

The Sickness

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Best of ≈ Non-Fiction

I'm dying. I'm dying I'm dying I'm dying. I can feel it; I just know that I'm dying. My brain is melting, and soon my hair will completely shrivel up and run away. If only it would happen soon, the whole process of dying is really starting to get old. If I could just make it go faster, make whatever disease I have spread faster, then I could relax and die already.

I think I was six and a half when I really started to notice it, the dying I mean. It started with a little cough, a sniffle here and there. Mother didn't think it was much, and Daddy wasn't there to give an opinion on the matter, but I knew. I wasn't sure, but I thought maybe that's why he left me with Mother that day, because he didn't want to catch my sickness. Even still, I knew as soon as Daddy left us that my sickness, my death, was nearing and getting worse.

Now that I am eight, I know a lot more about the world, and about dying. I know that dying is when a person's soul gets sucked out into the sky and never comes back down. Their bodies go into the ground so the families can remember who they are and stuff. I don't know who is doing all the soul sucking, but Daddy says I should whisper into the dark at night for my sickness to go away. Sometimes I do that, but mostly I just whisper for the dark to suck me away to the sky, so I can float and sing and play with the clouds, and do other stuff that dead people do.

But anyways, I was talking about my sickness. How my life all started to go downhill. First, it was my teeth that went. One by one they would fall out... and I know it didn't happen to the other kids like it happened to me. The other kids, they were normal. They didn't have special teeth like mine, and mine

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weren't supposed to fall out. I had a special heart, a special brain, and a special way of doing things, so my Daddy said. And, and well my teeth weren't supposed to just fall right outta my head the way they were! Along with my teeth, sometimes it seemed like every one of my hairs was falling out; so much that I had enough to make squiggles with it on the shower walls, enough to draw pictures of clouds and stuff. When I told Mother I was going bald, she didn't believe me. She would just wipe the hairs away and say

“Oh shush, Emily. That is just nonsense.”

But as I watched my hair float down towards the drain, I felt a sinking inside, the kind of sinking that only death brings.

And although I couldn't save all of my hairs, I managed to save most of my teeth. What I did was I'd swallow them. Right when they'd fall out, I'd pop them into my mouth along with a swig of chocolate milk. I figured they would regenerate inside of me and grow back into my gums. Maybe learn their lesson on their way through my body and never fall out again. And you know what? That's exactly what happened. That's exactly what happened and I knew that I was special still. I thought that since one day I would probably be bald like Daddy, I would at least still have all my teeth to keep me company.

Mother never really liked it that I was so special; I think she was jealous that she couldn't figure out the things that I could. Jealous that her teeth fell out and stayed out and that she couldn't exactly think right or talk right sometimes. Maybe it was her that was making me sick come to think of it... I don't know really, all I know is that sometimes I would get so sick that Mother would take me to see Daddy. I would limp around the house because of the tumors and the clogged-up blood in my legs until she would call Daddy to help me. She'd say:

“Alright Hank, I just can't handle her anymore; she's

been doing it again. Take her for the weekend?”

The weekends I spent with Daddy were the best. Usually my sickness (my dying) would subside for a while, and I could be the special little girl he knew I was. He would pet my head and say

“Emily, what’s wrong, Sugar? Sick again this week?” to which I would respond;

“Yes Daddy, got a real bad case of dying right now, can’t hardly walk.”

He believed me when no one else would. He would fix me soup and take off work. He knew the importance of an ending life just like I did, and he didn’t want to waste a minute.

Daddy would wake up early with me on Saturday mornings just to watch the cartoons I liked best on TV even if they weren’t his favorite! He let me help him sort his colorful morning pills before he swallowed them whole. I was always so amazed with my Daddy for not having to crush his pills into applesauce like I had to do, and I always hoped that my throat would be strong enough to do the same one day. Sometimes I would sneak one of his pills into my Lucky Charms to practice my throat strength. Also, I figured Daddy and I had the same kind of dying, so maybe his pill would make me better too. I always dreaded Sunday nights though, when Daddy would scoop me up and say,

“Alright Booger, time to get back to Mama.”

I hated going home mostly because Mother was going through a sort of dying too; she was suffering from Devorce syndrome. It made her cry a lot, and I really couldn’t stand it anymore. She wasn’t really dying like I was; one day I would just stop breathing, my fingers and hair would all fall out, and I would die. Mother would recover. Daddy told me so; he said she’s just faking it mostly, that Devorce syndrome isn’t even

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real. My disease, however, is very real.

In fact, I'm pretty sure that I heard Daddy on the phone the other day with his doctor, talking about my disease. He has to go there (to the doctor) a lot because he doesn't want to be bald anymore, I think. Anyways, I heard him say the word Cancer and dying and I think they meant me, so that's probably what I've got. It's pretty bad because I don't even go to see the doctor that much, once a year maybe, but they can tell just by looking at me that I've got the Cancer I guess. Doctors are pretty smart that way.

Not long after that Mother told me I better be good because a doctor was coming over. I figured he was coming to see if there was a cure for me so I made a robe from tissue paper and scotch tape and sat at the door waiting for him. When he got there he stepped right over me though, and went to give Mother a checkup. She yelled at me to:

“Go to your room and stop acting like a child!”

Then mostly they ignored me and made gooey eyes at each other on the couch. I hated how Mother was; laughing and smiling while I lay in my room so close to death. Help was inches away, and yet there I lay dying in my princess bed, arms crossed over my chest, prepared and waiting to die.

Weeks and weeks started to go by though, and I hadn't seen Daddy. I would beg and scream at Mother to let me see him, or call him, but she would only say:

“Not today, Emily, maybe tomorrow.”

I wondered why Daddy didn't want to see me anymore. I thought maybe he just wasn't having as much fun anymore with his sick little girl; so I tried to get better. I took all the medicine I could find. Every day it was something different; Pepto Bismol on Monday, Tylenol on Tuesday, Nyquil on Wednesday, Zyrtec on Thursday, and my Mothers Zolofit on Friday. By the time the

third weekend without Daddy came, I was fed up. I was just not getting any better, in fact, I felt worse! And with Daddy avoiding me because of my sickness, I needed to get better once and for all.

So over the weekend, I gathered all the pills I could find, I had been practicing my throat strength over the weeks, and I knew I could swallow them all. I knew I had to swallow them all, or else I would never see Daddy again. If I could cure myself, I surely would be his special little girl again, he would come see me and love me and... well, he would be my Daddy again. So on Monday I played sick. Mother let me stay home alone from school because she “Just can’t take another damn day off work for your stupid games!” She didn’t care like Daddy did, and I knew that once I was all better, I could be away from her for good.

Once she was out the door, I leaped up from my princess bed and ran to the hall closet. There was a secret space under the carpet where I had been sneaking more and more pills each day, saving them for this day in particular. I grabbed them all. It took me two trips to carry them all into my room; there had to have been about thirty. All of them different sizes and shapes and colors... this was almost like a little game, I thought! As I started to swallow them with my chocolate milk, I remember thinking, “This is the best idea I have ever had.”