

"Pressure, But She Never Knew"

She's tiny for a two-and-a-half-year-old, and she's in isolation, the hospital is unfamiliar and she is cold. She is placed on her stomach and brick shaped weights are on her back in hopes that the spine won't curve from the disease ravaging her little body. She now weighs nineteen pounds, the nurses put her back in diapers, they don't realize her age, but she can't move to use the bathroom anyhow. She is not allowed visitors with the exception of Sunday afternoons. What visitors? She is behind a locked door, for fear of spreading the disease, they can see her through a two way mirror, they can watch her dark curly mopped hair and see her new habit, one she never did before as she sucks violently on her little thumb, it's company to her now. She looks back and does not see them, she sees a tiny girl with a thumb in her mouth, and she lays very still. The Mother remarks to the Father and Grandmother, "look how still she is, look how good she is being, she doesn't cry and she doesn't fight her circumstance." The Grandmother says.....she's too sick to fight or cry, her body is trying to heal"..... There is pressure in the little girl's brain, the doctor explains to the frightened parents, there is pressure in her spine, she will not walk the rest of her life. Then suddenly the pressure shifts to the parents who wonder what will become of their child, what kind of life is in store for her and her future? They pray day after day, feeling like they are trapped in a vice of worry and fear.

On day 67, visiting day, they look through the glass and their child is sitting up, drinking a glass of juice. Her hands and arms are so little and her body is weak, but she is sitting up, and though pale, she looks better. The doctors tell them "she is better, but we will not know for some time if she can walk, if her brain will be normal, if she will even know who you are." He apologizes for the need to be so blunt, but they nod in understanding. The Grandmother and the Mother stifle their sobs. They can't bear to watch this, yet they know the little girl needs them.

The pressure shifts to the child, how much can she do and when? The next step is getting the child out of isolation and reunited with the parents. Will she even know them. She sees them come around the corner from her new room and new bed in the Children's hospital. There is something in her eyes, but not for the Mother, it is the Father that she first notices and the eyes change from vague to knowing. Then the Grandmother, almost an immediate response, again from the eyes. The Mother says in a quiet voice "Hi sweet girl, do you know who I am?" The child does, but now the eyes are angry. They almost say 'you left me here, why did you do that?'"

The physical therapy starts, one year after the sickness comes, the child can take little steps in her brace, she is used to her therapy, but she wants to do it her own way, she does not want to do it when they say, when she is ready she tries her own path.

The child is me, the little girl was me, I must now release the pressure of ignoring the inner child within, I want to embrace the child, love the child, and then finally let the child go. To look at old pictures is painful but a necessary resolve. This part is finally over.

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