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The Secrets I am Ashamed Of

I am forced to be ashamed of what is out of my control. My life is packed full of secrets. There are events that have happened, no one else should know. But this is my life. What has happened, created me, so why should I feel uncomfortable in my own skin?

I have wanted to erase my past. What would happen if I was able to move? Leave the past in the past and only live in the present? The past defines me. My past created me. I have moved so many times in my life and each time, in a way, I have created a new identity. But now, I am unable to leave and I am confronted with everything head on. I am forced to stay and there is no way to escape. I can claim that my past was out of my control and should not make me who I am, but it does. Even though my past was out of my control, it is still my past. I could say I was little when it all began, but that means nothing. These secrets I keep, make me feel like an outsider. God forbid someone were to find out about them, they may learn who I really am.

Through this paper, I will tell a few of my secrets. These are the events, the things that have happened, that I am expected to be ashamed of. Before I start, I should say they are not really secrets but more so parts of my family I am not supposed to talk about. This is what makes me unique from the average person.

For most of my life, I have been different. Something never seemed right to me and if I am honest, I still, to this day, do not know if it is now “right”. I have never been “normal” but I

also do not think I would want to be. At the age of ten, I was diagnosed with brain cancer. This is my first secret I have been told for so long not to share. What will people think? They may be afraid. I can recall now that before my surgeries, my head was heavy and there was a throbbing sound in my ear. People asked how my family or I did not know. It was my normal. I never questioned it because why would one question all they have known? Someone else's pain was my reality. My head was shaved but no one knew. I would cover it. My mom used to ask me what I would do if my shield were to fall off during school. I would wear a thick headband that almost covered the entirety of my head. I told her I would put it back on. I was expected to be ashamed because the other children did not have a scar and did not look like me.

My first brain surgery lasted over five and a half hours. It was the bloodiest surgery by neurosurgeon had ever performed. After, I was placed into a coma and my mom was told there was very little chance of my survival. Three days later, I awoke beyond weak. That same day, it was my mom's birthday. I was able to struggle out the words happy birthday but was unable to speak for the following two weeks. The summer between fourth and fifth grade, it was as if I was an infant trapped in a ten year olds body. I had to relearn everything! Doctors determined I should have died that year. However, no one truly knew what I went through because it's my secret.

The second day of seventh grade, I had my third surgery and missed a day of school. However, I was not allowed to tell anyone why I was missing. I got in trouble the following day, although I never explained that I was in the hospital and it was not my fault because it was another one of my secrets.

I have never been told that my cancer is gone. Every time I have an MRI and meet with my neurosurgeon, it seems as though he wants to operate again, but after talking to me, he doesn't think he should. As far as I know, I still have a cyst in my head. I also have been told I have two cancer nodules but because they do not seem to be affecting me, I must be normal. Apparently, he may do more damage if he goes back in to remove things. Just recently, I was told I am actually missing part of my brain. At ten, when this all began, I made the assumption no one had brain in the location of my tumor. I longed to be a normal little girl. After the surgeries, after they fixed me, I was normal, right? Doctors seem to think because I am the patient I do not need to know details about what is happening. Because I am able to communicate and seem normal, I must be. People should not worry about me because I am able to act the part. As a little girl, my only dream was to be like everyone else. To not have to worry about checkups, getting MRIs or ct scans, and just fitting in. But I am different and from all that has happened to me, I will never completely fit in. I have to accept this.

I remember moments walking around wishing so badly to be someone else. To start over my life. It was not going as I planned, when I was little, and I was not understanding how to cope with it all. People began taking my struggles and claiming them as their own. Because I was in the hospital, they, too, somehow could feel my pain. But their pain was different. No one truly will ever be able to understand how I was feeling and even I do not completely understand it. I have had a few conversations with my family members about this time and they tell me how difficult it had all been for them. They claim I must not have known because I was put under during my surgeries. But I remember. Just because I could not communicate my feelings during the time or even now, does not mean I was not there. My third surgery, I was actually not put

under. I was given medication so I would not remember but I remember parts. I was confined within what felt like a coffin as I heard unusual sounds around me. I remember when they were drilling the metal contraption to my skull, seeing my dad walk away. I was laying there in silence as tears streamed down my face. I remember a lot but because I am not supposed to, I must keep it a secret. Not many people in my family even claim this all happened to me. If it is brought up they say it happened in the past and we must move on. This makes me different and they are unwilling to acknowledge it. My family is ashamed so, therefore, I too must be ashamed.

My second secret is my parents are divorced. Obviously people know about this, but this is another one of my secrets. I am not supposed to talk about it. I do not really know much about my family. If I ever am to ask anything about it, I am either given the cold shoulder or told it is not my place. I was required to make a family tree once for class and I was told to have it portray my parents as married because that would make me fit in and that is what is normal.

My dad has never really been a part of my life. I could say when I was little, maybe around three or four he was there but he really was not. I was raised thinking that dads do not come home. My dad would be gone for months at a time, claiming it was for work, but none of us knew where he really was. At this time my parents were still married. My mom has told my two brothers and I that our dad did not know how to be a father. But I did not know how to be a daughter and my brothers did not know how to be sons. Why could he not just have tried? We could figure it out together. My mom has also told my older brother and I once when she was upset that my dad did not actually want my younger brother. He was upset that she got pregnant and told her that he knew it was what she wanted. But this is another one of the secrets I keep. One that my younger brother must never know about. My question is if my dad really did not

want a third child, why did he have two more after that? For so long in my life I wanted my dad to be there. I wanted him to guide me through parts of my life that were hard and tell me everything would be okay. But he was not there and I have to live with that. He was not there and although I am ashamed to say that I don't really have a dad, it is a secret.

I will learn more about my family only when one of my parents are enraged and something slips out. They mostly do not mean to say what is said in these moments. When I was around five, I remember my mom telling my older brother and me she had another brother but when he was twelve, he was hit by a car and passed away. I never understood why she could not talk about it, but I have learned over the years, my mom has secrets too. Secrets just like me, that are not really secrets, but she, too, must feel ashamed of what is out of her control. She only has one picture of her brother because her parents got rid of the rest. Because he is gone, they must not speak of him anymore. He was the past and the past must be forgotten.

In year eight, I began having seizures. Because I had my first one at home, no one knew but my family. I have a type of seizure called a grand mal seizure. I have been told I experience these because I have scars on my brain from my operations. During an episode, I black out and drop to the floor. My whole body tenses up and begins to shake. I foam at my mouth and curl up to my left side. After a little while of shaking, I will lay motionless and it looks like I have died. It will then occur again. They only stop when my body is physically unable to continue. I showed up to school the next day and was told not to say a word. I had a few more episodes of seizures but because they never took place at school, I must not talk about it. I was told that the other students would not understand and I should not scare them. I have never known how to feel when I am told my life, my past, will "scare" others.

My last secret are my brothers. My dad has previously had two more sons, making me have a total of four brothers. However, I am supposed to say I have two. The other boys do not count because of our age difference. I was seventeen when the first boy was born and twenty when the second boy was born. My other two brothers, that I am allowed to freely talk about, we are all within four years. Other people are ashamed of my dad's actions so, therefore, I must be ashamed too. But aren't they my brothers? Why should I, or they, be guilt-ridden we are related. Because of our dad? How is that our fault?

Some days, I want to start on a blank page so badly. Maybe I could, just for once, be normal. My biggest concern would not be a concern at all. But I cannot. I was given this life of ups and downs. This, though, is my life. Even though it has been difficult at times, I would not change it. I would not be the person I am today if all of this had not happened.