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## I Know I'm Going to Die

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# I Know I'm Going to Die

I grew up in hospital beds, dragging an IV pole behind me like a wooden pull toy. Nurses piled ice on me like blocks. A TV in a cubby, like the empty one in my third grade classroom, played my favorite movie over and over again so that the last words I heard after closing my eyes were the lyrics to *Part of Your World*.

I didn't know I was about to die. My mother either didn't remember or didn't want to take pictures, preferring her last photos to be of a seemingly healthy child and not one whose body was already pale enough for a too-small coffin.

Doctors formed a ring round my rose-stained sheets, and stuck me with needles hooked to bags full of red paint to replace what I spilled. I knew that I was about to die.

I knew my first book wasn't a real one. Real books were thick with hard covers, not a few folded pieces of construction paper containing barely a paragraph:

One day I was bLeeding enternaly, that Mean's im Bleeding inside My BoDy So I went to the Hosiptal and at the Hosiptal I HaD the niseist nurses in the worldD My nurse's name's are Kelly Koral Becky and BarB I likeD all of My nurse's and I likeD the play room to Becase I got to Do Lot's of craft's I also got to panit and I Downt relly Get to Do that a Lot and I went to the

I-C-u and there I HaD the Most Butefull room ever and when I HaD to go Home I CrieD for 3 an a Hafe ouwers Stra So if you ever go to the HosaPital remBr its alot of fun oh I DiDint mechin you get free food.

I knew I wouldn't live long enough to publish a real one.

Death, like growing up, was an interesting hypothetical to my friends. They agreed that I would be the first to die. It was the most logical conclusion to come to; I was the one who had to stop playing to take daily medications. They hadn't been alive long enough to notice people were aging, that each birthday candle actually counted down instead of up. I wondered how many birthdays I had left.

When I was nine and in another hospital bed, I grew sick of the paper-thin blanket and of hiding my IV under it to sleep and of nurses waking me to take my vitals and of the IV lines tangling when I dragged the pole from my bed to the bathroom and of water getting stuck under the tape holding it in my vein when I washed my hands. I expected to grow sicker, never taller. I knew that I would die.

When I was ten I read about Alexei Romanov and how he had *hemophilia*. Hemophilia was a large medical word like *splenomegaly*. If he got so much as a paper cut, he could bleed out. I went to recess wearing a spleen guard, knowing that if I got hit by a stray ball then my spleen could rupture and I would bleed in. He died when he was thirteen. I wondered if I would live that long.

I wasn't allowed to go to gym class with my friends. In high school, in the room meant for in-school suspension, I wrote essays on sports instead of playing them. People talk about how teenagers feel immortal and untouchable, but I always knew my life was ephemeral and not eternal.

When I was seventeen, I went to the hospital after vomiting and then collapsing in a pool of my own blood. I have outlived Alexei Romanov. I won't live much longer.

As the anesthesia takes effect, the voices around me grow distant and unsteady. The only solid sound I can find is my own voice. I sing a lullaby, wanting it to be the last thing I hear. Is this what it feels like to die?

I have several works in progress, one of which I structured so that it would only work as a trilogy. I wish I hadn't done that. Even the most prolific authors can only put out around one novel a year. Can I publish a real one? Will I have enough time?

When I was nineteen, I was admitted to the hospital. Then I was discharged. Then I became sick again and was readmitted. Then I was discharged. Then I was readmitted. I know that there will come a time when I'm never discharged.