

little girl



me as a little kid

By Marla Noss

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As a little girl, I loved playing mother, father, and child. I loved to play the role of the mother. I loved imagining having a great family. I loved imagining getting married and having children. I always said I wanted to have at least 3 kids. Imagining a big loud happy family made my heart beat faster. I imagined myself getting married and having children. At 15 and 16 I wanted a boyfriend so incredibly badly, and so did everyone else. Everyone had a crush on someone, except me, I felt like no one found me beautiful or could ever fall in love with me. So I wished all the more to have a big happy family someday. I often imagined the perfect story of how I would meet my boyfriend, how the relationship could be, and how I would have a huge family someday. Today at almost 19 I'm not even sure if I want to have kids anymore, and getting married is almost out of the question for me, and yes I still want to have a relationship, but it's not my top priority anymore, I don't feel bad anymore that I've never had a relationship because today I prioritize myself, I don't picture my perfect family anymore, today I dream about adventures, about traveling, about cities, about my life.

When I was a little girl my parents told me one day that they were going to separate, we were sitting on the roof of our house where my father had been sleeping for a few weeks and they said nothing would change, we were still a family. But everything changed. After they told us that, I ran crying to my room and didn't understand the world anymore, then we went to the zoo. I have hated the zoo ever since.

When I was a little girl and we went on a school trip, I was always homesick. I cried because I wasn't at home, because I missed my parents so much, both my parents and the family we used to be. I cried so hard that my teacher had to come and hold me. As a little girl I wondered what we did wrong, I wondered what I could say to make them love each other again. I often closed my eyes and imagined the two holdings each other, like in the movies it's all so easy, in the books, there's always a happy ending, so why not with my family?

When I was a little girl I didn't understand why we suddenly couldn't be a family anymore, and all the more I wished for my own family sometime later. When Mom and Dad said we were still the same family, they lied, because we weren't anymore. Everything changed, at least for me as a little girl. For me, the world collapsed at that time. My old world was a happy family with great parents, in a beautiful home. My new family was strange, torn apart and I hated it. All my friends had homes I suddenly had a mom's place and a dad's. All my friends had normal families. And I suddenly didn't. As a little girl, I cried, screamed, and just didn't understand. Why? Why couldn't they love each other anymore?

I could always sort out my feelings and thoughts better with written words. When my mom and I had a fight I wrote her a letter, and when I felt alone I wrote it in my diary. I wrote many letters. With my aunt. With my mom. With my dad, asking them why nothing was the same as before. Why everything had to change. Every fifth diary entry was a wish that Mom and Dad would get back together. Every eyelash, every penny in the well, every birthday wish. Over and over I said, "I wish for Mom and Dad to get back together."

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When I was a little girl I just wanted everything to be like it used to be. For far too long I thought it must be possible for Mom and Dad to get back together. When I was a little girl, I didn't want my mom to love someone new, because she loved my dad. I didn't want Dad to move out, I didn't want someone new to move in. Mom and Dad belong together. I was selfish, I only thought about myself and my old perfect family, but I was also still a little girl who didn't even begin to understand the complexity of love, the world, and the idea of family.

I don't know when exactly that changed when I left the naive little girl behind and started to understand that it is such a precious gift that mom and dad love me and my sister honestly and sincerely, I don't know when I understood that my new family can also be beautiful and perfect. And I think that I am still learning that.

I know that it has haunted me for a long time this dream of the perfect family, the perfect love. I know that the separation from Mom and Dad has changed me forever. It has left a crack in my

primal trust, I am afraid of being abandoned, of being alone, of losing my stability. As a little girl you need stability, you need security and order in your world, and when mom and dad meant they were separating, stability, security, and order broke in me. Children don't see their parents as individuals who have come together, they see them as a unit that holds their world together. So when the parents separate, even if it is the best for the family, the children, and the parents, the children feel as if parts of themselves are thrown away, and their stability, through the unity of their world is broken. The same thing happens when a new partner comes into a parent's life, explains Dr. Bruce D. Perry in the book "What Happens to You." For the children, this is the point where the separation becomes final, they feel even lonelier and have the feeling their parents' attention is no longer with them.

It took me a long time to accept the new partners of my parents. It took me a long time to understand that the little girl was allowed to feel that way because she was still a little girl who felt left alone from that moment on. For a long time, it was difficult to accept relationships in any form. For a long time, I was afraid that important people in my life would leave me. And for a long time it took me to understand that even though the separation of my parents was basically peaceful, it can and does leave wounds. Everyone has wounds, some bigger than others. But everyone has them. Everyone has experiences that have wounded them, some would say made them who they are today. Because every experience shapes you, everything you experience is processed and brings you to a new point.

Through the separation of my parents, I have understood a lot about myself today, and maybe I have even become more open with my feelings. I am no longer sad and meanwhile, I wish for something else when I blow out my birthday candles.