

# My Childhood was a Shattered Mirror

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## **My Childhood was a Shattered Mirror**

*Alexandra Cordill*

My childhood was a shattered mirror

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In my oldest memory I play with my parents in our Halloween orange kitchen. They chase me as I laugh.

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One afternoon in June last year dad said to me, “Be careful of who you date, I know autism can be passed down by parents with ADD or ADHD too. And you would hate to double the chances for your kids.” I say nothing.

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I didn’t speak until 21 months. My mom taught me basic sign language instead.

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When my fish, Frederica, dies I don’t cry. I bury her in a Tiffany box in our front yard with her favorite pebble.

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I cry when we move to a new house and I can’t push my bed flush with the wall, so I can feel the pressure on my chest as I sleep.

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I learn to sleep face down.

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Every year for my birthday we play Happy Birthday to Me by Cracker

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My parents nudge me towards social interaction. I have different friends every year of elementary school.

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They all leave me eventually.

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My mom's scent is a permanent slurry of Tiffany perfume and garlic from the hours she spends in the kitchen.

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I press my face into her growing belly when she is pregnant with Anna. I talk and sing to the floating fetus for hours on end.

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When she is born my mom makes me use Purell every time I want to hold her. My hands are constantly dry and cracked from the alcohol.

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In second grade I move to public school. My anxiety is so severe that I scratch myself to the point of hives every morning. Just so I can escape to the nurse's office for 20 minutes. My parents take me to an allergist. He prescribes me pills that do nothing for my burgeoning anxiety. I continue scratching and walk down to the nurse's office every morning for my half pill.

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When I was twelve I copied down every lyric to Young the Giant's Cough Syrup at least 15 times in one week.

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A year later I announce I am atheist. My catholic aunt tells me she is worried about me.

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The two movies I feel connected to are The Perks of Being a Wallflower and Into the Wild.

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At freshman homecoming I have my fist kiss. Afterwards he tells me he wants to just be friends.

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In fifth grade I read Bullfinch's Mythology cover to cover. All the kids at school saw me lugging around a 500-page book of Greek myth from 1863. This did not help me find friends.

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I relate to Medusa

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At age nine I set record for most words read in a school year. 2.4 million. I devoured at least two books a week. This did not help me make friends either.

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I went to day camp for kids of State Farm employees for five consecutive years. The only thing I remember from Camp Wanikskaka is winning the costume contest dressed as an ear of corn.

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When I was fourteen my best friend was sent to boarding school. I had to find new friends.

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My grandfather asks, "If your husband likes long hair, you'll grow it out right?" I say no and go on some long rant about hair and femininity. He understands none of it

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In 7th grade I wrote an essay titled 'The Mercator Projection Shifts Childrens' Paradigm of the World. My teacher tells me I'm too smart for my own good. I don't understand what he means.

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Anna bikes to Culver's with her friends, I watch 80's movies with my parents. Ally Sheedy is my spirit animal.

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I watch Friends on an infinite loop to compensate for not enjoying the company of my friends.

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My therapist tells me I should schedule one social thing per week. I don't.

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I am the only 12-year-old at my gym. I make friends with all the 40 somethings doing Crossfit to fulfill some desperate need for human contact while exercising. I go through my teen years lifting weights instead of killing myself on cardio machines like my peers. This does not help me make friends.

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My mom cries while watching soldiers come home to their dogs. I don't understand why this makes her sad. She says she's happy crying. That doesn't make sense either.

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I lock myself in my room from breakfast to dinner, so I can start and finish my book without interruption.

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My sister gets annoyed because we've watched Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat the past five days during winter break. I don't care because I'm five years older and I should be perpetually in control of the VHS player and also because Finding Nemo is stupid.

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My dad asks me to grab his shoes on my way to the kitchen. I say, "You have two feet why don't you get them yourself?" My parents get mad, I'm just repeating a line from a tv show and the character's parents laughed. I don't understand why mine are so angry.

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I get my hair cut in my favorite sweatshirt, it has a moose embroidered on the front. The hairdresser doesn't wash my hair, so it clings to my skin. I throw my sweatshirt away, it is forever itchy.

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My mom buys me a pink striped fuzzy sweater. I feel like a Muppet and I love it. I tell her its itchy, she says it won't be after she washes it. I never wear the sweater.

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I am eight I teach myself how to knit and spend hours toiling over perfect, evenly spaced stitches only to get bored. I eventually end up with several impeccable doll sized blankets.

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My sister is loud and speaks her mind. I learn to do whatever she wants to, so I can avoid her screams hurting my ears.

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My mother forces me to drink water. I hate how the cold spreads down my throat.

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I go missing at a wedding reception when I am four. My mom finds me in a back room of the hotel practicing to be the flower girl at my aunt's upcoming wedding. I refuse to go back to the party for another 20 minutes.

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I ruin a 9th birthday party because I refuse to watch any movies that are not comedy. We watch Napoleon Dynamite instead of August Rush.

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During recess I am escorted by a lunch monitor to the bathroom, so I can brush my teeth after lunch. After a boy called me stinky breath on the jungle gym the week before. This does not help me make friends.

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In third grade I punch Paige H. in the butt because she was encroaching onto my carpet square in the library. My teacher isn't that mad because I don't think she likes Paige H. that much anyway.

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Paige H. had a baby last month.

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In fourth grade I obsessively read Shakespeare and get frustrated when my mom can't talk to me about the central plot of each play because she's never read them. She takes me to see A Midsummer Night's Dream instead.

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Two summers later my mom forces me to go with two girls I don't like to see Romeo & Juliet. I have to explain every detail to them and then listen to them gush about how romantic the play was.

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I visit my aunt in New Mexico and go to the hot air balloon festival. I sit on the hood of her car to watch all the balloons take flight, she turns on the windshield wipers and laughs. I don't understand why this is funny.

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In eighth grade I go to Washington D.C. with my middle school. I become friends with our tour guide and don't understand why people are reluctant to share a hotel room with me.

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In preschool my teacher gives us each a bag of construction paper bones and tells us to create a new dinosaur. Forever the realist, I construct a Stegosaurus.

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In high school I have a group of friends. I have nothing in common with them but they are friends nonetheless.