

Jazz for Justice: Student Task Force

I Just Want To Be a Kid Again

by R.M. Shilpi

Do you want to be a grown-up? They asked me.

Do you want to help your family? They said.

Of course I do! I told them

But now I wish I never said

I didn't know what to expect

Just that I'd work as much as I could

I was going to support my family

That was all I knew

Twelve hours a day

Ain't so bad at first

But then comes hunger and tiredness

Injury and thirst

You're helping your family

They said, they swore

All I see are fields

I can't learn or feel anymore

I'm not even helping

My family much at all

The amount I'm getting paid

It's so small, *too* small

But there's nothing we can do

Out here, we're all alone

So I guess I'll just keep working

Til I'm tired to my bones

Not too far away, another kid says

I'm just as out of luck

I'm really just like you

I'm really just as stuck

I live in a tiny jail cell

(I was the fall-guy)

It wouldn't be so bad

Except – I'm here for life!

I didn't even kill anyone
All I did was be there
But I'm being charged just the same
I had no idea – I wasn't aware

My lawyer didn't help me much
Never told me anything
And I was just a kid back then
Barely even a teen

I've changed since then
I know I was wrong
But my sentence, my punishment
It doesn't end – it's lifelong

I wanna change the world
I want to help if I get out
But no one believes 'the criminal'
All I get is scorn and doubt

On the other side of the world
I *have* killed someone
Ever since I was little
I've known how to use a gun

I don't want to do this
I want to change the 'status quo'
But I'm a child soldier
I've nowhere else to go

I was just a little kid
I did what the grown-ups said
And now because of me
There are people dead

I don't know what to do
I don't know what to say
I don't want to hurt people
It shouldn't be this way!

But I'm a killer now
It's too late for me
So I guess I'll keep on going
Til the next dead child's me

I wouldn't really know
If there's anything else out there
But I'm stuck here, even if there is
I'm not going anywhere

My hands, they pick the food you eat
Even though they're covered in scars
While your kids will learn and play
I'll watch childhood from afar

I committed a crime but never killed anyone
I was just in the wrong place and time
But Now I'm trapped in this tiny cell forever
I'll be in prison for the rest of my life

I was so small when I got my first gun
Now I'm surrounded by the dead
There's nothing else to do, so I'll keep spilling blood
And I'll stay drowned in red

I can be better than what I am
I can get past what I did
I'm a farm worker, a criminal, a soldier
But mostly, I'm a kid

I want to be more than just underpaid labor
I want to be more than a body in a cell
I want to be more than a hired gun
I want myself and the world to be well

I want to end all the wars and strife
And all the pain and suffering therein
But most of all, more than anything else
I just want to be a kid again

**For more information on Juvenile Justice,
visit the Human Rights Watch Student Task Force at**

www.hrwstf.org



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