

Losing Chicky

—*Laura Daum*

I NEVER NOTICED HOW beautiful spring is. I never actually stopped to look as the days passed between winter and into the spring months. Somewhere along the way, I stopped trying to find that delicate transference of death into life. For the first time since I was a child, I notice the trees are blooming again. The buds grow more brilliantly each day, screaming in colors of maroon, pink, white, and green. It's a strange feeling. It's almost as if I had been blind all my life, then suddenly had my sight returned in the same instance that the world was being born. All the colors are more frightening, spinning like a picture under a blue, blue sky, with clouds floating through the horizon like ocean waves. How could I have stopped noticing the spring?

The thoughts bombard my mind as I drive to Dr. Wes's office. There's an emptiness that I can't shake. The passenger seat is cold and alone. I keep glancing over, wanting to speak of the spring. I'm so used to her being there next to me, hanging on my every word. Normally, I would let the thoughts tumble out in streams. She would nod that blond head of hair, twisting some on her delicately manicured finger, take in what I was saying, putting words in here or

there. But I'm alone now. In the car, at home, in school, in church; I'm forever alone.

As I drive through the tree-lined streets of the nice neighborhood, the one with huge brick houses and white picket fences, I see two children outside on the sidewalk. One is sitting on the ground fiddling with the grass, the other standing, holding the rope, seemingly begging the other to stand and play. As I pass, the children suddenly transform before my very eyes into two little girls with matching blond hair in pigtails and matching outfits on the lawn.

We were five. I was playing hopscotch with my sister, trying to figure out if I could come up with a new rhyme to jump to. My sister was sitting on the concrete, her round face and honey-colored eyes which mirrored my own, were intently focused on an ant. She watched it crawl and struggle as she poked and prodded, until, in a fit of rage, she squashed it with her thumb.

"Ew! Chicky!" was my response.

She looked at me, with those twin orbs and simply wiped the gooey

stuff off of her fingers onto her pants.

We were always together. Day, night, bedtime, story time, and playtime... We could never be separated.

We were five. I was playing hop-scotch with my twin sister, Chicky. Then there came Devon, with his dirty hands and his mean face, which was always grimacing or pouting. There he came, out from behind the fence into our yard, our domain.

“What do you want?” Chicky asked. Her face almost as menacing as his was.

“Can I play too?” He tried to smile. His face pulled up in an unaccustomed expression.

“No, but maybe later you can.” I said.

“But I want to play now!”

In his anger, he came up close to me. He had put his face next to mine, until I was staring into those plain brown eyes. He put his arms out and pushed me down. Hastily, after seeing the tears spring up in my eyes, he darted back behind the fence.

I bled. I scraped my knee and I was bleeding. But my sister, my Chicky, helped me stand. Let me lean on

her and she had carried me into our house. Mother wasn't home, she was working. So she helped me into the bathroom and cleaned me up all by herself. My twin hadn't been as squeamish as I was about blood. She even kissed my boo-boo and told me it was okay. I wouldn't be hurt again.

I shake my head, the sun's glare blinding me momentarily and I almost miss my turn. Swerving sharply, I make it, ten minutes late. The red brick building greets me as I swing back the thick double doors and step into the waiting room. I am waved through to the corridor of my therapist's office. Opening the door, I'm astounded at how bland and dark the room is. How could I have forgotten? The only cheery things were the posters with “Achievement” and “Progress” written on them.

“Charlotte. Good to see you again. Have a seat.” The voice from behind the desk of papers came as a shock. My eyes hadn't quite adjusted to the darkness yet.

I see the tuft of blond hair and the glint off the glasses, breathe in slowly. *Here we go again.* Sitting down in the velvet chair, I immediately begin fidgeting and twirling my ring, like usual when nervous. She notices this. Her eyes dart down to my hands. I

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clasp them together and look up.

“Well?”

“Oh, sorry, I’ve just been swamped with paperwork lately.” She waves her hand across her desk.

“That’s obvious.” She smiles. She’s really not bad looking for a woman of forty. There are age lines around her face, but her eyes and mouth still retain most of their youth.

“How have you been lately?”

“Good.”

This is meaningless chit-chat. She always takes a million years to get to the root of what she wants to work on. *Get to the point already!*

“How is the medication? Having any problems with that?”

“No.” *Sweet Jesus, forty five minutes left? You must be joking.*

“You seem tense today. Anything you want to get off of your chest?”

“Well, I thought about Chicky.” I lower my eyes, fiddling with my ring again; silver, shiny, and permanent. That ring seemed to be the only constant. “I can’t seem to get her off of my mind lately.”

“Sometimes it’s better to hold on rather than let go completely. It’s perfectly normal. Actually, I’d be worried if you weren’t thinking about her.”

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“Why did she have to leave?”

She leans towards me, taking off her glasses and setting them down on the desk.

“Maybe it was just her time to go. She probably realized you didn’t need her help anymore. She wouldn’t have done anything to deliberately hurt you.”

“Why do you say that as if you knew her?” I raise my eyebrows. “You didn’t.”

She sits back in her chair and sighs.

“Charlotte. I’m not trying to take Chicky away from you. That’s not why you’re here and that’s not why I’m here.”

“Then why am I here?”

“You are here because you lost someone very close to you. Now you have to let go of someone else who filled that place. It takes a toll on a person. No one could’ve handled what you’ve dealt with for so long on their own.”

I sit back in the chair, crossing my arms. She glances at the papers on her desk and shoots me a little smile. “Whenever you wish to talk about it, we will. For now we can talk about

whatever you choose.”

I know the “it” she’s speaking of. The papers on her desk, the extensive notes and the doctors reports; I know what they all read. Mother has been over it with me many times. They say I have a problem. Deep, emotional and scarring, my problem is such that I need therapy and medication to fix it all; to make it all evaporate.

“What if I don’t wish to talk about it?” My eyes dart back down to my hands. Without permission, my fingers caress the silver, twist and turn it. Dr. Wes clears her throat and shuffles the papers around on her desk.

“Well, I guess all I can do is wait.”

Wait for what? What does she wish me to say? *My father died too early. My mother’s never home. No one listens to me, so why should you?*

I can’t imagine pouring my heart out to this woman. This speck of a woman, whose only reason for being here is to listen to me because Mother pays for these sessions. Mother wants me to be normal, to have friends, to hear me talking to someone on the phone and not to someone who she claims never existed.

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"I can't do this anymore, Charlotte. I just can't." She sobbed to me one evening, on those rare occasions that I saw her in person.

"That's a lovely ring you have." Dr. Wes's voice intervenes. She is pointing to my hands.

"Uh, thanks."

"Who gave it to you?" She props up her chin with her fist, staring at me intensely.

"Here, Charlie, this is a magic ring." Father said as he handed me the shiny silver thing. Mother was in the background telling him my fingers were too tiny, it wouldn't fit. She said that there was no point in giving such a pretty piece of jewelry to a five year old that played in muck all day.

He only smiled and said, "A pretty girl deserves pretty things. She'll grow into it."

"I've had it as long as I can remember. I haven't taken it off in five years."

She nods her head again. "Well, our time's almost up for today. Shall we continue next Friday?"

"Sounds fine," I stand, grab my purse and yank open the door, eager to get home and out of that office. It has a dizzying effect; those post-

ers and wooden paneling make for a migraine.

I jump in my car and head for home. When I pull in the driveway all that greets me is a big house with no lights to be seen on inside. There's no second car in the garage. I'm assuming Mother won't be home until later. I walk in the purple front door. Purple. Who the hell paints their front door purple? The house is too big; too many rooms for only two people. Mother's said many times how we should move into a house on Delmond, small and easily affordable. She never has though. When I ask her why, she always says, "Some things you just can't let go of."

Lately Mother attempts to keep some civilized communication going using an old Mickey Mouse magnet on the refrigerator to transfer notes. As I wander into the kitchen, there's Mickey, sitting in his usual place in the middle of that white blank space, holding up my mother's voice. *Charlotte, dinner's in the fridge. Help yourself. See you when I get home.*

I have to laugh at that. She doesn't even say when she'll be home. I grab the orange juice and head up to my room, turn on the black light and lay on my twin bed. I close my eyes and immediately am drawn into a simpler

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“Charlotte?” She smiled. “Wanna get pretty?”

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“Charlotte?” She smiled. “Wanna get pretty?”

“Huh?” I smiled back. “Nah, I'm pretty enough as it is. You? Well, for you, I guess it wouldn't kill you to try it.”

She rolled her eyes and stuck out her lower lip. “C'mon, let's sneak into Mom's room and find some of her

mascara.”

“I'm gonna stay here. You go.”

“Fine. Whatever.” She jumped up to leave.

“Dork!”

“Loser!” She stuck her head back in the door to shout at me.

Minutes later she reappeared, brandishing iridescent blue eye shadow and Mom's red plastic tube of mascara. “Ha. Found it.”

Sitting at our vanity she applied gallons of the stuff. Somehow, with her coaxing and taunting, I ended up sitting cross-legged in front of my sister while she applied the black mascara to my eyes. Hours ticked by,

until the sun disappeared into a sea of black clouds, blacker than the garish eyeliner we had applied. We heard rain pounding the tin roof, looked up, then at one another.

“Wanna go dance in the rain?”

Chicky asked. We hadn’t done that since we were seven.

“We’re too old, you dork.”

“You’re never too old to dance in the rain.” At that, she grabbed my arm and pulled me downstairs, out the door. And we danced in the rain. We danced, laughed, and twirled, mascara running down our faces making black lines. We looked like crazy, wet Indian natives. We danced until the mascara ran down our necks and seeped into our shirts. We danced until the sky produced streaks of light and thunder. We danced until Mother leaned out the door and screamed at us to come inside. Soaking wet and breathless, we reluctantly obeyed.

I open my eyes, look up at the ceiling. The clock beside my bed proclaims it to be eleven at night. I shake my head to get rid of the nightmares, be rid of her. I don’t want to remember these things. Why these things have to happen? Well, that still remains a mystery. Under my bed

there exists a lovely thing. A bright, silvery bottle of vodka, purchased by a man named Chase, whom I pass every morning on my way to school. Good man, that Chase. Good enough to take money from a sixteen year old, good enough to take a mere five-dollar bribe to buy her some alcohol, to buy her the good stuff. I rescue it from the confines of the dust bunnies and clutter, keep it in the safety of my arms. I lay back, take a swig. It burns, ripping its way into my stomach. It tingles and overtakes me as I, bit by bit, choke down the bottle. One more drink, that’s a good girl, drink it all down. Drink her away. Drink them all away.

Hours tick by, until it becomes more than time, more than a space that can be filled with the alcohol. So drink it down, girl, drink it all down. I swear, I closed my eyes and it was five, I open them again and now it’s eleven and the dark shapes are crowding my room. They fill the spaces. They drink in the light. They inch their way across these walls. They speak and their voices sound like shadows do. They whisper and waver and speak in soft tones so that I cannot hear them any longer. Speak up! Come one now, how am I supposed to carry on a decent conversation when you keep moving like that, huh? Can you answer me that? Well, can you answer me? Take

another sip, just one more sip, and then it's gone. Now it's in the system where no one can retrieve it. Let us try to walk, shall we? My feet move together, without rhyme, without reason. They scream "We can't work like this! How can you expect us to work under these conditions with this drug coursing through our veins? We'll learn you to do this to us!" And damn those legs, they did. I stumble and fall, first over the chair to the desk and then on solid floor. I make my way to the window, to my escape. My window with the pink frilly curtains. Damn those ugly lacy things. Chicky picked them out. Chicky. The lace laughs at me, it's lacy frilly way. It giggles and points at me, mocking my loss. I'll teach you to laugh! Rip apart the shades, yes, strip the window bare. I promise I will make up for stripping you down. Pry up the latch and spring up the window.

"C'mon, Charlie, get up." She whispered in the dark. "C'mon."

"Huh?" Before I could open my eyes, Chicky was pulling me from the bed, towards the window. She'd grabbed a blanket off of her bed and proceeded to open the window and step out onto the second story roof.

"Are you nuts? It's freezing out here!"

"That's why I brought the blanket silly." She reached through the window pane and snatched my wrist, helping me out. She wrapped the blanket around the both of us and we just lay there, looking at the heavens. The lights were abnormally bright that night. I remembered the moon looking huge and luminous in the sky, like a Chinese lantern. And we lay there, looking up at the night sky, not uttering a word, with our heads knocked toward one another.

The warm night air pulls around me as I lie here once more. I'm still here, I haven't left. It wasn't that long ago when we were together. It wasn't that long ago that we were both out here, looking up at that glorious ball of light in the dark horizon. I lean forward, looking out into the yard. The trees take on a life of their own in the night. The wind rushes through them, twists the branches, jostles their frame to look like waving fingers. The trees wave at me. They're waving. Hello trees! My eyes go in and out of focus. I swear I can see a shape moving on the ground. The moonlight shows the way. It shows me the figure moving towards the house. Chicky?

The warmth pulls around me, pulls through me, sweeps me along with it. I want to stay here.

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There's a million miles of darkness sweeping through the land. I want to reach out and touch it. I want to feel it. I want to take it into my arms and have it carry me off. No more therapy sessions, no more doctors, no more medicine, no more. I hear a noise, out here, on this celestial plane. As I turn towards the sound, the dark shadows mix with brown. The brown starts to bend and fade through the night. The brown has faded to gold. Gold, gold, golden. Golden eyes stare at me. Golden eyes come out through the darkness followed by golden hair, golden skin. Chicky. My Chicky.

"It's a long way down, dork." She peers over the side, coming to join me. She sidles up next to me, plopping down on the roof, letting her

legs dangle over the side.

"They tell me you're a lie." I'm still tipsy. I just put a slur on "a".

She frowns at me, face illuminated by the moon. Our Chinese lantern in the sky. "You knew I wasn't meant to be here long." Her voice drops down to a gentle hum.

"I don't understand."

She furors her eyebrows, mirroring mine. She used to mimic my facial expressions all the time when we were children.

"I was never meant to stay." She reaches her hand out as she speaks those words and tucks a strand of hair behind my ears.

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“Can I go with you?”

Chicky smiles. She looks out on the lawn, her eyes tilt back up to the lantern in the sky. She then closes them as if contemplating. “No, it gets easier as time goes on.” She stands, leaning once again towards the edge, peering down.

“I want to go where you go.”

She smiles and nods. “I know this is difficult. Mother’s been busy with work and you’ve been seeing Dr. Wes for the past three months, but she’s going to help you. It’s tough now, but it will get better. It always does.”

“Doesn’t seem like it.” I lie back, propping my head up with my arms. Chicky sighs as she lies down next to me. “No one ever said life was easy.” “It should be, though. Why the hell shouldn’t it be?”

“I don’t know. I never said I knew everything.”

“Why can’t I go where you go? Can you tell me that much?”

She closes her eyes again. Upon opening them, she reaches over and grabs my hand. It’s solid. It’s real. There is warmth in her hand. I can feel the pulsing of her blood. How could they have told me she was a

lie? There are no lies.

“I don’t want to hurt you anymore than I already have.”

“It won’t just go away when you leave.” I squeeze my eyes shut. Chicky takes my hand, heaving me up next to her. She bends, as if she is trying to get a good look at the ground, glances up, giving me a little smile.

“It’s a long way down.” Chicky says, looking at me with those golden eyes. “I want to go where you go.”

“Are you sure?”

I nod my head.

Then we jump. 