

2009 - 2010
CBC Writing Competition
Junior Entry
Category: Fiction
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The Last Hour of Charlotte Olivia McQueen

I still have to write the Note before I do what I came into the bathroom to do. I don't know what it should say-I was never the greatest at expressing my emotions, which is one of the main reasons why I've suffered for way too long. But then again, how do you explain to your friends and family that being alive was killing me? That life is racing right by me and I'm too tired to catch up?

They wouldn't understand. All they would be able to talk about would be how "I had it all," when really, I was losing it all. Or maybe I never had it all...I'll never know for sure.

I'll have to write quickly, since Mother will be home in an hour or so, and I don't want her to hear me. I've been preparing this day for weeks-I even returned all my books, but I told the nice, senile office lady that I was changing schools instead. She smiled, showing off her plum lipstick stained teeth, and handed me my transfer, adding "We'll miss you, Carrie," before sending me on my merry way. I didn't correct her by saying that my name was Charlotte, not Carrie, because in the end, it wouldn't have mattered what my name was. She wouldn't remember it anyway.

While I'm thinking of what to write, I decide to get everything ready. I've already picked out my outfit-nothing white, because blood is hard to get out of white. Believe me, I know. I drag along the keepsakes box I got when I was around eight years old. Inscribed inside was *May all*

your important memories be stored in here forever. Love, Dad. It's funny how he gave me a memory box, but then decided we would never see each other again, and all our adventures would be a thing of the past. He left when I was ten. That's around the time I realized that people shouldn't be trusted-they'll take your heart and rub it along a cheese grater, watching as pieces of your heart fall off, giving them a sick and serious pleasure. It's probably nothing personal. Most people just like watching others bleed.

I carefully open the box, tracing the outline of Harold, the gun I bought for this special occasion. I thought it would be more special if I named it. I was always told to never talk to strangers, and I didn't want the one thing that could grant me happiness to be a stranger in my own home. It wouldn't have felt right, and I'm all about things feeling right.

T-minus thirty minutes now-I don't have much time left before the end, and I still have to write the Note. Why didn't I write it earlier? Now, I'm getting antsy-I wouldn't want my little sister, Natalie, to find me when she comes home from her appointment. All I can see are flashes of images in my mind, of her, walking into my room to borrow some coloring pencils or maybe to even use my stereo. She would have to walk past the bathroom, and she would see me, smell the blood. She would walk inside the bathroom, accidentally stepping in the puddles. Even though she's only nine, I'm sure she would understand. Understand what, you ask? Why I had to end it. Maybe her life would be better and maybe Mother wouldn't have to struggle to pay the rent and could afford to send Natalie to her ballet classes again. I would be helping them in a way-one less mouth to feed, one less back to clothe. I would hope that I'm doing the right thing, but deep inside, I know I'm not. Me, Charlotte Olivia McQueen, do the right thing? Ha-ha. That's funny.

Now, all I can see in my mind is Natalie screaming, after she has tried to wake me up from my eternal sleep, which would be impossible. Her screams could crumble the walls, break the windows, and cause way too much trouble. Natalie isn't the kind of girl to give up, so she would continue her mission of trying to wake her up. Her hands would be covered in red, slippery, bright red.

Suddenly, my world start spinning, and I rush to the bathroom, but I don't make it to the toilet in time. It seeps all over the floor, all different colors. I've never met a piece of food I didn't like. Maybe that's the reason I've put on a couple of pounds and I've been getting comments from my mother. Not ones like, "Ohh, you're getting fat." More like "Did you *really* need that piece of cake?" "There are starving children in this world and you aren't helping them, or my favorite: the laughter, Well, it's more like a giggle, but that isn't important: It's laughter all the same. Just her little "he he" makes me want to never eat again...but I can't do that. I could never do that: Mr. Hershey, Pizza Hut and Coco-Cola and I are way too close to end our friendships now.

I would lie on the floor, but it's covered in puke. I'll have to mop that up soon before Mother comes home. She hates a messy house and I wouldn't want her to mention at my funeral that my death scene was a messy one. I get the mop from the kitchen and quickly get to work. By the time, I'm done, it smells like lemons and hamburgers. Ahh, the smell of clean.

Already ten minutes have passed. Natalie will be coming home from her doctor's appointment any minute now, with our mother in tow. Better get ready.

I start by taking a quick shower. No one wants to die dirty and I sure as hell won't. I slip into my clothes, which feel nice, having been warmed by the sun. I start preparing the Note. I

don't even know what to say, so I write the only two words I can say at the time like this: *I'm sorry*. Then, to make sure no one feels any guilt about this, I add: *It wasn't any of you guys' faults*. Love, Charlotte Olivia McQueen. I'm not worried anymore. It'll all be over soon.

Finally with another minutes passing, I pick up Harold and I stare at him. I pick up the shells that I placed next to him and insert them oh-so-carefully. I don't want him to be uncomfortable. Slowly, I raised the gun to my eyes...and I stop, because the bathroom would be such a better place to do this.

Picking up the Note and setting it on the sink, I once again raise Harold up to my face, but I know I can't do this. It's different, imagining your suicide than actually going through with it. "What am I doing,?" I whisper, and suddenly I collapse to my knees, curl up in a little ball and I cry. I cry because I'm incredibly lonely, even though I'm actually one of the most popular girls at Georg Spinner High. I cry because my heart is breaking, and I don't have the strength or even the talent to put it back together. I cry because I've gotten heavier than I used to be, and that makes my mother's day. It gives her hope that her life isn't as fucked up as she thought it was. Lastly, I cry because of Natalie and how much she might need me to be there-for her to tell me about all the guys she likes. To wipe her tears when the certain boy she likes even more than the others turns out to be a complete loser. To maybe even drive her to the movies on her first date. But, I can't help but think that I could be there when she starts feelings the hits of depression. That maybe I could catch her before she hits rock bottom and the thought of her living suddenly makes her want to end it all. I could do that and I will.

Quickly, before Mother and Natalie come home, I start to put Harold back in the box...but then, I hear it. The "he he" giggle that my mother throws my way right after I head to

the fridge or look through the cabinets. Where did this laughter come from? Mother won't be home until five minutes from now. I'm probably going crazy, so I ignore it. Once again, I hear that little giggle...but it's louder and more pronounced this time. Now, I'm starting to get paranoid-maybe I've heard that laughter way too many times and it's getting stuck in my head. I mean, you don't forget when people are laughing at your pain or your insecurities.

I sigh and continue walking, but this time the laughter is replaced by mother's voice. She isn't even home yet, but I still know what she would say: "Oh, Charlotte, you're such a fat loser. First, you can't keep your grades up, and you're too big to be wearing those pants and now, you can't complete something as simple as taking the gun and pulling the trigger? He he, you're so freaking worthless. Hmm, maybe I'll turn your bedroom into a gym, after your demise. I wouldn't want to become as fat as you, dear. He he, he he, he he..." Her laughter won't stop. I need it to stop, but it keeps going and getting louder and louder each time she utters it.

I'm sick of her laughter. I'm sick of the way she gives me those pathetic looks and pitiful hugs. I'm sick of how she never says "I love you, Charlotte" unless I'm my average size. I'm sick. I'm tired. I'm hungry. I'm useless, I'm worthless. I'm nobody. Nobody wants me. Do you want me? Do you need me Does anyone in this entire whole wide world need me? I didn't think so.

With one minute left, I can see the car pilling up on our street, so I grab Harold, rush into the bathroom, slam the door and turn on the water in the sink, to muffle the sound. Once again, Harold meets my eyes, but I don't like the look he gives me, so instead I press him to my temple.

This time, I'm calm, maybe even a little bit excited. I count down from ten, just to make sure I'm ready.

Ten...I hear the car pull up in the driveway; can still hear the engine purring. Nine...A lot of shuffling downstairs. Maybe I should have put Ronald, our dog, into the backyard. Eight, there's a car door slam. No doubt Mother will scream at Natalie for doing it. Seven...raised voices. I was right. I know Mother like the back of my hand. Six..."Shit! I forgot my planner in the front seat! Gimme a minute..." Mother yells at Natalie, no doubt blaming her for this misfortune. Five...the blame ensues. Natalie won't say a word, if she knows what's good for her. Four...The scuffing of Natalie's Chucks and the click-clack of Mom's Payless heels sound up the drive way. Three...they're almost at the front door now. It's too quiet, just the way I like it. Two...Mother's keys are jiggling, turning the doorknob. One...There's Mother's giggling again..."I wonder what Charlotte has eaten today," she says, making her way into the kitchen.

And with that, I smile, knowing I won't have to worry about diets, working out or low self-esteem anymore. "Goodbye," I whisper and I pull the trigger, and by then, I can already smell the sweetness of happiness.