

Till the End

By

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INT. SUBURBAN HOME - HALLWAY - DAY

A myriad of photo frames populate the wall space of a hallway. One frame shows a toddler playing with a baby pug. Another frame shows a little girl hugging the pug as a puppy. Another frame shows the girl and the pug asleep together on a bed.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

ANNIE, five, bushy pig tails and a tiny dress, unfolds a piece of paper with crayon-scribbled plans on it.

ANNIE

Ok Charlie you know the drill.  
Mom's not here so we need to move  
fast.

CHARLIE, the pug from the photo frames barks in agreement and licks Annie's cheek. Annie chuckles and rolls up the paper plans.

Annie pulls a step ladder out from a pantry. She struggles to unfold it but Charlie helps her and the ladder snaps open.

Annie stumbles a little, repositions the ladder and begins her ascent.

ANNIE(CONT'D)

Keep a look out Charlie.

Charlie nods his head like a soldier and stands by the kitchen doorway.

Annie's on the top step of the ladder and reaches up for a cupboard. She's too short. Annie stands on her tippie-toes and manages to open the cupboard doors.

Annie gasps when she sees a large jar inside the cupboard. Charlie stares at the jar from the kitchen doorway, he's mesmerized.

Annie's fingers graze the sides of the jar but it's too far back to reach. Charlie prances over to the ladder and gives her a boost.

Annie gets her hands on the jar and pulls it out. Charlie waits in anticipation as Annie pops the lid of the jar open.

Chocolate chip cookies as big as Annie's hands lay neatly stacked in the jar. Charlie's eyes flutter as he catches a woft of their sweet smell.

(CONTINUED)

DAD(O.S.)  
Annie. Charles.

Annie and Charlie freeze with fright then slowly turn to face dad, the jar in Annie's arms.

DAD, a tall, thin, bespectacled office worker, stares questioningly at the duo.

DAD  
How many times do I have to tell  
you two? Get the cookies and go.  
Otherwise mom will catch you.

Dad smiles lovingly at Annie and Charlie, reaches into the jar and takes a bite of a cookie. He moans subtly, savoring the flavor of the cookie.

Charlie and Annie chuckle, relieved. Annie sets the jar down on the platform of the step ladder. She pulls a cookie out and gives it to Charlie.

Charlie's eyes widen like saucers, his tongue dangling from his mouth. He goes in to take a bite but then stops.

His eyelids droop and his pupils swirl, he loses his balance and collapses.

Charlie sees Annie standing over him, tears in her eyes, Dad beside her. His vision slowly fades to black.

ANNIE  
(droning out)  
Charlie.

INT. VET'S WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Annie and her parents sit on chairs in the waiting room. A water cooler hums in the background.

MOM, a beautiful woman with short black hair, holds Annie in her arms.

A door opens and a VETERINARIAN, wearing latex gloves and scrubs, steps into the waiting room.

Annie and her parents sit forward, waiting for the Vet to speak. The Vet shakes her head solemnly.

Annie buries her face into her mother's shirt and cries. Dad drapes his arm around his wife and daughter, saddened.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - PORCH - DAY

Birds chirp softly in the distance as the sun's rays create a contrast of light and shadow on the wooden porch.

Annie sits on the porch, her hands cradling her face. She's frowning at the ground and hardly moves a muscle.

A tennis ball bounces on the ground in front of Annie and stops when it taps her shoe. Annie kicks the ball away, hardly acknowledging it.

The ball is thrown back and taps her shoe again. Annie, infuriated, grabs the ball and is just about to toss it when she sees Charlie.

Annie pauses mid-throw, unsure of what's going on. Charlie barks and wags his tail. He's blue now and somewhat transparent.

Annie drops the ball and sprints over to Charlie. She gives him a great big hug but her arms pass right through him.

Annie gasps. Charlie barks, prancing around on the ground. Charlie sits in front of Annie.

ANNIE

Charlie... you're a ghost.

Charlie barks and wags his tail playfully. Annie puts her hand out to touch Charlie but it passes through his head.

ANNIE(CNT'D)

Whoa.

Annie pokes and prods at Charlie's ghostly body, her hands pass through each time. Charlie frowns a little then makes a game of it by staying just out of Annie's reach.

Annie chases Charlie across the lawn. Charlie uses his superior speed to run circles around Annie which only makes her try harder to catch him.

Annie's so wrapped up in chasing Charlie that she doesn't realise she's teetering dangerously on the road's edge.

Charlie scampers into the middle of a road outside the bounds of the lawn. Annie hops into the middle of the road.

Annie turns her head to see a car racing toward her. Dad leaps, pulling Annie out of the way and does a barrel roll.

The car swerves and crashes into a fire hydrant. The hydrant bursts open and spurts water into the sky.

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Dad unfurls from the barrel roll, Annie safely tucked between his chest and legs. He looks over at the DRIVER, a bald man, who stumbles out of the car.

The Driver checks himself for any injuries then peers at Dad and Annie across the road.

DRIVER

Hey are you two okay?

DAD

Yeah we're alright, thank you.

DRIVER

Okay I'm just gonna take a seat real quick.

The Driver, knees shaking, plops down onto the sidewalk and half passes out from anxiety. Dad looks down at Annie.

DAD

Annie what are you doing in the road?

ANNIE

It's Charlie.

DAD

What did I tell you about playing outside alone?

ANNIE

But Charlie's here dad, look.

Annie points to where Charlie was but he's gone. Dad stands, rests his hands on his hips and looks around.

Annie wells up and cries. Dad picks her up and carries her to the lawn.

DAD

I know it's difficult Annie but Charlie's gone.

INT. ANNIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Annie lays awake in bed. She can hear her parents' muffled voices talking outside her room. Annie rolls over onto her side.

She stares at her door. A light from the hallway outside illuminates the door's edges. Her eyelids grow heavy.

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Annie blinks once, twice, then just before she drifts off she sees a small blue light at the base of her door.

Annie sits up at once, wide awake and sees the blue light float slowly over to her.

ANNIE

Charlie?

Annie wipes her eyes and takes a closer look. It is Charlie but this time he's not so chipper.

ANNIE(CONT'D)

Are you here to play again?

Charlie stops at the foot of Annie's bed and looks up at her glumly.

ANNIE(CONT'D)

Are you hurt?

Charlie shakes his head and hops up onto the bed. He sits down in front of her. Annie stares at him for a while longer.

ANNIE(CONT'D)

What is it Charlie?

Charlie moans a little then presses his head to Annie's chest. Annie holds him in her arms.

The two maintain their embrace then Charlie's body glows brightly. He disappears in a flash.

Annie's eyes flutter open, she lifts her head from her pillow. and looks around.

Annie looks up and sees specks of dust twinkle in the blue moonlight above her bed.

ANNIE(CONT'D)

Goodbye Charlie.

THE END