

The Girl Who Wasn't Loved
A Lucia Chronicles Novella

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Dickinson, Emily. *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson: With an Introduction by Her Niece Martha Dickinson Bianchi*. Boston: Little, Brown, and, 1927. Print.

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I would like to thank Dad for acting as my editor and confidante throughout this writing process. I would also like to thank you, Dear Reader, for picking up *The Lucia Chronicles* and following Lucia on her journey. I know you are kind, Dear Reader, so please do not judge Eve too harshly. As you know by now, behind every great story is an even greater villain.

Nobody is a villain in their own story. We're all the heroes of our own stories.

-George R.R. Martin, American novelist

*LOVE is anterior to life,
Posterior to death,
Initial of creation, and
The exponent of breath.*

E.D.

Prologue

*Of all the souls that stand create
I have elected one.
When sense from spirit files away,
And subterfuge is done;*

*When that which is and that which was 5
Apart, intrinsic, stand,
And this brief tragedy of flesh
Is shifted like a sand;*

*When figures show their royal front
And mists are carved away,— 10
Behold the atom I preferred
To all the lists of clay!*

The wind whipped across the plains, bending the tall blades of grain to its will. Dark cumulonimbus clouds hung low in the sky. Fat raindrops began to fall to the earth, slowly at first, then quicker until finally the earth was being pounded as if the heavens were angry, pounding the ground with their fury. Leaves ripped from the trees. A car alarm sounded in the distance, a lonely, forlorn sound.

Some miles away from the crescendo of the car alarm, in a small yellow farmhouse with a winding drive and an iron signpost reading “*Sunshine Farms*,” a baby was being born. The mother and father were beside themselves with joy. The father paced anxiously outside of the closed bedroom door. Because of the storms all the Medical Centers had been closed. This wasn’t just any storm; they were calling it the storm of the century. The plains hadn’t seen a tornado since the Climate Change. It was strange indeed and the timing couldn’t have been worse.

Luckily, the doctor had been willing to risk driving to their house in order to deliver the baby. Peter was beside himself. He and Rosalie had tried so long for a baby. They had decided not to find out the gender, but Peter couldn’t help but hope for a boy. A boy that he could show the ropes of the farm and who could follow in his footsteps. Rosalie claimed she didn’t care as long as the baby was healthy.

Thunder crashed and Peter jumped mid-pace before resuming his back and forth trudge

down the hallway. How long did it take to deliver a baby? It had seemed like hours. Lightning lit the hallway a menacing blue. The wind howled and the broken window shutter, which Peter had neglected in the months of excitement leading to the baby's birth, banged impatiently against the side of the house.

The house was eerily quiet. Hushed voices drifted from behind the door, but Peter couldn't make out what they were saying. Shortly after the Climate Change, the Second Great War had broken out. The War that Changed Everything is how people referred to it.

Dollar ain't worth the paper it's printed on. Damn war changed everything. Freedom Shmeedom. That damn war changed everything.

What it came down to was Capitalism or Socialism. Equality comes with a price. People wanted change. For years they'd watched the politicians lie, manipulate, and run the country into the ground. What used to be a world powerhouse was now the butt of many a joke. One side pressed for change, the other side pressed back and each side pressed harder and harder until there was nothing left to press.

The Nation was born.

Out of many comes one.

But right now none of that mattered to Peter. They were far enough away from the City Centers where there wasn't much that had changed in the Farmlands yet. Peter and Rosalie would have their first child and their family would stay safe and protected on the family farm. *Sunshine Farms*. Peter's great-grandfather had started the farm. At various points it had been a dairy farm, a cattle ranch, and now the farm was used mostly for grains and even had a small orchard. Peter had grand plans for the farm which had recently come into his ownership. In the autumn they could offer hayrides and sell pumpkins along with fresh apple cider. The grains would be harvested and sold. It would be a lot of hard work, but with the farm they would be financially secure and maybe they would be lucky enough to stay out of the reach of the Sovereign, the new governing body which established itself after the Second Great War.

The rain turned to hail. The hail pounded the roof of the farmhouse and ricocheted off the glass of the windows. The hallway lights flickered. Behind the closed door was an ear-piercing scream, but it was quickly smothered by a crash of thunder that seemed to shake the bones of the old farmhouse. Peter paused outside the door. Should he go in? The nurse that had come with the doctor was quick to usher him into the hallway. Peter had helplessly obeyed, but the nurse was

old-fashioned and had insisted that the husband's place was out of the way.

Such strange weather. There had been a steady stream of sweltering days, long seemingly endless days. Rosalie had grown uncomfortable and then just as soon as she went into labor the weather had seemed to change. As if this little baby was going to be born with a vengeance the same as the storm that now raged outside the safe haven of the farmhouse. There was a loud crash as the shutter was ripped from its hinges and banged along the side of the house before being engulfed in the wind.

Rosalie's wails of agony coalesced with the locomotive howl of the wind until they reached a crescendo. Peter paused outside the door, afraid to let out a single breath for fear that something was wrong. He carefully pressed his ear to the door. Listening. So much hope and joy, their lives completely changed forever in a matter of seconds. A pregnant pause. And then. A long, shrill wail, the high-pitched cry of a baby being born into the world. Peter let out a sigh of relief. The hail trickled to a stop and the wind eased to a standstill. The yowl of the car alarm was replaced with the welcome chirping of birds. At the end of the hallway, the storm clouds seemed to part and a single ray of sunlight fell through the windowpane and across the floor as if an omen of the good things to come.

The door was pulled open causing Peter to jump back and the nurse appeared motioning for him to come in and see this new child. He was a father! Rosalie was in bed propped up by pillows. Her hair was matted with sweat and she had dark circles beneath her violet-colored eyes, but she looked happy. She was holding a small bundle in her arms. As Peter approached, he was surprised by the large round violet eyes looking back at him. The baby's face was red from crying and immediately Peter realized his hopes for a son were not answered this time around, but as the baby reached up and wrapped its tiny fingers around his adult-sized finger, he felt the slight disappointment melt away. A daughter.

Rosalie looked down lovingly on her newborn daughter. "I've decided to call her Eve. Eve Vida which means *to live dearly loved*."

Peter smiled as he peered down at the tiny new child. "I like it. Welcome, Eve Vida, you are the newest addition to the Malcouer family."

2

“But Peter, it’s an amazing opportunity!” Rosalie objected. It wasn’t often that she and Peter argued. In fact it was extremely rare. Baby Eve was fast asleep in the nursery, eight months old. Rosalie sat at the kitchen table her hands wrapped tightly around a cup of coffee that had already gone cold.

Peter leaned on the counter facing her, the glint in his brown eyes betraying his anger. “What about this?” He gesticulated as if to encompass the entire house and surrounding land. “This is an opportunity! It’s a chance to grow as a family and not to be affected by all that nonsense coming from the Capital.”

Rosalie looked down at the mug in her hands which set on top of the letter that had caused their argument. She had received the letter weeks ago and felt a flutter of excitement upon reading it. When she had chosen a Vocation, it was the first year of the Ceremony and it was kind of hodgepodge, but its meaning had not been lost on Rosalie. She had stood in front of her community and announced her Vocation as Assistant to the Sovereign. She’d never felt prouder, like she could actually *do* something, contribute to the community that had given her so

much. All these weird changes were happening now that The Nation had formed, amongst them the strange Vocation Ceremony, but maybe Rosalie could change that. Maybe she couldn't get things back to how they were, but she could try and make a positive difference.

She had stepped into a training role working with the Sovereign of Province 3. It's where she had met Peter and they had fallen quickly and hopelessly in love. They both wanted to make a change, but Peter was a dreamer whereas Rosalie was a doer. That was the key difference. She had humored him after they were married and she realized that she was pregnant, taking a leave of absence from her role as one of several Assistants to the Sovereign, while Peter toiled away as a Provincial Accountant. Peter's father was old and not well, soon he passed and Sunshine Farms was left to Peter as his family's legacy. Peter had jumped at the opportunity to change their lives; he never was truly happy as one of the "Province's drones" as he'd called it. They had moved into the farmhouse immediately and now here they were.

But over the last few months since their daughter's birth, Rosalie had begun to grow restless. Peter seemed to poke around the farm, fixing the things destroyed in the storm on the day of Eve's birth, envisioning this and envisioning that. As she nursed Eve and watched Peter tinkering from the window, she couldn't help but think there were bigger things for her out there. Not that she didn't love Peter or the farm; it wasn't that at all. It was simply this gnawing feeling that she could do more, be more. She could be a mother to Eve and wife to Peter, but wasn't there something else out there for her? And as if in answer to her silent prayers it came. The letter.

The letter was from the Sovereign reminding her that her one year leave of absence was nearing an end and informing her that she would need to make a decision as to whether or not she would return to her role. As an incentive, since the monetary system had been all but abolished, replaced with the trade of goods and services, she would be able to resume her previous role without possibility of demotion or having to re-enter her training. She could simply pick up where she'd left off a year ago. The timing had almost seemed too good to be true.

Without meeting Peter's eyes, Rosalie replied almost inaudibly. "But Peter, I wanted to make a change. It's what I announced to my community and with all this so-called nonsense as you put it coming from the Capital, maybe I really could make a change. I'm not making much of a difference sitting around here."

Peter let out a frustrated sigh. He came around the counter and pulled out a chair to

Rosalie's left and slumped down into it. He pulled her left hand free of the mug and held it in his warm, secure one. She looked up at him now and his brown eyes were no longer filled with anger, but with a sort of sadness mixed with concern. "You make a difference to me. And to Eve."

She knew that he meant well, but Rosalie also knew that she was meant to do more than this. "You know what I mean." She sighed. She didn't want to go there, but if she wanted Peter to support her in this decision, she had to pull out the coup de grace, the argument to end all arguments. "We both want a better future for Eve. And we both know that she won't be able to stay isolated on this farm forever. Let me work to make changes that will make a better Nation for her future. If I'm working with the Sovereign, I can influence key decisions that could affect our lives, Eve's life."

She didn't like to do this to Peter; it wasn't usually her way to try and manipulate his feelings. It's just she wanted this so badly with every cell in her body. This was how she was meant to make a difference and she'd rather do it with him than without him. She saw the pang of hurt in his expression and he let out another sigh, running his hand over his face. She knew he was going to give in.

"Okay."

"Okay?" She felt an excited feeling rising up in her belly. "You'll support me on this?"

"Yes, I'll support you, but Ros, don't let your desire to make a difference in The Nation, affect what's right in front of your face, the place where you'll make the most difference is in mine and Eve's lives."

Rosalie was so giddy with joy that she almost hadn't heard his reply. She was going to do it all: mother, wife, Vocation. She was going to make a difference, an *actual* difference, not just sit on the farm biding her time. She smiled reassuringly at Peter across the table. "Don't worry, I won't."

Peter looked out the window clearly agitated. He moved away and the sheer lacy curtains swirled back over the window. Eve was perched on a blanket in front of the fireplace, which Peter had recently finished restoring, playing with some of her toys and toddler books. Rosalie had been back to work for almost a year now, and what had started as short work days in the City Center of Province 3 had evolved into a commute to the Capital several times a week.

Rosalie had been very successful in her role as Assistant to the Sovereign, relentless in her pursuit of positive change and a promising future for her daughter, so successful that she caught the eye of the Supreme Sovereign. Word travels fast in The Nation. Now Rosalie spent four days a week in Province 1 at the Capital as an Assistant to the Supreme Sovereign. When she wasn't in Province 1, she'd spend two days a week working in the Province 3 Sovereign office micromanaging on behalf of the Supreme Sovereign. This did not make Peter happy.

Not only did Peter have to restore the farm alone, but he often took care of Eve alone as well because by the time Rosalie got home, Eve was already fast asleep. No surprise that Eve's first word had been "Dah-dee." Peter wasn't even sure Rosalie had noticed the baby's babbling. Peter got down on the floor amongst the stuffed animals and books, down to Eve's level. "Dah-dee," she cooed and giggled at herself.

"That's right," Peter nodded. He pointed to himself. "Daddy." And then he pointed to her. "Evie."

Eve giggled again clearly amused. "Efie." It was as close as she was to pronouncing her own name. Peter smiled. Eve picked up one of the board books scattered around the area rug and handed it out toward Peter. He took it from her, pulling her into his lap, and sat cross-legged on the floor and began to read.

After a while, Eve was fed and fast asleep in her nursery and Peter had fallen asleep on the living room couch with an open book in his lap, his reading glasses askew on his face, when the front door opened and closed. He startled awake.

"Sorry, I'm so late tonight!" Rosalie sang. "Where is everybody?" She rounded the corner from the foyer into the living room, eyes darting about looking for Eve.

Peter tried to conceal his frustration, after all, marriage was about compromise. This was simply a compromise that would make Rosalie happy. He wasn't oblivious. He'd known how sad she was after Eve's birth, growing restless. When they'd met she was an advocate for change

full of energy, but he watched her wilt like an unwatered flower after their daughter was born. Now, some of her vibrancy was returning. But at what price?

“Eve’s asleep,” he glanced at the clock on the mantle. “It’s past eight o’clock. She gets put down at about seven.”

Rosalie set her leather work tote down at her feet and frowned as if confused. “Oh. I didn’t realize it was quite that late. By the time the train got in from the Capital and then I had to stop at the office in town...”she smiled sheepishly. “Guess I hadn’t realized how late it had gotten!”

“Dinner’s in the refrigerator,” Peter mumbled fixing his glasses. It felt disruptive when Rosalie was home, not part of the routine. Like it was Peter and Eve versus Rosalie. It made him uneasy to feel this way.

“Oh, okay,” Rosalie replied, it slowly sinking in that she’d be eating dinner alone, that Peter had probably eaten with Eve several hours ago. “Alright then.” The smile didn’t fade from her face as she disappeared from the room and down the hallway.

Peter picked back up his book, but the words were a blurry mess on the page. He listened to the sounds of Rosalie getting the casserole he’d made earlier out of the fridge and setting the oven to heat it up. He heard her pad softly up the stairs and the creek of the floor as she entered the nursery. He couldn’t make out what she was saying, only that she was singing, and the quiet melody drifted through the floorboards. Then he heard the floorboards creak again as she entered the bedroom and she changed from her work clothes into something more comfortable. Peter already knew the routine: home late, empty apologies, dinner alone...Peter would then go to bed and a couple hours later Rosalie would join him. She’d slip into bed thinking she hadn’t disturbed Peter’s slumber, and he’d let her think that. His back would be pressed against her and he’d lie awake past the time her breath became slow and even.

This wasn’t how it was meant to be. He had dreams for them, for their child, for this farm, and for himself. If Rosalie wasn’t going to put the family first, he wasn’t sure how long he could either. These thoughts would keep him up long through the night until the first slit of morning light would filter through the bedroom window. Rosalie would quietly rise to get ready for the office and only after he heard the bedroom door close as she left would he finally fall back into a fitful sleep.