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CASPLOSHION

by Anna Scotti

After the casplotion I was a little bit scared but when I looked up Mrs. Lydia was waving to me from a tree. She was sitting there, and she looked like a brown cat, a fat one, and she had on her purple dress that is my favorite, and she was still holding my lunchbox, but she was up in a tree, so I started to laugh. When I laughed, she laughed, and she came down from the tree backwards, kind of sliding, and I saw her bottom shaking inside her purple dress, because she's a little bit fat, especially her bottom and under her arms where the wobbly stuff is. Mrs. Lydia has a wrinkly neck and she smells good, like powder and crayons. After the casplotion Mrs. Lydia told me, "Hush, hush, child," but it didn't make sense to say "Hush, hush" because I only laughed once and then I stopped laughing even though she did still look funny, with her hair all swooped up sideways on her head, and her dress wrinkled up, and her bottom shaking when she came down from the tree.

Mrs. Lydia went over to Tommy Rojas where he was lying on the sidewalk except only half of him was lying there, one arm, one side, one leg, his whole head, and the rest was just kind of smooshy and red, which I think was blood. Well, I know it was, but it looked like the kind of hamburger meat that comes in long rolls, all wrapped in plastic, with a picture of hamburger meat on the outside of the package. I knew that it was Tommy Rojas but I didn't want to say hi to him because the way he looked scared me. But when Mrs. Lydia picked him up he was fine and his clothes were only a little bit bloody and he smiled at her and looked up at the sky and said "jellyfish" and then he hugged Mrs. Lydia and then he ran away. There was still the hamburger stuff lying there on the sidewalk where Tommy had been but I didn't look at it. I didn't look at the clouds that were down on the ground instead of up in the sky, and that were swirly brown and yellow instead of grey and white. I didn't listen to the noises, the crashing and the buildings groaning like big animals and I didn't listen to the fire engine sirens because they were too loud and my ears hurt. Instead I listened to Mrs. Lydia humming.

If you are ever in a casplosion you don't have to be scared, and if you are scared, don't worry because soon you won't be scared anymore. It's only for a minute. At first it's mixed up because you don't know where you are or why everything is kind of flying around and why you started out inside a building, and you ended up outside a building. I didn't like when my chest hurt, like when you run too hard, but it didn't last very long and then there was the part I liked, like electricity, the kind that makes your hair crackle. Except it was all over my body, tingling and crackling, like every tiny part of me was buzzing and crackling and flying apart in different directions. I felt like a flock of birds.

One bird flaps up off the ground, then all of them, flapping and flying in all different directions, wings beating and making that whirring sound. It felt like that, except tingly.

If you are in a caspllosion don't be afraid that your mom won't hug you anymore, because she will. She will still let you snuggle on her lap while she is also snuggling a pillow. She will put her arms around you and pat you and the pillow, and kiss the top of your head, and she will rock you. She might cry but she will still love you. She might stand up fast and let you tumble onto the ground but she will still love you. You can feel her hands patting your back and her mouth kissing the top of your head, but she can't feel you snuggling her back, and so she cries. Sometimes she can feel you, but she will still cry.

If you are in a casploshion your mom and dad will fight about it. They will pretend not to be mad but they will be mad, at each other, and at you, but they will still love you and when they hug in bed you can crawl in between and feel them and smell them and they won't know you're there. Well, they will know and not know, like when you know actually that Santa isn't real because the presents are all under your Mom's bed, and also you saw lipstick where the bite was taken out of the cookie. So you know he's not real but you think he is real, too, because you can feel it. You can feel that he is actually up there at the North Pole and that he is actually going to fly down and bring you the presents, and when you wake up in the morning, there they are!

I lie between them. I hug them. When my daddy kisses my mom, I slip inside her mouth and I taste his cigarette taste and his cookie taste, except the cigarette taste doesn't bother me anymore. It just smells like Daddy. If they would let me I would rock with them when they hug, I would crawl inside Mommy, I would crawl inside Daddy,

and they could make me into a new baby. I think they could. Sometimes I feel like a new baby, curled inside Mom's stomach, like the picture in the book on the bottom shelf in my bedroom, the picture with the see through baby with veins, still growing inside his mommy, not born yet.

Sometimes Mrs. Lydia takes me to her sister's house and we watch her sister frying apples in a pan at the stove, humming a black person song. All the people at Mrs. Lydia's house are black people and they all like to eat fried apples right out of the pan. Mrs. Lydia's sister smacks at their hands when they snatch apples but you can see she doesn't mind, not really. Sometimes Mrs. Lydia goes with me to my house and she sits at the kitchen table and runs her finger around the rim of Mommy's coffee cup. When Mommy washes dishes, I stand behind her and put my arms around her and lean my head against her soft bottom. Once she felt me hug her and she said, "Lauren, Lauren, are those your little hands?" Mrs. Lydia shook her head and smiled at me in a funny way and then we were back in the tree, her and me, eating snack from my lunchbox.

I am a big girl and a little girl all at the same time. I am bigger than I used to be when I was just turned three instead of three and a half. I am a lot bigger than I used to be when I was two, before I went to preschool. Once my daddy asked me "Are you a big girl or a little girl, Laurie?" and I said "I'm a big girl, but I'm a little big girl," and everybody laughed and Daddy threw me up in the air and caught me in his hands. It hurt my ribs a little – that's those bones in your chest – but I liked it anyway.

I wish that Daddy could snuggle me like Mommy does, but he won't. Sometimes when he pets Cracker I lean against her and put my face in her fur and then he pets me, too, but he doesn't know it. Sometimes he sees me a little bit when he is hugging

Mommy but then he stops. He stops right away and Mommy turns over and cries.

Daddy just goes in the bathroom and smokes a cigarette.

I am a big girl but I'm not getting any bigger. I wanted to.

I wanted to.