

Photography

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/21656344) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/21656344>.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	F/F
Fandoms:	Beetlejuice - All Media Types , Beetlejuice - Perfect/Brown & King
Characters:	Lydia Deetz , Delia Deetz , Adam Maitland , Barbara Maitland , Charles Deetz , Beetlejuice (Beetlejuice) , Original Characters , Emily Deetz
Additional Tags:	Sad with a Happy Ending , Lydia has a lot of feelings and is really bad at expressing them , Lydia and Charles bonding , Fluff , Comfort , Charles is getting better and comforting Lydia , lydia loves photography , Photography
Language:	English
Series:	Part 6 of Beetlejuice Short Stories
Stats:	Published: 2019-12-03 Words: 3,857 Chapters: 1/1

Photography

by [paige_who](#)

Summary

When Lydia is nominated for a photography competition four hours away from home, everybody goes a little overboard with making sure she is prepared for the week away. Everything was fine until Lydia accidentally said a three-letter word.

To say Lydia was excited was an understatement. Her and three students from her photography club at school were nominated as finalists in a statewide competition, the winner of that would go on to the nationals. Lydia was the youngest of the four, the only freshman with two juniors and a senior so while she didn't think her chances of winning were all that great she was just thrilled to have simply been nominated. Of her portfolio, the nominated piece was a photograph of a chemical reaction she had been doing in her chemistry club. Her photography teacher said it was the strangest photo he had ever seen, but he claimed to be mesmerized by it. He actually wanted her to submit another picture but she didn't think it would be fair to submit photos she took with the help of Adam, Barbara, or Charles. None of the other students could be floated to an ideal location for a picture, so she simply took these for fun.

Going to the competition was a whole week off of school, and four hours away from home. Not that she hadn't been away from home before, her parents used to send her to sleep-away-camps all the time when she was little, but this would be the first time she would be away from her family since...well she didn't want to think about it that way. She just wanted to be able to go and have a good time like a normal person would. She marked down the days on the calendar in the kitchen excitedly as the trip approached. Breaking the news to Beetlejuice was the hardest, even though he didn't like to admit it he thought Lydia was funny and without her, it would just be adults in the house. Lydia promised to make it up to him and that they'd play a fun prank on her dad and Delia when she got back. In the end, the negotiated deal was two pranks on her dad and Delia as well as the guarantee that she would bring him back a zagnut from wherever she was going because "they taste different depending on where they're from." Lydia didn't argue with him on that as the discussion had already gone on longer than she would have liked.

It was the night before the trip and shockingly the person most anxious was Barbara. She help Lydia pack her bag, constantly asking her if twelve outfits would be enough for a seven-day trip or if she needed a new toothbrush even though the one she had was perfectly okay, and hardly a month old. She expected this kind of behavior from her helicopter parent of her father but he was actually very laid back about the whole situation, probably trying to not overwhelm her because even though Lydia denied it she was anxious about the whole thing. Not only that but she really did want to win. She worked really hard at her hobbies, and it took her begging her teacher to let her redo the reaction eight different times just so she could get the photo exactly how she wanted it. She knew her shot of winning was really slim considering that not only was she the youngest in her group from school but she was one of the youngest in the whole competition. She was right in between the two different age categories as a freshman, but she managed to be nominated.

Lydia was sitting on her bed, the suitcase of her belongings on the floor beneath her. She glanced around the room trying to make sure there wasn't something important she was forgetting when she smacked herself on the head for forgetting to grab at least one of her cameras. She picked up her favorite camera, though she only had two and the one was a very old polaroid camera she only used for aesthetic purposes and walked down to the kitchen to see what everybody else was up to that night. It must have been later than she expected

because the only person downstairs was Barbara who was making herself her typical late-night snack of peanut-butter toast drizzled with honey.

“Too excited for tomorrow that you can’t sleep?” Barbara asked

Lydia shrugged, “No, I was just going over my last-minute checklist. Making sure I had all my ducks in a row.”

“Oh, so you’re back to being the duck queen?”

Lydia went to playfully smack Barbara’s arm but her hand simply slide through her as Barbara went non-solid to avoid the blow. Both laughed and she gestured for Lydia to join her in the late-night feast.

“I’m only teasing. So do you think you’re ready? Have you written your acceptance speech for when you blow the competition out of the water and win first prize.”

“Unlikely, all the other pictures I’ve seen look really impressive and I haven’t even gotten to see people from out of our district. I’m just looking forward to getting to spend time with my friends on the trip, they already talked about staying up late to tell ghost stories,” she laughed, “I guess I will be winning that game.”

“And you’re sure that you have everything all set? Did you pack your camera.”

She nodded and pointed at the camera around her neck, “It would take a lot for me to lose this thing.”

“And you have an extra outfit for every day of the trip plus the fancy dress that your dad bought for you to wear to the awards ceremony.”

Lydia simply groaned in response to that one. Her dad should understand by this point that she isn’t a bright and colorful kind of girl, but he insisted on a red and blue dress, arguing that black is too formal for the event she’s attending. The dress wasn’t ugly, it just wasn’t her style at all, but the fact that her dad went out of his depths to get it for her made her a little more willing to compromise and wear it.

“And it’s four hours away from here, do you have all your medicines packed. I know you’re allergic to penicillin so even if you have to go to the doctor out there because you got some kind of infection don’t let them prescribe you penicillin, amoxicillin, ampicillin-”

“I think I’m old enough to know my own allergies,” she laughed, “Besides I’m not sick so I don’t think I’ll be needed an antibiotic any time soon.”

“Just making sure, and if you don’t like what they have to eat I convinced your dad to give you an extra twenty dollars so you can go buy yourself something else because I know you and you’d rather just skip that meal than say you don’t like something. I know it’s part of your anxiety so I figured this would be the easiest solution for you. So no skipping meals okay?”

“I did that twice because they were serving fish at school!” Lydia retorted trying not to be a little agitated with the lack of confidence Barbara had in her about this trip. She was still a kid, but she’s been alone before, she didn’t need the whole run down that she’s already gotten from her father and Delia.

Barbara smiled at her gently and the agitation faded, “I’m just so proud of you! This is a huge deal and when you get back with your first place trophy.”

“Ribbon and that’s if I even get first place which I’m not-”

“We’re going to have a celebratory dinner and cake!”

“I don’t get cake if I don’t get first place?” Lydia faked whined, knowing the answer

“Nope, so you’d better hope you get first place because I don’t just make a vanilla cake with cream cheese frosting for anybody.”

Lydia rolled her eyes, and without even thinking the words slipped off her tongue, “Okay mom.”

Neither of them said anything, nobody wanting to be the person who acknowledged it. Lydia felt the heat rising to her face instantly and tried to stammer out some kind of correction but she just got more and more flustered the harder she tried to fix it.

“No, no it’s okay!” Barbara tried to put the girl at ease but before she could even get the next sentence out Lydia ran upstairs and slammed her door shut. Feeling terrible Barbara tried to go and talk to Lydia but there was no answer when she knocked on the teenagers door. She only knew for sure that she was in there when something was thrown at the door in anger when Barbara tried talking to her through the door. She had no clue what she was supposed to do next, it was an accident. She knew Lydia didn’t mean to say it and Barbara certainly didn’t want to be viewed as a replacement for Emily. She never tried to be, she was always very careful about how she referred to Lydia. Though she often laments to Adam and Beetlejuice how Lydia is like the daughter she never got to have, she would never dream to say that to Lydia’s face. Instead, she tried to seem more like a friendly aunt who just so happened to live upstairs and also be there for Lydia anytime she needed her and help her with her homework and school problems. Suddenly Barbara felt really guilty, she hadn’t even realized it until then but she really did encroach into the motherly role maybe a little too much for Lydia’s comfort. She had been pretty overbearing about this trip ever since Lydia told her about it. She should have read the signals Lydia was giving a little more closely, then maybe this whole thing wouldn’t have happened. She didn’t notice that she was sitting with her back to her door until a groggy but concerned Charles was standing in front of her.

“What happened?” Barbara asked him

“I guess I could ask you the same thing. I just about thirty texts from Lydia telling me that she doesn’t want to go on the trip anymore. That she isn’t feeling well and doesn’t want to get anybody else sick and ruin it for them. You’ve clearly been with her tonight, what are we talking because I’m pretty squeamish. I can deal with her having a cough but please don’t tell me she has the stomach flu. I’m no good at seeing other people puke.”

“She’s not sick. Look this is all my fault, I’ve really been overstepping my bounds recently with this whole trip four hours away. I’ve been on her case about making sure she has everything packed and I know she didn’t mean it...Charles, she called me mom earlier. In the kitchen.”

He sighed, placing his hand on his temples, “Not exactly the problem I thought I would have to handle tonight, but I can’t say I didn’t see it coming. Look no offense, but I think it might be for the better if I’m the one who talks to her. She’s probably confusing her anger at herself for being angry at you.”

“Yeah, I’d be careful walking in. She threw something at the door when I was trying to talk to her. It sounded like it broke, I’m not sure if it’s glass.”

Barbara desperately wanted to make sure Lydia was okay but she knew Charles was right, it was better off if she left Lydia to cool down about the whole situation. She couldn’t imagine how confused she must feel. It’s one thing to accidentally call a teacher mom, but Lydia’s situation was a world of difference. She wandered around the house aimlessly for a little while until she just went back into the attic and told Adam about what happened.

“Well I mean it’s kinda cute that she called you mom.”

Barbara threw her book at her husband, “Adam! No, it’s not, she was really upset about it. I feel awful.”

“I know you feel bad about it but that just means that Lydia loves you so much that she sees you as someone she can trust like a mother. I know she knows you aren’t trying to become the new Emily. Nobody could compete with Emily Deetz for her. Look she’s just embarrassed about it, she’ll get over it by the morning and I’m sure she’ll be feeling fine for her trip.”

“God if she doesn’t go because of me I’ll probably never forgive myself.”

“She’s a resilient girl, I’m sure she’ll come around.”

Barbara nodded and let her husband envelop her in a much-needed hug, “She’s our girl, huh?”

When Charles knocked on his daughter’s door it was a quick response of “Go away Barbara.”

“It’s dad.”

The door creaked open and standing in front of him was a sullen Lydia wearing a nightdress that was a size too big for her, and rubbing aggressively at her eyes to cover up the fact that she had probably been crying, “What do you want? I told you I’m not feeling good.”

“Barbara told me about what happened.”

She scoffed, “Of course she did. Because everybody has to know how much of a freaking idiot I am.”

“Do you want to talk about it.”

“No I don’t. I just want everybody to leave me alone, but nobody ever listens to me. Nothing that you’re going to say is going to do anything. I don’t want to go anymore, it’s simple as that. It has nothing to do with what happened. I just don’t feel like it anymore. I’m not going to win anyway so what’s the point of even going?” she crossed her arms and slumped back down on her bed, “I’m not even really friends with the other kids that are going. They’re all way older than me, they probably don’t even want a dumb freshman following them around like some lost puppy.”

Charles sat on the edge of her bed, careful not to disrupt the sleeping cat nestled between the covers. He put his hands on the bottom half of her curled up leg, “I think this sudden change of heart runs a lot deeper than you being afraid of not fitting in with the other kids.”

“Gee, what gave that away dad?”

Charles tried to ignore the sarcastic tone she was taking up, trying to understand that she was very emotional right now and didn’t mean to be disrespectful, “So do you want to talk about what’s really bothering you? Because I don’t think it’s Barbara either.”

There was no response from Lydia besides her shifting position to laying face down in the bed, her face smooshed into her pillow. After a few seconds of awkward silence, Lydia mumbled something but it was muffled by the pillow.

“What?”

“I’m happy!” Lydia shot up and shouted, “Okay? I’m happy and I’m not supposed to be. No, like I know I’m allowed to be happy but it’s just...ughh I just don’t know how to explain it. It’s just so confusing.”

“You’re upset because you’re happy?”

Lydia nodded, “It’s just that everything has been going good recently and I don’t like it. It feels wrong, I feel wrong about it.”

“Honey it’s a good thing that you’re feeling happy! That’s what you’ve been working on with your therapist and with all of us here. That’s just the natural progression of your progress.”

“I feel so guilty about it. Like I’ve got so much going on in my life now. I’ve got school and babysitting, and photography club and this competition, and I’ve got Wendy and all you guys. I feel like I’m forgetting about mom. I don’t think about her as much as I used to. I used to think about her constantly and some days all I get is a quick memory, how terrible is that? I can hardly remember what her voice sounds like anymore. I promised her, I promised myself that I would never forget her and I’ve apparently already replaced her in my mind!” She was getting erratic now, the words flying out of her mouth faster than Charles could process them, “I never thought about it until...I just can’t believe I did that.”

“Sweetheart, it isn’t that big of a deal. It was an accident, everybody knows that. You know that.”

“I called her mom!” She shouted, throwing herself back into her pillow again, “I called her mom, dad!”

“It’s okay, it just slipped out. She’s someone you love and value-”

“I have a mother!” Lydia was crying now, “I have a mother, and I just called another person mom. She only died a year and a half ago, I should still be mourning but instead, I went out and found a new mom. I bet she’s really happy about that in the Netherworld, “Oh Emily Deetz, no don’t bother sending any signs to Lydia anymore. She’s completely moved on, in fact, she gone and outright replaced you!” ”

“You’re being too harsh on yourself!” Charles tried to tell her, but she wouldn’t acknowledge him, “You aren’t forgetting about your mother, you are just going through life. It happens, we all get caught up in things in our lives. You’re young, and though a lot of older people would tell you that your life isn’t hard work you’re really busy! Truthfully I would be more concerned if it had been a year and a half and you still hadn’t been able to go about your life. This isn’t a bad thing, it doesn’t mean that you’re a bad daughter because you don’t spend every waking minute thinking about her. You didn’t do that when she was here.”

She still kept her face buried in her pillow. Charles gently pushed her shoulder and rolled her over to look at him. Her eyes were glassy both from tiredness and sadness, “I feel like I’m betraying her and I know that makes me sound insane but it’s how I feel.”

“She would be so happy for you, you’re doing amazing things in your life and she would be so freaking proud of you. All of it, all the progress you’ve made. Just look at how far you’ve come, Lydia! I know how hard it must be for you to stop and wonder if you’re going through this right and honestly that’s just how life is sometimes. There’s a lot you will never know for certain but I can tell you right now that Emily would want above all else for you to be happy, to feel loved, and to love others. You’re doing all of that in spades. So try not to feel guilty because you’re doing exactly what she would want you to do if she was here.”

Lydia sat up and pulled her cat into her lap, a few tears that had been building up streaked down her face and she quickly wiped them away, “I shouldn’t have lashed out at Barbara. It’s not her fault that I called her mom.”

“She understands.”

“I don’t know why it’s affecting me so much, it’s just that this is the first time that I’m going to be away from all you guys, and I’m...I’m scared. Ever since mom died you’ve all at least been around somewhere, I always had somebody else there that knew what was going on and now I’m going to be going four hours away for a whole week all by myself. I haven’t gotten them as bad as I used to but what if I have a nightmare and they make fun of me? It’s bad enough that I’m the youngest one going but if I have a nightmare and start crying they’re all going to make fun of me.” Lydia began to get more worked up and she leaned her head on Charles’s shoulders in an attempt to soothe herself, “I’m always caught in between being okay

and then feeling bad that I'm doing okay and then making myself worse! Then I just take it out on everyone else."

"I get like this too Lydia, it just feels more intense for you because you're younger. God when I first proposed to Delia I felt like I was betraying Emily too and then when I told you I was convinced that I was doing the wrong thing, but I eventually knew that she wouldn't want me to be lonely for the rest of my life. She would know that I still loved her, and missed her."

"I miss her too." Lydia lamented as she gently scratched her cat behind the ears, "I wish she could be here for the competition because she would love some of the photographs. Doug Hilton took a picture of like a bunch of people wearing these super creepy rabbit masks in a cornfield. It's a really neat picture, it scared the teacher but I loved it."

"I'm sure she would love all of them. Especially yours, but not because she's biased, but because it is the best."

"You're starting to sound like Barbara." Lydia laughed, her guilt and anger slowly starting to fade away as she thought about how her mom would feel.

"I'm serious though, you've got a real talent and I'd hate to see you miss out on this opportunity because you're feeling afraid that enjoying yourself is somehow disappointing Emily. So what do you say? Do you still not want to go?"

Lydia thought about it for a second before shaking her head, "I want to go."

Charles smiled at his daughter and patted her proudly on the shoulder, "I knew you would. Now it is way too late for you to still be up. You have to be on the bus for eight o'clock tomorrow morning, try to get some sleep okay?"

She nodded, laying down in her bed, pulling the covers up to her face and closing her eyes. Her cat purred as she snuggled up against Lydia's stomach. Charles gave Lydia a soft kiss on the forehead before shutting the lights off and closing the door.

In the end, Lydia didn't win the competition. She was right that she was the youngest one there. First place went to a senior from a school she had never even hear of, but Lydia didn't care. When she came back home after the week she sat at the dinner table telling everyone all the fun stories she had from her trip, laughing until her side hurt when Beetlejuice threw a piece of cake at her father's face, but Charles' just swiped her face with his finger and licked the frosting off in stride claiming he preferred his cake that way. Even though there was no blue first place ribbon attached to her photography it was framed and hanging on the wall alongside her invitation to the event. By the time everyone had been partied out that night it was just Lydia and Barbara still in the kitchen. Without saying a word Lydia leaped into a huge hug before trotting up happily to her room, her kitten scurrying behind her.

"That's my girl," Barbara whispered.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!