

CHOO CHOO CHARLIE

Written by

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PRE-LAP: A small boy's voice makes the rhythmic drum of train wheels and air whistles.

EXT. PORCH AREA - DAY

Little fingers expertly piece wooden train tracks together.
CLACK. CLACK. CLACK.

The hands connect several toy trains bandaged with duct tape.
CLICK. CLICK. CLICK.

His small finger eases the trains forward down the hill.

CHARLIE

Down you go!

This is CHARLIE, a 4 year old boy content to play quietly on his own. The Polar Express plays on an iPad next to him.

Man, this is the life.

PRE-LAP: A young girl's voice belts out in song.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A little puffy dress spins round and round. Arms and legs sprinkled with band-aids flail about. This is Charlie's 6 year old sister GRACIE, a ball of carefree energy.

An iconic Disney princess sings on the TV in front of Gracie. As rough and tumble as she can be, it's clear our leading lady is a princess at heart too. She holds a hairbrush as a microphone, singing along for the whole neighborhood to hear.

In a burst of energy, she twirls and lets go of the hairbrush.

It SMACKS into the TV.

Gracie STOPS. She's not particularly concerned, but knows what's about to come next...

MOM (O.S.)

GRACIE! There better not be anything broken when I come in there!

Yikes. She bolts to the back door.

EXT. PORCH AREA - CONTINUOUS

Charlie steadily rolls his prized possession, Thomas the Train, down the tracks. Gracie pops out the door.

GRACIE
Hi Charlie. Watcha doin'?

Charlie doesn't hear her, fully engrossed in his trains.

GRACIE (CONT'D)
Can I play with you?

Charlie doesn't look up. Just shakes his head no.

A deflated Gracie shrinks back into the house.

He plays with Thomas some more and then looks up to the screen to chime in with Tom Hanks.

CHARLIE
All aboard!

His moment of distraction leaves his masterpiece vulnerable.

GRACIE
CHUGA-CHUGA-CHUGA-CHOO CHOO!!

Gracie flings the door open and rips through the tracks like a tornado. Pieces fly everywhere.

Charlie SCREAMS IN HORROR. Gracie LAUGHS.

Charlie pouts. The harder Gracie laughs, the harder he frowns.

He picks up a track piece and looks at it longingly.

GRACIE (CONT'D)
(singsongy)
Oh Charlie...

Bringing her arm from behind her back, she reveals Thomas the Train in hand.

No. Not today. Today is the day he fights BACK!

WAR CRY!

Charlie bursts off the ground, track piece in hand, charging at his sister.

She SCREECHES and dashes away.

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Charlie chases after Gracie wielding his track piece like a sword. They run all over the backyard, around trees, and through the play set.

GRACIE

You can't catch me Charlie!

EXT. FOREST'S EDGE - CONTINUOUS

Finally, Charlie corners her against the forest in their backyard. There's nowhere to run.

A standoff. Brother. Versus. Sister.

Gracie looks back over her shoulder into the woods. The unknown. The wild.

It's a bit intimidating, even to a daredevil like her.

She looks back at Charlie, determined to get his train and his payback.

She raises her hands to the sides of her head. Thomas in one of them. Is this a surrender?

Her fingers wiggle and her tongue sticks out! No, not a surrender by any means.

Before Charlie can react, she darts into the woods.

Oh no.

Charlie stands frozen.

CHARLIE

Gracie!!

She's quickly disappearing into the deep thicket. Will he follow?

MOM (O.S.)

Gracie! Charlie!

Charlie looks back towards the house.

No, this is a problem for Mom to solve.

Hanging his head in failure, he drags his feet all the way back to the house.

As he arrives at the doorsteps, he trips over a track piece and falls. They are completely destroyed. No amount of duct tape can bandage the mess Gracie has caused this time.

He huffs. It's clear he's got no choice. Looks back into the woods.

It's now or never.

CHARLIE

Choo. Choo.

He RUNS across the yard and into the forest.

FOREST RUNNING MONTAGE:

- Sounds of plants rustling.
- Gracie runs through giggling.
- Charlie, man on a mission.
- We lose Gracie in the thicket.
- Charlie's feet at full speed.
- Sticks break.
- Breathes fast.
- Yells for Gracie.
- Stumbles over a rock.
- Face-plants.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Slowly blinks open. The sun and sky are going to sleep now...and the deep green forest looks even more unwelcoming than before.

All alone Charlie lays. He finds his wooden track next to him. Pockets it...and that's when he realizes.

His arms and legs are clothed in something different! A rich blue suit with gold buttons adorn his little limbs.

He touches his head...a hat! Takes it off and in bright shiny gold letters, there it is: "CONDUCTOR".

Wow, oh wow.

Cautiously, he stands up, looks around, and spots Thomas the Train in a pile of leaves.

Finally! He scoops the train up.

But...where's Gracie?

He takes a good look around him. She's nowhere to be found.

Gripping the train tighter now, his eyes well.

CHARLIE

She's gone.

He covers his face with his hands, releasing Thomas all the way back down to the ground.

As he cries, the train sinks into the mud. By some kind of magic, it is completely absorbed by the earth.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Gracie lays in a pile of leaves, completely still.

Suddenly and violently she rolls over and yawns. Rubs her eyes. Where is she?

The same shadowed, frightening trees tower over her.

GRACIE

Hello?

Nothing.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

(aggressive)

HELLO!?!

An owl hoots. The tall twisted trees rustle.

She spots two yellow eyes peering through a bush at her.

Gracie GASPS.

She covers her face quickly and begins whispering.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Charlie lowers his hands from his face and looks to the ground for Thomas. Where'd he go?

He pats the ground. Nothing.

Defeated, he pounds the ground.

A TRAIN WHISTLE BLOWS.

Charlie looks up, off screen. His eyes stretch round and wide. Whatever he sees is absolutely out of this world.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Gracie, shivering and eyes covered, continues pleading for safety.

GRACIE
 (whispering)
 Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray
 the Lord my Soul to keep.
 if I should die before I wake, I
 pray the Lord my Soul to take...

Growing from afar, a yellow glow. Gracie peeks between her fingers.

Eerie fog pours from the glow and across the forest floor.

A DARK FIGURE emerges there in silhouette. It is looking up at the glow.

GRACIE (CONT'D)
 (scared)
 Charlie?

The figure turns its head towards her. She grows a small bit of courage.

GRACIE (CONT'D)
 Charlie, is it you?

The figure does not reply. Gracie realizes it must not be him.

She looks up to the night sky, as if her little brother were watching over.

GRACIE (CONT'D)
 I...I just wanted to play with
 you...I'm sorry!

The figure takes a deep breath.

DARK FIGURE
 Aaaaaalll aboaard!

Gracie's eyes widen. She recognizes that voice.

DARK FIGURE (CONT'D)
Aaaaalllll abooooard!?

Oh wow. It's just like the movie.

She walks towards the voice. The glow trickles through the trees as she passes by.

Stepping up to the figure, she sees their face now. It *is* Charlie, in full conductor uniform.

He holds out his hand.

CHARLIE
Well? You comin'?

Gracie beams. Puts her hand in his.

They run into the train's glow, off to a brand new adventure. Together.

THE END.