

A SNOWBALL'S CHANCE

By Jeff Dunne

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CHARACTERS

AMANDA	A middle-aged, single mother whose own mother has just recently passed away.
DAVE	Amanda's older brother.
SCOTT	A long-time family friend who has kept his feelings for Amanda hidden his whole life.

SETTING

The attic of an old house.

SCENE

(Amanda, a middle-aged woman, is sitting on the floor of an attic, surrounded by boxes that haven't been opened in decades. Nearby, her older brother Dave is leaning against a tall wardrobe, leafing through an old book.)

AMANDA

Oh good. Another box of receipts. I swear, Dave, I am *not* doing this to Becky. Before I go, I'm going through all of my old records and throwing everything away.

DAVE

(Only partially paying attention, as he is intent on the book.)

Better yet – pack it all up and send it to Mitch. Let him deal with it.

AMANDA

You're right. That's a better idea. But he'd probably just turn around and forward it all to Becky after I'm dead.

DAVE

Then you just have to outlive him.

AMANDA

I don't know. He was always the healthy one— *(She has turned to look at Dave.)* What's got your attention?

*(Dave holds out an old, well-loved copy of *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe.*)*

Ohhh. Let me...

(She stands, and he hands over the book with a touch of nostalgic hesitance.)

I haven't seen you in a long time. *(She flips through the pages.)* A very long time.

(Amanda gets a little misty-eyed, and looks over at the wardrobe.)

Do you remember...

(Dave makes a gesture of “how could I not remember, silly”)

AMANDA (CONT)

I miss those days. Scott and Melanie would come over...

DAVE

Speaking of Scott—

AMANDA

(Not hearing him...)

...and we'd spend hours up here, just... *(Big sigh.)* Scott would be Peter, and Melanie would be Susan. And you and me... Oh, why couldn't things stay like that?

DAVE

Probably because the IRS gets so irritable if you don't keep in touch every year.

AMANDA

Do you remember how we used to hang that ugly lamp from the rafter and pretend that we had just come through the wardrobe?

DAVE

(He laughs.)

Yeah. You know, I bet that lamp's around here somewhere. Mom and Dad would never have given it away.

(Amanda starts looking in boxes, but a moment later Dave finds it inside the wardrobe.)

Look at that. Just as ugly as ever.

AMANDA

Hang it up. Here, I'll he—

DAVE

I've got it.

(He hangs it up by tying the cord over a rafter.)

There.

(Amanda looks at the suspended lamp, then down at the book with a nostalgic sigh.)

AMANDA

I could never get Becky to read this. I'm such a terrible mother.

DAVE

Do you remember that time you poured about a hundred bags of cotton balls all over the place?

AMANDA

Oh my god. Yeah, I remember. I haven't thought about that in years.

DAVE

And, of course, that had to be the time mom decided to come up and see what we were doing.

AMANDA

She was so furious.

DAVE

No, she wasn't. Don't you remember? She joined in. Pretended she was the White Witch, decreeing 'Christmas is canceled' and—

AMANDA

Wait, wait. I thought... You mean, she was...

DAVE

What?

AMANDA

Oh my god. I thought she was serious. I thought she was angry, and that...

DAVE

No. She was just joining in. Wait. You really thought she was threatening to cancel Christmas?

(She shrugs; clearly she did.)

Hah. Well, you *were* pretty little, and that would have been a big deal at that age, I guess.

AMANDA

I remember being worried about it for months, and then so relieved when she started decorating after Thanksgiving. She seemed so angry at the time.

DAVE

That's because she was pretending to be the witch. She was supposed to be angry.

AMANDA

I honestly don't remember it that way at all. God, it's funny how you can look back at things and realized that you just had no clue.

(They share a moment of silent reflection.)

DAVE

Anyway, I was going to tell you, Scott said he is going to stop by for a few. Share his condolences about mom, you know.

AMANDA

Oh. That's nice, I guess. I didn't realize you two were still in touch.

DAVE

A bit. Not super close. A Christmas card now and then, that sort of thing.

AMANDA

Weren't they Jewish?

DAVE

No. What gave you that idea?

AMANDA

He said something like that once. That they celebrated Hanukkah or something.

DAVE

(Laughs...)

He was just messing with you.

AMANDA

Jeez. He really didn't like me much, did he?

DAVE

I wouldn't say that.

AMANDA

Oh, I would. If we weren't in Narnia, he was always telling me to go away. And even up here, somehow Queen Lucy was always the right person to go... hide in the corner or something.

DAVE

Well, maybe. But heck, we were kids, and kids can be... well, you know. But he did ask about you, so he obviously isn't too anti-Amanda. At least not these days.

AMANDA

Asked about *me*?

DAVE

Yeah. He usually does. How're things, how's the job, how's your sister. You know.

AMANDA

Oh, like that. Not an actual interest.

DAVE

I don't know. It wasn't until I told him about you and Mitch that he offered to stop by today. I suppose it could've just been a coincidence, though.

SCOTT (OFF)

Hello?

DAVE

Speak of the devil. (*Calling down.*) Up here! In Narnia.

AMANDA

Is Melanie coming too?

DAVE

Nah. She's in Tulsa now. Moved there a few years ago for a job with some insurance company, I think. Married to a guy named...

(Scott enters, and heads over to shake Dave's hand. He has a bottle of Snowball with him, and a small stack of Dixie Cups.)

SCOTT

Dave!

DAVE

There's our favorite Jew!

SCOTT

(Giving him a confused look...)

Is that our new thing now? Because I was good with the usual 'don't you look old'.

DAVE

Well, you do. How far back has that hairline receded? I think I can just make out your brain.

SCOTT

Anyway... *(Turning to face Amanda.)* Hey, Mandy.

AMANDA

Hi, Scott.

(Scott notices the lamp hanging from the rafter.)

SCOTT

Or should I say 'Hail, Queen Lucy'.

AMANDA

We were just remembering all of that. *(In a bad British accent...)* It's been rather a spell, hasn't it, King Peter?

(Scott laughs a little.)

SCOTT

So sorry to hear about your mom.

AMANDA

Thanks.

(Scott looks around.)

SCOTT

Lots of memories in this place...

DAVE

Yeah.

SCOTT

'll be strange to see it with someone else's car in the driveway.

AMANDA

Wait, do you still live next door?

SCOTT

Again. Not still. I moved back when my father had that big fall a couple of years ago. He needed someone to look after him.

AMANDA

Oh, I didn't know. I'm sorry. I hope he's okay.

SCOTT

Passed. Six months ago.

DAVE

Why didn't you say anything on the phone?

SCOTT

Ehh. Figured we could commiserate in person.

AMANDA

Well, I'll let you two catch up. There's a lot of stuff downstairs that—

SCOTT

Oh. Okay. If you want. *(Suddenly remembering...)* But here. *(He holds out the bottle.)* At least stay long enough for this.

AMANDA

What is that? Lemonade?

SCOTT

Noooo. No, no. It's... uh... Well, guess.

AMANDA

What?

SCOTT

Guess. But I'll give you a hint. It's the one thing you wanted to bring into the attic, but you said your mom would never allow.

AMANDA

I have no idea.

SCOTT

Seriously? You used to mention it all the time. The one thing missing from our land beyond the wardrobe.

AMANDA

Well, it looks like booze, and I'm pretty sure I wouldn't have wanted to bring that into the attic.

So you give up?
SCOTT

Yeah. I give up.
AMANDA

Snowball!
SCOTT

What?
AMANDA

I can't believe you don't remember. You used to complain every time about how it just wasn't right because we didn't have any snowballs.
SCOTT

I did?
AMANDA

Hah. I remember that. Yeah, it really bothered you.
DAVE

So I figured, this was our last chance. Here.
SCOTT

(He sits on a box, opens the bottle, and pours a drink into three little Dixie Cups. He hands them out. Amanda takes hers and sniffs it. She then considers the cup curiously.)

You're not anti-alcohol, are you? It's pretty sweet as they go. Lemonade and Advocaat.

What? No, it's fine. It's just... The cup. This is the same kind of cup we used to use for apple juice.
AMANDA

Yeah. I thought...
SCOTT
(Smiling...)

No, not just that it's a Dixie Cup. I mean it's the *exact* same. Same pattern.
AMANDA

SCOTT

Hmm. No kidding.

(Amanda puts the cup down next to her, and looks something up on her phone over the next few lines.)

DAVE

Well, this is a really nice touch. Thanks.

SCOTT

You bet. I know how tough it can be, losing your parents and... Well, like I said. This might be our last chance to... you know.

DAVE

Shame that Melanie couldn't be here.

SCOTT

Yeah.

DAVE

She doing okay?

SCOTT

I don't know, honestly. Sounds like she and Blake are hitting a bit of a rough patch. Which reminds me, Mandy. I was sorry to hear about you and Mitch.

AMANDA

(Looking up from her research.)

What? Oh. Thanks. Yeah, it's... It was rough, but I think it's better this way.

SCOTT

How is Rebecca handling it? She's got to be, what, eleven now?

AMANDA

(Rather surprised that he'd know this.)

Yeah. Yeah, eleven. Just recently.

SCOTT

Does she still stay in touch with her dad?

AMANDA

No, not much. Well, not at all, actually. Mitch... didn't...

SCOTT

Damn. I always thought he didn't deserve you. Didn't realize he was that much of an idiot too.

AMANDA

(Very surprised at hearing these comments.)

Yeah, well, she's better off without him.

SCOTT

So are you.

AMANDA

Thanks.

(Her confusion grows, and she turns back to her phone. Scott watches her for a moment, then resigns the conversation and turns back to Dave.)

SCOTT

So... How's the exciting world of linens? Sotela still treating you okay?

DAVE

Oh, you know. It's a frenzy. New cloth napkin pattern getting released next month and—

AMANDA

(At what she's read on her phone...)

What the hell?

DAVE

Yeah, it came as a shock to everyone. Somewhere between a dusty pink and salmon blush, but—

AMANDA

They stopped— *(She turns to look directly at Scott.)* Where did you get these cups?

SCOTT

(Suddenly a touch uncomfortable...)

Uhh... *(Then with inspiration...)* Narnia?

AMANDA

They stopped printing this pattern over fifteen years ago.

Really?
SCOTT

(Amanda stares at Scott, who holds out for a moment but then turns to focusing on his Dixie Cup of Snowball. Dave looks down at his cup, then at the other two, back at the cup, and then something finally clicks for him.)

DAVE
You know what? I *just* remember that I've got a... a... a thing that... Ah, screw it. I'll be downstairs if you need me. Which... I'm now thinking... is pretty unlikely.

(Dave exits. Amanda and Scott look at each other in silence for a few moments. Suddenly Dave enters, picks up his Dixie Cup, shows it to them in explanation, and exits again.)

So...
SCOTT

So...
AMANDA

(Dave enters. He pours himself another cupful, then exits.)

What's...
SCOTT
(He laughs nervously.)

You always were really sharp. I figured you'd recognize the pattern.

Yeah.
AMANDA

SCOTT
Didn't, uh... didn't occur to me that they'd stop making it.

AMANDA
Scott...

SCOTT
Okay, yeah. I've been... holding onto the cups for a little while.

AMANDA

Quite a while. Like... at least fifteen years.

SCOTT

Maybe a bit more.

AMANDA

How much more?

SCOTT

The cups? About twenty years. The basic idea? Pretty much ever since we stopped coming up here. Originally, I thought it would be something with real snowballs... then I thought maybe something with those flavored shaved iced things... But I could never figure out how to arrange—

AMANDA

Scott, you hated me as kid.

SCOTT

What?

AMANDA

You were terrible to me. Pretty much all the time unless we were playing Narnia. And even then, you were always sending me off to be alone while you and Dave and Melanie were... rescuing unicorns, or...

(Dave enters. He walks over, pours himself another Dixie cup of Snowball, smiles at them, then exits.)

SCOTT

I'm sorry. Mandy, I'm so sorry. Really. What you're saying is... well... it's completely true. I did do that. All the time. But as stupid as it sounds, it wasn't... it wasn't because I didn't like you.

AMANDA

Well, it sure looked that way.

SCOTT

Yeah. I'm sure it did.

(Scott walks around the attic, running a hand over boxes and beams like each holds a special memory for him. He comes to one in particular, and pats it.)

I hated this.

SCOTT (CONT)

What?

AMANDA

Don't you remember this one?

SCOTT

Well, I guess I remember them all. Sort of. I did live here.

AMANDA

You hit your head on this one. Right here. You were trying to get out of that rolled up length of carpet that we used for—

SCOTT

Oh my god. I remember that.

AMANDA

You fell over while you were still in it, and hit your head right here.

SCOTT

(He turns to look at her.)

I can still remember it like it was yesterday.

It wasn't that big a deal,

AMANDA

You had that big bruise under your eye. *(Shakes his head, remembering.)* You wore sunglasses to school for like two weeks.

SCOTT

That's right. That's right. How do you...

AMANDA

(Slowly, remembering...)

(Dave enters again, and walks toward the bottle of Snowball. Scott picks it up and hands it to him.)

Here. Just take the whole thing.

SCOTT

(Dave looks at him, Scott looks back – impatient but not angry. Dave exits, and Scott turns back to Amanda.)

AMANDA

How do you remember that?

SCOTT

You know what the worst day of my life was?

(Amanda just shakes her head no, confusion and disbelief painting her expression.)

AMANDA

What?

SCOTT

June seventeenth, nineteen—

AMANDA

Ninety-seven.

SCOTT

When I heard that you got engaged to Mitch... Mitch the Bitch, that's what I called him. Never liked the guy, but when you... When you two got engaged, that's when it really hit me how stupid I'd been. And for how long.

AMANDA

No. This doesn't make any sense. You didn't like me. You avoided me. All the time. You never even let me hang around in the same room when you came over.

SCOTT

I know.

AMANDA

Then... why? Why did you—

SCOTT

I was afraid. Mostly. Afraid that if Dave saw me... caught me looking at you like...

AMANDA

Like? Like what?

SCOTT

Like I did each morning.

AMANDA

We never saw each other in the morning, Scott. You were always getting up late, and I'd be off to school before you were even out of the house.

SCOTT

I know. You walked past my bedroom window at 7:42. Every day. Then at 7:43 I'd rush downstairs, grab a slice of toast, and make up some new excuse for why I was late while I ran to school.

AMANDA

No. That's not possible.

SCOTT

Yes. I kept that routine for four years, Mandy. Trust me. You may not have seen *me*, but I definitely saw you. But hey, it's how I got into track, so there was a bright side, right? And I made up some really great excuses, which was kind of like creativity training, which—

AMANDA

No! No. You can't just come in here... come in here and unload all this on me. What am I supposed to do with this? Jesus, Scott. I thought you hated me, and now I find out you were practically stalking me. What am I supposed to make of this?

SCOTT

I don't know. I'm sorry, but I don't know. And I wasn't stalking you. You make it sound like I was trying to... to *hurt* you or something. I never got in the way of your life, did I?

AMANDA

No. No you didn't. I guess that was unfair. I just... Why didn't you ever say anything?

SCOTT

You were my friend's sister. You were 'little Mandy' for so many years, you know? And then... then one day... you weren't. I woke up and 'little Mandy' had vanished, and you were just... Mandy. And you were still Dave's sister, and Queen Lucy, and... and out of reach.

AMANDA

I was next door.

SCOTT

Yeah. But you might as well have been in Narnia. And then before I knew it you were dating that doofus Jimmy Wharfen. Then *Bradley*. Though he was okay, I guess. I liked Bradly. Treated you well. It also helped that he was gay.

AMANDA

What are you... Brad was not gay.

SCOTT

Oh, come on. Seriously?

AMANDA

He wasn't gay.

SCOTT

Brad got engaged last year to a very nice minister from Wyoming named Timothy.

AMANDA

He did?

SCOTT

It was all over Facebook. Anyway, then there was Mitch. And then June 17th. After that, well...

AMANDA

I... Scott... I don't know what to say. How could... How could I have missed this?

SCOTT

Maybe because I tried really hard to keep it a secret. Dumbest thing I ever did.

AMANDA

Did Dave know?

SCOTT

I don't know. I never told him, but sometimes I think he suspected. Of course, I'm guessing he does now, because I only heard him take two steps down the stairs with the bottle, but...

DAVE (OFF)

So does this mean I can come back in now?

SCOTT AND AMANDA

No.

DAVE (OFF)
(Disappointed but amused.)

Damn.

AMANDA
This is... a lot. A lot to process.

SCOTT
I'm sorry. I know it's not the best time. Heck, it may be just about the worst possible time. But when I heard that your mom had passed, I realized that this was probably the last opportunity I'd have to...

AMANDA
To what? What were you hoping would... what am I supposed to say?

SCOTT
Nothing. You don't need to say anything. Or do anything. Maybe it was just my last chance to use those Dixie cups. I had this whole thing laid out in my mind.

AMANDA
Did it go like this?

SCOTT
(Laughs, then...)
Not even remotely. For one thing, Dave wasn't here. And he definitely didn't walk out of the attic with the bottle.

(The bottle slides out onto the stage. They both laugh a little. Scott picks it up and pours a little more into his cup and then puts the bottle on a box.)

AMANDA
So how *did* it go?

SCOTT
It was crazy, I guess. One of those daydreams that doesn't quite fit into the real world. In some sense we were adults, old enough to drink... but at the same time we were little kids too. Again.

AMANDA
Back before everything got so... complicated.

SCOTT
Right. You were up here. Reading one of your books.

AMANDA

You knew that I came up...

(Scott nods.)

How...?

SCOTT

You weren't exactly making a secret of it. In fact...

(He gets up and walks over to a little nook area.)

Sometimes when I was waiting for Dave for something or other, I'd sneak up and sit right here... where you'd sit and read. I'd sit here and imagine we were here together, reading. Talking.

(He turns back to Amanda.)

Anyway, so I had this kind of fantasy. You'd be sitting here reading, and I'd come up and find you here. I had to just pretend that Mitch didn't exist. He didn't fit into the daydream, and frankly imagining a world without Mitch is imagining a better world no matter what.

AMANDA

You can say that again.

SCOTT

So I'd come up and find you, and I'd say "You know what we really need to make this perfect?"

AMANDA

Oh my god. I remember now. I *remember*. I used to say that all the time. I remember! You know what we really need to make this perfect?

SCOTT AND AMANDA

Snowballs.

SCOTT

Yeah. And I'd say that in order to find snow, we'd need to be in Narnia. And you'd say 'well, the wardrobe's right there'. And we'd go inside. And in the back I'd have the Snowball and the Dixie cups hidden in a corner, so that when we came out, I'd be carrying them. Then we'd laugh, and you'd say 'well it finally happened – snowballs

in Narnia.’ And I’d smile, and pour us some drinks. And we’d go back to the little nook here, and somehow...

(He pauses, unsure whether to continue.)

AMANDA

Somehow...?

SCOTT

Somehow it really *had* happened. Not the snow like we had always wanted, but the years were gone. We were still the same age, in some sense, but all the... mistakes... all the complications... It was like we had found our way back into Narnia. Our Narnia. And we were young again. And free. And we’d sit down here, and you’d shove me because I had accidentally sat on one of your favorite books.

AMANDA

That sounds like you.

SCOTT

You’d have that look on your face, the one where you’re frustrated but kind of amused at the same time. And I’d say that I was sorry, and you’d say ‘it’s okay, but don’t let it happen again’. And then we’d smile. And after a moment you’d look away, but I’d still be looking at you... and smiling. And you’d look back and say ‘what?’ And I’d say that I was smiling because I knew a secret. Then you’d say – in that absolutely horrible-yet-completely-perfect English accent... You’d say, ‘the royalty of Narnia should not be keeping secrets from one another, King Peter.’

(Amanda laughs at his imitation of her awful accent.)

And I’d say ‘Then I suppose I’d better tell you. Are you sure you’re ready?’ And you’d give me that smile that only you seem to have, that’s knowing and innocent all at the same time. Yeah. That one.

(Amanda suddenly grows self-conscious, and laughs to cover it.)

You’d smile like that, and I’d lean close and say, ‘the secret is... that I’m completely in love with the most perfect woman in all the kingdoms of the universe, and I’m *smiling* because against all odds, *I* have been blessed by Aslan himself with the opportunity of sharing this fleeting, eternal moment with her.’

(Amanda stares at Scott, then suddenly realizes that she has a tear in her eye, and wipes it away. There’s a soft silence for a bit, and then Scott finishes.)

And the thing was, I couldn't really tell whether we were in our world or in Narnia, but I knew we were home. So we'd sit here, side by side, crammed into the little nook, sipping our Snowballs from Dixie cups while the rest of the world stood still, waiting for us to finish.

(Amanda looks at Scott, but says nothing. The seconds tick away, and after many of them in silence, Scott gives a weak smile.)

Well... Thank you.

AMANDA

What are you... For what?

SCOTT

For listening. For not laughing. For letting me say what I should have said twenty years ago. I'm sorry it took such terrible circumstances to give me the courage.

(Scott finishes what's left in his Dixie cup and puts it next to the bottle.)

AMANDA

Well...

(Scott turns to look at her.)

Well, it finally happened. Snowballs in Narnia.

(Scott smiles at this, nods, then starts to walk towards the exit.)

What do you think you're doing?

(He stops.)

SCOTT

What?

AMANDA

You can't leave yet.

(He turns to look at her, confused.)

AMANDA (CONT)

Didn't you say the world stood still until we finished our drinks?

(He looks at her, stunned, frozen. After a long moment, he nods. Amanda picks up her Dixie cup, which she hasn't tasted yet.)

Well, I haven't finished mine yet.

(Scott goes back to where he was, and sits down. He watches her put her cup back down, still un-sipped, and the lights fade to black.)