Chocolate's Death

By Emily Cameron 11/21/2013

This afternoon, after returning from a tiresome day at school, I immediately went over to my guinea pigs' cage to greet them. I stroked Ginny's coarse ginger fur as she gnawed on some timothy hay. My second guinea pig, named Chocolate, was huddled inside a plastic hut that we had placed in the cage for her to hide in. As I tried to remove the hut so that I could pet Chocolate, I accidentally squashed her hind paw. I expected her to react with a squeak of annoyance, but for some reason, she didn't even move. A horrible sense of dread tightened my stomach, and I quickly removed the plastic hut. Chocolate was sprawled on her side, with her paws sticking out and her dark eyes glazed over, wide open.

"Chocolate?" I whispered, reaching forward to stroke her soft fur. When my fingers touched her, I recoiled in horror, because she was stiff as a board and icy cold. A sob rose in my throat and tears spilled against my eyelashes. I knew at that moment that she was dead. I screamed for my mother to come and she rushed over to me.

"What? What's the matter?" she demanded.

"It's Chocolate," I sobbed, tears streaming down my cheeks. "She—she's . . . dead." The words tasted bitter on my tongue, bringing on a fresh wave of tears.

My younger brother, Alexander, sprinted over to us, his brown eyes glittering with concern. "What's going on?"

"Chocolate's dead," my mother said, her own eyes glistening with tears as my brother stared in mortification at the rigid, lifeless body.

Our other guinea pig, Ginny, was circling frantically around the lifeless body, sniffing at Chocolate's silky brown fur. She squeaked in complaint when Chocolate refused to move. She crouched down and appeared to be licking Chocolate's glazed-over eyes in an attempt to wake her up. When that didn't work, Ginny turned to look pleadingly at us, her dark eyes clouded with concern.

"She's dead, Ginny," I whispered, reaching forward to pet her, but she recoiled from my touch, her squeaks growing louder and more persistent.

I had no idea how our precious guinea pig, Chocolate, had died. Despite the fact that we gave her piles of food to eat, she had always been scrawny and mild. Unlike bouncy, bubbly Ginny, Chocolate spent most of her days huddling inside the plastic hut. Ginny had always been the dominant female, so I often found the two guinea pigs fighting and pawing at each other. I guessed maybe Chocolate died of some disease or virus that we had never really known about. Or maybe she died of old age. After all, she was five years old, and she was probably just slowing down. I didn't know, but it bothered me how she had passed away without us ever knowing why.

Later that day, we buried Chocolate in the little patch of land in front of our house. My father dug a deep hole in the ground, and we gently placed Chocolate's stiff body inside. It was almost as if she were a frozen lump of ice; she was so cold and rigid. I placed several carrots, which had been Chocolate's favorite food, inside the hole as well, as a sort of offering to her, as a way of saying sorry. I cried as my father dumped the excavated dirt back into the hole and patted down soil.

We will never forget our beloved guinea pig, and we will always remember her as the beautiful, gentle pet that comforted me when I was upset, that made me laugh whenever I gave her food, that taught me responsibility and carefulness. I hope Chocolate has a better afterlife in animal heaven, wherever that may be.