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Doll

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## Doll

Red stained the white fabric in an ever-growing circle. It was almost pretty, the way it spread almost evenly, almost a perfect circle. Why wouldn't it be almost perfect? After all, it belonged to someone who was almost perfect. Correction. Someone who used to be almost perfect.

Eva stepped back, fingers lingering on the silver butter knife almost longingly, a sigh escaping from her. Short, dark hair fell into her eyes as she regarded her sponsor with a smile, lips stretching tight over white teeth. Was this what it felt like? This ache to her jaw, this fine trembling in her fingers. Was this what it was supposed to feel like?

A coffee cup, still mostly full, shattered against the ground, the brown liquid spreading out on the floor. It wasn't perfect, or pretty. Just spilled coffee, the bitter smell covering another, more pleasant scent.

"Does it hurt?" Eva asked softly as she sat herself in one of the white wicker chairs, folding her long legs under her. A gurgling reply was her only response as

something much larger than a coffee cup fell to the ground. “I suppose it does. I hope it would.”

Pulling at the sleeves of her long, black canvas coat, she looked up into the sun for a moment before the pain of it made her close her eyes. In some ways, it was always like this. The silence only broken by words that didn’t matter, and didn’t make sense. Love. Yes, that’s what she’d been talking about this time. It was happiness before that, and maybe joy. All good things, all good emotions.

Eva opened her eyes and waited for the spots to fade as she looked at her sponsor, a beautiful, almost perfect young woman who was slouched against another of the wicker chairs, hands that would have been fluttering about in some emotive state were resting against either side of the pretty little silver knife. Maybe she was wondering if she should pull it out or not.

Eva wondered if, even now, she could feel them. Those emotions she prized so highly, and paid so much to feel. Even now, as she decided if she wanted to pull the knife from her chest and die quickly, or leave it in and die slowly.

Reaching to grab her cup of tea, Eva considered her. Kat, her sponsor, the reason she’d been created. Created to house the emotions that Kat didn’t want to feel, the bad things like despair. The reason they took away everything else that had made her human and beautiful and happy.

“Is that what you would be feeling now, if you could?” She raised her glass to her lips as her sponsor looked up at her with lost, blue eyes. Eva had often wondered why they looked nothing alike, but it made some sort of poetic sense. Darkness for darkness, and light for light. “Despair. Would you cry?”

“E-Eva.” Kat’s voice was strained. That was sad. She had such a pretty singing voice. Eva had heard that said before, but she had never heard her sponsor sing. They had never let her, for some reason.

“No. I don’t suppose you would. I don’t think you can cry anymore.” Eva took a sip of her tea, watching the red on her fingers stain the white porcelain. Like Kat’s dress, but not a circle. A fingerprint, probably. Not a perfect circle. Not even an almost perfect circle. She could never make anything into a perfect circle. Not even almost. Her sponsor was good at that. “Though I think you should. You are going to die, so you should be able to cry, right?”

“W-why?” Shaking hands had closed around the knife, bits of her long, blond hair escaping the tie and floating around her shoulders. Eva guessed that it was only fair that if Kat couldn’t cry, she could at least be beautiful in death. Someone would appreciate it.

“I think I remember being happy. I think I even smiled, a long time ago.” She murmured into her tea. “Before they decided I didn’t need that anymore, and they took it all away to make room for you. It was strange, to only feel the things you didn’t. Fear. Sorrow. But I think you forgot about hate. I think they did too, when they made me into this doll. When they and you took everything from me.” Eva felt her lips split in a smile, so wide that it hurt. Was this right? “A doll is just supposed to contain, but we feel too, even if science has stripped away everything we ever were. Nothing left. Just a doll to put on a shelf and forget about.”

“I..” Her blue eyes were starting to glaze over, the almost perfect circle gone. The whole front of her white dress was stained red, a dark red. Her sponsor didn’t have long left.

“Just a doll to shove what you didn’t want to feel into, so you could be happy. Uncaring. Beautiful.” Eva set her mug down softly. “You didn’t want to hate, so you gave it to me. Years and years and years of your hate in me for years and years.” With a faint sigh, Kat’s head fell forward. Her last breath. How poetic. “Goodbye.”

From behind her, there was a scream. Despair. The sound of it was unmistakable, ringing true in Eva’s heart as in the scream.

“Kat’s dead! Kat’s doll killed her!”

Turning her head, she caught a fleeting glimpse of a maid as the door swung shut, the woman running to get help, probably. Eva reached for her tea again. Dolls weren’t human anymore. They didn’t feel. HOLLOWED OUT, they were just shells. They gave the rich a way to escape from the terror, the pain, and the sorrow.

Eva’s shoulders started to shake, a sound escaping from her. Something she didn’t recognize. It was loud, and it felt... nice, the echoes of it rolling over her as her head fell back, that strange, somehow not right smile still on her lips. Wasn’t this... laughter?

Was this, finally, what it was like to be happy again?