

The doll curse

„Stiff the body, Stiff the dress
Motionless mask is all that's left.
Heart is still pounding- keeps you alive
Until someday the curse breaker arrives“

Athan stared at the old woman in disbelief. He had no idea what the woman wanted here in his house and why she looked at him so hard and yet compassionate. A pull went through his body and he wanted to say that he preferred that she finally stop her mumbling because it scared him. But the old woman muttered and murmured the same words over and over , hypnotized him with her green eyes. He could not look away. In the beginning he had tried to run away and persuade his legs to do something. But his body had not obeyed him. He was forced to look the elderly woman into her eyes. She had a power he could not resist, which increased his fear further.

Something happened in his body, and he had no idea what it was. The wall clock struck seven times as the old woman kept mumbling. The force inside Athan's body increased. It felt as if he was torn from the inside out. The room was getting bigger and Athan suddenly realized that he was shrinking. He was getting smaller. His heart pounded helplessly and quickly in his chest. He wanted to scream, but the scream got stuck in his throat.

'This is the end,' he thought and his world went dark.

When he finally woke up, he looked into the face of the old woman. It was huge. He could see every single wrinkle and birthmark as it was highlighted under a magnifying glass.

Athan tried to move away but could not move. The old woman giggled. "Do not look at me like that! You deserved it. Nobody hurts my little girl“.

Athan did not know what the old woman meant. He was 17 years old and never even had a girlfriend. He was a shy boy. But this woman thought otherwise.

She grabbed suddenly his body and he would have flinched if he had been able to. His body was not only small but completely helpless. The old woman picked him up and showed him his room. His parents couch stood in the corner and on it sat three dolls. Three dolls who seemed

strangely familiar to him. They looked like his three big brothers William, David, and Jacob. "Do you know them, huh?" The old woman asked, and he wanted to shout: "Yes, these are my brothers" But he couldn't speak.

„They are now as stiff as you", she whispered and then she started to giggle as if she was crazy.

„Grandma!" he heard a voice and saw the old woman wince and put him hurriedly to his brothers on the couch.

He saw a girl with reddish-gold hair storming into the room and glaring at the old woman. It was Bea, his brother William's girlfriend. "What did you do?" Bea asked, sounding incredibly angry.

"Nobody hurts my little one!", Said the old woman and sounded defiant.

"Grandma, he did not hurt me ... I love William and I did not cry because of him. Damn ... I ... I'm pregnant Gran, that's why I cried and I did not know how to tell William. I was desperate, but I'm sure he'll understand. We already talked about marriage and I know that he loves me. I know you did something to him. I feel it. So undo it quickly. "

The old woman stared in horror at her granddaughter. "I can't reverse it ..."

"What did you do?" Bea shouted. The old woman pointed to the couch and Bea looked horrified at the dolls. "These are William's brothers ... why did you punish them all, when you thought William hurt me?"

"The curse is a family curse ...", the old woman said stubbornly. "there parents are dead, but the brothers where alive..."-

"You have transformed them all? In dolls? Are they still breathing?" Bea sounded hysterical.

The old woman just nodded "They had to learn respect and ..."

„He had respect, grandma!" Interrupted Bea. "He did not do anything wrong. So say, how do I lift this curse ... do I have to kiss William free? "

"It takes time, Bea ... it can't be broken yet ...", mumbled the old woman and looked pale now.

"It has something to do with time? Have you ever considered that I have no time, that I am pregnant and that my baby needs a father? Yes? Have you considered that?" Bea shouted. "You took my future from me ..." she cried.

At her words, the old woman went paler, she grabbed at her chest. Her eyes widened and then she collapsed suddenly.

"No!", called Bea "Grandma ..." and she ran towards the old woman. She still clasped her chest and her breathing was that of a fish that can not live ashore. After a while, her head fell to one side and she remained motionless.

Athan watched Bea. She was hysterical now. She sat in the hallway for a long time screaming and crying. Athan thought she would never stop. But eventually, she got up and looked at the couch. Her eyes were red and swollen. Trembling, she reached for Athan's brother and whispered, "William, I love you. I will do everything to undo this curse. I'm alone and I need you ... oh William, I love you so much" Then she kissed the doll. There was hope in her eyes. A hope that now spread to Athan. Again and again, she kissed William, but his brother remained a doll. Athan felt all her love. But this great love was not able to lift the curse. William remained a doll. Athan suddenly felt miserable. If she did not manage to free them, who would be able to do it?

Suddenly he heard a loud chuckle. It came from the door and he was annoyed that he could not turn his head. He saw Bea drop his brother's body and turn to the side.

"So she did it?" A voice called. Athan knew that voice. It belonged to one of his neighbors. Theodore. He was a terrible person. He was angry and mean. How many times had Athan watched him torment their horses? He was not a pleasant man. Why was he here?

„Well, maybe I should have warned her that the curse will stop her heart, huh?" Theodore laughed again and Bea took a step to the side so that Athan was now able to see the mean man.

"You, gave my grandmother the curse?" Bea asked in disbelief.

"Yes. Did she not tell you how angry and mean your dear William was and that his brothers were no better than him?"

"But that was a lie!", Bea yelled.

Theodore laughed. "Oh really..."

"You knew it was a lie", she guessed.

"Of course, I knew it," admitted Theodore without regret.

"It was quite easy to manipulate her. When you repeat a lie, again and again, everyone believes it to be true. I

only had to wait...it was my lucky day when you ran crying out of the church yesterday...what a wonderful day. Your grandma came directly to me and begged for something to hurt William".

"But ... why?" Bea was appalled and helpless. She looked so fragile now that Athan wanted to hug her.

"Because you, little Bea, belong to me. Nobody takes away my little witch. You will give me power. Your father is rich and the blood of a powerful witch is in your bloodline". Theodore said, taking a step towards Bea.

"But I do not love you. I love William. Undo the curse. Right now!" Bea demanded and Athan saw that she was trying to be brave.

"You can not dissolve the curse yet. It lasts a couple of years and then certain situations have to arrive to lift this curse. I don't want to explain further unless I get what I want now. You can save the four boys by becoming my wife. Otherwise, I'll have to burn this house with the dolls inside. "

"I will never marry you. I do not love you ... "Bea yelled desperately.

"Tsetse, dearest Bea, you will not live anymore when the time has come to break these curse ... it just takes a long time, hahaha" Theodore seemed to be amused.

„I'd rather die than take you as a husband“, she spit out.

"I have opportunities to make you my loving wife ... so there is no need for you to surrender voluntarily ... but of course, I would prefer it," Theodore said coldly and threateningly, taking another step towards Bea. He spread his arms and said, "Come on and give yourself to me willingly ..."

"Never!" Bea said firmly and took a step backward.

"Do it now!" said Theodore in a warning tone.

"I'm happy to repeat myself: NEVER!" Bea said, throwing herself on the couch. Then everything went pretty fast. She rolled on the side of the couch, reached under the bottom and drew abruptly a rifle out. While Theodore was running towards her to stop her, she shot him in the chest. Twice. Theodore collapsed, blood run out of his chest. Athan heard Bea say coldly, "You simple forgot that my dad taught me to shoot, did you?"

Theodore's eyes went blank. He was dead.

Bea threw the rifle away and sank crying on the couch. Her sobs were heartbreaking and it hurt Athan's heart to see her so distressed.

Athan had no time frame and he did not know how long she was crying, but at some point, she raised her head and looked at him and his brothers.

"Is that it? Yes?" She said loudly and then she seemed to be waiting for something. Did she finally become crazy?

"Are you sure ... do you think I can modify it for us?"

She whispered excitedly. "And then we are all together ..." She sounded hopeful. "And I love you so much more, William!" She took Williams's doll and kissed it. Then she hugged it tightly to her chest and whispered:

„Stiff the body, Stiff the dress
Motionless mask is all that's left.
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Athan saw Bea shrink until she was small like him. There she lay in Williams arms with a happy smile on her face and waited with him and his brothers for the one who would break the curse.