

Joanna was quiet for the whole ride home, but there was tension in the air. There was nothing quite like the thrill of a good find, and our truck was full of potential. Coming home from the flea market with a load of antiques meant cataloging, appraisals, pricing, contacting buyers... or, with worse luck, more junk for the garbage truck on Monday.

I glanced over as I drove. My wife was fidgeting with the ends of her long black hair, and her dark, angled eyes flicked back and forth as the scenery sped by. I turned my focus back to the road. That face was dangerous. I could stare at her for hours.

"Think we got anything good?" I broke the silence, solidifying the question that already filled the cab.

"We'll see." Her voice was quiet, nonchalant. I smiled, wondering how hard it was for her to push down the emotion. She was easily stressed, worrying about the money we spent and whether we'd fail to make a profit, though she always tried not to betray her feelings. She wasn't as relaxed about taking risks as I was, and this load had been unusually hard for her to appraise, so I figured she was feeling unusually apprehensive.

Maybe I could get her to open up over some specifics, I thought.

"Well, there's the bureau. That had better be worth something solid. I think we overpaid for the manuscript, actually... it's old, sure, but in poor condition. We'll see if there are buyers. Hmm. And that bisque doll is stunning, I really hope she's not a modern piece - you said you couldn't find the maker's mark?"

"Boudoir, you mean." Her correction was terse. Still so buttoned up... why was she like this?

"Joanna. I'm certain it's a *bureau*, not a *boudoir*." I was feigning misunderstanding: a chest of drawers would not be confused with a lady's bedroom, but she was too distracted to catch my dry humor.

"No no, it's a boudoir *doll*, not a *bisque* doll." There was a hint of frustration, impatience. Oops.

"She's got silk hair, not molded hair," she continued. "And this one's head was made of composition with a china mask, not a full porcelain cast; you can't call it a 'china doll.' It looks like the type that are modeled after someone in real life - a celebrity from the era, probably. They look totally different from bisque dolls." Yep, there was a note of rebuke.

"Uh huh. And?"

"And the clothes are really well done," she continued. "Custom work by someone skilled, probably the original owner, though I couldn't tell what they are made of. And the clothing style is... *really* weird."

“Well, we got her for cheap, right? Didn’t the old lady give you a deal on that piece?”

She turned around and looked at me, finally, staring quizzically into my eyes as though they held the answer. I willfully broke eye contact to turn back to driving.

“Mike, I said no, and she offered it to us for *twenty*. Twenty dollars! And she almost seemed... sorry about it.”

The rest of the ride home was quiet, and the rest of the evening was spent carefully unloading the truck into our garage. Once everything was laid out on pads on the concrete, with enough space around each item for examination and photographing, I followed Joanna into the kitchen for a late dinner. I was upbeat; I had a good feeling about our haul.

The doll was lying on the dining room table, loose black silk curls cascading down one side of her white porcelain face. Her maroon-painted lips were pursed, and her faded gray eyes stared at the ceiling. I wondered why Joanna had brought this item in instead of leaving it in the garage to appraise tomorrow.

“Excited to start on that one?” I quipped, fishing leftovers out of the fridge and putting them in the microwave.

“If you want.” She shrugged. What? That didn’t make sense. “Let’s take a look.” She fetched her laptop and sat at the table, and began examining the doll.

“See, it looks like the classic flapper style with the painted sideburns, but she has long loose hair over it instead of short and styled. Added later, maybe? Glass eyes - that is *rare*. Maybe there’s a mark under her wig... oh, so weird, she doesn’t even *have* a wig! This hair is *rooted!*”

She sat back in her chair, thinking, before leaning forward again to examine the clothes.

“The dress is made of some kind of thin leather, and the boots are leather, too. Not painted. It’s fine, must be lambskin? The skirt is silk, and... Whoops!” She was lifting the skirt, and then drew her hand back suddenly. She looked at me almost sheepishly. “She has *underwear*, Mike. Black lace, and... uh... I saw details under them. *Anatomy.*”

We shared a moment of bewilderment.

I tried to assess. “So, we have a pseudo-flapper dressed in leather and lace with no maker’s mark, plus undies and naughty bits. Sounds like a full custom job, a unique build, probably using a commercial head and shoulders blank. This could be *big money*, Joanna! If it’s actually from the ‘20s. Worth thousands, do you think?”

She nodded slowly. “There should be a mark on the composition at least, then, on the shoulder plate somewhere. It’s not on the back, so...” She was gingerly lifting the bodice of the dress,

peeking down its front, and again she stopped suddenly and stared up at me.

“She has *tits*, Mike! This. Doll. Has. *Boobs*. Painted nipples and everything. She’s some kind of weird 1920s-style... I don’t know... *porn doll*?” We shared a nervous laugh.

“Like someone had wanted to make an adult version of a boudoir doll, and was *very good at it*, but also didn’t know the right styles for dolls of the period! Even though there’s no way this is modern, or even vintage. Look at how old this body fabric is, the stiffening of the leather... this is *definitely* early 20th century. No, I’m sure.”

“Maybe this is why the old lady was trying to get rid of it,” I suggested. “Thought it was improper, or something. She didn’t want the embarrassment of someone commenting on it in her shop.”

Joanna snorted, shook her head, and then put the doll down. “Well, she gave up a unique piece for a stupid reason then. This thing is worth taking to a pro to look at, for sure. I’ll make some calls in the morning.”

“Sounds good. Sure you don’t want me to do it? It’s supposed to be my job, the people part, since you are better at appraisals and all that.”

She stopped, not looking at me, then quietly: “/s that your job, Mike? I can do it, you know. Or... am I not enough of a people person?” She fiddled with the doll’s clothing. How did I just touch a nerve?

“No, that’s not what I’m saying, I’m just offering to do my part! Look, don’t get mad, you’re great with people, you-”

“I’m *not* mad! Listen, we put a lot of money down on this lot! If this doesn’t pan out, I don’t know what we’ll do. But / know who to contact for dolls. And here you are, telling me that I shouldn’t do the people part. Are you really SO afraid of my... *condition*, Mike?” Her voice was going from too low to too loud, and her eyes flashed with anger.

Blindsided, I tried to calm her down. “Look, Joanna, you’re a lot more worried about being bipolar than I am! It’s got nothing to do with this, I was just asking for a job to help with! You are perfectly fine with people, and...”

“Apparently not, since I can’t even make a phone call without you trying to tamp me down, stifle my emotions!” She cut me off, yelling now.

I was nonplussed - we’d been through plenty of ups and downs, and she went on medication for some periods when her extremes got debilitating, but I had no problem standing by her. Bipolar disorder was something I was willing to help her manage, and it had never come close to impacting our relationship.

But this anger was something new and scary. Why was she lashing out at me like this? Was the

stress of the business really that bad, even after the find we just made?

Tears were starting to stream from Joanna's eyes. She opened her mouth to yell again, but stopped herself this time. I could see she was trying to regain control, seething instead of raging, bottling up her feelings as she so often did – and she sprang up from the chair and stomped off to the bedroom. The door didn't slam, exactly, but it was shut far harder than necessary.

There was a muffled scream of rage. The pillow over her face was not particularly effective.

Wow.

I took a moment to collect myself and formulate a plan, then I set the teapot going to make a hot drink for Joanna after she had calmed down enough. I turned to the dining table as I waited for the water to boil, but the beautiful, weird doll was gone. Joanna must've taken it with her into the bedroom – how strange. I didn't even see her pick it up.

I was staring at the bedroom door, pondering, when it opened with a yank and a red-eyed Joanna stormed out, holding the black-clad doll at arm's length.

"What is this supposed to be, Mike? Why would you put this in the bedroom? How did you even DO that?!"

I raised my hands to protest. "I didn't..."

"Why did you even bring it inside in the first place?! You wanted me to look at it first, to check it out before everything else...why??"

"Joanna!" I tried to make a stand. "I didn't bring it in! I thought YOU did!"

"STOP IT, MIKE! You're fucking with me! Getting my hopes up that we have a real treasure here, finally a nice solid payday, but it's some kind of bullshit, making a fool out of me!"

I stepped back in the face of her irrational rage, tripped somehow, and landed on my butt on the kitchen floor. Joanna advanced, wielding the doll.

"Well, take your stupid doll, before I *smash* it! I am done with this... done with you... I should just smash *you!*" She shrieked.

Something was very, very wrong. This was the first time Joanna had ever threatened violence - this couldn't be her talking! But it was happening nonetheless, and I watched with shock as she wound up to fling the doll at my face. I threw my arms up to shield myself from the haute-couture missile, waiting for the hardness of a ceramic head to hit, but it never came.

I peeked over my arm to see Joanna staring at the doll as she held it, shaking with fury. No, she was shaking the doll itself. Her eyes widened and the shaking became frantic – what was she doing?

“Mike! It’s stuck! It’s... on me... the stitches... THE STITCHES... ARE IN ME... MIKE! Mike, I can’t... Help me!”

She dropped to her knees. The shaking had become full-on flailing, accompanied by terrified wails, and then it encompassed her whole body. Joanna writhed on the floor, a mass of long black hair and lace, with flashes of white ceramic flung about.

I fumbled for my phone in my pocket to call 911, or to turn on my flashlight for a better look, to do *something*. Finally, I had it out and tapped in the keycode – but the writhing had stopped.

I slowly stood. Joanna was a still heap on the floor, face down, hair messed and spread around her. There was no panting, despite her exertions, but she was jerking slightly like someone with exhausted muscles barely able to hold themselves up.

“Hey... are you okay? What happened?”

There was no answer from the collapsed figure. I thumbed down the menu on my phone, and tapped the light on.

“Joanna!”

At the mention of her name, the figure’s head snapped up, tossing black curls. The face that looked up at me was pure white, like matte porcelain, practically glowing in the flashlight beam. Gratuitous black and navy blue makeup covered the eyes, with piercing silver irises under sharp painted brows, and her mouth was a dark red hourglass of pursed lips. Thick blue stitches framed the whole face, burrowing into her hairline, down her temples, along her jawline, and under her chin. Blood drops were forming where the threads emerged from her flesh.

Silver-irised eyes blinked in the light, then the red lips cracked open.

“Mike... get... it... off...”

Her voice was faint, a bare whisper, and transitioned into a muffled scream... not unlike the one I had heard from the bedroom, mere minutes ago, but somehow so much farther away. I stepped forward, not knowing how I could help, but stepped back again as the china-faced woman started clawing at her face and thrashing about uncontrollably, still screaming distantly.

Her forehead struck the front of the dishwasher with a sickening crunch and she pitched forward, face-first, into the floor. There was more crunching as her hands scabbled at her forehead and temples, trying to find purchase among the neat blue stitches, smearing small

blood drops across the pure white surface.

I stared, horrified, as the clawing became weaker, and Joanna's movements became jerkier. Finally she was still, curled in a fetal position with her hands over her face. The screaming had faded away completely.

As I watched, the blood smeared on her fingertips began to darken until it was pitch black, and then the blackness spread outward and crept up her digits.

I didn't know what to do. I hovered, horrified, afraid to touch her – or this thing she had become – but terrified of what would come next. Was she dead? Gone completely? What twisted power did this doll have, to invade someone, like this? I again thought to call the police, but if they saw this... *thing*... they would think I was some kind of horrific murderer with a ghastly doll fetish! There was no explanation for what had happened.

Joanna's body lurched, as though a wire hooked to her shoulder had been pulled taut. Then another jerk... I backed away quickly, keeping my flashlight on the body, and put the dining table between us.

The figure rose slowly, smoothly. Not the way a person stands up from the floor: This was a limp body rising until her feet were on the floor and her knees were straight, but her head lolled forward, trailing hair, and her arms dangled. Her hands were pitch black to the wrist now, horrific living gangrene, and I could see twisting veins of black reaching ever farther upward under her skin.

The black fingers twitched, and as I watched, their tips elongated... *stretched*. The black nails turned to sharpened points on digits now malformed and macabre.

Then Joanna's horrific doll face jerked towards me. I could see that it was shattered in places where she had hit it: spiderwebs of blood-red cracks spread over her forehead, brow, cheek, and chin. Her eyes had changed too. The left one was perceptibly darker, the entire eyeball blackening, and the iris was shining more redly than silver in my flashlight. The other, still silver, had a sclera of pure unnatural white, like the eyeball itself was made of porcelain.

"Joanna!" I shouted at the thing, terrified but angry too. It had taken my partner, the love of my life, and consumed her in some way. What was this blackened, evil abomination? Was Joanna still inside, rescuable?

The eyes widened, locked on my face, and the mouth opened. No, it *dropped* open, hingeless, gaping wider than any human jaw. Pure ivory teeth and a blood-red tongue framed growing, empty blackness.

Then, it screamed. I can't describe the noise. It was pain: high pitched and piercing, yet grating, it penetrated my nerves and my vision swam. I clamped my hands over my ears, but it made no difference at all – the screeching agony coming out of that creature's mouth was more than just

sound.

I felt warm wetness on my hands as my ears bled. My teeth were gritted in pain; I tasted blood in my mouth. Redness clouded my eyes – I had no doubt that blood vessels were bursting all over my body. I collapsed, trying to escape in some way, but unable to move while that horrible scream transfixed me.

When I awoke, a persistent whine filled my ears. I staggered to my feet, and looked around – the lights were on, everything seemed normal. There was no doll, no transformed Joanna, and I realized with a start that the tone in my ears was just the tea kettle coming to a boil. As I turned it off, I felt coldness on my ears – I touched them, then stared at my hands. Congealed blood.

No, no, NO! The nightmare was real, and it was not over.

There was a sound from the lit bedroom. Movement, steps... a shadow on the open door. I stared, heart pounding, as a familiar figure stepped out. Joanna stood there, with no trace of porcelain or thread, not even a spot of blood on her face.

Hope welled up in me until I realized that she was wearing a curious leather dress, straight and fringed at the bottom in a flapper style, the skirt barely long enough to conceal her crotch. And her walk was not hers – she strode toward me with her hips swaying, shoulders back, as though she was being pulled forward by raw sexuality across the floor.

“Now *that* morsel looks downright jazz.”

What? No. The voice was not hers either. The enunciation, the timbre...all wrong.

“Jo-... Joanna?”

She fixed me with a gray stare, dominating.

“My pretty dolly, Dottie, gave me this body; there is no more Joanna. My name is Dauphine, but the meat shall not speak it. It shall not speak at all, unless I command it. If it does not obey me, then it is fit only for the abattoir. I do not wish to go find a new egg so soon, and I do so wish to play with this one for a spell... so, the meat *will* obey.”

She raised a hand from behind her, and idly twirled the eight-inch chef’s knife it held. *My* chef’s knife, from the kitchen drawer. I could feel its coldness from where I stood, and the burning bite of an edge that I had used hundreds of times before to part the flesh of chicken and pig with barely a press. And now, it was wielded in that small hand, and I knew I was no more than a carcass to her.

She grinned faintly, an expression that didn’t reach her eyes.

“It knows its fate, good. Now. Meat does not wear clothing, does it? How silly!” She flashed a

perfect white smile under soulless and colorless eyes as I haltingly started to undress.

“Faster. Do not make me wait. Oh, a lovely cut this is! I shall enjoy it. The meat lies on the floor. Lies still.”

She stood over me, bending at the hip, and set the knife point against my bare sternum. There was pain, and blood welled up, but I willed myself to stony stillness..

She hiked her skirt a few inches with her free hand, and paused.

“I will enjoy playing inside the meat, after I gut it and watch the life leave its eyes. Oh, I can’t wait!”

That cold, white smile again, but wider and more animated with enthusiasm.

“Still, I prefer playing with the meat inside of *me* while it’s still warm. Thus, it has some time left – *if* it can follow the rules.

“First, the meat shall not move an inch; it is forbidden. Second, it will not presume to touch me with its hands, or they will be *removed*. Meat is for me to use as I wish; nothing else. And I will take it cold over misbehaving, at a whit.”

And with that she squatted gracefully down, and I felt myself slide inside to touch the cold, black evil that dwelt within her.

To say that the experience was unpleasurable would be a lie. Dauphine, in Joanna’s body, rode me with hunger, a vigor that Joanna never offered. It was all I could do to keep from moving my own hips, instead of allowing this psychotic monster to simply use me as a human plaything. However, the knife point pressed to my chest maintained a searing pain that helped me keep my senses, and dulled my lust – I shivered to think of what would happen if I climaxed before this creature had had her fill.

“Oh, this body! Thin, and weak, no stamina.” Dauphine stood, huffing slightly, and stretched her legs. I didn’t blame her. Joanna’s body was well-shaped, but not particularly athletic. A trickle of moisture ran down her inner thigh as she repositioned to impale herself on me again.

Wait - thin and weak? This abomination was constrained by my wife’s physical limitations? Hope flashed in me. I only needed to be faster than the knife, and...

I acted without thinking; it was faster that way. As Dauphine began to squat again, bringing the point of the blade back to its bloodied position over my heart, I swiped at her knife hand with all my speed. Thankfully, Joanna’s reflexes were insufficient. I struck her wrist hard, then grabbed it; the knife whistled across the room, and I heard it embed in the cabinetry somewhere with a “thunggg” sound.

Joanna’s lips, curled in a snarl, let loose a shriek of affront. Her other hand swept down at me, nails bared, but I was anticipating it; I blocked and grabbed, then with both her hands



immobilized, I pushed her off of me and struggled to a knee.

Dauphine screeched and fought, trying desperately to yank her hands from my grip, but I did not relent. As I had surmised, her physical strength was a challenge but still no match for mine. She tried to lash out with a foot, which I barely avoided catching in the groin; to protect myself, I started to twist her arms around, bringing them behind her as she was forced to turn away from me. Her head thrashed, flinging black hair, and I managed to stand up fully before bringing her down to her own knees, facing away from me, and bent her arms upward behind her back to force her acquiescence.

Then, I had won. She was finally quiet and still, panting, on her knees with her face inches above the floor and her arms twisted at their limit behind her. I held her wrists like weird motorcycle handlebars, breathing heavily from the exertion and relief. Perhaps I wouldn't be murdered tonight, after all?

Joanna's voice – Dauphine's, rather – came from the floor. It was quiet, forced patience, but tinged with malice.

"Meat would be prudent to let me go, lest I call Dottie back."

She could do that? Was that demon doll in the next room?

"Listen, you antique freak, I don't give a flying fuck about your 'Dottie', I'm not letting you sit up until I get some answers! And I am NEVER letting you go."

"Didn't you learn your lesson last time? Another scream should do the trick, if you refuse to behave..."

I shuddered at the thought of the scream, but I didn't budge.

She sighed with exasperation, "At least finish me off, meat, or I really WILL call Dottie in. Dot-tie! lovely lady!... DOTTI!"

I didn't know what else to do, so I shoved her arms forward in panic, forcing her face to the ground. Her naked rump swung into the air in front of me, the cloth of her dress sliding up well past her waist.

Dauphine paused, face to the floor, then shuffled her knees apart, making her butt wobble and inviting me in. I stared at it - Joanna's beautiful womanhood, framed with trimmed black hairs.

"Now, meat! Or... DOT!"

"Okay! FUCK!" I folded her arms together behind her back so I could grip her wrists with one hand, then I used my free hand to guide my member. I heard her breath catch when I touched

her, then I paused to try to think through my plan of action. There was a grunt of impatience and Dauphine backed up her rear fully onto me. Well, now it would be harder to think.

It was my turn to ride, now. I thrust quickly at first, hearing high-pitched whining noises that Joanne never uttered; then I changed my angle and rammed downward, slowly and deeply, eliciting deeper grunts.

After only half a minute of the downward thrusts, Dauphine began to shake, twitching uncontrollably from her core. "Here it comes," I thought, and increased the power and depth of my thrusts, but not the speed. After only a couple of these, Dauphine was full-on wailing as her body shook with pleasure.

Her climax was substantial; when the convulsing and wailing stopped, I felt her sag to the floor under me.

"That is enough, meat. I shall get up now."

Even on her knees, her arms held behind her back and her face on the floor, this psychopathic bitch thought she could be in charge? I had a plan now: I didn't stop, but settled into a rhythm that produced a regular gentle slapping sound.

"I said... to get out of me... I've had enou- Aaaaah." There was something extra satisfying about Dauphine, the killer tyrant, being unable to control even her own breathing.

"This... is... your... last... warning..." she managed between pants. I waited until I felt her breath in deeply, filling her lungs to call the abominable doll's name, before I withdrew and left her quivering in the air.

"I can see that you are going to be difficult, meat. Do you truly need another of Dottie's screams to remind you of your position? You might feel strong and clever, but I still got what I wanted from you – meat cannot win this one."

"My name is Mike, and I know something about Joanne that you should know too."

"MEAT. I care not. You will let me up this instant, or..."

This was the moment when my trail of spit landed on her anus, and she shuddered at the sudden cold.

"Joanna," I explained, "is really good at this. Can relax on a dime. And she absolutely *loves*..." I took aim.

"Taking it..." I applied pressure. "Nooo!" Delphine whimpered.

"In..." I pressed harder, and Delphine's body went rigid in panic.

"The ASS."

She shrieked as I slid through the tight ring and into her forbidden place.

Then she was motionless, transfixed; I also held still for a moment, deep in her nether cavern, before I began to move. Dauphine's confusion at the new sensation was quickly replaced with moans even louder than when she had climaxed earlier.

"Oh, my SWEET—" she gasped. "The filth! The *depravity!* It's so... AAAH! SO intense!"

I was right – Joanna's body still produced those same feelings, but they were new to Dauphine.

"I'm betting you'll want to answer my questions...-"

"Nothing... to tell... the meat..." she interrupted, while interrupting herself with moans.

"... if you want me to *keep moving*. Won't you?"

I stopped, mid-thrust.

"Aaah-ugh! You DEVIL! I... I will, I will, just MOVE!" I obliged, and the return to thrusting set her to shaking again.

"Where is Joanna, Dauphine?"

"She's inside... bound... *Aaaah! Sweet mother Mary, so deep!*... in blue thread."

I slowed down. I could feel her gripping my girth, spasming for more. "Please... faster..."

"Then tell me: How do I get her back?"

"I beg of you... give it... *Damn you!* I must be satisfied, my lust for carnal pleasures and need for entrails! I... I disemboweled my first husband as we made love, you see, that jazz was incredible. And then others. So many more... feeling that thrill again, the thrill of mortality as I'm drenched in blood and sin, will help me to sleep again as Dottie. Now, *please, sir!*"

That was it, then. Lust and entrails, blood and sin.

"Then I shall satisfy you, ghoul. Carnal pleasure like you've never had – exploding in *your own* entrails, to send you back to hell!"

"If I *could* go to hell, Meat, I would be there... *ugh!*" I pushed her down until the side of her face was pressed hard on the floor, her mouth open and drooling. Black hair spread out in a spiral swirl across the white kitchen tile as I pounded her ass.

She was wailing from the sensation now, every breath a scream of pleasure, but I started to make out a word: "Blood!" she was crying, chanting, as I filled her past brimming with ecstasy.

I tried to consider the consequences of her request, but cogent thought was lacking. Finally, I pressed a finger to my chest, smearing it with my own blood.

"Blood! Blood! Blood!" She was shrieking now. I leaned forward, putting even more weight on her folded arms and back, angling myself directly down; her voice went low and all she could manage was a guttural "Unh!" with every intestines-jarring thrust.

I reached to put my bloody finger in her mouth. I felt teeth immediately grip it, painfully, and wondered for a terrified moment how terrible a mistake I'd made; but then her tongue was circling my fingertip, tasting my blood, and my finger was free again.

I pounded away, ignoring the burning of my muscles and the lightheadedness as I panted for breath. "Take it!" I gasped. "Feel me in Joanna's entrails! Be SATISFIED, you murderous, horrifying freak!"

"YES!" She shrieked, so high that I was sure it came from the doll's mouth, and not Joanna's. "*SATISFY ME NOW, MIKE!*"

I don't know how I was able to turn up the intensity any further, but I did, and immediately felt myself reaching the edge of no return.

"Go... to... HELL!" I slammed my pelvis into her rear, releasing a first hot gout inside of her, and then again, another; and another. Joanna's body convulsed violently as she received my final thrusts, her voice gone except for a long strangled croak as the pleasure overwhelmed even her own breath.

I released her arms and collapsed backward, exhausted and spent, for the moment not even caring if Dauphine was about to slaughter me. For her part, she collapsed and lay flat on the floor, her arms limp beside her, fluids trickling down a buttock.

After a minute to get my breath back, I mopped the sweat from my eyes and tried to sit up, assessing the prone nude woman on the floor.

"Jo-... Delphine?"

She stirred, and then sat. She rubbed her wrists, then looked at me with sharp, soulless gray eyes.

"I have never done that before. Allowed the meat to finish, that is. And... you have made me feel a way I did not know was possible."

I swallowed. "Carnal lust. Entrails. Blood. I... I satisfied you!" It was a demand, but one that hid

a desperate question.

“Oh. So you did, Mike. Ohhh. I *am* satisfied. In fact... I think I’m falling in love.”

She did her mouth-only smile, but this time, it was at me. Then she winked at me, a strangely aggressive gesture that felt like a punch to the gut.

“Until next time, sweetmeat.”

With that, she collapsed, a marionette with her strings cut. I scrambled forward to catch her head as she slumped.

I held the limp naked figure, willing her to wake up as Joanna, terrified of what else could come next.

Minutes passed.

Finally, there was a sigh, a stir, and a warm chuckle. *Joanna’s laugh.*

“Uhh.. Mike... that was crazy good... what did you *do* to me, man...?”

It was *her!* My love, my life, my wife, back inside her own body. Tears of relief welled in my eyes.

“Oh, you... enjoyed that, did you?” I didn’t know what else to say. What did she remember?

“Oh *God*, Mike! You rocked my world! I... I don’t think I can *walk* after that!” She laughed again.

“No need, babe. I’ve got you.”

I lifted her, feeling every ounce of her mass in my aching muscles. She giggled and clung to my neck as I carried her to the bedroom.

Before I closed the door, I glanced back across the room and saw something: a cracked white face at the top of the antique linen cabinet.

Shining silver eyes stared out into the room.

Shining, and not asleep.

The End