

Flash Fiction #1

When the craftsman put down his needle, the work was finally complete. He was meant to leave the doll in the moonlight, and in the morning its eyes would open. He had not given the doll eyes, but the grimoire stated that it would not be necessary. Its eyes would be molded from light into a material known as *moonglass*. It would be the final indication that the spell had worked. It was dark magic. It would have consequences, he knew, but he had no other choice. If one receives orders from the King, then one must do as they are told.

The next morning, the Court Magician herself came, along with two knights. She strode into his humble cottage with her gargantuan furs, the wide brim of her hat and dark veil obscuring her face. He felt like a mouse cornered by the vicious housecat. Her wicked grin asked him for the grimoire, which he returned with shaky hands. Then she asked for the doll.

“Come see for yourself, my Lady. I did exactly as you instructed.” He bowed his head and showed her into the other room. A little girl was sleeping in the rocking chair, curled up into a ball. She was as precious as a doll, but the subtle rise and fall of her chest was proof that she had come to life like a real girl.

“Wake.” The Court Magician commanded. Her voice held power, and the girl gasped and opened her eyes. They were a clear, crystal blue. An otherworldly blue.

Her thin red lips stretched into a smile. “Excellent work. I will take the girl now, and you will be rewarded as promised.” She turned, and her furs slapped against his face. He pushed the fabric away and dared to speak again.

“Wait, my Lady. I must ask for permission to stay with the girl, at least for these next few days. If anything happens, I would like to be there.”

She huffed. “Forgive me, but I don’t see why?”

“Each creation is like a child to me.” He said. “Please.”

“Very well. Come along.”

They reached the castle just in time to prepare for dinner. He had barely spent a carriage ride with the girl before they were each whisked away to be bathed and dressed and educated on the proper etiquette required of them. He was surprised that he would even be allowed to dine with the King at all, but as it turned out he wished to personally thank the craftsman himself. It was odd, he thought, the way in which royalty lived. They were like dolls themselves, playing in a fancy toy house. He allowed his shoes to be shined for him, and thought of the same polish sitting on his workbench at home.

Dinner was an intricate ceremony, a dance of servants serving each course. He ate in silence, politely listening to the conversation of the Queen and Court Magician, and the comments of the Prince, and the shrill laughter of the Princess. He was just a mere craftsman, what place did he have

with these people? He occupied his time by helping the girl, his little girl, cut up her food and eat dinner. Being a real girl meant that she required real nourishment as well. He patted her cheek with a fond smile as he wiped the crumbs. She did not know a thing.

Oddly enough, the King had barely spared a glance at the girl even though he was the one who had asked for her. The craftsman held his tongue, but wondered when they would finally be acknowledged. For now, the craftsman and his child were relegated to mere decorations. It was not until the party was moved into the drawing room for post-meal entertainment that he was approached by the Court Magician. He bowed to her, and guided the girl to bow too. Her feet were a little unstable, so she stumbled forward but gripped tightly onto his pant leg so she wouldn't fall. Afterwards, she hid behind him as if she was afraid of the woman. Privately, he agreed with her. She was quite intimidating.

"You've taken a liking to her." She declared. "Tell me, have you ever been married? Or had any children?"

"I did once, my Lady. And I had a little girl too, not much older than this one. I lost them both to illness."

"That's a shame, I'm sorry to hear that." She said, her thin lips pursed in distaste.

Their conversation was cut short when she was summoned by the King. He whispered something to her, and she nodded her head.

"Everyone, His Majesty will now present the Princess with a wondrous gift for her upcoming sixteenth birthday." She announced. The room clapped, and whispers began to stir as everyone made guesses as to what the gift would be.

"For my precious daughter, I will give her a precious jewel, one which can only be crafted through rare and obscure magic. A pendant made of moonglass." He announced.

It was too late before the craftsman began to fully understand the nature of the events unfolding before him. One servant presented the Court Magician with the empty gold chain of a necklace, and another tore the girl away from his side. But he could only watch in horror as the servant presented the woman with the girl, and she began to recite a vile incantation. A pain sprouted in his chest and he sank to his knees, clutching at his heart. No one paid him any mind, as they were all mesmerized by the ceremony in the middle of the room.

The world went dark, and he shut his eyes tightly. They must have done it then. The guests oohed and aahed, all commenting on the fantastical display. Before he drew his last breath, he heard her voice calling out to him. She was calling for her Papa.