

My Baby Doll

Krishna Y. Patel

“My Baby Doll”

This was it. I had finally graduated high school and was moving onto my next big step, attending a top-tier - not quite Ivy League - university. I had already taken no less than 20 trips into my walk-in closet, but this final one was different. It was to find my doll.

Unfortunately, it has been missing for weeks now, but she was my good luck charm. No one remembers where it came from, but she was my best friend in the whole world. Her brown skin and blue eyes looked just like mine, and the freckles on her cheeks looked like my late sister's. Ten years later, I still miss my sister.

I push aside the remainder of my clothes and search every corner of the almost empty closet for my doll. I crawl deeper and deeper into my closet now seems like it has no end, I make sure I look behind every box, but she's not in here. I let out a dejected sigh, while finally standing up and walking out of the closet.

“Hello, look at my pretty doll!” A little girl in a ruffled baby pink dress held out a doll that looked exactly like mine. “You're so pretty like my doll. Do you want to hold her? I call her Love because I love her.”

I examined the little girl's features. Her brown skin was almost the exact shade of mine with matching eyes and hair. Weird.

“I'm Isabelle Joss, and I live on 235 Love Street with my mommy and daddy who love each other so much. Can you take me home? I want to go home.”

Isabelle Joss.... From 235 Love Street. That was my name and my old address. Curious to know how younger- me was in my bedroom, I agreed to take the little girl home. The last thing I would want to do is have her get lost.

Isabelle takes my hand and guides me past two streets South. I walk slowly to match her pace. The further we walk, the more the streets resemble them from 10 years ago. We finally stop at the light blue, single-story house in which I spent the first 12 years of my life. My parents moved out of the house when my sister died to escape the depressing memories of their firstborn. You could hear a young couple talking- arguing- about something.

She opens the front door and pulls me inside. It hasn't changed.

"Isabelle, honey, there you are. Come on and wash up. Your special birthday dinner is ready. Mary is already at the table," Mom says while wrapping her daughter in a tight embrace and kissing her on the cheek. *Mary....*

Mary was my older sister, killed by someone evil just two days after my eighth birthday. Unfortunately, we were never able to identify the evil spirit, but I never stopped missing my best friend. She's still alive here, maybe I can save her so little Isabelle has a forever friend.

Isabelle sits at the table after washing her hands and face in the bathroom, and Mom and Dad sit on either side of her. My favorite food, chicken curry and rice, is in the center of the table.

"Mommy, can my friend Izzy have some dinner with us? It's her birthday too!" Isabelle asks while pointing to where I sit with my doll in my lap.

Dad frowns then answers, "Honey, you know you can't give your dolls real food. How about we finish dinner then we can bake her a cake in your play kitchen." Isabelle pouts when she realizes that only she can see me but nods in agreement.

A few hours later, the family ate dinner and cut the birthday cake. Now, Isabelle and Mary are coloring in their princess-themed coloring books. Little Isabelle occasionally glances at me to make sure I am still there.

I see a woman dressed in all black place her fingertips against the window. It is so fast that I almost miss it, but her eyes turn bright red, and the doll's eyes follow. It does not seem like the other two girls noticed it. Once again, weird.

Isabelle stands up once she's finished coloring her Elsa picture and picks up the doll. A bright red glow engulfs her small frame then dulls to an almost invisible state. It looks warm and almost like how a hug would feel- protective and comforting. The little girl runs out of the room with the doll and her freshly colored picture, but the glow remains around her body. Mary follows her younger sister to their parents' room where they all sit and read a book together. It reminds me of those times with Mary when she was still alive.

While I sit here at my old house and witness my past life, I nearly forget about the change in my life that is about to come. Classes do not start for a week and orientation is three days from now. Mary's death day is two days from now. I think I might change my flight to after that day. Maybe I can save her.

The next morning, I woke up next to Isabelle in her twin bed. I remember falling asleep in my own house, but I think the odd magic from the woman last night made it so that I could not leave the house for long.

Two mornings later, Isabelle, Mary, and I are taking a walk in the park behind the house. Isabelle is holding her doll. Behind the restrooms, I notice a trio of women dressed in all black. I don't think much of it until we walk past the restrooms to sit underneath a shady tree. The three

women approach us and whisper something about finally having us right where they want us. I pick little Isabelle up to keep her away from the creepy women.

One of the three women reaches out to grab Isabelle from my arms as she kicks and screams. They mumble words about death and sacrifice while fighting the young girl. Mary stands behind me, clutching the bottom of my shirt, and watches the witches try to take her sister away from her.

“That’s it,” the middle one screams towards Isabelle. “You’ve done enough, baby doll.” She brings her hands up towards her face and claps them together. A sharp ringing sound fills my ears. I accidentally drop Isabelle when I fall to my knees in pain and try to block out the sound. Mary’s ears start to bleed, and she kicks the dirt and screams. Isabelle’s red glow turns back to its initial brightness, and it seems to block the attack attempts from the three women. I glance at the baby doll sitting against the tree, noticing its bright red eyes. That’s when I realized the doll was protecting her.

Immediately after the witches realize their magic is not hurting Isabelle, they decide to target her older sister instead. I fight the pain in my ears and jump up to my feet to reach for Mary. Unfortunately, I’m too late. Their magic has her pinned face down on the dirt. Her muffled screams for help barely reached me.

“Izzy help!” Isabelle cries, traumatized from watching her sister hurting on the ground. At this point, there are bloody cuts all over Mary’s body and her breathing begins to slow.

“The doll, Isabelle! Grab the doll. It’s protecting you, maybe it can save Mary.” The little girl runs to the tree and picks up the doll. Its magic is brighter than ever. She brings me the doll and I grab her hand instead. The warm red glow travels up my arm and around my body. It’s

working. The doll's magic is working on me. When the pain in my ears subsides, I still feel weak.

Next, the witches pick up Mary who is now unconscious, and begin to take her away. I throw Isabelle onto my back. I am only able to take one step before I crash onto my knees again, but I must save my sister. I begin to slowly crawl behind the woman while instructing Isabelle to grab Mary's hand.

I'm overwhelmed with the feeling of weakness as I pull myself back to my feet when we get as close to Mary as we can. Isabelle reaches over my head and her fingers barely touch her sister's, but that is enough for the red glow to begin its travel up Mary's arm. Finally, Isabelle grabs Mary's hand. I know the red glow has encompassed Mary's entire body when the witch holding her screams in agony. A bright red flame climbs up her arm and then spreads over her tall, thin body, leaving her in ashes in seconds.

The chain of the doll, Isabelle, Mary, and I is so strong that I reach for the leg of the second witch. It only takes one touch before she is on fire too. As a result of fear, the third one uncovers her face to reveal herself.

It was the lady from the window who put a spell on the doll. Mary's arm slowly brushes up against her. She doesn't burst into flames. Instead, the baby doll in Isabelle's hands disappears, and the witch's face changes to resemble the doll. She was the doll. She saved Mary. *Love* saved Mary. I shut my eyes in relief, and when I woke up, I was back in my room with a grown-up Mary on my bed.

"You're here!"