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babesinthewood

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babesinthewood

katie lynn grip

Tiny lights flicker--suspended midair to small objects by rough-hewn ropes of canvas strips tied together. At first a welcome respite from the surrounding darkness, upon closer inspection, the objects become simultaneously more bizarre, horrific and strangely personal--the site of either innocuous playful abandon, or something much more sinister. *The amber glow emitting from one of the hanging jars is lovely, but is that a couple slices of...cheese? How long has it been there? Well, what do we have here? How sweet, a tiny bird's nest...unless...wait, is that hair? Human hair? And look over here at this jar--something creamy and...oh my, look at that tiny hand. What happened to that poor baby doll?*

A pop song echos incessantly throughout the room and a cooler light emits from a laptop of the room. A crumpled blanket and used teacup lie next to the laptop. *Is the owner of this laptop coming back?* A video plays on infinite loop. The face is in shadow while the pop song echos through the tinny speakers. The person's hair is backlit. It appears to be a young woman. *Where is she now? Did something happen to her? What will happen to me?*

After moving past each object, the feeling of curiosity slowly becomes one of *maybe it would be wise to turn around*. Then before long, the last object--a stained rag (*wait, is that a pair of panties?*)--passes by and a dimly lit hallway comes into view. The hallway leads to the opening of a roughly constructed building--slivers of light passing from under a black curtain. Like a shipping container in an abandoned warehouse--what kind of horrors will be met beyond the curtain? This is the stuff of classic horror films. At this point, the content of the suspended objects becomes more important. *What type of a person brought me here? Girl or boy? Man or woman? Do they want me to come closer, or are they warning me to go away?*

Once the curtain has been peeled away, it is revealed that the room is just a small, clean, gallery--a simple "white cube" (well, more of a rectangle). Modestly sized paintings occupy the walls: a scene with two girls in pink dresses adorned in flower garlands sit between two brightly colored abstract paintings. On the far wall, sits a painting that appears to depict either the inside of a tent or blanket fort with richly red, illuminated curtains--an environment for stuffed bears and puppies at play. At first innocuous like the glowing objects in the dark, a closer look reveals more

disquieting possibilities at play: One of the girls' faces is well-rendered and one looks flat and strangely resembles a sex doll; and their hands--either crudely rendered stumps or missing altogether! The colorful spills and juvenile, gestural marks in the surrounding paintings which at first seemed to be just joyful bursts of playful color become spilled milk and possibly a soiled blanket or pair of pajamas or burned down candles at the site of a disquieting ceremony or private shrine. The stuffed puppies in the blanket fort appear to be enjoying each other's company too much and the stuffed bear might be trying to escape the scenario. The foreground--a roughly textured pink and white--becomes like vomit and those sumptuous red curtains take on the characteristics of the womb or the veiny skin of human nether regions.

Suddenly the room begins to feel smaller and the displaced feeling--the "where am I?" panic starts to creep in. Exiting and moving past the objects once more, each one is seen anew taking into account the scene of the small paintings in the room. As the narrative begins to expand, and the song plays for the twentieth time--"*I'm gonna get your heart racing in my skin tight jeans, be your teenage dream tonight*"--it is time to go; but not without the sense that something should have been done or that someone was watching the entire time.