

## ***What a Pair of Dolls***

A bottle shattered against the bedroom wall. “Stacy, wait—!”

A lamp flew through the air to smash against the floor. “Stacy, stop—!”

A litter box, complete with cat, went spinning across the room like a frisbee. “Stacy, don’t—OOF!” Dave barely managed to catch it, not that that stopped a furious Mr. Mittens from scrambling over his face. “Stacy!”

“How could you?!” said his girlfriend. “And with my *sister?!?*” She picked up the bottle of wine he’d bought her in apology, shook it menacingly, then noticed the date on the label and carefully put it aside. “How could you?!” she repeated, picking up and throwing a book instead. “How could you?!”

“It was a mistake!” said Dave, raising his arms to shield himself. “I thought she was you! It—it was like in one of those comedy flicks, you know?” He threw her a pleading smile. “You know?”

The toaster hit him right in the nose.

As Dave collapsed, holding his face and moaning, Stacy gave a hiss and scrambled under the bed in search of something. “I thought she was you’?! I’ll show you what it means to look like me, you pig!”

She stood, an item in each hand. In the left, she held a book; in the right: a simple wooden wand. Training her eyes on the former, she started to chant beneath her breath. Sparks of blue and pink light flickered into being around the wand’s tip, growing brighter with each word she spoke.

Back on the floor, Dave’s nose had finally stopped stinging. With a groan, he forced himself to stand and froze as he saw what his girlfriend was doing. “W-wait,” he said, holding his hands up defensively, “wait! Stacy, you don’t have to—!”

“*Double Date!*” said Stacy. As the incantation left her lips, a bolt of swirling pink and blue lightning shot from the tip of her wand. Dave had just enough time to see it before it slammed into his chest, sending an electrical current surging through his nerves.

With a gasp, Dave threw back his head and moaned as the spell’s energy coursed through him. Falling to his knees, he sat there shivering, watching as the hair on his arms burnt away in thousands of little flames. Within ten seconds, they were as bare as they’d been when he was born. A tickling sensation in his chin told him the same thing was happening there.

As he grabbed at his face, the feeling spread outward. It settled in his scalp, and Dave gasped as a long lock of brown hair tumbled in front of his eyes. As he went to sweep it aside it fizzled and bleached, turning instantly to a shade of perfect blonde. He gaped.

With every second he sat there, his hair grew a little lighter and more than a little longer. Grabbing at it, he begged it to stop, earning a laugh from his girlfriend.

“If you think that’s the worst of your troubles,” she said, looking down on him, “you’ve got a big surprise in store, *babe*.”

Dave whimpered.

As a fresh lock fell in front of his eyes, he felt a strange sense of loss in his arms and raised them to see the muscles he’d worked so hard for deflating like punctured balloons. Over the span of several seconds, they simply shriveled away entirely, leaving his arms as thin and scrawny as they had been when he was twelve. Feeling them, he couldn’t keep himself from gasping.

While Dave struggled to process what had happened to his arms, he felt a similar feeling in his pecs and his six-pack and his legs. Lifting up his shirt, he stared as his perfectly-sculpted abdomen crumpled like the six-packs he and his friends shared at the weekends. In seconds, it was completely flat, smooth, even a little pudgy.

Like his arms and torso, his legs swiftly followed suit. Muscles vanished as if a vampire were drinking them, slurping all their strength away through the suction of its teeth.

Worse, however, even as his muscles ceased deflating, his entire body began to shrink, as if all his size were being drained into the world around him. He gasped as his legs shortened, as his ribcage compacted, as his shoulders squeezed them tightly together, and his face lost all its harsh angles. By the time it stopped, he’d lost a foot or more of height, and felt for all the world as if he were no larger than a doll.

Shivering, he touched his face. Everything felt so much smoother, so much softer.

From inside him came a pulsing.

Heart pounding, sweat dripping from his brow, Dave looked down and watched as the legs he’d just seen drained suddenly reinflated. Only, instead of muscle, they were plumping up with fat, thickening and smoothing till they looked just like—

Raised into the air on his newly-cushioned ass, Dave swallowed and turned to the creamy thighs protruding from his girlfriend’s skirt. “St-stop!”

Stacy rolled her eyes. “As if.”

Before Dave could think of a response, his body pulsed again. This time, the epicenter was his chest, and as he watched with quaking eyes his shirt started to rise, pushed up by his nipples. They rose on two curving lumps of fat, the bloated balloons of what once been his perfect pecs. Swelling larger with every second that passed, they soon reached the size of his head, dragging him forward with their weight.

Breathing deep, he clasped them tentatively and squealed in a shockingly high-pitched voice as his touch sent a jolt of ecstasy coursing through each of them. Falling back, he sat there panting and sweating, cock as erect as it had ever been in his life.

Unfortunately, it wasn't to last. As he watched, sweat running down his face, his penis trembled and gave one last, triumphant spurt, before collapsing like a Jenga tower. He stared, shivering in pleasure, as the sodden bulge in his pants flattened out completely, and he felt a different kind of wetness welling in its replacement.

As he raised a trembling hand to touch it, his clothing sparkled and warped, turning fluid and runny. He squeaked as his jeans shriveled into a tight-fitting skirt, while his trainers stretched into white high heels and pantyhose. Higher up, his plain white shirt tightened into something scandalously figure-hugging, while a row of black buttons popped into being between its neckline and its hem. Even as he stared, the top two undid themselves, exposing a generous amount of cleavage.

Just as he thought the whole awful experience was over, he felt a terrible constricting sensation around his groin and chest and squealed in his heightened voice as a set of tightly-fitting lingerie sprang into existence around them. The feeling of his new panties digging into his pussy, combined with that of his new bra clasping his breasts, made him want to throw his head back and scream.

He settled for squealing. It seemed a decent compromise.

Finally, golden rings and bracelets appeared round his fingers and wrists, while a diamond necklace tied itself around his neck and an invisible makeup artist painted his face in foundation.

Only as the latter finished doing his mascara, did the tingling and the sparkles finally fade.

Breathing heavily, Dave threw herself to her foot and took a good long look at herself in the bedroom's mirror.

She—she looked just like Stacy. Identical, down to the smallest detail.

Trembling, she searched for the mole on Stacy's chin, found it on her own, and touched it with a little squeak.

"Enjoying yourself?" asked her girlfriend.

Dave rounded on her, eyes tight. "Wh-what have you done to me?" she asked, shocked to hear Stacy's voice spring from her own mouth.

Stacy smirked. "Well, since you had such an easy time confusing my sister and I, I've decided to make it so people will confuse the two of us instead. Look at us," she added, taking a place beside Dave in the mirror. "We're like *twins!*" Wrapping an arm around Dave's shoulder, she pulled her into a side hug. "I was always telling my roommate in college how

much I'd like a twin sister! And now, thanks to you, I finally have one!" She grinned. "I can tell we're going to have a lot of fun together, aren't we, sis?"

Seeing her expression, Dave could only shiver.

"From now on, we're sisters," said Stacy, pushing her away. "Not boyfriend and girlfriend, understand? Sister and twin sister."

Falling to her knees, Dave trembled. "This is insane! You can't just—"

"Sure I can," said Stacy, with a shrug. "And if you ever want to be turned back, you're going to go along with it, okay, hot stuff? Every time you act like 'Dave', I'm going to keep you like this a month longer, understand?"

A pair of little tears formed in Dave's eyes. "Please, Stacy, you can't—"

"Now, what should we call you?" asked her ex, tapping her chin in thought. "Hmm, we want something that suits your new appearance... Hmm. Ahah! How about—" She licked her lips. "—Beauty?"

Dave swallowed. "B-Beauty?"

"Sure," said Stacy, stooping so they were face to face. "What, are you saying it doesn't suit you?" She pinched Dave's cheek and gave it a playful squeeze, daring him to say it didn't.

"N-no," said 'Beauty', "it suits me."

"Excellent," said Stacy, standing and clapping her hands. "Well, now that that's sorted, I guess it's time to figure out what we're doing tonight."

Beauty blinked at her. "What we're doing?"

"That's right," said her ex, "we're both single now, you see? So, tonight, you and I are going out on the town to look for some cute guys."

Beauty could only shiver.

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As the taxi rolled through the streets, Beauty sat in silence, listening to her new twin without really hearing a word.

"I think we'll try Fantasia, first," said her new sister, double-checking her make-up even as she spoke. "You remember Fantasia, don't you? That's where we met, remember?" Snapping her compact shut, she frowned. "Hmm, thinking about it, I have a bad track record with the men there, don't I? You know what, forget Fantasia. We'll try the club across the street instead. What's it called? Oh, right. The Dollhouse."

The taxi screeched to a stop. Tossing the driver some cash, Stacy slipped out. Beauty, on the other hand, remained in her seat, quaking inside the exquisite dress Stacy had forced her into.

Before she could work up the courage to move, her door opened on its own.

“Come on,” said Stacy, looking down at her, “what are you waiting for? You’re not *scared* are you?” Her expression dared Beauty to say ‘yes’.

“N-no,” said Beauty, forcing herself to her trembling legs. “No, Stacy.” She swallowed.

Stacy laughed. “Aww, come on, don’t be such a scaredy-cat. What’s the worst that could happen to you tonight? Afraid the cutie you end up with will be *too* cute?” She smirked knowingly.

“N-no, Stacy.”

“Great.” Snatching Beauty’s hand, Stacy dragged her away from the taxi and through the cold night to the crowd outside the nightclub. Soon enough, they were at the front of the queue.

The bouncer looked them up and down and smirked, stepping aside to let them pass without a word. “Enjoy yourself, ladies,” he said with a little laugh.

As they passed, Beauty felt something smack her ass. She had to bite her lip to keep herself from squealing.

Inside the nightclub flashed and hummed like a bottle of captured lightning. Heels clacked against the dance floor; glasses clacked against the bar. Bodies slapped into bodies, asses grinding against crotches even as lips pressed into lips and tongues coiled around tongues. The air stank of drink and sweat and pheromones.

Giving Beauty’s hand a painful squeeze, Stacy dragged her past the dance floor to the bar and slipped into a stool with practiced ease. “Go on, take a seat,” she said, looking over her shoulder.

Gulping, Beauty did so..

Once they’d both been served the martinis Stacy had ordered for them, Stacy spun around on her stool and directed Beauty’s attention to the dance floor. “See anyone you like?” she asked.

Beauty scanned the crowd and looked away shyly. “N-no.”

“Aww, come on, don’t be like that.” With a tug of Beauty’s wrist, Stacy directed her gaze to a cute blond in chinos. “What do you think *he’s* like in bed? God, I bet he’s a *great* lover.”

Beauty blushed.

Stacy smirked. "Well, if you don't like *him*, how about that guy over there?" She directed Beauty's eyes to a brown-haired young man in jeans. "What do you think *he's* like in bed?"

Beauty shuddered.

"No?" said Stacy. "Still not interested? Tut tut tut, well, that just won't do. You can't stay as shy as this *forever*, Beauty. Unless..." She leaned in close to whisper in Beauty's ear. "Unless you want to stay Beauty forever, that is."

Beauty's hands, folded neatly in her lap, trembled.

Stacy pulled back. "So, if the blond and the brown-haired guy are out, how about we try...? Oooh!" Her eyes lit up. Grabbing Beauty's shoulder, she turned her to face a pair of identical young men who'd just entered the nightclub. "Look at *those* two," she said, biting her lip and rubbing her thighs together.

Swallowing, Beauty followed this command. She had to agree, the two were handsome. Even as a man, she would have been forced to admit it.

Now though, as her eyes roved up and down their shirts, riding over their tightly-fitted shirts and the bulges in their jeans, she experienced a shiver of something she'd never before experienced...

...accompanied by a sudden warmth between her legs that made her squirm.

Seeing her expression, Stacy smirked. "I see you agree with me," she said, flicking her eyes down to Beauty's crotch. "Well, in that case, why do we go and greet them? Come on, quickly, but someone else snatches them up!"

Before Beauty had a chance to protest, Stacy grabbed her hand, dragging her off her stool and across the dance floor to the pair of handsome men.

Several meters away, one of the men happened to glance in their direction. He looked the pair of them up and down, before nudging his twin and directing his gaze towards them. The second locked his eyes on Beauty in particular, and the feeling of his eyes drinking in the sight of her made her shiver in her heels.

"Heeey~!" said Stacy, screeching to a stop in front of the pair. "Oh my God, do you two, like, live in this area?"

"All our lives," said one of the men, a smile forming on his lips.

"Oh my God, that is per-fect," said Stacy. "You see, my sister and I are new to town, and we're looking for someone to be our guuuides~." She stretched the word out, giving the brothers a knowing wink.

The pair smirked. One laughed. "Well, I can't speak for my brother, but I'd be happy to show you around."

"Same," said the other man, holding out a hand. "Name's Gareth. What's yours, beautiful?"

Stacy giggled coquettishly. "Actually, my name's Stacy. 'Beauty' is my sister's name." With another giggle, she pushed Beauty forward. "Go on, Beauty, say hello to the nice men."

Stacy's push almost knocked Beauty right into Gareth's chest. Regaining her balance, she looked up and swallowed. God, he was so tall...

"Hey there," he said, looking down at her smirk.

Beauty flicked a glance at Stacy, who gave her a glare and mouthed 'forever'. Beauty swallowed. "H-hi," she said, face red.

Gareth laughed. "Hey now, there's no need to be shy. I promise I don't bite." His teeth sparkled in the light.

The other man punched his brother in the shoulder. "No wonder she's shy with a big lump of meat like *you* looming over her. Take a step back and give her some space, you idiot." As Gareth stepped back, the other man stepped forward. "Name's Jerome," he said. "How'd you two lovely ladies like somethin' to drink?"

"I think we'd love it," said Stacy with a smirk. Wrapping an arm around Jerome's, she allowed him to lead her back across the dance floor to the bar.

Beauty and Gareth, meanwhile, stood for a second in silence. Gareth held out his own arm, clearly expecting her to take it, and frowned when she didn't.

Finally, Beauty swallowed, blurted an incomprehensible word of apology, and scurried off after her ex without saying anything more.

After a moment of pause, Gareth followed behind her.

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Beauty tried not to drink much. The men had offered to pay, but the thought of getting drunk on their drinks made her stomach feel worse than any amount of alcohol could. Instead, she simply sat there, stirring her martini with its pick and wondering if Stacy would punish her for slipping off to the bathroom.

Her twin, on the other hand, downed glass after glass without the slightest hesitation, looking no more inebriated than she had been in the car. Absently, Beauty wondered if that was some kind of witchcraft too.

"Oh my, like, God," said Stacy, playfully slapping Jerome's chest, "no, like, way! Shut up!"

"I'm serious," said Jerome, whose nose had gone red. "No kidding."

Stacy only laughed a little harder.

Finishing off his drink, Jerome gave a great sigh and stood. "Sorry, gotta run to the toilet. Be back in a minute."

Gareth stood too. "Actually, I kinda need it as well."

"Don't worry, we'll wait here for you," said Stacy.

With a final shared smirk, the two headed off. The second they were out of view, Stacy turned on Beauty with a glare. "What was *that*?"

Beauty flinched. "What was *what*?"

"Don't pretend you don't know. You're supposed to be acting like my twin sister, not like your dog just died."

Beauty frowned.

"Keep this up," Stacy half-whispered, half-hissed, "and I'll add another month to your total."

"But that's not—!"

"No shit it's not, but if you're not going to play along *I'm* not going to play *fair*, okay?"

Beauty opened her mouth to protest, but all that came out was the most feeble squeak. She turned aside, screwing up her eyes to keep herself from crying.

"Aww," said a new voice, "I'm not interrupting anything, am I?"

Beauty turned and found herself staring at Stacy's exact opposite: a short, slender, dark-haired woman with glasses and no curves whatsoever to speak of.

Beside her, Stacy all but grit her teeth. "Ashley," she said, making the name sound like a curse.

"Heeeey, Stace," said the other woman. "Hey, it's greeeat to see you again, you know?" She flicked a glance at Beauty and frowned. "I didn't know you were capable of mitosis. It suits you, you disgusting amoeba."

Stacy drew herself up in her seat. "What the fuck do *you* want, Ashley? If this is about your boyfriend—"

Ashley rolled her eyes. "Please. I dealt with that cheating fuck the same way I *should* have dealt with you, you slut." She mimed flushing a toilet.



As Beauty realized what was going on, a fresh trembling started in her hands. She had to grip her knees just to keep herself from shaking.

Unfortunately, this attracted Ashley's attention. "Say, who is this clone of yours anyway? I know you were always going on about wanting a twin, but last I saw your sister she looked nothing like you. Where'd you find *this* doppelganger?."

Stacy gave her a glare. "That's none of your business, you hedge-witch. Why don't you fuck off and go back to making poultices for farmers?"

Ignoring her, Ashley took a step closer to Beauty. Her eyes tightened, glimmering like gemstones. Beauty flinched as they focused on her. "Hmm," said Ashley, looking deep into Beauty's eyes. "So that's your story, huh? How. Iron-ic." She licked her lips. "I like it though. You're the perfect couple for each other. A real pair of dolls."

"Thanks for the endorsement," said Stacy. "Now do us all a favor and fuck off back to your chicken-hut, Baba Yaga."

Ashley smirked. "As you like." And with that, she turned to go without a word.

Stacy huffed. "*Witch*," she said, sounding as if she meant something similar.

Beauty swallowed and turned back to her drink, feeling for the first time as if she wanted it.

Neither noticed Ashley wiggling her finger, nor heard the words she spoke beneath her breath.

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A couple of minutes later, Gareth and Jerome returned, slipping back into their seats with a smirk. "Much better," said one of the pair (Beauty found she couldn't tell the difference). "Didn't realize how much I'd been drinking." He laughed.

Stacy laughed too. "You know what, you're right," she said, pushing away her glass, "I think it's time we headed home." The pause that followed was *gravid*. "It's kinda late," she added, "and Beauty and I really *hate* walking home on our own. I don't suppose the two of you would like to accompany us?" She twirled a finger through her hair.

"I think we'd be delighted," said Jerome, standing and helping Stacy to her feet.

She giggled as she wrapped her arm around his own, pausing only for an instant to look over her shoulder and throw a glance at Beauty that commanded her to follow.

With a gulp, Beauty turned to Gareth and found him holding out his hand too. Drawing in a deep breath, she took it, allowing him to haul her out of her seat and away. Her heart pounded as he led her across the dance floor and up out of the nightclub.

The taxi ride home wasn't much better. Packed tight between Gareth and Stacy, Beauty could do little more than squeeze her knees and shiver, feeling as though she'd burst into tears at any moment.

Gareth, for his part, didn't pressure her to talk. While Stacy and Jerome flirted and groped and did pretty much everything short of actually fucking each other, Beauty and Gareth sat in silence.

In the end, the awkwardness overwhelmed her fear. "S-so," he said, "you work in the city?"

"Yeah," he replied, sounding a little surprised to hear her talking.

She gulped. "Wh-what kind of work do you do?"

He grimaced. "Ah, it's a little embarrassing." He scratched the back of his head. "I work at a, er, toy store," he said.

"Oh," replied Beauty. "That's not what I was expecting."

Gareth shrugged.

For the rest of the ride, they sat in silence.

Finally, the taxi screeched to a stop outside Stacy and Beauty's apartment. Opening the door, Stacy slipped off Jerome's lap and led him by the arm all the way up to the entrance. The two were inside and upstairs before Gareth and Beauty had even exited the vehicle.

"So, uh," said Gareth, as the taxi sped away. "You're not really into this, are you?"

Beauty froze. She wanted to shake her head and say 'no', but the knowledge that Stacy might add to her punishment kept her from speaking. "O-of course I am," she said, trying to sound confident.

Gareth simply raised an eyebrow. "Look, you don't seem to be into it, which means I'm not into it either, okay?"

She had to keep herself from audibly sighing in relief. "Oh, oh, okay."

"That said, you mind if I come in and grab a chair? Can't really leave without my brother, you know?"

"S-sure," she said, leading the way. For the first time all night, she actually felt a little confident.

As she crossed the threshold into the apartment, however, something struck her. It felt like an electric shock, and it froze on the doorstep. All of a sudden, her body felt so *stiff*. She wanted to throw back her head and scream, but she just couldn't force herself to move.

Like a wave of varnish, this feeling of stiffness spread all over her, washing up from her feet to her neck and leaving her standing there, utterly frozen. As she struggled to move, the world around her pulsed, and she could only watch, wanting to breathe deep and scream, as the apartment swelled around her into the apartment of a giant. The floor rushed towards her with speed.

Beauty struck it and bounced, but instead of breaking every bone in her body, she only made a slight *clack* and came to a stop unharmed, her figure locked in the position she'd assumed. Lying there on her side, unable to stand, she stared as her elbow sparkled and split, revealing a smooth ball with a little screw running through it. From this spread a pair of thin seams. One ran down her arm to the hand, while the other flowed upward in the direction of her shoulders.

Meanwhile, the rest of her shrunken body tingled as it underwent its own changes. She could feel the lips of her pussy fusing together, melding into a single lump of plastic. Something very similar happened to her digits—fingers and toes alike simply stuck together and fused till they were almost indistinguishable.

Finally, something sprouted beneath her feet. She couldn't see very well in her current position, but it looked a little like a cardboard flower. As she watched, it blossomed and expanded, its petals welling around her on all sides to form the walls of a little room. One of them was plastic, giving a window into the world.

Before she had a chance to appreciate this (not that she was especially inclined), something seized her limbs and snapped her backward, dragging her into the embrace of a lump of specially-molded plastic. It gripped her on all sides, holding her firmly in place.

With that, the spell seemed to be over.

Heart-assuming she still had one-pounding, Beauty struggled against her restraints, against both the plastic holding her and the stiffness of her body. She tried to scream, tried to protest. And when that didn't work, resorted to begging for mercy.

*Stacy, please! Turn me back! Turn me back! Stacy, I'm sorry—I'll sleep with him! I'll sleep with him!*

The world outside her plastic window whirled. Gareth's face appeared, grown to a giant's. "Huh," he said, looking in on her. "Who'd leave a doll like this lying unboxed in an apartment doorway?"

*Wh-what?* thought Stacy. *Doesn't he recognize me?*

Footsteps sounded on the stairs. "What the hell are you doing up there?" asked Gareth.

Jerome grunted. "Dunno," he replied. "Not sure what I'm doing here at all."

"Yeah..." replied Gareth. "Actually, thinking about it, why are we here? Whose apartment is this?"

Jerome shrugged. "Dunno. Say, I found something you might like on the floor upstairs. Here." He held something up.

If Beauty *did* have a heart, the sight of what was in Jerome's hand made it stop beating. Because it looked like a little cardboard box with a plastic window for a front, and inside it sat a doll that looked almost exactly like Stacy. 'I'm Slutty Stacy,' said a speech balloon beside her head.

Beauty wanted to shiver. *Wh-who? Why-?!*

Jerome tossed the box, forcing Gareth to snatch it out of the air. "You didn't steal this, did you?"

"Nah," replied his brother. "I told you, it was just on the floor outside the apartment. So, finders-keepers, you know? Take it into work tomorrow, see if you can sell it."

"Mmmn," replied Gareth, tucking Stacy under his arm. A second later, he put Beauty there as well, placing their boxes' windows so together so they could stare at each other's faces.

*Stacy!* thought Beauty. *What's going on?!*

Stacy simply stared back at her and smiled, face blank as any doll's.

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With that evening brought to a rather abrupt end, Gareth and Jerome soon headed back outside and whistled for a taxi. Beauty could only watch and listen from her box as the car screeched up and the pair slipped inside, where Gareth placed the two of them on the seat beside him and sat back with a sigh.

"God," said Jerome. "What a complete waste of a night."

"Tell me about it," replied Gareth. "Where'd it go wrong, d'you think? It seemed like it was going pretty well to start with."

Jerome frowned as if struggling to think. "I don't know," he said, shaking his head. "I don't know."

The taxi sped on. Soon enough they arrived outside what could only be the pair's apartment, and Gareth took the two of them under his arm in order to carry them inside. Making his way upstairs to his bedroom, he placed them beside a colorful uniform and set about throwing off his clothes.

As his cock sprang out of his boxers, tip stretching all the way down to his knee, Beauty stared, feeling a little glad she'd been spared.

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She spent the rest of the night slowly losing her mind.

A hundred or more questions assaulted her, each more painful to confront than the last. Why had this happened? If Stacy hadn't done it, who had? If someone else had done it, were they going to turn her back? ...Or... Or were they just going to leave her like this?

The prospect made her want to whimper. The idea of being a woman forever had been bad enough on its own. But being a *doll* forever? She wanted to screw up her eyes and burst into tears.

They weren't going to leave her like this, were they? ...Were they?

Several hours after she asked herself this question, sunlight finally started to spill through Gareth's window. She watched, unable to do anything else, as he rose and made his way to the shower, slowly working his way through his morning routine.

At last, he returned to change into his work clothes. The moment he was done, he snatched them up, packed them into a bag, and hauled them off to the toy store.

For the next half-an-hour, Beauty could do little more than stand there in her cardboard and plastic prison as the bus carried Gareth to work. After a half-hour of intense anxiety, she heard the sound of him stepping off and making his way into the building. She couldn't see anything beyond the bag, but she heard him speaking to his coworkers, heard him getting ready.

Eventually, a hand slipped into the bag and snatched her out of it.

"You're saying they're unopened?" asked someone, a man.

"Yeah," replied Gareth. "They're still sealed and everything. It's like someone just bought them and abandoned them."

"Weird," said the older man. Taking Beauty's box from Gareth, he held it up to his face for inspection. "Slutty Stacy, eh? Seems like a reasonable name for a doll." He said this without any irony whatsoever. "Eh, whatever. Go throw them on the shelf and stick whatever price you think is appropriate on them."

"Will do," replied Gareth, accepting her back. And with that, he stuffed her back in the bag and moved on.

A minute or two later, his hand grabbed her again. Beauty could only whimper in her head as he drew her out and plopped her on a shelf, followed only a moment later by Stacy.

"There," he said, carefully adjusting them. "Hopefully you two sell." With that, he turned to go. Beauty could only watch him retreat, wanting to open her mouth and scream at him.

What were they supposed to do *now*?

The only answer that came to mind was 'nothing'. What else was she *supposed* to do when she could neither speak nor move?

As she ruminated on this she heard the sound of a door swishing and realized the store was open. With this knowledge came a new and even more terrifying realization: there was a real chance that someone could *buy* her.

What would happen then? How would whoever had done this to her know where to find her to turn her back? What would happen if she got lost, or worse, damaged? How was she supposed to get back to normal?

These were questions that tormented her over the course of the next few hours as business in the store went on as normal around her. Children, mostly little girls, ran past her intermittently. Some of them even looked at her, and one even happened to pick her up, sending her into a spiral of despair. Fortunately, a call from their mother caught their attention, and they put her back on the shelf without protest. Standing there, she found her missing heart pounding.

After that, the hours passed without much change. Children and parents passed her by, and a few even showed some interest, but no-one else picked her up, and no-one decided to buy her.

Slowly, steadily, the store grew darker and darker, until at last the lights snapped on and dazzled her plastic eyes. They remained on for an hour before turning off, at which point the bustle of the store faded into silence.

\*

Night, and the rest of the week, passed quickly and without incident. The longer she stood in the box, the less time seemed to mean to her. By the time the store's lights snapped off for the fourth time since she'd arrived, Beauty had settled into a dreamlike state in which she barely noticed it passing her at all. Events blurred together—one day was too similar to the next.

Finally, however, she saw a familiar face.

"Well, well, well," said a woman in black, stooping to take a closer look at them, "if it isn't Slutty Stacy and her sister... Slutty Stacy." Ashley smirked as she reached to pick them up. "Which one of you is the original, huh? Assuming it even matters anymore." She snorted.

As her words settled in Beauty's head, her brain sped back up to full speed in an instant. *Y-you!* she thought, wanting to thrash and fight and scream. *You did this!*

Ashley gave her a knowing smile. "Jeez, took you a while to figure *that* out, didn't it? Yeah, of course I did."

The cruelty in her eyes would have made Beauty shiver if she'd still been alive. *Please, please, turn me back!*

"Hmm," said Ashley, tapping her chin in thought. "I guess I could turn *you* back. I mean, it's not like *you* slept with my boyfriend in college."

*Please!*

"Of course, you're still a cheat, aren't you? Even if the person you cheated on deserved it." She grinned. "I mean, I'm basically doing the world a favor, aren't I? Now, it's probably not *great* that you're liable to end up in the hands of a corruptible little girl, but, eh, it's not like you're in much of a state to influence her."

Her words landed on Beauty like a series of stone blocks. *N-no! No! Please, you have to turn me back!*

"Pass," said Ashley, placing her back on the shelf. "...Actually, tell you what, I'll cut you a deal: I come into this story 'bout once a month to buy a new doll for my niece. If you're *both* still here the next time I pass... I'll turn you back." She leaned in close. "And I do mean both of you. If even one of you sells, well..." She mimed cutting her throat. "Enjoy little Lacy's dollhouse."

Beauty wanted to cry. *No! There's no way we'll last a month!*

Ashley laughed. "Well, that's too bad for you, isn't it, dollface? Anyway, I gotta go. Got a busy day ahead of me, being a living human an' all. Can't spend it all talking to toys. Sooo... see ya! And good luck!"

With that, she turned and strolled away as if nothing were out of the ordinary.

Beauty could only watch her go, wanting nothing more than to whimper.