

THE DOLL

by

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FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

A nine-year-old girl's customary living space.

On the floor, CAITLIN sits with a pair of scissors in one hand, red wrapping paper in the other. She's unconsciously cute, well on her way to becoming a heartbreaker.

Caitlin cuts the wrapping paper in half and tosses the scissors aside.

From the hallway, FOOTSTEPS. Caitlin glances up, sees the shadow standing on the other side of the bedroom door.

Caitlin holds her breath; waits for the shadow to move on.

It does.

With an exhale, Caitlin returns her attention to the wrapping. She reaches for the thing next to her -- an eighteen-inch PLASTIC DOLL in a ruffled navy blue dress.

Caitlin places the doll in the center of the paper. Looks hard into its eyes. The doll seems to be staring back --

SHRINK! Caitlin quickly brings the paper up and over the doll. She ties it off with a piece of ribbon.

Caitlin pulls out a marker. Writes on a name tag. Sticks it to the present.

She closes her eyes and breathes a sigh of relief.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

A two-story suburban home, not a light on inside.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Darkness. All is still. Caitlin is fast asleep.

CRINKLE.

Caitlin's eyes open. Was that wrapping paper? She reaches for the beside lamp, looks to --

The red present. It sits on a chair in the corner of the room. It appears untouched.

Caitlin turns off the light. Keeps her eyes open. Waits.

CRINKLE.

That was definitely wrapping paper. She clicks on the light.

The present, still on the chair, but subtly, almost teasingly, in a new position.

Caitlin throws the covers over her head. She closes her eyes, listens to the sound of the CRINKLING WRAPPING PAPER as it fills the room.

RIIIIIIPPPPPP. THUMP.

Under the covers, Caitlin opens her eyes.

SILENCE.

Trembling, Caitlin lowers the sheet for a peek.

The chair is empty. A piece of torn wrapping paper hangs delicately from the edge.

Caitlin swallows the lump in her throat. She pulls the covers away. Crawls to the foot of the bed.

On the floor is the marker, the scissors, and scattered bits of torn wrapping paper.

Caitlin looks down, catches a cursory glimpse of --

THE DOLL'S FOOT --

-- slipping silently under the bed skirt.

Caitlin GASPS and jumps back. She listens to the sounds of the doll moving beneath the bed.

There's a feminine GRUNT.

Then, again, SILENCE.

Caitlin slowly moves back to the foot of the bed. She lowers herself to the floor, gets on her knees, grabs the bottom of the bed skirt. She lifts it up.

BOOM! The doll shoots out from underneath the bed.

Caitlin SHRIEKS, watches the doll slide to the other side of the room. It comes to rest against the empty chair and doesn't move.

Cautiously, Caitlin approaches it. She immediately notices the doll's MARRED CONDITION -- torn dress, twisted hair, right eye missing. Along its cheek, three parallel scratches.

Next to the mangled doll, the shredded wrapping paper with the original name tag:

"FOR THE GIRL UNDER MY BED. PLEASE LEAVE ME ALONE."

Caitlin knowingly closes her frightened eyes.

From under the bed, a GHOST-WHITE HAND reaches for the pair of scissors as a SCOWLING FACE emerges from the darkness.

FADE OUT.