

Anne's trembling fingers fumbled furiously with the shiny, patterned wrapping paper as the excited young girl struggled to tear open her birthday present. At last the flimsy golden paper was shredded away, revealing a tall, decorated box. Anne's bushy golden eyebrows lowered over her confused blue eyes as she stared curiously at the box, then at her smiling parents. "What's in it?" she demanded eagerly, delicately tracing a cautious finger over the smooth label that clearly bore the words, "Just for You Friends." Anne glared expectantly up at her mother and father, waiting impatiently for an answer. Despite her harmless, gentle features and her frail, weak body, she was a selfish, irritable little girl who cared for nobody but herself, yet her parents loved her dearly.

"You'll see when you open it!" exclaimed her mother cheerily, tightly clutching a camcorder ready to record the opening of her beloved daughter's birthday present. "It's something you've wanted for a very long time!" Both parents briefly experienced a dramatic, vigorous flashback of Anne shrieking shrilly and ferociously kicking them for a specific doll just like her equally spoiled friend, Melissa.

Anne ripped carelessly at the box until it was promptly reduced to a pile of shredded brown paper. This was her famous way of opening things—tearing them apart mercilessly without bothering to open them properly like any intelligent, ordinary child would. Anne scowled unappreciatively at the result of her vicious shredding: a doll. Her overjoyed parents had expected her to be delighted to get what she had wanted for so long, but instead Anne's freckled cheeks turned a vivid shade of purple and she shrieked, "This isn't the type of doll I wanted! It isn't like Melissa's!" and she proceeded to throw a massive temper tantrum right on the spot.

"But, darling, isn't the doll beautiful? It doesn't have to be exactly like Melissa's, does it?" Anne's mother cried frantically, desperately attempting to calm her daughter down. The discarded doll sprawled lifelessly on the floor, its glossy brunette hair tumbling lusciously all over its skinny plastic body.

"No, it *has* to be *exactly* like Melissa's!" Anne protested stubbornly. "Her doll has green eyes and mine has brown! Mine *has* to have green eyes!" She gave her doll a merciless kick that sent it tumbling across the floor, its tangled curls of hair cascading awkwardly over its unblinking brown eyes as it rolled across the carpet.

The two parents exchanged helpless glances. "Alright, darling," Anne's mother promised breathlessly. "We'll get you a new doll just like Melissa's. Okay?"

Anne's thin, narrow lips stretched tightly across her gleeful face in a victorious smile. "Yes," she said, her penetrating sapphire-blue eyes glancing coldly at each of

her relieved parents, daring them to protest. They obediently lowered their heads as if their demanding daughter was a powerful queen rather than a spoiled, unsatisfied child.

That night as Anne clambered into her large four-poster bed and roughly yanked up the thick twisted blanket, she disdainfully flung the abandoned doll across her bedroom where it tumbled painfully onto the floor. She glared resentfully at it for a moment, carefully surveying its ever-smiling, painted vinyl face, before comfortably nestling her head into her plush, creamy white pillow and immediately falling into a deep slumber.

The next morning when Anne's long eyelashes fluttered open and she awoke, she found the unwanted doll had moved slightly from the spot on the floor where she had flung it mercilessly the night before. She frowned, then carelessly shrugged her skinny shoulders and clambered out of bed, giving the doll a swift kick as she trotted majestically out her bedroom door.

That night, Anne lay asleep in her bed, her tangled golden curls of white-blond hair tumbling lusciously all over her fluffy pillow in which her head nuzzled comfortably, unaware of the dark shadows flickering eerily across the creamy white walls of her bedroom. A soft, menacing rustle echoing hollowly from the corner of the room abruptly awoke Anne, and the young girl roughly shoved back the blanket sprawled across her trembling body, her wild, glinting blue eyes darting fearfully around the room until her suspicious gaze tumbled upon the doll. It had moved again. Anne struggled to suppress a piercing cry of utter alarm. What was going on? Then Anne's suspicious stare flickered across the wall opposite her, and this time she did shriek, a bloodcurdling cry that unwillingly escaped her trembling, narrow lips. For there, scrawled clumsily across the wall, written in suspicious scarlet paint, were the words: You'll be sorry.

Anne clawed desperately at the blankets, frantically yanking it over her head where the sheets obscured her vision so she could not see those dreaded words on her bedroom wall. Her rapid breath thickly clouded the air like invisible smoke, but she did not dare raise the blanket from her head. Anne stayed under the blankets until the first feeble, golden rays of sunlight filtered welcomingly through the clear window, and only when the light flooded entirely through her dark bedroom did she gather the courage to lift the sheets from her head. The fearful words were no longer scrawled across the wall. They had disappeared, almost like they had never even been there before. Anne breathed a sigh of relief. Maybe it had all just been her imagination.

But the startling ordeal was not over yet. Suddenly, Anne felt the cold, razor-sharp blade of a knife painfully prickling the tender skin under her neck, and when she glanced down uncertainly, she saw a long, slender knife clutched tightly in the doll's skinny fingers. Then the alarming thought occurred to Anne that it was the doll who had written the words on her wall, the doll that had moved, and now the doll who was threatening to kill her.

A piercing shriek prepared to escape Anne's dry, scratchy throat, but she did not have time to scream, because the needle-sharp blade of the knife was already slicing deeply into Anne's skin, brutally killing her in seconds.

Several weeks later . . .

The young girl's skinny fingers fumbled furiously as she struggled to tear open the crinkling patterned wrapping paper covering the gift box. When the girl finally managed to rip open the box, she scowled unappreciatively at the result: a doll. "I don't want a stupid little doll!!!" shrieked the girl viciously. "This doll is *ugly!*" She flung it ferociously across the room.

"Darling," pleaded the mother in a whining coo. "It was a gift from Anne's parents. It was Anne's favorite doll. . . ."