

A Doll for the Witchling

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Part of the Fashion Series

Gabrielle arrived at her job a little early. As she was wearing a baggy sweatshirt and pajama pants, it was hard to tell that the blonde haired woman was a local model. Though it might seem strange that Gabrielle would take a job modeling at a toy store, these were the jobs that she enjoyed. They were small and quirky, but also had a natural charm that drew Gabrielle to them.

The toy store had been granted prime real estate near to the mall's food court, on the first floor. It was as brightly lit as any toy store Gabby had ever been to, with blue carpeting and varieties of common toys. The model knocked on the still gated door and waited patiently for a young goateed man to come to the front. He was thin, and only just Gabby's short height.

"You the other model?"

Gabby nodded, and he pointed her to the back. With little more guidance, Gabby walked to the back room where a makeshift makeup table had been set up. There was another model there, already dressed in a blue ballet dress. She sat at the table with a mirror in hand, busy exaggerating her natural features to appear more doll-like.



“Hi.” Gabby said to her while putting her purse on the table.

“Your costume is over there.” The woman said, pointing and not looking at Gabby. Nearby, a pink and white leotard hung on a hanger.

“Cute!” Gabby said, trying to get some conversation going. But the other model kept her focus on her mirror.

“If you could, you know, not talk, that would be great,” she said.

Gabby frowned and picked up her costume. The job had rapidly lost its charm.

Two hours later, Gabby stood on a pink pedestal in front of the toy store. Her pink and white leotard, and pink pancake tutu was perfect at lighting up the eyes of passing parents and children. Her long legs clad in nude tights themselves turned many a man’s head. Her hair had been pulled into a high ponytail and a silver tiara crowned her head. But to top the costume off, Gabby had painted pink dots on the apples of her cheeks. Those, and the four strings that hung from the ceiling and were tied to her wrists and feet made even her believe she was a real doll.

The other model, thankfully, stood on her own pedestal on the other side of the entryway. She had gorgeous, high cheekbones and black hair, and was a tad shorter but a smidge heavier than Gabby, though she still had perfect modeling physique. She was dressed in a less revealing ballet dress, but was still adorned with the pink circles and strings that marked her as a doll.

The two models were dutiful in their poses; both only shifting occasionally, though Gabby especially was prone to waving or smiling to the amazed kids who watched her. One such kid was a twelve-year-old girl who kept her long black hair in pigtails and wore a purple shirt that said she was a ‘Witch in training’ in stylized text. Something about the two models entranced her, and she asked Gabby, then the owner of the toy store, if

she could play with the models. She was, of course, denied that chance, and so walked away with slightly drooping shoulders.

But the girl turned as she passed Gabby, and looked at the model with brown eyes. “Don’t worry, Dolly, we can play soon enough.”

Gabby almost felt bad for the kid who couldn’t seem to differentiate fantasy and reality.

However, she returned about an hour later, with her tall mother in tow. The mom, who had a shock of red hair, looked very soccer mommish in sneakers, capri pants, and button down shirt, took barely a look at the models before saying something to her daughter and went into the toy store. Gabby didn’t think much about it and kept her attention to the concourse and the mass of people who walked by. But the conversation between the store owner and the mother quickly grabbed the model’s attention.

“How much for the pair of marionettes out front.” She asked. Gabby heard the girl say something quickly. “Actually, we’re only interested in the pink one.”

“The what?” The owner replied, “You mean the models? We just hired them to pose as marionettes for the day. They’re not real toys.”

“Sir, I think you are mistaken. The pink one is clearly a toy.”

“No, ma’am, we hired both of them; they’re just models.”

“Could you please follow me?” The mother asked, and Gabby felt bad for the owner as he dealt with this clearly insane woman. All three of them walked to stand in front of Gabby. The mom pointed at the model and said, “You see, those strings are clearly attached to her.”

“Well, yes, because we tied some string around their wrists,” The owner said.

Gabby suddenly felt four needle pricks, one in each wrist and ankle. She instinctively tried to yelp, but her jaw remained stubbornly stuck. She noticed a strange twinkle in the girl’s eyes.

“I think you are mistaken.” The mother said, walking to Gabby and showing the owner the model’s wrist. Gabby glanced down and was shocked to see the string was now attached to her wrist by a small metal loop that was screwed into her body. The owner shook his head and cleaned off his glasses. Gabby was too shocked to do anything.

“And, this marionette is made of wood and jointed.”

Gabby’s posture suddenly straightened and she felt a wave of cool air come over her body. Having been looking at her wrist, she saw a thin yellow band of light run over her hands and arms, replacing tan skin with lacquered wood. She could even make out faint tree rings and wood knots along her arm. The storeowner closed his eyes and started to count. Gabby had no idea what he was doing.

“But, ma’am, I clearly remember hiring two models to pose for us today.”

“Well, sir, I don’t know what you did with the other one, but this marionette is plainly not a model. I mean, if she was, she would have certainly said something by now.”

Gabby quickly tried to speak, but her lip felt fused together. She didn’t even feel a tongue or teeth inside. In fact, Gabby realized she wasn’t breathing, nor was her heart beating. Her eyes remained motionless, as did the rest of her body. How was this happening? Gabby scanned for something, and saw a nearly foot long black wand in the mother’s hand, held secretly along her leg.

“And sir, honestly, would this ‘model’ have manufacturing stamps on her feet?”

Gabby saw the witch flick her wand and felt a pin prick of pain on the bottom of her left foot. The mother came forward and picked up Gabby’s foot, twisting it so the owner could see. Of course, the model could not, but she watched the owner’s face finally nod.

“I suppose I was mistaken. She is a doll. What do you think would be a fair price for it?”

The witch flicked her wand; “I’ll pay one dollar for her, and not a penny more.”

The man nodded and accepted a single green bill.

“Will you need any help moving them?” He asked, but the witch shook her head.

“I can deal with her quite easily.”

The owner went back inside the store and the smiling witch’s kid walked up to Gabby.

“Isn’t this great? Now we can play forever!”