

Brandy's Dollhouse

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A Ye Olde Toys Story

Brandy didn't have a spoonful of interest in the toy store, until she saw a doll move. The mall was a quiet place today, with stores still sleepily opening. Some, like the clothing store she was headed to, had yet to open. In the meantime, she walked through the mall and browsed the windows. That's when she saw the toy.

A moving doll, in this time and all its wondrous technology, might not seem so special. But the doll didn't move at the mercy of mechanical jerks. Her movements were too fine, too natural, and too lively. Of course, being a reasonable person, Brandy did not believe her eyes. She stopped to look at the doll, which wore a blue dress and stood on the balcony of a three story blue dollhouse. And the doll, despite no means to do so, waved at Brady and motioned for her to come closer.

Her curiosity obeyed the doll's command, walking to the dollhouse and noting the sign in the dollyard:

Dodgson Mansion - \$299.00

Includes Alice Doll

Then she looked at the doll, and realized that she was dressed very much like Alice, who had great adventures in Wonderland. Brandy could almost look directly into the doll's eyes, being the dollhouse was so tall and sat upon a table.

"How do you do?" The doll curtsied to Brandy. Her voice was melodious, not like the mechanical

sound Brandy had been expecting.

“I’m curious,” the woman managed to say.

“Oh, what a wonderful thing to be! What are you curious about?”

“I’m curious about you and how you move and talk.”

“Well, that’s silly. There are many things that move and talk, are you curious about all of them, too?”

“Of course not. It’s just that I’ve never known a doll to move before.”

Alice laughed. “That’s because humans move fine enough for us. We only move when we need to go somewhere and there is no person to move us. But since I’ve no owner to move me, I must always move myself.”

“That sounds quite lonely. How do you get by?”

“Oh,” the doll perked up on the balls of her cloth feet, “I have many things to play with in here. I can play tea, or play dress-up. I can cook and clean, as well! Would you like to come inside so I can show you?”

Brandy was more than a little surprised at the doll’s offer. “I would, but I’m much bigger than you, and don’t think I’ll fit, or get inside.”

“Well, of course you can! Just go through the front door, like any reasonable person would.” The doll twirled around, then walked inside the house. “Don’t forget to knock!” She yelled.

Brandy, who still considered herself to be a reasonable person, supposed that if a doll could walk and talk, surely a person could be shrunk to fit inside the dollhouse. So she bent and rapped on the door with one finger. The door opened, and Alice stood behind it. What mystified Brandy, however, was that she stood, without any trouble at all, on the front patio of the dollhouse, and not a tick of a second had passed since she was a giant. While Brandy was still stunned at her sudden change in size, a startlingly deep growl came from behind her, and a deep shadow to match fell upon her. She turned to see a giant man with almost no hair on his head or face wearing a deep scowl. Alice grabbed Brandy quickly, pulled her inside, and slammed the door.

“Best not to talk to him,” the doll said.

“What’s his problem?” Brandy asked.

“Oh, he just hates toys.”

“He works in a strange place if he hates toys.”

“On the contrary; he works here so he can get rid of us.” Brandy had half a mind to argue the point further, but supposed the doll would know more about toy makers than she. “Well, this is where I live,” Alice said, waving around the dollhouse, the interior of which was drab balsa wood ready to be decorated, and a few pieces of furniture. Just enough for a doll to live on. Alice, Brandy could see clearly, was a rag doll, made of a tan cloth stitched together and having only mitten hands. Her body looked as soft as a pillow, but she still moved with uncanny life and ability. Brandy followed the toy to the tea room which had four chairs and a table between, and a set of plastic finery. Alice pulled out a chair for her guest and dutifully pretended to pour from the pot.

“Would you like some sugar?”

“Yes, please. Two lumps,” Brandy said, not feeling strange at all in the game of pretend with a toy. In fact, it all felt natural. Right. Alice wasn’t a doll, but alive in some important way. A potential friend.

Alice pulled two sugar cubes from the pot and plopped them into a cup. Brandy noted they were likely wooden cubes painted white. Alice then prepared her own tea, and the two clinked their cups together.

“So what is it you wish to discuss?” Brandy asked, pretending to sip her tea.

“Oh, I don’t know. I’ve never had a discussion before. What do people normally discuss?”

“Many things. Politics, school, news, celebrity gossip, regular gossip. The list is really quite extensive.”

“I wouldn’t know anything about those subjects.”

“I suppose you wouldn’t, being that you are a doll. But surely you must know some gossip?”

Alice shook her head, “Not really. I am so far from the other dolls that I have no clue what they do with their day. But I do know they are jealous of me.”

“Why is that?”

“Well, wouldn’t you be jealous if you were strapped inside a box or smooshed by teddy bears while you could see another doll have an entire house to herself?”

“I suppose I would.”

Alice sighed, “Unfortunately, I have seen a hundred Barbies bought and gone to happy homes, while I remain here all alone and ownerless.”

“I should think that to be a good thing. I for one would not want to be owned.”

“Well, of course you wouldn’t. But I am a doll. If I am not owned, who will play with me?”

“Perhaps a playmate. It is unfortunate that you are all alone in this mansion.”

“What a splendid idea!” Alice said, jumping from her seat, “Come, let’s get you properly dressed.” She grabbed Brandy by the hand, and Brandy, surprised, let herself be led by the doll. Once she got her wits about her, and, having some suspicion as to what was to happen next, ran hand in mitten with Alice up the stairs, giggling like a child along the way. It had been ages since she felt the simple joy of play. Not that Brandy didn’t have friends, but so much of life was wine and whine.

The doll guided Brandy to a room adorned with a bed and a trunk. Alice let go of her new friend and opened the trunk, which was filled with doll-sized clothes. Brandy sat next to her and tried to pick a few things out for herself, but Alice put a stop to that with a slap.

“Stop that. I’ll get your clothes. You just get ready.”

“Oh, but I’d much rather pick my own dress.”

Alice laughed without looking up, “Of course you would, but there is no doll in the world that should get to choose what she wears.”

“Well, I am not a doll.”

“Oh, but could you pretend? For me? I have never had a playmate to call my own.”

Brandy smiled, coming to think of her as a friend. She decided then she would find a way to buy this house so she could have many more adventures in it. Many more adventures with her.

“I’ll pretend to be your doll. What do you want me to do?”

“Well, get rid of those boring human clothes. I have something much more fun for you.”

Brandy nodded, without an ounce of bashfulness in front of the doll (and being that the room was hidden from human eyes) pulled off her shirt and jeans, and sat on the bed in her underwear while Alice ruffled through the trunk. The doll ignored Brandy’s little noises of approval or disapproval, and eventually pulled out an appropriate costume.

Brandy was delighted when she saw her doll dress. It was pink and fell down almost to her knees. It had a few white stripes as accents and thin straps. Alice had also found a pair of purple tights that went well with the dress, and Brandy couldn’t wait to put her costume on. She slipped into her dress and tights, and then spun around for Alice to awe at her. The doll clapped her mittens at the little show, and Brandy curtsied to her friend.

“I think I could make a good doll, should I choose to be one.” Brandy laughed while smoothing her dress.

“Oh, would you? I do wish to have a doll friend.” Alice said.

“Well, I have many person responsibilities that I can’t just leave. But I intend to buy this house so you can come live with me.”

Alice let out a little squeal and leaped into Brandy, hugging the woman tightly around her neck. “Oh, thank you, thank you, thank you.”

“You’re very welcome, Alice,” Brandy said, pulling the doll off her, “I think I need to go find an employee so I can buy this place.” She went into the upstairs living area, bare but for the French doors leading to the balcony.

“Wait here. I’ll be right back,” she told Alice, and walked onto the balcony. After a moment of

searching, she saw the scarecrow-like owner standing over a display of diecast cars with a pen and clipboard in hand. His lips moved, but couldn't make out the mumbling from this distance. She began shouting, singing, and waving her arms to get his attention.

Alice walked up beside her, still giddy at the thought of getting a proper home, until she saw the old owner.

"Brandy, don't!" The toy said, pulling at Brandy's arms, "He doesn't like it when dolls try and talk to him."

"Well, I'm human," Brandy said.

"But he doesn't know that!"

But it was too late for Brandy to listen to the advice, as the old man saw her and his placid face turned to a scowl. The woman suddenly thought it might have been a good idea to at least grow back to a human size before talking to the man as his over six foot frame came closer, towering over both Brandy and Alice.

"What is it?" He snapped at her.

"Well," Brandy said, getting her nerves under control as she looked up at the giant, "I want to buy this dollhouse, and I want to make sure the doll here comes with it."

Alice had retreated inside.

"I should think it's too late for all that, seeing as this house has been bought."

"I beg your pardon?" Brandy asked. "No one's been here since I arrived, and I think my friend would have known if she had been purchased."

"It was an online order. The house, and both dolls inside, are to be shipped later today."

Her heart started to thump faster, as the man had used the plural, implying that Brandy herself had just been sold. "Sir, I'll have you know that I'm human."

The man frowned, "Is this some kind of joke? You're just a doll."

“I would never joke about such things. I am a human, and not a doll, and I cannot be sold. I mean to buy this doll and her house, and that is that. The notion that I would be a doll is quite nonsensical.”

“Nonsense? You walked into a dollhouse, therefore you are a doll. It all seems very sensible to me.”

“Brandy,” Alice said from inside, her voice quiet and a little worried, “Brandy, your arm.”

The woman ignored the doll and put her hands on her hips, “Now, I may be *currently* small, but I assure you I am human and can purchase this house. And I would appreciate it if you stopped thinking of me as a doll.”

“Brandy,” Alice hissed, “look at your arm!”

The woman looked back at Alice, and then looked at her arm. Confusion broke to worry when she saw unmistakable stitches along the inside of her arm. In fact, the skin around the stitches was now cloth.

Her mouth went dry as she tried to process the sight. And then she looked up to the scarecrow man, whose frown deepened past his chin. He reached forward with a hand as big as Brandy herself. She tried to jump away, but wrinkled old fingers wrapped around her like pythons.

Perhaps she was partially stuffed now, as she felt no pain as his less than gentle hand squeezed her. Brandy shouted and cursed at the man, kicking her legs and struggling against his giant’s strength. But he paid her fighting as he appraised the six inch tall woman. He mumbled something about insolence and plaything, but she didn’t understand any of it. Stranger, however, was that she felt his deep voice reverb through her body.

“You’re just a toy,” he said finally, passing his judgment over Brandy, and Brandy, knowing that her arms, and perhaps more of her, were completely plush, couldn’t disagree. Though she wanted to so badly. The old man lowered her to the dollhouse’s front lawn before dropping her unceremoniously. Brandy shouted, her stomach leaping into her throat as she fell the last human foot to the green painted board. Fortunately, her mostly plush legs softened her fall.

“If you wanted to be a person, you really ought not to have gone inside a dollhouse.” He said, pointing

a wrinkly old finger at Brandy. She watched him leave with a gaping mouth and large, disbelieving eyes.

The dollhouse door swung open and steps ran to her. “Oh, Brandy. You really must learn to trust me. I have been a toy far longer than you, and know how to behave myself.” Alice picked her friend off the ground.

Brandy’s heart skipped faster and faster as she realized with more than a little fear that she was to be a doll, and from the sounds of it, had already been bought. She became quite worried about being owned and being played with.

“I’m a doll,” Brandy said, dumbly looking at her hands as her fingers grew into an adorable mitten. Alice wrapped her own mitten around Brandy’s.

“I know,” Alice said, with a hopeful little smile across her stitched face, “and I am so sorry. Had I known that you would be transformed, or that you would be bought, I would never have invited you in.”

“I’m a doll,” Brandy said again, letting Alice pull her onto a little porch swing.

“You said that already, Brandy,” Alice said, kneeling in front of the transforming doll. Watching as her new friend’s face became cloth and cotton. She stroked Brandy’s new yarn hair. “Do you think you will like being a doll?”

It was hard for Brandy to think. All she could do was imagine her new life, where she was made from stitched cloth and fluffy cotton. Imagining a life in a balsa wood dollhouse. In someone’s playroom, beside a bed or in a closet. A life in the control of another.

“There’s no need to be sad.” She said, “Being a doll is a wonderful thing. You’ll see. Three days from now, we’ll be wrapped up in our owner’s arms, smiling like Cheshires. Or, we’ll be swinging through the air learning to dance ballet.” And, for a moment, Brandy believed that she would come to love being a doll. If she could love being a doll for a moment, maybe she could love being a doll forever. She squeezed the other doll’s mitten. In fact, with Alice by her side, she knew she could.