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# THE PLASTIC CAMP

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# THE PLASTIC CAMP

A Creative Project Submitted to the  
Office of Graduate Studies  
College of Arts & Sciences of  
John Carroll University  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

By  
Cierra Chalice Perry  
2016

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## Introduction

I have created this story to capture how human suffering is often contained, perpetuated, and reinforced by a cycle of fear and emotions that result from the psychological neurosis of humans themselves due to inescapable insidious reflections. What I mean by insidious reflections is how one's own reflection in the mirror can manipulate one's perception of oneself. In this story I explore the notion of individuals mirroring each other by inflicting torture onto others that they are unaware of because they are simply "mirroring" someone else's behavior. I am inspired by Stanley Milgram's documented film experiment *An Obedience to Authority* because it showcases how individuals follow orders and mirror the behavior of others without considering the repercussions of their behavior. This story examines what happens when we are prisoners of our own reflections, what happens when we mirror or follow the orders of someone else without regard to consequences, and what happens when we are rejected by that which we mirror.

In *On the Sublime*, Longinus argues that sublimity is a technique that poets use to bring about an eminence and excellence in discourse that "contains much food for reflection, is difficult or rather impossible to resist, and makes a strong and ineffaceable impression on memory" (138). Longinus's argument highlights the fact that even our thoughts and intentions are reflective mirrors themselves. My story *The Plastic Camp* aims to capture a series of reflective emotions projected by the characters onto each other through a repetitious cycle of mirroring actions.

I commissioned the language of the characters in this story to be poetic because I believe that it intensifies and places emphasis on their suffering. I am inspired by Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, specifically the character Macduff, and Shakespeare's preoccupation with how the circumstances of Macduff's birth influences his destiny. Similar to Macduff's birth in *Macbeth*, the main character in my story Ruby is unnaturally born because she is cut from her mother's womb with a cattle horn by her physician father Richard. The unnatural birth of Ruby is mystical and makes her somehow more erratic and unhinged than most girls her age.

In addition, Ruby is born first and then her stillborn twin brother Richard junior. In *Negotiating with the Dead*, Margaret Atwood's discussion of doubles and doppelgängers inspired me to create Ruby as a twin who absorbed some of her brother's qualities at the time of her birth and his stillbirth. The stillbirth of Ruby's twin brother Richard serves as a source of her suffering because looking at her own reflection sends her into a trance. In her discussion of duplicity, using *Alice in Wonderland* as an example, Atwood states, "the moment when Alice passes through the mirror at this one instant Alice is neither here nor there, neither art nor life, neither one thing nor the other, though at the same time she is all of these at once" (57). Atwood's description of Alice's existence is precisely how my character Ruby exists within this story. Ruby is a gem, work of art, and her reflection holds her captive bearing her to the real world and a world of seizing mirrors.

The theme of doubles continues in this story through bodily scars and mutilations. Ruby's mother Lisa is haunted by the scar left on her stomach from Ruby's birth, which

also reminds her of Richard junior's stillbirth. Lisa repetitiously injures herself on Ruby's birthday to commemorate Richard junior's stillbirth. Lisa and Richard are unable to enjoy intimacy because of the scar left on Lisa's stomach. Lisa tells Ruby every year on her birthday the story of how she was born, which can be considered conducive to Ruby's psychological neurosis. However, Lisa always leaves out the details surrounding Ruby's birth including the fact that her twin brother Richard was stillborn. Ruby's past abnormal and awkward behavior signifies that she somehow knows about her stillborn twin brother Richard. Ruby's father Richard blames her for her brother's stillbirth because he believes that she somehow took his nourishment away from him in the womb.

I created the quintuplet Ashley sisters who torture Ruby once she arrives at *The Plastic Camp*. I wanted this story to present suffering as a fine balance where atonement and karma function as tools for repentance of sins. For example, even though Ruby may or may not be responsible for her twin brother's stillbirth and so on her karma comes in the form of the Ashley sisters who are twin quintuplets. In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare created the witch twisted sisters who serve as oracles of Macbeth and Macduff's fate. Similarly, the Ashley sisters serve as seers and speakers of Ruby's fate.

Robert Frost's *Home Burial* inspired me to create a torturing office window that overlooks the backyard grave of Richard junior. Ruby's father Richard is tortured daily as he looks out of the window upon the grave while working from his home office. The act of Richard looking out of the window at Richard junior's grave parallels Ruby being ensnared by her own reflection. Richard junior would have been like a twin heir for Richard. The void of Richard junior is the epicenter of suffering for Richard, Ruby, and

Lisa. Ruby overeats and has obsessive behaviors that enrage Richard and make him fear that she will risk his reputation and fortune. Richard decides to send Ruby to *The Plastic Camp* for girls where she endures perversely cruel physical treatment and psychoanalysis perpetuated by the school headmistress Mrs. Truft, her colleagues, and other girls enrolled at the school.

I am also influenced by the Pavlovian theories on classical conditioning. The purpose of *The Plastic Camp* is to use classical conditioning to reform the girls attending the school by commissioning them as young women with etiquette, intelligence, perfect bodies, and skills that will make them valuable within society. The problem is that the headmistress Mrs. Truft uses an abusive form of classical conditioning to shape the girls into what she deems as appropriate women.

In many of Shakespeare's plays, there are worlds within other worlds, which inspired me to create a similar dichotomy in *The Plastic Camp*. This story contains several worlds within worlds where privacy is a privilege. While attending *The Plastic Camp*, in *The Dollhouse Room*, Ruby is placed in a room that resembles a real dollhouse. She becomes the living doll in the plastic room that exists within the confines of *The Plastic Camp*. I am inspired by T.S Eliot's *The Wasteland*. In T.S Eliot's *The Wasteland*, in the section called "A Game of Chess" he describes a room of seduction with a woman sitting on a burnished throne whose belongings begin to intoxicate the surroundings. This section of the poem functions in several ways and one specific way is that the woman can be considered a pun for the queen piece in a game of chess whose placement in the room creates an activation of seductive senses.

Her "synthetic perfumes" intoxicate the air and move about the room from the ceiling's lacqueria to flirt with the candle and enhance its flame along with the air seeping in from the window. This section of *The Wasteland* inspired me to create a room that resembles an innocent dollhouse that is torturous and seductive at the same time. In my chapter "The Doll House Room" Ruby is seduced, pleased, taunted, and tortured by the synthetic perfumes that the plastic flowers emit. The Doll House Room acts as a conscious mirror because it is aware that Ruby inhabits the room. I am inspired by Edgar Allan Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher* and how in the novel the house is like a head that falls into its own mirroring self-consciousness in the form of a polluted tarn because of the demented psychological neurosis of its inhabitants.

In T.S. Eliot's *The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock*, Prufrock obsesses over a woman's fragmented arms that are attractive, mysterious, and torturing to him. In The Doll House Room, the Ashley sisters' fragmented body parts imprint the walls in the doll house room to torture Ruby. The public newspaper in this story serves as a mirroring visceral world of its own where no one has privacy, marriages and divorces are announced, land and property are at risk of being seized, reputation and wealth is placed on the line, and it is possible to lose everything from a bad newspaper post.



In *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, Dryden argues that "no passions in a story move our concernment as fear and pity does because when we become agitated with fear for one character or have hope for another we become pleased in tragedy by the interest that we take in adventures" (384). Dryden's argument inspired me to strive to maintain a balance of fear within this story to elicit hope from the reader for the characters deliverance from suffering. I view this story as fitting into the gothic literary tradition for its dark take on the cycle of suffering. I would say that this story fits the horror genre because it contains several acts of gross hostility, physical mutilation, and psychological deprivation. This story fits the psychological thriller genre because it uses classical conditioning, brainwashing, and psychoanalysis as a way to alter behavior deemed as unacceptable. The difference is that none of the characters in this story acknowledge that they are conducive to their own and each other's suffering. I wanted the element of suffering in this story to remain unaccounted for because I believe that makes the act of suffering more torturous. In *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads*, William Wordsworth argues that "whenever we sympathize with pain, it will be found that the sympathy is produced and carried on by subtle combinations with pleasure" (657). My goal in this story is to illustrate characters who are oblivious to their own wrongdoing to allow the reader to choose whether or not to sympathize with the characters to discern if they are worthy of their suffering. All of these elements combined also make this story a mystery because the reader has to use the evidence of the story to solve the psychological neurosis of the various characters, particularly Ruby.

## Ruby's Cattle Horn

Lisa stroked Ruby's red curls and twirled them as she told her the story of how she was born while they sat on the white settee in their massive formal dining room adorned with precious stones and push-pin pearls. "A ruby etched into my womb wanted emancipation from the unbiblical cord that made you a glutton wrapped around your neck three times to let us know that it was time for you to join us in this world and your father spread me out on his work desk scarring me with this cattle horn to bring you into this existence and it drove him mad" said Lisa. "When he saw a mound instead of manhood he angered that you were not his son" said Lisa. Ruby's eyes began to twinkle and she started to cry. "Mother why does father hate me?" asked Ruby. "He is a doctor and he dislikes things that he does not understand but he does not hate you darling" said Lisa. Lisa took Ruby's hand to trace the cesarean scar on her stomach. "Did I hurt you mama?" asked Ruby. "It hurts all the time especially every year on this day" said Lisa. Lisa held up the cattle horn and twisted it to show Ruby its sharpness. "This holds you well it retains your birth and my blood" said Lisa. She pressed the cattle horn against Ruby's face to absorb her tears. "Stop this display of weakness!" ordered Richard as he bursted into the formal dining room. Lisa and Ruby jumped. "I'm sorry pa" said Ruby in a begging tone of voice. "Richard please it is Ruby's birthday" said Lisa. "Yes and you tell her the same story every year leaving out her crime!" yelled Richard. "We agreed to never speak of it" said Lisa.

Richard snatched the cattle horn out of Lisa's hand and pointed it in Ruby's face. "It was you foul spawn who stole his proper nourishment away from him in the womb!" yelled Richard. "What do you mean pa?" asked Ruby. "Your gluttony was strong even in the womb forcing your twin brother to be stillborn and your mother to suffer permanent chills!" yelled Richard. Lisa stood up. "You can't possibly blame Ruby for his descent and my ailment!" yelled Lisa. Richard threw the cattle horn, took Ruby by the chin, and put a mirror in her face. Ruby stared frozen in a trance at her reflection in the mirror. "You see there is something wrong with the girl Lisa and she is not going to drown my reputation in the papers with her nonsense" said Richard. "She is not a puppet to be frozen on command Richard!" yelled Lisa. Richard continued to hold the mirror in Ruby's face tilting his head from side to side observing her. "Can't you see the emptiness in her eyes how she gazes with delayed abandon and she is never sorry for the things that she does" said Richard. Tears arose in Lisa's violet eyes. "Remember when she sunburned all of the ants in my experiment colony with the looking glass?" asked Richard. "She was just curious about your study" said Lisa. "How about when she bit her pet rabbit's neck and blamed it on your speaking petunias?" asked Richard. "The rabbit taunted Ruby with its red eyes it was unfriendly" said Lisa. "Fix the girl before the insurance man, paper reporter, or some other publicized fallacy blemishes my reputation because of Ruby's ruin" demanded Richard. "Just give me a chance to find someone who can help her" begged Lisa. The maid Lisette came running into the room. "Everything alright Ms. Lisa?" asked Lisette. "Leave us Lisette" ordered Richard.

Lisette ran into the kitchen where she could still hear Richard yelling. "Ruby is an overweight nuisance delayed in her years troubled by her own reflection since infancy and now it is time to send her to the Plastic Camp for girls!" yelled Richard. "She is too young to be away in her condition" said Lisa. Richard held the mirror steady in Ruby's face. "Every day from my office window I see the marble that crowns his skull how the ground heaves to reject his body from the grave I dug for him in the backyard" said Richard. Richard took the mirror from in front of Ruby's face. Ruby blinked and stood silent. "Do not think my words sequitur Lisa we will send the girl to the Plastic Camp" said Richard. "Mrs. Truft the Plastic Camp headmistress has a good reputation for helping troubled girls" said Lisa. Richard pointed at Ruby. "If she returns from the Plastic Camp unchanged we will have to dispose of this false jewel that bares our beauty only to mock it with her lack in senses" said Richard. Richard walked away and went into his work office. Lisa and Ruby heard him sobbing saying that his boy was taken from him. "Did I really have a twin brother mama?" asked Ruby. Lisa dried her eyes and took a deep breath. "Yes you were born first a big healthy baby and your brother was born next frail, pale, and blue" said Lisa. "Did I do it like pa said?" asked Ruby. Lisa hugged Ruby. "Of course not your brother was gone long before he silently came" said Lisa. She handed Ruby a large white box wrapped with a red bow. "Happy birthday Ruby" said Lisa.

Ruby clapped her hands and opened the box to find a lavish red gown pressed with three sapphire buttons down the back. Ruby slobbered as Lisa buttoned her into the gown.

"We shall have our last tea together before you leave for La Plastique Camp Ruby" said Lisa. Lisa placed a ruby ring on Ruby's right index finger. Ruby gazed at the ring while holding it up next to a candle. "Wear this Ruby to remind you of who you are" said Lisa.

### Tea for the Living and Candles for the Dead

"Lisette please bring us some tea good maiden only use the white porcelain China because you know what the reflective glassware does to Ruby" said Lisa in a gentle tone as she and Ruby sat down at the table. "Shall I dress the table differently madam?" asked Lisette as she pushed the China set into the room on a French cart. "No just kindly leave us the tea" said Lisa. Ruby stared at the ruby ring on her finger and inserted it into her mouth. "No Ruby you are thirteen today and you must grow to your age take that finger out of your mouth and place your hands in your lap" said Lisa. "Yes mama" said Ruby. Lisa smiled as she took Ruby's hand across the table. Lisa told Ruby to drink her tea. Ruby slurped her tea in an ill-mannered fashion. Lisa shook her head. "You must learn the trades of a fair woman and they will teach you at La Plastique Camp because you must return a proper young lady with delicacies to please your father Ruby" said Lisa urgently. "Mama I am not fair?" asked Ruby while chewing a piece of her hair. Lisa sighed. "You are fair because you are mine with a mind of inner talents that most will not understand" said Lisa. "What is wrong with my mind mama?" asked Ruby. "Your mind has crevices that are unlike most and your father fears that you will be a detriment to him and his practice" said Lisa.

"Come Ruby it is time for bed you will leave for the Plastic Camp tomorrow" said Lisa. Ruby threw the rest of her tea off of the table. Lisette ran into the room to clean it up. "Lisette please take Ruby to her room for bed and pack her belongings for the Plastic Camp" said Lisa. Ruby went unwillingly to bed frowning at Lisette. Lisa blew out all of the candles except for one. She took the candle with her to Richard's office and opened the door.

Richard sat staring in a trance out of the window at his son's grave. "You see it Lisa how he lays in a cold bed of dirt?" asked Richard sobbing. Lisa walked over to Richard and placed her hand on his shoulder. Richard turned around to face Lisa. "Every day I perform operations and deliveries in this office and babes are born with lungs blowing Odyssey air why-why wasn't he?" asked Richard as he pulled at Lisa's forearms. Lisa shook her head and began sobbing. "The Lord kept him" said Lisa. Richard frowned as he began to rapidly unbutton Lisa's black chiffon dress. "Stop Richard!" yelled Lisa. Richard opened Lisa's dress and traced the cesarean scar on her stomach with his index finger. "I haven't had your body in so long that I hadn't noticed the wound appears freshly raised as if it has been healing for thirteen years" said Richard. Lisa's eyes filled with rage. "You see this candle Richard?" asked Lisa as she began crying heavily. "Every year on this day I come into your office with this candle and do this" said Lisa. Lisa threw her dress to the floor and took the candle flame to trace the cesarean scar on her stomach and burn it.

Richard grabbed the candle from Lisa and reached in his office drawer for burn ointment. "You need not do that I want it to burn I know how to treat myself I do this every year" said Lisa. "Foolish woman you will not be a detriment to my practice suppose one of the ladies who dresses you in those fancy stores saw this unhealed scar on which I operated they would believe me an ill practicing physician" said Richard. Richard anxiously began rubbing Lisa's stomach with the ointment. The red scar looking like a blistered painful smile began to heave with blood ready to drop from the rough friction caused by Richard's hand. Richard stood back to eye scan Lisa's body. Lisa stood frozen staring back at him. He took the palm of his hand to trace Lisa's body. "Those milk paps perfect erect twins to entice me drape above this naval a nose sewn inward spaced above this scar a horrifying smile that I drew to bring forth my dead heir and the Jackle jewel named Ruby who ate him and disfigured your perfection" said Richard. Tiny lines of blood rolled down Lisa's abdomen onto Richard's hands as he covered her scar with wound dressings from his desk drawer. Richard began making disgusted faces. "I'm glad the scar desensitizes you and your lust" said Lisa crying. "You purposefully regenerate the scar to ill my passions" said Richard. "We both know that you lost your nature the year of Ruby's birth and Richard junior's stillbirth" said Lisa. A tear rolled down Richard's cheek unaccompanied by any expression. Lisa looked out of the window at her son's grave as she put her dress back on.

"Happy birthday to you Richard junior my quiet prince I am sorry that my womb and this world rejected you we will meet again with the Lord's grace" said Lisa. "Tea for the living and candles for the dead" said Lisa as she blew out the candle. Richard carried Lisa to bed and they went to sleep.

#### Transition

Morning came and Lisa watched the dew settle away from the shrubbery. She went into Ruby's bedroom and hesitated. "This may make me a bad mother" thought Lisa. Lisa walked over slowly to Ruby who was sleeping peacefully in her crib like wooden bed laced with pearls and draped with fine sheer linens. Lisa lightly lifted Ruby's arms that seemed to belong on a girl much younger. She stared at Ruby's petal pink lips that curved as if she was still being nursed. "The girl is stuck in infancy by her frame, mind, and appearance" thought Lisa. "It is time to go darling" whispered Lisa into Ruby's ear as she semi opened her eyes. Lisa uncovered Ruby. "Come lets clean you up Ruby go into the washroom" said Lisa. Ruby walked into the bathroom and stood at the sink in a frozen trance staring at her reflection in the mirror. Ruby's face drew closer and closer to the mirror as if she was being pulled to it. Her eyes began to turn red. "Not again Ruby we don't have time for this!" yelled Lisa as she turned Ruby's face away from the mirror shaking her. "Lisette-Lisette!" yelled Lisa. Lisette came running into the room. "Bathe and clothe Ruby it is time for her to go to the Plastic Camp" said Lisa. "Yes madam" said Lisette as she took Ruby by the hand helping her down into the claw foot tub.



Lisette filled the tub with water while Lisa went to wake Richard. Ruby started to give Lisette a hard time as she began splashing water out of the tub yelling that she was not going to leave. Lisette took a cloth and began to wash Ruby's back. Ruby splashed more water on the floor making Lisette slip and fall barely grasping the tub. Ruby stopped and smiled at Lisette. Lisette apprehensively took a cloth to Ruby's face and began to wash it. Ruby bit down on the cloth. "Unteeth the cloth Ruby and let me clean the sleep away from your face" said Lisette. Ruby snatched the rosary from around Lisette's neck and began lightly twisting it into her own navel. "Stop it Ruby that is your life button and if you in-damn it your blood will flood out and you will die" said Lisette. Lisette snatched the rosary from Ruby, grabbed a hand mirror from her apron pocket, and held the mirror to Ruby's face. Ruby stared into the mirror as Lisette continued to bathe her. Lisette became frightened by the gleaming reflective red light in Ruby's eyes that seemed to be projected and rejected by the mirror. She sat the mirror down and quickly began to bandage Ruby's naval. Ruby rapidly blinked her eyes and looked down at her bleeding naval. "Why this rush of red from my life button?" asked Ruby. "I must get you dressed Ms. Ruby" said Lisette nervously as she towel dried Ruby's hair. Lisa entered the room. "Lisette why is Ruby's life button being bandaged?" asked Lisa. "The girl did it to herself madam with my rosary while in the tub to offset me" said Lisette. "Blood on the rosary is blaspheme against our Lord and mockery of the rood hopefully he will spare you both" said Lisa.

"I repent and I am truly sorry madam" said Lisette. "The red light appeared to emit from Ruby's eyes and the mirror or both" said Lisette. "It was just a reflection dwell on it no more" said Lisa. Lisette took Ruby by the hand and helped her into a green dress with emeralds around the neck. The buttons down the back of Ruby's dress grabbed her waist tightly. "She barely fits this one madam" said Lisette. "I see but it will have to do give her the slide in slippers we must go Richard is waiting at the carriage for us" said Lisa. Lisa took Ruby's hand as they walked outside to the carriage car. "Well get in the carriage" said Richard. Ruby kicked off her shoes. "I don't have time for this girl!" yelled Richard. Richard got out of the carriage, took out his pocket mirror, and put it into Ruby's hands forcing her to stare at her reflection. He picked Ruby up to place her in the middle of the carriage. Lisa sat silent next to her. Richard began smoking his pipe as he drove off down the road through the thick fog. Lisa took the mirror out of Ruby's hands and Ruby fell asleep on Lisa's shoulder.

#### Arrival

Richard drove up the long driveway to the large and lavish white estate with many Victorian windows. The headmistress Mrs. Truft was standing outside with her hands folded. Mrs. Truft stood five-nine finely clothed in a bouffant dress that hugged her twenty-two inch waist. She wore her blonde hair in a side chignon. "Mrs. Truft is lucky to have a husband who endorses her endeavors he allows her to use their estate as a school for girls because he feels bad about abandoning her to serve in the war" said Lisa to Richard. Richard began to cough due to inhaling too much smoke from his pipe.

"Good woman although I am not deported do not go getting ideas from this unattended radical woman whose husband is obviously unaware of her proceedings" said Richard.

"You cannot deny that Mrs. Truft is quite exquisite and I am sure that she will help Ruby develop into a proper young lady to your liking" said Lisa. "Yes she is the ideal Poe emaciated morsel that trains a fat flock of young hens within her luxurious home" said Richard. "Shh she will hear you Richard" said Lisa. She rolled her eyes at him. Mrs. Truft extended her long branch like arms outward and gestured for them to come in.

"Ruby dear wake up we are here" said Lisa as she lightly tapped Ruby on the shoulder.

"Awake girl!" yelled Richard. Ruby awoke startled. They all got out of the carriage. Lisa took Ruby by the hand and ascended the stair along with Richard towards Mrs. Truft. "Welcome Lisa, Richard, and Ruby come in and follow me to my office" said Mrs. Truft in a stern tone. They entered the school. The floors were marble and the ceilings were high and vaulted.

Ruby looked around suspiciously at the walls covered in plastic. Mrs. Truft unlocked her office door and sat down at her large desk encrusted with gold leaf. Lisa and Richard sat with Ruby in between them on the opposite end of Mrs. Truft's desk. Ruby traced the gold leaf with her fingernails. Mrs. Truft leaned over the desk towards Ruby. "Ruby we can help you here yes" said Mrs. Truft. "I most certainly hope so" said Richard. "Do be quiet sir I have to assess the child and speak to her" said Mrs. Truft in a demanding tone of voice. "Do you take that tone with your husband?" asked Richard. "I must certainly do when he is home" said Mrs. Truft.

Lisa smiled. Mrs. Truft took a plastic doll from her desk drawer and showed it to Ruby.

"We have a special place here for girls like you Ruby and if you cooperate I will give you this plastic doll at the conclusion of your treatment" said Mrs. Truft. Ruby smiled and clapped her hands with excitement. "How old are you Ruby?" asked Mrs. Truft.

"She acts as if she is an infant" said Richard. "I was thirteen yesterday then I died" said Ruby in a deep tone of voice. Lisa grabbed her stomach. "Ruby it is inappropriate to mock the death of your brother" said Lisa. "And how old are you today?" asked Mrs. Truft sarcastically. Ruby said nothing. "If nothing else you will speak when you are spoken to here" said Mrs. Truft. Richard smiled. "She is very verbal once she becomes comfortable with someone but her behaviors are obsessive" said Lisa. "She was born from the womb a glutton killer!" yelled Richard. Mrs. Truft cupped her right hand taking Ruby by the chin. "The girl bears a striking resemblance to you Richard and what a beautiful jewel she is" said Mrs. Truft. "She is troubled by her own reflection and too large for a girl her age" said Richard. "Leave Ruby to me we will make her a slim doll unchanged by her reflection" said Mrs. Truft. "She cannot look into mirrors and reflective objects without becoming ensnared by them" said Lisa. "Close your eyes Ruby" said Mrs. Truft. Ruby stared at Mrs. Truft refusing to close her eyes. Lisa covered Ruby's eyes. Mrs. Truft took a mirror out from her desk and sat it in front of Ruby. Lisa uncovered Ruby's eyes.

Ruby unflinchingly gazed into the mirror. "Interesting I have never seen anything like this before" said Mrs. Truft. "Can you hear me Ruby?" asked Mrs. Truft. Ruby continued to stare into the mirror without blinking. "Ruby focus on my voice if you can hear me open your mouth" said Mrs. Truft. Ruby remained captivated by her reflection. "Now it is better that you should leave without her awareness let her remain lost in her own reflective vanity, heaven, or hell" said Mrs. Truft. Lisa kissed Ruby on her forehead and whispered in her ear to be a good girl. A tear rolled down Ruby's cheek and dropped onto the mirror. "She has never shown any sign of awareness while looking into a mirror" said Lisa. "The tear is perhaps a sign that Ruby can be reached while ensnared depending on some unknown anomaly factor that I must figure out" said Mrs. Truft. "See to it that the girl is fixed otherwise you can make her a permanent member of your fat flock" said Richard. He grabbed Lisa's hand pulling her out of the office and they left.

### Golden Robes

Mrs. Truft took the mirror from in front of Ruby's face. Ruby looked obliviously at her surroundings. "Come Ruby let me introduce you to the other girls" said Mrs. Truft. Ruby followed Mrs. Truft down the hallway pressing the wall embroidered with plastic golden flowers that popped out in a three dimensional way. The flowers let out air sighs as prisoners of the wall. Mrs. Truft led Ruby to the large room where all of the girls slept. Mrs. Truft told all of the girls to rise from their beds, stand, and greet Ruby. "This is your new sister and you should treat her as such" said Mrs. Truft.

The girls all said hello to Ruby in unison and she hid behind Mrs. Truft's bouffant skirt. "Get from about my skirt girl you are not a baby and Nami give Ruby a golden robe" said Mrs. Truft. Mrs. Truft pried Ruby from her skirt, pushed her into the room, and locked the door. The girls stood looking at Ruby. "You better put this golden robe on Roobs because Mrs. Truft won't let you wear any of those fancy clothes in here" said Nami with a New York accent. Ruby started crying and the other girls started laughing and telling her to shut up. "Shh be quiet or Mrs. Truft will come back" said Nami. Nami put her arm around Ruby and unzipped her dress. "This girl is fatter than everyone here" said a girl named Helena. "We are here because we are all fat" said Nami. "No we are here because we are all fat and crazy" whispered a girl named Lee Ling. "Take off your clothes and put on that robe girl you are not a princess anymore" said Helena. Nami zipped Ruby into the golden robe. "Hot-too hot" said Ruby. The robe was lined with plastic and elastic sweating bands. "Mrs. Truft said that we have to wear the robes to lose weight faster you will get used to it just go to sleep" said Nami stuttering. Ruby got into the empty bed next to Nami and began sobbing. "Why are you here?" asked Nami. "Because I'm too fat, I killed my twin brother before he was born, and I can't look into a mirror like everyone else" said Ruby. "Why are you here?" asked Ruby. "Because my mother is an actor and she doesn't have time for me" said Nami.

## Solid

The drill bell rang the next morning at six-thirty and woke up all of the girls except Ruby who did not sleep anyway. Nami took Ruby to the large communal bathroom where all of the girls bathed. Ruby apprehensively got under the shower head encased with plastic and began to wash her hair. "Just about everything in this place is plastic or wrapped in it Roobs" said Nami to Ruby entering the shower stall next to her. "Go on and wash your ass Ruby-roachy!" yelled Helena to Ruby in a loud screechy voice. All of the other girls started laughing and bathing. "I bet her mama washes it for her at home" said a girl named Pearl. "Shut up or I'll stick my pencil up your pee holes!" yelled Ruby. All of the girls became silent. Ruby stepped out of the shower wrapped in a towel and so did the other girls. Helena walked over to Ruby dripping wet and smoothed her hand over Ruby's wet red hair. Helena began to walk in circles repeatedly around Ruby. "Look at this firecracker head of hair with freckles to match" said Helena laughing. "I bet she's got a fire crotch to match all that" said Pearl. "You both always have to bother someone" said a girl named Lucy. Helena pulled Ruby's towel down. "You were right Pearl this girl's crotch is on fire" said Helena. All of the girls laughed except for Lucy and Nami. Ruby wrapped her body again with the towel. "Leave Ruby alone or I will tell the Ashley sisters" said Nami. Helena walked away looking nervous. "Who are the Ashley sisters?" asked Ruby. "The Ashley sisters come and go as they please because they are Mrs. Truft's quintuplet daughters" said Nami. "Why does Helena fear them?" asked Ruby.

"Everyone is afraid of their freedom because Mrs. Truft lets them do whatever they want to whoever they want" said Nami. "Shh be quiet" whispered Nami as Helena came walking over to them again. "I don't like your red hair and bush to match" said Helena as she plucked a strand of Ruby's hair. Ruby wrapped her arms tightly around Helena and bit her on the shoulder. They began to wrestle and pull at each other's hair. Blood ran with water down the floor drain as the girls gathered splashing in it yelling at each other. Mrs. Truft came into the bathroom blowing her loud whistle. "Stop this nonsense and come take your places at the scales" said Mrs. Truft. "The Negro girl Tabby will clean up this mess" said Helena. "Negress Tabby, get yourself in here girl!" yelled Helena. Tabby came running into the bathroom. "Tabby clean up this mess that these wretched girls made in my lovely bathroom we don't want Mr. Truft to come home from the war to see blood spilled in his own home" said Mrs. Truft. "Yes ma'am" said Tabby. Tabby apprehensively walked over to Helena to bandage her shoulder. "Don't touch me with your shit colored self" said Helena to Tabby. "Shut up Helena and let Tabby clean you up" said Mrs. Truft. "The rest of you drop the towels from your bodies" ordered Mrs. Truft as she handed them sheer gowns to put on. The girls dropped the towels exposing their bodies imprinted with red marks from wearing the golden robes lined with plastic and elastic sweat bands. Mrs. Truft brought in two separate clothes lines on rollers.



One clothes line had clean golden robes for the girls to wear with the plastic and elastic sweating bands. The other clothes line had beautiful embellished dresses for the girls to wear. "We have to get weighed in the morning every Monday before breakfast and if we weigh light we are allowed to choose a normal dress but if we weigh heavy we must wear the golden sweat robe for the rest of the week" said Nami to Ruby. "I want to be a slim girl for my mama and pa" said Ruby. The girls put on the sheer gowns that Mrs. Truft gave them. "Silence girls it is time to be weighed everyone take your place at a scale and on the count of three mount them" said Mrs. Truft. Mrs. Truft counted to three and the girls got onto their scales. Mrs. Truft proceeded to walk down the line of girls recording their weights into her grade book. "Lee Ling five-seven and one-hundred eighty-five pounds you are still too heavy go get a golden robe" said Mrs. Truft. Lee Ling began to cry as she showed Mrs. Truft the red marks embedded into the sides of her stomach from wearing the golden robe. "I do not care about your marks you need to sacrifice to reach perfection" said Mrs. Truft. Lee Ling put on her golden robe. "Pearl five-nine and two-hundred-thirty pounds what hast thou been eating Pearl!" yelled Mrs. Truft. "You give me those precious pearls from around your neck Pearl" said Mrs. Truft. "I will die without them my mother gave me these pearls" cried Pearl. "They nearly choke the chops of your neck and your mother did not mean for you to wear them as a heifer I will take them from you during your sewing class" said Mrs. Truft. Mrs. Truft clinched her fists as she proceeded to walk down the line of girls to finish recording their weights.

"None of you have lost weight which means that you all will put on golden robes including Ruby and meet me in the formal dining room for breakfast" said Mrs. Truft.

The girls put on their golden robes, got into a straight line, and walked down the hallway to the formal dining room.

### Satiate

The formal dining room was adorned with plastic golden shades and bows tied up to the windows to give the appearance that sun light was coming into the room. The long dining table, chairs, and utensils were golden plastic. All of the girls took a seat at the table. A covered plate was centered on a golden placemat in front of each girl. Ruby got excited because she smelled pancakes, eggs, and bacon in the air and she smiled at Nami. "Don't get too excited Roobs smells are tricky here at Plastic Camp" said Nami. "Take your seats girls and we will start PCCC which stands for Plastic Camp classical conditioning something you are all familiar with except Ruby" said Mrs. Truft. The girls sat down in silence looking petrified. Tabby stood watching wide-eyed in the corner with her hands folded. Mrs. Truft bent down to the table looking at Pearl and swiped her fingertips across her pearls. "Now Pearl tell me what do you smell in the air?" asked Mrs. Truft. Ruby raised her hand and began squirming and licking her mouth. "Put your hand down wretched girl I did not ask you" said Mrs. Truft. Ruby spat on the floor with frustration. The other girls gasped. Tabby's eyes widened as she rapidly shook her head. Mrs. Truft walked over to Ruby smiling and smacked her across her face. "Instead of Tabby, you will scrub that spot after breakfast Ruby" said Mrs. Truft. Ruby started crying. "Ah ha Ruby-roachy got exterminated" said Helena laughing. Mrs. Truft

smacked the back of Helena's head with a ruler. "Pearl tell me what do you smell in the air!" demanded Mrs. Truft. "I smell pancakes, eggs, and bacon" said Pearl in a sad low voice. "Lucy tell me what will you and all of the girls eat once you uncover your plates" demanded Mrs. Truft. "Pancakes, eggs, and bacon" said Lucy lethargically. "Repeat after me girls and we will say grace" said Mrs. Truft. "We thank you for this simulation that we are about to receive we pray it sustains us enough to curb our gluttony as to please your will Lord amen" said Mrs. Truft as the girls repeated the grace. "Now girls you may uncover your plates" said Mrs. Truft. The girls uncovered their plates containing plastic pancakes, eggs, and bacon. A short older woman with disheveled gray hair, green eyes, and severely wrinkled skin came into the room pushing a cart. The cart was holding a golden box, several small boxes containing green liquid, and several elongated tubes. "Ruby this is Ms. Deyling and she prepares the food for us here at Plastic Camp" said Mrs. Truft. "Hello Ruby" said Ms. Deyling. Ruby did not speak. "Spice up our breakfast please Ms. Deyling" said Mrs. Truft. Ms. Deyling winked her eye at Mrs. Truft and turned the dial on the golden box upward. The smell of the pancakes got stronger. "Now girls take in the air and chew on your pancakes but don't swallow them" said Mrs. Truft. Mrs. Truft told the girls to close their eyes. Ruby said no and sat with her eyes open. "Not again" gulped Helena. Pearl started digging her nails into the plastic table. Lucy hit her head against the table. Nami began chanting that her mama was going to be proud of her as she chewed the plastic food. Lee Ling ripped a piece of hair from her scalp and it began bleeding. "You all stop it and show Ruby how it is done right arm out to your sides everyone!" yelled Mrs. Truft.

Ms. Deyling proceeded to hook up elongated tubes to each box and place it on the plate in front of each girl. Mrs. Truft began connecting feeding tubes to each girl's right arm. Ruby started screaming and rocking back and forth. Nami told Ruby not to worry and that she would become the slim girl that she wanted to be for her mama and pa. Ms. Deyling approached Ruby smiling and placed a clear box full of green liquid in front of her onto the plate. "Ruby you are going to get all the nutrients that you need in this little box" said Ms. Deyling smiling. "It tastes like apples Ruby" said Ms. Deyling. "You lying bitch it tastes like shit" said Helena. "Helena you will do all of Ms. Deyling's chores tomorrow" said Mrs. Truft. Helena frowned. Ms. Deyling took Ruby's right arm to insert the feeding tube. Ruby scratched Ms. Deyling on her left arm and bit her right hand. "You stupid girl!" yelled Ms. Deyling. Ruby threw her food box against the plastic wall. Helena laughed while slinging her feeding tube chanting "we are all puppets on a string". "Ms. Deyling go retrieve a reflective plate from the kitchen" said Mrs. Truft. Ruby closed her eyes. Ms. Deyling returned with the reflective plate. Mrs. Truft took the reflective plate from Ms. Deyling and placed it onto the table in front of Ruby. "Open your eyes and show the rest of the girls what you can do little mirror witch" said Mrs. Truft. Ruby held her eyes shut. Ms. Deyling gestured to the food box and feeding tube. Mrs. Truft nodded. Ms. Deyling inserted the feeding tube with force into Ruby's right arm and her scream went to quick silence as her eyes opened to meet her reflection in the reflective plate.

"Girls observe the error of vanity through Ruby" said Mrs. Truft. Ruby's eyes quickly turned red. "Now let's continue our breakfast" said Mrs. Truft. Ms. Deyling pressed another switch on the golden box and the room filled with the smell of bacon and eggs. "The rest of you pick up your plastic bacon and eggs and chew on them but remember not to swallow them" said Mrs. Truft. Ruby began breathing heavily as saliva began to drip from her mouth onto the plate. Soon Ruby's saliva formed a small pond on her plate. "You are killing her stop!" yelled Nami. Nami quickly got out of her seat and her feeding tube fell from her arm. She put her arms around Ruby. "Please snap out of this Ruby" cried Nami. Ruby continued to stare at her reflection unresponsive as the veins in her eyes pulsed from strain. Nami looked into the plate at Ruby's reflection. Three tear drops fell from Nami's face onto the plate blurring Ruby's reflection. Ruby blinked her eyes. "Are you okay Ruby?" asked Nami. "I saw him" said Ruby. "Who did you see?" asked Mrs. Truft. Ruby said nothing. "Perhaps liquid, tears, or water the element which gives life is the way to cure her" thought Mrs. Truft to herself. "Answer me now mirror witch who did you see?" asked Mrs. Truft. "You don't put your precious Ashleys through this!" yelled Ruby. "My daughters are mostly perfect not heifers like you all and they will join you in good time Ruby" said Mrs. Truft smiling evil. Mrs. Truft told Ms. Deyling to escort Ruby to the doll house room. Ms. Deyling grabbed Ruby by her hair and pulled her down the hallway. She pushed Ruby into the doll house room and locked the door.

## The Doll House Room

The doll house room was beautifully crafted to resemble a dollhouse. The plastic walls shined golden as if the sun's rays were penetrating them. The floor was lined with realistic plastic flowers in assorted sizes and colors that glistened to entice Ruby as she trampled upon them making them emit seducing synthetic perfumes that produced visible powders in various colors. Ruby peered to the dark green domed ceiling to see the flowers' odors collide as their evanescent smells and colored powders meshed together forming a false multicolored sky. These pungent fumes inspired unfamiliar tingles of passion in Ruby that made her body hair stand and tingle. The largest blue flower in the center of the floor began to emit a honeysuckle fragrance and Ruby began to rub her thigh. She kneeled down to breathe in the flower's aroma and its false petals felt like velvet against her nose. The temperature in room along with Ruby's body temperature rose from the golden sweat robe that she was wearing. Ruby decided to take off the golden robe. She rolled in the flowers that seemed to cool her down by absorbing her body sweat. Ruby stood up to put her golden robe back on. She walked over to one wall to touch it with her open palm and imprinted it. She jumped back as she saw the impression of her hand print form dimples into the wall that slowly went away. Ruby began to scream at the top of her lungs as the unstoppable perfumes seemed to turn on her by forming an intoxicating dark grey smoke that began to exhaust and smother her.

A high pitched voice started to sing, "*Knee deep in flowers we'll stray we'll keep the showers away if I kiss you in the garden in the moonlight will you pardon me and tiptoe through the tulips with me*". Ruby began coughing and throwing herself at every plastic wall in an attempt to escape as the voice got louder. The walls appeared to exhale the impressions that Ruby made into them with her body. Ruby sat down exhausted at the plastic tea table in the corner. She looked down at the plastic cups with brown plastic filling to resemble tea. She began to chew on some plastic tea cakes and fainted. A clear plastic garden hose was inserted into the room above Ruby's head and sprayed her with cold water. The voice sang louder, "*If I kiss you in the garden in the moonlight will you pardon me and tiptoe through the tulips with me*". The voice suddenly stopped. Ruby woke up and could hear a crowd of girls laughing. She heard the left wall begin to crinkle and a small opening revealed a pair of ocean blue eyes peering at her through the wall. Ruby backed up to the right wall and a pair of hands then arms began coming through the wall extending through it like dough. The hands grabbed Ruby and squeezed her tightly around the waist. Ruby started screaming as she saw another set of hands emerge from the wall above her head. These idol hands began toying with Ruby's lips as she saw a pair of legs that began to imprint the wall next to the door. Buttocks began to impression the last wall with legs walking backwards into the plastic wall. These five fragmented limbs began to close in on Ruby as the hands above her head covered her mouth.

The room appeared to get smaller and Ruby fainted again. Mrs. Truft opened the door. "That's enough" said Mrs. Truft as she unlocked the door and the limbs dispersed. She sat a large glass of water and a hand held mirror faced down onto the floor. She grabbed Ruby by her cheeks. Ruby woke up blinking her eyes. "Listen good you will not disobey again because if you do your treatment will be worse than this and don't think about telling your parents because they are the ones who left you to me" said Mrs. Truft. "Let me show you something Ruby" said Mrs. Truft. Ruby apprehensively stood up. Mrs. Truft gestured to the mirror. "Pick the mirror up faced down Ruby" said Mrs. Truft. Ruby shook as she lifted the mirror. "Well you want to look at your reflection one day before your beauty decays like Dorian's" said Mrs. Truft. "I saw my brother Richard last time" said Ruby. "Nonsense you just learned of him from your parents your hallucinations are fictitious your brother is dead" said Mrs. Truft. "It is my occupation at the present time to cure you from your disorder and make you thin" said Mrs. Truft. "Now turn the mirror over girl" demanded Mrs. Truft. Ruby turned the mirror over and began staring at her reflection. Mrs. Truft poured water over the mirror. Ruby blinked as she saw flashes of her reflection through the water. Mrs. Truft smiled. "You see Ruby you control your reflection it is essentially you" said Mrs. Truft. Ruby smiled as she saw her reflection for the first time without being trapped by it. The water left the glass and as the last drop trickled off of the mirror Ruby was held captive by her reflection again.



Ruby stood helplessly gazing at herself as her eyes started to turn red. Mrs. Truft took the mirror and Ruby blinked. "Ruby think of the flowing water" said Mrs. Truft. "Well we have made progress follow me to the waiting room where all of the girls are waiting to be escorted to sewing class" said Mrs. Truft. Ruby followed Mrs. Truft to the waiting room.

### Knit Me a Pretty Girl

Ruby sat on the bench in the waiting room next to Nami exhausted and silent. "It is time for sewing class girls" said Mrs. Truft. "Tabby escort the girls down to the sewing room, introduce Ruby to Ms. Roxford, and then after sewing class escort the girls to the Dandridge store so they can choose a dress to wear for the parent visitation day" said Mrs. Truft. "Ma'am I cannot go into the Dandridge store without an escort and proper clothing remember" said Tabby. "Mr. Daniels the butler will escort you to the Dandridge store now go and take the girls to sewing class" demanded Mrs. Truft. Tabby's eyes widened with fear. Tabby traced the hallway wall with one finger as she led the girls to sewing class. The teacher Ms. Roxford greeted the girls as they entered the room. "You must be Ruby the troublesome red head that likes to bite" said Ms. Roxford with a half-smile twisting her own red hair while staring at Ruby. "Take your seats and get your sewing boxes out of your desks" said Ms. Roxford. "She is a very pretty woman" whispered Ruby to Nami. "Yes but she'll prick you with her needle if you mess up a sewing project too often" said Nami. "She teaches sewing during the day but she is a show girl at night" whispered Lucy who sat across from them.

"Silence everyone place your eyes on me and pay attention or you know the prick price" said Ms. Roxford laughing to herself with an elongated needle in her hand. "Girls you must learn to become women of excellence by learning the sewing trade and men will value you for what your hands can do" said Ms. Roxford. "There's five empty seats which means that the Ashleys have decided to skip sewing class again" said Ms. Roxford. Ruby's eyes widened as she thought of the five fragmented limbs that tormented her in the doll house room. "It was the Ashleys" Ruby thought to herself. Just then shoe clacking could be heard coming down the hall and five cornsilk haired girls with blue eyes and fair skin waltzed into the room. "Ah the beautiful Ashleys have decided to join us say hello to our new edition Ruby" said Ms. Roxford. The Ashleys said hello to Ruby distinguishing who they were by saying their middle name initials after their first name. "I'm Ashley S. and you're going to die strumpet" said Ashley S. Ms. Roxford told her to apologize. "These fragmented fiends palter with me in a double sense" thought Ruby to herself. The Ashleys sat down at their own table staring at Ruby giving her evil smiles. "You will each choose a large piece of yarn from the pail in front of me and today you will learn how to sew designs into each other's hair" said Ms. Roxford. The girls formed a line and chose their yarn. "Ruby you should choose blue yarn because it will highlight your red hair" said Ms. Roxford. Ruby took a few pieces of light blue yarn and went back to her seat with Nami who chose pink yarn for her dark brown hair.

The Ashleys each hit Helena in the back of her head as she bent down to choose light violet yarn to go in her long caramel brown hair. Ms. Roxford told the Ashleys to stop before she called Mrs. Truft and they went back to their table with multiple colors of yarn to sew into their cornsilk colored hair. Lee Ling chose sea green yarn to sew into her waist length black hair and partnered up with Lucy who chose white yarn for her light brown hair. Pearl chose orange yarn for her chestnut colored hair and partnered with Helena who sat clinching her fists. Ms. Roxford showed the girls how to thread their large oversized needles with the yarn and she demonstrated how to sew yarn into Tabby's hip length golden brown wavy hair. She plaited Tabby's hair to the side with the yarn. Long footsteps accompanied by tapping noises could be heard down the hall paired with a hand held ringing bell. Mr. Daniels came into the room anxious and smiling as he bowed to Tabby extending his arm ringing a bell. "On the account of Mrs. Truft's orders I am here to escort Tabby and the girls to the Dandridge store after your class Ms. Roxford" said Mr. Daniels with a country accent. "He is a greasy goat hillbilly" whispered Helena to Pearl and they began giggling. Tabby began to nervously flinch and pull at her dress. "Why you cannot wear that shabby old dress to the Dandridge store" said Mr. Daniels as he flicked one of the ruffles on Tabby's dress. "I need to have a word with Mrs. Truft" said Tabby. Mr. Daniels ignorantly and loudly called down the hall to Mrs. Truft. Mrs. Truft came running down the hall. "May I speak with you in private ma'am" said Tabby to Mrs. Truft. Mr. Daniels looked nervous.

"Come on girl let's close the door and walk some ways down the hall" said Mrs. Truft.

Ms. Roxford told the girls to continue their lesson by working in partners and she ran to catch up to Mrs. Truft and Tabby. "May I accompany this discussion?" asked Ms. Roxford. "Sure a good teacher likes to lend her noisy ear" said Mrs. Truft. They walked five rooms down from the sewing classroom and went into a vacant room shutting the door. Tabby told them that Mr. Daniels has repeatedly made sexual advances towards her while she is trying to do her job. "You'll be fine at the store where there are other people around besides he is just trying to doddle with no real intentions of meaning you harm girl" said Mrs. Truft. Mrs. Truft and Ms. Roxford began laughing. "Tabby you are a Negress and should not concern yourself with such matters" said Ms. Roxford as she patted Tabby on the head and stroked the braid that she plaited into her hair. Ms. Roxford took photographs out of her pocket displaying herself as a show girl dancing and singing on stage. Tabby continued to try to express her concerns about being escorted by Mr. Daniels. However, Mrs. Truft and Ms. Roxford were too engrossed with the photographs. Meanwhile, the girls in the sewing classroom started sewing extravagant designs into each other's hair with yarn.

## Mother of Pearl

Pearl nervously asked Helena to come with her to the back of the classroom.

"Helena when Mrs. Truft comes back she will surely take my mother's pearls" said Pearl panicking. "Hide them somewhere" said Helena. "Stand in front of me and lean your head backwards" said Pearl. Pearl quickly sewed yarn designs into Helena's hair. "I'm going to give you one braid down your back" said Pearl. Pearl braided Helena's hair on top of the table and positioned her elbow on the end of Helena's braid with her forearm extended upward. Pearl began moving her elbow back and forth on top of Helena's braid. "Be careful my head is tender" said Helena. "Lend me your sewing needle Helena" said Pearl. "Why don't you just use the sewing needle that you already have?" asked Helena. "I need another sewing needle to do this" said Pearl. Helena gave her sewing needle to Pearl. Pearl tied a thick piece of yarn like a tourniquet to the end of her arm near her hand. She bit down on her tongue and made a deep incision into her arm with the sewing needle. "What is taking you so long to braid my hair and why are you grinding your teeth?" asked Helena. Helena grabbed her braid and brought it around in front of her to find that the end was soaked in Pearl's blood. She quickly turned around to see Pearl attempting to force her mother's pearl necklace into the incision that she made into her forearm. "Pearl are you mad you will bleed out" said Helena. "Help me force it and sew it in" said Pearl. Helena helped Pearl sew the necklace into her arm. Helena also helped Pearl disguise the wound by tying a long cloth and strings of yarn around the incision.

Helena took some cloth and wiped the table free of Pearl's blood. Mrs. Truft, Ms. Roxford, and Tabby came walking into the room. "Well knit me a pretty girl you all look marvelous" said Ms. Roxford. Mrs. Truft went walking around to every girl to inspect their hair. Helena began sweating and squirming because she was worried that Mrs. Truft would find out what she and Pearl did with the pearls. Mrs. Truft walked to the back of the room and started to look at the designs in Helena's hair. "Yours looks rushed Helena why is that Pearl?" asked Mrs. Truft suspiciously. "I'm not that great at sewing ma'am" said Pearl nervously. "Why didn't you sew a design into Pearl's hair Helena?" asked Mrs. Truft. "I did not have the time because it took Pearl a while to do my hair before you arrived ma'am" said Helena. Mrs. Truft stared at Pearl's arm. "Well you certainly took the time to embellish your arm Pearl and that was not a part of the original assignment" said Mrs. Truft. "Pearl give me your mother's pearls and take that ribbonry off of your arm you will not stand out apart from the other girls" demanded Mrs. Truft. "They are not about me" said Pearl. Mrs. Truft grabbed Pearl's arm and began to take the yarn off piece by piece. Pearl and Helena began sweating with fear. Mrs. Truft pulled the last piece of yarn off. Pearl closed her eyes and Helena gasped. Pearl flipped her arm over. Mrs. Truft began to unravel the cloth and she saw a soaked line of blood dots in a straight line pattern that got more noticeable as she keep unraveling it. "What is this?" asked Mrs. Truft as she took the cloth off of Pearl's arm. Pearl quickly put her arm near her side. Pearl and Helena did not say anything.

Mr. Daniels came into the classroom. "Shall I escort Tabby and the girls to the Dandridge store now Mrs. Truft?" asked Mr. Daniels anxiously. Mrs. Truft turned around looking angry at Mr. Daniels. "Can't you see that I am in the middle of something!" yelled Mrs. Truft. Mr. Daniels sat down next to Ms. Roxford at her desk. Tabby frowned at him. The rest of the girls sat silent staring at Mrs. Truft. "Hold out your arm Pearl!" demanded Mrs. Truft. Pearl shook her head no. Mrs. Truft took Pearl's arm and flipped it over to reveal the stitched incision displaying the impression of her mother's pearls beneath her skin. Mrs. Truft lightly traced the incision with her fingertips. "Ah I see what you have done with your mother's precious pearls false dame it would have been better for you to have swallowed them than to try to hide them within your unhallowed skin" said Mrs. Truft. "Tabby go get the wound medicines and clothes-wringer" said Mrs. Truft. Tabby went to go get the medicines and clothes-wringer. Mr. Daniels blew a kiss at her and she frowned. "Now girls we will have a lesson in human biology. Pearl go to the front of the class and stand in front of Ms. Roxford's desk" ordered Mrs. Truft. Pearl nervously walked to the front of the class with blood dripping from her arm and stood in front of Ms. Roxford's desk shaking. "Would you like for me to remove the pearls from her incision?" asked Ms. Roxford. "No I will remove the pearls with the help of my resident physician Ruby" said Mrs. Truft smiling. "Ruby your father is a physician isn't he?" asked Mrs. Truft. "Yes but he has not taught me his trade" said Ruby. "It does not matter I'm sure you have seen some of his work you will assist me" demanded Mrs. Truft.

The Ashley sisters begged to assist Mrs. Truft. "Not this time this is a job for Ruby" said Mrs. Truft. Mrs. Truft walked up to the front of the class. "Everyone pay attention and come here Ruby" said Mrs. Truft. Ruby grabbed her seat. "Shall I put you in front of a mirror and allow the girls to doodle your face instead?" asked Mrs. Truft. Ruby nervously walked over to Mrs. Truft. "Hold up your arm Pearl with the incision facing the class and sit on this stool" said Mrs. Truft. Mrs. Truft gave the class dunce cap to Ruby and told her to place it on Pearl's head. "You still think I am a fire crotch?" asked Ruby as she put the dunce cap on Pearl's head. All of the girls laughed. "This is not fair!" yelled Helena. "You were her accomplice you will be punished next" said Mrs. Truft. Helena started fidgeting. "Lend me your needle" said Mrs. Truft to Ms. Roxford. Mrs. Truft took Ms. Roxford's needle. Mrs. Truft put on some gloves and gave a pair to Ruby. "Bite down on your tongue Pearl and make a fist" said Mrs. Truft. She opened Pearl's stitches one by one and blood began to drip like raindrops. Pearl screamed and the girls looked terrified. "Stop it you are hurting her!" yelled Ruby. "You want to help her Ruby?" asked Mrs. Truft. "Ruby maybe you can pull the pearls out of Pearl's incision little physician" said Mrs. Truft. "No I cannot do it" said Ruby. "Fine then go sit down Ruby" said Mrs. Truft. Ruby hurried back to her seat. Mrs. Truft proceeded to pull the pearls out of Pearl's incision. Pearl screamed and cried. Tabby poured a mixture of medicines over Pearl's wound. "Well you are the first live girl to become a mother of pearl and I will adopt your offspring" said Mrs. Truft. "Tabby clean the necklace, restore the luster to the pearls, and leave them in my office" said Mrs. Truft. Tabby took the pearls to be cleaned.



"Pearl needs to go to the infirmary to ensure that too much of her blood is not lost and no infection sets in" said Ms. Roxford. Mrs. Truft secured a tourniquet and bandage around Pearl's wound and told her to take her seat. "No matter the case in all of my years of running this school no girl has ever left the grounds for outside care and they never will because we here at Plastic Camp provide everything that these girls need" said Mrs. Truft. Mrs. Truft pushed the clothes-wringer to the center of the classroom. She put a chair in front of the clothes-wringer. "Come sit here in this chair Helena" said Mrs. Truft. Helena apprehensively sat down in the chair. "I will do your hair which is a task Pearl could not do" said Mrs. Truft. "Take down your braid Helena" demanded Mrs. Truft. Helena took down her braid and Mrs. Truft combed her hair. "Ms. Roxford measure the length of Helena's hair" said Mrs. Truft. Ms. Roxford took a tape measure out of her desk and measured Helena's hair. "Helena's hair is seventeen inches long" said Ms. Roxford. "Yes it appears to be waist length" said Mrs. Truft. Mrs. Truft grasped the ends of Helena's hair placing it in between the rollers of the clothes-wringer. She used the crank handle to string Helena's hair slowly through the clothes-wringer until the back of her head met the wringer. "Do you like the length of your hair Helena?" asked Mrs. Truft. "Yes I do" said Helena shaking. "Well you should have thought about that before you decided to help Pearl smuggle pearls into her arm!" yelled Mrs. Truft. "You are due for a trim" said Mrs. Truft. Mrs. Truft slowly began releasing Helena's hair from the clothes-wringer. She released her hair to her ear.

"Shall I cut it here?" asked Mrs. Truft. "No please don't!" screamed Helena. Ms. Roxford hit the release on the crank letting Helena's hair out of the clothes-wringer. Mrs. Truft gave a surprised look to Ms. Roxford. "Very well vigilante who wields a sewing needle by day and shakes her tail by night" said Mrs. Truft. Mr. Daniels snickered to himself. All of the girls gasped. "Go return to your seat Helena" said Mrs. Truft. "Now Mr. Daniels you may escort Tabby and the girls to the Dandridge store" said Mrs. Truft. "Yes ma'am I will prepare the carriage and bring it to the front" said Mr. Daniels. Mr. Daniels left to pull the carriage around. "Tabby!" yelled Mrs. Truft. "Ms. Roxford the girls will not require sewing lessons for the remainder of the year your methods place their fragile imaginations at risk" said Mrs. Truft. "You cannot possibly concur that Pearl and Helena's ill doing was due to my lesson and not the fear that you instill in the girls daily" said Ms. Roxford. "I'm sure that your other occupation will preserve your means as you are a show girl and I know that you have a commonplace with men who rally for your affections as you are not yet married" said Mrs. Truft. "I will not be dismissed from my occupation here so unjustly and unkindly without probable cause you will regret this!" said Ms. Roxford. Ms. Roxford told the girls that she loved them and they all hugged her. Ms. Roxford left. "Tabby take the girls through the west corridor and wait on the long bench for Mr. Daniels" said Mrs. Truft. Mrs. Truft pulled Tabby aside and whispered in her ear. "Tabby manage the girls well in the Dandridge store because my reputation is at risk and paper reporters with cameras will surely be there" said Mrs. Truft. "Yes, ma'am" said Tabby. Tabby nervously took the girls through the west corridor to wait for Mr. Daniels.

## An Outing

Mr. Daniels drove up and tipped his hat to Tabby while slightly licking his lips. The girls rushed onto the bus like vultures. "Negress Tabby you have to sit in the back of the carriage while we young porcelains ride in the front" said Helena. "Yes Helena I will happily go to the back of the carriage" said Tabby sarcastically feeling relieved that she did not have to sit next to Mr. Daniels. Ruby got up and went to the back of the carriage to talk to Tabby. "Tabby how old are you?" asked Ruby. "I'm seventeen not that much older than you" said Tabby. "Why are you here?" asked Ruby. "I'm here because I belong to Mr. Truft he is my father" said Tabby. Ruby looked surprised. "Does Mrs. Truft know?" asked Ruby. "No she does not know and don't you tell her Ruby" said Tabby. "I won't if you promise to help me when I need you" said Ruby. "I will" said Tabby. Mr. Daniels drove up to the Dandridge store and let the girls out of the carriage. He took Tabby's hand and helped her out of the carriage. "I can manage myself Mr. Daniels thank you" said Tabby in an aggravated tone. The girls ran off of the bus excited except for Pearl who felt sluggish from her wound.

## Cheese Over Black

A man with dark hair and a polite smile extended his arms to welcome them to the store. "Welcome I hope your shopping experience is exhilarating and takes you to places you have never imagined" said Mr. Dandridge the store owner. Mr. Daniels bowed and said thank you. They all walked into the store lobby where they got a glimpse of sights to come. The store was a lavish three floor mall adorned with marble floors where women on top of pedestals served as live display models posing in dresses.

"Now girls you may pair up and wander about the store choosing one dress to have fitted and meet me back here in the lobby on this red sofa" said Tabby. "My mama buys all of her gowns from here" said Ruby to Nami as they walked over to a live model dressed in a white gown. The model was extremely emaciated, with a brunette bob, pale skin, and green eyes. "I bet she looks like death under her makeup" whispered Nami to Ruby. Ruby and Nami laughed. Ruby stared fixated on the woman examining how thin she was. The model could tell that Ruby was about to say something so she studied her lips. "My pa would love if I were your size" said Ruby to the model. The model cocked her head to the side and looked Ruby up and down in disbelief. "Well can't you speak?" asked Nami. The model posed soundless to the side exposing the length of her gown. "I want to have your gown fitted to me please" said Ruby to the model. The model smiled, shook her head, and abruptly turned forward. She took both of her arms from the top of her head and traced her thin silhouette to the girls. Then she pointed at Ruby and traced a bigger silhouette using her own body expanding her hands far out to the side. "She thinks you're too big to have the gown fitted to you Roobs" said Nami. "Well if you think I'm fat you can at least not mime-mock it silently to my face" said Ruby. "Yeah why don't you say something bad saleswoman?" asked Nami. The model pointed to a sign above her head that said *The Subaltern Can't Speak: She Is Deafly Beautiful, Mute, and Honest About Fashion and Will Point You In the Right Direction*. The deaf model pointed at Ruby and then pointed at a black dress across the store.

"She thinks you should wear a black dress Roobs" said Nami. Ruby stood on the stool next to the model and ripped the sign from the ceiling. The model smiled and lip sang thank you. Another saleswoman came running over to them with red hair wearing a purple vest and pencil skirt. "Girls did Alice offend you as to why you ripped down the sign above her head?" asked the saleswoman. "No, I don't think that the sign should be above her head it is offensive" said Ruby. The saleswoman quickly reattached the sign to the ceiling above Alice's head. The saleswoman got in between Ruby and Nami and put her arms on their shoulders. "Come with me girls my name is Alva and I will help you find appropriate black dresses" said the saleswoman. Alva gave Ruby a black dress that reached above the knee with ruffles and pearls around the collar. Nami chose her own black dress with an empire waistline and lace up the back. Nami spun around fast looking at her dress in the three-way mirror. Ruby and Alva clapped for Nami. "Your turn Ruby" said Alva. "She can't look in the mirror like everyone else" said Nami. "I do not need to look in the mirror I know it is a beautiful dress" said Ruby to Alva. "Oh nonsense every girl loves the mirror when they look pretty" said Alva as she pushed Ruby in between the three-way mirror. Ruby kept her eyes closed, head down, and placed her hands to the two side mirrors while trying to slowly back out of three-way mirror. "Help me Nami I can't look it will ruin everything!" yelled Ruby. Nami ran up but Alva pushed her back as she positioned Ruby's head upward. She took her index fingers and pried Ruby's eyes open forcing her to look in the mirror. Ruby stared in the mirror motionless as a tear rolled down her cheek.

"Well now you see how beautiful you look Ruby?" asked Alva. "Roobs are you alright?" asked Nami tapping Ruby on the shoulder. "Alright Ruby how about we ring you up for this dress?" asked Alva. Ruby said nothing and kept still staring at her reflection. "I'll go get Tabby" said Nami as she ran off to find her. A newspaper reporter ran up who had been watching. "Well something seems to be wrong with the girl I have noticed her standing fixed in the mirror for quite a while without a hint of vanity's purposes" said the reporter. "I do not know once in the mirror she seemed to not hear" said Alva. "I have it I will go get the deaf model subaltern she may be able to communicate with her" said Alva. Alva ran to get Alice. The reporter took out her notebook and camera. She studied Ruby and began poking her motionless body. She wrote down "cheese over black" in her notebook. She began poking Ruby harder. "Little miss can you hear me?" asked the reporter. Ruby's eyes started to turn red. The reporter wrote down some more things and took Ruby's picture from in back of her to capture her staring at her own reflection. The reflective flash and glare from the reporter's camera into the mirror made Ruby blink her eyes. However, Ruby continued to stare in the mirror because the reporter's camera flash was quick.

Tabby ran over to Ruby with Nami and Alva ran over to her with Alice. Tabby was wearing a chiffon gown with diamonds around the waist that she had been trying on. Tabby turned Ruby away from the three-way mirror. "Ruby what happened?" asked Tabby. "Alva made her look in the mirror" said Nami. Alice reached her hand to Ruby's face and rubbed her cheek. Alice slapped Alva and gestured for Tabby to leave the store with Ruby.

"What school are these girls from?" asked the reporter. "They are enrolled at Mrs. Truft's Plastic Camp" said Tabby. The reporter looked Tabby up and down. "Negress these girls are your charges and why are you wearing an expensive dress in this store letting the price tag dangle?" asked the reporter. The reporter took Tabby's picture as she was kneeling down to Ruby. Pearl ran up to Tabby saying that her arm was hurting from the incision. The reporter took a picture of Pearl's bandaged arm. "You can't do that!" yelled Nami to the reporter. The rest of the girls gathered around Tabby. "Why this lack of color of all the colors you could choose why have you all chosen black dresses except for the Ashley sisters?" asked Tabby. "You are black" said one of the Ashley sisters laughing. "Yes but Tabby is far from the color of our dresses she is olive brown" said Lucy. "We are all wearing black because it is obvious that we are fat heifers like Mrs. Truft says" said Helena.

The reporter continued to write down things in her notebook. "You sure do look pretty in that fine dress Tabby" said Lee Ling. Tabby smiled. "I can see that you all including myself wish to wear these lovely dresses out of the store let us all get in line to be rung out" said Tabby. "I reckon I'll buy that gown for you Tabby" said Mr. Daniels. "I can buy it myself" said Tabby. Mr. Daniels laughed. Tabby paid for the girls' dresses with Mrs. Truft's money. Tabby took a lot of money out of her own pocket book to pay for her own dress. Everyone stared at Tabby wide-eyed. "Where did you get so much money Tabby?" asked Lee Ling. "I have my earnings and my pa is a rich man enlisted in the war for his own charity choice" said Tabby winking at Ruby.

The reporter kept writing in her notebook until Tabby, the girls, and Mr. Daniels left the store. The girls boarded the carriage with Tabby and Mr. Daniels drove them back to the Plastic Camp. Tabby put the girls to bed and stayed up half the night twirling around in her dress.

### The Newspaper

Mrs. Truft awoke the next day to sit at her desk for a cup of coffee and read the newspaper. The front page of the newspaper stated:

*Cheese Over Black: A Girl in a Black Dress is Held Captive By Her Own Reflection*

*My name is Haley Dunlap, and I am a reporter for The Godwin Times. I encountered a young troubled girl in the Dandridge store yesterday named Ruby who was trying on a black dress. Ruby remained frozen in time by her own reflection as she stood terrorized peering into the three-way mirror. I stood by calling her and lightly tapping her shoulder but she could not respond. Her eyes strangely strained glowed red. Ruby attends Mrs. Truft's Plastic Camp for girls. A broken hillbilly named Mr. Daniels and a Negress girl named Tabby were in charge of Ruby. Where were Tabby and Mr. Daniels while Ruby was ensnared by her own reflection? I'll tell you where they were. They were frolicking with each other. The Negress returned hours later wearing one of the most expensive gowns in the Dandridge store and Mr. Daniels offered to buy it for her. The Negress took out a large sum of money from her pocket book and paid for her own gown. The Negress is not much older than the girls who were her charges. One of the girls wore a long bandage on her arm that appeared to have covered a long and deep incision.*



*The girl moved in a hostile way like she was basically too wounded to be out and she complained to the Negress about pain in her arm. However, all the Negress did was doddle and dote on playing dress up with the girls without concern for their proper welfare. Mrs. Truft is obviously wayward from her husband's long detainment in the war. Judging from what I saw in the store, Mrs. Truft is going to squander away her husband's earnings. My question is-is it safe for us to be sending our young impressionable girls to Mrs. Truft's Plastic Camp for girls?*

Mrs. Truft choked on her coffee and spilled some onto the floor as she went to go find Tabby and Mr. Daniels. "Tabby where are you girl!" yelled Mrs. Truft as she went stomping through the halls with the newspaper rolled in her hand. Mr. Daniels came walking down the hall holding fresh flowers from the garden. Mrs. Truft abruptly walked over to him, snatched the flowers out of his hand, and roundhouse slapped him. "I bet those flowers are for Tabby have you seen the papers you and that Negress have ruined my reputation!" yelled Mrs. Truft. "Read this you imbecile!" yelled Mrs. Truft as she shoved the newspaper into his face. "I reckon it is the girl Ruby she is the one who has ruined your reputation" said Mr. Daniels rubbing his red face. "Tell Tabby when you find her that I want to see her" said Mrs. Truft. Mrs. Truft pushed past Mr. Daniels dropping the key to Tabby's room. Mr. Daniels picked up the key. "Hey Mrs. Truft I reckon that you dropped this here key" said Mr. Daniels. Mrs. Truft kept walking until she reached the girls' room. She unlocked the girls' room and told Ruby to get out of bed.

"As for the rest of you today is a free day do whatever you like I will be working with Ruby today and Pearl I will speak with you later" said Mrs. Truft. The girls were surprised and baffled. Nami looked nervous. "Is Ruby in trouble?" asked Nami. "This does not concern you Nami enjoy your free day" said Mrs. Truft. Mrs. Truft told Ruby to follow her to her office.

### Water Intervention

Mrs. Truft told Ruby to sit at the other end of her desk while she went to her sink to fill a big bowl with water. Mrs. Truft put the big bowl off to the side of her desk and pushed the newspaper towards Ruby. "Read it and tell me what you think Ruby" said Mrs. Truft. Ruby read the newspaper. "I do not know what is happening when I am engaged by the mirror" said Ruby. "Do you see what havoc you have caused and how you have risked my reputation in the papers?" asked Mrs. Truft. Ruby frowned. "My pa said the same thing before he sent me here" said Ruby. "Well I predict that I will not have much time with you as I am sure that your parents read the papers" said Mrs. Truft. "I have to successfully help you now that the universe will be curious about you and me" said Mrs. Truft. She pushed the bowl of water in front of Ruby. "Ruby water is a flowing constant it is the element that gives life and it takes the form of its container do you understand?" asked Mrs. Truft. Ruby nodded. Mrs. Truft dipped her hands into the bowl and cupped water within them. She let the water flow from her hands back into the bowl. "Water is like flowing glass don't you agree?" asked Mrs. Truft. "No I do not" said Ruby.

"I am going to show you that your reflection can be manipulated" said Mrs. Truft. Ruby nodded. "Now Ruby I am going to ask that you look into the bowl and touch your reflection" said Mrs. Truft. Mrs. Truft kept eye contact with Ruby as she pushed the bowl closer to her. Ruby slowly bent her head to look into the bowl at her reflection. "A reflection is like a dream that we can manipulate touch your reflection and see that you control it" said Mrs. Truft. Ruby touched her reflection and snatched her hand back. "The water is cold!" yelled Ruby. "Yes and you see that you are fine now let's go into the kitchen" said Mrs. Truft. Ruby followed Mrs. Truft into the kitchen.

#### Company

Mrs. Truft approached the pantry closet. She saw a violet piece of linen sticking out from the bottom of the pantry. Ruby sat down at the kitchen table watching Ms. Deyling prepare stewed apples to tube feed to the girls. "Come out of that pantry closet Tabby I see the bottom of your dress sticking out foolish girl" said Mrs. Truft. Tabby came out of the closet. Mrs. Truft slapped her across the face. "You were supposed to supervise the girls in the Dandridge store not allow them to run ragged and give the school a bad name!" said Mrs. Truft. "I hear carriages pulling up in the drive" said Ms. Deyling. "It is probably the wretched parents of Ruby, a reporter, or both I'm ruined!" said Mrs. Truft as she fell to the floor. Ms. Deyling rubbed Mrs. Truft's shoulders to console her. Tabby looked out of the window. "One of them is Haley the reporter who came over to me and the girls in the Dandridge store" said Tabby. Tabby squinted and grabbed her mouth.

"Who else is coming?" asked Mrs. Truft. "It's the sewing teacher Ms. Roxford the one you fired!" said Tabby. Ms. Deyling pushed Tabby out of the way to look out of the window. "There is another carriage pulling up" said Ms. Deyling. Ms. Deyling's jaw dropped. "It's Ruby's parents" whispered Ms. Deyling into Mrs. Truft's ear. "The outside world and newspaper are mirrors that will not no longer reflect us" said Mrs. Truft. The doorbell rang. "Ms. Deyling flatten the tires on all of the carriages and Tabby take Ruby out to the garden until I call for you" said Mrs. Truft. Tabby took Ruby into the garden. "It is beautiful out here" said Ruby. "Yes isn't it nice to be outside" said Tabby. Ruby nodded as they laid next to each other in the grass. Meanwhile, Mrs. Truft opened the door for the reporter and Ms. Roxford. "Yes what do you want?" said Mrs. Truft in an aggravated tone of voice. "I'm Haley Dunlap a reporter for the Godwin Times and you know Ms. Roxford may we come in?" asked Haley. Mrs. Truft slightly clinched her fists. "Yes I am familiar with your reports most recently the ill written one about a new student that I have named Ruby and another student named Pearl" said Mrs. Truft. "Well may we come in?" asked Haley while taking out her pen and pad. "Yes come in and learn how to write the truth" said Mrs. Truft. Haley walked in smiling. Ms. Roxford proceeded to follow her but Mrs. Truft pressed her arm to her stomach. "Be careful you're under surveillance Truft" whispered Ms. Roxford to Mrs. Truft while looking at Haley. Mrs. Truft let Ms. Roxford in. "Are you expecting those other people coming behind us?" asked Haley. Mrs. Truft looked nervous and quickly shut the door.

Ms. Roxford looked at her suspiciously. "Mr. Daniels come here right away!" yelled Mrs. Truft. Mr. Daniels came running down the hall out of breath. "Escort Ms. Dunlap around the school Mr. Daniels" said Mrs. Truft. "As a reporter I'd like to observe the premises by myself if you have nothing to hide" said Haley smiling. "I have to protect my assets especially since you have brought my former employee with you to exploit me Mr. Daniels will escort both of you around the premises" said Mrs. Truft. "Follow me please" said Mr. Daniels. "Are you the man who accompanied the young Negress at the Dandridge store?" asked Haley. "Why yes I reckon I am miss" said Mr. Daniels. Haley frowned and wrote things down on her notepad. Haley and Ms. Roxford followed Mr. Daniels down the hall.

#### Secrets Told

The doorbell rang again. Mrs. Truft opened the door for Ruby's parents. "Where is my daughter!" yelled Lisa while grabbing her pregnant stomach. "Do not get yourself worked up in your condition this time we will have our son" said Richard taking her by the hand to enter the door. "You have risked my reputation and practice as a physician have you read the papers incompetent woman!" yelled Richard to Mrs. Truft. "Do not take that tone with me or I will call the authorities" said Mrs. Truft. "Well have you cured the girl?" asked Richard. "I have made a significant breakthrough with Ruby using water to show her that she is in charge of her own reflection" said Mrs. Truft. "Take me to my daughter or I will call the authorities on you!" screamed Lisa. "Follow me to the garden" said Mrs. Truft.

Once they reached the garden Lisa called to Ruby. Ruby sat up out of the grass and ran to Lisa. They hugged each other tightly. "You're so slim darling what have you been eating?" asked Lisa. Ruby looked at Mrs. Truft. "I have been eating boxed food" said Ruby. "Ah ha she has even developed a sense of humor" said Mrs. Truft nervously. "Have you come to take me home mama?" asked Ruby. "Are you able to look in the mirror normally?" asked Richard sarcastically. Haley and Ms. Roxford came storming in the room with Pearl. Mr. Daniels came running after them. "I'm sorry Mrs. Truft they made her talk" said Mr. Daniels. Pearl's skin tone was flushed, she had trouble standing, and her arm was jaundice yellow with green and blue hints of color surrounding her incision. "Pearl has told me how you instill fear into the girls at this school so much that it caused her to hide her mother's pearls in her own arm so that you would not take them" said Haley. "Yes and do not forget how Pearl said that Mrs. Truft tube feeds the girls so they will lose weight fast and makes them wear dresses with plastic sweat bands" said Ms. Roxford. "She blamed me for Pearl's mutilation and fired me when I suggested that Pearl go to the infirmary!" yelled Ms. Roxford. "Lies all of you lie I do everything in my power for these girls" said Mrs. Truft while backing away from them. Richard looked at Pearl's arm. "I am a physician this girl has a touch of jaundice, the beginnings of a staph infection, and ill blood" said Richard. Pearl's eyes began to roll. Richard caught Pearl as she collapsed. Haley continued to write frantically in her notepad.

Richard laid Pearl down on the ground. Everyone including all of the girls gathered around Pearl. "Is she dead mother?" asked one of the Ashley sisters. "No but she needs to be transported to the infirmary immediately" said Richard as he listened to Pearl's heart beat. "I am afraid all of your carriage tires and our phone lines are down Pearl will have to go to the infirmary in the morning" said Ms. Deyling nervously. Richard abruptly stood up and grabbed Mrs. Truft by her wrist. "This is your own doing you splintered hell commissioned mad woman!" said Richard. All of the girls started clapping and cheering him on. "Shut up this instant you hens!" yelled Richard to all of the girls. They all went silent. "You think that you can risk my reputation in the papers and get away with it foul woman?" said Richard to Mrs. Truft. "Unhand me you malevolent creature I am not your spineless pitiful wife or your mirror witch daughter!" yelled Mrs. Truft as she tried to pull away from him. Lisa slapped Mrs. Truft across the face. Ruby grabbed onto her mother's dress afraid. Mrs. Truft held her face in shock. Mr. Daniels attempted to hit Richard and Richard knocked him unconscious with one punch to the head. Mrs. Truft fell to the floor beside Mr. Daniel's unconscious body. Snaps and light flashes came from Haley's camera as she began taking pictures. Everyone paused to stare at Haley. "Do you think that I will allow you to leave here let alone publish those photos?" said Mrs. Truft to Haley. "No you will not publish those photos nor the notes that you have written on your pad both would be a detriment to me and my practice" said Richard. Richard walked closer to Haley as she backed away from him. He grabbed her.

"Tabby go get some loose linens and bring them back here immediately" said Mrs. Truft. Haley began screaming and squirming in Richards's arms. "Let her go Richard" yelled Lisa as she ran up to Richard. Richard pushed Lisa back and she hit the ground sideways. Tabby came back with the linens. Mrs. Truft took a vial out of her pocket and placed three drops of liquid from the vial onto one of the linens. She covered Haley's mouth and she fainted. "Are you alright mama?" asked Ruby. "Have you done this to my daughter?" asked Lisa from the floor while grabbing her stomach. "Your daughter knocks herself out in the mirror and apparently your husband knocks you to the floor when he feels like it" said Mrs. Truft while tying Haley's feet together. Richard gave a dumbfounded look as he tied Haley's hands together. Mr. Daniels opened his eyes. "Where is Ms. Roxford?" asked Mrs. Truft. "She is here somewhere her carriage tires and our phones lines are down she has nowhere to go" said Ms. Deyling. "Ms. Deyling take the girls to their room and lock them in there" whispered Mrs. Truft to Ms. Deyling. "Get up you worthless man and find Ms. Roxford and bring her to me" said Mrs. Truft to Mr. Daniels as she began kicking him. Mr. Daniels got up holding his head and began searching for Ms. Roxford. "You will care for Pearl tonight until she can go to the infirmary in the morning after Mr. Daniels repairs your carriage during the daylight when perhaps the phone lines will be regenerated" said Mrs. Truft to Richard. "I do not take orders from women especially stewed prunes like you who will manage the reporter?" asked Richard.



"Leave Haley to me if it's one thing that I know it is hospitality for hostile women" said Mrs. Truft smiling. "Tabby show Ruby and her parents to the guest room" said Mrs. Truft. Richard picked Pearl up. Tabby led them to their room. Richard laid Pearl onto the spare bed and checked her vitals. Tabby helped Lisa lay down in the master bed. Ruby laid next to Lisa. "How is the girl Pearl?" asked Lisa looking over at Pearl. "I doubt that she will survive" said Richard hovering over Pearl. Tabby closed the door and locked it. Ruby ran to the door and began pounding on it. "Tabby do not lock us in here!" yelled Ruby. "It is for your own welfare" said Tabby. "Negress unlock the door this instant!" yelled Richard. "Take care of Pearl and your family" said Tabby as she walked away. Mrs. Truft dragged Haley to the formal dining room and sat her upright at the end of the long plastic table. Haley began to open her eyes as Mrs. Truft pinched her. "I will remove the cloth from around your mouth if you cooperate" said Mrs. Truft. Haley nodded her head. Mrs. Truft removed the cloth from Haley's mouth. Mrs. Truft sat at the end of the table. Haley stared at Mrs. Truft with disgust. "Ah I have seen that face several times from the girls here at my Plastic Camp" said Mrs. Truft. "Why is almost everything in here plastic?" asked Haley. "Because plastic is impressionable and it keeps the girls safe" said Mrs. Truft. "You have to let me go the authorities and my place of employment knows that I am here" said Haley. "Well of course you are here you are a sick young lady taking pictures of people spying on them exploiting them perhaps you came to me for help and I committed you to this institution out of the goodness of my heart" said Mrs. Truft.

"That would be an affable story if my last newspaper post concerning this school was not published detailing the instability of this institution you are the one who needs to be committed" said Haley. Mrs. Truft clinched her fists. Screams could be heard coming from down the hallway. Mrs. Truft ran down the hall.

### A Mother

Lisa went into labor. "Push Lisa and I will finally have a son!" yelled Richard as he prepared to deliver the baby. Everyone ran to the outside of the door to listen. Ruby backed up to the door staring. "Do not watch angel turn your head" said Lisa to Ruby. "Forget the Jackle focus Lisa push!" said Richard. Richard cut the unbiblical cord and started weeping. Lisa gave birth to a baby boy. "He is my heir a delightful mirror image of me and he will lead this family into greatness" said Richard. Richard cleaned his son and handed him to Lisa. "Nurture and nourish him Lisa" demanded Richard. Mrs. Truft opened the door. Richard held the boy up flashing him to everyone as if he was a souvenir and then gave him back to Lisa. "I see that you finally have what you want" said Mrs. Truft. "He was born early by the force of Richard's hand causing me to fall he was not yet due" said Lisa sobbing. "He is here he is fine and he is mine" said Richard. "Is this the life that you want to continue to have with your children Lisa?" asked Mrs. Truft. "Why didn't he cry?" asked Lisa. "He was born strong" said Richard. Richard kissed his son's forehead. Mrs. Truft handed Ruby a hand held mirror facing down. Ruby took the mirror from Mrs. Truft as she walked towards Lisa. "Come here darling to see your brother" said Lisa to Ruby. "No do not let her look upon him" said Richard. Ruby handed the mirror to Lisa.

Richard snatched the mirror and pushed Ruby back. Ruby fell to the floor. "You will not impose your hellish ways onto him foul spawn" said Richard to Ruby. "Give me the mirror Richard" said Lisa. "I know what you are thinking there is no way that he is like Ruby" said Richard. "Allow me to do this" said Mrs. Truft as she snatched the mirror out of Richard's hands. Lisa turned her son towards Mrs. Truft. Mrs. Truft put the mirror in his face. The baby stared at his reflection as his eyes began to turn red. Mrs. Truft took the mirror from in front of him and he began to cry. "Kill him I will not have another like her!" said Richard as he pointed at Ruby. "You will not impose your cruelty onto me and these children!" yelled Lisa. Richard attempted to pry the baby from Lisa's arms. Mr. Daniels came into the room with his hands behind his back. "Well did you find Ms. Roxford?" asked Mrs. Truft. "I reckon she is hiding somewhere smart" said Mr. Daniels. Richard walked over to him. "You better find Ms. Roxford before she risks my reputation in the papers like all of the hens flocking around this place" said Richard. "I reckon you think that you can put your hands on women and get away with it?" said Mr. Daniels. Mr. Daniels swung a huge brick around from behind his back and hit Richard on the head knocking him unconscious. "You fool you should have waited until he cured Pearl now they are both unconscious!" yelled Mrs. Truft. Lisa began screaming. "Silence woman I'm sure that inside you are happy that someone stopped him" said Mrs. Truft. Lisa went silent. "Tabby take Ruby and her brother to your room and lock the door" said Mrs. Truft.

"It is okay mama Tabby will take care of us" said Ruby. Lisa handed her son to Tabby. Tabby took Ruby and her brother back to her room. Mrs. Truft looked at Richard lying unconscious on the floor. Mrs. Truft told Mr. Daniels to go check on Haley. "Now Lisa you must make what you are going to do look like an accident" said Mrs. Truft. Lisa gave a puzzled look. "If you want to set yourself and your children free you must kill him" said Mrs. Truft.

### Playing With Knives

"How would I do it?" asked Lisa. "I set up every room in this house as a trap but this room that we are in is particularly special" said Mrs. Truft. Mrs. Truft told Lisa to look up at the ceiling. "You see the chandelier with the adjoining ceiling fan in the middle?" said Mrs. Truft. "Why yes it is beautiful with elegant crystal" said Lisa. "I had it specially made in case my husband ever tried to beat me" said Mrs. Truft. "I do not understand" said Lisa. "Foolish woman I have altered this work of art into a trap device that will after pushing this button count down fifteen minutes and fall upon the face of the victim who slumbers ignorantly in this bed" said Mrs. Truft. Lisa sat up. "Rest after giving birth no woman should be on her feet it will not drop unless it spins and the best thing about the device is its beauty and silence" said Mrs. Truft. "We will take you out of this room and send you with your children as we lay Richard in this bed and let the device tenderize him" said Mrs. Truft. "No, I want to see it happen it is the only way that I can stop burning this scar on my stomach" said Lisa as she showed Mrs. Truft the cesarean scar from Ruby's birth and her twin brother's stillbirth.

"You poor woman" said Mrs. Truft as she kissed Lisa's forehead. Mrs. Truft called for Mr. Daniels. Mr. Daniels came running into the room. "Mr. Daniels place Richard in the bed next to Lisa" said Mrs. Truft. Mrs. Truft told Lisa to press the black button to her left to make the device spin. "I am going to lock the door Lisa and your screams will let me know that he is gone" said Mrs. Truft. "How is Haley Mr. Daniels?" asked Mrs. Truft. "I'm sorry I reckon she has escaped" said Mr. Daniels as he ducked anticipating a hit from Mrs. Truft. "We still have not found Ms. Roxford we will find both of them they will not ruin this institution's reputation!" yelled Mrs. Truft. Mrs. Truft and Mr. Daniels left the room and locked the door. Lisa sat up in the bed watching Richard regain consciousness. "I had the most awful nightmare that our son was bewitched by the mirror like the Jackle Ruby" said Richard. "Yes dear Mrs. Truft has ordered the Negress Tabby to look after the children so that we can get some sleep and relaxation until that awful reporter is secured on the grounds" said Lisa. "Yes it makes sense we cannot let Haley leave this place with those incriminating photos only to place them in the Godwin Times newspaper" said Richard. "Sleep now" said Lisa to Richard. Richard closed his eyes and went to sleep. Lisa pressed the black button. She watched the chandelier lights illuminate the room as the swift air from the ceiling fan cooled her sweating body. "How can this beautiful artful device be so deadly" thought Lisa to herself as she watched the device spin. She counted the minutes backwards in her head. Two minutes before the device was set to fall Lisa whispered in Richard's ear. "I hope the devil sets you in front of a mirror and replays this moment tell him that I sent you" said Lisa as she got out of the bed.

The beautiful device detached from the ceiling and fell on Richard's face as Lisa watched. Richard opened his eyes and stared at his reflection in a piece of the chandelier as he died. "Now I know why it is said that art frees you" said Lisa. Lisa screamed. Mrs. Truft opened the door with Mr. Daniels. "Mr. Daniels carry Lisa to Tabby's room so she can be with her children" said Mrs. Truft. Mr. Daniels carried Lisa away to Tabby's room. Mrs. Truft went closer to the bed to get a look at Richard's body. She heard footsteps behind her. Haley and Ms. Roxford approached her. Haley held a gun and Ms. Roxford held a knife. "You killed Richard!" screamed Haley. "Knave reporter wielding a gun instead of a pin and worthless sewing teacher wielding a knife instead of a needle" said Mrs. Truft. "Shut up" said Ms. Roxford. Mrs. Truft began to laugh. "Neither of you have the capability to kill me" said Mrs. Truft. Haley shot Mrs. Truft in her leg. Mrs. Truft fell to the floor. "Oh darling Truffles we don't want you to go so soon without receiving the torture that you have inflicted upon these girls" said Ms. Roxford. "Girls do come in" said Haley. All of the girls came rushing into the room. Mrs. Truft gave a frightened look as the girls smiled at her. Ms. Roxford went to check Pearl's pulse. "She is barely alive" said Ms. Roxford as she took the bandage from Pearl's arm. Ms. Roxford took some of the pus with the knife from Pearl's wound and stabbed Mrs. Truft in her arm. She handed the knife to Helena who stabbed her next. The girls proceeded to take turns stabbing Mrs. Truft. Haley took pictures of Richard's body.

## Reflection

*My name is Haley Dunlap. I am a reporter for The Godwin Times. I went to Mrs. Truft's Plastic Camp for girls to bring you a sequel to my last report. I found that the girl Ruby is remarkably talented and she is partially cured of her mirror neurosis. Ruby and her mother are looking forward to curing her infant brother who has the same neurosis. Ruby's father was murdered by the psychotic headmistress of the school Mrs. Truft. He was found staring at himself into a deadly chandelier ceiling fan hybrid that Mrs. Truft dropped on him. Mrs. Truft inflicted severe psychological and physical pain onto her students including forcing them to eat from feeding tubes, wear dresses lined with plastic sweat bands to induce weight loss, and Mrs. Truft frequently beat the girls attending the camp. One of the girls named Pearl would have nearly died at the hands of Mrs. Truft had I not been able to see to it that she be transported to the infirmary. The school cook Ms. Deyling was taken to jail on the account of the girls testifying that she was responsible for tube feeding them. The school chauffeur and driver Mr. Daniels was also seized by authorities for carrying out Mrs. Truft's tasks of cruelty according to the girls. Mr. Truft, Mrs. Truft's husband, returned from the war to claim his Negress daughter Tabby who served as Mrs. Truft's maid. Mr. Truft and Tabby will keep the school running under a new headmistress Ms. Roxford who was the former sewing and needle point instructor at the school. Mr. Truft plans to marry Ms. Roxford this year.*

*-Haley Dunlap Reporter for The Godwin Times*

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