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Brown Bear
By: Ashley Bernett

The young six-year-old woke up to screaming and the shattering of glass. In her Cinderella onesie and teddy bear in hand, she snuck to the staircase where her mother was out cold on the living room carpet. Even though she was in front of the couch, Maisie could tell that she was still in her shimmery silver top, her hair still curled.

“This will impress Daddy,” Mommy said as she finished curling the last amount of her blonde hair. Maisie, sitting on the bathroom counter, giggled.

“You look so pretty,” she said.

Mommy caressed her daughter’s cheek and smiled. “How did I get so lucky to have a girl like you?”

“Are you ready yet?” Daddy asked from the master bedroom.

Mommy got out her lipstick from her makeup bag. “Just adding the finishing touches,” she replied. Daddy stood by the doorframe of their bathroom, fixing his tie.

“C’mon, I don’t want to be late,” he said. The sharpness in his voice made Maisie wince. “And Maise, get off of there.” She slid down the counter and went into the attached bedroom.

“You didn’t have to scold her. She was fine,” Mommy said.

“Don’t start with me Jessica, we have to leave.”

Mommy huffed and put everything away. Mommy twirled into the bedroom and asked, “How do I look?” Daddy took out his phone and began texting someone.

“Like a princess,” Maisie said.

Without looking up, Daddy said, “Wonderful, now let’s go.”

Maisie held her hand over her mouth as her father held a broken bottle of whiskey and took deep breaths.

Her dad knelt down and touched her hair as if it was precious china. “What have I done?” he asked aloud. Maisie surveyed the room and noticed his phone was on the flat part of the railing at the bottom. While he began to cry, she tiptoed down the stairs. Maisie was about to grab the phone until the last step squeaked. Daddy looked at the stairs and gasped as he saw his wide-eyed daughter. “Maisie,” he said, holding out his open hand.

Maisie immediately dropped her bear and snatched the phone. “Maisie!” Running up the stairs, she clutched the phone to her chest. Daddy tripped up the steps as he swooped to get her bear. She placed her white desk chair underneath her doorknob and sat on her bed. She slid the phone to dial 9-1-1 like her mother had taught her a few months ago after the last argument. Tears flowed down her cheeks as Daddy pounded at the door. “Maisie, it’s okay sweetheart. Mommy will get up soon. Come on out,” he said.

“9-1-1, what’s your emergency?” the phone operator asked.

“My-my daddy...I think he killed Mommy,” Maisie replied.

“Where do you live?”

He continued to knock on the door, each knock getting louder. “Maisie! You dropped Brown Bear. Don’t you want him back?”

Maisie let out a sob. “No, go away,” she said.

“Hello?” the phone operator said.

“It’s 9183 Hillside Lane. Please hurry,” Maisie said, pushing the end call button.

Her father stopped knocking. “Fine, I see how it is. You’re just like her.”

He screamed, and she heard a huge tear like cloth being ripped in two, followed by large stomps.

Maisie ran up to the door and waited a few seconds. She wiped away her tears and placed the chair next to the door. She opened it a crack and peered around for him. When she determined it was safe, she fully opened the door to find Brown Bear decapitated. “No,” she said. She collected the stuffing, along with his head and body and dragged her feet back into her room.

She placed the chair back under the knob and laid on her bed. Holding Brown Bear close, she sobbed as blue and red lights filled her room.