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Life Hangs by a Thread

The piercing screams of horrific murder echo through my ears every night. In the darkness, sinister, blood-red eyes bore into my skull, leaving such a stare imprinted on my brain. The evil cackles of laughter resonate off the walls, walls that continue to close in on me as though I am to be compressed into tiny bits of human nothingness. This is what I experience every night. Every night I cannot sleep, for I dare not shut my eyes. I dare not shut my eyes because of that night. That night, my sister perished in the very sanctuary of our home. Our home was no longer home ever since stepmother-number-three slithered into our lives.

I was three when my mother abandoned me and my sister; I always wondered why she had left us. Her departure had a great effect on the family. My father was a successful, busy merchant who was almost never home, yet when he did come home, he would always have a new woman with him. Our mother left him heartbroken, so he was now always out with other women. My sister and I never liked the kind of women he brought over, for they always looked far too young and much too indecent to be qualified for a motherly role. There were two of this kind, both of whom never lasted long, not surprisingly. However, as time went by, stepmother-number-three finally appeared. Our new stepmother was everything we had imagined her to be. She was not too old nor too young; she was beautiful, well-mannered, and looked very much respectable. She spoke with directness and eloquence, articulating her words with such grace that

even her most censorious remarks felt like a gentle brush of a feather. Most importantly, she was able to differentiate between me and my sister; my sister and I are identical twins. Growing up together, my sister and I have always been mixed up. We were always doing every single thing together, taking care of each other, and looking out for one another. There was never a time we were ever separated or apart. For someone to finally see us as two separate people, neither I nor my sister had ever experienced such a feeling of identity before.

The longer our stepmother lived with us, the more my sister and I grew apart. We finally had the freedom to begin developing into our own personalities. We became more independent of one another. We started arguing a lot over things we disagreed about; the fact that we were disagreeing was new to the both of us. Our personal ideas had developed into our different outlooks of certain things. Our perspectives became so disparate that for the first time in my life, I would start to feel sorts of bitter resentment towards my twin. I would sometimes be in such disgust when I looked at her because it was like looking at a reflection of myself but with a completely different personality. Whenever this happened, I would sometimes wish to myself that there was only me, no other version of me. However, when I caught myself having such spiteful thoughts, I became afraid, knowing my character was now capable of such malice. As our characters became more distinguished of each other, I started to sense an ominous lack of security. There was this feeling as though some sort of unnatural, invisible force was slowly pulling apart the bond between me and my sister. I did not think of asking her how she felt because the idea of it just seemed absurd. I did not want to be ridiculed, so I went along with it. Still, I felt extremely uncomfortable.

As time passed, I also began to notice a few peculiar things about our stepmother. She despised sunlight, always blocking any sunlight from entering the house with dark maroon,

velvet curtains she had brought with her. She could not tolerate people touching her things, instantly snapping at those who came close in contact with any of it. Strangest of all, she had this spool of shiny clear thread that appeared to be so thin to the point of appearing nonexistent. I first thought it was a luxurious brand of thread for delicate clothing, yet I had never seen her mend any clothes. Whenever I saw her unravel the thread and play with it, my heart would always race. The faster she rolled the thread, the faster my heart would thump; the slower she spooled the thread, the slower my heart would beat. It was as though this thread had me mesmerized, for I could never tear my eyes away from it until she stopped manipulating it. Regardless, I started feeling uneasy about my stepmother. These inauspicious feelings sparked my curious interest to know why she became a part of the family. I asked my father about how they met, and he simply told me that she reminded him of someone he was once very keen of. As I tried to investigate around my home, I came across something I never expected to see: two rag dolls with the strange clear thread weaved through each doll's chest. I went over to the dolls to take a closer look. I noticed that they were similarly looking dolls, just with different outfits. A nostalgic feeling started stirring inside me, and I instantly realized how the dolls resembled me and my sister in our younger days. I thought our stepmother made these dolls for us as a gift. As I played around with them for a bit, I started having bitter thoughts again. I wondered how nice it would be to have one exclusive doll made just for me, not for any other. A doll made by a mother for her daughter, her one and only daughter. I gave one of the dolls' threads a good tug, yanking out the entire thread out of the doll's body. It did not take long for me to realize that I had made a fatal mistake.

An agonizing shriek resounded the halls of the house. The scream was unmistakable. "No! What have I done?!" thoughts of such sort raced through my head as I ran out to find my

sister. With each step, I prayed and pleaded to God for him to prove what I thought is not true. “I did not mean to do anything. My sister is okay. She is okay...I am no murderer.” I finally reached my sister’s room, the seconds dragging out into minutes, the unbearable anticipation behind the closed door eating me inside and out. All of a sudden, my stepmother appears directly behind me. “Is something the matter,” she asked. I turned around to face her, and I receive the biggest chilling of the spine anyone could possibly have. Her eyes were so dilated of pure black marble, so round and lifeless that when I stared right into them I felt as if I was looking into an incessant, dark abyss. My heart skipped a beat when she took a small step towards me. I took a small step backwards. She takes another step towards me. I am pressed up against the door now. “Well,” she pauses. “Aren’t you going to open it,” my stepmother eerily asks. I stand there frozen with fear. “Well?!” She ferociously asks as she quickly whips out the two rag dolls I had messed with earlier. She begins to fiddle with one of them, the one with no thread. She starts to contort the limbs of the doll, convoluting it to the point that the doll looked no longer human. My eyes grew large in fear as I pictured could now possibly be behind the door. I could no longer stand the suspense. I quickly turn around and open the door. As I come into contact with the doorknob, an icy shock jolts through me. In opening the door, I could feel a wave of a cold chill of death fume from the room, tickling the tiny hairs across my skin. In front of me is my sister, my beloved sister, with her body distorted in unrecognizable form, along with her heart, her actual heart, yanked out of her chest. Before I can even react, my stepmother suddenly reappears right in front of me. “I thought I told you I do not like my things touched,” she said playfully. I whimper uncontrollably as I start to lose the feeling in my legs, collapsing on to the floor. “You will be next, my sweet,” she says as she pats the head of the other doll with a thread. Her eyes then flickered to a color so blood-like that my vision became obscured, tinted blood-red. She

took the doll of me and started tying knots with my thread. “You didn’t think Mommy would ever leave you, right?” I could feel the insides of my chest grow tighter and tighter; I whimpered. “Shhhh, everything is fine... *just...fineeee,*” whispered my stepmother. It became more difficult to breathe. I found myself breathing hard. No longer was oxygen flowing into my brain, so I blacked out. The last image I saw was of a great fire, along with my mother opening her mouth, laughing maniacally, as she transformed into her dark, demonic form.

The authorities eventually came and found me unconscious with my dead sister. Our father had just returned from a business trip to find his home eerily quiet. Our “stepmother” was no longer to be found, vanished. I never told anyone about our mother returning. I never told anyone of the dolls. I am aware of what I had done. I was the one who found the dolls. I was the one who had pulled that thread. I am now the one who is damned. With each passing day, my chest grows tighter, bit by bit. With each passing day, I continue live in utter fear with no escape. My sister’s piercing scream goes off in my head every night. I see the devil’s blood-red eyes appear in front of me as a reminder of my transgressions and sinful thoughts. I understand that at any moment my life can be wrenched from me. My life is now in the hands of the devil, just dangling from the fires of Hell. As I lie down on my bed, I simply lie there as I allow the night to engulf me in its cloak of darkness. There is no escape, for there is no forgiveness for those who kill or wish to kill. I can never make it through the night because I will never be at peace, and so I do not sleep.