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Doll, Interrupted

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All day long, Chloe had been walking on eggshells around her husband as he stalked the house, talking into his Bluetooth. Political talk: who was caught in a scandal, whose numbers were up, who had endorsed so and so. Now, dressing for the Garwood's annual Fall Fundraiser, she knew with every fiber of her being that something strange was in the air.

Silk stockings in a pale oyster shade. Panties to match, though Chloe doubted they'd survive her husband's obsessive attention to detail. Even at his parents' estate, he preferred her to be naked under her clothes. With a sigh, she wondered what it would be like to get dressed without worrying about what Andrew wanted. After ten years of marriage, she could anticipate his desires, but that didn't stop him from making her change just because he could.

As if on cue, she heard his voice behind her. "I think black tonight, doll. It's more serious."

"Serious?" Usually Andrew wanted 'provocative' or 'fuckable' – not serious.

"I've made a decision. I'm running for Senate."

She turned and gaped at him. "But...you've never even..."

His green eyes turned hard. "Negativity? From my own wife? Do I get no support at all?"

She bit her lip. Andrew bristled with energy, spoiling for a fight. The last thing she wanted to do was irritate her husband when he was in a mood.

"Yes, of course. It's so sudden, that's all."

"I've been thinking about it for a while. Talking with some bigwigs. They all say I should be a shoo-in. Successful businessman, only son of the legendary Jock Garwood. Young, charismatic. I'll feel things out a little more tonight, then announce in a week or so."

Why hadn't he discussed any of this with her? She stared at him numbly. After ten years of marriage to Andrew Garwood, it shouldn't surprise her that he didn't consider her opinion necessary, but she felt the hurt of it anyway.

"I need you to look perfect tonight, like the respectable wife of a future Senator. What were you going to wear?"

"I was considering the sapphire Armani."

He took a step closer. "No. Something good for autumn. Rust, or pumpkin, or some crap like that. You know, woody earth tones. Or black, that's always safe."

"Okay." She bent over to strip off the oyster stockings, conscious of his eyes on her. Almost casually, he reached out and fondled her crotch. She hid a wince. Would he want her here and now, in her walk-in closet, surrounded by the provocative outfits he'd selected for her over the years? But no, he did nothing more than tweak her sex.

"Behave yourself tonight, doll," he said in a warning tone. In her camisole, she turned to face him. His glittering eyes, the eyes that had dazzled her as a naïve teenager, were focused inwards. A shiver went up her spine. Of all the moods she'd seen from Andrew, this one was new and disturbing in its unfamiliarity.

"I always do what you want," she said softly. The things she'd done...she didn't like to think about them.

He shot her a glance of scornful green. "I'm not talking about that. Things are changing. I'm moving into the big leagues now. I need you to be sophisticated and polished. I need you to chat up the wives. Talk about kids and recipes. Know what the issues are, but steer clear of anything controversial. No opinions. Got it?"

"No opinions on what?"

"Anything. Your only opinion is that I'd be the best Senator Massachusetts has ever had." Andrew reached for her right nipple and rubbed it between finger and thumb, the thin silk chafing her skin. "Are you ready for this?"

The doubt in his eyes mirrored her own. Could she say the words he wanted without choking on them? When she was an innocent virgin, he'd trained her to do whatever he wanted, and she'd known no better, but his demands had involved her body, not her mind, or her voice. Most often she'd worn a mask, and survived by detaching herself from whatever was happening to her body. So many strangers had seen her naked, but few had seen her face, and none had heard her voice.

She nodded at her husband with a bravado she didn't feel. As always, she'd do her best. That's what marriage to Andrew was: one foot in front of the other, one day at a time, one humiliating moment after the next.

He left her then, and her legs nearly gave out under her. She slumped against the cedar-lined wall of her closet. So this was the change that had hung in the air like a brewing storm. Andrew's obedient little sex doll was now supposed to become a sophisticated political wife, telling everyone what a great Senator he'd be.

Could she really tell a lie like that?

"Mommy?"

Running footsteps made her scramble for her clothes. The girls knew they weren't allowed in her closet. But in their eagerness to tell all about their visit to the zoo, they might forget. "I'll be out in a second, my darlings!"

Hurriedly, she dressed in a floor-length, antique bronze satin dress that turned her eyes from amber to dark honey. She could play the part of political wife. She was used to playing parts. And if she forgot the reason why she did it, she had only to look outside the closet, into the palatial bedroom, where her girls waited for her.

Halley and Merry had acquired pinwheels at the zoo. Halley was spinning in a crazy circle to make hers whirl faster. Merry had traces of cotton candy on her cheeks. "I said no cotton candy," Chloe told them, bending to kiss Merry on her golden head.

"No, you didn't!" said the ten-year-old with utter indignation. "You said, only if we ate something healthy first."

"What'd you eat that was healthy?"

"Fries!"

Chloe had to laugh. "I guess I should have defined healthy more precisely."

Merry giggled. "We put tons of ketchup on, didn't we Halley?"

"Tons! Like, as much as eighty-two tomatoes." Halley, an eight-year-old whirling dervish, reeled across the floor. Chloe caught her in her arms just before she hit the wall, which was covered in priceless wallpaper in a rare peony pattern.

"Go say goodnight to your father. We'll be out late tonight."

Their little faces grew sober. "Will you come kiss us goodnight?"

"Of course." These two little imps were all that really mattered to her anymore, now that her own parents were gone. For Halley and Merry, she would do anything.

Anything.

Shuddering at the thought of the things she'd already done, she shooed the girls off to bed. What was she going to do about this new phase of her captiv...marriage? The word captivity was closer to the truth. A captive in a golden palace. With a limo.

Around seven-thirty, Burt, Andrew's longtime driver, ushered her in to the black custom Bentley with his usual blank expression. Andrew, impeccably dressed in a tuxedo and smelling of Dolce & Gabbana aftershave, slid in next to her. So many memories in this Bentley. How many times had she ridden back here in some outrageous outfit, nipples exposed, thighs bare against the black leather? Don't think about that now, she told herself. This is different. Things are changing.

As Burt drove down the long, elm-lined drive, it occurred to her, in a flash of blinding hope, that Andrew would have to treat her differently if he was going to be a Senator. They

couldn't go to those parties anymore. Even though they always wore masks, the risk of being recognized would be too great. The thought was intoxicating. No more plaything...instead she'd be a sophisticated Senator's spouse. Maybe she'd take some classes, or hire a private tutor to educate her on the issues. A glorious new life opened up before her.

By the time Burt opened the door for them at the Garwood mansion, Chloe was filled with a thrilling sense of hopeful purpose. Head high, she took Andrew's arm and fixed a half-smile on her face.

Andrew looked down at her as they made their way up the wide stone steps, toward the lights of the party within. "What's up with you?"

"I think you made a good decision, that's all. We could really help people, Andrew. I think it's exciting."

His lip curled. "You're such a child. Will you never outgrow your naiveté, Chloe? This is about power, doll. Power."

Before she could answer, unsure even of what she might say, the cool voice of Andrew's mother greeted them. "Andrew. Chloe. How are the girls?" Mrs. Garwood bent down to give a perfunctory peck on the cheek to her son, and a vague air kiss to Chloe.

"Halley and Merry are looking forward to their visit with you this Sunday," she told Mrs. Garwood.

"Lovely. I'm planning a tea party, and I'm going to invite a few carefully selected children." She shared a conspiratorial glance with Andrew, and Chloe realized with a sense of shock that Mrs. Garwood knew all about Andrew's Senate ambitions. Was she, literally, the last to know?

"Look who's here," said Mrs. Garwood, indicating someone across the room.

"Excellent. I was hoping he'd come tonight. C'mon doll, a quick drink, then I want you to meet this guy."

Andrew steered Chloe toward the bar. She couldn't keep her hurt feelings to herself any more. "Why did you tell your mother before you told me?"

He looked astonished. "Mother is one of the top political hostesses on the whole East Coast. Her connections are incredible. I can't do this without her."

The swirl of chattering guests made her dizzy. What was Andrew saying, that he couldn't do it without his mother, but he could do it without her? Was she so insignificant to his master plan? The scent of a hundred mingled perfumes rose around her, and she felt sick to her stomach. It took all her willpower to keep her polite smile glued to her face, to remember to nod when someone said hello as they passed.

At the bar, Andrew signaled the bartender with his usual casual arrogance. "White wine for my wife, and I'll take a Glenlivet on the rocks."

Chloe's resentment tasted bitter as bourbon. Just once, she'd like to order for herself. When the bartender returned with the drinks, she said, to her own utter surprise, "Actually, tonight I'd like a cosmopolitan, please."

"Cosmo, sure thing."

"Don't bother," Andrew interjected. "Wine is fine. It's about all she can handle. She's cute, but she's a lightweight." He shot the bartender a conspiratorial smile.

Chloe saw the bartender freeze. The man, who'd already turned away with the glass of wine, slowly looked back at them. "Andrew and Chloe?"

"Yeah?" Andrew frowned.

"Sean Duncan, from Bellhaven Island. I knew you way back when. We went fishing for blues one time, with Dustin MacDougal."

Dustin MacDougal. The name was like a bugle call from the past. Dustin was the only island kid who'd ever stood up to Andrew. The memory of his midnight blue eyes and take-no-crap attitude came flooding back to Chloe. Now she recognized Sean. He'd been one of Dustin's tag-alongs. He still had a trace of his Maine accent.

Andrew clearly didn't like the reminder. "Haven't been back to Bellhaven in years."

"Things don't change much out there."

"How's Dustin?" Chloe asked, with a smile.

Andrew interrupted in a tight voice. "We'll take that wine and let you get back to work."

Sean handed Chloe the glass of white wine, with an apologetic look that made her stomach clench. "Yeah, sure." Message received. Sean wasn't about to buck the son of the Garwoods.

What would Dustin have done, if he'd been the bartender? Dustin would have stood his ground and brought Chloe the drink she wanted. The simple power of his midnight-blue gaze would have made Andrew back down in sullen resentment. Where did that inner strength come from, she wondered wistfully as Andrew steered her away from the bar. She took a sip of wine and the sour taste made her gag.

"I don't want to hear anything about Bellhaven again," growled Andrew in her ear.

"Why? Because they don't treat you like a god on Bellhaven? Because you're just another summer kid there?" Was that really her voice saying those things?

She felt Andrew tense, felt his fingers dig into her arm. "What's gotten into you?"

"I don't like white wine."

"I can't have you getting drunk at my father's goddamn Fall Fundraiser. Jesus, Chloe, sometimes I think you're mentally impaired. It's a good thing you're fucking hot."

"Why don't you stop insulting me, and start trying to charm your future campaign donors?"

He stared at her with narrowed eyes, as if he'd like nothing better than to take a whip to her, something he'd never done but had frequently threatened. By now she knew it was an empty threat. He wanted her to look perfect, his flawless possession to display at will.

His glance drifted away from her and his eyes lit up. "There he is. Perfect timing. See the guy over there?"

With distate, Chloe recognized the man. His big belly bulged over the waistband of his dress pants, and he had an unkempt look about him. She'd seen him at various society parties, where he always looked out of place. She didn't know his name.

"He looks like a slob, but he's the richest motherfucker here. He's like the godfather of local politics. If we get him in our corner, we'll be set. Everyone else will follow."

Chloe sighed. "You'd better go talk to him then."

"Yes, let's go." With a tight smile, Andrew headed in the man's direction, his grip tight on Chloe's elbow. "This is your moment. I'm counting on you here."

"What do you mean?"

"Reel him in, doll, reel him in. He's already told me how much he likes you."

The fat man's eyes sharpened as he turned to greet them. "The charming son of the house and his lovely wife."

"Good to see you, sir. How about we go talk in private?"

That was usually her cue to go mingle, but this time Andrew beckoned her to accompany the two men to the library. Chloe realized with pleasure that this was her chance to show Andrew she could be polished and sophisticated, and win the wealthy donor's support.

The quiet of the library was a relief after the din of the party.

"Quite a crowd, eh?" The man had a gruff, unpleasant voice.

"Yes," she agreed. "The Garwoods' parties are always mobbed."

"Not surprising. Your husband's an up-and-comer."

"Yes, he is." Chloe was about to launch into a hopefully charming explanation of why her husband ought to be a Senator, when she felt Andrew's hands on her shoulders through the fur-lined bolero jacket she wore to keep off the chill.

"Unzip your jacket," Andrew told her.

Shock rippled through her.

When she didn't move, Andrew felt for the zipper in the front of her bolero and lowered it. Paralyzed, she felt Andrew remove the jacket from her body.

The man's eyes fastened onto her chest. The bronze fabric clung to her, revealing just enough cleavage to be enticing yet appropriate. A topaz pendant hung between her breasts. Andrew liked her to wear jewelry to accent her bosom.

"Well?" Andrew asked.

"Nice," said the man. "Give me more."

Another shock as Andrew reached into the bodice of her dress and pulled out her breasts. He rubbed her nipples between thumb and forefinger in the way that always made them stiffen, no matter how embarrassed Chloe was. "Gorgeous, aren't they?"

Chloe drifted into the familiar disconnection that provided her only escape. She floated up, away from her body, where she could look down at the scene dispassionately.

"Oh, yeah," breathed the man. He made a move as if to lunge forwards, but Andrew held up his hand.

"Do we have a deal?"

Reluctantly, the fat man dragged his gaze away from Chloe's exposed nipples. "The whole shebang?"

"Just what we talked about."

The man looked back at Chloe, scanning her body, her face, and landing again on her breasts. "Deal."

Chloe couldn't see Andrew, who was still behind her, but she felt him quiver with satisfaction. He gave her nipple another tweak. Then he did something that stunned Chloe to the depths of her soul. He pushed her down onto her knees. Only the thick folds of her dress protected her from the hard floor.

What was happening? Confusion swirled in her dazed mind. She felt cool air behind her as Andrew left her and crossed to the door, his footsteps clicking on the parquet. She heard the soft opening and closing of the door. Silence settled over the room.

Then the fat man came toward her, hands stretched out. He grabbed her breasts, and she winced at his roughness.

"Don't..." she said, but his hands were already gone. Plump and clumsy, they fumbled at the opening of his pants. His penis tumbled out beneath the folds of his belly. It was level with her mouth, and as he took another step forward, she was riveted by the sight of its growing mass. Clearly, he wanted her to put her lips on it. Clearly, he thought he was entitled to put his penis into her mouth.

Andrew had sold her to the highest donor for a chance to become Senator.

A shiver went over her body. She couldn't see the man's face any more, only his big belly and the heavy flesh that jostled against his pants, swaying back and forth, coming ever closer. She still didn't even know his name.

Sick despair pressed down on her like a blanket of lead. So this was the role she was supposed to play in Andrew's campaign. So much for educating herself. So much for freeing herself from his twisted games. In all the parties she and Andrew had gone to, never had things come to this. Men had touched her, even women, she'd been ogled and toyed with and posed and stroked. But never had she been expected to perform sex acts on a stranger. Was this what he thought she was worth? Did her only value lie in exposing herself, in sucking off this fat, obscenely wealthy man?

She bent her head as the man came closer. "I've been waiting for this for a while," he said in his crude voice. "Garwood said you wouldn't cause any trouble."

She said nothing, just turned her head away. The pendant shifted with her movement, warm against the skin of her chest. Time seemed to slow to a crawl. Her life with Andrew stretched behind her, every humiliating moment of it. In front of her, blankness. Nothingness. Just a penis, belonging to a man with no name. Was that her future? The man spoke again, every raspy word raining down on her like acid.

"He said if you made a fuss, page him. But that you wouldn't, because you're a doll about this kind of thing."

A *doll*. The word bounced around in Chloe's brain like a crazy pinball. An image popped into her head, a memory of herself as a tiny blond eight-year-old in her parents' house on Bellhaven, stretched out on a throw rug her mom had made, playing with a Barbie she'd dressed as a fairy princess. How had that little girl ended up here? Like this?

The man pushed his hips forward so his penis brushed against her cheek.

She'd ended up here because she'd idolized Andrew, and she'd believed in fairy tales where innocent girls married wealthy princes and lived happily ever after.

"Come on, doll baby," muttered the man.

Where had that little girl's world gone, with the smell of pines, the constant murmur of waves on a rocky beach, the lonely calls of seagulls? The salt air on her tongue. The quiet strength in a pair of midnight blue eyes. The glorious wind on her face.

Right now, it wasn't the wind against her skin, it was an insistent penis. She reared away and bolted to her feet. "No. Get away from me."

A cruel look came over him. "You don't want to do this."

"Get out of here."

"I'm not going anywhere. If you want to leave, you're going to have to deal with your husband."

She whirled away from him, pulling her dress back up over her breasts.

"You'll pay," said the man.

"Fuck off," she told him, stalking to the door, riding a rush of adrenaline. Those two words felt so powerful. So liberating. She'd never said that before, to anyone. Quivering from the thrill of it, she swung open the door of the library and strode into the thick of the party. At the bar, she spotted Andrew laughing with one of his buddies, hand clapped onto his shoulder. She waded through the crowd, collecting surprised glances each step of the way.

When she reached him, he turned in shock, arrested in mid-anecdote, a frown gathering on his forehead.

"Fuck off," she said. It felt even better this time. "Fuck. The Fuck. Off."

Had she just invented a profanity? She laughed out loud at the look on Andrew's face. Other faces turned toward her, reflecting various degrees of shock and surprise.

She wanted to tell Andrew she was leaving. She wanted to tell him he was an ass to the most ultimate degree, that she regretted every minute she'd spent with him, except for the ones that had produced Halley and Merry. But when she opened her mouth to speak to him, nothing came out.

He didn't deserve her words. He didn't deserve anything from her.

She turned her back on him and headed for the front door. Outside, fresh air and freedom beckoned. A new life waited.

But her exhilaration faded as she made her way through the party. A hundred questions swarmed her thoughts. Would Andrew fight a divorce? Would he want custody of their daughters? Would he want revenge? How would she find a lawyer? How would she pay for a lawyer? Where would she go, what would she do?

Maybe this was a mistake, maybe she could blame it on the wine, on the stress, on something, anything.

Panic sent her stumbling out the front door. A more immediate question loomed. How was she going to get out of here? She had no cash with her. Andrew had her cell phone. A knot of chauffeurs leaned against a Town Car, sharing gossip and cigarettes. One of them was Burt. He spotted her and jumped to attention.

She waved him off, resolve stiffening her spine. No, this wasn't a mistake. Never again would she set foot in the dreaded Bentley. Her pendant would pay for a cab, if necessary. She took a deep breath of the crisp November air. Yes, something was different

today. It wasn't the change of season, or Andrew's change of career plan. It was her. Finally, Andrew had pushed his little doll too far.

About the Author

Juniper Bell's first Samhain book, "Doll," will be released on December 15. Juniper lives in a cabin in Alaska, where she spends the long winter nights letting her imagination run wild. For more, visit her web site at JuniperBell.com or her [Samhain author page](#).