

I screamed in anger and threw the bottle as hard as I could at the bed(sound effect). It hit Betsy and she fell on the floor. I laughed. I dragged her into the bathroom and threw her into our bathtub, which always had water in it as the drains were all clogged(sound effect). Of course, she didn't fight back while she was underwater, but it made me feel better. A few minutes later, after I had finished taking out my anger and humiliation on my favorite toy I threw her in the toy chest and slammed it shut(sound effect). I kicked the chest against the wall ; I never wanted to see Betsy again.

I never owned another doll after that. About a week later the police came and two nice ladies took me to live in a new home in a new state, with food and toys and no drugs. The trunk went into storage and the wagon disappeared. I never saw my mother again. As I got older my foster parents admitted she was in jail, doing 25 years. I felt nothing for her anyway, I was still having nightmares because of the life she had given me. I focused on doing well in school and ignored her letters from prison. She reached out to me several times in my teens but I always declined her calls.

That is, until this morning. I am 30 now, with my own children and a husband who loves me deeply. I have a beautiful house, two dogs and a career as a social worker trying to make a difference for kids who had it bad like me. So when I got a voicemail from my mother letting me know she had been paroled and wished to speak, I felt stable enough to let her say her piece. Since the kids were home from school I went out into our shed in the backyard to return my mother's call. The shed was the children's domain and they used it to play in the summer. I sat on my old toy chest which was currently being used as tea party table and dialed the number she had left me.

Three rings. sound effect

"Hello? Laura?"

"Hello, mother. How are you?"

"Oh Laura, thank you for speaking to me. I know you have your own life now and a family. I would love to meet them someday! I just wanted to tell you how sorry I am. For everything."

"You are not meeting my kids - ever. I am going to say my piece here, too. The drugs destroyed you and you took me down alongside you. Honestly, I am surprised it took you so long to get caught."

"I'm not sure what you mean about being caught, Laura I honestly know nothing! Look, it hardly matters. I do understand why you would feel that way. Why you would hate me and not want me to meet your little ones. I learned a lot about Jesus and forgiveness while I was away and just..oh Laura, I am so sorry about Betsy."

"Betsy?" I paused, confused. "Why would you care about her?"

"I know, I know Laura, believe me I do. It was all my fault, the drugs. And Betsy, oh God, if I had only been able to see through the haze, if I had only known. She's gone forever now and it's all my fault."

As my mother began to cry, I tapped my fingers on the toy box impatiently. The drugs had clearly fried my mother's brain.

"Mother, why are you talking about Betsy? Why do you even care? And I know where Betsy is." Right underneath me.

"You do? What are you talking about, Laura? Oh God, where is she?!"

I shifted uncomfortably. "Betsy's in the trunk."

I honestly thought she had hung up, I heard nothing on the other end, not even breathing.

".....What do you mean your sister's in the trunk?"

"Sister? What the hell are you talking about? Back on drugs so soon, mother? Betsy is a goddamn doll. I locked her in the toy box a few days before you got arrested for opium possession."

"Laura.. oh God no...no... Laura, I wasn't arrested because of the drugs, I was arrested because of Betsy's disappearance! You always called her your little doll, but we all thought you knew.. Oh God, what did you do, Laura? What did you do to my baby?!"

With no emotion, I set the phone next to me and stood up. I could hear the distant sound of my mother's anguished cries and feel the dark clutch of agony in my own chest. Memories were stirring in the back of my mind threatening to come flooding forward into my consciousness. Pushing against a door in my head, a door that had been locked so tightly for so long, I had forgotten it was there.

Could the trauma and the drugs have really led me to believe that a small child was actually doll? Asking for food, asking for utensils to eat with, asking me to protect her from the bad man...

No...

I slowly turned around and brought my eyes down to the chest. Surely, it was too small. You couldn't fit a person in there. You couldn't. But what about a very small, starving, emaciated child? What about her? If I were an investigator looking for a child I would never consider looking in this chest. It was just too small.

I knelt down to the ground and unclipped the clasps. It would be better to not look. After all that I had overcome, this new life that I had earned. It could all be undone by opening this toy box. I shouldn't open it. I should throw it in a landfill and forget it ever existed. I should not look inside.. I opened the chest.(sound effect)

I never had a doll. My mother never could afford to buy me one. I never had a wagon either. But I did have a toy box. A pretty, blue and white toy box. And when I was five, I drowned my two year old sister and put her in it. And now my life is over.

Erica/narrator - Like most people, Laura had a sad childhood. Her father left she was born and her mother was on drugs from the day she brought her home. The smoky air would always flood

down the hallway and under her door and seemed to linger for days. Her mother wasn't a bad person, just a victim of her addictions. When she did have spare money, she would put food in the house and even sometimes buy Laura clothes from Goodwill. The only pieces of furniture she had in her bedroom were a boxspring and mattress set and a little blue and white toy chest. Not that Laura had a lot of toys to put in it, just the 3 that she had gotten for birthdays: one was an art kit, one was a red wagon, and the last, her pride and joy, was a doll named Betsy.

Kyle - Betsy you are my best friend. I love having tea parties together.

Sound Effect - Clink

Erica- I like having tea parties too.

Erica/narrator- Thinking about Betsy in adulthood has led Laura to believe that she was a severely traumatized child who was often high on opium and therefore, her memories were extremely unreliable

Erica- Steal food for me. Bring me forks, bring me knives. Hit the bad man who is sleeping on our couch.

Jason - why do you always do these bad things, Laura?

Kyle - It was Betsy who told me to do them! You never believe me!

Kyle- Mom i know i have never had a birthday party before but all my friends at school really want me to have one.

Jason- A birthday party? Laura, that's ridiculous. I can't afford to feed 15 other children that aren't even mine - I can barely afford to feed you! You eat like a elephant, or should I say little Betsy does. I barely get anything to eat around here!

Kyle- *mumbled* i hate you. *Starts to cry* (sound effect of door slam) how come Betsy never gets in trouble like i do? *scream and throw bottle at betsy* (sound effect)