Princess was my best friend in the whole world—she was any eight-year-old’s dream doll, tall, golden, and plastic. Her blue eyes sparkled, and she looked like her namesake in whatever I dressed her in. She had everything she could ever want, whenever she wanted it. My brown eyes gazed lovingly into her blue ones as I held her smooth hand in my rough one. She was a princess—my Princess. It was little matter to me that her smile never changed.

Mama never thought Princess a dream, and she told Daddy that, often enough that he had an automatic response for her complaints. “She’s only eight, you’re making a fuss of nothing.” Mama would then point out that it had been four years of Princess-topia, and Daddy would brush this off. “She’ll grow out of it. All kids do.”

I never understood Mama’s dislike of Princess. Princess was pretty; didn’t everyone like pretty? I wanted to be just like Princess. I dressed up in Mama’s clothes because they looked more like Princess’s clothes than mine. I pulled out Mama’s lipsticks and smothered my lips in sticky pink glosses until they shone like Princess’s fuchsia ones. I never did it while Mama was home. She would have been angry. I was too young for such things, she would say as she shook her finger. “Go play with Ruthie and Abigail, you spend too much time inside with Princess. It’s nice out, and you need the sunshine. It’s healthy. It’s the loveliest day, and you are the loveliest girl.” She wasn’t right, though, as anyone could see: Princess was the loveliest girl, and every minute with her was like a dream.

I didn’t play with Princess and her fantasyland much after the seventh grade, because at thirteen, I determined dolls were for children, and I was obviously not a child. What a silly, droll pastime! This made Papa smug, and I once overheard him remark to Mama, “See, I told you she’d grow out of it. All kids do.” Mama confused me by responding, “We’ll see.” She still seemed worried.

Three years went by without me ever picking up Princess, but I kept her, just because she was “a relic of juvenile fantasy”, as I so often told my friends when they mentioned Princess’s presence above my mirror. I was an adult, nearly. I had other things to worry about. Still, I was always aware of Princess’s position above my head as I wrestled with my too-tight jeans and struggled to smooth my blemished skin with concealer. She looked down on me whenever I stood before the mirror, and I imagined her to be amused, in much the same way I was when I watched my three-year-old cousin try to do her hair like mine, or talk like me, or gesture the same way. Always a silly imitation, silly in its vainness.

In this way, Princess was very present in my life, even though I never touched her. I didn’t dare move her. Twice while cleaning out my room I thought about giving Princess a new home, or just throwing her away, but I could never bring myself to do it. She had been a fixture of my childhood--how could I toss that? And so Princess stayed, perched daintily upon my mirror, surveying my every move with her sparkling blue eyes, and forever smiling her fuschia smile.

At sixteen, I began to worry. Princess had started to follow me. Not actually, of course, but I found that whenever I stood before a mirror, I felt her pretty blue eyes burning holes into my head, as if she sat upon every mirror everywhere. Those blue eyes obliterated any semblance of value I had. I’d begin to feel sick. I cried more. Then Princess was everywhere I saw a reflection of myself: the rearview mirror, Ms. Dubinski’s east-facing windows, the polished floors of my mother’s office, Miranda’s glasses, trendy storefronts, the dentist’s aquarium. Wherever my face was, Princess’s was there, too. I felt I was unraveling, slowly and painfully, and that Princess was on the other end of the thread. She wasn’t going to let go.

So I painted my face, and didn’t eat, and ran until my blisters popped and I doubled over, choking out vomit. None of it stopped or even slowed her progress, as her pale, painted hands pulled at the fibers of my being. If anything, she seemed to be gathering speed. It terrified me. I tried to reason. I was a person, and she was manufactured. But she was perfect, and I cried.

Under Princess’s power, I finished the last day of the school year and collected my yearbook. I eagerly signed all the yearbooks people handed to me, and gleefully read what they wrote in return. The pages were crammed with messages in every color. “You are such a queen, guuuuurrrl!!! See you this summer!!!” “You, me, and every beautiful thing, girlfriend!” “HMU 4 movie marathons this summer! We have a lot to catch up on!” Ambiguous Office quotes. Ice cream. Friends.

When I returned home late that night, after hours of swimming and bicycle stunts and DIY piercings, I was exhausted. As I entered my room, I looked up at Princess, posed over the mirror. And then—what was that noise? Growling? It stopped; it started. I looked in the mirror. It was I. I had growled at Princess, like a dog at a wolf. I had bared my teeth—my teeth that were not like Princess’s, despite three years of braces. My eyes had narrowed—my brown, brown eyes that mandated contacts, nothing like Princess’s clear, sparkling blue ones! “Where is my sparkle? Ha--glitter eyes,” I thought, as I slid onto my bed and opened my yearbook. I slid my fingers across the pages, and flipped to my portrait. I was pretty. I was nice. I was good. I was enough. Yes, yes, yes—

No—no words could describe my horror, for there, on the shiny page, was Princess’s face where mine ought to have been. It was a fresh testament to her supremacy. How she haunted me, haunted me! Blue eyes, sparkling eyes, eyes that I had begged often enough to snap my spine, instead of testing its strength. How I hated her, hated her, with all my heart and mind! I leapt from the bed and swept Princess from her pedestal. In my frenzy, I took hold of her wavy blonde locks and beat her body against the wall. I melted her hands with matches. I stabbed her stomach with needles. I slashed her hair off and flushed it down the toilet. I heaved her head from her body, demented by my seizure of power. I was so angry, so very angry, at what she had done to me. It wasn’t fair! And still, still her eyes followed me. The blue, blue eyes! They taunted me, mocked me! Jezebel, Delilah! A thousand shots of humiliation! I sliced her face in two, and tore the head. I stabbed and stabbed and stabbed the remnants, until the eyes were shreds, ever lapping up my pain. Then I lit the tatters, and observed as Princess’s eyes were liquefied into puddles.