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Mami

By: ALBA DELIA HERNANDEZ

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Calabash: A Journal of Caribbean Arts and Letters is an international literary journal dedicated to publishing works encompassing, but not limited to, the Anglophone, Francophone, Hispanophone and Dutch-speaking Caribbean. The Journal is especially dedicated to presenting the arts and letters of those communities that have long been under-represented within the creative discourse of the region, among them: Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles, Maroon societies, and the Asian and Amerindian societies of the region. Calabash has a strong visual arts component.

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Alba Delia Hernandez

MAMI

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Mami in a doll factory. Mami working hard. Mami puts the food on our table. Mami puts a roof over our heads. Mami buys me five new pants and blouses in September. Mami works in a doll factory. Mami buys me everything I need. Mami, tonight I want to sleep in your bed and wait for you. I don't want to sleep in Mamá's room tonight. Indio and Freddie can help Mamá. Mami let me sleep in your room and wait for you.

Today I made a cake all by myself. Mami's doesn't get home till midnight because she's working two jobs now. At night she works at a factory where she makes plastic fishes. I like her doll factory job better.

The other day I looked at Mami's hand and noticed that she had cuts and little scars all over her index finger and on her thumb.

"What happened there?"

"The twisties," she tells me, "the twisties to keep the dolls in the box."

"Why do you have to put the twisties on? They just make it harder for me to take the doll out. I hate those twisties."

"You have to keep them on so the dolls look neat and people'll want to buy them."

The dolls that Mami usually brings me from the factory don't come in boxes. They just come in a plastic bag inside her purse. But the dolls I get for Christmas and my birthday come in boxes. Like the one Titi got me yesterday. The doll had a hole in her

mouth and a hole down there, so I could give her water or milk in a bottle and then she would pee it out and she had diapers that I had to put on her.

She had twisties around her neck and around her ankles and wrists. She had a big one around her waist. I asked my sister to do it. But she tried one and couldn't do it and she just left the doll on the sofa. I went to my brother to help me, but he told me to give it to Mami to do. But I don't want to ask Mami, because Mami hates the twisties.

So I tried to do it by myself. I twirled the twisty little by little. I got the twisty around the wrists out. There was a little red mark on my finger now. But it wasn't a cut like Mami's. I untwisted her other wrist and then her ankles and then her neck. I got her out of the box. But then I put her back in again. I wrapped the twisty around her neck and tied her to the box again. I tied her wrists and ankles and waist again. And then I started from the ankles and untwisted her again. I took her out and told her that she had to go in the box again ten times because that's the only way she could come into my house and play. She didn't want to go back in, but I pushed her and told her not to make noise or else I'd tie the twisties harder. She started to cry so I tied the twisty around her neck real tight. I twisted and tied and told her to shut up and when I looked at my fingers, they looked a little like Mami's. There was a line, but no cut. It was just red and pink. When I touched it, it hurt and burned. I bit my finger to make it redder, but the lines were not like Mami's. I only had bite marks. I put the doll in again and told her I had to twist and tie her in the box 100 times more, before she could come and stay at my house.