

The Story of Blue Belle

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My first memory of life was of their kiss.

His calloused-looking fingers curled themselves in her copper hair while she smiled as their lips pressed together. The gesture seemed odd to me, but I stared, enchanted by it and them. Her arms held me close to her breast, and I heard very clearly the fast thumping that thumped within her. It deafened my ears but I could also hear his. My first sound was of their hearts beating. My first scent was of her Jasmine flower perfume and the faint aroma of powdery rose of the workshop room. My first touch was of her warmth from the skin against my little body, and my first sight was of their kiss. It was soft and it didn't last long, but their noses still caressed each other before they opened their eyes to gaze into their souls—his slate gray reunited with her fresh spring grass green.

Joy—I knew not what it was in my first moments, but it was the word that came to me as I observed their expressions. Joy and love. A love so strong, pure, and true that it breathed life into me. I knew the man who kissed this woman. He was the one who built me, and their love is what created my soul.

“My love,” the woman called him, “did you give her a name?” her voice chirped like the morning sun of spring.

Looking down at me with her, he hummed. His voice spoke, deep like the calming, crashing of waves of the sea—soothing and strong. “I made her for you, my dearest. She is yours to name.”

The woman studied me further. She looked at my tube-curling, golden hair, my clear brown eyes, my pale cheeks, my painted red lips, my sapphire blue dress and blue bonnet to match on top of my head, and the black, buckled shoes on my tiny feet. She stared at my colors, and an idea sparkled in her eyes.

“I shall call her Blue Belle. Our beautiful little Blue Belle.”

Once upon a time, in the year 1862, there was a young doll-maker. He was a Frenchman who traveled across Europe in hopes of settling down in a town far from the city, where he could practice his craft of ball-jointed doll making. One day, he fell in love with a woman in a small town with the most beautiful green eyes he had ever seen. He opened shop in her town and she loved the dolls he made, even when ball-jointed dolls were a new craft and weren't immediately fond of by society. This woman was the first to love his creations in her little town.

To propose, the doll-maker crafted a doll of fine beauty and detail—the most stunning doll he had ever created in his career. He was not rich. He was an outsider in her town, and all he knew was how to make dolls. He didn't have much to offer her, but she was more than satisfied with his love alone. She accepted his proposal and loved the doll as if it was her own child. She named it Blue Belle.

Years of happy marriage together passed before the couple could, at last, have a child of their own. However, the baby did not cry when she was born. Although breathing, the doctor predicted that the child would not survive a day after her birth. The doll-maker and his wife were devastated with the news, until they heard their baby crying from the nursery. In her crib, where they left their baby girl, the Blue Belle doll was lying beside the baby as she wailed and cried.

No one knew how the doll got there.

Ysabel, the baby girl, grew up happy and healthy with her parents for many years after her miraculous birth. She was very well behaved—always helping her mother clean after supper, always smiling, always expressing love to her parents, and she shared their love for the dolls her father created. At school, she was considered the most well-mannered student a teacher could ask for.



But she was also the quietest and most reserved child in class. She wouldn't play with the other children, but would rather spend many hours of the day watching her father carve, paint, and dress the dolls he sold, and, if Ysabel promised to be careful, her father would allow her to play with the dolls as well. For a young girl of seven, it wasn't unusual to play with dolls for Ysabel would eventually out grow them, but she never tried to intermingle with the other children or any other adult besides her parents—if necessary.

"Father's dolls are the only friends I need," Ysabel would reply when she was asked why she never talked to the other children.

How she played with the dolls was similar to how people would interact. She would talk to the dolls and respond as if she were engaged in a back and forth conversation—with their own thoughtful opinions and responses. Her strange behavior did not go unnoticed by the village or her parents. It concerned them, but Ysabel was their precious child. They did their best to understand her, as they knew of the isolation to have an intense fascination no one else could really appreciate.

For every doll that was sold, Ysabel acted as if she were saying goodbye to a dear friend. Since she had no real friends, her father decided to craft for her a doll of her own—much like how he made one for his wife. Equally perfect and equally divine. "Think of him as your angel to take care of you and to watch over you," the doll-maker told his daughter. "Your guardian when your mother and I are not around to protect you, a companion to guide you and accompany you in life's journey, and a friend to help you smile so you won't ever be lonely. You are the most precious thing to my heart, Ysabel, you and your mother, my beautiful little doll." She loved the doll he'd given her and played with it always, along with her mother's Blue Belle doll.

Then one night, tragedy struck on Ysabel's house.

At this time, ball-jointed dolls still were not a popular craft in the small, reserved village. The doll-maker had many troubles in the beginning and many more when he managed to capture the heart of the most beautiful woman in town. A drunken group of five bigots, prejudiced against the dolls, with a leader known for his acute distaste against Ysabel's family, raided their home. First, they attacked the shop; the family woke at the sound of the windows smashing and porcelain heads of the dolls shattering. Ysabel was the first to cry, screaming about the dolls being murdered. Quickly, her parents hid her under the floorboards and warned her not to come up or make a sound no matter what sounds she'd hear. Ysabel remained as quiet as she possibly could, gripping the doll her father made for her and the Blue Belle doll in her arms, as she heard the men storm into her home, beat her father, and disgrace her mother.

"Ey! Where'd thad brat of yurs go? Thad creepy liddle bitch! She'd be nice, ain't she boys?"

Beaten nearly to death and raped beyond salvation, Ysabel's parents were at the men's mercy but they would not breathe a word of their daughter's location. With a sudden slam of a heavy boot from the leader, Ysabel squeaked under the floorboards, and she was discovered. The leader tore through the room to find the trapdoor, and he grabbed the little girl by her collar when she had tried to escape. She dropped her doll in the dirt and dust of the underground and screamed for her parents while gripping little Blue Belle in her tiny arms.

When Ysabel's father tried to escape his assailants, they punched and kicked him back down—cracking more ribs and having him gasp for impossible air.

When the Ysabel's mother tried to escape her rapists, they punched her down and slammed her face back on the wood before pinning her body back to submission. A water pitcher had fallen from the counter when the leader searched for her daughter, and the doll-maker's wife reached for a piece of the glass. Grabbing it, she stabbed her assaulter in the neck to get him off. She left the piece in his neck to bleed to death and reached for her daughter next. The leader stopped her, and she scratched his eyes. He dropped Ysabel, and the little girl protected her mother's doll with her elbow.



Ysabel heard her mother scream for her to run. She heard the man call her mother a ‘whore’. She heard her mother get pushed and then there was a very loud SNAP. Ysabel turned around and saw her mother on the floor, her head under the legs of a fallen rocking chair. Ysabel’s father couldn’t call out to his own wife when she laid unmoving.

With two dead bodies in the room, the other two attackers started to panic. This was going too far but it was too late—their leader bellowed. They finished what they had started, and he reached for Ysabel. The little girl had not looked away from her dead mother. With the sorrow of her body and the anger towards these men, Ysabel suddenly screamed, and from the trapdoor, a knife stabbed the leader’s arm before he could touch her again.

A stranger crawled out of the trapdoor, holding the hot metal blade that burned the flesh it impaled—allowing not a drop of blood to be spilt from the wound. The doll-maker recognized the stranger the moment he saw him through the blood that clouded his vision, though he could not believe it. Wearing the same clothes he stitched and bearing the same features he designed, this stranger resembled the doll he crafted for his daughter.

With eyes that glowed red, like the devil’s wrath, the stranger smirked and hissed, “I’m going to kill you....”

“...all of you,” Ysabel finished for the stranger, whose hazel-violet eyes glowed with rage just the same towards the men who murdered her mother.

One by one, the stranger killed the attackers. He sliced off the leader’s arm first, before digging the blade under his ribs, and then dragging the blade down the flesh of his thigh, just so he could survive a little longer. The scent of burning flesh sullied the air, and the other men tried to leave. The doll-like stranger did not let them. He trapped them in Ysabel’s home, and he reveled in carving their bodies before the shock and pain drove them mad to death. The stranger’s knife raped the men of their dignity, the way they violated Ysabel’s mother, and he made sure to have them cry in the luscious pain they shared with Ysabel’s father. The stranger did everything Ysabel wanted him to do and more—and she loved their screams.

The leader had a gun in his jacket pocket. He pointed it at Ysabel, his hand shaking from lack of strength and his eye sight unclear. A shot boomed into the room, and Ysabel’s father heard the stranger call out a name from the hallway before the air finally became silent. The name he heard was Blue Belle. Feeling more concern for his daughter than the unfeasible events that played before him, the doll-maker crawled to Ysabel’s side. When he saw her face, she was without an eye. Funny thing was, it wasn’t the doll-maker’s daughter whom the bullet hit. It was the Blue Belle doll that was also missing an eye.

When Ysabel woke up, the doll her father made for her was beside her on the bed—no longer life-size and moving on its own. The doll-maker also waited by the bedside, with his wounds unskillfully mended. “You’re not afraid of me?” she asked her father.

Then he smiled, and he replied to her, “How could I be afraid of the child who saved my life and avenged her mother’s murder?” with the utmost sincerity. Ysabel was so relieved by his words that tears drenched the tightly wrapped bandage over her missing eye. Little did she know that her life was never going to return to the truly happy days she once knew.

The doll-maker left town with his daughter. They knew they had to leave and start anew somewhere far away. They buried their wife and mother, giving her the proper burial she deserved, and they burned the bodies of their assaulters in their house. Father and daughter traveled from one town to the next—some were large cities and some were small towns. The doll-maker never let the two of them stay for very long. Only long enough to open shop, sell a few dolls for money, and then they would move on to the next town.

It wasn’t because the doll-maker feared their identities to be revealed and the two of them to be



separated. It was so Ysabel's father could find a proper wife and mother for his daughter—someone who shared a love for the ball-jointed dolls and had the same shade of green eyes as she did, which held compassion and acceptance. Once it was confirmed that none of the women in town had her exact shade, then the doll-maker and his daughter would move on.

A mother with a gentle soul and those same beautiful green eyes; yes, that was to be the proper mother for Ysabel. If a woman was false, then there was no need for her.

Years passed this way—the constant moving, Ysabel's new education becoming the craft of doll making, and the relentless searches for a replacement mother. Ysabel herself didn't complain about this new way of living, so long as she had her dolls and her father. She was fine with not making friends or acquaintances with other people, so long as she had her father's dolls for company instead. Then in a smaller, poor village near the ocean, Ysabel met a thirteen-year-old girl, same age as her, named Clarisse.

Clarisse approached Ysabel first and was really friendly with her. She was also very persistent, which was something Ysabel wasn't comfortable with. She was more acquainted with the eerie eyes of rejection and the soft mumbling of rumors that scorned her and her dolls. When Ysabel tried to ignore Clarisse, the sea village girl would continue talking as if she were completely oblivious. She admitted that the village was financially suffering from their poor skill at fishing, which was where most of the income came from, and there weren't a lot of children since families would often leave for a better life—so Clarisse was very happy when Ysabel and her father moved in. No one had ever really said that to Ysabel before and slowly, she listened to Clarisse a little more.

However, because the village was small and low on potential marriageable women, there wasn't a single pair of green eyes possessed by any of them. Ysabel's father was ready to leave, but Ysabel pleaded her father to stay a little longer. It was the first and only time she ever asked him for a request, but he was still adamant on finding a woman to be Ysabel's mother. The doll-maker's daughter had known of her father's grief for losing his wife. She watched it turn into his obsession and eat away the caring father she used to know all these years. She saw the violence he would sometimes display, never to her but to the women he attempted to court and the people who taunted them. Ysabel witnessed his episodes and she never stopped her father or told him different. Only at the little village by the sea did Ysabel finally tell him a secret of what he could do so that they may remain a little longer.

“Make a doll, Father. Craft a doll in Mother's image with the same eyes you love. Think of her as you craft it. Use the love you have for her to create a soul. Give it a purpose, and I'll help give it a physical form like before—when Mother died, and I used the doll you gave me to avenge her. I can do that, Father.”

The doll-maker immediately went to work. His new obsession became making the perfect doll, in his wife's image, so that she could come back to their daughter—come back to him. So long as they could stay in the little village by the sea with Clarisse, Ysabel didn't mind her Father's newfound madness.

The two girls became close friends. Ysabel listened more to Clarisse. Clarisse never stopped talking and invited her new friend for dinner and sleepovers. Clarisse's parents were also very nice to Ysabel and had wanted to meet her father as well, since they were the political leaders of the village. “Father is busy working,” Ysabel would answer, and that was all she would say about it.

Ysabel still played with her dolls, and Clarisse became the first, and soon the last, person whom she would ever willingly allow to touch them. She shared her views with her new friend that dolls are alive. They have souls, and Ysabel's father has the ability to create souls for every doll he crafted, without even realizing it. It was because of his love for crafting that such tiny, little souls could be born, and only Ysabel could hear them, since she was also a product of his making. The dolls could not move on their own, nor could they talk to their owners. “Is that why you move



around so much,” Clarisse asked her, and Ysabel told her no. It was because she allowed her doll, Wrath, to kill the murderers who took her mother away. Clarisse accepted listening to this and more.

One day, the doll-maker was near completion of the doll-imitation of his deceased wife, and Ysabel was readying herself to meet with Clarisse. The sun was just about to set, letting in the hues of red and orange to reflect off the ocean’s surface through the windows of their home, when there came a knock at the front door. A police officer was at the door, and Clarisse’s voice was heard screaming behind him.

“There’s the freaks!”

Outside Ysabel’s home was a mob of the villagers, with the police officers that held badges from bureaus of larger, more well-known cities—a few the doll-maker and his daughter had lived in and left. They came for the family of criminals, who not only killed the men that killed Ysabel’s mother, but also assaulted and dishonored the women who had the ‘wrong shade’ of green eyes. Since Ysabel had confessed to Clarisse about what happened that night and why they traveled from place to place, their actions could not be pleaded as self-defense, and the people who rejected them would not accept such a plea anyway.

Ysabel knew that the crime of dishonor was a lie against her father.

As the police were dragging the doll-maker and his daughter from their new home to the police carriage, the captain informed Clarisse’s family that they had done a great service to society and would be given a hefty reward that would replenish the poor village for many years. They called Clarisse a hero. When a police officer took Ysabel’s Wrath and Blue Belle doll away, she struggled—screaming and claiming that no one touches her dolls.

“No, just me, right?” Clarisse picked up pieces of coral rocks from the sea shore and threw them at Ysabel. A few other villagers started copying her, throwing rocks at Ysabel and her father. “You’re the spawn of the devil! Go rot in hell where you belong!”

One of the rocks missed Ysabel entirely and instead hit the Blue Belle doll. The already broken porcelain face cracked more, and Ysabel screamed bloody murder. With the police holding her, she couldn’t cover her face and allowed all of the village to watch how the corner of her lip cracked, like the doll’s, into a wide, rigid smile—the same damage that was done to the Blue Belle doll. Seeing this, Clarisse ran to the police officer that held the two dolls and yanked away the Blue Belle one. “Did you forget to share this little secret with me, *my friend*? Any damage done to this filth will be done to you? Then let’s make that ugly face of yours prettier!” She raised the doll up to smash the doll on the reefs. Right before she could, her hands were sliced clean off over her head.

An officer laid on the sand, with his head nearly severed from his shoulders, and Wrath caught the Blue Belle doll before it hit the ground with Clarisse’s dismembered hands.

“Now you’re going to die...” Wrath hissed, and Ysabel finished, “...Clarisse.” Her one visible hazel-violet eye was glowing, like it had all those years ago.

Wrath stabbed Clarisse, multiple times. The last one he stabbed deeper into her chest and turned the blade so that her screams would be nothing but total agony when it echoed throughout the beach. The villagers started to run away, even Clarisse’s parents, fearful of this new stranger who just appeared out of nowhere while the other police officers took out their guns. They shot at Wrath and he allowed the bullets to hit him. He relished in the terror on their faces when they watched his wounds heal instantly, as if they hadn’t happened. He wanted to show them that their weapons would not hurt him or cause him to bleed, even when a bullet went straight through his head.

Then he would play with them, with his coal hot blade like the first time. Wrath killed all of them, sparing Ysabel’s father, who once again could only watch these impossible events. He watched how his daughter walked over to Clarisse’s bleeding body for her last moments of life.



“You were never my friend.” Then her soul drifted away to death.

Ysabel took off the bandages that had covered her missing eye all five years and rolling down her face were tears of blood. The wound left by the betrayal of her friend bled through her missing eye as she screamed and cried in her grief and anguish. The tears and the blood drizzled on the sand, and her shrieks were like listening to a dying animal—it was painful to listen for the doll-maker.

When he tried to approach her, however, Wrath returned and threatened Ysabel’s father not to touch her. If the doll-maker had been a good father and protected his daughter like he was supposed to, instead of sulking over his dead wife, then this wouldn’t have happened. Claiming that finding a suitable mother was for Blue Belle’s sake, Wrath didn’t want the doll-maker to make him laugh.

“Wrath, stop it,” Ysabel demanded her doll not to talk to her father in such a manner, but she dare not say more to defend him, as a part of her agreed with Wrath’s words. Ysabel’s father did not fear Wrath, even when he should. But seeing how much pain his daughter was in, ignored that instinct. He reached for her again and brought her to his arms to hold. He caressed her, kissed her, and apologized over and over for what he’d done to her.

BANG

Clarisse’s father had come back with a gun and a few men who’d also run away at first to get weapons. The one who fell from the bullet was the doll-maker, with his daughter still in his arms. Wrath turned his rage on them and brutally murdered the men—their weapons failing to protect them from him. Ysabel crawled out of her father’s arms and became hysterical over the blood and the wound—pleading with him not to die and leave her. He cupped her right cheek, where she didn’t have the broken crack on her face, and his hazel-grey eyes showed only sweet adoration for his daughter and the death that had crept to claim him.

“My beautiful little doll....p-please f-forgive me.” And then he died.

With his death, Clarisse’s and the town’s betrayal, anything sweet or pure that was left snapped inside Ysabel. Wrath could feel something happening inside her, something darkening and evil. When Ysabel screamed again, birds flew from neighboring trees far from the village, and animals scurried away from their homes to get away from the dark energy released from Ysabel. The windows of Ysabel’s home were broken, and the villagers quivered at the sound of such a monstrous screech while they armed themselves or tried to gather their families to leave.

Leaving was futile for anyone. From the doll-maker’s workshop and through the front doors of his home emerged six dolls with larger physical forms like Wrath—one of them being the masterpiece Ysabel’s father obsessively crafted.

“Kill them....I WANT THEM ALL DEAD!! LET THIS VILLAGE BURN BACK DOWN TO HELL!!”

By Ysabel’s command, Wrath and the new six dolls went on the hunt. Every soul in the village—every man, woman, child, and elderly—were all sent to damnation. Her Wrath that was fueled by the Lust for their blood fed her Gluttonous hunger for the injustice done to her. Her Slothful feelings were Envious of the families that comforted each other when pleading for mercy, making her feel Greedy for a more painful demise on them all. Her seven dolls answered her desires and physically caused the village to burn for the sake of their mistress’s Pride.

No one was safe and everything burned, just like Ysabel wanted. She didn’t watch it burn. She stayed by her father’s body—caressing his head, holding him against her broken heartbeat, and kissing his cool, dead face.

Ysabel only looked up when she heard a familiar voice cry ‘monster’.

Clarisse’s mother became the last survivor of the village. She was being dragged by the hair in Wrath’s grip when he returned with the other six dolls. He had a feeling that Ysabel wanted the honors. He gave her his knife, and she accepted it, holding it to the woman’s throat.



“Silly. I’m not a monster,” Ysabel said, tilting her head to the right so the gaping hole that had once been her left eye was revealed for the horrified woman to see. “Father says I’m beautiful. So tell me, please. Don’t you think I look pretty?”

Ysabel slashed the woman’s throat and as she laid on the ground, drowning in her filthy blood, Ysabel constantly stabbed her—over and over and over again.

