

## Self Discovery of the Wooden Doll

In my world of crafted wood, I cannot bear to think of the impracticality a navel has for a being such as me; a yellow navel, at that. What use is this lonely dimple on my smooth abdomen? Certainly, it was of no use at my beginning for I was born from the hands of the Craftsman. No woman nurtured me inside nor pained me into this world; The only fond embrace was given by the manipulative fingers of the Craftsman carefully sanding every nook of my being, yellowing my bellybutton, gluing on my eyes, one at a time. With my back snugly fit in the crease of his palm, the Craftsman looked at me with a sense of pride. "I have made you," he commanded. With a thoughtful gaze into my eyes, he determined my selfdom. "You will be called Jamie," he said, initiating me with a scathing tool on my side, slowly burning my identity onto the core of my being while gently mouthing the sounds of my name. My name. Jamie. It was mine and it belonged to me and in the Craftsman's eyes I knew that I was unique.

The yellowness of my navel is equally mysterious to me. The brief moment I spent with the Craftsman did not include any rational explanation for its existence, let alone the urine-y hue of it. I hate the power the clashing yellow paint and light stained wood has over human temperament. In fact, before I was moved, an elderly pair spent an afternoon debating the extent of the yellow's disharmony with the weak tinge of my surface. They came in with a cold breeze and a laborious welcome from the tiny bell that hangs over the door. This was followed by an involuntary movement into the unspoken route of the shop. I watched them gaze as they grazed along the path, stopping every few shelves to pursue their curiosity, touching the intricate lace of a china doll, experimenting with the entangled strings of a puppet, when, in a unanimous motion, their gazes fell on me. My limp naked body leaned against the side of the shelf as their noses drew nearer to my features: my glossy eyes, crafted nose, absent mouth, and present navel.

"That's an odd shade for a bellybutton," noted the woman to her indifferent husband. Out of a need for bickering, the old man admitted,

"Well, I didn't really mind it, but if you think so..." He sighed, then confessed, "I thought it would fit nicely in Alex's room."

"Our Alex?" exclaimed the woman. "Have you seen her room? What use would she have for a thing like that? Really, Richard, she wouldn't want a doll that clashes with itself that pretty hue of her room."

"That yellow does not clash with her room! It's the same exact color; it's perfect. And it's quirky and I think she would like it."

**“Do you even know Alex?---” It continued like this for quite some time, casually analyzing my navel hue, the skill of the Craftsman, and that plush animal that Alex must have hated last year since they never received a thank you card. I watched and listened and tried to understand what it was all for. Not for Alex, whomever that is. Not for me; I stayed on that shelf when the tiny bell tinkled goodbye to the old couple. Nothing. It was all for nothing. I was the forced spectator of this mundane quarrel featuring my insignificant navel and its compatibility with the color of a room that would most likely be painted or moved out of soon enough. This couple fought out of habit, to pass the time. Nevertheless, it was something. I was something. And that pleased me well enough.**

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**I was moved one morning. I assume that it was assumed that leaving the only shelf I had known could be potentially fruitful, at least that is what the lady with dry hands muttered about the move as she cautiously took me into a new perspective of my old world of crafted wood. I had waited patiently for a move. It didn't matter where or how far, just enough to assure me of my significance, my existence. The unfamiliar shelf was similar to the former in its physical effect on me; however, its proximity to the door granted me the task of acquainting my sight with an entirely new angle.**

**I did not get the chance to familiarize my gaze as I had at my other angle because soon after I was purchased. I was taken by a man with defined features and a hurried look. His long overcoat and leather gloves complemented his professional stride that violated the unspoken route of the shop and headed my direction, scanning the shelves around me. He barely glanced my direction before he grabbed my naked body from the shelf and started toward the counter. It wasn't until the slow formalities of the purchase that he finally gave me a good look. With a deep sigh into my painted eyes and a nod of acceptance, I could see the man's restlessness. At the end of the transaction, I was placed in a large brown paper bag, positioned in a most inhuman posture with my sharp nose practically touching my knees. It was completely dark when I heard the tiny bell tinkling goodbye. I stayed that way for what must have been days.**

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After quite some time in darkness, the light violently poured in and a small fumbling hand reached down to fetch me. With a searching look over my body, I could see the boy's eyes resting on my fine light wood, my yellow navel, my branded identity. His two brown eyes met mine. He gently settled me onto his shoulder like an infant and with a quiet utterance of "Thanks," to the same hurried man who had bought me, the boy was off. He ran through a silky house with many staircases. I had never run before. I took a hard beating from the relentless jerking against the boy's bony shoulder. I had never been handled like that before. I had never been handled like anything before. I liked it: being touched, being held. We slowed into a large plush room filled with silk and lace like the china doll's dresses I observed continuously in my former life. The boy took me to a scattered corner with small garments and blocks and figures and trains and placed me on a thin metal stand with a fitted seat. He turned away to sift through the scattered remnants of a sophisticated playtime. The boy returned with an ensemble of miniature garments: a purple velvet hat with a tall white feather, a red polka dot skirt, a green suit jacket, a midnight blue cape, a black mask with eyeholes, a long white undershirt, a pair of blue puffy shorts. He experimented with each piece, carefully maneuvering my body into them, leaning back to judge, and gently taking them off. The boy chose the purple velvet hat and the black cape, setting me down again, but with a different view than before. I took it in slowly, trying to notice every detail in sight as the boy walked around searching for something. A fine white bench with a cushioned seat. A short woven box lined with white linen. A light wooden doll on a small metal stand. It steadied my gaze, even though here was nothing particularly special about it. In fact, the doll was profoundly usual, comfortable in the wide landscape of the large plush room; however, the more I studied it, the more uneasy I felt. It's painted eyes seemed to haunt my existence, to look at me in a new way, different than I had ever been looked at before. For the first time in my existence, I had an overwhelming urge to do something: to move, to smile, to laugh, to run away, to speak, to . The boy had spotted the doll as well and made his way toward it. He picked it up and as they came closer to me, the boy struggled to adjust the doll's fine green costume, eventually choosing to change the shirt completely. As the boy removed the green piece, I was terrified to witness a yellow bellybutton upon the smooth abdomen of that wooden doll along with a brown lettering upon his core. A shiver stirred through me as the boy replaced the doll's shirt with the white one, covering its eeriness from sight, but it was already carved into my memory; that clashing yellow navel.