

Doll Bones
By Holly Black

The Queen was a bone china doll of a child with straw-gold curls and paper-white skin. Her eyes were closed, lashes a flaxen fringe against her cheek. She wore a long gown, the thin fabric dotted with something black that might be mold. Zach couldn't remember when exactly they'd decided that she was the Great Queen, only that they'd all felt like she was watching them, even though her eyes were closed, and that Poppy's sister had been terrified of her.

Apparently, one time, Poppy had woken in the middle of the night and found her sister- with whom she shared a room- sitting upright in bed. "If she gets out of the case, she'll come for us," her sister had said, blank-faced, before slumping back down on her pillow. No amount of calling to the other side of the room had seemed to stir her. Poppy had tossed and turned, unable to sleep for the rest of the night. But in the morning, her sister had told her that she didn't remember saying anything, that it must have been a nightmare, and that their mother really needed to get rid of that doll.

After that, to avoid being totally terrified, Zach, Poppy, and Alice had added the doll to their game.

According to the legend they'd created, the Queen ruled over everything from her beautiful glass tower. She had the power to put her mark on anyone who disobeyed her commands. When that happened, nothing would go right for them until they regained her favor. They'd be convicted of crimes they didn't

commit. Their friends and family would sicken and die. Ships would sink, and storms would strike. The one thing the Queen couldn't do, though, was escape.

...On the way out, Zach paused in the living room to look at the Queen again. Her pale face was shadowed, but it seemed to him that though her eyes were closed, they weren't quite as closed as they had been before. While he stared at her, trying to figure out if he was imagining things, her lashes fluttered once, as if stirred by an impossible breeze.

Or as if she was a sleeper on the verge of awakening.