

Man in a Box

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Chapter 1 of 1

Lily has an imaginary friend. So what? Don't all children? But hers is ... special.

i keep a man inside a box under my bed
do you?
no?
where do you keep yours, then?
mummy says it's normal
for girls my age
to have imaginary friends
but i know he's real
because
he tells me things
talks to me at night
does nice things for me
like that time that james took my dolly
and pulled her arms off
because he was cross with me
my friend got me my dolly back
and when james broke his arm

that afternoon
i cried
but my friend said not to
it was what bad little boys deserved
and that if anyone ever hurt me
he would hurt them back
worse
he said he loved me
and would protect me
that's how i know he's my friend
i love him too
my mother says i dream too much
i used to tell her
about my friend and me
the games we play together
like reading books
sometimes the words were too big
mummy didn't understand
she always got a strange look on her face
when i asked about war
and death
she thought i was too young for such things
she didn't like my stories
told me to read my books about quidditch instead
i don't care about quidditch
not anymore
my friend said it was okay
he would protect me
i don't tell mummy things anymore
i take the man out and listen to what he says
he tells me how pretty i am
at first he sounded like daddy
daddy always tells me i'm beautiful
like a princess
my friend doesn't believe in princesses
he tells me i am better than that
i am special
he touches my cheek
not exactly like daddy
his fingers are cold
but i don't mind
because i know he loves me
as much as my daddy does
but daddy tells me stories
about flying and centaurs and mermaids
my friend tells me
about more important things

i like his stories better
he says i do not dream enough
my friend tells me i am important
that i am meant for great things
i don't understand what he means
i ask him
and he laughs
he says one day i will see
one day they will all see
he says i'm growing up
that i'm getting so big
my brothers tease me
but he says i'll be better than them
one day
and not to worry
i still don't understand
but it doesn't matter
i trust him
i hear my mother in the hall outside my doorway
she always tucks me in at night
i'm too old for that now
but i smile anyway
and let her pull the covers up
she brushes my hair back from my face
and tells me how big i'm getting
how pretty i am
how smart
she wishes me good night
and kisses my forehead
i can't wait for her to leave
my friend watches
but she can't see him
when she leaves she leaves the door open
partway
my friend kisses me too
but not on the forehead
he pulls the covers back down
he knows better than mummy
the way i like it
he touches my body
with his cold fingers
he says it will help me grow
make me stronger
it tickles
but he says i will learn to like it
i hope so
when he is done

i put the man back in the box
under my bed
and pretend to sleep
i watch my father walking silent past my doorway
i am glad dad doesn't tuck me in
at night
anymore
i tried to tell him about my friend
once
my friend warned me
he told me dad wouldn't understand
but i didn't listen
i told him anyway
my friend was right
dad didn't understand
he got angry
he told me i was much too old
for imaginary friends
but i said
my friend was real
james and albus laughed at me
called me a baby
for not knowing the difference
between real and imaginary
and they ran off to fly
but daddy and mummy looked
like they might cry
so i lied
and i smiled
and said he wasn't real
but he is
i don't think dad believed me
i hide the man behind my back
my friend told me
i shouldn't ever talk about him
because
mum and dad
don't believe me
it makes me so angry
my friend says that's okay
that i should be angry
because i'm a good girl
and mum and dad
ought to trust me
but he says they don't
he says i'm growing up
i'm becoming a young lady

so beautiful
and one day
i'll be better than them
stronger
and then
i won't need them anymore
just him
i wish it would get here sooner
and all the while he's blowing kisses down my spine
he touched me last night
like he always does
he pulled the covers down
the way i like it
but this time
it felt different somehow
he smiled
and said i was ready
that if i wanted to
i could make it all happen
i wouldn't have to wait
anymore
to be better
stronger
all grown up
he said that he loved me
that if i loved him back
as much as i said i did
then i would let him
i nodded
it hurt
at first
the way he touched me
so strange
as he moved inside me
he got heavier
until i could barely breathe
but it tingled
he said
it should feel good
i guess it did
he said it would be better
next time
i got scared
when i saw the blood
but he smiled
and said that was normal
that i was so special

that we were bound together
and no one could change that
not my parents
not my brothers
they didn't matter anymore
because
i could be his forever
if i wanted to
i sat up
it hurt so bad down there
but i smiled
and said yes
he smiled
and embraced me
and held my hand
as i pointed my father's wand
and the green light
hurt my eyes
but then
he said
i was a woman now
all grown up
and i was his
forever
i'm not the only one
who loves to feel the woman in me
just
no one sees
the other fingers