



Porcelain Christmas

The snow falls in thick, quiet sheets as you trudge up the hill. Your grandmother's cottage glows faintly ahead, a warm beacon through the storm. It's Christmas Eve, and you promised to visit, though the drive was treacherous and the night unnervingly still.

You step inside. The air is warm, scented with pine, and the fire crackles softly in the hearth. The Christmas tree twinkles with golden lights, but something feels off. The room is too quiet, the shadows too long.

"Grandma?" you call, but no one answers. Only the steady tick of the grandfather clock and the whisper of snow against the windows reply.

On the table, a plate of cookies sits untouched next to a single red envelope with your name on it. The handwriting is delicate, looping, familiar. Your fingers tremble as you tear it open.

"He knows when you are sleeping...
He knows when you're awake."

The words send a shiver down your spine. Then you hear it—a creak from the stairs behind you.

"Grandma?" you say again, your voice barely a whisper. Your pulse pounds in your ears.

Footsteps. Slow, deliberate, descending the stairs. You turn, and there she is—except it's not her. The figure wears her robe, her slippers, but the face... the face is wrong. It's smooth and pale, like porcelain, with a single slit where a mouth should be. The slit stretches into a jagged, crooked grin.

You can't move as it steps closer, its fingers impossibly long, sharp like icicles.

"Darling," it rasps, in a voice almost—but not quite—your grandmother's. "You've been... bad."

The last thing you see is the Christmas tree reflected in its hollow, glittering eyes.

*May your holidays be filled with
everything you deserve... and nothing
that you don't.*

