



The Woman who Never Stopped Smiling

by Pauline Walden

He had had many women in his life but never the right one until he met Coppelia. He'd first seen her sitting serenely with hands folded demurely in her lap, a gentle smile on her generous mouth, and wide, china-blue eyes. It was love at first sight and very soon they had set up house together.

At home, when she wasn't busy tending to his every need, she sat on the chair opposite his beside the fireplace, always with the same gentle smile.

One evening, as he gazed at her speculatively, he realised that the novelty was wearing off. Then he noticed something odd and strangely exciting; he thought he could see wires attached to her ankles and wrists but, surely, it must be his imagination. He leant forward and tweaked one of the wires and sure enough she twitched! He'd always wanted an athletic woman and soon discovered that she responded absolutely and without complaint to his slightest whim.

He became more and more demanding, pushing her abilities to their limit until he noticed that her gentle smile had faded and the corners of her mouth were turning down.

Her eyes had lost their clarity and her nose had a small blemish from her last fall, which offended him greatly. Added to which one of her arms didn't look right.

When a neighbour called to ask if there was anything wrong, as she'd heard a lot of noise the previous night, she noticed Coppelia, propped up against the stair post in a tangle of wires. The neighbour was aghast. 'She needs a doctor', she said and promptly called for an ambulance.

'Don't be ridiculous!', the man protested, 'it's only a puppet!'

