

An Absolute Doll

by Janet Aldrich

Just as the old lady snipped the last thread, the phone rang.

She reached around and lifted the old-fashioned handset. No modern inconveniences for Miss Evelyn. "Yes?"

"Mrs. Evelyn Thurgood? This is Lee, calling from ScreenerService. We need to verify someone who worked or works for you as a paid helper."

"Oh, of course." She held the phone between her jaw and shoulder as she held up two different shades of embroidery floss and contemplated them.

"Well, this person's name is Sheila Embry. She says she worked for you beginning in 2003 and is still working for you now."

"Yes, yes! Sheila is a charming lady, you know, it's very hard to find good help, people who will stick around and be loyal and helpful." She decided on the floss she held in her left hand and laid the other one down. "But Sheila, well, she's special. She's an absolute DOLL!"

"Would you recommend her for another position?"

"Now, perhaps I would, although I believe we've come to an agreement about her not leaving. Though..." Miss Evelyn's pauses were more eloquent than her speech. She threaded her needle as she waited for a response.

"Yes, ma'am. Though..."

"Oh, I shouldn't complain, I guess, but she did tend to get a *leetle* bit too caught up in that Hindernet thing, but I suppose that's something younger people do today. Why, she didn't even hear me when I would ask her for something! Can you imagine?"

"Well, ma'am ..."

"Well, nothing. I cut off that Hindernet right away. She was a bit upset, but I she calmed down when I expressed myself. Is that all you needed?"

"I don't suppose you can verify her Social Security Number?"

Miss Evelyn waved her hand in the air as if her caller could see her. "Laws, no! Why, I don't bother with such things. Either a person's right for the job or they're not."

"Yes, ma'am. Thank you for talking with me today. I guess that's all I need."

"Well, you're right welcome." She hung up the phone decisively.

Looking around the room, she thought that she'd answered the woman just right. *I did cut off the Hindernet. Just not the usual way, I guess.* The severed computer cables still lay where they had fallen when she had chopped through them.

She spoke to her companion. "Now stop those tears. You're going to make the colors on the floss run." The other woman rocked back and forth slightly, the bright red embroidery that covered and sealed her lips was styled in a macabre smile that was contradicted by the pain and fear in her eyes. She shifted her feet, and the chain around her ankle jingled.

"You aren't going to try to leave me again, are you, Sheila?"

Mutely, the woman shook her head.

"That's good. Now let's try to put some roses in those cheeks, shall we?" The elderly lady picked up some seamstress' chalk and drew a bright blue circle on her companion's face, picked up the threaded needle and began to sew.

