

## Made with Love

Everybody knew Anna. From her striking figure to her soft blue eyes, she was the kind of girl that was simply hard to miss, and she knew it. Anna had a peculiar habit, a weird giggling kind, that she would do every so often. She would always stare into objects to see herself, offering a passing glance to anything that reflected her perfect image. And yet, nothing could quite capture it, as objects, are simply objects, and nothing could truly project her perfection like the way someone looking could. Her mother, a woman who sees and knows everything, would always notice her gawking and wouldn't stand to feed her delusions.

“What exactly are you hoping to find,” Anna's mother snarky remarked, “If you're trying to find beauty search someplace else?”

Anna never minded her mother's pressing comments or the way she spoke in disappointment on the mere mention of her. She was content with herself, and, after all, she wasn't completely alone. Her reflection was all the company she could ever imagine needing.

Anna's mother couldn't understand her daughter's quirk, at least, that is the story she told. As much as Anna would like to detest, her beauty is not her own, but one cultivated from her mother. A modern projection of the stories told in old albums, containing pictures, locked away in the unknown places of the family's basement. If you could believe one of those tales, take the time to look at the old photos, a story of a

woman who was once a young girl with soft blue eyes, delicate pink skin, and fair blond hair would come to life.

But now, after conceiving a daughter, staying home, and aging, time stole away her most precious years and she couldn't stand to see someone live their own.

"Snap out of it silly girl and get me my coffee," croaked Anna's mother as she pushed past her and slide out the glass patio door. She rested on the rocking chair in the corner of the porch, who's wood was warn, and stood proud with marks from daily use as if it were an army general showing off their battle scars. As the door closed, Anna sighed in relief as her familiar, yet beautiful image returned again in the reflection of the glass.

Anna knew better than to keep her mother waiting. Bidding her reflection goodbye, she went quickly to work on her mother's convoluted take on coffee, being careful not to miss a step.

#### *Recipe for Perfect Coffee*

- 1) Take out a ceramic mug and put two spoonfuls of Instant Coffee Mix.
- 2) Once the water in the kettle has come to a boil, pour until halfway.
- 3) Fill the rest of the cup with cream and two large spoons of sugar.
- 4) Make sure it was made with love!

With a thud and a screech, Anna pushed the glass screen door open and stepped outside. She was greeted with a familiar view of overgrown grass and the smouldering humidity that offered the mosquitoes an endless breeding ground. It had

certainly shown as the sugar concoction her mother called coffee received an entourage of attacks from the hungry pests.

Anna always had enjoyed the winter season and preferred it over the summer. There was a certain sense of joy from witnessing powdery snow cake the country landscape and crunching on icicles that formed on low hanging tree branches. But now the weather was warmer, and the grass, impatient and restless from its snowy prison grew with more determination than ever. The sight reminded her of an infection, the mass of green slowly spreading and in due time, it would overtake the entire yard.

Anna turned to her mother, who was slowly rocking on the chair, forming a methodical rhythm of screeches and creeks that warned Anna to hurry up. Swiftly, she handed her mother the coffee, and turned to dart inside. Before she could take a step, something stopped her.

“Are you forgetting something?” A cynical voice broke the silence. Anna froze, her heart beating in quick secessions as an iron-cast grip held her wrist in place. She stood there in the moment of silent tension, a suffocating atmosphere more powerful than the humidity around her. Turning to her mother, Anna addressed her promptly.

“It was made with love,” she said letting the words sink in, despite them feeling wrong.

“Good,” her mother laughed and with that simple magical phrase her mother’s grip softened and Anna was free to return inside.

Dinner was no different from any other night. Anna's mother spoke sporadically in loud tones as her father replied in hushed whispers with carefully crafted words. Her father was the town's biggest sheriff, but Anna liked to refer to him as the town's biggest push over too. Anna was not allowed to speak at dinner, and the only company she had was her distorted image in the reflection of her spoon. She ate and occasionally glanced back at the spoon, as if striking a constant conversation with her gaze. Of course, her actions didn't go unnoticed and with a sudden shout she was summoned to her room for an early night by her mother.

Climbing the stairs, Anna's reflection flashed anger through the mirrors on the walls. A fuming rage building inside her despite her calm demeanour, for she knew slamming doors and rushing up the stairs wouldn't be a smart decision.

Anna sobbed into her pillow, letting her sadness consume her like the darkness around her.

"Why is my life like this, why is **she** like this." Anna sneered, her hatred growing. It grew and grew until it was so intense, she couldn't think, couldn't breathe, and just when she thought she couldn't take it any longer a voice broke the silence.

"Dear child, you are in so much pain, and yet you do nothing, why?"

Anna squinted and focused her eyes on the darkness. Straining to see anything but she couldn't. At first, she thought it was her imagination, but the sickening feeling pursued and didn't fade away.

“You are in control in more ways than you may think little one. They won’t be expecting anything,” The voice in the dark cackled.

Anna didn’t reply, after all she had gotten used to listening. So, she sat and listened to all the wonderful things the voice in her dark room had to offer. It spoke of many things ranging from her mother to her father and even her beautiful looks. No one ever spoke to Anna in such calm soothing tones and gave her the attention even her own reflection couldn’t provide. That night, she slept peacefully despite the hours before.

Waking up, the day was just like any other. Anna’s father went to work, and she went to her’s too. She swept the floors, brushed the toilets, washed the walls, prepped the food, and even did her mother’s hair. Despite doing so much, apparently it had all been wrong.

“You’ve missed a spot silly girl,” Anna’s mother whined, “My hair feels too tight!”

Anna’s effort was not enough, it never was, and next time she’d just have to work harder.

The afternoon arrived quicker than expected, time didn’t move as slowly when Anna began growing used to the work. Staring at the cup she had been washing, Anna was lost in her own reflection. She had first counted the hours, then minutes, and now seconds. She was waiting for her mother’s call.

“Anna,” her mother shouted, “Get me my coffee!”

With that, Anna sprang into action. Despite her disappointing performance today, she was determined to get something right. Anna crafted her mother's coffee with a smile and put more effort and love than she had ever done with anything in her entire life. Moving towards the screen door, Anna flung it open and stepped outside. Somehow this afternoon seemed hotter than the last, but she didn't mind. Racing to her mother, Anna extended her hand and offered her the coffee.

"Made with love," Anna proudly exclaimed!

"Don't try so hard," her mother sneered, eyebrows raised at Anna's sudden perk in mood.

Returning inside, Anna could hardly contain her excitement. She didn't even want to move. She sat, waiting at the kitchen table. She didn't want to miss a moment of a spectacular show that was about to unfold. No sooner than Anna had rested in her seat she heard a noise. A low gurgling noise, followed by stifled coughs. She didn't dare to move, not until she was sure that the sounds would stop, and the thing that was making them would be silenced.

Her nerves calmed as the first part of the show was over and she could not wait to watch its climax. Picking up her book, she sat in her usual spot on the couch and read, waiting for her father to come.

Arriving at his usual time, Anna's father entered the door, sleep stolen from his eyes after a hard day's work. Dinner was set, and the two sat on the table to enjoy.

“Where is your mother,” Anna’s father remarked looking around?

Anna shrugged and as she began to eat, her father mimicked her actions. As usual, dinner was quiet, and Anna didn’t mind. It would be boring now, but the fun would start later, and the idea painted a smile on her face.

Finishing up, her father suddenly stood. His eyes locked on the patio door as the gears in his head began to turn. His mind was playing with an idea he was willing to explore.

“I am going to check on your mother.”

Sliding the door open, her father stepped outside, his face suddenly formed wrinkles and his nose perked as if he’d smelled something terrible. This was just what Anna was waiting for, her legs shook from the rush of adrenaline. It was too much! Following her father outside, the family both witnessed the sight together.

There laid her mother, still. At first glance one may have mistaken her to be asleep. However, foam decorated her mouth, and her eyes were like glass. Anna focused on the image reflected within them, and then laughed, a maniacal chuckle that bellowed deep within. Her father stared in terror; tears peppered his face. One may have mistaken them for love, but Anna just knew he was scared.

“What have you done,” her father cried backing away from the horrendous sight!

“Nothing,” Anna responded, “I just did what she asked, I made her coffee with love.”