



Alma - model text

One crisp November day, the villagers of the quaint town of Clarent awoke to a fine dusting of icing-sugar snow. The light flakes danced and whirled slowly downwards from the leaden sky, landing silently on the hard, frosty ground.

Through the landscape of the town's snowy alleyways and narrow streets, skipped a little girl. She loved adventures and, when she had seen the soft blanket of snow that morning, she couldn't wait to explore. As she trotted through the village, the snow crunched softly under her shoes and her breath bloomed, making clouds of translucent white which disappeared into nothingness around her.

While hop-scotching her way down one silent, empty passage, she caught sight of a wall covered with names in varying styles of handwriting. Different names. Impulsively grabbing a piece of chalk, she signed her own name with a small, triumphant flourish: 'Alma.' As Alma stepped back to admire her work, an icy shiver tingled down her spine and she frowned in pensive thought. Turning slowly, she looked at the shop window opposite. A doll stood proudly in the centre; a doll she hadn't noticed just a moment before. Alma approached. Eyes widening, she gazed up at the doll which resembled a little girl - very much like herself! Alma's mouth gaped open as she took in the pink body warmer; the sky-blue hat; the boyish, khaki trousers; the wispy blonde hair. She glanced down at her own attire and gave a small smile of recognition. She was thrilled to have found a doll so perfectly suited to her! Eagerly, she looked up again. But the doll had vanished! Dismayed, Alma peered through the window. Her childish, pudgy hand, clothed in a puffy mitten, rubbed at the frost obscuring her view into the shop. She pressed her small, pink nose against the cold glass and squinted into the shop's dark interior. Yes! There it was - now standing defiantly on a round table in the middle of the room. Without a second's thought, Alma skipped to the door and pulled at the handle. The door didn't budge. Alma scowled. She tried the handle again. Still no movement. Frustrated, she stomped off. However, before leaving, she vented her annoyance by throwing a snowball at the teasing window. Turning on her heel, she was ready to embark upon a new adventure when, from behind her, she heard a creak. Turning, Alma saw the door now invitingly ajar. She approached, a smile of glee spreading across her face.

The shop was dark and smelt musty. The air felt thick with a sense of anticipation and the silence hung over the statuesque residents like a shroud. But it was warm. And full of the most beautiful dolls! They were stood in corners and perched on shelves. Every single one was unique. Alma marveled at what she beheld. She had never noticed this little shop and was so happy to have discovered such a treasure trove of fine dolls. There were fancy dolls, dressed in lace and silks; dolls with teddy bears in their arms; dolls ready for the rain, the sun or the snow; dolls holding musical

instruments; there was even a doll on a bicycle! In fact Alma, keen to get straight to her doll, tripped and set him off by accident and he wheeled wildly around in a circle of desperation, before crashing into the door repeatedly as though trying to escape. She chortled at this; he was just a doll after all...although he did have a very realistic expression of determination on his face. In fact, all of the dolls had realistic expressions, and they seemed to follow Alma around the room with their glassy, empty eyes. She was unperturbed. An intrepid young girl, she shook off any feelings of unease and looked once again to the spot where she had seen her doll. It had gone again! In disbelief, Alma turned around, searching the dark corners and high shelves with her wide, sapphire-blue eyes.

Just as the familiar feeling of impatience was returning to her, Alma suddenly caught a glimpse of the soft, pink body warmer - her doll had moved and was now standing calmly on a shelf just out of her reach. Relieved and delighted, impulsive and determined, Alma approached the shelf. It was crowded with other dolls. Some looked a bit like Alma, whilst others were old fashioned and wore pinafores and held parasols. But they all looked like children. Alma was mesmerized by this and decided that she must hold her 'replica'. As though bound by a spell, she reached up. She clenched one mitten in her teeth and tore it from her hand decisively. She stood on tiptoes. She stretched every part of her body, straining to touch the doll's face. Her muscles ached with the effort and her fingers tingled with longing.

As her hand brushed against the doll's smooth, porcelain face, Alma felt a rush of blood course through her veins. Her ears were suddenly filled with a whooshing sound and she was thrown violently backwards - but she didn't land! Instead, she tumbled and somersaulted through a dark abyss. Unable to scream, her chest tightened. She gasped as images of dolls surrounded her. She could hear the piercing wails of children, an accompaniment to the heavy beat of her heart. Spiraling out of control, Alma's mind raced but she was unable to grasp any meaning from what was happening. And then: quiet. Stillness. A stillness so great and stifling that Alma could now hear the blood rushing in her ears and her breath slowing to a steady rhythm. Her limbs were frozen, she was rooted to the spot. She managed to swivel her eyes from side to side and took in the shop from where she now stood. From where she now stood on the high shelf where her doll had previously been.

The wall opposite the shop outside was filled with far more names of children than Alma had noticed previously. All in different handwriting. All unique. Alma's own, clear and defiant, in the middle. As she took this in, another doll rose to stand coaxingly in the centre of the window display.

The snow outside whirled downwards in soft flurries.