

**SPEAK FOR  
ME**

K. R. Alexander

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**Nomi Parker hated three things above all else: Spiders.**  
Public speaking. And dolls.

Nothing scared her more than turning on the bathroom light in the middle of the night and finding a humongous hairy spider on the tile floor.

Nothing got her palms sweating like the idea of standing in front of her class to give a presentation—which made the fact that she wanted to be a theater star hard to imagine.

But neither of those compared to her fear of dolls.

When her friends had sleepovers, she made them put all their dolls in the closet. Or in another room.

Ideally she would have preferred to hide them all in another building. On the other side of town. Or on another continent.

When she went down the toy aisle, she had to look at the floor so she wouldn't catch sight of those beady doll eyes watching her lifelessly.

When a distant aunt had mistakenly bought her a doll for her eighth birthday, she'd hidden in her bedroom crying for the rest of the party. She hadn't come out until her dad had assured her the doll was gone. And never coming back.

She didn't know what was worse after that—having nearly been stuck with a doll or having all her friends laugh at her.

She didn't just hate dolls because they were creepy. Even though that was definitely part of it.

She hated them because whenever she looked at them, she started to wonder.

What would it be like to be stuck in a box like that?

What if every doll in the world could actually think, but they weren't able to talk and move on their own?

Sometimes she had nightmares about becoming a doll, unable to move or speak, unable to stop her owner

when they decided to cut off her hair or put her in gross clothes or toss her to the family dog.

When she woke from those nightmares, her palms would sweat just like during a presentation, and her heart would race just as if she'd seen a hundred spiders in her bed.

The nightmares were bad. Really bad.

And they would soon become her reality.