

“Up on a hill, deep in the woods, we shall go to play. With me forever, never to part, you will always stay.” Sophie chanted with Angelica as she skipped out the back door. Her mom was at work, as usual, and her babysitter, Sam, was watching television while gossiping on the phone with her best friend. When Sam first started watching her, they conjured up an agreement. If Sophie and Angelica stayed out of her way, they could do whatever they wanted. They had all promised not to tattle on each other, and so far, it had worked out very well. Sam was a 17-year old high school dropout. After her life-altering decision to quit school, she took this nanny job to make easy money. All she had to do was show up at 6 every morning when Mrs. Howard left for work, and she was usually there until about 7 at night when she would return home.

Sophie was a 5-year old girl with curly blonde hair and striking blue eyes. She was a very manipulative, sly child who could get almost anything she wanted by batting her long eyelashes. However, there was only one strange thing about her. She was completely fascinated with death. She loved making up situations in which someone close to her would die, each one more gruesome than the last. One day, Mrs. Howard came home to find Sophie imagining that she, played by Angelica, had been killed by repeat stabs, and Mrs. Howard was horrified. She had no idea what to do about this growing problem, so she took a friend's advice and scheduled Sophie multiple therapy sessions. Being a very smart, little girl, Sophie quickly learned that if she wanted to continue to play this game, she had to do it in private, so she began to act uninterested with death. In reality, the fascination grew more and more.

A few weeks had gone by of therapy, and she was “miraculously cured”. The ignorant psychiatrist had deemed her well, and she was back to playing Barbie but only in front of her mother and Sam. When Mrs. Howard would leave for work, Sophie and Angelica would skip outside and disappear into the dark woods, chanting the rhyme. They would play at a broken tree swing about which only the two of them knew. Angelica, always playing victim, would go along with whatever Sophie said, and she did it happily. Day after day, Sophie would choose new victims and new deaths. Her teacher, Miss Kim, was killed by suffocation. Her elderly neighbor, Mrs. Hammerston,

had eight cats, and they scratched her to death. Even Sam, the babysitter she loved so much, had a television pushed on top of her. Sophie had a truly twisted mind, and it did not seem to be changing anytime soon.

One day, Sophie and Angelica were sitting by the mossy tree. Sophie was completely out of ideas, and she was incredibly bored. She resorted to seeing how far she could throw different objects she found on the ground while pondering new things to do. She felt around the ground and picked up a piece of rope. She began to swing it around while looking at the tree. She had never noticed how easily the tree could be used as a form of death. It had a branch she could reach while standing on the swing. "Genius!" she thought. Sophie had realized two things. First, she had not killed Angelica, her best friend and sister, yet. And second, she had not killed anyone by hanging. This was perfect. She was so very excited. Suddenly, she heard Sam calling, "Sophie! Come inside! It's time for dinner! Don't forget Angelica!" Sophie smiled and told herself tomorrow she would finish her game, so she buried the rope, just in case. It would be the best day ever. Sophie and Angelica skipped back to the house, ate dinner, watched some television, and went off to bed.

The next morning, Sophie waited for her mom to leave for work and for Sam to turn on the television. Immediately, she ran out the door, chanting, "Up on a hill, deep in the woods, we shall go to play. With me forever, never to part, you will always stay." Sophie arrived to the broken swing and dug up the fraying rope. Sophie mounted the swing and tied the rope to the lowest branch, the only one she could reach. She ordered Angelica to place the rope around her neck. In a deep, authoritative voice, Sophie said, "Angelica, you have murdered several people, and it is now time to pay. Your sentence is death by hanging. Do you have any last words?" There was silence. Assuming Angelica had nothing to say, Sophie hung her sister, laughing maniacally while clapping. She was right! This was so much fun! She untied the rope from the branch, and Angelica fell to the ground. Sophie continued to laugh while she waited for Angelica to get up. Angelica did not move. Sophie's heart stopped for a few seconds. What had she done? Why wasn't Angelica moving? "Angelica, get up, please. We are done

playing this game. It is not even funny.” Sophie pleaded with her. Angelica still did not move. Sophie dropped to her knees and began to shake her sister whose skin felt cold and had gone pale. Sophie began to sob over her sister’s dead body. All of a sudden, Sophie heard Sam’s voice calling for her. Panicking, she slightly covered Angelica’s body with some dirt, but she had not done a good job. Angelica was still fairly visible.

Sam continued to call for her, so Sophie ran towards the house, wiping her tears from her face. She had to act as if nothing had happened. Hopefully, no one would notice that Angelica was missing. Sophie ran into the house, and shouted, “Don’t worry, Sam! I’m here. I’m just going to go up to my room and play.” She went into her room, sat on her bed, and continued to sob. She heard Sam shout her name again though, so she went downstairs and found Sam calling for her while approaching the woods. Sophie started to freak out. What if she found Angelica? How would she explain it to her? Sophie ran to Sam and began to pull on her shirt. “No, no. I’m not in the woods anymore. Let’s go back inside.” Sam did not even acknowledge her presence. All she did was take out her phone and dial Mrs. Howard’s number. “Hello, Mrs. Howard? I can’t seem to find Sophie. I’m going to the woods right now, but she usually runs home right away.” Sophie heard a murmured response from her mother. She was on her way home, but why? Could Sam not see that she was standing right in front of her?

Mrs. Howard arrived home within ten minutes and was out looking for Sophie. Sophie shouted at her mom that they could stop looking, but she didn’t even flinch. Sophie began to cry again, not only for her sister, but she was so frustrated. She had learned her lesson; she would stop playing this sick game if they would just acknowledge her! But still, there was nothing. After a few hours, Mrs. Howard called the police, and they arrived at the house within the next few minutes. Sophie made one last attempt for the police to notice her, but not even they could. Mrs. Howard instructed them that Sophie always played with her imaginary friend, Angelica, in the back woods, so the police began to search. Around midnight, the police came to a spot in the woods with a broken swing lying on the ground and a girl’s body hung from the lowest tree branch. They had found Sophie—dead. The policemen covered the body and gave the

news to Mrs. Howard. Sophie knew she was in trouble now. Through muffled sobs, Sophie tried to explain, "I was...game...it was...accident...I am so sorry!" But still, no one even spoke to her. She just heard Sam who was both comforting Mrs. Howard and explaining to the policemen, "Sophie had this friend whom she called Angelica. She would only answer us if we referred to both of them, not just Sophie. Sophie would say that Angelica was her sister. I don't even know how this could happen." Only then did Sophie realize what was going on. She stopped crying, as if nothing had happened and skipped off into the woods, chanting, "Up on a hill, deep in the woods, we shall go to play. With me forever, never to part, you will always stay."