



## CHRISTMAS EVE IN THE PLAYROOM

A Nursery Play for Children

By CAROLYN SHERWIN BAILEY

### Cast of Characters

ELEANOR—A Nursery Child.  
JACK—Eleanor's Brother.  
THE OLD DOLL—A Very Little Girl.  
HARLEQUIN—A Boy.  
BILLIKEN—A Fat Boy.  
THE DRUM—A Very Small Boy.  
SANTA CLAUS—An Older Boy.  
SOME BROWNIES—Smaller Children.

### Costumes

ELEANOR: A long, white night gown.  
JACK: Pink flannel pyjamas.  
THE OLD DOLL: Very ragged and soiled gingham dress. She wears only one shoe, one stocking is hanging. Her hair is snarled and her face smudged with charcoal to make it dirty.  
HARLEQUIN: Red and yellow cotton clown suit, torn. One arm is done up in a sling, and he wears a bandage around his head. His face is whitened with powder and lined with red crayon, or he may wear a clown mask.  
BILLIKEN: A toy shop Billiken suit and mask. It has holes cut at the knees, elbows and toes, through which the stuffing is coming out.  
THE DRUM: The drum foundation is two toy hoops fastened together with a strip of cardboard. Heavy wrapping paper or canvas covers the top and bottom. There are two holes in the bottom for the child's legs and one in the top for his head. The drum is painted to represent a real drum, but the top is torn and the straps hang loose at the sides. The child has to be sewed into the drum.  
SANTA CLAUS: A red flannel suit trimmed with white cotton batting.  
THE BROWNIES: Tight fitting brown flannel breeches and short jackets. Pointed brown shoes, and pointed caps made of the same material as the suits.

### ACT I.

Place: A nursery. Two cribs stand in one corner, in which Eleanor and Jack are tucked, fast asleep. In another corner there is an untrimmed Christmas Tree. The light is dim. A clock strikes nine, very slowly. The Old Doll and Harlequin enter softly on their tiptoes, looking cautiously around. Eleanor and Jack waken and sit up in bed, wondering, but do not speak.

The Old Doll: "She hasn't come yet?"

Harlequin: "Who, my dear?"

The Old Doll: "The New Doll, of course. She's expected. That's the reason I was put up in the attic this morning, but I just couldn't stand it a minute longer." She shivers, and walks toward the Christmas Tree with little mincing, doll steps. "The mice! Ugh! I can hear them now—the ill-bred creatures—dancing and squeaking, and pointing their paws at me. And such a wind! I'm nearly perished with the cold." She crosses to the fireplace, warming her hands and pulling her skirts about her. "The New Doll will sit on the very tip top of the Christmas Tree. I sat on top of a Christmas Tree once, but that was a year ago, before I was dragged about by my heels and chewed by the baby and left out of doors by Eleanor, and scalped by Jack, before I was 'The Old Doll'."

Harlequin dances softly about and tries to turn a somersault, which he is unable to do because of his broken head. "Cheer up, my dear. It's all in a toy's life. Suppose you had slept last night in the wood shed, in the puppy's basket. That's where Jack dropped me after he broke my arm. I haven't a whole bone in my body. I've been pounded, and cuffed, and made to do tricks when I didn't

feel like it. I thought I'd just drop in for a minute to see this old circus ground before the new clown comes. Of course, it's my last night. Why, bless my pantaloons, who's this?"

Billiken enters in such haste that he falls down. He picks himself up and looks furtively behind him, wagging his head from side to side all the time as though it were loose and about to fall off. "I got away from him. He didn't eat me up after all. He had as many stripes as a tiger, and a roar like a lion, and the teeth of a dragon, but I escaped." He paces nervously up and down.

The Old Doll: "Who?"

Harlequin: "Who?"

Both together: "Who?"

Billiken: "The Tommy Cat! I'm left in the cellar every night now, and the Tommy Cat came in by way of the window. He chewed me here."

He holds up one hand.

"And here!" He holds up the other hand.

"And look at my head! He sat on me and the stuffing left my neck." He sits down, cross-legged, on the floor. Harlequin hurries over and pats him on the back.

Harlequin: "Cheer up, old man! You're safe here, anyway."

The Old Doll, taking Eleanor's work bag from a nail in the wall, and crossing to Billiken's side: "I will sew up your rips, sir."

Billiken, gratefully: "You're very kind, I'm sure, but don't be long about it."

He looks at the Christmas Tree.

"I'll have to be moving on soon. This

isn't the right place for me. I'm not fit, now. I'm an old toy."

The Drum enters, and looks about; "I won't stop for long. I'm on my way to the barn. I was sent there this morning by Jack. He says I'm no good now."

Speaking to Harlequin: "Would you mind pounding me a little, sir, to see if I bang?"

Harlequin beats The Drum. Billiken and The Old Doll beat him also, but he makes no sound.

The Drum: "That's what I thought; I'm burst. The barn for me!"

He starts toward the door.

Harlequin: "Wait a bit, old chap!"

Billiken: "You see, we're all going there!"

The Old Doll: "Yes, we'll go with you. We can't stay here. We're the old toys, and the new ones will be here presently."

Jack, jumping out of bed and turning on the light: "Oh, I say, don't go. We jolly well like you. We're sorry we treated you so."

Eleanor, jumping out of bed, too, and taking The Old Doll's hand: "Oh, Jackie dear, I'm terribly sorry for them. What can we do?"

Jack, pompously: "Why, there's only one thing to do."

Eleanor: "Oh, what, Jackie?"

Jack: "We'll take them to Santa Claus!"

### ACT II.

Place: Santa Claus' work shop, with tables, work benches, and a candy kettle over the fire. The Brownies are seen, all very busy. One stirs candy, another is

painting a doll's house. Some are seated on the tables, putting in dolls' eyes and painting toy animals.

The shop door opens, Eleanor enters leading The Old Doll, and Jack follows with Harlequin. Billiken and The Drum bring up the rear. Santa Claus enters left. The Brownies jump down and huddle together at the right.

Santa Claus, lifting his spectacles, and speaking in a gruff voice: "This is preposterous, absurd, unpardonable, unwarranted. Such an intrusion was never heard of before in the history of Toyland. Do you know the penalty for entering my workshop on Christmas Eve?"

Jack, bowing very low: "We're sorry, sir, but we had to come. We've been rather bad—at least—that is—I have."

He leads Harlequin forward.

"Here's a perfectly good Clown that I broke, sir!"

He points to The Drum and Billiken.

"I beat him with a ball bat, and he broke. I left Billiken in the cellar, and the cat got at him. Do you think there's any little thing you could do for any of them, sir?"

He nudges Eleanor, speaking to her, aside. "Go on, 'fraid cat. I can't say any more. My teeth rattle so."

Eleanor, making a curtsy and taking The Old Doll up to Santa Claus: "Please, we are so very sorry. Jackie didn't do it all. This was the *beautifullest* doll, last year. Weren't you, Lucinda?" The Old Doll nods her head. "But I haven't combed her hair for weeks, and I lost her other shoe. Could you fix her up like a new doll?"

Eleanor goes closer to Santa Claus, and sees the twinkle in his eyes. She drops The Old Doll's hand and hugs him. "Oh, you dear old thing! You look just like your pictures."

Jack follows Eleanor and begins to tweak Santa Claus' beard.

"Yes, you do. You look nicer than your pictures."

Santa Claus, trying to speak sternly: "But there's a penalty. No chocolate drops for two weeks, and you will have to be good to your toys for a whole year!"

Jack: "We don't care!"

Eleanor: "No, we don't care!"

Jack, dancing about the shop and singing: "No more candy, but we don't care."

Eleanor, dancing, too, and singing, "Darling Lucinda shall have new hair."

Jack: "Billiken, gay as he used to be."

Eleanor: "Shall smile and smile for the dolls to see."

Jack: "Harlequin, dance, as you used to do."

Eleanor: "Little Red Drum, bang loud and true."

The Brownies at a motion from Santa Claus change The Old Doll's dress, wash her face, comb her hair, tie on a fresh ribbon; mend The Drum, sew up Billiken, and remove Harlequin's bandages. Billiken beats The Drum in time to a real drum behind the scenes. Music is heard, and the children, Santa Claus, the Toys and the Brownies dance.

### Tableau

Jack and Eleanor are asleep, and the nursery is dark. The clock strikes five, and the room is lighted slowly. In the corner stands the Christmas Tree, decorated with balls, bells, and silver cobwebs. On the top of the tree is a real doll, dressed like The Old Doll after the Brownies had made her new. A toy Harlequin hangs beneath her, and on the floor stands a red Drum and a Billiken.

Jack and Eleanor slowly waken, rub their eyes in astonishment, and then jump up, clapping their hands in delight.



"This is preposterous, absurd, unpardonable, unwarranted. Such an intrusion was never heard of before in Toyland. Do you know the penalty for entering my workshop on Christmas Eve?"