

revolve around, yourself, for a  
 "What do you need help about?"  
 discomfort made him blunt. "It  
 be as bad as your letter sounded."  
 "Can't it?" Her eyes were dark  
 disturbance. "You act as if you'd  
 gotten how —"  
 Black, dear," the high soft voice of  
 child cut across her mother's words,  
 you haven't come and said hello to  
 boys, and they're very unhappy  
 out it."  
 Let's look 'em over, Mimsy." He  
 quickly from the couch and cast  
 an apologetic smile. Any worry  
 had would keep for a while, and  
 was, after all, Mimsy's play time.  
 oh, there are a lot." For Mimsy  
 all her dolls and stuffed animals  
 ed up in a double row on her bed.  
 introduce me, will you."  
 Yes, they want me to." She turned  
 the bed. "This is Black, a doctor in  
 hospital and a friend of Ranny's,  
 all you people must be nice to him,  
 cause he's a great guy, Ranny says,  
 I think so too." She used her fa-  
 ther's first name with complete spon-  
 sivity.  
 Now she turned to Black with an  
 conscious imitation of Celia's social  
 manner that made him grin. "This is  
 dear, Black"—she picked up a very  
 and dirty green elephant in a green  
 and cuddled it in her arms—"my  
 best friend in the world. This is  
 bid."  
 He pointed to a red plush reindeer  
 with white felt horns and a collar of  
 bells.  
 It was an expensive-looking toy, and  
 he picked it up and turned it over  
 curiously. "Good Lord"—as he found  
 it in the animal's side—"he can  
 must give the key a turn and a  
 tick syncopated version of Silent  
 Night, Holy Night came tinkling  
 through the air. Celia had crossed the room and  
 standing close beside him, watch-  
 ing the introductions. He glanced at  
 her to see if she shared his amusement  
 at the incongruity, but she was looking  
 at Mimsy with an irritated expression  
 and smoking in short angry puffs.  
 Isn't he a grand fellow, Mimsy?"  
 grinned his delight at the child.  
 Yes," she said, as if not to hurt the  
 dear's feelings, "very grand, and he  
 likes nice music, but I don't know

him very well yet. They're all nice, but  
 Babar's my friend."  
 "And Black is my friend, Mimsy."  
 Celia linked her arm through his with a  
 little laugh. "Come along, Black, and  
 let me show you what Ranny splashed  
 around me for Christmas."  
 "Just a sec, till I meet the rest of the  
 family," he stalled. "What about the  
 dolls, Mimsy?"  
 "Oh." She smiled up in triumph at  
 his attention. "Well, this is the baby  
 doll"—pointing to a sleepy plush doll  
 of almost life size and very lifelike  
 appearance—"and this"—she pointed to  
 a French doll with a felt face and dark  
 hair like her own—"is the little girl  
 doll. The father doll is at the office.  
 This is the mother doll!"—she indi-  
 cated another—"but the mother doll  
 is sick. That's why she is lying down."  
 "Sick. That's too bad. What's  
 wrong with her?"  
 "I don't know," she said seriously,  
 "but I think maybe she's going to die.  
 She's awfully sick, the doctor says.  
 She's sick with an operation."  
 "Mimsy"—Celia gave a little shudder—"that's an awful way to talk.  
 What would the little girl doll do if the  
 mother doll died?"  
 "She'd still have the father doll,"  
 said Mimsy tranquilly.  
 "Mimsy"—Celia's voice had a sharp  
 note—"that's a very naughty way to  
 talk and pretend. I don't want you to  
 play that dolls die."  
 "But she is going to die," Mimsy in-  
 sisted. "The doctor says so."  
 "Well, you'd better play something  
 else," said Celia severely.  
 Mimsy looked up at her and her  
 mouth was quivering. "I can't help it  
 if she's sick," she said faintly, and two  
 tears rolled down her cheek. She  
 turned and ran across the room to the  
 doll's house, and climbed up into the  
 nursery again, but this time her head  
 was huddled in one corner and her  
 shoulders were shaking.  
 "Mimsy." Black started across the  
 room toward her, but Celia stopped him.  
 "Leave her alone. She always hides  
 in there when she's been naughty.  
 She knows it's wrong to go pretending  
 people are dying. She'll come out in a  
 few minutes. Look, come see Ranny's  
 Christmas present." She opened a  
 door leading from the child's room at



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