

THE DOLL

By S. Morrison Jones

FANNY and Tiki walked single file across the gorse paddock and waded the tiny stream where the water slipped quietly over the pebbles. They pushed through the gap in the hedge and stepped into the empty playground. Every morning when they reached it, it was lonely and silent. They were always very early, and they were always first. The school was closed, and the high staring windows looked down at them without welcome, so that if they did speak it was in whispers; and the birds singing in the wattle trees by the gate emphasised the silence. Fanny hated this morning emptiness but Tiki seemed not to notice it.



They drifted over to the long bench against the wall and sat on it, in the sun, resting their bare feet on the hot asphalt. Fanny, with her big toe, pressed bubbles of tar softening in the heat. Tiki stayed quite still, his stomach drawn in; sitting with his hands in his pockets and his eyes on the ground. His face was pale under the brown,

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illustrations and a real story about Miss Pink (a mouse) meeting Grandpa Puff (a bullfrog), Gaffer and Gammer Greytoes (more mice), Miss Bee, Mr. Spider and others. Neither *Bosky Goldfish* nor *Jonathan Seal* appeal as particularly well conceived. Bosky writes poetry. A more juvenile way of spending his time would have made him more attractive to young readers. Jonathan's adventures are written in a crabbed eye-tiring script, and phrases such as "Ethelred's exuberant and aggressive knowledge" stick out like lumps in a plate of ill-cooked porridge. The illustrations are sub-standard.

The Book of the Four Coloured Pencils contains drawings to colour in, and some funny antics by the Pencils themselves as they show how to do it, but the text may not be fully appreciated by small New Zealanders. *Follow the Flute* is expensive but well-produced, with some pleasant verses and illustrations in "seven lovely colours." *The Unclouded Years*, also expensive, combines full-page photographs of toddlers with little stories explaining them.

and the worried frown on his forehead didn't lift for a moment. Fanny was restless. It wasn't long before she began to move about on the bench, standing up and plumping herself down again. She climbed up on the bench suddenly, and began running along it, her eyes all the time on the gate from the road by which the other children would come. She jumped to the ground, and began playing hopscotch on a den marked out with white chalk. She took no notice of Tiki. And after a while she went to the gate and out on to the rough metalled road. She passionately wanted the day to begin, so she should not be alone with Tiki whom she could no

longer understand; Tiki who didn't want to play any more, so that he had become part of the change and the loneliness instead of a shield against them. She wanted noise and movement and laughter.

The waiting was longer that morning. It was the last day. Teachers were not hurrying themselves, and children were not afraid of being late. But they came at last, the children turning in at the gate in twos and threes, laughing and talking, excited, and cleaner and neater than usual, because of the party.

TIKI slouched away at last to the boys' part of the playground. He tried half-heartedly to join in a game of ball, but he was never in the right place. He was always too slow and whenever the ball came near him he fumbled with it and dropped it, so that even younger and smaller boys jeered at him and pushed him impatiently away. He smiled apologetically, still frowning, the frown dominating the smile, so that they felt still more annoyed with him. Fanny was quick and full of life, moving all the time, here, there, and everywhere, so that even when the neat, fastidious little girls didn't want her in a game she took no notice of them and was soon the leader. She was happy because she was no longer lonely, and she was excited about the party. She cheeked the bigger girls and she was rough with the primers; the blood mounted in her cheeks, making them warmly brown, and she pushed the tangled black hair from her hot forehead. She was very dirty and her dress was ugly, and the other girls avoided taking her hand or being caught by her in the game. All over the playground the calling out and the shrieking and the shouting went on incessantly, only a few little groups intent on secret chatter making oases of quiet in the din. There was never a single moment under the hot sky when everyone paused,

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