

JUST PRETEND

by Ken Bradbury



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The characters: Libby, a very imaginative young girl, and her mother.

LIBBY: (*sitting on a chair, talking to her doll*) But when we go to the store, we've got to remember coloring crayons, right, Lucy? And then we'll go dress shopping for Easter and then buy ice cream for our tea party on Saturday! (*moving the doll*) Here, I'll put you right over here by George and you two can talk while I change Hillary's dress.

MOM: (*offstage*) Libby! Who are you talking to?

LIBBY: (*to the dolls*) That's Mom. She doesn't always understand things.

MOM: Libby!

LIBBY: Grownups don't know much about magic and pretending.

MOM: (*entering*) Libby, who are you talking to? And why didn't you answer me?

LIBBY: Sorry, Mommy. I was telling Lucy about our shopping trip. She was confused so I put her with George because he really understands these things. You know what he told me this morning, Mommy?

MOM: Libby, I've got work to do and I'm really too busy to talk to dolls. Young lady, I want this room cleaned up this morning. I mean it. No more playing with your dolls until this place is spic and span.

LIBBY: How can I be in my room without talking to my dolls? That wouldn't be polite, Mommy. When Aunt Jenny came over you told me to be sure to talk to her because I should always talk to people.

MOM: Aunt Jenny is a human being. Lucy is just a doll.

LIBBY: (*reaching to hold Lucy*) No, don't cry, Lucy. Mommy didn't mean that.

MOM: Libby, I'm serious. Clean up this room ... right now.

LIBBY: But Lucy's crying, Mommy. I've got to make her feel better. *(to George)* What George? No, she isn't always like that. Sometimes Mommy's really nice.

MOM: Libby!

LIBBY: She only shouts when she's under stress.

MOM: I am not under stress! You are going to be stressed, young lady! Now get up and get to work!

LIBBY: Don't cry, Lucy. Please don't cry. Mommy didn't mean it.

MOM: I most certainly did! Give me that doll, Libby.

LIBBY: Are you going to hurt her?

MOM: *(taking the doll and putting it on a table)* There. Lucy can watch you clean. You can talk to her and George and all the rest of your dolls all you want while you work.

LIBBY: But what if they want to help?

MOM: Libby, they can clean the whole room if they want. Just get it in gear. The sweeper's downstairs. You know where to get it.

LIBBY: I can't leave my dolls alone!

MOM: Okay, I'll sit right here with your dolls while you go get the cleaning stuff.

LIBBY: Okay, let me explain. George has a cold this morning and you may have to wipe his nose. Molly didn't sleep well last night and she's a little grouchy...

MOM: You're only going to be gone two minutes!

LIBBY: ... Kanga hurt his toe yesterday so don't ask him to jump around too much, Mortimer ... well, you know what Mortimer's like. Just smile at him and tell him to cheer up, and Lucy is still feeling pretty sad. You think you can handle all this while I'm gone?

MOM: I'll manage somehow. Now get your tail in gear, young lady.

LIBBY: *(leaves, then pokes her head back in immediately)* Lucy, if you need anything, just ask Mommy. She's usually a lot nicer than this.

MOM: Lucy!

LIBBY: Okay. *(she exits quickly)*

MOM: (*looking around the room*) What a mess. (*picks up something*) I wonder how old this cookie is? (*picking up a few things and putting them away*) Oh, Libby, once you get kids of your own you'll know what stress it. I don't think I've slept two hours this week ... Oh great. What'd you spill, Lucy? (*runs her fingers across the table top in front of Lucy*) Looks like ... good grief. It's coming from the doll. She's put water in the doll's eyes to look like tears. (*wipes the tears*) Here you go, sweetheart. Cry no more. (*sets the doll down*) If I don't get to town and pick up groceries ... (*looks at Lucy*) Oh. I must have missed some. (*she wipes the doll's eyes again*) There. (*puts the doll down*) What's going on here? I just wiped your eyes. (*picks up the doll and again and brings it very close to her face, inspecting the doll's eyes*)

LIBBY: (*from offstage*) I can't find the dust rags, Mommy!

MOM: (*still looking at the doll*) Under the sink!

LIBBY: Okay!

MOM: (*still looking at the doll*) Maybe it's one of those dolls that ... What was that? (*looks at the George doll*) Could have sworn I heard a tiny cough. (*to George*) Did you cough? Good grief, I'm talking to a doll. It must be hereditary. (*turns quickly to the Mortimer doll*) What? Did you say something ... uh ... Mortimer? There I go again. I need some rest.

LIBBY: (*offstage*) I can't find it, Mommy!

MOM: Then get a new one ... look in your dad's underwear drawer! Get a pair with holes and you can dust with that! (*looking at a doll*) There's that cough again! I wonder if she's got these things rigged up somehow. (*gets on her knees and looks under the bed*) A tape recorder somewhere or ... (*touches her hair*) What? (*to Lucy*) You're crying again? You're crying on my head, Lucy!

LIBBY: (*offstage*) They've all got holes, Mommy!

MOM: Then just bring the holiest ones!

LIBBY: (*offstage*) That's funny, Mommy!

MOM: Yeh, I know. Holey shorts. Now hurry up, Libby! I've got things to do!

LIBBY: (*offstage*) Don't stress Mommy.



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