

The Fairy Doll

From The Fairy Doll and Other Plays for Children

By Netta Syrett

1922

Characters:

-Rosalind} (real children)

-Barbara} (real children)

The Dolls:

-The Papa

-The Mamma

-Tommy

-Angela

-The Nurse

-The Cook

-The Fairy

SCENE I

This scene takes place in the Nursery. On a table is a large Doll's House. Standing before it are Barbara and Rosalind. They are busy polishing, dusting, and putting back the furniture which is spread upon the table.

ROSALIND: Here's the wardrobe, and here's the bath. Have you put in the bird-cage?

BARBARA: Yes. There! Everything's quite tidy. *Now* shall we bring her?

ROSALIND: Wait a minute. The Mamma's dropping the baby. Let me pin it on tighter. *(She takes the Mamma doll out of the Doll's House and performs this operation.)* That's better. *(Replaces the doll.)*

BARBARA: *(In an exasperated tone.)* Look at Tommy! He's fallen into the grate again. He really *is* tiresome; and the Mamma spoils him terribly.

ROSALIND: *(Calmly.)* Pick him out. Oh! And stand the Cook up straight; she's lying on the kitchen table.

BARBARA: *(Obeying.)* She's been doing that all the morning. There! *Now* we can bring her, can't we? *(She runs towards a cupboard on the other side of the room.)*

ROSALIND: *(Hurriedly.)* No, wait! The Papa's fallen over the dining-room sideboard. Oh! He's knocked over two wine glasses.

BARBARA: (*Going back impatiently*) They *are* a bother today, all these dolls! They've never been so stupid before. Look at Angela now! Her head's in the bath, and a moment ago she was sitting nicely on the sofa.

ROSALIND: (*Slowly, as she turns away from the Doll's House.*) Barbara!

BARBARA: (*Still busy with the Doll's House.*) What?

ROSALIND: (*Mysteriously*) I don't believe they want her.

BARBARA: (*Turning sharply.*) Not want the *Fairy Doll*?

ROSALIND: No.

BARBARA: Why not?

ROSALIND: Look what a horrid expression the Cook's got!

BARBARA: (*Turning to see.*) So she has.

ROSALIND: And look at the Papa's face!

BARBARA: He looks just like Uncle Jack when the dinner's late, doesn't he? . . . But Rosalind, they *must* like her. Why, she's beautiful.

ROSALIND: Yes, but she's got wings and they haven't.

BARBARA: Why will they mind that?

ROSALIND: I don't know, but they *will*.

BARBARA: Let's look at her. (*The children go to a cupboard and lift out a box, from which they very gently take the Fairy Doll. She is dressed in white and has long wings.*)

ROSALIND: (*With a long breath.*) Of course, she's perfectly lovely. Do you remember her on the top of the Christmas tree, and how *afraid* we were we shouldn't get her?

BARBARA: (*Mournfully*) Yes, and we've been planning ever since for her to live in the Doll's House—as a great favour to the other dolls.

ROSALIND: (*Decisively.*) Well, they don't want her.

BARBARA: Do you think it's because they think the Doll's House isn't good enough? It isn't very pretty when you come to think of it. That's the worst of having Grandmamma's doll's

house. The dolls are not pretty either. They're so old-fashioned. Look at the way they're dressed! Angela's plaid frock, and the Papa's *awful* trousers.

ROSALIND: Yes, but all the same, I believe they think themselves much grander than the Fairy Doll.

BARBARA: Oh, Rosalind! How could they? Look here! She ought to live in a garden—not in a house. Let's make a garden for her here on the table, beside the Doll's House. Auntie Margaret will help us. We'll make little paths, and green baize for grass, and a piece of glass stuck in for a pond. And then it will be a beautiful garden, with roses and great trees, and blue sky. And the Fairy Doll will live there in a bower of roses, and come in and see the Doll's House people sometimes for a great treat. Oh, do let us!

ROSALIND: Well, we'll make the garden; but I don't believe the Doll's House people will like it, all the same.

BARBARA: Let's bring them all out and look at them. (*She collects them all in a bunch.*)

ROSALIND: Don't hold the Papa upside down, his hat's not stuck on.

BARBARA: He oughtn't to wear it in the house at all.

ROSALIND: I *told* you he was a rude thing. He never takes it off even when the Mamma comes into the room. I don't believe he would take it off even for the Fairy Doll.

BARBARA: (*Setting the dolls in a row.*) Well, now, here's Cook.

ROSALIND: (*Scrutinizing her.*) Awfully cross.

BARBARA: And here's Nurse.

ROSALIND: Well, you know how rude *she* is to the Mamma! She said yesterday she'd never had a nurse so rude to her. Don't you remember? (*Imitating Nurse's voice.*) "Well, Ma'am, I do my best; and in every other situation I've been, I've given the greatest satisfaction; but then, I've always lived with ladies before, and you'll please to take a month's notice. . . "

BARBARA: (*Nodding.*) Yes, I remember. Horrid for the Mamma! Now the Mamma's got a nice kind face.

ROSALIND: Yes, but you know how she gives way to everyone—especially to the Papa. And *think* how she spoils Tommy!

BARBARA: Yes, Tommy's very naughty. Look at the horrid smile he's got.

ROSALIND: And he teases Angela so, and he's so nasty to her. Angela's a silly little thing, isn't she? The Papa says she's got no character.

BARBARA: The Papa's got too *much* character, I think. You know what a noise and fuss he always makes.

ROSALIND: Well, that's all the family; the baby doesn't count, because it's always pinned on. But I don't believe any of them will be pleased about the Fairy Doll.

BARBARA: Very well; we won't put her in the house then, but we'll make the garden for her to live in. Let's make it a perfectly *lovely* garden, Rosalind, and then the children can go there and play, and the Fairy Doll can tell them fairy tales, and the Mamma can go and sit on the grass and make daisy-chains for the baby, and the Papa can sit under the trees and read the newspaper. *(She has crossed the room and taken off the lid of the box containing the Fairy Doll, and while she speaks she is looking down at it tenderly.)* And then the Fairy Doll—*(A crash.)* What's that?

ROSALIND: *(Who has been replacing the dolls in the Doll's House.)* Only the Papa. He's in an awful temper; he's knocked over the coal-scuttle. *(A pause.)* Barbara!

BARBARA: What?

ROSALIND: I can't help thinking they're sort of alive.

BARBARA: Well, I've always thought so!

ROSALIND: Of course they don't want us to know it. But if we came down one night—

BARBARA: Awfully late! When everyone has gone to bed!

ROSALIND: Yes. At 12 o'clock, you know.

BARBARA: Oh, Rosalind. Let's make the garden first—and do it tonight.

CURTAIN

SCENE II

This scene takes place in the drawing-room in the Doll's House. Cardboard chairs and furniture; artificial flowers under glass stands on mantelpiece; wooly hearth-rug, etc.

Seated on the sofa in the rigid attitude befitting her name is the Mamma Doll. She is dressed in a stiff full skirt of early Victorian make, and the rag baby in long clothes is pinned on to her with motor hat-pins. Angela, the "little girl" doll, in a very full dress of book muslin, sits near on a chair.

Tommy, in a sailor suit trimmed with gold braid, is on the floor, his back propped against the sofa. Both "children" have their arms and legs extended in stiff doll fashion. When the curtain goes up they are motionless and as much like dolls as possible.

After a moment the door on stage left is slowly pushed open, and Barbara and Rosalind enter, in their nightgowns. They look round in amaze.

BARBARA: *(In an excited whisper.)* Rosalind!

ROSALIND: Don't you see what it is? The Doll's House drawing-room.

BARBARA: Grown big. Look at the bird-cage! And the clock and the furniture! Everything's grown big, like a real room.

ROSALIND: And so have the dolls! There's the Mamma.

BARBARA: And Angela—and Tommy. Oh, Rosalind! But where is the Fairy Doll? *(Excitedly.)* Do you think *she's* turned into a real fairy?

ROSALIND: But these are not real. I mean only like dolls are real. Not so real as we are.

BARBARA: How do you know? Oh, I'm so glad we came down to see how they were getting on! —Hush! *(A clock "off" begins to chime twelve. At the last stroke Tommy begins to kick; he then leans across and slaps Angela, who whines.)*

ANGELA: Mamma! Tommy's slapping me.

BARBARA: *(In a low voice.)* Rosalind! *(The two children, holding hands, retreat to a corner of the room, and watch, half hidden by a big chair. Each doll, while it speaks, becomes for a moment really alive, though the voice should be rather high and mechanical. The moment it has uttered the words, it relapses into the doll stage, leaning limply against the furniture, etc. This peculiarity must be preserved throughout.)*

THE MAMMA: Tommy darling, that's naughty to your little sister. . . *(In a wheedling tone.)* Did you see the pretty lady in the garden today?

ANGELA: *(Eagerly)* Yes, he did, Mamma; and he threw mud at her, Mamma, all over her wings. Wasn't he naughty?

TOMMY: *(To Angela)* Sneak!

THE MAMMA: Oh, Tommy darling, that was rude! Why don't you like the pretty lady?

TOMMY: Because she's a silly idiot.

THE MAMMA: Oh, I don't think she's quite an *idiot*, Tommy; but if she's not so clever as we are, that ought to make us kind to her, you know.

TOMMY: (*Obstinately.*) She's a silly idiot.

ANGELA: (*Shrilly.*) Nurse says she's no lady.

(*Enter Nurse. She is dressed in the round print skirt and flat cap of the Doll's House "Nurse."*)

NURSE: (*Grimly.*) Come, Master Tommy, it's your turn first tonight.

TOMMY: (*Kicking upon the floor*) No, I don't want to go to bed! I don't want to go to bed!

THE MAMMA: Be a good boy and you may take a piece of chocolate out of the cupboard. (*Tommy moves stiffly to a cupboard.*) (*To Nurse, rather timidly.*) I hear you saw the—er—lady in the garden today, Nurse?

THE NURSE: (*Drawing herself up.*) Lady, ma'am? I saw the young person, yes, ma'am; and that brings me to what I was going to say, ma'am. You'll please take a month's warning.

THE MAMMA: (*Distractedly.*) But why, Nurse?

THE NURSE: I've lived in the best families, ma'am, but never 'ave I been where that sort of thing was kept. In the garden, too! And Cook will tell you the same, ma'am.

(*A knock*)

THE MAMMA: Come in.

(*Enter Cook—very fat and red-faced. She speaks with a Cockney accent.*)

COOK: I wish to give notice, please, ma'am.

THE MAMMA: This is very sudden, Cook. Why?

COOK: Because I'm a respectable woman, ma'am, and I don't like insecks about the plice.

THE MAMMA: *Insects*, Cook?

COOK: That there in the garden (*Pointing out of window*) 'ave got wings sime as insecks 'ave. I s'pose she's a inseck. She couldn't be nothing else.

ANGELA: She might be a bird.

TOMMY: Think yourself so clever! (*Pulls Angela's hair. She gives a little scream and relapses into rigidity.*)

THE MAMMA: (*Feebly.*) But she seems harmless. She seems to wish to be kind to the children; she wanted to tell them stories, didn't she, Nurse?

NURSE: (*Primly.*) She did, ma'am, and Miss Angela, I'm sorry to say, was inclined to listen, till Master Tommy come up and pulled her away. He 'as a great deal of spirit—Master Tommy.

THE MAMMA: But she isn't in your way at all, living among the roses as she does. It isn't as though she wanted any cooking done. She might be a bird, as the child says.

COOK: It isn't that, ma'am, it's the *principle* of it we object to, Nurse and me, 'avin' always lived in the best fam'lies with butler and footman kep', and thoroughly respectable. And if Master was at home 'e'd say as much. Master's a thorough gentleman. I will say *that* for 'im.

(*Loud angry voice in the distance*)

BARBARA: (*To Rosalind in a loud whisper*) It's the Papa!

(*Enter The Papa, dressed in the early Victorian Doll's House "Papa" fashion—wide trousers, red waistcoat with gilt buttons, top hat made of shiny black glazed cardboard, as though stuck on his head.*)

THE PAPA: (*Incoherent with fury.*) What's this! *What's this* I've found in the garden, Emma?

THE MAMMA: (*With timid apology*) Oh, George! I didn't expect you back today. It's—er—I don't know, George, what it is.

THE PAPA: (*Rushing back, opening the door and beckoning.*) Come in here, please.

(*Enter The Fairy. She is a real fairy now, and must look as ethereal as possible.*)

THE PAPA: (*Furiously*) Now will you tell me who you are?

THE FAIRY: (*Shaking her head.*) I can't, if you don't know.

THE PAPA: Will you tell me why you are trespassing in my garden?

THE FAIRY: Is it your garden? Did you make it?

THE PAPA: No, and never wanted it. The landlords of this place made it. They must have got more money than sense.

THE FAIRY: Who are your landlords?

THE PAPA: How should I know? This is a respectable country where no one makes stupid inquiries like that.

THE FAIRY: Until they have a grievance. I'm afraid I'm a grievance?

THE PAPA: You're worse! You're a—

THE FAIRY: A fairy.

THE PAPA: I don't care what you call yourself. What are you doing in my garden?

THE FAIRY: Your landlords put me there—as a great gift to you.

THE PAPA: (*Choking with anger.*) A gift! A gift, indeed! What were you going to do for us?

THE FAIRY: A great deal. I would have shown you the way to Fairyland for one thing.

THE PAPA: (*Gasping.*) May I show you the way to the door? (*To the Mamma*) What are the servants doing here?

THE COOK: If you please, sir, we 'ad come to give notice. Mistress seemed to like that there insecck about, so Nurse an' me, 'avin' always lived in 'igh fam'lies, and being thoroughly respectable—

THE PAPA: You don't mean to say, Emma, that you've actually *encouraged* a—a mere fairy—in a family like ours?

THE MAMMA: Well, George, I only—

THE FAIRY: She was very kind. (*Shaking her head.*) But she'll never find the way to Fairyland.

THE PAPA: I should think not! She's my wife. (*To Servants.*) Go away, my good women, and don't be absurd. This—er—nuisance shall be removed at once.

THE NURSE AND COOK: (*Bobbing.*) Thank you, sir!

THE PAPA: For goodness sake stop sniffing, Emma! (*To the Fairy.*) Go!

THE FAIRY: I'm afraid it's not so easy.

THE PAPA: Why? What do you mean?

THE FAIRY: You don't know your landlords. They sent me here. Everything you have is theirs. You hold it at their pleasure. They are very powerful. If it seemed good to them, they could break these walls, crush this furniture—and crush *you*. Yes, in a thousand pieces.

(*The Mamma faints upon the sofa, the Cook and the Nurse lean limply against the wall; Tommy and Angela begin to cry. The Papa subsides into a chair.*)

ROSALIND: (*In a loud whisper.*) Barbara, she means *us*!

THE PAPA: (*Feebly*) Is this true?

THE FAIRY: Quite true. Against their will I cannot leave you.

(*Barbara and Rosalind, hand in hand, come out into the middle of the room. All the dolls stare fixedly at them, standing or sitting in rigid attitudes. The children go and stand before the Papa.*)

BARBARA: If you please, *we* are the landlords—I mean the landladies.

THE PAPA: (*Falling on his knees, gasps.*) Spare me, ladies! I'm a respectable man with a large family.

(*All the other dolls go down stiffly on to their knees, and with clasped hands speak in mechanical tones, one after the other.*)

THE MAMMA: Kind ladies, he doesn't mean half he says. Spare him!

TOMMY: Boohoo! Boohoo! I only threw mud on one wing. I will be good! I *will* be good!

ANGELA: Boohoo! I didn't throw nuffin at all—and Tommy made me.

THE NURSE: (*Murmuring in terror.*) Never having been where they was kept before, I wasn't used to them, kind ladies—

THE COOK: Always keepin' myself *to* myself—and butler and footmen kep'—

ROSALIND: Don't be so silly. We're not going to hurt you.

BARBARA: We'll ask the Fairy to come to live with *us*, if you don't like her. (*Wistfully.*) We thought you would—at least *I* did.

ROSALIND: (*Severely.*) Get up! If you only knew how silly you looked, you wouldn't go on like that.

BARBARA: (*Pulling her sister's hand deprecatingly.*) Rosalind!

ROSALIND: Well, they're only dolls, you know, though they *are* alive.

(*All the dolls rise, trembling.*)

ROSALIND: (*Pointing sternly to The Papa.*) Go away! You're a horrid man. (*The Papa jerks himself abjectly towards the door stage right. The others follow in the order in which Rosalind addresses them. To the Mamma.*) You're the nicest. But you shouldn't give way so to the Papa. Put Tommy to bed for a whole day—with bread and water. And don't give Angela any jam for a

week. *(To Tommy, who goes off howling.)* That will teach you to be a better boy. *(To Angela.)* And do try not to be such a sneak! *(To Cook.)* I think you're a perfectly horrid cook, and if I was the Mamma I should send you away. *(To Nurse.)* And you're the grumpiest nurse I ever saw. Fancy not *liking* to take the children in the garden and let the Fairy amuse them. *(She stamps her foot.)* Go away, all of you! And if you don't get nicer, we'll turn you out of the Doll's House, and put in another family. Anyhow we shall take away the lovely garden we made for you. You're not fit to have a garden, and you're not fit to have a fairy to live in it. Go away! *(She stamps again, and the dolls huddle out of the room.)*

(Meanwhile Barbara, who has been standing by The Fairy, holding her hand, suddenly sits down on the floor, and begins to cry.)

THE FAIRY: *(Bending over her.)* What is it, my child?

BARBARA: I'm so disappointed. Rosalind *said* they wouldn't like you. She always knows. But I thought they would. And we made such a beautiful garden—

THE FAIRY: *(Smiling.)* Never mind. Fairies are not for dolls who live in cardboard dolls' houses; they are for people who make gardens. Come and see! *(She draws the children to the window.)*

BARBARA: *(Excitedly.)* Rosalind! I told you so! It's a real garden! Oh! Look at the sun on the grass, and the big trees, and the blue sky!

ROSALIND: And the little path that leads out of the garden, under the arch of roses! Look, it winds up the hill and over the mountains. *(To The Fairy.)* Where does it go?

THE FAIRY: *(Smiling.)* All the way to Fairyland. Come! Let's go and see!

(All three move towards the door, the children dancing round The Fairy in their eagerness.)

CURTAIN