

The Toy Box

Alice Aldrich

WHEN THE Coopers came to call, I was elected to entertain their six year old twins, Jeanie and Joanie. On sudden inspiration I took the two up to the attic where there is a large toy box, half-filled with odds and ends of once beloved playthings. There we found such articles as battered story books, pieces of train track, a car with only three wheels, and several dolls with missing limbs. The children were delighted. They began busily to dress the dolls in the faded, wrinkled clothing.

Suddenly Joanie discovered in the bottom of the toy box the worn shopping bag that contained the "dress-up clothes." The dolls were forgotten. "Let's play go visiting," Jeanie suggested. "I'll be mother, and you can be Mrs. Grant." Her sister agreed, and soon the two girls, one stylishly attired in a Chinese kimono, and the other in a faded net formal, were sipping imaginary tea and seriously discussing the problems of child discipline and household management.

As I watched them, I wondered just why it is that in games of make-believe, little children love to assume the roles of adults. I think it seems to children that it is an adult's privilege to do whatever he pleases. Children long to be "grown up" so that they too may enjoy this privilege. Thus in their favorite games of imagination they become temporary mamas and papas, school teachers, policemen, and firechiefs.

It is difficult for children to realize that their conception of "growing up" is the exact opposite of really "growing up." The more one is willing to accept the sacrifice of his personal desires, the more nearly adult he becomes. Many so-called adults are merely overgrown children. They have no desire to become really adult, for they find the life of a child much more pleasant.

When the Coopers had gone, I returned to the attic and put away the toys. As I thought of Jeanie and Joanie and their game, I felt suddenly afraid. With a sense of dread I realized that I must soon leave behind the world of the twins, of childhood, and become an adult. As I reached to close the hinged lid of the toy box, the act seemed to be a symbol of the decision I feared to make. Impulsively I rose and went quickly downstairs, leaving the toy box open.