

The doll that never was.

It was freezing when I finally opened my eyes, so cold I could hardly feel my nose, I snuggled further under the blankets and eiderdown. It was a few days before Christmas and only the thought that it might have snowed made me reach for my dressing gown. I looked out of our bedroom window, sadly no snow. I tried to wipe the pane with my hand for a clearer look but the ice was not only outside but inside too. Our bedroom had large glass doors which opened into the garden, it was beautiful in the summer but freezing all winter. My sister, Kathleen was awake too and together we made a dash for the kitchen where it would be warmer and Mum would have breakfast waiting.

We lived in an old large house used as a guest house, by the seaside in East Kent. We were used to visitors coming and going each summer, with the cries of regular visitors of 'Oh haven't you two grown.' This year was special we were opening for Christmas. A huge tree was up and decorated in the large dining room. The Christmas smell of the fir tree was fantastic and the fragrance can still transport me back to that room, even now. My cousin Lynn and her Mum and Dad had arrived and it was all excitement and the other guests were due that day, a busy time for all.

Kathleen and I were bored and went upstairs to explore and decided to hide in the large airing cupboard, it housed all the linen for the guests and was warm. While we were there we discovered something wrapped up in a towel, we discovered a life size, top of the range baby doll. We were very excited, we were used to sharing presents and even discussed what her name would be. We carefully wrapped it again and made a quick exit in case we were found out.

Christmas morning arrived and we knew what awaited us in the living room. We crept along and saw two pillow cases full of parcels for us. We dipped into them, a large thick colouring book, with new crayons and pencils, some farm plastic animals we had looked at in the toy shop, including a chicken with the chicks following behind, they would make a wonderful addition to our farmyard. There was a torch for us both, just right to tease the cats shining it up and down the wall for them to chase, Jolly Noddies we called it. A cut out doll book, the doll was cardboard and you cut out various outfits from paper. The best gifts were two baby dolls made from hard plastic but dressed in hand knitted matching outfits with a hat and booties. Just a perfect Christmas morning. It was only later that we wondered about the baby doll we had found.

All was explained later, when Lynn came to see us carrying the doll dressed in real baby clothes. We both managed to hide our disappointment and Lynn allowed us to play with her too so it softened the blow somewhat and we loved our own dolls.

So that was the story of the doll that never was, well for us two anyway.

We remembered this true story when Kathy, Lynn and I started having zoom meetings in 2020 during the lockdown. Lynn never knew about the airing cupboard doll and I think that was my first experience of envy.