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## The Christmas Doll

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## THE CHRISTMAS DOLL

I still remember the doll I received from Santa Claus in 1955 when I was nine years old. I named her Juliana. She was about 17" tall and slender - a doll you could dress up. She came with a red shiny travel trunk. It had hangers in it for her dresses, drawers for her shoes and accessories, and a place for Juliana to stand. Every occasion after that Christmas, my presents were clothes for Juliana. I told my friends that I was the luckiest little girl to have my Juliana. There wasn't a day that went by that I didn't play with her, dressing her and tidying up her things just so. When I was finished, I would carefully place her in the trunk, close it, and put it in the back of the closet I shared with my two little sisters.

There were four of us by the time I reached high school in 1959; a little brother was the newest addition. It was getting crowded in our house. There were only two bedrooms and one bathroom, but we didn't know any better. Most of our neighbors were in the same situation; three or four children and the exact same house, bought right after the war. My father used to say they were the best houses around.

"Mr. Shekleton built a strong house, real plaster and real brick - built to last." He cringed when Mom put a hole in the wall to hang another picture.

"This is a new house," he would say, "you're ruining it with all these holes." Mom would tell him to keep quiet, it was not new anymore; it was twelve years old already. I think my father just wanted everything preserved; I'm like that too. When I have

something nice, I like to keep it as good as new because I may never get a chance to have that particular thing again.

My doll was no exception. When I dressed her, everything had to match; her shoes, hat and gloves had to be the same color as her outfit. Everything was organized and in its particular place inside the trunk. But now I was thirteen, almost fourteen, and in high school. I hadn't played with Juliana for over

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*I was still a little girl.*

*Not playing with her  
made me feel bad.*

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a year. I knew I was neglecting her, but I was growing up. Playing with her meant I was still a little girl. Not playing with her made me feel bad. Tomorrow, I promised, I'll take her out and straighten her things and dress her in a real fancy outfit. That's what I kept telling myself, but I'd be on the phone too long or busy shopping. I had discovered the stores.

On Christmas Eve of 1959, Mom was trying to get us all to bed early. I knew she had left the gift wrapping until the last minute as usual. I offered to help, but she said it wouldn't be right if I saw any of the presents. So, off to bed. I was too excited. Sleep always evaded me on Christmas Eve night, then I'd get a nose bleed. I stayed in bed as long as I could trying not to swallow

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the blood down the back of my throat, then I sneaked into the bathroom. I couldn't help but notice the front room; no presents yet. After about fifteen minutes taking care of my nose bleed, I tiptoed back to bed, tossed and turned until morning. Funny thing, I never heard Santa or anyone put the presents out, but, sure enough, there they were. Mounds of gifts for all of us.

It's ironic, we never seemed to have enough money for things until Christmas came. That's when my father got a big fat bonus check. The 'once a year' oil bill was due in January and he paid that out of the bonus; the rest was for Christmas. It took my sisters, brother, and myself over two hours to open all the presents, one at a time. This year, Santa gave me nylons, shoes with little 1-1/2" heels on them, *Taboo* perfume, a soft brushed fur skirt with a sweater to match, a new coat, four

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new 45's: "Get a Job," "Dream," "Sleep Walk," and "Summer Place." The best gift was the phonograph to play my new records on. They were all so grown up. I looked around; there were no more presents for me. My little sister said, "I don't see any

dollclothes. I guess that's cause you're a teenager now." When she said that, I felt so alone, like I didn't belong in any world anymore. All of a sudden, I didn't feel so grown up. I wanted to be a little girl and play with dolls.

I started to cry. My mother asked what was wrong, "Why are you crying? Don't you like your new things?"

"Oh yes, they're perfect," I said as I ran to my bedroom. I could hear the giggles and laughter in the front room as the kids played with their new toys. I was digging through my closet for the red trunk. There it was. Oh, what a beautiful sight. It made me feel so good, like coming home after being away for too long. With tears streaming down my face, I opened the trunk and there she was, my Juliana. I picked her up out of the trunk and held her tight. She was everything I remembered and more. She was childhood and memories. She even smelt like childhood; that sweet plasticky doll smell of the 50's. The dress she was wearing was rumpled and I straightened it out. Sitting there with her felt so right and I wanted both worlds. I wanted to be grown up but I couldn't play with dolls, too. So I gave her a kiss and said goodbye until next time. I told her I had some records to play and some high heels to try on.

— Danna Durkin