

THE LOST BABY

By Beth Slater Whitson

“Which of you will look after baby until Sarah finished her work in the kitchen?” asked Mrs. Brown, coming into the room where Bobby and Roberta were deeply absorbed in a new game, a toddling, golden-haired baby clinging to her fingers.

“I will, mam’ma,” said Roberta glancing up from the game and reaching out a hand to the baby.

“We’ll both look after her, mam’ma,” answered Bobby, also reaching a hand to the little toddler.

Mamma Brown slipped out, pulling the door shut very gently, failing to latch it in her anxiety to get away without baby seeing.

The children stopped playing for a few moments; then, having gotten the baby amused with some toys, they returned to their game. It was very interesting, and neither looked up again until Sarah came in and wanted to know where her lamb was.

Both children sprang up with a cry of surprise. The baby was nowhere in sight.

“The door wasn’t fastened,” said Sarah, looking at them accusingly.

“But the darling was here just a moment ago, I’m sure,” cried Roberta and Bobby in a breath.

The rushed into the hall, calling; “Baby, baby, Toddles, where are you?”

Sarah ran in one direction and the children in another, but when they met again ten minutes later, no sign of the baby had been found.

“O, you bad children!” moaned Sarah, wringing her hands.

Bobby and Roberta were both in tears, their eyes big and frightened. Together, they went through the house again and again, calling, “Baby, baby!” but no baby voice answered. Finally, they went out and searched the coal house, the cellar and all the most unlikely places in which a baby might have been found.

Mamma Brown returned just as the searching party came back from the cellar. Sarah’s face was very pale, and Roberta was sobbing outright.

“O, what is the matter?” asked Mrs. Brown.

“The baby is lost, mamma,” answered Bobby chokingly.

With a little cry, Mrs. Brown flew past them up the stairway toward the room in which she had left her baby. Just as she reached it with the others close behind, a funny little gurgle came from behind the door, and, making a rush toward the noise, the four looked down on a half-awakened baby curled upon the puppy’s rug. When Sarah had pushed the door open it had hidden the little sleeper, and none of them had thought to search the room.

Mamma snatched up the baby and smiled faintly. “Did you forget about her, dears?” she asked.

They nodded mutely.

“But you needn’t be afraid, mamma,” Bobby said after a moment, “that we’ll ever forget afraid – need she, Roberta?”

“No,” said Roberta so solemnly and sorrowfully that Mamma Brown put the baby in Sarah’s arms and drew the two forgetful children into her own.

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