

The Dollhouse

By Rich Wingerter

Tammy lifted the lid of the little house. It was as tall as she, and she was a whole four years old. The house sat on a small rise in the ground at the foot of a stately pine, out back, at the border of the woods. The entire roof tilted up on hinges, so she could look inside.

Her father and mother watched Tammy examine the tiny toy furniture and little cloth figures.

"What do you think?" Momma asked. "Your dad worked hard."

"Your mother, too," he insisted.

Momma smiled at him.

"I love it!" Tammy squealed. "It's got furniture! Best birthday ever."

Tammy reached into the family room and picked up a doll from its place on the couch. Its face was very solemn, but its dress was a lively red. She held it up to her mother.

"Polly wants tea, Momma. She won't be happy 'til she has tea."

"Okay, bring her inside. We've got another surprise."

"I want tea," her brother said.

"Yes, Timmy. You too."

Dad nodded at Tammy. "Be careful closing the lid."

Tammy admired the rooms on the top floor. The family room on the left had a couch, a coffee table, and a flat screen TV on the wall. The room on the right had a king-size toy bed, end tables, and a dresser. A doorway in the bedroom led to a bathroom behind.

She carefully lowered the lid, and the family went into the big house.

"Wow!" Timmy said, seeing a giant birthday cake on the table. "I want a slice."

He picked up a cake cutter, which his mother immediately, but gently, removed from his hand.

"We have to sing Happy Birthday, first. And Tammy needs to blow out the candles."

"Make her blow out the candles, Momma. I'm hungry!"

Tammy set Polly on the dining room table with her back against a glass of cold milk.

As they ate the cake, Tammy looked out the back window at the dollhouse until she couldn't take it anymore. She grabbed Polly.

"Thanks for the cake!"

Tammy took Polly back to the little house and lifted the lid, holding it open. As she put the doll back in her seat, she noticed a movement in the bedroom. Gingerly, she lifted the bed covers on the toy bed.

"Argh!" cried a creature wrapped in sparkles, leaping to her feet. "You nasty little child! How dare you stick your big fingers in our room!"

"What is it, Star Beam?" called a voice from the bathroom. A tiny figure entered the bedroom, wiping his wet hair with a towel as his wings fluttered, throwing off small specks of water.

"That!" she exclaimed, stamping her foot and pointing up at Tammy. "That *creature* pulled my blanket off. Do something, Moon Wrinkle!"

Moon Wrinkle frowned up at Tammy. Annoyance filled his voice.

"Don't you know better than to invade our house. A gust of dust and you'd be away with the fairies. You'd never see your mom or dad again."

"But you're tiny!" Tammy replied. "And I'm a big girl."

"She's no use to us," Star Beam complained to her companion. "She's just a girl." Then, to Tammy, "Do you have a brother?"

"Yes. But you don't want him. He's only three."

"Oh, that's good," Moon Wrinkle replied. "Three. That's the best age." Star Beam nodded profusely.

"Bring him," Star Beam demanded. "And don't think you'll run away. I'll make your toes curl! Fetch him this second. Do you hear me?"

Tammy started to cry.

"I'll be in big trouble!"

Moon Wrinkle wagged a finger at her.

"You bring that boy right now. We know all the bad things you've done. And we'll tell!"

Tammy's face contorted in agony. If she gave them her brother, she'd be in big, big trouble. But if she didn't, the fairies would make her toes curl.

"Wait here," she told them.

"Leave our house open," Star Beam demanded.

The fairies watched Tammy tip the lid all the way back against the tree.

They waited expectantly, watching over the top of the wall. They pulled out bags of fairy dust to throw on Timmy, and got big handfuls. Footsteps approached.

A face appeared over the wall, the face of Momma. She reached over the wall with the nozzle of a vacuum and suddenly the bedroom filled with the whine of a motor and the whoosh of moving air. Slurp! She vacuumed the fairies right up!

Momma looked over her shoulder.

"All safe, now, Tammy. Close the lid nice when you're done."

End

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