

Miss Annabel and Julia,

Chapter 04

“Gwendolyn and Christopher”

Fiction by Angela Bauer

Julia Scott Barclay still was grinning during the morning of Wednesday, 24 May 1933, as she entered the first floor study.

This had been used by the male head of the Barclay family since they built this mansion in 1833. Randolph William Barclay's father had been a banker in Manhattan during the American Revolution. At age 25, in 1810, Randolph founded a general merchandise store in what was then considered Uptown New York south of Houston.

Backed by the banking power of his relatives, Randolph kept expanding his selection of products, and also their quality. His family name and contacts helped the wealthiest and most powerful families in New York feel secure shopping at Barclay's Department Store.

Randolph had not attended a university, but he had the knack of discovering what his customers would want to buy before they knew it themselves. Factories had started making ladies' ready-to-wear garments, but those were only popular with women who could not afford custom designed and sewn clothing.

Randolph reasoned that not every garment wealthy women wore needed to be custom made, so long as factories could produce consistent high quality. The very wealthy had children who could be very comfortable in ready-to-wear most of the time. Also, the wealthy had servants by the

mansion load. Those needed undergarments and uniforms, which could well be ready-to-wear.

Randolph made it his mission to discover appropriate factories to produce his quality of ready-to-wear. His family banks would provide the financing to those factories.

To encourage his wealthy female customers to spend time in his store, Randolph included an exclusive Couturier Department with a separate entrance. Dress designers would meet clients in this swank area, where actual dress makers would measure the clients. The actual physical construction of those dresses would be performed in a separate building using factory organization methods to produce the best hand-crafted couturier gowns, with a marvelously high profit mark-up for Barclay's store.

It was with the profits from his thriving store that Randolph Barclay purchased a farm far north of the polluted area of Manhattan south of Houston Street.

That farm ran west from the banks of the East River to just east of what became Fifth Avenue. The northern boundary was just north of the current East 75th Street. The southern boundary was just south of modern East 70th Street. His mansion was between modern East 73rd and 72nd Streets.

The dirt road in front of the Barclay Mansion much later was named Park Avenue, and eventually it was paved. Soon other wealthy families began to build mansions in the neighborhood. On lots of five or more acres, those mansions were hardly crowded together. Of course in those days there were no municipal utilities. The Barclay Mansion was surrounded by an estate to keep the home functioning.

Julia had listened when her mentor, William Randolph Barclay, would talk about his family history. Now that she was the second wife of his only son, Richard, she was not emotionally comfortable invading that study.

However, Richard needed her to also function as his business partner even when she could not be in the office. Because while the mansion had extensions for the residence phone, only the study had a private telephone line on Richard's desk. That was also the only office-style desk she knew about in the building.

That morning while she was waiting for 9:30 A.M. when she would have a chat with Annabel up in her room, Julia did look at scrapbooks started by the wife of Randolph and maintained up to her tragic death by William Barclay's wife Annabel, mother of Richard and his younger sister Gertrude. In those scrapbooks Julia discovered that Richard was not quite four years older than her. Gertrude was less than two years older. This was very useful information to know.

Julia rang for assistance. The new parlor maid, Anna Bates, responded quickly.

"Miss Bates," Julia started, "I want to thank you and Mr. Franklyn for being so gracious this morning at breakfast. It seems to me we all should share the workload. I just hope you and Miss Watson are happy with your bedrooms and do not mind serving at table.

"I know all of you worked with an experienced footman who Mr. Franklyn highly recommends. I am sorry I do not remember the name, but apparently after the death of your employer Peter Dyckman, that gentleman has taken a vacation. So, I am asking all of you to take up the slack and also use all your contacts to communicate with that gentleman the job here is waiting. However, we cannot wait forever.

"Now, would you ask Mrs. Franklyn to see me at her earliest convenience. And, I need a secretary to answer the private phone on this desk when I must step out of here for duties in the rest of the home."

"Very Good, Mrs. Barclay. I am caught up cleaning the first floor, so with permission of Mrs. Franklyn I would be pleased to answer your

phone. Maybe someday I will be educated enough to work in an office. I'll find Mrs. Franklyn right away," Anna gushed, actually dropping a courtesy as she started to back out of the room.

"Miss Bates, I thank you and I will remember to find a way to continue your education. Just bare with me for a few weeks while I get this household running while also re-organizing the Barclay stores.

"Also, as I mentioned during the informal meeting, I prefer we be as relaxed and informal as practical. You have my permission to call me 'Julia' when we are in private. And, do me a huge favor by not making a reverence and backing away from me. I know anything you say is with respect. I do not want anyone having a collision because they were backing up for no legitimate reason.

"From what I have seen, you are an excellent employee. I foresee so many more opportunities in your future. Have a very nice day."

At that moment the phone rang. Agnes Mayo, Julia's assistant secretary in the store's executive office told her the meeting with the bankers had concluded. Julia asked if she could speak to Richard.

"Darling Julia, the loan deal is even better than the proposed contract you wrote. Henry Gaston is having the actual legal documents prepared as yet we speak," Richard told her. "Actually I was about to have Agnes call you. I know you have your hands full at the house.

"Could you do me a huge favor? Gaston said all of his people hope you can participate in a ceremony signing the loan papers. Is there any way you could attend? My impression is they would like to sign in their offices."

"Of course Darling Richard, I agree I should be there, if only to keep Mr. Gaston happy. The situation here is that in a couple of minutes I need to have a brief chat with your daughter. You saw how rude she was.

"My guess is that Annabel is more confused than being a simple brat. Of course I spanked her, even harder than the other night, mostly because she expected that would be the consequence. My other guess is that for some unknown reason she is egging us on because she wants to be spanked.

"My thinking was to make the spankings very unpleasant, but today I spanked her harder than I consider prudent and she still was not satisfied. So talking to her calmly is vital. Her breakfast food is still in her room. I told her she must stay there until she eats it, but I suspect by 10:45 A.M. most of the food will have spoiled.

"I doubt my chat with Annabel in a few minutes will last all that long. So I will have another chat with her about 10:45, when I hope she will be in a better mood. The good news is after the spanking she called me 'Mommy' which might just be a slip of her tongue.

"If you can discreetly jolly Henry into holding the ceremony after 3 P.M., I will be there in elegant business attire. I assume you will need Mr. Edwards to drive you, so why don't I take a taxi to the bank? I have taken taxis far more often than I have been driven in a Rolls Royce, although I am getting used to that!

"As I told you, I want you to hire a valet. A gentleman named Arthur Swift was valet to the late Peter Dyckman where most of the new staff used to work. I expect a call from him any minute. My thinking is to send him over to talk to you in your office after I give him a brief interview. The last thing I want is to thrust some valet down your throat who just does not click with you. I trust Mr. Franklyn, who is a great judge of character. He feels you will like Mr. Swift.

"Now another thing, I am about to have Mrs. Franklyn scout me a room on the first floor which can be set up as my home office. Honestly I am uncomfortable even temporarily working in your study with the ghost of your father looking at

me. So when I find a room, I will have a couple of phone lines installed. And, I will ask Ruth MacAleese to select a junior secretary from the pool who can cover my home desk while I am in the house. The rest of the time she can be back in the steno pool at the office. Is that a plan?"

"Julia, all that sounds great to me" Richard said very happily.

"Oh, Darling" Julia started again, in a coy way, "Depending on how my chats with Annabel go this morning, I am thinking of having Clara Parson dress her nicely so I can bring her with me to the signing ceremony. She will behave well enough, I am sure. But it will give her a chance to see both of us in a way different from her experience with us at home. Do you have any objection?"

"Julia, I will leave all that in your hands. When you want to send this Swift fellow over, just let Agnes know. By the way, while she is not yet a 'Julia Scott' replacement, I see why you picked her as your assistant. Agnes types accurately and thinks on her feet, very much like you," Richard said. Julia could feel him beaming.

"Darling, I see it is time I walk upstairs to chat with Annabel. When I get a second I'll phone Agnes for the exact schedule. I miss you and I hope you know I am away only because I am needed here and you have Agnes!" Julia said in a rush.

As soon as Julia hung up on her conversation with Richard, while she was still beaming, Miss Bates knocked on the study door. Mrs. Franklyn was waiting to speak to her, and the employment agency was calling on the home line. Julia thanked Miss Bates. On her way to the other phone, she asked Mrs. Franklyn to walk with her.

Mr. Arthur Swift had been located and would arrive at the mansion about 11 A.M.

Julia started talking to Rose Franklin as if dictating to a talented stenographer: "Mrs. Franklyn, first of all please call me Julia

except when you would not consider doing so to be discreet. You and Miss Parsons will be my most important allies in turning this decaying museum into a happy home. Meanwhile, you have permission to stay as far away from Annabel as you like.

"It is pointless to say she is a nice girl who is confused, but she is making slow progress. I just need to provide her the right kind of attention she has needed all her life.

"I am beyond thrilled with everyone you and your husband brought to us from the previous house. So sad the circumstances.

"Right now I am needed here mostly for Annabel, but I am also a partner and executive in Barclay's of Fifth Avenue. Please keep this information confidential. Our company has just agreed to buy the second largest department store in its city, Rogers of Philadelphia. There is a loan document signing ceremony this afternoon, which is great for the company, but frustrates my efforts here.

"I want my husband to have a valet. Your husband recommends Arthur Swift. You also know him. I really do not have time to interview him, so if you can do that for me. Tell him what you know about Mr. Barclay and me. Explain that all the turmoil in this family is being solved. Maybe you have noticed a positive change over the past day or so. Then, if you think there is a good chance Mr. Swift will click with my husband, you phone my assistant, Agnes Mayo, in the executive offices. She is currently my husband's executive secretary. Make an appointment today for Mr. Swift to meet my husband.

"Next, my husband and I agree immediately we need to set up a permanent home office on the first floor but not in the formal study or the library. I am still a stranger here. Please scout the place. We will need at least two phone lines for the new office separate from the private line in the study and also from the house phone line. But, have the phone company plan of installing a small switchboard, so we can accept calls to the

study or house without running all over the place.

"Find the space and start the phone company making the arrangements.

"This morning, after I have a very important conversation with Annabel, which should have happened five minutes ago, I need to decide what I will wear to a meeting with our bankers this afternoon. To save time I will need help changing my clothes and fixing my hair.

"Does Miss Bates or Miss Watson have any experience as a lady's maid? Honestly a few days ago I could not imagine having such a person, but then I was only running a department store. If you want to keep both of those young ladies in their current jobs, then find me a lady's maid.

"I need a taxi to go to the bank meeting. Maybe your husband could arrange that?"

"Mrs. Barclay I thank you for the kind words. Please call me Rose when you like, although the last time an employer did so was when I was a trainee housemaid and not yet 15. But times have changed. I agree relaxing old-fashioned traditions is necessary now.

"I only know Anna and Emily from the last home, which was a bachelor household. So I have never seen them serving as a lady's maid. But not that many years ago, just before I was promoted to being a housekeeper I was a lady's maid just a few blocks south of here. I remember how to dress a lady, so if you like I can help you out. Somehow we will find you a maid.

"As for the taxi, your husband had already phoned my husband to suggest a second chauffeur be hired. I am told there is another Rolls Royce in the garage. It is a shame to waste it. Mr. Edwards has a friend who is an experienced and discreet driver. We reached him and he will be here shortly to double check the condition of the car. Will that be satisfactory?"

"Rose, this is marvelous news. Now if you will excuse me, I need Anna to sit in the study to take my phone messages. I really am late letting Annabel out of her room confinement," Julia said while rushing for the stairs.

The timing worked out, because Clara Parson was just leaving Annabel's room, carrying a laundry bag.

She signaled Julia to wait: "Julia, Annabel got upset when I removed her diaper, which was almost dry. She must think taking away her diaper is some kind of punishment. I do not understand that, but then I have never encountered a girl quite like Annabel. Unfortunately I have run into more than my share of 'eccentric' spinster aunts like Miss Barclay.

"My suggestion is to let Annabel stew or cool off for another few minutes. Will you join me in my room for a cup of tea?"

"Clara, I am honored. I agree, let Annabel calm down to the extent possible," Julia said.

Once they were seated in the Nanny Room and were sipping tea, Julia outlined her tentative plan: "Clara, it is very important that I go to the ceremony with our bankers this afternoon. I will need to change clothes and Mrs. Franklyn will see to that. She thinks I need my own lady's maid. Can you imagine that?"

"My plan for the ceremony is to take Annabel with me, assuming she is in the right mood. I am willing to take the chance she might misbehave somewhat, but my gut feeling is she will be so happy for the attention she will be very nice.

"She needs to wear a very nice dress. But, how would you feel if just this once we let her wear a diaper and rubber pants under the dress? That could be a compromise to make her happy without upsetting her toilet training. Am I crazy to think this way?"

"Julia, I think that is the most brilliant choice from a parent I can remember. Are you sure you were not a mother or nanny in a past life? This could be just the event to help you bond with Annabel. What can I do to help?" Clara said as she hugged Julia.

"Well, if it seems like Annabel is in the right mood and does take up the offer to wear a diaper, you will need to come with us with a diaper bag. You might think I was a mother in a past existence, but I am darn sure in this lifetime I have never even seen a diaper changed. I do not remember my early childhood. My memory starts after me and all my friends were toilet trained.

"Has Hannah called to say when she will be here?"

"Julia, she did phone twenty minutes ago, before it was time to get Annabel up from her nap. I expect Hannah to be here very soon. She is taking the bus because she is not used to riding in a taxi and she might well not have enough cash in her purse," Clara confided.

"Speaking of that, Clara, from now on I want all the staff to carry some petty cash from this house for just such situations.

"By the way, does Annabel even still have a suitable diaper bag? Most children would rebel at the idea, but Annabel might just love having one of her own."

"Julia, I never gave away her last diaper bag. I was about to when the first Mrs. Barclay left. Then Annabel regressed. I kept the bag. It is still in the nursery closet. While you talk to her I will bring it out and brush it off. It was selected so as not to embarrass her when she was three. It will do fine. If this becomes a regular thing then we should buy a modern diaper bag. I have in mind the perfect dress for Annabel to wear to the ceremony. I agree; if Annabel is in the right mood, she will be just fine. If she is still sullen and defiant, then she should stay

home. My suggestion is we gage her mood before even mentioning the outing.

"It will only take me a few minutes to put on a nicer dress if you need me to go with you."

Believing she had waited long enough, Julia walked the few feet to Annabel's room and politely knocked on her door. She was invited to enter.

"Julia, I hate you and I still will not eat!" Annabel shouted.

Upon entering, Julia could see that Annabel was wearing one of her day dresses, obviously without a diaper. She was standing between the left side of her bed and the chair where her miniature poodle 'Fluffy' was resting. On the same side of the bed a couple of feet away from Fluffy there was a low table with the breakfast tray.

"How sad you feel that way, Darling. I expect you to resent that I had to punish you earlier. I do not hate you, I think you can be a marvelous young person, but you have some seriously bad habits.

"It worries me that you will not eat. I had hoped during your nap you would get up and at least have some nibbles of your food before it is spoiled. You win, even if you do not eat, that tray will be removed at 11 A.M. to be replaced with a cold lunch tray. We can keep this up indefinitely.

"Annabel, would you at least smell your food?"

With her hands on her hips, Annabel responded, "No! I can't smell the food or anything because I have a cold."

"That cold is new, since you were not sniffing at breakfast or when I finished spanking you an hour or so ago," Julia said calmly. "This means you are either mistaken about having a cold, or you are a nasty liar! You lied

about having ptomaine poisoning the other day hours before I met you.

"But, giving you the benefit of the doubt, if you have a cold, you will not need these!"

Julia had noticed the drawer of the night stand on the right of her bed was ajar. From where Julia was standing she saw the glint of light reflected from a polished apple. Taking a fast step to that drawer, Julia pulled it open, removed and held up three apples and a fresh banana.

"Darling, do you want to call me some more names? I have already decided to give you another spanking, so you might as well insult me some more. I might not spank you extra," Julia said in a friendly, non-confrontational way.

"You are a big girl, so you know what will happen. Please bring me your hairbrush so we can get this spanking out of the way."

Julia sat on the right side of the bed. Surprisingly, or not, Annabel did not hesitate fetching the hairbrush. She walked over with it without delay. After handing Julia the hairbrush, Annabel obediently stood to her right side while the skirt of her dress was folded upward. Then her cotton panties were rolled down below her knees.

Without being told Annabel climbed over Julia's waiting lap into the classic position of shame. She shut her eyes tightly and clutched the bedding with both hands.

Julia administered the first spank just firmly enough it would not be considered a joke. In the bedroom light, she could see marks and bruises from the earlier 'first-class walloping' Julia had administered. This follow-up reminder spanking only consisted of the one hairbrush smack and a couple of dozen sharper smacks from Julia's right palm.

Looking around, Annabel had a tear from each eye. Julia got the impressing the tears were in disappointment because she did not get a decent paddy-whacking or walloping.

"Darling you may get up and put your panties back on. Since your fresh fruit is not spoiled I am leaving it on your table off the tray.

"You may play with Fluffy, read or do what you like that is not naughty. I will be back before 10:45 A.M. for another of our chats. I am looking forward to that. I really hope I do not need to spank you again at that time!

"Say, Darling, answer my question: Earlier, when you were finishing crying from your walloping, instead of calling me 'Julia' in a sarcastic way, you called me 'Mommy' in what seemed to be an affectionate tone. Did you mean that?"

"Julia, you will never know, because you keep saying I am a liar," Annabel reasonably answered, with a childish smirk on her face.

Downstairs in the study, Anna Bates had taken careful messages, as if she had graduated from a first-rate secretarial school. Mr. Swift had arrive and been interviewed by both Mrs. and Mr. Franklyn. Anna had called Agnes and sent Mr. Swift to the office to meet Richard.

The meeting with the bankers was scheduled for 4:00 P.M.

Julia's first ever personal chauffeur, John Merriman, had arrived. He was hired and had already added air to the tires of the second Rolls Royce. Soon he would have its gas tank filled. Anna's opinion was that in his uniform John was even better looking than was Buddy Edwards, although Mr. Merriman was older. (In fact he was younger than Julia, but to nineteen-year-old Anna at thirty-three Julia must have been considered ancient.)

Impressed with the careful messages, Julia asked, "Anna, you show real potential as a secretary. As soon as possible an office will be created for me here in another room. My original plan was to have a woman from the steno pool at the store come here on days when I am not at my real store office. Do you touch type and take shorthand?"

"No, I am sorry. My mother taught me to take neat messages, but I have never used a typewriter. I do not know shorthand," Anna answered with slight embarrassment.

"Do not worry. If you like, and with Mrs. Franklyn's permission, I will have three office typewriters sent here along with stands and office chairs. We have more than enough stenographers at the office. I will assign one here every day for the next couple of months. When you can spare time away from your normal duties, that stenographer can coach you about typing and shorthand. Say, if I could learn all that, it should be a snap for you."

Julia picked up the phone and dialed the store's switchboard. She talked to the facilities department to have suitable typewriters, typing stands and swivel secretarial chairs sent to the mansion on the double. Then she directed Ruth MacAleese, the chief of the steno pool, to select a woman who could be seconded to the mansion office for at least two months and who also could teach typing and Pitman-Gregg shorthand.

Next Julia called her most reliable contact at Bell Telephone. She mentioned that her housekeeper had started an order for more lines. Now she needed a second line installed in the study immediately, that day if possible. Julia said she understood there would need to be engineering to install a PBX switchboard, but she knew such a study was not needed to add an ordinary phone line. As usual, Julia got her way without fuss, bribes or threats.

Clara Parsons knocked on the study door just as the conversation with the phone company ended. She introduced Miss Hannah Randall.

That was a very impressive young woman. She was taller than Clara or Julia, athletic yet slender, an attractive blonde without seeming 'theatrical' and enrolled at the City College of New York (CCNY) at just barely 17! Without hesitation, Julia hired Hannah on the spot.

"Nanny Parsons has told me about you and your family. Most people in service here are welcome to either live here or at home. In the nursery, sorry I mean 'Nanny', department it would suit our convenience if you could live in a private staff bedroom on the top floor. Miss Bates or Miss Watson can show you those rooms. Almost all are still vacant so you have a wide selection. Currently none need to share a room.

"Normally I would ask Nanny Parsons to introduce you to my step-daughter Annabel, but I will leave that to Nanny's judgment. She probably told you the girl is nine and still wets her bed. Nanny might have told you I had to wallop Annabel this morning, but she did not know I needed to give her a reminder spanking fifteen minutes ago. This might not be the best time to meet Annabel, who is restricted to her room at the moment. I need to have another chat with the child in fifteen minutes.

"Does having to diaper a girl this old for bed upset or offend you, Miss Randall? In my house I never want anyone in service called by just a first or last name. Except in private with those you grant permission to do otherwise, you will be 'Miss Randall'. Can I assume since you have taken this job that the fact Nanny and I spank Annabel with a hairbrush does not offend you?"

"Thank you so much for hiring me. This will be my first job. I know I should have started working a couple of years ago, but my folks encouraged me to study. My mom was a junior nursery maid when she was 14, so I have a lot of catching up. I have changed and washed many

diapers for our neighbors. Nanny was telling me about wonderful new rubber pants. I confess I have never even seen any kind of rubber pants. Folks in my neighborhood cannot afford them.

"As for spanking, Nanny will tell you my folks believe in not spoiling children, so I have had my share of over the lap spankings with a wooden spoon or hairbrush from my mother and over the bed with a heavy belt from my father. I know they love me but do not spoil me," Hannah blushed as she spoke.

"When I was a girl my mom spanked my bare bottom with a hairbrush, but my father was too shy to take down my bloomers when I needed the belt. Like you I loved my folks and I deserved those spankings when I was a kid. Glad to know we will not upset you when Annabel gets spanked," Julia said with a sense of relief.

She noticed Clara almost giggling. "Go on Hannah. In for a penny, you might as well be in for a dollar. I did not tell Mrs. Barclay anything, but I suggest you do confess."

"Do I have to, Miss Parsons? I feel so silly," Hannah blushed very deeply.

"Well, Hannah, I am not going to force you to tell nice Mrs. Barclay any secrets, but I am sure you will feel better after you tell her everything relative to your feelings about spanking," Clara said sweetly.

"All right, Mrs. Barclay, as a babysitter I have never spanked anyone. But my own spankings did not end when I was a child. The evening before my mother told me about this job, a couple of pals from college took me to a bar before I went home on the subway. Mommy smelled my breath and pulled my skirt up and my panties down. She walloped me so hard I could hardly sit the last couple of days. I still have a few bruises. But it would have been worse to have gotten the belt from my father. He's a sergeant at Precinct 11 in Greenwich Village. The pain is bad, but being naked in front of my father is even worse."

"Miss Randall, this will remain our secret. My own apartment is in Precinct 11, on Barrow where Commerce Street dead ends. When I was 17 The Great War was on-going. Looking on the bright side, at least Prohibition is just a bad memory, so your dad would not have needed to arrest you for violating the Volstead Act!" Julia laughed as she gave Hannah a warm hug, managing to smack her covered derrière affectionately.

"Mrs. Barclay, I would prefer to live here. Not to be away from my parents, but to render the very best service to your family. The thing is I did not bring even a change of clothing with me today and I do not own a uniform," Hannah said.

Reaching for her purse, Julia pulled out several singles and a few five dollar bills. "Miss Randall, before you meet Annabel, who does not have a vote about your employment, please take this money for a taxi to and from your home. Bring as many things as you like. The Housekeeper Mrs. Franklyn will arrange to order you some uniforms.

"On the way to your home, please have the taxi take you to a shop I know. They have a package waiting for me that I do not have time to pick-up myself today. The package is already charged to my account. I expect that you will not open the package or enquire about the contents.

"It could well be by the time you get back here I will have already left with Nanny Parsons and Annabel. The two of you will be introduced soon enough. Welcome to our family!"

Of course the mystery package contained a selection of wooden hairbrushes, because Julia did not dare be caught examining Annabel's. She had told Richard she would pick up one for their bedroom, but her only chance was to send Hannah on that errand.

When Julia knocked on Annabel's door, the invitation to enter was muffled. The first two things Julia noticed was that Annabel was covering her face with a large, but thin,

children's book, which was wrong-side up. The only food uneaten was the three apples and the banana, which were still not on the tray.

In an attempt to be nice, Julia said, "I am so glad that you ate your breakfast like a responsible girl."

The reply was garbled, from behind the book and Julia was sure she could hear Annabel swallowing. As best she could understand, Annabel claimed, "I'm still mad at you and not eating. Fluffy was hungry so he ate."

Julia got in the fantasy spirit, by talking to the dog: "Fluffy, you are such a smart dog you should be a movie star! I mean, how many dogs can shell an egg and pour maple syrup on their hot cakes, which must have been stone cold. I would not have eaten them. Maybe some special dogs could manage that.

"But Fluffy, tell me how you managed to use the grapefruit knife and spoon to so neatly eat your grapefruit? Did you have some help, oh maybe from Annabel?"

"Oh, No, Mommy. Fluffy did all that all by himself. I had my back turned so I am not sure how he did any of that!" Annabel answered from behind the book.

"Darling that just proves Fluffy is smarter than you."

"Mommy, that's not true. I am the smartest girl my age I know," Annabel proclaimed.

"Lambie Pie, and just how many girls do you know?"

"Julia, I have lots of friends," Annabel answered still hiding behind the book.

"If you give me the names of your friends I will invite them to a party now that Mrs. Franklyn is cooking without poisoning us. Just

give the list to Nanny and it will be taken care of right away. Your party will be so much fun."

Still talking as if in a fantasy where imagined friends come to physical parties, Julia use a just slightly more serious voice: "Annabel, Darling, Fluffy has to be smarter than you and a much better liar. He left a syrup stain on the part of your dress I can see. Fluffy would never pretend to be reading while holding his book upside down!"

That was when Julia removed the book while Annabel was swallowing the last of her breakfast.

"I caught you, you little liar. I should spank you, but that does not seem to change your behavior for the better.

"My belief is that I am a much better liar than you and Fluffy as a team. Here, let me show you."

Julia closed the book and put in on the bed. Already there was a plushie white rabbit and pig. "That is 'Gwendolyn' the rabbit and 'Christopher' the pig."

"No, No, all of my toys are boys!" Annabel protested.

"Never mind that, it is high time you had girls as friends and toys.

"I bet I can make up a better lie about Gwendolyn and Christopher than you can while only using half my brain," Julia challenged.

"Mommy, that's not fair. You already know how your story goes!"

"No I don't. I never met Gwendolyn and Christopher before. Besides I could make my lie as a poem or even a song. You chose," Julia dared.

"Mommy, you go first, singing your song," Annabel asked.

Julia replied, "Well, Darling, here goes: (she sang a sophisticated tune)

"A rabbit named Gwendolyn and a pig named Christopher,
Walked up a hill.
There they met a girl named Annabel,
Who would not take her pill!"

Despite her best efforts Annabel broke up into genuine laughter, the first time Julia had seen such emotion.

"You win Mommy; you are a much better liar! But I am only nine, so I don't have your years of practice lying!" Annabel said while still laughing.

She stuck out her tongue at Julia before embracing her. Julia stuck out her tongue childishly, before smothering the child in kisses, all the time tickling Annabel.

As was to be expected, the result was that Annabel wet her pants. Her mattress had a rubber sheet, but that did not keep the summer comforter dry.

"All right Annabel. You win. Nanny mentioned you wanted to wear diapers all day. If you want, that is allowed. You have my permission to leave your room to have Nanny diaper you. But you do not have to go to bed.

"Also ring so Miss Watson can remove your food tray. Again, good job eating all that!

"I love you so much. You are an individual. That is for certain. All we need to do is direct your whoppers into fiction.

"So, after Nanny diapers you, how about you use paper and a pencil to write more verses about the Adventures of Gwendolyn and Christopher?" Julia concluded by giving Annabel another hug, ending with a single smack on her derrière hard enough the girl noticed and grinned.

"Oh, Darling, I saw that expression. Clearly you have been lying when you cry as I spank you. I bet you didn't feel any of those spanks," Julia proclaimed in pretend outrage.

"Oh Mommy, I am so sorry for saying I want you to leave. I really, really want you to be my Mommy forever!

"But, Mommy Dearest, you lose the bet. I have felt every spank from you and from Nanny Parsons. I am not complaining because I know I got what I deserved. Probably I got away with murder while Aunt Gertrude was instructing Nanny Parsons," Annabel said while still embracing Julia.

"I love you too, but I will still spank you when necessary. Now go have Nanny diaper you before you soak other furniture!" Julia said lovingly, giving her step-daughter a final smack on her bottom.