

## DUST

### THE DOLL

R.E. and I were in the barn loft when we heard a station wagon drive into the yard, running over to look out the loft opening, R.E. said, "It's Uncle Olen [Potter] (a cousin we called Uncle).

We climbed down the hay stack from the barn loft and ran out the door to see why Uncle Olen had stopped to see us.

"Bud, Don, and Brian, are with him too!" R.E. shouted back to me as he ran ahead up the slope toward the house.

I knew from experience that all of them would run off to play leaving me behind. I just couldn't keep up with those big five and six year old boys and none of them would be caught dead playing with my rubber doll, so about the best I could do was run behind them exhausting myself while they had all the fun, or sit down somewhere to watch while they exhausted themselves running, climbing, or swinging lath swords in great pirate battles of good against evil.

While the older boys went running around the house playing a fast game of tag I went into the house to see why Uncle Olen had come by the new farm to see us. He was sitting at the kitchen table together with Dad talking about them going together to buy a spotted Poland China boar hog.

Hi, Uncle Olen.

Hello Gary, what are you doing today?

Talking to you.

"Gary," Mother interrupted, "go outside and play with the other boys, your Daddy and Olen are talking business."

Walking through the bedroom I picked up my rubber doll and went out the West door to sit down on the concrete step behind the house where Bob the black-n-tan Coonhound came up to sit down next to me. I laid the doll down and started petting him while the other boys came running past.

"Hey Gary!" Brian said. "Let me see your rubber doll!"

"OK." I replied, thinking at last someone wanted to play with me.

Hey you guys! Come here. I want to show you something that's a lot of fun.

The other boys all ran over to see what Brian had found.

"That's a rubber doll." Don said, with disgust.

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"I know but they make real good water guns." Brian said, as he pulled one of the legs out of its molded socket. Then handing the doll to the other boys to pull one out for themselves he ran down to the cattle watering trough to fill the doll leg with water.

"Stop! You're killing my doll!" I shouted, to no avail. All the arms and legs had been pulled out and the culprits had ran away toward the water trough behind Brian.

Standing there alone again looking at the armless and legless body of my doll I had finally suffered the ultimate insult. Grabbing what was left of the doll and running down the slope it was my intent to whip everyone who had taken my doll apart, while they all started running away stopping only long enough to drench me with water from the legs and arms of my dead doll. After chasing the vandals all over the farm yard only to end up soaking wet from head to foot, Uncle Olen started honking the horn of his station wagon. (A signal for all the Potter boys that it was time for them to go home.) Each of the boys threw down the part of my doll which he had and ran up the slope to leave while Don shouted back over his shoulder, "Gary, you can have your baby back."

I looked around the farm yard for a long time for all the missing limbs from my doll but was only able to find two arms and one leg. Finally out of exhaustion and despair, I threw the doll down, standing there alone looking down at the broken doll at my feet I decided, "That dumb doll has caused me too much grief already." Then turning away I walked slowly up the slope toward home forever leaving behind my rubber doll.

Somewhere out there in the red dirt of that canyon bank on the quiet western plain there is the dust of a rubber doll, silent witness of a little boy who was just too small to play, and a Memory in the Dust.