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BUFFIN



BY LEONE BARRETT
ILLUSTRATED BY MARGARET A. GAUG

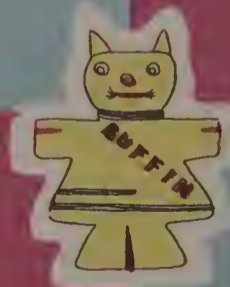
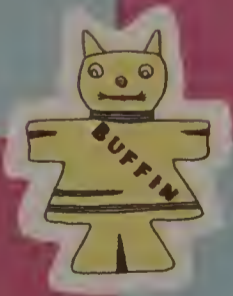


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BUFFIN





Jody and Bing were very busy too.

BUFFIN



By
LEONE BARRETT

Pictures by
MARGARET A. GAUG

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SPRING had come and everyone was busy. The plants and flowers and birds were busy. The friendly little robin with his trim brown coat and his reddish-brown vest was very busy. He was carrying tiny twigs and straw for his nest.

The little Hawthorn Tree that stood proudly by the front gate bowed politely to everyone who passed. Even it was busier than usual.

It seemed that the Hawthorn Tree would never stop changing its dress. First it was a plain gray winter one. Next it had little pink bud-dots all over it. Then it had a green, fluffy dress. Now it had a beautiful white ruffled one, and it did smell so sweet.

Jody and Bing were very busy too. They were talking and thinking and then talking again. How could they help the Fresh-Milk-For-Babies Fund?

Jody was a year and a half older than Bing. Of course, in a year and a half, a girl learns much. That is what Jody thought.

Bing, a year and a half younger, thought that being a boy he knew quite a lot too.

“Bing!” said Jody, “no need to have a lemonade stand. We couldn’t raise money for the Fresh-Milk-For-Babies Fund that way.”

“But, Jody!” said Bing, “a lemonade stand is the best way.”

“The best way for you to have all the lemonade you want. Remember the last one?” said Jody accusingly.

With a strange feeling in his stomach, Bing quickly sat down on the ground. He was glad to see Buff coming toward them. Buff was their big, soft, yellow cat. Bing thought that he could talk to Buff, and stop any more conversation about the lemonade stand.





“Remember the last one?” said Jody accusingly.

Bing was busily talking aloud to Buff. Inside he was just as busily saying to himself: "If we had been selling lemonade that time for the Fresh-Milk-For-Babies Fund, I never, never should have drunk all the lemonade. But I suppose right now the less I say about a lemonade stand the better."

"Now I know, Bing," said Jody, her eyes flashing. "Let's make a toy, a nice soft, yellow pussy-cat toy. A pretty one that would look like Buff. We could sell it to the woman at the Toy Bazaar, and we could make some money for the Fresh-Milk-For-Babies Fund."

Bing surprised Jody by saying, "Yes, Jody! You're right."

Just then Bing had a thought. Bing often had a thought.

"You know, Jody! I have a better idea than that pretty yellow pussy-cat."

Jody was disappointed, but she tried not to show it. She said as politely as she could, "Well, what is your idea, Bing?"





Bing felt very proud to be consulted. When you are a year and a half younger, it gives you an important feeling to be consulted.

“Ahem-m!” went Bing, thinking fast. Then “Ahem-m-m!” he went again. He wanted to be sure it was a good idea before he told it to Jody. Then he stroked Buff’s back and said, “Nice little Buffy!”

Inside he was still thinking. Then he very carelessly kicked the grass, so as to have more time to think, and finally he said,

“I think we should make a toy airplane and sell that. Then we could have money for our Fresh-Milk-For Babies Fund.”

“Bingy!” Jody always said Bingy when she really wanted to have Bing think her way. She found it was usually successful. “I do not believe we could ever make a toy airplane that anyone would want to buy.”

“Maybe not, but I’d like to make an airplane anyway



and just see. Maybe someone might want to buy it," said Bing, shaking his head soberly.

"Bi-in-gy!" Jody's tone would have melted a heart harder than Bing's. "Do you re-a-lly think so?"

Bing really thought so. But that last, coaxing Bi-in-gy was too much, so he said, "Well then, Jody, let's comper-mise."

Bing's tone of voice sounded to Jody as if her idea had won, but that word "comper-mise,"—what did it mean?

When you are a year and a half older, you should know the meaning of long words, even words as long as "comper-mise."

Jody took a chance and said, "Bingy! You are the nicest brother to comper-mise. Now we shall make a soft, yellow pussy-cat."



“Well then, Jody, let’s compermise.”

Bing was so surprised that he almost dropped Buff. He jumped up from the ground where he had been sitting. He gasped once or maybe twice and said, "I didn't say we were going to make a soft, yellow pussy-cat. I said we were going to compermise. Don't you know what compermise means?"

He looked at Jody. He tried to look very wise.

"Well—" said Jody.

Then suddenly she whirled on her heel and started running toward the house, calling back to Bing. "I am going to get a drink of water."

Bing was as glad to see Jody leave at that particular moment as Jody was to get away. By that time he was not sure he had used the correct word. Even if he had, he could not tell Jody exactly what it meant.





The faster Jody ran, the faster her brain worked. “Compermise, compermise,” it kept saying. She must have heard that word, but where had she heard it and what did it mean?

As she reached the kitchen, in walked Nurse Dinah. She was very fat and very black. Her teeth were as white as her starchy dress and her trim cap.

“Dinah, what does compermise mean?”

“Compermise?” said Dinah, her eyes growing rounder and bigger than ever. “Land sake, chile, don’ ask Dinah. I doesn’t know, honey, honest I doesn’t. But in yondah is yo’ Mummy, jes’ come in from shoppin’. She sho’ kin tell you.”

Jody ran to her mother and said, “Mummy! What does compermise mean?”

“Compermise?” said Mother.

“Yes,” Jody explained, “Bing said that. When I wanted to make a soft, yellow pussy-cat and he wanted to make an airplane, he said that we would permpermise.”

Mother then told Jody that she had heard Father tell Bing a story the night before. It was the story of how two great chiefs had compromised on a very important matter so that they would have no war.

“You see, dear,” said Mother, “the word is compromise. Bing means that you two together will make a toy, and half of it will be a soft, yellow pussy-cat which is what you want, and the other half of it will be an airplane which Bing wants. I do not quite know how you are going to do it, but you and Bing decide that for yourselves. Only, dear, say ‘compromise’ to Bing in a way that he will know the word is compromise.”





“Only, dear, say ‘compromise’ to Bing in a way that he will know the word is compromise.”

When Bing saw Jody returning, he found comfort again in stroking Buff's yellow fur and pretending that there had been no talk about "compermise."

He thought he probably had used it wrong, so the thing to do now was to keep Jody from saying any more about it.

But before he could possibly think of anything to say to her, she sat down beside him and said, "It will be fun to compromise about that soft, yellow pussy-cat and the airplane. But the trouble is that we can't make an airplane look like a pussy-cat, nor a pussy-cat look like an airplane."

"Yes!" said Bing, greatly relieved and quite proud that he had the general idea of the word compermise, even though he was a year and a half younger. "We can think that out. A pussy-cat and an airplane do not look much alike. But I do want to make something that I think will take me on a great adventure."

"I suppose you would think that. But I want to make something I can play with right here at home," said Jody.

They both began to laugh together when Bing said, "But it is not going to be ours when it is finished anyway."





“But,” said the practical Jody, “unless it is nice when it is finished, no one will want to buy it; and then we can’t give any money to help the Fresh-Milk-For-Babies Fund.”

“Yes, it must be nice when we finish it. But I still think that an airplane pussy-cat can be just as nice as a soft, yellow pussy-cat, if we are very careful how we make it,” decided Bing.

Together they ran in to tell Mother. Never before had they planned anything that sounded like so much fun, and never before had they planned anything that Mother thought was so nice.

Their fingers were tingling to begin to make a toy all by themselves, one nice enough for them to sell. But first they must earn some money to buy some cloth to make the toy. Mother reminded them of that.

Mother, Jody, and Bing sat in silence and thought hard. Finally Mother told them that if they would go out in the garden and help Thomas edge the pansy bed, they could earn some pennies. That would be a start, and before long she was sure they could earn enough to buy the cloth for their new toy.

Working with Thomas was always such fun. He always told them such funny tales and sang such funny little songs. Jody and Bing liked the way Thomas would laugh at his own tales and songs. He just laughed until he shook all over.

So Thomas worked and talked and laughed and shook. Jody and Bing worked and laughed and shook too.

Bing tried to laugh like Thomas, for it looked as if Thomas was getting so much fun out of his laugh.

While they were carefully working, Thomas sang this funny song to the “clip, clip” of his shears as he busily trimmed the rose bushes:

“Sang the funny woolly puppy to the china cat,
‘Well! Well! What do you think of that?
You me-eow and I bow-bow,
But you can’t do either until you know how.’”

“‘Well! Well! That is that!’
Sang the saucy china cat,
‘You can’t me-ow. You don’t know how.
You can only go bow-wow.’”





Working with Thomas was always such fun.



Finally Jody and Bing began to sing with Thomas. They all worked and sang together about the woolly puppy and the china cat.

And in spite of all Thomas' funny tales and funny songs and their laughing and their shaking and their singing, the pansy bed was neatly edged.

Late that afternoon two very tired children went into the house for their baths. Dinah scrubbed such muddy knees and muddier hands, but never were knees and hands too muddy for Dinah to get clean. So out of their baths they came, clean and shining. Tired but still excited, they waited for Father because they were so anxious to tell him of their new plan.

No sooner was Father in the house than both his big hands were filled with little hands. On each of his knees was seated an excited little person. Quickly they told him of their plans.

"Daddy, the pansy bed is edged now, but we need lots more pennies. What more can we do?"

"Pennies are scarce nowadays," said Father as he soberly shook his head, and Bing and Jody soberly shook their heads too.

Of the three, Bing looked the most serious. But his hard thinking brought a surprising idea. It was surprising to Father and to Mother and to Dinah and to Jody too.

This thought came very suddenly to Bing. He started to say it just as suddenly. The result was that it caught in his throat. Dinah had to rush for water. Mother had to hold up his hands. Father had to pat him hard on the back.

Bing was still red in the face and a little short of breath when he started to tell his surprising idea!

“Here is a way I can make money every day, Daddy. If you let me do this, it will save my having to think so hard again.”

That was his best argument. No father wants to see his only son choking over a too-hard thought and a too-quickly-said idea.

“Now listen, Daddy,” said Bing. “I want to help Thomas shine your car every morning until we have all the money we need to make our compromise toy.”

“The job is yours, son,” said Father with a pleased smile. “Only what do you say to making that a compromise toy instead of a compromise toy?”

“Compromise it is, Daddy,” said Bing, as he gave Jody a side glance. He hoped she had not heard. But Jody and Mother exchanged an understanding glance, too.

And then Jody had an idea. It was not such a quickly-said idea, so it was voiced in a much safer way than was Bing's.



“Every morning let me hang fresh towels in the bathroom and dust my bedroom. Will you, Mother?”

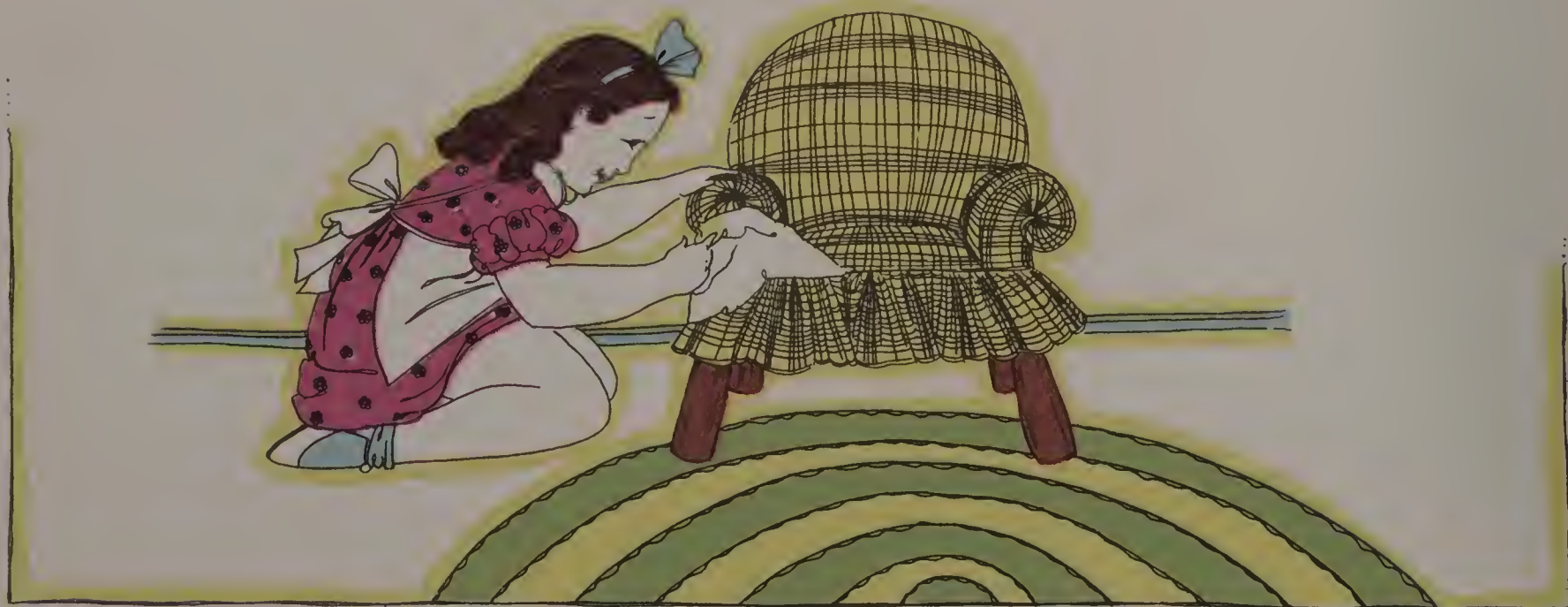
Mother agreed to this also.

Such a busy pair of children they were the next morning and many mornings afterward. They worked and talked and planned how they were going to make an airplane pussy-cat.

Then came the evening when Father helped the children count their pennies. To their delight they found that they had enough to buy the cloth for their toy.

Carefully, and still compromising, they drew a large picture. It was just the size their new toy was to be. It had a round head with two perky ears on it. It stood on its hind legs which really looked more like the rudder of an airplane than they looked like hind legs. This was Bing's idea.

When the toy stood on its hind legs, the front legs looked like arms, only they were held straight out at the sides. That made them look like airplane wings all ready to fly. This was Bing's idea too. Then they cut around the pencilled line and they had a paper pattern for their toy.





*Carefully, and still compromising, they drew
a large picture.*



It was a thrilling moment when they laid the paper pattern on the bright yellow cloth. They then started to cut the cloth. Mother made a few helpful suggestions.

Jody cut out one side and Bing cut out the other side. It was hard for Jody to keep a straight face when she looked at Bing.

Never had Bing worked so hard. First he crossed his legs like a tailor but his arms would not reach as far as they should. Next he knelt so that he could reach further, but he lost his balance and fell on his stomach. He lay all sprawled out. His arms and feet were flying, but he still clutched the scissors.

Suddenly Dinah was standing anxiously over him. She turned him right side up and he soberly started to cut again.

After the bright yellow cloth was cut and the little rough edges all neatly trimmed, Jody had another idea. Bing was too tired by this time to do anything but just sit and listen. That shows how hard Bing had worked on the cutting. For when Bing just sat and listened Bing was a very tired Bing.

“We should name this new toy, now that it is really beginning to be a toy,” said Jody. “It will be even more fun to work on if we name it and don’t have to call it ‘it’ all the time.”

Bing, still sitting on the floor and still looking a bit wilted, sighed, "I think so too."

Mother, Father, Dinah, Thomas, Jane-the-Cook, all were consulted, each in his turn. But no one could give a name that was good enough to suit everyone.

The next day when they were still wondering what to name the toy, in walked Buff. His yellow tail was flying in the air, and his face was as round as that pattern they had cut out.

"We'll name it after Buff," said Jody.

"Yes," said Bing, "only just a little different name, so we don't get them mixed. Let's call it 'Buffin.'"

Jody agreed, and Buffin was to be its name.

Now that Bing was through with his cutting, his ideas began to come back. He said, "Let's print the name—B U F F I N—across the front, like an airplane."

It was a real task to print that name Buffin, but finally, with just a little help from Mother, it was finished to the very last letter.

Buffin had such a funny little red button for a nose. His eyes twinkled like the shining lights on an airplane. That is what Bing thought at least.



By the time Buffin was all finished, snow was on the ground, and it was just two days before Christmas.

Jody and Bing were delighted with their bright, soft Buffin who had such a way of snuggling right into your arms.

They wrapped him in c-r-rinkly paper and started down to the Toy Bazaar with him. Dinah was following so close that she looked like a spread eagle all ready to snatch her eaglets from any harm.

“Jody, don’t you feel all nice and cozy inside?” said Bing.

“Yes!” said Jody. “It was such fun to plan and to make Buffin. And now it is fun to know that all by ourselves we are going to earn money for the Fresh-Milk-For-Babies Fund. But—” and Jody’s eyes began to blink very hard as she added, “I hope whoever buys Buffin will be very good to him.”

Then for the first time the thought of giving up their beloved Buffin came to Bing. A great tear suddenly splashed down a very pink cheek. But he bravely swallowed hard, took a deep breath, counted slowly to four and then backward again to one, and stopped the next tear before it had a chance to even start.





"I hope whoever buys Buffin will be very good to him."

Jody, very tenderly, laid Buffin in Bing's arms. Bing held him close. No one spoke.

As they reached the Toy Bazaar, Jody said as carelessly as she could, "Dinah, let's walk around the block. I believe Buffin might like a little more of this air and sunshine before he goes inside."

Dinah thought so too, and so did Bing.

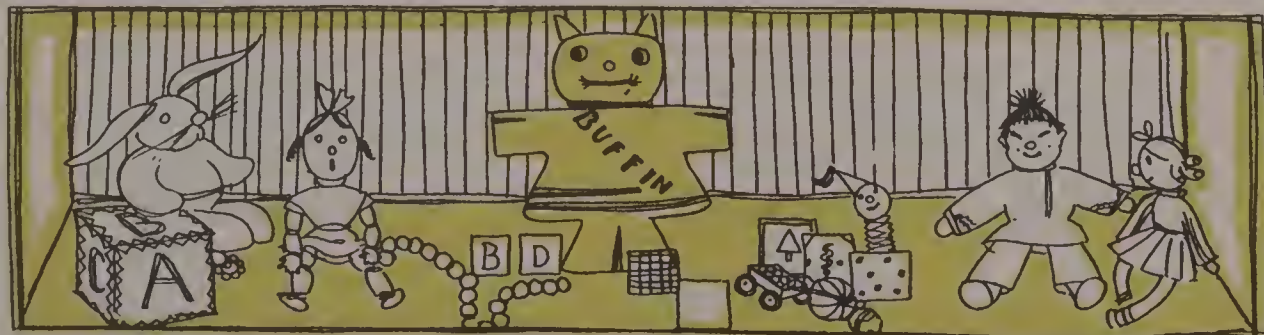
After they had walked around the block three times so that Buffin could have more nice air and sunshine, Bing—one and a half years younger—proved to be the hero.

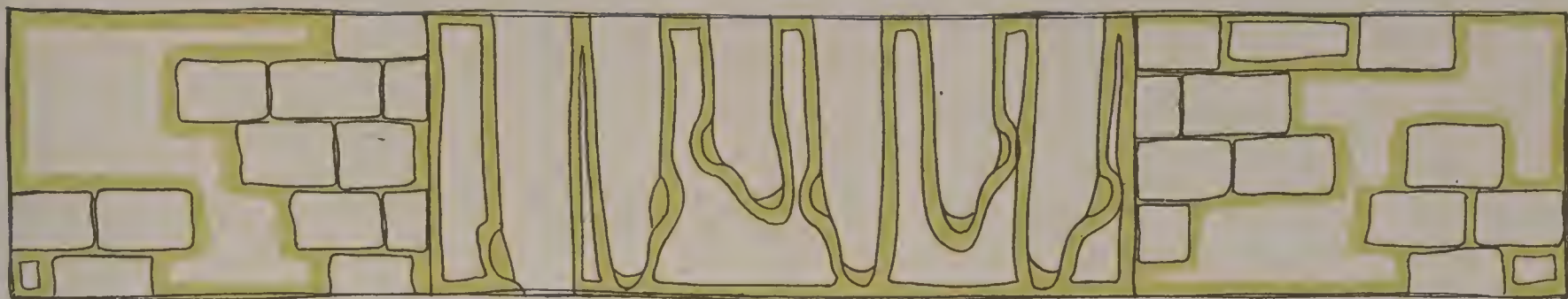
Just as they came to that dreaded door, Bing handed Buffin to Jody, and with his chin high and a smile on a very brave little face, he opened the door and said, "Well, here we are at the Toy Bazaar."

The Toy Bazaar Woman liked Buffin and agreed to buy him. She counted out a handful of bright new coins and gave them to Jody and Bing, and then she put Buffin in her shining glass case.

As the two children went out the door, they kept their eyes straight ahead. Neither one quite dared to look back to where Buffin sat bravely smiling in the glass case.

On their way home, Jody managed to say to Bing, "I am sure Buffin will be very brave and very good, no matter where he goes."





“Yes,” said Bing. But Bing, being a year and a half younger, could not quite keep his lip from quivering. He hoped Jody would say no more about Buffin for awhile.

When they returned home, everyone was busy getting ready for Christmas. Jane-the-Cook was making mince pies and Christmas tarts. Mother was in a room with the door closed. Jody and Bing could almost see Christmas surprises right through that closed door.

Thomas was shining the silver platters for the turkey and the cranberry sauce and the plum pudding. He was humming merrily away as he rubbed. Jane frowned at him and said he sounded like an old buzz saw. But he kept right on humming and rubbing and smiling, much to Bing’s delight, and Jody’s too. Everybody loved Thomas and his cheery smile and his cheery songs.

Then on Christmas Eve stockings were hung and Christmas carols were sung and stories were told. Mother and Father told Bing and Jody how proud they were of their little son and daughter—how they had shown the true Christmas spirit when they gave away their beloved Buffin so that little hungry babies might have food.

Jody held Mother’s hand tight, and for the moment all the hurt of giving up Buffin was gone.



Jody and Bing took a long time that night to get to sleep. Their thoughts were so full of what was going to happen the next day. Just what would happen? Christmas Day was always so full of surprises and every Christmas was nicer than the Christmas before.

Jody opened her eyes the next morning just as Dinah came rustling in to shut the windows. Dinah was all smiles and starchier than ever. She had a sprig of holly jauntily tucked in her white cap.

Before the children had their feet in their warm slippers and had soft robes wrapped around them, Mother and Father peeped through the door and called, "Merry Christmas!"

Never were baths finished and clothes put on more quickly. Mother, Father, Jody, Bing, and Dinah—all dashed down the stairs together and stood breathlessly by the closed library door.

Then—the door was flung open and there, in all its glory, stood a lighted Christmas tree. It was surrounded with so many wonderful things that Jody and Bing could not at first tell one wonderful thing from another.

But two pairs of shining eyes singled out, first of all, a bright, yellow something. That something was—or was it?—yes, it was—Buffin!! But were they seeing double, or were there really two Buffins?



Were there really two Buffins?

Two pairs of glad hands each reached for Buffin, and each pair of glad hands held a Buffin, so there must have been two Buffins; and both Buffins looked exactly like the Buffin they had so carefully made.

How could such a thing ever be—two Buffins so much alike that neither Jody nor Bing could tell them apart?

For a few moments, even Bing was speechless.

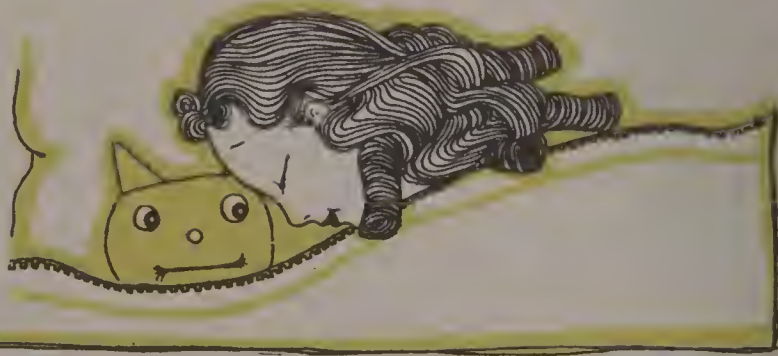
Jody was the first one to get her breath. “Mummy!” said Jody, “how did Santa Claus ever know that we made Buffin and wanted so much to have him for our own?”

“Whee-ee!” Bing’s breath came back with a big, whistling gasp. “Santa Claus and his whole workshop must have worked all night to make another Buffin.” Bing was remembering the days and days he and Judy had spent in making Buffin.

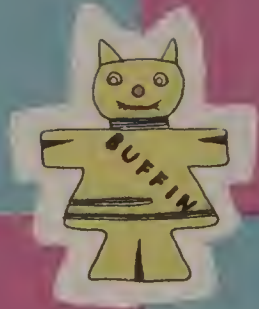
“How did Santa Claus ever happen to think of making another Buffin?” Jody and Bing said together.

Such fun as Jody, Bing, and two smiling Buffins did have! To this day no one, except maybe Santa Claus, knows which Buffin Santa Claus made and which Buffin Jody and Bing made.

Even Mother and Father can only shake their heads and say, “I wonder!”

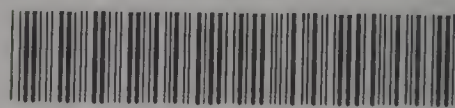






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