

SCARY SHUMBA

FOREWORD

Hello, children! Or “*bonjour*” or “*hola*” or even “*bom dia*,” as they say in Brazil. It is quite possible that you are reading this story while tucked in bed, so it is “good evening, children” (or whatever the language is of the country in which you happen to live). It could be *boa noite*, as they say in Portuguese, and it just so happens that this story is set in Brazil. If you close your eyes, you can imagine the scenes as we take a trip to the beautiful Brazilian city of Petropolis and visit a mansion, where in one of the children’s bedrooms there is a small community called Puppendorf. The word “*puppen*” is German for “dollies” and “*dorf*” is German for “village.”

(Actually, I just remembered, if you happen to be reading the story on your own, you can’t very well close your eyes and imagine, can you? You will just have to imagine with your eyes open as you read.)

So why do we not call the place “Dollytown” or something else in English? Why German? Well, maybe I should give you a little background of the family who lives in that mansion.

Albert and Sandra Kessler are members of an American scientific research team and they have three daughters—Angela, who is twelve; Doris is nine; and Priscilla, the youngest, who is seven years old. Also living with them is the children’s private tutor, Dorothea Klaus, and she happens to be German. She it was who named the bedroom community of dolls and stuffed animals “Puppendorf.”

The family’s Brazilian cook, Rebecca, and their housemaid, Maria Luz, live in the servants’ quarters, and in a small cottage on the edge of the property lives Josue, who takes care of the grounds and is their driver.

Now, we know that most children love to pretend, right? So before we enter Puppendorf we must remember that the events are pretence in the minds of Angela, Doris, and Priscilla, and they can become pretence in your minds too.



These scenarios can be brought to life, like the little dollies, when you apply the life lessons that each one learns. Did you know that many children flocked around Jesus during His days on earth, and many of them, especially the little girls, would probably have been holding a little stuffed rag doll or animal? Of course, they were stuffed with straw and were not as well made and realistic as they are today, but to many of those children they were a toy to treasure. You can imagine our Lord taking one and using it to present an object lesson for the child or those surrounding Him, just as He used a little child as an example of the kind of faith we need to enter the kingdom of heaven.

So, children, enjoy your visits to Puppendorf and learn from these little stories of Annabelle (the Christmas dolly), Kayla (a Brazilian dolly), Barbara and Beverly Bimbo (fashion dolls), Nosey the dog, Bruno the bear, and Shumba the lion cub.



Puppendorf was in a topsy-turvy tizwas, and anticipation filled the air. Barbara and Beverly Bimbo were primping and preening in front of the mirror as Kayla frantically filed her nails. Annabelle was trying to drag a comb through her unruly acrylic frizz of hair.

Nosey the dog, however, was sitting sullenly in the corner licking his empty doggie bowl.

It's a dog's life, he was thinking.

"And I hear Shumba's an incredible *hunter*," Barbara Bimbo said as she brushed her long blonde hair.

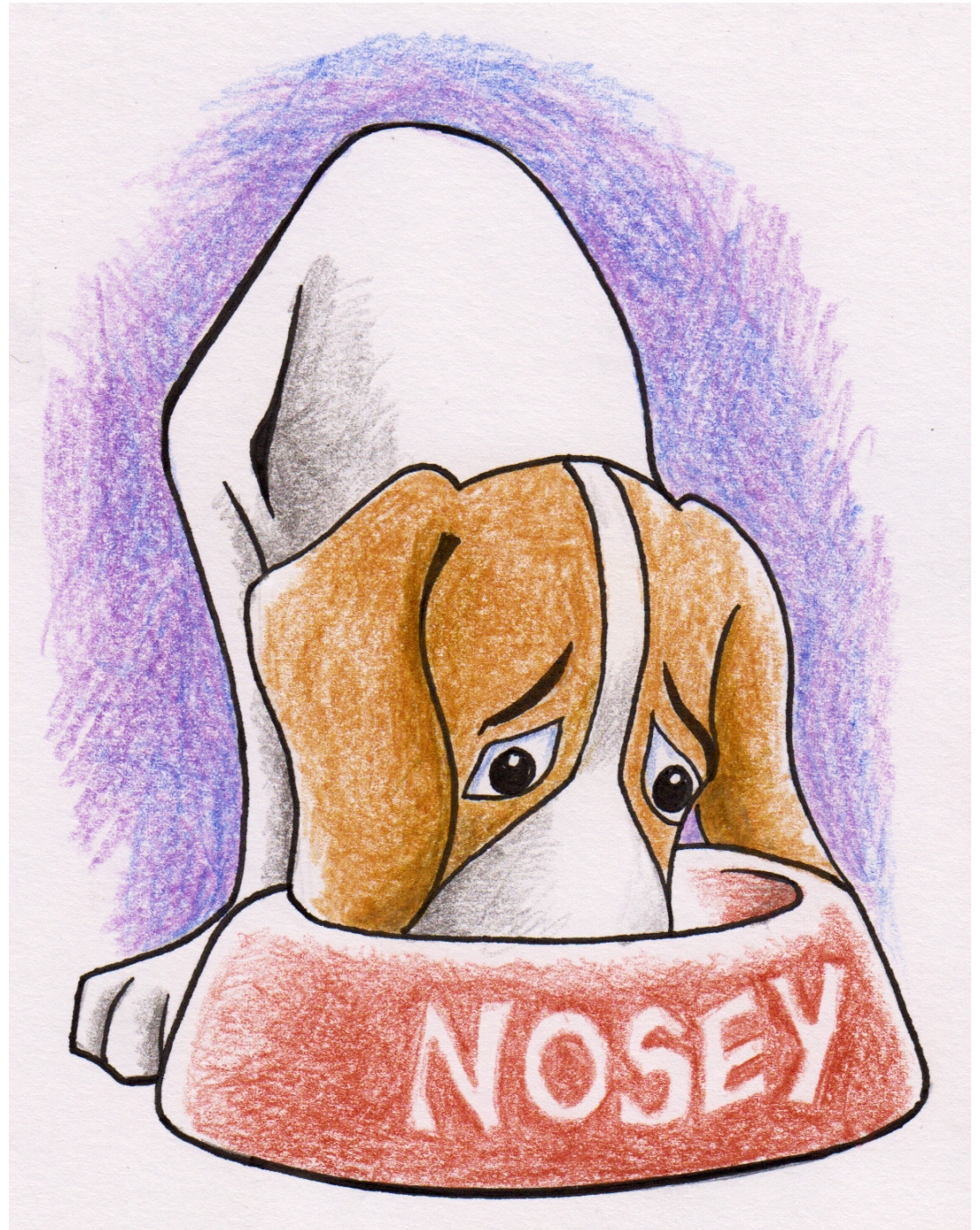
"So I've heard," chirped Beverly Bimbo, as she braided her long black hair. "Not just going for mice and rats or chasing cats."

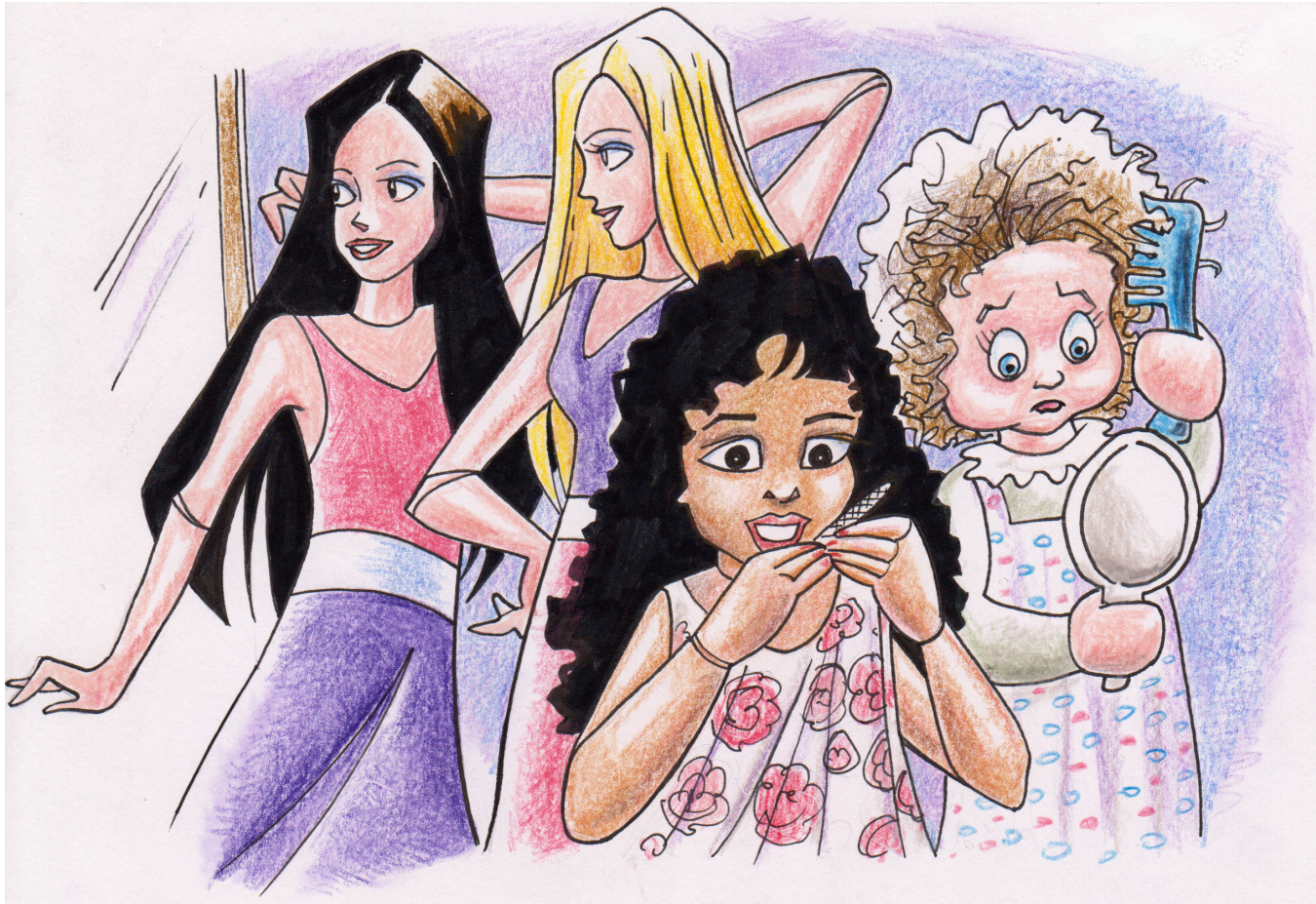
"And that's not all," Kayla chimed in as she studied her fingernails. "He's on the ball. *Fast!* No lazy slowpoke."

"And he's *apparently...*" Annabelle said, pausing to let her use of a recently discovered word have its full effect, "an incredible *protector*. You know, scaring off robbers and all."

"And he doesn't just bark," said Barbara.

"No," said Beverly. "He *roars!*"





“Awesome,” said Annabelle.

“And on top of all that, he’s been in a *movie*,” said Barbara. “*Jungle King*.”

“Yeah,” said Beverly. “Ken took me to see it. It’s really cool.”

“So, when’s he coming?” Kayla asked.

“Tomorrow,” said Annabelle. “He’s supposed to be here after the human’s lunch ... about 2:15 or so. Angela picked him up on that trip to those huge waterfalls. Shumba lion cubs are super cheap down there ... *apparently*.”

“Wow,” said Barbara Bimbo. “Let’s head on down there.”

“Easier said than done,” said Beverly, “unless one of the human girls decides to take you along in their suitcase. I mean, Angela took Bruno Bear.”

“So what’s the problem?” said Barbara.

“Can you compete in the ‘cuddly’ category?” Beverly asked.

“I suppose not,” replied Barbara. “About all we—I mean me and you—fit in is the ‘dress up’ category, seeing as we like our outfits changed a zillion times.”

“Well, whatever, if worse came to worst, Ken can drive us down there,” said Beverly. “He can get us there in no time.”

Kayla rolled her eyes. “Yes, the way he drives.”

“What do you think about all this, Nosey?” said Annabelle, a little concerned that their canine friend was being left out of the excitement.

“Dunno,” Nosey mumbled. “About what exactly?”

“The category thing. Are you the cuddly type that the human children want to take to bed and on trips?”

“I don’t think so,” Nosey said morosely. “I usually just get stuck on the shelf, along with a bunch of other Noseys. Nosey with a Santa Claus hat, or a Nosey the Texas Ranger, or Nosey the rapper with sunglasses and a baseball cap. All that sort of crowd.”

“That’s a lot of attention, though,” said Barbara Bimbo. “Up on a shelf. That’s more than we get ... I mean, me and Bev.”

“I guess it’s ’cos when they play with us we can’t stand up,” said Beverly. “I mean, they can’t prop us up without a lot of hassle.”

“That’s because your legs are so long and skinny and your heads are too big,” said Kayla. “They can’t balance you.”

“Okay, okay,” said Nosey. “What I meant is, I don’t get a lot of, you know, *personal* attention.”

“Well, thank God that you are the only Nosey around now,” said Annabelle. “Since they gave a bunch of us away to that charity ... what did they call it?”

“Bazaar,” Kayla said in an authoritative tone.

“Right,” said Annabelle.

“But that didn’t leave me with many friends,” said Nosey. “I mean, other dogs.”

“You’ve still got Diggity Dawg to hang out with,” said Barbara Bimbo.

“Yeah,” Nosey mumbled. “If he’s around. He’s always out and about.”

“So anyway, Nosey,” said Annabelle. “What do you think of Shumba coming? Cool, isn’t it?”

Nosey puffed, slowly shook his head, and took another lick at his empty bowl.

“What, Nosey?” Kayla asked with a look of concern.

Nosey drew a deep breath and looked astutely into the rays of the sunset peeking through the bedroom blinds.

“I think...” he began, after clearing his throat. “There are a few things you need to know about that ‘wonderful’ Shumba. ...”



“Hi, everyone!”

Silence met Angela’s cheery greeting.

“Hello?”

Lifting up the quilt, Angela peered into the shadows underneath her bed. “Kayla! What on earth are you doing here? Aren’t you usually in the dollhouse?”

Kayla looked furtively around. “Is he here?” she asked.

“Who?”

“Shumba.”

“Er ... yes. And I was hoping to introduce him to his new playmates. I notice the tea set isn’t out, the Bimbo apartment is a mess, and the dollhouse is empty, by the way. Why is that?”

Kayla coughed nervously and nibbled on her well-manicured fingernails.

“Is something wrong?” Angela demanded.

“N-no,” Kayla stammered. “It’s just that we...”

At that moment, Doris and Priscilla entered the room with expectant expressions.

“So what happened with the nice warm welcome?” Doris asked.

Angela shrugged. “I’m clueless. It looks like Annabelle and the others are in hiding.”

“The humans are here,” Annabelle furtively whispered to Barbara and Beverly as they peered down from a shoebox in the top of the closet.

“And she’s got Shumba?” Barbara asked.

“Looks like it. Sealed in plastic,” said Beverly.

“Let’s hope they don’t open it,” said Annabelle. “Or we’re minced cloth.”

“Speak for yourself,” said Barbara. “We ... I mean me and Beverly ... are made out of vinyl, like Kayla.”

“What’s Shumba made out of, by the way?” Barbara asked.

“Oh, I don’t know,” said Annabelle. “Probably the same stuff Bruno’s made of. Some sort of fuzzy beige cloth, kind of.”

“Then what are we so freaked out about?” Beverly asked.

“Because Shumba likes to eat vinyl too ... *apparently!*” Annabelle wailed. Barbara put a finger to her lips. “Shhh! Don’t raise your voice.”

Suddenly the box shook and Angela's face loomed above the petrified dollies.

"What are you all doing in here? We have a new addition to our clan, didn't you know?"

Annabelle, Barbara, and Beverly nodded nervously.

"Well, the least you can do is to make him feel at home. And where's Nosey, by the way?"

The dollies looked at each other and shrugged.

"Anyway," Angela said brusquely, gathering up the three dollies and setting them in a row on the bed next to Kayla. "With or without Nosey, we're going to have a little welcome home celebration for our new member."

Doris began laying out the tea set and Priscilla handed a pair of scissors to Angela, who proceeded to cut open the plastic package that contained the eager Shumba. The dollies on the bed stiffened and clutched one another.

"What's with all this?" said Doris. "Just last night when Priss and I announced that Angela was bringing Shumba the lion cub, you were all excited."

"I know, it's just that..." Annabelle began, and then let out a shriek as Angela placed Shumba on the bed.

Shumba sniffed the air and crouched warily.

"He's going to *pounce*," Kayla screamed.

"No, he's not," said Angela. "He just

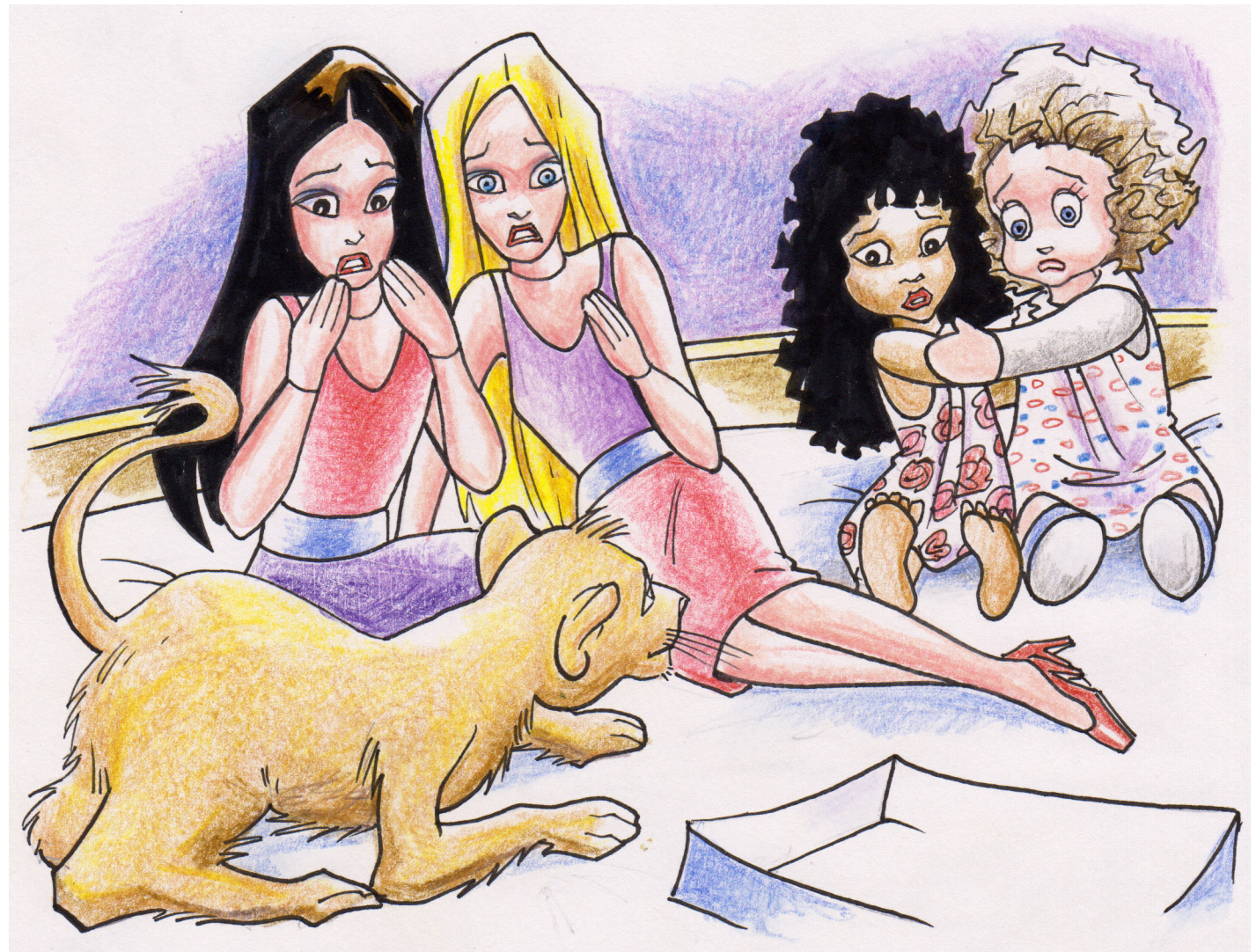
doesn't understand what you guys are so freaked out about."

"What a bummer of a welcome," said Priscilla. "Shumba must feel terrible."

"What do you expect us to do?" said Barbara. "We feel even worse about the probability of being eaten alive."

"Whatever makes you say that?" Doris asked, as Shumba relaxed and began rolling on the quilt and smiling at the four dollies. "Look, he just wants to make friends."

"Yeah, he's friendly, all right," said Beverly. "Until we're fast asleep, and we become his midnight snack."



"This is terrible," said Angela. "Where on earth is all this coming from?"

"Nosey," said Barbara. "He told us that..."

"Nosey," Priscilla broke in. "Where is he, by the way?"

"Oh, gosh," said Doris. "I didn't even notice he wasn't here."

"I think that's been the problem," Beverly said under her breath.

"Maybe he went downstairs to say hi to Bruno," said Priscilla. "They do get on pretty well together. Or he's out with Diggity Dawg."

"Nosey told you what, by the way?" Angela inquired.

Barbara, Beverly, and Kayla looked expectantly at Annabelle, who took it that she was supposed to explain.

"N-Nosey told us," she said. "Th-that ... er ... Sh-Shumba was super mean and was going to attack us and eat us up in the night and stuff."

Angela strode towards the bedroom door. "Nosey!" she bellowed from the upstairs landing. "Come out from wherever you are and get in here at *once*!"

There was no answer.

"You will not get your bone tonight unless you do!"

Suddenly, Angela heard a whimper from behind the nearby linen closet door, which slowly creaked open to reveal a puppy dog dolefully looking up at her.

"What's this I hear? Scare stories about Shumba and stuff. Let's go."

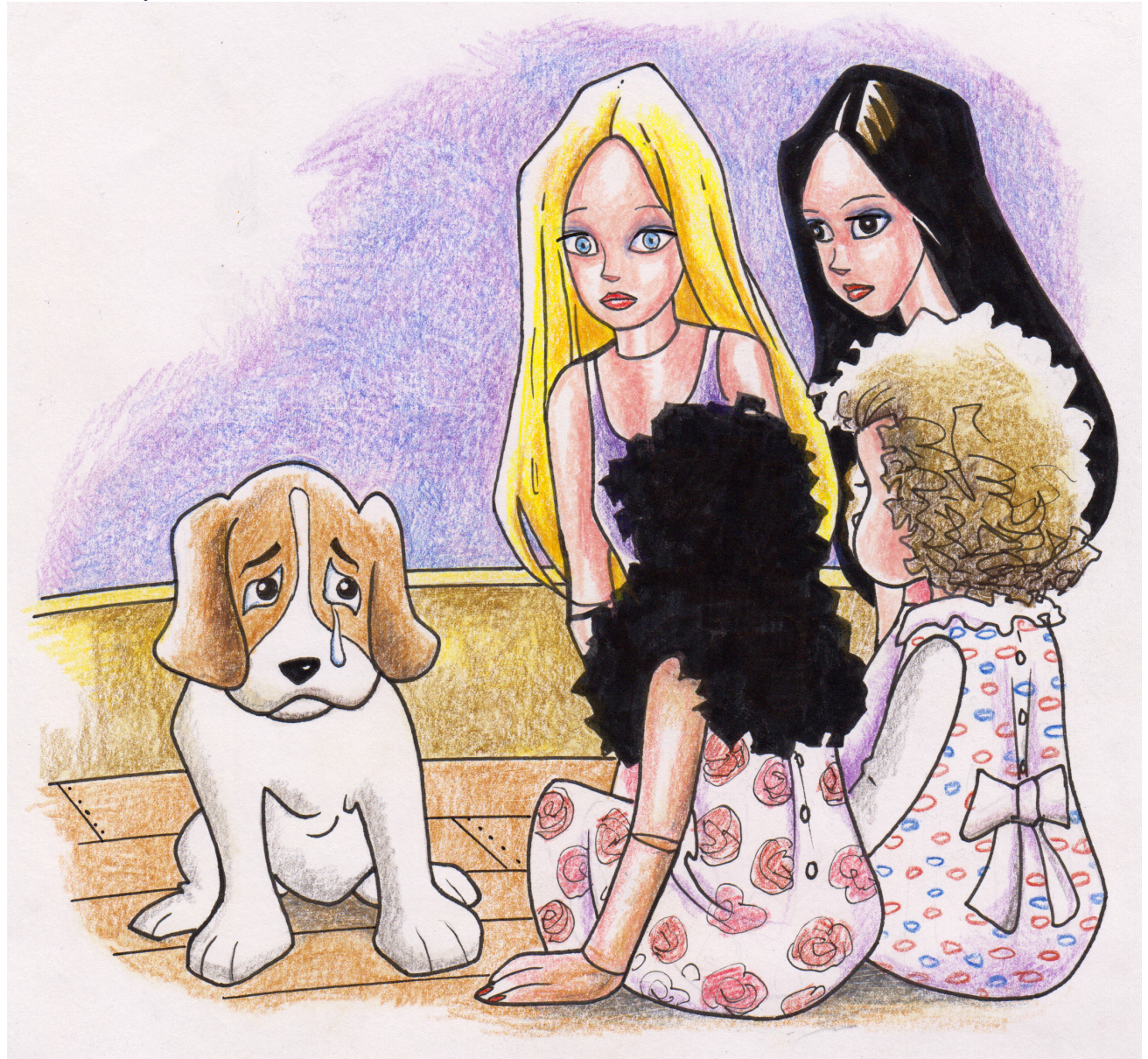


"...and so that's it," Nosey shamefacedly said as he sat on the floor surrounded by Angela, Doris, Priscilla, the four dollies, and a bewildered Shumba.

"I guess I was jealous of the girls carrying on about 'Shumba this' and 'Shumba that' and him being in some big fancy movie."

"Look, Nosey," Priscilla said, earnestly. "You may not have been in a big movie, but you've been on coffee mugs and birthday cards."

"And kids all over the world adore you," said Doris. "You make them laugh, and they're not afraid of you."





“That’s more than can be said of me,” Shumba muttered with a grin.
 “And you’ve had a lot more experience,” Angela added. “I mean, you’ve been around for at least fifty years.”
 “And you haven’t aged a bit,” said Barbara.
 “Right,” said Beverly. “Not like a lot of other dogs.”
 “They’re usually dead by then,” Kayla added.
 “So what do you say you apologise to everyone,” said Angela. “And once Bruno gets up here we can pray for Shumba’s first night here.”
 “Yes!” chorused the others.

So, children, you will be happy to know that Nosey and Shumba soon became the best of friends, with Shumba teaching Nosey how to hunt and pounce like a lion, and Nosey instructing Shumba in the art of burying bones.

And dollies Annabelle, Barbara, Beverly and Kayla all learned to appreciate Nosey more and to be sensitive when extolling others’ virtues in front of him, being mindful to tell him what they admired about him as well.

And Nosey learned to not be jealous when others receive praise.

