

## The Doll

*By Sophy Churches*

The doll sat under the Christmas tree in its beautiful pink silky dress with lace trimmings and matching bonnet. The little girl hugged it like she never wanted to let it go. She laughed aloud, as it was her only dream to have a doll.

But it was war time. Her father received his call-up papers the very next day, and she and her mother saw him for the last time. He never returned from the war.

By now, nearly everyone left the city to hide in the country as the city prepared for the siege. When the husband left, the mother immediately gathered their clothes, and with her little girl and the heavy suitcase in tow, left the house. They walked a little way when the little girl started screaming, "My doll, my doll, my darling doll!" They turned back and collected the doll which was still in the little girl's cot.

With good luck, they reached the train in time to take them to the mother's relatives in Transylvania. They mostly slept through the twelve-hour journey, with the mother holding the little girl, and the little girl holding her doll.

When they arrived, the uncle was already waiting with a horse-drawn cart. The little girl hadn't seen horses before and was slightly frightened of them, but she enjoyed the ride.

At the farm there were many new and interesting things for the girl to see. She learned the names of all the animals and told the names to her doll. Her mother was soon absorbed by the relatives and the little girl was left to roam the farm, explaining everything she saw to the doll.

The war was not so serious in the country as it was in the cities. But when they heard the German army marching through with their heavy equipment, the people scattered, as they did not want to be involved in any way with the war.

After the war ended, the mother and the little girl waited for the husband and father for many years. They could not go back to the city as the borders were closed around Transylvania.

When the little girl was six years old, she was still holding her doll, even though it had become dirty and ragged. One day she left the doll on a bench outside.

A huge pig on the farm was roaming free and it could eat anything it wanted, although occasionally left-overs were sloshed into a metal plate for the pig. When the girl realized the loss of the doll, she ran outside remembering the bench where she'd left it. She arrived at the moment when the pig pulled down the doll and started chomping into it. Seemingly, the pig liked it and chomped slowly – first the arms, then the legs, then the body, finishing with the head.

The girl screamed and cried so some of the farm workers came running. They just laughed their heads off as they saw the doll's body parts disappear into the dirty grey pig's mouth, not caring that this was the worst tragedy of the girl's entire life. They were probably laughing at the girl too. When the girl found her mother in the kitchen, she fell into her arms sobbing inconsolably.

Sixty-five years later, a lady still looks at the dolls in antique shops, toy stores, and friends' homes, and gives a little hug to these dolls on the journey of her life. Maybe she even sheds an invisible tear or two at times like this, remembering her lost doll.