

Mary Jane

Her Book

CHAPTER I

THE BROKEN DOLL

MARY JANE stood on the curbstone and stared into the middle of the street. Her face was white with fright and the tears which had not as yet come were close to her big blue eyes. Her little fists were clenched and even her perky plaid hair ribbon seemed to show amazement.

And wasn't it enough to make any little girl stare? Her big, beautiful doll, the one that came at Christmastime, lay crushed and broken in the middle of the street! Its glossy brown hair was matted in the dust;

its dainty pink dress torn and dirty and its great brown eyes crushed to powder!

For a full minute Mary Jane stared at the wreck that had been her doll. Then she turned and ran screaming toward the house.

Mrs. Merrill heard her and met her at the front steps.

“Mary Jane! Dear child!” she cried, “what is the matter? Tell Mother what has happened!”

“My doll! My beautifulest doll!” sobbed Mary Jane, “my Marie Georgianna is all run over!”

“Surely not, surely not, Mary Jane,” said her mother as she picked up the little girl and sat down, with her on her lap, on the porch steps, “dolls don’t get run over.”

“My doll did,” said Mary Jane positively, “see?”

Mrs. Merrill looked out into the street and there, sure enough, was the wreck of the doll.

“Tell me how it happened, dear,” said Mrs. Merrill and she gathered her little girl tighter in her arms as she spoke for she knew that if the doll had been run over, Mary Jane herself had not missed an accident by so very much for the doll and the little girl were always close together.

Mary Jane wiped her eyes on her mother’s handkerchief, snuggled cozily in the comfortable arms and told her story.

“I was going over to play with Junior like you said I could,” she began (Junior was the little neighbor boy who lived across the street in the big white house), “and just as I got into the middle of the street I heard a big, *big* noisy ‘toot-t-t-t’ way down by Fifth-Street—and you *know*, Mother” (and here Mary Jane sat up straight) “that you always told me if an automobile was as far away as Fifth Street it was all right—so I went on across. But this automobile didn’t just come; it hurried fast, oh, so very fast and by the

time I was halfway across the road it was so close I just turned around and ran back to the curbstone and I was in such a hurry I guess I must have dropped my Marie Georgianna!”

“And the automobile ran over her, poor dolly,” finished Mother, with a thrill of fear as she realized Mary Jane’s narrow escape. Then she wiped off the teary blue eyes and smilingly said, “Listen, Mary Jane, and I’ll tell you a secret.”

“A secret about a doll?” asked Mary Jane eagerly.

“A secret about a doll,” replied Mother. “Marie Georgianna has a twin.”

“Not a really truly twin?” demanded Mary Jane and she sat up straight and opened her eyes wide. “A really, truly, for surely enough twin?”

“Yes, she has,” said Mother nodding her head emphatically, “a really, truly, for surely enough twin—I saw her down at the store

only yesterday and I think we'll have to go downtown and bring her home, don't you think so?"

"But how'll we go so early?" asked Mary Jane, for she knew that Mother always liked to do her morning work before they went on errands.

"I think Father is still here," replied Mother; "you smile up your face and run around to the garage. I think you'll find him there working on his car. If you do, tell him all about what happened and tell him he's going to mend your doll by finding her twin!"

Mary Jane slipped down from her mother's lap and hurried around the house toward the garage. As soon as she was out of sight, Mrs. Merrill went out to the street and rescued the wreck of the doll from the dusty road. Yes, Mary Jane was right when she said that the doll was all gone—it would take considerable work to put even the dress in order and the doll itself was broken beyond

all mending. Hastily Mrs. Merrill pulled off the dirty dress and dropped the doll into the covered trash basket where Mary Jane would not see it again and be reminded of the accident.

“What are we going to do about that speeding on our road?” demanded Father as he hurried up to the back porch just as the lid was back on the trash basket. “Did you hear about Mary Jane’s narrow escape?”

“We’re going to do this about it,” said Mother positively. “Mary Jane isn’t to go over to Junior’s again by herself. If she has to go over, one of us will take her. And now the important thing is to find Marie Georgianna’s twin. And Mary Jane,” she added as the little girl came running toward the steps, “this twin of Marie Georgianna’s is afraid of automobiles, very afraid of them, and she doesn’t like to cross the street unless some grown-up person is with her.”

“That’s a good thing,” said Mary Jane

with a big sigh, "because I don't like to either. Next time I go over to Junior's I'm not going over. And what shall I name Marie Georgianna's twin, Mother?"

"We'll decide that later," laughed Mother; "you must hurry quick and wash your hands and face and slip on a clean frock so you can go to the store with Father."

It doesn't take long to tidy a little girl who wants to help so it wasn't five minutes before Mary Jane was sitting, clean and tidy and straight, beside her father in the front seat of his automobile. She loved to get in while the car was still in the garage and then, when he backed it out, to hold the wheel while he locked the doors and climbed back into the driver's seat.

The Merrills lived in a charming home on the edge of a small city; a home surrounded by trees and garden and plenty of space for playing; and at the same time, only about ten minutes' ride from the stores in the center

of the city. So a very short ride brought Mr. Merrill and Mary Jane to the store where Marie Georgianna's twin was to be found. In the meantime, Mrs. Merrill had telephoned to the store and had told the saleswoman in the doll department just which doll to have ready for Mary Jane.

When Mr. Merrill and his little girl walked into the toy department, there, with her arms outstretched in greeting, was a beautiful big doll. For a moment Mary Jane said nothing—the doll was so like her dear, broken-to-pieces Marie Georgianna that she could hardly believe her eyes! She walked up close to the counter; looked hard at the doll and then exclaimed, “It is! It is, Daddah! It *is* a twin just as Mother said it was! And is it for me to take home?”

Mr. Merrill assured her that the doll was to go home with them and then he asked about clothes. “Are you sure you have enough at home? Were the clothes spoiled too?”

“While Mother was washing me ready to come downtown, she told me she could fix the dress and Marie Georgianna didn’t wear her hat when she was run over,” said Mary Jane, “so I guess her twin doesn’t need anything new.” But she looked so regretfully at the cases of pretty clothes that Father bought a pink parasol—“just for fun” he said.

“She doesn’t want to wear *just* hand-me-down clothes of her sister’s even if she *is* a twin,” he explained, “and I always like to buy doll clothes for little girls who don’t tease for new things. But there’s one thing sure about this parasol,” he added, “it’s not to go over to Junior’s!”

“It won’t!” laughed Mary Jane happily, “because I won’t and parasols can’t go places by themselves!”

All the way back home Mary Jane sat very still and held the new doll close up to her. Mr. Merrill thought perhaps she was thinking about the accident and tried to get her

to talking—that shows how little even good fathers understand! Mary Jane wasn't thinking about any accident, dear me no! She was naming her doll.

Just as they got out of the car at their own front walk, she announced solemnly, "I've named her Marie Georgiannamore because a twin is more than one."