

# *The story of* Holly & Ivy

**T**HIS IS A STORY ABOUT WISHING. It is also about a little girl and a little doll. It begins in a toy shop in a little town called Appleton on Christmas Eve.

Holly was a little doll in the toy shop window who needed a child to bring her to life. If she wasn't sold, she'd have to go back into "stock"—a dark, dusty place ruled over by the nasty, scary stuffed owl, Abracadabra. Dolls, of course, cannot talk. They can only make wishes that some people can feel. Holly wished as hard as she could.

Mrs. Jones, the policeman's wife, passed the toy shop window. You and I would have felt Holly's wish at once, but Mrs. Jones had no children and it was so long since she had known a doll that she did not understand; only a feeling stirred in her that she had not had for a long time, a feeling of Christmas, and when she got home she told Mr. Jones, "This year we shall have a tree."

"Who is going to look at it?" asked Mr. Jones, before he left for work. He had to work all night. Mrs. Jones promised to have his breakfast ready when he got home.

Far away in the city was a big house called St. Agnes's, where thirty boys and girls had to live together. Most of them were invited to kind homes for Christmas, but no one had asked for Ivy. Ivy would have to go to the Infant's Home.

"I don't care," said Ivy. "I don't care at all. I'm going to my grandmother. In Appleton." No one knows how that name came into Ivy's head. Perhaps she heard it somewhere. But when the train that was taking Ivy to the Infants' Home for the holidays stopped at Appleton, Ivy got off.

In the toy shop Holly was still wishing, but at the end of the day she still wasn't sold. Mr. Blossom, the owner of the shop, left Peter, his young assistant, to choose any toy for himself, and lock up. Peter locked the door but the key fell through a hole in his pocket into the street.

Ivy had never seen such a nice little town before. She walked round and round the market stalls. When she saw Holly she knew that she had found her Christmas doll. Ivy and Holly stood looking at each other and wishing. "But the window is between," laughed Abracadabra nastily.

Ivy found a gold key and put it in her pocket. She was getting cold. "I must find my grandmother quickly," she thought. "I must look for a house with a tree and no children." She started walking, peeking in the windows of all the cosy houses.

Very early on Christmas morning, Ivy looked in the Jones' window and saw the tree, the warm fire, the breakfast all ready, and Mrs. Jones sitting by the fire, waiting. "My grandmother!" thought Ivy.

She was just about to knock on the door when Holly made a wish. "But first," thought Ivy, "I must get my doll," and she ran back to the toy shop.

At the toy shop, Ivy had to duck into a doorway because Peter was there with a big policeman (Mr. Jones). They were looking for the toy shop key. Peter was so worried and upset that Ivy stepped forward and gave it to him. Peter was overjoyed.

Then Mr. Jones turned to Ivy. Ivy knew that a policeman might want to send her to the Infants' Home. "I'm going to my grandmother's," she said. She took his hand and led him straight to his own house. "You needn't knock," said Mr. Jones, "you can come in."

To thank Ivy for returning the key, Peter decided to give her Holly. He snuck into the Jones's house and put her under the tree.

The Jones gave Ivy breakfast, a bath, clothes, toys, and eventually adopted her. But first, she wanted to see her Christmas tree. They all went into the front room. And there, under the tree, was Holly.

I told you it was a story about wishing

*—from the story by Rumer Godden*