

BECOMING REAL
Deacon G. Collins

One day the toys on the shelf were talking among themselves.

"I wonder what it must be like to be real," said the velvet rabbit to the wooden horse. "I get tired of just sitting here waiting to be held. I wish I were made real so I could be loved. I haven't been held or cuddled for a long time. The child that owns me has grown up and no longer plays with me. I feel so worn out and ugly."

"That's just it," said the wood horse. "You were loved by someone. Sometimes your springs get rusty and don't work too well so they set you aside; but you still have the dreams and memories from when you were new," said the wood horse.

"Real isn't how you're made," said the wood horse.

"It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but really loves you, then you become real."

"Does it hurt?" asked the rabbit.

"Sometimes," said the horse, for he was always truthful. "When you're real you don't mind being hurt."

"Does it happen all at once like being wound up," asked the rabbit, "or bit by bit?"

"It doesn't happen all at once," said the wood horse. "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't often happen to toys that break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are real, most of your hair has been loved off and your eyes drop out, and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But, these things don't matter at all, because once you are real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."

"Don't be too quick to throw your old dreams away for they were real once upon a time," the wood horse said. "Life is an experience that made you who you are; it just happens over a long period of time. Our eyes may be droopy, our hair may have fallen out, our joints may be creaky, our skin may be flabby, our personalities may be crabby but our spirit is still young; for our dreams never die. When your family loves you, you don't mind if you're ugly to strangers, for you are still real to those who care and love you. You weren't made this way it just happened."

"Does it hurt?" asked the rabbit.

"Sometimes!" said the horse. "But love and friendship are the velvet touches that makes us real and our dreams come true. Our dreams and our youth may yet be fully realized by the velvet touch of God's grace. When God loves you for a long, long time it's not just a dream, for His love is real."

"Does it hurt to be real in His sight?"

"Sometimes, for He asks us to carry a cross. The hurt may make us ugly in the sight of the world, but in His real world we are made beautiful by His velvet touch of never ending love and friendship. We can no longer break; our sight never fails; our joints are youthful again as we hear Him say, 'You are real and beautiful in MY SIGHT. On your last day on the shelf I will welcome you to My real world.'"

The wood horse said to the velvet rabbit, "Look at the label on your seam, what does it say?"

The rabbit read, "Made in heaven by golden hands; do not wash in lukewarm attitudes or it may shrink; dry clean only through love."

"See?" said the wood horse, "Your label tells the truth; you are already real in someone's heart."