

idiotically, without doing anything for her.

« What was your doll like ? » the man asked while taking her hand. « Was it a nice doll ? » Agathe nodded several times, sniffing on and off.

« But what was it like ? » the man asked again.

« Made of material » said Agathe who had soon stopped crying ; « a cloth one with red hair, well, gingerish, and she's got a long blue ankle-length dress with whiter flowers on it ; she's got another dress too for the winter, it's brown corduroy with lace on it, Mummy made that one, and then...

— Is it big ? the man interrupted her.

— She's three, Agathe said, that is already big for a doll. »

The man smiled ; he got up to sit next to her ; he put his black leather attaché case on the bench and she and Cécile both moved up a bit to make room for him. She was now quite happy to chat.

« I'm not asking how old she is » the man started up again – and when he started to speak his smile has left his lips but could still be seen in his eyes – « I'm asking you if she is big : is it a big doll or a little doll ? »

Without hesitating Agathe held her hand at the same height as the seat.

« Like that, she comes up to here... Nunuche is a bit bigger ; but the size of dolls doesn't mean much, there are even really small ones, I've got a friend at school...

— Now listen to me, the man said, the three of us will search together, she certainly can't be very far, dolls don't run away.

— It's not worth it, we've already looked everywhere » replied Agathe in a very opinionated way and Cécile even added : « it's not worth it » whilst staring at her still swinging feet.

« Then let's go and ask the boys who are playing over there, perhaps they have noticed something, perhaps they've taken it to play a joke on you. Do you know them ?

— No it's not them, she said flatly, they were with us near the pond, they didn't stop shooing off the ducks so we wouldn't be able to give them bread ».

The man thought about it for a moment. Agathe looked at him and waited. With his short brown hair and his rectangular shaped face he looked like her mother's colleague who sometimes came to the house to pick her up in the evenings ; except that her mother's friend didn't have a black coat and he never stayed with Agathe talking to her about her doll or anything else for that matter. Sometimes he didn't even come in, he simply hooted in his car and her