

The Ventriloquist



Joyce was a ventriloquist and a darned good one. A minute after she'd plunked Little Adele down on her lap and started up a conversation with her, you'd swear she was the real McCoy. For sure you'd always want to yank that little cigarette out of her little mouth, for fear of what damage it was almost certainly doing to her little lungs. Of course, the ciggie together with Little Adele's ensuing coughing spasms were a big part of the shtick, and Joyce played it to the hilt. "You oughtn't inhale, y'know," she'd say, wagging her finger disapprovingly at Little Adele. Then the dummy would blow a big plume of smoke right into Joyce's face, and Joyce would hack and wheeze even more than Little Adele had, much to the delight of the audience. The comedic timing of the pair was brilliant in other regards, too. When they sat down together at the dining room table to eat, Little Adele would match Joyce mouthful for mouthful, pausing only to take a puff on her ever present cigarette. It was first-rate entertainment! So why hadn't the Flederer Family Circus snapped them up by now? Because the off-stage relationship between the two was so strained. Little Adele treated Joyce appallingly. She was vindictive, cruel and hotheaded. She humiliated Joyce, and once hit her so hard with a vacuum cleaner nozzle that Joyce had to have her head stitched up at the hospital. No, the Flederers sure didn't need a potential disciplinary problem like that!