

Playing for Their Lives

*Barbara
Wednesday's
Child*



Dorothy Singer

BARBARA, WEDNESDAYS CHILD

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BARBARA, WEDNESDAYS CHILD

Divorce and Its Effects

Monday's Child is fair of face
Tuesday's child is full of grace
Wednesday's child is full of woe
Thursday's child has far to go
Friday's child is loving and giving
Saturday's child works hard for a living
But the child who is born on the Sabbath day
Is blythe and bonny and good and gay.

First Meeting

The saddest little face peered at me through the car window. Lillian Crawford urged her daughter, Barbara, to open the door and come into the waiting room, and reluctantly, Barbara complied. She kept her head down, but when I reached for her hand, she took it and slowly walked with me into the playroom. Barbara looked quite thin—undernourished—and had a sallow complexion and long dark hair badly in need of a washing, and yet, she was dressed in expensive clothes. The incongruity between her clothes and her physical appearance was striking, but as I learned more about Lillian Crawford and Barbara, I was less surprised.

Barbara was five years old when she started therapy. A colleague of mine was treating Lillian Crawford, Barbara's mother, for a long-term depression and was concerned about Barbara's depression as well, manifested by threats to Lillian that she would "kill" herself, by her constant weeping, and by her feelings of being "unloved" and "unwanted."

When Lillian first came to see me, she had been separated for two months from her husband, Arthur, Barbara's step-father. An impending divorce and arguments about Barbara's custody had exacerbated Lillian's own depression and suicidal threats, as well as her neglect of Barbara and a younger brother, Raymond. Therapy had been suggested for Barbara four months before my first contact with the family, but Lillian had resisted, believing that Barbara was only echoing her own complaints

and was actually a “healthy child.” Money for treatment was not an issue; Arthur Crawford was a wealthy stockbroker who was providing for the family’s financial needs during the separation. Barbara and Raymond were visiting Arthur on weekends and, according to Lillian, were “confused” about what was happening. To further complicate matters, Arthur had a seventeen-year-old daughter from his first marriage. She also visited him and, Lillian said, “detested” Barbara, whom she had labeled the “snot.”

The Family Background

Before my first contact with Barbara, Lillian Crawford came to see me. Her husband had refused, stating that “therapy is for the birds.” An attractive woman in her late twenties, Lillian was meticulously dressed in expensive clothes, and her bleached hair was cut short and carefully coiffed. Although she looked as if she had stepped off a page in *Vogue* magazine, her voice, diction, and mannerisms (like popping chewing gum) were characteristic of someone from a less affluent class.

Lillian’s face was devoid of expression during our session. She told me facts in a monotone, as if she were talking about another person: “All my life, I’ve had tough breaks. My life is like a soap opera but even worse. As a kid, I watched my folks fight. My mother drank every day. My father took care of us kids—four of us, all losers. When I was fourteen, my mom died and my three brothers and I were raised by an aunt and uncle because my father just up and left us. I dropped out of school at sixteen and began working as a typist in this brokerage firm. I was good at that. Arthur worked there, too. I’ve know him since I was nineteen, and I think he always loved me. He’s older, by twenty years, and had just been divorced when we met. He wanted to marry me when I was twenty, but I didn’t really love him. Because he urged me to find my own apartment, eventually I moved out of my aunt and uncle’s house. Arthur helped with my rent, and sure, we did become lovers.

“I began to dress better and look better. By watching the girls in the office, I learned a lot. Arthur gave me presents and took me out, but I wanted more—more adventure in my life before I married. So, I saved my money.

“My dad came back when I was twenty-two. Imagine. He just walks in one day as if he never left—the bastard—and wants his family together. Well, my brothers wouldn’t give him the time of day. I was

the youngest and a softie, so I let him come live in my apartment. He was OK. As a matter of fact, he was a good cook, and that helped me. He cleaned, cooked, like he was trying to make up for all those years that he was gone. We had some fights—about my dating Arthur, my choice of men (he felt they were too old for me), clothes, you name it! He didn't want me to be like my mother, he said. It was OK though, I guess. I was lonely, and by this time, my aunt and uncle had given up on me. I think they thought I was too reckless, and maybe they worried that I would get too involved with the wrong kind of man. I had Arthur now, and my dad. But things were still going to happen. My dad gave me a present on my twenty-third birthday: a week's vacation in Florida at a fancy hotel.

I was so excited. I had never been out of Connecticut before, not even to New York!

"Arthur wanted to go with me, but I said no. This was *my* big adventure. Dad now calls this present the 'Devil's doing.' Well, I guess in a way, Dad's right. I went to Florida with new clothes, a new hairdo—I looked like a million. That's where I met Barbara's father.

"It was love at first sight—for me, anyway. Anthony was in the army, stationed in Florida. One night, he and a buddy were at the bar of the hotel restaurant. We were together all weekend, and I was mad for him. I was also stupid; we didn't use contraceptives. When he left, he took my address and said he would write to me. We did write to each other, even after I let him know that I was pregnant. In my eighth month, he stopped writing. My letters were returned unopened. Later, I found out that he'd been transferred to Germany, and his buddy wrote to me that Anthony had deserted after two months there. I also found out that he had a wife and two kids.

"So, back home, Arthur steps in and asks me to marry him. I did, and he adopted Barbara legally. Barbara thinks he's her real father. We then had a child together: Raymond, who is three now. After Arthur and I married, my dad moved out. They just couldn't stand each other. Arthur and I bought this humongous old house, and I live there now with the kids. Arthur has his own place at the beach.

"His first wife lives in New York, and they have this daughter, Jackie, who used to come to stay with us on weekends. She's something else. I can't stand her. She's spoiled rotten and is mean to Barbara, but good with Raymond. She was always climbing out the window at night after we went to bed and meeting different guys and coming home early in the morning, mostly stewed, but Arthur shut his eyes to all this.

Jackie and I fought like cats and dogs. She's jealous of me and Barbara and even hates her own mother. What a mess!

"Arthur and I fought a lot about Jackie, about my housekeeping, about the way I raise the kids. I think, too, he really favors Raymond and hates Barbara. He won't admit this, but I know he resents her. Even though he adopted her, she's really not his kid. Now he's giving me grief. He wants physical custody of my kids, just for spite, I think, but he says I'm an unfit mother. This is what's driving me nuts. I sometimes think if I died, everyone would be better off. Now my shrink says that Barbara is messed up. Can you help her?"

I listened to Lillian's story and wondered how she could tell me all this without shedding a tear. Either she had told this story so many times—to her therapist, her lawyer, her aunt and uncle—that by now the tears were gone, or she was using distance and insulation from these painful events as a way of defending herself from further anxiety and depression. I knew that Lillian was in good hands with my colleague, and that she had some psychological support from her father, her brothers, and her aunt and uncle. My own concern was Barbara. I asked Lillian to describe Barbara for me.

Lillian told me that Barbara really didn't like Arthur anymore: "She's so anxious that she grinds her teeth at night. She also cries when she has to visit Arthur on weekends. When I drop her off, she won't get out of the car, and if Arthur comes to my house to get the kids, he has to drag Barbara down the walk. She punched me the last time I tried to drop her off.

"She has a terrible temper. I told her to count to ten before she yells. I told her to put her anger in a basket and give it to Jesus; He'll know what to do. But she doesn't listen to me. She told me she'll kill herself if she has to go to Arthur's house, and she told me she really means it: 'I'll kill myself. I'm not joking.' That's just how she said it. Why should she have to go to his house? Arthur's lawyer told my lawyer that Arthur has legal rights. Well, he's not Barbara's natural father. I don't care if he did adopt her. He shouldn't see her at all."

This was the only time during my first encounter with Lillian that I saw her lose control and show emotion. Clearly, Lillian was angry at Arthur and resented his right to see the children. She continued to describe Barbara, emphasizing Barbara's "hate" and dread of Arthur; her difficulties with Jackie, whom

Lillian saw as a “terrible role model”; and Barbara’s refusal to “wash, eat, play, and be normal like other kids.” Although Arthur gave Lillian money for the children and paid the bills for the house, her therapy, and her car, he was always “late” in his payments. Lillian was “sick and tired” of Arthur and his need to correct her constantly, his criticism of her mothering, and his loathing of her friends.

Lillian ended our session stating that she thought a detective was following her to try to prove that she “had other men” and was neglecting the children. She felt that Barbara was not really “disturbed,” that Arthur was the real problem.

Barbara’s Visit

When Barbara entered the playroom for our first session, she was quiet, shy, and listless. Rather than explore the room, she sat still on the couch, hands folded, eyes downcast, shoulders drooping. She had just started kindergarten, she told me, but “I don’t know my teacher’s name.” When I asked Barbara if she would like to draw, she nodded and came to the table. She drew circles and squares and colored them in. She then asked if she could play with the dolls. She chose the Hart Family dolls, a mother, a father, and a baby. She played with them using different voices:

“Now I’m going shopping. You watch the baby,” she said to the father doll.

“Come back soon for dinner.”

“OK. Good-bye.”

She played this scene several times: each time, the mother kissed the father good-bye, kissed the baby good-bye, and then went off. She brought the mother back in time for “dinner.” As she played, she seemed to relax, became more animated, and enjoyed her little story. I watched with no comments. I just wanted her to feel comfortable before I intruded or made interpretations. As I watched Barbara, I was aware of her sallow appearance, her oily hair, and a slight stench as if her underwear were dirty. Her nails were jagged and dirty as well. Yet this child was wearing expensive sneakers, designer jeans, and a gold bracelet. I noticed, too, that Barbara had dark shadows under her eyes and seemed tired and lethargic by the end of the session. Once this brief, spirited play was over, she seemed spent. I led her

back to the waiting room and told Lillian I would phone her that evening. As they drove off, Barbara waved goodbye from the car window.

I wondered what her home situation was truly like. Lillian struck me as so absorbed in her own psychological and physical needs that she was unable to expend much energy in caring for Barbara, who seemed to be a victim of benign neglect.

That evening, I phoned Lillian and expressed my concern about Barbara's appearance, being careful not to sound accusatory; I didn't want to put Lillian on the defensive. To my surprise, Lillian listened, seemed grateful for my suggestions, and implied that she had just forgotten to wash Barbara that day, "because I was so worried and preoccupied with my divorce." Lillian said that she would take care of Barbara in the future, and that "it was really unintentional" on her part. She wanted to know if I thought Barbara would really "kill herself." I told Lillian it was too soon for me to have a good sense of Barbara, but that I would stay in close touch with her. Accepting this, Lillian said they would be back in two days for our next session.

Barbara's Drawings

I tried to make sense of Barbara's suicidal threats to her mother. It was possible that she had overheard Lillian talk about suicide to Arthur or to her father or friends. Children are perceptive, and Barbara may have realized that such a dramatic statement as "I'll kill myself" would attract adult attention and concern. I learned later from Lillian that Jackie often made suicidal threats to Arthur in order to "manipulate him" and had actually cut her wrists three years after her parents had divorced. According to Lillian, Jackie had told Barbara about this incident in order to "scare her."

When Barbara came for our second session, she was cleaner. Her hair was washed, her nails were evenly cut, and there was no odor, but she still looked tired and listless; her eyes still seemed sunken in the same dark shadows as before. Barbara went right over to the Hart Family dolls and began her little playlet. This time "Daddy" went to work, but he didn't "come home."

- Where did "Daddy" go? [I asked]
- I don't know. Far away.

- Won't he come back?
- When the baby is all grown up, she'll find him.

I thought Barbara was referring to Arthur and the impending divorce, and I continued to observe her as she played.

- This mother is crying now, big, big tears. Baby is sleeping.
- The mother feels sad.
- Yes, everyone is sad. They never see Daddy, but they have his picture and his name.
- What's his name?
- I can't remember.

Something didn't feel right, but I didn't know what was bothering me. Barbara knew Arthur's name. Why wouldn't she use it?

Meanwhile, Barbara put the dolls away and found the Play-Doh. She rolled it out, made little balls, and seemed to like the texture of the clay. I was still puzzled about her doll play and asked if she would like to draw. She agreed, put the clay away, and drew "my family." She asked for two pieces of paper. On one sheet, she drew "Mommy, " "myself, " and "Raymond. " On the other sheet she drew "Daddy and Jackie. Dad has a beard, and a fat tummy. He lives in the beach house. Mommy and Daddy are getting a divorce, and I'm sad." Although Barbara had given me an accurate story of her family situation in her drawings, it didn't match the doll play. I asked her if that was Arthur who left the mother and baby dolls and went away. She became silent, put her head down, and would not talk about the dolls anymore.

I was confused. She seemed so open in her drawings of the family with a clear separation of Arthur and Jackie from Lillian, herself, and Raymond, but why wouldn't she say the "daddy's" name in the doll play. In her own way, she had given me two stories. It was up to me to figure it out, she seemed to say. She had communicated enough. Now, no more today.

As our sessions moved along, Barbara continued to play the same game: "Daddy goes away, and

baby finds him." She was reluctant to talk about where the father was and yet was open with me about her feelings toward Jackie, Raymond, and Lillian. Barbara told me that she was bothered by Raymond, who "takes her toys," "hits her," and "is a crybaby and spoiled." She often went to the dollhouse and put the boy doll to bed "with no supper" while "big sister watches TV all night and eats lots of candy."

As the weeks went by, and as Barbara began to feel more comfortable with me, she was able to tell me about her dreams. She had a dream that was repeated several times a week. In this dream, "a scary gorilla comes to my bed. Then the banister falls down the stairs. Then the house shakes and falls down."

We talked about the dream, and through puppet play, Barbara was able to make one connection with her present situation. She pretended one puppet was the "gorilla," who chased Barbara, the girl puppet. She played this game with much excitement and intensity until she was able to laugh about it.

- Scary gorilla, go away.
- Who is the gorilla?
- Arthur is the gorilla!
- Why is Arthur the gorilla?
- He has a big beard.
- Is that why he's so scary?
- Yes. He came to our house with a bat and clippers.

In this session, our eighth one together, Barbara sketchily described an incident in which Arthur had come for the children but Lillian wouldn't let him in. Lillian later corroborated this story, at our second monthly meeting. Arthur had gone back to the car and taken out a bat, threatening to break the door in. When Lillian yelled that she'd call the police, Arthur went to the garage, got the hedge clippers, and said he would cut the telephone wires. Both children were now screaming. Lillian yelled at Arthur to go away, and he did leave. All of this was reported to the police and to Lillian's lawyer.

At our second meeting, Lillian also gave me some information that helped to explain Barbara's doll

play. Because of Arthur's behavior with the bat, Lillian had been able to get a temporary restraining order that prevented Arthur from coming to the house. Further, she had been able to prevent the children's visits at Arthur's house until a court hearing decided on custody rights. The divorce papers had come through, and a date was to be set for the judge's decision concerning physical custody of the children. Lillian confessed that she was afraid that Arthur, out of vindictiveness, would tell Barbara that she was not his natural child. For this reason, she herself had told Barbara that her real father "had gone far away and one day would come back." Lillian had also given Barbara a photo of Anthony, which "Barbara put under her pillow and keeps it there all the time." This information clarified Barbara's doll play. The "daddy" wasn't Arthur, but Anthony, who had gone away. The "baby," Barbara, would find him some day. No wonder Barbara's dreams were scary; no wonder the banister and the house were falling down. Everything in this child's life seemed to be falling apart. She had now lost two fathers: she had been rejected by her natural father, and now a divorce would separate her from the man who, until recently, she had believed to be her father.

Divorce and Its Effects on Barbara

My inner reaction to Lillian when she told me about her revelations to Barbara was a mixture of shock and disbelief. Yet, as a therapist, I had to prevent Lillian from becoming aware of my disapproval. In dealing with clients, a therapist must never become judgmental. When I encounter a situation like this one, it takes all my energy to keep from exploding with outrage. In Lillian's case, I could only hope that her psychotherapist was finding it possible to deal with her egocentrism, which overshadowed any compassion she might feel for Barbara. Lillian had not experienced good mothering as a child herself, and as a result, unfortunately, she lacked some of the skills essential for raising a child, but in working with Barbara, I needed Lillian as my ally, not as an opponent.

It was very hard for me to listen to Lillian rationalize why she had had to tell Barbara about Anthony. I wondered if this revelation had been meant to alienate Barbara from Arthur. If Lillian convinced Barbara that Arthur was not her true father, did Lillian think that she would have a better chance of denying him visitation rights? These thoughts passed through my mind as I listened to Lillian justify why she had told Barbara the truth:

- Arthur has become stingy. I think Barbara should know that he's not her real daddy. Maybe one day Anthony and I will get together again.
- Lillian, that's a fantasy.
- Well, maybe not.
- Can it possibly help Barbara?
- Yes, she can think of a good father someplace waiting for her.
- But Arthur has been her father, and from what you've told me, he has been a good father.
- Not now. He's got a terrible temper. I'm worried that he'll hurt me or the kids. Look what he did with the bat.
- Barbara tells me you have put new locks on the doors, and chains as well.
- Yes, I don't want him near us. I have a court order to deny visitation and to keep him away.
- When will the custody decision be made?
- In a month, I hope. I don't want him to see Barbara. I'm not sure I can keep him away from Raymond, though.
- Won't this affect both children, if one child goes to Arthur for visits and one doesn't?
- He's a bastard. He's claiming that I starve the kids, and that I keep them up late. He told my lawyer I watch porno films with the kids. That's a lie!
- Look, right now, Barbara needs your support. She needs your love and should not be exposed to the bitterness you and Arthur feel.
- Well, tell him that!

This was a difficult session, but I could not step into the role of Lillian's therapist. She already had one. The problem was that she was obviously still thinking about Anthony, and now Barbara would join her in perpetuating that fantasy. Lillian had signed a paper allowing her therapist and me to share information if Barbara was involved, and I felt that it was necessary, for Barbara's well-being, to alert my colleague to the current situation. It certainly involved Barbara, who was now clinging to what seemed to

be an impossible dream. Lillian had had no contact with Anthony for almost six years. He was a married man and an army deserter (*Had he been found? Was he in prison?*) and he had not tried to communicate with Lillian since her eighth month of pregnancy. And Lillian's unrealistic dreams were now affecting Barbara, who felt rejected by her biological father, was caught in a struggle between her mother and Arthur, and had a deep craving for a father. I was worried about the effect on Barbara of Lillian's venom. Although Barbara was gradually withdrawing her love from Arthur, I felt that this withdrawal was a result of Lillian's demands and not of Barbara's genuine feelings.

Barbara now brought repudiation to her interactions with Arthur, borrowed, it seemed, from Lillian or derived from Barbara's identification with her. In Barbara's doll play, Arthur was now portrayed as the "enemy." I speculated that, although she truly loved Arthur and missed him, she was beginning to feel anxious and guilty about her former visits to him. She may have felt disloyal to Lillian and in conflict about the time she had spent with Arthur. Her later sessions demonstrated these ambivalent feelings and supported my hypothesis. When she used the father doll in her play, it was seen both as a nurturing figure and as one not to be trusted.

Research on the effects of divorce on young children suggests that girls develop lower self-esteem as a result of feelings of guilt if they have tried to maintain a relationship with their fathers. Indeed, Barbara felt depressed, unworthy, unloved, and unwanted. She verbalized these emotions in our sessions, crying and banging her head on the table, needing my comforting and reassurance that she was not to blame for anything. Despite Arthur's lavish gifts of toys, trips to New York, and sailing on his boat, Barbara had found it difficult to accept these pleasures, knowing that Lillian was so hostile toward Arthur. Barbara was desperate to keep her mother's love, and Lillian attacked Arthur's generosity as "bribes"; it was impossible for her to match his bestowal of presents on the children. At the same time, Arthur grudgingly paid the bills, although these payments were usually late in coming.

Lillian was fighting for sole-parent custody of the children. Arthur had contested it with claims of Lillian's instability, depression, suicidal threats, promiscuity, and physical and emotional neglect of the children. However, Arthur was willing to compromise and had suggested joint legal and joint physical custody, which would include visitation rights and shared responsibility in decision making. He knew that he might lose if he demanded sole custody. At one point, Arthur's attorney had even argued for split

custody, Arthur offering to take Raymond, his biological child, while Barbara remained with Lillian. Lillian had been adamant in her refusal. Thus, the Crawfords were at war, and the children were the victims.

The Dreams Continue and Change

While deliberations concerning the custody of the children proceeded, Barbara continued to see me regularly. She began to talk more openly about her dreams, most of them similar in theme. A pigeon, a monkey, a gorilla, or some “weird monster” was usually a “scary” figure in the dream that “scratched” her or “hurt” her in some way. Could the scary figures be symbols of Arthur? I offered Barbara the opportunity to talk about these animals or to draw them. She preferred to act out the dreams with puppets and generally found some relief in the repetition of one particular puppet playlet. She used the “princess” and “wolf” puppets for her story.

- Why does that “monster” scratch the princess?
- The princess is alone. No one takes care of her.
- Who should take care of her?
- The king.
- Well, let’s get the king puppet.
- OK, here comes the king. But Dorothy, I need two kings.
- You can use the prince puppet and make believe it’s a king.

Barbara took the two male puppets and held them in one hand. The “princess” was on her other hand. The princess “cried” and said, “Help, help! There’s a big, big scary monster who will eat me up.” “No,” said the king puppet. “I will save you.”

“No,” said the prince puppet. “I will save you.”

Barbara dropped the princess puppet and punched the “wolf” puppet which was now on her

hand, again and again. She threw it down and said:

- The end!
- Is the play over?
- Yes, of course. The princess is saved by two kings. The wolf is dead.

Barbara played out this same script during the next few sessions, and her dreams of monsters gradually began to subside. Who was the monster? I was puzzled. I surmised that the “kings” were her two fathers, although Barbara had not yet revealed this to me directly. But who was terrifying Barbara? Who scratched and clawed her at night in her dreams? Did the animal symbolize the custody battle, the current struggle between Lillian and Arthur? Or was the animal a person? It did not seem to be Arthur as I had once thought.

The tension in Barbara’s house was mounting. According to Lillian, Arthur was demanding more time with the children, and he wanted to take them to see his mother in Chicago. Lillian tried to prevent this trip but lost. I was concerned about the trip, too, wondering if Arthur would leave the children with his mother as a means of getting them out of the state and away from Lillian before the custody decision had been made. To my surprise, the judge, ruled that the visit was appropriate and also revoked the restraining order. Plans were made for the trip, and Barbara and I talked about it during our sessions. She seemed eager to go, but somewhat apprehensive. At our last session before the trip, Barbara brought a crystal ball. She said that she could “look into the ball and see two daddies.”

- Tell me about the two daddies.
- I really, really have two daddies. Raymond has only one. My daddy’s name is Anthony. I never saw him. I don’t know where he lives. I have his picture. I’ll bring it next time I come to see you. When I grow-up—when I’m sixteen—I’ll go find him.

This disclosure caught me by surprise, and I wondered why Barbara had chosen this particular time to reveal to me the true identities of the “kings.” I speculated that the anticipation of the trip had made Barbara anxious and that she must have wondered, as I did, about the possibility of remaining with her grandmother. Or could it be that she thought the trip was an excursion to find her real father? Why

the fantasy with the crystal ball? It was necessary to discuss the trip again, and to reassure Barbara that she would come back to Lillian and me, but I also wondered if Barbara really wanted to come back. It seemed to me that living with Lillian was a chaotic existence, whereas Arthur offered her more creature comforts and, indeed, care and love.

The playlet with the dolls and the story of the two kings who rescued the princess were the symbolic games Barbara used to express both her need to find her true father (“When the baby is all grownup, she’ll find him”) and her need to have both daddies (the two kings) protect the princess and save her from harm and abandonment. Was it possible that Barbara’s “scary monsters” signified her anger at her mother? Indeed, were the monsters Lillian? Perhaps Barbara was seeing Lillian as someone who had hurt her, first by losing her natural father, and now by divorcing Arthur, whom Barbara had thought for so many years was her real father.

Barbara’s feelings toward Lillian needed to be clarified. I was sure that Barbara loved her mother, but she must also harbor resentment toward her. In order to deny these unpleasant feelings, Barbara had first tried to identify with Lillian and had therefore felt ambivalent toward Arthur; any love felt for him would be a betrayal of allegiance to her mother. And yet, in a sense, Lillian had betrayed Barbara twice. As a result, Barbara had little control over what was happening in her life.

Put Your Mother on the Ceiling

Barbara did come back from Chicago, and the visit had been a huge success. The airplane ride, in first-class, had been an adventure surpassed only by Grandma’s huge house and her luxurious presents to the children. Barbara’s previous anger toward Arthur was less in evidence. He was winning her over by material things, and Barbara now, seemed to be more overtly angry at Lillian. In her doll play, and her puppet play, she expressed this anger and seemed confused about her emotions. However, the sad, listless quality of our earlier contacts was decreasing and was being replaced by more hostile feelings. The “cruel” picture of Arthur that Lillian had painted for Barbara no longer seemed entirely valid: Barbara had experienced pleasure during her trip with him and kindness from his mother. She may have been influenced and overwhelmed by the material benefits, but she had also been temporarily removed from the tension of life with Lillian and had found some peace. As all of these feelings needed to

be addressed in our sessions, I felt it was time to try some imagery exercises to help relieve some of Barbara's tension.

I started with a simple technique, using exercises from a delightful book, *Put Your Mother on the Ceiling*, by Richard de Mille. These games were designed to open up "the closed territory of the mind" by the use of vivid imagery stimulated by de Mille's phrases. De Mille argues that in a child's life, there is a time for fantasy and a time for realism. A balance is crucial. Although the Anthony fantasy was of some comfort to Barbara, I was always on guard concerning it. I was afraid that her fantasies about the reunion with Anthony would interfere with her maintaining the love she felt for Arthur—a love that was already in danger because of the divorce and Lillian's bitterness. However, completely dismissing Anthony's existence didn't seem useful either. He was Barbara's natural father, and she clung to the idea of his existence: only if her biological father was a real person could she herself exist.

I was concerned, too, about Barbara's lack of self-esteem, her self-hate, her feeling of not being effective, her depression, and her feeling of having been abandoned. Often Barbara would say, "I am ugly" or "No one loves me" or "No one wants me." Perhaps she construed the loss of two fathers to mean that she was not worthy of love. Although her drawings, her puppet play, and her doll play were all helping her to express her emotions, I felt that there were still areas of pain that we had not explored. Would the use of imagery help this wounded child?

Before each game in de Mille's book, a short introduction tells the child what it is about. The games are "imagination games," but they are also a kind of "reality training." The book starts with a simple exercise and proceeds to more complex ones, and these are direct and open-ended questions woven throughout the exercises that can be answered aloud or silently. At the end of each exercise the child is asked, "What would you like to do now? And then what? And what next?" Thus, the child has choices and can complete the exercise in several ways that feel comfortable. Some children are even inspired to make up their own exercises.

Before I began these exercises with Barbara, I wanted her to relax, and she was able to do so quite easily. I simply asked her to sit quietly in a comfortable chair, close her eyes, take deep breaths, and loosen her fingers, hands, arms, and legs. We began each exercise with this relaxation procedure. I then

introduced the first exercise, "Boys and Girls." Barbara was asked to imagine a boy standing in a corner, wearing a jacket and a hat. She was then asked to change the color of his clothing; to have him lie down, roll across the floor, jump in the air, and sit in a chair; to have the boy's chair float up to the ceiling; to have the boy sing while up at the ceiling; and so on. We did this exercise with a girl as well.

Judging by her smiles and willingness to play, Barbara enjoyed this game. We did this particular exercise a few times before I introduced "Animals." Here she had to imagine, for example, a mouse, and elephant, and a dog; she had to give them colors, change their forms, change their names, and change their sizes from small to big and back again. Barbara was learning to control her imagery and found that wild fantasies could be made tame.

My goal was to work up to the exercise called "Parents." Here Barbara could follow the commands and make the parents become small, turn colors, multiply in number, stand on the ceiling, shrink, have a steam roller run over them and "flatten them like pancakes on the street," and have them grow fat and upset the steam rollers. Sharks were allowed to "eat" the parents, but the parents could then grow big, catch the shark, and eat it up. At the end, as in all previous exercises, Barbara could do anything she wanted to do with the parents in her imagination.

Barbara was delighted with this technique and later drew pictures of what she had imagined. She also playacted the exercises with dolls or puppets, and we were able to talk about her feelings during the month of these "mind games."

One session, Barbara said, after our exercises:

- I sometimes would like to put Daddy on the ceiling.
- Why?
- Then I'm boss!
- But of course you can't do that in real life can you?
- No, but I can think that!
- Does it help to think that?

- Yes, it helps.
- What about your mother? Do you want to put her on the ceiling, too?
- Wow! She goes under the steam roller!
- Sounds as if you're angry at her.
- No. No. No.

This was too much for Barbara. I had hit a nerve, and Barbara turned away. Obviously, she was angry at Lillian but could not tell me. Her play, however, began to change as a result of the exercises. It became more directed toward involving the mother doll, Mrs. Hart. Now Mrs. Hart was a true "villain," and Barbara directed much anger at her: "Mrs. Hart went shopping all day."

Barbara placed the doll across the room.

- Where's Mr. Hart?
- He's home baby-sitting. He's cooking, cleaning. He's exhausted (big sigh).
- When does Mrs. Hart come home?
- Well, she comes home late. Mr. Hart locks the door and won't let her in. She sneaks in through the window. He finds her and kicks her right out!
- Mr. Hart is sure angry.
- Oh, you bet! Get out, get out, get out!
- Will Mr. Hart ever let her come in?
- No. Never. She has to sleep in the park. The end!

Barbara was reversing roles. Now the mother was locked out of the house. She was the negligent person, whereas Arthur, the father, was the nurturer. I was somewhat mystified by the change in Barbara. Of course, the imaginative games had allowed some feelings to come out, but the anger seemed more directed at Lillian now.

My monthly visit with Lillian would soon clarify what was going on at home.

The Custody Decision

Lillian's session with me helped to explain much of what Barbara had been experiencing during that month. It seemed that Barbara had announced to Arthur during one of their visits (the judge had reinstated the visits to Arthur) that he was not her "real daddy, but a stepdaddy." Arthur had become enraged, and phoned Lillian, telling her to stop turning Barbara against him. When Lillian attempted to tell Barbara not to talk about Anthony in front of Arthur, Barbara threw a tantrum, told Lillian that she "hated" her, and "hated Arthur," and began to "beat up on herself—punching her head and punching her own arms and legs." Barbara had shouted at Lillian, accusing her of not loving her and loving only Raymond.

"I tried to comfort her," said Lillian, "and I tried to tell her I love her and that Arthur loves her. I told her none of this mess is her fault. I tried to hold her and kiss her and stroke her. Finally, she calmed down and said she loved me and loved Arthur. She wants her family to be together. She also wants Anthony to come back and live with us. My God, look at what I've done. I never should have told her about Anthony. I know now it was wrong. Maybe Arthur wouldn't have told Barbara about Anthony, but I couldn't chance it. Suppose he had told her before I did!"

Lillian was crying now, her typical tough composure shattered. She went on: "Do you know we had the final ruling about custody of the kids? I won. I have sole physical custody, with visitation rights for Arthur."

"No," I said, "I didn't know. I only suspected that something was going on. Barbara's play shifted from anger at Arthur to anger at you. I feel that she loves you both, and is terribly confused about the divorce, and her role in its occurrence, and, of course, curious about Anthony. Give her time. She expressed anger at Arthur to keep your loyalty and also because he's not her natural father. But down deep, she loves him; he has been her only father since she was born, and that love is difficult to destroy. Anthony is a fantasy figure that she holds onto now. As she gets older, you'll be able to help her understand the whole story. Right now, she seems to feel 'lucky' that she has 'two daddies.' Let's allow

her to keep that idea. It would be difficult now to deny Anthony's existence."

"I did tell Barbara that Anthony will come back," Lillian said. "What should I tell her now that I have custody? Will Barbara think that's why I got divorced—to make room for Anthony? Oh, my God, my God."

"Lillian, this is a tough one. We can't tell Barbara that Anthony will come back, but we can tell her we don't know what will happen. You and Arthur can continue to give her love and security and comfort. Please try to keep your contacts with Arthur free of arguments. One of the best things you can do to ensure both Barbara's and Raymond's positive adjustment and well-being is to keep the relationship between you and Arthur amicable. We know from the many studies about divorce that children do best when their parents maintain good interactions with each other. It's also important for you to continue your therapy. The children will be sensitive to your moods and your attitudes as a single parent coping with two youngsters. Fortunately, you will be provided for financially, but I hope you can find some interest for yourself."

As we parted, Lillian reassured me that she would not attempt to undermine Arthur's attempts to "father" the children when they visited him.

I was not surprised to learn that Lillian had been granted sole physical custody despite Arthur's attempts to paint a picture of Lillian as a neglectful, selfish, egocentric mother. Both parents had been granted legal custody.

I was concerned now about Barbara's feelings of ambivalence about both of her parents, and I felt that we needed to work on the anger that she was beginning to express. It would be important for her to deal with these hostile feelings toward her parents, as well as her attempts to injure and punish herself physically. Barbara felt worthless and felt that she had been a cause of the divorce. Although her resentment toward Lillian was beginning to emerge, I believed that she loved her mother very much and needed Lillian's love in return. Lillian was indeed a person whose judgment with regard to men was poor, but she had been punished enough for her mistakes. It was time for mending. Her therapist was encouraging her to go back to school and to explore some vocational choices, and I believed that it would be possible for her to have a decent, productive life without Arthur.

I decided I would continue the imagery work to help Barbara work out her current feelings of rage toward her mother. We needed to talk about the decision concerning custody and Arthur's role in Barbara's life now that he would not be as readily available as he had been in the past.

I felt comfortable about the judge's decision to grant Lillian sole physical custody, because she had been making progress in her therapy. Studies concerning children who are in joint physical custody (children living for substantial amounts of time with each parent) have been inconclusive or have yielded mixed results. Although some reports state that children in joint physical custody demonstrate increased self-esteem and competence, a substantial proportion of the children are visibly distressed and confused. Their adjustment depends on such variables as the age and temperament of the child and, most important, the parents' psychological functioning and the quality of the parent-child relationships. Custodial parents who are anxious and depressed convey these feelings to their children, and the results often disturbed children. Barbara had not coped well with her parents' separation, not only because of Lillian's personal problems, but also because of Barbara's low threshold for anxiety.

I knew that Lillian was in treatment, but I had never met Arthur. Arthur was an enigma. He wanted no contact with either Lillian's therapist or me. The only picture I had drawn of him stemmed from Lillian's and Barbara's comments. At times, Barbara seemed to adore him, and at other times, she seemed anxious and uncomfortable about seeing him. During the separation, Lillian had tried to poison the children's minds against him. Now that things were settled, her attitude was more accepting, a shade kinder and more sympathetic.

Guided Affective Imagery

Barbara seemed comfortable playing the mind games. They evoked feelings that she attempted to express in her play, but that frightened her when she did so. She would go only so far and then would use denial of these feelings as she played. In the imagery exercises, however, she was able to unleash her anger at Lillian, get control of it, and recognize it as being related to the divorce and her fewer contacts with Arthur. Previously, she had expressed anger at Arthur. Sometimes Arthur had been the "bad daddy" in her play. After the custody decision, more anger was focused on Lillian. That reaction was understandable. Lillian had made Arthur leave the large, comfortable house. Now Arthur lived in smaller

quarters, and had been left alone, deprived of house, children, and wife. In Barbara's symbolic play, she felt sorry for him, the "daddy who cooked, cleaned, and took care of the baby" while the mother spent all day at leisure, "shopping." Barbara and Lillian now fought continuously. Whereas in the earlier stages of the separation, Barbara had visited Arthur reluctantly and had allied herself with Lillian (mainly so as not to lose her love), she now vented all of her confused, hurt, angry feelings on Lillian, both in her play and in reality. The ambiguity of her custody status had been resolved, and she felt more secure in the knowledge that she was to live with Lillian. Thus, Barbara now had the freedom to express her feelings without fear of losing her mother. My task was to help her accept *both* of her parents and their love, and to help her recognize that she had not been responsible for the dissolution of the marriage.

I was concerned, too, about some of Barbara's doll play. During one session, for example, she took a doll and said:

- Here's the mommy. Her face is all red. She just came back from the lawyer. She's crying . Poor Mommy.
- Why is she crying?
- The family is moving away.

At this point, Barbara took the two male puppets and put a "baby" on their laps.

- Here's the baby. She has two daddies. The daddies put the baby to sleep. Mommy is crying. The daddies move away.
- Where is the family moving to?
- They move out and leave the mommy. The two daddies live in the same house. Now the baby lives with the mommy. She said good-bye to the daddies. They don't talk to her.

Barbara took the baby doll and put her on a bed in the dollhouse. She put the mother doll in the kitchen and took the puppets to a box across the room.

- Here's where the daddies live. They live alone. No children, no Mommy. They won't let that mommy come to visit them. The baby is crying now. She hits the mommy.
- Oh, she is mad. That baby hates herself.

- I remember, Barbara, when you didn't feel good about yourself—like the baby. Can we help the baby feel better?
- Only if the mommy lets the daddy in the house.

Barbara had revealed much to me in this play: her strong desire to have the “two daddies,” her awareness of the custody decision, and her anger about it: “The baby hits the mommy.” And yet the tone of the play suggested to me that, despite the baby’s attack, Barbara also felt sorry for her mother: “Poor Mommy.”

Barbara was trying to understand the full force of the custody decision; she was also still clinging to the notion that “two daddies” were available to take care of her. I wanted to help her allow some of her fantasies about Anthony to emerge so that she could accept the fact that he was gone and that Arthur was available for her, just as he had been since her birth.

I decided to use the directed-imagery technique called Guided Affective Imagery (GAI), as described by Hanscarl Leuner and his colleagues. It is an approach more commonly used in Europe than in the United States, but one that is also respected here. As an adjunct to play therapy, this approach had worked well with other clients of mine who were about Barbara’s age or a little older. Because she had responded so enthusiastically to the de Mille games, I felt this technique would also be effective.

Basically, the client “dreams, so to speak, under the direction of the therapist, who directly participates in the dream experience through his communications.” Leuner found that GAI worked well with children because of their readiness to tap into material at a near-conscious level. The parent may be informed of the child’s images, and the therapist can explain to the parents how the child experiences the family setting. I needed to know Barbara’s covert attitudes toward Lillian and Arthur. Her willingness to express her anger was an important step forward in her therapy, but I was not convinced that her anger was genuine; it might be a cover-up for her deep longing to be loved and to love.

The use of GAI is relatively simple. I asked Barbara to sit in a comfortable chair with her eyes closed. She relaxed, as she had before the de Mille exercises. Over a period of time, I presented the standard emotional images or motifs that Leuner and his colleagues had found successful in their clinical experience with children. The eight images or motifs are a *meadow*, which is the relaxer and the starting

point of each session; *the ascent of a mountain*, which encourages the child to view an imaginary landscape and helps the therapist to find out whether the child will climb the mountain by herself or himself or with help; *the pursuit of the course of a brook* to its source (the brook is an expression of vital drives that can be a place for cleansing and refreshment); *a visit to a house*, which the child enters and explores; *an encounter with relatives*, as real figures or symbolically disguised as animals (this exercise helps to reveal the child's relationships with parents, siblings, and authority figures); *observation of the edge of the woods* (the therapist learns which figures emerge from or enter the woods); *a boat*, which appears on the shore of a pond or lake (the child climbs aboard as a passenger or steers it herself or himself); and *the cave*, which is observed from a distance, and symbolic figures emerge (the child can enter the cave and stop or can explore the cave's depths).

I began the exercises with the "meadow," suggesting that Barbara picture herself in a meadow, and asking her to describe it to me. My job was to question her about what she saw in the meadow, to help her confront any frightening figures or animals she met, and to provide protection by suggesting, for example, that she placate the animal by offering food until the animal was so "stuffed" that it lay down, became completely harmless, and fell asleep. Each motif is presented several times before the therapist moves on to the next one. Thus, I offered the meadow motif at the beginning of each session, for about five minutes, and then went on to each motif in order (two sessions were devoted to each one). I then asked Barbara to draw whatever she wished from each story. In this way, we went through all eight motifs over the course of a couple of months. In addition, our play therapy continued, much affected by the images unleashed in the GAI.

The most salient features that emerged from the GAI were Barbara's use of animals in the meadow, her attempts to ascend the mountain, her use of the cave, and the subsequent striking changes that took place in her therapy as a result of these images. Barbara's meadow was filled with cows and fierce animals. When she seemed afraid to pass by one, I offered her ways to subdue it. Barbara's eyes were closed as she described what she saw in the meadow:

- There are birds, squirrels, deer, and some ugly animals, too. They look mean. I see a cow and an elephant. I don't like that elephant. He worries me. He scares me.
- Don't be afraid. Pretend you are giving him lots of food to eat. Give him so much food that he will

be full and go to sleep. OK?

- OK, I'll feed him.
- Good. Now you can walk right by that sleeping elephant. Can you do that?
- Yes. My cow is running away, too. The cow is running away from that elephant. He's big and mean and powerful. He never lets the cow drink any water in that pond.

Barbara began to focus on two animals: the cow, which she kept throughout the GAI sessions, and the elephant. It was clear to me that the cow was the mother and the elephant was the father. In Barbara's images, the mother was gentle, and the father powerful—quite different from the way Barbara had recently portrayed the mother and father dolls in her play. Before GAI, her mother doll had been characterized as negative, and the father doll as nurturant, but Barbara's deeper fantasies invested her father with power. In reality, he had come to the house with a bat, threatening Lillian, and this was a vivid memory for Barbara.

As the GAI proceeded, Barbara used the "cave" as a place where "bad people" lived. Cavemen were "fighting" in the cave. As Barbara described them, they became quite enraged, perhaps as in the fights she had witnessed at home. The elephant and the cow finally went to the cave together. They "fight, too," and the "elephant squirts water on the cow and chases her away."

Barbara drew the elephant squirting water at the cow, making the cow a tiny figure in the corner of the page. I offered no interpretations, and let Barbara image freely and draw whatever she wished. Gradually, over several sessions, as we repeated motifs, Barbara allowed the cow and the elephant to drink from the same pond. Together, they subdued the cavemen and drove them away.

The mountain played a role in Barbara's stories as well. She struggled to climb the mountain, "falling" down, but getting up each time. She "just had to get to the top!" I felt that Barbara was struggling with her feelings about her parents and needed to gain control and master her emotions. She also wanted to be "on top of things" and "see everything below." Barbara truly wanted to be in control, and to see everything that her family was doing: in the hearings about custody, the compromises Lillian had made with Arthur, where Jackie would be, and how she and Raymond would manage. And perhaps her

thoughts were about Anthony as well.

It seemed to me that, as things were settling down at home and decisions were clearer about custody, although still longing for a “family,” Barbara was coming to grips with the reality of her situation. Along with Raymond, she visited Arthur about twice a month. Lillian and Arthur tried to be more polite to each other (the cow and the elephant sharing the water from the pond), and the “bad people in the cave”—symbols of her anxieties and fears of an unknown future—were under control. The hostility that Barbara had overtly expressed toward Lillian was less in evidence. The cow in Barbara’s images was gentle and loving, the way Barbara wanted her mother to be. Indeed, Barbara’s warmth concerning this “cow” in her imagined stories was indicative of her true feelings toward Lillian. Gradually, she shed her anger. She seemed no longer to blame Lillian for the loss of Anthony and for having evicted Arthur. Little by little, the “two daddies” theme in her doll play subsided. During one session, for example, Barbara arranged the Hart dolls in a “living room” and said:

- The mother is in the kitchen making supper for the children; all the family is watching TV in the living room. Daddy comes home—but only for a visit.
- Where does this daddy live?
- He has his own house—but not far away.
- What’s happening in your story?
- Well, here’s the daddy—he comes right in that door. He’s hungry. He wants his supper.

I watched and listened. Barbara was using different voices for her characters:

- Where’s my supper? [deep, “daddy” ’s voice]
- Here it is—potatoes, hamburgers, ice cream [“mother” ’s voice]
- This is good—yum yum yum. [daddy’s voice]
- Eat it all up. [mother’s voice]

In Barbara’s play, as in her imagery exercises, she was attempting to initiate a reconciliation

between her parents. The cow and elephant in her fantasy were the mother and father in her doll play. They were able to be civil with each other and even share a meal albeit that the “daddy” lived in another house. The imagery training was powerful in effecting change. Barbara was able to get in touch with emotions that she had tried to suppress. Now she was able to translate her images into more concrete play.

Just as Barbara used one doll for the “daddy” figure, she now used one puppet for a “daddy” as well in her puppet games. Thus, just as Barbara was able to imagine one elephant who befriended the cow, she was able to relinquish the two fathers who had previously appeared in much of her family play. Perhaps she had even blended them into one: the loving, caring father she desired. Was it possible that Barbara had tucked away the notion that Anthony would reappear? She no longer mentioned him and seemed to have accepted her new life alone with Lillian and Raymond.

Barbara began to gain weight and to look more wholesome. Her self-esteem improved as well. She no longer talked about harming herself or not liking herself. She also seemed to understand that she had not been the cause of the divorce, that “Daddy and Mommy just didn’t like each other so much any more.” Lillian had put a lot of effort into taking better care of the children as a result of her own therapy and her growing insight into her parents’ difficulties and her early childhood. It was time for me to begin the termination process with Barbara.

Lillian’s Surprise

At our monthly visits during the time I had been using GAI with Barbara, Lillian had shown marked changes in both her physical appearance and her mental attitude. The brassy look began to give way to a more L. L. Bean look, as she began to wear tailored clothes (“my school clothes”) and sensible shoes. She had also let her hair grow and revert to its natural light brown color. She told me that she had been trying to get her high school equivalency diploma by attending special classes, and also talked about plans to go to a community college and take business courses.

Lillian informed me that she had been in touch with her father and contemplated inviting him to move in with her and the children. She wasn’t sure how this arrangement would work out, but she

wanted to “think about this possibility” and was talking it over with her therapist. Eventually, Lillian carried out this plan, but after I had terminated play therapy with Barbara. As a result, I did not know how it had affected the children. At the time, I could only speculate that he would be a stabilizing force, giving the nurturing attitude he had had toward Lillian after reentering her life over six years before. They had maintained friendly contact even after he had moved out of the state. The children had no real sense of who their grandfather was, so everyone would have to become reacquainted. I asked if Lillian had discussed “Grandpa” with Barbara.

“No, not yet,” she replied. “But if things look like it will happen, I sure will talk to her about it. Things with Barbara are better. We don’t argue so much, especially since I don’t have to force her to go to Arthur’s house for sleepovers. She doesn’t mind the visits for the day, but she still worries and asks if she has to sleep over. I think she’s afraid she won’t come back to me. I think she really loves Arthur, but she did see a side of him when he got mad that she had never seen before. Also, I guess I shocked her, too, about Anthony. She really was a case, wondering if she could ever trust anyone.”

As I listened to Lillian, I was pleased to discover that she understood Barbara’s confused feelings about Arthur and her. She was proud that she could convey such positive news about herself and her future. I wasn’t convinced that she had truly put Anthony out of her mind, but at least she now had some realistic plans.

We talked about the future and Barbara’s own feelings about herself. Lillian felt that she had put Barbara “through the wringer” and wondered if Barbara would grow up “normal.” Lillian remembered her own unhappy childhood and was afraid that Barbara might one day be destined to enter into a marriage as unfortunate as Lillian’s and her mother’s. I was aware of the ten-year longitudinal study of girls from divorced middle-class families. Judith Wallerstein, an expert on divorce, found that delayed reactions to divorce, which she called “sleeper” effects, had evolved over time. Many of the daughters of the divorced custodial mothers had developed close relationships with their mothers during early adolescence. When they were older, these young women identified with the divorced mother, whom they regarded as “having failed at the major developmental task, that of love and marriage.” This failure made it difficult for these daughters to form close heterosexual relationships because of their concern about their own potential adequacy as wives and mothers. Wallerstein believed that, as the young

women approached adulthood and contemplated leaving their mothers alone, their “normal separation process was exacerbated by guilt, anger, and anxiety, as well as by worry and compassion.” Certainly, these feelings of anxiety and guilt, even now, had been manifested by Barbara, but I could not possibly predict whether Barbara would experience the “sleeper” effect described by Wallerstein. If Lillian continued to grow emotionally and intellectually, and if she and Arthur could maintain a civil relationship, I thought Barbara had a good chance of developing into a well-adjusted young woman.

I gave Lillian some information about Barbara’s play and imagery stories that I thought would help her better understand Barbara’s former anger and her current desire for a friendly relationship between her parents. Lillian listened and seemed to grasp this information, agreeing that Barbara still needed overt affirmations of Lillian’s love. As she put it, “I’m trying to make up for all the things

I screwed up in my life. I think I can do it. With help from my therapist, and with help from you, I’m getting there.”

Barbara Empties the Cave

I began to taper off my sessions with Barbara. We did continue with our traditional play therapy and, only occasionally, with the imagery methods. Barbara seemed more willing now to talk about the divorce, and in our last month together, we did just that: talk more than play. Barbara was almost six years old and was beginning to read. She printed her name for me. She liked to draw as she talked, producing numerous pictures of flowers and happy faces of people she knew, including Lillian, Arthur, and Raymond.

Barbara told me she was sorry about the divorce, and that she loved both her parents. She also referred to Arthur as “Daddy” rather than as “Arthur.”

- Sometimes I was mad at Daddy ‘cause he yelled at Mommy. That made me sad.
- How do you feel now?
- I can visit Daddy. That’s OK. Mommy and Daddy love me—but they don’t love each other anymore.

- Yes, they do love you and always will.
- When Daddy came with the bat, we went to Mommy's brother's house. My Aunt Carol let us stay there.
- Yes, I remember. Daddy was angry. But now Mommy and Daddy can talk to each other, and things are better.
- I have a sort of family.
- You have Mommy, Daddy, Raymond, and Jackie.
- Yes, I have my aunts, uncles, eight cousins, a dog, and a white mouse.
- That's a lot of family.
- Yep, a lot of family.

Barbara no longer mentioned Anthony; in fact, Lillian told me that Barbara had returned his photo to her. This was a good sign. As we drew to a close—only one more session to go—Barbara asked if she could play “imagination” again. Barbara wanted to visit the cave once more.

- Remember, this is where the bad men fought?
- Yes, Barbara, I remember. What is happening now?
- Well, the cavemen all came out of the cave. They get into the boat and sail away. The cave is empty. No more bad people are there. The door is open. The end!

I liked this metaphor, and I felt that Barbara had told me much in using it. Her bad feelings were gone, and the door was open to new possibilities. I could only hope that, for this child's sake, good things would enter the cave.

Our good-byes took place the following week. Barbara wore a party dress, and that sad face of almost a year before was only a dim memory. She played once more with the Hart Family, placing everyone—Mr. Hart, Mrs. Hart, and the baby—together on the couch, saying, “This is a visit—a good visit. Everyone is here, for just a little while.”

She then took the father doll and, very gently, put him to sleep on the couch by himself. Mrs. Hart and the baby kissed him "goodnight." Barbara drew a picture of herself, pinned it up on my wall, and said good-bye. In the waiting room, Lillian shook my hand.

"I'll keep in touch," she said.

I never heard from her again, but my colleague said things were going well for her.

A year after I terminated Barbara's therapy, Lillian remarried Arthur. Neither my colleague nor I know what has happened since.