
Trix
The Other Kipling
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1. The House of Desolation

When Trix told the story of her birth, she strung together an almost comic series of close escapes from death. When she told the story of her childhood, she found no humour in the long years of lonely banishment. Overcoming abandonment and neglect, she outfoxed infant exposure. Later, and with difficulty, she outlasted childhood horrors.

In early October of 1871, when Trix was three years old and Rudyard was not quite six, they were awakened one cool autumn morning by their mother and readied for a short journey. They left the large and comfortable home of their grandmother at Bewdley in Wolverhampton, where they had been visiting, and, with their mother, took the train south to Hampshire. Rudyard was a sturdy boy with a solid stance, a steady gaze, and a sure sense of himself and his place in the world. The trip posed the prospect of another day of exploration and adventure for the curious child. Trix was a softly pretty, blond, and blue-eyed little girl. Too young to have a sense of herself or her world, she set out on the journey as on any other day, reassured in her changing surroundings by the familiar presence of her mother and brother.

Recently accustomed to train travel, the children sat comfortably and contentedly next to their mother. After the train journey, they rode in a hired carriage past fields of brick-mounds and wide expanses of barren heath. The carriage rolled on through the sandy streets of the shabby town of Southsea, stopping at a newly built, three-storied building at the end of a bare road. At number 4 Campbell Road, Havelock Park, they entered a dim and narrow entryway and were introduced to an older couple, Mr and Mrs Holloway. Mr Holloway walked with a limp to greet his guests, bending down to shake hands with the little boy. He had a pleasant face covered by a short beard. Mrs Holloway was a thin, bespectacled woman with a wide smile stretched to expose large teeth held by gleaming wires.

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The children had been on an extended holiday in England, having travelled with their parents from Bombay. They had arrived with their parents in Southampton on 13 May 1871, after the long voyage from India through the newly opened Suez Canal. They had proceeded to London and then on to the Grange, the large and luxurious home of their aunt and uncle, the Burne-Joneses. For five months, they had moved about England, paying visits to other relatives of their mother—to their grandmother Hannah and Aunt Edie Macdonald at Bewdley; to Aunt Louisa, her husband Alfred Baldwin, and son Stanley at nearby Wilden. They also travelled to meet their father's mother and sisters at Skipton. The children had made several more visits with their parents to the Burne-Joneses and had been treated to a seaside holiday at the coastal town of Littlehampton. During the long family vacation, no mention had been made of any special plans for the children's future. Nor had any explanation been given to the children for the long ocean voyage, except for a chance to visit with relatives back in England. Their only expectation was for a long holiday abroad. They had not been told the chief purpose of the trip—to leave them indefinitely with strangers.

Having spent several months being introduced to their parents' friends and relatives, they were comfortable travelling and staying with new people. There was nothing unusual in being taken to visit an elderly couple in an unfamiliar place, but this place was more than unfamiliar—it was unpleasant. It had a musty smell. The rooms the children could see from the front parlour, where they had been deposited, were small and dark. While Mrs Kipling talked with the Holloways, the children stared and sniffed about. After inquiring about the plan of the house, Mrs Kipling was given a tour of the lower floor and the back garden. The children could hear footsteps as the Holloways, speaking in low voices, showed Mrs Kipling around the house. Then all was silent, and their mother disappeared. She was simply gone.

I can see Trix standing there in the parlour beside her brother Rudyard, waiting patiently for her mother to return. After a while, growing uneasy, she turns herself around, searching for the familiar warm folds of her mother's heavy skirt and reaches up for her mother's extended gloved hand, but they are not where they should have been. The reassuring swell and swish of her mother's presence are gone. Trix looks about her, trying to understand where she is and how she had

come to be there. She recognizes nothing except Rudyard, standing stiff and still beside her.

Rudyard assumed at first that their mother had momentarily forgotten to take them with her, or had been called away on some errand and would soon return. Waiting and watching in the gloomy room, he assured Trix that there had been some slight misunderstanding or some easily remedied mistake. Rudyard had expected that after the short visit, like many others they had recently paid, they would be leaving with their mother to return to the home of their grandmother or their aunt and uncle. Having been told nothing, given no warning of the abrupt change that was about to occur, neither he nor Trix had any way to understand where their mother had gone. They could not believe that they had been purposely left behind. Given no explanation or farewell, the children were utterly confused to be alone in an unfamiliar house with people they had only just met. Rudyard looked about with distaste and scorn at the dark cramped rooms, while Trix looked to Rudyard for some clue, some words of explanation.

After a while, the children were forced to accept that they had been abandoned, although for how long they had no idea. For days, weeks, and months after, they waited, with hopes steadily dimming, for the return of their parents. Before giving up hope completely, they invented fantasies of running away through the streets, across the heaths, and up the sandy dunes to the sea (which they could hear from the house) where they would overtake their parents boarding ship for Bombay.

Many years later, Trix came to understand that their parents,

> doubtless wanted to save us, and themselves, suffering by not telling us clearly before-hand that we were to be left behind, but by so doing they left us, as it were, in the dark, and with nothing to look forward to [...] As it was, we felt that we had been deserted, 'almost as much as on a doorstep,' and what was the reason? [...] Mamma was not ill [...] Papa had not had to go to the wars; [...] they hadn't even lost their money [...] But there was no excuse; they had gone back to our own lovely home, and had not taken us with them. There was no getting out of that.[1]

1 Alice M. Fleming, 'Some Childhood Memories of Rudyard Kipling', *Chambers Journal* (March 1939), p. 171.

Whatever the justification, the result was that Trix, having been left 'as much as on a doorstep', felt like an unwanted parcel.

The children struggled to invent an explanation for having been handed over to strangers and consigned to the mean little house, appropriately named Lorne Lodge. Their greatest difficulty was that 'we had had no preparation or explanation; it was like a double death, or rather, like an avalanche that had swept away everything happy and familiar'.[2] In time, they understood that Mrs Holloway—who commanded the children to call her Aunty Rosa—Mr Holloway who was to be called Uncle, and their twelve-year-old son, Harry, were to replace their family, and that Lorne Lodge, with its small bare patch of garden, was to be their home.

Mrs Holloway, with what they soon recognized as her typical cruelty, told the children that they had been left because they were tiresome creatures. The kinder Mr Holloway assured them that she was only joking and that they had been left in England because the climate in India wasn't good for little people. But this did little to enlighten the baffled children about the utterly unexpected and inexplicable change in their lives. They had only their imaginations to make sense of their startling new situation.

Slowly, they became accustomed to the bleak house and shabby neighbourhood. Lorne Lodge was a narrow house of three stories at the end of an undistinguished street lined with similar houses.

> It was a small house of six rooms, not counting the greenhouse, which only Aunty Rosa remembered to call 'the conservatory.' It wore a shabby stucco pinafore, and had a front garden about the size and shape of a Persian prayer carpet, where nothing grew except a bank of St John's wort, which sloped down to the playroom window in the basement. That playroom was always chilly and smelt of mushrooms even in the summer, and any toys put in the wall cupboards [...] turned blue with mildew after two or three days. At the back of the ugly brickwork a mean little scullery and coal shed suggested architectural dermatitis and deformity.[3]

2 Trix Kipling, 'Through Judy's Eyes', in Lorna Lee, p. 362. Punch and Judy were the names used by Rudyard for the two bereft children in his story 'Baa Baa, Black Sheep'. Trix in her memoir of childhood 'Through Judy's Eyes', written much later, used the same names.

3 Trix Kipling, 'Through Judy's Eyes', p. 346.

There was a dining room with 'a big sideboard with funny bits of looking-glass where you didn't expect them, and where they chiefly reflected people's feet'[4] and a big, polished table used for both meals and lessons. The drawing room, like the dining room, was dark and dreary with a musty smell the children found disagreeable. Trix shared a bedroom as well as a bed with Mrs Holloway. She delighted in the few pretty feminine touches in the bedroom—a skirted dressing table, a red satin and white lace pin cushion, red and white glass scent bottles.

Rudyard shared a bedroom with Harry in the dark, low-ceilinged attic. Having lived in the warmth and luxury of India with servants to wait on him in brightly decorated rooms, wide airy verandas, and gardens planted with fragrant flowers, Rudyard was amazed and appalled by his new surroundings. He remembered the parks in Bombay where tall pink oleanders blossomed, green parrots perched in the trees, and striped grey squirrels—tame enough to eat from one's hand—scampered about. Trix remembered little of India after having been away for six months, but she trusted Rudyard's descriptions of pastel-petaled flowers and brightly feathered birds.

As the children became accustomed to the house, they became acquainted with the Holloways—Mrs Sarah Holloway, Mr Pryse Agar Holloway, and their son Henry, called Harry. Mrs Holloway, 'a puritanical, narrow-minded Evangelical', was a sharp, bony woman with 'frowning eyes, grinning lips, long yellow teeth, and soiled widow's cap'. 'She was [...] early old, with pepper and salt hair in lank loops above large ears [...] Her lips looked dry and chapped even in summer, and never hid the large front teeth and the gleaming gold wires that fastened the back ones, and her throat was long and skinny ("Just like poultry".)'[5] The father of the foster family—Pryse Agar Holloway, a retired Navy captain—was softer by nature. He treated the little boy kindly and protected him from the bullying of twelve-year-old Harry. He told Rudyard stories and took him on walks. Little girls held only slight interest for him.

Rudyard, who had been pampered and spoiled back in India, was cocky and talkative, and accustomed to lord it over his devoted ayah and the other servants. Friendly servants told him local folk tales, taught

4 Ibid.
5 Ibid., p. 351.

him Indian songs, carved toys for him out of fruits and nuts, and took him to Hindu temples. Rudyard felt entitled to pull his ayah's hair and even bite her. Throwing stones at the younger servants was permitted. Mrs Holloway was determined to discipline the imperious, arrogant, and impertinent little boy.

Trix had only one memory from India—a scary story she had been told or perhaps a dream resulting from the story, of a savage pantomime featuring a tiger skin rug. She was terrified of this image which haunted her dreams. No other images of India stayed with her. Trix was a sweet-natured, adorable, fair-haired toddler, who was easy to love. Mrs Holloway loved her for herself and also, Trix believed, because 'She had always wanted a daughter and her happy heart engulfed [Trix] as much as the somewhat fastidious child would allow'.[6] Trix longed to be loved, and Mrs Holloway did love her.

The first years at Lorne Lodge were sad and lonely for Trix, but not frightening. She was favoured and pampered by Aunty Rosa, who taught her to read and write and to behave and speak properly. She encouraged the pretty child and praised her efforts.

Three years into the children's captivity, when the gentle Captain Holloway died (29 September 1874), the situation worsened. Mrs Holloway felt free to indulge her bad nature and encourage the worse nature of her son. Most of Rudyard's and almost all of Trix's memories of Lorne Lodge date from after the captain's death, when Mrs Holloway along with Harry made life a misery for the two children stranded in her desolate house.

Harry, fifteen at his father's death, became the children's chief enemy. Trix and Ruddy hated and feared Harry, who was nine years older than Trix and six years older than Rudyard. Trix watched helplessly as Harry openly taunted and tormented Rudyard with questions, ensnaring him in lies and confusions. After trapping Rudyard in contradictions, he reported them back to Aunty as intentional lies. Aunty punished lies severely, often with beatings, which Trix could hear and see but do nothing about.

Trix herself lived in terror of Harry. She listened for his comings and goings, sensitive to the sound of his footfall on the stairs and his approach to the door. When she heard him come home from school,

6 Ibid., p. 364.

she tiptoed away to hide herself. When Mrs Holloway was at home, she hid behind her ample skirts, but Mrs Holloway was often out or busy around the house. And Harry was especially crafty in seeking Trix out when his mother was not around. Harry cunningly manoeuvred Trix into crannies and corners where he touched, teased, and threatened her. Trix searched for whatever protection she could find and was grateful to find Jane, the maid of all work. Jane 'was very quick and clever in helping her to hide from him; and did not tell where she was even if Harry twisted her arm and thumped it'.[7] But Jane had work to do and an employer to please and could not be a completely reliable shield. Trix knew that Harry was a tattletale and a liar, both a bully and a toady, with 'a crow's quickness in finding a wound to pick at'.[8] He could easily get Jane sacked and get Trix into trouble.

Trix didn't simply hate and fear Harry, she was physically repelled and disgusted by him. She felt sickened by the smell and shine of his over-pomatumed black hair, and she distrusted his shifty narrow eyes, set too near together. He tortured and frightened her in subtle and surreptitious ways, often just by his large and looming physical presence. She shuddered with fear and revulsion just thinking about him.

Trix came to understand that Aunty protected and indulged her only child. She allowed him free rein to bully Ruddy and, when she was not present, gave him tacit permission to bother her. As well as his mother's permission, Harry had his society's acceptance of bullying male behaviour. Little girls were sport, small creatures to be teased and toyed with. Trix sharpened her wits plotting to evade, repel, and defeat Harry. Trix later recalled that, 'Up until the age of eleven I hated Harry so wholeheartedly that I have only disliked a few people, in a mild, tepid way, ever since'.[9] Trix knew that it was dangerous to protest or resist him. He was quick to feel a slight and quick to return one. Afraid of worse punishment from Harry, Trix never complained. Instead, she learned how to run away quickly and hide herself securely. When Trix was a pretty six-year-old girl, Harry was an oily fifteen-year-old.

Aunty often promised Trix that if she were a good girl, one day she would marry Harry. Harry, privy to his mother's romantic fantasy, thus considered Trix his own property, to tease and touch. Trix never accused

7 Ibid., p. 363.
8 Ibid., p. 358.
9 Alice M. Fleming, 'Some Childhood Memories of Rudyard Kipling', p. 169.

Harry of misbehaviour, sexual or otherwise, but she may not have understood nor had the language to express his interference as sexual. His attentions to Trix may not have been sexual, but it seems likely that greasy, pimply teenage Harry touched Trix in ways she did not like. She found him physically loathsome.

When, at the age of twenty-three in 1888, Rudyard, a gifted artist, illustrated his autobiographical story, 'Baa Baa, Black Sheep', he drew Aunty Rosa with sharp angles and dark lines as a furious, accusatory figure. She points a long bony finger as she furrows her brow. 'Devil boy' Harry has horns and a forked tongue. Trix, in the three pictures in which she appears, is a little girl with cropped hair and bangs. She wears 'a short-sleeved blue frock and white pinafore, white socks, and bronze shoes with soft soles rounded like biscuits'.[10] In all three pictures, she is cowering behind Auntie's skirts. In two of them, she looks out from behind Aunty's skirts with a wide-eyed and wary gaze, and in the third, she is tiptoeing away from the scene, partially hidden by Aunty's dress. She can only be hiding from and hoping to escape from Harry. In Rudyard's pictures, Trix appears to be about six or seven years old, the age when her memories first came into focus.

Fig. 2 Rudyard's drawing from 'Baa Baa, Black Sheep'.[11]

10 Ibid.

Fig. 3 Trix, always behind Aunty's skirts in Rudyard's drawing from 'Baa Baa, Black Sheep'.[12]

Every day, Trix watched as Rudyard and Harry packed up their books and went off to Hope House School in Somerset Place, while she stayed behind. At home, Trix was taught by Aunty, a careless mixture of religion, music, and manners. Aunty served as Trix's sole teacher, companion,

11 From Rudyard Kipling's, *Something of Myself*, ed. by Thomas Pinney, pp. 167–68. The illustrations accompanying this reprint of 'Baa Baa, Black Sheep' are by Kipling in a holograph of the story now in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library. In his *Rudyard Kipling* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1978), pp. 27–28, Lord Birkenhead reports on the Kipling parents' reaction to Rudyard's story, 'Baa Baa, Black Sheep'. It was a grievous blow to the Lockwood Kiplings when they read these savage outpourings in cold print, and, unwilling to recognize their own contribution to this suffering, they tried to make Trix say it was all exaggerated and untrue, but even to comfort them, she could not pretend that they had ever been happy'.

12 Ibid.

caretaker, and nurse. Jane, Trix's protector from Harry, was Trix's only other possible companion throughout the long days. But as a servant in the household, Jane was shy of becoming Trix's friend, although Trix longed for her closer companionship. 'There was so little scope for love in her narrowed life that it was natural for a starved, sensitive nature to long for praise, or at least for notice. She was absolutely without companions, or the chance of making little friends'.[13] When she was seven, Trix briefly attended Sunday school and dancing classes, and there she tried to make friends. But Aunty discouraged friendships and made visits with other little girls impossible. Trix's time with Rudyard was limited by his own need to study and by Aunty's strict rationing.

Every Christmas beginning in 1873, Rudyard went away for a month to spend the long holiday with aunts, uncles, and cousins in London and in the country. He spent most Christmas vacations with his aunt Georgie, wife of the painter Edward Burne-Jones, at the Grange, in an exciting bohemian, intellectual atmosphere where frequent guests included John Ruskin, William Morris, and Charles Eliot Norton. Trix was not invited on these excursions. When Rudyard went off, she wept with resentment and confusion. She was hurt that she was not invited for the holiday parties and tried to find reasons and made excuses for the insensitivity and unkindness of her relatives. The aunts and uncles, who were in the habit of entertaining Rudyard alone when Trix was a toddler, failed to notice that, over the years, Trix grew old enough to be a proper guest. Christmas holiday was therefore an especially bleak time, as Rudyard was gone for a month of celebrations, which Trix could only imagine and envy. Not once during this period was she ever invited to visit her many aunts and uncles. She bore this slight without explanation or complaint. Trix also suspected that Aunty Rosa, not wishing to be parted from her during the holidays, protested against her being included in the family celebrations away from home. Trix had one brief holiday to Brighton with Mrs Holloway during her six years at Lorne Lodge.

Aunty did love Trix, and Trix, starved for attention and praise, needed and wanted her love. But being Aunty's favourite was double-edged. By arousing and accepting Aunty's tender feelings, she felt she

13 Trix Kipling, 'Through Judy's Eyes', p. 357.

compromised herself. Aunty Rosa often compared Trix to Ruddy, her good behaviour used as a stick to beat Rudyard with. Thus, as Trix curried favour with Aunty, she risked putting Ruddy into even greater disfavour. Winning love from one person important in her life necessarily meant hurting someone else even more important. She hated Aunty for putting her in this position and hated herself for encouraging it. Rudyard suffered more blatant tortures. He was baited, bullied, and beaten. But he recognized and sympathized with Trix's more subtle dilemma and forgave her for what she considered betrayals.

In all comparisons and competitions, Aunty favoured Trix over Rudyard. While this might have weakened the bond between the two, it never did. Rud and Trix stuck close together, sharing stories and keeping secrets. They were protective and proud of each other. Rudyard firmly maintained for himself and for his sister his sense of Kipling superiority over all Holloways. Rudyard defended himself and his sister against Aunty's humiliating and demeaning treatment by holding her birth, breeding, manners, and education in complete contempt. This was a particularly raw spot for Sarah Holloway, a woman of lower-class origins, whose husband was of a higher class and whose young boarders had connections and expectations far above her own or her son's. Rudyard remembered the fine home, polite conversation, and refined manners of his parents in India and spent long holiday vacations with his wealthy and cultured aunts and uncles. Although Trix had no direct experience of this, she trusted Rudyard's conviction that Aunty was of a much lower caste than Papa and Mamma. He often told Trix that she did not need to mind what the 'no-caste' woman did or said. The two mistreated children created a special bond over their sense of social superiority. It served them well against Aunty's frequent demoralizing words and actions.

Brother and sister formed another bond as co-conspirators—protectors of each other's lies and subverters of Aunty's rules. Aunty considered reading books an improper pastime for the children, and when she discovered Trix or Rudyard reading instead of playing with their toys, she reprimanded them severely. To avoid her interference, they each invented tricks to deceive her. Trix often seated herself on the damp playroom floor, lined up her dolls in a neat row opposite to her, and ordered them to sit properly and attend. Then she happily read her

books aloud to her assembled audience, pretending she was a teacher instructing a class. In this way, she wasn't lying when she reported to Aunty that she had been playing with her dolls. Rudyard devised a clever although cumbersome method for confounding Aunty. He lay on the floor reading, holding his book with one hand while manipulating the unsteady legs of the table with the other to make a thumping noise. Thus, he disguised the silence of reading with the pounding of play (see Fig. 3).

Much of Mrs Holloway's teaching focused on her strict religious beliefs, which she impressed on Trix and which Trix adopted. Always a gifted mimic, Trix easily learned to imitate Aunty's pious attitudes. But over time, Trix began to understand that producing the outward signs of godliness and piety was not the same as feeling godly and pious. The feelings that actually arose from her heart were feelings she recognized Aunty would find unacceptable. Thus, she learned to disguise her real feelings and invent substitute thoughts that could be acceptably expressed. Small and specific lies expanded into large-scale deception and invention. Trix later wrote of one of her fictional heroines, 'One of the most wearisome necessities of her life had been the constant fabrication of thoughts, or, rather, of substitutes for thoughts, such as she could share with her aunt'.[14] Trix assigned this wearisome and wounding work to her fictional character, but she clearly knew of it first-hand. Trix was especially sensitive to adjusting herself to what the adults around her wanted from her. Eager to please and assuming that causing displeasure could mean expulsion, Trix expressed only those thoughts and feelings that were appropriate and proper. She made herself into what she thought Mrs Holloway wanted her to be: a good, grateful, obedient, God-fearing, Christian child.

Trix could be herself only with Rudyard and with Jane, the housemaid, but her time with Rudyard was strictly limited and her comfort with Jane was never perfect. From Aunty, whose pious model recommended strict Christian goodness, and Harry, whose unwanted attentions required flight, she learned the crucial survival skills of running away, hiding, and lying.

14 J. M. Fleming (Alice M. Kipling), *A Pinchbeck Goddess* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1897).

When she was alone, which she was most of the time, Trix relieved her loneliness by inventing fantasies and dreaming. At the age of four, Trix learned to read, remarkably before Rudyard learned to read. His education in India had oddly not included the alphabet. Once they were both fluent readers, they devoured whatever books they could find and asked for more to be sent to them.

Trix was required by Aunty to read the Bible, and she knew it well, but she also read *The Arabian Nights, Sidonia the Sorceress*—a racy German tale—and the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Anderson. Instead of following orders to play, she read story books, and, by the age of five, she was reading for her own pleasure, despite Aunty's disapproval. Books and magazines were sent to the children, mostly to Rudyard, by the parents, Uncle Alfred Baldwin, and other relatives. Whatever was sent to Rudyard he shared with Trix. They both read *Robinson Crusoe*, the novels of Walter Scott, poetry by Wordsworth and Tennyson. Later, despite Aunty's prohibitions, Trix read Shakespeare's plays and eighteenth- and nineteenth-century poetry and fiction. Dickens's novels were her favourites. While Aunty's lessons were her only formal education, she read from books brought home by Rudyard, sent from India by their parents, and from a small library in the house. (When she was finally sent to school, she was found to be 'absolutely ungrounded, curiously ignorant, but singularly well-read'.)[15]

Reading books of brutality, sensuality, and magic, Trix developed her own violent imagination. She loved playing with words and invented her own private language by transposing letters of the alphabet. Trix and Rudyard made up stories for each other and shared outlaw fantasies. 'We had a sort of play that ran on and on for months, in which we played all the parts. I'm afraid there was generally a murder in it; or we ran away to sea and had the most wonderful adventures'.[16] Rudyard and Trix together nursed rescue and revenge fantasies, which they spun into complicated tales. Having read the same books and lived in the same bleak circumstances, the two children could elaborate on each other's stories, continue each other's trains of thought, and almost read each other's minds.

15 Alice M. Fleming, 'Some Childhood Memories', p. 170.
16 Ibid.

Even later in life, they could complete each other's thoughts, sentences, and stories. (As teenagers, when they started writing for publication, they collaborated effortlessly. Trix's stories and poems were indistinguishable from Rudyard's.) The story-telling gift, shared by both, was a form of consolation as well as a means of survival. From the various tellings and retellings of incidents, both Ruddy and Trix were liable to confuse fact with fiction or embellish fact with fiction. Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield,* which they loved, became a touchstone for them both. Orphaned and sent from home, David suffered deprivations, hurts, and longings similar to their own. Like them, David pondered his life's central mystery—how a gifted child like himself could have been so easily thrown away. Rudyard and Trix not only shared David's miseries, they savoured his triumphs—revenge on his enemies and early success as a writer.[17]

Mrs Holloway had no fondness for books in themselves, one book being of equal value to any other, but she understood that reading books and sharing stories were pleasurable activities she could control and curtail. As punishments, she often confiscated books from the two children, isolated them from each other, and enforced silence between them.

Trix and Rudyard were strongly discouraged from what Aunty called 'showing off'. Very early on, Trix revealed herself to be a facile talker and a prodigious memorizer, reciter, and imitator. Most of the time, she was praised for her performances, but, inexplicably, at times, she was criticized for exhibiting these same talents. Rudyard was

17 David Copperfield endures a miserable childhood but is eventually rescued. He grows up to be a writer. His life story was similar enough to Rudyard's and to Trix's to give them great comfort and sustain them through many years. David, like Rudyard, had been pampered and praised as a child and found his fall from grace unaccountable and unacceptable. (In chapters X and XI of *David Copperfield*, David describes his childhood unhappiness. 'All this time I was so conscious of the waste of any promise I had given, and of my being utterly neglected, that I should have been perfectly miserable, I have no doubt, but for the old books. They were my only comfort, and I was as true to them as they were to me, and read them over and over I don't know how many times more'. 'I know enough of the world now, to have almost lost the capacity of being much surprised by anything, but it is matter of some surprise to me, even now, that I can have been so easily thrown away at such an age. A child of excellent abilities, and with strong powers of observation, quick, eager, delicate, and soon hurt bodily or mentally, it seems wonderful to me that nobody should have made any sign in my behalf'.) Rudyard as well as Trix wondered how they too could have been 'so easily thrown away' and how nobody seemed to notice or care.

positively punished for showing off, one of his major crimes. His chatter often resulted in his being accused of inventing, pretending, or lying. He was regularly beaten with a cane for showing off as well as for lying. Trix witnessed Ruddy's canings and ached to protect him. But she was helpless to do anything except fantasize furious, bloody scenes of vengeance.

Aunty never caned Trix or rapped her over the knuckles, but she enforced one punishment which terrified Trix at the time and haunted her ever after. One day after committing an infraction of one of Aunty's many rules, Trix was ordered to stand upon the highly polished dining room table. When Aunty lifted her onto the table as a punishment, Trix thought, at first, it was a game and laughed. Standing on the table seemed like no punishment at all, until Aunty reminded her that she should be ashamed of her naughty behaviour. When the punishment was repeated several days later, Trix felt its full terror. Balancing on the high table, she felt as if she were exposed atop a high tower. Her soft-soled shoes slipped and slid. She grew dizzy and faint and imagined she was about to fall over the edge and be dashed to pieces on the carpet far below. Half-way through the punishment, she felt the floor sinking farther and farther away, while she grew colder and colder, and a funny noise, like a boiling kettle, sang in her ears. Rudyard offered his long hair as a lifeline and then his sleeve, but Trix was forbidden to accept his help. She was afraid of moving even a little for fear of upsetting the inkstands or the slates. The punishment only lasted five minutes, five minutes more if she whimpered, but it seemed an eternity.[18]

Standing high up on the table, she felt exposed and afraid. (Drawers were not always worn, and when they were, they had an open seam at the crotch.) Never before had she felt so dizzy and cold. Never had she heard a steady, squealing ringing in her ears. Standing on the table, Trix was exposed to the loathsome Harry's curious gaze, and possibly she was explored by his probing fingers. Trix reasonably felt afraid of falling

18 Virginia Woolf's sexual abuse as a child of six by her half-brother has been well documented in her diaries and letters. It is only a coincidence that the first experience of abuse narrated by Virginia closely resembles this incident described by Trix. Like Trix, Virginia was ordered to stand up on a high shelf and there was molested by her half-brother Gerald. 'I still shiver with shame at the memory of my half-brother, standing me on a ledge, aged about 6 or so, exploring my private parts'.

or fainting. But unreasonably and inexplicably, she also felt ashamed and disgusted at being exposed and exhibited.

One day, the doctor came to the house while Trix was standing unsteadily on the table. Seeing the child shivering and as white as a sheet, the doctor took her straight off the table and placed her onto his knee to comfort her. Trix tried not to cry, as the doctor took Aunty to task. Despite Aunty's explanations of her 'wise handling' of the children, the doctor reprimanded her. 'You must remember that you can't treat a china cup, egg shell china too, as if it were a tin mug,' said the doctor. Behind Aunty's back, Rudyard danced his 'special war dance'.[19] Trix was never again forced to stand on the table, but the punishment remained a well-remembered source of terror and shame. The doctor became her hero.

Only once did Trix seriously protest against Aunty, and it was on Rudyard's behalf rather than her own. Towards the end of their stay at Lorne Lodge, when Rudyard had been bullied into submission and Trix had been outraged into rebellion, she heroically came to her brother's defence. After Rudyard recognized that bringing bad reports home from school resulted in beatings, he formed the habit of destroying the reports before reaching the Holloway door. For quite a while, he successfully kept Aunty ignorant of his poor grades, but he was eventually found out.

Aunty discovered the ruse one Saturday morning and was enraged, more at the deception than at the poor marks. As a punishment, she shut Rudyard up in his room without food or water for two days and called him a 'moral leper'.[20] All through the weekend, Trix longed to help her brother, but she was banned from going near his door. When Monday morning arrived and it was time for Rudyard to go to school, he was allowed out of his room. Trix was awake and downstairs, listening for some sound from Rudyard's room, when she heard his steps descending from his attic room. Aunty ordered Trix to go to the drawing room and practice the piano, without moving from the stool, for forty-five minutes. On her way to the drawing room, Trix asked to see her brother. She was told that Rudyard was still in disgrace and could not be

19 Trix Kipling, 'Through Judy's Eyes', p. 356.

20 Lord Birkenhead, *Rudyard Kipling* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1978), pp. 25–26.

disturbed on his way to school by his silly sister. Harry added that she might never see her brother again. As she entered the drawing room, Trix heard Aunty storming at Rudyard with more than her usual shrill fury. Hoping to drown out the hateful noise, she sank down on the piano stool and, as ordered, pounded out the scales she had been practicing. Trix listened for Aunty's rage to subside, and when she heard Rudyard leave the house, she crept to the window. Believing herself alone and unobserved, she drew back the oily lace curtains, peered out, and saw Rudyard going down the small garden path, walking like an old man. A placard covered the whole of his back. It was made of strong cardboard. Neatly printed by Harry in big block letters were the words: KIPLING THE LIAR. Trix tiptoed out into the hall, silently opened the front door, slipped out, and ran to catch up to Ruddy. When she reached him, she grabbed at the placard and tried desperately to tear it from his back. It was so thick that she couldn't even bend it. It was neatly and tightly sewn to his little blue overcoat with string so strong she couldn't rip it. Reaching into Ruddy's pocket, she found his pen knife and tried with its short blade to pick the stitches out, but Ruddy protested weakly, 'Don't, don't dear. Leave it alone—it's no good—she'll only beat you too'.[21]

While Trix hung on, desperately pulling on the placard, Ruddy crept on to school, broken down at last. Eventually Trix gave up and ran back, her long hair whipping her face, to meet Aunty, who, brandishing a cane, resembled a scarlet-faced virago. Aunty had never used the cane on Trix, but it seemed, in this instance, she might. Trix screamed at Aunty, 'You are a wicked woman. I'll never speak to you again. How dare you sew that wicked placard on poor Ruddy'.[22] She threatened to tell the authorities of Aunty's cruelties.

'You don't know anyone to tell' retorted Aunty.

'Yes, there's the doctor, and you can't stop me telling the vicar. I'll stand up in Sunday School, and I'll tell the postman and the policeman on the corner of Palmerston Road. She threatened me with the cane, and I said; that's right, thrash me as if I was Ruddy. You know how I bruise and when I'm black I'll go the police and show them and have you punished'.[23]

21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.

Confronted with Trix's unusual fury, Aunty backed away, loosened her grip on the cane, and blinked back her tears. Tender-hearted Trix felt sorry for making the poor woman cry, but Ruddy needed her protection. When she was fighting for Rudyard, she felt righteous and bold. Ruddy was too broken by fasting and beating to defend himself. The story of the LIAR placard was also told in much abbreviated form by Rudyard in his story, 'Baa Baa, Black Sheep'. In the story, when the child is ordered to wear the placard, he, with uncharacteristic recklessness, defies Aunty and refuses to wear it. When Rudyard told the story again much later in his autobiography *Something of Myself*, he reduced it to one sentence and omitted his defiance. There, he accepted the punishment and actually wore the hated sign through the streets of Southsea. Only in Trix's tale (as told to Kipling's biographer Lord Birkenhead) does she play a heroic part. Hers is a revenge story—how she came to Ruddy's defense, finally stood up to Aunty, and prevailed.

All three versions of the story resemble an early incident in *David Copperfield*. After David bites his hated stepfather, Mr Murdstone, he is sent away from home to a school where he is forced to wear a placard tied like a knapsack on his back, reading 'Take care of him. He Bites'.[24] Both Trix and Rudyard knew *Copperfield* well, but it is unclear exactly how their stories came to resemble Dickens's. Perhaps something similar actually happened to Ruddy, and the children embellished the facts of the incident by borrowing from *Copperfield*. Perhaps they so identified with David that they confused what had happened to him with what had happened to them, perhaps this was a common form of punishment, or perhaps there is some other explanation.

From Trix's story, whether true, embellished, or invented, it appears that she felt she had a few friends she could turn to if she needed help—the doctor and the vicar. Should she ever alienate Aunty by acting on her vengeful fantasies, she had reckoned her possible allies. On an earlier occasion when Aunty threatened to whip Rudyard, Trix pictured Aunty's severed head, 'with its frowning eyes, grinning lips and long yellow teeth, and soiled widow's cap' rolling on the floor.[25] Trix often played out in her imagination scenes of violent retribution.

24 Charles Dickens, 'Chapter 5', in *David Copperfield* (London: Bradbury & Evans, 1850).

25 Trix Kipling, 'Through Judy's Eyes', p. 353. Jane Gardam's novel, *Old Filth* is loosely based on Rudyard Kipling's childhood as a Raj orphan. The young boy of the novel

Trix's more immediate annoyance from Aunty was not her cruelty but her constant affection. What bothered Trix the most was Aunty's physical nearness, which she had no choice but to accept. During the six years when Trix shared Aunty's bed, she had to tolerate falling asleep with Aunty's bony arm around her. Trix often woke in the night from a recurrent nightmare of the Indian tiger skin. When she cried out, it was Aunty who was there to reassure her. Aunty's presence in the bed calmed her nighttime terrors, but Aunty's unwanted consoling words and constant physical affection made her uneasy. Trix 'always hated being hugged by anyone but her own family, and wished more than anything, except going back to Bombay, for a bed of her very own'.[26] Trix was a fastidious child, uncomfortable with physical affection. For years, she longed for the privacy and safety of her own space.

Whatever mistreatment the children endured, it was never spoken of or written about to their parents or other relatives. They did not complain of the difficulties of their lives or ask for relief. These were simply the facts of life, how it was, how it would continue to be. Both Rudyard and Trix wrote regularly to their parents in Bombay and later in Lahore, but their letters were strictly censored and often dictated by Mrs Holloway. Rudyard, who had the chance to complain to his aunts and uncles with whom he visited on holidays, never did. When Aunt Georgie asked him later why he never told anyone how he was being treated, he explained, 'Children tell little more than animals, for what comes to them they accept as eternally established. Also, badly-treated children have a clear notion of what they are likely to get if they betray the secrets of the prison-house before they are clear of it'.[27]

During Rudyard's Christmas visit to the Grange in 1876, his aunt noticed that he was having trouble with his eyes. She also sensed that there was something strange in his behaviour. He reported seeing things that weren't there, things that frightened him. Aunt Georgie, concerned about Rudyard's well-being, wrote to Alice, urging her to come to England to check up on her boy.

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lives with two girls, who share between them many of Trix's qualities. The three children are cared for by a woman who mistreats and beats them. Together the children plot to kill the evil woman. It is one of the girls who suggests murder. Trix, in shared fantasy with Rudyard, often rehearsed Aunty's violent murder.

26 Ibid., p. 348.

27 Rudyard Kipling, 'Chapter 1', in *Something of Myself* (New York: Doubleday, 1937).

Alice did not respond with immediate action. She had considered visiting England the year before but she had postponed the trip, unwilling to leave Lockwood—who, in April of 1875, had taken on a new post, as the head of the Mayo School of Industrial Art and curator of the Lahore Museum. This was a far more substantial, varied, and interesting position than his old job as teacher at the Bombay art school. Alice was pleased to find her husband advancing in his career and was hopeful that the move from Bombay to Lahore would prove professionally advantageous for Lockwood and socially advantageous for the whole family. She felt confident that Lockwood could fulfil his new professional responsibilities, but she believed that he needed her help to settle him in his new post and introduce him to the new society of Lahore.

By early 1877, Alice felt confident in Lockwood's place at the museum and in Lahore and was willing to leave him. Responding to Georgie's alarming report about Rudyard, which she had received many months earlier, she determined to return to England to find out what was troubling her son. Her daughter's health and happiness had not been reported to her by her sister, who had not seen the child for years. In April 1877, five and a half years after she had left the children without preparation or explanation, Alice reappeared without warning at Lorne Lodge.

When she stepped from her four-wheeled carriage in front of the dismal house, Rudyard recognized her immediately but hung back, uncertain how to react and afraid of being accused of showing off. Trix had no memory of her at all and had no idea how to react. Seeing this beautiful woman for what seemed like the first time, Trix was simply amazed. She could not believe that this lovely creature, who declared herself to be her mother, could actually be her longed-for Mamma. She ran to her mother's open arms. Drawing away to take in the dazzling vision, she was surprised by her mother's pale smooth skin and bright blue eyes. A flurry of softly uttered endearments and tender embraces startled and confused her. Alice hugged and kissed the surprised children, and, before saying anything else, asked if they remembered her. Wary about showing his emotions in front of Aunty Rosa, Rudyard responded coolly. Trix quickly followed his lead. With no advance notice of her arrival and no idea of her intentions, the children were unsure

how they should act. Alice was disappointed and puzzled by their odd behaviour, baffled by their well-learned, self-protective strategies for avoiding Aunty's temper. 'She did not know that well-trained animals watch their tamer's eye, and the familiar danger-signals of 'Aunty's' rising temper had set both [children] fawning upon her'.[28]

Alice remained for a constrained and awkward dinner with Aunty Rosa and the children. When it was Trix's bedtime, she tucked the little girl in with hugs and kisses. When Rudyard rose to leave the table, Aunty offered her withered cheek for a kiss. Ruddy defiantly refused to give what had never been requested of him before. After Ruddy had retired to his room, Alice went alone upstairs to say good night to him in the attic room he shared with Harry. Groping her way in the dark, she located him lying in bed. As she bent down to embrace him, he instinctively thrust out his arm to ward off a blow. This dramatic demonstration convinced Alice of the dangers she had exposed the children to. When she saw that her son was accustomed to defend himself against nightly attacks, she begged him for his forgiveness. Fairly quickly, she forgave herself.

She also soon discovered that Rudyard was half-blind.

Alice was distressed to find that Trix had become a plump little prig, devoted to Aunty and quick to spout her pious words. Trix had been schooled in Mrs Holloway's religion and, despite some doubts, had taken on her teacher's evangelical fervour. Alice and Lockwood, both children of Methodist ministers, had left their religion behind when they had removed to India. Alice, with her usual wishful thinking, had assumed that her own rejection of religion had somehow been imparted to Trix and was dismayed to find that, on the contrary, Mrs Holloway's stern teachings had been fully absorbed by the impressionable child.

After recognizing on her first visit that the children were deeply unhappy, Mrs Kipling resolved to end their misery. Arriving back the next day at Lorne Lodge, she announced that she was taking the children away. Mrs Holloway protested, asserting her devotion to her young charges. Trix, fearing that her mother might find Mrs Holloway's false assurances convincing, was struck with nervous dread. She could not control her darting eyes and twitching fingers, and these signs of

28 Alice M. Fleming, 'Some Childhood Memories of Rudyard Kipling'.

alarm were clear even to Mrs Kipling, who was eager to minimize the children's misery. Forced to recognize Trix's terror, she resolved to remove the children immediately and reward them with a vacation in the country.

The mother believed she could quickly return the children to their original love for her, as if she had never abandoned them. Trix, who had no memory of her, had no original love she could be returned to. Rudyard, who remembered and loved her, could never return to his original love for her nor to his original innocence.

When Rudyard wrote about his childhood in the autobiographical story, 'Baa Baa, Black Sheep', he called the boy Punch and the little sister Judy. When Trix wrote about this period in her memoir, 'Through Judy's Eyes', she adopted the same names.[29] Punch and Judy seemed appropriate names to both Rud and Trix for the poor beaten and embattled children they had been at Lorne Lodge. The narrator of Rudyard's story, reflecting on what he had lost from the harsh experience of his childhood, wrote, 'When young lips have drunk deep of the bitter waters of Hate, Suspicion and Despair, all the Love in the world will not wholly take away that knowledge; though it may turn darkened eyes for a while to the light and teach Faith where no Faith was'.[30] (These lines appear above the drawing on page 16 from 'Baa Baa, Blacksheep'.)

Rudyard recognized that his mother wanted what had been most convenient for her to have been most comfortable for the children. On the contrary, what had been most convenient for her had been decidedly uncomfortable for them. When Trix wrote about her childhood, she attempted to be understanding and to accept her mother's rationalizations for deserting the children. But her attempts are not altogether convincing. Here is how Trix imagined her mother's careless thoughts about the effects of abandoning her children. 'Besides they [the children] would be quite happy in their new surroundings after a bit, children always were. They'd forget, children always did. Unluckily Punch [Rudyard] never forgot, acute nostalgia made the new

29 Rudyard Kipling, 'Baa Baa, Black Sheep', in *Something of Myself*, ed. by Thomas Pinney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) and Trix Kipling, 'Through Judy's Eyes'.

30 Rudyard Kipling, 'Baa Baa, Black Sheep'.

life difficult to him, and though Judy [Trix] could and did forget details in the past, the 'mother want' in her world was never supplied'.[31]

Rudyard remembered the actual terrors of the place—how he was humiliated, shamed, and beaten. Trix focused on her imagined losses—what she missed, what she was denied, what she never had. She recognized how her character was distorted and damaged by the experience. Her most insightful conclusion about her childhood deprivation was that she suffered from 'mother want', which was never supplied. 'Mother want', borrowed from Elizabeth Barrett's Browning's *Aurora Leigh*, is a beautiful and plaintive phrase, which poignantly captures what Trix had been denied.[32] Much of her later life—her speechless sorrow and mad rages—was spent tragically and vainly trying, in one way or another, to satisfy this want. But, as Trix was sadly to learn, mother want must be satisfied in childhood; no adult experience can ever make up for its loss.[33]

31 Trix Kipling, 'Through Judy's Eyes', p. 356.

32 Trix frequently quoted memorable lines and phrases from her favorite authors, most often from Shakespeare. This phrase from Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* is quite appropriate. The line refers to the author's loss of her mother at age four. Like David Copperfield, Aurora Lee grows up to be a famous author. There are multiple not-quite-parallels between Trix's early life and Book 1 of this long novel-poem. Aurora, an actual orphan, survives her desolation by secretly reading verse, which rouses in her a passion to create her own poetry. Eventually, Aurora goes to London to earn her living as a writer and succeeds in creating her masterpiece. With the phrase 'mother want' Trix evokes her chief childhood loss, but also evokes another later loss—her failure to become an independent woman who successfully follows her vocation as a writer. The half-buried reference to Aurora Leigh suggests both the orphaned and displaced child Trix was, and the powerful writer Trix might have become.

33 Trix knew she had been hurt by the inexplicable separation from her parents. She wrote in both of her novels about the hurt inflicted on children by having been deserted by their parents for their entire childhoods.