

## BULL IN A CHINA SHOP

By Carole L. Cooney

Bull in a China Shop comes from an Aesop fable in which a donkey broke lots of things in a potter's shop. The image was changed to a bull in a china shop when fine plates and dishes, called china, were first used in Europe in the 1500s. "Donkey" was changed to "bull" probably because a bull is so much bigger.

Today it means a clumsy person who deals too roughly with a delicate situation or a rough person who is near breakable things.

Setting: Spangles, an expensive department store

Characters:

Narrator

Charlie- 9 years old

Silvia- 5 years old

Mrs. Burnes

Joseph, the clerk

Mr. Headley, the manager

**Narrator:** On a fiercely hot afternoon, Mrs. Burnes, Charlie and Silvia enter *Spangles*, a most expensive department store. The children were tired and cranky as they followed their mother into the glass and dinnerware section.

**Mrs. Burnes** (smiling sweetly to the clerk) Now children, mind your P's and Q's.

**Charlie:** (He rushes toward the glass display) Mother, look at these glasses! They look like they're falling over. (He reaches toward a glass.)

**Mrs. Burnes:** CHARLIE!!!!

**Narrator:** The clerk rushes to the display.

**Clerk:** (through his teeth) Pleeeeeeze, put – that - glass - down.

**Charlie:** (cheerfully) Okay. I'll just put it on this shelf.

**Narrator:** As Charlie reached for the top shelf, his sister, Silvia tripped and fell onto him. Down they went. The glass *crashed* on the floor.

**Mrs. Burnes:** Oh! My dear children. Are you hurt?

**Narrator:** The children roll on the floor, crying, kicking and screaming.

**Clerk:** Madame, would you kindly *remove* your children from our shop!

**Mrs. Burnes:** I will do NO SUCH THING!

**Narrator:** Exhausted, the children sit up, wiping tears from their eyes. Reaching up to the table's edge, Charlie begins to pull himself up. The table is covered with a silken cloth. Charlie's hand grabs it. As he tugs, a huge pile of glassware topples over onto the floor.

**Mrs. Burnes:** (screams) No, no! Charlie, stop. Silvia! Where's Silvia? Charlie, where's your sister?

**Narrator:** Mrs. Burnes begins to rush about the store looking for Silvia. There is a sudden crash and scream.

**Silvia:** (screams) Mama! Mama! Look what I did!

**Narrator:** Silvia points to a pile of broken dishes.

**Silvia:** Mama, I was just looking and then... and then when I touched one, they all fell over. I didn't *do* anything.

**Narrator:** Hearing the crashing noises, the Manager briskly walks into the display room.

**Manager:** What seems to be the trouble Joseph? (looking at the broken glass) Oh, what is going on? Oh my, oh my.

**Clerk:** Sir, the children were being careless.

**Manager:** Madame, those glasses and dishware are our most expensive items. I'll have to send you the bill for the damage. I'm afraid your husband will be a bit upset about this.

**Mrs. Burnes:** Well! I've never heard such nonsense. My children are *children*. I can't help it if your displays are so flimsy. Yes, sir, we're leaving and I shall *never* come back again.

**Charlie:** Mama, can we go now! I want to go home!

**Silvia:** (still crying) Mama! Mama! I want to go home. I want to go home. I want to go home.

**Narrator:** Mrs. Burnes grabs Charlie and Silvia's hands and marches out the door.

**Manager:** Joseph, would you please clean up this mess. In all my years at Spangles, I've never seen such unruly children. They were like bulls in a china shop.