

Second Place in the Christmas 2007 Short Story Competition
Junior Section (under 16)

Author – Jade Barber

With her story

The Christmas Angel

Celia tumbled down the grand staircase, her hands rushing down the marble banister. She tripped over the polished steps in earnest and she stumbled on the hem of her ruby gown. She fell but quickly pulled herself upright, a scowl on her face. Impatiently she smoothed down her dress. Embarrassed. “Mummy, Daddy!” she screamed. “Where are you?” Suddenly a woman rushed into the hall. She wore a shimmering grey gown and was stunningly beautiful. Her blonde hairs fanned out over her shoulders. So unlike Celia’s own brown locks. “Merry Christmas darling.” Her mother said in a soft, gentle voice. “Yes Mother, you too.” The girl said impatiently. “Can I open my presents yet?” She asked hopefully. “Of course not Darling” her mother exclaimed. “We must wait for you sister!”

“Yes Mother?” a light voice trickled down from the staircase. “I’m ever so sorry Celia; I know how much you want to look forward to opening your presents.” Isabelle smiled sweetly and shot their mother a look of understanding. Celia’s face flushed with embarrassment. She looked at her sister’s angelic face angrily. Her mother sighed. “Come now, girls lets go and see what Father Christmas brought you this year.” Celia rolled her eyes. Isabelle just smiled her angel’s smile. They both followed their mother into the large sitting room. And Isabelle sat down gracefully on a velvet sofa, perfectly poised, her eyes dancing with amusement. Celia sat on the bright, beautiful Hand made rug, and stared into the fire. The flames danced about, as if taunting her, telling her she would never be as good as Isabelle.

“Well Celia?” her father asked, “Aren’t you going to open them?” He smiled and nodded towards the tree then leaned back in his chair. She moved closer to it and stared at the brightly wrapped presents under the twinkling tree. Hurriedly she handed them out, shoving them at Isabelle hoping to see her get frustrated. Isabelle, however, just graciously thanked her and leaned over elegantly to pick up the fallen gifts. Their mother stared at her adoringly, her eyes shining with pride for the oldest daughter, but never for Celia. Celia turned away before anyone could see the tears in her eyes and began to viciously unwrap her presents.

Isabelle opened her gifts slowly, admiring her fine jewellery and clothes her parents had bought her. Afterwards she got up and glided across the room to the piano. She [sic] beauty captured by the light from the chandeliers as she leaned back to drift along with the peacefully, perfect, music.

Celia tuned her attention back to her presents and a burst of anger shot out of her when she realised they had bought her a spinning top. A spinning top! How old did they think she was? She stood up swaying, her anger drowning her while her vision

clouded by her mother's obvious delight in her firstborn, and her father humming along to the music Isabelle had created. Celia clawed at the polished mahogany table, her nails digging deep into the expensive wood. "I AM NOT A CHILD!" she screamed at her parents as a sudden burst of anger shot through her body and words flew out of her open mouth. The music stopped. Her parents sat upright in their arm chairs, mouths hanging open with disbelief. Even Isabelle she saw with delight was staring at her, her eyes wide, her fingers hovering over the ivory piano keys, stunned that her little sister would dare contradict her parents. She didn't stop how ever words rushed through her mouth, her emotions running wild. "I AM NOT ISABELLE, AND I NEVER WILL BE!" she screeched at her gaping audience.

It was her mother that broke the spell. She sat up a little straighter in her chair and cleared her throat. "Now dear, I don't think that was called for." She said, the sternness in the voice rising slightly. "Do you?" Celia tamped [sic] her foot in frustration and ran from the room. She flew up the marble staircase, her feet barley [sic] touching the carpeted landing as she stumbled to her room, her vision blinded by tears. She threw her self down on her high four poster bed her velvet dress sprawled out on the bed like crushed petals underneath her. The silk cover rustled as she turned onto her side, quickly wiping the tears form her eyes. How could her parents be so unfair? How could they not see that she her own person. She was 16. She did not need to be treated like a child. This was Christmas after all, a family time, a time for sharing and understanding. And of course it wasn't *her* fault so it must be theirs! This is the way she saw it as she laid on her bed smothering herself in self pity .telling herself that she could do no wrong .but never *enough* either.

It was while she was laid there that she heard a creak, and her door opened slowly. Celia hastily turned over and pretended to be asleep trying to keep her breathing slow and regular, hoping her mother could not hear or sense the loud thudding of her heart. Her mother crept in, and tiptoed across the floor, her charcoal grey skirt swishing as she crossed the room. She sat down on the edge of the bed and smoothed her skirt. She leaned over and stroked Celia's hair. Her heart rate quickened. "Oh Celia" her mother sighed. "What a Christmas this has turned out to be, I'm sorry darling, we've thought about what you said, your daddy and me. And we understand how you feel. But Really Celia you have to change too. You demand for things rather than ask, which I suppose is our fault. But Isabelle, well, she's been away you see, to boarding school hasn't she. Her choice not ours mind. But you, you've been home schooled and haven't had the chance to realise real life as Isabelle has." Celia shivered and she raised her head, "I'm sorry mother", Celia choked. "I will try to control my temper in future, and be nicer to Isabelle, but really mother, I am not a child anymore and your gift today really upset me." Her mother sighed again. "I'm sorry Celia. Its just with Isabelle away so much and you here, my youngest .well it just seems like I don't want to let you grow up, for fear you will forget me, or you want need me, and I would miss that a lot Celia." Celia lifted her head and laughed at her mother. "Mummy! I'll always need you! Still you mightn't feel so happy about it later on!" and with that she giggled and pulled her mother up off the bed. Mother and Daughter descended down the stairs hand in hand, the joy of Christmas glowing from them both. Celia finally found accepted [sic], she felt loved, like a very special Christmas Angel.

The End