

## Christmas Spirit

A wealthy family of 8 lived in London, England, in a beautiful, white and brick mansion. They were the Brixtons. The mother, Catherine and the father, James had 4 daughters and 2 boys. Melanie, a 13 year old girl with straight, dirty blonde hair and green eyes. Charlotte, a 15 year old girl with dark brown locks of hair, freckles and brown eyes. Phoebe and Alistair, identical, 14 year old twins who had straight blonde hair and brown eyes. Benjamin, a 17 year old boy with freckles, straight, thick, brown hair and green eyes. And Gwendoline, a small, petite girl of 12 years old with light brown, long, straight hair and brown eyes. She had a sweet face but was sour and self-absorbed. One thing that every one of the children was, well, they were all a bit spoiled. Their dad was in a good business, in a very high position of the FDUK, the Financial Department of the United Kingdom. He was a lawyer in finance and got a very good pay for his job, but was out of the house early, and didn't come back until late at night. The mother was a famous singer and song-writer; she had a lovely, sweet voice and she never went flat nor did her voice crack, ever. All of the children went to Eton College and got a very good education there, all being very good students and extremely smart as well.

School let out at 3:15 and the girls would go to ballet and the boys would go to guitar, every day except Saturday and Sunday. Gwendoline, however, also did gymnastics on Saturdays and piano on Sundays, she loved all of her after-school activities dearly. Charlotte mostly did studying and school work on Sundays, but hung out with her friends and her boyfriend on Saturdays. Phoebe and Alistair were best of friends -not only twins- and played many funny games and created bizarre jokes to laugh about and pranks to trick people with, until 3pm to 5pm on Sundays when they did circus training together. Benjamin preferred to focus on his math, for, he wasn't the best at that particular subject, but wanted to become an accountant, following in similar steps to his father. Melanie was a shy, quiet girl who loved doing ballet, but always stayed up in her room for almost the entire weekend. What no one knew, except for the maid, Alice, was that she actually spent all of her time writing. Pencil and paper, ink and scrolls, computer and keys, she did it all. Melanie had written many books, romantic and fantastical, and many scripts, comical and tragical. Although the Brixtons had little talents they didn't know about each other, or secrets they daren't tell one another, they all stuck together, and were a good, well-bonded, jolly family.

We'll set the scene on a snowy Friday, two weeks before Christmas day in 2017. The kids were crossing a street, coming home from school, Benjamin and Charlotte leading the way like the mature, older siblings they were. Alistair and Phoebe were plotting their next prank to play on Eleanor Cooper, the popular girl in the fourth form. Gwendoline was talking to Melanie about her day. Melanie was always so calm, kind and didn't say much, for there was no need to when "there was a gorgeous planet to take in and a lovely life to theorise and think about" she would say. It's what kept her so quiet, and then she would write all of her thoughts down and turn them into personal novellas. Gwendoline, however, was chatty and vibrant, and though in school, she was a little arrogant and mean, with her family was where she behaved best. It was when she was in the company of her siblings and parents, that she felt no need to be bold, or to

scare people to get her ways or to act higher than everyone else. This was all because she felt so comfortable around her family, but insecure around her friends, fearing they would judge her.

Gwen asked what Melanie had done today and gotten a response that sounded something like, "Nothing much. I finished my English project, so now I don't have any homework for the weekend." Gwendoline shrugged at the plain, uninteresting response. The two young girls stayed quiet for the rest of the short walk home. Within five minutes, Ben was rapping at the door, ignoring the knocker. Alice answered the door, greeted the children and let them inside the big, beautiful house. Alice had been caring for all of the children for all of their lives, cooking for the family and keeping the house clean and tidy. Oh, what a lovely woman she was, someone that each one of the children, mother, and even father confided in. Father was sitting at the fireplace, reading papers, and Mother was reading her favorite book, *Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*, for the fifth time. She's read the whole series 4 times and -as the children assumed- was reading it for a fifth. Mother was a pretty, small, curly blonde-haired, brown-eyed woman who was bold, courageous and funny, yet at the same time, the most elegant, beautiful woman to ever walk the earth, so the children and father thought. Father was a sharp young man with brown, normally messy but now neat hair and freckles complimenting his face. He was strict, but fun, calm, smiley and wise.

With a quick hello, Ben and Charlotte went upstairs to their bedrooms and Alistair and Phoebe went downstairs to the basement, where they planned most of their tricks and jokes. Gwendoline and Melanie sat down in two comfy armchairs, across from their mother. Their big mansion was 3 stories high, with an attic and basement. There was a theatre, 8 bedrooms, mother and father sharing one, Phoebe and Alistair sharing another and two guest bedroom. Father looked up for a moment at the girls and told them to take the scones that mother had baked just an hour before, to their grandma who lived only two streets away. The girls put the scones in a basket and walked to their grandma's house. The children called their grandma nana and their grandpa, -who had been in the hospital for 2 months now because of a heart condition- grandad. The family would visit their grandad often and bring him his favorite chocolate muffins, baked by mother. Nana and Grandad were father's parents and had lived in France for a long time before, until father was 12. So father taught all of the children how to speak French, and now, they were all fluent. To this day, Nana only spoke French to the children, to make sure they were still practicing the fine language.

The girls walked silently to Nana's cute house and knocked on the door. Nana greeted them and let them inside with a smiley face, telling them to sit on the couch. She gasped with delight when she saw the basket filled to the brim with fresh scones. Gwen got up and went to the kitchen to grab butter, strawberry jam, plates and knives. They talked and ate the perfectly buttery and sweet scones for about 15 minutes, until Nana stopped the conversation to ask the girls a favour. She told them about a mother and her little girl who lived in an old and tattered cottage down the road. They were very poor and had little food, for the mother couldn't find any work and when she did it didn't pay much. Nana asked, very politely, if the girls could give them the rest of the scones, then telling them -in French- that it was the right thing to do. The girls thought and Gwen groaned but agreed to go and Nana sent them off with the rest of the butter, jam and scones and gave them each a kiss on the cheek and a piece of paper showing them directions to the little cottage.

The girls arrived at a very small cottage on the corner of a street, where the little chimney had steam puffing out of it. After knocking on the door, a woman with red hair in a messy bun and green eyes answered the door looking very tired. The girls introduced themselves and the woman told them that her name was Emily. Emily invited the girls into their small home with an oven, two burner stove, fridge and freezer, a couch, a queen bed and a single bed, squeezed into two very tiny rooms, a two-seater table, a brick fireplace in which a warm fire was now starting to dim out, and a small bathroom with a browned sink, a toilet and a shower. There was no T.V. no microwave, no desk and no air conditioning or heating system. Gwen's heart sunk and for the first time in forever, thought of how much she had and how little others might have had. A little girl with straight red hair and blue eyes came running over to meet the visitors, introducing herself with a big smile and an outstretched hand for the girls to shake. She said her name was Holly. The girls handed them the basket of scones and then asked if they knew Nana. Emily and Holly answered yes with a sweet smile and Gwen and Melanie said that she was their grandma. After that, the four fell into deep conversation until Gwen looked down at her watch realizing that they had been there chatting for 2 hours now! The girls said their goodbyes and left swiftly, running home.

Once home and comfortable in her big room, Gwendoline thought about Emily and Holly, about how much she had and how little they had. She looked around her room and thought that the size of her room was only a little smaller than their little cottage. After meeting the sute mother and daughter, and seeing how content they were with what they had, how they appreciated the small amount of things they had in their life and instead, here was Gwen being rude, ungrateful, uncaring and unthoughtful she was, yet she had so many great things in her life. A big house, amazing siblings, a kind family, an amazing education, she could go on all day listing all the great things she had. Gwen couldn't actually stop thinking about Emily and Holly, so she decided to go and see them again tomorrow since she had nothing planned for her Saturday, but to laze around.

In the morning, before anyone had woken up, she walked up to the grocery store and got some pancake mix. She whipped up some pancakes for breakfast for her whole family that morning, starting to think about others and not just herself anymore. After that, she made some brownies that she could take up to the cottage. After about another hour of being in the kitchen, with a tray of fresh brownies in hand, she went to see Emily and Holly. Emily and Holly were excited to see her again and marveled at the brownies. Handing out the brownies, Gwen started up a conversation about what they were going to do for christmas, but there was nothing planned but a small Christmas celebration between the two of themselves, so Gwen came the next day as well. This time, she brought Alistair and Phoebe, who helped carry a Christmas tree that Gwena and her Nana had purchased for the small, quite bare cottage. Holly squealed when she saw the tree and Emily had a few tears. Not only that, but Gwen had also brought them red and green baubles and candy canes to decorate the tree with. After decorating the tree and many thanks from the little family, Gwendoline started asking what the two of them wanted for Christmas. Holly had four things in mind, a barbie doll, new pyjamas, a pair of slippers and for her mother to not always be overtired. Emily wanted a television and some makeup. Later on, when Gwen went home, she smiled to herself thinking of a plan. She looked at a piece of paper on her desk on which she had written her wishes for the christmas. Looking over it, she rolled

her eyes at her greedy old self, crumpled the paper and threw it in the bin. She grabbed a new piece of paper and started scribbling down her new wishlist, although it wasn't really hers. She was writing all that Holly wanted and the two things the Emily wanted.

There was one thing troubling little Gwen, however. Holly had really wanted for her mother to not always be so overtired. She finally decided that she'd get Emily a coffee maker and some coffee pods for each morning. She put her list under the tree and then went up to her father asking for a bit of money to buy some Christmas gifts for Emily and Holly to give to each other. Gwen invited Charlotte with her to give her some advice on what to buy. The girls went to a little shop and bought a gorgeous long white dress with hand sewn butterflies at the bottom for Holly to give to her mother. Then, they went to a bookshop and bought 3 books, *The Lion The Witch and The Wardrobe*, *The Princess Bride* and *Matilda* for Emily on Christmas day. She wrapped both gifts up thoughtfully and met up with them to secretly and separately give them the gifts for one another. Come Christmas day, through lots of snow and caroling Gwen woke up and ran outside of her bedroom. She saw Melanie with the same excited look on her face, together they ran downstairs to see the Christmas tree with loads of individually wrapped little presents underneath. After only 10 minutes, everyone was awake, bustling downstairs excited to unwrap all of the gifts. Mother and Father noticed that Gwen wasn't opening any of her presents, so she explained the whole thing to them about her wanting to be nice, do good deeds and wanting to give more than wanting to get.

Mother and Father hugged her proudly, then suggested that they invite Emily and Holly over. So Gwen skipped out of the house to the cottage and found Emily and Holly enjoying the gifts they'd given each other. Emily had the lovely white dress on and Holly had opened up *Matilda*. Gwen took them over to their house where they were politely greeted and introduced to the whole family. Gwen handed the two their presents, they were both so surprised. When all of the gifts were opened and all of both Emily and Holly's wishes had come true, Emily cried and thanked the family again and again, and Holly hugged Gwen so tightly, she could feel the happiness in Holly's heart bouncing off into her own. Then, Emily and Holly both smiled at each other and handed Gwen a square little gift. Silently, she unwrapped it and found a cookbook inside with tons of recipes waiting to be cooked. Gwen was so happy because she dearly love to bake and now she could learn to cook for her family too! That night, they had a wonderful feast and when it was time for Emily and Holly to leave, all of Gwen's siblings helped bring all of the new little gifts to their house.

From now on, Gwen was not a spoiled, mean, unkind child who never cared about anyone else's feelings, she was quite the opposite. And this Christmas was, for sure, the best of them all.

*-The End-*