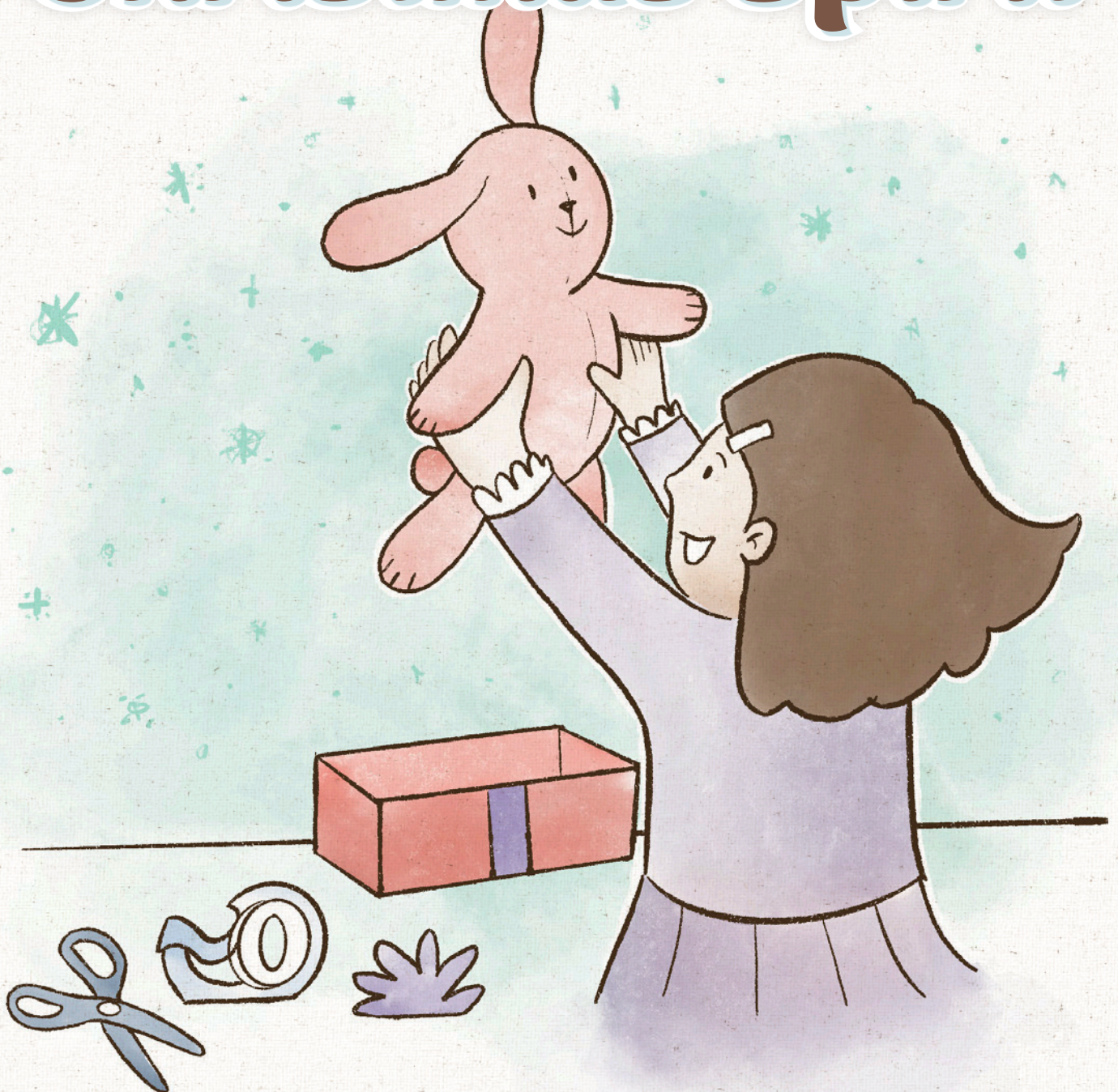


Special Bunny AND Christmas Spirit



WRITTEN BY Dede Nicholson | ILLUSTRATED BY Laurisha Blackstock

Once upon a time there was a little girl who lived with her mom and dad and lots of older brothers and sisters.

One day when she was two years old, Little Girl met a very special bunny while she was out shopping with her mom.



Much to Mom's surprise, Special Bunny had decided to come live with them and he was discovered all snuggled in the stroller with Little Girl when they arrived home. (But that's a story for another time.)

Special Bunny and Little Girl were best of friends for many, many years.

During those years, a great sadness fell over Little Girl and her family. Everyone loved the best they could and tried the best they could, but the family broke apart.

It was a very dark and scary time.

When Little Girl was nine years old, she went to live with her dad and her big sister. With no mom around and a dad who was often away on business trips, Big Sister, who was not very old herself, had to be very responsible. She went to school and took care of the house. And she had to watch over Little Girl.

Big Sister carried a heavy burden and sometimes felt afraid.



That December, Christmas Spirit came. Little Girl decided she wanted to give Jesus a present – it was his birthday after all. But it had to be a very special present. Nothing was more special than Special Bunny!

On Christmas Eve, Little Girl carefully wrapped Special Bunny and gently placed him under the tree. She knew and believed with all her heart that Special Bunny would not be there in the morning.



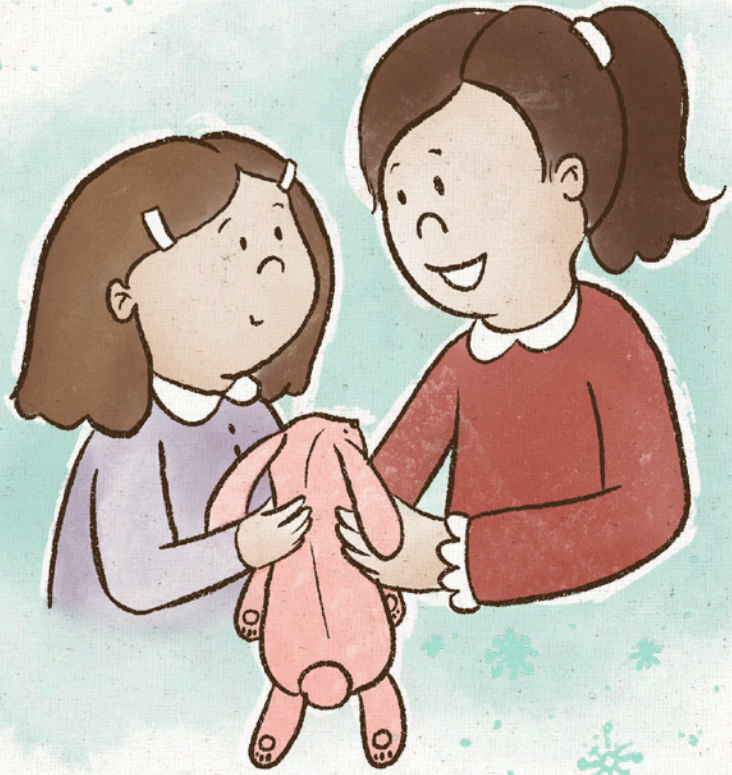
Christmas morning came and Little Girl didn't even notice the abundance of toys that Santa brought. All she could see was Special Bunny – still wrapped and still under the tree. Her heart sank and she felt very disappointed. Didn't Jesus want his present?

Big Sister had not been aware of Little Girl's plan, so she didn't know what to do or how to comfort her.

That's when Christmas Spirit gave Big Sister a message for Little Girl.



“I have a message for you Little Girl,” Big Sister said. “Jesus loves his present very much. He says it’s the best present ever, but Special Bunny loves you and would miss you terribly. Special Bunny needs you. So he wants to know, would you please take care of Special Bunny for him? Always remember how much he loves Special Bunny, how much he loves your present and how much he loves YOU!”



Christmas Spirit is real. Christmas Spirit takes us out of ourselves and carries our burdens. Christmas Spirit is light in the dark, scary places. Christmas Spirit is comfort in the painful places. Christmas Spirit is with us and for us.

Christmas Spirit is Jesus, Immanuel, God with us.

Little Girl is Grandmother now. She still has Special Bunny and she still has the memories. But even better than that, she has Jesus.

All these years later, Little Girl and Big Sister both have Jesus and Jesus has them!

