

A Magic Gift

Special holiday wand works wonders | BY KIM COOPER FINDLING

When my daughter was 6, she put one thing and one thing only on her holiday wish list. "Dear Santa," Libby wrote on a piece of pink stationery in her first-grade-best handwriting, "I want a magic wand for Christmas. One that is very beautiful and fits in my pocket." Before she signed off, she added, "Please can I have one that *really works*?"

I was stymied. Even if Santa brought her a wand, what would happen if it didn't work the way she wanted it to? "Is there anything else you want to add to the list?" I asked her.

"Nope," she replied. "That's it." She sealed the letter and put it in the mail.

A week later, I took her to see the Santa at the mall, hoping a conversation with the big guy might reveal some other desired gift. But, no. "I want a magic wand, please," she declared to Santa definitively. "One that fits in my pocket, is very beautiful and *really works*."

As the holiday approached, I fretted more and more. Finally, on Christmas Eve, I decided that Santa would do the best he could. I crossed my fingers and tried not to stress too much about it. In the morning, Libby found a slim package wrapped in silvery paper by her stocking. Inside was a narrow wand, light pink in color and bedecked with a smattering of glittering rhinestones.

With it was a note: "Libby, I heard your request for a magic wand. I know that you wanted it to be a certain size for your pocket and to be extraordinarily beautiful, and to create real magic. Unfortunately, despite all of the magic I bring along for the ride every Christmas night, I am not able to pass it on to other people, even the children I love. I am giving you this wand anyway, with an important message: You are capable of making magic of your own."

"It might not be like the magic in the fairy movies or on TV, but every human is able to make magic from the love in their own heart. If you believe this, you can make magic every day—magic that is real and that matters. All you need to do is ask your heart what it's trying to tell you. This wand should get you started. Love, Santa."

As my daughter read the message, I thought I saw a tiny note of disappointment pass over her face. I held my breath. Then she leapt up, waved the wand in the air and said, "I am a fairy!"

With a flourish, she waved the magic wand over her little sister's head. "Now you're a fairy!" Four-year-old Maris threw her arms in the air, delighted. She buzzed around the room, smiling and "flying" with her arms extended.

Amazingly, the magic wand *really worked*. Libby made all sorts of magic with that thing. After all of the gifts had been unwrapped, Libby said to her sister, "Let's go make our room into a fairy kingdom." And it was so. At naptime, she waved the wand over her sister's head and said, "Make Maris the Fairy sleepy." Maris slept. At bedtime, Libby waved the wand over my head. "Make Mommy a fairy mommy who sings to me." I sang her a lullaby until she fell asleep, the wand still clasped in her fingers.

The magic-fairy phase lasted for a couple of years, and Libby used her wand to create wonderful make-believe, and to spread love and goodness as "magic" to her friends and family. Eventually, fairies gave way to other pursuits, and the wand was tucked away.

Then, a few months ago, Libby, now 11, started middle school. My sweet first-grader had become a competent, bright sixth-grader. The first week of school, her art teacher asked the students to decorate a paper bag and collect items that represented themselves, to share with the class. As is the case these days, Libby

handled the task herself. She told me about it after the fact.

Libby stood before her peers and held up a wand. The wand looked tinier in her hand than five years before, and a few of the jewels had fallen off. No matter. "This is my magic wand," she proclaimed to the class. "It reminds me that everyone has a little bit of magic inside themselves. All you need to do is listen to your heart, and you can make magic."

When she told me this story, I gave her a huge hug, feeling amazed and proud. The wand and its accompanying message had produced magic that had endured over the years and been bravely extended to a middle school classroom.

But isn't that the way magic works? It's always available to treasure and to share, whenever we remember it. Love and goodwill and kindness and even benevolent make-believe are forever inside us, just waiting to be invited out. All we have to do is ask our heart what it is trying to tell us.

Kim Cooper Findling and her daughters make magic in Central Oregon.

