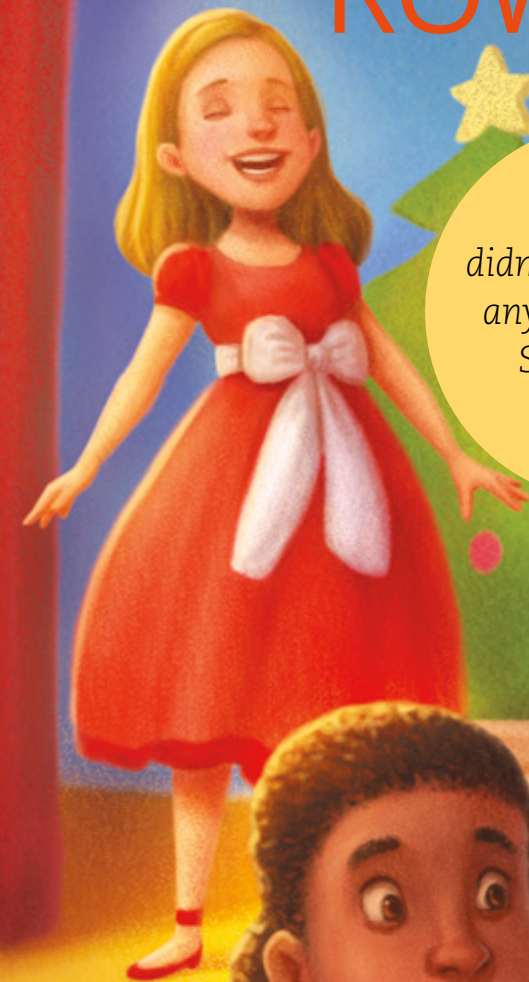


The Star of THE SECOND ROW

Charlotte
didn't mean to hurt
anyone's feelings.
She was just
talking!



By Charlotte Larcabal

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(Based on a true story)

“Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones” (Proverbs 16:24).

It was 10 minutes until show time.

Piles of fake snow covered the stage. Shiny ornaments sparkled. It was the annual Christmas show, and Charlotte was the star. Well, that’s what Mom told her. But Charlotte knew the star of the show doesn’t stand in the second row of the choir.

She *would’ve* been the star if the director had given her the big solo.

Near the end of the show, one singer got to sing a song all by herself. Charlotte had wanted to sing that solo more than anything. But she didn’t get to. Brianna did. And it just wasn’t fair. Everyone said Brianna had a beautiful voice, but Charlotte didn’t think Brianna sounded *that* good.

Charlotte plopped down next to Anne, Stacey, and Jenny. They all wore the same glittery green dresses. Charlotte thought that together they looked like a giant Christmas wreath.

“Brianna is so lucky,” Anne was saying. “They’re going to have all the spotlights on her.”

Charlotte wished they were talking about *her*. That she was the one in the spotlights.

“She looks kinda nervous,” Stacey said. “Maybe she’ll pass out!”

They all giggled.

“I don’t know why she got the solo,” Charlotte said. “She can’t even sing that well.”

As soon as she said it, Charlotte felt guilty. She knew she shouldn’t say mean things about anyone. But she liked the way her friends grinned at her. They had all wanted Brianna’s solo too.

Just then, their choir director swept in. “Places!” she called. “It’s show time!”

They followed her to the stage, and the show began.

Charlotte was surprised at how much fun she had. She liked singing—even from the second row. And she had to admit, Brianna did a great job. But when the show was over, she saw Brianna run from the stage.

Was she crying?

Charlotte remembered what she had said about Brianna and felt guilty again. But Brianna hadn’t heard, so it didn’t matter, right?

So why was Brianna crying?

“I’ve gotta tell you something.” Stacey grabbed Charlotte’s hand and pulled her into the changing room. “Jenny told Brianna you said she’s a bad singer.”

Charlotte felt like a lump of coal dropped into her stomach. *Maybe that’s why Brianna was crying. Oh no.* She hurried out of the room.

Charlotte hadn’t meant to hurt anyone. She was just talking! Why would Jenny tell Brianna? It was all Jenny’s fault!

But that wasn’t true. Charlotte knew she shouldn’t have said what she did.

Charlotte felt sick. She wanted to go home. Maybe she could just avoid Brianna. Forever.

She sighed. She knew what she had to do.

Charlotte walked outside. She saw Brianna with her family. It looked like she was still crying. Charlotte really didn’t want to face them all, but this was the right thing to do. She prayed for help and walked toward them.

“Brianna, can I talk to you?”

Everyone looked at Charlotte. They didn’t look very happy to see her, but Brianna nodded and followed Charlotte.

“Brianna, I know Jenny told you what I said, and I’m sorry,” Charlotte said.

“It was mean,” Brianna said, looking down.

“I know. And it wasn’t true. You’re a great singer,” Charlotte said. “Can you forgive me?”

Brianna smiled a little. “Do you think I did OK?”

Charlotte nodded. “You were amazing! The star of the show!”

She gave Brianna a hug before she went to find her family. Charlotte looked back to see Brianna smiling.

“Hey, Charlotte!” Brianna yelled as she got into her car. “Merry Christmas!”

Charlotte smiled. Heavenly Father had answered her prayer. Her guilty, jealous feelings were replaced with happiness that sparkled as bright as any star. ●