

# Annabelle

a PHP Short



Nancy Christie

# *Annabelle*

by Nancy Christie

## **Excerpt**

This free excerpt consists of the first couple of pages of *Annabelle*, which is available as an eBook short story from [Amazon](#), [Apple iBookstore](#), [Barnes & Noble](#) and other online bookstores.

[PixelHallPress.com/Annabelle.html](http://PixelHallPress.com/Annabelle.html)

It is also one of the 18 stories by Nancy Christie in [\*Traveling Left of Center and Other Stories\*](#) which will be published in September 2014



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“My father was a painter,” Annabelle had said—was it at the second session or the third?—“and my mother would pose for him.”

Annabelle remembered watching her father paint in the cold, clear light filtering into his studio. He used canvas and oils the way God had used clay, creating life from inanimate objects. The walls of the house were hung with his paintings—those his agent could not convince him to release—and everywhere Annabelle looked, her mother’s dark eyes would follow her, glowing on the canvas.

Sometimes, after a long session in the studio, her mother would be pale and weak, barely able to stand, so colorless that one would think her a ghost. The portraits, by contrast, were pulsing with life. Annabelle had feared that her father was drawing the very lifeblood from her mother, leaving behind an empty shell.

And yet, her mother gloried in the attention, willingly changing herself into any figure her husband desired, just to be able to stand there, caught by his passion, while he painted.

His work sold quite well in galleries across the country, but even if it had not, her father would have continued to paint, and her mother to pose.

And Annabelle-the-child would be standing, somewhere just outside their line of sight, watching. And waiting.

“Did your father never paint *you*, Anna?” Jules’ question was spoken so softly in the darkened room that it almost seemed the words originated in Annabelle’s mind, and she answered them just to hear her own voice echoing in the darkness.

Annabelle blushed, an ugly red stain against her pale skin. “He did not paint children,” she answered hesitantly, not adding that once she had asked—begged!—her father to paint her.

She had been young, five or six, and perhaps a little jealous of the attention given her mother during those endless sessions in the studio. Just once, she wanted her father to look at her with the intensity he

reserved for his wife—to fix her so clearly on the canvas that there was no possibility of her ceasing to exist.

The promises she had made—“I won’t move! I won’t even breathe if you would just paint me!”—were all in vain. Her father had looked at her absently, his brush suspended in mid-stroke, and Annabelle realized in that moment that he wasn’t at all certain who she was or why she was there in his studio.

Her mother, with gentle, insistent fingers, had urged her reluctant daughter from the room, promising “another time, darling. You’re too young to be a model for your father’s art. He needs someone a little older, more knowledgeable. You are still unformed, innocent... too young. You must wait,” and then the door closed and Annabelle was left outside while her mother went back to pose for her husband.

Sometimes, when Annabelle remembered that moment, she almost hated her mother. She had wanted her chance, and her mother wouldn’t let her have it. Perhaps she should have argued or cried. She didn’t want to wait. She wanted her father to see her *now*.

But Annabelle was a good child, an obedient daughter. Her mother said she must wait. Therefore, she would wait. If not for her father, then someone else—some other man who would be drawn to her like a moth to a candle. It would happen. Her mother had promised.

“But when?” and she was unaware she had spoken aloud until she saw Jules’ raised eyebrows and understood he had not been following her thoughts.

“When will it happen? My mother,” she explained awkwardly, twisting her hands together until the knuckles gleamed whitely in the lamplight, “my mother promised me a lover...someone like my father. She said I was beautiful, that men would follow me wherever I went. She used to call me her own ‘lovely Annabelle’.

“Sometimes she would lie with me and twist our long hair together into one long rope and you couldn’t tell, not really, which was my mother’s hair and which was mine. I was a pretty child then...‘lovely Annabelle,’” and then she fell silent.

Lovely Annabelle she once was, but Anna was what she had become—the long curls cut short, the golden strands darkened and dirty-looking, the blue eyes washed to some indeterminate shade of gray.

There was no one left who remembered Annabelle, and no one who particularly cared about Anna. Although once, there had been a rose, sent by a man she hardly knew, who worked in the office next to hers....

#### END OF EXCERPT

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#### ABOUT NANCY CHRISTIE

Nancy Christie's essays and fiction can be found on the pages of magazines as diverse as [Full of Crow](#), [Fiction365](#), [Red Fez](#), [Wanderings](#), [The Chaffin Journal](#), [Woman's Day](#), [Experience Life](#), [Tai Chi](#), [Writer's Digest](#) and [Xtreme](#). Christie's book, [The Gifts of Change](#) (Beyond Words/Atria), explores ways to make the most out of life's challenges. She is currently working on several book projects: a novel, a short story collection and a book for writers.

A member of the [American Society of Journalists and Authors](#), Christie writes articles for print and online publications as well as handles copywriting for corporations and marketing/advertising firms. She also teaches writing workshops at writing conferences and schools across the country and hosts the monthly Monday Night Writers group in Canfield, OH. You may connect with her on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) or her [blog](#).

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