

THE BATTLE FOR  
**AUNT JANE**

by Matthew Collins illustrated by Nancy Cote



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▶ “Do you think Aunt Jane will remember me?” asked Chris.

“Of course,” Mom said, chuckling to herself.

▶ “She hasn’t seen me since I was four, and that was four years ago,” said Chris. “I’ve changed a lot.”

▶ “Don’t worry,” said Mom. “I’ve been sending pictures, and she can’t wait to see you.”

▶ They heard a loud clattering on the stairs, and Olivia burst into the kitchen.

“Is she awake yet?” Olivia asked breathlessly.





▶ “No, we got in late, and your aunt is tired from her long flight,” replied Mom.

▶ Chris and Olivia had tried to wait for Mom to return from the airport with Aunt Jane, but it got very late. Dad said they could see her in the morning.

▶ “Good morning, everybody!”

They turned around, and there was Aunt Jane. She looked a little sleepy but had a big smile on her face.

▶ “How did you get so big?” exclaimed Aunt Jane.

▶ “Aunt Jane, do you like French toast?”  
asked Olivia.

“It’s my favorite!” replied Aunt Jane.

▶ “It’s my favorite, too, and I know how to make it,” said Olivia. “Mom, can I make French toast for Aunt Jane?”

▶ Mom said yes, and she and Olivia went to work. Chris served Aunt Jane a glass of orange juice, but it wasn’t the same. He felt left out as Aunt Jane praised Olivia’s French toast.





After breakfast, they listened to Aunt Jane tell about her most recent trip. She was a photographer who traveled all over the world taking pictures for magazines. She pointed out the places she had been on Olivia's globe.

Aunt Jane went upstairs to get some pictures that she'd taken. When she returned, Chris rushed to sit next to her. Olivia glared at him. She squeezed in next to Mom to make sure she was on Aunt Jane's other side.

When Aunt Jane went upstairs to unpack, Chris and Olivia eagerly followed Aunt Jane to her room. She handed Olivia a small statue of a horse and Chris a small statue of an elephant. They came from Thailand and were made of a green stone called jade. Olivia and Chris thanked Aunt Jane, and Olivia ran to put her statue in her room.

Chris hesitated for a brief moment, and then he said, “I take pictures, too. Would you like to see them?”



🔊 Chris led Aunt Jane to his room and showed her pictures he had taken on family vacations. Aunt Jane was very encouraging, pointing out things she liked about each one.

🔊 Olivia found Chris and Aunt Jane and said, “I had a story published in the newspaper. Do you want to read it?”

“Absolutely!” said Aunt Jane.

🔊 Aunt Jane read the story and told Olivia how good it was. Chris stared at Olivia, annoyed, and Olivia smiled back.







▶ After lunch, they went to the town swimming pool. Olivia demonstrated all her swimming strokes, and Chris jumped off the high dive.

▶ Later on, Mom took Aunt Jane out to meet some old friends. While they were out, Olivia took Aunt Jane's laundry out of the dryer and folded it for her. Chris picked flowers from the garden. Dad helped him get a vase, and Chris put them in Aunt Jane's room.



▶ That night, Chris walked by Olivia's room. She was on her bed, working on something.

▶ "What are you doing?" asked Chris.

"Nothing," replied Olivia.

Chris walked in and looked. Olivia was stringing together beads.

▶ "You're making a necklace for Aunt Jane," said Chris.

"I'm trying to concentrate," said Olivia.

▶ "I bet she doesn't even like necklaces. I've never seen her wear one," said Chris.

Chris went on his computer and found the pictures he had taken. He added captions, printed them on good paper, and put them together into a book.

It was the last day of Aunt Jane's visit. The family was going out to dinner. Chris and Olivia got dressed and waited downstairs for their parents and Aunt Jane.

Chris saw that Olivia had her neatly wrapped present, so he ran and got his gift. Olivia looked annoyed and declared, "I'm giving mine first."



▶ “Not if I give mine first,” replied Chris.

“It was my idea, so I’m going first,”  
insisted Olivia.

▶ Chris grabbed Olivia’s gift and ran off with Olivia chasing right after him. She managed to grab one end of the package, and they both pulled. Suddenly, the package ripped, and beads from the broken necklace tumbled to the floor.

▶ Olivia ran to the sofa and snatched Chris’s book. Chris grabbed the other end, and they tugged on it until it ripped, too.





▶ Mom, Dad, and Aunt Jane hurried into the room. “He broke my present for Aunt Jane,” sobbed Olivia.

▶ “She wrecked my present, too!” said Chris.

“She keeps trying to make Aunt Jane like her better!” shouted Chris.

▶ “He’s doing it, too!” yelled Olivia.

▶ Aunt Jane sat down on the sofa between Chris and Olivia. She said in a soothing voice, “Olivia, I don’t like you better than Chris, and Chris, I don’t like you better than Olivia. I love you both the same.”






▶ “It’s not a contest, and I think I’m very lucky to know and love both of you,” continued Aunt Jane.

▶ Aunt Jane helped them pick up the mess they had made. “Perhaps we can fix these when we get home,” said Aunt Jane. “Now my best present is to have a good time tonight.”

▶ She took each one’s hand, and they all walked out the door together, at the exact same time.





## Think Critically

-  1. What happens when Aunt Jane comes to visit?
-  2. When do you first realize that Chris and Olivia are competing for Aunt Jane's attention?
-  3. How does Aunt Jane act when Chris and Olivia try to do different things for her?
-  4. Why does Chris tell Olivia that he's never seen Aunt Jane wear a necklace?
-  5. Do you agree with Aunt Jane's point that she can love both of them the same?

### Social Studies

**Write a Travel Booklet** Aunt Jane has traveled to many different places. Where would you go if you could go anywhere in the world? Find out about the place. Then write a few paragraphs about it for a travel booklet.

  **School-Home Connection** Ask family members to share some photos or stories from when they were growing up. Ask about who is in each photo or story and what your family members remember about that time.