

Transcript

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[introduction music]

Welcome to Easy Stories in English, the podcast that will take your English from OK to Good, and from Good to Great.

I am Ariel Goodbody, your host for this show. Today's story is for intermediate learners. The name of the story is *Sisters, Sisters*. You can find a transcript of the episode at EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Sisters. That's EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Sisters. There, you can also download the episode as a PDF.

Today's story is quite long, so I'm going to do the same thing that I did for [The Boy Who Knew No Fear](#) and split it into two parts, leaving the vocabulary explanations for part two at the end of part one. You might even want to take a break between the two parts, or listen to part two on a different day.

This story is inspired by a traditional folk song, *The Two Sisters*, but I decided to put the story in a modern setting, as I haven't written too many stories on the podcast set in the present day. The original story is about two sisters who argue by a river, because they are both in love with the same man, and the older sister pushes the other into the water and she drowns. Later, someone makes a harp, a musical instrument, out of the bones and hair of the dead sister, and she plays herself and sings the song of what happened, revealing that her sister murdered her.

My version of the story is *quite* different, but it's still all to do with music. The title *Sisters, Sisters* is a reference to a song from the film *White Christmas*. The song goes [plays *Sisters*]. It is a classic **showtune**. Showtunes are songs from musicals, often from old Hollywood films.

The sisters in my story are inspired by the sisters from this song. When I did some research into it, I found out that the two actresses who performed it were Rosemary Clooney and Vera-Ellen. However, Vera-Ellen's voice was not used for the song, and they used the voice of Trudy Stevens instead. I'm sure Vera-Ellen was not too happy about this! This idea inspired parts of my story as well.

Finally, just one more cultural reference I want to mention: at one part of the story, the characters visit Vienna, the capital city of Austria. Many tourists come to Vienna because they are interested in Empress Elisabeth of Austria, who was the last empress of Austria, and was assassinated in 1898. Elisabeth's nickname is Sisi, and I found out when I visited Vienna that a lot of tourists love Sisi and learning all about her, which I thought was interesting.

OK, I'll just explain some words that are in part one of today's story.

A **fiddle** is a string instrument. Actually, a fiddle is the same as a violin, but just an old-fashioned word for it. Fiddles are played with a long stick that has hair on it called a **bow**.

Sprinkles are little colourful sweet things that you put on ice cream. They're also called **hundreds and thousands** or **jimmies**. Children often have sprinkles on their ice cream, as it looks pretty and tastes good. You can also get cakes covered with sprinkles.

If you **keep your nose clean**, it means you stay out of trouble. When a criminal leaves prison, the police might tell them to keep their nose clean to avoid going back in prison. In this story, none of our characters are very good at keeping their noses clean...

A **compliment** is when you say something nice about someone else. For example, 'Oh, you look nice today!' or 'You're really good at cooking!' Some people are good at accepting compliments, and some people find it very hard to accept compliments.

When you like someone romantically, and you want them to know that you like them, you can **flirt**. For example, you might tell someone that they are very pretty, or give them presents, or laugh at all their jokes. I used to think I was bad at flirting, but I think I'm pretty good now. You just have to be confident! The only problem is, I often can't tell when someone is flirting with me.

When you **pinch** someone, you pull together some of their skin between your fingers. It hurts quite a bit. When something really amazing happens to you, you might say, 'Pinch me, I'm dreaming!' because you think that it must be a dream, and that if someone pinches you, you will wake up. Or, you can just pinch yourself.

When a bird flies, it **flaps** its wings, moves them up and down. Butterflies and other insects also flap their wings to move. If a flag is standing in the wind, it will probably flap about. When you are reading outside, the wind sometimes flaps the pages of your book, and it can be very annoying.

When we talk about art, such as music and novels, we often describe it by saying it's **X meets Y**. For example, if you read a book about wizards who go on spy missions, you might say it's '*Harry Potter* meets *James Bond*'. Or, if you hear a song with a great rap about breaking up with your boyfriend, you might say it's 'Nicki Minaj meets Taylor Swift'. These combinations all sound pretty terrible, don't they?

A **broadsheet** is a type of newspaper. Broadsheets tend to be bigger, and more serious than other newspapers. In fact, non-broadsheet newspapers are often referred to as tabloids, and they have very stupid stories in them. Some broadsheets in the UK are *The Guardian*, *The Times* and *The Telegraph*. Some tabloids in the UK are the *Daily Mail*, *The Sun* and the *Daily Mirror*.

A **note** is a single sound in music. For example, [sings one note]. Notes can be long or short, and they can be high or low. In the UK, the seven main notes are called CDEFGAB. When it comes to the names for different lengths of notes, it gets a bit more complicated. In American English, they use a very simple system: whole note, half note, quarter note, eighth note etc. But in the UK, we like to suffer, so we call them: semibreve, minim, crotchet, quaver, semiquaver, demisemiquaver and hemidemisemiquaver. Anyway, when I found out that the much simpler American system existed, I was quite angry!

A **hike** is a very long walk in the mountains. When you go hiking, you usually wear special hiking boots, bring a packed lunch, a big bottle of water, and put on plenty of suncream! In my family, we go on hiking holidays quite a lot.

OK, so listen and enjoy!

Sisters, Sisters

Part One

Bottle and a cap

Fiddle and a bow

Sprinkles on ice cream

and Christmas with snow

We go together like sisters

'Cause that's what we are

My name is Angeline

I always keep my nose clean

And my name is Annabelle

I'm the one with all of the brain cells...

Annabelle had hoped that tonight would be different. It was Friday, and the bar was packed for once. But as they sang, they got the usual uninterested stares. Still, a performer knew to keep smiling until the end. So she didn't let the crowd see her disappointment.

That was never a problem for Angeline, of course. Whenever she performed, she went into a different world, and she was the only one who existed. Well, generally for Angeline, she was the only one who existed.

After the show, they got the usual light applause, and they were quickly led off-stage. Angeline smiled like an angel as always, and went to the bar to buy them some drinks. Of course, she didn't manage to order any before some men showed up to buy them for her. Annabelle waited behind—Angie would accept every drink offered, and give half of them to Annabelle.

Anna couldn't be mad. Angie was beautiful, with her silky blonde hair and smile like the sun. But it still hurt. If just one person came up to compliment Anna's singing or songwriting skills, she might feel OK. But Angie got all the compliments, whether about her beauty or her singing voice. It was mostly just flirting, of course, but Angie drank it up like a dying man finding water in a desert.

'Can I buy you a drink?'

Anna ignored the voice, thinking it must have been directed at someone else, until she realised the man was talking to her. He was a short guy, with balding brown hair and tired eyes. He looked like he worked eighty hours a week. Not the kind of guy you usually found in this small-town bar.

'Sure,' said Anna, pleased to have any kind of attention. 'I'll have a martini.'

The man laughed and shook his head. 'You really are a traditionalist, huh?'

'What do you mean?'

'I'm guessing you wrote the song? I mean, your sister almost forgot the words halfway through.'

Anna smiled weakly. Angie *did* sometimes get lost in the music.

'Yes, I wrote it.'

'You're clearly talented. I like the part about "keeping your nose clean".' He sneezed theatrically. 'But it's very... well, I guess "old Hollywood" is a nice way to put it. It's very Clooney and Vera-Ellen.'

'And which one of us is Vera-Ellen?'

The man laughed. 'I see you know your history. Let me get that drink.'

Anna felt sick as she waited. This was *just* the kind of man she did not want to talk to. He pretended he was complimenting her, but really he was insulting her. Well, she wasn't going to smile and be nice like Angie.

The man handed her the martini glass, and she took a big drink and then said, 'Listen, I don't come here and perform to be insulted by short balding men who look like they've been divorced three times. Thank you for the drink, but this conversation is over.'

She turned to walk away, but the man spoke.

'I was going to make you an offer.'

She froze.

'What kind of *offer*?'

'The Hollywood kind. New Hollywood, that is. That's my job, finding rising stars.'

Anna's face burned. She so badly wanted to keep her pride, to walk away and never come back. But she had to know.

So she turned around.

'I'm listening.'

'Look, you're clearly both talented, but you're the brain cells and she's the... sprinkles on the ice cream, shall we say?'

Anna almost wanted to defend her sister against the insult, but it was true.

'So that's why I'm talking to you. With your songwriting skills, and her looks and voice, you could break into the pop market. I know it's not the kind of song and dance you love, but—'

'*Her* voice? We wouldn't be singing together?'

He shook his head. 'It's a different time. Solo artists are way more successful these days. Look, I know your type. You're in this for the art, right? But I bet that, right now, you're working some terrible minimum wage job and living in a tiny apartment, and if this singing thing doesn't work out, you're eventually gonna have to quit.'

Anna said nothing, because it was true. Her and Angeline shared a small apartment, where Anna could hear every word spoken between her and her male visitors. Not to mention, the bills were piling up.

'Nobody wants to give up on their art, but we've got to be realistic. Did you know that songwriters make more money than singers? You can do it for a few years, save up, buy a nice house in the Bahamas and go back to singing your **showtunes**.'

'You... really think we could be that successful?'

'I know talent when I see it. Here, take my card. Call me if you decide you want to see the world.'

The man handed her his business card. Harry McElroy. By the time she looked up, he was gone. Behind where he'd been standing, she saw her sister, laughing and chatting with three men.

'Oh, you'll come to our next show? What a gentleman!'

Anna knew it was all lies. The men only wanted to come to her bedroom, not her shows. Angie knew it, too, but she didn't care. She didn't need success like Anna, just some nice compliments here and there, and when that got boring, some more direct flirting.

Well, Anna was sick of it. She drank her martini, waited for her sister to get bored, and then suggested they go home.

In the taxi—which they could barely afford, but Angie hated getting the bus—Angie fell asleep on Anna's shoulder. She really did look like an angel.

Anna held the business card in her hand, reading it again and again like it might change in front of her eyes.

Money wasn't everything, but it was sure better than what she had now.

'I told you, Annabelle. *Butterfly Head* is a big hit. You can say "sorry" now.'

The three of them—Annabelle, Angeline and Harry—were sitting in the recording studio. Angeline's first single, *Butterfly Head*, had just come out, and was climbing the charts.

'Oh, Anna, can you believe it?' said Angeline.

She **pinched herself on the arm**, said "ow!", and then laughed like a little girl.

Anna and Harry had fought through the whole songwriting process. *Butterfly Head* was a stupid, simple song about a girl who thought about the man she loved every time a butterfly landed on her head. Each **flap** of its wings was like 'the beat of her heart, so delicate it might break'. Anna tried to write more intelligent lyrics, putting in references to the life cycles of butterflies, but Harry cut most of them.

'Look, it's a pop song. It has to be easy to sing. "Metamorphosis" is too long.'

But now, seeing how well the song was doing, and seeing Angie's child-like behaviour, Anna realised it was perfect. And the cheque she'd received that morning wasn't bad, either.

'So what's our next song?' said Angeline. 'Something with the two of us?'

Angie still hadn't realised that she was a solo act. Anna couldn't bear to tell her, and Harry treated her like a child, never revealing the whole truth.

'Oh, I think we'll want the follow-up to *Butterfly Head*,' said Harry, touching Angeline's arm where she'd pinched it. 'Something about *being* in love instead of falling in love.'

Anna said nothing, but she felt like several butterflies were being born inside her stomach. Harry was *flirting* with Angeline. At first, she thought she was just being jealous, but she realised she was in no way attracted to this man. It annoyed her because it was unprofessional. Besides, *she* was the one whose talent had attracted Harry in the first place, wasn't she? But of course, Angie was the one receiving all the compliments. As always.

'I've been doing some planning, actually. Setting a few things up. We'll release a few more singles, and then...'

'And then?' said Angeline, her eyes wide open.

Harry leaned over and whispered in her ear. Anna wanted to scream at them to stop acting like children.

Angeline **gasped** and her eyes shone.

'Anna, did Harry already tell you? We're going to go on tour!'

Each single was more successful than the last. Angeline quickly became one of the biggest pop stars of the moment, and everyone was talking about her. Some complained that she didn't write her own songs, but nobody cared very much. Most pop stars didn't. The important thing was that she was pretty. It also helped that she had a great voice.

As they released more music, Harry allowed Anna to experiment more with the lyrics. And sure enough, people liked her more serious, intelligent style. Music critics praised the songs, calling Annabelle '**Lady Gaga meets Fiona Apple**'. It was the kind of compliment Annabelle had dreamed of, only it was going to Angeline and not her.

For Angeline's latest song, *Tears on a **Broadsheet***, Anna was called into the recording studio. They got her to record the whole song, as well as the harmonies, and she thought this might end up being a duet. But when she heard the final version, she realised they'd mixed her voice with Angeline's, having her cover up the lower **notes that Angie struggled to hit**.

When she asked Harry about it, he just said, 'It's normal in the industry. Your voice is similar to hers, but you hit those low notes with *soul*. Look, aren't you just happy to be on a song?'

They did put her name on the CD, but only in very small letters, far beneath Angeline's. Annabelle was secretly furious, but she said nothing. Angeline was so happy about the tour, and she couldn't bear to ruin it for her.

They performed throughout America and the UK. In fact, tickets sold so well that they extended the tour to Europe, travelling to places Annabelle had always dreamed of. Angeline barely got to leave the tour bus, always preparing for the next show or recovering from the last. Besides, when she did go outside, she was surrounded by fans.

Annabelle, on the other hand, was invisible. At first, she loved this. She had the time and the space to explore all the places they visited, and one evening she even skipped the concert and went out to a bar in Vienna. Wearing her new leather jacket and drinking expensive champagne, she began to feel relaxed for the first time in years.

'Also, was machst du hier, Schönheit?'

Annabelle smiled at the man. 'Sorry, I'm American.'

He laughed and sat down next to her. 'No problem.'

'You must think I'm some awful tourist.'

'Oh no, not until you start telling me how much you adore **Sisi**.'

Annabelle laughed. She had her own Empress of Austria to deal with back in the tour bus. She opened her mouth to make such a comment, but hesitated. Until now, she'd only been around Harry, Angeline and the crew. She hadn't spoken to anyone who didn't know who she was.

She decided to be casual.

'Actually, I'm here with the Angeline tour.'

'Oh, that pop star? My sister really wanted tickets, but they sold out so fast. So what are you, a sound engineer?'

'No. I write the songs.'

He laughed as if it were a joke. Then he realised she was serious.

'Really? I don't know, I guess I just expected some short, fat man in his forties.'

Angeline forced a smile.

'Nope. I write all the songs. We're sisters, actually.'

'OK, now I *know* you're joking. Tell me the truth. What are you, an accountant?'

Annabelle wasn't sure if this was some cultural misunderstanding, a difference in American and Austrian humour. But she felt all the colour disappear from her face.

'Sure. I'm an accountant.'

She finished her champagne and returned to the tour bus. Suddenly Vienna didn't seem so fun anymore.

After the tour, Anna made Harry give them some time off. Angeline couldn't say 'no' to anyone, especially Harry. In fact, they'd been getting very close over the past few months, and their flirting had gotten more obvious. Whenever they had the chance, he took her to a recording studio to work on a 'secret project'. Yeah right, thought Annabelle. She knew exactly what kind of 'secret project' that was.

But Anna was tired, which meant Angie must be exhausted, so she convinced Harry to give them a few weeks off. Anna had planned on going home and visiting their parents, but Harry insisted that they visit one of his beach houses in Malibu.

'Listen, you're stars now. You've got to start living like it. And I hate it when my house is just sitting there empty.'

And sure enough, the house looked like it had come straight off *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*. Angeline immediately ran around like a child, pulling off all her clothes and jumping in the pool. Anna told her to watch out for the paparazzi, but there was no stopping her sister.

After several days of lazing about on the beach, eating seafood and sleeping in, Anna got bored, and said that tomorrow they were going on a hike. Angeline complained, but she knew what was good for her, so she agreed.

The next morning, they put on their new hiking shoes—which they'd had to order online—and left for the hike. It was lovely and cool this early in the morning, and the sight of the sun rising over the sea took Anna's breath away.

They hiked over the coastal paths, Anna stopping many times to wait for Angie to catch up. After a few hours, they took a break, sitting on a cliff that overlooked the sea.

There, Anna decided to bring up something that had been bothering her for a long time.

'So... have you been texting Harry while we've been here?'

'Oh, come on, Anna. If you want to say it, just say it.'

She always acted different when they were alone. The angelic smile left, and she was more honest. The thing was, they hadn't been alone for months.

'Fine. Are you and Harry in a relationship?'

'Is it a problem if we are?'

'He's our *manager*.'

'So? I'm good at keeping men where I want them. You know that.'

Oh, Anna knew that all too well. She stood up and stretched her legs.

'Have you had sex with him?'

'Ugh!'

Angie jumped to her feet and spat on the ground.

'I *knew* this was coming. I've seen the looks you've been throwing at us. Why do you always have to be so jealous?'

'Jealous? You think I'm *jealous*?'

Anna almost wanted to laugh, but Angeline looked dead serious.

'You *are* jealous. And I was trying so hard to help you at the start, you know, to get you on stage as well. But you have to *fight* for attention, Annabelle. You could have it, but you give up so easily.'

'Fight for attention? I've been fighting all my life, Angie. You just never noticed.'

'I talked to Harry for you, you know. I asked him if you could come up on stage after one of the shows. He said yes.'

She smiled and crossed her arms as if she'd won the argument.

'That wouldn't happen, Angie,' she said like a tired mother. 'This was all planned from the start. That was the deal I made with him, when we met in that bar. He knew you were the pretty one with the voice of an angel.'

She almost said, 'even though you can't hit those low notes,' but managed to stop herself.

'Look, I'm not *mad*—I make more than enough money—it's just hard when everyone's talking about how great *your* lyrics are when I'm the one who—'

'"The pretty one with the voice of an angel"? Is that how you see me? I'm an artist too, you know!'

'Oh, won't you LISTEN to me for one time in your God-damn life!'

Anna was so angry that she moved without thinking, and pushed Angie.

She didn't mean to push her so hard. Just something to get her attention. But with all the stress and performances and workouts, Angie had lost a lot of weight, and when Anna pushed, she fell over like a stick.

She didn't even have time to scream. Her face just looked up at Anna in surprise as she fell down the cliff. Her head hit a rock and made an awful noise, and then she disappeared into the ocean below.

Annabelle had killed her.

END OF PART ONE

And I'll just introduce the vocabulary for part two.

Dye means to change the colour of something, by using chemicals. In the past, dyeing fabrics to make clothes was a complicated process. People had to find certain insects and animals to produce certain dyes. Now, we can use artificial dyes to dye fabric any colours we want. More people dye their hair these days, although some people think dyed hair looks unnatural and ugly.

Vocals are the part of a song that is sung. So when you are editing a song, you'll mix together guitar, drums and vocals, for example. Often, when a singer performs, they have backup singers who provide backup vocals.

A **synthesiser**, also called a **synth**, is a computer program that creates sound using technology. In the past, in order to record a song, you had to play an instrument in real life, but nowadays you can use a computer to synthesise the instruments. These days, there are even vocal synthesisers such as Vocaloid, although most people prefer the sound of real singers' voices.

When something **cuts out**, it stops suddenly. For example, if you're at a party and there's a problem with the electricity, the music might suddenly cut out. Nobody wants the music to cut out, because it kills the mood!

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A big thank-you to my new patrons, as well as patrons who have increased their pledge. I'm recording this episode in advance, and I haven't had time to mention the new patrons here, but I will in the next episode.

And a special thank-you to my Teacher's Pet patrons: Vera Kaufmann and Rüdiger Richter.

OK, so listen and enjoy!

Part Two

Everyone thought it was an accident. Annabelle hadn't meant to say that it was. She wasn't even sure if she thought she was guilty or not. But as soon as she started telling the story to Harry—through sobs and tears—he finished her sentences for her. It was a crazy accident, he said, and it wasn't Annabelle's fault. It couldn't be her fault.

In TV shows and movies, people would've suspected her immediately. The jealous sister, tired of hiding in the dark. But real people weren't like that. The public had never heard of her, and nobody who knew her wanted to believe that she had killed someone.

Harry handled it all incredibly well. Annabelle was sure he was going to blame her, but he never once did so. He made sure the body was found quickly, and that no paparazzi pictures were taken. He spoke to the media, telling them that she had fallen—no mention of Annabelle's being there—and that she was being taken to a private hospital.

That part made no sense. She was *dead*, anyone could see that. But Harry insisted it was for the best, and so Annabelle agreed to it. As long as the public believed she was alive, a part of her could believe it, too.

And then, a few months after Angeline's death, Harry came to Annabelle with another offer.

As soon as Annabelle stepped on stage, she knew it was a mistake. There were hundreds of thousands of people in front of her. She wasn't Angeline. She wasn't used to having the attention of *ten* people, and there were so much more than that here...

But as soon as the lights hit her, the performer inside her woke up. She might not have been Angie, but she wasn't Anna anymore, either. With her **dyed** hair and plastic surgery, she looked exactly like her dead sister. Well, not *exactly*, but someone would only know if they looked close up. And ever since her accident, Angie had started to care about her privacy.

She picked up the microphone, smiled like an angel, and began to sing. The first song went well. She'd had classes to make her sound as close to Angie as possible, although she couldn't quite hit all the high notes. That was alright, though, because they could mix in Angie's **vocals** during the concert. Harry had made some comment about using old samples from the recording studio, and insisted that all pop stars mixed in pre-recorded vocals with live performance.

The crowd cheered, and Anna smiled. So this was how Angie felt, seeing ten thousand smiling faces looking up at her. She felt like a god.

The band played the intro for *Butterfly Head*, and Anna lifted the microphone to her mouth.

And then another voice came through the speakers.

At first, Annabelle thought it must just be the effect of hearing her own voice through the sound system. She was used to hearing Angie sing *Butterfly Head*. But then, during a quieter part of the music, she realised it wasn't her voice at all—her voice was coming quietly out of her mouth, disconnected from the microphone, and the one coming through the sound system was her sister's.

But Angeline was dead.

With horror, Anna continued to sing, and so did Angie. Was she dreaming? She wanted to pinch herself, like her sister used to always do. But no, this was real. The lights, the music, the shouts of the people. It was all too real.

When the concert finished, Anna had a pretty good idea of what was going on. But she had to speak to Harry to make sure.

When he saw her approaching, he gave a guilty smile.

'So you figured it out, huh?'

'You **synthesised** my sister's voice,' she said, trying to sound calm. 'That's what you were doing all that time, working on that "secret project".'

Harry **sighed**. 'You must think I'm evil. In the past, voice synthesisers were terrible. You could always tell it wasn't real. It's only recently they've become so good. And when a new technology reaches that level of sophistication, you have to start using it before everyone else does.'

He said it so simply. Like he was just talking to another dumb pop star. She supposed he was.

'You promised me I would get to sing. I dyed my hair, I got the fucking plastic surgery! I *made* myself into my sister.'

'Shh, come on. Let's go inside my room to talk.'

Most of the crew probably knew the secret, but it wasn't good to talk about it so close to the public. So she let him lead her to his dressing room. She noticed that he had a framed photo of Angeline in the corner. He blushed, and quickly hid it.

'Look, I never promised you. I said it was a possibility. You got to do the first song, didn't you? But *Butterfly Head* is all high notes. Very airy. There's no way the public would believe it's the same voice, as lovely as yours is.'

'Too mature,' she muttered.

'A few years ago, I started recording samples with all my stars. I experimented with the synthesisers, just to see if we could use it for backup vocals. But I never planned on using it like this, until...'

Anna felt sick. Recently, he'd been mentioning the incident more and more. He never looked her in the eye when he did.

'There are the guys in suits, you understand? I don't have as much freedom as you think. As soon as they found out what happened, they made me do this. I care about the art as well, you know. The guys in suits, though, it's all about money to them. "Listen, Harry. That girl was ready to make us billions of dollars. I don't care if you have to replace her with a robot, just do it." I know I wasn't honest with you. I'm sorry. But this way you at least get to perform.'

Anna was amazed at how good an actor he was. Or maybe he really did believe he was innocent. Still, she could see the logic in his words.

'I don't know if I can go on with this.' She touched her face. God, had she really changed her *face* to look like Angie?

He nodded. 'I understand. I won't make you go on forever. Just an album. That should make enough money, and you won't even have to do a tour.'

'No album. A single.'

Harry **sucked in air through his teeth**. 'Look, I want to be nice, but... I don't have that much of a choice in this. And I've kept your secret all this time.'

Anna's body went cold. Once again, she felt butterflies being born inside her stomach, and she wanted to throw up.

'If the public finds out you've been pretending to be your sister, your *dead* sister... Well, they won't be too happy.'

'You're a monster.'

'And you're Angeline, the cutest pop star in the world.'

That night, Anna wasn't sure if she slept or not. She had a dream, but it felt so real that it could've actually happened.

Angeline came in through her window, shining like a real angel. Anna tried to speak, but she couldn't. Angeline opened her mouth and spoke for her.

'I know you didn't mean to hurt me, Anna. And I'm sorry I ever hurt you.'

Anna thought, How can you forgive me for what I've done?

Angie smiled, and it was so bright Anna had to close her eyes.

'Everything will be OK. I can't promise you won't suffer, but... Things will be better.'

When Anna opened her eyes, Angeline was gone.

The day after, Anna had another concert. It was in their hometown. She drank five cans of Red Bull and hid in her room until she absolutely had to leave.

This time, there was no excitement, only fear. But she was a professional, and she'd give a good show.

She had to.

The crowd was smaller than the one from the day before—their little hometown didn't have any huge venues—but it felt twice as full. She opened with *Butterfly Head*, and it hurt to remember how innocent Angie had been when the song had first come out.

But halfway through the song, something strange happened. Angie's voice suddenly **cut out**. The musicians didn't realise, however, and kept playing. For a moment, Anna panicked, worrying that the crowd would realise what was happening.

But then Angie started singing again, and this time, the words were different.

My name is Angeline

You're probably wondering where I've been

My sister's name is Annabelle

She writes the songs you know so well

We stood on a cliff in Malibu

We argued over who loved who

She pushed me once, and then I fell

I broke my head, and that was—that was...

Look, I was never as good at writing lyrics as her, OK? The important thing is, I'm dead and—

The speakers suddenly cut out, and the place fell silent. Thousands of faces stared up at Annabelle. Suddenly, her face looked different. It was similar to Angeline's, but not quite the same...

A man from the back was the first to say it.

'That's not Angeline! That's her sister!'

The voices came faster then, and louder. Someone threw a lighter at Anna and hit her in the head.

Before they could throw anything heavier, she ran away.

Annabelle's trial took place a few weeks later. All that time, the media went crazy, publishing story after story about the mad sister who had killed Angeline out of jealousy.

Annabelle tried to avoid the stories, but it was like the entire world was screaming at her. Every night, she hoped Angeline might return in her dreams, but she never did, and now she was convinced that her sister wanted to punish her.

Fortunately, she still had plenty of money to hire a good lawyer. She didn't have to do much during the trial, just repeat what her lawyer had told her to say. It seemed to go on forever, though, and with each passing minute Annabelle imagined her life in prison, being known as the sister murderer.

But, to her surprise, she got off free. Nobody had seen the incident, the judge argued, and the strange issue with the synthesiser had never happened again. Besides, they could hardly use a robot's song as evidence. So that was that. She was innocent.

Of course, that didn't matter to the public. To them, she was a murderer, and they didn't need evidence to cancel her and end her career. Annabelle was forced to leave social media, leave her hometown and hide away in California. She hoped that the media would

eventually lose interest and give her some privacy, but at the same time, she wasn't sure she deserved it.

Annabelle never wrote music again, but she sometimes listened back to the first few singles she'd made with her sister, especially *Tears on a Broadsheet*. Now when she listened, she *could* hear herself on the track. Not her actual voice, of course. But Angeline sang differently when it was a song that Annabelle had written, and on this one she almost sounded happy to be singing with her sister, even though the mixed vocals had probably been kept a secret from her.

Anna knew now that she had never really wanted to be on a stage in front of tens of thousands of people. A hundred would've been enough. If she'd never made that deal with Harry, maybe she would have gotten that.

One day, Anna had a crazy idea. She travelled to Harry's house in Malibu, knowing it was the time of year when he stayed there. She made sure to stay well away from the cliffs, and drove up to visit him.

He was polite to her, which was more than she could have hoped for. She hadn't rung to tell him she was coming in case he called her a murderer and refused to let her in. It was hard to remember that there were still people who liked her, given the thousands of people online every day who screamed hate at her.

They had a drink—Harry had Malibu, which seemed like a bad joke, and Anna had a martini. Then, she finally said what she had come there to say.

'Harry, I have an offer for you. I want to buy something.'

When she told him what it was, he didn't seem surprised. Just sad.

'Forget about the money,' he said. 'I'll give it to you for free. I feel too guilty having it here.'

So he went and got it for her. It was just a little black box, and it was hard to believe the treasure it contained.

But to Anna, it was everything.

Anna switched on the computer. It was nine pm, the usual time they did their Friday night show at the bar.

It had taken her a long time to get the program set up, but she refused to ask for help. She needed to do this by herself.

She hit 'play', and the music started. She got into position, and when it was time, she sang. *They sang.*

Bottle and a cap

Fiddle and a bow

Sprinkles on ice cream

and Christmas with snow

We go together like sisters

'Cause that's what we are

My name is Angeline

I always keep my nose clean

And my name is Annabelle

I'm the one with all of the brain cells...

The synthesised voice sounded just like Angeline had when she was alive. Their voices mixed perfectly together, like they always had.

And just for those brief moments, Anna could pretend that Angie was alive again, that they really were performing together.

They sang the final notes, and she raised her arms up in the air, smiling wider than she had in years. And through the open window, in the garden, a butterfly flapped its wings. It sounded like the clapping of an angel.

THE END

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