



The
Sister Switch

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ISBN 978-1-338-62830-2

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 24 25 26 27 28

Printed in the U.S.A. 37

This edition first printing 2024

Book design by Abby Dening and Elizabeth B. Parisi

* 1 *

You're Not Going to Believe This

Dear Lucy,

Please read this whole letter before doing anything! Do not put on the bracelet! Do not make a wish yet!

Got that? Good. Now I can start.

Hi.

I'm Addie Asante. We've never met, but you need to know what happened to me.

The bracelet in this box is magic. And by magic, yes, I mean the hocus-pocus kind. Think fairy tales, but without the messy stardust getting all over your clothes and hair.

And no, I'm not your fairy godmother. I'm a fifth grader in Columbus, Ohio. I love music, puns, and my dog, Fufu. Plus, I always try to be understanding.

So I *understand* you must be pretty stunned by the whole magic-bracelet reveal right now, and you're likely not paying attention to what you're reading. These words are probably all blurry, so you're forgiven if you put down this letter for a sec to take a closer look at the bracelet.

I'll wait. La, la, la.

Are you back now? Cool.

Let me caution you—flashing-light warning here—*please* be careful what you say while you're wearing this bracelet. I learned this lesson the hard way.

What I'm going to do right now is tell you my whole story, starting the day before I got the bracelet.

It was Monday after school, and I was in my room with my best friends, Sloane Zhang and Leah Gibson. (When I say *my* room, I mean the room I share with my just-turned-five-year-old sister, Camille—more on that soon.) I was sitting on my bed, Sloane was sitting in my beanbag chair, and Leah was sprawled across my turquoise rug with my golden retriever mix, Fufu, sleeping peacefully next to her. My side of the room was neat and tidy, while my little sister's side was an explosion of toys, Lego pieces, and glitter. Camille wasn't there right then, no doubt making a mess someplace else.

Sloane, Leah, and I were discussing which song the



three of us would perform in our school's upcoming talent show. We were all super excited for the show this year.

"We should sing 'All Love,'" Sloane sighed dreamily. It was her favorite song.

"No," Leah said, slapping her hand down on the rug for emphasis. Fufu's head shot up, and she patted my dog back to sleep.

"Why not?" Sloane asked, scowling at Leah.

"I hate 'All Love,'" Leah said, scowling back.

I hiccupped on a chuckle. "*Hating* on 'All Love'? Now that's hilarious."

I was trying to distract my besties from their standoff, but neither laughed. My smile drooped.

"'Havoc' is a *better* song." Leah turned to look at me. "Right, Addie?"

Sloane looked at me, too, her eyebrows raised.

I froze. My best friends both had strong opinions, and because I was more go-with-the-flow, I always ended up stuck in the middle of their disagreements.

The thing is, I had another idea.

I'd written my own song. It was called "Together," and my secret hope was that my friends and I could sing it at the show on Friday.

The winner of the talent show got one month of free

classes at the Franklin School of the Arts, which offered some of the best music, dance, art, and acting classes in Columbus. Kids who've studied there have gone on to perform on Broadway and even win Grammys!

I've imagined taking classes at Franklin ever since I found out they offer a songwriting class. But I've kept that dream to myself. What if my talent didn't measure up? What if my parents were disappointed that I wasn't focusing enough on schoolwork?

But this could be my chance to win a free songwriting class. And test it out.

All we needed to do was perform my song.

All I needed to do was tell my friends I'd written a song.

I opened my mouth. I closed my mouth.

"Addie?" Sloane prompted.

What if my suggestion caused even more arguing? I was the peacemaker in the group. I didn't want to make waves. Or what if I sang them my song and they thought it was terrible?

I glanced at my keyboard in the corner of my room. The sheet music for "Together" sitting on top of it gave me the courage to speak up.

"What about something original?" I asked.

"Exactly!" Leah huffed. "'Havoc' is unique."

“I mean something no one has heard before,” I said.
“Something we wrote.”

“No one wants to hear a song *we* wrote,” Sloane said.

My heart thumped. “Not something we wrote.
Something I—”

My door burst open, and my sister Camille stormed into the room.

“I am not a crybaby!” she yelled as she ran to her bed, flung herself down, and sobbed into her pillow.

Great.

My older sister, Sophie, came into the room and stood by the door with her hands on her hips.

“Then stop crying,” Sophie told Camille. “And yelling! I’m trying to do my math homework and you keep interrupting me. You’re *always* interrupting me.”

“I was just asking if you wanted to play!” Camille shrieked.

Her sobbing woke Fufu. My adorable pup got up and trotted out of the room, probably to a more drama-free part of the house.

“Addie,” Sophie said, glaring at me. “I’d appreciate it if you could keep Camille in here while I’m studying.”

Camille wailed.



“But we’re planning for the talent show,” I explained, gesturing to Leah and Sloane.

“Well, what I’m doing is actually *important*,” Sophie snapped.

I bristled. Before I could respond, my big sister turned on her heel and left. Sophie is twelve—only two years older than me—but she gets to have her *own* room. I guess my parents thought that Sophie’s big, brilliant brain needed the extra space.

“That was pretty rude,” Sloane said, but she didn’t

look surprised. She and Leah were already familiar with Sophie's attitude.

I sighed. As the trusted eldest, Sophie was allowed to do pretty much whatever she wanted. But what did she *actually* do 24-7? Sat in her room and studied! Sure, she got the highest grades in her class and would probably go to Harvard or invent a new internet or something. But she had no friends. Mom and Dad got her a cell phone last year, and I honestly thought she only used the calculator.

If I was Sophie's age, I would hang out at Paige's, the cool bookstore-café on Morse Road. I would walk home from school on my own. My friends and I would be like the characters on TV shows starring wild and free middle schoolers!

"It's not like you don't take school seriously, Addie," Leah pointed out, and I nodded gratefully. Last week, I'd even gotten an A+ on my family history project. I'd interviewed my grandparents and written about my mom's family's migration from Louisiana to Ohio over a hundred years ago, and about my dad's parents leaving Ghana fifty years ago to come to America. I'd loved working on that project and was proud of my grade.

"Thanks," I told my friends. "Although I bombed that math pop quiz today . . ." My stomach fell at the memory.

I'd gotten a ten out of twenty. I would have to tell my parents about it later. They wouldn't be happy. I normally did well in math, but I'd had a headache and had *not* been expecting a quiz.

"It wasn't just you," Sloane reminded me, cringing. "Half the class failed. Including me and Leah! The quiz was impossible."

"Yeah," I said. "At least Ms. Frankel said we could take a make-up quiz on Friday."

Camille's sobs were still ringing out like a tornado siren from where she lay on her bed.

I shook my head, stood up, and ushered my friends out of the room.

"Why don't we choose a song tomorrow?" I suggested as we walked down the stairs.

Leah stopped when we reached the front door. "We should really pick one now."

"Yeah," Sloane said.

I couldn't ignore the fact that my two stubborn friends had finally agreed on something. While I no longer had the courage to suggest singing "Together," there was still a way to wrap up our visit on a high note. Literally.

"What about . . . 'Wild Ride'?" I suggested, hearing the

upbeat jam in my mind. “It’s popular but not played out. We can do something like—”

I sang the melody—the middle voice of the chorus—mimicking the soaring tones I was imagining.

“And, Leah, you’d take the lower part, like this—” I found the slightly deeper notes that blended nicely with the melody.

Leah repeated, “*Wiild riide.*”

Fufu was at my feet now, wagging her tail like a conductor’s baton.

“Nice, Leah. And, Sloane, you’d hit the high part like—” I trilled out the chorus.

Sloane echoed, “*Wiild riide.*”

I pointed and nodded at her. “Sweet! Now let’s sing it together.”

Our harmony floated above our heads and settled the tension in the air. Even Camille went silent up in our room. Leah and Sloane exchanged glances. Then they both squealed.

“That was amazing, Addie,” Leah said.

Whew! Even if it wasn’t a song I wrote, we would still perform in the show. And if our performance was good enough, we could win those free classes. I felt dizzy with excitement at the thought.

“We’ll practice at lunch tomorrow, ’kay?” Sloane said as she and Leah stepped outside. I nodded and waved to my friends, relieved.

Problem solved, I thought. Everything is going to be okay.

How wrong I was.