



Chapter 1

Pam and Emily had been best friends since before they could remember. Emily even had a picture of the two of them side by side in baby strollers. Every time they looked at that picture, they burst out laughing.

“You hardly have any hair on your head,” Emily would snort between giggles.

“Well, look at you!” Pam would snicker. “You’re sucking your thumb!”

The two girls had always loved joking

with each other and poking fun at things they thought were funny about each other. But they had never been mean or hurtful. The kidding never went too far. However, for some reason, things had begun to change recently. More than once, Pam made jokes that really hurt Emily's feelings.

“Oh, wow,” Pam had said right after Christmas. “That new sweater your mom gave you looks like something my grandmother would wear.”

When Emily frowned and just walked away, Pam called after her.

“Hey, I'm just kidding! Can't you take a joke?”

Later that day Pam sneaked Emily a note in class telling her that she was sorry.

After school, she invited Emily over to her house to play.

Sometimes friends make mistakes, Emily wrote in her diary the next day. *But best friends stay best friends.*

However, as time went on, Pam made mean jokes more and more often. And her apologies came less and less often. Sometimes Emily wasn't sure if they *were* best friends anymore. Finally, something happened near the middle of the school year that made Emily wonder if they were even friends at all.

It all began when Mr. Benson, their teacher, announced that his 4th-grade class was going to put on a play for the whole school later in the year. There would be

acting, music, and singing in the play. There would be fun costumes and beautiful sets.

“Everyone has to be involved,” Mr. Benson said. “If you don’t want to be in the play, you can help with something else.”

Most of the students wanted a part. And when Mr. Benson explained that the starring role was a girl’s part and that it involved singing a lot of fun songs, nearly half the girls in the class wanted the starring role. Several girls raised their hands excitedly and said they wanted that part.

“Here’s the thing,” Mr. Benson explained. “It’s not as easy as just volunteering. You’ll have to try out for the part you want.”

Pam raised her hand.

“You mean like whoever is the best gets the best part?” she asked.

“That’s right,” Mr. Benson said. “So you’ll really need to practice the part you want. The harder you work, the better chance you’ll have.”

On the way home from school that afternoon on the bus, Pam talked nonstop. She was very excited about the play. And she was certain that she would get the best role.

“A star! I’m going to be a star,” Pam said. “I love to sing. No one can beat me at that!”

Emily smiled at her friend. Pam had always been a bit of a show-off. She liked

attention. Emily was pretty sure Pam's great singing would get her the starring role in the play. Even so . . .

"Hey, I think I'll try out too," Emily said.

Pam got a funny look on her face. "Really? For the starring role? Why?"

Emily acted like it was no big deal.

"I don't know. It would be fun. We could practice together and stuff."

Pam still looked unsure, but she just shrugged.

"Okay. Whatever. But you can't really sing very well, you know."

Emily didn't argue. She knew Pam was right. Maybe she couldn't sing as well as Pam, but that didn't mean she couldn't try

out. After all, there was acting too, not just singing.

“I can try my best, anyway,” Emily said.

For the next two weeks, Emily and Pam got together after school nearly every day and practiced. Well, Emily practiced. Pam wasn't really interested in rehearsing the lines for the play. Mostly, she just danced around and sang the songs into a mirror. While Emily rehearsed lines, Pam tried to figure out how she'd wear her hair in the play.

Finally, it was tryout day.

No one even came close to singing as well as Pam.

But Emily was the best actress.

Mr. Benson and two other teachers

watched quietly, but they clapped loudly for each student. It was impossible to tell which students would get which parts.

“Friday morning, I’ll post a list,” Mr. Benson announced. “It will show everyone’s part or job in the play. It won’t be easy to choose! All of you have done a great job.”