

STAND-IN SISTER

A Ten-Minute Dramatic Duet

by
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CAST: MAGGIE and EMMA

(The scene opens as MAGGIE pantomimes holding a flashlight and squinting while trying to discern shapes in a dark room. EMMA is cowering behind MAGGIE, clutching her sister for comfort.)

MAGGIE: Emma, would you quit yanking on me? If you make me trip, we could fall right back down the ladder.

EMMA: **(frightened)** Don't move. I can't see a thing up here!

MAGGIE: Well, duh! Who's the moron who dropped her flashlight half way up?

EMMA: I told you I was scared of heights!

MAGGIE: Then you should have stayed downstairs. I swear, you are such a chicken!

EMMA: I was not about to let you climb up here all by yourself, Maggie. Be real!

MAGGIE: **(pointing her "flashlight" above her head)** Wait! Is that a light bulb? I can't reach the chain. Give me a boost, will ya?

EMMA: Hold on Maggie, what if the chain is for something else?

MAGGIE: Something else? Like what?

EMMA: **(Realizing that SHE has been overreacting, EMMA starts giggling playfully.)** Remember in the old horror movies what happens when someone pulls a mysterious cord?

MAGGIE: No, what?

EMMA: **(imitating Dracula)** The hulking butler arrives with electrical bolts sticking out of his neck.

MAGGIE: **(giggling)** You're such a goof. Come on, try boosting me up on your leg.

EMMA: OK, on the count of three, you step on my leg and I'll lift you up by the waist. One...two...three!

(The attempt ends up with MAGGIE and EMMA falling awkwardly.)

MAGGIE: Owwww!

EMMA: You OK?

MAGGIE: Yeah, but remind me never to try to make a pyramid like those cheerleaders at school.

EMMA: How do they do that stuff anyway?

MAGGIE: Beats the heck outa me! They're like human pretzels. Emma – wait! Here, take the flashlight and point it over there. I think I see a chair. **(MAGGIE drags the chair under the "chain," climbs on top of it, and pantomimes pulling the chain. The girls gasp and look around in awe.)** Voila! Light!

EMMA: This is sooooo cool! Maggie, I take it all back. We should have climbed up to the attic years ago!

MAGGIE: **(beginning to explore)** Well, Mom has always freaked us out with all of her warnings. I guess she pretty much brainwashed us against it.

EMMA: **(imitating their mother)** "No girls! Absolutely not! Who knows what's up there? There could be rats!"

MAGGIE: **(joining in on the imitation)** "Rats with rabies!"

EMMA: "Bats!"

MAGGIE: "Bats with rabies!"

EMMA: "Wasps!"

MAGGIE: "Wasps with rabies!" **(The ridiculousness of this concept elicits a peal of laughter from the sisters.)** And you actually believed her!

EMMA: Me? Hey, *you're* a year older, big shot. I never heard *you* volunteer to climb up to the attic!

MAGGIE: **(pantomiming looking in boxes, etc.)** Boy, if I had known how great it was, I'd have sneaked up here a long time ago!

EMMA: Look at all of this stuff! It's like a giant yard sale!

MAGGIE: I don't think Mom's ever thrown anything out! She just stuffs all our old things into the attic!

(As the girls "dig" for treasures, they pantomime touching and playing with various items.)

EMMA: Oh look! My old tricycle! And Mr. Chubby, my teddy bear!

MAGGIE: My violin! I haven't thought about it in years! Think I can still play it?

EMMA: **(winces while MAGGIE pantomimes playing the violin)** Yeow! Now I remember why you quit the band in fifth grade.

MAGGIE: Very funny.

EMMA: **(kneeling center stage)** Maggie, look at this fabulous trunk. It has carving all over it. Help me move all of the junk off of it.

MAGGIE: (**helping**) Oh how beautiful! It must be an antique!

EMMA: So why do you think Mom and Dad keep it way up here? This has got to be worth a whole lot of money, don't ya think?

MAGGIE: Definitely! Do you think we should open it?

EMMA: I guess so. I don't know... I feel like maybe we should ask first.

MAGGIE: I told you that you were chicken.

EMMA: Maggie, Mom *did* tell us to stay out of the attic.

MAGGIE: Emma, she started all that talk when we were little kids. She just didn't want us to get hurt. You know? She didn't want us to break our necks on the ladder...and...besides, she's always such a worry wart. And you're starting to sound just like her!

EMMA: Well...OK...but if something flies out of this trunk, I swear I'll have a heart attack.

MAGGIE: Mom junior!

EMMA: So open the trunk already!

MAGGIE: ("**opening**" **the trunk and inspecting its contents**) Picture albums! Lots of them!

EMMA: Cool! Why don't Mom and Dad keep them in the family room with all of the other albums?

MAGGIE: I don't know. That's weird, isn't it?

EMMA: Sure is. ("**opening**" **an album**) Oh look, Maggie. Here's a picture of Mom holding you right after you were born! Have you ever noticed that in all of the albums downstairs, you're already ... like ... a year old? (**giggling**) You look like a little tadpole with those buggy eyes. Thank God your face grew or you'd still look like a frog!

MAGGIE: (**playfully hitting her sister**) Very nice! Here's one with Dad holding me. I look like I'm howling, don't I?

EMMA: (**laughing**) You always did have a big mouth!

MAGGIE: Here's one with all four of us! Grandma must have taken it. It's funny seeing Dad with all that hair!

(EMMA looks confused and there is a long pause.)

MAGGIE: Emma? ... Em? ... Earth to Emma!

EMMA: Huh? ... Oh, sorry.

MAGGIE: What's up?

EMMA: Uh...nothing You know, Maggie... I think we'd better go back downstairs, now. Mom wants us to start making dinner before she gets home. I'm getting kinda hungry.

MAGGIE: Why are you acting all creepy all of a sudden?

EMMA: I'm not. Come on, let's put the album back, OK?

MAGGIE: No, it's not OK. I want to look at the rest of the pictures.

EMMA: Maggie, I want to get out of here!

MAGGIE: Would you let go? You are being such a brat! (**yelling**) What's up with you?

(There is a long uncomfortable silence.)

EMMA: (**quietly**) Look at the picture.

MAGGIE: Yeah? So?

EMMA: How can that be the four of us? Mom and Dad adopted me a year after you were born.

MAGGIE: And?

EMMA: And those babies are both newborns.

MAGGIE: Oh...that's odd... Well, let's look for some close-ups. ("**flipping**" **the pages**) Here's one! ... (**whispering**) Omigosh.

EMMA: (**gently**) That's what I thought.

MAGGIE: ...Two little tadpoles...Two sets of buggy eyes...

EMMA: Two little Maggies. Identical.

MAGGIE: (**Lying down on her back in shock, SHE continues slowly.**) ...It all makes sense... Why would anyone adopt a baby only one year after giving birth? People adopt when they can't have babies of their own, don't they? You hear about it all the time. A couple gets married...They try to have a baby... After a few years they go to a fertility specialist... No luck... so, they decide to adopt. It fills their emptiness... It's a way to make a family. (**SHE sits up.**) But...but why adopt so soon if you have a new, little baby girl? I mean, they already had a family. They had a baby girl. Why would they need to go out and get another one? (**MAGGIE is so overwrought that SHE doesn't see the pain SHE is inflicting on EMMA.**) Unless...unless...you have *two* of everything. (**Figuring it out as SHE talks, MAGGIE stands.**) Of course! What if you already had two cribs? Two high chairs? Two sets of clothes? What if you were used to two baby girls and then something happened to one of them? Didn't Grandma mention a couple of times that she lived here for a while after I was born? That someone was sick or something? Darn, why didn't I pay more attention? That's why I've never seen any pictures of me when I was a newborn! All of the photos in the house were taken *after* YOU arrived. They're of you and me together! I can't believe that they kept this a secret from me! That's gotta be it! Something happened to that other baby...that other Maggie...my twin... She died. I can ...feel it!... (**crying**) I can feel

it! I always feel... like I'm... like I'm waiting for someone. I always feel... incomplete...like...like I want to reach out and share with someone...someone like me who'll...understand...someone who will always be there for me...
EMMA: (***standing to interrupt in a sudden rage***) — I hate you!

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