

Eloise Smith

SISTER

★ TO A ★

STAR



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*To siblings
everywhere.*

*Because together
the world is less lonely,
and the shadows
less dark.*



On the flickering TV screen, the movie star raised his sword in a salute. His eyes glimmered, full of focus. The steel blade glinted as he swished it to the side. Shoulders back, chin tipped up, he lowered his mask over his face. The camera cut to a wide shot. Evie squeezed the sofa cushion, though she'd seen the film dozens of times. This was her favourite bit. The part most people didn't know about. The moment the film star was swapped out. And Grandpa was swapped in. Her Grandpa Jack. Fencing double to the stars. Hero to Evie.

The camera panned round Grandpa and his adversary. On the castle battlements, the duel began. The pair danced

up and down the narrow walkway, ignoring the steep drop to the side. Grandpa darted in and out of range, tempting an attack. He teased his opponent's blade with sharp taps. His opponent attacked, fast and forceful. With a leap back, Grandpa blocked the attack. But just as fast came another. Grandpa jumped up on to the castle wall with cat-like balance. He retreated along the parapets in a flurry of parries. Backed against the turret wall, Grandpa parried high, then low. A swing round a column. Evie leant forward, mouth full of fruitcake, as Grandpa made a flying attack. Sword arm extended, leg kicked out behind, he sailed through the night air. His point landed at his opponent's throat, freezing him to the spot. Huzzah! The image was black and white and grainy, but the danger was so real, so electric. Evie didn't even notice she'd dropped crumbs all over the carpet.

A key turned in the front door. Argh! They were back early. What about ballet practice? Evie scrabbled for the remote control as her twin rustled in, tutu still on. Followed by Mum, breathlessly unbuttoning her sparkly winter coat.

'Budge up. Tallulah'll be on in a minute,' said Mum, plonking herself down on the sofa. She clocked the sword-fighting scene. A frown. 'Not that again, Evie. You'll upset Dad.' Evie changed the channel before Dad came in from

the garage. He didn't like to be reminded of the father he'd never known.

The Allerbys sat through a pet food advert, a yoghurt advert and a shampoo advert. And then it was on. It had been the talk of the house for weeks. Her twin's screen-acting debut. This was bigger than when she starred as Cinderella in the school musical. Bigger than when she played a cygnet in Wakefield Theatre's sell-out production of *Swan Lake*. This was huge. Tallulah did not disappoint, skipping on to screen in a cloud of glamour. A cute curtsy at the camera. A twirl of a toothbrush. And then an Oscar-winning smile as the Cleanzy toothpaste logo appeared.

'What a performance,' gasped Mum, leaning across Evie to hug Tallulah. 'I never imagined I'd have such a talented daughter.' Evie slumped into the sofa. Tallulah looked embarrassed. Mum seemed to have forgotten she had two daughters. 'You are destined for Hollywood, my girl,' she said, patting Tallulah's hand.

'You know how I feel about Hollywood, Susanne,' grumbled Dad. 'Only brings trouble.'

'And you know how I feel about my daughter,' replied Mum. Evie slipped off the sofa and wandered off. Because she didn't want anyone to know how she was starting to feel about her rather too brilliant twin.