



Discovered

*“Stella Stella bo bella banana fana fo fella me
my mo mella . . . STELLA!”*

Stella is my name, but the person singing was my sister, Penny. She was sitting across from me at Brody’s Grill, the restaurant Mom and Dad had taken us to for dinner, even though it was a Monday, and we usually eat at home during the week. Mom and Dad said they didn’t feel like cooking, and besides Brody’s Grill is our favorite restaurant.

“Ba ba ba ba ba ba ba.”

That was my brother, Marco, singing nonsense.

“Penny.” Now that was Mom. “Keep it down, please.”

“It’s Opposite Day!” Penny cried. “That means you want me to keep it up!”

“Penelope Jane,” Mom said. “Inside voice. Now.”

“Sometimes Mrs. Finkel tells Joshua to use an inside voice,” I said.

Mrs. Finkel is my third-grade teacher, and Joshua is a kid in our class. He calls out a lot, and he’s not just loud the way Penny is. He’s mean, too.

“But I don’t like to think about Joshua when we’re not in school and I don’t have to, because he’s such a meanie,” I added.

“That’s not nice, Stel,” Dad said.

“He’s the one who’s not nice,” I said. “He’s the biggest meanie in the whole third grade. And he’s always getting in trouble because he breaks the Ground Rules, like using your inside voice. That’s a rule in our class, you know.”

“It’s a Ground Rule at this restaurant, too,” Mom said. “So all of the customers can enjoy their meals. All right, Pen?”

“Pa pa pa pa pa pa pa,” Marco said.

“I think Marco’s saying your name, Penny,” Dad said.

“Use your inside voice, Marco!” Penny told him.

“Shhh, Penny,” Mom said. “He’s just a baby. He doesn’t know any better. But you’re five, and you do.”

Penny folded her arms across her chest.

The waitress came over to our table. “Can

I bring you anything—coffee, tea?” she asked.

“Just the check whenever you get a chance,” Dad said.

“*I’m a little teapot,*” Penny began to sing.

“Penny,” Mom said in a warning voice.

“What? I’m using my inside voice—my inside singing voice.” And she started again. “*I’m a little teapot, shorty spout. Here is my handle, here is my spout. When I get all steamed up hear me shout. Tip me over and pour me out!*”

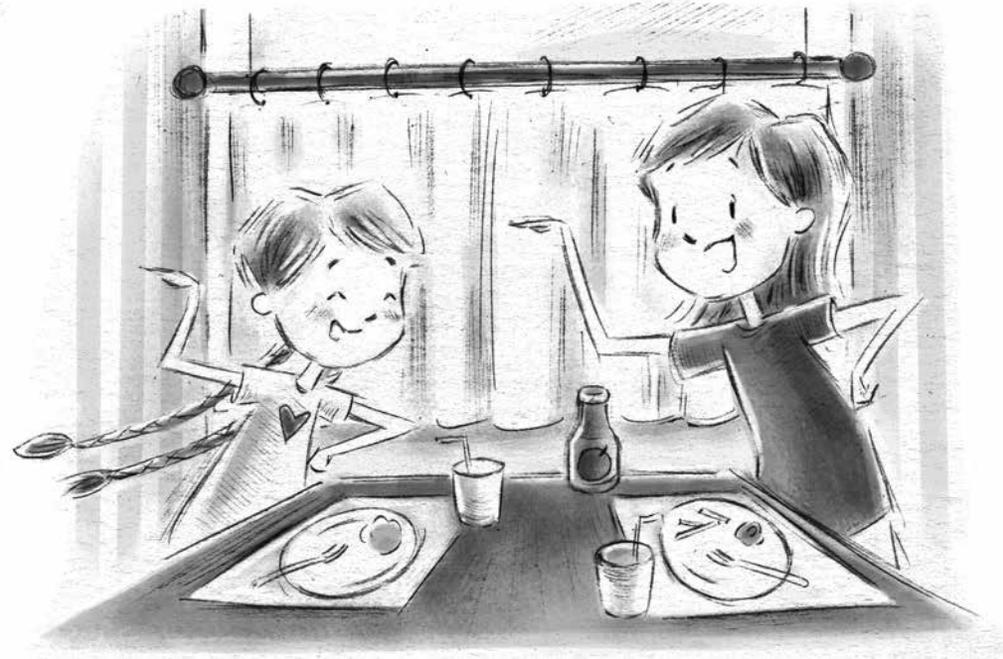
“Penelope Jane, that’s enough,” Mom said.

“Those weren’t even the right words,” I said.

“They were so,” she said.

“They were not. It goes like this.” I started to sing, “*I’m a little teapot—*”

“Stella, not you too,” Mom said.



“I just need to teach her the right words,” I said. “I’ll be so quick. *I’m a little teapot, SHORT and STOUT. Here is my handle, here is my spout.*”

“All right,” Mom said. “We’ve got it.”

“Excuse me,” a man said. “I’m sorry to interrupt. I couldn’t help but hear the concert going on at your table.”

“I’m so sorry we were bothering you,” Mom told him. “What do you say, girls?”

“Sorry,” I mumbled.

“I’m sorry, too,” Penny said.

“Oh, no need to be sorry,” the man said. “I rather enjoyed what I was hearing. I’m a casting director with Auditions Unlimited.”

“Oh my goodness!” I said. “I’ve always wanted to meet a casting director.”

“What’s a casting director?” Penny asked.

“Someone who decides what people get to be in movies and TV and stuff like that,” I told her.

“Movies and TV?” Penny asked. “Really?”

“Really,” the man said. “Here, let me give your parents a card.”

He handed it to Dad.

“I want to see,” Penny said.

“Me too,” I said. “I’ll read it to you.” I took

it and read out loud:

**Hal Lewis, Director
Auditions Unlimited
101 Sanderson Drive
Somers, California**

“All right, Stel,” Mom said, reaching out for the card. “I’ll take that now.”

“Are we going to be famous?” Penny asked.

“I think we’re getting a little ahead of ourselves here,” Dad told her. He stuck his hand out toward Hal Lewis. “I’m David Batts. It’s nice to meet you.”

“Nice to meet you, too,” Hal said. Then he shook hands with Mom, and then with me, and then with Penny. We all said our names. Well, except for Marco.

“Any relation to Joshua Lewis?” Mom asked.

Now I was thinking about Joshua again and it wasn't even my fault!

"Mom, lots of people have the same last name," I said, before Hal Lewis had a chance to answer. "It doesn't mean they're related. How would Joshua be related to a casting director?"

"And Joshua is already related to Bruce in my class," Penny said. "They're cousins."

"And they're both my nephews," Hal Lewis said. "Are you friends?"

"Stella's not friends with Joshua because he's a mean—" Penny started.

"Shh, Penny. She's just kidding," I said.

"Joshua and Stella go way back," Mom said.

"Naturally my nephew has charmed all the ladies," Hal said. "And speaking of these ladies, I'm looking for a young girl for a little

scene in a TV show I'm casting. And I think your daughter—your older daughter—might just be perfect for it."

"Me? Really?" I asked.

"Yes, really," Hal said.

Oh my goodness! Oh my goodness! Oh my goodness!

"I'm so glad you didn't feel like cooking tonight!" I told Mom and Dad. "Could you imagine if we ate at home like usual and this never happened?"

"I wish it never happened," Penny mumbled.

"Should I go home and change my clothes?" I asked. Right then I was just wearing plain black leggings and a pink T-shirt, but I had better things at home. Like my jeans with the sparkles on the back pockets. Or my flower-girl dress from Aunt Laura's wedding.

“You don’t have to do anything today,” Hal Lewis said. “But if it’s all right with your parents, you can come to my office tomorrow at twelve-thirty for an audition.”

“Other kids are trying out for this part, too?” Mom asked.

“Yes,” Hal Lewis said. “But we’re in the last phase of auditions, so Stella would only have to come this one time.”

“I don’t know,” Mom said. “Twelve-thirty is smack in the middle of the school day.”

“Stella shouldn’t be able to go, because she’d miss school,” Penny said. “And also because if she gets to be on TV then it’s not fair to me.”

“It is too fair,” I said. “Sisters don’t always have to have the exact same things.” Penny sat back in the booth and folded her arms across her chest. “Please, Mom? Please, Dad? Please?”

I asked. “I’ll make up all my schoolwork. I’ll do double the homework that night.”

“I think Mom’s just worried,” Dad said.

“Worried?” I asked. “But why?”

“Because show business is a hard business,” Mom told me. “I know it sounds like a lot of fun right now. But trust me. When I was young, I had a friend who was an actress.”

“You did?” I asked. “That’s so cool.”

“It was sometimes,” Mom said. “But most times it wasn’t. My friend Dawn went on a lot of auditions, and usually she wouldn’t get the part. The director would want someone taller, or shorter, or with darker hair. It made Dawn feel bad. I don’t want that to happen to you.”

“Excuse me,” Hal said. “I just want to say—I can’t make any promises here, but Stella has my vote. And it’s a very good bit—in a show you might already know. It’s called

Superstar Sam.”

“*SUPERSTAR SAM?!*” I practically shouted, and then I remembered we were still in a restaurant and I was supposed to use my inside voice. “You know the show, Mom. It’s my favorite. Sam is a gymnast, and she does all sorts of other cool things. That’s how I knew what a casting director even was, because of the episode where Sam is going to be in a movie, but then she breaks her leg on the balance beam.”

“Well, isn’t this day full of coincidences,” Hal said. “We’ll be filming right here, too.”

“In this restaurant?” I asked. “Don’t you film at a studio?”

“Sometimes we film on location,” Hal Lewis said. “I came here today to check this location out. And what good luck for me, because I got to meet you.”

Good luck, as long as my parents agreed to let me audition. I clasped my hands together. “Please, Mom. Please, Dad. Please, pretty please, with a cherry on top? And sprinkles on top of that, and butterscotch icing, and another cherry?”

Mom looked at Dad, and Dad looked at Mom. And then they both looked over at Hal. “Okay,” they said.

