

SISTER ACT

by Ken Bradbury



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Two characters: Ellie and Paula

ELLIE: (*at a table, writing*) “Dear Mom. I’m leaving home. You don’t understand me, no matter how many times I’ve tried to explain things. You won’t listen to anything I say and I’m not sure you love me anymore. (*a pause, then*) p.s. Please don’t take this personally.”

PAULA: (*entering*) What are you writing?

ELLIE: (*trying vainly to hide the letter*) Nothing.

PAULA: You aren’t running away from home again are you?

ELLIE: That’s silly! I don’t do those things anymore.

PAULA: You’re running away from home.

ELLIE: I’m just thinking about it, okay?

PAULA: And you’ve written another note to Mom about how she doesn’t listen to you and nobody understands you.

ELLIE: Well ... something like that.

PAULA: Ellie, this is getting old.

ELLIE: It’s none of your business.

PAULA: Of course it’s my business. You’re my little sister and if you leave then I get the front bedroom. This is important.

ELLIE: You’re just like all of them.

PAULA: Them?

ELLIE: The whole world is against me.

PAULA: Ellie, the whole world doesn’t even know you. And there’s surely somebody out there who understands you. Maybe in France or somewhere.

ELLIE: See?!

PAULA: I’m kidding!

ELLIE: You’re just playing with my emotions to make me crazy.

PAULA: Ellie, I don’t have to do a thing to make you crazy. You’re already there. Now come on downstairs. It’s almost time for supper.

ELLIE: I'm not eating.

PAULA: Since when?

ELLIE: I'm on a hunger strike. That'll get their attention if they find my starved lifeless body out in the front yard tomorrow.

PAULA: Make it the backyard. Dad doesn't like to clutter up the front view.

ELLIE: You don't even care, do you?

PAULA: Of course I care. People starving in front of the house takes down the value of property. I may inherit this place some day.

ELLIE: *(crossing her arms in a huff)* I'm not speaking to you.

PAULA: *(looks at her a long moment, shakes her head and begins busying herself with something)*

ELLIE: *(finally)* I said I'm not speaking to you.

PAULA: I heard you.

ELLIE: And that's final.

PAULA: Ellie, if you're not speaking to me then stop speaking to me. Otherwise I'll think I'm hearing things.

ELLIE: That's it. I'm not going to say another word.

PAULA: Fine.

ELLIE: I mean it.

PAULA: I can hear you.

ELLIE: How can you possibly hear me when I'm not speaking.

PAULA: I have ESPN! Maybe it's because you keep talking! Ellie, if you're going to throw a fit, trying something other than not speaking. You're really lousy at that.

ELLIE: First I can't get my ears pierced, then mom said no to the tattoo and she just blew a gasket when that first boy invited me on a date.

PAULA: You were eight years old, Ellie. You'd have had to go in your stroller!

ELLIE: That's not funny. It was love!

PAULA: It was chocolate milk.

ELLIE: Huh?

PAULA: The boy gave you his chocolate milk at lunch time and fell in love ... over a milk carton. Ellie, as long as you keep doing these dumb things people aren't going to trust you.

ELLIE: How do you know?

PAULA: Because I did the same dumb things when I was your age. Been there, kid. Done that.

ELLIE: So what happened?

PAULA: I grew up. Sorta. So what's really the matter?

ELLIE: Whatta you mean?

PAULA: This isn't about piercing or dating. What's really wrong?

ELLIE: I don't know what you're talking about.

PAULA: Wish I didn't, but I do. What's bothering you? (*a very long pause as Ellie looks at her sister then turns away, crossing to the other side of the room, then*) Talk to me, Ellie.

ELLIE: (*softly*) People don't like me.

PAULA: (*a pause. Paula gets it now. She slowly crosses to her sister, knowing the problem but momentarily at a loss for what to say...then ...*) I see.

ELLIE: (*a pause*) You do?

PAULA: I don't agree with you ... but I understand you.

ELLIE: It's a circle, Paula. I act a certain way to try to make my friends happy then they do something to make me mad and I get mad then I lose my friends. I can't make anybody happy. I want to get out of the circle.

PAULA: (*a pause, then*) Oh Ellie.

ELLIE: What?

PAULA: You're doing it all wrong. I don't blame you 'cause I did the same thing, but you're doing it all wrong.

ELLIE: (*a pause, then*) So how do I ... How do I do it right?

PAULA: I know the answer but I don't know if you've got the guts to do it.

ELLIE: Try me.

PAULA: Be somebody you hardly know.

ELLIE: Who?

PAULA: You. Just be you. Ellie, when we think we're not good enough we try to be somebody else ... the way we dress,



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