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Opening extract from

Amber's Song

Written by

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Published by

Barrington Stoke

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Amber's Song

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Barrington Stoke

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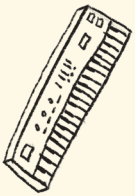
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Chapter 1

The Band – and the Baby

Mark loved music. Most of all, he loved playing his guitar. He and his three best friends had a band called Vampire Jam and they played together every week. Jakob was the singer, Emma was on keyboard and Nell was the drummer.

Every Saturday they met in Nell's garage and played for three hours solid – with a hot chocolate break at half time. It was fantastic. Mark never, ever missed a practice at Nell's on Saturday morning.

Until the Saturday his baby sister was born.

She was born a week early, at two o'clock in the morning. When Mark and his big sister Janet woke up, Granny was in the kitchen, getting their breakfast.

"Your mum and dad went off to hospital while you were asleep," Granny said. "And now you've got a new little sister. We'll go and see her as soon as we've finished breakfast."

"Yay!" Janet said. She loved babies.

Mark was excited too. But – it was Saturday morning. "What about the band?" he said. "We always practise on Saturdays."

Granny smiled. "A baby sister is more important than band practice," she said. "You'll have to miss it this morning."

Mark texted Nell.

Can't come this morning. Going to see our new baby.

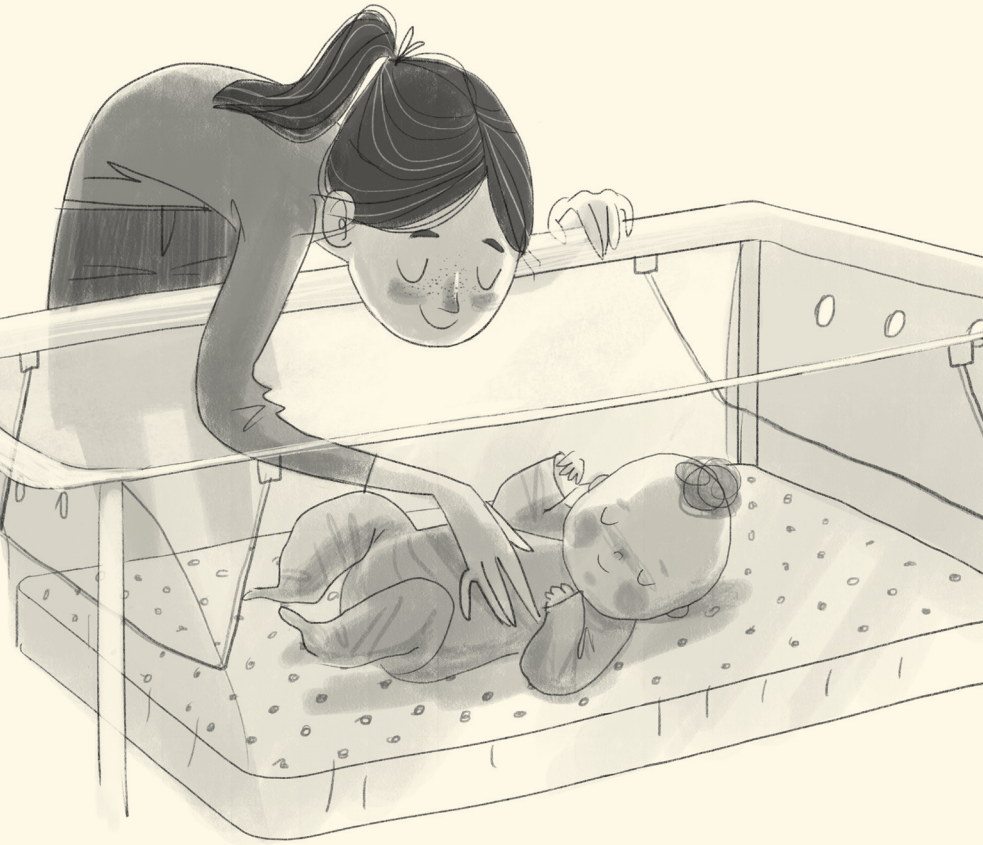
Great! Nell texted back. **Lucky you**!!

Mark groaned. Nell had heaps of little cousins and she loved babies even more than Janet did.

As soon as they'd eaten their toast and cornflakes, Granny drove Mark and Janet to the hospital. They went to the Birth Centre and found Mum and Dad sitting by a little cot, gazing down at the baby.

"Isn't she gorgeous?" Mum said. "We're going to call her Amber."

Mark looked at his baby sister. 'Hmm,' he thought. 'Gorgeous?' She was small and pink, with red hair and a funny little face. She was fast asleep.



"Oh, she's *sweet*!" Janet said. She bent over and gave the baby a kiss.

That was a BIG BAD mistake. The baby's eyes fluttered open, she looked up at Janet's smiling face and she started to scream.

"Don't cry, Baby Amber," Mum said. "Your big sister just gave you a kiss. Ssshhh." She lifted the baby out of the cot and cuddled her. But the "ssshhh" and the cuddles didn't work. Baby Amber screamed even louder.

"Never mind," Dad said. "She'll be fine when we get her home."

But he was wrong. When they got home, Baby Amber screamed even more. She screamed so hard her little face scrunched up and turned purple. Mum tried feeding her. Dad tried rocking her. Granny tried stroking the top of her head. Nothing did any good.

Amber's screams went on and on and ON.

"It's all my fault," Janet wailed. "I shouldn't have kissed her." She started to cry too.

Mum hugged Janet. Dad rocked the baby again. And the screaming got louder and louder and LOUDER. It was so loud it hurt

Mark's ears. He couldn't bear the noise any more.

He went and fetched his guitar. "Is it OK if I go to Nell's now?" he said. "For the end of band practice?"



Dad looked round and nodded. "Yes, it's fine. Just be back in time for lunch."

So Mark put his guitar in its case and went off to Nell's garage.

