

# Totally Twins

## Musical Mayhem

The Fabulous Diary  
of Persephone Pinchgut



Sweet Cherry  
Publishing

Author  
Aleesah Darlison

Illustrator  
Serena Geddes

Sunday 7 February. 12:22 pm

On my bed.



Hi, and welcome to the sometimes-cool, sometimes-crazy world of Persephone River Pinchgut. (That's me!)

This is my first ever entry in my first ever personal diary. Totally brilliant, huh? Plus, I'm writing with a brand new purple gel pen, which is so silky smooth!





BTW (by the way), Mum and Portia don't know I've started a diary so this is **TOP SECRET**. If they did know, they'd snoop for sure, especially Portia. I've never kept a secret from her before. Why? Because she's my identical, twin sister.

I thought that seeing as how I'm nearly eleven,

and getting older and more mature by the second, that maybe I should start doing things - well, a thing - on my own. I'm 'testing the water,' as Gran would say. So, keeping a diary should be one thing I can do on my own. Well, that's the plan. So, here goes.



## TEN TOTALLY TERRIFIC THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ME

1. My birthday is May 29.
2. My star sign is Gemini: the twins.  
Spooky coincidence or what?
3. I'm in Year Five at Heartfield  
Heights Primary School.
4. My favourite things are hanging  
out with my friends, swimming,  
collecting stationery (including  
gel pens, of course) and reading  
awesome books.
5. My favourite food is cheese and  
lettuce sandwiches (on white bread),  
followed closely by chocolate.

6. My two best friends in the whole world are Caitlin and Jolie.
7. My number one pet hate is being compared to Portia all the time! Yawn.
8. My favourite colour is purple.
9. My favourite room in the house is my bedroom – or at least my clean side of it, but definitely not Portia's messy side.
10. When I grow up, I'm going to be an archaeologist in Egypt. Not only do I find all things Egyptian totally fascinating, I love the idea of digging up ancient jewels that haven't been seen by human eyes for thousands of years.

Uh-oh, Mum's calling me for lunch. We're having vegetarian lasagne (one of Mum's better-tasting meals). TTYL (talk to you later).

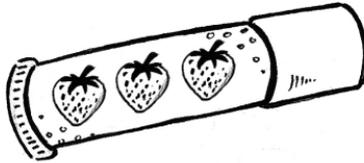


Sunday 7 February. 1:04 pm.

Hiding on the front porch while Mum and Portia do the washing up.



Phew, that was close! I had to sit on my diary while Portia came running around the corner like a maniac looking for her strawberry lip gloss.



Well, I've given you the run-down on me. Here's the goss on my family situation. I live with my mum, Skye, and my twin sister, Portia. Portia's middle name is Flame. I'm River, she's Flame: water and fire. Get it? I think Mum was trying to be clever when she named us.

## MY MUM

Mum has always been into totally out-there things. When she was pregnant with Portia and me she was into Greek mythology and Shakespeare. That's what I'm guessing anyway. Why else would she name me after the Goddess of the Underworld and Portia after the heroine in Shakespeare's play, *The Merchant of Venice*? According to Mum, Shakespeare is the greatest playwright of all time. I have my doubts.

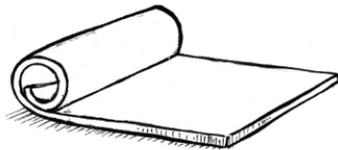


Last year, Mum was into reiki, which is a way of healing people by touching them with your hands, and iridology, which is studying the patterns and colours of someone's eyes to

determine if they are healthy or not.

Before that, she was into feng shui, which is a Chinese way of organising your home for harmony and positive energy (whatever that means). You wouldn't think our house was feng shui. It's totally messy because Mum and Portia leave their stuff everywhere, but Mum has spent ages ensuring we have perfect chi. It will bring us good fortune any day now, or so Mum says.

At the top of mum's current list are yoga and laughter therapy. She teaches classes for both in our living room so we usually have stacks of people here. All her students adore her. The problem is, Mum is often so busy with her alternative therapies that Portia and I barely get to see her.



## MY DAD

Dad is very different to Mum. He is not into the 'alternative lifestyle'. He is totally conventional and (don't tell him I said this) totally unadventurous. The most adventurous thing he has ever done is move to England - and that was two years ago after his split with Mum!



At first, he wasn't planning on moving there. He only went to 'sort himself out' and 'reconnect with family'. Dad's family is originally from England so he wanted to trace his family tree. Apparently, when people get oldish like Dad, that's what they do. You know, they try to work out where they've come from so they can figure

out where they're going to.

Anyway, when Dad got to England he found several well-decayed ancestors, a new life and a new wife, so he stayed.

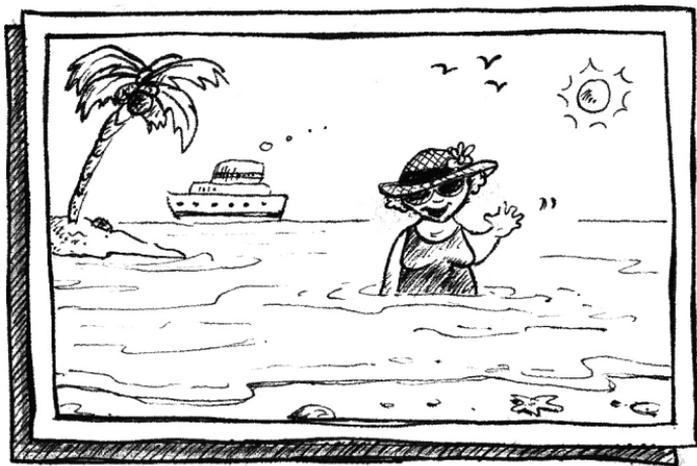
Dad doesn't phone much because it's too expensive. Portia and I have tried talking to him on Facebook and email, but he doesn't write often enough for a proper conversation. I want to get Skype so we can talk via video, but we'd have to buy a camera because our computer is so old that it doesn't have a built-in one. Mum refuses to do that because it costs money. She can be stingy sometimes.

## MY GRAN

Speaking of elderly things, my gran is really cool and not like most other grannies because she doesn't cook, she doesn't knit and she can't

stand cats. Instead, she's into bungy jumping and cycling and swimming in the surf, even in the middle of winter. Brrrr!!!! Her skin is ultra-brown and wrinkly and Mum is always telling her to be sun smart, but it never sinks in. Gran does exactly what she wants to do.

Gran's a travel writer so she is away a lot. She's actually holidaying in the Maldives at the moment, researching her next travel book. Lucky thing!



## MY TWIN SISTER, PORTIA

Now we come to Portia, my twin - not my clone like some people say. Obviously, though, because we are identical she does look like me. We have the same sunshine-and-honey hair down past our shoulders with soft curls at the back (which Portia is forever flicking about); the same 'crystal-green cat's eyes', as Mum calls them; and the same pointy elbows and skinny fingers.

Except for a teardrop-shaped mole on my left cheek, we look exactly the same. Oh, and most of the time I wear my hair in a ponytail (with four bobby pins on either side so nothing escapes), while Portia wears hers out. She says it's more flattering like that. I just find a ponytail tidier.

On the inside, though, we're totally different.

For instance, we never agree on things like keeping our room tidy, or what clothes to buy so we can share them, or what sort of cake we like best. (I like chocolate, Portia likes vanilla.)

That's why Mum calls us 'polar opposites', and why Portia calls me winter and herself summer. 'You're dark and serious,' she always says, 'while I'm airy and light.'

I tell her, 'Whatever.' But I think she has a point.



Monday 8 February. 3:45 pm.

My bedroom.



DISASTER has struck and you're so totally not going to believe what's happened. It's so incredibly bad I don't know what to do.

Okay, so are you ready for it?

This can't be happening. Deep breath. Here goes.

Our class has to perform an end-of-term musical!

That's right, a musical. Honestly, I'd rather use a public toilet or public shower without flip-flops. Why? Because I have zilcheroonie singing ability. I'm totally without tune. The very thought of singing in front of a real, live audience with all those eyes on me makes me shake like a skinny-minnie greyhound on a windy day.

We only started drama this year and I only chose it because Portia made me. No-one mentioned anything about singing. This is extra, extra bad news. I just know I'm going to make a total gooper of myself with my horrendous cat-getting-its-tail-pulled singing!

Hang on. Intruder alert!



Monday 8 February. 4:07 pm.

I'm back. Still in my bedroom.



Another close call! I had to stash my diary under my quilt while Portia scratched around the room looking for her strawberry lip gloss. Maybe if she kept her side tidy she'd know where things were.

Portia, of course, is ecstatic about the musical. Not only is she already Miss Tamarind's (our drama teacher) favourite, she's also a fabulous singer. Wouldn't you know it? Everything Portia is, I'm not.

That's why, when Miss Tamarind delivered the news, unlike me, Portia was oozing with joy and shouted, 'That's so cool, Miss T!' Even the boys were excited. 'Awesome!' Flynn said. 'I'm the best singer.'

Some kids actually chanted (yes, chanted),  
'Mu-si-call! Mu-si-call!'



Miss Tamarind grinned and said she was glad we were all so keen.

I wasn't. I was horrified and sat slumped to one side like a crumbling sandcastle, thinking, 'I can't do this. I can't sing.'

Miss Tamarind's crinkle-look, peasant skirt swished as she strode around the room dropping lime-green handouts about the musical onto our desks. She took great delight in telling us auditions were next Tuesday. Next Tuesday! Can you believe it?

Anyway, I stared at the page Miss Tamarind

handed me - without reading anything because I was in total shock - while a tight feeling gripped my chest. Miss Tamarind looked at me as if my face was lime-green too. It probably was. I did feel sick. She asked me if everything was okay and made a big deal of telling me how excited 'my twin' was and that she had thought I would be too.

Now, what Miss Tamarind and most other people don't realise is that just because Portia and I look the same it doesn't mean we think the same or that we are the same. We are individuals, but explaining that is all too hard sometimes.

So, instead, I grimace-smiled back at Miss Tamarind. You know, like when someone steps on your toe and it completely kills, but you smile because you're trying to be polite and pretend you can't feel it.

'I'm fine,' I said.

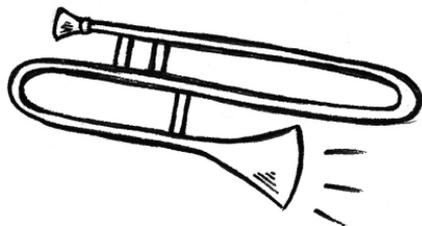
Miss Tamarind smiled knowingly and moved onto the next desk where she dropped another lime-green bomb. Her next piece of startling (Not!) news was that Principal Moody had agreed to let the school band play on the night.

All I hope is that they play ear-splittingly loud so when I sing they drown me out.



Hayley, a totally talented flute player, asked Miss Tamarind what would happen if you were in the band.

'Aha,' I thought, 'maybe I can take up the trombone and avoid singing that way.'



‘The band will have to do without some of its players because I want our entire class on stage,’ she said, dashing my plan.

Jacob asked, ‘What if you can’t sing?’

Good question, Jacob!

‘It’s not important if you can’t sing,’ said Miss Tamarind. (Not to her, maybe.) ‘What matters is that you give it a go. I’m not looking for the next Idol. I’m looking for students who will embrace the experience.’

Please! I wanted to tell Miss Tamarind that having a good time and singing didn’t necessarily go together for some people, but I didn’t think she would have been interested. This was her brilliant idea, after all. Plus, with everyone else so pumped about the musical I would have sounded like a total wet blanket if I’d complained.

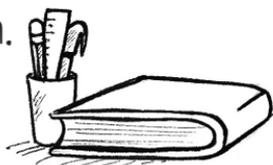
So, instead, I tried catching Portia’s eye to

send her a SECRET SIGNAL of distress. She was too busy staring into space with a dreamy look in her eyes and a twitchy smile on her lips to see me. She was probably fantasising that she was some famous singer performing in a concert or skipping up on stage to receive an international singing award in front of millions of screaming fans, or something equally celebrity-like and singer-ish, which would be totally Portia's thing.



Monday 8 February. 4:38 pm.

At my desk.



I'm back. I had to grab a cheese and lettuce sandwich (on wholegrain, unfortunately) because I was starving. White bread is heaps yummiier, but Mum is dead against processed flour. She says it contains toxic bleaches and blocks your intestines. Appetising!

BTW, Mum's still not home. Wonder where she is? She's probably out stocking up on non-toxic, non-intestine-blocking products at the organic food store. Portia's in the lounge room watching music videos again. She's probably getting pointers for her upcoming performance.

So, where was I? Oh, yeah, Heartfield Heights Musical.

Anyway, while I was freaking out over Miss

Tamarind's announcement about the musical, Caitlin told Portia, 'You should try out for the lead. You're a brilliant singer.'

## MY BESTIE, CAITLIN

Caitlin is one of Portia's and my best friends. She's in the choir with Portia and Jolie, our other bestie. We're a gang of four. We sit together in class and spend every recess and lunchtime together. Sometimes other girls hang out with us - it's not like we're snobs or anything - but basically four is a good number for us. Four is my favourite number, BTW. It's just perfect don't you think?

Well, when Caitlin said that, Portia flicked her hair and admitted she'd love to be the princess.

'Who wouldn't?' said Caitlin. 'You gad about in gorgeous dresses, you wear sparkly tiaras

and you get to kiss the prince.’

‘Or the frog,’ I said.

Caitlin giggled. ‘Oh, admit it Perse, playing a princess would be awesome.’



I rolled my eyes and mumbled something even I didn't hear, while Portia said she wasn't sure about kissing any boys. She wanted to know if Miss Tamarind would make someone do that. I was adamant I wasn't going to kiss anyone. I've seen what boys get up to at lunchtime and it's certainly not hygenic. Imagine the germs you could catch!

Jolie asked me which part I wanted and I said none because I couldn't sing very well. Portia snorted and said I couldn't sing at all and that if Jolie and Caitlin heard me they'd not only be shocked and horrified but terrified as well.

Then Portia kept going on about how bad I

was until I got so angry my ears started to burn, like they always do when I get cranky.

Silently I counted to ten, doing the ujjayi breathing Mum taught me in yoga. Slow. Deep. Rhythmic. Mum says calming your breath quietens your mind.

Haaaa...

'It won't hurt to give it a go.' Jolie's worried eyes flicked from Portia to me and back again.

Haaaa...

Portia snort-giggled like a pig in a laughing competition. 'Oh, yes it will,' she said. 'It'll hurt our ears!'



There was no way I could quieten my mind with Portia carrying on like that, so I hissed, 'Stop it!' She just raspberried me, which was so infuriating. Luckily the recess bell rang, saving me from further humiliation. I hate losing my

cool like that. I wish I hadn't, but I couldn't help it. Portia has an irritating habit of knowing exactly how to push my buttons.

The moment the bell rang, Portia, Caitlin and Jolie jumped up, not bothering to pack up their pencils or books, which is typical. They're so messy.

'Bags being first at skipping!' Portia said.

'You're always first,' Caitlin grumbled.

'Well, I'm second,' Jolie said.

They bounded out of the classroom, giggling and chattering and totally forgetting about me. They hadn't even bothered to notice how I was feeling or what I was going through as a non-singer being forced to perform in a musical. It was like they didn't care about me at all.

By now, I was feeling totally sorry for myself and wondering what to do. I was so afraid of singing on stage that I was almost in tears. To

stop myself, I thought about our maths lesson coming up after recess. Bad idea! It only made me more miserable, if that's at all possible!

So, trying not to think about musicals or mathematics, I slowly tidied my desk, tucked my chair in and trudged outside.



Monday 8 February. 6:20 pm.

On my bed.



Portia is a total pelican. I thought she was TOTT (totally over the top) at school, hassling me about my singing. Now she's being a pain at home too.

Mum strolled in a while ago, late as usual and bursting with news about her new art teacher at college, Mr Divine, who'd been 'so inspiring'.

'I have to get something onto canvas this instant,' she told us as she made a beeline for her sanctuary, otherwise known as her art studio.

So, no time for a deep and meaningful discussion with Mum about the day's disastrous events.

Mum's 'art studio' sounds quite posh, but in reality it's just a screened-off section of our

wobbly veranda which surrounds our sagging weatherboard cottage. It's so ancient that if it were human it would need to be hospitalised.

Our house is certainly no castle, except that it might be as decrepit as one of those crumbly old 13th century ones in Scotland - only much, much smaller. And damper. And cheaper. You could probably fit our whole house into a proper castle's hall closet. Oh, you get the picture.

Seriously, though, our house is so decrepit you would feel sorry for it. There are about a gazillion holes in the tin roof. When it rains we have to set out buckets to catch the drips. I hate all the buckets sitting about and the constant splish splash of water. It's so irritating and utterly annoying, not to mention wet.

After Mum went to her studio, I snuck in to watch her. She lit an incense stick (musk peach, which she always says helps her focus) and slid

a blank canvas onto her easel. Then she began painting with her usual energy and intensity. Portia is so like her. Both of them are incredibly messy so it's best to stand back when they're doing something. Way back.



Mum was painting with this bright, egg yolk colour she'd mixed, and some creams and browns. As usual, it was hard to tell what she was painting because Mum's a totally abstract painter. Understanding her paintings can be difficult because they have hidden meanings. You never know if what you're seeing is what you're meant to see, if you know what I mean.

At least this one looked happy. For ages after Dad left, Mum's paintings were always black or grey or, if she was in an ultra-good mood, murky blue. Since she's taken up laughter therapy she's been better. Now she paints with colour: mostly.

