

THE CARLTON TWINS

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discovering voices

The Carlton Twins

Ah, Noira and Bianca. What charming young ladies. Perfectly beautiful and perfectly polite, and if it was not enough, their wonderful singing voices could match those of the angels. However, they did have a trait which made them most remarkable: they shared a torso, waist and hips. Two arms and four legs in total, those two gals had. They sure were a sight, especially when dancing and singing on the stage. Just like otherworldly sirens, the twins caught the eye of the nation with their act as “The Carlton Twins” in a traveling freak show with a name long forgotten.

The only exhibit without humans were two giant butterflies pinned to a mounting board. The sisters could not walk past it without feeling an odd sense of dread from the sight.

It was 1947 when our girls turned seventeen, and they looked like beauties from another era. Noira was graceful and Bianca was stylish. And although to the outer world they were the most perfect sisters, always laughing and singing together, their hearts harbored a deep hatred for each other. Noira could not stand Bianca and Bianca despised Noira. And both hated “mother dearest”, who sold them for drinking money to the first circus owner she could find. Why, as you see our young ladies were far from happy with their fate. When the lights went out, the audience left and they were left alone to change clothes, they no longer were half as loving as on stage.

One day, a certain gentleman arrived to watch their show. He was tall and handsome, with a look on his eyes that could inspire poetry. That evening, he approached the sisters and offered them a two roses. He told them they were beautiful, and that gorgeous girls like them should not rot away in a sideshow, being presented as freaks of nature. He also said that he was interested in marrying them.

Noira felt flattered and infatuated. She wanted to go with this man as soon as possible. She consulted with Bianca if they could marry him and leave their miserable life behind. Because although they hated each other, they only ever did what they agreed on. However, Bianca said no. She said he probably just wanted to exhibit them elsewhere and take advantage of

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them, just like everyone who had showed them any sort of affection up to date had. The conversation ended there, and once the show moved to another town, so did the girls. And they never saw that tall, handsome man again.

Despite their irreconcilable hatred, they respected and trusted each other. And please do not get me wrong, the anger of one of them for her sister was not any less real because of this. They could be opposing forces just as much as they could be perfectly synchronized in thought and action. Perhaps it was because they simply never knew life without the other. They never learnt how to not be one person, and not only in a physical sense, but also in their identities. They were, after all, treated like a unit by every single person they had met, so why not be one?

Another day on display, for everyone to see. They sang a song about being always together, dressed like flappers from the roaring twenties and holding huge feather fans. The dance routine was not complicated in itself. What was complicated was performing it on high heels. Because of that, our poor Bianca tripped, making them fall. The audience laughed and then left. No one else arrived that day, probably because word spread quickly that the talented siamese twins were nothing but an absurd waste of money to watch. Their manager, a hard boiled old man, called them up and yelled at them for the ridicule they caused. He told them he was very kind, picking them up from the streets after their previous manager abandoned them and giving them an opportunity. That he practically treated them like his daughters even if they were abominations and that they were repaying him by not even putting in any effort at all. He then slapped their faces, leaving red and painful marks, and sent them backstage.

There, they discussed what to do. Noira said that they could escape. That they could run so far that they would not get caught. Bianca agreed, never wanting to get slapped again.

And then, on their four feet they ran. They ran as fast as they could with the night as their cloak. They thought about the handsome man and the

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audience, they thought about “mother dearest” and their manager. They thought about the two butterflies, which really had more in common with them than any person. Were they butterflies, pinned to a mounting board or were they coyotes, caught in a trap for as long as they could remember? Either way, they longed to be free. Truly free.

And then they say a light come from behind them. They were found and their dream of freedom shriveled up before their very eyes. They were taken back to the freak show. My, so close to getting away yet so far. Noira cried and Bianca screamed. And this was because both had lost whatever little sanity they had left.

That night they did not sleep. They both pretended to, so that the other thought they were. In reality, they were thinking about what went wrong. Why they could not be free. Why their own mother, who they had sworn to destroy someday, would sell them the way she did. Why they were barely seen as humans by other people. Why they could not be free. And then they both realised.

Noira thought she would never be truly free as long as she had to share a body with someone she hated so much. It barely even mattered if they were not part of a freak show because she would never be happy as long as she shared blood vessels with a girl she could not stand. And somehow she knew Bianca was thinking the exact same thing.

Bianca picked up a letter opener, Noira grabbed a razor blade and they both looked at each other. They knew one would die that night. They counted to three...

And then, there was silence. There was silence and blood on Noira’s hand. And Bianca was moving very little and then stopped moving at all. Noira thought about how coyotes bite their own ankles off to escape traps. And then looked out the window. To see the stars and the moon.

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She was free. Just like the celestial bodies she was staring at. And she was so far gone that she had not even thought of the repercussions at all. She had not thought about what would happen next. She looked next to her, to the now deceased Bianca and a tear rolled down her face.

There was no hatred anymore. Was that feeling, deep in her heart, love for her twin?

The next morning, a woman found both of the sisters dead. It was not hard to assume this would happen, for that they shared veins and arteries. And they were finally free.