

Bella's character profile from Sister Sister

Bella is Willow's half sister and she is eleven. She has thick black hair down to her shoulders and quite pale skin like her mother – in fact she is a mini-me of her mum. She has a brother called Archie who is seven. Anthony is her father and he is a famous writer and newspaper journalist. Maria is her mum and she is a successful food writer. They live in East Dulwich in South East London in a terraced house with a pretty garden, right near a lovely ice cream parlour. Bella loves the ice cream parlour and her favourite flavours are caramel and coconut. She also loves spaghetti carbonara. Because her mum is a food writer the family are always trying new food and Bella is adventurous in her choices and isn't afraid of chilli's! Bella is good at sport and at her school she is in all the teams for most things. She is especially good at netball and athletics. But her big sport is Taekwondo. She is amazing at it and competes for a local club. Her dream is to participate in the Olympics one day. She is one belt below black belt, which she will go for next year.

Bella is very clever and is top in all her subjects, but she finds creative writing really hard. Her mind is very logical so thinking outside the box is hard for her. That's why she likes Taekwondo because to be good at it, you have to learn all the patterns of combat in a certain order. Just like learning times tables. Bella is very strong willed and says what she means, even if it can offend someone. She doesn't do it on purpose to be mean – she just doesn't think. If she says she going to do something, she will. So she really does dedicate herself to her Taekwondo and trains three times a week.

Bella's best friend is called Pippa and they do everything together. Pippa lives quite near so they see each other all the time. Bella gets on with Archie but does find him annoying at times. He wants her to play with him and she doesn't want to play Lego or Minecraft. They do like making cakes together with their mum though. Bella has lots of other friends, but she would rather always see Pippa over anyone else. She can be quite intense, but Pippa is very sweet and kind and understands Bella really well, so they get on.

When Bella gets ill, she doesn't realise it at first. She has a sore throat that won't go even with antibiotics, and then she's mysteriously covered in bruises for no reason. She's tired and grumpy all the time and finally when she collapses at Taekwondo, she is rushed to hospital where Severe Aplastic Anaemia is diagnosed. Her family go into shock, but she doesn't actually know how she is supposed to feel. She'll get better, right? Her parents start acting strange. Her mum's eyes are red-rimmed from crying, but Bella never sees her cry. She has to stay in for a few days to have loads more tests. Her dad is over jolly but looks crazed. Archie is still Archie but that's because he doesn't really know what's going on. The doctors talk to her parents separately and leave her out of the conversations. Bella is worried. What does it mean? Her dad leaves his phone by her bed while talking to one of the doctors and Bella secretly goes on line (she knows his password!). She discovers that if she doesn't get a bone marrow transplant she will die! After being inconsolable she comes right out and asks her dad what they are going to do. The thought of dying terrifies her, but she thinks if I have the transplant all will be OK, as the success rate is so high. Her dad explains that they have been searching for a donor since the news and

there is no one that matches on any of the registries in the UK or Europe. He, Maria and Archie will be tested as matches. But in the end, it turns out no one in the family is a match. The doctors send Bella home, and tell her they will keep searching. She has to come in for blood transfusions to keep her energy up. She can't go to school as she is too tired and also she might catch bugs as she has a weak immune system. She becomes really withdrawn and doesn't want to see anyone. Pippa is the only friend she wants to see and lovely Pippa offers to be tested as a match for Bella (she isn't). She feels like a freak and hanging over her the whole time is the fact she might die. She can't even practise Taekwondo and preparing for her black belt has had to stop, something she finds really upsetting.

Just when things couldn't get much worse for Bella, her dad drops a bomb. He sits on the end of her bed and says he may have found another person to be tested. He tells her about a girl called Willow who is thirteen and lives in the countryside with a woman called Helen whom he used to date years ago. He explains that the girl, Willow, is his daughter and that he and Helen kept her a secret from Maria and the kids so as not to upset anyone. Even Willow didn't know who her father was. Bella feels like she has been shot. A sister? How? Her dad also tells her that Willow and her mum are coming to visit this weekend. This is when Bella goes mad, screaming at her dad for being a liar, saying she doesn't want to meet this girl, doesn't want her to be tested, doesn't need her help. How dare he think she would be OK with it? What if Willow wants to move in? What if she starts taking her father away? Bella refuses to talk to her father at all after that, shutting him out.

The meeting is a disaster. Bella really does hate Willow on sight. Her nicey niceness makes her want to back-kick her out of the room. How dare she be so healthy and look just like her dad? And she can write like him too? Bella can't write. At the moment, she can't do anything. When she catches her snooping in her bedroom, she goes ballistic, and even when Willow looks like she might cry, she just doesn't care! Over the next few weeks, her anger doesn't go away and when Willow is found to be a match, Bella almost wants to refuse her bone marrow, but knows that would be ridiculous.

Underneath the anger is fear – Bella is very frightened in case the operation doesn't work. And when she is admitted to hospital to start treatment to prep her body for the operation, she does become more and more withdrawn. The chemo makes her sick and her mouth hurt and when Willow visits her, she wants to run away, but she can't. She has no strength. What if Willow takes her place should she die? She can't get that out of her head.

Once in isolation She feels so rough that watching telly is exhausting. As her body gets ready to receive the bone marrow, she is at her lowest ebb. Bella sneaks a look at her dad's ipad when he pops out and discovers he's reading Willow's blog. She reads all about Willow's fear, all the trauma she herself has gone through after the discovery of her father, how she is terrified of dying on the operating table, how Bella's hatred of her is breaking her heart. Bella is stunned. She can't believe it. She had been thinking of Willow as a thing, not as a person. She could easily relate to her fear. And When Willow sends her a book, *Little Women*, she had mentioned in her blog, Bella's heart thaws. Through the fog of her own fear and anger and illness, Bella

feels ashamed of herself and she and Willow make up, with Bella asking if they can be sisters. It makes her feel happy, instead of sick.