

## **A Bad Serenade**

Go on, express yourself, she urged him, a playful smirk on her face. They sat on a park bench, the afternoon sun warm on their skin. "Let's get along," she said, more to herself than to him. She had been trying to get him to open up for weeks. "Try," she whispered, leaning closer. "What's the worst that could happen?"

He sighed, a nervous habit. "I don't know," he mumbled, his eyes fixed on the ground. She knew he wanted to be a musician, but he was too afraid to perform. To distract him, she said, "I need to get out of here. Let's go shopping."

He shook his head. "I want to conquer my fear," he said, suddenly resolute. He stood up, took a deep breath, and began to sing. His voice cracked on the first note, and he winced. "He sings bad," she thought, trying to suppress a giggle. But as he continued, she saw the passion in his eyes.

He finished the song and looked at her, his face flushed with embarrassment. She smiled, a genuine, loving smile. She didn't care that he sounded terrible. In that moment, watching him try so hard, she realized she was in love.