



Amy,
My Daughter

MITCH WINEHOUSE

**AMY
MY DAUGHTER**

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Dedication

**This book is dedicated to my father Alec, my mother Cynthia
and my daughter Amy. They showed me that love is the most
powerful force in the universe.**

**Love transcends even death.
They will live in my heart forever.**

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BEFORE WE START

You'll understand if I tell you this is not the book I wanted to write. I had been working on one about my family's history with my friend Paul Sassienie and his writing partner Howard Ricklow. It was due to be published this year.

I needed to write this book instead. I needed to tell you the real story of Amy's life. I'm a plain-talking guy and I'll be telling it like it was. Amy's too-short life was a roller-coaster ride; I'm going to tell you about all of it. Apart from being her father, I was also her friend, confidant and adviser – not that she always took my advice, but she always heard me out. For Amy, I was the port in the storm; for me, she – along with her brother Alex – was the light of my life.

I hope, through reading this book, that you will gain a better understanding of and a new perspective on my darling daughter Amy.

THANKS, AND A NOTE

A huge thank-you to my wife Jane, for being my rock during the most difficult time of my life and for her continuing dedication and support; Alex, my son, for his love and understanding; Janis, for being a fantastic mother to our children; my sister Melody and all my wonderful family and friends, for always being there; my manager Trenton; my PA Megan; Raye and everyone at Metropolis; my agents Maggie Hanbury and Robin Straus, and the lovely people at HarperCollins on both sides of the Atlantic. And special thanks to Paul Sassienie, Howard Ricklow and Humphrey Price for helping me write this book.

I am donating all of my proceeds as author from this book to the Amy Winehouse Foundation, which we, Amy's family, established to help children and young adults facing difficulty and adversity in their lives. I intend to spend the rest of my life raising money for the Foundation.

I believe that through her music, the Foundation's work and this book, Amy will be with us for ever.

PROLOGUE

I'd like to say that the first time I cuddled my new-born baby daughter, on 14 September 1983, was a moment that will live with me always, but it wasn't nearly as straightforward as that.

Some days time drags, and others the hours just fly. That day was one of those, when everything seemed to happen at once. Unlike our son Alex, who'd been born three and a half years earlier, our daughter came into the world quickly, popping out in something of a rush, like a cork from a bottle. She arrived in typical Amy fashion – kicking and screaming. I swear she had the loudest cry of any baby I've ever heard. I'd like to tell you that it was tuneful but it wasn't – just loud. Amy was four days late, and nothing ever changed: for the whole of her life she was always late.

Amy was born at the Chase Farm Hospital in Enfield, north London, not far from where we lived in Southgate. And because the moment itself was quickly over, her family – grandparents, great-aunts, uncles and cousins – soon crowded in, much as they did for almost every event in our family, good or bad, filling the spaces around Janis's bed to greet the new arrival.

I'm a very emotional guy, especially when it comes to my family, and, holding Amy in my arms, I thought, I'm the luckiest man in the world. I was so pleased to have a daughter: after Alex was born, we'd hoped our next child might be a girl, so he could have a sister. Janis and I had already decided what to call her. Following a Jewish tradition, we gave our children names that began with the same initial as a deceased relative, so Alex was named after my father, Alec, who'd died when I was sixteen. I'd thought that if we had another boy he'd be called Ames. A jazzy kind of name. 'Amy,' I said, thinking that didn't sound quite as jazzy. How wrong I was. So Amy Jade Winehouse – Jade after my stepfather Larry's father Jack – she became.

Amy was beautiful, and the spitting image of her older brother. Looking at pictures of the two of them at that age, I find it difficult to tell them apart. The day after she was born I took Alex to see his new little sister, and we took some lovely pictures of the two of them, Alex cuddling Amy.

I hadn't seen those photographs for almost twenty-eight years, until one day in July 2011, the day before I was due to go to New York, I got a call from Amy. I could tell right away that she was very excited.

'Dad, Dad, you've got to come round,' she said.

'I can't, darling,' I told her. 'You know I've got a gig tonight and I'm flying off early in the morning.'

She was insistent. 'Dad, I've found the photographs. You've got to come round.' Suddenly I knew why she was so excited. At some point during Amy's numerous moves, a box of family photographs had been lost, and she had clearly come across it that morning. 'You've got to come over.'

In the end I drove over in my taxi to Camden Square and parked outside her house.

‘I’m just popping in,’ I said, knowing full well how hard it was to say no to her. ‘You know I’m busy today.’

‘Oh, you’re always going too quick,’ she responded. ‘Dad, stay.’

I followed her in, and she had the photographs she’d found spread out on a table. I looked down at them. I had better ones but these obviously meant a lot to her. There was Alex holding new-born Amy, and there was Amy as a teenager – but all the rest were of family and friends.

She picked up a photo of my mum. ‘Wasn’t Nan beautiful?’ she said. Then she held up the picture of Alex and herself. ‘Oh, look at him,’ she added, a mixture of pride and sibling rivalry in her voice.

She went through the collection, picking up one after another, talking to me about each one, and I thought, This girl, famous all over the world, someone who’s brought joy to millions of people – she’s just a normal girl who loves her family. I’m really proud of her. She’s a great kid, my daughter.

It was easy to be with her that day: she was a lot of fun. Eventually, after an hour or so, it was time for me to go, and we hugged. As I held her I could feel that she was her old self: she was becoming strong again – she’d been working with weights in the gym she’d put into her house.

‘When you’re back, we’ll go into the studio to do that duet,’ she said, as we walked to the door. We had two favourite songs, ‘Fly Me To The Moon’ and ‘Autumn Leaves’, and Amy wanted us to record one or other of them together. ‘We’re going to rehearse properly,’ she added.

‘I’ll believe it when I see it,’ I said, laughing. We’d had this conversation many times over the years. It was nice to hear her talking like that again. I waved goodbye out of the cab.

I never saw my darling daughter alive again.

* * *

I arrived in New York on the Friday, and had a quiet evening alone. The following day I went to see my cousin Michael and his wife Alison at their apartment on 59th Street – Michael had immigrated to the US a few years earlier when he’d married Alison. They now had three-month-old twins, Henry and Lucy, and I was dying to meet them. The kids were great and I had Henry sitting on my lap when Michael got a call from his father, my uncle Percy, who lives in London. Michael passed the phone to me. There was the usual stuff: ‘Hello, Mitch, how are you? How’s Amy?’ I told him I’d seen Amy just before I’d flown out and she was fine.

My mobile rang. The caller ID said, ‘Andrew – Security’. Amy often rang me using the phone of her security guard Andrew so I told my uncle, ‘I think that’s Amy now,’ and passed the house phone back to Michael. I still had Henry on my lap as I answered my phone.

‘Hello, darling,’ I said. But it wasn’t Amy, it was Andrew. I could barely make out what he was saying.

All I could decipher was: ‘You gotta come home, you gotta come home.’

‘What? What are you talking about?’

‘You’ve got to come home,’ he repeated.

My world drained away from me. 'Is she dead?' I asked.
And he said, 'Yes.'

1

ALONG CAME AMY

From the start I was besotted with my new daughter, and not much else mattered to me. In the days before Amy was born, I'd been fired from my job, supposedly because I'd asked to take four days off for my daughter's birth. But with Amy in the world those concerns seemed to disappear. Even though I had no job, I went out and bought a JVC video camera, which cost nearly a grand. Janis wasn't best pleased, but I didn't care. I took hours of video of Amy and Alex, which I've still got.

Alex sat guard by her cot for hours at a time. I went into her bedroom late one night and found Amy wide awake and Alex fast asleep on the floor. Great guard he made. I was a nervous dad, and I'd often peer into her cot to check she was okay. When she was a very young baby I'd find her panting, and shout, 'She's not breathing properly!' Janis had to explain that all babies made noises like that. I still wasn't happy, though, so I'd pick Amy up – and then we couldn't get her back to sleep. She was an easy baby, though, and it wasn't long before she was sleeping through the night, so soundly sometimes that Janis had to wake her up to feed her.

Amy learned to walk on her first birthday, and from then on she was a bit of a handful. She was very inquisitive, and if you didn't watch her all the time, she'd be off exploring. At least we had some help: my mother and stepfather, along with most of the rest of my family, seemed to be there every day. Sometimes I'd come home late from work and Janis would tell me they'd eaten my dinner.

Janis was a wonderful mother, and still is. Alex and Amy could both read and write before they went to school, thanks to her. When I came home I'd hear them upstairs, walk up quietly and stand outside their bedroom door to watch them. The kids would be tucked in either side of Janis as she read to them, their eyes wide, wondering what was coming next. This was their time together and I wished I was part of it.

On the nights that I didn't get home until ten or eleven o'clock, I'd sometimes wake them up to say goodnight. I'd go into their room, kick the cot or bed, say, 'Oh, they're awake,' and pick them up for a cuddle. Janis used to go mad and quite right too.

I was a hands-on father but more for rough-and-tumble than reading stories. Alex and I would play football and cricket in the garden, and Amy would want to join in – 'Dad! Dad! Give *me* the ball.' I'd prod it towards her, then she'd pick it up and throw it over the fence.

Amy loved dancing and, as most dads did with their young daughters, I'd hold her hands and balance her feet on mine. We'd sway like that around the room, but Amy liked it best when I twirled her round and round, enjoying the feeling of disorientation it gave her. She became fearless physically, climbing higher than I liked, or rolling over the bars of a climbing frame in the park. She also liked playing at home: she

loved her Cabbage Patch dolls, and we had to send off the ‘adoption certificates’ the dolls came with to keep her happy. If Alex wanted to torment her, he’d tie the dolls up.

When I did come home early I read to the children, always Enid Blyton’s Noddy books. Amy and Alex were Noddy experts. Amy loved the ‘Noddy quiz’.

She would say, ‘Daddy, what was Noddy wearing the day he met Big Ears?’

I’d pretend to think for a minute. ‘Was he wearing his red shirt?’

Amy would say, ‘No.’

I’d tell her that was a very hard question and I needed to think. ‘Was he wearing his blue hat with the bell on the end?’ Another no. Then I’d click my fingers. ‘I know! He was wearing his blue shorts and his yellow scarf with red spots.’

‘No, Daddy, he wasn’t.’

At that point I’d give in and ask Amy to tell me what he was wearing. Before she could get the words out, she was already giggling. ‘He wasn’t wearing anything, he was ... naked!’

And then she’d put her hand over her mouth to stifle her hysterical laughing. No matter how many times we played that game it never varied.

We weren’t one of those families that had the TV on for the sake of it. There was always music playing and I sang around the house. We used to get the kids to put on little shows for us. I’d introduce them and Janis would clap and they’d start singing – well, I say singing ... Alex couldn’t sing but would give it a go, and Amy’s only goal was to sing louder than her brother. Clearly she liked the limelight. If Alex got bored and went off to do something else, Amy would carry on singing – even after we’d told her to stop.

She loved a little game I used to play with her – we did it a lot in the car. I’d start a song or nursery rhyme and she’d sing the last word.

‘Humpty Dumpty sat on the ...’

‘... WALL ...’

‘... Humpty Dumpty had a great ...’

‘... FALL.’ It kept us amused for ages.

One year Amy was given a little turntable that played nursery rhymes. It was all you heard from her room. Then she had a xylophone and taught herself – slowly and painfully – to play ‘Home On The Range’. The noise would carry through the house, *plink, plink, plink*, and I’d will her to hit the right notes on time – it was agonizing to have to listen to it.

Despite her charm, ‘Be quiet, Amy!’ was probably the most-heard sentence in our house during her early years. She just didn’t know when to stop. Once she started singing that was it. And if she wasn’t the centre of attention, she’d find a way of becoming it – occasionally at Alex’s expense. At his sixth birthday party Amy, aged three, put on an impromptu show of singing and dancing. Naturally, Alex wasn’t best pleased and, before we could stop him, he poured a drink over her. Amy burst into tears and ran out of the room crying. I shouted at Alex so loudly that he ran out crying too. After the party, Amy sat on the kitchen floor sulking, and Alex wouldn’t come out of his room.

Despite such scenes, Alex and Amy were extremely close and remained so, even when they got older and made their own circles of friends.

Amy would do anything for attention. She was mischievous, bold and daring. Not

long after Alex's birthday party, Janis took Amy to Broomfield Park, near our home, and lost her. A panic-stricken Janis phoned me at work to tell me that Amy was missing and I raced to the park, beside myself with anxiety. By the time I arrived, the police were there and I was preparing myself for the worst: in my mind, she wasn't lost, she'd been abducted. My mum and my auntie Lorna were also there – everybody was looking for Amy. Clearly, Amy was no longer in the park and the police told us to go home, which we did. Five hours later, Janis and I were crying our eyes out when the phone rang. It was Ros, one of my sister Melody's friends. Amy was with her. Thank God.

What had happened was just typical of Amy. Ros had been in the park with her kids when Amy had seen her and run over to her. Naturally, Ros had asked where her mummy was, and mischievous Amy had told her that her mummy had gone home. So Ros took Amy home with her, but instead of phoning us, she phoned Melody, who was a teacher. She didn't speak to her but left a message at the school that Amy was with her. When Melody heard that Ros was looking after Amy, she didn't think too much about it because she had no idea that Amy was missing. When she got home and heard what had happened, she put two and two together. Fifteen minutes later, Melody walked in with Amy and I burst into tears.

'Don't cry, Daddy, I'm home now,' I remember her saying.

Unfortunately, Amy didn't seem to learn from that experience. Several months later I took the kids to the Brent Cross shopping centre in north-west London. We were in the John Lewis department store and suddenly Amy was gone. One second she was there and the next she'd disappeared. Alex and I searched the immediate area – how far could she have got? – but there was no sign of her. Here we go again, I thought. And this time she'd definitely been kidnapped.

We widened the search. Just as we were walking past a rack of long coats, out she popped. 'Boo!' I was furious, but the more I told her off, the more she laughed. A few weeks later she tried it again. This time I headed straight for the long coats. She wasn't there. I searched all of the racks. No Amy. I was really beginning to worry when a voice said over the Tannoy, 'We've got a little girl called Amy here. If you've lost her, please come to Customer Services.' She'd hidden somewhere else, got really lost and someone had taken her to a member of staff. I told her there was to be no more hiding or running away when we're out. She promised she wouldn't do it again and she didn't, but the next series of practical jokes was played out to a bigger audience.

When I was a little boy I had choked on a bit of apple and my father had panicked. So, when Alex choked on his dinner, I panicked too, forcing my fingers down his throat to remove whatever was obstructing him. It didn't take Amy long to start the choking game. One Saturday afternoon we were shopping in Selfridges, in London's Oxford Street. The store was packed. Suddenly Amy threw herself on to the floor, coughing and holding her throat. I knew she wasn't really choking but she was creating such a scene that I threw her over my shoulder and we left in a hurry. After that she was 'choking' everywhere, friends' houses, on the bus, in the cinema. Eventually, we just ignored it and it stopped.

* * *

Although I was born in north London, I've always considered myself to be an East Ender: I spent a lot of my childhood with my grandparents, Ben and Fanny Winehouse, at their flat above Ben the Barber, his business, in Commercial Street, or with my other grandmother, Celie Gordon, at her house in Albert Gardens, both in the heart of the East End. I even went to school in the East End. My father was a barber and my mother was a ladies' hairdresser, both working in my grandfather's shop, and, on their way there, they'd drop me off at Deal Street School.

Amy and Alex were fascinated by the East End so I took them there often. They loved me to tell them stories about our family, and seeing where they had lived brought the stories to life. Amy liked hearing about my weekends in the East End when I was a little boy. Every Friday I went with my mum and dad to Albert Gardens where we'd stay until Sunday night. The house was packed to the rafters. There was Grandma Celie, Great-grandma Sarah, Great-uncle Alec, Uncle Wally, Uncle Nat, and my mum's twin, Auntie Lorna. If that wasn't enough, a Holocaust survivor named Izzi Hammer lived on the top floor; he passed away in January 2012.

The weekends at Albert Gardens started with the traditional Jewish Friday night dinner: chicken soup, then roast chicken, roast potatoes, peas and carrots. Dessert was lokshen pudding, made with baked noodles and raisins. Where all those people slept I really can't remember, but we all had a magical time, with singing, dancing, card games, and loads of food and drink. And the occasional loud argument mixed in with the laughter and joy of a big happy Jewish family. We continued the Friday-night tradition for most of Amy's life. It was always a special time for us, and in later years, an interesting test of Amy's friendships – who was close enough to her to be invited on a Friday night.

I spent a lot of time with the kids at weekends. In February 1982, when Alex was nearly three, I started taking him to watch football – in those days you could take young kids and sit them on your lap: Spurs v. West Bromwich Albion. It was freezing cold, so cold that I didn't want to go, but Janis dressed Alex in his one-piece padded snowsuit, which made him look twice his size – he could hardly move. When we got there I asked him if he was okay. He said he was. About five minutes after kick-off he wanted to go to the Gents. Getting him out of that padded suit was quite an operation, and then it took another ten minutes to get him into it again. When we got back to the seat, he needed to go again so we had an action replay. At half-time, he said, 'Daddy I want to go home – I'm home-sick.'

When Amy was about seven, I took her to a match. When we got home Janis asked her if she'd enjoyed it. Amy said she'd hated it. When Janis asked why she hadn't asked me to bring her home, she said, 'Daddy was enjoying it and I didn't want to upset him.' That was typical of the young Amy, always thinking of other people.

At five Amy started at Osidge Primary School, where Alex was already a pupil. There she met Juliette Ashby, who quickly became her best friend. Those two were inseparable and remained close for most of Amy's life. Her other great friend at Osidge was Lauren Gilbert: Amy already knew her because Uncle Harold, my dad's brother, was Lauren's step-grandfather.

Amy had to wear a light-blue shirt and a tie, with a sweater and a grey skirt. She was happy to join her big brother at school, but she was soon in trouble. Every day she was there could easily have been her last. She didn't do anything terrible but she was

disruptive and attention-seeking, which led to regular complaints about her behaviour. She wouldn't be quiet in lessons, she doodled in her books and she played practical jokes. Once she hid under the teacher's desk. When he asked the class where Amy was, she was laughing so much that she bumped her head on his desk and had to be brought home.

Amy left a lasting impression on her Year Two teacher, Miss Cutter (now Jane Worthington), who wrote to me shortly after Amy passed away:

Amy was a vivacious child who grew into a beautiful and gifted woman. My lasting memories of Amy are of a child who wore her heart on her sleeve. When she was happy the world knew about it, when upset or unhappy you'd know that too. It was clear that Amy came from a loving and supportive family.

Amy was a clever girl, and if she'd been interested she would have done well at school. Somehow, though, she was never that interested. She was good at things like maths, but not in the sense that she did well at school. Janis was really good at maths and used to teach the kids. Amy loved doing calculus and quadratic equations when she was still at primary school. No wonder she found maths lessons boring.

She was always interested, though, in music. I always had it playing at home and in the car, and Amy sang along with everything. Although she loved big-band and jazz songs, she also liked R&B and hip-hop, especially the US R&B/hip-hop bands TLC and Salt-n-Pepa. She and Juliette used to dress up like Wham!'s backing singers, Pepsi & Shirlie, and sing their songs. When Amy was about ten she and Juliette formed a short-lived rap act, Sweet 'n' Sour – Juliette was Sweet and Amy was Sour. There were a lot of rehearsals but, sadly, no public performances.

I was devoted to my family, but as Amy and Alex got older, I was changing. In 1993, Janis and I split up. A few years earlier, a close friend of mine, who was married, confided in me that he was seeing someone else. I couldn't understand how he could do it. I remember telling him that he had a lovely wife and a fantastic son: why on earth would he want to jeopardize everything for a fling? He said, 'It's not a fling. When you find that special someone you just know it's right. If it ever happens to you, you'll understand.'

Unbelievably I found myself in a similar situation. Back in 1984 I had appointed a new marketing manager, Jane, and we had hit it off from the start. There was nothing romantic: Jane had a boyfriend and I was happily married. But there was definitely a spark between us. Nothing happened for ages and then eventually it did. Jane had been coming to my house since Amy was eighteen months old and had met Janis and the kids loads of times. She was adamant that she didn't want to come between me and my family.

I was in love with Jane but still married to Janis. That's a situation which just can't work indefinitely. It was a terrible dilemma. I wanted to be with Janis and the kids but I also wanted to be with Jane. I was never unhappy with Janis and we had a good marriage. Some men who stray hate their wives but I loved mine. You couldn't have an argument with her if you tried: she's such a sweet, good-natured person. I didn't know what to do. I really didn't want to hurt anybody. In the end I just wanted to be with Jane more.

Finally, in 1992, I made up my mind to leave Janis. I would wait until after Alex had had his Bar Mitzvah the following year, and leave shortly afterwards. Telling Alex and Amy was the hardest thing; I explained that we both loved them and that what was happening was nothing to do with anything they'd done or not done. Alex took it very badly – who can blame him? – but Amy seemed to accept it.

I felt awful as I drove away to live with Melody in Barnet. I stayed with her for six months before I moved in with Jane. Looking back now, I was a coward for allowing the situation to go on for so long, but I wanted to keep everybody happy.

Strangely, after I left I started seeing more of the kids than I had before. My friends thought that Amy didn't seem much affected by the divorce, and when I asked her if she wanted to talk about it, she said, 'You're still my dad and Mum's still my mum. What's to talk about?'

Probably through guilt, I over-indulged them. I'd buy them presents for no reason, take them to expensive places and give them money. Sometimes, when I was starting a new business and things were tight, we'd go and eat at the Chelsea Kitchen in the King's Road where I could buy meals for no more than two pounds. Years later, the kids told me they'd liked going there better than the more expensive places, mostly because they knew it wasn't costing me a lot.

Two things never changed: my love for them and theirs for me.



Amy in a contemplative mood. My birthday card in 1992.

2

TAKING TO THE STAGE

Wherever I was living, Amy and Alex always had a bedroom there. Amy would often stay for the weekend and I'd try to make it special for her. She loved ghost stories: when I lived in Hatfield Heath, Essex, the house was a bit remote and quite close to a graveyard. If we were driving home on a dark winter's night I used to park near the graveyard, turn the car lights off and frighten the life out of her with a couple of grisly stories. It wasn't long before she started making up ghost stories of her own, and I had to pretend to be scared.

On one occasion Amy had to write an essay about the life of someone who was important to her. She decided to write about me and asked me to help her. It had to be exciting, I decided, so I made up some stories about myself but Amy believed them all. I told her I'd been the youngest person to climb Mount Everest, and that when I was ten I'd played for Spurs and scored the winning goal in the 1961 Cup Final against Leicester City. I also told her I'd performed the world's first heart transplant with my assistant Dr Christiaan Barnard. I might also have told her I'd been a racing driver and a jockey.

Amy took notes, wrote the essay and handed it in. I was expecting some nice remarks about her imagination and sense of humour, but instead the teacher sent me a note, saying, 'Your daughter is deluded and needs help.' Not long before Amy passed away, she reminded me about that homework and the trouble it had caused – and she remembered another of my little stories, which I'd forgotten: I'd told her and Alex that when I was seven I'd been playing near Tower Bridge, fallen into the Thames and nearly drowned. I even drove them to the spot to show them where it had supposedly happened and told them there used to be a plaque there commemorating the event but they had taken it down to clean it.

During school holidays we had to find things for Amy to do. If I was in a meeting, Jane would take her out for lunch and Amy would always order the same thing: a prawn salad. The first time Jane took her out, when Amy was still small, she asked, 'Would you like some chocolate for pudding?'

'No, I have a dairy intolerance,' said Amy, proudly. She'd then wolfed down bag after bag of boiled sweets and chews – she always had a sweet tooth.

Jane used to work as a volunteer on the radio at Whipps Cross Hospital, and had her own show. Amy would go in with her to help. She was too young to go round the wards when Jane was interviewing the patients, so instead she would choose the records that were going to be played. Once Jane interviewed Amy, and I've still got the tapes of that conversation somewhere. Jane edited out her questions so that Amy was speaking directly to the listeners – her first broadcast.

One link I never lost with Amy when I left home was music. She learned to love

the music I had been taught to love by my mother when I was younger. My mum had always adored jazz, and before she met my father she had dated the great jazz musician Ronnie Scott. At a gig in 1943, Ronnie introduced her to the legendary band leader Glenn Miller, who tried to nick her off Ronnie. And while my mum fell in love with Glenn Miller's music, Ronnie fell in love with her. He was devastated when she ended the relationship. He begged her not to and even proposed to her. She said no, but they remained close friends right up until he died in 1996. He wrote about my mum in his autobiography.

When she was a little girl, Amy loved hearing my mother recount her stories about Ronnie, the jazz scene and all the things they'd got up to. As she grew up she started to get into jazz in a big way; Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughan were her early favourites.

Amy loved one particular story I told her about Sarah Vaughan and Ronnie Scott. Whenever Ronnie had a big name on at his club, he would always invite my mum, my auntie Lorna, my sister, me and whoever else we wanted to bring. We saw some fantastic acts there – Ella Fitzgerald, Tony Bennett and a whole host of others – but for me, the most memorable was Sarah Vaughan. She was just wonderful. We went backstage afterwards and there was a line of about six people waiting to be introduced to her. When it was Mum's turn, Ronnie said, 'Sarah, this is Cynthia. She was my childhood sweetheart and we're still very close.'

Then it was my turn. Ronnie said, 'This is Mitch, Cynthia's son.'

And Sarah said, 'What do you do?'

I told her about my job in a casino and we carried on chatting for a couple of minutes about one thing and another.

Then Ronnie said, 'Sarah, this is Matt Monro.'

And Sarah said, 'What do you do, Matt?'

She really had no idea who he was. American singers are often very insular. A lot of them don't know what's happening outside New York or LA, let alone what's going on in the UK. I felt a bit sorry for Matt because he was, in my opinion, the greatest British male singer of all time – and he wasn't best pleased either. He walked out of the club and never spoke to Ronnie Scott again.

Amy also started watching musicals on TV – Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly films. She preferred Astaire, whom she thought more artistic than the athletic Kelly; she enjoyed *Broadway Melody of 1940*, when Astaire danced with Eleanor Powell. 'Look at this, Dad,' she said. 'How do they do it?' That sequence gave her a love of tap-dancing.

Amy would regularly sing to my mum, and my mum's face would light up when she did. As Amy's number-one adoring fan, who always thought Amy was going to be a star, my mum came up with the idea of sending nine-year-old Amy to the Susi Earnshaw Theatre School, in Barnet, north London, not far from where we lived. It offered part-time classes in the performing arts for five- to sixteen-year-olds. Amy used to go on Saturdays and this was where she first learned to sing and tap-dance.

Amy looked forward to those lessons and, unlike at Osidge, we never received a complaint about her behaviour from Susi Earnshaw's. Susi told us how hard Amy always worked. Amy was taught how to develop her voice, which she wanted to do as she learned more and more about the singers she listened to at home and with my

mum. Amy was fascinated by the way Sarah Vaughan used her voice like an instrument and wanted to know how she could do it too.

As soon as she started at Susi Earnshaw's, Amy was going for auditions. When she was ten she went to one for the musical *Annie*; Susi sent quite a few girls for that. She told me that Amy wouldn't get the part, but it would be good for her to gain experience in auditioning – and get used to rejection.

I explained all of that to Amy but she was still happy to go along and give it a go. The big mistake I made was in telling my mum about it. For whatever reason, neither Janis nor I could take Amy to the audition and my mum was only too pleased to step in. As Amy's biggest fan, she thought this was it, that the audition was a formality – that her granddaughter was going to be the new Annie. I think she even bought a new frock for the opening night, that was how sure she was.

When I saw Amy that night, the first thing she said to me was, 'Dad, never send Nan with me for an audition *ever again*.'

It had started on the train, my mum piling on the pressure: how to sing her song, how to talk to the director, 'Don't do this, don't do that, look the director in the eye ...' Amy had been taught all of this at Susi Earnshaw's but, of course, my mum knew better. They finally got to the theatre where, according to Amy, there were a thousand or so mums, dads and grandmothers, each of whom, like my mum, thought that their little prodigy was going to be the new Annie.

Finally it was Amy's turn to do her bit and she gave the audition pianist her music. He wouldn't play it: it was in the wrong key for the show. Amy struggled through the song in a key that was far too high for her. After just a few bars she was told to stop. The director was very nice and thanked her but told her that her voice wasn't suitable for the part. My mum lost it. She marched up to the director, screaming at him that he didn't know what he was talking about. There was a terrible row.

On the train going home my mum had a go at Amy, all the usual stuff: 'You don't listen to me. You think you know better ...' Amy couldn't have cared less about not getting the part, but my mum was so aggravated that she put herself to bed for the rest of the day. When Amy told me the story, I thought it was absolutely hysterical. My mum and Amy were like two peas in a pod, probably shouting at each other all the way home on the train.

It would have been a great scene to see.

Amy and my mum had a lively relationship but they did love each other, and my mum would sometimes let the kids get away with murder. When we visited her, Amy would often blow-wave my mum's hair while Alex sat at her feet and gave her a pedicure. Later my mum, hair all over the place, would show us what Amy had done and we'd have a good laugh.

* * *

In the spring of 1994, when Amy was ten, I went with her to an interview for her next school, Ashmole in Southgate. I had gone there some twenty-five years earlier and Alex was there so it was a natural choice for Amy. Incredibly, my old form master Mr Edwards was still going strong and was to be Amy's house master. He interviewed Amy and me when I took her to look round the school. We walked into his office and

he recognized me immediately. In his beautiful Welsh accent, he said, ‘Oh, my God, not another Winehouse! I bet this one doesn’t play football.’ I had made a bit of a name for myself playing for the school, and Alex was following in my footsteps.

Amy started at Ashmole in September 1994. From the start she was disruptive. Her friend Juliette had also transferred there. They were bad enough alone, but together they were ten times worse, so it wasn’t long before they were split up and put into different classes.

Alex had a guitar he’d taught himself to play, and when Amy decided to try it out he taught her too. He was very patient with her, even though they argued a lot. They could both read music, which surprised me. ‘When did you learn to do this?’ I asked. They stared at me as if I was speaking a foreign language. Amy soon started writing her own songs, some good, some awful. One of the good ones was called ‘I Need More Time’. She played it for me just a few months before she passed away. Believe me, it’s good enough to go on one of her albums, and it’s a great pity that she never recorded it.

I often collected the kids from school. In those days I had a convertible, and Amy would insist I put the top down. As we drove along, Alex in the front alongside me, she’d sing at the top of her voice. When we stopped at traffic lights she would stand up and perform. ‘Sit down, Amy!’ we’d say, but people on the street laughed with her as she sang.

Once she was in a car with a friend of mine named Phil and sang ‘The Deadwood Stage’ from the Doris Day film *Calamity Jane*. ‘You know,’ Phil said to me, when they got back, his ears probably still ringing, ‘your daughter has a really *powerful* voice.’

Amy’s wild streak went far beyond car rides. At some point, she took to riding Alex’s bike, which terrified me: she was reckless whenever she was on it. She had no road sense and she raced along as fast as she could. She loved speed and came off a couple of times. It was the same story when I took her skating – didn’t matter if it was ice-skating or roller-skating, she loved both. She was really fast on the rink, and the passion for it never left her. After her first album came out she told me that her ambition was to open a chain of hamburger joints with roller-skating waitresses.

She was wild, but I indulged her; I couldn’t help myself. I know I over-compensated my children for the divorce, but they were growing up and needed things. I took Amy shopping to buy her some clothes, now that she was nearly a teenager and going to a new school.

‘Look, Dad,’ she said excitedly, as she came out of the changing room in a pair of leopard-print jeans. ‘These are fantastic! D’you think they look nice on me?’

* * *

Whenever she was staying with Jane and me, Amy always kept a notebook with her to scribble down lines for songs. Halfway through a conversation, she’d suddenly say, ‘Oh, just a sec,’ and disappear to note something that had just come to her. The lines looked like something from a poem and later she would use those lines in a song, alongside ones written on totally different occasions.

Amy continued to be good at maths because of the lessons she’d done with her mother. Janis would set Amy some pretty complicated problems, which she really

enjoyed doing. Amy would do mathematical problems for hours on end just for fun. She was brilliant at the most complex Sudoku puzzles and could finish one in a flash.

The pity was that she wouldn't do it at school. We received notes complaining regularly about her behaviour or lack of interest. Clearly Amy was bored – she just didn't take to formal schooling. (I had been the same. I was always playing hooky but, unlike my friends, who would be out on the streets, I'd be in the local library, reading.) Amy had a terrific thirst for knowledge but hated school. She didn't want to go so she wouldn't get up in the mornings. Or, if she did go, she'd come home at lunchtime and not go back.

Though Amy had been a terrific sleeper as a baby and young child, when she got to about eleven she wouldn't go to bed: she'd be up all night reading, doing puzzles, watching television, listening to music, anything not to go to sleep. So, naturally, it was a battle every morning to get her up. Janis got fed up with it and would ring me: 'Your daughter won't get out of bed.' I had to drive all the way from Chingford, where I was living with Jane, and drag her out.

Over time Amy got worse in the classroom. Janis and I were called to the school for meetings about her behaviour on numerous occasions. I hope the head of year didn't see me trying not to laugh as he told us, 'Mr and Mrs Winehouse, Amy has already been sent to see me once today and, as always, I knew it was her before she got to my office ...' I knew if I looked at Janis I'd crack up. 'How did I know?' the head of year continued. 'She was singing "Fly Me To The Moon" loudly enough for the whole school to hear.'

I knew I shouldn't laugh, but it was so typically Amy. She told me later that she'd sung it to calm herself down whenever she knew she was in trouble.

Just about the only thing she seemed to enjoy about school was performance. However, one year when Amy sang in a show she wasn't very good. I don't know what went wrong – perhaps it was the wrong key for her again – but I was disappointed. The following year things were different. 'Dad, will you both come to see me at Ashmole?' she asked. 'I'm singing again.' To be honest, my heart sank a bit, with the memory of the previous year's performance, but of course we went. She sang the Alanis Morissette song 'Ironic', and she was as terrific as I knew she could be. What I wasn't expecting was everyone else's reaction: the whole room sat up. Wow, where did this come from?

By now Amy was twelve and she wanted to go to a drama school full time. Janis and I were against it but Amy applied to the Sylvia Young Theatre School in central London without telling us. How she even knew about it we never figured out as Sylvia Young only advertised in *The Stage*. Amy eventually broke the news to us when she was invited to audition. She decided to sing 'The Sunny Side Of The Street', which I coached her through, helping with her breath control, and won a half-scholarship for her singing, acting and dancing. Her success was reported in *The Stage*, with a photograph of her above the column.

As part of her application, Amy had been asked to write something about herself. Here's what she wrote:

All my life I have been loud, to the point of being told to shut up. The only reason I have had to be this loud is because you have to scream to be heard in