

CHEERLEADER MEETS THE GOTH

By Deborah Karczewski

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ISBN 1-932404-25-2

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(Krista is the epitome of those beautiful girls who are self-absorbed, hyper, and not-so-bright.)

OH-MY-GOD! I am – like – so totally freaked! Half of me is relieved to be out of that place. Half of me is, well, touched because I've had, like, a *(hands pantomime quotation marks in the air)* "moment" with a fellow human being. And half of me wants to take a shower like you wouldn't believe!

It wasn't even my idea, anyway. My father sat me down yesterday in his big, leather office. I thought - Cool! I'm finally going to get that new digital camera I've been begging for!

Daddy cleared his throat and said, "Krista, it's time for us to start thinking about embellishing your resume for college."

"Are you kidding me? What for?" I asked. "I am captain of the Redford High School Cheerleaders!"

"I know that, Pumpkin, and your mother and I are very proud of you," he said, "but —"

I interrupted, "I've been cheering since kindergarten, Daddy! First for the Twin-Boro Pollywogs in elementary school... then for the Twin-Boro Fighting Frogs in middle school... and now for the Twin-Boro Amphibians in high school! If it weren't for the motivation of us cheerleaders, the Amphibians would never have made it to the Football All-States!"

"I'm not denying that your cheerleading is quite impressive, Honey," he said. "It's just that colleges like to see that you have varied interests...that there's more to Krista than just cheering."

"JUST?" I gasped. Imagine – insulted to the core by my own father!

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“You need to try other activities,” Daddy said. “Spread your wings. Experience new clubs. Diversify!”

“Di – what?”

“Diversify. Show those colleges that you are good at more than one thing. Let them see that Krista is more than just a cheerleader.”

“JUST? JUST?” Stabbed twice in the heart in one day! So...there you have it. My whole world was turned upside down... My entire reason for being ripped apart. What else did he expect me to do? Cheering was my life! First I thought – how about Service Club? No, you have to dish out soup and stuff to poor people. I mean – eeeewwww, can you imagine the germ potential? Then I considered how about tennis? No way. Think about the sweat factor. Debate Club? Uh-uh, what if somebody disagreed with me? I'd be crushed! Then, it hit me: Drama Club. The school musical! Perfect! I could so handle the choreography – I mean, the very essence of cheering is dancing, right? And the singing? Well – Duh! What do I do every day in the shower? Sing! And the acting? Well, when we read *Macbeth* in English class, Mr. Kurtz said that he had never seen such a unique interpretation of the witches before. **(The actress should yell and move to the words as though they were a cheerleading routine.)** “Bubble! Bubble! Toil and Trouble!”

Well, can you believe that auditions just happened to be tonight? This year's spring musical is supposed to be a play called *The Sound of Music* or something like that. So, I dressed up in my tiniest little skirt, my glitteriest top, and my platformiest shoes... took a deep breath...and psyched myself up.

The director asked me if I'd like to try out for Mother Somebody or Sister Whatever. I said, “Sure.” I mean, I've got a mother. I've got a sister. No problem, right? First they had me read some scene about my character sending some chick, Maria, off to the mountains somewhere. I figured they were having me read for the villain, so I read the lines using my best impression of the Wicked Witch of the West. You know – the green one in *The*

Wizard of Oz. I was pretty sure that they loved it because everyone started applauding. Next, was the singing part of the audition. When I sang about climbing that mountain, I really rocked! (**pantomimes the hand-over-hand motion of climbing up a ladder**) And when I sang about searching high and low, I gave it my all. (**puts her hand to her brow, flat above her eyes, "Indian-scout" fashion, and rises on tiptoe for "high" and crouches for "low"**) Then the director said, "That was great, Krista. Now, let's do it again ...for real."

For real? I looked out into the audience section of the auditorium where the people who were waiting to try out were sitting. Everyone was cracking up. Some of them were holding their stomachs, they were laughing so hard. And it hit me. They weren't laughing because I had done a good job. They were laughing AT me! ME! The captain of the Redford High School Cheerleaders!

Somehow I made it off the stage and ran up to the second floor girls' room. I slammed shut the stall door and cried like I've never cried before. I was so humiliated! So embarrassed! So mad at Daddy! So confused! What had I done that was so awful? I hated everybody! Suddenly, I heard the bathroom door swing open. I pulled my legs high up onto the toilet seat so that if anyone looked under the stall door, nobody would know I was there. I didn't want to talk to anybody. They could all flush themselves for all I cared.

SLAM! Somebody kicked the bathroom door shut. BOOM! Somebody kicked the stall door open right next to me. BAM! Somebody kicked it shut again. Ok – so now I was not as much upset as I was totally freaked. I hugged my knees to my chest and tried not to breathe. Then I heard the most (**searching for the right word**) pathetic noise I had ever heard. It started like a low whine in the back of the throat and then it rose to a full, high-pitched, painful howl! I tried so hard to keep completely... and totally... silent. I sat for what felt like an hour. My legs began to ache, but I was too scared to move a muscle.

Finally, the bathroom door opened, again. “Anybody in here?” It was Miss Carlson the custodian. “Locking up, now!” she yelled. What should I do? If I moved now, whoever was next to me would know that I had been there all that time! He, she, or it would know that I had witnessed her tantrum or whatever the heck it was. And if whoever it was WAS THAT angry already, imagine what he, she, or it would do to ME! I kept perfectly still. **(pause)** So did the thing next to me. Miss Carlson turned off the lights and closed the bathroom door. My heart was beating so loudly that I was certain that whoever was in the stall next to me could hear it. My heart sounded like the marching band’s drums. It was dark. Pitch black. My legs felt totally numb. I decided to lower them slowly to the ground. SPLASH! I guess between the dark and the lack of blood supply, my left foot thumped right into the toilet. I yelled, “EEEEWWWW!”

“What’s that? Who’s there?” barked the voice from the next stall.

What happened next is a short blur. I suppose we both fumbled for the stall doors, bumped into sinks, and grabbed for the light switch by the exit door at the exact same moment. Feeling each other’s hand on the switch, we both screamed, “AHHHHH!” The lights popped on.

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