

SERIAL STAR

By Deborah Karczewski

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ISBN 1-60003-472-1

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SERIAL STAR

SERIAL STAR - Page2

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Um...hi? My teacher said the nurse asked to see me? (*listens*) Me? – Oh, I'm Brianna Bower. Yeah. Um...is she here? – The nurse? Are you a sub? (*listens*) Oh- Nice to meet you, Miss Chambers. (*listens*) Child Protective Services? Is somebody hurt or in trouble? (*listens*) Sit down? Okay, now I'm starting to freak out a little bit. Where is the nurse? Geez, that lady takes more bathroom breaks than - (*listens*) She asked you here? Look, this is all wrong. I really think I had better call my mom, okay? (*listens and is getting nervously annoyed*) Yes, I live with my mom. Where else would I live? (*listens*) No, my dad lives on the other coast, but he's absolutely fine – I just saw him last vacation. (*listens*) No, I don't have a boyfriend. Should I? Is that a new prerequisite for getting into college? Would you tell me what the heck is going on? (*listens intently for a while and then starts to laugh*) Sure I have bruises all over my arms! Of course I just got off crutches! Yes – I did need stitches on my forehead! But it's not due to any kind of abuse, lady! It's because of television!

You know that new show, *Serial Star*? No? Oh, you've got to be kidding. Don't you watch TV? What planet are you from? *Serial Star!* It's just the greatest singing competition show ever! Don't you ever read the newspapers? *Serial Star!* The producers go to a different city every week. They audition hundreds and hundreds of people! Some of them can't sing their way out of a paper bag, but some of them are amazing! Then they take the best of the best – I don't know – maybe thirty or so of 'em – and they compete! Everybody in the country gets to vote for your favorite contestant that week. Yeah, you call up on the phone, and if your star wins...it's like he knocks off the competition and gets closer to being the country's biggest singing sensation! It's like he *kills* off the competition – get it? (*listens and gets impatient*) Geez lady – it's like he's a serial killer, but he's a serial *star* – get it? Isn't that just the coolest concept?

Well, when they narrowed down all of the contestants to the top five, they all went on a national radio tour! For advertising – you

SERIAL STAR - Page3

know? And they even came to the next town over! How could you not have heard of any of this? Don't you listen to the radio, either? Oh lady, you have *got* to get a life! It was publicized all over the place! In the papers, posted on electrical poles, all over the windows of super markets...! Everybody was supposed to call in and explain why you thought your favorite singer should be the next Serial Star! And maybe, if you were lucky, you could even talk to him! (*suddenly guilty*) Okay – I did cut school that day, but geez, they wouldn't have called Child Protective Services for that. Would they? (*Without missing a beat Brianna hops back into intense excitement.*) So, I kept hitting redial, like nonstop. It was hours. I thought my redial finger was going to fall off. And you don't know how hard it is to do everyday things while you're constantly redialing with one hand. I mean, just going to the bathroom is a feat in itself. And if you get hungry, forget it. Picture me climbing up on the kitchen counter with just one available hand. Wouldn't you know Mom had to put the cereal box on the highest shelf? And then it happened! I heard the radio DJ's voice on my telephone!

(*mimicking*) "Hey there! This is WSSS, your very own Serial Star Station! What's your name, caller?"

"B – B – Brianna!"

"Well hey there, B – B – Brianna! So, who's *your* favorite Serial Star?"

"Omigosh-omigosh-omigosh! It's gotta be Drew Chase! His voice is unreal! It's like he's computer generated! I mean, nobody can start that low and then glide that high without any break in between! He's inhuman! He's like a vocal machine! It's like he has an acoustic guitar in his throat! It's like –(*in a third voice*) "Whoa there, Baby. You're gonna make me blush!"

"Drew? Drew Chase? Is that really you?"

"It sure is, and I want to thank you for –"

“AHHHHH!”

In my excitement I dropped the cereal box! Still standing on the kitchen counter, I reached for the cascading cinnamon swirls. I wasn't thinking straight! I mean, I was talking to Drew Chase! Drew Chase was talking to *me*! My foot slid on a pile of cinnamon puffs and WHOOSH! I was airborne! And then – BOOM! I landed like a distorted pretzel onto the cat's water bowl beneath the counter.

Next thing I remember is opening my eyes in my hospital bed. It was fuzzy, but I could make out two faces.

“Mom?” I asked weakly.

“Oh Sweetheart,” Mom cried, “we've all been so worried about you! You're going to be just fine, honey.”

“My leg hurts,” I whined. Then I focused on a hazy face next to Mom's. “Who, who are you?”

He said that he was that DJ from WSSS! He said that I had pulled the greatest publicity stunt ever! No one had ever broken a leg on air before! They were so impressed that they were sending me and my mom on an all expense paid trip to see the semi-finals of *Serial Star*! Omigosh-omigosh-omigosh! Me! Brianna Bower – in the actual audience of *Serial Star*! In the same room with...him! Drew Chase! The man with the insanely, unbelievable vocal cords!

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