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Miss Beth

A Dark Comedy in One Act

That has a passing resemblance to a certain, unspeakable Shakespearean play

(it's okay, it's public domain)

By Don Zolidis

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One-act dark comedy
9F 4M, expandable, flexible

Beth is pretty, popular, a valued member of the Sub-Regional Champion competitive cheer squad, and relatively happy with her life. But when a late-night Ouija board session proclaims that she will become assistant cheer captain, an unexpected and ridiculous series of supernatural events are triggered. As Beth's thirst for power grows, her moral compass goes into a tailspin – and her popularity-hungry mom and best friend aren't helping. A campy, female-centered, modernized version of Shakespeare's dark classic.

Dramatis Personae

BETH, a rather typical cheer squad member, first assistant cheer captain, later cheer captain

SAMANTHA, her rather devious friend

BETH'S MOM, Beth's mother, an emotional vampire

COACH TESSA (or TOM), the cheerleading Coach

The Spirit Pantherettes:

BRITTANY
NEELA
MARTA
TASHA
KURT
JESS

CARVAGGIO, an assassin
BLIMUNDA, a rival cheer captain (can be played by the same actor who plays CARVAGGIO), played by a male actor in drag
LACKEY, a member of Blimunda's cheer squad

A note on the gender of the performers: This play may easily be done as an all-female cast. Simply change a few of Kurt's lines and use option B for the climactic scene with Blimunda. If you wish to have more male performers, the following parts may be played by boys.

SAMANTHA (change name to SAM)
COACH TESSA (change name to COACH TOM)
KURT
CARVAGGIO
BLIMUNDA
LACKEY

Additional cheer squad members may be added as necessary. Some of them may be male.

Setting: A school near you.

(Thunder. Lightning. Maybe some rain sounds.)

(BETH, dressed in a competitive cheer uniform, stands center, and addresses the audience.)

BETH *(to the audience)*

It was a dark and stormy late afternoon.

(Lights up on the rest of cheer squad, led by BRITTANY, going through their routine in slow motion. High-energy music plays at half-speed.)

My squad, the Pantherettes, was competing in the sub-regional championship.

CHEER SQUAD *(in slow motion)*

G.

(short pause)

O.

(short pause)

Whaaaaat dooooes that spellllllll?

(short pause)

GO!

(They freeze)

BETH *(to the audience)*

How was I to know that this series of events would lead to my ultimate destruction? You see, the night before –

(SAMANTHA, dressed normally, enters with a Ouija board on the opposite side of the stage.)

SAMANTHA

Beth! Let's ask it a question!

BETH

You believe in these things?

SAMANTHA

I would be crazy not to! Come on come on come on! Sit next to me sit next to me sit next to me!

BETH

There's only two of us here.

SAMANTHA

I know, but you are my best friend in the entire world and if you're not right next to me all the time I get insecure and then a little crazy and then I think about throwing myself out the window because life isn't worth living if we're not best friends, right?

BETH

I guess.

SAMANTHA

Okay – let's go ommmmmmmm….

BETH

What?

SAMANTHA

Meditate or it doesn't work!

BETH

Sorry… Ommmm….

SAMANTHA

Oh great evil spirit mass-produced by a toy company and distributed to hundreds of thousands of youngsters across the world – what will happen in tomorrow's sub-regional cheer competition that I'm not allowed to participate in because I have terrible rhythm?

(As one, they jerk the little controller around the Ouija board with lightning speed.)

BETH

Wow. What did it say?

SAMANTHA

It said – Victory is yours. First, assistant cheer captain. Then, Cheer Captain.

(Thunder. The lights go out on them.)

(The cheer squad enters, flush with victory.)

BRITTANY

Yes! Woo! We're number one!

NEELA

Number one! Woo! Yes!

(Coach TESSA bursts in and gathers them up.)

COACH TESSA

All right team, have a seat. Hydrate yourselves. You gave a hundred ten percent out there.

NEELA

I was giving a hundred and fifteen percent, actually. I checked.

COACH TESSA

I will stuff you into a trash compactor.

NEELA

Okay.

COACH TESSA

You murdered that other team. They won't even think to cheer in our house again.

BRITTANY

Can I give a speech coach?

COACH TESSA

Hold on. I'm about to say something profound. I was on the phone with my husband *{wife}* today. You know what he told me? He said cheering wasn't a sport.

(Shock and horror from the assembled cheerers.)

You know what I said? First, let me say that an attitude like that is why I no longer allow him to be within a fifty-mile radius of me. He circles on the outskirts of town like a rocky asteroid caught in the earth's gravitational pull. But then I said: You know what? You're darn right it's not a sport. It's Life. And.

(she waits for it)

Death. You think a mere athlete could execute a synchronous twenty-foot seven-twenty twist while looking pert and fresh in makeup? You think a mere athlete could holler in unison and keep pace to the rhythmic, sensuous beats of LMFAO? No. They would tremble and collapse into a spineless puddle of jelly. That's what an athlete would do. You are not women. You are not men. You are Nietzschean super-beings from the future. And I, for one, REJOICE IN YOUR SUPERIORITY! WE WILL NOT YIELD! WE WILL NOT FALTER! WE SHALL RULE!!!!

(short pause)

The Regional conference district two cheer championships in two weeks. That is all.

BRITTANY

Can I give my speech now?

COACH TESSA

Oh. Sure thing. I just want you to know that I rocked my victory speech and you cannot hope to defeat me.

BRITTANY

I'm not really in competition with you.

COACH TESSA

Brittany, I love you, you're a darling sweethearted girl, but I want you to know that everything in life is a competition. You see this face?

(She shows BRITTANY her face)

I win with this face. Every day. Winning.

BRITTANY

Thanks coach. Um… guys… Woo!

EVERYONE

WOO!

BRITTANY

You were so super awesome out there! I mean it was like… the most super awesomest like wonderful amazing – I don't even have words for it – but it was so special – I was crying underneath my face – in here –

(she points to her heart.)

Super Wonderful Awesome Greatness. Anyway – Coach Tessa has told me that because of our win tonight –

COACH TESSA

I call it a triumph.

BRITTANY

Our triumph tonight, I get to name an assistant cheer captain. And this goes out to a very super special wonderful lady… drumroll please –

(They do a drumroll)

COACH TESSA

What kind of drumroll is that? Watch and learn.

(COACH TESSA does an amazing drumroll which ends in a super-incredible and unnecessary drum solo.)

That's what I'm talking about.

BRITTANY

Thank you. Our new assistant cheer captain will be… Beth!

(Terrifying thunderclap. The lights flicker.)

BETH

Me?

BRITTANY

Yes! And now… with this spirit stick which was passed down to us, I anoint you… Assistant Cheer Captain!

(BETH gets down on her knees and BRITTANY touches her with the spirit stick. More thunder. BRITTANY claps excitedly and hugs BETH. Everyone is happy.)

BETH

Thanks!

NEELA

Speech!

BETH

Um… I couldn't be assistant cheer captain without you guys. So um… thank you.

COACH TESSA

You call that a speech? That was a comment.

BETH

I'm just overwhelmed.

COACH TESSA

Winners don't get overwhelmed. They overwhelm their opponents. Beth – you have so much potential – you need to seize it. Dominate the world. Of cheerleading. All right team! Huddle up!

BETH

Oh and remember we're having a team sleep-over at my house tomorrow!

(COACH TESSA and the other cheerleaders put their hands in while BETH remains distant.)

COACH TESSA

T E A M!

EVERYONE

TEAM!

(They cheer and all head in opposite directions.)

(BETH drifts to her house. SAMANTHA darts in.)

SAMANTHA

So so so so so? Did it happen did it happen did it HAPPEN?

BETH

I am… assistant cheer captain.

SAMANTHA

Aaaaaaaaaaah!

BETH

No it's okay it's just -

SAMANTHA

OMG! OMG!

(SAMANTHA starts to hyperventilate.)

BETH

Calm down Samantha.

SAMANTHA

Just like the Ouija Board foretold! It's all happening! IT'S ALL HAPPENING!

BETH

Relax! Jeez. You're freaking out.

SAMANTHA

Freaking out? I'm freaking out? Why aren't you freaking out?

BETH

It's just assistant cheer captain. It's no big deal.

SAMANTHA

But don't you realize what this means? The prophecy was correct –

BETH

It wasn't really a prophecy –

SAMANTHA

IT WAS A PROPHECY! And now… you will become… Cheer Captain. It will be glorious.

BETH

Can you be normal for one minute? I haven't even had dinner.

SAMANTHA

Beth – if you're normal, they kill you. The only people who succeed in this world are relentless sociopaths who will stop at nothing to achieve their aims. If Reality Television has taught me anything. No surrender, Beth. None.

BETH

Well Brittany is a senior, so after this year she'll go on to college, and then I have a pretty good chance of being promoted –

SAMANTHA

What is wrong with you? Don't you have any ambition? The Ouija board didn't say you were going to be cheer captain next year –

BETH

It didn't really specify a time.

SAMANTHA

That means immediately. We must strike quickly. You're having a sleepover tomorrow night, right?

BETH

How did you know that?

SAMANTHA

It's in your diary.

Skipping Forward

Because they're so cute! And I can fit into them again. Six hours of Zumba a day and then three more hours of kick-boxing. I am feeling GREAT about myself. Honey – there are no more walls between us.

BETH

Yeah, but one of those walls is the wall to my room.

BETH'S MOM

Tell you what – whenever you want, you can go into my room and borrow my clothes.

BETH

I don't want to borrow your clothes.

BETH'S MOM *(breaking down)*

Because my clothes are ugly!

BETH

Mom, no –

BETH'S MOM *(crying)*

They are! I have terrible taste! I wish I was more like you!

BETH

This is just weird –

BETH'S MOM *(sniffling)*

You're my best friend in the whole world, Beth -

BETH

I'm not your friend, I'm your daughter.

BETH'S MOM

What are you talking about?

BETH

That is our actual relationship.

BETH'S MOM

Are you unfriending me?

BETH

I'm not unfriending you.

BETH'S MOM

Because I would not live through that.

BETH

Maybe you should get friends your own age.

BETH'S MOM

You are the coolest person I know.

BETH

Maybe there's cool people who are like forty.

BETH'S MOM

I don't like them. I like you.

BETH

Okay, but –

BETH'S MOM

Beth. I gave life to you. You owe me.

(Sunny)

Let's get ready for the party! Hey Beth one more thing: Don't embarrass me tonight, okay? I'm trying to be cool. Thanks!

(BETH speaks to the audience.)

BETH

I couldn't really worry about my Mom, though. You know, on account of my best friend's plan that I commit murder and all. How do you update your facebook status with that, by the way? Contemplating assassination.

(SAMANTHA darts in.)

SAMANTHA

Samantha likes this.

(She darts out.)

BETH

No – I'm not contemplating it, of course. There's no way I would ever do anything like that.

(The Cheer squad enters as BETH exits to change clothes.)

BETH'S MOM

OH MY GOD YOU'RE HERE!!!!

(she screams a little)

(Awkward pause.)

BRITTANY

Is this Beth's house?

BETH'S MOM

Oh yeah I'm sorry I'm so nervous! I'm Shelly. Some people think I'm Beth's Mom. Well I am actually Beth's Mom, but I want you to think of me like Beth's cool friend Shelly. We're all totally equals here. Right? You guys are so awesome! Hugs? Anyone want hugs?

(No one wants hugs.)

BRITTANY

Thanks.

NEELA

This house is small.

BETH'S MOM

Well, you know, after the divorce… amiright ladies? Amiright? Or not. I mean, you guys probably aren't divorced. That's cool. Whatever. We don't have to talk about that.

BRITTANY

I think it's cute.

BETH'S MOM

THANK YOU. You have awesome taste!

NEELA

It's like someone who's old decorated it.

BRITTANY

Neela. Be nice. Some people just have problems.

BETH'S MOM

I know! Right? Like… are you guys talking about me??

BRITTANY

No! We would never talk about you in front of your face.

NEELA

Is Beth actually here?

MARTA

Hey – um – are we like having pizza?

BETH'S MOM

Whatever you guys want.

MARTA

Because I'm a vegan. And I don't consume products that were made by slave labor.

NEELA

Cows aren't slaves, Marta.

MARTA

Oh really? You know that? You are inside the mind of a cow? How do you know how they're treated? Let me tell you something about cow brains –

NEELA

They taste good.

MARTA

What? What did you say?!

NEELA

That's the best part of the cow. The yummy yummy brain.

BRITTANY

Teammates. Please. We are about to have a bonding experience.

BETH'S MOM

I know, right? Can we talk about boys?

NEELA

Where is Beth?

(BETH enters, freaked out.)

BETH

Here I come! Sorry I was just getting ready – a little freaked out, though – everybody feeling okay? Brittany you feeling okay?

BRITTANY

Yeah.

BETH

You're not sick or about to die anything?

(Thunder.)

BRITTANY

What?

NEELA

Are you mental?

BETH

Sorry! Just make yourselves at home! Nobody touch anything sharp!

BETH'S MOM

When are the boys getting here?

BETH

Mom. Go away.

BETH'S MOM

I told you to call me Shelly.

BETH

Shelly. Get out of here.

BETH'S MOM

You don't have to be rude about it.

(BETH'S MOM exits.)

BRITTANY

All right time for embarrassing games! And popcorn!

(BETH steps out to address the audience.)

BETH

So on the party went. Midnight.

(She turns to look at the girls. They freeze in a position of hilarity. Brittany has a bowl of popcorn.)

One o' clock.

(A different pose.)

Two o' clock.

(BETH'S MOM sneaks in and poses with the girls.)

Mom! Go away!

(BETH'S MOM slinks off.)

Three o' clock.

(A new pose. Two of the girls are now asleep.)

Four o'clock.

(Everyone is asleep.)

(SAMANTHA, dressed in an all-black ninja outfit, sneaks in on one side of the stage.)

SAMANTHA

Pssst!

BETH

I see you.

SAMANTHA

Pssst!

BETH

You're not supposed to be here.

SAMANTHA

Do it now.

(Thunder.)

BETH

Are you crazy?

SAMANTHA

Yes. Do it now. Here, I brought you a knife. It's one of my favorites.

BETH

Sam – I'm not going to murder her, be serious.

SAMANTHA

I'm going to say this to you because I'm your best friend. There are moments that come along in this life – opportunities where you can say, "I tried." Think about that. There are people who go through their entire lives wondering if they could've been someone important, but they were too scared to go out there and try – maybe you succeed, maybe you fail, but the most important thing is that you threw your hat into the ring and said, "here I am world, let the chips fall where they may, I am not going to be afraid of *life* –"

BETH

Wait. So if I kill someone I'm not afraid of life, but if I don't kill someone I'm afraid of life?

SAMANTHA

Right. Who knows what Brittany is going to be when she grows up? A terrorist? She could be a terrorist. She's probably going to have a miserable existence married to some rich guy who doesn't really care about her and she'll probably have a bunch of friends and some kids who love her or whatever – but she could also end up living in a cave in Afghanistan – do you want to let her take that chance? She's on top of the world right now. If you kill her you'd be doing her a favor. She'd be going out on top. You'd be crazy and mean not to kill her.

BETH

This is really kind of evil logic, Sam.

SAMANTHA

How about this? If you don't do it, you're a chicken.

BETH

I don't know –

SAMANTHA

You can always blame the Ouija board.

BETH

So I thought about it.

(SAMANTHA gets right behind and whispers in her ear.)

SAMANTHA

Do it.

BETH

To act, or not to act?

SAMANTHA

That's not even the right play. You're a go-getter. Go Get Her.

BETH

Still – murder? In my house.

SAMANTHA

It could be manslaughter. If you have a good lawyer.

BETH

Arrghg…

(SAMANTHA produces multiple knives.)

Okay.

(BETH takes one. And as she approaches BRITTANY…)

BRITTANY

Arrhgghghghg!

(BRITTANY contorts and dies before BETH can stab her.)

SAMANTHA

Oh yeah. I also poisoned her popcorn. In case you chickened out. That's the kind of friend I am.

(Thunder. BETH addresses the audience. The other cheerers pick up BRITTANY and carry her off-stage, maybe doing a solemn cheer along the way.)

BETH

It's not every day your best friend convinces you to kill someone and then murders them before you get the chance.

SAMANTHA

Hey – I just want you to know. I have so must respect for you. I never would have had the courage to poison her popcorn if you didn't implicitly agree that she should be killed. So… this is all your doing. Okay? Can I have a hug?

(BETH hugs SAMANTHA.)

(COACH TESSA enters to deliver the eulogy. The other cheer squad members drape themselves in black.)

COACH TESSA

All right squad, gather round. First I want to say that I noticed a few of you are eating too many cookies at the dessert table, and that's going to affect your trajectory in the air, so… knock it off. Second, we're all sad about Brittany. She was a winner. Well, she was, until she ate that tainted popcorn. But I say – what does not kill us, makes us stronger.

NEELA

But it killed her.

COACH TESSA

Right. But it didn't kill *us*. We are now stronger.

NEELA

No we're not!

COACH TESSA

Neela, can you go back to being a brownnoser please? This backbone thing you've developed is becoming bothersome. I know Brittany would've wanted us to not think about her and continue on as if nothing happened at all.

MARTA

Are you sure?

COACH TESSA

Yes! Hey! Eyes up here! That's why I'm naming Beth Cheer Captain! I will now present her with the spirit stick.

(BETH approaches COACH TESSA.)

If the rest of you could make an angelic humming sound that would be great.

(The rest of the cheer squad makes an angelic humming sound.)

You call that an angelic humming sound?! I could out-angel you in a heartbeat!

(They do a better angelic humming sound.)

Thank you. Beth, by the power vested in me by various divine entities, I hereby name you CHEER CAPTAIN.

(Thunder.)

Awesome.

MARTA

Speech!

BETH

Thank you. My people – um… I know that I assumed command in rather… shady circumstances, and um… I'm sorry about that, but if we stick together we will be uh… winners… and we'll win the district two regional championships together. Yay.

(nobody claps)

Skipping Forward

BETH

Without listening to my bloodthirsty best friend.

SAMANTHA

Who is the biggest threat to you? Neela? How do you eliminate that threat?

BETH

I don't really like where this conversation is going.

SAMANTHA

It's only going where you secretly want it to go, Beth. There's only one way to take care of an enemy in the sport of competitive cheer.

BETH

No! No! Okay! I'm not murdering people to get ahead!

SAMANTHA

You already did.

BETH

No I didn't! You did that!

SAMANTHA

I was acting on your orders.

BETH

No you weren't!

SAMANTHA

Ninety percent of language is non-verbal, okay? You gave me non-verbal clues which indicated that I should go ahead and poison Brittany. I know you better than you know yourself.

BETH

Just get out of here. And don't kill anyone!

SAMANTHA

What about just a little killing?

BETH

No!

SAMANTHA

Maiming? Horribly disfiguring someone? I could –

BETH

NO!

SAMANTHA

Fine. Go ahead and run your squad and hope they don't toss you out for incompetence.

(SAMANTHA leaves.)

BETH

So I threw myself into practicing for regionals.

(The remaining members of the Cheer squad enter.)

Let's try it again!

(They perform a routine. It is awful.)

What is that? What was that?

MARTA

I'm sorry. I'm just not feeling inspired.

KURT

I don't even know what I'm doing with my hands.

TASHA

I know what you're doing with your hands and it's not appreciated!

KURT

That wasn't my fault! That was her stupid routine!

MARTA

Hey. Let's not lose sight of the fact that there are starving animals in the ocean, all right? What if we dedicated our performance to trout?

KURT

I'm not dedicating my performance to a fish!

TASHA

Can I have a new partner? Kurt is the worst human ever!

KURT

I'm the worst human ever!? Can I have a partner who doesn't resemble a whale?!

TASHA

Oh well you loved that whale last night!*

KURT

That's cause it was dark!*

**These lines may be cut. Especially if Kurt is played by a female.*

BETH

Hey! We're a team! All right?! Team! T E M.

MARTA

YOU DIDN'T EVEN SPELL IT RIGHT!

KURT

This can't be happening!

TASHA

I'm going to need to see a therapist!

BETH

It's T E A M – I know that. I know that. Just – settle down. I've sent out Jess to scout the other squad – the new Pantherettes.

KURT

Oh man! Even their name is better!

TASHA

Why is New Pantherettes better than the Spirit Pantherettes!?

KURT

First of all, I've had a problem with being a pantherette the whole time. People laugh at me.

TASHA

They laugh at you for other reasons than that, Kurt.

KURT

This is why I can't love you!

TASHA

Oh come on!

BETH

Hey!

(JESS runs in.)

Well? How are they Jess?

JESS

They're gonna slaughter us! We're doomed! Everything we've worked for is going to get annihilated! You should see them! The moves! The expert choreography! The gyrations – the gyrations are AMAZING! We're all gonna die!

(JESS collapses.)

MARTA

That's it. I quit.

BETH

No! Wait! Guys! We'll be better. I swear.

KURT

How are we going to beat them? There's no way.

BETH

Jess is overreacting. She's like that. Right Jess?

JESS *(sniffling)*

Overreacting?

BETH

Right?

JESS

No. I'm not. I cried tears of joy while watching their performance. And I felt the rhythm take over – I was clapping my hands and I couldn't stop myself! And stomping my feet! Let me reiterate: WE'RE ALL GONNA DIE!

(JESS collapses again.)

BETH

I'll fix this. You stay here. And I'll fix this. We'll meet for rehearsal again tomorrow. Squad dismissed!

(The cheer squad exits as the lights shift to Beth's house. SAMANTHA is holding one of Beth's stuffed animals, stroking it like a Bond villain.)

SAMANTHA

Ah. So you've come back to me.

BETH

I just need her incapacitated.

SAMANTHA

Sure.

BETH

Maybe bad acne or something.

SAMANTHA

Of course.

BETH

Maybe a sprained ankle.

SAMANTHA

Why not?

BETH

But it has to look like an accident. It can't be obvious that I'm involved in it.

SAMANTHA

No one will know. We'll wear black.

BETH

But I'm not involved in it!

SAMANTHA

Sure. You have nothing to do with it. Can I just let you meet the guy, though? I'm super-excited about this!

(CARVAGGIO enters. CARVAGGIO may be male or female, but he or she has a ridiculous Italian accent.)

CARVAGGIO

Greetings. I am Carvaggio. I have heard there is this thing you need.

BETH

Well um… just my rival cheer squad –

CARVAGGIO

Cheerleading is not a sport.

BETH

You shut your mouth or I will kill you where you stand.

CARVAGGIO

Sorry. Sorry. I thought you meant cheerleading not competitive cheer. Yes. I have seen the many flips and choreographed routines. Bella. Molta bella. S'cusi. I bet most football players would not be able to do that.

BETH

Right. So… um… make it so that she can't compete any more.

CARVAGGIO

Right. I have just the thing. No problem. Killa the girl.

BETH

No not killa the girl.

CARVAGGIO

Is okay I understand.

BETH

That's not what I want you to do.

CARVAGGIO

Ninety percent of communication is non-verbal. I got it. Do I kill her children too?

BETH

She doesn't have children!

CARVAGGIO

Other family members? Maybe sisters? A cousin. Friends of hers on facebook?

BETH

Just keep the killing to a minimum!

CARVAGGIO

Right. Killing to a minimum.

(CARVAGGIO sweeps off.)

SAMANTHA

I am so proud of you right now.

BETH

I'm not.

SAMANTHA

The old Beth would've said, I'm not sure I like the idea of assassinating my rival, but the new Beth, the improved Beth, says, do it. You're growing as a person.

BETH

I'm becoming evil.

SAMANTHA

Good. Evil. Those are just words. Who's to say that Neela wasn't planning on having you murdered? Isn't a little bit better to strike pre-emptively before your enemy can strike first? That way you get to punish them for things they haven't done yet.

(CARVAGGIO returns.)

CARVAGGIO

It is done.

BETH

That was quick.

CARVAGGIO

I am very fast. Like bunny. With knives. And maybe a special thingie made out of piano wire that I can –

BETH

I think I've heard enough. How much do I owe you?

CARVAGGIO

Don't worry about it. I do it for fun. Love my job.

(CARVAGGIO exits.)

SAMANTHA

You gotta respect that.

(BETH steps out to speak to the audience.)

BETH

So we continued to train. The rebels who had joined Neela returned to us –

(NEELA's squad members return.)

MANDY

Hey. Our leader was impaled by a swordfish. We've come to beg forgiveness.

COACH TESSA

Winners never beg! Winners win! But yes you may come back.

BETH

Not so fast coach. I'm cheer captain now. I make the rules.

(COACH TESSA steps back from her.)

COACH TESSA

Oh – I see the grasshopper has become the butterfly.

BETH

Grasshoppers don't become butterflies. They become old grasshoppers.

COACH TESSA

We're not here to talk about entomology, although I agree that it is fascinating, and in any discussion of insects I would annihilate you. I still run this team, Beth.

BETH

Not anymore.

COACH TESSA

There's one way to settle thing: An old-fashioned cheer-off.

BETH

Bring it.

COACH TESSA

Marta, prepare my special tune.

MARTA

Yes, Coach!

COACH TESSA

And… one two three… hit it!

(MARTA plays a high-energy pop song. COACH TESSA begins her routine. It is spectacular. It has lots of spirit fingers and pelvic thrusts, maybe a back handspring (if your actor can do that) She dances around BETH, circling and taunting her with her awesome moves.

(After some dancing, COACH TESSA dances up close to BETH and BETH takes out a knife and stabs her in the gut. COACH TESSA steps back, holding her stomach.)

COACH TESSA

You've… learned… well. Spirit… forever.

(she dies. The other cheer squad members watch.)

BETH

I'm in charge now. Got it?

MARTA

I don't want to challenge your rule or anything, but I just want to say that I'm mostly against murder. But in this case, since it was a human, I'm not all that choked up about it.

BETH

WHO WILL FOLLOW ME?! T E A M! TEAM!

EVERYONE *(a little wary)*

TEAM!

(BETH steps out to talk to the audience.)

BETH

I know what you're thinking. I maybe went a teensy bit overboard with that whole stabbing thing. And yes, if I had it to do over again, I probably would not have killed my coach. That was over the line. But still… I crossed the line a little bit when I hired that assassin, so if I learned anything from my poor, dead coach… if you're going to do something, you need to do it a hundred and ten percent!

(She turns back to her team.)

I'd like to say a few words about Coach Tessa. If you don't want to end up like Coach Tessa, do not question my leadership style. Got it? Let's get back to the rehearsal!

(The squad begins a new routine as BETH heads back to her house.)

(BETH'S MOM enters with cookies.)

BETH'S MOM

Want a cookie, darling?

(no response)

What is it?

BETH

I don't want to talk about it.

BETH'S MOM

Sweetie – we're best friends, we can talk about anything together. Come on. What's the matter?

BETH

I think I'm becoming evil.

BETH'S MOM

Why would you say that, sweetheart? You're popular!

BETH

I know but I… I seem to have lost my moral center.

BETH'S MOM

No! Not at all! Honey, you are special special special. You're the cheer captain, you can't be evil!

BETH

But what if I did something terrible to become cheer captain?

BETH'S MOM

So what? Honey: The ends justify the means. You're a winner, therefore everything you did to become a winner was justified. Okay? Now come on – you want to go to the mall with me and check out cute boys?

BETH

No Mom I've told you I find that creepy.

BETH'S MOM

You're so busy now with your ascent to power that it's hard to spend any time with you.

BETH

I'm busy, okay? I have a lot of things to do and a lot of enemies to destroy. It happens.

BETH'S MOM

Can I mention again that I'm a very emotionally needy person?

BETH

I know that.

BETH'S MOM

And also that I gave birth to you and raised you and fed you in order to make you my best friend?

BETH

Fine. But that doesn't mean you are my best friend.

BETH'S MOM

What?

BETH

You're just – I have things to do, okay? Have you seen Samantha?

BETH'S MOM

I think she's in the basement suspiciously washing her hands.

BETH

How long has she been doing that?

BETH'S MOM

Ten, twelve hours.

BETH

And you didn't stop her?

BETH'S MOM

I don't really like her.

BETH

Arrgh!

BETH'S MOM

Text me later!

(BETH moves off to the side, where she spots SAMANTHA talking to herself.)

SAMANTHA

Dear Television Producer – My name is Samantha and I've got the kind of borderline narcissistic personality disorder you need for your latest reality show. I don't care what it is: Ice Road Truckers, Giant Fisherman People, Wife Swap, The Real World – I will do them all. What about Hoarders? I could do Hoarders. Give me a week and I will adopt twenty-five cats and raid every garage sale in a ten mile radius. I am unhinged, I am desperate, and I am so so watchable. Check this out. This is me having an argument with my boyfriend. I don't even have a boyfriend by the way but I swear on all that is holy I will find a boy so shallow that he doesn't even shower, he

just dips himself into a cloud of axe body spray and hair gel and emerges from a tanning bed with perfect abs and an unhealthy sexist attitude. But here it is:

`What are you doing you bleep bleep what bleep you I will eat your heart! Oh yeah why don't you come here and make me! Yeah that's right you heard me!'

(back to the camera)

Here's where I attack a random stranger and try to pull out her hair extensions.

(SAMANTHA leaps at an invisible attacker and starts screaming and pulling out imaginary hair extensions.)

`Don't you look at my man! You bleep bleep bleep I will eat your heart my man loves me I bleep bleep you come here again I'll kill you!' See that? I will be on the cover of every tabloid in existence. I can also get pregnant if you want.*

**This line may be cut.*

BETH

Sam?

SAMANTHA

Whoops.

(SAM turns off the camera.)

BETH

What are you doing?

SAMANTHA

What does it look like I'm doing?

BETH

Creating a demo tape to send off to reality TV shows?

SAMANTHA

Yes. That is what I'm doing.

BETH

Why?

SAMANTHA

Um… cause when the police come for us, if I were a celebrity it would really help me escape justice.

BETH

Are you kidding?

SAMANTHA

I'm not like you, Beth! You're too pretty to go to jail! The jury will love you! But look at me! My face screams eight to ten years!

Skipping Forward

BETH *(tossing and turning)*

mmm….

GHOST OF BRITTANY

BEETTTTTHHH…

(THE GHOST OF BRITTANY floats in.)

BETH

ACK!

GHOST OF BRITTANY

Remember me? I was like the best cheer captain ever. And I died at your SLEEP-OVERRR!

BETH

I didn't kill you! That was Sam! She's over there!

GHOST OF BRITTANY

I've heard that like ninety percent of communication is non-verbal!

BETH

No!

GHOST OF BRITTANY

You don't even have the right spirit to be cheer captain! I was the true cheer captain! I would have led us to the regional championship! You're like doomed! Like Doomed!

(The GHOST OF NEELA enters opposite.)

GHOST OF NEELA

Soooo doomed! And your hair doesn't even look that good!

BETH

I didn't kill you either!

GHOST OF NEELA

My blood is sooo on your hands!

GHOST OF BRITTANY

Soooo on your hands! OMG.

GHOST OF NEELA

OMG!

BETH

Leave me alone!

(The GHOST OF COACH TESSA enters)

GHOST OF COACH TESSA

There is no murder in team!

BETH

Okay, you, I actually did kill.

GHOST OF COACH TESSA

And I'm kinda cool with that, but still… on the other hand it was not coooollll….

GHOST OF NEELA

Not coooollllll!

GHOST OF BRITTANY

Soooo not cool!!

BETH

Begone spirits!

COACH OF BRITTANY

We've got spirits, yes we do, we've got spirits, how about you!

BETH

Nooo! Nooo! Nooo!

(Thunder. The lights go out.)

(Lights up on the cheer squad.)

MARTA

Beth? You all right?

(BETH stumbles in.)

BETH

I'm sorry what?

TASHA

Get your head in the game. We gotta get ready.

KURT

Yeah.

TASHA

Shut up Kurt. No one's talking to you.

KURT

What did I say to you?

MARTA

Hey guys what about team spirit?

BETH

Spirits? Where?

MARTA

Team Spirit! Are you all right?

BETH

I'm good. Let's do the routine.

TASHA

Your hair looks terrible today.

BETH

I will cut you to pieces! I'm sorry… little edgy, that's all. Let's get ready for the routine. Let's go out there and kill them! I mean, you know, not literally kill them, because that would be a crime and we would most likely be haunted by the vengeful spirits of the other cheer squads we slaughtered, but still, I would like to see them crying and hugging each other in despair as their hopes are dashed against the rocks. Right? Who's with me?

(The other members of the cheer squad look at her strangely.)

KURT

That sounds fine.

(JESS runs in, out of breath.)

JESS

OMG guys! I just checked out our competition!

(She stops to gather her breath.)

BETH

And?

JESS

We're so dead! We're toast!

(SAMANTHA, having just entered, hears that word.)

SAMANTHA

Aaaaaah! Noooo! The prophecy has come true!

(She runs off stage.)

BETH

Get a hold of yourself Jess, who are they are?

JESS

When they through their fliers into the air – they get so high they could be holding hands with angels. And their gyrations… those perfect gyrations! And they have signs that say Go! Fight! Win! I can't even stand it!

(She breaks down sobbing again.)

BETH

What's the name of the team?

JESS

The Lower Southeastern Kansas Spirit Tornado!

(Thunder.)

BETH

I'm not scared of them.

(Thunder again.)

JESS

They all have spirit sticks! Like a million of them! It's like a forest!

(Thunder once more.)

TASHA

How many people are in their squad?!

JESS

Okay – like twenty – they have twenty spirit sticks.

TASHA *(to KURT)*

This is all your fault, Kurt!

KURT

What did I do?

TASHA

Shut up! Just shut up and stop talking!

MARTA

There's only one way we can win, Beth.

BETH

What's that?

MARTA

You need to challenge their leader in a one-on-one cheer off.

TASHA

Yes, totally! You should do that!

KURT

Yes Beth! You're the strongest one!

TASHA

Why would you say that to her?

KURT

What?

TASHA

She's not the strongest one. She has the most spirit. You make it sound like she has man arms or something.

KURT

I didn't mean that she has man arms! And there's nothing wrong with man arms anyway!

TASHA

You wouldn't know anyway.

KURT

Well to lift you I'd need chimp arms!
(They look at him strangely.)
Chimps are pound for pound stronger than humans. It's true. They'd win an armwrestling competition with anyone. My uncle is a zookeeper.

TASHA

I hate you so much.

MARTA

Would you two stop bickering!

JESS

We're gonna die!!!!
(she hyperventilates again.)
Or at least lose.

MARTA

Well Beth – you're cheer captain, you can do it.

BETH

All right. Not a problem.
(She cracks her knuckles.)
I'm not scared of this forest girl.
(Thunder again.)

(BLIMUNDA enters in full cheer outfit, accompanied by a LACKEY, who may be either male or female.)

*****BLIMUNDA should be played by a male actor in ridiculous drag. If you are doing an all-girl show (or if the notion of cross-dressing (in Shakespeare! How is it possible?!) would cause your administrators to lose their minds), use the optional lines at the end of this section.*

BETH

Hello.

BLIMUNDA

Hello.

BETH

I hear your cheer squad is going to challenge for the regional championship.

BLIMUNDA

We're going to win regionals, honey. You can put that in the bank. Looks like it might be the only thing you have in the bank.

LACKEY

Oh! Dang!

BETH

That's funny coming from someone who looks like roadkill had a baby with an octopus.

BLIMUNDA

Sunshine, you must be a comedian. That was a dazzling insult. I'm going to go write that down in my hurt journal. But when I look at you, and then I look at

(takes out a pocket mirror and looks at "herself")

This. Mmm mmm mmm. It's like Snow White and one of the special dwarves named Chunky.

End of Excerpt.
To purchase this play, visit www.concordtheatricals.com