

SCENE 1: The girls' locker room.

(BECCA enters, clearly upset. She attempts to open her locker, to no avail. She tries again. And once more. Finally, she slumps her head against the locker.)

(TAMLYN runs in, perky as all hell.)

TAMLYN

Wow, Becca, you have really been working on your splits! They look great!

BECCA

Thanks, Tamlyn. I spent an hour before practice today just stretching.

TAMLYN

Your hard work is really paying off!

BECCA

Do you think so? I'm so worried, Tamlyn. I know I'm getting better, but I don't know if I'm good enough yet. I don't know what I'd do if I got cut from the squad. *(suddenly dark, to herself:)* My life would be over...

TAMLYN

Oh, Becca, you just keep on working hard and you're sure to stay on the squad – why, you might even be voted Queen of the Autumn Ball!

BECCA

Oh, I'd give anything to be Queen of the Autumn Ball! *(suddenly dark and internal:)* Anything... *(normal:)* But I don't stand a chance, and we both know it – not while Johanna is around, anyway. I don't think she likes me, and she's Captain of the cheerleading squad! If she doesn't think I'm good enough, she'll cut me, and then I'll never be voted Queen of the Autumn Ball.

TAMLYN

Johanna just wants what's best for the squad! I'm sure she sees how hard you've been working, and I'm sure she likes you, too!

(JOHANNA enters, smoking. She drops her cigarette butt and leaves it burning.)

JOHANNA

Hi, girls. Tamlyn, nice practice. You've really got spunk. *(TAMLYN smiles eagerly and puts out the smoldering stub.)*

TAMLYN

Johanna, I thought Becca did a fantastic job on those splits today, didn't you? (*TAMLYN and BECCA share a "fingers crossed" look.*)

JOHANNA

Right, I forgot. Becca, your splits were crap. I've already put you on report with Miss Winthrop. One more screw-up and you're off the squad. And I know how crushing that would be to your social life, especially since you're a... (*contemptuously:*) ...transfer student.

TAMLYN

Oh, Johanna! You put her on report with our faculty adviser? Why?

JOHANNA

I think Becca knows why. Don't you, Becca?

BECCA

Yes, I do. (*dark and internal:*) It's because I was twelve seconds late to practice last Thursday. (*normal:*) But I did sixty extra jumping jacks that day, Johanna! I thought that was punishment enough!

JOHANNA

All the jumping jacks in the world couldn't make up for being late for one of my practices. (*JOHANNA lights a fresh cigarette.*)

TAMLYN

(*cheerfully waving away smoke*) Now, Johanna, I know you wouldn't cut Becca from the squad! She has too much spirit!

JOHANNA

You really don't get it, do you, Tamlyn? Spirit is all well and good, but our girls have to be more than spirited. They have to project the right image, date the right boys, be the most popular girls at Bay Orchard High! And I'm not sure Becca can handle the pressure. After all, the Autumn Ball's less than a week away, and she doesn't even have a date yet.

TAMLYN

Are you and Bill planning a big night for the Ball, Johanna?

JOHANNA

Of course. First he's buying me dinner at Chateau des Riche –

TAMLYN

Chateau des Riche! Isn't that the most expensive restaurant in Bay Orchard?

JOHANNA

That's right. Then a limo to the Ball, we'll be crowned Queen and King, we'll do our spotlight dance, and then we'll take off for a night of unbridled sex at his house – well, maybe he'll be bridled. I suppose you'll be going to the Ball with that hopeless freak Chester, won't you, Tamlyn?

TAMLYN

Oh, yes! We can't wait! I know he's not captain of the football, basketball and baseball teams like Bill is, but I think he's a pretty special fella. And my mom's making me a new dress just for the Autumn Ball! (*a thought strikes TAMLYN*) Johanna, why am I on the cheerleading squad? I mean, I get good grades, my boyfriend wants to be a theoretical astrophysicist, and I don't put out – why do you keep me on the squad if image is so important to you?

JOHANNA

You're our token – you're sweet, Tamlyn. So sweet you give me a toothache.

BECCA

I...I understand what you want, Johanna. I'll make an effort to fit in. After all, it's only my first year on the cheerleading squad, and you've been around for – (*a glare of warning from JOHANNA*) – ...longer than I have. I'm sure you know better than I do.

JOHANNA

Now that's what I like to hear. Keep it up, Becca, and I'll take you off report. I might even nominate you for Co-Captain for basketball season. (*JOHANNA slams shut her locker and drops her burning cigarette.*) Ladies. (*And she's gone.*)

TAMLYN

Oh, Becca! Co-Captain! Wouldn't that just be a dream? You must be so electrified!

BECCA

Yes...yes I am, Tamlyn.

TAMLYN

How about a celebratory milkshake at Edna's?

BECCA

Edna's? Isn't that the malt shop and popular hangout for us kids from Bay Orchard High?

TAMLYN

That's right. I promised Chester I'd meet him there, but I know he wouldn't mind if you joined us.

BECCA

Sounds great, Tamlyn. You run on ahead. I'll just be a minute.

(TAMLYN smiles and runs off. BECCA ties her shoes, collects her books, and shuts her by-now-opened locker. She's about to leave when she suddenly stops, crosses to JOHANNA's locker, and fingers the door. A buzzing noise is heard. BECCA's fingers become claws which she drags down the locker as she faces the audience, something dark in her countenance.)