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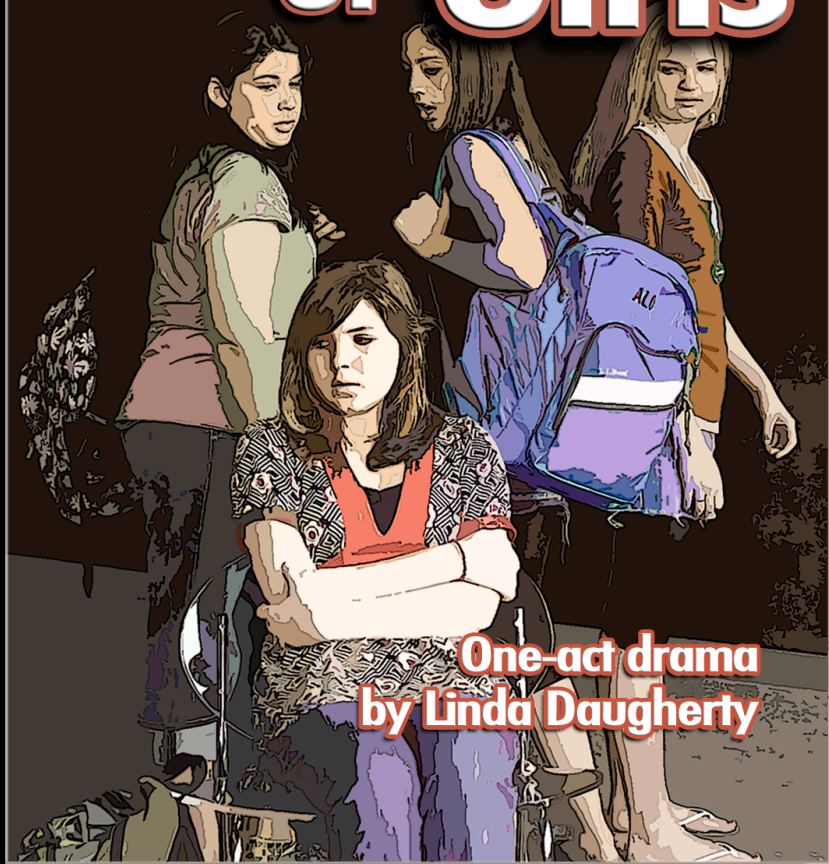
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The Secret Life of Girls



**One-act drama
by Linda Daugherty**

The Secret Life of Girls

Drama. By Linda Daugherty. Cast: 10w. (9w. with doubling). "I'm going to tell you a secret—and I don't want you to tell. The secret is about me—about my life—how it will never be the same again." In this honest and unflinching dramatization of teen-girl angst, a window is opened into the tumultuous and destructive world of girls' bullying. Abby seeks to gain acceptance as the newest member of the school championship volleyball team. As she and her teammates struggle to find a friend, a place in the group and themselves, their jockeying for position is sometimes humorous and often heartbreaking. Invitations are extended or withheld, individual friendships sacrificed to collective judgments, and alliances formed and changed daily as they careen from exclusion to isolation to acceptance and back again. Bullying in the form of gossiping, keeping secrets, using friendship as a weapon, name-calling, exclusion, spreading rumors, backbiting, clinging to cliques and manipulation become a prelude to dangerous behaviors such as depression, cutting, eating disorders, and premature sexuality. The adults in the girls' lives are either unable or unwilling to change their behaviors. Though desperately concerned, Abby's mother is unable to make contact with her daughter, while the volleyball coach and team mom enable rather than work to effect change. When faced with the consequences of their actions, the girls ultimately resolve—one by one—to change their behaviors. Based upon interviews with girls on the giving and receiving end of bullying, the play highlights the impact of "cyberbullying," the facilitation of mean-spirited behaviors through the use of cell phones, text and instant messaging, e-mail and chat rooms. The portrayal of the sobering reality of these girls' lives can start a conversation in homes, schools and communities, providing the opportunity to reveal the secrets and address the complexities which dominate the lives of many young women. *Area staging. Approximate running time: 40 minutes. Code: SN8.*

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THE SECRET LIFE OF GIRLS

(40-minute version)

By

LINDA DAUGHERTY



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LINDA DAUGHERTY

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(THE SECRET LIFE OF GIRLS -
40-minute version)

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This play is dedicated to
NANCY SCHAEFFER
and to
Linn Helen Daugherty, Maureen Mahoney Martin,
Colleen Mahoney Martin,
Lynn Lester Cohen and Kelly Abbott Morris

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All producers of the play *must* give credit to the author of the play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The name of the author *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent (50%) the size of the title type. Biographical information on the author, if included in the playbook, may be used in all programs. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

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The Secret Life of Girls premiered at Dallas Children's Theater (Robyn Flatt, Executive Artistic Director) from April 13, 2007, through May 20, 2007, directed by Nancy Schaeffer.

Original Cast

Abby Erin Simmons / Abby Gentsch
Stephanie Alyssa Overbeck / Rachel Rosenstein
Rebecca Lindsay Woodmansee / Amanda Rojas
Kayla Kendall Howen / Stephanie Tomba
Sutton Kelly Brooks / Meg Showalter
Anna Marie Regen Routman / Sarah Zashin
Chandle Jordan Naftalis / Laura Payne
Sutton's Mom / Coach Lisa Fairchild *
Abby's Mom Lisa Schreiner *

Original Production Staff

Scenery and Video Design Randel Wright
Lighting Design Linda Blase
Sound Design Marco Salinas
Costume Design Aaron Patrick Turner
Properties Design Kim Lyle
Stage Manager Dwight Sandell *

* Denotes member of Actors' Equity Association, the union for professional actors and stage managers in the USA.

NOTES

Screens/Projections

A large screen or other large flat surface is required on which electronic communications between characters, including e-mails, instant messages (IMs), and text messages as well as photographs and other images, are projected. With a few exceptions, the messages contained in these communications are simultaneously spoken by actors.

For the projections, a Microsoft Powerpoint software program may be used.

The Dallas Children's Theater premier production used three large, onstage screens (center, stage right and stage left) made of black scrim on which images were projected using a three-projector video server control system. Projected communications were displayed with borders suggesting their source; e.g., computer monitor, PDA or cell phone screen. Generally speaking, e-mails, IMs, text messages, videos and photographs were projected on the center screen while projections on the two side screens were used for dramatic effect and emphasis. As one example, in the IM scene between Stephanie and Rebecca, selected "charged" words from the IMs were enlarged and projected on the side screens. As the scene ended and the laptops closed the screens stage right, center and stage left were filled with the words, "OUR" "SECRET" "COOL," one large word per screen. When characters were exchanging IMs in real time, messages were projected on the side screen where the recipient was located. Some electronic communications and photographs were projected on all three screens such as the "Subject: R!!!" e-mail and the photograph of Rebecca's behind.

Costumes

The play requires several, fast costume changes. The girls' costumes consist of typical middle-school clothes, volleyball practice clothing consisting of black shorts or warm-up pants (except Abby whose practice shorts are a different color) and white shirts, volleyball game uniforms consisting of red shorts and white shirts with red numerals, and sleep-over nightclothes. Red, zippered "Champions" jackets are worn at volleyball practice and from time to time during the play by all girls except Abby. In the Dallas Children's Theater production, for her first entrance, Abby wore a white shirt and a skirt which was underdressed with two pairs of shorts: red game shorts under longer, pink practice shorts. Girls wore white game shirts under "Champions" jackets and red game shorts under black practice shorts or warm-up pants for fast changes.

Music Selections and Movie References

In the play the music progresses from upbeat and innocent to dark, grating and explicit. Music should be currently popular with the 12- to 18-year-old age group. The musical selections contained in the stage directions are subject to restrictions on use and protections afforded by copyright and other laws. Such selections are *suggestions only*. Scary movie titles should be updated.

Girl's Photographs

If possible, actresses playing girls should provide their own childhood photograph for the ending sequence. The photograph should portray the actress between the ages of about two and seven and be close-ups of a happy, joyful face, looking directly into the camera.

Script for After Show Discussion

ACTOR PLAYING ABBY'S MOM OR THEATER REPRESENTATIVE: At this time we invite everyone to stay for a discussion about issues raised in the play. It is my pleasure to introduce our facilitator, _____.

FACILITATOR: Hello. My name is _____. I am a [physician/psychiatrist/psychologist/other healthcare professional] OR I am with/from _____. [A few words may be said about your organization or the work you are currently doing with adolescents.] I am here today to facilitate a discussion with you about issues raised in the play as well as strategies to stop bullying or deal with its effects. We welcome your comments, but we need to set a few quick ground rules. Please use school-appropriate language, even though the characters in the play did not. Also we need to keep comments as brief and to the point as possible. And, finally, please do not mention anyone by name.

Please raise your hand if you recognized any of the behaviors or situations in the play. [Call on those raising hands and receive their response. After responder's answer, repeat the answer so that everyone in the audience hears it.]

How did the girls in the play bully each other? [Ask about cyberbullying if not suggested].

Why did Abby join in the bullying?

What were some of the consequences of the bullying?

Do you think that boys experience any of these situations?

What do you think the girls could have done to stop the bullying?

THEATER REPRESENTATIVE: Let's talk about one way to stop a bully. This strategy is called "being a defender." Bullying usually starts with one comment. Studies show that if one person in a group says something bad about someone else, the next voice is the most important. If the next voice in the group is kind, there's a chance that the bullying will be stopped before it starts. For example, let's go back to very early in Abby's story—one day at lunch:

SUTTON. Hey, guys, let's all wear our championship jackets tomorrow for tryouts.

ANNA MARIE. We just gotta win again this year.

KAYLA. I have been working on my serve all summer.

REBECCA. Me, too.

STEPHANIE. Hey, guys, I hear Abby wants to be on the team! (*Annoyed.*) Please!

THEATER REPRESENTATIVE: Okay, freeze. Stephanie's comment is the beginning of bullying. As we saw in the play, other girls joined in and escalated the situation. But this is the time when a single voice could make a difference. Chandler, what might you have said if you had been there?

CHANDLER. Guys, let's leave it up to Coach. She'll pick the right players and I really don't feel comfortable talking about someone when they're not here.

THEATER REPRESENTATIVE: Two great comments. So, let's say that you in the audience are all members of this championship team. Can someone else be a defender and give me a suggestion of what you could say after Stephanie's comment?

[Theater Representative will then receive some positive, defender comments from the audience. Examples of comments: "Let's give her a chance." "We've never seen her play. Abby might be really good." "We were all beginners when we started playing, then we got better."]

THEATER REPRESENTATIVE: Now let's try the scene again.

SUTTON. Hey, guys, let's all wear our championship jackets tomorrow for tryouts.

ANNA MARIE. We just gotta win again this year.

KAYLA. I have been working on my serve all summer.

REBECCA. Me, too.

STEPHANIE. Hey, guys, I hear Abby wants to be on the team! (*Annoyed.*) Please!

THEATER REPRESENTATIVE (*calling on two or three audience members who have volunteered*): Now will you each say your comment to Stephanie?

[Audience members repeat their previous comment.]

THEATER REPRESENTATIVE: And then the scene might have played out like this:

CHANDLER. Guys, let's leave it up to Coach. She'll pick the right players and I really don't feel comfortable talking about someone when they're not here.

SUTTON. I don't care who's on the team. I just want to win.

ANNA MARIE. I think everybody should get to play volleyball if they want too.

KAYLA. I practiced serves with Abby. She is good.

REBECCA. Abby is a good athlete.

ALL. Go, Fireballs!

THEATER REPRESENTATIVE: Thank you.

[Final comment by facilitator and announcement about information and resources in the lobby provided by community organizations or agencies.]

THEATER REPRESENTATIVE: Thank you for being at this performance of *The Secret Life of Girls*. We hope that you will take a hard look at the destructive consequences of bullying and do what you can do to be a force to stop it. And we want you to know, if it's happened to you...

CAST (*together*). You're not alone.

Miscellaneous Notes Relating to Dallas Children's Theater Production

Girls roles were very successfully played by 13- to 16-year-olds.

The roles of Sutton's Mom and Coach were played by the same actress.

Real volleyballs were used for tryouts and practices. An imaginary volleyball was used for games.

Isolated area lighting helped to establish the play's rapidly changing locations. Lighting cross faded to keep action moving between scenes. Transitions to school settings were highlighted by a school bell and transitions to volleyball practice were highlighted by Coach's whistle.

Immediately after each performance, with the actors present, the actress playing Abby's Mom and a facilitator led a discussion of approximately fifteen minutes with the audience about issues raised in the play. A theater representative could be substituted for the actress playing Abby's Mom. The facilitators were local healthcare professionals or representatives from community-based organizations knowledgeable about adolescent-related issues. The script used in connection with this discussion follows the play. Pamphlets and brochures relating to issues addressed in the play were made available in the theater lobby.

THE SECRET LIFE OF GIRLS

CHARACTERS (in order of appearance)
10 roles for actresses

ABBY, an adolescent girl
ABBY'S MOM
REBECCA, an adolescent girl
KAYLA, an adolescent girl
SUTTON, an adolescent girl
ANNA MARIE, an adolescent girl
STEPHANIE, an adolescent girl
COACH, female
SUTTON'S MOM
CHANDLER, the new girl

Possible doubling: COACH / SUTTON'S MOM

THE SECRET LIFE OF GIRLS

SETTING: A large screen, on which words and images are projected, is UC. Stage R and L are two small tables, each with a laptop computer and chair. UR and UL are two benches. The open space center stage represents various locations in the play: ABBY's house, school, locker room, gym and STEPHANIE's bedroom.

AT RISE: A single light rises on ABBY in school clothes sitting at table stage R. Her backpack is on the floor nearby. ABBY opens the laptop. As she types and speaks, the following words appear, letter by letter, on the screen.

NOTE: In the script, projected words are italicized. when projected words are spoken by an actor, headings and subjects, if any, are *not* spoken.

ABBY. I'm going to tell you a secret—and I don't want you to tell. The secret is about me—about my life—how it will never be the same again.

(ABBY closes laptop. Blackout. Screen goes black. In dark, VOICES sing "Happy Birthday to You" and the following e-mail appears on screen.)

From: NANCY <nfooster@earthlink.net>

To: ABBY <chocalot05@aol.com>

Subject: B'day!

Happy Birthday to Abby from Aunt Nancy and Uncle Don. Choose a book you like with your \$30 Amazon.com gift certificate. All our love to our darling niece Abby.

(Screen goes black as lights rise on ABBY hurriedly organizing her backpack for school. ABBY'S MOM enters with large gift bag with volleyball inside. She places bag on bench UR, crosses to ABBY and gives her a quick hug and kiss.)

ABBY'S MOM. How were your pancakes, birthday girl?

ABBY. Great! Thanks, Mom.

(Car horn honks.)

ABBY'S MOM. Dad's in the car. Better hurry. TGIF!

ABBY. TGIF! *(She grabs her backpack and starts to rush off. She sees presents.)* Hey, what's that?

ABBY'S MOM. That's for tonight! Get going!

(ABBY runs off.)

ABBY'S MOM *(cont'd., Calling after her)*. Happy Birthday! You're the best, Abby! Love ya!

(Popular music underscores as ABBY'S MOM exits and lights cross fade. REBECCA and KAYLA enter with

backpacks, talking and laughing. From another direction, SUTTON and ANNA MARIE, carrying backpacks, rush on and the FOUR clump together. ABBY enters and the GIRLS excitedly surround her. Music fades as STEPHANIE enters with backpack.)

KAYLA. Hey, Steph!

(Other GIRLS greet STEPHANIE.)

STEPHANIE. Hey, guys. *(Hugging ABBY.)* Hey, Abby, happy birthday!

KAYLA. Abby, I got you a really, really cool birthday present!

STEPHANIE *(looking annoyed at KAYLA)*. Uh, Kayla, hello, I thought we were gonna go together and get a present after school.

KAYLA. Yeah, well, my mom couldn't go today 'cause my aunt's coming.

STEPHANIE. Whatever. Thanks a lot.

SUTTON. I am so ready to party! Like will this day ever end?!

(Bell rings.)

ALL GIRLS. Yes!!!

KAYLA. It's party time!

(As popular music plays loudly, GIRLS drop their backpacks and begin to party. They each take a present from their backpacks, lead ABBY to a bench and shower her with presents. While GIRLS pose, KAYLA snaps photos

with her cell phone. ABBY grabs a large gift bag, reaches in and excitedly takes out a volleyball. Music fades.)

ABBY. Hey, guys! Look what my parents gave me! A volleyball!

(Music underscores as GIRLS rush to ABBY, who holds volleyball, and they form a kick line. The party continues as GIRLS take out nail polish and hair supplies. Some paint their nails while others fix one another's hair. ABBY rushes off and returns with pizza boxes. The music changes to a favorite song such as "Barbie Girl" by Aqua. GIRLS scream and dance wildly together. They fall to the floor laughing as lights fade to black and music fades. Lights rise as ABBY'S MOM enters.)

ABBY'S MOM. Sutton's mom's here, girls.

SUTTON. Already?

(GIRLS gather their backpacks.)

ABBY'S MOM. Is she taking all of you home? Except you, Kayla?

SUTTON. Yeah. Come on, guys!

(SUTTON, REBECCA and ANNA MARIE shout their "thank yous" to ABBY and exit with ABBY'S MOM.)

ABBY *(calling after them)*. Thanks for coming, guys! And for the great presents!

STEPHANIE. I didn't know you were staying, Kayla.

ABBY. Yeah, we're gonna work on our volleyball serves. I'm gonna try out for the team. Isn't that cool?

(SUTTON runs on.)

SUTTON. Stephanie, come on! My mom's in a hurry!

(SUTTON rushes off. STEPHANIE exits in a huff.)

ABBY. Come on, let's go in the backyard!

(Lights fade as ABBY and KAYLA exit with volleyball. Music underscores as following TEXT MESSAGE appears on screen as ABBY'S MOM enters, collects gifts and pizza boxes and exits.)

From: Abby

Thanx guys 4 awesum prezents! Best bday ever!!!

(Music fades and screen goes black. Lights rise and bell rings as ABBY enters, dressed for school. She meets STEPHANIE, entering.)

ABBY. Hey, Stephanie! Thanks so much for my present. STEPHANIE *(coolly)*. You're welcome.

(STEPHANIE takes out her cell phone, ignores ABBY and begins texting.)

ABBY (*growing nervous as she gets no reaction from STEPHANIE*). I'm really glad my parents gave me a volleyball. I can practice my serves.

STEPHANIE. Why would you want to do that?

ABBY. I'm gonna try out for the team this year, remember? Kayla said my serve was strong and—

STEPHANIE. Listen, I gotta go.

(As STEPHANIE leaves ABBY frozen, SUTTON rushes on and grabs STEPHANIE, pulls her aside and excitedly whispers a secret. They giggle, jumping up and down. Together they turn and stare at ABBY.)

STEPHANIE (*cont'd*). Uh, Abby, hello? This is kind of private.

ABBY (*coming to*). Oh, oh, sorry...

(ABBY exits. STEPHANIE and SUTTON watch her go and then resume their intrigue.)

STEPHANIE. So, tell me! What else did he say?!

SUTTON (*parceling out the juicy information*). He said that you were totally the hottest girl in the grade. He said he thought you were going to the movie last Friday with your cousin. He was looking for you *the...whole...movie!*

(They grab hands, squeal and excitedly jump up and down.)

STEPHANIE. I can't believe I missed hanging out with the hottest guy ever to go to Abby's stupid sleep-over!

SUTTON. Honestly couldn't her parents rent something scary? "Nothing R, girls." And the volleyball? What's up with that?

STEPHANIE. You don't want to know.

(Bell rings. STEPHANIE and SUTTON rush off. Lights cross fade as ABBY enters and crosses to laptop stage R with her backpack. ABBY'S MOM enters and places ABBY's birthday presents center.)

ABBY'S MOM. Hi, honey. How was school?

ABBY *(flatly)*. Fine.

ABBY'S MOM. I know everybody had fun at your sleep-over.

ABBY *(quickly closing laptop)*. I guess they did. How would I know?

(ABBY crosses center, drops her backpack and sinks to the floor. ABBY'S MOM, concerned by ABBY's mood, exits. Lights cross fade as STEPHANIE enters and sits at table stage L. STEPHANIE opens laptop and signs on. REBECCA enters in black warm-up pants and Fireballs "Champions" jacket and sits at table stage R, opens laptop and signs on. REBECCA reacts excitedly as she looks at her laptop screen and types rapidly. REBECCA and STEPHANIE speak as they type. Instant messages between STEPHANIE and REBECCA appear on screen. During their following "chat" ABBY takes presents from gift bags and returns them, takes out volleyball and puts it back in large gift bag, lays her head on her blanket and stares at ceiling.)

REBECCA. [IM to STEPHANIE]

shopaholic99: hey Steph

STEPHANIE (*annoyed*). Is Rebecca always on?

REBECCA. [IM to STEPHANIE]

shopaholic99: whazzup Steph

STEPHANIE. [IM to REBECCA]

star743: nada zero u

REBECCA. [IM to STEPHANIE]

shopaholic99: ZERO?!! kayla said brad was after u all day!

STEPHANIE. [IM to REBECCA]

star743: like kayla knows

REBECCA. [IM to STEPHANIE]

shopaholic99: Brad is HOT, HOT, HOT!!! Steph, u want 2 go 2 mall sat after game? u me kayla

STEPHANIE. [IM to REBECCA]

star743: not kayla

REBECCA. [IM to STEPHANIE]

shopaholic99: NOT kayla?

STEPHANIE. Can't you read? [IM to REBECCA]

star743: mall maybe...becca, got some really bad news

REBECCA. [IM to STEPHANIE]

shopaholic99: please, Steph, i can keep a secret. TELL!

STEPHANIE. [IM to REBECCA]

star743: abby trying out 4 volleyball!!!

REBECCA. [IM to STEPHANIE]

shopaholic99: volleyball? really?

STEPHANIE. Hello... [IM to REBECCA]

star743: our team won championship last year remember??? abby's never played volleyball total
DISASTER!

REBECCA (*understanding*). Oh...okay... [IM to STEPHANIE]

shopaholic99: SO TOTAL DISASTER!

(*ABBY stands and exits with backpack and presents.*)

STEPHANIE. [IM to REBECCA]

star743: some 1 needs 2 clue her in. hey becca mall sat cool, just us

REBECCA. [IM to STEPHANIE]

shopaholic99: cool! what time

STEPHANIE. Ugh...great... [IM to REBECCA]

star743: about team i'd clue abby in but i'm captain. if she'd just take a HINT

REBECCA. [IM to STEPHANIE]

shopaholic99: let me tell her. i mean i'd be doing her a favor. everybody feel same way?

STEPHANIE. [IM to REBECCA]

star743: totally! about mall sat. don't tell! anna marie would butt in OUR SECRET.

REBECCA. [IM to STEPHANIE]

shopaholic99: OUR SECRET! COOL!

(*Last IM remains on screen. REBECCA closes laptop and excitedly exits. STEPHANIE, pleased with herself, smiles and and closes laptop as lights fade. Bell rings loudly. Screen goes black. Lights rise as ANNA MARIE and KAYLA with team bags enter in black practice*

shorts and Fireballs “Champions” jackets and drill up-stage with volleyball. KAYLA has her cell phone inside team bag. ABBY rushes on downstage in shirt and shorts, carrying tennis shoes and socks. REBECCA enters in black warm-up pants and “Champions” jacket and crosses to ABBY. During following conversation, ABBY sits and puts on socks and tennis shoes.)

REBECCA. Hey, Abby, did I hear something about you playing volleyball this year?

ABBY. Yeah, I am.

REBECCA. Oh...well, it's just that I hear everyone's worried that if you go on the team, well, that we'll lose.

ABBY. I've been practicing a lot. Kayla said—

REBECCA. Whatever. But last year we won the championship and it would be just horrible if we lost this year.

(COACH, carrying volleyball, enters with STEPHANIE and SUTTON, chatting and laughing. STEPHANIE and SUTTON wear their “Champions” jackets and black practice shorts and carry team bags. COACH blows her whistle.)

COACH. Okay, girls! Fire up, Fireballs!

(ALL GIRLS except ABBY huddle.)

COACH & GIRLS *(except ABBY)*. Go, Fireballs! *(They cheer and break huddle.)*

COACH. Okay, girls, we've got a lot of work ahead if we're going to do as well as last year. What's our secret weapon?