**The New Cheerleader**

by Arthur Saxon

Gretchen Wendel sighed as she watched the cheerleaders from her lonely spot in the bleachers. How she envied them. They were the elite, loved and hated in equal measure by the other students, but oh so popular! Sure they could be bitchy and shallow, or at least a couple of them were, and they had taught the rest to be. But Gretchen longed to be one of them, longed to dance and cheer in front of the crowd at football games, longed to be the center of attention and the object of the boys’ fascination.

Hence the sigh. She knew she was not quite pretty enough, not quite thin enough, not quite gymnastic enough – her tumbling skills were limited to a rather wobbly cartwheel. Picking up her schoolbag, she descended from the bleachers and gave the cheer squad a last forlorn look before heading home.

Once back in her living room, she switched on the television and put in a video of her favourite hip-hop and reggae songs. Not that she was particularly enthused about the music, but she loved the way those beautiful coloured girls danced, and she was very fond of emulating them.

Taking off her jeans, Gretchen began to dance in front of the television, gyrating her pelvis as the women in the video gyrated theirs, running her hands over her breasts and then down her sides, bending over as she caressed her legs. With her hands planted on her knees, she arched her back so that her bottom stuck out, then she writhed sensuously, imagining that she was wiggling her bottom at an awestruck crowd of her fellow students at a football game. Now if only cheerleading routines were like this instead of all those impossible jumps and flips!

A new video came on – a particularly raunchy hit from Jamaica. Copying one of the dancing girls, Gretchen lay down on her back, spread her legs wide, and gyrated her hips as she stroked her thighs. As often happened in this situation, she found her hand drifting to her pussy, and as she continued to writhe, she slid her hand inside her knickers and began to masturbate. Dancing in so erotic a fashion always made her horny.

The front door opened and closed. Gretchen whipped her hand out of her knickers and jumped to her feet, just as her father appeared in the doorway. He looked at her and beamed. “How’s my princess?” he asked, spreading his arms wide.

She smiled and rushed into his embrace. “Hi Dad,” she said.

Ruud Wendel, a giant of a Dutchman, lifted his daughter off the floor and carried her over to his favourite armchair, where he carefully sat down, with Gretchen ending up on his lap. He gave her a kiss. “Hoe gaat het, Gretchen?”

“Goed, dank u,” replied Gretchen. “But I’ll never shake this accent if I keep speaking Dutch.”

“You should not be so anxious to shake it, my darling,” said Ruud. “Your friends may tease you now, but when it comes time for you to get a job, you will find that an accent can be useful.”

Gretchen shrugged. “Did you have a good day at work?”

“Oh, it was not bad, you know,” said Ruud. “I made a couple of good sales.” He noticed a loose thread on her t-shirt, and pulled a miniature sewing kit out of his pocket. “Here, you have a loose thread – stay still and I’ll mend it for you.”

She kept still while he sewed. “I wish I was a cheerleader, Dad,” she said.

“Then become a cheerleader,” said Ruud.

She laughed. “It’s not that simple! I’m not pretty enough, and I’m not thin enough, and I can’t do all the things they do.”

“I have seen those cheerleaders at your school – you are prettier than all of them,” said Ruud.

“Thanks Dad,” said Gretchen with a smile, “but you’re biased.”

“Not at all. Look at your beautiful blonde hair, and your perfect skin, and your bright blue eyes – you are perfect.”

“My face is chubby and round,” said Gretchen.

“It is beautifully round, but it is not chubby. It is a very Dutch shape. And possibly yes maybe you do have a little puppy fat still, but you will lose that soon enough.”

“I still can’t do the routines though,” said Gretchen obstinately.

Ruud looked at her seriously. “That, you can do something about. We set our own limitations, Gretchen. If you truly want to become a cheerleader, then I know that you will become a cheerleader.”

Gretchen smiled at him. “Thanks Dad.” She gave him a kiss, then climbed off his lap. “I’m going upstairs to do my homework.”

“Okay,” said Ruud.

The following day, Gretchen sat in class, only half paying attention to what the teacher was saying. She was watching Tammy, the captain of the cheer squad, who was dressed today in her cheerleading uniform as there was a game this afternoon. She was showing a lot of leg, and a lot of the boys were very distracted as a result. Gretchen looked down at her own skirt, which was almost knee length. It was so unfair that cheerleaders were allowed to wear shorter skirts than other girls!

As Tammy flirted with various boys, Gretchen pondered her father’s words: “We set our own limitations, Gretchen.” Her father would know, of course – he had lost everything when his second wife (Gretchen’s stepmother) had left him and fled the state, leaving behind massive credit card debts which Ruud had known nothing about until the bailiffs arrived. Bankrupt, he had taught himself a new trade and started up his own clothing company, which was now thriving thanks to his tireless efforts and boundless enthusiasm. Gretchen admired her father over all other men.

And so she made a decision, right then and there. She would become a cheerleader. She would!

That afternoon, as she watched the game with some of her fellow students, she studied the cheerleaders’ moves. She figured she could probably manage the high kicks, since she could very nearly do the splits, but those backflips looked way too hard – her back just did not bend that much!

And then her heart leaped into her mouth as Chrissie slipped off Bren’s shoulders and fell to the ground headfirst. A collective gasp arose from the crowd. The coach rushed over to check on the fallen girl. Gretchen stood up, trying to see what was happening.

The game stopped while Chrissie was attended to. After a few minutes, whispers circulated among the onlookers that the girl had hurt her neck. Gretchen’s mind began to race. If Chrissie had injured her neck (which was a shame for Chrissie of course, poor girl, though she was a bit of a bitch), she would be off the squad, which meant that they would have to recruit a new cheerleader. This was her chance!

Sure enough, on Monday morning a notice was put up, asking for girls to try out for a temporary spot on the squad. Filled with resolve, Gretchen put her name up on the board, and later that day she found herself standing nervously in front of a panel of three cheerleaders, who were looking at her with a mixture of amusement and derision.

“Gretchen Wendel,” said Tammy, the pretty but bitchy blonde captain of the squad. “Do you really think you have the right, uh, physique to be a cheerleader?”

Gretchen was determined that the panel should not see any sign of her nervousness. She smiled sunnily, and forced her voice calm. “I could stand to lose a few pounds,” she said, “and I will.”

A couple of the girls snickered at her accent, but she made herself ignore them and maintained her smile.

Tammy grinned, then shrugged. “Fine, let’s see what you’ve got,” she said.

Gretchen took a deep breath. This was it. She had spent the previous two evenings working on a little routine that she could manage, combining some of the easier cheerleading moves with a more dance-based approach. Today she was wearing a little miniskirt, which she had put on just before coming to this try-out – it would never have been allowed in class – and a t-shirt emblazoned with the school’s name and logo which she had bought from the school shop.

“Tweedvale High School rocks my world!” she yelled, bouncing on the spot and then doing a high kick. “The other school is a great big turd!” She spun around and ground her hips at the panel. “Their football team can kiss my ass!” Then she dropped to the floor and humped an invisible lover. “Our team rules – GO TWEEDVALE MASS!” And with that, she leaped up again and bounced and high-kicked in joyful exuberance. “Woo-hoo! Go team!”

Then, panting from the exertion, she noticed the stunned faces of the panel members. “Well, that was … different,” said Tammy, looking somewhat nonplussed.

Another girl, Megan, was grinning. “I liked it!” she said.

“I’m sorry,” said a third girl, Stacy. “That’s way too raunchy for our squad. You can’t use words like ‘turd’ and ‘ass’ in a chant.”

“It’s just a try-out, Stace!” said Megan. “It’s the attitude that matters, and you have to admit she’s got the right spirit. We’re not asking her to write our chants for us.”

“But she’s acting like a slut in heat,” persisted Stacy. “We couldn’t have her doing that in front of the crowd! Plus,” she added in a lower voice, “look at the size of her boobs!”

“Quite,” said Tammy. “I’m sorry, Gretchen, but you’re just not what we’re looking for.”

“Wait a minute,” said Gretchen. “Since junior high I’ve idolized you guys, thinking you’re the epitome of beauty and sexiness – and now I’m too sexy for you?”

“We’re not sluts, Gretchen,” said Stacy snidely.

“I know that,” said Gretchen. “And neither am I. I’m still a virgin, after all. But as cheerleaders you have this enormous power, this huge gift of being the crème de la crème of high school society, and all eyes are on you…”

The girls on the panel nodded, smiled, shrugged. “This is true,” said Tammy. “So what?”

“Except at the game,” said Gretchen. “Did you see the attendance at that last game? Where the fuck was everyone?”

“That’s hardly our fault,” said Stacy sternly. “The team has had a poor run the past few years, and nobody enjoys coming week after week to see our team lose over and over again. So you can blame the team for the low attendance … or blame the coach. Don’t blame us.”

“But isn’t it up to the cheerleaders to inspire confidence? That’s what you do, right? As cheerleaders you can affect the outcome of the game, and that brings a whole level of responsibility…”

“Hold on,” cut in Tammy. “We do our job well, okay? We cheer and cheer till our lungs are hurting, and we perform our routines really fucking superbly. Don’t tell us that we’re not pulling our weight.”

“Oh I’m not,” said Gretchen. “But if you made your routines a little sexier, you’d draw a bigger crowd, and if you can fill the seats, then the team would feel that the school was really behind them, and then they would play better. Home field advantage and all that.”

“That’s a pretty good idea,” said Megan to Tammy.

“Shh,” said Tammy. Then, to Gretchen, “So you think we should ditch the stunts we’ve all worked on so hard, and just shake our asses at the crowd?”

“Of course not,” said Gretchen. “I’m truly in awe of the gymnastics you girls do. Stacy, your tumbling just takes my breath away – it’s always so flawlessly executed. I definitely think you should keep on doing that stuff. But if you could work some sexy dance moves into your routines as well, you’d have something different, something special, something that can whip the crowd into a frenzy of excitement, which will in turn fire up the players. Not all of us have to be able to do the hardest moves, right? I know I can’t do some of the amazing things you do, but I’ll try really hard, and I think with just a little practice I could do some of them pretty soon. My dad has a saying, which goes: ‘We set our own limitations’, and I live by that.”

The panel conferred quietly, while Gretchen tried not to fidget.

“We’ll let you know,” said Tammy at last. “We still have some girls to see.”

“Thank you very much for your time,” said Gretchen. She started towards the door.

“You’re welcome,” said Tammy. “You may want to pull your skirt down before you leave here.”

Gretchen, startled, looked down at her skirt – it had ridden up around her hips, exposing most of her knickers. She blushed and pulled it back into place as she walked out of the room with as much dignity as she could.

The next day Megan Garrett met her in the corridor. “You’re in,” she said. “Stacy and I managed to persuade Tammy.”

“Wow! Thank you!” exclaimed Gretchen. Then she inquired, “Stacy argued for me?”

Megan nodded. “She’s a sucker for flattery – that was a good move on your part.”

Gretchen grinned. “So when do we practice next?”

“We have three practices a week – Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from four-thirty to six o’clock. So there’s a practice this afternoon – make sure you’re on time, and wear something practical. Your skirt showed us a little more than we wanted to see.”

Gretchen chuckled. “But skirts are part of our uniform!”

“Yeah but we don’t wear regular knickers with them. If you want to wear a cheer skirt, that’s fine, but if you do, make sure you wear cheer knickers underneath.”

Gretchen nodded. “Okay,” she said.

“Give your measurements to Tammy and she’ll get a uniform for you. In the meantime, I suggest you just wear shorts.”

That afternoon she arrived at the practice session wearing a cheerleading uniform from last season, and a pair of ordinary full-cut knickers, less brief than her usual knickers but still smaller (and rather less sturdy) than proper cheer knickers. Megan shook her head slightly when she saw her, but she said nothing.

The other girls in the squad were surprised to see that Gretchen was their newest recruit, but they were more welcoming than she had feared. Soon she was learning their moves, and even Tammy was pleased at how quickly she picked up the basics of the routine. Since Gretchen could not tumble well, a girl named Dorothy took Chrissie’s place, and Gretchen stepped into Dorothy’s position.

“Now,” said Tammy, “Gretchen has some ideas on how to make our routine a little sexier. I feel that it’s our responsibility to fill the empty seats in the bleachers when the team plays at home, and since the team has a bad rep recently, drastic measures are required on our part. Gretchen, perhaps you could show us all some of your moves.”

Gretchen happily did so, bumping and grinding her way through a reggae song that she ran through in her head. She played with the hem of her skirt, seductively uncovering her buttocks bit by bit as she gyrated with her bottom thrust out towards her shocked fellow cheerleaders.

“That’s obscene – you can’t expect us to do that!” said Lynette, a tall girl with black hair.

“Not everyone will be doing stuff like that,” said Tammy coolly. “Just those who want to.”

“Actually it’s more difficult than it looks,” said Gretchen. “I think we’ll be struggling to find girls who can do it. Perhaps everyone could give it a go, and we’ll figure out who’s good at it and who isn’t?”

“Good idea,” said Tammy. “Lynette, if you’re dead against it, then I guess there’s no point in you even trying. But how about you Pam?”

Pam arched an eyebrow. “What, you think I’ll do it because it’s a dancehall move and I’m black?”

Tammy’s cheeks flushed. “I just thought you might be better at it than most of us.”

Pam shook her head. “Well it’ll be fun watching you all trying to dance like black girls. I’ll do it as long as I’m not the only one.” With that she stepped out from the rest and began to dance, thrusting her bottom out and shaking it with a speed that impressed even Gretchen. The other girls goggled, particularly when Pam raised one leg high into the air and still managed to grind her hips very sensually without apparent effort.

When she finished, Gretchen could not help clapping. “Very good!” she said.

“Impressive,” admitted Tammy. “Megan, how about you?”

“I’m not sure I can,” said Megan, “but I’ll give it a go.” She stepped out and began to undulate her hips, rather inexpertly but with commendable enthusiasm. Gretchen smiled and nodded encouragingly.

One by one, most of the girls tried to copy Gretchen’s and Pam’s moves, with mixed success. Being cheerleaders, they were all sufficiently limber, but some of them simply did not seem to have the hips for it. Or possibly they were inhibited by the overt sexuality of the moves and their discomfort was showing in their performance.

Tammy had been taking notes. Eventually she said, “Okay. Pam, Dorothy, Gretchen and Stacy seem to have these moves down pretty well. Megan and myself obviously need some extra practice, but I think we’ll get there. Michaela and Sue’s strengths apparently lie elsewhere. Lynette and Bren don’t want to try. Well I’d say that’s pretty good. The next question is: who would be okay with doing those moves in front of a crowd?”

Gretchen immediately put up her hand, but her face fell when she looked around and saw everyone else’s hands by their sides. Then her heart leaped as Megan put her hand up. “I’ll do them,” she said. “As long as I can master them in time.”

Dorothy put her hand up. “I’ll do them,” she said. “They look easy to learn, and fun.” She was a cute redhead, nearly as buxom as Gretchen but a couple of inches shorter. Gretchen smiled at her in gratitude.

Then Pam raised her hand. “Well I was waiting for other volunteers,” she said, “which we have now, so I guess I’m in too.”

Tammy nodded. “That’s enough then. I think we should stick to four, at least for the time being.”

“I kind of imagined,” said Gretchen quickly, “half of us doing the dancehall moves while the other half does more conventional cheerleading stuff.”

Tammy thought for a moment, then nodded. “Okay, well I’ll make up the fifth then, unless Stacy…”

Stacy shook her head vigorously. She had tried the moves, just to prove she could do them, but she was not at all comfortable with the thought of grinding her ass at a bunch of horny teenaged boys.

And so a new routine was worked out, incorporating some of Gretchen’s reggae moves. By Friday’s game, it was still imperfect, but they decided to give it a test run anyway. Fortunately it was another home game.

The reaction was incredible. By the end of the first quarter, all the boys in the bleachers had migrated down to the section directly in front of the cheer squad, and they were whooping and hollering and whistling at the tops of their lungs. Spurred on by this reaction, the girls really began to get into it, lying on their backs, spreading their legs wide, and stroking their inner thighs while they gyrated their hips in time with their chants. Gretchen, kitted out in her brand new uniform, even pulled her cheer knickers up between her buttocks for a short while as she bent over and ground her bottom at the crowd.

And then a curious thing happened. The vast expanse of empty seats began to fill up. Somebody had run out and spread the word about what was happening on the football field, the rumours had gathered pace and exaggerations along the way, and soon the land between the school buildings and the football field was filled with boys running to the bleachers to see what the cheerleaders were doing.

Seeing the bleachers fill up apparently had a positive effect on the players, for the game began to turn around. By the end of the fourth quarter, nearly three quarters of the seats were filled with cheering boys (and girls, who had come along to see what the boys were so excited about), and the score was tied. In the final minute, during which several defenders on the visiting team were distracted by a particularly lewd move by Gretchen (in which she actually ran a finger up the gusset of her knickers while her legs were spread wide towards the field), the home team scored a final touchdown, and the match was won.

The coach was ecstatic. Throughout the game he had been wavering on the brink of marching over to the cheer squad to ask them what the hell they were doing, but as the seats filled up and his team began to recover their spirits, he decided to leave well alone. In fact he came over to Tammy afterwards and said, “I’m sure you realize the trouble you’re in, but I just want to say that from my point of view, you did the job you’re here for. You practically won this match for us, so for that I’m grateful.”

Tammy glowed with pride. “Thank you Mr. Winters. We just felt we had to do something drastic to fill the seats.”

“Well, for what it’s worth, I’ll put in a good word for you when the shit hits the fan,” said the coach. “But I don’t know if it’ll save you from a roasting.”

And a roasting is what Tammy was expecting when she was asked to report to the principal’s office on Monday morning. As she went, she met Gretchen in the corridor. “If I get dropped from the squad, it’ll be your fault!” she said vehemently. “I knew it was a bad idea – I shouldn’t have listened to you!”

“I’ll come with you,” said Gretchen. “I’ll take the blame – don’t worry, I’ll make sure you stay captain of the squad.”

“You can’t take the blame,” said Tammy bitterly. “It was my call – I’m the captain. So I’ll be the one punished.”

“Still, I’ll come with you,” said Gretchen.

“Suit yourself,” said Tammy indifferently, though really she was glad of the support.

They entered Mr. Castleman’s office with trepidation, and found him looking stressed. “Oh, hello Tammy, hello Gretchen. What did I want to see you for? Oh yes – the cheerleading.” He sighed. “Well I guess you helped us win the game, but you can’t go sexing up your routines like that. You’ll get the school into trouble.”

“How so, exactly?” asked Gretchen. “I don’t believe we broke any indecency laws. What we did, you can see on MTV any day of the week.”

“You can’t see cheerleaders doing that during a football game any day of the week,” said Mr. Castleman severely. “And that’s the point.”

“So we’re entering uncharted territory,” said Gretchen. “And it seems to be helping our team. So would it not be better just to let the matter be, and only take action against the cheer squad if you receive an official complaint?”

“You think I haven’t?” said Mr. Castleman. “The coach of Norfolksville High was most upset by your behaviour!”

“Of course he was!” said Tammy. “It helped our team to shrug off their demoralization, with the result that his team lost. Naturally he’s looking for someone to blame!”

“Mr. Castleman,” said Gretchen. “These new moves were my idea…”

“Yes, well, I know that standards of decency are a little different in the Netherlands…”

“That’s not the point,” said Gretchen. “When I was in junior high, a great man came and gave a speech to our school. I was totally inspired by what he had to say. He taught us that we should innovate, we should find new and better ways of doing things, because that is how we make progress. He also said that we should act with confidence, even when we don’t feel it, and that really rang true for me. My dad has a saying, which goes: ‘You should always try to absorb the finer qualities of the people you admire’, and I try to live by that.”

“Who was this speaker?” asked Mr. Castleman, curious despite himself.

“It was you, sir,” said Gretchen. “It was a great speech and I’ve never forgotten it.”

“Oh!” The principal was quite thrown by this. “Hmm, I think I remember that speech. Well you know, I’m not quite as idealistic now as I was then. I’m glad you got something positive out of it though.”

“Why do you feel less idealistic now?” asked Gretchen.

Mr. Castleman sighed, and the stressed look came back into his face. “Idealism doesn’t often pay off,” he said, “especially in this job. I have to answer to people – to the board, to the parents – even to the students sometimes. It makes it very hard to take a stand.”

“Yet if anyone can, you can!” said Gretchen. “I saw that fire in your eyes when you spoke to us three years ago. I don’t believe it has gone – will you not stand up for us? For Tammy? For your cheerleaders? For your football team? I feel that we’re on the brink of some really good successes. Will you help us to bring that about?”

Mr. Castleman chuckled. “You’re quite the inspirational speaker yourself, Gretchen,” he said. “Very well, I’ll give you a chance, and I’ll try to support you if I can. Just don’t go doing a Janet Jackson or all hell will break loose.”

“Understood,” said Gretchen. “Thank you sir.”

As they left, Tammy whispered, “That was fucking unbelievable. Nice work Gretchen!”

Gretchen smiled.

On Tuesday Gretchen watched the football team practice after school. Coach Winters spotted her, and came over to say hello. “I understand Mr. Castleman isn’t going to take any action against you,” he said. “That’s good.”

“Yes,” agreed Gretchen. “How’s the practice going?”

“Pretty good,” said the coach. “But it’s hard to get their spirits up for this next game against Timpton High – they’re a tough team and we haven’t beaten them in six years.”

“What’s that?” Gretchen asked, pointing at a notebook in the coach’s pocket. “Is that your book of plays?”

The coach chuckled. “Yeah. I’ve had this book for twenty-five years now, ever since I first started coaching high school teams.”

“Cool!” said Gretchen. “And have you invented any of the plays in there?”

“Pretty much all of them,” said the coach. “At least, I’ve adapted most of them from various sources, but there are a few that are entirely my own.”

“That’s really awesome!” said Gretchen. “And are our boys good at performing those plays?”

“Well yeah, I guess,” said Mr. Winters with a shrug. “They’re kinda outdated though … some time I should really come up with some new plays that are better suited to today’s game.”

“Sounds good – so why don’t you?” asked Gretchen.

“Well … I dunno, you kinda get into a routine. I’m getting a bit old for new tricks, I think. I’ve kinda lost the imagination to come up with new stuff.”

“Nonsense – you can’t be a day over forty-five,” said Gretchen. “I’m sure your best work is yet to come.”

Coach Winters looked at her quizzically. “I’m fifty-eight,” he said.

Gretchen’s jaw dropped. “You’re kidding!”

“No – seriously,” said the coach. “Thank you though.” He smiled.

“Well you’re only as young as you feel,” said Gretchen. “And from talking to you, I can tell that your mind is still as sharp as a whip, whatever you might claim. I bet that when you sit down this evening, you’ll be able to come up with a play so cool and different that it’ll knock the socks off Timpton High this Friday. What do you say?”

Fred Winters laughed. “You almost make me believe it,” he said. “You wanna be the coach?”

Gretchen smiled. “Don’t tease – I know nothing about football. But you do – you have a vast wealth of experience, and I just know that you’re going to be able to take that and do great things with it. My dad has a saying, which goes: ‘To reach the heights, you’ve got to dig deep’, and I try to live by that.”

“To reach the heights, you’ve gotta dig deep,” said the coach. “I like that. Very well Gretchen, I’ll give it a go. Thank you.”

“Don’t mention it,” said Gretchen with a smile. “Good luck!”

On Friday, Gretchen and the other cheerleaders took a bus with the football team to Timpton High. The mood on the bus was rather subdued, but Gretchen felt very upbeat and tried to buoy up the spirits of those around her.

“It’s all very well for you to say that,” said Jack Loomis, the quarterback, “but you haven’t seen their players – they’re huge! They’re gonna eat us alive.”

“Bullshit,” said Gretchen. “I know we don’t have a great history against these guys, but I think you’ll find that coach Winters has a couple of new tricks up his sleeve. Just a hunch. My dad has a saying, which goes: ‘What goes down, must come up’. Timpton’s winning streak can’t last forever, and I for one can’t wait to see their faces when you guys kick their asses.”

Jack smiled. “I hope you’re right. It would be nice.”

Later, as the team emerged from the locker rooms, there was a marked change in their attitudes. Gone was the defeatism that had been so obvious on the bus. They were now filled with fire and determination, as Tammy noted with interest to Stacy.

“I wonder what’s gotten into them,” she said.

“Dunno,” said Stacy. “Coach must’ve said something pretty darn stirring to them.”

So the cheerleaders cheered, and they chanted, and they danced and they tumbled, and they shook their booties and gyrated their hips until the Timpton students in the bleachers stared in awe, shock and (as often as not) delight. Their cheers for their own team seemed muted – they seemed more interested in cheering for the visitors’ cheerleaders. At a predetermined point, the front five girls turned their backs on the crowd, bent over, flipped their skirts up, and pulled their knickers deep between their buttocks. The crowd went wild.

The Timpton team was disoriented by this, and let through a touchdown, which brought the scores nearly level. Tweedvale was just two points behind, and it was halfway through the third quarter. The defense now fought hard, but could not prevent Timpton from scoring a touchdown, and converting it.

With the help of a new play devised by coach Winters, Tweedvale came right back and scored another touchdown. Timpton was by now getting frustrated, and despite their lead they were playing as if they were losing. A careless pass was intercepted by Greg Finchley of Tweedvale, who scored another touchdown.

From then on, the Tweedvale team went from strength to strength, and they did not let Timpton score again. They themselves scored another touchdown in the last five minutes, and when the clock ran out they whooped and cheered. Jack Loomis ran over and hugged Stacy, his girlfriend, and then Gretchen, for the pep talk on the bus. When Stacy glared at her, Gretchen hurried over to the jealous cheerleader and said, “Relax, Stacy – I wouldn’t dream of it.”

The mood in the bus on the way home was jubilant, with much singing and laughing. Coach Winters was particularly pleased – he caught Gretchen’s eye and winked at her. She smiled back at him, and then she turned to Tammy.

“Tammy, I’ve been thinking about our uniforms. Do you think we could make them a little sexier?”

“Like how?” asked Tammy.

“Make the skirts shorter, for a start. And these knickers – they’re terribly ugly. The gusset is three inches wide! And could the waistband possibly be any higher?”

“Well … since they’re so likely to be seen, they’re designed so that you can be damn certain they’re covering everything,” said Tammy. “It’s just practical.”

“Practical is not sexy,” said Gretchen. “I think we should wear ordinary knickers.”

“But what if something slips out?” asked Tammy, lowering her voice. “All those high kicks we do – you can’t guarantee the gusset will stay in place. And you’ve seen the photographers at some of these games – they’d have a field day if they caught a glimpse of … you know what.”

“Would they,” inquired Gretchen. “What would they do with a picture like that? You really think a newspaper would print it?”

“Hmm,” said Tammy. “Well, they could put it on the internet.”

“Where it will get lost among the millions of pictures of adult models posing in cheerleader outfits,” said Gretchen. “With tiny knickers or, more often, no knickers at all underneath. You really think a glimpse of pink alongside a slipped gusset is going to make a big mark on-line?”

Tammy thought about this. “Damn, maybe you’re right,” she said. She thought some more. “We’ll have to be consistent, though. We’ll all have to have the same knickers.”

“You’ve got everyone’s sizes,” said Gretchen. “Fancy coming shopping with me tomorrow?”

Tammy grinned. “Okay,” she said.

The next day, therefore, the two girls shopped for knickers at a department store in town, and picked out some pretty white silk briefs for the entire squad – six pairs each. Gretchen paid for them with her father’s credit card (he allowed her a certain amount of spending money per month, and she was always careful not to exceed that amount), and then the two of them went back to Gretchen’s house to try them on. While they were both standing in their t-shirts and new knickers, Ruud opened Gretchen’s bedroom door and came in. Tammy squealed and covered her knickers with her hands.

“Hi Dad,” said Gretchen, and she stood on tiptoe to kiss him. “This is my friend Tammy – she’s the captain of our squad.

“Pleased to meet you Tammy,” he said. “I’m Ruud.”

“I’m sorry?” said Tammy, startled.

“That’s Dad’s name, dimwit,” said Gretchen, chuckling.

“Ah yes,” said Ruud, with a hearty laugh. “I’m Ruud, not rude.”

“Dad,” said Gretchen, “we’ve decided that our squad needs new uniforms. Would you consider making some for us?”

“If the school approves, and is willing to pay, then yes of course,” he said.

“I’ll make sure they approve, and pay,” said Gretchen. “I’ll talk to the coach.”

“I’m sure Mr. Winters will be happy with the idea,” said Tammy, nodding. She still felt a little nervous, standing in front of Ruud in her t-shirt and knickers, but since Gretchen did not seem in the least bit concerned by his presence, she did not like to make a big deal of it.

“Okay,” said Ruud. “I’ll not make anything until you talk to him, but in the meantime we can discuss designs if you like.”

“Great,” said Gretchen, smiling. “Well Tammy, I think we should stick to the school colours, right?”

“Definitely,” said Tammy.

“So what I figure is this: a pleated skirt in white and green, as low-rise as possible, and just long enough to cover the buttocks.”

“That sounds awfully sexy,” said Ruud gravely.

“That’s the idea,” said Gretchen. “We’ve kind of sexed up our routines.”

“Oh have you? Well, as long as Mr. Winters approves your ideas, I’ll do it.”

“I’ll make sure he does,” said Gretchen with a smile. “Now for the tops – I thought a nice white peasant-girl crop-top would be cool…”

“Neat,” said Tammy, nodding. “I like that.”

“Semi-transparent of course – like most of them are.”

“Our bras will be visible,” said Tammy.

“Yes,” said Gretchen, “so we’ll all have to wear white bras.”

Ruud shook his head. “I very much doubt that the coach will tell me this is okay,” he said. “You can be sure that if he says ‘Gretchen’s design is okay’, I will ask him what exactly you told him.”

“Dad!” said Gretchen, a little hurt. “You don’t trust me?”

“I trust you,” he said solemnly, “but I want to make sure there is no misunderstanding.”

“Fair enough,” she said. “Well, thanks Dad – I’ll try to have him call you Monday.”

“Okay.” He nodded and left the room.

“How soon will he have them ready, do you think, if we get the coach’s approval on Monday?” asked Tammy.

“I don’t know – it depends on how busy he is,” said Gretchen. “A few days, maybe a week. How are your knickers?”

“Uh, fine,” said Tammy.

Gretchen took hers off, and found a seam picker from her sewing kit. “I’m going to take the gusset out of mine,” she said. “When I’m spreading my legs in front of the bleachers, I think it would be kind of cool to have only one single flimsy layer of material between the audience and my pussy.”

Tammy shivered. “You’ve got some nerve,” she said. “But I guess that’s a cool idea, except that any, uh, dampness would show more clearly.”

“I don’t care,” said Gretchen with a wicked grin. “Maybe if I do get wet, the material will turn transparent.”

“Gretchen, you are a bad girl!” said Tammy with a shocked expression. “Are you sure you’re a virgin?”

“Totally,” said Gretchen, deftly picking out stitches as she talked. “I’ve had a couple of boyfriends, but I felt I was too young for sex. I think I still am.”

“Have you turned sixteen yet?” asked Tammy.

Gretchen nodded. “Last month. I can stand to wait another year or so, though. Maybe. There!” She held up her knickers, with the gusset removed. “Much better.” She put the knickers back on, then lay back on the bed with her legs spread wide. “How does it look?”

Tammy grimaced and turned her head away, but her eyes seemed unable to pull away from Gretchen’s thinly-veiled pussy. “That’s more than I wanted to see!” she complained.

“But what can you see?” asked Gretchen, sitting up.

“I could see your hair, and, uh, your slit…”

“Hmm, I shall have to shave,” said Gretchen. “Do you want to take a bath with me?”

“What?” asked Tammy, startled.

“A bath. You know – bathroom, bath tub…”

“I heard what you said,” said Tammy. “I just … are you a lesbian?”

“No,” said Gretchen. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to freak you out.”

“You didn’t,” said Tammy. “It’s fine. I was just, uh, making sure.”

“So do you want to take a bath with me or not?” asked Gretchen.

“I’ll pass,” said Tammy. “Sorry.”

Gretchen shrugged. “No need to be sorry. But I’d like to take a bath now. You’re welcome to wait for me if you like. Help yourself to a drink from the fridge.” She stripped off what remained of her clothes and sauntered out of the room. “Hi Dad – just taking a bath,” she said as she passed her father on the landing.

“Okay,” he said. “Is Tammy staying?”

Gretchen stopped and thought. “Not sure – why don’t you ask her to dinner?”

Ruud nodded. “Good idea.”

Gretchen continued to the bathroom, where she started to run her bath in. Ruud meanwhile headed to Gretchen’s bedroom and opened the door. Tammy froze, wide-eyed, in the act of removing her knickers.

“Would you like to stay for dinner?” asked Ruud.

“Uh, okay!” Tammy gasped.

“Good!” said Ruud, and he withdrew. Whistling a Dutch folk tune, he trotted downstairs to the kitchen.

Tammy shook her head – these Dutch people were crazy. But kind of cool.

Half an hour later, Gretchen emerged from the bathroom, naked, dry apart from her hair, and newly shaved. She walked into her bedroom and smiled at Tammy.

“Look!” she said. “All smooth.”

“Very nice,” said Tammy, almost managing not to look. “There! Now I’m all done.”

Gretchen stared at the pair of knickers Tammy was holding. “You took the gusset out of all your knickers too?”

“Not just mine – I took the gusset out of everyone’s knickers!” said Tammy, grinning.

Gretchen laughed out loud. “Cool!” she said. “I can’t wait to see their faces!”

Their fellow cheerleaders had, it turned out, mixed feelings about the new knickers. Gretchen passed them around after their practice session on Monday.

“Much better!” approved Stacy. “Very sexy.” And this was the opinion of most of the girls.

“They’re a little thin, perhaps,” said Dorothy, eyeing them dubiously. “Won’t they be a bit see-through?”

“A bit,” said Tammy. “You may want to give yourself a pretty comprehensive shave. But nobody will be close enough to see anything improper.”

“And where’s the lining?” asked Lynette.

“Yeah,” said Bren. “I never saw a pair of silk knickers like these without a gusset before.”

“It’s a new style,” said Gretchen. “I quite like it.”

“You might have consulted with us first,” said Lynette.

“Yes, we probably should,” said Tammy, “but let me make up for that now by bringing up the subject of the rest of our uniform. Gretchen’s dad runs a clothing company, and he’s a wizard at sewing, so we thought it might be cool to change our uniform.”

“What’s wrong with this one?” asked Bren.

“It’s a little frumpy,” said Tammy.

“Frumpy?” said Lynette. “What’s frumpy about it?”

“What Tammy means,” said Gretchen, “is that we’re all beautiful, sexy girls – at least you lot are, and I’m trying to be – and we deserve to show ourselves off a bit. You know – bare our midriffs, show a little more leg…”

“You lie in front of the crowd with your legs spread and your skirt around your hips,” said Lynette. “Just how much more leg do you think you could show?”

“Good point,” said Tammy. “But we’re not always lying down. And we get to wear our uniforms the whole day – not just during the game.”

“Well, I don’t mind,” said Sue, who had possibly the nicest figure of all of them.

“Let’s take a vote,” said Tammy. “All those in favour of a skimpier uniform, raise your hand.”

All but two hands went up in the air.

“Motion carried,” said Tammy. “Gretchen, you’d better hurry if you’re going to catch Mr. Winters.”

“Oh! Yes of course,” said Gretchen. She hurried off to find the coach.

He was putting gear away after the day’s practice. He smiled as Gretchen approached. “Hello Gretchen!” he said. “How nice to see you.”

“Nice to see you too, sir!” said Gretchen. “Congratulations on last Friday – you came up with some great plays!”

“Thanks to you,” he said. “It almost feels like I’m thirty again, full of bright ideas and plans. I’m very grateful to you for helping me rediscover my creativity.”

“You’re welcome,” said the cheerleader. “Coach, I’ve been meaning to talk to you about our uniform. My dad runs a clothing company and he’d be willing to make us new uniforms – if that’s okay with you.”

“What’s wrong with the ones you have?” asked Mr. Winters.

“Nothing – except I’d prefer a slightly sexier look,” said Gretchen. “In fact we all would – we just took a vote.”

“Oh! So … how much would it cost?”

“Not much,” said Gretchen, optimistically. “I’m sure my dad will give the school a discount.”

“Well, it’s not really up to me,” said the coach. “I mean, it’s fine with me, but Mr. Castleman will have to approve the cost.”

“Oh.” Gretchen’s face fell. “Well, could you write a note to the effect that you approve the idea, and the design for the new uniforms, so that I can take it to Mr. Castleman?”

“I could,” said Mr. Winters, “except that I haven’t seen your proposed design, so how can I approve it?”

“How about if I describe it to you?” said Gretchen.

“Okay, shoot,” said the coach.

“Well, the top will be a gauzy, peasant-girl kind of crop-top. Very pretty, very feminine. The skirt will be similar to what we currently wear, but shorter.”

“How much shorter?” he asked warily.

“Oh, long enough to cover our butts,” said Gretchen, “but not much more.”

The coach shrugged. “Well, it sounds all right to me. But if you want to wear this uniform in class, you’ll have to get Mr. Castleman’s approval on that, too.”

He took out a pen and paper, and wrote down the following:

‘I, Fred Winters, hereby approve Gretchen Wendel’s design for a new cheerleader uniform. It is my opinion that her contribution to the school’s football and cheerleading culture cannot be underestimated, and this seems like a reasonable way to thank her for her efforts.’

Gretchen thanked him, and then skipped off to the principal’s office, hoping that he would still be there. Fortunately he was.

“Sir?” said Gretchen as she walked in. “I have a note here from coach Winters.”

“Oh?” said Mr. Castleman, looking up from his cluttered desk. He took the note and read through it. “You want to change the uniform?”

“Yes please sir!” said Gretchen.

“Well, I’m fine with that,” he said. “I know what you’ve done for the football team in the short time you’ve been a cheerleader, and I agree with coach Winters – this is a small price to pay. Now how much would this cost?”

“Not too much,” she replied. “I’m sure my dad will knock a little off the price, since it’s my own school.

The principal nodded. “Well, I’ll call him to discuss that, if you don’t mind.”

“Sure!” said Gretchen. “Oh, and there was one other thing.”

“What’s that?” asked Mr. Castleman.

“Can we wear the new uniforms in class?”

“I don’t see why not,” he said. “Why – are they going to be terribly racy?”

“The skirts will be shorter than before,” said Gretchen, “and the tops skimpier.”

“Hmm, well, as long as it doesn’t result in a discipline problem, I guess I’ll allow them,” said Mr. Castleman. “If I have complaints from the teachers, though, I’ll have to ban the uniforms from classrooms.”

“Okay – thank you sir!” said Gretchen. “My dad will be in touch.”

That evening Gretchen went over her ideas for the new uniform with Ruud, and Ruud called coach Winters at home. Then he called principal Castleman. “Well,” he said as he came off the line, “it seems you’ve persuaded them. Let’s make you a uniform!”

He was quite excited about the project, and by the end of the evening he had made three skirts, in the correct sizes for Gretchen, Tammy and Pam. Gretchen, having brushed her teeth and got ready for bed, wanted to try hers on straight away.

“Ooh, it’s so short!” she squealed in delight. “This is wonderful, Dad!”

The skirt was slightly longer in the back than in the front. It only just covered her buttocks, and barely covered her pussy at the front. The waistband was so low-rise that her new knickers peeped over the top. It was partially pleated around the sides and back, but the front was unpleated, and bore a four-inch slit right down the middle. When she tried sitting down, the slit enlarged into a wide V, making it absolutely impossible for her to cover her knickers while she was sitting.

“Hmm, that is quite revealing,” said Ruud. “Are you positive you want that slit in the front?”

“Definitely,” said Gretchen. “Dank u wel, Dad.”

“Niets te danken,” said Ruud. “But if you need me to sew up that slit, let me know.”

“I will,” Gretchen promised.

By Thursday evening, all the uniforms were finished, and Gretchen wore hers to school the following morning. She also took with her the other uniforms, along with an invoice, which she gave to the principal twenty minutes before her first class. He winced a little as he looked at it, but then he nodded in acquiescence.

“I hadn’t realized your new uniforms would be quite that … small,” he said, looking her up and down with a slightly troubled expression. “Or see-through. Your bra is visible, you realise.”

Gretchen smiled. “It’ll be a big hit with the boys in the bleachers,” she said.

“Of that I have no doubt,” he replied. “I worry though about whether anyone in your classes will remember anything they are taught today.”

“I’m sure they will,” said Gretchen with a smile. “I’ll tell them all that if they don’t want our uniforms to be banned from the classroom, they’d better pay good attention to the teacher.”

“That might work,” admitted Mr. Castleman. “And if it doesn’t, then regrettably I will indeed have to ban your uniforms from class.”

She still had some time before class, so she went to the locker room and met Tammy, Dorothy, Michaela, Sue and Stacy, who were waiting for her. “Holy cow!” said Stacy, as she stared at Gretchen’s barely-there outfit.

“That’s the kind of reaction I was hoping for,” said Gretchen with a giggle. “Just wait ‘til you try on yours!”

“Have you got them?” asked Sue.

Gretchen nodded, and handed the girls their uniforms. Soon they all matched, and Dorothy was tugging ineffectually at the hem of her skirt. “Mine’s too short!” she complained.

The Dutch girl frowned. “Did I give you the wrong one?” she asked. She could see Dorothy’s knickers even though the other girl was standing upright.

“I don’t know,” said Dorothy. “It fits on my hips fine – it’s just too short!”

Pam, Megan, Lynette and Bren now arrived. “Jesus!” exclaimed Lynette. “I’m not wearing one of those!”

“Neither am I!” said Bren.

“Aww come on Lynette,” said Gretchen. “You’ve got no fat to spare – you’ll look great in this! Certainly better than I do. Look at the love handles I’m showing!”

Lynette looked, and shook her head. “It’s not a question of how good I’ll look – I just don’t want to look like a slut!”

“Lynette, we discussed the design of the uniform – this shouldn’t be coming as much of a surprise. Just try it on and see what you think.”

Lynette sighed, and agreed to try her uniform on. When she fastened her skirt in place, she nodded. “This isn’t so bad.” Her skirt covered her buttocks and knickers with at least an inch to spare.

“Too right!” said Dorothy. “You’re the same size as me, right? Same waist, same hips – but you’re only five foot two! That’s why my skirt is too short – I’ve got yours!”

Gretchen immediately realized this was true – a full six inches separated the two girls in height, yet the willowy Dorothy actually had the same waist and hip measurements as the shorter girl. She had given Dorothy Lynette’s skirt, and vice versa.

“No no – this is definitely mine,” said Lynette firmly.

“Come on Lynette,” said Tammy. “If you swap with Dorothy, you’ll at least both be covering your undies. Poor Dorothy doesn’t want to be walking around with visible knickers all day.”

“Tough,” said Lynette. “Gretchen’s dad can make her another skirt – this is mine.”

Gretchen sighed. “Dorothy, since Lynette’s being so stubborn, would you be gracious enough to put up with that skirt, just for today? I’ll get my dad to make you another one this weekend.”

Dorothy pursed her lips. “All right,” she said. “Just for today.”

“What about me?” said Bren. “I’m still not going to wear one of those skirts.”

“Shut the fuck up, Bren,” said Tammy, glaring at her. “Just wear the damn skirt.”

Bren wore the skirt.

The uniforms were a huge hit with the boys in their classes, though the girls were less happy. Despite Gretchen’s best efforts, class disruption was at an all-time high, and very little work was done in any of their lessons. Part of the problem was of course the slit in the front of their skirts, which allowed any boy glancing a cheerleader’s way to see her knickers.

The teachers tried to maintain control, but with a resounding lack of success. By the end of each lesson, they had pretty much given up trying to impart any knowledge to their students.

Finally it was time for the game. Tweedvale was playing against Storway High, a match which Storway, as the previous season’s champions, fully expected to win. Tweedvale, two weeks ago, might have expected the same. But their victory the previous Friday had given them a new sense of confidence in themselves and in their coach, and they had put more practice hours in this week than they ever had before. Coach Winters had spent the week devising new stratagems and new plays, and he had taken the players’ training in new and interesting directions. This would be a match to remember, he was sure of it.

In the locker room, the cheerleaders practiced their chants. Then Tammy said, “Okay, let’s go get ‘em!”

“Wait a second,” said Gretchen. She pulled off her crop-top, unclasped her bra and took it off, then put her top back on. The other girls stared at her.

“Gretchen, we can see your boobs!” complained Bren.

The Dutch girl smiled. “I’m fine with that,” she said. “The rest of you can stay as you are – that’s fine – but I think it’ll be a nice effect to bounce around in this thing.” Her large chest filled her top out well, so that the gauzy material moulded itself to her breasts.

“You’ll hypnotize the audience,” said Tammy with a chuckle. “But, oh what the hell.” She removed her own bra, cunningly while her crop-top remained in place. Her breasts were smaller than Gretchen’s, but beautifully shaped, and her nipples were visible as faint pink circles.

“Well I’m not going to be outdone by you guys,” said Megan, and she too removed her bra.

“I’m game,” said Dorothy, taking off her D-cup bra.

“You’re all nuts!” said Lynette, shaking her head in disbelief.

The cheerleaders emerged on to the field to huge applause from the spectating students. Wolf whistles rent the air, and Mr. Castleman, after staring with his mouth open for a moment, put his head in his hands and groaned.

Cameras lined the front of the bleachers. Television cameras. The press had had a tip-off that this game might be worth recording, and as the astonished cameramen watched the girls trot out and stop in front of them, they hastily started filming so as not to miss a single newsworthy moment. So it was that Gretchen’s large breasts, bouncing every which way inside her skimpy top, were digitally immortalized several times over.

The game started, the cheerleaders cheered, and almost immediately the knickers became a problem. With so little rigidity in the material, high-kicks frequently resulted in one side or other slipping between the labia. By the time Tammy, Gretchen, Dorothy, Pam and Megan lay down for their first pelvis-grinding sequence, all five of them had one half of their pussy exposed. Half of the television cameras missed the first touchdown (by Storway), they were so intently focused on the cheerleaders’ misaligned knickers.

Clouds had been building all day, and now it began to rain. Large raindrops peppered the girls’ thin crop-tops, gradually soaking them and causing them to cling to the bras beneath (or, in four cases, the breasts beneath). Soon all ten bras were completely transparent. And when the foremost five girls next lay down and spread their legs wide, with their skirts around their hips, the rain quickly soaked their knickers and brought their shaved pussies into sharp focus for the benefit of the cameras and those boys close enough to see well. The cheers and wolf-whistles doubled in volume.

Not that anyone in the rain-drenched seats seemed to care by this point, but Storway were eight points ahead. All eyes were on the cheerleaders, and their enticingly wet clothing. At one point Gretchen, realizing that one side of the crotch of her knickers was cleaving her pussy, deftly flicked the other side into the same position, so that only a narrow bunched-up wad of wet material buried deep between her labia offered any protection from the long lenses of the television cameras.

In the third quarter, coach Winters pulled a few new tricks out of his sleeve, and Tweedvale managed to level the score. In the last minute of the final quarter, the home team clinched victory with an exceptional kick from Douglas Kimball. The crowd had by now picked up on the fact that the end of the game was nigh, and finally erupted with tumultuous applause as the kick sailed between the posts.

The cheerleaders tumbled and flipped and danced and whooped in celebration. Then they posed for a few pictures before Mr. Castleman ran up and suggested that they should probably hit the showers – NOW.

Gretchen and Tammy giggled to each other as they ran to their locker room. Behind them, the other girls were chatting about how fun it had been – even Bren had loosened up a little, though Lynette still wore a scowl as she kept her arms folded across her chest.

Outside the locker room, Gretchen stopped. “I think I’m going to go and shower with the boys,” she said. “They played a fantastic game and I’d like to reward them a bit.”

“Gretchen!” exclaimed Tammy, shocked. “You’re not going to have sex with them are you?”

Gretchen giggled. “Who knows?” And she skipped off to the boys’ locker room.

Their faces as she stripped off and walked naked into their showers almost made her laugh out loud. All conversation (and movement) stopped as she stepped under the diverging streams of watery warmth.

“What are you doing here?” asked Jack Loomis, covering his private parts with his hands.

“I thought I’d just shower with you guys,” said Gretchen. “Do you mind? Should I leave?”

“No!” “Hell no!” “Nonono.” “No I don’t mind!” “No, please stay!” “Heck no!”

Gretchen giggled. “Who wants to soap me up?”

She was not short of volunteers.

It was with considerable reluctance, though with a firm sense of duty, that principal Castleman called a faculty meeting that evening. Pizza was ordered, and the staff common room was filled with nearly all of the school’s teachers.

The principal cleared his throat. “I’ve called you here to discuss the situation with the cheerleaders,” he said, “and in particular the situation with Gretchen Wendel. I’m sure you all have thoughts on this matter.”

“The girl should be given a medal, Evan,” said coach Winters immediately. “We’re in the regional semifinals now, thanks to her efforts!”

“Yes, well, thank you Fred,” said Evan Castleman. “I feel you may be slightly biased though, on account of you being the football coach. Anyone else?”

“I’m inclined to agree with Fred,” said Sheila Musson, Gretchen’s biology teacher. “She got me enthusiastic about my subject again – I’m twice the teacher now that I was before she came into my classroom. Apparently her dad has a saying: ‘Passion never dies – you can always wake it up again’ – and I’ve found that to be very true.”

“Indeed,” said Darryl Petersen. “Another of her father’s sayings is: ‘The more you discover, the more exciting become the things you don’t yet know.’ That one piece of wisdom has inspired not only me, but practically every physics class I’ve taught since she shared it with me.”

The principal nodded. “Yes, I guess we have all benefited from her father’s wisdom. And from her own infectious charm and enthusiasm. But we can’t have her turning our cheerleaders into half-naked … showgirls! She really ought to be punished.”

“You’re not going to expel her, I hope?” said Mr. Thorpe. “I’ve not had a chance to teach her yet, but I hope to see her in my math class next year.”

“Certainly not,” said Evan. “I think we all recognize that she’s very good for our school. We just need to rein her in – curb her … outrageousness.”

“Well, she is Dutch, you know,” said Werner Schmidt, who had taught Gretchen German for one semester. “The Dutch just have a different attitude to nudity than Americans.”

“I’m well aware of that,” said Evan. “But we’re not in the Netherlands, we’re in America. And people will complain about that sort of thing. We can’t be seen to be letting her get away with this. The parents will sue the hell out of us.”

This sobered up even Gretchen’s most ardent supporters. “Perhaps we could suspend her?” suggested Sheila.

“For a short period,” added Mr. Thorpe.

“Say, a week?” ventured Dick Wishman.

“That will go on her academic record,” said Werner.

“Oh, like anyone in her future is going to care about that,” scoffed Millie Stewart, a history teacher.

“Still,” admitted Evan, “I wouldn’t want to compromise her future. Perhaps we could leave the suspension off her record.”

“I wouldn’t like to think of her missing out on her classes,” said Sheila. “Perhaps I’ll pop round to her house in the evenings and catch her up.”

“I will too,” said Reggie Clay, who taught Gretchen English.

“Hold on a minute,” said Mr. Thorpe suddenly. “Why are we picking on Gretchen? Tammy Woodstrode is the captain of the cheerleaders – surely if the squad in general misbehaves, she should be the one punished.”

“Oh, but we all know it was Gretchen who designed these new uniforms,” began Evan.

“Which you approved, did you not?” asked coach Winters pertinently.

Evan opened his mouth, then shut it. “I didn’t approve the lack of bras, or the transparency of the underwear!” he managed after a moment’s thought.

“Did you insist that a bra be worn? Did you insist on a certain style of underwear?” asked Fred.

The principal was at a loss. Could this all be his fault? “I guess … perhaps … I was a little too incautious in my approval of her proposed design,” he admitted.

“Then all you really need do,” said Reggie, “is formalize the design of the uniform, so as to avoid a repetition of today’s … unwanted exposures.”

“I suppose so,” said Evan with a sigh. “Very well – I shall work with Gretchen on Monday, and together we’ll come up with a uniform that works for us both. If parents complain, I guess I’ll just have to blame it on a wardrobe malfunction.”

“Yeah – good luck with that,” said Millie.

“Well what do you suggest?” asked Evan in exasperation. “None of you seems to think I should punish the cheerleaders.”

“You could send Gretchen round to apologise personally to any parents who complain,” suggested Sheila.

Evan chuckled, then frowned. Then he brightened. “My God, that’s brilliant!” he exclaimed. “If anyone can talk an irate parent out of a lawsuit, it’s Gretchen!” He smiled around at the assembled faculty. “Enjoy the rest of your pizzas, ladies and gentlemen. This meeting is adjourned.” And, whistling merrily, he left the room and headed up to his office.

He found Gretchen there, still wearing her cheerleader uniform (now dry).

“Hello sir!” said Gretchen.

“Hello Gretchen – what are you doing here?” asked the principal with a furrowed brow. “Why aren’t you at home?”

“I stayed late – I was working on something,” she said. “I was hoping to catch you though. I wonder if I could talk to you about this new dress code I’ve worked out…?”

THE END