Victoria's Victory



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TCM Teacher Created Materials

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CHAPTER ONE



Fumbled Beginnings

Ever since I was born, there was always something different about me.

For starters, I was one of those surprise babies like on those cheesy television shows.

"Doctor, I thought I had the flu!"

"No, Vicky, you're expecting a child."

The same doctor that delivered the

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news to my excited parents delivered me. I was born so early I was called a micro-preemie, and I wasn't expected to live. I did, but my mother didn't. I got a lot of things from my mother: my dimples, my curly hair, and my name. At six months old, I also got her best friend as my new mom. My dad married Rita, a single mother of triplet boys who are just a few months older than me. For six great years, we were one big happy family. Then, my dad was killed in a car accident, and Rita was back to being a single mom except now with a daughter.

Luckily, Rita is nothing like the evil stepmothers you read about in fairy tales. In many ways, Rita would treat me better than her rude, stinky boys. However, on Chore Days, she treated me like Cinderella.

"Victoria, you'll never finish sweeping if you keep daydreaming." While Blake, Jake, and Drake got to wrestle and watch sports on the

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weekends, Rita and I did all of the never-ending housework. "It's laundry time," Rita reminded me. "We have a lot to do this week since the boys' football season has started."

"By *we*," I asked Rita, already knowing the answer, "do you mean the boys, too?"

Rita glanced over at the triplet tornado just as Jake ripped a new hole in Drake's pants. A hole that she'd make me mend later.

"I'd sooner ask the cat," she laughed. When I didn't giggle like I usually did out of politeness, Rita stiffened up and reached for a laundry basket.

"Boys will be boys, Victoria," Rita said, offering me the basket, "and teamwork makes the dream work." How many times had I heard her say that? What about my dreams?

As I bent to pick up dirty clothes, an unwelcome breeze hit my backside. Rita forced me to mend the boys' pants but never let me wear them.

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"Ladies belong in dresses," she decreed. "No *ifs*, *ands*, or *buts* about it." Mine was the only 'but' I cared about, and I didn't want it on display.

"Rita, I need a wardrobe change," I said.

Surprisingly, she agreed. "I have something you'll love!" I was speechless as she left the room, but I should have known better.

She returned carrying a blindingly pink uniform. "Our favorite color for my favorite cheerleader!"

Pink is Rita's favorite color, and she was certain it was mine, too. (It's actually brown.) Rita often said that I came home from the hospital with two accessories: a feeding tube in my nose and a pink bow on my head.

"No one knew you were a girl without that bow," she recalled as I tried on the uniform.

My cheerleading uniform was the same Pepto-Bismol™ color as that bow, and I felt nauseated wearing it.

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CHAPTER TWO



Having a (Foot)Ball

The only good thing about cheerleading was football. I hated cheerleading and was terrible at it no matter how hard Rita pushed me—which was pretty hard.

"Teamwork makes the dream work, ladies!" said Rita.

Rita's favorite mantra worked on

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the rest of the squad, but not on me. Football, not cheer, was the team of my dreams!

My brain couldn't remember cheer routines, but memorizing football plays was a breeze. I became a stealth expert at pigskin (that's slang for *football*), and during practice, I watched my brothers play and dreamt of joining them.

"Ignore the boys, and focus on us girls, Victoria!" Rita said.

Rita coached cheerleading like she coordinated chores: relentlessly.

I knew that if she found out I wanted to play such an unladylike sport, she would be livid. So, it's easy to understand my panic when she snooped in my room one Saturday morning shortly after I had visited the library.

"Victoria, why are your brothers' library books in your room?" I looked up from my cereal and was horrified to see Rita holding my secret stash of football books.

"Not mine. You know I don't read!"

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