

I'm running hard, legs pumping, and heart beating. The rain slams down on my face, my side-bangs plastered to my cheek. My cleats tear through the wet, muddy earth, pushing me towards the goal. I can hear the wet squishes of pursuit as mud splatters my calves, and my offensive reflexes kick in. I zigzag and loop, confusing my pursuers. I hook a sharp left and swing my foot as hard as possible. Contact with the ball makes a satisfying thud and it races toward the net. The goalie dives, misses, and curses. As the ball hits the back of the net, droplets of water shake off and shimmer in the miniscule ray of sunlight peeking through the angry clouds.

I can see mouths open and close, and suddenly all the sound rushes in. Roaring hits my ears and even with the flat tone, it makes me smile. *We won!* I think ecstatically. Sure enough, a whistle blows - to my ears, it's another dull monotone. I jog back to the rest of the team and they pat me enthusiastically on the back.

"Coach?" asks Rebecca, "Do we have to be the Leopards? Can't we be something, like, cooler?" Coach Rick ignores her, everyone knows she loves the name, she just wants attention.

"A good game," states Coach Rick, "but a little bit too close for your last this season. Although, 10-9 is a fairly decent score, if Kirsten hadn't gotten that last goal, it would've been a tie." With that, more pats come to me, and I flush bright red. Coach walks away to shake hands with the other coach, and to thank the ref. As the rest of the team breaks apart, I walk slowly back to the car, and soon Coach joins me. We sit silently and wait for mom to come, and sure enough, she is just standing there, talking to Haylee's mom.

Fifteen minutes later, she gets in. "Good game sport!" says Coach (aka dad) jubilantly. "Thanks, Dad," is my winded reply. Mom speeds out of the parking lot, and soon hits the highway. The drumming rain lulls me to rest, and I can barely see the forest flashing by.



“Kirsten, what do you want to be?” Ms. Allander inquires. We are focusing on realistic goals today in psychology. My mom made me take this class, thinking I wanted to be a guidance counselor. Ms. Allander waits, but I remain silent, lips pursed. “Don’t be ashamed, everyone has a different idea of what they want to be.” She encourages. I wait a few more moments, and finally decide to tell the class. “I want to be, a-a...” I take a deep breath in and brace myself, “A singer.” There. I said it. As I expected, the class busts out into laughter, and I can’t disagree. As if tone-deaf Kirsten could be a singer. Hilarious.

The laughter doesn’t last very long, Ms. Allander shushes it quickly. “That is a perfectly reasonable goal,” she scolds. As she quickly changes the subject to peer mediation, I zone out and watch birds flit past the window.

I barely notice as she leaves the room, but then the bell rings - unless it’s Alexa tricking me again. It wouldn’t be the first time she used my tone deafness against me. I check the clock, which confirms it was the bell, and throw my books and folders into my bag. I grab my cleats from under the couch, and heave myself off the beanbag.

I don’t see Ms. Allander approach, so she scares the pee out of me when she questions, “I’m sure you know Mr. Elma, the choir teacher, correct?”

I look at both of them. “Yes, why?” I mumble.

“Well,” he says sheepishly, “Ms. Allander told me about your goal, and I volunteered to give you voice lessons.”

“Thanks, but you shouldn’t waste your time on me,” I mutter.

“Oh, I have too much time, actually. I was also hoping to get a new experience out of teaching a tone-deaf person.” I flush scarlet, and mumble an unrecognizable ok. I realize quickly they couldn’t have heard that, so I nod my head in agreement.

I rush out of the room and to the parking lot, where I fling myself onto my fiery red bike, and pedal for home. I bike slowly down the long sidewalk, take a left, a right, a right, a left, and turn left into my driveway.

I punch in the garage code, and walk through the door. Closing it behind me, I throw my backpack in the corner, slip off my shoes and socks, and trudge on the

fuzzy carpeting to the beanbag in our living room. I normally only have half an hour 'til soccer practice, but the season ended yesterday and, luckily, I have no homework! flip on the TV and zip through the channels, looking for a Pawn Stars or American Pickers. I find an American Pickers I haven't seen yet and slouch farther into the beanbag.

A few American Pickers and a Swamp People later, the door creaks and slams heavily on its hinges. "Afternoon, nerdlet!" the cheery voice bounces through the hallway, and I reply with faux grumpiness "Right back at you, sweat sock." My comeback is terrible and my brother, Henry, knows it. I hear a snigger, followed by his light footsteps flying up the stairs. I stand up with a sigh, and decide to pay attention to my pets, the only ones who don't care about my tone deafness.

First, I visit Ed, our albino corn snake. I lift off the top, stick my hand in, and wait. Slowly, Ed comes out of hiding and curls himself around my forearm. "Hey, buddy!" I say. Ed stares back at me with his orange-red eyes. He flicks his tongue at me, tasting the air. I reach into his food bag, and set him in his box. I set the frozen mouse in with him, and replace the lid. He coils onto his branch and gulps down the frozen mouse. I decide to pay attention to Bob, my African Grey. I walk up to his cage, and laugh in his face. His reply is a squawking laugh, and this time, I join in for real. After a few minutes of squawking and laughing, I head to the refrigerator for a microwave-dinner.

I decide to go to bed early so I trudge up the stairs, make a face at my brother, and pull on my pajamas. I brush my teeth, my hair, and flop onto my circular waterbed. I sigh, clap off the lights, and close my eyes, drifting into a dreamless sleep.

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School flies by quickly, and soon it's time for my singing lesson with Mr. Elma. *What fun!* I think sarcastically. I walk into the circular choir room, and already, a million questions flood into my head.

Mr. Elma answers my question before I can say it. ““Why is it circular?” you are probably thinking. I have a circular room, so everyone in this room is an equal. If no one is in the front, and no one is in the back, we are equals!”

“But, Mr. Elma, technically, if you are standing in the middle of the room, you are the focus point, and therefore you are not equal to everyone else.” I counter.

“You are right! You are a smart child! Now, let’s focus. I am going to sing a simple major scale. See if anything sounds more than a monotone.” I am not hopeful, and I’m not surprised when all he sings is a dull, buzzing, monotone.

“Anything?” he says,

“Nothing.” I reply.

“It was worth a shot.” He said. “Ok, I have an idea.” Again, I’m not hopeful, so I am doubly surprised when he leads me to the piano. “All of my 6th graders have to feel the vibrations in a piano, to get a feel of instrumental vibration. I am hoping you can match the piano’s vibrations to your throat’s.” He says this quickly and asks me to place my hand on my throat. I hum, and feel the vibration. He plays a note on the piano, and I feel a stronger, quicker vibration. I try to match the pitch, and I feel my hum quicken.

“Good job! This is amazing! You’re a little flat, but that is so cool! I am psyched!” he congratulates me.

Despite my un-hopefulness, I smile, and feel *hopeful!* We keep doing this on and off for hours on end, until I can hum *Mary Had A Little Lamb*, *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*, and *Baa Baa Black Sheep*. I am happy, Mr. Elma is happy, and I am ready to start *singing* physical words. But our time is up. Mr. Elma sends me off.

I go home, do my homework, play with Ed and Bob again. Mom and Dad are asleep before I finish my homework, so I turn off my light, and crash on my bed-still dressed. I am faintly aware of the drumming rain and the flashing lightning, but I’m asleep before it can affect me.

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It’s the same routine for the next few days, no singing, just humming. More homework, more humming, and more Ed and Bob until finally, I start to sing. It feels

great, and Mr. Elma says I'm perfectly in tune for the 8th grade choir song. I am thrilled! It shocks me when Mr. Elma says "I have been looking for a perfectly in-tune soloist for the 8th grade song, and I was wondering if you would like to be the soloist."

"Oh my god! This is so great!" I think. "Of course! I would love to!" I nearly shout. I am bursting with joy while I rush from the room. I am ecstatic and am shouting at my mom what happened when she pulls up in her Camaro and she says "Calm down, breathe, tell me *slowly* what happened." I take a few deep breaths and calmly tell her the story. "That's great honey! But what are you going to wear? Your white blouse and slacks?" she asks. I am afraid that if I have to talk, I will shout, so I just fervently nod my head, my pencil-straight, mouse-brown hair bobbing against my cheeks.

I arrive at home and race through my homework, completely forget to acknowledge Ed and Bob, and am high-strung the entire evening. I can barely sleep, and when I finally start to drift into dreamland, it's one in the morning. The last thought on my mind, is that the concert is in *four days!* With that thought, I doze off, and music dances and twirls its way through my dreams.

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The past three days have flown by pretty quickly, and I was hyped and high-strung the entire time. It is finally the day of the concert, so I am running through my solo, and not paying attention to my classes. When Mr. McAliss asks me about the continental U S of A, there is a long silence before I realize that he asked me a question, and that I need to answer. I give the correct answer, and force myself to pay attention for the rest of the day.

When 7:00 pm rolls around, I am onstage, third person from the left on the second riser, and I have large wings waiting backstage for me. Mr. Elma starts giving his speech about the cultural importance of the song, and what it means. It is a beautiful song in Italian about a little angel who saves a village from the devil. He finishes his

speech, and we start to sing. I have my hand on my throat, and my hand on Anna's throat (she was the only one willing to help me sing) and I am in tune. When the time comes for my solo, I put on my wings, and flit to the front of the stage. Anna is the devil, and we have a specially choreographed dance, where my hand is always on her throat or back (the only other place I get a vibration). Our dance goes well, and so does our intertwining solo.

As we take a bow, I can see tears in the audiences' eyes. Mr. Elma gives an unexpected speech at the end, about the little angel, who could sing in monotone. He invites me to the piano and gives the audience a demonstration of how my singing works. The audience claps, and I am glad when it's over. Mr. Elma's final words are this:

“Kirsten is an example of this: that which we think is impossible, is truly possible.”

THE END