

2 Brittani's Question

"Brittani Slocum. First question. The pageant has come under fire for perpetuating an unrealistic image of superthin girls as beautiful, and many people feel this is harmful to girls' self-esteem. What do you say to these critics? And what do you personally feel about these narrow standards of beauty?"

Brittani's smile remained Vaseline smooth, but her eyes

showed fear. "Um, what does *perpetuate* mean?"

"Keep something going."

"Keep what going?"

"No, *perpetuate* means to *keep something going*." Like *I am perpetuating your stupidity*, Adina thought.

"Oh. Um, well, I would say that being skinny and stuff is good because you can, like, fit into supercute jeans, unlike my friend Lisa? She totally ballooned up to a size six and none of her pants fit, and she had, like, three-hundred-dollar Sandeces¹⁰ jeans!"

In the line, several girls gasped.

"Seriously! And she got all depressed and stuff? And she wouldn't come out of her room or do cheerleading anymore because her uniform wasn't fitting right and her parents had

to do, like, a li'l benefit concert to raise the money to send her to fat camp, and when she came back from fat camp, she was super, super angry and started piercing things. She took a nail gun and nailed all her old Barbies to the wall in a cross pattern just like little Barbie Jesuses. It was so, so freaky. And we had, like, nothing in common anymore, and before she got fat we used to go shopping *every weekend* and watch all our favorite Corporation shows. It was super, super tragic, and so, like, I know the pain of this because I lost my best friend in the whole world over it and stuff, so, yeah, it's bad and, um, what was the question again?"

Adina stared, openmouthed. "I have no idea."

"Remember, don't show fear," Taylor called. Over the firewood, she struck two rocks together, trying to catch a spark. "Judges are like dogs: They'll smell it. If you don't know the answer, answer it like you do anyway."