



Here's a story for maturing kids who are just starting to show some interest in (yikes!) the opposite sex.—John McCormick

A Goth Christmas

By John, William, and Connor McCormick

Hillary was a “goth.” To some, goth is a style of dress. To others, it’s a lifestyle. Like her other goth friends, Hillary wore black clothing and white makeup every day. She had her ears,

nose, belly button, and tongue pierced. When her mother wasn't around, Hillary liked to wear black or crimson lipstick. Her hair was dyed raven black with purple highlights. She even had two tattoos. One on her shoulder, and the other—a butterfly—on her ankle.

Hillary listened to hard rock music. Her parents thought her music was bleak and depressing, but Hillary found that it reflected her mixed feelings about growing up. Hillary was a rebel. She never accepted rules just because someone else told her that's the way things are done.

Although Hillary hung out with a goth crowd, she liked a boy who was definitely not a goth. His name was Matt. Matt was a preppy. Being preppy is completely different from being goth. Matt was clean-cut and liked to wear polo shirts with khaki pants. He was president of his class and captain of his school's lacrosse team. During summertime, Matt enjoyed hanging around his parents' country club, swimming, and playing golf and tennis.

Although they were different, Hillary and Matt did have some things in common. Both were smart and caring, and worked hard in school. Most importantly, they liked each other. A lot.

Still, it wasn't always easy for two such dissimilar people to get along. Matt didn't like to hang out with Hillary's friends. He found them dull, lazy, and whiny. Hillary's friends didn't like Matt much either.

"Dump that guy," said Katrina, one of Hillary's best friends. "He's so law and order. Besides, he just doesn't, well . . ."

"Well, what?" asked Hillary.

"Fit in," said Katrina. Katrina's comment hurt Hillary's feelings.

Hillary's other friend, Ashley, chimed in. "You should dump him first before he dumps you. He'll probably find some blonde, blue-eyed preppy girl he likes better than you, and then you're history."

It wasn't much easier for Hillary with Matt's friends. When Matt took Hillary to his friends' parties, Hillary stood out like a sore thumb. Matt's friends, though polite, gave her a wide berth. Hillary often stayed in the corner by herself.

"You could make an effort to talk to people," said Matt after they left one party.

"It's not my fault your friends are such snobs," said Hillary.

"Why do you always have to be a rebel? Couldn't you try just once to fit in with my friends?" Matt sounded angry.

"I could say the same thing about you. Maybe you need to try to fit in with my friends."

One word led to another. Before long, Hillary and Matt got into a fight. "Maybe my friends are right," said Hillary. "We just aren't right for each other."

"For once tonight, I agree with you," said Matt. "Maybe it's time we broke up."

"Fine with me," said Hillary.

"Fine with me," said Matt.

The next evening, Hillary told her friends that she had broken up with Matt. Her friends couldn't have been happier.

"It's about time," said Katrina.

Ashley agreed. "Let's go celebrate. I know about a great party across town."

Everyone had a great time at the party. Except Hillary. At first, she tried to convince herself that she was glad to be rid of Matt. But the more she thought about him, the more she realized how much she missed him.

Hillary woke up late the next morning. It was the first Saturday of the Christmas season. The stores had decorated their windows with Christmas ornaments and lights. A light snow was falling. Hillary loved snow. She decided to take a walk to cheer herself up.

She strolled along Main Street, stopping every now and then to window-shop. When she came to a beauty salon, she paused and looked in the window. She saw her reflection in the mirror and absent mindedly fiddled with her hair. She glanced up and down the street, took a big breath, and walked into the salon.

"Hello," said the salon receptionist. "May I help you?"

"Yes. I would like a complete makeover."

The receptionist introduced Hillary to a stylist named Olga. Hillary told Olga how she wanted to look. "Are you sure about this?" asked Olga.

"I'm sure," said Hillary.

Olga got right to work. She washed Hillary's hair, then began to cut. Where Hillary once had spiky hair, Olga gave her a stylish, bouncy cut.

"And for color?" asked Olga.

“Blonde,” said Hillary. “No; wait. I want something closer to my natural hair color. Light brown. But with highlights.”

“You’ve got it,” said Olga.

Olga brought out her dyes and hair colors. While she worked, the salon’s manicurist removed the black nail polish from Hillary’s finger and toenails. Instead of black, she painted Hillary’s nails a soft pink.

By this time, Olga had finished coloring and setting Hillary’s hair. She held up a mirror for Hillary to see. “What do you think?”

Hillary stared for a long time into the mirror. The new hair style and color made her look softer. “Is that really me?” She smiled.

On the way home, Hillary couldn’t resist a stop at a clothing boutique to buy a new dress. No more black clothes. Even though it was winter, Hillary picked out a short, flowery dress. When she held it up in front of a mirror, she stuck her tongue out. “How do girls wear these things?”

As soon as Hillary got home, she picked up the phone. She paused a moment, then summoned her courage and dialed.

“Matt? It’s Hillary.”

“Hi Hillary. I was just thinking about you,” said Matt.

“And I was thinking about you. Can you come over? I have a surprise for you.”

Hillary put on her new dress, borrowed a pair of her mother's dress shoes, and combed her hair. She heard a knock at the door. Before opening it, she checked her appearance in the hallway mirror. "Here goes nothing," she said under her breath.

Hillary opened the door. Matt stood there holding a bouquet of flowers, dusted with snow.

"Oh, my gosh," said Matt. "You . . . you've changed." Matt couldn't believe how different—and beautiful—she looked.

Hillary was speechless.

"Well," said Matt, "what do you think?"

Hillary held her fingers to her lips, trying to suppress a laugh. "You've changed too."

What an understatement! Matt had dyed his hair black, with purple highlights, and was wearing a spiky haircut. He was dressed in black too, in a T-shirt, leather jacket, jeans, and high boots. He even wore an earring, but he admitted he couldn't muster the courage for one for his lip.

"You did this all for me?" asked Hillary, as tears filled her eyes.

Hillary wrapped her arms around Matt's neck and gave him a big kiss.

"Merry Christmas, Goth."

"Merry Christmas, Preppy."