

ALL IN

Grovehill
GIANTS

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CHAPTER ONE

Gathering Evidence

I'm a big, fat pig. I'm a big, fat pig, and I know it. I know it," I said to myself because all I could think about was food.

We had just won a big football game. Everybody was ecstatic on the field, and I was thinking about where I was going to go to eat. I was actually happy the game was over, not because it was a nail-biter or because my half-sister Vanessa's new boo, Emerson Prince, won the game with his kick, but because I had been holding my stomach in all game, and now I could let it out a little. Okay, I was letting it out a lot. Problem was, when I did that, my

tan-colored gut bulged out. At least I thought so. I really needed to find a safety pin because when Emerson's kick made it through the uprights, I did a herkie and popped the button on the back of my skirt. I had hoped the zipper would hold my skirt together, but as I walked around I could feel it sliding down. I knew I needed to get to my cheer bag to put on my jogging pants.

"Oh my gosh! We won the game!" Vanessa said with glee, running over to me.

She was jumping up and down. I wanted to be happy for her. I could only imagine all she'd been through—not living with her mom and younger half siblings because her mother couldn't take care of her, having to live with my family when she felt like an outsider because, though we shared the same dad, my father chose my mom over hers, and being hospitalized. She'd been so depressed that she made some bad choices that had almost ended her life.

I was jealous of all the attention she was getting from our folks, but she and I talked about it. We had a fresh start, and I didn't want to ruin it by not being happy for her. However, I couldn't

jump up and down with her because I might lose my drawers.

“What’s wrong? I know you, girl. You’re not excited,” Vanessa said, clearly salty, until she looked at the game’s star. “Is he not just the most handsome thing?”

Admittedly, Emerson was a cutie pie. She’d never known it, but I had a bad crush on him in the eighth grade. I thought we were perfect for each other. Both of us were mixed, Caucasian and African American. I wanted a good boy, and he was a good boy—the son of a preacher man.

When we got to high school, the crush melted like ice left out in the sun. Emerson wasn’t as cool anymore. He wasn’t hanging with the right crowd. I guess I was shallow, all into image and status, and Emerson didn’t have those things. Well, until now. I didn’t want him again or anything. I’d actually taken the initiative and told him he needed to make sure he didn’t lose Vanessa. Everyone in the school knew he wanted her, but when she finally gave him the time of day, he started tripping. But come to find out, he was the target of a gang, so he deserved a pass

for being preoccupied. It was actually admirable that he'd kept his distance from her so that Vanessa wouldn't get mixed up in the violence while the gang was trying to hurt him.

"I'm fine. I'm okay. Go enjoy him." I pushed her toward Emerson.

"Okay, okay. I just can't believe he won the game! He was the kicker! Isn't that crazy?"

"Yes, that's crazy. And he likes you."

She squeezed me real tight.

There were so many of us on the field. Everyone was slapping each other's hands. I got caught up in the emotions, and before I knew it, I was being twirled in the air.

"We won!" Stone Bush, the fine, perfectly tanned, sandy-brown-haired stud, said.

I didn't know it would feel so good to have his strong arms around me. But as heavy as I thought I was, he made me feel light and special. Stone was a hunk. He'd always been tall and lanky, but now he was filled out too. Word was that he was one of the best tight ends in the state. Since he was just a junior, colleges were hitting him hard, loving his almost six-foot-three, 230-pound frame. Of course I thought he

was handsome with his slick hair. He was cool like his dad, who was a rock star in one of the hottest bands in the land.

However, he said, “Dang, you’re more solid than you look.”

Then something inside me snapped, and I said, “I didn’t ask you to pick me up!”

“I was just teasing,” he said, looking worried that he’d offended me.

Not falling for his pitiful expression, I said, “Whatever.”

“Yeah, glad you know he’s not teasing,” said Jillian Grayson, a brash competition cheerleader who got on my nerves.

She was such a dream killer. She had a boyfriend, but he moved away. Now it was like she wanted every guy in our school to like her, even the ones who were already taken.

She leaned in and whispered, “You need to go fix your clothes. You’re about to lose your skirt.”

Horried, I was standing there in the middle of the field surrounded by people. Where could I turn? Where could I go? How could I get away from everyone? I stood there frozen, looking at Stone, who was laughing. He was talking to some

of his other teammates, so he probably wasn't laughing at me, but I felt like he was anyway.

"You need to go fix your clothes. Didn't you hear me?" Jillian said, even more loudly this time.

"Shhh!" I said, looking at her unbelievably. "I don't want everybody in the world to know!"

Frowning at me like I stunk, Jillian uttered, "You're getting too fat. You can't order a small-sized uniform at the beginning of the year and need an extra-large before the season is out."

"I am not that big."

She rolled her eyes, insinuating otherwise. "I've been noticing you at practice and stuff. You've always got something in your mouth. No need to look at guys like Stone."

I wanted to tell her she was lying. I wanted to go off on her and say it was none of her business. But the only thing I could do was look at her tiny little waist and say, "How do you stay so thin?"

With a smirk she bragged, "I eat everything I want."

Rolling my eyes, I knew what worked for her could not work for me. "Okay, well, not all of us can do that."

She leaned in closer. “You can if you do what I do. I purge.”

I didn’t understand what she meant. Then she took her finger and pointed it down her throat. I felt my eyes widen as I realized she meant she threw up her food. She hushed me before I could overreact.

“Your skirt looks hideous because your zipper is way down. I’ll just follow you to the bathroom so you can change.”

“I got to go to the sidelines and get my bag.”

“Okay, I’ll follow you over there.”

“You’ll stay close to me?” I asked.

“Sure,” she said.

I couldn’t believe Jillian was being so nice. I should’ve known something was up. We hadn’t gone two feet before we bumped into Stone. Jillian moved away, leaving my problem exposed. Stone was standing directly behind me. I quickly turned.

“Your skirt,” he said, truly rattling me.

I just grabbed the back of it and ran over to the fence. How could Jillian do that to me? Why would she allow me to be embarrassed?

I pulled up my pants under my skirt,

then slid the skirt over them to take it off. As I was changing, I looked back over and saw her flirting with Stone. No wonder she wanted to make me look like an idiot. She wanted him all to herself. And why would I think he wanted me when she was so much hotter and white? I'd never known Stone to claim a girlfriend, but of all the girls I'd seen him with, none had my makeup.

In addition to my skin color, I was a big, fat pig, and I knew it. Now that I knew something I could do about it, what was I going to do? I knew I couldn't keep doing the same things because I wanted different results. I had to lose a few pounds in my gut. I was desperate, and I wasn't opposed to taking drastic measures, particularly if they could help.

"I got to go talk to my mom and dad!" Vanessa said, happier than I'd ever seen her, almost an hour after the game. "But I need you to see if you can get your mom's car because I'd like you to go out with me tonight so I can hang out with Emerson."

"He drives," I said, wanting her to get that

she couldn't just use me to accomplish her agenda.

"I know he drives, but I want to hang out with you. A bunch of us are going to meet up over there."

"Over where?" I asked real tired, hungry, and sort of irritated.

"I don't know. A couple of them were saying we should go to Chuck E. Cheese's. It's innocent fun that I want to share with my sister. Is that all right?" Vanessa said in a baby-talk voice.

Being real sisters was something I was going to have to get used to. I wanted to be left to myself because I felt so un-cute. But Chuck E. Cheese's meant pizza, and that hooked me. I was in.

I went up to my mom and said, "Vanessa and I want to hang out. Can I get the car? Can you ride back to the house with Dad after you guys drop off Vanessa's mom and siblings at the hotel?"

Smiling at the fact that I wanted to bond with Vanessa, she replied, "Yeah, I can ride with him. Sure."

"You sure you won't be too squeezed in the

Infiniti with Vanessa's mom, her three siblings, Junior, you, and Dad?"

"We'll work it out. You girls go and enjoy yourself." She leaned in and said, "I wish I had a sister."

I didn't know how to respond to that. For so long, Vanessa had been a thorn in my side, and while she said she felt bad for all that, she'd still ruined my life these past couple of years, always making me feel bad that I was the one who had my parents together. And now I was just supposed to forget all that? Nevertheless, I thanked my mom, and then Vanessa and I headed out.

"So we got to get you a boyfriend," my sister said, looking over at me as we drove to get something to eat. There was a caravan of folks behind us.

"I don't need a boyfriend. I'm cool by myself."

"I don't know who you think believes that, but I don't," my sister said.

"Well, it took you a long time to accept that Emerson was into you. Why can't you respect the fact that I don't need to be pushed either?"

"I'm not trying to push you. I can just see that you really want it. That's all."