

EVAN JACOBS

# THE UNDERDOGS





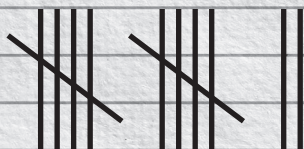


# GIRLS' TACKLE FOOTBALL STATS



HAS THE COUNTRY'S  
FIRST TACKLE FOOTBALL TEAM  
FOR 5TH & 6TH GRADE GIRLS

HOW MANY GIRLS IN THE SCHOOL WANT TO PLAY COED FOOTBALL



BOYS THINK GIRLS CAN'T PLAY BECAUSE ...

THEY WILL



&

GET



THINK AGAIN, BOYS!





JASMINE LOVES MAKING CORN SOUP





## CHAPTER 1

# LUNCH GAME

Jasmine Le's eyes narrowed. She was watching Mark Kline play football. It was lunchtime. Mark and some other guys were playing.

*A blond thirteen-year-old god. Wow!* she thought.

"Oh man!" Mark yelled. "You blew it."

He was looking at Mike Ramirez. Mike had missed a pass. The ball was on the ground. It had landed close to Jasmine.

Her BFFs were sitting on some bleachers behind her. Zoe Ebad and Tess Quade. Zoe was a tall and perfect blonde. “Do you ever get pimples? I’ve never seen one on your face. Unfair!” Tess once told her.

Tess’s hair was long and brown. She had smooth dark skin.

Jasmine was a hybrid of the two. Long black hair. Olive skin.

Everyone on the field was in eighth grade. They went to Meadow Springs Middle School.

“Shouldn’t you throw the ball back?” Zoe asked.

Jasmine wasn’t a tomboy. But there were only boys on her street. She had played kickball with them. Baseball, soccer, and even tackle football too. She grabbed the football. Then she threw it back.

“Oh my gosh!” Zoe said, laughing. “You did it. I can’t believe it.”

“Did you think she wouldn’t?” Tess asked.



The ball soared through the air. The boys watched it. Mark barely moved to catch it.

“Nice throw,” Mark said. “For a girl.”

“Nice throw, period,” Jasmine said.

Mark laughed. “All right. Let’s get in our formations,” he called. “We still have fifteen minutes till the bell rings.”

“Are you going to eat your lunch?” Zoe asked. She held up Jasmine’s sandwich. “It looks good.”

“Eat it,” Jasmine said. “I’m going to play football.”

Tess and Zoe looked at each other. “I don’t recall them asking you to play,” Tess said.

“So?” Jasmine smirked. She walked out onto the field. Jasmine planted herself between the two teams. The boys started yelling. She tuned it out. Mark stared at her. She didn’t even blink.

“What are you doing?” Mark asked.

“I want to play football,” Jasmine said. “I’m just as good as any of you.”

“But you’re a girl.” Mark frowned. “You can’t play football!”

“Why not? I play with boys a lot. I’ve even played tackle football.”

“You’re a girl!” Mark said again. “You will get hurt.”

“No, I won’t!”

The other boys yelled too. They told Jasmine to get off the field. Tess and Zoe ran over.

“Jasmine,” Zoe said. “Come on!”

“Ignore our friend,” Tess said to Mark. “She ate lunch in the cafeteria. Bad food makes you weird.”

“I’m feeling fine,” Jasmine said. “If boys can play football, we can too.”

“Mr. Ross,” the boys called.

Mr. Ross was in charge of school security. The man was short and stocky. He always wore tracksuits. Maybe he had played high school football. But he was out of shape now.

“What’s the problem here?” Mr. Ross asked.



“Jasmine thinks she can get in on this game. Play football with us,” Mark said.

“I *can* play football,” Jasmine said. “They just won’t let me.”

Mr. Ross stared at them. “Um. Now listen, Jasmine.” Mr. Ross stopped talking. He looked like he was thinking. “These boys are playing football. It’s not the game for you.”

“Why not?”

“Well. Um ... because you’re a girl.”

“That’s not a reason. Sex doesn’t matter. I can play,” Jasmine insisted.

“Get her off the field, Mr. Ross!” one player yelled.

“Look,” Mr. Ross said. “You must get off—”

“No!”

Silence.

Mr. Ross was known for being nice. But he did have a temper. “Leave this field, or go see the principal. It’s up to you.”

Jasmine held her ground. But Zoe stepped

in. “We were just leaving,” she said. Zoe grabbed Jasmine’s arm. “Enjoy your game,” she yelled to the boys.

Tess grabbed Jasmine’s other arm.

The girls led her off the field.



The rest of lunch passed in silence. Jasmine sat on the bleachers with Tess and Zoe. She watched the game. What would it be like if she were allowed to play?

“Stop being so mad,” Zoe said. “You want to play football? Since when?”

“Since those boys wouldn’t let me,” Jasmine said.

Jasmine fumed the rest of the day. No way would she take no for an answer. Girls could play football. They could if they wanted to play.

The friends met up after school. They always walked home together.

“Look,” Tess said. “That shirt is so cute.” Tess



showed the girls her phone. The cool shirt was on Instagram.

“Do you like it, Jazz?” Tess asked Jasmine.

Jasmine eyed the shirt. It was white. “I’m Not Hot” was written on it. “It’s cool,” Jasmine said.

But Jasmine kept thinking about football. Zoe and Tess talked. Jasmine thought about justice. Then something caught her eye. They were near Wagner Park.

There was Mark. Again. It was football practice. Looked like a Pop Warner team. She could see the team name. The Marauders.

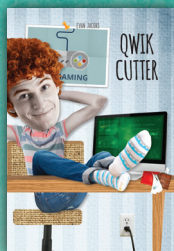
Their coach was tall. He was dressed like Mr. Ross.

Jasmine had a thought. “Wait! I’ve got an idea,” she said. She walked over to the field.

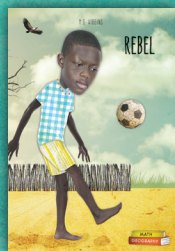
“Here we go again,” Zoe said, rolling her eyes.



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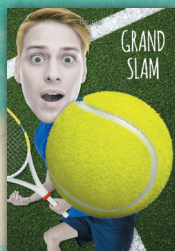
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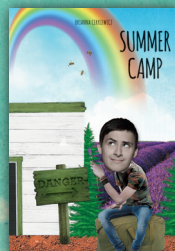
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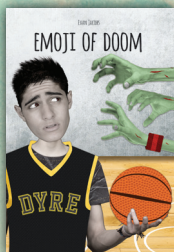
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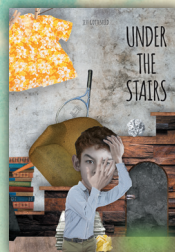
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# THE UNDERDOGS



FOOTBALL, CORN SOUP,  
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CANCER, ARTIFICIAL TURF,  
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GIRLS RULE! THAT'S WHAT JASMINE LE THINKS. AND GIRLS CAN DO ANYTHING BOYS CAN DO. BUT CAN THEY PLAY TACKLE FOOTBALL? HECK YES! JASMINE TAKES ON HER WHOLE TOWN TO PROVE THAT GIRLS CAN RUN, JUMP, AND CATCH A PIGSKIN JUST AS WELL AS BOYS.



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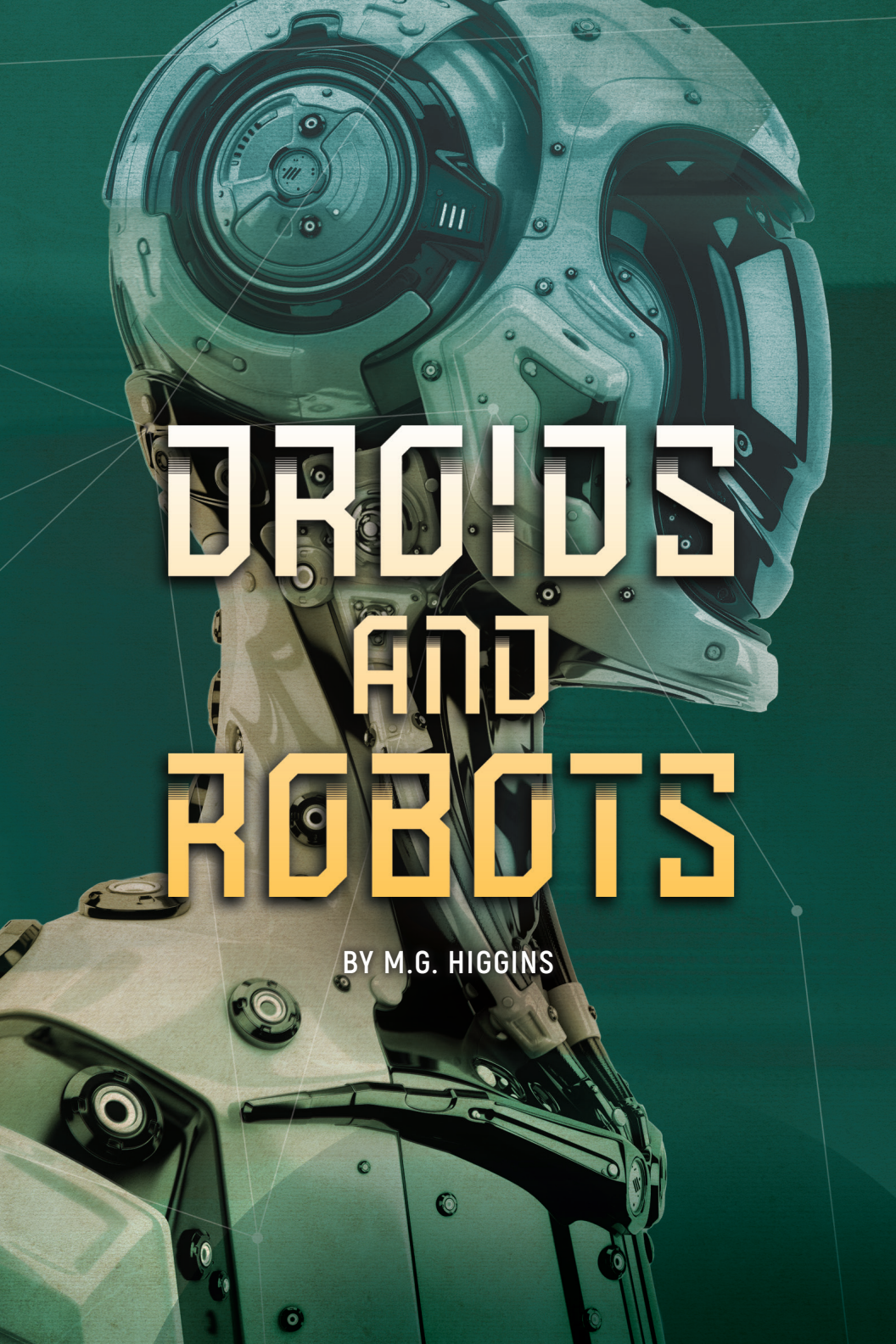


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# DRONDS AND ROBOTS

BY M.G. HIGGINS





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# Born in Fiction

A metal arm bends and twists. It welds a car door. A big cat races across a field. This is not like other cats, though. It is made of metal and wire. A woman greets people at a store. Her head is plastic.



These are all robots. Bots is another name. Bots are machines that do tasks on their own. They have been around for a long time. Today's robots are very high tech. Most are run by computers.



# From the Minds of Writers

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Androids are robots that have a human look. Droids is another name. These robots began in the minds of writers. Authors wrote about future worlds. The worlds were full of androids. They could think and feel. These droids acted like people. Most obeyed their owners. Others fought them. They rose up and fought back. Their goal was to take over.



Real robots are not like that. They don't look much like people. The world is full of them. Some build cars. Others help doctors. Troops use them in battle. Bots even do chores around the house. They can make life easier and safer.



**FAST FACT:** A play from the 1920s titled *R.U.R.* included machine beings. The writer called the beings robota. It was shortened to *robot*. That is where the word comes from.

# Fans and Critics

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It seems clear. Robots help us. They keep costs down. That means items are cheaper. This helps buyers. Even still, not everyone is a fan. Robots do jobs once held by people. Because of this, some people are out of work. These jobs may never come back. This is a big problem. There are no easy answers.

Tech keeps getting better. Robots get smarter. They can do more. This means other jobs will be lost. There is hope, though. The robot industry is big. It can create new jobs.



# History

Robots may seem new, but they are not.

**Automated** machines go back thousands of years. There was a Greek man. His name was Archytas. He made a bird out of wood. It flew on steam power. This was around 400 BC.

A clock is a kind of robot too. Springs and gears run on their own. They keep track of time. The first clocks were made in the 1300s.

It was the late 1700s. The **steam engine** came into use. Many tasks were automated after that. Machines wove cloth. Mills ground grain. These tools were helpful. Food and clothes could be made faster. This caused a big shift in jobs. Over time, more people worked in factories.



# DROIDS AND ROBOTS

Robots may seem new, but their roots trace back more than 2000 years. Today, we have more robots than ever before. They work in factories, cook our meals, and even perform surgery. As robots become more like humans, what new changes will they bring to our world?



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