

# SCREENMUND

**G**rovehill  
GIANTS



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## CHAPTER ONE

# Jammed Tight

Dang, girl! Your booty is tight!” this old man said to me as he touched my behind when I walked past him during halftime of our fourth football game of the season.

I started to wind up to slap him hard, but my sister Victoria was right behind me and said, “Just keep it moving. He’s probably drunk. Besides, you know your junk in the trunk is hard to ignore.” She laughed as she jogged off to the concession stand with Skylar, our close cheerleader girlfriend.

My sister was really getting on my nerves. Actually, she was my half sister. We had the same father but different mothers. I was completely African American, but her mother was white.

So she wasn't a true sister. She always hated how bold I was. That was her problem.

Honestly, I had my own insecurities to deal with. I didn't like the fact that she had light skin and good hair. I wasn't supposed to say she had good hair. My mom hated that I envied Victoria in some ways. Even though I didn't live with my mother, which was a whole other issue, there was no use in denying the truth. Victoria's wavy brown hair was easy to manage and could stand up to the rain; mine was kinky, and if there was even a hint of dew in the air like tonight, my hair got jacked.

Most people called me an angry black woman. Though they were joking, I *was* angry. And I didn't have any problem showing it.

My father was a former NBA player, and in his prime, he was hitting it with any woman who would give him time. The joker ended up with three babies born around the same time. Yep—Victoria, myself, and a brother we'd just found out about were all juniors in high school.

What angered me the most was that he had chosen one of those three women to marry, and it

wasn't my mom. My mom learned nothing from the incident. She had three other children by three different men, and she was barely making ends meet. When it became real tough for her to care for me, she sent me off to live with my dad after he offered to take me. Honestly, I felt she sent me away because she was mad that some of the men that she was bringing around were looking at me. Her mother got onto her about bringing men around, and she chose to let me go instead of changing her ways.

"Hey, Vanessa. When you gonna give me them digits? Who else you waiting for? You ain't all that," one of our quarterbacks, a senior named Chaz, said to me as I passed him on the way to the concession stand.

He was on the sidelines, but he should've been in the locker room with the rest of his team. Knowing he was upset at not playing, I answered, "When your uniform gets dirty and Coach doesn't have you out here fetching the Gatorade. How about that?" I didn't want to be rude to anybody, but I used sarcasm as a way of venting. He had come at me all wrong, so it was time I put him in his place.

“Oh, it’s like that? You and your stuck up tail.”

“Yeah, it’s like that. Truth hurts, huh?” I said as I walked away, leaving him on the sidelines to talk smack alone. He didn’t have what I wanted.

“You told him right,” a familiar voice said.

When I looked over my shoulder, I saw Emerson Prince, the pastor’s son. A tad annoyed, I asked, “You were listening to my conversation?”

“It’s hard not to hear you telling someone off with the way you scream. I’d hate to be on your bad side,” he said jokingly as he grabbed my hand.

I jerked it away.

“What do you want?”

“Dang, can a brother just talk to you?”

“Are you a brother?” I said to him, knowing his dad was white and his mom was African American.

“Oh, see you got jokes.”

“No, I’m serious.”

A couple of weeks ago my good friend and the cheer captain, Ariel Holiday, went to church with us for family and friends day. Ariel thought

that Emerson was into me. I didn't tell her that she was tripping, but I hinted at the fact that she was wrong. Maybe she was right.

No thanks. He was a skinny, pale little nerd. While he wasn't rude like most guys I was into, he wasn't my type at all. Even Emerson's sweetness aggravated me, but when I huffed and puffed a little, I could see he was dejected.

So I stopped, took a deep breath, and said, "What's up, Emerson? I know you don't like me or anything, right? We're like buddies. You're my brother in Christ and nothing else, right?"

"And if I were into you, would that be so bad? What's wrong with me?"

"Don't take this the wrong way, but you're just not my type."

"What? You like somebody like Chaz? Or an old man who likes to put his hands where you didn't invite them to go?" Emerson said, insinuating he'd even seen the fan touch my behind.

"Did it look like I wanted Chaz?" I said, completely irritated.

Heck, Emerson witnessed me going off on the fool. Why would he even say that? How did I not know Emerson had the hots for me?

In a more considerate tone, Emerson said, “I wasn’t trying to upset you. I just don’t understand why you won’t give me a chance. I’m a decent guy with a heart for you. I’m not a thug, and I want to treat you like a queen.”

“What can I say? I like black guys.”

“I am black.”

“No.”

“Yes,” he said. “I’m not going to have anybody telling me who I am.”

“Okay, fine. You’re not the kind of black that I’m looking for. How about that?”

“What are you talking about? Your sister is just like me.”

“Okay, well then, date my sister.”

“What else are you looking for?” he asked, unmoved from his focus.

Throwing my hands in the air, I said, “I like athletes.”

“I’m probably the best soccer player in this state,” he defended.

“Okay. I’m sorry. I like football and basketball players. Soccer, that’s a joke. I don’t live in Europe.”

“It’s a growing sport in the USA.”

“Okay, well, it’s not a sport I like. I’m sorry. You’re asking me why I’m not attracted to you, and I’m telling you, but you don’t want to hear it. You’re fussing with me about why I feel the way I do. You’re just not my type.”

“That’s fine,” he said as he huffed and puffed.

“There’re plenty of other girls here. Go after one of them.” Emerson’s eyes looked distraught, but I went on. I said, “I’m sorry. I want a guy who’s cool. A guy who can handle a football, the MVP of the game, one that will stand up for me. I don’t want a wimp, and I’m not trying to be funny, Emerson, but you look like Clark Kent. I want Superman. You know what I’m saying? Ugh, forget it.”

He looked dumbfounded. I couldn’t help him with that. So I walked away. Two hours later it was almost the end of the fourth quarter, and we were about to lose the game. Everybody was talking about the fact that we lost the best kicker around. I actually wondered how ER Stone was feeling at Lockwood High School. Yup, our white kicker was now going to an all-black high school. I was guessing he was having a hard time, because being the minority is never fun.



“We’re going to lose this game,” Ariel leaned in and said to me.

I rolled my eyes. I didn’t even want to talk to her. The hottest player on the team, Ryder Packer, liked her. How could a smart and fine African American guy like her blonde-headed behind? I didn’t want him, but the fact that he wanted her got under my skin.

“I know you’re not still mad. Ryder and I aren’t even seeing each other anymore, okay? You can have him.”

“Like I want your leftovers. Please.”

“Well, you don’t have to be upset because we’re not together, okay? I care about our friendship. He and I are just going to be friends. Plus, I’ve seen these guys at this private school ... oooh.”

“Our scrawny little kicker doesn’t think he’s going to make it fifty something yards out,” I said as we saw the kicker come onto the field.

“Of course he’s not,” Victoria said, entering the conversation. “He’s been missing the goal all night. We’re going to lose anyway, so he might as well try and kick the ball once more.”

Looking closer at the kicker, I noticed that he actually wasn’t so skinny. His jersey was

different than the rest of the team. I guess he'd torn his, and that was the only replacement. We all braced ourselves as we wanted to win, but we had little hope. Surprisingly, the ball went up in the air and actually had the length this time. It was close to the yellow goal post, but it made it on the inside. With those three points, we won ten to nine. No way. The kicker had saved the day.

"What's wrong with you?" Victoria said to me as we got into the car after the football game.

I just looked at her. I was older than her, but she was the one who was trusted to drive. It was killing me on the inside that I had to live in her shadow, but in all fairness, it really wasn't my home that I was living in. Yes, it was my dad's, but they weren't my family. My family was broken, and there really wasn't anything I could do about it but accept the crumbs the family I lived with gave me. My dad was an investment banker at Merrill Lynch. He put in long hours. I barely ever saw him, so whatever his wife Lisa—Victoria's mother—said were the rules, I had to obey.

Things weren't equally split in the house. I had to clean the kitchen on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays. Victoria was responsible for Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. Our little brother, Victor Jr., or Junior as we called him, had to do it on Sundays. However, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays Lisa usually did it. So I always had three days, while Victoria only had one and Junior had none. It just wasn't right.

Anytime something was missing or broken, Lisa called me out to explain what I knew. She was slick because she never accused me of doing anything, but why didn't she ask her own children? Thankfully, it was a four-bedroom house, so I didn't have to share with Victoria, but it was mighty funny that her bedroom had a bathroom. I had to use the one in the hall and share with our brother. I felt more like an unwanted guest than a part of the family. Now that it was time for us to drive, even though I had my license first, Victoria had the privilege.

"That was a great game, huh?" she said, just making conversation.

I hated that I didn't like her, because she really was a good person. She wasn't conniving.