

CHAPTER ONE

Jaris Spain, Kevin Walker, and Trevor Jenkins—three seniors from Tubman High School—were heading for their first class of the day. Suddenly, a gust of wind, called a “dust devil,” blew up. The weather people had warned of Santa Ana winds, and dust devils could be expected. The boys held on more tightly to their binders lest a page blow away. But just ahead of them a girl was walking in a T-shirt and white denim shorts. The wind took the stack of papers she was carrying. As she dove to retrieve them, her shorts split in the rear, giving a clear view of her red panties.

Hearing the boys laughing behind her, the girl turned and screamed. “What are

you laughin' at, you freakin' fools?" She scrambled to recover more papers, and the split in the back widened, revealing still more of the red panties.

Jaris hadn't meant to laugh. In fact, laughing like that was out of character for him. It just happened, and he tried not to laugh. Kevin Walker, however, didn't try to stop. He laughed freely as the pretty girl tried futilely to pull her T-shirt down to cover the gaping tear in her shorts.

Trevor hurried to pick up some of the girl's papers, and Jaris and Kevin joined in. In a few minutes, they had recovered them all, but the girl didn't seem grateful. "You idiots just can't stop laughin', can you?" she screamed. As Kevin handed her the papers the boys had recovered, she demanded, "Do you laugh at automobile accidents too?"

"Hey, babe, cool it," Kevin urged. "Maybe next time you should buy a bigger size. Whatever size you're wearing ain't

up to the job. Y'know what I mean?" He started laughing again.

"Oh, I could just rip that stupid smile off your face," the girl snarled. She was pretty, with an oval face and bright dark eyes that now crackled with hatred.

Trevor felt very sorry for the girl. He sympathized with how embarrassed she must be. Splitting your pants like that and revealing red lace panties was not a good thing, especially when teenaged boys were right behind you. Trevor was wearing a pullover sweater. On impulse, he yanked it off over his head. "Here," he said to the girl, holding it out to her. "Just tie the arms around your waist, and let the sweater hang down ... the back ... see? It'll cover ... everything ..."

The girl yanked the sweater from Trevor's hands as though he owed it to her. She tied the arms around her waist and stomped off, clutching her papers. She didn't even bother to thank Trevor.

“Now we can’t see her red panties anymore,” Kevin remarked. Another explosion of boyish laughter followed the girl like a taunt. “Darn you, Trev.”

Then, as the angry girl disappeared around a corner, Kevin spoke. “Yet another member of the mean girls club. Maybe we should introduce her to Jasmine Benson. They’d make a great team.”

“Who is she, I wonder?” Jaris asked. “I don’t remember seeing her around.”

Oliver Randall, another friend of the three seniors, came along just in time to hear Jaris’s question. “Her name’s Denique Giles,” he offered. “She’s just transferred from another school. I saw her filling out the papers in the office last week.”

“Boy, Oliver,” Kevin commented, “did you miss a show. It’s probably the best thing that’s gonna happen all day or maybe all week. A wind came up and blew her stuff away. Then when she dove to get it back, her shorts split. We all got to see her red panties.”

Oliver laughed too. "You guys get all the breaks," he said.

"Never gonna see that sweater again, Trevor," Kevin warned. "You poor, good-hearted sap. It was a nice sweater too."

Alonee Lennox, Oliver's girlfriend, came along then. "You guys all laughing your heads off. What's funny?"

The four boys briefly looked at one another. Only Kevin was nervy enough to explain. "Well, Alonee, we saw this witchy girl just ahead of us. Her big behind was too much for her britches, and they split. We all got to see her red panties, and when we laughed in appreciation, she had a hissy fit."

"Oh brother!" Alonee groaned. "And here I thought you guys were too grown-up for stuff like that."

"It really was sort of funny," Kevin chuckled. "She's waltzing along, and the wind steals her papers. She makes a move to get 'em, and the shorts rip. Then the split widened, and we got to see even more." Kevin was still grinning.

“You too, Jaris?” Alonee asked, a smile on her lips. “Are you just a nasty little boy at heart too?”

Jaris shrugged. “What can I say?” He spread his hands out, palms up. “I just started laughing. It happened like spontaneously. Boy, was she mad, though. She looked like she coulda killed us all.”

“Then this dummy Trevor pulls off his good sweater and gives it to that mean chick,” Kevin went on. “And she ties the arms around her waist, and we couldn’t see the show anymore. You know, Trev’s sweater was kinda maroon, so it matched the red panties.”

Jaris started laughing again. Alonee punched him, but not hard.

During lunch period that day, Denique went home to change her shorts. When she returned to the campus, she was wearing jeans. She looked around, searching for someone in particular. Denique was new on campus, but she knew Alonee Lennox from her English class. Alonee had helped get her up to speed in the reading assignments.

“Alonee! There you are!” Denique called out in relief.

“Hi,” Alonee said.

“What a day I’ve had,” Denique groaned. “This morning I stopped to pick up some papers that blew away in the wind, and my shorts split in the back. Just my luck a bunch of morons were behind me, and they started laughing like crazy. That’s what comes of buying clothes in real cheapie stores, but what else can I do?” Denique’s tone was bitter. “Anyway, there was this guy, he actually loaned me his pullover to cover my backside,” Denique went on. “The others were absolute freaks, but he was civilized enough to try to help me. I don’t know who he was. I didn’t get his name. I wonder if you might know.”

“Let’s see,” Alonee responded. Alonee recalled that Kevin had complained about Trevor ruining the red-panty show by loaning the girl his sweater. “That must have been Trevor Jenkins. He’s a sweet guy. I ... ran into those boys you were talking

about and they said Trevor loaned you his sweater.”

Denique held the rolled-up maroon sweater. “Where’s he now?”

“Trevor’s in science, Denique, and I’m going there right now,” Alonee answered. “I think you have it now too.”

Denique looked at her schedule. She had science after lunch today. “Yeah, some guy named Buckingham,” she noted. “I suppose he’s as bad as all the other teachers in this crummy school.”

“No, he’s actually pretty good,” Alonee objected. “You know, Denique, there are some good teachers here.”

The two girls walked together toward science. “I was supposed to go to a private academy,” Denique announced. “It’s a really good school. But then my life fell apart totally. We lived in a nice house miles from this lousy neighborhood. Me and my sister had our own bedrooms, and we were both enrolled in the academy. There was no problem paying the tuition.”

Denique grimaced. “Now we live in a dinky apartment, and Lindall and I have to share a room. And we’re both stuck in this freakin’ dump of a school.”

Denique recited the sad tale with bitterness in every word. Alonee couldn’t remember meeting anybody with so much anger in a long time.

“Well, I’ve *always* shared a room with my sisters,” Alonee responded. “There are four kids in our family. Our parents got one bedroom, my brother has one, and we three girls share the big bedroom. It’s not bad, though.”

“Well, I hate it,” Denique snarled. “Lindall, my sister, she’s a freshman here, and she’s into *all* my things. I never knew what a pest she was until I had to share a room with her. Nothing is off-limits to the little brat.”

They neared the science classroom. Marko Lane and his girlfriend, Jasmine Benson, were outside talking. Marko eyed the pretty newcomer until Jasmine elbowed