
★ ★ ★ CHAPTER 1 ★ ★ ★

The Fish and the Fiesta

The Ellis-Chan family heard the screams before they even entered Wild Acres Amusement Park. Once inside, all five of them tilted their heads back and looked up. Casey covered her ears. Annie broke into a grin. Mr. and Mrs. Ellis-Chan held hands. And Bobby wondered if anyone would notice if he ran away.

“Look!” Annie sounded awestruck. “It’s Monstroso!”

Mr. Ellis-Chan glanced down at Bobby. “What do you say, son? Do you want to try it this year?”

Bobby swallowed hard as the cars of the giant roller coaster chugged up the rickety wooden rails. When they got to the very top, it was as if the world stood still for a split second before the riders plunged down Monstroso’s death drop.

“Um, maybe later,” Bobby croaked.



MONSTROSO

ENTER

The whole town of Rancho Rosetta, California, turned out for the annual Labor Day Fiesta at Wild Acres. Bobby could hear a rock band playing in the distance as the riders exited Monstroso, laughing and giving each other high fives. Some people got right back in line to go on again. Bobby shook his head. The only ride worth going on over and over was the bumper cars. He also loved the Circus Train, but that was a little kid ride.

“Casey and I are going to KiddieLand,” Mrs. Ellis-Chan declared.

“KiddieLand! KiddieLand!” Casey echoed. Her crown fell off as she hopped up and down, waving her wand in the air. “They have a bouncy castle in KiddieLand!”

“I’ll keep an eye on Annie and Bobby,” Mr. Ellis-Chan assured his wife.

“I don’t need anyone to watch me,” Annie protested. “I’m in high school, remember? I’m practically an adult!” She paused and adjusted her football helmet. “Dad, can I have some money? I want to play some games.”

“Games!” Bobby jumped in. “That sounds like a good idea.” Games were much more appealing than possibly dying

on Monstroso. Plus, last year Bobby almost won a giraffe at the Spin-a-Wheel.

As Annie, Bobby, and their father made their way toward the games, people all around them froze with one arm out and then growled. Even though this happened all the time, Bobby didn't think he'd ever get used to it.

Mr. Ellis-Chan was a former linebacker with the Los Angeles Earthquakes pro football team. He had been nicknamed "The Freezer" for his ability to stop his opponents cold in their tracks. Bobby's dad would dig in his heels, hold one hand straight out in front of him, and make such a ferocious noise that a sports announcer once declared it "the growl heard 'round the world."

Mr. Ellis-Chan was now retired. But even though he had traded in his football jersey to become a stay-at-home dad, many of the residents of Rancho Rosetta were thrilled to have an ex-football star living among them.

"Look!" Annie cried as they neared the Football Throw. "I'm going to win that giant panda!"

Annie played quarterback on the Rancho Rosetta High School football team. When she won the job, the headline in the local newspaper read, "Freezer's Daughter Follows in His

Footsteps.” Mr. Ellis-Chan had been so proud that he burst into tears.

“Here, little lady.” The man in the Football Throw booth handed Annie a ball. He winked at Bobby and whispered, “Girls can’t throw.”

Bobby glanced at his sister, who was staring steely-eyed at the tire hanging from a rope on the ceiling. When Annie’s ball spiraled straight through the tire, the Football Throw man’s smug smile fell off his face.

As football after football sailed through the tire, the Football Throw man sank down onto a stool in the corner of the booth. At last, Annie stopped. She looked at her father and asked, “Dad, do you want to go next?”

The Football Throw man stared at the huge figure looming before him and stammered, “You’re . . . you’re . . . you’re The Freezer!”

Mr. Ellis-Chan smiled modestly, then turned to his son. “Bobby, do you want to give it a try before I go?”

Just as Bobby was trying to think up an excuse not to play, he heard a familiar voice calling, “Bobby! Bobby, over here!”