

# Chapter One

I'm not going to think about yesterday. No, I'm going to lie here under the covers and think about last week instead. Yesterday sucked big-time, but last week, well, last week was amazing.

One thing's for sure—I'm good. I don't mean good in a goody-goody way, like that girl Elizabeth who sits in the front row in English, the one who's always volunteering to erase the blackboard or run errands

for the teacher. When I say I'm good, I mean I'm bad. Real bad.

It must've been pure badness that gave me the idea to phone the *Pillow Talk* hotline and pretend I was Mr. Quincy. That and the fact that he gave me a detention the week before for not having my shirt tucked in. You'd figure a vice-principal would have better things to do than patrol the hallways looking for dress-code violations. If you ask me, any self-respecting guy who goes around with a clear plastic ruler and measures the platforms on girls' shoes is asking for trouble.

Which is what I gave him.

When I got the idea, it was like I was possessed. Nothing could've stopped me—not even if I'd known how royally pissed off my parents would be.

Everyone at school listens to *Pillow Talk*. It's a total hoot. These perverts phone in to discuss their sexual problems. You'd think they'd be shy to talk about stuff like that on the radio, but they're

not. Like this one nutbar phoned to say he likes to prance around naked right in front of his living room window. He wanted to know if Dr. Dingle—believe it or not, that's the name of the sex therapist who hosts the show—thought there was anything wrong with that. Then there was this headcase who phoned to discuss her urge to tie her boyfriend up before they fooled around. You gotta admit, sometimes people can be pretty whacked out. It makes me wonder about regular-looking people I see in the street or at the mall. I want to ask them, Are you one of those weirdoes or what?

I was pretty surprised when Dr. Dingle picked up the phone himself. I knew it was him because I would have recognized his voice anywhere. I have been listening to him twice a week since seventh grade. He's got one of those low, really serious voices and he says "uh-huh" and "I see" a lot. He also makes this clucking sound when people say how lousy they feel.

Which is exactly what he did with me. Only, it wasn't really me. It was me pretending to be Mr. Quincy. And I must have been convincing because Dr. Dingle fell for it—hook, line and sinker. “My name is Mr. Joseph Quincy,” is how I started. My voice was a bit shaky at first. Not because I was nervous or anything, but because I was trying not to laugh. But even the shakiness was good, because most of the people who phone in sound nervous, especially when they first start talking. “I’m the vice-principal of Hill Road High School and I have a terrible problem.” I even sniffled a little to make myself sound extra pathetic.

That’s when Dr. Dingle clucked. “And what is the nature of that problem?” he wanted to know.

“Well,” I said—and I took a deep breath so I wouldn’t crack up altogether—“I have an uncontrollable urge that involves girls’ shoes. When I measure the platforms on their shoes, which is part of my job—you see, girls at Hill Road are forbidden to wear platforms

more than two inches high—I’m unable to resist sniffing their shoes and feet. There’s more, but it’s extremely difficult for me to talk about on-air.”

“Uh-huh, I see,” and then Dr. Dingle took a short pause, as if he needed to gather his thoughts. “Well, the first thing you need to know, Joseph, is that foot fetishes are surprisingly common and relatively harmless,” Dr. Dingle said. “But for a man in your, uh, position, it might be wise if you put someone else in charge of measuring footwear at your school. You don’t mention a wife, Joseph, and I’m wondering whether you are married or have a girlfriend. Perhaps she might be willing to let you caress her feet. How does that sound, Joseph?”

That’s when I slammed down the phone. I had to—because I was about to crack up.

My biggest mistake was not thinking this whole thing through.

Everyone was whispering when I walked into homeroom on Monday. They were asking each