

#1 *New York Times* Bestselling Author

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... *Size 12 Is Not Fat* ...

LITTLE
BLACK
BOOK
SEE INSIDE

CHAPTER ONE

Every time I see you
I get a Sugar Rush
You're like candy
You give me a Sugar Rush
Don't tell me stay on my diet
You have simply got to try it
Sugar Rush

“Sugar Rush”

Performed by Heather Wells

Written by Valdez/Caputo

From the album Sugar Rush

Cartwright Records

“Um, hello. Is anyone out there?” The girl in the dressing room next to mine has a voice like a chipmunk. “Hello?”

Exactly like a chipmunk.

I hear a sales clerk come over, his key chain clinking musically. “Yes, ma’am? Can I help you?”

“Yeah.” The girl’s disembodied—but still chipmunklike—voice floats over the partition

between our cubicles. “Do you guys have these jeans in anything smaller than a size zero?”

I pause, one leg in and one leg out of the jeans I am squeezing myself into. Whoa. Is it just me, or was that really existential? Because what’s smaller than a size zero? Negative something, right?

Okay, so it’s been a while since sixth grade math. But I do remember there was this number line, with a zero in the middle, and—

“Because,” Less Than Zero/Chipmunk Voice is explaining to the sales clerk, “normally I’m a size two. But these zeros are completely baggy on me. Which is weird. I know I didn’t lose weight since the last time I came in here.”

Less Than Zero has a point, I realize as I pull up the jeans I’m trying on. I can’t remember the last time I could fit into a size 8. Well, okay, I can. But it’s not a period from my past that I particularly relish.

What gives? Normally I wear 12s . . . but I tried on the 12s, and I was swimming in them. Same with the 10s. Which is weird, because I haven’t exactly

been on any kind of diet lately—unless you count the Splenda I had in my latte at breakfast this morning. But I'm sure the bagel with cream cheese and bacon I had with it pretty much canceled out the Splenda.

And it's not exactly like I've been to the gym recently. Not that I don't exercise, of course. I just don't do it, you know, in the gym. Because you can burn just as many calories walking as you can running. So why run? I figured out a long time ago that a walk to Murray's Cheese Shop on Bleecker to see what kind of sandwich they have on special for lunch takes ten minutes.

And a walk from Murray's over to Betsey Johnson on Wooster to see what's on sale (love her stretch velvet!): another ten minutes.

And a walk from Betsey's over to Dean & DeLuca on Broadway for an after-lunch cappuccino and to see if they have those chocolate-covered orange peels I like so much: another ten minutes.

And so on, until before you know it, you've done a full sixty minutes of exercise. Who says it's hard

to comply with the government's new fitness recommendations? If I can do it, anyone can. But could all of that walking have caused me to drop two whole sizes since the last time I shopped for jeans? I know I've been cutting my daily fat intake by about half since I replaced the Hershey's Kisses in the candy jar on my desk with free condoms from the student health center. But still. "Well, ma'am," the sales clerk is saying to Less Than Zero. "These jeans are stretch fit. That means that you've got to try two sizes lower than your true size."

"What?" Less Than Zero sounds confused. I don't blame her. I feel the same way. It's like number lines all over again. "What I mean is," the sales clerk says, patiently, "if you normally wear a size four, in stretch jeans, you would wear a size zero."

"Why don't you just put the real sizes on them, then?" Less Than Zero—quite sensibly, I think—asks. "Like if a zero is a really a four, why don't you just label it a four?"

“It’s called vanity sizing,” the sales clerk says, dropping his voice.

“What sizing?” Less Than Zero asks, dropping her voice, too. At least, as much as a chipmunk can drop her voice.

“You know.” The sales clerk is whispering to Less Than Zero. But I can still hear him.

“The larger customers like it when they can fit into an eight. But they’re really a twelve, of course. See?”
Wait. What?

I fling open the door to my dressing room before I stop to think.

“I’m a size twelve,” I hear myself saying to the sales clerk. Who looks startled.

Understandably, I guess. But still. “What’s wrong with being a size twelve?”

“Nothing!” cries the sales clerk, looking panicky.

“Nothing at all. I just meant—”

“Are you saying size twelve is fat?” I ask him.

“No,” the sales clerk insists. “You misunderstood me. I meant—”

“Because size twelve is the size of the average

American woman,” I point out to him. I know this because I just read it in People magazine. “Are you saying that instead of being average, we’re all fat?” “No,” the sales clerk says. “No, that’s not what I meant at all. I—”

The door to the dressing room next to mine opens, and I see the owner of the chipmunk voice for the first time. She’s the same age as the kids I work with. She doesn’t just sound like a chipmunk, I realize. She kind of looks like one, too. You know. Cute. Perky. Small enough to fit in a normal-sized girl’s pocket.

“And what’s up with not even making her size?” I ask the sales clerk, jerking a thumb at Less Than Zero. “I mean, I’d rather be average than not even exist.”

Less Than Zero looks kind of taken aback. But then she goes, “Um. Yeah!” to the sales clerk.

The sales clerk swallows nervously. And audibly. You can tell he’s having a bad day. After work, he’ll probably go to some bar and be all “And then these women were just ON me about the vanity sizing . . .

. It was awful!”

To us, he just says, “I, um, think I’ll just go, um, check and see if we have those jeans you were interested in the, um, back.”

Then he scurries away.

I look at Less Than Zero. She looks at me. She is maybe twenty-two, and very blond. I too am blond—with a little help from Lady Clairol—but I left my early twenties several years ago.

Still, it is clear that, age and size differences aside, Less Than Zero and I share a common bond that can never be broken:

We’ve both been dicked over by vanity sizing.