



## Grinder Hill

**C. D. Shelton**

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(371pp)

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*Exploring themes of health, weight loss, and love, Grinder Hill is a romance that's heavy with opinions.*

C. D. Shelton's *Grinder Hill* follows a young man's weight-loss journey. He navigates self-acceptance and romance while questioning the impact of America's health habits.

William "Billy Bob" Bobbit is an overweight football player, defined by his ability to take down other players with his mass. After running into Tommy, an old friend who's lost a hundred pounds, Billy decides to follow Tommy's lead. He changes his lifestyle habits to include healthier eating and mountain biking.

As he slims down, he attracts the eye of his crush, Joyce, as well as the jealousy of her ex-boyfriend, Joe. Redefining himself as he learns about the science of health, Billy Bob challenges himself to take on increasingly difficult mountain-biking competitions.

The plot of *Grinder Hill* is straightforward and well paced. Billy's weight-loss journey is related without noticeable struggles; it is not overly personalized. A lack of emotional content makes it difficult to connect to Billy, and the perceived ease of his transformation comes off as inauthentic.

There is no internal conflict with Billy's weight loss; instead, conflict arises when Joyce's ex-boyfriend, Joe, attempts to sabotage Billy both athletically and academically. However, Joe's motivations are one dimensional, and the outcomes are predictable.

*Grinder Hill* reads like a weight-loss instruction manual rather than as novel. Everything Billy does, from going to weight-loss seminars to writing a report on obesity for class, is related alongside information and statistics about weight loss. Dialogue is overly scientific and unnatural. The use of parentheses, bold type, and bullet points during discussions upsets their flow.

While informative, the book runs long and is sometimes tedious. The narrative raises large questions, like about the roles that the government and the food industry plays in people's choices, but stops short of deep exploration. Some of the conclusions it reaches could be construed as judgemental; there is little room for nuance or conflicting ideas.

Billy Bob's character is the most developed, but all characterizations suffer from a lack of background and personality. Descriptions are flat and individuals' speech patterns are all very similar. Billy Bob's nervousness around his crush, Joyce, is portrayed well, but generally there is an absence of believable emotion in their relationship. Billy effectively evolves, but he remains hard to relate to.

General settings, including Billy's hometown and school, are not thoroughly described, though multiple mountain-biking sites are well depicted with natural imagery and descriptions of how it feels to ride them.

Exploring themes of health, weight loss, and love, *Grinder Hill* is a romance that's heavy with information and opinions

regarding obesity in America.

DELIA STANLEY (January 24, 2018)

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