

DISTRICT 13

# A SECOND SHOT



SADDLEBACK  
EDUCATIONAL PUBLISHING

# 1

“Yo. Little Bro! Move it or lose it!” Wallace McKnight yelled. He grabbed his backpack.

Wallace went out the door. His mom said to wait for Miles. But Wallace was in a rush. Today was a big day. The first day at a stupid new school. The first day to prove his basketball skills. Wallace couldn't be late.

Wallace walked down the street. He did not wait for Miles. Miles was twelve. He could walk by himself. He'd be fine.

"Wallace! Wall-*ace*!" His little brother's voice came from behind him.

Wallace stopped walking. "What?" Wallace said without looking.

"The bus stop is over here!" Miles said.

Wallace turned. Miles stood at the bus stop. He grinned at Wallace. He thought he was so smart.

Next to Miles was a girl. She had curly hair. She was the prettiest girl Wallace had ever seen.

"I was just takin' a walk," Wallace bluffed. "Waiting for you."

The girl cocked her hip. Then she yawned. She wasn't fooled.

Wallace walked over to Miles. He whispered, "Who's that?"

The girl said, "*That* is Tasha Young. Your next-door neighbor. I was at the block party last night. You didn't come. You woulda met me if you had. Instead you were off playin' basketball."

Wallace blushed. Then he shrugged. "Be easy, Tasha. Just working on my baller moves. I can be your star player. Give you a reason to go to the games."

"Uh-huh. Well you'd better watch out, new kid. There's already a star player at Northeast High. His name is Deron Ford."

“Don’t worry. It’s all gravy. I seen guys who think they be cool. My game will leave them cold. Cold as you are hot.”

Wallace leaned against the bus stop sign. His shoulder slid off. He fell on his butt. So much for being cool.

Miles laughed. “Smooth, bro!” he said.

Tasha giggled. She gave him a real smile. She was even prettier when she smiled. She helped him up. Wallace felt his heart race. Maybe he still had a chance.

She said, “Deron is this year’s LeBron. Maybe you are good. If you’re half as good as you say maybe you’ll make the team.”

“Then he’ll get to see you dance!”  
Miles said.

“Dance? What dance?” Wallace  
was lost.

“That’s right. I don’t need no  
man. I got my own reason to go to  
the games,” Tasha told him. “I’m  
captain of the dance team. Though I  
wouldn’t mind bringing Miles as my  
date.” She winked at Miles.

The bus pulled up. The door  
opened. Miles went up the steps.  
Tasha followed him.

“Are you coming?” she called to  
Wallace. “I’ll show you ’round school.  
Can’t do that if you’re here.”

The bus doors began to close.  
Wallace tripped over his feet  
hurrying to get on.

*BRRRRRRRRRRRING!*

The bell rang for lunch. Wallace walked out of class. He waved goodbye to some girls. They heard he was a basketball player. They were fighting over who got to sit by him. None were as pretty as Tasha.

Wallace turned the corner. He realized he was lost. Again. This was the third time today. At least no

one cared if he was late for lunch. Well, he cared. Boy, was he hungry. Breakfast was forever ago. His bag lunch sounded better than ever.

Wallace looked around. Was his locker on the right or left?

“Oof.” Wallace walked into a wall. He backed up. It wasn’t a wall. It was two huge guys.

He’d run into the biggest guys at school. What were their names? Jordan Walker and E-something. Emerson? Edward?

“Where do you think you’re going, man?” Jordan cracked his knuckles.

Wallace stood his ground. It was an accident. “Just looking for my locker, cos,” he said. “Didn’t mean trouble.”



“Don’t get fresh with me.”

Jordan’s face was mean. He frowned at Wallace. “You’re that new kid. Wallace? The one who’s been shooting off his mouth. ’Bout joining the basketball team?”

“So? Whatcha sayin’?” These guys weren’t even on the team.

“We’re friends of Deron. He’s the best ’round here. You catch that? He averages 30 points and six assists. Per game, fool. In his free time he’s got ESPN on the line. You feel me?”

“I feel you. Doesn’t mean I won’t try.” Wallace was angry. No one had ever talked to him this way. At his old school they loved him. He’d been a star. The star. He hadn’t averaged 30 points though. Maybe Deron was

good. Wallace still wasn't going to be bullied.

"Since you don't play, I'll tell you. Ball is a team sport," Wallace said, "I'll only make him better. So lay off, Emerson. Or whatever your name is."

"The name's Emmitt. Emmitt Dunn." Emmitt pushed him. Wallace hit the wall. Emmitt walked away. "Remember it, new kid."

Wallace was worried. This was nothing like his old school. He wasn't giving up basketball. Not for bullies. Not for anyone. He messed up at his old school. This was his last shot. He'd just have to watch his back.