

DISTRICT 13

**DOWN  
AND OUT**

 **SADDLEBACK**  
EDUCATIONAL PUBLISHING

# 1

Terrance looked at the clock. It was almost closing time. No one was in the corner store. He sighed. Couldn't he close early?

The door opened.

"Think fast, fool!" Someone threw something. Terrance caught it. It was a football.

Terrance turned and glared. It was Darius. Wasn't school enough?

This guy just wouldn't leave him alone.

“What ya want, Darius?” Terrance asked.

Darius grabbed ten candy bars. “Didn't think you'd catch that. I heard you were slow. Maybe it's just math.”

Terrance's face got hot. Mr. Fisher called on him in class today. Terrance couldn't answer the problem.

Terrance was failing math. Well, not yet. He would be soon. He hated that everyone knew. Especially Jasmine. She probably thought he was dumb.

Darius tossed some money on the counter. “Better check your change. Seein' as how you can't add. Later,

loser.” Darius took the football.  
He left.

Terrance swore. He counted the money. Darius hadn’t paid enough. What a jerk.

Someone said, “Hey, man! Don’t be usin’ fool words ’round your sisters, T.”

Terrance smiled. It was Miguel. He came in with Terrance’s twin sisters, Jacinta and Adrianna. They were eight years old. “Hey, Miguel. Hey, A. and J.”

The girls hugged Terrance. Then they ran around the shelves. They liked to play tag in the store. They never sat still.

“Don’t knock anything!” Terrance yelled.

“I saw Darius leaving,” Miguel said. “He was coming out of here. Dude bothering ya?”

“Naw, man. Guy’s a jerk. Nothing I can’t handle.” Terrance shrugged.

“Right. You let me know. You up for some soccer after this?” Miguel was a soccer star. Terrance wasn’t very good at soccer. He was better at football.

“How ’bout we toss the football around instead?” Terrance suggested.

“Okay, man. Call me when you’re done here.” Miguel headed out. The girls followed at a sprint.

Terrance watched them go. He saw something on the street. It was a white van. It was parked there

when Terrance started work. Some guys were around it. They watched the store.

Terrance closed the store. Those guys were just goffin'. He wouldn't worry.

## 2

Terrance stared at the problem. He didn't know the answer. Was it  $a + b$  or  $a \times b$ ?

He thought about throwing the football with Miguel last night. It was fun. He threw it half the block. Miguel was impressed. Terrance wished he could play football more.

Mr. Fisher called on him. "Want to try solving it, Wright?"

Terrance shook his head. He heard Darius whisper, “Wright? How ’bout wrong!”

The kids in the class laughed. Terrance stretched his legs. He ignored them. But he didn’t know the answer.

Behind him, Darius laughed. “Big and dumb. What a combo.”

Terrance clenched his fists. He hated being big. He hated Darius. “One more word, Darius, an’ I’m gonna bust your grill,” Terrance thought.

Darius said, “I bet Jasmine likes me ’cause I know how to add.”

Terrance stood up. He turned around. He was going to hit Darius this time.



Mr. Fisher got between the two boys. “Okay. That’s enough. No need to get overworked. It’s math. It’ll be here tomorrow.”

The bell rang. Everyone stood up. Terrance grabbed his bag. He couldn’t wait to get out of there.

“Not you, Terrance.” Terrance sat back down. He was in trouble.

“I know I’m just the football coach. I’ll only be here until Ms. Rooney gets back. But Terrance? I know you’re smarter than this.”

Terrance was confused. Man, Mr. Fisher was pushy. What did he want?

Mr. Fisher continued, “Terrance, I know you can do better. Maybe a tutor ...”

“What? Like for idiots?” Terrance stood up. “I’m not stupid.” He walked out of class.

Mr. Fisher said, “Terrance, wait. Just give it a try.” Terrance just kept walking.

Terrance sat next to Miguel at lunch. He told him what Mr. Fisher said.

“A tutor isn’t a bad idea,” Miguel said. Terrance ignored him. He opened his sack lunch.

“Don’t ya know who your tutor would be? Don’t you?” Miguel asked. He grinned.

“You?” Terrance said. Miguel got good grades. Better than Terrance. Maybe getting help from Miguel wouldn’t be too bad.

“No, fool. Jasmine,” Miguel said.  
“She’s the math tutor.

Terrance bit into his sandwich.  
Studying with Jasmine? He’d have  
an excuse. He could talk to her.

He’d give tutoring a shot.

# DISTRICT 13

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Terrance thought about football. He was sore from practice. That was good. Coach Fisher said his blocks were better. He'd get to play in the game! Coach was right about football. You've got to have something to work for. It makes you work at everything.

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