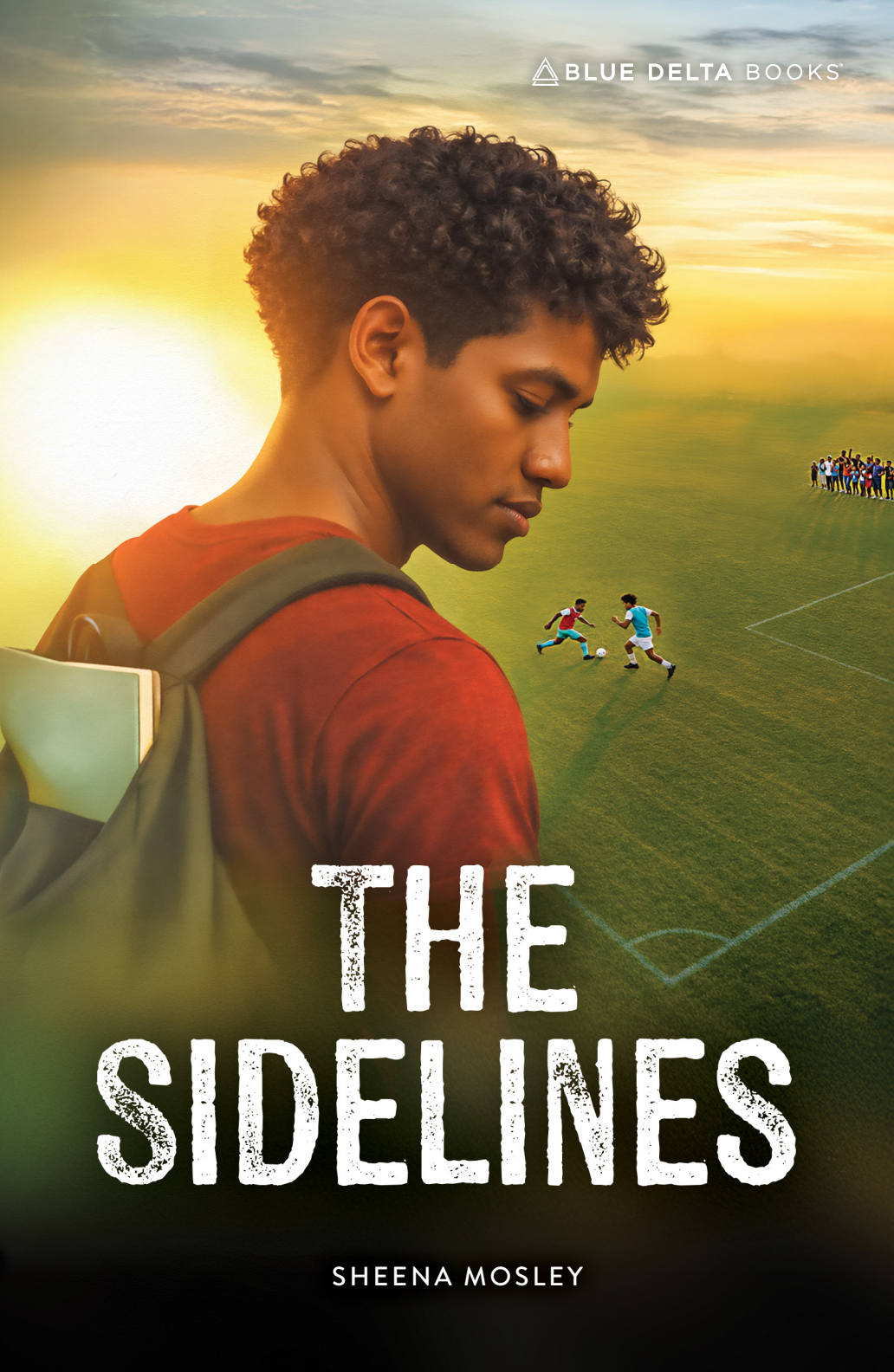


 BLUE DELTA BOOKS



# THE SIDELINES

SHEENA MOSLEY

## CHAPTER 1

# MISTAKE

It was a bright Saturday afternoon. Omari took a deep breath. *This was a mistake*, he thought. *I never should have asked for help.*

But he had.

Now here he was, standing in the middle of an empty soccer field. A breeze whipped through his curly brown hair.

Omari pulled out his phone. He checked the time. *Maybe Gus won't even show up.*

Then Omari would have to try another way.

But he refused to give up. This was too important. It was about family.

Omari's family reunion was one month away. His aunts, uncles, grandparents, and cousins were coming. They were flying in from around the world. There was always a big soccer game at the reunion. Omari usually sat out for the game. He would open his sketchpad. Then he would draw from the sidelines.

His cousin Len was a great player. Len bragged about it. He also teased Omari about his preferences. This included Omari's decision not to play.

Omari was used to feeling different. He was okay with that. But he was tired of sitting out. That was why the 16-year-old came up with a plan.

When Omari saw Gus jogging toward him, he frowned. At first, Omari had been brave. He

had asked the school's star soccer player to teach him the game. Omari didn't know why Gus had said yes. But he had. Today was the first day of practice. Gus showed up late and empty-handed. He wasn't even carrying a soccer ball.

Omari sighed. He stuffed his hands into the pockets of his hoodie. *I was right. This was a mistake.*



## CHAPTER 2

# WE

**G**us met Omari on the field. “Hey, man. Sorry for showing up late. It won’t happen again.”

Omari took one hand out of his pocket. He gave a small wave. “Hi. It’s okay. No big deal.”

Gus gazed around the field. Then he smiled. He’d spent most of his life on the turf. “Should we get started?” He looked back at Omari.

“With what, exactly?” Omari asked.

Gus raised an eyebrow. “Um, soccer? You asked if I would help you.”

Omari nodded. “Yes, I did. But where’s the ball?”

“Ah, now I see what you mean.” Gus grinned. “We don’t need a soccer ball. At least not for the first few days.”

Omari was confused. “What? Why?”

Gus put his hands on his hips. “Players run a lot during a game. They have to keep up that pace. So they stretch first. Then they run laps. That’s how training begins.”

Omari’s shoulders sank. He gazed over Gus’s shoulder. His sketchpad was sticking out of his backpack on the bench. Drawing from the sidelines didn’t sound so bad right now. But Omari shook his head. The teen focused back on Gus. “Okay. So I’m going to stretch. Then I’m going to run laps for a few days?”

“No,” Gus said. “*We* are going to stretch. Then *we* will run laps.”

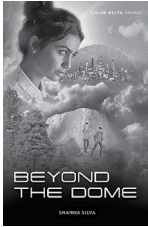
Hearing that made Omari feel better. He had figured he was doing this by himself. But he had asked someone to help him. It made sense that he and Gus were in this together now.

Omari nodded slowly. “Okay. Let’s get started.”

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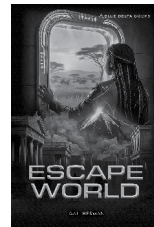
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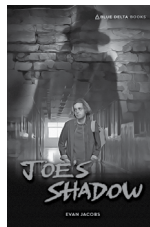
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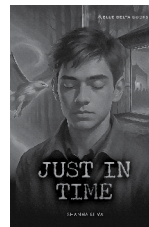
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ROMANCE

# THE SIDELINES

Always on the sidelines, Omari wants to improve his skills before his family's annual soccer game. But he needs help. Taking a bold step, Omari asks Gus, the school's star player, for guidance. As their friendship blossoms, Omari not only elevates his game, he also learns more about himself.



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