

DISTRICT 13

TAKING CONTROL



SADDLEBACK
EDUCATIONAL PUBLISHING

1

Marcel stopped in the street. He was the biggest of the three boys. He was also the kindest. Marcel stopped Akil too. “Wait now, Tre,” Marcel said. “Best looking girl? In the whole school?”

“You heard me,” Tre yelled. He was across the street now.

Akil touched Marcel’s arm. “Later,

big man,” he said. Then he jogged over to Tre.

“Later, Tre,” Akil said. But Tre ignored him.

“Deena is fine,” Tre said. “I know it.”

“She’s okay,” Akil said. “See you later.”

Akil ran to his building. He climbed the stairs. It was late in the fall. The windows were open. He heard Marcel and Tre arguing. They were out on the street.

Akil didn’t think Deena was fine. At all. He disliked her in fact. But Akil didn’t argue with Tre. Not anymore. It wasn’t worth it. Akil used to be small and shy. Tre took

care of him then. But things weren't like that now.

Akil entered his apartment. His mom was on the couch. "Hi, baby," she said.

"Hi, Ma," Akil said. He kissed her cheek. "Long day?"

"The usual," she replied. "You hungry?"

"Nah," Akil said. He walked to his room. He grabbed the notebook under his bed. He returned to the living room. "I ate. Did you? You want anything?"

"I'm fine, sugar," his mom said. "But I'd like to feed you once in a while."

"Ma, I eat."

"Yeah, right," she said. She smiled

at her skinny son. Then she fell asleep.

Akil sat with his notebook. The edges were worn. He got every penny out it.

He stared at a blank page. He didn't hate all girls. Just Deena. Deena was a big mouth. But Tre liked her. So she was always around. Akil couldn't control that. What could he control? "Not much," he said out loud.

2

Akil wanted to sleep. But it was too noisy. He rolled out of bed. Why do people move on Saturdays?

“Look who’s awake!” his mom said. She was pouring coffee.

“Who could sleep!” Akil said. He rubbed his eyes.

“Oh, baby! I forgot to tell you! Patrice and her mom are moving back. I just helped them with some

boxes. I gotta run. See you tonight.” She kissed Akil good-bye. She had to get on her tiptoes!

Akil didn't move a muscle. How could she forget to tell him? “I need to change,” Akil thought. He ran to his bedroom. He grabbed a T-shirt off the floor. It smelled okay. He put it on with his best jeans. He ran to the living room window. That window faced the street.

Akil saw a small moving van. Patrice's mom was next to it. Where was Patrice? Akil hadn't seen her in two years. She moved out with her mom. Akil never knew why. One thing he did know. He missed Patrice.

Patrice and Akil grew up together. They were the same age.

They even went to the same daycare! Patrice came over after school too. She ate dinner at Akil's a lot. Patrice's mom was always "out."

The building's front door swung open. A tall woman ran down the stairs. She did so two at time. "That can't be her," Akil thought. The woman walked to the van. Patrice's mom grabbed a tiny TV. She carried it to the building.

The woman put her hands on her hips. She looked up and down the street. Then she ran her hands over her hair. That's when Akil knew it was Patrice. She did that all the time. She always had her hair back. She always smoothed it out like that.

Akil turned from the window.

“Should I help them?” he thought. His mom would say yes. He turned back to the window. Patrice’s mom was back. They each grabbed a box. They locked up the van.