

DISTRICT 13

# THE HANDOFF



SADDLEBACK<sup>™</sup>  
EDUCATIONAL PUBLISHING

# 1

Xavier sat across from his younger brother Hugo. They were alone in the subway car. It was about 10 p.m.

“No pills,” Xavier said. “*Especially* from Emilio. And don’t drink.”

Hugo rolled his eyes. “Stop hatin’ on Emilio,” he said. “So he’s with Clara. Get over it.”

Xavier did not respond. He looked out the window. It was true. Emilio

was on his last nerve. Clara was only part of it. Emilio was getting cocky. He wasn't afraid of cops anymore. He was taking too many risks.

The subway slowed down. This was their stop.

“Grab your transfer,” Xavier said. “We gotta catch a bus.”

“You said Freeport.”

“Yeah, the other side of it,” Xavier said. “Let's move. We'll take the 23.”

Xavier stepped through the doors. Hugo looked on the floor. He picked up his muddy transfer. Then he followed his brother.

They hustled to the 23 stop. But they missed the bus. The 23 didn't run much at night. So they walked. They reached Emilio's an hour later.

“This way,” Xavier said. “Around back.”

“Where his mom at?” Hugo asked.

“Don’t matter. She doesn’t care what we do,” Xavier said.

Xavier led Hugo between two houses. They climbed stairs to a back deck. Xavier saw his best friend Angelo.

“What up, Angelo?” Xavier said.

Angelo held out his hand. “You miss the 23?”

“That bus is jacked,” Xavier said.

Angelo nodded. “Nice night though. Feels like spring. Nice lid, Hugo. Lookin’ pretty fly.”

“Even better than your brother!” Clara joked. She stepped onto the deck. She closed the sliding door.

Hugo blushed. “I’m going in,” he said. He walked behind Clara. Then reached for the door.

“Hey, Hugo,” Xavier called out.

Hugo was annoyed. “*What?*”

“Be good.”

## 2

Xavier watched Hugo go inside. Then he leaned on the deck railing. Angelo stared at him.

“See something you like?” Xavier asked.

“Surprised you brought him,” Angelo said. “That’s all.”

“Me too,” Clara added. She had a small pipe in her hand. She passed it to Xavier.

“*Please,*” Xavier snapped. “He’d come anyway. Kid wants to be here. At least I can watch him.”

“He shouldn’t want this,” Angelo said.

Xavier took a hit. “Yeah? What should he want, Angelo?”

“I don’t know. Baseball. Hell, track and field. *Something.*”

Xavier smiled. “You’re still fast, Angelo. Get back on the team. You got two years still.”

Angelo sat quietly. “I go back when you go back,” he said to Xavier.

Xavier took another hit. “My track career went up in smoke,” he said.

Inside, Hugo sat on the couch. He heard Emilio in the kitchen. He

felt in his pocket. Yep. He had a lighter. He tried to sit up straight. He wanted to look bigger. But the old couch was busted. He just sank lower.

“Hey! There he is!” Emilio yelled.

Hugo was all smiles. “What up, Emilio?” he said.

Emilio pulled out a fresh smoke. He put it up to his lips. Hugo stood quickly. He pulled out his lighter. He lit Emilio’s smoke.

“Xavier bring you?” Emilio asked.

“Yeah.”

Emilio looked surprised. He threw his arm around Hugo. He was pretty smashed. “Know what this party is for?” he slurred. “Me bangin’ Clara. One month today. Should I keep her? Another month?”

Hugo didn't say anything.

"Smart!" Emilio said. He squeezed Hugo even closer. "I love this kid! Carries a lighter for me. You believe that?" Then Emilio fell into the couch.

Raul came into the room. "Ready, Emilio?" he asked.

"For what?"

"A delivery," Raul said. He lit a smoke.

"Kush?"

"Yep. An ounce," Raul replied.

Emilio nodded. "Hugo, find your brother. We got business."

Hugo left the room. Emilio barked one more order. "And tell Clara to get in here. Haven't seen her all night."

“She’s on the deck,” Raul said. He passed Emilio a small silver flask. “With Xavier.”

Emilio unscrewed the top of the flask. He took a long pull. He yanked Raul’s cigarette from him. Then he stuck it in the flask.

“What the hell, Emilio?” Raul yelled. “Why you do that?”

“Because I can,” Emilio smirked.

Outside, Hugo found Xavier. He was still on the deck. So was Clara.

“Hey, Xavier, Emilio wants you. Says he has business. Um, Clara? You too.”

Clara looked at Xavier. She was sad. Xavier emptied her pipe. He stood up and passed it to her. “Thank