

ANNE SCHRAFF

URBAN
UNDERGROUND®

See No **EVIL**

 SADDLEBACK
EDUCATIONAL PUBLISHING

CHAPTER ONE

Jaris Spain's parents were talking in the living room about their fourteen-year-old daughter, Chelsea. Last year, she had been in eighth grade at Marian Anderson Middle School. At that time, she and two friends did a very foolish and dangerous thing. They accepted a ride from two guys in a Mercedes. One of the guys was a student at Tubman High School. They knew him, and the other guy was his brother. Chelsea, Athena Edson, and Keisha all climbed into the Mercedes for a ride around the block. The ride turned out to be a lot longer, sometimes at speeds of over one hundred miles an hour. Chelsea's parents were terrified

and angry. Chelsea had been biking, walking, and taking the bus wherever she needed to go. Now she was grounded. Now the job of taking her to and from school fell to her seventeen-year-old brother, Jaris. Now Chelsea had become a freshman at Harriet Tubman High School. She was earning good grades, and she had accepted her punishment with grace.

Lorenzo and Monica Spain were the parents of Jaris and Chelsea. And they were now considering lifting the restriction on Chelsea. They thought her responsible behavior had earned her her freedom. Chelsea was nearing her fifteenth birthday, and maybe it was time for her to be on her own again. Chelsea was spending time at Athena Edson's house along with another friend, Inessa Weaver.

“What do you think, Lorenzo?” Mom asked. “Chelsea has been doing really well in school, and she could ride her bike or even walk to Tubman with Inessa. There aren't any dangerous intersections between

here and there. Maybe it's time we give her more responsibility."

Pop wasn't so sure. "The little girl has been doing better, yeah," he granted. "But she still hangs with that loose cannon, Athena. Who knows what the two of them might dream up? Then those little punks sniffin' around. Maurice Moore, I can't stand him. Swaggering little pup. Heston Crawford is some better. I don't mind him so much. I don't know, Monie."

"Well, why don't we just try it?" Mom suggested. "Let Chelsea go to school on her own for a couple weeks, and see how it goes. Lorenzo, she hasn't complained or anything, but I know she feels real stifled. I mean, most of the freshman kids who live this close to Tubman get there on their own. I hate to have her start thinking that we don't trust her at all—and *never will.*"

"Yeah," Pop relented slowly. "You got a point there. It's like the old sayin', 'If I got the name, I might as well have the game.'"

“Exactly,” Mom responded, relieved that her husband was coming around. Lorenzo Spain was a very stubborn man, but Monica knew that no father loved his children more. Many other fathers were occasionally involved, but Lorenzo was a dad twenty-four-seven.

“You be the one who tells her, Lorenzo,” Mom suggested. “She adores you. And it’s really been hard on her knowing how she let you down so bad when she went riding with those dopeheads. When you go over to Athena’s house to pick her up tonight, you tell her that tomorrow she can go to Tubman on her own.”

“Okay, Monie,” Pop agreed. He saw his tall son, Jaris, now a senior at Tubman, standing nearby and listening. “What do you think of what we decided, Jaris? We doing the right thing?” Pop asked. “You know the little girl maybe better than we do. Is she ready for prime time?”

“Yeah, I think so,” Jaris replied. He wasn’t saying that only because he was

tired of driving Chelsea to and from school and the mall. He really noticed that Chelsea was getting more mature. He didn't think she'd be accepting rides from dopeheads anymore.

Jaris truly felt that Chelsea was ready for more freedom and that she wouldn't abuse it. She had to learn sometime to be responsible without someone standing at her side.

Pop climbed into his pickup truck at nine o'clock and made the short drive over to Athena Edson's house. He didn't like the Edsons. They gave Athena way too much freedom, he thought. They were both so wrapped up in their own jobs, they paid little attention to their daughter. Pop would have preferred Chelsea not being friends with Athena, but the girls were inseparable. Pop feared that Athena appealed to Chelsea's wild side, and that thought worried him.

When Pop rang the doorbell at the Edson house, he expected one of the parents to answer. Instead, Athena opened the

door. “Hi, Mr. Spain,” she said, swinging the door open. She was a beautiful girl. Too beautiful, Pop thought. She wore sparkly tight tops and skinny jeans. She looked more like a sixteen- or seventeen-year-old than what she was—a fourteen-year-old just out of middle school.

“Hi there, Athena,” Pop responded. “So who’s home, Mom or Dad?”

“Mom had to go to a faculty meeting at her high school, and Pop is seeing a client or something, I don’t know,” Athena answered lightheartedly.

“Beautiful!” Pop commented. Pop walked into the living room, where Chelsea and Inessa were downloading music. “Three little girls home all by themselves. Lissen up girls, just now I ring the doorbell. Right away Athena here, she flings open the door. Don’t even look through the peephole. No. Just flings open the door. I mighta been Jack the Ripper, and now here I am in the living room with you guys.”

Chelsea giggled. “Who’s Jack the Ripper, Pop?” she asked.

“He wasn’t a nice man,” Pop explained. “And don’t make a joke of it. It ain’t funny, little girl. Athena, don’t be doin’ airhead stunts like that. You just don’t open the door before you look through the peephole and see who it is, okay? Some bad people out there in the dark. You don’t just open the door and invite them in whoever they are.”

“You’re right, Mr. Spain,” Inessa agreed grimly. She was the most sensible of the trio. “I’ve told Athena the same thing. And for your information, Chelsea, Jack the Ripper was a horrible murderer who lived in London, England. He murdered a lot of girls.”

Chelsea stopped smiling. “I’m sorry, Pop,” she apologized.

Pop was fuming, already having second thoughts about lifting Chelsea’s restrictions. “I let you come over here,” he declared “and in two seconds of me being

here, I see stuff that's wrong and dangerous. Athena, stop with the music, okay? Who's pickin' you up, Inessa?"

"My mom will be here pretty soon," Inessa replied.

"Okay then, come on Chelsea, we're goin' home," Pop commanded. Chelsea jumped up and joined her father. She might have been fourteen going on fifteen, but to Lorenzo Spain she was about eleven years old. She was his little girl who was jumping rope only yesterday and who still had all her stuffed animals arranged on her bed.

After Chelsea was in the truck, Pop commented, "You ain't been riding your bike too much lately, little girl."

"No," Chelsea answered sadly, "I can't go anywhere, you know."

"Would you like to be riding your bike again, little girl?" Pop asked.

"Oh Pop!" Chelsea screamed, clasping her cheeks with her hands.

"Maybe you could bike to school again, you think?" Pop continued.

Chelsea leaned over and gave her father a big kiss on the cheek. “Oh Pop,” she cried, “you mean—”

“Your mom and I, we were talkin’,” Pop went on. “You been doin’ real good in school, Chelsea. You’re gettin’ good grades. Teachers all sayin’ good stuff about you. You been mindin’ your Ps and Qs, if you know what I mean. So you think you can handle bikin’ or walkin’ to school again when the weather is nice? When it’s rainin’ we’ll get you there.”

“Ohhh!” Chelsea cried, “That would be so wonderful. I love to ride my bike to school or walk with Inessa. Most of the time we walk, and it’s so fun to talk to my friends. Oh Pop, I can text my friends on the way to school and—”

“Remember now,” Pop insisted sternly, “no talkin’ on the phone or texting anybody while you’re on your bike. You gotta be watchin’ the road.”

“Yeah, right, Pop,” Chelsea agreed. “You mean I can start tomorrow?”