



Juicy Central

Kiki
Level-headed, trustworthy, sporty, shy

Doin' It

Book 8 | Ayshia Monroe

[CHAPTER]

1

Kiki Butler sat on the bottom bleacher of what passed for the South Central High School football stadium—really two sets of risers on either side of a weed-strewn field. Her classmates were sprawled out on seats behind her. Most had eyes glued to their cell phones. Nobody dared text—that was against school rules—but there was no rule against clock watching.

Kiki didn't have her cell out, since she was actually paying attention to her English teacher, Ms. Okoro. That didn't mean she couldn't sneak a peek at the

phone of the person sitting next to her, though.

“Ten thirty,” Kiki thought. “Twelve more minutes here. Then one more class. And then no more school. What a year. What an effing year.”

Kiki knew her classmates were craving the final bell that signaled sleeping in and partying off the hook. She herself wasn't much of a party girl—she much preferred the basketball court to doing shots and smoking herb—but she had a good summer ahead. There'd be plenty of time to hang with her boyfriend, Sean King. She'd be working at the day-care at Northeast Towers, the two-building apartment project where she lived with her older-by-two-minutes twin sister, Sherise, her mom, and her stepdad.

Since the weather was so great—sunny, calm, temp in the seventies—Ms. Okoro (everyone just called her Ms. O)

had brought the eleventh grade English class outside. Ms. O had been born and raised in Nigeria and wore a festive orange dress and a ton of bracelets in honor of this last day of school. She often spoke of how teachers in Africa were treated with reverence and how kids went to school dressed nicely.

“South Central High sure ain’t Africa,” Kiki thought. “Even if school be savage!”

Kiki took in her own cutoff jeans, Chicago Bulls jersey, and basketball kicks. Pretty tall at five foot eight, her hair was back in her usual braids after an experimental new 'do for prom. Her classmates were as casual as she was, except for Tia Ramirez, who sat a few rows back. Tia had come to the hood from Mexico a year or so ago. She wore a beige pants suit with her dark hair in a thick bun and glasses perched on her head.

Tia always dress like she goin' to court to testify.

“Christopher Okigbo was not just a poet,” Ms. Okoro spoke without notes. “He was a poet, and he was a revolutionary. He died in a rebellion against the Nigerian government in the late 1960s. Listen!”

I have fed out of the drum!
I have drunk out of the cymbal!
I have entered your bridal chamber;
and lo,
I am the sole witness to my
homecoming!

“Okigbo wrote that in a poem called ‘Distances,’” Ms. O said. “And the homecoming he is talking about is not high school homecoming. But I’ll spare you analysis and let you enjoy the words.” She stepped toward the bleachers, made

a big show of glancing at someone's phone—kids laughed at that—and then smiled.

“Just another hour and you're out for the summer. That gives me time to be a witness to something important. Kiki, Tia, and Nishell Saunders, could you join me?”

Kiki was taken by surprise. She looked back at Tia and then at Nishell. Nishell was super-curvy. She wore jeans and a black leotard shirt and had her camera around her neck. She'd been head photographer at yearbook club, and Tia had been manager. Kiki had worked on the yearbook too.

She and the girls approached Ms. O, and Kiki gazed out at their classmates. Jackson Beauford—Nishell's boyfriend—was elbowing the kid next to him. Behind Jackson was Carlos Howard, Sherise's boyfriend. He looked ready to fall asleep.

“See these three students?” Ms. O asked. “I learned in Africa that school is not here to teach you. It is here to give you the opportunity to learn! ‘I have fed out of the drum; I have drunk out of the cymbal.’ Okigbo is saying that in order to live and learn, one must act. Kiki, Tia, and Nishell worked hard on the yearbook. They lived and learned. They acted. They deserve recognition.”

Ms. O spread her arms wide. “Recognize!” she ordered.

To Kiki’s shock, her classmates applauded. Kiki saw Nishell grin wildly. Tia was nodding slightly, as if she felt she deserved the props. Kiki herself felt great.

No one ever recognizes me.

A few moments later, though, Kiki wasn’t feeling so good.

As the applause died, someone stepped out around the bleachers. It was

Miss Prince, the secretary in the guidance office. She was so old Kiki figured she'd worked there since Abraham Lincoln was president. She reported to Mr. Crandall, the head guidance counselor, whom everyone hated.

For good reason. Crandall be an ass.

Miss Prince cleared her throat loudly and then spoke. "Ms. Okoro, pardon the interruption. Mr. Crandall wants to see two of your students immediately. Shemeka—Kiki—Butler and Tia Ramirez, please follow me."

It was never good to be called into Crandall's office. It could mean only one thing. You were in trouble.

"Whatchu think this be about?" she asked Tia.

The girl from Mexico shrugged. "I have no idea."

Kiki noticed that Tia's Mexican accent was practically gone. She sounded

almost like she'd spoken English her whole life.

"He gonna mess us up for something," Kiki predicted glumly.

As they waited for Crandall, Kiki stared at the bad artwork on his walls. Crandall loved bird paintings.

What kind of bird would Crandall be? A pigeon? A wren? Nah. Prolly a vulture.

The door opened. Crandall entered. He was close to retirement age, with graying hair and rheumy blue eyes. He also had the worst taste in clothes of any human on the planet. Today he wore a black suit with an orange tie.

Crandall wasn't alone. With him was the school principal, Mr. Olson, also in a bad suit and tie. Olson had done a poor job at school after school before the board of education dumped him at SCHS. He mostly hid in his office.

He don't dress no better than Crandall. I ain't never talked to him. Well, I'm gonna hear from him now.

The tension was too great for Kiki to shut up any longer.

“What’d we do?” Kiki blurted.

The two adults were taken aback, and then laughed.

“I don’t know why you assume it’s bad news,” Mr. Olson said.

“In *this* office?” Kiki scowled. “It’s always bad news.”

She looked at Tia. The other girl sat impassively, hands folded, legs crossed.

Mr. Olson smiled. He had bad teeth. “Not today. Why don’t you explain, Mr. Crandall?”

“Gladly,” Crandall’s voice was friendly. Kiki figured he was probably trying to impress his boss.

“Kiki, Tia, I’ve seen your final grades. You two are tied for the highest grade