

DISTRICT 13

# LINE UP

“Daniel! Dan-*iel*. Wait for me!”

Daniel Stubbs ignored the voice. It was a bad day at Northeast High School. He didn’t need anyone bothering him.

“Can’t you wait? Mom said you should.” It was his little sister Kiara. Daniel shrugged. His mom said something before school. He didn’t listen.

“Anyway,” his sister continued, “Jamal’s with me. I thought you’d wait for *him*.”

“What up, brother?” Jamal Harris was Daniel’s best friend. They met in the first grade. Jamal gave his usual fist bump greeting.

“Nothing much. Surprised you’re still talking to me. I’m probably a grade-A nerd now.” Daniel kicked a pebble.

“What! Naw man. You showed up that windbag Mr. Murphy good in class today. Gave him a what for on his fact checking. Nobody’s calling you a nerd. Hero, more like.”

“Yeah. I heard about that! Mr. Murphy’s nas-ty,” Kiara told the two boys. Daniel shook his head. They

talked about it in the middle school? Daniel sighed. He had a NERD sign on his forehead now.

“You’re on top of school. You ready to take on sports? Join the track team with me?” Jamal asked.

“Dunno man.” Daniel shifted. “After today? School stuff isn’t for me. You know? I’m not like you.”

Jamal laughed. “You showed up Mr. Murphy today. You can show me up in sprinting.”

“Who’s gonna show Jamal up? Can I be there when it happens?” A voice came from behind them.

Daniel saw long brown legs and a bright smile. It was Simone Wallace. She had snuck up on their group. Daniel’s face got hot.

Simone was the prettiest girl Daniel knew. She was also the fastest. She won state in track last year. Her black hair was shiny. Even her skin glowed. He'd never said a word to her. She was a friend of Jamal's. They ran track together.

"Uh ..." Daniel couldn't respond. Simone had heard about him correcting Mr. Murphy. She probably thought he was a nerd.

Jamal jumped in to save Daniel. "Just sayin' he should give track a chance. You tell him, Simone."

"You should come! I heard you laid it down on Mr. Murphy today. Good work! Try laying down track. I'm sure Jamal will be eating your dust." Simone smiled again.

Maybe track wouldn't be so bad. He mumbled, "I guess I could. Tomorrow. Give it a try."

"Great. Can't wait to see you. Gotta run!" Simone jogged off. Daniel watched in a daze.

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Daniel waited. Jamal would tease him for sure. Jamal only said, “You’ll come? You owe me a race then.”

Daniel stared. Jamal gave him grief before. Two weeks ago Daniel said Simone was fine. As fine as Jamal’s girl, Destiny. Jamal didn’t let Daniel forget then. Now, not even a peep.

“Yeah. I’ll be there,” Daniel said.

“Catch ya on the flip side.”

Jamal ran off. He left Daniel with his sister.

Kiara ran her mouth. “Daniel’s got a crush!”

“Drop it, Kiara.” Daniel was angry.

“Simone is too pretty! You see her long wavy hair? You’re ugly!” Kiara tossed her braids. She pretended to be Simone.

“Kiara I mean it!” Daniel opened their front door.

Kiara sang, “Daniel and Si-mone sit-ting in a tree. K-I-S-S.”

Daniel banged the door. “Would you SHUT UP!” It was louder than he meant.

Kiara burst into tears.



“No way to talk, boy!” said Daniel’s Grandpa. He was in the kitchen. Oh no. Daniel was in trouble. Grandpa Stubbs would walk out. Daniel would get a smack upside the head.

His ma came out of the kitchen instead.

“Daniel! Don’t yell at your sister!” His ma stormed. She wore her nurse’s uniform. She had a double shift tonight.

“She was nagging me, Ma.” She looked tired. She didn’t need this.

“I did NOT raise my son to yell. Apologize.”

Daniel didn’t say anything.

“Fine. Leave. Come back when

you can.” This was too much. Kiara had asked for it.

“FINE,” Daniel yelled. He ran out the door. He sprinted down the street. He didn’t hear the door slam.

Daniel ran. Then he got out of breath. He walked. He slowed down by the basketball courts. He saw people he knew. Someone called his name.

“Yo Dan! My man!” It was Tyrese.

“What’s up Tyrese?” Daniel said slowly. Tyrese didn’t talk to Daniel. Not anymore.

Tyrese was like a brother to Daniel. He was older. He was cool too. Daniel’s first running shoes were from Tyrese.

Tyrese dropped out two years ago.

He said to “hang with his boys.” Now they caused problems. Sometimes the cops came. Tyrese often ignored Daniel. It made Daniel mad.

Tyrese waved his hand. The others on the court saw. They came closer. Daniel got nervous.

“I heard Jamal ditched you. You’ll be needing a new crew,” Tyrese said. He bounced his basketball.

Daniel shifted. Daniel didn’t know the new Tyrese. This Tyrese was different. Dangerous.

“Want to hang with us?” Tyrese’s friends stood with him.

“I dunno.” Daniel’s brain raced. Did he want to hang?

Tyrese’s ball stopped. “I give an invitation. You don’t know?” Daniel

saw Tyrese's teeth. He was angry.  
The guys moved around Daniel.

“I ... I ... I'll think about it. I gotta get home.” Daniel turned around. He ran as fast as he could. He heard Tyrese's laughter. He wasn't happy. He was angry.