



District 13

180 DEGREES

G. HERMAN



CHAPTER 1

Ms. Green looked at her students. “Okay, everyone. What is the purpose of a catalyst in a chemical reaction?”

Jordy stared at his desk. *Do not make eye contact*, he told himself. *I don’t want to be called on. The bell is about to ring.*

Ms. Green nodded at a girl seated in front of Jordy. “Yes, Mia?”

Leaning down, Jordy took hold of his backpack. The bell sounded. He took off while Mia was still talking.

Ms. Green smiled at Jordy. “Goodbye, Mr. Duncan.”

Jordy knew he was lucky to get away. Ms. Green was cool.

He hurried down the empty hall. *Pick up the pace. I have to get there before anyone else.*

Basketball season had just started. Coach Smith was still holding tryouts.

I have to make the team, Jordy thought. A few extra warmups and some practice shots could help.

It was so easy last year. Nobody got cut from the freshman team. Now Jordy was a sophomore. Anyone could be cut.

The gym was steps away. Championship banners hung outside the doors. Photos of winning teams were on display. Jordy didn't pause to look. He just rushed past.

His older brother, James, and his dad had been team captains. In the pictures, they each held a trophy.

Jordy sighed. *I'll be lucky to make junior varsity.*

A full-length mirror hung in the locker room. Jordy did his best to avoid looking at it. His reflection would be a reminder. Jordy's height was the problem.

Coach Smith stepped out of his office. "Hey, Dunk."

Jordy's shoulders sank. Dunk was his old nickname. Everyone used it in middle school. Jordan Duncan had been the star player. Then everyone kept getting taller—except for Jordy.

"No problem," his dad would tell him. "There are short NBA players. Besides, we know Coach Smith."

Jordy's dad had played with Coach Smith

back in high school. Years later, Jordy's brother played on Coach's team. Their families were close.

When Jordy was little, Coach Smith brought over a small basketball hoop. Coach taught him to jump high and jam the ball in the net.

"We should call you Dunkin' Jordy Duncan," he joked. "Or maybe just Dunk."

The name stuck.

Now Coach Smith waved him into the office. "Come in."

"Hey, Coach. What's going on?"

"Have a seat," the coach said.

"Really?" Jordy glanced at the clock. "I have to get ready."

Coach Smith gave him a serious look.

Jordy sat.

“You’re like a son to me, Dunk.” Coach Smith sighed. “That’s what makes this hard to say.”

No way is this good, Jordy thought.

He was right. It wasn’t good news. Coach cut him from the team. Jordy was just too small.

“I can tell everyone this was your idea,” Coach Smith went on. “You quit to do other stuff.”

Silence passed between them.

“Let’s go with that,” Jordy finally said, his voice cracking. “Can I leave now?”



CHAPTER 2

Jordy made it outside without seeing anyone. He dreaded going home.

Basketball ruled in the Duncan family. Jordy's mom had played in high school too. NBA games were always on TV. His parents were big fans. They named him after Michael Jordan. His brother, James, was named after LeBron James.

James had moved out a while ago. Still, he came home to watch the Miami Heat games with the family.

Jordy opened the door to an empty apartment. *Good, everyone's out. Mom must have a shift at the library, and Dad's at the station.*

His dad was on the police force. James was too.

Lately, that had also been annoying Jordy. *Where do I fit in?* he wondered.



Jordy crawled into bed. The afternoon passed by in a blur.

“Son?” Mrs. Duncan stood in the doorway. She spoke softly. “Are you okay? It’s time for dinner. James is here too.”

That’s just great. Jordy sighed. *Now everyone can hear the news.*

The family sat at the table. They passed around dishes. Sports radio played in the background.

“Is everything really okay?” Mrs. Duncan asked Jordy. “You haven’t eaten much.”

“Not hungry?” Mr. Duncan smiled. “I guess Coach Smith went easy on you today. How was practice?”

This is it, Jordy thought. It’s time to tell everyone the truth. In his mind, he formed the words: *I was cut.*

“It was fine,” he lied.

“Good!” His dad nodded. “Now eat up. You need some weight to take it to the hoop.”

“That’s right,” James said. “Remember my championship game? We were down by two. With three—”

“Seconds on the clock,” Mr. Duncan cut in. “The other team thinks you’re going for a layup. You were big enough to muscle your way to the basket. Bang! Instead, you score a three-pointer.” They high-fived. “That was . . .”

Jordy stopped listening.

After dinner, the family went to the living room for dessert. Jordy's dad turned on the TV. The Miami Heat had a six-point lead.

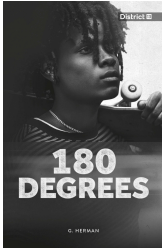
Now, Jordy thought. I'll tell them now. This time, it will be the truth. Coach Smith won't have to lie for me.

"Hey," he said. "I didn't go to practice." Surprised, everyone turned to him.

"I quit the team."

The words slipped out. He couldn't take them back.

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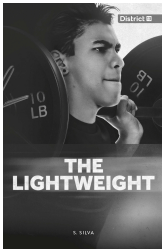
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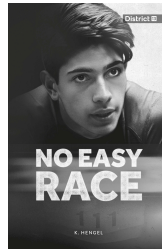
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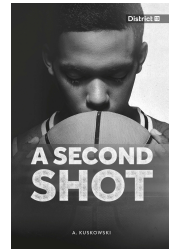
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Jordy “Dunk” Duncan hails from a family of star basketball players. After being cut from the team, Jordy secretly develops a passion for a different sport—one that comes with new risks. Will Jordy find the courage to tell his family the truth? How will they react to his newfound interest?

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