



District 13

LINE UP

A. KUSKOWSKI



CHAPTER 1

Corey Thompson sat in the last row. The teen was doodling in his notebook.

Mr. Lock stood at the front of the room. The math teacher was rattling on about the differences among compound interest equations. Corey knew the differences. He even had a favorite. But after yesterday, Mr. Lock wouldn't call on him for a while.

Finally, the bell rang. Mr. Lock reminded the class about the upcoming quiz. Corey shut

his notebook. Then he headed for the door. Mr. Lock avoided eye contact.

Whatever, Corey thought. I only told Mr. Lock he had put the wrong answer on the board. Reluctantly, the teacher reworked the problem in front of the class. It turned out Corey was correct. Mr. Lock was mortified.

Corey met his friend Jamal outside. They started walking to Lincoln Elementary. It was four blocks away. That's where Corey picked up his sister, Kiara.

Jamal adjusted the strap on his backpack. Then he swung it over his shoulder. "I still can't believe what happened in Lock's class."

"I'm surprised you're still hanging out with me." Corey kicked a rock. "Everyone probably thinks I'm a huge nerd now."

Jamal nodded. "Well, you are. But you're

also my hero. Lock's always looking down on me—on *us*, really. I'm glad you showed him up. It's about time someone did.”

Corey smiled.

“Have you thought any more about the track team?” Jamal asked. “Tryouts are coming up. I know you don't play basketball anymore. You and Ty used to play all the time.”

Corey looked away. It still hurt to hear that name.

“Corey!” someone's voice squeaked. It was Kiara. Happy as ever, she was skipping toward him. No one smiled as much or laughed as often as his little sister.

“Guess what happened today,” Kiara said giggling.

Corey opened his mouth to answer.

“Mrs. Pine brought her dog to school!”

Kiara squealed. “He had these big, floppy ears and little paws. I want one!” She spun in a circle and grinned.

Corey shook his head. “Mom will say no. Our place is too small for a dog anyway.”

“I can keep him in my room,” she countered.

“Forever?” Jamal teased.

Kiara shrugged.

Corey and Jamal glanced at each other. They tried not to laugh.

Then Corey spotted Simone. She was the prettiest girl he knew. Simone had won state in track last year. They had only spoken once. Simone was a friend of Jamal’s, not his. Corey hoped that would change someday.

Simone was picking up her little brother. Jamal noticed her too. He waved her over. She

grabbed her little brother's hand and headed to the group.

Corey's heart raced. *What am I going to say?*

"Hey, Jamal," Simone said. Then she looked at Corey. "Hi, Corey."

Corey didn't think his heart could beat any faster. But it did when she said his name. "Hey, Simone."

"What's up?" she asked.

"I'm just trying to get Corey to join the track team."

Simone smiled at Corey. "That would be cool! I used to watch you play basketball. You're fast. Think about it. We could use you on the team."

Corey suddenly thought joining the track team was the best idea in the world. "I guess I could at least try."

“Great! I can’t wait to see you.” Then
Simone left with her brother.

Corey watched in a daze.



CHAPTER 2

Patiently, Corey waited. He was sure Jamal would tease him about Simone. But Jamal didn't mention it.

Kiara, however, couldn't help herself. "Corey's got a crush!"

Corey was embarrassed. "Drop it, Kiara. Tell me more about Mrs. Pine's dog."

Corey managed to quiet Kiara by the time they got home. Grandpa Bo and their mom were in the living room. They were watching a basketball game.

“How was school?” Ms. Thompson asked her children.

“Good,” Corey and Kiara said. He was lying. Kiara wasn’t.

“I got to hold a puppy.” Kiara beamed.

Corey rolled his eyes. He couldn’t hear the story again. “I have homework.”

It took Corey exactly 42 minutes to do his homework. Biology was easy. Social studies was too. He had free time now. But Corey didn’t want free time. Keeping busy helped him avoid thinking about what had happened last year.

Kiara interrupted his thoughts. He could hear her sobbing in the kitchen. Ms. Thompson had said no to getting a dog again.

Corey didn’t want to hear his sister crying. He eyed the basketball sitting

in the corner of his bedroom. *Should I? Shouldn't I?* he wondered.

He finally made up his mind. Corey scooped up the ball.

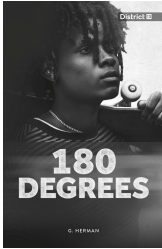
There weren't many people at the court. Corey had hoped there would be more. He loved hearing the trash talk. Ty used to do that with him.

Swish! Corey sank a three-pointer.

“You’ve still got it,” someone said.

Corey froze. The familiar voice sent chills down his spine. He turned around. It was the last person he expected or wanted to see.

District 13



9781638895831



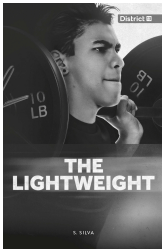
9781638895817



9781638895879



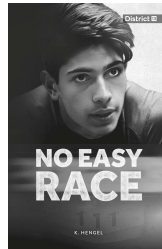
9781638895855



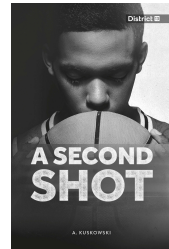
9781638895824



9781638895848



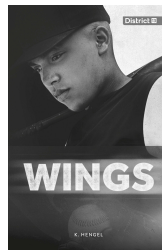
9781638895893



9781638895862



9781638895909



9781638895886

WWW.SDLBACK.COM/DISTRICT-13

District 13

LINE UP

Corey Thompson is a smart, talented basketball player. When his former mentor lets him down, Corey leaves the game behind. Encouraged by a friend, he tries a new sport. But will a danger from the past ruin Corey's future?

 **SADDLEBACK**
EDUCATIONAL PUBLISHING
www.sdlback.com

LEXILE HL250L

ISBN: 978-1-63889-584-8



9 781638 895848