



District 13

WINGS



K. HENGEL



CHAPTER 1

Angel Alvarez stood in center field. He pounded his fist into his baseball glove. “One more, boys!” he shouted.

Looking up, Angel squinted. The lights were too bright. *You could lose a ball glancing into them*, he thought.

It was the bottom of the seventh inning. Angel and the Huskies were up by one. They needed just one more out to win the game.

The Huskies had played against this team

last season. Angel remembered the next batter. A player's swing was something Angel never forgot. This guy was pretty good. People said he was slow. They said he couldn't hit a fastball. But Angel knew better.

"One more out," Angel shouted. He looked over at his best friend. Roberto played right field. The two nodded at each other.

"Let's put this one to bed!" Roberto called. "It's time to finish this right now!"

Angel watched the pitch. The batter was in motion right away. *He's starting his swing early*, Angel thought. *He'll meet that fastball with no problem and probably knock it deep.*

Crack!

The ball soared into the night sky. Angel was right. He had a way of judging fly balls. Coach Benson said Angel had "the gift."

As he ran toward the fence, Angel took

quick looks over his shoulder. It was hard to see. *I hate these lights!* His heart pounded. But he kept up his pace. The ball was coming down now.

Angel could see it clearly again.

As he reached the fence, the ball landed in his outstretched glove. He caught it! The Huskies won. Angel ran toward the dugout.

Roberto followed him. “Nice catch, Wings.”

“Thanks,” Angel said, smiling. “I had lost it for a second though. It was a lucky catch.”

Roberto shook his head. “That wasn’t luck, Wings. I’ve seen you catch too many of those.”

The Huskies were thrilled with the win. But they had a long ride home. Players walked to the bus. Angel and Roberto were last in line. Like their teammates, they carried their gear.

“The sky seems so different out here,” Roberto said. “It’s so dark.”

“Not like in the city,” Angel agreed.

Coach Benson stood at the bus. He grinned at Angel and Roberto. “Great job out there, both of you. I’m glad I get to coach you for another season after this year.” Then he clapped his hands. “Now let’s get going.”

Roberto got on the bus first.

The coach touched Angel’s arm. “Angel, wait. I have big news. A scout is coming next week. He’ll be at the Warriors game. His name is Trent Beckman, and he’s interested.”

Angel stared at his coach. He didn’t know what to say.

“You deserve it, Wings,” Coach said. “No one deserves this more than you. Come on. Let’s head home.”



CHAPTER 2

On the bus, Angel sent a text to his girlfriend.
“We won!”

Maria replied right away. “I knew you could do it! You’re the best.”

Angel smiled as his thumbs moved quickly across the screen. “Guess what. A scout’s coming to check me out at the Warriors game.”

“Seriously?” Maria responded. “That’s amazing! We’ll have to celebrate when you get back.”

Angel laughed quietly. Then he sent another text. “Nothing has happened yet.”

Maria sent a smiley face. “But it will.”

It was late when Angel finally got home. He quickly ate a sandwich. Then he checked on his twin sisters. Yasmina and Isabel shared a small bedroom. Angel peeked inside. The girls were sound asleep.

Angel quietly closed their door. Then he went into the living room. He made his bed on the couch. Every night he slept there. It had been his idea. The teen wanted his sisters to have their own room. Besides, Angel was always tired at the end of the day. Falling asleep was easy for him.

At 4:30 a.m., he heard his mom at the front door. She was putting on her jacket. Her shift at the diner started soon. Angel sat up on the couch.

“Did you win?” Ms. Alvarez whispered.

“Yes,” Angel said with a grin. Then he told her about his catch.

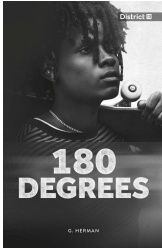
She smiled. “I’m proud of you, miyo. Okay. I’m off to work now. The lunch money is on the table. Don’t let the girls forget.”

Angel nodded. “Bye, Mom.”

Two hours later, Angel got his sisters ready for school. It didn’t take much. They were seven years old now. Roberto stopped by as usual. He and Angel walked the twins to school. Then they headed to the high school.

By the time Angel entered the building, he was already tired. But his thoughts drifted to last night’s winning catch and the upcoming game against the Warriors. An actual scout would be there. This made Angel perk up. He had so much to look forward to.

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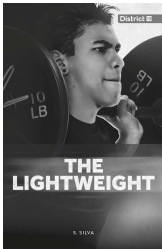
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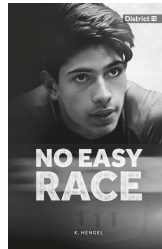
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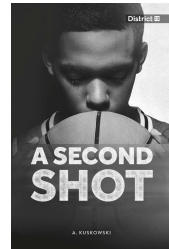
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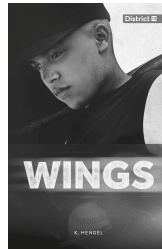
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Angel “Wings” Alvarez is a star baseball player. But an injury caused by a good friend forces him off the field. Will Angel find a way to forgive his friend? Will he ever play ball again?

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