

The officer parks and puts his brights on. I blink to keep from being blinded. I remember something else Daddy said. *If you're with somebody, you better hope they don't have nothing on them, or both of y'all going down.*

"K, you don't have anything in the car, do you?" I ask.

He watches the cop in his side mirror. "Nah."

The officer approaches the driver's door and taps the window. Khalil cranks the handle to roll it down. As if we aren't blinded enough, the officer beams his flashlight in our faces.

"License, registration, and proof of insurance."

Khalil breaks a rule—he doesn't do what the cop wants. "What you pull us over for?"

"License, registration, and proof of insurance."

"I said what you pull us over for?"

"Khalil," I plead. "Do what he said."

Khalil groans and takes his wallet out. The officer follows his movements with the flashlight.

My heart pounds loudly, but Daddy's instructions echo in my head: *Get a good look at the cop's face. If you can remember his badge number, that's even better.*

With the flashlight following Khalil's hands, I make out the numbers on the badge—one-fifteen. He's white, midthirties to early forties, has a brown buzz cut and a thin scar over his top lip.

Khalil hands the officer his papers and license.

One-Fifteen looks over them. "Where are you two coming from tonight?"

"Nunya," Khalil says, meaning none of your business. "What you pull me over for?"

"Your taillight's broken."

"So are you gon' give me a ticket or what?" Khalil asks.

"You know what? Get out the car, smart guy."

"Man, just give me my ticket—"

"Get out the car! Hands up, where I can see them."

Khalil gets out with his hands up. One-Fifteen yanks him by his arm and pins him against the back door.

I fight to find my voice. "He didn't mean—"

"Hands on the dashboard!" the officer barks at me. "Don't move!"

I do what he tells me, but my hands are shaking too much to be still.

He pats Khalil down. "Okay, smart mouth, let's see what we find on you today."

"You ain't gon' find nothing," Khalil says.

One-Fifteen pats him down two more times. He turns up empty.

"Stay here," he tells Khalil. "And you," he looks in the window at me. "Don't move."

I can't even nod.

The officer walks back to his patrol car.

My parents haven't raised me to fear the police, just to be smart around them. They told me it's not smart to move while a cop has his back to you.

Khalil does. He comes to his door.

It's not smart to make a sudden move.

Khalil does. He opens the driver's door.

"You okay, Starr—"

*Pow!*

One. Khalil's body jerks. Blood splatters from his back. He holds on to the door to keep himself upright.

*Pow!* Two. Khalil gasps.

*Pow!* Three. Khalil looks at me, stunned.

He falls to the ground.