

Get up, Kiki! Get your butt up! Whatchu think this is, a ho-tel?”

Sherise Butler stood over her twin sister, Kiki, who was still fast asleep with the covers over her head. “Come on, Shemeka! You don’t wanna to be late. Not today!”

She shook her sister through the worn white sheet. Kiki’s response was to fake-snore. Sherise was not amused. Then Kiki shifted the fake-snore into a donkey’s bray, and Sherise cracked up. Not that Sherise had ever seen a donkey. There weren’t many donkeys in the hood

where Sherise lived with her sister, their mom, LaTreece, and their long-time stepdad, Tyson Nelson.

“No donkeys in this hood. Plenty of asses though,” Sherise thought with a grin.

“Why you up before the alarm?” Kiki muttered. “What time is it?”

Sherise snuck a glance at the old clock radio; the one LaTreece had bought at Goodwill for five bucks. That was what normally woke them up since they both turned in their cell phones to LaTreece and Tyson at ten thirty. LaTreece and Tyson were way stricter than anyone else’s parents, grandparents, foster moms, or whatnot. Sometimes they were a damn pain. But they always took care of theirs.

“Six fifty-five,” Sherise declared. “Get your butt up.”

“Jeez-o! Why you trippin’? You never up before me!” Kiki pulled the covers high over her head.

Kiki had a point. Sherise was never up before Kiki, not on a school day for sure. Most school days? Sherise had to drag herself out of bed. As a rule, she hated school. She wasn’t a brainiac jock like her sister. She couldn’t keep up in classes or in hoops.

But Sherise had Kiki beat when it came to looks and boys. For sure.

Kiki finally sat up. She’d slept in an old Lakers shirt with Shaq’s number. Sherise hooted at her sister’s braids, which were tangled like a bird’s nest, as Kiki rubbed sleep from her eyes.

“Just what’s so funny? And what’s the dealy with you all showered and dressed and made-up already?” Kiki demanded.

It was true: Sherise was ready to dip. She'd been awake since six, working her look in the apartment's single bathroom with the toilet you had to flush twice. She wanted to look good, and not just for her boyfriend, Carlos Howard. Today was a day she actually wanted to go to school: a day where she wanted to look fine for everyone.

Fortunately for Sherise, she had a lot to work with. She was petite and slender with straight hair to the middle of her back and skin like spun gold. This morning she wore a slinky black dress with a red belt and red boots. The outfit came from GG's, the clothing store at the Eastside Mall where she worked after school.

She knew she looked hot. That was good because today the whole school would have its eyes on her. She wanted every boy to want her, every girl to be