

## MEET THE MAJOR CHARACTERS

- **Starr Carter:** Our main protagonist who seeks justice for her friend while finding a balance between her home and school life.
- **Khalil:** Starr's childhood best friend who gets shot by a police officer during a traffic stop.
- **Maverick Carter:** Starr's father, who was once imprisoned due to his previous involvement in a local gang named the King Lords.
- **Lisa Carter:** Starr's mother who works long hours as a nurse to provide for her family.
- **Seven:** Starr's older half-brother who feels the need to protect his family and Starr.
- **Sekani:** Starr's younger brother, and instigator of insignificant family arguments.
- **Chris:** Starr's white boyfriend who also attends the expensive prep school with Starr.
- **Hailey:** Starr's childhood best friend from her prep school who causes strife within their friendship.
- **Maya:** Starr's other best friend from prep school who understands Starr's frustration with Hailey.
- **Kenya:** Starr's childhood best friend from Garden Heights, and Seven's half-sister.
- **King:** Leader of the King Lords gang in Garden Heights, also Kenya's abusive father.
- **Iesha:** Seven and Kenya's mother who is often abused by King.

## CHAPTER SUMMARIES:

### Chapter 1:


- Starr Carter goes to a party in her neighborhood of Garden Heights. She feels out of place since she attends a predominantly white school 45 minutes away. Starr's childhood friend, Khalil, arrives at the party, dressed in expensive clothes, so Starr suspects that he is selling drugs. Starr and Khalil begin to catch up when suddenly, gun shots ring out at the party and everyone scatters. Khalil and Starr run out together to his car, and he offers to drive her home. Khalil starts playing Tupac on the radio, which starts the conversation on THUG LIFE. Khalil gets pulled over by the cops.

### Chapter 2:

- When Starr was 12, her parents talked with her about what to do when approached by the cops. Their advice: do whatever the cops say to do, don't make any sudden moves, and only speak when spoken to. The cop approaches the car and asks for license and registration. Khalil shows frustration and doesn't comply with the cops demands. Starr remembers her dad telling her to remember the badge number of the officer stopping you. Khalil continues to give the cop a hard time so the cop forces him out of the car and slams him onto the hood. The officer tells Khalil not to move and walks back to his patrol car. When Khalil opens his car door to check on Starr, the cop shoots him. This brings Starr back to her childhood when her friend Natasha was killed in a drive-by shooting. Khalil is dead after being shot three times, and Starr is held at gunpoint.

### Chapter 3:

- They leave Khalil in the street while Starr waits in the back of an ambulance. Her parents, Lisa and Maverick, arrive on the scene and take her home. At home, her mom helps her out of her blood stained clothes and into a bath. Starr finally falls into a fitful sleep plagued by nightmares. When Starr wakes up, she goes to the kitchen to have breakfast with her parents and older brother Seven. Seven and Maverick are talking about Seven's mom, Iesha, being



abused by her boyfriend and drug lord, King. They decide as a family to keep Starr's involvement with the case in the family and not tell anyone. Starr goes to work with her dad at their family-owned grocery store. Starr's friend Kenya shows up at the store. On their way out to grab lunch, they run into King, Kenya's dad. King tries to give Starr a wad of cash to pay for their lunch, but she refuses to take it because he's a known drug lord and abusive to her mother and siblings. Maverick comes out to talk to King. King insists that Maverick owes him a favor but Maverick disagrees since Maverick went to prison for him. Maverick tells King not to hit Seven again and King drives off angrily.

#### **Chapter 4:**

- Starr has nightmares of her friends and wakes up in the middle of the night. She starts to go to the kitchen when she hears her parents fighting with her Uncle Carlos. Carlos is a police officer and lives in a nice part of town. Carlos is trying to persuade Starr's parents to let Starr speak with the police about Khalil's shooting. The adults become aware of Starr's presence and Carlos asks if she would be willing to talk to the police. Starr reluctantly agrees to talk to them and Carlos promises justice for Khalil. The next day, Starr and her parents go visit Khalil's grandmother, Rosalie. Starr remembers all the good times she had at Rosalie's with Khalil and Natasha. Rosalie took Lisa in after she got pregnant in school and Lisa's mother kicked her out. Rosalie babysat her kids for free while Lisa finished school. Rosalie is sick with cancer, but she is still comforting Starr over what happened. She tells them that Khalil was selling drugs but he wanted advice from Maverick on how to get out. On their way out, Maverick and Lisa give Rosalie money to help pay for Khalil's funeral.

#### **Chapter 5:**


- Starr and her family pray together before Lisa drives the kids to school. Starr tries to act normal with her friends but finds it hard because she keeps thinking about Khalil. Starr is also uncomfortable around her friends because they are all talking about the cool vacations they went on, and Starr's family only vacations to a local hotel that has a pool. Her friend, Hailey, has also become more distant ever since she unfollowed Starr for posting on Tumblr about Emmett Till being shot by the police for whistling at a white woman. Starr is also in a fight with her boyfriend Chris. She is reluctant about telling her father she is dating a white boy, even though her mom already knows. Chris tries to talk to Starr, and he jokes around singing her favorite song. This reminds her of Khalil, and she ends up crying, leaving Chris confused. After school, Seven picks up Starr and Sekani and drives them to Lisa's work so she can take Starr to the police station. While the kids are waiting for their mother, Khalil's mother, Brenda, shows up. Brenda is covered with scabs and scars, indicating drug abuse. Brenda had just learned of her son's death and was devastated. Starr is mad at Brenda for acting like this because she never took care of Khalil. Lisa gets mad at Starr for saying that because Khalil was still Brenda's son, no matter how terrible of a mother she was.

#### **Chapter 6:**

- Lisa takes Starr to the police office where she is questioned by two officers about what happened. Starr tells them everything that she witnessed. One of the officers doesn't believe that the officer forced Khalil out of the car. Starr is getting upset about reliving that night but she wants to finish the interview. After Starr tells them what happened that night, they ask about Khalil being a drug dealer. The cops keep questioning Starr about Khalil but never about the officer that killed him. Not long after, Lisa gets angry with them, and they leave. Starr and Lisa both feel that this case is not going to fall in their favor.

#### **Chapter 7:**

- Starr is at school sitting with her friends, Hailey and Maya, waiting for gym class to start. They had just had fried chicken for lunch, and they are all full. The girls are watching a group of their classmates playing basketball. Hailey convinces Starr and Maya to play a three-on-three game with Chris and two of his friends. Chris starts questioning Starr during the game why she freaked out the other day but she ignores the question. Chris gets the ball past Starr and takes off for the hoop. Hailey gets made and yells at Starr to pretend that



the ball is some fried chicken if she wants to stay on it. Starr gets angry and goes to the girls locker room. Hailey and Maya follow and Hailey claims that she didn't mean for her comment to sound racist, but Starr is not convinced of this. Her friends acknowledge that she has been acting weird and ask if it had anything to do with Khalil. Starr tells them she doesn't know him and tells them it was the anniversary of her friend Natasha's death. Starr asks to go to the office and pretends to have cramps and calls Carlos to come pick her up. He takes her out for frozen yogurt instead of taking her home. They talk about the case. She tells him that the officer held her at gunpoint, too.

### Chapter 8:

- This is the day of Khalil's funeral. Looking at Khalil's dead body reminds her of seeing Natasha's body as a child. Starr and her family get invited to sit in the front pew with the family. The funeral was supposed to be upbeat and a celebration of life, but the service takes a turn when April O'Frah, a representative for a police accountability advocacy group, starts talking about how Khalil was shot and was unarmed. The church erupts into chaos. After April asks people to join her protest march after the funeral. King, Iesha, and his followers enter in the church and place a bandana on Khalil's body, which is what King Lords do to their fallen brethren. Rosalie throws the bandana back at King and Maverick convinces him to leave. After the ceremony ends, April approaches Starr and her family. She asks Starr to provide her perspective on what happened, but also offers Starr her services as a lawyer if Starr gets dragged further into the case.

### Chapter 9:


- Maverick sends the boys home with a message saying he was staying at the store to protect it from looters and to stay indoors. There were riots all over Garden Heights. They could hear gunshots in their neighborhood and saw on the news that police cars were set on fire. Starr is woken up by Seven asking her to go to the park to play basketball. As they walk out, they yell to their parents where they are going. Seven and Starr play basketball until they are approached by the Garden Disciples, a rivalry gang, and they harass Seven because he lives with King. They pull a knife on him and demand for his phone and shoes. A King Lord, DeVante, walks up to the group and scares the rival gang off. Maverick pulls up at the park and yells at Seven and Starr for leaving the house after the riots without telling them because they didn't hear their shout as they were leaving. Starr gets grounded and she, Sekani, and Lisa go over to Carlos's house. Starr sees the cops and the damage on the drive over and feels like the riots are her fault. Chris sees that Starr is at her uncle's house and comes over to talk. Starr tells him that she feels like their race and financial status is what is creating the distance. Chris reassures her that they can make it work

### Chapter 10:

- Starr, Lisa, and Sekani stay the night at Carlos' because the riots broke out again. On the way home, the next morning, Lisa is pulled over and Starr almost has a panic attack. Maverick and Starr talk about Tupac's philosophy on THUG LIFE. Maverick says that the system is oppressive and it keeps minorities from getting out of poverty, so it leads them to a life of drug dealing just to make money. After this conversation, Starr decides she wants to speak out about Khalil's murder. At her father's grocery store, DeVante walks in and acts shifty. After some coaxing and an ultimatum, they get DeVante to tell them that he is hiding from King. DeVante wants to know how Maverick got out of the Lords. Maverick tells his story. He was a King Lord at the age of 12. After he became a father, he wanted out. King finally let Maverick out after he took the fall and went to prison for him. Maverick offers DeVante a job, a place to stay, and help getting out of the Lords. Later that night, Starr hears her parents arguing about DeVante and if they should move out of the neighborhood.

### Chapter 11:

- At school Monday morning, Starr learns that Hailey's older brother is organizing a protest about Khalil. The students are staging a walk to get out of class, not out of solidarity for Khalil's death. Starr gets angry with her friends about this and refuses to partake in the exploitation of Khalil's death. Chris and her friend Jess also



sit out of the protest. After school, Seven picks Starr and Sekani up and they go to the store. The TV crew is interviewing Mr. Lewis, the man who owns a shop next door. Mr. Lewis tells the TV crew that he saw King Lords jumping cops and mentions King by name. Maverick warns Mr. Lewis that he was in danger after name-dropping on the broadcast, but Mr. Lewis says he isn't afraid. A police car stops by Mr. Lewis and Maverick, who are arguing. The cop asks if there is a problem but the officer doesn't believe them when they say they are just talking. The officer becomes aggressive and forces Maverick to the ground. The cops pat him down multiple times and leave Maverick with a warning. Everyone goes back in the store. Maverick is furious. Mr. Reuben's nephew, Tim, was in the store and revealed that the neighborhood knows about Starr's involvement. Kenya came to the grocery store and said she was mad that Starr wasn't speaking out about Khalil.

### Chapter 12:

- Starr is in the backyard with her dad when they see military tanks rolling down the street. They warn people to stay inside after curfew at 10 p.m. or they will be arrested. Starr decides she wants to start speaking out slowly, so she creates an anonymous Tumblr blog called "The Khalil I Know," which is pictures and stories of him that paints a bigger picture of who Khalil was. The next day, she stays home from school and goes to speak with April O'rah. April told them the case is getting taken to a grand jury and offers to represent Starr in the case pro bono. Starr accepts her offer and agrees to do a TV interview, as long as her identity remains anonymous. During the meeting, Maverick gets a call from DeVante because something is going on at the store, and DeVante needs help.

### Chapter 13:

- When they get back to the store, they find that Mr. Lewis had been beaten up by the King Lords. Not because of the interview that Mr. Lewis gave, but because the gang was looking for DeVante. DeVante had stolen \$5,000 from the King Lords. Maverick decides it's no longer safe for DeVante to stay in the hood, so he moves him to Carlos' house. At Carlos' house, she learns that Carlos has been put on leave from the police. Starr feels guilty about it. Carlos agrees to help DeVante and get him through online school. Chris sees the family car in the driveway, so he rings the doorbell. Maverick learns that Starr has a white boyfriend and that everyone knew before him. He is even more upset that Carlos knows about Chris. Lisa takes Maverick outside to argue about Chris being white and how Maverick refuses to move his own family out of Garden Heights but he thinks it's too dangerous for other people. Chris leaves and Starr asks about her parents argument. Lisa goes out to move her car and DeVante comes into the kitchen. DeVante accuses Chris of trying to be black. He then told Starr that Khalil wasn't a King Lord, he was just working for King to pay off his grandmother's debt. DeVante said that he joined the gang for money security.

### Chapter 14:

- Starr leaves Carlos' house to walk to Maya's house. Hailey and Maya are in her room playing video games, and Starr joins them but it feels awkward. Hailey addresses the tension. Starr admits that she is mad at them for taking part in the bogus protest. Maya apologizes but Hailey gets mad and demands Starr apologize for accusing her of being a racist. The three girls turn back to the TV and an interview is being broadcasted. The man on the TV is the father of the cop who shot Khalil. The father says that Khalil was speeding and had threatened the cop. He also tells the interviewers that his son was attacked by another cop, who Starr guesses was her uncle. Hailey says she felt bad for the family because his life matters, too. Starr gets angry and says their lives always matter more. Starr asks why Hailey unfollowed her Tumblr and Hailey storms out saying she doesn't know Starr anymore. Maya tells Starr that Hailey unfollowed her because Hailey didn't want to see the black power stuff she was posting. Maya tells Starr that Hailey would make racist comments towards her, too. A couple years ago, Hailey had asked Maya if she and her family eat cat for Thanksgiving, and she laughed because she felt uncomfortable. Starr and Maya make a pact to not let Hailey keep saying racist things to them. After that, Starr goes back to Carlos' house. Starr asks him if he assaulted the other cop. He admits that he did. He was mad that he pointed the gun at Starr. He also said that if he were in the same situation, he would not have killed Khalil.



## Chapter 15:

- The next day, Starr has to talk to the DA. Starr tells her mom about what happened with Hailey and what DeVante had told her about Khalil. After breakfast, she goes home to change for the interview with the DA. Maverick, Lisa, and Starr go down to the DA's office. Starr has to recount everything that happened, but when she has to tell the story of Khalil's death, she gets sick. Lisa and Maverick get her back in the car, and Starr is upset by how many pitying looks she was getting. Starr stays with Maverick at the store for the rest of the day. Starr and Maverick start talking about Chris. Maverick admits that he was worried that the reason that Starr was dating a white boy was because of him; he thought that he had given black men a bad reputation for what a man should be. She reassures him that that was not the case and that he set a great example. Unexpectedly, King shows up asking for DeVante and Maverick insists he doesn't know. King threatens Maverick and Starr and tells them that Starr better not implicate the King Lords or something bad would be coming to them. Maverick closes the store early after being shaken by King's threat. At dinner, Lisa gives them good news because she has an interview for a better job position at the hospital. Maverick agrees to move out of Garden Heights.

## Chapter 16:

- April O'Frah has arranged for Starr to do an interview on a national broadcasting station. A week after the interview, she will testify to the grand jury. April spends the week preparing Starr for the grand jury and the interview. Afterwards, she helps April at Just Us for Justice. On the way to the interview with Diane Carey, she learns that DeVante and Chris were becoming good friends. Starr does her interview without her face in any of the shots. Starr tells Diane about everything that happened that night and Diane asks if there was anything she would like to ask the cop. Starr said she wanted to know if he regretted not shooting her, too.

## Chapter 17:


- After the interview is broadcasted on TV, it becomes one of the most viewed interviews in the network's history. Support floods in for Starr but she also receives death threats from King. That Saturday, Starr goes to prom. Chris is being distant and moody. They get into a fight and talk it out in the car. He tells her that he found out she was the witness. He was upset that she felt she needed to keep that from him. She tells him it was because he made her feel normal and was afraid he would see her as the girl from the hood. They say I love you for the first time that night. She also tells him about what happened to Natasha. That night Starr thinks is the best night of her life.

## Chapter 18:

- The next day, the family goes to look at the house that her parents are wanting to buy. They all pray together in the living room and thank Lisa's mom for giving them the money for the down payment. Later that night, the family is in the den watching basketball when they hear gunshots go through the house and brick being thrown through their living room window. Nobody was hurt, but Carlos comes over to assess the situation. They debate whether it was the King Lords who had done it or cops who were wanting to scare Starr out of testifying. Starr says she doesn't want to testify anymore because she doesn't want to put her family into danger. Maverick tells her that sort of thinking will never get anything accomplished. Maverick calls in backup to help protect the house. Carlos gets really angry when he finds out that Maverick invited two Cedar Grove King Lords to be the protectors.

## Chapter 19:

- Starr walks into her kitchen the morning of the grand jury and finds the kitchen filled with Cedar Grove King Lords. Lisa sends Starr outside with food for her uncle and father. The two were sitting in the back of the SUV talking, and they made up for the benefit of Starr. The King Lords escort Starr and her family to the courthouse. The courthouse brings back memories of Maverick getting sentenced to prison. Starr's parents



aren't allowed in the court with her, so they tell her she is brave for doing this and sends her in. She recounts the story for the DA and answers all of the questions that they ask. Starr knows that she has to do this for justice for Khalil, but she still finds it painful.

### **Chapter 20:**

- It has been two weeks since she testified with the grand jury. Starr is at school and Hailey comes up to her with a picture from Starr's twelfth birthday party that had Khalil in the shot. Hailey is angry that Starr had lied to her about knowing him. Maya and Starr tell Hailey to apologize for her racist comments. Hailey refuses to apologize and says that the officer did a favor by killing Khalil because he's just another drug dealer. Starr attacks Hailey, and she fights back. Hailey's older brother gets involved and Seven fights him. All four of them get suspended. Lisa comes to get the kids and when they get home, they find the Garden Disciples gang and the Cedar Grove gang sitting at the kitchen table with Maverick. Maverick is trying to get the gangs to help stop the riots from occurring because they get too crazy and give the black community a bad name. They two gang leaders shake hands. Lisa and Maverick decide not to punish the kids because if they were in their situation, they probably would have done the same thing.

### **Chapter 21:**

- Two weeks later, Starr's and Seven's families and friends are having a birthday and graduation party for Seven at Carlos' house. Starr is unsure how to act because DeVante, Kenya, Maya, and Chris are all there and her two separate worlds are combining. She is relieved when all of them can sit down and have a fun and warm conversation. Starr heads inside to get a snack when the phone rings. Iesha is at the gate and wants to be let in. The family meets her outside and Iesha confronts Seven about not inviting her to his party. Seven gets angry and tells her she was never a good mother to him and she didn't even show up to his graduation. Lisa comforts Seven and Iesha on her way out when she warns Maverick that King will hurt his family since Starr implicated him during her interview. Kenya apologizes to Starr for Iesha. Starr tells her she should encourage Iesha to stand up against King. They head back outside to present Seven with his cake. They all spend the rest of the night dancing and having fun.

### **Chapter 22:**

- It has been 13 weeks since Khalil was killed. Starr and her family have moved into their new house but Starr doesn't feel at home yet. The grand jury is set to announce their decision in a few hours, and Starr is nervous about it. She goes over to Chris's house and they hang out in his bedroom. Starr tells Chris that they shouldn't be together because of their backgrounds, wealth, and race. Chris disagrees with her and tells her they should be together. Starr tries to initiate sex but Chris stops her and tells her she isn't in a good place to make this decision, and she starts to cry. They end up falling asleep. When they wake up, she sees that she has a frantic call from Seven. Lisa and Carlos are out looking for her and DeVante has been hurt. Seven picks up Starr and Chris. They drive over to King's house. They find DeVante and Kenya in Iesha's room. DeVante went to visit his brother's grave and got jumped. King is in the backyard with the gang partying and waiting to kill DeVante. Iesha comes into her bedroom and finds all of the kids in there. She tells them to get Kenya and Seven's little sister and get out. Iesha helps them escape even though she knows she will be on the receiving end of King's anger. When Seven learns that Iesha sent them away to protect them he wants to turn back and protect her. On the way to drop off their little sister, they learn that the grand jury decided not to indict the officer.

### **Chapter 23:**

- Starr is upset about the decision and feels she did all that she could. Starr gets angry and decides that she wants to protest with the rest of the city, so they all decide to go. They drop off Seven's little sister and drive to Magnolia where the protests are happening. King Lords and Garden Disciples are burning a police car, looting, and tagging the streets. Police in riot gear and tanks march down the streets. Explosions and smoke fill the air, so the group decides to run back to the car. In the car, they start talking about the difference between white and black people.

## Chapter 24:

- They decide to go help Maverick protect the store but they keep running into roadblocks. The car runs out of gas, and they have to leave the car to walk to a gas station. On the walk to the gas station, the group finds a protest on the street that Khalil was shot. April O'fray is leading the protest chants on a patrol car. April is surprised to see Starr but Starr says she is angry and wants to protest. April asks Starr to fire her so that she won't be liable for her if her parents find out. Starr is handed the bullhorn and she starts speaking to the crowd. The police start throwing out tear gas. She hurls a can back at them. The group is choking on tear gas. Goon, one of the Cedar Grove Kings, saves them and drives them to the store. The store is boarded up and has a black-owned sign on it. Goon and the people riding with him, including a news anchor, grab gallons of milk to help burning eyes and leave. Starr checks her phone and has messages from her mother, who saw her speech on TV. They go to the back to call Lisa from the office. Out of nowhere, a glass bottle with a flaming cloth is thrown through the window and the store catches fire.

## Chapter 25:

- The kids rush to the back door to get out, but the burglar bars won't let them leave, and they do not have the keys on them. They start yelling for help. Tim Reubens hears them and tries to get them out. Luckily, Maverick shows up and unlocks the door and lets the kids out. Everyone watches the store erupt into flames. The kids sit on the curb with Lisa, Maverick, and Carlos, when they notice King and his gang sitting in the intersection laughing and pointing at the store. Maverick confronts him but before anything bad can happen, the police and fire trucks show up. Mr. Lewis tells the police that King started the fire, but because he wasn't a witness, they won't do anything about it. Maverick tells the police that he did see King start the fire so they arrest him and the whole gang. Maverick likes Chris more after he stuck with Starr the whole night and makes plans with him to go to the boxing gym. Carlos says King will be arrested for arson but probably won't be in for very long. DeVante decides to tell the police where King's drug stash is so he will go to prison.

## Chapter 26:

- That next morning, April O'fray calls to apologize to Starr for putting her in danger and not getting the results they wanted. She tells Starr that she has a good life ahead of her in activism. Hailey tested Starr by apologizing but she really decides that her apology is more about Starr's reaction than actually feeling sorry. Starr realizes Hailey is toxic and kicks her out of her life. Starr sees she is one the front page of the newspaper for throwing the tear gas. Maverick and Lisa say they will be able to keep the house even with the store being destroyed. The family goes down to the store to look at the damage and Mr. Lewis gives Maverick his barber shop to expand his store because he is retiring. The family and community members start their work on the store. Keyna shows up and tells Starr that Lyric and Kenya will be staying their grandmother because King beat Iesha. She is now in the hospital. Kenya asks about the store, and she tells her they will rebuild it. She accepts what happened to Khalil and the ending of his story and is hopeful for the black community. She vows from that day on she will never forget him or be silent.

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