

#1 New York Times Bestseller  
**ANGIE THOMAS**



*"Absolutely riveting!"*  
JASON REYNOLDS

*"Stunning."*  
JOHN GRISHAM

"Niggas tired of taking shit," DeVante says, between heavy breaths. "Like Starr said, they don't give a fuck about us, so we don't give a fuck. Burn this bitch down."

"But they don't live here!" Seven says. "They don't give a *damn* what happens to this neighborhood."

"What we supposed to do then?" DeVante snaps. "All that 'Kumbaya' peaceful shit clearly don't work. They don't listen till we tear something up."

"Those businesses though," I say.

"What about them?" DeVante asks. "My momma used to work at that McDonald's, and they barely paid her. That pawnshop ripped us off a hell of a lot of times. Nah, I don't give a fuck about neither one of them bitches."

I get it. Daddy almost lost his wedding ring to that pawnshop once. He actually threatened to burn it down. Kinda ironic it's burning now.

But if the looters decide to ignore the "black owned" tags, they could end up hitting our store. "We need to go help Daddy."

"What?" Seven says.

"We need to go help Daddy protect the store! In case looters show up."

Seven wipes his face. "Shit, you're probably right."

"Ain't nobody gon' touch Big Mav," says DeVante.

"You don't know that," I say. "People are pissed, DeVante. They're not thinking shit out. They're doing shit."

DeVante eventually nods. "A'ight, fine. Let's go help Big Mav."

I yell it out too. Part of me is like, "What about Uncle Carlos the cop?" But this isn't about him or his coworkers who do their jobs right. This is about One-Fifteen, those detectives with their bullshit questions, and those cops who made Daddy lie on the ground. Fuck them.

Glass shatters. I stop rapping.

A block away, people throw rocks and garbage cans at the windows of the McDonald's and the drugstore next to it.

One time I had a really bad asthma attack that put me in the emergency room. My parents and I didn't leave the hospital until like three in the morning, and we were starving by then. Momma and I grabbed hamburgers at that McDonald's and ate while Daddy got my prescription from the pharmacy.

The glass doors at the drugstore shatter completely. People rush in and eventually come back out with arms full of stuff.

"Stop!" I yell, and others say the same, but looters continue to run in. A glow of orange bursts inside, and all those people rush out.

"Holy shit," Chris says.

In no time the building is in flames.

"Hell yeah!" says DeVante. "Burn that bitch down!"

lil!" People gathered around the car record the scene with their phones and throw rocks at the windows.

"Fuck that cop, bruh," a guy says, gripping a baseball bat. "Killed him over nothing!"

He slams the bat into the driver's side window, shattering the glass.

It's on.

The King Lords and GDs stomp out the front window. Then somebody yells, "Flip that mothafucka!"

The gangbangers jump off. People line up on one side of the car. I stare at the lights on the top, remembering the ones that flashed behind me and Khalil, and watch them disappear as they flip the car onto its back.

Someone shouts, "Watch out!"

A Molotov cocktail sails toward the car. Then—*whoompf!* It bursts into flames.

The crowd cheers.

People say misery loves company, but I think it's like that with anger too. I'm not the only one pissed—everyone around me is. They didn't have to be sitting in the passenger's seat when it happened. My anger is theirs, and theirs is mine.

A car stereo loudly plays a record-scratching sound, then Ice Cube says, *"Fuck the police, coming straight from the underground. A young nigga got it bad 'cause I'm brown."*

You'd think it was a concert the way people react, rapping along and jumping to the beat. DeVante and Seven yell out the

Outside, somebody honks his car horn a bunch of times.

Momma rolls her eyes. "Speaking of your father, I guess Mr. I'm-Gonna-Slam-Doors needs me to move my car so he can leave." She shakes her head and heads toward the front.

I throw Chris's juice away and search the cabinets. Aunt Pam may be picky when it comes to drinks, but she always buys good snacks, and my stomach is talking. I get some graham crackers and slather peanut butter on them. So good.

DeVante comes in the kitchen. "Can't believe you dating a white boy." He sits next to me and steals a graham cracker sandwich. "A wigga at that."



"I—the gun in the car stuff. On the news they said there may have been a gun in the car, like that changes everything. I honestly don't know if there was."

Ms. Ofrah opens a folder that's on her desk, takes a piece of paper out, and pushes it toward me. It's a photograph of Khalil's black hairbrush, the one he used in the car.

"That's the so-called gun," Ms. Ofrah explains. "Officer Cruise claims he saw it in the car door, and he assumed Khalil was reaching for it. The handle was thick enough, black enough, for him to assume it was a gun."

"And Khalil was black enough," Daddy adds.

A hairbrush.

Khalil died over a fucking hairbrush.

Ms. Ofrah slips the photograph back in the folder. "It'll be interesting to see how his father addresses it in his interview tonight."

Hold up. "Interview?" I ask.

Momma shifts a little in her chair. "Um . . . the officer's father has a television interview that's airing tonight."

I glance from her to Daddy. "And nobody told me?"

"Cause it ain't worth talking about, baby," Daddy says.

I look at Ms. Ofrah. "So his dad can give his son's side to the whole world, and I can't give mine and Khalil's? He's gonna have everybody thinking One-Fifteen's the victim."

"Not necessarily," Ms. Ofrah says. "Sometimes these kinds of things backfire. And at the end of the day, the court of pub-

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Daddy once told me there's a rage passed down to every black man from his ancestors, born the moment they couldn't stop the slave masters from hurting their families. Daddy also said there's nothing more dangerous than when that rage is activated.

"Let it out, son," Mr. Lewis tells him.

"Fuck them pigs, man," Tim says. "They only did that shit 'cause they know 'bout Starr."

Wait. What?

Daddy glances over his shoulder. His eyes are puffy and wet, like he's been crying. "The hell you talking 'bout, Tim?"

"One of the homeboys saw you, Lisa, and your baby girl getting out an ambulance at the crime scene that night," Tim says. "Word spread around the neighborhood, and folks think she's the witness they been talking 'bout on the news."

Oh.

Shit.

"Starr, go ring Kenya up," Daddy says. "Vante, finish them floors."

I head for the cash register, passing Seven and Sekani.

Buying the stuff is only the first step. We unload it at the store, put it on the shelves, and we (scratch that, I) put price stickers on all those bags of chips, cookies, and candies. I should've thought about that before I agreed to hang out with Daddy. While I do the hard work, he pays bills in his office.

I'm putting stickers on the Hot Fries when somebody knocks on the front door.

"We're closed," I yell without looking. We have a sign, can't they read?

Obviously not. They knock again.

Daddy appears in the doorway of his office. "We closed!"

Another knock.

Daddy disappears into his office and returns with his Glock. He's not supposed to carry it since he's a felon, but he says that technically he doesn't carry it. He keeps it in his office.

He looks out at the person on the other side of the door.

"What you want?"

"I'm hungry," a guy says. "Can I buy something?"

Daddy unlocks the door and holds it open. "You got five minutes."

"Thanks," DeVante says as he comes in. His Afro puff has become a full-blown Afro. He has this wild look about him, and I don't mean 'cause of his hair, but like in his eyes. They're puffy and red and darting around. He barely gives me a nod when he passes.

Daddy waits at the cash register with his piece.



"Exactly. Drugs come from somewhere, and they're destroying our community," he says. "You got folks like Brenda, who think they need them to survive, and then you got the Khalils, who think they need to sell them to survive. The Brendas can't get jobs unless they're clean, and they can't pay for rehab unless they got jobs. When the Khalils get arrested for selling drugs, they either spend most of their life in prison, another billion-dollar industry, or they have a hard time getting a real job and probably start selling drugs again. That's the hate they're giving us, baby, a system designed against us. That's Thug Life."

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"I hear you, but Khalil didn't *have* to sell drugs," I say. "You stopped doing it."

"True, but unless you're in his shoes, don't judge him. It's easier to fall into that life than it is to stay outta it, especially in a situation like his. Now, one more question."

"Really?" Damn, he's messed with my head enough.

"Yeah, really," he mocks in a high voice. I don't even sound like that. "After everything I've said, how does Thug Life apply to the protests and the riots?"

I have to think about that one for a minute. "Everybody's pissed 'cause One-Fifteen hasn't been charged," I say, "but also because he's not the first one to do something like this and get away with it. It's been happening, and people will keep rioting until it changes. So I guess the system's still giving hate, and everybody's still getting fucked?"

Chris and I move away from the door. I lean against a locker and fold my arms. "I'm listening," I say.

A bass-heavy instrumental plays in his headphones. Probably one of his beats. "I'm sorry for what happened. I should've talked to you first."

I cock my head. "We did talk about it. A week before. Remember?"

"I know, I know. And I heard you. I just wanted to be prepared in case—"

"You could push the right buttons and convince me to change my mind?"

"No!" His hands go up in surrender. "Starr, you know I wouldn't—that's not—I'm sorry, okay? I took it too far."

Understatement. The day before Big D's party, Chris and I were in Chris's ridiculously large room. The third floor of his parents' mansion is a suite for him, a perk of being the last born to empty-nesters. I try to forget that he has an entire floor as big as my house and hired help that looks like me.

Fooling around isn't new for us, and when Chris slipped his hand in my shorts, I didn't think anything of it. Then he got me

ful. Dad and Stepmother Dearest dragged me and Remy to the house in the Bahamas for 'family bonding.'"

And bam. That normal feeling? Gone. I suddenly remember how different I am from most of the kids here. Nobody would have to drag me or my brothers to the Bahamas—we'd swim there if we could. For us, a family vacation is staying at a local hotel with a swimming pool for a weekend.

"Sounds like my parents," says Britt. "Took us to fucking Harry Potter World for the third year in a row. I'm sick of Butter Beer and corny family photos with wands."

Holy shit. Who the fuck complains about going to Harry Potter World? Or Butter Beer? Or wands?

I hope none of them ask about my spring break. They went to Taipei, the Bahamas, Harry Potter World. I stayed in the hood and saw a cop kill my friend.

"I guess the Bahamas wasn't so bad," Hailey says. "They wanted us to do family stuff, but we ended up doing our own thing the entire time."

"Listen! The Hate U—the letter U—Give Little Infants Fucks Everybody. T-H-U-G L-I-F-E. Meaning what society give us as youth, it bites them in the ass when we wild out. Get it?"

"Damn. Yeah."

"See? Told you he was relevant." He nods to the beat and raps along. But now I'm wondering what he's doing to "fuck everybody." As much as I think I know, I hope I'm wrong. I need to hear it from him.

"So why have you really been busy?" I ask. "A few months ago Daddy said you quit the store. I haven't seen you since."

He scoots closer to the steering wheel. "Where you want me to take you, your house or the store?"