



CHAPTER 1



"Winston! What are you doing?" Switch and I laughed so hard we practically fell off our seats in the cafeteria. But Winston just kept on dancing his ham sandwich across the table, singing along to his favorite song ever: MC Grillz's "High Roller Molar."

"I'm the hip hop dentist, best songs in the galaxy! / I be dancin', rappin', singin', savin' you from cavities!"

Winston sang and bounced his sandwich



back and forth on the table like little lunch dancers. Switch laughed so hard that juice came out of her nose!

As silly as it was, this was what I loved most about my best friends. Winston and I had been besties for forever. We grew up together in the neighborhood, and he knew everything about me—like that even though I might have rolled my eyes at his dancing sandwich routine, I still secretly loved it. We got to know Switch this year when she moved to Hansberry Heights with her mom. She may have been brand new when we met on the first day of fifth grade, but now we did everything together—playing soccer in the park, coming up with new dance



moves at the Community Center, or just eating scones and slurping smoothies at the diner! All three of us were best friends, and we were always there for each other, no matter what. Plus, we always had so much fun—like, so much fun that juice came out

of Switch's nose a lot 'cause we were always laughing so hard.

We were besties for lots of reasons, but one of them was that we all really loved hip hop. I wanted to grow up and be a rapper, and change the world with my music! And Switch, she was an amazing hip hop beat maker and music producer. She was gonna write all the music for my rhymes someday. Winston was a painter, a sculptor, a fashion designer—a little bit of everything, actually! He might not have known exactly what he was gonna do when he grew up, but I was sure whatever it was, it would be amazing.

Me, Winston, and Switch spent most of our time thinking about hip hop. And all three of us were MC Grillz's biggest fans—he was the coolest, most awesome rapper, and he had serious super swag. And just in case you were wondering, since he was a rapper and a dentist, all his songs were about teeth! We joined in



with Winston as his sandwich danced down the table, singing the chorus of MC Grillz's first song together:

"If you wanna ride with me, just remember I don't play—every member of my crew is always brushin' twice a day!"

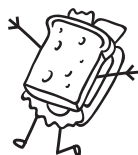
"Uhh . . . what are y'all doing?" Our giggles and Winston's sandwich dancing were interrupted by Crash and Chris, who slid into the seats next to us with their trays.

"Just practicing my moves for the concert this weekend," Winston shrugged, taking a bite from his dancer. "Gotta be ready for the show of the century!"

"No," Switch chimed in, eyes going wide. "The show of the millennium!"

"What show?" Chris asked, chowing down on his chicken nuggets. "What're you talking about?" Me, Winston, and Switch looked at each other before we all squealed together:

"The MC Grillz concert!" I didn't know



how Chris hadn't heard about it—practically everyone in our neighborhood was going to the concert this weekend. MC Grillz was coming to our city for the first time ever to put on a huge show. They said that it would have rapping, singing, dancing, and free toothbrushes for everyone!

And looking around the cafeteria, I could see that just about every kid at Peach Tree Middle School was going to be there—and all of them were just as excited as us. I saw Sam and Demi Ray in their MC Grillz tee shirts, doing his signature floss dance. I saw Megan and Sabiya typing on their laptops, getting updates on the latest MC Grillz concert news from fan websites. And Carrie, Danny, and Mateo were in the middle of a heated argument about which MC Grillz song was his best ever.



“Toothpaste Be Poppin’!” Carrie said with a flip of her ponytail. “And that’s final!”

"No way," Danny and Mateo replied. "It's gotta be 'Floss Like a Boss'!"

Looking around the cafeteria, I was getting even more excited for the concert. It seemed like everyone in the entire fifth grade was going, and we all couldn't wait to see MC Grillz in person!

"It's gonna be the best," I explained to Chris. "It's the biggest thing to happen to our neighborhood since, like, forever!"

"Yeah, dude," Crash added with his annoying smile. "Especially 'cause I have front row tickets." Crash pulled two super-shiny tooth-shaped tickets from his jacket pocket and waved them in front of Chris's face. "I'm gonna be so close to MC Grillz, he'll probably pull me up on stage to sing with him!"

Winston and Switch were impressed, but I couldn't help but roll my eyes. Crash was fine most of the time, I guess, but it felt like he always had to be the best at everything. He bragged all



the time! And sometimes I got competitive with him—especially when it was about music.

“Oh yeah?” I snapped back, “Well, me, Switch, and Winston are gonna get MC Grillz to pull *us* up on stage. ‘Cause we’re gonna have our own dance. And matching outfits! And . . . um . . . we’re gonna do it all on roller skates!”

I could hear Winston leaning over to Switch to whisper, “Wait, we are?”

But Crash just smiled and popped one last tater tot into his mouth. “Yeah, sure—whatever,

Karma. I'll remember to wave to you when *I'm* up on stage, rapping with MC Grillz!" He laughed as he got up from the table and walked out of the cafeteria.

Ugh, Crash! He was always trying to be better than me! I knew then that we'd have to come up with a plan to get up on that stage so we were the ones waving to Crash . . . and not the other way around.



"Um, Karm, are we *actually* gonna go to the concert on roller skates?" Winston asked nervously as we walked home from school.

"Cause I really, really can't roller skate."



I guess roller skates were off the table—but we had to do something special to get MC Grillz's attention at the concert! And even though Crash annoyed me, I wasn't gonna let our conversation with him stop me from being excited. Me, Switch,

and Winston were just two days away from seeing MC Grillz in person, on stage, rapping all our favorite songs! We walked home from school that afternoon and talked through the plan for what was gonna be the best night of our lives.

To keep track of all our ideas, I pulled out my journal as we walked. I brought my journal everywhere with me—it was basically like my second brain. It's where I wrote my thoughts, feelings, and of course my rap lyrics. But right now, I was using it to plan our entire MC Grillz night, step by step. "So Winston, your abuelita will drop you off at my apartment at seven," I started writing.



"And my mom will bring me then, too!" Switch added.

"My dad will take us on the subway to the arena downtown," I said. "But how are we gonna get MC Grillz to notice us, so he pulls us up on

stage? Ooh—maybe if we make matching tee shirts with his face on them!”

“And we could come up with a special dance for his new song,” Switch suggested.

“And we should definitely bring pickle chips.” Winston tapped my journal page seriously. “I heard they are MC Grillz’s favorite snack!”

We all giggled as I wrote it down. “Pickle chips—got it,” I said.

“Did somebody say pickle chips?!” Running from the entrance of his school, my little brother Keys butted his way



into our conversation, just like he always did.

Pickle chips just so happened to be his favorite snack, too—he was basically obsessed with them. He was holding another one of his super silly inventions in his hands. He made them all the time from random things around our apartment. But whatever that thing did, I didn’t want it anywhere near me—Keys’s last invention had blasted pudding all over my bedroom!