

# Chapter 1

“Gerome! Hurry up!”

“Almost done!”

Really, I was just waking up with five minutes to go before the bus came. I hopped out of bed, got dressed and brushed my teeth. Then, I ran downstairs. Dad was cooking waffles, but I opened the pantry and pulled out a granola bar.

“Son, I’m making breakfast!” Dad shouted, pointing to the stack of waffles.

“I’ll be fine! Don’t forget, I’m staying over at Marcos’ for the night!” I yelled all at once while rushing out the door.

I started running. The bus turned around the corner. I ran faster and faster. The doors opened. I ran so fast I thought I was the fastest person in the world. Finally, I reached the bus and my legs relaxed. *Safe*. I climbed into the bus and found the seat of my best friend, Marcos.

Everyone in the school knows Marcos, especially girls. (Mar- COs is the pronunciation. FYI, it means warlike. I must admit, the meaning does not fit Marcos at all).

In case you don't know, Marcos is a real chill guy. He's a video gamer. He's Hispanic and his grandparents are from Mexico. He's got all the girls looking at him like he's a basket full of cute puppies. Most guys hate him because their girlfriends like some other dude that they don't even think is cool. So, if you see a guy with girls following him with dreamy eyes and guys looking like they want to kill him (they probably do), then that's Marcos. Anyways, I sat by him.

"Looked like you were trying to be the Flash out there. Ever thought about the track team?" Marcos said while looking at his game.

I smiled. "I only run like that for desperate times." I pulled out my computer and we started playing games.

"I'm so excited about going to your house!" I exclaimed.

"It's gonna be nothin'. Guess what though, my abuelos are coming."

"Let me guess, grandparents?"

"Right on target."

The bus pulled to a stop. We arrived at Kepler F. Guilder Middle School (I don't even think that's a real

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person). I hopped off the bus and I walked inside then I saw my other best friend, Mike.

If you squish funny and caregiver together, you get Mike. Mike loves to roast or joke on teachers. It's no wonder why he's having so many lunch detentions lately. He cares about his friends though if there's a kid messing with you, tell Mike. Next day, you'll never be messed with by that kid ever again. So, if you're in class and you hear someone joke on the teacher and everyone laughs—when the teacher asks, “whoever said that come here,” you'll know who will walk up.

When I came up to Mike, we dapped each other up. “Yo bro, how's it goin'?” he greeted.

“It's goin' good, how about you?” I responded.

“I feel like roasting somebody.”

“Usual. Yo, you excited about being over at Marcos' tonight?”

“Bruh, I was so ready, I packed last week.” I looked at him in astonishment, was he really that excited?

“Yo, man see ya later.” I walked away and into homeroom and got ready for school.

I played through band class and jogged through P.E. I studied hard through math class and was dozing off during history. I ate lunch with my best friends. I did my best in English and eased through science. Then, I was on the bus again, without any worry about being

late. When we got off the bus, I followed Marcos to his house.

“This is gonna be so awesome,” I said.

“It’s gonna be more than awesome because my sisters are doing after-school activities.”

We stopped on the doorsteps and knocked on the door. Just then Mike’s mom pulled up. We saw Mike get out and ran over.

“Y’all ready for some action-packed games?!” he exclaimed.

“You know I am,” I replied.

“Mike, you packed that much?” Marcos asked, amazed looking at his backpack. Mike’s bag was bulging with stuff. “It’s only one night.”

“A man always has to be ready,” Mike insisted. Right then, the door opened, and Marcos ’mom appeared through the doorway.

“Well, hello! You must be Marcos ’friends. Come inside.”

## *Chapter 2*

Marcos' house looked like Mexican culture and modern things mixed together. The walls had geckos squirming up and down. A TV was mounted high in the living room. Devices were lying around the house. The smell of Mexican food hung in the air. It felt comfortable.

"This house is so cool," Mike said.

"I'm glad you like it," gleamed Marcos' mom.

"Is somethin' cooking?" I wondered aloud.

"Dad's cooking some taquitos for dinner," Marcos replied. "Oh, I forgot to introduce you to my abuelos."

The grandparents got up from the couch and smiled.

"This is my abuelo," Marcos introduced, pointing to the elderly man who had a straw hat, plaid button-down shirt, and khakis. He had a stern face, but a warm grin. He firmly shook our hands. "And this is my abuela," he said, pointing to a woman with a blouse and a gentle

smile. She had a look like she was trying to figure something out about us.

“Hello, I’m Gerome,” I waved kindly.

Marcos’ abuela approached us with a box, “I have something for you all.”

She opened it and there were necklaces inside. She handed a weird looking lion to me. I kindly took it. She handed an alligator to Mike and a monkey to Marcos.

“Thank you,” I smiled.

“Would you like some taquitos for dinner?” Marcos’ dad asked.

“YES!” Marcos and Mike yelled enthusiastically.

“No thanks,” I replied, “they’re too spicy for me.”

Marcos declared “We’ll go upstairs and hang out,” and started running up the stairs. Mike and I followed. There was a mirror on the wall, and I stopped to look at it, seeing the reflection of someone that I have known for years. That person needs an introduction as well.

My name is Gerome, it starts with a g, but has a j sound. (Jer- ROm pronunciation. See told ya— j sound) I’m African American. I have long hair. I love to play and joke. I’m smart and love to challenge my friends. I always think that I’m cool and don’t care if anyone else thinks otherwise. I love that I’m hanging out with my friends.

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“Yo, Gerome, are you coming?!” exclaimed Mike.

“Yeah, right behind ya!” I shouted. I went inside Marcos’ room and saw the TV sitting on a dresser. Mike was shuffling through his bag for his controller. I had mine in my pocket.

“I got Dino Crash. It’s a three-player game. It’s about three hunters killing dinosaurs from an invasion,” Marcos explained.

I was eager. “Nice!” I pulled out my controller and I plugged it in the console. The game turned on.

Mike rushed over with his book bag still on. “What time is it?”

“3:30,” I checked my watch and looked back at Mike. I noticed that Mike had put on the necklace that Marcos’ abuela gave him. I decided to put mine on too. It felt comfy on my neck and I liked it. Marcos saw us and he went to go put on his.

“Huh, it’s pretty cool,” he shrugged. “Let’s get back to our game.”

Mike plugged in his controller and we started the game. We got the tutorial, and we finished all the way to the boss level. We all fist bumped each other at the same time. That was when our necklaces started glowing.