

JUSTIN and the BEST BISCUITS IN THE WORLD



MILDRED PITTS WALTER

JUSTIN IS GROUNDED

THE BALL HIT the board and rolled around the rim of the basket. Justin reached his tallest, caught it on the rebound, and tipped it in.

"My win," Justin said to his friend Anthony. Surprised and pleased he had at last won, Justin said, "Let's play another game."

"I gotta get home, but tomorrow, OK?"

"Let's come early."

"I'll pick you up," Anthony said.

Justin still wanted to play one-on-one,

his favorite basketball game, but there was no one left to challenge him. The playground was emptying fast. Only a few girls were scattered about. Some played jump rope. Others played tetherball.

He watched the rope jumpers and had an urge to get into their game. His sudden, untimed move broke the rhythm. One girl threw down the rope and chased Justin, shouting, "You better stay out of our game!"

Justin ran fast, laughing at her. The girl soon gave up and went back to turn the rope for her friends. Justin returned to the basketball court. He zigzagged, dribbling the ball. Then he tried making long shots and missed them all. At the free-throw line he tossed twice and missed. Disgusted, he dribbled around the court again.

The August sun moved far westward. Rolling hills in the distance cast shadowy shades of purple. The playground was now quiet, deserted. Justin tossed for the basket. He hit. He tossed two more perfect shots and decided it was time to leave.

He walked along the tree-lined streets between rows of sturdy wood frame houses, wishing he didn't have to go home. Not yet. If only he had brothers; one brother, anyway. Somebody to help him control Evelyn, his older sister.

He turned the corner onto his block. Their car was in the driveway. His mother was already home. He hadn't known it was *that* late. Hadiya, his younger sister, strained under bags of groceries as she removed them from the car. That was his job. The one thing he did well enough around the house to win praise and approval. He needed to be home. He started running.

There was much talk, a lot of hustle and bustle inside. That old feeling of being left out came over him. He waited in the hallway just outside the kitchen door, listening.

"Oh, Mama, you didn't," Evelyn shouted.

"Oh, but I did. I had a wonderful sale today, and that means a big bonus."

"Oh, great," Hadiya said, happily. "Now I can get my bicycle fixed."

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Ten-year-old Justin can't seem to do anything right. One sister thinks he's a slob, the other says he's lazy, and according to his mom, he's always late. It's no fun being the only boy in the house.

Luckily, Grandpa comes to the rescue. He invites Justin to his ranch for the big rodeo and teaches him real "men's work"—mending fences, catching fish, and even handling horses. But Justin's cowboy grandfather also has some unexpected lessons in store—like how to make a prizewinning batch of the best biscuits in the world!



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