

BEACON STREET GIRLS®

Time's Up

BY
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ALADDIN MIX

NEW YORK LONDON TORONTO SYDNEY

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Katani Summers
a.k.a. Kgirl . . . Katani has a strong fashion sense and business savvy. She is stylish, loyal & cool.



Avery Madden
Avery is passionate about all sports and animal rights. She is energetic, optimistic & outspoken.



Charlotte Ramsey
A self-acknowledged "klutz" and an aspiring writer, Charlotte is all too familiar with being the new kid in town. She is intelligent, worldly & curious.



Isabel Martinez
Her ambition is to be an artist. She was the last to join the Beacon Street Girls. She is artistic, sensitive & kind.



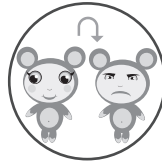
Maevae Kaplan-Taylor
Maevae wants to be a movie star. Bubbly and upbeat, she wears her heart on her sleeve. She is entertaining, friendly & fun.



Ms. Raspberry Pink
The stylishly pink proprietor of the Think Pink! boutique is chic, gracious & charming.



Marty
The adopted best dog friend of the Beacon Street Girls is feisty, cuddly & suave.



Happy Lucky Thing and alter ego Mad Nasty Thing
Marty's favorite chew toy, it is known to reveal its alter ego when shaken too roughly. He is most often happy.





Part One
Kgirl Enterprises



CHAPTER

I

Rock Steady

They have harnesses and stuff, right?" Maeve asked in a tremulous voice. "I mean, to catch you if you fall off?"

At the words "fall off," Katani swallowed hard. She too felt nervous at the sight of the ginormous, gray climbing wall. *I can't believe I'm actually going to climb it*, she thought. But she reached down and gave Maeve's clammy hand a reassuring squeeze. "Chillax, girlfriend. Look at Avery. She can't fall." Sure enough, Avery, the most athletic of the group of friends, was already securely harnessed and had started her climb.

Katani tried to distract herself from her fears of looking like a total spaz on the wall by concentrating on her favorite magazine, *T-Biz! A Magazine for Teen Entrepreneurs*. As she flipped another page with her free hand, a colorful ad suddenly caught her eye. "This is incredible!" she blurted out loud, before she could stop herself.

"Whoa! That's the spirit, Katani!" Avery shouted encouragingly, giving the Kgirl a thumbs-up as she dangled in her harness.

Katani looked up, slightly embarrassed by her outburst but glowing with excitement about what she had read. “No, no, it’s not that, Ave. Forget the wall. It’s this contest—an ‘Entrepreneur of the Year’ contest for middle-school students! Listen . . .” But Avery was already facing the wall and the pint-size climber hadn’t heard a word she had said. Katani figured Avery was probably too busy trying to beat the boy next to her up the wall.

“You better put that magazine away, Miss Fashion Biz, and listen to the instructor, or you’ll be hanging every which way when it’s your turn,” warned a suddenly serious Maeve, her big blue eyes glued to the climbers scrambling up the wall like little spider people. Maeve gasped as one climber slipped and fell away from the wall.

But Katani couldn’t care less about the rock climbers. In fact, she wished she had stayed home. *T-Biz!* was seeking “the next generation of business leaders.” This was *so* up her alley. Kgirl Enterprises was her ultimate fantasy. She should be home now writing up her “detailed, viable business plan” instead of climbing like a giant bug up some *craaaazy* wall. Why had she agreed to come? The contest offered “an opportunity for all young entrepreneurs to fulfill their dreams.” Katani looked around to see if she could find a quiet place to keep reading.

A sudden blur on the rock wall grabbed her attention. “That girl just fell ten feet!” she yelled.

Maeve, who had been waving for Charlotte and Isabel to come over, spun around. The little girl was now hanging in midair. Maeve’s legs began to tremble.

“She’s fine,” a boy standing behind the girls said.

Maeve turned around to see two of their friends from school. “Hey! Dillon and Nick! What are you doing here?”

“How can Isabel just stand over there and draw?” Katani commented, glancing over at Isabel, who was intently sketching one of the climbers. “My hands are shaking so much, I don’t think I could hold a pencil!” she said as she quickly zipped her magazine in the pocket of her sweatshirt. While she liked Dillon and Nick, no way was she ready to share that she was going to enter the *T-Biz!* entrepreneur contest with the two most popular boys at Abigail Adams Junior High. Dillon could be a big tease, and she didn’t want to be his latest target. She could just hear him in the cafeteria announcing, “Katani’s going to be on the next *Oprah*. Uh-huh!”

“What are *we* doing here? What are *you* doing here?” The good-looking Dillon pointed at Maeve’s hot pink yoga pants. He had a low tolerance for all that pink girly stuff. “Nice climbing gear, Maeve,” he teased.

She punched him in the arm.

“Seriously, I didn’t know you Beacon Street Girls were rock girls,” Nick Montoya joked, his eyes on Charlotte, who had just reached the group. “We’ve been climbing for months,” he added proudly.

“This is my first time,” Katani offered. She totally didn’t want the guys thinking she was any kind of expert. Especially since she was now convinced that she would be slip sliding down that wall any minute now.

“We’re forming a team so we can compete. Rock climbing is, like, the coolest sport ever. Hey, check out the Ave.” Dillon pointed to Avery grabbing the top of the wall. “Leave it to Avery to beat an experienced climber like Josh on her first try.” He shook his head in admiration.

“Well, it’s not really Avery’s first time. She’s tried it a couple of times in Colorado,” Charlotte piped up. Then she blushed, thinking that maybe she sounded like she was putting Avery

down. She was, in fact, really proud of her friend and just wanted to explain that Avery was pretty skilled already.

"Well, Avery definitely should join our team, then. We're going to need all the help we can get because we aren't that great," Nick said, laughing.

"Hey! Speak for yourself, dude," Dillon protested. Charlotte and Katani looked at each other. They both knew what the other was thinking: Why weren't more boys like Nick Montoya. He wasn't braggy and show-offy like most of the boys they knew.

Suddenly, Avery was in front of them. "A team? I want to join a team! I'm in, right, guys?"

"Oh, yeah!" Nick said.

"Sweet!" Avery threw her fists in the air. "Okay, guys. We gotta find some supercompetitive climbers if we want to win. Let's get together. . . ."

Avery was interrupted by Chris, the muscled instructor, who faced the group. "Okay, ready to rock steady, ladies?" He pointed at the wall behind them. Katani stared at the huge structure, and Maeve made a funny scaredy-cat face. The wall towered over them, looking impossibly high.

Katani felt her stomach twist into knots just looking at it. She glanced over at Maeve, who was tapping her right foot up and down while clasping and unclasping her hands together. Katani stifled a nervous giggle. Competitive friends, a looming contest deadline, and now another opportunity to demonstrate her total *lack* of athletic skills? That was just too many walls to climb!

"Chill out, guys! We'll catch you after your lesson." Dillon waved as he and Nick exchanged a laughing look and walked away from the girls.

"I'll give it another go." Avery grinned, turning her full attention to Chris.

"Where's Isabel?" Charlotte suddenly looked concerned. Katani and Maeve glanced around the crowded gym but couldn't see their dark-haired friend anywhere. "You girls have to get going or we're going to run out of time," an impatient Chris warned them. "I've got another lesson coming up," he explained.

The BSG turned their heads to face him when suddenly Isabel appeared out of nowhere, clutching her notebook. She popped in line next to Avery. Katani whispered, "You better stash that sketchbook in your backpack or it will get lost." Isabel's eyes widened. Her sketchbook was too important to her to ever let it get lost.

"Excuse me, Mr. Instructor." Isabel waved her hand. Maeve couldn't help giggling. "What?" Isabel stared at her friend. "I just want to know if I can go and put my notebook in my backpack. There may be great works of art in here." The artist of the group grinned.

Chris just shook his head. "Hurry up," he said, squelching a smile. He began counting as Maeve started a little impromptu hip-hop routine to one, two, three and Isabel sprinted across the gym, darting in between climbers and parents. Stashing her sketchbook in her green backpack, she was back in less than twelve seconds. Avery gave her a high five and the BSG were ready to climb . . . well, three of them were. Linking pinkies, Katani nibbled on her lip and Maeve twirled a curl.

Chris carefully went over the general climbing rules again and showed the girls how to strap on the safety ropes. Within minutes, all the BSG were harnessed and on the beginners' wall. A couple of experienced climbers came over to belay them.

"You're doing great, girls. Go at your own pace, hold by

hold," Chris called up to them as they began to inch up the wall.

Avery scaled half the wall in seconds, then stopped to look down at her friends. "Go, BSG! You definitely have the hang of it."

"We better have the 'hang' of it," Charlotte said with a laugh, gripping the colorful ridges of rocks on the wall with her fingers and toes, "or we're in trouble!"

"I'm going to demolish this wall!" Avery announced, scrambling like a mad monkey to the top.

"Look at us, we're really doing it!" Isabel yelled up to the triumphant Avery.

Avery hung at the top while Isabel and Charlotte kept a steady though slow pace. "Rock it," she shouted down to her friends, but couldn't help glancing at the overhang on the twenty-foot route next to her. She would be climbing that within a month, she promised herself as she zipped back down the wall with her usual natural athletic abandon.

"Nice work up there," Chris told her.

"Thanks. Can I try the intermediate wall?" Avery jogged in place, trying to be patient, but about to jump out of her skin. She wanted a bigger challenge than the beginners' wall.

"I see you're ready to go, but let's give your other friends a minute to catch up."

Avery looked up. She couldn't believe what she was seeing. Despite her long limbs, Katani had made it only a few yards up the wall and looked as scared as if she were climbing Mount Everest instead of a beginners' wall. Avery had to cover her mouth to keep from laughing out loud. Katani must have seen Avery watching because she suddenly flung herself back to the wall with her determined Kgirl look.

Katani actually managed to scramble up about a foot. *Not*

too bad for an unathletic beginner! Katani thought as she gave herself an imaginary pat on the back.

Suddenly a screaming, flailing Maeve flew out from the wall sideways. Avery couldn't hold it in any longer—she burst into a humongous belly laugh. With her hair flying and her bright pink pants flapping, Maeve looked like a wild and crazy flamingo. She must have flown out a good five feet from the wall before she was saved by the safety harness.

"Hey look, Maeve's auditioning for *Fear Factor!*" Avery yelled a little louder than she intended. Everybody in the gym turned to look.

Though Maeve seemed more than slightly terrified, she just couldn't stop her performer self from taking over. She pushed herself off the wall again, flung her arm out, and bent her leg. She shouted, "Not *Fear Factor*, *Peter Pan*—the next time it comes to Broadway!"

Half the people in the gym were staring up at her. Dillon was laughing so hard he could barely stand up. A small, scared smile spread across Maeve's face, and still she was such a ham! Avery swore Maeve would do anything for attention.

Finally, an embarrassed but radiant Maeve was lowered to the ground, where she took a sweeping bow. A minute later, Katani joined her, looking like she had just run the Boston Marathon. "I think I'll stick to horseback riding," she said, wiping the sweat off her forehead.

"I guess I'm not going to make your rock-climbing team," Maeve said, smiling sweetly at Dillon.

"You'll have to start your own team with Tinkerbell and Wendy," Dillon told her.

"Yeah, in Neverland," Nick added.

"Maeve, you crack me up!" Avery was trying to swallow her laughter. "I'm so glad you came. I bet I could learn to

climb every wall in here, but I could never create the scene you just did!"

"Only Maeve," Dillon agreed.

Nick was watching Charlotte and Isabel descending. "You did great!" he yelled to them as they landed.

"Everything okay here?" Muscle Man stood in front of them, dwarfing Dillon and Nick.

"Fine, thanks," Maeve said, with an innocent expression as she flung her red curls over her shoulder with a flourish. "I guess the stars indicate that I belong on the ground."

"Have to say, we don't get to see rock climbing like that every day. Hope to see you girls again," Chris said, then turned back to the wall.

The BSG clasped arms and dashed for the locker room. Life on the wall had rocked their day.