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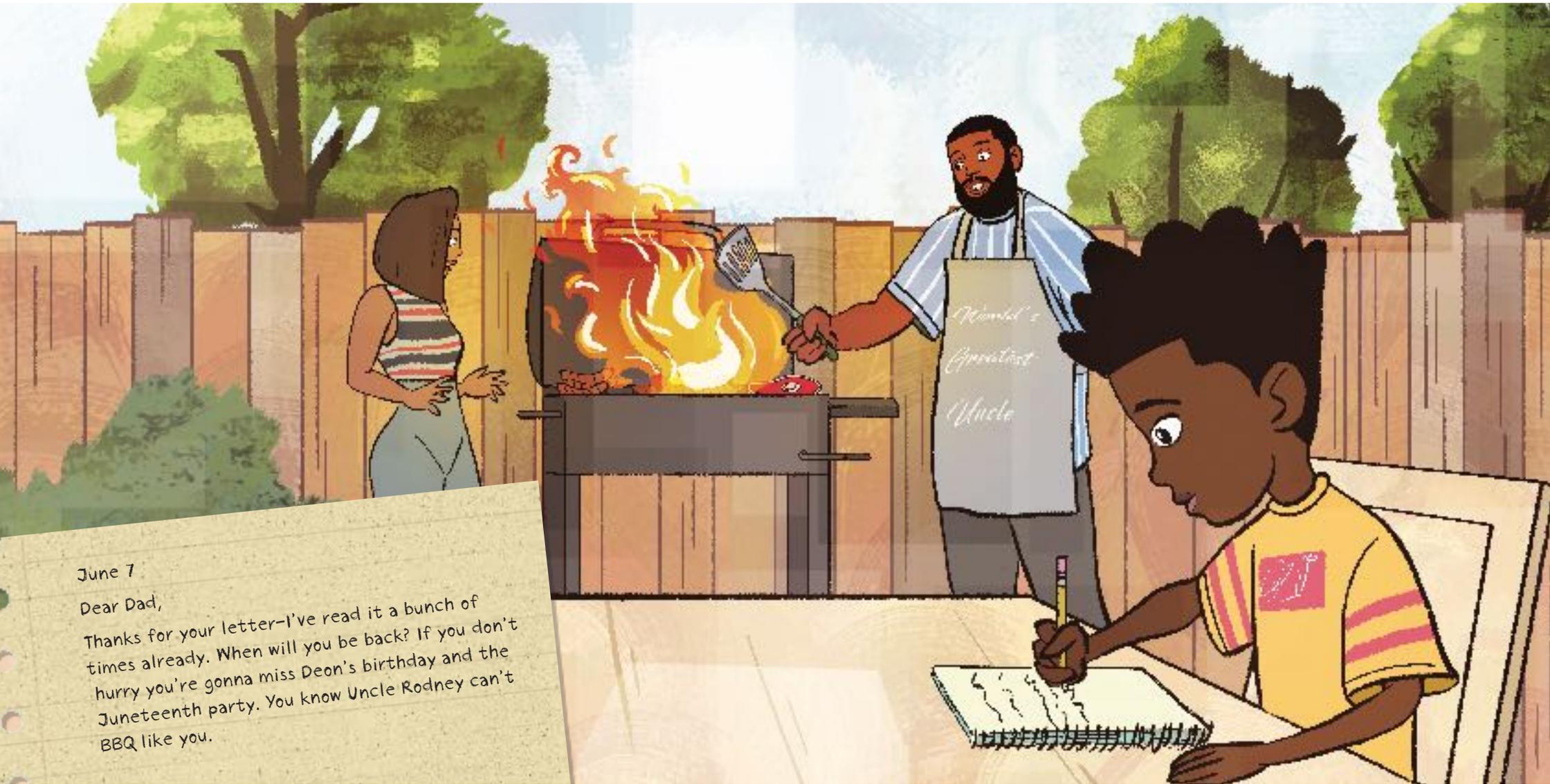
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To all the children and communities who are
missing someone, may letter writing and communication
help mend the pain until they return home.

To Ma, Lee, Lee Lee, and Donyae, for always being my inspiration.
—with love, Magi

To my loving parents—thank you for always
encouraging me to follow my dreams.
—David





June 7

Dear Dad,

Thanks for your letter—I've read it a bunch of times already. When will you be back? If you don't hurry you're gonna miss Deon's birthday and the Juneteenth party. You know Uncle Rodney can't BBQ like you.



Anyway, the only change here since you left is that Chyanne moved to art school. Before she went she told me, "Remember that you are significant," but I don't know what that means. Maybe "cool"?
Now two of my favorite people left. Who's next? MAMA!? Deon can't take care of me.



Do you know who's the significantest person I know? You. Remember when you and me and Deon did cool things together like fix up the ol' Chevy? Those were the best days.

Love,
Nelson

Tips for Writing Letters to Incarcerated Loved Ones

There are many ways to talk to someone who is incarcerated, such as visiting them, making phone calls, sending email, and video chatting if they have that option. However, one of the least expensive and most fun ways is good old-fashioned letter writing. Writing a letter allows you to think about what you want to say and practice storytelling. And it gives your loved one a handwritten note they can keep and reread later.

Here's what you'll need:

- paper (some facilities only allow white paper)
- something to write with (like a pencil or a blue or black pen)
- your address
- your loved one's address (including the facility's street address and the person's ID number)
- an envelope
- a stamp or stamps

Here's what you'll do: (If you need help with any of these steps, ask a parent or other family adult. This includes finding out what is or isn't allowed in letters to your loved one.)

1. Traditional letters open with **"Dear (person's name),"** which is usually a good way to start.

You can also freestyle it! Starting letters with quotes, jokes, or alternatives like **"Happy Holidays, Dad"** or **"Howdy, Mom"** can help set the tone for the rest of your letter.

2. Write the main part of the letter. If it feels difficult to start, write from the heart. Remember, letters are like a conversation. Write what you would say if you were talking to the person. Here are some ideas if you get stumped:
 - Update them on your life, such as telling them about your school, your friends, or activities that you like to do.
 - Share family news, like if your cousin is having a baby or your Uncle Rodney is getting married.
 - Bring up things you know they like. If they love music, let them know about the latest album by their favorite musician. If they enjoy food, tell them about a new recipe you tried or let them know you have perfected Grandma's German chocolate cake recipe. (Bonus points if you promise them a slice when they return home.)
 - Ask for advice if you are struggling with something. Your loved one will probably like to have the chance to



help you, especially if the problem you're facing is one they've dealt with.

- Draw pictures that they will love. You could draw a picture of your family or the person's favorite car or anything else you think they would like.
- Ask questions that give the person something to write back to you about. Think about their situation. You might ask, **"Has anyone else written letters to you?"** If they say no, you could encourage other family members to write letters. Or, **"Have you read any good books lately?"** If they say yes, you could ask them to tell you what they learned or describe their favorite part of the book. You can also share some of your favorite stories and what you loved about them.

3. Next, you can sign off. The sign-off includes a wrap-up sentence and your signature. You can write something like:

**"I hope you are doing well and
I can't wait to hear from you
Love,
Nelson"**

4. Now you can get ready to send your letter. In the top-left corner of the front of the envelope, write your address or the address that you will check for mail in the future.

This information lets your loved one know where they can send their response. Write it like this:

**Your first and last name
Your street address
City name, state abbreviation, zip code**

5. Next, write the address of your loved one in the center of the envelope. Follow this format:

**The person's first and last name
(and sometimes their ID number)
Facility name
Street address
City name, state abbreviation, zip code**

6. Now you can fold your letter to fit it in the envelope and seal it.
7. Next, put a postage stamp on the top-right corner of the envelope. If you do not have stamps already, you can get some from your local post office. A stamp costs less than a dollar. The number of stamps you need depends on the weight of the envelope and letter. One stamp should be enough for a one- or two-page letter.

