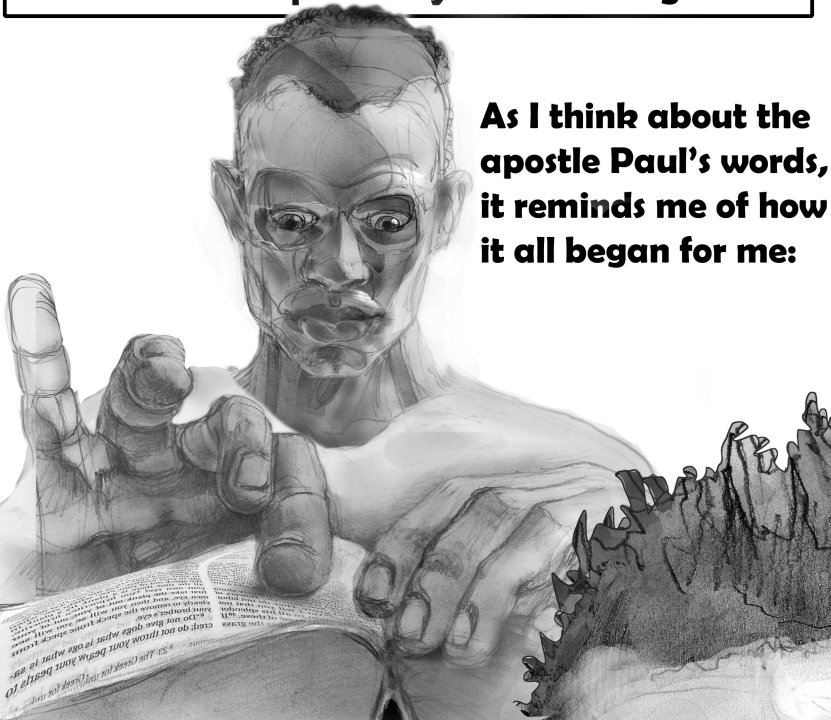


# BOY TO MAN

**“When I was a child I thought like a child, acted like a child and reasoned like a child. When I became a man I put away childish things.”**

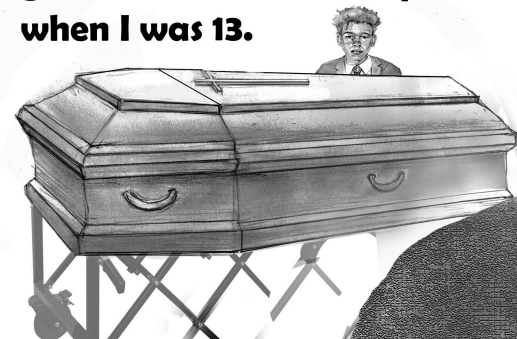


**As I think about the apostle Paul’s words, it reminds me of how it all began for me:**

**During my childhood, my mother spent her days on the couch, high or drunk. We never had food in the fridge. I walked around hungry with no shoes and dirty clothes.**

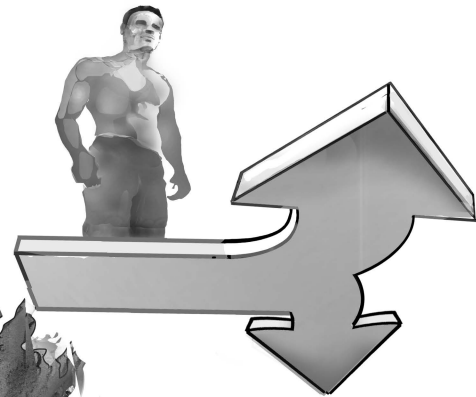
**My two older sisters and I got our meals from the mission because my mother sold our food stamps for drugs.**

**Eventually, we were taken away from my mother and went to live with our grandmother but she passed away when I was 13.**



**Since no other family member wanted us, my sisters and I were put into the foster care system and sent to separate homes.**

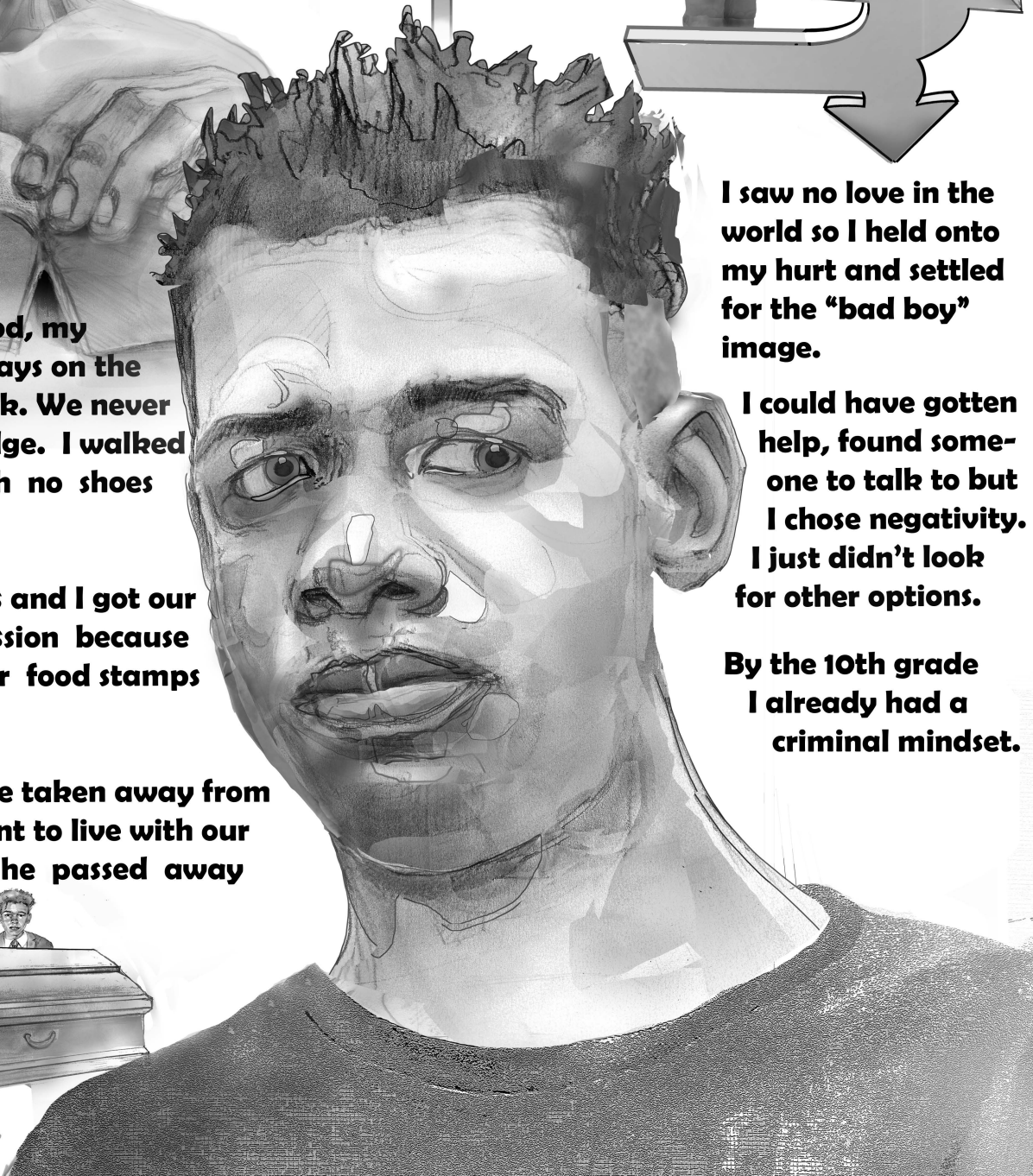
**As I entered high school, I made a decision: I decided to have an attitude.**



**I saw no love in the world so I held onto my hurt and settled for the “bad boy” image.**

**I could have gotten help, found someone to talk to but I chose negativity. I just didn’t look for other options.**

**By the 10th grade I already had a criminal mindset.**





One day, after government class, I just walked out the front door of the school. I was sick of it all: school, my foster home, my whole life. I wanted to walk away from everything.

But I remember that I stopped for a minute after I came down the steps and ran all of my options over in my head. I think I knew I was making a big mistake.

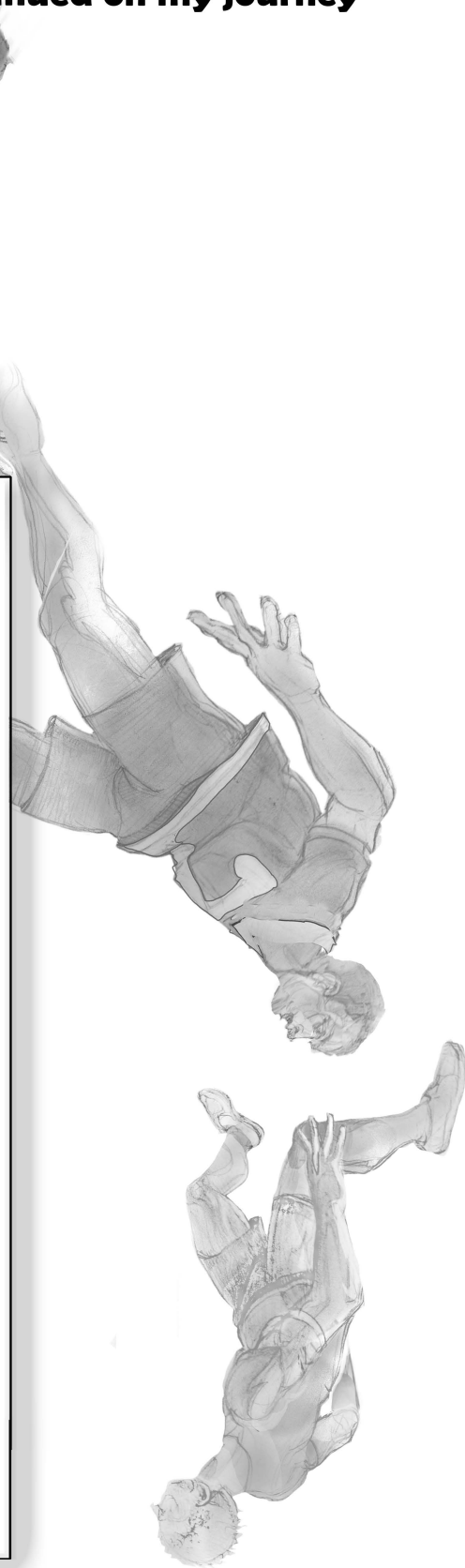
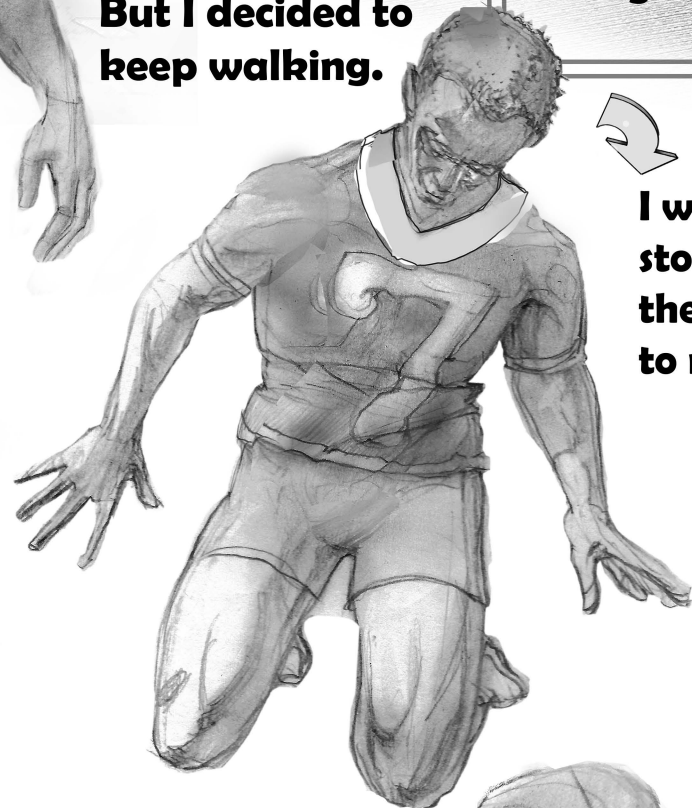
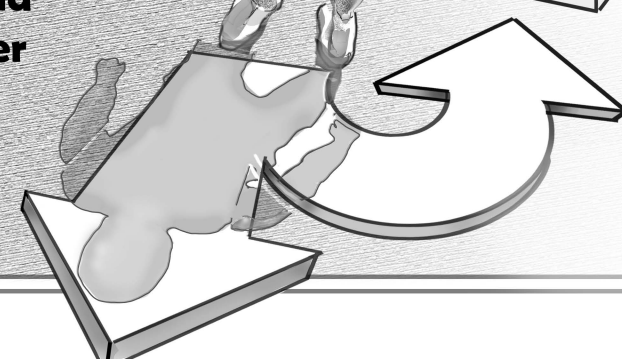
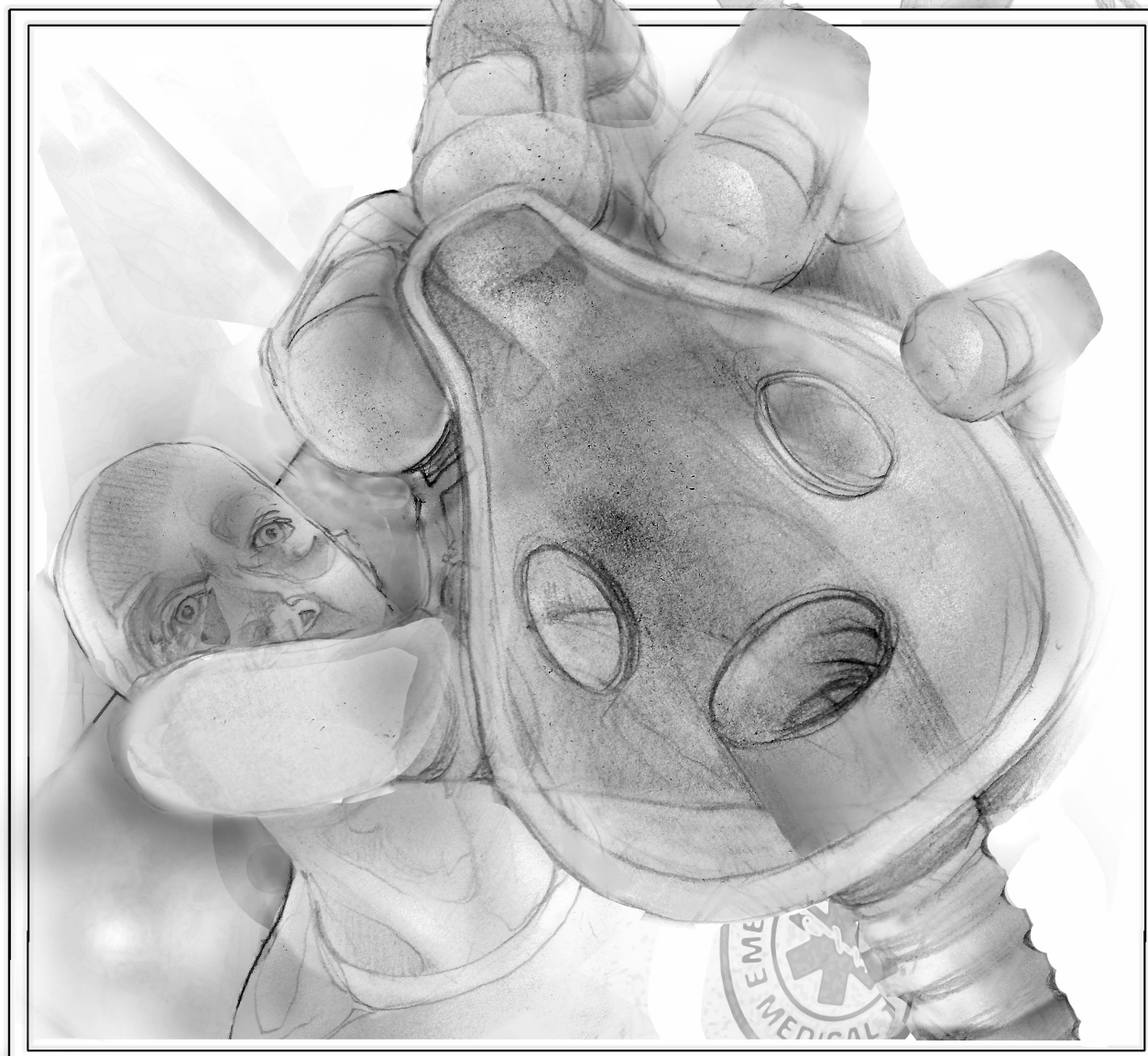
But I decided to keep walking.

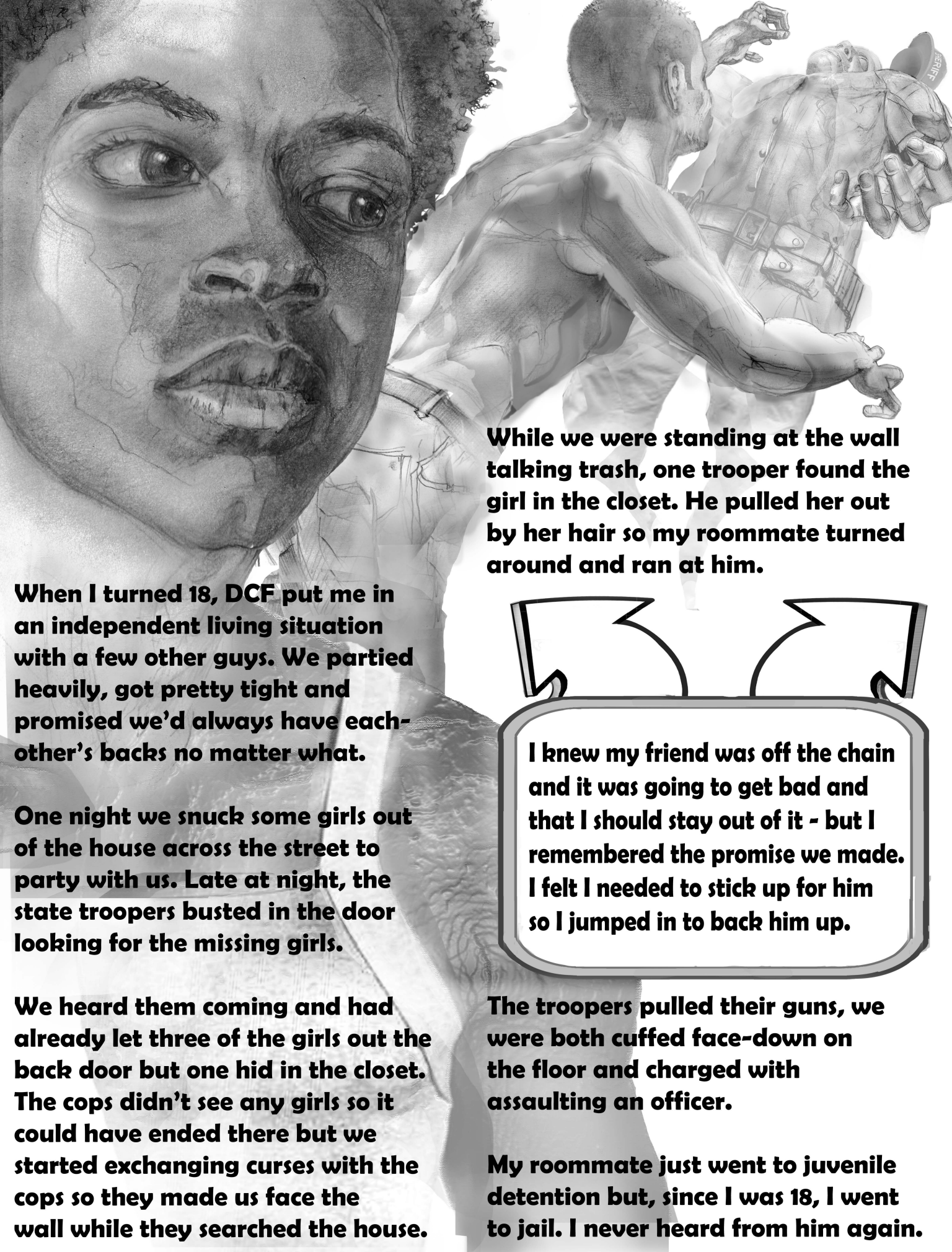
I walked for miles. It was 95 degrees. After a while I stopped at a liquor store, stole Four Lokos and downed them one after another as I continued on my journey to nowhere.

Within minutes I was staggering drunk. I made my way into a McDonalds and passed out. I woke with an emergency response team over me, putting an oxygen mask on my face. I heard them say my body was shutting down.

In the hospital, while they were pumping me out, a nurse told me I had alcohol poisoning. She said that I was dying when they brought me in.

The police came in later, arrested me for public intoxication and violation of probation and sent me back to DCF.





**When I turned 18, DCF put me in an independent living situation with a few other guys. We partied heavily, got pretty tight and promised we'd always have each other's backs no matter what.**

**One night we snuck some girls out of the house across the street to party with us. Late at night, the state troopers busted in the door looking for the missing girls.**

**We heard them coming and had already let three of the girls out the back door but one hid in the closet. The cops didn't see any girls so it could have ended there but we started exchanging curses with the cops so they made us face the wall while they searched the house.**

**While we were standing at the wall talking trash, one trooper found the girl in the closet. He pulled her out by her hair so my roommate turned around and ran at him.**

**I knew my friend was off the chain and it was going to get bad and that I should stay out of it - but I remembered the promise we made. I felt I needed to stick up for him so I jumped in to back him up.**

**The troopers pulled their guns, we were both cuffed face-down on the floor and charged with assaulting an officer.**

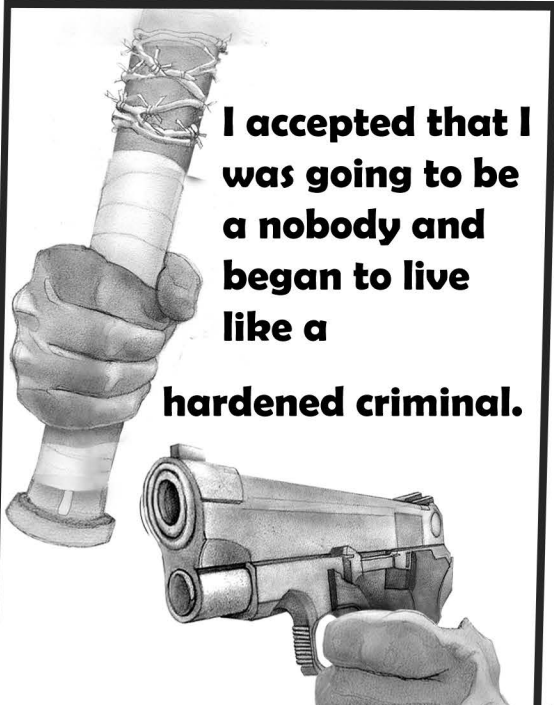
**My roommate just went to juvenile detention but, since I was 18, I went to jail. I never heard from him again.**

**After that, things went from bad to worse.** ↻

**... did whatever I wanted.**



**I didn't care what happened to me.** ↻



**I accepted that I was going to be a nobody and began to live like a**

**hardened criminal.**

**I gave up, let go and**

**Eventually, I ended up here, serving time in state prison.**



**Now I've taken time to reflect and accept responsibility for what I've done. Christ renewed my mind so I can now see how I got here:**

**I've always been searching for the love I didn't have as a child. As a teen I just got angry. I didn't ask for help. I remained stuck in that 'child' phase and didn't make the transition from boy to man.**

**Holding on to hurt stunted my growth. Now here in prison, for the first time, I've been able to grow as a person. That's why Paul's words speak to me:**

**"...but when I became a man, I put away childish things!"**

