

Child of Woe

THE TRUE STORY
OF MAURY BLAIR

WITH SUSAN WELLS, GRAHAM PAULSEN, KAREN AMARAL

A PERSONAL MESSAGE

Not one scene in *Child of Woe* was “based on a true story.” It is the actual account of Maury Blair’s life. Every incident happened—except when Maury insisted the worst details be left out.

Is Maury Blair for real, or is he more like the unrealistic heroes in Hallmark movies—the feel-good but exaggerated stories that could leave you with a sugar high? I’d be skeptical if I didn’t know Maury personally or hadn’t confirmed these events with his lifelong friends.

The story of Maury’s first pastor, Jack Ozard, is found here. Susan Ozard Keddy, Jack’s daughter, recalls: “I’ve known Maury all my life. I remember him sitting at my parents’ table, talking so fast it seemed like he never took a breath. His enthusiasm has never stopped!”

Hope was there for Maury, just as it is here for you. Something led you to this book. As Maury and I have discovered, God has been with you all along.

Susan Wells

Author: *Child of Woe*, *Child of Woe – Graphic Novel*

MEET THE CREATORS

SUSAN WELLS, author and visionary behind *Child of Woe*, crafted the dialogues based on the original memoir, developed the storyboard content, and managed the book’s creation. Her career has spanned the decorative arts, from professional home stager to author of two DIY decorating books and host of TV’s *Dreamhomes*. Susan brings creativity, humor, and inspiration to her publications and seminars. Her inspirational works include, *A Place at My Table* and the *Child of Woe* memoir. Her passion for sharing Maury Blair’s journey has been the driving force behind carrying his legacy to new generations.



GRAHAM PAULSEN is a creative director and media producer specializing in graphic design and digital artistry. With a blend of advanced graphic design techniques and digital tools, Graham crafted the visual world of *Child of Woe*, transforming the narrative into a vivid and immersive experience. His work on this project involved artistic vision and technical skill, bringing to life the raw emotion and transformative journey of Maury’s story. Graham feels deeply honored to contribute to retelling a story that has inspired so many, shedding light on the resilience and hope that continue to guide those facing their own challenges.



KAREN AMARAL is a digital creator who has a passion for graphic design and website design. She was behind the layout of *Child of Woe*, counting it a privilege to use her creative skills to bring this powerful story to life. Collaborating with the team on the visual structure of the novel was both a technical and personal honor. Having first encountered Maury’s story at the age of eleven, she has long been inspired by its depth and raw portrayal of resilience in the face of adversity. Being a part of retelling this moving narrative has been a humbling experience, one that she holds dear as it continues to shed light on the silent battles faced by so many.



We are thankful to our families, whose support, and patience, helped make this possible!

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THE ANIMAL'S PREY

STATUE-LIKE, MAURY WOULD PRESS INTO THE DARKENED CORNER OF THE UPSTAIRS BEDROOM. THE BOY'S APPEARANCE WAS STRIKING—A SKELETAL FRAME WITH SUNKEN EYES BETRAYING HIS YOUNG YEARS.

NOBODY
LOVES ME.
NOBODY
EVER
WILL.

THE CREAKING ANNOUNCED THE TORMENTOR'S ARRIVAL. THE CHILDREN WOULD SETTLE INTO AN UNEASY QUIET AS HE STAGGERED UP THE PORCH STEPS. THE SCREEN DOOR SQUEALED WHEN OPENED, HISSED AND SLAPPED WHEN YOU LET IT GO.

EVERYBODY ...
HIDE!

I'M GOING
TO KILL
HIM!

THE "OLD MAN," THE CHILDREN'S NAME FOR HIM, WAS HOME. HE ROARED AND CURSED IN A DRUNKEN STUPOR. EVERYONE MADE ROOM FOR HIM LIKE YOU WOULD A MENACING ANIMAL, BUT HIS ACTUAL PREY WAS ELSEWHERE

...
UPSTAIRS, THE DOOR'S SLAPPING SENT A JOLT OF SILENT TERROR THROUGH MAURY. HE SPRANG AWAY FROM THE CRACKS IN THE FLOOR AND SLIPPED TO THE CORNER WINDOW. HIS SURVIVAL INSTINCTS WARNED HIM TO MOVE QUICKLY AS HE VANISHED INTO THE SHADOW'S EMBRACE.

SOMEBODY,
PLEASE HELP!

THE SOLITARY CHILD COULD HEAR THEM ALL. WHEN DANGER WASN'T PRESENT, HE'D SLIP TO THE FLOOR, LYING FLAT ON HIS SKINNY BELLY WITH HIS CHIN RESTING ON HIS KNUCKLES. THROUGH THE CRACKS IN THE FLOOR, HE COULD SEE THE ROOMS BELOW— A PRISONER'S VIEW OF HIS FAMILY'S ACTIVITIES.

IT'S MY BIRTHDAY AND I CAN'T EVEN TURN ON THE LIGHT OR I'LL BE BEATEN. WHY AM I SO DIFFERENT? WHY SO HATED? ○ ○ ○



CAUGHT YOU TURNING ON THE LIGHT, YOU 'BL@*K B@ST@RD'. I'M COMING UP TO GET YOU!



GYRUS! NOOOO! HE'S JUST A CHILD!

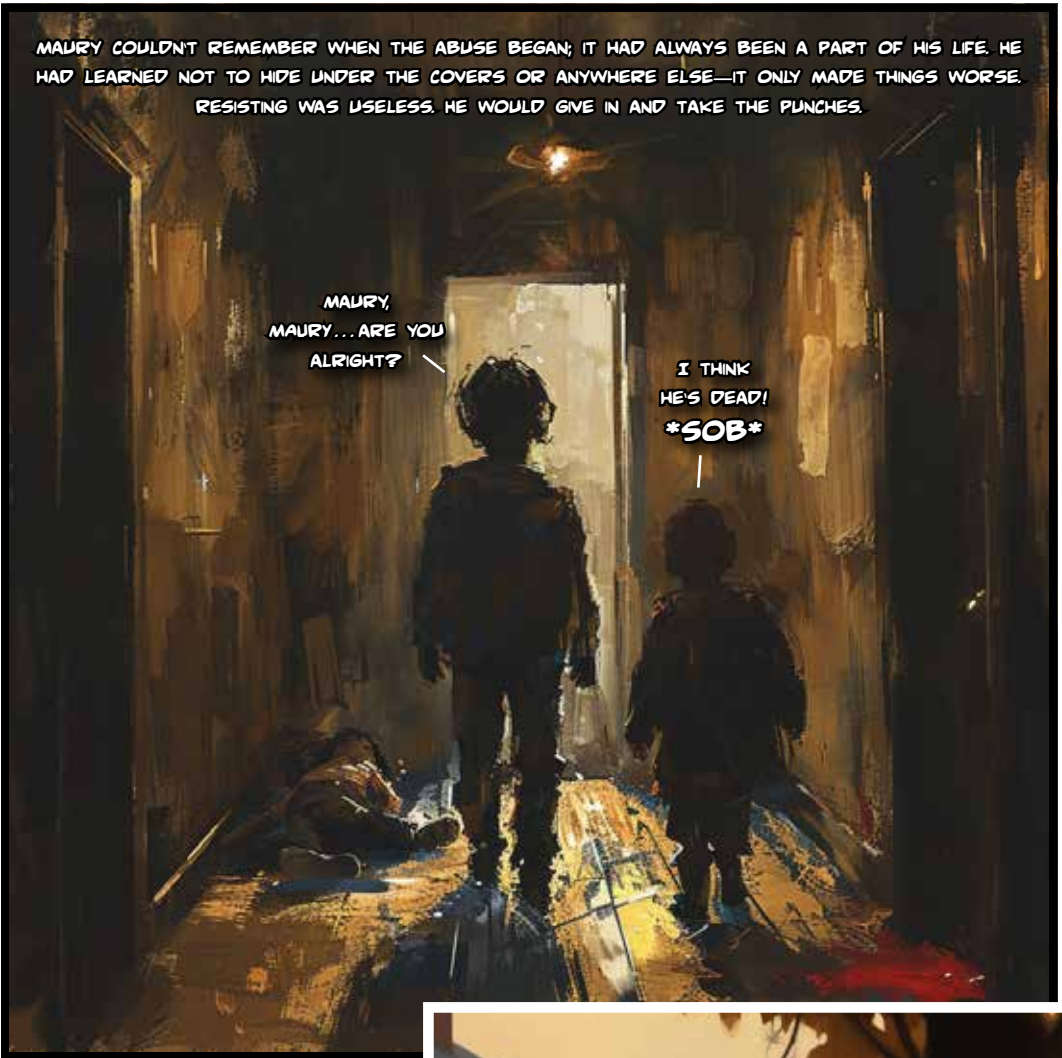
WHY DOES HE ONLY CALL ME THAT NAME? I HATE THAT I LOOK DIFFERENT THAN THE FAMILY. ○ ○ ○

THE CRACKS IN THE FLOOR OFFERED HIS ONLY GLIMPSES INTO FAMILY MEAL TIMES. ON CHRISTMAS DAY, A BROTHER MIGHT SNEAK HIM SCRAPS OF FOOD.

WHY IS MY HAIR DARKER, AND MY SKIN NOT AS LIGHT AS ○ ○ ○ MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS?



MAURY COULDN'T REMEMBER WHEN THE ABUSE BEGAN; IT HAD ALWAYS BEEN A PART OF HIS LIFE. HE HAD LEARNED NOT TO HIDE UNDER THE COVERS OR ANYWHERE ELSE—IT ONLY MADE THINGS WORSE. RESISTING WAS USELESS. HE WOULD GIVE IN AND TAKE THE PUNCHES.



MAURY,
MAURY... ARE YOU
ALRIGHT?

I THINK
HE'S DEAD!
SOB

SIDETRACKED

JUST A FEW YEARS EARLIER,
MAURY'S MOTHER, ALICE, HAD BEEN
A PROMISING STUDENT WITH DREAMS
OF MAKING THE WORLD BETTER.

ALICE SHOWS POTENTIAL
FOR HELPING OTHERS,
AND SHE'S ALREADY A
GREAT COMMUNICATOR!



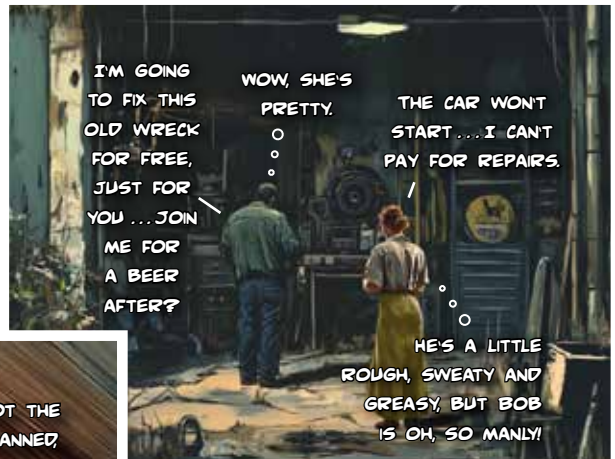
I HAVE TO
TAKE CARE
OF MY
MOTHER.
GOD, I
PROMISE
TO BE
BACK
SOON.



... THERE IS NO MONEY. WHY DO I HAVE ALL THE WORK?

TIMES WERE HARD. ALICE WAS NOW RUNNING THE FAMILY HOUSEHOLD, WITH NO HOPE OF RETURNING TO COLLEGE. HER MOTHER WAS DEMANDING AND ONLY WANTED ALICE TO TAKE CARE OF HER. THE OTHERS WERE GLAD TO STAY AWAY.

THE OLD CAR KEPT BREAKING DOWN. ALICE WAS FORCED TO GET IT FIXED.



I'M GOING TO FIX THIS OLD WRECK FOR FREE, JUST FOR YOU ... JOIN ME FOR A BEER AFTER?

WOW, SHE'S PRETTY.

THE CAR WON'T START ... I CAN'T PAY FOR REPAIRS.

HE'S A LITTLE ROUGH, SWEATY AND GREASY, BUT BOB IS OH, SO MANLY!



THOSE TWO ARE NEVER GOING TO MAKE IT ... ALICE SURE ISN'T THE GIRL SHE USED TO BE.

THIS IS NOT THE LIFE I'D PLANNED, BUT I'LL MAKE IT WORK.

WITH EACH BABY, I GET MORE DEPRESSED. THERE ISN'T ENOUGH FOR FOOD. I CAN'T COPE. THINGS JUST CAN'T GET WORSE.

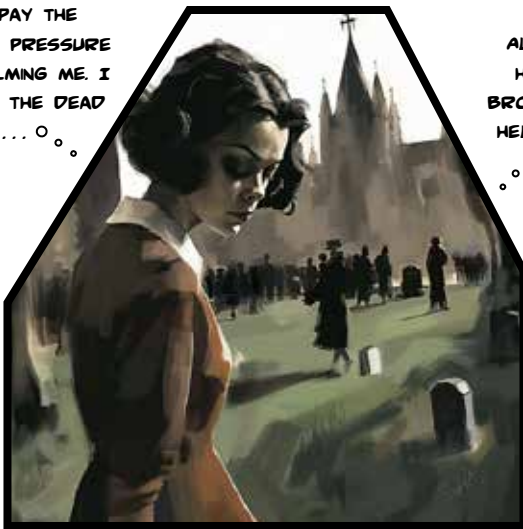
THERE HAD BEEN NO RAIN FOR MONTHS. THE FARM CROPS DRIED UP. BANKS CLOSED. JOBS WERE SCARCE. NO ONE HAD MONEY.

MOM ... WE'RE HUNGRY!



I CAN'T PAY THE DOCTOR. THE PRESSURE IS OVERWHELMING ME. I WISH I WAS THE DEAD ONE... ○ ○

PNEUMONIA, A TERRIBLE LUNG INFECTION, SWEEPED THE TOWN. BOB'S MOTHER REFUSED TO HELP WITH MEDICAL BILLS OR EVEN HIS FUNERAL EXPENSES.



ALICE IS PRETTY BUT HAS NO MONEY. MY BROTHER BOB DIED, I'LL HELP HER. SHE'LL HAVE ○ ○ TO TAKE ME.

ALICE WAS DROWNING IN BILLS AND POVERTY. THERE WAS NO HELP FROM GOVERNMENT OR THE COMMUNITY. CYRUS—BOB'S OLDER BROTHER—STEPPED UP. HE WAS CHARMING ON THE OUTSIDE, EVIL ON THE INSIDE.

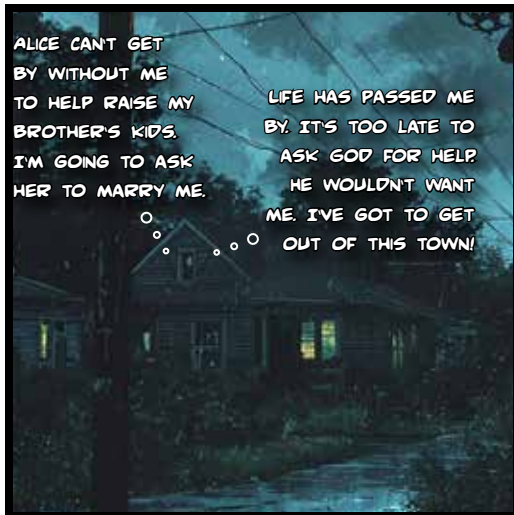


IT'S NOT RIGHT THAT MY WIFE DIED AND I HAVE NO CHILDREN... I THINK ALICE WANTS ME. SHE DEFINITELY NEEDS ME.

YOU CAN COUNT ON ME, ALICE!

THANK YOU FOR THE GROCERIES AGAIN, CYRUS. WHAT WOULD I DO WITHOUT YOU?

YOUNG ALICE SHOWED THE BEGINNING SIGNS OF HER LIFETIME INSTINCT TO RUN AWAY FROM PROBLEMS.



ALICE CAN'T GET BY WITHOUT ME TO HELP RAISE MY BROTHER'S KIDS. I'M GOING TO ASK HER TO MARRY ME.

LIFE HAS PASSED ME BY. IT'S TOO LATE TO ASK GOD FOR HELP. HE WOULDN'T WANT ME. I'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF THIS TOWN!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR OFFER CYRUS. I'M MOVING TO MY SISTER'S CITY FOR A JOB. FAMILY ARE TAKING CARE OF THE CHILDREN TIL I GET SETTLED.

THAT'S OKAY ALICE. I UNDERSTAND...

○ ○ THAT UNGRATEFUL @#!



GOD, HELP ME BEGIN AGAIN IN A NEW PLACE WHERE I CAN BRING MY KIDS AND GET AWAY FROM THIS GOSSIPING TOWN.

AFTER ALL I DID FOR HER!!! ONE DAY, I'LL FIND A WAY TO GET REVENGE. I'LL MAKE HER PAY!

A FEW HUNDRED MILES AWAY, MOST BUSINESSES HAD SHUT DOWN. FINANCIAL DEVASTATION STILL RAVAGED THE LAND. ALICE MANAGED TO GET A JOB AT A LOCAL FACTORY. SHE TOLD NO ONE OF THE FAMILY SHE'D LEFT BEHIND.



NO MATTER WHERE I GO, HOPELESSNESS FOLLOWS... THAT GUY KEEPS LOOKING AT ME.

THE NEW GIRL LOOKS SAD, BUT IS SO BEAUTIFUL. I'M GOING TO ASK HER OUT.

I'M SORRY HER HUSBAND DIED. WE'RE FALLING IN LOVE SO FAST, I SEE A FUTURE FOR US. PICNICKING EVERY DAY... WHAT COULD POSSIBLY GO WRONG?



THIS IS WHAT REAL LOVE MUST FEEL LIKE. MAURY BLAIR IS SO HANDSOME, AND SO NICE TOO.

I JUST CAN'T TELL HIM ABOUT MY PAST. HE WON'T WANT ME IF HE FINDS OUT I'VE LEFT THREE CHILDREN BEHIND. I HAVE TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO MAKE THIS WORK.

I'LL WAIT UNTIL A LITTLE LONGER BEFORE I TELL HIM AND SOMEHOW WE'LL MAKE THIS WORK.

LIKE MUCH OF ALICE'S LIFE, NOTHING WENT WELL FOR LONG. OFTEN, BAD CHOICES ENSURED THAT THE GOOD TIMES WOULDN'T LAST.

MAURY BLAIR SEARCHED EVERYWHERE ... WORK ... ALICE'S ROOMING HOUSE ... SHE WAS GONE WITHOUT A TRACE!

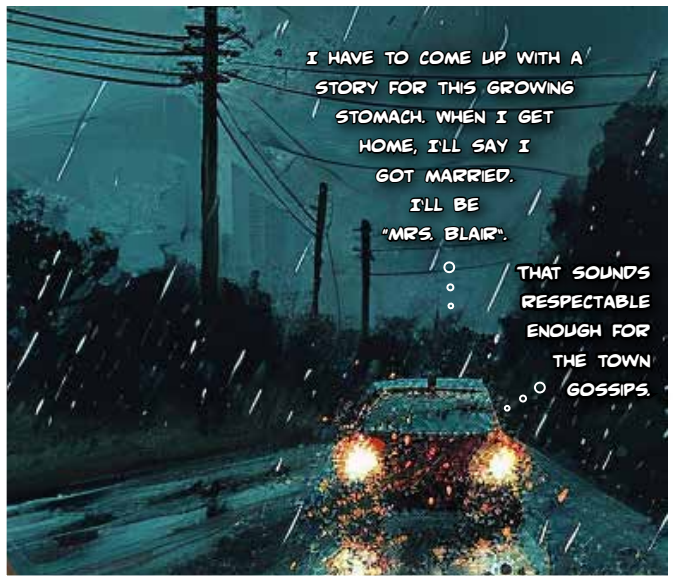


GOD PLEASE HELP ME, I'M SO SICK, BUT I CAN'T BE PREGNANT! EVERY TIME SOMETHING GOOD HAPPENS, IT ALL GOES WRONG.

I LIED ABOUT EVERYTHING I COULDN'T BEAR TO SEE THE SHOCK ON MAURY'S FACE IF I TOLD HIM I WAS GOING TO HAVE HIS CHILD. THIS COULD RUIN HIM.

STRIKE THE DEEPEST BLOW

ALICE FOLLOWED HER
INSTINCT, TO RUN FROM
HER TROUBLES.



I HAVE TO COME UP WITH A
STORY FOR THIS GROWING
STOMACH. WHEN I GET
HOME, I'LL SAY I
GOT MARRIED.

I'LL BE
"MRS. BLAIR".

○ ○ ○ ○ ○
THAT SOUNDS
RESPECTABLE
ENOUGH FOR
THE TOWN
GOSSIPS.

ALICE LIED . . .

HE WAS
SUCH A
HORRIBLE
PERSON. HE
TREATED ME
BADLY SO
I DIVORCED
HIM . . .
THEN I
FOUND OUT
I WAS
PREGNANT.



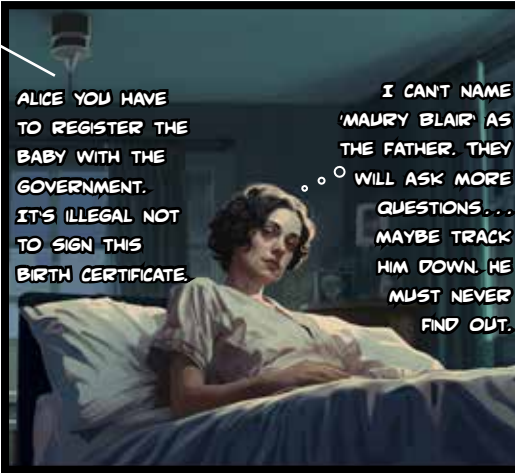
I UNDERSTAND
ALICE, WHAT CAN I
DO TO HELP YOU
GET SETTLED?

I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M
DATING THIS MAN
AGAIN. BUT I NEED
CYRUS MORE THAN
EVER . . . THERE'S
NO MONEY FOR
FOOD FOR THE
CHILDREN. I MISS
MAURY TERRIBLY.

KEEP ACTING NICE.
SHE'S DESPERATE. ○ ○ ○
SHE'LL SOON BE
YOURS, ON YOUR
TERMS. I AM GOING
TO HURT HER WAY
MORE THAN SHE
HURT ME.



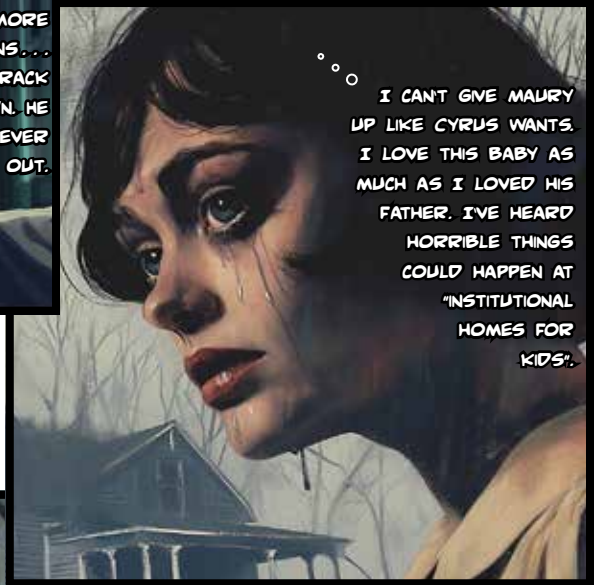
A FRIEND, ZEKE, DROVE ALICE TO A NEARBY TOWN TO GIVE BIRTH. IT WAS A HOME FOR 'UNWED MOTHERS', OR FOR WOMEN TOO POOR TO PAY THE HOSPITAL BILLS. UNDER PRESSURE, SHE MADE A SELFISH DECISION THAT WOULD MAKE BIG TROUBLE FOR BABY MAURY LATER IN LIFE.



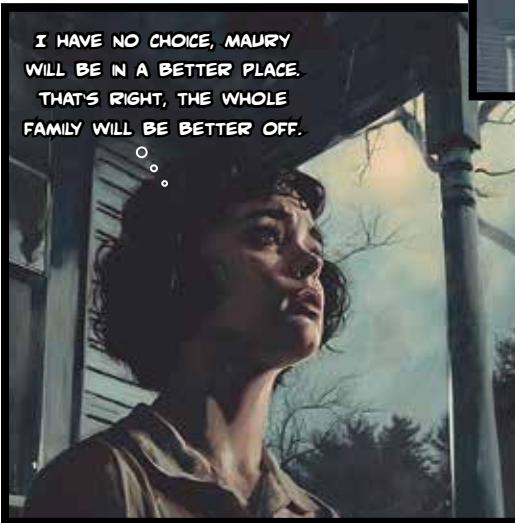
ALICE YOU HAVE TO REGISTER THE BABY WITH THE GOVERNMENT. IT'S ILLEGAL NOT TO SIGN THIS BIRTH CERTIFICATE.

I CAN'T NAME 'MAURY BLAIR' AS THE FATHER. THEY WILL ASK MORE QUESTIONS... MAYBE TRACK HIM DOWN. HE MUST NEVER FIND OUT.

OVER A YEAR WENT BY AS ALICE'S STRUGGLES ONLY INCREASED. CYRUS REFUSED TO GIVE UP HIS CRUEL DEMAND. HE WOULD NOT MARRY ALICE AS LONG AS THAT 'B@ST@RD' WAS AROUND.



I CAN'T GIVE MAURY UP LIKE CYRUS WANTS. I LOVE THIS BABY AS MUCH AS I LOVED HIS FATHER. I'VE HEARD HORRIBLE THINGS COULD HAPPEN AT "INSTITUTIONAL HOMES FOR KIDS".



I HAVE NO CHOICE, MAURY WILL BE IN A BETTER PLACE. THAT'S RIGHT, THE WHOLE FAMILY WILL BE BETTER OFF.

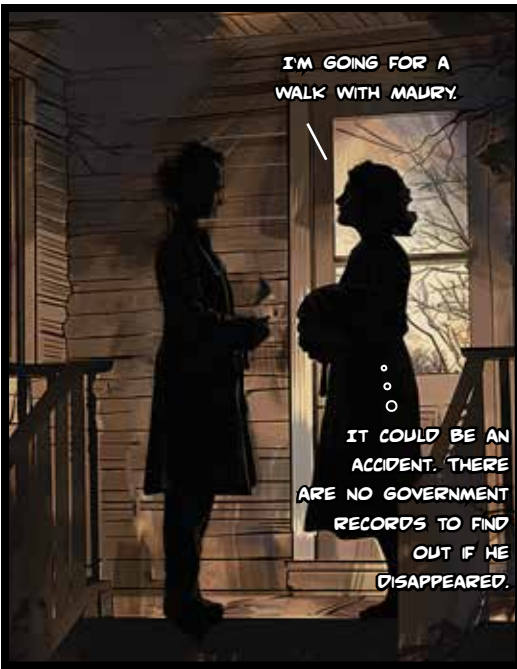
AS SHE OFTEN DID OVER THE YEARS, A DEPRESSED ALICE LEFT THE CHILDREN WHEN SHE'D GO AWAY TO "VISIT" A SISTER OR FRIEND. SHE COULD BE GONE FOR WEEKS. TO CARRY OUT HER PLAN, THIS TIME SHE BROUGHT ONE YEAR-OLD MAURY TO HER SISTER'S.



THANKS FOR LETTING ME BRING MAURY FOR A VISIT. I CAN'T COPE WITH LIFE RIGHT NOW. I NEEDED A BREAK.

YOU'LL ALWAYS BE MY FAVORITE LITTLE SISTER! I'M GLAD TO HELP.

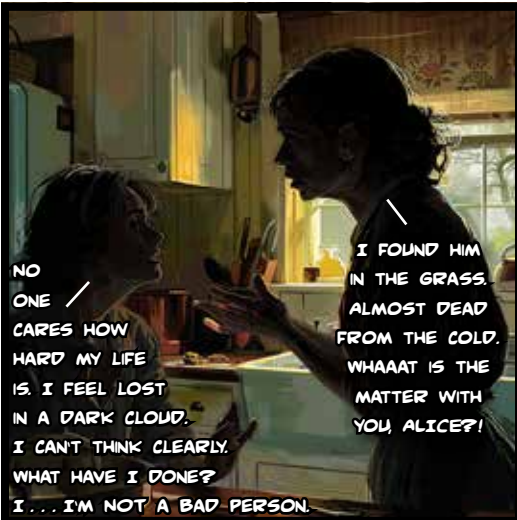
IN THE MIDST OF HER DEPRESSION, ALICE CAME UP WITH THE MOST UNTHINKABLE SOLUTION. SHE FELT THE OPPRESSIVE PRESSURE LIFTING.



I'M GOING FOR A WALK WITH MAURY.

IT COULD BE AN ACCIDENT. THERE ARE NO GOVERNMENT RECORDS TO FIND OUT IF HE DISAPPEARED.

AT THE TIME, THERE WAS NO HELP FOR MOTHERS SUFFERING FROM POST-PARTUM DEPRESSION FOLLOWING CHILDBIRTH. NO ONE KNEW ANYTHING ABOUT THE MEDICAL CONDITION. THIS COULD WORSEN IF A MOTHER WAS UNABLE TO COPE WITH OVERWHELMING CIRCUMSTANCES. ON RARE OCCASIONS, SEVERE DEPRESSION COULD CONVINCE A NEW MOTHER INTO HONESTLY BELIEVING HER CHILD WAS BETTER OFF NOT LIVING IN THIS "CRUEL WORLD".

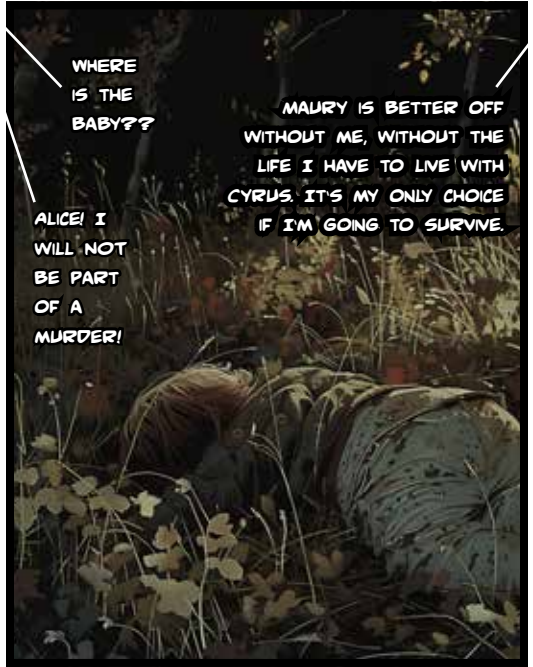


NO ONE CARES HOW HARD MY LIFE IS. I FEEL LOST IN A DARK CLOUD. I CAN'T THINK CLEARLY. WHAT HAVE I DONE? I... I'M NOT A BAD PERSON.

I FOUND HIM IN THE GRASS. ALMOST DEAD FROM THE COLD. WHAAAT IS THE MATTER WITH YOU, ALICE?!

... AFTER A LONG WHILE ...

ALICE RETURNED TO THE HOUSE SHIVERING WET, AND COLD. SHE WAS ALONE!!!



WHERE IS THE BABY??

MAURY IS BETTER OFF WITHOUT ME, WITHOUT THE LIFE I HAVE TO LIVE WITH CYRUS. IT'S MY ONLY CHOICE IF I'M GOING TO SURVIVE.

ALICE! I WILL NOT BE PART OF A MURDER!

AS SHE HAD DONE ALL HER LIFE, ALICE LIED TO SAVE HERSELF FROM THE TROUBLE SHE FOUND HERSELF IN. SHE'D DENY HER REALITY, CLINGING TO THE UNREALISTIC HOPE THAT THINGS WOULD WORK OUT IN THE END.



I LOVE MAURY. HE LOOKS LIKE HIS FATHER...IT'S A LITTLE LIE. CYRUS WILL GET USED TO THE BABY OVER TIME.

I...I... I'LL GIVE IN TO YOUR DEMAND AND LET LITTLE MAURY GO.

SEE THAT YOU DO ... I'LL GET THE MARRIAGE LICENSE TOMORROW.

SUNDAYS OFFERED A BREAK TO THE ROUTINE OF VIOLENCE. UNCLE BILL WAS A BARBER. HE WOULD COME OVER SUNDAY AFTERNOONS FOR DINNER AND CUT THE KIDS' HAIR.

... SON, SNEAK TO UNCLE BILL'S SHOP TOMORROW.

ALICE, BRING MAURY DOWN AND I'LL CUT HIS HAIR TOO.

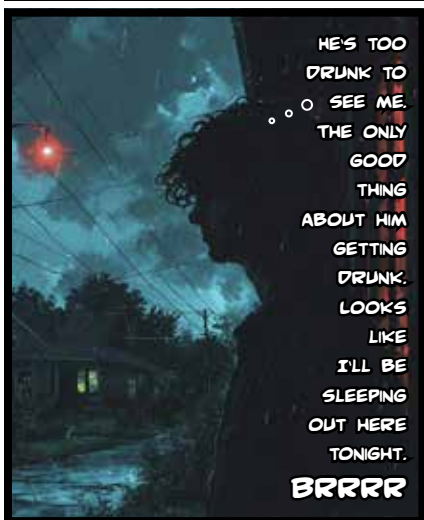
THERE IS NO WAY THAT B@ST@RD IS GETTING HIS HAIR CUT HERE!

YOU'RE CRAZY. HELL PROBABLY BE THE BEST KID YOU HAVE.

IT'D KILL YOU IF I COULD . . .



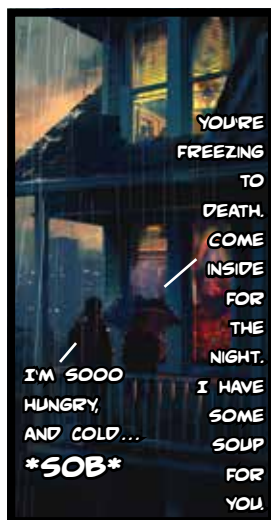
WHEN CYRUS DRANK, ALICE WRAPPED MAURY IN BLANKETS, WALKING THE STREETS. WHEN OLD ENOUGH, THE TWO WALKED TOGETHER UNTIL CYRUS FELL ASLEEP.



HE'S TOO DRUNK TO SEE ME. THE ONLY GOOD THING ABOUT HIM GETTING DRUNK. LOOKS LIKE I'LL BE SLEEPING OUT HERE TONIGHT. **BRRRR**



I'LL FINISH HIM OFF THIS TIME WITH THIS AX.



YOU'RE FREEZING TO DEATH. COME INSIDE FOR THE NIGHT. I'M SOOO HUNGRY, AND COLD... *SOB* I HAVE SOME SOUP FOR YOU.

MAURY WOULD CROUCH JUST OUTSIDE HIS HOUSE AND WATCH HIM COMING. SPYING ON THE OLD MAN, HELPED MAURY DECIDE WHAT TO DO NEXT. HE FOUND PLACES TO SLEEP AROUND THE NEIGHBORHOOD; BENEATH THE PORCH, IN A GARDEN, OR SOMETIMES SLEEPING ON THE FROZEN GROUND. HE WAS NEVER GOING IN THAT HOUSE AS LONG AS CYRUS WAS HOLDING AN AX!

PEOPLE KNEW WHY MAURY WAS TOO AFRAID TO GO HOME AND DID WHAT THEY COULD TO HELP. IN THOSE DAYS, MOTHERS IN ABUSIVE SITUATIONS HAD NOWHERE TO GO. FEELING UNSETTLED, EVEN UNDER THE CLEAN, DRY SHEETS, MAURY ASKED TO GO HOME—TRADING SAFETY FOR DANGER. IT DIDN'T MAKE SENSE, BUT COMFORT AND SAFETY FELT FOREIGN.

MAURY NEVER KNEW THE HISTORY. HE NEVER UNDERSTOOD WHY HIS STEPFATHER HAD SINGLED HIM OUT. WHY THE HATRED FOCUSED ONLY ON HIM! MANY NIGHTS MAURY WOULD CRY IN THE COLD OUTSIDE HIS HOUSE OF HORRORS, HIS TEARS FREEZING AGAINST HIS SKIN BEFORE THEY COULD RUN DOWN HIS CHEEKS.

DO I FREEZE OUTSIDE, OR GO
IN AND GET BEATEN? WHERE
ARE YOU GOD???

... NO GOD WOULD LET
THIS HAPPEN TO ME!



MOST OFTEN HE'D WATCH FAMILY LIFE FROM CRACKS IN THE FLOOR UPSTAIRS, BUT WHEN THE OLD MAN WAS AWAY, HE WOULD JOIN THE FAMILY AT THE DINNER TABLE. IT FELT SO GOOD BUT BITTERSWEET. EVERYONE KNEW HE'D HAVE TO GET OUT OF THERE FAST ONCE THEY'D HEARD THE OLD MAN OUTSIDE.



THE FOUR BOYS SHARED ONE BED, SNUGLY ARRANGED SIDWAYS LIKE PUZZLE PIECES. IN WINTER, IT BECAME A WARM, COZY NEST-AND A BRILLIANT HIDING SPOT. WHEN CYRUS SEARCHED THE HOUSE FOR MAURY, HE NEVER THOUGHT TO CHECK BENEATH THE TANGLE OF SPRAWLED BODIES. THERE MAURY LAY, HOLDING IN HIS GIGGLES, TUCKED AWAY IN PLAIN SIGHT!

WHEN THE KIDS WASHED THEIR CLOTHES IN THE GRAND RIVER, THEY WERE LAUGHED AT. THEY WERE THE FAMILY THAT THE REST OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD WISHED WAS NOT THERE.

YOU KIDS ARE THE DIRTIEST IN TOWN!

IF I EVER CATCH YOU WITH THOSE HORRIBLE KIDS, YOU'RE GOING TO GET IT!



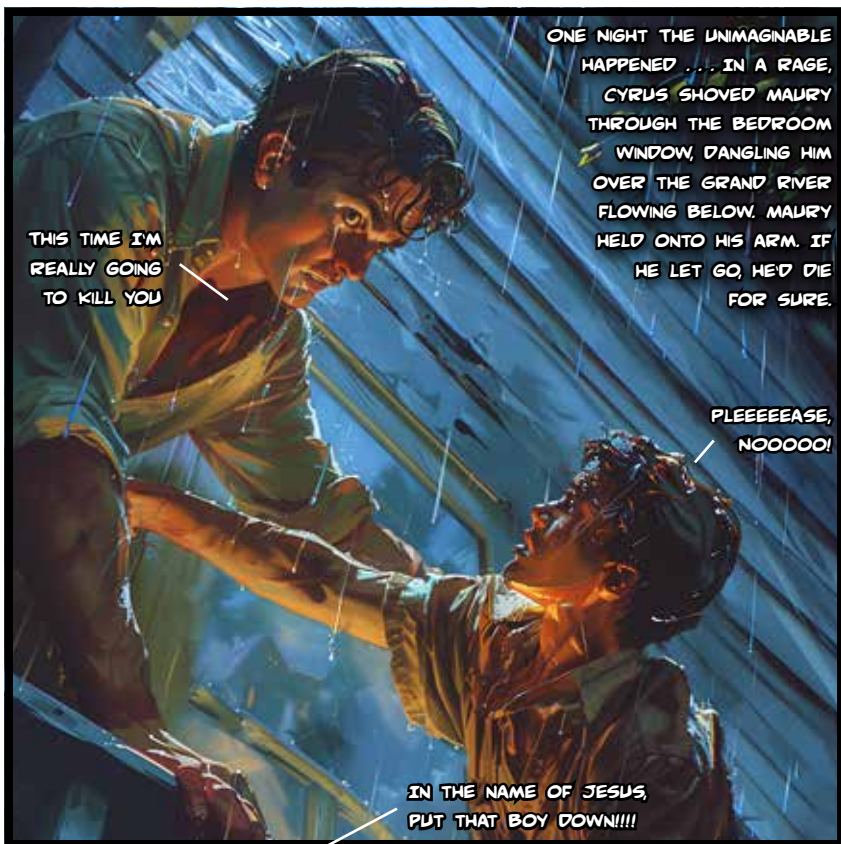
THIS TIME I'M REALLY GOING TO KILL YOU

ONE NIGHT THE UNIMAGINABLE HAPPENED . . . IN A RAGE, CYRUS SHOVED MAURY THROUGH THE BEDROOM WINDOW, DANGLING HIM OVER THE GRAND RIVER FLOWING BELOW. MAURY HELD ONTO HIS ARM. IF HE LET GO, HE'D DIE FOR SURE.

PLEEEEEEASE, NOOOOO!

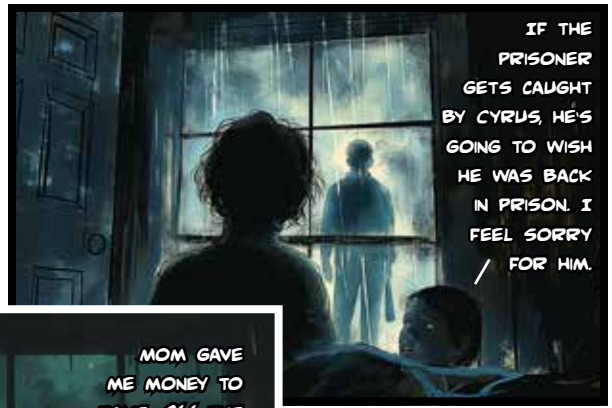
THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME MAURY'S MOTHER STOOD UP TO CYRUS WITH AUTHORITY. SOMETHING HAPPENED AS THE LOOK ON CYRUS' FACE CHANGED! ANGER TURNED TO FEAR AS HE PULLED MAURY IN.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS, PUT THAT BOY DOWN!!!!

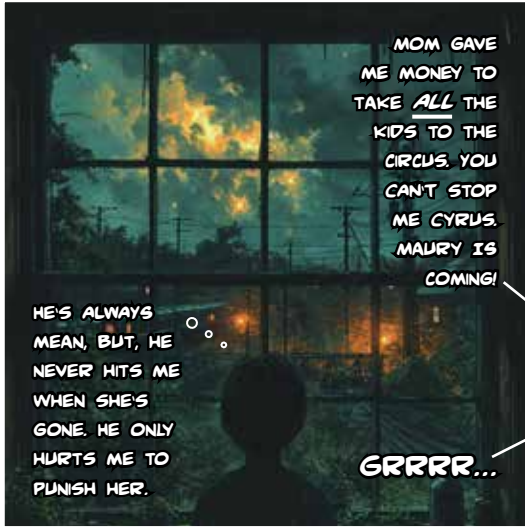


A CONVICT HAD ESCAPED. EVERYONE WAS TALKING ABOUT IT! MAURY AND HIS BROTHERS LAY AWAKE IN BED, IMAGINING THEY'D HEARD A KNOCK. AS CYRUS HEADED OUT WITH A BASEBALL BAT, THEY SCRAMBLED DOWNSTAIRS TO WATCH. MAURY IMAGINED THE CONVICT RUNNING BACK TO THE PRISON BANGING ON THE DOOR, PLEADING FOR THE WARDEN TO LET HIM BACK.

THE CON WAS CAPTURED MILES AWAY. HE HAD NEVER COME TO TOWN. UNLIKE THE LUCKY ESCAPEE, MAURY HAD NO PRISON TO FLEE TO. HE HAD NO OTHER SOURCE OF SHELTER.



IF THE PRISONER GETS CAUGHT BY CYRUS, HE'S GOING TO WISH HE WAS BACK IN PRISON. I FEEL SORRY FOR HIM.



MOM GAVE ME MONEY TO TAKE ALL THE KIDS TO THE CIRCUS. YOU CAN'T STOP ME CYRUS. MAURY IS COMING!

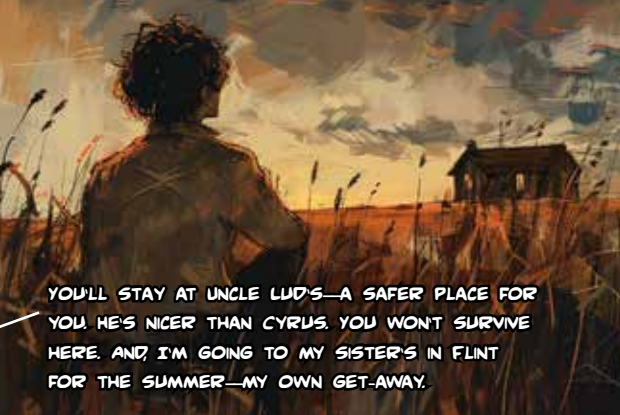
HE'S ALWAYS MEAN, BUT HE NEVER HITS ME WHEN SHE'S GONE. HE ONLY HURTS ME TO PUNISH HER.

GRRRR...

WHEN SHE'D GET DEPRESSED, MAURY'S MOM WOULD VISIT HER SISTERS FOR WEEKS, TAKING THE YOUNGEST KIDS. MAURY SAT IN HIS BEDROOM FOR HOURS, LOOKING AT THE TRAIN TRACKS THAT HAD TAKEN HIS MOTHER AWAY.

SO MANY TIMES MAURY BURIED THE REALITY OF HIS MOTHER'S NEGLECT—THE REALITY OF HER ABUSE TO HIM—THE EMOTIONAL VIOLENCE OF HER ENDLESS LIES.

MOM, PLEEEEEEZE DON'T SEND ME AWAY FOR THE SUMMER AGAIN
SOB



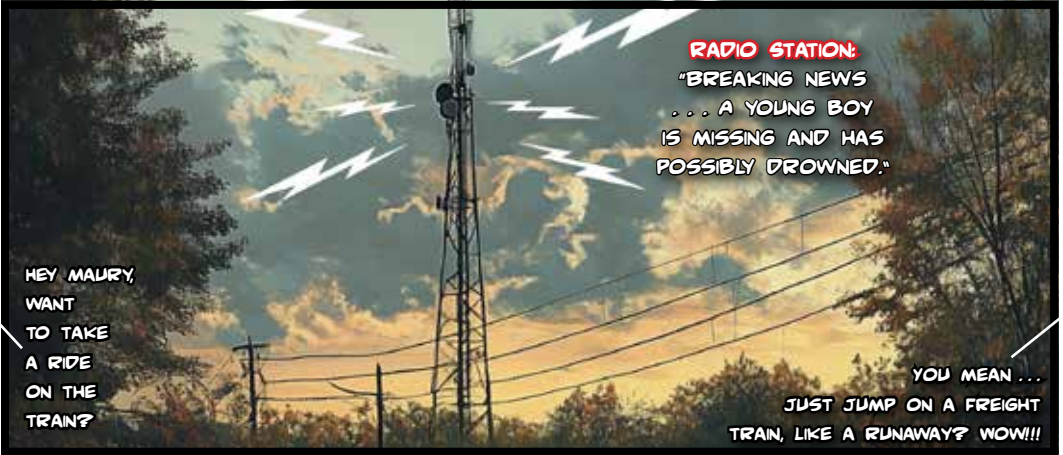
YOU'LL STAY AT UNCLE LUD'S—A SAFER PLACE FOR YOU. HE'S NICER THAN CYRUS. YOU WON'T SURVIVE HERE. AND, I'M GOING TO MY SISTER'S IN FLINT FOR THE SUMMER—MY OWN GET-AWAY.



I'LL TEACH YOU TO DISOBEY, YOU FILTHY RAT!!

DARK MEMORIES: LUD LIFTED MAURY OFF THE GROUND. AS HE DANGLED LIKE A RAG DOLL, LUD STOMPED TOWARDS A HUGE RAIN BARREL. MAURY'S STOMACH TIGHTENED. HE COULD FEEL THE PULSE IN HIS HEAD. HIS FACE BROKE THE WATER'S SURFACE AS LUD PUSHED HIM BACK INTO THE WATER. HE HELD HIM UNDER, PULLING MAURY OUT AT THE LAST MOMENT. HE COULDN'T BREATHE. HIS LUNGS WERE BURNING AND MAURY WAS SO AFRAID! LUD WASN'T LIKE CYRUS — HE WAS WORSE! LUD THREW HIM DOWN WITH A JOLT AND WALKED AWAY. MAURY NEVER TOLD HIS MOM WHAT HAPPENED. SHE SENT MAURY THERE FOR FOUR SUMMERS.

BILL HUNG AROUND KIDS YOUNGER THAN HIM. HIS PANTS WERE TOO SHORT, EXPOSING UGLY SORES ON HIS LEGS. NOBODY WANTED TO BE AROUND BILL. HE WASN'T WANTED AT HOME SO HE SPENT HIS TIME WITH A FEW REJECTS, LIKE MAURY.



RADIO STATION:
"BREAKING NEWS
... A YOUNG BOY
IS MISSING AND HAS
POSSIBLY DROWNED."

HEY MAURY,
WANT
TO TAKE
A RIDE
ON THE
TRAIN?

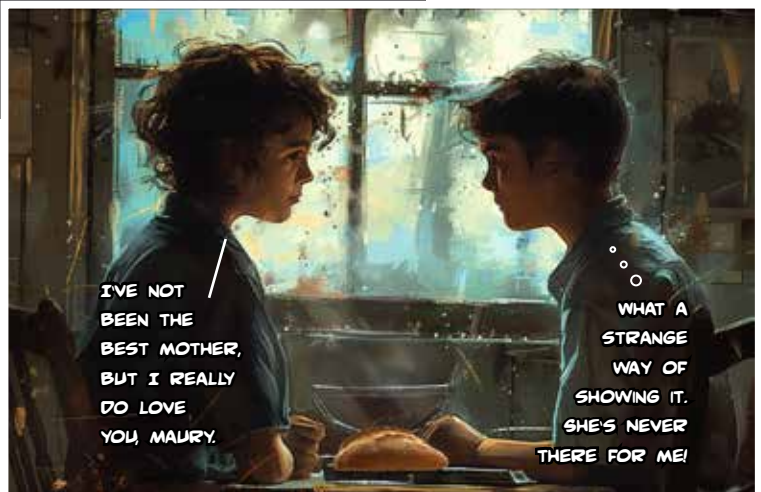
YOU MEAN ...
JUST JUMP ON A FREIGHT
TRAIN, LIKE A RUNAWAY? WOW!!!



GOD, IF YOU ARE
THERE, PLEASE
BRING MAURY
BACK ALIVE!
SOB

EVERYONE
THOUGHT MAURY
HAD DROWNED
IN THE RIVER. HIS
MOM TRIED TO
FIND HIM, ALL THE
NEIGHBORS, EVEN
THE BOYS CLUB
... MAYBE THEY
WERE HOPING
FOR A REWARD.

"YOUR BOY IS SAFE." — THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WORDS MAURY'S MOTHER HAD EVER HEARD. SHE TRIED TO HUG HIM, BUT HE PULLED AWAY. IT WAS A STRANGE FEELING AS SHE ALMOST NEVER HUGGED MAURY—CYRUS COULD NEVER FIND HER SHOWING MAURY LOVE! ALICE GAVE HIM A BOWL OF CEREAL AND A TREAT SHE'D FOUND.



I'VE NOT
BEEN THE
BEST MOTHER,
BUT I REALLY
DO LOVE
YOU, MAURY.

WHAT A
STRANGE
WAY OF
SHOWING IT.
SHE'S NEVER
THERE FOR ME!

LOOKING BACK—CHRISTMAS DAYS:

ONLY CYRUS COULD SEPARATE MAURY FROM THE FAMILY. FROM THE CRACKS IN THE FLOOR, HE'D WATCH HIS SIBLINGS SQUEALING WITH DELIGHT WITH THEIR CHRISTMAS PRESENTS, THEN DIVING INTO A TURKEY DINNER. HIS BROTHER, MARK, WOULD REPORT TO HIM WHAT GIFTS HAD BEEN EXCHANGED. LATER, MARK WOULD TRY TO SLIP MAURY SOME LEFTOVERS, LIKE SNEAKING FOOD TO A STRAY DOG.



SHHHH
MAURY.
DON'T TELL
ANYONE.

YOU JUST MADE
MY CHRISTMAS DAY
HAPPY!

BOXING:

MAURY TOOK UP BOXING AT FIFTEEN, LYING THAT HE WAS OLDER. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HIS LIFE, CYRUS SHOWED INTEREST AND GAVE HIM A COUPLE OF TIPS. WITH TERRIBLE EYESIGHT, MAURY WAS SOON BEATEN AND BLOODIED AND QUIT. CYRUS NEVER SHOWED INTEREST IN HIM AGAIN.



I KEEP TELLING YOU!
HIT USING THE HEEL
OF YOUR HAND TO
PROTECT YOUR
KNUCKLES.

KIDS AT SCHOOL LAUGHED AT MAURY BECAUSE HE WASN'T SURE OF HIS BIRTH DATE. EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW THAT. TYPICALLY, ALICE CLOSED HER EYES TO THIS BIG PROBLEM . . . MAURY'S PROBLEM!

HE BEGGED HER FOR AN ANSWER,

"MOM, WHICH DAY IS IT,
APRIL 27TH OR 28TH?"

"MAURY, IT'S
NOT IMPORTANT!
DROP IT!"

YOU ARE SO
WEIRD. YOU
DON'T EVEN
KNOW YOUR
BIRTHDAY?
WHAT A FREAK!

FREAK!

FREAK!

FREAK!

WHY DO YOUR
BROTHERS AND SISTERS
HAVE A DIFFERENT NAME
THAN YOU? WHY DO
YOU LOOK DIFFERENT
THAN THEM?

I'M BULLIED AT
HOME, SCHOOL, AND
EVERYWHERE I GO.
I AM A FREAK.



FRAGMENTS




MAURY
GREW UP IN
THE CHARMING
TOWN OF PARIS,
ONTARIO, THE
GRAND RIVER,
A LIFELINE AND
PLAYGROUND.
OTHERS HAD
SKATES AND
SLEDS,
TURNING
CANADIAN
WINTERS
INTO A
WONDERLAND;
MAURY MADE
DO WITH
A PIECE OF
CARDBOARD,
GLEEFULLY
SLIDING DOWN
SNOWY HILLS
UNTIL IT
SHREDDED
TO BITS.



BOOTS AND A BALL WERE ALL HE NEEDED TO PLAY HOCKEY, PROVING THAT HEART MATTERED MORE THAN EQUIPMENT. MAURY'S RESOURCEFULNESS AND JOY FOR LIFE SHONE BRIGHTLY, BUT RARELY, IN HIS OTHERWISE DARK WORLD.

MAURY CREATED HIS OWN HAPPY PLACES. HE FOUND DIRTY MARBLES IN DITCHES, SHINED THEM UP, AND HAPPILY PLAYED FOR HOURS BY HIMSELF. A FEW RUBBER RINGS USED FOR TOOLS WERE POLISHED TO LOOK LIKE EXPENSIVE RINGS . . . IN HIS IMAGINATION ANYWAY.




NO ONE CAN FIND MY MARBLES HERE . . . THEY MIGHT BE TAKEN AWAY. HEY, WHEN I PLAY BY MYSELF, I ALWAYS WIN!! HA!

IT FEELS GOOD TO MAKE MY OWN PERFECT, HAPPY WORLD. I'M COMPLETELY IN CONTROL.

THE SIMPLE THINGS MADE MAURY HAPPY. ONE SUMMER HE CREATED HIS OWN LITTLE GARDEN WONDERLAND IN AN EMPTY ALLEY THAT CYRUS WOULD NEVER FIND. FOR A LITTLE WHILE, LIFE WAS "PERFECT" AND KIND AND BEAUTIFUL.



THESE WEEDS, WILDFLOWERS, AND A FEW STOLEN FLOWERS, LOOK REALLY GOOD. IT MAKES ME FEEL HAPPY WHEN I'M TAKING CARE OF THEM, LIKE MY PET MOUSE.



MAURY FOUND WAYS TO HAVE FUN. THEY'D GATHER LEAVES FROM ALL THE YARDS. THE NEIGHBORHOOD KIDS LOVED JUMPING IN THE PILES. THE "MOST LEAFY", YET THE MOST TREELESS YARD ON THE BLOCK! CYRUS HATED IT, BUT NEVER FIGURED OUT WHAT THEY'D DONE! HA!

THE GOOD TIMES:

MAURY WASN'T THE BEST PLAYER, BUT BASEBALL MADE HIM HAPPY. ONE DAY HE COPIED THE THEATRICS OF A FAMOUS BASEBALL HERO, BABE RUTH. HE DELIBERATELY STRUCK OUT ON THE FIRST TWO BALLS, LETTING THEM GO BY. BEFORE THE LAST PITCH, HE BRAVELY POINTED TO THE END OF THE FIELD, 'HOME RUN STYLE'.



NEW YEARS PARTIES:

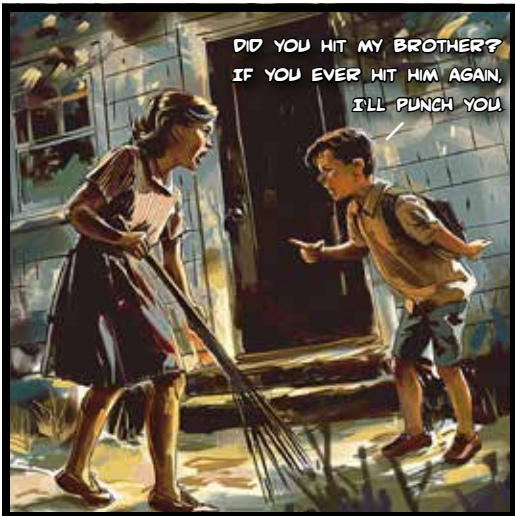
ALICE AND CYRUS WOULD PARTY ALL NIGHT. THE KIDS MADE THEIR OWN FUN, ENJOYING THE SNACKS ALICE LEFT FOR THEM. FROM PILLOW FIGHTS TO FAKE WRESTLING, THEY PLAYED UNTIL THEY HAD TO CLEAN UP BEFORE THEIR PARENTS GOT BACK!



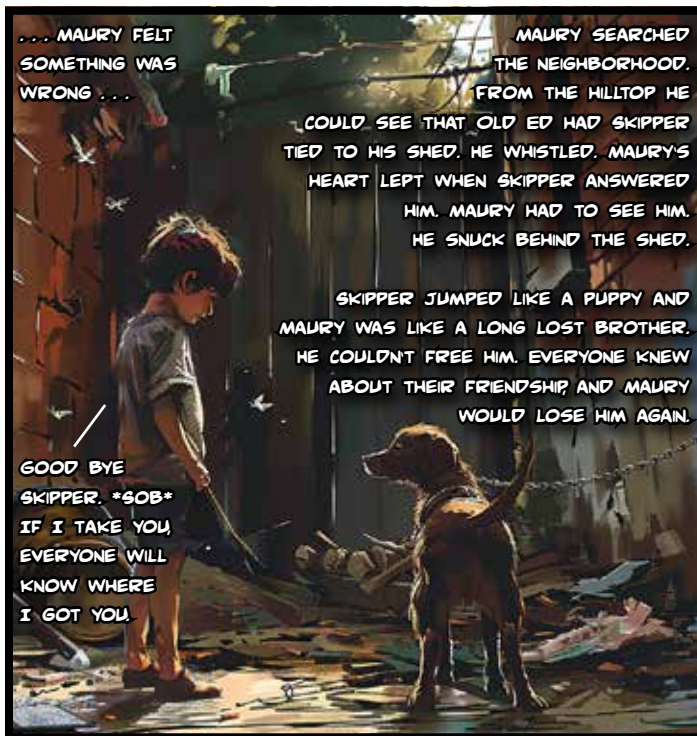
SIBLING BONDING:

DESPITE DISAGREEMENTS AT HOME, ON THE STREETS, THE KIDS DEFENDED ONE ANOTHER.

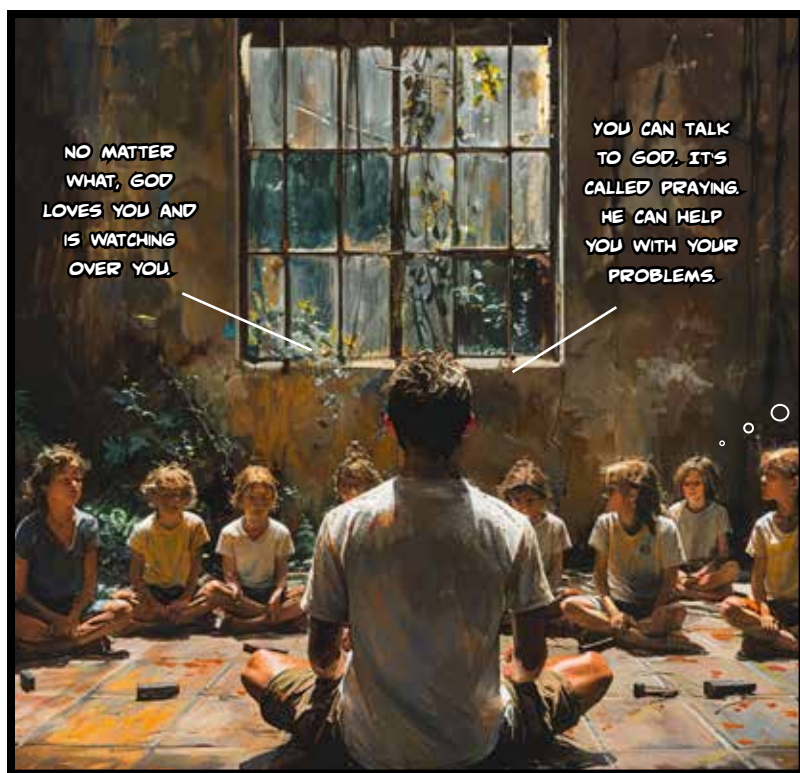
MAURY THREATENED HER, "YOU WOULDN'T DARE HIT ME!" HE RAN HOME, BLEEDING ALL OVER.



STRANGE & WONDERFUL FRIENDSHIPS



A LITTLE CHURCH "ON THE WRONG SIDE OF TOWN" WELCOMED MAURY AND HIS SIBLINGS TO THEIR KID'S CLUB. THEY CAME IN SMELLY AND WERE OUT OF CONTROL. THEY PLAYED GAMES OF ALL KINDS.



THE LEADERS WERE KIND AND PATIENT, GIVING THE KIDS A SENSE OF BELONGING AND ACCEPTANCE.

HUMPH, I DOUBT THAT THERE IS ANY "GOD" OUT THERE LOOKING OUT FOR ME. THESE PEOPLE ARE NICE, BUT THEY HAVE NO IDEA ... KIND BUT CLUELESS!

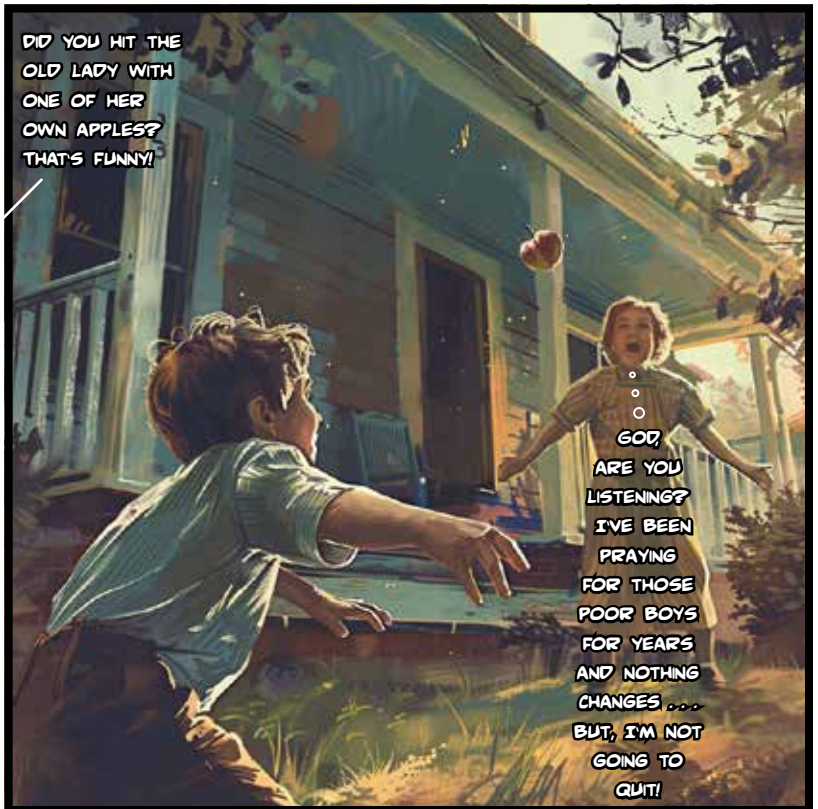
MAURY REPAID THE KINDNESS OF THE KID'S CLUB LEADERS BY USING THEIR CHURCH SERVICE AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PRANKS. HE'D SLITHER LIKE A SNAKE UNDER THE BENCHES, KNOTTING UNSUSPECTING PARISHIONERS' SHOELACES TOGETHER. THEY STOOD TO SING, ONLY TO WOBBLE LIKE BOWLING PINS!

THE AWKWARD RECOVERIES, THE NERVOUS CLEARING OF THROATS—MAURY LIVED FOR IT. THE CHURCH FOLKS, NOT SO MUCH. BUT MAURY FIGURED A GOOD LAUGH WAS "GOOD FOR THE SOUL".



MAURY AND HIS BROTHERS WERE INVOLVED IN NEIGHBORHOOD TROUBLE! THEY KNOCKED OUT WINDOWS WITH FLYING BASEBALLS, SOMETIMES THROWING ROCKS AS THEY TRIED TO HIT THE HARD HATS OF CONSTRUCTION WORKERS. MAURY THOUGHT THEY WERE BEING FUNNY. THE CONSTRUCTION WORKERS THOUGHT THEY WERE THE WORST KIDS EVER.


AS APPLES BOUNCED AROUND MRS DUDLEY, SHE NEVER YELLED AT THEM.



DID YOU HIT THE OLD LADY WITH ONE OF HER OWN APPLES? THAT'S FUNNY!

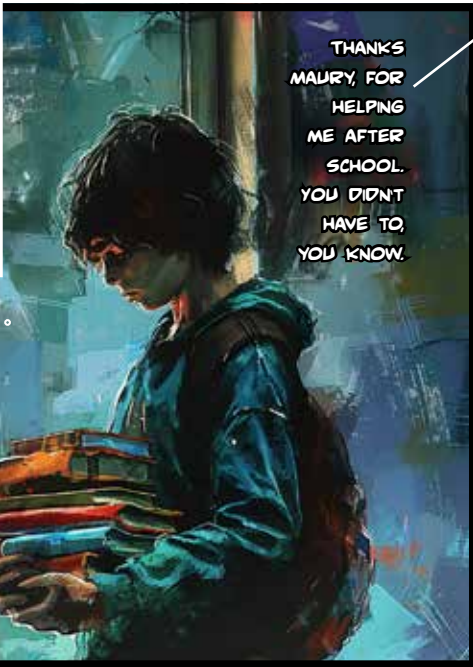
GOD,
ARE YOU LISTENING?
I'VE BEEN PRAYING FOR THOSE POOR BOYS FOR YEARS AND NOTHING CHANGES... BUT, I'M NOT GOING TO QUIT!

I'M ANGRY WHEN
PEOPLE HURT
ME. I'M MORE
ANGRY WHEN
THEY ARE NICE.
... MAURY BLAIR,
"TOO PATHETIC TO
BE PUNISHED!"
SOB

A young boy with dark, curly hair is shown in profile, looking towards a doorway in the distance. The scene is dimly lit, with light coming from the doorway. The boy's expression is one of sadness or contemplation.

MAURY,
YOU WERE
IN TROUBLE
AND WERE GOING
TO BE STRAPPED.
BUT, YOUR
TEACHER ASKED
ME TO LET IT GO.
YOU'RE LUCKY!

YEARS BEFORE, MAURY WAS TERRIFIED OF
STARTING SCHOOL. SURPRISINGLY, HE FOUND
MORE KINDNESS FROM THE TEACHERS
THAN HE'D EVER KNOWN. EVEN THOUGH
THE OTHER KIDS OFTEN MADE FUN OF HIM.
ONCE, HE SNUCK INTO THE SCHOOL AND
SCARED THE TEACHER. SHE SCREAMED AT
MAURY! WHEN THE PRINCIPAL FOUND HIM
CROUCHING IN THE CORNER, MAURY KNEW
HE WAS IN FOR SERIOUS PUNISHMENT.

A young boy with dark, curly hair is shown in profile, looking down at a stack of books he is holding. He is wearing a dark jacket and a backpack. The scene is dimly lit, with light coming from a window in the background. The boy's expression is one of sadness or contemplation.

THANKS
MAURY, FOR
HELPING
ME AFTER
SCHOOL.
YOU DIDN'T
HAVE TO,
YOU KNOW.

INSTEAD, THE TEACHER DID NOT
PUNISH MAURY BUT ASKED IF
HE'D LIKE TO STAY AFTER SCHOOL
SOMETIMES TO HELP TIDY THE
BOOKS AND CLASSROOM. HE LOVED
IT AND STAYED AS OFTEN AND AS
LONG AS HE COULD.

A young boy with dark, curly hair is shown in profile, looking down at a stack of books he is holding. He is wearing a dark jacket and a backpack. The scene is dimly lit, with light coming from a window in the background. The boy's expression is one of sadness or contemplation.

I LOVE IT
HERE, BUT
I HATE THAT
SHE FEELS
SORRY FOR
ME. EVERYONE
KNOWS I'M A
RAT TRAPPED
IN MY OWN
HOUSE.
SOB

HAPPY TO BE WORKING IN SCHOOL!!
... HA, THAT'S REALLY SCREWED UP
AND HOW MESSED UP WAS SHE???.
... BEING NICE INSTEAD OF HURTFUL??

LAST DAY OF SCHOOL:

SOMEONE REPORTED THAT
MAURY WAS WORKING,
INSTEAD OF ATTENDING
SCHOOL. HE GOT A VISIT
FROM AN OFFICIAL. MAURY
DIDN'T HAVE DECENT
CLOTHES AND SCHOOL
DIDN'T SEEM TO BE DOING
MUCH GOOD. MAURY HAD
TURNED SIXTEEN. AT LEAST
HE COULD MAKE MONEY.
THE PRINCIPAL COULDN'T
TALK HIM OUT OF IT.

A young boy with dark, curly hair is shown from behind, walking away down a long, brightly lit hallway. He is wearing a dark jacket and a backpack. The hallway has a light-colored floor and walls, and there are windows on the right side. The boy's expression is one of sadness or contemplation.

YOUR
MARKS
ARE
PRETTY
GOOD
MAURY.
THINK
ABOUT
FINISHING
YOUR
EDUCATION...

CYRUS HAD ALWAYS BEEN THERE. IT DIDN'T MAKE SENSE, BUT HE'D BECOME MAURY'S SOURCE OF SECURITY. HE HAD INSPIRED FEAR, TURNED HIS INTESTINES INTO CRAMPING KNOTS, AND DESTROYED MAURY'S LIFE. HIS MOTHER HAD COME AND GONE, OFTEN LEAVING HOME FOR WEEKS. SHE HAD BEEN IRRESPONSIBLE, OFTEN FEELING GUILTY AND DEPRESSED, WHICH MADE HER MORE DEPRESSED. NOW, MAURY'S BROTHERS AND SISTERS HAD DRIFTED AWAY. ONLY CYRUS REMAINED THE SAME.

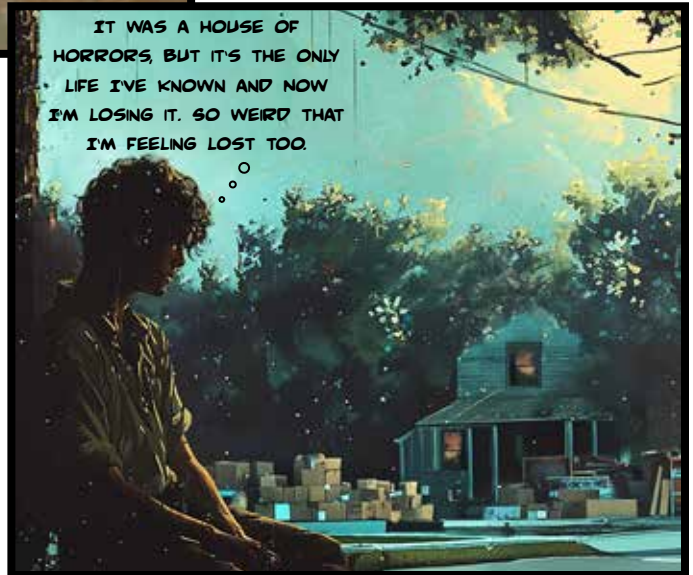
MORE CHANGES / FAREWELLS

IN MAURY'S TEEN YEARS, CYRUS GOT SICKER— HE HARDLY WORKED. ALICE FOUND LESS AND LESS MONEY IN CYRUS' POCKETS. THEY HAD TO DO SOMETHING!

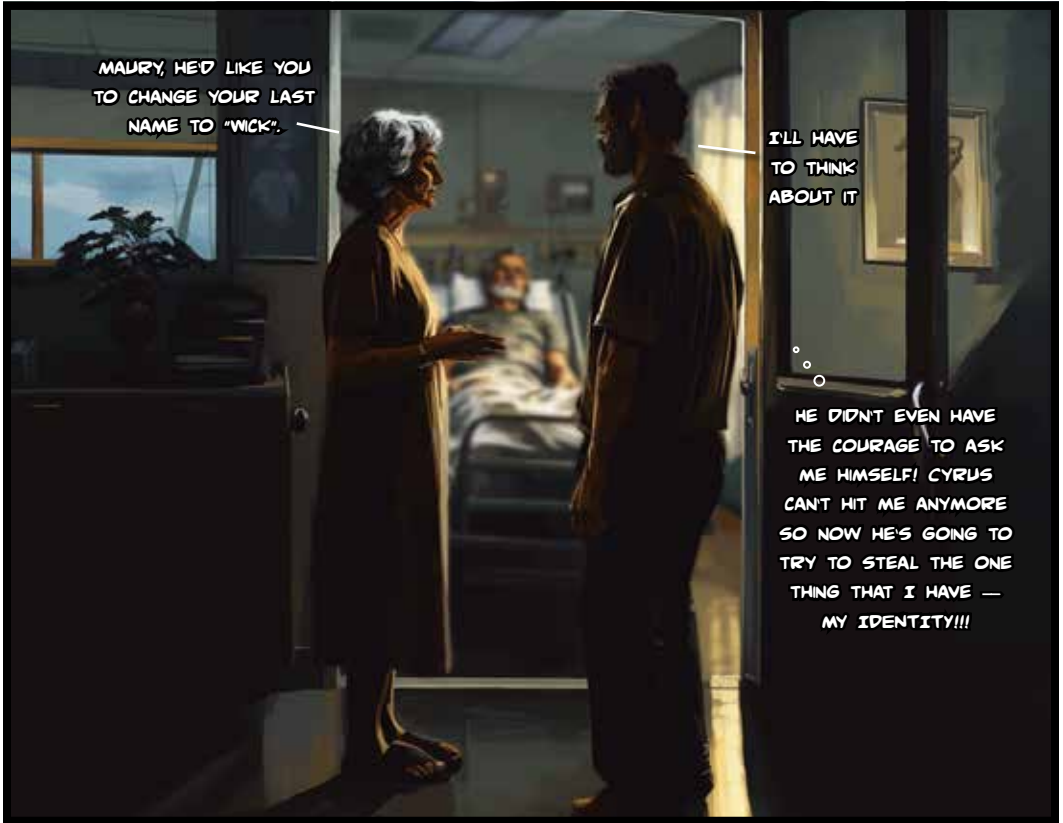


ALICE DECIDED TO OPEN A LITTLE RESTAURANT. WHAT A BAD IDEA—SHE COULDN'T EVEN RUN HER OWN KITCHEN. THE BOYS CALLED IT "WICK'S SLOP SHOP". MAURY WORKED HARD, BUT ALSO DID CRAZY THINGS. HE LET FRIENDS ORDER FRIES FOR FREE. PAYING TO HAVE FRIENDS ... SO PATHETIC!

THEY WERE GOING TO LIVE ABOVE THE RESTAURANT. THE OLD MAN WAS TOO SICK TO BEAT MAURY ANYMORE. MAURY WOULD NEVER KNOW WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO BE SAFE IN THAT HOUSE. HE FELT DEPRESSED WITH SO MANY BAD MEMORIES ... THE BRUTAL BEATINGS, EVERY STOLEN MEAL. BUT, THERE WERE ALSO MEMORIES OF THE PLAYTIMES WITH HIS BROTHERS, SOME GOOD TIMES ...



CYRUS' HEALTH DECLINED. ALICE AND MAURY DROVE HIM, COUGHING AND GROANING, TO THE HOSPITAL.



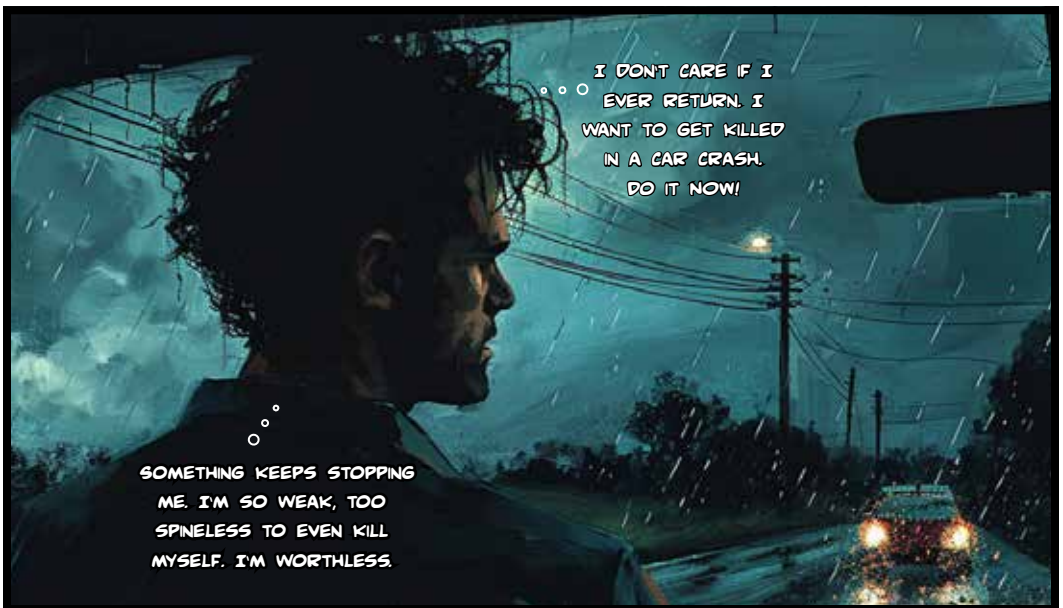
MAURY, HE'D LIKE YOU
TO CHANGE YOUR LAST
NAME TO "WICK".

I'LL HAVE
TO THINK
ABOUT IT

HE DIDN'T EVEN HAVE
THE COURAGE TO ASK
ME HIMSELF! CYRUS
CAN'T HIT ME ANYMORE
SO NOW HE'S GOING TO
TRY TO STEAL THE ONE
THING THAT I HAVE —
MY IDENTITY!!!

HORRIBLE ENDING . . . NEW BEGINNINGS

ONE BY ONE, THE OLDER KIDS LEFT THE HOUSE TO GET MARRIED OR JOIN THE ARMY. MAURY SPENT HOURS LISTENING TO ROCK AND ROLL MUSIC ON THE RADIO, GROWING MORE DEPRESSED EACH DAY.



I DON'T CARE IF I
EVER RETURN. I
WANT TO GET KILLED
IN A CAR CRASH.
DO IT NOW!

SOMETHING KEEPS STOPPING
ME. I'M SO WEAK, TOO
SPINELESS TO EVEN KILL
MYSELF. I'M WORTHLESS.

MAURY HUNG OUT AT THE POOL HALL. HE DIDN'T HAVE TO TALK MUCH TO ANYONE.

UNTIL ONE NIGHT ...

YUP, I REMEMBER THE DAY YOU WERE BORN, MAURY. I DROVE YOUR MOTHER TO BRANTFORD.

NO, YOU DIDNT, ZEKE. I WAS BORN IN FLINT, MICHIGAN! TAKE IT BACK!!

YOU WERE NOT. YOU BETTER GO HOME AND CHECK WITH YOUR OLD LADY.

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU MAN? YOU DONT EVEN KNOW WHERE YOU WERE BORN?

I'M LEAVING. YOU GUYS ARE JERKS!!

ALICE WOULD RETREAT INTO HER PRETEND WORLD. THIS ISSUE WAS NO BIG DEAL. MAURY HAD PICKED HIS OWN RANDOM BIRTH DATE. THIS WAS GOING TO BE THE LEAST OF MAURY'S PROBLEMS ... SO MANY TIMES HE BURIED THE REALITY OF HER NEGLECT - THE REALITY OF HER ABUSE - THE EMOTIONAL VIOLENCE OF HER ENDLESS LIES.

FUNNY! ZEKE SAYS HE DROVE YOU TO THE TOWN WHERE YOU HAD ME!

I'M SOOO TIRE OF YOUR CRAZY STORIES. YOU'RE NOT EVEN A GOOD LIAR. YOU'VE CARED MORE ABOUT YOURSELF THAN MAKING ME A JOKE!!

TELL YOUR FRIENDS THAT YOUR FATHER DIED A WAR HERO. YOU WERE BORN IN AMERICA ...

WHYYY DO YOU KEEP HARASSING ME WITH THIS STUFF MAURY? YOU ARE UPSETTING ME!

THE RESTAURANT FAILED. ALICE FELT THE IMPULSE TO RUN AWAY. THEY TRIED GETTING JOBS IN DIFFERENT CITIES UNTIL MAURY FINALLY BEGGED HER TO GO BACK ... EXCEPT THAT THEY NOW HAD NO HOME TO GO TO.

MOM, THIS SHACK WERE SUPPOSED TO LIVE IN IS CONDEMNED ...

WHEN THEY REALIZED THE LANDLORD WAS HAPPY TO TAKE MONEY FOR THE CONDEMNED PROPERTY, MAURY GOT THE FAMILY FIXING UP THE PLACE.

IT'S FREEZING. HEY GUYS, WE'RE GOING TO FILL IN THE HOLE IN THE WALL WHERE THE BIRD NEST IS.

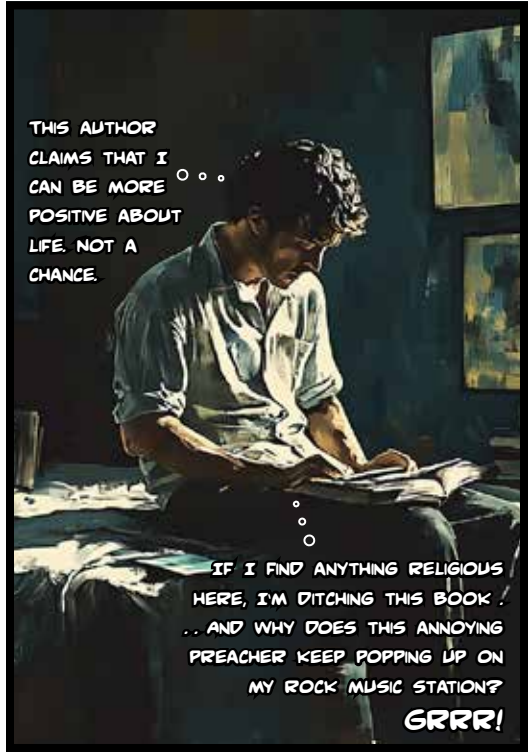
KNOCKING DOWN THESE OLD WALLS MAKES THE PLACE LOOK BIGGER. WHO KNEW THAT MAURY WAS A DECORATOR. HA!

SO WEIRD BEING THE "HEAD OF THE FAMILY" AT 19!

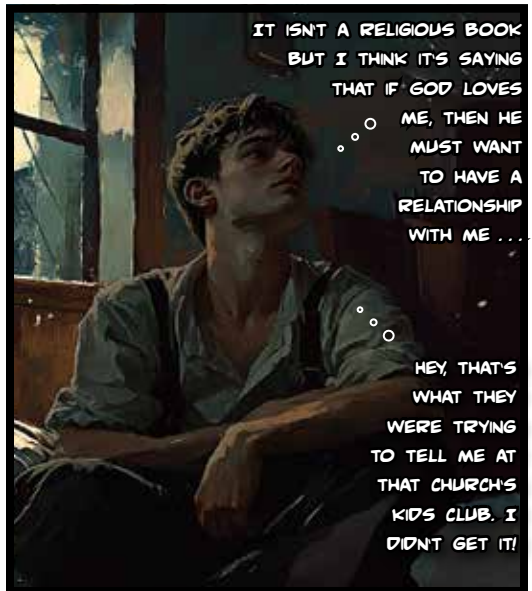
CHAIN REACTION

EVERY NIGHT MAURY LISTENED TO ROCK MUSIC, OFTEN READING USELESS BOOKS. HE FELT THERE WAS NO WAY OUT, UNTIL HIS MOTHER GAVE HIM A BOOK.

THERE WASN'T A PARTICULAR CRISIS; HIS WHOLE LIFE HAD BEEN A CRISIS. MAURY LEFT THE BOOK UNTOUCHED FOR DAYS ...



IN THE BOOK'S POSITIVE THINKING TIPS, ANOTHER MESSAGE POPPED UP ... "GOD LOVES YOU." GOD LOVED MAURY AND GOD ALWAYS DID ... THROUGH EVERY HORROR MAURY HAD EXPERIENCED. HE HAD JUST WANTED TO BE LOVED. MAURY FELT A PERSONAL AWAKENING, A DESIRED CLOSENESS WITH THE DIVINE. HIS EXISTENCE FINALLY MADE SENSE.



FROM HIS PRAYERS FOR HELP ON THOSE FREEZING COLD NIGHTS, TO BEING LOVED BY THOSE KIDS CLUB LEADERS ... COULD IT BE THAT GOD HAD ALWAYS BEEN THERE?? HAD EVERYTHING IN MAURY'S LIFE LED TO THIS ENCOUNTER??

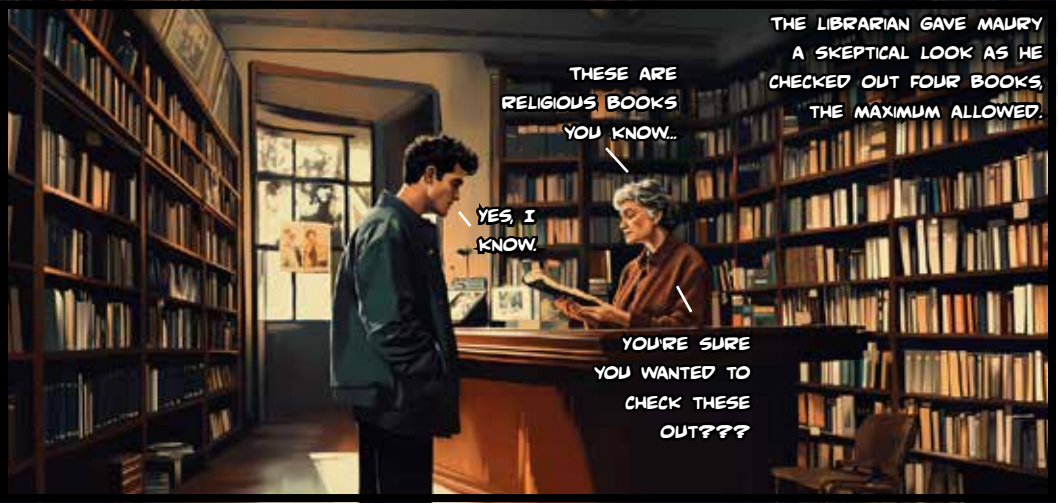


I FEEL DIFFERENT. I FEEL LIKE GOD WAS IN MY ROOM LAST NIGHT.

IS THIS JUST RELIGIOUS BRAINWASHING?

MAURY, YOU ARE LOOKING SO MUCH BETTER THIS MORNING!

THE RELIGION SECTION IN THE LIBRARY NEVER EXISTED TO HIM BEFORE.

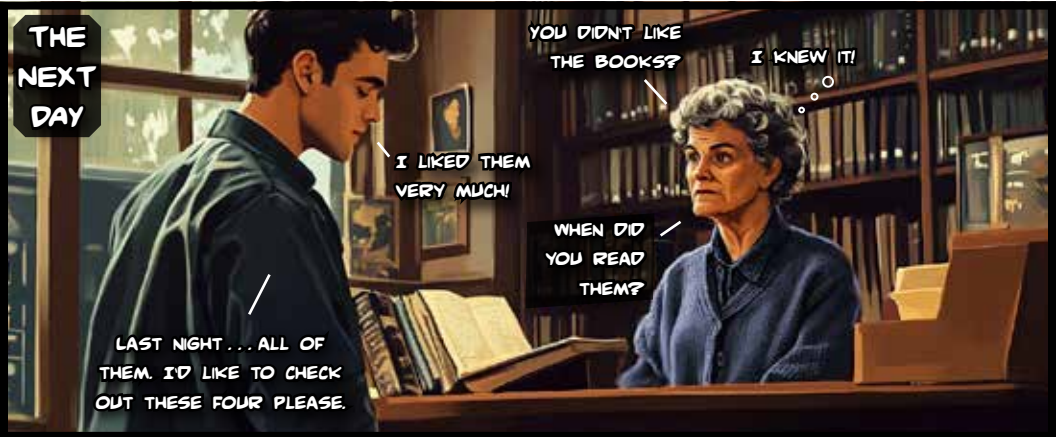


THESE ARE RELIGIOUS BOOKS YOU KNOW..

YES, I KNOW.

YOU'RE SURE YOU WANTED TO CHECK THESE OUT???

THE LIBRARIAN GAVE MAURY A SKEPTICAL LOOK AS HE CHECKED OUT FOUR BOOKS, THE MAXIMUM ALLOWED.



THE NEXT DAY

YOU DIDN'T LIKE THE BOOKS?

I KNEW IT!

I LIKED THEM VERY MUCH!

WHEN DID YOU READ THEM?

LAST NIGHT ... ALL OF THEM. I'D LIKE TO CHECK OUT THESE FOUR PLEASE.

NIGHT AFTER NIGHT WAS THE SAME: A CHILD GOBBLING UP NEWFOUND KNOWLEDGE.



I'M READING ABOUT THE BIBLE, BUT I DON'T HAVE ONE.

HERE'S YOUR GRANDMA'S BIBLE.

THERE ARE NOTES THAT SHE MADE, AND SOME I MADE MYSELF A LONG TIME AGO.

HE READ ABOUT HORRIBLE OLDER BROTHERS WHO SOLD JOSEPH INTO SLAVERY AND TOLD THEIR FATHER THAT HE WAS DEAD! AT THE VERY BEGINNING OF THE BIBLE, ONE BROTHER KILLED THE OTHER BECAUSE HE WAS JEALOUS. KING DAVID HAD AN AFFAIR AND SENT THE WOMAN'S HUSBAND INTO THE BATTLEFIELD TO DIE!! THERE WERE MORE SCREWED UP PEOPLE HERE THAN MAURY HAD EVER MET.



WHAAAT! I'M READING ABOUT PEOPLE WHO HAD REALLY MESSED UP LIVES. I THOUGHT I WAS THE ONLY ONE WITH A HORRIBLE FAMILY. CYRUS WASN'T THE ONLY ONE!

A "SEEKER" CAME TO JESUS—NICODEMUS. JESUS TOLD HIM, "YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN" ... CHANGED FROM THE INSIDE. WAIT A MINUTE ... THAT'S WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO MAURY THE OTHER NIGHT!

"IF ANYONE IS IN CHRIST, THE NEW CREATION HAS COME; THE OLD HAS GONE, THE NEW IS HERE!"



THAT MESSAGE OF PAUL'S MUST BE TRUE ... I'M NOT FINDING THOSE RELIGIOUS RADIO PROGRAMS IRRITATING ANYMORE!

THE FAMILY OWNED AN OLD WOOD STOVE. MAURY SOON EXPERIENCED HIS FIRST MIRACLE. THEY HAD NO MONEY FOR WOOD. HE TRIED PRAYING FOR GOD'S HELP BUT DIDN'T HAVE MUCH FAITH ... UNTIL A LOCAL BUSINESSMAN STOPPED BY ONE DAY.

HEY, I'M WONDERING IF YOU WOULD TEST A LOAD OF WOOD I'M BUYING FOR MY BUSINESS.

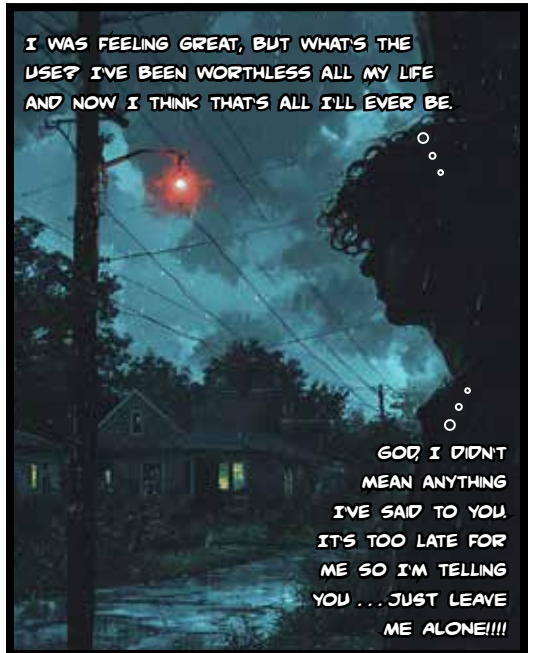
YESSSS! WELL TEST THIS WOOD FOR YOU GLAD TO HELP!



GOD, I PRAYED SO MANY TIMES WHEN IT SEEMED YOU DIDN'T HEAR ME. YOU SURE DID THIS TIME.

SO MANY THINGS HAD BEEN GOING WELL ... UNTIL OVERWHELMING DEPRESSION STARTED CREEPING BACK. HE'D ALWAYS FELT REJECTED, SO MAURY DECIDED TO REJECT GOD BEFORE HE WOULD SOON DO IT TO HIM.

I WAS FEELING GREAT, BUT WHAT'S THE USE? I'VE BEEN WORTHLESS ALL MY LIFE AND NOW I THINK THAT'S ALL I'LL EVER BE.



GOD, I DIDN'T MEAN ANYTHING I'VE SAID TO YOU. IT'S TOO LATE FOR ME SO I'M TELLING YOU ... JUST LEAVE ME ALONE!!!

MAURY'S MOTHER LOVED HIM, BUT SHE HAD NOT ALWAYS BEEN THERE. CYRUS HAD ALWAYS BEEN THERE, BUT HE NEVER LOVED MAURY. HE HAD NEVER KNOWN ANYTHING BUT REJECTION. BACK IN HIS ROOM, HE TURNED ON THE RADIO TO LISTEN TO SOME ROCK MUSIC TO NUMB THE PAIN. INSTEAD, THAT ANNOYING RADIO PREACHER CAME ON.

"YOU DON'T JUST WALK AWAY FROM GOD, CAUSE HE'S NEVER GOING TO WALK AWAY. HE'LL KEEP FOLLOWING YOU!"

I DIDN'T MEAN IT GOD! I MUST HAVE BEEN OUT OF MY MIND. I'M HOPING YOU DIDN'T LISTEN TO ME. I WAS TERRIBLE TO SAY THAT.

MAURY VISITED THE LITTLE CHURCH THAT HAD RUN THE KID'S CLUB YEARS BEFORE. "WHAT'S HE DOING HERE?" WAS THE 'WELCOME' HE EXPECTED. HE'D MADE SO MUCH TROUBLE. MRS. MATHIE, THE PIANIST, WAS ALSO A LOCAL TEACHER. HE WONDERED WHY SHE WAS CRYING. HE'D ASK HER AFTER THE SERVICE, HOPING SHE WOULDN'T RECOGNIZE HIM.

DO YOU REMEMBER ME?

OHhhh, I REMEMBER YOU, MAURY! I'VE BEEN PRAYING FOR YOU FOR YEARS. I LOOKED DOWN TODAY AND SAW YOU HERE!

NEW RELATIONSHIPS QUICKLY DEVELOPED. HE COULDN'T HELP BUT WORRY HOW LONG THEY WOULD LAST.

I DON'T KNOW HOW NOT TO LIVE LIKE AN OUTCAST. WHEN ARE THESE NEW FRIENDS GOING TO CATCH ONTO THAT AND DROP ME?

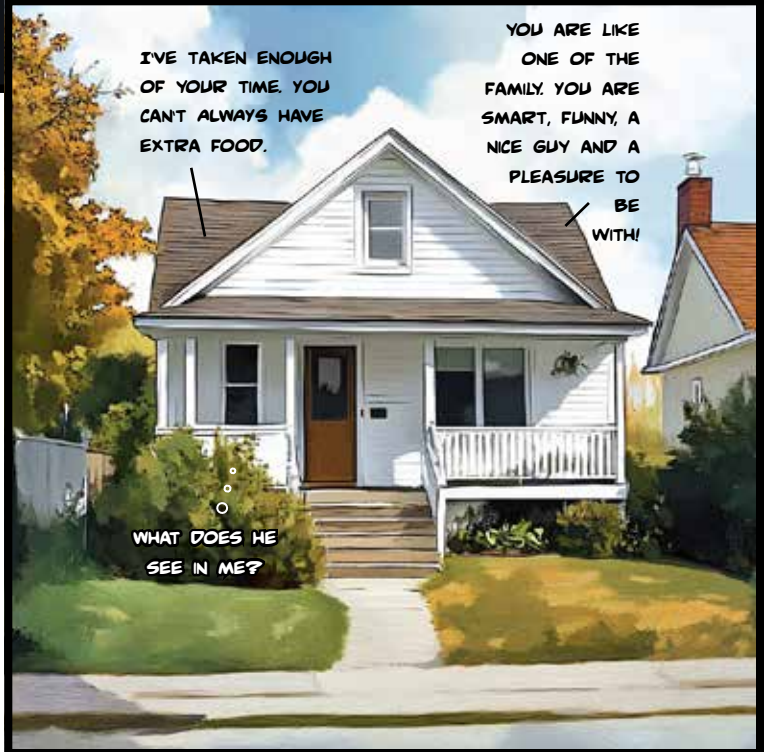
I DON'T WANT TO JUST BE YOUR PASTOR, MAURY. I WANT TO BE YOUR FRIEND.

MAURY PRACTICALLY LIVED AT PASTOR JACK OZARD'S HOME. HE ALWAYS SEEMED TO BE THERE AT MEALTIMES. WHEN HE'D OFFER TO LEAVE, THEY WOULD INSIST HE STAY. HUNDREDS OF HOURS OF "VISITS" STRETCHED INTO ALMOST AS MUCH TIME EATING WITH THE FAMILY.

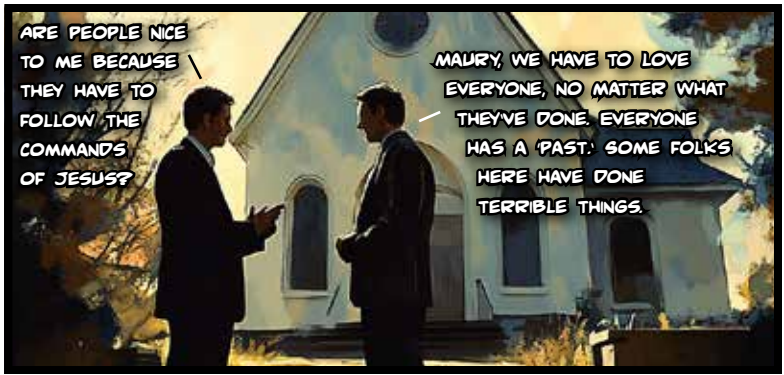
I'VE TAKEN ENOUGH OF YOUR TIME. YOU CAN'T ALWAYS HAVE EXTRA FOOD.

YOU ARE LIKE ONE OF THE FAMILY. YOU ARE SMART, FUNNY, A NICE GUY AND A PLEASURE TO BE WITH!

WHAT DOES HE SEE IN ME?



VOICES FROM THE PAST TAUNTED MAURY—HE DIDN'T BELONG WITH THESE 'PERFECT' PEOPLE. THEY'D RETURN TO THEIR BEAUTIFUL HOMES, WHILE HE WOULD HEAD BACK TO HIS SHACK.



ARE PEOPLE NICE TO ME BECAUSE THEY HAVE TO FOLLOW THE COMMANDS OF JESUS?

MAURY, WE HAVE TO LOVE EVERYONE, NO MATTER WHAT THEY'VE DONE. EVERYONE HAS A 'PAST.' SOME FOLKS HERE HAVE DONE TERRIBLE THINGS.

MAURY WAS LEARNING THAT RICH OR POOR, SAINT OR SINNER, JESUS DIDN'T CARE ABOUT THEIR PAST. BUT—HE DID CARE WHEN OTHERS THOUGHT THEY WERE BETTER.



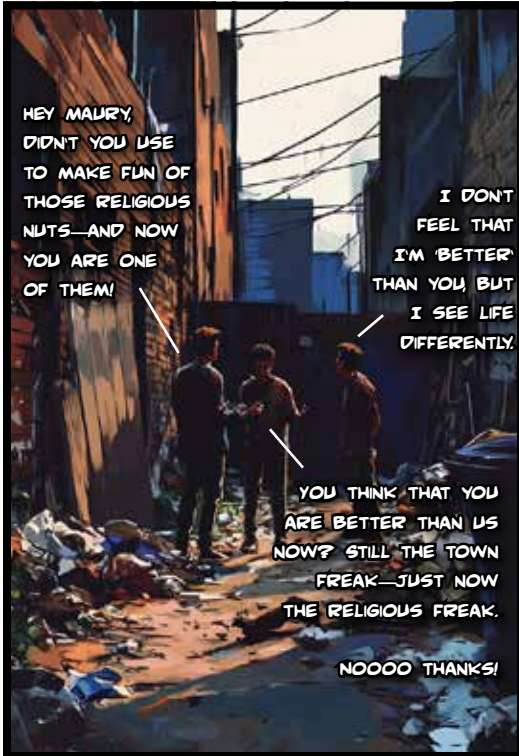
IF I'M HONEST, YOU WON'T LIKE ME. EVEN THE WAY I DRESS ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH.

WEARING THE RIGHT CLOTHING DOESN'T MEAN THAT EVERYTHING IS ALRIGHT INSIDE. JESUS SAYS, THAT WE ARE CLOTHED IN HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS. AND—NICE OUTFIT MAURY. NOT THAT IT MATTERS! HA!

MAURY ASSUMED HIS OLD FRIENDS WOULD BE HAPPY THAT HE WAS IN A BETTER PLACE. WRONG!!



MAURY LEARNED FROM OTHERS. FROM COFFEE SHOPS TO MEALS AT THEIR HOMES, HE WATCHED EVERYTHING THEY DID!

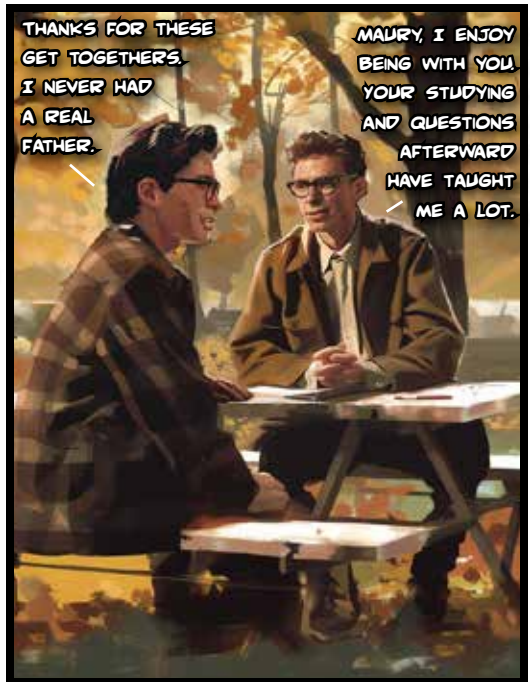


HEY MAURY, DIDN'T YOU USE TO MAKE FUN OF THOSE RELIGIOUS NUTS—AND NOW YOU ARE ONE OF THEM!

I DON'T FEEL THAT I'M BETTER THAN YOU, BUT I SEE LIFE DIFFERENTLY.

YOU THINK THAT YOU ARE BETTER THAN US NOW? STILL THE TOWN FREAK—JUST NOW THE RELIGIOUS FREAK.

NOOOO THANKS!



THANKS FOR THESE GET TOGETHERS. I NEVER HAD A REAL FATHER.

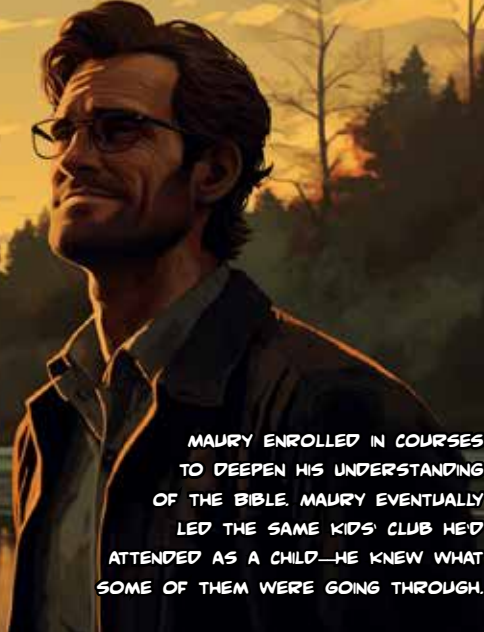
MAURY, I ENJOY BEING WITH YOU. YOUR STUDYING AND QUESTIONS AFTERWARD HAVE TAUGHT ME A LOT.

MAURY'S MOTHER RETURNED TO HER FAITH. STILL, HER PAST HAUNTED HER. HIS BROTHERS WERE A MESS—DRINKING AND FIGHTING LIKE THE FATHER THEY HATED. MAURY WASN'T READY FOR THEIR MOCKING, OR THEIR REJECTION.

WHEN A BROTHER CAME TO A CHURCH SERVICE, HE RAN UP TO THE PREACHER AFTERWARD—MAYBE TO HIT HIM??? NO, MAURY'S BROTHER WANTED TO CHANGE HIS LIFE.

WAS EVERYTHING "PERFECT"? YEARS OF DYSFUNCTION WEREN'T GOING TO DISAPPEAR! BUT GOD WAS THERE WHEN THE FAMILY NEEDED HIM.

MAURY ENROLLED IN COURSES TO DEEPEN HIS UNDERSTANDING OF THE BIBLE. MAURY EVENTUALLY LED THE SAME KID'S CLUB HE'D ATTENDED AS A CHILD—HE KNEW WHAT SOME OF THEM WERE GOING THROUGH.



MAURY MET THE MOST AMAZING GIRL. HER SMILE, THOSE SPARKLING EYES. BEV WAS ALL MAURY COULD THINK ABOUT!

I'D LOVE TO SHOW MAURY WHAT A GOOD HOME COULD BE LIKE. AND—HE'S SOOO HANDSOME!

I CAN'T IMAGINE ANYONE WANTING ME.

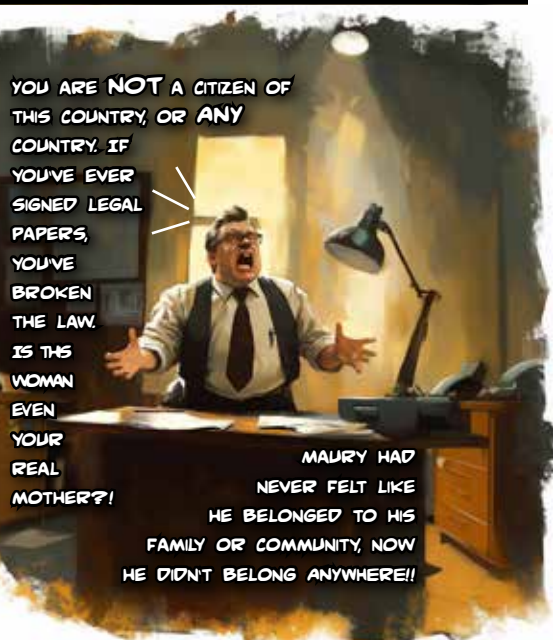


MAURY REVEALED THAT HE WASN'T "A WANTED CHILD". HE DIDN'T KNOW HIS REAL FATHER. BEV LOVED MAURY JUST THE WAY HE WAS, BUT... HE HAD TO GET HIS DOCUMENTS!



MOM, BEV AND I CAN'T GET MARRIED UNTIL I FIND MY BIRTH CERTIFICATE!!!

YOU ARE NOT A CITIZEN OF THIS COUNTRY, OR ANY COUNTRY. IF YOU'VE EVER SIGNED LEGAL PAPERS, YOU'VE BROKEN THE LAW. IS THIS WOMAN EVEN YOUR REAL MOTHER?!



MAURY HAD NEVER FELT LIKE HE BELONGED TO HIS FAMILY OR COMMUNITY, NOW HE DIDN'T BELONG ANYWHERE!!

THOUGH ALICE NEVER APPLIED FOR A BIRTH CERTIFICATE, HOSPITAL RECORDS CONFIRMED MAURY'S ADMISSION AS A TODDLER. THIS PERSUADED AUTHORITIES TO ISSUE ONE.

MAURY TRACKED DOWN HIS FATHER'S PHONE NUMBER. THE VOICE ON THE OTHER END SOUNDED JUST LIKE HIS. HIS FATHER RELUCTANTLY AGREED TO TALK AGAIN.

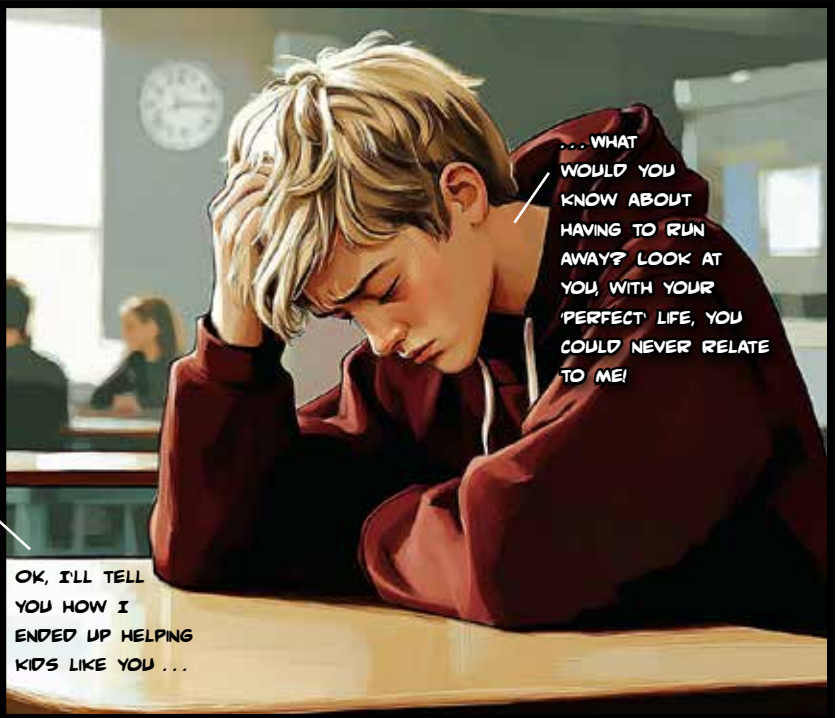
MAURY FOUND HIS FATHER'S ADDRESS, AND WHEN THE DOOR OPENED, HE SAW AN OLDER VERSION OF HIMSELF. THEY KNEW INSTANTLY THEY WERE FATHER AND SON. HEARING VOICES INSIDE, MAURY SAW FEAR IN MAURICE'S EYES—THE FEAR OF BEING 'FOUND OUT'. PRETENDING TO BE LOST, MAURY LEFT, HOPING TO RECONNECT. BUT A YEAR LATER, MAURICE PASSED AWAY.



IT DIDN'T MATTER—MAURY'S COMPLETENESS NEVER HINGED ON DISCOVERING THE SOURCE OF HIS GENETICS. IT HAD TAKEN ROOT IN THAT LITTLE HOUSE WHERE HE FIRST ENCOUNTERED THE FATHER WHO HAD BEEN WATCHING OVER MAURY FROM THE MOMENT OF HIS CONCEPTION. GOD HAD NEVER BEEN CONFUSED ABOUT MAURY'S BLOODLINE. MAURY'S EARTHLY BLOODLINE HAD NEVER LIMITED GOD'S CLAIM ON HIM. HE WAS A CHILD OF THE KING!

MAURY HELPED AT A CHURCH'S CENTER FOR TROUBLED KIDS. HE'D NEVER PLANNED TO SHARE HIS PAST—TOO MUCH PAIN!

HE FOUND HIMSELF IN DANGEROUS SITUATIONS, LIKE THE TIME MAURY WAS ASKED TO VISIT A BIKER IN A DRUG-FILLED FORTRESS FULL OF WEAPONS! SOMETIMES LIVES WERE TRANSFORMED. MANY TIMES, HE FELT HE'D FAILED. MAURY WOULD REMIND HIMSELF THAT HE ONCE SEEMED LIKE A 'LOST CAUSE'.



... WHAT WOULD YOU KNOW ABOUT HAVING TO RUN AWAY? LOOK AT YOU, WITH YOUR 'PERFECT' LIFE, YOU COULD NEVER RELATE TO ME!

OK, I'LL TELL YOU HOW I ENDED UP HELPING KIDS LIKE YOU ...

HOPE IS HERE!

BEV AND MAURY HAVE DEDICATED THEIR LIVES TO SERVING IN DIFFICULT PLACES, INCLUDING OVER TWENTY YEARS DIRECTING TEEN CHALLENGE, A DRUG REHABILITATION CENTER. HE'S SHARED HIS STORY WHEREVER HE COULD—FROM YOUTH GROUPS AND ROCK CONCERTS TO PRISONS. THEY WERE BLESSED WITH TWO BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTERS, LISA AND LAURY. BECOMING A GOOD DAD HAS BEEN PERHAPS THE GREATEST MIRACLE OF ALL.



I WAS A PRISONER IN MY OWN HOME. EVERYONE HAS THEIR OWN PRISON. JESUS CAME TO SET THE PRISONER FREE. HE CAN SET YOU FREE EVEN HERE.

IF GOD COULD HELP MAURY, MAYBE THERE'S HOPE FOR ME.



MAURY'S PERSONAL MESSAGE TO YOU

FROM THE OUTSIDE, IT MIGHT SEEM LIKE I'VE EXPERIENCED MORE FAILURES THAN SUCCESSES. BUT EVERYONE'S PATH IS DIFFERENT. REFLECTING ON MY LIFE, I REALIZED I GOT HERE TODAY BECAUSE I KEPT RETURNING TO THE RIGHT CHOICES.

- WHEN I NEEDED HELP, I ASKED FOR IT!
- I ACKNOWLEDGED MY DISCOURAGEMENT AND DEPRESSION AND CONFRONTED IT INSTEAD OF BURYING MY FEELINGS.
- I TURNED BACK TO GOD WHENEVER I WAS TEMPTED TO RUN AWAY, OR MAKE MORE BAD MISTAKES.
- I SURROUNDED MYSELF WITH PEOPLE I COULD LEARN FROM AND TRIED TO FOLLOW THEIR ADVICE.
- I CHOSE WHICH VOICES I'D LISTEN TO. THE ONES THAT ACCUSED THE 'NEW ME' OF BEING AN IMPOSTOR, OR THE VOICE OF GOD THAT REMINDED ME I WAS NEVER HOW CYRUS DEFINED ME—'BASTARD CHILD'. I WAS HIS CHILD.

WANT TO TALK WITH SOMEONE?

EMAIL: MAURYBLAIR@OVERCOMINGABUSE.CA

GET HELP ANYTIME: CROSSROADS 24-HR LINE: 1-866-273-4444

BONUS! GET THE *CHILD OF WOE* GRAPHIC NOVEL E-BOOK FREE!

ALSO AVAILABLE: THE ORIGINAL *CHILD OF WOE* MEMOIR E-BOOK.

WATCH INTERVIEWS WITH MAURY AND EXPLORE MORE AT OVERCOMINGABUSE.CA.

WANT TO TALK TO THE PERSON WHO GAVE YOU THIS?

ENDURING A NIGHTMARISH HOME-LIFE FILLED WITH UNIMAGINABLE MENTAL AND PHYSICAL TORMENT, THIS IS THE GRIPPING TRUE STORY OF A SOUL'S RELENTLESS FIGHT FOR HOPE AGAINST INSURMOUNTABLE ODDS. WILL THE LIGHT OF HOPE PIERCE THROUGH THE DARKNESS? FIND OUT IN THIS TALE OF SURVIVAL AND RESILIENCE.



A STORY OF TRAGEDY TO TRIUMPH

