



BK1 TRIPPIN'

PJ GRAY



JUST A HOUSE

Troy was in his last foster home. He hated it. Just like he hated all the others. His foster mom had many kids. She also had a job.

Troy would lie in bed at night. He would dream of leaving. He wanted a place of his own.

Troy began to skip school. He did not have friends. He liked to be alone.

He tried to stay out of fights. But if he had to fight, he would. And he tried to stay away from gangs. It was hard.

Troy had one more year of high school. His grades were bad and getting worse. He did not want to go back.

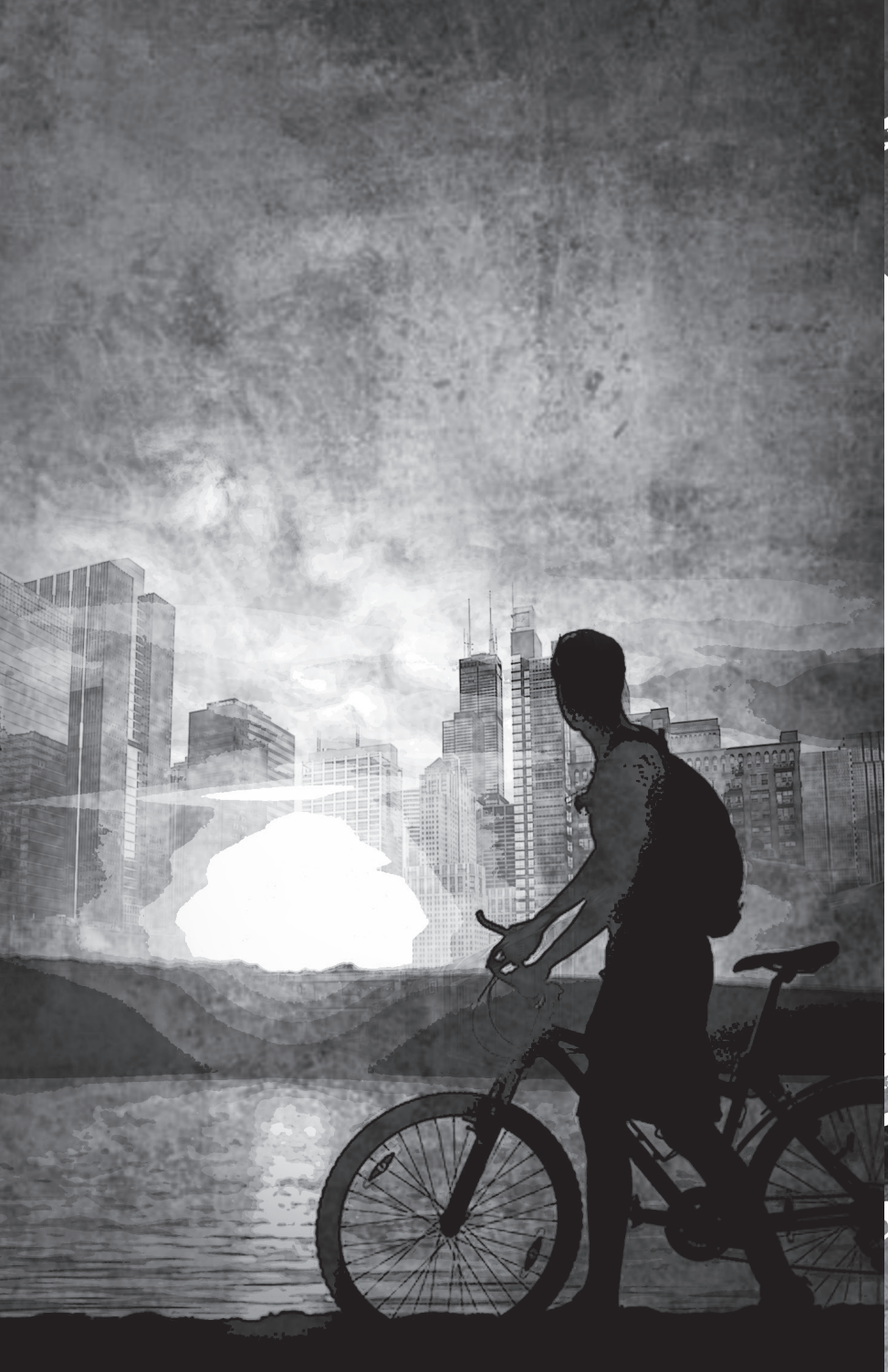
“The cops found you again,” his foster mom said. “You were in the park. You have to stay in school.”

"You can't make me go," Troy said.

"Fine! Don't go!" she yelled. "You can stay here. Take care of the kids. How about that?"

“No way!” Troy said.

“Then you better stay in school.”





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Over it. That's how Troy felt about foster homes. So he ran away. He walked the streets during the day. Begged for money. Then he met Justin.

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BK 2 **TRIPPIN'**

THE ACCIDENT

PJ GRAY



A FRIEND'S GIFT

Troy left the shelter. He found a job and took classes at night. Troy worked at a meat packing company. He found a cheap place to rent. He bought a used car.

Troy tried to save money, but it was hard. He did all he could to stay off the streets.

Justin left the shelter a year after Troy.

Justin tried to keep a job. But he did not like to work. He lived with his girlfriend. She broke up with him. She wanted him to move out. Justin was going to be back on the streets.

Troy and Justin still talked on the phone. Sometimes they met for dinner. They liked to eat burgers at a diner. The diner's name was the Slop Shop. Troy always paid for their meals.

“I got a call from Cash,” Troy said, eating his burger.

“Cash?” Justin asked. “What’s up with him?”

Cash was a friend from the shelter. Cash moved to a town called New City. He got a job at an auto parts plant.

“Cash is having a New Year’s Eve party,” Troy said.

“Cool,” Justin said. “I wish I could go.”

“Why don’t we go?” Troy asked. “I can drive.”

“Dude, I wish I could.”

“Why not?” Troy asked.

Justin looked at his food. The food that Troy paid for.

“You know I’m broke. I can’t help pay for gas or food,” Justin said. “I have no job. My girlfriend is going to kick me out. She just took back her cell phone.”

“Why not go with me?” Troy asked.
“What keeps you here?”

Justin looked down.

“I want you to go with me,” Troy said.
“This road trip is just one night. I will take care of the gas. And we can crash at Cash’s place.”

Justin ate the rest of his burger. “Okay,” Justin said. “Let’s go see Cash and have some fun.”



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Troy found a job. Moved out of the shelter. Bought a car. Time for a road trip. Justin tagged along. It was New Year's Eve. What could go wrong?

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