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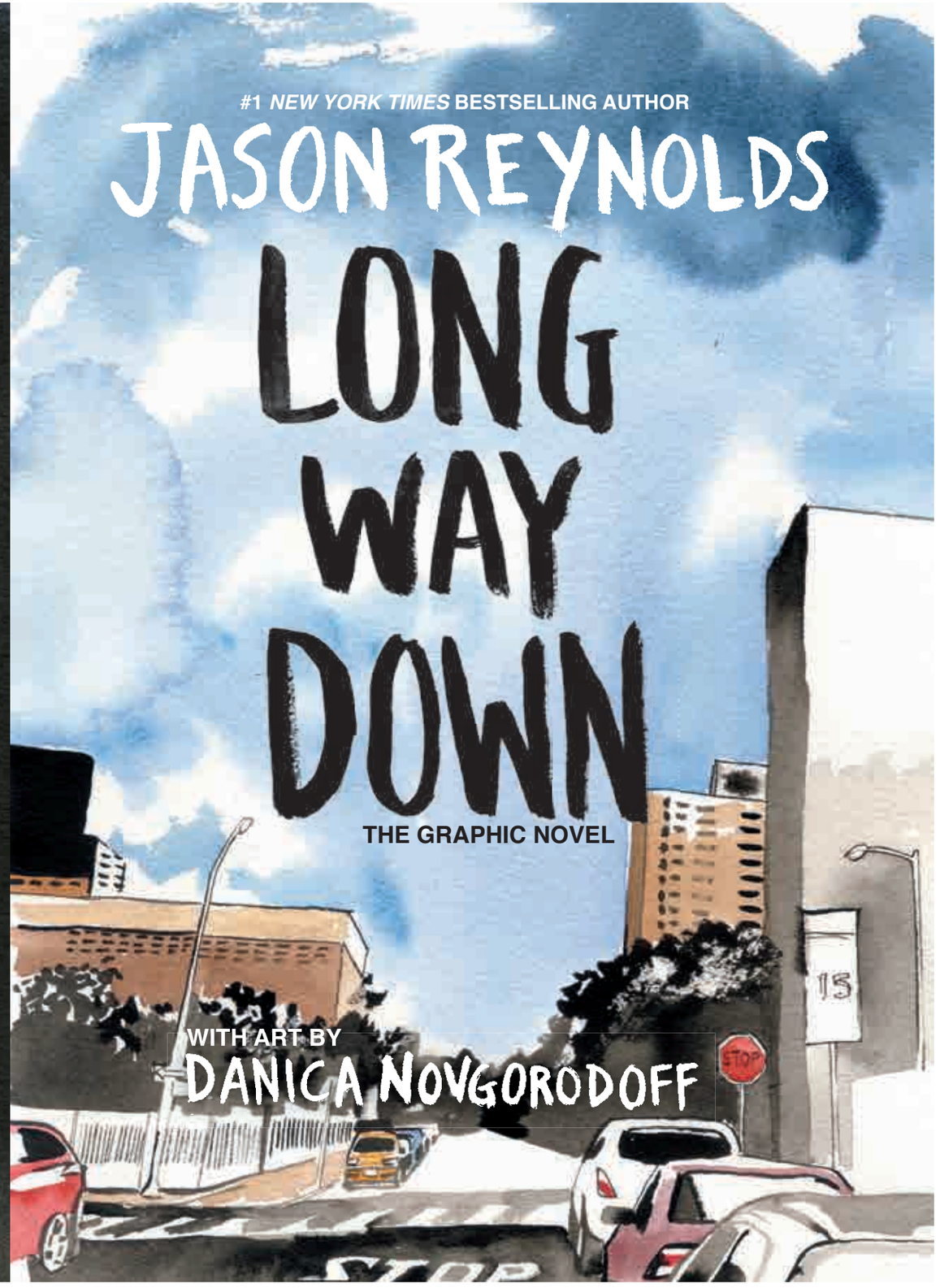
JASON REYNOLDS

LONG WAY DOWN

THE GRAPHIC NOVEL

WITH ART BY

DANICA NOVGORODOFF





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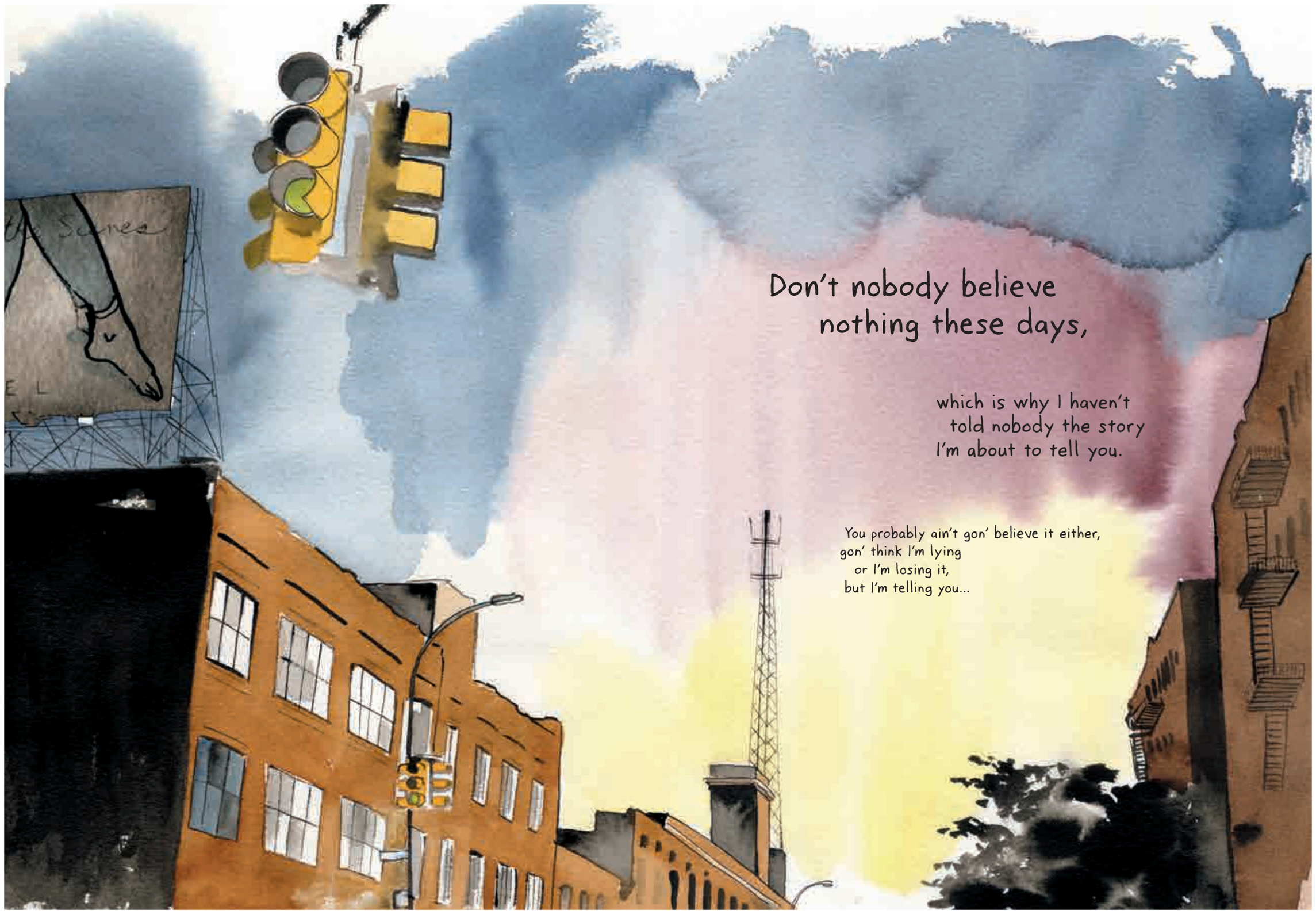
For all the young
brothers and sisters in
detention centers around
the country, the ones
I've seen, and the ones I
haven't. You are loved.
—J. R.

To the young artists,
writers, and activists
working for justice.
Tell your stories.
—D. N.



LONG WAY DOWN

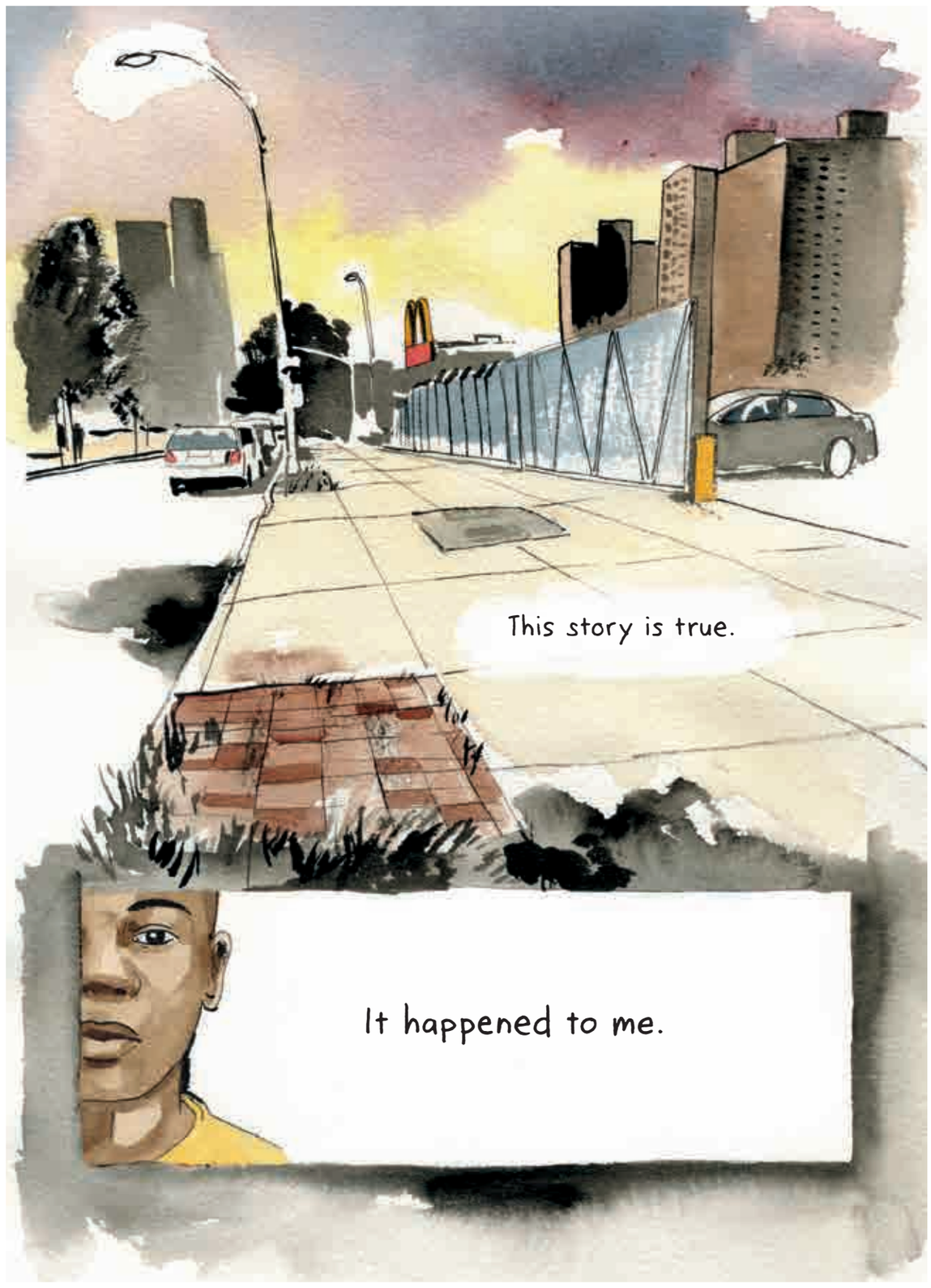
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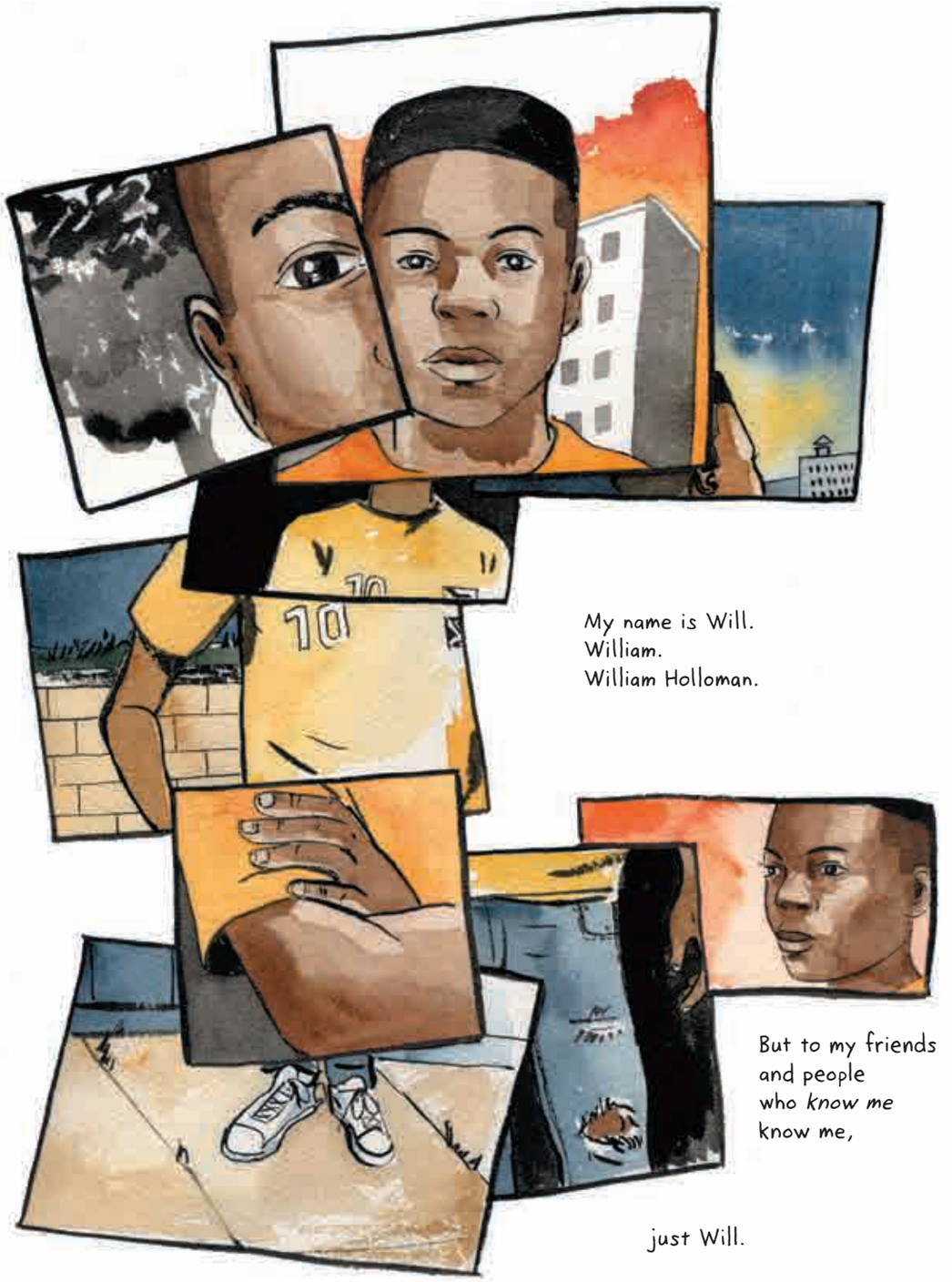


Don't nobody believe
nothing these days,

which is why I haven't
told nobody the story
I'm about to tell you.

You probably ain't gon' believe it either,
gon' think I'm lying
or I'm losing it,
but I'm telling you...


This story is true.
It happened to me.


My name is Will.
William.
William Holloman.
But to my friends
and people
who *know me*
know me,
just Will.

The day before yesterday...

I need to, Will.

There's no way I'll make it at 5'7".

I'm only William to my mother



and my brother, Shawn, whenever he was trying to be funny.

William! What're you ladies up to?

Tony's waiting for his growth spurt to make an appearance.

Y'all are what, fifteen? I grew a foot when I was fifteen.

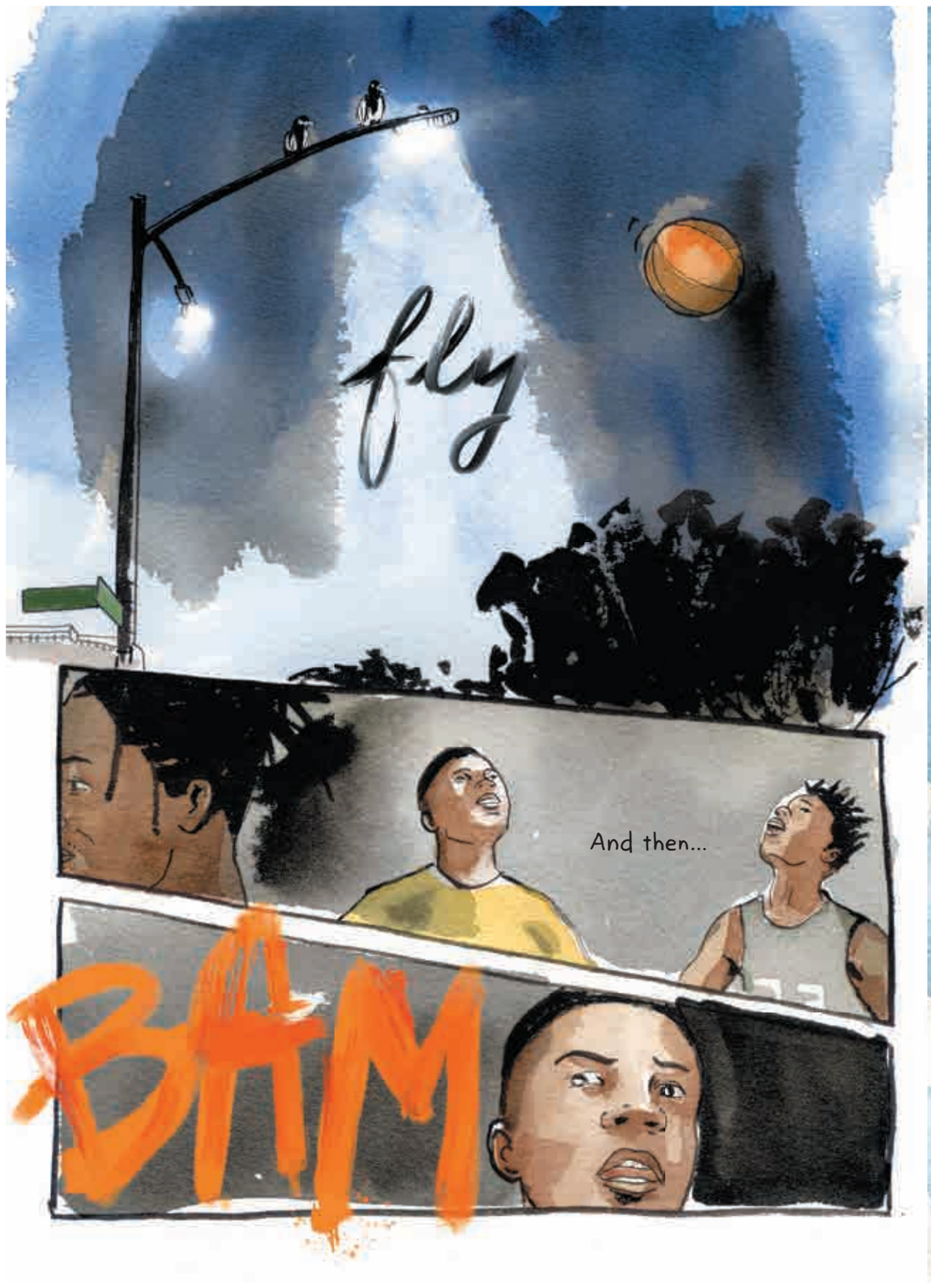
Like a foot and a half. I got all his old shirts he couldn't fit.

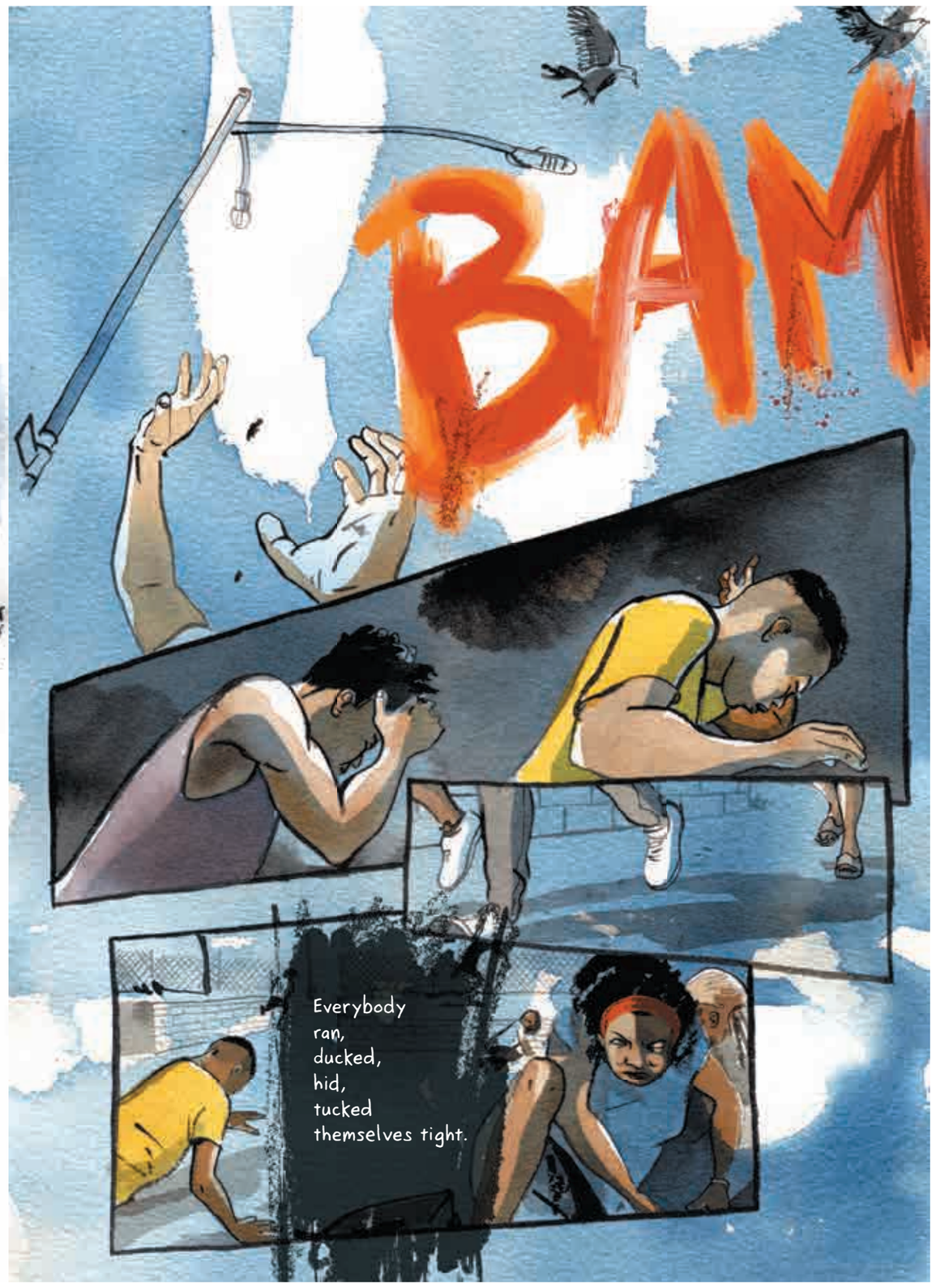
Even though Tony was the best ballplayer around here our age, he was also the shortest.

And everybody knows you can't go all the way when you're that small

unless you can really jump.

Like...


fly
And then...
BAM


BAM
Everybody
ran,
ducked,
hid,
tucked
themselves tight.

Did what we've all
been trained to do.

Pressed our lips to the
pavement and prayed
the boom, followed by
the buzz of a bullet,

ain't meet us.

Me and Tony
waited like we always do,

for the rumble to stop,



before picking our heads up
to count the bodies.

This time

there was

only one.


Shawn.