

The Most Essential Part of My Life

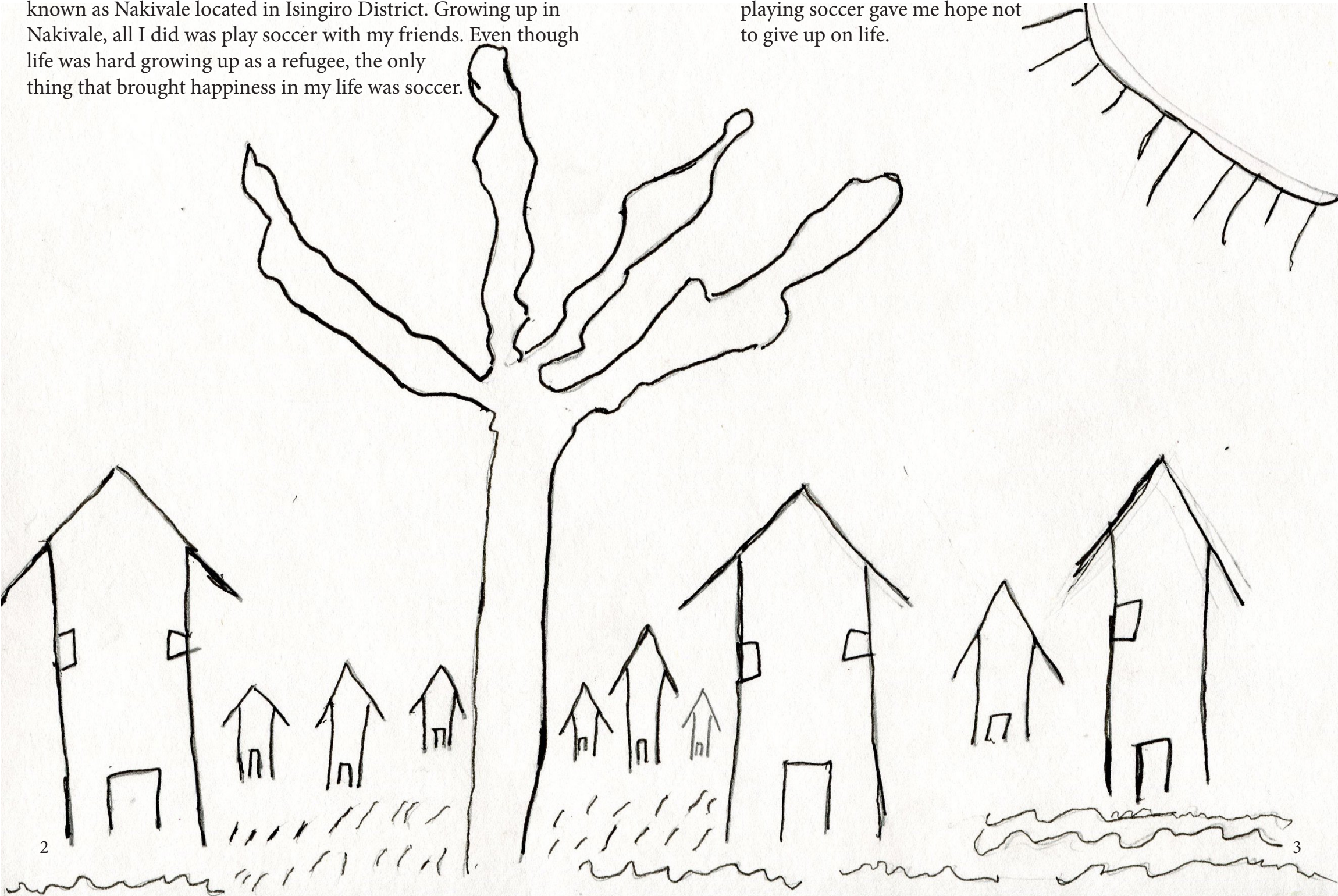
By Enock Sadiki



Soccer is a sociocultural key where I am from.

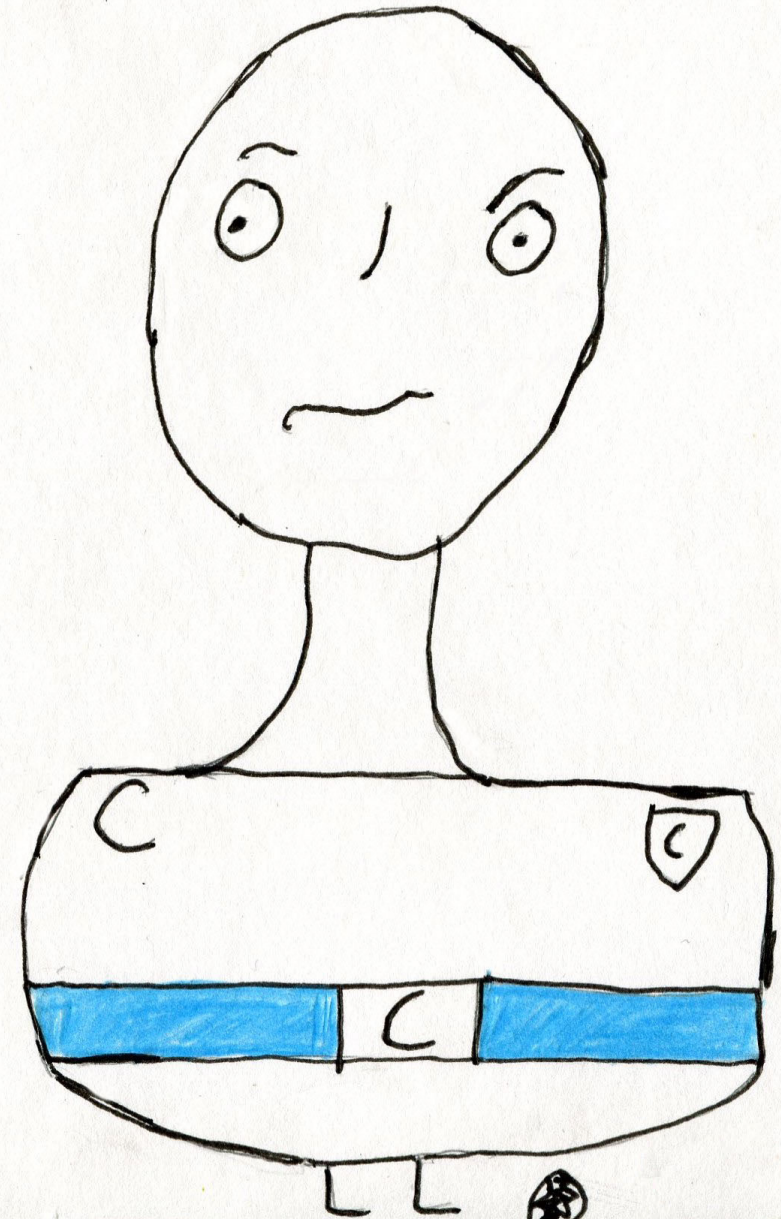
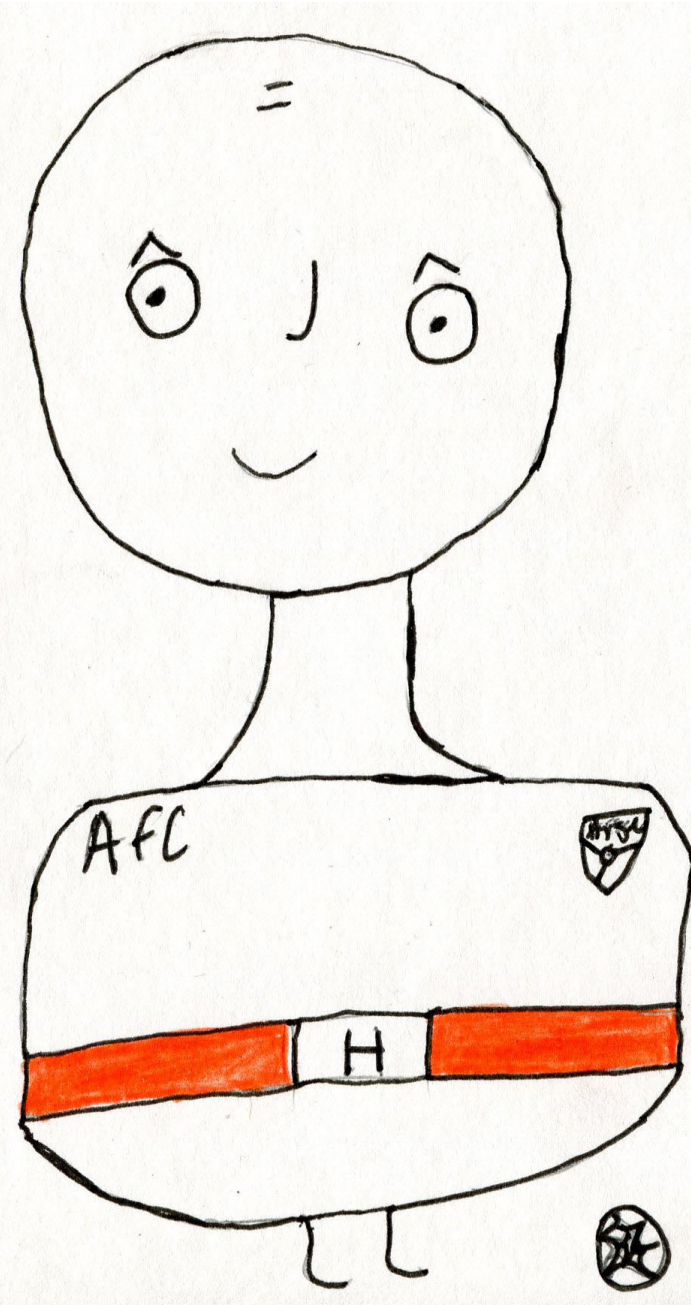
I am from Uganda, I grew up in a refugee settlement that is known as Nakivale located in Isingiro District. Growing up in Nakivale, all I did was play soccer with my friends. Even though life was hard growing up as a refugee, the only thing that brought happiness in my life was soccer.

Playing the beautiful game was important to me because there was nothing else that brought me joy when I was going through a crisis of poverty. Playing soccer didn't only give me happiness, playing soccer gave me hope not to give up on life.



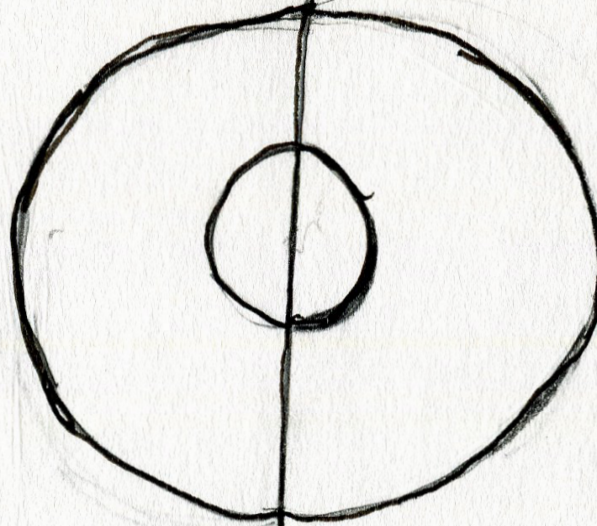
One day, we came up with an idea of having soccer tournaments, even though we lived in a small area with my friends. We would create a soccer tournament by making two teams.

The first team were people that lived in the western part of Nakivale and the other were people that lived in the eastern part of Nakivale. My friends and I played on the East team, as we started off as two teams, more people created their own teams.

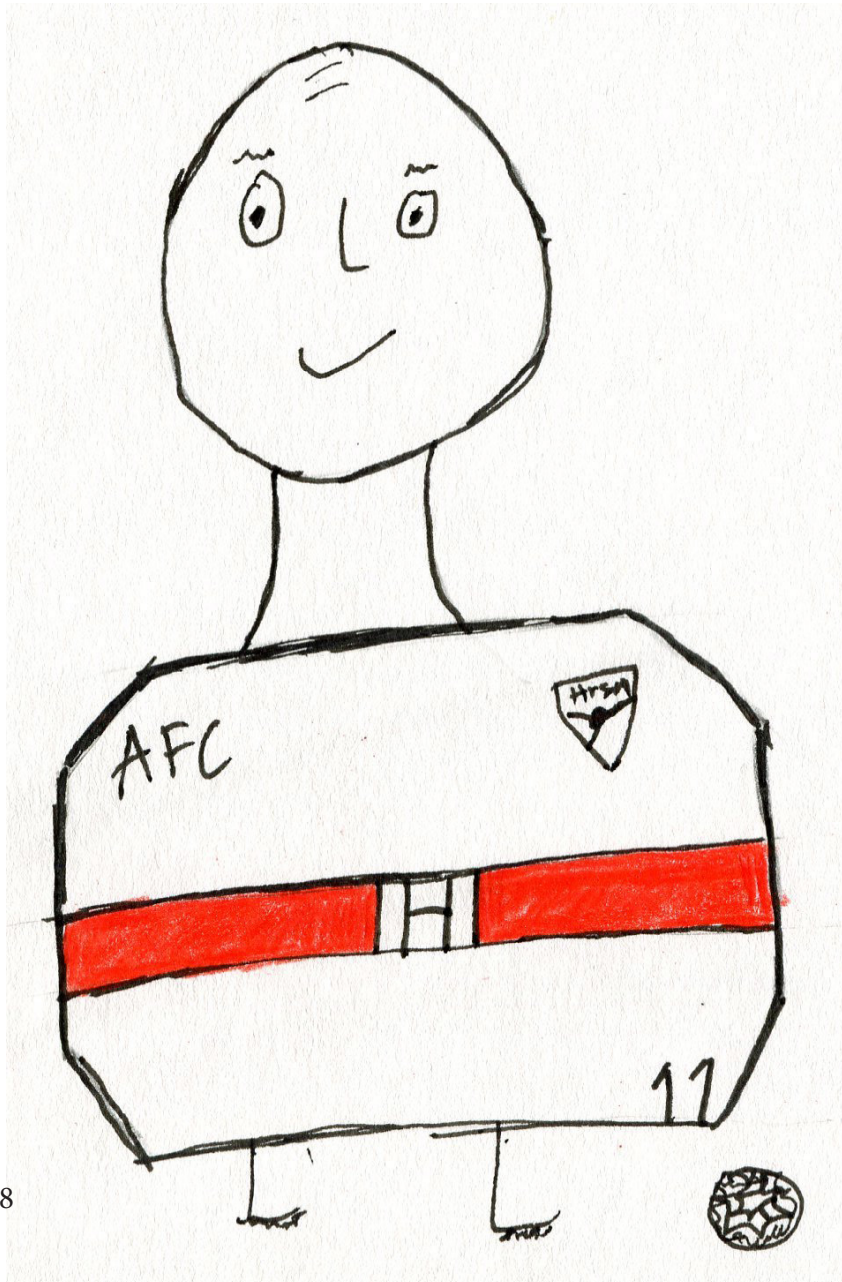


We had everything we needed to play tournaments but the only thing that was missing was a field because most places were owned by people and whenever we tried to play soccer on land the owners would call our parents or stop us from playing.

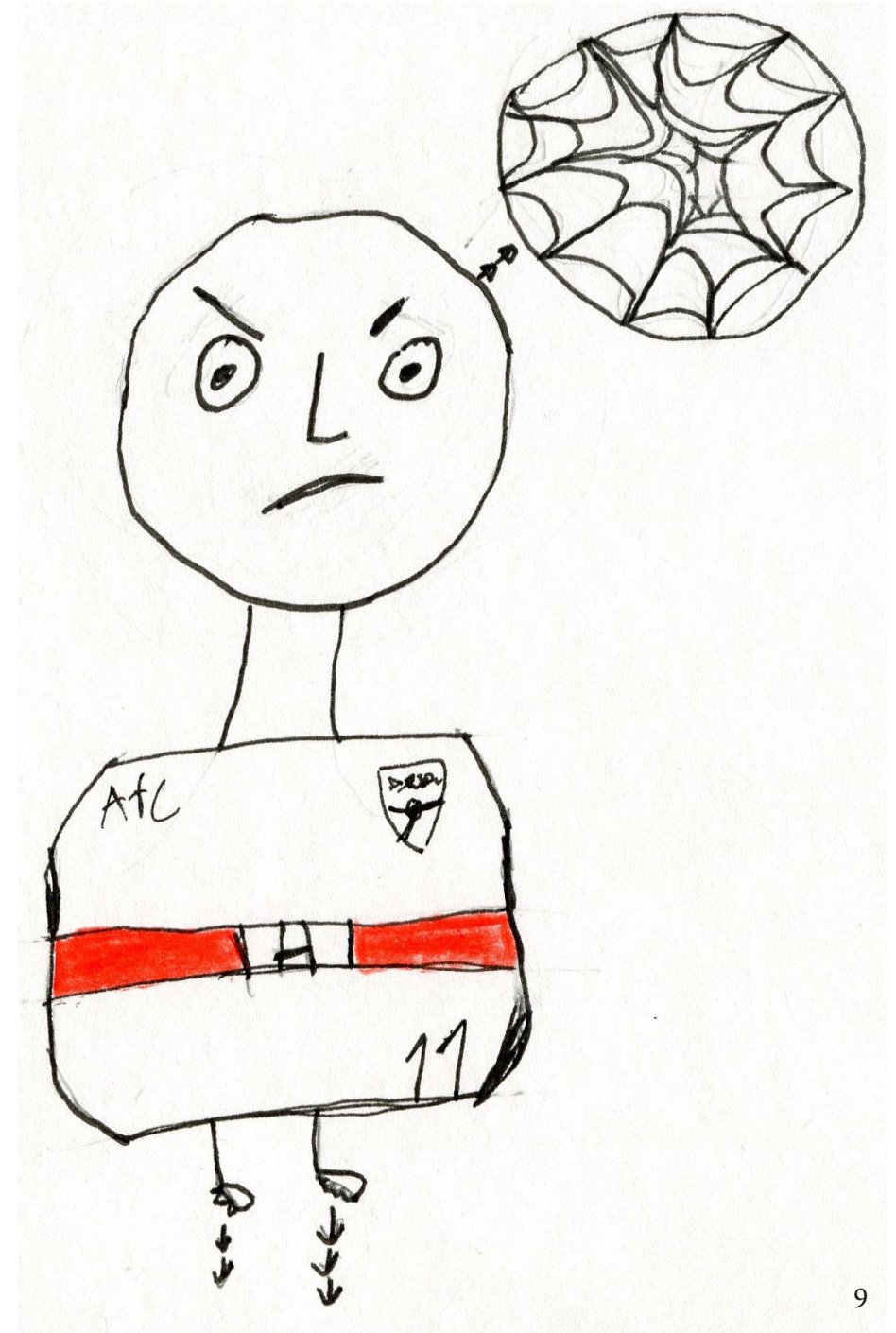
Other teams continued playing but our team couldn't because we didn't have a field, so one day I asked my dad if we could use our back yard as a field to play and practice on. My dad allowed us but we had to cut grasses and little trees that were growing in the yard. We worked on it as a team and a few weeks later we had a field that was big enough for us to use.



Playing soccer wasn't just a sport to us, playing soccer brought laughter and enjoyment to us; it was one of the things that united us like family. Living in a refugee camp is hard, especially trying to get along with people that you don't know and people that speak different languages.



Even though our parents didn't like us playing soccer we always did whatever it took for us to play. We had our first game in our new field, everything went well, and we won.



When I wasn't playing soccer, I was helping my dad by planting plants and raising cattle with my brother. During the day, we would take them to different pastures, then at night we would milk them.

One day, my dad told me to take cows to different pastures and bring them back by nine o'clock, but on that day I told him I had a game. I had to choose between listening to my dad or not listening to him and go play soccer. I spent all morning thinking about it.



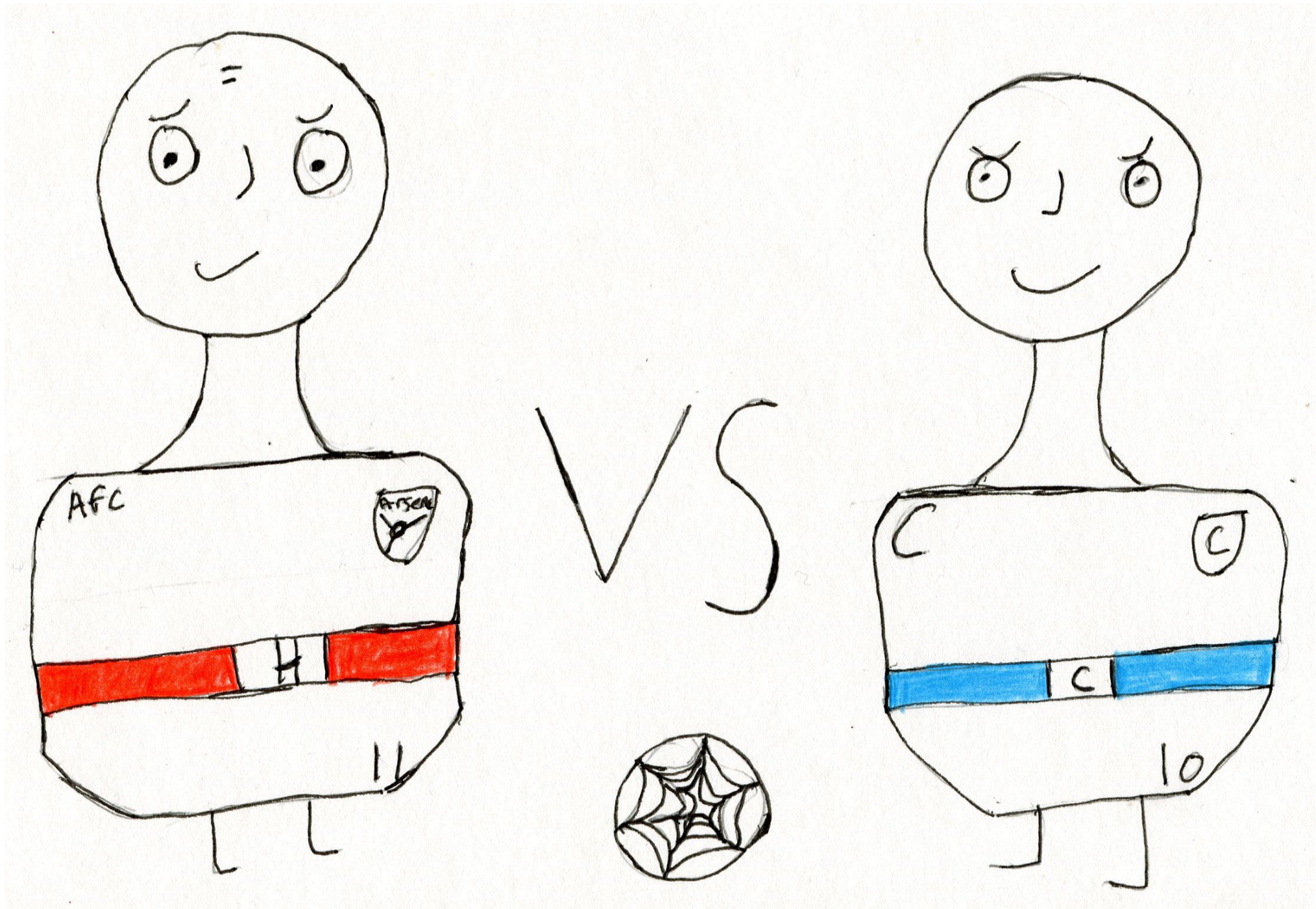
I took the cows out as my dad told me to, but as I was in the pasture and watching the cows eat grass thoughts were running through my mind.

I was struggling not to think about the game, but I had to make a decision.



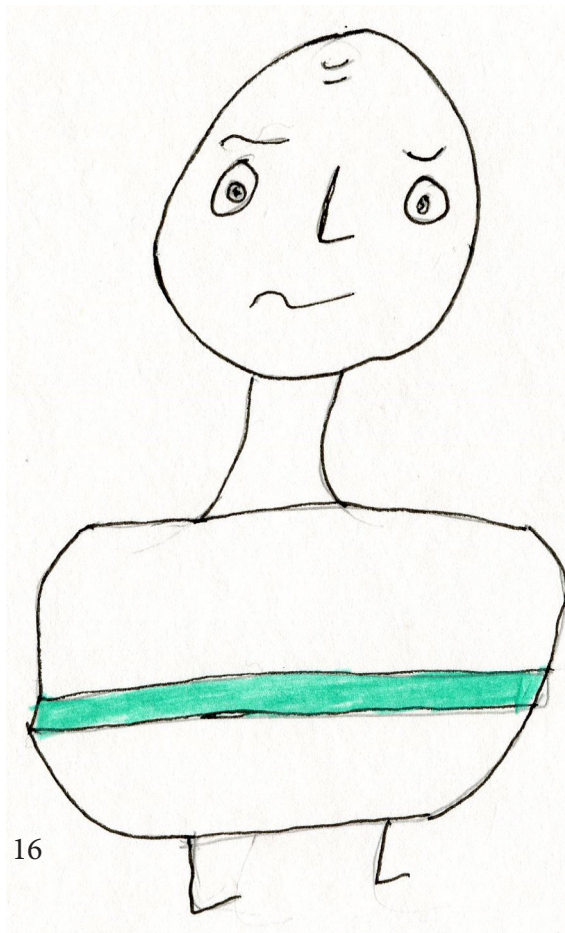
I decided to leave the cows in the pasture and go play soccer. My plan was to leave the cows by themselves in the pasture, then after the game I would come back to get them. I was worried, but I didn't think about the consequences I would face if something bad happened to the cows.

This was a big game for us because it was against our rivals, the western team. I got to the field and my friends were waiting for me, once I got there we started to play. Everything was going well until they scored in the last minute and we lost the game. I was so frustrated about the game that I almost forgot about the cows I left in the pasture.

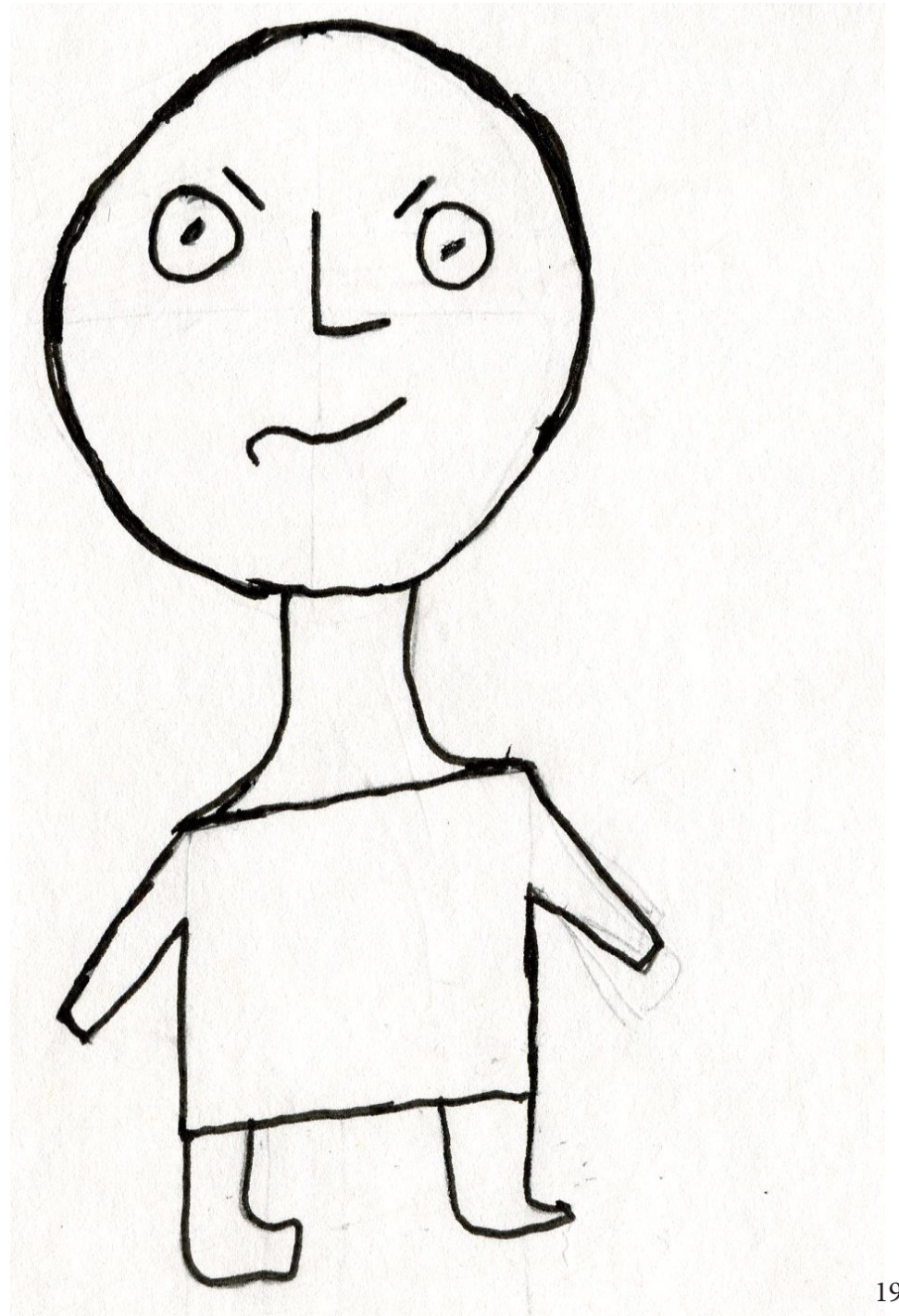


I got my things and ran back to the pasture so fast, when I got there I only saw one cow. I was so scared that I started to cry. I was scared that I wouldn't find the rest.

I was thinking about what my dad would say or do if I told him that I lost the rest of the cows. I spent hours looking for the cows and I couldn't find them, I got tired and I went back home but I was scared.



When I got home I told my dad what happened. While I was sitting down and telling my dad what happened my legs and arms were shaking. I knew how important the cows were to my family; that's why I was scared. When I told him everything, he didn't say anything back to me until a few minutes later. Then, he told me that we will go look for them the next day.

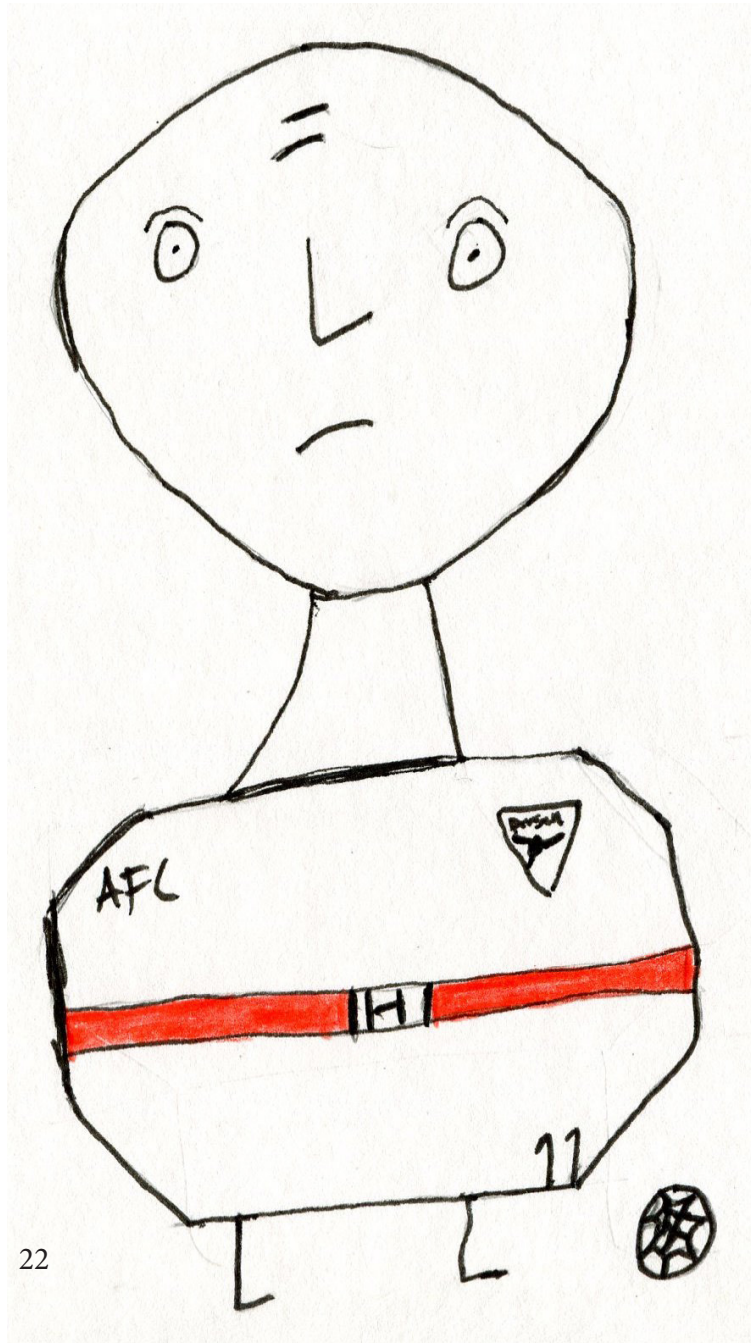


The next morning, we went to look for them, but my dad wasn't talking to me. I felt like he was disappointed in me because he wasn't talking to me. We went to different pastures to look for them, after hours of searching we finally found them tied in someone's backyard. My dad went and spoke to the person who tied the cows in the yard.

I didn't follow my dad when he went to speak to the guy that had our cows tied, but from where I was standing I could tell that my dad was apologizing to the guy for whatever problems the cows caused. While we were going back home with the cows my dad was still not talking to me, we got home and we led the cows into their corral.



The next day was our last practice before our final game against the Western team. This practice was 3 weeks before I had to leave my friends, family, country, and culture to move to the United states. I was excited and sad at the same time because I was leaving my friends and family behind even though it was an opportunity for me to have a better life.



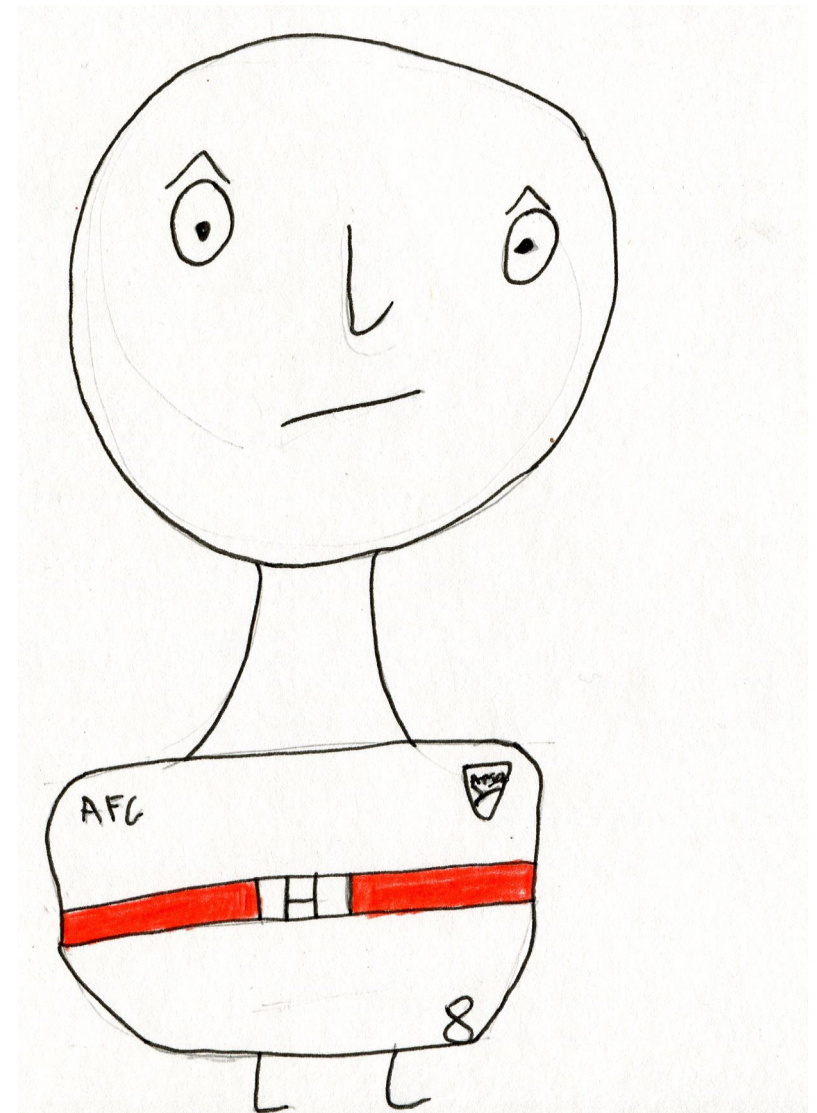
During the morning my brother and I milked the cows and after my brother took them out of the corral. I was no longer taking the cows out because my dad said I wasn't responsible enough to take care of them. A few hours before the practice I met up with teammates and friends, I told them my goodbyes because I was leaving in a few weeks.



An hour before the practice my dad finally spoke to me and the first thing he said to me was that I should let my teammates know that our team won't be able to play in our yard anymore because my dad was selling the property and that I should tell them my goodbyes because we will be moving out of the camp. We will be moving to the city until we move to America.



I was shocked, the week had just gotten worse because my friends wouldn't have a place to practice or play the game and the worse thing was that I won't be able to practice with them or play our last final game. I was angry at my dad, I thought he sold the property to get back at me for not taking care of the cows but after a while I understood why he did what he did. Moving to the city was going to be different too because I was used to living in the camp but my dad made that decision to protect our family. This decision my dad made was to protect our family because when people hear that you're leaving to America or anywhere they feel envy about you, and they do bad things to your family that would make it hard for the family to move.



A week later when we were living in the city I was wondering what happened with my teammates and if they had won the game. I never got to know if they won the game because I couldn't call them and there wasn't any way I could communicate with them. I had no friends in the city but everything else was going great and I still got to play soccer sometimes but it wasn't as fun as it was in the camp because it was hard to find people to play with and it was hard to find a soccer field.



I am seventeen years old now and soccer is still a sociocultural key to me. Playing soccer is something I will never stop doing because it teaches me things I can use in life. Soccer has taught me to never give up, Soccer has taught me how to communicate with different kinds of people, soccer has taught me to stay committed and dedicated to things. Without soccer I wouldn't be who I am today. People dream to play professionally, some dream to play it until college, but my dream is to keep on playing soccer forever.

