

You can probably think back on defining moments in your life — the time you got news of a friend's death or a couple seconds during your wedding when all your loved ones' faces blurred into one happy light. Those moments probably felt uncontrollable, as if so many decisions, good or bad, combined to spit you out at that spot, at that time, with no chance to change course.

When we got to court, Garrett, in a last attempt at defining his trajectory, asked the judge if he could have one more day to work before he reported to jail. It was a long shot. The judge denied the request.

A security guard stood by as Garrett hugged his mom over a railing in the courtroom. I waved to him, and he waved back. Then the guard handcuffed him and took him out a side door.

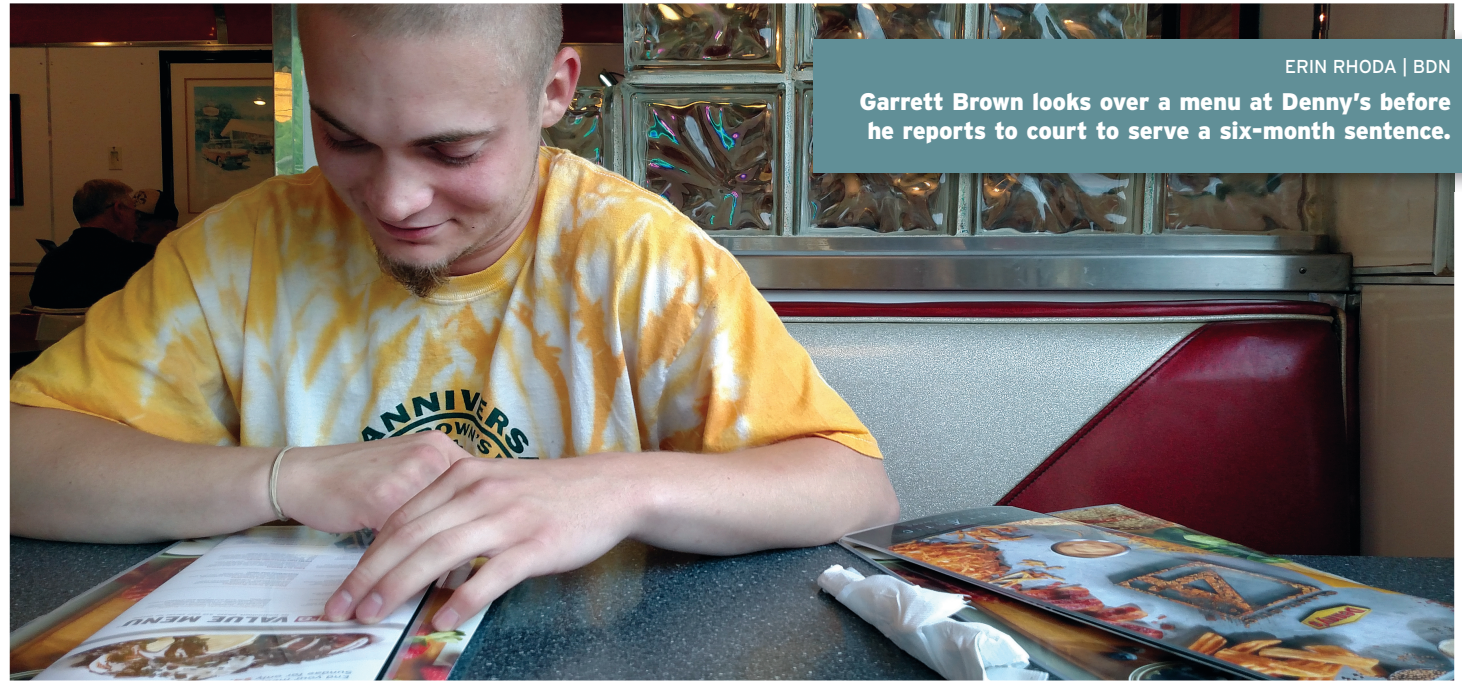
"This doesn't get easier," Traci said to herself.

Kennebec County jail, an old stone building not far from the capitol, is a maze of doors and hallways. Inside, Garrett was the angriest — or maybe saddest — I had ever seen him. He was "really sick of living this life," he said, and "not too excited" about being required to do several weeks of intensive outpatient therapy — more counseling — when he got out, even though he knew he needed help.

We sat in the video arraignment room, flanked by a bookcase of Bibles. All he wanted was to go back to college, he said. But there were other steps he needed to take first. He hoped to get approved for day reporting, which would allow him to complete his sentence at home if he agreed to touch base with corrections on a regular schedule. If he wasn't physically in jail, he could apply for health insurance, so he could complete his weeks of required therapy. Only then could he fill out paperwork to request financial aid, so he could apply again to SMCC.

"Not to sound like a fairy tale, but obviously I'd like a fucking happy ending to this story," he said.

The more we talked, the more reflective he became. He spoke about wanting to one day use his experience to be a mentor to at-risk kids. ("It would be different coming



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Garrett Brown looks over a menu at Denny's before he reports to court to serve a six-month sentence.



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Garrett Brown shops at Wal-Mart for underwear, to bring with him to Kennebec County jail that day, June 30, 2015, to begin serving a sentence.



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Garrett Brown hugs his mother, Traci, before entering the Augusta courthouse June 30, 2015.