

CY, O'NER

comics as eyewitness
October 2020

Sri Lanka

Armenia

Iraq

Mauritania

Colombia

front line defenders



cypher

/ˈsaɪfər/

The dictionary definition of cypher is ‘a secret or disguised way of writing’. In many ways, this is the essence of comics storytelling – the image, rather than the word, is a disguise for many words, that can convey meaning, emotion, and can re/frame an entire narrative.

Rap and hip hop culture has taken the word and ascribed a new meaning: ‘an informal gathering of rappers, beatboxers and/or breakdancers in a circle, in order to jam musically together.’ This, too, we find relevant to this project, in that we are bringing together artists and HRDs in freestyle collaboration of activism and art with the aim of informing, elevating and inspiring.

For us, this captures the spirit of why we are working in comics and guides how we facilitate the process of creative production.

Edited and published by:
Beldan Sezen and Adam Shapiro

Cover art by Isuri

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Cypher 04 - The Award issue // part one



adam shapiro

Each year, Front Line Defenders presents an annual award to five human rights defenders at risk – one from each region of the world (Africa, Americas, Asia-Pacific, Europe & Central Asia and the Middle East & North Africa).

This edition of **Cypher** honors the 2020 Award Winners:

Africa:	Mekfoula Mint Brahim (Mauritania)
Americas:	Guardia Indígena de Cauca (Colombia)
Asia-Pacific:	Juwairiya Mohideen (Sri Lanka)
Europe & Central Asia:	Lara Aharonian (Armenia)
Middle East & North Africa:	Women Human Rights Defenders (Iraq)*

Because of the pandemic, we have had to rearrange all of our plans for this year's award, moving the in-person ceremony planned for May to an online event on 9 December. And in our world during pandemic, interruption is the underlying reality for everyone. For human rights defenders, interruption is a part of daily reality all the time. This issue has been impacted and stories interrupted, and so we ask your indulgence in that this issue will be dynamic - unfinished stories presented here will be updated through 9 December, in time for our online ceremony - and we hope you join us for that!

In developing the stories for this edition, new security-related and geopolitical issues emerged that have affected the storytelling. One Award winner was visited by security agents in her office in an act of intimidation that led her to request that some information about her work be left out of this story. By doing so, she is preserving her ability to continue to provide for her community. In Iraq, a series of killings of human rights defenders in Basra led the local police to tell the WHRD* who had been selected as the regional winner to leave the city for her own safety – as a result we agreed with her to honor WHRDs in Iraq as the award winner and to present the story here as a collective story. And just as Lara in Armenia was due to sit down with the artist (Armineh) to develop how her story would be drawn, Azeri and Armenian forces started a lethal war over the territory of Ngorno-Karabakh, leading to the mass mobilization of Armenian citizens and the displacement of thousands from the territory into Armenia. Lara has been spending her days aiding the civilians who have fled, and she has asked that we delay any further recognition.

Please take in these stories carefully. These human rights defenders are being honored by this organization this year, in part because of their resilience and perseverance in the face of great stress, risk and trauma, but they are also reflections of the larger movement of human rights defenders in their countries and around the world – and they are the first to call that to our attention. This is why **Cypher** exists – to bring these stories to wider audiences and to visibilize the human rights defenders in response to efforts to intimidate, harass, threaten and attack.

When we honor the award winners each year, we are honoring not only them, but all human rights defenders, from all walks of life. Please join us in celebrating their courage, and helping to make their voices louder than the efforts to silence.

Cypher 04 - The Award issue // part two



**the fine line of censorship:
“Instability is a goldmine without bottom”**

beldan sezen

When artists team up with HRDs one of two things are likely to happen. All goes smooth and the story is delivered on time or - a war breaks out or the region hits yet another severe economic crisis or the defender's life is in danger due to threats by state officials or other forces. When something along these lines transpires, we are confronted as editors and publisher to walk a line that protects the HRD's life (and possibly the artist's as well) and refusing the pressure of censorship. To be held hostage by a threat of harm to life so we won't tell the story truthfully shows that the perpetrator knows very well the power of storytelling. And that the storytelling can break the ability of the perpetrator to threaten or harass.

The artists we work with are challenged to bring forward the stories of HRDs in condensed versions - itself a huge challenge. Combine that with the processes that HRDs face and the artist's ability to work and deliver the story in a very short amount of time of often no more than six weeks is stretched. The results may not always be perfect, and may still be somewhat rough. But we believe that that creation - a product of time and context - is itself a statement.

This is the undercurrent that accompanies you, dear reader, when reading the stories we publish every month in Cypher.

October 2020

Sri Lanka

Juwairiya Mohideen

Following the August parliamentary elections in Sri Lanka, resulting in a super majority for the party of Mahinda Rajapaksa, human rights defenders, journalists, lawyers, minority rights defenders and those working in war affected fear new levels of intimidation, harassment and possibly worse.

This year's award winner for the Asia-Pacific region, Juwairiya Mohideen, has already survived being forcibly displaced in her youth and becoming an internally displaced person (IDP) in her own country. Without formal education beyond grade school, Juwairiya has gone on to lead an important women's rights organization, Muslim Women's Development Trust (MWDT) and become a pillar in her community, even as she faces intimidation, threats and harassment. She works with women

Juwairiya is at the front line of calls for reform in Muslim personal laws which deny Muslim women and girls the basic rights enjoyed by their non-Muslim sisters in Sri Lanka. Juwairiya has been undeterred by threats against her and her family, blatant misinformation and attacks on her character and being labelled as a traitor and shunned by parts of her close knit community.

Artist: Isuri

Isuri is an artist based in Colombo, Sri Lanka. They graduated from Columbus College of Art & Design with a BFA in Illustration. These days, they're working on two adventure comic books; Podi (Oni Press), a shrink-fiction story about two sisters trying to find their baby brother and escape a tropical garden full of enormous beasts; and Aarthi & The Land of Salt (Scholastic), a story of twelve-year-old Aarthi, her new friend and her younger siblings, who discover the secret world of an abandoned saltern.

[Portfolio](#)

[Instagram](#)


**MY
NAME IS
JUWAIRIYA
MOHIDEEN**



I was born on 15th January 1968, in Erukkalampitti village in Mannar district. My parents had 9 children, seven daughters and two sons. In the year 1990 when LTTE* told the Muslims to leave within two hours, we were forcibly evicted from Mannar to live in a settlement for Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) in Puttalam.


Thirty years later, we are still living here.



An illustration of a bullock cart with three people and a white bull. The cart is pulled by a white bull with a dark harness. Three people are on the cart: one in the front holding the reins, and two others sitting behind. The background is a sunset sky with orange and purple clouds. Two large speech bubbles contain text.


Back then
there was no
Muslim, Tamil
problem, we all
lived together.

It is very
painful for me to think
about, even after 30
years, leaving my native
place in two hours. I had
very close relationships
with the Tamils there and
that disconnection still
lingers on.



I have two children now, a son and a daughter. My daughter is in grade 10 and my son is in grade 7. My husband Uwais has his own business.






Shortly after the expulsion, I started working as an aid worker, helping the IDP community in Puttalam with their basic needs.

I have been working for 25 years now.

While I was working, I realised that there was no organization working to support and protect women, who were the most vulnerable.

That is why I started the Muslim Women's Development Trust, which addresses violence against women and discrimination starting from their homes to within their communities.





Back home in Mannar we lived peacefully, and Tamils were like part of our family.

In our village we called everybody as Annan¹, Appa², Amma³, Mama⁴, Mami⁵.

The driver in my house was a Christian and the worker was a Hindu.

¹ elder brother ² father ³ mother ⁴ uncle ⁵ aunty

When old relatives from Mannar came to visit, I used to tell my husband Jayabalan mama and mami are coming to see us.

Then only I realized she was born here, in Puttalam, born without relatives and surrounding societies, unaware of other communities.

My 8 year old daughter asked me why I call Tamils as mama and mami.

I told her how we used to relate to each other and that calling someone 'Annan' and 'Thangachi' can make our relationships stronger, more nurturing.

So I encourage my children and their friends to call each other 'brother' and 'sister'.

I felt by doing this, I can contribute something that is dear to me to the next generation.





I am Juwairiya Mohideen.

I am a Muslim Women Human Rights Defender based in Puttalam, in the North West of Sri Lanka. Me and my family were displaced to Puttalam from the North during the mass expulsion of Muslims by the LTTE in October 1990, and we still live as IDPs in Puttalam. For over 25 years, I have been a vocal advocate for the rights of IDPs and women's rights, especially Muslim women's rights to equality, non-discrimination and against systemic violence and abuse against women and girls. I am the founder and executive director of the Muslim Women's Development Trust (MWDT) based in Puttalam – which provides practical support including legal advice to women and girls. I am the chairperson of a women's collective from the Northern and Eastern provinces, working to reform discriminatory laws and practices. Over the past five years, I have been at the forefront of campaigns for reform of Muslim personal law.



Armenia

Lara Aharonian

Lara Aharonian is a human rights defender who works on a variety of human rights issues in Armenia, an ally of virtually all movements and causes, and who has worked for women's rights, LGBTI rights and against corruption. But in October 2020, she started emergency response supporting civilians fleeing the conflict that erupted with Armenia's neighbor, Azerbaijan. She has given space in her own home to shelter some people, while turning her organization's office into an emergency humanitarian aid distribution center.

Armine Shahbazyan, also based in Armenia, has had family members called up to the front as the country entered a full mobilization phase, making it nearly impossible to work on this story.

The story here is unfinished, but will fully realized over the next month, even as the daily news brings reports more misery and suffering as a result of this conflict. As the final layout was being prepared, Lara sent this note: 'I fear that soon the shelling will reach us as well but still hoping it will stop soon, but have no idea how, since no external power was able to stop it yet. This week we also cleaned our underground shelters just in case.'

Artist: Armine Shahbazyan
Illustrator and Graphic Designer based in Yerevan, Armenia.

[Behance](#)



LARA AHARONIAN



My name is Lara, I was born in Beirut, Lebanon in 1972. I was only 3 when the war started.

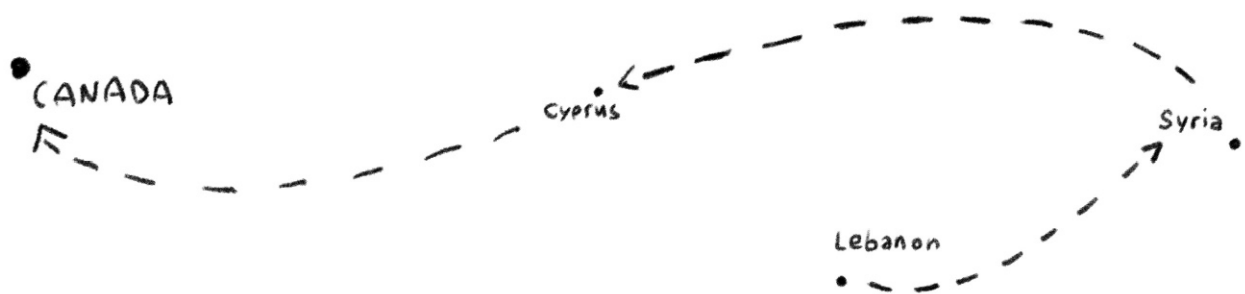


As a small child I was completely mesmerized on how women in my family were able to predict the future in the dried-up coffee at the bottom of the small coffee cups. But these were not just regular coffee sessions. They were a safe space created by women among them to raise issues that they found difficult to talk about. My grandmother was an expert on this and as a small child I would listen for hours to these magical sessions.

Years later, when I started defending women's rights, this ritual became an important tool of healing, solidarity and empowerment. Very feminist in their nature it gave me the opportunity to discuss uncomfortable issues like war trauma, health, sexuality or domestic violence in very traditional settings.



I grew up learning how to hide in bomb shelters, learn the sounds that different weapons make and read for hours everything I found under the candlelight since electricity was cut most of the time.



In the late 80s when the civil war became even more deadly and our house was bombed, After traveling across different towns looking for safety, finally my parents decided to take the risk of crossing at night the sea to Cyprus and from there migrate to Canada to a safe haven, leaving behind all the devastation and death.

Montreal was a healing place for our family. The trauma of war, losses and broken homes stayed in our souls longer, but living in a peaceful country gave us back the courage to live again.

I discovered there, green wide spaces, friendly people and libraries full of books.

My interests grew in social justice issues and more specifically in feminism and women's rights. I studied at the University, educational psychology then feminist literature, then volunteered with women's centers, advocating on local rights issues, writing feminist texts and protesting for social housing.



In 1999 I decided to travel to Armenia and volunteer for the summer in a small village called Karin Tag, in the unrecognized territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. While during the day I was helping the villagers in renovating a church, the afternoons I was visiting people's houses and drinking coffee with the women. Then the long coffee-cup reading sessions started and while getting at ease around me, women started telling me their stories, about their lives during war, how they gave birth in shelters, how they cared for the wounded, the deaths, the grief. We cried together then we laughed again and days passed while we became good friends.

In 2001, I returned for another summer, this time in Shushi, a beautiful city in Karabakh, Artsakh, devastated by the war. This time with my little girl who was 1 at that time, I volunteered to help with the Shushi hospital reconstruction of one ward. Once more, after the work day, I used to put my baby in a backpack on my back and we would together visit the homes and around coffee cup reading sessions listen to the most difficult issues; their lives, health, abuses they faced, violence in the house and economic hardships.



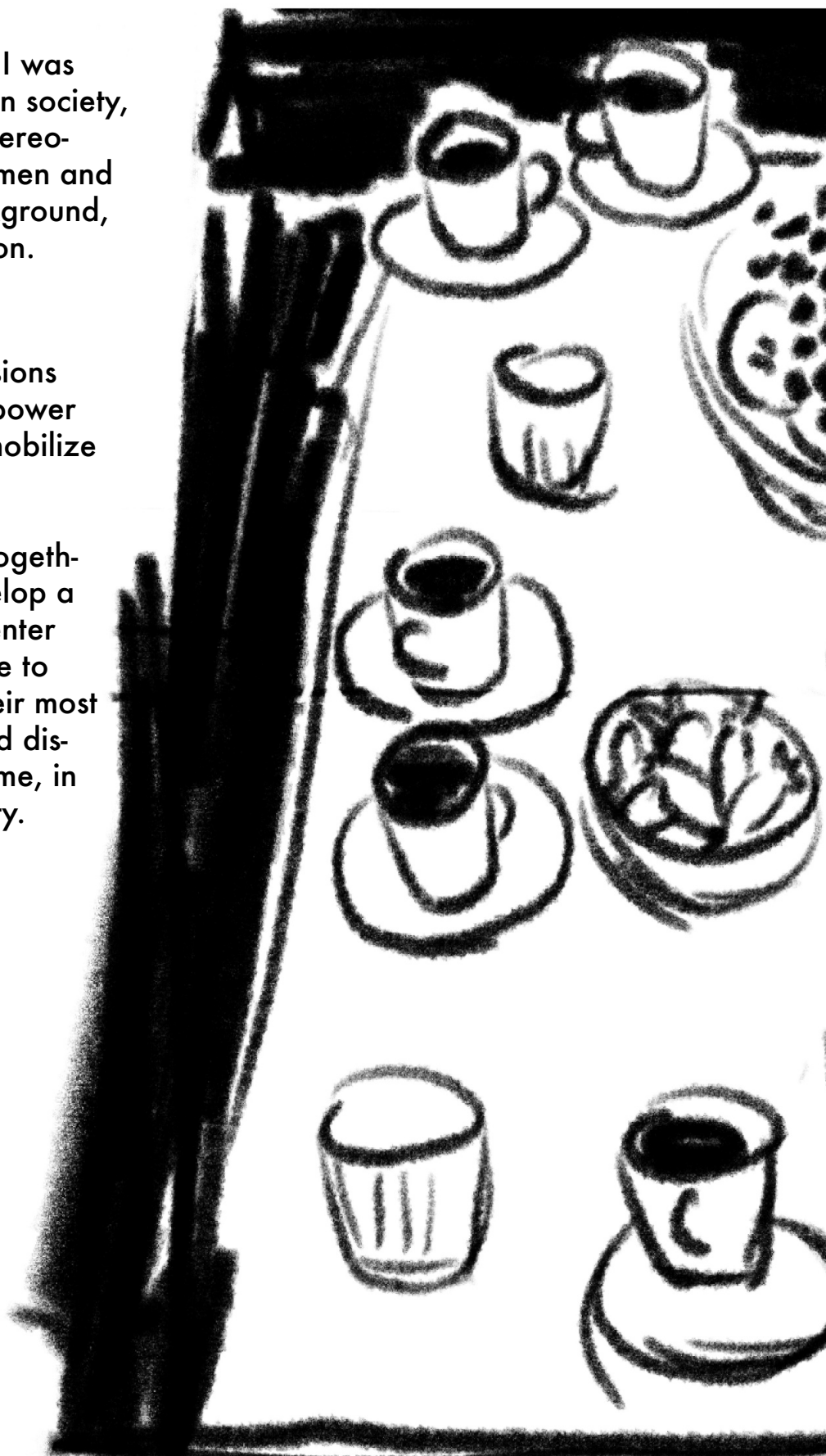
From 2003 I moved to Armenia and started the Women's Resource Center and a hotline to help women experiencing sexual abuse, harassment and domestic violence.

Together with other women, I was denouncing the inequalities in society, the patriarchal values and stereotypes, advocating for all women and girls regardless of their background, beliefs and social orientation.

From these important discussions and safe sessions came the power to raise consciousness and mobilize ourselves for social change.

Over the years, I was able together with other women to develop a drop-in women's resource center where women and girls came to find a safe space, discuss their most difficult issues, prejudices and discrimination they faced at home, in school, at work and in society.

Together we were able to advocate for the law on domestic violence as well as amending the criminal law on sexual abuse and throughout the year raised many sensitive and difficult issue related to gender equality, justice and women's rights in Armenia.



I also received a lot of threats, hate speech... smear campaigns.

"My husband has been wounded in the war in the 90s, when he came back home, he was another man completely, it was not easy, war took a lot from us..."



"There was this family friend, I remember when he used to come to our house, I was just a child, he would bring gifts and wanted always to kiss and hug me, I always felt uncomfortable around him and his touch... but we never talked about these stuff in our society, it was shameful"

"I always wanted to travel the world, work and study, but my parents decided that the best thing would have been to marry our neighbor's son. I did not love him, but my dreams were not realistic and women should marry and have children, that's how it is. He became very violent over the years, he threatened to kill me and the kids. I tried to go back to my father's home, they told me I should go back, stay with my husband and keep the family together, I felt alone and had to deal with the abuse for the sake of my children..."



From 2003 I moved to Armenia and started the Women's Resource Center and a hotline to help women experiencing sexual abuse, harassment and domestic violence.



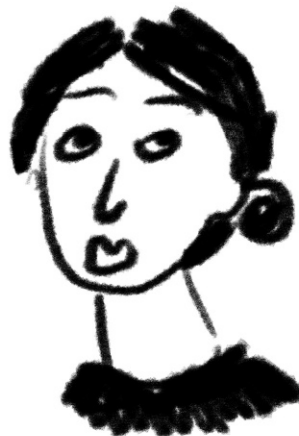
Together with other women, I was denouncing the inequalities in society, the patriarchal values and stereotypes,



advocating for all women and girls



regardless of their background, beliefs and social orientation.



Then hate started to
escalate even more..

"Many times when we talk about a woman, we see a woman, a mother, many times a sister and that's all, but I want to remind you that we are also single mothers, we are also mothers who have lost their children in the army, we are also unwilling to become mothers, we are also elderly, we are transgender and we are lesbian and bisexual women, or we do not want to adopt or have children, we are women living in border villages, we are poor, we are Yezidi women, women with disabilities, and when laws are being drafted we have to be careful that every type of women can benefit from it."

BURN
HER!

TRAITOR!

YOU
are the destroyer of
families and
Armenian values!

KILL HER!

You are
PROPAGATING
homosexuality!

Rape
HER!



Iraq

Women Human Rights Defenders

Ordinarily, Front Line Defenders would be naming the Iraqi woman human rights defender who has been recognized as this year's Middle East and North Africa regional award winner. She is a fearless and courageous campaigner for women's rights and intercommunal peacebuilding. But over the last couple of months, a series of targeted, brutal murders of HRDs, especially WHRDs in her hometown of Basra, have forced her and other WHRDs to go underground. And in order to protect her security, we have agreed that Front Line Defenders would honor Women Human Rights Defenders in Iraq with the award.

The story presented here had to be adapted after initially being developed to tell the story, so that it could reflect the larger experience of WHRDs. Adaptation is a strategy of HRDs, and especially WHRDs, confronting threats, intimidation, harassment and violence. In this case, as with others in this edition, the story of the story is as informative as the story itself.

Artist : Mays Yasser is an Iraqi Comics Artist, Illustrator and a Copywriter.
[Instagram](#)



Piece by Piece

A Few
Pieces



When I am alone my mind starts to wander... I go back to all the things that lead to where I am today.



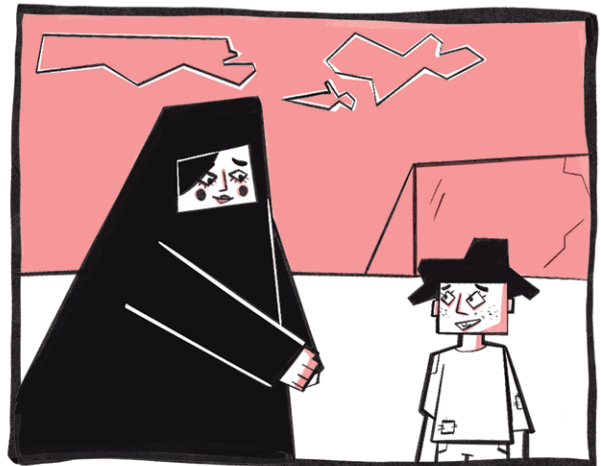
To the reason I started doing this in the first place... For those who desperately need a voice.



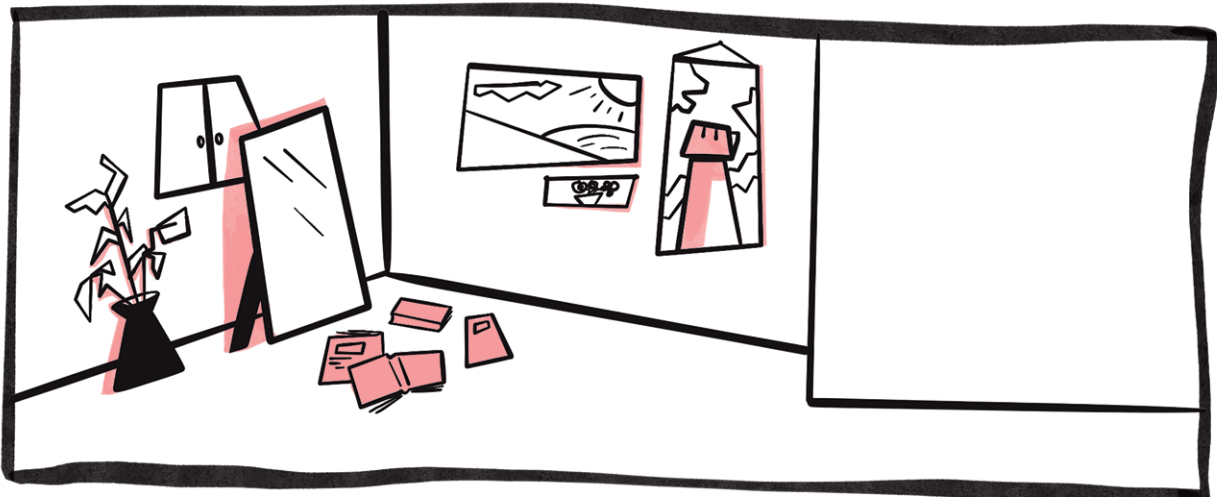
I think about it all the time, I felt like my soul was trapped. I needed to do something for those



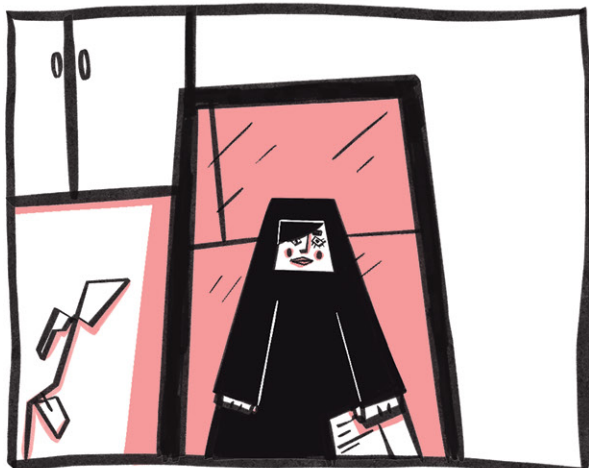
who can lose their future, hopes and even lives due to them leaving schools to join deadly wars.



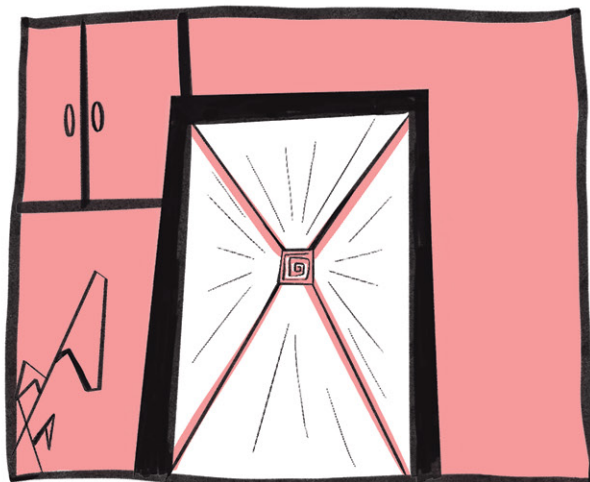
This was my space, my sanctuary and my home... I needed to speak up, to act and put up a fight.



I needed to fight for myself first,



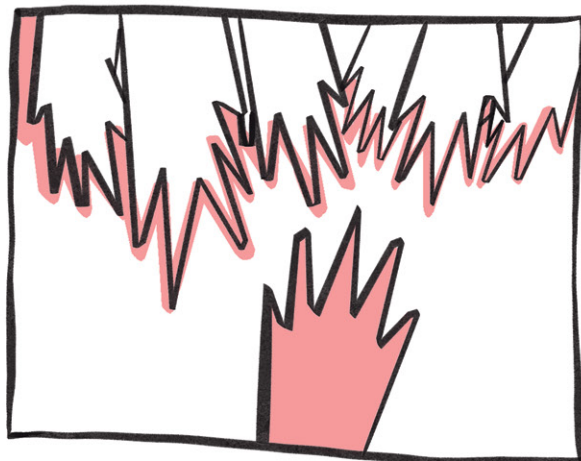
to find my voice, seek the right path. No matter how hard and scary the unknown feels.



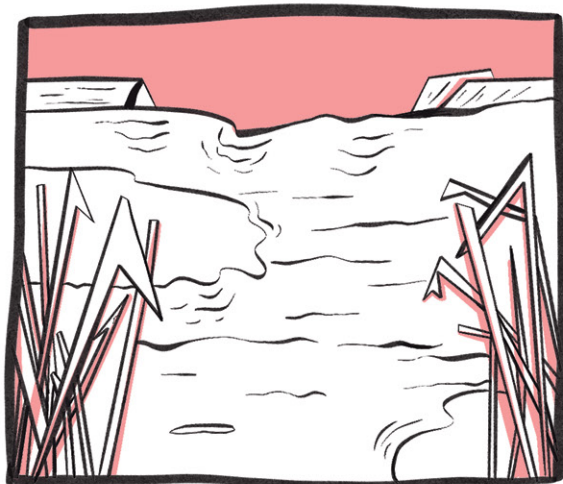
It's all worth it eventually.



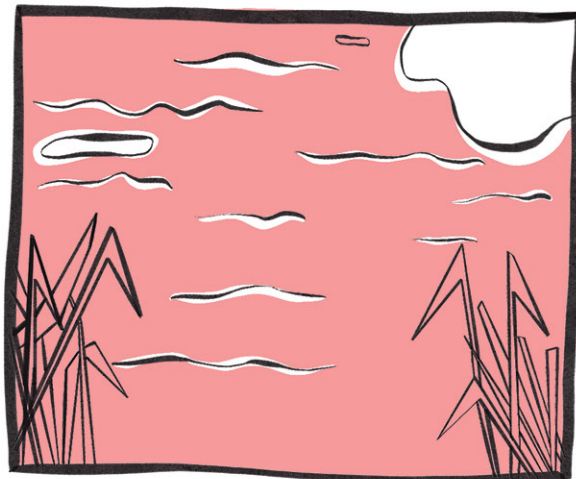
Reaching out to whoever needed was my life's purpose.



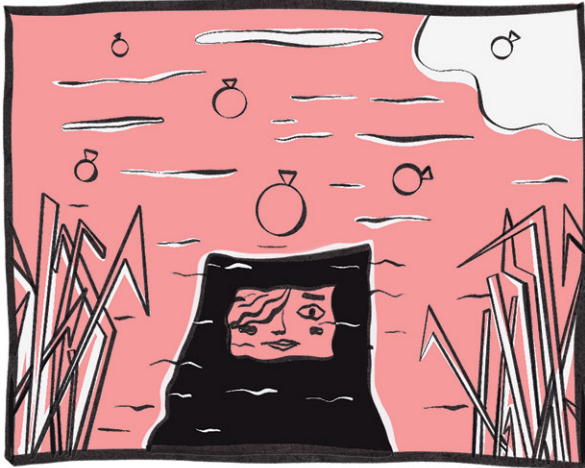
I remember one time, in the marshes...



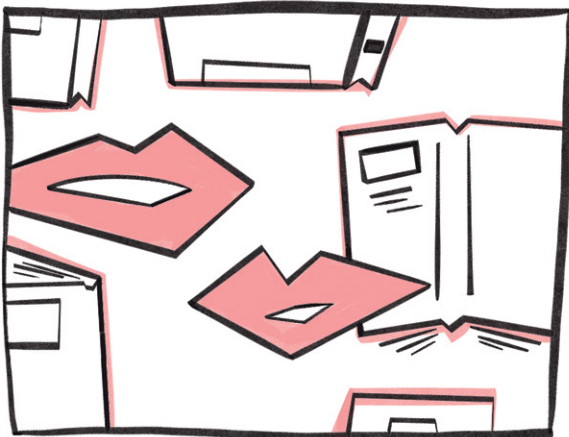
I felt as if the water was speaking to me.



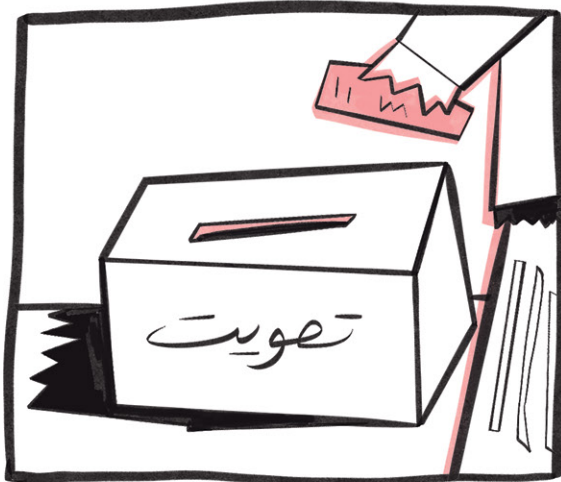
It talked to me about all the stories it witnessed on the lands. About underaged marriages and screaming injustices.



All they needed was someone to lead them to proper education. It is powerful the way learning can give a voice its biggest impact.



understood the importance of voting and what one voice can do.



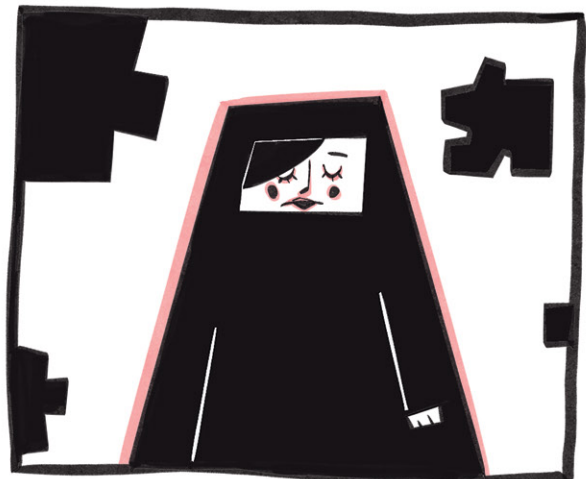
To all those who are voiceless...



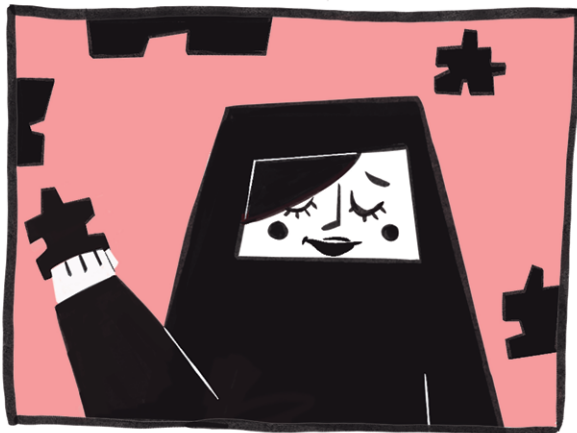
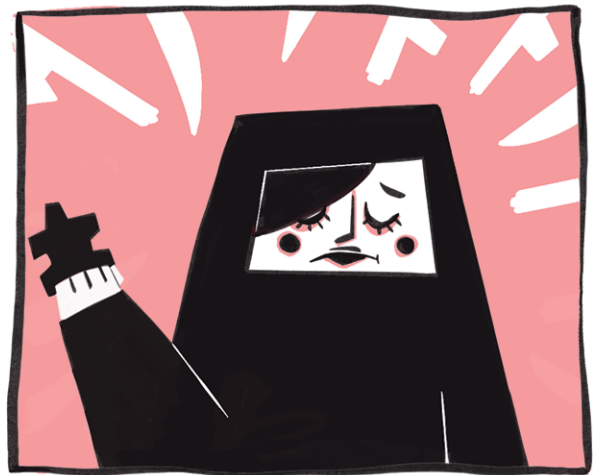
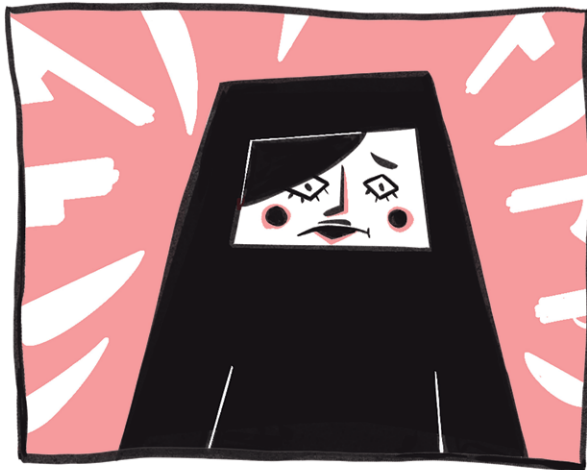
And they are learning indeed. They started new lives, escaped cages of forced marriages,



I reflect on all of this. The things I was able to do for them, and how grateful it made me feel.



The pressure can be overwhelming... the threats and silencing forces. But then I remember what I am a part of. I go back to what motivated me in the first place, and it gives me the strength to move forward, and give more.

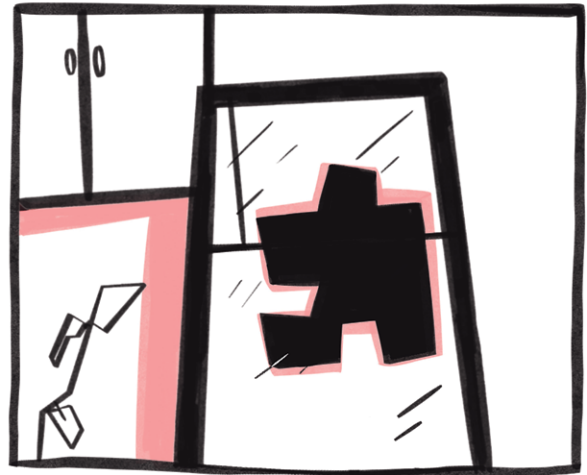
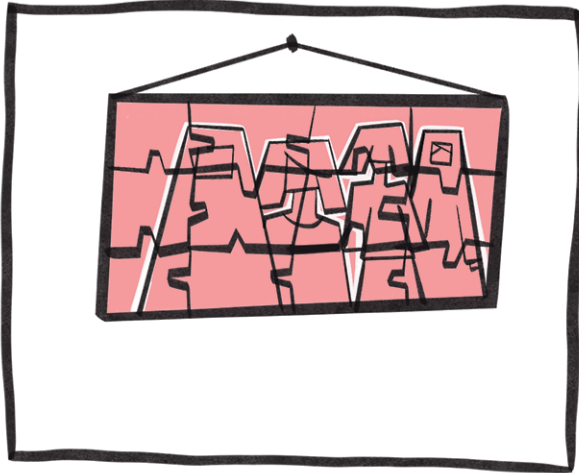


خطوة تلو الأخرى

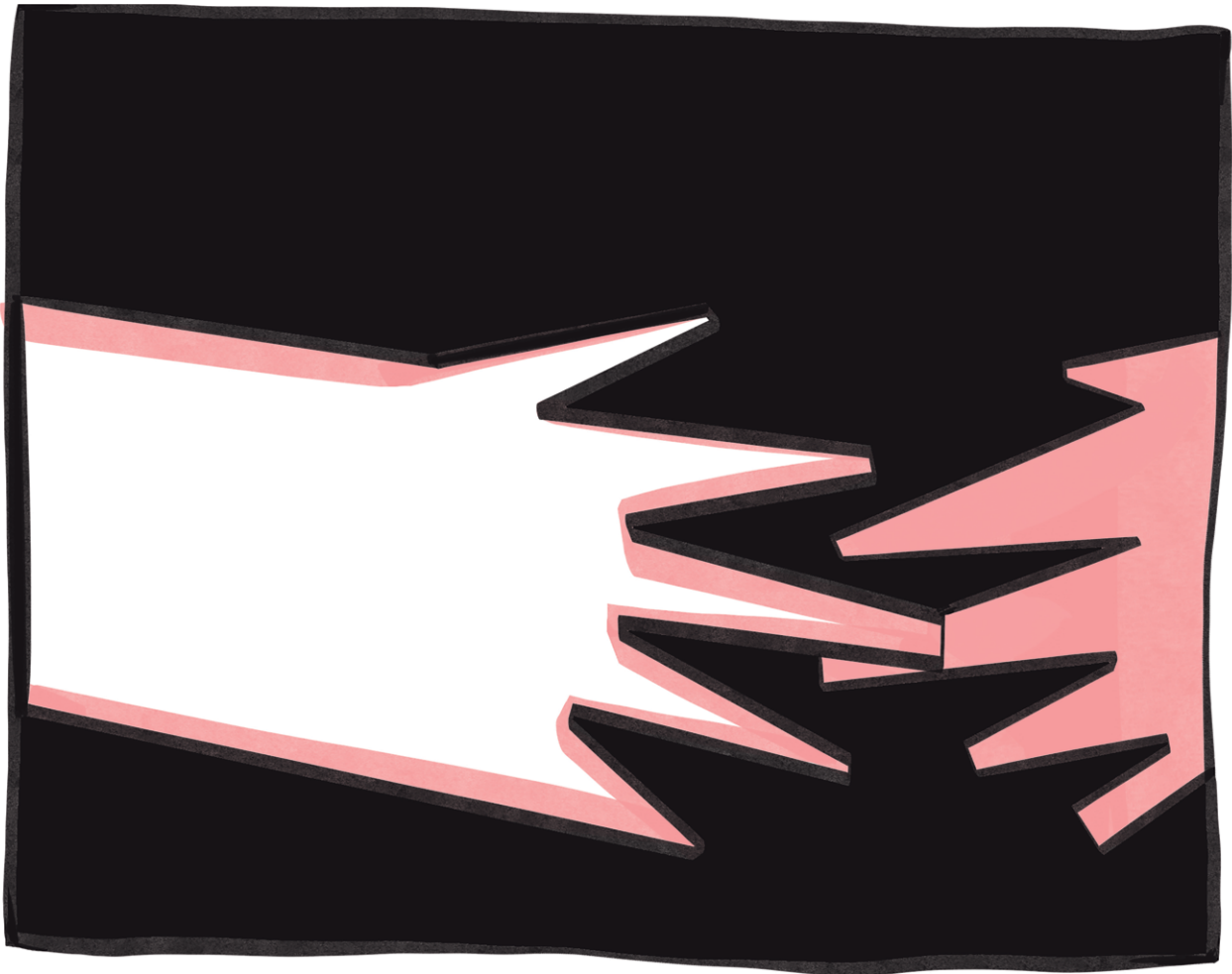
And it takes me back to where it all started, I remember that the path is long, and the fight is big and I need to take it one step at a time.

We are all parts of a puzzle, and that puzzle needs each and every one of us to complete the bigger picture.

Each part is extremely crucial.



I found my peace in dedicating my life for these causes, helping others reach their full potential, improve their lives and become part of the cycle so they can help others as well. Thinking of how big it all really feels... it's fulfilling. The day I quit is the day I die, and not a day earlier.



The end.

النهاية.

Mauritania

Mekfoula Mint Brahim

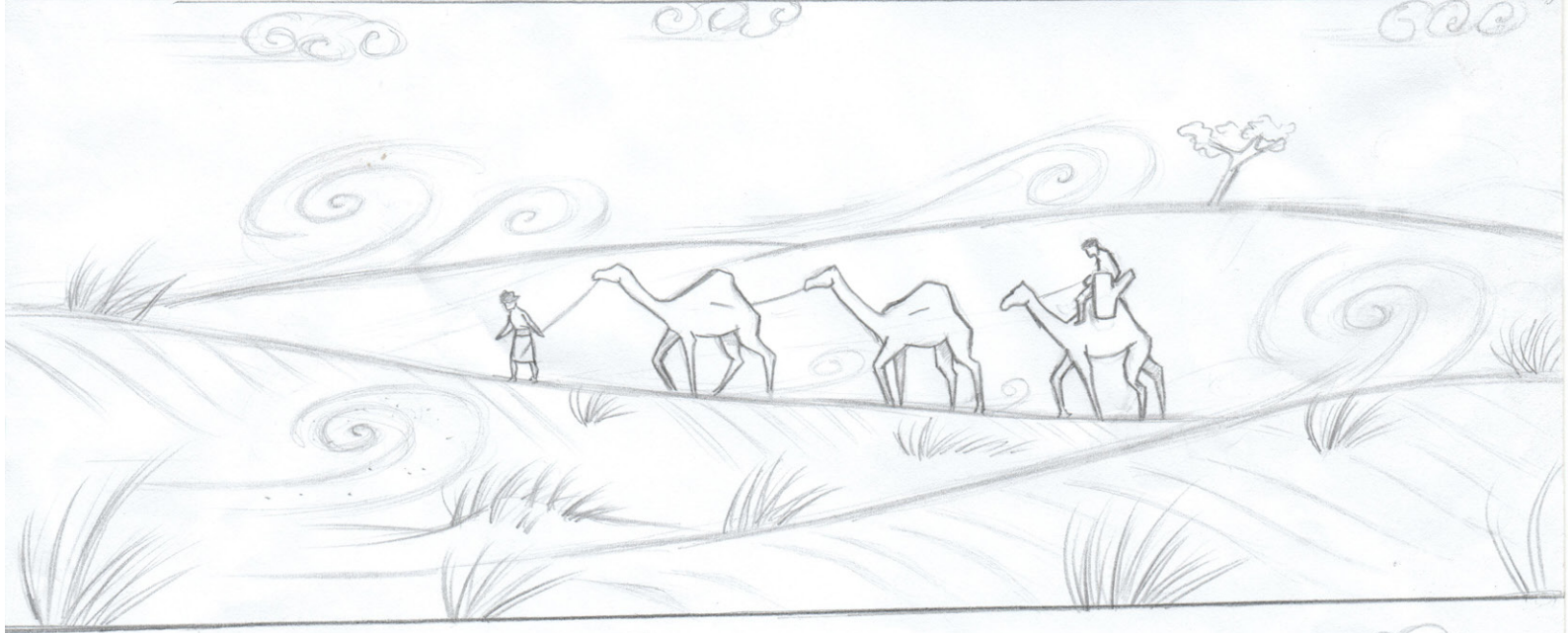
Mekfoula Mint Brahim is a woman human rights defender from Mauritania fighting against religious extremism and discriminatory practices in Mauritania, including against women and members of the Haratine and sub-Saharan African communities. She is the President of *Pour une Mauritanie Verte et Démocratique* (For a Green and Democratic Mauritania), a non-governmental organisation founded in 2009 which works to protect and promote human rights, and leads women empowerment projects in rural areas. As a direct result of her human rights work, Mekfoula Mint Brahim has been the target of death threats and a smear campaign on social media by religious groups. A fatwa was issued against her in 2014 after she called for the death sentence of the blogger and political prisoner Mohamed Mkhaitir to be overturned. She has also been accused of apostasy which is punishable by death.

Drawings: Cooldji.Designed

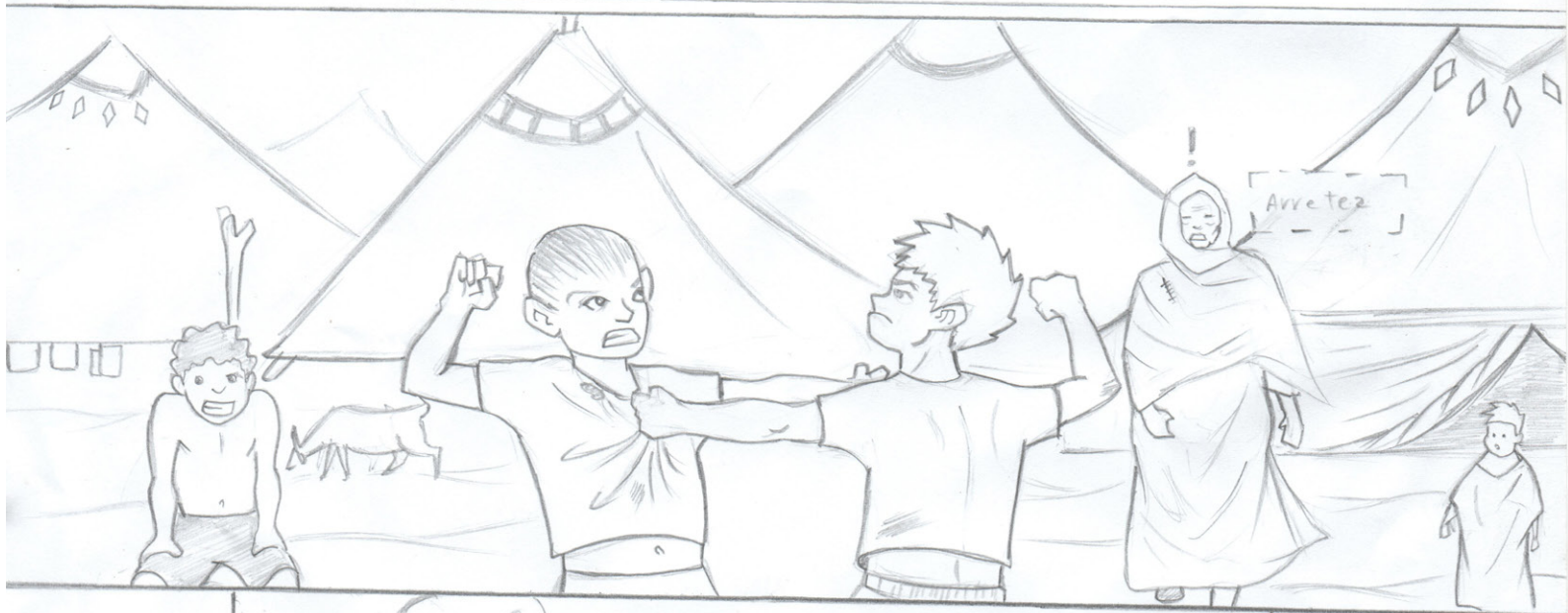


Mekfoula Brahim - the strength of a woman

Mauritania (city of Tawaz in 1968) desert, camel, dust and many tents and water wells.

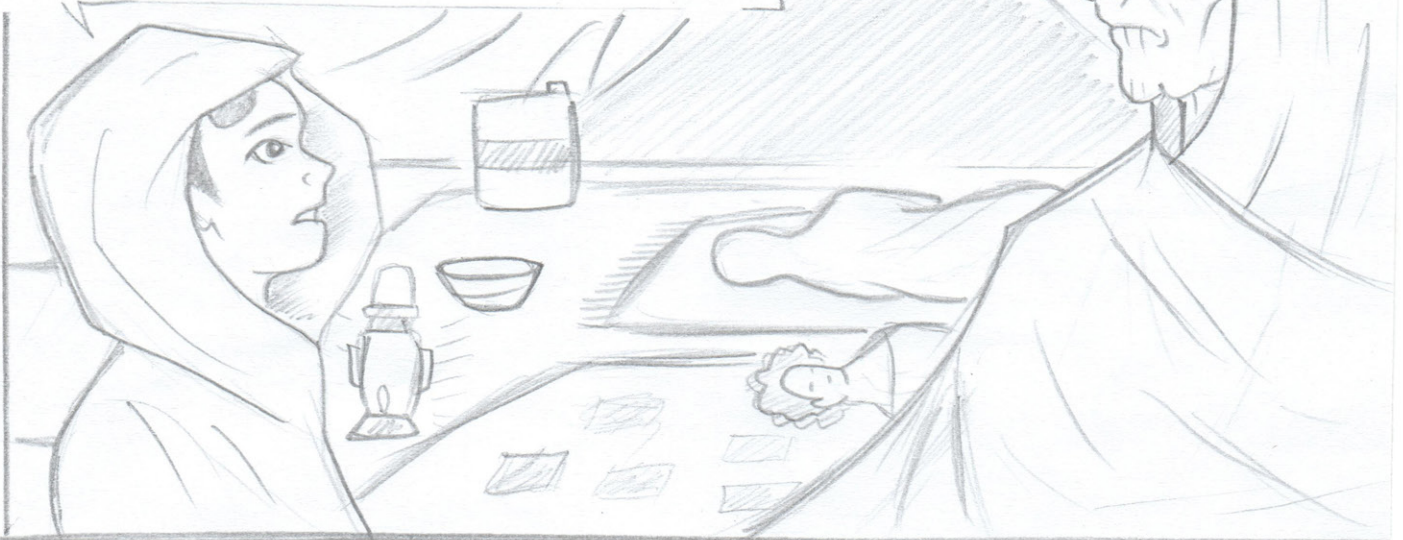




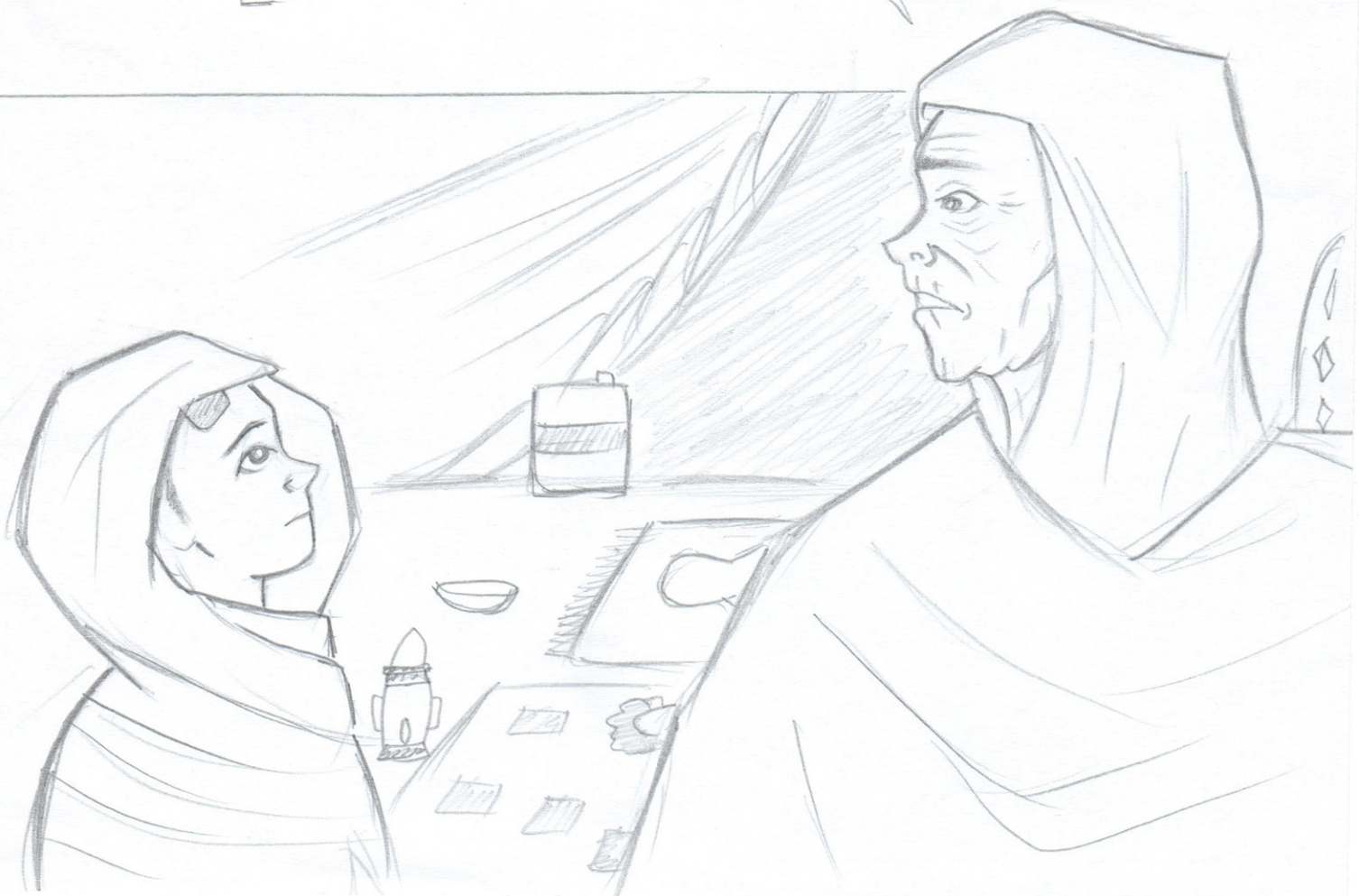


Nuit

Grandma why men do not make any effort and we women and girls are the only ones to do everything ?

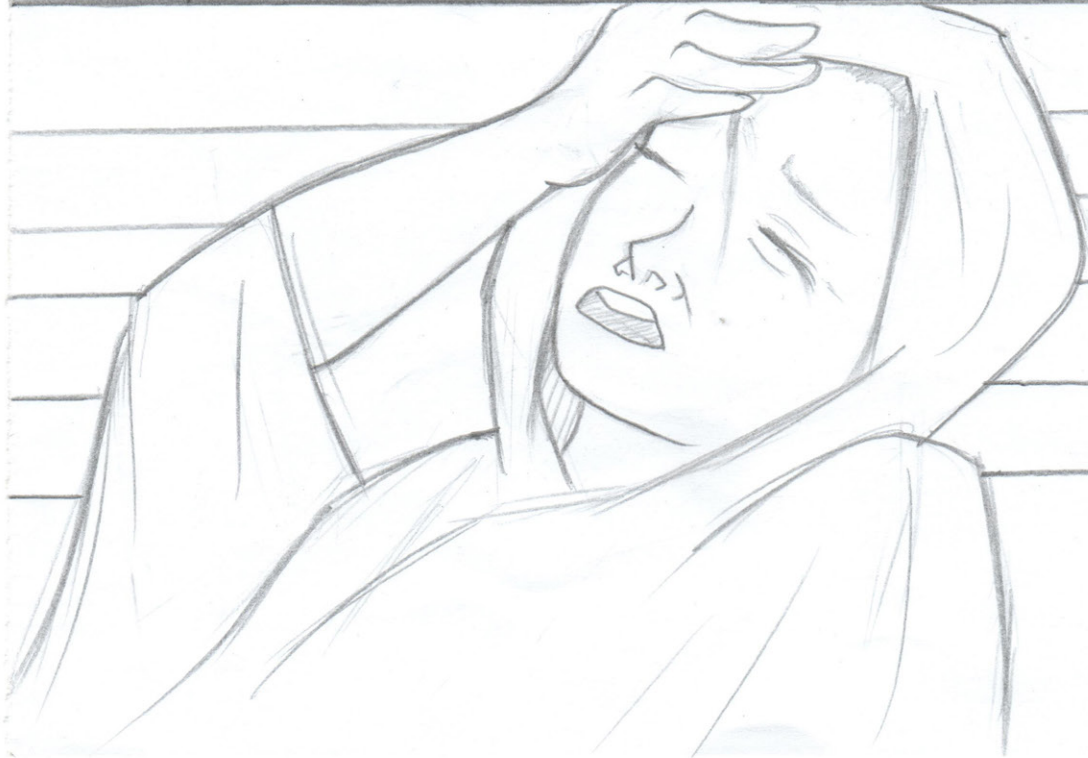
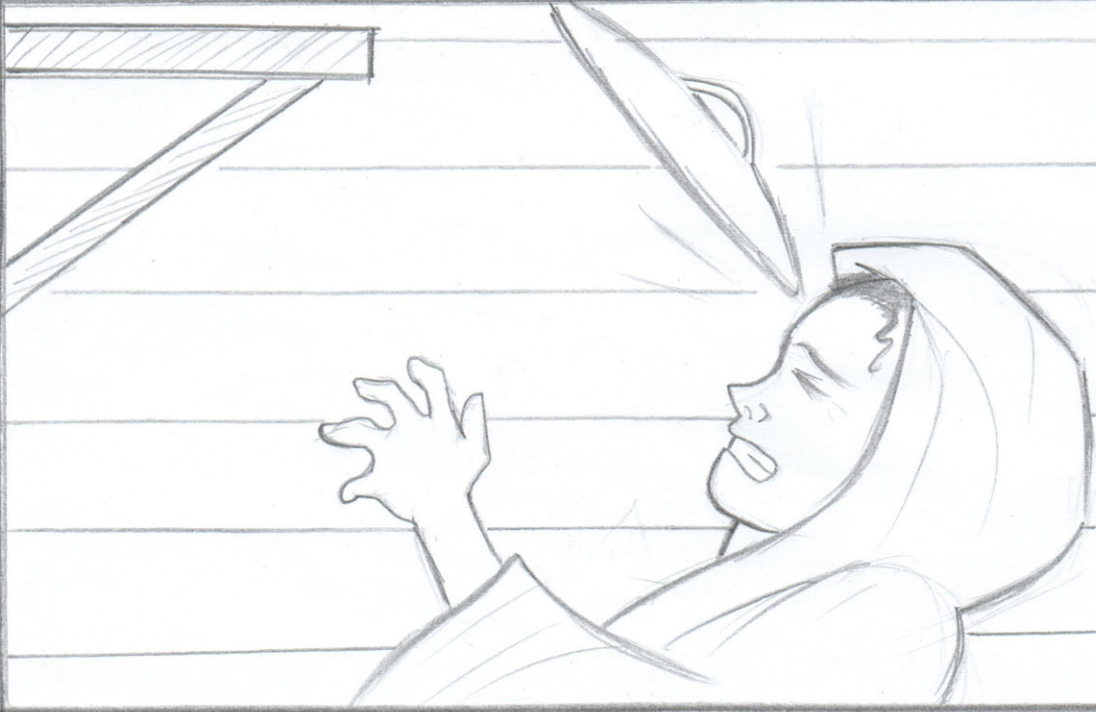
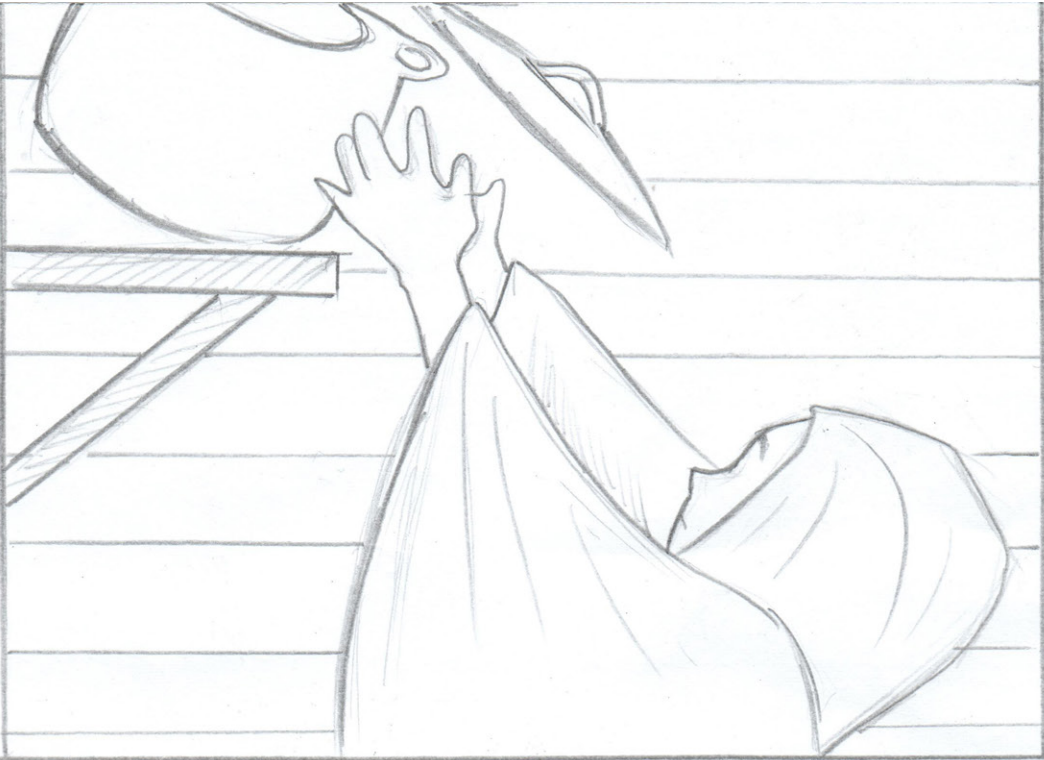


Because men are superior to women. Go help your sisters in the kitchen.

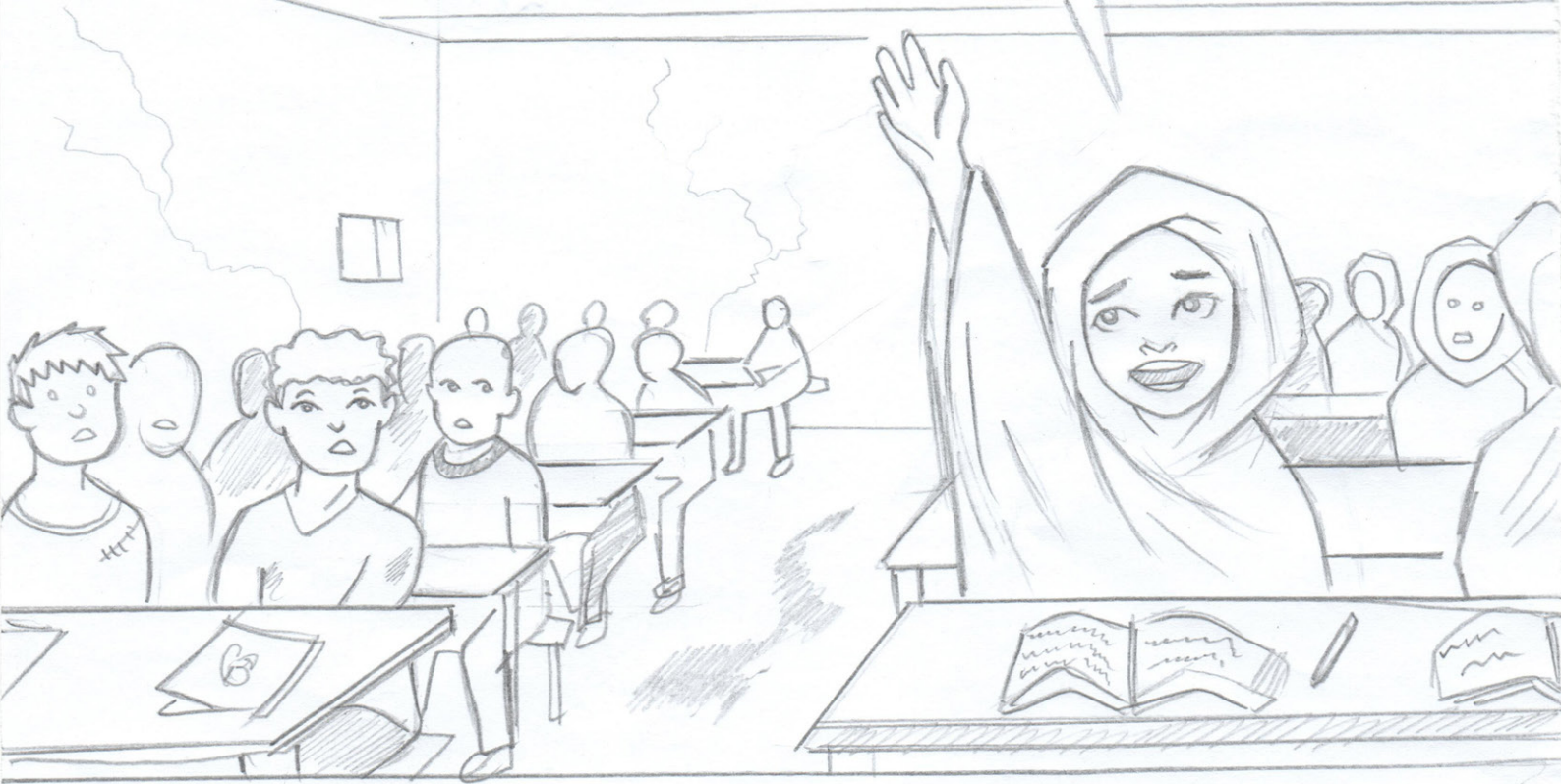


But aren't we all the same? Why does my grandmother say that men are superior to women when we are the ones who make everything and do all the work.





Teacher, why do they say that men are superior to women?

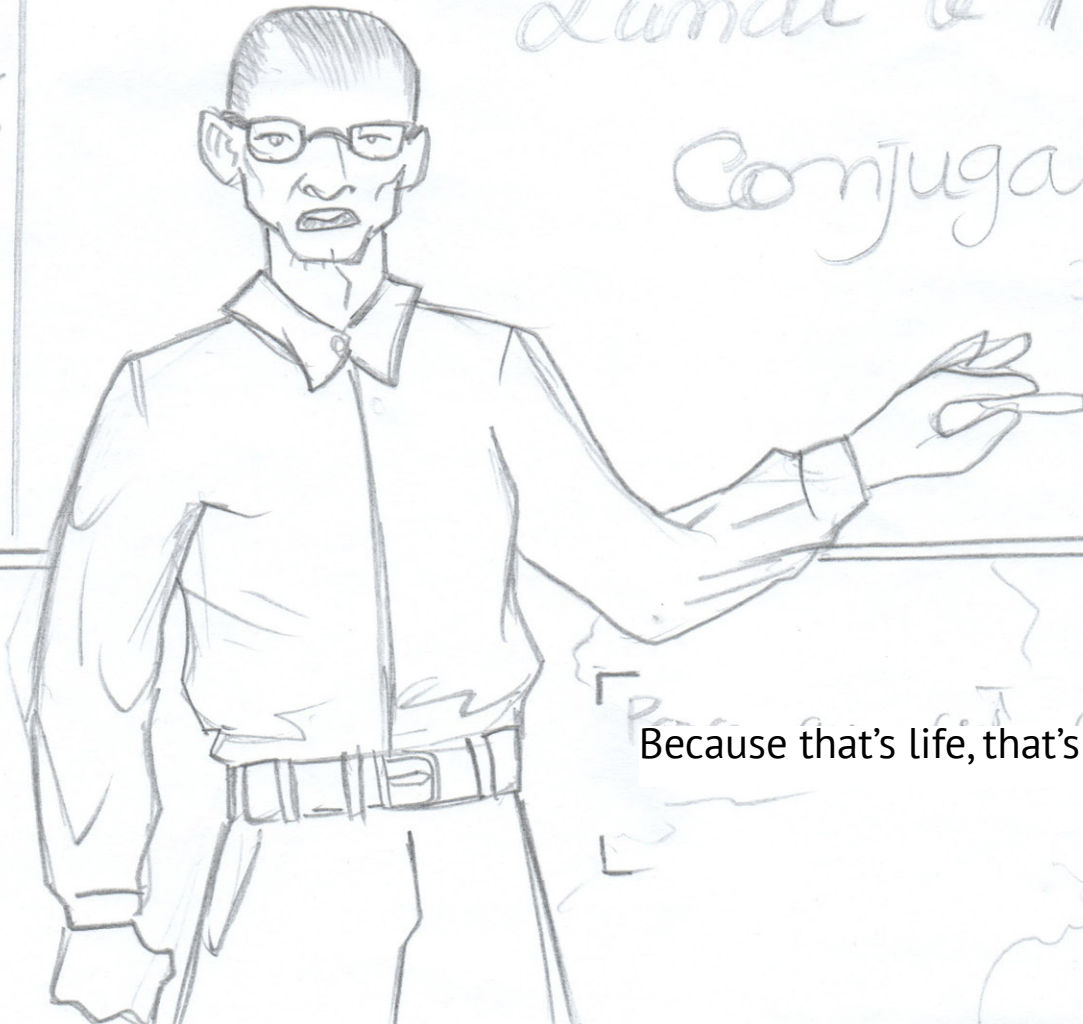


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Lundi 6 7. octobre

Conjugaison

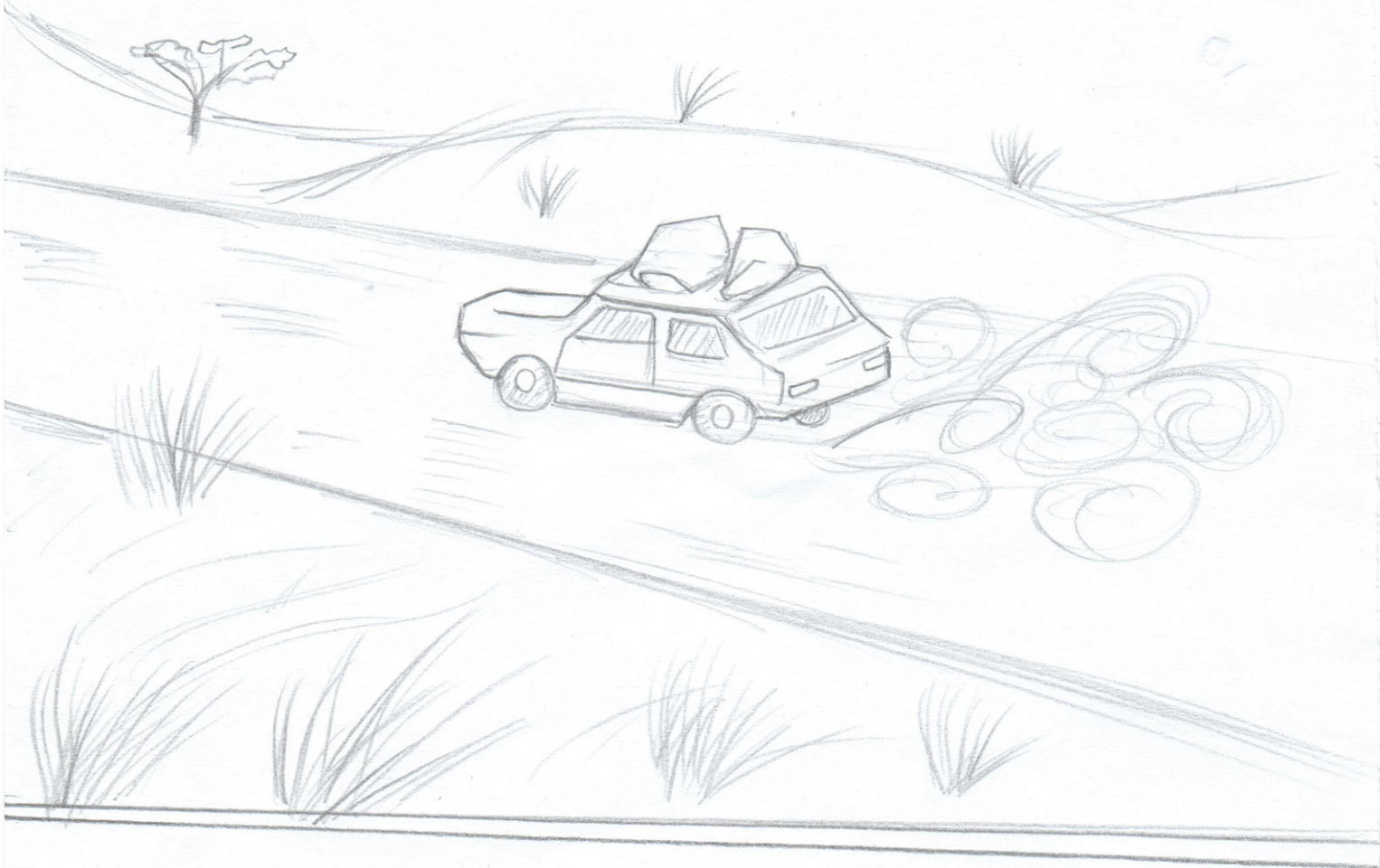
conjugaison



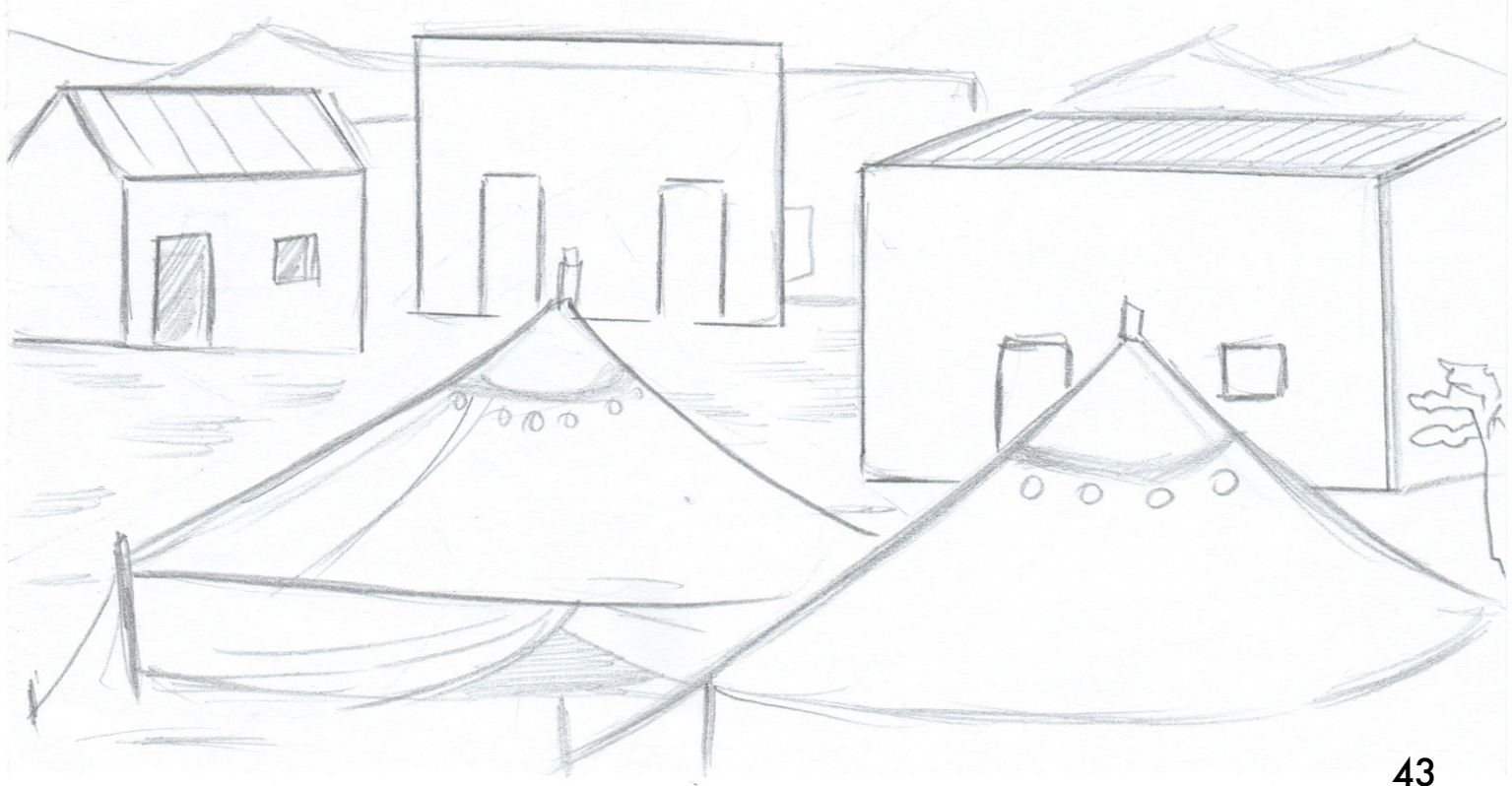
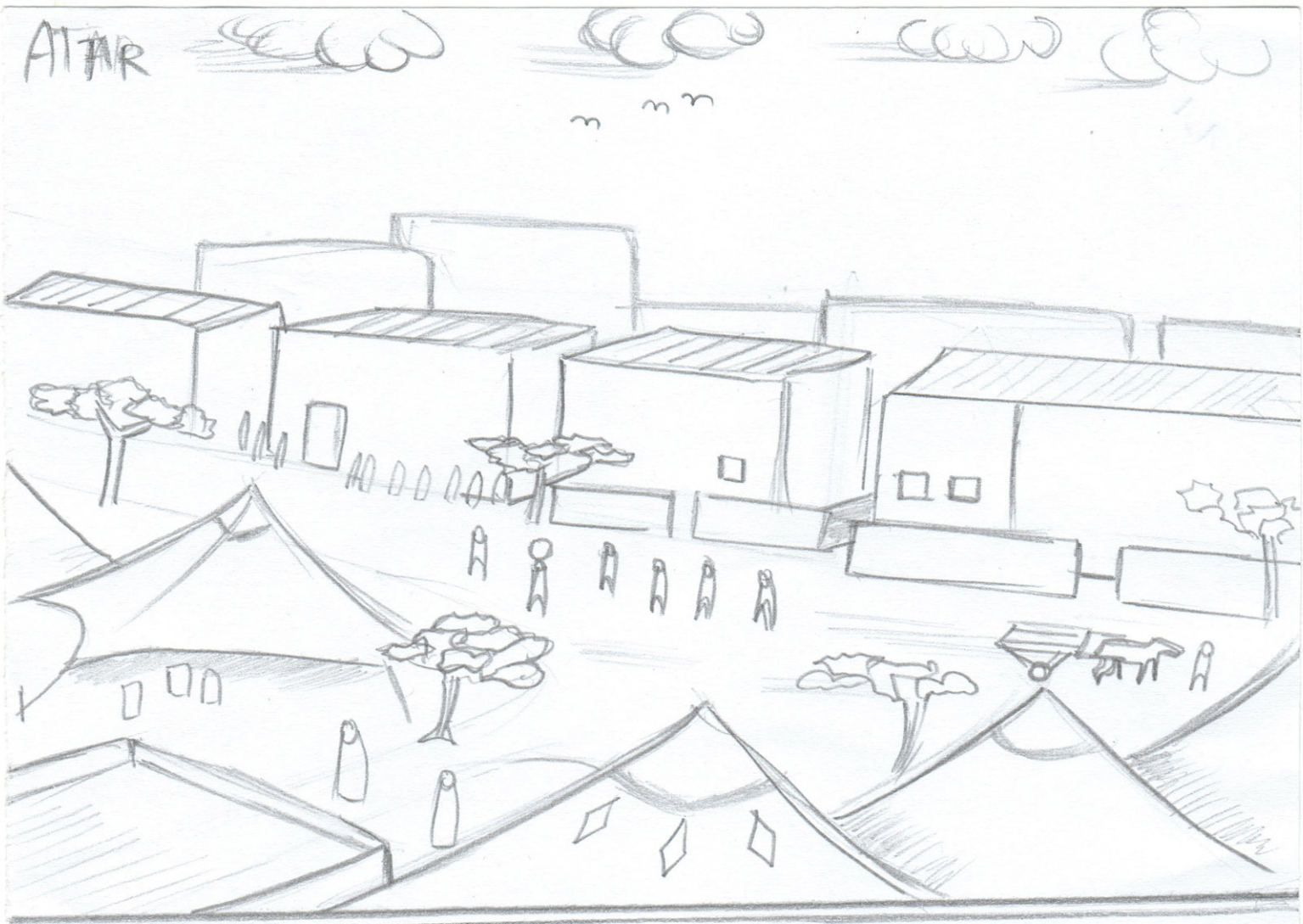
Because that's life, that's how it is!



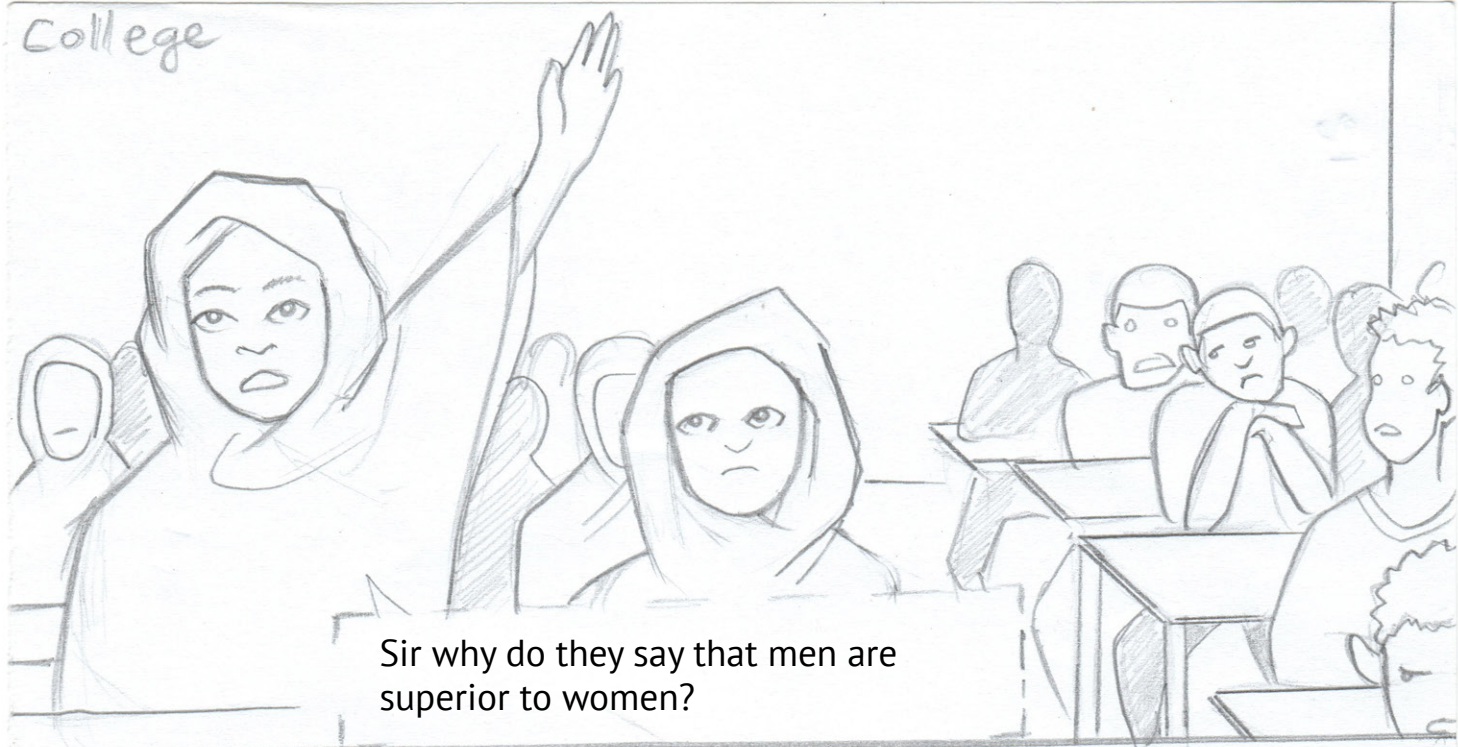
A few years later my parents and I moved to the city of Atar. DEMENAGEMENT



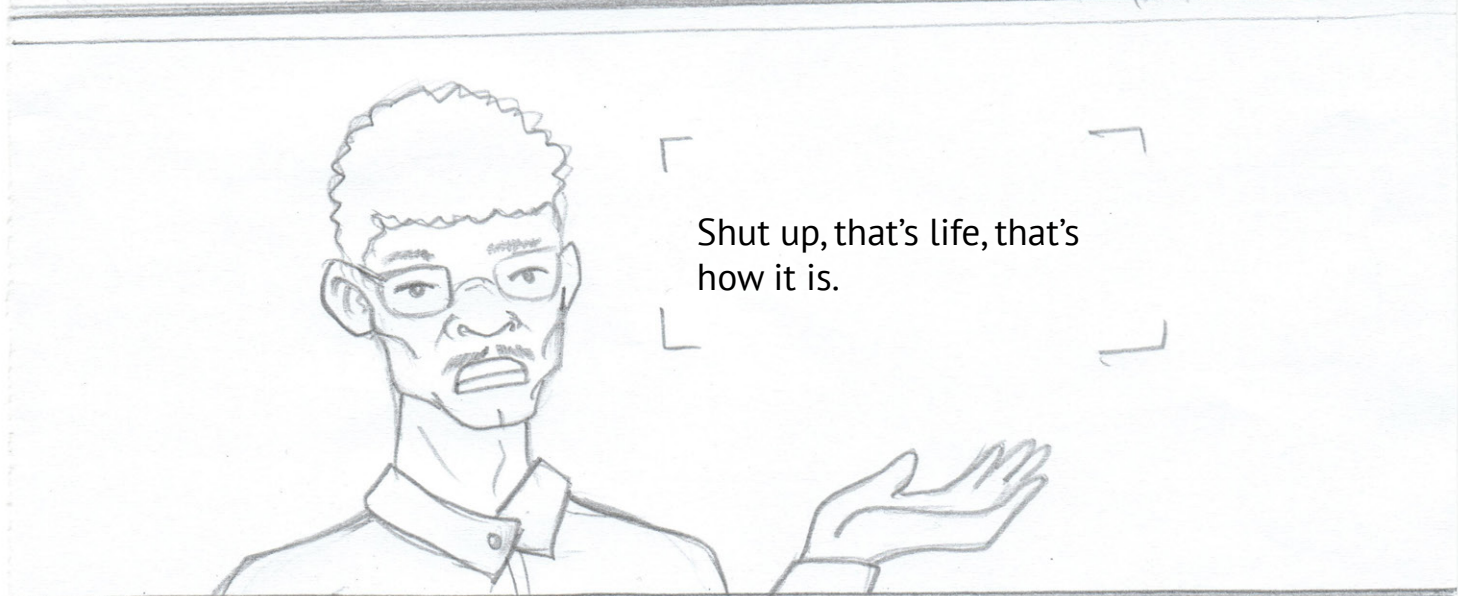
ATAR



College



Sir why do they say that men are superior to women?



Shut up, that's life, that's how it is.

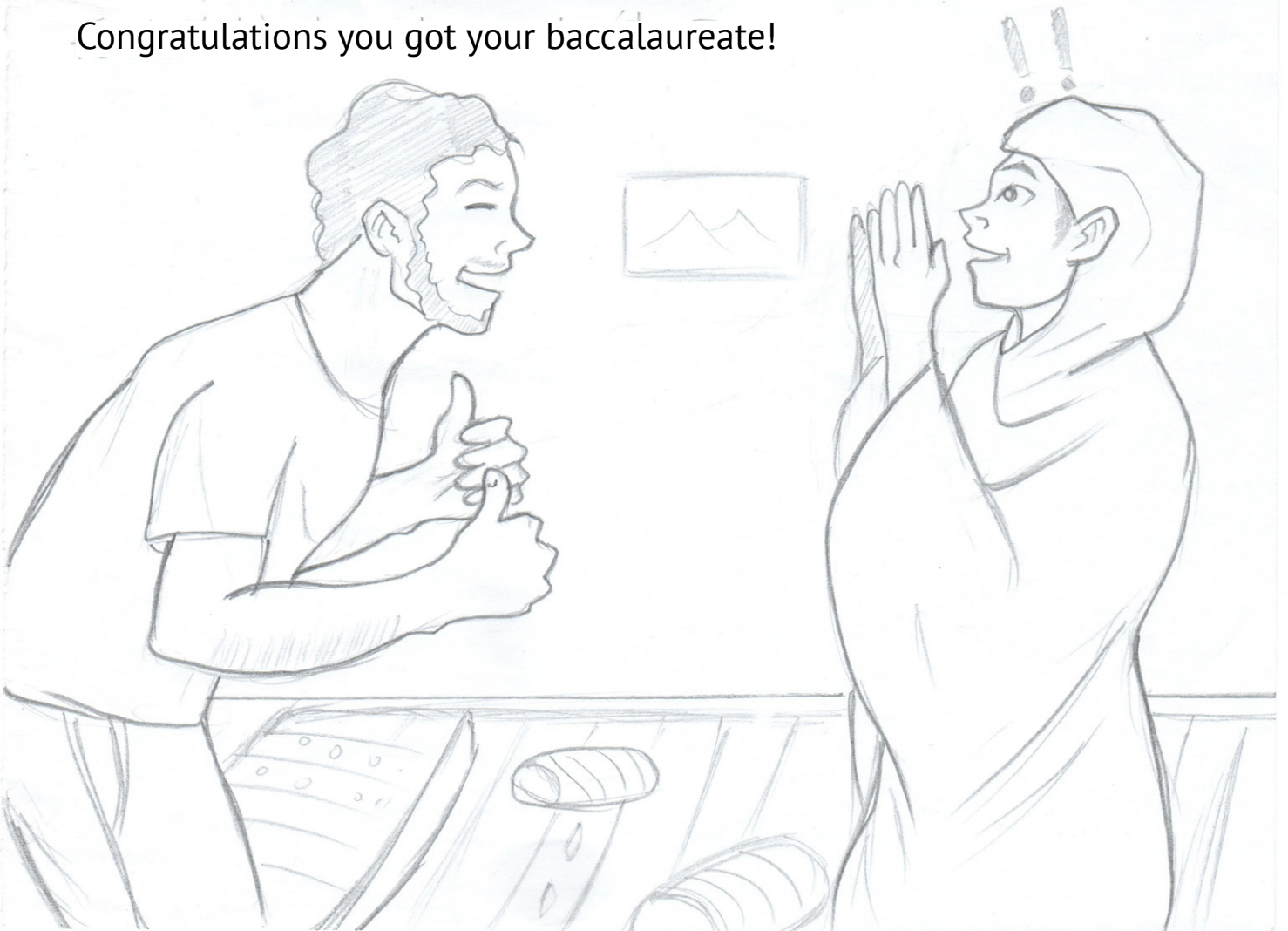


No! we are all equal.

2 years later Mekfoula Brahim went to Nouadhibou to live with her older brother in order to take the baccalaureate.

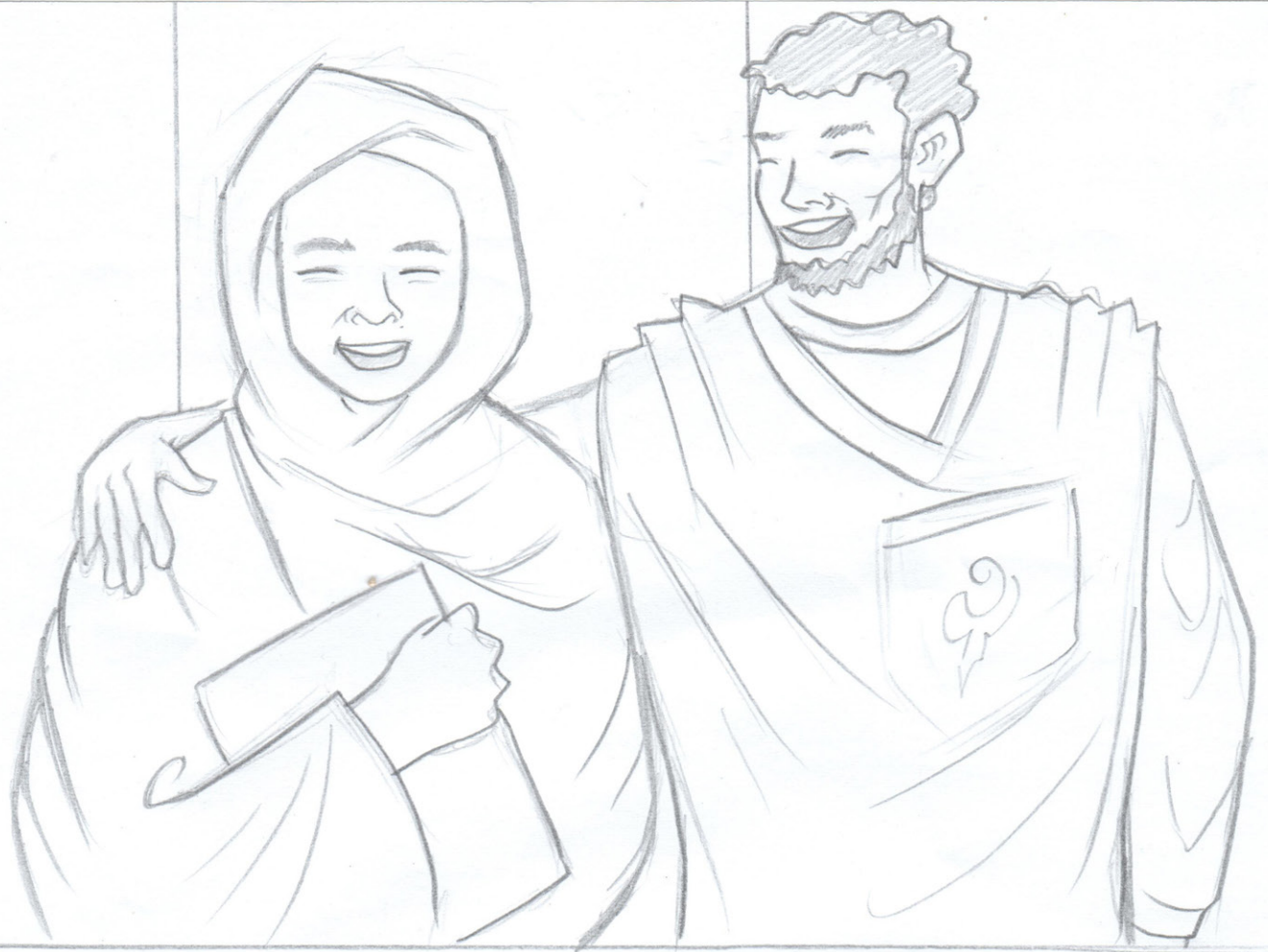


Congratulations you got your baccalaureate!

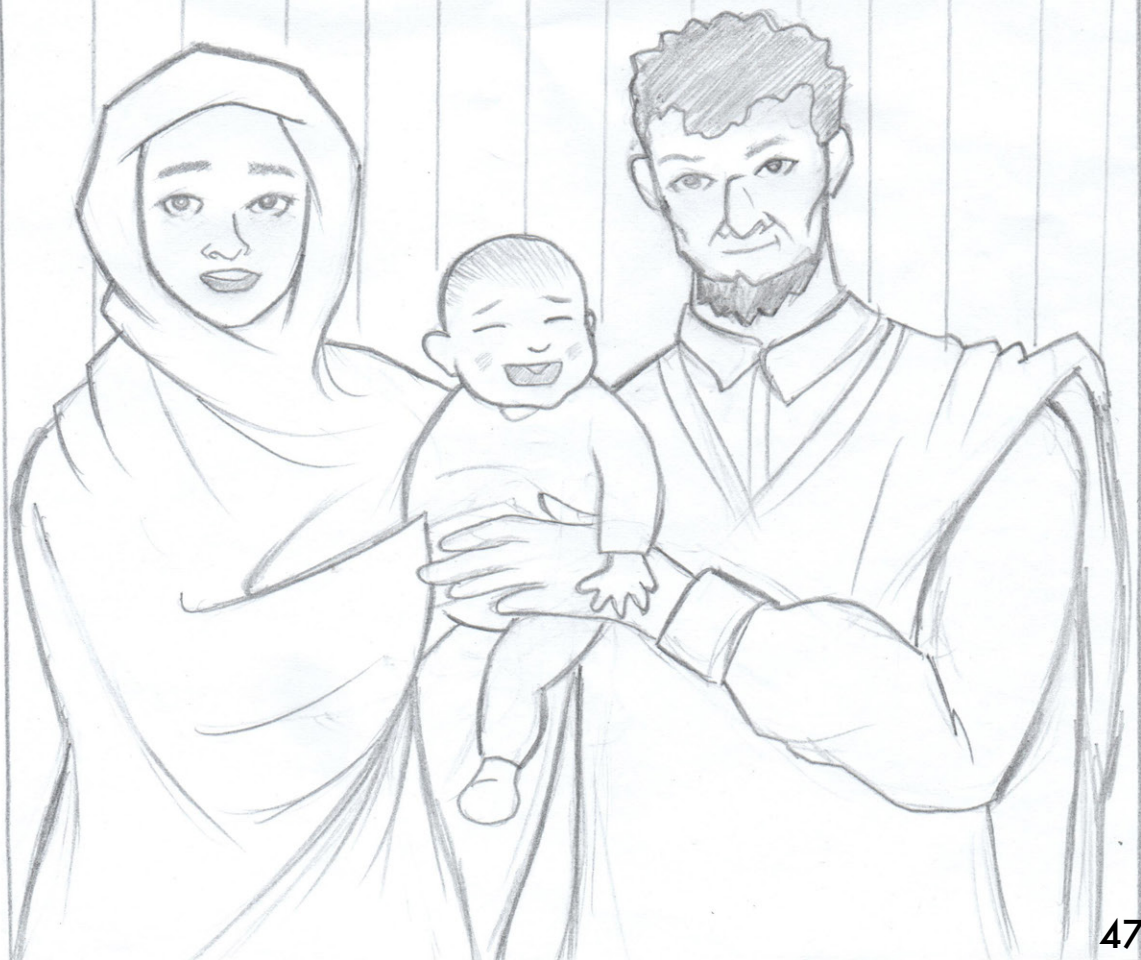


At the age of 19 Mekfoula went to study in Algeria.

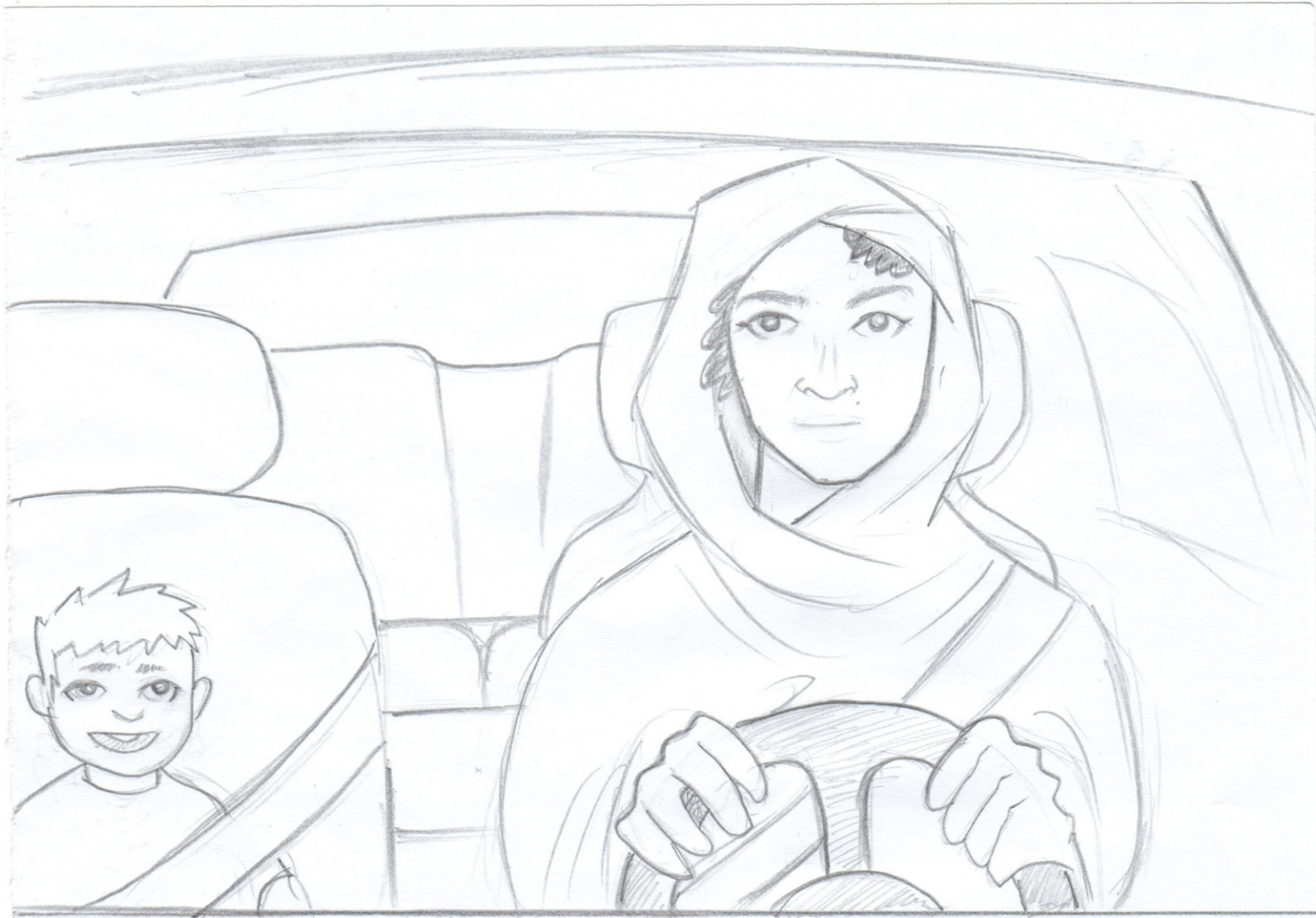




After my return from Algeria I got married and then I had a baby boy.







I no longer felt in a relationship and the love had faded over time so my husband and I got divorced.

Theresa Rivo?4
525~
1 1 1 1 1
2 2 2 2 2
3 3 3 3 3
4 4 4 4 4

I'm going to quit my job because this is not what I want to do.

Life is not easy either if I quit my job and I have nothing left to do.

In addition I have the child of the family...

1 1
2 7
3 2
4 1

I studied law in Algeria and I dreamed of making a career as a humanitarian to help my fellow man and this dream enlivens me every day.

So I take the risk to quit my job and I will create a charity or an NGO for human rights!

Girls! I resigned!



I always told you about my vision of my world and that I wanted to help and create a humanitarian organization, don't you remember?

yes!



yes.

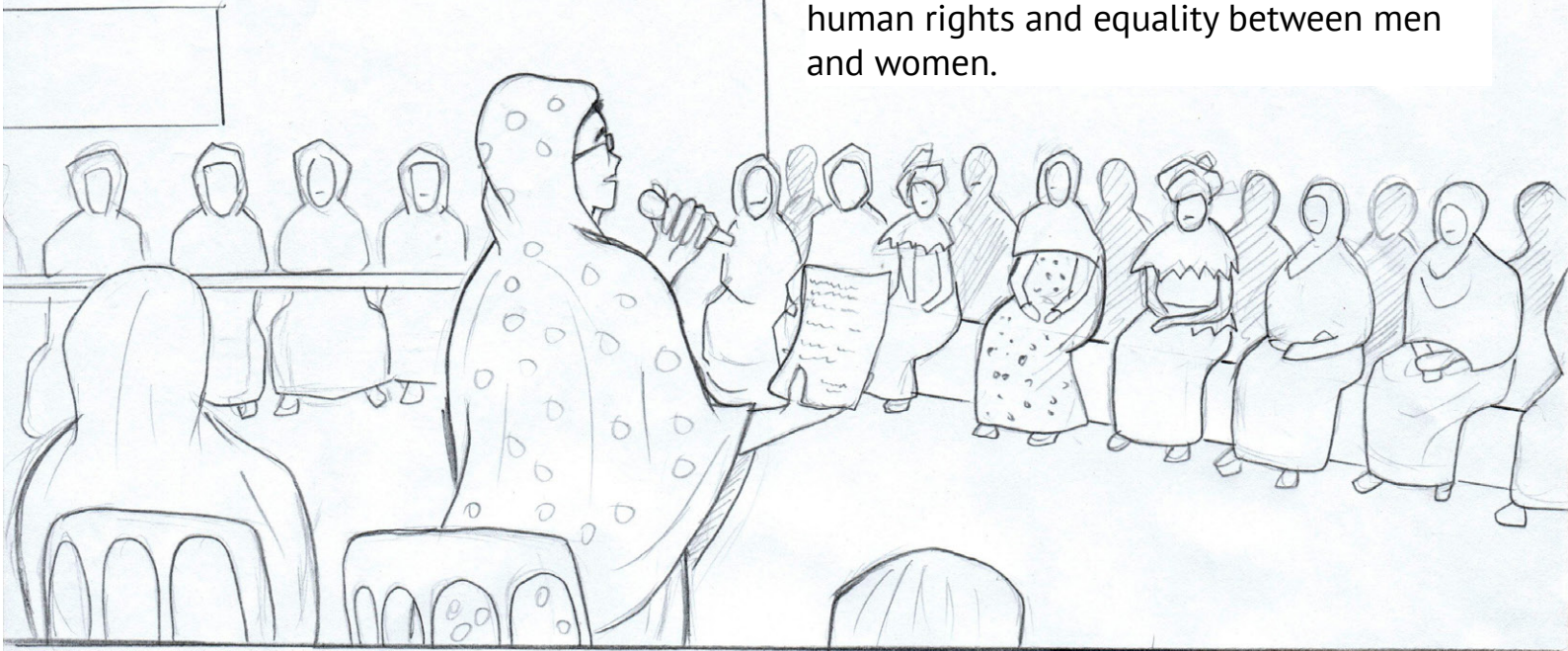
Here, I resigned for that and as I remember you shared the same vision as me. Would you like to do this with me? let's create our humanitarian organizations together and defend equality between men and women!



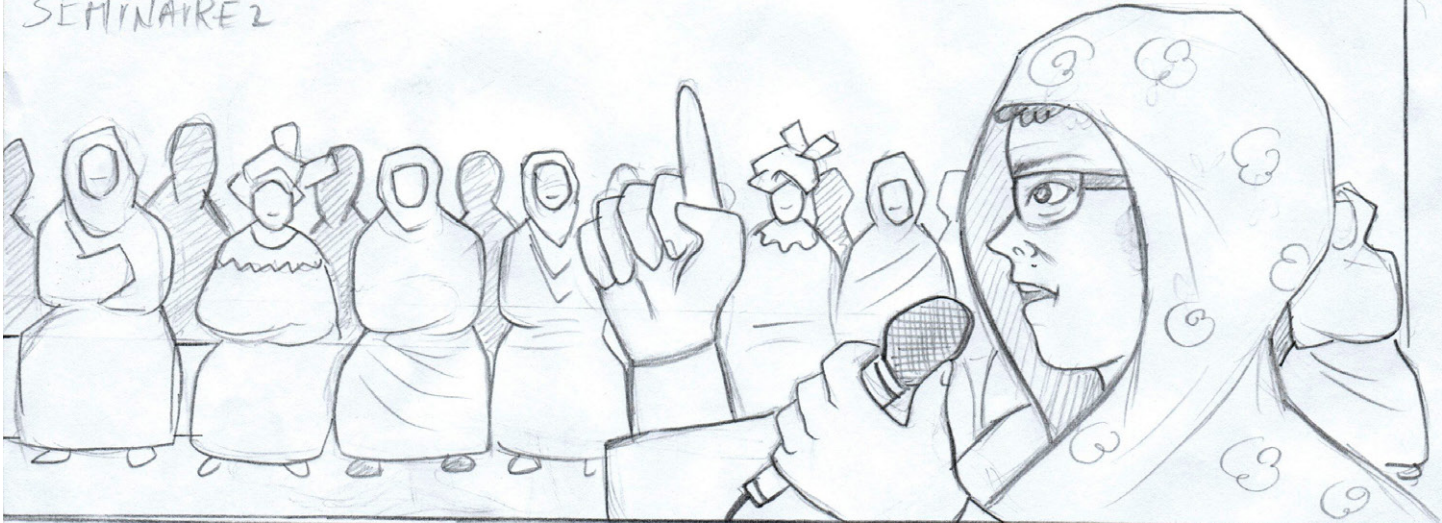
We all agree with you!

SEMINAIRE 1

My friends and I went on a regional tour of our country Mauritania, to give seminars on human rights and equality between men and women.

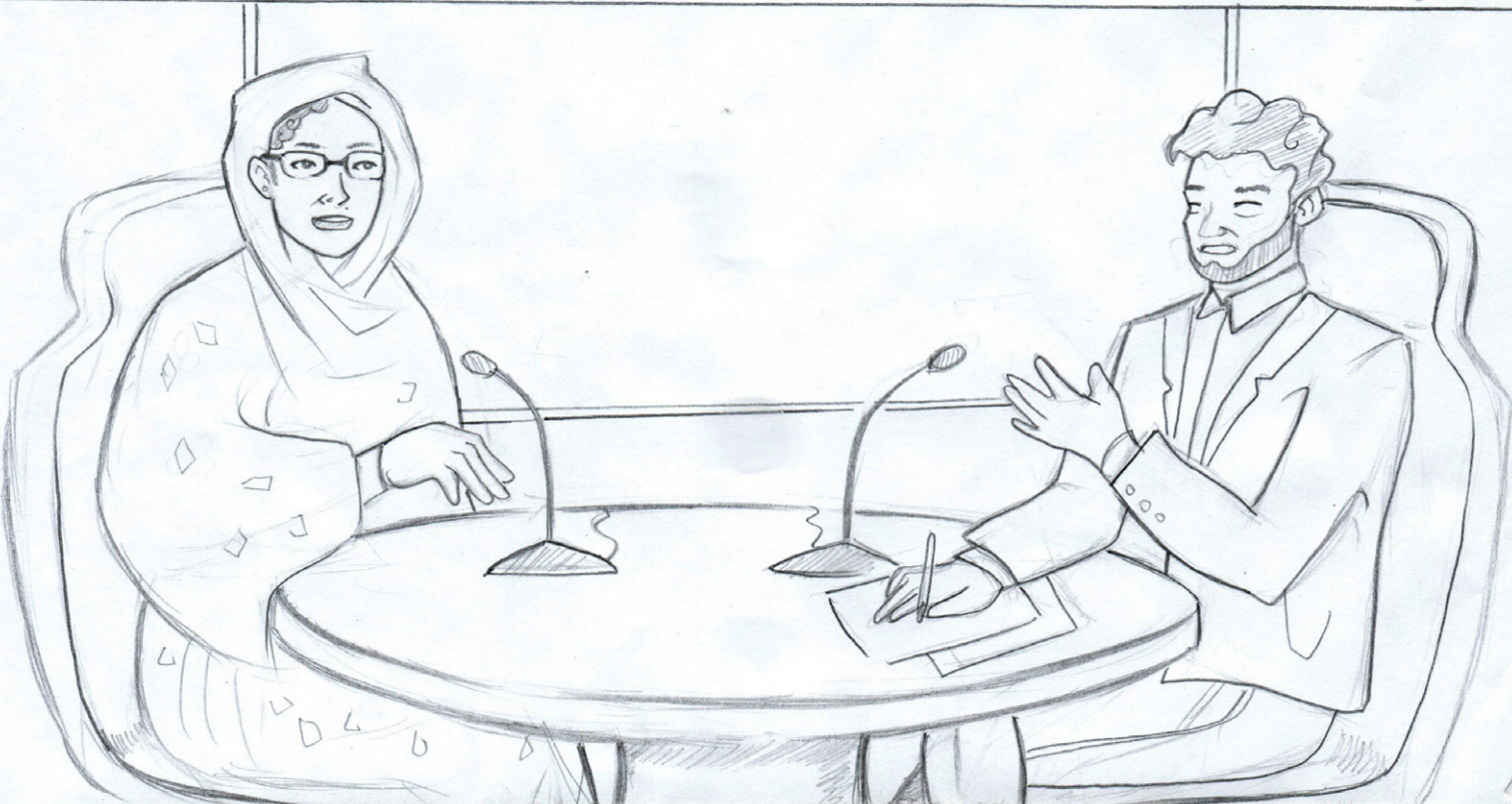


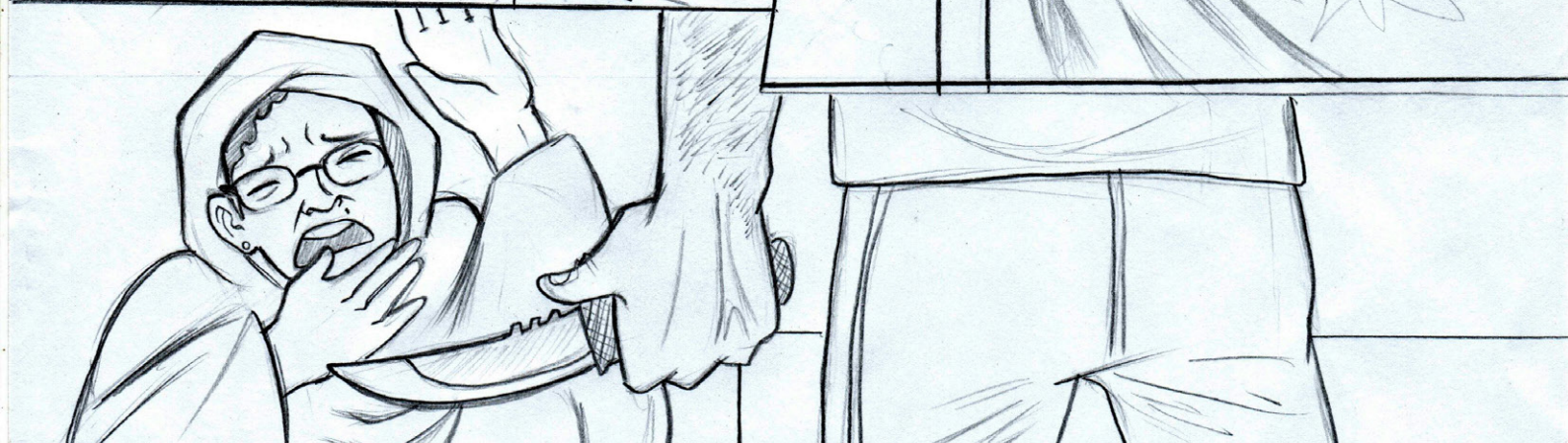
SEMINAIRE 2



I did a lot of TV shows that almost cost me my life in 2006.

M'ONT COUTER LA VIE

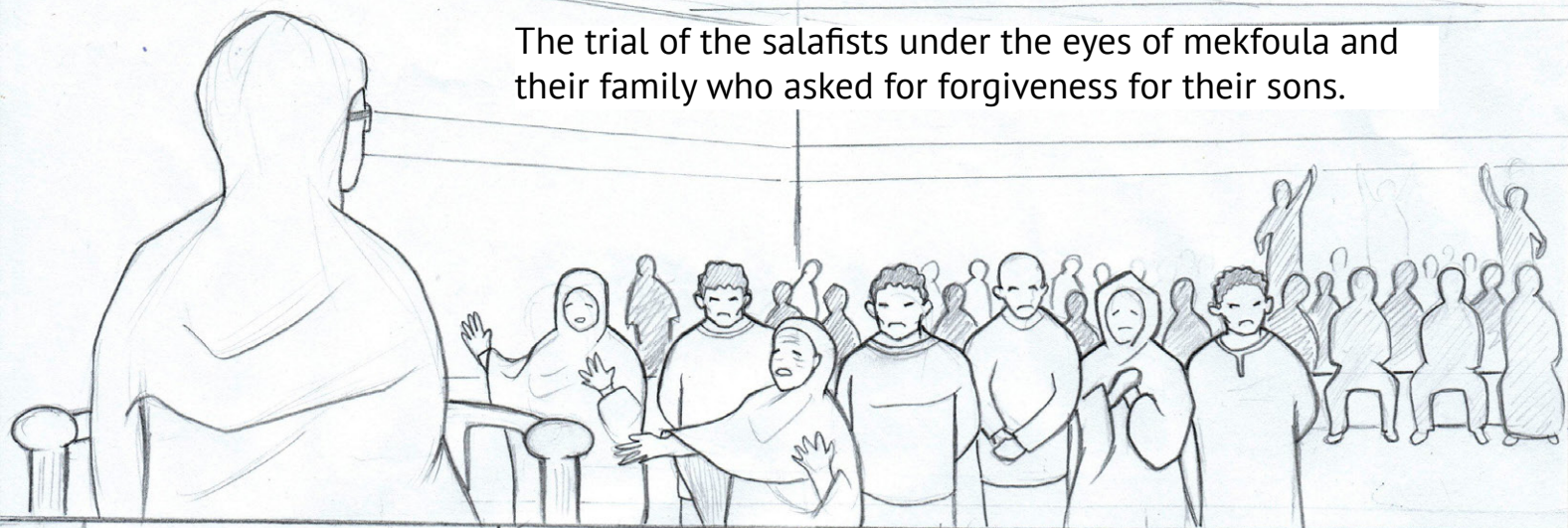




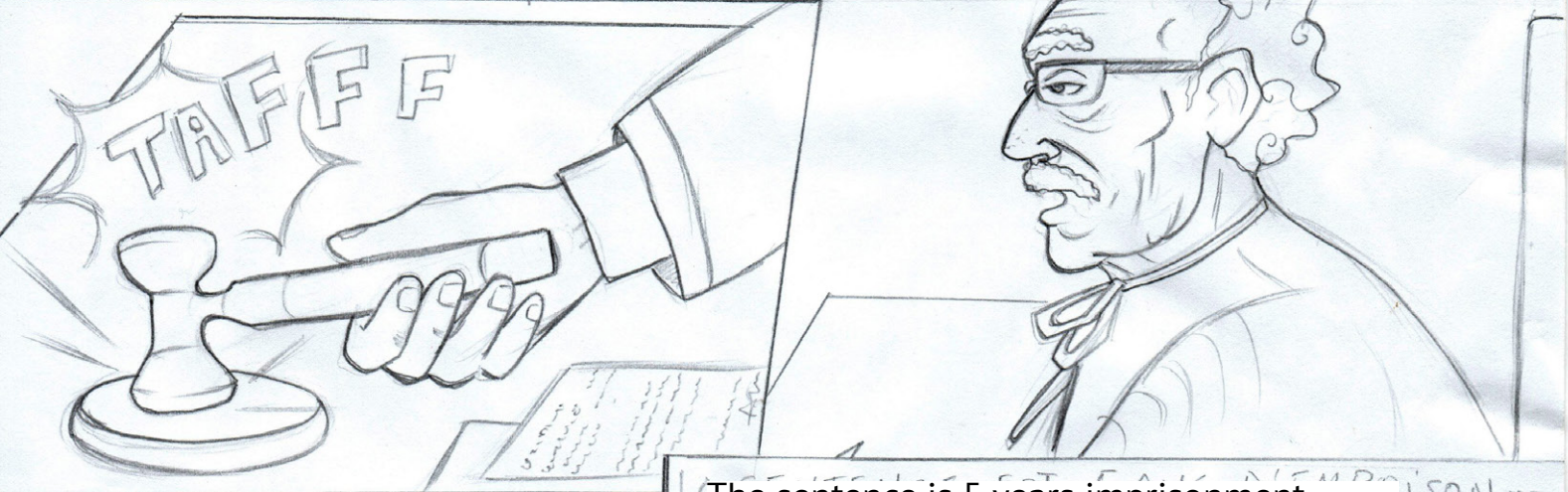
Salafists armed with knives and cameras came to my house and attempted to murder me which failed thanks to the police who intervened in time.



The trial of the salafists under the eyes of mekfoula and their family who asked for forgiveness for their sons.



They tried to assassinate me, I will never forgive them because I defend equality between men and women.



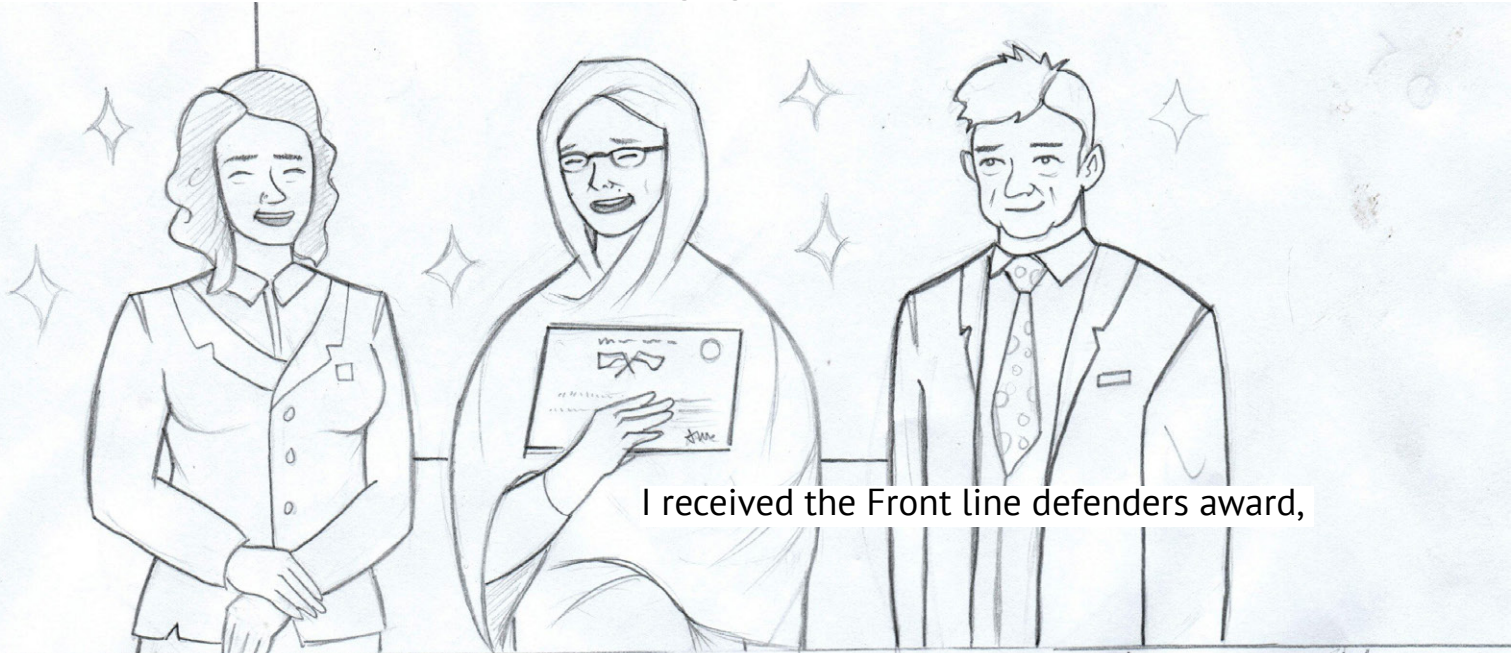
The sentence is 5 years imprisonment.



M'AIS C'EST INJUSTE IL MERITE
It's unjust! He deserves more than 5 years.

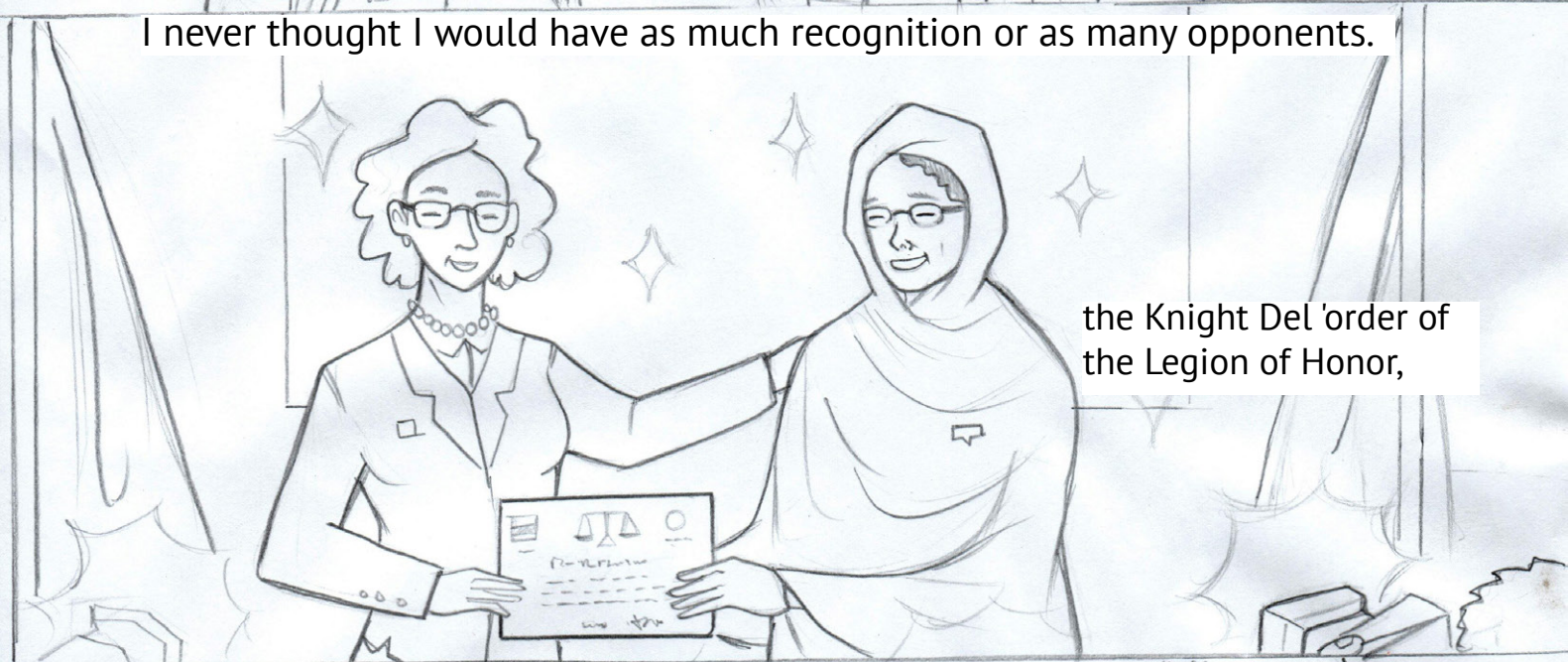
TUE!

I was scared, I withdrawn into myself, many people were against me, but I was relieved because others were encouraging me.



I received the Front line defenders award,

I never thought I would have as much recognition or as many opponents.



the Knight Del 'order of the Legion of Honor,



and the Franco-German prize for human rights and the rule of law in 2020

To me, Human Rights means freedom of expression. It is equality of opportunity, it is citizenship and most importantly, Human Rights are freedom.

Colombia

Guardia Indígena de Cauca

The winner of the Americas regional award, the Guardia Indígena del Cauca (Indigenous Guard of Cauca) - Kiwe Thegnas (Defenders of Life and Territory), is a community life and ancestral resistance composed of women, men, boys and girls who defend their territories in a peaceful, unarmed way. It was created in the violent region of Cauca in southwestern Colombia, and in 2001 began operating as an organized collective. The majority of the indigenous guards belong to the Nasa indigenous group, which is the largest and most organised, and they have trained other communities throughout Colombia over the years to defend their own territories. Their communities have been subjected to multiple forms of violence resulting from the presence of armed actors, the drug trafficking economy and multinational exploitation.

Over the last three years Colombia has been the most lethal country in the world for human rights defenders, and this, despite a peace agreement between the government and the FARC coming into force. Among the most vulnerable are land and indigenous peoples' rights defenders. The Guardia have suffered attacks against and killings of its members, and face a myriad of threats from the army and other state agencies, as well as narco-trafficking and other criminal groups.

Artist: Michael Guetio
[Instagram](#)

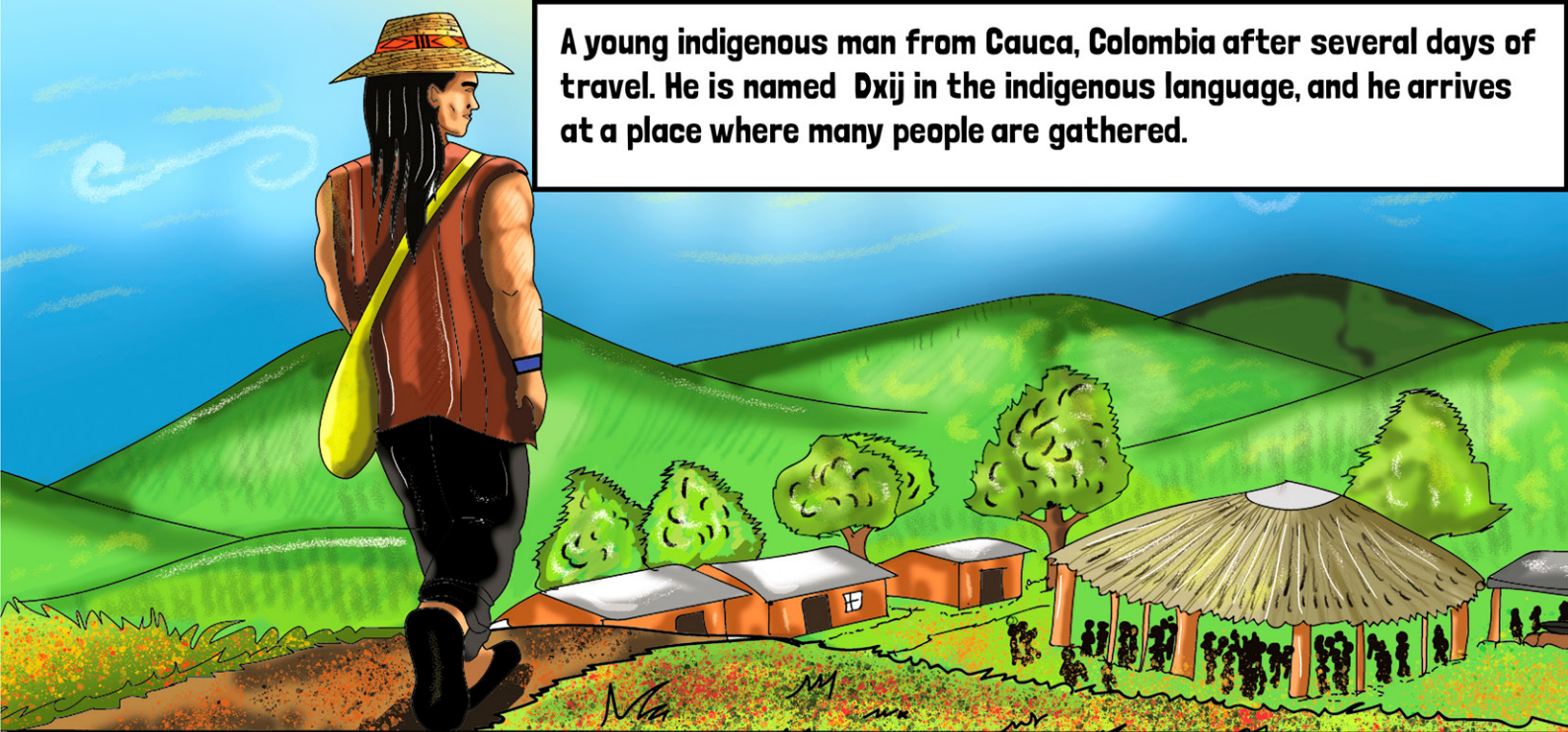
Espíritu del viento

Spirit of the Wind

THINGS



A young indigenous man from Cauca, Colombia after several days of travel. He is named Dxi in the indigenous language, and he arrives at a place where many people are gathered.



Edwin Dagua Ipia, the community leader, looks at the newcomer and admires his traditional dress.



Our friend has good energy and appears to be a good leader.

OK, let's end the meeting. Now put on some music!



At night ...

Welcome, comrade. Where are you from?

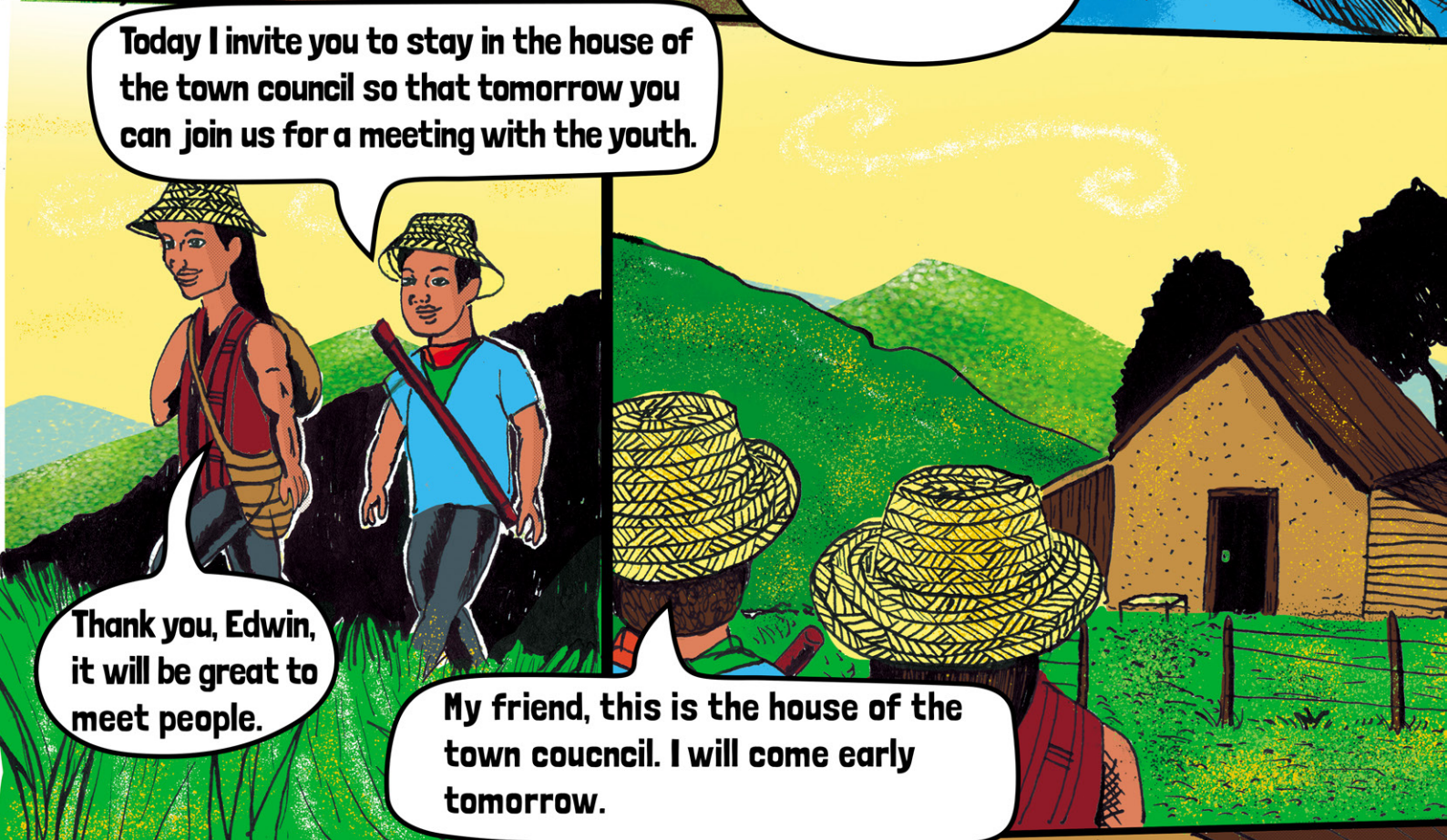
From high up in the mountains and I'm going to the capital.





Have you been a community leader for long?

Since I can remember, I have been involved in the process of activating Guardia youth.



Today I invite you to stay in the house of the town council so that tomorrow you can join us for a meeting with the youth.

Thank you, Edwin, it will be great to meet people.

My friend, this is the house of the town council. I will come early tomorrow.



In the morning ...



Let me introduce Dxi who comes from the upper mountains.

Welcome, comrade, how nice you are here. I am Jimmy, coordinator of the Guardia.

Great to meet you!

Later that day...



Well, comrades, it is time to assess the situation in the territory.

Our territory is going through a very difficult time. The illegal crops have brought armed groups that attack our community. We must deal with this problem.





After the death of my parents, I am on my way to the capital to find my brother.



Edwin!

An armed group took one of our men and want to kill him.



Call all the community, we must rescue him.



If you don't want to plant marijuana the easy way, then you'll pay a price!





Easy, comrade, we are here.

We are the Guardia Indígena (Indigenous Guard) in this territory and I am an authority.



And what are you going to do with your little sticks? Tap us?



We are peaceful. But if we have to remove you from the territory, we will.

Outnumbered, the armed group retreats.



It is better to leave, those Indians were brave.

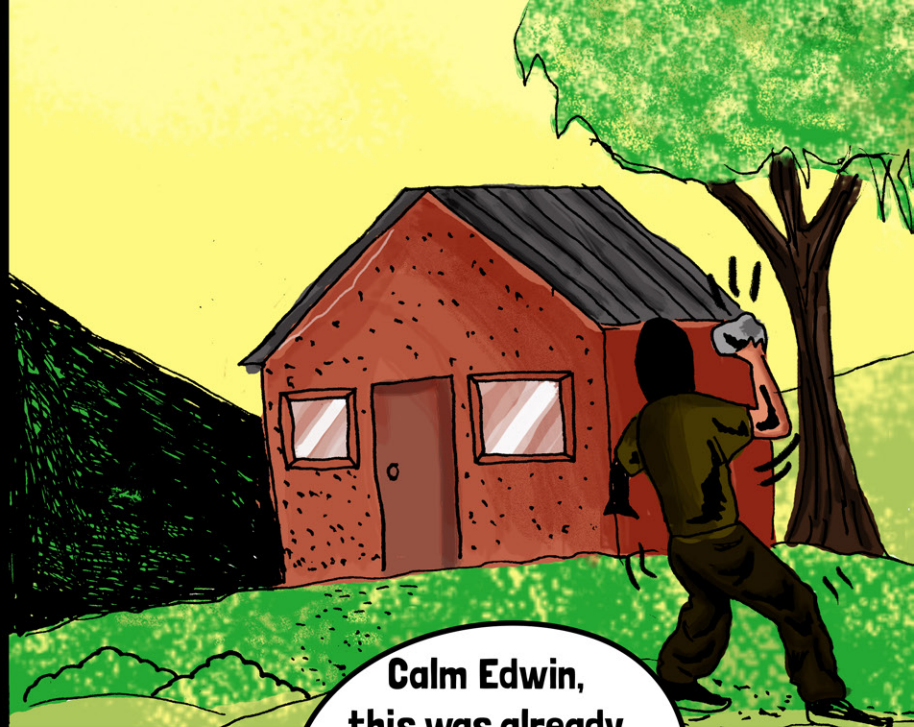
Comrade Edwin, I don't have a good feeling. It is better to sit and ask for strength from the spirits (ritual) ceremony.



The situation is not good. We must prepare to face problems.



Be careful, Edwin. This is already known. We must gather the community.



Calm Edwin, this was already known we must bring the community together.



Your days are numbered!



We'll go alert the Guardia in order to take control of the territory.



Another threat has been sent to the community. We must be vigilant all over our territory.



Many thanks, comrades, for accompanying me. See you tomorrow.

They want us to be weak and silent, but we cannot be silent. It is time to raise our sticks and defend our territory.

At night ...



Good night. When you will go, tell us and we will come.

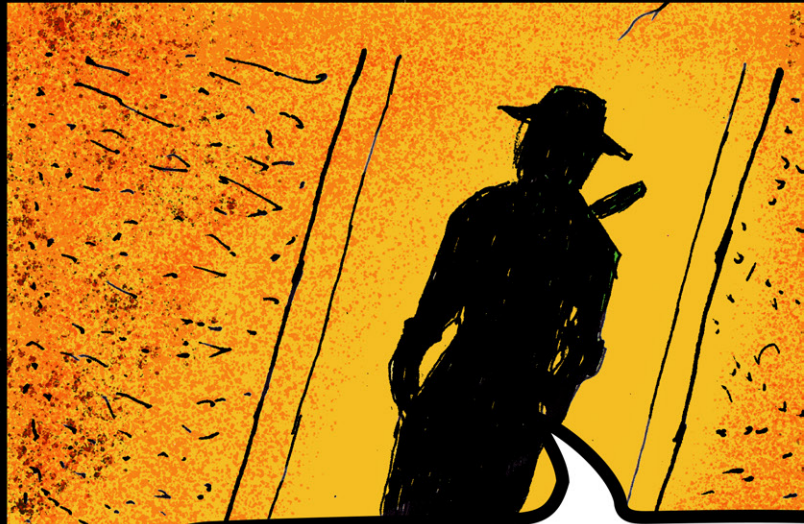


We have to take care of our leaders.


In the morning ...



The community is worried but if I'm wrong, everyone is wrong




I must not be afraid. I must go forward to make my community strong.



The strength of the community is its unity and in our beliefs.

We'll see if he's got courage.


Now we'll see if he is so brave when he's alone.




Let's see if he is still brave without his people?



and if we allow this, it'll grow out of control!



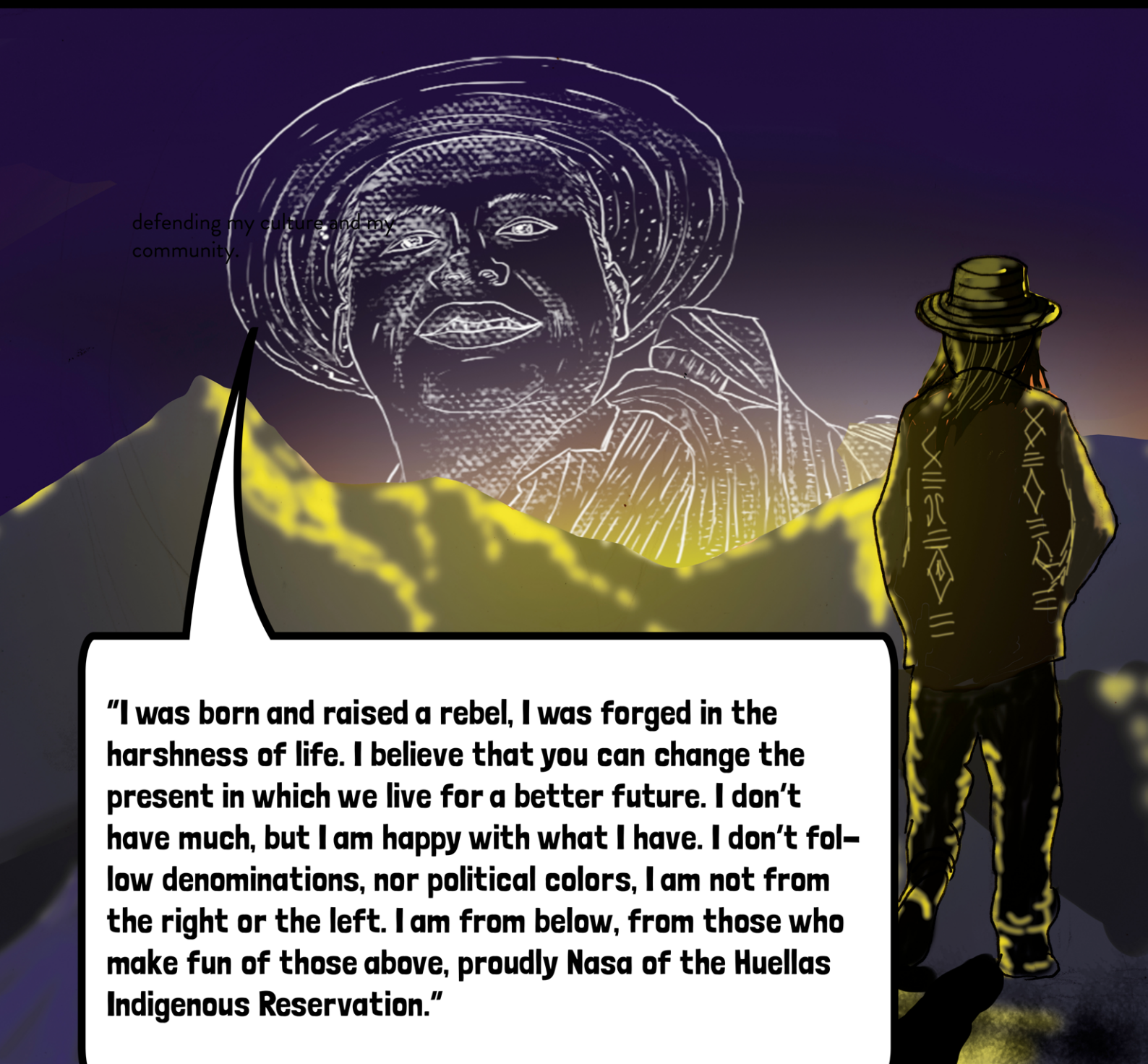
Because of you, people are making trouble for us.



I was born and raised a rebel and will die a rebel, defending my culture and my community.



Edwin is gone but his legacy and his story will go on in the strength of the Guardia and the organization of our community.



defending my culture and my community.

"I was born and raised a rebel, I was forged in the harshness of life. I believe that you can change the present in which we live for a better future. I don't have much, but I am happy with what I have. I don't follow denominations, nor political colors, I am not from the right or the left. I am from below, from those who make fun of those above, proudly Nasa of the Huellas Indigenous Reservation."

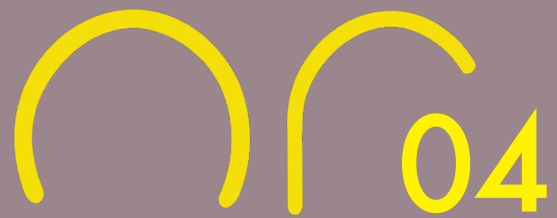


This is a work recognized and protected by the traditional authorities of the Cerro Tijeras Reservation, Article 7 of the Constitution of Colombia of 1991, convention 169 OIT of 1989, ratified by Law 21 of 1991, UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 2007, Law 89 of 1890.

Thank you for joining us in the first chapter of 'Thegza'.



Municipio de Suárez Cauca



Find us online



frontlinedefenders.org/cypher

