

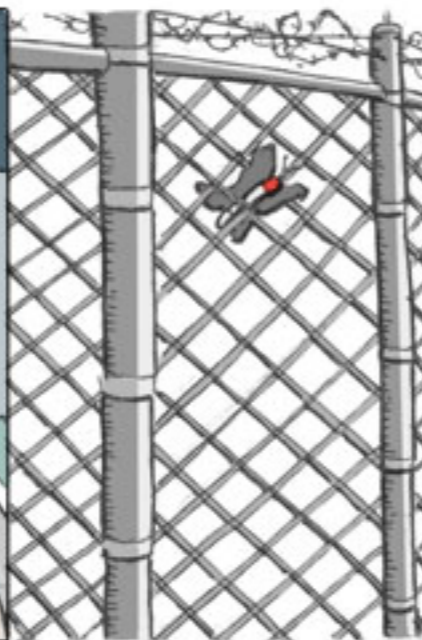
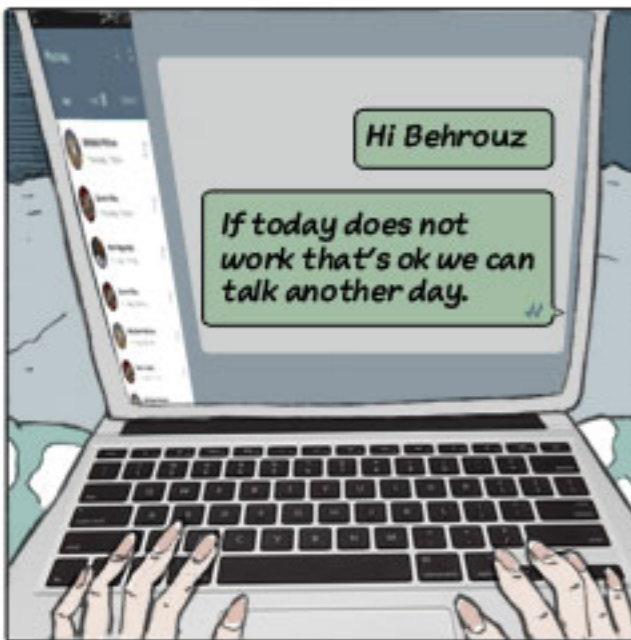
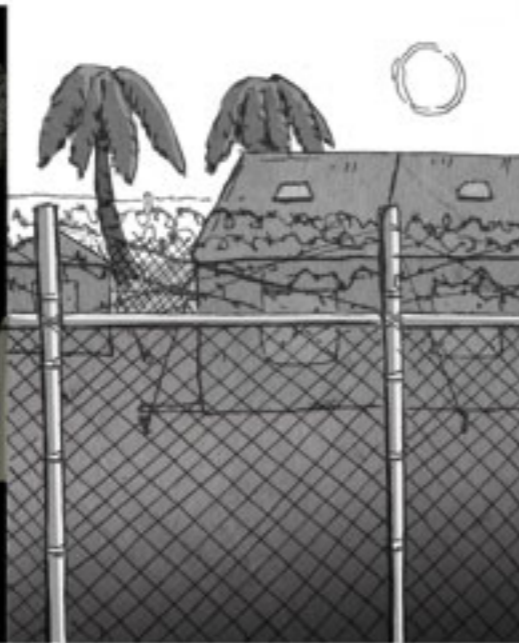
From August-December 2017, Behrouz Boochani, a Kurdish writer detained on Manus Island for the past 5 years, told his story to PositiveNegatives. The exchange was done clandestinely over WhatsApp. Halfway through, the Australian government closed the detention centres but would not allow those there refuge in Australia - or elsewhere. This is Boochani's story, before and during that time.

He remains on Manus.

He remains on Manus.



14 OCTOBER 2017



Could you please introduce yourself.

My name is Behrouz Boochani.

I'm from
Kurdistan (Iran)

Born on the
23rd July 1983

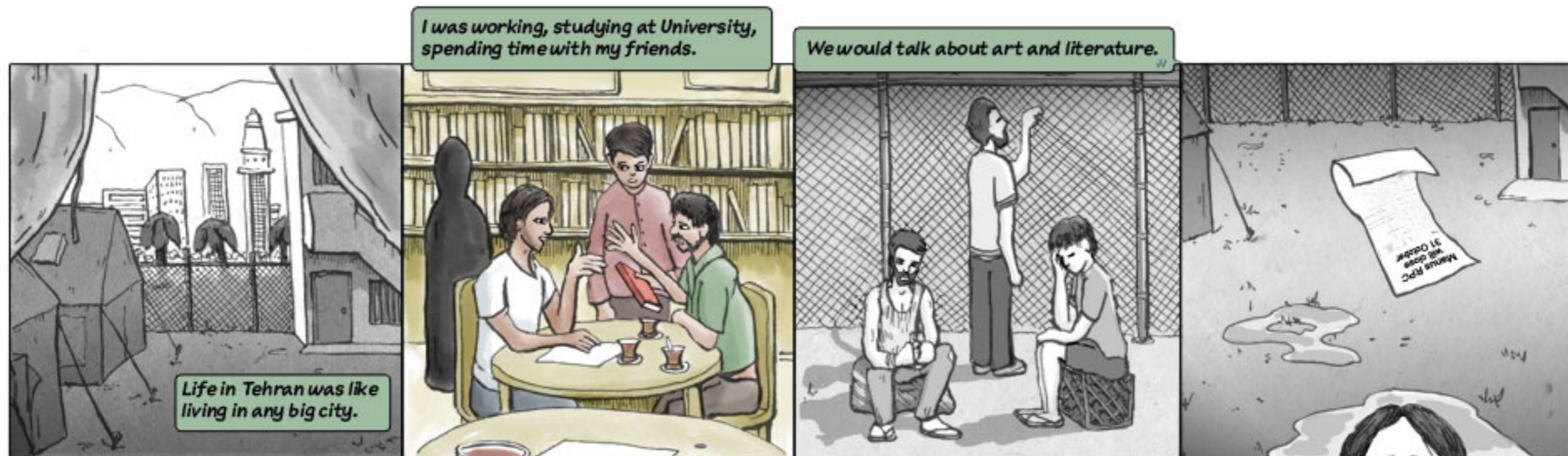
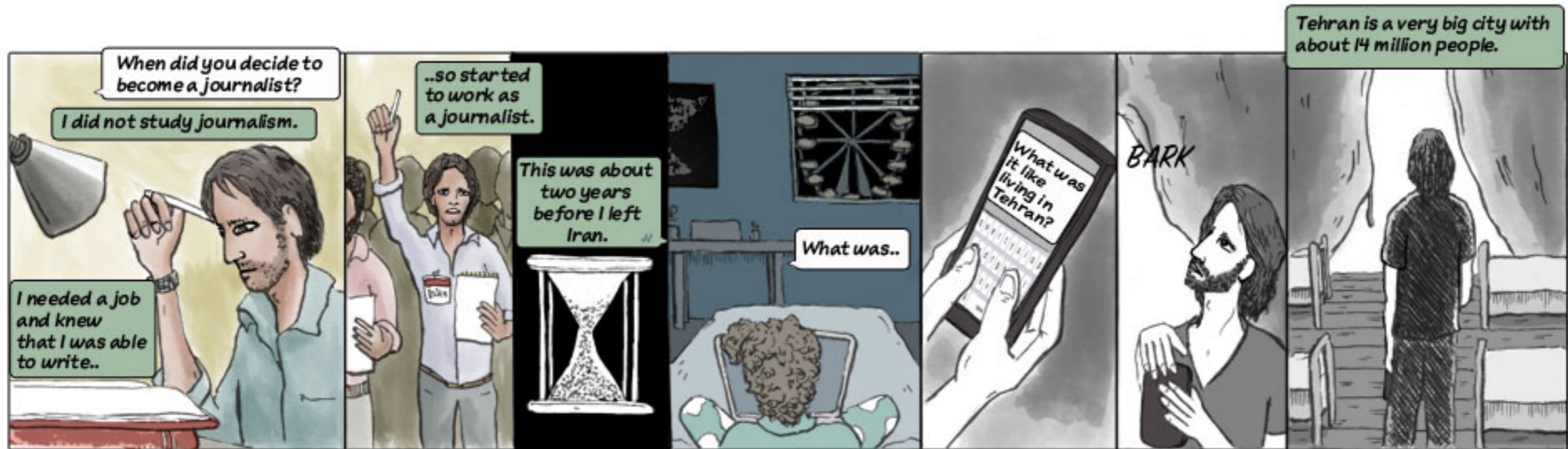
I am a journalist and writer.

What was your life like in Kurdistan?

I was born near a city called Ilam. I was living with my parents in a stone house, in a small village surrounded by an oak jungle.

I left at 19 to move to Tehran for university.

I did a Masters in Geopolitics and Political Geography.



What was your favourite part of studying?



I liked to be in the library, spending time there doing research.

What did you focus your research on for your Masters?



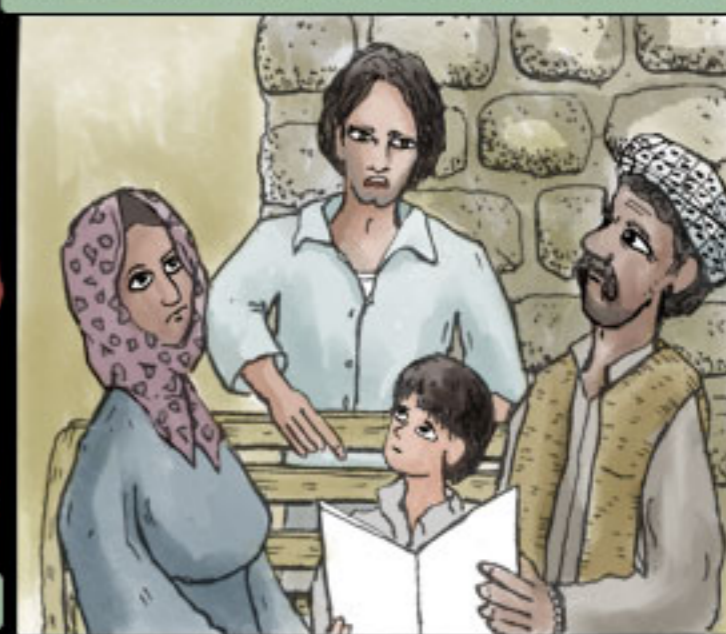
I was working on Nationalism.

I always had these questions in my life about:

why was the **Kurdish** language not a formal language in Iran and why don't **Kurdish** children have the right to learn **Kurdish** in schools or universities?

I was involved with this issue for a long time..

..and was very angry with the Kurdish parents who did not teach their mother language to their kids.



Some of my colleagues and I were thinking about a way to tell people that they have to respect the Kurdish language...

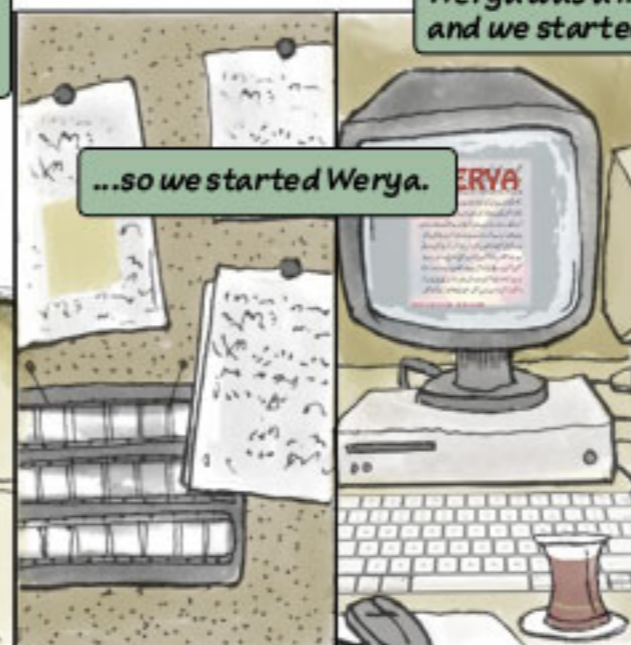


..and was very angry with the Kurdish parents who did not teach their mother language to their kids.

When did you decide you wanted to start Werya?



...so we started Werya.

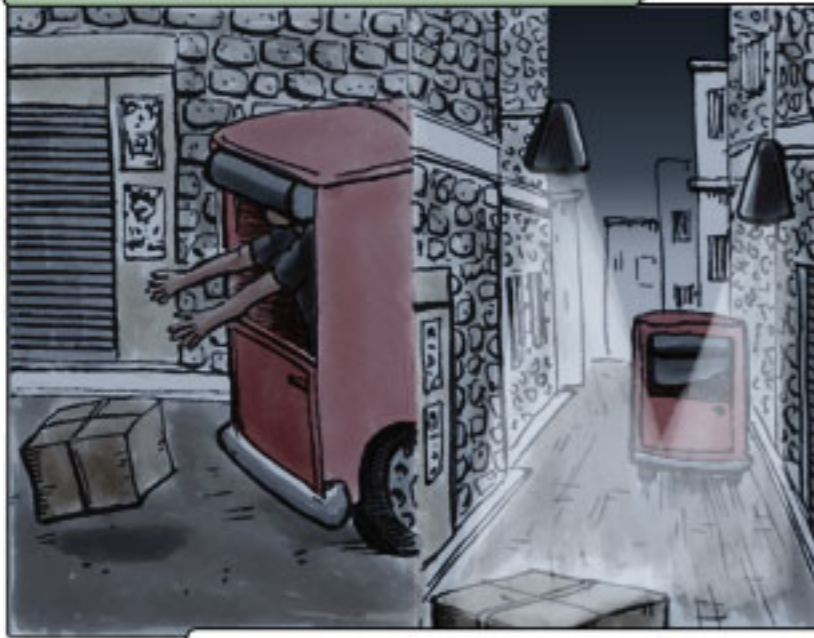


Werya was a monthly magazine for a long time and we started working only in Kurdish.

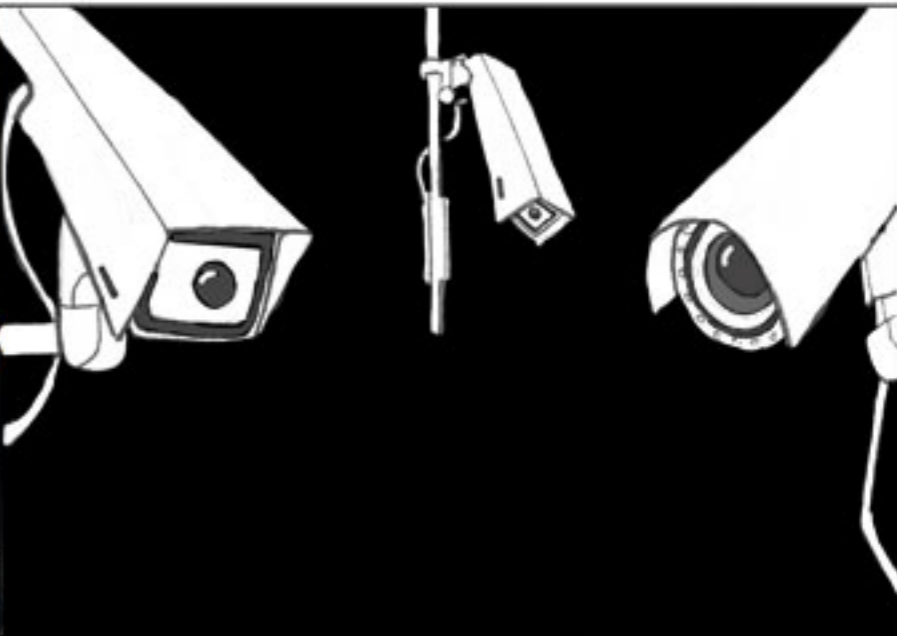
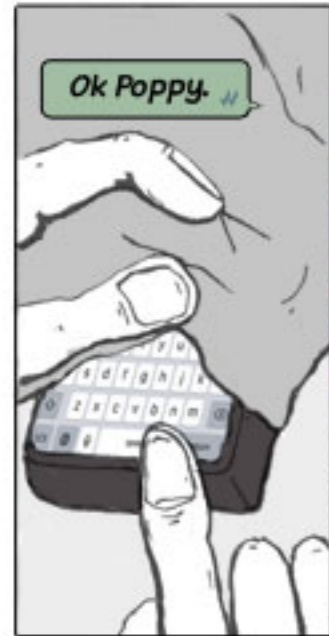


We knew that the Iranian government wouldn't allow us to continue and that they would arrest us one day..

But we did it anyway because we thought it was a very important issue.



How many people were working on Werya?





How long were you working at Werya and where were Werya's offices?

I was working on Werya for about two months.



The government suddenly attacked our offices and arrested 10 journalists and cultural activists.



During that time, I was in Tehran.



When I found out..



اگر آن ترک شیرازی به دست آرد
به خال هندویش
بده ساقی می باده
کنار آب زکن آ
فغان کاین لولیه
چنان بردند صبر از
ز عشق نا ت
به آب

I published the news in some overseas Persian and Kurdish media

How did you stay hidden from the authorities?

I was in Tehran at a friend's house.

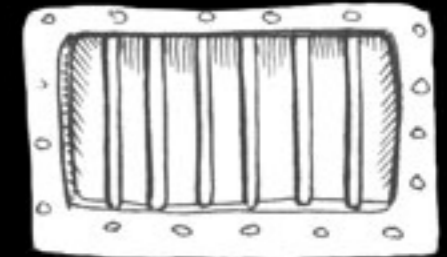


What happened to the journalists that were arrested?



Some of them got released

and some of them were charged.



They went to jail.



Did the smuggler help you when you arrived in Indonesia?



Yes, he was in contact with me when I was there.



Did he help you with getting a place to stay for the four months you were in Indonesia?

Yes, I was in so many places in Indonesia.



Each place for a week or two weeks.

What kind of places were you in?

I was in a hotel..



a prison..



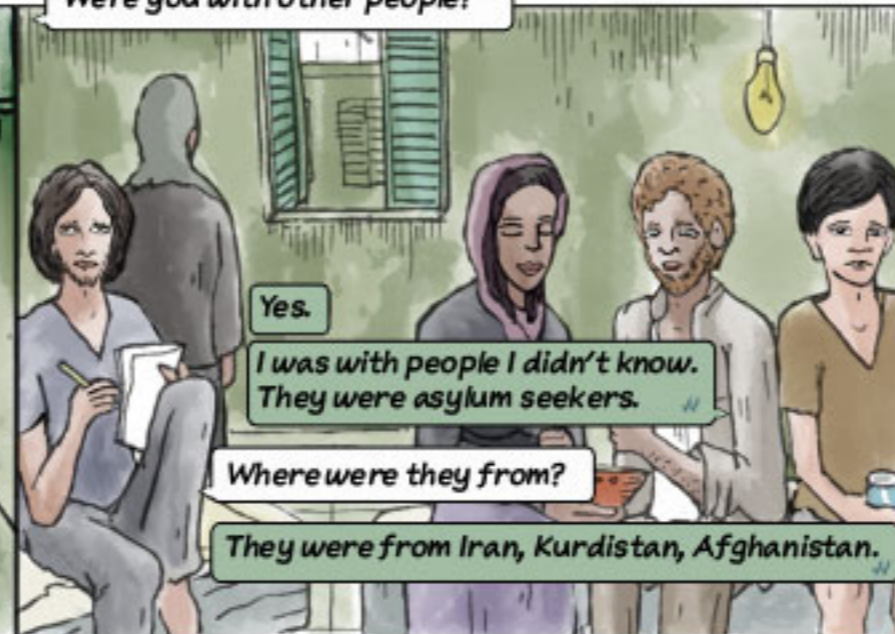
a mosque, etc.



We were not safe so the smugglers had to change our location.



Were you with other people?



Yes.

I was with people I didn't know. They were asylum seekers.

Where were they from?

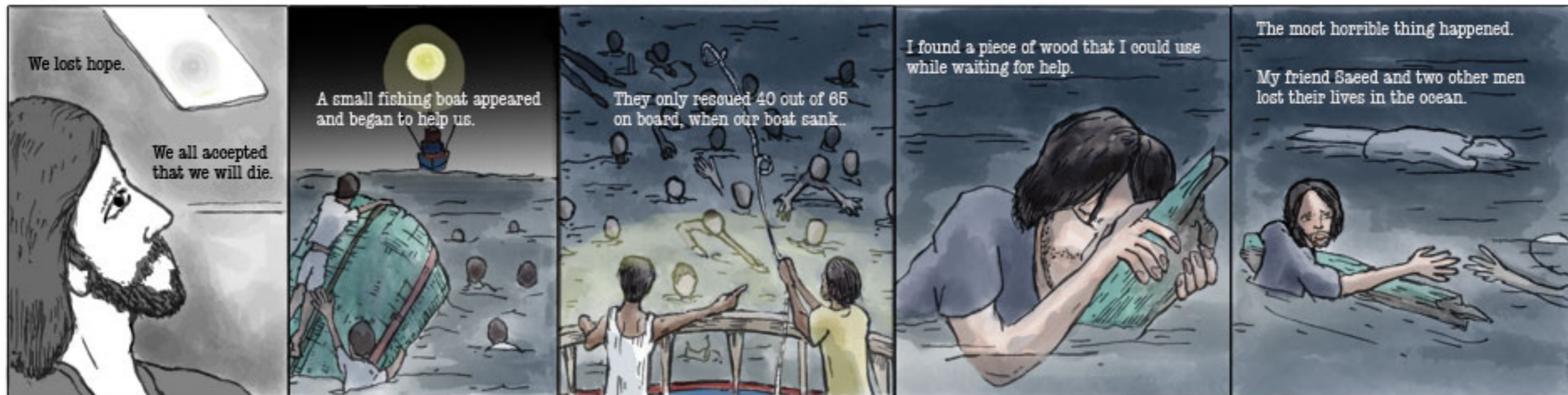
They were from Iran, Kurdistan, Afghanistan.

Were you in Jakarta?



I was in Jakarta for a month, then I moved around Indonesia for several months before coming back to Jakarta..





Could you tell me what happened when you were rescued by the police?



After escaping the prison the police put me in..

I went to a garden close to the prison. I was there for a few hours..



..then I went to a mosque and stayed there until morning.



In the morning I asked a man, who was working in the mosque, for help and he helped me get back to Jakarta.



When I got back to Jakarta, I contacted the smuggler..



.. and he sent a car to take me to a safe place



I was in Jakarta in a small apartment for about two weeks



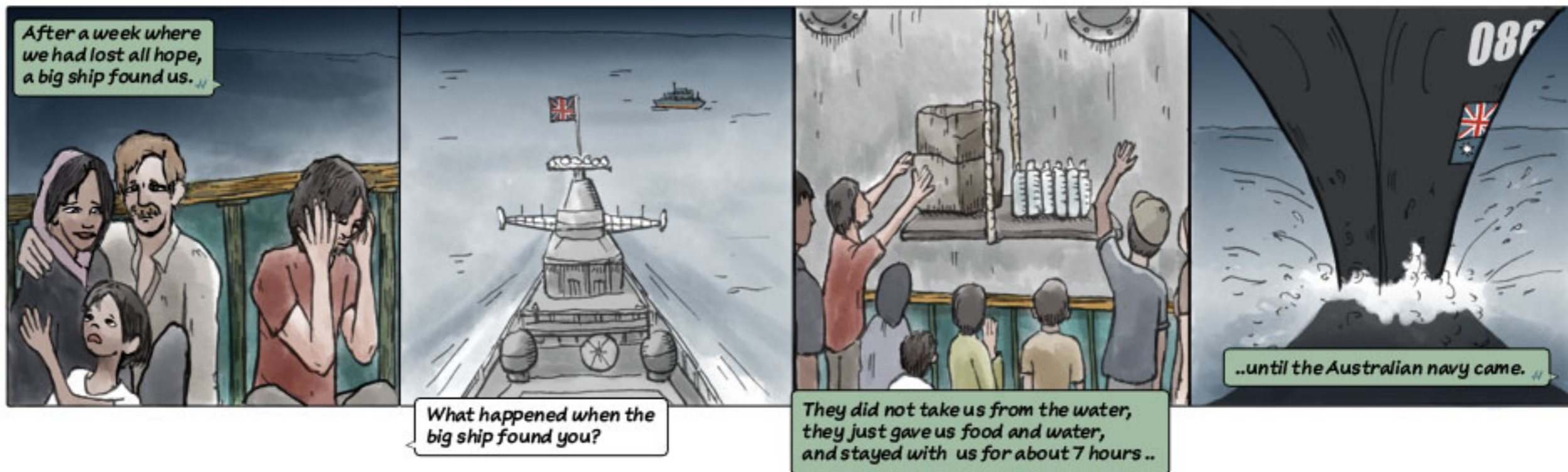
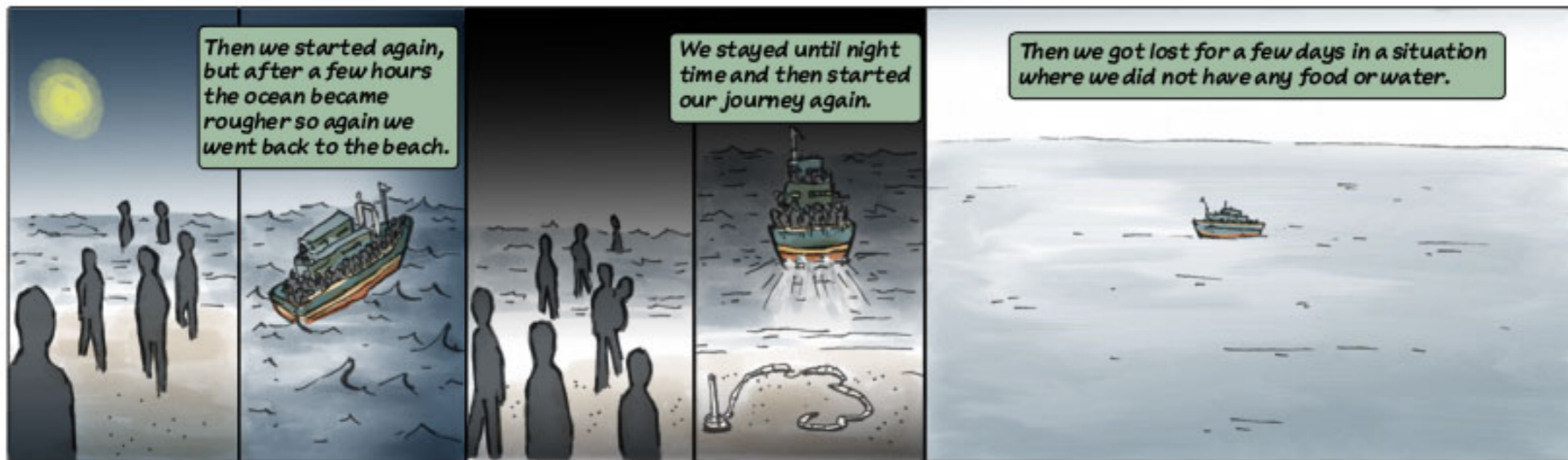
Then I started the second journey.



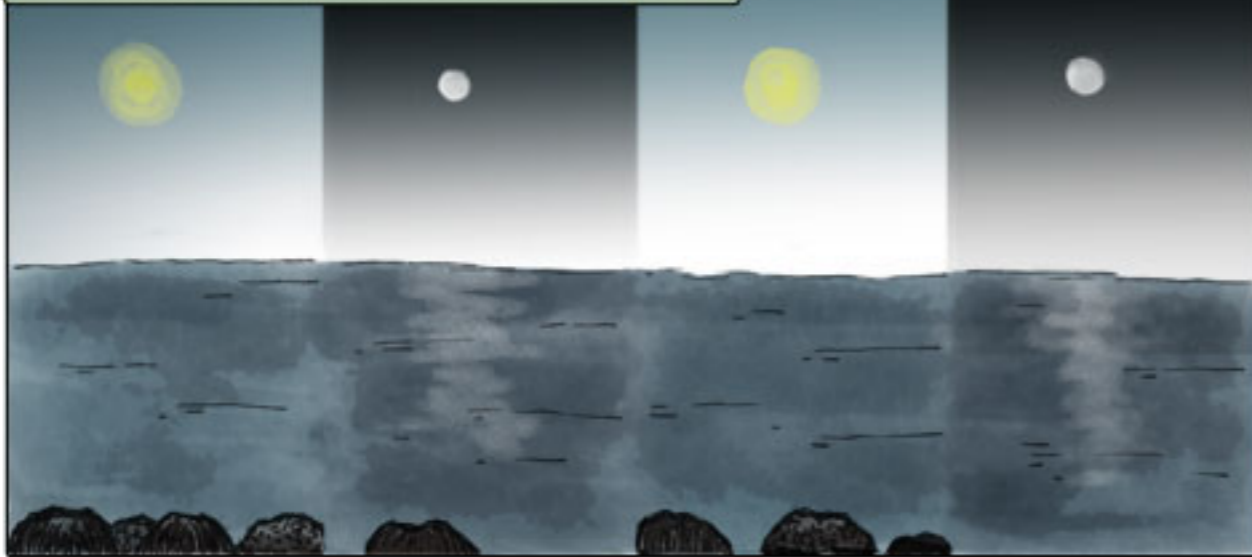
How were you treated on your second journey?

We were on the ocean for six hours, but it was very dangerous so we came back to the beach.





They took us to Christmas Island, which belongs to Australia. It took us two days to get there.



It was four days after the announcing of the 19th July law. Because of the law, I was exiled to Manus Island in Papua New Guinea.



The rules have changed.

This law started to be exercised when our broken boat with 85 unconscious passengers was lost over the ocean. When we reached the soil of Australia, we found out about this cruelty..

Number 19 seems so ominous to me.

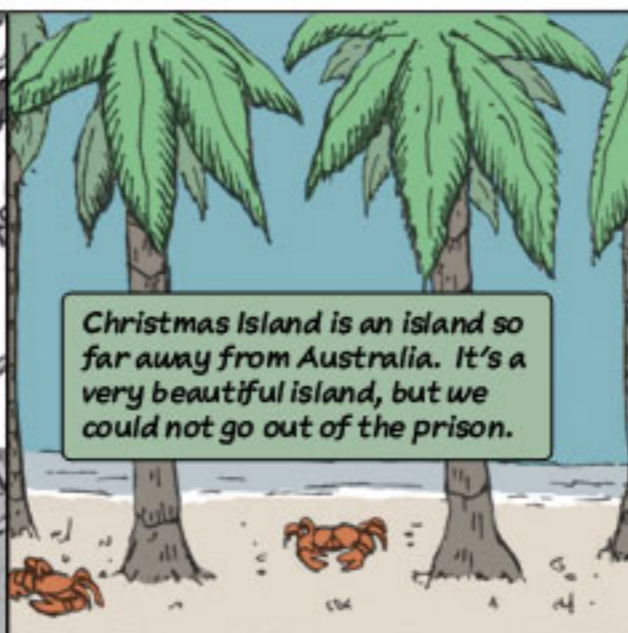


2013
2014
2015
2016
2017
2018
20..

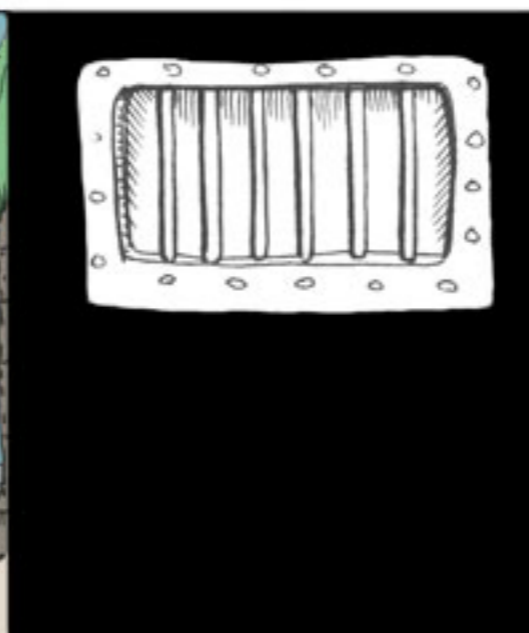




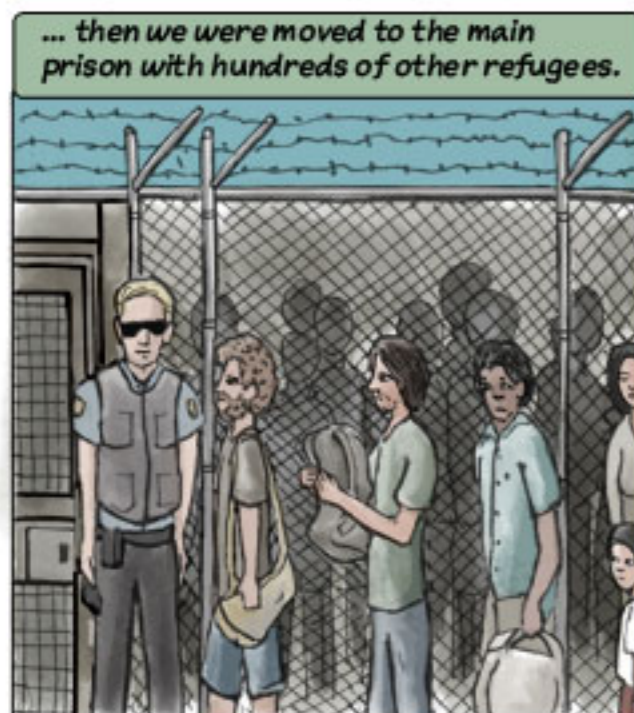
17th OCTOBER 2017



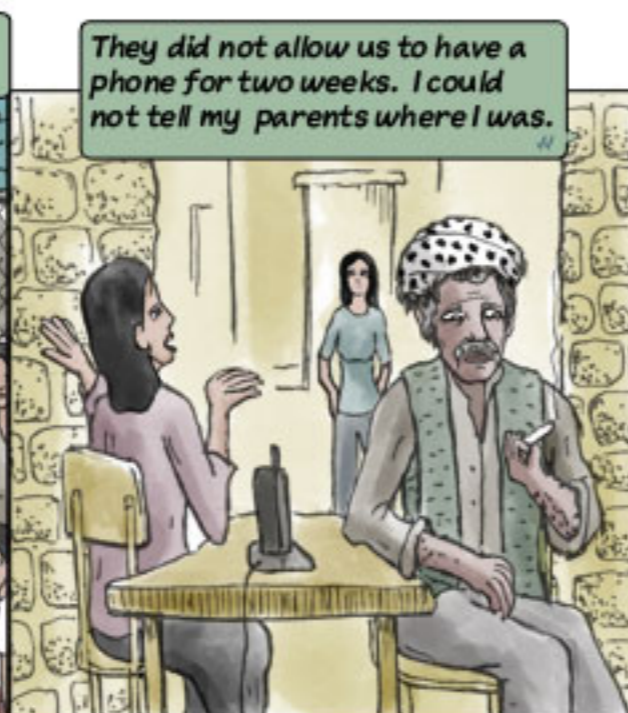
Christmas Island is an island so far away from Australia. It's a very beautiful island, but we could not go out of the prison.



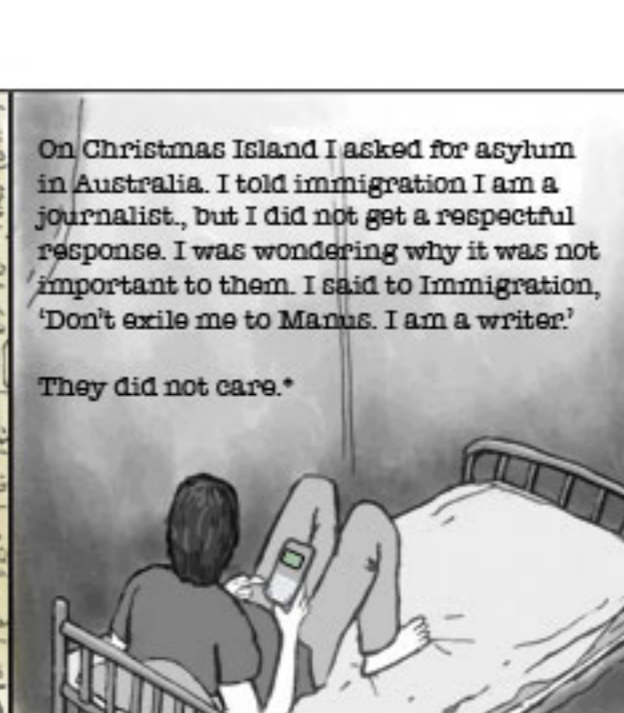
We were in a very small prison for about two weeks...



... then we were moved to the main prison with hundreds of other refugees.



They did not allow us to have a phone for two weeks. I could not tell my parents where I was.

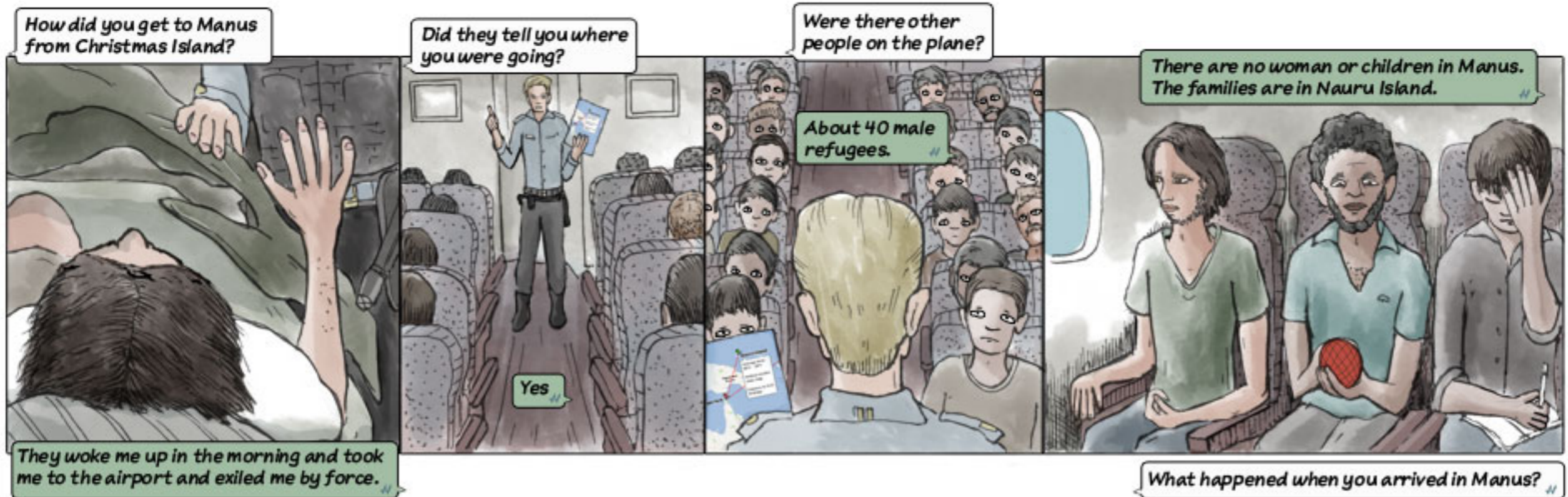


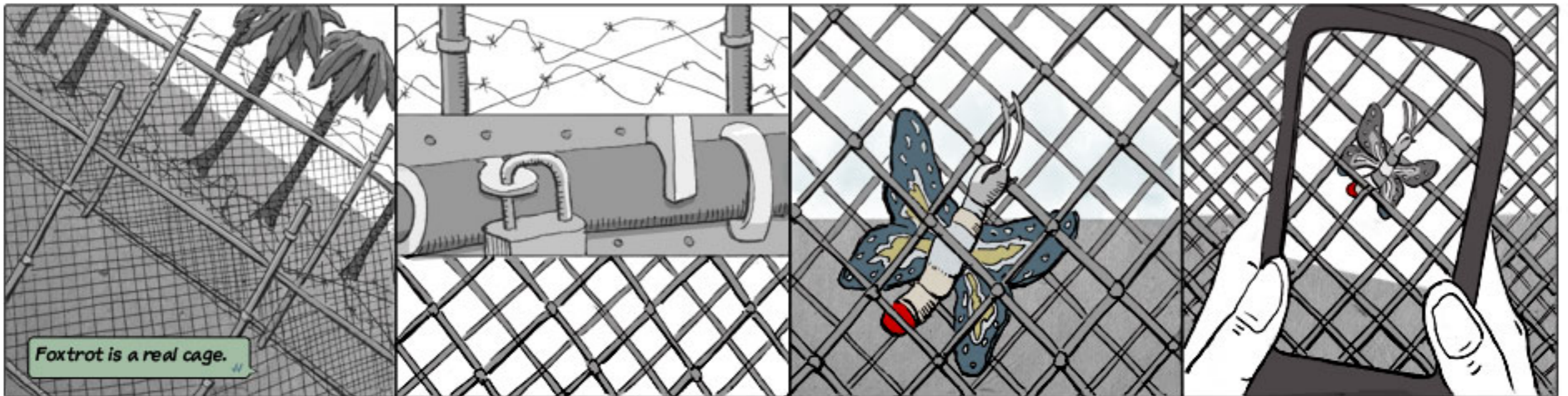
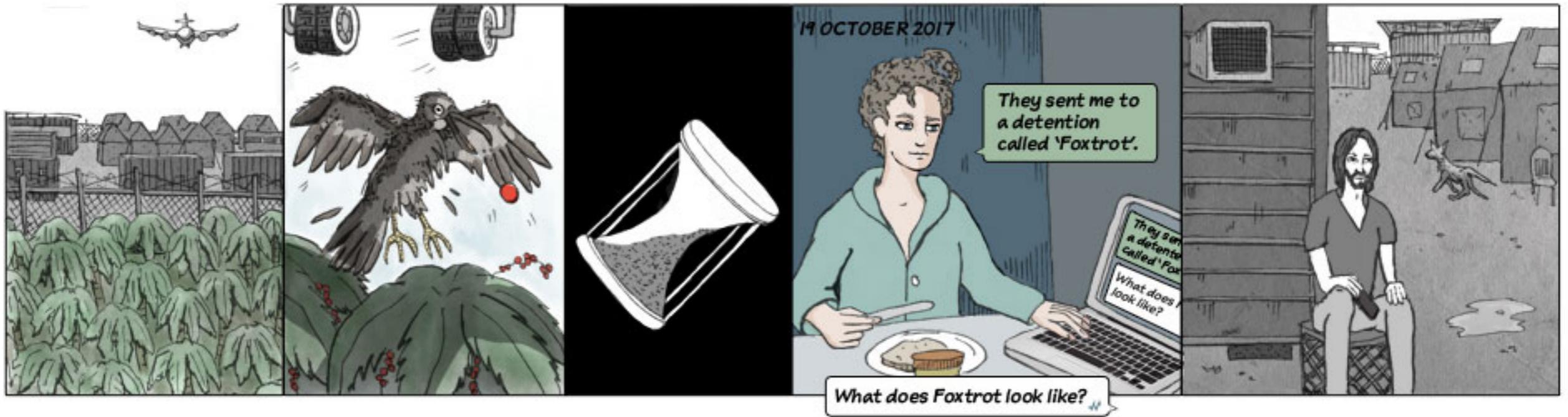
On Christmas Island I asked for asylum in Australia. I told immigration I am a journalist, but I did not get a respectful response. I was wondering why it was not important to them. I said to Immigration, 'Don't exile me to Manus. I am a writer.'

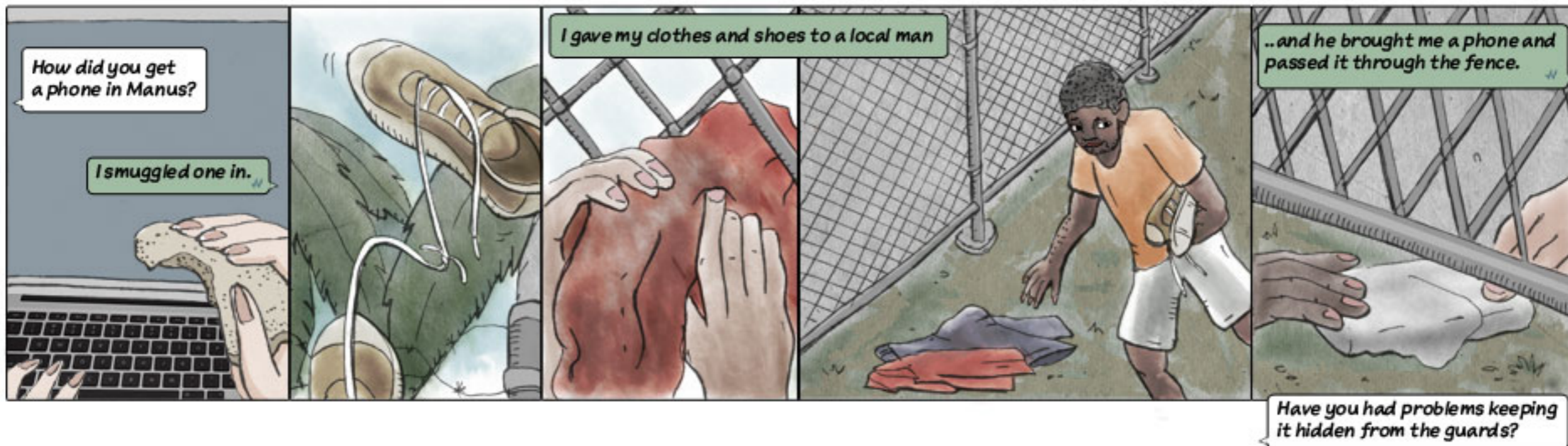
They did not care.*



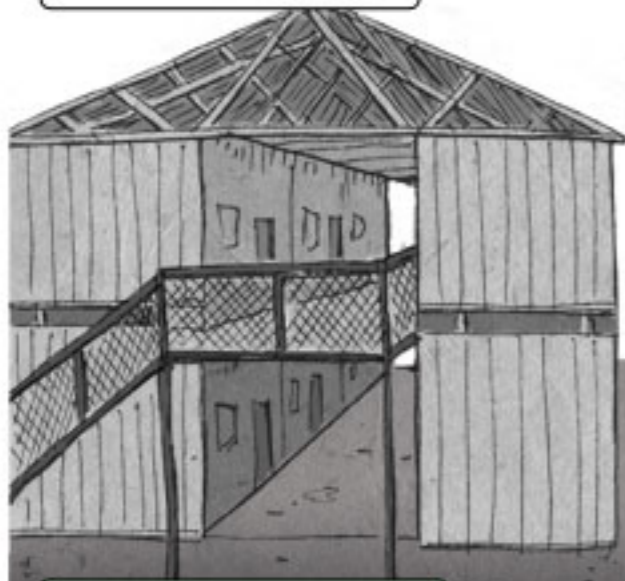
*Issue #68 The Walkley Magazine, March 2017



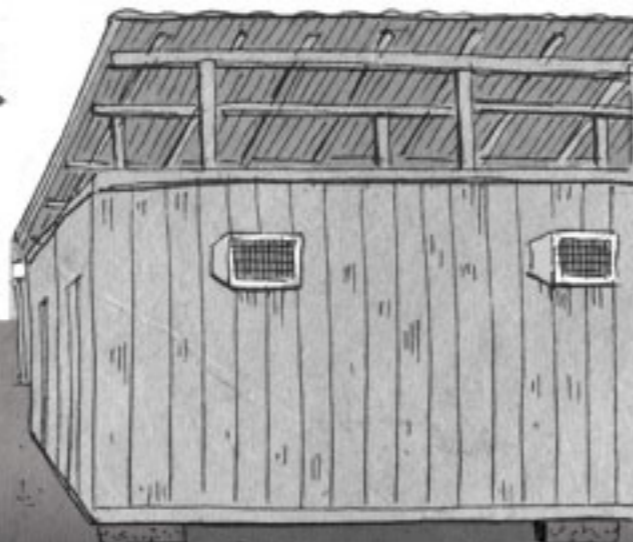




Are you still in Foxtrot?



I was there for 18 months



..then they sent me to Delta.
I was there for 14 months ..



..then they sent me back to Foxtrot
for a month, then they sent me to Oscar.



I'm in Oscar now.

Are they far apart from each other?



All of the prisons are
beside each other.

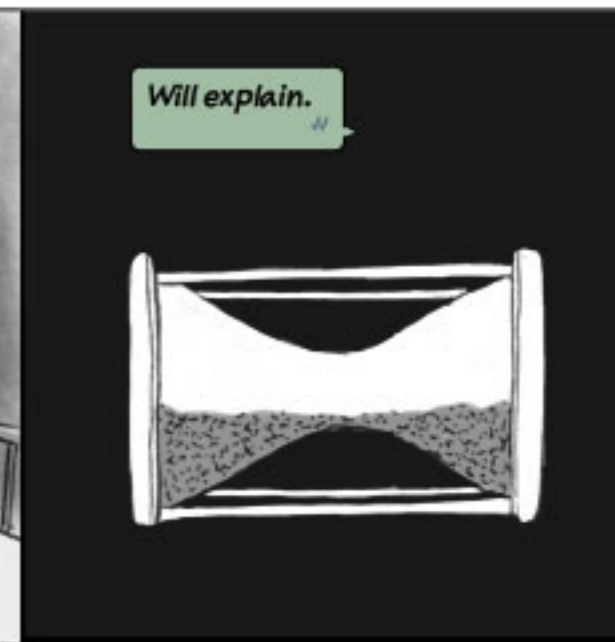


How come you were
moved between them?

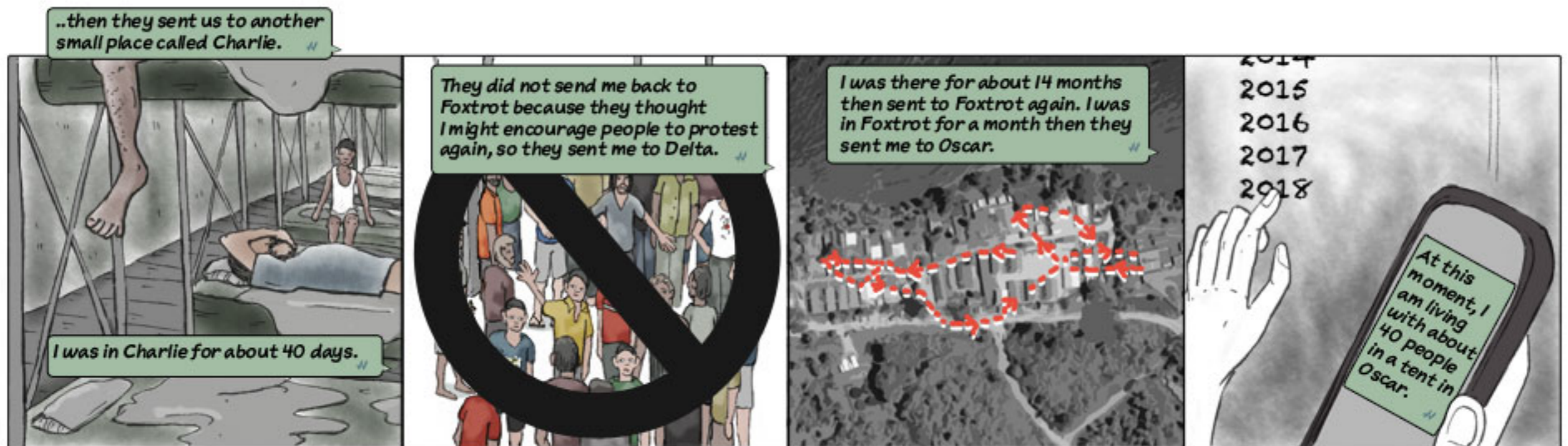
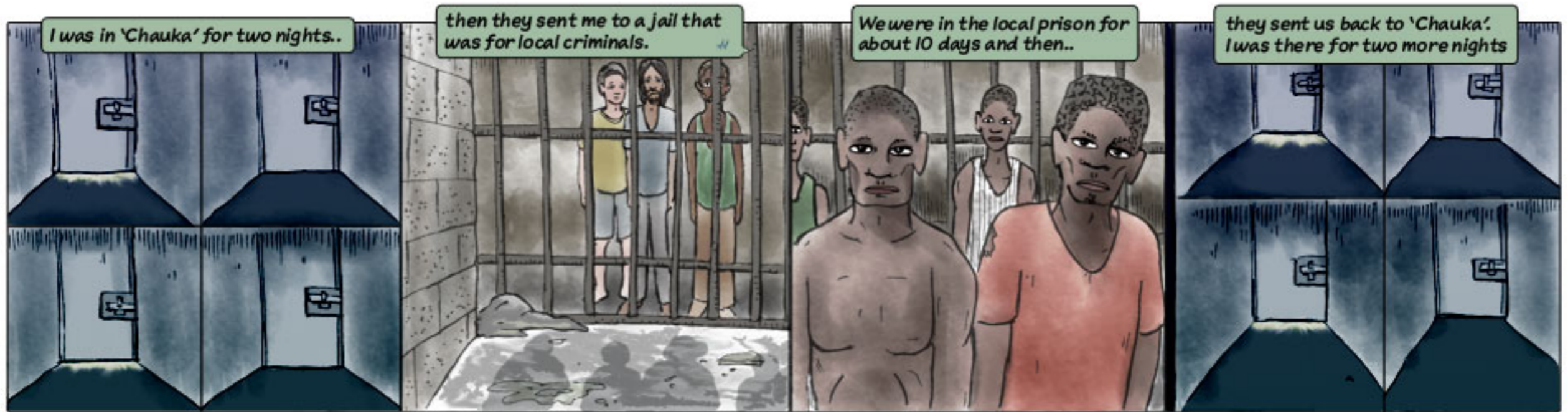
Will answer.

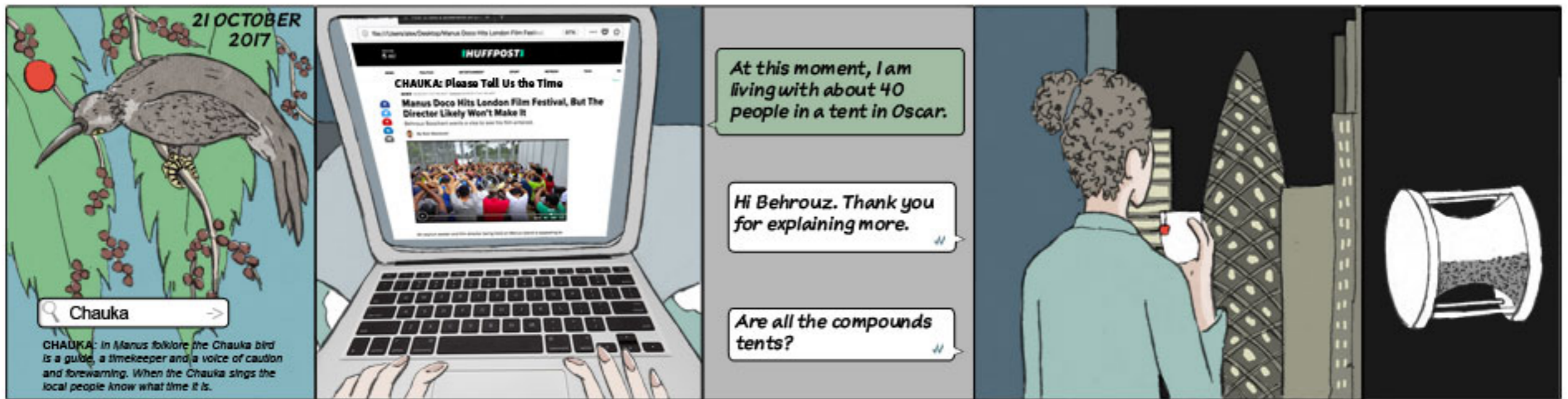


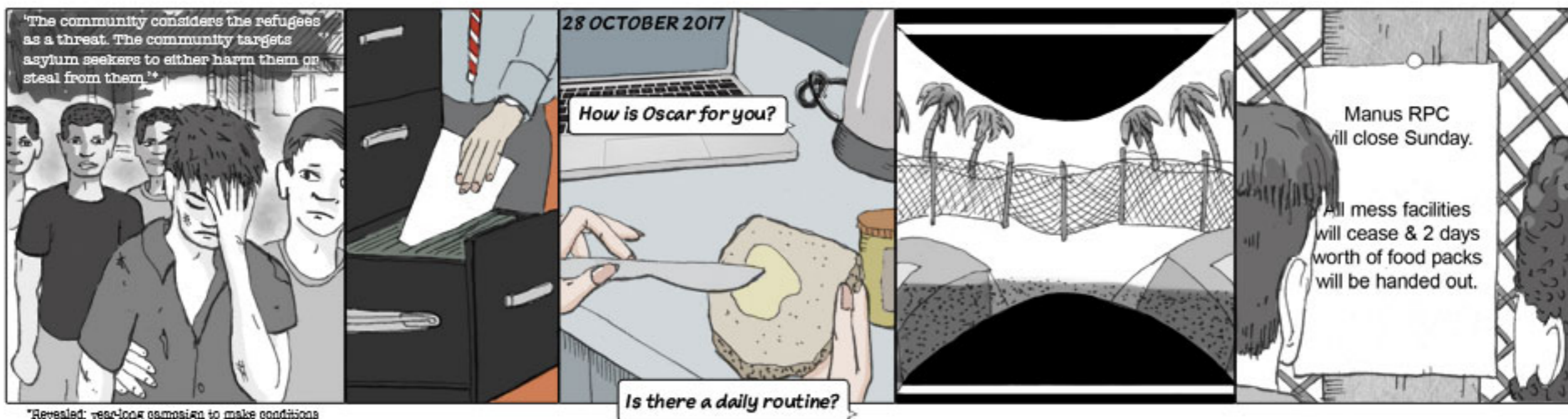
Will explain.











*Revealed: year-long campaign to make conditions harsher for Manus refugees.
theguardian.com 17/5/17. Behrouz Boochani on Manus Island; Ben Doherty, Nick Evershed in Sydney

30 October 2017

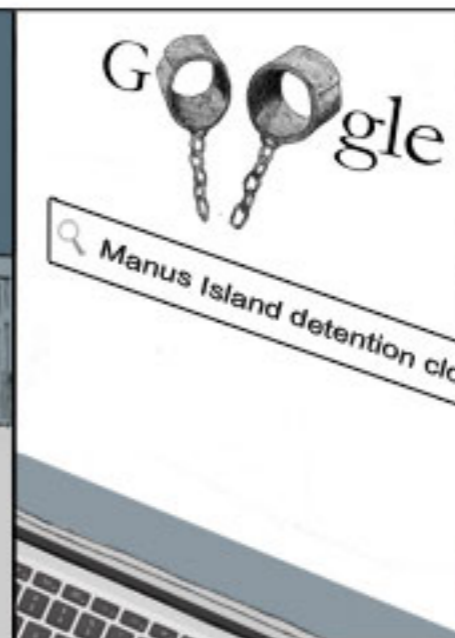


Hi Behrouz.
I haven't heard from
you in a while and I
just wanted to check
that you are ok?



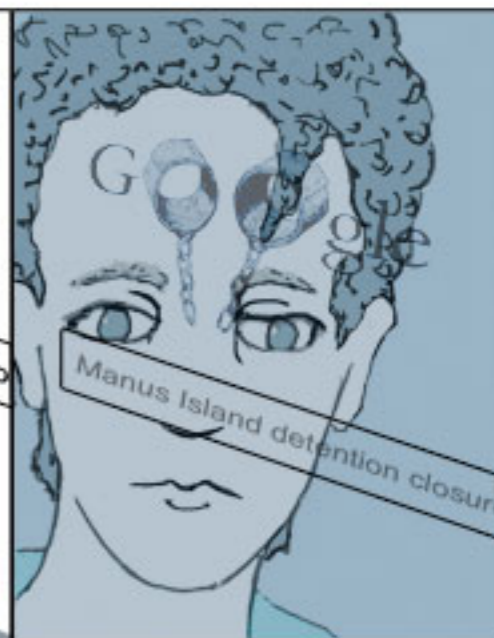
is there a
daily routine?

Hi Behrouz.
I haven't heard from
you in a while and I
just wanted to check
that you are ok?



Google

Manus Island detention closure



Manus Island detention closure

The rain suddenly starts to pour...
The garbage bins are filling up with
rainwater... This rain is such an
enormous blessing - it is delivered
with perfect timing.



A missionary on Manus wants
to bring food... but is prevented
by the navy. The Australian
government insists on starving
everyone.



I have to eventually make
my way to Delta prison.
The silent protest begins at five.



The mosquitoes of
Manus are again
ruthless and
barbaric.
Another tough
night awaits.*



SMACK

I feel this place
has become a
battlefield, and
I've become a
war reporter.



*The breath of death on Manus Island:
starvation and sickness.
Boochani theguardian.com 3/11/17

*27/10/17 'This is hell out here':
how Behrouz Boochani's diaries expose
Australia's refugee shame;
Boochani theguardian.com 4/12/17

