

The Caravan Citizens

Spatial resistance and resilience in the refugee camp of Za'atari

-
A Graphic Novel

by
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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

In the realm of refugeeism, camps can be perceived as places that sustain the lives of displaced humans, vulnerable environments that contain passive recipients, or territories of sovereign power that enforce state-sanctioned limits on refugees' freedoms. These three approaches, as observed by humanitarian agencies, media producers, and theorists do not only encompass camp's control, and planning strategies, in the social, humanitarian, and political fields but also determine the participation of architecture in the discourse on emergency communities. Architecture incarnates the humanitarian essence in these type of shelters, the temporality of the camp in providing transitional housing, and the exclusion in the spatial and urban characteristics. Nevertheless, camps can be perceived through a deferent architectural lens from the street level: architecture as a construct for coping with drastic cultural, social, economical, and political change.

In this thesis, I highlight the planning and developing systems that are created by the camp's authorities and investigate architecture as a response to them in the case of Za'atari camp in Jordan. Syrians who resettled in Za'atari reshaped the settlement they resided in for survival, resiliency, and power. They changed the urban fabric of the camp, deformed their dwellings to develop, humanize and privatize their houses, and created spaces that afforded them a political agency, economical, and leisure source. These architectural creations provide insight for understanding the dynamism of life in refugee camps and an analysis of the human behavior of refugees.

In the format of a graphic novel, I outline the evolution of these residential typologies through time, seeing them as stemming from rapid changes to life in Za'atari camp. I illustrate fictional case studies informed by media, documentaries, and inspirations from real testimonies from the Camp. The novel explores several aspects of the camp's evolution from inside out since the camp's establishment in 2012 until the urban fabric settled in 2016. This includes displaying key aspects of daily life, the relationships between fellow refugees and the camp's government and the refugees' perspectives on their legal status and the place they moved to.

In this thesis, I document and explore Syrian refugees' spatial techniques for adaptation in Za'atari camp in Jordan. I study how spatial deformations provide stability, normalcy, humanization, and political agency in the camp. In the format of a fictional graphic novel, I embed the camp planning system, the refugees' interventions in developing their dwellings, and the factors that influenced the refugees' spatial decisions.

Acknowledgment

The biggest gratitude is for Robert Jan van Pelt, my supervisor for his generosity and support in all possible ways with immense and contemplative knowledge. I thank him for spreading positivity and warmth. His trust in my pursuit and guidance to work flexibly encouraged my ideas to flow confidently.

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Thank you, my sisters, Maysa'a, for your wisdom and compassion and for being available even with your very busy life, and Manar, for all the discussions, laughter, and readiness to assist even in the middle of the night, and my brother Majid for your magnanimity and for making my life in Canada cheerful. You all are my source of happiness.

Thank you my beloved parents Nawal and Abdulmanan for the limitless support and love and for being a great model of passion, success, and strong well.

Dedication

*To the happy endings that we might not witness, but we
might be a part of its making*

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We Journey towards a Home

We journey towards a home not of our flesh.
Its chestnut trees are not of our bones.

Its rocks are not like goats in the mountain hymn.
The pebbles' eyes are not lilies.

We journey towards a home that does not halo our heads with a special sun.

Mythical women applaud us. A sea for us, a sea against us.
When water and wheat are not at hand, eat our love and drink our tears...

There are mourning scarves for poets.
A row of marble statues will lift our voice.

And an urn to keep the dust of time away from our souls.
Roses for us and against us.

You have your glory, we have ours.
Of our home we see only the unseen: our mystery.

Glory is ours: a throne carried on feet torn by roads that led to every home
but our own!

The soul must recognize itself in its very soul, or die here.

*Mahmoud Darwish, On refugeesim,
Unfortunately, It Was Paradise
Palestinian poet*

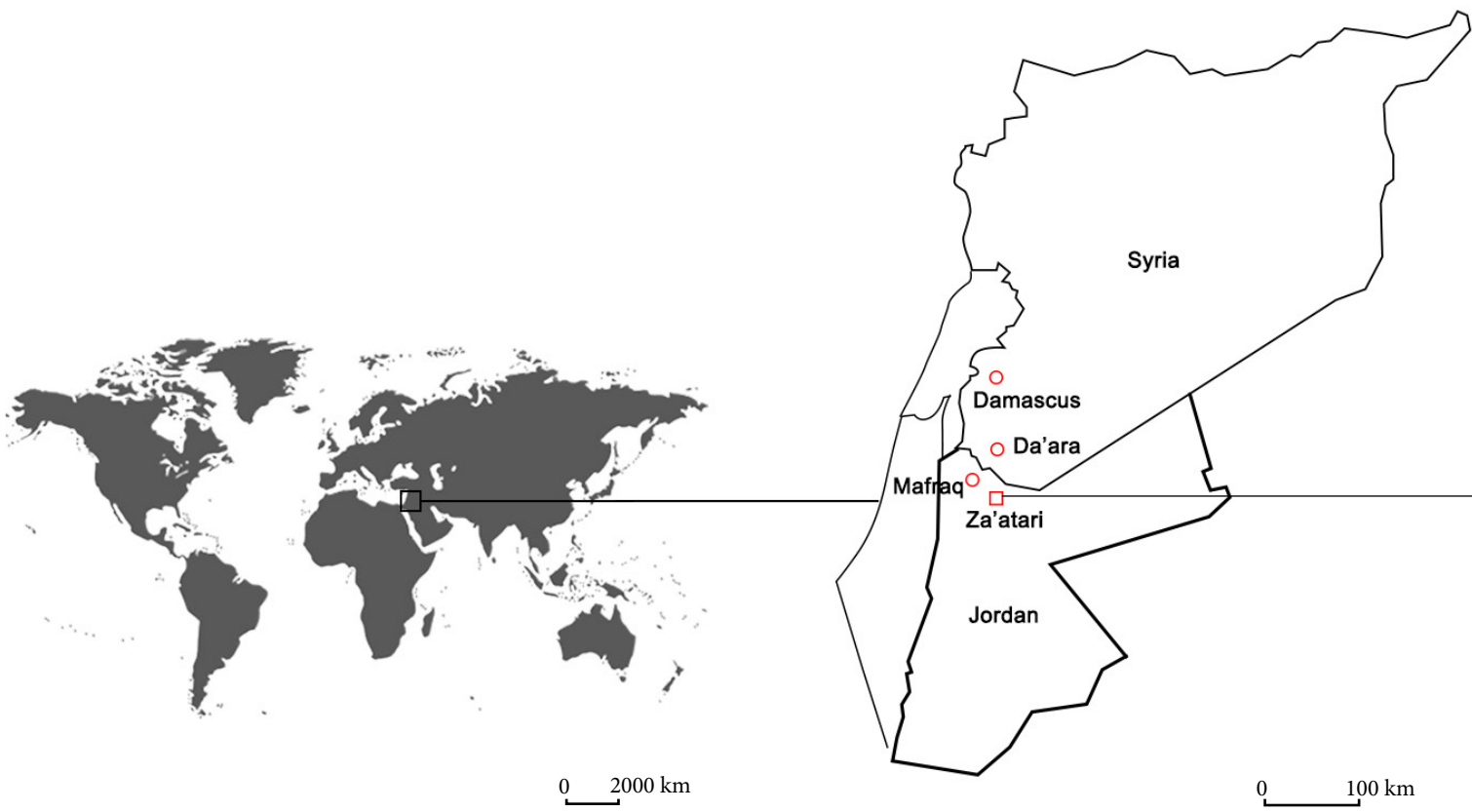


Figure 0.1 Za'atri Camp Location in Jordan
[Illustrated by Author]

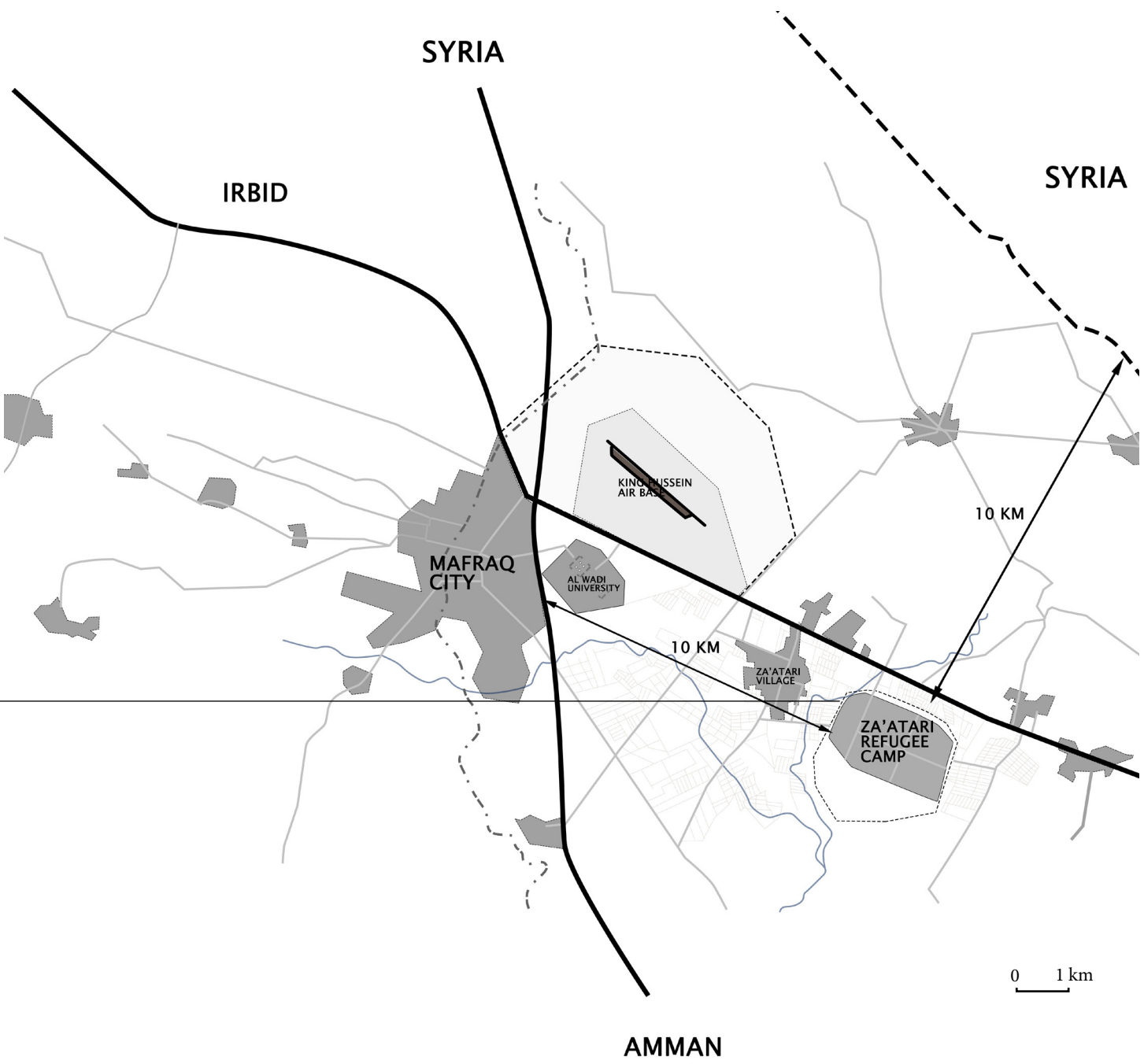




Figure 0.2 Za'atari Camp Aerial View 2013 [UE Foundation, 2013,uefa foundation.org]



Introduction: Time to flee

It was far from expectations that the anti-oppressive government protests in the Middle East, which is known as the Arab Spring, could reach Syria. Since it started in Tunisia and transferred to Egypt, Bahrain, and Yemen, until it swept across Libya, the desire to gain justice and freedom was growing in most of the countries in the Arab region.¹ For some politics and most of its citizens, Syria was one of the countries where seeking a change in its political system was a crucial dilemma, which went through several trials in the country's history.²

However, Syrians presumed that the history that recorded the violent and deadly responses of the Assad's government towards attempts of standing against the regime was enough to deter any will of starting a protest rather than a revolution. In fact, Syrian citizens were silently uprising, and it only took a few weeks for the demonstrations to start in the country.³ In March 2011, the revolution's first spark emerged in the city of Dara'a where the first peaceful mass demonstration was launched, the first group of kids, during the crisis, was arrested, and the first unarmed protestor was shot and killed by the security force and al-Assad army.



Figure 1.3 Protest in Dara'a, 2011
[syrianvoices.wordpress]

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Swiftly, Dara'a became the first area that was blockaded by the military and attacked with bombardments announcing the threat of converting the conflict to a devastating war.⁴ Currently, Syria has entered its tenth year of the war which has caused severe damage to civilian infrastructure in most cities including Dara'a, it killed over 511,000 Syrians and forced 6.6 million people to flee their homes.⁵ In these mass involuntary movement waves, people displaced first into adjacent districts, towns, and cities towards north-west Syria and later they moved into neighboring countries such as Lebanon, Turkey, and Iraq. Dara'a's location on the Syrian southern border took its inhabitants through the exodus across the borders to Jordan.



Figure 1.4 Destruction in Dara'a [almodon.com]

From the heart of Hauran, Dara'a

Dara'a is the biggest city of Hauran plateau located next to the borderline of Jordan acting as a link between the two countries as its mountains stretch to the northwest of Jordan. The valley of Hauran in Syria is a fertile land that contains several rivers and a water reservoir. Thus, due to the land typology, Dara'a province plays a major role in agricultural production in Syria. On the other hand, due to its location, it is considered a dominating administrative and economic connection that controls the trade between Syria and Jourdan. In addition to the economic relationship, ethnoreligious, tribal, and family relationships tie the region of Hauran in both countries. This connection explains the support that Syrians in Za'atari camp received from their relatives in Jordan in providing sponsorship to help them to leave the camp and reside in Jordanian cities such as Mafraq, Irbid, Amman, and others.⁶

Before the crisis, around 1,042,500 Dara'awis occupied 24 towns and villages in the province of Dara'a, 75 % of which were Sunni Muslims.⁷ They built their houses either surrounded by the nature of their farms or in the main city, where they brought greenery inside the building through the design of courtyards, which is ancestral from the traditional Islamic architecture that was initially found in Syria three ages ago. Traditionally, courtyards were used to provide environmental, esthetical, and social comfort to the inhabitants.⁸ In addition, they created private recreational areas open to the inside and invisible from the outside producing the "architecture of the veil."⁹ Although in the contemporary era, due to several social and economic factors, this traditional feature with its internal open space has become rare, it is still seen, mostly in a simplified form, in most houses in all Syrian cities including Dara'a.

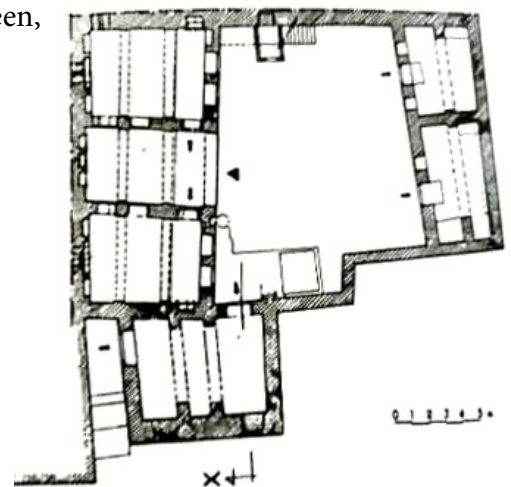


Figure 1.5 Courtyard house, Bosra, Dara'a
[Corinne Castel et al, *Dwellings in ancient Syria from the third millennium BC until Islam*, 540]



Figure 1.6 Dara'a [Abdullah Hreden,2019,Facebook@ Abdullah Hreden Photography]

Abdullah Hreden Photography



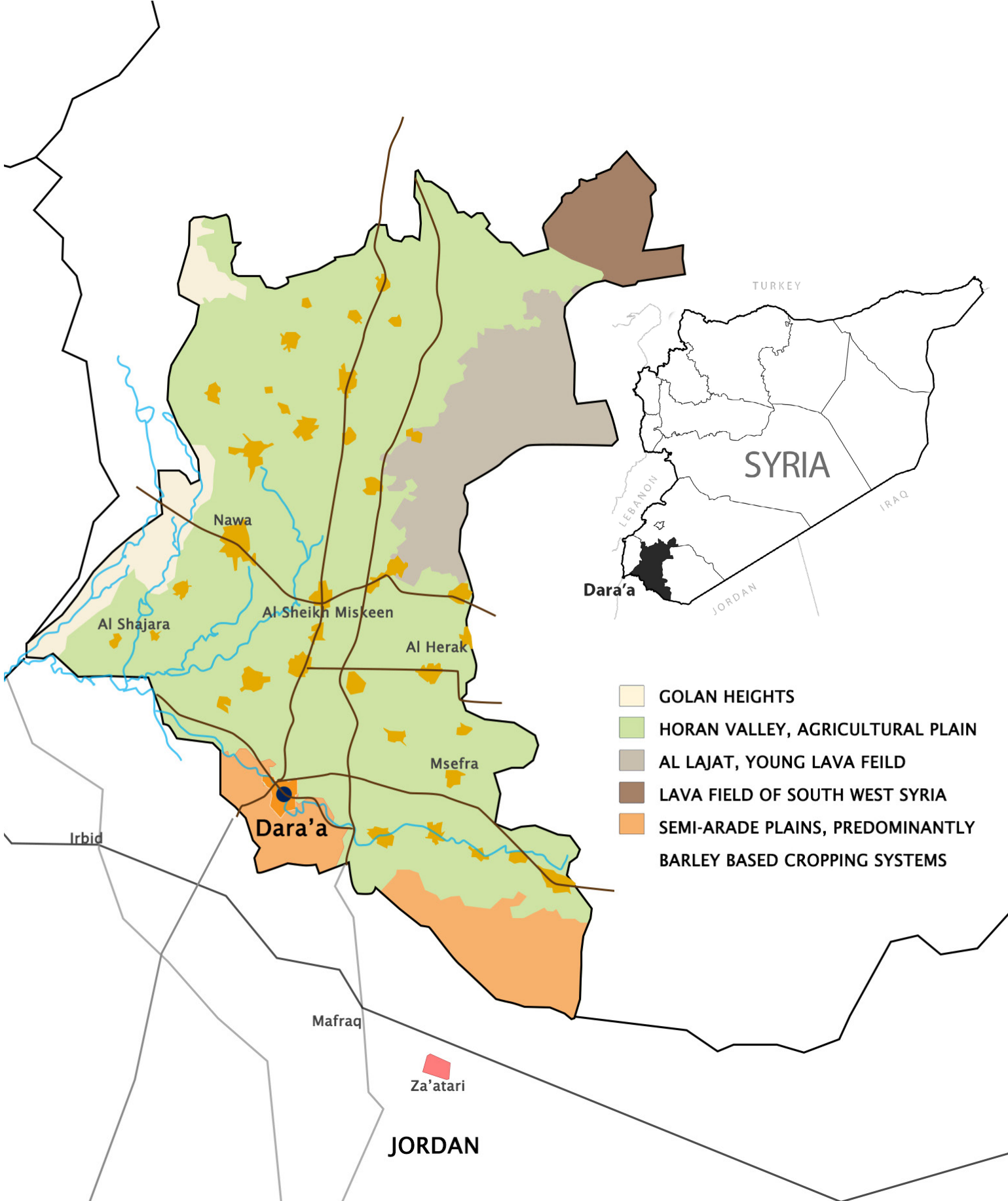


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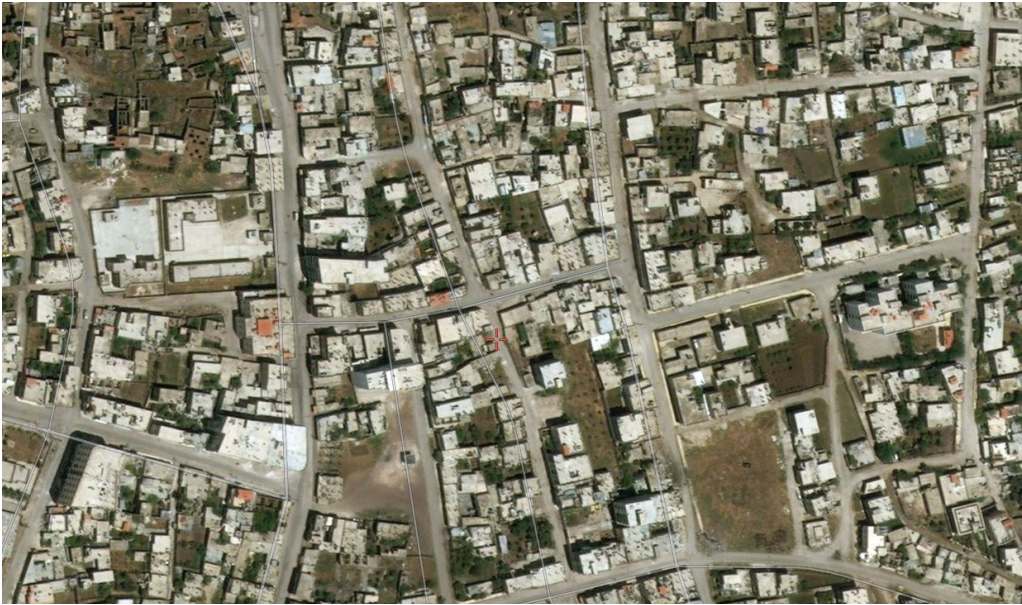




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Figure 1.11 Previous Page: Shaykh Miskin Village Urban Fabric Post War [2011, google earth]

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Figure 1.13 Madafa, Daraa [syria.sy/]

Figure 1.14 Madafa, Daraa [orman.bntaljab. Facebook]





On the other hand, other architectural typologies have distinguished Hauran region that are associated with its culture and social order such as the hospitality room (Madafa) and the celebratory tent. The Madafas are high-quality spaces created in each town or village by families' leaders for receiving guests and holding meetings with other families and leaders. As a result, these spaces that are opened during the day hours represent two tribal values: power and generosity. As they are established by the highest level in the hierarchical social order in a tribe, they act as informal juristic courts where agreements can be established and problems between tribes or individuals can be solved. In addition, the leaders act as a transitional medium that links between their communities and the governmental authorities.

The other architectural space that has been seen in several events, mainly weddings, is the celebratory ephemeral space. The celebration of marriage is a great event that takes from three to seven days when the entire village enjoys and shares dancing and eating. During the first five evenings, the groom, his family, and invited male guests perform several types of folkloric folk dances, known as Dbke, in one big circle or multiple small ones. The sixth and prefinal day is called the Henna day when both the groom and bride get their hands dyed with Henna in a separate segregated party. Ladies gather, sing, and dance in the bride's family house, while men stay outside in the same prepared setting that is normally located in a central piazza of the town, or in a vast open area close to the celebrating families' houses. On the last day, the groom takes his bride from her family's house to his house in a procession on a horseback. The groom, in each evening, serves the guests tea and coffee and he invites them during the last night to the wedding feast that is traditionally made of twenty to thirty sheep cooked in a meal named Huarani Melaihi Mansaf. This dining gathering is usually held in tents set up in the same location as the wedding ceremony or at the family's Madafa.¹⁰



Figure 1.15 Previous Page: Madafa, Dara'a [orman.bntaljab. Facebook]

Figure 1.16 Wedding Setitng, Dara'a [Youtube. مراد مياس]

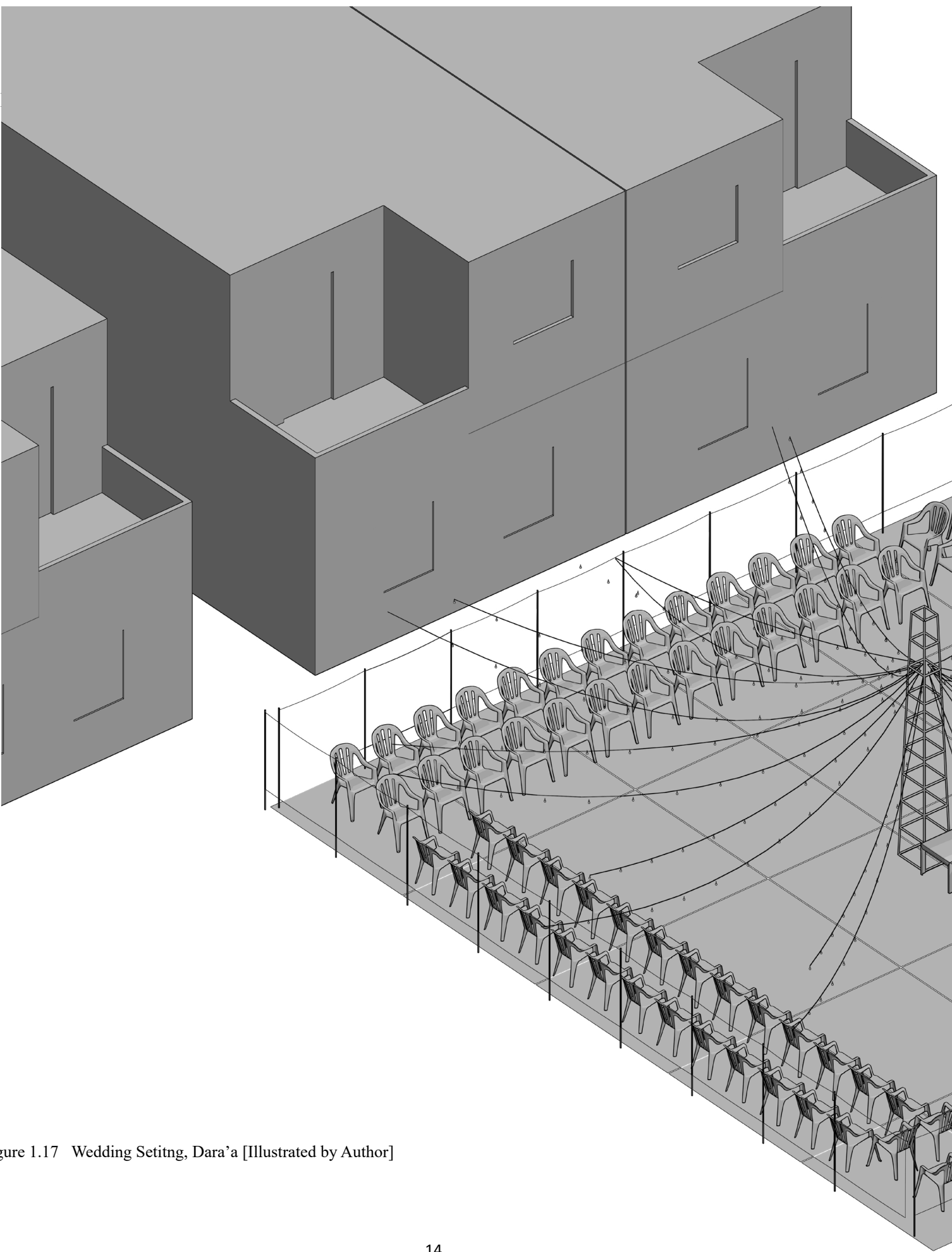
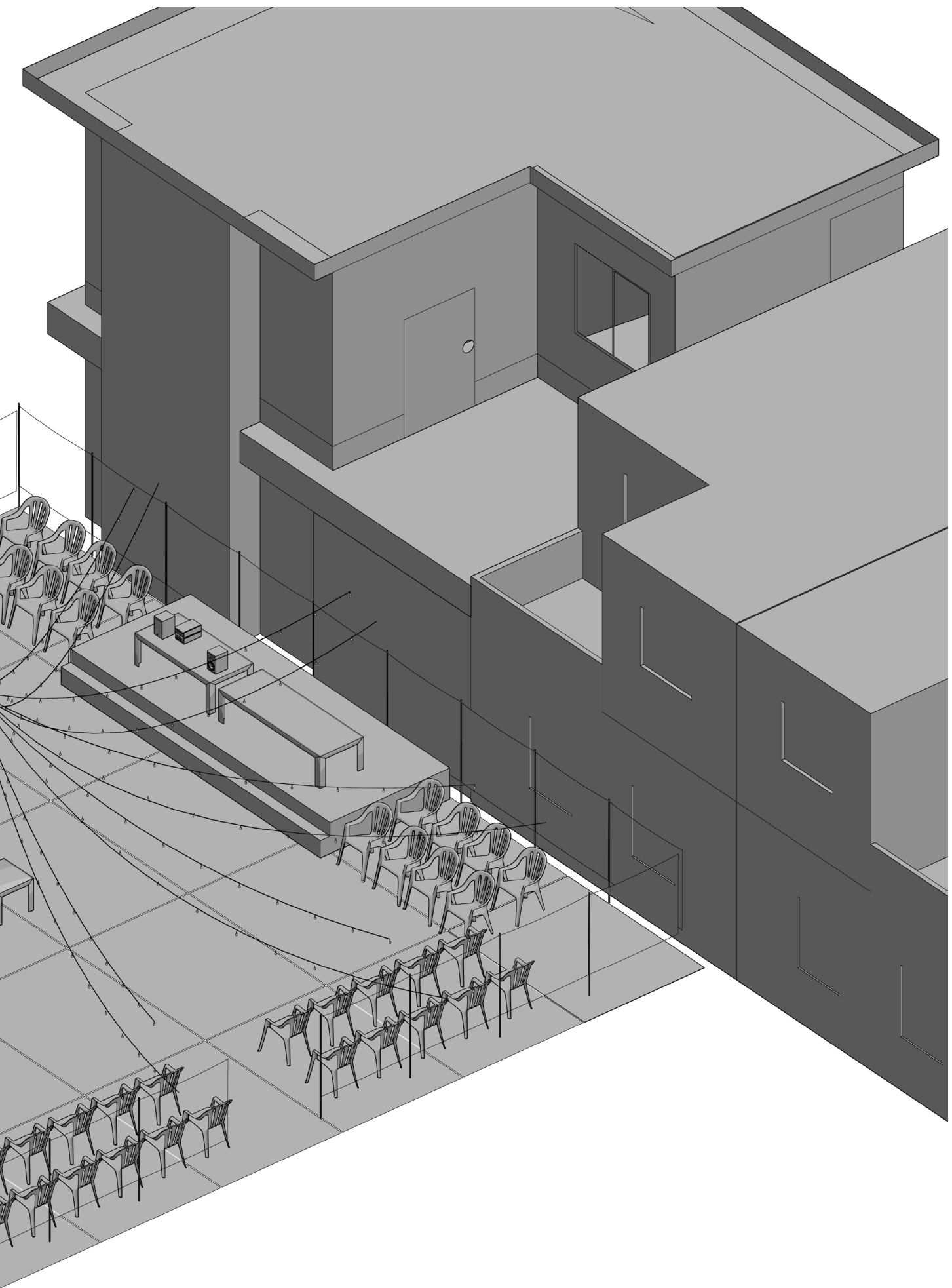


Figure 1.17 Wedding Setitng, Dara'a [Illustrated by Author]



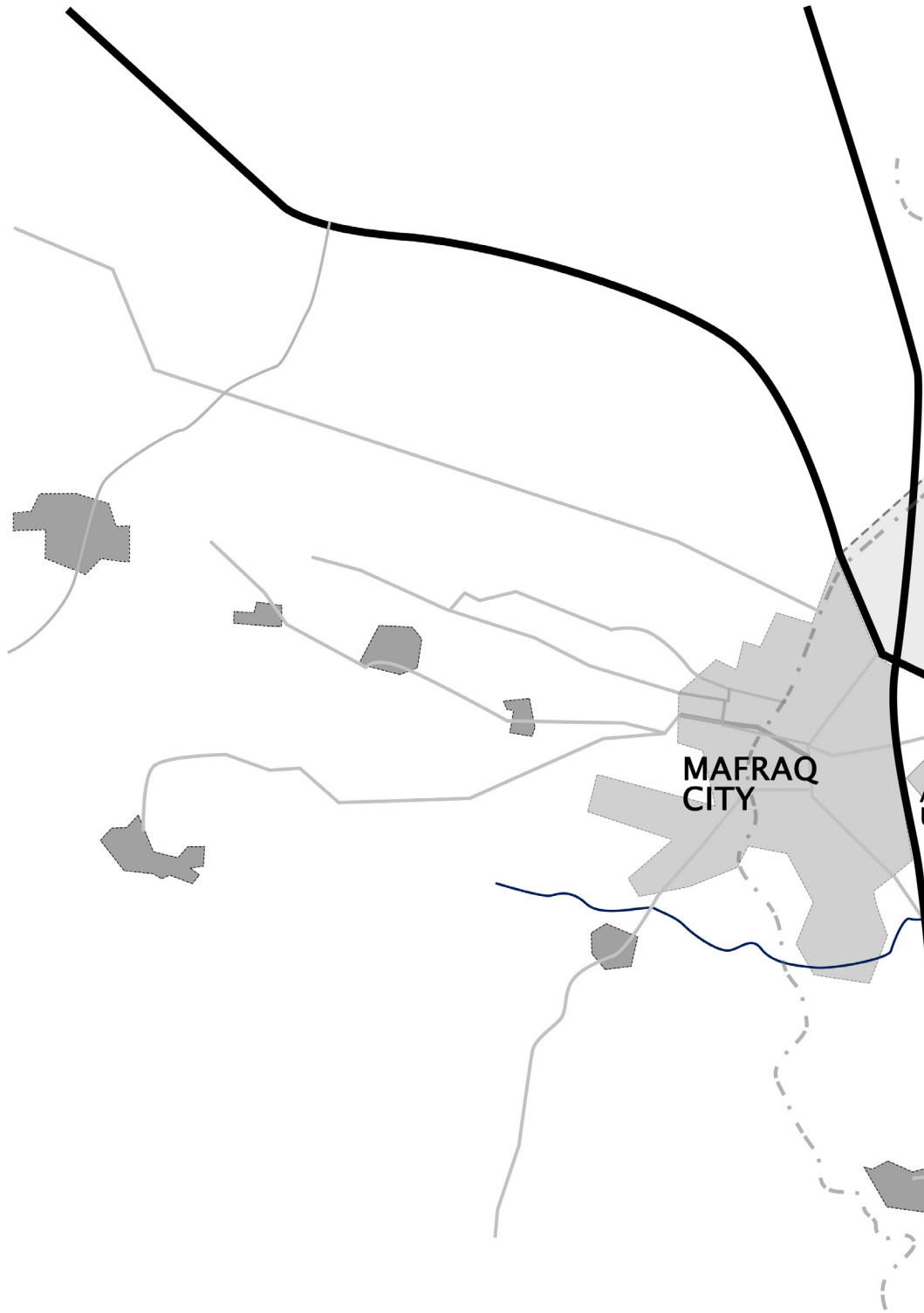


Figure 1.18 Za'atari camp surroundings [Illustrated by Author]

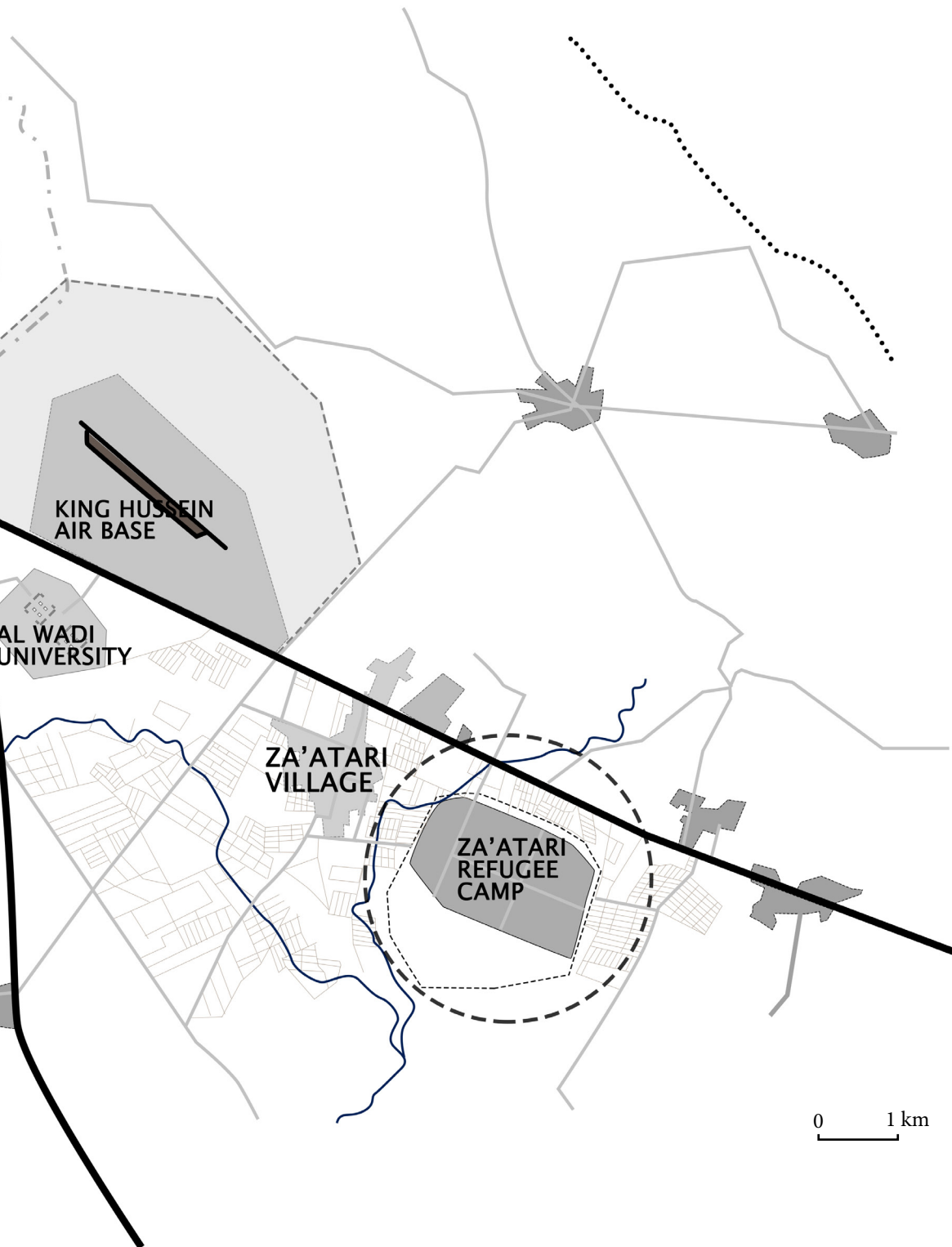




Figure 1.19 Za'atari camp borders [Illustrated by Author]

To the heart of a desert, Za'atari Camp

The total number of registered Syrian refugees in 2020 is 5,563,951. 288,267 of them are in camps. Jordan has been hosting 600,000 of them distributed in several cities and refugee camps; the most important and biggest one, which was the gateway for all Syrian refugees in the country is Za'atari in Mafraq city. Currently, Za'atari is home for 76,143 refugees, 80 % came from Dara'a, 14 % from rural Damascus, 2% from Homs, and 2% from other cities.¹¹

The site was originally established on a 10,000 ha land that was prepared to accommodate 10,000 refugees. Currently, the site size is 30,000 ha and it has hosted around 300,000 refugees in June 2013 because of the rapid and huge mass displacement. Some refugees who were able to leave the camp, under a sponsorship agreement, moved to Jordanian cities like Amman, Mafraq, and Irbid. Other refugees returned to Syria before closing the borders or were transferred to the other 4 camps for Syrians in north Jordan. However, the current population number is still 4 times higher than the minimum criteria stated by the UN.

The camp is named after a small village in Mafraq region called Za'atari that is located in the north of Jordan a few kilometers from Syrian borders. This location was chosen following the UNHCR guidelines that are mentioned in the *UNHCR Handbook for Emergencies*. The site is a vast land of a semi-arid desert where no one was living in before the establishment of the camp. According to Takis Würger, a war correspondent and investigative journalist "The local Bedouins say that before the refugees came, the only resident of this desert was the devil. Not even scorpions lived there."¹²

When it was established in July 2012, it was jointly run by the UNHCR & the Jordanian government represented in the Jordanian Hashemite Charity Organization (JHCO) and the Jordanian armed forces. Currently, there are 100 NGOs that fund and provide necessities such as food, health care, and educational support programs.

Initially, the camp started with tents that were aligned in rows running in the West-East direction and separated by fire access lanes, forming what later has been called the old camp. The increased number of Syrians who

Introduction: Time to Flee



Figure 1.20 Za'atari Camp Growth 2011- 2019 [Google Earth]

The Caravan Citizens



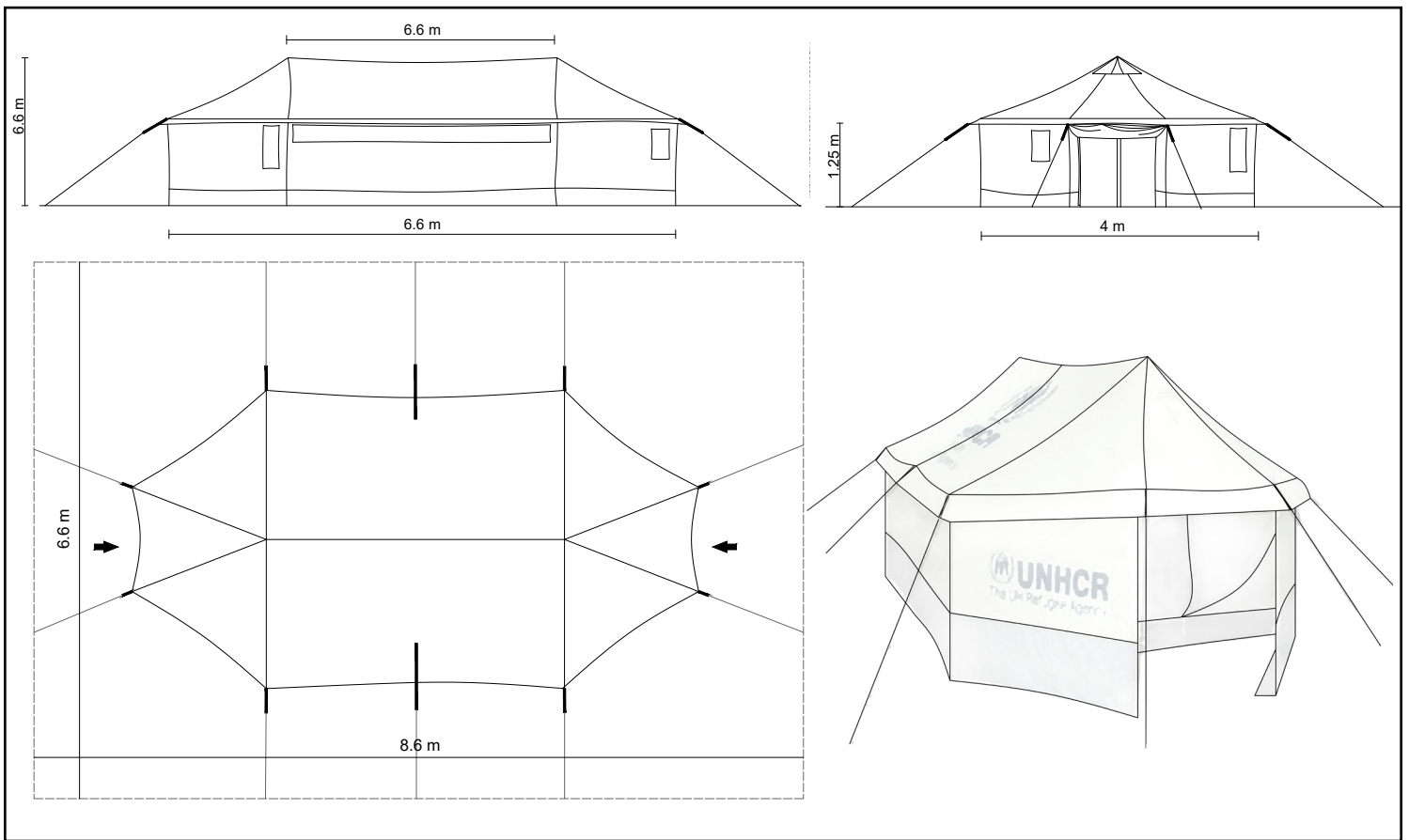


Figure 1.21 Tent shelter description [Illustrated by Author]

Figure 1.22 Next Page: demonstration zaatari camp, 2013 [June 2013, alwasatnews.com]

arrived between July and May of 2013, that jumped from 50,000 to 200,000, was the reason for condensing the tents and changing the camp's morphology. Accordingly, the UNHCR started expanding and planning the camp to accommodate around expected 100 000 refugees. It opened new sectors and prepared them with the institutional infrastructure. This change was concurrence with the arrival of a new camp director who was assigned by the HNHCR, in March 2013, named Kilian Kleinschmidt. Kilian divided the camp into 12 sectors and appointed a UNHCR official in each sector center. After a few months of its opening, the camp slowly started to receive prefabricated caravan houses that were donated by several countries mainly the Gulf State.

Za'atari camp is one of the few camps for Syrians that its authorities have not prevented the inhabitants to apply modifications to their houses. This was, in my opinion, because of the camp director's vision that supported refugees in regaining their dignity, the high attention that the camp received from media, and the refugees' endeavors in resisting to lose full control over their fate.

When Kilian came from Kinia where he had been in charge of managing Dadaab camp, he arrived with a great reputation for solving problems. In his first few months of being the mayor of Za'atari camp, he noticed the effort of the camp's residents in enhancing their living conditions. He believed that the refugees were building an instant city while the UNHCR was preparing a human warehouse. For him, the refugees' actions were for humanizing and privatizing the typical uniformed buildings that were distributed on the rocky land.

On the other hand, since its construction, the camp was strongly highlighted in TV news, documentaries, and even researches. It was the most photographed and filmed refugee camp in the world. It hosted celebrity visitors from all fields like ambassadors from international countries, football players, actors, singers, and more. Besides, the camp has its own public relations office and social media pages (Facebook and Twitter). This visibility gave the refugees confidence in delivering their voice to the international communities and in showing their demand for a change.

People in the camp came from a country where they were revolting and fighting for justice and freedom. Their combatant was their country's governors. After they broke down the wall of silence, they do not accept any authority to command them what they should eat or where to place their houses.



“These are the most difficult refugees I have ever seen,” says Kleinschmidt comparing Za'atari's inhabitants with other refugees he dealt with when he was serving in other camps around the world such as Pakistan, Congo, Kenya, Somalia, Kosovo, and Sri Lanka.

Modularity is what distinguishes all refugee camps in the world as the main rule that is designated by the UNHCR Handbook for Emergencies. This principle structures the camp's complete zone as one complex consisted of several sectors that contain four blocks. The subdivision continues in this hierarchal planning system until it reached the smallest modular unit

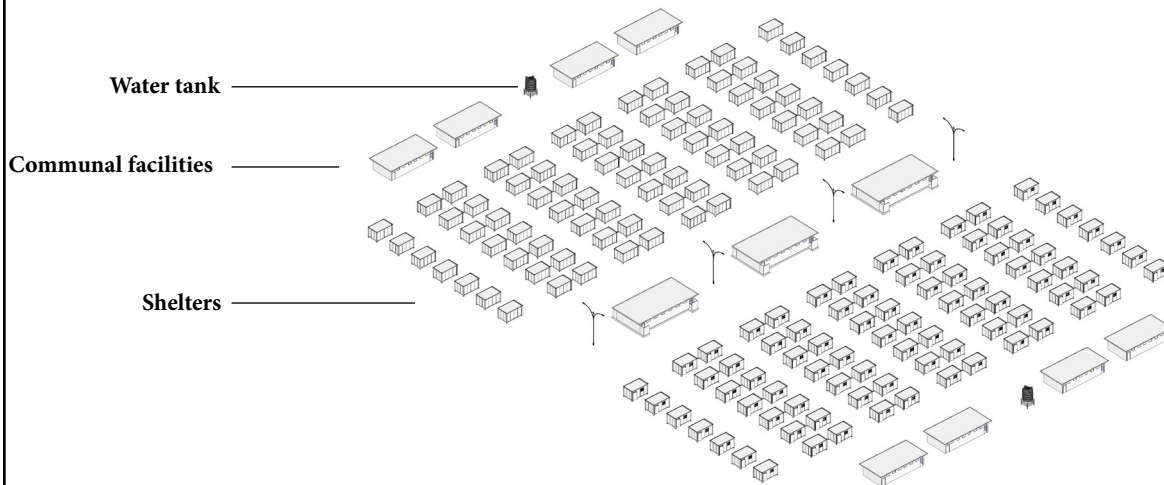
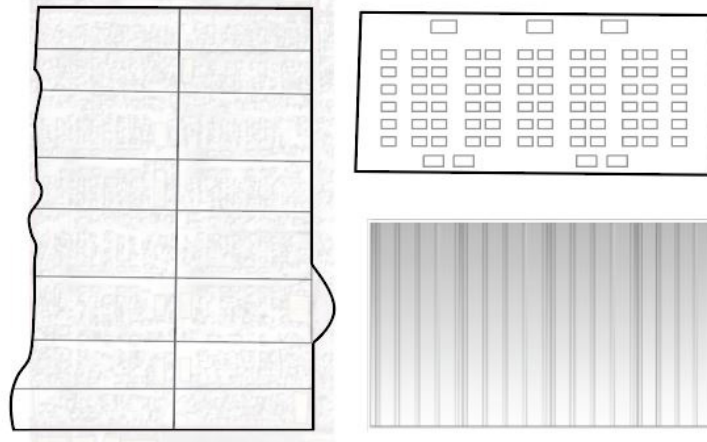
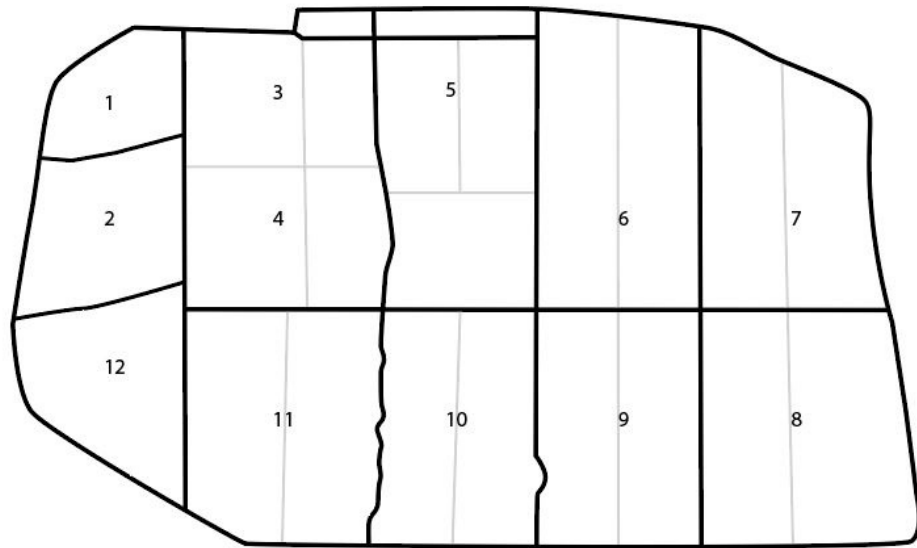
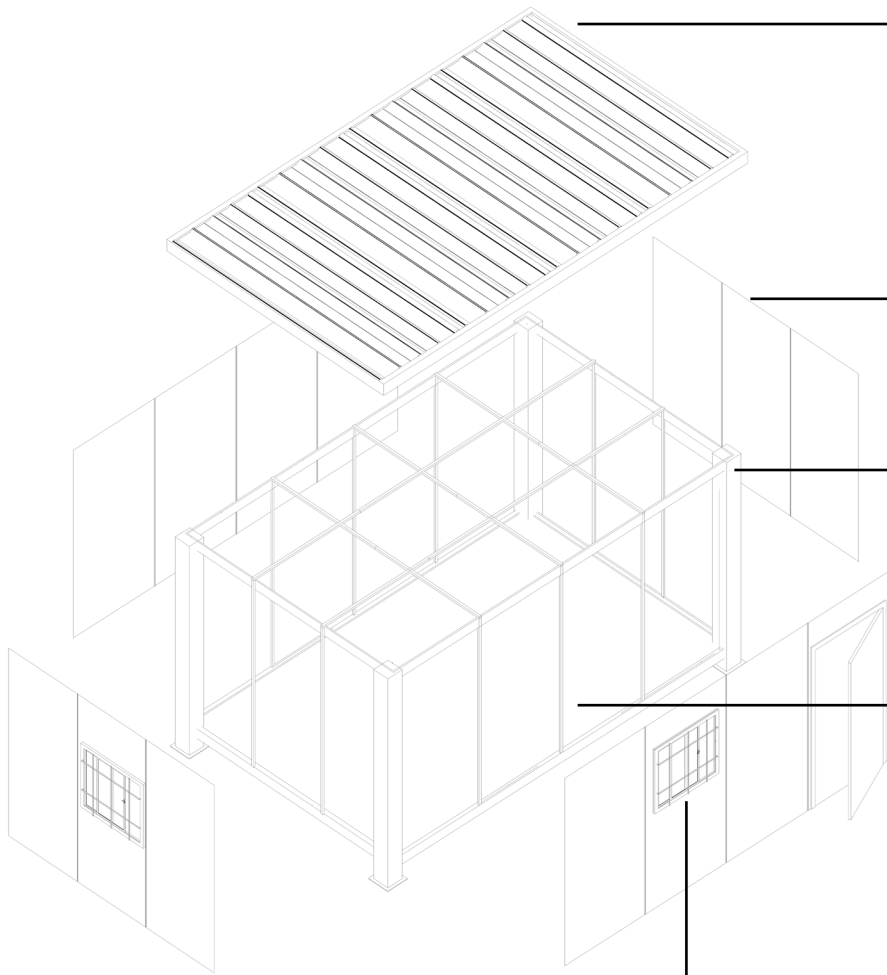


Figure 1.23 Modular Planning Za'atari Camp [Illustrated by Author]

Figure 1.24 Next Page: Prefabricated shelters specifications [Illustrated by Author] info: Stefano Scavino, "The Summerisation of Jordanian Shelters.", 2014



Roof panels: 40-75mm thickness of Polyurethane insulated panel covered with a pre-painted corrugated steel sheet from the outside and with a flat one on the inside. Joining system: Self-drilling screws.

Wall Panels: 40 mm thickness of Polyurethane insulated sandwich panel covered with a 0.35 mm pre-painted flat steel sheets from both sides. Joining system: Tongue and groove

Skeleton & Steel Framework: Press-formed steel beams. Joining system: bolt connections

Floor: Steel skids holding a steel decking sheet covered with 12 mm thickness plywood. bolt connections for the skids and self-drilling screws for the decking sheet.

Door & window: Polyurethane installed sandwich panel with extruded aluminium frame profile. Sliding window has a 6 mm single glass.

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of the shelter for one family that is formed of 4-6 people. Each level in this system is associated with several service distributions such as the number of necessities per capita and the number of educational and healthcare facilities. Each 16 families create a community in one block that contains one water tank and one communal bathroom and kitchen. Every 4 blocks form a sector that contains one educational facility, a market, and a medical center. The 4 sectors, create the complete camp that contains several administrative facilities. In the case of Za'atari, the camp consists of 12 sectors.

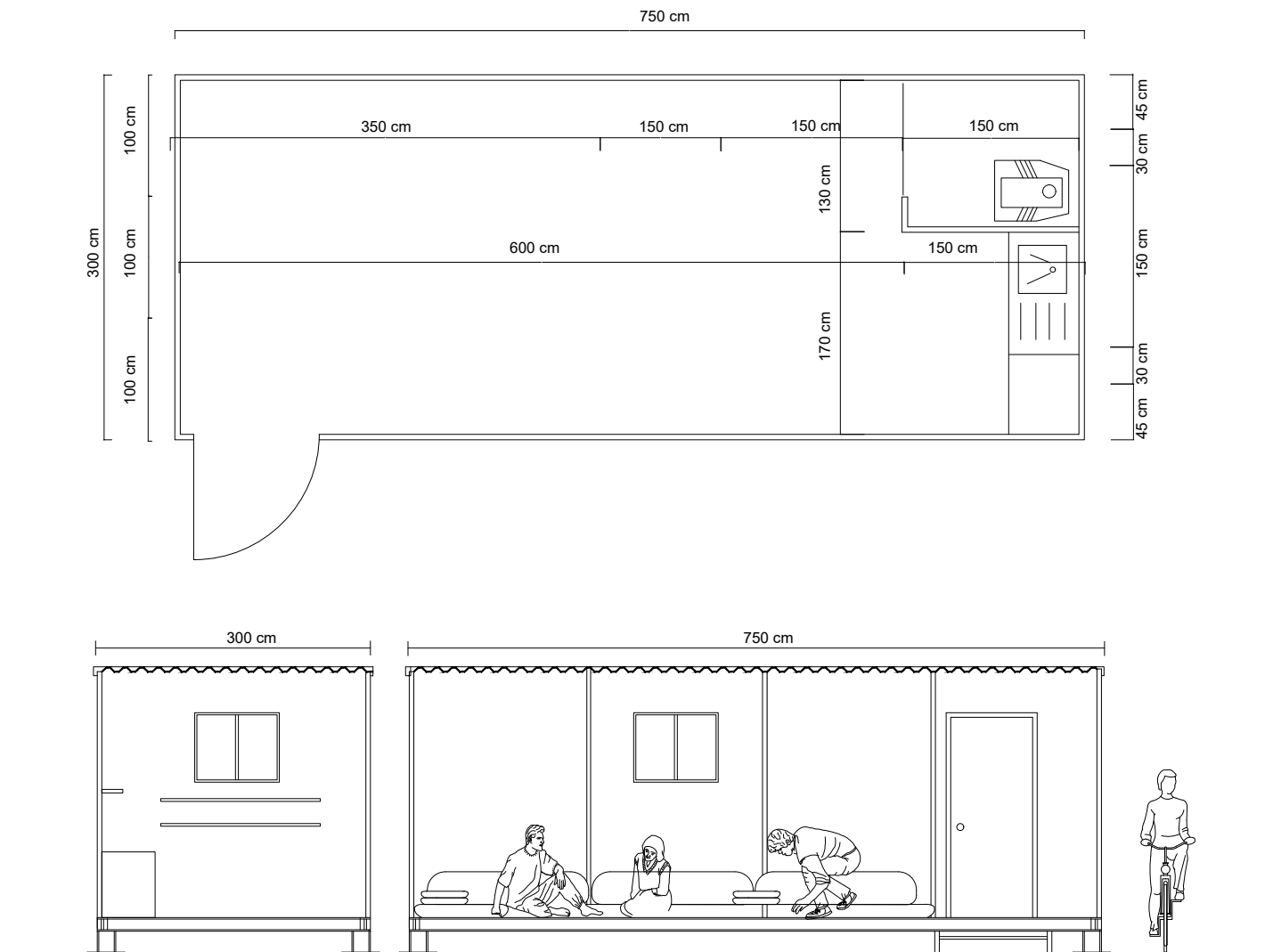


Figure 1.25 Caravan with washroom inside- plan and sections [Illustrated by Author]

Refugeesim

Refugee camps, in their basic definition, are temporal humanitarian settlements created for protecting refugees and saving their lives.¹³ They are designed for providing safety and assistance although they are not intended to last permanently. These settlements are jointly run, controlled, and managed by humanitarian governmental and non-governmental organizations (GOs) and (NGOs) along with host country governments. Worldwide, the most important intergovernmental agency providing protection and humanitarian aid to refugees in the world is the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which is part of the United Nations. This organization, founded in 1950, introduced a list of regulations and guidelines for refugee camps under international law at the '1951 Refugee Convention' in Geneva. Since then, UNHCR has defined a refugee as a person who is "unable or unwilling to return to his country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion." A person can be referred to as a refugee when they leave their home country, crossing an international border by force fleeing a crisis like wars or natural disasters.¹⁴ Although this definition primarily describes and determines the term refugee, stating an official status and a list of rights, it embodies an identity associated with protected displaced people.

This definition is tightened by aid organizations as perceived through the lens of humanitarianism: a human life to be saved. For Manuel Herz, an architect and urban researcher, there are two additional spectrums that set the boundaries of understanding refugee camps: vulnerability as shown by media producers, and sovereignty as articulated by theorists and the perceptions of political institutions. TV reports, documentaries, and donation call advertise-

ments portray refugees as passive recipients who depend on UN aid. Theorists such as Agamben, who describe power and state in the modern era in his book *Homo Sacer*, consider camps as spaces of exception that require order and supervision.¹⁵ This exception is physical due to the camp's isolated location, being placed on the host country's land in an empty area close to the borders between the homeland and host country, and political due to its state of control. Although they might have minimal interaction with surrounding cities, camps are socially secluded and separated by controlled permeable fences and walls. Therefore, they are excluded spatially, and legally from the host country; although they are included by being part of the physical territory, they do not belong to home nor to host society. Thus, refugee camps ambiguously save lives, on one hand, however, they are meant to reduce them to bare biological, temporal, and survival qualities. Similarly, for Foucault, camps are fields of managing and controlling populations using various methods and actions.

These three approaches to look at refugeeism explain the camp's control, management, and planning strategies, not only in the social, humanitarian, and political fields but in the field of architecture, determining the participation of architecture in the discourse of emergency communities. Nevertheless, architecture has a second role that receives limited attention: architecture as a creation for coping socially, economically, and politically and a reaction to the previously mentioned factors.

In this thesis, I document and explore Syrian refugees' spatial techniques for adaptation in Za'atari camp in Jordan. I investigate the contribution of architecture in providing stability, normalization, humanizing: how refugees' lives are drawn by it, and how they use it as a source of empowerment.

Essentially, space is assumed as a tool to respond to immediate needs during refugee crises, which is a consideration that is preserved by the camp planning agencies even when displacement becomes constant. This is due to the political, economic, and social complexity that accompanies a camp's existence. However, architecture plays a manifold role even on lands of refuge: besides forming dynamicity, it shapes people's lived experiences and self-perception. The space I study is a composition, formation, and deformation transformed by acts of resiliency. I describe interventions created by the camp's residents

to convey their experiences and their social, political, and even psychological factors.

These architectural creations provide insight for understanding the dynamicity of life in refugee camps and an analysis of the human behavior of refugees. These architectural interventions allow us to conduct lessons from the refugees when they have control over their architectural decisions in the absence of design by a professional architect. Each modification is a unique architectural solution to collective struggles.

Buildings are similar to our memories in their ability to show values and dimensions but they encompass as much as they reveal. By documenting the architectural interventions, I capture a record of the substantial stages of the human history of struggle and the desires for change they were emerged from. It traces a new collective memory that is embedded within spaces and objects in a new place. It conveys the refugee's pride in their achievements in re-establishing their lives almost from zero and gives the people and spaces recognition in heritage sites. Most camps last for some decades, contradicting the concept they were initially built for, demolition. Dheisheh camp, in Bethlehem, for instance, is one of the oldest camps in Palestine and the world, which is inscribed on the World Heritage list. The 70-year-old site is distinguished with its urban fabric and socio-spatial typologies, standing as a testimony to the history of Palestine.¹⁶ Therefore, my thesis provides a source of memoriam of suffering and resiliency, which, potentially, can contribute to future studies in the realm of architecture for people at risk to provide a comprehensive analysis for community recovery.

For Manuel, studying urban activities is an essential question that allows settlements of hundreds of thousands of people, who are living in semi-permanent exceptional conditions around the world, to become visible.¹⁷ It explains the impossible-to-separate-from spaces: activities and aspects, such as living, working, moving, and participating in politics. When observing human-scale actions, architectural and planning choices become tactical. This detailed investigation provides a dataset to compare to UNHCR guidelines and academic resources in the field of refugee camp planning and architecture.¹⁸ From there, lessons can be learned to develop design and management strategies.

The unique relationship among structures, spaces, and social actions creates a self-organized city-mimicking typology that allows for a bottom-up system to emerge, which reflects the actual priorities and needs of refugees.

I lay out the residential typologies evolving through time, seeing them as stemming from the rapid changes of life in Za'atari camp. I illustrate these events in the form of a graphic novel that relies on woven sources between media, documentaries, and real incidents from the Camp.

In terms of precedent, the spatial resistance in Dheisheh camp is one of the most well-known reactions of refugees, for its flexibility and functionality that empowered politically the Palestinians living in it. The camp went gradually through several stages of development that changed the prefabricated caravans provided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) to concrete buildings. This significant transformation was associated with a political change that occurred inside the camp. When the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was established inside Palestinian camps by refugees, which considered them centers for managing and leading the liberation of Palestine, architectural strategies for empowering the camp emerged. Plot boundaries were enforced with concrete walls, house entrance thresholds were added, and later external staircases enabled vertical expansion. This morphing fulfilled refugees' needs and facilitated the generation of a new order.¹⁹



Figure 1.26 Dheisheh refugee camp 1952- 2012 [UNRWA archive, Brave New Alps for Campus in Camps [<http://www.campusincamps.ps/architecture-exile/>]]

Western Sahara camps are other examples of self-governing camps that have been mostly developed by the inhabitants. The site was established 40 years ago, with support from Algeria. It started with the typical identical rows of tent shelters with no other facilities. Over time, Sahrawis gradually converted the camp to a quasi-complete city where the urban environment is a means of expressing refugees' aspirations on cultural, social, and political levels.²⁰ This is seen, for example, in residential structures--Sahrawis occupying several buildings and inserting new structure materials like corrugated steel and mud to create clay huts besides maintaining the use of tents. In addition, the refugees gained the ability to control the settlement's administration as they have created their own political institutions. In addition, they developed the commerce, transportation, health, education, and recreation fields that signify the city-like urban quality.



Figure 1.27 Western Sahara Camp [Manuel Herz, “From Camp to City refugee Camps of The Western Sahara, 2013”]



Figure 2.28 "Bakery Road." Drawing from life in Syria, 2012 [George Butler, <http://www.georgebutler.org/>]



Novelism-Graphically

As a researcher acquainted with the agonizing events that have occurred in my homeland, Syria, and my community throughout history, I have discovered the several dimensions of these incidents in Arabic literature, such as novels. Stories have played a powerful role in recording and spreading historical events, especially the ones that were not exposed to the public. For example, in the 1980s, when a group member of the Muslim Brothers party started a demonstration against the regime in the city of Hama, President Hafez al-Assad's army besieged and invaded the city, leading to an infamous massacre that left close to 30,000 people dead.²¹ The news of the mass killing and subsequent random incarceration of citizens was spread among the country but the full image of the humanitarian violations stayed, for years, inside the borders of the city of Hama. When some Hamwi detainees ended their sentences in the 90s and 2000s, they documented their personal experiences inside Assad's prisons in the form of novels. Mustafa Khalifa, a novelist and political author, detailed the horror and torturing he suffered after he was convicted of belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood party, although he was Christian, in *The Shell: Memories of a Hidden Observer* novel.²² Thus, I decided to communicate my research in the form of a narrative. I created a fictional story that focused on tracing the resistance and resiliency of the Syrian refugee community as they live in one of the harshest economical, climatic, and political environments around the world, Za'atari camp.

As is common for academic research, across all fields and not particular to architecture, facts are the biases and the ground foundation of the research. However, what expands from it is not necessarily fact based. Some studies handle social, psychological...etc, aspects that are better conveyed through differ-

Novelism-Graphically

ent methods e.g. storytelling. This is the route I take as I represent the facts surrounding Za'atari camp before narrating the social and psychological aspects using a fictional graphic novel. This allows the reader to differentiate between fiction and non-fiction, offering the best of both worlds and freeing the reader to see the story through their perspective. I target enriching the existing image of refugee camps by building an anatomical sketch of everyday life in the camp, and shifting the vocabularies used in such a context as seen by an outside, yet Syrian, rather than western perspective.

In addition, Za'atari camp is a vulnerable humanitarian space and this vulnerability is hard to witness as a reader, using a graphic novel helps emphasis on the architectural aspects while shielding the reader from the harsh reality people are living in.

This representation allows me to explain the complexity of the human factors that affect the architectural features that I am tracing in my study and strike a balance between emotional effects and technical analysis. Stories narrow down the generalized approach of seeing refugee camps to observe spe-



Figure 2.29 “No Justice No Peace.”
[Audrey Hawkins, Gary Embury, Mario Minichiello, 2018, Reportage Illustration: Visual Journalism]

cific time, space, and characters who interact with their context, allowing the audience to engage with the events from a personal level. Realistic fiction, on the other hand, stimulates the audience's curiosity and paves the way for their imagination to move in space and time while, simultaneously, frame the scope of their exploration.

In linking between a novel that analyzes a refugee camp and architecture. In fact that there is a gap between the architectural profession and emergency settlements due to the complexity of camps' environment, being temporal spaces that are directly affected by interweaved uncertain factors. Those factors include politics, economy, culture, and society of both: homeland and host country. However, emergency settlements are receiving more attention as a response to the increasing climate change disasters. Thus, to be able to set the future architectural guidelines of refugee camps, understanding the reflections on the current conditions, the spaces as used by the population, and the activities that organize and define urban life is a must. Therefore, documenting the architectural aspects of Za'atari camp might be an initial step in setting the vocabularies of spaces and thus, filling in the gap.

Conducting the research

In the first stages of my research, I examined the site of the camp, its inhabitants, and spatial properties through non-governmental humanitarian organizations and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports, articles that are published by urban and social researchers. In addition, I researched documentaries and TV reports posted on YouTube or sold online, and photographs taken by the camp's residents found on social media. I intended to use that knowledge as a base to guide me through an actual visit to Za'atari camp that I was planning for. During that visit, I aimed to conduct my study as a series of face to face interviews and convert them into a novel that includes illustrating the actual architectural and human conditions using storytelling reportage illustrations.

In drawing the reportage, I aimed to follow the visual journalism method that allows to draw a visual summary of the events and thoughts they embody.²³

PUBLIC PARK NEAR THE PORT
ON THE ISLAND OF KOS
IN GREECE.
AUGUST 2015.

CLAUDIA'S GOT TO MOVE

FOR THE PAST SEVEN YEARS SHE HAS BEEN SELLING SOUVENIRS HERE, MAINLY SPONGES, TO TOURISTS.

BECAUSE OF THE REFUGEES, THOUGH, THE TOURISTS ARE STAYING AWAY.

TOURIST ATTRACTION:
NERATZIA
A FORTRESS BUILT BY THE KNIGHTS OF ST. JOHN

FERRY PORT:
150 METERS

CLAUDIA'S STALL

YACHT HARBOR:
50 METERS

KOS

ISLAND, GREECE





REFUGEES

HELLENIC
COAST GUARD

SUNRISE

TURKEY

POLICE STATION

50 METERS

DINGHY IN TOW

FLOAT RINGS
(INNER TUBES FROM CARS)

HERE THE REFUGEES SEEK PERMISSION
TO CONTINUE THEIR JOURNEY TO ATHENS.
WAIT TIMES:

7-21 DAYS

OLEANDER
BLOSSOMS

MECCA

YOUNG DITCH WOMEN

LIFE
JACKET

SOCKS

TOURIST
(DRUNK)

UNDERPANTS

TENTS DISTRIBUTED BY
MEDECINS SANS FRONTIERES
ON THE PREVIOUS DAY.

PLASTIC
SPOON

LARDBOARD
BOXES FROM
THE TRASH

Novelism-Graphically

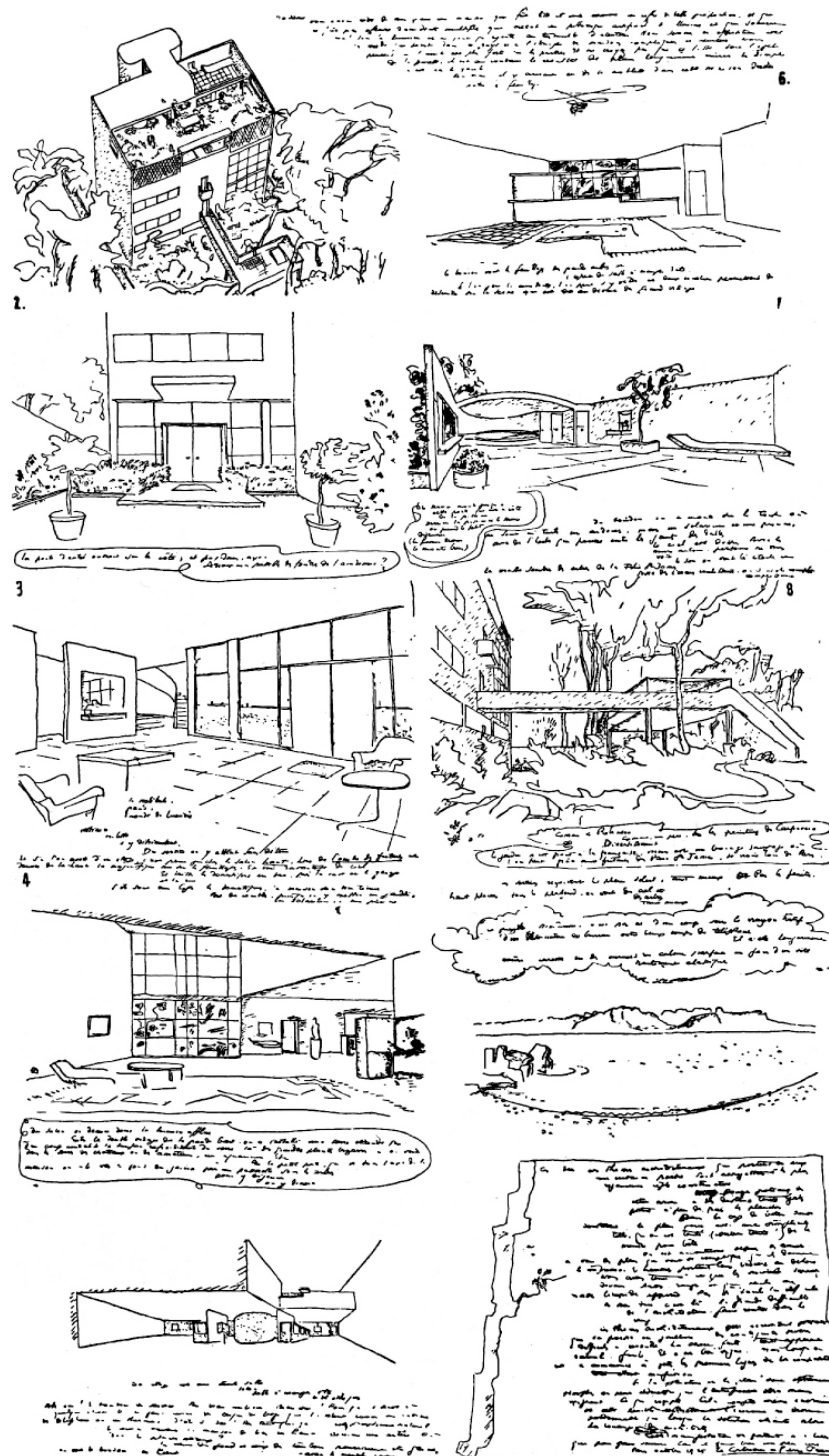


Figure 2.30 Previous Page: Syrian Refugee camp on Greece [Oliver Kugler, “Escaping Wars and Waves”, 2018]

Figure 2.31 Le Corbusier: Lettre a Madame Meyer (1925) [Luis Miguel Lus-Arana, “Le corbusier read comic books. Notes on the interactions between architecture and graphic narrative.”]

For Gary Embury and Mario Minichiello, reportage is “event-based, meaning that it is an art applied to things of significance happening in the world. The illustrator acts as a particular kind of visual journalist, capturing the dynamics of unfolding events through their artwork.”²⁴ The hand drawing transmits the artist’s feelings on location and creates a connection with the artist, people witnessing the process of drawing and the complex documented issue. Reportage can emphasize one aspect of the story such as the feelings of horror or demonstrate daily life activities.²⁵ As such, I chose to dissociate the architectural interventions, acts of coping, and the factors that provoked the refugees’ existence in Za’atari from the convoluted full image of the situation inside the camp. I preferred establishing an interactive relationship with the refugees by involving them in the process of sketching either by having them as an audience, who I expect to like seeing the final result, or by sitting among them to draw them in their houses rather than intimidate them by a camera.

I discovered the field of visual journalism by reviewing a number of precedents, such as *Reportage Illustration: Visual Journalism* by Gary Embury and Mario Minichiello, which discusses in depth the merits and technique of reportage illustration such as drawing in a field of an event with painting and drawing tools. It provides examples of reportage drawings created by several artists from several locations including Syria where Gorge Buttler, an artist specialized in sketching in war lands, traveled to document refugee camps in north Syria. Furthermore, I reviewed *Escaping Wars and Waves: drawings by Olivier Kugler* that is a portrayal of life vignettes of Syrian refugees in five different camps around the world. Rather than telling a cohesive story, the detailed illustrations create human testimony diaries of refugees, who Kugler interviewed, that include thoughts, dialogues, and explanations of the context.

However, dealing with the changes the COVID-19 pandemic brought, the life drawing project was canceled, and the trip to Jordan was abandoned. Thus, I chose to represent the event of living as a refugee in Za’atari based on the material I started with. In specific, I relied on videos recorded by the refugees and documentaries by the UNHCR such as “A Day in Life: Za’atari” series that was done in 2013.²⁶ This documentary introduced me to the early stages of developing the camp, the role of the camp’s manager, and refugees’ responses. Aside

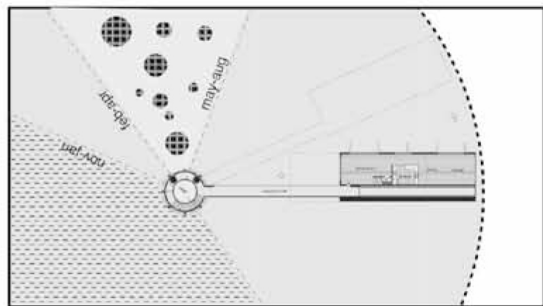
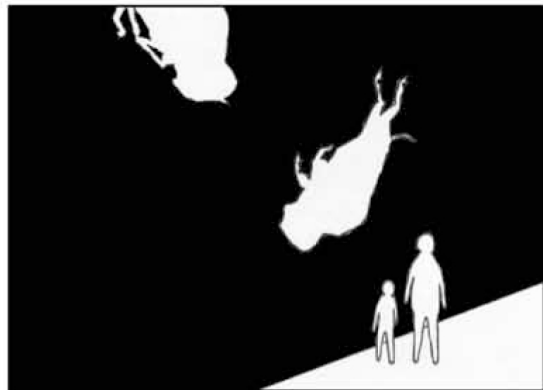
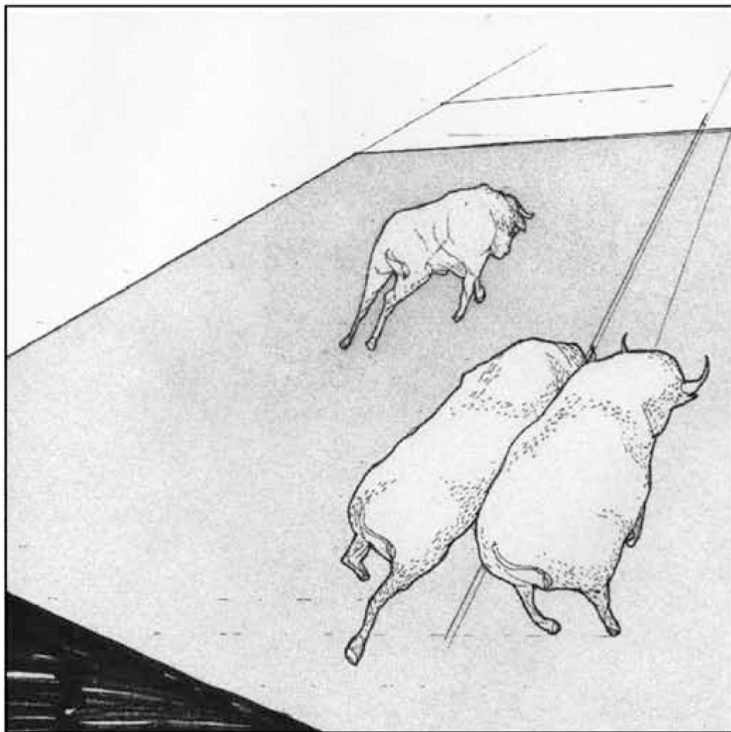
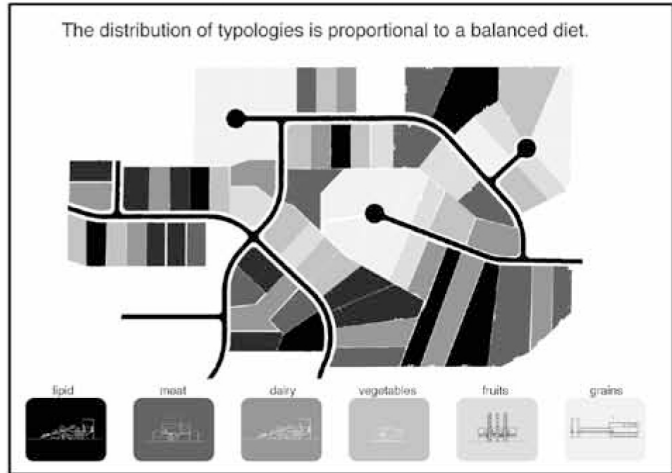
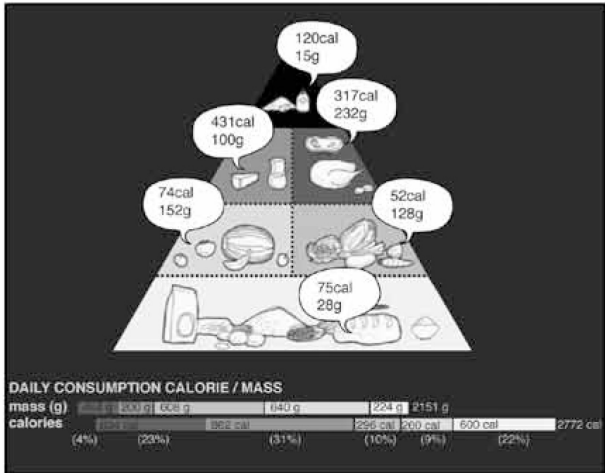
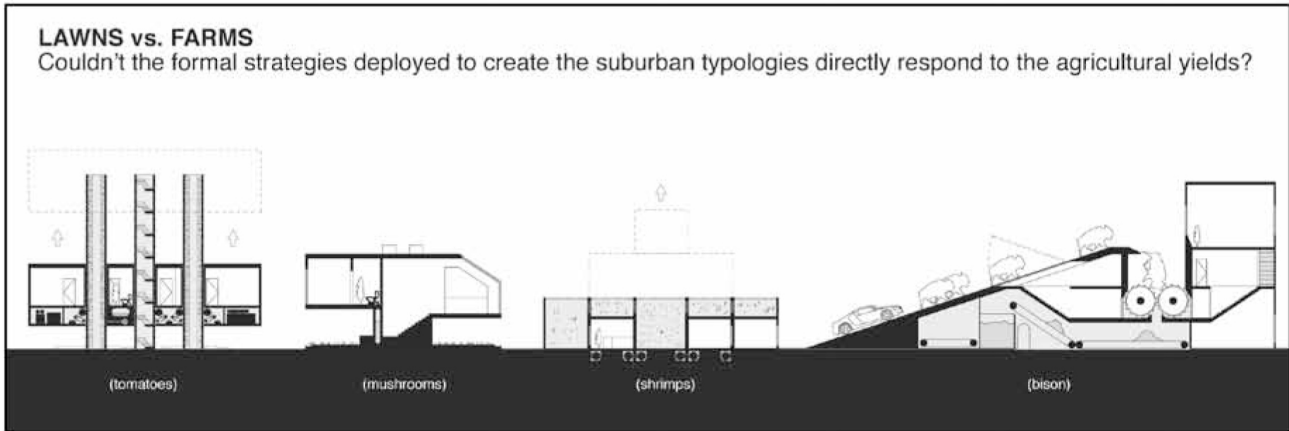


Figure 2.32 Architectural graphics dominance [Jimenez Lai "Citizens of No Place," 2012]

from that, I firmly depended on stories and information I have heard from Kilian Kleinschmidt in an informal, one hour long, conversation on Facebook messenger. Kleinschmidt is a humanitarian expert who served in the UNHCR for 30 years including 3 years of directing Za'atari camp. Additionally, I was able to communicate, through social media applications such as WhatsApp, with previous refugees who left the camp and resettled in Canada and others who are still in the camp and agreed to share their experiences with me. Using the refugees' unique testimonies, I created a fictional graphic novel that shows the camp from inside out.

Describing through visualizations is a key factor in architectural communication as it focuses on a sense of place. Bird's-eye planning illustrations and aerial satellite images are successful in tracing the dynamic urban changes in any city that occur as a result of architectural decisions, but they hardly tackle the human perspective from the pedestrian level. Human stories are fundamental in each city; they weave into the fabric of daily activities and consequently the urban one. Human-level pictorials, especially sequential drawings, structure a seldom relationship with architecture in the design process and in visual representation as they address the design essence. The sequential art, which is known as a comic book or recently graphic novel, has been used in the realm for a long time. Le Corbusier, for instance, used several explained-with-texts vistas that are placed in a sequential order to explain the design proposal of the never constructed house of Lettre a Madame Meyer. Moreover, Archigram introduced the science-fictional approach through the Amazing Archigram issues.²⁷

Joining narration with drawings provides word and wordless manifestos, moves the reader from ideas to the depth of spatiality and offers a simple presentation method for complex and hard-to-imagine situations. According to Lai Jimenez, a designer and the former of Bureau Spectacular studio that engages design through stories, "Cartooning is a medium that facilitates experimentations in proportion, composition, scale, sensibility, character plasticity, and the part-to-whole relationship as the page becomes an object."²⁸ Furthermore, tactically opting particular aspects of the spaces, people, and parapher-

Novelism-Graphically

nalía to be included in the story allows for an artistically successful way to draw the attention to the specific elements non-dispersedly by the vulnerable humanitarian conditions in the camp.

The flow of the stories links human actions with architectural responses. Through the captured slice of life events and some of their complexities, the

novel gives meaning to spatial changes created by refugees. The novel plot and drawings alternate between describing the places' characteristics and the process of designing the spaces.

In the experience of drawing from my imagination and the images that blink on my computer screen, I substituted the absence of the power of immediacy that life drawing provides for greater attention to details I selected to present, in order to highlight specific incidents, spaces, and architectural properties. Moreover, it allowed my stories to show, smoothly and sequentially, the developments of the camp's shelters phase by phase.

Once I settled on making a graphic novel, I searched through a slew of comic books for an answer about my main concern: in creating a storyboard, how can architectural drawings be smoothly integrat-



Figure 2.33 Architectural features within the comic narration [Riyad Sattuf, "The Arab of the Future: Volume 1," 2016]

ed without interrupting the narrative flow or illustration style? In comic books and graphic novels in the realm of architecture, some of the technical diagrams were included to become a dominant part of most of the comic panels such as in Lai Jimenez's *Citizens of No Place: An Architectural Graphic Novel*. On the other hand, in non-design related comics, spatial diagrams were smoothly merged within the scenes sequence, as seen in *Riyad Sattuf's The Arab of The Future: A Childhood in The Middle East*. Thus, for the purpose of establishing a smooth transition while enriching the context with architectural drawings, I used a method that merges the two ways of presentations; I created a mixture of the narrative shots where interior and exterior spaces are indirectly described.

In choosing an artistic styling for the hand-sketched illustrations, I mostly rendered the drawings in black and white with some exceptions for the key images that demonstrate key events. The precedent of journalistic illustrations educated me on drawing methods. The wide selection of visual approaches used in Reportage Illustration revealed the elements of presenting an event using impressions of drawings that are shown through human expressions, object scale, the opposition of black and white rendering versus colored images, and the use of the environment. Kugler documented moments in time in detailed drawings including information about the subjects drawn and quotes by the refugees. Therefore, I opted to draw the scenes from an artistic perspective that alternates between the sketchy, impressionistic, and dreamlike style and realistically detailed panels when needed. The combination of this format delivers both an accurate documentation of the event and an emphasis on human feelings.

In this qualitative by nature research, I derived the results from observations of data that I gathered from several resources that I mentioned in the previous section. However, in studying the daily routine of a refugee living in Za'atari camp and demonstrating the stage by stage development of a shelter, I primarily relied on virtual conversations with the refugees who are currently residing in the camp. Their stories allowed me to explore the camp's local experience and knowledge, including contextual factors such as social relationships. Accordingly, I was able to understand the divergent details and formulate a bigger picture.

When doing research from a distance that is being conducted with a community that might have experienced trauma in a refugee camp, there are two main factors I depended on to encourage participants to share their thoughts and experiences. First, to reach out to a refugee through a trusty connection and, second, to structure a respectful and efficient conversation.

Gaining refugees' trust, I mainly connected with them through mutual friends, relatives, or trustworthy NGO workers. From there, I started building a snowball sampling method. Each refugee linked me with a friend, neighbor, or family member who is willing to have a conversation with me.

Based on the UNHCR guidance, respect, confidentiality, and managing expectations are the key factors for effective communication between an agency worker and a refugee.²⁹ At first, it is vital to create a relaxing atmosphere that might pave the way for openness and trust. Hence, I left the communication method and time open for the interviewees to select. Most of the refugees welcomed sharing their experiences using text messaging with few exceptions in the form of voice recording. In addition, for making the discussions attempting for refugees to express themselves, the talk took the form of listening sessions.

Before any session, that was held in the Arabic Language, I stated a set of facts, introducing myself, the purpose of the research, and the refugee's rights during the dialogue. I informed interviewees that their shared personal details were not for publication and the main goal of the talk was to document spatial changes, gain knowledge about daily activities in the camp, and to get inspiration from their stories. In addition, I indicated that they had the choice to pass any question, take a break, or finish the talk at any point. Most importantly, I have transparently explained the benefit for the refugees' community that can be offered by this research. Thus, the refugees' expectations and hopes have been clearly and realistically established.

The Caravan Citizens Novel

The Caravan Citizens novel consists of four stories that tackle several aspects of life and spatial characters of Za'atari camp. The stories implicitly trace some of the spatial changes over time and explicitly lists the social, psychological, and economical factors that influenced the architectural and urban coping strategies. They balance between refusing to admit the favor of receiving aid and accepting it when it becomes a personal benefit. They show the shift between depending on donations and gaining independence. They illustrate the different ways of reaching self-sufficiency and the possible roles of each family member to reach this goal and consequently to enhance the family's dwelling. Besides, it sheds the light on one of the strongest reasons that encouraged individuals and NGOs such as Mulham Group to donate with caravans, which is helping youth in marriage. Finally, it represents the internal relationships between the refugees and authorities and external ones between Syrians inside the camp and Jordanians outside it. The stories are inspired by real-life testimonies and classic novels such as *My Daddy Long Legs*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Anne of Green Gables*.

My Daddy Long Legs is a classic epistolary novel that was written in 1912 by the American writer Jean Webster. The book is one of the bildungsroman stories that discuss the development of the protagonist's character until reaching maturity. Jerusha Abbott, or Juddy Abbott as she likes to call herself, is an orphan girl who is raised at an orphanage where all children depend only on charity. Although she is a stubborn girl who searches for her independence, she writes a letter for the orphanage's committee of trustees seeking financial support for studying in college as a writer. She gains sponsorship from a member who keeps his identity unknown. Juddy only sees his long shadow while he was leaving the orphanage one time. Thus, she calls him My Daddy Long Legs. The story tackles the relationships between Juddy and her sponsor that is developed through her monthly letters to him. While she perceives him, sometimes as a father, other times as a friend, he first sees her as a person in need, then gets educated by her thoughts in a way that changes his autocratic personality to end up falling in love with her. Thus, without reviling his role as a sponsor, he meets

her and builds an emotional relationship with her. However, unconsciously, he tries to impose his control over her. Juddy, on the other hand, strongly resists his control making a statement of self-creation and accepts the marriage proposal only when she feels the change in her lover's character.

This novel discusses the notion of humanitarian aid as perceived by the givers and the people who need it. It reflects the mixed and complex reactions of recipients that vary between presumption, acceptance, and resistance. Syrians in Za'atari camp, similarly, expect and accept international aid especially that they believe that international governments are involved in the war in Syria. Yet, they resist the full submission to these authorities and the loss of their identities and desires.

Pride and Prejudice is a romantic novel, written by Jane Auston in 1813, that tackles social manners recreating them in the society through its fictional plot. It represents the development of several characters' personalities that are involved in the narrative of a love triangle. In Auston's novel and Za'atari camp, marriage is perceived as a happy yet complex activity that includes social, political, and economical aspects. In both fictional stories written by Jane and me, the ultimate manner of sacrifice moves the story of love towards happier endings. However, in Za'atari camp, marriage cannot be accomplished without submitting to the UNHCR unit rules (having a house).

Anne of Green Gables is a 1908 novel written by Lucy Maud Montgomery. The story is about an orphan kid who is adopted by two siblings who wanted to have a young boy to help them in their farm. Unlike their expectations, Anne is an active, dreamy, and talkative girl. The narrative recounts how this 11-year-old child changed the role that was expected from her as a girl and how she influenced the family's life. Similarly, some kids in Za'atari camp have played a crucial role in developing the camp's spaces, even young girls.

Development through Deformation



Figure 3.34 Za'atri Camp Aerial View 2012 [UNHCR Photo Unit, November 21, 2012, flicker.com]



Development through Deformation

When involuntarily displaced people arrive in the land of refuge, they interact with each other, and with the land and space they are residing in from a complex point of view that unconsciously joins the three spectrums: humanitarianism, vulnerability, and control. First, for people who escape a field of war taking a dangerous journey of crossing an international border, safety, protection, and healthcare are their highest concerns. Those are the same main aspects humanitarian agencies urgently solve. Second, the sudden and urgent transformation from the stable settlement of home to the chaotic land of a refugee camp results in tremendous financial and physical loss as well as psychological trauma. Thus, refugees also look at their condition through the lens of vulnerability especially when they face the image of the term “refugee” as a new legal status. Refugees before facing refugeeism are just like us--they often consider that people in refugee camps are passive victims.³⁰ Thus, the sudden involuntary transformation makes displaced people lose all concepts that construct the idea of personhood.³¹ This includes loss of property, home, family, belonging to a community, security, and freedom to make decisions and participate in socio-political and economical practices. Displaced people, therefore, feel the effect of power controlling and monitoring them.

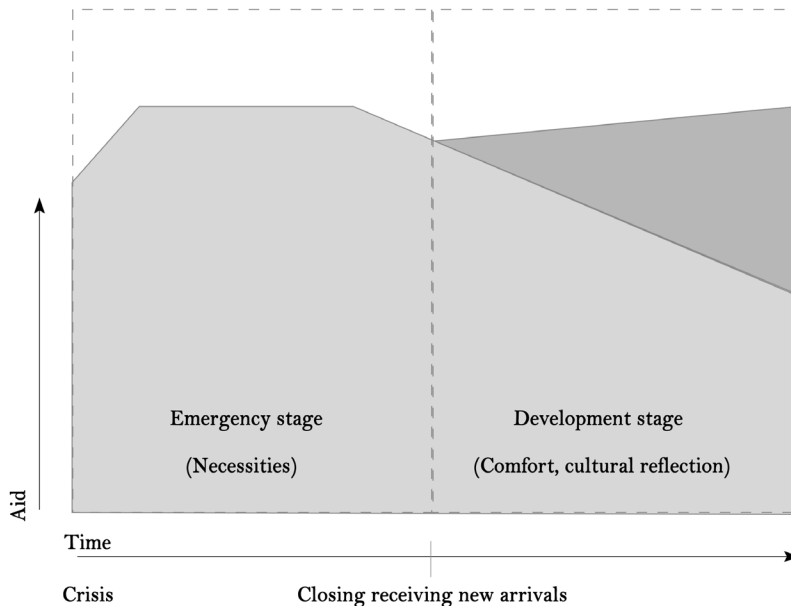
In addition to these three factors, refugeehood as perceived by camp residents is influenced by their internal feelings, beliefs, traditions, previous life in the homeland, and their expectations of the displacement duration.³² They arrive with heavy memories of life before deportation, both negative ones represented in warfare and arrest and positive ones such as previous skills and successes. Thus, in the first stages of developing their own dwellings, refugees seek basic, urgent necessities and view their refugeeism as a temporal solution that will last for a few weeks. This optimistic prospect occurs because of the geographic juxtaposition of Jordan and its legal status. This sense of impermanence influenced the refugees’ decisions around developing their shelters or

Development through Deformation

establishing work for a long time before they gradually came to realize the permanence of temporality. Nevertheless, the camp accelerated in transitioning from the emergency status to the development stage when the humanitarian aid declined and receiving new arrivals was closed on 30th April 2014.³³

Developing through deformation

The infrastructure in refugee camps is hard to maintain. When the UNHCR arranged the expanded areas, it planned them in a modular configuration to accommodate new arrivals and help in relocating the residents of the extant naturally arising, non-planned sector. Nevertheless, the number of new arrivals rapidly increased, and the climatic problems, such as floods, severely affected the tent dwellings. Therefore, new and old arrivals moved to inside and between the prefabs. The



UNHCR lost its control over its initial plan and strategically has submitted to the actions of occupation.

Andrew Harper, UNHCR's previous programs director and representative in Jordan said in a conversation with New Humanitarian organization, "A refugee camp is something like a Rubik's cube," there is a structured plan that establishes things in place. "But when people start fiddling around with it, it's very difficult to get back together."³⁴ Residents apply modifications and improvements to their houses on a regular basis. When the UNHCR supplied the refugees with the basic tent or caravan shelters, they assigned each group of families to a specific location that was not directly supported with basic infrastructure. Electricity provided power to main streetlamps, there were two communal kitchens and bathrooms and one shared water tank for each 8-10 families. The refugees' response was a reaction to the numerous problems this setting created. Refugees faced a lack of comfort, privacy, safety in their dwell-

Figure 3.35 Previous Page: Development stages {Illustrated by Author}

Figure 3.36 Modular arrangement from the old camp [farestudio.it/]



ings, which were not always structurally stable and seldom afforded them protection from extreme weather conditions in their tents or in the communal bathrooms and kitchens. For these reasons, they repositioned their shelters from the assigned original plots, placing them instead in either a semicircular or a U-shape pattern. These re-arrangements formed social compounds organized around an open courtyard with a main entrance or located them closer to the streetlamps or a service office to get access to power sources. In these clusters, relatives, extended family members, and people from the same village live close to each other and use the courtyard in socializing, communal cooking, and joining their kids while they safely play. This strategy was also applied when the tents were replaced with caravans. Although a caravan needs 15 men to carry it, refugees helped each other to move it around. They removed the wooden floor panels, lifted the house from the inside, and carried it to other locations.³⁵ Over time, they established a creative method that first consisted of using gas volumes to move the building and later has used a carrier that was invented by the refugees. From the camp's fence posts, they built a wheelbarrow-like device, which consisted of a 4-beam frame, a steering pole, and 4 wheels.

Second, they looked at all construction elements either of their own shelters or in the surroundings as a source of materials: the donated houses, the communal facilities, administrative and service buildings, and even fences were reused, procured, and traded³⁶. For example, an aluminum track and a

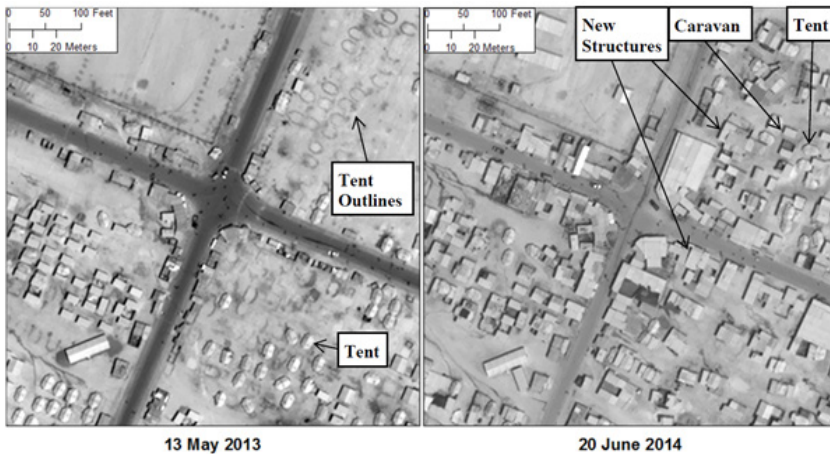


Figure 3.37 Old camp structure (left) VS New modular arrangement (right)
[arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=67a88f4302a748c4bfd61e57801ce81c]



Development through Deformation

wood piece could be bought for \$10 in the camp's black market. Tents were sold for \$30 to \$100 or found abandoned on the rocky land where its owners had left it behind when they moved to outside the camp. On the other hand, the



price of a caravan reached \$700 despite its original price tag to the donor of around \$3000.³⁷ Using a mix of wooden, metal, and fabric components, the refugees constructed extensions to their buildings. They attached tents together or to caravans, added corrugated metal sheet walls and doors, and created shelves, tables, and other furniture pieces using the wood flooring panels after

they replaced it with cement on a gravel base. Most families divided the tent's space into several zones: a kitchen, living/ guest area, washroom and shower, storage, and sometimes a zone for selling some basic goods. At night, the entire space was used for sleeping.

When a caravan was expanded to fit the average number of family members that its average number reached 6 people, the refugees attached the caravan to one or more structures that were made with tent fabric, concrete blocks, corrugated metal sheets, or a second or more caravan units that were sold, secretly at the beginning, in the camp's market. They laid out the prefabs around a central private space to create an extra room and mimics the notion of the traditional courtyard. This space they used as a shaded outdoor living area and a clear buffer between the public space of a street and the private one of home and as a safe area for kids to play.³⁸

Some people constructed cement fountains and most of them grew several kinds of plants in the house's front garden like vegetables, flowers, vines such as grapes and Jasmine, herbal plants like mint and parsley, and trees like lemon.

Cultural memory and reflecting identities, prestige, and lifestyle were also seen in decoration and furniture. The similar-looking units were privatized and humanized by painting the exterior walls. Refugees used arches, flowers, and greeneries, keeping the nostalgia of Dara'a environment. Furnishing their



Figure 3.39 Relocating a caravan [Reuters, 12 Dec 2013, news.trust.org/item/20131212171314-snopw/]

Figure 3.40 Previous Page: Caravan movements in the main street corner [Infrastructure Evolution Analysis via Remote Sensing in an Urban Refugee Camp - Evidence from Za’atari]

dwelling, initially, the refugees depended on mattresses, blankets, and mats that they received from the UNHCR. With the evolution of the camp’s market, more tools and devices have been brought to tents and later caravans, such as stoves, refrigerators, televisions, and even washing machines. The majority, who were culturally conservative, maintained the nomadic floor seating style even after they moved to caravans, while people from rural Damascus and Homs switched to the use of sofas, chairs, and dining tables.³⁹



Jan 2013

Jan 2013

Oct 2016

Figure 3.38 Urban fabric over time [googlemaps]

Development through Deformation



Figure 3.41 Garden [Zaatari memórias do labirinto - 30 de maio nos cinemas @ Vemio]





Figure 3.42 Paintings on caravans [cnn.com/2018/07/30/middleeast/zaatari-refugee-camp-artists/index.html]

Madafa

Generosity might be considered the most outstanding feature of Arab customs and values. The room where guests are hosted, entertained, and fed (madafah in Arabic) is one of the spaces that boosts hospitality in local nomadic cultures. It encapsulates a notion that has been imported from the homeland and has created a unique significance in Za'atari's architecture. Most refugees associate, in their caravans or even their previous tents, a space for gathering with people from outside the family. Sometimes, the guest room is a caravan where male visitors meet, while women gather in the courtyard or adjacent rooms. In other cases, the room that serves as a master bedroom at night hosts guests during the day. The madafa, on the other hand, can have greater importance: it embodies multi-layered political and social roles.

Upon its establishment, the camp was controlled by the Jordanian Hashemite humanitarian organization that coordinated the roles of several NGOs and the UNHCR. However, due to the immense number of refugees arriving daily, the Hashemite organization transferred its administrative work to the UNHCR in March 2013. As for policing and protection, the Jordanian forces controlled the camp before they collaborated with the British government in

establishing the Community Police Assistants (CPAs) in 2013.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, at that time, none of these or other agencies opened the door to refugees to represent themselves in the camp's communities. Consequently, a group of informal representatives emerged in the form of street leaders, who became a key feature of contact for NGOs and police. The street leader terminology clearly signifies the connection between the urban space of streets and the administrative role that is associated with it. Analyzing the old camp morphology, we can see the dense urban fabric that consists of long, relatively, narrow streets; in contrast, the new camp has wide and vast gridded areas as planned by the UNHCR. The street leaders arose in a specific and characteristically defined space within the old camp to accomplish a crucial role that got official recognition by the authorities. The responsibilities for scheduling aid delivery, filling water tanks, and signing people up for the paid job of cleaning communal facilities, for instance, were all handled by the street leaders.⁴¹ NGOs found this strategy reliable since it substituted meeting with a few people recognized as authorities by the camp in one meeting for otherwise having to gather with hundreds of refugees in a day.

The NGOs'/UNHCR's intention was to collaborate with more street leaders in the newly established districts. The chess-board-like layout nonetheless complicated the distinction between streets, which caused a disconnect between the space and the leaders' commitments. More than one street leader appeared in the same street, for example, and nomination of leaders occurred in several ways, including by election, self-nomination, and appointment by the NGOs.⁴² When nominated by the people,

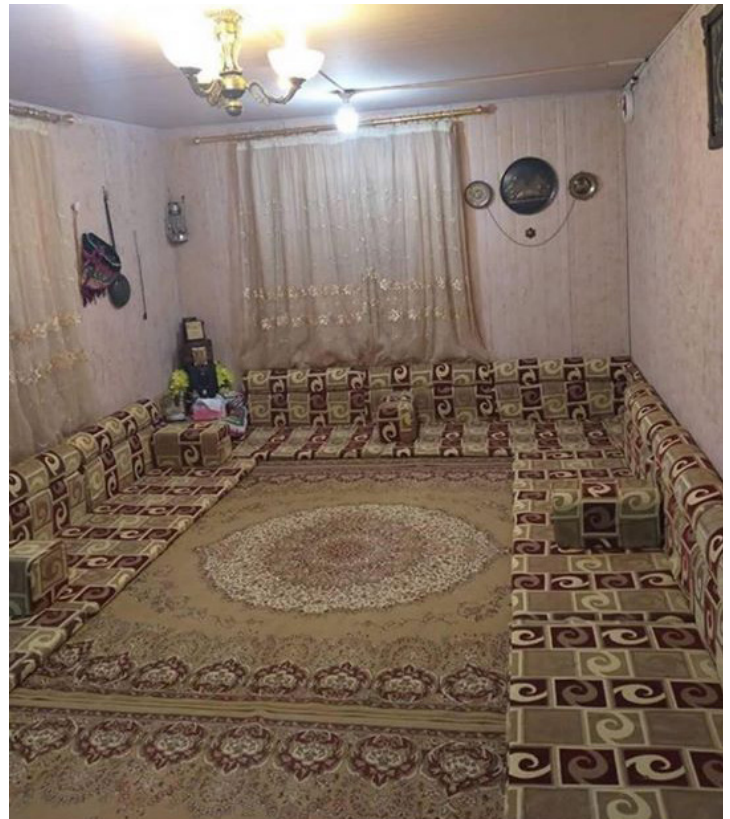


Figure 3.43 A high quality Madaf, 2019
[zaatari2012 @ facebook]

Development through Deformation

a leader might have gained his street peoples' trust by being a tribal leader (sheikh), who usually had political responsibilities prior to arriving to Za'atari, based on the fact that people who come from the same Syrian village or town are placed together in the same region of the camp. Some leaders achieved authority by being one of the first residents who arrived in the Camp, especially those who came with their men. Leaders might also progressively establish acceptance by offering help and aid from their personal funds. For instance, a leader of 21 streets hired 10 barbers who walked all day to provide free shaves in order to gain the refugees' love in return.⁴³ Moreover, leaders replicated the use of the madafa as a tool to obtain agency. The construction quality reinforces the image of generosity, openness, and readiness to help, which can be shown by the large size of the madafa room, its furniture and decoration along with the hospitality available, such as hot coffee and tea served throughout the day. Due to the difficulties of arranging the role of street leaders who gained this position over time, and the misuse of this position by some rulers, efforts to engage them in the new, more-ordered system faded, then gradually stopped. Nevertheless, madafas are still part of the camp's architecture.

Training pigeons

Raising, trading, flying, and showing pigeons is an old and still-popular hobby in the Sham-region countries such as Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria. People use their houses' rooftops to construct coops and spend hours with their birds. Every evening, the city bustles with sharp whistles, snaps, and clapping sounds, and the sky gets full of flocks flying in response to their fanciers. For many refugees in Za'atari, this hobby that has moved with them carries psychological and economic values; it is an entertaining exercise, a signifier of freedom, a reminder of hometown, and even a source of funds. Some people dedicate areas of their homes to this hobby, even when earlier the homes were in the form of tents, for growing birds that neighbors and kids come to see and play with. Now, they construct cages on top of their caravans or in their gardens for keeping pigeons and other birds.⁴⁴ It did not take a long for a bird-trading market to become part of the long market corridor. People brought the birds from neighboring villages and towns outside the camp to breed them. A pigeon can be sold for over \$100, but their cages and food (seeds) are affordable as they are made of castoff wood or corrugated metal sheets and wire.⁴⁵



Figure 3.44 Pigeon growing structure interior and exterior shots, 2016. [mubasher.aljazeera.net]

Waste disposals of residential buildings

In 2012, trucks were used for transporting wastewater tankers from the camp's shared latrine blocks. The kitchen, bathroom, and shower facilities were connected to a primary sewer system that the refugees constructed by digging a hole. It allowed wastewater to flow through one PVC pipe to another hole that was covered with wood or fabric, and that worked like a waste tank placed outside. After being emptied from the tanks every night, the wastewater went into two tunnels, one of which collected blackwater and the other rainwater. The tunnels then merged with the main tunnel in the main street of each block. However, by the end of 2013, 70% of people had replaced this system with a built in-home pit latrine that required daily pumping out. This reaction, with the sanitation problem it brought, triggered the camp's officials to construct a sewer system that contains underground concrete tanks, one tank for every 4 houses.



Figure 3.45 Wastewater. [moh1993amad @ Facebook]

Figure 3.46 Next Page: market streets. [indiegogo.com, Edited by Author]

Market creation

On the camp level, since the camp was established, refugees began to conduct economical activities and, organically, created an informal market street that was initially formed of a few tents. The shops started with offering basic services such as charging cell phones; changing the Syrian currency of lira to the Jordanian dinar, although both are used inside the camp; and selling various products, including the UNHCR tents and later caravans. Primarily, refugees sold the property that they had brought with them, products donated by the UNHCR and NGOs and left behind by other refugees moved out, food donated by the World Food Program, or goods smuggled into the camp by water-truck drivers and other service workers who got money in return. Later, when obtaining a “break”, which means going outside the camp to Syria or other places in Jordan, was allowed, more products were bought and sold from and to Jordanians living in cities surrounding Za’atari. Rapidly, the street became the commercial center of the camp and was named the “Champs-Élysées”, ironically, after the one in Paris as the French government helped pave the street. Later, the market spread, along with another street perpendicular to it. Currently, this trading corridor that was established without permission from the camp’s authorities, has become legal, and people can work there if they have work permits. This commercial center contains around 3000 shops that provide all kinds of products that are not donated by aid agencies, such as vegetables, fruits, meat, Syrian desserts and spices, kitchen sets, and wedding dresses.⁴⁶ For many people, the market is a reminder of the taste and smell of home.

Jonathan Campbell, a WFP emergency coordinator, in a conversation with The New Humanitarian news agency says “Syrians come from a relatively middle-income country, so they do not eat beans and rice every day.”⁴⁷



The Caravan Citizens

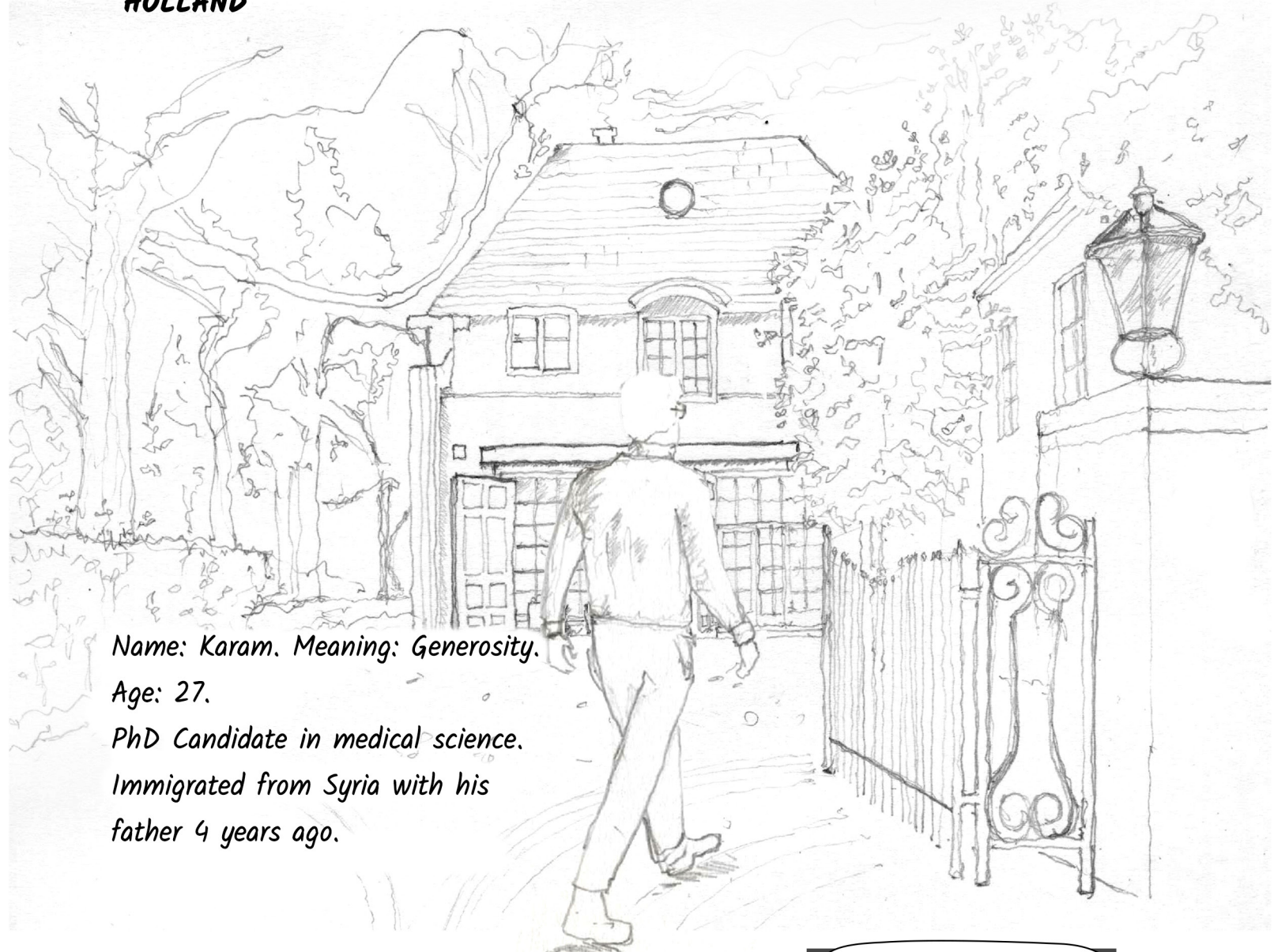
Written and illustrated by Iynas Mazyad

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, places, events, locales, and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

CHAPTER 1



HOLLAND



Name: Karam. Meaning: Generosity.

Age: 27.

PhD Candidate in medical science.

Immigrated from Syria with his father 4 years ago.

Devastation in the rebel-held Dara'a city. Activists blame barrel bombing by government forces...

Your uncle is on the way to Jordan now.

It is safe, at least.

But the camp is miserable.

We will see about that.

Do not worry. I will take care of it.

ZA'ATARI CAMP, JORDAN

SANA IS MY NAME. MY FATHER CHOSE IT FOR ME. HE SAW LIGHT FILLING UP THE HOUSE IN HIS DREAM WHEN MY MOM WAS PREGNANT WITH ME. GROWING UP, I USED TO HEAR COMMENTS LIKE, "IS IT YOUR NAME THAT IS MAKING YOU A REAL TORCH SHINING ON THE WORLD AROUND YOU OR YOU'RE THE ONE WHO MAKES IT APT FOR YOU?" FOR ME, SANA WASN'T MORE THAN A NAME. HOWEVER, I ONLY FELT THE MEANING OF IT WHEN I FELT THAT LIGHT FADING AWAY AFTER WE FLED SYRIA. IN ZA'ATARI CAMP WAS MY JOURNEY OF FILLING MY HEART WITH LIGHT AGAIN.

Name: Sana. Meaning: Bright light.

Age: 20.

Management Science student.

Fled from Syria with her family in early 2013.

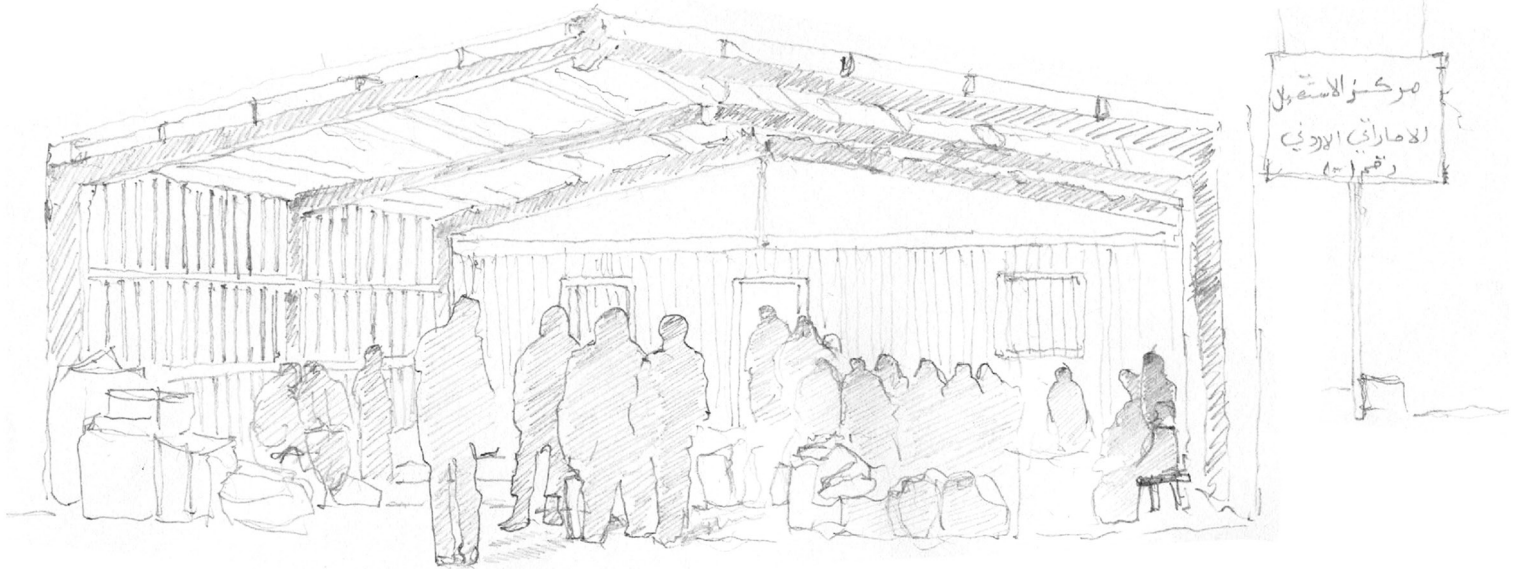


ZA'ATARI CAMP, JORDAN

THE STORY STARTED WHEN WE ARRIVED AT ZA'ATARI CAMP. WE CAME WITH MIXED EMOTIONS OF HOPE, RELIEF, AND FEAR. WE KNEW THAT THE END OF OUR JOURNEY FROM THE LAND OF WAR TO THE LAND OF SAFETY WILL NOT FINISH WITH THE WORDS "THEY LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER". BUT WE DID NOT EXPECT REALITY TO BE "THEY LIVED BECAUSE THEY HAD NO OTHER CHOICE." EVEN THOUGH, I AM BLESSED TO GO THROUGH THIS EXPERIENCE BECAUSE IT REVEALED DIFFERENT SIDES OF ME AND MY FAMILY'S PERSONALITIES.



THE THIRD DAY IN ZA'ATARI CAMP



AFTER A FEW DAYS OF STAYING IN THE RECEPTION TENT, MY FATHER RECEIVED A TENT AND WE BOTH WENT TO SET IT UP IN THE ASSIGNED AREA. WHEN I STOOD ON THE DESERTED LAND AND LOOKED AROUND US, ALL I SAW WERE SIMILAR TENTS, YET FULL OF DIFFERENT EYES EITHER HIDING FROM MINE OR SEARCHING FOR ANY HOPE MY EYES MIGHT HAVE CARRIED FROM HOME. I WAS NOT ABLE TO PROVIDE THEM WITH ANY BUT FROM THE DISTANCE CAME A MAN WHO WAS ABLE TO SEND US FEELINGS OF REASSURANCE WITH HIS SMILES AND DEEP RELAXING VOICE. LUCKILY, MY FATHER KNEW HIM, HE WAS FROM OUR TOWN IN DARA'A. SINCE THEN, HIS PRESENCE WAS ACCOMPANIED WITH PLEASURE.

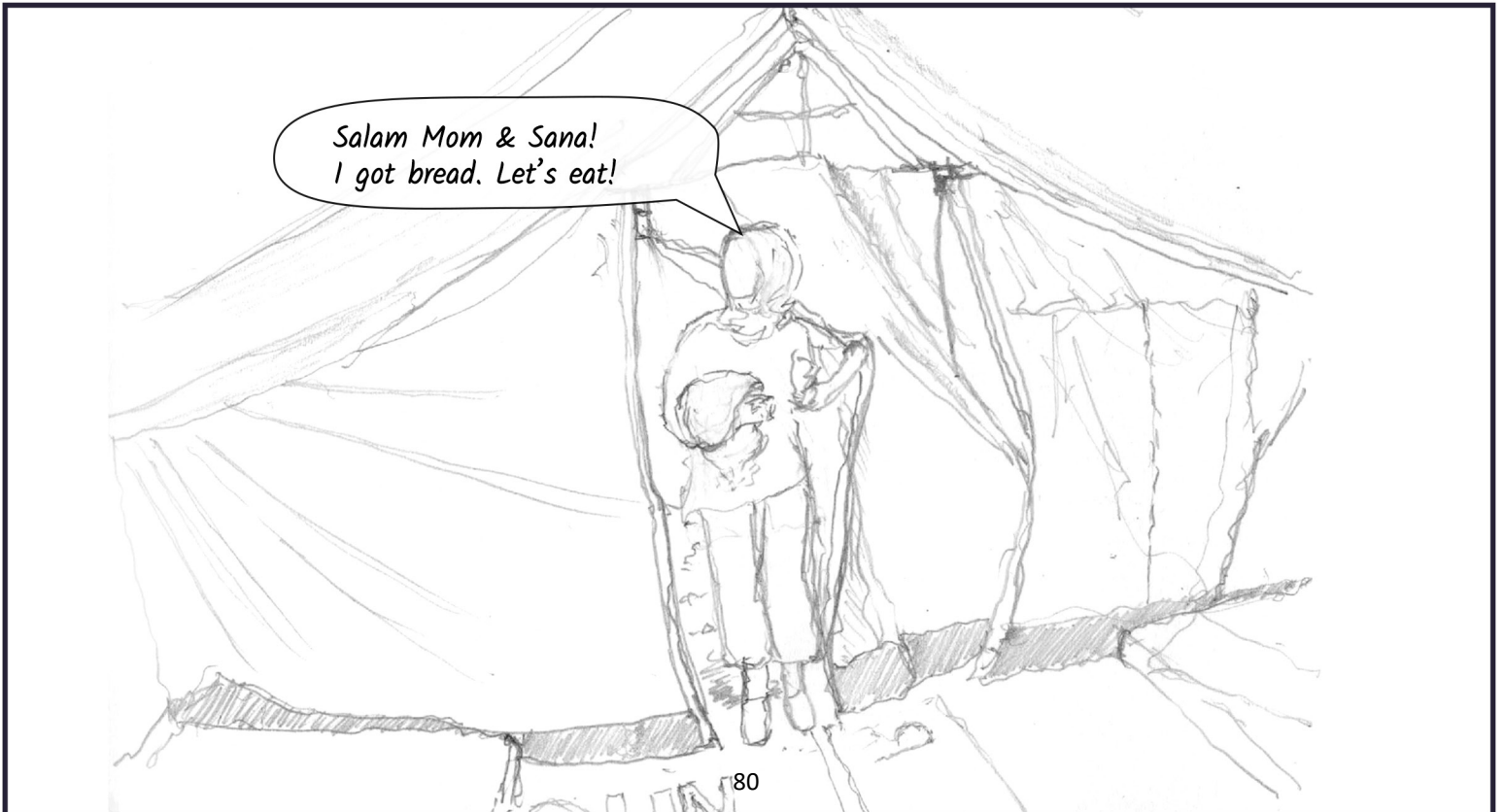
ZIYAD!!




Thanks for your help, Ziyad!

The ropes should be stretched and fixed to the ground with heavy rocks or it will collapse by the wind.

A FEW WEEKS LATER, MY MOM DIVIDED THE TENT INTO SEVERAL ZONES. THE TENT BECAME MORE LIVABLE. HOWEVER, THIS DID NOT HELP ME TO ACCEPT THE PLACE.





Have you heard of the family who just arrived next to us?

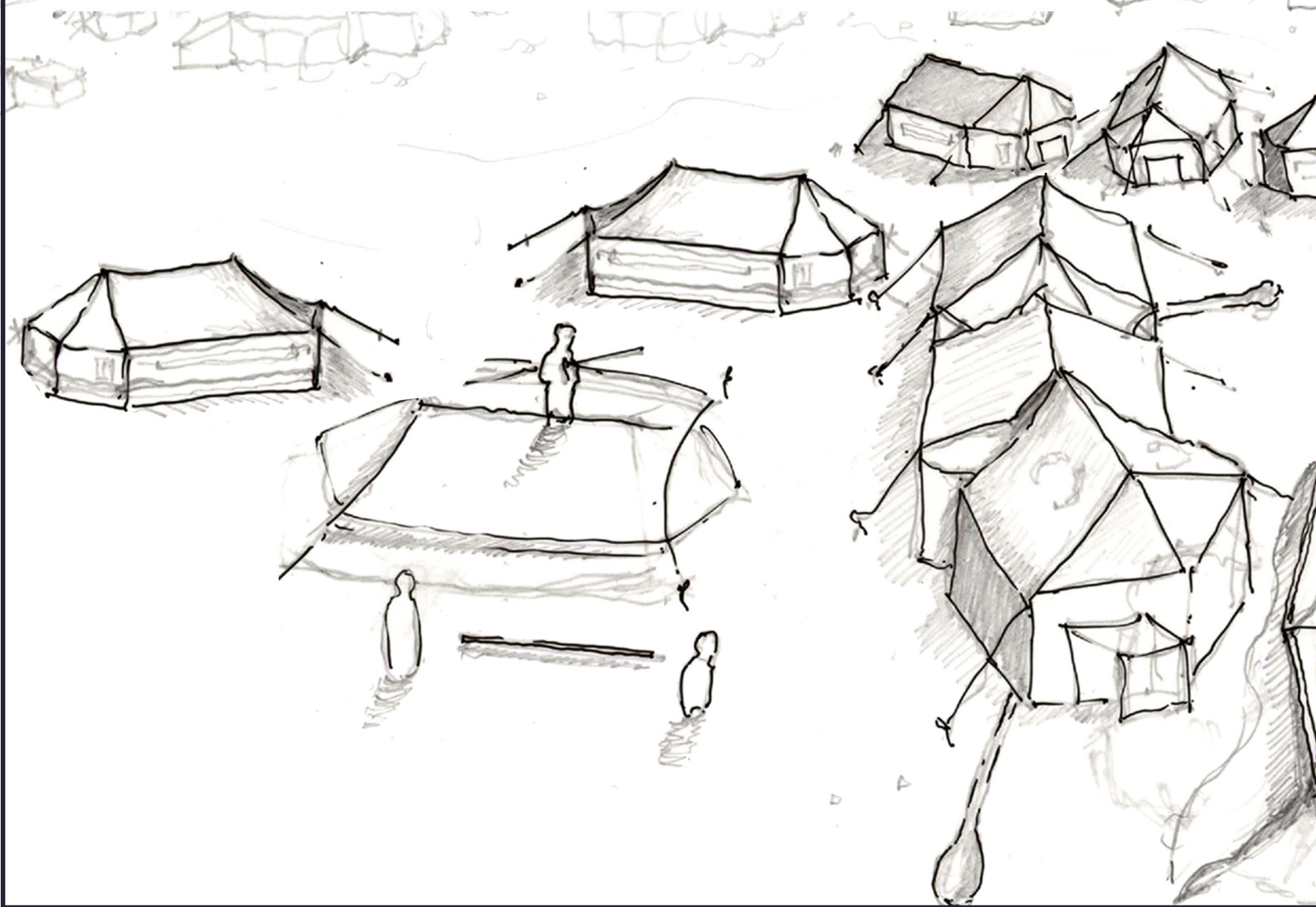
Yes, they are lucky they did not wait in the reception tent for a long time before they got their own tent.

We are lucky as well. Do you remember Ziyad, the person who helped us in installing our tent? I met him in the market today and he gave me two extra-large tents. I am thinking of using them as a second layer.

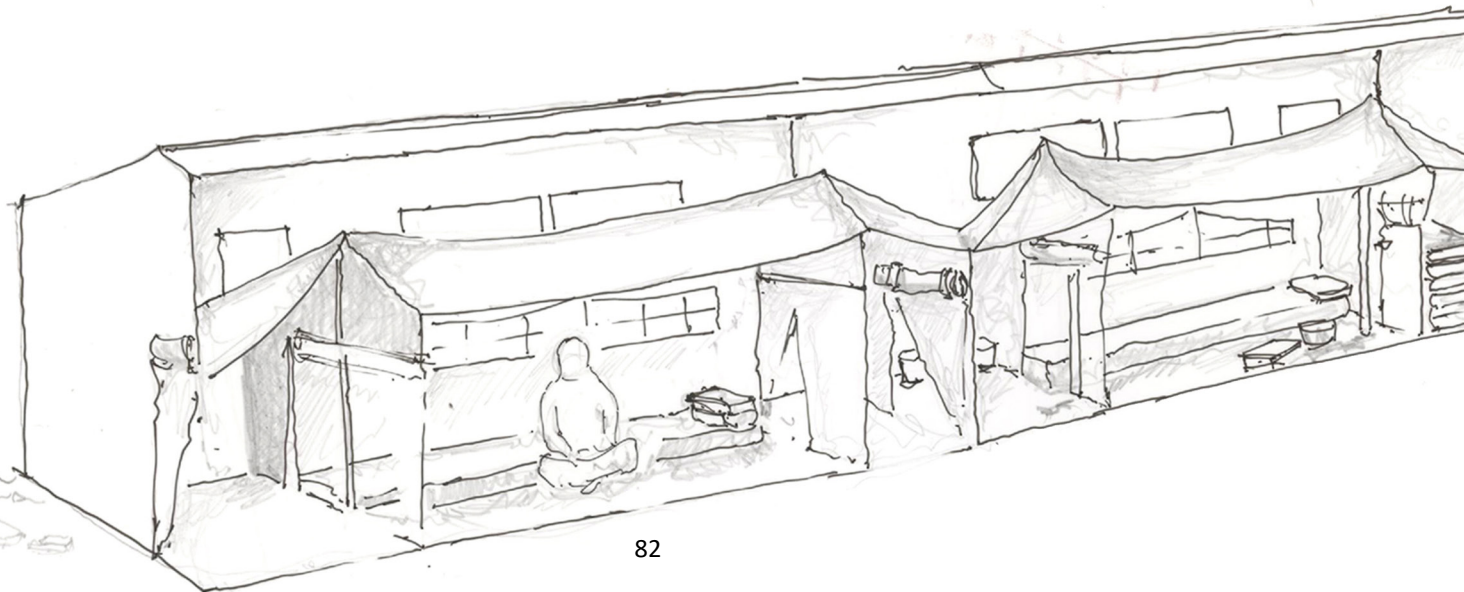


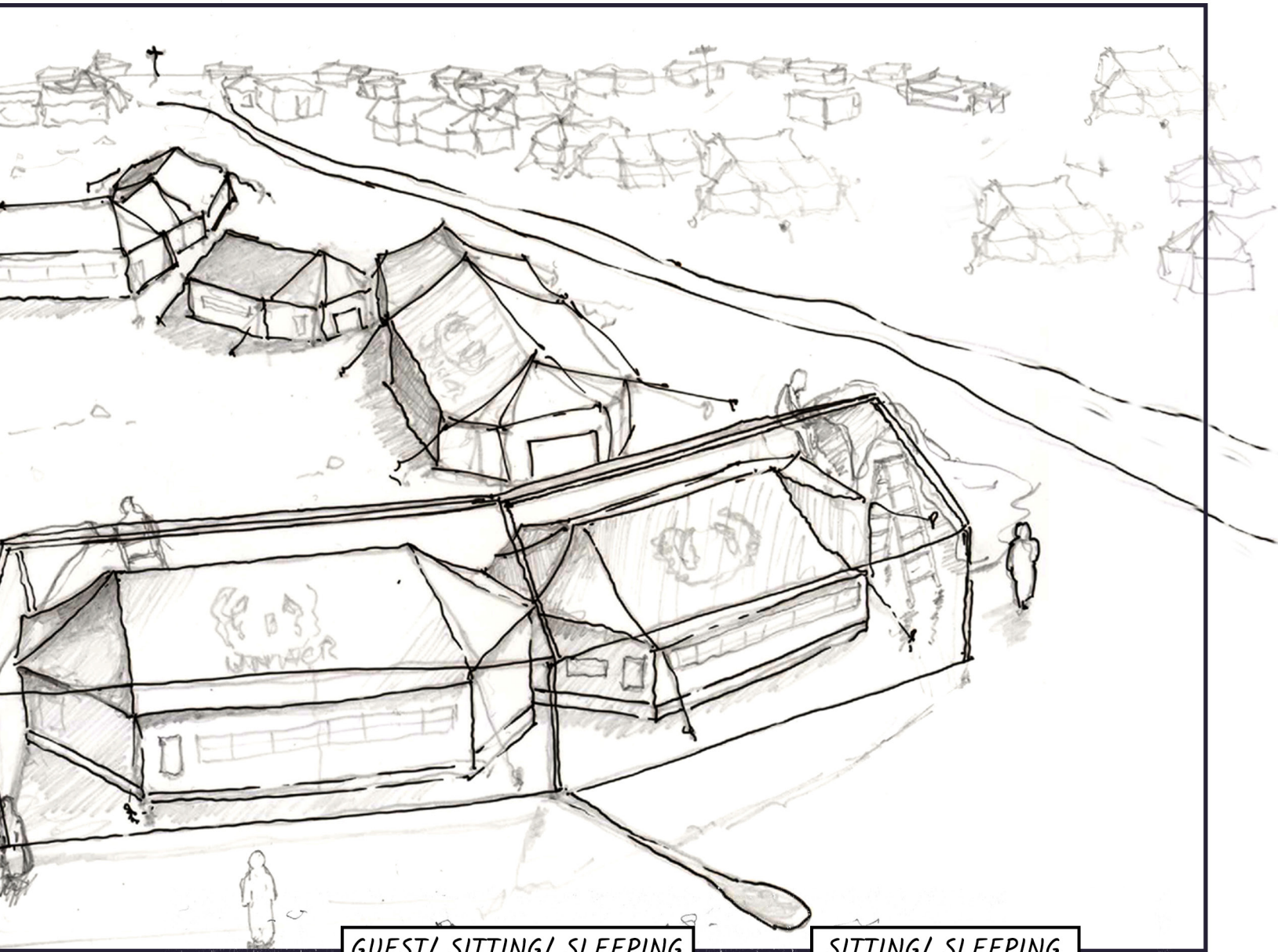
Someone from Europe donated them.

THE SAME DAY, THE NEW TENTS WERE INSTALLED AS A SECOND LAYER. WE SAW THE NEWLY ARRIVED NEIGHBORS CONSTRUCTING THEIR TENT.



OUR TENT HAS A KITCHEN ZONE, SLEEPING ZONES, AND WE PLACED THE BATHROOM BETWEEN THE TWO LAYERS.





GUEST/ SITTING/ SLEEPING

SITTING/ SLEEPING

ENTRANCE

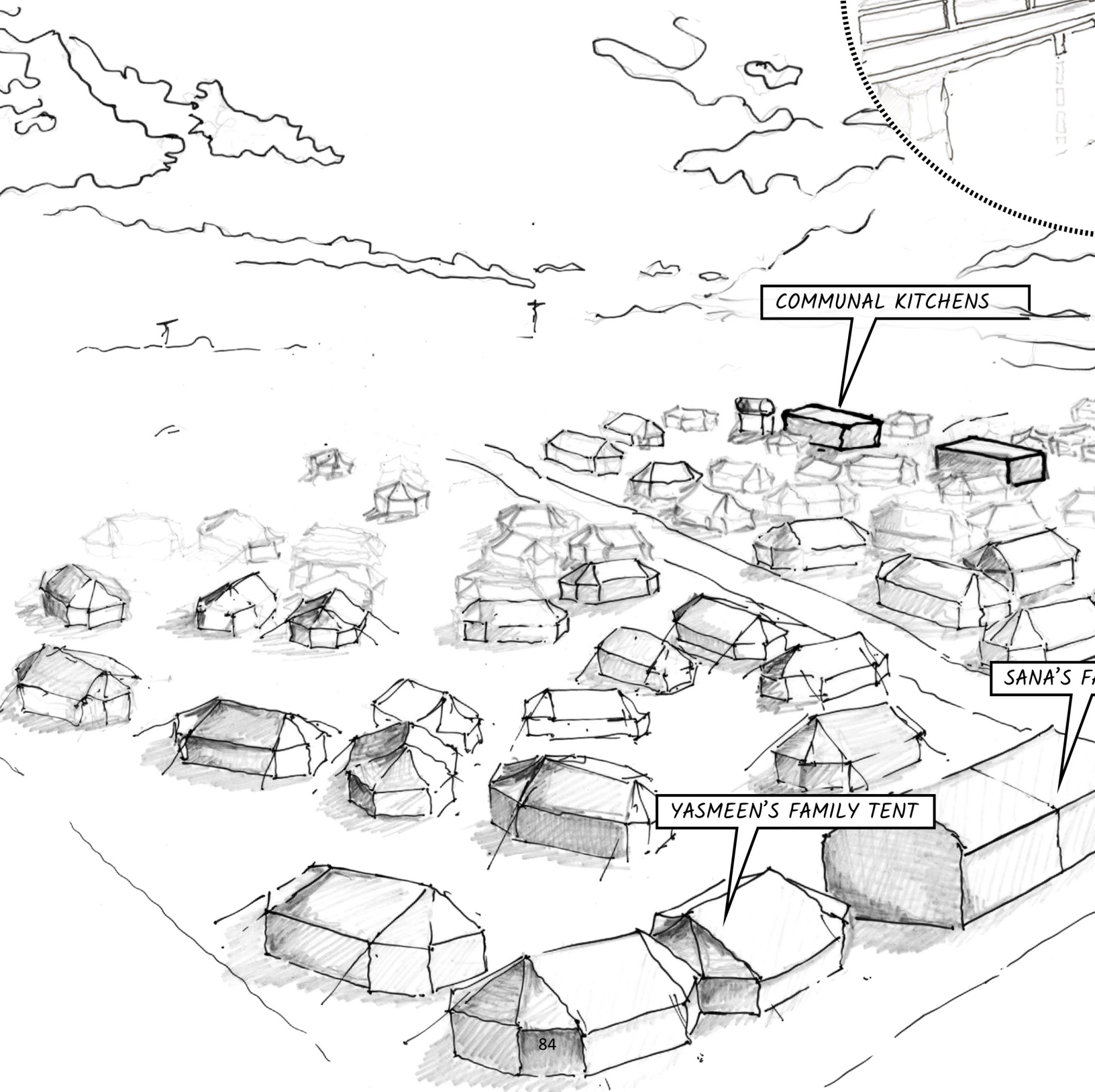
KITCHEN

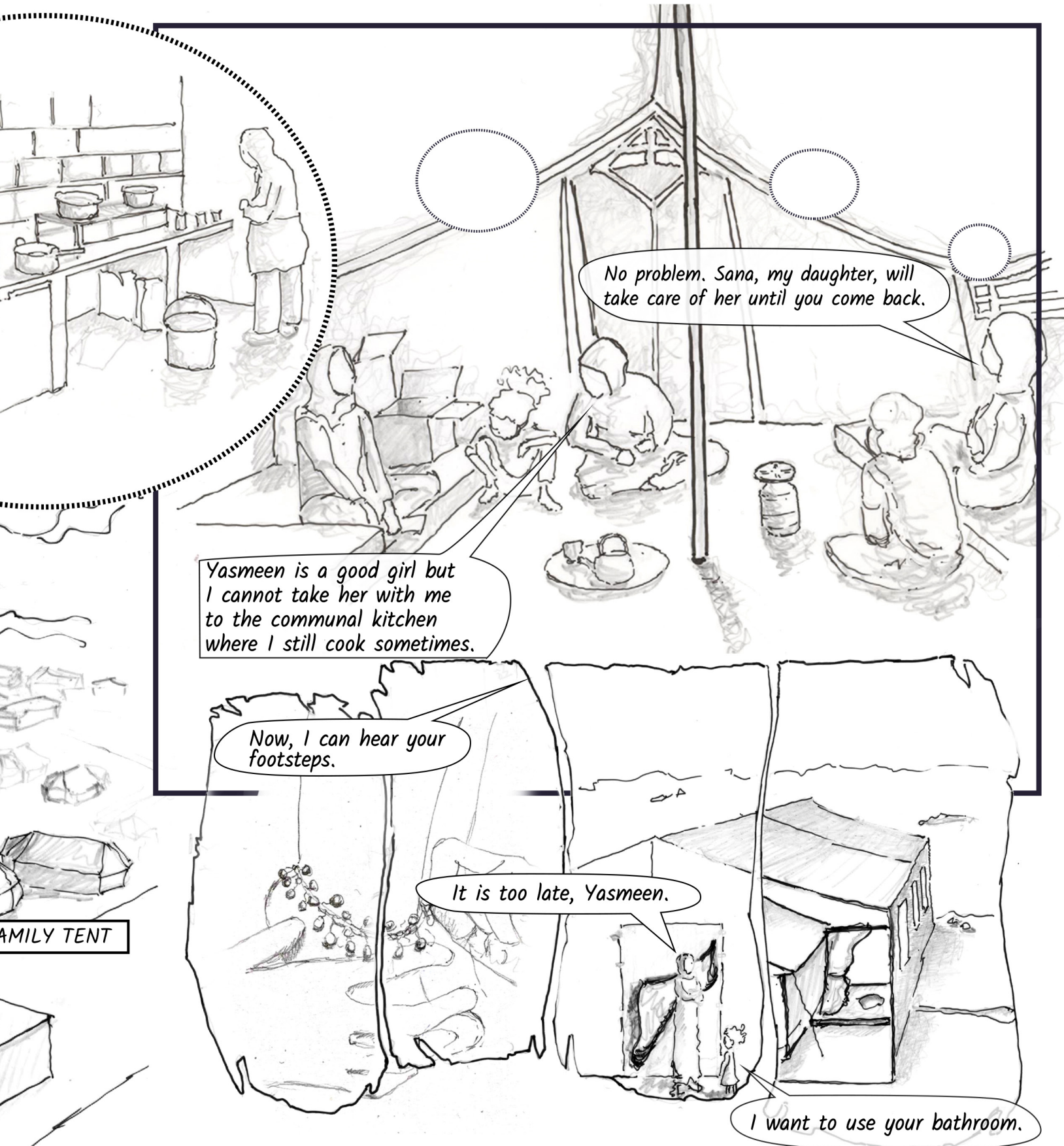
BATHROOM

STORAGE

SEWER HOLE

A FEW WEEKS LATER, THE NEWLY ARRIVED NEIGHBOR VISITED US ASKING FOR HELP IN TAKING CARE OF HER DAUGHTER, YASMEEN.





No problem. Sana, my daughter, will take care of her until you come back.

Yasmeen is a good girl but I cannot take her with me to the communal kitchen where I still cook sometimes.

Now, I can hear your footsteps.

It is too late, Yasmeen.

I want to use your bathroom.

FAMILY TENT

OVER THE DAYS, I DID NOT ONLY DISCOVER HOW ENERGETIC AND LIVELY YASMEEN IS BUT ALSO THE NEW WORLD SHE INTRODUCED TO ME: THE WORLD OF HOPE, RESPONSIBILITY, AND LOVE. ALTHOUGH HER TENT WAS REALLY CLOSE TO OURS, I WISHED SHE COULD STAY WITH ME ALL THE TIME. SHE SIMPLY BECAME MY MOTIVATION FOR LIVING IN THE CAMP.

ZA'ATARI CAMP 'S MARKET..

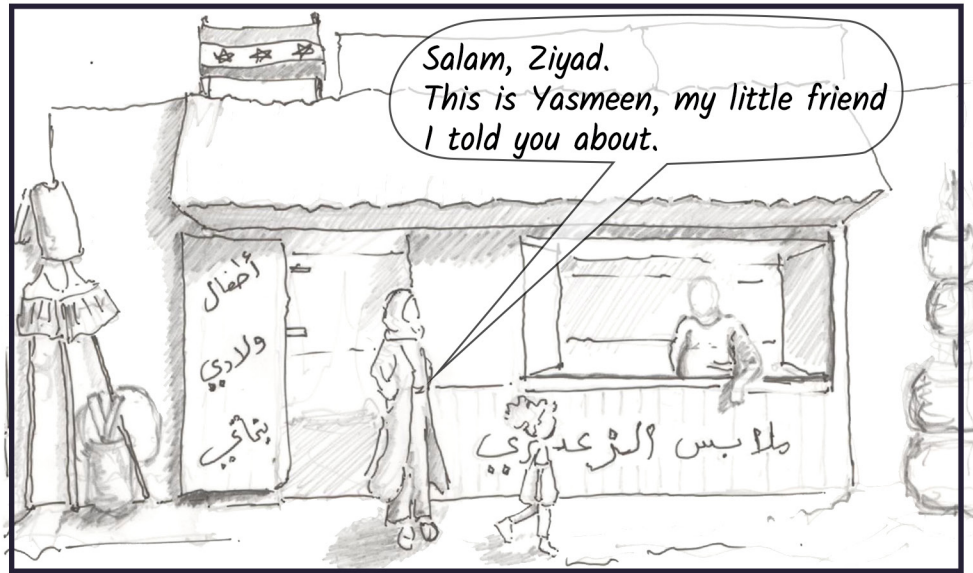
One day, I took Yasmeen with me to our retail shop. I was preparing a surprise for her.

Salam, Ziyad!
Is what I asked you to bring ready?

Yes, it is.
She can come and take it!



Salam, Ziyad.
This is Yasmeen, my little friend I told you about.



This is what you wished to have, Yasmeen.
And You Sana, what do you wish?

I only wish to return to Syria
and continue my education.

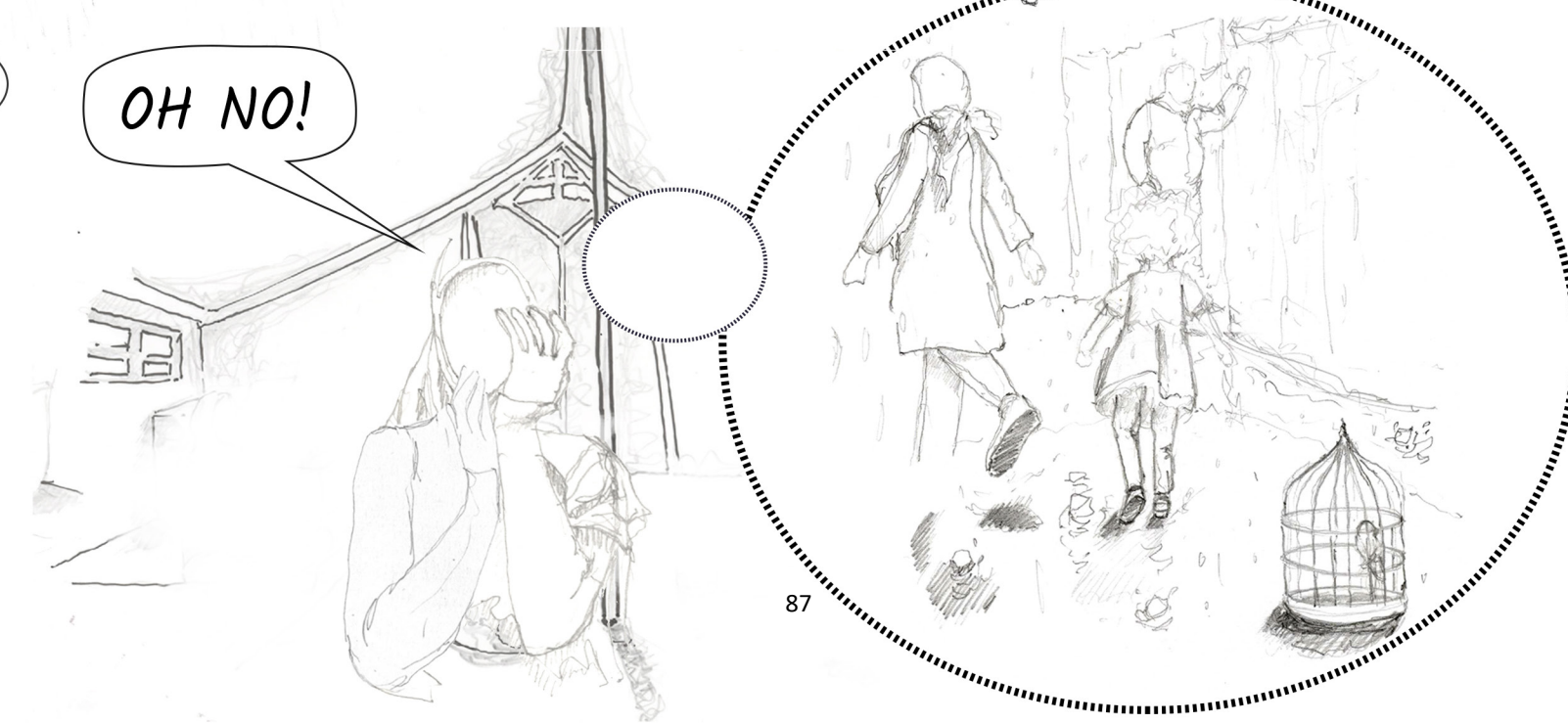




It's raining. Let's go home!



Stay with your mom and dad.



OH NO!



YAAAAASM



EEEEEN!!!

A FEW DAYS LATER..



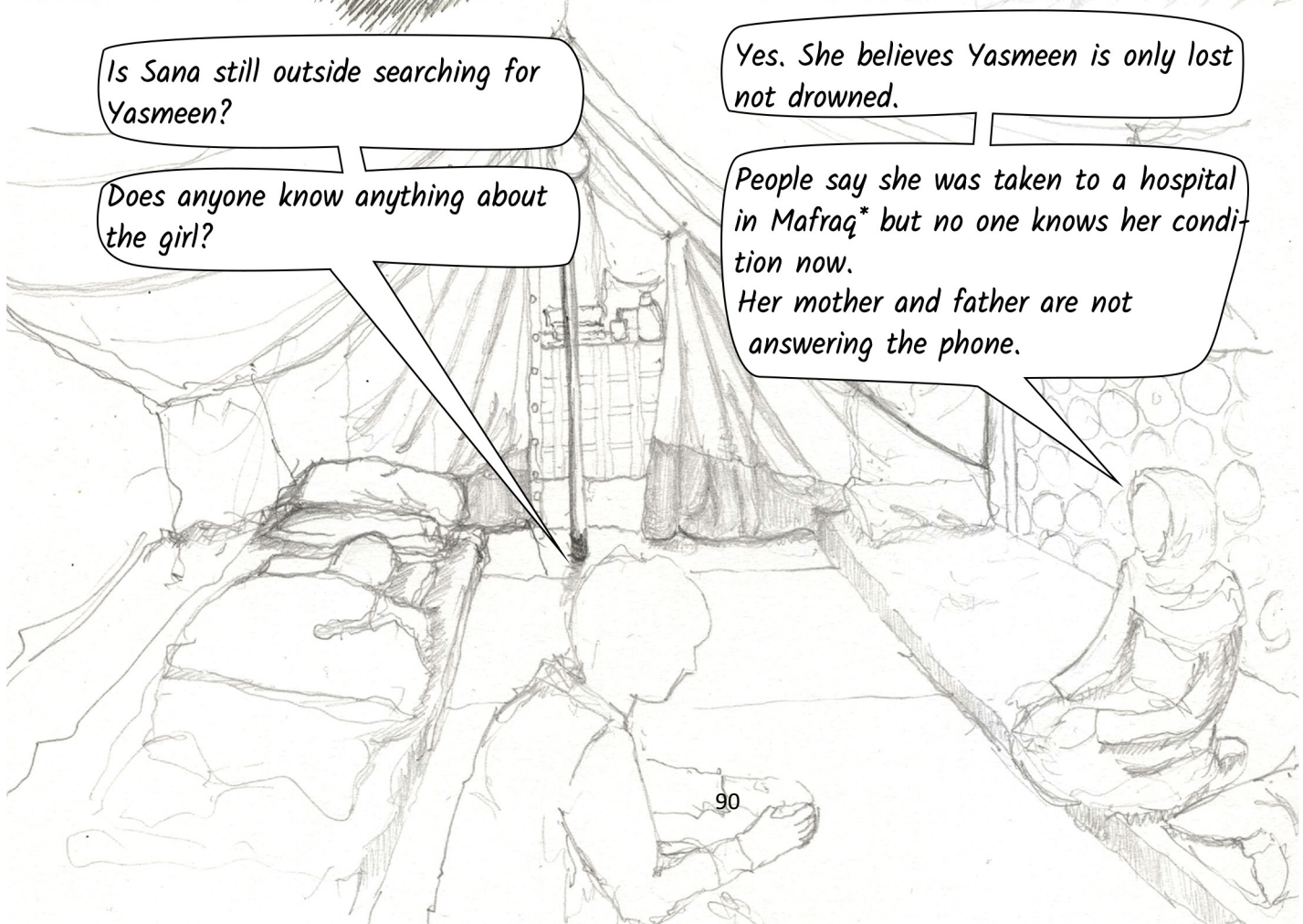
Is Sana still outside searching for Yasmeen?

Does anyone know anything about the girl?

Yes. She believes Yasmeen is only lost not drowned.

People say she was taken to a hospital in Mafraq but no one knows her condition now.*

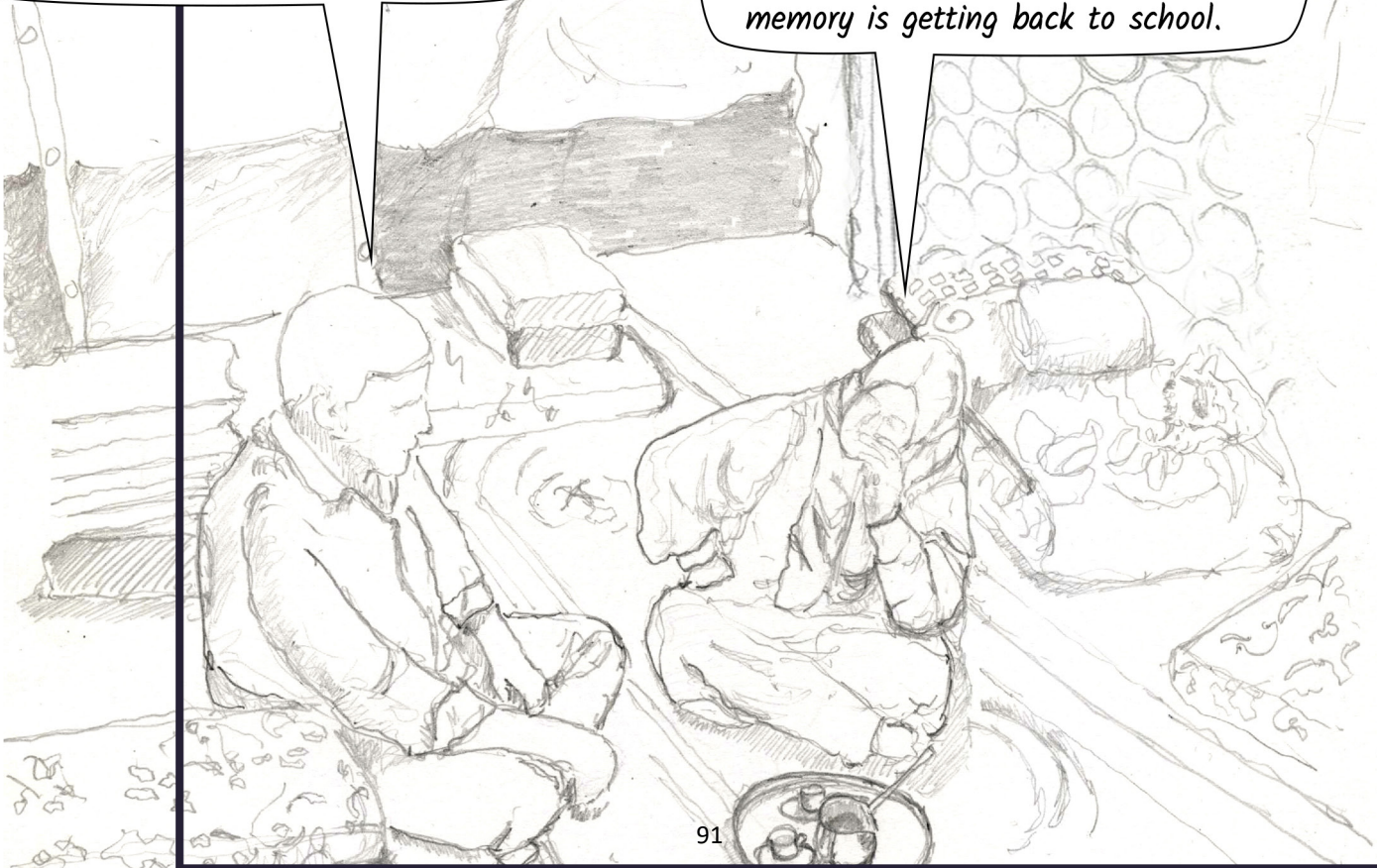
Her mother and father are not answering the phone.





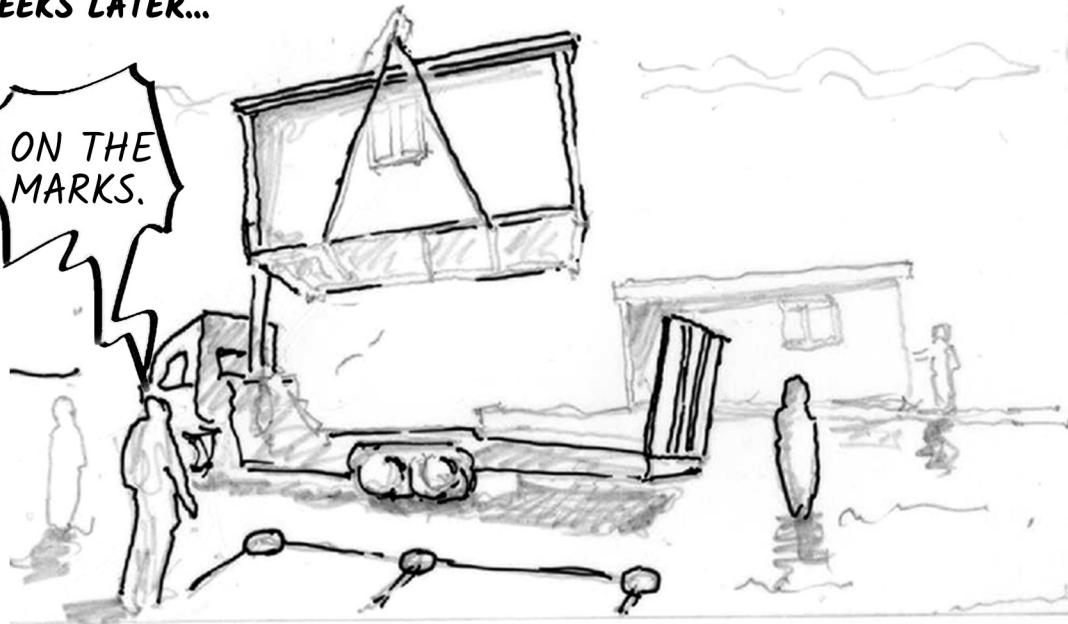
We should help Sana to cope with this trauma. I am thinking of changing the shelter to a caravan and I won't wait for the one provided by the UN. I will just buy one.

Great! The caravan we are waiting to receive from the UN won't be big enough anyway. But I know the only thing that will make her get past the memory is getting back to school.



TWO WEEKS LATER...

ON THE MARKS.



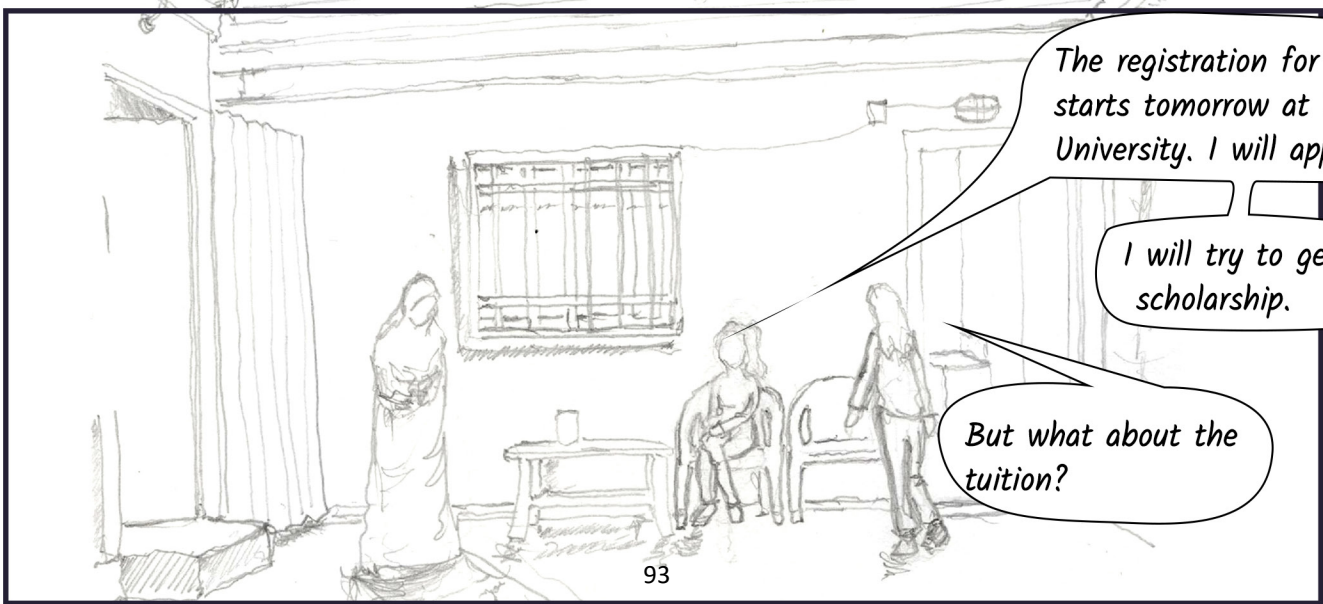
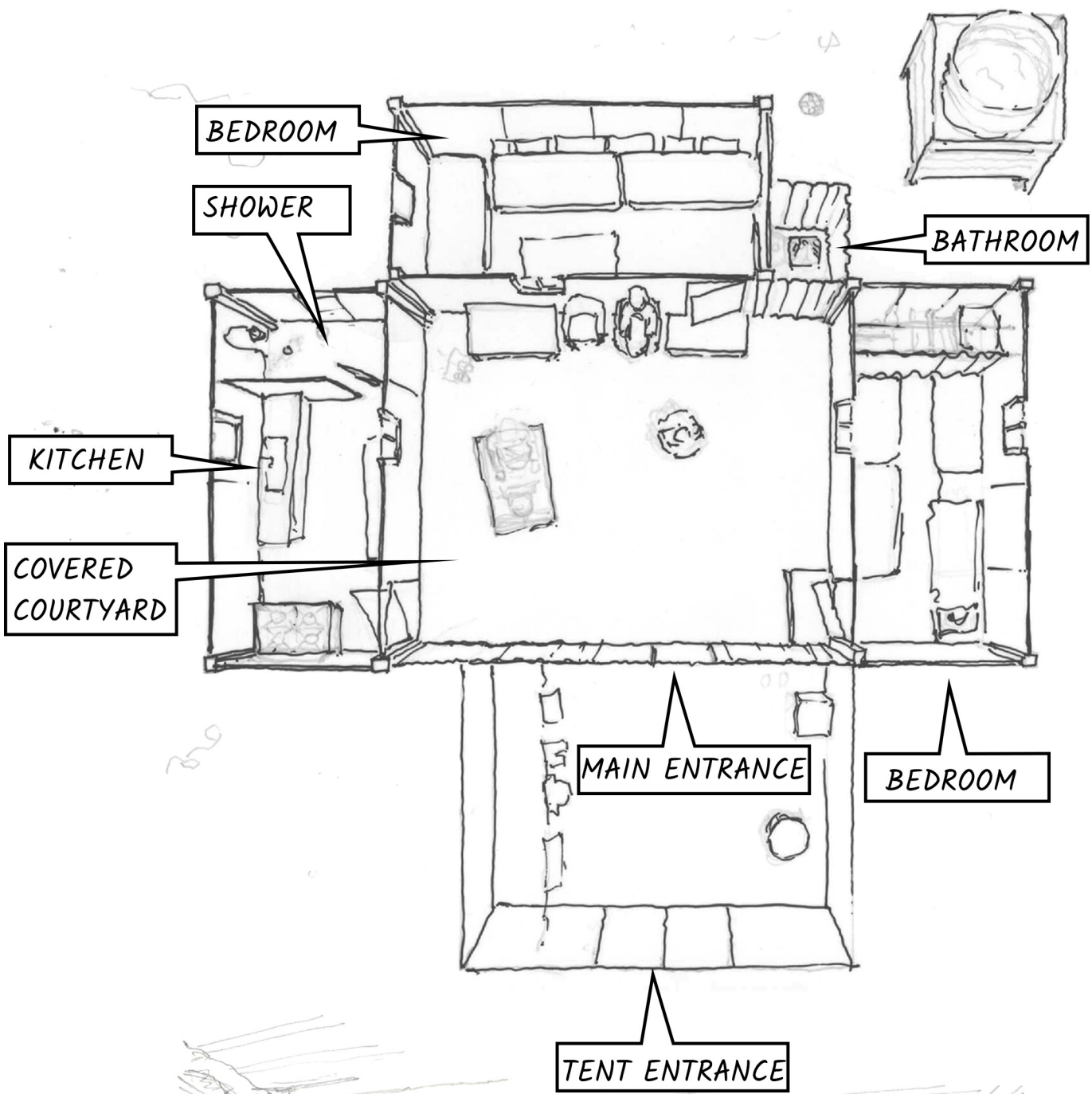
I want to plant a Jasmine.



How lucky you are!
You're receiving the caravan from the UN
in perfect timing.

Right! I only need to pour the
concrete base once.

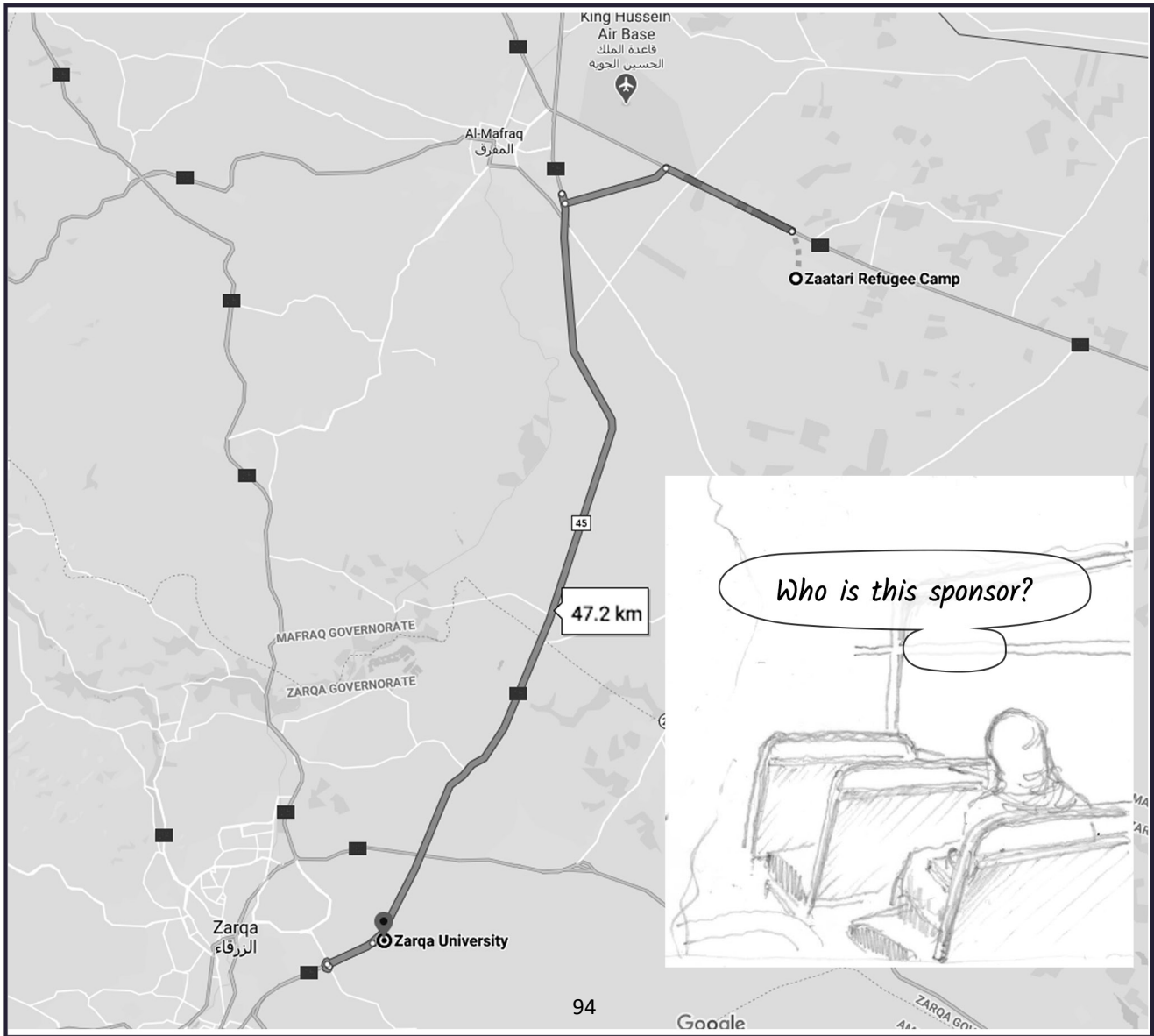




A FEW WEEKS LATER...



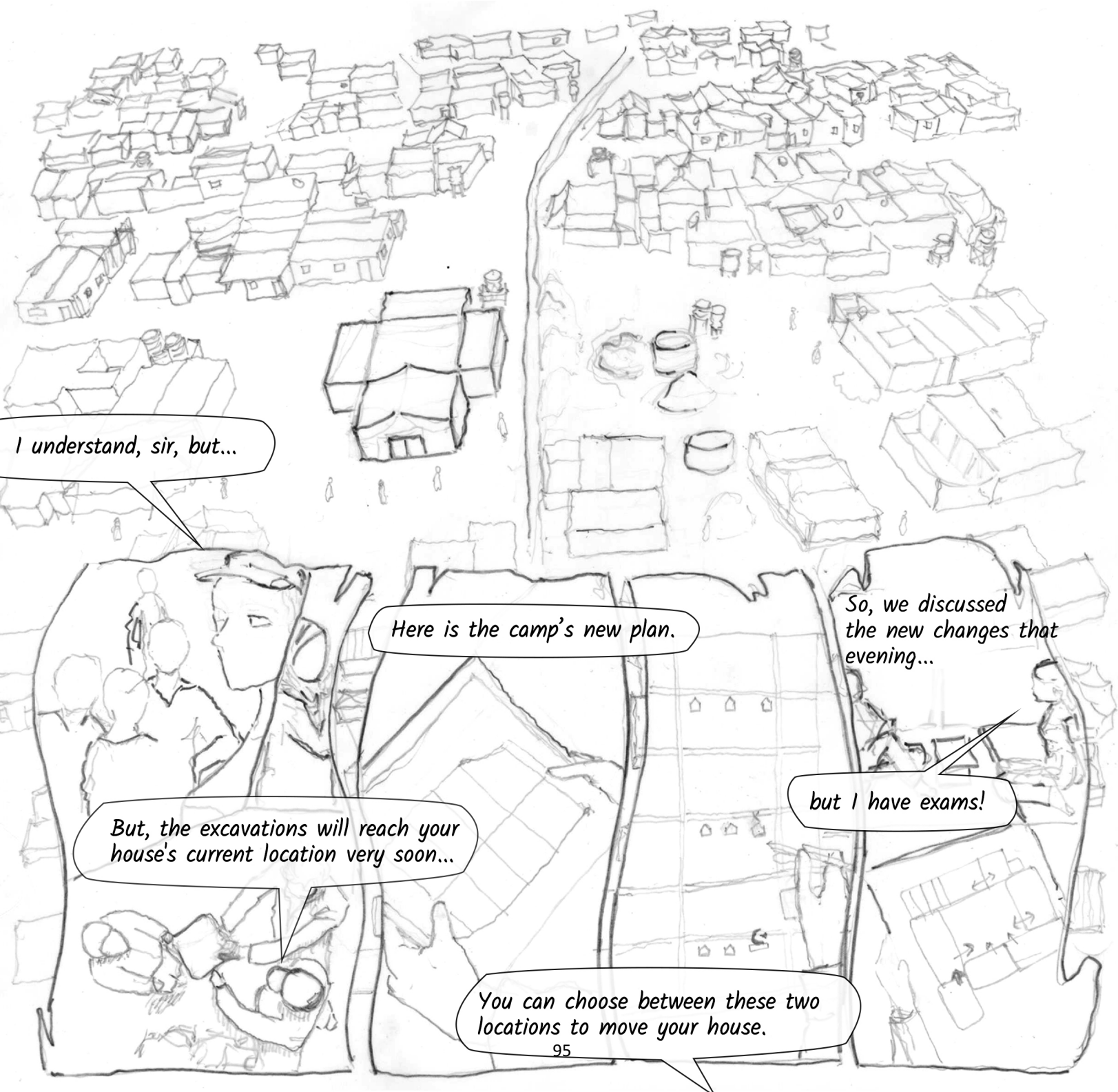
The university has received a fund from a sponsor. I have the tuition fully covered now.



Who is this sponsor?



ONE DAY, WHEN I WAS COMING BACK HOME FROM MY SCHOOL, I SAW MY FATHER AGITATED WHILE HE WAS SPEAKING WITH A YOUNG GUY WHO SEEMED HE WORKED WITH THE CAMP'S AUTHORITIES. I FOUND THAT GUY FUNNY WITH THAT CAP ON HIS HEAD. I DID NOT EXPECT MY LOOK TO HIM TO CHANGE VERY QUICKLY BUT WHAT HAPPENED NEXT SURPRISED ME.



I understand, sir, but...

Here is the camp's new plan.

So, we discussed the new changes that evening...

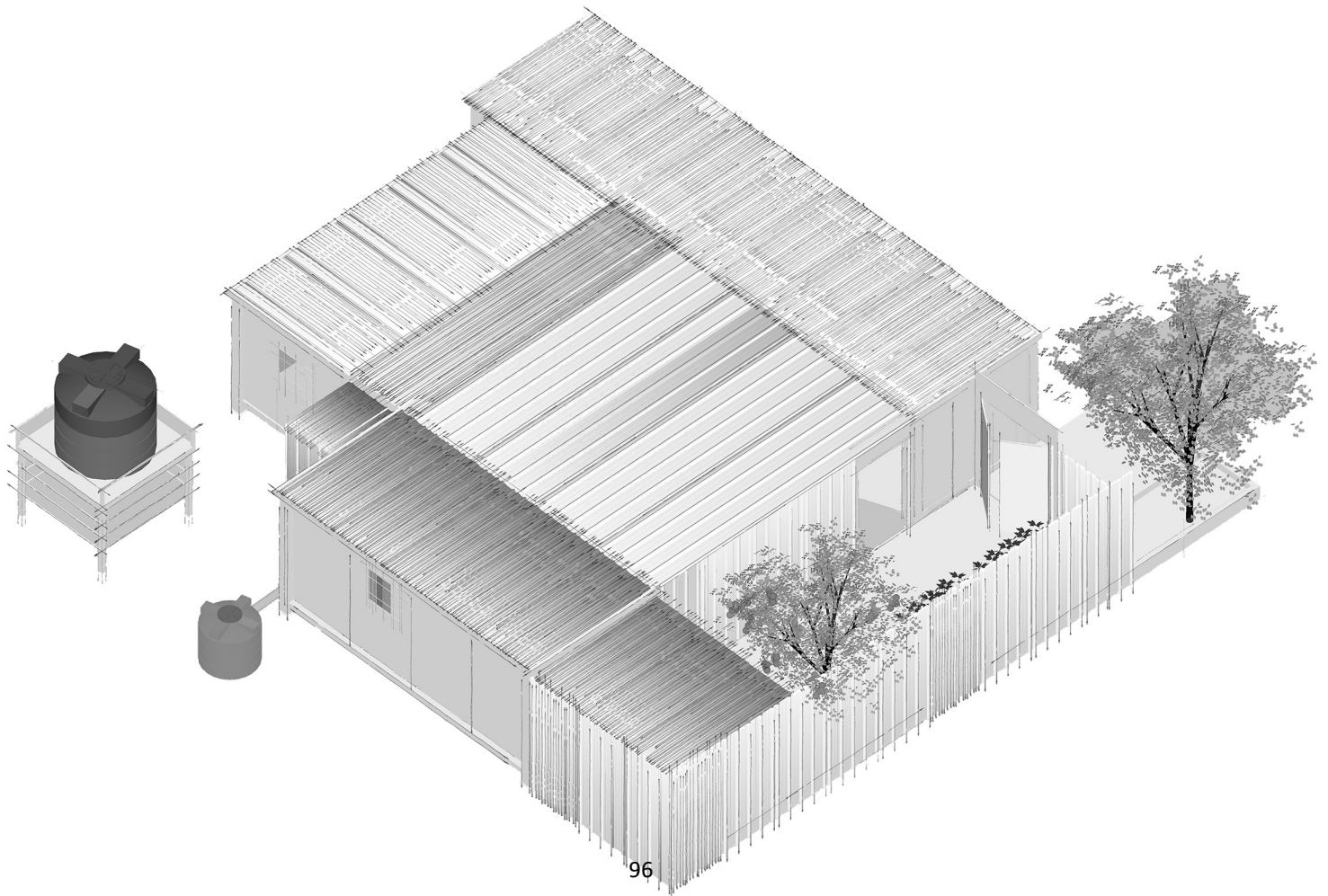
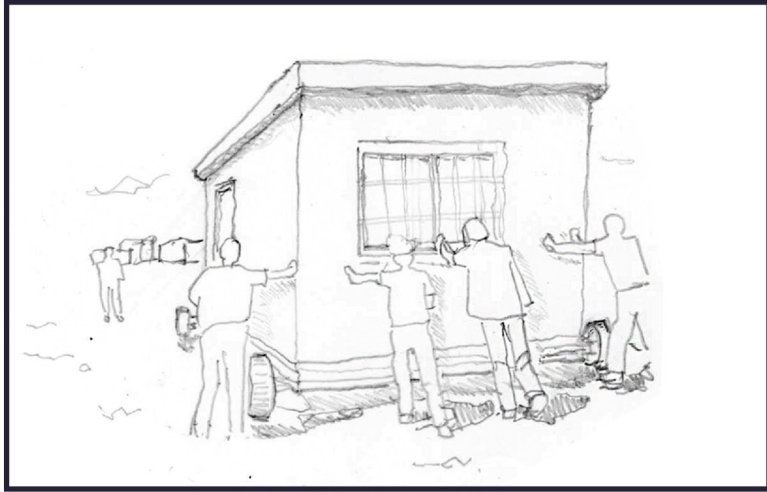
but I have exams!

But, the excavations will reach your house's current location very soon...

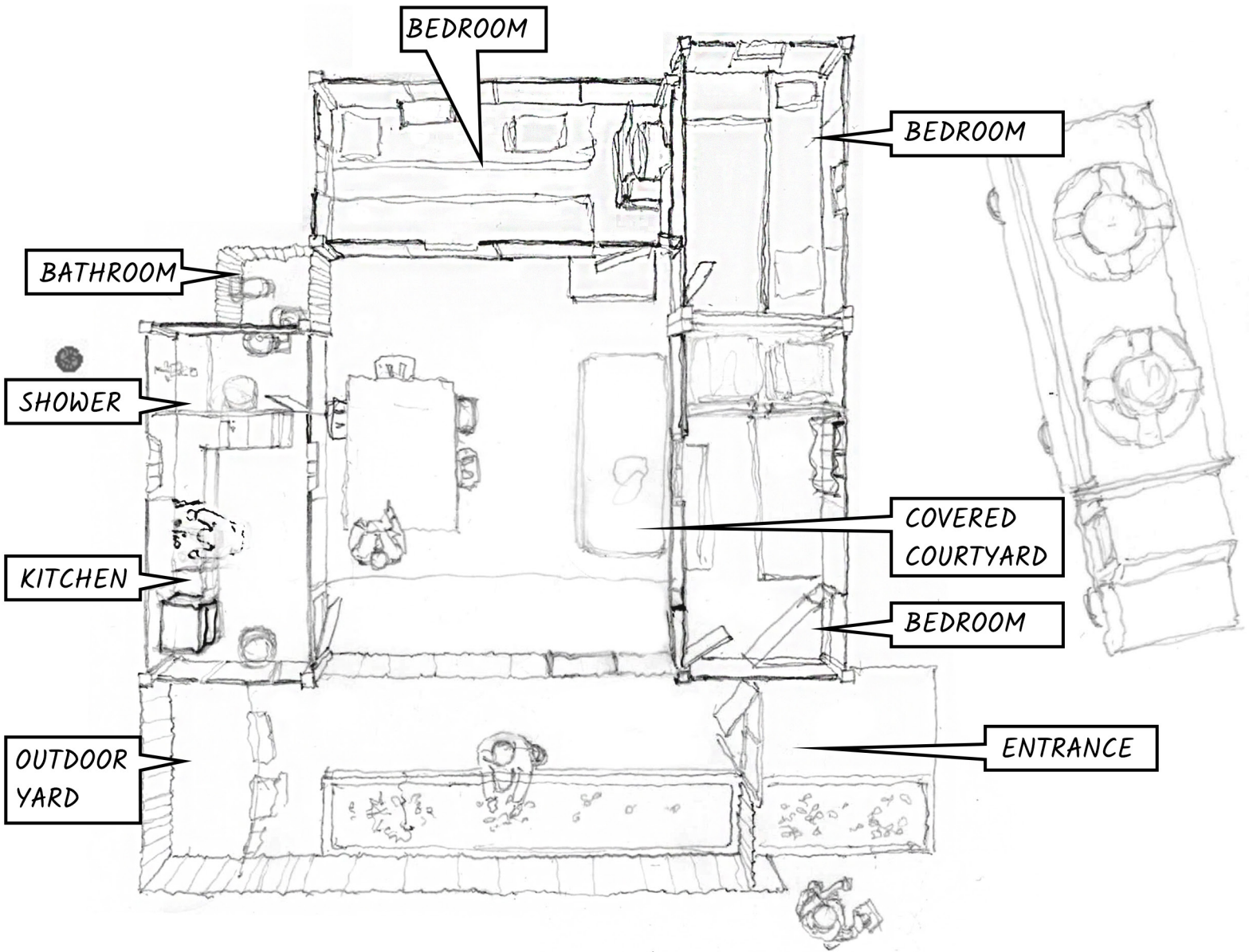
You can choose between these two locations to move your house.

A FEW DAYS LATER...

THE HOUSE WAS MOVED BY MY FATHER AND HIS FRIENDS.
EXCEPT FOR ONE CARAVAN WHERE I STAYED THE ENTIRE DAY
STUDYING.



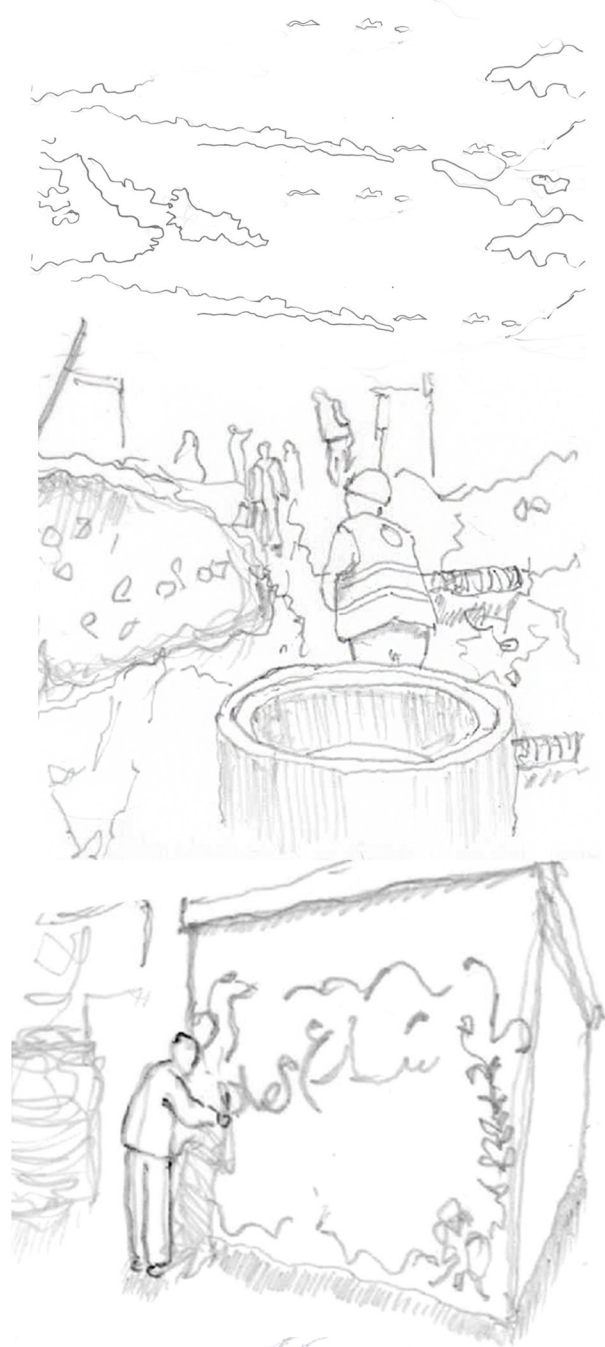
FOR ME, THE NEW HOUSE WAS A GOOD SIGN AND AN OMEN AT THE SAME TIME. AFTER WE REESTABLISHED THE BUILDING, THE SAME GUY VISITED US AGAIN AND HE ASKED TO TALK TO MY FATHER TO FINISH THE WATER TANK INSTALLATION AND FOR AN ADDITIONAL REASON.



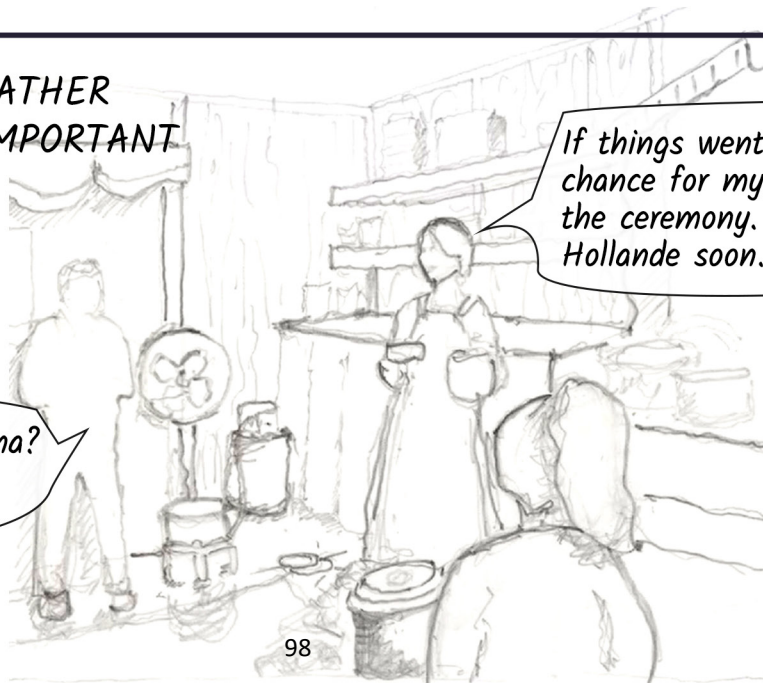
WHEN I OPENED THE DOOR FOR HIM, HE SEEMED DIFFERENT. HE WAS PROFESSIONAL IN EXPLAINING THE NEW SEWER SYSTEM AND THE NEW NAME ASSIGNED TO OUR STREET.



Can I talk to your father? I need to know which caravan he prefers the name of the street to be written on.



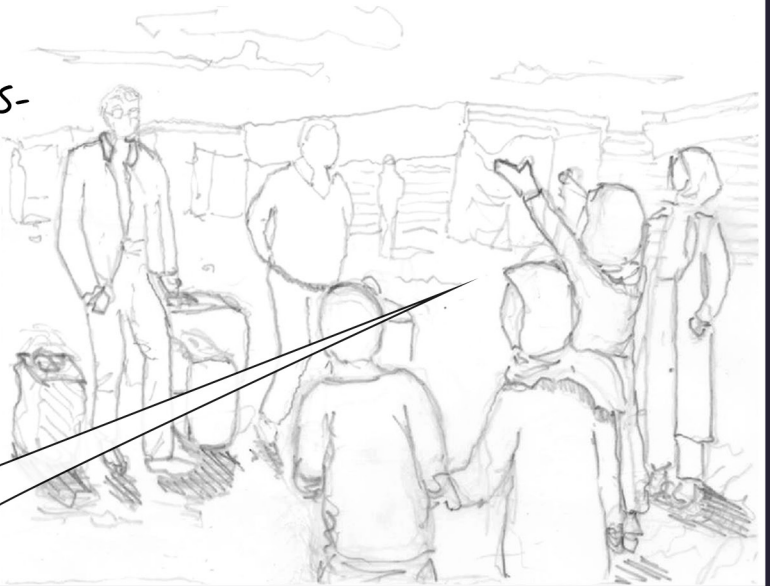
AFTER HE LEFT, MY FATHER CALLED ME FOR AN IMPORTANT ISSUE.



If things went well, it will be great chance for my brother to attend the ceremony. He is coming from Hollande soon.

So, What do you think, Sana? Do you like to meet with Nour, the guy?

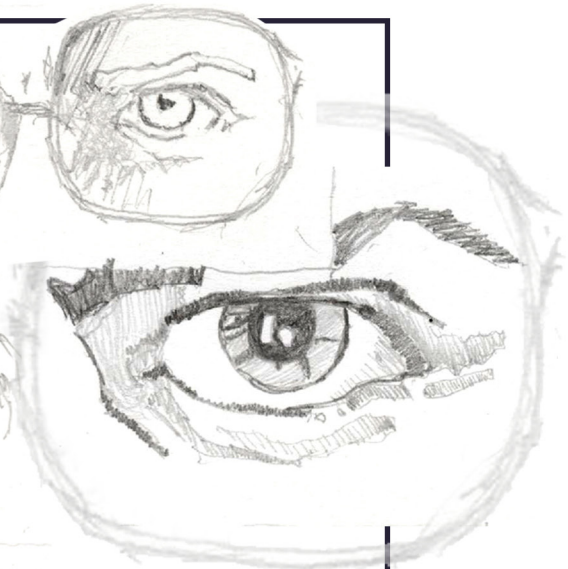
MY UNCLE AND HIS SON GOT THE ACCEPTANCE EASILY FOR A VISIT FROM THE CAMP'S ADMINISTRATION. THEY SPENT A MONTH WITH US. WE WERE ALL SO HAPPY ABOUT THEIR COMING UNTIL MY COUSIN, KARAM HAS MET NOUR.



You are welcome!!!!

Ahlan, Nour. This is my brother-in-law and his son, Karam. They have just arrived from Hollande to visit.

Oh! Ahlan.

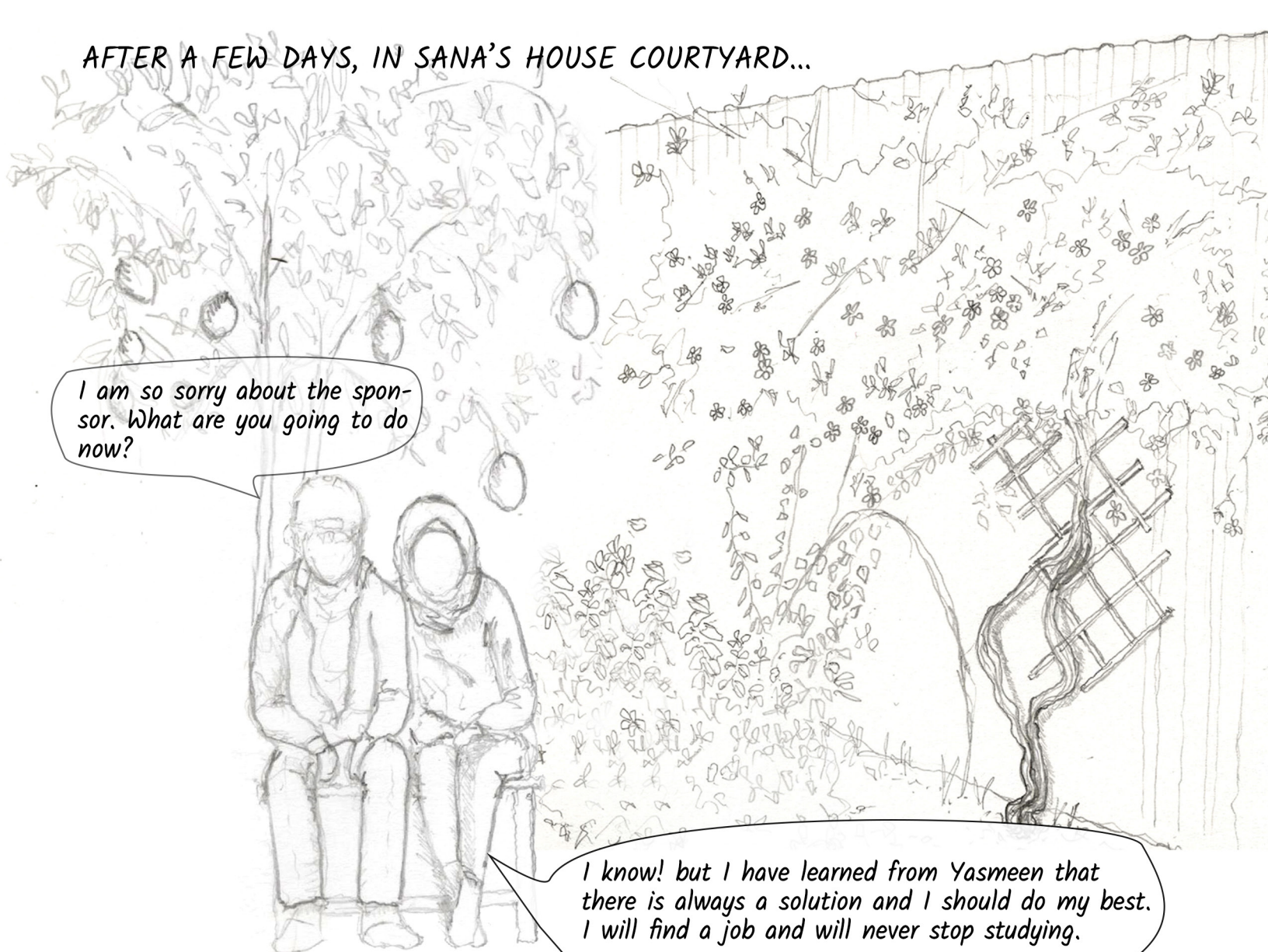


IN THE MIDDLE OF THAT "HAPPY" DAY, I RECEIVED A CALL FROM THE SCHOOL.

What do you mean by saying the sponsor has stopped the fund?


OH! SANA!

AFTER A FEW DAYS, IN SANA'S HOUSE COURTYARD...



I am so sorry about the sponsor. What are you going to do now?

I know! but I have learned from Yasmeen that there is always a solution and I should do my best. I will find a job and will never stop studying.



See! Yasmeen plant has bloomed early this year. Every time I smell these little white flowers, I remember her and wish I can see her again.



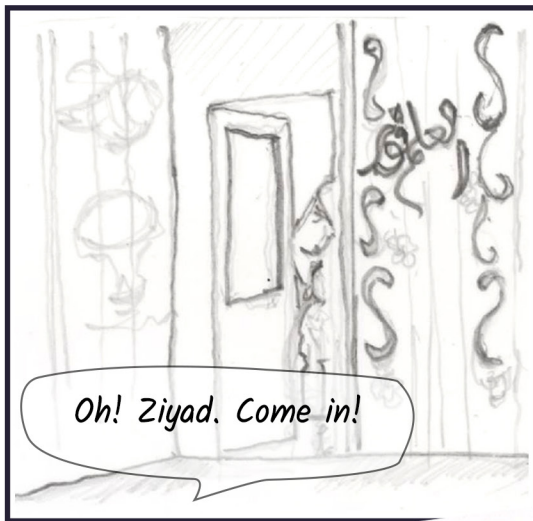
IT TOOK ME A LONG TIME TO FIND A JOB AS A TEACHER IN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FOR GIRLS. BUT I NEVER KNEW THAT THIS WORK WILL PROVIDE ME WITH THE MOST JOYFUL DAYS IN MY LIFE AT ZA'ATARI. ESPECIALLY THAT I MET MY LITTLE FRIEND IN THERE.



Straight up, everyone! Rise and shine!



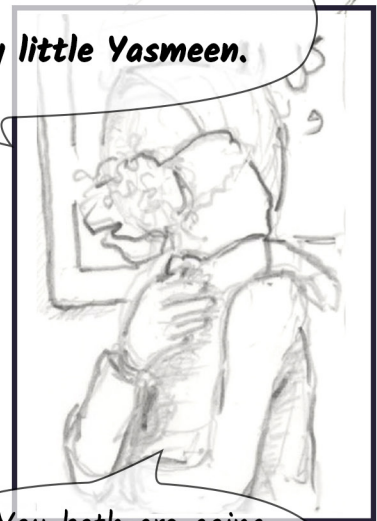
KNOCK!
KNOCK!!



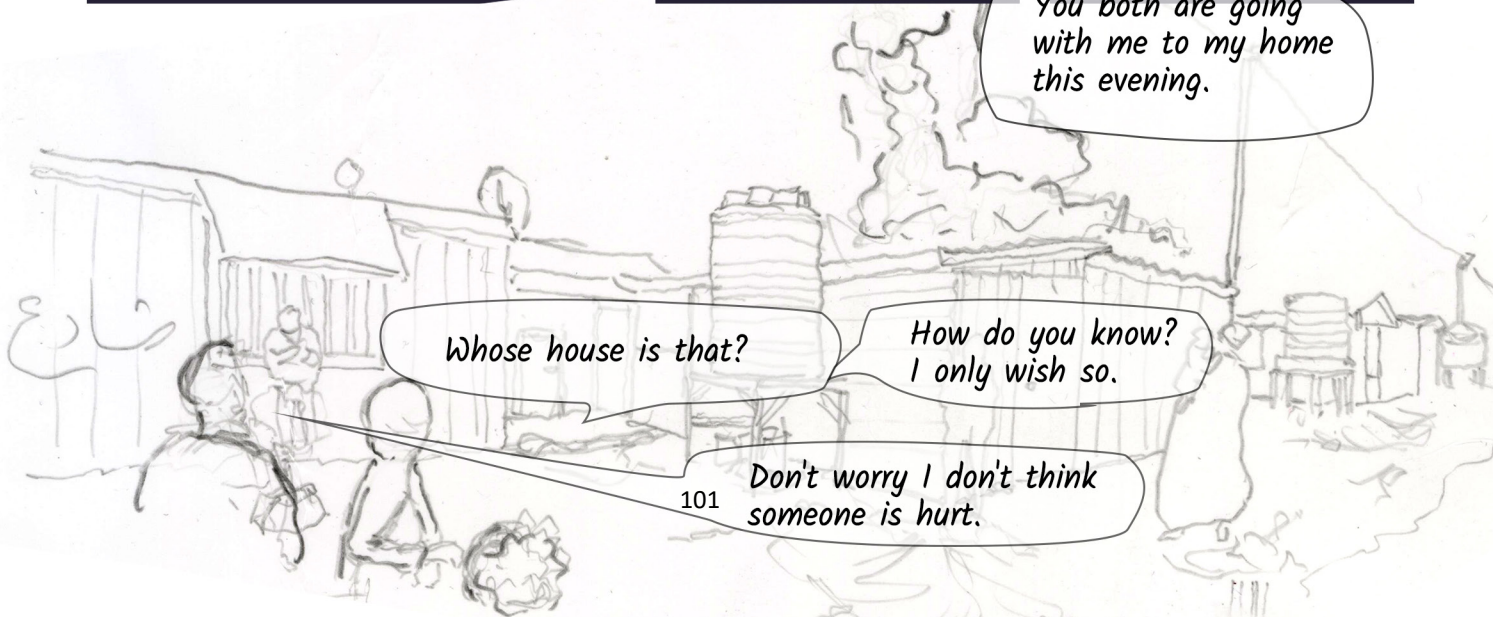
Oh! Ziyad. Come in!



I cannot believe it. My little Yasmeen.



You both are going with me to my home this evening.



Whose house is that?

How do you know?
I only wish so.

101 Don't worry I don't think someone is hurt.

IN SANA'S HOUSE BACKYARD...

Knock !
Knock!

I lost my house and you lost your college sponsorship at the same time.
I have doubts that this is all arranged.

There will be no wedding anytime soon.

Ziyad is here.

I am here to deliver a message from an anonymous donor.

Congratulations on your wedding and you are going to get a house.

Ziyad! You always bring happy surprises to us!

Why and how?

ZIYAD TOLD US THAT THE PERSON WHO WAS SPONSORING ME HEARD OF WHAT HAPPENED TO NOUR'S HOUSE AND DECIDED TO HELP US TO GET A HOUSE AND TO PREPARE FOR A BIG WEDDING CEREMONY. HOWEVER, HE KEPT THE NAME OF THAT GENEROUS PERSON AND WHY HE OR SHE WAS INTERESTED IN HELPING ME A SECRET.



A FEW MONTHS AFTER, I GRADUATED WITH FIRST HONOR AND I WAS ABLE TO PAY FOR THE FULL TUITION MYSELF. NOUR AND I WERE PREPARING FOR OUR BIG DAY; WE FURNISHED OUR HOUSE AND WE WERE READY TO START A NEW CHAPTER OF OUR LIFE.

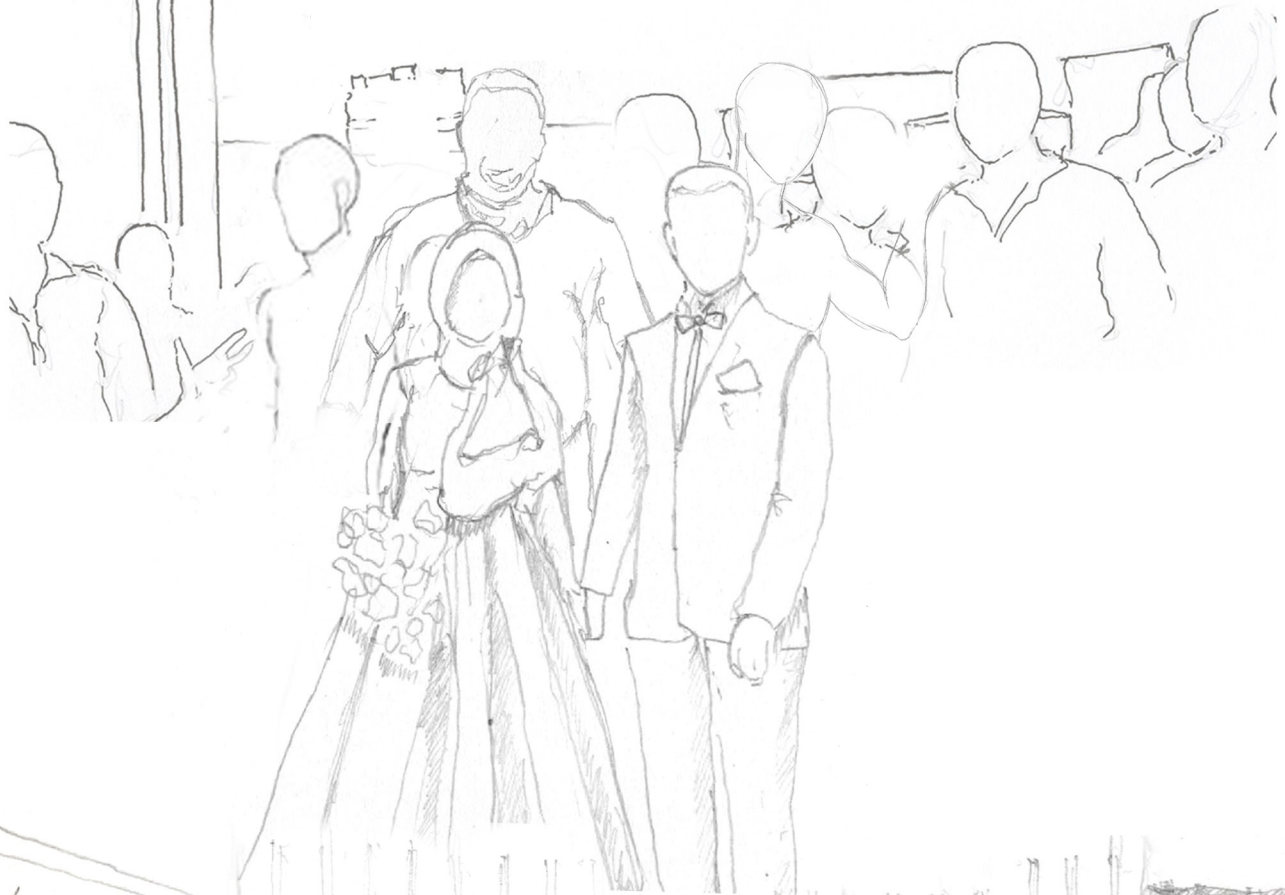
AT THE HINNAH DAY...



حنيت أيدي ولا حنيت أصابعي

ياما حلا النومة بحضن الرايعي

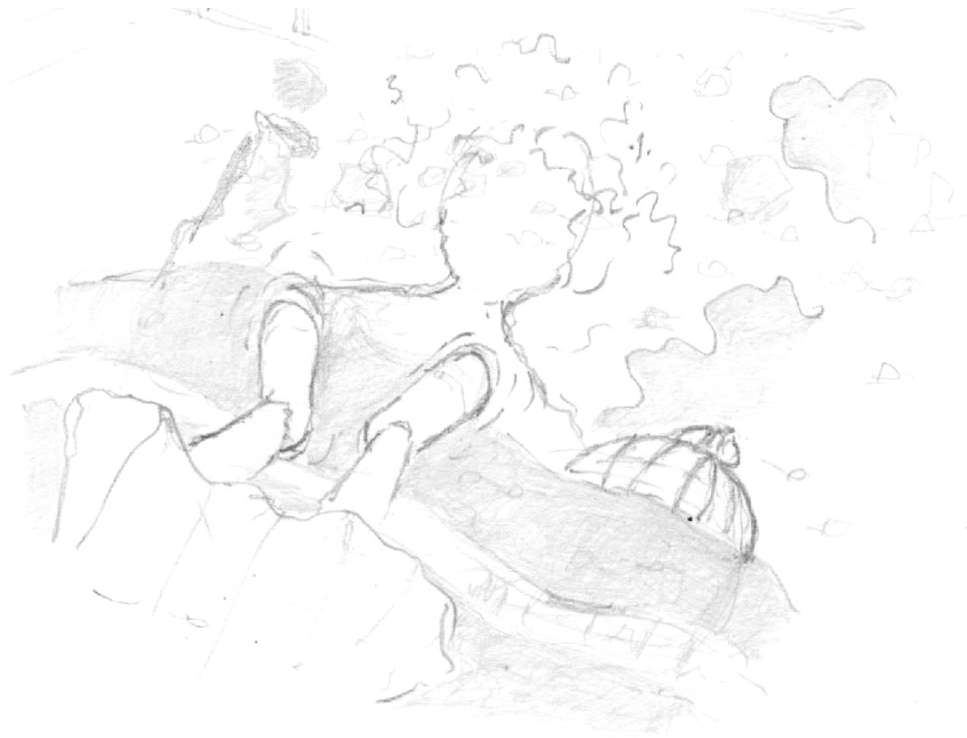
AT THE WEDDING CEREMONY



IN OUR NEW HOME...

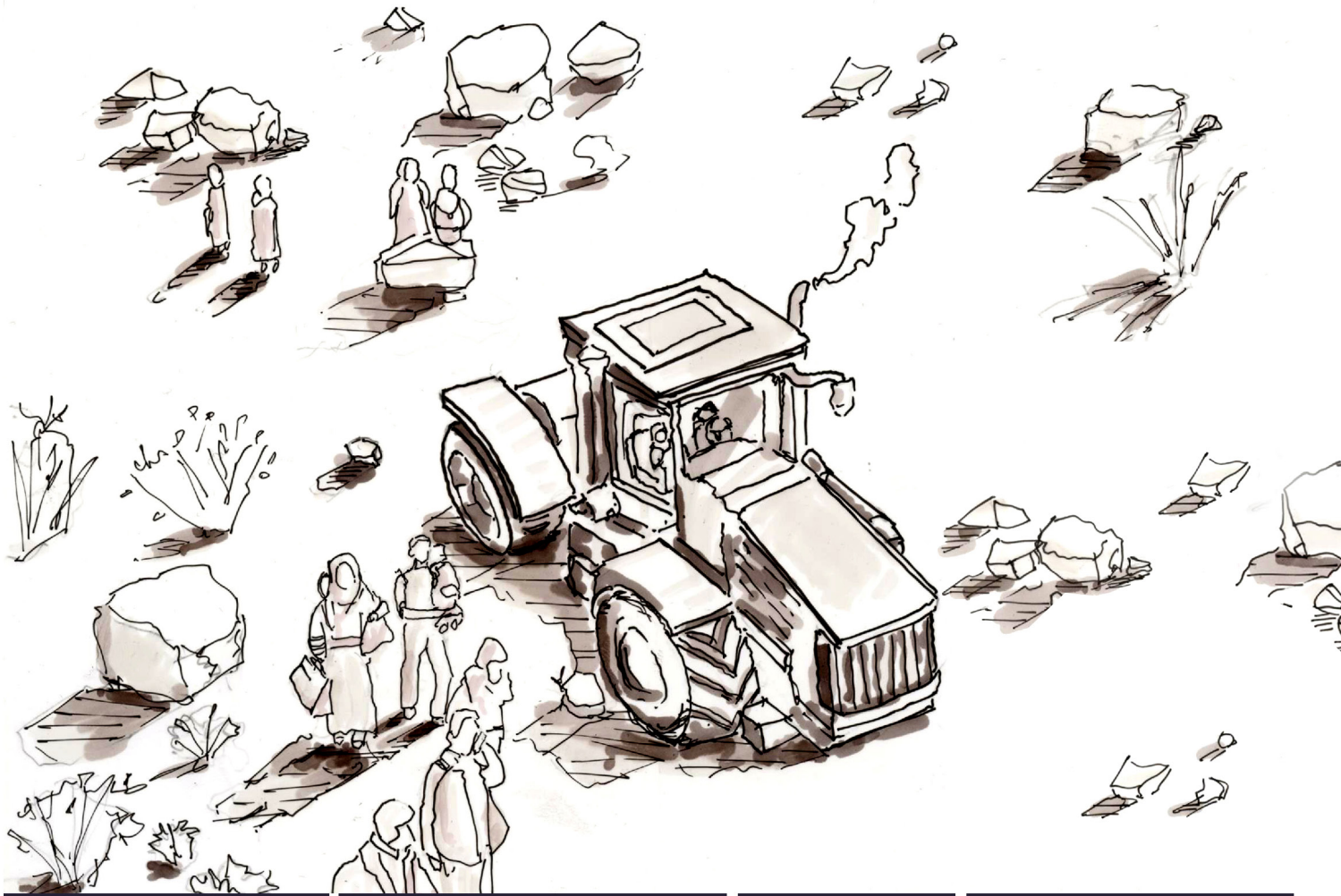


CHAPTER 2



SYRIA, FLEEING DARA'A...





SYRIA, ON THE WAY TO ZA'ATARI CAMP...







*We are in a safer place, Yasmeen.
I promise you that we will make it a happy
place.*



*No, we are staying here
for a few weeks.
Happiness is when we
return to Syria.*

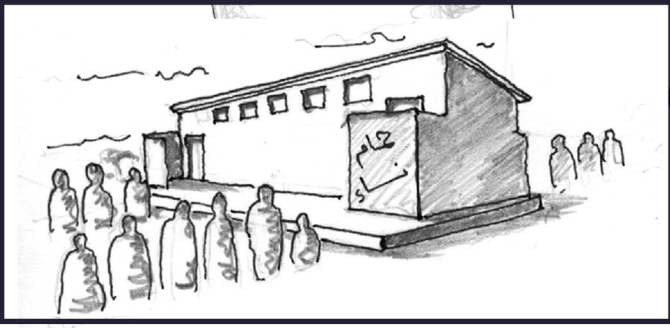
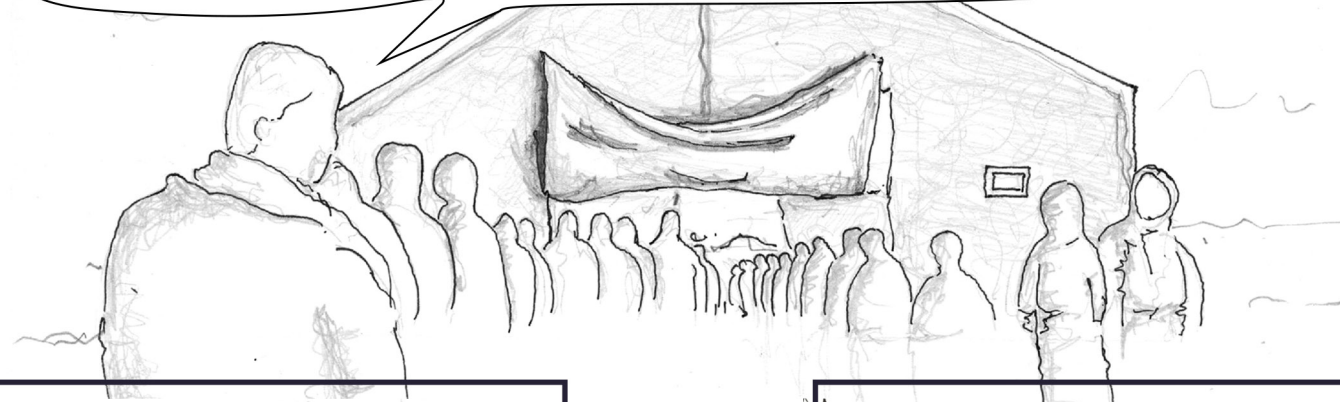


*Let's just be patient no
matter how bad the
situation is.*

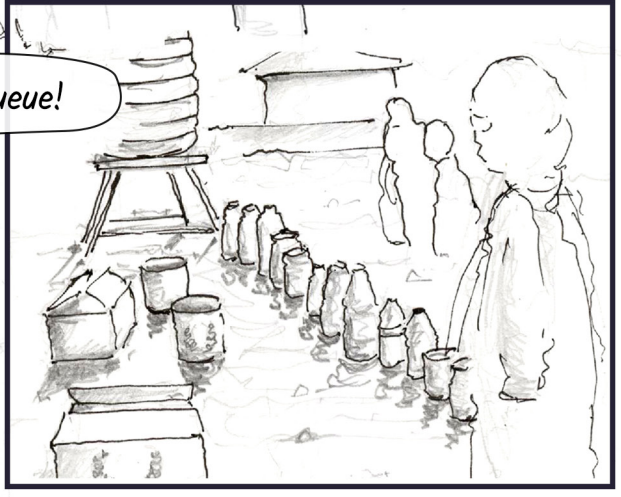


*I am the one who is
going to create happiness.*

This line is for the shelter request. We still need to get bread and water. Your mom wants to take you to the communal showers as well. Be patient, Yasmeen or I will return you to the reception tent to stay with your mom.



What a long queue!



Give me your bread voucher.



A FEW DAYS LATER, IN THE TENT RECEIVED...

Good!
She cannot see me. I will get all what we need my way.

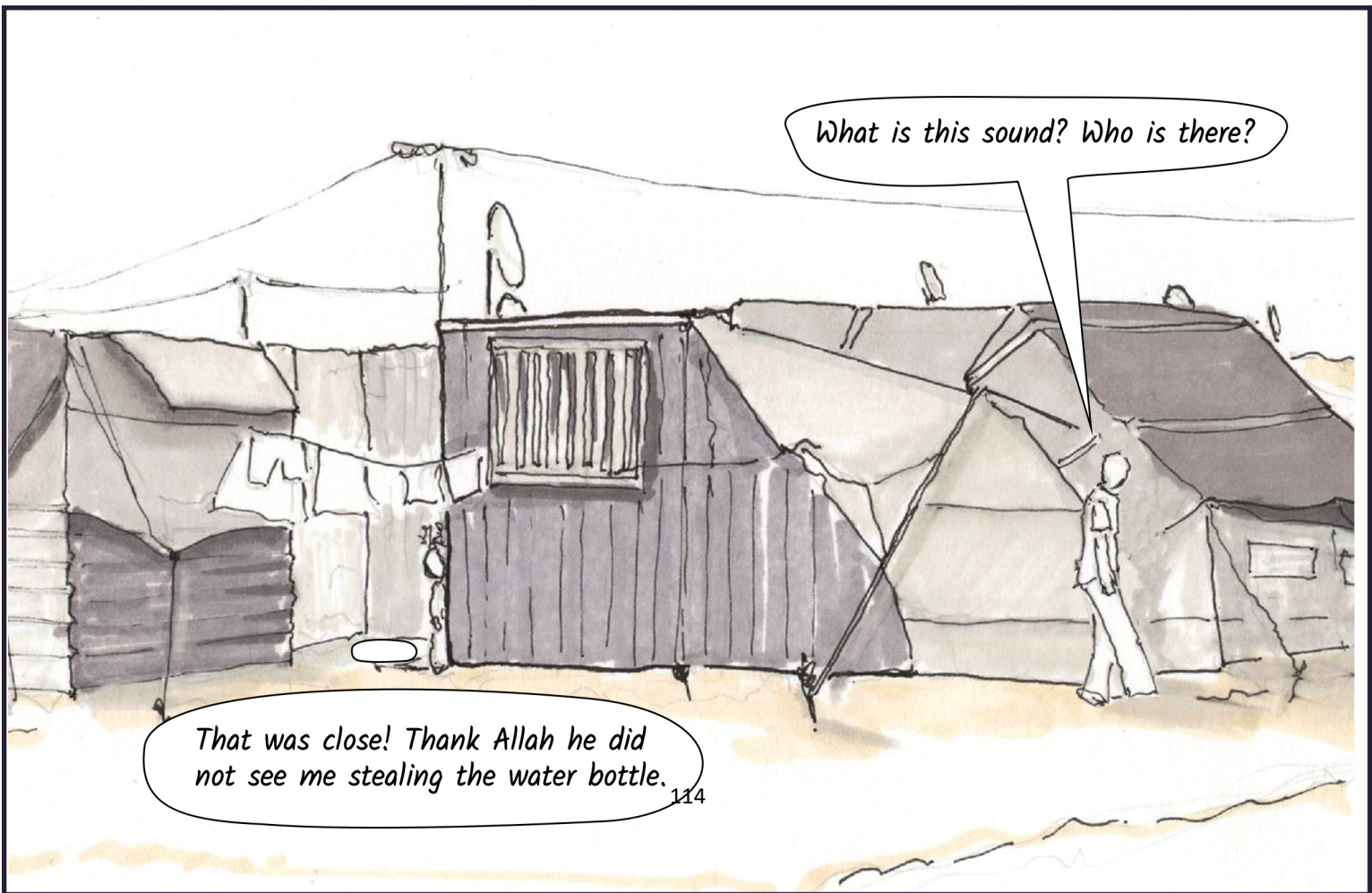
Allah, may you protect Yasmeen!

Found the bread of the day!

I hope she does not notice me!



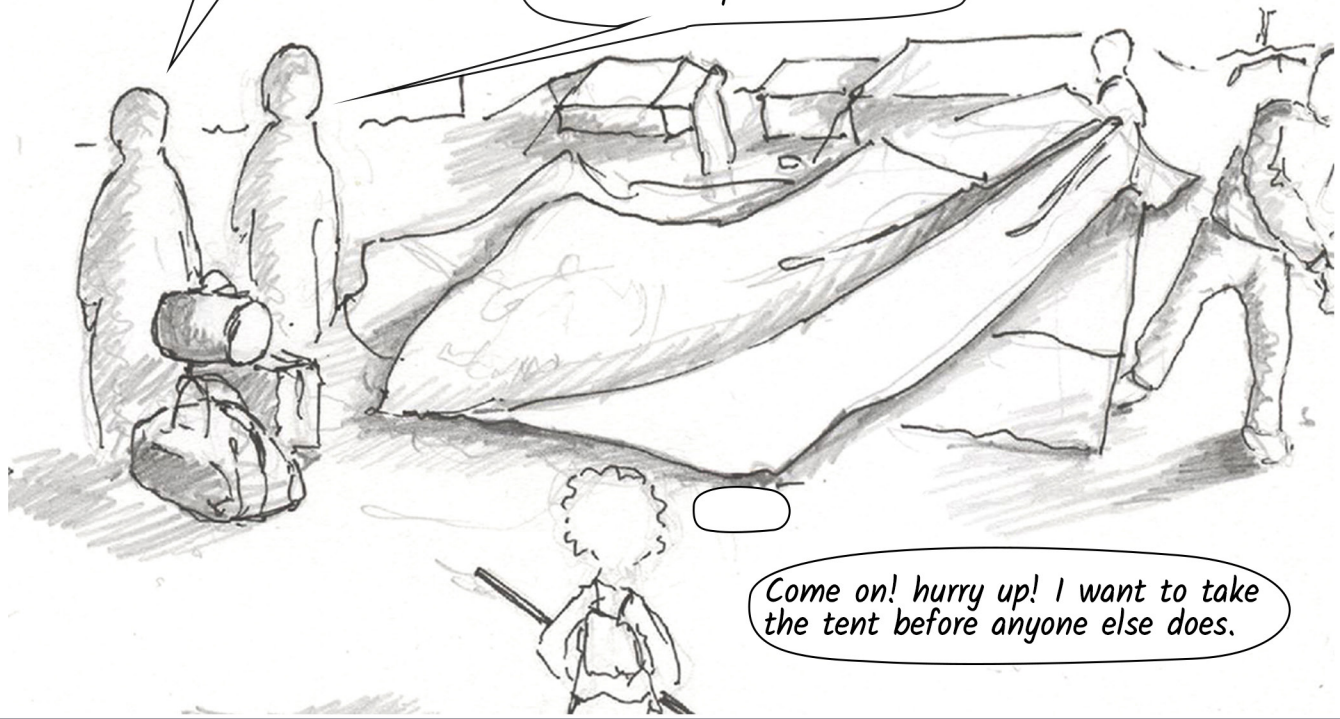
What is this sound? Who is there?



That was close! Thank Allah he did not see me stealing the water bottle.

Finally, we are leaving this place to Amman.

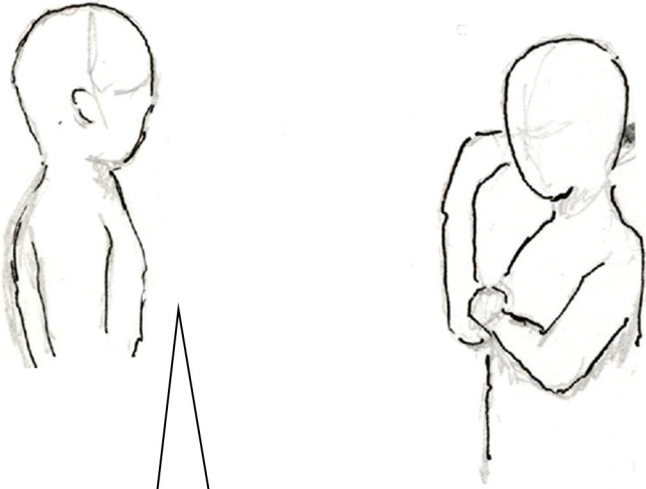
Your aunt saved us when she sponsored us all.



Come on! hurry up! I want to take the tent before anyone else does.



*YASMEEN'S MOTHER AND FATHER AFTER THEY SAW
WHAT SHE BROUGHT HOME...*

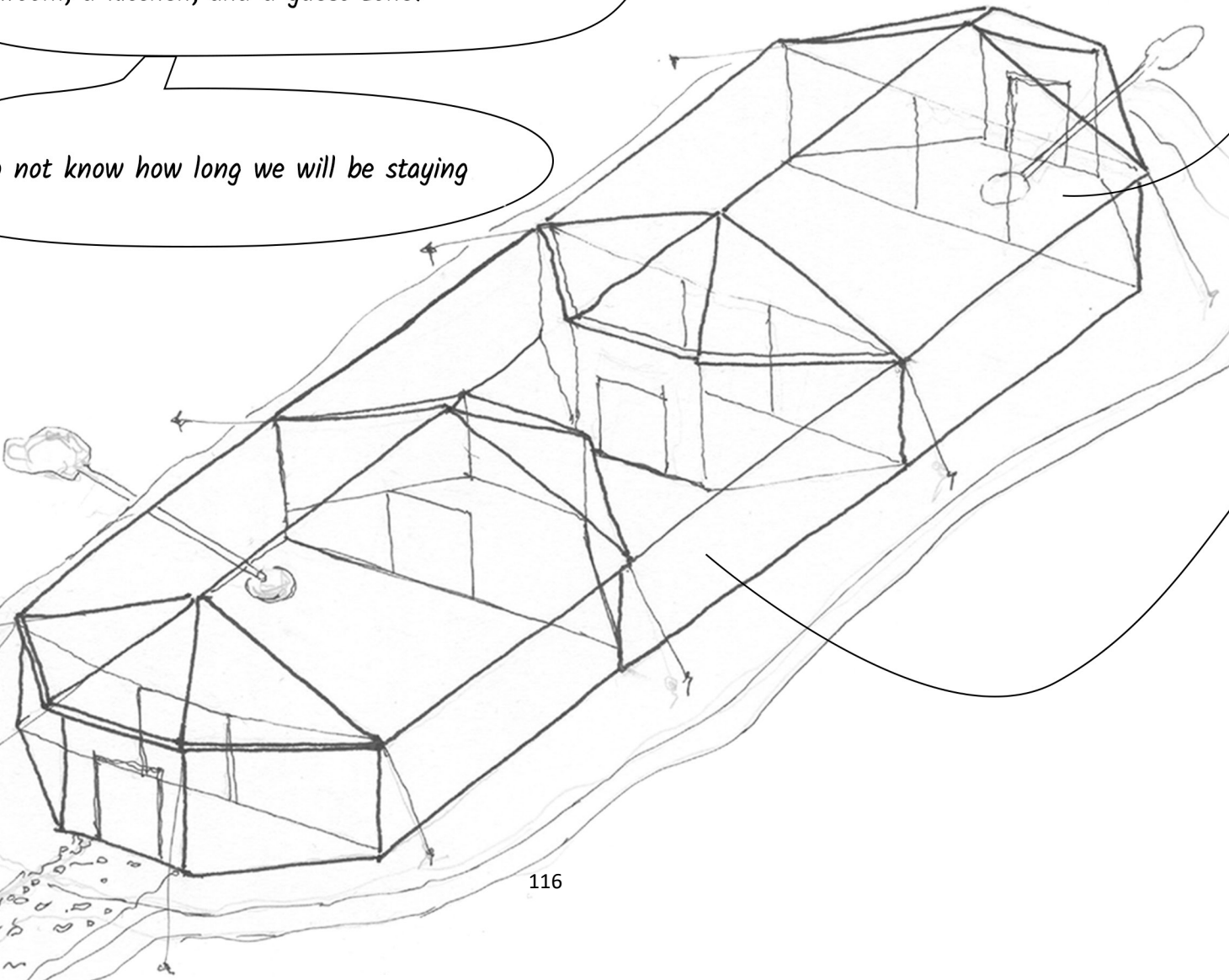


What Yasmeen is doing is not acceptable. How was she able to do all this in one day? Where have you been?

We do not need them. People are dying in Syria and fleeing from it and you want to develop the shelter?

Let us discuss Yasmeen's situation later. For now, let us benefit from what she found. We can have a bathroom, a kitchen, and a guest zone.

We do not know how long we will be staying here.

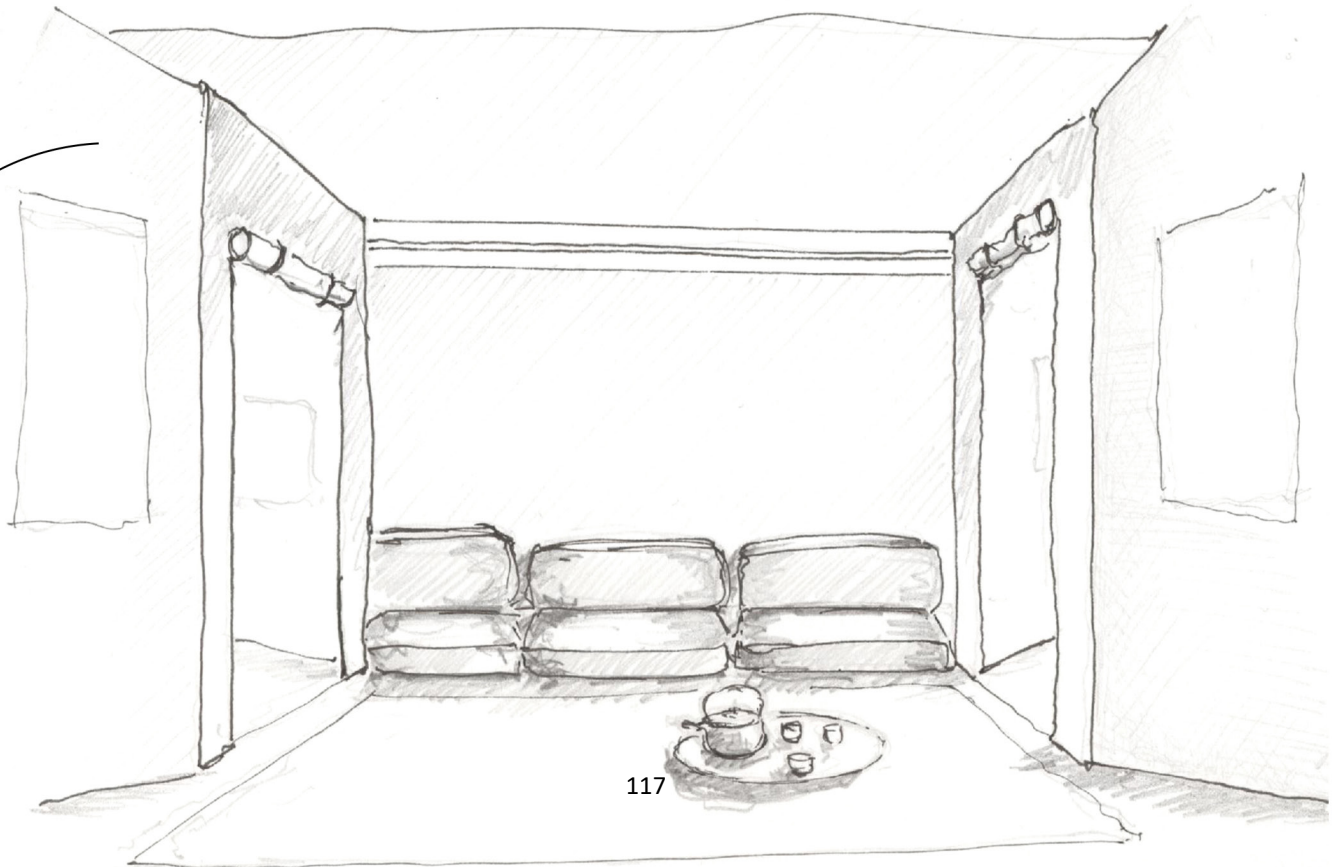


Eventually, Yasmeen's father expanded the house by attaching it to the one Yasmeen brought using a third piece of a tent fabric he bought from the market.

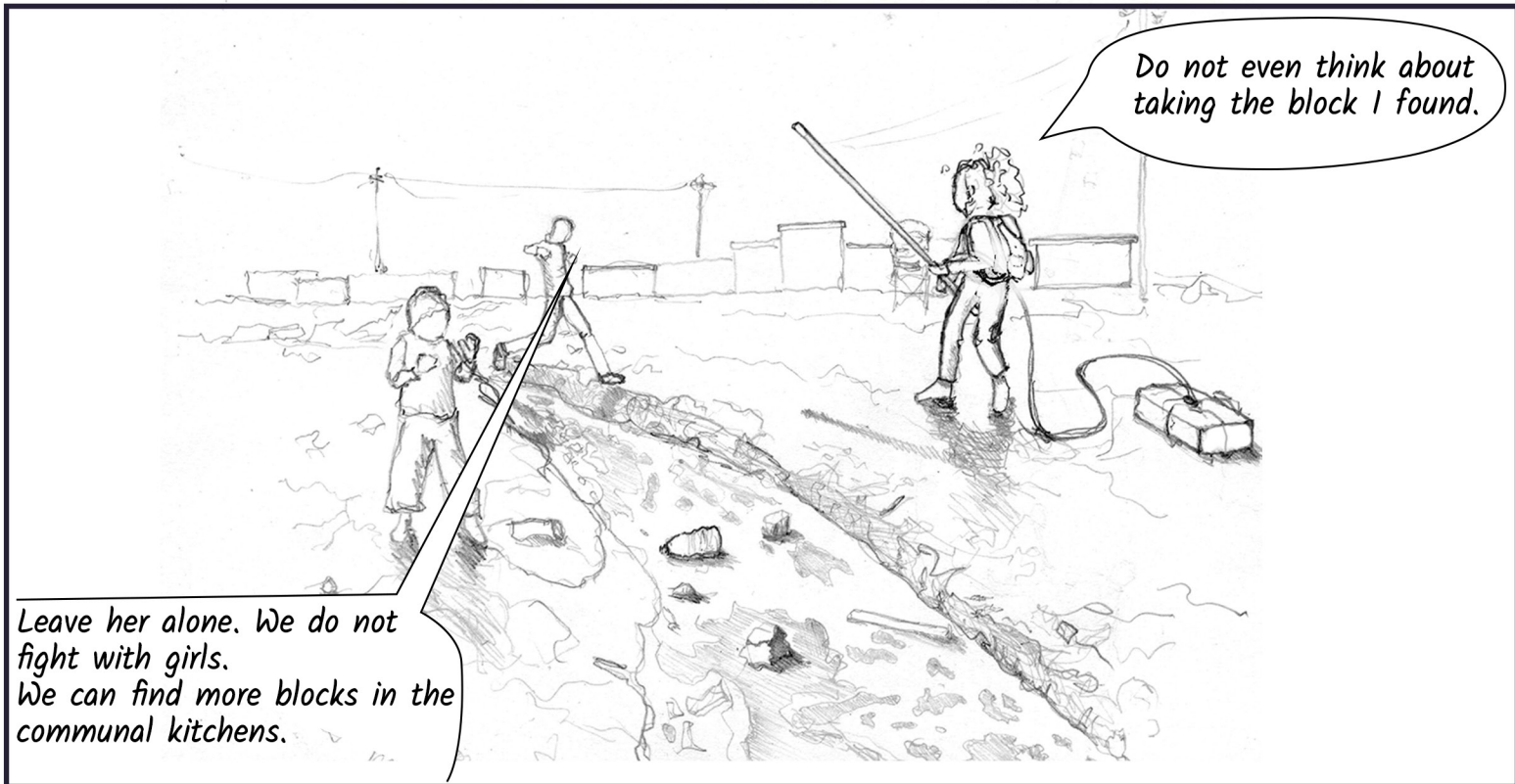
KITCHEN ZONE...



GUEST AREA...



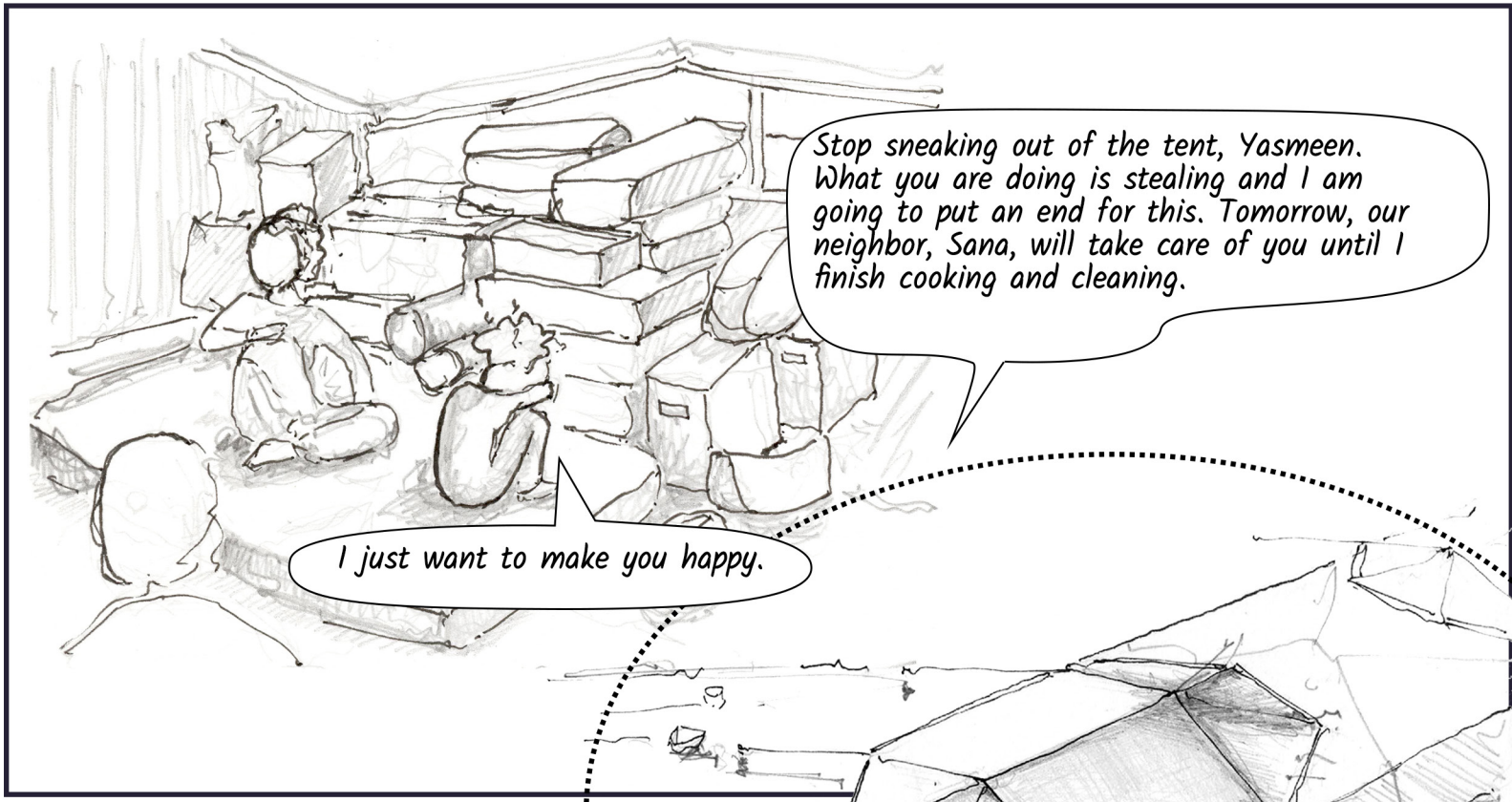
A FEW WEEKS LATER, YASMEEN SNEAKED OUT OF THE HOUSE AGAIN...



Another block and a food voucher!

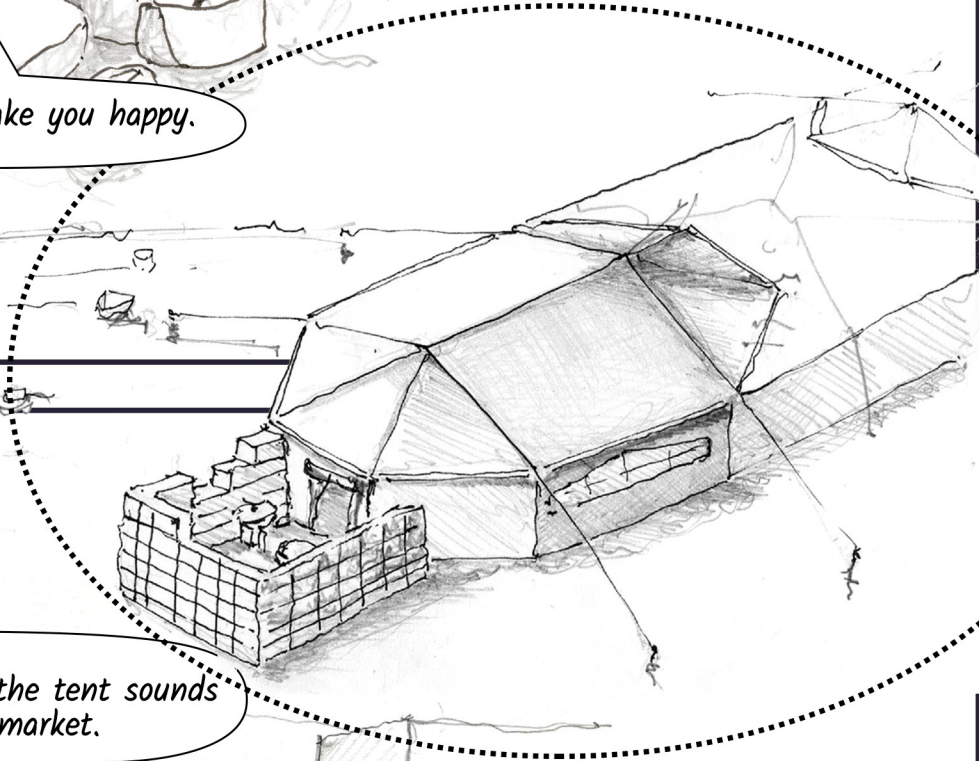
Bringing it here was not easy. Please, papa!
If I bring a few more, we will be able to build a shower or a kitchen outside.



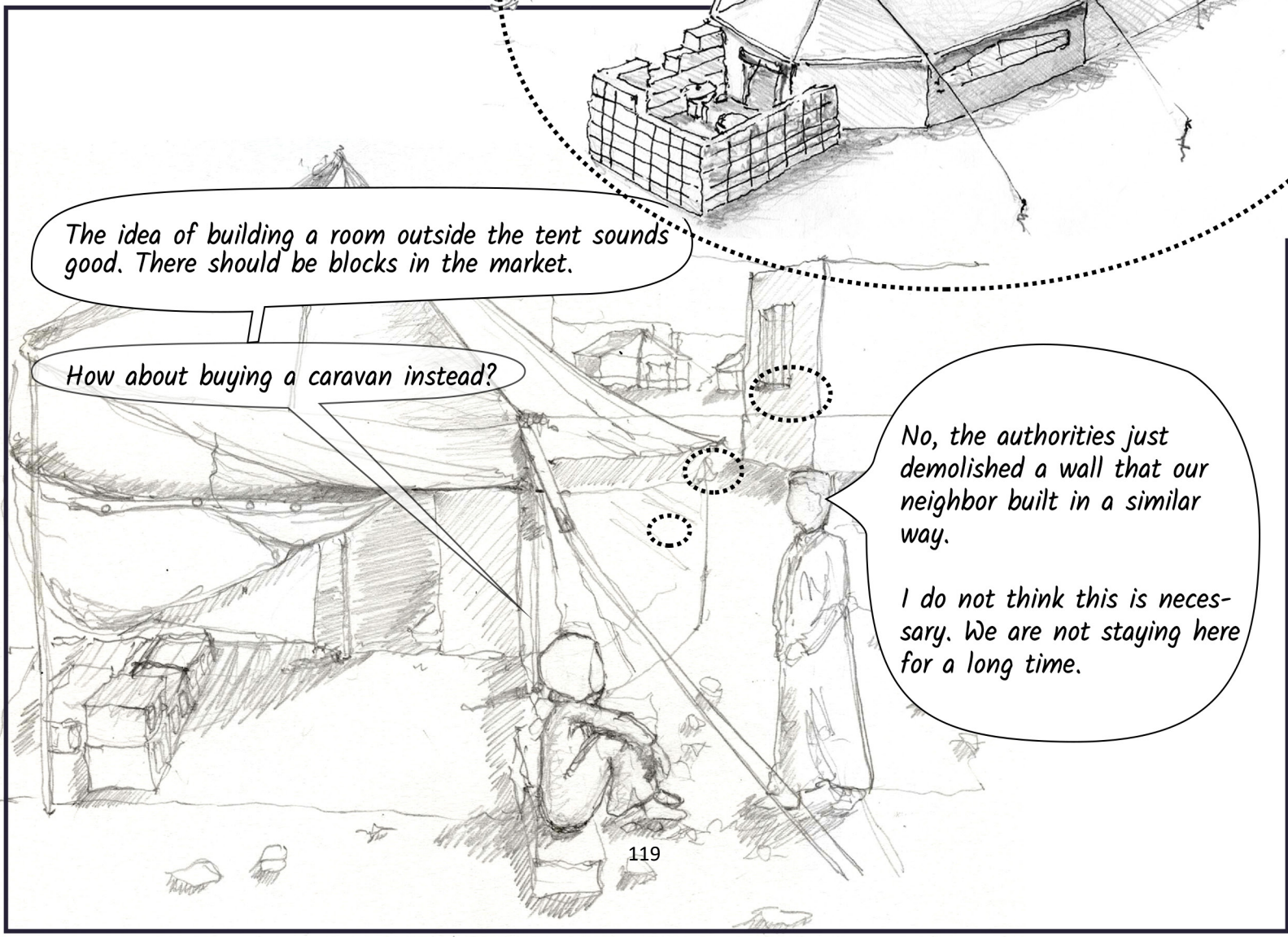


I just want to make you happy.

Stop sneaking out of the tent, Yasmeen. What you are doing is stealing and I am going to put an end for this. Tomorrow, our neighbor, Sana, will take care of you until I finish cooking and cleaning.



The idea of building a room outside the tent sounds good. There should be blocks in the market.



How about buying a caravan instead?

No, the authorities just demolished a wall that our neighbor built in a similar way.

I do not think this is necessary. We are not staying here for a long time.

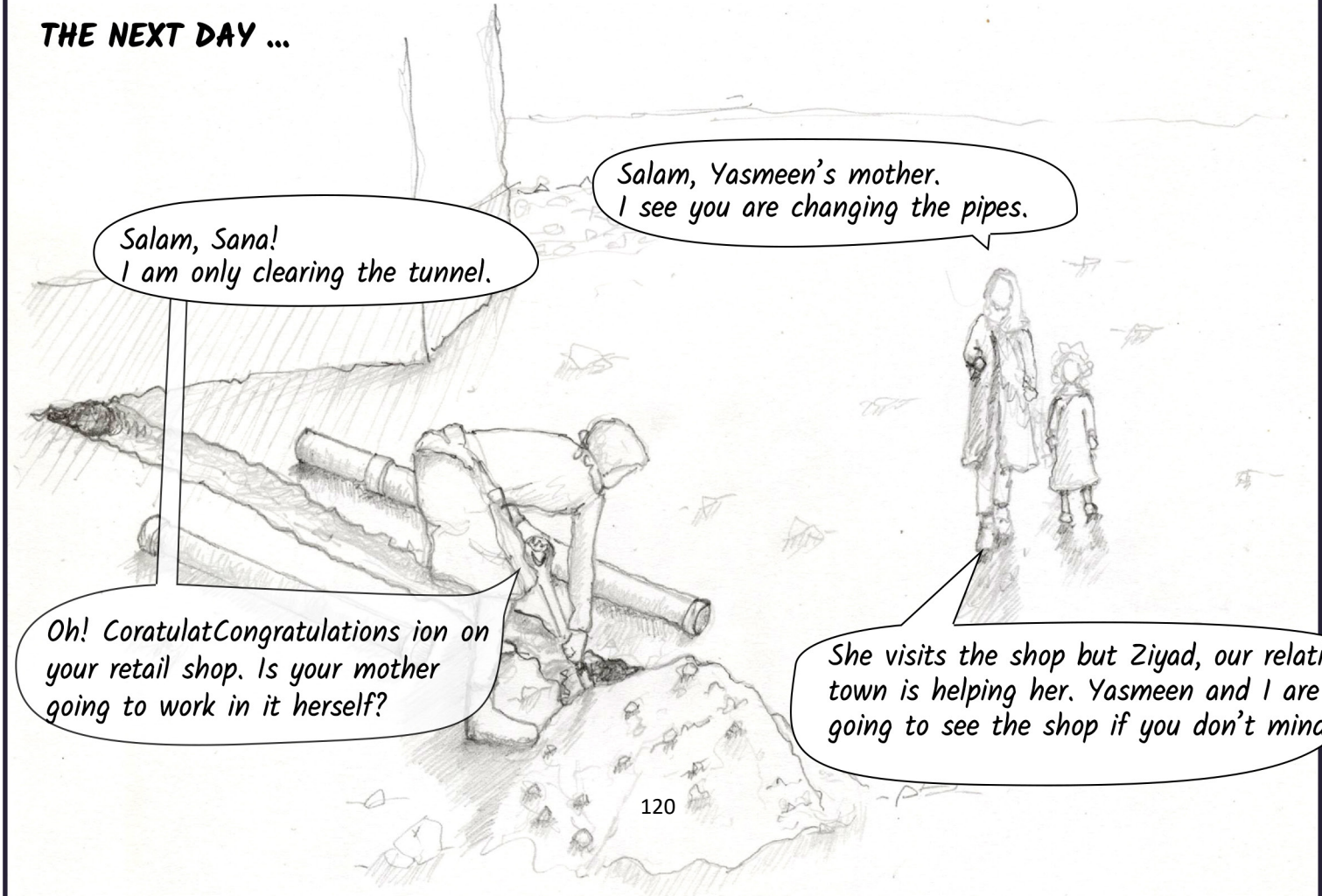
THE NEXT DAY AT THE NEIGHBOR'S TENT...



You are right, the communal kitchen and bathrooms are far, and it is not safe to leave your kids alone. Sana, my daughter will take care of her until you come back.

She is a well-behaved kid, do not worry.

THE NEXT DAY ...



Salam, Sana!
I am only clearing the tunnel.

Salam, Yasmeen's mother.
I see you are changing the pipes.

Oh! Coratulat Congratulations ion on your retail shop. Is your mother going to work in it herself?

She visits the shop but Ziyad, our relative town is helping her. Yasmeen and I are going to see the shop if you don't mind.

IN THE MARKET...

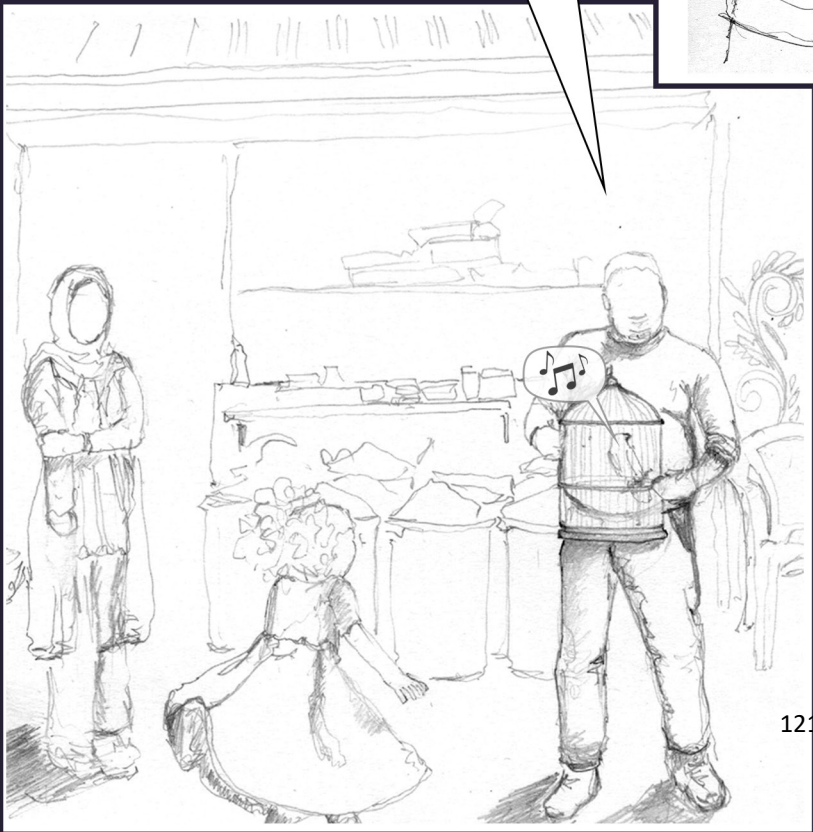


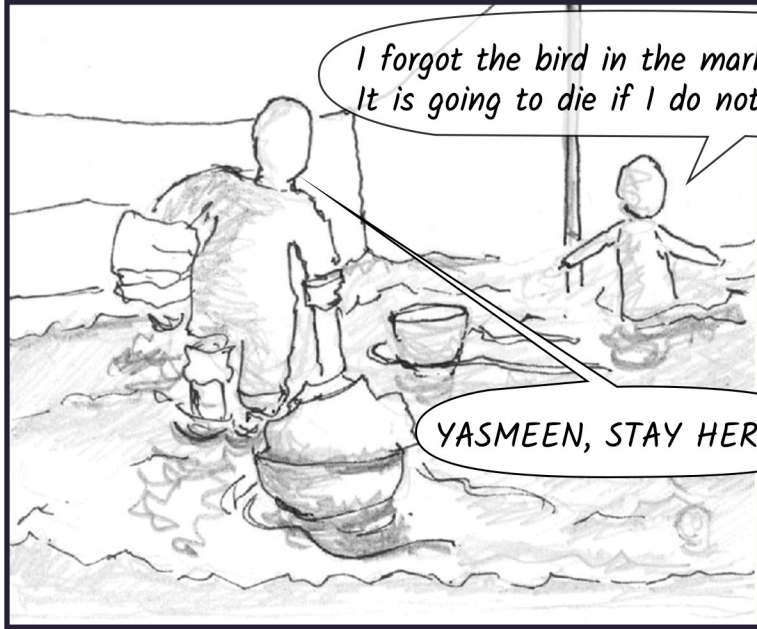
Salam, Ziyad.
This is Yasmeen, my little friend I told you about.

Surprise!
Sana and I brought you this little bird you always wanted to have.



Let us go home.
Hurry up!



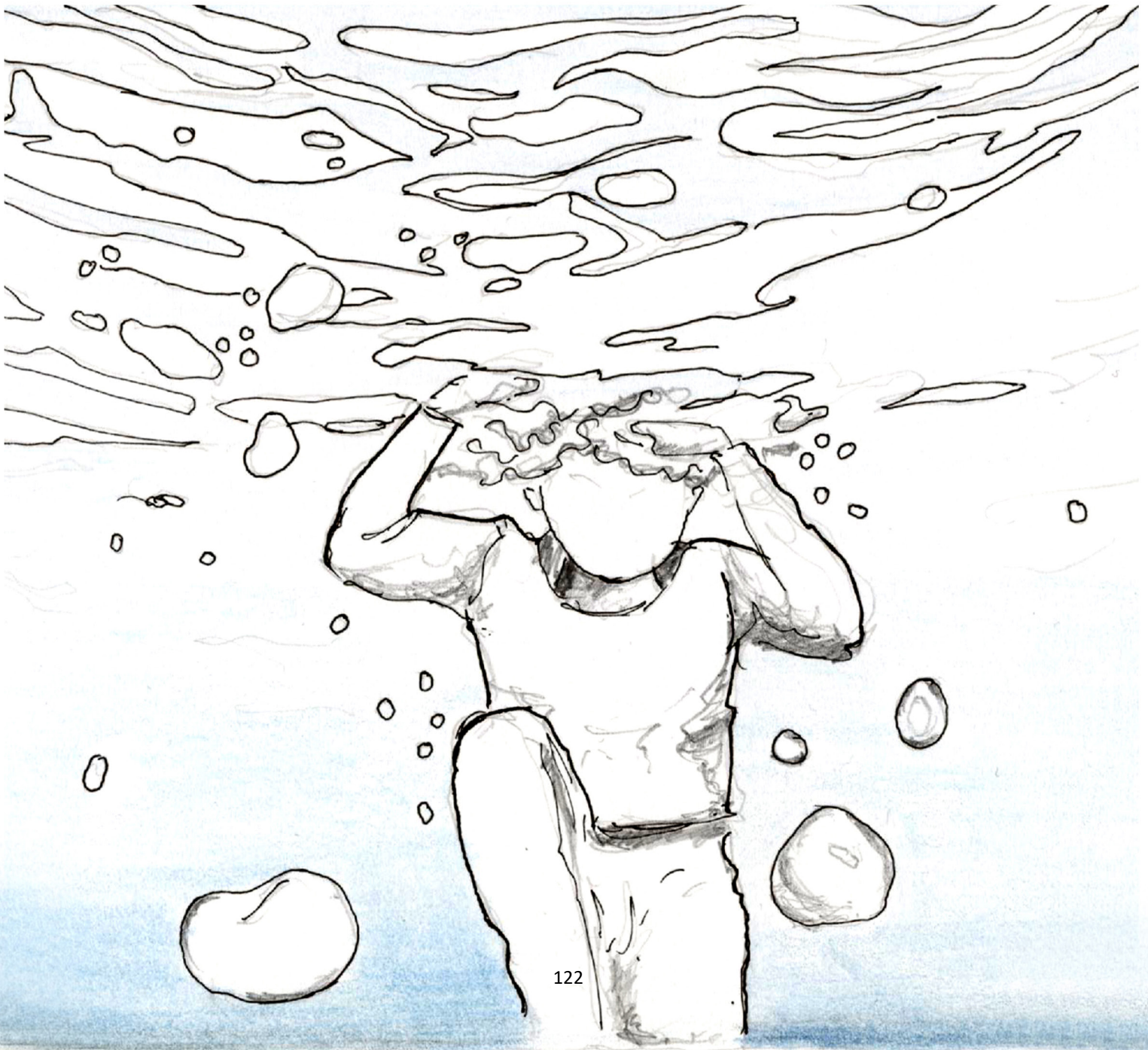


I forgot the bird in the market.
It is going to die if I do not bring it.

YASMEEN, STAY HERE.

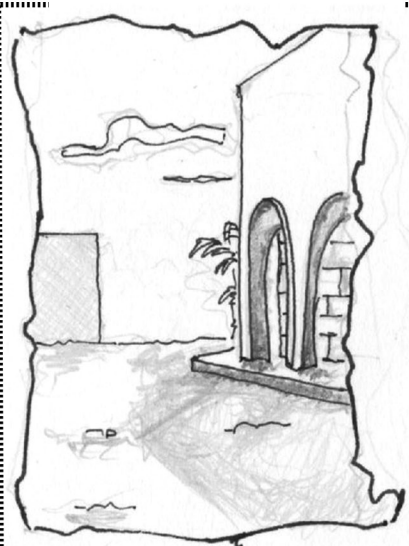


YASMEEN!



AT A HOSPITAL IN MAFRAQ CITY...

I am sorry my Yasmeen!
I should have listened to you. We should
have moved to a caravan.
I will go back to the camp and find one
tomorrow.



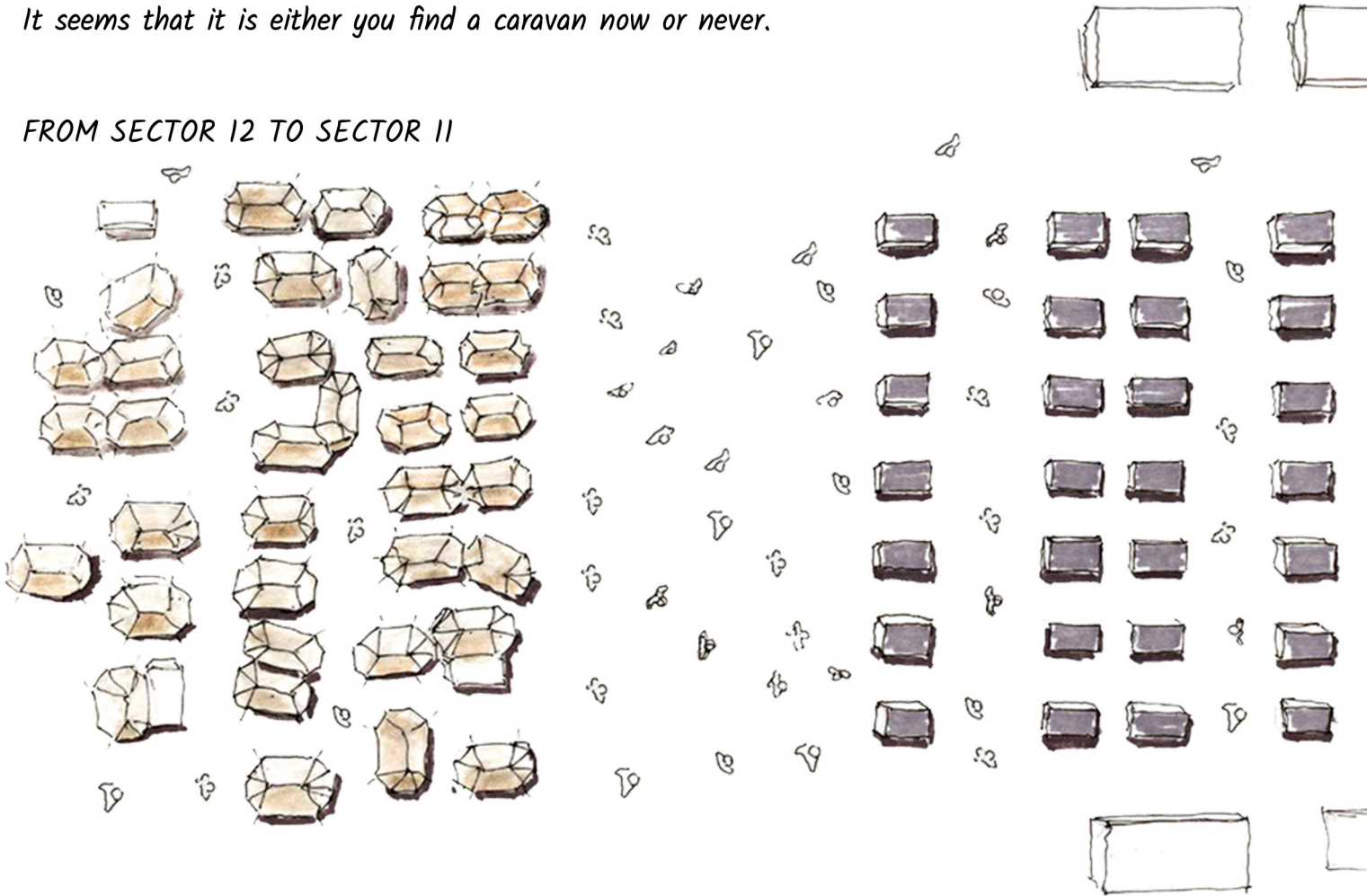
DARA'A IN YASMEEN'S MEMORIES...



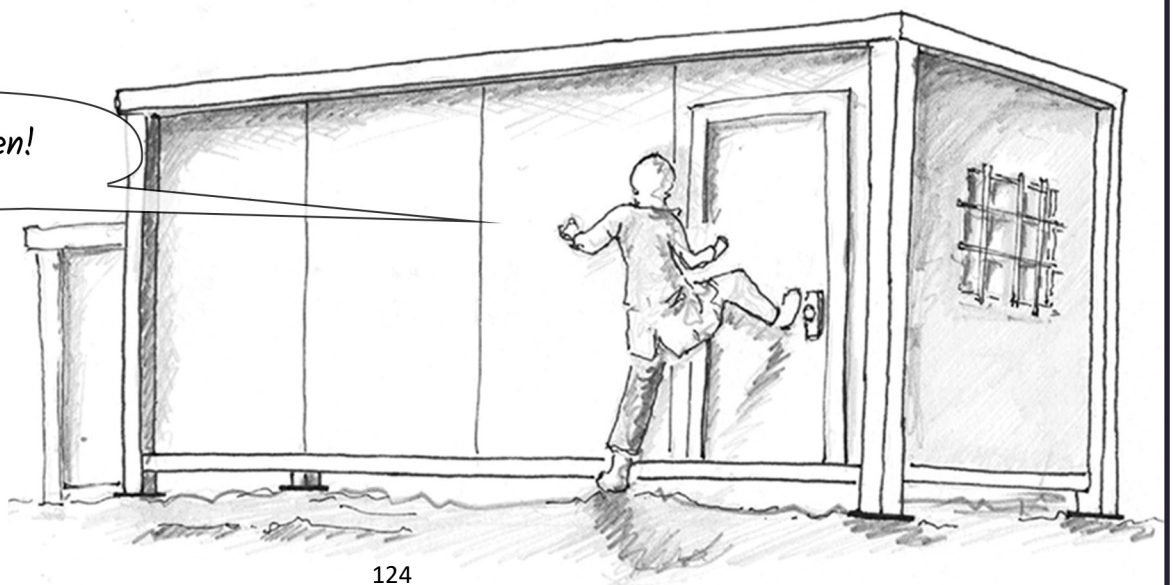
IN ZA'ATARI CAMP...

There are no caravans to sell, these days, Yasmen's father was told. The authorities are preserving the newly opened sectors for newcomers. But many people are moving without having approval after the flood. It seems that it is either you find a caravan now or never.

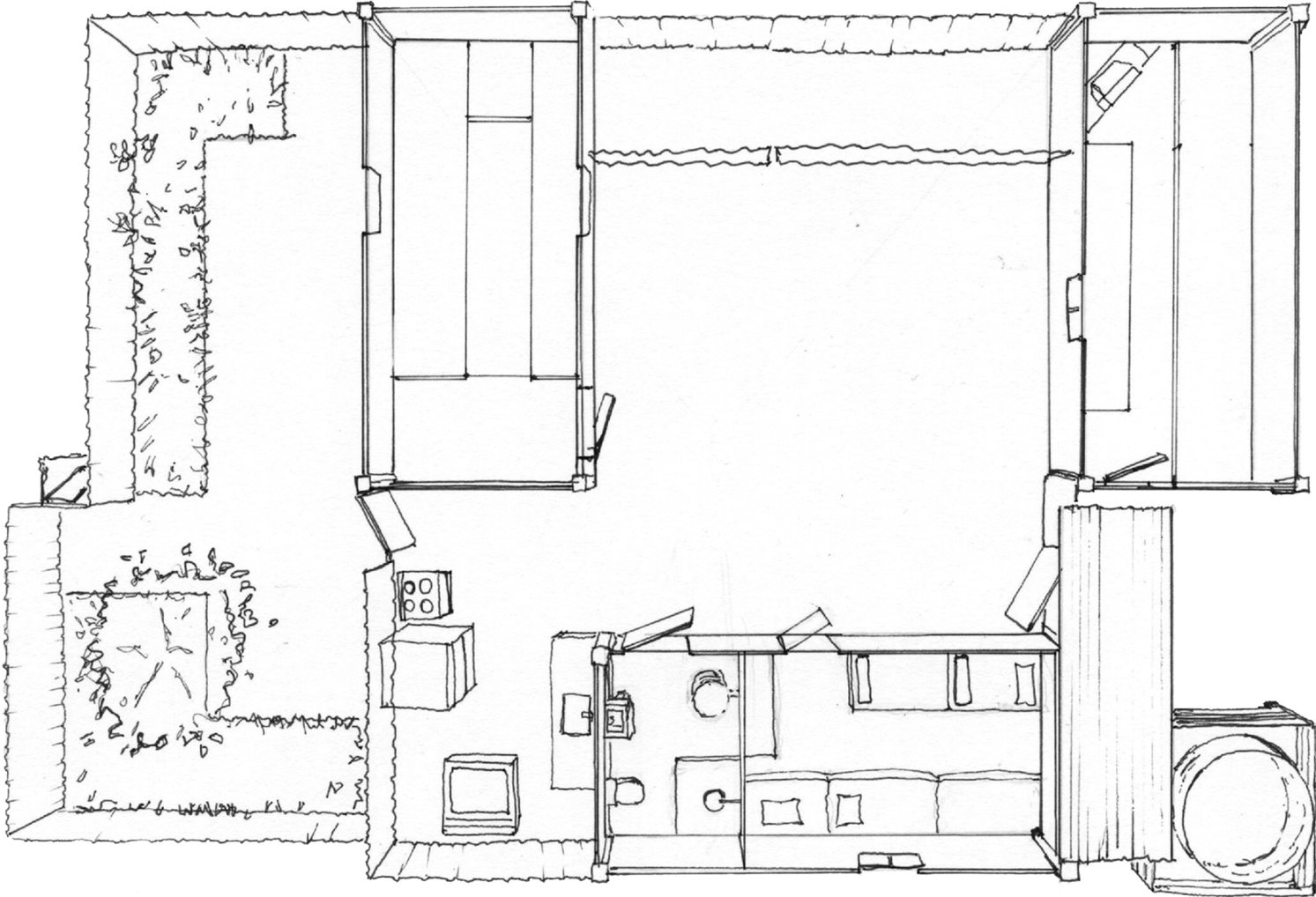
FROM SECTOR 12 TO SECTOR 11



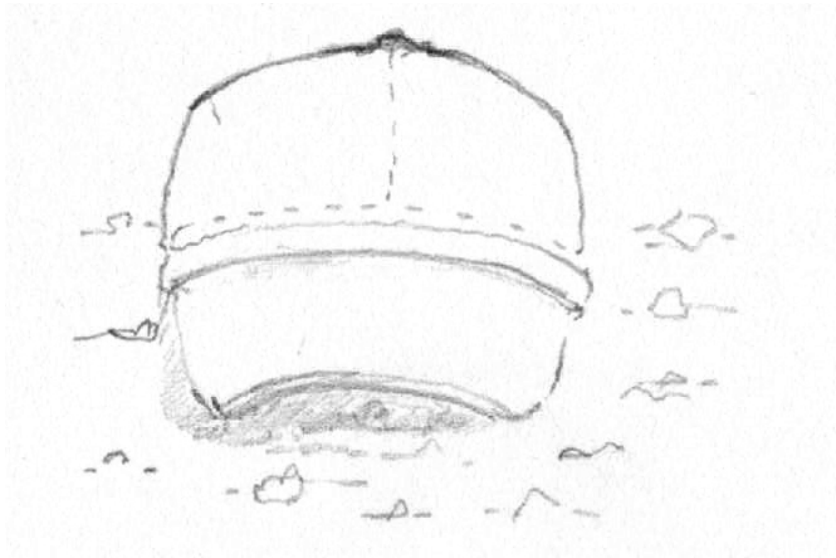
Only for you, Yasmeen!

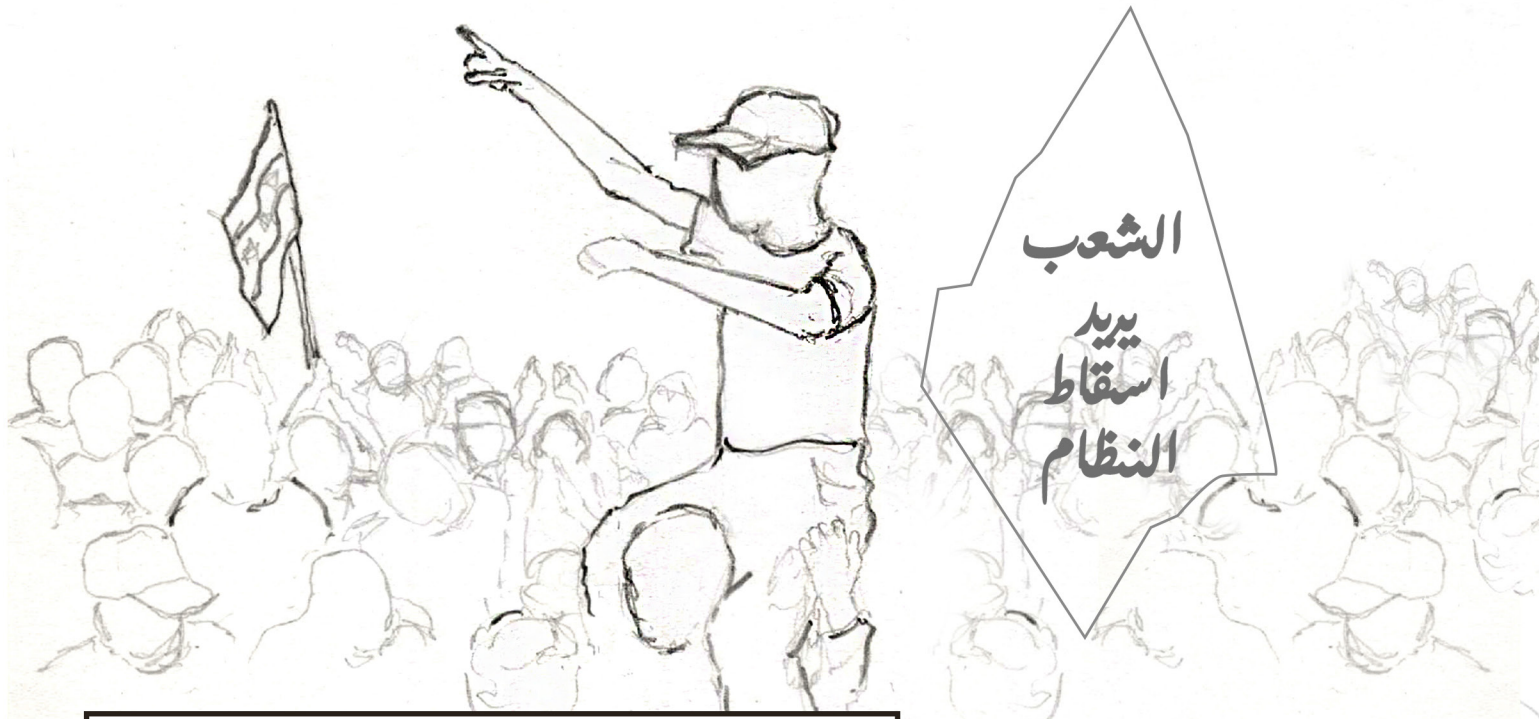


A few months later, Yasmeen's father developed the house to contain two more new caravans he bought from the market.

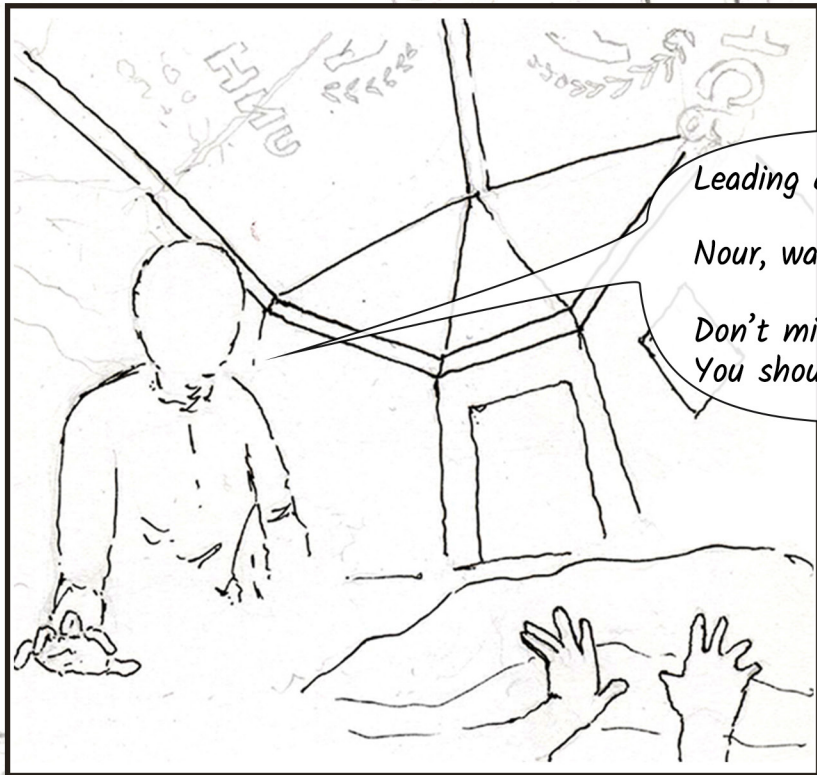


CHAPTER 3





الشعب
يريد
انسقاط
النظام

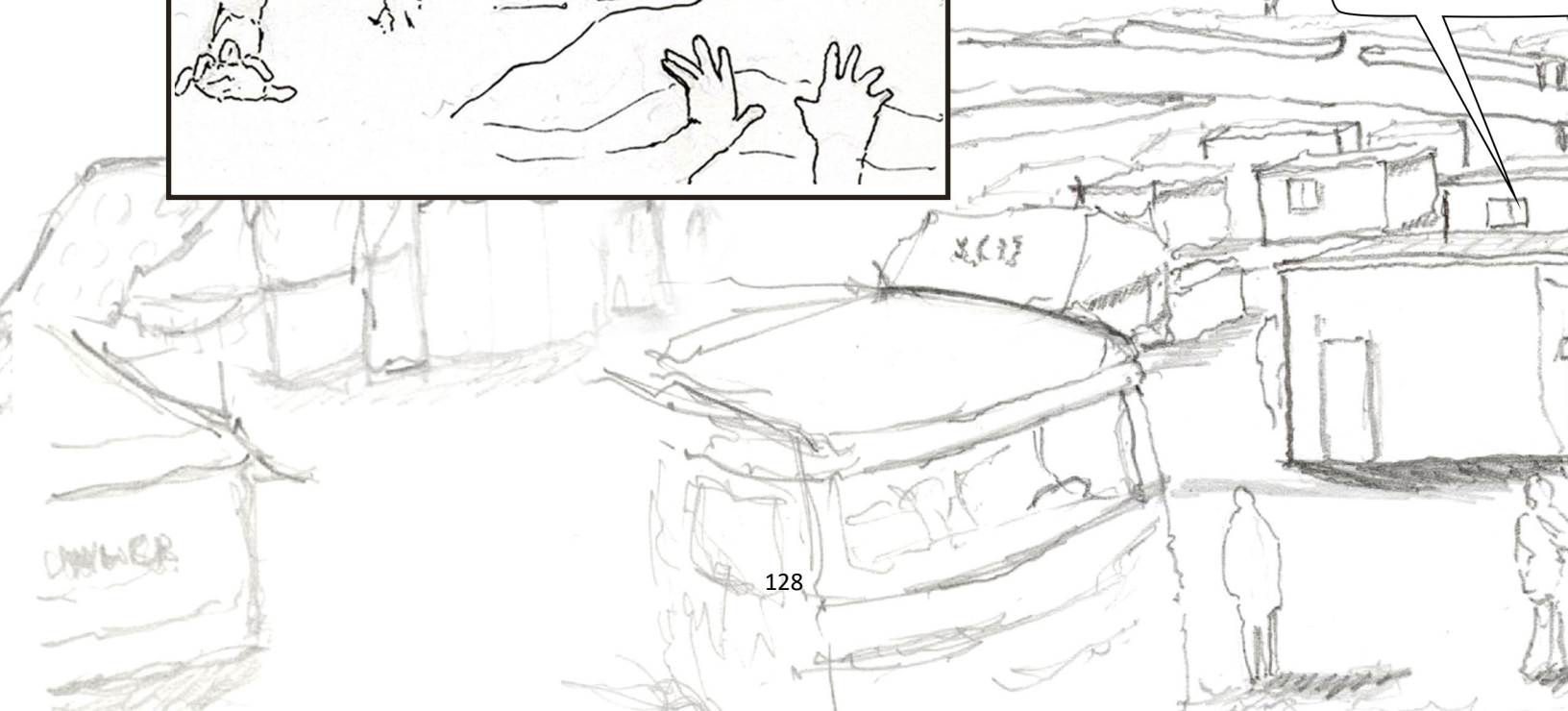


Leading a protest in your dream again!

Nour, wake up!

*Don't miss the caravans delivery.
You should speak to that community worker.*

SLOWLY!



I have been waiting for over six months.

Check with your street leader.



When am I going to receive a caravan?

Priority is for injured people.



CLEAR THE WAY!



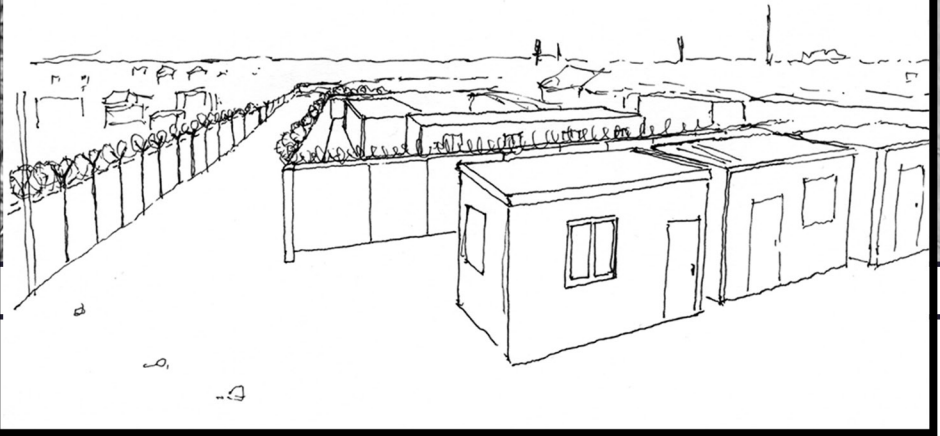
Four of your friends have received caravans in one day. None is injured.

I will speak to the camp manager.

ZA'ATARI CAMP...



IN THE BASE CAMP...



Go back! Shelters delivery schedule should be solved amongst yourselves



IN THE SECTOR'S MOSQUE...

They did not let me

Reporting about street leaders is not a solution

You are the best person who can present it to the manager, Nour!

I believe the time has come to present your proposal of the mediate governing system

الله أكبر
بسم الله

A FEW DAYS LATER, IN THE BASE CAMP...

We are a group of intellectuals who have worked in different fields in Syria

Our goal is to help in developing the camp

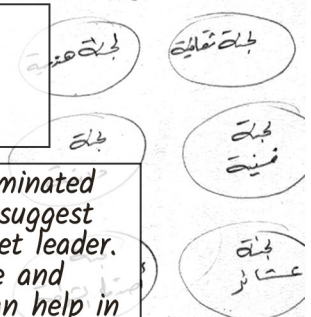
Take me as an example, I am a civil engineer, who have suggestions for developing the camp's infrastructure and the communal bathrooms.

There will be six communities; cultural, engineering, art, religious, tribe's leaders (shaikhs), and police friends' community.

The police friends' community deserves consideration but I have to reject the others.

However, as you are nominated by a group of people, I suggest that you work as a street leader. With people's acceptance and your background, you can help in delivering and explaining messages from us regarding the new camp's plans.

٦. جماعة بلدية
٧. أعضاء في كل لجنة



AS A STREET LEADER...

ONE AT A TIME, PLEASE!

We need electricity in our caravans.
It's unsafe at night

One tank of water for 50 families?

We are 14 people in one caravan.
When am I going to receive the
second one?

STREET LEADERS IN A MEETING WITH THE CAMP'S MANAGER...

Electricity, water, and caravans

We also need to create spaces for street lead-
ers to meet with the residents

...Nour is pretending that he is honorable.
This is not for our sake...

Creating a meeting space is
impossible right now

NOUR IN THE MARKET...



I need both; corrugated sheets and sandwich panels

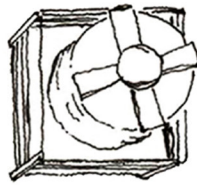
Salam, Ali's father.
I am here for the caravan, how much do you want for it?

Salam, Nour.
1200 Jordanian dinar but you can pay in Syrian currency.

The night I leave, you can get it.

When will that be

I am waiting to hear from the smuggler.

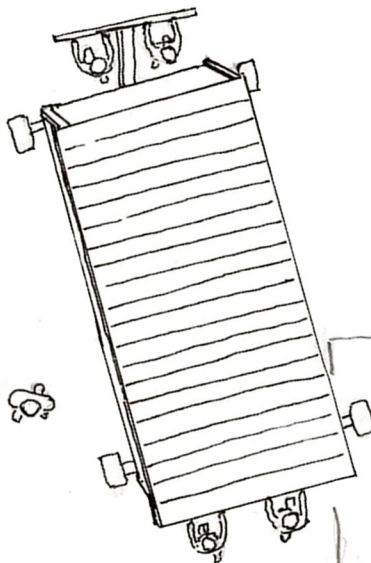
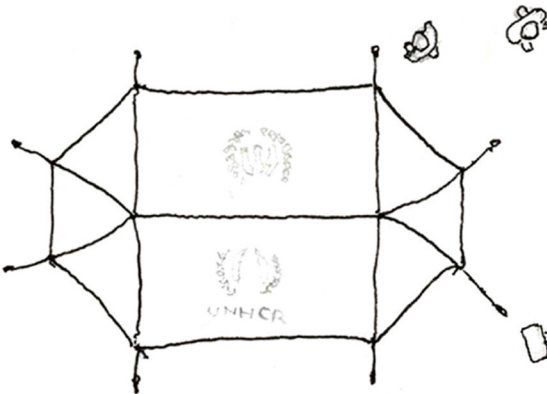
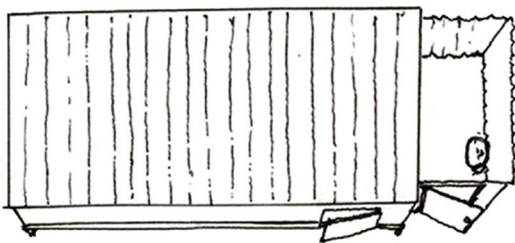


By Allah! You are my brother.

Are you sure of buying a caravan instead of waiting until you receive one from the UN?

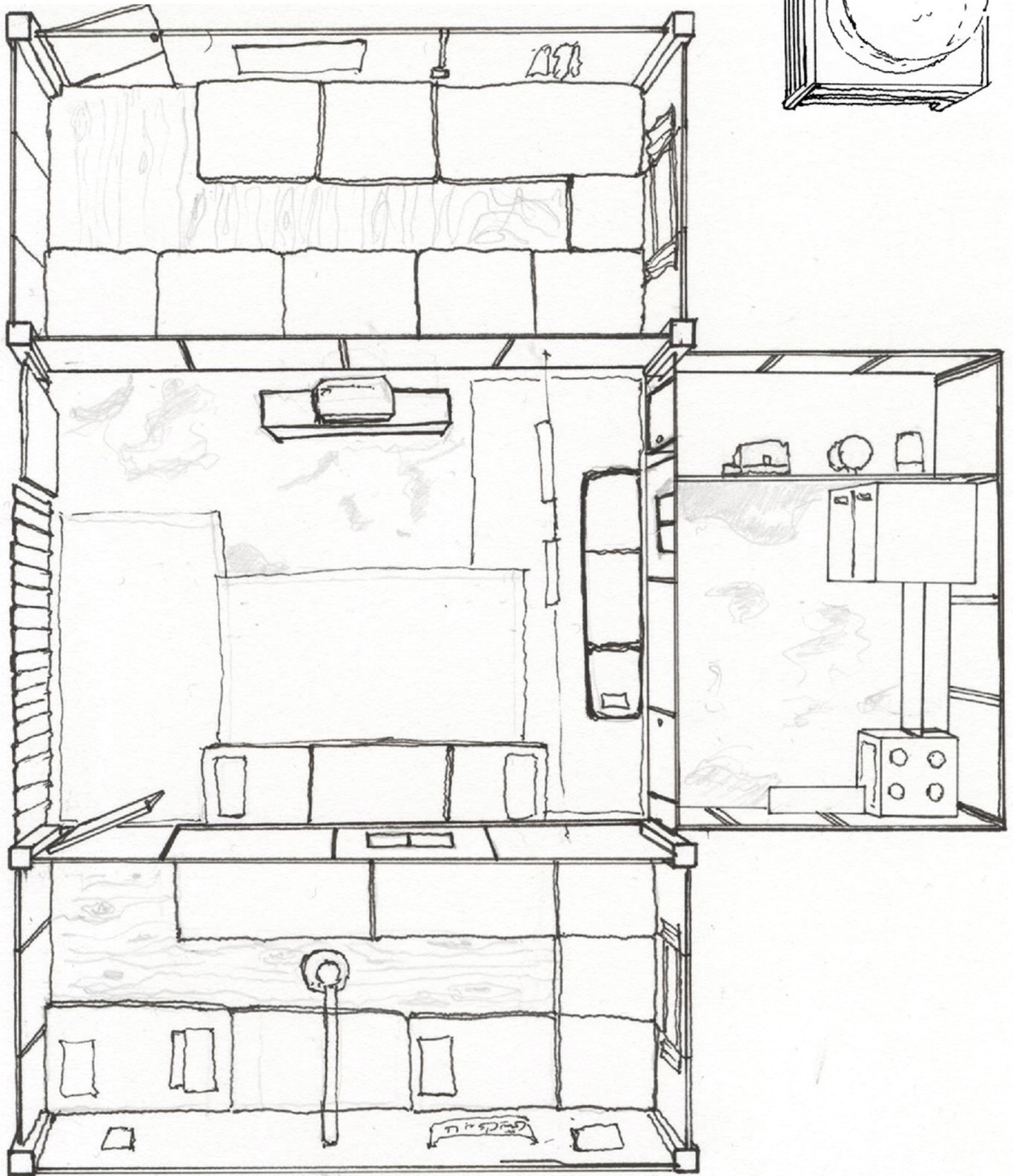
No problem!

Thanks for allowing us to use your bathroom! You saved us from using the communal ones.

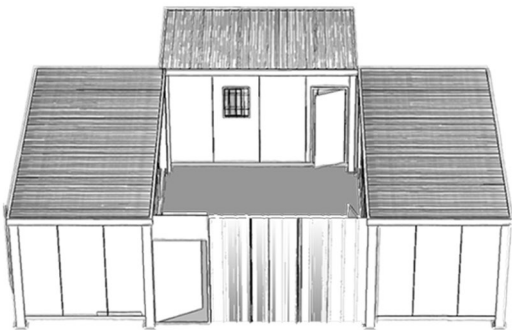
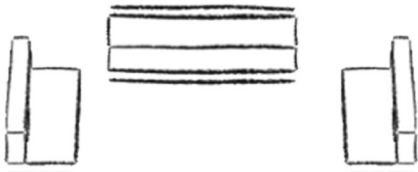
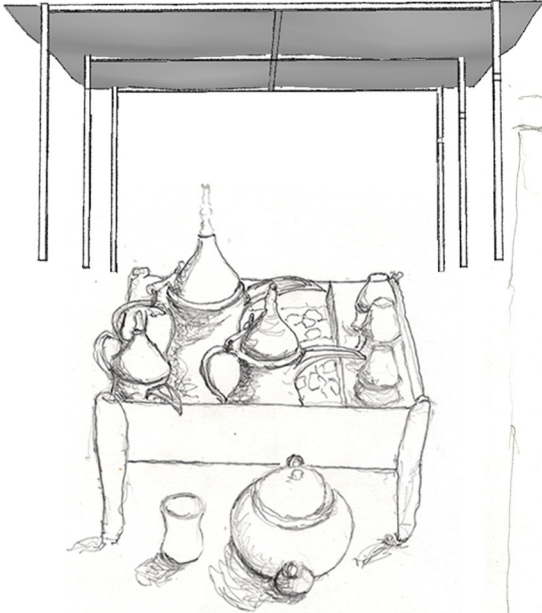


I have already bought it. You know it is almost winter and the Madafa room is necessary now.

Once I get the other caravan from the UN, I will attach them and if you agree on me using the back wall of your house, I will make the Madafa in the middle.

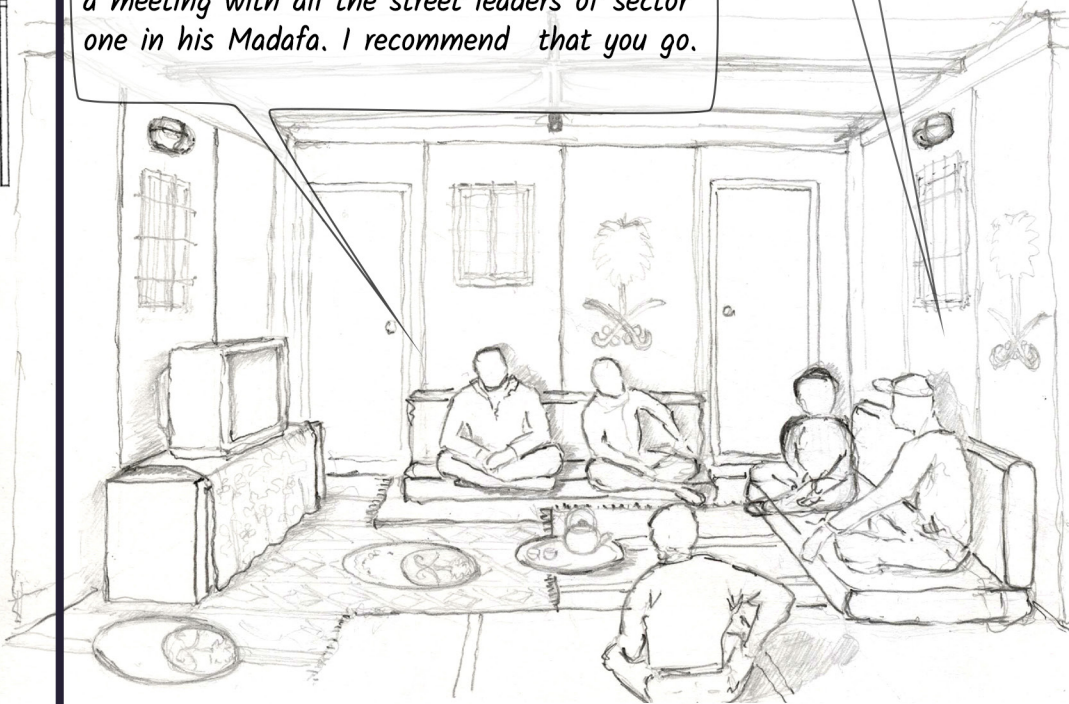


NOUR'S MADAFI



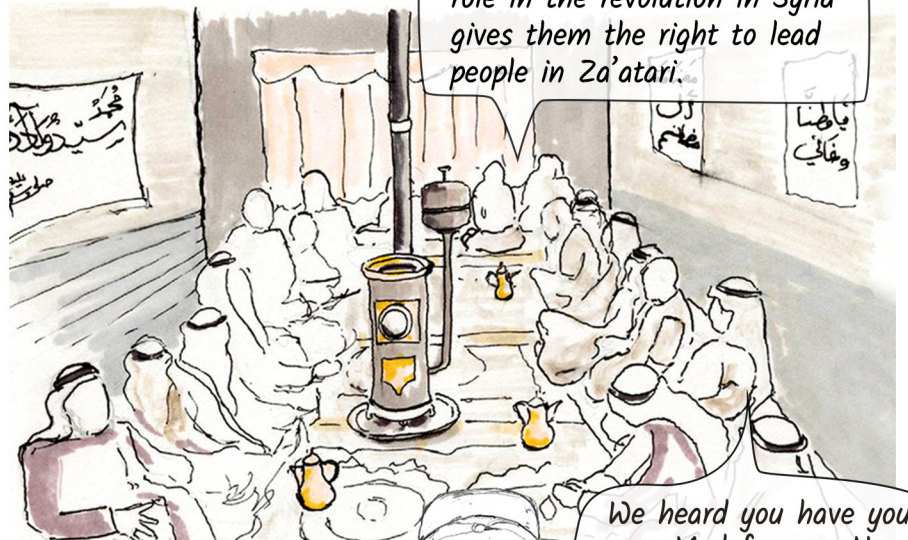
Welcome to my Madafa! Mazen's father, you will receive a heater today.

Good! But I am here today for a different reason. Shaikh Mulham is inviting you to attend a meeting with all the street leaders of sector one in his Madafa. I recommend that you go.



AT SHAIKH MULHAM MADAFI...

Some people think that their role in the revolution in Syria gives them the right to lead people in Za'atari.



I respect your position as a tribe leader.

We heard you have your own Madafa now, Nour. How come a young guy like you have it?

However, I am managing delivering aids and connecting the authorities with the refugees. You know the guest area is a place to meet with the refugees in my street.

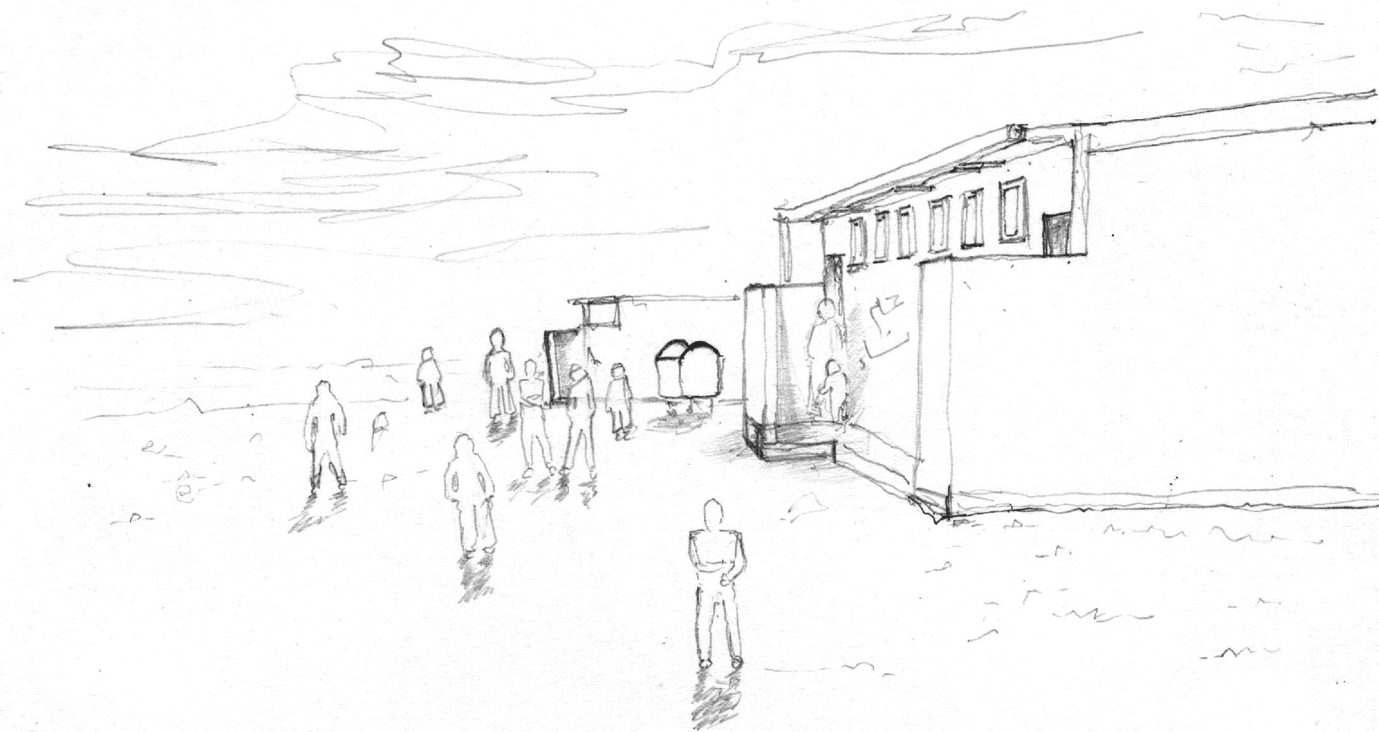
even with the tribe leaders' trials of excluding Nour, he became popular in his street. A long queue of refugees waits at his door every morning to solve their problems.

He appointed himself to help elderlies and to protect women when they use communal facilities.

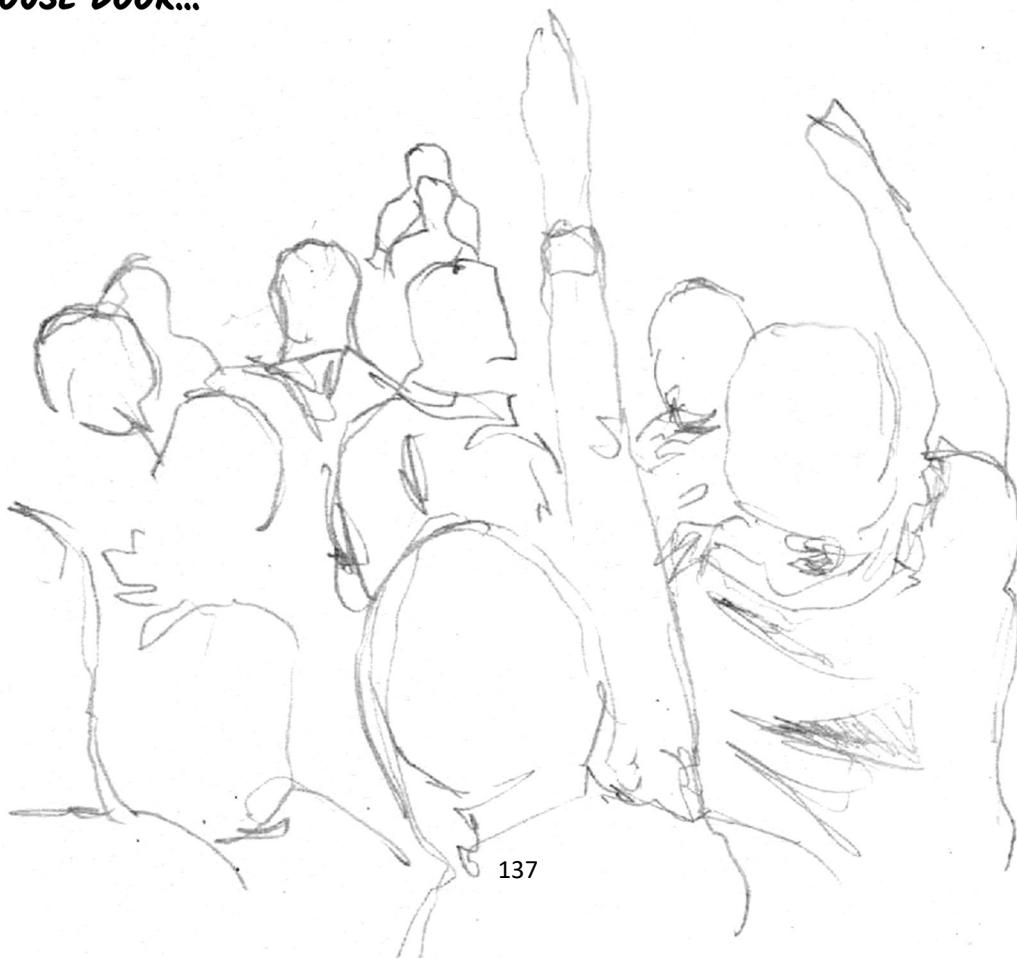
Nour seemed happy with helping people. He found himself in this work. The satisfaction of helping others only grew as he felt other opportunities growing once he met one person, his muse.



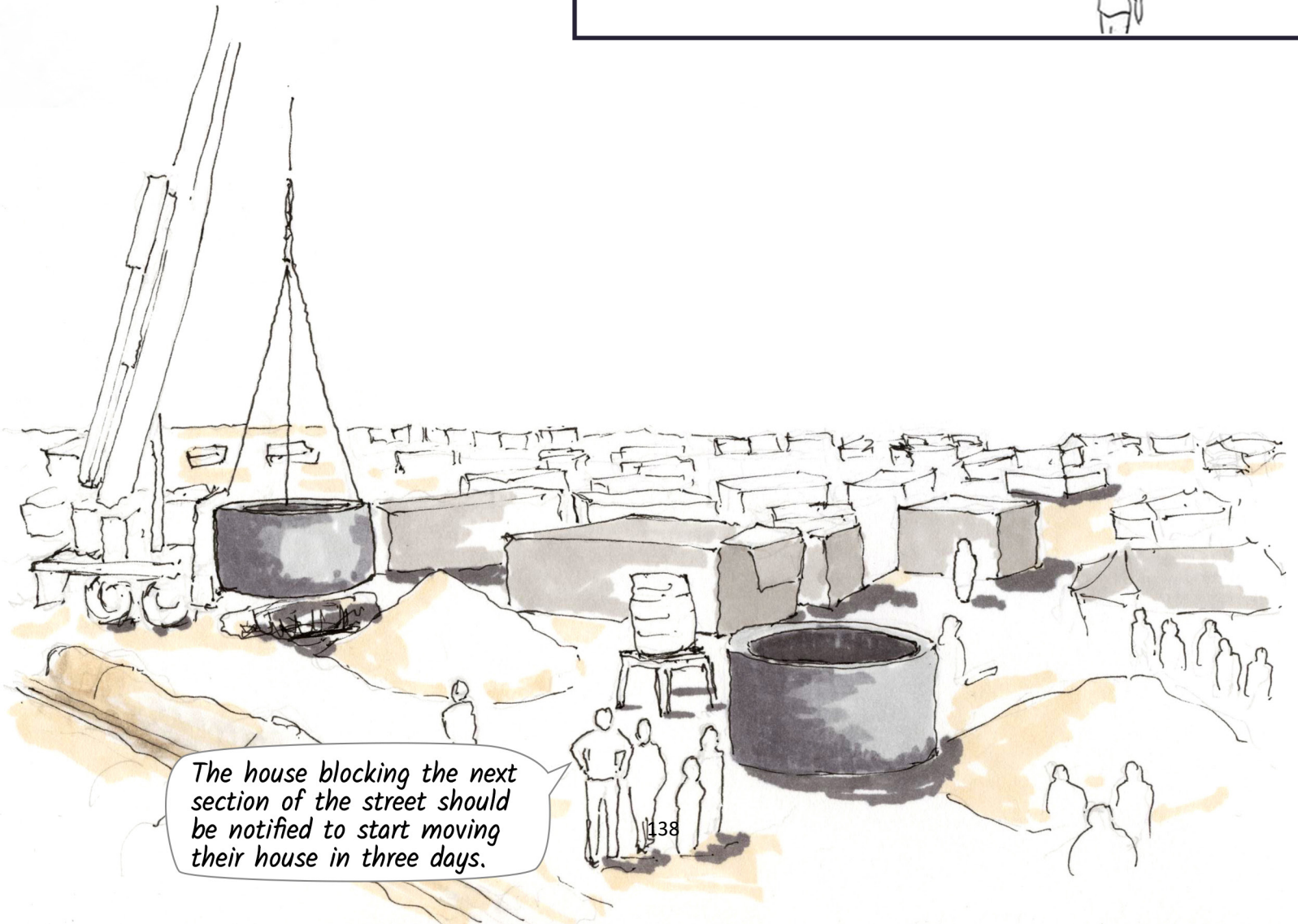
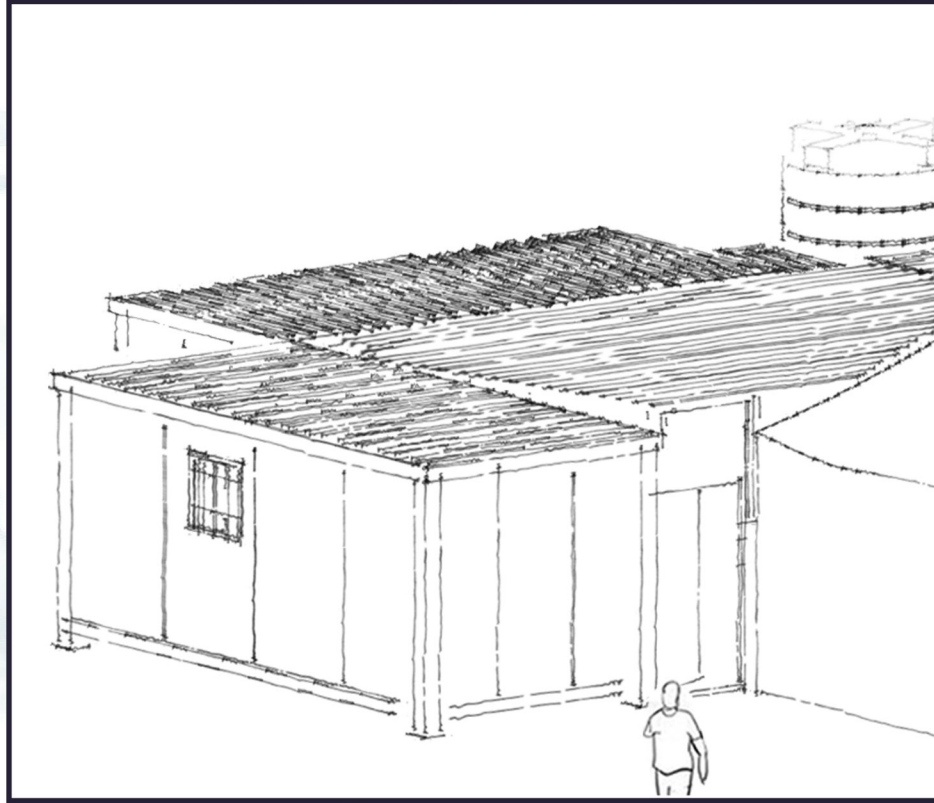
COMMUNAL FACILITIES...



AT NOUR'S HOUSE DOOR...

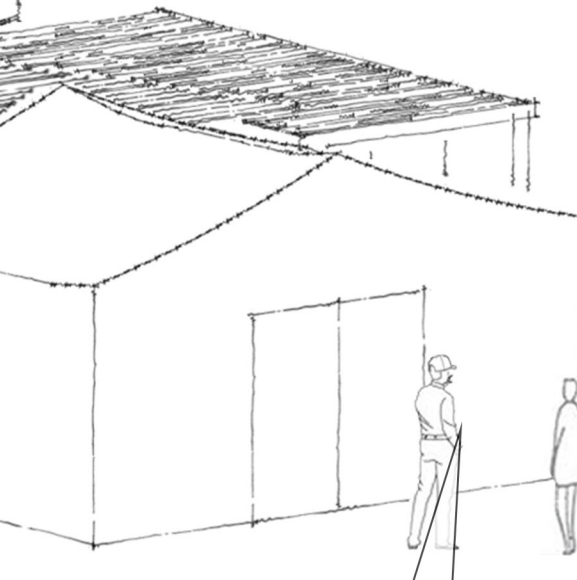


THE PLAN BEING DEVELOPED...



The house blocking the next section of the street should be notified to start moving their house in three days.

When Nour is relaying the changes that the camp's new development plan requires with one of the refugees, he sees his daughter, Sana, who is coming back from school.



What is happening?



This is a reminder of the due date to move your house, sir. We also need to know which location you choose between the two options in order to plan the sewage connection next month.



A FEW WEEKS LATER, AT SANA'S HOUSE...

Ahlan, Nour. There is my brother-in-law and his son, Karam. They have just arrived from Hollande to visit. We are glad to have you at our home.

Oh! Ahlan.

But as you know, the UN requires having a house separate from your family's

It is my honor to ask for your daughter's hand.

No problem!

Mabrouk the engagement!

Mabrouk, Sana and Nour!

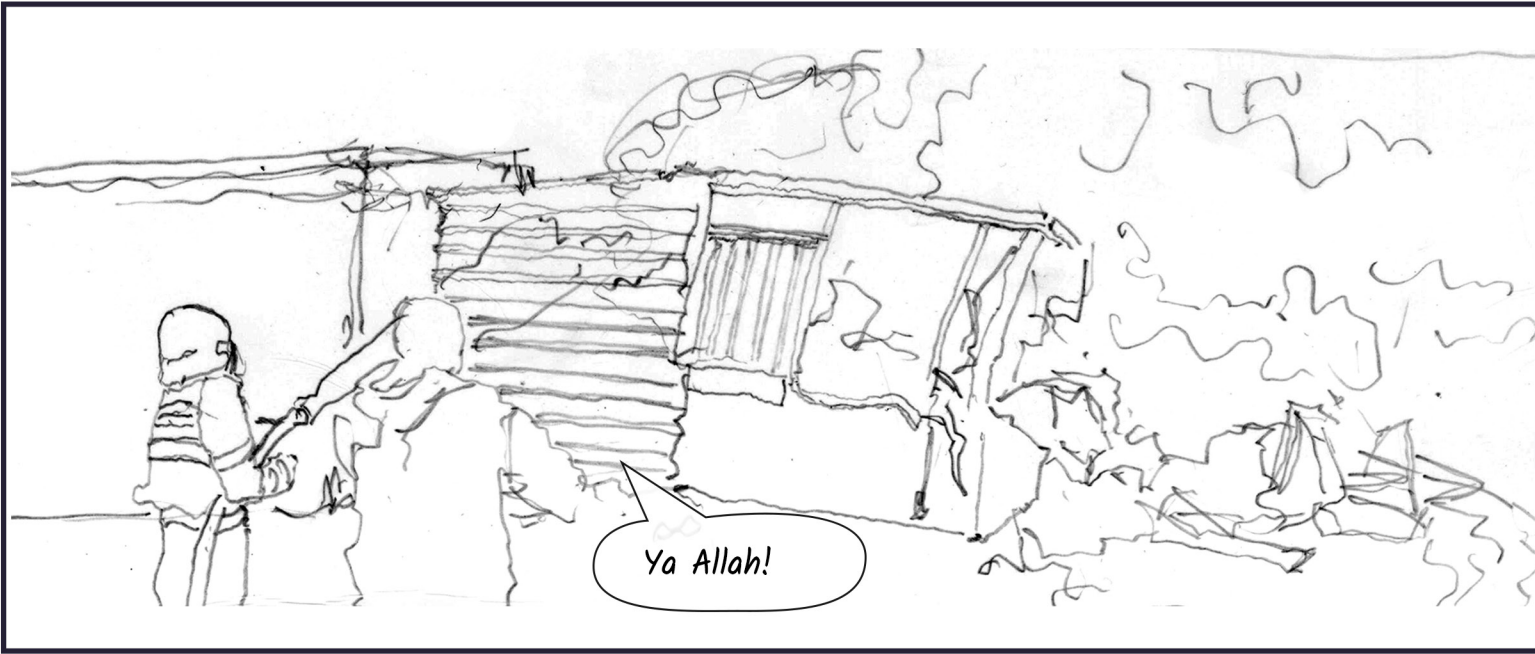
OH! SANA!

THE NEXT DAY...

HA!!

Am I hallucinating or is someone following me?

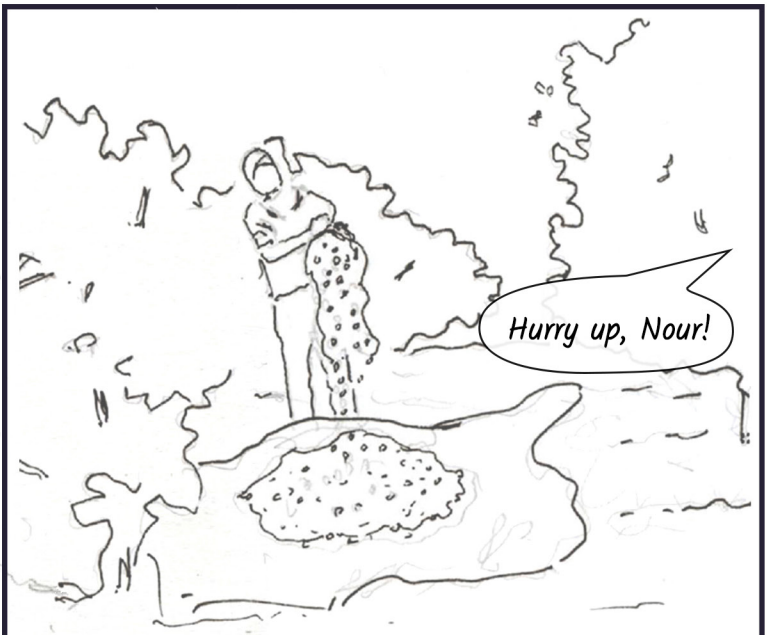
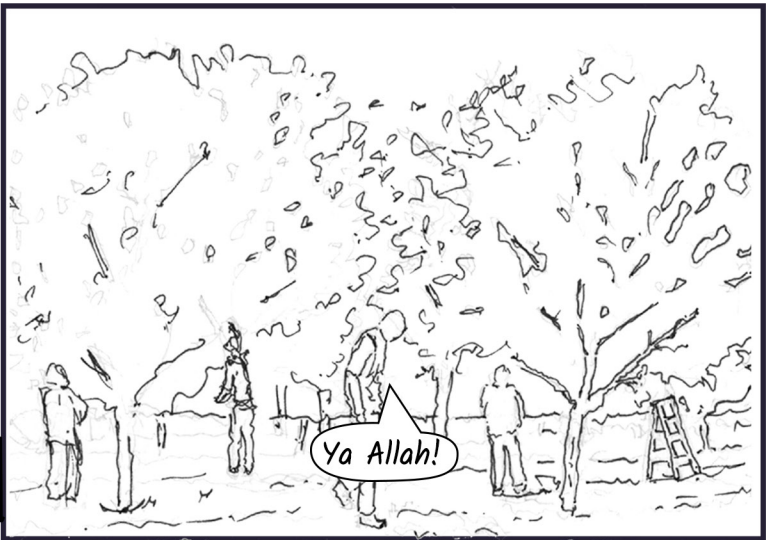
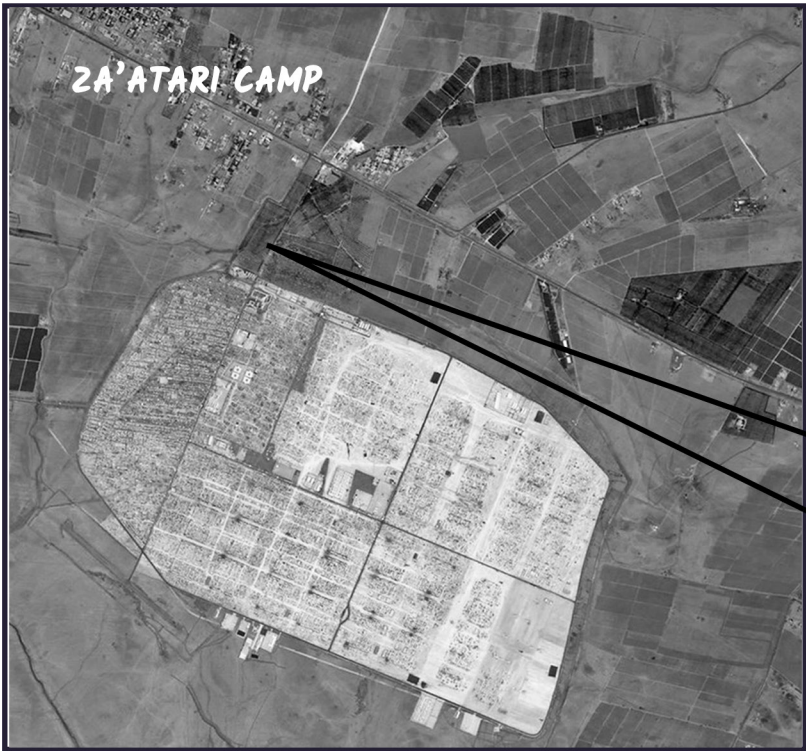
THE NEXT DAY, NOUR ARRIVES AT HIS HOUSE AND HEARS SHOUTS AND SCREAMS AT THE SIGHT OF IT BURNING.





THE NEXT DAY...





AT SANA'S HOUSE

I lost my house and you lost your college sponsorship at the same time. I have doubts that this is all arranged.


It might be, or someone else does not want us to get married. Someone was following me the day before the fire.



**KNOCK!
KNOCK!**

Do you think some of the street leaders are involved?

You are working in two different olive farms in addition to your work with the UN. You will be able to get a house for us and fix your family's house.



I am here to deliver a message from an anonymous donor.

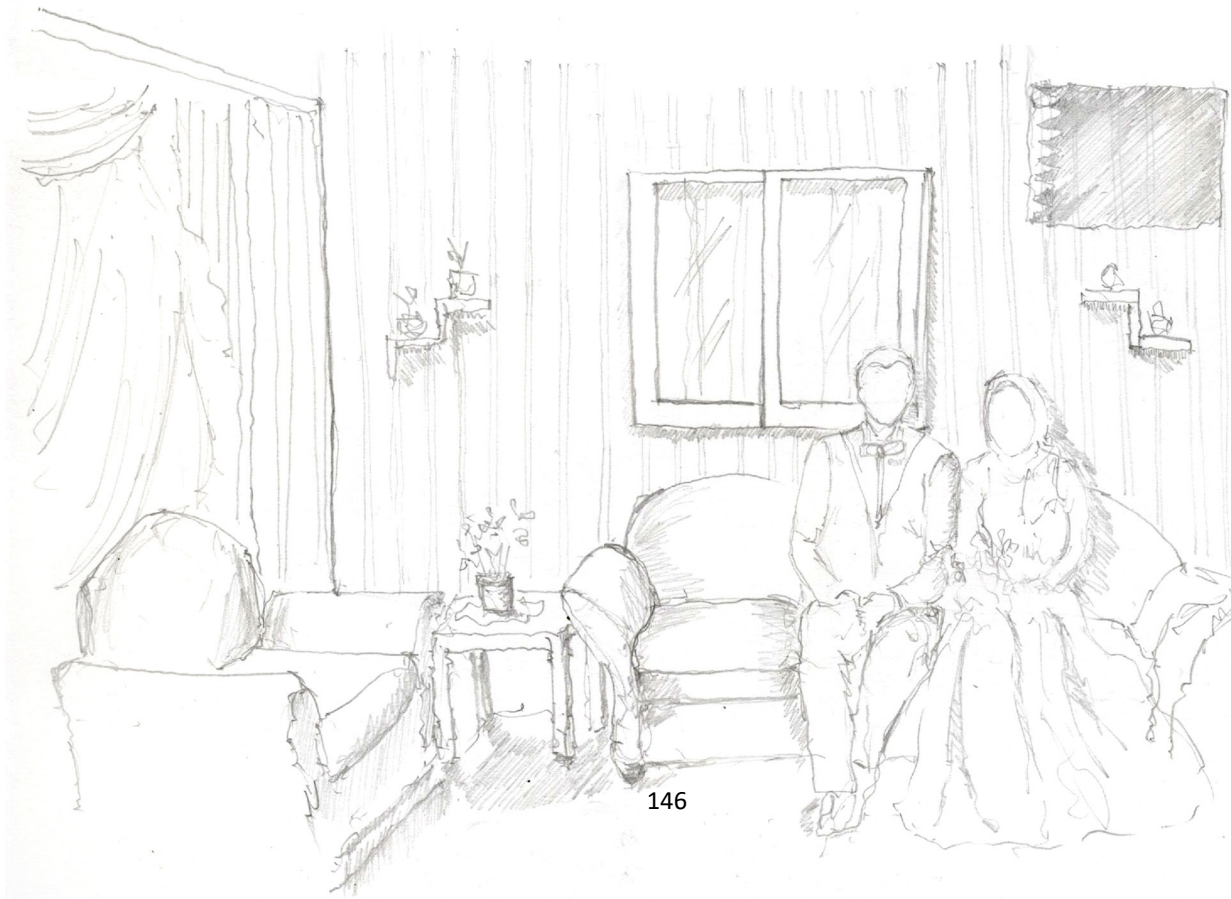
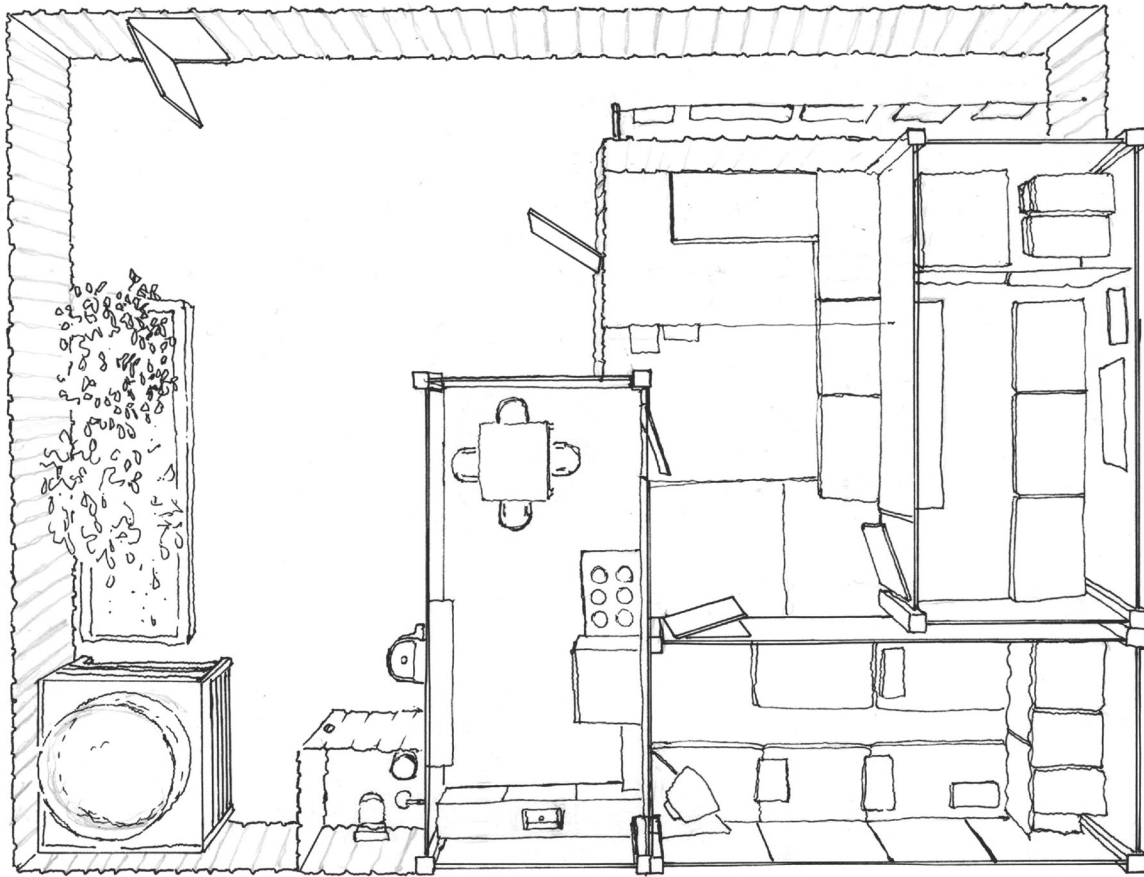
Congratulations on your wedding and you are going to get a house.

Ahlan, Ziyad.

Ziyad works with my mother in the retail shop.

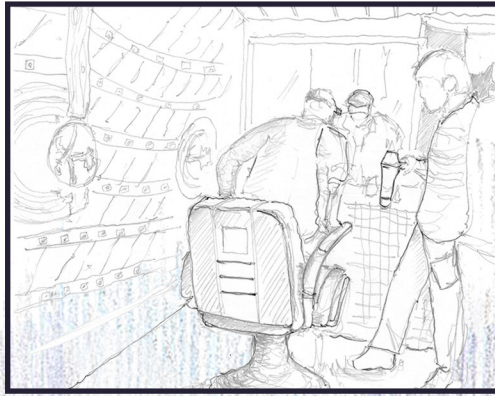
I wonder where I have seen him before?

A few months later, Nour was able to buy two new caravans; one for his family and the other for his new house. Both families received a caravan from the UN. In total, each house has three caravans.

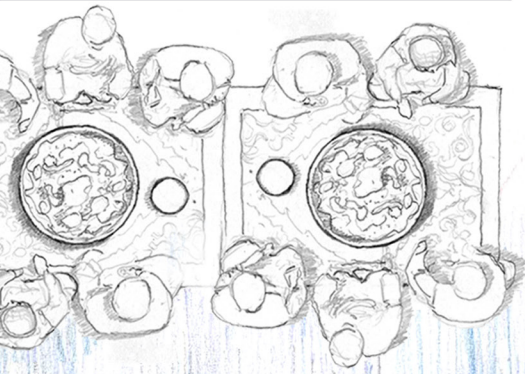


With some help from his fiancée, Nour furnished the house with good quality furniture.

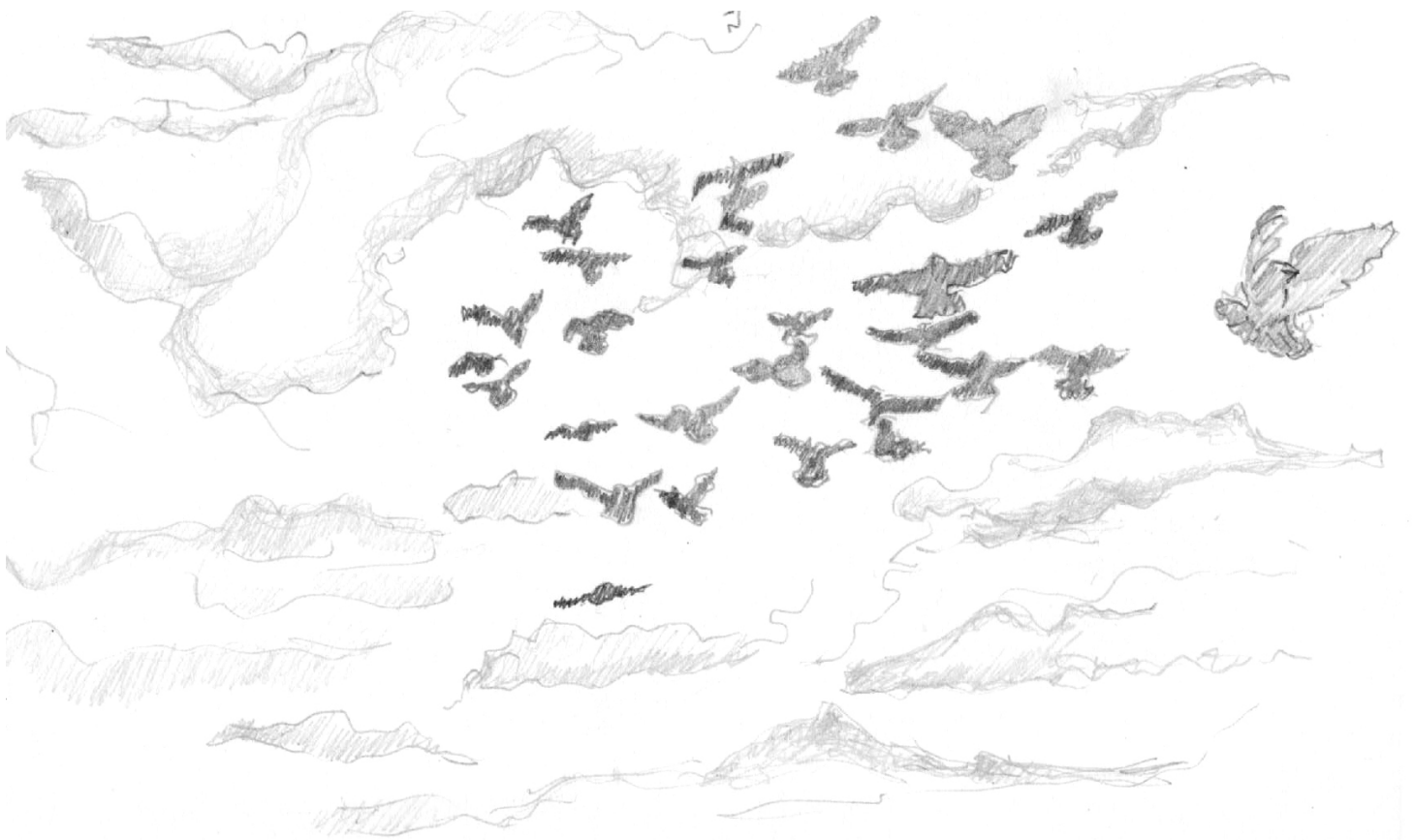




AT THE WEDDING DAY...



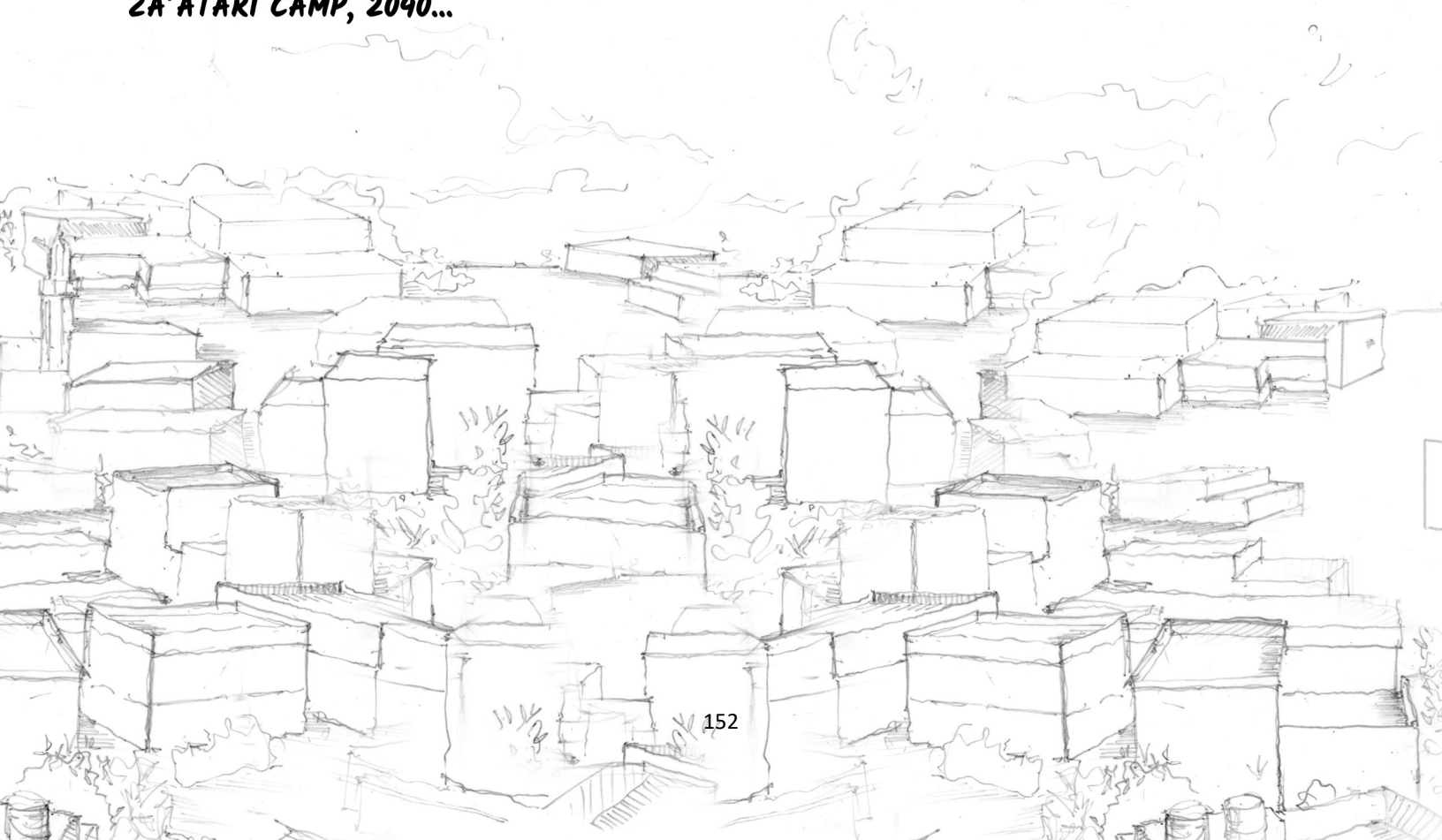
CHAPTER 4

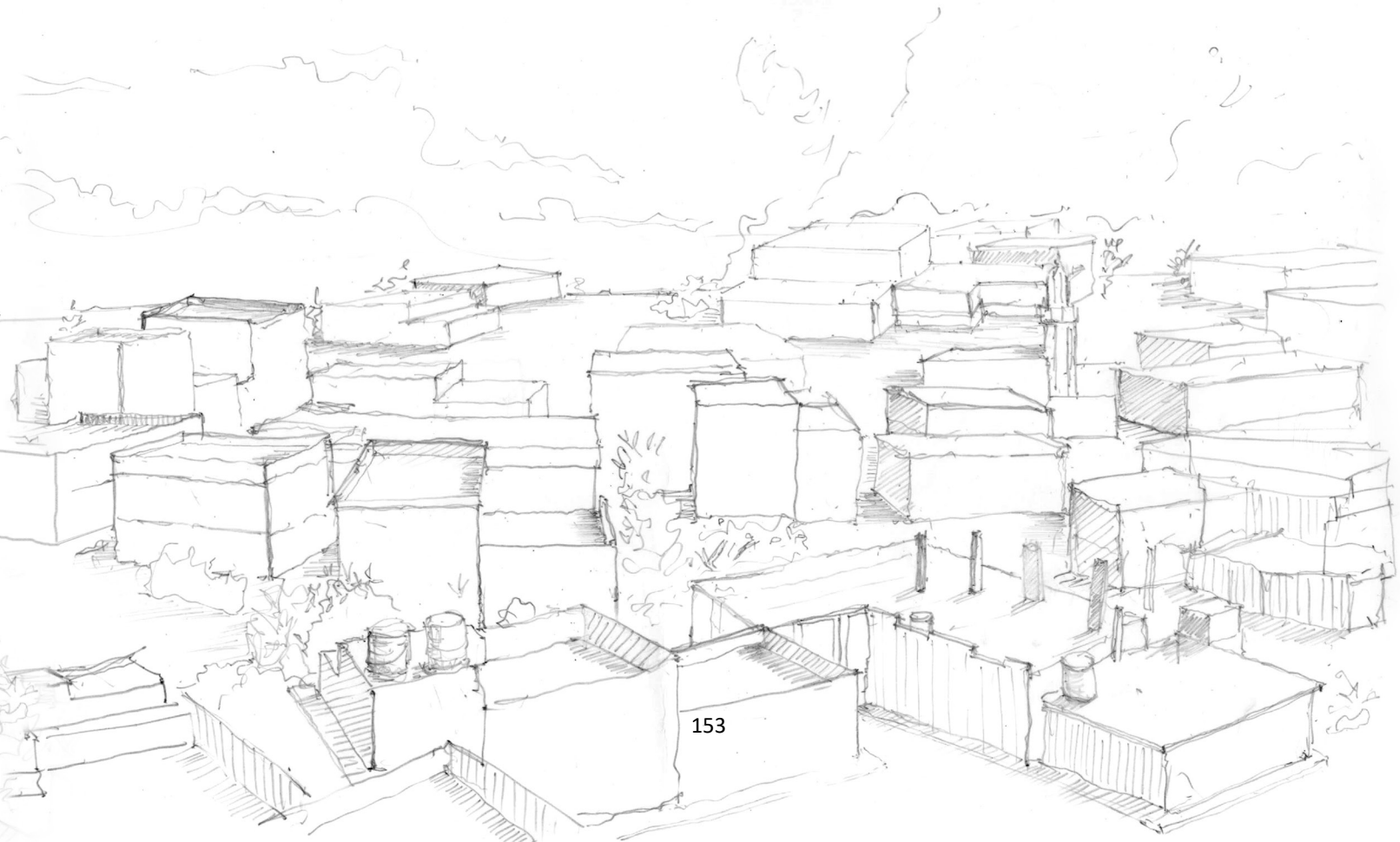


QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT...



ZA'ATARI CAMP, 2040...





ZA'ATARI CAMP, ZIYAD'S HOUSE...



This is the house.

Why would not you leave the camp?

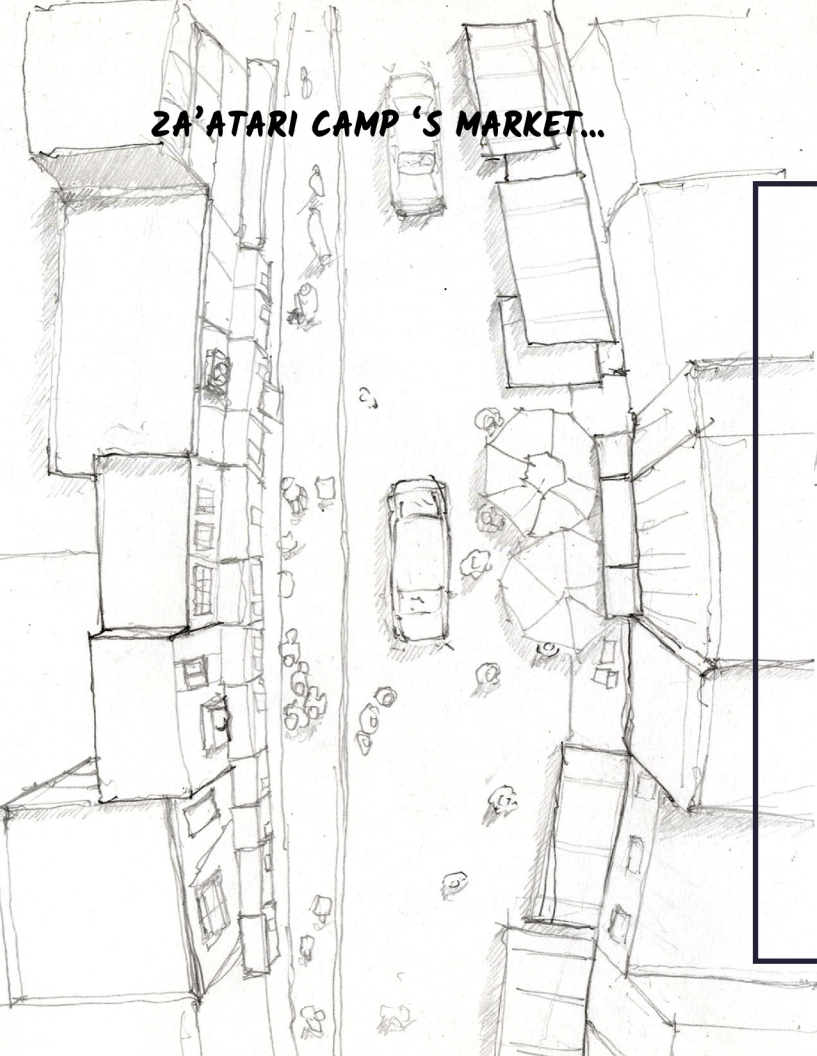
Don't you want to meet your grandchildren, Dad?

My whole life is here.



Let me show you what this place means to me. I will take you to my appointed "memory keeper."

ZA'ATARI CAMP 'S MARKET...



Ahlan!!



Salam, Yasmeen!!



OH! Ziyad! Welcome to your shop.

ZA'ATARI CAMP, ZIYAD'S TENT...

I was a kid but I remember your tent when Sana took me one day to visit you. You had a shop inside it.

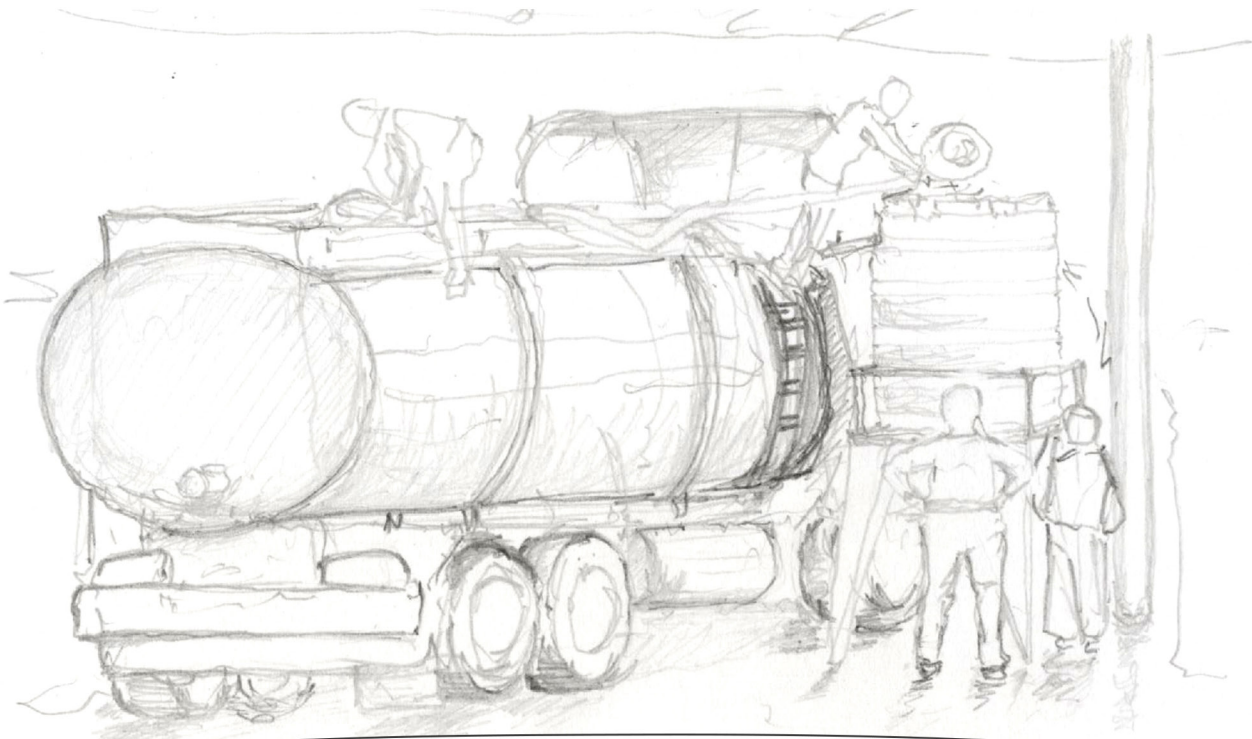


That's right. the tent was always crowded as I turned a part of it as a small shop.

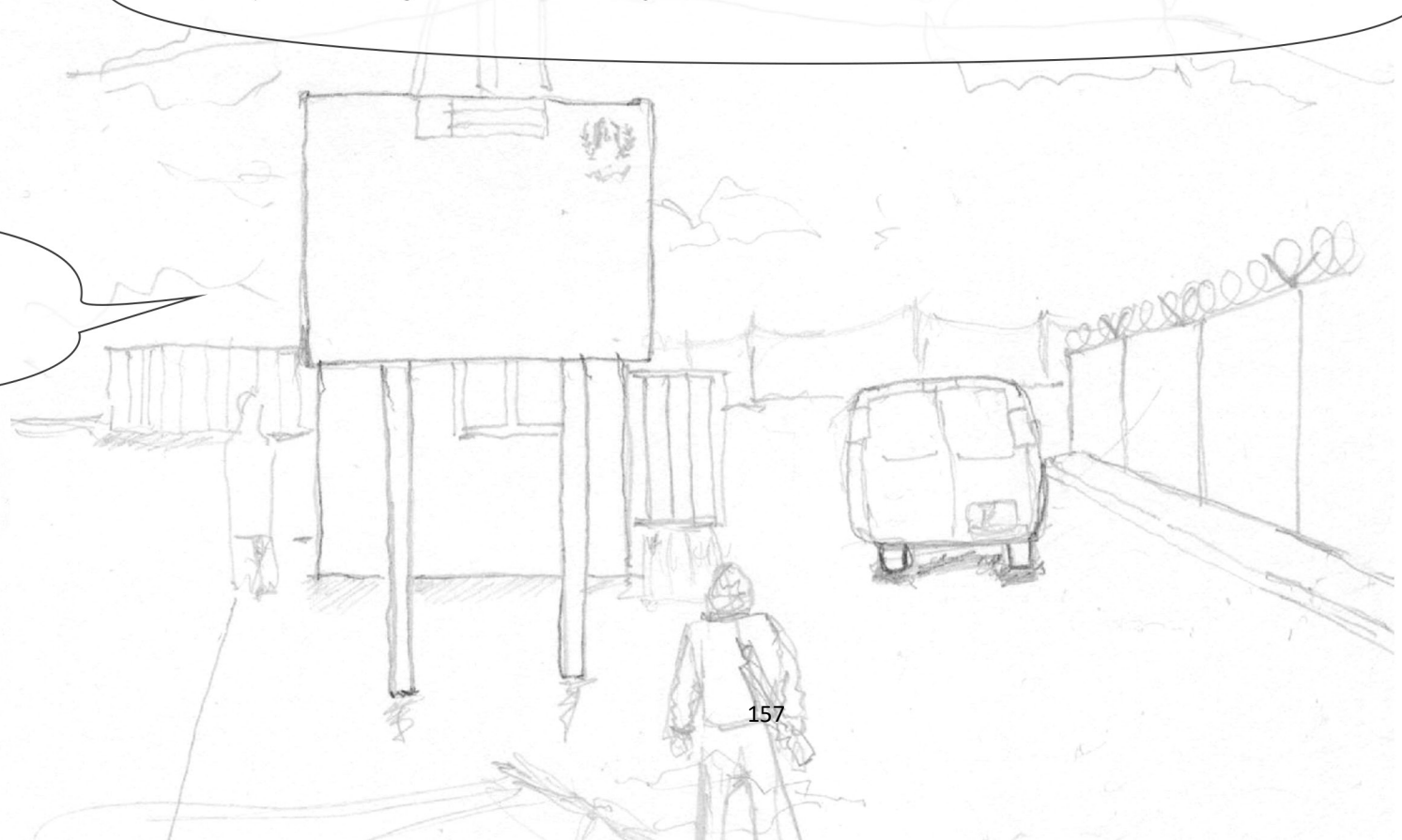
But where did you get the fruits from, Dad? As I recall, this kind of luxury was not offered by the UN.



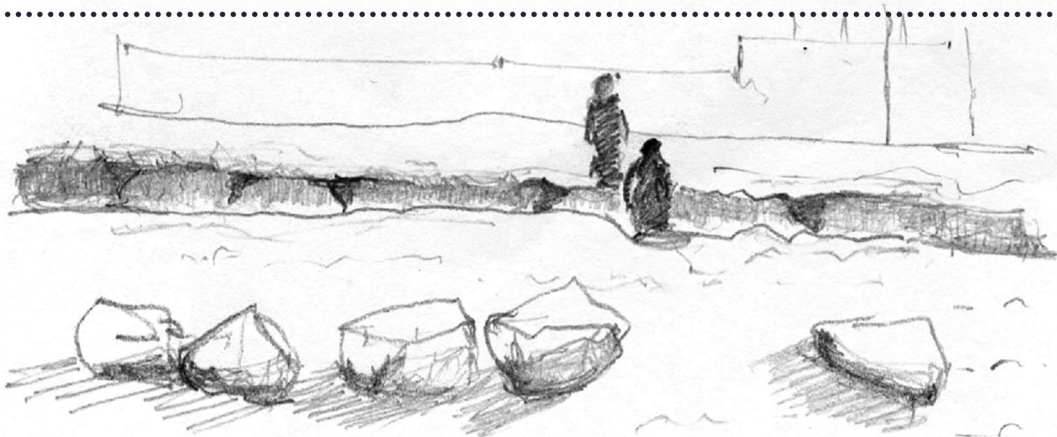
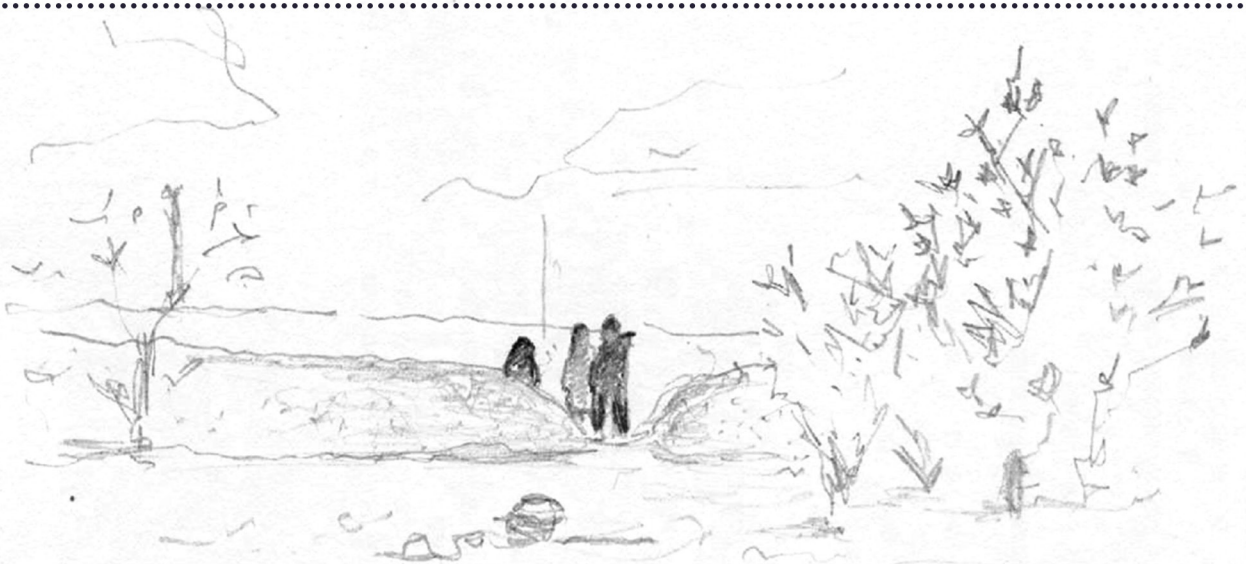
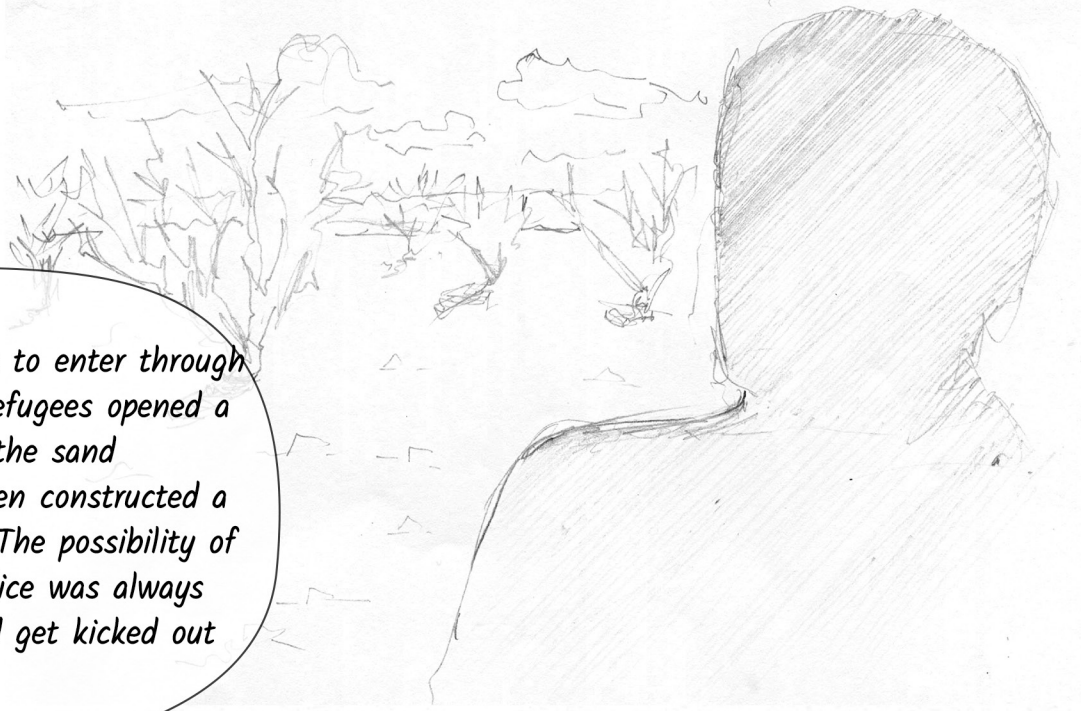
Nothing stopped your dad and other refugees. Bringing stuff from outside was possible although dangerous. At first, people paid for water tank drivers to smuggle stuff.



Later, they had an agreement with them, drivers were paid to safely sneak them outside the camp. But refugees find their way back.



The most used way was to enter through the olive farms where refugees opened a secret passage through the sand man-made hill. They even constructed a bridge over the trench. The possibility of being caught by the police was always high though. They could get kicked out of the camp.



Wow! You were a hero, Dad.

You helped us in gaining some money as well, my son!

Yes, I remember the delivery service I was offering in the market and the goods I sold for newcomers.

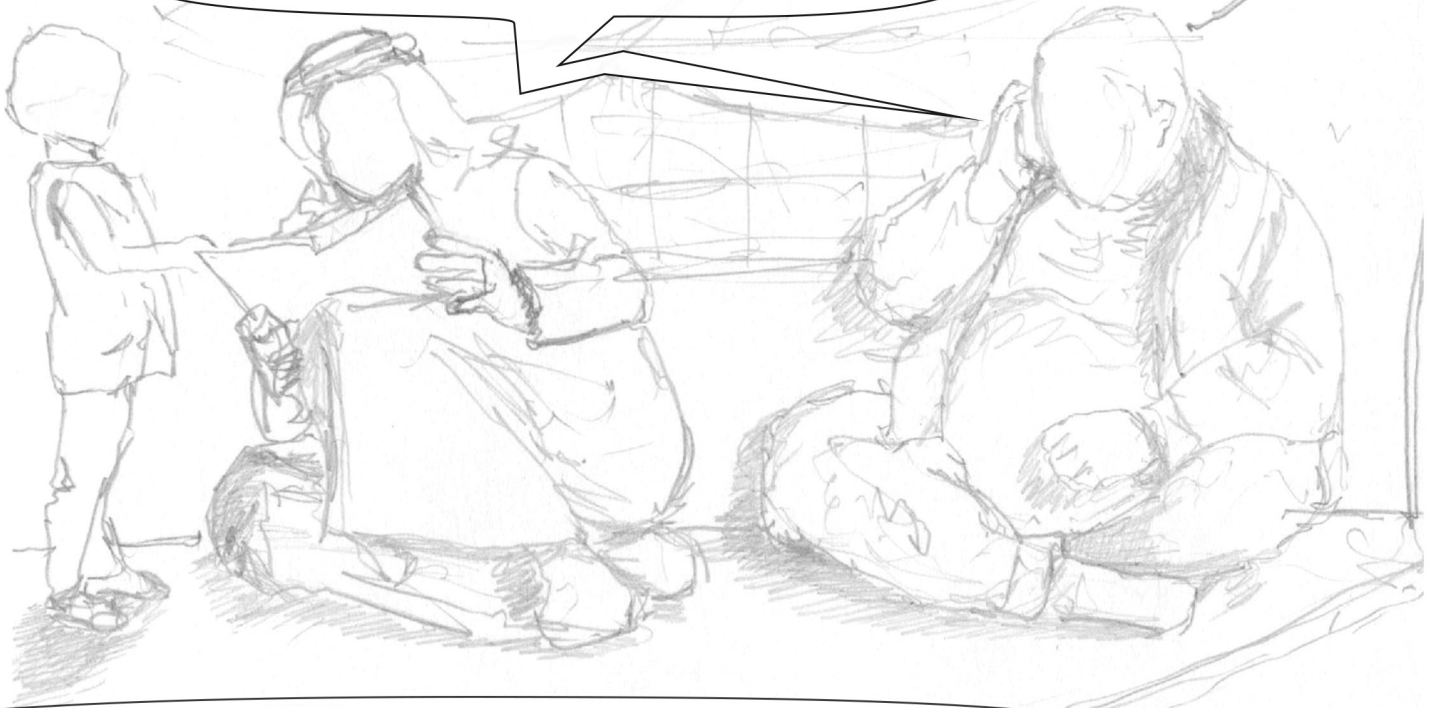
Can you believe that I used to climb a fence with spikes to reach the reception tent?

Of course, I do. We did dangerous things back then.

*Luckily, the situation did not last for a long time.
A friend who moved from the camp to Mafraq city called me one night.*

*I have always asked myself as a kid about this story.
Keep going, Dad.*

*Will you be able to take care of that?
The man lives in Hollande and he will pay in dollars.*

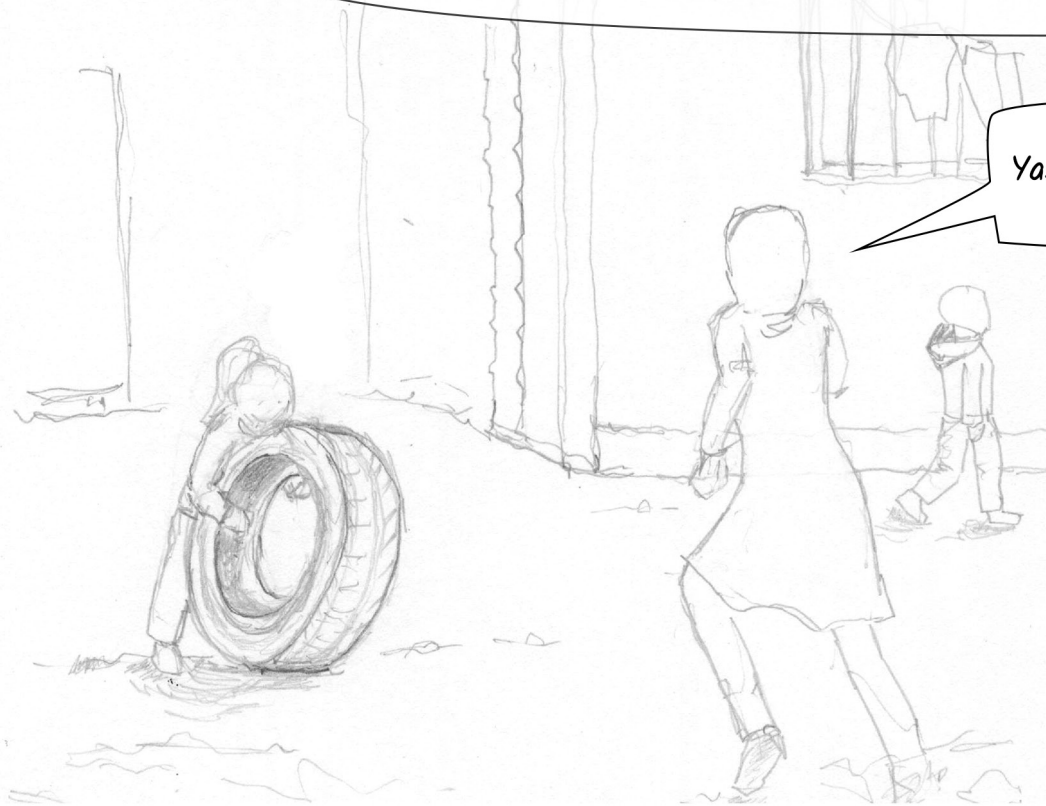


*So, I found where that newcomer was assigned to install his tent.
I was so surprised to see that he was one of my neighbors in Dara'a.*

Ziyad!!

*Allah is praised, you have arrived safely.
Let me help you!*

I helped the family with everything I can while I was doing my mission of watching the older daughter, Sana.



Yasmeen, wait!!

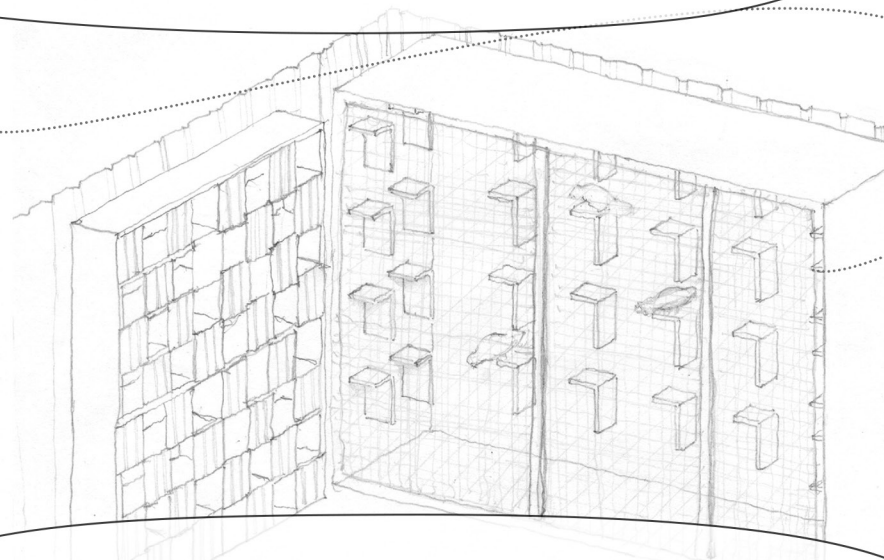
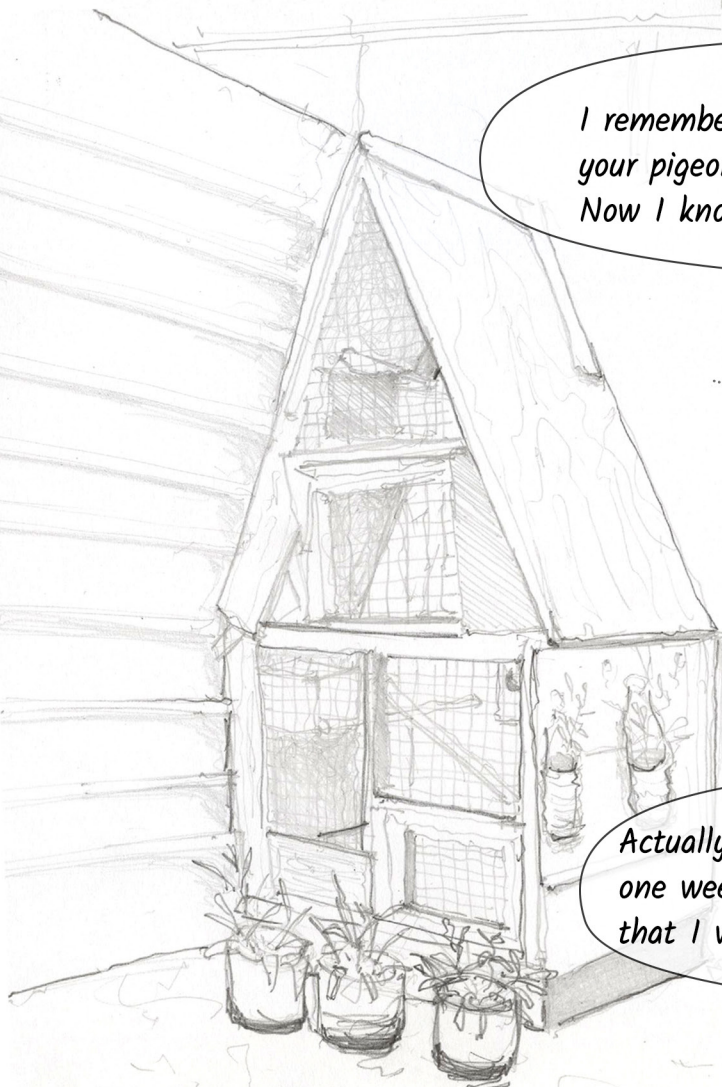
It did not take a long time to gain the family's trust. I quickly became their business partner.



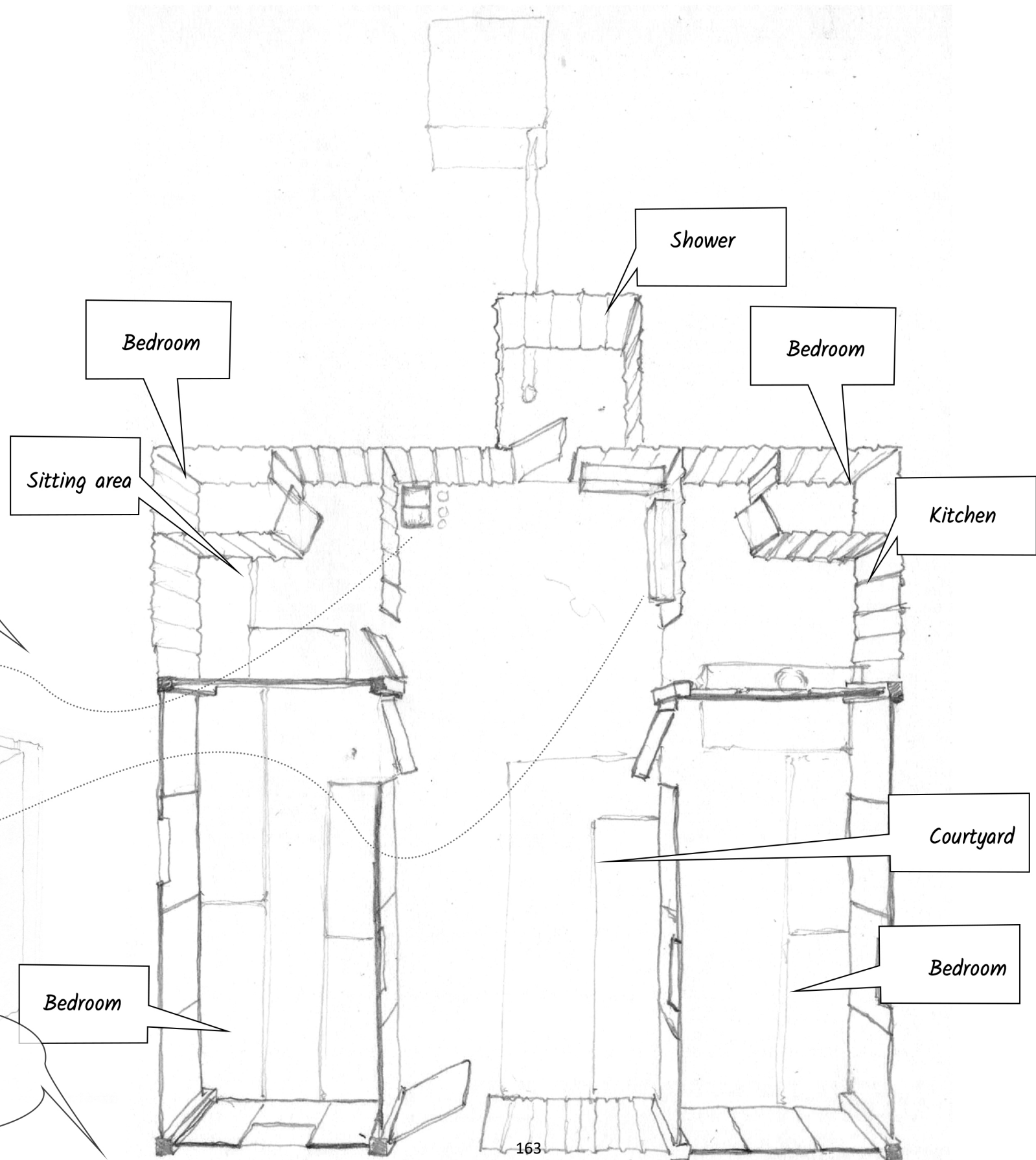
A few months later, I got a house for us. It had two caravans and other rooms made of metal sheets.



I remember how happy you were when you created the cages for your pigeons and birds.
Now I know where you got all those animals from.



Actually, I got them from Syria. I took permission to visit Dara'a for one week. I feared for my life. I stayed there for one day though. All that I wanted were my **pigeons**.



Bedroom

Sitting area

Shower

Bedroom

Kitchen

Courtyard

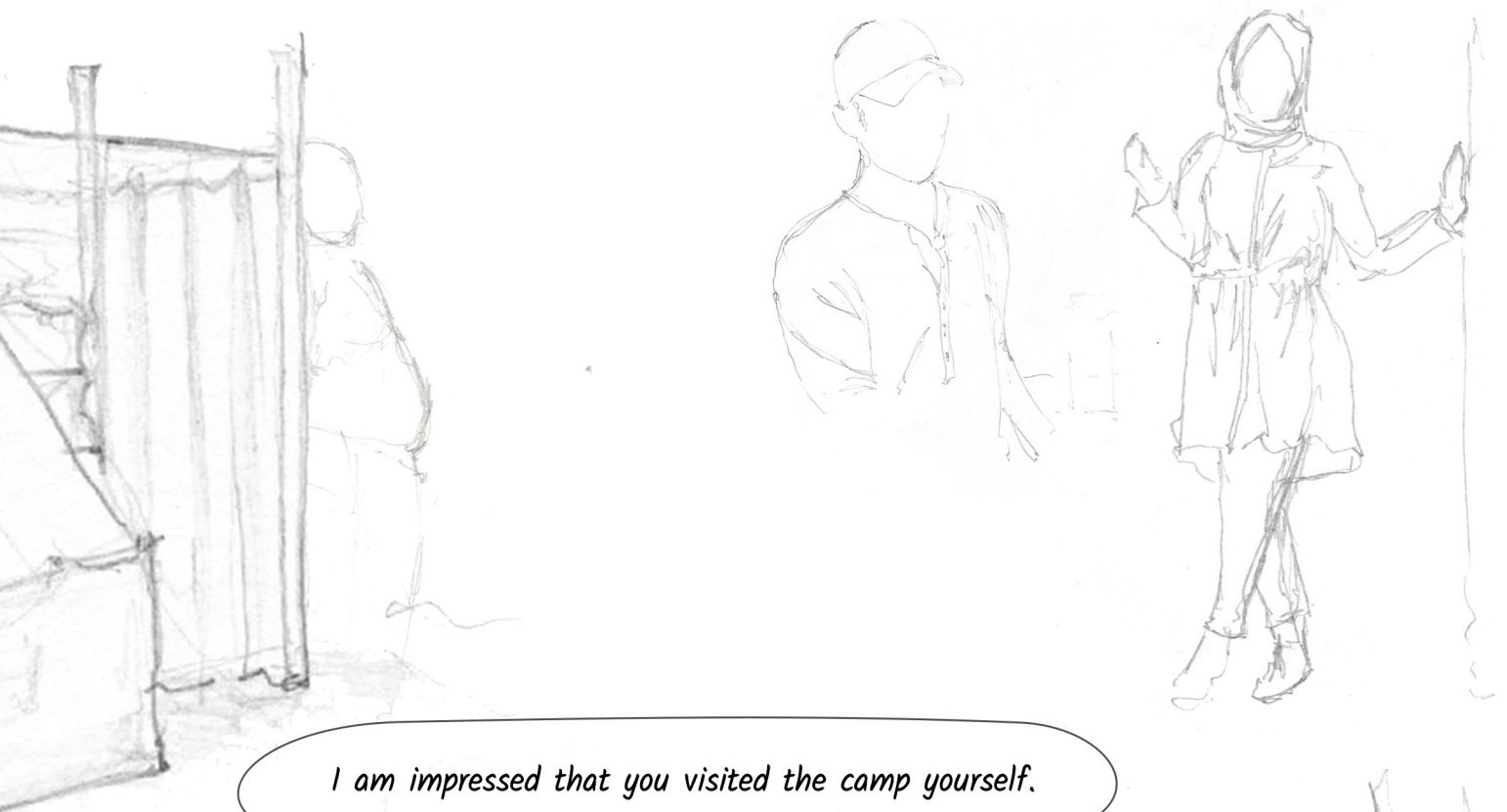
Bedroom

Bedroom

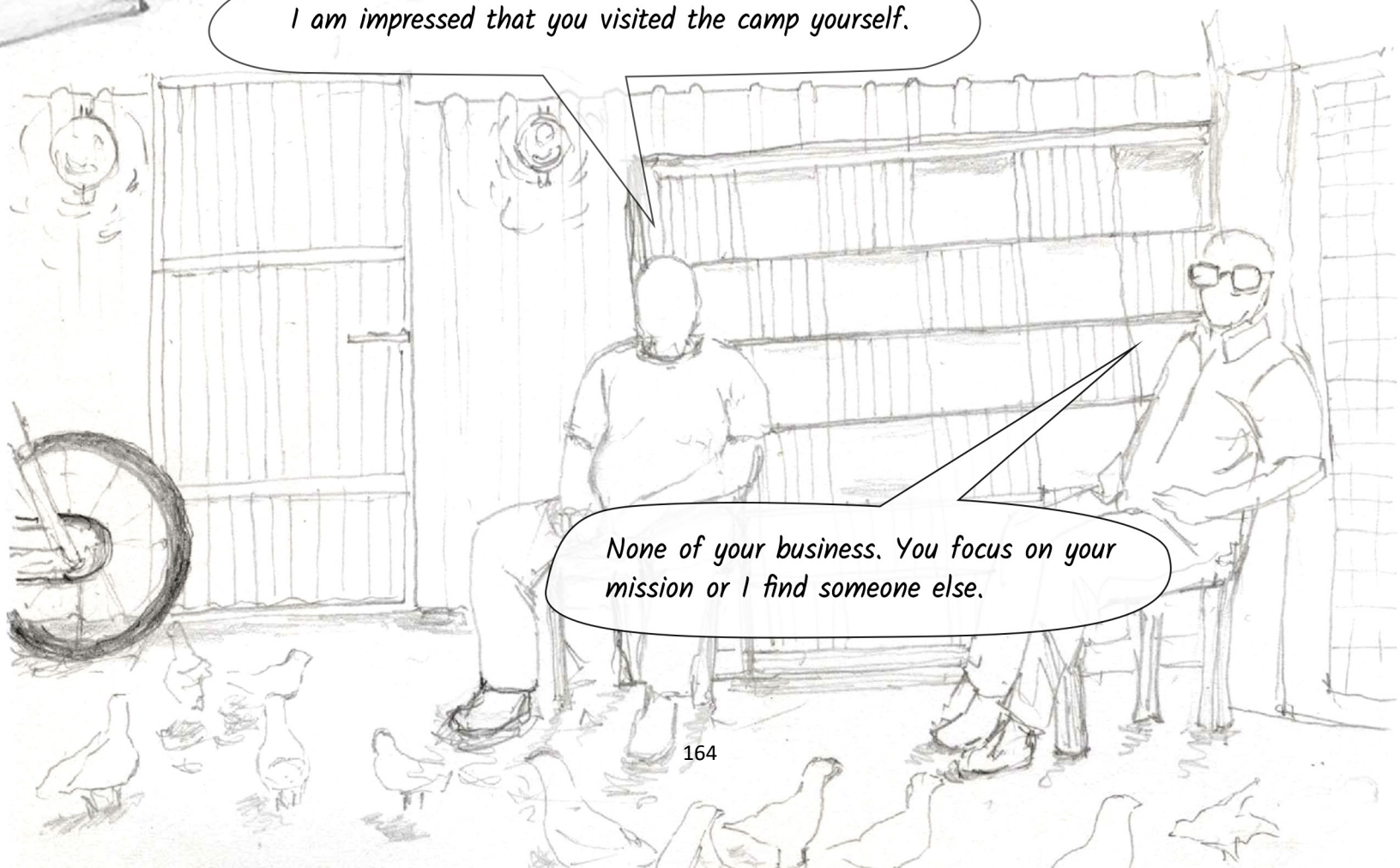
163

Entrance

*Watching and taking care of Sana and her family was an unusual job yet profitable.
However, I saw a remarkable change when I knew that Sana seemed to be in a relationship.*



I am impressed that you visited the camp yourself.

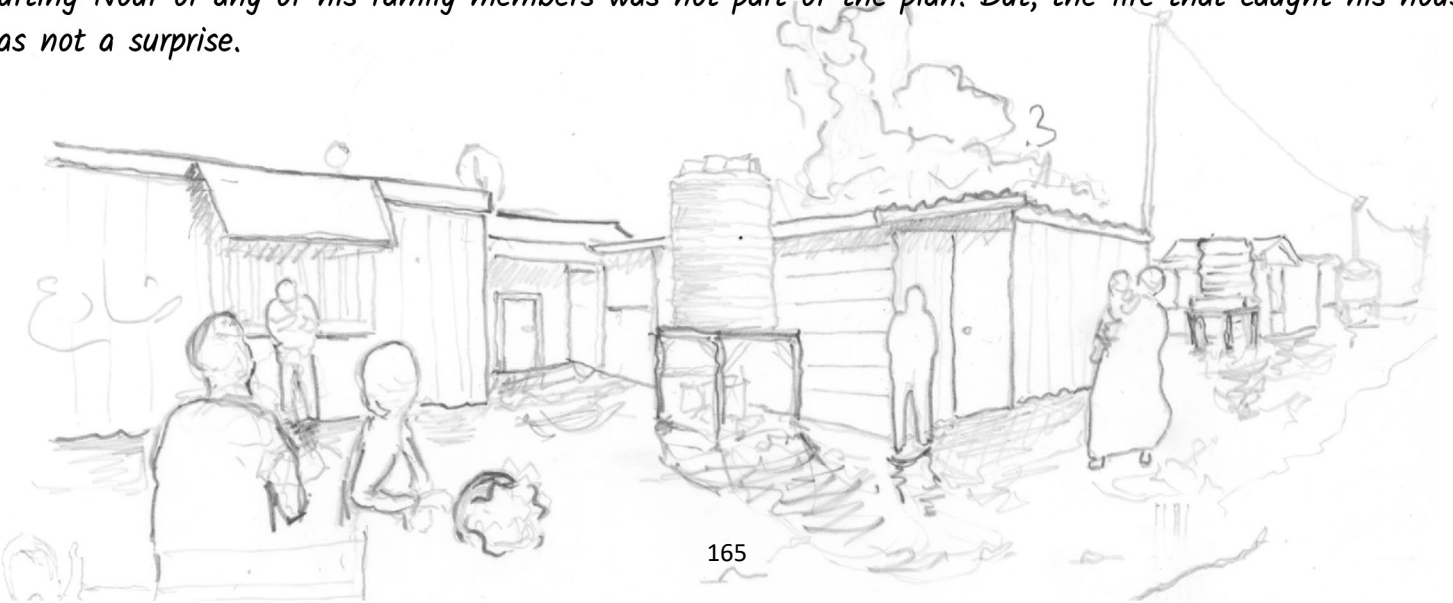


None of your business. You focus on your mission or I find someone else.

My mission switched to distract Sana, or to make Nour and Sana hate each other or stay away from each other at least, and of course, to keep my eyes on the guy.

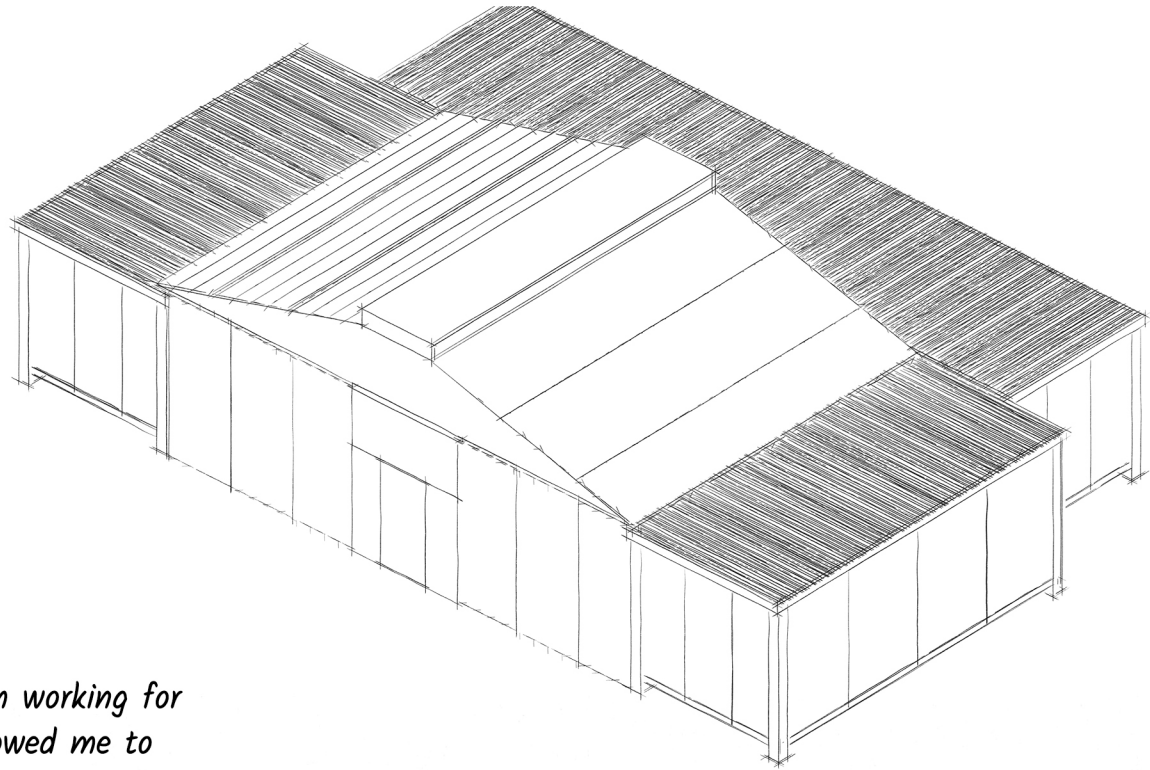


Hurting Nour or any of his family members was not part of the plan. But, the fire that caught his house was not a surprise.



After around a year, when I was unsuccessful in my second mission, or for some other reason that I don't know about, Karam stopped his request.

The surprise was when he supported Sana in preparing for her marriage.



Anyway, the money I got from working for Karam and the retail shop allowed me to afford to open my own business.



And to expand my house, a little.

laundry room

Kitchen

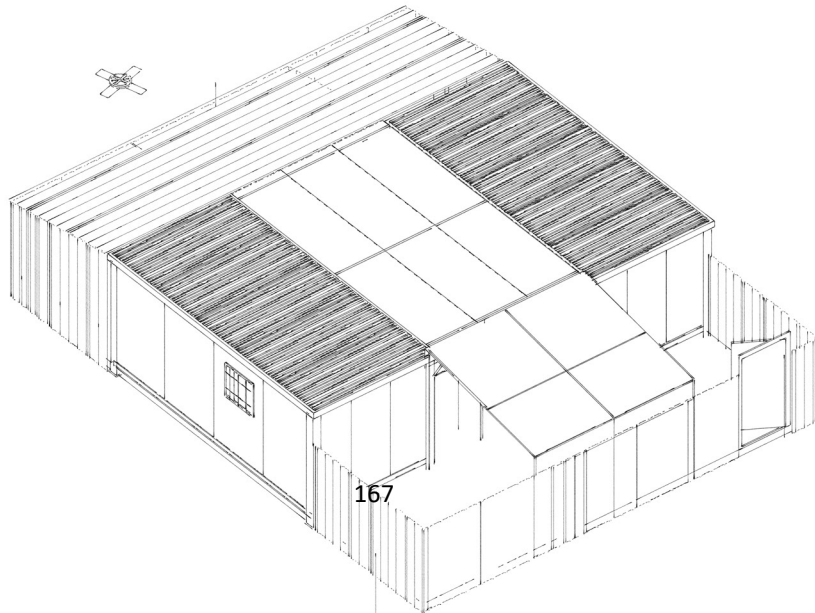
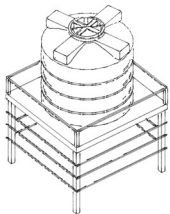
Bathroom/ shower

Bedroom

Bedroom

Courtyard

Front yard



Now, the camp has become more like a city with concrete houses and several facilities.

Yeah, Dad! But it is still missing a lot. I think it is better to come with me.

Why did Nour and Sana leave the camp a long time ago although they were really against the idea?

In 2016, strange and scary decisions were made. People who were still involved in any political activities in Syria were threatened by the camp's officials to be kicked out of the camp and forced to return to Syria.

Nour did not have a choice. He had to leave the camp.

Yasmeen is still here as you see. She is like a daughter to me after my sons and daughters left me. She is taking care of me, my birds, and my shops.

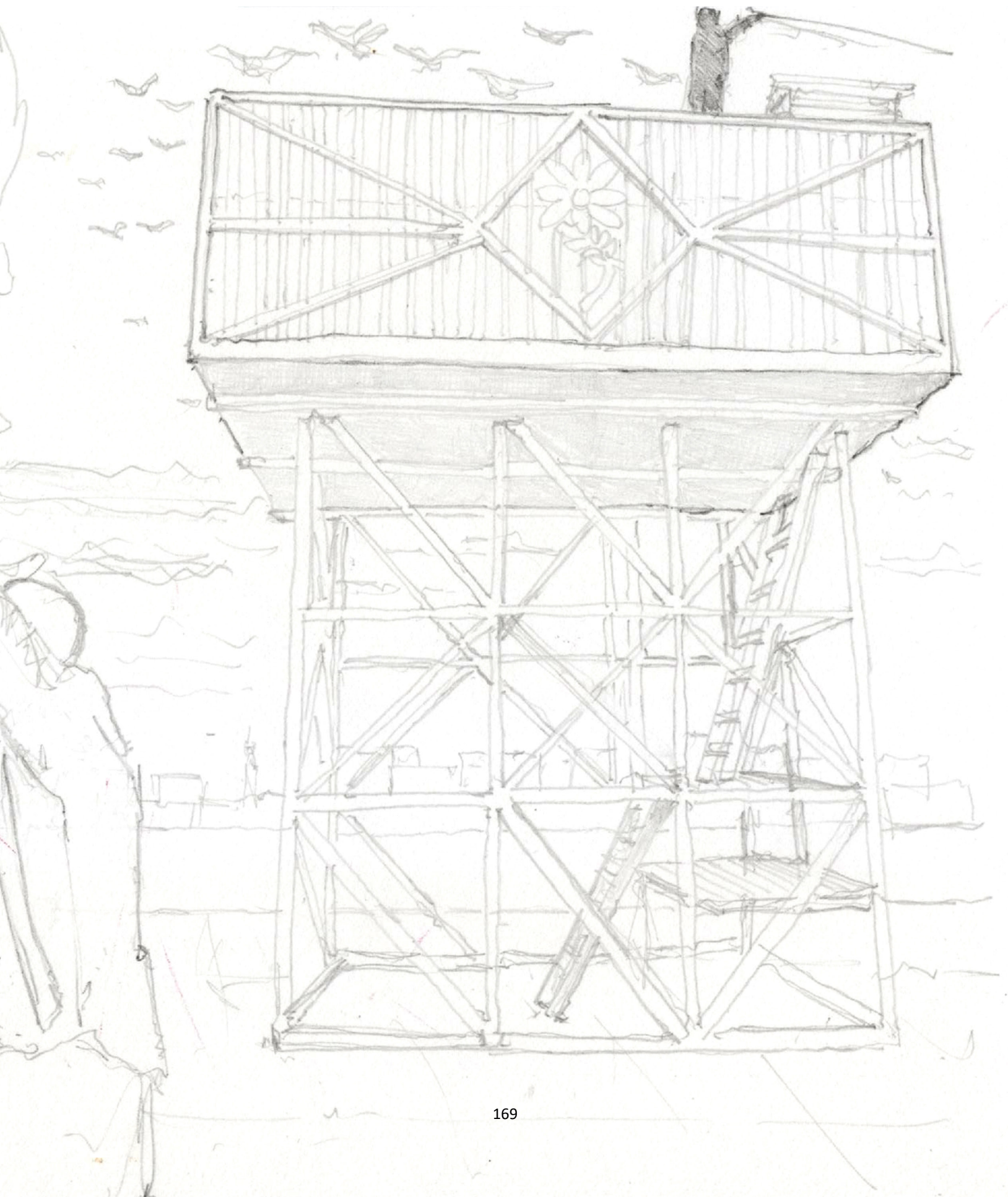
I will never leave her or my birds.

This camp is developed by us. Building with concrete was a big challenge that required long negotiations with the authorities.

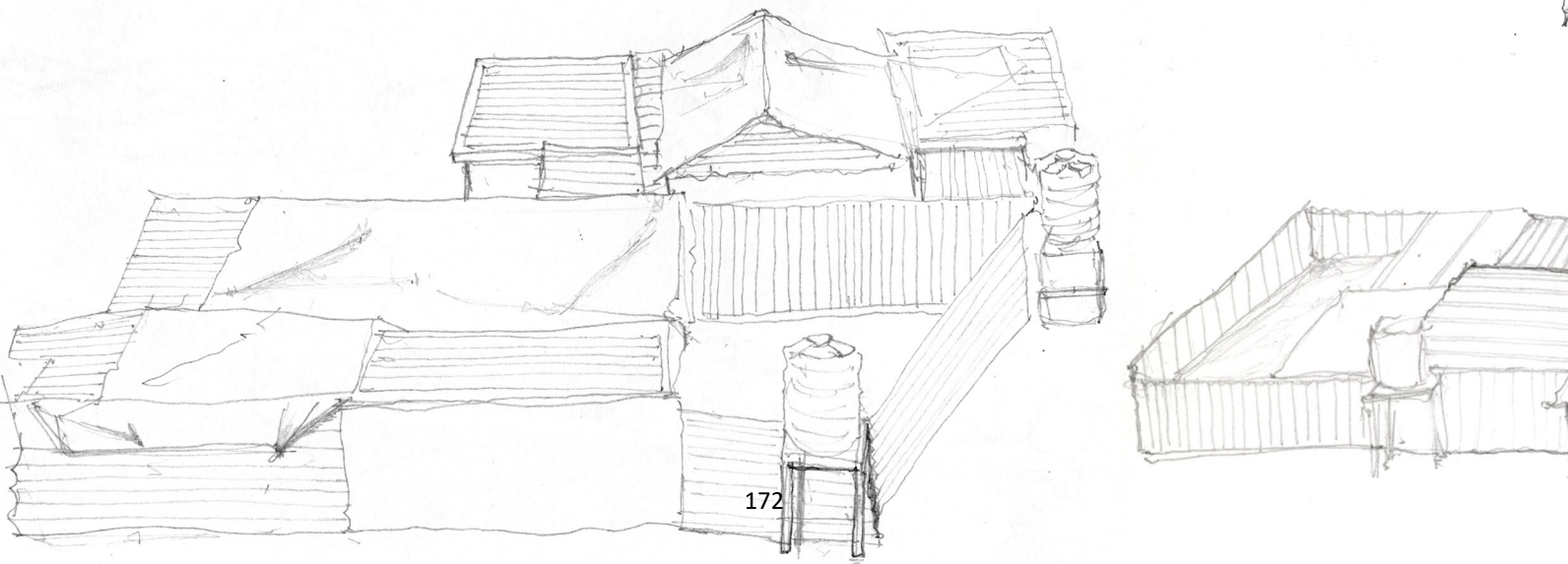
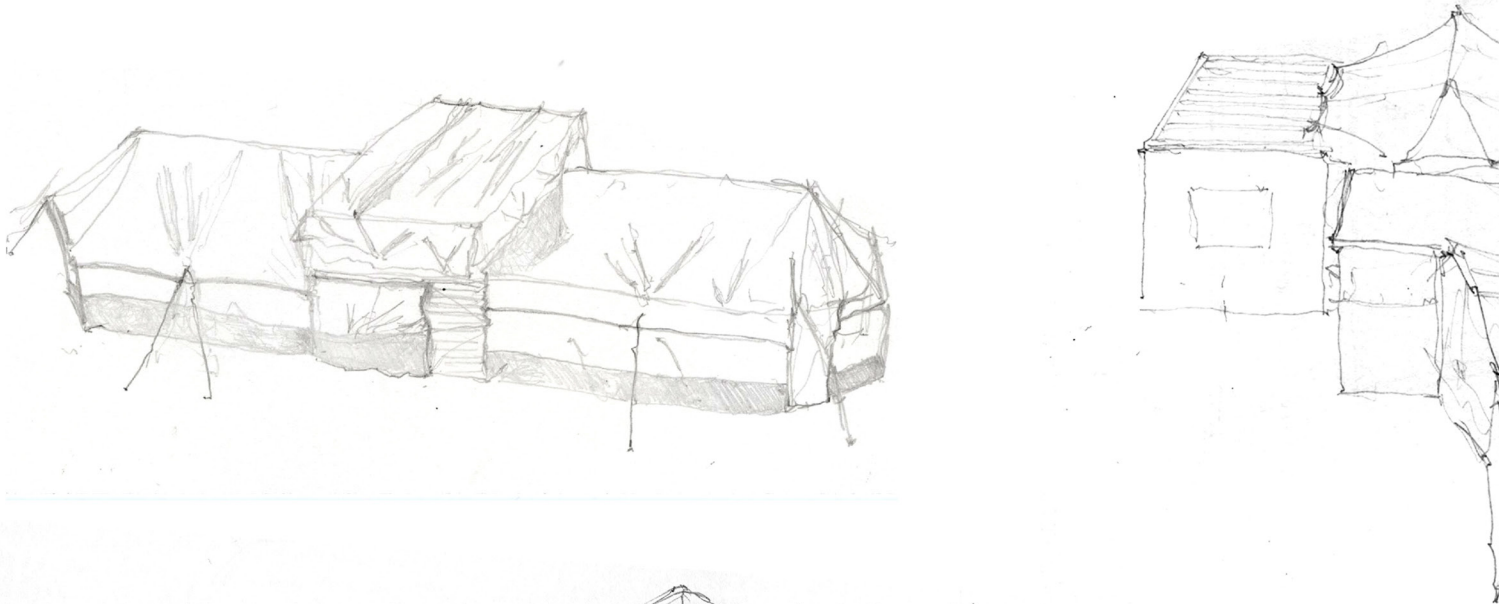
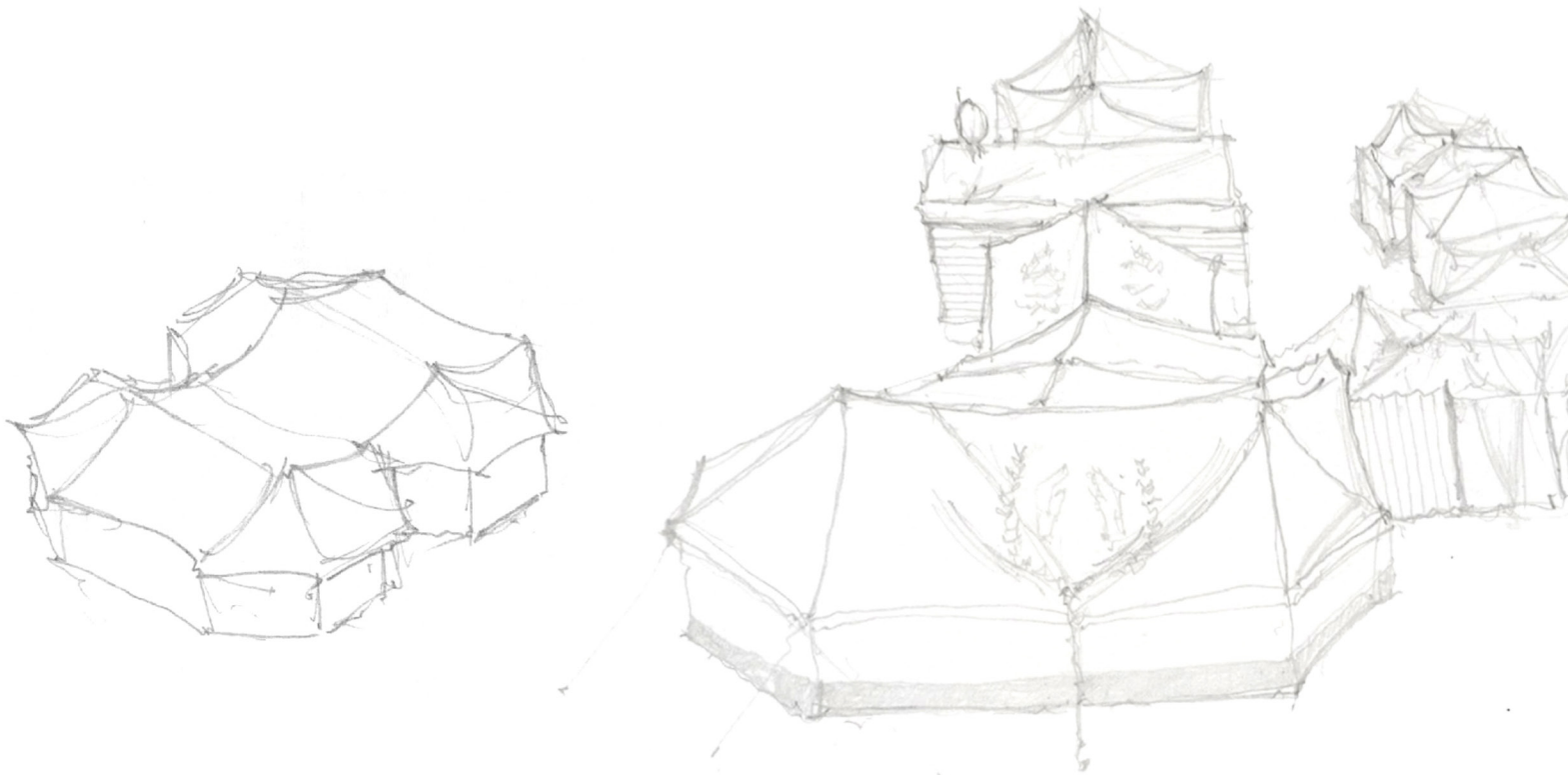
This step opened the door for the camp to be considered as a part of Za'atari village.

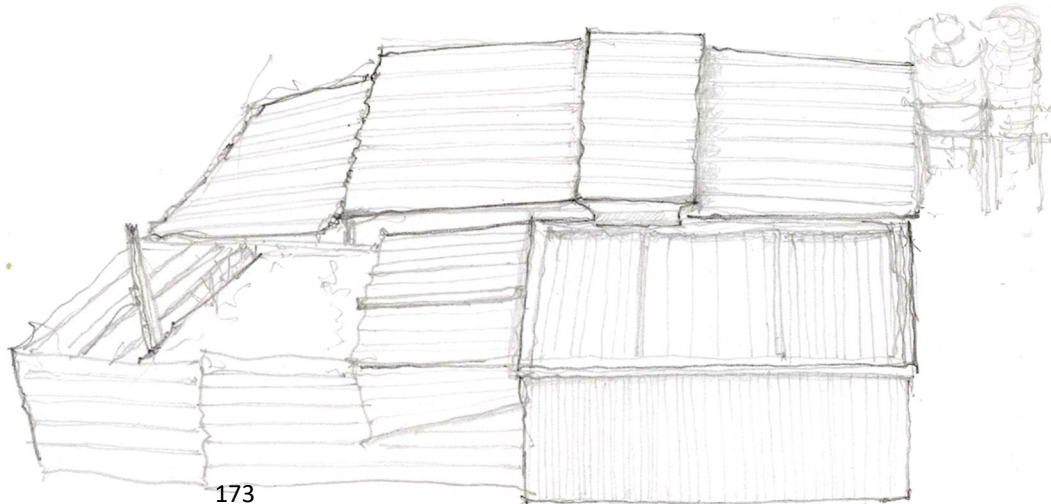
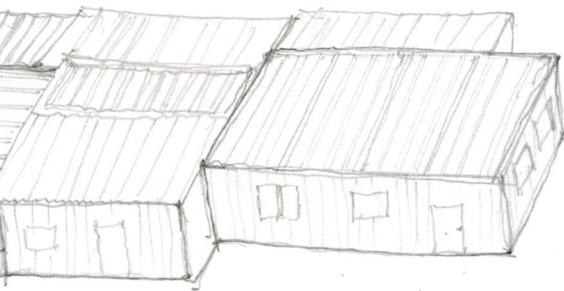
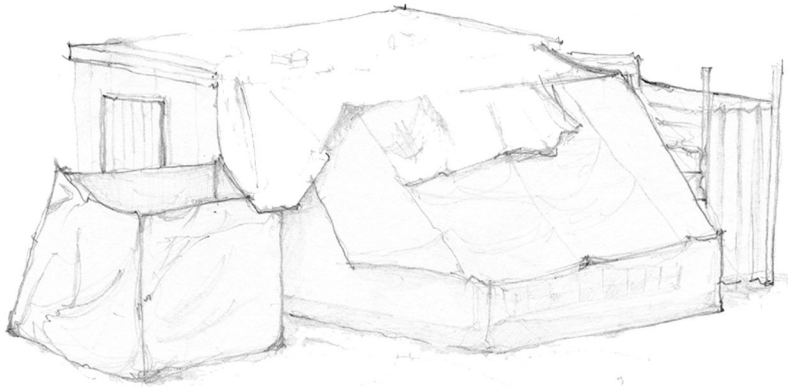
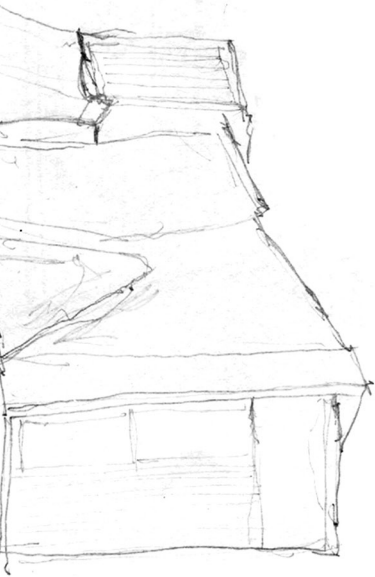
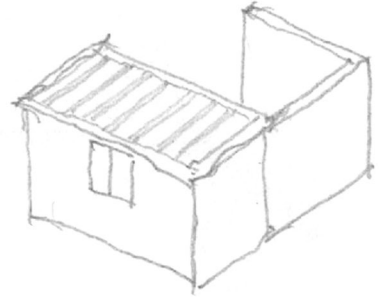
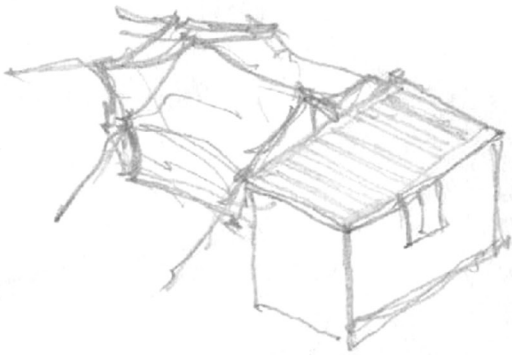
We developed the camp and it made us who we are.

If I would leave this place, it would not be to anywhere other than Syria.



THE END!





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