

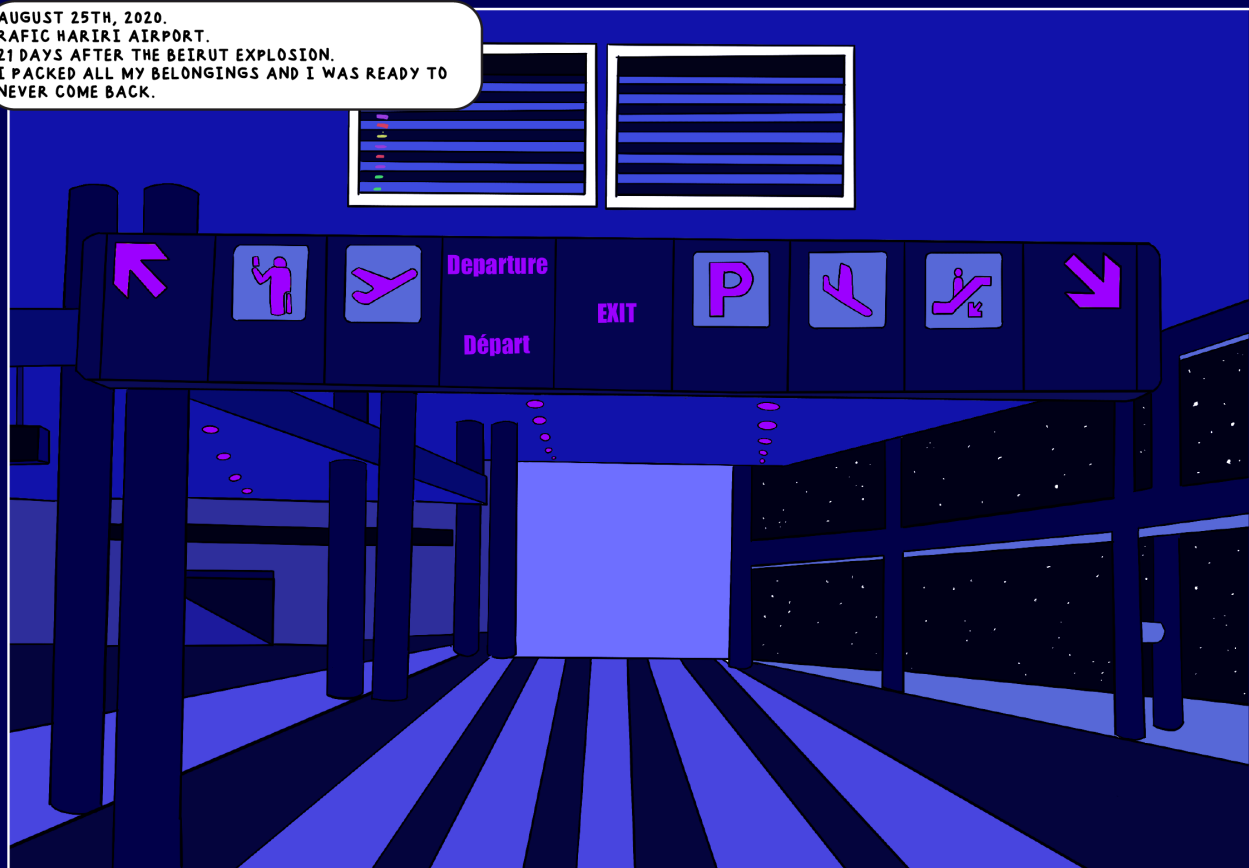
BY **أنا**
ANNA MOKBEL

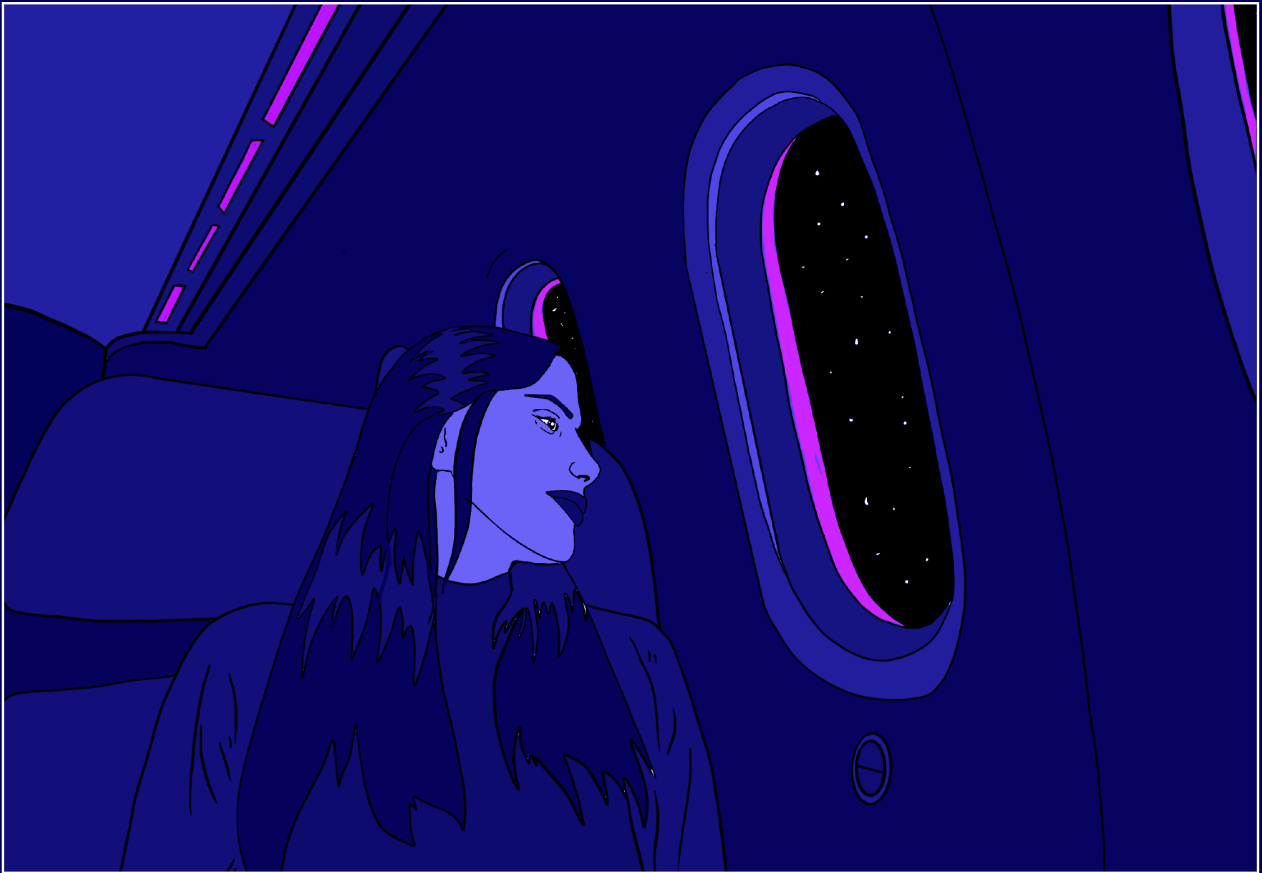
A BOOK BY

**СЕРИОС
НОММЕ**

АННА МОКБЕЛ

AUGUST 25TH, 2020.
RAFIC HARIRI AIRPORT.
21 DAYS AFTER THE BEIRUT EXPLOSION.
I PACKED ALL MY BELONGINGS AND I WAS READY TO
NEVER COME BACK.





100

100

100

100

100

100

100

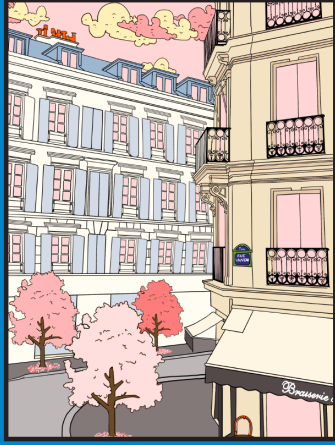
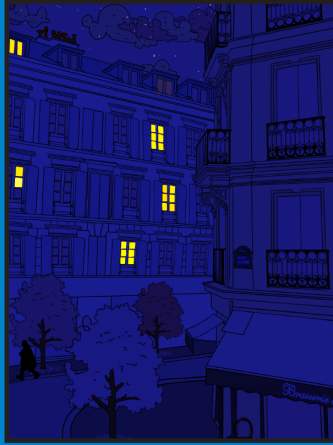
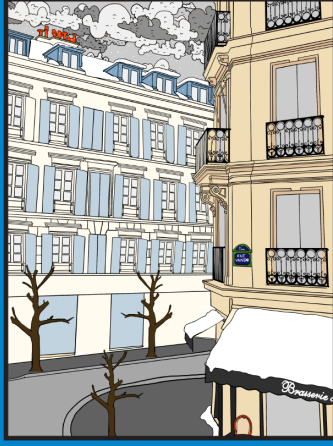
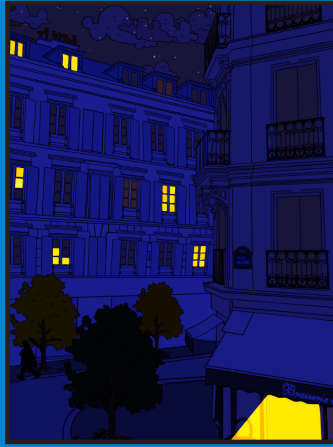
100

100

100

100

100



100

100

100

100

100

100

100

100

100

100

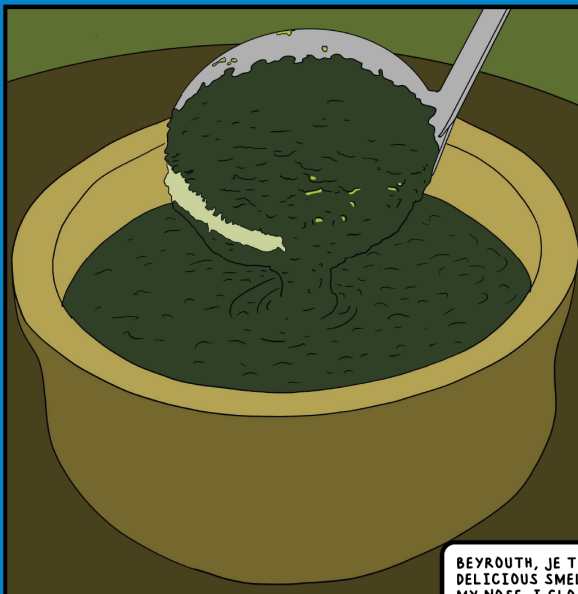
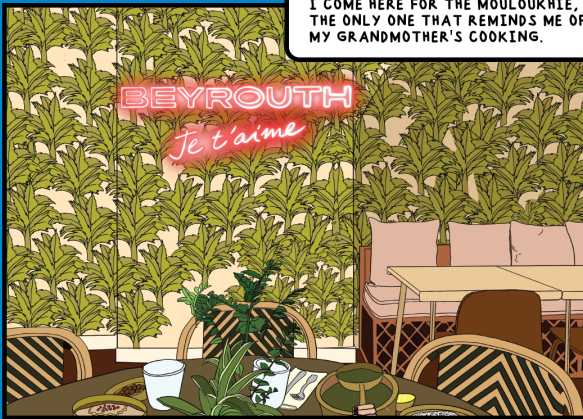
100

100

AS I WALK THROUGH PARIS, I COME ACROSS ONE OF MY FAVORITE PLACES, THE PLACE I COME TO TO GET A GLIMPSE OF HOME. THE LONGER I LIVE IN PARIS, THE MORE THE SENSE OF HOME AND THE QUESTION OF BELONGING EAT UP MY MIND.

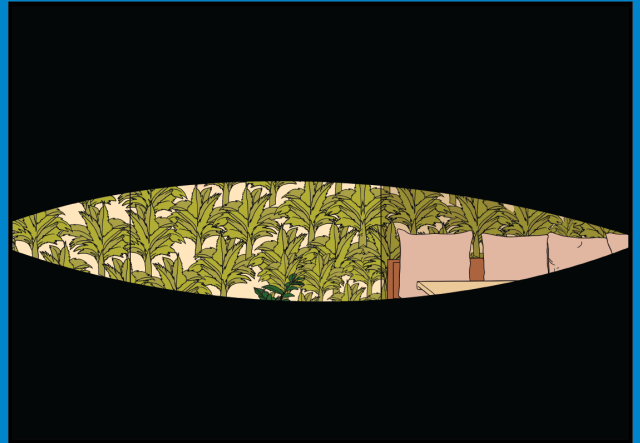


I COME HERE FOR THE MOULOUKHIE, THE ONLY ONE THAT REMINDS ME OF MY GRANDMOTHER'S COOKING.

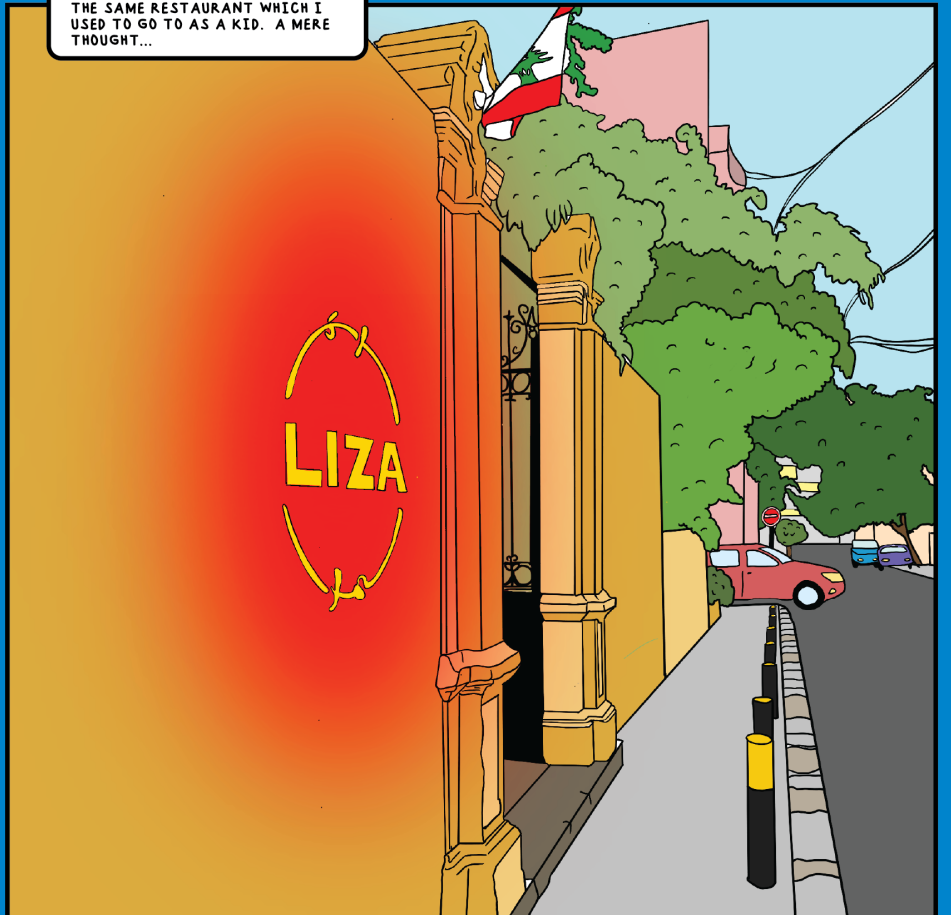
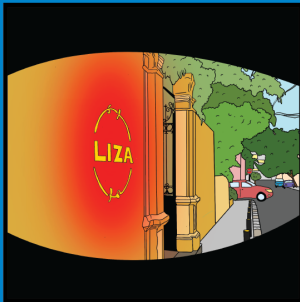
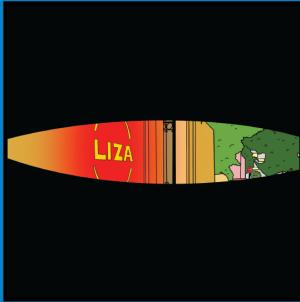
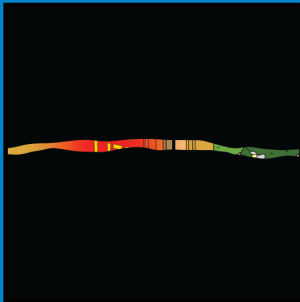


BEYROUTH, JE T'AIME. AS THE DELICIOUS SMELL COMES THROUGH MY NOSE, I CLOSE MY EYES.





A MEMORY COMES TO THE SURFACE AND IT BRINGS ME BACK HOME. I'M IN BEIRUT, NEXT TO MY HOUSE, AT THE SAME RESTAURANT WHICH I USED TO GO TO AS A KID. A MERE THOUGHT...



100%
certified

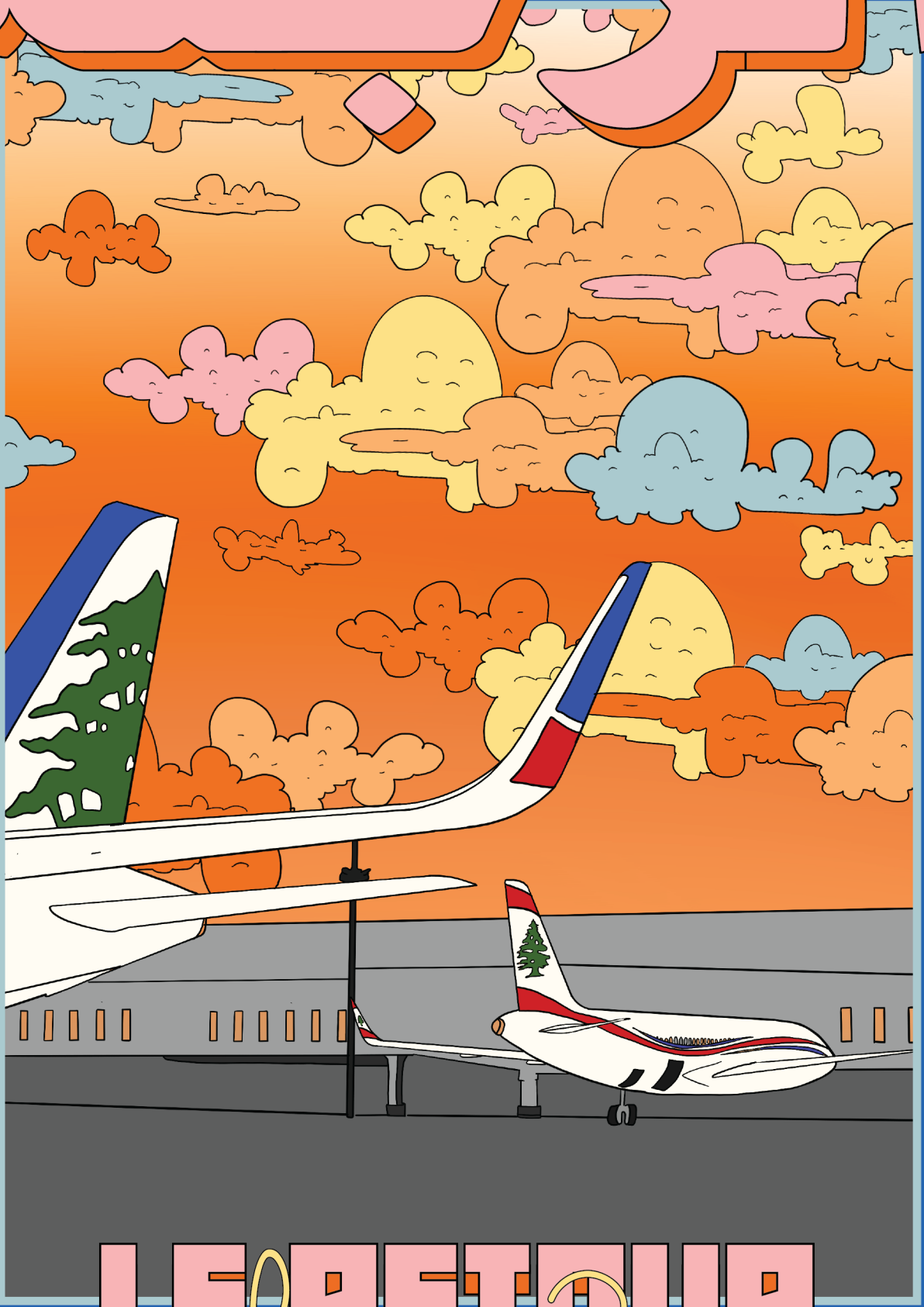
BEST
COOKING

since
always



TETA'S
COOKING

الرجوع



LE RETOUR

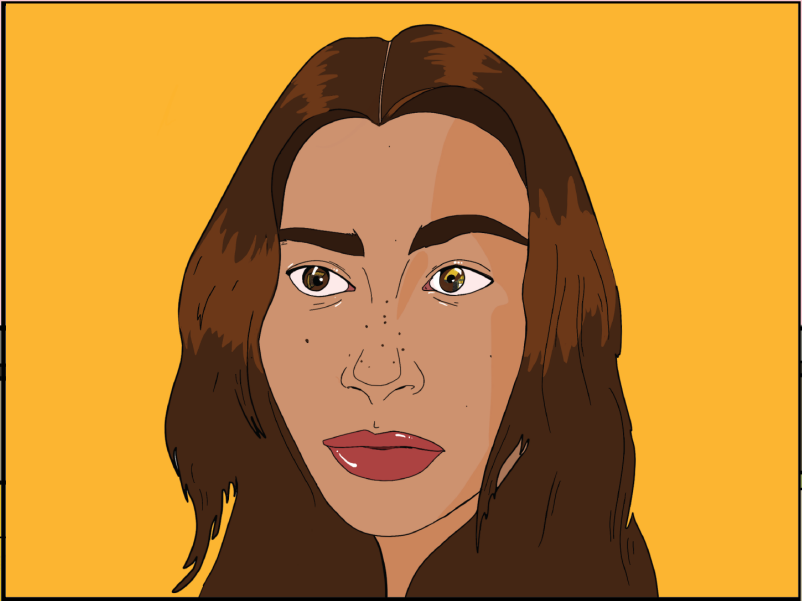
el rajaa

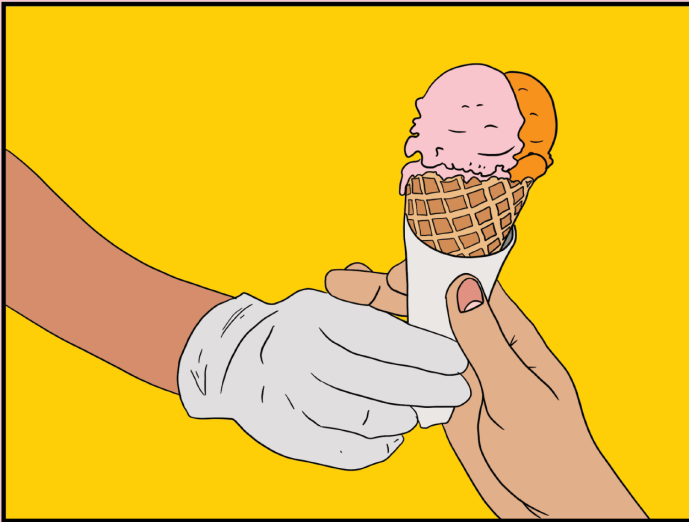
I'M BACK IN BEIRUT. MY
PERCEPTION HAS CHANGED.
I DON'T LOOK AT THE CITY
THE WAY I USED TO WHEN I
LIVED THERE. WHAT WAS
ONCE AN OLD
NOW TALKS TO BUILDING
ME THROUGH THE
LAYERS OF ITS HISTORY

WALKING ABANDONED ON MY
PAST THE ICE CREAM
NOW SHOP STREET,
I SEE IT, BUT WHAT SPEAKS TO
ME ARE THE **MEMORIES**.
I'M FIVE, **MEMORIES**,
MOM HANDS ME AN
ICE CREAM, I'M HAPPY.

I LOOK AT YOU

NOW

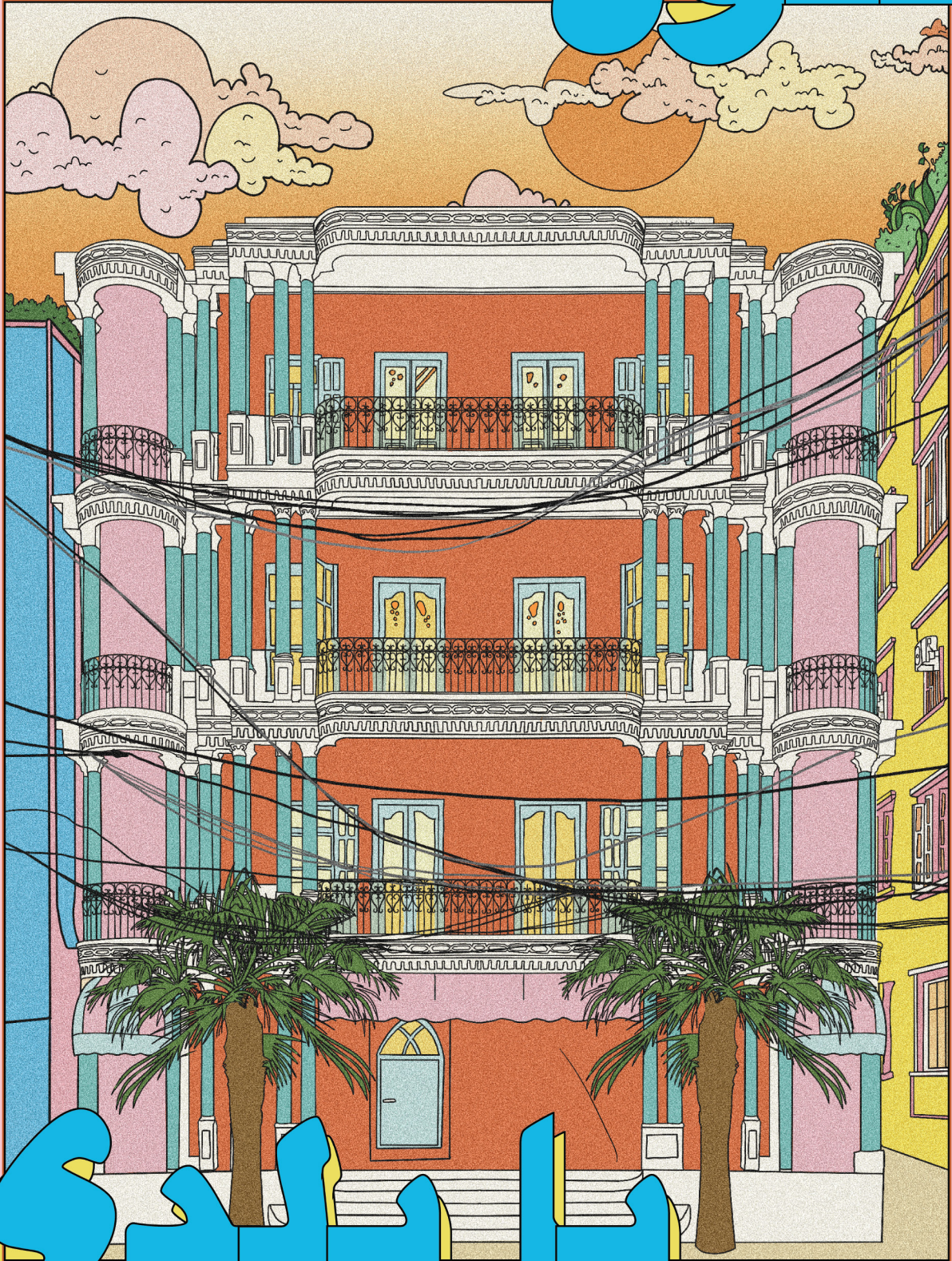




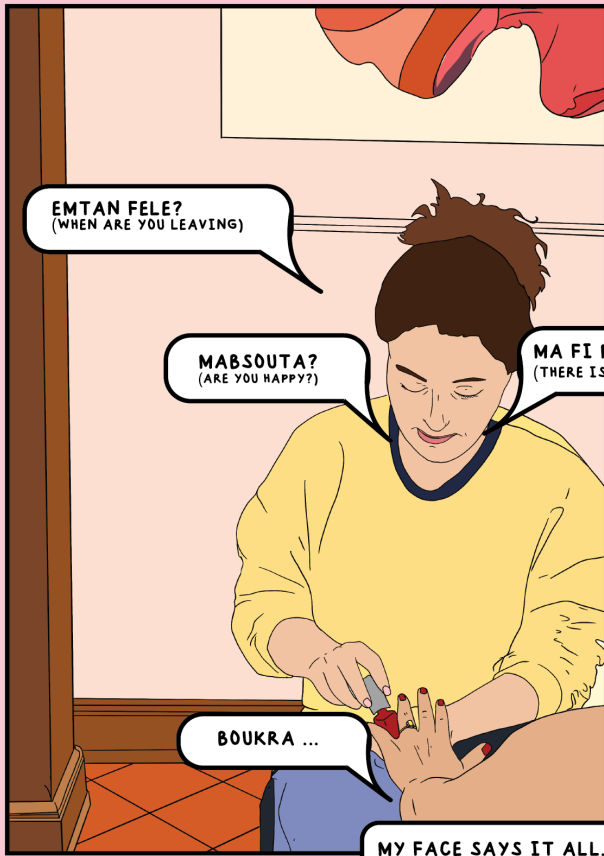
**THROUGH
THE LAYERS
OF THE
PAST**

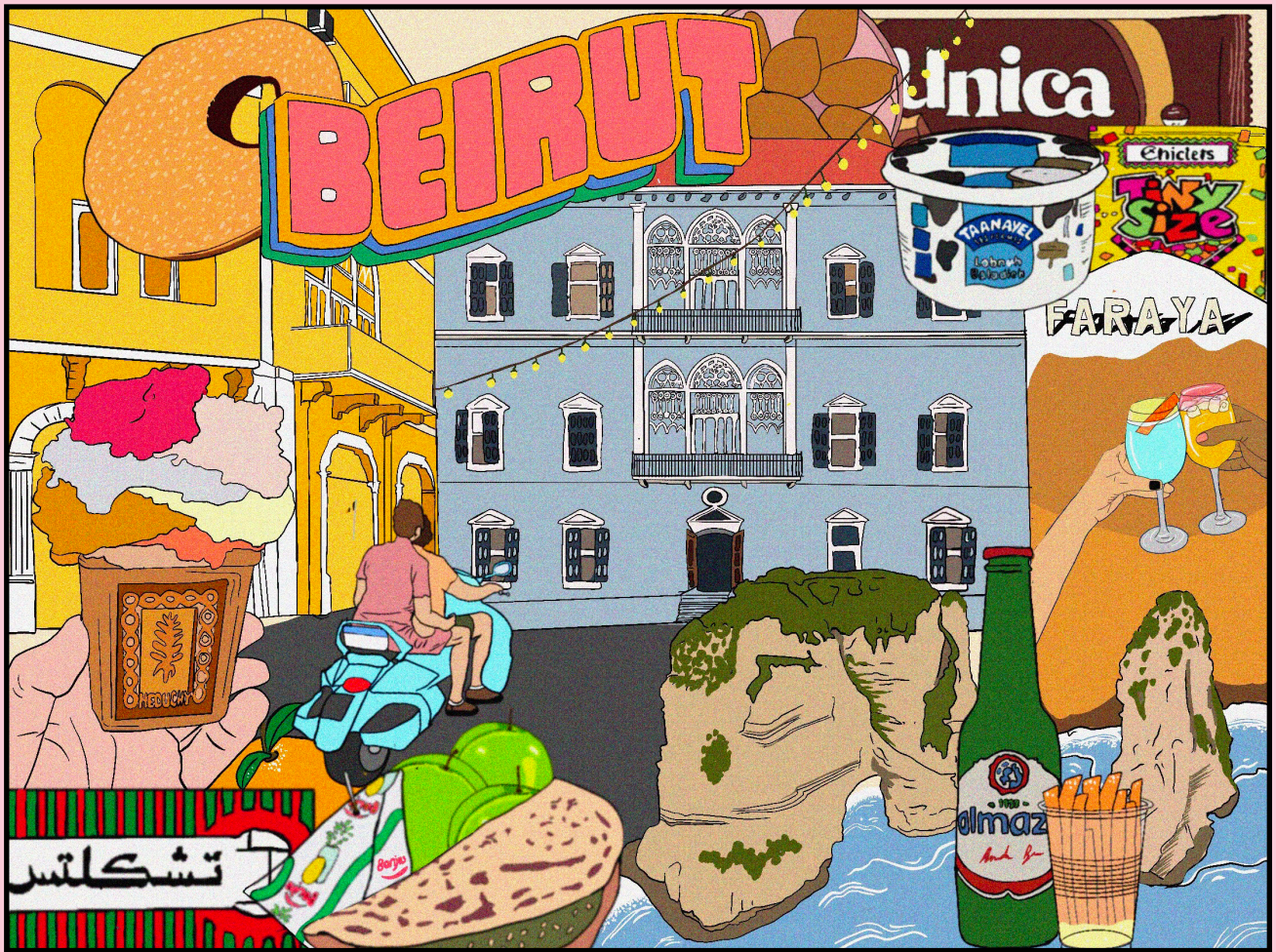


حديقة



يا بدي





GEBRAN

عائلة



جبران مقبل

MOKBEL

ألف وتسعة مائة وخمسة وخمسون 1955

I'M HOME, IT'S LATE, I'M IN THE LIVING ROOM WITH MY DAD. HE HAS HIS USUAL WHISKY DRINK AFTER A LONG DAY. WE'RE TALKING.



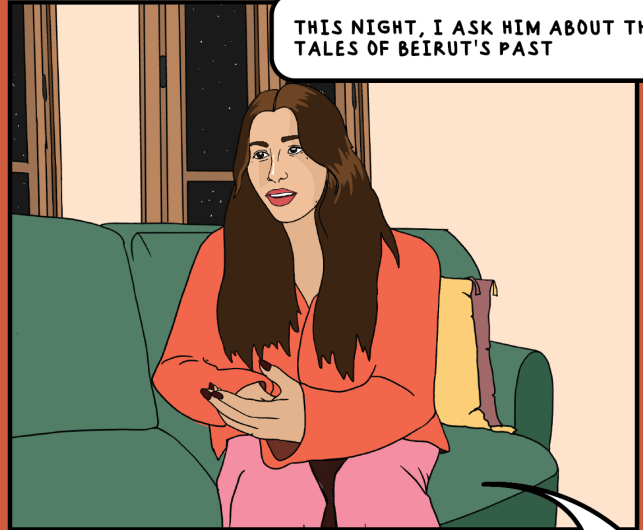
THESE NIGHTS ALWAYS BRING US TO TALK ABOUT ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING.

MY FAVORITE MOMENTS.

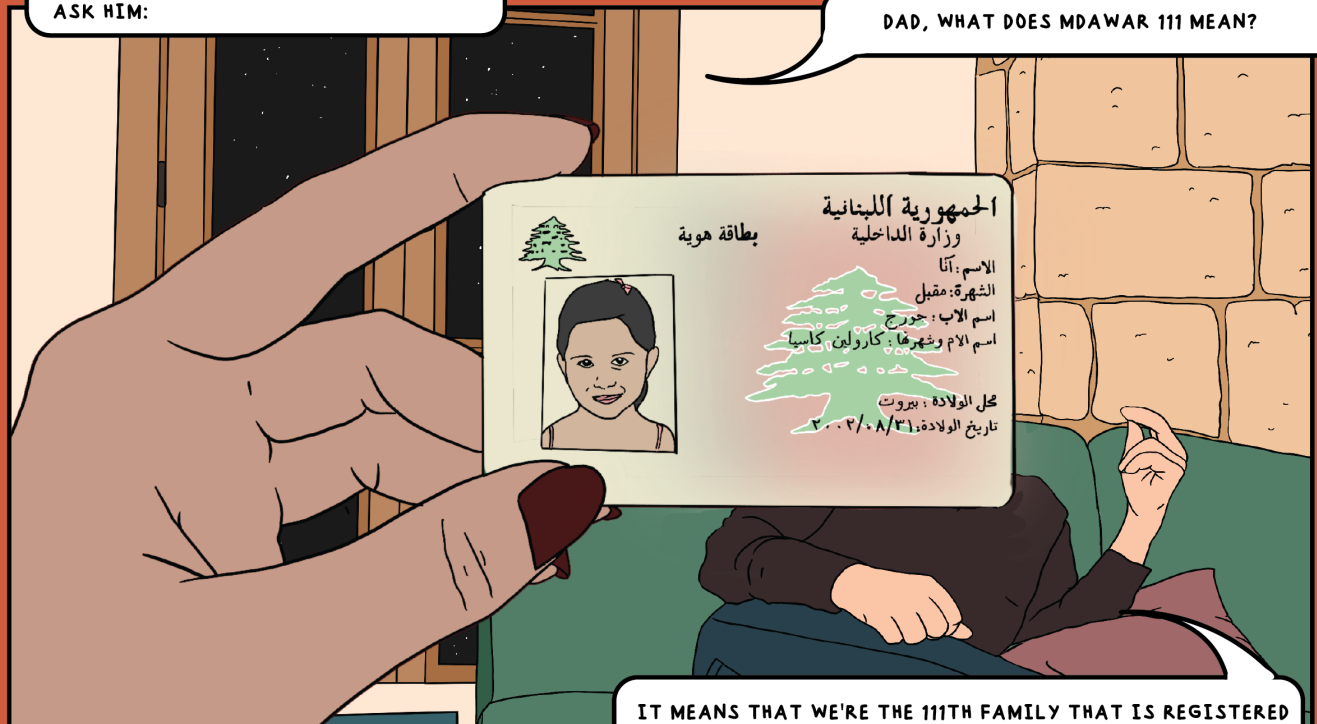


AS MY FATHER POURS HIS DRINK, I CURIOUSLY TAKE OUT MY ID CARD AND ASK HIM:

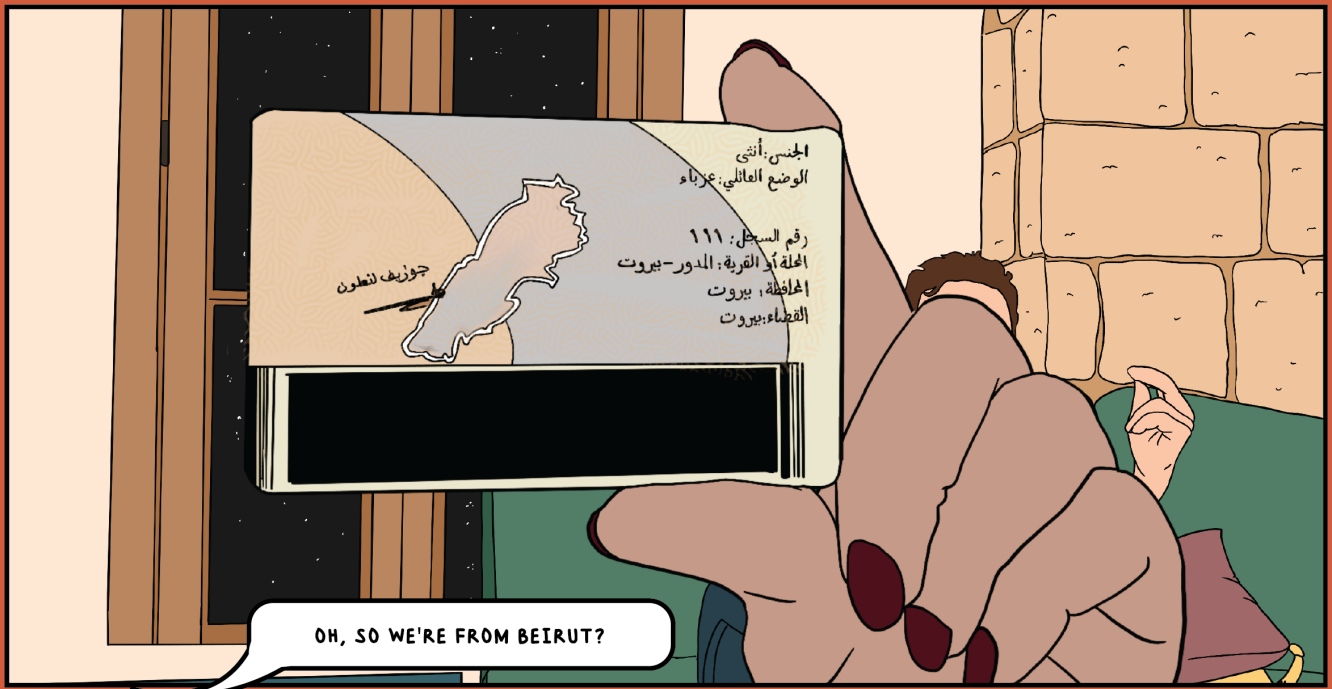
THIS NIGHT, I ASK HIM ABOUT THE TALES OF BEIRUT'S PAST



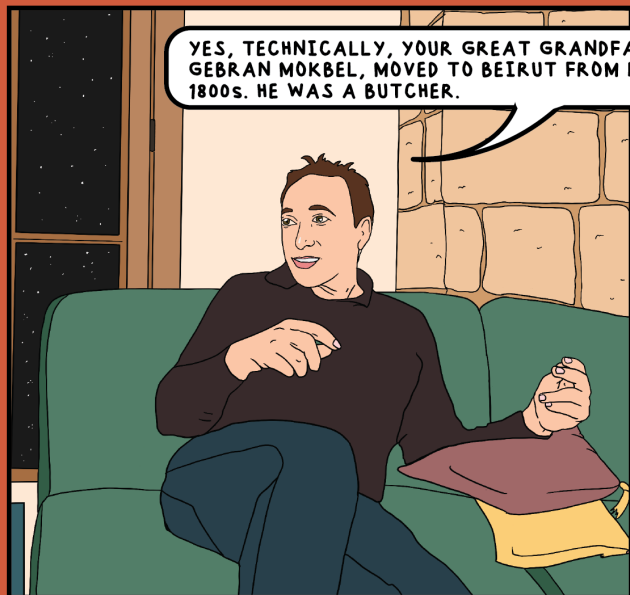
DAD, WHAT DOES MDAWAR 111 MEAN?



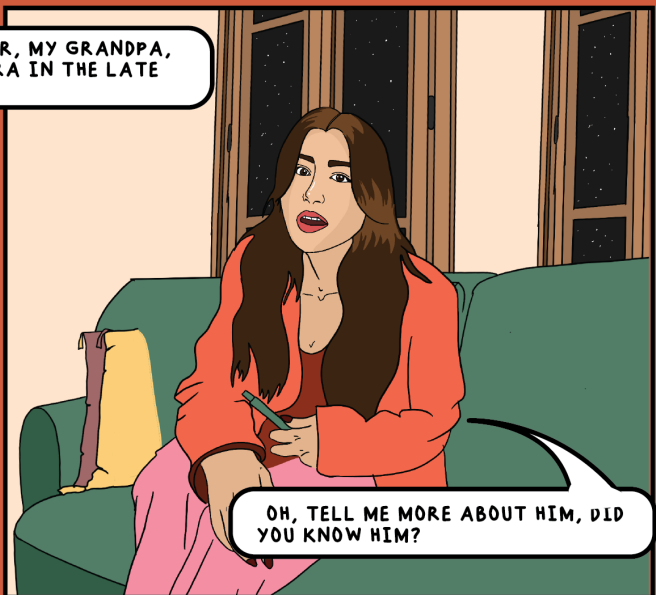
IT MEANS THAT WE'RE THE 111TH FAMILY THAT IS REGISTERED IN BEIRUT.



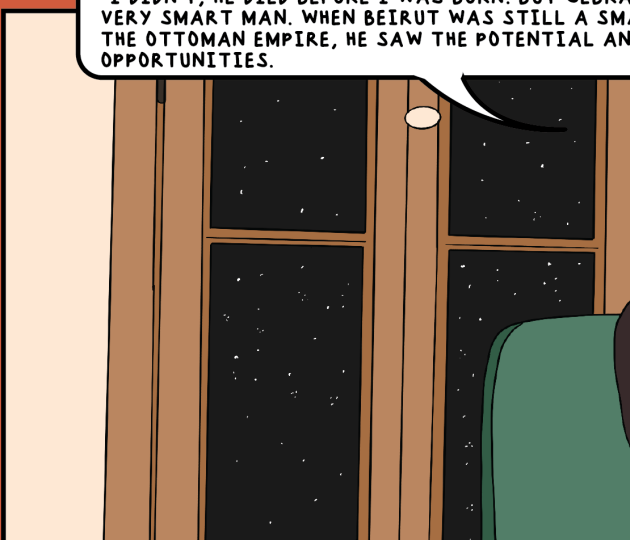
OH, SO WE'RE FROM BEIRUT?



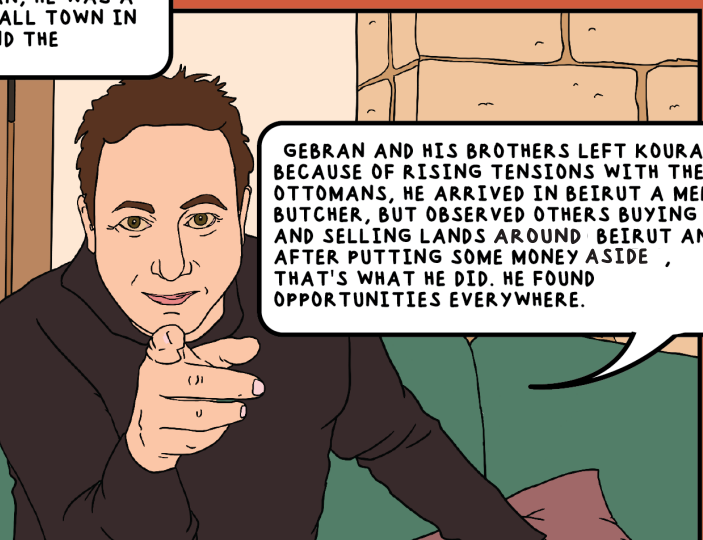
YES, TECHNICALLY, YOUR GREAT GRANDFATHER, MY GRANDPA, GEBRAN MOKBEL, MOVED TO BEIRUT FROM KOURA IN THE LATE 1800s. HE WAS A BUTCHER.



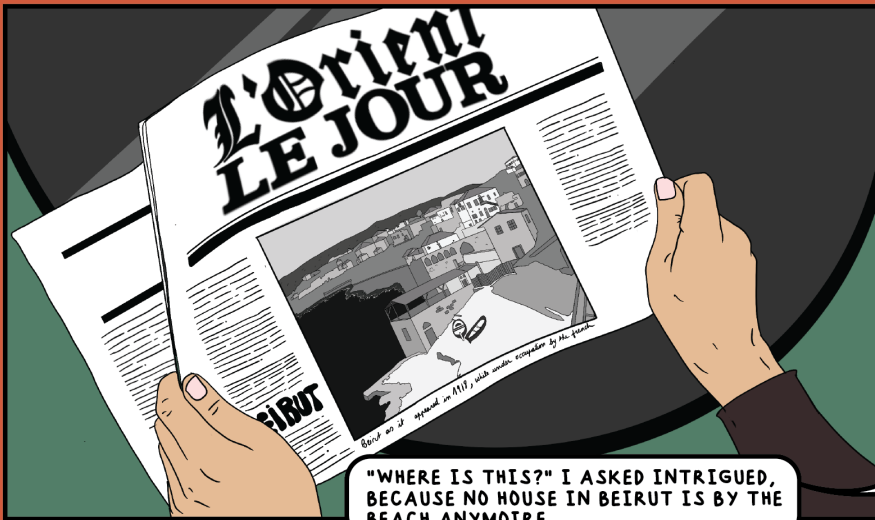
OH, TELL ME MORE ABOUT HIM, DID YOU KNOW HIM?



I DIDN'T, HE DIED BEFORE I WAS BORN. BUT GEBRAN, HE WAS A VERY SMART MAN. WHEN BEIRUT WAS STILL A SMALL TOWN IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE, HE SAW THE POTENTIAL AND THE OPPORTUNITIES.

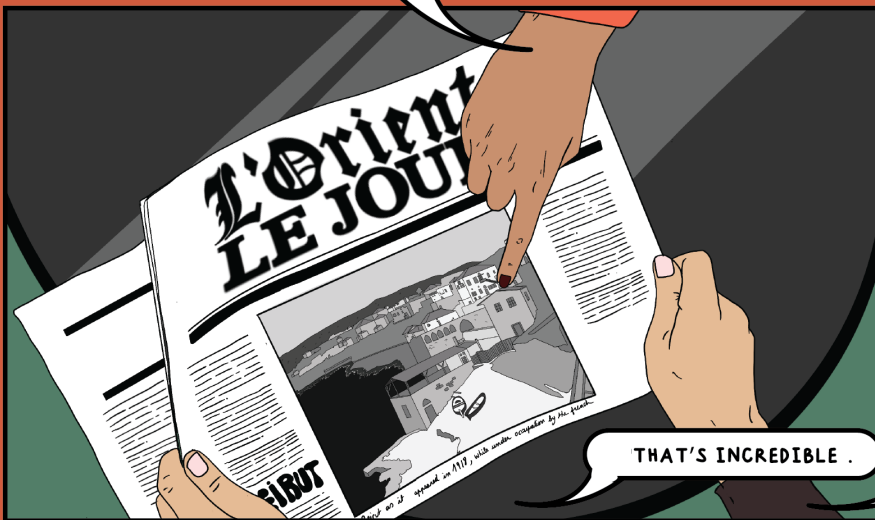


GEBRAN AND HIS BROTHERS LEFT KOURA BECAUSE OF RISING TENSIONS WITH THE OTTOMANS, HE ARRIVED IN BEIRUT A MERE BUTCHER, BUT OBSERVED OTHERS BUYING AND SELLING LANDS AROUND BEIRUT AND AFTER PUTTING SOME MONEY ASIDE, THAT'S WHAT HE DID. HE FOUND OPPORTUNITIES EVERYWHERE.



"WHERE IS THIS?" I ASKED INTRIGUED, BECAUSE NO HOUSE IN BEIRUT IS BY THE BEACH ANYMOIRE

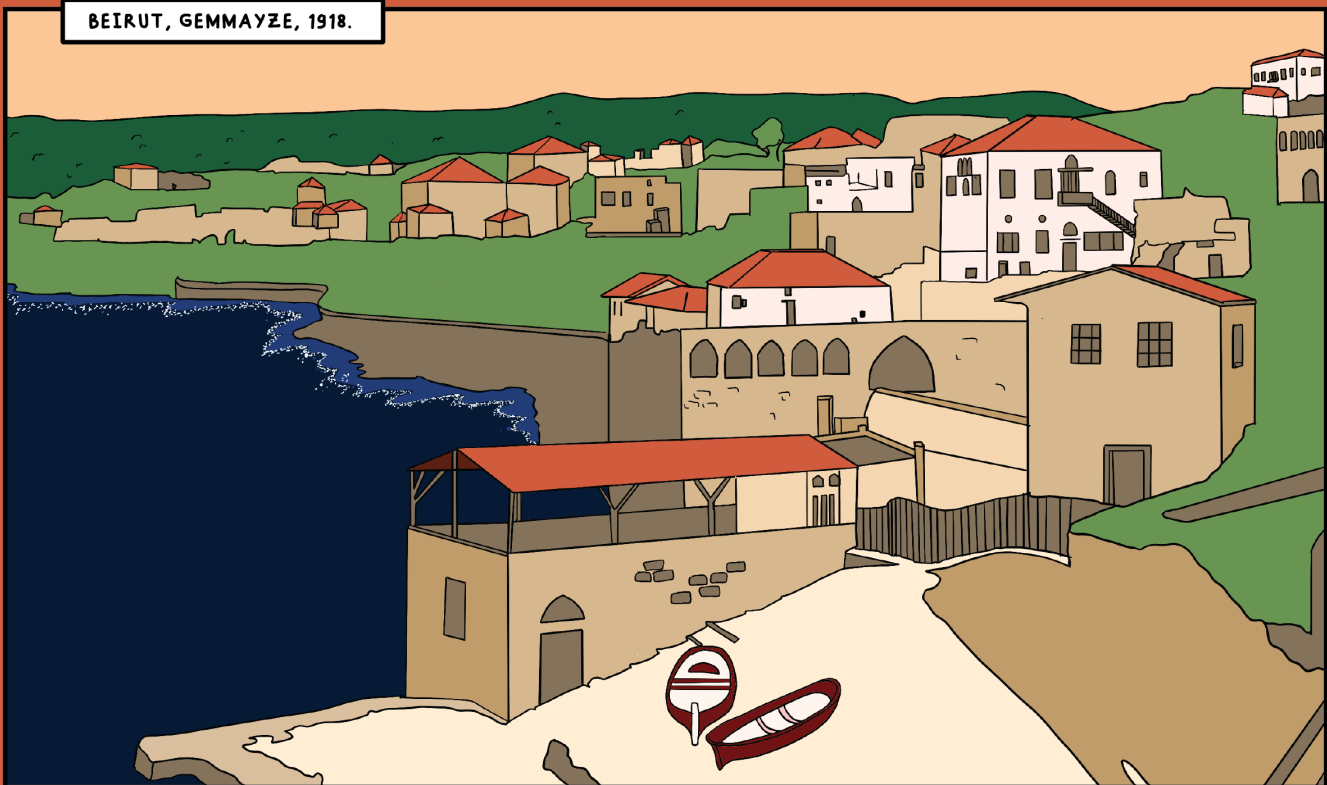
SPEAKING ABOUT THIS, WHAT A COINCIDENCE. LOOK AT TODAY'S ISSUE OF L'ORIENT LE JOUR. DO YOU SEE THIS PICTURE, THIS HOUSE RIGHT THERE. THAT'S THE FIRST HOUSE HE EVER BOUGHT.

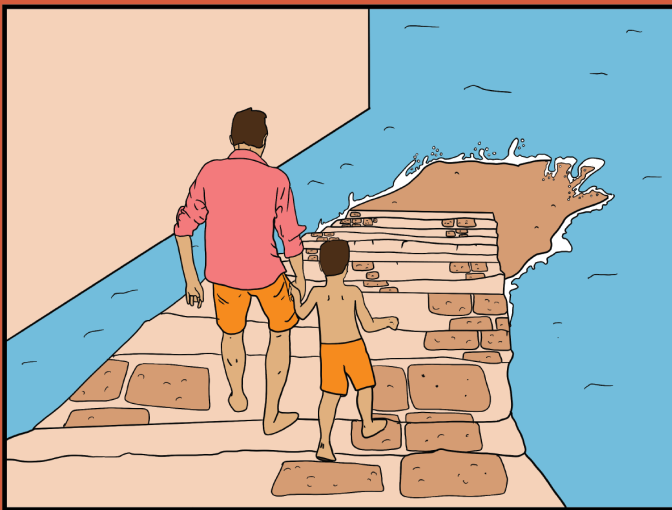
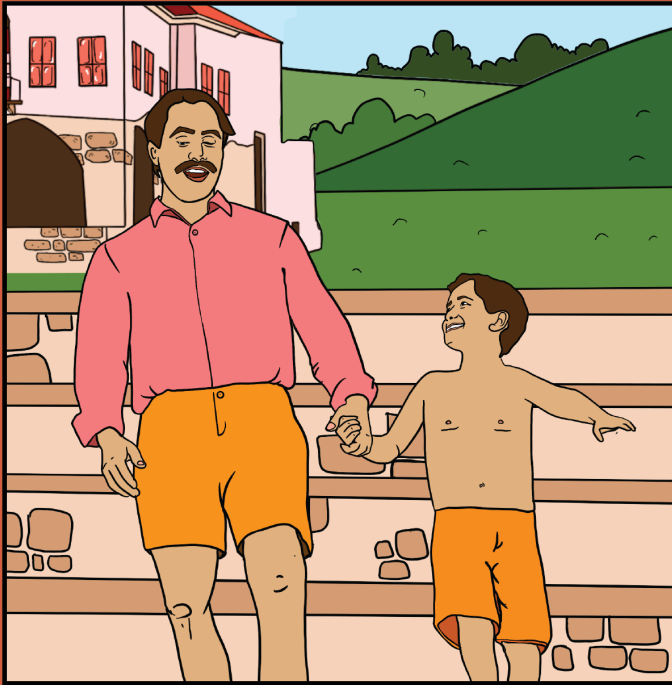
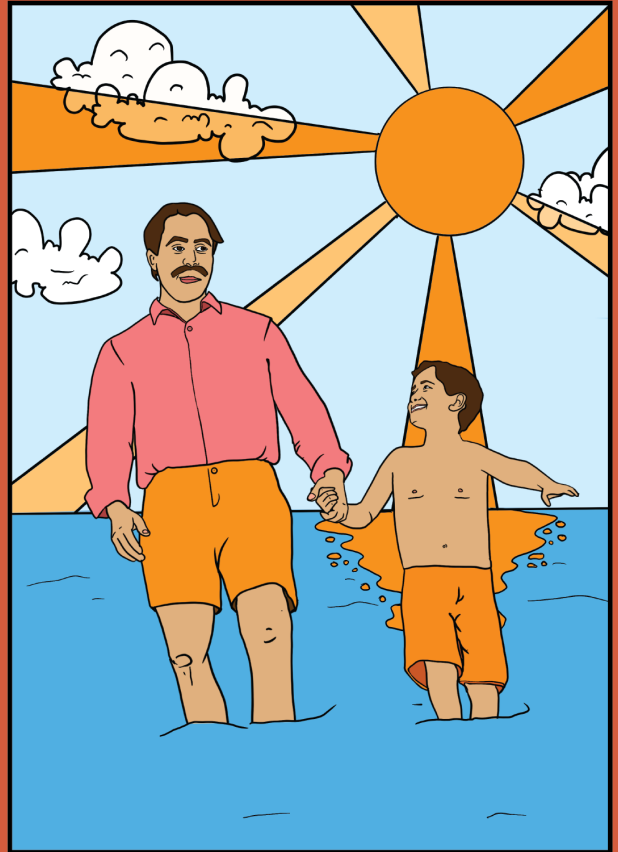
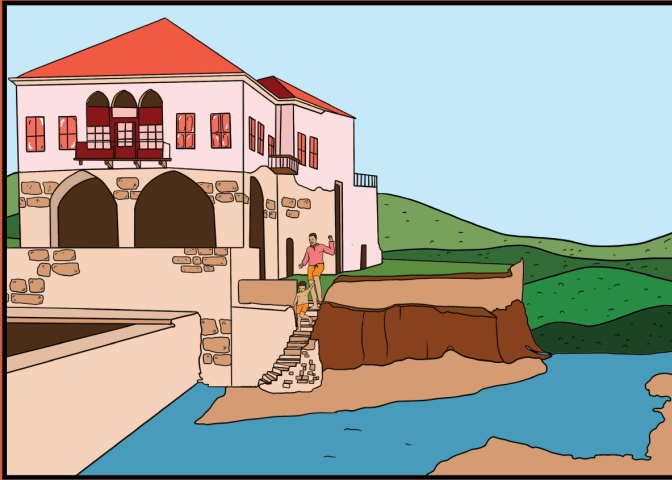


THAT'S INCREDIBLE .

"GEMMAYZE", "GEMMAYZE USED TO BE BY THE WATER. IT IS NOW FOLLOWED BY HIGHWAYS AND THE OLD PORT OF BEIRUT" IT IS CRAZY TO TRY AND PICTURE THIS CITY IN A WAY YOU WOULD HAVE NEVER IMAGINED. MY FATHER TOLD ME THAT, EVERY DAY, HIM AND HIS FATHER, GEBRAN, WOULD TAKE THE STAIRS DOWN TO THE BEACH , HAVE A SWIM AND GO ON WITH THEIR DAY. CAN YOU IMAGINE? HAVING A HOUSE IN BEIRUT , PIED DAND L'EAU

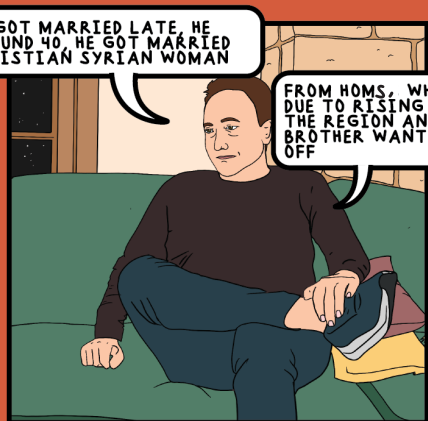
BEIRUT, GEMMAYZE, 1918.







TELL ME MORE ABOUT HIM, DAD!



GEBRAN GOT MARRIED LATE, HE WAS AROUND 40. HE GOT MARRIED TO A CHRISTIAN SYRIAN WOMAN

FROM HOMS, WHO LEFT SYRIA DUE TO RISING TENSIONS IN THE REGION AND WHOSE BROTHER WANTED TO MARRY OFF

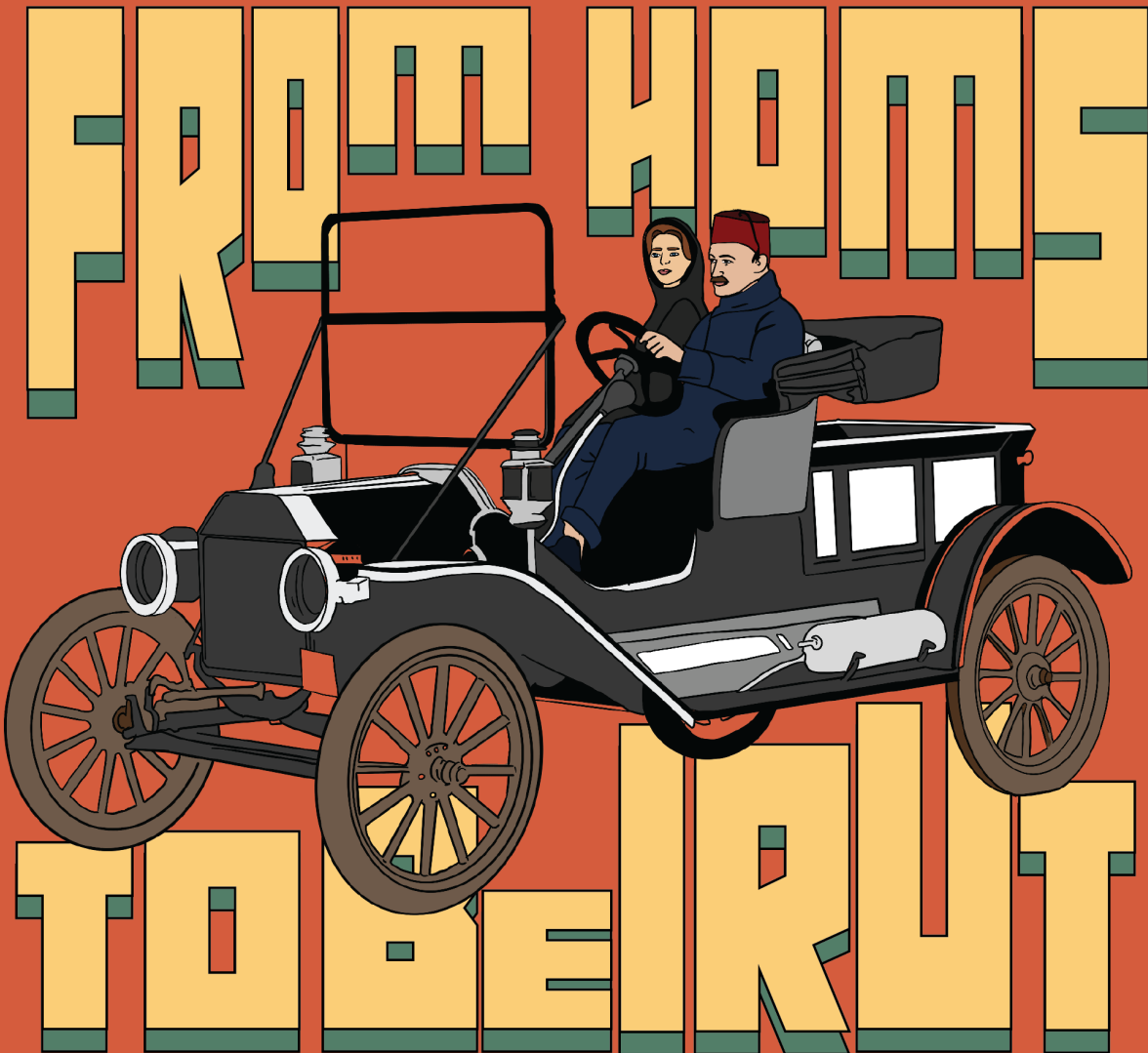


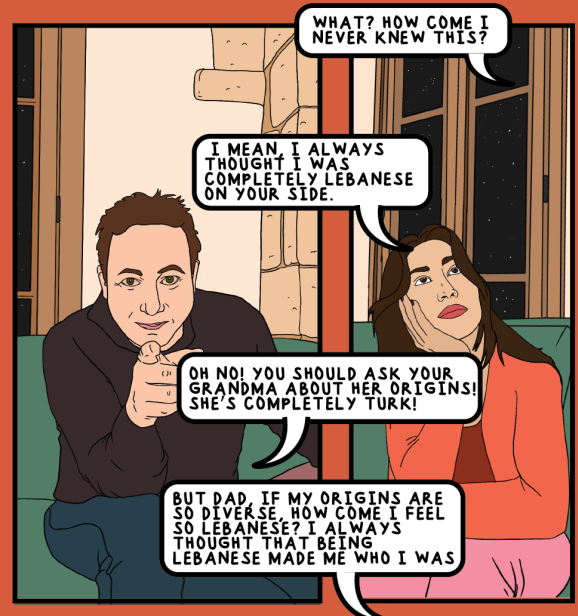
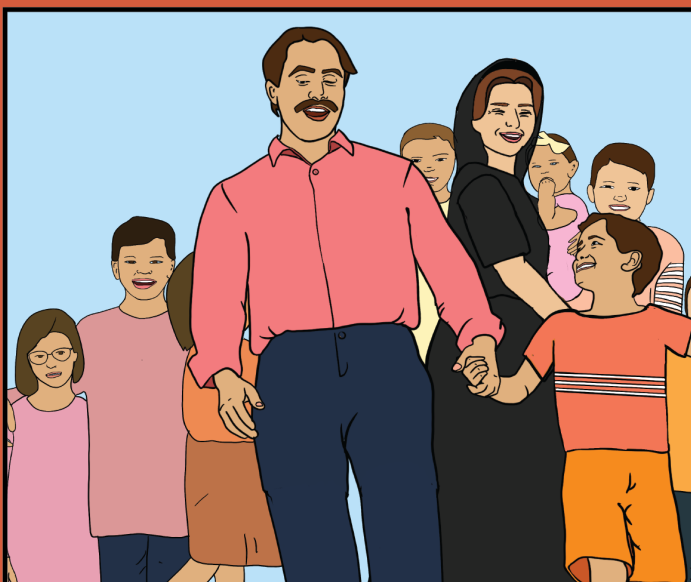
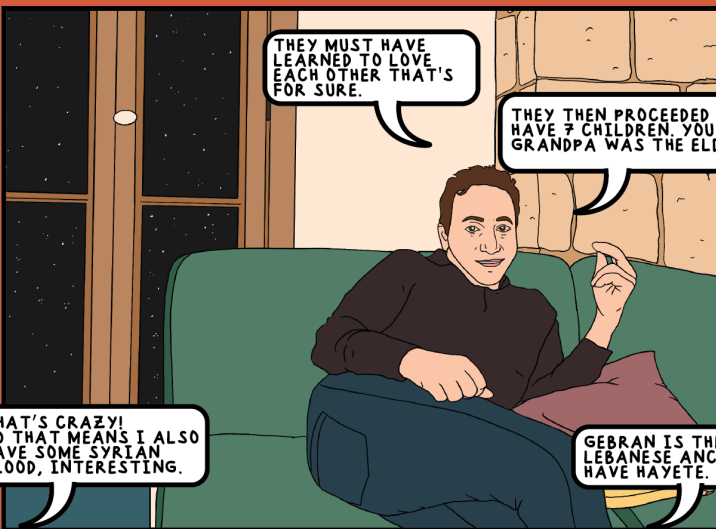
LIKE AN ARRANGED MARRIAGE?



YES, THAT'S HOW IT WORKED BACK IN THE DAYS

INTERESTING

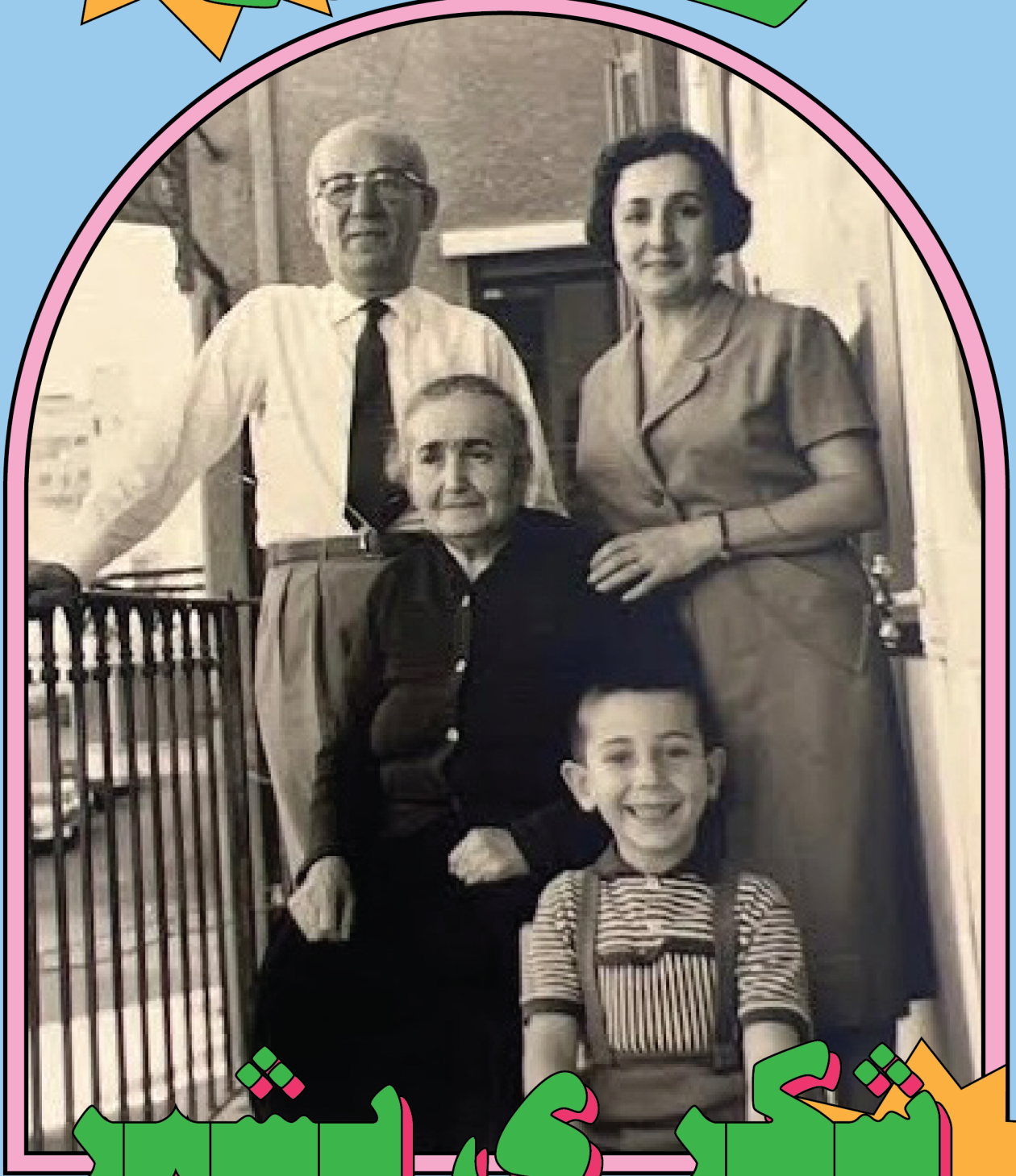




BUT IF MY ORIGINS
DON'T MAKE ME
LEBANESE, WHAT DOES?
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO
BE LEBANESE?



عائلة



تكري بيير

BEECHIR

1960

ألف وتسعة مائة وستون

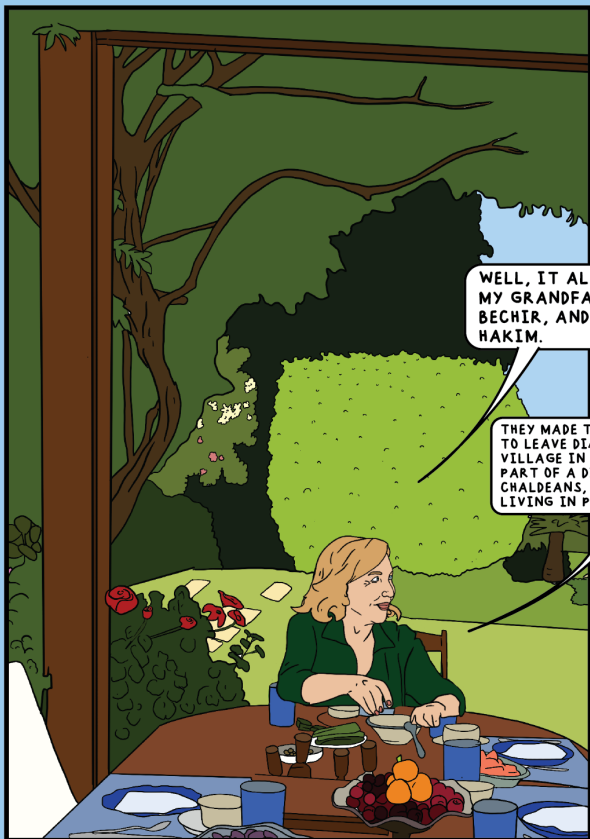
A FEW DAYS LATER, I GO TO MY GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE FOR LUNCH. BY DESERT WE START TALKING ABOUT THE HISTORY OF HER FAMILY. I HAD SO MANY QUESTIONS ABOUT MY ORIGINS AND COULDN'T WAIT TO ASK HER ABOUT IT. IT'S CRAZY TO IMAGINE ALL THE MIGRATION THAT HAPPENED IN THE MIDDLE EAST DURING THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE.



HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED ABOUT MY FAMILY'S INCREDIBLE JOURNEY FROM DIAR BAKIR TO BEIRUT IN THE EARLY 1900S?

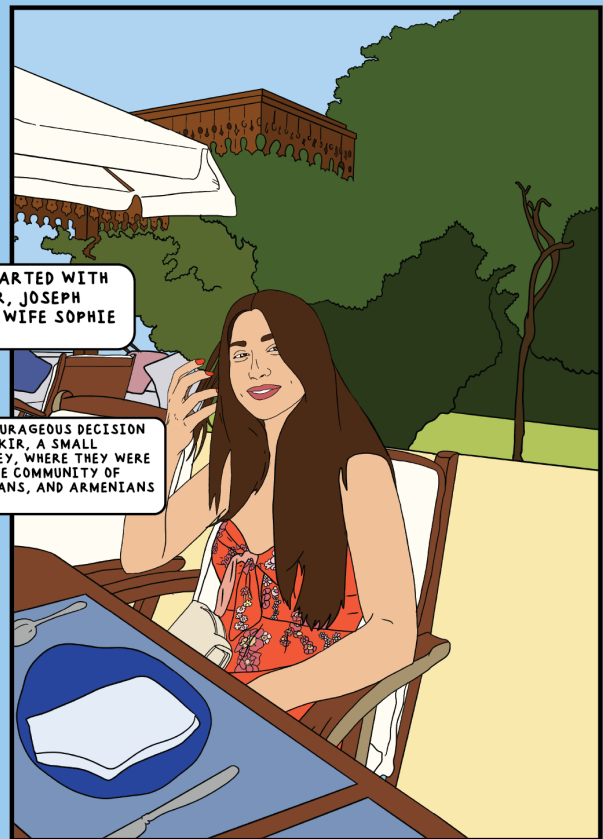
SIT DOWN, MY CHILD.

YES TETA. PLEASE, TELL ME MORE.

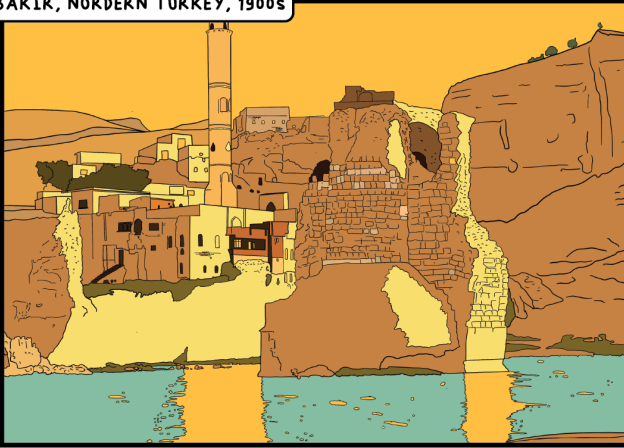


WELL, IT ALL STARTED WITH MY GRANDFATHER, JOSEPH BECHIR, AND HIS WIFE SOPHIE HAKIM.

THEY MADE THE COURAGEOUS DECISION TO LEAVE DIAR BAKIR, A SMALL VILLAGE IN TURKEY, WHERE THEY WERE PART OF A DIVERSE COMMUNITY OF CHALDEANS, SYRIANS, AND ARMENIANS LIVING IN PEACE.



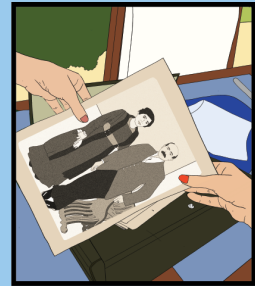
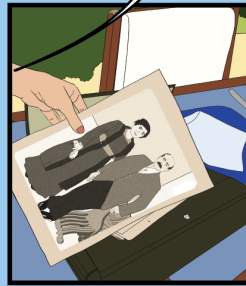
DIAR BAKIR, NORDERN TURKEY, 1900s



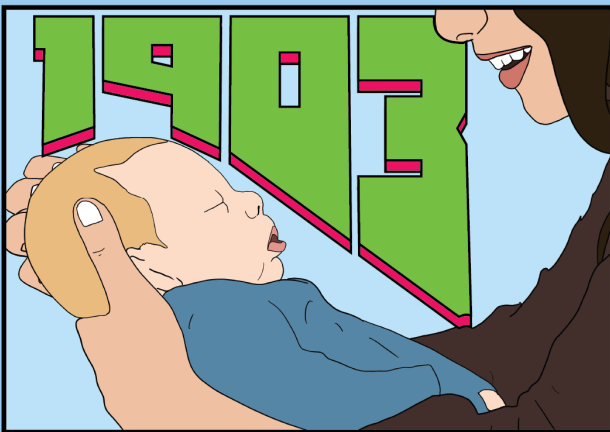
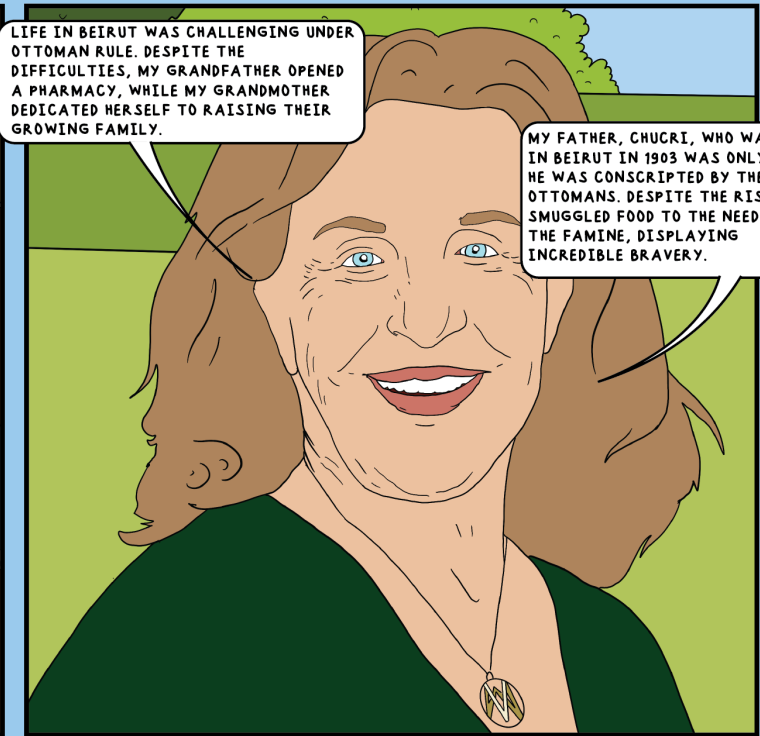
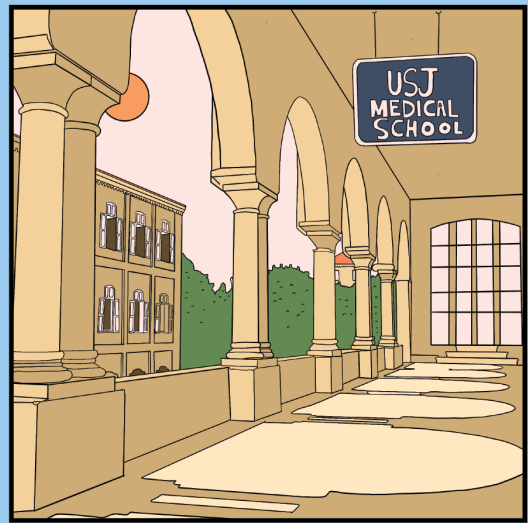
HERE, TAKE A LOOK AT MY GRAND PARENTS.



WOW, TETA, I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU STILL HAVE ALL OF THESE PICTURES!

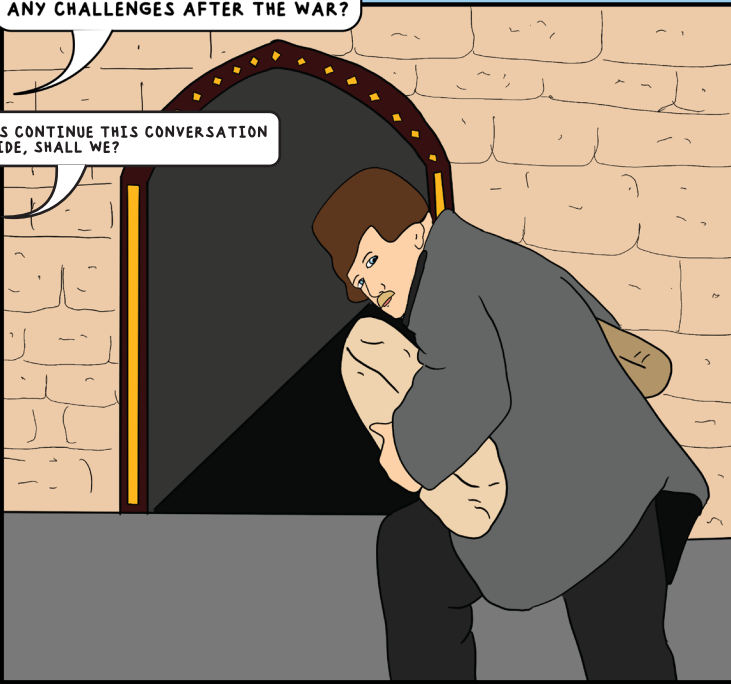


THEY LEFT TO PURSUE JOSEPH'S DREAM OF STUDYING MEDICINE AT SAINT JOSEPH UNIVERSITY IN BEIRUT.



YOUR FAMILY'S RESILIENCE IS TRULY INSPIRING. DID THEY FACE ANY CHALLENGES AFTER THE WAR?

LET'S CONTINUE THIS CONVERSATION INSIDE, SHALL WE?



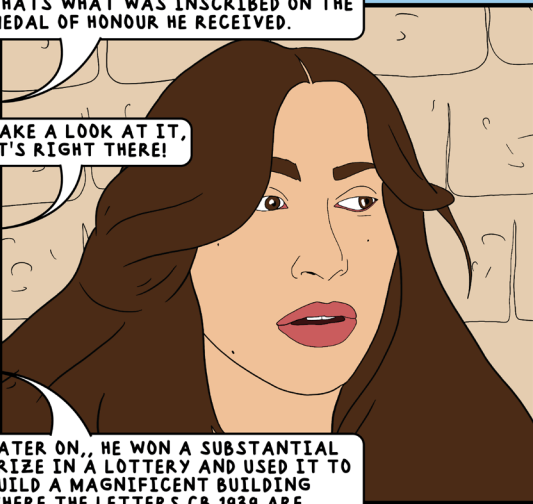
YES, AFTER THE WAR, WHEN THE FRENCH AND BRITISH ARRIVED IN LEBANON, MY FATHER'S ACTS OF KINDNESS DURING THE FAMINE WERE RECOGNIZED, AND HE WAS GIVEN THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MANAGING THE COOPERATIVE FOR THE ALLIED



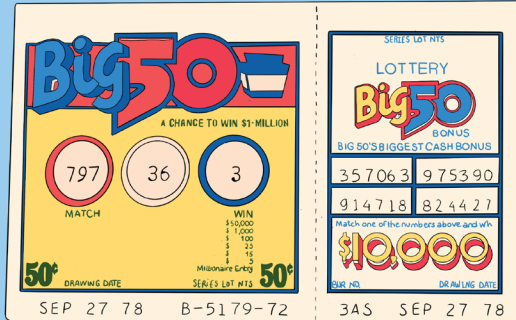
FAIRE LE BIEN POUR LE BIEN

« FAIRE LE BIEN POUR LE BIEN ». THATS WHAT WAS INSCRIBED ON THE MEDAL OF HONOUR HE RECEIVED.

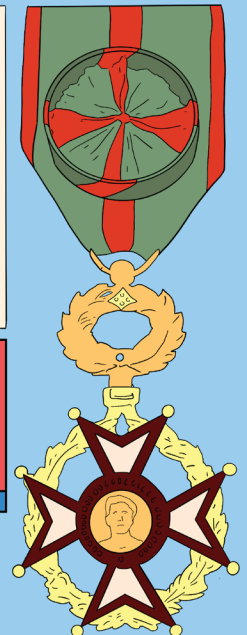
TAKE A LOOK AT IT, IT'S RIGHT THERE!

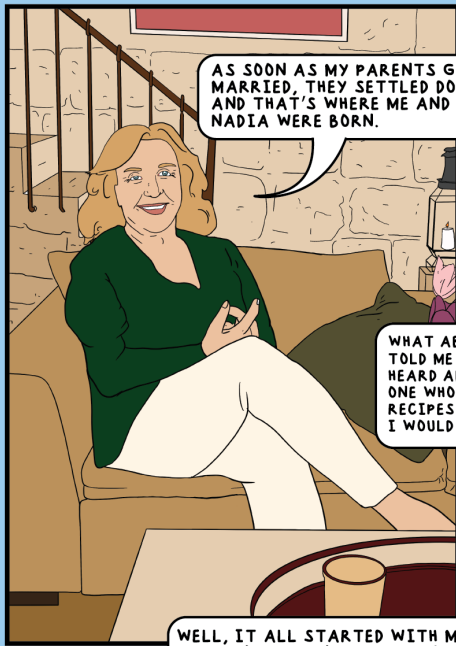


LATER ON,, HE WON A SUBSTANTIAL PRIZE IN A LOTTERY AND USED IT TO BUILD A MAGNIFICENT BUILDING WHERE THE LETTERS CB 1939 ARE STILL INSCRIBED.

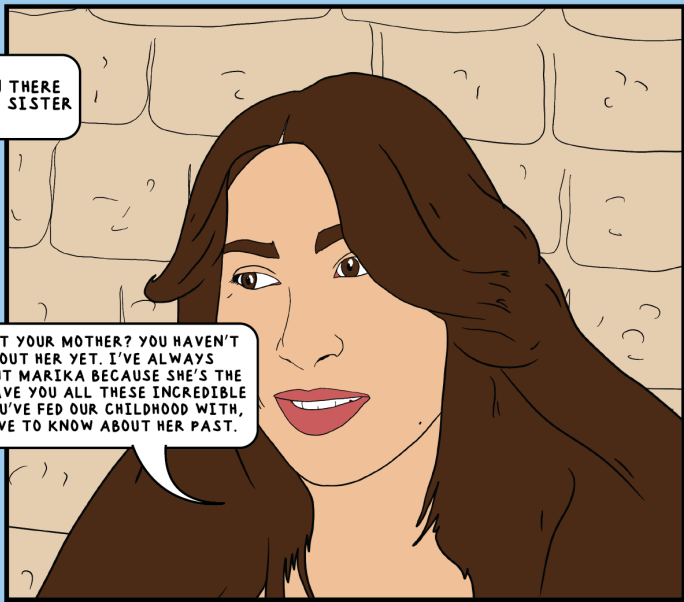


CB 1939

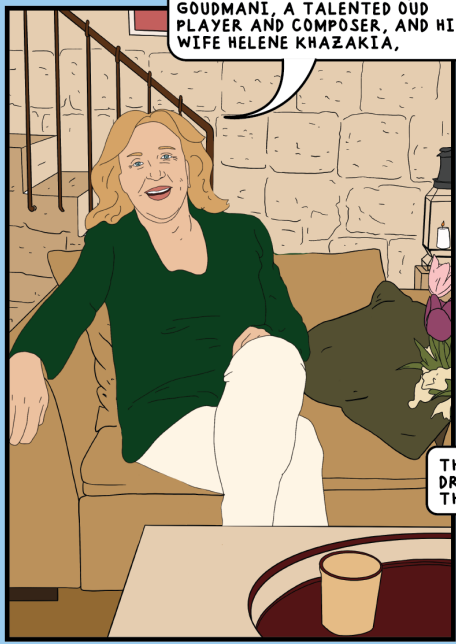




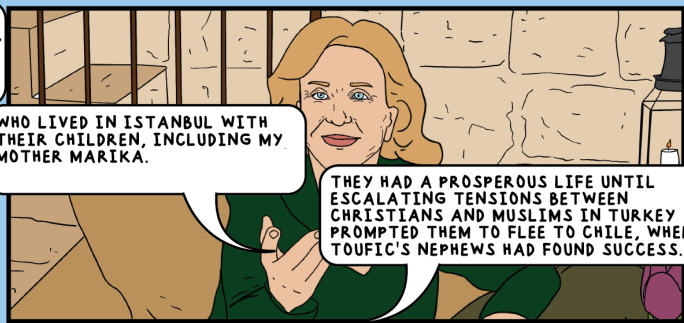
AS SOON AS MY PARENTS GOT MARRIED, THEY SETTLED DOWN THERE AND THAT'S WHERE ME AND MY SISTER NADIA WERE BORN.



WHAT ABOUT YOUR MOTHER? YOU HAVEN'T TOLD ME ABOUT HER YET. I'VE ALWAYS HEARD ABOUT MARIKA BECAUSE SHE'S THE ONE WHO GAVE YOU ALL THESE INCREDIBLE RECIPES YOU'VE FED OUR CHILDHOOD WITH, I WOULD LOVE TO KNOW ABOUT HER PAST.



WELL, IT ALL STARTED WITH MY MATERNAL GRANDFATHER, TOUFIC GOUDMANT, A TALENTED OUD PLAYER AND COMPOSER, AND HIS WIFE HELENE KHAZAKIA,

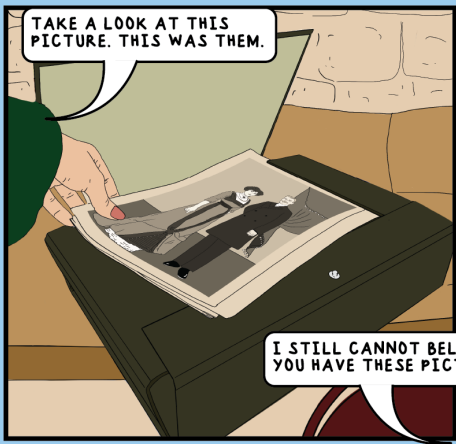


WHO LIVED IN ISTANBUL WITH THEIR CHILDREN, INCLUDING MY MOTHER MARIKA.

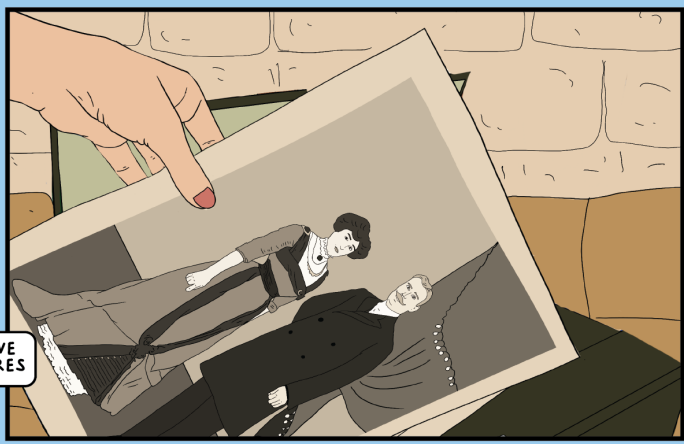
THEY HAD A PROSPEROUS LIFE UNTIL ESCALATING TENSIONS BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS IN TURKEY PROMPTED THEM TO FLEE TO CHILE, WHERE TOUFIC'S NEPHEWS HAD FOUND SUCCESS.



THAT SOUNDS LIKE QUITE A DRAMATIC CHANGE. HOW DID THEY END UP IN BEIRUT?



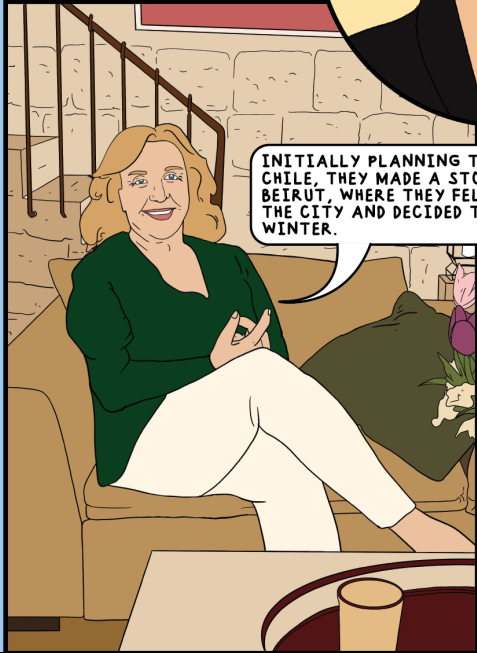
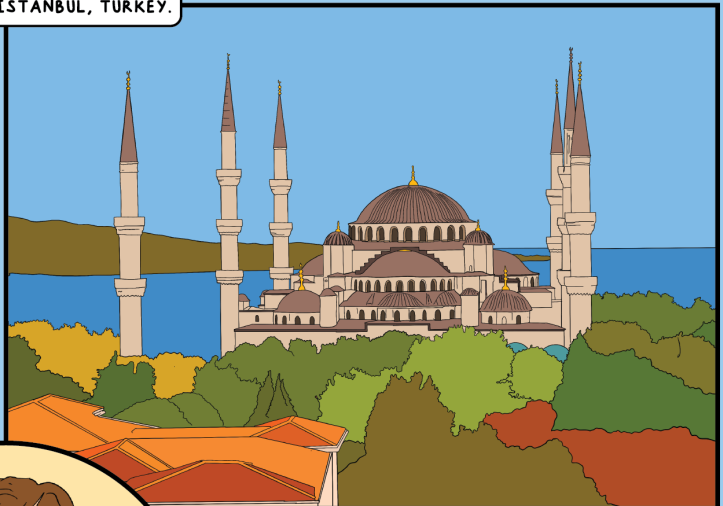
TAKE A LOOK AT THIS PICTURE. THIS WAS THEM.



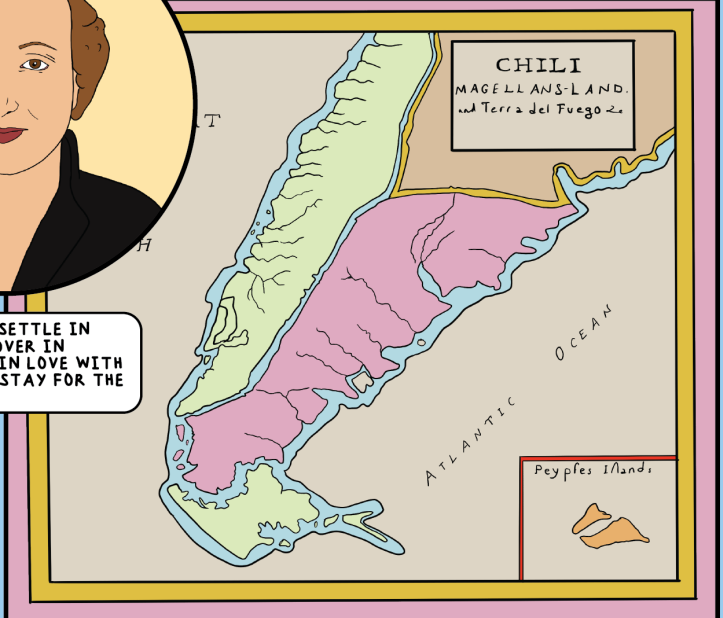
I STILL CANNOT BELIEVE YOU HAVE THESE PICTURES



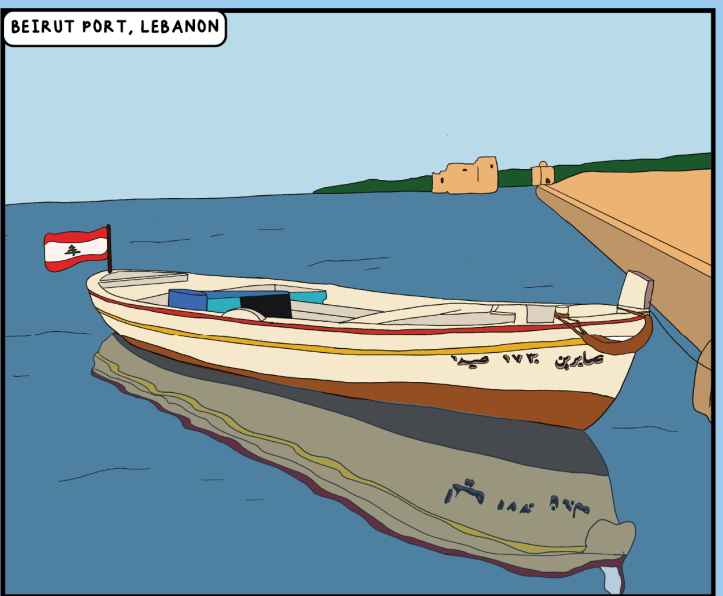
ISTANBUL, TURKEY.



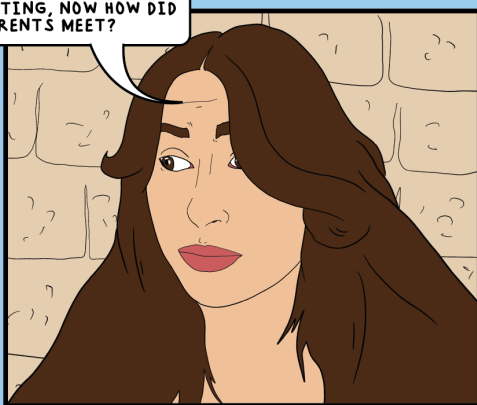
INITIALLY PLANNING TO SETTLE IN CHILE, THEY MADE A STOPOVER IN BEIRUT, WHERE THEY FELL IN LOVE WITH THE CITY AND DECIDED TO STAY FOR THE WINTER.

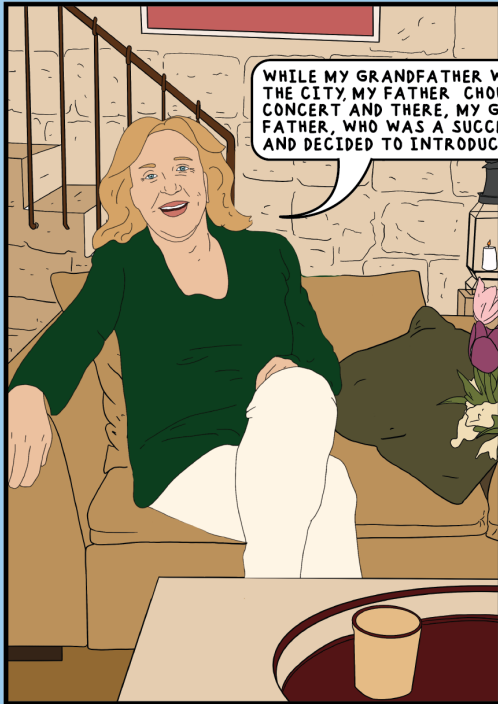


BEIRUT PORT, LEBANON

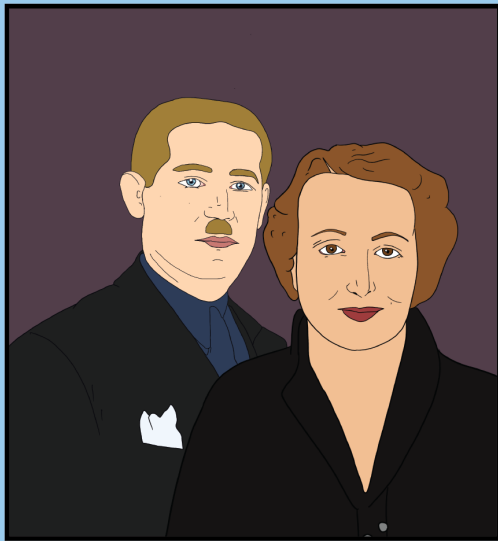
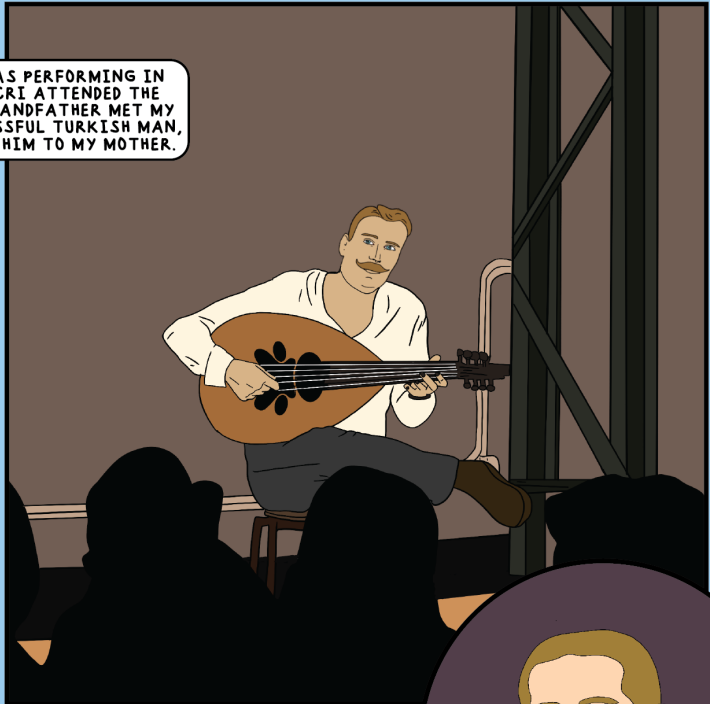


INTERESTING, NOW HOW DID YOUR PARENTS MEET?

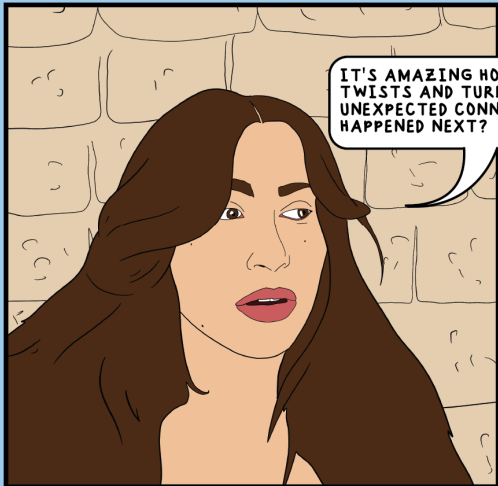




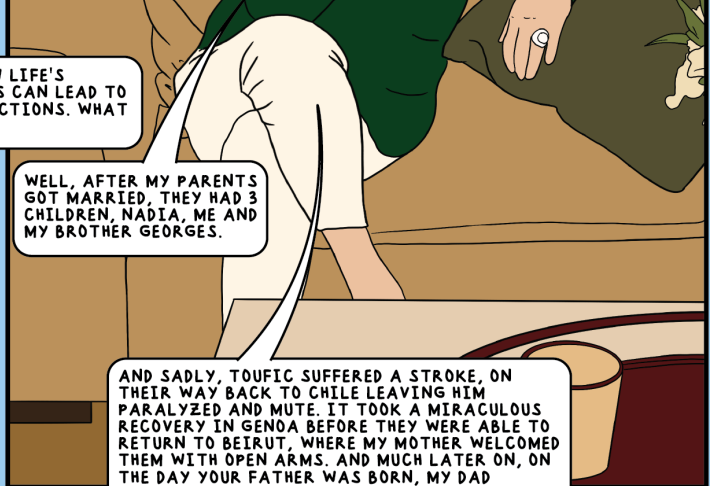
WHILE MY GRANDFATHER WAS PERFORMING IN THE CITY, MY FATHER CHOUCRI ATTENDED THE CONCERT AND THERE, MY GRANDFATHER MET MY FATHER, WHO WAS A SUCCESSFUL TURKISH MAN, AND DECIDED TO INTRODUCE HIM TO MY MOTHER.



THEY SOON FELL IN LOVE AND GOT MARRIED, MUCH TO THE DISMAY OF HELENÉ, WHO HAD HOPED TO REUNITE WITH HER SON IN CHILE.



IT'S AMAZING HOW LIFE'S TWISTS AND TURNS CAN LEAD TO UNEXPECTED CONNECTIONS. WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

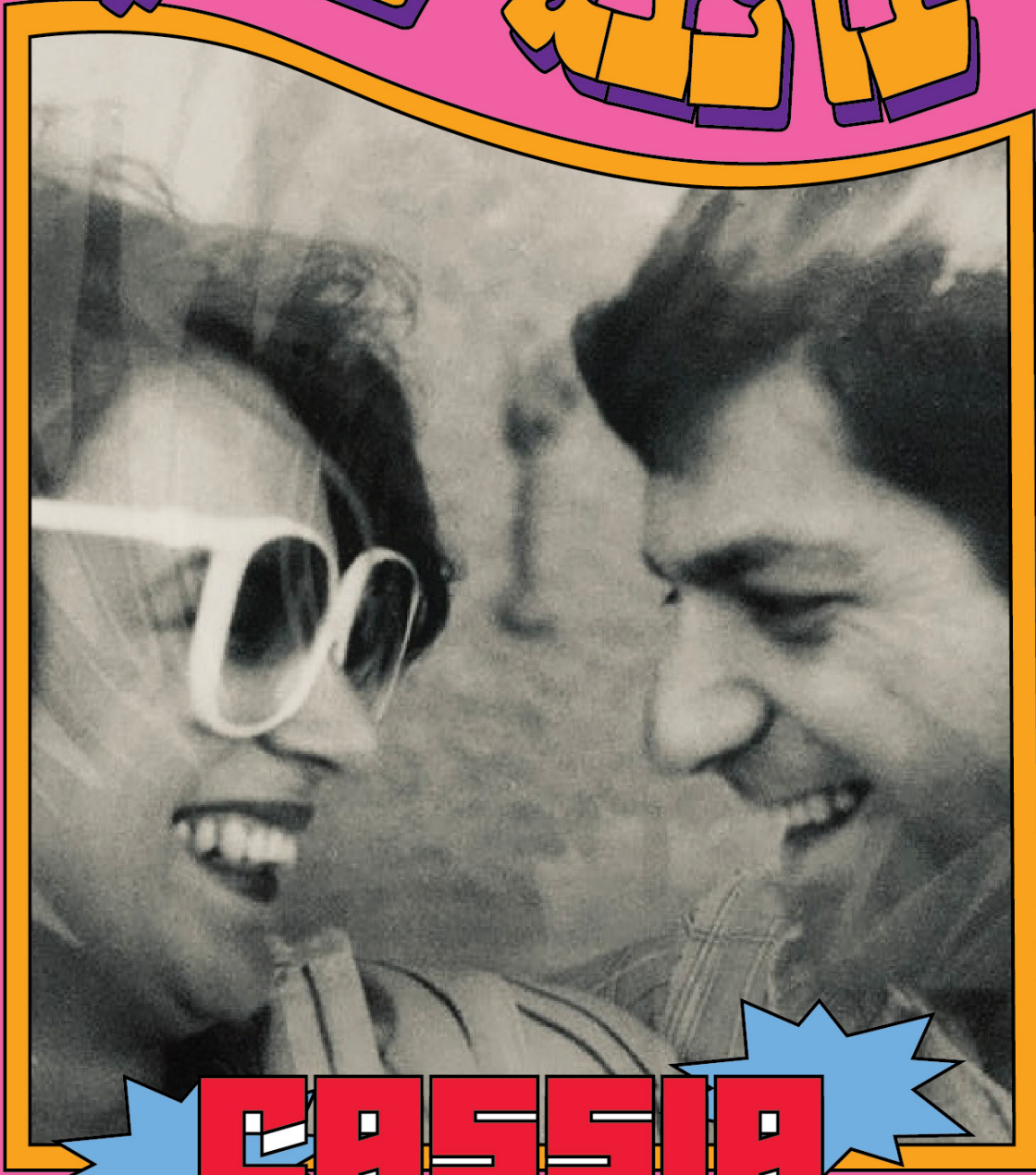


WELL, AFTER MY PARENTS GOT MARRIED, THEY HAD 3 CHILDREN, NADIA, ME AND MY BROTHER GEORGES.

AND SADLY, TOUFIC SUFFERED A STROKE, ON THEIR WAY BACK TO CHILE LEAVING HIM PARALYZED AND MUTE. IT TOOK A MIRACULOUS RECOVERY IN GENOA BEFORE THEY WERE ABLE TO RETURN TO BEIRUT, WHERE MY MOTHER WELCOMED THEM WITH OPEN ARMS. AND MUCH LATER ON, ON THE DAY YOUR FATHER WAS BORN, MY DAD UNFORTUNATELY PASSED AWAY.

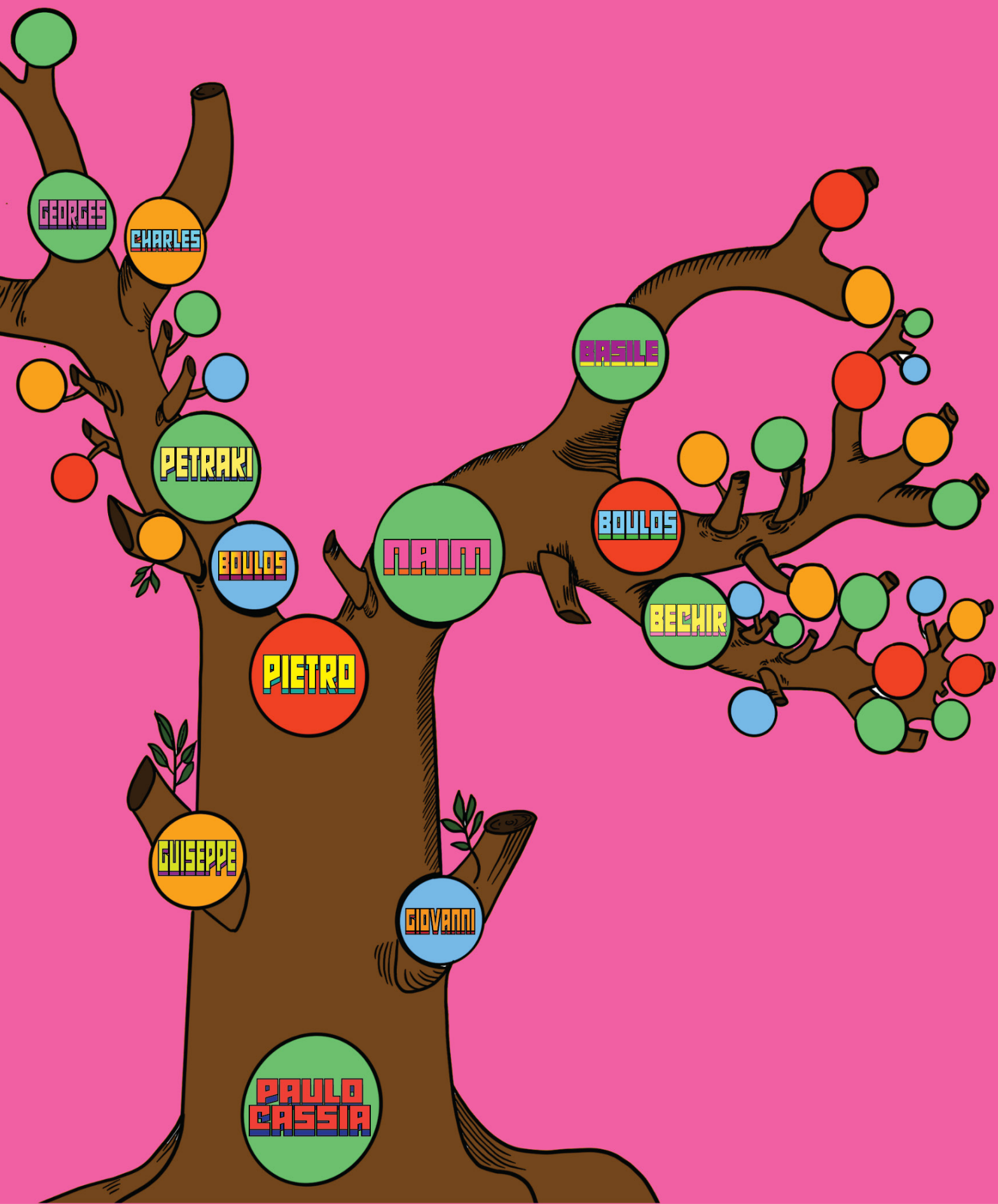
كاسيا

عائلة



CASSIA

1970



GEORGE

CHARLES

PETRAKI

BOULOS

PIETRO

GIUSEPPE

GIOVANNI

PAULO
CASSIA

NAIM

BASILE

BOULOS

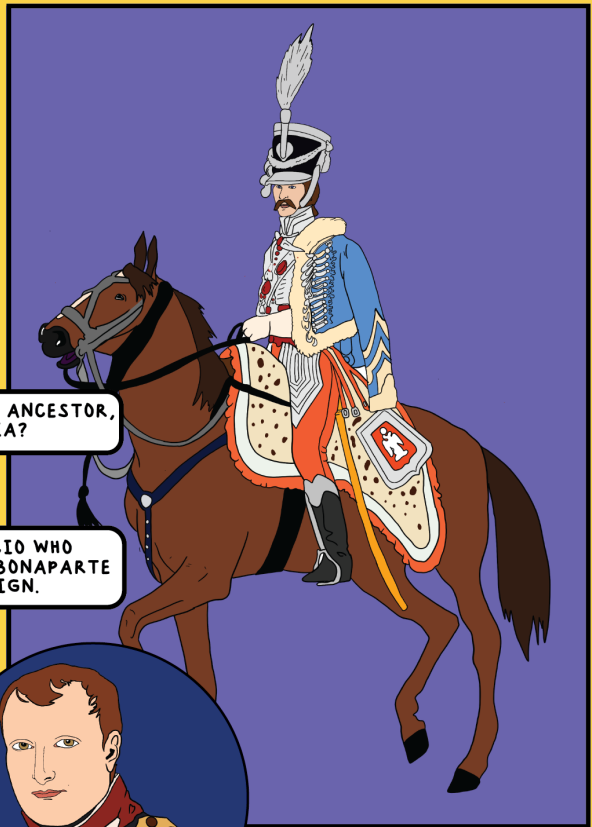
BECHIR

AFTER A BEAUTIFUL AND ENRICHING AFTERNOON AT TETA'S, I COME HOME TO FIND MY MOM BY THE BAR AND IN MY QUEST TO DISCOVER ALL OF MY ORIGINS, I GO ON TO ASK ABOUT HERS.

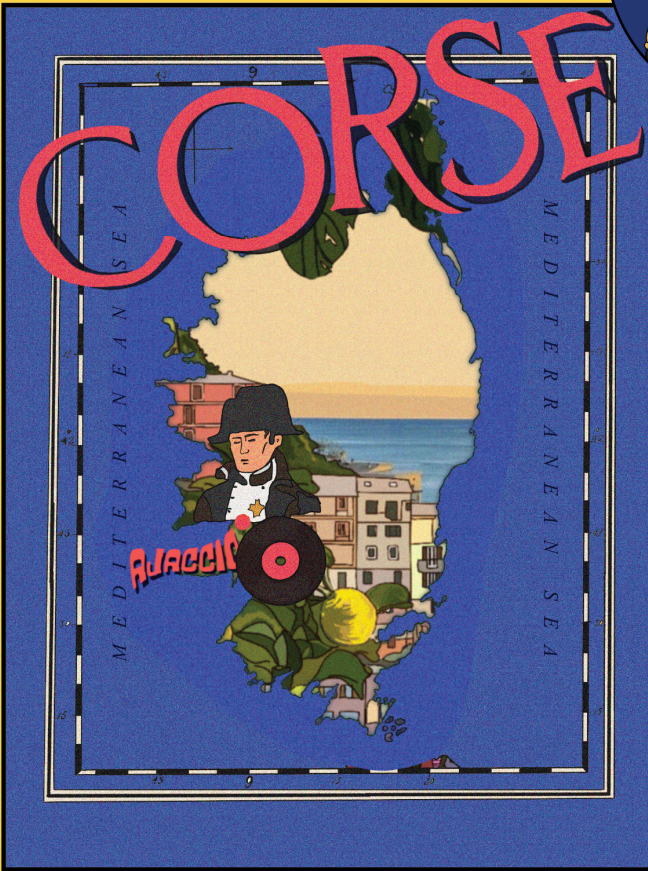
HEY MOM, COULD YOU TELL ME MORE ABOUT OUR FAMILY'S HISTORY. YOUR SURNAME DOESN'T SOUND LEBANESE AT ALL. ARE JEDDO'S ORIGINS NOT LEBANESE EITHER?

DID YOU KNOW ABOUT OUR ANCESTOR, COMMANDER PAULO CASSIA?

HE WAS A HUSSAR FROM AJACCIO WHO SERVED ALONGSIDE NAPOLEON BONAPARTE DURING THE EGYPTIAN CAMPAIGN.



CAIRO, EGYPT, 1798

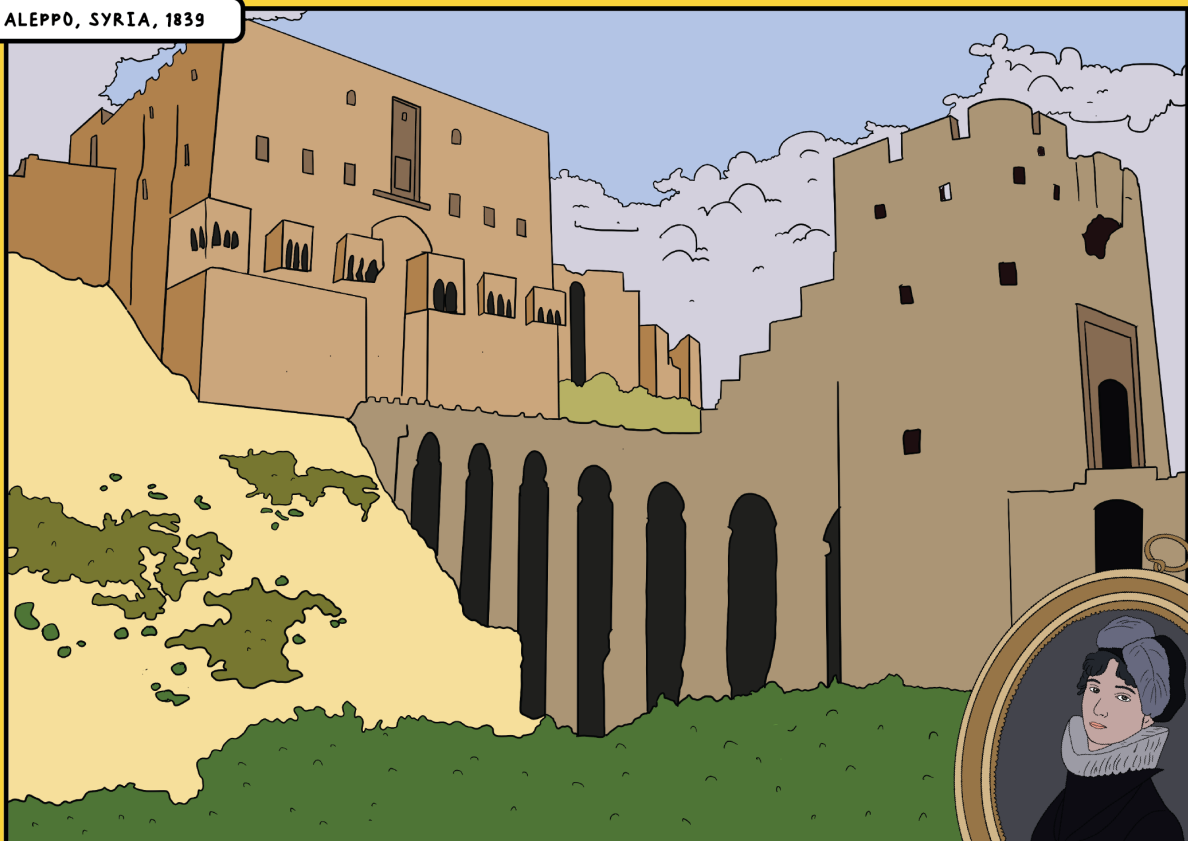


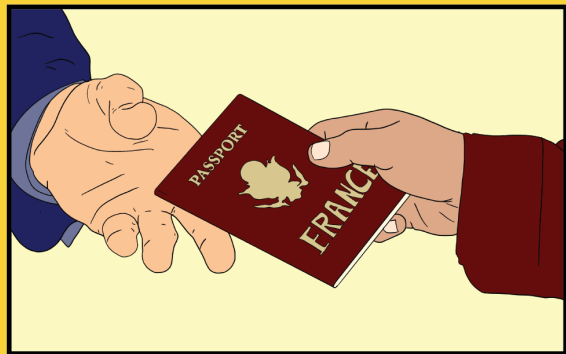
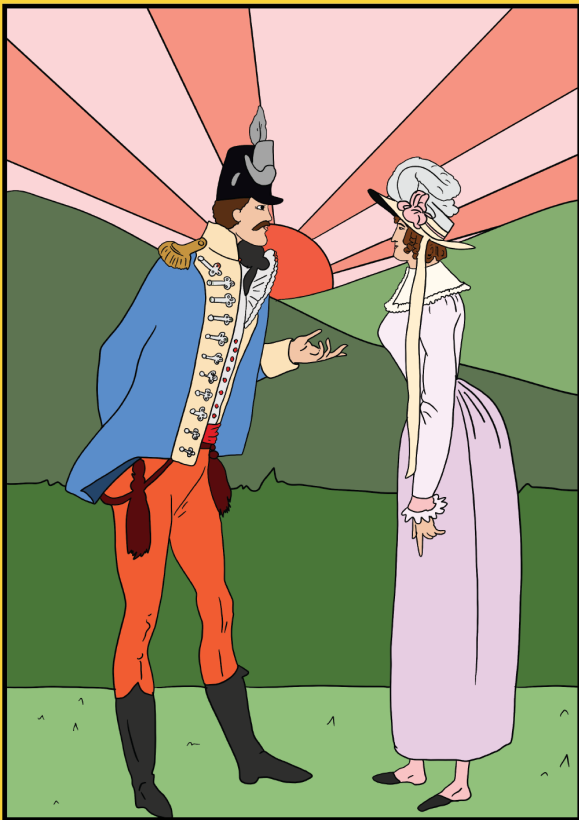
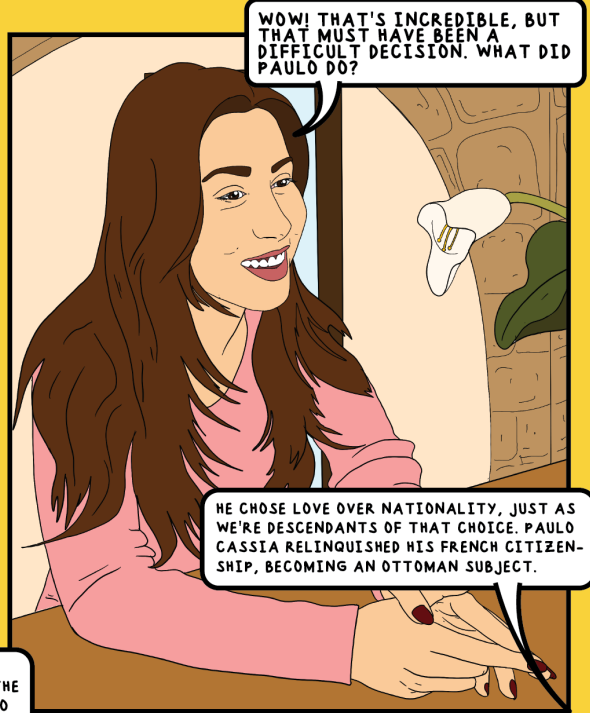
NO, I WASN'T AWARE OF THAT. TELL ME MORE.

WELL, AFTER THE RETREAT FROM ST. JEAN D'ACRE, HE STAYED IN THE REGION WITH SOME OF HIS COMRADES AND HELPED ORGANIZE THE ARMY OF OJEZZA PACHA D'OERE.



ALEPPO, SYRIA, 1839





WHAT A TALE OF LOVE AND SACRIFICE AMIDST HISTORICAL TURMOIL. THIS FEELS LIKE SOMETHING STRAIGHT OUT OF A NOVEL

BUT THIS STILL DOESN'T EXPLAIN HOW JEDDO IS LEBANESE. FOR ALL I KNOW NOW, HE'S SYRIAN

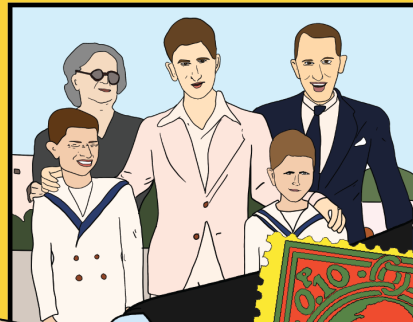
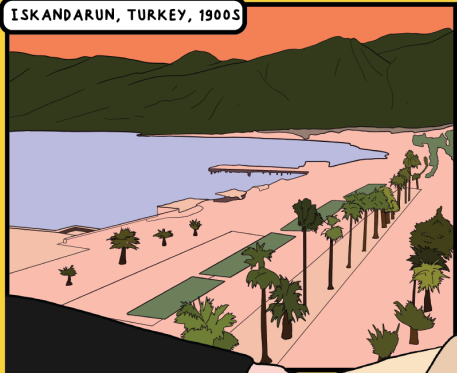
THE STORY KIND OF GETS LOST IN TRANSLATION BUT I KNOW THAT MY GRANDPARENTS, PAUL AND GEORGETTE CASSIA HAILED FROM ISKANDARUN, ALEXANDRETTE, IN TURKEY.

WHEN ISKANDAROUN BECAME PART OF GREATER SYRIA AFTER THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE'S DISSOLUTION IN 1922. IT WAS A TIME OF GREAT CHANGE, MARKED BY THE SYKES-PICOT ACCORDS AND THE IMPOSITION OF THE FRENCH MANDATE IN THE REGION.

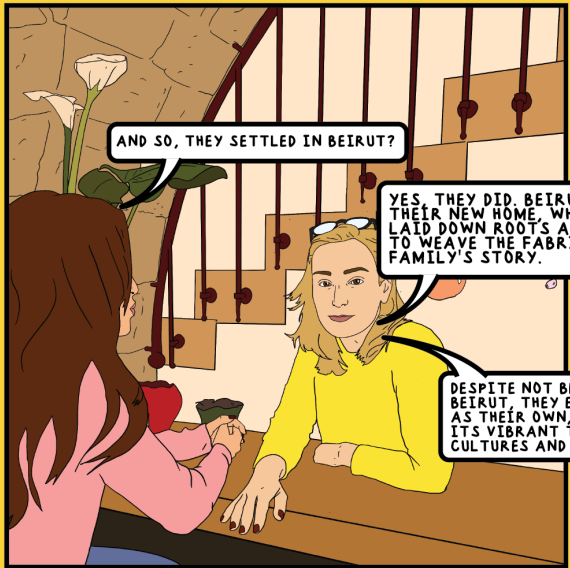
SO, WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

WELL, AMIDST THESE GEOPOLITICAL SHIFTS, MY GRANDPARENTS FOUND THEMSELVES AT A CROSSROADS. THEY WERE OFFERED LEBANESE CITIZENSHIP AS ISKANDARUN BECAME PART OF TURKEY IN 1939, THEY DECIDED TO SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY AND MAKE THEIR WAY TO BEIRUT.

ISKANDARUN, TURKEY, 1900S



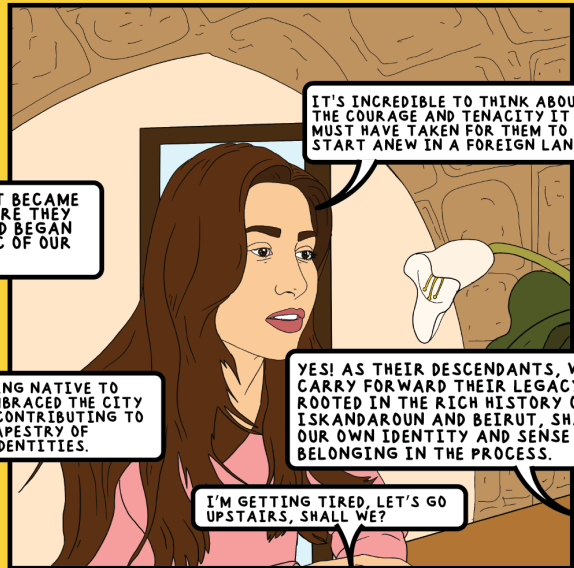
SYKES-PICOT



AND SO, THEY SETTLED IN BEIRUT?

YES, THEY DID. BEIRUT BECAME THEIR NEW HOME, WHERE THEY LAID DOWN ROOTS AND BEGAN TO WEAVE THE FABRIC OF OUR FAMILY'S STORY.

DESPITE NOT BEING NATIVE TO BEIRUT, THEY EMBRACED THE CITY AS THEIR OWN, CONTRIBUTING TO ITS VIBRANT TAPESTRY OF CULTURES AND IDENTITIES.

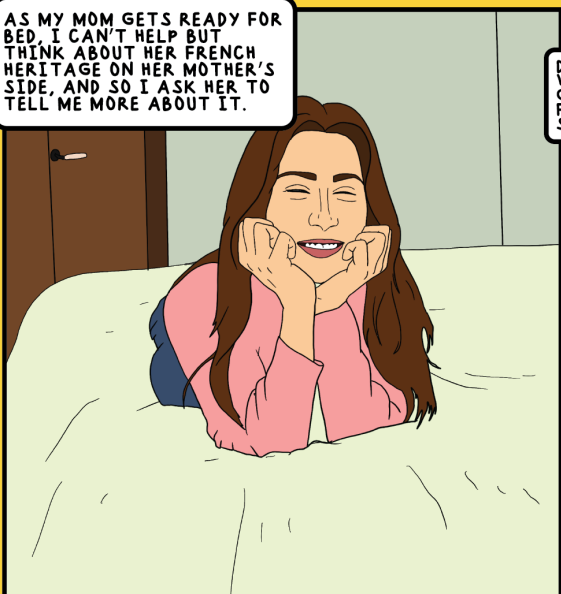


IT'S INCREDIBLE TO THINK ABOUT THE COURAGE AND TENACITY IT MUST HAVE TAKEN FOR THEM TO START ANEW IN A FOREIGN LAND.

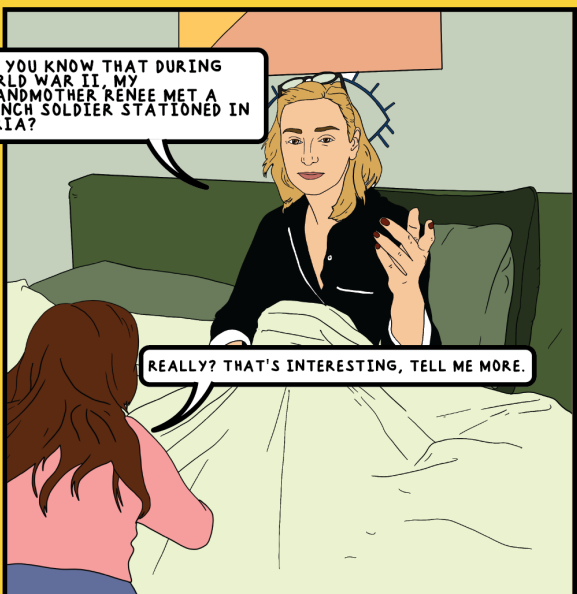
YES! AS THEIR DESCENDANTS, WE CARRY FORWARD THEIR LEGACY, ROOTED IN THE RICH HISTORY OF ISKANDAROUN AND BEIRUT, SHAPING OUR OWN IDENTITY AND SENSE OF BELONGING IN THE PROCESS.

I'M GETTING TIRED, LET'S GO UPSTAIRS, SHALL WE?

BEIRUT, LEBANON, 1950



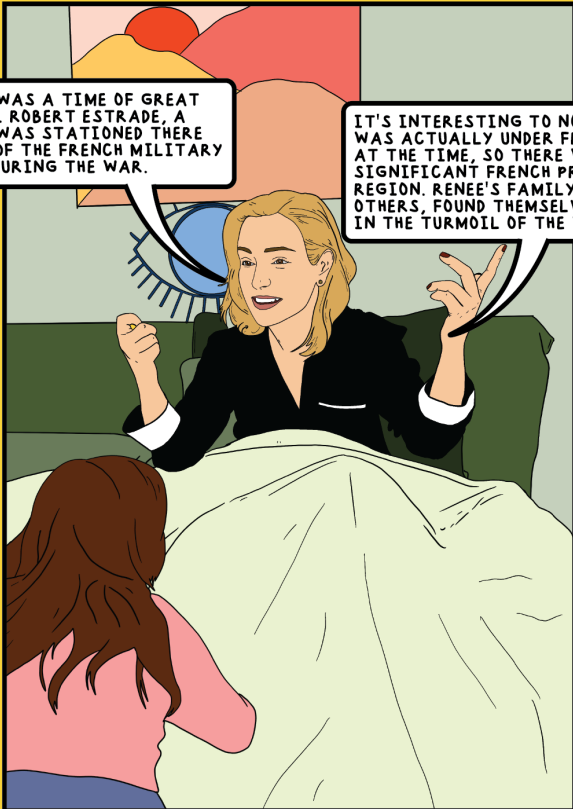
AS MY MOM GETS READY FOR BED, I CAN'T HELP BUT THINK ABOUT HER FRENCH HERITAGE ON HER MOTHER'S SIDE, AND SO I ASK HER TO TELL ME MORE ABOUT IT.



DID YOU KNOW THAT DURING WORLD WAR II, MY GRANDMOTHER RENEE MET A FRENCH SOLDIER STATIONED IN SYRIA?

REALLY? THAT'S INTERESTING, TELL ME MORE.

WELL, IT WAS A TIME OF GREAT UPHEAVAL. ROBERT ESTRADE, A SOLDIER, WAS STATIONED THERE AS PART OF THE FRENCH MILITARY EFFORTS DURING THE WAR.



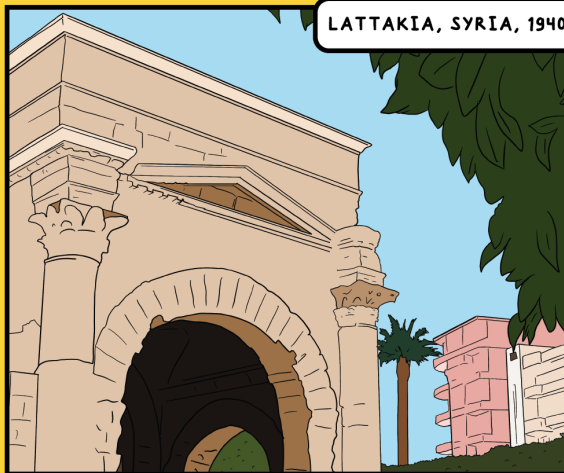
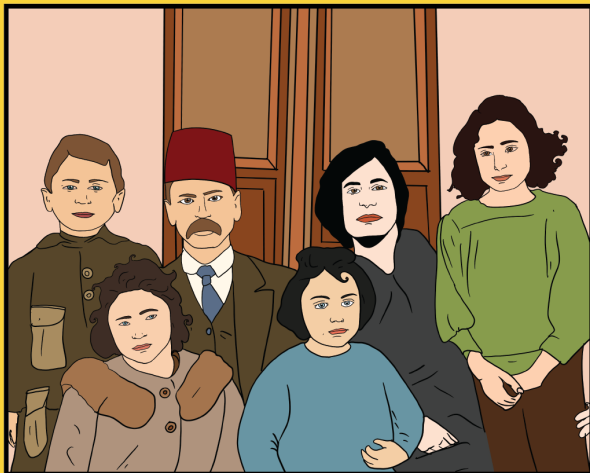
IT'S INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT SYRIA WAS ACTUALLY UNDER FRENCH MANDATE AT THE TIME, SO THERE WAS SIGNIFICANT FRENCH PRESENCE IN THE REGION. RENEE'S FAMILY, LIKE MANY OTHERS, FOUND THEMSELVES CAUGHT UP IN THE TURMOIL OF THE WAR.



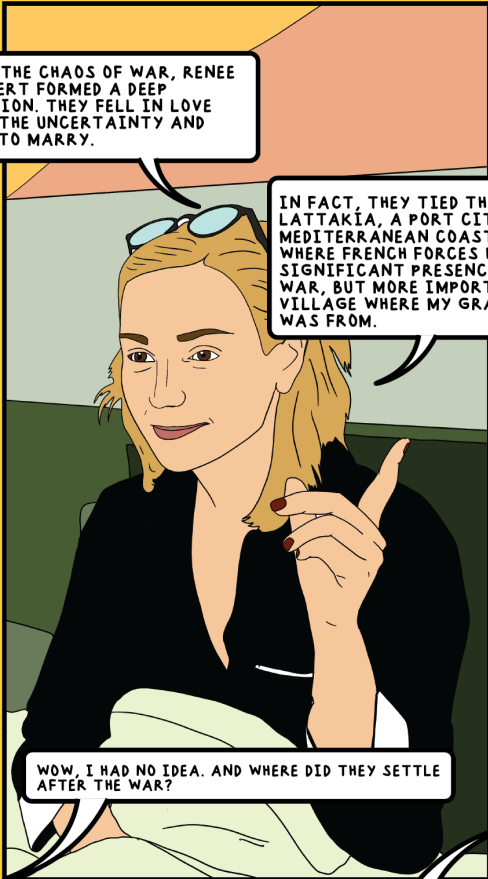
THAT'S FASCINATING. WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?



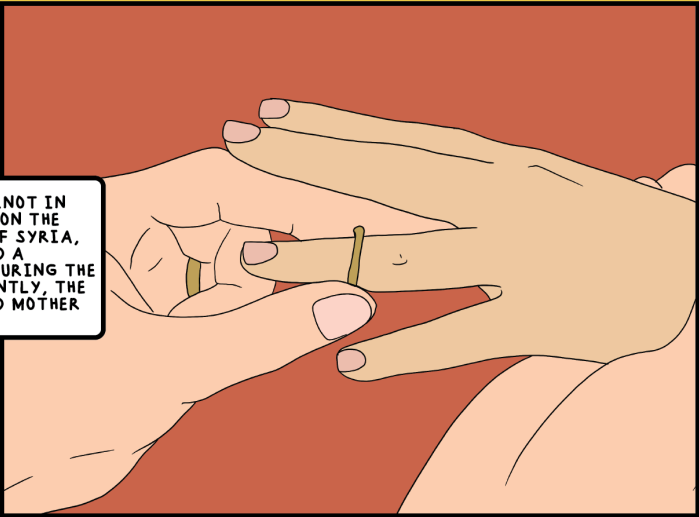
LATTAKIA, SYRIA, 1940



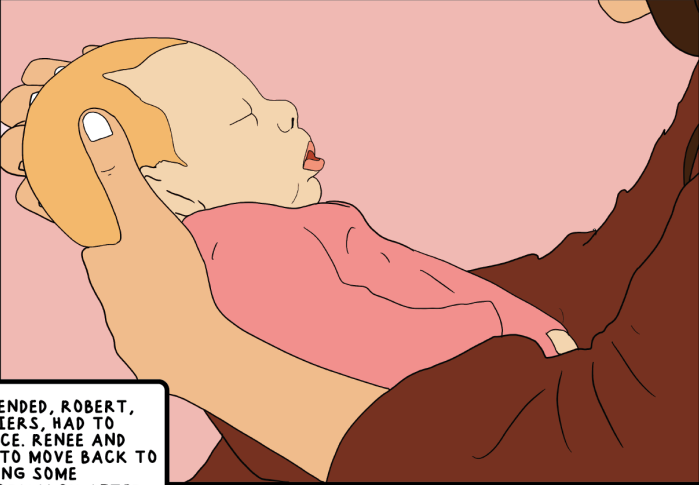
DESPITE THE CHAOS OF WAR, RENEE AND ROBERT FORMED A DEEP CONNECTION. THEY FELL IN LOVE AMIDST THE UNCERTAINTY AND DECIDED TO MARRY.



IN FACT, THEY TIED THE KNOT IN LATTAKIA, A PORT CITY ON THE MEDITERRANEAN COAST OF SYRIA, WHERE FRENCH FORCES HAD A SIGNIFICANT PRESENCE DURING THE WAR, BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE VILLAGE WHERE MY GRAND MOTHER WAS FROM.



WOW, I HAD NO IDEA. AND WHERE DID THEY SETTLE AFTER THE WAR?



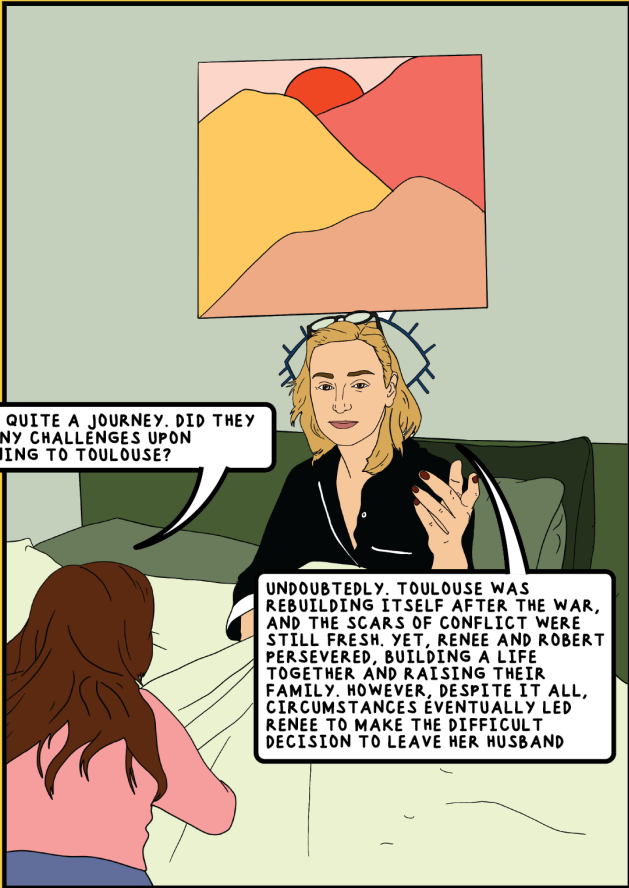
AFTER THE WAR ENDED, ROBERT, LIKE MANY SOLDIERS, HAD TO RETURN TO FRANCE. RENEE AND ROBERT DECIDED TO MOVE BACK TO TOULOUSE, SEEKING SOME SEMBLANCE OF NORMALCY AFTER THE TUMULT OF WAR-TORN SYRIA.



TOULOUSE, FRANCE, 1946

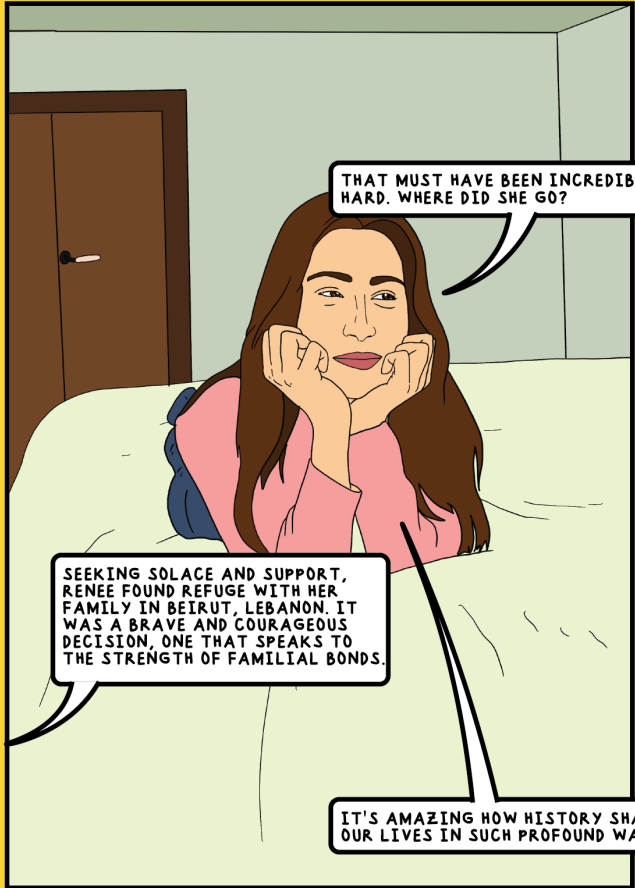


IT'S REMARKABLE TO THINK THAT MY MOTHER, YVONNE, WAS ACTUALLY BORN IN LATTAKIA DURING THOSE TURBULENT TIMES. SHE WAS THE FIRST OF THEIR FOUR CHILDREN.



THAT'S QUITE A JOURNEY. DID THEY FACE ANY CHALLENGES UPON RETURNING TO TOULOUSE?

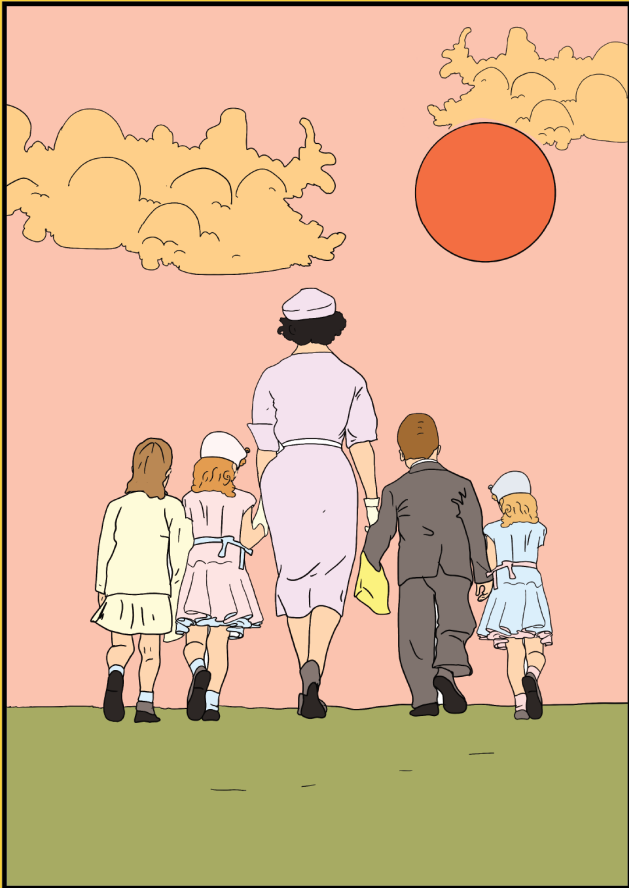
UNDOUBTEDLY. TOULOUSE WAS REBUILDING ITSELF AFTER THE WAR, AND THE SCARS OF CONFLICT WERE STILL FRESH. YET, RENEE AND ROBERT PERSEVERED, BUILDING A LIFE TOGETHER AND RAISING THEIR FAMILY. HOWEVER, DESPITE IT ALL, CIRCUMSTANCES EVENTUALLY LED RENEE TO MAKE THE DIFFICULT DECISION TO LEAVE HER HUSBAND

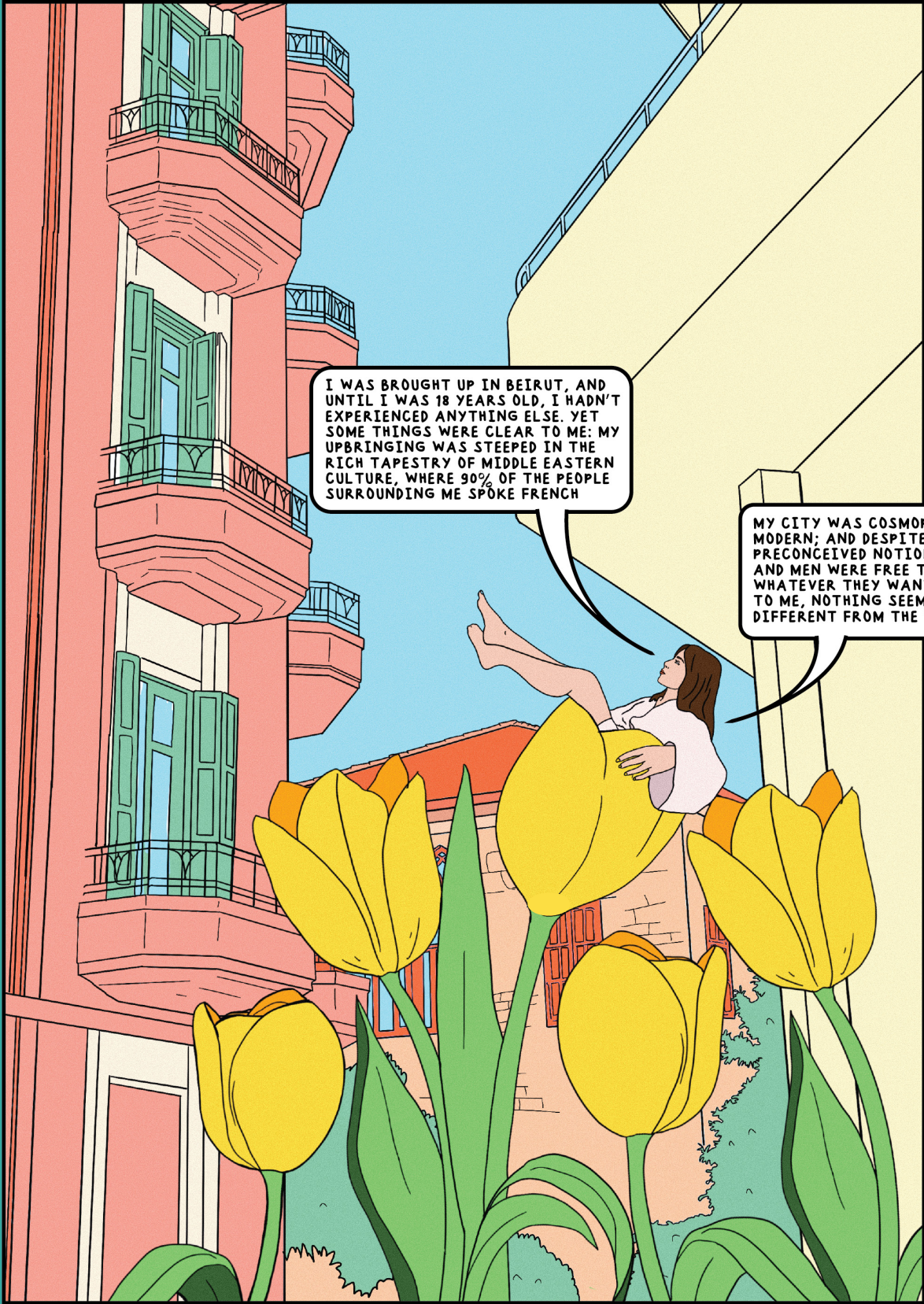


THAT MUST HAVE BEEN INCREDIBLY HARD. WHERE DID SHE GO?

SEEKING SOLACE AND SUPPORT, RENEE FOUND REFUGE WITH HER FAMILY IN BEIRUT, LEBANON. IT WAS A BRAVE AND COURAGEOUS DECISION, ONE THAT SPEAKS TO THE STRENGTH OF FAMILIAL BONDS.

IT'S AMAZING HOW HISTORY SHAPES OUR LIVES IN SUCH PROFOUND WAYS.





I WAS BROUGHT UP IN BEIRUT, AND UNTIL I WAS 18 YEARS OLD, I HADN'T EXPERIENCED ANYTHING ELSE. YET SOME THINGS WERE CLEAR TO ME: MY UPBRINGING WAS STEEPED IN THE RICH TAPESTRY OF MIDDLE EASTERN CULTURE, WHERE 90% OF THE PEOPLE SURROUNDING ME SPOKE FRENCH

MY CITY WAS COSMOPOLITAN, MODERN; AND DESPITE PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS, WOMEN AND MEN WERE FREE TO DO WHATEVER THEY WANTED TO DO. TO ME, NOTHING SEEMED REALLY DIFFERENT FROM THE WEST.

LEARNING ABOUT MY ANCESTOR'S STORIES AND THEIR ORIGINS KEPT ME WONDERING FOR A WHILE. IT MADE ME RETHINK EVERYTHING. I STARTED DOUBTING THIS STRONG FEELING I HAD THAT MY GENETIC ORIGINS HAD MADE ME, HAD INFLUENCED MY DECISIONS AND MY VIEWS ON CERTAIN THINGS.

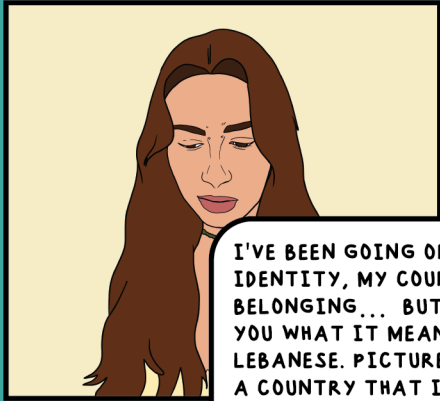
MY CONNECTIONS TO OTHERS, AND EVEN MY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WORLD. MY OPINIONS. TO ME, BEING LEBANESE MADE ME WHO I WAS AND SHAPED THE PERSON I WAS BECOMING.

BUT IN THE MIDDLE OF IT ALL, I WAS SURPRISED BY THE ANSWER I SATISFIED MYSELF WITH: THIS WHOLE REALIZATION HAD ACTUALLY BROUGHT ME CLOSER TO MY ANCESTORS. NOT BECAUSE OF WHERE THEY CAME FROM, BUT BECAUSE OF WHERE THEY ENDED UP

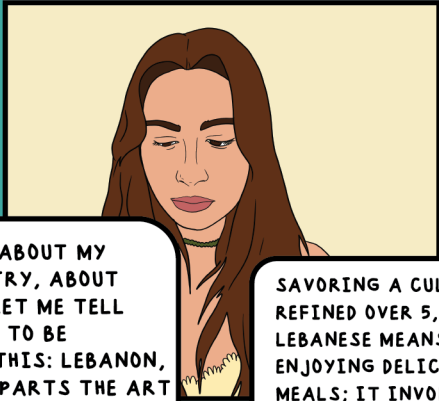
THEY FOUND A PLACE WHERE THEY BELONGED.

THEY ALL LEFT THEIR HOME, DURING THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE, AND SETTLED DOWN IN BEIRUT.

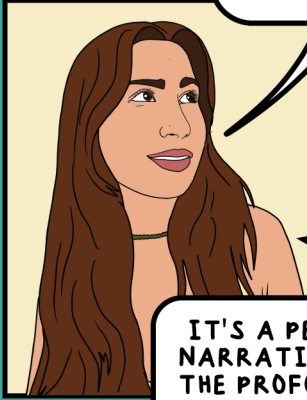
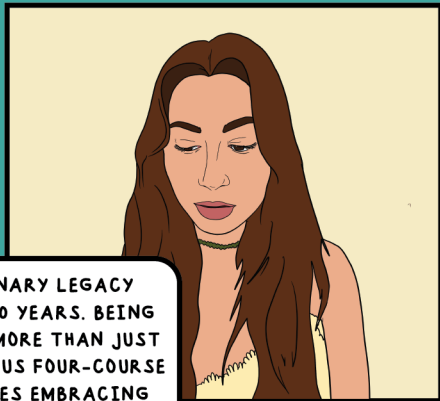
WITH TIME, BY CREATING A FAMILY, BY BUILDING A LIFE FOR GENERATIONS TO COME, THEY MUST HAVE FELT EXACTLY HOW I DO NOW, LIKE I DID MY WHOLE LIFE: THEY FOUND A PLACE WHERE THEY BELONGED.



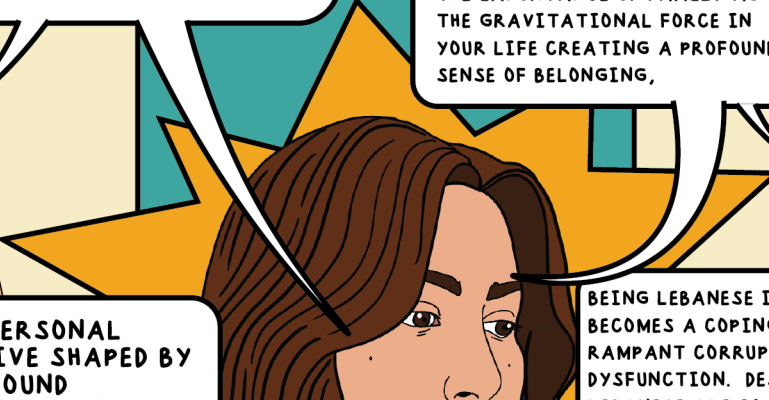
I'VE BEEN GOING ON ABOUT MY IDENTITY, MY COUNTRY, ABOUT BELONGING... BUT LET ME TELL YOU WHAT IT MEANS TO BE LEBANESE. PICTURE THIS: LEBANON, A COUNTRY THAT IMPARTS THE ART OF LIVING AMID UNCERTAINTY,



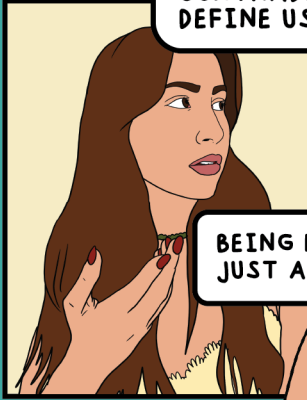
SAVORING A CULINARY LEGACY REFINED OVER 5,000 YEARS. BEING LEBANESE MEANS MORE THAN JUST ENJOYING DELICIOUS FOUR-COURSE MEALS; IT INVOLVES EMBRACING THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY AS THE GRAVITATIONAL FORCE IN YOUR LIFE CREATING A PROFOUND SENSE OF BELONGING,



IT'S A PERSONAL NARRATIVE SHAPED BY THE PROFOUND CONTRADICTIONS THAT DEFINE US.

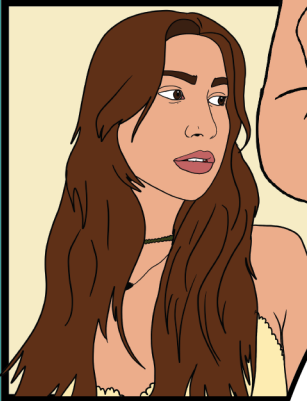
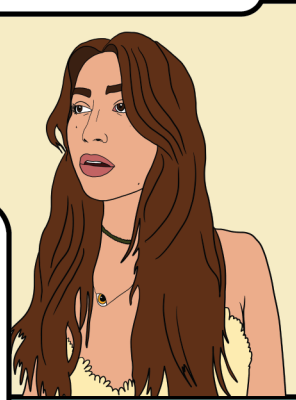


BEING LEBANESE IS WHEN RESILIENCE BECOMES A COPING MECHANISM AGAINST RAMPANT CORRUPTION AND DYSFUNCTION. DESPITE CHALLENGES, THE LEBANESE ARE COPING CONNOISSEURS



BEING LEBANESE ISN'T JUST A NATIONALITY;

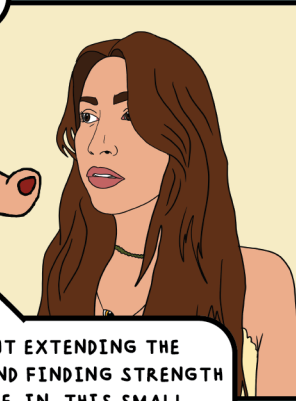
GENEROUSLY OFFERING SUPPORT WHILE OUR LEADERS ENGAGE IN A DIFFERENT KIND OF APPROPRIATION. LEBANESE IDENTITY THRIVES IN CONTRADICTIONS, BEAUTIFUL YET INFURIATING, RESILIENT YET COMPLEX.



SO, IMAGINE BEING LEBANESE WHERE EVERY MOMENT IS AN INTRICATE BRUSHSTROKE ON THE CANVAS OF A RESILIENT, COMPLEX, IDENTITY.

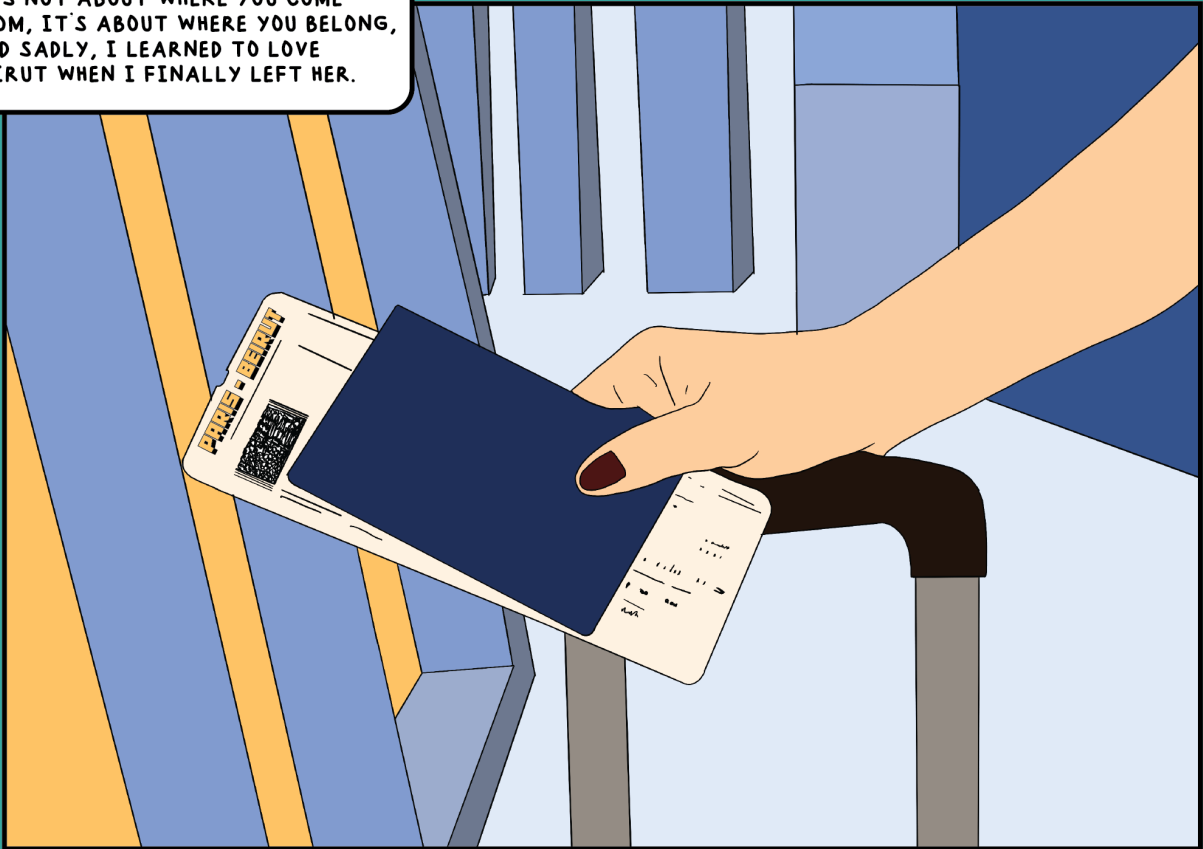


IT'S ABOUT EXTENDING THE TABLE, AND FINDING STRENGTH IN NATURE. IN THIS SMALL WORLD, BEING LEBANESE MEANS CONFRONTING THE DICHOTOMY OF LOVING AND DETESTING THE COUNTRY SIMULTANEOUSLY.



IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT THE HIGHS; IT'S ALSO ABOUT FACING THE LOWS HEAD-ON.

IT'S NOT ABOUT WHERE YOU COME FROM, IT'S ABOUT WHERE YOU BELONG, AND SADLY, I LEARNED TO LOVE BEIRUT WHEN I FINALLY LEFT HER.



SEE YOU SOON, BEIRUT.



BUT ON MY WAY TO THE AIRPORT, BOARDING MY FLIGHT BACK TO PARIS, THE ONLY THING I COULD TELL MYSELF WAS: SEE YOU SOON, BEIRUT.

TO BE CONTINUED...

