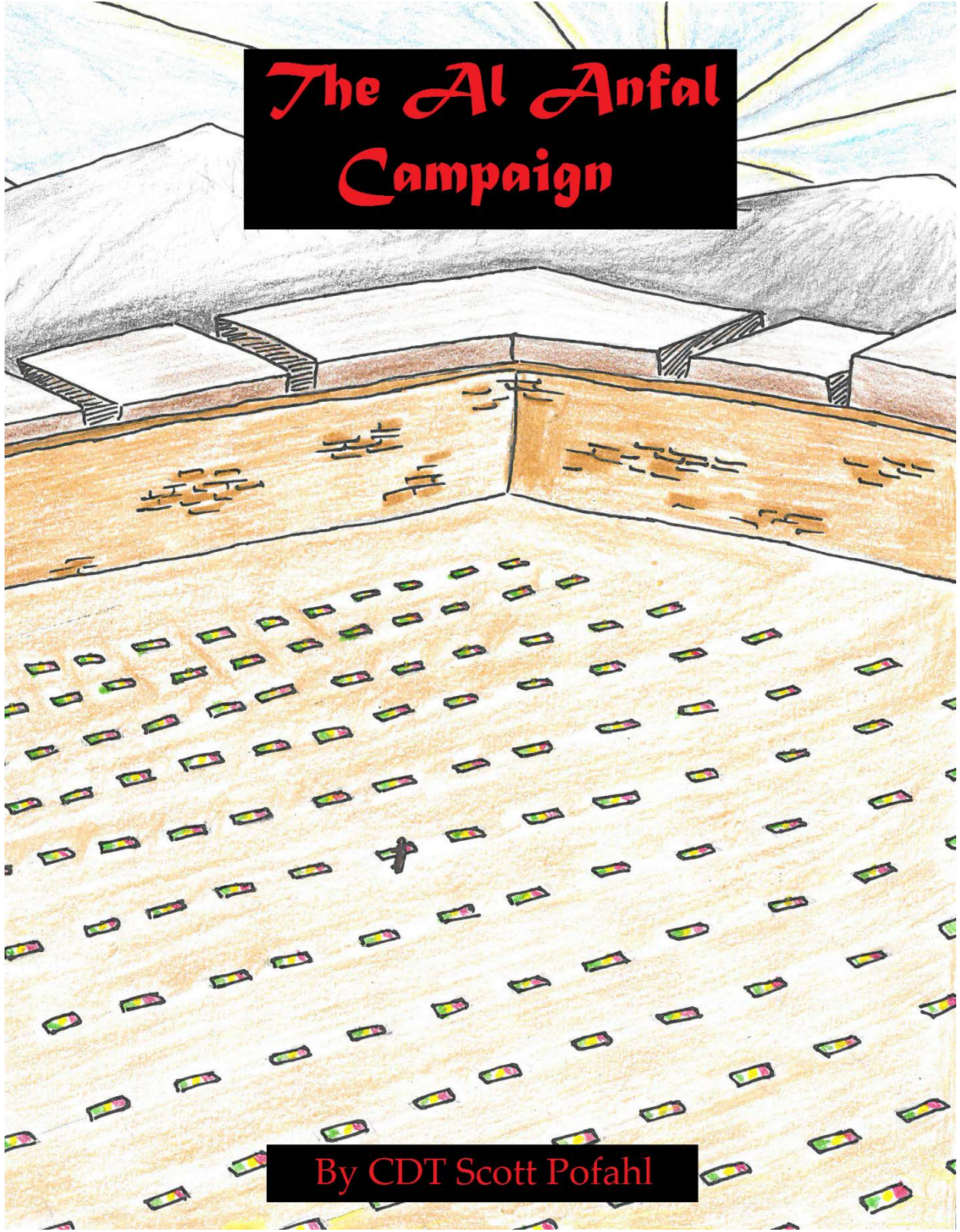
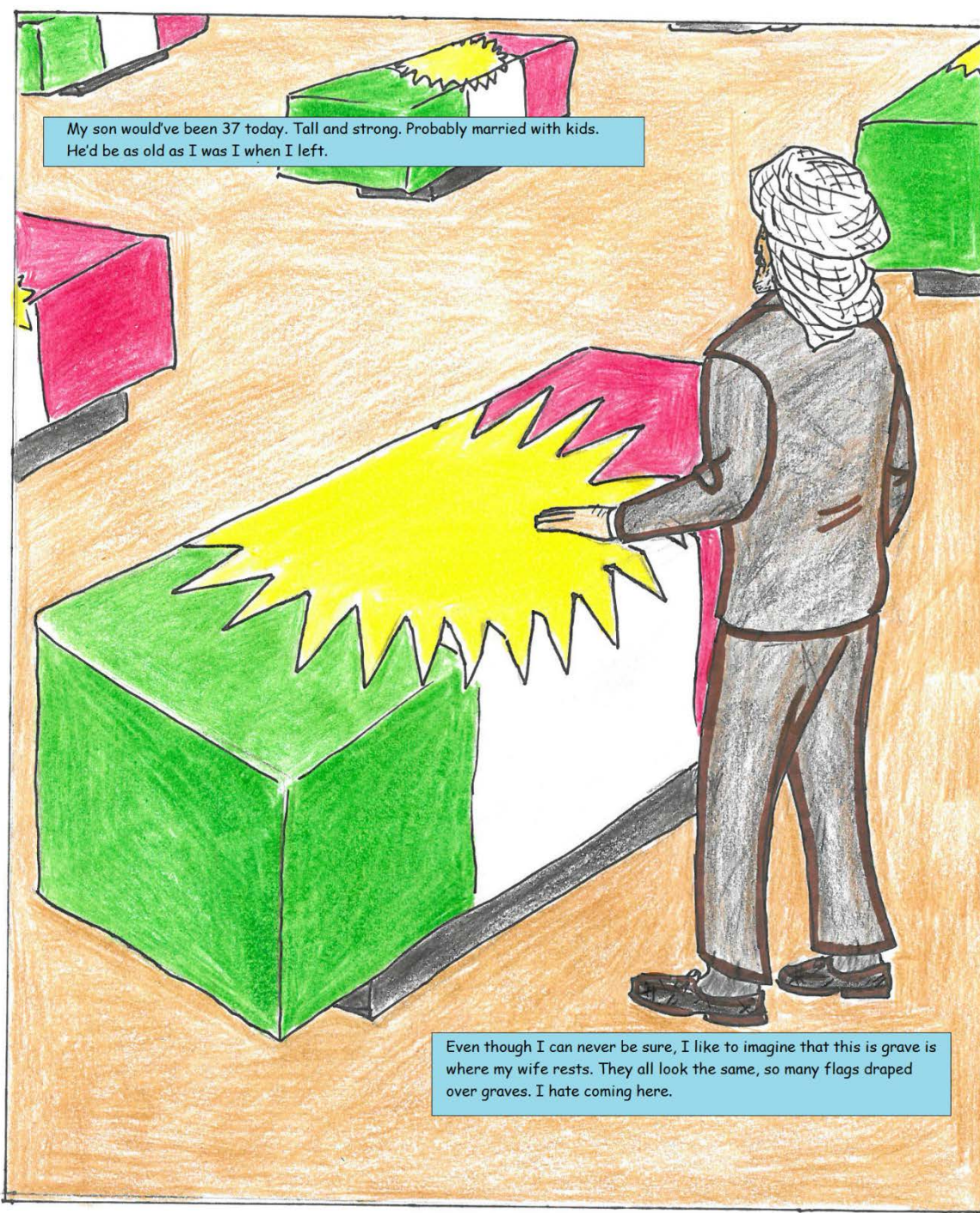




The Al Anfal Campaign

By CDT Scott Pofahl



My son would've been 37 today. Tall and strong. Probably married with kids. He'd be as old as I was I when I left.

Even though I can never be sure, I like to imagine that this is grave is where my wife rests. They all look the same, so many flags draped over graves. I hate coming here.

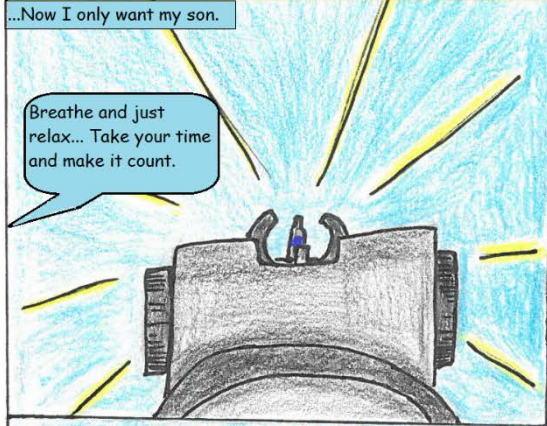




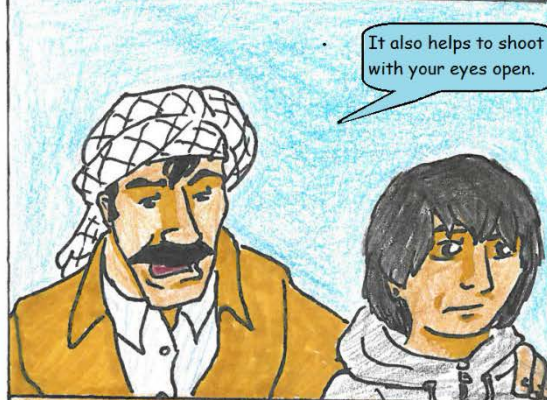
1988, late Regemê (early March). Samal's farm in North Western Iraqi Kurdistan, outside Halabja, near the Iranian border.

...Now I only want my son.

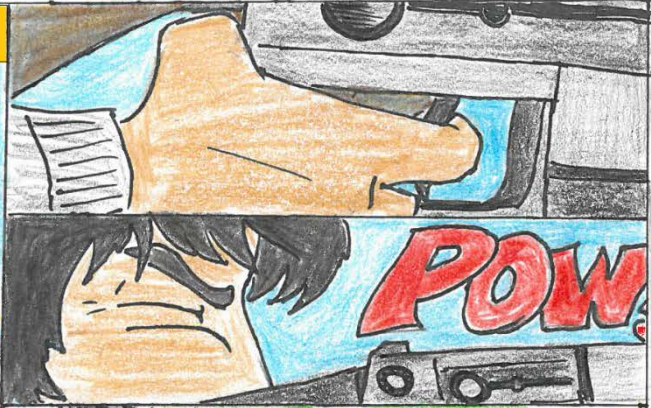
Breathe and just relax... Take your time and make it count.



It also helps to shoot with your eyes open.



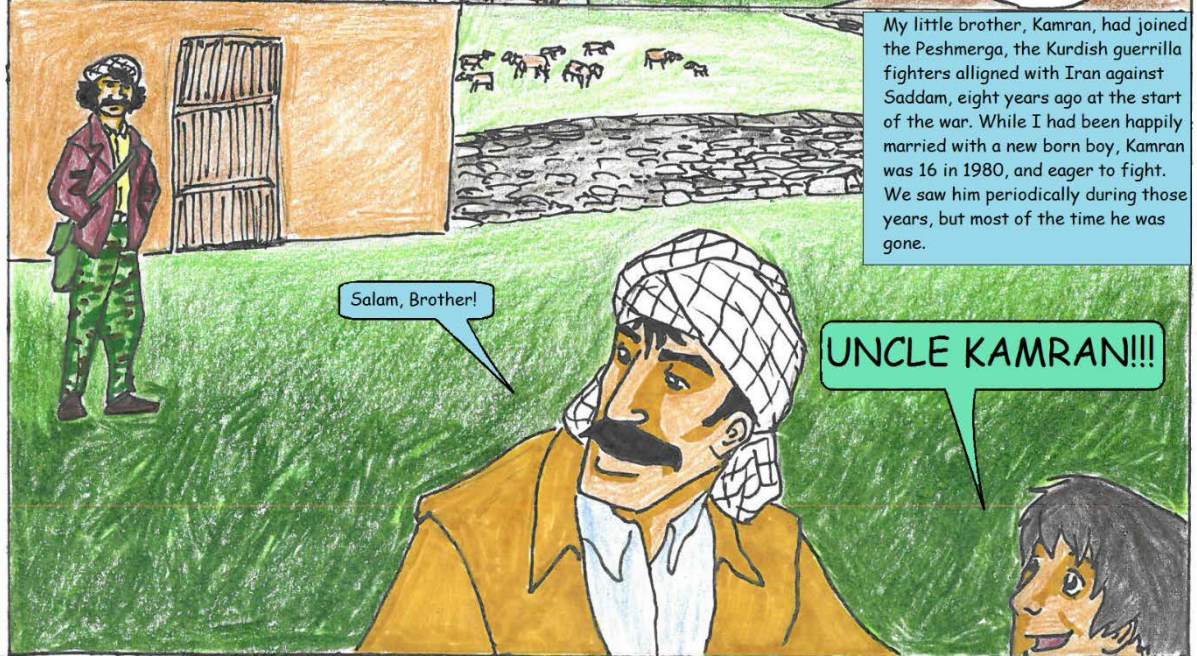
Don't worry, nephew, Saddam's soldiers aren't much faster than bottles. You'll get there.

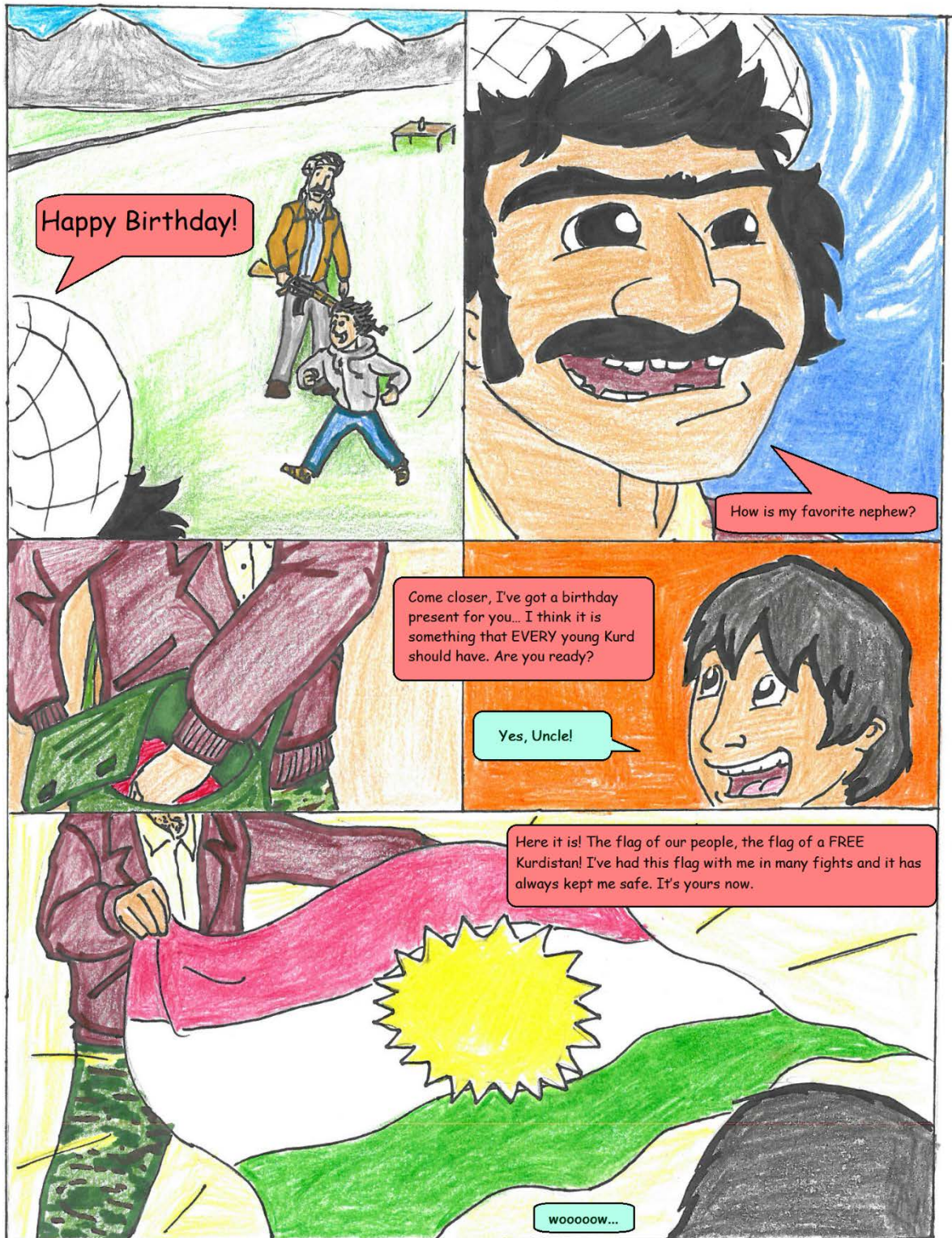


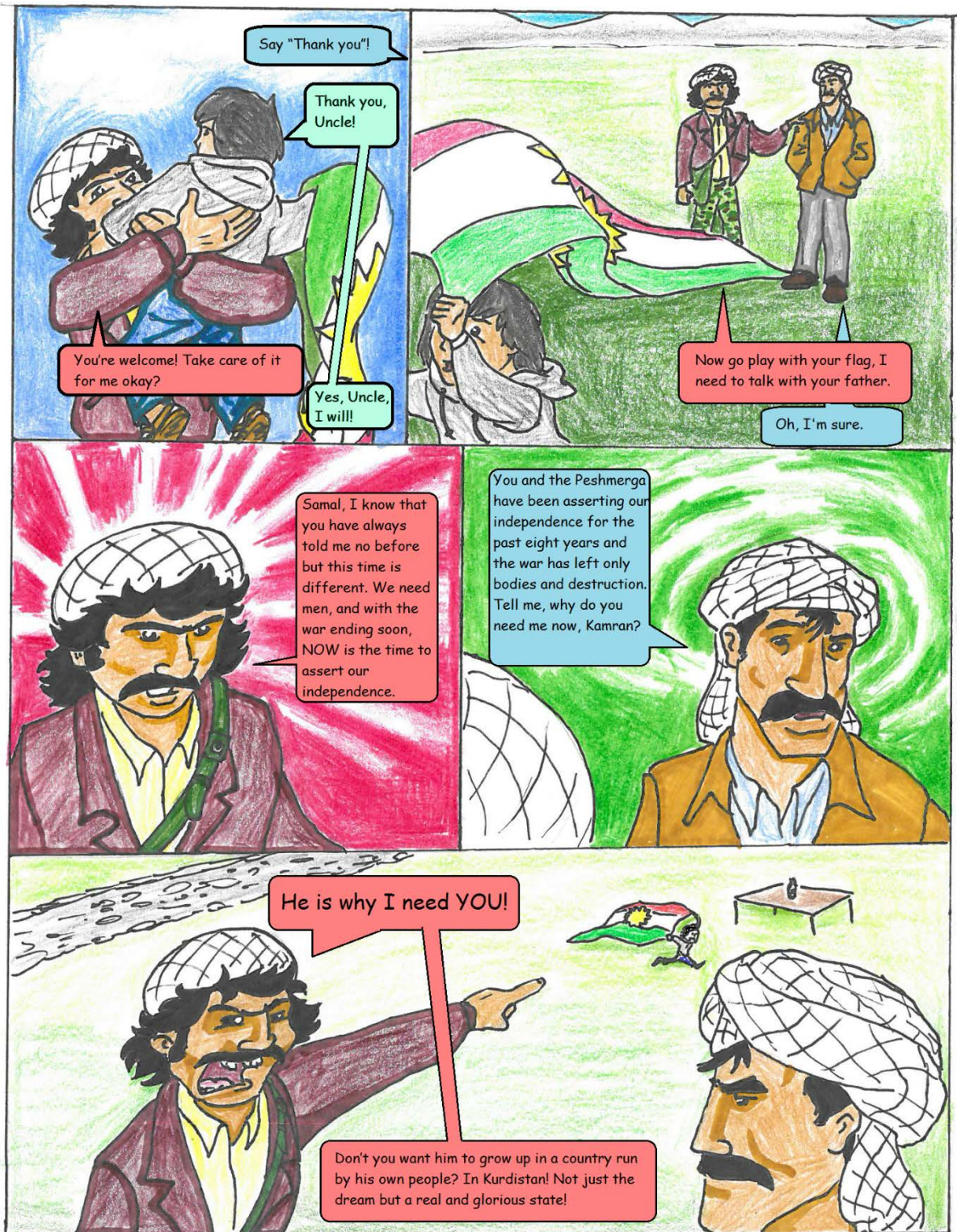
My little brother, Kamran, had joined the Peshmerga, the Kurdish guerrilla fighters aligned with Iran against Saddam, eight years ago at the start of the war. While I had been happily married with a new born boy, Kamran was 16 in 1980, and eager to fight. We saw him periodically during those years, but most of the time he was gone.

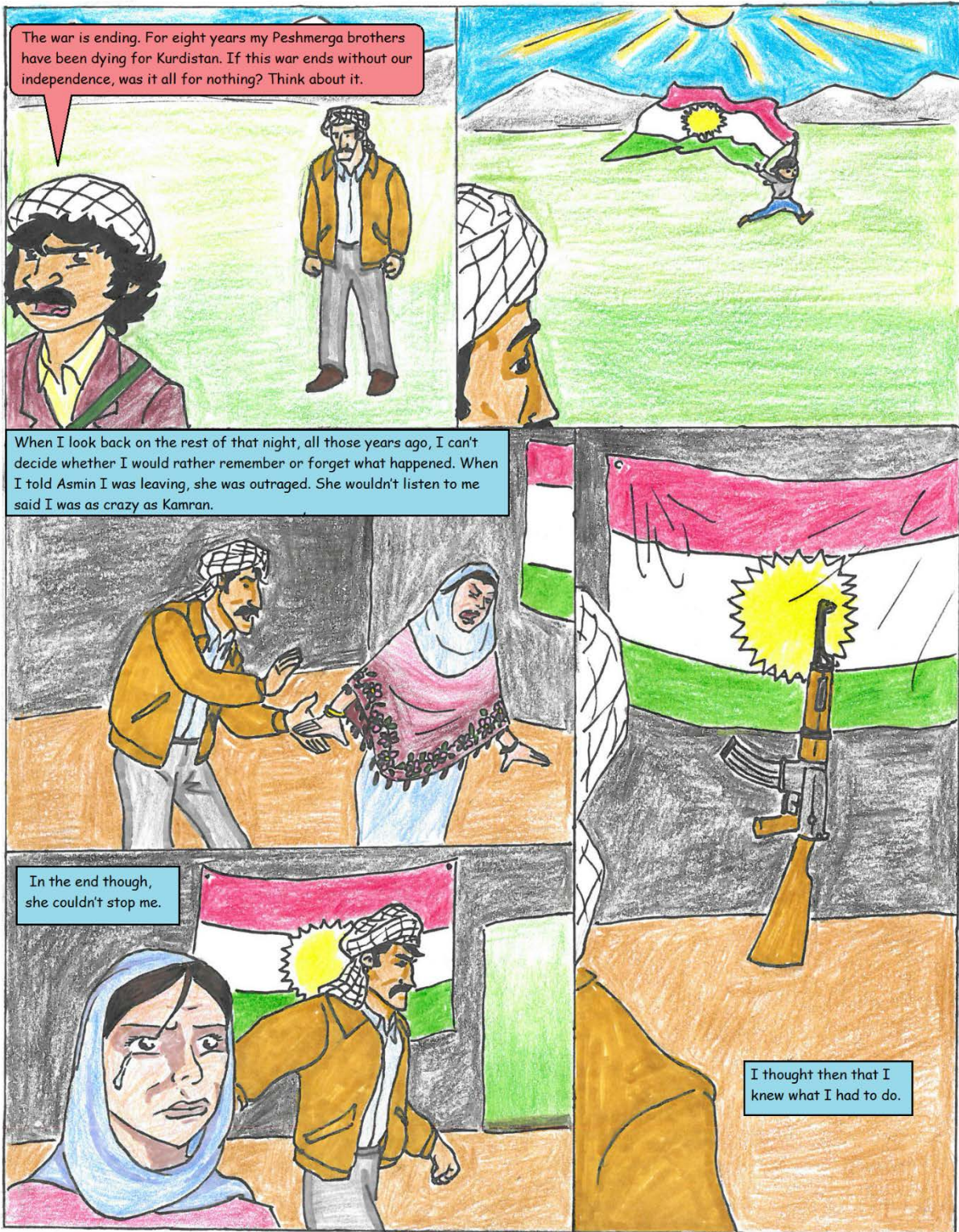
Salam, Brother!

UNCLE KAMRAN!!!













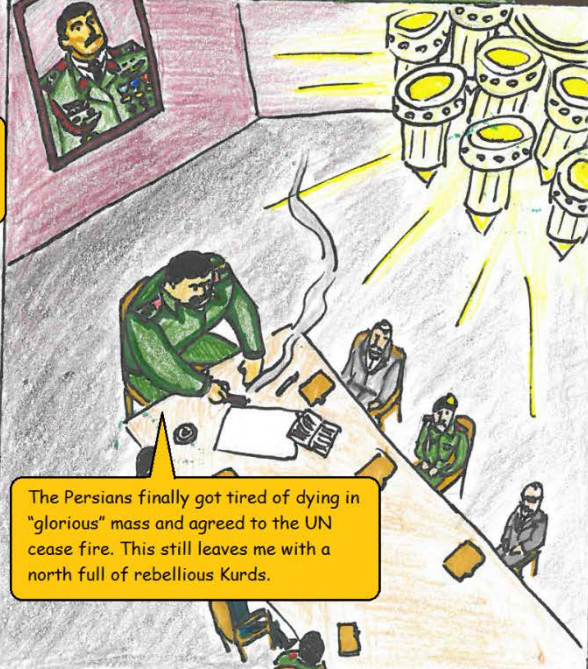
Like a boy poking a hornet's nest expecting to find honey, Saddam had attacked Iran while the country was still weak and disorganized from its revolution, however he underestimated the people's revolutionary fervor. The clash of Iranian religious zeal and manpower with Saddam's better funded war machine caused billions of dollars' worth of destruction and half a million casualties.



Finally after eight long years, the end seemed to be near. Or so we thought.



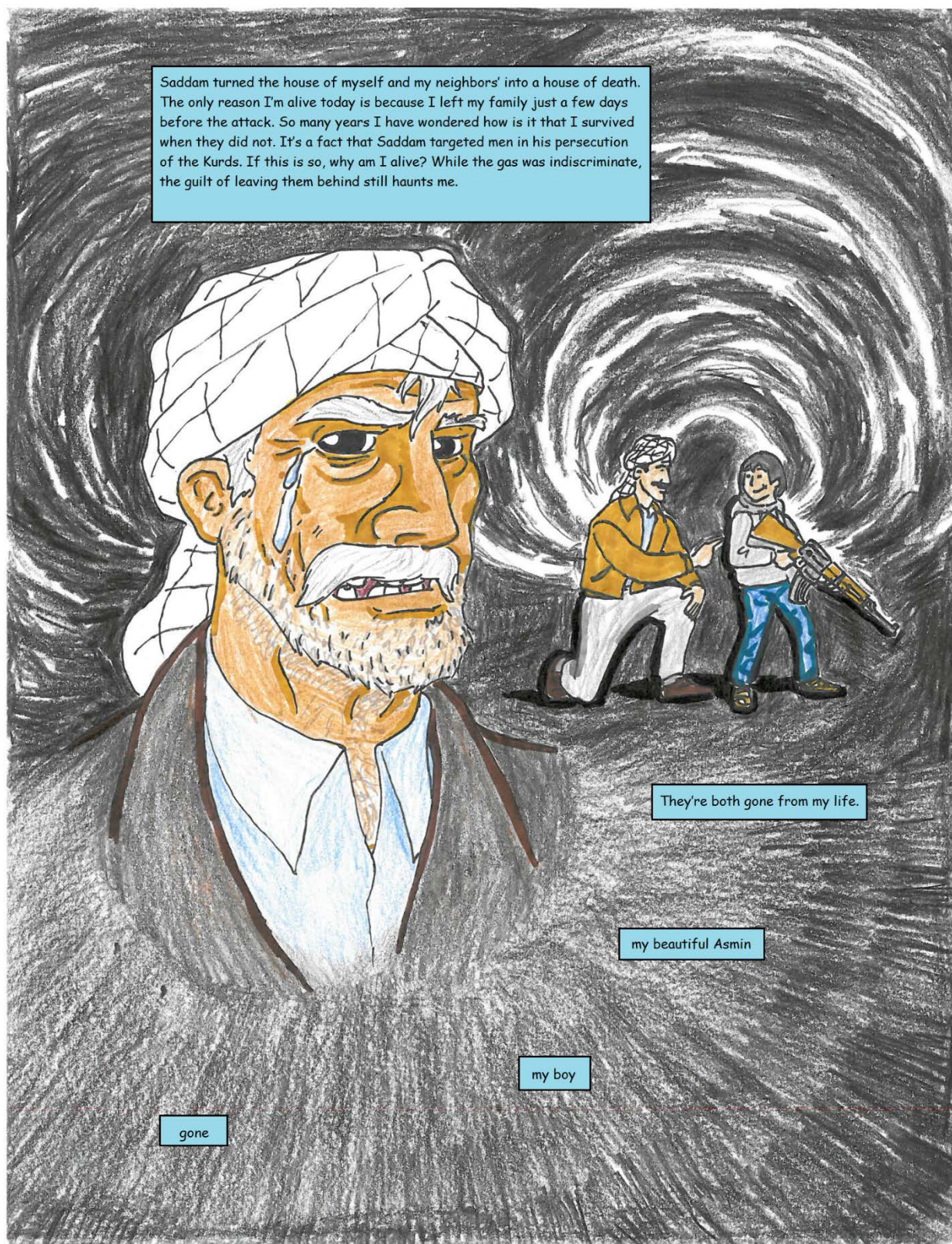
So gentleman, what am I going to do about the Kurds?



The Persians finally got tired of dying in "glorious" mass and agreed to the UN cease fire. This still leaves me with a north full of rebellious Kurds.







God, so much has changed. Now, even Saddam is gone. The Americans saw to that. They let us down after Gulf War. We Kurds believed they were going to finish off Saddam then and rose up accordingly. After the Americans left however, Saddam had his revenge. Now that the Americans have come again, it seems they still haven't decided whether or not they care about the Kurds.



Regardless, the fall of Saddam ignited a fire with which the fuel was opportunity. What was once Iraq has now become a piece of meat fought over by dogs. In the fight are the Americans, Isis, Iran, the Russians, the Syrians, the Turks, and of course, the Kurds. And believe me the Kurds have long hungered for their just share.



For with that opportunity comes hope, and where there is hope, there is Kurdistan!

For years, my people have dreamed of a free Kurdistan, and for years my people have died. With Iraq dissolved and Syria torn by civil war, the Kurdish nation has grown stronger. I'm glad that I'm alive to see these days!



As Ey Reqîb, our national anthem, says: "Oh, enemy! The Kurdish people live on, they have not been crushed by the weapons of any time;
Let no one say Kurds are dead, they are living! They live and never shall we lower our flag!"



The title of the campaign, "Al-Anfal," is named after the eighth sura in the Quran, whose title literally translates to "the spoils of war." Cruelly ironic, it was symbolic of the retribution Saddam desired to visit upon the Kurds for choosing Iran's side in the Iran-Iraq War. Over the course of the genocide, 250 towns and villages were exposed to chemical weapons. In total, Al-Anfal massacred 50,000 to 100,000 non-combatants and destroyed about 4,000 out of 4,655 villages in Iraqi Kurdistan. On March 16, 1988, there was a sarin gas attack on the city of Halabja in which 3,200-5,000 Kurdish people were killed, most of them civilians. Led by "Chemical" Ali Hassan al-Majid, cousin of Saddam Hussein, the Halabja attack proved to be the most violent single part of the Al-Anfal campaign and Saddam's reign as a whole.

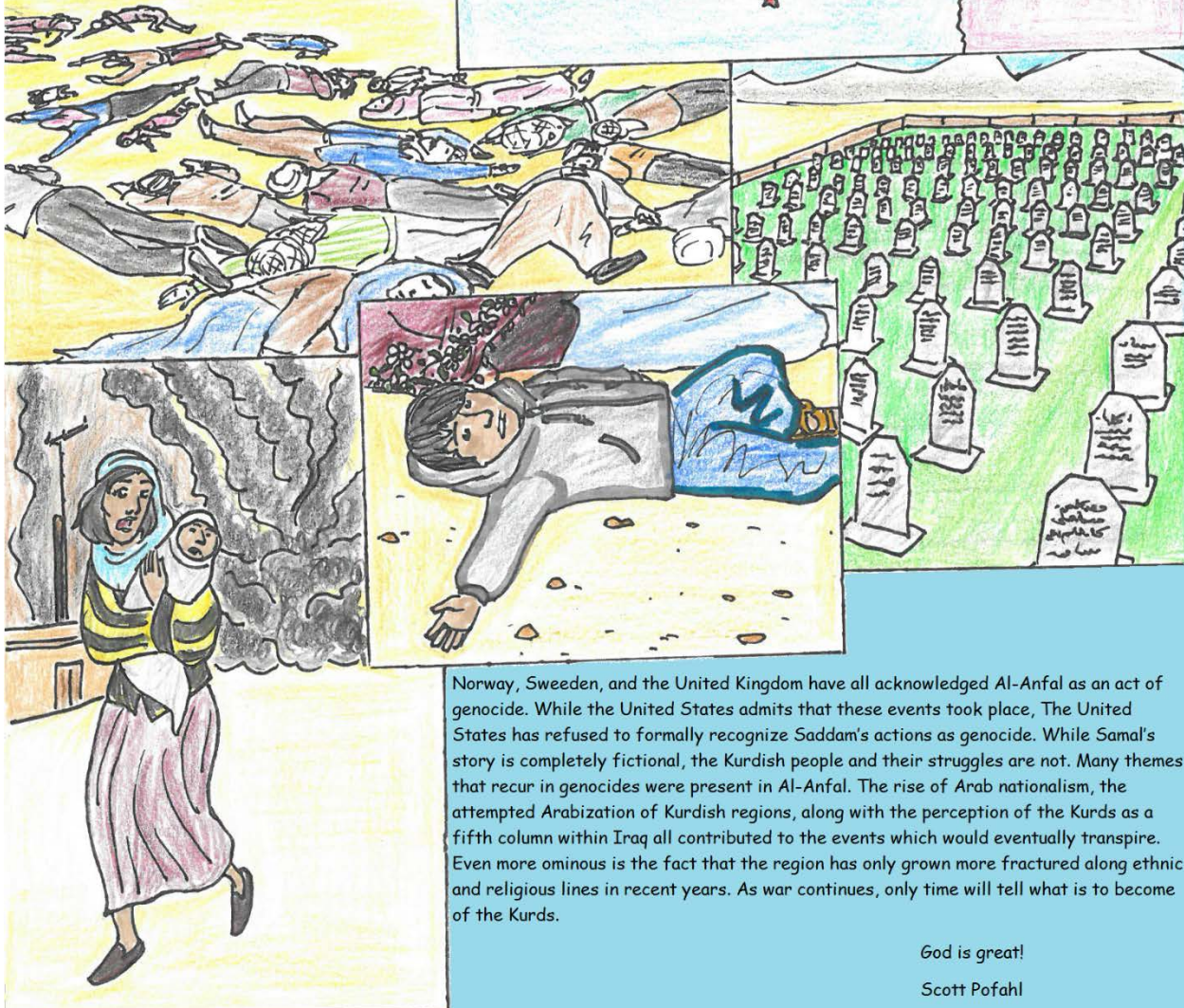
The Al-Anfal Campaign 1986-1989

★ = Known Chemical Attack

IRAQ

IRAN

هەڵەبجە
Halabja



Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom have all acknowledged Al-Anfal as an act of genocide. While the United States admits that these events took place, The United States has refused to formally recognize Saddam's actions as genocide. While Samal's story is completely fictional, the Kurdish people and their struggles are not. Many themes that recur in genocides were present in Al-Anfal. The rise of Arab nationalism, the attempted Arabization of Kurdish regions, along with the perception of the Kurds as a fifth column within Iraq all contributed to the events which would eventually transpire. Even more ominous is the fact that the region has only grown more fractured along ethnic and religious lines in recent years. As war continues, only time will tell what is to become of the Kurds.

God is great!

Scott Pofahl

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