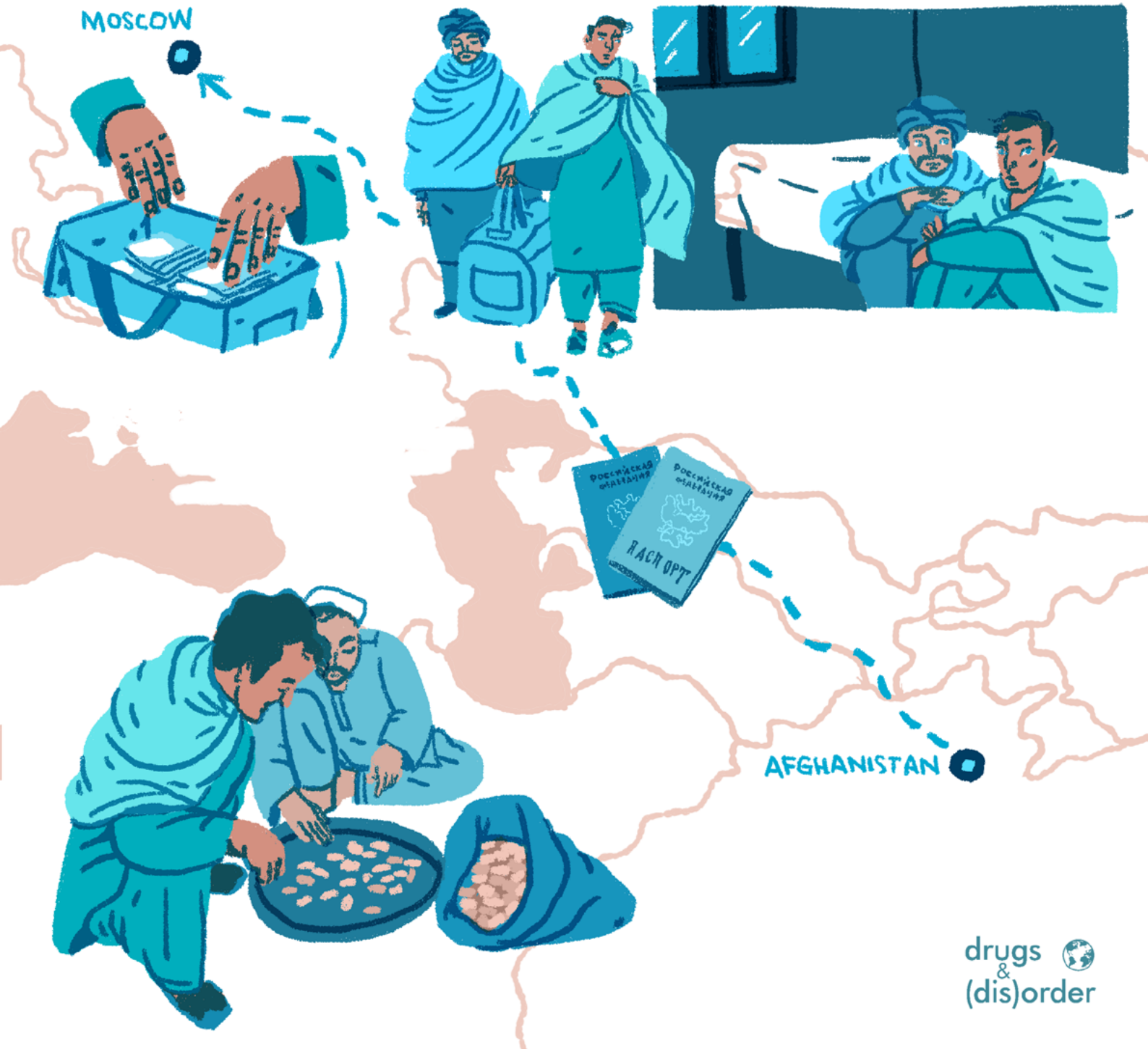


JANGUL

CONFLICT AND DRUG TRAFFICKING IN AFGHANISTAN'S BORDERLANDS



drugs & (dis)order


IN THE 1980'S, MY VILLAGE WAS CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE WAR BETWEEN THE COMMUNIST REGIME AND THE MUJAHEDEEN. THE DESTRUCTION WAS DEVASTATING.
WE WERE LEFT TO PICK UP THE PIECES OF OUR LIVES.
AFTER ONE BOMBARDMENT, OUR HOUSE WAS COMPLETELY DESTROYED.
LUCKILY, SOME MONEY AND OPIUM THAT WE HAD BURIED SURVIVED THE ATTACK.
WE USED IT TO BUILD A NEW HOME.


I WAS IN MY EARLY TWENTIES AT THE TIME AND WITH A YOUNG FAMILY OF MY OWN TO PROVIDE FOR.
THE INSECURITY AND UNCERTAINTY AFFECTED EVERY ASPECT OF LIFE FOR PEOPLE, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES.
SOME, LIKE MY BROTHER, FLED TO PAKISTAN
...SOME, LIKE MYSELF, JOINED GOVERNMENT ARMED FORCES.
...WHILE OTHERS JOINED THE MUJAHADEEN.

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF AFGHANISTAN

COUPONS

THE ARMY OFFERED A DECENT SALARY AND COUPONS FOR FOOD AND OTHER NECESSITIES...

WITH THIS I WAS ABLE TO SUPPORT MY FAMILY.

I SPENT MOST OF MY TIME SERVING IN THE NORTH OF THE COUNTRY.

Where is your family again, friend?

They are in Nangarhar.

IT WAS A LONELY PERIOD. I FOUND MYSELF REMINISCING OFTEN, ABOUT MY FAMILY...

...AND MY CHILDHOOD. I USED TO HELP MY DAD CULTIVATE THE WHEAT AND THE POPPY THAT WE GREW ON OUR FARM.


1992
What does this mean now that Jalalabad has fallen to the mujahadeen?
The only thing we know is that everything is uncertain.
I SOON LEFT THE ARMY. THE SALARIES DROPPED SIGNIFICANTLY AND THE COUPONS FOR FOOD ALSO STOPPED.
I RETURNED TO NANGARHAR, TO MY FAMILY.
BUT I WAS JOBLESS; THERE WERE VERY FEW OPPORTUNITIES AT THIS TIME.
AFGHANISTAN


IT WAS DANGEROUS TO BE AFFILIATED WITH THE COMMUNIST REGIME. PEOPLE WERE OSTRACISED AND OFTEN THREATENED.
POLITICAL MATTERS WERE INESCAPABLE...
Those who side with the communists forsake their country and God.

PAKISTAN

THE WAR FRACTURED OUR SOCIETY. JIRGA'S (*DECISION-MAKING BODIES) TOOK PLACE ACROSS BORDERS, IN PAKISTAN, IN DIASPORA COMMUNITIES.

WE LIVED DAY TO DAY IN DESPERATION.

I WAS LOOKING FOR ANY OPPORTUNITY THAT MIGHT GIVE ME AND MY FAMILY SOME KIND OF ECONOMIC SECURITY.



FINALLY, AN OPPORTUNITY CAME MY WAY—THROUGH A COUSIN OF A FRIEND I KNEW FROM MY TIME IN THE ARMY. HE WAS A LIEUTENANT IN THE ARMY.



If you come with me I can pay you a good amount of money, but you understand that you must take the heroin all the way to Moscow.

What are the risks?

There are many and they are high.



I TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY, EVEN THOUGH I KNEW THE RISKS.

IT WAS THE ONLY OPTION.

BUT I DECIDED NOT TO TELL MY WIFE.



I will not be gone a long time. I am only going to the north again for a few months. I hear they have many laborer jobs available right now.

MOSCOW





Now, understand that this bag is professionally made to hide this. But there are 2.5 kgs of heroin in it so you should guard it with your life.



ONCE WE LEFT NANGARHAR, WE STAYED IN A HOME THAT WASN'T OUR OWN WHILE WE WAITED FOR OUR PASSPORTS AND VISAS TO BE PREPARED.



FINALLY, WE REACHED THE BORDER.

AFGHANISTAN

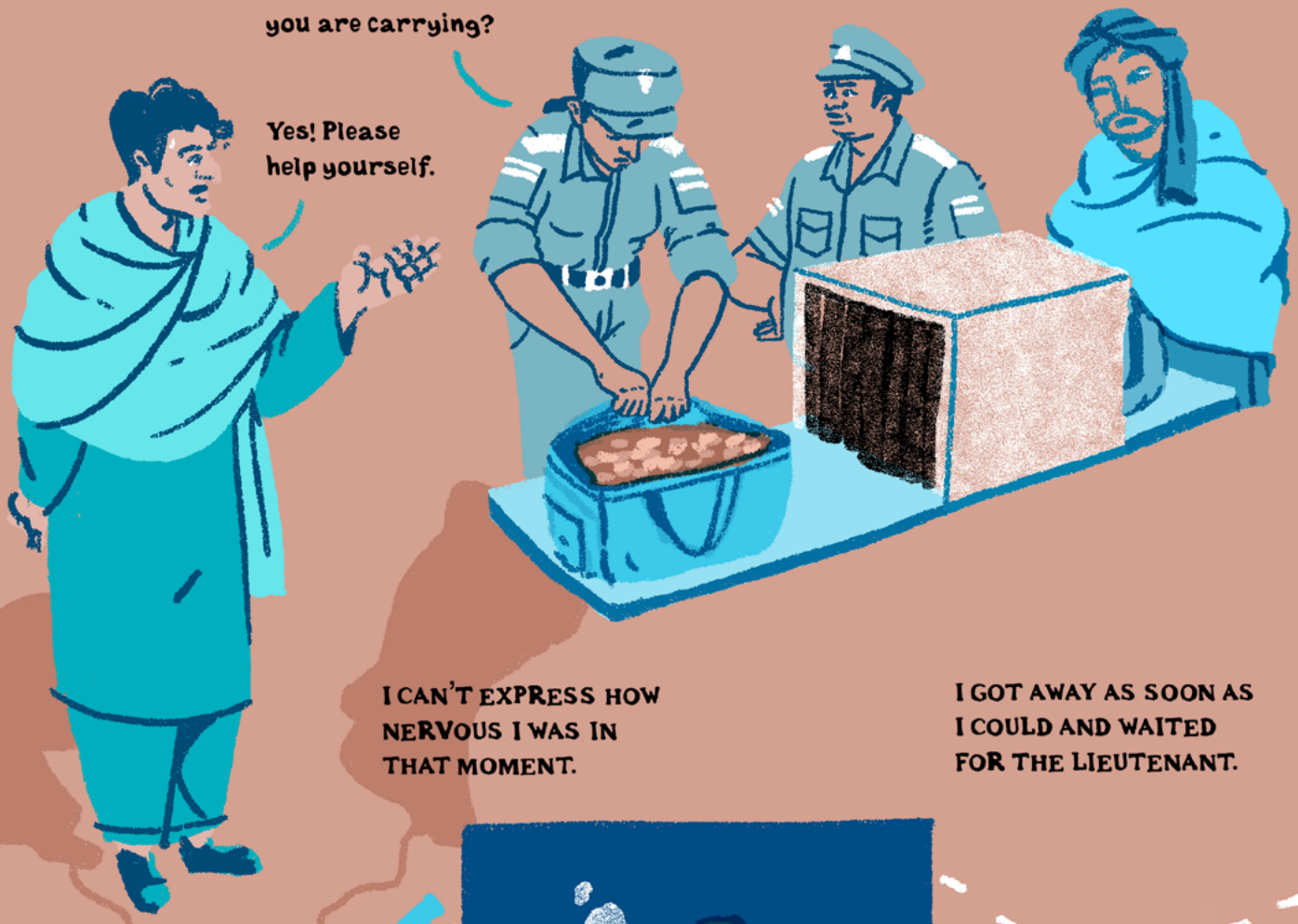


I BOUGHT SOME ALMONDS AND RAISINS AND THREW THEM IN MY BAG WITH THE HEROIN.

BORDER

Are these almonds you are carrying?

Yes! Please help yourself.



I CAN'T EXPRESS HOW NERVOUS I WAS IN THAT MOMENT.

I GOT AWAY AS SOON AS I COULD AND WAITED FOR THE LIEUTENANT.

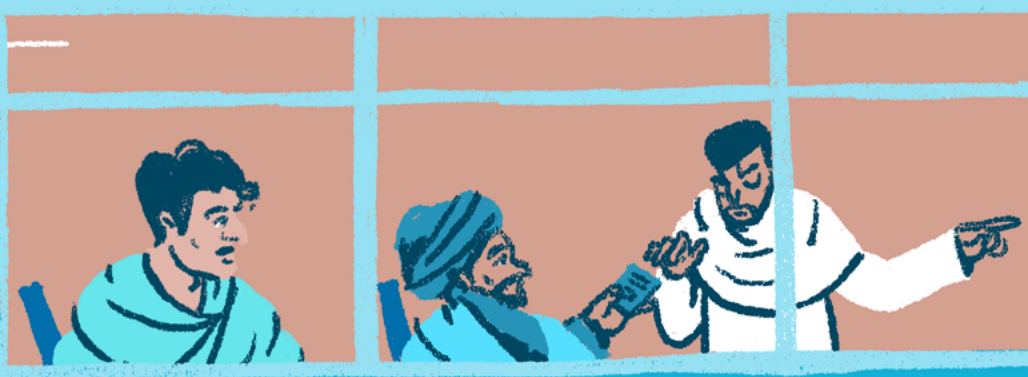


WE WENT THROUGH MANY CHECKPOINTS AFTER THAT, BUT LUCKILY NONE WITH SCANNERS.

MOSCOW

Hand over your passports.

You will not be stopped at the market by the police, but you must stay at this hotel.



THE NEXT MORNING, THE BUS DRIVER REFUSED TO GIVE US BACK OUR PASSPORTS.

HE INSISTED THAT WE HAD TO GO BACK AND THAT OUR JOURNEY COULD NOT CONTINUE.



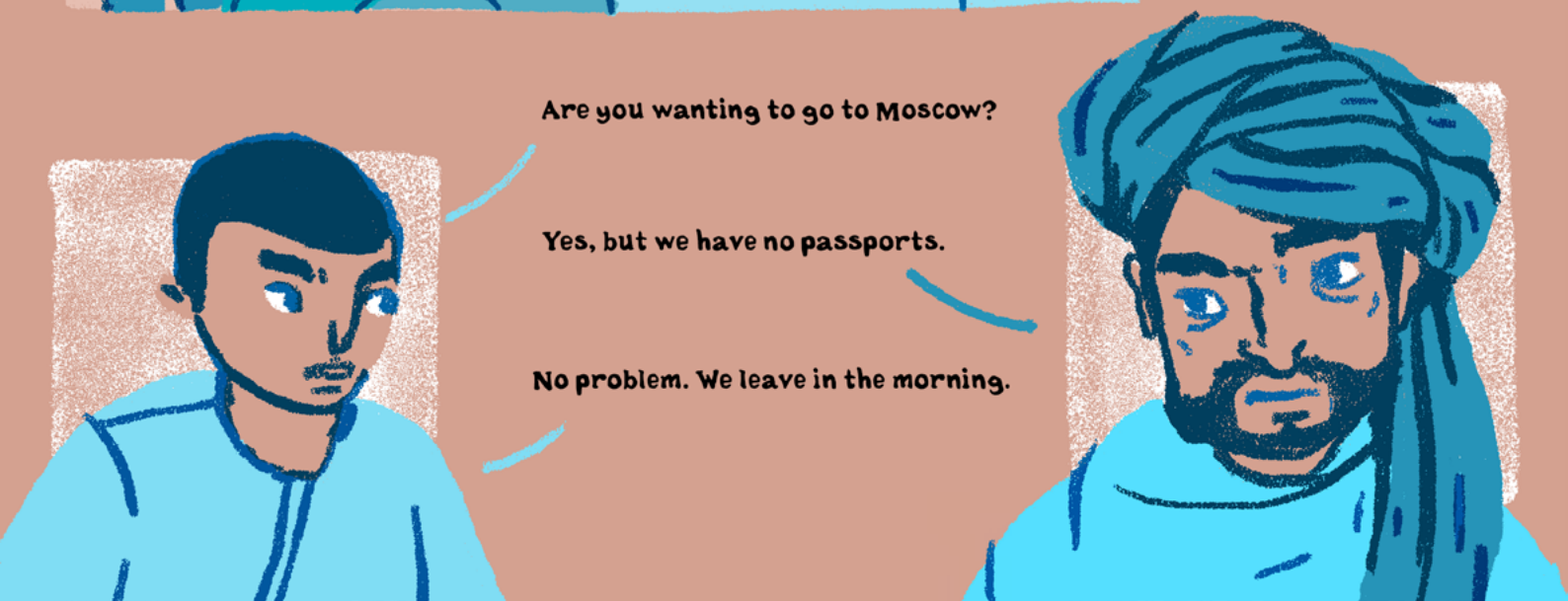
THEY MUST HAVE HAD A DEAL WITH THE GOVERNMENT.



WE STAYED AT THE HOTEL WHILE WE TRIED TO FIND A WAY FORWARD.

WE FELT LIKE A COMMODITY; USED, TRANSPORTED AND PROFITED FROM.

SUDDENLY, WE WERE APPROACHED BY A YOUNG AFGHAN BOY.



EVEN GETTING OUT OF THE HOTEL WAS DIFFICULT.
WE HAD TO LIE ABOUT OUR REASON FOR LEAVING.

You aren't allowed to leave! Where are you going?

Just to a nightclub!

Okay, fine, but don't stay out long.

FINALLY, WE REACHED MOSCOW.

I MISSED HOME IMMENSELY.



EVERYTHING IN MOSCOW FELT FOREIGN, UNFAMILIAR AND DISCOMFORTING.

I COULDN'T WAIT TO GET BACK HOME.

WE DELIVERED THE HEROIN TO THE TRADER.



HE WAS A GOOD MAN.



HE FED US AND TREATED US WELL.
OUR JOURNEY THERE WAS OVER, FOR NOW.

MOSCOW

WITH THE MONEY WE RECEIVED FROM THE TRADER AND NO HEROIN TO CARRY, WE MADE OUR WAY BACK HOME TO AFGHANISTAN.

WE DIDN'T HAVE PASSPORTS SO WE HAD TO PAY A LOT OF BRIBES, IT WAS A DIFFICULT AND EXPENSIVE JOURNEY.

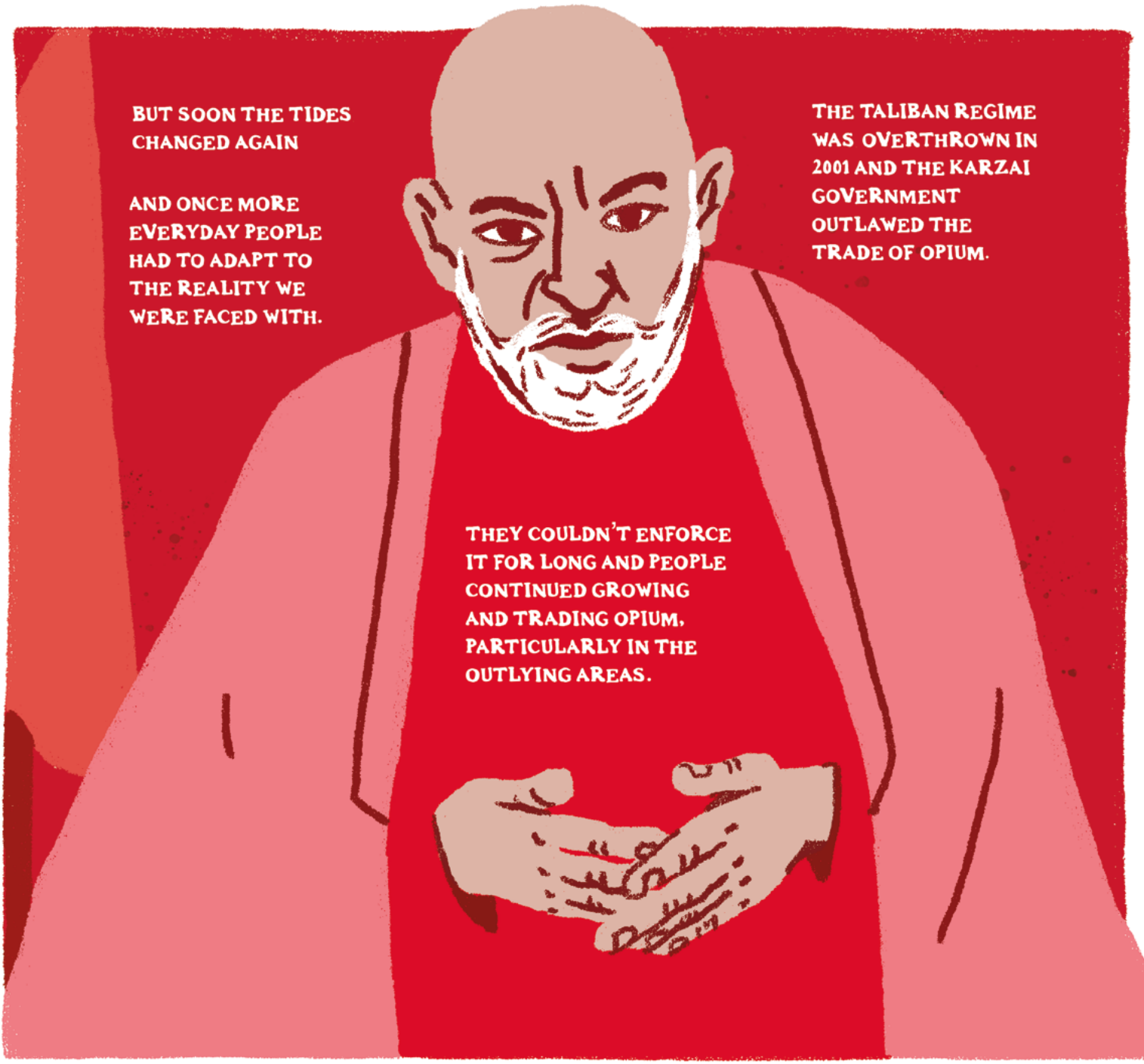
USING THE MONEY I EARNED FROM THE TRIP TO MOSCOW, I WAS ABLE TO OPEN A SMALL SHOP AT THE BAZAAR.



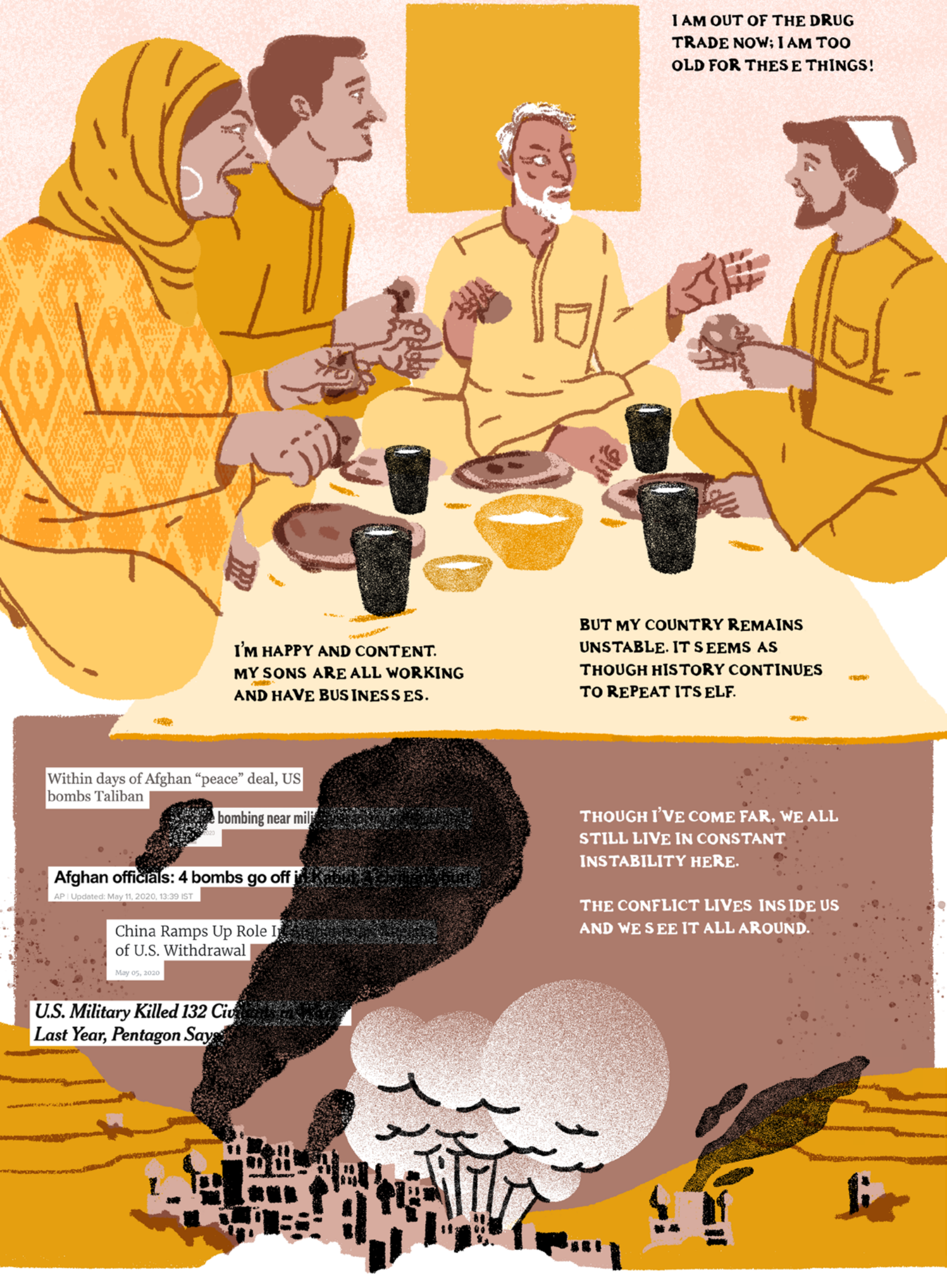
WHEN THE TALIBAN WERE IN POWER, WE COULD GROW AND TRADE OPENLY AND THEY TAXED FARMERS AND TRADERS.

AFGHANISTAN

THE TALIBAN IMPLEMENTED A VERY CONSERVATIVE ISLAMIC LAW. FOR MANY IN THE REGION, THIS WAS A TIME OF ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AND IT WAS SAFER, WE COULD TRAVEL WITHOUT DANGER.


BUT SOON THE TIDES CHANGED AGAIN
AND ONCE MORE EVERYDAY PEOPLE HAD TO ADAPT TO THE REALITY WE WERE FACED WITH.
THE TALIBAN REGIME WAS OVERTHROWN IN 2001 AND THE KARZAI GOVERNMENT OUTLAWED THE TRADE OF OPIUM.
THEY COULDN'T ENFORCE IT FOR LONG AND PEOPLE CONTINUED GROWING AND TRADING OPIUM, PARTICULARLY IN THE OUTLYING AREAS.


I have got a great opportunity - another trip smuggling heroin to Moscow, the same as last time but even higher pay out.
No, thank you, friend. I am doing well - I have just bought a piece of land and have started to even build on it.
I promised myself I would never do that again, the risk is too high.


I AM OUT OF THE DRUG TRADE NOW; I AM TOO OLD FOR THESE THINGS!
I'M HAPPY AND CONTENT. MY SONS ARE ALL WORKING AND HAVE BUSINESSES.
BUT MY COUNTRY REMAINS UNSTABLE. IT SEEMS AS THOUGH HISTORY CONTINUES TO REPEAT ITSELF.
Within days of Afghan "peace" deal, US bombs Taliban
bombing near mili
Afghan officials: 4 bombs go off in
AP | Updated: May 11, 2020, 13:39 IST
China Ramps Up Role I
of U.S. Withdrawal
May 05, 2020
U.S. Military Killed 132 Civ
Last Year, Pentagon Says
THOUGH I'VE COME FAR, WE ALL STILL LIVE IN CONSTANT INSTABILITY HERE.
THE CONFLICT LIVES INSIDE US AND WE SEE IT ALL AROUND.



About Drugs & (dis)order

Drugs & (dis)order: building sustainable peacetime economies in the aftermath of war' is a four-year research project generating new evidence on how to transform illicit drug economies into peace economies in Afghanistan, Colombia and Myanmar. It is the work of an international consortium of internationally recognised organisations with unrivalled expertise in drugs, conflict, health and development. Led by SOAS University of London, project partners are: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), Alcis, Christian Aid, Kachinland Research Centre (KRC), London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), Organization for Sustainable Development and Research (OSDR), Oxford's School of Global and Area Studies (OSGA), PositiveNegatives, Shan Herald Agency for News (SHAN), Universidad de los Andes, and Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

This comic was illustrated by Kruttika Susarla (www.kruttika.com).

PRODUCED BY:

POSITIVE NEGATIVES

drugs & (dis)order

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