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WORDS BY GOLDIE GOLDBERG

M.E.N.D.

MOVEMENT FOR THE EMANCIPATION OF THE NIGERIAN DELTA



YENAGOA, Nigeria (AP) -

- 2007

Armed men who seized control of a Royal Dutch Shell PLC oil complex overnight fled Friday, taking three Nigerian hostages, shooting a man and forcing the oil giant to halt production at the site.

The attackers kidnapped a soldier, an administrative officer and a chef who works at a base that houses staff and stores equipment in Oporoma in the southern state of Bayelsa, said Joshua Benemesia, a traditional chief who has mediated hostage negotiations in the oil-rich delta region.

At least one man was shot in the attack, Benemesia said. Neither his identity nor his condition were immediately known.

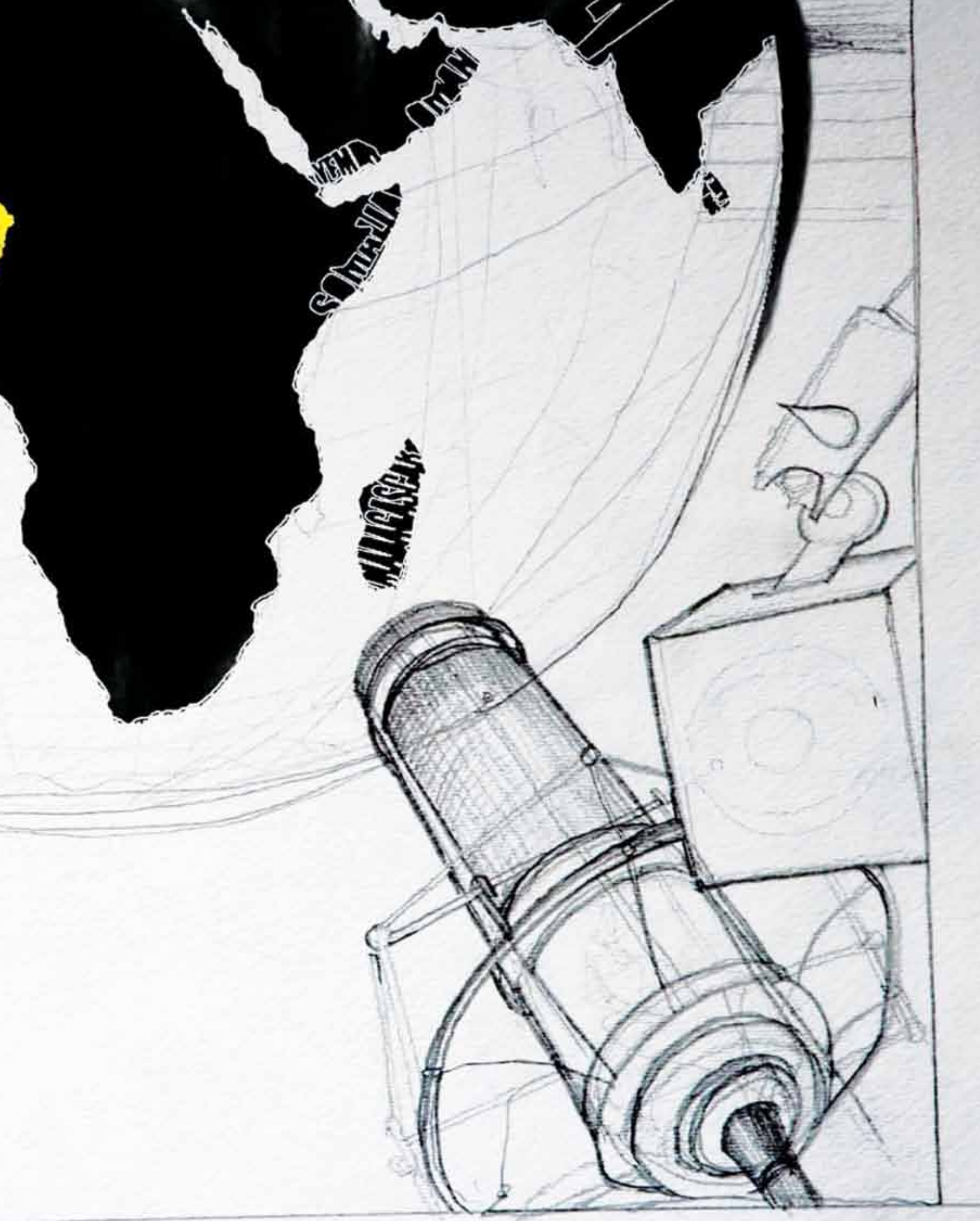
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Benemesia said he had not seen the assault himself, but had talked to members of his group at the scene. He said there were around 14 attackers.

Shell officials earlier confirmed the station was occupied. Spokesman Bisi Ojediran said it had been shut down as a precaution, cutting production by 12,000 barrels of oil per day. Attacks on pipelines and oil facilities have cut the West African country's usual daily output of 2.5 million barrels by about a quarter this year.

Nigeria is the fifth-largest supplier of oil to the U.S., and attacks in the Niger river delta have often moved world oil markets.

This latest incident came as OPEC wrapped up a meeting in Nigeria's distant capital, Abuja. On Thursday, the group said it planned to cut output in early 2007 to push oil prices above \$62 a barrel.



(MEND)



NIGERIA IS ONE OF THE LARGEST EXPORTERS OF OIL IN THE WORLD. THE FOURTH LARGEST EXPORTER TO THE UNITED STATES. NIGERIAN BASED OIL COMPANIES HAVE MADE SEVERAL HUNDRED BILLIONS OF DOLLARS SINCE 1960. ON THE FLIP SIDE OF THE COIN, MOST OF THE NIGERIAN POPULATION LIVE IN COMPLETE POVERTY. THE GOVERNING SYSTEM HAS BEEN A SUCCESSION OF DICTATORSHIPS AND CORRUPT POLITICAL LEADERS THAT HAVE TAKEN MOST OF THE MONEY THAT THE INTERNATIONAL OIL COMPANIES: SHELL AND AGIP HAVE USED AS PAYMENT FOR THE OIL RESOURCES. 380 BILLION WAS LOST TO POLITICAL CORRUPTION FROM 1960-1999. THE CONTRADICTION BETWEEN THE NIGERIAN DELTA RIVERS OIL WEALTH AND THE MATERIAL DEPRIVATION EXPERIENCED BY MANY OF ITS INHABITANTS COULD NOT BE STARKER. AFTER MULTIPLE REVOLUTIONS, PEACEFULL MEANS OF NEGOTIATION HAS ONLY LED TO A TIGHTER MILITARY ON THE ALREADY STRUGGLING PEOPLE IN NIGERIA, THIS IS THE STORY OF MEND. AND THE FIGHT RETURN THE OIL WEALTH TO THE PEOPLE.

Synopsis:

Since the 1950's, the Nigerian Delta has been a site of massive oil production, kleptocracy, war and civil upheaval. The government takes bribes from foreign-owned nefarious oil companies - principally Shell and Agip - and back them by sending state forces to strike against its own people, who have been fighting back with the increasing support of the international community.

The peaceful revolution of the early 1990's ended in state assassinations, increased military conflicts, and the emergence of organized local forces who have brought the outrage of the Nigerian people to bear upon the state and oil companies, who have responded with more violence.

⁺(MEND)

Movement for the
Emancipation
of the **Nigerian**
Delta

He is a hero to some.

A threat to others.

A mystery to all.

His name is Jomo Gbomo.
And he is the leader of *M.E.N.D.*

From a laptop in the jungle,
he leads the movement to free us
from the tyranny of oil companies
like Shell and Agip, who have
bribed their way to controlling
our government and military.



A painting of a lone, gnarled tree on a sandy dune under a yellow, hazy sky. The tree is dark and textured, with a thick trunk and sparse, dark foliage. The ground is a mix of light and dark sand, with some faint, dark markings. The sky is a gradient of yellow and white, suggesting a bright, hazy day. The overall mood is desolate and somber.

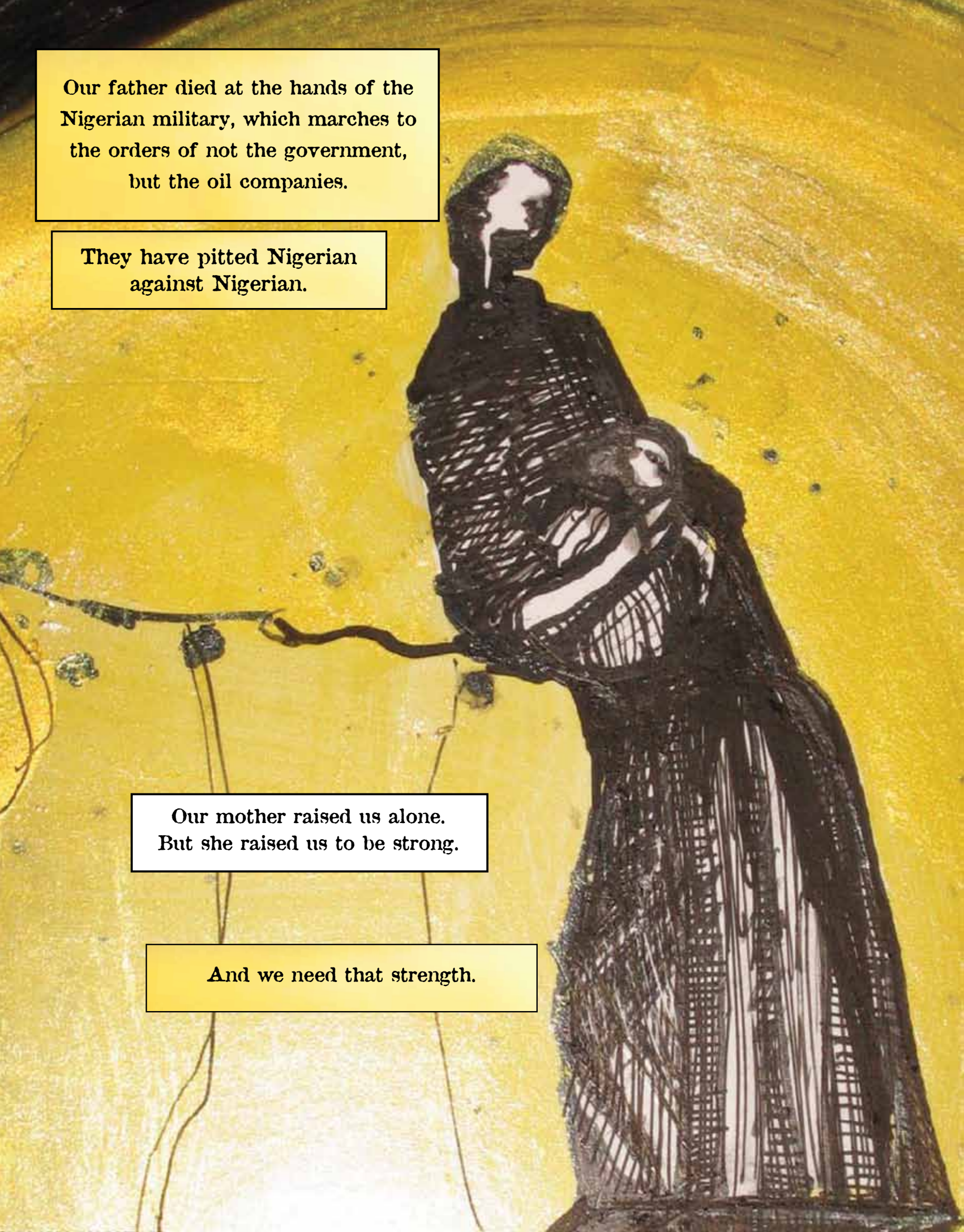
What government and military
do I speak of?

My home's.

The Delta Region of Nigeria.

A land being robbed of our
natural resource – oil.

But they also take our most
precious resource – our people.

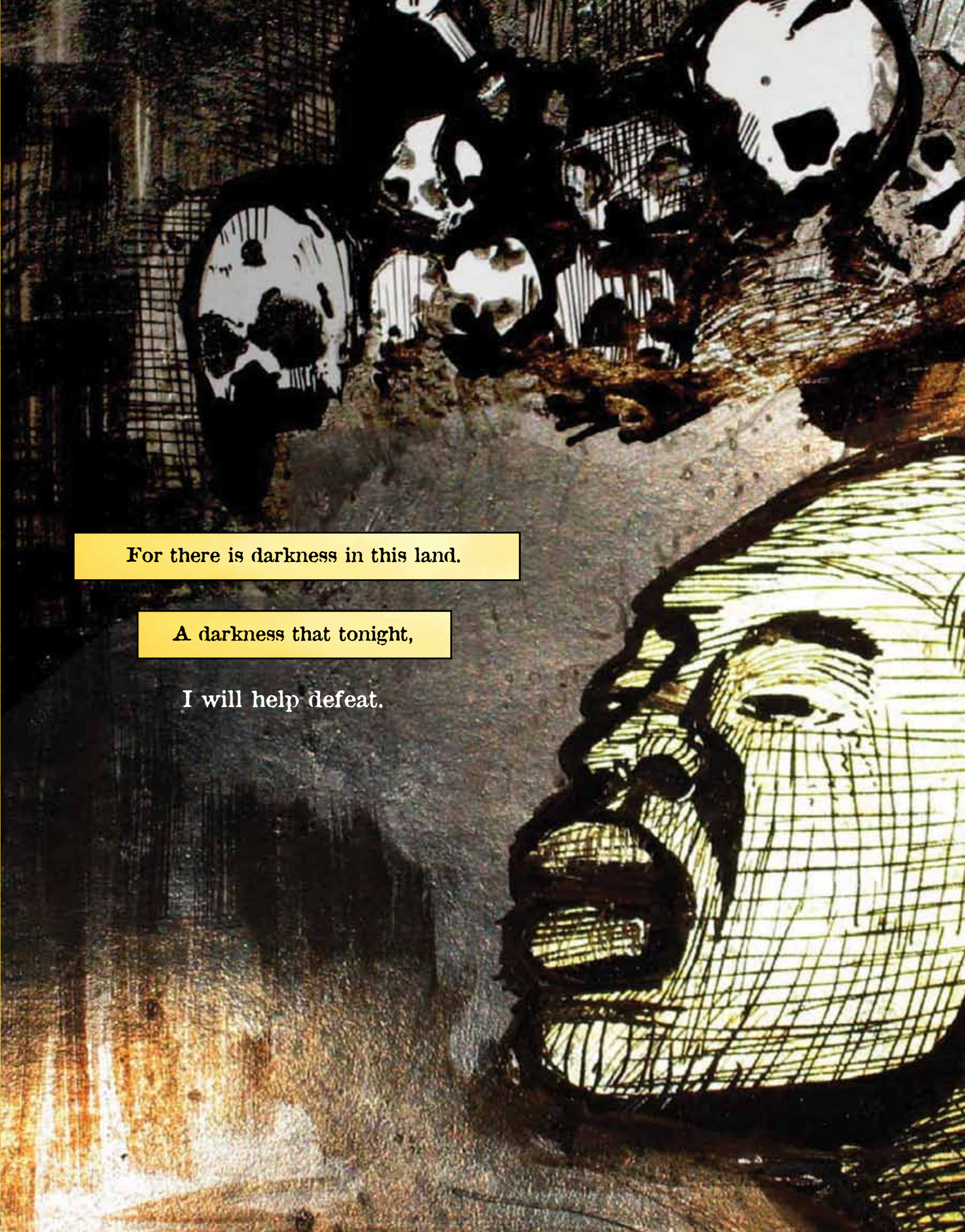
A painting of a woman in a black dress holding a child against a yellow background. The woman is depicted in a dark, textured, almost woven style, with her face partially obscured by shadows. The child is also rendered in a similar dark, textured style. The background is a solid, bright yellow, with some faint, dark lines and spots scattered across it.

Our father died at the hands of the Nigerian military, which marches to the orders of not the government, but the oil companies.

They have pitted Nigerian against Nigerian.

Our mother raised us alone. But she raised us to be strong.

And we need that strength.

A dark, textured painting with a large, stylized face in the foreground. The face is rendered in a grid-like pattern of black lines, with a prominent eye and a wide, open mouth. The background is a dark, mottled brown and black, with some lighter, circular shapes that resemble skulls or masks. The overall mood is somber and intense.

For there is darkness in this land.

A darkness that tonight,

I will help defeat.

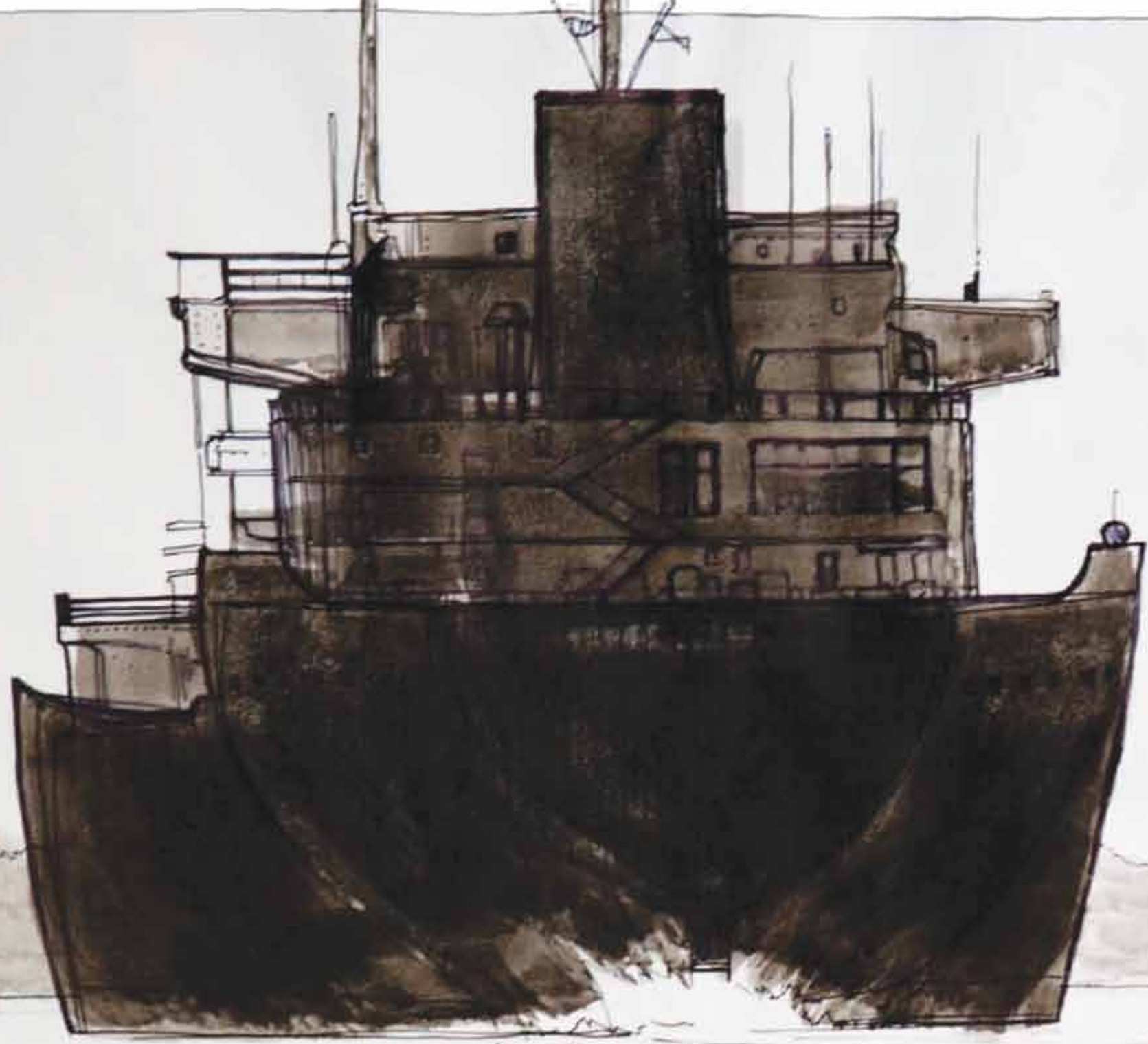
For my brother is in M.E.N.D.
And tonight, with inspiration from
Jomo Gbomo, we will attack an oil rig
and set ablaze the evil that is being
perpetrated against us.

Tonight, we fight – I fight.



From my fishing boat, I watch their tankers glide through the waters like dark clouds – along with their wake, an air of forboding ripples alongside them.

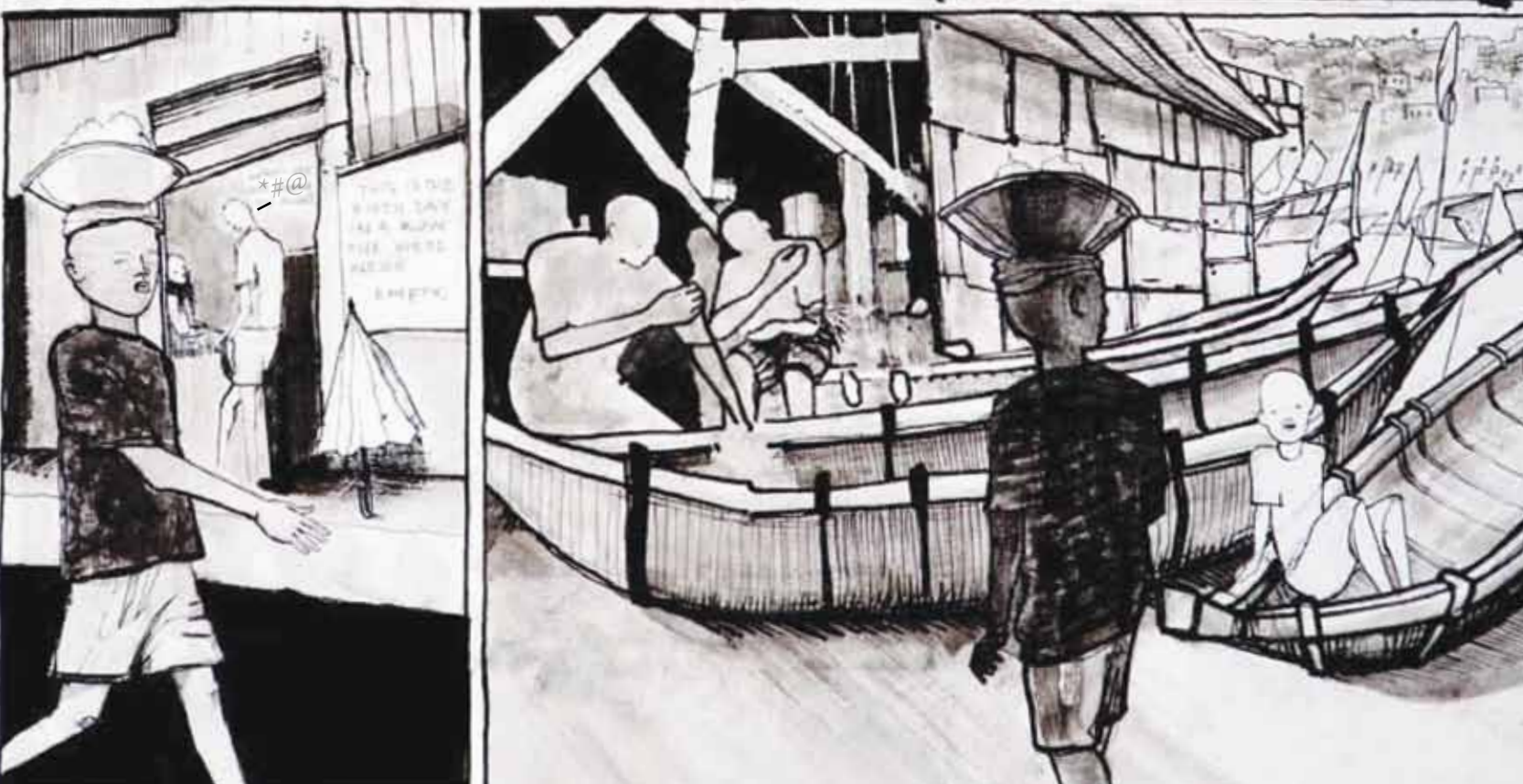
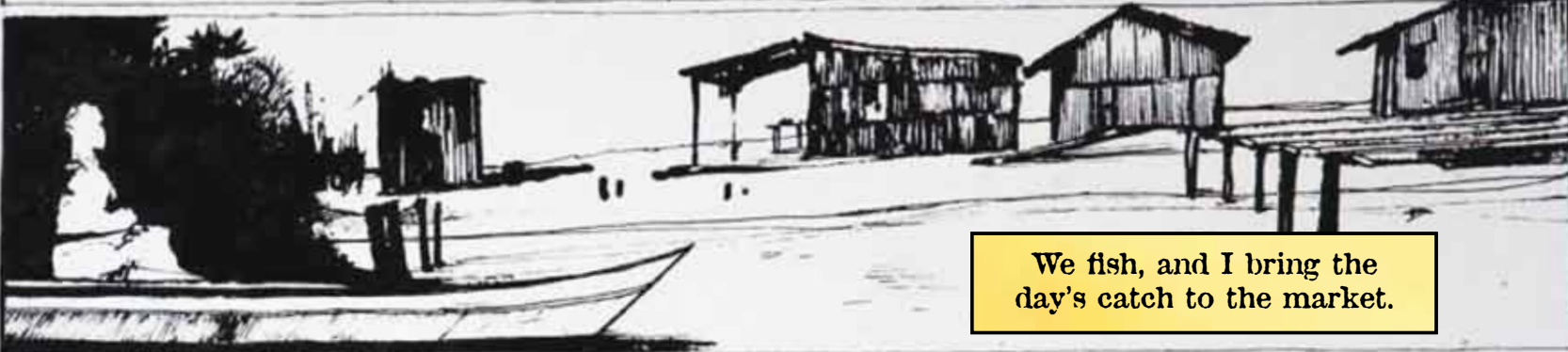
One day I hope to never see them darken our horizons ever again.



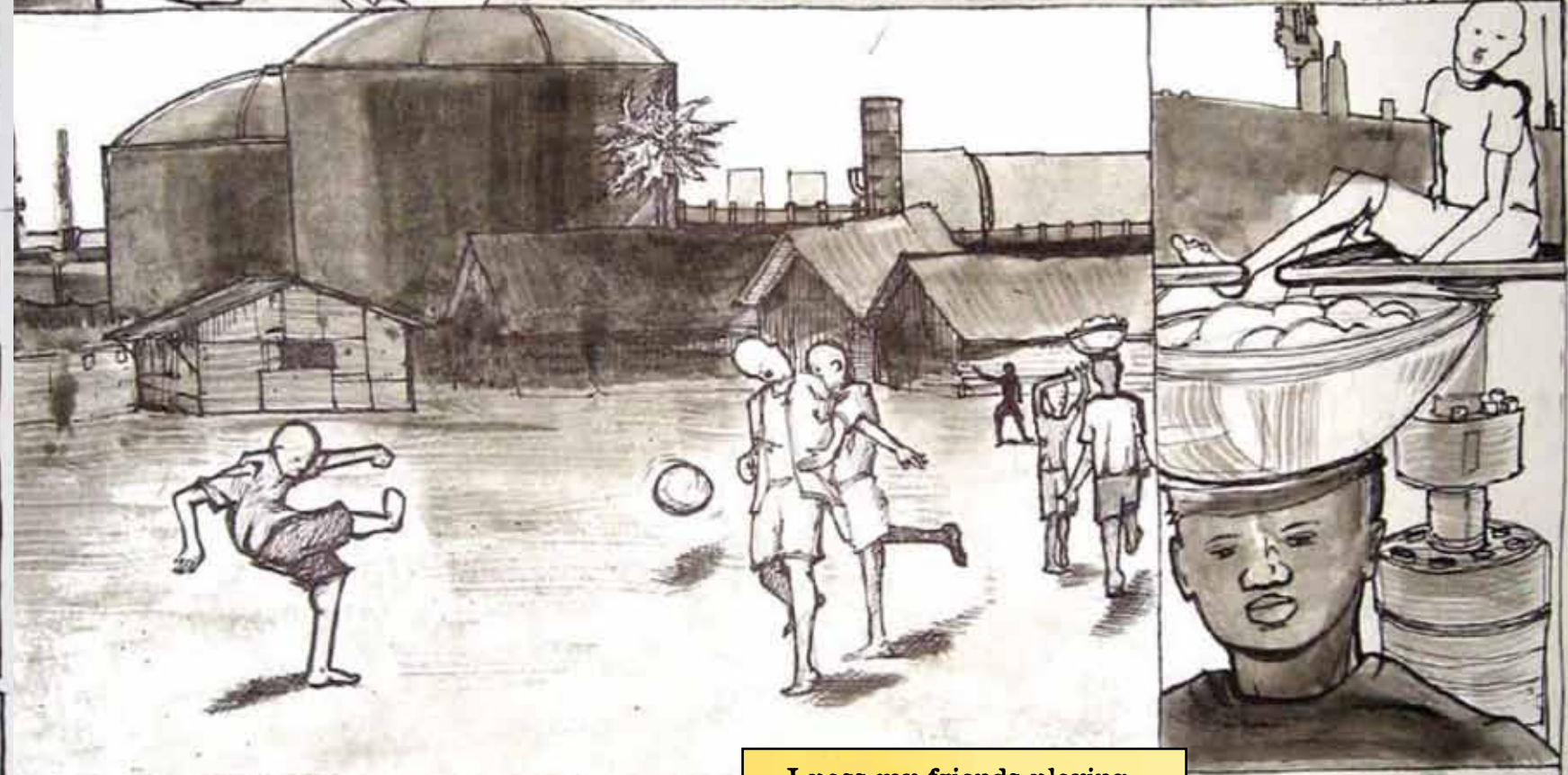
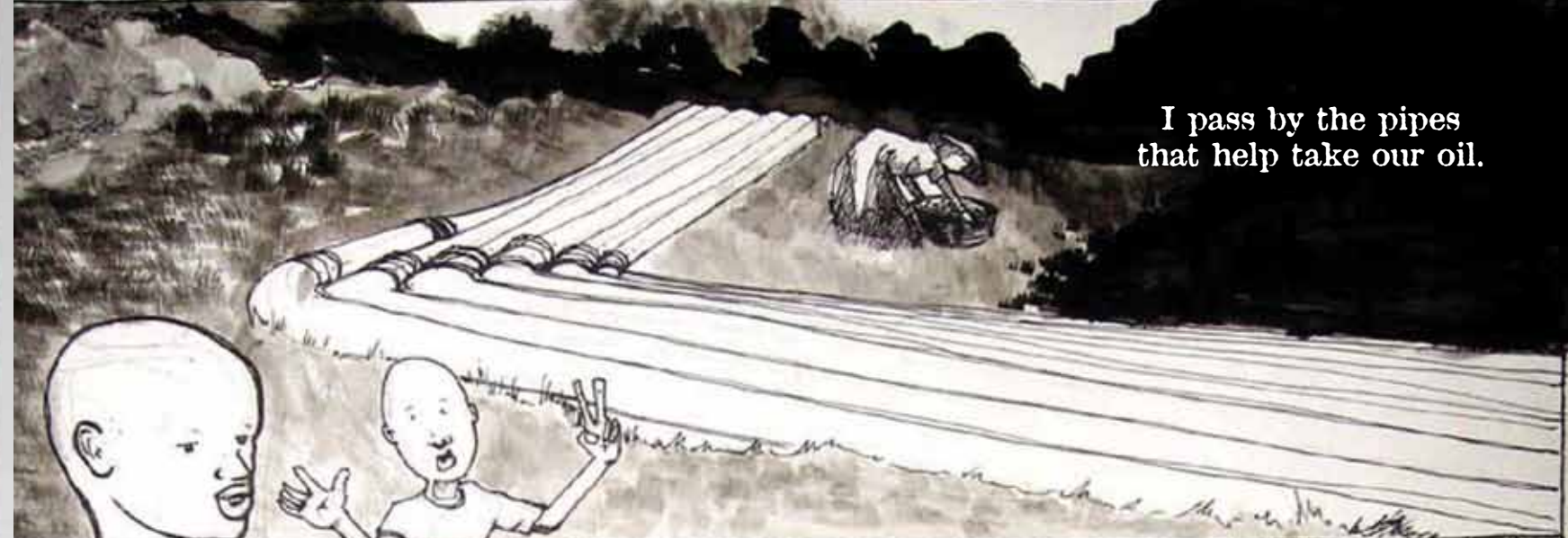
But until that fateful moment,
life will go on as always.



We fish, and I bring the
day's catch to the market.



I pass by the pipes
that help take our oil.

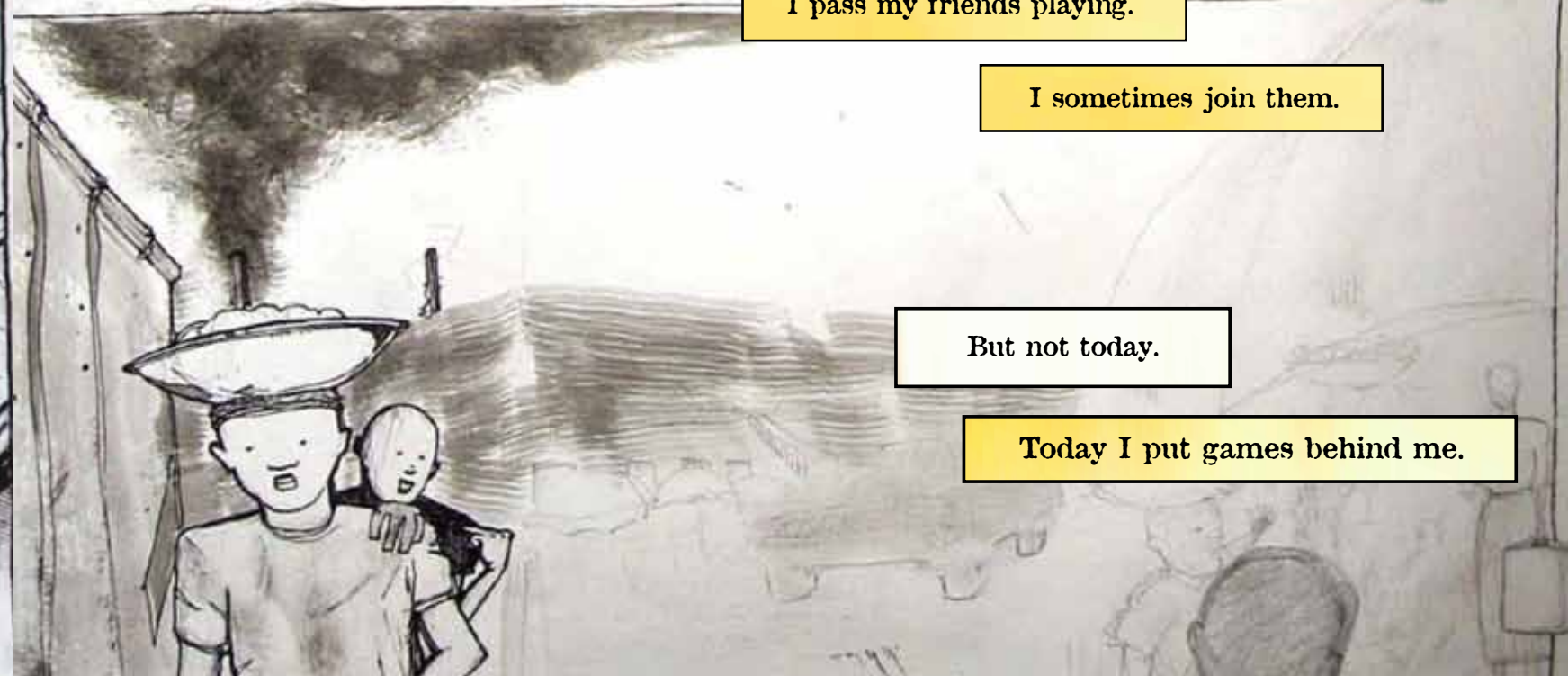


I pass my friends playing.

I sometimes join them.

But not today.

Today I put games behind me.

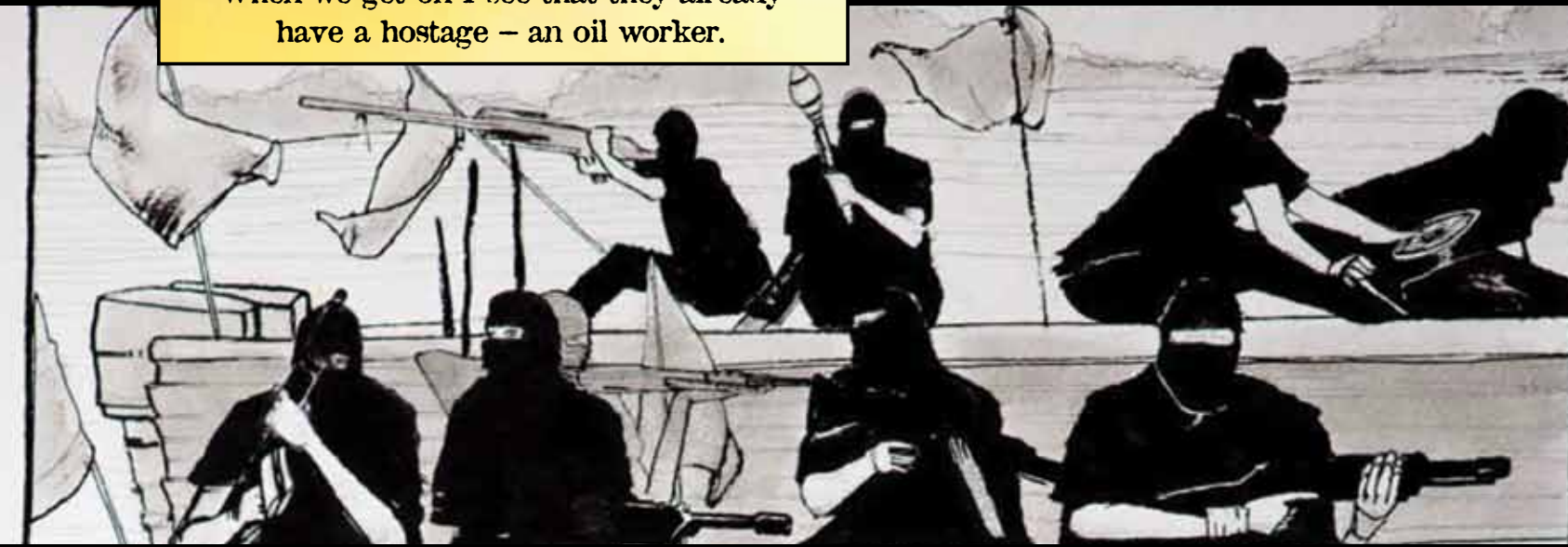


I meet my brother and watch as his –
our – fellow fighters come to pick us up.

It is time.

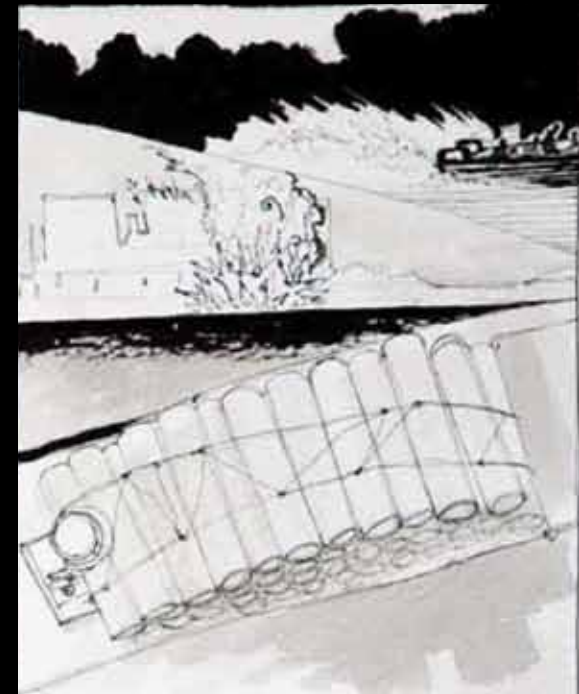


When we get on I see that they already have a hostage – an oil worker.

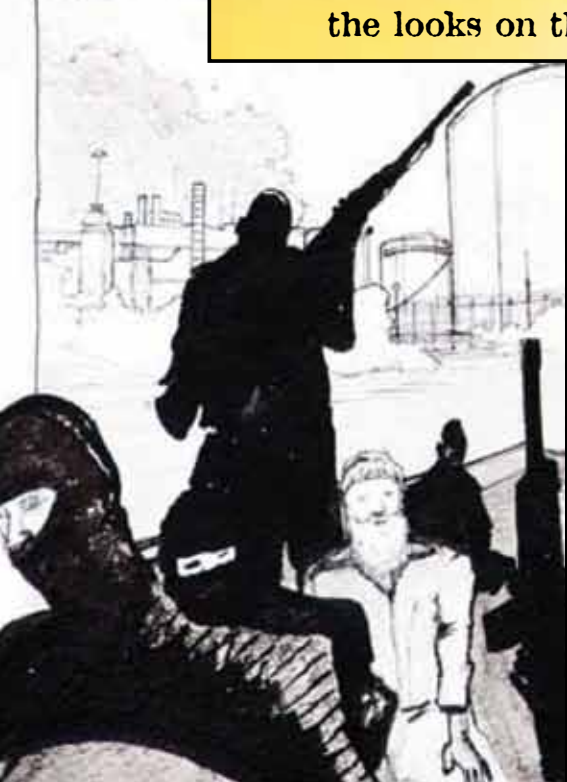


As the sky grows dark we turn to approach our targets.

The oil rig, and a military ship protecting it.



I also see the explosives, the guns, the looks on these men's faces.



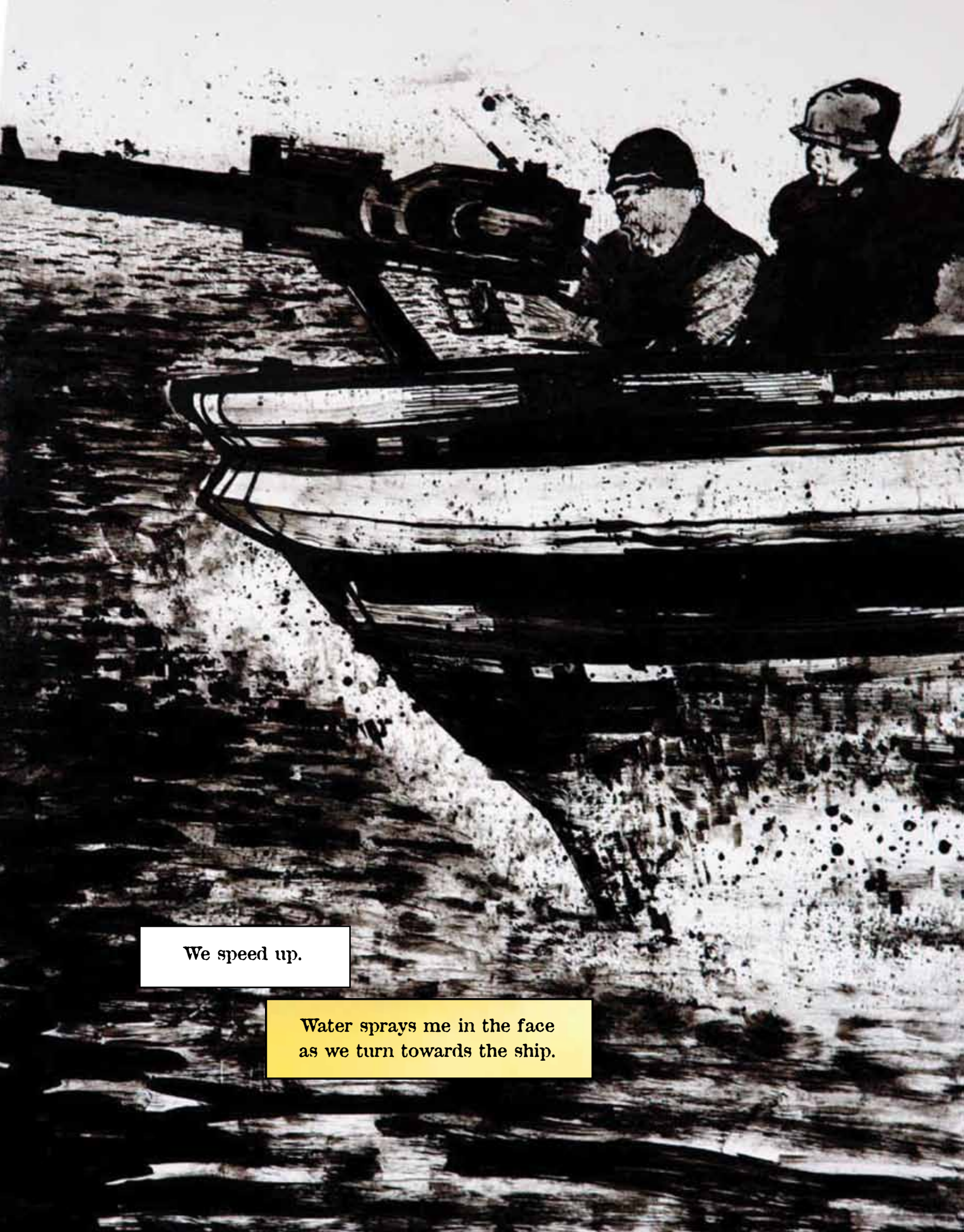
I now know, we are truly at war and there is no turning back for me.

I am ready.

They are looking for us.



But the night is our ally.



We speed up.

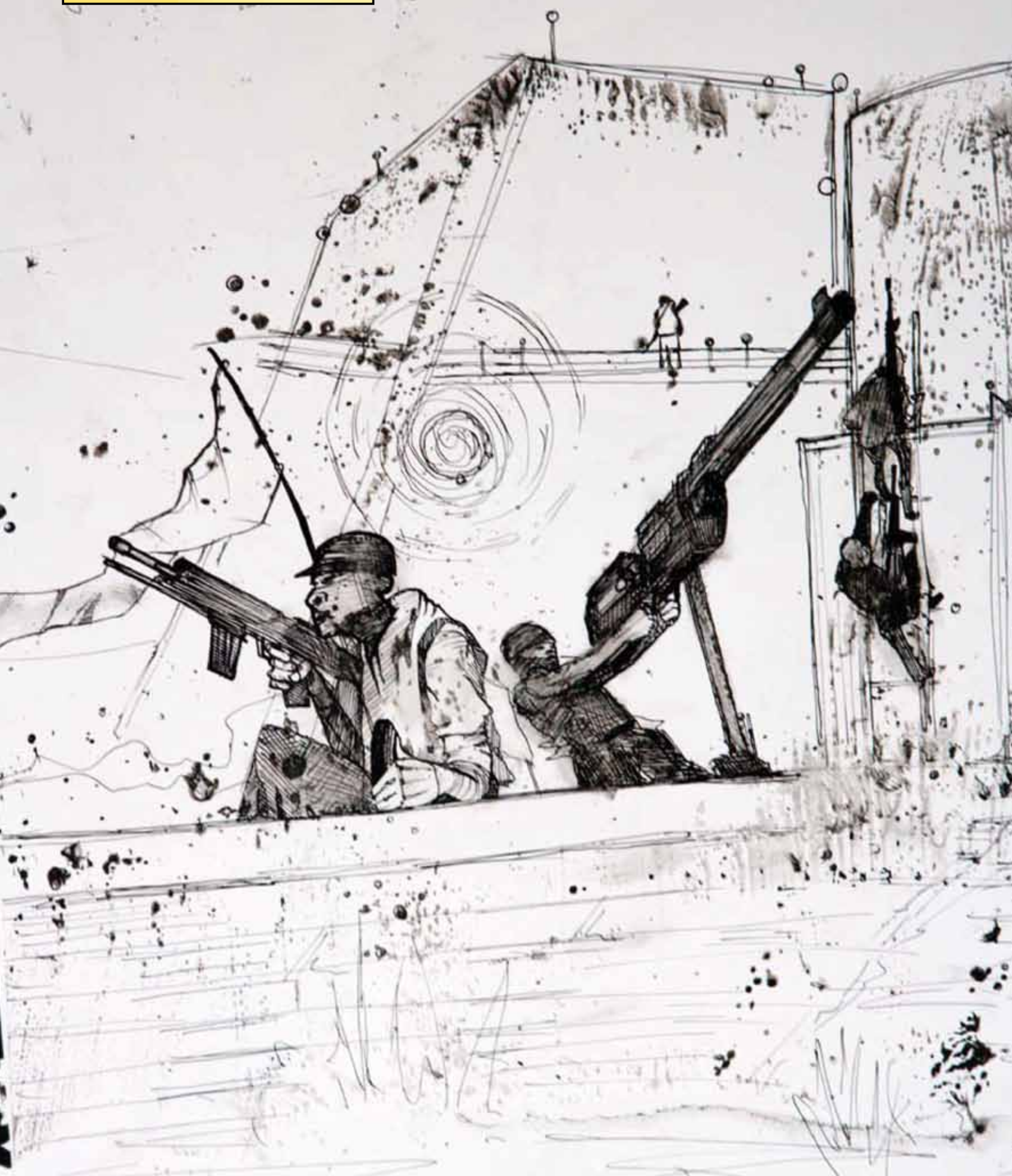
Water sprays me in the face
as we turn towards the ship.

We attack.



Go!
Go!
Go!
Go!
Go!
Go!

The sky lights up from the muzzles of machine guns.



Screams of men can be heard.



Piercing through the darkness of the night.



It is so loud,
so very loud.





They shoot their guns at us.

Firing into the night.

They want to kill us.



But all they do is make it easier for us to board them.

Half the men attack the ship.

While the rest of us speed towards the oil rig as if storming a monstrous castle on a hill.



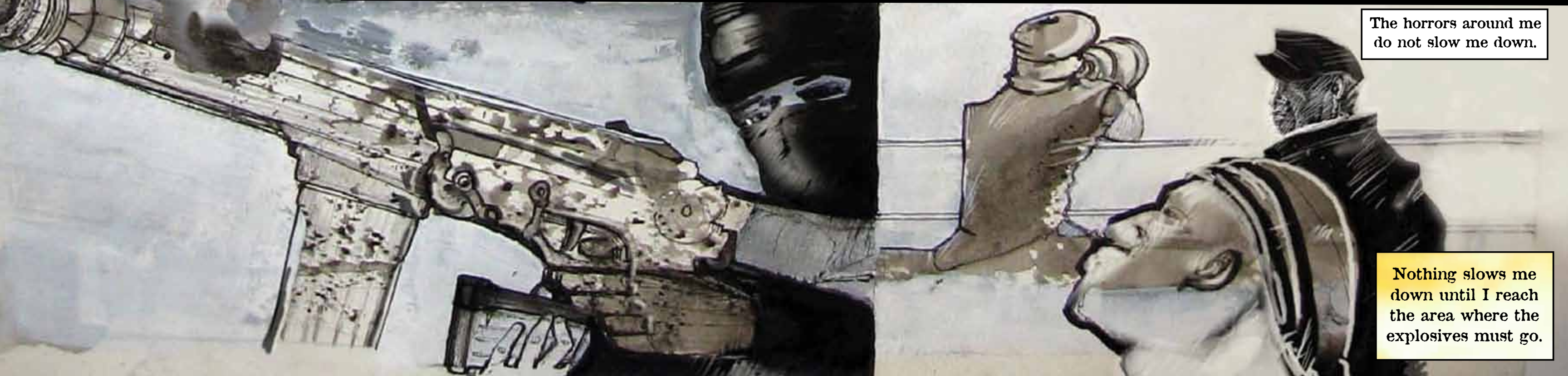
I can see that on the boat,
the fighting is brutal.



But there is no time for that.
We must make it to the rig.



My brother and I reach it.
But only I am able to make it up.



The horrors around me
do not slow me down.

Nothing slows me
down until I reach
the area where the
explosives must go.

I am clear.

I can do this.

For my father, for
my mother, for my
brothers and sisters
and family.

ALL CLEAR...

CLEAR.

CLEAR.


For my country.

I press the button.

click-*

BOOM.





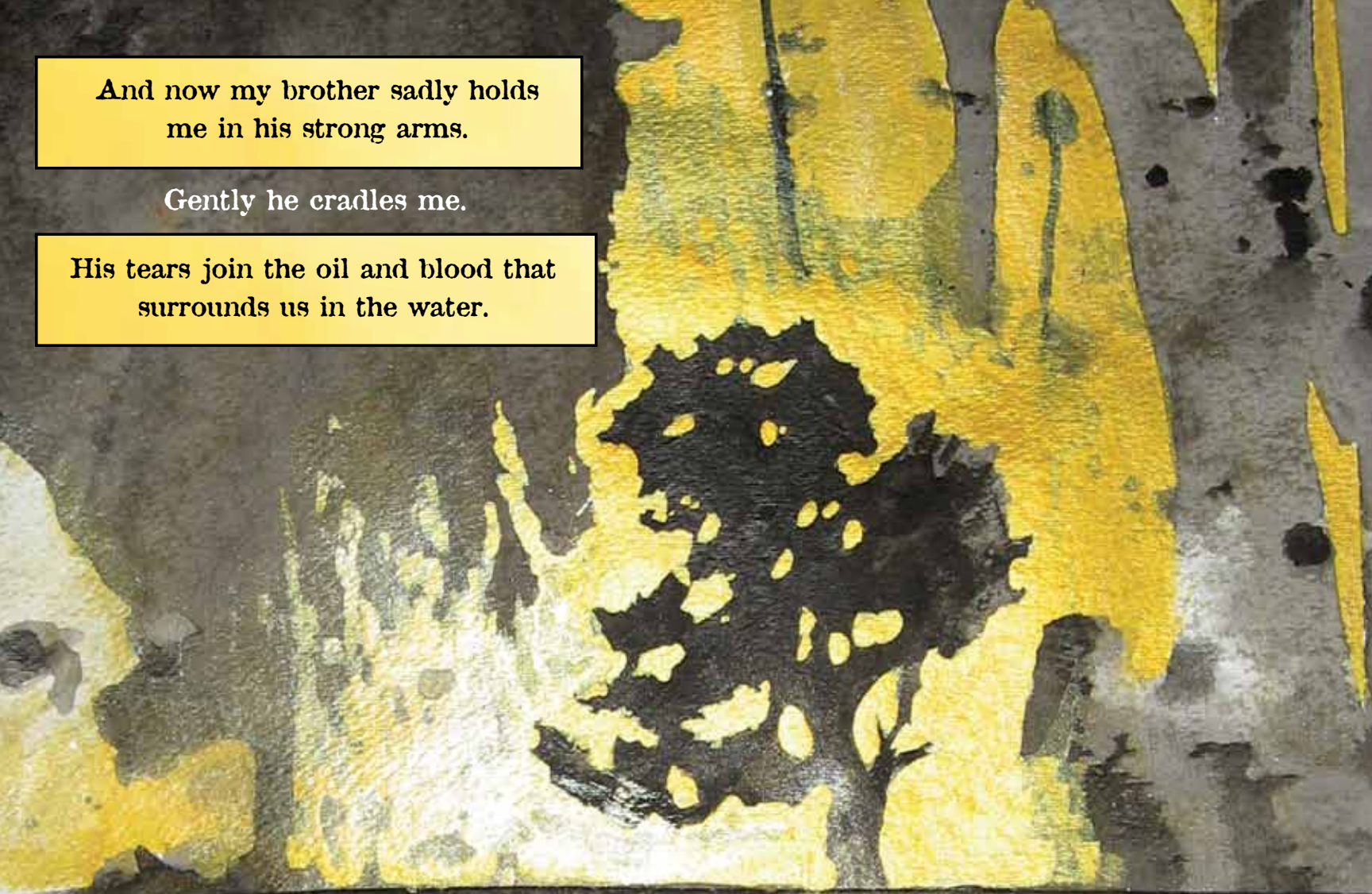
From the boat my brother and others watch
as the oil rig explodes into flames.

A joyous cry comes from the men.
All the men – except my brother.

Tears fall from his
eyes and the sea water
sprays in his face.

He should not cry though,
for tonight we are victorious.

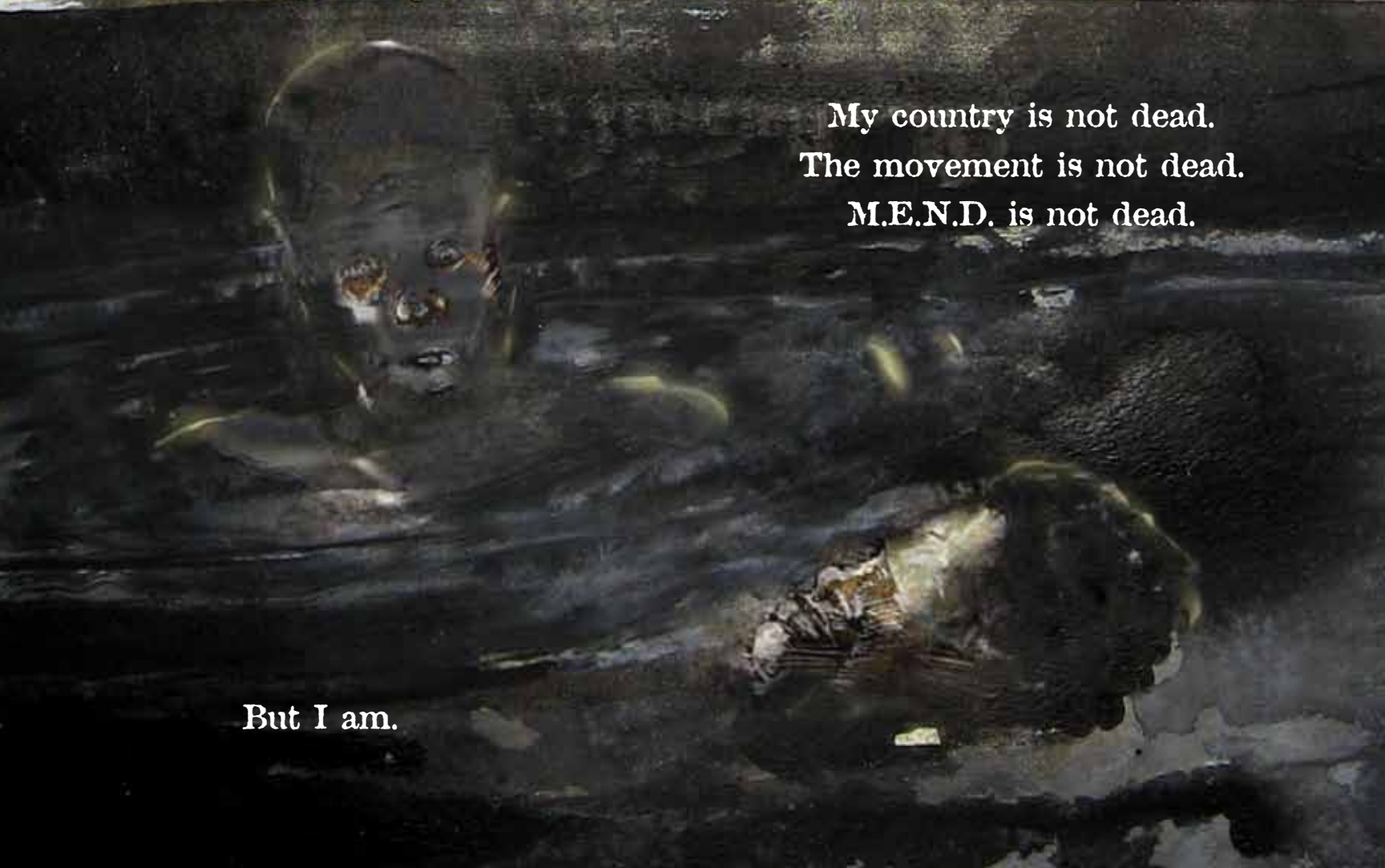
For this one moment,
we are the masters of
our own country,
our own destiny.



And now my brother sadly holds
me in his strong arms.

Gently he cradles me.

His tears join the oil and blood that
surrounds us in the water.



My country is not dead.
The movement is not dead.
M.E.N.D. is not dead.

But I am.

The fight continues.



(MEND)

**Movement for the
Emancipation
of the Nigerian
Delta**

Nigeria is one of the leading exporters of oil to the United States. In the last year oil production in the Nigerian Delta has been cut by roughly 25% due to the well organized militia attacks ...

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