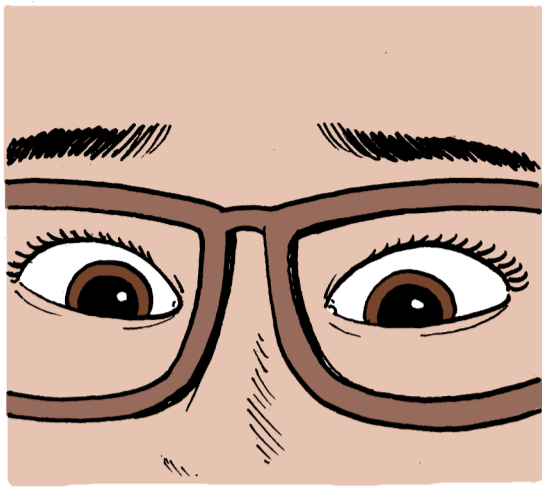
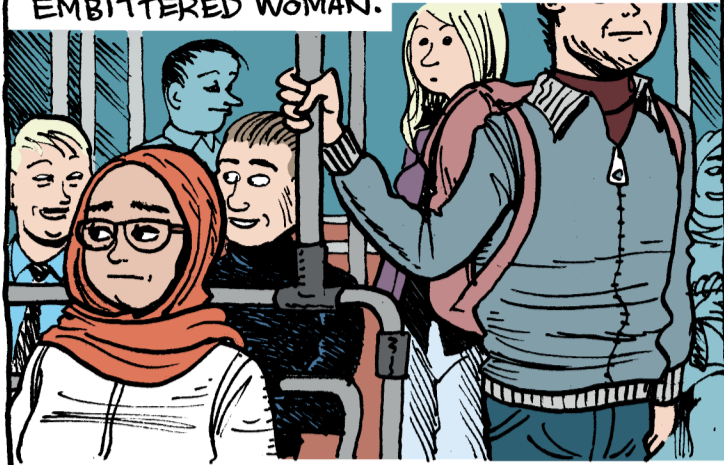


TRAPPED IN A MARRIAGE



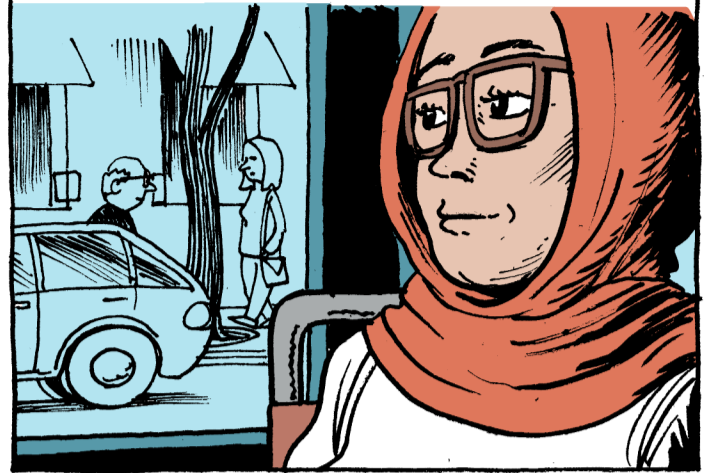
I WAS NAIVE AND INEXPERIENCED THEN. NOW, I WOULD NEVER BE SO QUICK TO SAY YES.

WHAT'S HAPPENED IS DONE. AND YOU CAN'T TURN IT BACK. STILL, I HAVEN'T BECOME AN EMBITTERED WOMAN.



...BUT IT HURTS SO MUCH TO THINK BACK. WHY DID I TOLERATE IT ALL BACK THEN?

I WAS BORN HERE IN THE NETHERLANDS, TOGETHER WITH MY LITTLE SISTER AND MY TWO BROTHERS. WE WERE RAISED LIBERALLY, BUT WITH ISLAM. NOT TRADITIONAL, BUT IT WAS PASSED ONTO US ANYWAY.



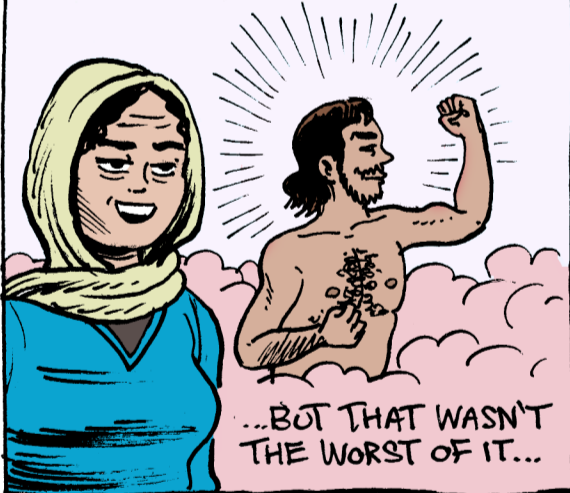
I WAS 24 YEARS OLD AND WAS GOING TO MARRY IN 2006, IN A TRADITIONAL WAY. NO ONE WAS FORCING ME.



THE FIRST COUPLE OF MONTHS WERE QUITE GOOD.



BUT SOON IT WENT WRONG... IT TURNED OUT HIS MOTHER HAD BEEN LYING FROM THE START ABOUT HIS AGE AND A JOB...



...BUT THAT WASN'T THE WORST OF IT...

I HAD TO ASK PERMISSION FOR EVERYTHING. I DIDN'T GET ANY FREEDOM AT ALL. I'D COME TO TOLERATE IT, BECAUSE A MARRIAGE IS ABOUT "MAKING COMPROMISES".



HIS FAMILY WAS FRIGHTENING ME



...BUT IT'S VERY DANGEROUS HERE IN PAKISTAN.

IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR YOU TO MOVE TO THE NETHERLANDS.

...CAN'T YOU GO AND FIND A JOB THERE?

I TRAVELLED BACK AND FORTH... I REALISED THAT FROM THE BEGINNING ALL HE'D WANTED WAS HIS VISUM.

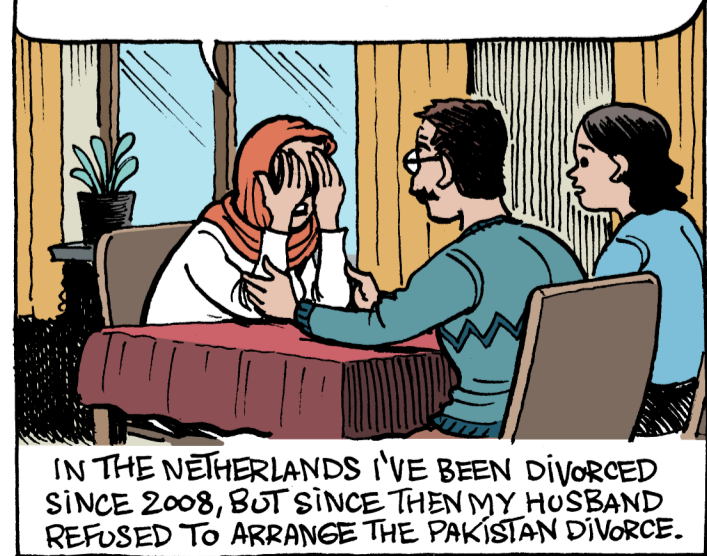


HE WAS SUPPOSED TO COME AFTER ME, BUT HE NEVER DID...

THROUGHOUT THE TIME I'VE LIVED HERE BY MYSELF, HE'S SENT ME A BIRTHDAY CARD, ONCE A YEAR.



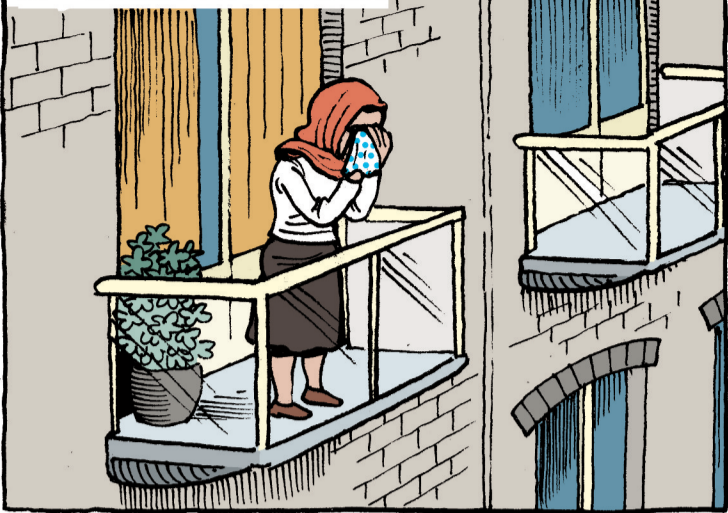
I'VE DONE EVERYTHING TO SAVE MY MARRIAGE! BUT I CAN'T GO ON THIS WAY...



IN THE NETHERLANDS I'VE BEEN DIVORCED SINCE 2008, BUT SINCE THEN MY HUSBAND REFUSED TO ARRANGE THE PAKISTAN DIVORCE.



SOMETIMES I HAD TO CRY AND I'D FIND A DISCREET PLACE TO DO IT. I DIDN'T WANT MY FAMILY TO SEE IT. I WANTED TO PROTECT MY PARENTS FROM MY SADNESS.



I WAS LEFT WITH MANY UNANSWERED QUESTIONS. WHAT HAD I DONE WRONG? I FELT JUDGED FOR SOMETHING I HADN'T DONE.



BUT IF I LET MYSELF COME BITTER, IT WOULD SEEN AS IF HE'D WON.

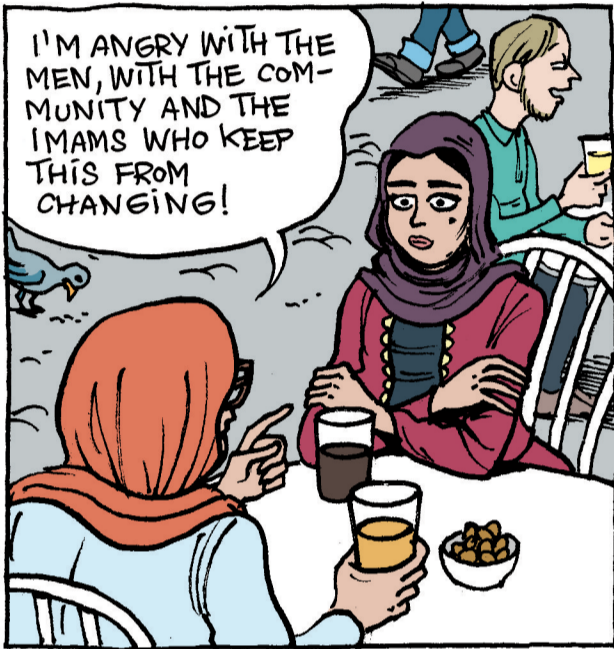


I STARTED TO BECOME AWARE OF MY RIGHTS AS A WOMAN.

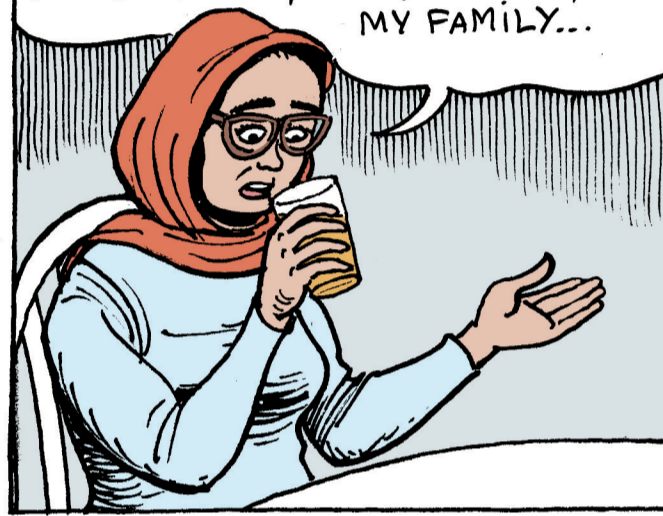
I ALSO HAD THE RIGHT TO BE SUSTAINED BY HIM BACK THEN!



I'M ANGRY WITH THE MEN, WITH THE COMMUNITY AND THE IMAMS WHO KEEP THIS FROM CHANGING!



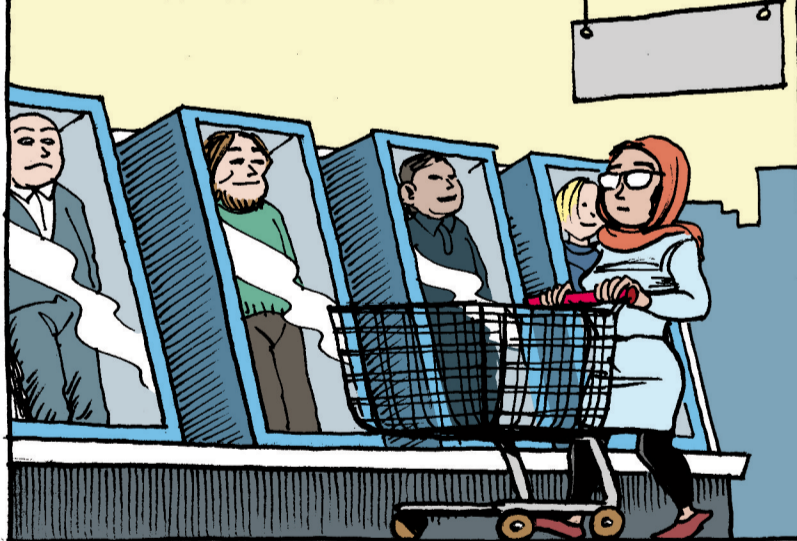
STILL, I'M NOT ANGRY WITH MY RELIGION AND IT WILL NOT MOVE ME TO LEAVE MY FAITH, OR MY CULTURE, OR MY FAMILY...



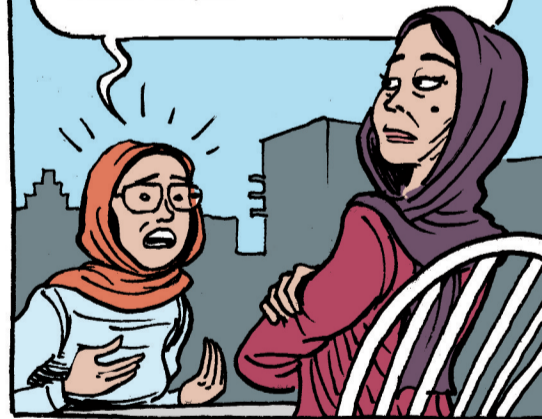
BUT ALTHOUGH I WAS NOW CONSCIOUS OF THESE THINGS, I REMAINED IN A SITUATION I COULDN'T CLIMB OUT BY MYSELF.



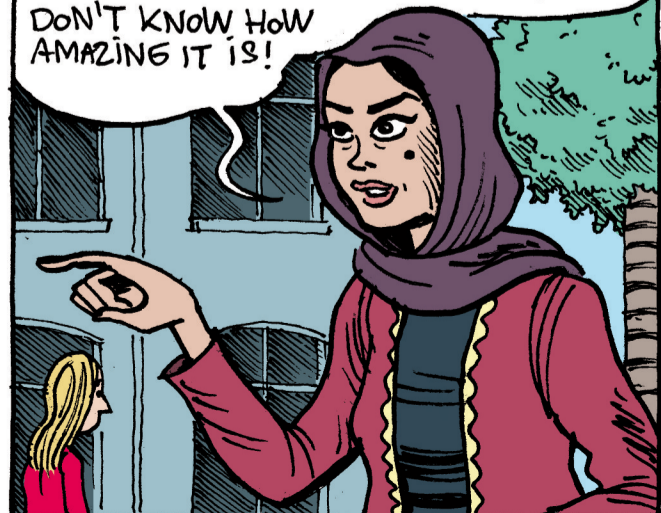
I DON'T ACTIVELY SEARCH FOR A SECOND HUSBAND. IN FACT, I CAN'T, SINCE I'M STILL MARRIED IN THE EYES OF PAKISTANI LAW.



I TAKE MY NORMS AND VALUES SERIOUSLY! SO I CAN'T OPEN MYSELF TO SOMEONE NEW WHEN I'M STILL CONNECTED TO ANOTHER. IT FEELS LIKE CHEATING.

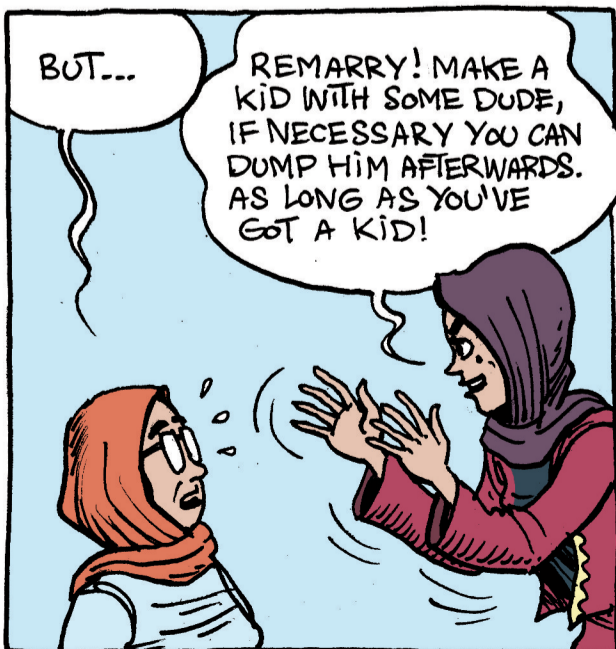


YOU'RE A HYPOCRITE, AMINA! JUST GET OUT THERE AND DATE, HAVE SOME NICE SEX WITH SOMEBODY! YOU DON'T KNOW HOW AMAZING IT IS!

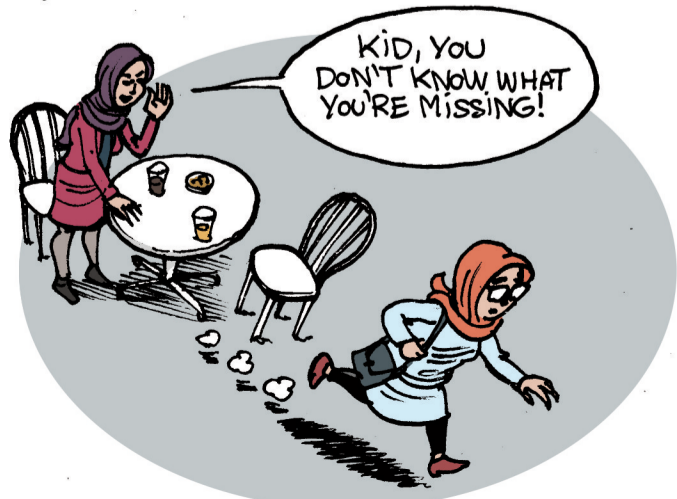


BUT...

REMARRY! MAKE A KID WITH SOME DUDE, IF NECESSARY YOU CAN DUMP HIM AFTERWARDS. AS LONG AS YOU'VE GOT A KID!



I KIND OF SEE HOW PEOPLE WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND. BUT FROM A CLOSE FRIEND, I WOULD'VE EXPECTED A LITTLE MORE RESPECT AND EMPATHY.





I GOT A LOT OF MISUNDERSTANDING FROM THE ISLAMIC COMMUNITY. AS THE WOMAN, I WAS SEEN AS THE GUILTY ONE.

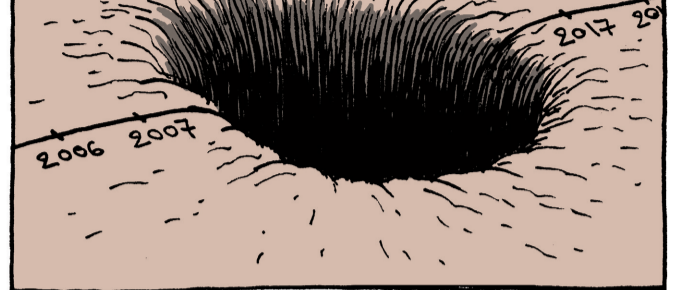
YOU SHOULD HAVE TRIED HARDER!

YOU'RE A SHAME TO THE COMMUNITY!

PRUDISH GIRL!



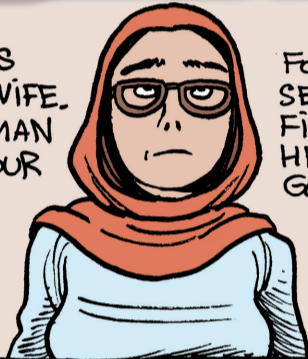
I'VE NEVER HEARD OF HIM AGAIN. IT FEELS VERY UNREAL. LIKE MY LIFE HAS A TEN YEAR-HOLE IN IT.



A PIECE OF CANCER THAT I CAN'T REMOVE FROM THE BACK OF MY HEAD.



I KNOW HE'S GOT A NEW WIFE. IN ISLAM A MAN CAN HAVE FOUR WIVES. SO UNJUST.

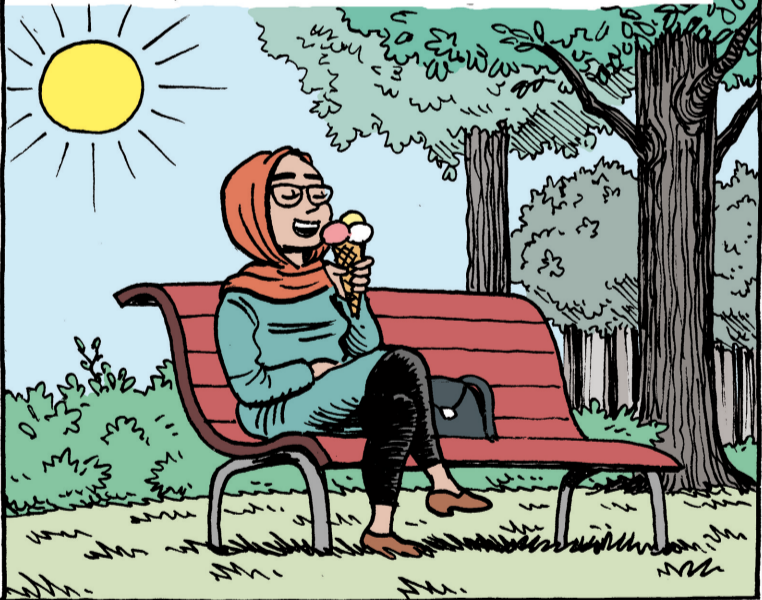


FOR ME IT SERVED AS CONFIRMATION THAT HE WAS NOT A GOOD MAN.

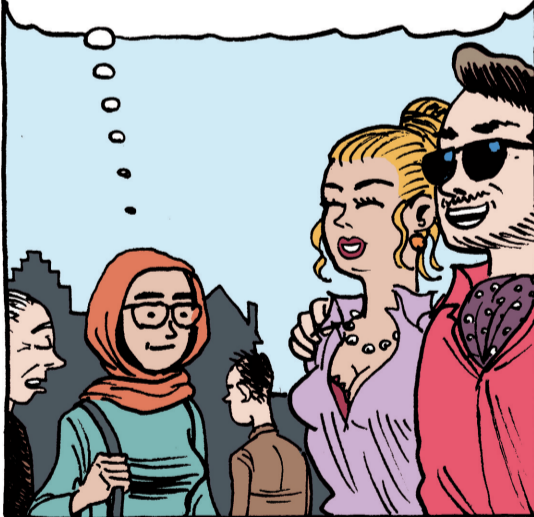
IT CONTRIBUTED TO AN ACCEPTANCE, AND NOW I COULD CUT MYSELF OFF FROM HIM EMOTIONALLY. LIBERATING!



SUDDENLY, I REALISED WHAT FREEDOM MEANT.



I WANT TO CONTINUE MY LIFE! AND DO WHAT I WANT. LIKE FINISHING MY STUDIES.

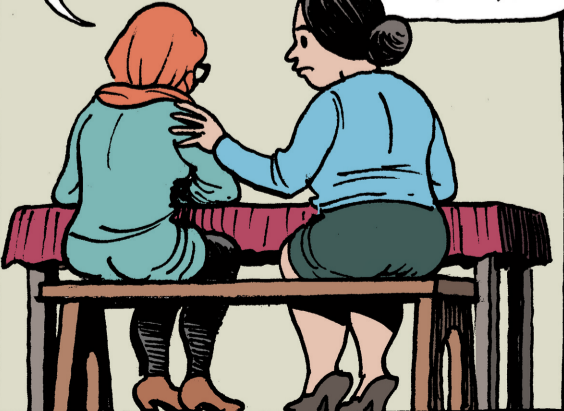


I DON'T WANT TO BE FRUSTRATED ALL THE TIME. I DON'T WANT TO CRY AND BECOME BITTER. I WANT A HAPPIER LIFE!

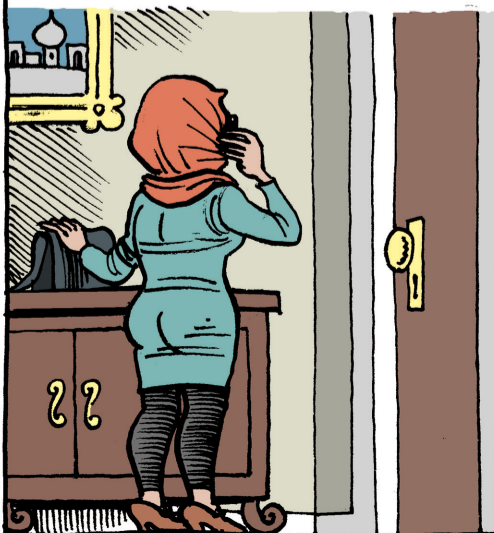


I'M HAPPY WITH MY LIFE THE WAY IT IS NOW. I MISS COMPANIONSHIP AND A BUDDY, BUT I REALLY DON'T MISS THE REST OF IT.

MAYBE I'LL FEEL DIFFERENTLY ABOUT IT LATER, BUT RIGHT NOW I DON'T WANT TO MARRY.



IT'S SO TIRING AS WELL, TO HAVE TO JUSTIFY MYSELF CONSTANTLY...



I'M DONE DOING THAT.



VERHAAL EN BEELD: KIM DUCHATEAU

PRODUCTIE: THE GRAPHIC STORY

MET DANK AAN: FEMMES FOR FREEDOM EN AMINA

ONDERDEEL VAN: "VERHALEN VAN VROUWEN"

MOGELIJK GEMAAKT DOOR HET BANK GIROLOTERIJ FONDS.