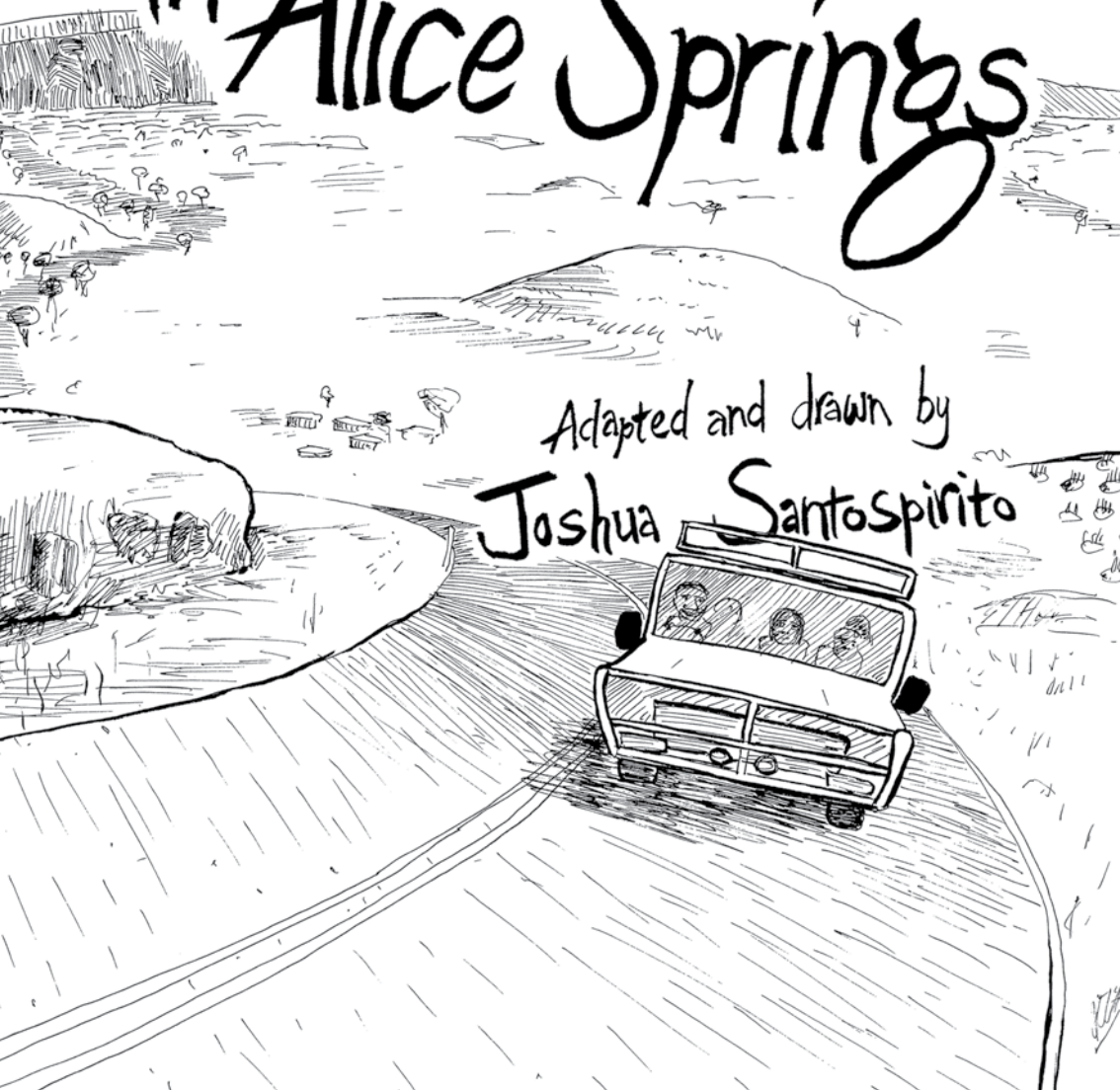


Craig San Roque's

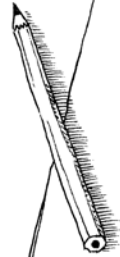
The Long Weekend in Alice Springs

Adapted and drawn by

Joshua Santospirito



I don't know how to think about
these things ...



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The Long Weekend in Alice Springs

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Acknowledgments

All local stories are based on real incidents. Names of people have been changed with the obvious exception of Craig San Roque and Tom Singer. There is mention of some deceased Indigenous men but they are named in the customary manner as *Kumanjayi* or *Kumantjayi*. Identities have been further disguised as none of the depictions in this book are based on the appearance of the real people around who these events are based on. Where possible, permission was sought from the people who are in this book.

No sensitive Indigenous cultural material has been revealed.

The original author, Craig San Roque, wishes to thank those people, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, who have generously and knowingly contributed to the stories told in *The Long Weekend in Alice Springs*.

This version is dedicated to the lives, accomplishments and memory of the following individuals and their families:

Berthe Nakamarra, Jilly Nakamarra, Rachel Jurrah, Pamela Williams, Mr Zimran and April Spencer, the Cook-Abbotts of Intjartnama, Jungerai Morris, Jane Shilling, Nampijimpa Ross, Warchivker and Albrecht families, William Armstrong.

I thank all for their visits to our yard and their part in family events over twenty years.

The responsibility for content and interpretation of events rests solely with the original author, Craig San Roque.

The notion of mythic sites influencing activities in the present in Alice Springs/Mparntwe comes from a three way conversation circa 2000. Mr Jampijimpa Armstrong and I consulted formidable and renowned cultural custodian Mr W. Rubuntja on several troubling matters in town pertaining to violence – the conversation turned to the matter of the Dog Story. The idea that local dreaming stories are alive and active in the present emerged easily from that conversation.

This was the inspiration behind my essay on the cultural complex. It was Mr Rubuntja's urging that we take our town's Dreaming stories seriously that led me to take this as the theme of *A Long Weekend*.

As a cultural caution – versions of the Dog Story are freely and publicly available in the booklet *The Arrernte Landscape – a guide to the Dreaming tracks and sites of Alice Springs* by David Brooks for Mpartntwe People; IAD Press, 1991. I have mentioned only that which is publicly available.

The Caterpillar, Dog and other Tywerrenge/Dreamings are referred to in Rubuntja's biography, *The town grew up dancing – The life and art of Wenten Rubuntja*, Rubuntja and Green, Jukurrpa Books, 2002. Throughout the book Rubuntja urges people to preserve, protect sites and respect their significance and value to keep a healthy country and life.

On the Tywerrenge Wenten says in *Caring for Town*:

“This place is little Central Australian Rome – too much Tywerrenge”

“This is a very important Creation story here. If you drink a lot of grog, you will lose this, all this. You will lose your mind. You will lose your country – your mother's father's country and your father's father's country. That's why you've got to be careful.” (p141)

“This country is there for all culture – because this is one country, Australia. Australian people live as one, in all communities, black and white...The Dreaming is really all over Australia. We must teach the whitefellas...We can't just let things die out and let the children get lost... Right thankyou for listening.” (p150)

—Craig San Roque with Joshua Santospirito

Introduction Joshua Santospirito

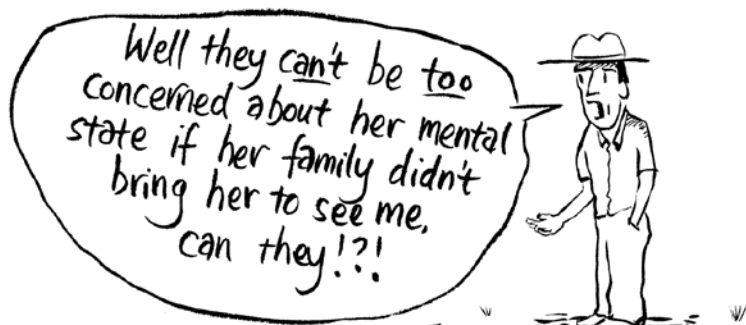
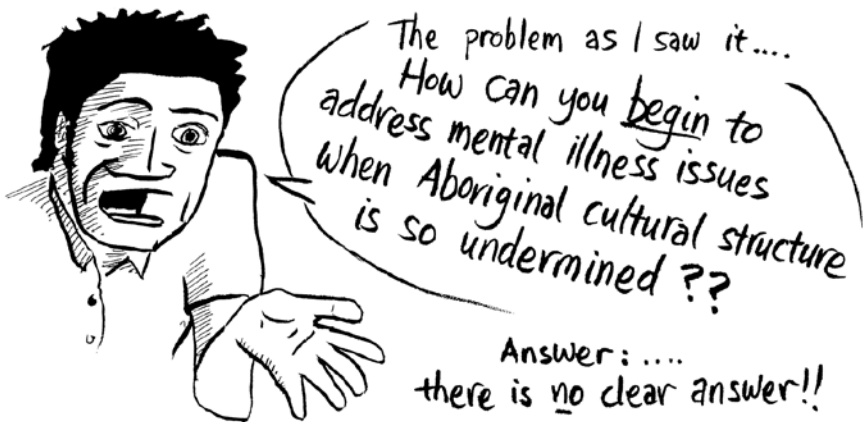
For a while - I worked in the field of remote mental health in Aboriginal communities in the Central Australia.



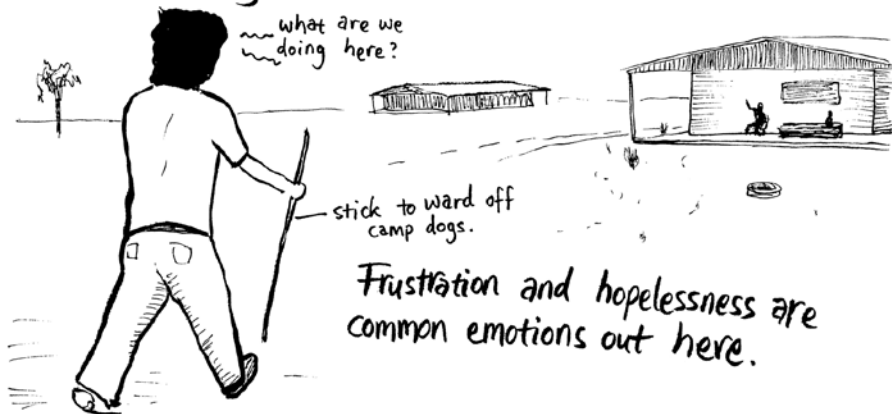
I learnt a humbling lesson
- just how little I understood.

We all struggle to make sense of the chaos





Psychiatrist who used to fly in
every three months ... nice bloke really.





Craig was a psychologist I worked with.
He sent me a few things he'd
written to help me frame my thoughts.
Some articles about petrol sniffing,

An essay called
"Coming to terms with country"
(a very brave and personal piece),

another one "A long weekend in Alice Springs"

I dunno if I really
understood the themes
..... but I found
them all somehow
useful to read...



When Nadine and I left Central Australia
I realised I still had a lot of digesting to do.



why do we all feel
so raw?

I got back into drawing too,
which I also found helpful.

In 2008 I found a copy of the Long Weekend
and began drawing bits of it.

the girl in the
hospital →





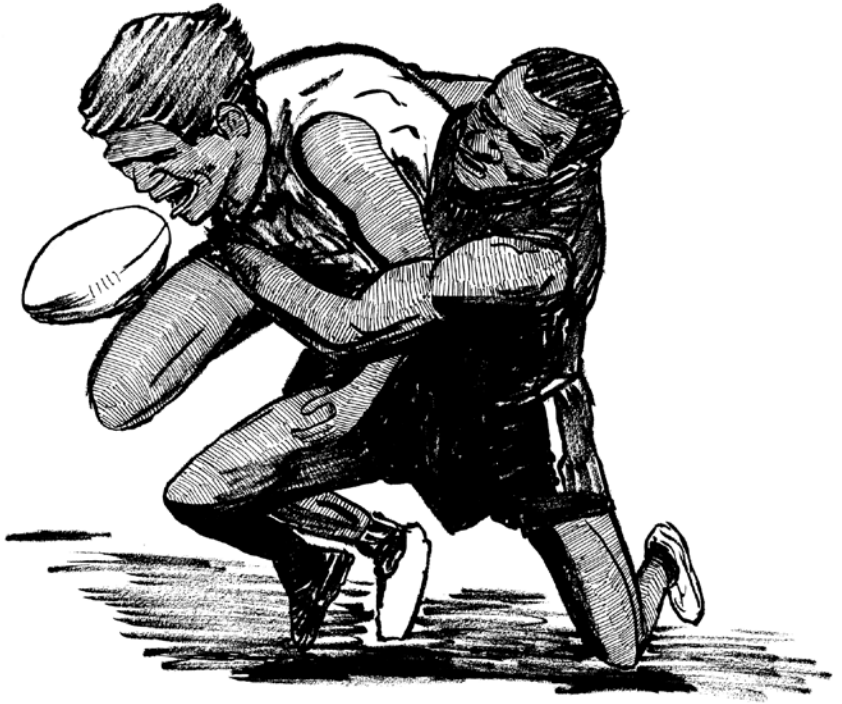
Somehow drawing all of this
strangeness helped...

me make some sense of it.



the football





The Long Weekend in Alice Springs

*I can see a campfire
in our backyard.*





An old Aboriginal woman,
Manka Maru, is hunched
beside the fire.

Her black clothing,
her black skin,
make her almost...

invisible.



She is the widow of
Kumanjayi Morris, a good
man who won an award,



and died of heart failure
and alcoholism...



She hasn't spoken about
her deceased husband.


She will not mention his name .

There's a clutch of polaroid
photos in her plastic handbag.

In the mornings, sometimes, she
takes them out and ponderously
gazes into the images of her
husband.

She fondles them,


then slips them back
into her bag.



Now the cooking has hold of her attention

lamb chops,
tomato sauce.

chicken nuggets,
hot tea.



comfort in a life that has
no foreseeable development,

no progress.



no economic vitality.

FRIDAY

My name is Craig.

An American editor named Tom Singer has asked me to write a chapter on the idea of cultural complexes...

an old idea of Jung's: It was a bit controversial at the time.

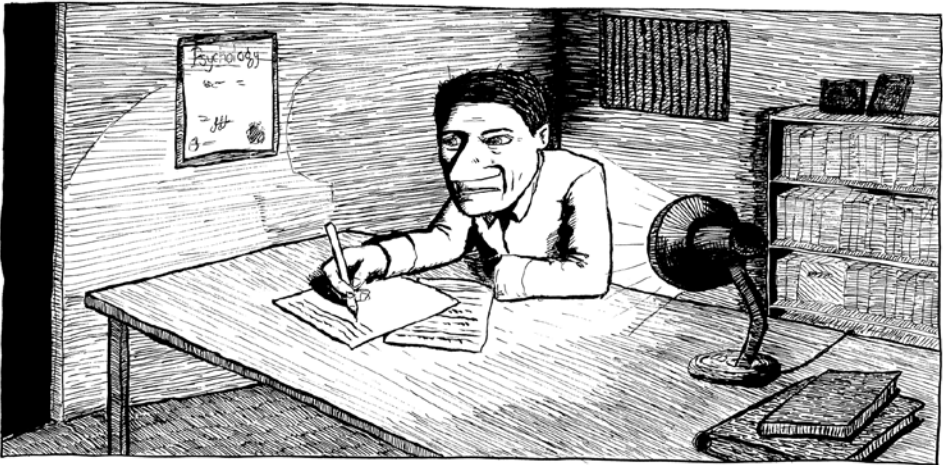
I'd like to finish this by the end of this long weekend.



In his psychological languages Tom writes -

Cultural Complexes
structure emotional
experience,
tend to be repetitive,
autonomous,
resist consciousness
and collect experience
that confirms their
historical point of view
... automatically take on
shared body language...
express their distress
in similar somatic complaints

...provide a simplistic
certainty about the
groups place in the
world in the face of
otherwise conflicting
and ambiguous
uncertainties.



I don't know how to think about
these things

I do not really know how to represent
the action of a cultural complex to myself.



I can look at what goes on in other countries: observe the incredibly stupid things that one mob of people does to another ... and I can say

AH! THERE'S A CULTURAL COMPLEX IN ACTION



Something seems to happen to my consciousness when a complex operates: self-awareness becomes less sharp.

Perhaps I can discover where a complex operates by noting when and where I am most ... inarticulate.



When I am fascinated by something but am almost unable to think about it.

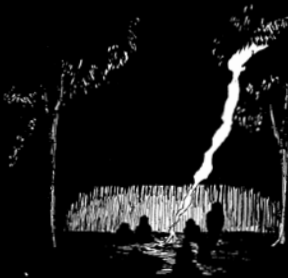
and almost unable to speak.



This weekend I sat down to think and it was as though shades came to visit with a purpose.



There are others around the fire



It is Friday - the beginning
of a long weekend.

There are six or seven bush people
down from Warlpiri country
for the football.



Beth is an Aboriginal health worker
She talks to her mother about
computers and blood pressure ...



and the health hazards
of fried chicken.

Celine walks in through the gate with two young men.



who played with a can of petrol over a campfire.



It blew up in his face.



He was too intoxicated to foresee the consequences.



He's been skin-grafted, tracheotomied, amputated ...



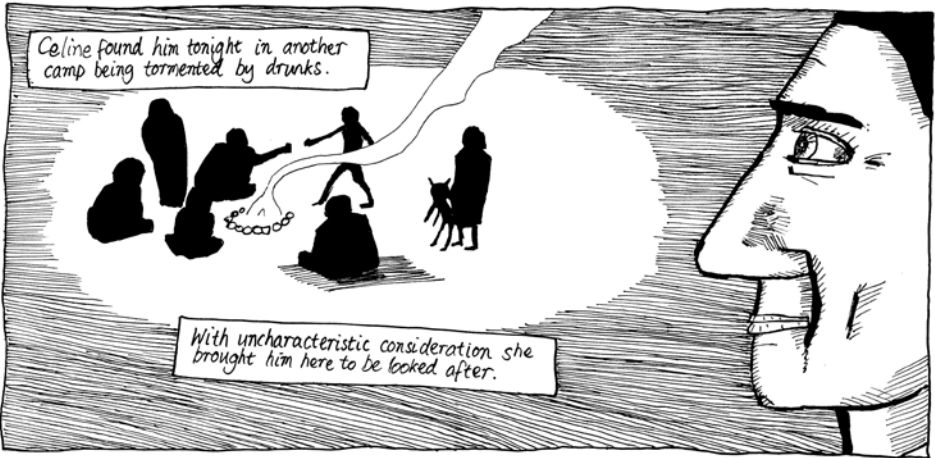
AND RESTORED!





I have a list of boys like this,

looking after them is my work.



Celine found him tonight in another camp being tormented by drunks.

With uncharacteristic consideration she brought him here to be looked after.



That's her mother and sister sitting over by the fire ...



She wants her mother to see her display of care.

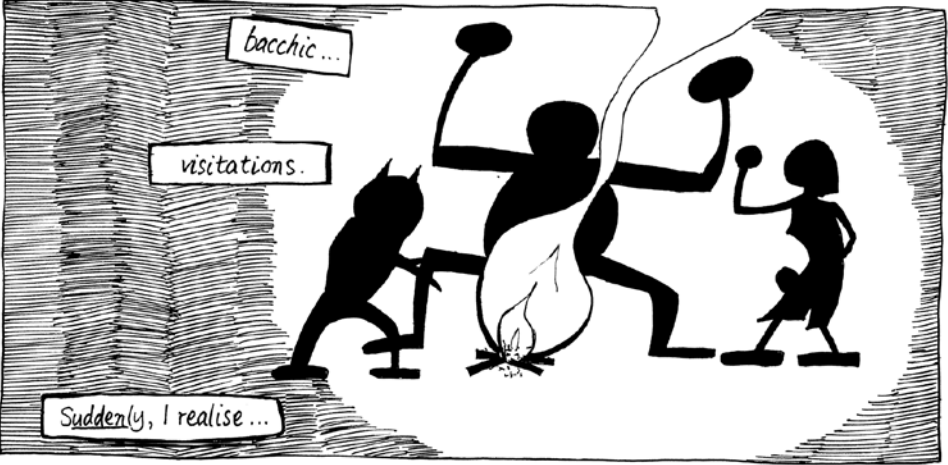




I'm trying to develop a theme for this essay that I'm writing...

but I feel interrupted by these...

incidental...



bacchic...

visitations.

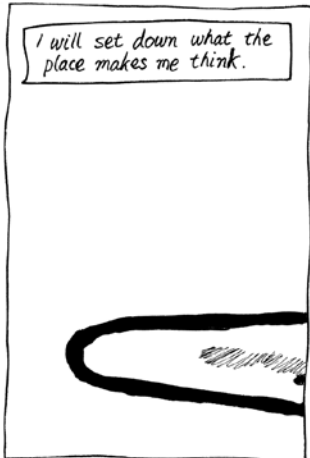
Suddenly, I realise...



I don't have to THINK anymore about the problem that Tom troubles me with.

I just have to sit here and describe what is happening around the fire...

and in my mind's eye.



A dry wind comes from the Western desert country,



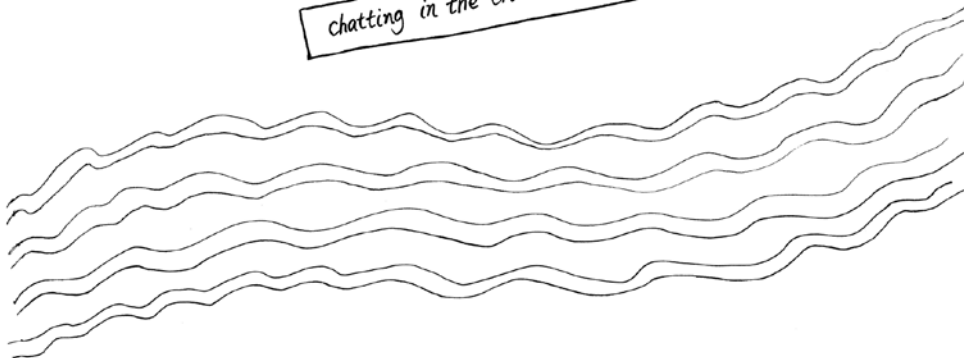
windows and doors open for the breeze.

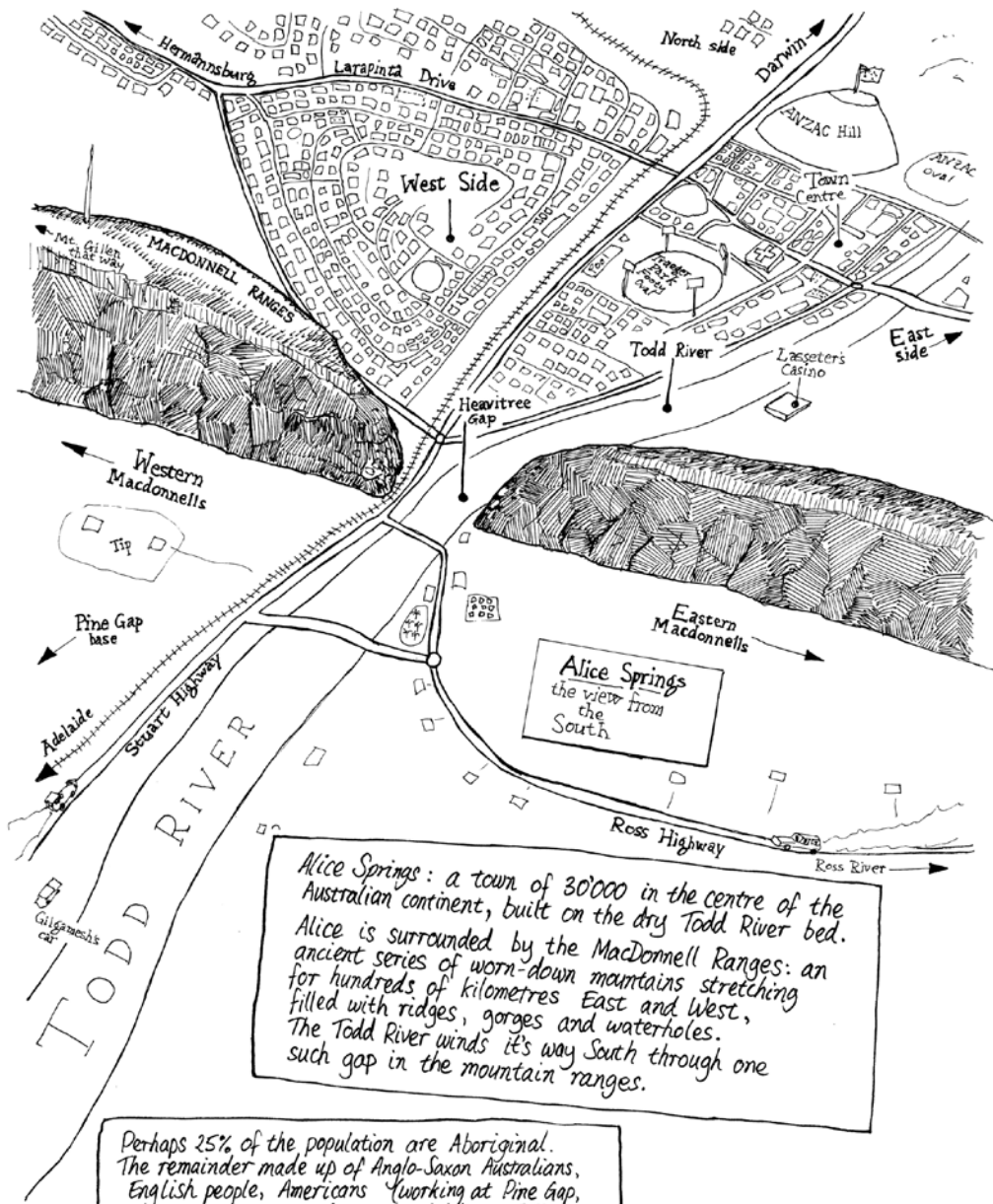
It is silent enough now.

The visitors smoking, drinking tea,

rolling into blankets.

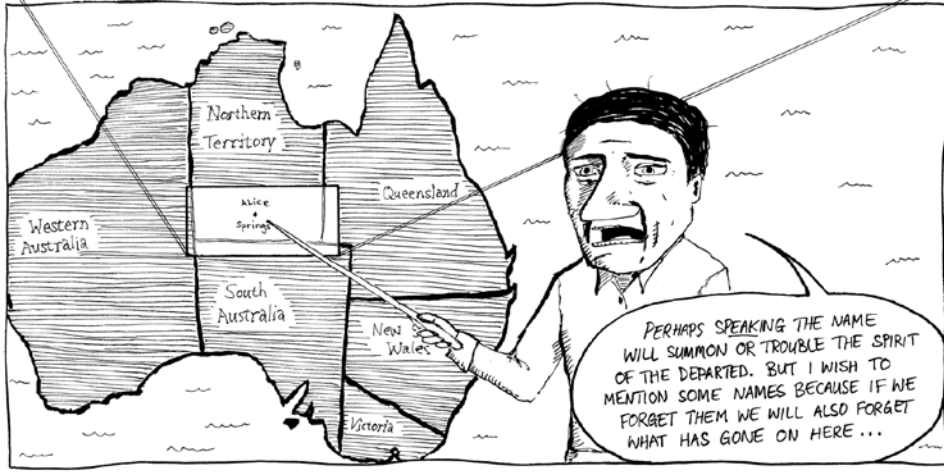
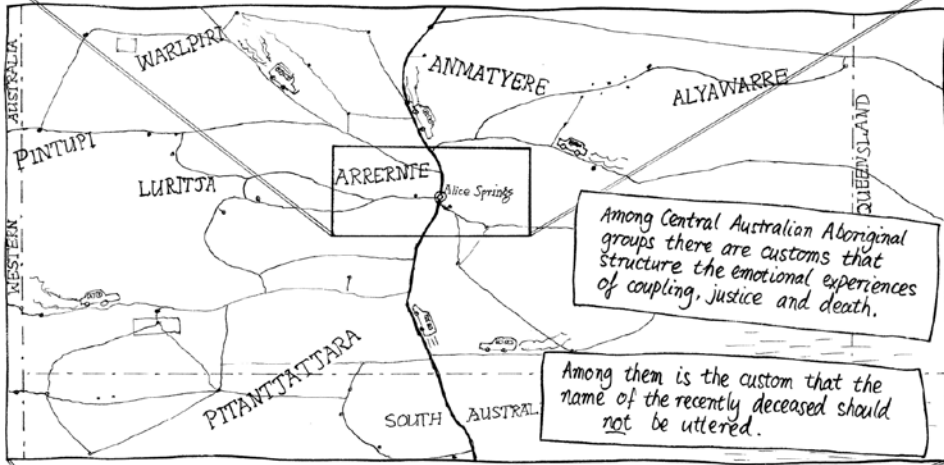
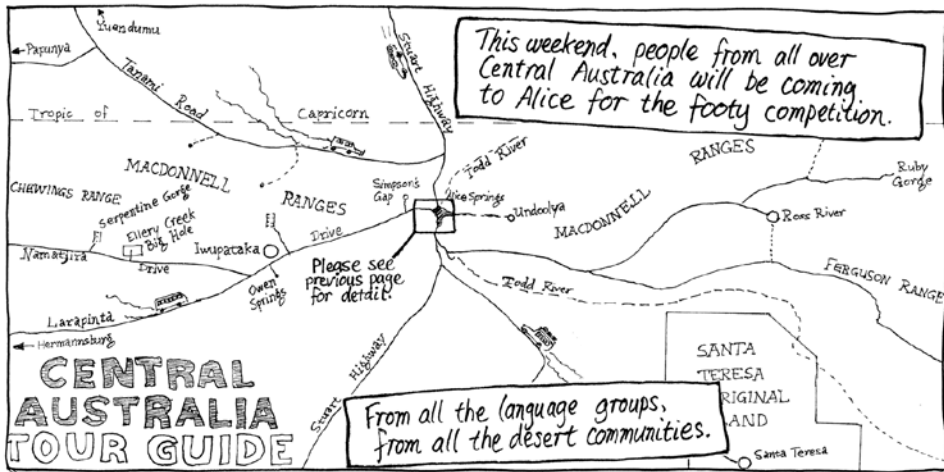
chatting in the crow-like cadence of the Warlpiri language.





Perhaps 25% of the population are Aboriginal. The remainder made up of Anglo-Saxon Australians, English people, Americans (working at Pine Gap, out of town), some Germans, Italians, Filipinos, some seasonal blow-ins during the tourist months.

The Arrernte people are Indigenous to the immediate area, though in Central Australia there are many desert tribal cultures and languages that have lived in the region for thousands upon thousands of years.



These names -

Kumanjayi Morris

Just three names among hundreds of local men who had a role in maintaining the integrity of indigenous cultural life.



But they slipped away.

Not in a state of satisfaction, but in resignation. Men who suffered a peculiar kind of depression.

Barry Cook

Their vigorous way of life now domesticated by the West. They endured it for as long as they could.



The web of memory-systems developing too many gaps. A cultural body losing vital organs and bone density...

Kumantjayi Zimran

giving up and giving way to diabetes and heart-disease,

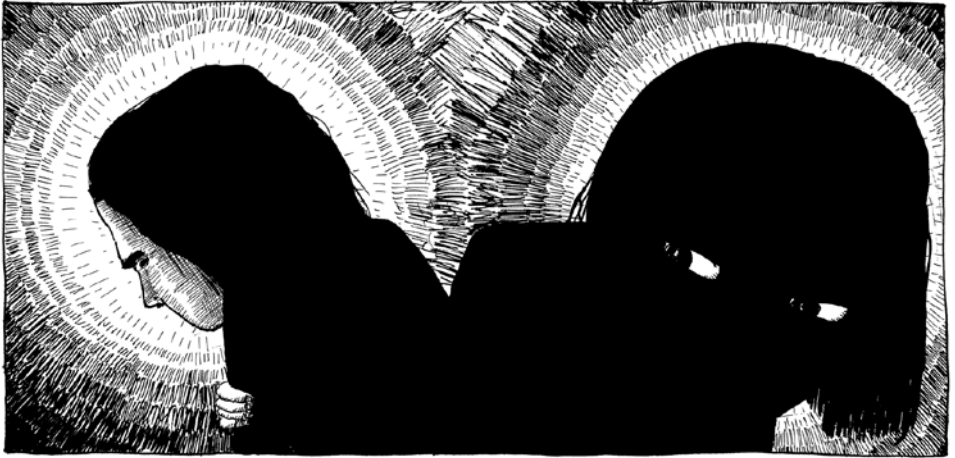
tobacco, cynicism,

and misunderstanding.





*They were summonsed before a
Magistrate who has to mediate...*



*... in what is essentially
a psychological problem.*





He had no ability to integrate his experience.



He lived a nomadic life of random assaults and now he has died a random death.

Maga is dead from petrol sniffing.

He died on a cold morning, sitting up in the driver's seat of an abandoned vehicle.



For many, the death of this man is a relief.

Such disorder is part of living



in a culture which is on
the borderline ...



of a peculiar disintegration.



I hear the news - outside of town on the South highway, a man is sitting in an old Ford Cortina.

The body of a dog is wrapped in a blanket on the back seat.

The dog has been in the car for three days.



The police officer says that the man is "one sandwich short of a picnic."

HE NEEDS A PSYCH' ASSESSMENT

HE WON'T GIVE UP THE DOG!

IT'S A JOB FOR A SHRINK!



Everyone takes time, we roll a cigarette.

After a while the story unfolds, he cautiously confides the list of troubles encountered on the 1700 km route up from the South...



Someone sabotaged his vehicle at a truckstop.

he whispers in passing...





*This man needs
grief counseling,*



*a living animal
companion,*

*and assurance of
immortality.*



In the heat my attention drifts,

to the matter of cultural complexes

I am trying to work out if
certain culturally defining
events that happened in the past

also take place in the present ...

as a psychological
inheritance.



Are these ancient complexes still unravelling?

We inhabit the present... but perhaps we incarnate repeatedly these patterns of seminal events constructed thousands of years ago.



Do we reincarnate the pathologies of former influential cultural events?

Is this man his own problem?

Or did it all begin a long time ago?



Has he been seized by a collective disorder?

He cannot bury it.



He is waiting for
some restoration
of life.

or a resurrection ?

A refugee from another time ?

He says that he is exiled
from his rightful lands

The Ford has broken down

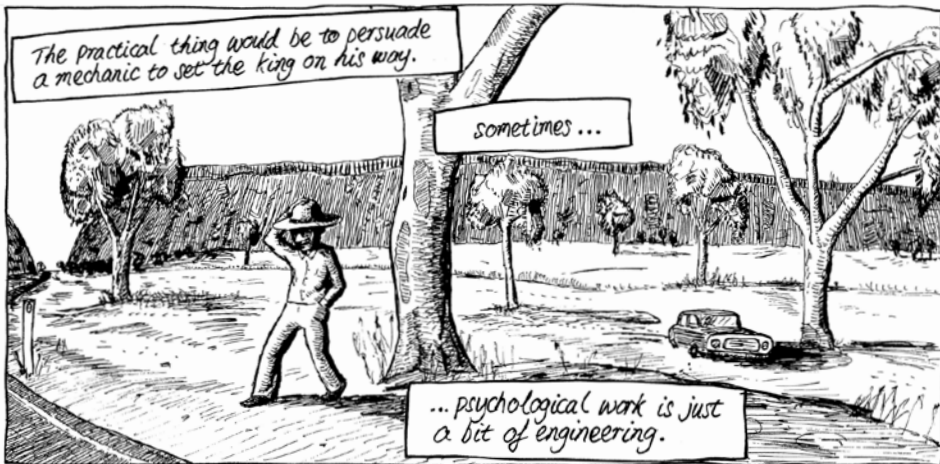
Gilgamesh has no money

He could be sitting here for weeks !

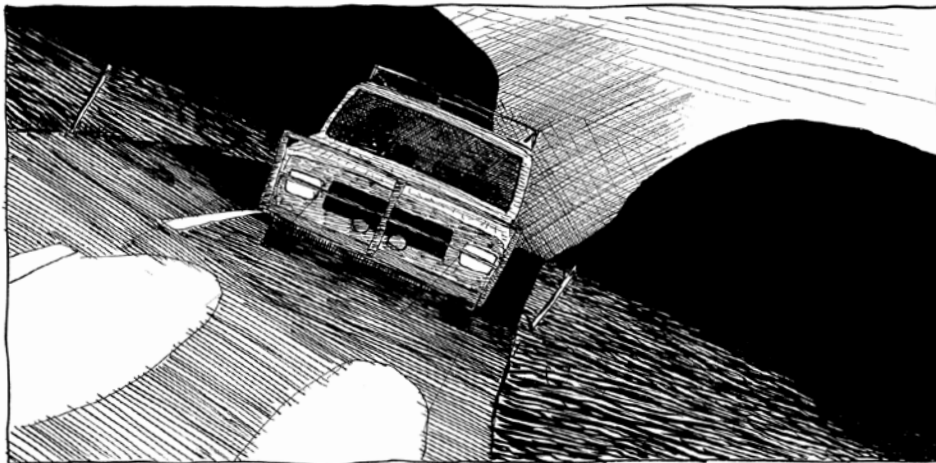
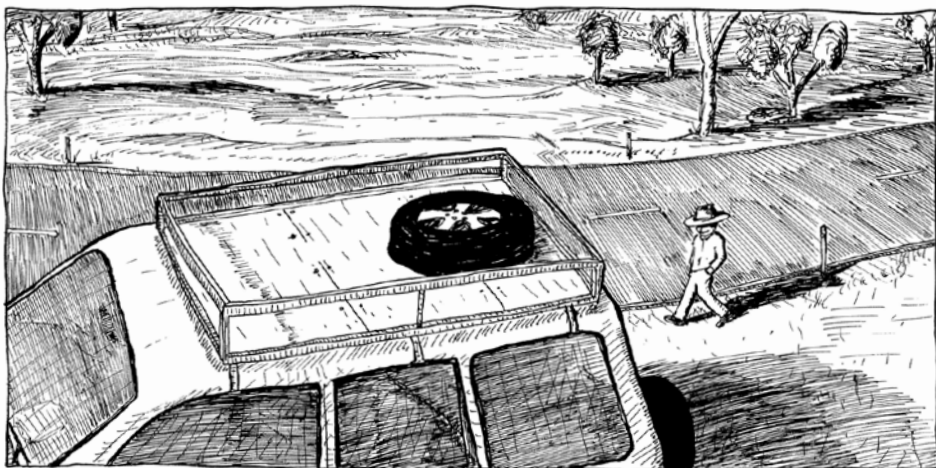


The practical thing would be to persuade
a mechanic to set the king on his way.

sometimes ...

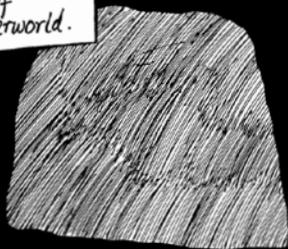


... psychological work is just
a bit of engineering.





Of all the many stories emanating
from there down the ages I find my
mind dwells on the story of
Inanna's descent to the Underworld.



In ancient Sumeria
Inanna was the
Goddess of war
and sexual love.



The story begins with Inanna arrogantly deciding that she wishes to enter the Underworld.



FOR I ALONE WOULD ENTER



THE HIGH PRIESTESS OF HEAVEN WOULD ENTER

Inanna's sister was Erishkigal, the Queen of the Underworld; Erishkigal was greatly displeased.



So she tells her chief gatekeeper, Neti to...

BOLT THE SEVEN GATES OF THE UNDERWORLD AND THEN, ONE BY ONE OPEN THEM JUST A CRACK ...

AND TAKE AWAY HER RAIMENTS OF OFFICE.



YOUR SHUGGLRAH CROWN YOUR HIGHNESS
WHY MUST MY CROWN BE TAKEN?
IT IS THE WAY OF THE UNDERWORLD.



YOUR LAPIS BEADS PLEASE YOUR GREATNESS



YOU MUST NOW TAKE OFF THE DOUBLE STRAND OF BEADS

LET MY SISTER ENTER ...



YOUR BREAST-PLATE

BOWED LOW.



THE GOLD RING, GIVE IT HERE!



YOUR ROD AND LINE.

AND YOUR
ROYAL ROBE.





Naked and bowed low, Inanna enters the throne room, Erishkigal rises.



The Amunna, judges of the Underworld, surround Inanna.



Erishkigal fixes upon her the eyes of death...



speaks words of wrath,

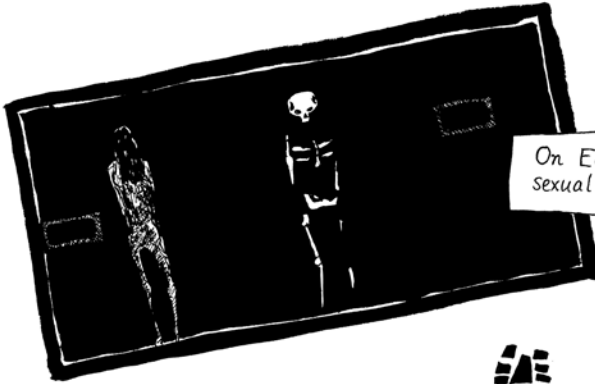
the cry of guilt.

Struck down with sixty diseases
Inanna becomes a corpse...

a piece of rotting meat...

hung from a hook on the wall.





On Earth... all sexual activity ceases.

This greatly troubles ENKI - the god of life and replenishment.



From the dirt under his fingernails he creates two sexless creatures

GO TO THE UNDERWORLD, FIND THE CORPSE.

Gala-Tirra and Kur-Jara go to the Underworld and find Erishkigal in great pain ... like a woman giving birth.

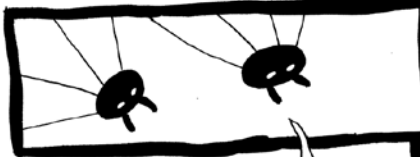
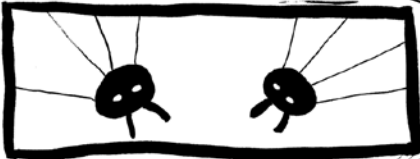
ARRGGHH

O GREAT ERISHKIGAL, WE FEEL YOUR PAIN WITH YOU!

YES! THE WHOLE WORLD CRIES.



KIND LITTLE CREATURES, FOR YOUR KIND WORDS I OFFER YOU ANYTHING FROM MY REALM.



WE WISH TO HAVE THE CORPSE THAT WAS ONCE INANNA.



TAKE IT AND LEAVE.



The two clever flies found
the corpse of Inanna
and sprinkled upon it
the water of life.

UNG...

ERISHKIGAL, I TAKE YOUR LEAVE.

After three days of death she was about to step into the world of the living again.

Leaving the Underworld, Inanna and the two flies were accompanied by the Annunna, who said...

YOU WILL NOT BE FREE OF US UNLESS SOMEONE TAKES YOUR PLACE IN DEATH.

She collects her garments and goes.





The first person they find
is NINCURBA: Inanna's
faithful servant.

YOUR HIGHNESS!
WE FEARED YOU WERE
DEAD

No! You **CANNOT**
TAKE THIS ONE.
SHE IS MY FRIEND
AND I WILL NOT
DAMN HER.

THEN WHO
SHALL WE TAKE?

THERE IS MY
HUSBAND DUMUZI,
DRESSED IN HIS FINEST
CLOTHES. HE DOES NOT
MOURN FOR ME.

She fixes on him the eyes of death and the Annumna fall upon him.



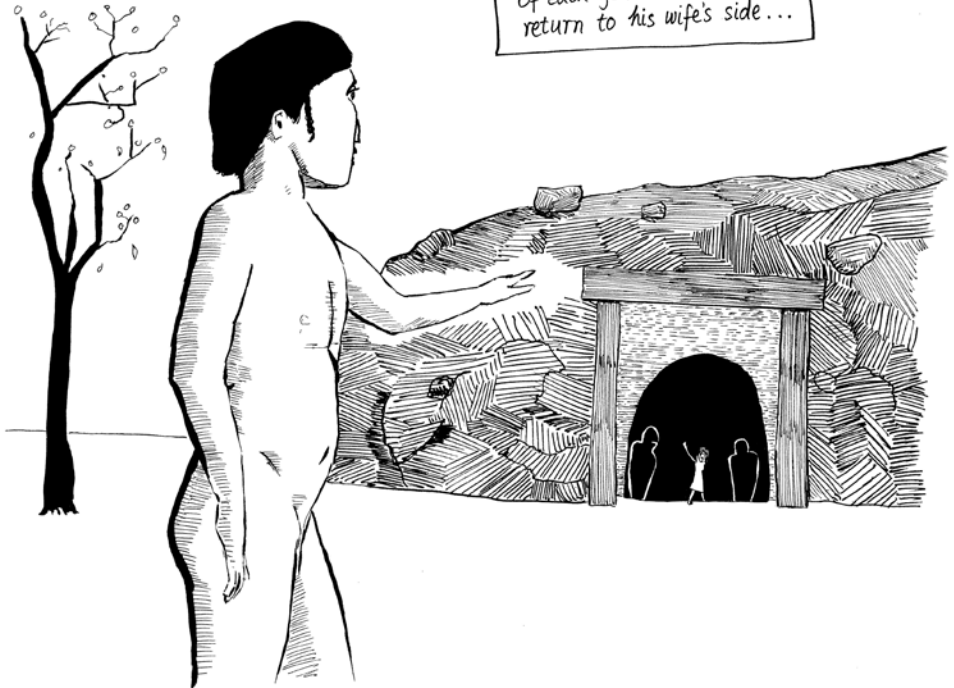
The world falls into Winter as Inanna begins to miss her husband.



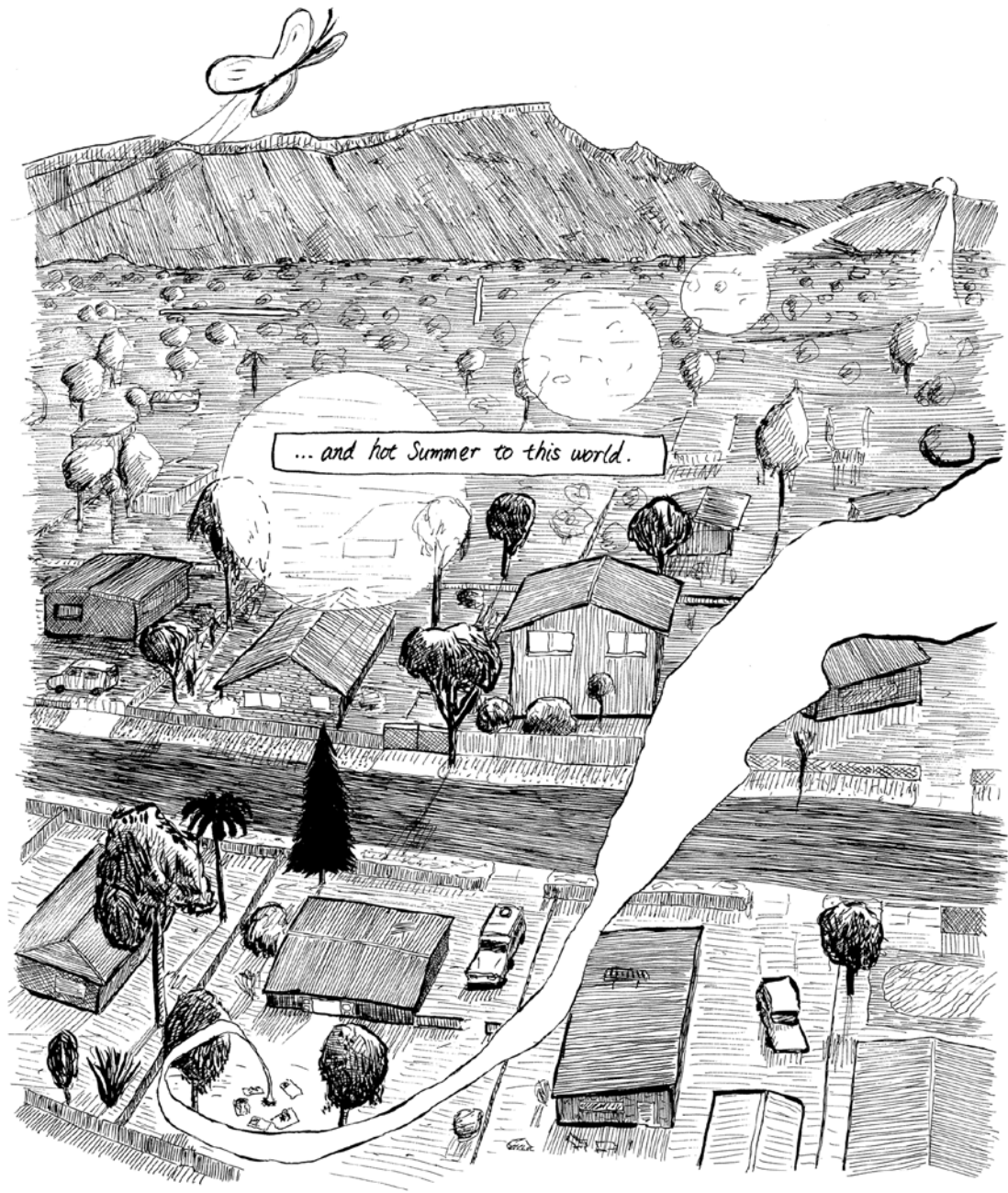
Dumuzi's sister comes before Inanna out of love for her brother, she offers herself in his place.

Inanna agrees.

It is decreed that for half of each year Dumuzi shall return to his wife's side...







... and hot Summer to this world.

