When my cries first pierced the sky, following the Tày tradition, Father hung my placenta up in a bamboo tube...

and then bathed me with the water from the nearby river.

I grew up with the corn, the river, and the love of the villagers.

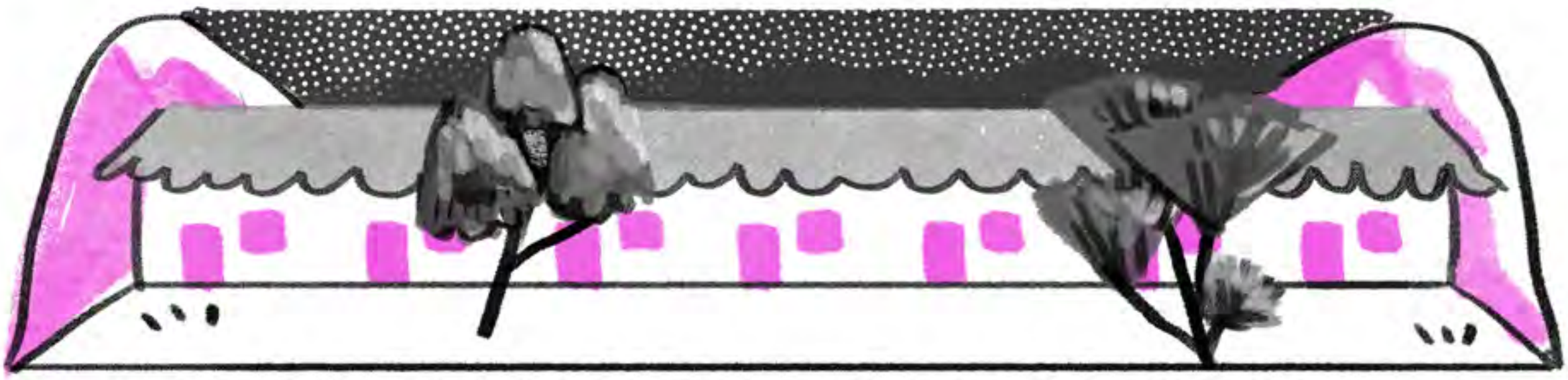
Excerpted from "Tracing Between the Colors of the Highlands" by Dương Mạnh Hùng and Phạm Thu Trà

In Ê đê* culture, they love having daughters, especially the firstborns, like me.

He was a dedicated principal and cadre,** beloved by all students, who gave him the warm nickname Papa Y Ngô ng.

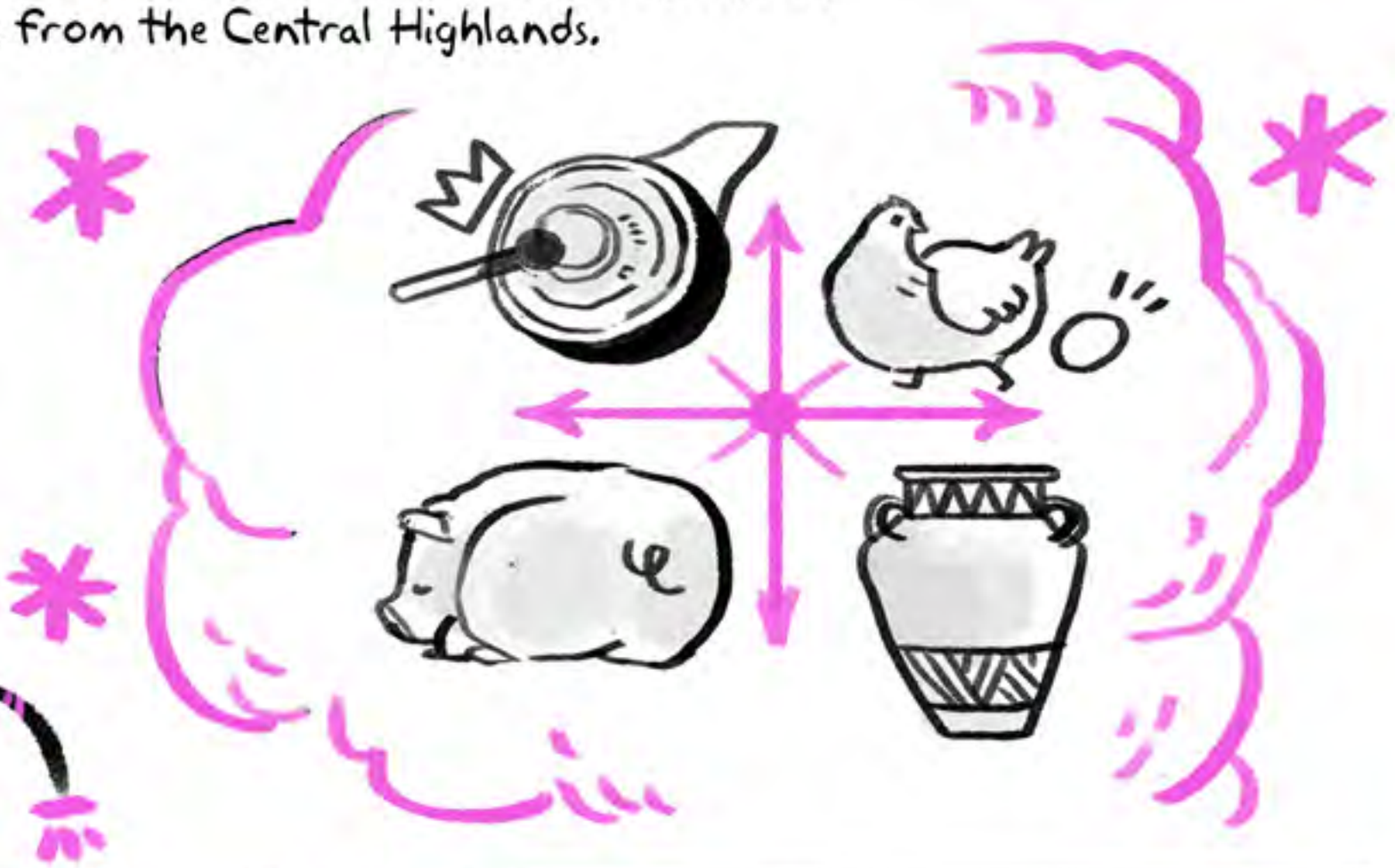
*Ê đê people: Austronesian ethnic group from southern Vietman
** Cadre: representative of the first national assembly for an independent Vietnam

My childhood was filled with stories about our homeland in Đăk Lăk, with magnificent landscapes that are dear to the Ê đê soul, through Father's songs:
Oh hear the sound of the forests,
Oh thousand-year-old Central Highlands, land of heroes,
Ơ ơ ơ ơ ơ
The azure clear rivers, the wavy mountain ridges...
timeless like Chư Prông Mountain, like Ba River



The school for Southern students, where Father was the headmaster, was also home to hundreds of cadres from the Central Highlands.

They decorated their houses according to their customs, even bringing everyday objects from home: from livestock to musical instruments.



Father would encourage each group to celebrate according to their traditional customs.

TABUK, KALINGA
25 OCTOBER 2020

Who are you visiting?

Mother Betty!

It's good to see you.

Are you okay? Why are you grouped with male detainees?

There are no cells for women here.

Excerpted from "Let the River Flow Free: Women Defenders of the Cordilleras," text by Gantala Press and art by Nina Martinez

Innabuyog*
Today at 8:00PM

INNABUYOG urgently demands the release of Indigenous activist Beatrice "Betty" Belen of Lubuagan, Kalinga who was arrested today by the police and military.

We deserve to defend our ili!** We don't need these soldiers, these large projects.

"The government orders removal of Chico Dam heroes' monument in Kalinga..."

"Just in: The Philippine gov't now allows 100% foreign ownership in energy projects..."

Activists are terrorists!

Serves her right for being a communist!

*Innabuyog: Alliance of Women's Organizations in the Cordillera
** Ili: village

How are things, Sierra? Come inside for coffee.

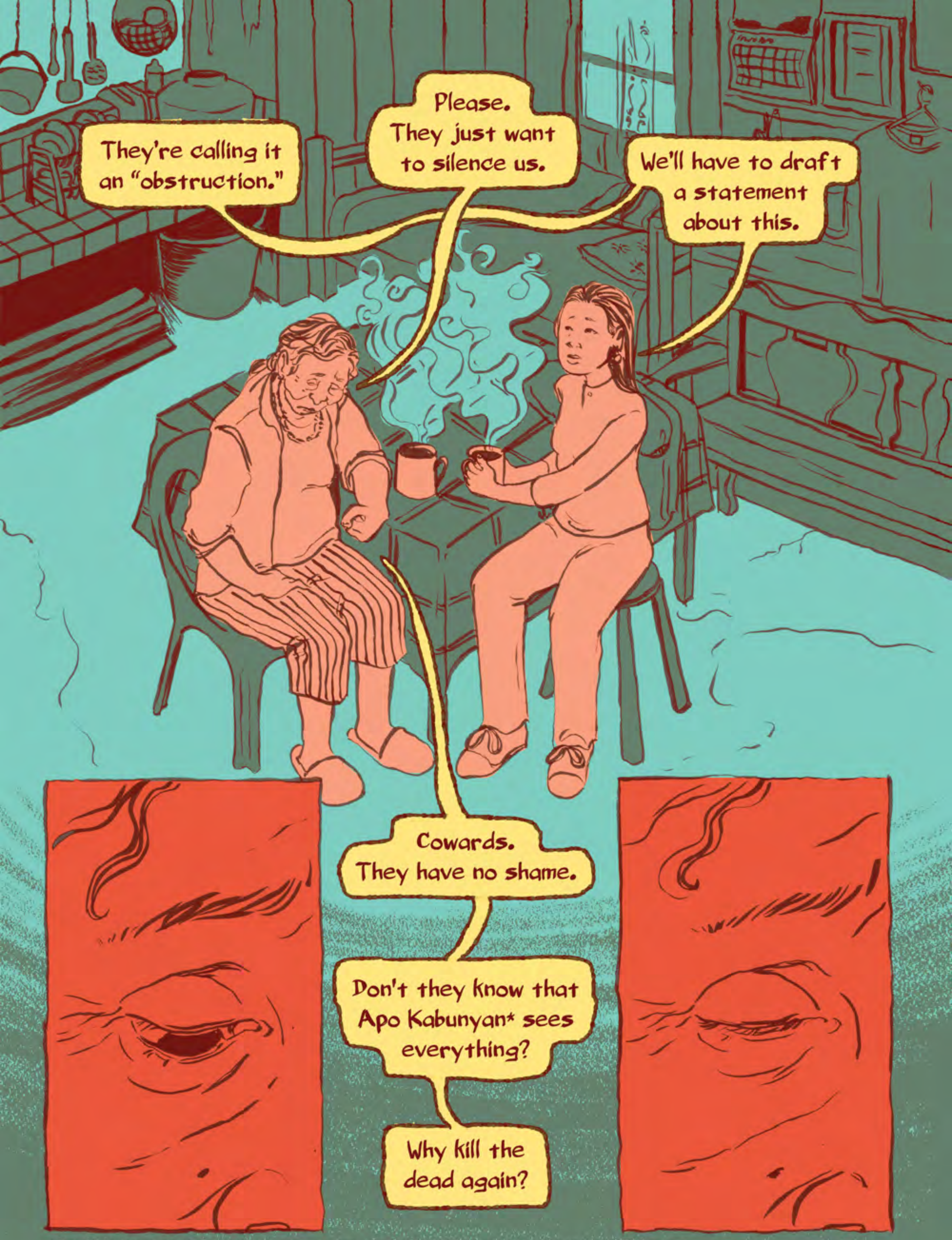
How is Betty?

She's okay. They transferred her to another cell. You'll see later when we visit her.

Mother Tining... have you heard about the memorial?

What about it?

The local government wants it gone.



*Apo Kabunyan: supreme deity in many parts of the Cordinllera region in northern Philippines

What don't they understand of how we see this world?
The River to us is life. As is our Land.

It is made sacred by the sweat of our ancestors...

Tining!

...and protected by their spirits.

Our story, you've already heard it.

Let me hear it again, Mother Tining.