

FABIEN TOULMÉ

# HAKIM'S ODYSSEY

Book 2: From Turkey to Greece



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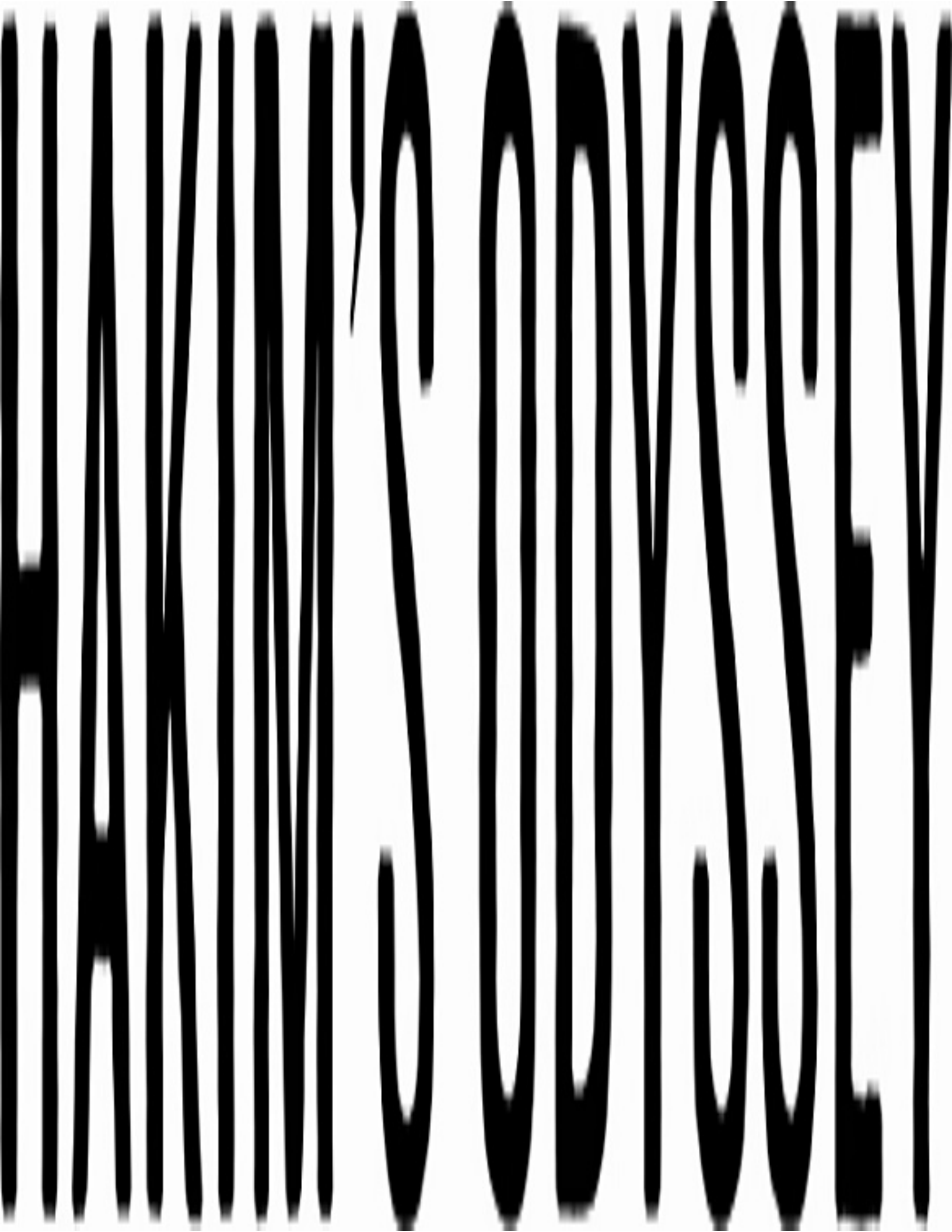
graphic mundi





graphic mundi

drawing our worlds together







I MET HIM A LITTLE LESS THAN A YEAR AGO THROUGH A JOURNALIST FRIEND.

HELLO, HAKIM,  
I'M FABRIEN.

HELLO, FABRIEN,  
COME IN!

I WANTED THE PERSPECTIVE OF A REFUGEE SO THAT I COULD UNDERSTAND AND SHARE A STORY THAT POLITICIANS, THE MEDIA, AND THE PUBLIC WOULD OTHERWISE OVERLOOK.

DAMMIT! HOW'S THE  
DANG THING WORK?

THEY'RE HUMAN BEINGS, AND THEIR JOURNEYS, STORIES, AND FATES CAN'T BE ENCOMPASSED BY A SINGLE, DETACHED WORD LIKE "REFUGEE."

HAKIM IS THE OLDEST OF 9 CHILDREN. HE AND HIS FAMILY LIVED IN A SUBURB SOUTH OF DAMASCUS.

WE'RE GOOD!

OK.

SO, I'M HAKIM,  
I'M 30 YEARS OLD  
AND I'M SYRIAN.

HAVE A GOOD  
DAY, KIDS!

WHEN HE WAS A KID, HE'D HELP  
OUT AT HIS DAD'S NURSERY.

HE LIKED IT SO MUCH THAT,  
WHEN HE GREW UP, HE  
STARTED HIS OWN NURSERY  
WITH HIS COUSIN MAHMUD.

SO WE CAN PLANT SOME  
BUSHES ALONG THERE.

AND PUT A BIG  
GREENHOUSE FOR THE  
ROSES OVER THERE.

HIS BUSINESS  
TOOK OFF QUICKLY,  
AND HE BOUGHT  
AN APARTMENT,  
WHICH HE GOT  
COMPLETELY  
REMODELED.

IT WAS GOING TO BE HIS HOME ONCE HE'D  
FOUND A WIFE AND STARTED A FAMILY.



BUT PEACEFUL PROTESTS AGAINST THE COUNTRY'S DICTATORIAL REGIME BEGAN SHORTLY AFTER THE WORK WAS FINISHED.

THE CRACKDOWN WAS BLOODY...

AND HAKIM WAS ARRESTED AND TORTURED FOR HELPING WOUNDED PROTESTERS.

HE WAS HELD IN PRISON FOR THREE WEEKS BEFORE BEING RELEASED.

AN OLD CUSTOMER FROM THE NURSERY PAID FOR HIS RELEASE.

WHEN HE GOT OUT, HE DISCOVERED THAT HIS NURSERY HAD BEEN SEIZED BY THE ARMY.

THE COUNTRY GRADUALLY SANK INTO CIVIL WAR. HIS APARTMENT WAS DESTROYED IN A BOMBING.

FEARING FOR HIS SAFETY, HAKIM DECIDED TO LEAVE SYRIA, ALONE, UNTIL THE SITUATION CALMED DOWN.

A FEW WEEKS LATER, ONE OF HIS BROTHERS, JAWAD, WAS ARRESTED AT A PROTEST. (HE REMAINS MISSING TO THIS DAY)

HE WAS TAKEN IN BY HIS FRIEND GHAZI, WHO LIVED IN BEIRUT.



WITH NO JOB AND NO PROSPECTS, HAKIM DECIDED TO JOIN HIS FRIEND ZAHED, WHO WAS LIVING IN ANTALYA, TURKEY.

AND THEN HAKIM LOST HIS JOB.

THEN GIVE ME AN EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT!

I'VE BEEN ASKING YOU FOR ONE FOR WEEKS AND YOU PROMISED YOU'D DO IT!

NO, IT'S NOT POSSIBLE.

IT'S JUST TOO EXPENSIVE.

DON'T WORRY. IT'S DIFFERENT HERE.

IF YOU KEEP TRYING, IT'LL WORK OUT.

WHILE HE DIDN'T FIND WORK THERE EITHER, HE DID MEET NAJMEH, A YOUNG SYRIAN LIVING THERE WITH HER FAMILY.

BUT AFTER A FEW MONTHS, WITH MORE AND MORE REFUGEES ARRIVING THERE AS WELL, JORDAN PASSED LAWS THAT CRACKED DOWN ON ILLEGAL LABOR.

THEY GOT MARRIED.

THERE, HE WAS ABLE TO DO WORK UNDER THE TABLE FOR A CLEANING COMPANY, WHICH ALLOWED HIM TO SURVIVE.

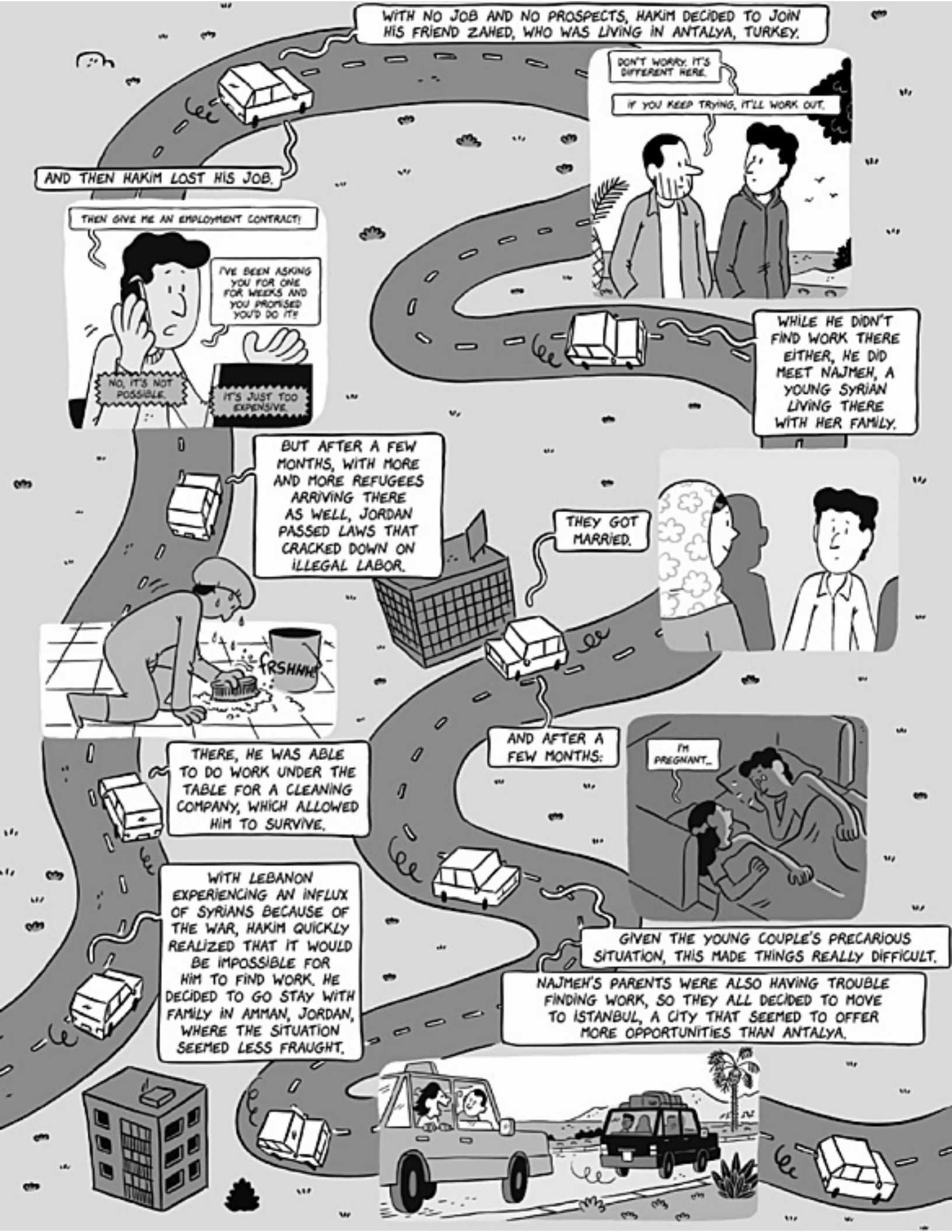
AND AFTER A FEW MONTHS:

I'M PREGNANT...

WITH LEBANON EXPERIENCING AN INFLUX OF SYRIANS BECAUSE OF THE WAR, HAKIM QUICKLY REALIZED THAT IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM TO FIND WORK. HE DECIDED TO GO STAY WITH FAMILY IN AMMAN, JORDAN, WHERE THE SITUATION SEEMED LESS FRAUGHT.

GIVEN THE YOUNG COUPLE'S PRECARIOUS SITUATION, THIS MADE THINGS REALLY DIFFICULT.

NAJMEH'S PARENTS WERE ALSO HAVING TROUBLE FINDING WORK, SO THEY ALL DECIDED TO MOVE TO ISTANBUL, A CITY THAT SEEMED TO OFFER MORE OPPORTUNITIES THAN ANTALYA.



AND THAT'S WHERE WE FINISHED  
LAST TIME I TALKED TO HAKIM.



WOW!

AND I COMPLAIN  
WHEN I DON'T GET  
TO WATCH TV.



HAKIM'S A REAL SUPERHERO.



YES.

IN A WAY HE IS.



OK, WE'RE HERE.

READY TO GO IN?



YEEEAH!





"THIS ISN'T LIVING, IT'S LIKE WE'RE ALREADY DEAD."









YES, RIGHT! LET'S GET TO IT!



SO WE ALL  
MOVED TO ISTANBUL.

ABDERRAHIM HAD FOUND A BIG HOUSE  
IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CITY, IN A VERY  
TOURISTY AREA NEAR THE BLUE MOSQUE.



AND WE MOVED IN TOGETHER TO SAVE  
MONEY ON RENT.



HERE, HAKIM, GRAB THIS  
SUITCASE FOR ME, PLEASE.

THIS IS YOUR ROOM.

IS IT OK?

IT'S PERFECT!



IT EVEN HAS ITS  
OWN BATHROOM.



THANKS, DAD.

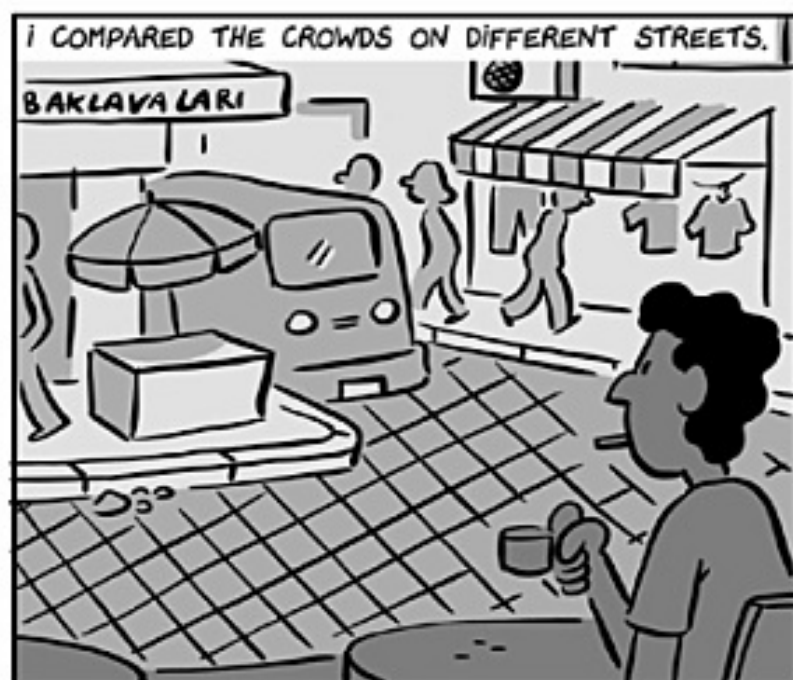
I'M GONNA LET IN SOME  
FRESH AIR, IT'S HOT IN HERE...













AND A FEW DAYS LATER, I GOT STARTED.



I GOT SET UP ON A MAJOR STREET  
NEAR THE BLUE MOSQUE.



I SOLD MY BOTTLES FOR JUST A LITTLE MORE  
THAN I PAID FOR THEM, AND FOR MUCH LESS THAN  
OTHER STREET VENDORS.



BESIDES, BECAUSE I SPOKE ARABIC  
AND A LITTLE ENGLISH, IT WAS EASIER  
FOR ME TO DRAW TOURISTS.



VERY SOON, I WAS SOLD OUT.





ENOUGH, AT LEAST, FOR NAJMEH TO BE ABLE TO GO TO THE DOCTOR.



THE BABY IS DOING VERY WELL.

AND IT'S A BOY!



WE WERE HAPPIER TO HEAR THIS THAN WE WERE WHEN WE'D REALIZED NAJMEH WAS PREGNANT.



NOT BECAUSE IT WAS A BOY (BOY OR GIRL, I DIDN'T CARE EITHER WAY) BUT BECAUSE WE WERE NOW IN A BETTER SITUATION.



OF COURSE, I KNEW OUR SITUATION WAS STILL PRECARIOUS, BUT I TOLD MYSELF WE'D BE ABLE TO PAY FOR THE BIRTH AND HAVE OUR BABY IN SOMEWHAT OK CIRCUMSTANCES.





THE DAYS PASSED AND AUTUMN ARRIVED...



WHAT ARE YOU DOING UP SO EARLY?



I'M THINKING...



ABDERRAHIM STILL  
HADN'T FOUND  
WORK, AND IT WAS  
GETTING TO HIM.

AS FOR ME, BUSINESS WAS STILL GOING  
FAIRLY WELL, DEPENDING ON THE DAY.

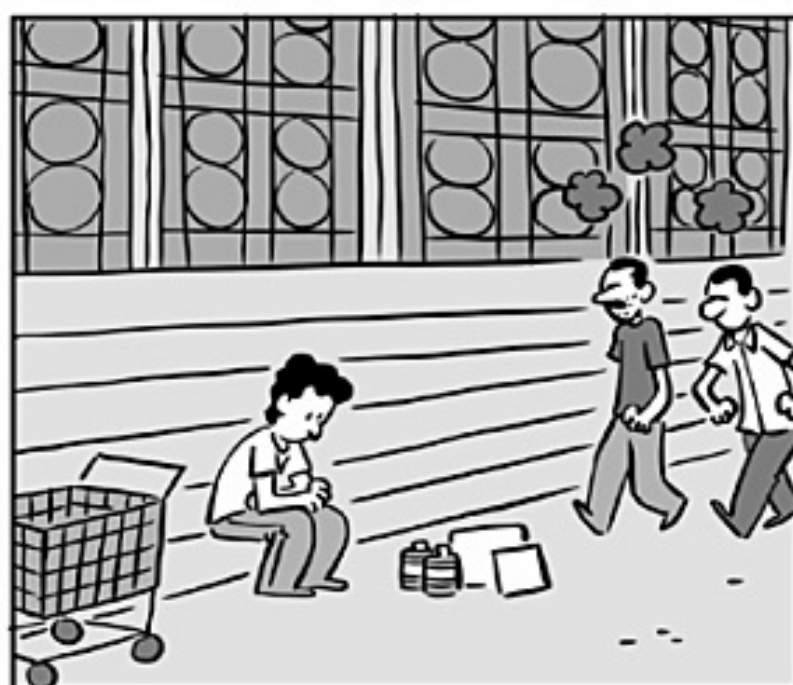


YIKES,  
TODAY MIGHT  
BE TOUGH WITH  
THIS RAIN.

PHEW! THE RAIN  
STOPPED!









IN THE WEEKS THAT FOLLOWED, I MAINLY WORKED AS A GUIDE FOR TOURISTS FROM THE GULF.



BY DECEMBER I'D MANAGED TO SAVE A LITTLE OVER \$2000, WHICH WAS THE COST OF CHILDBIRTH.







NAJMEH WAS SUPPOSED TO COME HOME AFTER THREE DAYS, BUT THERE WERE COMPLICATIONS AND SHE LOST A LOT OF BLOOD.



SHE HAD TO STAY LONGER IN THE HOSPITAL, AND WE HAD TO BUY BLOOD FOR HER TRANSFUSIONS.



AND WHEN SHE COULD FINALLY COME HOME, SHE STILL NEEDED ADDITIONAL CARE.

AT THE END OF IT ALL, THE BIRTH COST TWICE AS MUCH MONEY AS WE HAD LEFT.



THANKFULLY, ABDERRAHIM HELPED US OUT ONCE AGAIN.



TO THIS DAY, JUST LIKE WITH THE DOWRY AND COUNTLESS OTHER THINGS HE'S HELPED US WITH, I HAVEN'T PAID HIM BACK.



NOT YET...



I FELT THAT, JUST LIKE ME, MY FAMILY WAS A LITTLE SAD NOT TO BE THERE FOR THIS STEP IN OUR LIVES.

YOU'LL SEND US PICTURES, RIGHT?

I WILL!

TELL ME, HOW ARE THINGS AT HOME?

THE WHOLE FAMILY IS WELL, THANK ALLAH.

WE WENT BACK TO OUR OLD NEIGHBORHOOD, EVERYTHING IN DOWNTOWN DAMASCUS IS MUCH TOO EXPENSIVE.

ISN'T THAT KIND OF RISKY?

WE'RE BEING CAREFUL.

THERE ARE BOMBINGS, BUT THERE ARE SHELTERS WE CAN GO TO.

WHERE ARE YOU LIVING NOW THAT OUR OLD BUILDING'S DESTROYED?\*

THE AREA'S EMPTY...

WE'RE RENTING A VACATED APARTMENT.

\*SEE BOOK 1

AND JAWAD?

STILL NOTHING...

AS WINTER SET IN, THERE WERE A LOT FEWER TOURISTS, SO I COULDN'T WORK AS A GUIDE.



I TRIED TO THINK WHAT I WAS GOING TO DO TO MAKE MONEY.



WHAT CAN I GET YOU?

A CUP OF TEA, PLEASE.

TO WARM ME UP...





WHEN YOU HAVE TO SUPPORT YOUR FAMILY,  
BREAKING THE RULES BECOMES MORE TEMPTING.



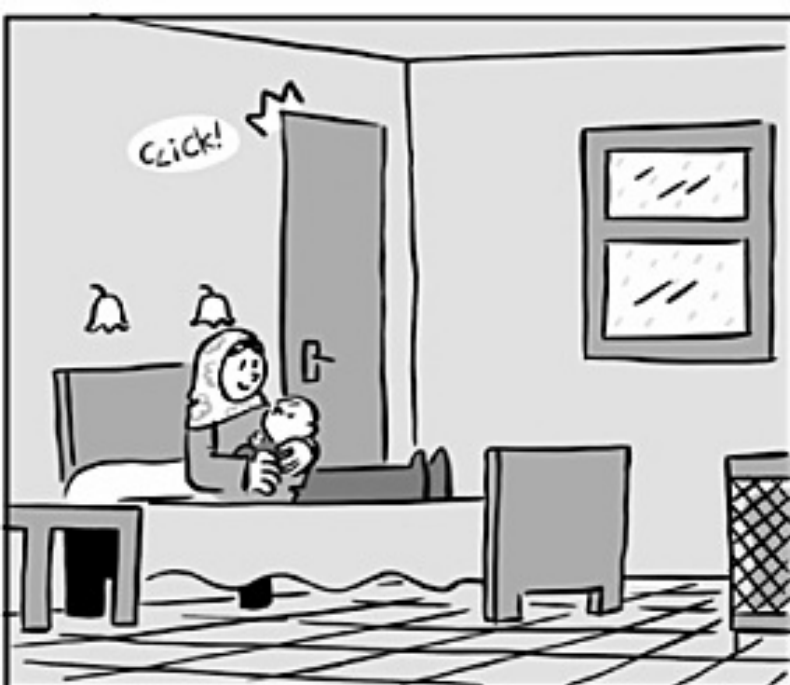
YOU'RE IN SURVIVAL MODE.

BAŞCILAR GIDA 1



IN FIVE MINUTES,  
THE THREE UMBRELLAS  
I'D PURCHASED WERE SOLD.





ONE MORNING, I BOUGHT THIRTY UMBRELLAS. FOR ME, THIS WAS A BIG INVESTMENT.



BUT THINGS WERE GOING SO WELL...













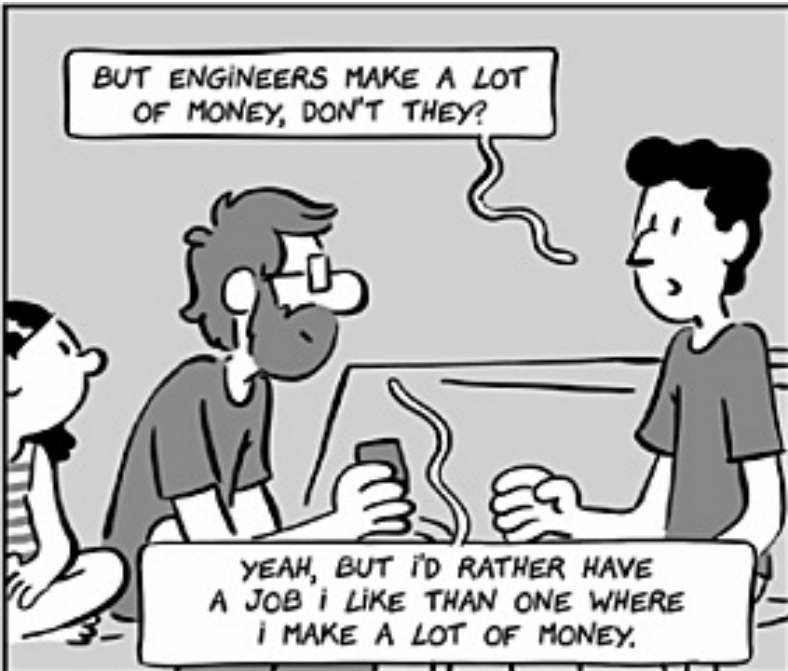


THAT FIRST DAY, THEY GAVE ME  
VERY SIMPLE TASKS TO DO.









ANYWAY, AFTER A FEW DAYS,  
I GOT A SMALL PROMOTION.

HEY! NEW GUY!



TAKE THESE!



YOU'RE A RESPONSIBLE AND CAPABLE GUY.

PUT THE BOOTS ON,  
YOU'RE SWITCHING TO  
THE CEMENT TEAM.

OK.



WATCH.

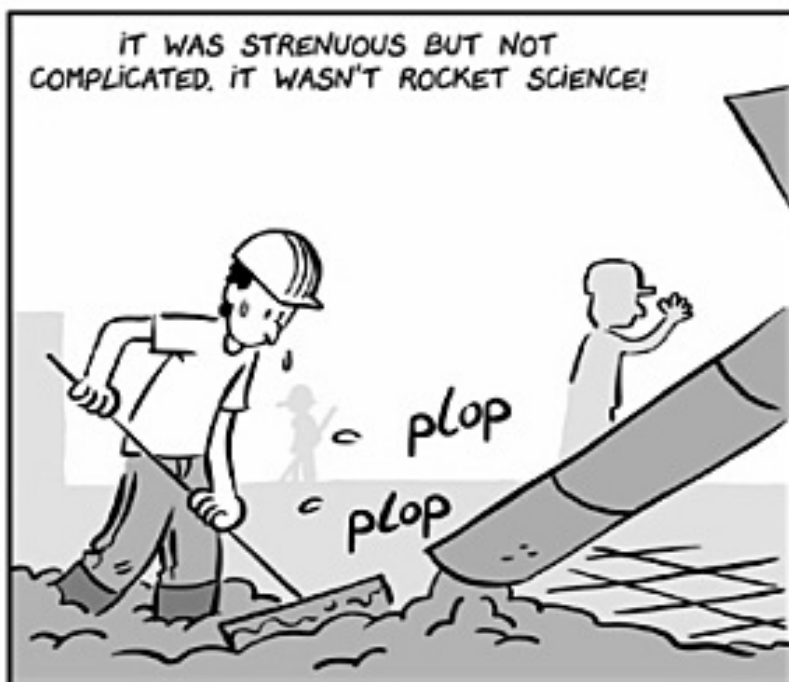
SO AS THE  
CONCRETE  
COMES DOWN,  
YOU SPREAD IT  
OUT EVENLY.



YOUR TURN.



IT WAS STRENUOUS BUT NOT  
COMPLICATED. IT WASN'T ROCKET SCIENCE!



BUT I SPENT THE DAY STANDING IN FRESH CONCRETE, AND SOME GOT IN MY BOOTS.



AFTER A FEW DAYS OF THAT, I HAD SEVERE BURNS ON MY LOWER LEGS.



WHAT'S GOING ON, NEW GUY?

THINK YOU'RE AT THE BEACH?

OH NO,  
BOSS!



IT'S JUST THAT  
I GOT BURNED.



SO?

IT HURTS  
TOO MUCH,  
I HAVE TO  
GO TO THE  
DOCTOR.



WOULD YOU  
BE ABLE TO GIVE  
ME THE MONEY  
FOR THE DAYS  
I'VE WORKED  
SO FAR?

SO I CAN AFFORD  
THE VISIT?



FIGURE IT OUT!

I'LL GIVE YOU YOUR  
MONEY WHEN YOU  
COME BACK...



I DIDN'T WANT TO BLOW UP AT MY BOSS,  
SO I LEFT WITHOUT A WORD.



WHAT'S WRONG, HAKIM?



MY LEGS REALLY HURT...



IT HAPPENED  
AT WORK...

WE'LL TAKE CARE OF YOU, DON'T MOVE!



OH, POOR HAKIM!

AAAH!



WE'RE TRULY  
JUST DOGS  
TO THEM!

WE HAVE NOTHING TO HOPE FOR HERE...











PREPARATIONS FOR  
ABDERRAHIM'S JOURNEY TOOK  
ABOUT A MONTH.

AND ONE DAY...

KNOCK!  
KNOCK!

AH!

IT'S YOU!

WELL?

HERE ARE YOUR  
DOCUMENTS AND TICKETS.

YOU LEAVE  
NEXT WEEK.

BERNARD  
DUGREZ.

IS HE A REAL PERSON?

I CAN'T  
TELL YOU  
ANYTHING.

IS THERE A CHANCE  
I'LL BE CAUGHT?

YES, IT COULD HAPPEN.

AT CUSTOMS, ACT CASUAL  
WHEN YOU GIVE THEM  
YOUR PASSPORT, AND  
DON'T SAY A WORD.

YOUR SKIN IS REALLY  
QUITE LIGHT.

YOU COULD  
EASILY PASS  
FOR FRENCH.



ABDERRAHIM LEFT IN FEBRUARY 2014.

I'LL CALL AS  
SOON AS I CAN!

DEPARTURE

WE WERE WORRIED BUT ALSO HOPEFUL.

BE CAREFUL AT CUSTOMS, DAD.

IT'LL BE ALRIGHT,  
I'M SURE OF IT.

DUPAR



I'M GONNA GO  
BACK TO WORK.

DON'T YOU WANT TO WAIT  
FOR YOUR WOUNDS TO HEAL?

I CAN'T AFFORD  
TO WAIT...

THE WHOLE FAMILY'S  
DEPENDING ON ME NOW.







LUCKILY, ABDERRAHIM HAD LEFT US THE CAR, AND I EARNED A BIT OF MONEY AS A CAB DRIVER.



TELL US EVERYTHING!



THE TRIP WENT REALLY WELL!

I DIDN'T HAVE ANY PROBLEMS GETTING THROUGH CUSTOMS.

WHEN I GOT TO PARIS, SOME OTHER REFUGEES EXPLAINED THAT THE ASYLUM PROCESS IS FASTER IN OTHER PARTS OF FRANCE.



I'M LIVING WITH ONE OF MY NEPHEWS IN AIX-EN-PROVENCE.

IT'S GOING WELL!



ONCE MY PAPERWORK IS FINALIZED, I'LL ASK TO BRING YOU HERE.



INSHALLAH!

WHAT ABOUT YOU?

OUR FINANCIAL SITUATION WAS VERY BAD, AND WE'D HAD TO MOVE TO AN APARTMENT IN A WORKING-CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD A FEW DAYS EARLIER.



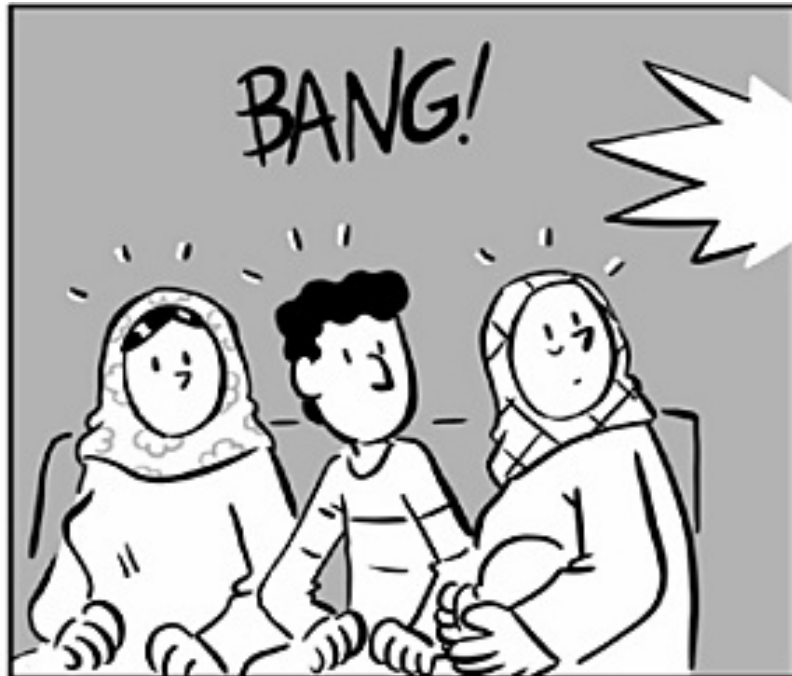
WE'RE GETTING BY.

I'LL TRY TO SEND YOU SOME MONEY.

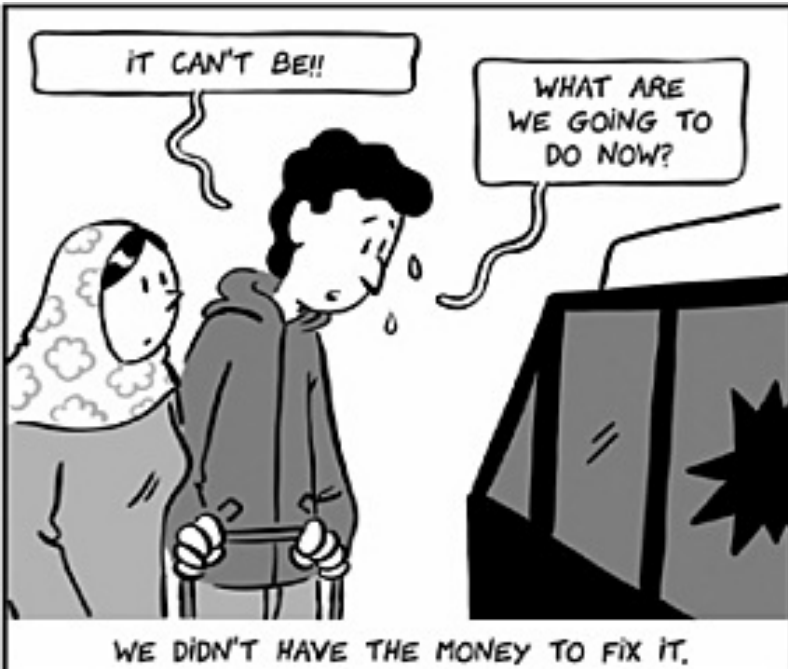


SINCE THE APARTMENT WAS TINY, WE WERE NOW LIVING WITH JUST NAJMEH'S MOTHER. HER SIBLINGS WERE LIVING WITH FAMILY FRIENDS.









A FEW WEEKS LATER, WE GOT A CALL FROM NAJMEH'S FATHER.





FAMILY REUNIFICATION WILL ONLY COVER NABIHA AND YOU, SINCE YOU'RE UNDER 18.

NO WAY!

I WON'T LEAVE WITHOUT THEM!!

ONCE YOU'RE HERE, WE'LL DO WHAT WE NEED TO SO THAT THEY CAN COME TOO.

I'M TOLD IT'S POSSIBLE.

IT WILL BE VERY QUICK. THINGS ARE SO ORGANIZED HERE!

AND IF YOU'RE ALREADY HERE, IT'LL BE EASIER TO BRING THEM OVER.

NO! I'M STAYING WITH THEM, AND THAT'S FINAL!!

IT'S BETTER IF YOU GO.

WITH WHAT LITTLE MONEY WE HAVE, TWO OF US WILL SURVIVE BETTER THAN FOUR.

HAKIM'S RIGHT...

WE CAN GET THINGS READY FOR THEM TO JOIN US.

GO, NAJMEH.

IN TWO OR THREE MONTHS, IT'LL BE DONE.

AND THEN WE CAN START OUR NEW LIVES TOGETHER.

NAJMEH HAD A HARD TIME DECIDING.



NAJMEH, HER MOTHER, AND HER TWO BROTHERS LEFT IN JUNE.

ONLY HER OLDER SISTER WAS STAYING IN TURKEY,  
WITH HER HUSBAND WHOM SHE'D MET THERE.

DING

ALL PASSENGERS  
FLYING TO PARIS ARE REQUESTED  
TO PROCEED TO THE DEPARTURE GATE  
AT THIS TIME...

↑ GATE G-H

← GATE A-B

SEE YOU SOON!

ATE G-H

IT WAS A VERY SAD DAY...

IF IT'S NOT SORTED OUT IN THREE MONTHS, I'M COMING BACK.

DON'T WORRY, NAJMEH.



WE WERE SO UPSET THAT WE DIDN'T NOTICE NAJMEH HAD TAKEN HADI WITH HER...



SHE ONLY NOTICED AT THE TICKET CHECKPOINT.

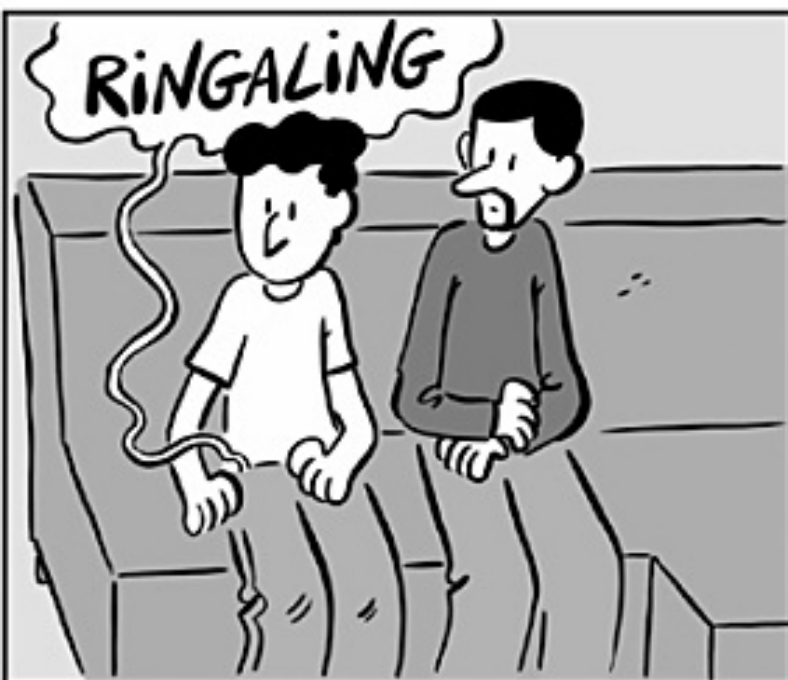




NAJMEH'S SISTER AND HER HUSBAND CAME BACK TO THE APARTMENT WITH ME.



THEY STAYED TO HELP FOR THAT FIRST NIGHT.



IT ALL REALLY HIT ME THE NEXT MORNING WHEN THEY LEFT.



BEFORE SHE LEFT, NAJMEH HAD GIVEN ME EXPLICIT INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO TAKE CARE OF HADI.



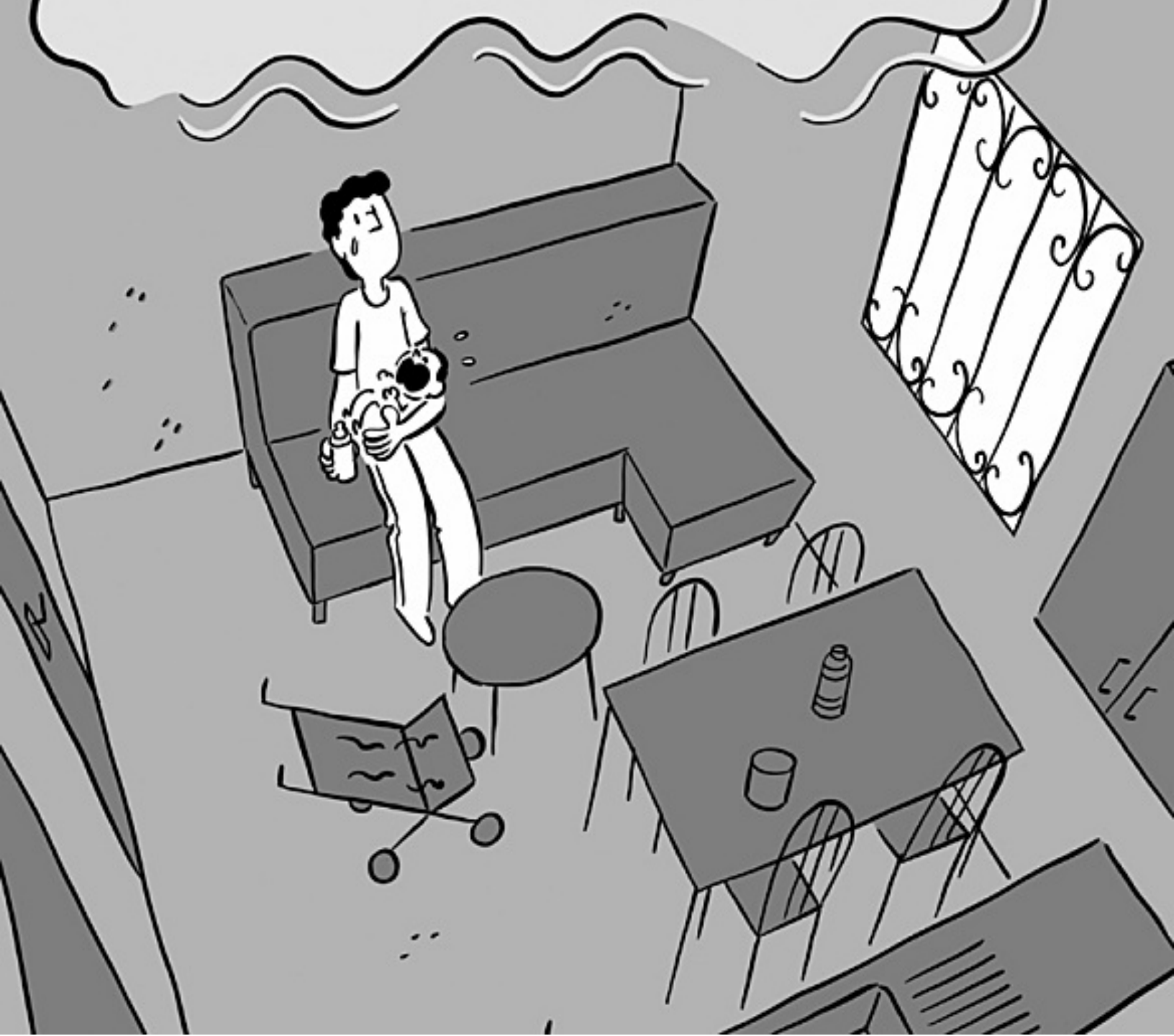
IN OUR CULTURE, IT'S USUALLY THE MOTHER WHO TAKES CARE OF THE CHILDREN.



UP TO THIS POINT, I'D PLAYED WITH HADI AND THAT'S ABOUT IT.



WAAAAAH!





I FINALLY FIGURED OUT  
WHAT WAS WRONG.

WAAAH!

IT'S OK,  
YOU'RE OK.

HE NEEDED CHANGING...

AND THAT'S WHEN IT STARTED TO HIT ME...

SNIFF!

WAS I GOING TO BE ABLE  
TO TAKE CARE OF MY SON?

AND IF SOMETHING HAPPENED TO  
ME, WHO WOULD LOOK AFTER HIM?

WAS THIS REALLY GOING  
TO TAKE THREE MONTHS?

WHAT IF IT WAS  
LONGER?

WHAT IF I COULDN'T  
EVER GET TO FRANCE?

WHAT IF I NEVER SAW  
NAJMEH AGAIN?



HADI WENT TO BED AT THE SAME TIME AS ME.



I OFTEN PUT HIM IN FRONT OF THE TV TO WATCH CARTOONS.



HE WENT EVERYWHERE WITH ME, IN ALL KINDS OF WEATHER. I DIDN'T REALLY HAVE MUCH OF A CHOICE.



HE WAS CONSTANTLY GETTING SICK LIVING LIKE THIS.



POOR BOY, YOU'VE GOT A FEVER.



I'M SORRY YOU HAVE TO GO THROUGH THIS.

NEXT TIME I HAVE TO GO OUT IN THIS WEATHER, I'LL FIND A SITTER FOR YOU.



BUT THE ONLY TIME I TOOK  
HIM TO ONE...

THANKS!

OH, NO  
PROBLEM!

WAAH!

WAAAAH

WHY ARE YOU  
CRYING LIKE  
THAT, HADI?

WAAAAH!

WOW, YOU  
SEEM REALLY  
UPSET...

ARE YOU MAD  
THAT I LEFT  
YOU TODAY?

OH MY! YOUR BOTTOM  
IS COMPLETELY RED!

WAAAAH!

UNBELIEVABLE!  
THEY DIDN'T CHANGE  
YOU ALL DAY!!

SHHH...

FEEL BETTER?

SNIFF!

FROM NOW ON,  
I'LL ALWAYS  
KEEP YOU WITH  
ME, HADI.

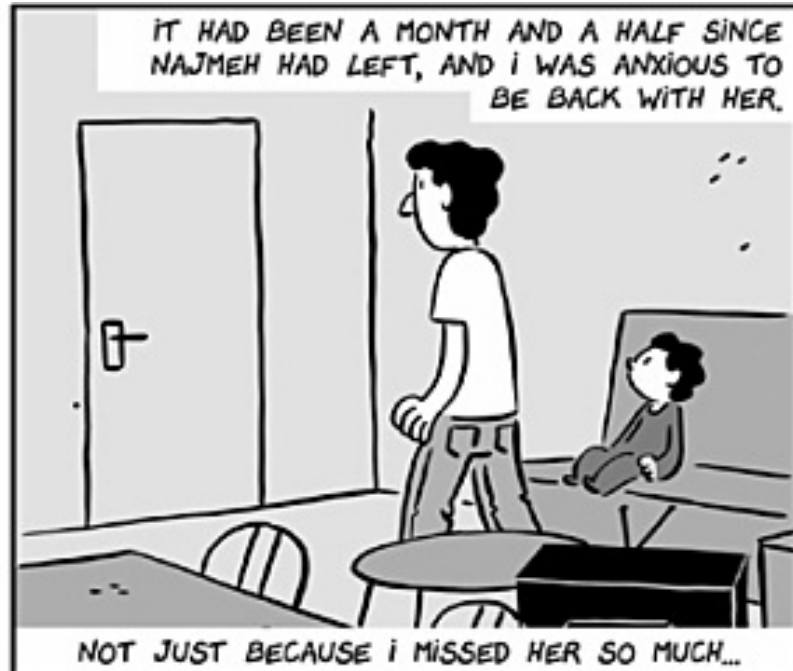
SNIFF!

SNIFF!

RINGALING







BESIDES, PEOPLE THERE LOVED TO GOSSIP.

THE OTHER DAY, I HEARD THE IRANIAN GUY WHO OWNS THE GROCERY STORE SAY YOU'RE NOT A MAN.

HOW COME?

YOU LET YOUR WIFE LEAVE.

HOW IS THAT ANY OF HIS BUSINESS?!

WELL...

WHAT, DO YOU AGREE WITH HIM??

CALM DOWN, HAKIM!

YOU'RE NOT A BAD HUSBAND, BUT IT'S TRUE YOU SHOULD HAVE MADE HER STAY.

OR EVEN GONE WITH HER!

IT'S NOT YOUR JOB TO RAISE THE KID!

AT THE END OF JULY, NAJMEH TOLD ME THAT SHE'D BEEN INSTRUCTED TO COME BACK IN SEPTEMBER FOR HADI'S AND MY PAPERS.



THIS WAS A BIG DEAL. I ONLY HAD ENOUGH SAVINGS TO GET THROUGH THE END OF AUGUST.







AND SEE, HIS CLOTHES  
ARE ALL MISMATCHED!

OH YEAH?

HE LOOKS OK!

I WAS GETTING  
BETTER AT TAKING  
CARE OF HIM, BUT  
I STILL WASN'T  
AN EXPERT!

HERE IN FRANCE, I FIND THAT  
MEN ARE VERY GOOD FATHERS.

THEY LOOK AFTER THEIR  
KIDS VERY WELL.

HM, I GUESS!

HEEEY!

IT DEPENDS!

WHEN I USED TO GET MY DAUGHTERS  
READY FOR SCHOOL, THEY SOMETIMES  
LOOKED A LITTLE STRANGE TOO.

LUCKILY, NOW THAT I'M  
GROWN UP, I CHOOSE  
MY OWN CLOTHES.

WE GOT THROUGH AUGUST, AND IN SEPTEMBER NAJMEH WENT IN FOR HER NEXT APPOINTMENT.





SORRY, SIR, BUT I CAN'T DO ANYTHING FOR YOU.

FOR THIS TYPE OF THING, YOU HAVE TO GO TO YOUR OWN COUNTRY'S EMBASSY.



WHAT??

BUT DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? IF I GO TO THE EMBASSY OF THE COUNTRY I FLED, I'LL BE ARRESTED AND SENT BACK THERE.

MAYBE SO.

BUT IT'S PROCEDURE.



THEIR ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES SOMETIMES SEEMED PRETTY OUT OF TOUCH WITH REALITY...



AS I LOOKED INTO THINGS MORE, I LEARNED THAT I COULD GIVE POWER OF ATTORNEY TO A LAWYER IN DAMASCUS, WHO WOULD SORT THINGS OUT FOR ME IN SYRIA.

BEEP!  
BEEP!



YES, MR. KABDI, I CAN CERTAINLY DO THAT FOR YOU.

JUST KNOW THAT IT COULD TAKE SOME TIME.

IN ANY CASE, IT WAS THE ONLY SOLUTION.

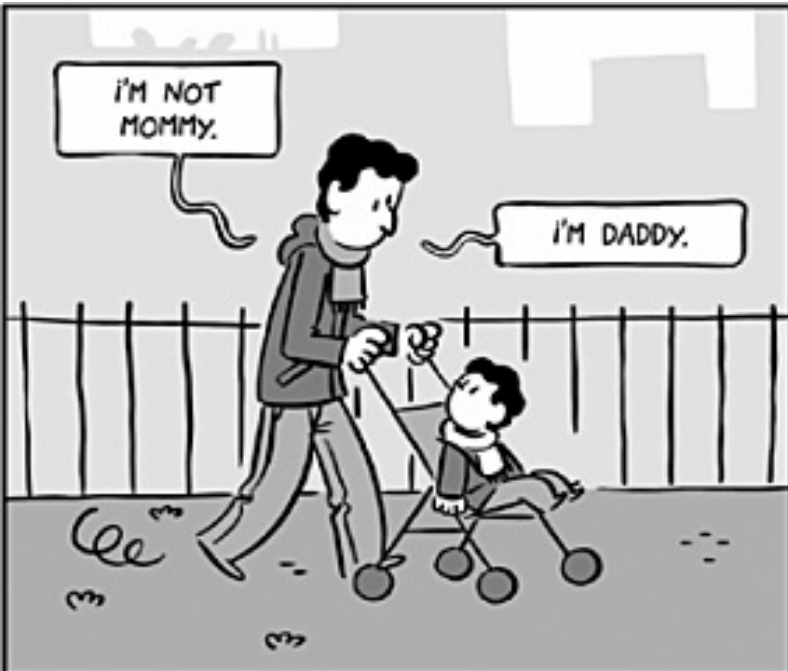


WITH ALL THE INQUIRIES AND APPOINTMENTS,  
SEVEN MONTHS HAD ALREADY PASSED SINCE  
NAJMEH HAD LEFT.



HADI WAS JUST STARTING  
TO SAY A FEW WORDS.

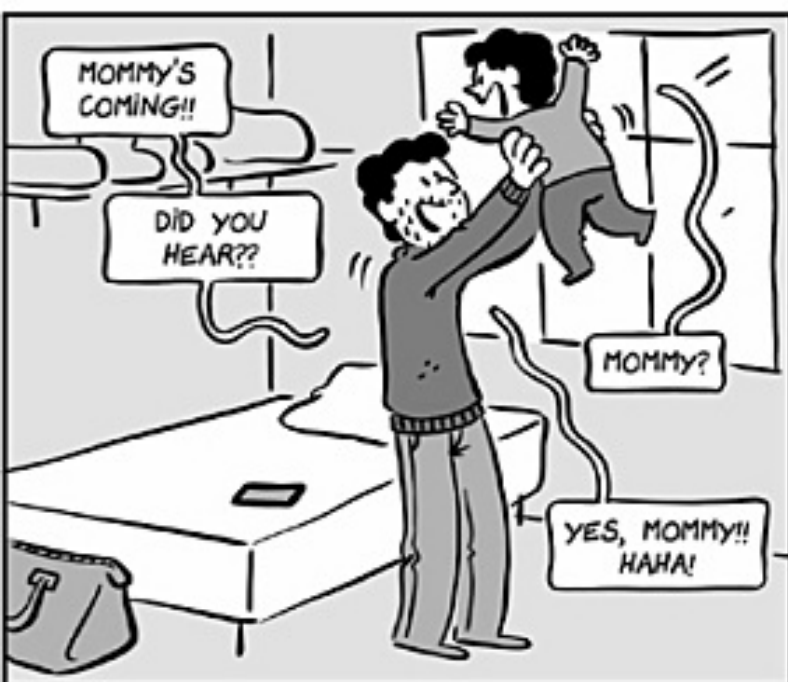












AND THEN A FEW WEEKS LATER...









ONCE THE CAR WAS FIXED UP,  
I POSTED ADS ONLINE, OFFERING MY  
SERVICES AS A TAXI DRIVER.



AND I GOT BACK TO BUSINESS.



THAT'LL BE  
35 LIRA, PLEASE!

HERE!



HAVE A  
NICE DAY!

SÖZGEN

THANKS!



RİNGAL-



HELLO?

YES,  
I CAN COME  
RIGHT AWAY.

WHERE AM  
I PICKING  
YOU UP?



THE DAYS WENT BY  
VERY QUICKLY...



NAJMEH'S DEPARTURE WAS VERY SAD,  
EVEN WORSE THAN THE FIRST TIME.



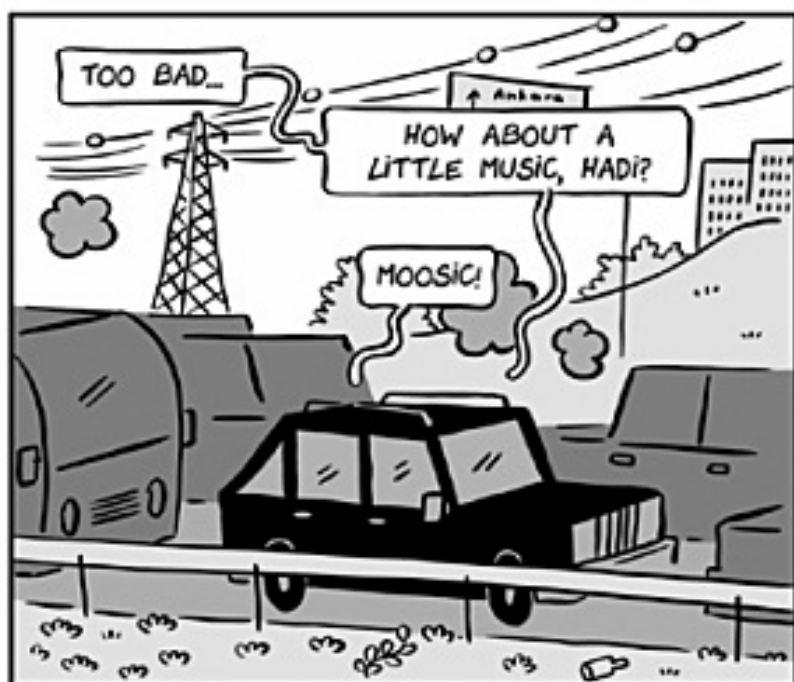
A COUPLE OF FRIENDS WERE INVITING ME TO MEET THEM AT A CAFÉ TO TAKE MY MIND OFF THINGS.



COME ON, WE HAVE SOMEONE WITH US WHO'S TAKING OUR SON TO THE PARK ACROSS THE STREET. SHE CAN LOOK AFTER HADI TOO.











WHEN MY FAMILY COULDN'T REACH ME,  
THEY'D CALLED NAJMEH TO TELL HER.



THE REGIME KEPT BOMBING OUR  
NEIGHBORHOOD IN SOUTHERN DAMASCUS.



DURING ONE OF THESE BOMBINGS, WHILE  
MY MOTHER AND SIBLINGS WENT TO SEEK  
REFUGE IN A SHELTER, MY FATHER  
DECIDED HE'D RATHER STAY BEHIND.



AND IF IT  
DOES, I'LL COME  
JOIN YOU.



JUST AFTER MY FAMILY LEFT,  
A BOMB FELL ON THE BUILDING.



HE DIDN'T SUFFER, HAKIM...







I WAS SAD...



...ANGRY...



DEPRESSED.

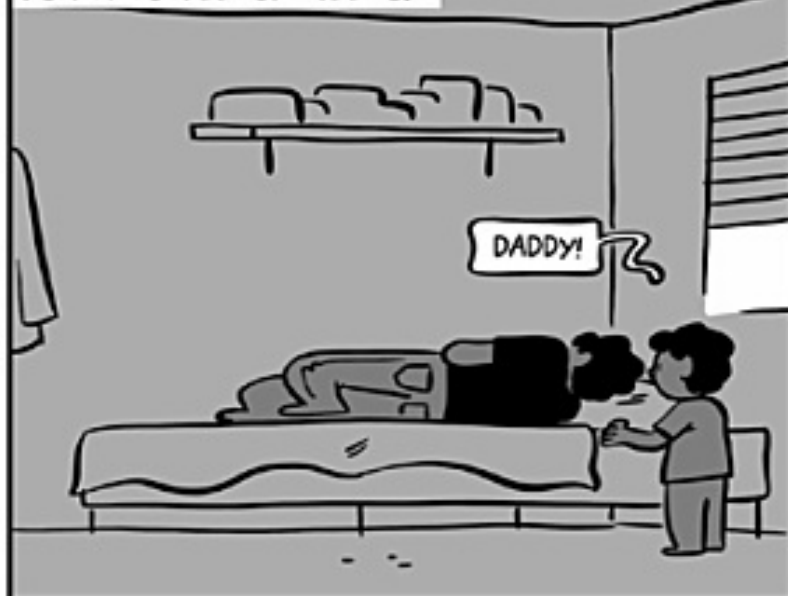


THIS WAS UNDOUBTEDLY ONE OF THE WORST PERIODS OF MY LIFE, AND THERE WAS STILL MORE TO COME...

I TRIED CALLING MY FAMILY TO FIND OUT MORE, BUT I COULDN'T GET THROUGH TO THEM.



I STAYED HOLED UP IN THE APARTMENT FOR A COUPLE OF WEEKS.











IT WAS A MONTH BEFORE I GOT THROUGH TO ONE OF MY BROTHERS.

HELLO?

HELLO,  
IT'S HAKIM!

WE TALKED ABOUT OUR FATHER, AND HE COMFORTED ME.

YOU HAVE TO LOOK  
AFTER YOURSELF.

OUR FATHER WOULDN'T WANT  
TO SEE YOU LIKE THIS.

HE WAS RIGHT...

BEEP!

YOU OK, HAKIM?

YES, I'M-

BETTER.

YOU CAN GO HOME,  
TARIQ.

I KNOW  
LIVING HERE IS  
DIFFICULT FOR YOU.

ARE YOU SURE?

YES...

THANK YOU,  
FRIEND.

I POSTED MY TAXI ADS  
ONLINE AGAIN.



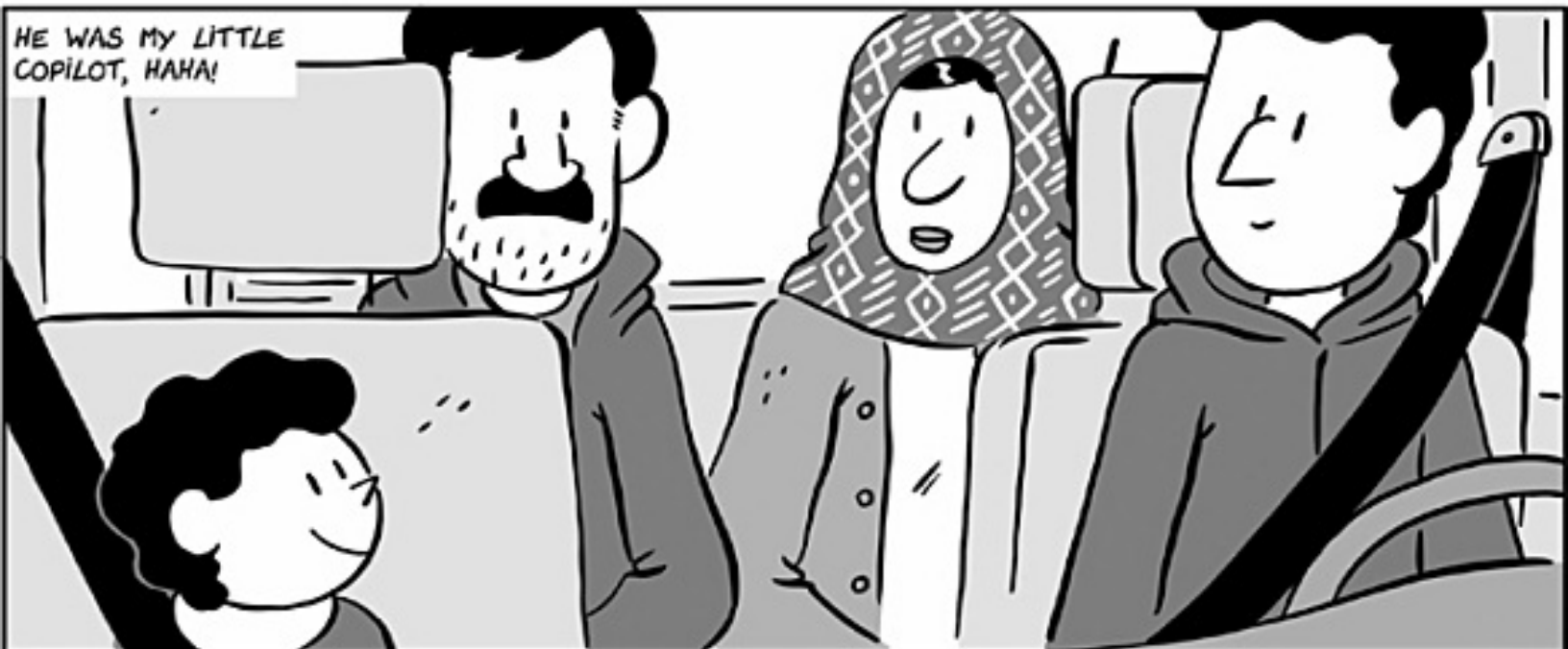
I HAD TO GO BACK TO WORK,  
NOT JUST FOR THE MONEY  
BUT TO CLEAR MY MIND.



SINCE I DIDN'T WANT TO PUT  
HADI IN CHILDCARE, HE WENT  
EVERYWHERE WITH ME.



HE WAS MY LITTLE  
COPILOT, HAH!



MY CUSTOMERS WERE REFUGEES, LIKE ME.  
THEY WERE UNDERSTANDING.





IN SPITE OF THIS WORK,  
I STILL WASN'T MAKING ENOUGH  
TO LIVE ON, AND EVERY  
MONTH NAJMEH'S FAMILY WAS  
SENDING A LITTLE MONEY.



IT WAS BECOMING HARD  
TO BORROW FROM FRIENDS...



AT LEAST I WAS ABLE  
TO PAY THE RENT.



YOU SPEAK ARABIC?



I'M SYRIAN.



I'M RAZZAQ.

PLEASSED TO  
MEET YOU!

I'M  
IRAQI.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO COME OVER FOR TEA?

UH...SURE!

I HAVE MY SON,  
LET ME GO GET HIM.

NO  
PROBLEM.

IT MAKES ME HAPPY  
TO SPEAK ARABIC.

I MOVED HERE FROM AN AREA  
WHERE IT WAS ALL TURKS.

AND SINCE I DON'T  
SPEAK TURKISH...

THE TWO OF US TALKED FOR A BIT.  
HE WAS REALLY NICE.

HE SEEMED TO BE A FAIRLY WEALTHY BUSINESSMAN.

HE SEEMED VERY  
HAPPY TO HAVE MET ME.

IN THE FOLLOWING WEEKS,  
WE SPENT QUITE A BIT  
OF TIME TOGETHER.

ENAN OZALIT



SINCE I SPOKE A LITTLE  
TURKISH, I HELPED HIM WHEN  
HE NEEDED IT.



THANK YOU, HAKİM.

I'M LUCKY YOU'RE HERE.

IT'S NO  
TROUBLE.



I'M SURE IF OUR  
SITUATIONS WERE  
REVERSED, YOU'D  
DO THE SAME.



DADDY, PARK!

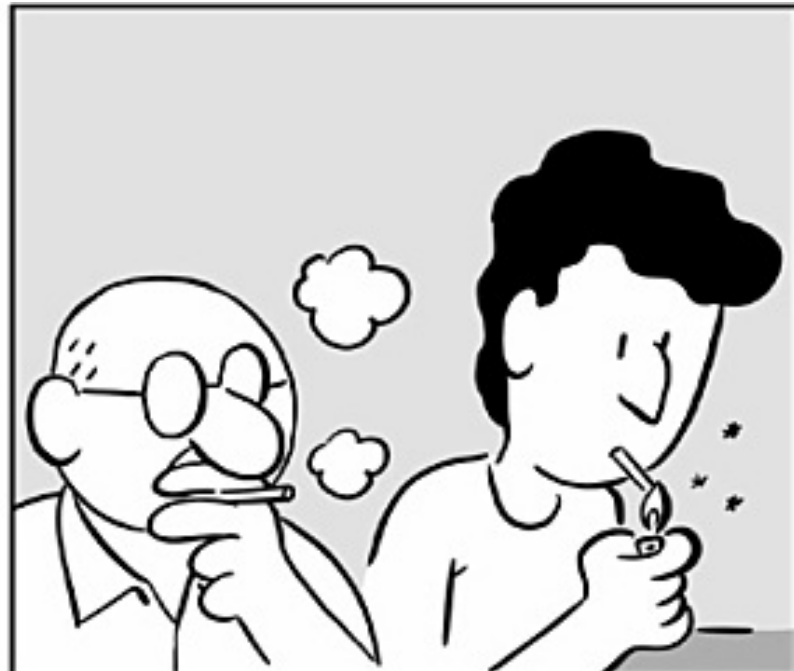
YOU WANT  
TO GO TO  
THE PARK?



I'LL COME  
WITH YOU.

I DON'T FEEL LIKE GOING  
HOME RIGHT AWAY.







WAS THAT YOUR WIFE?

YES.

WHY DON'T  
YOU JOIN HER  
IN FRANCE?

IT'S COMPLICATED. I'M  
WAITING FOR MY PAPERS  
TO BE SORTED OUT.

BUT IT'S TAKING  
FOREVER...

WHY DON'T YOU HIRE A SMUGGLER?

IT'D BE  
FASTER!

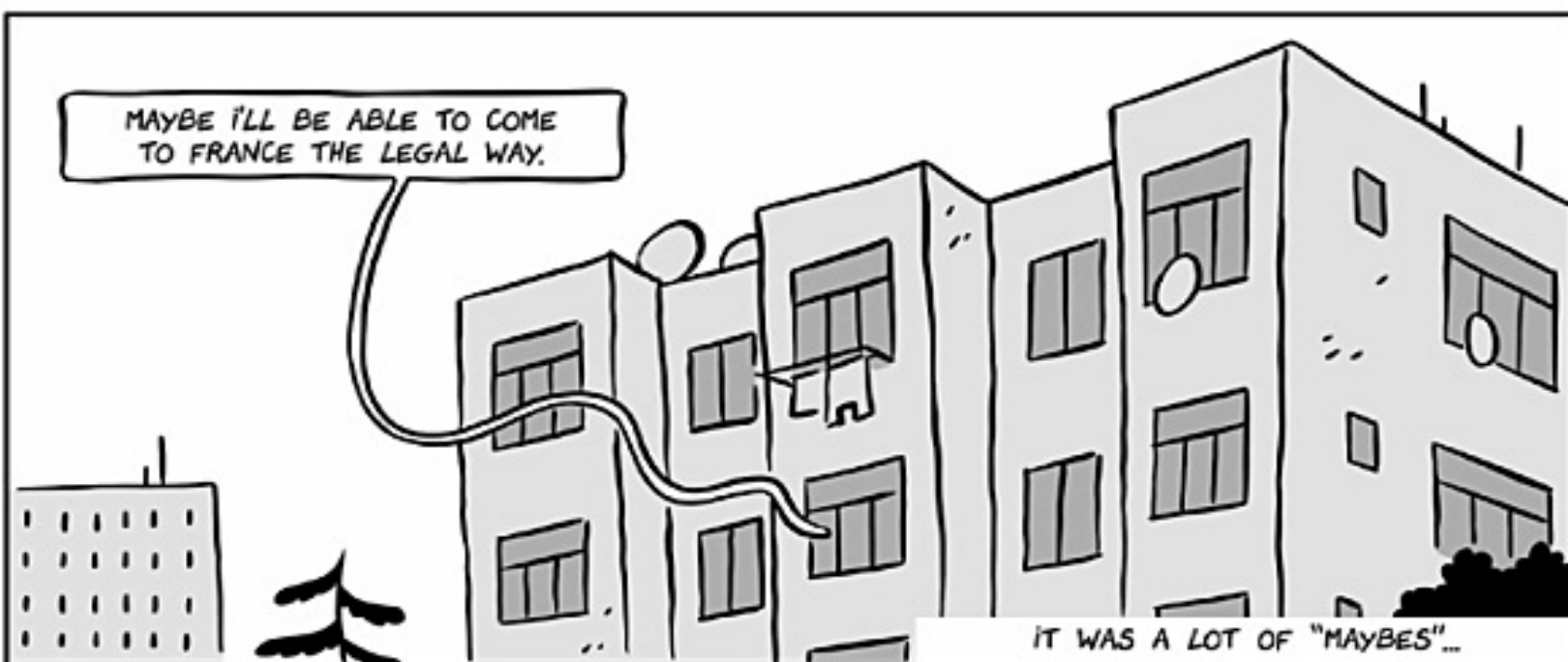
IT'S DANGEROUS!

AND ANYWAY I DON'T  
HAVE THE MONEY.

IF YOU WANT, I CAN  
LEND YOU THE MONEY.









I THOUGHT ABOUT IT FOR DAYS AND DAYS.



MY PROBLEM WITH IT WAS THE RECKLESSNESS OF CROSSING THE SEA.



ESPECIALLY WITH A CHILD.



WELL? HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT MY OFFER?

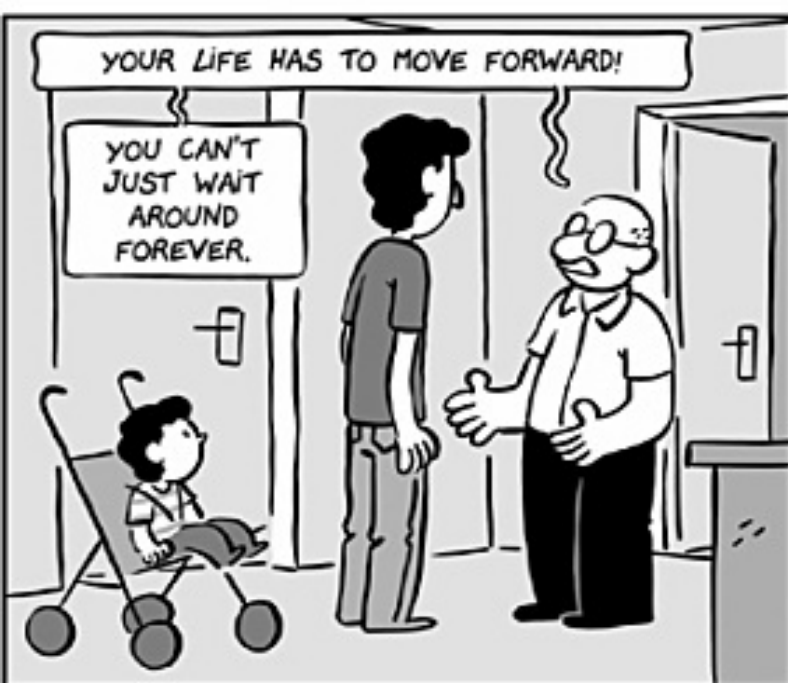
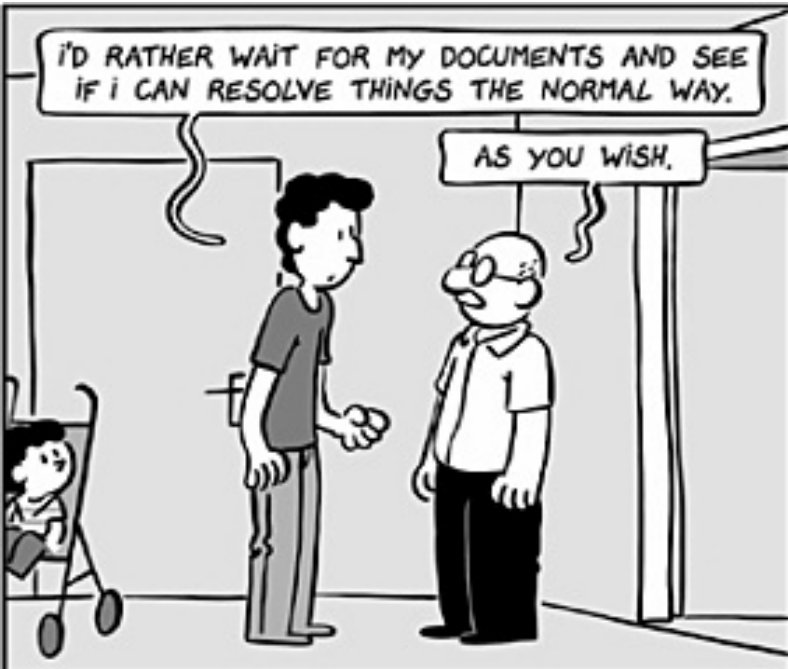


I'M NOT GOING TO DO IT...

IT'S VERY GENEROUS OF YOU.



BUT IT'S TOO RISKY.



AND ONE DAY...





THEY THOUGHT I WAS FALSIFYING DOCUMENTS AND THEY CLOSED MY FILE.







\*A COUSIN IN AMMAN, SEE BOOK 1





A FEW DAYS LATER, HE ARRIVED IN ISTANBUL WITH HIS DAUGHTER.



I DROVE THEM TO THE BUS THAT WOULD TAKE THEM TO IZMİR.



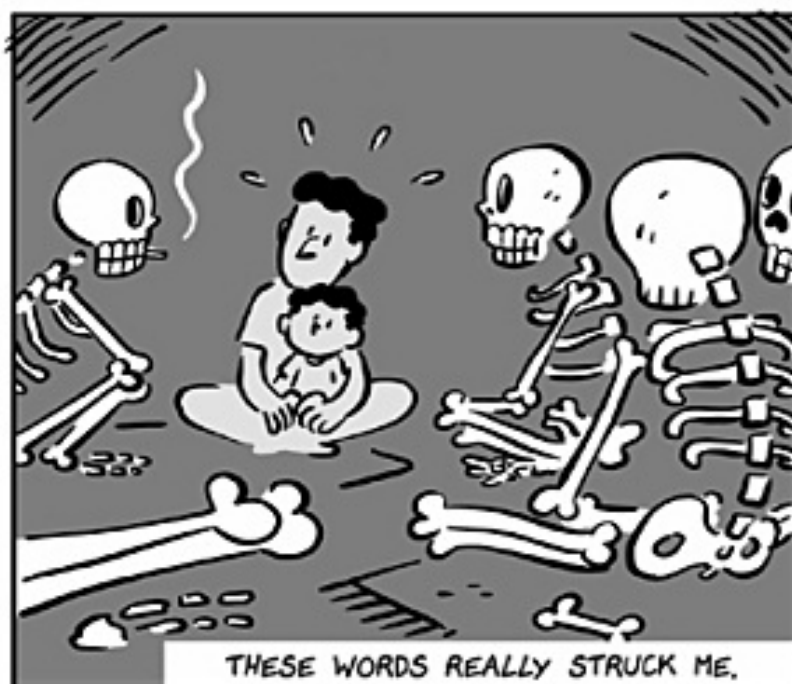


HE LIVED IN A CRAMPED LITTLE APARTMENT WITH SIX OTHER SYRIANS.





I TALKED WITH THEM ABOUT THIS MEANS  
OF GETTING TO FRANCE.

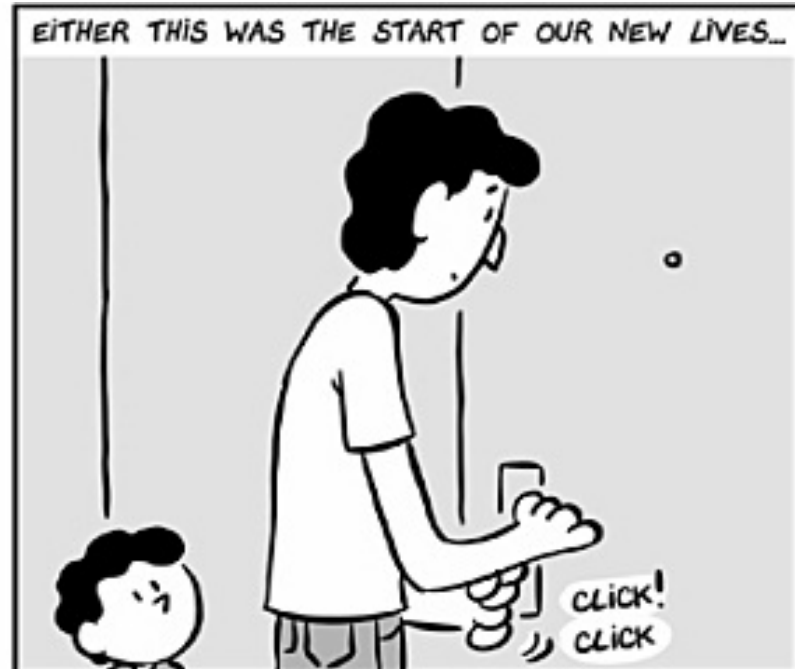




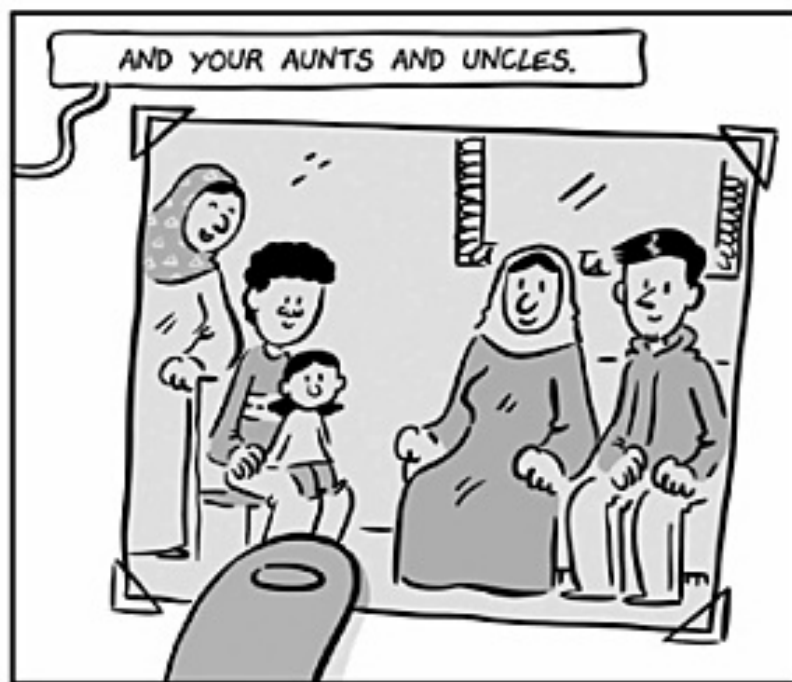
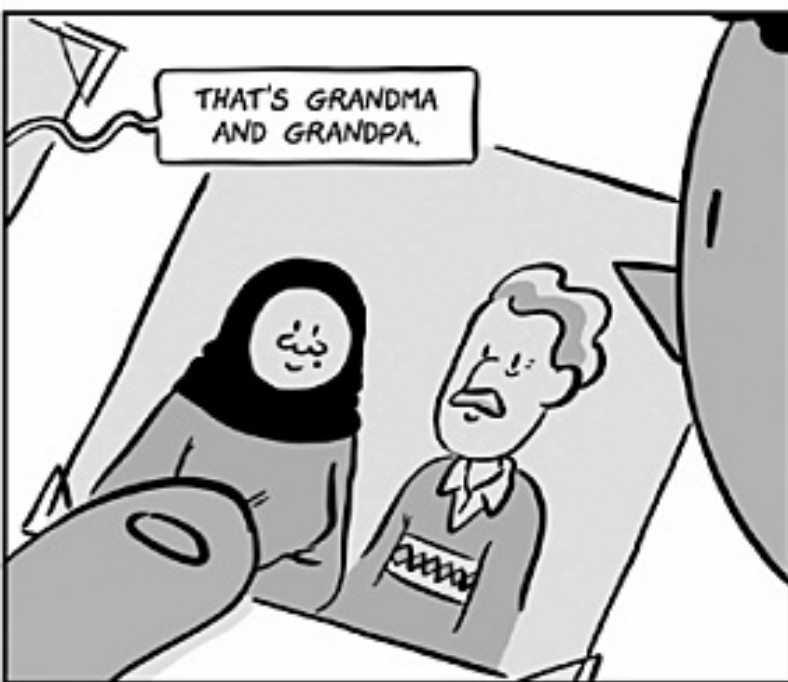
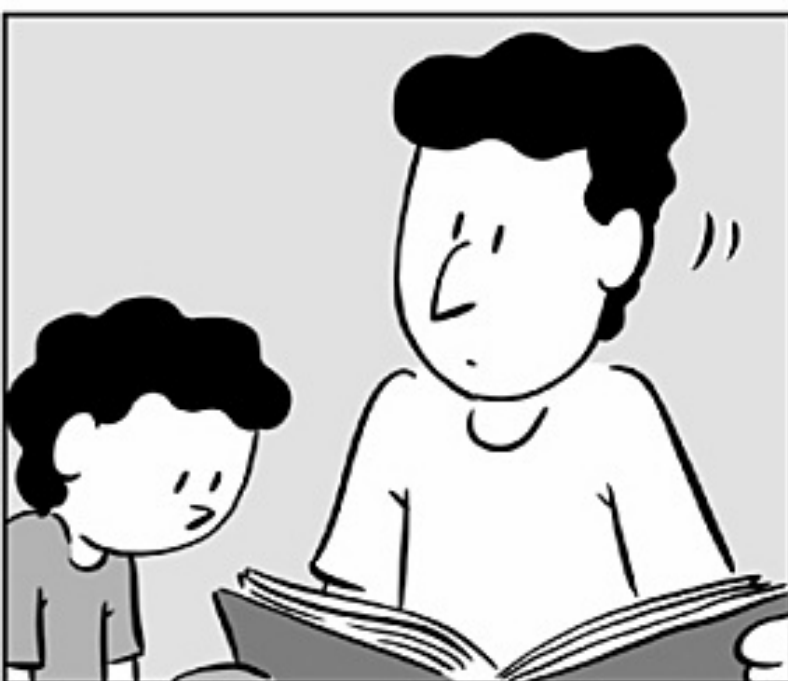
















THE NEXT DAY, I ENTRUSTED MY FATHER-IN-LAW'S CAR TO A FRIEND OF HIS.



HE WOULD SELL IT AND SEND THE MONEY TO ABDERRAHIM.

AND TARIQ CAME AND GOT THE KEYS TO MY APARTMENT SO HE COULD MOVE IN.



AND THAT WAS IT. I HAD NO MORE TIES TO TURKEY.



IT WAS STRANGE, AFTER ALL OUR TIME SPENT HERE.





AT THE BUS STATION, I LOOKED  
FOR A BUS TO İZMİR.



I MANAGED TO FIND ONE THAT WAS ABOUT  
TO LEAVE.



MOST OF THE PEOPLE ON  
THE BUS WERE SYRIAN.



THEY WERE SURELY GOING TO İZMİR FOR THE  
SAME REASONS WE WERE.




WE WERE LEAVING FOR GOOD AND  
GOING DOWN THE PATH OF REFUGEES.









I HOPE THINGS GET  
BETTER IN THEIR COUNTRY  
SO THEY CAN BE  
TOGETHER AGAIN SOMEDAY.



"MAY ALLAH PROTECT US!"

WORK ON MY GRAPHIC NOVEL  
ON HAKIM WAS GOING WELL.



WHAT I HAD INITIALLY IMAGINED  
WOULD BE A BRIEF SUMMARY  
WAS GRADUALLY TURNING  
INTO A HUGE STORY.



WHEN YOU WATCH OR READ  
THINGS ABOUT REFUGEES,  
THEIR PATH APPEARS LINEAR,  
AIMED AT A SINGLE GOAL:  
EUROPE.



IN REALITY,  
IN HAKIM'S CASE ANYWAY,  
IT WAS MUCH LESS SIMPLE  
(OR SIMPLISTIC).



HIS GOAL HAD BEEN TO LEAVE  
SYRIA TO SAVE HIS SKIN,  
NOT TO REACH EUROPE.



HE COULD HAVE BUILT  
A LIFE IN LEBANON, JORDAN,  
TURKEY, OR ELSEWHERE  
IF CIRCUMSTANCES  
HAD ALLOWED.



SO I COULDN'T GLOSS OVER  
ALL THESE STEPS AND  
REDUCE HIS JOURNEY TO A  
"QUEST FOR EUROPE."

I HAD TO TELL IT ALL...



Hakim: I have a  
2-hour window if  
you want me to tell  
you the next part.



LET'S DO IT!







IT'S HARD TO REMEMBER DATES.

I THINK IF I WAS INTERROGATED  
BY THE POLICE FOR A CRIME  
I DIDN'T COMMIT, I'D GET SO MIXED UP  
OVER MY OWN CALENDAR THAT  
I'D IMMEDIATELY SEEM SUSPICIOUS.



BELIEVE ME, WHEN THE POLICE  
QUESTION YOU, AND YOU  
KNOW WHAT'S AT STAKE, YOU  
REMEMBER THINGS VERY WELL.



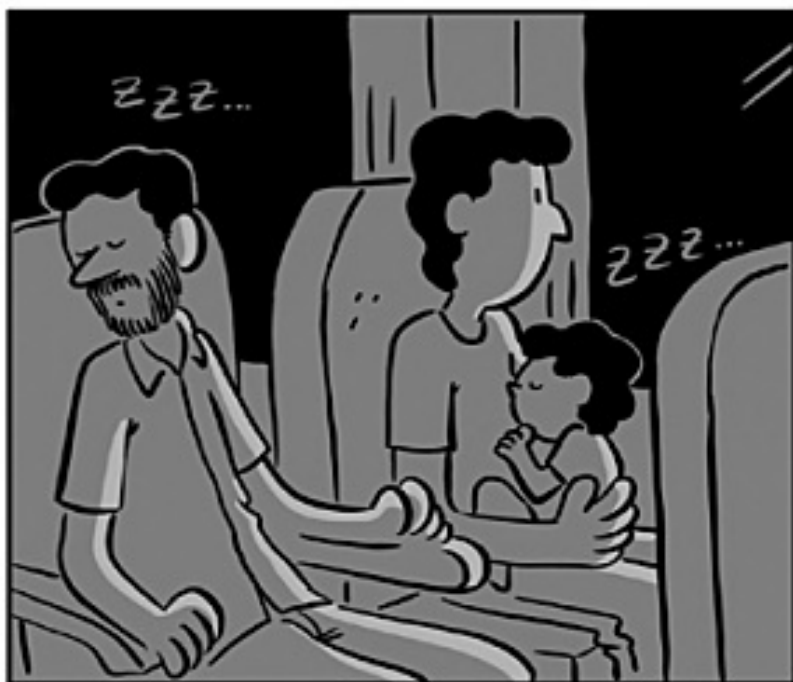
BUT YOU MAKE  
ME COMFORTABLE.

SO REALLY  
IT'S YOUR  
FAULT!

HAHA!



SO, WE LEFT IN AUGUST AND THE  
TRIP TOOK ALL NIGHT.



I THOUGHT OF THE FUTURE, AND THE PAST, I LOOKED BACK ON WHAT I'D GONE THROUGH THOSE LAST FEW MONTHS, AND I WONDERED WHAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN TO US. WAS I MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE?



My MIND WAS RACING...

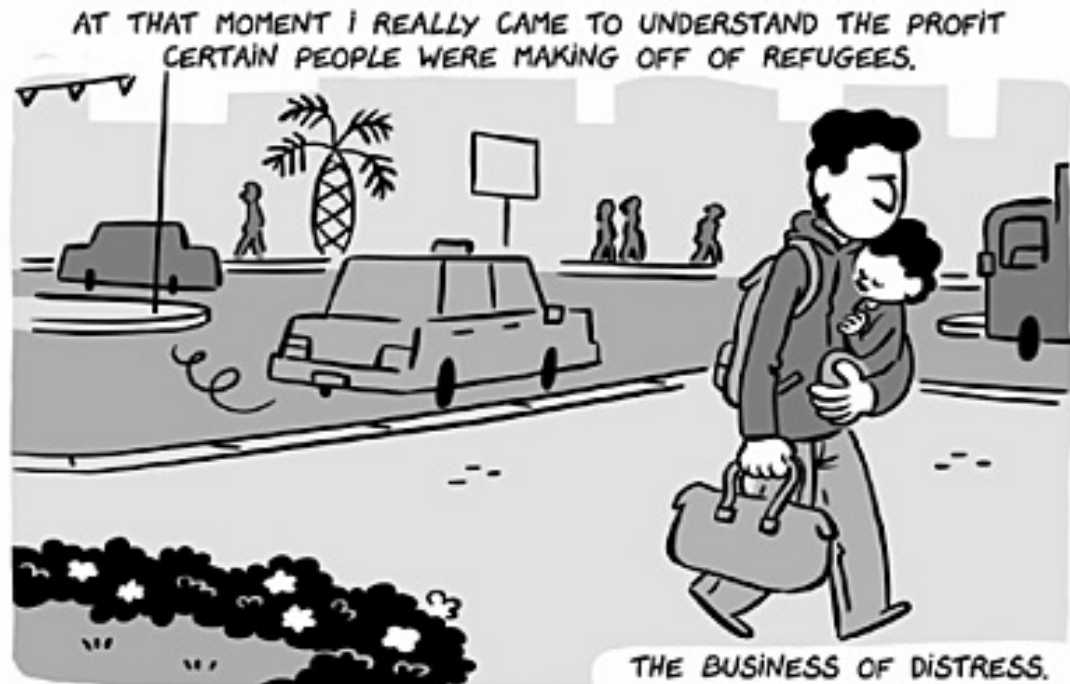
WE ARRIVED AT DAWN AT THE BUS STATION IN İZMİR, AWAY FROM THE CENTER OF TOWN.











THE BASMANE AREA, A KIND OF  
OPEN-AIR MARKET FOR EMIGRATION.





THERE WERE SYRIANS EVERYWHERE, AND IRAQIS AND AFGHANS TOO... ALL WAITING TO LEAVE FOR EUROPE.



THERE WERE SMUGGLERS SPEAKING WITH THEIR FUTURE CUSTOMERS.





YOU WON'T FIND ANYTHING  
WITHIN THE CITY PROPER.

I CAN'T AFFORD THE  
SUBURBS, BUT I'D SUGGEST  
GOING THERE IF YOU CAN.

ARE YOU GONNA LEAVE SOON?

WITHIN A DAY OR TWO.

OH?

UH,  
THANKS...

AS SOON  
AS I CAN...

GOOD LUCK, THEN.

PERSONALLY,  
I'M ON MY THIRD TRY.

AT LEAST IT'S BETTER  
THAN DROWNING, RIGHT?

FOR SURE.

I HOPE IT  
WORKS OUT  
FOR YOU.

EACH TIME MY BOAT'S  
BEEN CAUGHT AND  
I'VE BEEN BROUGHT  
BACK HERE.

I'LL TAKE  
MY LEAVE.

MAYBE I'LL SEE YOU AGAIN.

BYE.

FULL



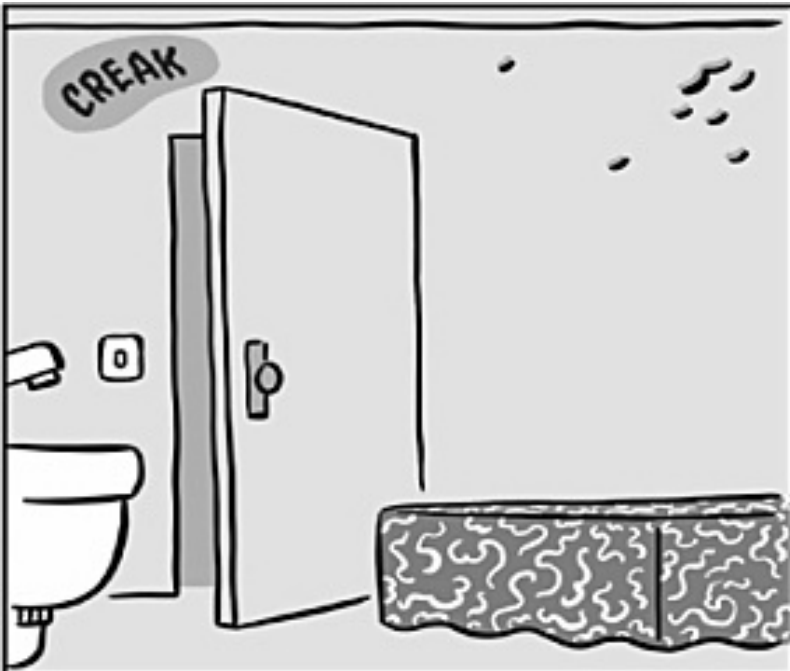














THE NEXT MORNING, I TOOK  
A TAXI BACK TO BASMANE.



I HAD TO FIND A SMUGGLER, BUT I DIDN'T  
REALLY KNOW HOW TO GO ABOUT IT.



IT CERTAINLY SEEMED LIKE THEY ALL SPOKE  
ARABIC (MOST OF THEM WERE SYRIAN).



BUT I DIDN'T KNOW WHETHER I COULD SPEAK  
TO THEM OPENLY, OR WHETHER THERE WERE  
CODES TO USE OR THINGS I SHOULDN'T SAY.



WHEN I REALIZED THEY WERE  
CARRYING ON IN FULL VIEW  
OF THE POLICE, I MADE UP MY  
MIND TO APPROACH THEM.



IT WAS A LITTLE LIKE  
CHECKING OUT DIFFERENT  
TRAVEL AGENCIES AT  
A TRAVEL EXPO.



WE OFFER A GETAWAY ON  
A 15-FOOT BOAT, COCKTAIL  
SERVICE NOT INCLUDED  
BUT MAXIMUM SAFETY FOR  
THE ABSURDLY LOW PRICE OF  
€2000!!

WE PROVIDE A BUDGET OPTION:  
YOUR FEET'LL BE IN THE WATER AND  
IT'LL SMELL LIKE GASOLINE BUT IT'S AN  
ASTONISHING EXPERIENCE, YOU'LL SEE.

MER TRANKIL

☆☆☆  
EUROPA ♥ DREAM  
☆☆☆

AT EUROPA DREAM, WE GUARANTEE  
YOU'LL REACH EUROPE AND  
EXPERIENCE THE THRILL OF  
A NIGHT CROSSING.

THANKS, THANKS!

I HAVE TO THINK ABOUT IT.

WHO SHOULD I TRUST? WHAT WOULD GIVE ME THE BEST CHANCE OF GETTING THERE? DID PAYING MORE MEAN THE TRIP WOULD BE SAFER?

IT WAS VERY DIFFICULT TO CHOOSE.



HI THERE!

Hi!

WELL?  
DID YOU FIND A ROOM?

YES, THANKS FOR THE TIP.

NOW I'M LOOKING FOR A SMUGGLER.

BUT IT'S NOT EASY TO CHOOSE.

GOOD TIMING, I JUST FOUND ONE AND I'M LEAVING IN TWO DAYS.

THE PRICE IS DECENT AND APPARENTLY HIS BOATS DON'T GET CAUGHT OFTEN.

IF YOU WANT, YOU CAN GIVE ME YOUR NUMBER AND WHEN I GET THERE, I'LL TELL YOU HOW IT WENT.

OH, PERFECT!

THANKS!

I GAVE HIM MY NUMBER AND WENT BACK TO THE HOTEL.





WE STAYED IN THE HOTEL FOR THE NEXT TWO DAYS.



THE WAIT FELT ENDLESS TO ME.



I FELT EXCITED, AFRAID, AND UNCERTAIN...



WOULD WE MANAGE TO FIND A SMUGGLER?



WE COULDN'T STAY HERE LONG, EVERYTHING WAS TOO EXPENSIVE.

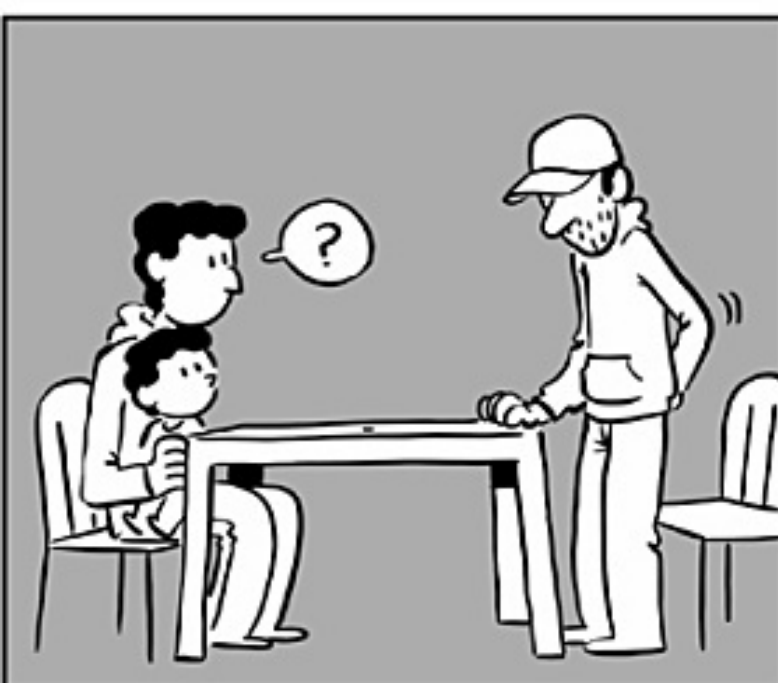














BEFORE GOING TO THE AGENCY TO PAY FOR THE CROSSING, I DECIDED I ABSOLUTELY HAD TO BUY US LIFE JACKETS.



I COULD HAVE DONE IT EARLIER BUT I DIDN'T THINK OF IT UNTIL THEN, FACED WITH OUR IMMINENT DEPARTURE.



FIRST OFF, WE HAVE THIS WHISTLE.



FWEET!



IT'S SO LOUD, HUH?

THAT'S SO YOU CAN BE  
FOUND IN AN EMERGENCY.

IF YOUR  
BOAT'S ADRIFT  
OR EVEN IF  
YOU FALL INTO  
THE WATER.



WE ALSO HAVE LIGHTS,  
AND WATERPROOF BAGS FOR PHONES...



UH THANKS, I'LL JUST  
TAKE TWO LIFE JACKETS.

ONE FOR ME AND  
ONE FOR MY SON.



OH?





WE DON'T HAVE CHILDREN'S SIZES,  
BUT I CAN OFFER YOU A RING  
AND ARM BANDS FOR HIM.



I DIDN'T REALLY HAVE TIME TO LOOK  
ANYWHERE ELSE.

WE'LL HAVE  
HIM TRY IT  
OUT TO SEE.

ARMS UP,  
YOUNG  
MAN.



THEREE!

IT'S  
PERFECT.

SWIM?



WHAT DO YOU THINK?



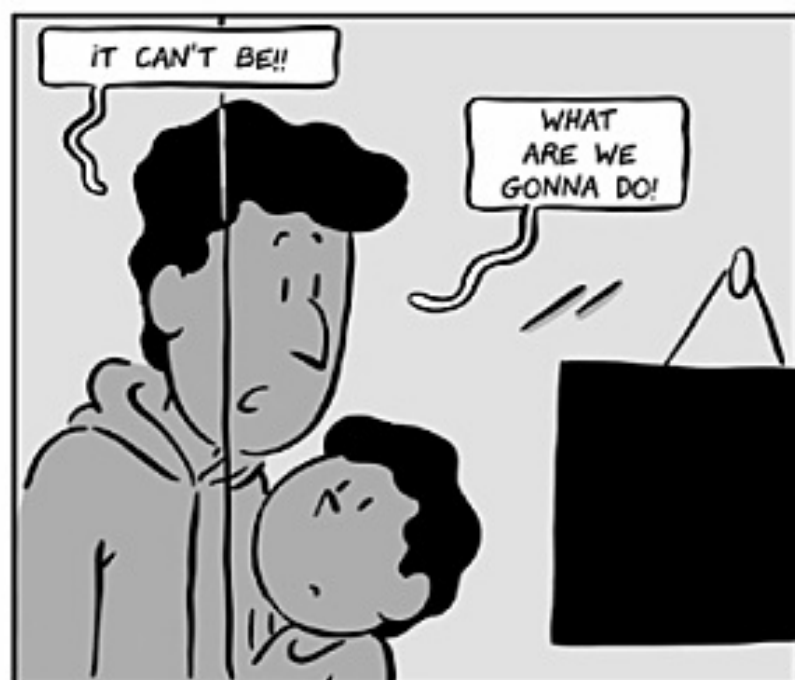
SIR?

SO WHAT DO  
YOU THINK?



DADDYYY!











WE RUSHED BACK TO THE HOTEL.  
IT WAS NEARLY TIME TO LEAVE.

HELLO!

I SUPPOSE YOU WANT TO BOOK ANOTHER...

...NIGHT?

NO THANKS!

I'M LEAVING NOW.

TAP!

TAP!

TAP!

PLAY,  
DADDY?

NO TIME,  
KIDDO, WE'VE  
GOTTA GO.

TONIGHT, WE'RE  
GOING  
ON A BOAT RIDE.

BOAT?

THAT MUST BE OUR RIDE...

KISIKPET OTEL

HI THERE, I'M...

GET IN!

THE DRIVER DIDN'T SAY A WORD THE WHOLE WAY.



ABRUPTLY, THE CAR STOPPED IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE.













THE TRUCK STARTED...

VROOM



THERE WERE ABOUT THIRTY OF US:  
OLD AND YOUNG, MEN AND WOMEN.



NO ONE SPOKE. THE HEAT WAS STIFLING  
AND IT WAS HARD TO BREATHE.



EVERY TIME THE DRIVER BRAKED OR WENT  
AROUND A BEND, WE SLID INTO EACH OTHER.



I THOUGHT THEY WERE GOING TO DROP  
US OFF SOMEWHERE AFTER A SHORT RIDE.



IN FACT, WE RODE  
LIKE THIS FOR ABOUT AN HOUR.

I STARTED IMAGINING ALL KINDS OF THINGS:  
THEY WERE GOING TO KILL US, KIDNAP US,  
THROW US INTO THE SEA...



WAAAAH!

SNIFF!

SNIFF!

TO TAKE MY MIND OFF THINGS, I STARTED RECITING NIZAR QABBANI'S\* POEMS TO MYSELF.

I'VE BEEN TRYING TO DRAW A LAND...  
WHICH TAUGHT ME ALWAYS TO LIVE IN TUNE  
WITH LOVE, AND SO FOR YOU, IN SUMMER, I'LL  
STRETCH OUT THE CLOAK OF MY LOVE,  
AND IN WINTER WHEN IT STARTS TO RAIN, I'LL  
WRING OUT YOUR DRESS.

SNIFF!

SNIFF!

I'VE BEEN TRYING  
TO DRAW A LAND... WITH A PARLIAMENT  
OF JASMINE... WITH A PEOPLE AS  
DELICATE AS JASMINE... WHERE DOVES  
SLUMBER ABOVE MY HEAD AND  
THE MINARETS IN MY EYES  
SHED THEIR TEARS...

WAAAAH!

WAAAAH!

I'VE BEEN TRYING TO DRAW A CITY OF  
LOVE, FREE OF ALL INHIBITIONS...

IT WAS ALL TOO MUCH...



THE TRUCK FINALLY STOPPED.

**SCREECH**



**CLANG!**



GET OUT!



WE COULDN'T SEE IT, BUT WE COULD HEAR THE SEA.

WHSHHH...

WHSHHH...



LISTEN!

WHSHHH...

WHSHHH...



HEAD OVER THAT WAY, YOU'LL FIND A LITTLE PATH.



YOU HAVE TO KEEP QUIET.

NO ONE  
CAN TALK.



AFTER A BIT,  
YOU'LL COME TO A BEACH.

THE PEOPLE THERE'LL TAKE CARE OF YOU.



YOU'RE NOT  
COMING?

WE COULD GET LOST!

WHAT IF  
THE POLICE  
CATCH US?



DO WHAT I SAID, AND NOTHING  
WILL HAPPEN TO YOU.



WE STARTED DOWN THE LITTLE PATH, WALKING SINGLE FILE.

RUSTLE!

DID YOU  
HEAR THAT?

SHHH!

WE WERE ALL TERRIFIED.

THIS IS MY SECOND  
ATTEMPT AT THIS.

THERE'S NOTHING  
TO FEAR HERE.

I HEARD THE SMUGGLERS  
BOUGHT A STRETCH OF BEACH  
FROM TURKISH OFFICIALS, SO  
THEY HAVE IT TO THEMSELVES.

I DON'T  
KNOW IF IT WAS TRUE, BUT I HEARD THIS  
RUMOR SEVERAL TIMES DURING MY JOURNEY.

WE WALKED IN DARKNESS FOR ABOUT TEN  
MINUTES.

BEFORE REACHING THE BEACH.

WHSHHH...

WHSHHH...

IT WAS PAST MIDNIGHT.

WHSHHHHH...

WHSHHHHH...

WHSHHHHH...





IT WAS PRETTY SURREAL. THERE WERE ABOUT A HUNDRED REFUGEES SITTING ON THE SAND, IN TOTAL SILENCE AND DARKNESS.



THE ONLY PEOPLE STANDING WERE ABOUT A DOZEN SMUGGLERS WATCHING OVER THEM.



THEY WERE ARMED.

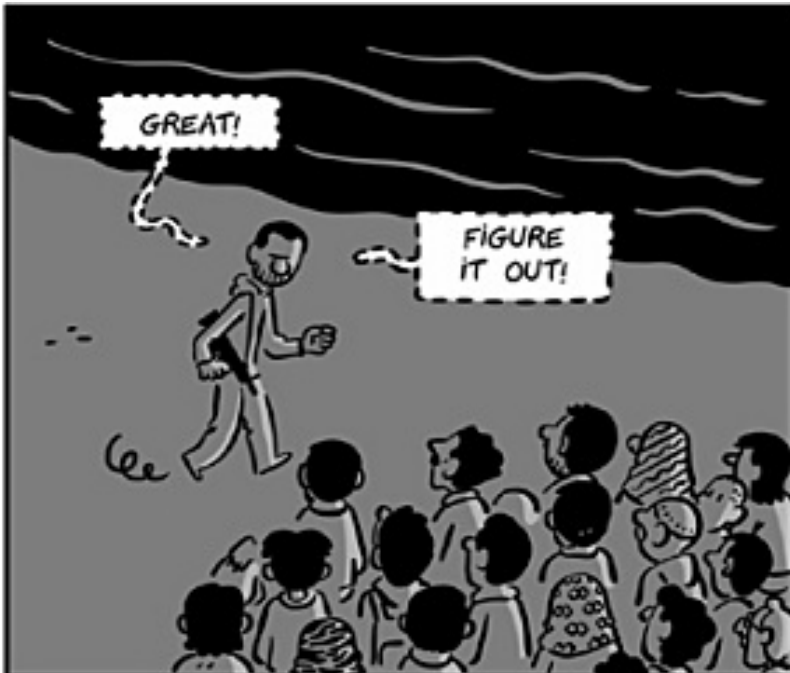
THERE WERE NO BOATS IN THE WATER, AND WE WONDERED IF IT WAS WISE TO GO DOWN THERE.



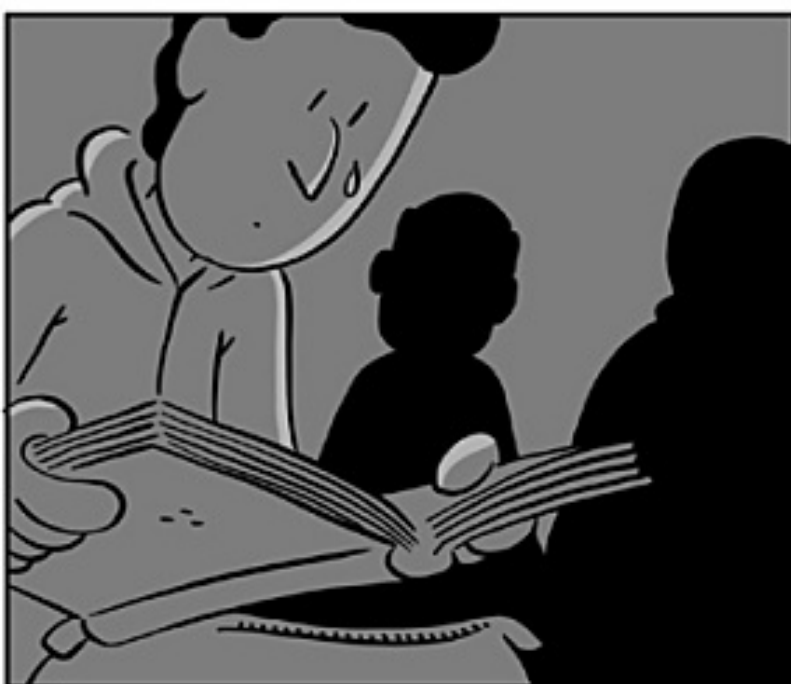
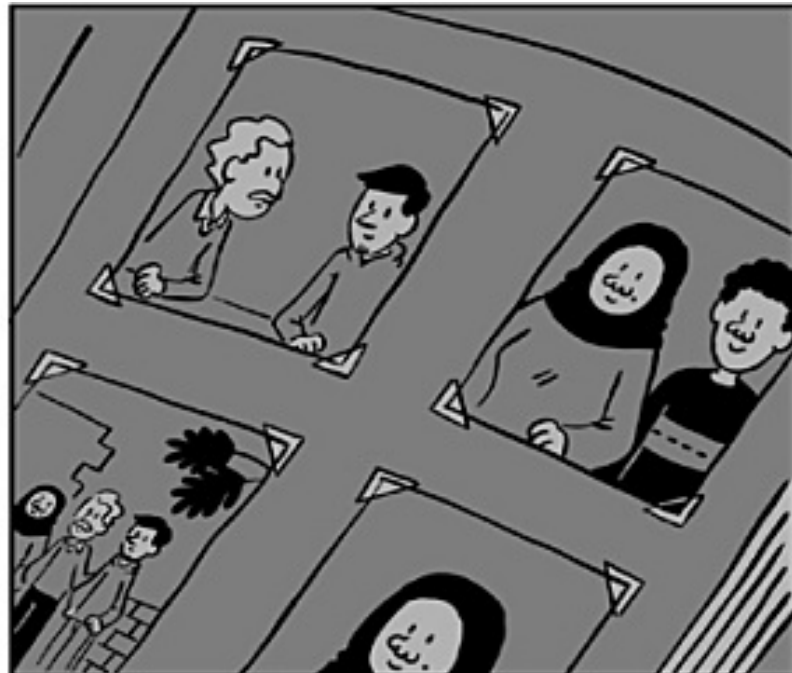
WE DIDN'T HAVE MUCH TIME TO WONDER THOUGH. A MAN CAME OVER TO MEET US.







AND I LET GO OF ALL MY  
BELONGINGS.







WE ALL STAYED SITTING THERE FOR AN HOUR.



EVERYONE WAS SILENT. EVEN THE LITTLEST KIDS DIDN'T MAKE A SOUND. AS IF THEY COULD SENSE THE GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION.



IT WAS LIKE WE WERE FROZEN.

I WONDERED HOW LONG THIS WAS ALL GOING TO TAKE, BECAUSE THERE WERE STILL NO BOATS.



SUDDENLY, A FEW SMUGGLERS SET OFF FROM ONE SIDE OF THE BEACH.



THEY CAME BACK WITH PACKAGES, WHICH THEY HANDED OUT TO A FEW OF US.



AIR PUMPS...



THEN TWO PICKUPS ARRIVED.



I DON'T KNOW HOW THEY GOT DOWN THERE, I HAD THOUGHT THE COVE WE WERE IN WAS ISOLATED.

YOU, GO HELP THEM UNLOAD.



CAN I LEAVE MY SON WITH YOU?

YES, NO PROBLEM.



IN THE BACKS OF THE PICKUPS, THERE WERE BIG BOXES, BOAT MOTORS, AND GAS CANS.

PUT THAT BY THE WATER.



GREAT!

GO SIT DOWN!



THEN THEY CALLED OVER THE YOUNG GUYS  
WHO HAD THE AIR PUMPS.



THE BIG BOXES CONTAINED INFLATABLE BOATS.



THANKS!

NOT A PROBLEM!



HE WAS VERY GOOD.



WHERE'S HIS MOM?



SHE'S NOT HERE.

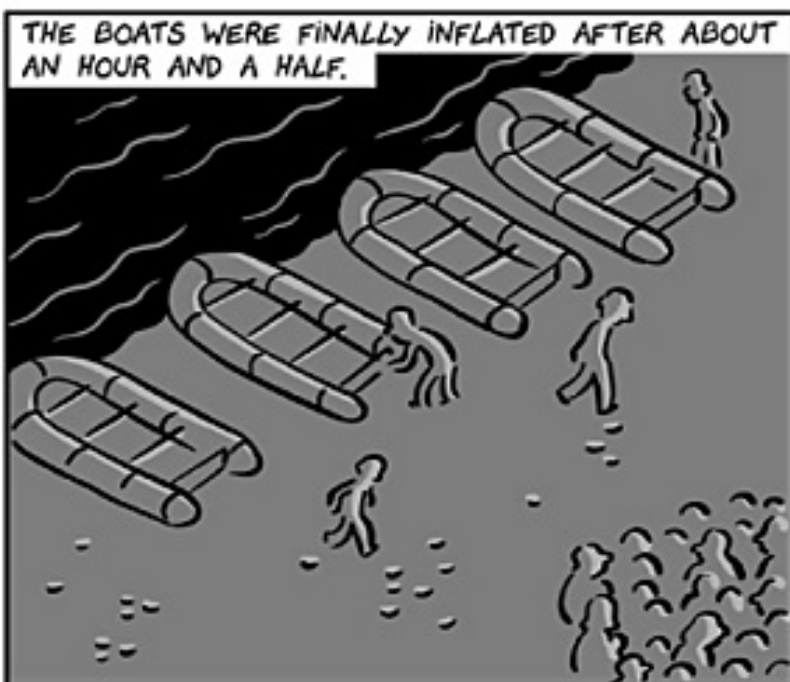


I'D GOTTEN IN THE HABIT  
OF NOT SAYING MUCH ABOUT MYSELF.





\*A CITY IN NORTHERN SYRIA.









STAY ON COURSE,  
YOU'LL BE FINE.



IT TAKES  
ROUGHLY FOUR HOURS  
TO GET ACROSS.

...

OK.

WHEN PEOPLE SAW THAT THE PILOTING WAS BEING LEFT TO ONE OF THE REFUGEES (WHICH, I LEARNED LATER, GOT HIM A DISCOUNT ON THE CROSSING) AND THAT EVERYTHING WAS SO "DIY," A WAVE OF PANIC SPREAD THROUGH THOSE OF US ON THE BEACH.



I EVEN WONDERED IF I SHOULDN'T MAKE  
A RUN FOR IT.



BUT PEOPLE WHO HAD BEEN ON  
THIS "ADVENTURE" BEFORE  
REASSURED US.

IT ALWAYS  
GOES LIKE  
THIS.

DON'T  
WORRY,  
EVERYONE!





\*FATE





THE FIRST BOAT VANISHED INTO THE DARKNESS AS THE SIGNAL WAS GIVEN FOR A SECOND GROUP.



LET THE WOMEN AND  
CHILDREN GET IN FIRST.



EVERYONE LISTENED FOR ABOUT A MINUTE.



THEN EVERYONE JUST STARTED CLIMBING IN.



IN THIS TYPE OF SITUATION, EVERYONE FORGETS THEIR EDUCATION, THEIR MANNERS.



THAT "KID" IS AT LEAST FIFTEEN!!



I WAS ONE OF THE LAST TO GET ON,  
AND I ENDED UP AT THE BACK NEXT  
TO THE OLDER SYRIAN MAN I'D TALKED WITH.



I WAS RIGHT BY THE GAS  
CANS.



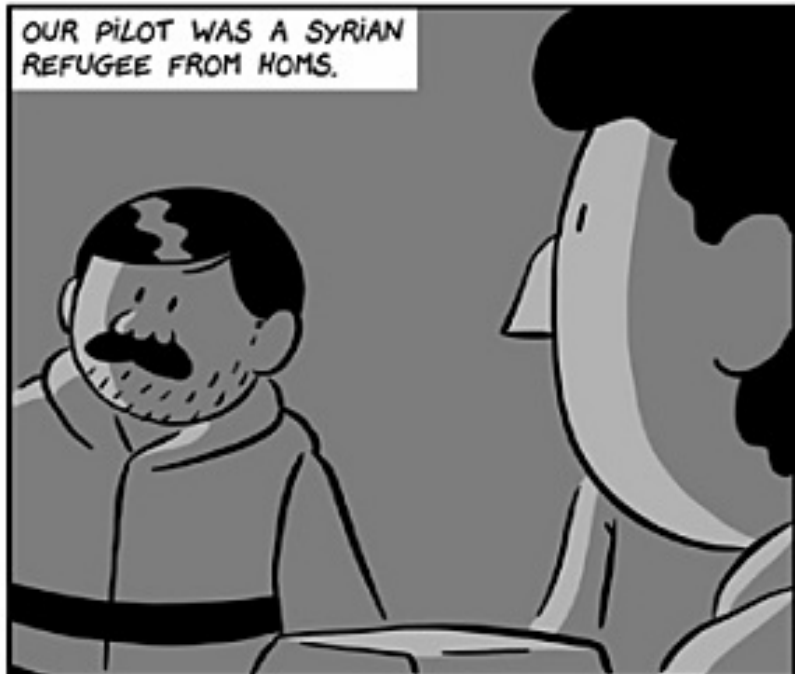
THERE WERE TWO OF THEM:  
ONE CONNECTED TO THE  
MOTOR AND ONE SPARE.

BY SOME STROKE OF LUCK,  
I HAD A BIT OF LEG ROOM.



THIS WAS QUITE LUCKY, SINCE THERE MUST HAVE  
BEEN 50 OF US, AND EVERYONE ELSE WAS  
PRESSED TOGETHER SO THEY COULDN'T MOVE.

OUR PILOT WAS A SYRIAN  
REFUGEE FROM HOMS.



YOU FEEL READY?



INSHALLAH.



IT WAS THE FIRST TIME  
IN HIS LIFE HE'D SEEN THE SEA.

ONE SMUGGLER GAVE HIM INSTRUCTIONS.

DON'T WORRY  
ABOUT THE GAS.

THERE'S PLENTY IN THE CAN  
THAT'S HOOKED UP NOW.

WHEN YOU'RE ALMOST THERE,  
YOU CAN ADD A BIT FROM  
THE SECOND ONE IF NEEDED.

GOOD LUCK!

MAY ALLAH BE  
WITH YOU!

OK.

HERE WE GO.

VRRRR!

PTTT! PTTT! PTTT!

WELL!

THIS DOESN'T  
SEEM SO  
HARD.



THE FIRST HALF HOUR OF THE CROSSING WENT WELL...



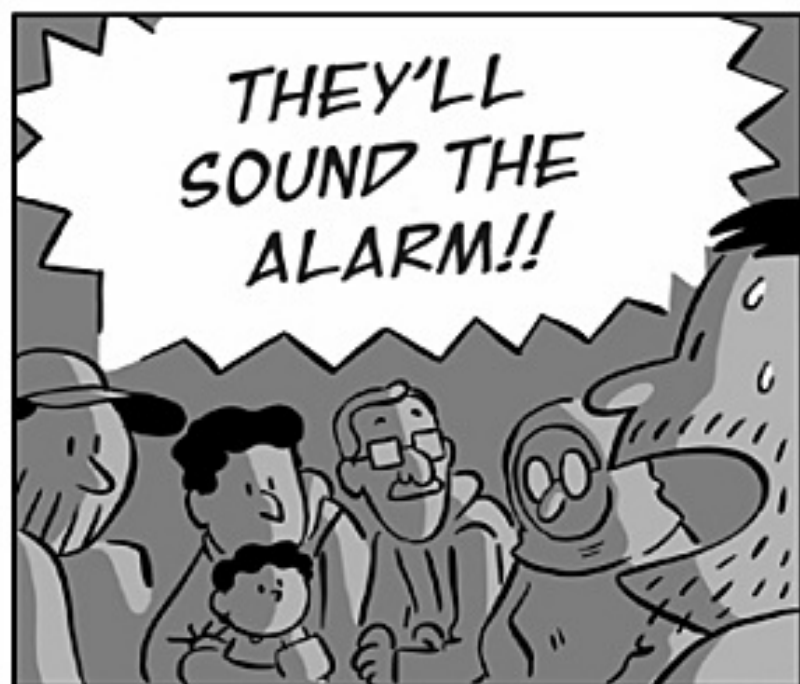
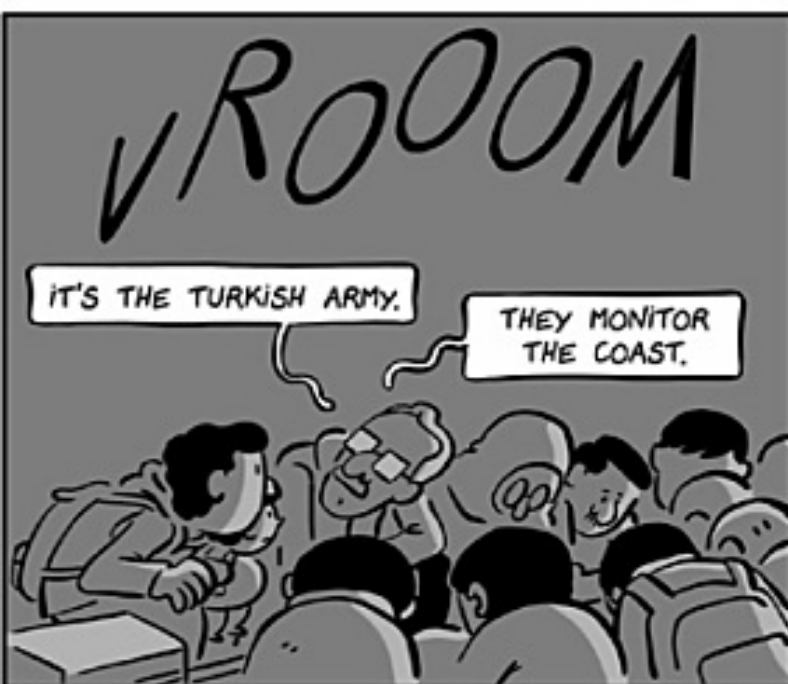
THEN WE STARTED SEEING MORE LIGHTS  
AHEAD OF US.



WE WERE NO LONGER SURE WHICH ONE  
TO AIM FOR.







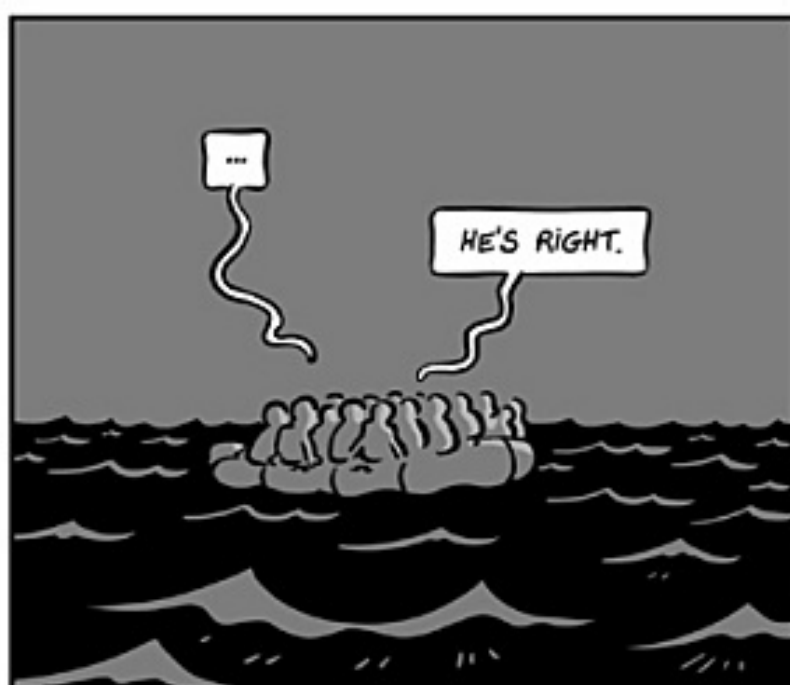
PEOPLE BEGAN TO PANIC, AND THE BOAT STARTED MOVING IN ALL DIRECTIONS.

WE'VE GOTTA HEAD BACK TOWARD TURKEY!

NO WAY!  
WE'VE GOTTA SPEED UP TOWARD GREECE!



THE ONLY THING WE CAN DO IS  
KEEP QUIET AND  
STAY CALM!!



THE FIRST TIME WE TRIED  
TO CROSS, THERE WAS A  
PLANE LIKE THAT ONE.

A FEW MINUTES LATER, THE TURKISH  
COAST GUARD SHOWED UP.

THEY MADE US GET ON THEIR BOAT,  
AND THEY DEFLATED OUR DINGHY.

THEY BROUGHT US BACK TO  
LAND AND WE SPENT TWO  
DAYS IN PRISON BEFORE  
WE WERE RELEASED.



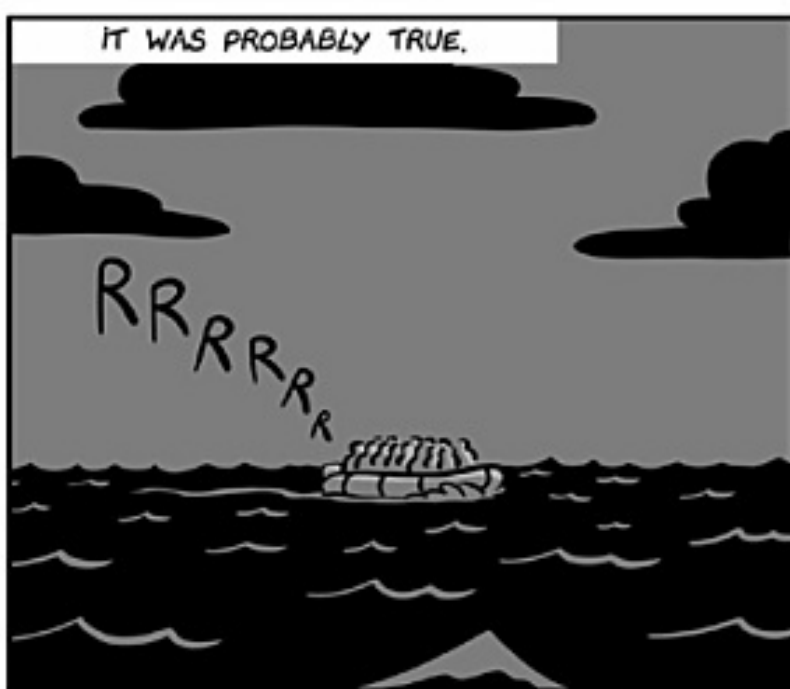
I SUPPOSE OUR SMUGGLER  
THAT TIME HADN'T BRIBED  
THE COAST GUARD.



OTHERWISE  
I DON'T SEE  
HOW THE TURKS,  
WITH ALL THEIR  
RESOURCES, DON'T  
CATCH OUR BOATS  
EVERY TIME!!



IT WAS PROBABLY TRUE.

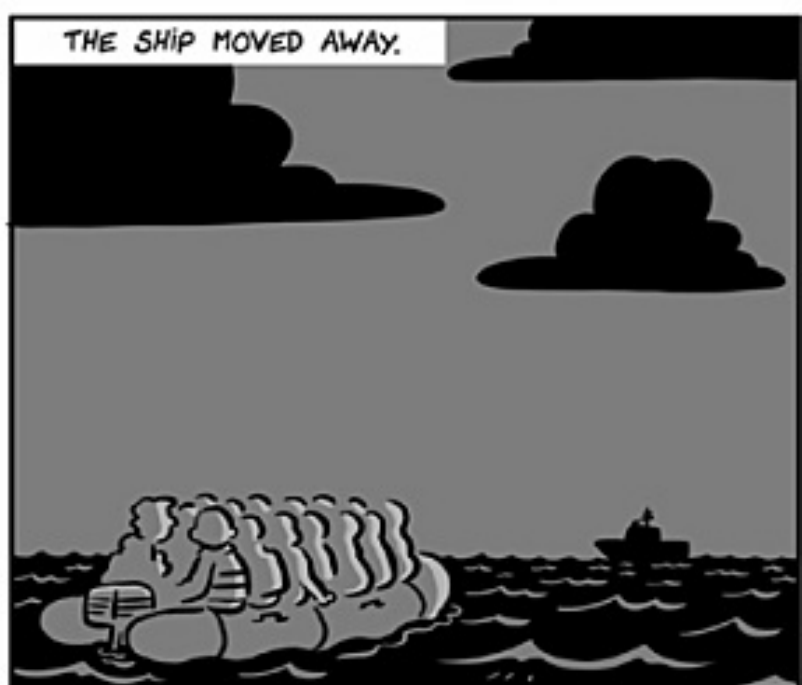


ABOUT AN HOUR AFTER THE PLANE WENT BY, WE SPOTTED A SHIP.



IT LOOKED LIKE A TURKISH COAST GUARD VESSEL.

ONCE AGAIN, EVERYONE STARTED MOVING AROUND, AND THE BOAT ROCKED DANGEROUSLY.









WE SAT ON THE WATER, IN A DEATHLY SILENCE.









THE PILOT TRIED TO RESTART THE MOTOR SEVERAL TIMES WITHOUT SUCCESS.



PEOPLE STARTED REALLY PANICKING NOW, ESPECIALLY SINCE THE WIND AND THE WAVES WERE GROWING STRONGER.



THE BOAT WAS PITCHING DANGEROUSLY, AND WATER STARTED GETTING IN.



LISTEN!

WE'LL PUT ALL THE CHILDREN IN THE MIDDLE SO THEY DON'T FALL OUT.

AND WE'LL TRY TO GET THE MOTOR WORKING AGAIN.



HADI, LIKE THE OTHER CHILDREN, WAS PASSED FROM HAND TO HAND TOWARD THE MIDDLE OF THE BOAT.

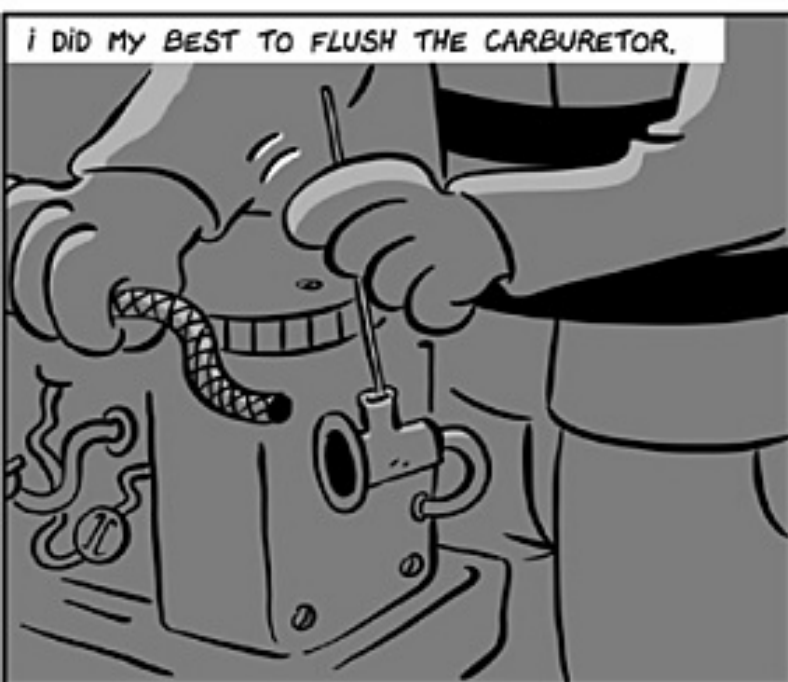


IS ANYONE HERE HANDY WITH MOTORS?



NO ONE?





PEOPLE STARTED CRYING, THE BOAT SHIFTED AROUND, AND THE WATER KEPT COMING IN.



WE STARTED BAILING WATER HOWEVER WE COULD.



ONE GUY SPOTTED ANOTHER BOAT IN THE DISTANCE.



THEY DIDN'T HEAR AND CONTINUED ON.



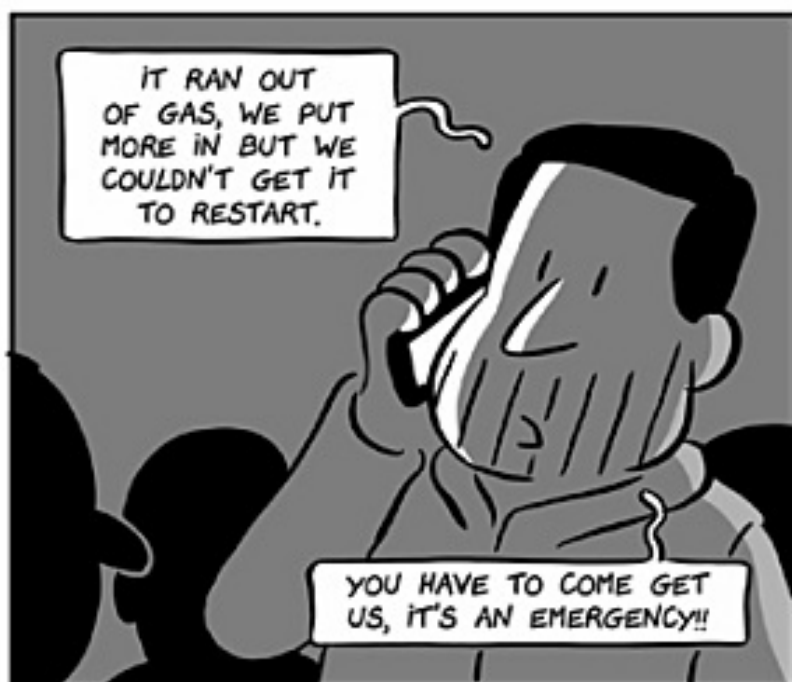
AT THAT MOMENT, EVERYONE IN THE BOAT BEGAN CALLING UPON THEIR GOD.



THEN SOMEONE YELLED:







AND INDEED...



...THANKS TO THE SMUGGLER'S  
ADVICE...



...THE MOTOR STARTED UP.



WE WERE BACK ON COURSE TO THE ISLAND. EVERYONE FELT RELIEVED, DESPITE THE WIND AND THE WAVES.



WE KEPT BAILING.

FIVE MINUTES LATER, THE MOTOR STOPPED  
AGAIN.



WE GOT IT WORKING AGAIN FOR A FEW  
MINUTES, THEN IT STOPPED AGAIN. THIS  
HAPPENED TWO OR THREE TIMES, AND  
THEN IT STOPPED COMPLETELY.



THE SITUATION WAS BECOMING VERY, VERY TENSE. THE WATER WAS APPROACHING THE LEVEL OF THE BOAT.



PEOPLE STARTED PANICKING AGAIN.

WE HAVE TO MAKE THE BOAT LIGHTER, OTHERWISE WE'LL SINK!



A FEARFUL MURMUR WENT AROUND THE BOAT.



THEN EVERYONE SORTED THROUGH THEIR BAGS BEFORE THROWING THEM IN THE WATER.



I KEPT ONLY MY PHONE, THE MONEY, AND OUR PAPERS. I TOSSED EVERYTHING ELSE.

BUT THE BOAT WAS STILL JUST AS LOW IN THE WATER.



HEY!! WHY HAVEN'T YOU TOSSED YOUR BAG?

I HAVE VERY VALUABLE ITEMS!

SO? THE STUFF I TOSSED WAS VALUABLE TOO!









VERY QUICKLY, WE REALIZED THIS WASN'T WORKING.



WE WERE LITERALLY SINKING, AND THE BOAT WASN'T MOVING.

HOPELESSNESS FELL OVER THE BOAT.



WE STOPPED ROWING AND BAILING.

PEOPLE STARTED PRAYING, CRYING, HUGGING EACH OTHER GOODBYE.



BUT SOME REFUSED TO AWAIT DEATH.

WE'RE NOT THAT FAR FROM THE COAST, MAYBE WE COULD SWIM THERE?



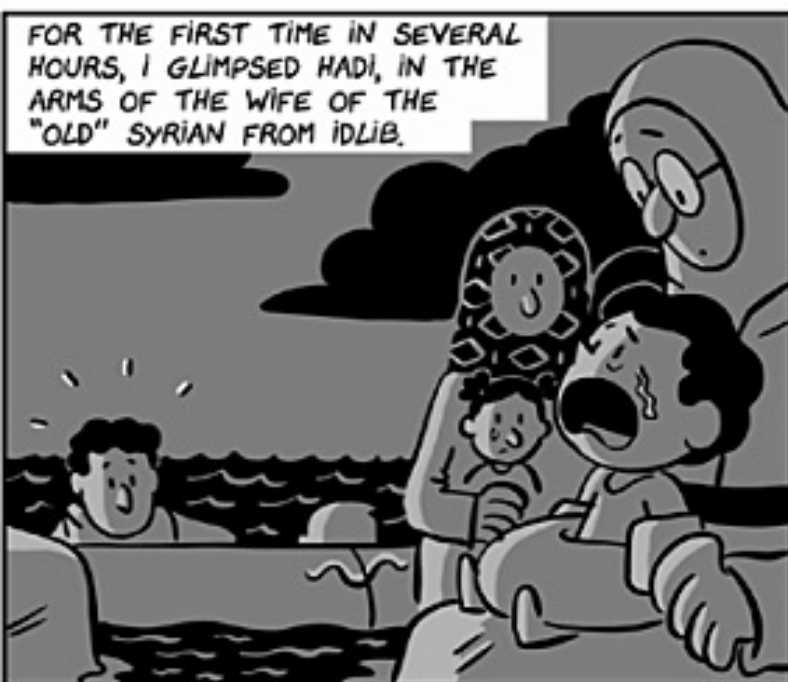
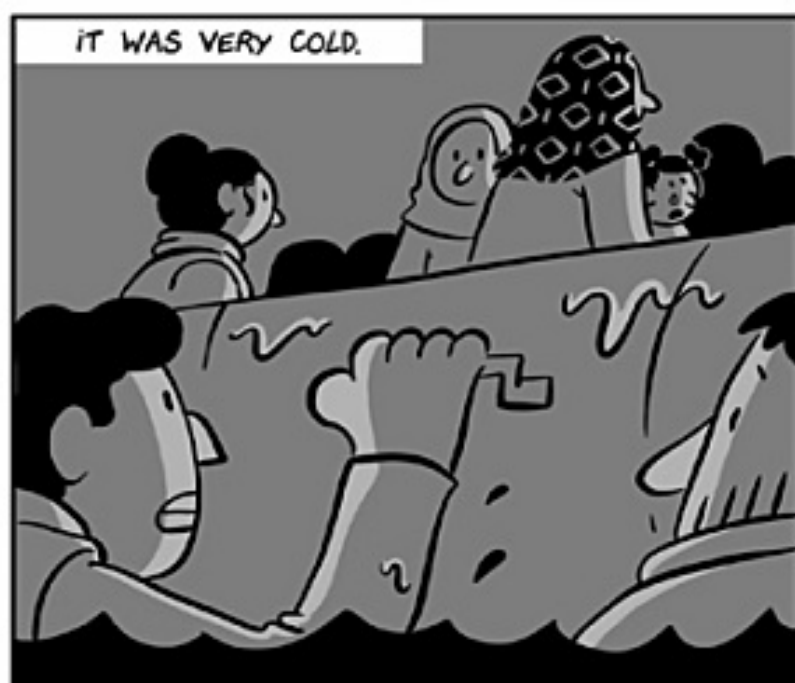
ON THE OPEN SEA AT NIGHT, THAT'S SUICIDE.



ON THE OTHER HAND, MAYBE WE COULD LIGHTEN THE BOAT A BIT.



THE MEN COULD GET IN THE WATER AND HANG ON TO THE BOAT.



WHEN THE WOMAN SAW ME STARING AT HIM,  
SHE CAME AND SAT NEAR ME.



DADDYYYY!



HUSH, HADI.

DADDYY!



HE SHOOK WITH FEAR AND COLD.

AT THIS POINT, HAKIM BROKE OFF.



FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE HE'D STARTED TELLING  
ME HIS STORY, TEARS APPEARED IN HIS EYES.



EVEN THOUGH HE'D  
TOLD ME MANY TERRIBLE THINGS.

I MYSELF WAS CLOSE TO TEARS.







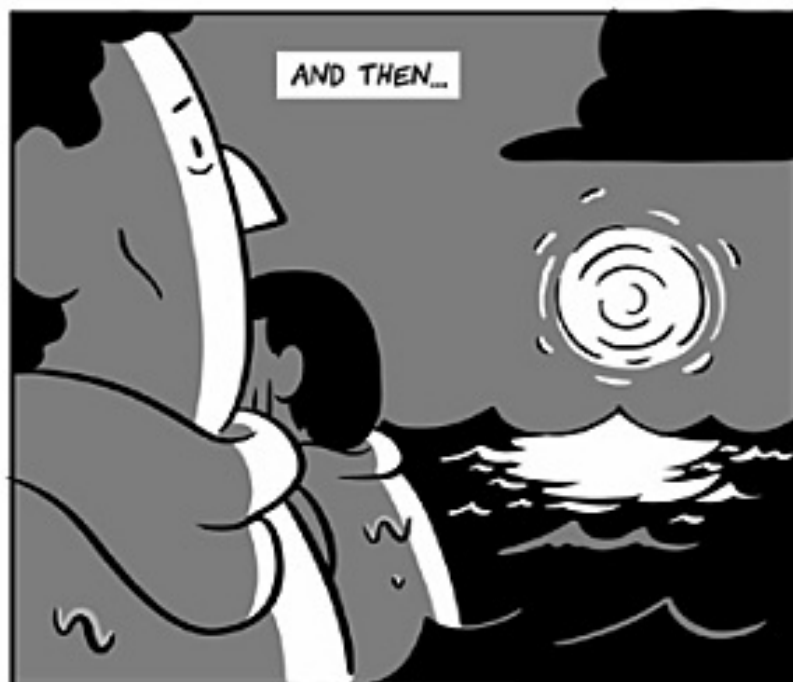
IT'S HARD TO SAY HOW LONG WE WENT ON LIKE THIS.



SOME OF THE WOMEN, TOO, STARTED GETTING IN THE WATER.



IT MUST HAVE BEEN 5 OR 6 IN THE MORNING. I WAS WONDERING HOW LONG WE HAD LEFT BEFORE THE BOAT SANK.



IT SOUNDS A BIT LIKE A HOLLYWOOD MOVIE WHEN I TELL IT THIS WAY,  
BUT THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED.



WE ALL STOPPED, FROZEN. WE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO THINK.



STRANGELY, IN THE MOMENT, I DIDN'T THINK  
"PHEW! WE'RE SAVED!"



INSTEAD I IMAGINED HUMAN TRAFFICKERS  
OR SOMETHING ALONG THOSE LINES.

IN SHORT, SOMETHING HARDLY BETTER THAN  
WHAT WE WERE ALREADY DEALING WITH.



BUT I WAS WRONG. WHEN THE BOAT  
CAME CLOSER, WE SAW GREEK LETTERS  
ON THE HULL, AND GUYS IN UNIFORM.

REMAIN CALM!



IT WAS THE GREEK POLICE.

YOU'RE ALRIGHT!!

I WONDERED HOW THEY'D  
MANAGED TO SPOT US.











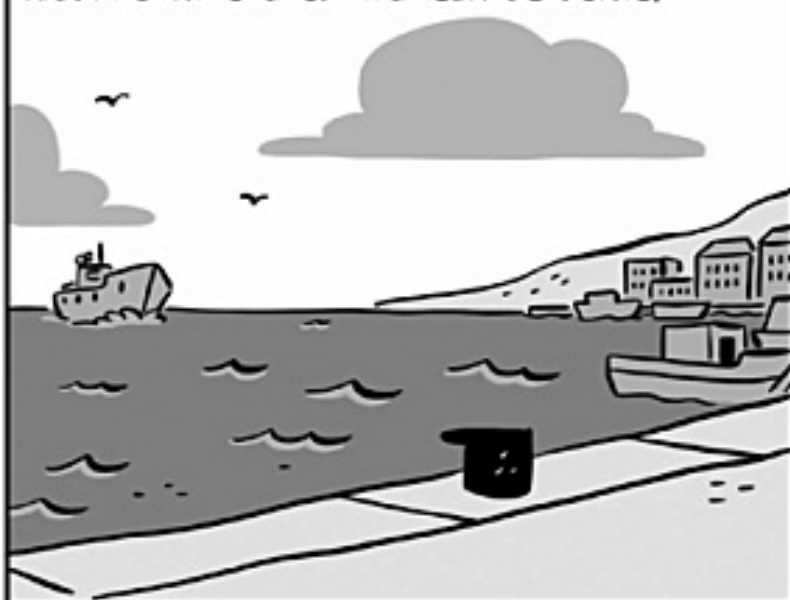
THE SUN FINALLY ROSE, AND WE SAW SAMOS.



IT WAS FARTHER AWAY THAN WE'D THOUGHT.  
WE'D NEVER HAVE MADE IT THERE BY ROWING.

LET ALONE SWIMMING...

WE RODE FOR ANOTHER HOUR BEFORE  
ARRIVING AT ONE OF THE ISLAND'S PORTS.



WE WERE EXHAUSTED AND CHILLED TO THE BONE,  
AND WE HAD NOTHING BUT OUR WET CLOTHING.



BUT WE WERE ALIVE.



AND WE HAD MANAGED TO GET TO GREECE!



AT THAT MOMENT, I THOUGHT I'D  
MADE IT THROUGH THE HARDEST PART  
OF MY JOURNEY. BUT I WAS WRONG.





"YOU TRYING TO GO NORTH?"



BUT I HAD NO SERVICE.

EXCUSE ME, COULD I  
BORROW YOUR PHONE?

I LOST  
IT.

HOW ABOUT YOU?  
CAN I USE YOURS  
FOR A MINUTE?

I HAVE NO  
SERVICE.

SIGH

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!  
THIS WAY, PLEASE!

PLEASE FORM A LINE,  
WE'RE GOING TO REGISTER YOU.

HAVE YOUR IDENTITY DOCUMENTS  
READY, IF YOU HAVE THEM.

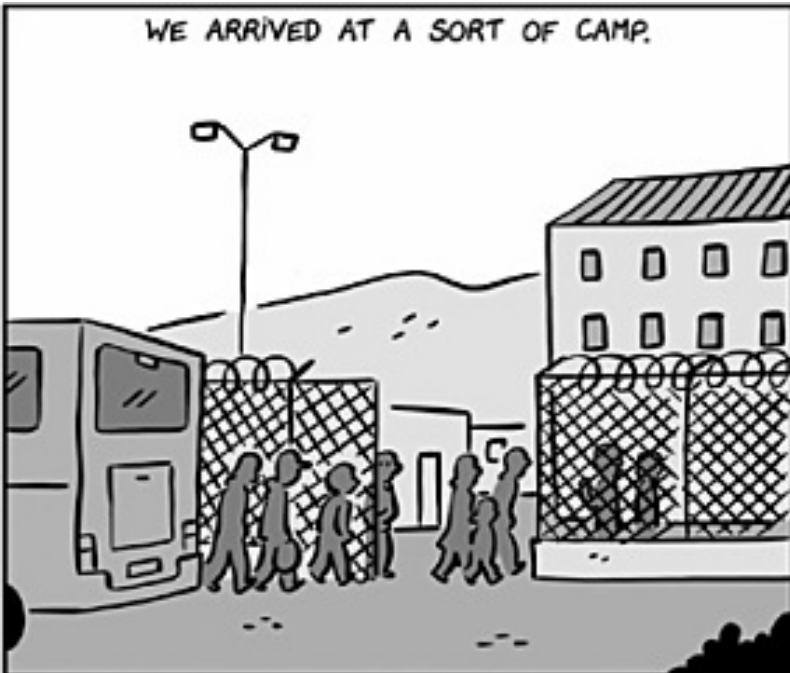
THIS TOOK A GOOD HALF HOUR.

ZUBAIR  
AREZU.

AFGHAN.

THEN THEY PUT US ON A BUS.

WE ARRIVED AT A SORT OF CAMP.





THEY LOCKED US IN A BIG ROOM IN THE BASEMENT WITH A HUNDRED OTHER MIGRANTS.



PEOPLE HAD SCRAWLED ALL OVER THE WALLS.



IT WAS VERY DIRTY.

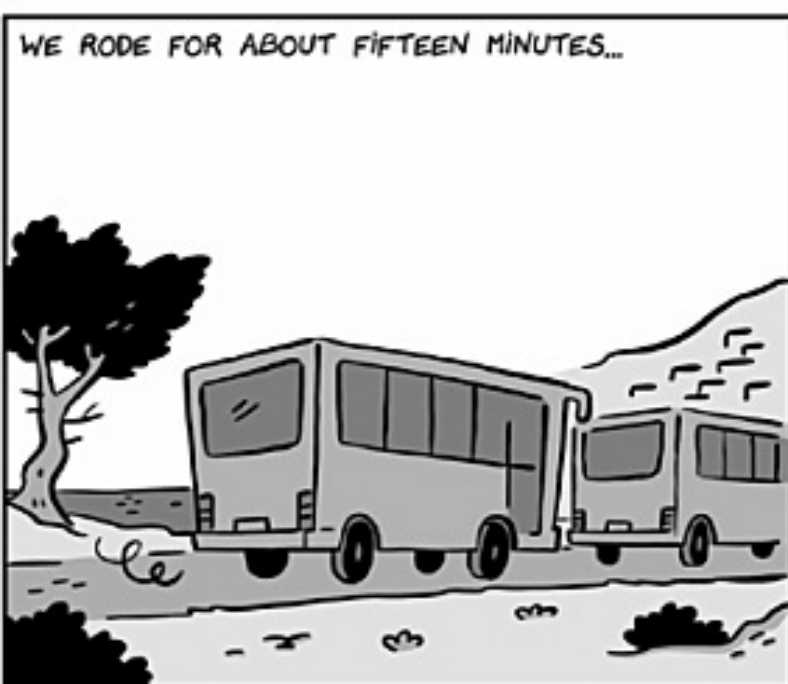


IT LOOKED A LOT LIKE A PRISON.

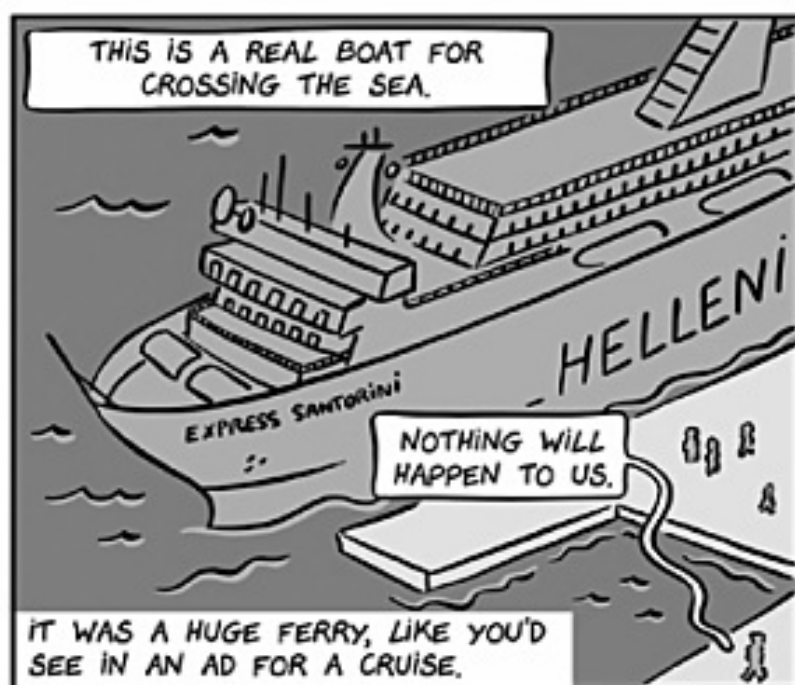


ULTIMATELY, MY STAY AT THE CAMP WOULD BE VERY BRIEF. HARDLY AN HOUR AFTER WE ARRIVED, WE WERE TOLD TO LEAVE.











UM, HELLO...

A TICKET FOR MY SON  
AND ME, PLEASE.

THAT'LL  
BE €52.



ONE SECOND.



HERE.

THANKS.



DO YOU KNOW IF  
THERE'S A SHOP  
SOMEWHERE NEARBY?

JUST THAT WAY,  
ON YOUR RIGHT.



THANKS.

NO PROBLEM!

WELCOME TO GREECE.



THEY DIDN'T HAVE DIAPERS BUT I GRABBED MILK,  
A BOTTLE, SOME BANANAS...



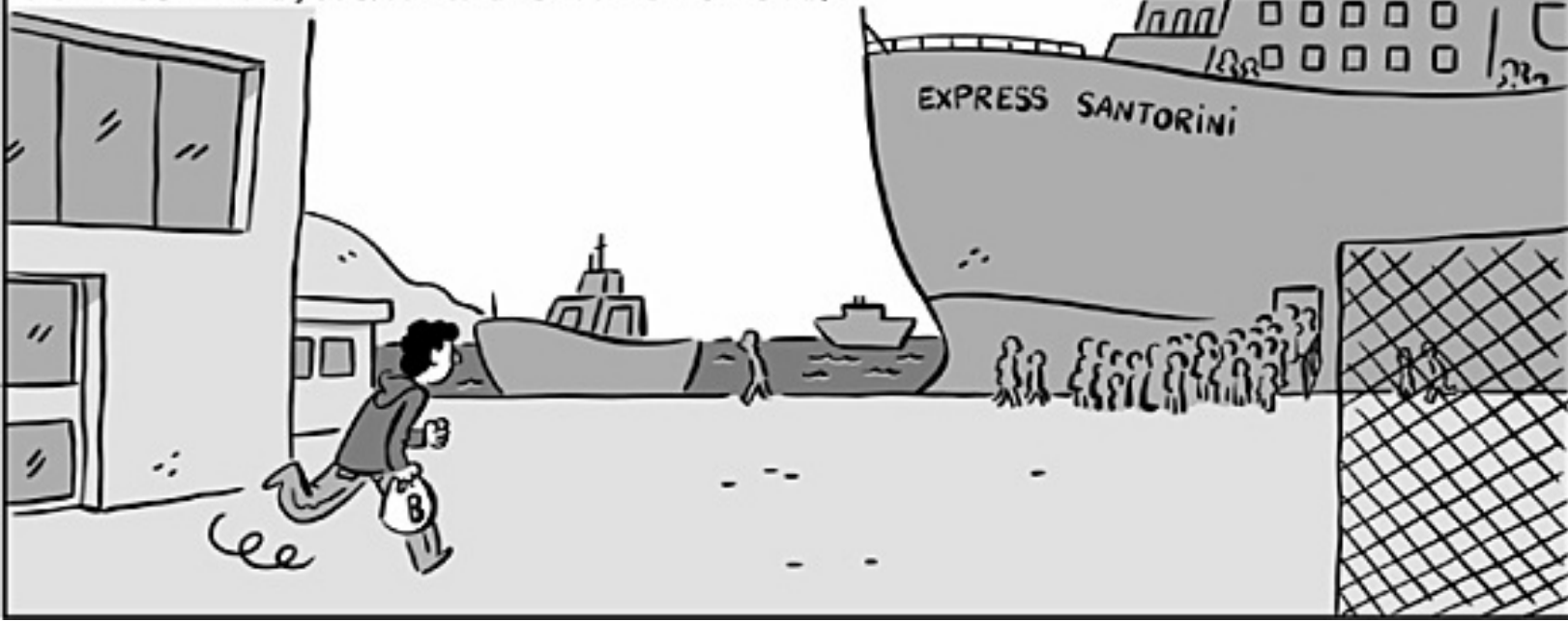
...COOKIES, A PACK OF CIGARETTES...



AND I RAN BACK.

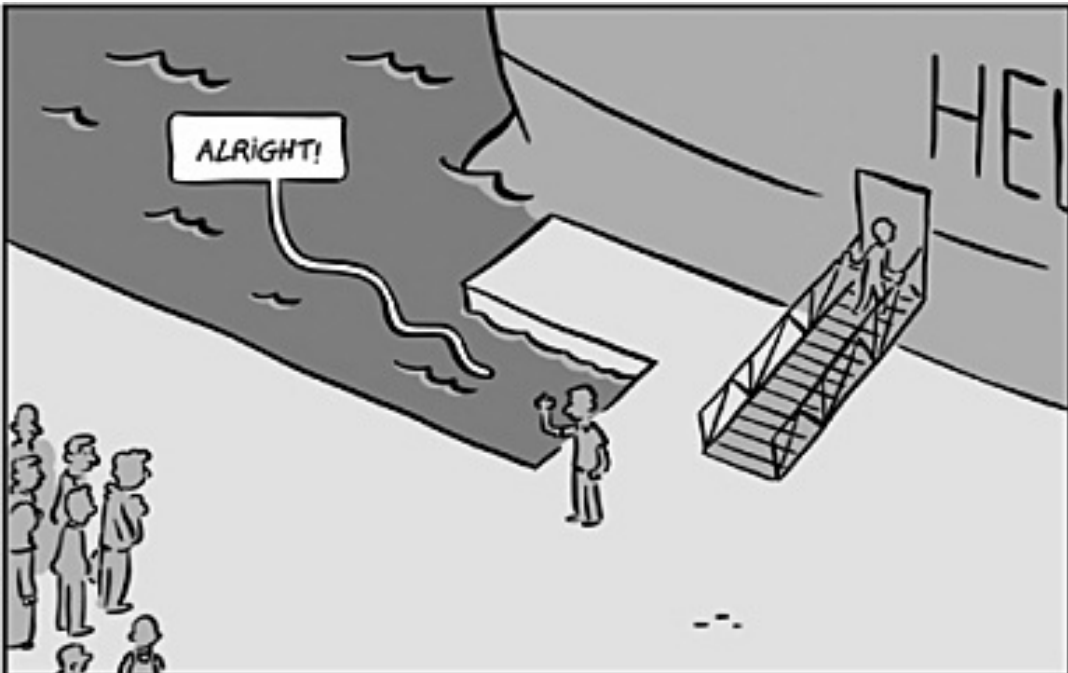


WHEN I GOT THERE, PEOPLE WERE STARTING TO BOARD.





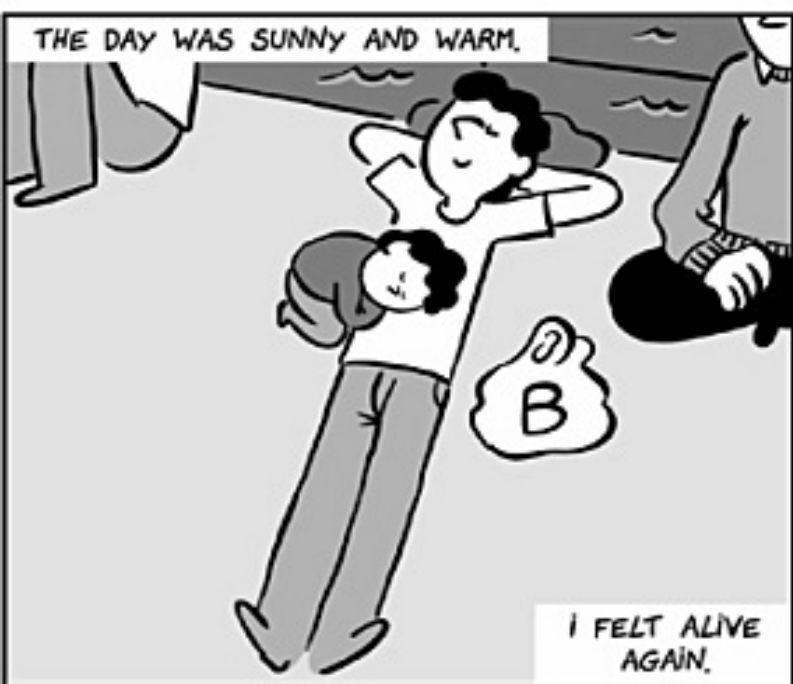
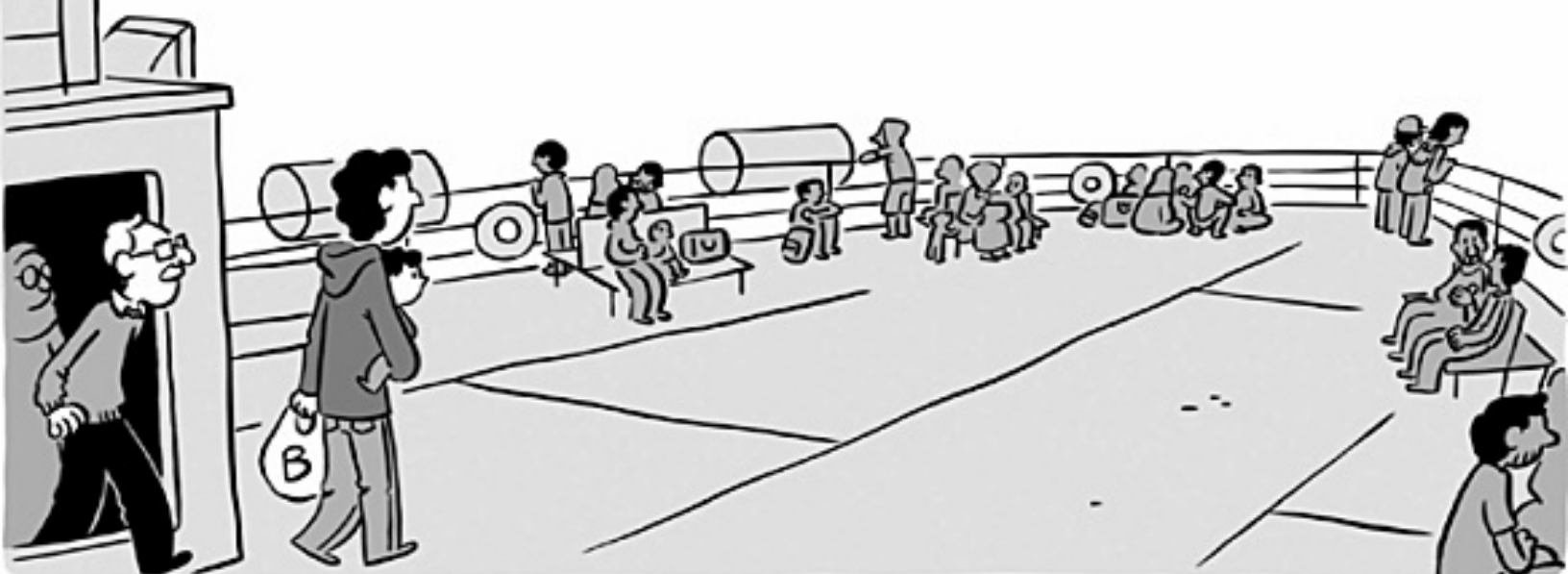


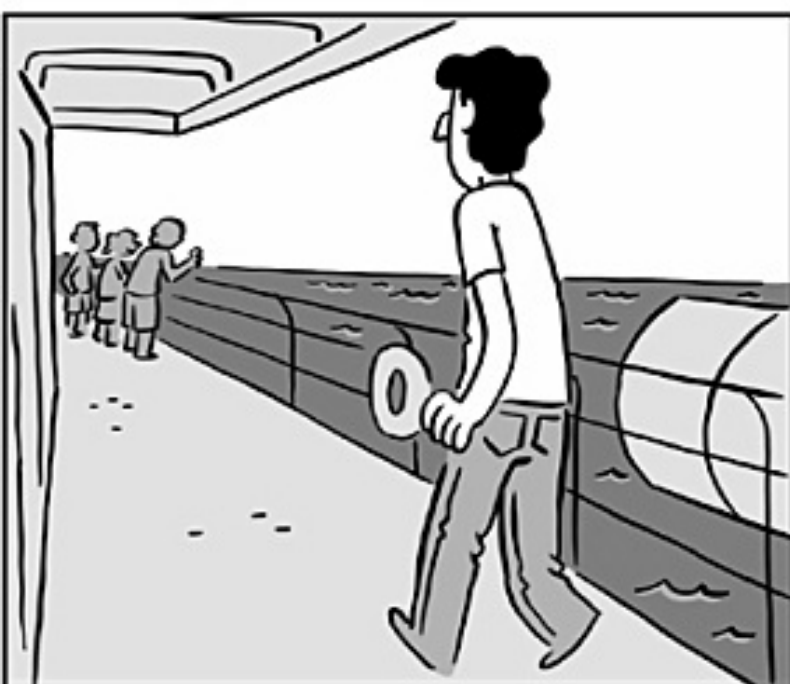


SOME OF THEM WERE VERY FRIENDLY.

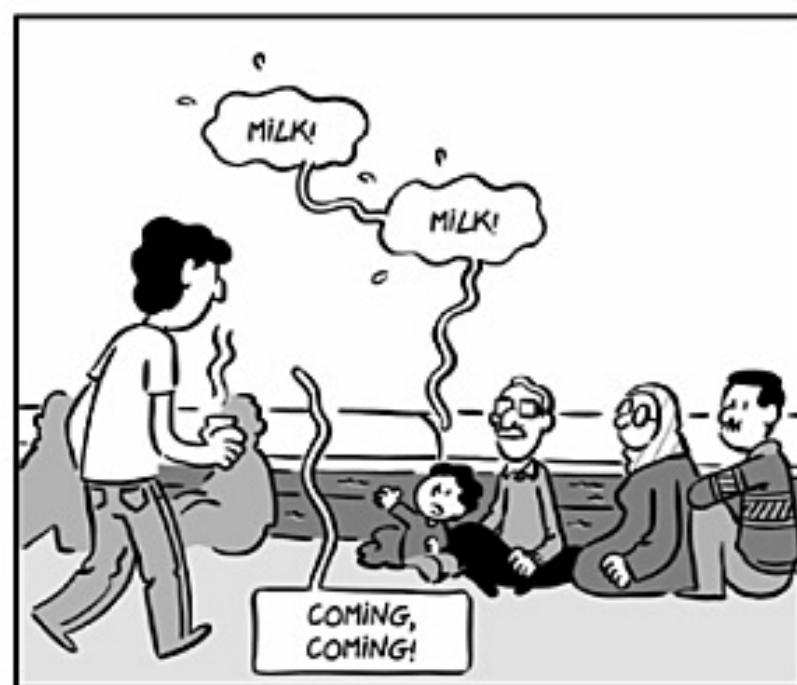


THE UPPER DECK WAS EXCLUSIVELY FOR MIGRANTS.











SO THE ARRIVAL OF THE POLICE HAD NOT BEEN A TOTAL ACCIDENT. IT WASN'T SO MUCH LIKE A HOLLYWOOD MOVIE AFTER ALL, HAHA!



WITH THE SIZE OF OUR BOAT, THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE, AND ALL THE HUBBUB, I HADN'T SEEN HIM MAKE THE CALL.



I STEPPED AWAY FROM THEM TO SMOKE  
A CIGARETTE.



THE LAST TIME I'D HAD ONE, I'D BEEN  
ON THE BEACH, IN TURKEY, WITH NO  
IDEA WHAT WAS AHEAD OF US.



IT WAS STRANGE. NOW THE SEA  
LOOKED SO CALM AND BEAUTIFUL.



WHEN I'D FOUND IT SO DANGEROUS AND SCARY  
THE NIGHT BEFORE.



EXCUSE ME.



CAN I HAVE A CIGARETTE?





IS NIHAD OK WITH YOU SMOKING?

UMM...

NOT REALLY.

BUT AFTER WHAT WE  
JUST WENT THROUGH,  
I WANT ONE.

THANKS!

I TOLD HIM I WAS GOING  
TO USE THE BATHROOM.

I HAVE ABOUT  
TEN MINUTES.

AARGH...

STILL NO  
SERVICE.

IT WAS VERY HOT ON THE UPPER DECK, SO I GOT HADI AND WENT LOOKING FOR A PLACE TO SLEEP FOR A BIT.



WE NEEDED TO REST.

PEE-EW! YOUR  
DIAPER IS DIRTY.



WE'VE GOTTA  
GET YOU MORE.

I KNEW THERE WERE MORE "ADVENTURES" AHEAD OF US AND I WANTED TO ENJOY THIS MOMENT OF RESPIRE.



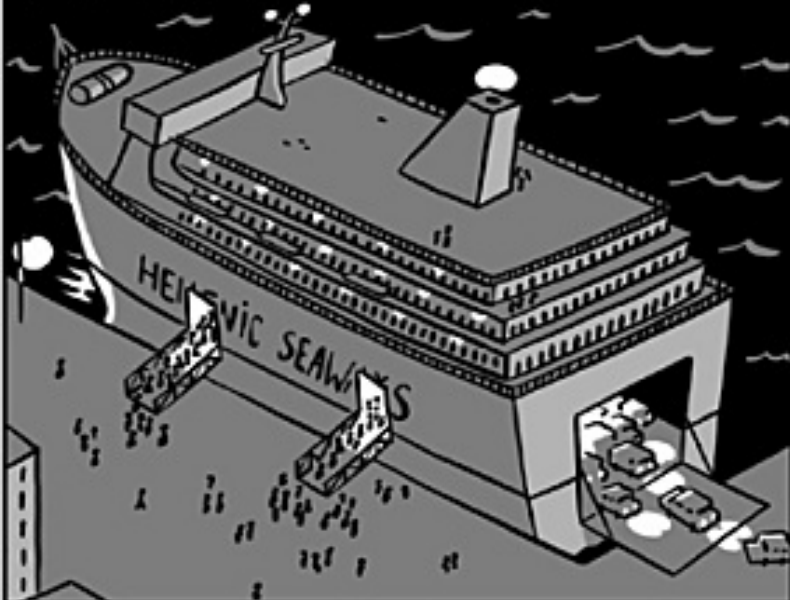
WE SLEPT FOR THE REST OF THE TRIP.



AND THE BOAT ARRIVED AT THE PORT IN ATHENS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT.



AS MIGRANTS, WE WERE THE LAST  
TO GET OFF.



THE CITY SEEMED GIGANTIC.



THAT'S WEIRD.

THERE'S NO ONE TO  
SUPERVISE OUR ARRIVAL.



WHAT ARE WE  
SUPPOSED TO DO?



OUR FUTURES ARE IN OUR OWN  
HANDS NOW, MY FRIENDS.

WE HAVE VISAS,  
WE'RE FREE.



WELL, SORT OF...

WE'RE STILL REQUIRED TO  
GET OUT OF GREECE...



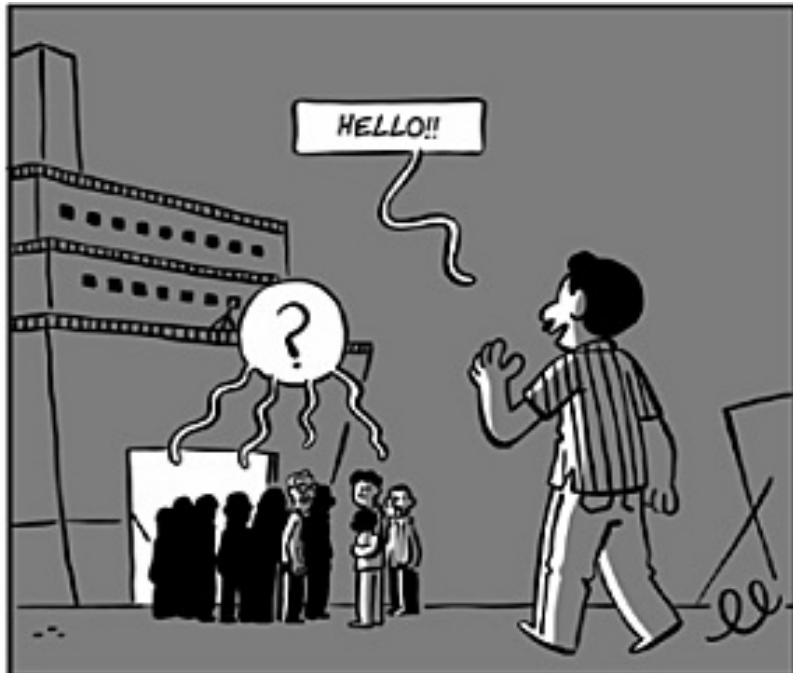


NO ONE WAS PLANNING TO STAY, ANYWAY. THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC SITUATION LEFT US LITTLE HOPE OF BUILDING A GOOD LIFE HERE.



I WAS THE ONLY ONE TRYING TO GET TO FRANCE.





SO OUR LITTLE GROUP OF MIGRANTS SPLIT UP.

GOOD LUCK!

THANKS! YOU TOO!

MAYBE WE'LL  
MEET AGAIN.

INSHALLAH!

I WENT WITH NIHAD AND HIS FAMILY.

OUR DRIVER'S ENGLISH WAS REALLY BAD.

I TAKE YOU MIGRANT PLACE.

OK?

OK...

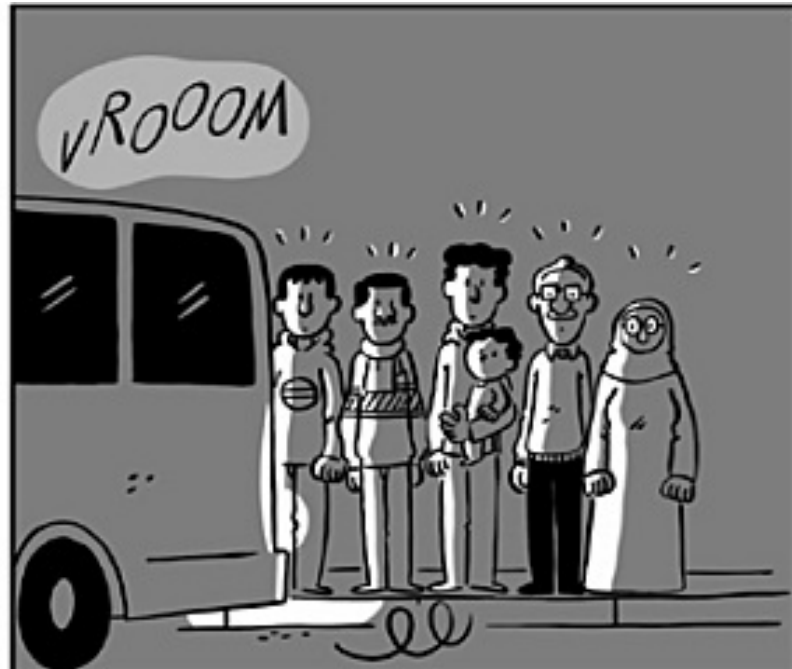
PERFECT, SIR, MA'AM.

HE DROPPED US OFF IN THE CENTER OF TOWN.

GOODBYE,  
SIR, MA'AM!



VROOOM



IN VICTORIA SQUARE.

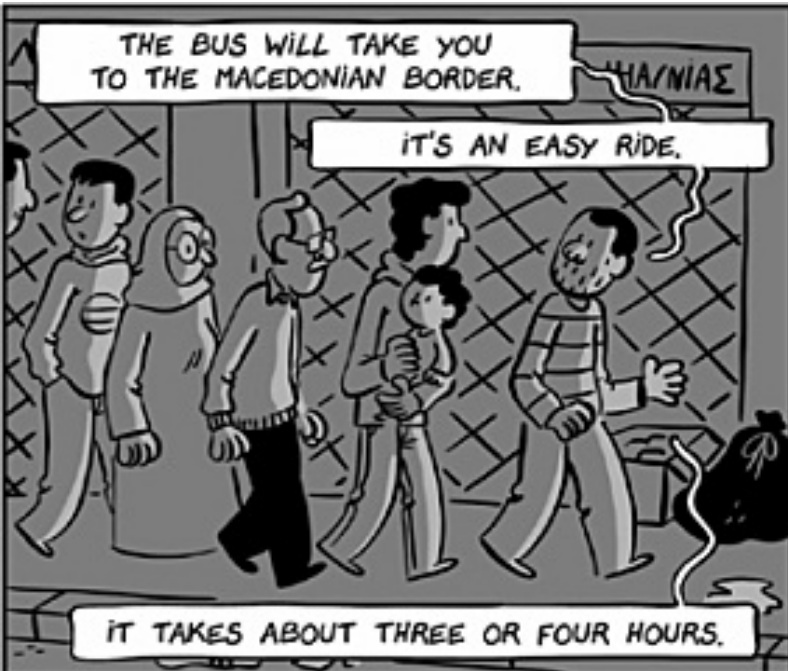


AN OPEN-AIR  
REFUGEE CAMP.

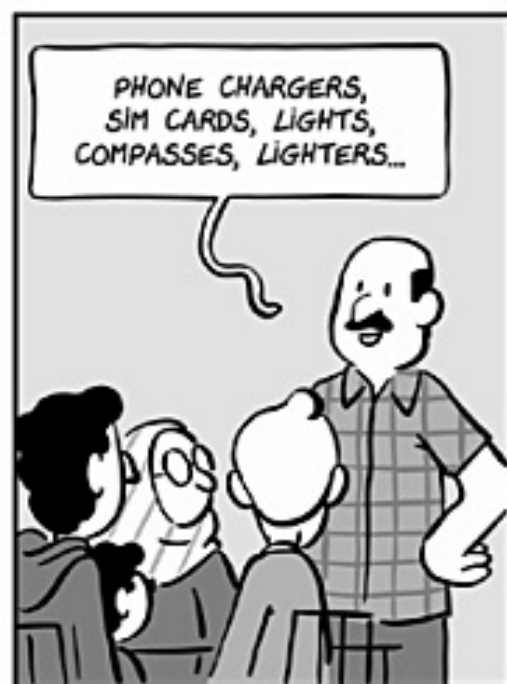
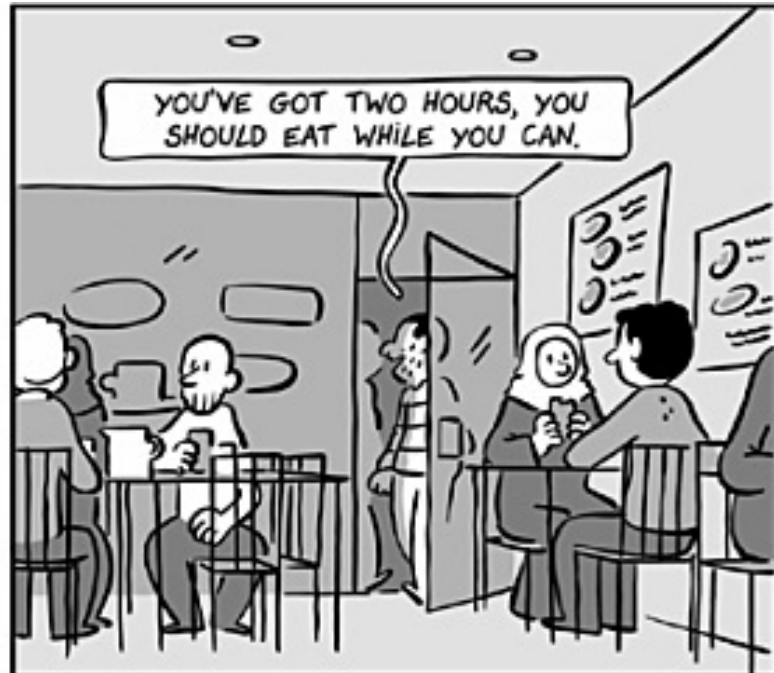








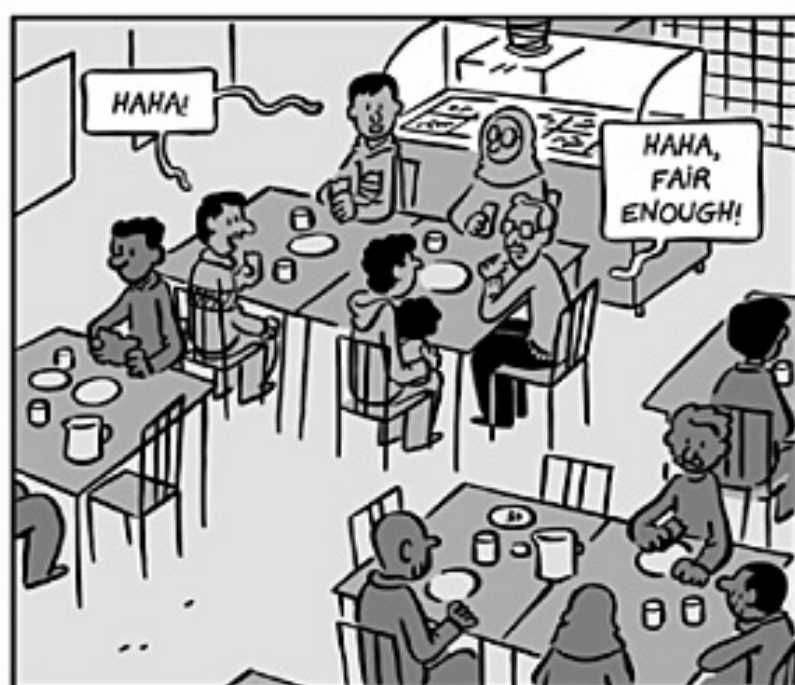












FOR THE MOMENT, I COULD THINK OF ONLY ONE THING: MOVING FORWARD.









കാലം നാൾ പലപലം നാളിലേ

MAGIC MAN

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