



Meet The Somalis

The illustrated stories of Somalis in seven cities in Europe

OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS

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Introduction to *Meet the Somalis*

Meet the Somalis is a collection of 14 illustrated stories depicting the real life experiences of Somalis* in seven cities in Europe: Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Leicester, London, Malmo, and Oslo. It provides readers a unique look into what everyday life is like as a Somali in Europe. The stories are based on the testimonies of Somalis in Europe interviewed during six months in 2013.

Meet the Somalis accompanies a seven-city research series—*Somalis in European Cities*—examining the experiences of Somalis in Europe in areas such as education, housing, employment, health, political participation, and identity. The research, launched at the end of 2013, sought to offer a better understanding of the challenges faced by Somalis in Europe and how they can be overcome.

The Somali community in Europe is a vibrant, diverse minority group. Europe's Somalis can be divided into three broad categories: people of Somali origin born in Europe, Somali

refugees and asylum seekers (who came direct from Somalia as a result of the conflicts), and Somalis who have migrated from one country in Europe to another. There are no accurate figures for the number of Somalis in Europe, but on the whole they are among one of the largest minority groups.

The research findings from *Somalis in European Cities* highlighted successful inclusion practices in cities as well as the barriers to integration facing Somalis. Though at first glance one might expect this to be a fragmented and beleaguered community, the reality in many cities in Europe is very different.

Meet the Somalis depicts experiences many of us will never know, like fleeing a warzone with your children or, worse, leaving your loved ones behind. But more often, these stories portray values shared amongst many of us, like the importance of family, well-being, and identity in an ever-changing world.

*The term Somalis is used here to signify a wide-ranging community: first-, second-, and third-generation Somalis; people of Somali origin who self-identify as Somali-Norwegian or Somali-British, for example; and people of Somali origin who no longer self-identify as Somali but have instead taken on European nationalities.

Background and Approach to *Meet the Somalis*

Meet the Somalis includes stories of young and old, happy and troubled, comfortable and poor. Some were born and raised in Europe, are professionals, and have families whose identities unite Somali and European cultures. Others, recently arrived and having left behind violence, fear, and refugee camps, are still trying to make sense of their new lives in an unfamiliar land.

Meet the Somalis aims to introduce key issues about the experiences of Somalis in Europe in an accessible way. In each city, researchers from the *Somalis in European Cities* series introduced us to a wide range of Somali families and individuals. The Somali community graciously invited us into their homes, businesses, and lives, sharing their time and their tales.

Each interview lasted one to three hours. The people we spoke to told us about their life (or their parents' lives) before leaving Somalia, the hardships and fears they encountered on their journey, the memories of what they left behind, their lives now in Europe, and their hopes and expectations for the future.

The illustrated stories focus on challenges faced by Somalis in their respective cities in Europe and issues raised in the *Somalis in European Cities* research, including education, housing, the media, employment, and identity.

We collected hours of recorded interviews, photographs, and stories that were sometimes tragic, shocking, hopeful, inspiring, and funny.

At every stage of the process, the Open Society Foundations' At Home in Europe team, Somali friends, and researchers commented on ideas and illustrations and provided guidance and insight, making it a truly collaborative process between artists, academics, and Somali participants themselves.

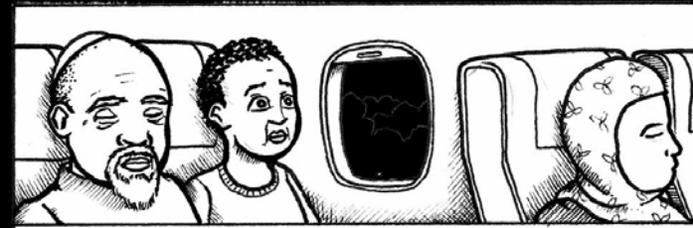
Meet the Somalis "introduces" the reader to our Somali neighbours, but we hope it also inspires readers to consider how Europe looks through the eyes of a migrant community, making their home in Europe by choice or, often, necessity.

We would like to thank everyone who has given their time and entrusted us with their life stories. It has been a wonderful experience to meet so many warm and hospitable people within the Somali community and a privilege to hear their tales.

Ben and Lindsay

Benjamin Dix (researcher and author) and Lindsay Pollock (artist)

Baashi and Liibaan in Amsterdam



THE PLANE RIDE SCARED ME. WHERE WAS I GOING? WHAT WAS EUROPE LIKE? AIRPORTS, OFFICIALS— EVERYTHING WAS NEW AND CONFUSING.

BY THE TIME I REACHED AMSTERDAM AIRPORT, I FELT LIKE I WAS DREAMING. HOW STRANGE THE PLACE WAS. AND ALL THESE WHITE PEOPLE...

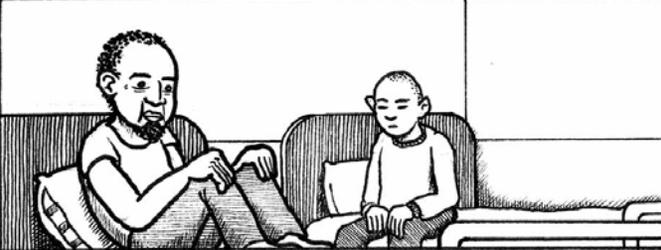


I TOLD THE IMMIGRATION MAN MY WHOLE STORY. HE TOOK A HUNDRED NOTES, ENDLESSLY QUESTIONED ME...

I WONDERED HOW LONG IT WOULD ALL TAKE; WHEN I WOULD BE FREE TO LEAVE. 3 HOURS? FOUR?



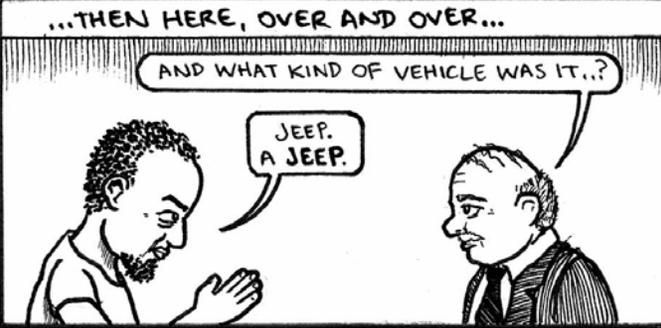
THAT DAY WAS FIVE YEARS AGO.



FOR FOUR YEARS, I WAS LEFT TO FESTER AT THIS ASYLUM DETENTION CENTRE...



...THEN THAT ASYLUM DETENTION CENTRE...



...THEN HERE, OVER AND OVER...

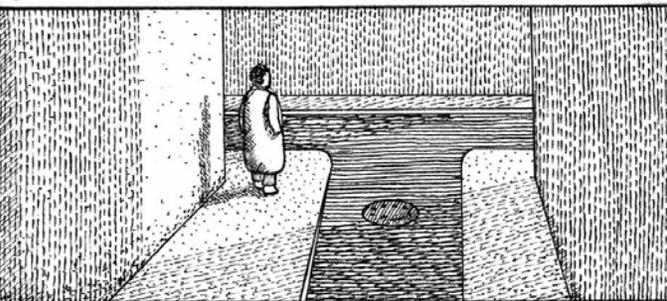


I WASTED THE BEST YEARS OF MY LIFE LIKE THIS. I REACHED MY MID-20s, NEVER HAVING WORKED, NO CHANCE OF A FAMILY...

AND THEN LAST YEAR, THEY TOLD ME THAT I COULD NOT STAY. THAT THEY DID NOT BELIEVE MY STORY. AND THAT IT WAS SAFE FOR ME TO RETURN TO SOMALIA ...



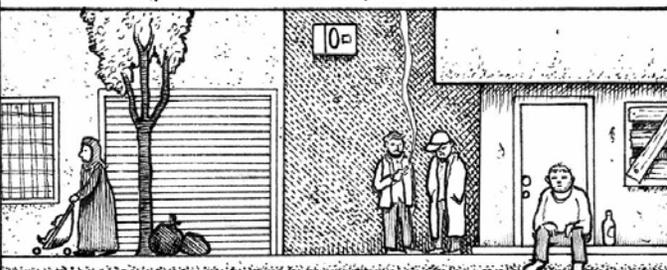
THEY TOLD ME I WOULD BE RETURNED WITHIN A WEEKS. I COULDN'T THINK STRAIGHT. HOW COULD I GO BACK? WHAT WOULD BECOME OF ME? I SLIPPED OUT OF THE CENTRE AND STARTED WALKING



SOMEHOW I OVERCAME THIS TERRIBLE DELIRIUM. BUT I WAS LEFT ALONE WITH MY TROUBLES.



I JOINED THEIR GROUP. THERE ARE OVER 100 OF US REJECTS HERE, ALL IN FEAR OF THE AUTHORITIES. MOSTLY THEY SEEM CONTENT TO LEAVE US AS GHOSTS. WE'RE A LITTLE COMMUNITY IN THE SHADOWS, RELIANT ON HAND-OUTS...



SINCE I HAD BEEN AWAY, THE REBELS HAD OVERRUN MY AREA. MY FUTURE THERE WAS ALREADY WRITTEN. I HAD NO HOME TO GO TO.

I DECIDED TO RUN. I COULDN'T GO BACK TO THE ASYLUM CENTRE. I COULDN'T GO ANYWHERE.

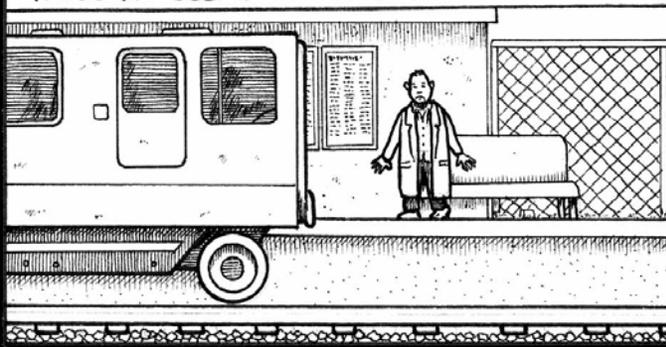


I FELT SO ALONE. I WALKED, AND WALKED, LOOKING FOR AN ANSWER. THE COLD KEPT MY MIND FROM THE FEAR. I FROZE TO THE BONE.



OMAR HAD BEEN THERE FIVE YEARS ALREADY. I SAW A PHOTO OF HIM AS A TEENAGER IN IRAN. THAT HAPPY BOY WAS UNRECOGNISABLE IN THE GAUNT, HAUNTED MAN I KNEW.

I HAD THOUGHTS OF SUICIDE. A PASSING TRAIN CALLED TO ME. ONE LITTLE STEP AND ALL THESE PROBLEMS WOULD VANISH.



I SLEPT ROUGH. I KNEW I HAD TO AVOID THE POLICE. ONE DAY I MET OMAR, AN IRANIAN GUY IN THE SAME SITUATION. HE WAS STAYING IN AN ABANDONED BUILDING WITH OTHER FAILED ASYLUM SEEKERS.



IMMIGRATION ARE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR ME. I HAVE TO STAY IN THE SHADOWS... I AM A DEAD MAN IF THEY RETURN ME TO IRAN

EVEN IN THE FEW MONTHS I KNEW HIM, I COULD SEE HE WAS IN DECLINE. I WORRIED FOR HIM. BUT LIVING AS A FUGITIVE MYSELF, WHERE COULD I TURN FOR HELP?



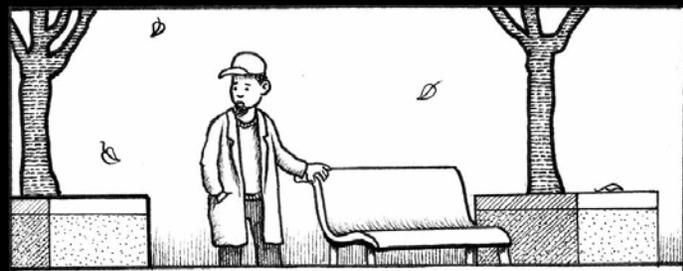
I CAN'T GO BACK, BAASHI. I CAN'T GO BACK.

THEN ONE MORNING WHEN I WOKE, OMAR WAS GONE.



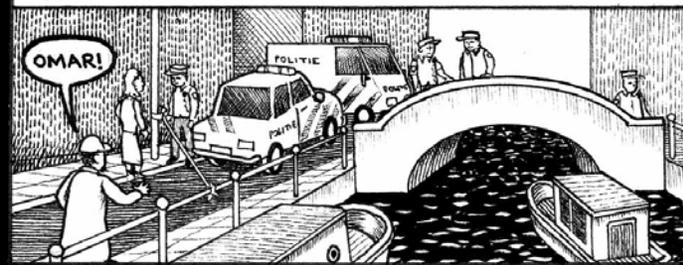
HAVE YOU SEEN OMAR?

NOT SINCE LAST NIGHT WHEN YOU CAME IN



I SEARCHED ALL DAY FOR HIM. I WENT TO ALL OUR PLACES BUT COULDN'T FIND HIM ANYWHERE.

AS SOON AS I SAW THE POLICE ON THE BRIDGE ... I KNEW WHAT OMAR HAD DONE.



OMAR!

THAT NIGHT OUR BUILDING WAS SILENT. 100 PEOPLE SAT LOST IN THOUGHTS OF COLD DARK WATER. AFTER OMAR, WHO NEXT?



WATCHING OMAR'S BURIAL, I FELT LIKE I WAS ATTENDING MY OWN FUNERAL.

A REPORTER WAS THERE... HE APPROACHED ME AFTERWARDS WHILE A PHOTOGRAPHER SNAPPED PICTURES. HE ASKED ME...



EXCUSE ME SIR- DID YOU KNOW THIS MAN OMAR?

KNOW OMAR?



OF COURSE I KNOW OMAR



WE ARE OMAR. ALL OF US



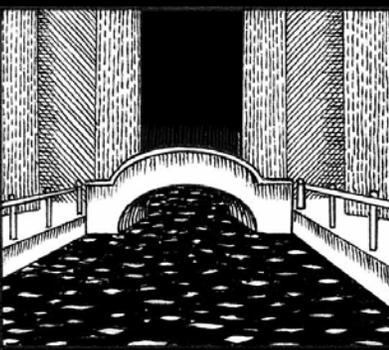
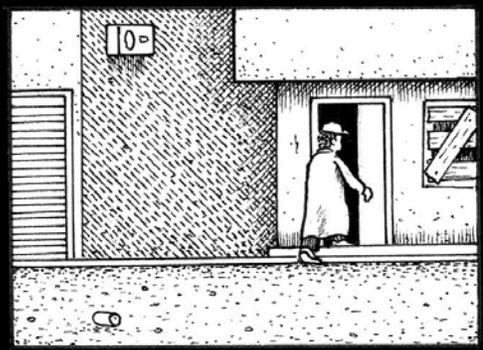
I'M NO PIRATE, THIEF OR RAPIST LIKE YOU SAY IN YOUR PAPER EVERY DAY!



YOU'VE PUSHED US TO THE SHADOWS- MADE US GHOSTS...



YOU MIGHT AS WELL BURY ME NEXT TO OMAR...



LIIBAAN & ABSHIR AMSTERDAM



WE USED TO BE SO TIGHT. DAD WOULD GO AWAY A LOT ON BUSINESS, SO HE WAS MORE THAN JUST A BIG BROTHER FOR ME. HE WAS LIKE A MENTOR.

"I SEE NO CHANGES, ALL I SEE IS RACIST FACES... MISPLACED HATE MAKES DISGRACE FOR RACES..."

WHEN HE GOT HIS FIRST GIRLFRIEND - EVA - WE MADE A PROMISE NEVER TO TELL EACH-OTHER'S SECRETS TO MUM AND DAD.

CHECK IT OUT- CARL TAPED THIS FOR ME OFF HIS BROTHER...



WE USED TO PLAY TUPAC CASSETTE TAPES TOGETHER. I THOUGHT WE WERE PRETTY COOL.



WE WEREN'T BAD KIDS. CHEEKY, PERHAPS. WITH NO MONEY AND NOT MUCH TO DO. THE POLICE HAD IT IN FOR US. THEY ALWAYS GAVE US TROUBLE.

4 KIDS SHOP-LIFTING... WE PICKED UP THE RING-LEADERS

THEY'D CALL HOME TO GET US PICKED UP. DAD WOULD COME IN THE CAR, SOMETIMES LATE AT NIGHT.

O! YOU LADS. GET OFF THAT WALL



I MEAN, WE WEREN'T ANGELS. WE SHOP-LIFTED A BIT... BUT NO MORE THAN ARNE OR KLAAS - AND WHO DID THEY ALWAYS TAKE IN? THE SOMALI BOYS!

WHAT WAS IT THIS TIME, ABSHIR?

NOTHING, I SWEAR! THEY JUST ALWAYS GO FOR US...



BEING OLDER, ABSHIR ALWAYS GOT TOLD OFF WORSE.

HE COULD GET ANGRY BUT WE KNEW DAD WAS ON OUR SIDE. HE WORKED SO HARD. BUT WHEN HE WAS AROUND HE WOULD DO ANYTHING TO HELP AND ENCOURAGE US...



DAD WASN'T SO RELIGIOUS. ENOUGH TO KEEP THE FAMILY FROM TALKING. BUT HIS SPARE TIME WAS FOR BOOKS, MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES. HE WOULD DRAG HIS TWO UNGRATEFUL SONS ALONG...

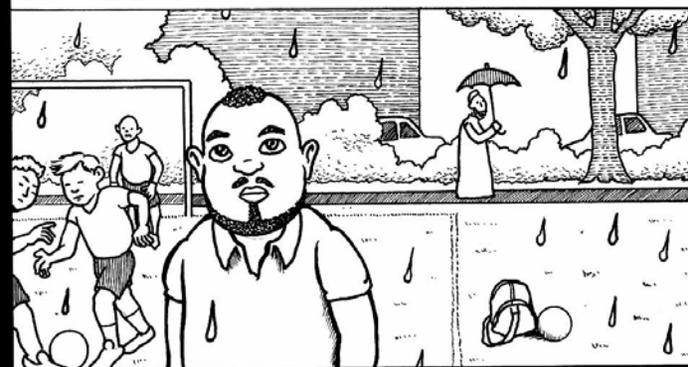


NOW I WOULD GIVE ANYTHING TO HEAR HIM WAXING ON ABOUT HIS FAVOURITE ART AGAIN...

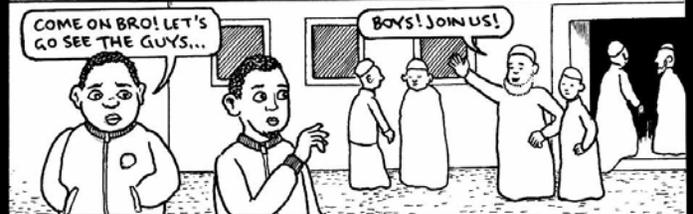


IT WAS A SUDDEN HEART-ATTACK... HE DIED INSTANTLY. JUST LIKE THAT-GONE.

ABSHIR AND I WERE BOTH DEVASTATED. BUT WE DEALT WITH OUR GRIEF IN VERY DIFFERENT WAYS.



WE USED TO BE SO CLOSE, ALWAYS HAVING FUN. BUT AT A TIME LIKE WHEN DAD DIED, A MAN MUST GET IN TOUCH WITH HIS SOUL AND GOD. I KNEW I HAD TO EMBRACE MY RESPONSIBILITIES AND BEST-SELF.

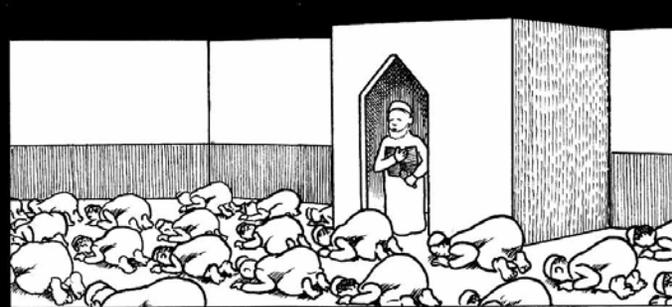


BUT LIIBAAN BEHAVED AS THOUGH THIS WERE SOME KIND OF BETRAYAL. HE WENT THE OTHER WAY.

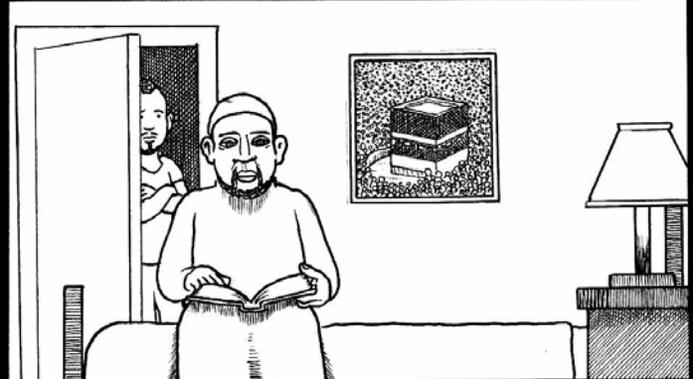
I FEAR I LED LIIBAAN DOWN THE WRONG PATH DURING OUR YOUTH.



I SPOKE TO OUR IMAM ABOUT IT. HE SAID IT WAS GOOD TO ENCOURAGE LIIBAAN BUT THAT HE MUST MAKE HIS OWN DECISIONS IN LIFE.



BUT AFTER FULLY EMBRACING ISLAM, I FELT PART OF A COMMUNITY THAT UNDERSTOOD ME, MY IDENTITY AND FRUSTRATIONS. I WISH LIIBAAN COULD EXPERIENCE THE SAME THING.



IN THE QUR'AN AND IN PRAYER, I FIND ALL THE ANSWERS THAT I NEED.

I REMOVED MYSELF FROM THE CROWD I USED TO MOVE IN. THAT WAY OF LIVING SEEMS SO EMPTY TO ME NOW. WHO WAS I BACK THEN?

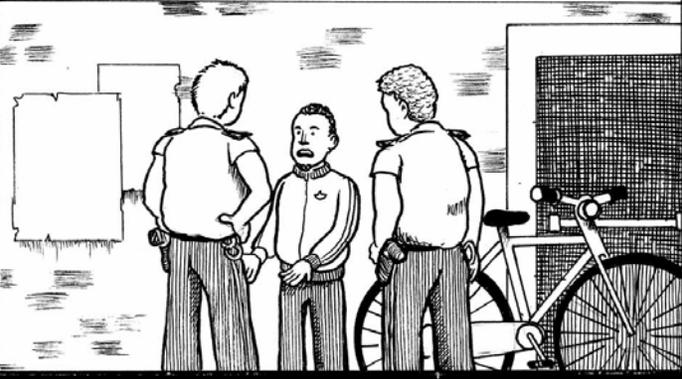


ARMS DOWN BY YOUR SIDES SIR - WHAT ARE YOU CARRYING?



BUT SOME THINGS DON'T CHANGE. I PROBABLY GET EVEN MORE SUSPICION FROM THE POLICE NOW...

I REMEMBER ONCE GETTING PICKED UP BECAUSE THEY THOUGHT I HAD STOLEN MY BIKE.



DAD HAD TO COME TO THE POLICE STATION WITH THE RECEIPT TO PROVE THAT IT WAS MINE.



BUT NOW I HAVE GROWN MY BEARD AND WEAR SHALWAR, IT'S ALL ABOUT JIHAD AND AL-QAEDA.



THEY SAY THEY'RE "JUST MAKING ENQUIRIES." BUT THEY WATCH US EVERYWHERE. I GET SO TIRED OF BEING SCRUTINIZED... I OFTEN THINK ABOUT HOW DAD DEFENDED ME FROM THEM WHEN I WAS YOUNG.



YOU KNOW, I GUESS I TAKE AFTER DAD...



... RELIGION JUST ISN'T THE HEART OF WHO I AM. I NEED TO LIVE IN THIS WORLD, HERE, NOW.

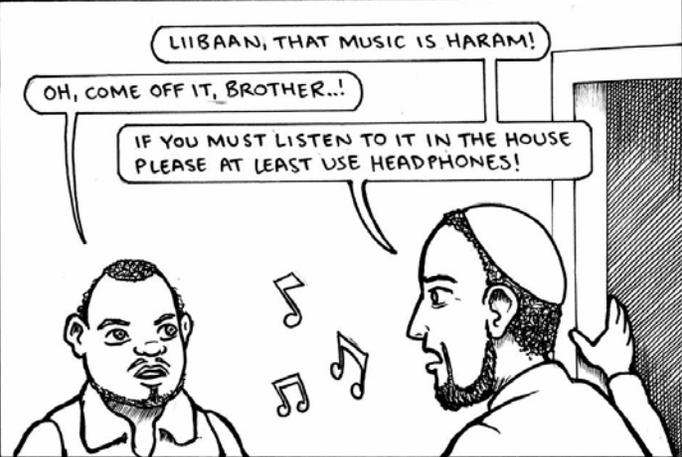
HEH HEH... THIS IS A BIG TUNE!



LIIBAAN, THAT MUSIC IS HARAM!

OH, COME OFF IT, BROTHER..!

IF YOU MUST LISTEN TO IT IN THE HOUSE PLEASE AT LEAST USE HEADPHONES!



WHEN WILL YOU GROW UP, BROTHER? THIS IS NOT THE RIGHT PATH YOU ARE FOLLOWING...

AND WHAT IS THE RIGHT PATH, ABSHIR? YOU GROW THAT BEARD, WEAR A SANCTIMONIOUS FACE AND THINK YOU'RE BETTER THAN ME!

STOP IT, STOP IT MY SONS! YOUR FATHER WOULD BE HEART-BROKEN TO HEAR YOU AT ONE-ANOTHER'S THROATS LIKE THIS!

YOU BOYS MUST RESPECT ONE ANOTHER. YOUR PATHS ARE DIFFERENT BUT YOU WILL ALWAYS BE BROTHERS. AND YOU ARE BOTH MY SONS. AND... YOU ARE BOTH YOUR FATHER'S SONS...

LATER...

BROTHER, I'M SORRY. I KNOW YOU'RE SINCERELY WORRIED FOR ME. I DON'T REALLY THINK YOU'RE SANCTIMONIOUS. BUT YOU NEED TO RELAX! I'M FINE...

I KNOW, LIIBAAN. AND I AM SORRY FOR GRIEVING YOU. PLEASE JUST- ALWAYS COME TO ME IF THERE IS A REAL PROBLEM.

OK... WELL. I'M GOING TO SEE THE BOYS.

AND I'M GOING TO EVENING PRAYERS.

HEY! YOU TWO! MAY I ENQUIRE WHERE YOU ARE GOING? YOU CARRYING ANY I.D WITH YOU?

OFFICER, THIS IS RIDICULOUS! MY BROTHER AND I ARE MERELY WALKING THE STREET!

BE COOL BROTHER! THEY'RE ONLY MAKING ENQUIRIES!

SHORTLY-

CHECK YOU OUT, "O CALM ONE"! THAT MOSQUE REALLY BRINGS OUT YOUR SPIRITUAL SIDE!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT CAME OVER ME!

LIIBAAN, LET US TOMORROW GO FOR TEA AT THE CAFE IN THE ART GALLERY WHERE DAD USED TO BUY US THOSE CAKES...

YOU REMEMBER?

Sagal and Abdi in Copenhagen

SAGAL ♡

COPENHAGEN



OKAY! TIME'S UP!
EVERYBODY CLOSE
YOUR PAPERS AND
BRING THEM UP
TO THE FRONT...



YOU TOO, SAGAL!
10 SECONDS!
1 SENTENCE...
DONE!



OOF! THAT WAS ROUGH!
I STRUGGLED WITH THE
SURGICAL QUESTION...
HOW DID YOU DO, SAGAL?
HA! PIECE OF
CAKE, HANS

I FELT LIKE A MILLION DOLLARS! EXAMS WERE OVER AND THE SUMMER STRETCHED AHEAD OF ME.

MUM WAS SO PROUD OF ME STUDYING MEDICINE. SHE ONLY WISHED DAD WAS HERE TO SEE IT TOO...

ALL OF US MED STUDENTS WERE GOING TO A PARTY, TO CELEBRATE END OF TERM. A CHANCE TO DRESS UP!



WHAT TIME DO WE MEET FOR THE PARTY TONIGHT?
STARTS AT 8
PERFECT! SEE YOU LATER



HE WOULD HAVE BEEN SO PROUD OF YOU...
WAS IT HARD?
FOR SUPER-SISTER? NO PROBLEM!



OK, SO WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS ONE?
I STILL PREFERRED THE SEVENTH ONE!



THANKS FOR DINNER MUM! I HAD BETTER RUN...
ENJOY YOURSELF SAGAL. YOU DESERVE IT. DON'T BE TOO LATE!



HEY, SAGAL! YOU LOOK GREAT!
TAH- DAAAAAH!
SHE OUGHT, THE TIME SHE SPENT ON IT!
NONSENSE! I JUST THREW IT TOGETHER!



GOD IT FEELS GOOD TO LEAVE THE BOOKS BEHIND. A GUILT FREE EVENING!

I'M GOING TO DANCE AWAY EVERY SINGLE COBWEB!



YOU! SORRY BUT YOU CAN'T COME IN WEARING THAT HEAD SCARF

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?



I'M SERIOUS. IT'S POLICY. YOU'RE NOT GETTING IN LIKE THAT

DUDE, YOU HAVE TO BE KIDDING, THIS IS RIDICULOUS...

EXCUSE ME...



WHAT'S THE HOLD UP GUYS? HANS AND ALEXANDER ARE ALREADY GETTING THE DRINKS IN!

YOU COULD JUST TAKE IT OFF, SAGAL

NO!



HEY- WHAT'S GOING ON?

SAGAL! WAIT!

I'M LEAVING



SHORTLY

SIGH...

I WAS BORN HERE. I SPEAK DANISH, I PAY TAXES- YET SOMEHOW BECAUSE I'M A MUSLIM I'M SECOND CLASS. NO! WORSE! I'M OFFENSIVE!

LET'S GET AN ICE-CREAM



WHAT? IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE FURIOUS ANYWAY, MIGHT AS WELL BE FURIOUS AND HAVE AN ICE-CREAM, NO?



THIS IS SO LAME! WE'RE 21, WE'RE GORGEOUS- AND WE'RE EATING ICE-CREAM ON A FRIDAY NIGHT WHILE OUR FRIENDS DANCE THEIR BUTTS OFF!

WELL - YOU KNOW- WE COULD GO BACK...



...IF YOU TOOK THE SCARF OFF



I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M HEARING THIS AASIYA! THIS IS MY IDENTITY! I AM DANISH, I AM SOMALI AND I AM A MUSLIM...!

AS AM I! EVERY BIT AS MUCH AS YOU ARE. BUT SAGAL...



BUT WHAT? YOU DON'T THINK IT MATTERS?

OF COURSE IT MATTERS! BUT - MAYBE THAT'S JUST HOW IT IS. WHY SPOIL OUR EVENING...?



OH I SEE - NOW I SPOILED OUR EVENING!

OH, SAGAL! I DIDN'T MEAN THAT- WAIT...

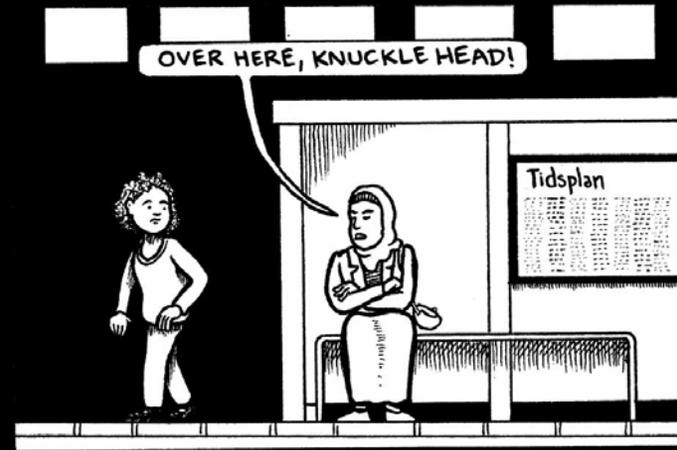


SAGAL!

SAGAAAL!

DAMN IT!

SIGH



OVER HERE, KNUCKLE HEAD!



I'M SORRY SAGAL. IT MAKES ME FURIOUS TOO - HONESTLY. IT JUST SEEMS TO GET HARDER AND HARDER THOUGH. I GET TIRED OF HAVING TO DEFEND MYSELF EVERYWHERE



YOU KNOW, MY BOSS AT THE SHOP TOLD ME SHE'D "RATHER I NOT WEAR MY SCARF" ANY MORE... WHAT CAN I DO?

UGH!



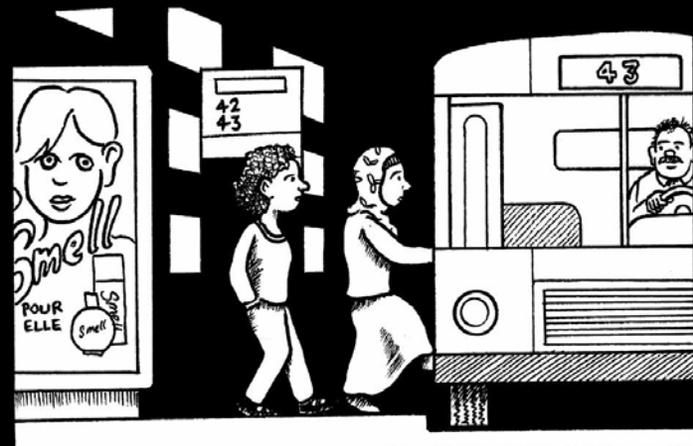
IT MAKES ME SO MAD. IT MAKES ME WANT TO WEAR MY SCARF EVEN MORE!

BUT THEN WHAT? UNEMPLOYMENT? AND MORE ICE-CREAM ON FRIDAY NIGHTS?



I SHOULD WEAR THE NIQAB, SEE HOW THEY LIKE THAT- IGNORANT BULLIES...

HERE COMES THE BUS



AT LEAST WE HAD A GOOD DANCE AT MOHAMED'S WEDDING LAST MONTH

YEAH...



BUT IF I WANT TO GO OUT AND DANCE, AND DRESS HOW I FEEL COMFORTABLE - I DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO WAIT FOR ANOTHER OF YOUR COUSIN'S TO GET MARRIED!



NEXT DAY

SAGAL MY SWEET, I TOLD YOU THOSE PLACES ARE NOT FOR YOU. I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU WOULD WANT TO GO ANYWAY...

DING DONG!



IT'S NOT ABOUT THE PARTY, MUM - IT'S ABOUT ME BEING ACCEPTED THE WAY I AM - SOMALI, DANISH, MUSLIM, WOMAN - ALL OF IT!

HM-HMM, YES DEAR



HI MRS KHALID! HOW ARE YOU THIS MORNING?

HELLO AASIYA! WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?

HEY...



SAGAL - YOU'RE MY OLDEST FRIEND. YOU SEEMED SO MISERABLE LAST NIGHT, SO I CAME HERE TO CHEER YOU UP. I HAVE JUST TWO WORDS FOR YOU. "BEYONCE..."



... AND "TICKETS"!

SO!



COME ON AASIYA! LET'S SHOW 'EM HOW SOMALI GIRLS DANCE...!

YOU GOT IT, SAGAL!



I SPENT THREE YEARS IN A KENYAN REFUGEE CAMP



I WOULD LIE ON MY BACK WHEN A PLANE PASSED OVER, IMAGINING MYSELF ONTO IT...

I HAD FRIENDS IN THE CAMP BUT THERE WAS LITTLE TO DO OR SAY... WHAT DOES ONE DISCUSS, WHEN EVERY DAY IS AS EMPTY AS THE LAST?



LIKE PRISONERS, WE WOULD SIT AND CONTEMPLATE TIME... RUNNING AWAY LIKE SAND THROUGH FINGERS



THEN ONE DAY I WAS GRANTED MY PAPERS. MY TURN TO FLY HAD COME - TO A COUNTRY CALLED "DENMARK."



FLYING - WHICH HAD LOOKED SO PEACEFUL FROM THE GROUND - WAS NOISY AND ALARMING...



BUT WHEN THE EARTH FELL AWAY AND THE OCEAN APPEARED, HUGE AND DARK, I FELT FREE AT LAST.

IN COPENHAGEN I JOINED THE SOMALI COMMUNITY. IT WAS ANOTHER WORLD! JUST WALKING OUT MY FRONT DOOR FELT INVIGORATING, WONDERFUL...



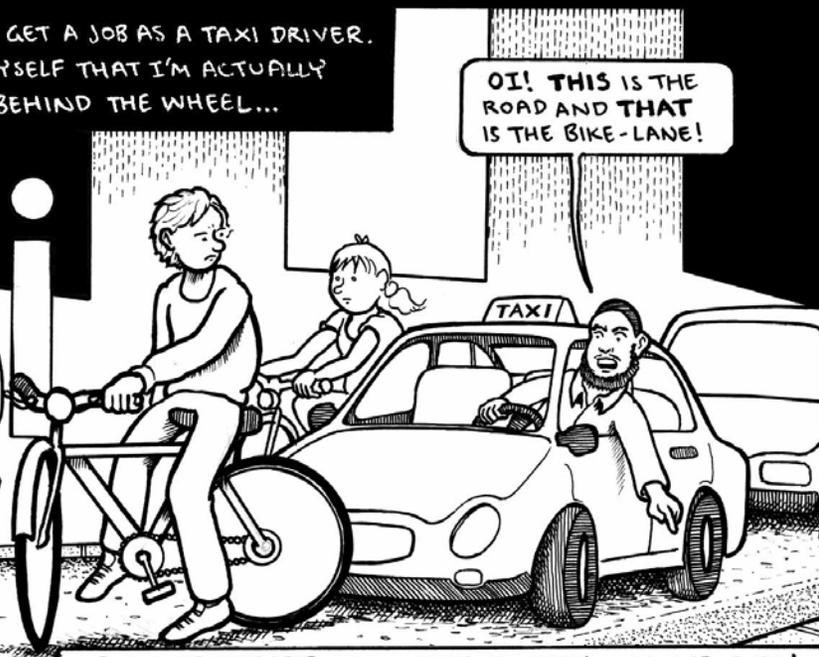
I FELL IN LOVE WITH FOZIA, A WOMAN FROM MY CLAN. IN TIME WE HAVE BEEN BLESSED WITH FOUR CHILDREN.



TUT! ABDI, INTRODUCE THEM PROPERLY - THIS IS FAISA, ABSHIR, YAHYA AND TALISO!

I MANAGED TO GET A JOB AS A TAXI DRIVER. I SURPRISED MYSELF THAT I'M ACTUALLY PRETTY GOOD BEHIND THE WHEEL...

ABDI & FAMILY, COPENHAGEN



OI! THIS IS THE ROAD AND THAT IS THE BIKE-LANE!

... BUT SOME OF THESE CYCLISTS THINK THEY OWN THE ROAD!

HOPE HAD RETURNED TO MY LIFE. AT LAST I WAS A WHOLE PERSON AGAIN. BUT IN 2001...



EVERYTHING CHANGED THE DAY THOSE BUILDINGS FELL IN AMERICA. OVERNIGHT, LIFE SOURED...



THE SOCIETY THAT HAD WELCOMED ME, AND THAT I HAD EMBRACED, SEEMED SUDDENLY TO PERCEIVE MY FAMILY AS A THREATENING ABERRATION



I REMEMBER DEVELOPING NERVOUS HABITS, LIKE SMILING AT EVERYBODY ON THE STREETS, OVER COMPENSATING, JUST TO SHOW THAT -HEY! WE ARE NO TERRORISTS!

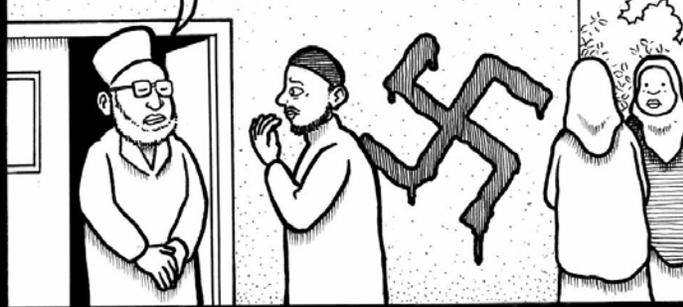


THE CHILDREN WERE EMBARRASSED - THEY SAID I SEEMED LIKE A CRAZY MAN. BUT I KNEW THEY WERE TROUBLED BY THE PREJUDICE TOO...

... PERHAPS EVEN MORE THAN FOZIA AND I ...



IT APPEARED OVERNIGHT - GALAD FOUND IT THIS MORNING



BUT IT DID NOT PASS. IT WORSENER, WHEN TERRORISM HIT LONDON, AND MADRID. WE FELT LIKE PARIAS.

PEOPLE KNEW NOTHING ABOUT SOMALIA OR ISLAM - TERRORISM, VIOLENCE AND FUNDAMENTALISM WERE THE ONLY ASSOCIATIONS FOR MOST PEOPLE...



OH YEAH? WHY ARE YOUR PEOPLE ALL PIRATES? YOU CAN'T OBEY THE LAW LIKE THE REST OF US?



MIND YOUR BACK, BROTHER!



WHEN WE ARRIVED HERE THERE WERE LOTS OF WHITE FAMILIES, BUT OVER TIME THEY HAVE MOVED AWAY. MIGRANT FAMILIES TAKE THEIR PLACES, AND THEN EVEN MORE WHITE FAMILIES LEAVE...



HI DAD!

I'M NO FOOL, I CAN SEE WHAT IS HAPPENING- "WHITE FLIGHT" THEY CALL IT. AND WOULDN'T YOU KNOW IT?



I THOUGHT SO! LOOKS LIKE ANOTHER KOSOVAN FAMILY MOVING IN... I HOPE THEY'RE BETTER BEHAVED THAN THE REST...

ABDI!

OH, THAT'S RIGHT! TEACH YOUR CHILDREN PREJUDICE WHY DON'T YOU!



HONESTLY ABDI, YOU SOUND JUST LIKE A DANE WITH THAT TALK!



DAD'S IN TROUBLE!

HA HA!

AHEM!

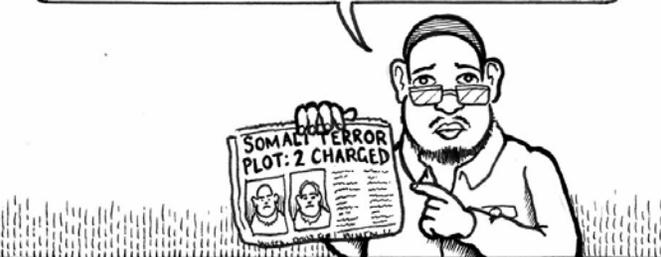
SHE'S RIGHT, OF COURSE. THE KOSOVANS ARE IN THE SAME BOAT AS US. IT IS SO HARD TO FEEL A VISITOR IN THE VERY PLACE WHICH IS YOUR HOME...

AND OFTEN - AN UNWELCOME VISITOR



OUR IDENTITY IS FOREVER DISTORTED, FRAMED BY THESE BLOODY TERRORISTS AND THIS SALACIOUS SENSATIONALISM IN THE MEDIA...

THE ONLY THING I HAVE IN COMMON WITH THESE MEN IS WEARING MY BEARD LIKE THEIRS!



ON THIS I AM JUDGED COMPLICIT!?



EDUCATION IS THE ONLY WAY TO BREAK THIS CYCLE. AND I THINK CHILDREN WILL LEAD THE WAY.



HI NANNA! HI SARA!

I'M GOING TO PLAY FOOTBALL WITH LASSE!

BRM BRM!

9pm - "SOMALI PIRATES: TERROR ON THE SEAS".
HARD-HITTING INVESTIGATION INTO MODERN
PIRACY PERPETUATED BY SOMALI GANGS.

SIGH... MIGHT AS WELL WATCH IT-SEE
WHAT THEY'RE SAYING ABOUT US NOW



JUST LOOK AT THIS NONSENSE! THEY TALK AS IF THE
WHOLE COUNTRY IS WAR-RAVAGED... MY AREA
HAS NOT SEEN FIGHTING FOR 10 YEARS...

I DON'T KNOW SWEETHEART-YOUR
MOTHER HAS QUITE A TEMPER...!

HA HA HA!



AND WHO IS THIS GUY TALKING ABOUT
SOMALIA? HE IS NOT EVEN AFRICAN-!

YEAH!



THE KIDS GET SO INDIGNANT, SEEING THEIR FAMILY
AND COMMUNITY DENIGRATED AS DROP-OUT, KHAT-
-CHEWING, WOMAN HATERS AND TERRORISTS!

NEXT DAY

THEN THEY CALLED ME 'PIRATE' AND
TOLD ME SOMALIA WAS BACKWARD-
I'LL GET THEM TOMORROW!

NO SON! YOU MUST
RISE ABOVE IT!



LITTLE FAISA HAD HAD ENOUGH. AND, SHE HAD A
PLAN OF HER OWN. NEXT DAY WITH HER TEACHER'S
PERMISSION SHE STOOD AT THE FRONT OF HER CLASS

I AM A DANISH SOMALI, AND I AM A MUSLIM.



MY FAMILY ATTEND THE MOSQUE NEAR THE
SHOPPING DISTRICT. MY FATHER DRIVES A
TAXI. WE ARE VERY NORMAL! IF YOU HAVE
QUESTIONS ABOUT MY RELIGION OR CULTURE
-PLEASE ONLY ASK AND I WILL TELL YOU

THANK-YOU



WHEN I HEARD WHAT FAISA HAD DONE I WAS SO
PROUD! THE TEACHER WAS IMPRESSED TOO, AND
ENCOURAGED HER TO JOIN THE DEBATING SOCIETY.
TODAY SHE IS THEIR BEST DEBATER!

I AM SURE THAT SHE
GETS IT FROM ME...



ABSHIR FOLLOWED FAISA'S LEAD - THE CHILDREN
KNOW THAT MAKING FRIENDS AND FORGIVING
IGNORANCE IS THE ONLY WAY TO CHANGE THINGS

PERHAPS IT MIGHT ALL BE DIFFERENT, BY THE
TIME YAHYA AND TALISO ARE GROWN UP...



Anwar and Jamilah in Helsinki



ANWAR HELSINKI



I REMEMBER MY CHILDHOOD SO CLEARLY... WHEN I CLOSE MY EYES I CAN HEAR MY FATHER'S CATTLE AND FEEL THE SUN ON MY SKIN AGAIN...

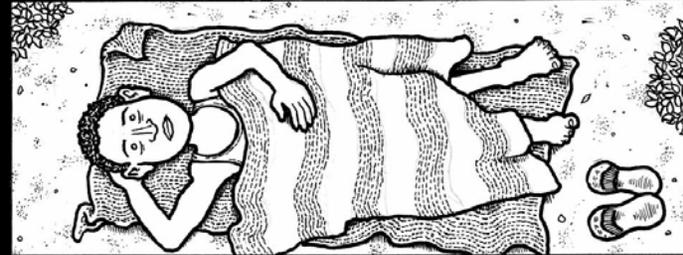
FARMING IN SOMALIA WAS A CONSTANT BATTLE AGAINST THE ELEMENTS. MY FATHER TAUGHT ME HOW TO FIND FERTILE GRAZING LAND.



LIFE WAS A PRECARIOUS DANCE. A DROUGHT COULD WIPE OUT YOUR HERD, YOUR WHOLE LIVELIHOOD... WE WERE ALWAYS ANXIOUSLY WATCHING THE SKIES AND SEASONS...



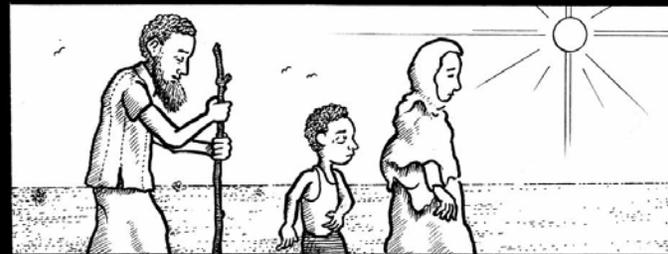
THEN, IN THE LATE 80s, THE FIGHTING BEGAN. FAR FROM US AT FIRST, BUT WE FOLLOWED IT EVERY NIGHT ON THE RADIO ALL THE SAME.



AT NIGHT I WOULD BE KEPT AWAKE BY FEARFUL THOUGHTS OF THE FIGHTING OVERCOMING US... OF GUNMEN LURKING IN THE DARKNESS.



IN 1992 AS THE FIGHTING RAGED ON, THE WORST OF THE DROUGHTS STRUCK. WE LOST EVERYTHING. I WONDERED - WOULD I DIE BY THE BULLET, OR STARVATION?



WE SET OUT FOR THE SAFETY OF KENYA. BUT THE JOURNEY WAS HELL - SO FAR. SO HARD. AND FOR MY FATHER IT WAS A DEATH MARCH.



I HAD TO BURY HIM THERE IN A SHALLOW GRAVE... COVERING HIM WITH ROCKS AND SAND... IT WAS THE WORST MOMENT OF MY LIFE.



MOTHER AND I REACHED A REFUGEE CAMP IN KENYA. WE WERE BROKEN PEOPLE. THERE WAS NO SENSE OF CELEBRATION. WE HAD LOST OUR LIVES, OUR SELVES...



AND THERE WE STAYED. STUCK, FOR FIVE YEARS. I PUSHED AND CAJOLED MUM TO KEEP EATING, TO GO ON. THOUGH FOR WHAT, I WASN'T SURE.



UNTIL ONE DAY FATE INTERVENED AT LAST. WE WERE REPATRIATED, TO HELSINKI. NEITHER OF US HAD EVER SEEN SNOW BEFORE...

I HAD NEVER HEARD OF FINLAND, NEVER IMAGINED SUCH A PLACE. IT WAS HALLUCINATORY TO SUDDENLY BE HERE. I WAS SO GRATEFUL TO THESE PEOPLE - "THE FINNS"!



MOTHER AND I STRUGGLED AND STRAINED TO LEARN THE DENSE, COMPLICATED LANGUAGE OF OUR ADOPTED HOME.



THERE WERE TIMES, IN YEARS THAT FOLLOWED, WHEN I WISHED I COULD NOT UNDERSTAND THEM AGAIN.



I WOULD WONDER - WOULD THEY STILL TREAT US SO CRUELLY IF THEY KNEW WHAT WE HAD FLED FROM? WHY WE WERE HERE?



I IGNORED THE JIBES AND FOCUSED ON IMPROVING MYSELF. THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATION WERE OVERWHELMING TO ME.

I IMMERSSED MYSELF IN AFRICAN LITERATURE AND DISCOVERED AN APTITUDE FOR MATHS... I LOVED ALL BOOKS!!!



I READ ECONOMICS AT UNIVERSITY. DURING THAT TIME I MET HAWA. SHE WAS A NURSE. WE WOULD WALK TOGETHER, TALK TOGETHER...



WE MARRIED AND SOON WERE BLESSED WITH A SON, KAAFI.

SUDDENLY I HAD A FAMILY TO SUPPORT. I GOT A JOB AT AN ACCOUNTANCY FIRM AND PUT IN LONG HOURS



MOTHER AND I MADE FRIENDS WITH MANY OTHER SOMALI FAMILIES IN HELSINKI. SO MANY SEEMED TO HAVE WORRIES AND TROUBLES - SOCIAL, OR FINANCIAL...



WE JUST CAN'T MANAGE WITH 9 KIDS IN A 2-BEDROOM PLACE...

WE PETITIONED SO MANY TIMES FOR A BIGGER APARTMENT BUT THEY KEEP REFUSING US...



I'M SO UPSET, ANWAR-THE APPLICATION HAS BEEN REJECTED YET AGAIN. XORIYO AND THE KIDS HAVE BEEN REFUSED ASYLUM THREE TIMES NOW BUT I THOUGHT THEY HAD TO REPATRIATE FAMILIES BY LAW?

MY FRIEND WARFAA HAD THE OPPOSITE PROBLEM

THEY INTERVIEW ALL SIX KIDS SEPERATELY AT THE EMBASSY IN ADDIS- THEN SAY THERE IS DISCREPANCY IN THEIR TESTIMONY. WELL OF COURSE THERE IS! THE LITTEST IS ONLY NINE! THEY JUST DON'T WANT THEM HERE ANWAR...



I MISS THEM SO MUCH



SO LONG GOOD LUCK!

HEARING SO MANY PROBLEMS WORE ME DOWN. I HAD TO DO SOMETHING CONSTRUCTIVE, SIMPLY TO AVOID DESPAIR!



I JOINED A FLEDGLING COMMUNITY ORGANISATION THAT HELPED SOMALIS MAKING THE TRANSITION TO FINNISH SOCIETY AND ADDRESSED INTERCULTURAL FRICTION

WE SOMALIS ARE A SMALL COMMUNITY IN FINLAND. WE KNOW EVERYONE BY JUST A FEW DEGREES OF SEPARATION! HAVING A DEGREE, AND UNDERSTANDING SOME OF THE OFFICIAL SYSTEMS, I THOUGHT I COULD HELP OTHERS MANAGE THEIR PROBLEMS. WE HAVE REGULAR COMMUNITY MEETINGS...



OUR NEIGHBOURS ARE AGGRESSIVE TO US- THEY SAY NOT TO GO NEAR THEIR KIDS!

THE SHOP NEAR US WOULD NOT SERVE MY WIFE! SHE WAS ALMOST IN TEARS...



BESIDES HOUSING ISSUES, IT IS THESE RACE TENSIONS THAT COME UP TIME AND AGAIN



...I SHOULD TELL THAT FAT MAN WHAT HE CAN DO WITH HIS OPINIONS! I-

NOOOO, ROOBLE - LET'S REMAIN CONSTRUCTIVE!

I TRY TO KEEP EVERYTHING CALM AND POSITIVE BUT IT IS NOT ALWAYS EASY. NATURALLY PEOPLE GET VERY UPSET AND TEMPER FLARE...



AAMINO, LET ME TALK TO MY CONTACT DAMIAN AT THE POLICE STATION ABOUT THESE BOYS WHO ARE HASSLING YOUNG ORIYO

PFFT! FOR THE LIKELY GOOD IT WILL DO!

YA-AWN

RACIAL INSULTS? YES, AND THROWING STONES. THEY REALLY FEEL UNSAFE IN THEIR AREA, SIR...

LOOK, THERE IS NOT A HUGE AMOUNT I CAN DO BUT WE WILL STEP UP PATROLS... IF WE COULD ACTUALLY WITNESS AN INCIDENT IT WOULD HELP. BUT LEAVE IT WITH ME, ANWAR, AND THANKS FOR LETTING ME KNOW.



WELL, I DON'T KNOW HOW EFFECTIVE THAT WAS BUT AT LEAST I RAISED THE ISSUES. I WISH I HAD SOMETHING MORE CONCRETE I COULD TELL TO AAMINO AND ORIYO...



THE JOB AT THE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION IS VOLUNTARY. SOMETIMES IT MAKES FOR VERY LATE NIGHTS BUT I DON'T MIND. BEING EDUCATED AND SPEAKING GOOD FINNISH, IT'S EASIER FOR ME...

BUT THE PROBLEMS KEEP COMING. SO OFTEN IT'S HOUSING... IN SOMALI CULTURE WE HAVE BIG FAMILIES. BUT HERE, THERE IS NOT THE HOUSING PROVISION. OVERCROWDING CAN CAUSE GREAT STRESSES...



WE HAVE BEEN IN THE QUEUE FOR A LARGER PLACE FOR I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG!

THE HOUSING OFFICE SAY, "BE PATIENT! BE PATIENT!"

CAN I HAVE A SAMOSA, MUM?

ME TOO!

WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO? SLEEP STANDING UP IN THE CUPBOARD?

IT'S VERY HARD TO STUDY HERE ANWAR. THERE'S NO PEACE AND QUIET. OFTEN I'M LATE FOR SCHOOL SIMPLY BECAUSE WE'RE ALL TRYING TO GET IN THE BATHROOM!



I OFTEN FIND MYSELF SPENDING MY LUNCH BREAK AT THE HOUSING OFFICE OR CITY HALL...



PLEASE GO AHEAD MADAM - YOU TELL ME AND I'LL TRANSLATE FOR THEM...

LOOK, I CAN SEE THEY'VE BEEN ON THE WAITING LIST FOR A THREE BEDROOM APARTMENT OR LARGER BUT THERE SIMPLY ISN'T ANYTHING AVAILABLE RIGHT NOW - CAN YOU TELL THEM?

AFTER A LONG DAY AT THE OFFICE CRUNCHING NUMBERS, AND THEN ABSORBING ALL THESE TALES OF WOE... RETURNING HOME TO HAWA AND KAAFI IS MY SWEET REWARD

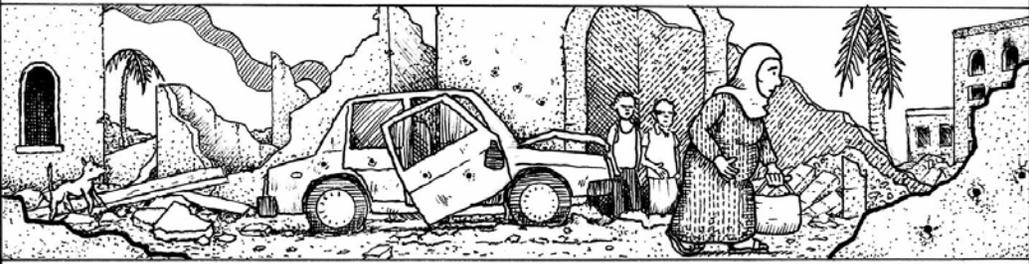


POOR KAAFI! HE DIDN'T MANAGE TO STAY AWAKE TO SEE YOU



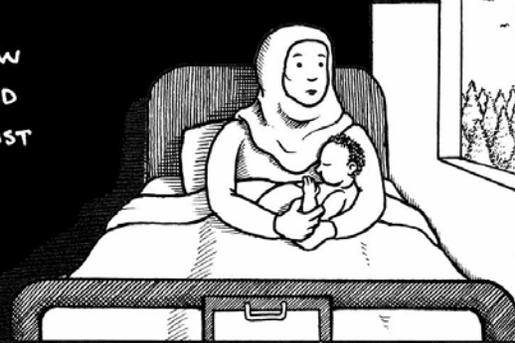
THINGS WORKED OUT FOR US HERE IN HELSINKI BUT WE HAVE A DUTY TO HELP OTHERS LESS FORTUNATE. THIS IS OUR CULTURE - TO HELP EACH OTHER, AS A COMMUNITY. I JUST WISH WE COULD WORK TOGETHER WITH THE WIDER, FINNISH COMMUNITY... ...AND NOT ALWAYS HAVE THIS DIVIDE, BETWEEN "THEM" AND "US".

MY MOTHER WAS PREGNANT WITH ME WHEN SHE ESCAPED THE WAR IN SOMALIA...



... SHE GAVE BIRTH IN A RECEPTION CENTRE IN THE NORTH OF FINLAND.

IMAGINE HOW STRANGE AND SCARY IT MUST HAVE BEEN FOR HER...



ALL ALONE WITH A NEWBORN BABY IN A STRANGE LAND OF INFINITE FORESTS, WHERE THE SUN NEVER SET...

MY MUM TAUGHT ME ABOUT SOMALIA AND ISLAM FROM AN EARLY AGE. I REMEMBER SHE ALWAYS SEEMED HAPPY AND SAD AT ONCE WHEN TELLING ME ABOUT HER HOME



NOBODY AT SCHOOL KNEW ABOUT SOMALIA OR ISLAM... BUT I GOT ALONG WELL WITH THE OTHER CHILDREN.

MY MOTHER TOLD ME RECENTLY, HOW ISOLATED SHE FELT BACK THEN... THE ONLY SOMALI MOTHER WAITING AT THE SCHOOL GATE. I NEVER HAD ANY IDEA.



ONE DAY A BOY IN MY CLASS REFUSED TO SIT WITH ME BECAUSE HE SAID I WAS 'DIRTY'. SOMEHOW, EVERYTHING SEEMED TO CHANGE IN THAT MOMENT...

AT LUNCH TIME I FEIGNED A STOMACH ACHE AND RAN HOME TO MUM.

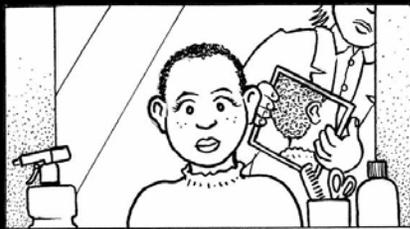
JAMILAH MY SWEET, WE ARE ALL THE SAME AND WE ARE ALL DIFFERENT. BUT YOU...

...YOU ARE MY MOST PRECIOUS GIFT FROM ALLAH.

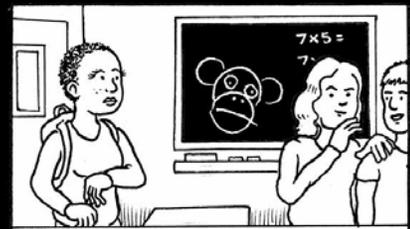
NOW CHEER UP AND HAVE A SAMOSA.



FOR THE FIRST TIME I UNDERSTOOD THAT MY MUM AND I WERE DIFFERENT. I WISHED I COULD SCRUB MY SKIN AND FIND IT WHITE BENEATH. I FELT ASHAMED...



WHEN I WAS OLDER I DECIDED THAT MY HAIR DIDN'T HELP ME FIT IN. I PERSUADED MY MUM TO LET ME CUT IT SHORT.



IT DIDN'T HELP. A MEAN GIRL SAID I LOOKED LIKE A MONKEY. THE NAME STUCK WITH THE OTHER KIDS.



I STARTED TO SPEND MORE TIME READING THE QUR'AN WITH MUM, SEARCHING FOR MY OWN IDENTITY.

I STARTED TO WEAR THE HIJAB WHEN I WAS 16. AT FIRST IT SHOCKED THE OTHER KIDS AT SCHOOL.



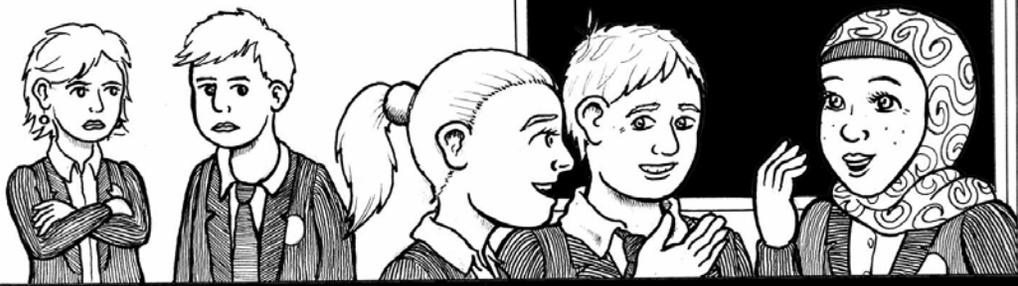
BUT EVERYTHING I DID SHOCKED THEM. SO WHAT WAS THE DIFFERENCE? I FINALLY FELT LIKE MY OWN PERSON.

JAMILAH



HELSINKI

FROM THAT DAY ON I WORE THE HIJAB. IT SEEMED TO ERECT A BARRIER WITH MANY IN MY CLASS. BUT I MADE A FEW TRUE FRIENDS FOR THE FIRST TIME TOO...



HOWEVER, OUT IN THE CITY I OFTEN SEE PEOPLE GIVING ME SIDWAYS LOOKS AS IF I MAKE THEM UNCOMFORTABLE OR THAT THEY DON'T TRUST ME.

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN INTO FASHION. SHOES ARE A PARTICULAR WEAKNESS...



UGH! THESE LOOK LIKE WELLINGTON BOOTS!



I WANTED TO WORK IN FASHION. I BEGAN APPLYING FOR JOBS IN THE CITY.

BUT ONE AFTER ANOTHER MY APPLICATIONS WERE REJECTED OR IGNORED ENTIRELY...



WITH REGRET...

BLAH BLAH BLAH

MY WHITE FRIENDS SEEMED TO FIND JOBS WITH LESS TROUBLE...



SORRY, J- I HAVE TO SCOOT OR MY BOSS WILL KILL ME. YOU MIND SETTLING UP?

I STARTED TO WONDER IF PEOPLE WERE PUT OFF BY MY NAME. AFTER SO MANY REJECTIONS YOU CAN GET TO FEEL PARANOID.

ONE DAY I HAD AN INTERVIEW WITH A BIG CLOTHES RETAILER. IT WAS ONLY A SHOP-FLOOR POSITION. WHEN I GOT THERE, THE MANAGER DIDN'T EVEN LOOK AT MY C.V. BEFORE TELLING ME SHE DIDN'T THINK I WAS "RIGHT" FOR THE JOB.



YES... WELL, THANK YOU FOR COMING IN, JAZEERA

IT'S... JAMILAH. ... WILL YOU KEEP MY CV ON FILE-?

AFTERWARDS, I SAW THE NEXT CANDIDATE ARRIVE - A WHITE GIRL, SAME AGE AS ME... THE MANAGER GREETED HER WITH A BIG SMILE AND THEY DISAPPEARED INTO HER OFFICE.

RIGHT THIS WAY...

ON THE BUS HOME, THE SENSE OF BEING WATCHED WAS WORSE THAN EVER. THE EMPTY SEAT NEXT TO ME FELT LIKE A POINTED MESSAGE...

...YOU'RE NOT WANTED HERE

MY MUM GENTLY SUGGESTED I TRY ANOTHER KIND OF JOB. THEY WERE HIRING AT THE AIRPORT... "SECURITY OPERATIVE..."

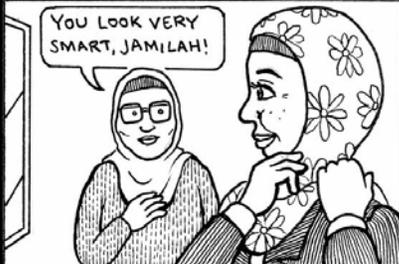


I WAS ALMOST DISAPPOINTED WHEN THEY ACCEPTED ME. BUT I RESOLVED FOR MY MUM'S SAKE TO TRY MY BEST.

THE UNIFORM WAS AWFUL.



YOU LOOK VERY SMART, JAMILAH!



I JAZZED IT UP WITH MY VERY FAVOURITE HEAD-SCARF.

BUT THE MOMENT HE SAW ME, MY SUPERVISOR SAID -

GET THAT RAG OFF YOUR HEAD



I COMPLAINED TO THE SENIOR MANAGER. HE SAID THE SUPERVISOR'S DECISION ON THE UNIFORM WAS FINAL...

YOU CAN'T PLAY THE RACE CARD HERE -!



THINGS GOT WORSE LATER IN THE WEEK. I WAS WORKING THE SECURITY-LINE AND ASKED A WOMAN TO STEP ASIDE FOR A RANDOM SEARCH -

YOU'RE NOT SEARCHING ME! YOU PEOPLE ARE THE TERRORISTS!



MY SUPERVISOR ACTUALLY APOLOGISED TO HER AND DIRECTED A WHITE GIRL TO PERFORM THE SEARCH...

HMPH!



THIS TIME THE MANAGER TOLD ME TO "STOP CAUSING TROUBLE..."

YOU NEED TO LIGHTEN UP AND BE A TEAM-PLAYER!



AFTER MY SHIFT I JUST SAT IN THE AIRPORT CAFE FOR AN HOUR, WATCHING PLANE AFTER PLANE TAKE OFF AND DISAPPEAR.



AT HOME, A LETTER WAS WAITING FOR ME

I HADN'T TOLD MY MOTHER ABOUT APPLYING TO A FASHION COLLEGE IN LONDON... I NEVER IMAGINED THEY WOULD ACCEPT ME.



I FELT TERRIBLE. WHAT HAD I DONE? HOW COULD I CONTEMPLATE ABANDONING MY MOTHER?



BUT SHE LOOKED ME IN THE EYE AND SAID—



SHE CAME WITH ME TO THE AIRPORT. WE WERE SILENT ALL THE WAY, TRYING TO BE STRONG...



BUT WHEN WE HAD TO PART AT THE PASSPORT DESK, BOTH OF US BROKE DOWN CRYING...



LONDON IS GREAT. I DON'T FEEL LIKE I STICK OUT HERE. THERE'S EVEN ANOTHER SOMALI GIRL IN THE YEAR ABOVE.



I'M DOING WELL ON MY COURSE. YOU'LL NEVER GUESS OUR FIRST ASSIGNMENT... HEAD-SCARVES!

I SENT MY SCARF TO MUM FOR HER BIRTHDAY.



WE SPEAK MOST DAYS ON SKYPE.

THINGS AREN'T PERFECT IN ENGLAND EITHER.



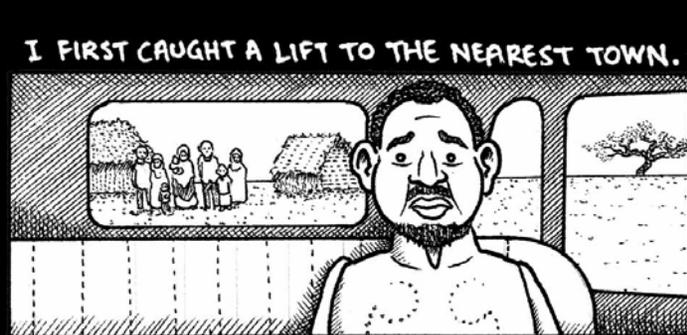
I GUESS STUPIDITY IS UNIVERSAL.

IN A YEAR I'LL RETURN TO HELSINKI. YOU KNOW, I ACTUALLY FELT HOMESICK THE OTHER DAY.



IT WAS A SURPRISE TO REALISE THAT IN MY HEART, FINLAND IS HOME.

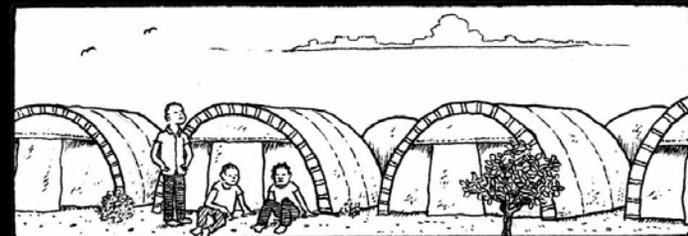
Musta and Shamsu in Leicester



MY PARENTS HAD ENOUGH MONEY TO SEND ONLY ONE OF THEIR 7 CHILDREN AWAY FROM THE WAR. I WAS THE ELDEST - SO I WAS CHOSEN.

WE HAD NEVER BEEN SEPARATED BEFORE. I HAD NO IDEA WHERE I WOULD GO, OR WHAT MY FUTURE HELD...

I REALISED AS I DROVE AWAY THAT I MIGHT NEVER SEE MY FAMILY AGAIN.



FOR TWO YEARS I WAITED IN A REFUGEE CAMP IN KENYA. SO MANY OF US IN THE SAME CRUEL PREDICAMENT... ALL WAITING FOR OUR NAME TO COME UP, SITTING IN THE HEAT, DAY IN, DAY OUT

WAR IS TERRIBLE. WE HAD PLENTY OF TIME TO CONTEMPLATE THE HORRORS WE HAD WITNESSED.

THEN ONE DAY MY NAME CAME UP. IN THE MOMENT OF HAPPINESS, I ONLY FELT SAD FOR THOSE I WAS LEAVING BEHIND.



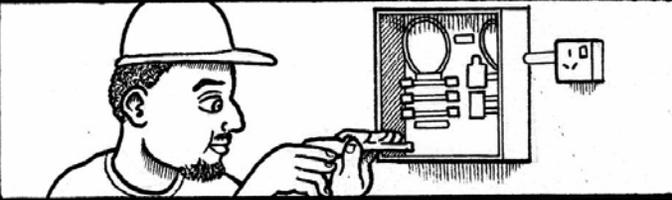
I SAT ON THE BUS LOOKING OUT AT THE RAIN AND TREES, SO GREEN...



...IT WAS BEAUTIFUL

I WAS PART OF A UN REPATRIATION DRIVE. THEY BROUGHT ME TO AMSTERDAM, A PLACE I KNEW NOTHING OF. A COACH MET US AT THE AIRPORT.

LIFE AFTER THAT WAS DISJOINTED FOR A WHILE



I STAYED IN AN ASYLUM CENTRE. I STUDIED TO BE AN ELECTRICIAN. I GOT A CERTIFICATE.



I HELD DOWN A LOT OF JOBS TO PAY FOR MY STUDIES. ANY SPARE CASH I SENT HOME TO SOMALIA.

I GOT NEWS FROM HOME ONCE A WEEK IN A PHONE CALL. EVERY TIME I HUNG UP I FELT FURTHER FROM HOME AND LONELIER THAN EVER.



ONE DAY WHEN I CALLED, I LEARNED THAT MY FATHER HAD DIED.

THE PRESSURE TO SEND MONEY HOME GREW EVEN GREATER. THE BURDEN KEPT ME AWAKE AT NIGHT.



A FRIEND WAS LEAVING FOR THE UK, TO LIVE IN LEICESTER. HE SAID BUSINESS WAS EASY THERE.

WITHIN A YEAR I FOLLOWED HIM AND STARTED OVER.



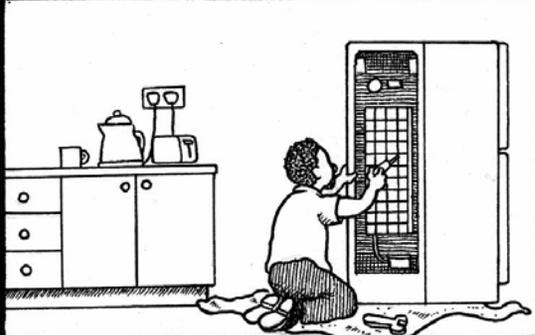
AND WITHIN TWO YEARS I HAD MARRIED AYAAN AND WE HAD A CHILD ON THE WAY

18TH OCTOBER - £7.20 ON FOOD...
OH DEAR OH DEAR...



OUR FINANCES WERE TERRIBLE. BOTH OF US WERE SUPPORTING BIG FAMILIES AT HOME IN SOMALIA. WE LIVED VERY FRUGALLY.

FOR THREE LONG YEARS I DID SHIFT WORK, ALL THE HOURS ALLAH SENT



I SAVED, AND I WORKED, AND I SENT MONEY HOME



THINGS WERE SO TOUGH BACK THEN. WHEN I COULDN'T AFFORD MEDICATION FOR MY UNCLE'S EPILEPSY, I TRIED TO EXPLAIN TO MY BROTHER ON THE PHONE



YOU'RE THE LUCKY ONE TO HAVE GOT OUT! WE ARE STUCK HERE WITH NOTHING, BROTHER- JUST THE WAR AROUND US EVERY DAY

I KNOW ABDI BUT IT'S NOT EASY HERE EITHER. IT'S A STRUGGLE IN A DIFFERENT WAY...

ABDI?

ABDI, ARE YOU THERE?

I THINK YOU HAVE FORGOTTEN ABOUT YOUR FAMILY, BROTHER



THAT HURT SO MUCH. I WAS "THE LUCKY ONE." BUT HOW COULD MY FAMILY UNDERSTAND THE STRUGGLE I FACED? IT'S SO EXPENSIVE TO LIVE HERE. MY CHILDREN NEEDED DECENT FOOD AND CLOTHES... AYAAN AND I OFTEN WENT WITHOUT.



FOR 10 YEARS I WAS BURDENED WITH CONSTANT GUILT. I LOVE MY FAMILY. MY RESPONSIBILITY IS TO THEM BUT THEIR NEEDS ARE SO GREAT. I COULD NEVER EARN ENOUGH TO LESSEN THEIR SUFFERING.



MY ELECTRICAL QUALIFICATION DIDN'T HELP. I RELIED ENTIRELY ON INSECURE, POORLY PAID SHIFT WORK.

AYAAN TOOK WORK IN A SCHOOL. BUT EVEN WITH BOTH SALARIES, WE BARELY STRUGGLED THROUGH



ONE DAY OUR LUCK CHANGED. I WAS TALKING TO THE SOMALI OWNER OF OUR LOCAL COMMUNICATIONS SHOP...



I LOVE WORKING HERE. PEOPLE COME INTO THE SHOP FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD. WHENEVER THERE IS AN EMERGENCY IN THE WORLD WE ARE FIRST TO KNOW, AND TRY TO HELP

LAST MONTH FOR EXAMPLE THERE WAS A HUGE FLOOD IN BANGLADESH. ANXIOUS RELATIVES FILLED THE SHOP



IT'S A DROP IN THE OCEAN BUT WE DO WHAT WE CAN. WE'RE LIKE A BIG EXTENDED FAMILY HERE. COMMUNICATIONS ARE CRUCIAL FOR US.

WE ALL STRUGGLE TO KEEP CONNECTED AND SUPPORT OUR FAMILIES BACK HOME. HERE I CAN HELP PEOPLE WITH PROBLEMS JUST LIKE MINE



MY CHILDREN HAVE NEVER BEEN TO SOMALIA. THEY HAVE NEVER BEEN HELD BY THEIR GRANDPARENTS OR MET THEIR UNCLES... THIS SADDENS ME EVERY DAY.



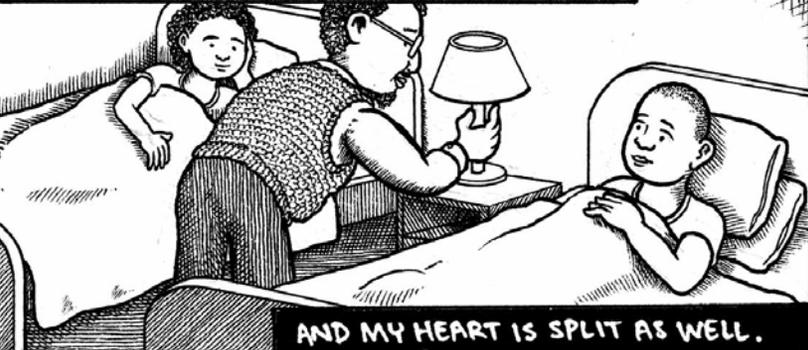
WE SPEAK ON THE COMPUTER. BUT IT IS NOT THE SAME.

I AM LEARNING FRENCH AT SCHOOL, GRANDMA!

WHY ON EARTH WOULD YOU BE DOING THAT, CHILD?!



THE FACT IS, MY FAMILY IS SPLIT BETWEEN TWO ENTIRELY DIFFERENT WORLDS...



AND MY HEART IS SPLIT AS WELL.

MY DREAM IS THAT ONE DAY THE WAR IN SOMALIA WILL END AND WE CAN RETURN THERE ALL TOGETHER



THE FAMILY WOULD BE UNITED, AND WE COULD HELP ONE ANOTHER ALONG...



FOR NOW IT REMAINS A DREAM. BUT ONE DAY.

ONE DAY, INSHA'ALLAH



MY FIRST HUSBAND IN SOMALIA WAS A LAYABOUT. SO IN 2006, I DIVORCED HIM! ALHAMDULILLAH THAT MY 3 CHILDREN AND I MOVED HERE TO LEICESTER.



I MET MY SECOND HUSBAND AND HAD TWO FURTHER CHILDREN...

BUT HE WAS WORSE THAN THE FIRST! A DRUNK AND ANGRY GOOD-FOR-NOTHING. I DIVORCED A SECOND TIME.



NOW I HAVE A WHOLE FAMILY TO SUPPORT ALL ON MY OWN.

BUT WITH ALLAH'S GRACE, I AM FREE AND INDEPENDENT. LAST YEAR I OPENED A CAFE WITH MY FRIEND HANI



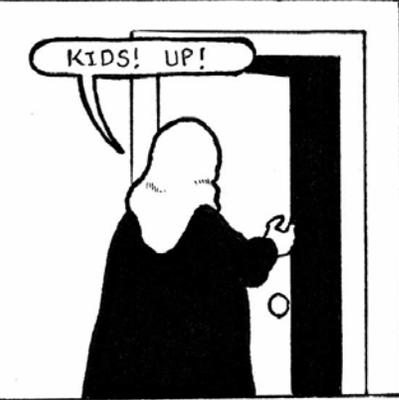
SHAMSO & FAMILY LEICESTER



I WAKE BEFORE SUNRISE EVERY DAY TO PERFORM MY MORNING PRAYERS THIS IS MY FAVOURITE TIME OF DAY!



I REFLECT ON THE GRACE OF ALLAH AND GIVE THANKS FOR ALL THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE HELPED ME...



AT 06:15 I WAKE UP THE CHILDREN...



THE DAY STARTS WITH A WHIMPER...



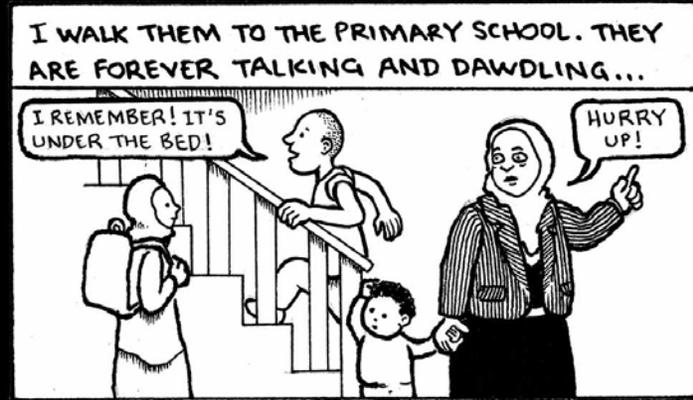
MUUM! SAGAL IS IN THE BATHROOM AND SHE'S GOING TO MAKE ME LATE AGAIN!!!

...THEN A BANG!



FROM FIRST THING IN THE MORNING I AM COOKING...





I ARRIVE AT THE CAFE AT 08:15, WHERE HANI HAS ALREADY OPENED UP AND THE MORNING RUSH IS IN FULL-FLOW



THERE ARE ALWAYS SOME REGULARS HAVING A STRONG SOMALI COFFEE TO START THE DAY

SHAMSO! DID YOU GET THE MILK?

SOME OF THE OLD BOYS SIT AROUND ALL MORNING DRINKING COFFEE AND DEBATING THE SITUATION IN SOMALIA...

WC



HI HANI! SORRY I'M LATE-!

MORE SAMOSAS!

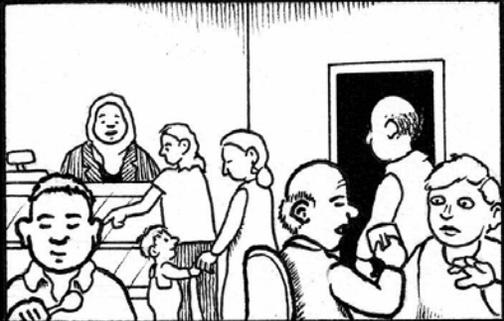


I SPEND MOST OF THE MORNING PREPARING SAMOSAS... EVERYBODY SAYS I MAKE THE FINEST SAMOSAS AROUND!

YOU CAN'T HAVE ENOUGH, THEY ARE POPULAR WITH EVERYBODY— BANGLADESHIS, PAKISTANIS, THE ENGLISH BOYS...



I MUST SAY, I AM PARTIAL TO A FEW MYSELF!



THE RUSH PICKS UP AGAIN AT AROUND TWELVE. FOR TWO HOURS I NEED TEN PAIRS OF HANDS...

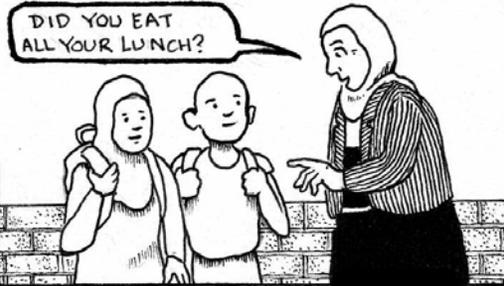
CAREFUL ON THE CHAIR— I'M DRAWING HANI!



AT 14:00 I COLLECT THE LITTLEST ONE FROM NURSERY. I HAVE TO WATCH HER WHILE I WORK IN THE CAFE.

AT 15:20 IT'S TIME TO COLLECT THE OTHER TWO AND TAKE THEM TO THE MADRASSA TO LEARN ABOUT THEIR RELIGION AND CULTURE...

DID YOU EAT ALL YOUR LUNCH?



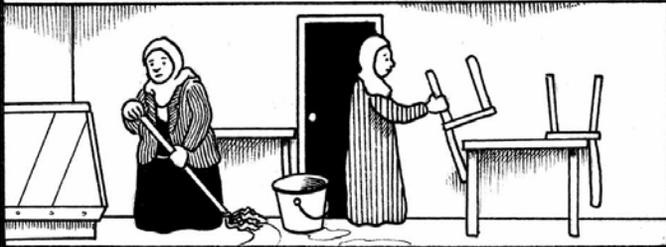
IT'S VERY IMPORTANT THEY LEARN THEIR QUR'AN AND MAINTAIN THEIR SOMALI ROOTS AND— OOPS! I'M RUNNING LATE!



SORRY I'M LATE HANI!

I HAVE TO GET BACK TO THE CAFE TO HELP HANI CLEAN UP AND PREPARE FOR TOMORROW. IT'S A LOT OF WORK, BUT ALLAH HAS BLESSED ME WITH THIS BUSYNESS!

I'M TRYING AND TRYING TO SAVE FOR A BIGGER HOUSE. ALL OF US ARE IN JUST TWO ROOMS AND EVERY MORNING THE FIGHT FOR THE BATHROOM GETS LONGER, AND LOUDER...



TEA WITH TWO SUGARS, DAWN! HOW ARE YOU TODAY?

FINE THANK YOU SHAMSO

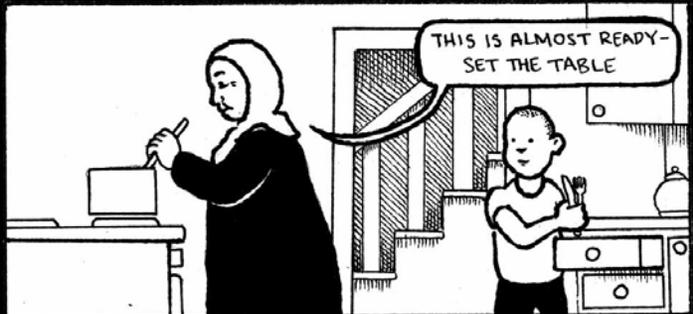
ON WEEKENDS I VISIT THE OLD PEOPLE'S HOME TO KEEP THEM COMPANY. I TELL THEM ALL ABOUT ISLAM SO THEY CAN SHARE THE WISDOM AND JOY!



"DESPAIR NOT OF ALLAH'S MERCY: BEHOLD, ALLAH FORGIVES ALL SINS - FOR, VERILY, HE ALONE IS MUCH-FORGIVING, A DISPENSER OF GRACE!"



THAT'S LOVELY, DEAR. DO THE LADIES AT THE MOSQUE ENJOY MAKING JAM?



THIS IS ALMOST READY - SET THE TABLE

THE DAY FINISHES WITH COOKING ONE MORE MEAL. BUT DINNER ALL TOGETHER IS SPECIAL...



THEN AFTER PRAYERS, TO BED. IT'S SO CRAMPED HERE, BUT WE LOVE EACH OTHER AND PULL TOGETHER AS A FAMILY...



KAAFI STOP KICKING!

WELL. USUALLY.

Saafi and Zein in London



Saafi London

MY MOTHER AND FATHER RAN A SMALL GROCERY SHOP IN MOGADISHU. THEY HAD A GOOD BUSINESS BUT IT WAS HARD TO MAINTAIN AS THE WAR ESCALATED. JUST COMING TO WORK EACH DAY COULD BE PERILOUS



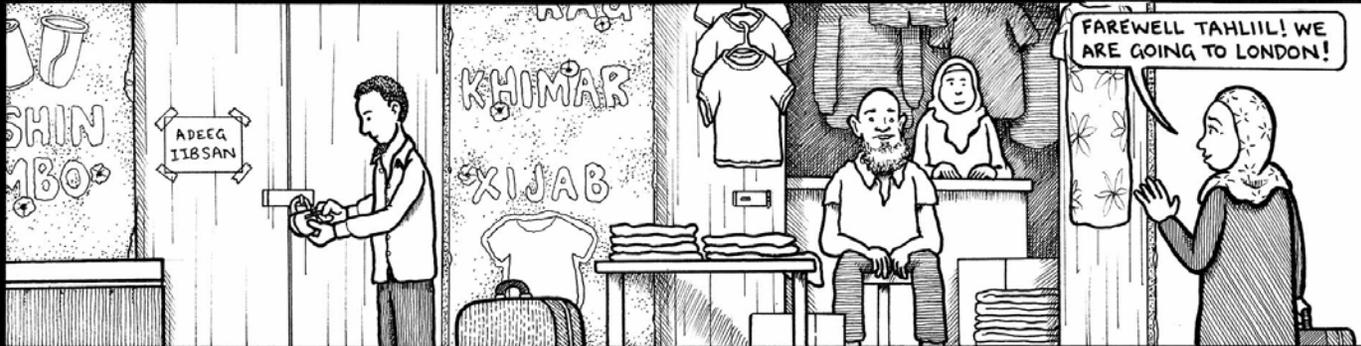
THEY SO DESPERATELY WANTED A CHILD TO COMPLETE THEIR FAMILY. MY MOTHER TOLD ME THAT SHE SUFFERED THREE MISCARRIAGES. THEY TRIED AND TRIED BUT IT SEEMED DESTINED NEVER TO BE.



THEY SIMPLY COULDN'T TAKE IT ANY LONGER. MY MUM WAS CONVINCED THAT SHE COULDN'T CARRY A BABY TO TERM BECAUSE OF THE STRESS AND FEAR.

SO FATHER DECIDED TO SELL EVERYTHING AND START ANEW SOMEWHERE FAR AWAY. THEY SPENT ALL THEIR SAVINGS HIRING AN AGENT WHO HELPED THEM TO FLEE...

THEY WERE NERVOUS OF THEIR NEW LIVES BUT THERE ARE SO MANY SOMALIS HERE IN LONDON THAT THEY SOON MADE FRIENDS AND EVEN DISCOVERED DISTANT RELATIVES!



FATHER TOOK A JOB AS A BUS DRIVER. OFTEN HE DROVE THE NIGHT BUS AND THEN SLEPT THROUGH THE DAY. BOTH MY PARENTS WORKED VERY HARD BUT AT LAST THEY WERE HAPPY.



AFTER TWO YEARS MY MUM FELL PREGNANT AND THIS TIME TO THEIR DELIGHT EVERYTHING WAS OKAY. AND ONE COLD DECEMBER DAY, I WAS BORN!

MOTHER GOT WORK AT A CAFE IN EAST LONDON, CATERING MOSTLY TO SOMALI FAMILIES



SWEETHEART, LET DADDY REST- HE IS VERY TIRED!

=YAAAWN= IT'S OK MY LOVE, SHE IS BEING GOOD!

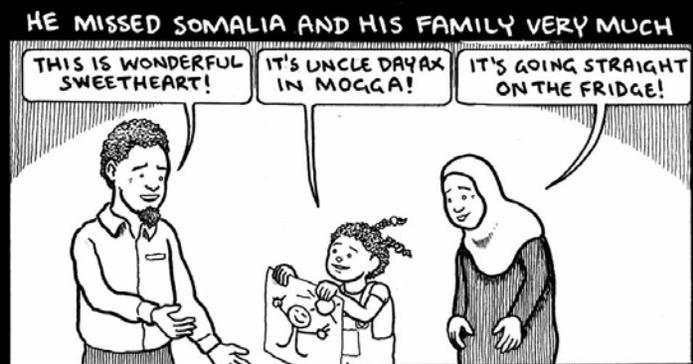
HEE HEE HEE!

DAD DOTTED ON ME FROM DAY ONE. HE WOULD CALL HOME FROM THE BUS TO CHECK UP ON ME AND TRY TO STAY AWAKE TO PLAY WITH ME IN THE DAY...

HE CAREFULLY CULTIVATED FOCUS AND DISCIPLINE IN ME. BOTH MY PARENTS REMAINED IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH THEIR FAMILIES BACK IN SOMALIA. I REMEMBER DAD TELLING ME...



WORK AND STUDY HARD MY LOVE. YOU CAN BE THE CHANGE IN SOMALIA ONE DAY. WE COULD ALL RETURN HOME AND LIVE IN PEACE THERE



THIS IS WONDERFUL SWEETHEART!

IT'S UNCLE DAYAX IN MOGGA!

IT'S GOING STRAIGHT ON THE FRIDGE!

I FELT PROUD THAT MY FATHER PUT SUCH FAITH IN ME. I WORKED HARD AND TRIED MY BEST TO BE A GOOD DAUGHTER FOR HIM AND MUM.



MUM- SHH AND GO PLAY UPSTAIRS SAAFI

NO... OH, NO...

THEN ONE DAY WHEN I WAS 7 YEARS OLD, FATHER RECEIVED A MESSAGE THAT HIS BROTHER DAYAX WAS TERRIBLY ILL IN SOMALIA.

I REMEMBER, AFTER I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE ASLEEP, HEARING MUM PLEADING WITH DAD NOT TO GO... THE FIGHTING WAS VERY INTENSE AT THAT TIME



PLEASE. JUST THINK. IT IS SO DANGEROUS.

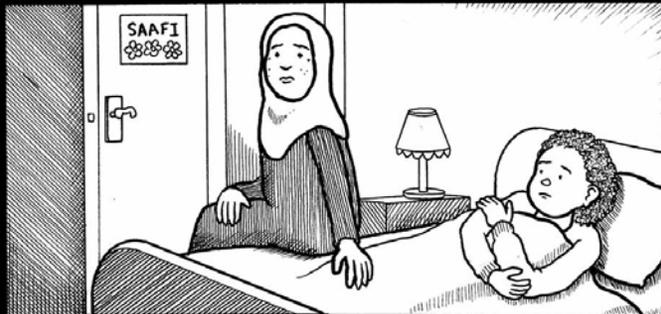


I CANNOT FORGET THE HALF SMILE, AND LITTLE WAVE HE GAVE ME AS HE STEPPED OUT INTO THE COLD ON THE MORNING HE LEFT. LUGGING THE VERY SAME BATTERED CASE HE HAD CARRIED FROM SOMALIA...



DAD PROMISED THAT WHEN HE ARRIVED, HE WOULD PHONE US EACH EVENING. AND HE DID- GIVING US UPDATES ON DAYAX'S HEALTH, AND ALWAYS PLAYING DOWN THE DANGERS. EVEN THOUGH WE COULD SOMETIMES HEAR GUNFIRE IN THE BACKGROUND ON THE LINE.

THEN ONE DAY NO PHONE CALL CAME. MUM PUT ON A BRAVE FACE AND SAID IT WAS SILLY TO WORRY. BUT I KNEW SHE WAS SCARED WHEN SHE PUT ME TO BED. SHE SEEMED TENSE AND DISTANT.



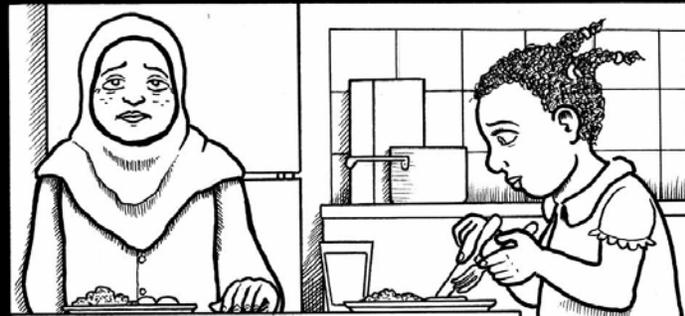
NO! OH-OH NO- NO! PLEASE NO!

WHEN THE PHONE RANG AT THREE IN THE MORNING, AND WOKE ME, I SOMEHOW KNEW DAD WAS DEAD, EVEN BEFORE I HEARD MUM, VOICE SHAKING, BREAKING INTO HYSTERIC'S DOWNSTAIRS

AFTER DAD WAS KILLED IN SOMALIA MUM BECAME TERRIBLY DEPRESSED AND ANXIOUS. SHE WAS OVERPROTECTIVE OF ME FOR A LONG, LONG TIME.



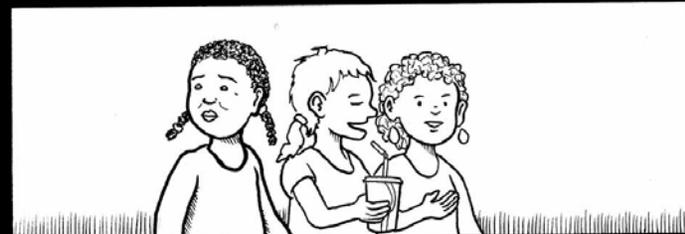
THINGS BECAME PRETTY TOUGH. MUM HAD TO TAKE ON EXTRA WORK AS A CLEANER TO MAKE ENDS MEET. SHE WAS ALWAYS EXHAUSTED. I DESPERATELY MISSED DAD'S CHEERFUL PRESENCE IN THE HOUSE.



MY PARENTS HAD ALWAYS ENCOURAGED ME TO SPEAK TO MY SOMALI RELATIVES ON THE PHONE REGULARLY, TO ESTABLISH A CONNECTION EVEN THOUGH THEY WERE SO FAR AWAY. IT HAD BEEN MY DAD'S FONDEST WISH THAT I MEET THEM ONE DAY.

WITH DAD GONE I FELT RESPONSIBLE FOR KEEPING THE LINK WITH HIS FAMILY. I WOULD SPEAK WITH MY COUSIN MISKI. SHE'S THE SAME AGE. SHE WOULD TELL ME TERRIBLE STORIES OF THE HARDSHIPS THEY ENDURED AND THE VIOLENCE SHE WITNESSED.

I USED TO FEEL GUILTY THEN, ABOUT LIVING IN THE SAFETY OF LONDON, WHERE THERE WERE NO BOMBS, NO GUNMEN, NO MURDER OR MAYHEM. AS I GOT OLDER, MY PREOCCUPATION WITH SOMALIA GREW.



AT THE SHOPPING CENTRE OR THE MOVIES WITH FRIENDS, LONDON SEEMED UNREAL - A PRIVILEGED BUBBLE.

FROM MY EARLY TEENS I HAD AN OCCASSIONAL, RECURRING NIGHTMARE. I WOULD SEE ALL THE HORROR MISKI HAD DESCRIBED TO ME IN MOGADISHU...

... BUT TRANSPOSED SOMEHOW TO THE STREETS OF LONDON. THE SAME TERROR VISITED ON ME AND MY FRIENDS AS SUFFERED BY MY INNOCENT FAMILY IN SOMALIA.



-AND HEAR ALWAYS MY FATHER'S VOICE IN THE DARKNESS...



Work and study hard my love. You can be the change in Somalia one day. We could all return home and live in peace there...

I WOULD BURST AWAKE - SOAKED IN SWEAT -

I WANTED TO HELP SOMALIA HEAL. I SMILE NOW, TO LOOK BACK ON MY TEENAGE EARNESTNESS, BUT I WAS SINCERE, AND STILL AM. MOST OF THE KIDS IN MY SCHOOL WERE DISRUPTIVE AND SEEMED NOT TO WANT TO BE THERE...

I CONCENTRATED AND TRIED MY HARDEST EVERY DAY. KNOWING HOW MISKI WISHED FOR BETTER SCHOOLING, I KNEW WHAT A PRIVILEGE IT WAS. I FELT ANGRY WITH THE OTHER KIDS - WHAT IDIOTS THEY SEEMED!

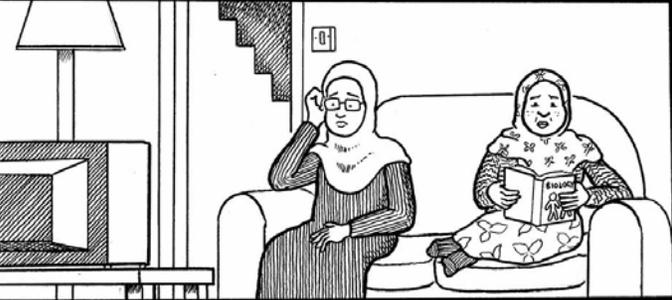
THE AREA WE LIVED IN WAS NEVER THE NICEST. THERE WERE SOME REALLY STUPID PEOPLE THERE WHO HAD A PROBLEM WITH HOW WE DRESSED, ESPECIALLY MY MUM



YOU CAN IMAGINE, IT DID NOT HELP MY MOTHER'S DEPRESSION. BUT SOMEHOW, WITH MY FATHER'S MEMORY NEVER FAR FROM MY MIND, ALL THE ADVERSITIES SEEMED ONLY TO FUEL MY DETERMINATION.

I GREW CLOSE TO MY UNCLE DAYAX, EVEN FROM 4000 MILES AWAY... HE NEVER FORGAVE HIMSELF THAT FATHER DIED WHEN VISITING HIM. HE WOULD ALWAYS SAY HOW PROUD FATHER HAD BEEN OF ME

TEN YEARS AFTER DAD'S DEATH, DAYAX FINALLY SUCCEMPTED TO HIS CHRONIC ILLNESS. STILL A YOUNG MAN - IT FELT TO ME LIKE LOSING A SECOND FATHER.



HAD HE LIVED IN ENGLAND DAYAX WOULD HAVE RECEIVED BETTER MEDICAL CARE. I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT HE WOULD STILL BE ALIVE NOW AND FOR MANY YEARS TO COME

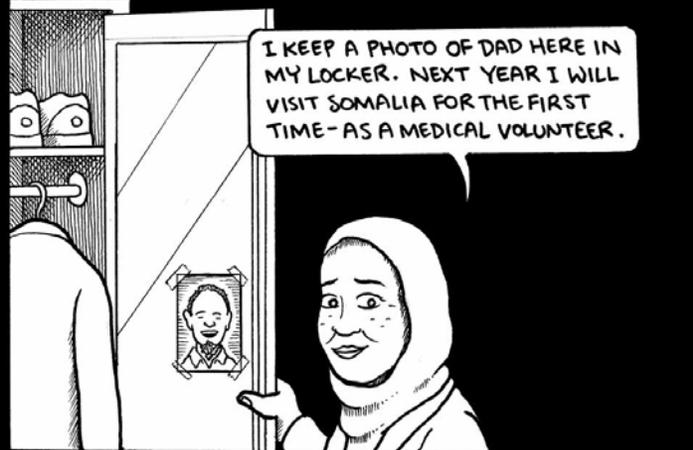


7 YEARS LATER

LOSING HIM SEALED MY AMBITION TO BECOME A DOCTOR. MUM SUPPORTED ME ALL THE WAY. EMOTIONALLY. FINANCIALLY!



I KEEP A PHOTO OF DAD HERE IN MY LOCKER. NEXT YEAR I WILL VISIT SOMALIA FOR THE FIRST TIME - AS A MEDICAL VOLUNTEER.



Zein London



I DON'T REMEMBER MUCH FROM MY CHILDHOOD IN MOGADISHU. MUM TELLS ME WE FLED WHEN THE FIGHTING CAME TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT. I SORT OF REMEMBER HEARING EXPLOSIONS... BUT IT'S ALL A BIT OF A BLUR, REALLY.



MY SISTER GACAL LIKES TO TELL ME HOW I WOULD SCREAM AND CRY AT THE SOUNDS OF THE FIGHTING...

IT'S TRUE! YOU CRIED LIKE A BABY!

AGH! GERROFF YOU BIG OAF! WE'RE NOT KIDS ANY MORE! MUM! SHE'S GIVING ME A KNUCKLE-RUB AGAIN!

GACAL!



THIS IS OUR PLACE, NUMBER 9. PAINT'S PEELING AND THE HEDGE NEEDS A TRIM...

... BUT IT'S HOME!



WE MOVED TO ENGLAND WHEN I WAS FOUR. LIVING IN NORTH LONDON IS ALL I'VE REALLY KNOWN.

I STARTED PRIMARY SCHOOL WHEN I GOT HERE AND SOON BEGAN TO SPEAK MORE ENGLISH THAN SOMALI.

ME AND MARK ARE POWER RANGERS, MUM!



(2002)

I SAW MUM HIDE THE CHOCOLATE BISCUITS IN THE TOP CUPBOARD!

CHOCOLATE... SOMETHING... COOL!



GACAL AND I HAD A LOT OF FUN BEING ABLE TO SPEAK A LANGUAGE THAT MUM COULDN'T UNDERSTAND!

I MUST ADMIT WE SOMETIMES TOOK ADVANTAGE OF HER LANGUAGE BARRIER...

ZEIN'S GREAT ON THE FOOTBALL PITCH BUT NEEDS TO FOCUS MUCH HARDER ON HIS MATHS AND SCIENCE...

HE SAYS I'M GREAT ON THE FOOTBALL PITCH

WELCOME PARENTS
GROVEBROOK PRIMARY
PARENTS EVENING

YELLOW CLASS
MR. JENKINS



I WAS TEN, THE FIRST TIME THE FEDS STOPPED ME. I WAS COMING BACK FROM FOOTIE PRACTISE.

HEY SON, CAN YOU STOP A MINUTE FOR ME?



ARE YOU CARRYING ANY SHARP OBJECTS? CAN YOU OPEN YOUR BAG FOR ME?



KEEP YOUR NOSE CLEAN, SON



I'D HAVE QUITE A COLLECTION BY NOW, IF I HAD SAVED ALL THE STOP AND SEARCH SLIPS THEY HAVE HANDED ME OVER THE YEARS...

MY MATE GEROME SAYS HIS MUM ALWAYS MAKES A COMPLAINT WHEN HE GETS STOPPED. I CAN'T BE BOTHERED WITH ALL THAT. I DON'T TELL MY MUM MOST TIMES. I DON'T WANT TO UPSET HER.

HI ZEIN! DID YOU HAVE A NICE DAY?

SIGH... YES MUM

BEEP
BOOP
BEEP

A POLICE CAR CRUISED PAST JUST WHEN WE WERE GOING IN THE SHOP. ALL I DID WAS TO CATCH THE OFFICER'S EYE...

NEXT THING IT'S HANDS ON THE WALL, TURN OUT YOUR POCKETS. RIGHT ON THE HIGH STREET IN FRONT OF EVERYBODY... SO HUMILIATING.



TWO YEARS AND ABOUT A MILLION STOP-AND-SEARCHES LATER I WAS IN UPPER SIXTH AT SCHOOL AND PREDICTED A'S AND B'S IN MY EXAMS. I WANTED TO STUDY BIO-CHEMISTRY AT UNIVERSITY. MY MUM WAS MAKING MONEY STRETCH TO PAY FOR EXTRA TUITION BEFORE THE EXAMS.

DON'T YOU WASTE THAT ON COMPUTER GAMES AND NONSENSE, YOU HEAR ME, ZEIN?

ONE YEAR SHE GAVE ME A HUNDRED QUID AS AN EID GIFT. SHE WANTED ME TO GET SOME NEW CLOTHES AND A HAIRCUT FOR THE CELEBRATION.

YOU BOYS KNOW ABOUT A ROBBERY ON FORDWYCH ROAD THIS MORNING?

NO! WE'VE BEEN ROUND HERE ALL DAY!

ME AND GEROME WENT OUT TO THE SHOPS. HE WAS FLUSH TOO, WITH CASH HE EARNED FROM CLEANING AT HIS AUNT'S CAFE...

TRAINERS COUNT AS "NEW CLOTHES". RIGHT? SHE CAN'T ARGUE WITH THAT!

IF YOU COME HOME WITH THOSE NIKES I WOULD LOVE TO SEE THE TROUBLE YOU GET!

WHERE DID YOU GET ALL THIS MONEY THEN?

THAT'S MY MONEY FOR EID CLOTHES!

GEROME GOT UPSET BUT I TOLD HIM TO BE COOL. I ALMOST DIDN'T QUESTION THE FACT OF BEING SEARCHED.

I WAS HALF WAY HOME WALKING UP BENTLEY ROAD WHEN THE FEDS CAME AND JUMPED ME - NO WARNING - FROM OUT OF NOWHERE...



I WAS LISTENING TO MY MUSIC. I DIDN'T HEAR THEM COMING. FIRST I KNEW I WAS JUST SLAMMED UP AGAINST A WALL.

THEY SCARED THE LIFE OUT OF ME -

HANDS ON THE WALL! HANDS RIGHT ON THE WALL!



I STILL HAD MY HEADPHONES ON SO I COULDN'T EVEN HEAR WHAT THEY WERE SCREAMING IN MY EAR...



WHERE DID YOU JUST COME FROM? WHAT'S IN THE BAG?

PHYSICS BOOKS!
I'VE BEEN AT TUITION!



THERE'S BEEN AN ASSAULT HERE 30 MINUTES AGO. BLACK MALE, 5'10", BLACK JACKET...

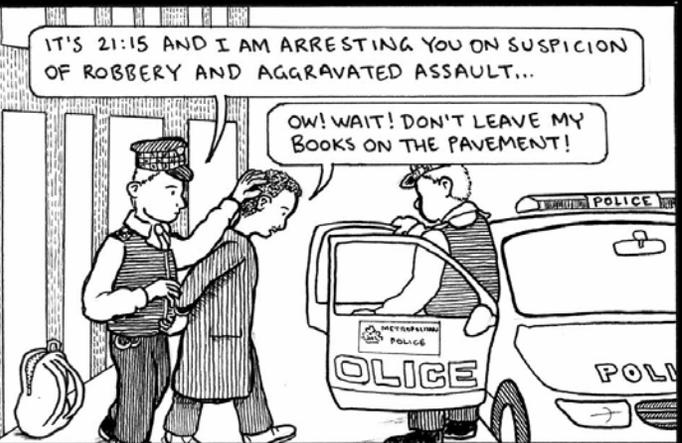
THIS AIN'T BLACK, IT'S GREY—

DON'T GET SMART, IT DOESN'T SUIT YOU



YEAH, COPY THAT—
WE'LL BRING HIM IN

HEY, WAIT, OFFICER, MAN!



IT'S 21:15 AND I AM ARRESTING YOU ON SUSPICION OF ROBBERY AND AGGRAVATED ASSAULT...

OW! WAIT! DON'T LEAVE MY BOOKS ON THE PAVEMENT!



AT THE STATION I FINALLY GOT MY PHONECALL. I RANG MY MUM. SHE ALREADY KNEW WHERE I WAS.

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?



SOME OTHER POLICE HAD ALREADY COME TO THE HOUSE AND WERE SEARCHING MY ROOM.

THEY'RE HERE RIGHT NOW! OH SWEETHEART, ARE YOU OK? I'LL COME TO YOU AS SOON AS THEY LEAVE—



NO MUM—IT'S LATE. STAY PUT WITH GACAL AND TRY NOT TO WORRY. I'LL COME BACK WHEN IT'S SORTED—IT'S JUST A MISUNDERSTANDING...



BUT AFTER WAITING SEVERAL HOURS IN A BARE CELL, THINGS GOT A WHOLE LOT WORSE.

WE ARE ARRESTING YOU IN CONNECTION WITH A SECOND ROBBERY LAST TUESDAY EVENING...

WHAT?!

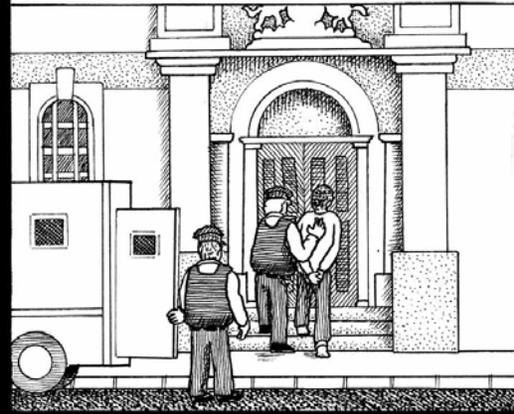


WHERE WERE YOU PRECISELY ON THE EVENING OF THE 10th?

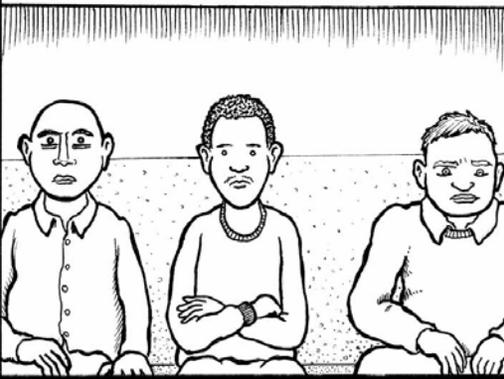
I WAS AT MY HOUSE, MAN!

AND YOU CAN PROVE THAT, CAN YOU?

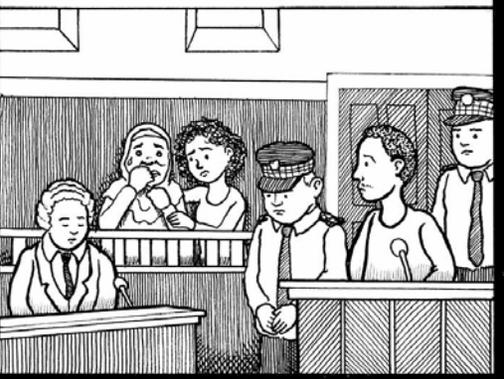
THEY TOOK ME TO MARYLEBONE CROWN COURT



I HAD TO WAIT IN A CELL WITH THESE OTHER SKETCHY-SEEMING GUYS...



IN THE COURT I COULD SEE MY MUM IN THE GALLERY AND SHE WAS CRYING...



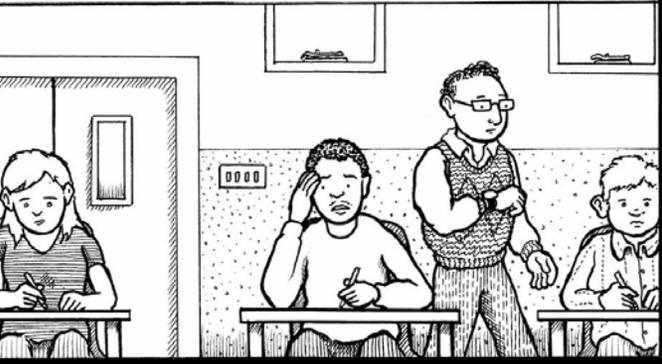
YOU ARE CHARGED WITH ROBBERY AND AGGRAVATED ASSAULT... WE ARE GOING TO LET YOU GO HOME SO YOU CAN CONTINUE YOUR SCHOOLING BUT YOU ARE NOT TO BE OUT OF THE HOME BETWEEN 4PM AND 6AM...



THEY PUT A TAG ON MY ANKLE TO MONITOR ME AND SENT ME ON MY WAY. SUDDENLY MY WHOLE WORLD WAS JUST SCHOOL AND HOME. AND NO CHANCE TO VISIT MY TUTOR IN THE EVENINGS...



ALL TOO SOON THE EXAMS CAME AND EVEN AS I SAT THEM I KNEW I WAS SCREWING IT UP...



AND ON RESULTS DAY MY WORST FEARS WERE CONFIRMED.



THEY **DO** MATTER, MUM- THEY **DO**. I CAN'T GET MY FIRST CHOICE UNI WITH THIS- **DAMN IT!**



SON, WE ALL LOVE YOU AND I'M SO PROUD OF YOU, NOT IN SPITE OF THESE GRADES BUT BECAUSE OF THEM... YOU WORKED SO HARD AGAINST THE ODDS... YOU'RE A CLEVER BOY, ZEIN



SOME WEEKS LATER THE CHARGES WERE DROPPED ON INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE. THE TAG CAME OFF AND I WAS ABLE TO TAKE A PLACE AT MY SECOND-CHOICE UNI. I TRY NOT TO BE ANGRY - BUT I'M ALWAYS THINKING ABOUT THE NEXT TIME IT COULD GO WRONG FOR ME. WHO TO FIGHT ABOUT THIS STUFF - THE POLICE? THE GOVERNMENT? I'M A YOUNG BLACK MAN - I'VE GOT NO VOICE IN THIS...



Magool and Mustafa in Malmö

I WAS SO HAPPY AS A CHILD IN SOMALIA

OOPS! JUST PICK UP THE ONION I DROPPED, MAGOOL!

GOT IT, MUM!



WATCH CLOSELY - AFTER YOU HAVE GROUND THE MEAT YOU CAN ADD THE CHOPPED ONION...

NOT TOO MUCH AT ONCE! I WANT TO STIR IT IN...

I CAN DO IT!



MY MOTHER WAS A WONDERFUL COOK. I COPIED HER, I WANTED TO BE AS GOOD AS SHE WAS...

LOOKING BACK IT SEEMS LIKE EVERY NIGHT MY PARENTS WOULD TELL ME STORIES UNDER THE STARS. WE HAVE A WONDERFUL ORAL TRADITION IN SOMALIA OF ELDERS SHARING STORIES WITH THE YOUNGSTERS

SHEEKOY, SHEEKO, SHEEKO XARIIRA. WAA BAA WAXAA JIRAY NIIN LAA DHAHOO CIGAAL SHIIDAAD...



EVERYTHING HAD TEXTURE IN SOMALIA. EVEN THE WALLS OF OUR HUT WERE ALIVE - MADE OF REEDS AND HOME TO TEN THOUSAND TINY CREATURES...

MAGOOL! HELP FETCH WATER-!



I WAS THE ELDEST GIRL. I HELPED MUM WITH CHORES. IT MADE ME PROUD. SHE DOTTED ON ME.

THOSE DAYS WERE LOVELY



ARE YOU OK, MUM?



MAGOOL & SACDIYA, MALMÖ



I MET AMIIR IN 1988. WE MARRIED A YEAR LATER.



HE WAS A KIND MAN. WE WERE BLESSED WITH A DAUGHTER, LEYLO. SHE WAS SO SWEET.



I LOST THEM BOTH IN AN EXPLOSION. THE WAR ... IT WAS... TERRIBLE. TERRIBLE.



I RETURNED TO MY PARENTS. FOR A FEW YEARS, WE STRUGGLED THROUGH - NOT REALLY LIVING... JUST SURVIVING

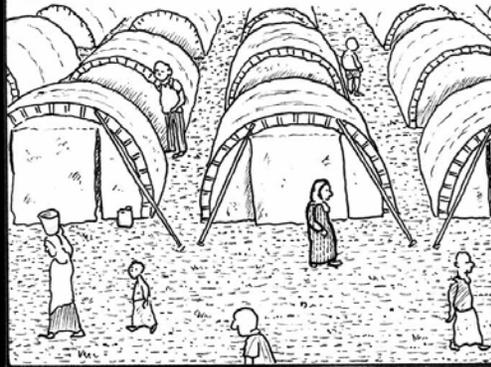


BUT...THEY DIDN'T MAKE IT EITHER. ANOTHER BOMB... I COULDN'T SAVE THEM - MY ARMS WERE BROKEN...

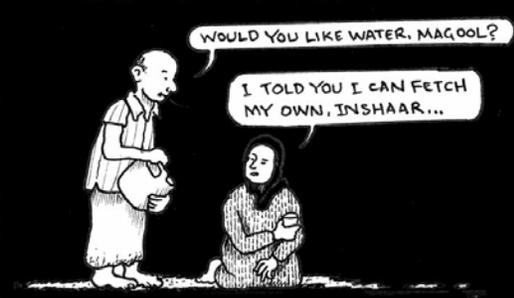


... I COULDN'T SAVE THEM

I LEFT SOMALIA. I FOUND MY WAY TO THE CAMPS IN KENYA. SOMEHOW.



I MET INSHAAR IN THE CAMP. AT FIRST I DIDN'T WANT TO KNOW HIM. BUT HE WAS CHARMING - SO BENIGN, LIKE A LITTLE BOY SOMETIMES...



WOULD YOU LIKE WATER, MAQOOL?

I TOLD YOU I CAN FETCH MY OWN, INSHAAR...

HE WAS ALWAYS AT MY SIDE, DEVOTED... AFTER SOME MONTHS, THE ICE AROUND MY HEART MELTED



WE MARRIED. AND A YEAR LATER, BY THE GRACE OF ALLAH, SACDIYA WAS BORN.



SHE IS A BLESSING, BROTHER

FOR TWO YEARS WE WERE HAPPY AS ONE CAN BE, IN A REFUGEE CAMP. OUR LITTLE FAMILY WAS LIKE A BUBBLE THAT KEPT OUT THE SADNESS.



ONE DAY THE OPPORTUNITY CAME FOR SACDIYA AND I TO TRAVEL TO SWEDEN. BUT NOT INSHAAR... HE WOULD HAVE TO STAY BEHIND

YOU MUST GO, MAGOOL. THIS IS NO PLACE FOR SACDIYA. IT'S OK. IT'S FOR THE BEST...



THAT WAS 5 YEARS AGO AND I HAVE NOT SEEN INSHAAR SINCE THEN. SACDIYA IS GROWING UP FATHERLESS. SHE IS A QUIET GIRL. I WATCH HER CAREFULLY, WONDERING IF SHE IS HAPPY...

ARE YOU OK SWEETHEART?

HMM-HMM



...I DON'T KNOW. I... I CAN'T TELL.

...IS THAT AN ELEPHANT?

I FEEL SO LONELY HERE.

TCH-NO, STUPID, IT IS A POKEMON GOLD-EDITION. YOU CAN WATCH BUT YOU CANNOT PLAY

HOW OLD IS YOUR GIRL THEN?

UH... SHE IS SACDIYA



SACDIYA SPEAKS SWEDISH WELL. I STRUGGLE WITH THE SIMPLEST EXCHANGE. I TRY, I TRY...

I OFTEN FEEL ANXIOUS. I GET LOST IN THE CITY IF I VENTURE FROM THE SMALL AREA I KNOW. I DON'T KNOW HOW TO ASK DIRECTIONS.



I KNOW IT IS A PRESSURE FOR SACDIYA, HAVING TO HELP ME WITH CHORES WHEN ALL HER YOUNG SCHOOLFRIENDS ARE PLAYING...

SHE ASKS, ARE THESE THE VERY STRONG PILLS FOR PAIN?



SOON AFTER I ARRIVED HERE, THE HEADACHES BEGAN. I FEEL LIKE MY HEAD IS SPLITTING.

HERE IS THE WATER MUM

THANK YOU SACDIYA, LEAVE IT ON THE FLOOR HERE... CAN YOU CLOSE THE CURTAINS AND PUT THE LIGHT OFF...



THEY KEEP ME AWAKE AT NIGHT.

WHEN I GO TO THE DOCTOR, SACDIYA HAS TO COME WITH ME TO INTERPRET

SHE SAYS SHE CAN'T SLEEP AT NIGHT...

SACDIYA, CAN YOU ASK YOUR MUM IF SHE IS EVER TROUBLED BY... BAD THOUGHTS? OR MEMORIES?



A DAUGHTER SHOULD NOT HAVE TO HEAR THESE THINGS ABOUT HER MOTHER. IT'S UNFAIR...

SHE SAYS YES. MUM SAYS HER DREAMS ARE VERY BAD



...IT'S A BURDEN...

I PUT ON A BRAVE FACE FOR INSHAAR. WE SPEAK ON THE COMPUTER EACH WEEK. BUT SACDIYA DOESN'T REALLY REMEMBER HIM. SHE IS SHY OF HIM.

CAN I GO AND PLAY...?

DON'T YOU WANT TO SAY HELLO TO DADDY?



I CAN SEE HOW MUCH IT HURTS INSHAAR.



THE LANDLORD DOESN'T LIKE US. HE COMES TO THE HOUSE WITHOUT WARNING SOMETIMES.

THIS WASN'T BROKEN LAST TIME! TELL YOUR MUM SHE HAS TO PAY FOR THIS, RIGHT? TELL HER.

HE SCARES SACDIYA.



I GET THIS RASH WHEN I'M UPSET. I DON'T KNOW WHY

NOW IT HAS SPREAD ALL DOWN TO YOUR HAND, MUM

IS IT HURTING?



SACDIYA, COULD YOU ASK YOUR MUM IF SHE HAS EVER SPOKEN TO A PSYCHIATRIST?



IT TOOK ME A LITTLE TIME TO TRUST THE THERAPIST. BUT SAYING ALOUD ALL THE THOUGHTS THAT WEIGHED ME DOWN SEEMED SOMEHOW TO SOOTHE ME...

AT NIGHT... I SEE LEYLO'S GRAVE... I THINK... I'M SO FAR FROM HER... AS THOUGH SHE STILL NEEDS ME...

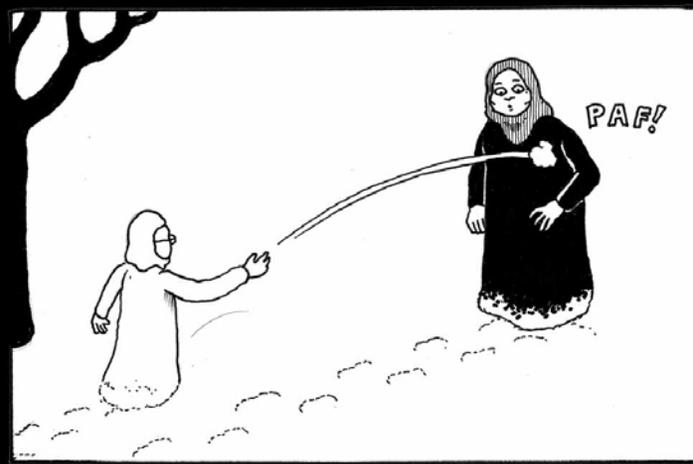


LATER THAT DAY I COLLECTED SACDIYA FROM SCHOOL. AS WE WALKED, IT BEGAN TO SNOW AND DID NOT STOP.

CAREFUL. IT IS SLIPPERY



LOOK, MUM - "SNOW-BALL"



PAF!



YOU RAT-BAG!

HA HA HA HA!



COME ON THEN, RAT-BAG!

HA HA HA!
HA HA HEE HEE

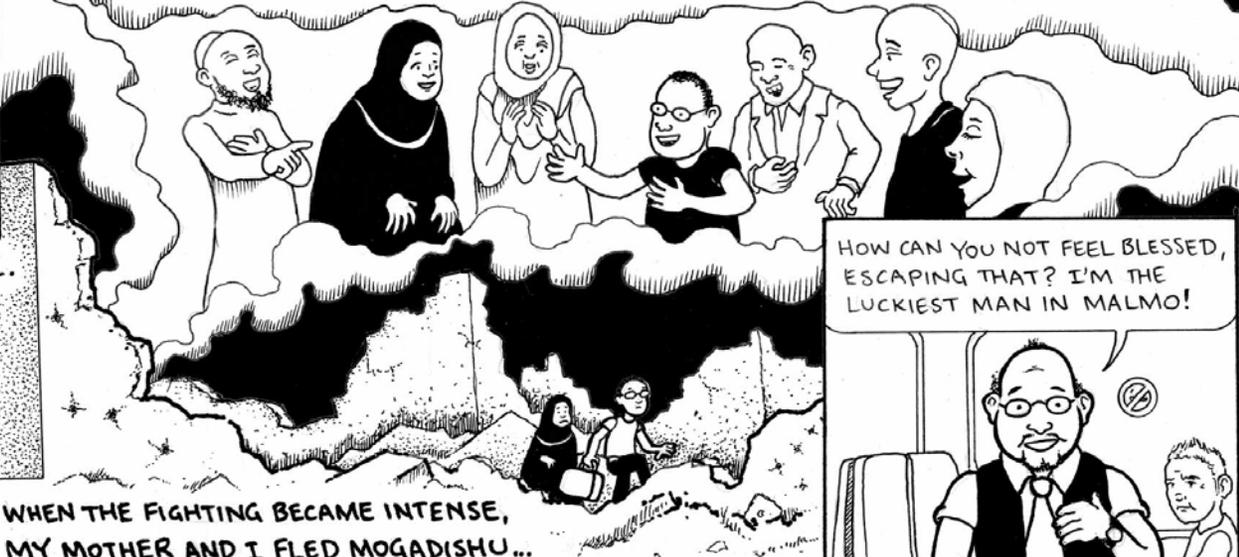
I LOVE MEETING PEOPLE!



BEING A TICKET INSPECTOR IS THE IDEAL JOB FOR ME...



WHEN I WAS A CHILD, MY PARENTS LOVED TO THROW PARTIES. WE WOULD SING... I WAS ALWAYS RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE, SHOWING OFF TO EVERYONE...



HOW CAN YOU NOT FEEL BLESSED, ESCAPING THAT? I'M THE LUCKIEST MAN IN MALMO!



MY FATHER WAS KILLED IN THE WAR - JUST CAUGHT IN CROSS-FIRE. MOTHER AND I WERE DEVASTATED. OVER TIME IT BECAME TOO DANGEROUS TO GO OUT. IT WAS SO LONELY, TRAPPED INSIDE... LISTENING TO GUNFIRE...



WHEN THE FIGHTING BECAME INTENSE, MY MOTHER AND I FLED MOGADISHU...

I'M SORRY SIR, THIS IS NOT A VALID TICKET FOR TRAVEL



IT SAYS MALMO RIGHT THERE! LEARN TO READ SWEDISH -



SIR, TODAY IS THE 19TH



MUSTAFA MALMÖ

SURE, SOMETIMES YOU MEET ONES LIKE THIS



BUT I'M FROM MOGADISHU! YOU THINK I'M BOTHERED BY AN IDIOT LIKE THIS?



NOT MUSTAFA!



LATER, BACK AT MUSTAFA'S APARTMENT

OH NO!

YOU FOOL!

HEY, NEIGHBOUR, HI!

UH, SURE

WHAT CAN WE DO FOR YOU?

CAN YOU HELP? I LEFT MY KEYS ON THE KITCHEN TABLE!

67

IF YOU GIVE ME A BOOST THROUGH THIS WINDOW, I SHOULD BE ABLE TO REACH THE KEYS OK!

YES, I SEE THEM THERE...

THAT'S IT NEIGHBOUR! HOLD MY LEGS! ALMOST...

THERE...

WHEN I GOT TO SWEDEN I WAS SO HAPPY JUST TO BE ABLE TO MEET PEOPLE AGAIN

IT MEANS A LOT TO ME, TO BE PART OF A COMMUNITY!

OOOPS

ARE YOU OK?!

HA HA HA!

WELL I'M INSIDE AND THAT'S THE MAIN THING!

OH! MUSTAFA!

I'M SO GRATEFUL, NEIGHBOURS! I'M MUSTAFA AND THAT'S MY MUM, MRS OSMAN...

I'M AGNES...

I'M SORRY - MY SON - HE... FOOL...

PLEASE! YOU MUST COME FOR TEA ON SATURDAY SO I CAN THANK YOU PROPERLY!

SAMI - IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU

SHORTLY

IT'S SO NICE TO MEET NEW PEOPLE!

WHAT DID YOU DO THAT FOR MUSTAFA? THEY OBVIOUSLY DIDN'T WANT TO COME OVER...

WHAT ON EARTH WILL I FEED THEM?

THIS IS SO AWKWARD...

WHEN I WAS A CHILD, MY MOTHER WAS ALWAYS FULL OF GOSSIP AND GOOD CHEER...



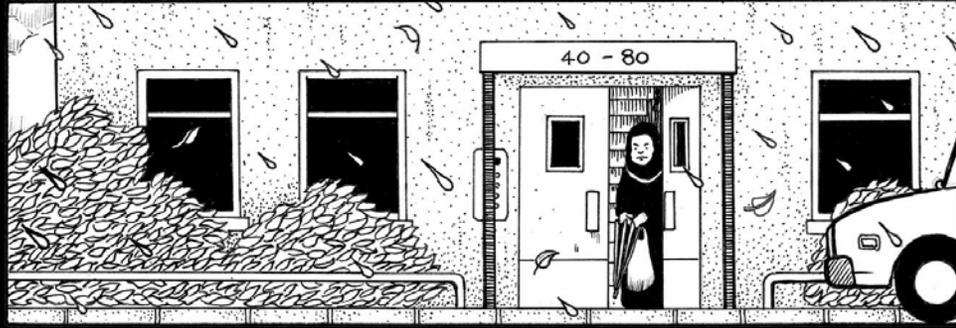
SHE FOUND THE MOVE TO SWEDEN UTTERLY ISOLATING. EVERYTHING WAS DIFFERENT. LEARNING THE LANGUAGE WAS AN ORDEAL...



IN SOMALI SHE'S SO ARTICULATE - BUT HERE, THE SIMPLEST INTERACTIONS ARE CONFUSING...



AT SOME POINT SHE JUST SEEMED TO GIVE UP ON JOINING SWEDISH SOCIETY...



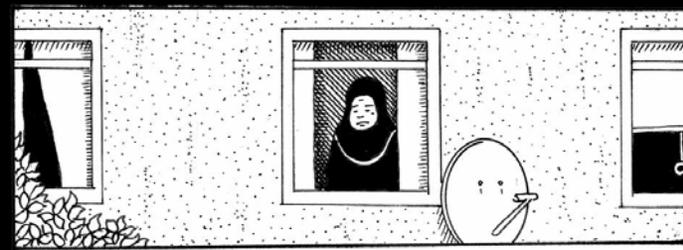
SHE WATCHES SOMALI SATELLITE TELEVISION...



TALKS TO RELATIVES ON SKYPE...



BUT I SO WISH SHE COULD CONNECT WITH THE WORLD AND PEOPLE OUTSIDE OUR OWN DOOR...



IT WORRIES ME THAT SHE'S DOOMED TO FEEL HOMESICK - LIKE A REFUGEE - UNTIL HER LAST DAY...



AND I KNOW SHE MISSES FATHER TERRIBLY



THAT SATURDAY...



I'M SURE I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO KISS HER ON THE CHEEK-

AM I ALLOWED TO SHAKE HER HAND? YOU GO FIRST..!

JUST WATCH YOUR LANGUAGE!

WHAT IF THEY DON'T EAT CAKE?



OH, NO! THEY'RE COMING...

OH, MUSTAFA... WHY DID YOU INVITE THEM?



HI SAMI! HI AGNES! WELCOME!

HI MUSTAFA-OOH, HOW'S THAT BUMP?



HELLO MRS OSMAN-

YES, HELLO, HELLO



ERM- WE BROUGHT A CAKE FOR TEA, MRS OSMAN-

YES, THANK YOU THANK YOU



DON'T WORRY! IT'S COMPLETELY HARAM*

OOOPS!

*FORBIDDEN



HALAL! I MEANT HALAL!

HE MEANT HALAL! IT'S HALAL..!



...NOT HARAM-

I'M SO SORRY

HE'S SO SORRY



HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA!



GOOD CAKE!

Faaid and Amiir in Oslo

IN 2008 AL-SHABAAB CAME TO MY VILLAGE IN SOMALIA, FORCIBLY RECRUITING MEN AND BOYS TO FIGHT

I WAS LUCKY. I WAS AWAY VISITING MY UNCLE WHO LIVED IN THE NEXT VILLAGE

... MY FATHER AND TWO BROTHERS REFUSED TO JOIN THE MOVEMENT. THE MEN SHOT THEM DEAD.



MY MOTHER INSISTED THAT I FLEE.

SHE SOLD THE LAND TO PAY FOR MY ESCAPE.

I TRAVELED FOR A YEAR THROUGH SOMALIA, THEN ETHIOPIA...



THEN FROM ADDIS ABABA TO GERMANY...

...WITH AN EXPENSIVE AGENT AND STRANGER'S PASSPORT...

... AND FINALLY TO OSLO... OSLO...



THIS IS GERMANY, MAN. YOU MADE IT. NORWAY WILL BE EASY FROM HERE

... LIMBO... ASYLUM CENTRES... QUESTIONING... TESTING... WAITING... WAITING AND WAITING... ONE YEAR... TWO... THIS CENTRE... THEN THAT...



SOME THAT YOU MEET HAVE BEEN WAITING

... GO AND LIVE WITH YOUR AUNT THEY SAID...



...WHILE YOU WAIT... AND WAIT... NO WORK...

FAAID



TELL ME AGAIN HOW MANY AL-SHABAAB CAME TO YOUR VILLAGE BECAUSE THERE IS A DISCREPANCY WITH YOUR ACCOUNT OF THE BOMB JUST WENT OFF...



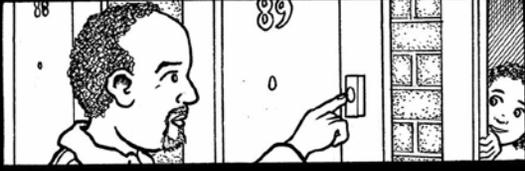
FOR SIX YEARS... SEVEN... JUST ROTTING...



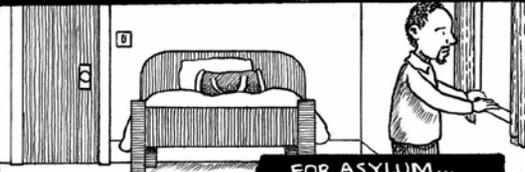
...NO MONEY... JUST THE ENDLESS WAIT...



BUT ALL THE SAME... BLANK WALLS... BLANK FACES... BLANK STARES... SAME QUESTIONS OVER AND OVER...



... COMPARED TO THEM I GUESS I WAS LUCKY...



... FOR ASYLUM...

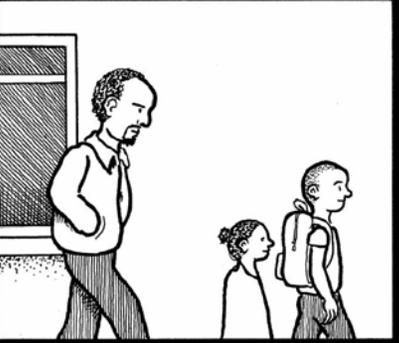
OSLO

FAAIID! ARE YOU UP? I NEED YOU TO TAKE THE KIDS TO SCHOOL...



YOU HAVE TIME BEFORE YOUR APPOINTMENT?

SURE



YOUR APPOINTMENT IS DELAYED - TAKE A SEAT OVER THERE...



45 MINUTES LATER

WHEN WAS IT, EXACTLY, YOU LEFT MOGADISHU?

I DIDN'T. I LEFT FROM KISMAYO.

YESSS... AND HOW, PRECISELY, DID YOU TRAVEL OUT OF KISMAYO?



AS I HAVE TOLD YOU SO MANY TIMES - MY BROTHERS AND FATHER WERE SHOT. MY MOTHER SOLD THE LAND AND PAID FOR ME TO LEAVE. I TRAVELED FROM KISMAYO TO ADDIS ABABA OVERLAND.

MMM-



AND THAT JOURNEY TOOK HOW LONG?
ABOUT... TEN DAYS.

BECAUSE PREVIOUSLY YOU TOLD MY COLLEAGUE 2 WEEKS - CAN YOU EXPLAIN THAT DISCREPANCY?



10 DAYS, 2 WEEKS, WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE? I WAS RUNNING FOR MY LIFE! HOW CAN I REMEMBER DATES? IT WAS 4 YEARS AGO! HOW MANY TIMES DO YOU NEED TO HEAR IT?



LOOK, FAAID...

NO, YOU LOOK! I CAN'T DO ANYTHING ELSE TO PROVE MY STORY. I JUST WANT TO WORK, TO BE SECURE. SO IF YOU'RE GOING TO SEND ME HOME THEN JUST DO



IT BECAUSE I AM SICK OF THIS!

SIGH

LOOK FAAID, I'M WORKING VERY HARD TO ASSIST YOU AND AN ATTITUDE LIKE THAT WILL NOT HELP YOUR CASE



IT'S ALWAYS THE SAME OLD STORY



THEY'RE ALL JUST LOOKING FOR A SLIP SO THEY CAN SEND ME BACK...



IF THEY'RE GOING TO DO IT, CAN'T THEY JUST DO IT? THIS IS HELL...



FAAID! IT'S SO LATE! IS EVERYTHING OK? FAAID?



ONE YEAR LATER



FAAID! FAAID, ARE YOU UP? YOU'RE GOING TO BE LATE...

I'M COMING, AUNTIE...

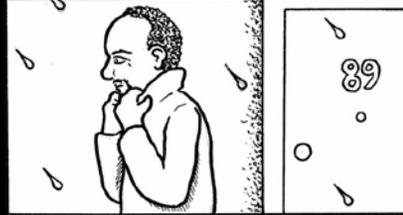
OH FAAID! DON'T LOOK SO GLUM

YOU HAVE TO BE OPTIMISTIC!



OPTIMISTIC! NOT ANY MORE. I WAS SO HAPPY WHEN I GOT ASYLUM SIX MONTHS AGO. I THOUGHT MY LIFE WOULD CHANGE.

FAT CHANCE. STILL NO JOB. STILL NO MONEY. STILL STUCK LIVING AT MY AUNT'S.



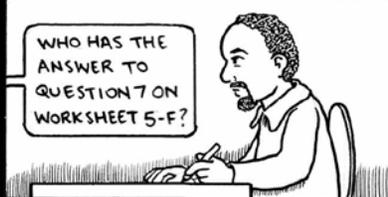
I FEEL SUCH A BURDEN. THE KIDS ARE GETTING BIGGER... I CAN'T SHARE THEIR ROOM MUCH LONGER.

I NEED MONEY! I NEED WORK! BUT WHO WILL HIRE A SOMALI VILLAGE BOY LIKE ME?

SO THEY SEND ME ON COURSES. THIS COURSE... THAT COURSE... COURSE AFTER COURSE...

DATA COURSE... HEALTH AND NURSING COURSE... JOB APPLICATION COURSE!

BUT FOR WHAT? NOBODY WANTS TO HIRE ME... NOBODY WANTS TO HIRE A REFUGEE...



THEY DON'T CARE. I SWEAR LAST WEEK, THE TEACHER OF THE NORWEGIAN LANGUAGE COURSE FELL ASLEEP...

IT'S A WASTE OF TIME. BUT IF YOU STOP ATTENDING, THEY CUT YOUR RENT AND SUSTENANCE PAYMENTS.

I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR A CHEAP ROOM TO RENT. BUT EVERY PLACE I TRY IT'S THE SAME STORY -



I THINK ABOUT MY FATHER AND MY BROTHERS A LOT.



FAAID?

FAAID, WILL YOU COME DOWN FOR DINNER..?





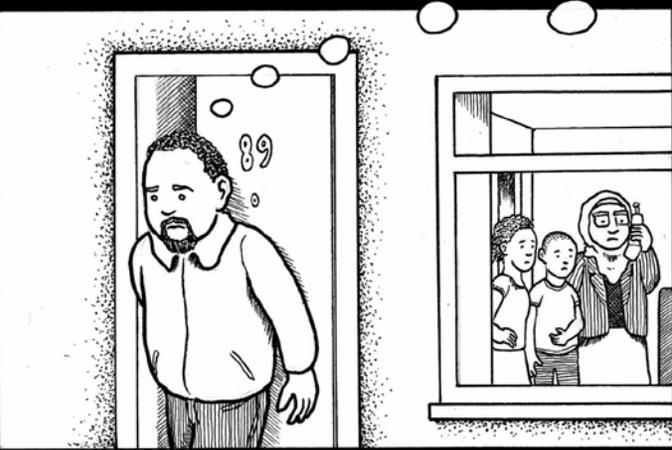
FAAID?
HMM
ARE YOU OK?
SURE. JUST TIRED.



HEY-DID YOU SEE THE NEWS? COME QUICKLY -
?



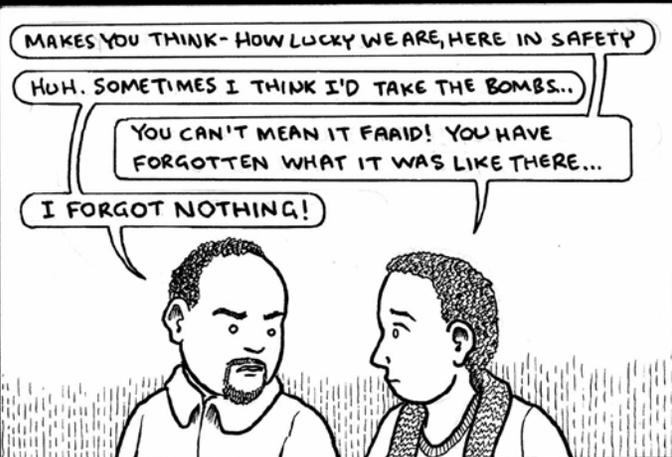
"...THE HUGE BLAST IN MOGADISHU WAS FOLLOWED WITH AN ATTACK BY AL-SHABAAB GUNMEN WHO UNLEASHED CARNAGE IN THE WEST OF THE CITY..."
POOR PEOPLE...
WE SHOULD CALL AUNT WILLO



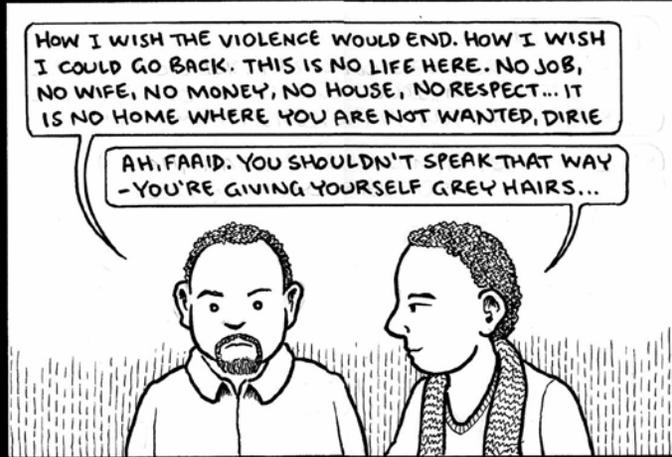
YOU'RE ALIVE!
YOU'RE ALIVE!



HEY, FAAID! WHAT'S HAPPENING, BROTHER?
HEY, DIRIE. JUST TAKING A WALK, MAN.
YOU SEE ABOUT THE BLAST IN MOGGA?
OF COURSE
TERRIBLE, NO? WHEN WILL IT END?



MAKES YOU THINK- HOW LUCKY WE ARE, HERE IN SAFETY
HUH. SOMETIMES I THINK I'D TAKE THE BOMBS...
YOU CAN'T MEAN IT FAAID! YOU HAVE FORGOTTEN WHAT IT WAS LIKE THERE...
I FORGOT NOTHING!



HOW I WISH THE VIOLENCE WOULD END. HOW I WISH I COULD GO BACK. THIS IS NO LIFE HERE. NO JOB, NO WIFE, NO MONEY, NO HOUSE, NO RESPECT... IT IS NO HOME WHERE YOU ARE NOT WANTED, DIRIE
AH, FAAID. YOU SHOULDN'T SPEAK THAT WAY - YOU'RE GIVING YOURSELF GREY HAIRS...



Amiir & Family - Oslo, Norway



I GREW UP IN A SMALL VILLAGE. LEARNING WAS MY PASSION.



I GRADUATED FROM MOGADISHU UNIVERSITY WITH A DEGREE IN LITERATURE. FIRST IN MY FAMILY!



I MARRIED CAWO, A FELLOW STUDENT, AND WE HAD TWO PERFECT CHILDREN



A BRIGHT FUTURE LAY AHEAD OF US...

...UNTIL THE WAR CAME IN 1991. WE WERE FORCED TO FLEE THE COUNTRY

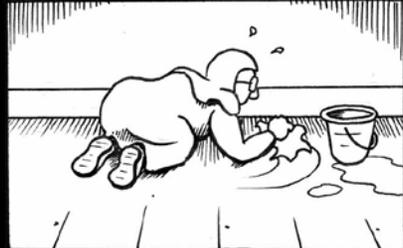
SUDDENLY WE WERE IN SNOWY NORWAY. IT COULD HAVE BEEN ANOTHER PLANET...

I FOUND WORK IN A CAFE WHICH CATERED MOSTLY TO OTHER SOMALIS LIVING IN OSLO.



WORK WAS OK. BUT IT HARDLY STRETCHED MY MIND.

CAWO HAD TO SWAP TEACHING FOR CLEANING



LIFE GOT BETTER AS TIME WENT ON. WE HAD 3 MORE CHILDREN. WE ALL LIVE IN THE SOMALI NEIGHBOURHOOD IN GRØNLAND.



BUT WE DIDN'T WANT OUR KIDS FOREVER TRAPPED IN THIS SMALL WORLD OF JUST A FEW BLOCKS...

CAWO AND I WANTED THE KIDS TO HAVE ALL THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT HAD BEEN SNATCHED FROM US. WE ENCOURAGED THEM TO PARTICIPATE, TO EMBRACE NORWEGIAN CULTURE...



...TO IDENTIFY AS NORWEGIAN AS MUCH AS SOMALI

STILL, CAWO AND I MISSED SOMALIA WITH ALL OUR HEARTS. WE SPOKE TO OUR FAMILIES OFTEN.



AND OUR DREAM HAS ALWAYS BEEN TO ONE DAY RETIRE HOME...

AND SO MUCH FOR OUR DEGREES. HERE, WE COULDN'T EVEN SPEAK TO OUR NEIGHBOURS...

I WANTED MY CHILDREN TO SHARE MY SOMALI CULTURE... LAST YEAR, WITH SECURITY IMPROVING, THE TIME SEEMED RIGHT TO SHOW THEM THEIR MOTHER COUNTRY... BUT WERE THE KIDS PREPARED FOR SOMALIA?

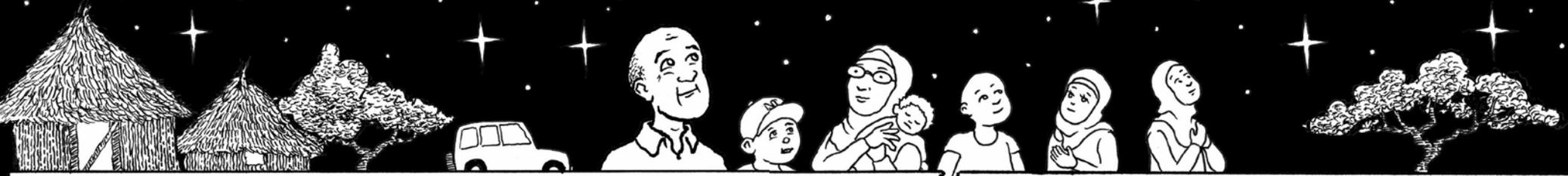


AS FOR MY OLDER BOY MAHAD... WELL, HE SEEMED TO HAVE SEEN TOO MANY BAD HOLLYWOOD MOVIES...



WE HAD A JOYOUS REUNION DINNER AND AT LAST I FELT LIKE EVERYTHING MIGHT BE O.K. BEFORE IT WAS TIME TO SLEEP, I CALLED ALL THE CHILDREN OUTSIDE TO SEE THE STARS...

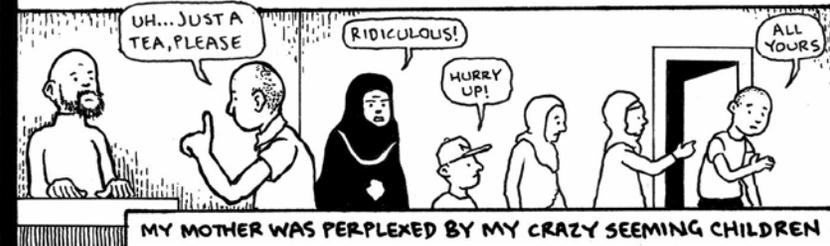
I ALWAYS SAID IT- THE STARS IN SOMALIA ARE LIKE NOWHERE ELSE ON EARTH...



NEXT MORNING, WE WERE GOING TO THE MARKET TO BUY FOOD FOR THE WEEK AHEAD...



BUT THEY WEREN'T. THE DAY BEGAN WITH A 15-MILE DETOUR SO THEY COULD USE THE FACILITIES AT A CAFE IN THE NEAREST TOWN...



AT THE MARKET, THINGS GOT WORSE...



FINALLY, MY MOTHER SNAPPED -



I SUPPOSE YOU ALL LIVE IN GREAT PALACES IN NORWAY! WITH AIR-CONDITIONING AND SERVANTS!

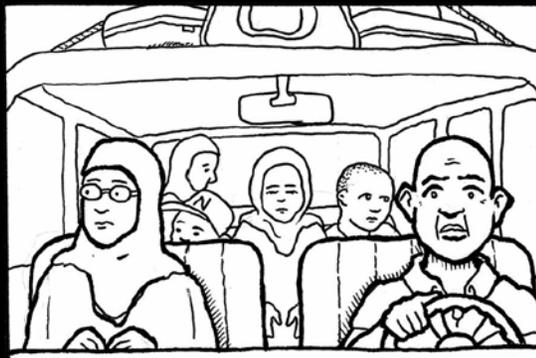


LATER THAT DAY, CAWO TOOK ME ASIDE...



CAWO OFFERED TO TAKE THEM BACK TO NORWAY WHILE I STAYED ON TO FINISH THE VISIT WITH MY FAMILY.

ON THAT LONG DRIVE BACK TO THE AIRPORT, THERE WAS A MISERABLE, GUILTY SILENCE...



BUT THEN AT THE AIRPORT, SUDDENLY CADEY SAID TO ME -



I WAS THRILLED. IT MEANT SO MUCH TO ME THAT SHE WOULD BRAVE ALL HER FEARS TO RE-CONNECT WITH OUR CULTURE



FOR TWO WEEKS I SHOWED MY DAUGHTER THE HAUNTS OF MY YOUTH, TELLING TALES...



SHARING FOOD...



... SINGING SOMALI SONGS!

IT WAS WONDERFUL ...



SOME THINGS WERE STILL HARD FOR HER. LIKE THE INCIDENT WITH THE BEETLE IN HER HAIR ...

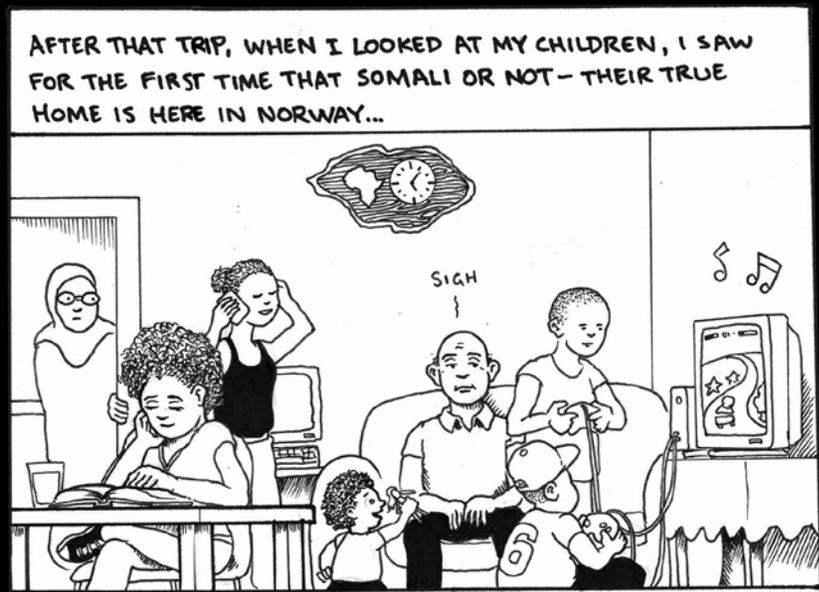
STOP JUMPING ROUND! YOU'RE MAKING IT GO FURTHER IN!



AND SOMETIMES, WHEN SHE DIDN'T KNOW I WAS WATCHING, I SAW SHE FELT PRETTY LOST AROUND HER RELATIVES IN THE VILLAGE.



HOWEVER, BY THE END OF THE TRIP, CADEY HAD WON MY MOTHER ROUND ENTIRELY! AND THEIR FAREWELL WAS TEARFUL ...



AFTER THAT TRIP, WHEN I LOOKED AT MY CHILDREN, I SAW FOR THE FIRST TIME THAT SOMALI OR NOT - THEIR TRUE HOME IS HERE IN NORWAY ...

FOR A WHILE, I FELT AS THOUGH I HAD MADE A GREAT MISTAKE, RAISING THEM THIS WAY. AS THOUGH I HAD SOMEHOW LOST THEM, OR GIVEN THEM UP TO ANOTHER PARENT ...



BUT THREE WEEKS LATER, CADEY GRADUATED FROM OSLO UNIVERSITY ...

JUST AS I HAD, THIRTY YEARS BEFORE IN MOGADISHU



WE ALL ATTENDED THE CEREMONY. I FELT SO PROUD, AND AT THAT MOMENT, I SAW THAT IT DOESN'T MATTER -

NORWEGIAN OR SOMALI ...



...THEY'LL ALWAYS BE MY CHILDREN.

