

My Future In Germany

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written and on 3rd and 4th November 2016.
Running time 10 minutes.

There is a man and a woman on stage. The woman is sitting stage right and is footering on her smart phone. The man is sitting stage left...

WOMAN

(looking up and seeing the audience for the first time)

... oh, hiya...

she looks down at her phone again and does some more footering her attention switches between the phone and the audience

I'm sorry, just give me a minute... I know... these things are so intrusive aren't they... but they're so, so handy... I mean who would have thought that you could book a holiday from a wee thing like this... I'm nearly finished... just two more clicks and then I will give you my undivided attention... There we go... 10 days in Mexico for me, my man and our two kids... sorted.

MAN

(looking up at the audience)

I didn't really want to leave Syria. It wasn't planned at all... but then why would I want to leave? It was where I was born. Where I grew up... went to school. Where my family was. I didn't want to leave at all, but then sometimes we have to do things we don't want to. I mean, who can say what is round the corner for any of us? When your country, your life and everyone and everything you know descends into chaos you sometimes find yourself doing something you never imagined yourself capable of doing.

WOMAN

We like to get away. Well, we work hard and we can afford it so why not? My husband and me have both got good jobs, we work bloody hard so we're entitled to our holidays aren't we? We deserve them. Three foreign ones last year... well heaven knows we need a bit of sunshine and you don't get much of that in Cumbria. Ask any secondary school geography student... highest rainfall in Britain, everybody knows that. Rain, rain, bloody rain. Alright for the ducks and sheep but not for me. This'll be the second time we've been to Mexico... it's just so easy to travel nowadays.

MAN

It was so difficult to travel, anywhere within Syria. There was a huge risk leaving your home. Never knowing who to trust. When your country goes to hell it gives a licence to the idiots living among us to behave badly. People who under normal circumstances would behave normally just need the slightest permission to kill or betray their neighbours and brothers. Then there were the air strikes, our own air force, the Russian air force, American and British drone attacks, or just the risk of running into some militia or other with some idiots licensed to kill...

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WOMAN

The kids have kind of out grown Disneyland. Three years on the trot we went there... the last time was a couple of years ago. So the main hols last year was Mexico and it'll be Mexico again. It'll probably be our last family holiday, you know, with the four of us. Well the kids are getting that bit older and they don't want to go on holiday with their mum and dad for ever, do they? Sarah, she's the oldest, will be off to university next autumn, and Benji, well I don't think he'll want to come on his own. He'll probably prefer to stay at home with his mates, or maybe he'll be off to Ibiza with his pals and leave us at home, that's what they do nowadays isn't it...

MAN

It took all the family's money, our entire life savings and money I stole from an injured taxi driver to pay for my trip out of Syria. I knew lots of people who handed over thousands of dollars for a place on a boat to Greece and who got nothing in return, or maybe got their throat cut in exchange for the cash. You could trust no-one. Rumours were that even if you actually managed to get on a boat, chances were you would be taken a couple of miles out to sea and be flung overboard. It saved fuel you see. I made it though, against the odds, I made it to Turkey and then a nightmare boat trip to Greece. We were lucky, we only lost an old man and woman and two kids, one of them just a baby really... but I had made it to Greece.

WOMAN

We used to go to Greece, you know, when the kids were small...but, well... I wouldn't go there now. Not with all them refugees all over the place. Have you seen the pictures in the papers and on telly? I mean how could you sunbathe on a beach with all them folk crawling out the sea like some pre-historic creatures emerging onto dry land for the first time? I mean I sympathise with them, I really do, but it's not the sort of thing you want on holiday is it? And sometimes, there's... oh, I hate to say it... but sometimes there's bodies too... in the water, where kids are trying to swim, I mean it's not right is it? It's unhygienic... thank goodness we're coming out the EU.

MAN

I was just so relieved that I had made it to the EU. Of all the world, the EU was where we knew we would be wanted. We knew we would be safe and looked after well. The EU was where we would have a future. I decided to try and get to Germany. Germany it seemed was the most welcoming of all the European countries. I had studied history and decided that would be my career in Germany, maybe teaching... my new life, my future. What I did not expect was to be locked in a camp in Greece with no food and water for the first four days. Even when I was given food it was a local guy, a cafe owner who passed us stuff through the fence. But again I was one of the lucky ones, after three months I was allowed to leave by bus in the middle of the night, to go to Austria...

WOMAN

There's just not the jobs for the young ones anymore. Good steady jobs I mean, jobs for life if you like... like me and my man have got. Good pay and conditions and bloody good pensions. There's less and less jobs going with good pensions these days. I worry for my two, so I do. I mean they'll both go to Uni obviously but I'd hate to think of them ending up on some zero hours contract at McDonalds or someplace. No, my man and me landed on our feet when they opened the factory in Cumbria... it's

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where we met as well. Twenty happy years... then we got married! No... I'm only kidding, it's been a good marriage and we've got two lovely kids.

MAN

It's amazing how quickly things go wrong. How quickly the dream of a new life evaporates when you discover that you are not being welcomed at all. Not everyone, there was a lot of kindness shown to us, but we also came across a lot of hatred and resentment too. Right wing groups were rising up all over Europe and Germany was no exception. Every day, I was spat at, assaulted and one day badly beaten up and kicked by a dozen or so guys. We were forced into nothing short of ghettos where hunger and violence hung in the air. It was like being at home, you could trust no-one. We had no money, no food, we couldn't contact our families. Any future at all seemed to be an impossible dream. I'd have been better off staying in Syria and taking my chances amongst the barrel bombs. I wasn't a religious extremist, I'd no loyalties to IS or anybody else. And I know that killing myself and half a dozen people outside McDonalds in Koln wouldn't solve anything but when your future fades out just a few hours ahead of you... it seemed like the thing to do...

WOMAN

Who is it I work for? Well... me and my husband work for British Aerospace... They build aeroplanes. You know the Red Arrows? Well British Aerospace built them. I don't work on the aircraft side of things, I work for the armaments division. It's all very hush hush... top secret, shouldn't really be talking about it. But we make some pretty snazzy bombs, most of which go to Saudi Arabia. I do a lot of the programming, mostly to do with the guidance systems, but other stuff as well. We have been working overtime lately, which comes in handy when you've got holidays to pay for. The Saudis are keeping us pretty busy, they're using a lot of our stuff in their attacks in Yemen. See recently... that funeral they attacked? Killed about a hundred and fifty folk and injured about two hundred others... that was one of ours. I mean they're not supposed to do that. Britain sells all that stuff with pretty strict guidelines... I know it's a bit like selling somebody a gun then telling them not to shoot anybody with it... But it makes you think though eh?

MAN

I didn't do it of course... I got as far as stealing a pressure cooker from a flea market and some fertilizer from an allotment when I was shopped to the German Police by the two guys who shared my room. Fellow Syrians. I don't even know how to make a bomb... I just knew that you needed a pressure cooker and fertilizer. And now I'm here, in a German prison cell awaiting trial on terrorist offences with the prospect of being imprisoned for thirty years. My future in Germany... I don't blame anyone. I don't blame my two countrymen. I don't even blame the Police, what were they to do? I mean... what if I had actually done it? As the Policeman, who brought me to this cell, said as he was locking the door - we can't have bomb makers living freely in our society.