



# A PERILOUS JOURNEY INTO THE UNKNOWN

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# **A PERILOUS JOURNEY INTO THE UNKNOWN**

**A SHORT STORY DEPICTING THE SUFFERING OF  
THE SYRIAN PEOPLE AND THE HARDSHIPS THEY  
ENCOUNTERED DURING THE LAST DECADE.**

In a quaint little town nestled between rolling hills and the crystal-clear river of Euphrates, there lived three inseparable friends named Ahmad, Sami, and Omar. They were as different as day and night, yet their friendship was unbreakable, and they used to spend too long time with each other. They went to school and attended the same classes as they were of the same age. They studied at the same school in Al Quriyah town, on the right bank of Euphrates in Deir Ezzor governorate, eastern Syria. Despite their busy schedules, they always made time for each other.

Ahmad was outgoing and vivacious, with a smile that could light up the darkest of days. He was known for his boundless energy and his talent for making everyone around him laugh. Sami, on the other hand, was quiet and introspective. He interested in reading books and art, and his creativity knew no bounds. Omar liked new technology and he was always eager to use his electronic devices especially mobile phone and laptop. He used to read about the latest discoveries, inventions and delved deeper into space science and news. Despite their differences, Ahmad, Sami, and Omar complemented each other perfectly.

Their friendship had blossomed from primary school and developed more and more throughout intermediate and high school. After completing high school, they spent a week thinking of the best major to study and all of them decided later to study English literature at Damascus University.



One summer evening, as they were preparing to leave for university, Ahmad, Sami, and Omar sat by the riverbank with their toes dipping into the cool water. Omar turned to his friends and said, “university is going to be a whole new adventure, isn’t it?” The two friends nodded with a wistful smile on their faces.

It was a new and a bit difficult experience for them to leave their hometown, but they didn’t have any other option as they had to travel over 50 km a day to arrive at the nearest university to their hometown. They had to leave their lovely town and headed to the Syrian capital to join university. The three friends cooperated with each other well and completed their first academic years successfully.

In 2011, unrest swept the country while they were on their second academic year. Due to the deteriorating security circumstances, they had to leave the capital and go back to their hometown which was also undergoing hard times and suffering from the lack of security.

The three friends met each other many times to decide what to do in the next stage. Ahmad suggested to travel to any neighboring country, either an Arab country or Turkey. Sami said neighboring countries don’t host Syrians or even allow them to enter. Sami suggested to immigrate to Europe as the European countries deal well with refugees and respect them. Sami asked his friends to choose an English-speaking country

as they can speak English and they don't need to learn a new language. Omar said English speaking countries including UK, USA, Canada and Australia don't welcome immigrants and even if they do, they accept a little number of immigrants. The immigration procedures of these countries may take years, he added. He suggested to stay in Syria till the last moment of their lives.

Following meticulous discussions, Ahmad and Sami could persuade Omar to immigrate, but not to an English-speaking country. They decided to immigrate to Europe, and they were also aware of risks and dangers that surround their route to Europe as they had to immigrate illegally. They chose Germany as their next destination and the place where they may achieve their dreams. The way to Europe was very long and risky and they were not allowed to move freely even inside Syria. The three friends were aware of what they need including seeking assistance of smugglers to guide them throughout certain routes to leave the country toward Turkey.

While discussing immigration requirements, they experienced more obstacles when they got to know the big amounts of money that they had to pay for smugglers inside Syria, Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, and Hungary before reaching their destination in Germany. The financial difficulties separated the three friends from each other. Meanwhile, the security circumstances deteriorated more and more and everyone of them started thinking of leaving the country before

being killed. Ahmad got financial aids from his brothers who work in one of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. He had to see off his friends who promised to follow suit as soon as possible. They pledged each other to meet in Germany soon.

Tears glistening in his eyes, Ahmad saw off his dear friends and left hometown. Once he left the hometown, he lost touch with his friends and family alike. Ahmad encountered multiple obstacles inside Syria as he had to pass through very dangerous areas including landmine-filled areas. He spent 5 days before reaching the Syrian-Turkish borders although the distance between his hometown and Turkey is around 430 km which takes around a 6-hour drive in normal situations.

On day 6, Ahmad headed toward the Syrian-Turkish borders with a hope-filled heart to leave the Syrian inferno and reach safety on the European beaches. His aspirations vanished within few hours as he was shot dead when he arrived at the Syrian-Turkish borders. No one knew who shot him dead and the few people around him did not have enough details about him, his family or even his hometown. He was buried on the death route near the borders.

Sami and Omar knew nothing about the fate of their close friend, and they continued their attempts to follow him to Germany. Sami's family had some property in Syria. His father and mother sold the property to help their son escape from the hell that burnt almost the whole country.

Once Sami received money, he immediately embarked on his journey toward Europe. Sami suffered from similar obstacles to that of his former friend. Following few days, he succeeded to enter Turkey, his first destination and the transit point toward his dreams. He spent around one month in Turkey, looking for trusted individuals or smugglers to help him advance to the next step. In his next journey, he had to travel from Turkey to the Greek islands across the Aegean Sea in which a big number of immigrants drowned.

The second journey preparations took several days as they had to hire a boat to cross the sea between the western part of Turkey and the eastern part of Greece. When the zero hour came at mid-night, Sami headed toward the boat. To his surprise, he had seen a huge number of people crowding around an obsolete boat. He asked a man standing beside him whether all the people are going to sail by the same boat! The man nodded vaguely at him. He was hesitant and thought whether he had to proceed with this perilous journey or come back to Turkey. He considered the journey well, comparing the risks of that journey and the risks of going back as his money would not be enough to continue his journey once again to Europe. If he returned to Turkey and looked for another journey with a better boat, he would face a new problem with affording the new journey. Following minutes of contemplation, he decided to proceed.

The boat sailed off the Turkish shore at mid-night. When it was halfway between Turkey and the Greek islands, the boat started facing too many obstacles due to overload and being obsolete. Further, nothing worked properly in that boat. Passengers felt as if they were travelling a 1000-mile journey or even an endless journey. The journey took longer time than expected.

Shortly, the boat encountered more serious problems and water started leaking inside. Sami got aware of the critical situation and the deadly mistakes that he and the other passengers have committed. In this miserable situation, everyone started thinking about safety and nothing else although safety sounded as an unattainable and far-fetched dream. With total darkness and cries of passengers, the boat sank quietly and settled at seabed. All people onboard passed away.

In Al Quriyah, missiles and rockets rained down on the town. In the last wave of missiles, Omar's parents were killed as their house collapsed while shelling. At these difficult moments, Omar had nothing to do in his hometown and he thought more of joining his friends in Germany as soon as possible. He knew nothing about what happened to them. His father and mother were working in agriculture and they had some small agricultural lands. When they passed away, he decided to sell the lands and leave the country.

Within a few weeks, he succeeded to sell lands and began preparing for his next journey. He sold the land with half its real value. It was very cheap because of the deterioration of the security situation and a lot of people were trying to sell their property and leave, therefore the price of lands and different real estate dropped sharply.

Omar's journey was as difficult as the journeys of his friends. He faced extreme hardships, and he survived many times along his routes in Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary, and Austria before arriving in Germany. He survived various attacks by human traffickers and attempts of exploitation by smugglers and continued his way to Germany after being looted. He also survived fraud attempts as some smugglers attempted to take much more money than the expected amount. Against all odds, he arrived in Germany and started another quest for finding his friends Ahmad and Sami.

After 6 months in Germany, he met a young man from his hometown. He asked him about his friends whether they arrived in Germany or headed to a different European country! The young man told him that Ahmad had passed away near the Syrian-Turkish borders and then the young man kept silent until Omar asked him again about his second

friend, Sami. The young man preferred to keep silent, but he answered due to Omar's insistence to know what happened to his other friend.

When the young man told him about the fate of his second friend, Omar underwent a psychological trauma. He recovered after 3 months and started his new life in Germany. He pursued his academic study and graduated from university later. He also obtained the German citizenship and lived just like normal people who have human rights and are respected by others.

Omar did his best to serve his new country and contribute to its development and prosperity. He felt that Germany had given him the best thing that he was looking for and paved the way for him to fulfil all his dreams. Germany hosted him and made him feel as a normal human being who has rights to be respected and duties to be fulfilled. Additionally, Omar felt that he must serve Germany more than the Germans themselves, because Germany brought him from death to life as he was about to die many times in his country and along the merciless routes to Germany.

