

ERITREAN REFUGEE MERHAWI BAIRE HAS LIVED IN HAMBURG FOR FIVE MONTHS. AFTER HE WAS GRANTED ASYLUM, HE STARTED TO TAKE GERMAN CLASSES AT A SCHOOL IN THE CITY CENTRE.



HE HAS TO STUDY THE LANGUAGE UNTIL HE REACHES B1 LEVEL, AS STIPULATED IN THE GERMAN "INTEGRATION LAW," WHICH APPLIES TO ALL REFUGEES.

## ACROSS THE SAHARA

MERHAWI USED TO BE A MATHS TEACHER IN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL NEAR THE CITY OF KEREN, 90 KM NORTH OF THE ERITREAN CAPITAL ASMARA.

## AND ONTO THE METRO

Text Ahmed Mohammed Omer  
Comic Alice Socal



AFTER 15 YEARS, MERHAWI DECIDED TO LEAVE ERITREA AND LOOK FOR A BETTER, SAFER FUTURE IN EUROPE.

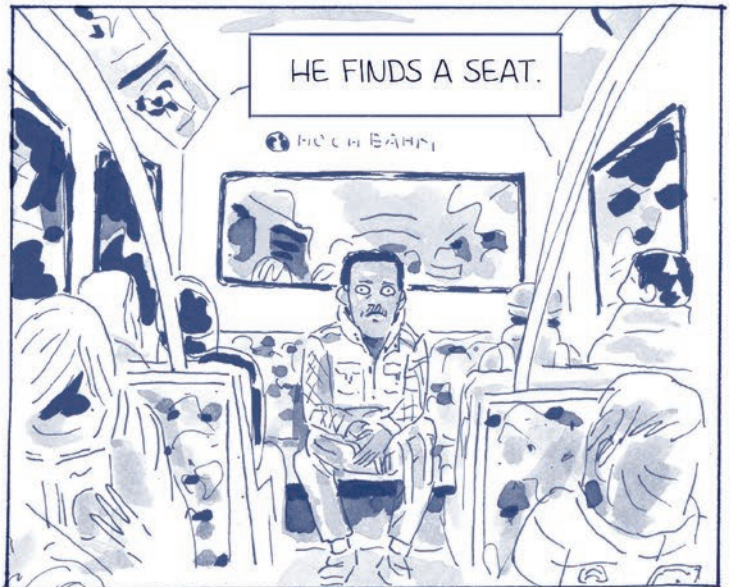


MERHAWI FINDS IT CHALLENGING TO ACTUALLY SPEAK TO GERMANS. THE ONLY OPPORTUNITY TO MEET THEM IS ON THE METRO RIDE BETWEEN THE REFUGEE CAMP IN NIENDORF MARKT AND GERMAN SCHOOL.



PEOPLE  
REALLY ACT  
STRANGE  
HERE...

HE FINDS A SEAT.



WHY DOESN'T THIS  
WOMAN SIT DOWN  
NEXT TO ME? SHOULD I  
OFFER HER THE SEAT? BUT  
THIS MIGHT NOT BE THE  
WAY THEY DO IT IN  
GERMANY.

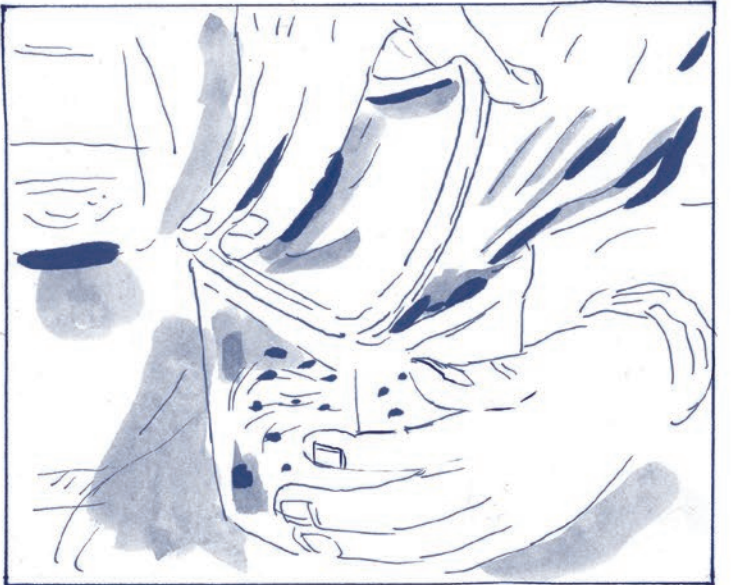
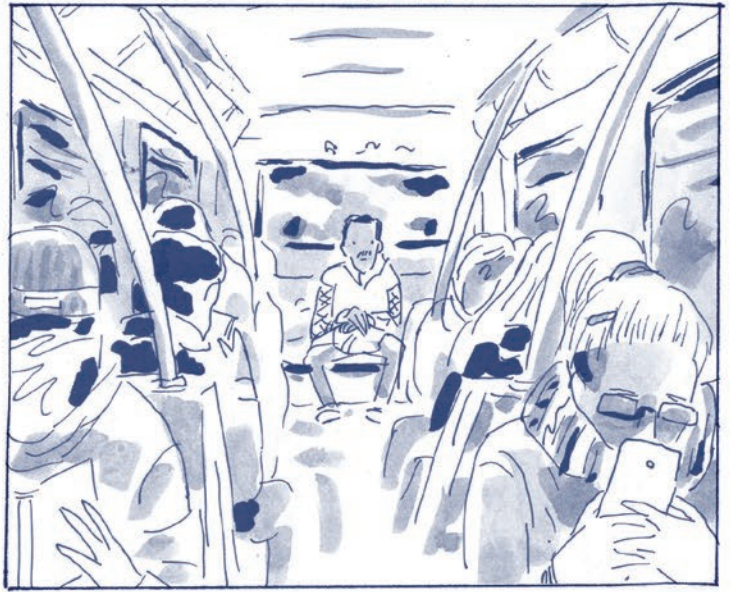
THERE IS A FREE SEAT  
NEAR HIM, BUT SOME PASSENGERS  
PREFER TO STAND.







\*WHY ISN'T SHE SITTING NEXT TO YOU?







THE YOUNG WOMAN TUCKS  
INTO HER DINNER. THE WRAFT OF  
IT SPREADS EVERYWHERE,  
BUT NO ONE MINDS.







BETWEEN THE 1960S AND 1990S, ERITREA AND NEIGHBOURING ETHIOPIA WERE CONTINUALLY AT WAR. TODAY, THERE IS STILL A BORDER DISPUTE.



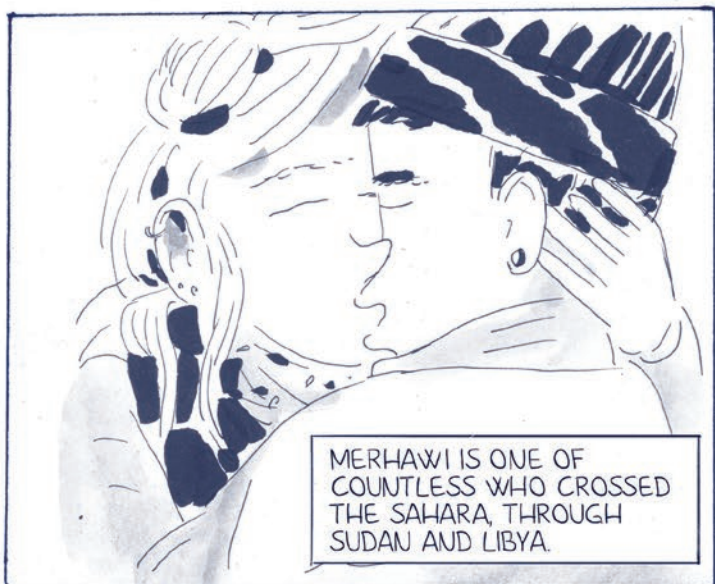
NEVER-ENDING CONSCRIPTION, ECONOMIC CRISIS AND A LACK OF BASIC CIVIL RIGHTS - REASON ENOUGH FOR ERITREAN YOUTH TO FLEE THEIR COUNTRY.



HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF SOLDIERS, CIVIL SERVANTS, TEACHERS AND OTHERS HAVE LEFT AS WELL.



MERHAWI IS ONE OF COUNTLESS WHO CROSSED THE SAHARA, THROUGH SUDAN AND LIBYA.



IN SUDAN, MERHAWI WORKED HARD DAY AND NIGHT TO EARN ENOUGH MONEY TO GET TO LIBYA.



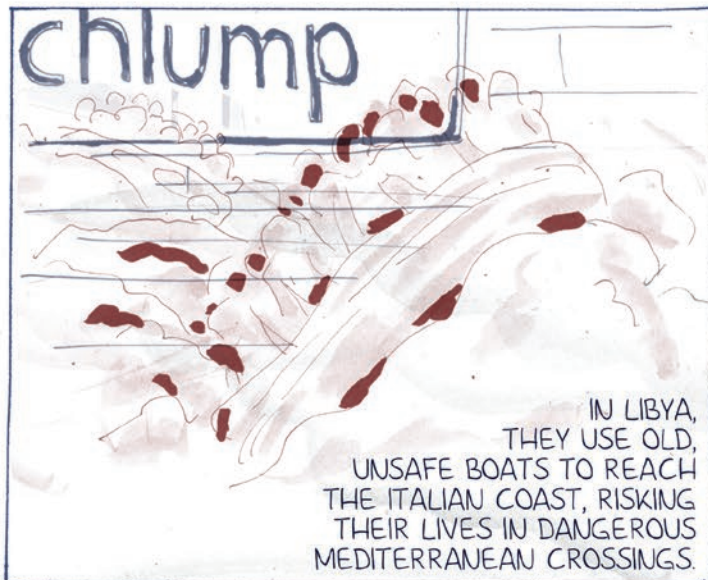


THIS IS THE MOST DANGEROUS  
ROUTE OUT OF ERITREA.



OTHERS WHO  
HAVE MORE MONEY  
TRY TO TAKE SAFER  
ROUTES FROM SUDAN  
THROUGH EGYPT AND TURKEY.

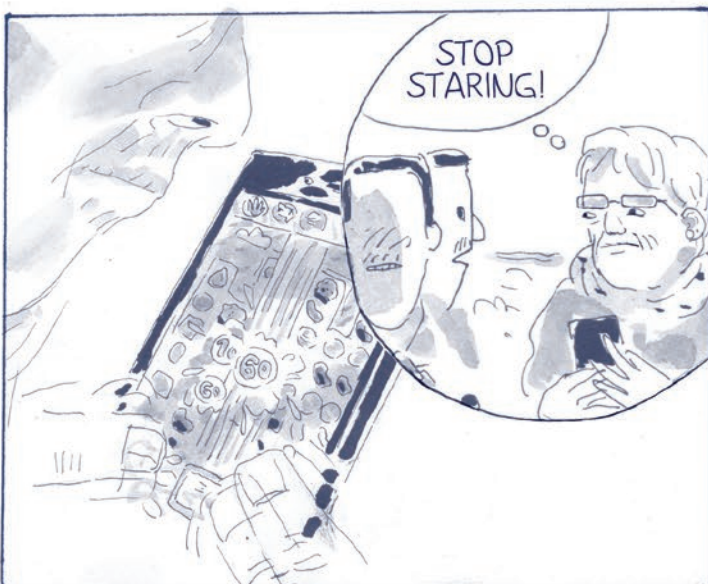
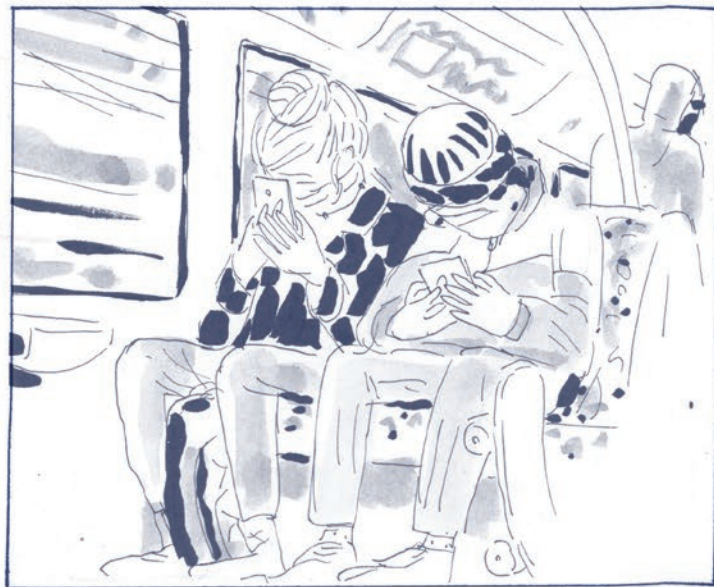
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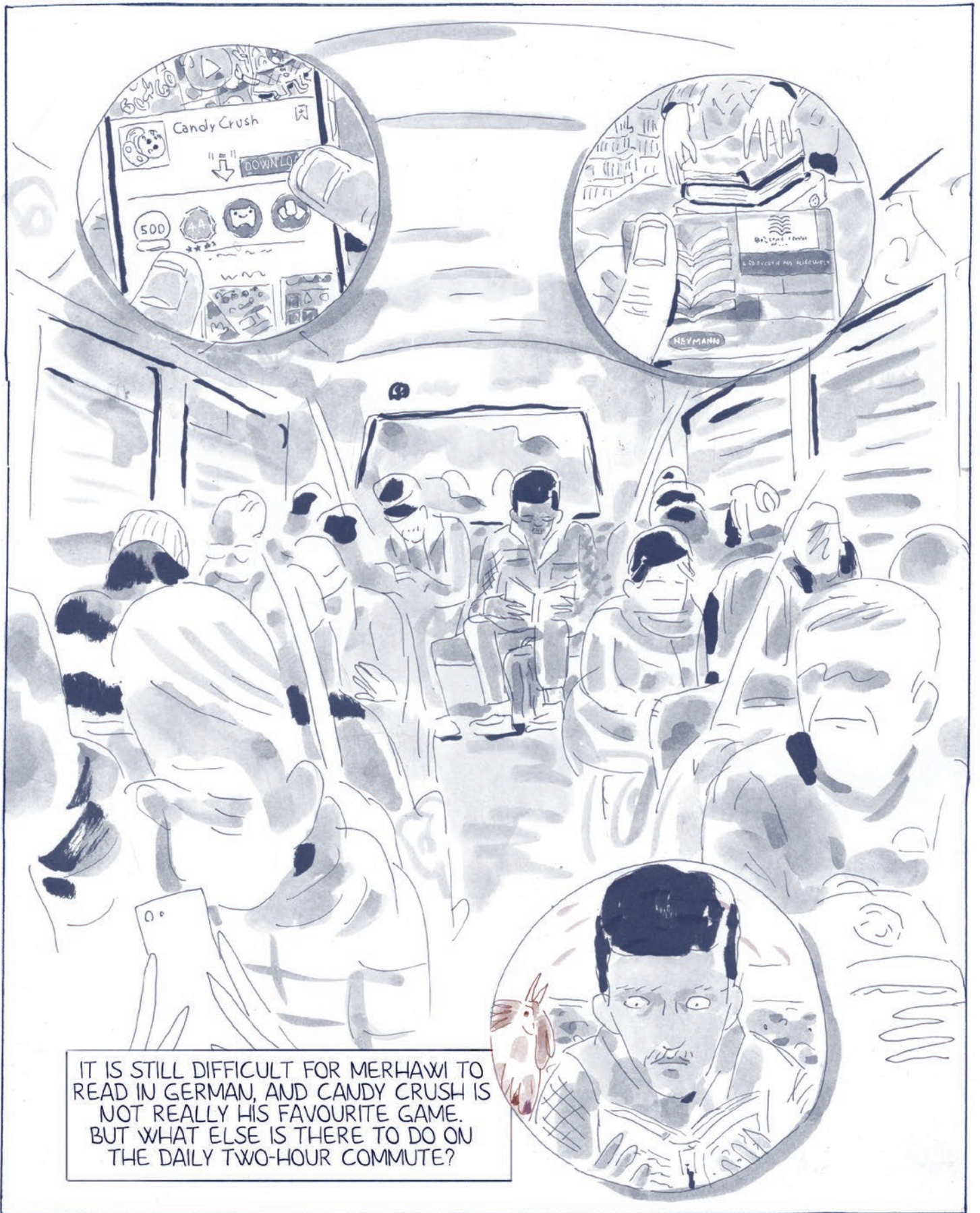
IN LIBYA,  
THEY USE OLD,  
UNSAFE BOATS TO REACH  
THE ITALIAN COAST, RISKING  
THEIR LIVES IN DANGEROUS  
MEDITERRANEAN CROSSINGS.



THOSE WHO REACH ITALY USUALLY CONTINUE ON  
TO OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, LIKE GERMANY.







IT IS STILL DIFFICULT FOR MERHAWI TO  
READ IN GERMAN, AND CANDY CRUSH IS  
NOT REALLY HIS FAVOURITE GAME.  
BUT WHAT ELSE IS THERE TO DO ON  
THE DAILY TWO-HOUR COMMUTE?



To Learn More ...

Country report on Eritrea from Freedomhouse:  
<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/eritrea>

Why so many Eritrean refugees are living in Kenya:  
<http://magazin.journafrika.de/en/refugees-kenia-45294>

Alphabet des Ankommens • Alphabet of Arrival

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