



## Attempts on Their Lives

Protests need different energies and narratives to encourage a mass social movement. Recognising a space for a creative interaction within the current refugee crisis, I decided to explore how my role as a designer, storyteller and activist can begin to rewrite and add dimension to the toxic narratives that exist within the humanitarian crisis.

I created this script as a method of documenting narratives in opposition to the mainstream narratives of the media. I actively exercised specific rules and procedures that can be identified in micronarratives throughout this project. Rules such as;

- Following a narrative structure which does not depend on a closed and definite ending.*
- Presenting characters as multidimensional human, not as tropes or stereotypes without fault.*
- Accurately representing the voice in which the narrative features*
- Minimal editing and tailoring*

Inspired by Martin Crimp's Attempts on Her Life.

While most of the narratives have remained authentic, there are a few which have been slightly revised and tailored to make the piece more politically, emotionally, or theatrically engaging. Having said this, the stories are by no means dramatised for audience entertainment.

The deliberate preservation of the unpolished language of the narrators hint at the certified authenticity of the transcriptions, and the collective need for 'immediate' information.

The narratives act as an ethical obligation to work in favour of the community in which it addresses, to preserve their voice-print and provide a vehicle in which these narratives can exist outside of institution and media systems. Draft forms have been shared and developed with those involved with the narratives.

I am merely the curator of the following narratives, not the author.

**Natalie Galvau**

## **Attempts on Their Lives**

'No one will have directly experienced  
the actual cause of such happenings,  
but everyone will have received  
an image of them.'

*Baudrillard*

'This is a piece for a company of actors whose composition should reflect the composition of the world beyond the theatre.' (Crimp, 1997)

The episodic, postdramatic-style fragments featured in the Attempts on Their Lives script denies the idea of fixed identity or linear narrative and offers multiple

perspectives on one central theme, without the interjection of the metanarrative, state voice. Sharing narratives of personal accounts, feelings, histories, interactions and ideas, which are completely disassociated with the influence of the media, showing the refugees as products of circumstance rather than as victims of a social drama.

This narrative approach highlights the script as a part of the world rather than its

signifier, presenting the 'drama of life' instead of 'drama in life'. Offering an intimate glimpse at the beginning of a new understanding of a reality, both emotionally and intellectually; the beginning of a more philosophical approach to the crisis, through that of a shared story.

This narrative archive shall act as a catalyst in the macronarratives of the media and institution, and offer a multidimensional, re-contextualised link between politics and expressionism through its ability to dilute the boarder between past and present self-citation.

**Attempts on Their Lives**

*Scenarios for the theatre*

1	Coffee and Smoke
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## Coffee and Smoke

**Performance piece. Adapted from Sae's poem on coffee and smoke,  
poetry and response workshop.**

FADE IN –

*Two characters sit smoking at a coffee table discussing the culture of a coffee bean (AD LIB). Their backs are to the audience and the coffee table with two mugs of coffee sit between the characters.*

*Everything is neat and minimalist. They are there alone, absorbed in the conversation and blanketed by the sharp smell of coffee and smoke.*

*In unison they pick up their coffees and exhale a puff of smoke. One leg folded over the other, tapping to a silent beat of which the following words follow:*

PROTAGONIST:  
I think the ritual  
Of a coffee and a  
Cigarette is of  
Universal understanding  
And inspiration  
If only we would focus  
More on the things that  
Connect us...

*Tapping continues as the scene plays out.*

*They turn their heads to look at each other showing their profiles to the audience.  
They cheer their mugs and turn their heads to face forwards once again.*

FADE OUT –



## See A Raid?

Script written from an immigration raids leaflet, found.

See A Raid?  
Don't walk by!  
We can resist the raids together!

Makes sure people  
Know they don't have to answer  
Any questions

(Beat)

They can leave.

(Beat)

Walk with them.

(Beat)

Film the officers and police

(Beat)

Challenge the officers and police

Why me?

Why them?

Why us?

(Beat)

See A Raid?  
Don't walk by!  
We can resist the raids together!

(Beat)

Tell people around you  
What is happening  
Call your friends  
Get the word out

(Beat)

See A Raid?  
Don't walk by!  
We can resist the raids together!

## Music

Performed as a music number. Taken from the music writing session, hosted at  
Amazing People of the World.

FADE IN-

Music, Music, Music  
Makes you feel amazing  
Makes you feel excited  
Music, Music, Music  
We are musical and loving  
Work towards our goals  
To be happy  
Suada, Simcha, Kushi  
Joie, Farhad, Lumturi

Music, Music, Music  
Makes you feel amazing  
Makes you feel excited  
Music, Music, Music  
Makes you want to dance  
Suada, Simcha, Kushi  
Joie, Farhad, Lumturi  
Music, Music, Music

(Beat)

Music is vibration

(Beat)

It's my expression

(Beat)

Music gives me meaning

(Beat)

It's empowering and fulfilling

(Beat)

Music is my everything

(Beat)

It's how I connect with  
People and myself

Music is my power  
My weapon  
My escape

FADE OUT-

My direction  
My identity  
My hope  
My home.

## Regulation 33

**The active law in which all ships at sea must respond to those in distress.**

Regulation 33 - Distress Situations: Obligations and procedures

The master of a ship at sea which is in a position to be able to provide assistance on receiving information from any source that persons are in distress at sea, is bound to proceed with all speed to their assistance, if possible informing them or the search and rescue service that the ship is doing so.

(Beat)

This obligation to provide assistance applies regardless of the nationality or status of such persons or the circumstances in which they are found.

(Beat)

If the ship receiving the distress alert is unable or, in the special circumstances of the case, considers it unreasonable or unnecessary to proceed to their assistance, the master must enter in the log-book the reason for failing to proceed to the assistance of the persons in distress, taking into account the recommendation of the Organization, to inform the appropriate search and rescue service accordingly.

(Beat)

The master of a ship in distress or the search and rescue service concerned, after consultation, so far as may be possible, with the masters of ships which answer the distress alert, has the right to requisition one or more of those ships as the master of the ship in distress or the search and rescue service considers best able to render assistance, and it shall be the duty of the master or masters of the ship or ships requisitioned to comply with the requisition by continuing to proceed with all speed to the assistance of persons in distress.

(Beat)

Masters of ships shall be released from the obligation imposed by paragraph 1 on learning that their ships have not been requisitioned and that one or more other ships have been requisitioned and are complying with the requisition. This decision shall, if possible

be communicated to the other requisitioned ships and to the search and rescue service.

(Beat)

The master of a ship shall be released from the obligation imposed by paragraph 1 and, if his ship has been requisitioned, from the obligation imposed by paragraph 2 on being informed by the persons in distress or by the search and rescue service or by the master of another ship which has reached such persons that assistance is no longer necessary.

(Beat)

The provisions of this regulation do not prejudice the Convention for the Unification of Certain Rules of Law Relating to Assistance and Salvage at Sea, signed at Brussels on 23 September 1910, particularly the obligation to render assistance imposed by article 11 of that Convention.

(Beat)

Masters of ships who have embarked persons in distress at sea shall treat them with humanity, within the capabilities and limitations of the ship.

(Beat)

Reg. 33 applies to all ships

(Beat)

## Regulation 33, Active

**Script based on the account published of a search and recovery diver, Renato Sollustri, following the event from October 3 , 2013, where a ship carrying hundreds of refuge-seeking women, men and children, mainly from Eritrea and Ethiopia, sank off the coast of Lampedusa, Italy. Over three hundred of those on board drowned.**

FADE IN-

*A raft floating between lands, hosting over 30 people in its small body.  
Small waves moan under the haunting moonlight, the promise of a tragedy within its hollow depths.*

*A small child, held by its pregnant mother, splashes its hands in the rising water of the raft. Blissful and innocent. Its mother holds it tightly, tiredness and fear cling to her face. Those around her silently restless to the obvious loom of fate. So close yet so far. Perhaps this saying translates differently. Perhaps it means more. Slowly sailing yet sinking, the boat gets smaller and smaller.*

FADE OUT:

*(The next day)*

*The dark blinding depths of the Mediterranean ocean floor.  
4 search and rescue divers' searching what seems to be a sunken ship. Drowned bodies tied together to be surfaced.*

RADIO SPEAKER:

A sunken ship carrying hundreds of refuge-seeking women, men and children sank yesterday, off the coast of Lampedusa, Italy. Over three hundred of those on board drowned. Officials say that while they did attempt to respond to the SOS they did not unfortunately, make it on time

SEA WATCH VOLUNTEER #1:

... Shit.

(Beat)

We should have come here first –

SEA WATCH VOLUNTEER #1:

-There's no way we could have known the boat would sail that night it was a 50/50

chance

SEA WATCH VOLUNTEER #1:  
-There shouldn't be a chance at all

(Beat)

Fuck.

*The Sea Watch volunteer leans on the table. A scribble-filled map shows notes on popular refugee passages and routes across the sea.*

There were four ships nearby, FOUR.

*The Sea Watch volunteer #1 smacks their hand down in frustration as volunteer #2 comes to console him.*

*The sound of movement grows louder and the volunteers rush to the back of the boat.*

*Camera pans to follow the volunteers out the door but remains inside, watching the scene play out through the doorway.*

*At the sight of what they drag out of the ocean, all crew members become agitated.*

*Sea Watch volunteer #2 turns pale and sways back as if about to collapse.*

SEA WATCH VOLUNTEER #2

(CHOKES UP) oh god...

NARRATOR:  
He described

(Beat)

swimming into the hold of the submerged boat  
and seeing the body of a young woman who seemed  
as if she was pregnant.

(Beat)

He recounted

(Beat)

taking her out of the boat-

"We laid her on the seabed. We tied her with a rope to other bodies and then...

(Beat)

we rose with them from the depths of the sea"

(Beat)

When they surfaced and lifted her body onto a waiting boat,  
they found that she had given birth while the boat sank,

(Beat)

the body of her new-born son,  
attached by his umbilical cord, underneath her clothes

## Perceptions of Fear

Apparently,  
Somehow,

I still managed to look at it from a certain distance that allowed the  
illusion of it all still having been  
'made up'?

The second was taking guests on board for the first time.

I remember a young woman falling to her knees,  
crying.

That was the second time reality hit me –  
this stuff is real, happening, and totally incomprehensible.  
How are any human beings able to treat their own kind like this?  
To abandon someone to their fate like this?

PAUSE

People from my orbit,  
when they talk about fear, they mean stuff like fear of heights of losing their jobs.  
Which is all right,  
it is perfectly fine to have those fears.  
But the fear you could see in the faces of our guests though was different and more  
sincere,  
if you can call it that.  
It was a fear for their lives.

## The Chilling Effect

### Extract from a conversation between Sea Watch crew and other humanitarian volunteers.

Under international laws and conventions you will NOT return people from which people are trying to escape from – that is legally binding  
And the government are telling us to contravene those laws and take them back

In Tunisia there `are... there are presidents that set ... example showing legal cases that have been won so that Tunisia deports people against their will...those countries aren't safe countries so, so we cant take them there...

And by maritime law...because all of this ties in...by maritime law, we are, we are duty bound to take them to the nearest port. Which are generally either, Lampedusa, Sicily, or Malta. Those are the closest places, so we are duty bound to do it  
We are perhaps THE ONLY ONES in Europe that obey the law,  
Right?  
However, we are criminalised  
Threatened.

Every single ship,  
Every single ship  
Is being located and stopped –  
And you think –  
Yeah fair enough - so they were a bunch of young activists, maybe, maybe they did do something criminal?  
They were young?  
Maybe they got something wrong?  
But every single one of us have been implicated – it can't be all of us, because we're not that trained.  
And the whole purpose of it, is to tie us in with red tape.  
To confuse people.  
To make it seem...to shred doubt and suspicion on our credibility by making us discreditable in some way... they gain political strength – like “well look at them, they're under investigation. There's no smoke without fire”.  
So they shred doubt, they make it seem like were criminals – even though we are the ones obeying the law..

It, it ties us in with red tape so it slows us down and exactly what I said before, it re-

moves routes in operation. We have to ask for permission to deploy from the generic coast guard. – Last week, I was in training and there was a boat reported which was two minutes away,  
can we respond to that boat?  
“no, wait”,  
Five minutes later we ask again, “no wait”,  
and then five minutes later they overtake us and go check the case..  
And that's what this is about.  
They are reducing the possibility for us to save these people. -

- How many boats are locked up in ports or still operating?
- Yeah, so. That's quite a difficult question to answer that. Its always in a state of flux. 'cause this is the red tape they tie us in, you know, we come back. Like with my mission – we came back from being held up for fifteen days and they then came round and (laughs), the lengths they go to to slow us down...they then came in and asked to see the ship. Asked to see our documentation – so we show the documentation. They can't get us with that, so then they ask to see our fridge. –
- Its going to be health and safety!.. – (said in state of disbelief)
- (lets out a sneer) They take us to the kitchen and asked about our waste disposal system –  
The system basically grinds up the food and released it into the sea so the fish can eat it, right?  
They said, that the particulates that we are releasing into the sea are two millimetres too big. –
- AD LIB of groans of disbelief and light murmuring
- I think it is really important to note the collusion of all the European governments coming together to stop us.  
They're doing it in the complicity of organisations which should be helping. Such as ION, they are completely complicit in it and will not use their voice because guess who funds them?

(Beat)

There is an oxymoron in the logic of the police,  
In so far as they say we are facilitating the legal entry of an asylum seeker, with they cannot do.  
They are except from illegal entry.  
It's the real paradox – everyone has the right to claim asylum in any country. Legally speaking, you are always an asylum seeker, what is different is that you're recognised as one by the state. The state has an obligation to allow you to seek that.  
So to enter illegally is obviated by the fact that you have the right to make that entry. And so the underlying logic employed by our prosecution...they already admit that they are asylum seekers, they already admit that it is impossible for them to enter illegally.

## Let Your Voice Bring Hope

Poem written in response to Let Your Heart Give Life, by Nedim Terfent.  
Written during the Student Action for Refugee poetry response workshop.

Let your voice bring hope.  
In response to Let Your Heart Give Life.

Let your voice bring hope  
It is all water of life  
Let it be the powerful boom of  
A thunderstorm  
Feeding the starving soil  
Your voice is the whisper of the babbling brook  
Nourishing the thirst of  
The lost  
The hopeless  
The desperate  
The distressed  
Your voice is our hope  
Let it share the strength of the  
Constant splash of a waterfall  
And carry the comfort through  
The silent hush of the waves  
Let it send messages through code  
In the pitter patter of raindrops  
Let your voice be crystal clear  
As clear as water  
Let it be hope to the hopeless.

In solidarity,  
Ellen

## Arabic Neue Ultralight Italic

Transcribed conversation between a refugee and a British National.

*Scene opens in a quiet cafe, located in Deptford, London. The soft sound of conversation and coffee machines flavour the air. At the centre of the stage sits two characters enveloped in conversation. The background noise begins to fade, the audience are now able to hear what they say...*

BOY  
Before my job in the café, I used to work in a tattoo shop.  
So...

*The boy grabs a napkin and black sharpie, clears the mug out of the way and begins to draw a series of Arabic letters.. The girl he's sat with leans in with interest.*

You know how people love to get Arabic tattoos? ...stupid words like love and life and home?...They used to pay me to sit and write different words in different fonts...

*He writes an Arabic word over and over, accentuating different aspects of the word with each print.  
Every so often catching the sharpie tip in the folds of the napkin.*

... so this is like, slanted...

*He points the tip of the pen at the second word down. The girl stares at the letters, clearly struggling to see the differences between the words.*

So like, you see here –

*The boy's pen moves to a specific letter of the word in which the shape of the letter drops to a straight line.*

-Its different to this one. And this one –

*He moves his pen to another style, and again points at the letter shape which drops to a line.*

-Is like a fancy, curly style.

... yeah, I'd be there for hours and hours, writing the words over and over. They gave me like, £10 for an full paper of writing.

*The boy continues to draw on the napkins.*

GIRL

-Nah OMG, that is so cool. It's like, not something you really think about is it? How different languages still have different fonts and how they can be italic and stuff ...  
What's my name in Arabic?

*He looks up at her in amusement and grabs a fresh napkin.*

## The Happy Ending

**Transcribed conversation between film producer and activist Sue Clayton, and I.**

*An empty shelf in a sea of books. She sees me looking at the gap in her collection.*

"They were dusty so I wiped them down with a damp cloth but found that it had made them mouldy, so had to throw them all out".

*A whole shelf of books thrown out and yet barely a dent made in her vast collection of literature. Wall to wall, books on film, poetry, politics, migration lined the flat. Some books were thumbed to death while others sat with un-cracked spines; I could tell in which topics her passions lie.*

"I used to work for Channel 4, but now I work for myself" she began, "They always wanted happy endings, and were too concerned with views. They sent me out in a small team to Calais to document the refugee situation out there. It was shocking and horrible, there were gas bombs going off all day and big bonfires and police raids during the night. Me and my team has three mobile phones nicked during our time there".

*She laughed, almost reminiscently.*

"When we brought back the footage, we were told it was too long. They wanted us to cut down the footage to 5 minutes, or so. They also wanted us to create a happy ending – something that the viewers would find satisfying. But how could we do that? How could we encompass the amount of devastation and destruction that is happening in the Jungle to 5 minutes? And we couldn't create that satisfiable ending, there was no hope for these kids, they had no-where to go, there wasn't a happy ending to capture".

## Master Sina ft. Balti - Clandestino

Transcribed and translated lyrics from the song Clandestino, by Master Sina.

Ha ha  
Balti  
Master Sina  
Yaaay

Clandestine because there's no life  
Because without mom  
Because there's no return  
Clandestine I want to become rich making Mummy happy without falling to peak

Your brain is in your country, and your heart is in Champs Elysee  
Divided between the papers and my home land  
With a backpack on your back, walking without GPS  
Walking in the street frightened from the CRS  
You're mates are so many, but you're by yourself, God bless who's dead  
Go away don't say my cousin from my country  
I accepted the homesickness, the coldness, but not being hurt  
Waking up on the sound of the church, really missing Al Adhan  
In the morning painter, Kebab with Algerian sauce  
My eyes were dreaming of the Italian Class  
They said "He comes from the homeland" they said "he's not behaved"  
Doesn't eat pig meat but thinks like the unbelievers  
The language is Arabic but the decor is French  
You want to get your papers, get the Dinar with Devise  
Call me on 06 I'll tell you Wakri Wakri  
Arab lost between the walls of a foreign country

Clandestine because there's no life  
Because without mom  
Because there's no return  
Clandestine I want to become rich making Mummy happy without falling to peak

I came to Italy, coming from a small one

Arabic in Italy, they said

Run away from the country on a boat  
I saw with my eyes my mates drawing in the sea  
There are those who have been saved, there are those who died  
There are those who drown without return  
Good morning Italy, Goodbye Tunisia  
Running away from the country and the beating of the police  
I arranged, I was wrong  
They tagged me for rude  
I grew up, I paid  
Today I'm return to my mom on the boat  
I do not have to say thank you to anyone because my life I did on my own  
And when you were expecting a baby, I was out to pick up the money .

Clandestine because there's no life  
Because without mom  
Because there's no return  
Clandestine I want to become rich making Mummy happy without falling to peak  
Think of me, Think of me, Think of me, I think of you  
Think of me, Think of me, Think of me, I think of you  
Think of me, Think of me, Think of me, I think of you  
Think of me, Think of me, Think of me

Clandestine because there's no life  
Because without mom  
Because there's no return  
Clandestine I want to become rich making Mummy happy without falling to peak

Clandestine because there's no life  
Because without mom  
Because there's no return  
Clandestine I want to become rich making Mummy happy without falling to peak  
I do not have to say thank you to anyone because my life I did on my own  
And when you were expecting a baby, I was out to pick up the money .



## WhatsUpp

### Transcribed conversation from the Volunteer Group Calais group chat.

BEEP

Eva, Toby, Rachel and I are with them,  
trying to find out what caused this...(PAUSE)  
...They've just fired half a dozen cs gas canisters  
into the family area...  
After all the Kurds had already gone back into the camp...

PAUSE

... Of course!  
Please, please have someone record it! –

PAUSE

-it kicked off when a group of fash walked all the way to the corner of chemin des dunes –

*(Monday 8.45 pm)*

BEEP

They're definitely shutting down the motorway.  
About 100 people in groups trying to jump lorries.  
Police tear gas is being shot –

PAUSE

Can someone with a truck help move 18 rolls of insulation from the library back to the  
warehouse today?

PAUSE

Also is anyone can bring a broom and dustpan and brush to women's centre that would  
be great, thank you!

PAUSE

Hey all.  
Please can I have a number for Hettie?

*(Tuesday 10.32 am)*

BEEP

Does anyone have contact details with the shit suckers on camp?  
Warehouse toilets are dangerously full ...

... I have no words...

Also pacific hotel in Calais was raided.

Just to let you know our hotel got raided this morning by armed police, presumably look-  
ing for ISIS related stuff...

PAUSE

Just heard this. Any idea of numbers?

*(Thursday 13.19 pm)*

BEEP

FIRE AGAIN –

PAUSE

Just found out. Do we need to get down there ASAP?

PAUSE

Warehouse staff needed?  
Anyone!? We are gearing up in this house.

PAUSE

OK, spoke to Simon...Fire engines are there, fire being put out.

*(Thursday 18.48 pm)*

## The Heart

**Poem written in response to Let Your Heart Give Life, by Nedim Terfent.  
Written during the Student Action for Refugee poetry response workshop.**

Your heart has given life, and has continued to do so.  
The heart is the most central part of who we are, a life without the heart is a lifeless one.

Your poem 'Let My Heart Give Life' has taught me how the heart is love, how love is the machine that offers the earth the greatest remedies.

The heart to be described as becoming the earth, is to say the heart is our home.  
A large part of me wishes how our home should be more loving, how people who broke the wings of the birds needs to see that every living thing on this earth works as one.  
In order to live we have to offer our hearts to each other.

'Let My Heart Give Life', 'Let Our Heart Give Life'.

Thank you for inspiring me (and many other people) to offer our hearts to those who need it the most, and thank you for inspiring me to trust in my heart that it has the ability to do so.

Quennie

## Knock Knock

**Poem written in response to Let Your Heart Give Life, by Nedim Terfent.  
Written during the Student Action for Refugee poetry response workshop.**

knock knock knock

You're not coming out

knock knock knock knock knock knock

We are coming out

knock knock knock knock knock knock knock knock

Things are going to change.

## NEDIM TURFENT

Poem written in response to Let Your Heart Give Life, by Nedim Terfent.  
Written during the Student Action for Refugee poetry response workshop.

Language so effortlessly beautiful  
written from a prison cell  
you speak of the natural world  
with such value and worth  
when all you face is brutal exile

It is a shame that humans fail to  
work 'collectively', in 'solidarity'  
like the ants you speak of can

it should be simple, the smallest  
of species can achieve that unity.

where is the warmth in humanity?  
I admire your strength in humanity.

A strength where hearts can be 'crystal clear' and 'give life to the lifeless'.

Iona

## New Ways

Poem written in response to Let Your Heart Give Life, by Nedim Terfent.  
Written during the Student Action for Refugee poetry response workshop.

We are writing to you because we love it.  
Because you love it.  
Because we have to keep it alive.  
We respect, admire and stand in solidarity with you.  
As a young, creative writer, seeing the passion you possess to defend the art of expression is inspiring in more ways than I can describe..  
Thank you for everything.

Some of the phrases I could think of using your initials (well, some of the best). -

Newly Tired  
Neon Trout  
Normal Tactics  
Nectarine Tracks  
Nah, Try!  
Nearby Tea  
Newspaper Trenches  
Now, Together

There's always a new way of saying something, right?

Betty

## Paradiso Italia

### Transcribed story of the journey behind Mirko Orlando's Photography project Paradiso Italia.

*Mirko leans back in his chair and turns his face to the sun, paused for a second then returned his gaze to me.*

MIRKO:

My journey, the seed of the graphic novel Paradiso Italia (Paradise Italy), started in Turin, where migrants occupied "Ex Moi" (a residential complex built in 2006) in order to protest the government migration policies. Here I learned a lot of things. Living with them, protesting with them, suffering with them.

I came to the second stop in Ventimiglia, where we slept in barracks and tents along the river Roja, waiting for the right moment to cross the French border. I met people who had ran away from Libya, who told me they had suffered torture. They did that with tremendous aloofness, without emotions. I found the tales of the suffering people disgustingly similar to a cold police report. But perhaps, this was the only way they could face what had happened.

After that, I went to Borgo Mezzanone (near Foggia), inside a ghetto. Built outside the city and among the fields where the migrants worked hard for little money and without any rights. I thought: "Is this the Italian dream?". I experienced sweat, anger, but also music, smiles, and unexpected happiness. I still considered it a hell, but K told me that he was happy. "This place is good. To leave my country is good, at last even the Mediterranean sea is good. This place is not hell... I came from there", he said. And another migrant explained to me that the ghetto was not his paradise, but it was a quiet place to be able to wait until the opportunity for something better came along.

Inside the ghetto there are a lot of shops. One of them is run by J from Gambia. He collects used clothes and sells them inside the ghetto. He also sends some of the clothing to Gambia for the shop run by this family back home. I asked him for a portrait for my book and asked if running a shop has always been his dream. He looked at me but didn't speak. Instead, after a while, he started to cry.

He said: "Let us help ourselves. Why did you save me from the Mediterranean sea if after you have nothing for me? You demand that I stay here but I have no time. You teach me the Italian language, you give me food, you treat me as a child, but I have no time. My

family, in Gambia, have no time. I need a document, a job, because I have to send money to my home. I am not a child. You tell me that I have to wait but I have no time. Without documents I can't work, I can't manage by myself, I can only wait, but I have no time. Let us help us. My shop is illegal but it is only a shop. Your government wants to destroy this place because it is illegal but here we don't hurt anyone. Let us help us. Please. Let us help us."

I realised that being Italian and European, I'm part of a hateful society. We hate anyone who comes from afar. Diversity is not liked and by hating even our neighbours, we have become strangers - strangers to ourselves. To hate is the worst way to love ourselves. Fear makes us isolated. All history teaches us that as a single country, working in isolation, you have no breath. But we have yet not learned.

As a way to understand the different communities, I travelled to the places and listened to the people I met – being aware that I always had access to a return ticket to come back to normality – which for them was not the same.

He leans forward, and hands me the photographs to reveal the characters of his memories.

## Self Care Like A Sponge: An Experience of Volunteer Well Being

### Experiences of volunteer well being and mental health.

When I volunteered in Greece for the first time I really struggled within myself. I didn't know how to even begin processing everything I was feeling; shocked, upset, worried, guilty, angry. So much anger, towards the world, to the universe, to whichever powers that might be that allowed such injustice to exist in the first place. I was furious at humanity, that we had such hostility and selfishness inside of us, such malice. What I found even more depressing was the apathy, why didn't people care that innocents were forced to flee from war? Why didn't we all know about these injustices? Why weren't we all working together to fix it? Why didn't people care?!

So caring is the first step. If you care then you can help. But caring about others cannot equate to martyring yourself, sacrificing your own mental and physical well being because you feel guilty that people are suffering. As a volunteer, you can't invalidate your own feelings, pain and lived experiences because objectively they aren't as horrific as the experiences of the people you are trying to help. It's difficult to accept that however much we do individually or collectively there will always be pain and suffering and sadness in the world. It's part of the human condition. It's something that I used to find overwhelming and soul destroying, and sometimes still do. Realising that my actions can't end global suffering; I'm not some fantasy superhero, just a student with limited resources. But that doesn't mean my intentions and actions are for nothing. It was something that I had to keep reminding myself of. Not to become overwhelmed with the bigger picture and things beyond my control, but to focus on the physical day to day things I could do to help alleviate the pain of those around me. You can only help to the best of your abilities and that's what matters.

I remember on one of my first nights in Greece, I was staying with friends and we were sitting on the tiny balcony in the evening after work, I couldn't stop crying. I was overcome with sadness and guilt. And I was angry at myself for being upset, believing that I had no right to be. I was angry that even being out there surrounded by people who had been through such trauma, I was still upset about stupid things from my life back in the UK. My friend looked at me and said, "Think about a sponge..."

I looked up at her, tears still trickling wobbly lines down my face, eyebrows creased and little lines of confusion forking my forehead. "What?"

"Well, think about it for a second," she continued, "a sponge can soak up water, but once it becomes saturated and full it can't absorb any more water. If you don't squeeze out the sponge regularly, you can't continue mopping up the water." I was still really confused at

this point, I laughed and told her I wasn't a sponge, though we could do with one to soak up all the tears.

"No, but you are the sponge," she replied. "Think of the sponge absorbing that water, as you helping other people; giving your time, resources and energy. If you just keep giving everything to other people all the time, you become saturated and overwhelmed. So you need to take time for yourself every now and then, and this is you squeezing out the sponge. If you don't take the time to look after yourself, how are you going to be able to keep helping other people? A sponge can't keep soaking up water forever, eventually it reaches capacity, and it's the same with us and our emotions and well being."

That was one of the most important analogies anyone has ever told me.

As a volunteer it's essential to look after your mental and physical health, for the sake of both yourself and those around you. To take the time to breathe and find that inner bit of peace. Just find a bit of time every day to do the things that you enjoy; reading a book, dancing to obnoxiously loud music, or maybe yoga and meditation. Whatever it is that makes you smile and feel alive, hold onto that.

Ella

