

Flash Fiction

# Selenium

by Hader Morsy

1. One-way flights are generally more expensive than return ones (per flight).
2. The Syrian civil war is the second deadliest conflict of the 21st century (so far).
3. “The World Migration Report: 3.6% of the global population are migrants”, he read.
4. An ad-filled French magazine, Turkish coffee, an unusually sunny Hoofdorp porch.
5. Adam applied for a permanent residence on the fifth anniversary of arriving here.
6. He went to the appointment with the folder he’d been preparing since they arrived.
7. This was the first day he could apply.
8. “Experience the beauty and culture of eight European countries in one summer.
9. Interrail Global Pass lets you travel as much as you want.
10. Interrail simplifies your travel plans so that you can focus on enjoying the journey.
11. Get 23% off with the code SPRING58 before the first of March.
12. “Valid only on participating European train networks.”
13. Adam took 13 weeks to cross through eight countries.
14. Turkey grew colder when the prospect of returning home disappeared.

15. The weather is usually beautiful in Greece that time of year.
16. The dispute over Macedonia wasn't on top of Adam's mind at the border.
17. Fear left Adam's wife, Sarah, sleepless for a week in Serbia.
18. Rivers flew towards the Hungarian border fence. Streamlets went through.
19. They reached Austria on the first day of Eid. Celebrated with friends in a tent.
20. They didn't want to get caught in Germany to avoid the EU's Dublin Regulation.
21. In the Netherlands 21% of the population lives below sea level.
22. Mostly, those people are in the Randstad region.
23. Ter Apel is not in The Randstad region. Only a few people live there.
24. Nine thousand.
25. Three thousand refugees arrived the same week as Adam and Sarah.
26. All had to register at the HQ of the Immigration and Naturalisation Service.
27. At the same time.
28. All had to stay in a refugee camp.
29. At the same time.
30. They slowly moved between types of camps: COL to POL to AZC to VBL.

31. ASL: Above Sea Level.
32. Until they moved to Hoofddorp. Adam had a cousin there.
33. He helped them find a place to live and work.
34. Detectors used in digital mammograms are made from selenium  $\text{Se}_{34}$ .
35. The interviewer questioning him for permanent residence asked, “why?”
36. Why did he want to stay in the Netherlands? Why not go back home?
37. Usually, Sarah would handle those questions.
38. Like their first interview in Ter Apel. The interpreter asked them in Arabic:
39. “How was your journey to the Netherlands?”
40. Back when Adam needed an interpreter.
41. His Dutch is now better than most, better than the interviewer’s.
42. Back when Sarah would smile softly, touch Adam’s leg signalling, “I got this”.
43. Preventing Adam from saying or doing anything he would regret.
44. Like, for example, throwing a tantrum about how this is his home now.
45. It has been for five years. There’s no other home.
46. Or throwing his papers in the face of the interviewer.

47. Who still flinched.
48. Even though he'd been working behind the separating glass for years.
49. Adam grew louder, angrier every time the interviewer said a thing.
50. The slur he shouted didn't help when security came for him.
51. Like the interviewer, one of the security guards was of Turkish descent.
52. A police record affects the decision of a permanent residence process.
53. Sarah should have been with him.
54. If only she had survived the selenium registering a white spot.

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