**The Path Of Hope: The Refugee Family From Syria:**

*A play written for the In Others' Shoes project*

*– submitted by Robin Dewa, Slovenia*

**Characters**Father Shakir
Mother Mawiya
Older daughter Zainab

Younger daughter Rafqa
Slovenian schoolgirl Monika:
Slovenian schoolgirl Petja:
Slovenian schoolboy: Tadej:
Slovenian teacher Ana:
A woman called Stanka
Narrator:

**Introduction:**

**Narrator**: "The Harun family from Syria received an asylum status in Slovenia. The oldest daughter Zainab started attending the ninth grade of elementary school in Slovenia, and her younger sister started attending the sixth grade. Their mom and dad didn’t manage to get a job and now they are very worried about how they will come without money to Germany, as there are more jobs available there. Despite having better conditions in Slovenia in comparison to the war back in Syria, Zainab and her family do not feel comfortable in the foreign environment. Zainab is scorned by her Slovenian classmate Monika on a daily basis. But since the last week onwards, Zainab is increasingly getting on good terms with Monika’s friend Petja. And Monika's boyfriend Tadej is becoming more and more interested in Zainab, who is not yet aware of this new situation.

Wednesday morning at school. Monika wants to get herself in Tadej's embrace, so she moves towards him, while Zainab appears. Tadej can not distance his eyes from Zainab. "

**Monika**: "I’ve had enough of it, Tadej. Every time this Zainab passes you by, you're just in the trance staring at her. You've been chatting with her more than with me lately. "

**Tadej**: "Monika, what 's this fuss all about? I just wanted to explain to her the principles of grammar dual in Slovene language today. She’s been listening to my explanations with a great interest. "

**Monika**: "You’d better explain the dual to her with the following example" Me Tadej, you Zainab, we are together ", and she will follow your face with even greater interest. Do you still love me? Admit that Zainab has enchanted you and that you like her. "

**Tadej** (*becomes embarrassed*): "Well, yes, she’s really cute, but ...' (***Monika*** *slaps him*.)

**Tadej**: "Oh, Moni, what's up ? You don’t even know what I wanted to tell you. And you did not let me finish my sentence. "

**Monika**: "I don’t care, you jerk! You are completely absent-minded lately when you are with me, but every time Zainab passes you by , you are in the seventh heaven! "

**Narrator**: "Thursday evening. In the room of the refugee centre, all members of the Syrian family Harun have gathered. "

*Mother* ***Mawiya*** *is looking at herself in the mirror. In the background, the song from the singer Shakira is being heard, to which Zainab is rehearsing her dance moves.*

**Mawiya**: "My dear husband, now that I'm looking at myself in the mirror, I see I’ve got wrinkles, and the first gray hair and I lost weight as well. This refugee wandering has resulted in bad consequences regarding my beauty. Come on, darling, please find some quality of mine! "

**Shakir**: "My dear, (*hesitating*), you still have a very sharp eye vision."

**Mawiya**: "You, jerk." (*and she slaps him*).

**Shakiri**: "Ouuch. Well, what should I say? Zainab, switch off that music! One more night here in the exile. I cannot work here as a refugee in Slovenia, not even in the Arab restaurant Abi Falafel. "

**Mawiya**: "Come on, stop complaining for a change. Are you the man or not? Are you gonna give up and give in? Hello! Perhaps there's gonna come a solution for us to go to Germany. "

**Zainab**: "My schoolmates are going to the cinema tomorrow. They invited me too - do you have any money for me for that? Some of my schoolmates are rude and find it hard to accept me, but if I do not socialize with them, it will be even worse for me. "

**Rafqa**: "I would like to buy some purse. Everyone in my class has got it! "

**Shakir**: "Well, we ain't got enough water and food! . What a pitty we ended up in Slovenia instead of Germany! "

**Mawiya**: " The future will open for Zainab and Rafqa, now that they have been allowed to go to school. They will learn Slovene and then somehow they’ll seize some opportunity here . "

**Narrator**: "They used to live in Tadmur, near the most preserved ancient city in the world-Palmyra. It was once ruled by the famous Queen Zenobia, after which Zainab got her name. Zenobia was brave and fought for freedom of her fellow Palmyrans against the ancient Romans, but just like the Harun family the Queen Zenobia had to go to exile in Europe. "

**Shakir**: " Dear Mawiya, do you still remember how many tourists, especially from Germany, came to our city to see the famous monuments of Palmira? We earned quite a lot of money "

**Mawiya**: "We really lived well for the Syrian standards, but our earnings could have been even greater if you had put some more work into it."

**Zainab**: "In Turkey, for the first time, I saw on the internet how Mutti Merkel invited us, Syrian refugees, to come to Germany. And her selfies with refugees. When I was small, I always wanted to go to the world whenever I listened to Shakira. To go to Europe, to America. I would've never ever expected my journey to Europe to be full of dead bodies, the heat and the rain, the illness. I still carry nightmares. "

*(****Mawiya*** *hugs* ***Zainab*** *and* ***Rafqa****)*

**Rafqa**: "I remember when one worker at the refugee center once gave me a Barbie doll donated by some good people, as I was afraid of all those barbed wires and threatening looks ... " ( ***Rafqa*** *is talking more and more quietly leaning on her mother*)

**Shakir**: "At that time, all gates were being closed to us. Now we can not go to Germany anymore, and we spent all our savings. We've got only € 18 per month here, and in coins. "(***Shakir*** *is counting his change*)

**Mawiya**: "All along the way I was trembling for the survival of my daughters trying to comfort them, while you were absent-minded. Now only some angel can help us ... "

**Shakir**: "Well, the more I would've earned,the more you would've spent. For women, the successful men are only those who can earn more money than their women can spend. "

**Mawiya** (*sighing*): "And only those women who find such men are successful."

**Shakir** and **Mawiya** (*simultaneously*): "We are both losers."

**Mawiya**: "I married you because I thought you were gonna change. But you didn’t. "

**Shakir**: And I married you because I thought you would never change at all. But you are constantly changing. For worse" (*it's a joke as both of them are smiling*)

**Mawiya**: "I know all the details of my children, their desires and fears, but it seems to me that as a man you sometimes only vaguely realize that there are some small people here in the refugee centre .."

**Narrator**: "**Shakir** is only physically present, with thoughts somewhere else again."

**Mawiya**: " Us women have received the gift of good speech, while you don’t even know how to listen to me. Never mind, this bickering is heading nowhere. "

**Narrator**: "Friday. At school, Monika and Petja are discussing going to the cinema after school lessons. "

**Petja**: "And then, after the movie at the cinema, we’ll go to McDonald's and then to the City Park shopping centre. Do you think Zainab will come, Monika? "

**Monika**: "Ah, this Zainab is strange. It’s obvious she’s a refugee. You saw it on TV then - some of them had money and Iphones and took selfies. And then they dare to say they ain’t got no money. Thank God we built fences to keep such people out, otherwise they would have come in even greater number. And this Zainab wants to take away my boyfriend! "

**Narrator**: "Monika sees Tadej and Zainab, who friendly hug each other. (***Monika*** *then goes to* ***Tadej*** *and kisses him.* ***Tadej*** *looks at her in a strange way*.)

**Monika**: "Zainab, are you coming with us to the cinema?"

**Zainab**: "I do not know whether my father can give me any money for it."

**Monika**: "If you do not go with us to the cinema, then you do not have to go with us to the City Park! "

*(This hurt* ***Zainab*** *so she moved away.)*

**Petja**: "Monika, refugees should be accepted with open arms. "

**Tadej**: "I do not know Monika why you are so evil to her, because she's not different than any of you. "
"

**Monika**: "My dear Tadej, I didn’t mean it. "

**Tadej**: " But you obviously did, if you said it like that," ( *He’s going to* ***Zainab***) "

**Petja**: "Well, you see, you’ve started to quarrel even with Tadej! "

**Monika**: "No, I haven’t!" "

**Petja**: "Oh Monika, how terrible you are! The family of Zainab had to run away from the fanatics in her own country. Yet you dare to behave in a terrible way towards her while she just needs friends the most . And what’s more, you are even jealous! "

**Monika**: "I'm not jealous! " (*She angrily goes away*)

**Tadej** (*comes to* ***Zainab***) "Zainab, I'm ashamed of Monika's behaviour. Monika has never behaved like this way before. "

**Zainab**: "It's okay. (*she is smiling*). Although I felt a little bad when she approached you and started kissing you. "

**Tadej**: (*feeling ashamed*): " I felt it strange as well as Monika usually doesn’t behave like that. Otherwise she's a good person. "

**Zainab**: "It's alright ..." (*Inconvenient silence*) "

**Tadej**: "Here you are, my address , come around at four o’ clock, we will drive you to the cinema. " (*he is smiling*)

**Zainab**: "Oh, thank you, Tadej. I just do not know if I come ... you know ... because of money (*she slowly goes away*) Bye! "

**Tadej**: "Mmm, wait, Zainab! I can pay the movie for you. "

Teacher **Ana**: (*comes to* ***Monika*** *and says*): "Listen, Monica. I heard that you haven’t behaved very well to Zainab lately. Accept Zainab, you’re both in the same class, students need to work together and help each other. Besides, we also have volunteers at school. But I hear that you also didn’t behave properly towards teachers today. "

**Monika**: "Well, they were bothering me!"

**Ana**: "Imagine, Monika, you were a teacher and would have a pupil who would object to you. How would you react? "

**Monika**: "Oh, no. I would never be a teacher. Poor teachers as you have to deal with such students like us. "

**Narrator**: "Today is Monday. Students went to see the garden at the Biotechnical Institute where they produce vegetables. They will do some work in the organic garden.

**Stanka**, *a representative of the Institute to students* : "If you grow vegetables with love and natural fertilizers, the yield is higher. What’s more, I do everything here in an organic way. We talk a lot to plants here and they grow better. Just try to see if plants listen to you. " (both **Stanka** and a teacher **Ana** are smiling.)

**Monika** (*whispering to* ***Petja***): "Organic, natural, what a bullshit! Well, am I supposed now to talk to weeds? It’s only important that food tastes good. " (***Monika*** *is turning towards* ***Zainab*** *with disdain* ) "Zainab, did you also grow your own food in Syria in an organic way? "

**Zainab**: "Of course, my mother did not use anything artificial in her garden. Syria is predominantly desert-like country, but Tadmur is an oasis in the midst of the desert. We could have a garden on the roof of our school, as well as in refugee camps, and we could dance Shakira's dance to make our harvest bigger. Shakira is our idol, with her ancestry from our neighbouring country Lebanon. "(***Zainab*** *begins to dance*)."

**Monika**: "In refugee camps, among those dirty people, oh no!" (***Zainab*** *looks at* ***Monika*** *with a strange look feeling uncomfortable*.)

**Tadej** : "Monika, why are you so rude? Make apology to Zainab, now! "

**Monika**: " Are you gonna tell me now how to behave? Well, if you continue being a lawyer for that refugee girl, we're done. " (*at the borderline of crying saying to* ***Zainab***). "Well, I hope you’ve had your fill now, Zainab. Tadej is now all yours. "

**Tadej**: "Monika, wait! Can we talk? "

**Narrator**: "The very next moment, angry Monica stumbles into one of the pots of plants, loses her balance and falls. Zainab comes to her and helps her get up. "

**Zainab**: "Monika, are you all right?"

**Monika**: "So what's wrong with you? Do you want to kill me? You’ve already got Tadej, what else do you want?"

**Tadej**: "Monika, are there problems with you again?"

**Monika**: "There are no problems with me, the biggest problem is Zainab here. "

**Zainab**: "It's not true. "

**Tadej**: "Monika, stop lying! "

**Zainab**: "Why do you hate me, Monika ? "

**Monika**: "Because since the first day you came here you’ve been trying to take away my boyfriend. "

**Zainab**: "Monika, I haven’t been trying to get your boyfriend. Me and Tadej are just friends, nothing more to it. Can’t you see? "

**Monika**: (*thinking for a while in a silence*) "But is that true, Tadej? "

**Tadej**: "Yes, it's always been like this. "

**Monika**: (*speaking nicely for a change*) "Oh, I can’t believe how stupid I was. I thought you and Tadej wanted to be together. Zainab, I'm really sorry that I behaved like this to you and said bad words about you. «
(***Monika*** *turning towards* ***Tadej*** ) "Tadej, I'm sorry I left you. "

**Tadej**: "Monika, would you be mine again?" "
*(****Monika*** *jumps into* ***Tadej's*** *lap and* ***Tadej*** *kisses her)*

**Zainab**: "Oh my God, we're finally friends. Monika, I'm so glad you have started to like me. "

**Narrator**: "Few days later, Monika, Tadej and Petja visit Zainab in their refugee centre. Mawiya is preparing a typical Syrian dish there. Meanwhile, Zainab is picking up a CD player and Shakira’s CD. "

**Zainab**: "I’m inviting you all, as well as the rest of the class, to prepare Shakira's dancing performance together. Are we gonna do it? "

**Everyone**: "Cool, of course we’re gonna do it!"

**Petja**: "I hardly wait for that!"

**Monika**: "That's the least I can do for you, Zainab, to make up for my past wrongdoing." (***Monika*** *is hugging* ***Zainab*** *as her new good friend*)

**Narrator**: "Few days later they were already rehearsing for their performance at school. The refugee centre allowed the Harun family to see the performance which received a huge applause from the audience. "

**Rafqa**: "Congratulations, Zainab! Mom, ain’t my sister such a cool person? I wanna be as tall as Zainab! "

**Mawiya**: "Of course, Rafqa. Shakir, are you proud of our daughter? I know something has just opened here for us. I’m starting to like Slovenia more and more. "

**Shakir**: "Me too, and I guess we’re gonna stay here."

*(****Mawiya*** *smiles at* ***Shakiri*** *and then they hug together with* ***Rafqa****.)*

*Dance*