



A movie by Pierre-Alain Meier

LOVE OF FATE

Réalisation **PIERRE-ALAIN MEIER** — Image **PETER INDERGAND SCS** — Son **JÜRIG LEMPEN** — Assistante de réalisation **MARION GLASER** — Montage **BEATRICE BABIN • MEYS AL-JEZAIRI** — Musique **ARVO PÄRT** — Montage-son **BENJAMIN BENOIT** — Mixage **DENIS SÉCHAUD** — Etalonnage **JAKOB WEHRMANN • CHRISTOPH WALTHER** — Graphisme et sous-titres **ILARIA ALBISETTI • MEYS AL-JEZAIRI • NINA KÁLIN** — Une Production **THELMA FILM AG PRINCE FILM SA** — en association avec **ORMENIS FILM AG** et **ZERO FILM** — avec la participation de **CINEFORUM** et le soutien de **LA LOTERIE ROMANDE** des **FONDS SUCCÈS CINÉMA** et **SUCCÈS PASSAGE ANTENNE** — Distribution **OUTSIDE THE BOX, THIERRY SPICHER**

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SYNOPSIS

1.5 million Syrians have been forced to flee to Lebanon and now find themselves at a stalemate. Their only glimmer of hope are the resettlement programs and the chance to be relocated to one of 20 Western countries.

Having left Syria in 2011, two Syrian families have been put through a veritable obstacle course.

Five years later, they are now on the brink of finally being able to depart for Germany. But as they take the final step, fate intervenes. One of the two families won't be leaving in the end.

When fate strikes, there is no escape. There are cures for ailments, there is none for fate.



The Jarad family: Mohsen, his wife Huriya and their 9 children

PIERRE-ALAIN MEIER

DIRECTOR AND PRODUCER

Between 2015 and 2018, I produced the film *Eldorado* by Markus Imhoof, which was presented at the Berlinale in 2018 and was later selected to represent Switzerland at the *Oscars for Best Foreign Language Film*.

The film accompanies migrants as they set off by their own means, across the Mediterranean sea, their subsequent disembarking in Italy and their arrival in Switzerland.

But another part of the film, shot in Lebanon and Germany, was meant to show the resettlement in Germany of two Syrian refugee families from Lebanon, the Jarad and Alsouki families.

Last day of shooting in Lebanon: Markus Imhoof has already left Beirut, he is in transit at the airport in Istanbul, on his way to Hanover to welcome the refugee families. He calls me at 3 a.m. and tells me that he has just learned from his assistant, who is

still in Beirut with the cameraman and the sound engineer, that a tragedy has shattered the dream of Mohsen Jarad, the main protagonist of the film, and that of his wife Huriya and their 9 children, who were no longer leaving.

The tragedy, which lasted about three hours between the Beqaa Valley and a hotel in the center of the Lebanese capital, was captured in a fearless and courageous manner by Peter Indergand and Jürg Lempen, two exceptional film technicians, who took it upon themselves to film this moment.

This twist of fate completely undermined Markus Imhoof's project. After a year of editing, he finally abandoned all the footage shot in Lebanon, because the Jarad family's misfortune overpowered the issues of the film he had in mind.

Eldorado then headed in a different direction. Nevertheless, Beatrice Babin, one of the film's

editors, and myself, have always been convinced that this dramatic moment, which took place only a few hours before the Jarad family's departure, could carry a film in its own right. And more importantly, we felt it was necessary - crucial even, for this dramatic event to be told, especially as the images and sounds recorded were so unique.

PETER INDERGAND

Mohsen Jarad lived with his family in the Beqaa Valley in Lebanon, not far from the Syrian border, in a small refugee camp. However, the difficulties of everyday life were now no longer of any importance. Mohsen knew that his dream was going to become a reality. He, his wife Huriya and their children would soon be in Germany. Not as Syrian refugees undertaking the dangerous journey by sea organized by smugglers, but instead by plane, on a flight organized by the German government. An utopian alternative in a world of deportation and flight?

But I could still feel a certain tension in him. He, who was always so relaxed, charming, funny. And yet there was a sense of stress emanating from him. Was it because of all the uncertainties that awaited him in a country with incomprehensible rules and roles? Was it because he had no knowledge of all that was going on behind the scenes, to make it possible for them to travel? Mohsen relaxed by smoking. Three to four packs a day.

On the day of their departure, a Tuesday, April 28th, the Jarad family, alongside the other chosen families, were taken to a hotel in Beirut to fly to Germany the next morning. Markus Imhoof, the director, was already on his way to Hanover to film the plane's arrival. Marion, the assistant director, Jürg, the sound engineer, and I were going to shoot the bus journey to Beirut and the departure the following day at the airport.

Mohsen started to feel unwell during the bus trip. As soon as we arrived at the hotel, the situation got worse. What then happened is documented in detail in the film.

It is never very pleasant to film a situation in which people are hurt and perhaps even lose their lives. I experience moments like these, feeling a constant inner tension.

A kind of dialogue between a defiant person, who questions themselves about the ethics of it all, and then someone who can remain cold and analytical

With the agreement of my partners, I got these images. During the editing of *Love of Fate*, I essentially tried to reproduce the emotions Peter Indergand and Jürg Lempen experienced, by arranging their images and sound recordings in a way that tries to provide meaning or sense to this obscure, unfathomable event.

CINEMATOGRAPHER

and wants to make the most of the situation for the film.

"Are you sure you want to film this?"

"Maybe we can talk about it later! If I don't film it now, we might regret it later. Let them decide, in the editing room. You can only take something out of the film, that has actually been filmed..."

"You could try to help!"

"No, I can't. There are people here who are more capable than I am medically, and better suited to ask for the help needed."

That's more or less what happened most of the time while those present were fighting to save Mohsen. Looking back, we always know everything better. There were also moments of hope. I imagined that Mohsen would finally come through and the story would have a happy ending and that this difficult moment would then become a powerful scene. For that alone, I was obliged to film. At the same time, I knew that this spark of hope was terribly small.

We regularly interrupted the shooting and consulted with the team. There wasn't much we could do. So we continued to film.

A few hours later, Marion, Jürg and I returned to our hotel. The shooting was over, fate had imposed its will. What was left was a big void.

The next morning we met the Syrian families at the airport during check-in. We had no news of the Jarad family. For a moment I thought that maybe Huriya would show up with the children. But of course, that was unrealistic. Her husband was dead, she couldn't leave him behind. And to make this clear, I shot the scene shortly afterwards of a German embassy employee carefully crossing out the Jarad family's visas with a ruler.

The picture on the visa, a red line across the face: this was the last image I saw of Mohsen. It was then that I realized that his dream of a new future, the dream of a better life for him and his family, had come to an end.

THIERRY JOBIN

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF THE FRIBOURG INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

The Material of Life.

There is the material of the film, that strikes you unlike anything else on a screen. This material that Pierre-Alain Meier organises with the sensitivity and honesty that characterises him. Indisputable.

And there is – just as rare in cinema – the material in the film. To watch this sensorial path that sets off in the dust of exile, almost melting in the sun, and ends surrounded by marble of hope, cold as a 4-star hotel lobby.

And right there, in a fragile balance, a human being who wavers, gets up, walks, carries and who, having reached his goal, collapses. So, he hangs on. Not grasping, but he clings on by touching the skin of others.

The *love* of the title is likely a caress. That gesture that the Coronavirus crisis now forbids us, is at the centre of this film, which makes it all the more poignant. Hands. Skin. Fingers running through hair. Tears that are wiped away. Palms of tenderness.

Love's embraces. What we have left, when all hope is gone.

The caress, a rare act in the 7th art. Rohmer gives us Jean-Claude Brialy's furtive caress of Claire's knee. Or those – a true ode - in Pascale Ferran's *Lady Chatterley*. Rummaging through cinematic sensations, they can also be found in Bergman or Truffaut. But here, it is not that kind of sensual caress we are talking about.

Here it is, "just" a humane, fragile caress. And it is immense. To touch someone to feel alive again. As simple as that. To feel alive in this world which is ours, because it is theirs. Feel their beauty. To stop talking about refugees as an abstract entity. To watch this film. Touch its miraculous sensitivity. Feel our brothers and sisters, so far and yet so close. To realize. To finally cry with them.

This film is a miracle.



Mohammed Youssef, IOM

INTERNATIONAL PREMIERE IN BEIRUT