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Writer/s: [Joseph Rabie](#)

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I abhor Luxembourg, with a fervour that equals my hatred at having to leave my beloved Jerusalem, the sharp zigzag of light and shadow as one passes through the narrow arch ways that lead down towards the esplanade of the mosque. Whenever I leave the city, it is with the deep pitted fear that I am on a one-way ticket outbound, that I shall never be allowed back, like my cousins in Beirut or in-laws in Kuwait, who have gilt-edged pictures of the golden dome in their living rooms as their only solace. The Jews have been saying 'if I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning' for the last two thousand years of exile, and now that they have returned, I cannot understand how they themselves can inflict such grief upon Jerusalem's own offspring, who having left the city as war refugees are denied any right to return. For my part, when I wake up in a bed located far from Jerusalem, I find myself in a no-man's land of thought, and only once I have imagined in my mind's eye the path leading back to my city, do I garner sufficient resources to emerge from under the covers.

The first time, I thought of sending my agent, but the banking authorities made me understand that my presence in their offices would be imperative if I wished to do business under their auspices. I am ailing, I told them, could I not be represented? No. So I resigned myself to taking the highway down to the airport, past the burnt-out vehicles scattered along the *wadi* commemorating the battles of what the Israelis call their War of Independence, and we, the *Nakba*.

At the airport we were taken aside for lengthy questioning: 'Where were we going? Why? Who would we be meeting?' 'It's just business', I tried to reassure them. I even have an Israeli associate, I told them, called Haim like the best of them. He too would profit from my voyage. After that my bags were neatly unpacked and each object was squeezed and examined by a charming young girl who told me that she had been doing this job since just after her military service, and would continue until she had earned enough money to take off like a bird to Bangkok and destinations further east, like so many Israeli youths after the army. Better than having no hope at all beyond deconstructing oneself as a human bomb, I told her, and her face filled up with a fraught look. She had no reply to that and I had struck a cord. She had promised solemnly to her mother to come back afterwards, to go to university and get a degree.

There is no direct flight from Tel Aviv to Luxembourg, and

so we flew via Zurich, business class, for after all, business had been kind to us, and we hoped that after this voyage it would be kinder still. As we flew over Thessaloniki, I was telling my agent that in my opinion, abstraction in painting was an artifice; true abstraction could only be found in music or in financial engineering. For an hour, between the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Trieste, my agent filled me in with the latest news concerning the tribulations of property ownership in Ramallah. The apartment buildings that he owned there were built only of the finest materials, white marble floors in the entrances, and reinforced concrete walls instead of the usual cement blocks, so that Israeli soldiers raiding the building in search of activists would not be able to go from apartment to apartment by knocking holes through the walls, leaving a god-awful mess. He rented to his cousins and in-laws and a gaggle of other related or unrelated people, and with the economy destroyed along with everything else by the Intifada, rent was no longer coming in. I commiserated but reminded him that we were making a pretty good living with our own endeavours, so if his tenants were too economically strapped to pay, he should take it philosophically. 'Philosophy' and 'private property' don't rhyme, he replied. As the plane cleared the last of the Alps and dropped gradually down towards Zurich out of the evening sky, I murmured to him that the only land he would ever truly possess was the volume of air displaced by his coffin.

We arrived at Luxembourg Airport late at night, a taxi took us to the Hilton Hotel, not far from where we would have to be the following morning. We shared a room, not to reduce the cost, but because I knew that without a familiar face, come morning, I would only burrow deeper into my bed.

Next day I had no stomach for breakfast. Another taxi, no need even to go into charming old Luxembourg (though we would, later, to buy presents). The taxi driver dropped us outside the Clearstream headquarters, a large complex of glass buildings, clear and friendly, open like a book, no hint of goblins or monkey business. There was fresh snow on the ground; it went scrunch underfoot, was as white as cocaine. I stole a furtive glance as we went through the revolving doors, but who would be watching, who would be caring; after all, banking is the lifeblood of the world.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Joseph Rabie.