

Rug rats

[Turkey](#) knows how it goes. First, the crazy opening price. You shake your head and walk away. Ahmet coaxes you into his shop with smiles and voluble assurances: “Byooutiful lady, pliiss, I give you verrayy gud prayce!”

Then, apple tea. Seated on a low bench, nursing your scalding glass, you are invited to admire the perfection of the rug, hand-woven by blind children in Turkmenistan, which you are so strangely refusing to buy.

At this point, summoning what remains of your willpower, you try to leave the shop. You promise Ahmet that you are going to think about his rug and return.

This is why the Turks refer scathingly to British tourists as “maybe later”. They have grown wise to our evasive, apologetic ways. They know that “maybe later” is English for “never”.

So, before you get to the door, Ahmet begins unrolling several other rugs with a lot of grunting and mopping of brow. At this point, a young boy may be summoned to help, adding to the pathos of the scene. Or, there is the nuclear option: kittens.

I know one Turkish rug seller who has a supply of kittens out back, knowing full well the British inability to say no to a fluffy small animal. So, with a kitten in one hand, apple tea in the other and 19 identical rugs at your feet, the Turk has you exactly where he wants you: helpless and too guilty to say no,

Show any last batsqueak of resistance and he will whip out a photograph of Angelina Jolie posing with blind, child rug-weavers in Turkmenistan. The very same children who personally made your rug! And, yes, he can send your carpet to the UK, for a very good price, which, when added to the cost of the rug, comes to... the crazy figure he quoted when you first tried to run away!

Do you reckon the Prime Minister of Turkey, Ahmet Davutoglu, took some apple tea and kittens to Brussels on Monday to haggle, [The German Chancellor is seriously thinking of giving Ahmet six billion Euros](#), double what Turkey was first offered. In return, Turkey will take back any failed asylum seekers from Greece. However, for each migrant Turkey takes back, the EU will take one Syrian from a Turkish refugee camp.

Plus, Turkey will get early, visa-free access to Europe by June, and may be waved through into full membership of the EU, which means 75 million Turks will be entitled to move to Basingstoke. *[My emphasis]*

This may be the first recorded instance in which Christmas has voted for turkeys.

Speaking as a veteran haggler with Turkish carpet-sellers, I have some advice for Frau Merkel. Put down the kitten and the apple tea, go back to the hotel and take a cold shower.

Ahmet is running rings round you, love. You can't pay him to take the migrants away and then let him send them all back again with a few million extra thrown in. When you are about to be had by a Turk, there is only one thing left to say: "Maybe later."

I can think of a shorter, more Anglo-Saxon response.

Basingstoke, incidentally, is in Hampshire, or