

## Finding refuge: a resilient journey from fear to hope



Ten-year-old twins Callum and Lucy\* were brought to England by their father with promises of an exciting new life. Leaving behind their house, school and friends, they arrived on the east coast of England with their parents expecting big things from their new location.

When the twins and their mother arrived at Gilgal, they were unrecognisable from the happy family who had left their home country 8 months earlier. The exciting new life they had been promised was a lie. The family of four had been living in a box room with just one bed, not even enough floor space to stand, and at the constant mercy of the father's increasingly violent outbursts.

"I remember the first time He slapped you," Callum says to Lucy. "He took a full bottle of water – a big one – and hit you in the forehead, and your head went back and banged into the spinning washing machine." The children were also hit by the wardrobe door, punched in the stomach, and had a hot iron held to their faces.

Both twins refuse to say the words "Dad" or "Father", instead spelling the name in magnetic letters on the

wall and referring to "Him". Upon arrival at Gilgal they declined to speak in English (despite being fluent), preferring to converse only between themselves and Mum in their native language. Eventually, however, the warm and comforting environment of the refuge coaxed them out of their shells, encouraging them to take part in the various activities held for the resident.

"The activities are fun! We've been to the cinema, to McDonald's... and cooking! We made cookies, and pizza, and chocolates."

Having fled from such cramped conditions, the twins were thrilled with their new accommodation at Gilgal, where they have their own bunk beds in a room with their Mum. They don't even mind sharing the kitchen with other families.

"Our Mum makes the best food, everyone likes her food! We sometimes let the others taste it, we've made friends in the kitchen that way."

Aside from their excited wishes for a swimming pool in the garden, there are only two things that the twins would change about living in the refuge.

*\*name has been changed for privacy*



Above all else, the twins love football, and hope to become professionals when they grow up. Back in their home country they were part of an organised children's league, but struggled to find something on a similar level in England. That is, until our CEO Sanja arranged for them to start training with the Aston Villa football academy.

"They are going to be professionals one day – playing in the league and probably for the country!" the twins' Mum laughs. "They have three countries to choose from – their home country, my home country, and England. Three great teams to pick from!"

The twins have big plans for their own futures, involving not only becoming professional footballers but also doctors, while pursuing their love of art. They want a big house with a garden and a swimming pool, near to a football pitch. They want a big bedroom, but they want to share it, so that they can always protect each other from monsters in the night.

Callum and Lucy have a long road to recovery ahead of them. Gilgal are proud to have dedicated support workers for both the women and the children in our refuge. With time and counselling, the twins and their mother will begin to rebuild their lives, and move on to private accommodation.

"We don't have many close friends at school, because we can't go round to play. Well we could go round to play, but we couldn't invite them back to play here, so we'd seem rude."

Their other wish takes a darker turn.

"We want more metal doors."

Callum then chillingly recounts a recurring nightmare he has, where the perpetrator of their abuse breaks into the refuge and kills everyone within.

"We can hear him coming, He's going from door to door and we are hiding behind the last door, and then he appears holding a knife..."

Gilgal does indeed have metal safety doors at each entrance of its secure location, but these are not enough to address the twins' shattered sense of security. Their mother explains that they are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), flash backs, and panic attacks. After living in constant fear of the monster that was their father for so long, even comfortable and familiar items like their clothes and their teddies can also seem like monsters in the night.

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You can support children like Callum and Lucy in their recovery by making a donation today, enabling us to provide this vital service. A donation of just £25 could fund a counselling session for a needy child.

Scan the QR code or visit [www.gilgalbham.org.uk](http://www.gilgalbham.org.uk) to donate now.

