

TRANSITIONS



A story of refugee lives.

Refugee

A refugee is someone who meets the definition of a refugee outlined in the 1951 United Nations (UN) Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, who:

‘.... owing to a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it’



Preface

This comic is about refugees. Not their experiences of persecution or war, nor the journey to safety and sanctuary. Although these do feature in the stories told. Instead, what is shared here are the experiences of what happens once a person has been given refugee status, where they live and how their life unfolds – in good and bad ways.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) there were 103 million people forcibly displaced across the world as of the middle of 2022; of these, one in three were refugees.

This comic focuses on refugees in the UK where there are two routes to refugee status, through the asylum system or via a government organised resettlement programme. In 2021 there were around nine asylum applications for every 10,000 people living in the UK. Most asylum applications made in the UK are successful. Between 2014 and 2022 nearly 29,000 people were resettled in the UK through organised programmes. The UK is below average compared to European Union states for how many people apply for asylum where the number there is around 14 applications for every 10,000 people.

The settlement of refugees is, at its core, a housing issue. Refugees are faced with the impossible decision to flee from their home, often navigating several places, to arrive in a country with hopes of being provided with security of status and assistance to continue their lives. At the foundation of this promise of refuge is the provision of a safe and secure home. Yet, refugees experience the worst housing of any migrant group.

Disproportionately, refugees live in housing of the poorest quality; housing that can be damp, cold, crowded, unsafe, inaccessible or unsuitable, in states of severe disrepair, and often unaffordable. There are also stark challenges in accessing support, taking up employment, welfare provision, alongside daily experiences of discrimination and racism; all of which are laden on top of a life that has been punctuated by trauma.

Poor housing means poor health; whether this is the quality and conditions of housing, its affordability, the security it offers, how we access it and the way the housing system operates. Combined with the stark challenges of poverty and inequality, the significance of housing is clear. It plays one of, if not the most critical role in shaping our health and wellbeing.

It doesn't have to be this way. Refugees do not want to live on benefits. Overwhelmingly refugees want to rebuild their lives, they want to work, they want to learn English, they want to be a part of community. They want houses to become homes. By giving space for the stories of how refugees experience housing and home we can meaningfully and powerfully shed light on where change is needed, where help is needed, and where hope and community persist. This comic - and the work of the wider project - takes a step in that direction.







THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR EVERYTHING.

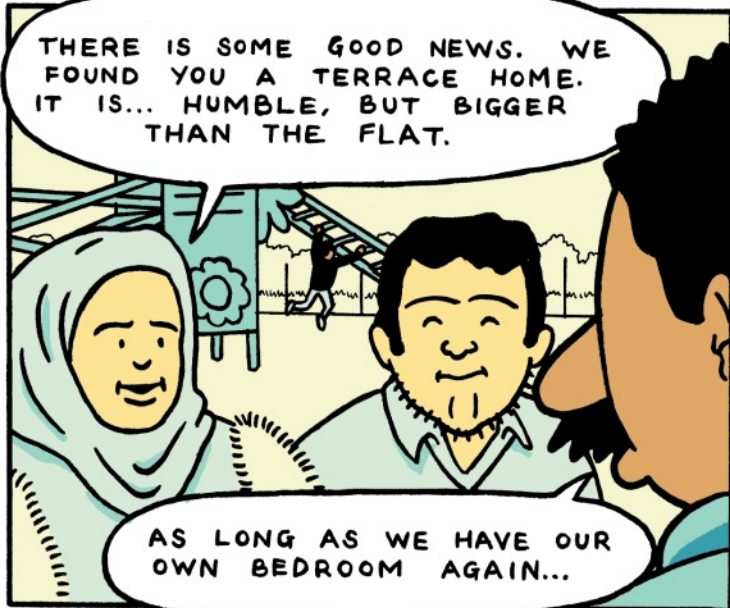
NO ONE SHOULD HAVE TO DO THIS ALONE.



ONE MONTH! AND STILL NOTHING. NO SUPPORT, NO DECENT HOUSING, NO LANGUAGE LESSONS.



IT IS NOT ENOUGH. WITHOUT THE MOSQUE, WE'D HAVE BEEN OUT ON THE STREET.



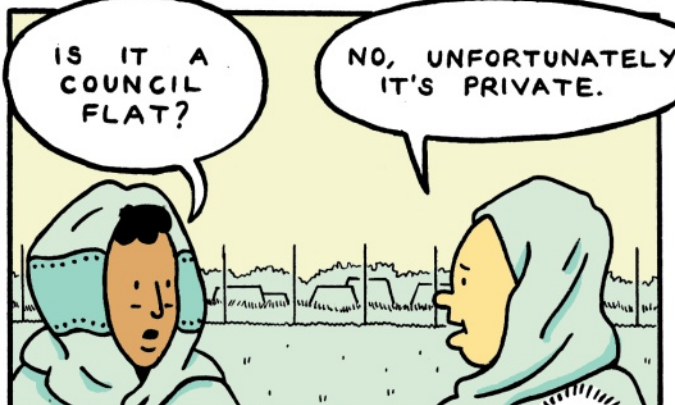
THERE IS SOME GOOD NEWS. WE FOUND YOU A TERRACE HOME. IT IS... HUMBLE, BUT BIGGER THAN THE FLAT.

AS LONG AS WE HAVE OUR OWN BEDROOM AGAIN...



THERE ARE THREE BEDROOMS. WE WILL HAVE TO LOOK FOR FURNITURE.

A WELCOME PROBLEM, SURELY.



IS IT A COUNCIL FLAT?

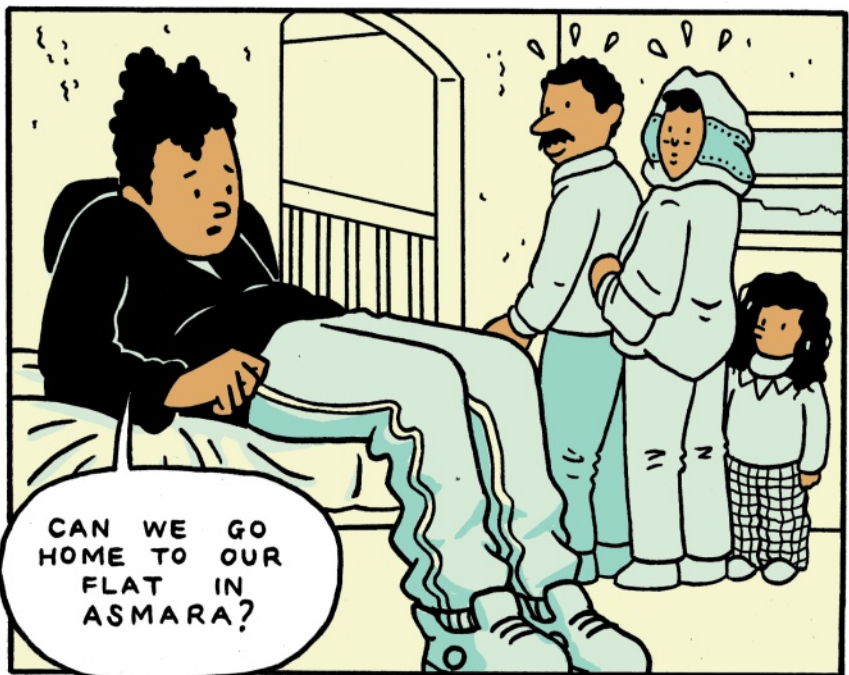
NO, UNFORTUNATELY IT'S PRIVATE.



YOU'RE STILL ON THE WAITING LIST FOR COUNCIL HOUSING.

28 DAYS LATER

HERE WE ARE!





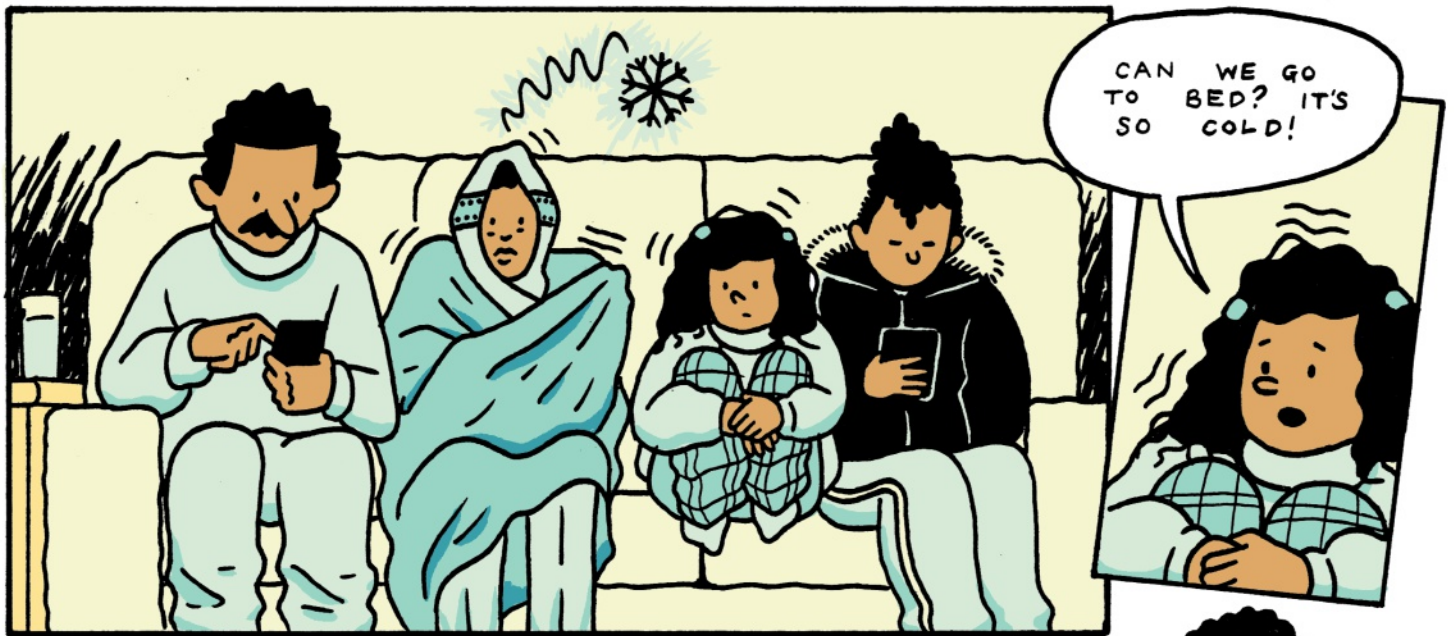


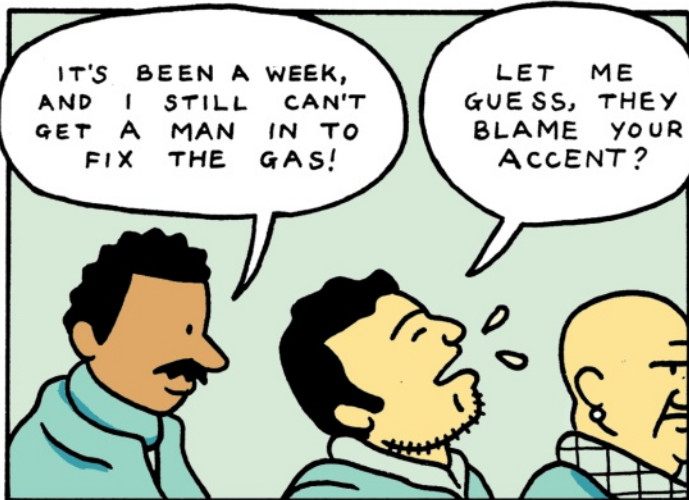
DAN! LUCY! COME HERE!

I DON'T WANT YOU PLAYING WITH THEM!

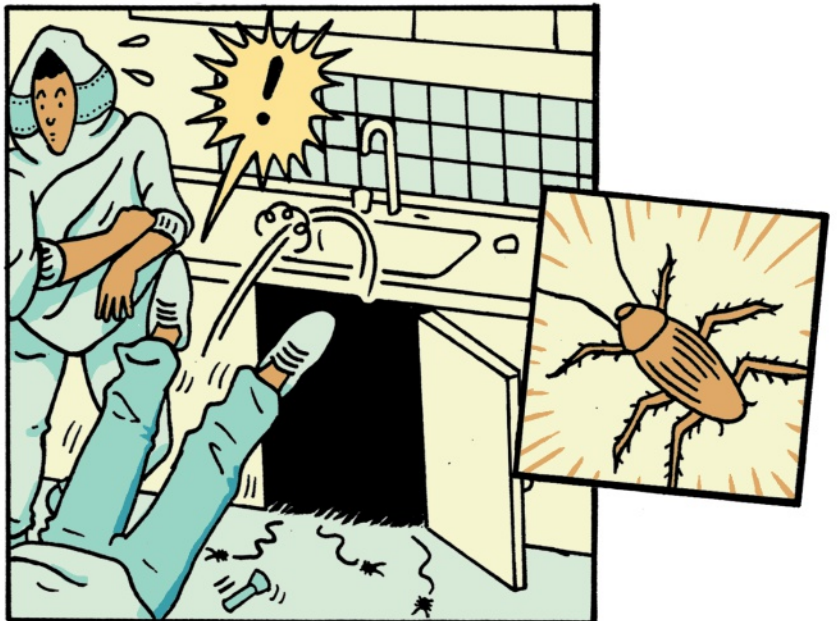


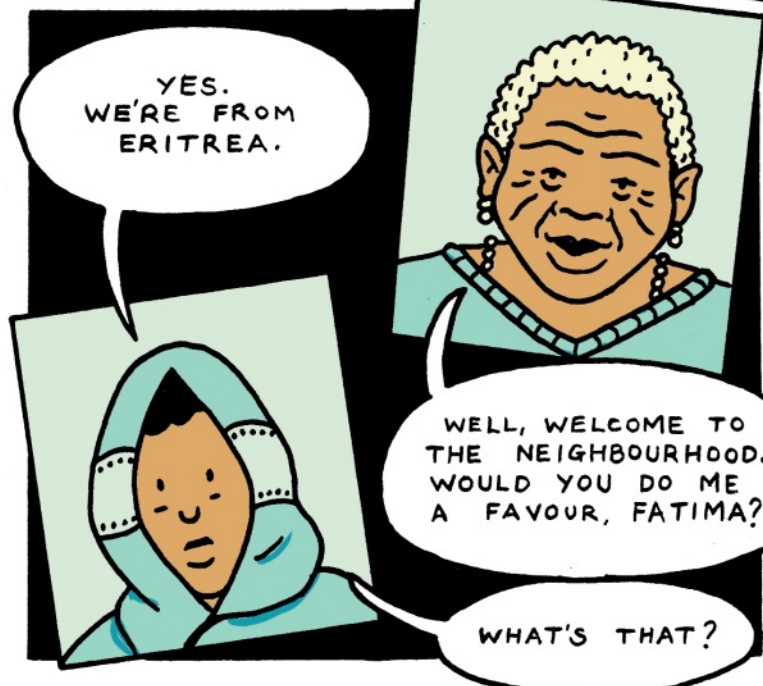






BACK AT HOME:

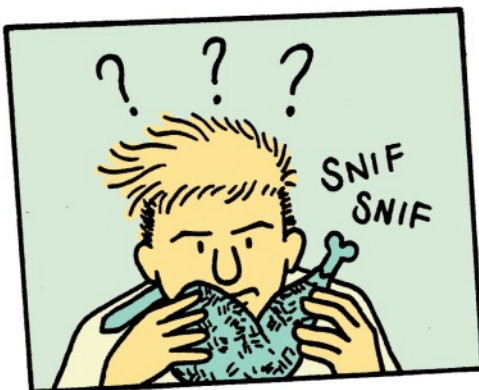
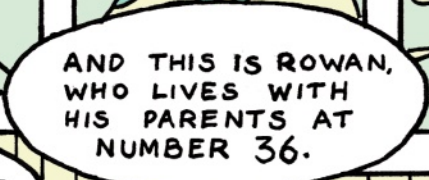
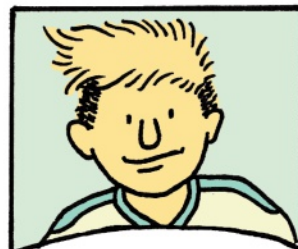
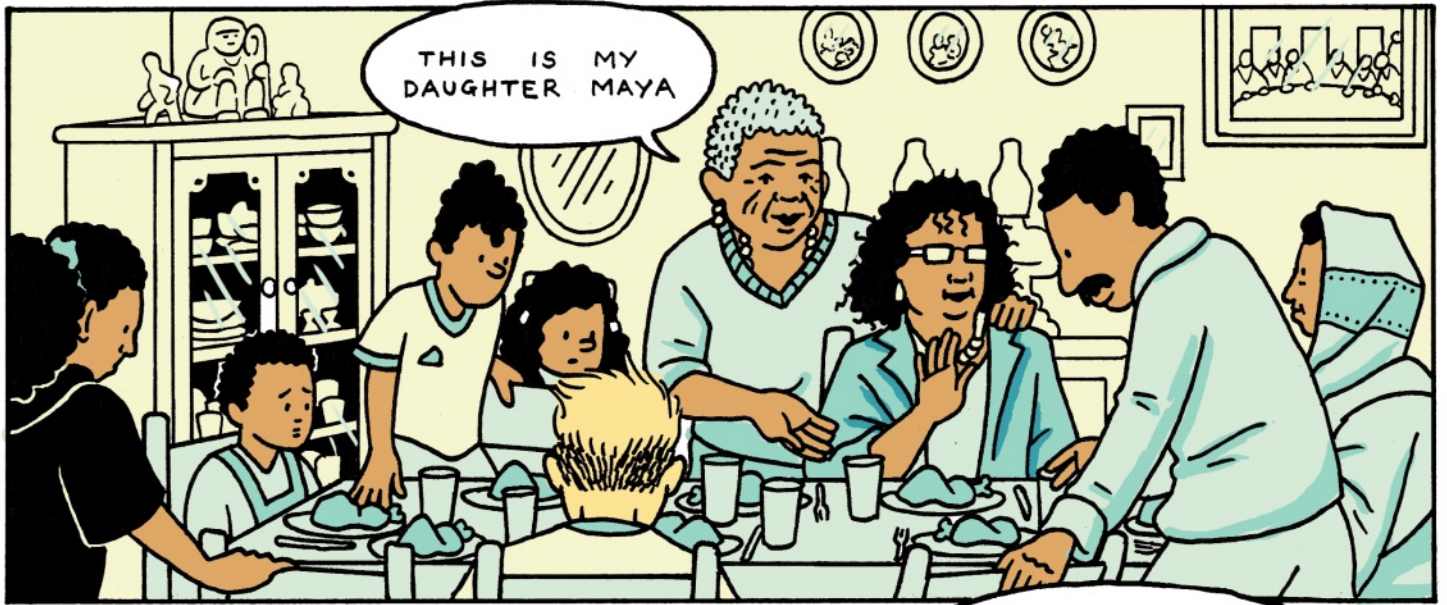




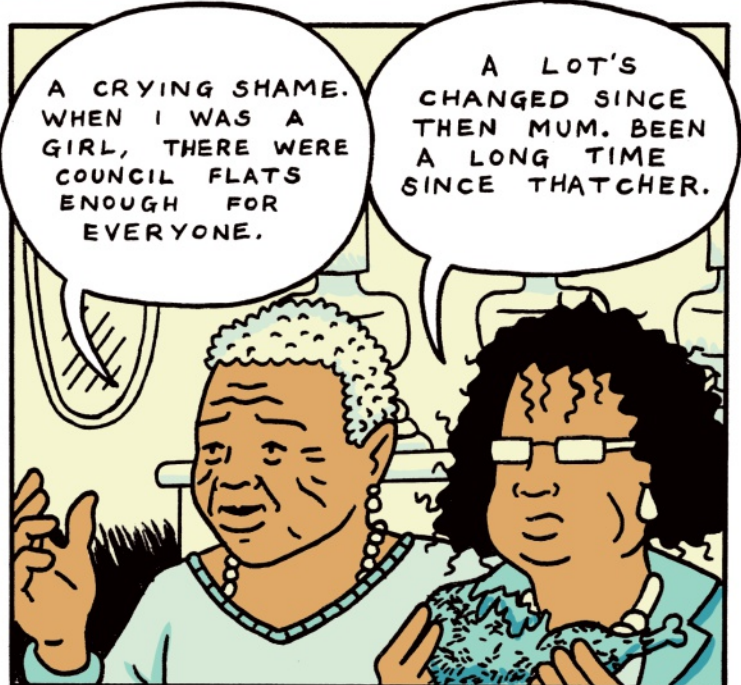


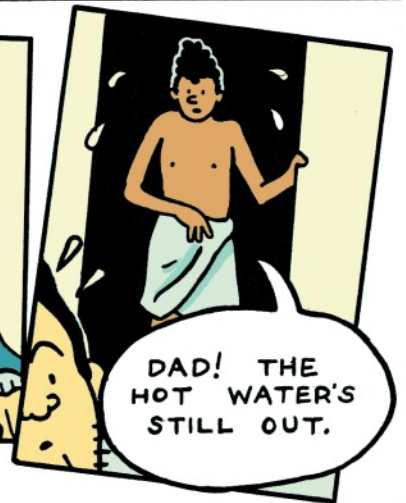
COME ALONG CHILDREN, TIME FOR DINNER.













ISN'T THE
LANDLORD
SUPPOSED
TO FIX THAT?



SUPPOSED TO.
WON'T PICK UP
THE PHONE. THIS
IS FASTER.

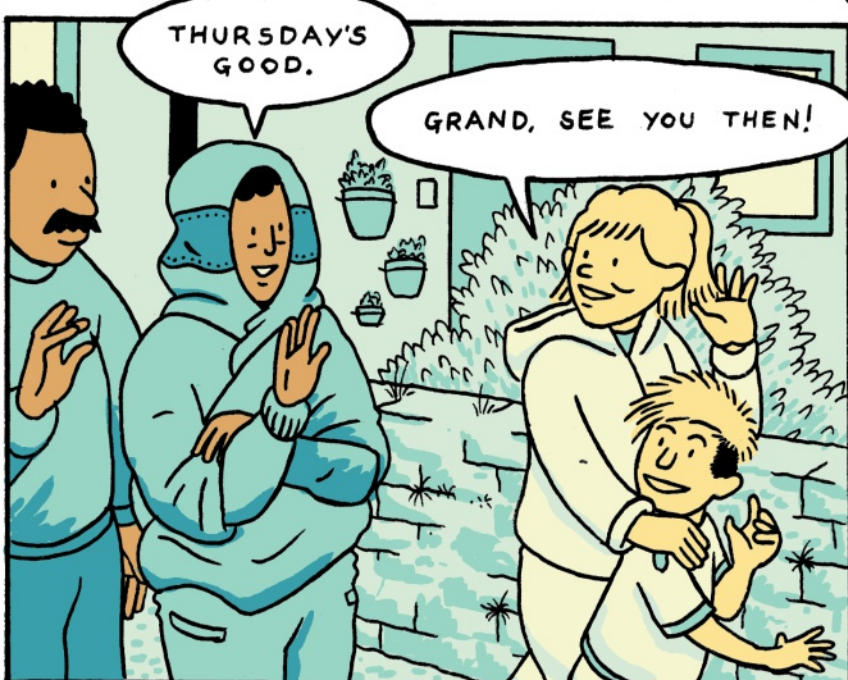
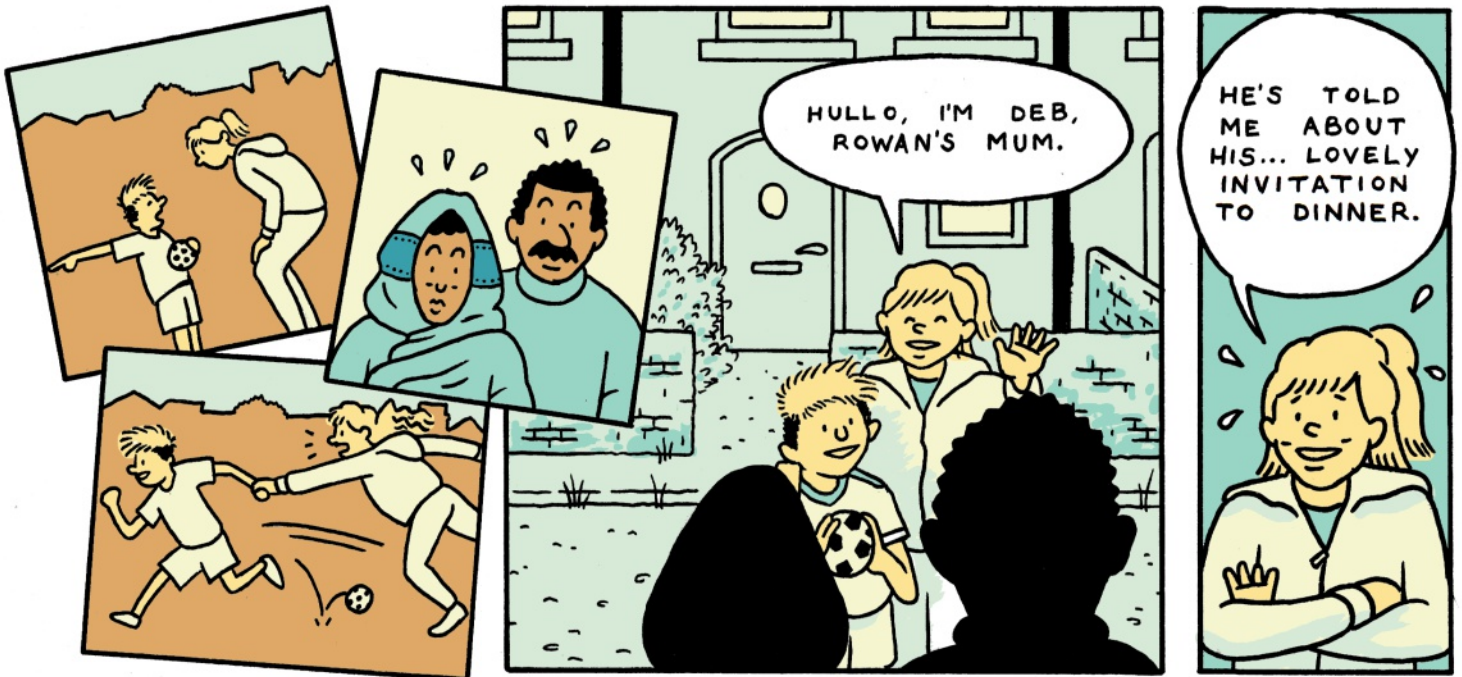


IT'S GOOD TO
BE SOMEWHERE SAFE
FOR THEM TO PLAY.



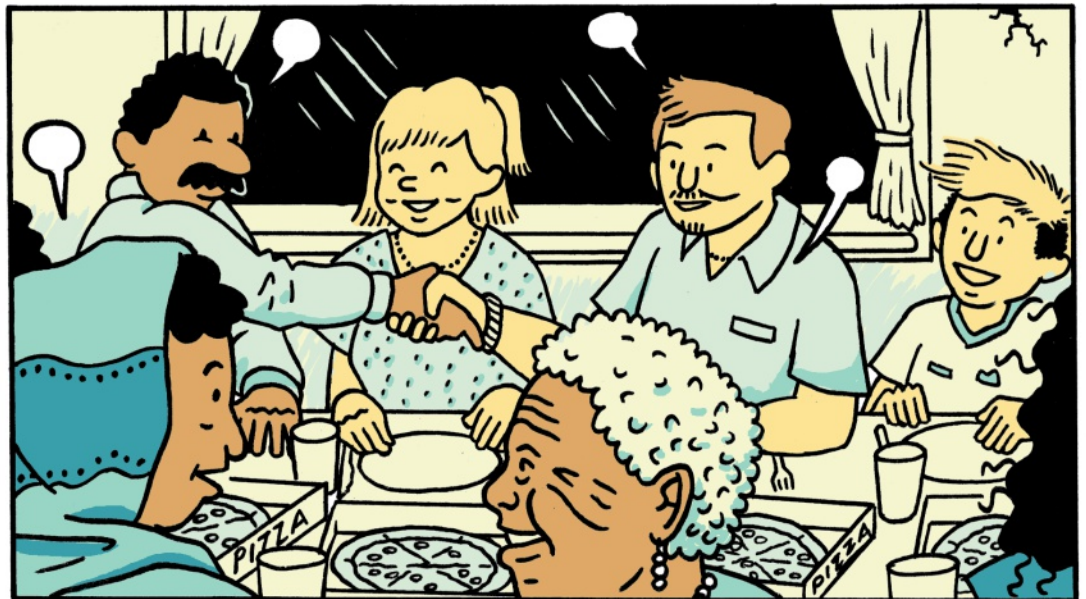
NABIL WAS
RIGHT. THESE ARE
NORMAL BRITISH
PROBLEMS.



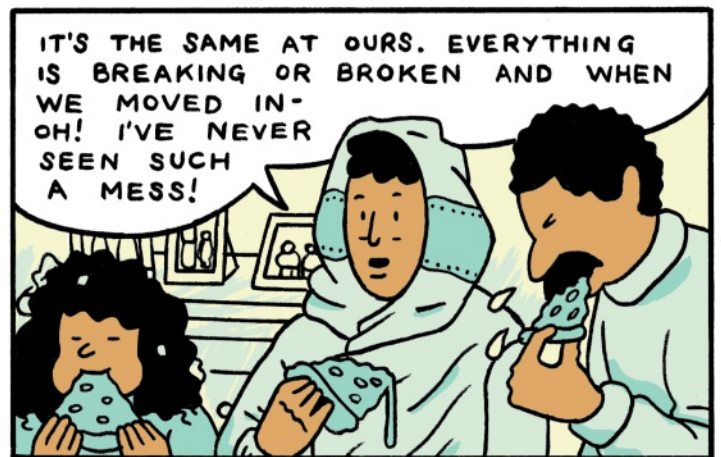




WELL...
DIG IN!



WOULD YOU LOOK
AT THAT CRACK
IN THE WALL!
I'VE BEEN AFTER
THE LANDLORD
ABOUT IT FOR AGES
BUT HE NEVER
GETS TO IT!



IT'S THE SAME AT OURS. EVERYTHING
IS BREAKING OR BROKEN AND WHEN
WE MOVED IN-
OH! I'VE NEVER
SEEN SUCH
A MESS!



I GREW UP
IN A COUNCIL
FLAT, AND IF IT
WASN'T PERFECT,
AT LEAST IT
WAS CHEAPER
AND THEY
BOTHERED TO
FIX THINGS.



BLOODY
GOVERNMENT



WHOLE COUNTRY'S
GONE TO HELL.

THAT'S
CHEERFUL.



SIMPLE AS, DEB. WAITING LIST FOR COUNCIL HOUSING. RENT'S GONE THROUGH THE ROOF. EVEN IF YOU CAN GET HELP IT'S NOT ENOUGH TO LIVE ON AND THERE'S NO DECENT WORK ANYWHERE!



NONE AT ALL. HOW ARE WE MEANT TO LIVE IN THIS COUNTRY?



I CAN'T SAY I'M CONVINCED THEY WANT US TO SURVIVE!

BAM!



ANYROAD, YOU LIKE FOOTBALL, YUSEF?



NOT AS MUCH AS MARIAM DOES!



I'M TAKING ROWAN TO A MATCH ON SUNDAY. DO YOU WANNA COME WITH US?



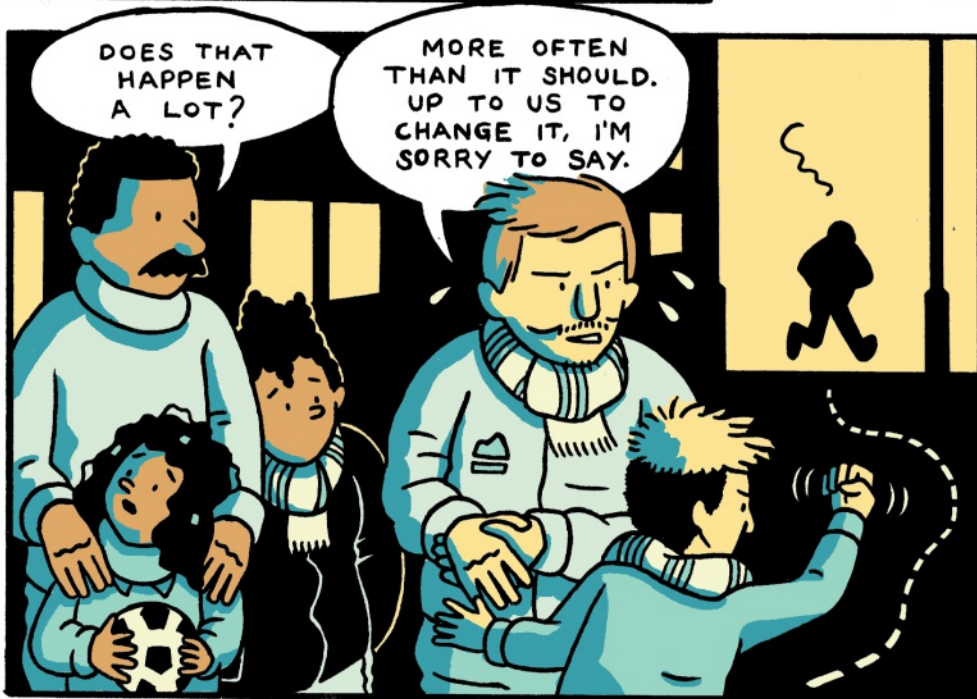
WE'D LOVE TO!





SOME
TIME
LATER
...





Afterword

This comic was based on a study undertaken by researchers from the University of Huddersfield, UK as part of the Refugee Integration Yorkshire and Humber project. The project was mobilised in January 2021 and concluded in December 2022. It sought to understand the housing pathways and experiences of refugees who had settled in the UK over a 30-year period. It involved an extensive scoping review of the literature and in-depth research with 49 refugees and 30 policy actors and practitioners. Research participants were mainly drawn from the Yorkshire and Humber region of the UK.

The stories presented here reflect the experiences the researchers heard from refugees during the study. The events are real events but drawn from a number of different refugee participants. Refugees, and those who work with refugees, have been involved in the production of this comic and have been consulted at key points along the way. We have adapted its content along the way to take on board their views.

There are a number of people to whom we want to express our thanks. First and foremost, the production of this comic and research was enabled by Migration Yorkshire, which supports people and organisations to achieve the most positive outcomes of migration for everyone in the Yorkshire and Humber region. We also want to express our thanks to: Dave Brown, Kate James, Tanya Roberts, Pip Tyler and Katie Fawcett. Secondly, this book would not have been possible without the fantastic input from a number of highly skilled Peer and Community Researchers at Migration Yorkshire; in particular, we want to thank: Akosiwa Agbokou, Sameerah Mahmood, and José García who were involved throughout the project, and Tesfalem Yemane for his contribution to the data collection stage. Thirdly, we are eternally grateful to all the participants who agreed to be interviewed as part of this research project. We hope that this document adequately reflects your experience and helps to inform others about the lives refugees live in the UK.

This comic has been produced with the financial support of the European Union Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. The contents of this comic are the sole responsibility of the authors, and in no way reflect the views of the funder, the European Commission or the United Kingdom Responsible Authority (UKRA). Neither the European Commission nor UKRA is liable for any use that may be made of the information in this publication.

The various outputs from the project can be found [here](#) and include: peer review papers, various written outputs and an interactive documentary.

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Suggested citation:

Goldring, H., Trueman, E., Brown, P., Gill, S., Halsall, J. P., Agbokou, A., Garcia, J., James, K., Mahmood, S. & Yemane, T (2022) *Transitions: A Story of Refugee Lives*. Ottawa: Petroglyph Studios.