

THE STORIES: ARTAN



First name: **ARTAN**

Last name: **CAMI**

Age: **25**

Country of origin: **ALBANIA**

Living in **Italy** since: **2005**

SHORT SUMMARY

Artan was too young when he was forced to leave Albania. His parents decided that he must move to Italy in order to have a better future. The situation by them was very dangerous as criminal groups armed themselves and took control of entire cities. At the beginning was very hard to adapt to the new environment as he was alone and at a very young age. However, his determination to overcome obstacle took him to where he is now. He has built his life in Italy and feels home.

“... LOOKING FOR ANSWERS”

ARTANS’ STORY – CONFLICT AND ESCAPE

Artan was 12 years when he was forced to leave his country. By then he was too young to understand why his life was taking a direction he could not control. The Opening of the depots occurred in the north of Albania for protection against the violence of the south. The decision was taken by the President

Berisha. When southern Albanian bases were looted, it was estimated that, on average, every male from the age of ten years upwards, possessed at least one firearm and ample ammunition. In order to protect the civilians in north and central Albania, the government allowed civilians to arm themselves from government arms depots. During the rebellion 656,000 weapons of various types, along with 1.5 billion rounds of ammunition, 3.5 million hand grenades and one million land mines, were looted from army depots.

This situation created a huge fear among citizens. *‘I remembered the silence broke at nights because of the shooting and mum trying to calm me down to protect me.’* During that period a lot of Artans’ family friends were killed. *‘We could not walk in peace on the streets, as people could be killed at any moment and time of the day.’* The area where Artan was living was controlled by a dangerous gang, drugs dealers and prostitution. Families were very scared all the time.

Because of this situation Artan’s family tried to escape, but the economic situation didn’t allow them. Artan’s mum found out that the Albanian Football Federation Tirana in collaboration with corrupted political parties offered the possibility to minors to come out of the country. The price was 4,000 Euros, which was a huge amount of money at that time. By paying this amount minors could take a week football training course in Germany. The truth was that when children left to Germany, they were left abandoned in different cities in Italy, so they could find a new life. Artan was one of them. *‘I was 12 years old, alone in Brindisi. I didn’t understand what I was doing there, and why? But my mum said that I was going to have a better future’*

Artans sheer determination to not relive the life under fear gave him the motivation to push himself to integrate

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STRUGGLING IN THE NEW SOCIETY

'It took me a while to understand my situation. My parents believe that I was going to be happier in Italy, but I wasn't at the beginning. I missed my family and friends.'

When Artan arrived in Italy he couldn't speak the language. He felt very isolated for many years. He was scared and became depressed. Social Services took him to a minor's community center.

BELONGING AND GIVING BACK TO SOCIETY

Immediately Artan began studying the Italian language. *'It was very frustrating not to understand, but I wanted and needed to learn. I spent hours alone in front of the television repeating out loud every word heard even if I couldn't understand the meaning.'* Artan wanted to learn the language desperately, so he could pursue his dreams and have the better future for himself and his parents.

At the age of 17 Artan was granted the study permissions documents. By then he could speak Italian fluently, and so he enrolled in a 3 years vocational training course to become a chef at a tourism school.

*'During the course all the students were Italian, and at first I felt I didn't belong to that school even if my determination to study was a lot. Then, over time they started to trust me, they understood I was not **just an Albanian but a person like them who wanted to create a better future and slowly we respect each other.***

Artan tried his best at school, and at the end he gained the highest final grades. He became a really good model student. This success opened new

possibilities, and he managed to get job in a very prestigious restaurant. He now feels he belongs to the Italian culture. *'Italy is home, my life is here.'*

I spent hours alone in front of the television trying to learn the language.