

HOPE
IN
DARKNESS

Turning Scars into Stars

ELIZABETH ANYIETH MAYEN

© ELIZABETH ANNYETHE MUYEN, 2022

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without the publisher's written permission, except where permitted by law.

ISBN-13: 979-8390-47-904-9

Published and Printed by **Elong'o Publishers**

P.O. Box 944, Narok Kenya

Email: info@elongopublishers.co.ke

Phone: +254742433826/+254114496083

Website: <https://elongopublishers.co.ke>



DEDICATION.

I am humbly dedicating this book to my late father, Abraham Mayen Ghai who at his youthful stage of his life contributed in the liberation of his country, South Sudan. Because of him and his other counterparts, am a proud lady to call myself a south Sudanese.

I dedicate this book to people whom life has subjected them to hardship but has found a place in their hearts to continue hoping.

It is to those who have shared with me their stories of hardship and Hope!

ACKNOWLEDGMENT.

First, I thank the Almighty God for making me accomplish the writing of this book. He gave me the ideas and strength to overcome every obstacle that I had encountered in one way or the other. Though I had been unwell most of the times, God has always been there to make me recover from the illness and continue writing it.

Mark Twain once said, “courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear, not absence of fear.”

Martin Luther King Jr also made a quote on courage. he said, “we must build dikes of courage to hold back the flood of fear.” This being my first book, I had to dig dikes of courage to finish up this project.

There is an English proverb that says, “one hand cannot clap.” Which simply means that people should cooperate to achieve something. I therefore appreciate various people who have generously extended their hands to support me in the previous years and those who are still helping me to make sure that I keep cherishing.

My great thanks to my late father Abraham Mayen Ghai. Thanks, dad, for you were the first person to introduce me to Education at Shilo Nile Star, Nursery and Primary School, Jinja. Uganda. Your efforts shall always remain appreciated in your absence. Continue resting in peace.

Mary Amer Ghai Lual, the iron lady who gave birth to me, thanks so much mama from the bottom of my heart. You are the best mother I can wish for in the world. You have always stood with me day and night. May you live longer.

Similarly, there are two sisters I always appreciate God for blessing me with them in this world. Thanks so much my humble blood sisters; Amuor Mayen and Ayen Mayen. The time you usually sacrifice to shower me with plentiful advises will never go in vain.



Turning Scars into Stars

I am grateful to my brothers, Thon Daniel Mayen, Dr. Gai Stephen Mayen, Gai Paul Jok, Lual Jacob Mayen who have always encouraged me to go ahead in every step I take, thank you for instilling the spirit of hard work in me. Dr. Gai Stephen Mayen, you are so pivotal in this book. Without your help financially, this book would have remained as a manuscript in the laptop without being published. Thank you dearly.

To Zoe G. Mathews, no matter the distance between us and the tight schedule you have, you are always there to answer my calls without hesitation. May God bless the work of your hands abundantly. Hats off to you. You are a blessing in my life. Someone explicitly said, “An investment in knowledge pays the best interest. You have invested in me hugely, my face is painted with smiles because of you. Shall always hold you at heart.

Uncle Abraham Angau Amuom, Machardit Ayak (Akuak Deng Mayen). Thanks so much my uncles. You have always stood beside me day and night. It would only be great if God keeps us alive for so long to see what is ahead of us. I appreciate your work whole heartedly.

“Määth awär kää”, a saying in dinka which is translated into English language as Friendship is worthier than relationship. At some point of life, this is all I have relied on.

“You might not believe in yourself, but know and remember that I believe in you. I always have and I will always.” These are the words I often hear from one of my friends, Akuek Natasha Deng. Though you stay far away from me, that’s in Turkey. You have always proved the saying; “Distance doesn’t kill friendship but silence does,” true. You amazingly contributed to the cover design of this book. Thanks, my girl. I appreciate you.

“Anyieth, why don’t you write a book?” A message appeared on WhatsApp one day. Guess who it came from? It was from my friend and a brother, Dut Alsherif, the Author of the book ‘Tales of A Legal Alien’. To cut the whole story short, we texted more but I had actually completed

the writing of this book, I was only waiting for its publication. Thanks a lot for believing and inspiring me through your book to write my own.

Words cannot explain how grateful I am to you my other friends, I would mention you all here unfortunately, the list is long. It's through my association with great people like you that am able to get all the cocktail inspirations of writing out my thoughts. People always say, "show me your friend and I will tell who you are." I will proudly stand in a crowd and choose any of you. May we age together and see what the future holds for us.

Over my dead body would I forget Akuei Malueth, The director of my former high school, Bor College High School, South Sudan. I always love interacting with people irrespective of age and gender as long as the conversation is fruitful. Mr. Akuei is the author of two great books, *Crossing the Barriers: Unending Journey* and *Unborn Triplets on Death Row*. Thank you, my director, you kept on pushing me to continue with my plans. Am glad and happy to have people like you. Akuei also loved the book title, the very first time I told him about it. This encouraged me to use it as it is.

To the Editor of this book, Michael Kintalel, words cannot express how you effortlessly worked on this book to make it a great one to read. Thank you! I appreciate your work.

FOREWORD

Don't be bitter forever; forgive those who offended you. There is anger that comes with emotional injuries, and it could be very serious. Accept and love yourself unconditionally. Pray for those who have offended you until you are no longer resentful of them. "You disenfranchise minorities when you show them your trophies." You impress them when you show them your scars." This is an amazing thing that I have learned from Elizabeth through her time-breaking, life-changing, and gold mine. I held and saw this book on my shelf. You transform them when you show them your scars and how they became your victories.

"You will win every battle you face." only hope. Prepare to be lauded; you are a title holder. You will overcome obstacles. You should understand that barriers and missteps are both essential parts of success. " In the whole story, she has captured the journey, though the path was thorny with broken glasses placed by those who never wanted Ajah to make it in life. There are those who gave their star case to cross over. We call them destiny connectors, and for sure, there are so many of those kinds out there, and with God's guidance, we get to them.

Because many people are reportedly in despair, she decided to write this book to give them hope. Because of hope, Ajah's kind are suffering and grieving, but with hard work and never giving up, they are eventually transformed into amazing people with joy, and their scars will make them stars.

I would definitely say that this book is a source of hope and encouragement to the afflicted. Through the well-engraved words and the flow of the story, I have personally pulled out the courage to face life. For this reason, I appreciate the literary work, and in my capacity, recommend it to anyone at any level because it cuts across ages and genders.

Michael Kintalel,

Hope in Darkness

Elizabeth Anyieth
Director, Elong'o Publishers,
Award winning author,

Table of Contents

DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENT.....	v
FOREWORD.....	viii
TURNING SCARS INTO STARS.....	11
HOW TO TURN YOUR SCARS INTO STARS.....	21
CHAPTER ONE:.....	24
CHAPTER TWO.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER THREE.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER FOUR.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER FIVE.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER SIX.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER SEVEN.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER EIGHT.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER NINE.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER TEN.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER ELEVEN.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER TWELVE.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER THIRTEEN.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER FOURTEEN.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER FIFTEEN.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER SIXTEEN.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER SEVENTEEN.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER EIGHTEEN.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER NINETEEN.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
APPENDIX.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.



TURNING SCARS INTO STARS.

When we look at the word "scar" in this context, I literally mean both the mark which remains on the skin when a wound has healed and that which means a mental feeling of great sadness or guilt after an unpleasant experience. The two have a correlation because, at some point, a person may be inflicted with a lot of pain. The physical scar can sometimes turn into an emotional scar, which affects people mentally. To become a star is to simply change the sad story by becoming successful, transforming into a better and more useful person within a community.

As South Sudanese, we have a lot of scars inflicted on both our physical bodies and in our hearts and minds. This makes it a reality that most of us live in a dark life, which triggers us to dispute the saying, "There is light at the end of the tunnel." Such scars don't fall on us from nowhere; they are created by us ourselves. Let's briefly look into such scars.

1. Poverty.

Poverty is a very big disease among us, which has generally affected a larger population. There are times in life when the affected do not have enough food to eat for the day, let alone the next. Poverty deprives the younger generation, youth, and elderly of many privileges, including education, good health, dowry to pay bride price, inability to acquire good clothes, and, most importantly, food. Only ration of food that most of them feed on. Thanks so much to all the UN Agencies who have selflessly continued to distribute the ratio of food to a few citizens. It's saving a lot of lives. You find a lot of children and the elderly malnourished because they don't feed on a balanced diet. This is all due to poverty.



Being subjected to poverty makes a lot of us fall into emotional stress, which to a greater extent leads to committing suicide. Most people have committed suicide simply because they can't withstand looking at their children suffering in poverty when they can't provide for them anything. What else pops into their minds? It's to aimlessly commit suicide.

Poverty makes us think of crimes to commit so as to survive. Stealing has become a major problem among children, and it results in poverty. We always hear of a family being given off as sacrifices for wealth. People who do this are those who believe they no longer want to suffer on earth because they believe, "Why should I have to suffer on earth when it is automatic that I will have to suffer in heaven due to the many crimes I am currently committing on earth?" It's better to enjoy myself on earth. " Such notions prompt the youth to indulge in sacrificial acts that later on claim many lives within a family. This all comes as a result of poverty and a lack of hope and courage that things will change one day.

There are times one gets mocked because of not owning some expensive items or dressing in trending outfits. There are times when your friends or family members neglect you in whatever they are doing because you are poor. What I want to tell you is that wealth is measured not by the clothes you wear, but by the activities and lives you impact with the little you have. In life, one needs to do what he can afford, not what others are doing. Life is not a competition.

Well, all one needs to know is that "poverty is not natural, it is manmade."

There are some people who believe that poverty has generationally been in their families, and thus it's something they can't fight against. Who deceived you? You can break the cycle of generational poverty. This only happens when one stops thinking that wealth is acquired through white-collar jobs only. Do any job that can earn you money



as long as it's not affecting your health. When I say any job, I don't mean you go on the streets and start practicing prostitution. though some people have made it a job. Look for something that is healthy. Something that won't tarnish your reputation.

When one is poor, one is not able to get an education due to a lack of money and therefore remains unemployed. An employed person is always jobless. When you are jobless, you are unable to buy nutritious food for your family and their health will eventually decline since gone are the days when people fed on anything, even if it was not nutritious, in the villages and life would move on. The children of this century are different. When the health of your children declines, they become weak. A weak person lacks energy to do any work and becomes sick. Hence, we can say poverty is the root cause of all other problems which come henceforth. Be the change-maker in your family.

Turn this scar of poverty into a star by changing the generational lack of wealth gap, keeping in mind that there's light at the end of the tunnel. Always hope that things will improve while doing your best. Don't stay idle and say, "I hope" nothing will change. Never. Hope while contributing as well.

2. Communal Conflicts.

Communal conflicts are eventually triggered when the interests of two communities clash. Emotions and sentiments run high, culminating in devastation and destruction of property and life. When I was young, I used to hear narratives from my mother when their village would be attacked by another community or tribe, leaving most of the property tarnished into ashes with death rates toiling high.

Well, I would always shiver and get scared. I thought they were just hearsay and fictitious stories like the Nigerian movies. Not until I grew up and one day picked up a call, "Hello Anyieth, our village has



been attacked." We are currently running towards Jalle. " My precious aunt, Yar Ghai, helplessly said while in a rush to save her life. She ended the call when I heard gunshots. I wouldn't get the chance to even ask her about the whereabouts of the other family members who stayed with her. I was shocked when I heard of the attack. The news spread quickly within the town I was in and the youth quickly rushed to the scene, but it was too late for them to save lives, apart from digging graves for burying young innocent children and elderly people. That was in 2017.

To cut the whole story short, such communal conflicts are staged by us. The people who suffer the losses are us. Why do we make an innocent child become an orphan when the father or mother dies during the fight? Why do we make a mother wail in tears of agony over the loss of her dear child? Besides this, there are a lot of other communities fighting each other. Such conflicts cause a lot of depression and stress amongst us.

Trauma affects us mentally. It deprives us of happiness. Some families do not have any members left. They have all been killed. Let's amicably solve such incidences so as to transform our scars into stars despite all that we have gone through. "Let your hopes, not your disappointments, shape your future."

3. Death.

Death is one of the hardest things to overcome. Even if some people have developed paganism for death, it is ultimately the scariest and saddest thing to encounter in life.

The notion that death is the end has haunted human life for all of eternity. Death brings cold thoughts to a person, which makes them miserable. It makes them lose the courage and focus to face the world.



Death generally causes fear in many lives. People will typically try to avoid the topic of death at all cost. The word itself tends to freak people out. The thought of death is far beyond any living person's grasp. When people that are living think about the concept of death, their minds go to many different places. Death is a thing that causes pain in people's lives. In my lifetime, I have experienced many deaths. I used to hear it and think it was a joke, but then I started believing it. That's when I no longer saw or heard about the deceased.

Life is our ability to make our own choices. Life allows us to mess up and learn from our mistakes. Life holds all of our memories. We grow through life, and prosper into something that we may have never imagined. Death is a grim reaper waiting at the end of the tunnel of life. Death takes away our ability to make any type of decision or perform any kind of action. Once death occurs, that is it. Death robs us of our living libraries. People whom we learn a lot from. Death simply marks the end of our story. Death stops the memories. Life and death are two totally different things that, weirdly enough, have a few similar traits. Life and death both occur worldwide. Life and death are happening all around us nonstop. While life can be taken away quickly, it can be given just as fast. Both occur in the blink of an eye.

But as it occurs, don't let it drag you down. Don't lose courage. Yes, I know how it feels to lose your dear ones. I remember when I lost my dad in 2018. The first three months were tough. Someone would surely know something was stressing me up. I know a lot of things pop up in your mind, such as the gap he or she has left to be vacant. Let me tell you, it can be filled again by two people. That's you and yourself. I know a lot of you there have lost most of your parents, their guardians, and generally your pillars of life. Yes, I understand, but that's not the end of your life. It is the end of their lives, the deceased, but not you. Do all it takes to strive and thrive.



Death is not stopping, it's something continuous due to sicknesses, natural calamities, and conflicts. This shouldn't make you lose focus. There are those who might have lost their children. I feel the pain you are going through as well, but I always hope that God will surely change your story and heal the emotional scar inflicted on you. Continue hoping that your tears of sorrow will be turned into tears of joy.

4. Child Abuse.

In a nutshell, child abuse may be caused by many evil forms. Child labor, sexual molestation, child battering, and even the marriage of underage girls to men old enough to be their guardians. Child abuse is one of the world's biggest problems.

Our society is full of evil-minded people. In one place, there are saints and positive people who love to spread the word of love and brotherhood. Others think of only their individual benefits. These are self-centered people. One obnoxious act that money-minded beasts do is to involve little children in employment activities. They make such children do laborious tasks in construction work, even fetch water from the borehole. Such people take away the very childhood from the lives of these children. Many people also forcibly make children indulge in sexual activities, begging, or housework activities. They snatch away the ingenuity and innocence from the lives of children and dominate their daily lives.

Others are beaten up with belts and other sharp objects. It rewires in their minds when they see any other person holding such things, even if they don't have any malice towards them. When we talk about child abuse, we usually perceive that child abuse is related to physical violence, but this is not a complete scenario. We also have emotional abuse. This is one of the lethal ways to destroy someone's self-confidence. It is done with the use of harsh and derogatory remarks.



In this emotional abuse, there is significant harm to the child's self-esteem. Yelling and ignoring their opinions are bad acts they don't deserve. A child feels left out after facing this kind of treatment, which thus affects his personality. As a child or anyone who is being silenced while being victimized, always report such cases to the appropriate authorities, such as Save the Children South Sudan. This would change your life. Though you are emotionally affected by this, always hope that your life will be joyous one day.

5. Rape.

Suffering from such abuses of rape leaves emotional scars. While bruises, cuts, and broken limbs will eventually heal, the emotional trauma takes a lifetime to overcome. The issue is that abuse brings about a betrayal of trust.

For instance, a child depends on their parents to protect them and keep them safe while they grow. The only thing that they should be focused on is playing and enjoying their carefree lifestyle. However, when a parent violates them in an abusive way, it destroys their trust in the people they love most.

The hurt is so much deeper. The agony is so profound that the brain often rewires itself to cope with the pain. For all the times that you feel defenseless as a child, your self-protection mode kicks into overdrive. There are a lot of people within the community who at their early age or adulthood stage have been raped. Such an action has affected them emotionally. They have made up their mind to always look at sex as a dirty and disgraceful act. What was once created to please each other and connect on a physical level has become a horrific nightmare. Some will become hypersexual to combat the trauma that lingers around this act, while others will become asexual and avoid it altogether.



On the other hand, self-esteem is hard to repair once it's been broken. Even if abuse isn't involved, one child can have high self-esteem while the other can barely look at themselves in the mirror. Through counselling and the use of positive affirmations, it is possible to repair esteem issues. I feel the pain such people go through. Some of them encounter mental illness, such as depression. The brain rewires itself and it finds ways to cope, but the new coping methods are often disorganized and bring about adverse changes.

As a child or an adult who once went through such a thing, always have hope that you will be great. There are a lot of personalities who have been raped at their tender ages, but no matter what, they have achieved a lot. You will fully recover.

6. Rejection and Abandonment.

At some point in life, everyone experiences rejection. One may be rejected by the family. You always feel like nobody wants you in their family. One can as well be rejected by friends. Friends no longer want you to socialize with them. There are those who are abandoned by their families. You find most of them on the streets begging. The streets are always their addresses. Nowhere else. Rejection and abandonment are so painful to the victims. When the rejection is consistent, happens at an early age, or comes from loved ones, you definitely deal with an emotional wound that's hard to heal.

Taunting, humiliation, devaluation, constant criticism, and unfair blame are all really harmful to whoever is on the receiving end. The heaviest emotional wounds from the past are the ones related to a lack of affection. These ones happen when someone has been abandoned, pushed away emotionally, or shut off. The main people who cause these kinds of wounds are parents and friends who have rejected you in one way or the other.



Wounds related to lack of affection can lead people to feel extremely alone a lot of the time. It makes them think that no one sees them as important. It also gives them the idea that no one understands them or accepts them.

Such people sometimes become extremely dependent on others. They have a constant need for outside approval. They also try to please everyone all the time and will often forget about themselves. Their moods are also all over the place and always depend on other people's attitudes at the time.

7. Unhealthy Relationships.

What we all need to know is that no relationship is perfect, but a healthy intimate partner relationship makes both people feel respected, supported, and safe. Healthy relationships are characterized by mutual respect, trust, equality, and honesty. However, most of us feel unlucky. They feel unlucky because of how they feel treated in such relationships.

There is a story of a lady who completed her senior four and then got married to a man who graduated in economics. Because girls are always privileged, let me put it that way. The lady got an NGO job and started earning a monthly salary of about 300 dollars by then. The husband became a teacher at a secondary school and earned around \$100 by then. The difference in monthly salary intimidated the husband. He didn't want the wife to receive more money than he did, so she was sabotaged to resign from the work place.

So, you can just see what most people are going through in the wrong relationships. The other is of a lady who cheats on the husband who provides her with whatever she needs. To worsen the situation, is a relationship where a husband spends time at the roadside sipping coffee the whole day while playing chess, then later on comes home to beat up the wife for not cooking appetizing food, yet he doesn't



help her financially in any way. Always hope that such occurrences will one day deviate from your path.

8. Infertility.

Many women in my society have been severely traumatized as a result of their inability to give birth. According to doctors, infertility affects both men and women; however, this is not the case in my community. A larger percentage always blames the lady, oblivious to the fact that it is only God who gives and takes anything. After a couple has been married for a few months, people will ask the husband, "Have you taken her to the hospital for a checkup?"

This belief and such words have depressed many women in society. Whatever you are going through. Keep hoping that one day you will be a mother or father like other people.

9. Sickesses.

Sicknesses were not as prevalent in previous centuries as they are now. There are dangerous diseases which have come into existence, such as cancer, asthma, hepatitis B, kidney failure, HIV/Aids, etc. Such diseases have truly affected most of us. But do you believe that things can change one day? As a patient, always hope for the best because your life cannot end. There are diseases which are curable but you don't have the money. Have hope that you will get the funds and recover from it.

Entirely, human life revolves around. We live in a society where we have scars all over. The above are few scars among many other, physically, mentally and emotionally.



HOW TO TURN YOUR SCARS INTO STARS.

As you have read about scars earlier on, emotional wounds from the past are like physical wounds. They heal and then scar over. They leave a mark. They don't hurt again, but are never forgotten. They remain as sad memories. If you don't treat them properly, they will just keep on causing problems. They might re-open or even worsen. Someone once said, "When you heal the memories from your past, you start to see the present in a different way."

Don't be bitter forever, forgive those who offended you.

There is anger that comes with emotional injuries, and it could be very serious. This anger hinders progress if not promptly dealt with. Pray for those who have offended you until you are no longer resentful of them. It is not enough to forgive others; you must also forgive yourself and move on. Self-hate is more destructive than the hatred of others. Accept and love yourself unconditionally.

Kindly do away with shame.

Shame is one big tool the enemy uses to destroy your confidence and delay or destroy your recovery. Do away with it. Lack is not a problem; it is how we handle the shame of not having it, especially with people who once held us in high esteem. If you can deal with the shame of poverty, a loss, or a mistake, you can turn your scars into stars; you can turn your storms into rainbows.

Believe in yourself.

Though you are in darkness, let the light of the word of God shine through the darkness. Usually, when light pierces a storm, rainbows appear. See any situation as working together for your good. Don't see a failed project as your failure but rather view it as a learning



process. Never accept the opinion of others about you as a correct interpretation of who you are; see it as if they don't really know you. Listen to me. You might appear helpless right now, but you are not hopeless. You will not end up in disgrace, but in your place of honor.

Always be proud of your scars.

Develop a message out of your suffering and share your testimony with others. It can mean the difference between life and death for someone who may be passing through a hard time and is thinking of quitting. Your scars can transform another person's life.

Robert H. Schuller once said, "Problems are not stop signs, they are guidelines."

Major battles leave you with a scar. Before there is ever a scar, there is pain and a wound. A scar is a sign of healing, a mark of overcoming, a declaration that what caused you pain and injury did not triumph over you.

Your scars don't show how much you have suffered or how much of a victim you are, but how much of a victor and survivor you are. Learn from your past mistakes or apparent failures and move on with your life. That you are alive shows that you are a survivor. Stop grieving because of what you have lost; start rejoicing because of what the Lord has brought you through. Shame the devil by proudly displaying your scars. You should be proud of it.

Many of us would rather display our trophies as opposed to our scars because we are embarrassed. Our hearts are filled with empty pride. In fact, we try to over compensate and "overdress" to hide our scars, but please take note of this. Never wear pride and be shy about displaying your scars. Our scars are our greatest trophies because they tell a story of triumph, a story of healing, a story of one who



overcame. Your scars are your testimony of God's love and goodness throughout your life.

When you show people your trophies, you intimidate them. When you show them your scars, you inspire them. When you show them your scars and how your scars became your victories, you transform them.

You will win every battle against you. Just Hope. Get ready to be celebrated; you are a champion. You will break barriers. You ought to know that challenges and failures are necessary components of success.

Because a lot of people are currently in darkness, I thought of writing this book to instill hope in them. Because of hope, all the suffering and mourning the little girl, Ajah, went through was eventually transformed into joy and her scars made her a star.

I hope her story will be a source of hope and encouragement to the afflicted. So as to find the courage to build their broken selves again.

CHAPTER ONE:

Ajah, a pretty tall sixteen-year-old dark-skinned girl had sat on a mat under a mango tree at their home in Jalle Payam while playing cards with her two female friends. Jalle is a Payam in Bor North County, in Jonglei State, South Sudan. It is situated on the east side of the Bahr al Jabal River between Bor and Twic East. The three girls had been playing this game since afternoon and it was clocking to evening hours which is usually a time for house chores and in this case now, preparing supper by all the girls within their village. At such a time, no girl is usually idle unless she wants to be taken as a laggard.

It was at this time that her mother who was under her granary grinding pounded millet grains; that could be used to cook food for that evening meal, called out with a loud voice, ‘Ajah! Ajah!’”. After a moment of silence, she answered her mother with a low tone that her mother could not hear. “Yes, mama” she vaguely said. Her pretty tall brown mother who was dressed in a red dress with a kitenge piece of cloth tied around her waist was angered because she thought Ajah had not answered her since she never heard of any response from her. It must be wildly unreasonable as you know how it feels ludicrous when one is ignored, she is her daughter and a young girl, to exacerbate the situation, dusk was falling rapidly.

Ajah’s mother shouted out again, this time, she paused grinding and raised her head while staring at the same mango tree where her daughter and her friends were playing. Girls didn’t notice her scowl in their direction. “Ajah, am calling you for the very last time,” Her mother said with a lot of infuriation. This frightened her. She neither wished to annoy her mother nor did she want to stop the game as she was surpassed during the various rounds they played since afternoon. She never wanted to spend the night with the “dogs” given to her by her friends. She wanted



to return them back. According to the Dinka Tradition, when one is outcompeted in playing cards. One is referred to as having been given “dogs” by her opponents. So this saying sparkled her mind sarcastically. This wouldn’t be the end as well; she was to prepare herself for mockery that would emanate from her friends who surpassed her. She immediately stopped thinking and replied her mother, “Mama, we are almost done, I will be there soon.” Her mother heard her statement but she didn’t reply and just continued to grind her millet flour. Ajah’s two friends looked at her and one of them uttered. “Ajah, we would love to stop the game here, our mother is not at home, she went to our uncle’s place today and will be back home late, imagine, we have not fetched water, neither have we thought of what to cook for supper.”

Ajah was frustrated by what she heard her friends say. She had no option of repudiation left but to accede to their proposal since her mother was in dare need of her too.

“It’s okay my dear friends, the day was great with your companion though heartbreaking for me.” Ajah thanked her friends faintly with a subdued voice. “Oh No! It’s a game Ajah, don’t let it bother you, there is always next time in every game”. Her friends alleviated her with words as they stood up from the mat and walked away towards their home.

She was elated by the words from her friends though left emotional since she is outcompeted by her friends while playing the cards game all the time. This wasn’t the first time. “Is it my brain which is not good enough for games or what,” She lost in introspection, as if delivering soliloquy as she was collecting the cards into their small polythene bag in which they are kept. She then rolled the mat on which they sat on and leaned it against the mango tree and hanged the bag containing cards on one of the branches. No sooner had she finished the above than she walked towards her mother with a panicky and unnerved face with her two hands humbled. She remained quiet the whole time facing on the ground. Her mother was still exasperated and embittered by her daughter. She paused



grinding, raised her head and said, “Get out of my sight or else.....or else you will regret what I will do to you. What kind of a girl are you? You know very well that you don’t do anything from Monday to Friday. I give you time to revise and refresh your mind. I thought you are equally caring to me that you will be helping me with house chores over the weekend yet all you think about is playing as big as you are, do you think you are still a kid to be doing what you are doing? Are you not aware that you are fully-fledged?” Ajah’s mother vociferated vehemently towards her.

But still, she stood without making a move. “What are you staring at, can you go and do some constructive work? It’s getting dark.” Her mother added. Ajah who was just folding her hands shamelessly left immediately as her mother had ordered her to and went to their small hut, brought out all the utensils and began washing them. She washed utensils as her mother cooked the food. The environment was so quiet. There was no conversation between the two. When she was done with washing the dishes, she went to open the chicken coop for their poultry to enter in. It was almost dark and cats would start preying them up if they are not secured in the coop. The chicken coop was adjacent to their mother’s hut that she sleeps in.

At that moment when she veered after closing the chicken coop, their last born, Achol; a girl who is her replica in appearance, only that she was young, and their village mates see her as Ajah’s doppelganger because of their spookily look alike, was standing beside her. Achol was not the last born to the family as a chance, or by nature as her mother was not that old, but their father had taken a vow of celibacy with their mother. She couldn’t believe her eyes. Achol’s black skirt she wore was torn. It was all tattered yet she left the house in the afternoon when it was in good condition. Her white t-shirt was very dirty that it almost lost its color. “What happened?” She yelled at her younger sister and pulled her one



ear upwards while pinching her skin using the other hand. “You playful girl, can’t you speak, what made you look like a pig?”

Achol trembled with fear, and tears started rolling down her cheek as she pleaded “Please Ajah, speak softly, don’t let mother hear us or else I will suffer two consequences tonight; that is missing the food and a thorough beat up with a mingling stick.” Achol earnestly begged her sister. Ajah is a gullible girl that could not fall for the crocodile tears without explanation, she shouted at Achol as loud as a blare of trumpets as she sought to figure out why she did that if she was actually aware of the torture she could be subjected to by their mother. “Besides all that, tell me what happened to you,” She continued. Achol was still crying when her sister wiped her tears and assured her that she would not tell their mother, but on condition that she will demystify what happened.

“Ok! I will explain” Achol assured Ajah. She nodded her head as she waited for the explanation. “We were playing rope skipping with my friends when when.....when it was my turn, as I was skipping the rope,” Tears rolled down her cheeks again with a lot of stammering from her subdued voice as she tried to explain herself. Ajah watched her in a glimpse as she struggled in clearing everything up. “I went and fell down on the sand and my skirt got torn.” Having narrated the story, Achol began wailing.

“Please, please, don’t tell mom, I promise not to do it again,” Achol begged her sister while looking into her eyes. She assuaged the fears of her sister and vowed not to tell their mother about it. She pardoned Achol after recalling the vexatious act she did earlier on in the evening which irritated their mother thus she could not bear seeing her angered again by the recklessness of her younger sister. Achol was still young; nine years old. Ajah’s mother who was in the kitchen heard voices of people talking outside the compound but could not figure out whose voices they were as well as what they were saying. “Ajah!.....” She called out Ajah’s name

to confirm who it was while moving out of the hut and walked towards the open space in the compound to find out who was talking.

Ajah and Achol's hearts skipped and blood rushed through the cold veins of their bodies at the highest speed; like that of a person who has just heard bad news of their loved ones as they heard their mother's footsteps.

"Yes mom," she responded to the call of their mother and signaled Achol to tip-toe to the bathroom which was behind the chicken coop. She was grateful because Achol complied with her instruction. When their mother came out of the kitchen, she asked Ajah, who she was speaking with. "Ohh mother, it was one of my classmates. She wanted my CRE classwork book and I assisted her with it forthwith then she left." Ajah convincingly equivocated her mother. Ajah's mother nodded her head in agreement but was still in skepticism. "Why did she leave so soon?" She curiously ask. She divulged her mother that it was getting late that's why her classmate left so early as she slowly walked away to help the cattle get into their byre. Her mother also walked towards the kitchen to serve the food she cooked.

Ajah having closed the byre went immediately to their room, got her clean clothes that she would use for changing after taking a bath along with that of her sister and took them to the bathroom. She also took a ten-liter jerrycan full of water and a bucket to the bathroom. Achol was already pissed off of the little time she had spent in the bathroom. They never had a toilet; it was only the bathroom which they used as a urinal and at the same time for bathing leaving it smelly with a greenish color at the surface of the ground that often intimidated them.

The bathroom walls were made up of four wooden poles which were covered with an old blanket with patches around it. Achol bathed quickly and changed her clothes which looked like that of a drunkard. When she was done with bathing, Ajah proceeded to take a bath as her sister waited her outside the bathroom.



They were both done with the washroom and Ajah held all their dirty clothes by her hand as Achol carried the bucket and the empty jerrycan. As they bent to enter their hut, their mother who had just stepped out of the kitchen called out, “Achol! Where have you been the whole afternoon and evening that you come home at this time?” she then looked at her phone and it was almost 7pm. Ajah interrupted her mother and tried to explain to her that Achol had been in the hut the whole afternoon and evening. Achol became so scared as she veered to face and respond to her mother. She cleared her voice and nervously responded with a low tone while pretending to be sick.

“Yes, mother. I have been inside the hut the whole evening, my head was paining, thus I decided to take rest. I just woke up and went to take a bath when Ajah was letting the poultry into their coop.”

Their mother was so emotional, she walked closer to Achol and made the *back-of-hand-to-forehead* trick and indeed, Achol was feverish.

“Ohh My daughter, is this the reason as to why your head is hot and your eyes as reddish as such?” Achol nodded her head in agreement.

“There is some herb inside the kitchen, am going to boil it for you, all will be well my daughter. Don’t worry!” Their mother expounded with care and Achol’s mood capriciously changed because she was left totally flabbergasted by the news of the herbal medicine which she would take. She looked into Ajah’s eyes who in turn instantaneously stopped her mother who had already headed towards the kitchen to boil the herb.

“Ohh no! Mom, I gave Achol some Panadol to take before,” Ajah uttered. To add on that, she continued convincing her mother, “Our science teacher once said pharmaceutical drugs don’t go along with herbs. In fact, it will be over dozing which could result into negative effects.” She spontaneously prevaricated her mother who fell for the deception.

Their mother began smiling. She walked closer to her daughters. “Ajah, always take care of your sister like this. Whether in my presence or absence. She is your only sister,” their mother lectured Ajah with chuckles of astonishment on her face. “Have you understood?” their mother further questioned. She felt wretched and guilty for she was getting great compliments from her mother yet she was deceiving. She felt piteous for herself.

“Yes.... yes, mother. I have understood,” she answered. Ajah and Achol then turned towards their hut and moved in as their mother smiled at them and walked towards her kitchen.

The two girls kept their dirty clothes in a polyethene bag, smeared their bodies with cooking oil because their Vaseline was used up and could not stand the situation of being dry without some oil on their bodies. As soon as they were done, they came out of the hut and sat on a mat that their mother had laid down within the compound. According to the Dinka-Bor tradition, in the villages, grown up girls who hail from the same clan or those who are just neighbors though from different clans dine and as well sleep together in one of the homes proposed, provided none of them has grudges against the other. This is part of the culture and it makes it so easy for the girls to be given maximum security by youth men since they are seen as a source of wealth. They are secured against other men. In case one girl makes a mistake, all the other girls whom they dine and sleep with are assumed to have made the same mistake hence subjected to the same punishment.

**Continue reading by purchasing
the ebook**

