

THE DISPERSED SEEDS

MALUAL JACKDIT GARANG

A thesis and an exegesis resubmitted to
Auckland University of Technology
In fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Creative Writing (MCW)

June 3, 2013

SCHOOL OF LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. Attestation of Authorship.....	3
B. Acknowledgements.....	4
C. Exegesis	
I. Abstract.....	5
II. Introduction.....	5
III. Themes	
1. Political struggle.....	7
2. Racism.....	11
3. Religious Conflict.....	15
4. Cultural Change.....	16
5. Violence.....	19
6. Migration.....	24
7. Conclusion.....	26
8. References.....	28
D. The Dispersed Seeds: Thesis.....	31-165

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare this thesis is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made.



By Malual Jackdit Garang

June 3, 2013

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank God for giving me strength and determination to complete writing this thesis. A special thank goes to Paul Mountfort, Chair for Centre of Creative Writing at AUT who instructed me in writing exegesis, and James George who voluntarily offered his time to help me revise the first manuscript. Your supports are indescribable.

Besides, my mentors, I would like to thank my editor, Mr. Richard, from AUT English Language who polished up the draft. Also, I'm indebted to Helen and all the AUT staff for allowing me to have enough time to work on my thesis.

Finally, I thank my family, and friends who encouraged me in writing and myself for enduring solitude and trials and tribulations of struggling author. My reader, *The Dispersed Seeds* is an attempt to exorcise my personal demons.

Abstract

The title of my thesis, *The Dispersed Seeds*, refers to the Scattered Children of South Sudan known to many as 'the Lost Boys.' However, a thematic intention of the novel can be summarised by arguing that 'we are not Lost Boys.' We are 'Dispersed Seeds.' It is a reflective memoir meant to explain Jangdit's experience from the time he left his parents in 1987 and fled to Ethiopia because of the civil war. It explores the trials and tribulations of living in a foreign land. It tells story of the young children struggling against poverty, ethnic and religious conflict, prejudice, and torture, searching for paradise, or at least sanctuary, in the country ripped apart by the civil war. It further contextualises the thesis in terms of the central thematic exploration of political struggle, racism, religious conflict, cultural change, violence and migration as key concepts in post-colonial literature. Finally, the purpose of the text is discussed, a key part of which is to give voice to the often voiceless victims of atrocity.

Introduction

My thesis tells the story of Jangdit, who was born during the civil war in Sudan. He witnesses the atrocities of war between Christian and Muslim groups that killed two million and displaced four million people. (Sudan, Oil, and Human Rights-Human Rights Watch, New York, 2003). He describes Sudan as the pride of Africa, origin of mankind, blessed with many natural resources, yet it is being stripped bare to its bones due to man's insatiable greed for wealth and power. The land so beautiful and green, has been tinted in red blood and become the

land of turmoil, suffering and injustice; the lives of so many innocent people sacrificed to sate the thirst of so many who have been blinded by greed and poverty. He describes South Sudan as a world of famine, massacre, rape, and death.

The story began with people gathering around the sacred bush to worship the deity and ended with the people praying for peace. Jangdit moves from country to country. At the beginning, the story started in Sudan, and he moved to Ethiopia-the middle of the book-then finally came to Kenya where the story ends. There are no 'minor' characters because he meets people along the way and continues on. He narrates what happened to him and his relatives during the twenty-two years of civil war in Sudan. (Children in war, The United Nations Children's Emergency Funds, 1996 and The Lost Boys of Sudan, International Rescue Committee, 2013).

Furthermore, the thesis tells of the coming of Christianity, the death of traditional deities and African culture, and the transformation from kraalisation to civilisation during the two decades of the civil war. It explores the consequences of post-colonialism and neo-colonialism and the interests of the West in Africa. It depicts the Sudanese history and cultural diversity, and what people need to do to keep the peace. It raises questions about how peace would be achieved and the work needed to unite the people.

Glossary: Kraalisation refers to expansion of traditional rural village and increase of livestock, especially cattle in southern Sudan.

In this exegesis, I chose African American literature, Australian postcolonial literature, and African postcolonial literature as my secondary texts because they focus on political struggle, racism, religious conflict, cultural change, violence and migration as the key concepts in postcolonial literature. My thesis explores the similar postcolonial issues and that is why I have chosen them as touchstone for my writing.

Political struggle

This section focuses on ethnic groups who feel excluded from mainstream politics. For example, the northern Sudan has dominated the country for many centuries leading marginalised people to rebel against the government. Thus alienation connects my thesis with the works of African writers; “Achebe and Ngugi through their works also explore political concepts; the major ones are alienation, power, gender, ideology, leadership and citizenship.” (Okolo, 2007, p. 60). Similarly, Deng a South Sudanese writer, describes the similar postcolonial issues in *War of Visions: Conflict of Identity in the Sudan*:

Failure of the Northern Sudanese politicians to share political power with political elites from the South continually reinforced a feeling of alienation by the South and the belief that the North was, in essence, a colonial successor to Britain. Also, attempts to coerce the South into the Northern fold worsened rather than benefited the perception of Khartoum governments as illegitimate, ultimately leading to armed rebellion. (Deng, 1995, p. 135).

The North controls everything under a brutal neo-imperial compradore class (Thiong'o, 1986), and such political and economic hegemony is a main theme of my writing as well as many post-colonial writers across the world.

To make a connection between Australia and Sudan, I will introduce *Coonardoo* (A&R Classics: An Imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, Australia, 2002) by Katherine Prichard, an Australian writer who describes the parallel issues of displacement and marginalisation of community and individual:

The aboriginal sense of justice recognized the bond...poor degraded wretches, treated like dogs, worse than dogs, they were, on stations, farther south and near coasts...drifting about the up-country towns and settlements along the coast. (Prichard, 2002, p.121).

Prichard further elaborates the ways in which the White Settlers displaced the indigenous people. This act of forcing people to leave their land and go and live somewhere else is a central theme in postcolonial literature-the condition and experience of characters from a variety of fictional works can be related to those of my creative project. Displacement is one form of brutalisation, incarceration is another. Harper Lee provides a description of how oppressors empowered by state apparatuses shackle their victims: "Nobody knew what form of intimidation Mr. Radley employed to keep Boo out of sight, but Jem figured that Mr. Radley kept him chained to the bed most of the time." (Lee, 2006, p.12). Boo is chained and threatened, and this menace inspires me to study *To Kill a Mockingbird*. It tells story of people who have been marginalised and brutalised, living in wretched conditions. It depicts a complex relationship between the people in power and the marginalised of society. Also, Vernay tells a similar story of brutalisation and cruelty in Australia:

Their novels depicted a colony characterised by violence and deprivation, emphasising the theme of incarceration with all the evils that resulted from it, such as difficulties to integrate successfully within a coercive and restrictive world; and let's not forget the disastrous undertaking of wiping out of the Aborigines. (Vernay, 2009, pp.15-16).

In all these settings, privation and act of violence are related to the effects of post-colonialism and colonisation in which a country rules other nation and develops trade for its own benefit. To provide evidence, I will examine the relationships between Africa and the West by looking at the important instance of Sudan-China bilateral trade. China is a main actor in the region and America is a foil, competing in the Sudan oil market. The Sudanese government made an alliance with China. As Reeves, an American expert writer on the Sudanese Conflict describes in his article, (*China in Sudan: Underwriting Genocide*, 2006):

Weapon deliveries from China to Sudan since 1995 have included ammunition, tanks, helicopters, and fighter aircraft. China also became a major supplier of antipersonnel and antitank mines after 1980, according to a Sudanese government official. (Reeves, 2006, P.1).

China supplies the weapons to the Khartoum regime that kills civilians in order to obtain oil. However, America condemns the China-Sudan relationship and pushes South Sudan to close down all the oil industries and expel Chinese oil production from the country. The competition by more or less imperial powers over natural resources is one of the root causes of suffering in Africa. To support my argument, Human Rights Watch tells of the exploitation and oppression of civilians in the South Sudan:

The large-scale exploitation of oil by foreign companies operating in the theatre of war in Southern Sudan has increased human rights abuses there and has exacerbated the long-running conflict in Sudan, a conflict marked already by gross human rights abuses-two million dead, four million displaced since 1983-and recurring famine and epidemics. (Human Rights Watch, New York, 2003).

Clearly, the World superpowers are wrestling to win oil contracts and this competition brings political instability. To give a pertinent example, in 1991,

the Vice President of South Sudan, Riek Machar attempted to topple the Sudanese rebel leader, Dr. John Garang. The failed coup resulted in tribal massacres in which thousands of people lost their lives. Jane, a BBC News reporter describes, "In 1991, the Khartoum government peeled off the disgruntled leaders of a smaller tribe-the Nuer- from the rebel movement and sent them into do its dirty work in Bor." (Jane, 2006: BBC News, Sudan). Jane elaborates the basic historical context of conflict in Sudan and thus description gives a reader an essential contextual knowledge of the civil war and how the competition over the natural resources leads to the suffering of the innocent people, as I quote from Reeves' article:

There is in all of Africa no more destructive bilateral relationship than that between China and Sudan, certainly when viewed from the perspective of US interest and those of the people of Sudan. Beijing's relentless military, commercial, and diplomatic support of the National Islamic Front regime has done much to ensure that Sudan remains controlled by a vicious cabal of genocidaires. (Reeves, 2006, P.1).

The relationship between China and Sudan is destructive and cynical. The Chinese support encourages the Sudanese regime to commit atrocities in the name of protecting the civilians from the rebel groups.

This political violence should be seen against the historical backdrop of the scramble for Africa by the great powers during the colonial era, which saw the invasion and mistreatment of people all over Africa. Achebe describes former colonisers treating their victims so badly, it makes them seem less than human: "The real question is the dehumanization of Africa and Africans which this age-long attitude has fostered and continues to foster in the world." (Achebe, 2010, p.13). The West depersonalised and brutalised the African people. Achebe

criticised such dehumanisation of Africa and Africans in *An Image of Africa* (London: Penguin, 2010), written to challenge and correct this misrepresentation. *An Image of Africa* addresses racism and this is what influenced me to choose it as my secondary text because the postcolonial literature focuses on race relation.

Racism

The aim of my project is to examine prejudice and discrimination against people who belong to other ethnic groups. I explore the distinctive characteristics which determine the irrationality of personal attitudes and group behaviours. To discuss racism as a key concept in my work, I will support my argument with evidence from the books that I have used in this exegesis. The authors describe all the central characters as the victims of racism in all the secondary texts. Racism is depicted at every level, from the overall context of the fictional work, such as when Coonardoo is castigated for not agreeing to the assimilationist dictate of acting like a white – “You’re a bad wicked, naughty little girl, Coonardoo,’ Mrs. Bessie scolded.” (Prichard, 2002, p.13) – to anecdotal, almost casual observations such as “Most people don’t let the blacks cook for them.” (Prichard, 2002, p.102). During the publishing of the first edition in 1929, race relations between the Aboriginal people and the White Settlers were poor as Huggan describes:

Racism in Australia has a long and undistinguished history. Early relations between Aborigines and white settlers were characterized by the often extreme racial antagonism that is a staple of violent frontier societies leavened by the type of moralizing Christian sentiment that permitted itself to express sympathy for the unfortunate natives... by convicts, Aborigines were seen as target for retributive anger at the system that constrain them; by pastoralists, as a direct threat to the land

they considered rightfully their own; by missionaries, as an opportunity for the religious conversion that would no doubt assist in civilizing them... (Huggan, 2007, p. 18).

In terms of tragic themes, the Aborigines and people of South Sudan suffer similar abuse and intolerance. In fact, both African and Australian literatures often focus on such race-based subjugation. By reading across post-colonial literatures, I find related portrayals of African and Aboriginal people. Both literatures represent and totally disproportionate animosity toward other races; as Prichard describes it: "No black ever did to a white man what white men have done to the blacks." (Prichard, 2002, p.125). Such passages confront narrow-mindedness and stereotypes. Prichard's exploration of racism and chauvinism in the era of the Stolen Generation shocked readers. To make a connection between Sudanese and Aboriginal people, Deng describes a similar inter-ethnic conflict in the Sudan:

The historical process that has separated the Arab Muslim North and the African South has its roots in the Arabization and Islamization of the North and in the resistance to those forces in the South. (Deng, 1995, p.9).

The Arabs want all other ethnic groups in Sudan to abandon their African identity and adopt Arab identity by speaking Arabic and practising Arab culture. Not only in Sudan, but in all Africa, people are forced to change their identity and language. However, the post-colonial writers are against such deracination and this is what influenced me to choose the story of Aborigines as my secondary text because it tells of the related story of hostility and intimidation:

A people who had virtually no contact with the outside world, were suddenly confronted with a hostile and alien force. Aborigines were forced out of their traditional homes, hunted like wild animals, poisoned or shot, and confined to the harshest and most desolate climes. The effect of British

settlement upon these people led to near extinction within 120 years (Brett, 1999).

The context for this is that the Aborigines and people of Southern Sudan were considered to be poor, savage and inhumane. Nevertheless, the post-colonial writers condemned such cruel treatment. African American literature, Australian and African postcolonial literatures focus on racism as a key theme. Achebe criticises western perspectives on the historical context of African people by denouncing Conrad's description of Africa as a Dark Continent.

Heart of Darkness projects the image of Africa as 'the other world,' the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilisation, a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality. (Achebe, 2010, p.3).

His writing inspired me to write this book in order to give my readers a clearer image of Africa. Many people have negative views of Africa describing it as a jungle and cut-throat world. This practice of undervaluing other ethnic groups and their place of origin is a main theme in theoretical approach of post-colonial literatures of Australia and Africa. Both African and Australian post-colonial literatures highlight parallel themes of racial prejudice, and what inspires me is the extent to which Chinua Achebe counter-attacked by describing it "colonialist criticism:" "That a 'critic' playing on the ideological team of colonialism should feel sick and tired of Africa's 'pathetic obsession with racial and cultural confrontation' should surprise no one." (Achebe, 1995, p.60). Oppression is structural and a key theme in the postcolonial theory, and is of course reflected in literature throughout the Neo-imperial diaspora. Prichard describes the subjugation and routine mistreatment of Aborigines: "Meenie, Bandojera and Coonardoo are the house-girls – These are my servants." (Prichard, 2002, pp.96-104) and "Through all nervy restlessness and

fury of Mollie's discontent Coonardoo was her slave." (Prichard, 2002, p.134).

Coonardoo depicts the social disparity in its historical context, and thus also acts to give voice to the voiceless. The habit of employing other people to work for free is a denial of justice and brings about conflict between opponents.

In the case of South Sudan, people took arms against the Khartoum regime and fought for twenty-two years. The political struggle was an attempt to prevail on the North to stop slavery and fight for the right for everyone to be given an equal opportunity. A parallel struck me with the *True History of the Kelly Gang* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002) which tells a similar story of a man fighting against the prejudices directed at them by the policemen:

God willing I shall live to see you read these words to witness your astonishment and see your dark eyes widen and your jaw drop when you finally comprehend the injustice we poor Irish suffered in this present age. (Carey, 2002, p.7).

Though white, the Irish were also subjects of British imperialism and colonialism. The narrator expresses his suffering at the hands of the police who administer them with an iron-fist. Australian postcolonial literature focuses on race relation and this is what inspired me to choose it as my reference. "Henry Lawson presented a harsher, more severe representation of the Australian outback. His rather pessimistic vision reflected in essence his political concerns for people of modest means, victims of social oppression." (Vernay, 2009, p. 34). In this exegesis, prejudice is a recurring motif rooted in the way people in power perpetrate human rights abuses, often fuelled by conflicts of identities and religions.

Religious Conflict

In this section, I will explore religious beliefs by looking at the words and deeds of people of different faiths. In order to find a cause of religious upheavals today, I will examine the work of Ngugi that covers the dynamics of religious contradiction between the West and Africa. Ngugi describes in his work that, "It was British colonialism which destroyed that tradition. The missionaries in their proselytising zeal saw many of these traditions as works of the devil." (Ngugi, 1986, p.37). He frames the thorny religious issues of naturalisation against supernaturalisation whereby a certain ethnic group believe in God whereas other people have faith in supernatural beings. Westerners believed in God as a powerful Divinity but Africans viewed the western God as devilish.

The ancient Africans were animists who believed that things in nature such as animals, trees and mountains have spirits. To give a relevant example, the Southern Sudanese used to worship the rain, fire and some snakes. By contrast, the British regarded this cult of idolising natural things as false and dangerous. Therefore, the British-based Church Missionary Society came in 1905 with the object of converting the local people to Christianity. Similarly, Islamists regarded other religions as unconventional so they asserted the need to convert everyone in the region to Muslim. Deng describes the historical context of religions in Sudan between Arabs in North and the local people in South:

The relationship between the North and the South, historians have argued, has essentially been one of internal colonialism, in which northern culture and religion were forcibly imposed on the southerners-The assimilation processes favored the Arab religion and culture over the African race, religions, and cultures, which remained prevalent in the South. (Deng, 1995, pp.9-135).

The Arabs looked down on the African polytheism and imposed their own monotheist God. However, the people of South Sudan rejected it. Eventually, the conflict erupted between the Muslim, Christian and animist groups. Furthermore, the Christian community and Muslim society continue to fight today because each group is trying to maintain its own culture. All over the world, religious conflict is a major problem triggered by the cultural issues.

Cultural change

The purpose of my writing is to explore customs, practices, and the global changes in cultural behaviour through contact with another culture. To discuss cultural change, I examine the relationship between Africa and the West by looking at cultural imperialism, globalisation of western culture, cultural appropriation, ethnocentrism, cultural cringe, and acculturation. My thesis depicts the central context of the Sudanese situation as one rooted in cultural change. The Sudanese have adopted some specific elements of western cultures and mimic others. Young people speak English and dress in western costumes; Sudanese women bleach their skins white. The Sudanese diaspora, likewise, often renounces their own culture as inferior to a western lifestyle, motivating me to write this book that on one level critiques cultural appropriation and cultural cringe. My main argument is that people should keep their own culture as an appropriate way of maintaining personal and national identity.

Similarly, Fanon argues against losing one's own culture by describing it as "*Pitfalls of Nation:*" "To fight for national culture means in the first place to fight for liberation of the nation, that material keystone which makes the building of

a culture possible.” (Fanon, 1995, 154). Fanon is a formative figure in discussing the issues of national culture and his criticism inspires me to write about the crucial issues of cultural change. My writing is aimed at examining personal understandings of culture, and stressing cultural flows between the West and Africa in reference to the theoretical framework of neo-colonialism. The western approach to African cultural issues shows that western countries are still using economic power to promote their cultural agendas. For example, the American and British governments put pressure on the Ugandan government to allow same-sex marriage by using aid as a pretext for introducing western culture:

The Obama administration recently said it would use its foreign diplomatic tools, including aid, to promote equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people around the world. Prime Minister David Cameron of Britain has threatened to cut aid for countries that do not accept homosexuality... But Africans nations have reacted bitterly to the new dictates of engagement, saying they smack of neo-colonialism. In the case of Uganda, the grudge could even help breathe new life into the anti-homosexuality bill. (The New York Times, 2012, p.1).

The Obama and Cameron administrations are manoeuvring Ugandans into adopting the western culture of homosexuality, and this political culture has appeared to many Africans as neo-colonialism. One can ask why the West condemns the African cultural practice of polygamy, but necessitates that Africans accept the western cultural embrace of same-sex marriage. In America, some states have not legalised same sex-marriage but Obama has/does not put pressure on them to pass it.

In my view, both Obama and Cameron are trying to impose the western practice of homosexuality in a similar way to how the missionaries spread

Christianity and introduced English across Africa. The early missionaries regarded the African cults of worshipping deities as unorthodox. Therefore, they converted the local people to Christianity, and introduced English so that the new believers would be able to read the Bible. Nonetheless, the natives did not realise that the ploy of introducing English was a tactic for eliminating local dialect. More recently, some African writers have responded to this deracination: Thiong'o becomes a radical critic of the use of English in African literature, preferring to write in the first instance in his own native Gikuyu:

I believe that my writing in Gikuyu language, a Kenyan language, an African language, is part and parcel of the anti-imperialistic struggles of Kenyan and African peoples. (Ngugi, 1995, p. 290).

As in Africa, in Australia the British wanted Aboriginal people to give up their traditional practices, and such ethnocentric behaviour is what inspires me to study Australian postcolonial literature. Fee elaborates loss of indigenous language. "For Indigenous writers in Canada, the United States, Australia and new Zealand /Aotearoa, this point is particularly important, because many Indigenous languages are near extinction." (Fee, 2010). Through interaction, the local people lose their culture due to the fact that the settlers reprimanded them for following their own traditional practices:

She was disgusted by practices she considered immoral, until she began to understand a difference to her own in the aboriginal consciousness of sex- And Mrs. Bessie hated the initiation ceremonies which were performed during midsummer pink-eye, sensing a sadism in them... (Prichard, 2002, p.25).

Mrs. Bessie fails to recognise the value of Aboriginal culture while operating from the perspective of her own cultural system. This response is rooted in a broader ethnocentric thinking that rejects the realities and rights of other

cultural practices. Chapman describes, "Like British rule in Nigeria, Achebe leans towards the interaction of cultural identity and administrative coercion." (Chapman, 2003). Conviction of cultural superiority by the members of Empire is a main theme in postcolonial literature, and provides a thematic parallel between Australian and African post-colonial literature and *The Dispersed Seeds*, where the Arab groups coerce the non-Arab women into wearing *burqa* and those who refuse are subjected to violence.

Violence

My thesis tells the horrific tale of civil war between South and North Sudan. It is the memoir of a child who left his parents due to the violence carried out by the Khartoum government. Not only in my home country, but across the globe, the world is engulfed by violence. Violence comes in many forms and although the context may be different, when I encounter it in literature it provokes an affective response. Harper Lee tells the related story of a black man who was unjustly charged with the rape of a white girl, and who is thus the victim of institutional violence. In *Coonardoo* the central character was burned to death. Her death foreshadows the coming of disaster upon the Aboriginal people. Violence is a crucial topic today, and it is also a central theme in postcolonial literature. In my country of origin, many people were burned to death in a similar way to how Prichard describes Coonardoo's murder by Watt Hugh: "Coonardoo fell back into the fire. He strode off among the trees." (Prichard, 2002, P.224). Hugh pushes Coonardoo into the fire and walks away - this cruel conduct was one influence for Prichard for writing her social satire. Her writing stresses the damage done to Aboriginal women and society at large. To draw an

analogy between Aboriginal people and other ethnic groups in Australia, Carey demonstrates how the police use coercive force and threats to prevent Irish people from stealing and committing crimes. "You shoot children, you f....g dogs." (Carey, 2002, p.3). The police attack the Kelly Gang and kill their kids. In fact, the act of violence is a major issue in the study of Australian postcolonial literature:

White settlers engaged in many clashes with Aboriginal people at the frontier. Fearing to be outnumbered by Aboriginal tribes some settlers escalated low-level skirmishes to the atrocities we now know as Australia's massacre of Aboriginal people. (Myall Creek Massacre, 1838)- Reeves describes a similar barbarism: The government of Sudan, dominated by the National Islamic Front, is relentlessly, deliberately destroying the African tribal peoples of the region. Indeed, all evidence suggests that what U.N. and Western diplomats are diffidently calling "ethnic cleansing" in Darfur, an area the size of France, is actually genocide. (Reeves, 2003).

The use of violence connects these books and helps me to understand life in other parts of the world in relation to my experience in Sudan. I wrote the memoir of Jangdit in order to tell the suffering of my people. I believe the life story of one man can change the life of a whole country. I wrote this book to draw the readers' attention to the Sudanese conflict, and give voice to the voiceless victims of atrocity. I describe the historical context of the prolonged violence in a similar way to how Carey depicts the brutality of police toward the Irish people: "The outlaw had requested that his mother might be released from Melbourne Gaol and his body handed over for burial in consecrated ground." (Carey, 2002, p.421). Police went to the outback, attacked the Bushrangers, captured and tortured them then brought the suspects to Melbourne Prison for execution.

In South Sudan, the regime carried out the similar brutal killings of people living in the countryside. The Sudanese police went to the village, collected the mavericks and took them to jail. In the prison, the captives were executed. This murder of the ethnic groups outside of a hegemonic power structure by the people in power connects both Australian and African post-colonial literatures. *Heart of Darkness* tells of the story of violence in the Congo during the era of the European invasion: "It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind." (Conrad, 1973, p.31) and "I've seen the devil of violence, and the devil of greed, and the devil of hot desire." (Conrad, 1973, p.43). *Heart of Darkness* was published in 1902, a period of colonialism in which Belgium ruled Congo. The Belgians invaded the country and administered it with terrible cruelty:

...the 'Belgian Congo' was a territory so brutally administered under King Leopold II, who turned the territory into one vast labour camp that it rates as one of the most iniquitous colonizations in modern European history, the horror of which was immortalized by Joseph Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* (1899). It is estimated that the Congolese population was halved under Belgian occupation from 1890-1920-from twenty million to ten million- in a genocide undergirded not only by summary execution but also by the routine torture and mutilation of men, women and children. (Mountfort, 2011, p.37).

Africa is still a theatre of war. The western proselytisers came to Africa, hiding their treacherous intentions under the guise of friendship, but ultimately brutalised the population and introduced many practices that may today be uncritically regarded as examples of African savagery (for example, the use of mutilation in current conflicts in the Congo imitates the practices introduced by the Belgians). Such bitter prolonged violence is related to the effects of post-colonialism and cultural imperialism, yet ironically has been turned into a

condemnation of African barbarism: as Achebe frames this view: "Africa as metaphysical battlefield devoid of all recognizable humanity, into which the wandering European enters at his peril." (Achebe, 2010, p.13).

Europeans come to Africa to extract its wealth, all the while hypocritically promoting their religious and political ideals; those Africans who rejected the western ideas are forced to relinquish their leaderships, a pattern that continues today with the ousting of Laurent Gbagbo of Côte d'Ivoire and Muammar Gaddafi of Libya. Africa is engulfed by political violence as Aleksandr describes the current situation in Libya after the fall of regime:

Libya is set to celebrate two years since the start of the uprising that ended with the death of longtime ruler Muammar Gaddafi. But this anticipation is marred by an expectation of mass protests, a lack of reform and a resurging secessionist mood. (Revolution redux: Libya to celebrate 2 years post-Gaddafi, February 14, 2013).

The world superpowers push African people to kill themselves under the guise of freedom and democracy in order to benefit from the civil war. Therefore, I argue that the Western view of Africa as a pawn and its absurd notion of democratisation is retrograde moving the continent backward. To support my argument, Okolo discusses in her book; *African Literature as Political Philosophy*, "The poor standard of living of most people in African societies in such that they should have been pushed to the brink of revolutionary violence, yet nothing of the sort has happened." (Okolo, 2007, p. 130). Okolo describes what causes violence in Africa and this is a powerful point as we know that the revolutionary movements in Africa have not brought change. To prove my point of argument, NATO and the World superpowers supported the rebel groups to overthrow the regimes in Libya, Egypt and Côte d'Ivoire. The dictators fell and

there is no change. The new government is committing the atrocities, yet the world superpowers profit by exploiting the continent's resources (Okolo, 2007, p.132). The powerful nations in the Western World manipulate Africans and take advantage of war by exploiting the resources; Human Rights Watch describes a way in which the conflict in Africa benefits the foreign nations:

The large-scale exploitation of oil by foreign companies operating in the theatre of war in southern Sudan has increased human rights abuses there and has exacerbated the long-running conflict in Sudan, a conflict marked already by gross human rights abuses-two million dead, four million displaced since 1983-and recurring famine and epidemics. (Human Rights Watch, New York Magazine, 2003).

The civil war in Sudan is definitely fuelled by the oil of the South Sudan and Darfur regions. The Sudanese government is committing terrible atrocities against civilians. Hundreds of people die every day because the war is a lucrative business. Eric Reeves describes the acts of violence carried out by the Khartoum regime:

The same men ordered the scorched-earth clearances of the oil regions in southern Sudan to provide security for the operations of international oil companies. The actions of oil companies from Canada, Sweden, Austria, China, Malaysia, and India-directly supporting the NIF regime-constitute one of the most shameful episodes in the long and terrible history of resource extraction in Africa. Genocidal destruction in Darfur will continue for the foreseeable future. The resources to halt massive, ethnically targeted destruction-of lives and livelihoods-are nowhere in sight. The consequences of this destruction, now extending over almost two and a half years, will be evident for years-in villages that have been burned to the ground, in poisoned water sources, in the cruel impoverishment of people who have lost everything, in deaths that will continue to mount relentlessly. (Reeves, 2003).

The government displaces people and uses the land for a commercial purpose.

Therefore, I chose to write on the violence as the main topic in my thesis because I want to draw the world's attention on genocide in Sudan as well as Africa where people are committing atrocities and war crimes against humanity. Similarly, Simathei describes, "Fictional representations of colonial violence in Kenya demonstrate complex linkages between colonial violence, the violence responses to it or decolonization, and the violations of the rights of citizens in the postcolonial/necolonial state." (Simathei, 2005). The cruel and violent act committed in Africa is similar to what Aborigines experienced in Australia during the conflict between the settlers and indigenous people. As a result of violence, the victims move away from their homeland and thus migration is a main theme in postcolonial literature of both Australia and Africa.

Migration

This section explores the consequences encountered by the people who left their homeland. It will focus on family separation and fear of strangers. Matter of fact, postcolonial literature focuses on hybridity, first contact, resistance, immigration, invasion, race relation, national identity and marginalisation as the central themes. My thesis tells story of Sudanese migrants and what consequences they have faced on their journey. In this part, I will assess *Dreams from my Father* by Barack Obama, *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift, and *My Life in the bush of Ghosts* by Amos Tutuola because they tell the similar story of people who are searching for their identity and missing relatives. *Dreams from my Father* tells a story of a man searching for his scattered family and his identity, "Where did I belong? And if I had come to understand myself as a black American, and was understood as such, that understanding remained unanchored to place." (Obama, 1995, p.115). Barack Obama

wrote his memoir, *"Dreams from my Father"* to trace his ancestry, migration of his mother's family from Kansas to Hawaii and Indonesia then his father's family in Kenya.

In the similar ways, *Gulliver's Travels* describes voyage to Lilliput, Broddingna, Laputa, and the country of the Houyhnhnms. "We set out the 5th Day of August, 1706, and arrived at Fort St George, * the 11th of April 1707." (Swift, 2008, p. 141). Similarly, *My Life in the bush of Ghosts and Heart of Darkness* portray the journeys and the events during their travelling around the world. In a similar way, my thesis explains the movement of Sudanese from their country to Ethiopia, and Kenya as well as many parts of the world. Jangdit spent 24 years in the bush. Similarly, in *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*, a boy enters the bush when he is 7 years. "At the same time as I entered into the bush I could not stop in one place as the noises of the guns were driving me farther...until I travelled about sixteen miles..." (Thieme, 1996, p. 12). These books illustrate the ways in which the central characters were separated from their families and thus alienation is a key theme in the postcolonial literature. My thesis focuses on the problems that the central characters face such as fear and dislike of foreign people, their customs and culture.

This exegesis discusses the consequences of resettlement and interaction between the foreigners and local people, as Okolo describes the conflict between Igbo people and the white settlers in *Things Fall Apart*, "Okonkwo's action in beheading the head of messenger to the white man is a call to his people to resist political oppression." (Okolo, 2007, p. 57). *Things Fall Apart* focuses on the first contact and resistance between the British and Igbo people in Eastern Nigeria as Achebe described it. The

basic point is that, many African writers concentrate on the issues of post-colonialism that connect Australian postcolonial literature with African postcolonial literature. The writers address the similar themes and this is why I chose African American literature, Australian and African postcolonial literatures as my secondary texts.

Conclusion

My exegesis frames the trials and tribulations that the central characters went through, which helped them realise the fangs of this twisted world and how liberty and peace are badly needed, in terms of central literary concerns and, especially, those of postcolonial literature. My exegesis has addressed some of the key contextual and cultural issues of postcolonial studies by examining the literary works of the postcolonial writers. For example, Lee explores the irrationality of adult attitudes to race in Alabama. It is a story of a man struggling for justice. In *Coonardoo* the central character was burned to death. It tells of the atrocities done to the Aborigines. *True History of the Kelly Gang* tells of the conflict between Irish and British in Australia by revealing the cruel acts of the policemen which killed three members of the gang and the hanging of Kelly. *Heart of Darkness* depicts the evils of imperialism and the savage repressions carried out in the Congo by the Belgians. My thesis depicts African ethnography, politics, diplomacy, cultures and religions and changes occur as a result of interaction between West and Africa. I argue that the Western view of Africa as a pawn and its absurd notion of democratisation is retrograde moving the continent backward. The Western World manipulates the people in Africa to fight for the regime change and thus violence result in destruction,

displacement and loss of lives of many people sacrificed to sate the thirst of those who have been blinded by greed for power and wealth. For instance, Sudan, Congo, Libya and Liberia present the countries destroyed by the Western absurd notion of democratisation in Africa. The West pushed the people to change the regime, yet the situation is still getting worse. This exegesis explains migration, repression, slavery, racism, cultural and religious identities, marginalisation, acculturation, and politics as main themes in post-colonial literature across the world. My thesis tells the historical context of the Sudanese from a personal point of view; it is an eye-witness account of such atrocities that is also, by definition, a work of postcolonial literature.

REFERENCES:

Achebe, C. (1995). *Colonialist Criticism*. In Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G. & Tiffin, H. (Eds.), *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. (pp.57-61). London: Routledge.

Achebe, C. (2010). *An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness*. London: Penguin Books.

Amos, Tutuola. (1966). *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*. In Thieme, John. (Ed.), *The Arnold Anthology of Post-colonial Literatures in English*. (p.12). London, Arnold publishing Pty Ltd.

Antonov, Aleksandr.(February 14, 2013). *Revolution redux: Libya to celebrate 2 years post-Gaddafi*. Retrieved from <http://rt.com/news/revolution-libya-federalism-reforms-232/>

Brett, Stone. (September 7, 1999). *Genocide in Australia: Report details Crimes against Aborigines*. World Socialist Web site. Retrieved from <http://www.wsws.org/articles/1999/sep1999/geno-s07.shtml>.

Carey, P. (2002). *True History of the Kelly Gang*. London: Faber and Faber.

Chapman, Michael. (Spring, 2003). *African Literature, African Literatures: Cultural Practice or Art Practice? Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (Spring, 2003), p.2. Indiana University press Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3821093>

Children in War. (1996). *The Lost Boys of Sudan*. The State of The World's Children 1996.UNICEF. Retrieved from <http://www.unicef.org/sowc96/closboys.htm>

Conrad, J. (1973). *Heart of Darkness*. London: Penguin Classics: Penguin Books.

Deng, F. Mading. (1995). *War of Visions: Conflict of identities in the Sudan*. The Brookings Institution. Washington, D.C.

Fanon, F. (1995). *National Culture*. In Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G. & Tiffin, H. (Eds.), *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (pp.153-157). London: Routledge.

Garang, Malual Jackdit. (2013). *The Dispersed Seeds*. A Thesis and Exegesis resubmitted to Auckland University of Technology in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Creative Writing (MCW). Auckland, New Zealand.

Huggan, Graham. (2009). *Australian Literature*. Post-colonialism, Racism, Transnationalism. In (Ed.), Elleke Boehmer. Oxford Studies in Postcolonial Literatures. Oxford University Press Inc., New York.

Human Rights Watch. (2003). *Sudan, Oil and Human Rights*. Oil in Southern Sudan. Retrieved from <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/11/24/sudan-oil-and-human-rights>

International Rescue Committee (2013). The Lost Boys of Sudan |International Rescue Committee (IRC). Retrieved from <http://www.rescue.org/lost-boys-sudan>

Jane, Standley (July 1, 2006). *Reclaiming the past in Southern Sudan*. BBC News, Sudan. Retrieved from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/5133324.stm.

Jonathan, Swift. (2005). *Gulliver's Travels*. In (Eds.), Claude Rawson and Ian Higgins. Oxford World's Classic. Oxford University Press.

Josh, Kron. (2012, February, 28). *Ugandan Lawmakers Push Anti-Homosexuality Bill Again*. Resentment Toward the West Bolsters Uganda's New Anti-Gay Bill. The New York Times. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/28/World/Africa/Uganda-lawmakers-push-anti-homosexuality-bill-agenda>

Lee, H. (2006). *To Kill a Mockingbird*. London: Arrow Books.

Margery, Fee (1997). *Writing Orality: Interpreting Literature in English by Aboriginal Writers in North America, Australia and New Zealand*. Journal of Intercultural Studies. P.28 Retrieved from <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cjis20>

Mountfort, P. (2012), "Yellow skin, Black hair...Careful, Tintin:" Hergé and Orientalism,' *Australasian Journal of Popular Culture* 1: 1, pp.33-49, doi: 10.1386/ajpc.1.1.33_1

Myall Creek Massacre (June 19, 1838). *Massacres: The horrors of frontier violence*. Retrieved from <http://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/history/myall-creek-massacre-1838>

Okolo, MSC. (2007). *African Literature as Political Philosophy*. Africa in the new Millennium. Dakar, Senegal. CODESRIA Books.

Obama, Barack. (2008). *Dreams From My Father*. Text Publishing Melbourne, Australia.

Prichard, K. (2002). *Coonardoo*. A&R Classic: An Imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, Australia.

Reeves, E. (September 3, 2003). *Genocide in Darfur: How Horror began*. Sudan Tribune Plural News. Retrieved from <http://www.sudantribune.com/news/genocide-in-darfur/spip.php?article11445>

Reeves, E. (May 6, 2004). *Genocide in Sudan: The United Nations suppresses its own report on the world's greatest humanitarian crisis in these times*. Retrieved from http://www.inthesetimes.com/article/genoicide_in_sudan/%20target=

Reeves, E. (August 4, 2006). *China in Sudan: Underwriting Genocide*. Retrieved from <http://www.sudanreeves.org/2006/08/04/china-in-sudan-underwriting-genocide->

Thiong'o, Ngugi Wa. (1995). *On the Abolition of English Department*. In Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G. & Tiffin, H. (Eds.), *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (pp.285-290). London: Routledge.

Thiong'o, Ngugi Wa. (1986). *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. Nairobi, Kenya: East African Educational Publishers.

Vernay, Jean-Francois. (2010). *The Great Australian Novel-A Panorama*. In (Ed.), Marie Ramsland. Melbourne, Australia, Brolga publishing.

There is no need to turn science into politics,
Wisdom into imprudence, life into death,
Superiority into stupidity, humility into vanity
Humanity into inhumanity, amity into enmity,
Justice into prejudice, and love into hatred.
The life is an ill arse and a healthy body.
Where there is politics, there is a conflict.
Where there is a conflict, there is death.
So let's not talk about politics now.
Where there is peace, there is no death.
So let there be peace on the earth.

THE WORLD OF HATRED

The coming of peace and development will depend upon us by
uniting and working together as the children of South Sudan.

It was the third moon of the year, nineteen eighty something. The rain started to fall, and the people began tilling their land. The grass, buds, flowers and leaves of the trees were sprouting. One cold morning, the villagers gathered around the sacred bush. A short man with a protruded belly clenched his fist and spoke: 'Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to welcome you. My name is Mach Atong. I am the diviner of the Lord of Fire for those who don't know me. I have worked for forty years. I communicate with the Lord of Fire and interpret what he tells me. Today, we are gathering to thank Him. Last night, He came to me in a dream and told me that Nyanchok Kur is pregnant with a boy.'

'A boy! Wow!' the crowd said and clapped in unison. 'We are happy to hear the good news and we shall be glad to see the son because a family without a son is like a rotten stump of an acacia tree. We ask you, Lord of Fire to protect him in the womb,' Mach said and paused.

The thunder roared, and the earth shook as if the tsunami had hit Borland, the smallest shred of land, like a prong of a fork along the bank of White Nile in South Sudan: The Land of the Dead.

"I, Lord of Fire, I have power to heal a deaf, blind, and crippled person in this realm. I have power to destroy and protect you. I'm happy that the son will be born, and his name will be Malual Jangdit," the voice said.

The crowd applauded, stamping and whooping. "We rejoice in you, Lord. We rejoice in you, Lord," the crowd chanted.

Mach Atong began performing a traditional dance while the old men clapped in rhythm as they sang. A bevy of old women bent over, beating the calabashes with their hands while a band of girls bowed, clapping. A crew of young men danced around the old men, women and young ladies. A gaggle of naked children giggled at the entertainers. The lightning flashed and a clap of thunder roared across the blue sky. It rained with small balls of ice. Mach collected the ice and put it in the mouth of the pregnant woman. The crowd stopped dancing and sang:

*Lord of Fire, we glorify you.
We praise and honour you.
We, 'heirs' in the realm of Atongkabeer,
We will stay with you.
God of Bior Deng,
We will stay with you.*

People gathered and sang to express their deep sympathy and communicate their needs to the Lord of Fire. This practice was a way of praying for the Lord of Fire to protect them. They praised the Lord of Fire so that Nyanchok could give birth without trouble and the baby would survive after the birth.

People stopped singing and the family killed a white billy goat for the well-wishers. The women prepared the meal. After the ladies had cooked the meat and corn dish to a mush, Mach Atong took a chunk of meat and a portion of the corn dish.

Mach said, 'Oh, Lord, I give you this piece of meat and posho. Eat them and bless us.'

Mach closed his eyes and mumbled. The smoke glowed out of his mouth. He belched and scattered the meat and the corn dish around the sacred bush. He took a blue bowl of soup and walked around the sacred bush, pouring out the soup.

"He emptied the bowl and stopped and then told the crowd, "Now, you can eat your meal." People ate the meal and dispersed. The sun sank and it rained heavily all night.

In the morning, Nyanchok gave birth to an infant, tall and eye-catching, like the calf of a giraffe. Then, a large number of people gathered for praise and Thanksgiving.

The crowd was glad to see a new baby 'me.' My father killed another white ox and the crowd ate the meal and celebrated my birth. My relatives felt happy to see that the divination had come true. They thought that Mach Atong had foretold false information. Sometimes, a fortune-teller can predict a right or wrong thing like a forecaster. The forecaster can announce that the rain will

come today, but sometimes it doesn't rain. Likewise, the fortune-teller can guess that an unborn child is male but after the birth, it might be female. Definitely, the prediction was true, so everyone was glad.

I spent six months and the measles and whooping cough broke out and affected me because I was not immunised against the childhood diseases. The diseases spread and I was the most infected infant. Then my parents thought that I would die. Baba invited his relatives and friends to come and entreat the Lord of Fire to heal me. The well-wishers brought offerings of chicken and goats to the Lord of Fire and Mach Atong took the magic spear and killed the animals. The animal sacrifice was an important atonement and reparation for wrong done to deity.

'Take the libation and pour it over him and then breathe in his nose,' the voice said.

Mach held me in his arms and anointed me, then breathed in my nose and said, 'Lord of our forefathers, we need you to make your son recover. He is everything to us.' Mach swallowed the burning charcoals and chewed them, then passed the small pieces of burnt wood into my mouth.

The lightning flashed across the grey sky, and the rain fell. Around the shrine, the acacia and balanite trees formed magical treetops. There was a small pond in the middle of the sacred bush covered with the lilies. It was a very attractive place. The flowers attracted the butterflies. Roaming around, you could hear the low drones of bees flitting over the flowers. The crowd stood in a circle and sang:

*'Oh, Lord of Fire, hear our voices.
We're calling you to heal your son.'*

Oh, Lord of Fire, we ask you to heal him.'

As the crowd was chanting, Mach stepped into the burning fire and stood holding me up so that the flame and smoke could exorcise evil spirits out of me.

'We are holding this festival so that Lord, you could exorcise all the evil spirits possessing him. We need you to heal your son. Lord, we bestow him to you. He will be your next diviner. We honour and praise you. Oh, Lord of our forefathers, bring him back to life. Help him,' Mach said.

The thunder roared and lightning flashed across the grey sky, and the rain started falling. People were glad to see the rainwater as a sign of healing, regeneration and washing away of sin. The wind broke the acacia trees and the water created a deep gully around the sacred bush. 'Praise the Lord!' Mach said and then the crowd sang:

*'Oh, Lord of Fire,
We are calling you,
To heal your son.
Hear our voices and
Nurse him back to health
Heal him, heal him.'*

The wind blew, and a white-throated swift fell dead. The Lord of Fire poured down his holy spirit, and I recovered. I wheezed because of the mucous blocking my nose. I coughed and sneezed. Then the men hooted the bullhorns while the women drummed the calabashes. It was a joyous and glorious day. Everyone was happy to see the dead son arise from death. I had stayed for four days without sucking. My mouth was foamed and sealed with thick dribble. When mama put her breasts in my mouth, the lips couldn't open. My heart was

throbbing, just like the abdomen of a wasp. A soft mass had glued my eyelids, and I couldn't open them, Mama told me. I yawned and coughed. The rainwater extinguished the fire, and smoke billowed up in a thin grey mist while the crowd continued singing and clapping in rhythm:

*'We thank you,
Lord of Fire for raising him from death.
We thank you for healing of your son.'*

My relatives praised the Lord of Fire for healing me. They thought that the whooping cough and measles would kill me. In fact, many parents had lost their children to disease, so the parents named the era '*ruon de ajouk* and *tongolo*-'the year of whooping cough and measles.' Mum told me that she had lost her six children to whooping cough and measles. I was the ninth born of eleven children.

In Dinka, the parents tell the family genealogy to their children: how the children were born, what happened during the birth because the generation is named after the year and the year is named after the events.

After Thanksgiving, the Lord of Fire made me recover and the crowd dispersed. Two years later I was weaned. My parents held a meeting to discuss where I should be taken to live. Mama suggested that she should take me to her family while Baba said that I should be taken to the cattle camp. This is our traditional practice. When a child stops breast feeding, it can be taken to live with its maternal family, or it can be taken to the cattle camp. My parents agreed to take me to the cattle camp because there was enough milk there.

One warm afternoon, Dad took me to Ajuerweng cattle camp. I spent six months there until one cold morning, Mach Atong came to the cattle camp and found me playing in the field of wild tomatoes.

"Jangdit, come here," he said. I heard a man's voice and I whirled and then waddled to him. "Don't suck your thumb," he said when I reached him.

"I think he is suffering from teething," Baba said.

"I came to take him home. There is a celebration, and we need him to be there. This is his time to attend the rite so that the Lord of Fire can give him power," Mach said.

"Mr. Diviner, I'm happy to hear that you need to take your nephew home. It is nice, but I'm afraid of witches and wizards. They may go to cast a spell on him. This is the "World of Hatred," many bad people hate him," Baba said.

"I don't think a witch or wizard can eat him. The Lord of Fire is protecting him. Not only that, we love him," Mach said.

"OK, just put on his clothes and take him home," Baba said and gave my clothes to Mach.

Mach took the clothes and said, "He has grown up faster and I don't think the clothes can't fit him. I will take him home in his birthday suit."

"OK, go and take care," Baba said. My Uncle, Mach held me in his arm and we left the cattle camp for the village.

We arrived in our house and found a crowd snuggling in front of a fireplace where a black saucepan was standing on the top of three stones. Besides the fireside, there were bundles of firewood, a brown pot of wine, and an assortment of utensils: a jug, gourds, and bowls scattered around.

People were drinking an alcohol. The lively crowd saw me and everyone stood up and shouted, "Jangdit, welcome home."

Amid this warm welcoming, a jealous, grumpy-looking woman in a black dress with black eyes clicked her tongue and glared at me. She gave me a sullen scowl and I whooped and gagged. My mouth foamed with a white bubble. I drooled and then felt dizzy. Mama realised that a witch had enchanted me. She strapped me to her back and took me to a witchdoctor for exorcism.

We came to the witchdoctor's house and he welcomed us in his hut. He put the coloured-quills of porcupine and feathers of ostrich in the calabash. The water was boiling in a brown clay pot. There were beaks of stork and horns of antelope hanging on the wall. He rose and went to collect them. He came and put them down in front of himself, between Mum and me. He broke a palm frond and performed his magic trick. The white foam formed around his mouth. He shook an orange gourd with a loud groan. He took a sharp razor blade and cut my chest. He kissed the wounds and sucked out the chaffs of sorghum and the charcoals then spat them onto the calabash. I yawned, coughed, and spewed out blood. He breathed in my nose and I opened my eyes.

Mum and I returned to our house and a crowd began to assemble. A large group of people gathered and held a meeting.

Mach said, 'I would like all the men to take their assegais and clubs and go to hunt for the witch. I need her alive or dead.'

Baba stood up and said, 'I would like to thank you. I am very happy to see the young children, old men and women who have come to express their deep sympathy. Your presence offers me a solace. I am opposing what Mach suggested. The witch is one of our family members and if we kill her, who is

going to take care of her children?' Baba stopped talking and glanced at me. The wind whined and moaned through the trees. Two dogs were fighting over a dry bone.

'I would like to tell you a short story. Five years ago, I went to Khartoum. One morning, I took a walk and found a crowd watching a lady in pain. I rushed to help her and the police held me. One policeman told me that the woman was an enchantress and the Islamic laws condemned acts of witchcraft and infidelity and the practitioners are put to death. As she had broken the laws, the judges sentenced her to death. The police beheaded her in public and I was shocked to see such an inhumane act. On behalf of my entire family, we forgive the witch. God will judge her.' The crowd shouted, 'boo' expressing their dissatisfaction.

'Well, I, Mach, am not satisfied with what you have suggested. We can't forgive her because she is going to cast a spell on us. She killed many people and she is going to kill all of us so if we have caught her, she must face the laws,' Mach said.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I would like our chief to express his opinion," Baba said. The tallest man stood up in the crowd and waved his hands.

He coughed and looked around then said, "Well, the case is simple. There is no point of argument. I need five strong young men to go and bring her here."

The young men ran to her house but she was not there. The men came back and the chief said, 'She has run away. I would like you to go and search for her and I will give a reward to the person who catches her. In this village, I don't think a fugitive can escape being caught. Thank you and go back to your houses.'

The crowd left and my parents held a family meeting. Dad suggested that I should be taken back to Ajuerweng cattle camp, but Mama proposed that she would take me to her sister in Bor town. Dad and Mum agreed to take me to Bor.

Then Mama picked me up and we left the village for Bor. We arrived at 5 p.m. and found Aunt sweeping the ground. "Good evening," Mama greeted her.

"I am fine and welcome," Aunt replied and threw down a broom and ran to us. She grabbed me from my mother's arms. Aunt felt happy to see us. Mama and Aunt chatted for a while and the darkness fell, so we entered in the room. The light of the lamp was bright. The light thrilled me and I felt at home.

In the morning, I woke up and went to play under the papyrus fence. I felt bored and lonely so I went to the riverbank and collected the shells of cockle, cowries and shells of snails. I came back and played with them. Three Arab kids approached me. A girl spat on my face and a boy threw mud at me. Another boy of my age took the shells and cowries and ran away. Another big boy punched me in my face. He tried to kick me and I caught his leg and wrestled him down. He fell and bruised his face so he cried. The girl ran away and the boy got up and attacked me. I took a reed and beat him. A tall woman heard his voice and came to the scene. She came and hit me behind and I fell on the ground. She trod heavily on me. I writhed and sprang up. I jumped into our fence and stood in silence, watching her lips quivering like the hands of a marionette.

"You, little black pooch! I will kill you if you touch my children," she threatened me and walked away.

The glare of the afternoon sun was hot and the beads of sweat formed on my face. I wiped away my tears and sat in the shadow of mango trees under the

fence. The fierce sun sank and Aunt returned from the market. In front of our gate, the woman who attacked me hijacked my aunt with a knife. She hurled the knife at my aunt. Aunt dodged the knife and decided not to retaliate, and then she walked away. My aunt came to me and touched my head.

"Jangdit, Take it easy," she said. I smiled at her and she went into the kitchen and prepared our dinner. The sun had set and we dined and went to bed early.

At midnight, an unknown arsonist set our shack on fire. The flames covered the hut, and I was suffocated. I woke up and smelled petrol. The smoke clouded the room, so I couldn't see anything. I yelled out and Aunt woke up and saw a fire. She held me in her arms and we rushed outside. We stood under the mango trees, just watching the burning hut. The tears of frustration and anger cascaded down our cheeks. I was frustrated and my face was burning with indignation. The burning hut collapsed over the fence and the fire spread out and burned down the whole compound.

Still watching the fire, we heard the loud noises of the guns around the town, so Aunt and I ran to the village. A Southern Sudanese, Major General Kuanyin Bol carried out a mutiny in Bor and the Sudanese civil war between the Arab-Muslims and black Christians began like a dream.

We reached the village at 7 o'clock in the morning. I was happy to meet my parents. We spent two months in the village and on November 16, 1987 the Khartoum regime attacked us.

At dawn we heard the sounds of guns. We woke up and scattered in different directions. I ran into the bush. My family members ran away and I didn't know where they had gone to. Aunt had gone missing until today. In the morning, I saw a group of young boys and I came to them, but they started

walking away. I was frustrated and cold with hunger. I stood, just staring at the smoke billowing from burning huts. A man pushed me behind and said, "Jangdit, stop crying and let us go."

"Go where?" I asked.

"We are running to the border of Ethiopia," he said.

"No, I can't manage to travel by foot," I said.

"Jangdit, many boys of your age are walking so let's follow them," he said. He looked me in the eye, and grabbed my right arm and dragged me. "Leave my arm, I will walk," I said. He left my arm and we set off on the perilous journey.

THE PERILOUS JOURNEY

The air was hot and I grew weary of walking, so I stopped and bowed my head. I heard birds cooing. I glanced up and saw the flock of doves. The sign of the bird gave me the audacity to hope that I would not die on the run.

'Oh, Lord of Fire, don't let me die from hunger and thirst. It will bring shame on our family. In your name, Lord of Fire, I am not going to die in the bush,' I mumbled. I took a deep breath and walked away. I tried to walk quickly but I didn't reach the first group of boys ahead of me.

I walked for four hours and the afternoon sunlight cast an eerie blue glow over the path. I felt too tired to walk. I sat down and a man came to me. He told me to wake up but I refused so he left me. I bowed and wept silently. Then I heard a cry of vultures and raised my head. The vultures flew down from the treetops and started tearing the bodies of boys who died from thirst. Then I recalled a story that my father told me.

He said, 'Once upon a time, there were two boys of my age. One day, their father sent them to the cattle camp because there was hunger in the village. The boys walked for six days and one boy felt tired on the way. He gave up and his brother persuaded him, but he refused to walk. His brother left him and he died in the jungle.' As I remembered this story, I woke up and threw a glance at the dead boys beside the path and followed my friends. The journey took us two weeks to arrive in Ethiopia.

We came to Pinyodu Refugee Camp on December 1, 1987 and the elders told us to camp along the river under the mangrove, acacia, and beech trees. It was a jungle of baboons, macaques, monkeys and wild pigs. The land was brown and dusty. There was no shelter, food or clothes. Many of us were naked, frail and puny. I went to the river, drank the dirty water and picked a green horned melon and ate it.

A thin white cloud was drifting across the sky and the light began to fade. I sat on the twisted root of mangrove trees and gritted my teeth. I saw a mouldy pawpaw on the ground. I stood up and went to collect it. I took it and four boys came and begged me to give them some pieces. I looked at it and saw mildew. Grey fungus grew inside so I threw it down. A tall thin boy grabbed the rotten pawpaw and ate it. He sweated and his mouth foamed. He fell on his knees and vomited.

We gathered around and took him to the camp. After a few hours, he passed away. We lugged his body into the bush because we didn't have a spade to dig his grave. We came back to the dormitory. My friends went to sleep while I sat on a burning log and moaned about his death.

I stayed awake until morning. At the sunrise, I felt hungry but there was no food. The trees were orange and leafless.

We spent three weeks without food. I lost three cousins and then got sick. Chol picked the leaves of a desert date tree, crushed them and soaked the leaves in the cold water all night. In the morning, I drank the herb and I got better. The leaders told us to build our shelters. We cut the small branches of trees and the grass and built our shelters. The rain fell and the shelters leaked like sieves.

We stayed for two months and the American Congress men visited us and took a report to the United Nations in New York and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) brought food to us.

The hunger finished but the bedbug, mite, flea, louse and chiggers infected us. There was no barber or salon. There was no iron, so we washed our clothes and spread them on the warm sand to kill the nits. This lack of personal hygiene increased the spread of the diseases. The New Year began with a promise of better life. We endured the hardship and adjusted ourselves to the situation.

On the third moon of the year 1988, the leaders arranged to put us in the different groups. I was taken to Group 4 while my cousin, Chol was taken to Group 1. We stayed for a while without seeing each other.

One sweltering afternoon, I went to the river and bathed and then I returned to dormitory. On the way, I met Chol standing beside the road with walking stick in his hands. "Hi, Jangdit," he greeted me.

"Are you sick?" I asked. He burst into tears and pointed at a swollen wound on his left leg. I stooped to check the wound and the guinea-worm popped its

head out. I grabbed the worm and pulled it out. The white worm fell on the ground. I crushed it and took him to their group.

On the fifth day, I visited him and a tall thin boy of my height told me that he had passed away. His death shocked me. I came back to our Group and moaned about his death until I got sick. I stayed for a week in the bed. My friends took me to the clinic where I was admitted. I spread my blanket on the ground and lay on my back, gazing at the sky while the tears of sorrow cascaded down my cheeks.

THE TEARS OF SORROW

The rising sun cast an eerie glow over the ground where I lay gazing longingly at the heavens. On the horizon, a coil of black smoke was curling into the blue sky. I heard the crackling of fire and smelled the burning of rubbish. The thunder roared and the flashes of lightning lit up the sky.

Lying on the wet ground, a slug and an earthworm crawled on me. On my wrist, a brown millipede and a red centipede coiled themselves tightly. Over me, my friends were weeping. A doctor came and said, "What is your name?"

"I am Jangdit," I said.

"How old are you?"

"I am eight years old," I said.

"Mr. Jangdit, we don't have drugs in the store. Just drink water and you will be fine," the doctor said and left me in pain.

I lay under the fence. My lower body was inside and my torso was outside the fence. The UNHCR had erected three tents around the shattered concrete

buildings. The wards were full. Pitifully, four patients were given one bed. Some patients slept on the wet floor while others sprawled under the barbed-wire fence because the measles, chickenpox, cough, dengue, diarrhoea, diphtheria and dysentery broke out and infected thousands of us. Many others also died of homesickness.

I stayed for many months and one cold afternoon, a short man in a light green nurse uniform came and glared at me on the wet ground. "Young boy, pack your luggage and go back to the dormitory," he said. I didn't answer him. He stooped and collected my clothes and flung them over the fence. "You live here for more than two seasons. You don't want to die or recover, so it is hard for me to keep you," he said.

I smiled at him and crawled out. I came and collected my clothes. I packed them into the cartons. I stood up and my body shook then I collapsed. I lay on the ground for three days but nobody came to help me. The heavy rain fell and rainwater nearly drowned me.

I snaked myself across the fence like a python lurking for its prey in the bushes. Seeing me there, you might assume that I had died, so two men in the green mortuary uniform came with a black stretcher. One man was wearing yellow rubber gloves on his hands. He covered his nose with a white patch.

A short man bent over me and held my chest and then he said, "He is still alive, but in a few minutes, I guess he'll die. So let's take him away. Look at him, he is unconscious even though he is breathing."

He grabbed the stretcher and pulled it beside me. I was weak, so I could hardly speak. He grabbed my legs but his friend wrenched his hands from my legs.

I watched them wrestling. They pushed each other away from me. A Good Samaritan said, "It is because of these children that we suffer for a long time. We shouldn't think too little of them because they are future seeds and I'm here to help them."

They stopped quarrelling and the Good Samaritan lugged me to the brick wall. He leaned me against it. He went to the kitchen and brought one packet of UHT milk. He opened the packet and gave it to me. I sipped the milk, but it spilled out of my mouth. He went back to the kitchen and boiled the milk. He returned with it, warm now. He told me to lie on my back. He held my nose and poured the milk into my mouth. I gulped it down and sweated.

I got a little better and was released from the hospital on April 5, 1989. I came back to the dormitory and went to bed. In the morning, I woke up and went to a fetid market to beg for food. In the market, I met a troop of soldiers from my tribe, sitting under mango trees and eating the boiled cassava.

The marketplace smelled of fish and rotten vegetables. Under the mango trees, the gaggles of Anyuak children were scattered around. The girls were playing hopscotch. The small naked kids were frolicking on the sand. The boys were pulling the tug of war. I stared at them and beckoned a tall girl of my height. She was wearing a grey torn dress. She came and greeted me, 'Good afternoon, and how are you today?'

"I'm fine and thank you," I said. "Can you give me one mango?" I begged. She smiled and then clambered up the mango tree. She picked four yellow mangoes. She climbed down and gave them to me. I took them from her hands and one mango fell on the ground. I bent to collect it then a person tapped my right shoulder.

I turned around and saw an Anyuak woman in a black torn dress. I smiled at her. A man in red ragged shorts came and grabbed my right arm. They smacked my face. "Why did you steal the fruit?" the woman asked.

"He is not a thief. I'm the one who gave him the mangoes," the girl said.

"Go away, who asked you to talk," the man said. I closed my eyes and screamed in terror. The soldiers came and hit my tyrants. The fighting broke out between the soldiers and Anyuak people.

The soldiers drove them to the swamp. The soldiers set fire to their shacks. The fire burned furiously and the blue smoke rose from the burning huts. I opened my eyes and a thick cloud of smoke began to haze over the market then I couldn't see the sunlight.

To the left, I saw a woman kneeling in the doorway and the roof collapsed over her and roasted her body. The incense sticks were scattered on the ground. To the right, a goatskin was hanging on the branches of a guava tree. I felt sad to see the horrible images of dead people so I walked away. I came back to the dormitory and went to bed at eight o'clock but I didn't sleep at all. I woke up at 1 am and prayed:

O Lord, how can I respond to the cries of your children?

What can I do to help? I want you to help them.

I need you to bring peace. Let there be peace in this land.

I finished praying and sat on the bed till dawn. In the morning, the Anyuak elders and our leaders held peace talks. On the third day, some of them came back home. On the fifth day, the peace was signed and they returned home and buried the bodies of their people in a mass grave.

THE MONKS' PRISON

Anyuak elders and our leaders made a big campaign to end the violence so that we could live in peace and harmony. The situation returned to normal and we began schooling under the acacia trees.

One cold morning, I woke up and went to school. A teacher asked me to read A.B.C.D but I didn't know them because it was my first day at the school. He beat me and sent me back to the dormitory. I came and sat on the crest of the anthill and talked to myself, "I am weaned on misfortune. God casts me off from my parents. He sends me to the Monks' Prison where I eat the leaves of the acacia, balanite, green grass and wild berries in the wilderness like a donkey in the monkey's year."

I stopped talking and got up and came to the dormitory. The sun sank and I went to bed. I stayed awake all the night. I remembered my parents. Lying on my back, I saw a figure resembling my Dad. I woke up and stretched my arms to hug him. However, it was an illusion of family reunification. I rubbed my eyes and sat on the edge of the bed till dawn.

In the morning, I went to the forest and cut a bundle of pickets for sale. I tied a big bundle and took it to the market where an Ethiopian man bought the bundle for five birrs. I was happy to get the money. I entered in a small restaurant built with grass on the roof and mud wall. There were two censers of incense on the table and the fragrant smell of burning incense filled the restaurant. The tablecloth with embroidered pictures of the dove was spread on the bench and a picture of Jesus was hanging on the wallpaper to make the restaurant look nice. The radio was singing Ethiopian local music and a maid

was sitting on a stool and shaking her head to the rhythm of the music. 'Hello,' I greeted her.

"I'm fine and welcome," she said.

"Thank you. Can I have one plate of *injera* and a cup of tea," I said?

"That is fine. Just take a seat," she asked.

"Thank you," I said and then sat on the bench. She smiled at me and went to kitchen and brought my meal. I started eating and she pulled her stool next to me and asked, "Sudanese, where are your parents?"

"Sister, I've no parents," I said.

"Did they die?" she asked curiously. I didn't answer her.

"I see tens of thousands of you, young boys without parents, where are your parents?" she asked.

"It is a sad story to tell you. The regime in Sudan attacked us and killed some of our parents while the others ran to an unknown destination. Many of us lost their parents and some of us got their parents back home. One night, the armed forces from our government attacked us and so we came here. Now, I don't know whether my parents are alive or not," I said.

"And who looks after you?" she asked.

"We take care of ourselves," I said.

"How many boys live in one hut?"

"Thirty-five to forty boys are packed in a small dirty hut."

"Where do you get food?"

"I eat the green leaves of grass and one small cup of maize as my meal a day. Sometimes, the United Nations gives us food."

"What sort of food?"

"Corns, millets, beans and lentils."

"Are they enough?"

"No!"

"Last night, what meal you did you have for your dinner?"

"I ate a corn dish with a watery soup of the grass leaves," I said, and she shook her head and the tears cascaded down her cheeks. She wiped her eyes and gave me a tearful smile and said, "Sudanese, what is your name?"

"I'm Jangdit of Bor origin."

"Are you an Australian Aborigine?"

"Yes."

"Oh, I can see. I've read about the conflict between Aborigines and White Settlers when I studied at Addis Ababa University doing History and Literature. Have you heard the story of the Stolen Generation? It's a shocking story. The dark-skinned people are suffering in the world. In South Africa, America, Sudan and other places they are not considered as mankind. They are oppressed," she said.

'When did you leave Sudan?' she asked.

'I left in 1987,' I said.

'Why?'

'I heard the Arabs in the North came to exchange salt for cowries and ivory. Then they found the land is arable so they started the war and grabbed our land to use it for a commercial venture. Therefore, we fled the country and we can't go back to our place of origin because they are going to kill us,' I said.

'Do you like it here?' she said.

'Yes!'

'Would you like to go back to your country?'

'No, it is not safe. The Arabs take control of everything and employ us to work for no payment in their houses,' I said.

'How do you feel?'

'I feel bad because I'm standing on the fragile whisker of death. Our enemy in Khartoum doesn't like us. He is very happy to see us in hardship. Therefore, I'm furiously sad to live in the ghetto and dismal hovel,' I said. She coughed and blew her nose. A feeling of frustration gripped her as I spoke.

'The Arabs have mistreated us for many centuries and today are the days of reality to give a living man his right! We are wracked by disease, but the regime does not want to treat us. We are living in abject poverty and the regime does not want to feed us,' I said.

'I hope God will help you 'people' of south to get freedom,' she said and the tears swelled in her eyes.

'Thank you,' I said.

'How do you feel about seeing an Arab?' she asked.

'There is pain in my heart, a pang of dismay, and of course, a searing pain strikes me like a parturient woman when I see any Arab. I feel sick because they are the most cruel, brutal and rude people who rule us with an iron fist,' I said.

'Oh, man, I can't keep listening to your life story,' she said.

She was shocked to hear that I had left my birthplace because of conflict. She thought I was a bastard who was born out-of-wedlock. I stopped talking and ate the food. I paid her, but she refused to take the money. I left her gazing at me in tears.

I returned to the Monks' Prison and went to bed. The day dawned warm and a bell chimed then I woke up and put on a white shirt and black trousers. I went to Church. It was August 25 in the year of Our Lord, 1989. In the temple, the Sunday school choir was singing and a choirmaster was conducting the music. The candles were burning on the table with a bright flame. I was entranced by the flickering candles. The table was covered with a beautiful and colourful quilt. The brown baskets of the tithe were hanging on a microphone stand.

Behind the table, a short man in a white gown holding a bowl of water waved his hand to and fro to the rhythm of gospel music. In the front row, there was a long queue of people standing in a line. I joined them and we were baptised. We sang for God's power to shatter the chains of slavery on our ankles. The bright light of happiness trailed around me. I felt the power of the Holy Spirit in me. People went and put the money in the basket, but I had no coin to give to God.

Pastor Deng said, "We collect the money to help the people in need. This is a part of generosity. God does not like stinginess." I felt ashamed of not paying a single coin. Pastor said, "It's not a sin to pay nothing. God knows that you have nothing."

"Today, I want to tell you what had happened last night. Some of you have heard or not. A thief broke in my house and stole the tithes. He stole all my clothes including underwear and handkerchief. This is a deadly sin. God condemns stealing. That's what I want to let you know it," Pastor said.

"Let's go to the Bible. Jesus will return to winnow us like millets. The chaffs and grains will be separated, likewise, the wicked and righteous will be separated. The bad people will be sent to Hell while the good persons will be

sent to Paradise. You need to have strong faith in God, respect and love others, don't commit adultery, steal and kill a person. Let's pray," Pastor said.

*Lord, bless and pity us.
Give us our wants and let's not be tempted.
Stop war and take us back to our home.
I pray in Jesus Christ.
Amen!*

We stood up and sang a Psalm of David, 27: 1-2

*The Lord is my light and my salvation-
Whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life-
Whom I shall be afraid?
When evil men advance against me
To devour my flesh,
When my enemy attacks me,
They will stumble and fall.*

We stopped singing and came out then a man came to me. "Hi!" he greeted me. "I am fine," I said.

"Are you Jangdit?" he asked.

"Yes!" I said.

"Do you know me?" he said.

"No, I don't think I have seen you before," I said.

"I am your uncle, Mach Atong, a former diviner of the Lord of Fire. Do you remember me now?" Mach said.

"Oh! Uncle, I remember you now," I said.

"It is nice to meet you. I heard of you and I tried to search for you but I didn't find you. Let us go to my house to meet my family," he said. I was happy to meet Uncle Mach. He was a short man with grey hair. He looked different from my uncles whom I knew them. He is the shortest guy in our family.

"When did you come here?" I asked.

"Six months ago," Mach said.

"Did you hear of my parents?" I asked.

"I heard that they were fine at a time I left there," he said. It was a real joy to hear that my parents and siblings were alive. The tears of joy cascaded down our cheeks as we chatted. We came to his house and found a gaggle of children playing behind the huts. They were shouting like a flock of the evening parrots. I stood silently and watched them skipping.

"Mary, come to meet your cousin, Jangdit," Uncle said. She stopped jumping over the rope and came to me. "Hi! I'm happy to see you," she said. I kept quiet. She was a good-looking young girl of about nine years with a birth-mark on her left cheek. "Jangdit, you are going to sleep here tonight. I am happy to help you. Did you enrol at school?" Mach asked.

"Yes, I am in class One and performed very well last term," I said.

"Thank you, next time you come, bring your exam results. I want to see them," he said. I nodded to him. "I am going to see the camp manager so have some fun," he said.

Mary went to the kitchen and brought me food. I sat on the porch and ate it hungrily. A tall girl gazed at me and said, "Mary, he is hungry. He is eating in a hurry. He is sweating. I think there is no enough food where he lives." The ways the tall girl described me made me feel ashamed so I stopped eating and

pretended to be full. Mary came and took the bowl. Mary came back and introduced the tall girl to me. "Jangdit, this is Rebecca. She is my close friend," Mary said.

"Hey! I am happy to meet you," Rebecca said. I kept quiet and stared at her. She was wearing a yellow slack skirt. "Mary, your cousin is handsome. I love him," Rebecca whispered. In a cage, a white hen was bearing an egg. The egg was so big, so it got stuck in her. She closed her eyes and the egg fell down.

"Where do you live?" Rebecca asked.

"I'm staying in the Monks' Prison."

"What do you mean?"

"We're living in the armpit of the camp where there are no ladies, just gents only."

"Who cooks for you?"

"We prepare our food, thatch our hut and take care of ourselves."

"Jangdit, are you going to sleep here tonight?"

"Yes!"

"That's lovely to spend a night with us. Do you want to talk to me?" Rebecca asked. Then a smile flickered across her face. Her happy smiling face attracted me. I winked at her and she rubbed her breasts and sang Amos Ajak's song in a sweet voice.

I'll remember you and I'll never forget the name of my friend. My friend where have you put me, tell me where you put me, don't forgive me.

Her sweet voice attracted me and I shook myself. She sat down and spread her legs slightly. She pulled up her skirt to catch my attention. I gave her a seductive smile.

"We're going to play hide and seek. Jangdit and I should be the first group to start," Rebecca said. "Jangdit, do you play hide-and-seek in your place?" she asked.

"Nah, we don't," I said.

"Do you know it?"

"Yeah, I know it."

"Stand up and follow me," she said. Her skirt trailed, making a swishing noise.

We entered in the kitchen and heaved ourselves over a ledge. We pushed down the dishes and broke them into pieces. The children heard a clanking sound of fallen dishes. They entered and Rebecca took her scarf and covered her face to evade the scornful looks. I hung my head in shame then walked out in a huff. I went back to the dormitory, the custody of jailbirds. Our hall of residence was a hot jail. I stayed for thirteen days without going back to uncle's home. I was worried about my mischief of breaking dishes.

On Sunday morning, I went to the church and, after the services, a person tapped my left shoulder. "Who's it?" I spoke in a whisper. I turned around and Mary hugged me. She laughed at me. "Hi!" I greeted her.

"Jangdit, Dad is looking for you." My heart thumped and I sweated. She looked confused. "Are you okay?" She asked. I shrugged.

"Mary, is zzzzz zat case?" I gibbered.

"What case, are you talking about?" she asked.

"Don't you remember what I'd done last month?" I said.

"I swear. It's not that case. Dad didn't hear it. He bought me shoes, but they are for boys. He had decided to return them. However, I told him to give them to you," Mary said.

I took a deep breath and happiness came over me in waves. For one of us to get a pair of shoes at that time was hard. We walked without shoes. I jumped up in excitement and asked her again. "Are you kidding or telling me the truth, Mary?"

"I am not lying. Dad had bought a pair of the white canvas shoes. You'll go to see them at home," she said.

The rain started falling and we walked home. She was very glad to meet me and I was happy to hear that my uncle was looking for me to give me shoes. The rain stopped and we met Rebecca standing at their gate. I beckoned her and she came to me.

We sat on a rough bench. Rebecca glanced at me and giggled. I covered my face and coughed. She was very happy to see me once more since I'd disappeared. A dark cloud was floating across the blue sky. Then Rebecca asked me. "Where are your parents?"

"They are in Sudan," I said.

"Who do you live with?" she asked.

"I'm living by myself. I was born and then fled like a fleeting shadow," I said. She rose up quickly and shook her head angrily. I laughed to myself.

"It's not a matter of laughing. I'm not a simple girl to make love with an orphan," she said.

“Rebecca, you need to know that kindling in a bundle cannot laugh at the burning firewood. I haven’t killed my parents. It was not my fault to leave them. I’m a loyal boy from a royal family. I don’t mind about what you think of me. I’m not an orphan as you called me,” I said. “Mary, I want to go back to the dormitory,” I said. I glanced at Rebecca and watched her storming off in a fury.

“You have to wait for my dad,” Mary said.

“It would be late so I need to go now,” I said.

“Do you need food?” she asked.

“No, I am full,” I said and returned to the dormitory. I came and David asked, “Where have you been?” David was my roommate and close friend.

“I went to uncle’s house,” I said.

“The UNICEF brought the new clothes today. I took your new blanket, shorts and one shirt,” David said.

“Thank you,” I said.

“Jangdit, the Pastor told me on Sunday that he is going to form a gospel music group and he is looking for young boys to join the choir, so I would like you to sign up,” David said.

“Oh, that’s nice,” I said.

“We shall go to the church in the morning to register and do practice,” David said. We chatted till dawn. I felt happy to get the new clothes.

THE DAYS OF HAPPINESS AND SADNESS

The day dawned warm and we woke up and came to the church. It was a bright Easter Friday in April 1991, a Christian festival to celebrate the

resurrection of Jesus Christ. The atmosphere was tinged with the rays of sunshine. The field around the church was sprinkled with sunflower and hibiscus. The blue palm leaves were spread on the path as well as around the fence. The Sunday School Choir and Youth Choir were dancing under the trees. Standing there, you can enjoy the peace of mind and beautiful entertainment.

I joined the Sunday School Choir under a giant tamarind tree and a tall man, Abraham, gave me a warm welcome. I signed up and we started dancing and singing. We danced and sang for a while until Abraham said, "Can you stop dancing and sit down?"

Abraham was a Sunday school teacher. He was kind and devoted young man in his late twenties. He taught the Bible to the young children. We sat quickly.

"You're doing well and I need one person to come forward," he said.

We clapped and Abraham said, "I need one of you to explain our hymns?"

My friends looked down and I glanced at Abraham and he met my gaze so he said, "Can you come here?" I shrugged. "What's your name?" Abraham asked.

"I'm Jangdit," I answered.

"Come here," he said. I gave him a timid smile and stood up. "You're going to explain the meanings of our songs," he said.

"Abraham, I stammer, so I don't think I can make it," I said.

"Don't worry about it. The Lord will give you power to speak clearly. I know many of you are shy of speaking in front of congregation, but I will instruct you. You're going to narrate one folktale similar to our hymns, and I know you will do it. I have confidence in you," he said.

"Now kids, you can go home and make sure tomorrow morning at seven thirty, you must be here. Otherwise, I will punish those who are late," he said. I

came and went to bed, but I did not sleep at all. My heart beat whenever I thought of addressing the congregation.

In the morning, I woke up. The day was lovely warm and the sky was gloriously white. I jogged and took a morning bath. I put on my black trousers, and a white shirt with a yellow strap passed over my shoulders. I went to the church and found the Sunday School Choir dressed uniformly in the white shirt and black trousers, whereas the Youth Choir dressed in the black trousers and red shirt with a blue strap passed over their shoulders. None of them was wearing shoes except me. The church was full. All the seats were occupied, and some people were standing around the fence. The microphone yelled loudly, "Sunday School Choir can you come in quickly?"

We made a long queue and entered inside. We climbed up the platform, stopped, and I came forward. The church seemed to spin in my eyes. I cleared my throat, paused and spoke: "Hallelujah! Praise the Lord. I'm Jangtit," I lisped. "I'm standing on this holy ground on behalf of the Sunday School Choir to explain to you the themes of our songs. We have five songs, but I'm not going to give an explanation of every song because we don't have enough time to do so."

"Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to welcome you and say, 'thank you.' Dear congregation, I will begin my explanation with a fairy tale. Some of you may wonder why I've chosen it. I think you know that the stories comfort us on the Day of Sadness like today," I said.

'Once upon a time, there lived a widow with five children. At that time, the drought had hit the land and killed many people. One hot night, her youngest child started crying. 'Mama, I need food.' She woke up and lit a fire. But there was not a single eye of grain. Getting food at that time was hard, like bringing

peace in Sudan. She held her chin while the tears cascaded down her cheeks.

“Oh Lord, I can’t stand watching my kids die and I can’t help them, but you can. Now I need your help, Lord,” she prayed. Then she sat beside the hearth until dawn.’

‘In the morning, she went to the forest and collected the firewood. She brought the firewood home. She put the bundle down and washed the cooking pot, poured the water, and put an axe in it. She built a fire and put the pot on it. She called her elder daughter and instructed her.

“My daughter, I’m going to the forest to collect firewood and I need you to look after your meal. When the water finishes in the pot just add some more, but don’t stir because it will be undercooked? When the fire dies, just add more wood. Tell your siblings to stay awake until I return from the forest,” the woman said.

‘Her daughter listened carefully and did as she was told. The woman took an orange wicker basket and went to the forest. The forest was dry as a bone. She hunted but she didn’t find the fruit and food. She felt she could no longer carry on hunting. She was tired, thirsty, and hungry. She heard the croaks of the frogs. She followed the sound of the frogs until she found a pond. She bowed, drank the water, and raised her head. She saw a trail of muddy footprints. She followed the trail for several miles and found huts surrounded by a stockade.’

As I was talking, the audience stared at me in admiration. A small child started crying in the crowd and interrupted me. A woman voice said, “You need to feed your baby so it could stop crying.” The church was hot as it was filled to a capacity.

I heard a low murmur of voices and then I stopped talking and wiped the sweat from my forehead. I looked at the crowd and said, 'The woman saw the pumpkin, cereal, sesame and peanut in the garden. There were dry fillet meats of giraffe, elephant, antelope and goat in the granary. She took a pot and cooked a family meal. She fried sesame and peanut and ground them. She put them in a brown gourd. She filled the basket with cereals. She bundled up the pieces of the dry meats and returned to her hut.'

'The woman came and found her children sitting beside the fire. She fed them. All people in the village passed away, but her children survived the famine. This is the end of the story.'

'To me, I think there is no a difference between that family and us here in Pinyodu. Many of us are dying of hunger. There is no food. We eat the wild berries like the apes. We learn three words in this story. The first is love, second is confidence, and third is hope.'

'The woman loved her children and the kids were confident in her. The children hoped whatever their mother said was true. We need to love each other. We need to be confident in God. And we need to bear hope that God will return us to our home. The axe in the pot symbolises the civil war. I know life is hard today, but tomorrow it will be easy, so we don't need to lose hope. If we lose hope and faith in God, we cannot go back home. We need to face the hardship. Don't let suffering and poverty kill you.' 'Praise the Lord! Amen!' I said, after a pregnant pause. 'Sunday School, let us sing.' I said. We sang Psalm 17:

Hear, O Lord, my righteous plea;
Listen to my cry
Give ear to my prayer

The congregation clapped in rhythm. The women started crying tears of joy. We sang five songs and stopped. Everyone craned its neck to see me. I could hear a murmur. 'Where is he? Where is he?' The Youth Choir came, but I had stolen the audience's attention. They sang, but the congregation didn't clap or yell at them. Abraham said, 'Youth, your time is finished so go to take your seat.' 'I think you know who's a winner?' Abraham said.

The voices responded, 'Sunday-School-Choir.'

'Dear congregation, I would like to welcome the Pastor to preach and I need you to give him a big clap,' Abraham said. The Pastor came forward and called me and I went to him. He put his hand on my head and said, "I'm glad to see this small boy on the right track. He actually challenged me like the Youth Choir. The chapters I've selected to feed you today are related to what he told us. Our readings are in the books of Daniel, Job and Gospel of Matthew 28:1-8. Our sermon today is talking about faith, hope, courage, love, truth and confidence. The Old Testament tells us the stories of Daniel and Job and how they were suffered and the ways the Lord had saved them at least. The New Testament tells us how Jesus was crucified as he gave his life to save us from our sin. The stories are touching and very powerful to us. We are in the same boat and shoes. The stories offer us a solace at this moment. We know that Jesus accepted to die on our behalf, because He loved us. Therefore, you need to remember what this small boy had said, Pastor told the congregation. He stopped talking and prayed:

*"Lord of all, we bow before you.
Keep us free from sin today,*

Never let us be confounded."

Amen!

We stood up, sang and came out. At the portico, I met a posse waiting for me. The happy crowd surrounded me and I nearly died of suffocation. I sweated and a woman came and pushed people away. She gave me a hug and said her name, but I didn't catch her name because I was overjoyed. 'I am so happy. You did well and it was awesome. God will bless you. Let us go to my house,' she said.

We came to her home and found four kids, one boy and three girls. She called them and they came to greet me. She introduced them to me, but I was unable to grasp their names. She sent her daughter to give me food. There were lots of corned beef, fish and chicken. Her daughter warmed the canned fish and chicken and brought them to me. I dined and we went to play. It was a joyous day. The children were friendly to me. We joined our hands in a line and pulled each other roughly. Her son, Judas, fell down and bruised his left knee. The sun sank and I said, "Mama, I want to go back to dormitory."

"That's fine. Just go and come on Friday to take my children to the church. We're family right and you're welcome to pop in for lunch or dinner any time. My daughter, Atong can cook for you if I'm not at home," she said.

I nodded and went to the dormitory. On Friday, I came and she wasn't there. Judas looked me over with a bad eye because he wasn't a churchgoer. He glared at me.

'Hey,' I said and raised my hand to greet him.

"You, bastard, I can't shake your dirty hand. You stink," he said and held his nose.

"Judas, don't be stupid. You need to behave yourself," Atong said. She was a tall young girl of fourteen years old. She has shiny face, and white teeth with black gums. She love singing and dancing. She won the gospel singing and dancing competition. Many people admired her characters. He has a good heart, people said. "Shut up, bitch," Judas said.

"Just leave him. Let us go to church," I said.

Atong held my hand and we bounced happily. Judas trailed us. On the corner, he approached us and spat on my face.

"You, bastard, I don't want to see your ugly face in our compound. Don't try to come back, otherwise I will kick your arse," Judas abused me.

"My brother, I am going to report what you have done to mum," Atong said.

"I don't care. Silly bitch, do you think that I don't know what you people are doing? I know your relationship. You can't cheat me," Judah said.

"What relationship are you talking about?" Atong asked. They quarrelled and fought. Atong scratched his face and he punched her lower lip. I stopped them and walked her home. Judas went to the church and lied to the pastor that he had caught me with his sister. I came to church and Pastor chided me for fornication. He said that I had broken God's commandment. Therefore, I would have to leave the church. The pastor didn't ask me. Judas alleged and he accepted the accusation. He went to his mum's workplace and said, "Mama, why did you bring an evil to our family?"

"Who?" his mum asked.

"Jangdit," he answered.

"Judas, my son, what are you talking about it? You're a naughty boy and he is a smart boy, so I need him to teach you. You're a congenital liar, so I don't wanna listen to your lies. By the way, why are you here at this time? You're supposed to be at church. Don't tell me that you've fought him. I can see the bruises on your cheeks," his mum said.

"Be honest to me. Tell me the truth, and the truth will set you free. Who injured you? You make a lot of trouble. You're a heartless child. I think God had forgotten to create your heart. God gave you a human shape, but you're an animal honestly," his mum said.

"Mum, I'm not an animal. I'm a son of man. Just listen to me. I don't want to tell you, what I've seen with my own eyes, because I know you're not going to believe it. You can go to the church right now to hear what your daughter had done. I've no voice to talk to you. I can't even admonish your daughter for what she did, but you for bringing the evil to spoil our family reputation," Judas said.

"Judas, don't beat around the bush. Stop telling nonsense and tell me, what she has done. I know you're a liar, but I'll accept what you'll say," she said.

"Mum, will you believe it?" Judas said.

"Yes, my child," she said.

"Your good boy, Jangdit, came at twelve and we went to the church. Instead of going to the dancing hall, they entered in the pumpkin field at the rear of the fence and slept there. I caught them myself. If you've a doubt just go to ask the pastor, I hope he'll tell you the similar shocking story," Judas said.

Amid this conversation, she felt annoyed then threw away her red scarf, stood up and left the office. She went to her house, took a stick and flogged her daughter. She ordered her not to go to church. She sent me a message that I

should not go to her house. She sent another message to the pastor, describing me as a weevil, a destructive beetle that destroys the crops in the garden and grains in the store. My fame died quickly like a patient with an incurable disease. People lost interest in me and I became the most hated boy. David was sad to hear that I was sacked from the Sunday School Choir. "Jangdit, what are you going to do?" David asked.

"I am going to see my uncle and tell him to talk to the Pastor," I said.

"That's a good idea," David said. I stayed for one month in the dormitory and on Saturday evening, I came to my uncle's house and found him listening to the BBC News on the radio. On May 24, 1991, the radio announced that the rebels had toppled the government of Mengistu Miriam.

On 30th May, the rebels attacked our camp and we fled to Sudan. On our way, many people lost their lives. We arrived in Sudan on August 24, 1991. My family was happy to see me. The people around the village gathered at our house and we talked till dawn. In the morning, mum cut off a white cock's head. The headless white cock ran around the huts and fell dead. The women removed the feathers and fried the cock and prepared the meal. We dined went to the church to celebrate my homecoming.

The children were swimming in the pond behind the church. The vultures were feeding on a carcass of a black dog under the acacia trees. The baboons were picking tamarind pods. Three female baboons were carrying their babies on their backs. Two males were wrestling near a hibiscus flower. One male ran and another chased him around the shrub of frangipani flowers. The puppies were playing along the pond. We entered and sat on the mud-benches. The choir came forward and performed in front of us.

The sounds of the guns echoed and we came out from the church. The thick flame rose from burning buildings. The armed forces arrived and we scattered around. I stumbled and fell down. I got bruises on my knees. The attackers captured children and women and set fire to our place of worship. The attackers threw the captives into the burning church. The smoke rose in a huge blue hue. A cobra was crawling in the fire. It twisted itself and died. The smell of burnt snake and people made me retch. The puppies scattered and their mother escaped by herself. It was a worst holocaust.

THE HOLOCAUST-BOR MASSACRE

I shook like a chameleon on a fringe of a leaf. I got up and scurried for hiding. I glanced at the pale sky which was covered with flame. The burning stubs of acacia wood were falling down. I looked back and saw people at my heels. In my haste to escape, I tripped and fell down again. On the ground, I raised my eyes and saw the firings like fireworks.

It was the worst day of the massacre.
It was the worst week of the pogrom.
It was the worst year of mass murder.
It was the worst decade of ethnic cleansing.

The Nuer attack would be remembered from generation to generation. They killed, looted, raped, abducted and raided the cattle. Nothing was left, just the bodies. Touring the village, you had to hold your nose to avoid the fetid smells of the bodies. It was the worst attack. The White Army captured our village and stayed for six months.

The well-educated men that we expect to bring a change from a kraal life to an urban turn out to be the agents of village annihilation by committing the worst atrocities. Even Amin Dada of Uganda and Mobutu Sese seko of Zaire hadn't done this during their brutal reigns. People said that Amin Dada, Osama Bin Laden, Robert Mugabe, Charles Taylor, Hosni Mubarak and Mobutu Sese seko had killed millions of people. I'm now going to add Riek Machar, the leader of the White Army and Joseph Kony, the leader of Lord Resistance's Army, to the list of the blind assassins.

On the ground, I hid my head on the bodies. The volleys of bullets were raining down like hailstones. I took out the New Testament and opened the book of Luke 21: 9 *"When you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away."*

"Really! Is this not the end? God must be crazy," I said.

My reader, I flashed back to the painful memory of the destruction of life in Nuer. The forces of Akuot Atem and Gai Tut attacked SPLA around the oilfield. The fighting took place and Kuanyin Bol was sent to fight them. The SPLA soldiers killed Gai Tut and Akuot Atem took over his position. In a few months, Akuot was murdered and Abdullah Chuol took his position. Then he was killed and the soldiers were ordered to lug his body under the balanite trees. The SPLA soldiers poured water in the basin and placed it near him. The eagles and vultures came and fed on him then drank the water. The SPLA forces burned down the villages, and killed people in the Gajack area. Following these pogroms, peace was rarely achieved by both parties. Now it was November 1991, six years after the Maiwut killing. Honestly, Dinka and Nuer have suffered

badly and borne the brunt of civil war more than the other tribes in South Sudan.

The bullets were falling down shatteringly. I crawled like an eel in the mire. I heard the snapping noise of the burning trees behind me. Still crawling, a short man with cicatrices on his forehead patted my shoulder. A feeling of fear gripped me as I saw his ugly face. His red eyes were twinkling. A squirrel was standing on the top of an anthill. It jumped down and twisted its back and raised its tail. It caught a grasshopper and ate it.

“Comrade, stand up and follow me,” he said. He was wearing torn shorts with a blue bandolier passed over his shoulders and across his chest. I tried to speak, but the fear glued my lips. “You, what is your name and who is your leader?” he asked.

“My leader is Riek Machar,” I replied. Riek Machar was a coup leader and warlord in his late thirties. He was incited by America to stage a coup against John Garang. Riek mobilised his kinsmen from Nuer tribe and armed them, then sent them to come and kill the supporters of Garang from my tribe. However, they came and killed the civilians instead of the armed forces. He paused and his friends came and surrounded me. “Do you like Riek?” a half-naked man asked.

“Yeah! I like him,” I answered.

“Where did you know the Nuer dialect? Are you related to Nuer?” a scraggy man asked.

"Yeah, my mother is Nuer and father is Bor," I lied. An animal bayed and a wounded man hit me. A Good Samaritan hid me behind him and said, "You just leave him."

"Oh! No, let me get my hand on him," the scraggy man said.

"Let him go," the Good Samaritan said.

"My friend, we cannot forgive a child from Dinka Bor. We must have to kill it. Don't you know that a child from Dinka Bor is like a young snake? Bor are snakes if you don't know them. You cannot leave a snake to live in your house. It might strike your ankles. Therefore, we must wipe them out as Riek told us," the scraggy man said. I looked down and felt a coarse palm on my neck. "You, where are your parents?" a one-eyed man asked. He looked angry and hungry.

"I don't know where they are," I answered.

"Ma, why don't you kill him," the one-eye man said.

"He is too young," the Good Samaritan answered.

"My friend, if you fear to kill him, let me kill him," the one-eye man said. 'Bring him here,' he said. I stood in silence and remembered the story of Joseph when his brothers plotted to kill him. He grabbed my right hand with his left hand and turned my face away. He shook a machete in his right hand, so I closed my eyes. Suddenly, a bullet hit his head. He fell dead and then we ran away. I don't know who shot him.

I stopped and hid in the fallen grass. The armed men from White Army captured my relatives and flogged them to death. The armed men killed four men and another group came with ten civilians: three little boys, four girls, two women, and one young man. The Riek's henchmen undressed one of my friends

and castrated him. The henchmen raped and tortured the girls and women.

Riek's men threw up the children and hit them.

I tried to move, but fear grounded me. I felt like I was watching *The Blood Diamond* Movie that was made in Sierra Leone. In the movie, the Sierra Leone rebel groups caught civilians and hacked off their limbs. That was what happened to us. Riek Machar ordered his loyalists to commit atrocities against us. Riek's henchmen killed, brutalised and mutilated us in similar ways the gangs of King Leopold II tortured and abused the Congolese in the Belgian Congo. To speak the truth, Lord's Resistance Army learned the mutilation from the southern Sudanese warlords introduced by the colonialist and imperialist regimes.

I heard the thunders of feet on the dry earth. I woke up and squeezed myself in a small hollow of an acacia tree and a short child soldier shot me at close range. I jumped out and escaped unharmed. I stepped on a small spiny object. The sharp spines jabbed my foot and I had tried to stand and catch my breath. But I slid and hit my face on a trunk of an acacia. I felt a sharp tingling pain running down my spine. I held up my foot and stood on one leg. I looked at my foot and saw a hedgehog. I pulled it out. Its quills broke in my foot. The fire came soaring and roaring, so I jumped into a deep pond. The forest burned to the ground and the sun sank. I came out and the forest was black.

The dim light of the waning moon illuminated the dark forest. My heart fell and my mind assumed the gravity of death. My stomach was churning. I was cold and hungry. I heard the bay of a cow. I raised my head and saw a hyena had jumped over a back of a white cow. The bull moved and wriggled forcefully in an attempt to escape. However, the hyena bit his throat and strangled the

bull. After a long struggle, the bull fell dead. I glanced at the moonbeam, but it had disappeared. It was so dark. "Heaven protect me!" I prayed.

At dawn, I heard a scream of a young girl. I turned around and saw my sister in rags. "Oh, no Lord," I said. "God, what can I do," I said. "I have no power to help her and I can't let them take her. She is everything to me. Without her, my life would be useless," I mumbled. "Move your arse," a tall man said. I leaned my back against the warped trunks and stretched my arms then stared at the heavens. "Didn't you see me, Lord? I need to talk to you. Are you there? I want to see a landlord of Borland. Can someone answer me, please?" I shouted.

I stopped talking to myself and wandered around the bush. I stopped walking and held my chin, and then I heard the voice of a young woman. I came to her and she gave birth to a baby boy. She collected him and wrapped with the leaves of agave. I felt so sad to see such a pathetic life. She put her breasts in the mouth of the infant, but there was no milk. He started crying and she put him on the ground and walked away. I called her to come back, but she left forever. I took him and squeezed watermelon in his mouth, but it was waterless. On the fifth day, hunger killed him. I dug the sand and buried him and then went to the River Nile.

I came and found five women picking the water lily. A small child was eating fruit from a sausage tree. We don't eat sausage fruit, but the disaster forced us to eat it. I left them and came home. I went into a fetid abandoned hut. There was a stink of rotten meat in the hut. I held my nose and slept and in the early morning I heard a knock on the wall. It was a deadly time for my relatives to return home. Actually, I didn't expect anyone to visit me at that time. "What can I do?" I asked myself. Suddenly, the wall cracked and collapsed. The sun flung

its lights through a crack in the wall. The bomb smashed the hut and it crumbled like the Twin Towers during the terrorist attack in New York City.

I jumped out and a giant man in torn black trousers halted me. He belched and grabbed my arms. He covered my nose and mouth trying to suffocate me with his hands. I wriggled like a fish on a hook. I saw an axe. I pushed him away, grasped the axe with both hands, and hit his temple. He fell down and I ran to the forest.

I ran for ten minutes and fell in an ambush. I got caught up. "Can you sit down," a tall man said. I sat on a cold and soft object. "How are you?" I greeted them.

"What? Are you Nuer?" Mony Nuer asked.

"Yes," I said.

"What part of Nuer are you from?" Mony Nuer asked.

"Gajack," I said.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"I'm Jangdit," I said.

"Your accent is different," another man said.

"I left Nuer when I was a young child," I said.

"Jangdit, we have a problem of understanding. We talked to these captives, but they won't answer us since we captured them. Can you help us in interpreting?" he said.

"Of course, I will do it. Oh! God, help me. I hate the birds to feed on me even though you've said in the Book of Isaiah," I talked to myself. "My blood uncle has become my bench to sit on. Woe is me, Lord?" I mumbled. I saw signs of

torture on their faces. I raised my right hand, and the tall man eyed me up and down and said, "Young boy, what itches your arse? Did an ant bite your ass?"

"No, sir," I said.

"And why are you raising your hand? Can you drop your hand down?" the tall man said.

"There is a pool over *zere*. Dinka are hiding around it. I would like to to to take you," I said.

"Mony Bor, take this knife and eviscerate this dead man," Mony Nuer said. The henchmen of Riek Machar killed a person from us and ordered others to remove the internal organs and cannibalise them. If anyone refused, the henchmen killed him or her.

A puny man from attackers took a quill of a porcupine and pierced out the eyes of my uncle. He ordered his friends to remove his teeth. 'Hammer them out,' he said. I closed my eyes to watch my relatives being mutilated. It didn't gladden me, it saddened me. The henchmen removed uncle's teeth and gouged out his eyes. He died from heavy bleeding.

The attackers took us captives to their headquarters where we found the armed civilians singing around the NgunDeang's shrine. A group of young men was roasting meat over the log fire. A medium man was performing a magic trick. He was shaking a brown gourd and tassel of giraffe tail. The shaman stood up and spoke: "I'm happy to see you. NgunDeang said in 1900s that Nuer will attack Dinka Bor. People thought that he lied to them. I'm here to tell you it wasn't a false promise. It's true. Everyone needs to sit down. I will introduce you, a boy that NgunDeang said will lead Nuer to Bor. Do you know him?" He

paused and said, "His name is Riek Machar Teny Dhurgon. Dragon! Dragon! Dragon!" He chanted.

Riek waved his hands with a happy smile flickering across his face and he said, "That's my name you heard from the seer. Now he will tell you more about me. Reasons I rebelled against John Garang."

"Thank you honourable, Doctor Riek. NgunDeang said that there will be a tall leftist man, originally from west bank. That man will graduate from the University of Khartoum and then go to study in Britain. Then he will marry a white lady. He is wise, bright and handsome. In Bor, there will be a short and cunning man who will lead the Sudanese rebel movement. He will be a well-educated and tough guy. And these two men will fight for leadership. Today was the day that NgunDeang had foretold our forefathers. Riek needs you to go to destroy Garang's force," he said. The wind was blowing and the day was clear. The goats were grazing on the grass under the acacia trees.

"I, Riek I am happy to hear the First Division had wiped out Garang's force around Juba. Now you can see the captives. You will go as reinforcements to the First Division and bring Garang dead or alive. The SPLM members appointed me to lead the party because Garang made the movement to be his family property. The movement is not a democratic party, but we need democracy, where there is freedom and equal right of every person to participate in the government."

Riek looked around and said, "People of the south Sudan and American government, especially president Bush need me to take over the party, but Garang himself does not want to abdicate the leadership to me. However, we

shall claim the throne through bloodshed. Garang shows a lack of seriousness that's considered inappropriate and we cannot accept such dismissive behaviour. He is indifferent to our ideas and the majority of people in Southern Sudan don't need him. He has been unresponsive to all our suggestions. This is what the politicians call dictatorship and we don't need a dictator."

Riek's henchmen clapped and screamed with joy. "He coughed and said, "The Khartoum regime applied such authoritarian control to everything and force us to obey its strict rules and laws. That was why we split and fought against Khartoum. We need to have freedom, make our decision and express our opinion. Therefore, we need to eliminate an autocratic leader in order to enjoy freedom under my leadership."

The audience clapped and a tall man raised his right hand and then sang. Two dogs came and lapped the blood of the dead bull on the ground. A brown dog started barking, 'bow wow.' The wind shook the trees and the dry leaves began falling on the ground. The light rain fell and the armed men stopped singing and Riek continued addressing them.

"Yes, you, citizens need to live in a situation where you are able to go where you want and do what you like. We bring you the freedom to think or act without being constrained by necessity or force. Not to be controlled by one man, free from the authority or domination of one person and able to operate alone. Our aim is self-determination, the right of the people of Southern Sudan to form their own government and rule themselves without North. I'm demanding autonomy for the South. Yes, we need change. President Bush of US and the Prime minister of Israel promised to give us guns to topple John Garang. Yes, Garang must go. Garang must go," Riek addressed his henchmen.

He stopped talking and left us. The captors built a large fence and locked us up without food. We lay on the wet ground and the wretched condition made us sick, so many captives passed away. We spent three months in the jail and Garang's forces attacked Riek's camp where we had been kept hostages.

The fighting took two hours and Riek's forces were defeated, so they fled and left us in the prison. We broke out of the jail and I escaped alone. I walked in the jungle and the morgue land smelled awful and nauseating. The land was consumed in the wrenching sorrow of the tribal massacre. I did not see a person, just empty land littered with carcasses.

My reader, the skulls are still lying on the ground. If you think I've exaggerated, just go there and you'll see the skeletons with your own eyes.

The tribal massacre made the village a graveyard. The bodies were not buried because many people were killed and the survivors fled the region. I lost one hundred and seventy close relatives and ten girls were abducted in my home village.

I spent one month walking alone in the jungle and arrived in the camp. The day was warm and windy. The thin mist was floating across the grey sky. John Garang visited the camp to address us, his supporters.

We gathered under the tamarind trees and Garang spoke: "You have seen what evil minds have done to us. They stab us in the back. We were going to capture Juba this season but the devils push us back. Dr. Riek and Dr. Lam are being hired by the enemies of Southern Sudan to delay us from reaching the Promised Land." We clapped and John Garang's deputy stood up and sang and we joined him:

We don't need to sell our land for money
We have oil and animals that can bring money
Khartoum is not a right place for black people
It is the kingdom of the killers
and we are informing you,
guys who went to Khartoum
We are going to destroy Khartoum

We stopping singing and John Garang said, 'Dear comrades, as you heard the song. I'm here today to assure you that we are going to win the victory. We are calling the World to stand up against the massacre of the civilians in Bor. The killing of young children and women is not allowed in the world. It's a crime against humanity.'

'Today, Nasir Declaration has become another deadly NAZI. Adolf Hitler killed millions of Jews and this pogrom was a clear genocide. These days, Riek Machar has done a similar ethnic cleansing. It is the worst holocaust. We are calling for human rights to intervene and help the displaced people. The leaders of Nasir Faction should stand trial for mass killing of innocent people.'

'Also I would like to assure my dear compatriots that Riek and Lam have no power to topple me or kill the SPLA/M party. Our rebel party is the successful and strong guerrilla movement in the world. There is no comparison between SPLA/M and Nasir Declaration party of criminals. Our aims are well presented to the world. Many of you may have wondered why such a coup happened. I'm here to tell you the cause of it.'

The termites came out and the small birds swarmed and started picking up the insects. A flight of dove came and sat on the branches of tamarind tree where the meeting was taking place. John Garang paused and glanced at the doves and nodded gently.

John Garang looked around and said, 'The oil is a major cause of inter-conflict in South. There are some men who want to come to dig the oil and I don't like them so they incited Riek to overthrow me. They don't know that I'm an invincible hero. In this meeting, you need to bear in your mind that the Nasir Declaration and her partners are not going to defeat us. It's a weak party. You have heard what has happened to USSR [Union of Soviet Socialist Republics]. It has been split up to lose power. America wants to splits us so that we can lose power and victory. Riek and Lam are stooges of America.'

'The government of America uses them to oust me. However, I'm strong in the military. Even if you leave me alone, I'm still going to capture Sudan by myself. Riek and Lam have defected, but they will return to us. The enemies of the South cannot succeed to destroy us,' John Garang said.

The crowd clapped and his deputy said, 'SPLA Oyee!' And we screamed, 'SPLA Oyee!' as a response to John Garang's speech.

'America needs to give us weapons and at the end of war, the American Oil Companies will come and dig the oil and buy it. Politically, economically and culturally, America is not the best country to ally with. In these cases, I refused to align with the government of USA, so the US President Bush pushed Riek to make a military coup. We need to make a friendship with a country that can bring us development,' Garang said and stopped talking. We clapped and chanted, 'Long Live, John Garang.'

The meeting ended and I went to search for my missing parents. I returned to the village but it was deserted. There were no people and livestock. Riek henchmen had burned the village to ashes. Nothing was left, just dry bones and rubble.

THE DESERTED LAND

I stood in silence and stared at the ruins of abandoned home. Indeed, the village had changed its magnificent view and I couldn't recognise the physical features. I looked around nervously, but I couldn't see the balanite tree where my granddad was buried. The trees in the middle of our garden that I used to play in had fallen down. The swarms of ants gnawed them, forming mounds of earth. The green forest was withered by the chemical weapons. I rubbed my eyes and shook my head. I felt strange in my birthplace because the village had gone to ruin.

As I didn't see anyone, I went to the swamp to search for my missing parents. Walking along the Nile bank, I saw footprints which I followed for several miles. I came to a maze, an area of interconnected paths that was difficult to find a way through because the footprints went in different directions.

'Lord, show me where my parents have gone,' I said. I stopped and held my chin. I heard approaching feet behind me so I glanced and saw a young girl in an orange-and-red striped dress. She was tall and cute young girl of my age. I was happy to see her. She smiled and greeted me, "Hi, Jangdit."

"I am fine," I said.

"What are you doing here?" she said.

"I am looking for my family members," I said.

"There are no people living here. Many people have moved across the river. I can take you to the camp if you don't mind," she said.

"That would be nice. Thank you," I said.

"You're welcome," she said. She rolled up her dress and climbed into a long wooden boat. A stinky boar came chasing a sow. "Do you remember me?" she asked.

"Of course, I think we met in the church before the massacre," I said.

"You've a good memory. I thought you've forgotten me," she said.

"You're cute," I said.

"Really?" She asked in surprise. She beckoned me and I joined her in the boat.

"Take this oar and let's propel the boat," she said. We rowed and it was a very exciting trip. A shoebill caught a fish and flew to the shore. On the beach the hippos and crocodiles were frolicking. The wildebeests were grazing on the grass along the river while the marabou storks were flying over with their pink pouches dangling on their necks. The reed, savannah grass and papyrus grew tall and built a thick fence. In the boat, she looked me in the eye and sang:

*Row, row, row your boat.
Gently down the stream
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily
Life is, but a dream.*

(An anonymous composer)

She stopped singing and asked me. "Can you tell me a story?" I didn't answer her. The waves fascinated me and I didn't want to talk. The trip took two hours propelling and I was afraid of hippopotamuses. They swam with their mouths out of water. We toured the Sudd swamp. We rowed to the shore. She halted the boat, climbed out and called me to join her ashore. I felt sad and she said, 'don't worry, you will find your family.

"Nyanpieth, I don't think I will find them," I said.

"Your parents are alive. I saw your dad four months ago," she said.

"Did you?" I asked.

"Yes," she said.

The papyrus and reed were shaking. A cloud was floating across the grey sky. I felt bad while she felt good, enjoying the warm weather. I came to her. "Jangdit, we should have a bath and go to check my net," she said. I smiled at her. "How are we going to take a bath together?" I asked myself. She took her dress off and jumped into the water. "Come on, dude," she said.

"I think it would be a good idea if you take a bath first and I will bathe after you," I said.

"Why?" she asked.

"We would be in a problem if a person finds us together," I said.

"Nobody can find us here. Just remove your clothes and join me. No problem, I promise," she said. I removed my clothes and dived into the river. I sank and swam underwater. I saw a mussel and collected it. I surfaced and said, "Look, I got this on the riverbed."

"Wow! You're a good diver. Can we compete?" she asked. I accepted and we swam across the River Nile. She defeated me four times and I felt jealous. We took a break and chatted.

"I heard that you went to Ethiopia. What does it look like?" she asked.

"It's not green like this Sudd. It is a mountainous region," I answered.

"My four cousins went to Ethiopia and they have not come back. Do you know them?" she asked.

"We were many, approximately 27,000 boys so it was hard for me to know everyone," I said.

"Let's go to check my net," she said.

We went and found it had caught twenty Nile perches. She showed me how to pick them out of the net. We picked and stacked them on the boat. We rowed to the temporary camp. We arrived and a large group of internal displaced people gathered and gave me a warm welcome. They had killed a hippo and her father was glad to receive me.

Suddenly, a tall white man, Marc Nikel from California, USA came to visit the camp. He was walking with three laymen and one laywoman. The local people curtsied and greeted Marc. He spoke the Dinka dialect. It took everyone by surprise to hear and see a white man speaking Dinka dialect. He was working with the Dioceses of Bor. He taught theology and translated hymns. Many people loved him.

Pastor Daniel said, 'We are happy to receive two visitors today; our father, Marc and our brother, Jangdit. We are glad to see Marc. His arrival is a real joy to all of us. I am happy indeed because the white people are our god who gives our daily bread.' He paused and looked around the crowd. He coughed and said, 'Father Marc, you're welcome.' Marc nodded at him and said, "Let us pray: Our Lord, Jesus, You said that bless are those who are suffering

For they will see the kingdom of God;

Now I call you Lord to let those victims of tribal war see your kingdom.

And sit them on your hand.

Protect them from hunger, diseases and death.

I pray in Jesus' name."

Amen!!! We responded.

The marabou came and sat on the branches of the beech trees. A small boy was fishing along the river. He threw his hook in the water and caught a mudfish. He pulled it out. The fish twisted itself, and the boy killed it.

"I am going to tell your uncle that you are here. The car is full. However, I am going to send the car to come and take you to your Uncle," Marc said and stopped talking. I smiled at him.

"You can go back to your houses," Pastor said.

Marc said, 'Goodbye' waving his hands. They entered in the car and left us staring at them in admiration.

A gaggle of naked children scampered after the white Toyota car. Daniel called them to stop following the car. Nyanpieth took me to her hut. It was small and tidy and thatched with flax and palm leaves. The wall was plastered with red ochre. She had hung a picture of Mary embracing Jesus in her arms. A zebra hide was screwed onto the wall. She drew pictures of marabou, flamingo, hippo, and had painted water lilies on the wall. On the door, there was a picture of a wolf barking and a crane swooping down on the trees.

'Marc is working with your Uncle, Bishop Garang. We like him. He came to help us,' she said. I rubbed my nose and yawned.

"Nyanpieth, I would like to leave you. I am going to search for my family," I said.

She gibbered and tears cascaded down her cheeks. I woke up and left her gazing at me in tears. I dragged my feet as I walked along the White Nile. I didn't see a living person, just the ruins of shattered huts and the dry skulls.

The vultures were flying over. The wind was shaking the tall savannah grass along the River Nile. The wildebeests came and entered into the water. A

crocodile bit one of them. The wildebeest struggled to escape but many crocodiles came and mauled it. The animal died after a long struggle and the reptiles ate it.

THE GOLGOTHA

On the third day, I came to a harbour and met Uncle Paul who took me to the camp. On Sunday, we went to the church. We stood up and sang hymn 133:

'May you turn your face to me, Lord?

Let me hear the sound of love,
and mercy in your heart, Lord;
I need you God to bless my life.
You're live of life,
And you're the fitness of soul
that the body squashes.

Chorus

Hope you will respond to me, Father.
I am desperate.
I need your blessing, Lord,
To heal the pain in my heart.

I am surviving on your power my God.
I cannot judge myself away from you;
Even if I am wicked,
unrighteous person in your eye.
I have no another Father with mercy,
And power apart from you.

The Lord calls me to his Kingdom, to live in his name.

If you called me in your heart, Lord,
You whom all the powers stand
You lead me and protect me,
There are many things to shake people on the earth.

My heart rejoices in your name, Lord,
For what you have done to me
I praise you and worship you
Fill me with knowledge of wisdom,
To understand your laws carefully
I lean my life on you, Lord,
Let me dwell beside you.

Pray you, pray you, pray you my God.
Plant the strength of faith in my heart to continue in your Kingdom,
Not to move away from your righteousness.
Continue until the day when my soul flies,
Going to you that's, the day you know to stay with you forever.'

We stopped singing and sat down. Then Paul Kon stood up and said, "Dear Congregation, I would like to thank all of you. The White Army rebel groups burned our village. However, we can worship God under the trees because He is present everywhere. I have a dream that the regime is going to kill me. I need you to stay calm."

The congregation got nervous and many people began to sweat as they heard the sad news of Paul's predicted death.

Paul was a prophet in the late 1980s. He preached the Word of God across the South Sudan. God appeared to him when he was eight years old. He was tending his father's goats in the pasture when a voice came from above. He

opened his hands and blood trickled into his palms. From there it took him quite a long time to join any church because Muslims had burned down the missionary schools and churches.

Following this destruction, the people of the South took arms against the Khartoum regime. Christians all over the world provided humanitarian support to the people of South. The Archbishop of Canterbury sent evangelists to rebuild the old Malek Cathedral. When they arrived Paul Kon joined them. Immediately, he was ordained as a reverend. He preached Christianity and burned idols. He baptised thousands of people. In the short time, he became a pillar of Christianity.

His teachings converted many heathens and Muslims to Christians. Therefore, the Muslims were jealous of him and the Islamic extremists decided to martyr him so that the Word of God would die and the South would remain a nation of Islam rather than a land of Christianity. The Islamic extremists passed laws to get rid of other religious leaders. The conversion of Muslims to other religion is a sin. Therefore, a proselytiser can be hanged.

Before Paul finished talking, a small naked boy entered and said, 'I have seen the militia coming.' We stood up and in the blink of an eye, armed forces surrounded the church.

"Oh, no Lord, let it be a dream," I moaned and groaned as I realised that the armed forces were attacking us.

We ran into the bush. The militia burned the temple and shot randomly. I hid and watched the terrorists of President Omar Bashir shooting Uncle Paul

Kon and his two assistants. Uncle Paul fell down and the blood spurted from the wounds in his head. The sight took away my breath.

I rolled under the desert date trees. The fire soared, burning the grass into ash. I looked back at the killing zone, but there was nobody; people had already evacuated the area. I stood up and staggered under the acacia trees like a drunken man alone. The burning bodies smelled bad and I held my nose. The war zone smelled like a barbeque field. The unsettling feeling in my stomach increased and I vomited.

I finished vomiting and woke up. I wiped my mouth and came to an open space. I stood on the edge of the bushes. The attackers collected a few women, wrapped their hands with the sisal and took them away. I heard the voices of the younger girls crying in the bush. The militia were raping them.

I came and knelt beside Paul Kon's body in prayer. I heard the roar of vehicles. I stood up and saw the military tank and truck mounting up the mound. I jumped into bush and hid, and then the assassins came and threw a security cordon around the bodies on the ground. The killers pulled out their swords and slit the dead men into pieces. I was shocked to see men cutting their fellow men like rams. The butchers finished, put back their machetes and swords in their sachets, clambered up the blue lorry and drove back to the garrison.

I came and three men joined me. We collected the bodies and buried them in a mass grave. The sun sank and we fled to the bush, fearing that the militia might come back and kill us. We slept under the acacia trees and in the morning, we woke up. I was exhausted so the men left me.

In the afternoon, I followed them and met a group of women and kids sprawling in front of the fire under the balanite trees. I stared at them and smelled the roast meat in the ember. I thought it was an animal, so I stooped to look at it clearly. I saw a human skull and stormed off in a fury. I found a ripe holly tree. I plucked plums and sat on the holly's wood and ate them. The sun sank and I slept on the wet ground.

In the morning, I woke up and went to the river. I removed my clothes and jumped into the water. The water made a splashing sound and the men heard it. Five men approached me and a short black man in tattered and bleached khaki said, 'Raise your hands and come out.' I raised my hands and came to the shore. We glared at each other.

"Do you know me?" the black man asked.

"Yes, I know you very well," I said.

"Who am I?" the black man asked.

"You're a perfidious man who betrays his own brothers to the enemy," I said.

"Did your Mum tell you that I'm a traitor? By the way, what is your name?" the black man asked.

"My name is Jangdit, Mr. Malueth," I said. Mr. Malueth was a black traitor who betrayed the black men to Arab. He took the militias to villages and camps around Bor to hunt for those who had joined the rebel forces.

"Do you know a young man by name Bol Jangdit?" he asked. My heart beat to hear my brother's name. His comrades gave me a fierce look. I looked down, and Malueth caught my left ear and pulled it up. I shuddered and sweated. "I don't know him," I said.

"You don't know him. Young boy, don't attempt to fool us. I know he is your brother. Please, don't pretend. What is your family name? I remember you said your name was Jangdit," Malueth said.

"Is he the one?" another policeman asked.

"Nah, he is a brother of a fugitive and he is also a rebel," Malueth said.

"Take your clothes and dress quickly and let's go to where you live," Malueth said. I put on my clothes and looked around nervously. Malueth said, "Move your arse." We left and came along the Nile bank. We heard a sound of an axe cutting a tree. Malueth said, "Guys, let me go to see who is cutting the tree." He went and found that he was my brother. They captured him and took us to *Pan Nyok Agany*. They flogged us with fifty lashes and put us in prison. My buttocks were swollen and I couldn't sit down, so I lay on my front. In the afternoon, the detective sergeant came and ordered the inmates to be flogged. One prisoner was caned with fifty whips of bamboo cane and a hundred strokes of *kurbash*-a whip made of hippo or buffalo hide. In the evening, the wardens tied our arms and legs and took us along the White Nile for an interview. We came to the port and the officers in charge of prison started interview. "Jangdit, are you a child soldier?" the detective asked.

"No!" I said.

"If you are not a child soldier, where did you get your clothes? Your age mates walk naked in the village and you wear clothes. Tell me the truth and the truth will set you free," the detective said.

"I bought my clothes in Khartoum," I said.

"Do you know anyone in Khartoum?" the detective asked.

"Yes, the police commissioner is my uncle," I lied.

"Really, why didn't you say that you are one of us," the detective said.

"What is your Muslim name?" the detective asked.

"Ali Musa," I lied.

"You must use your Muslim name so that you will not be in trouble with us.

We are looking for the rebels and the Christians. We don't have a problem with civilians and Muslim person. Now, how can I help you?" the detective said.

"My brother was captured and he is not a rebel. I wonder if you can help him," I said.

"His case is complicated and I can't release him. However, I will talk to my boss but there is no guarantee that he will be released quickly. His release would depend on what Malueth said about him. I will do my best to help your brother," the detective said, and ordered his friends to untie the ropes on my arms and legs. They cut the ropes and removed the rags on my face. They rolled the plastic sheets, burned them and dripped the hot liquid in the butts of my fellow inmates.

Malueth tied the balls of three men who were accused of being involved in the rebel attacks, removed their testicles. Then he put iron bars in the fire and pressed the hot iron bars on the bodies of my friends.

At dawn, the wardens took us back to the prison and in the afternoon, I was released. I returned to the camp. My friends gathered and asked me. However, the memory of torture and cruel treatment haunted me and I could

hardly speak. On the third day, Mach Kuol came and told us the sad news of my brother's death. We did the funeral without burial. Mach Kuol told us that the killers threw his body in the White Nile.

God abandons us. He leaves us under the power of the invisible devil. He throws us to the hungry wolf. At this century of death and sorrow, I saw grotesque sights of disaster. It roars like the surf of the sea and drowns my relatives in the deep waves. The story of the war is unbelievable to those who've never seen the flames and heard the sound of the bomb, but normal to those who have experienced such a brutal life. I witnessed the disaster that swept away two million Sudanese with a single broom.

The Khartoum regime attacked our displaced camp and we ran to Kapoeta on the border of Kenya. We arrived at 4:20 pm and stopped under the trees near an airstrip. We met a group of Toposa women and girls wearing goatskins and necklaces of colourful bead. The men were naked and dyed their hair red. Some of them were wearing ostrich feathers in their hair. The men made a circle and the girls joined them. They danced and an Antonov warplane came. We jumped into the bunker while Toposa scattered around the airstrip.

The Antonov dropped four bombs which killed three women, two girls and five men. The Antonov returned to Juba and we came out and collected the bodies. The shrapnel had lacerated one woman. We found her one leg, head, one breast and one hand but the rest of body was minced into jagged slices of meat.

I was shocked to see such a grotesque killing of women and children. We came and buried the bodies in the sand along the Singata River and returned to the town. I spread my plastic sheet on the ground under a neem tree and lay on

my back because the night was hot and the images of people who had been killed by the airstrike disturbed me. The regime destroyed us in a similar way God devastated *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* in the ancient World.

THE SECOND SODOM AND GOMORRAH

*The punishment of my people
is greater than that of Sodom...
Without a hand to help them*

LAMENTATION 4.6

The sweltering hot night made me sweat and I woke up and went to the water tap to take a shower. I came to the tap and pumped the water. Then I heard the firings of the machine guns. I raised my eyes and saw the bullets flickering across the dark sky. The armed forces of President Omar attacked Kapoeta town and destroyed it like Sirte City, Gaddafi's birthplace by the coalition forces during the Arab Spring. The aerial bombardment and military raid demolished the buildings and a few people who went to hide in trenches got buried alive. All the buildings crumbled down and the residents ran to Kenya and some to the Uganda border.

I escaped alone, running to Kenya while Uncle's family ran to Uganda. Still running, a male scorpion bit me and I fell down. I rolled on the ground. The scorpion venom made my mouth dribble with the long thick saliva. My left foot swelled and I attempted to squeeze out the poisonous fluid, but my hands were sweaty. I crawled into a ditch and lay there. The pain eased and I recovered from a daze. I opened my eyes and looked back, then saw smoke rising like a huge cloud of ash.

I lifted myself up and moved to the bush. However, the savannah grass and acacia trees caught fire, so I returned to the middle of the road. The flame made me cough and snuffle.

The fire died and I took a scrap of metal and cut the swelling. The venom drained out. The pain reduced and I broke an acacia stick. I limped lamely like an animal with a broken limb along the rough road.

I got stuck in a deep rut. There were a lot of the potholes in the road. I pulled up my legs, but the tendrils of the leguminous plants tangled them. I glanced at the heavens, but the angels were drowsing, so there was no one to come and untie the strings coiled around my ankles.

I crouched down and untied them and left the Land of Dead. Looking down to the next generation of war, I lost my grip on the hope of surviving. I personally bear witness to the atrocities that had been done by the regime. Living in Southern Sudan, you cannot hear folk tales. However, you can hear the horrific stories of genocide committed by the regime, my reader.

I arrived in Narus at ten o'clock in the morning. It's a Toposa kraal where they rear their cattle during the winter and take them to Ngatinga in the summer. Toposa are nomadic people who keep cattle, camels, sheep, donkeys, and goats. Toposa live in a dry desert. There is a little rain in the autumn and winter. The sand is brown. The wind blows all day and night.

The place was hot and damp, so I sweated. I opened a zip of my blue jumper and blew on my chest. My leg was stiff and I couldn't twist it. So I tied the sisal on my calf. I heard the children shouting, '*minye sukun*- fuck you.'

Oh, no God, don't let them abuse me like a white woman I heard being raped by Mr. Lokoter. My reader, an evil man of a difficult personality raped a BBC

female journalist and composed a song, 'I fucked a white woman.' This recollection set my heart thumping.

The naked young boys came and collected boulders and threw them at me. One stone hit my head and I began to bleed. "Oh, God, I'm not Stephen to be stoned to death so help me," I said. A tall girl in a sheepskin came and stopped the boys. The aggressive boys left me and I breathed. She looked probably fourteen judging by the size of her breasts. She wore no top and her breasts were small and erect. She came and massaged my leg and the stiffness reduced.

'Amidst the reeling of the earth, the dead men have heard the thunder of guns while the living men have seen the flame of burning fire. The days of sorrow are longer than the days of happiness. So Mr. Jangdit, keep courage or you'll die on the run,' a voice said.

The girl gave me sour milk. I drank the milk and she left me. The sun set and I squirmed till dawn. In the morning, I heard a clap of thunder across the dark sky. I looked at the heavens and saw the sunrise shining on the hilltop. I felt happy to see the sunlight. I gazed at the sunrise until I dozed off on the bare ground. While I was curled up on the coarse earth, a red ant crept into my ear and bit me. I woke up with a fit of anger. I took a thin stem of the grass and removed the ant. The wind was blowing and the sun was sweltering hot. I stood up and followed my friends to Kenya.

I walked for an hour and heard the voices of people. I raised my head and saw the clusters of huts surrounded by a stockade. I came to Nadapal. A gaggle of children was sobbing at the checkpoint. I saw Abraham sitting on the warped branch of an acacia. I went to him. I was happy to meet him. 'Jangdit, where did you come from?' Abraham asked.

'I came from Bor,' I said.

'When did you go there?' he asked.

'1991,' I said.

'I thought you were killed in Ethiopia. I have not seen you for a year. Thank God, you are alive,' Abraham said. 'Where are your parents?' he asked.

'I don't know where they are. I had separated from them during the Bor Massacre. I have searched for them but I failed to find them. I have not heard of them, whether they have passed away or are still alive,' I said and sniffled.

'Please, don't weep. I guess they are alive,' Abraham said.

'Thank you,' I said and glanced at the grey sky. 'You're welcome,' he said and left me gazing at the heavens. I felt thirsty, so I took a white plastic bucket and went to fetch water from a swale. I came and dug the sand until the sharp lumps of sand bruised my knuckles and broke my nails. In a half of an hour, the water sprang up from the hole. I drank the water. I belched and raised my head.

I looked at the sun and saw a ring of glowing fire around it. 'God, I wish it is not an end of the world. I guess, God, you are not going to destroy the World today as it is described in the Bible that God will pour down the fire to destroy the Earth. I hope today is not the day that the apostles foretold in the New Testament,' I mumbled.

I came back to bivouac from the swale and a person blew a whistle. We packed and journeyed to a safe haven. The road was warty like the skin of a chameleon and a toad and sharp like barbed-wire. The ridges of a mountain hemmed the road. The road ran long and the green hills were rolling away into the distance. We walked for several hours and we were too far away to reach the foothills. My spirits drooped at the prospect of the long, perilous and

arduous journey. We walked up the hill and down the valley to the refuge. The dry streams and gorges disheartened me. I hate walking in the valley, climbing up and going down the hill. The sharp rocks bruised my feet. My ankles swelled in the heat. I knelt and crawled on the rough road like a caterpillar on a dry leaf.

I was pale and weary of crawling. My hands and knees began bleeding. I took some sisal to strangle myself because I didn't want the enemy to capture me. A person tapped my left shoulder. I closed my eyes because I thought it was an enemy. I heard a male voice and glanced at him. I saw Abraham. I felt happy to see him. I got up and he hugged me. "Why are you holding the rope?" Abraham asked.

"I wanna kill myself," I said.

"You don't need to commit suicide," he said.

"Death is the only way to escape this suffering," I said. He held my hands and closed his eyes. "Close your eyes and let's pray," Abraham said.

*Lord, I ask you to give this small boy courage.
Be his shield and light to lead him.
Lord, I ask you to protect us from this sorrow.
Lord, we need your help.
Lord, you're omnipotent and omnipresent.
You have power and present everywhere.
You're the God of poor and desperate people.
We're desperate for peace, comfort, and joy.
God, save us from our oppressor.
Lord, let's reach the Promised Land of
joy where there is no hunger, thirst and war.*

He stopped praying and we opened our eyes. He took his green jumper off and tore it into pieces and tied them on my feet. My feet stopped bleeding and I limped slowly at a speed that made a snail a champion. We reached Kenya's

border. The atmosphere looked different. The sun was hot and the mirage appeared on the horizon.

I hit my right toe on a stone. The toenail broke and bled heavily. I cut a leaf of an aloe and squeezed the sap in the wound. I broke an agave leaf and made it into a bandage. I tied my toe then walked on my heel.

In a short time, I saw a village nestling in the foothills and relief came over me in waves. To the west, the ridge stretched its arms and opened its jaw in the north. The cliff hung like a tassel. The agave, blue sisal, thistle and thorny shrubs covered the land. The swales snaked across the village. On the trunks of acacia, the mildew grew. A white truck was stuck in the rut along the stream. A Kenyan driver was cooking under the balanite tree and three men were snuggled in front of a fireplace. A small monkey was sitting on the stones and eating a green horned melon fruit. There was a carcass of an antelope in the ditch.

We stopped and five young men came to us. I recognised my friend, David. I screamed and hugged him.

"Jangdit, long time eh," he said.

"David, I'm very happy to meet you."

"I'm very pleased to see you," he said.

"Did you join the armed forces?" I asked.

"Yes well, when we ran away from Ethiopia, I joined the armed forces," he said. "I thought you were killed in Ethiopia because I have not seen you. I never heard of you. You told me that you were going to see your uncle and you didn't come back to the dormitory," he said.

"I went to my uncle's house and the rebels attacked the camp. I and uncle's family ran to Bor," I said.

"Did you return to Bor?"

"Yes,"

"Did you witness the Bor Massacre?"

"Yes,"

"How was it?"

"It was the worst pogrom," I said. The tears of frustration cascaded down his cheeks. "David, men don't cry," I said. He wiped his tears away and took me in his hut. We entered and then he went out. In a short time, he brought me a mountain of food in a keg. I tried to eat, but I had lost my appetite. So I pushed it under the bed and asked him. "Can I have a cup of tea?"

He ran into the kitchen and brought me a mug of tea. I sipped the hot tea and sweated. I emptied the mug then left Sudan for Kenya.

On the way to Lokichoggio, the UNHCR had poured down food beside the road: baked beans, corned beef, canned meat, chicken, cartons and tins of biscuits and many packed snacks. I collected a few snacks, put them in the sack and proceeded ahead.

At 1 p.m. I came to Lokichoggio, a dry town in northern Kenya. The climate is hot. The temperature goes up to fifty degrees. The hot weather conditions wither the grass. There is no green leaf. The red sand tints the land. It is a world of sorrow and famine.

We scattered around and the staff of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee came and counted us. The UNHCR estimated that we were 16,000 lost boys, which meant 11,000 were dead or some were in the armed forces. The

UNHCR distributed rations to us. There was no water so I spent three days without taking a bath.

One lovely afternoon, David came and took me to Link Hotel and bought me doughnuts and fried meat. "Where did you get money?" I asked.

"Jangdit, we make money from everything on this land. Last month I went to hunt and killed a leopard, so I came today to sell the hide. We collect crystal and gemstones then sell them to Somalis. We sell the dry meat to Turkana people," David said.

"Good business," I said. We dined and took a rest. The hot sun went down and I said, "I want to go back to the camp." He put his hand in his pocket and took out a note for fifty shillings and gave it to me. "Take it," David said.

"No, I don't need money and thank you," I said.

"You're welcome," he said and put the money in his pocket.

"Take care," I said. He returned to Sudan and I went back to the camp.

I was bouncing along the dirt road to the camp. Then the wind roared like a hurricane and broke the branches of an acacia. I heard a crack and raised my eyes and saw big twigs falling over me. I jumped into a ditch. They fell onto a goat near me. The goat died and I rose up. A herder came and said that I had killed his goat. I tried to explain what happened, but he didn't understand me. The lack of language made it hard for us to understand each other. He took a knife and came to stab me. I took a big stone. Two policemen came and stopped us. I went to the camp. I arrived and went to the tap. I queued up in a line and a UNHCR camp manager, Philip, from Japan came and put his head in the water barrels, washed his hair, blew his nose, and spat into the water. Suddenly, the hungry crowds of angry refugees rushed to him. Luckily, a Sudanese camp

manager, Deng Dau helped him. The President Al-Bashir had bribed him to abuse us. He took our rations and sold it, and then took the money. As a result, hunger killed hundreds of us.

We stayed in Lokichoggio for two months and then travelled to Kakuma Refugee Camp. The sky was grey and the soil was red brown. A few gidgee trees were scattered in the area. There was no winter, spring and autumn. It was only the dry summer throughout the year. The temperature was forty-something degrees. The persistent drought withered the grass and the wind had built up the red sand dunes.

We arrived at 1 p.m. and the Turkana women and girls wearing the goat and camel skins came to us. The men were wearing loincloths with the sandals made from cattle hide or tractor tyre. They put red ochre on their heads. The Turkanans looked thin and starved. The men and women begged us for food. The sun sank and I felt sick with headache and fever because of the hot climate. The warm water gave me water diarrhoea and there was no clinic. Abraham got sick and passed away. The doctors told us that he died from anaemia. His death shocked us. I was sick for a week but I got recovered. I and my mates cut small branches and built our shelters. We put the green plastic sheet on the top. The wind blew all night and day and tore down our shelters.

In a few weeks, Bishop Garang visited the camp and we gathered under the gidgee trees and prayed for God to bring rain. God heard our voices and the rain poured down. Turkanans were surprised to see the rain. For the rain to fall in Kakuma before we had arrived was as rare as Robert Mugabe stepping down from the position of President in Zimbabwe.

The Turkana region is the dry “Famished Land” of the nomadic pastorals who keep cattle, camels, goats and sheep. They don’t grow crops. The trees are orange and leafless. The hot climate withered the grass. Throughout the year, people dig the well to water their livestock. The Terrace River cannot hold water. When the rain falls, it flows with mud.

However, our arrival brought a dramatic change. The rain fell and few leguminous crops germinated. They praised us and tilled their land for the first time in history and the sorghum yielded well.

In the hot summer of 1993, the UNHCR provided stationery and we started learning under the gidgee trees. I learned to speak a pidgin language, a mix of Dinka, Arabic, English and Kiswahili. In the cold winter of 1993, Commander Kuol Manyang came and called a meeting. We gathered at the church and Kuol spoke: ‘I know it is a hard time for all of us. The Khartoum regime recaptured many towns from us. Riek Machar and Lam Akol formed their rebel party and interrupted us from defeating the regime. Their forces killed and drove many people away from home. However, I need the young men and lost boys to go back and fight the regime. I need the children, old men and women to remain in the camp. We have weapons so I need the army.’

Uncle Bishop Garang stood up and spoke: ‘I am happy to see you in a good mood. What Kuol said is true. We need men to go back and join the armed forces. I have donated twenty million dollars to the army. The money shall be used to buy the weapons, but there are no people to use them.’ The crowd clapped and more than 5,000 lost boys volunteered themselves to go to the frontline. We sang a few hymns and Uncle Bishop Garang closed the meeting with prayers. I volunteered myself to join the armed forces.

At twelve midnight, we gathered at the foot of Kakuma Hill. The dark night was dappled with splashes of starlight. The wind was howling. In a line, an idealisation of my ancestral home filled my heart with joy. I was happy to go back to my birthplace. I and many lost boys boarded the trucks and returned to South Sudan. John Garang ordered us to go to Lotukei military training camp. We arrived there at sunset. The sky was red and the land was muddy and wet. It was a red-arse earth, a 'world of sorrow.'

The Red-Arse Earth

It was a chilly and rainy day. The water flooded the area and the white frost covered the Red-Arse Earth. I got flu and disappointed. "Why I returned to Sudan?" I asked myself. I stared at the earthworms moving in the rimes. I grabbed one worm and looked at it. It twisted itself and dangled. I threw it down.

I glanced at the sky and saw the last rays of the sunset disappearing behind the mountain. The place was ringing with a sound of death and sorrow. I went to the stream and then knelt and drank the dirty water. I stopped drinking, raised my head and then looked around, but I didn't recognise where I was.

"Oh, Yahweh, I wanna get the hell out of here," I said. "What place is this? Am I lost?" I said. Across the stream, a mongoose and a cobra started fighting. The snake opened its mouth to bite the small animal. The mongoose bayed and its friends came and mauled the cobra. They ate it and climbed onto the crest of the anthill then stood on their hind legs.

In the stream, the geese were swimming and honking noisily. I grabbed a stone and hurled it at them. It hit one. Others flew away and the wounded one remained on the water. I jumped into the water and collected the goose and choked it. The thunder roared and lightning flashed so the goose fell in the water and the wave took it away. I raised my eyes and saw a black smoke on the hilltop. The water rose and fell over me then I sank down. The waves smashed the shore and broke a tree. The branches fell in the stream while the roots remained ashore. I caught one branch and climbed out. I sat on the grey stones. I heard a voice.

“Young Boy, what are you doing here?” the voice asked. I didn’t answer it. “Do you need help?” the voice asked. “Open your eyes and look at me,” the voice said.

“Oh, God! I don’t want to die here. Help me, Lord,” I said. I remembered the story of Jesus when Satan confronted him in the wilderness. He didn’t afraid of death. This memory gave me audacity to hope that nothing would kill me in the jungle. “Who is talking?” I asked myself and opened my eyes. The wind made the waves across the meadow.

A cock of owl hooted, ‘hoo!’ I grasped a small stone and threw it at the bird. It flew away. I stood up and wandered around then met four young men eating the yellow horned melons. They left and I started picking the fruit. Then a wasp stung my left cheek. I crouched to squeeze out the sting. A python hissed and opened its mouth. I closed my eyes and collapsed. It wrapped itself around me. I covered my mouth and nose with both hands. The large constricting snake started to suffocate me. Luckily, my friends came and saved me. I heard a voice. “Open your eyes and get up,” a boy said.

“Joseph Garang, thank you,” I said. Joseph was my close friend.

I got up and glanced at the heavens and saw the dark cloud drifting across the blue sky. We came back to the camp. It was cold and the other boys went for practice. I sat on the wet ground and wept tearfully. The military training had disheartened me. The exercises of waking up and running at five in the morning made me sick.

In a few minutes, my friends returned from the training field. A person struck a gong and we ran to the parade ground. The trainers ordered us to go and put on the new uniform in welcoming our leader, Doctor John Garang de Mabior. We came and my friends put their new uniforms, but I didn’t change my clothes. I was wearing a black bleached T-shirt and the blue tattered shorts. The mud and foam of the snake were on them. I looked dirty.

The bell rang and we returned to the parade ground. A trainer saw me in the dirty clothes, so he barked angrily, “Why are you wearing the dirty clothes? Didn’t you hear John Garang is coming right now? Go back and change them.” I glared at him and said, “Sir, I’m not going to change them.”

“Have you refused?” he asked.

“Silly boy,” he abused me and blew a whistle. John Garang arrived immediately. He alighted and waved his hands. The armed men patrolled the parade ground. He raised his right hand and said, ‘SPLA Oyee, New Sudan, and Oyee!’ We screamed with joy, singing and clapping to acknowledge his warm welcome. We were happy to receive him and graduate us.

He nodded his bald head and spoke. “I, John Garang, I’m happy to see you in a good mood. You’re the Dispersed Seeds of the New Sudan.” We stood wordlessly. Even the Kapok and sausage trees stopped swaying.

"I come here to graduate you. You have completed your military training and that is very excellent. Training is really hard I know. You have managed it and I am very glad and appreciative of what you had done. Thank you," John Garang said.

We clapped while John nodded gently. "I need you to go to capture Kapoeta this season. This is our land and we cannot tolerate the intruders to take it while we are still alive. We need to sacrifice our lives. We should not give up our land and go to live in exile. We were born here and we would die here," Garang said. He looked around and said, "I'm very happy to see the young children like that small boy," pointing at me. He came and asked, "What's your name?"

"I'm Jangdit," I said.

"Are you related to Bishop Garang A. Jangdit?" he asked.

"Yes, he is my Uncle," I said.

"How old are you?" he asked me.

"I'm twelve years old," I said. He looked around and said, "It's not fair for a small children like you to join the armed forces. The children under the age of 16 are not allowed to join military. However, the war in Sudan needs everyone. Whether you're young or old, you must have to join the army to fight for freedom. I appreciate him as well as all of you who are present here. I hope you hear me." He waved his hands and strolled to a white car.

We felt happy and we sang to bid him farewell. Happiness came over me in waves. John Garang left us in high spirits. His words elevated our morale and gave us hope and great courage to attack the regime. We chatted till dawn.

In the morning, we came and played dominoes under the sausage trees. I looked sad and Joseph Garang asked, "Jangdit, who annoyed you?"

"Joseph, I had a strange dream last night. I dreamt that we were walking on a thin plank across the stream then it broke and we fell in the water. We sank down and the mud collapsed over us. None of us survived in the stream. I didn't sleep at all. The dream recurred in my mind and I tried to interpret it, but I couldn't get its meaning," I said.

"The thin plank is a Kapoeta narrow road and the stream is Singata. We're going to die in Kapoeta," Daniel interpreted. Suddenly, a bell tolled and we ran to the parade ground. We gathered and sang. Then my cousin Commander, Majok, came and addressed us, 'I received a message from John Garang this morning. He appointed me to lead you to Kapoeta. Tomorrow by this time, we will be celebrating our victory. Now go to pack your luggage and get ready.' 'Jangdit come here,' Majok called me. I came to him and closed my legs. 'At ease,' Majok said. 'I need you to remain here,' Majok said. 'Nah, I can't. I want to go with you,' I said.

'You're too young to go to fight. I don't think you are going to endure the horrible images of war. The events will give you trauma,' Majok said.

'I have seen the horrible images during Bor Massacre and I was not being traumatised. John Garang told us that we 'children' should go to fight for freedom,' I said.

'Jangdit, I need you to go back to Kakuma refugee camp for your studies,' Majok said.

'I don't like Kakuma. Hunger is killing people. I don't like it,' I said.

‘Go to Kakuma and after I and my comrades have seized Kapoeta from Khartoum regime, I will send you school fees to go to study in Nairobi,’ Majok said. The news of going to Kakuma set my heart thumping so I bowed and wept silently. ‘Stop crying and go to bring your Kalashnikov to me,’ Majok said.

‘I am not going to Kakuma,’ I said.

His deputy said, ‘let him come with us.’ Majok blew a whistle and the soldiers gathered. They clapped and whooped in joy.

‘Now we are going to Kapoeta. Are you ready?’ Majok said.

‘Yeah!’ we answered.

It was five o’clock in the evening. The day was hot and the wind was not blowing. A dark cloud was drifting across the sky. It looked like it was going to rain. We reached Kapoeta and made deployment along the Singata River. John Garang told Commander Majok to attack the airstrip and Brigade Two to attack the garrison. We surrounded the town and in the midnight, we began shelling the town, but the regime was well equipped with the weapons of mass destruction. The regime bombed us. The rockets fell behind us and slashed down the trees then buried thirty-three people in a mass grave. I heard Joseph crying in pain. I came to help him. The shrapnel cut him into pieces. His lower body was bouncing while his upper body was bobbling alone. “Joseph, rest in peace,” I said. The grass started burning and we marched ahead and captured the airstrip. We advanced to the mosque and found a Toyota car with a Chinese artilleryman died inside. We were surprised to find the China got involved in the Sudanese conflict. Majok

checked the Chinese and a bullet hit him in his chest. Majok fell on his knees, gagged and we carried him to Singata shore.

We gathered around him. The moon waned and so we couldn't see the moonlight. The shore was tinged with the black cloud. I stared at the dark mountain of cloud. I held his chest and I felt the jets of blood spurting from the wound. He lost energy and wheezed. I hit the ground with my forehead. Majok closed his eyes and rested in peace. We dug the sand with our hands and buried him. We were devastated to lose him. My friends surrendered and left me beside the grave. I bowed and wept tearfully.

The fire came burning furiously and I stood up, broke the green leaves and scrambled over the anthill. The smoke made me suffocate and I coughed. I opened my fly and peed on fire but my urine was too little to put out the wildfire. I closed my eyes and said, "Heaven protect me!" I heard the rumble and it rained and the fire died.

I glanced at the red sky and saw the rainbow. I was happy to see it. I broke a fat stick. The voices echoed and the stick fell down in my hand. The cold and fear made me shiver.

My head was buzzing with the gunshots. The grasshoppers were chirping. I followed my friends. I arrived in the desert road. The sand dunes had built the ridges. The cactus and aloe closed the road.

In front of me, a grey smoke was rising from the hilltop. I came to the foothill and the lightning flashed across the sky and the thunder roared. It looked like a volcanic eruption. The plateau had a mystic appearance. I mooched up and down on the slope of the mountain.

On the third day around 12 noon, I met a few survivors from my platoon. The enemy was chasing us. We greeted each other and the blaze in the sky turned to a core of coal. The warplanes bombed us. The grass caught fire and we scattered escaping the fire.

“Oh, God, is this the end of the world? I hope we shall defeat the evil,” I said. “Where are we now?” I asked myself. I glanced up and saw a Chinese gunship flying over us.

The warplane pulverised Jebel Anya-Nya One. The regime used the chemical weapons that killed many of us. I got flu and the bruises on my elbows and knees. On the third day, two hundred of us arrived to the headquarters and John Garang realised that 4,800 lost boys were killed in Kapoeta. The death of a large number of the children shocked Garang and he called an emergency meeting. The executives and all the commanders convened for the meeting under the acacia trees. John Garang spoke: ‘I have realised that the war is going to finish us and I need you to express your opinions, what would be a good approach to the conflict resolution in our country. To me, I have decided that ‘we’ members of Sudan People Liberation Army and Movement party shall go to Khartoum and sign the peace agreement, and what do you think of my idea?’

Kuol Manyang, a commander was in charge of operation, stood up and gave Garang a furious look. He was diehard who believed in a revolutionary concept.

Kuol shook his head angrily then cleared his throat and said, ‘John Garang, I didn’t expect you to show us such a cowardice behaviour. Now you must have to choose between leading us and going to die. If you chose to return to Khartoum, I will kill you and then we can appoint another brave man to lead our party. In 1972, the people of Southern Sudan signed the peace agreement

with Khartoum and now where is it? This is not a time for peace and the meet is finished.'

I screamed, 'SPLA Oyee, Long Live SPLA, Long Live John Garang and I sang and the soldiers joined me.

John Garang is a brave man
like lion and leopard
John, our leader, give us guns
To defeat the regime
Sudan is our country
Let us fight for freedom
Our struggle will set us free
Free from slavery,
Free from oppression
Free from marginalisation

We stopped singing and sat on the fallen branches of beech trees along the Dragon Pond.

THE DRAGON POND

Sitting along the Dragon Pond, I remembered a story that my Dad told me. He explained to me that Africa is the second larger continent, the origin of mankind and the historical site where the early civilisation began in the world. The early man originated in Oldupai Gorge known as the Cradle of Mankind in the Great Rift Valley in Eastern Africa. And the early agrarian revolution started along the Nile valley.

The African climate ranges from tropical to sub-arctic. There are many types of wild and domestic animals. The land is fertile and it has abundant resources.

However, it's the poorest and undeveloped continent in the world due to the corruption, poverty, illiteracy, war, human rights violations, aligned with the superpowers and political struggle.

I heard the whirring wings and looked over my shoulder and saw a flock of vultures flying down. The birds swarmed over a carcass of a black rodent along the river under the acacia trees. The monkeys were eating the horned melons. The weather was cold and a wisp of smoke was curling across the sky.

Still watching the vultures, I continued on memorising. The ancient Africa was the haven of peace for the migrants. However, now, it's the poor pool of blood, the abyss of the death. The beautiful land has become the valley of the dry bones and camp of refugees. He told me that the children of Israel came to live in Egypt. However, in the present world, the children of Africa are fleeing to Israel because of the civil war. "Jangdit, what are you thinking?" Boss asked.

I glanced over my shoulder and smiled at him. Suddenly, we heard the bark of guns and I jumped to my feet. "Jangdit, a man can't be scared of a sound of a gun," Boss said.

"I hate war and I don't like seeing people killing each other," I said.

"Jangdit, don't give up. We shall get freedom," Boss said.

"How?" I said.

"The government of America is going to give us weapons to topple the regime and after we've got freedom. They will come to build their refineries to drill the oil and extract the minerals," Boss said.

"Will this relationship benefit us?" I asked.

"It won't help us, but they don't care about our sorrow. Our sorrow is their joy," Boss said.

"How long are we going to suffer from hunger and war?" I asked.

"There is no end of conflict here. We are going to kill, kill and kill each other until the land shall remain empty. You have seen what had happened in Ethiopia and Rwanda, tens of thousands of people lost their lives. There is civil war in the rich countries but there is no conflict in the poor countries such as Tanzania because there are no resources," Boss explained.

The giraffes and gazelles came near us and stopped to eat the leaves of the acacia trees. The wind was shaking the trees and the dry leaves were falling down.

We gazed into each other's eyes as he spoke, "The America, Russia, China German, French, British and Israel are competing for wealth in Africa and this is why you see people killing each other," the Boss said.

"A good example, the Congo rainforest is the richest region. It has many minerals so America gave Laurent Kabila the weapons to topple Mobutu Sese Seko. Laurent overthrew the regime and he changed his mind so he was assassinated, he said and looked around.

I threw a glance at the giraffes and gazelles then saw a lion creeping stealthily and jumped over one gazelle and then mauled it. The rest of the animals ran away and the attacked gazelle died after a long struggle. The lion bit the dead animal on the neck and pulled the carcass under the mangrove trees.

Then Boss said, "Jangdit, Sudan has many mineral resources. We have diamond, gemstones, ore, steel, gold, aluminium, and copper apart from oil. Therefore, the government of the white people gave John Garang a scholarship to go and study in America. John Garang did his master and PhD

in Agricultural Economy at Iowa State University and military courses at Fort Benning in Atlanta Georgia. After he completed his studies, the government of America persuaded him to form a rebel to overthrow President Gaafar Nimeiry and after he successfully ousted the regime, the America oil companies will come to dig the oil.”

The lion fed and got full then lay drooling at his feet. The vultures came and fed on the carcass. A jeep came, trailing clouds of dust and we waved at the passengers. The jeep passed us, going to the Headquarters.

“However, John Garang refused to sign the deal and that was why Riek and Lam were used by America to stage a coup against John Garang. Who is to blame? Are we going to point our fingers at the people who kill themselves or masterminds who incite the people to commit a crime under the guise of democratisation? The struggle for power and wealth tore our country,” Boss said.

The water rose and fell then moved in a circle. The ripple of the waves attracted me so much. An eagle lunged for a fish in the water. The bird of prey caught the long fish and tried to pull it out of water, but the fish was heavy so it pulled down the bird. The eagle flapped its wings and sank like a stone in the water.

‘Jangdit, this is a world of power. I am going to tell you a story of two men; Mathiang Ajoh and Alier Ngeth who had formed a gang called ‘Scorpion-Eater,’ Boss said.

THE WORLD OF POWER

Once upon a time, there lived two wealthiest men; Mathiang Ajoh and Alier Ngeth. Mathiang was short, brave, cunning, fierce and cute with one eye. His friend, Alier was a tall hungry lion. They formed a powerful gang of voluntary assassins called 'Cham-Cheith-Scorpion-Eater.'

Mathiang was living in the south kraal while Alier was living in the north. They ate and drank the milk together. At lunchtime or dinnertime, Mathiang sipped the milk and sent the gourd to Alier. The Scorpion-Eater carried the milk gourd from Alier to Mathiang or Mathiang to Alier until they got full. After dinner, they sent the Scorpion-Eater to go to beat the drum. In the playground, Alier and Mathiang were the first group to sing and dance.

One warm evening, the cows were mooing and the herdsmen were singing. The smoke of burning dry dung was billowing up. It was the wane of the Dead Moon in the year of Our Lord 1850 in the tropical region of Borland. The sun shone from dawn till dusk. It was the most enjoyable season of the year. The spring had gone and the summer was approaching. At that night, the young energetic men attended the dance and began singing and beautiful young ladies lined up in a long queue. The girls had turned the goatskins into leather and wore it with the necklaces of coloured beads. The girls put red ochre on their heads. The young people were wearing the white ivory bangles on their upper elbows with the corsets of the beads. Mathiang and Alier put the crowns of the ostrich feathers on their heads. On their ankles, they wore the chains of copper. This was the most beautiful fashion. Then Mathiang and Alier walked lamely, holding the bundles of the assegais and nightsticks in their hands while the Scorpion-Eater patrolled the field. The dancers performed like bands of *Maori* doing *haka*. The hoot of horns and bomb of drum drowned the howl of the

wind. The visitors from neighbouring villages attended the dance. Some of them didn't know Alier and Mathiang's idiosyncrasy. "Alier, can we droop or moon?" Mathiang asked.

"We moon," Alier answered. Mathiang and Alier bent over and deliberately exposed their bare buttocks to the viewers and a guest laughed at them. The Scorpion-Eater came and dragged him away. "Man, what's so funny?" Cham-Cheith asked.

"Guys, I've not seen this bad thing in my life," the man answered.

"What is so bad?" Alier asked.

"The way, you have exposed your bare arses to the spectators," he answered.

"I think you've not seen the evil in your life, but today, you're lucky to see and feel it. Do you know us, whom you laughed at?" Alier asked.

"No, I don't know you. I have no interest to know the big men who do disgusting things," the man said.

"We are Lords of this cattle camp. And the laws state that whoever mocks us could be punished," Alier said rudely. "You laughed at us and the world would laugh at you," Mathiang said.

"Did the scorpion bite your arse one day?" Scorpion-Eater team leader asked.

"Nah," the man answered.

"You, lucky dog, the scorpion must sting your arse. I hope you would enjoy it," Alier said. The Scorpion-Eater flogged him to death. He died and the Scorpion-Eater celebrated murder of a rude man. His relatives felt sad about his death. However, it was dangerous to approach the Scorpion-Eater. Alier had signed the slave trade agreement with British Government in Sudan. He

abducted children and sold them. It was a time of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

The British came to buy the Africans and took them to work in the rice field, gold mines, and sugar, cotton, cocoa and tobacco plantations in the Caribbean Islands.

The Scorpion-Eater danced till dawn. In the morning, the body was taken to the forest. In the evening, the heaps of dry dung were burning steadily. The cattle were returning from pasture.

In the north kraal, Scorpion-Eater had gathered and Alier addressed them. "I need you, Scorpion-Eater to carry out a great cataclysm against Mathiang Ajoh. I've realised that he has joined the poor and weak men to overthrow me. I don't think there is a man in this land who can topple me. I'm the greatest invincible man. I created the stories that would be told from generation to generation. Now I want you to go and bring him here." The Scorpion-Eater came and found Mathiang rubbing his cattle with dung-ash. "Mathiang Ajoh, our Lord, Alier is calling you," the team leader said.

"Guys, go and tell him, I would be there in a minute," Mathiang said.

"Mathiang Ajoh, we've no time," the team leader said rudely. He glanced at them and sensed a conspiracy. He sweated and fell on his knees. He was aware of Alier's weird behaviour. He took his assegais "Mathiang, you don't need to carry the weapons, just throw them down and let us go," the team leader said. He put them down and followed them. The Scorpion-Eater brought Mathiang to Alier.

"Mathiang Ajoh, I'm happy to see you. My Friend, this is a red-arse earth. Things can happen in the way you didn't expect them. I've nothing to say, but I wanna give you the multiple choices. The two greatest bulls cannot share

one cow. I think you've seen the bulls fighting over a cow. 'We, 'males,' don't like sharing thing. Cocks, boars, men and billy goats are jealous and rude who behave in an aggressive manner. Now you've to choose between going to bed with my sister or kick the bucket. Your days are numbered, unless you follow my instruction," Alier said.

Alier's sister was a crippled and blind girl. The polio paralysed her when she was an infant. She couldn't talk clearly. Alier briefed her that a man would come to sleep with you so when you feel his cock just scream. Mathiang eyed him and asked, "My friend, do you mean it or are you kidding me?"

"The Big Men like us cannot speak in jest," Alier answered.

"We're family right," Mathiang said.

"Family, that's what I heard from you," Alier said. He smiled at him.

"Mathiang, this is not a time for laughing. It is a time for mourning," Alier said.

"I accept the deal," Mathiang said.

"Thank you. And I know your tricks so don't attempt to go and finger her. She is a virgin and I need you to break her virginity," Alier said. Mathiang went and slept with her. Immediately, she screamed, "It entered." Alier knocked on the door and he came out. "Mathiang, I think you know the marriage regulations. Now you've to choose between paying the full bride price or closing her thighs."

"Alier, I will close her thighs." In Bor, if a man is caught with a girl, he is liable to pay two cattle; one heifer and one bull for damaging her and placating her family. He chose to close her thighs because it is cheap and he cannot take her as his wife. "Mathiang, that's why I love you, you listen to me and do as I

said. Now we are going to your herd. This is the world of power. There is no room for a weak arse," Alier said.

"Alier, a lack of power is an evil, so I've nothing to say. However, the greed will tear this kraal apart." They came and Alier chose his white cow. She was the best and tallest cow like a giraffe with long white horns. Mathiang cried and went to Yirol and exchanged magic for a roan bull. The deity has a drum that beat itself alone. He returned from Yirol and signed a treaty with the British government to protect his cattle and children from abduction. There was a conflict between foreigners and the local people. He collaborated with Governor, Charles Gordon and promised him that when someone killed a British he could betray him. Gordon passed laws that the strong men shall not attack and raid the weak guys.

One red-hot afternoon, Alier came and abducted Mathiang's younger brother Dengajok. He was playing under a watchtower when Alier came and took him. "Alier, where are you taking me?" he asked.

"Keep quiet," Alier said.

Dengajok cried but Alier gagged his mouth with his hand so that people couldn't hear his voice. They arrived in Palabach and Mathiang met them. "Ouch! Alier where you are taking my brother? Dengajok, didn't you tell him that you're my brother?" Mathiang said.

"I told him, but he refused to set me free," Dengajok said.

"Oh, no Mathiang, if he is your brother just take him," Alier said.

"Alier, greed will kill you." Alier put Dengajok down. Then Mathiang grabbed him. Mathiang returned his brother home and Alier went back to his kraal.

In the late summer of eighteen fifty, the war broke out between the migrants and the local people. Mathiang armed the villagers with the assegais and clubs. He told them to murder any foreigner. One chilly afternoon, people murdered a white man. Gordon sent his henchmen to go to bring Mathiang because the person was killed in his territory. Mathiang saw the horses coming and he told his gang to hide behind the bush. "Don't spear them before I have said," Mathiang said and he stood in the path. The white men arrived and Mathiang's cousin stood up and speared one of white men. "Ouch! Kuel, what have you done? Did I tell you to spear a person?" Mathiang said. The sheriff alighted from his horse and asked, "Mathiang, who is he?" he asked.

"My Lord, I don't know him," Mathiang said.

"Mathiang, let us go to see Gordon," Sheriff said. They came to Bor and Mathiang was taken to the court. Under the desert date trees, Gordon asked, "Mathiang can you defend yourself against the brutal attack and murder of my people. What shows he is not your friend?"

"I don't know him," he said.

"Mathiang, we're going to kill him and you would cook his body and eat it," Gordon said.

"My Lord, if he is my gang member, he would boil and if he is not, he would not boil," Mathiang said.

The sheriffs gave Mathiang a knife. Mathiang slaughtered Kuel and cut his body into pieces. He built the fire, poured the water in a big saucepan and put the slices of meat in it. The fire burned and Mathiang did a magic trick so that the water could not boil. He cooked him for six hours, but the saucepan didn't catch fire. The prosecutors saw the fire, but the water was cold in the cooking

pot. The sun sank and the chief prosecutors ordered Mathiang to scoop out the pieces of the meat and bury them. The judges pleaded Mathiang not guilty. He returned to the village and started a campaign against brutal attack and the abduction of the children.

One moonless night, Mathiang mobilised his friends and told them to kill Alier. They came and surrounded his hut. They banged the mud wall and Alier heard the wild noises. He came out and the spears landed in his body. He said, "Mathiang Ajoh, I didn't suspect you to do this to me."

"Alier, it wasn't me. Your greediness and heartlessness killed you. The people, you have tortured are fed up with your bad attitude. This is the world of power and I've no power to help you," Mathiang said.

The British and Arab came into conflict. The Arab leader, Mahdi assassinated the British Governor Charles Gordon and conquered Sudan. Mahdi abolished the common laws and introduced the Islamic laws then persuaded the local people to repatriate British. The residents agreed and expelled the British from Sudan. The Arab took power and controlled the resources then people started to fight for Blood Oil. The Big Boss stopped talking and patted my shoulder. I smiled at me and said, "I hope that you have understood and heard what I told you. I stretched and yawned as I felt tired listening to him. I woke up and walked away dragging my feet on the wet ground. I disappeared and wandered around the bush looking for fruit.

THE BLOOD OIL

"Last month, the Sudanese government earned \$2.2 million from the first sale of oil from the 1,600-kilometre pipeline, which carries oil from the Unity State in the South Sudan to Port Sudan in North," by Chris Talbot, 20 October 1999.

I walked around the bush and found the ripe horned melons. I stopped and started picking the yellow fruit. I heard the whines of the bullets falling around me. I threw down the fruit and ran away. The armed forces of regime shot me because President Bashir declared the scorching earth operation and forced the local people to move away in the oil areas. And those who had refused to flee were killed and driven away to provide security for the operations of international oil companies from China, Malaysia and France.

The armed forces of regime chased me. We ran for a short time and they captured me. They tore my shirt, tied my arms and legs together and pulled me on the ground roughly. The sharp sand bruised me.

They took me to their garrison. We arrived and they beat me. A short man poured the crushed red pepper on my sweaty body. I scratched my body as if I had scabies and he laughed at me. "Feel it, you don't have ears," he said. They threw me into a deep bunker under the acacia trees.

My friends shelled the regime garrison. The bombs fell next to us and the blast blew off the slab on top of trench. Three men were killed in the bunker and I took the blood and smeared it on my face and head so the regime soldiers who had captured me would think that I was dead. I lay motionlessly and the leader of the regime soldiers told his friends to drag the dead to the river. They collected four of us and lugged us into the River Nile. They came and threw us into the water and I sank down and swam under the water. A few minutes, I

surfaced, came out of the water and sat along the Nile Bank. It was the Day of Lamentation.

THE DAYS OF LAMENTATION

*"Look at me, O Lord,
See me in my misery."*

LAMENTATIONS 1:11

I glanced at the sun and left the shore. The hot African tropical sun made me sweat. The wind was blowing with the hot air. I came to the camp and sat on a bamboo chair under the pine trees. I took the spine of a porcupine and smelled it. In a couple of minutes, I dozed off and the roar of a warplane awakened me and I entered the bunker to hide there. I found four men inside. I craned forward to see it clearly. I saw the bombs roaring and flashing like the police cars chasing the criminals.

Before I dropped my neck, the bombs fell around us and blew up. The shrapnel dug the sand and threw it over us. The bunker collapsed and buried us. My torso was out and my lower body was in the open coffin. I lurched in agony, struggling to pull myself out but I didn't make it. The neighbours came and dug us out of the sand then carried us to hospital. We were admitted. The nurses came and gave us aspirin pills. I took the pills.

I lay Prostrated on a shabby and stench bed and a hysterical grief struck me. I gave up hope of surviving in the First World of Death. After four hours in the hospital, I was released and my friends remained there.

I returned to our ruined compound and stared at a black ash of charred grass-thatched huts. The fragments had slashed down all buildings and fence. The airstrike pounded our compound into the particles of sand. The fire burned down grass the thatched-fence. I thought I was dreaming, so I rubbed my eyes to see it clearly. It wasn't a nightmare. Staring at the ruins, the tears rolled down my cheeks. "What a life?" I mumbled. The smell of burnt goats, food and chemical gas made me retch.

I left and came to stop at the junction. I stood on the blue mossy stones and watched the cloud drifting across the grey sky. The lightning was flashing. The rainbow divided the camp into two parts, the south and north. The toads were croaking while the geese and swans were swimming merrily in the stream. The ostriches were running very fast. The hawks were flying over the butcher's shop.

Still standing, the Boss came and said, "Jangdit, I am happy to see you. I heard that the regime soldiers had captured you. Was it true?"

"Yes! And the Lord set me free," I said. The Boss smiled at me and said, "Take this five thousand Uganda shillings and go to back to school." I took the money and walked to a restaurant. I entered and a short woman said, "Hi sir, how can I help you?"

"I am fine and what is your name?" I asked.

"My name is Rachel, a woman who is crying for massacre of black children," she said. "You look familiar and I think I have met you before. What's your name?" she asked.

"I am Jangdit."

"Are you related to Bishop Garang?" she asked in surprise.

"Yes, I am his nephew."

"Oh, that's nice. I love your family."

"What do you have?" I asked. She looked down and smiled. Her happy smiling face attracted me. She has white teeth. She tied a bright scarf around her neck. I winked at her and asked, "Beautiful Lady, what have you prepared this afternoon?"

"We have fried meat, lentil, boiled tripe and anchovy with molokhia soup," she said.

"Give me fried meat and Fanta," I said.

She went to the kitchen, took the golden yellow plates, wiped them with a purple towel and put them on a white platter. I gazed longingly at her. She came, walking on her knees and put down the platter and looked at the floor.

"Here is your order," she said.

"Cheers," I thanked her.

She took her seat beside me and nestled her head against my shoulder. We sat like a couple enjoying the sun on the beach. I looked her in the eye and she smiled at me.

She gave me her daughter and went to stir the soup. The little girl sucked her thumb, drooling at my lap. She came and said, "Dirty girl." She pulled the kid and threw her down.

"You don't need to throw her," I said.

"She dirtied you."

"I don't mind. She is a little girl to wipe her mouth."

"She is not a baby. She is a grown-up woman."

"Is she?"

"Yes!"

"I think you don't know a difference between a woman and a girl."

"I know it."

"No, you don't."

"Darling, I wiped my mouth when I was at her age."

"Don't kid me."

"Believe me."

"No, I can't believe you." She gave me a seductive smile while I ate my meal.

I finished eating and she took the dishes to the kitchen. She came back and wiped the dining table. The sun sank and she said, "Jangdit, can you walk me to my house?"

I nodded at her. We left the market. We came and stood in the dappled shade of a tall pawpaw and she showed me her hut. I decided to leave her. But a strong magnetic force of love pulled me back. I held her and she leaned her head against my chest then rocked her arms around my neck. "I love you," I said.

"How old are you?" she asked.

"I am twenty-one years old," I lied.

"You are not twenty-one. You are fifteen or sixteen, I guess. You are too young to make love with a woman."

"I love you more than money."

"I don't like men."

"Why?"

"A man cheated me and I don't need another guy to give me heartbreak again." After pregnant pause, she said, "Can you let me go, Jangdit?" I gave her my purple handkerchief. She wiped her face and blew her nose. "I want to talk

to you,” I said. She took me in her hut and lit a kerosene lamp. Through the light of the lamp, I saw her weeping. “Why are you crying?” I asked.

“Jangdit, will you marry me?” I love you,” she said.

“In the name of God, I promise you, so stop weeping,” I said.

“I hate myself and this country. Yesterday, I rode to Awaneli market to buy the anchovies. On my way, a man in dirty tattered khaki halted me. I stopped my bike and jumped down and he approached me. My heart beat and I ran into the bush and he fired his gun. Suddenly, the Uganda rebels attacked the market and captured many people. My niece was in the market and she got caught up. The attackers raped her and she is in a critical condition in the NPA (Norwegian People Aid) hospital. She is very young to have sex. I wonder why Nilotes kill themselves. The Ugandan rebels committed the worst atrocities. I don’t want to talk about what they did to us in Adjumani and Arua. I lost five relatives in Arua and two people in Adjumani in 1995. That was why we moved here. I hit my face on a brick wall. I lose hope of getting something good in my life,” she said. The lamp went off and the hut became darker.

“It’s really hard to trip on the gold, but it’s easy to hit your toe on the stone. To get the gold, you must have to dig the deep pits. Sometimes, you might not find a single nugget of gold, but the grains of sand. What does this phrase mean is that, to get something good in your life, you must struggle for it?” I said.

“Thanks you, for your good advice,” she said. I touched her head and she pulled herself closer to me. I threw my clothes on the floor where the ants ate them.

At 2 a.m., the wall cracked open and shattered roof crumbled over us. We made our way out of rubble. The bomb smashed the hut and we thought it

was an earthquake. We came out and the moon was waned. It was so dark. I ran to hide in the bush and I didn't know where she has gone to. I never heard of her. I stayed for two days in the bush and on the third day, I reported myself to the military camp.

The Boss gave me Kalashnikov and ordered our platoon to trace the Ugandan rebels. We came to the border of North Uganda and South Sudan and then lay in an ambush for four days and the Ugandan rebels didn't come so we left the area.

On our way, we fell in an ambush of the Ugandan rebels. They shot us and we scattered into the bush. I hid there and in the morning, I woke up and looked around nervously then saw two friends of mine lying lifelessly on the wet ground. The blowflies swarmed over them. I walked around searching for my friends, but I didn't find them. The sun sank and the moon was waned.

THE WANING MOON

*"The sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light;
The stars will fall from the sky,
and the heavenly bodies will be shaken."*

MATTHEW 24:29

The wind was howling and the stray dogs were barking. The lighting was flashing, but the rain was not falling. I was lost in a narrow rambling path through the hills. I sat on the stones and bowed. I smelled a smoke from the

burning firewood and raised my head. I saw a man sobbing beside the fire. I woke up and came to him. "Hi, what are you doing here?" I asked.

"Can you help me?" he said.

"What is your name?" I asked.

"I am John. The Ugandan rebels mutilated me," he said. The rebels cut off his hands and legs.

"John, I can't help you. We came to gather information about the Ugandan rebels and then we fell in their ambush. They shot us and we scattered. I am lost and I don't know where my friends are. I can't manage to carry you. I don't know where I am and the direction of going back to the barracks," I said.

"Have you seen that big fig tree? The road is passing under it. It will take you four hours to reach the camp. Go and call your friends to come and take me to the camp," he said.

"Goodbye!" I said. I left him and came to the barracks. The land was carpeted by the green sprouting grass. I entered the Holy Cathedral. A flock of bats was hanging upside down. I knelt and prayed, "Oh, Lord, I call upon you today to give us power to defeat Khartoum regime."

The wind shook the building and the rains of dust and tiles plummeted from a rotten roof. I stood up and ran outside. Around the church, the steam of cloud was rising from the wet ground. I slipped and fell in a ditch at the foot of the tall eucalyptus trees.

The lightning flashed and struck down the eucalyptus. The branches fell onto me. I raised my eyes and saw a man rolling in the blue smoke. I tried to stand up, but I didn't make it. I curled in the gully of muddy water and three men came to help us. The rain soaked me wet. I wasn't injured badly. I got the

small bruises on my back. The mist of water vapour stopped steaming. The other victim of the lightning strike passed away.

I glanced at the Holy Cathedral and saw the bricks falling down. They took me to a temporary medical centre. Dr. Kimeri gave me aspirin. I took two pills and went to change the wet clothes. I dressed and told my friends to go and bring John. We went and found him had died from bleeding. A whiff of mud filled the air. A flight of birds was flying in a circle. The frogs were croaking in a pond. We returned to the barracks and I joined a troop of soldiers listening to the BBC News under the fig trees.

A voice on the red Panasonic radio announced, "Commander Arok Thon Arok and the Sudan Vice President Al-Zubeir Muhammad left Khartoum for Nasir and their plane plunged into the Sobat River due to the bad weather. The plane wrecked and killed many passengers. However, Dr. Lam Akol and four crews managed to escape."

We applauded, shouting and whistling. "Long live SPLA." Al-Zubeir was a powerful leader while Arok Thon was an intelligent person. So we were glad to hear that Khartoum had lost the important people. Al-Zubeir had played the important roles in recapturing many towns from us. Therefore, his death was a great joy to us. We danced and sang until night.

The darkness swallowed the dim light of the waning moon. We made a big celebration. We gained a great courage through his death, hoping that we were going to topple the Khartoum regime. We were planning to attack Juba. In a few weeks, the military convoys arrived from Uganda with food and ammunition. We were happy to get the supports from Uganda government.

On Friday evening, the sun was darkened and the moon didn't give the light.

We boarded a yellow Hino truck and left Palotaka for Kitgum. The lights of the yellow Hino truck were not working, so the driver told his assistant to stand on the mudguard and hold the torch. The assistant driver caught the side mirror with his left hand and held the torch in his right hand. The truck slid off the road and overturned. It fell on the left side and then turned to the right side. The truck pinned the assistant driver on the ground. I heard an explosion of a skull and I thought the Lord's Resistance Army had bombed us.

The passengers burst into tears. My head was outside while my lower body was in the truck. I screamed and a friend of mine, Abukajudge came to help me. He held my hands and tried to drag me out. The sacks had pinned down my legs, so he didn't manage to pull me out. He called for others to come and help him. They hauled me out while the truck was roaring and the wheels were spinning. I stood up and felt back pain. Abukajudge teased me. "Why did you cry like a baby?" he said.

"Did you see tears in my eyes," I said.

"There is no water, but you yelled loudly."

"My man, you should feel pity for me. Look at your age, do you think you're a child," I said.

"What makes your blood boil?" he asked.

"You get on my nerves," I said.

"Just calm down," he said and raised his hand to touch me.

"Nah, don't touch me," I jumped back. Then a bulldozer came from Lokung town and lifted up the truck. We collected the wounded and put them in the truck and we returned to Palotaka on August 30, 1998.

At midnight, our leader John Garang came from Nairobi. The bell tinkled ting-ting-ting. We gathered in the field and felt happy to receive him. He came to address us so that we could keep courage to attack the regime. Then the whine of the Antonov made us scatter. We scurried for hiding and the airstrike dropped down five bombs. The three bombs fell in the deployment and killed three men and wounded Abukajudge.

In the morning, the Boss took my gun and told me to take Abukajudge to the Lopiding Hospital in Northern Kenya. A helicopter came from Uganda and took us to Narus. We arrived at five o'clock in the evening and a white car came and took us to the hospital. The road was muddy and bumpy. I tore my sleeve and wrote this poem:

The war sates me
and I'm thirsted for peace
I'm tired of war
and desperate for peace
I'm tired of living in the bush.
Lord, bring peace and take me back home.
Lord, let South Sudan be pride of Africa
God, bless a nation of a people tall,
and smoothed-skin along the River Nile.
Bless us and be our shield and defender.
Let there be peace in the land
Let there be peace in the people
Let peace reign throughout the land;
Unite the people of the Republic of S. Sudan

Bring the peace to the dilapidated nation.

Let us love each other.

Lord, let us see the moonlight.

We arrived at 4:20 p.m. in the Lopiding hospital. I completed writing this poem. We alighted and the nurses showed us where to put our luggage. The wards were full and many wounded slept under the fence, and on corridors. I spread a green plastic on the ground under a small tree and Abukajudge lay prostrated just squirming with pain. We spent three months in the hospital and Abukajudge was released and we went to Kakuma Refugee Camp on Saturday evening.

On Sunday morning, Uncle Bishop visited the camp and he found me. We were glad to meet each other and I could hardly contain my joy at seeing him. He took me to Nairobi city. We came to Nairobi and I felt alive to see the big glittering buildings. The tall buildings were so beautiful and the air was so fresh, conducive and favourable. The Ngong Road was congested and the cold made me shiver. We arrived in the city centre and I couldn't see the tops of the buildings. "Do you live here," I asked.

"No, this tallest yellow building is the office of President Daniel Arop Moi," the driver said. The statue of the first President of Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta was sculpted along the Uhuru High Way and I thought it was a real man. The pictures of horses, Mau Mau warriors, flying flamingos, bronze lion and giraffe sculptures, and statue of Daniel Moi caught my attention. I gazed at the buildings and I was full of admiration. The cars were gleaming in the African tropical sunshine. The glare of the sunrise made me happy. "I love this parade.

There is no light where I was living. The buildings are shacks. The land is dusty and rocky," I said. "I thank you, my Uncle for bringing me to this safe haven. I am glad to be here," I said. We arrived and the driver stopped the car at the gate. We took our luggage and went to the sitting room. We found people watching soccer, Arsenal V. Chelsea match. The weather was cold for me so I went to bed and wrapped myself with a purple blanket. I felt warm and happy to the light.

THE NEW MOON

*'Oh light of the moon
Wrap me
Protect me
Keep me warm.'*

(An anonymous author)

At 10 pm, I heard the pops of balloons in the Impala Club. I came out and stood under a grey concrete fence. I raised my eyes and saw the glimmers across the sky. I stepped on a stone and craned forward to see the sparkles clearly. The balloons burst out, and I dropped my neck. I tried to climb the fence, but the broken bottles and barbed wire on the top of it pricked my hands. I thought a gang had attacked the estate, so I went back to the room to awake my roommates. "Thon, wake up, a gang has attacked us. I heard the gunshots and saw the bullets flickering across the sky," I said. They woke up, and we came out. We left the door open. We stood and watched the simultaneous firings. "It is not a gang shooting," Thon said.

"I think you're blind and deaf," I answered.

"It is a firework party. The Kenya and Zimbabwe were playing rugby. Now the game is finished so they are celebrating their victory," Mading said.

I felt ashamed so I glanced up to refresh my memory. I saw a crescent of a new moon. The new moon was hanging like an old grey hat on a hook. Thon teased me. "It is not funny to me. I come from South Sudan, a war-torn country where there is no firework," I said.

"We don't have it, but you can use your common sense," Thon said.

"I'm not an oracle to predict something I don't know," I answered. They returned inside while I remained standing in the doorway. "Come in and close the door," Mading said.

"Are you annoyed?" Thon asked.

"No," I said.

"Why don't you wanna come in?" Thon asked.

"I'm watching the 'New Moon,' I said.

"Sometimes, you think like a kid," Thon said.

"The moon appeared yesterday," Mading said.

"Thank you, Mading."

"Thon, you're bullshit. The crescent of this moon is different from those I had seen before," I said.

"How?" he asked.

"The moon bent to the right instead of balancing its horns," I said.

"What's so funny about it?" Thon said.

"Don't you know that the horns of the new moon determine situation? When it bends to the left, it means misfortune, but it bends to the right it means fortune," I said.

“And if you know that, why don’t you know the fireworks?” Thon said. I came in and pulled a blanket over me and kept quiet.

In the morning, we woke up and took a shower. Thon and I had the breakfast and went to see his classmate, Kamau. We came and stopped in Gigiri to check a name of my cousin who was waiting for her flight to Canada, but her name was not on the board. We stared at the golden glow of the tapestries on the wall of Canadian Embassy. It is the most expensive and beautiful area. The buildings were painted with the multi-colour. The wind whispered with a soft sound of joy. Thon said, “If I got money, I can buy a house here. It’s clean and tidy area. I love it.”

Two minibuses collided as one tried to overtake another one. The engine of one minibus exploded and caught fire and the passengers began screaming and another minibus drove off at a high speed. I got in a panic to see such as a horrible accident.

Suddenly, a blue-and-white striped minibus came and stopped near us then Thon told me to get on board. We boarded it. Inside, the music was very loud, so we felt happy to listen to a song of 50 Cent “Get rich or Die Trying” because we were struggling to get rich or die trying. We arrived in Runda Estate and alighted at the junction then walked to Kamau’s house.

At the gate, we met a brown dog. He barked and jumped to us. We stopped and cowered in fear. He yapped and wagged his tail angrily. A Kamau’s sister heard the bark of a dog at the gate. She came to us. She is cute with smooth-faced and blue eyes. “Down boy,” she said. The dog sat and twitched his ears. “I’m scared of dog,” Thon said. I kept quiet. “I’m very happy to see you. Just welcome in, guys,” she said.

She took us into the sitting room where a black and white television was shouting. There was a picture of a British old man hanging on the wall. We sat and she went to the kitchen and brought a purple tray of cake and a yellow flask of tea. She knelt and put them on a brown ebony table and said, "Welcome guys and help yourselves."

"Thank you, Winnie," Thon said.

"Welcome guys," she answered. She stood up and glanced over her shoulder. We smiled and she went to the kitchen. We took tea and ate cakes then returned to Woodley Estate with Kamau. It is a small piece of land near Adam Arcade along the Ngong Road between Kibera and Jamuhuri Estate. "When are we going to the club?" Kamau asked.

"We are going now," Thon said.

"Which club is the best one?" I asked.

"Florida 2000-F2 club," Thon said, closed the cupboard and groomed himself. He put a yellow bandanna on his head and a red NBA wristband on his left wrist. He wore the white tracksuit pants to match his white sneakers. I put on a yellow Phat Farm shirt, Sean John Jean and black and white Michael Jordan shoes.

We came out and found two men sitting on the slabs at the gate near the drainage. They were wearing a red sheet of Masai passed over their shoulders and sandals made from tractor tyres. We passed them and one man said, "Hi boys. Can you come to tell us this thing?"

We stopped and returned to them. "*Unajua hi kitu*-do you know this thing?" the man asked. He showed us a Bunsen burner with gold inside. It was sealed and there was a piece of white paper with blue stamp. The price was written in

the block letters and numbers in a red ink 145,000 KSHs. I glanced at Kamau and he glanced at Thon. "It is gold," we answered.

"What for?" he asked.

"It is used for making jewellery," Kamau said.

"Where did you get it?" I asked.

"Oh, I got it in a butt of my employer's car. I'm working as a watchman in a rich white woman's house. This morning, she sent me to go and clean the car. I went and cleaned it and then found a sealed bottle. However, I don't know anything about it because I'm a villager. I'm wondering if you can buy it," Masai man said. Kamau and Thon glanced at me and I looked down. "We are lucky," Thon said.

"How much you sell it for?" Thon asked them.

"It is four thousand shillings," Masai man said.

We negotiated and the men accepted six hundred shillings. We bought it and I returned to keep it. I entered in the room and looked around to make sure that there was no one there. I opened my bag and put it in then locked with a padlock. I went to the lounge and Mading asked me. "Why do you return early?"

"I lost money," I lied.

"Huh! Are you kidding me?" Mading said.

"I don't know where I put them. I searched the pockets and bathroom, but I didn't find them so give me five hundred shillings," I said. Mading climbed the stairs and returned with a note for five hundred shillings. "Sorry for what happened. It's really bad to lose a huge amount," Mading said.

"Goodbye! I will see you later," I said. We went to the bus station. A white minibus came and we boarded it. Inside, there was loud music. A song of 2Pac 'Dear Mama' fascinated me and I didn't want to leave the minibus. The song reminded me of mum. It is my favourite song. "Jangdit, we let us here. This is an end of journey," Thon said. I stepped down and we went to F2 club.

The club was shaking and the blue and purple smoke was flowing out from the barrels above the floor. The DJ played a song of 50 Cent, "21 Questions." We were very glad to enjoy the nightlife. It was back to school time, so many students came to celebrate the happy holiday. We went to the counter and bought some drinks; Smirnoff Ice, Vodka and three bottles of soda: Coke, Sprite, and Fanta. Thon entered in the middle of the dancers and a tall well-dressed girl held him. He saw himself in a large screen mirror on the wall and grabbed his silver chain on his neck and danced twistingly. A short skinny girl tried to give me a hug but I pushed her away. "Hey man, don't you wanna dance with me?" she said.

"Yes," I said.

"Why?" she asked.

"I don't like ladies," I answered.

"Are you a faggot?" she asked. I didn't understand what she meant so I didn't answer her. "Are you...," she repeated.

"What do you mean?" I asked. She laughed at me. I was annoyed so I grabbed her neck and dragged her up. She wriggled and I abused her, "You stinky bitch, I will wipe your arse."

The bouncers came and grabbed my arms and dragged me down stairs.

"Boy, talk like man," a tall fat bouncer said.

"We are family right," I said.

"Of course," he said. I put my hand in the pocket, took out 50 shillings note, clenched my fists and said, 'Share.' We raised our fists and knocked them. Then I slapped fifty bobs in his hand. I bribed them to let me get in the club. "Go back and don't fight. Here in Kenya, there is no fighting and there will be no war," another tall overweight bouncer said.

"I don't think there will be no conflict in Kenya. Power struggle is a cause of ethnic conflict in Africa if you don't know. The Kenyans will fight each other believe me. The politicians will come into dispute and set the tribes against each other," I said. They laughed at me shaking their heads in disbelief.

I returned inside and tapped Thon on his shoulder. However, he didn't feel my hand. They hugged and osculated each other. The girl smeared him with a red gunk that she had applied to her face. On his neck, the creamy grease made the dots. The red stains of lipstick remained on his shirt. The sweat soaked him. The club was full and too hot.

The DJs stopped the music and arranged free style dancing. A short fat boy came forward and danced with glee across the floor. Kamau said he wanted to go back home. We left the club and walked him to the bus station. A red-and-white striped minibus came and Kamau boarded it. He peeped through the window and said, "Goodbye," waving at us.

"We are going to take route number eight to Kibera then we can walk home," Thon said. We came and boarded minibus route number eight. We left the rail station. We came to the city mortuary and our minibus collided with a pushcart. The carter was knocked down. I yelled at the driver to stop. However, he did hit and run. We got the checkpoint on Ngong road and the driver made a sharp U-

turn to Menelik Rd and turned to Kilimani Rd. He crossed to Ngong road near Nakumatt Supermarket. We arrived at the Kibera bus station, the second larger slum in Africa after Soweto in South Africa. The buildings are shacks and it is the most populated and ugliest part of Nairobi. There is no running water and the area is covered by the dirty water. We came home and went to bed straight away. Thon asked, "What time should we go to Eastleigh tomorrow?"

"We would go anytime," I answered.

"What have you planned to do with your share?" Thon said.

"I've not planned anything," I said.

"Why?" Thon asked. I did answer him. "We are lucky to trip on the gold. We stumbled across the money. Praise the Lord," Thon said paused. "I've planned to go to Kakuma when we've sold the gold. I'm happy that God heard my prayers. I had nearly lost my love, a girl whom I cannot live without her. She loves me and I love her. But the poverty makes it harder for us to get married. Her parents hate me because I'm a poor boy who cannot afford the bride price. Her parents accepted two lost boys to compete because they have money. Money can talk here. If I had gone to *Amerika* her father could have accepted me. I was the first boy to approach her when we were living in Sudan. Then she accepted me. Now things fall apart. Nobody wants to see us together. Fortunately, God gave me money. Hahaha! That's cool," Thon said.

We heard the patter of the rain on the roof and a cat cried 'mew' on the windowsill. I felt cold as the temperature dropped down.

"The gold is 145,000 Kenya Shillings. We will give our friend, Kamau 15, 000 KSHS and share 130,000 between us. $130,000 \div 2 = 65,000$. I will buy a bull for 15,000 then kill him to celebrate my luck. After that, I will elope with

Martha and pay the dowry. Whether her parents like me or not, I will take her. I wanna be a rapper like 50 Cent. Music is life. Now tell me your plan," Thon said.

"I cannot count my eggs before they are hatched," I said and fell asleep while Thon stayed awake till dawn. He is an ambitious and optimistic young man. I like him. At dawn, Thon awakened me. I woke up and bathed. "I will ask Mading again to give us two hundred shillings as our bus fare," I said.

"No, you can borrow one hundred shillings. From here to Eastleigh is fifty bobs each person," Thon said.

"In case, we cannot find a buyer. We need to have extra cash for returning home," I said.

"We cannot fail to find a person to buy gold. The demand of gold is high always," Thon said. I went to Mading and said, "Can I borrow four hundred shillings?"

"I have a note for five hundred," Mading said.

"That's fine. Just give it to me," I said. I took the money and came to Thon and told him that I borrowed one hundred shillings.

We came to Eastleigh. It is a sludge suburb on the outskirts of Eastern Nairobi where the Somalis migrants live. The street vendors were touting for customers. People were shouting like the weaverbirds up in a gidgee. There were loud clunks of the minibuses coming and going to the city.

In Eastleigh, the gold is sold in a small stall next to the shopping mall. The marketplace is sloppy. The dirty water flows every day. A street boy took mud and flung it at us and said, 'fuck you, Sudanese, go back to your country.' We ignored him and entered the stall then a woman fully clad in a black burqa

beckoned us. "*Horiya, kuja hapa*-guys, come here. Are you looking for gold?" she asked.

"No, we are selling gold," Thon answered.

"Let me see it. Is it 9 or 18 carat?" She asked.

"We don't know," I said.

"Where did you get it?"

"Dad sent it to us from Sudan," Thon answered.

"Oh, Sudan has an expensive gold that is 21 carat," she said. A short man with a long colourful beard heard a few snatches of conversation and so, he beckoned me. I went to him. The woman called him while he kept quiet. The woman and man started quarrelling and three people came and stopped them. The man left and the woman said, 'Please, take a seat.' We snuggled in front of her. I nestled my head against Thon's shoulder.

"I will weigh it and then we can discuss the price. The price of the US dollar rises up today so you are lucky to get more money," she said. She poured the nuggets of gold into her left palm and they shone with a yellow hue. She smiled and winked at us. My heart beat while Thon laughed. She put them on a scale. "Sorry, it is not gold. It is a non-metallic element," she said. Thon was shocked to hear that it was not gold while I laughed. "Where did you get it?" she asked again.

"We bought it yesterday from Masai men," I answered.

"They had cheated you. Here, we have scams that bilk people so don't buy things from the vendors. Wrap it well and go to throw it away. Watch out for the police, they may arrest you if you get caught," she said. "They ground a cassette tape with a padlock. It is glistening like gold. You cannot discover

through looking, unless you put it on the scale. The none-metallic elements are light while the metallic elements are heavy,” she explained. Thon felt sad and started blaming me. “It is your fault you know,” he said.

“How?” I answered.

“You didn’t believe it,” Thon said.

“My brother, stop admonishing me for no reason. And what you want to know is that, I’m not a sort of person who gambles. So if we ran at a loss. It doesn’t matter to me,” I said.

“Fuck, how are we going to get home?” Thon said.

“We will walk,” I said.

“Oh! Jesus Christ, I can’t walk home. I couldn’t believe how things turned ugly. I thought God had visited us with a golden gift. My hope is shattered,” Thon said.

“I have some cash so let’s go to have lunch in an Ethiopian restaurant,” I said. We went to the restaurant and ordered two plates of injera. We dined and went to Zimmerman.

In the evening, we returned to Woodley and I poured down the fake gold on the dining table. I told the story and Uncle Bishop Nathaniel gave me two thousand shillings. My friends were shocked to see it.

In the morning, I received a call from Kakuma to attend the interview on 22 July 2003. My cousin who came to New Zealand applied to New Zealand Immigration to take me there.

In the evening, I travelled to Kakuma. We came to Lodwar and the police gave us hard time. They charged each of us to pay 300 Kenyan Shillings. We paid the money and came to Africana Hotel and slept there.

In the morning, we booked a minibus to Kakuma. At 11 am, we boarded and a turn-boy said, "Get up and let this passenger go to the back seat." I came down and he told his fellow Kenyan to sit on my seat. "Get in and stand," the turn-boy told me.

"I can't stand inside, so take your ticket and refund me," I said.

"We don't refund the customers, so it's your choice either to stand or remain here then look for another minibus," he said. We quarrelled for ten minutes so I entered in the bus and we left Lodwar.

I stood bending and the minibus bumped then banged my back and head on the ceiling. "Driver, stop the minibus," I said. He refused so I grabbed his collar and pulled him behind. The minibus jolted to a stop. It had nearly hit the rocks. I got three nasty bumps on the back of my head. The passengers screamed in terror.

"This minibus is not going ahead unless you give me back my seat," I said. Three women starting crying and a young girl urinated on her seat. "She got up and said, "Come and sit on my seat."

"Me, I can't sit on your pee. I need my seat," I said. The man who had taken my seat stood up and I sat down. We came to Kakuma and the police charged the driver with an excess of carrying one extra passenger. I collected my bag and went to the camp.

On my way, a girl called me and I stopped and she came and gave me a hug. I was shocked and blinked as if I was eating a hot meal. It took me by a surprise to see her in a different skin colour. She was as black as tar. Then she applied peroxide. So she became as pale as a ghost. We didn't meet each other for ages. I saw her and I couldn't believe my eyes. I thought she was an Asian

girl. She blanched and the chemical speckled her skin leaving a lot of the freckles. There were black spots around her lips, brows and knuckles. She whispered in my ear, but I didn't hear a single word.

I came to our compound and in the morning, I visited her and explained to her the badness of makeup. At that time, the chlorine acid burned my palm. We were making an experiment in the school laboratory. I poured chlorine acid in a tube, and took zinc metal, copper metal and magnesium and put them in another apparatus. Then my classmate came and poured them in cork chlorine. The chemical puffed and spilled over my hand and then burned me. I showed her the scalds.

The chemical damaged her skin badly. The temperature in northern Kenya was 48 degrees Celsius and this hot climate is not suitable for bleaching. She got pregnant and became a mother-to-be. She went to the hospital to give birth, but a baby got stuck in her, so she had an operation. The doctors wanted to stitch the wound, but her body was soft like a cloth soaked in chlorine so it tore like the rotten meat.

Providentially, her God helped her at last and her body stopped tearing and then the doctors stitched her. After she was released from hospital, skin sloughed off like a dead skin of a snake. She was healed but her skin cracked like a dry bark of an acacia. She shed her skin like a dead skin of a gecko in which she looked as pale as a wingless termite. The peroxide tarnished her beautiful dark-olive skin. I didn't expect a person to cast its skin like a reptile.

I looked at her in the eye and said, "I know that lifestyle has certainly changed. We are now impostors. We make the false claims of other people identity. We mimic other identity. The boys plait their hair while girls wear

trousers. The teenagers get married at an early age which is not a part of our culture. Nowadays, all the ladies bleached their skins. I am strongly advising not to bleach your skin anymore.”

I advised her and went back to our compound. I came and went to bed. The night was hot and windy. The hot weather made me sweat all night. In the morning, I woke up, bathed and went to Zone Three Parish. I came and sat on the bench of mud. I closed my eyes to pray and a twig fell onto my head. We used to pray in the paling because there was no large building. I opened my eyes and saw an image of a young lady. I tried to recall her face, but I didn’t recognise her. “A voice said, ‘brother didn’t you remember me?’ Suddenly, I stood up and returned home. At the gate, I met Mading. “Hi!” he greeted.

“I’m fine,” I said.

“I’m looking for you,” Mading said.

“Why?” I asked.

“I received a message one hour ago that your sister had returned from Nuer,” Mading said.

“Really! Is she alive?”

“Yes! She is alive. Let’s go to Zone One. She is waiting for us on the radio call,” Mading said. We came and I took a handset. “Hullo, this Jangdit speaking,” I said.

“Hallelujah! You are alive. I saw you when I was abducted. I prayed God to protect you,” she said.

“Did you get married?”

“Yes!”

"To whom?"

"My abductor married me."

"A guy who had killed your relatives?"

"Yes!"

"How many kids do you have?"

"I have seven kids."

"How did you come?"

"My husband told me to visit you."

"Where is he?"

"He is in Akobo."

"Will you go back or stay here with us?"

"I will go back."

"You won't go back."

"No one will take care of my husband and kids."

"Look! We can't discuss this case on radio. I will go to Bor and then we can talk about it. I'm happy that you are still alive. Let's stop here."

We stopped talking and I felt happy to hear that my sister was still alive. I spent 12 years and I didn't hear of her. I suggested that she was dead. Hearing her alive made me feel happy all week.

On Friday afternoon, I came to the International Organization for Migration, New Zealand Office (IOM) for an interview. The wind was blowing and the pigeons were sitting on the top of the fence. The sign reads "Welcome to UNHCR Kakuma Refugee Compound," filled my heart with joy. I stopped at the gate and showed my appointment letter to the security guard. "How are you?" I greet.

"I am fine and how can I help you," the security guard said.

"I have an appointment today at 3 pm," I said.

"Which embassy?" he asked.

"New Zealand Embassy," I said.

"Oh, it is a good country, wish you a good luck," he said. I entered and an usher took me to IOM, New Zealand Office. On the veranda, a nest of refugees waiting for interview seated on the long benches. The butterflies were flitting over the sunflowers. I stared at everything and a tall New Zealander man met my gaze. His eyelids flickered slightly and I smiled at him. "Hi," greeted us.

"We are fine," the crowd answered.

"Who is Jangdit?" he asked. I raised my hand and said, "Here I am."

"I am Peter Kennedy, please, follow me," he said.

I stood up and followed him inside and he said, 'take a seat.' I sat on a soft chair and gazed up at the ceiling. The room was cold with an air conditioning. A feeling of great happiness gripped me. "Thank you for attending the interview. I am an immigration officer working with refugee resettlement," he said. I didn't answer him. "When did you leave your country?" Kennedy asked.

"I left in 1987," I said.

"Why?" Kennedy asked.

"The government armed forces attacked us so we ran away," I said.

"Have you joined armed forces before?" Kennedy asked.

"No!" I denied.

"What are you going to do in New Zealand?" Kennedy asked.

"I will go to study," I said.

"The education in New Zealand is good. The New Zealand qualification is recognised all over the world," Kennedy said. It gladdened my heart to hear the good news of New Zealand. Your interview is finished so go and wait for the results," Kennedy said. The interview went like a dream. I left in high spirits and returned home.

I spent two weeks and returned to Nairobi. I arrived in the evening and went to bed. In the morning, a friend of mine who came from US called me to meet him at Serena Hotel. I came and met him waiting for me at the reception. "Hey!" he greeted me.

"I am fine. Thank you, David," I said.

"I have not heard of you for a long time. I think it is nine years. Last season, your Uncle Bishop Garang went to USA and I met him so I asked him where you have been and he told me you are staying with him. I am glad to meet you," David said.

"David, when did you quit the military? I thought you were still in armed forces," I said.

"Do you remember the time we met when you were coming to Kenya?" David said.

"Yes, I remember the time, you came to Loki and took me to the Link Hotel," I said.

"I spent one year in Sudan and I came to kakuma. I asked your friends and they told me that you went to Sudan and joined the armed forces. I was sad to hear that you had joined the armed forces. Now you made a good decision to

return to school,” David said. The time finished quickly. I looked at the watch on the wall and it was 7 pm. “David, I need go to back. It is not safe to travel at night,” I said.

“That’s fine,” he said and gave me seven thousand shillings. I took the money and left him in the hotel. I came to the city centre and I didn’t recognise where I was. I stopped walking and began to look around nervously. The grey mass of tiny particles rose from the ground. I glanced at the sky and a black smoke began to haze over me, so I couldn’t see the billboards. “Oh, God! I want to get the hell out of here,” I said. I saw a telephone booth. Three girls were standing beside it. They were wearing glittering corsets. The neon light illuminated their faces. They were gleaming like the moths in the dark night. I was surprised to see them half-naked. “Wow! They are very beautiful girls. Why don’t you go to talk to them?” I mumbled.

I glanced at them and entered the booth to make a call. I put my hand in the pocket and found a ten shilling coin. I took it out. Then I slid it into the slot and pressed zero then the telephone gobbled it. I banged the booth and one girl slid in, took the handset in my hand and slammed it back. My heart beat and I sweated. “Hey dude, what’s zup?” she said.

“I’m fine, beautiful young lady,” I said.

“You look tired. How can I help you?” she asked.

“Oh, well! I’m a Lost Boy,” I said after a pregnant pause.

“Where are you going?” she asked.

“I am going to Kenya Bus Station on Kenyatta Avenue,” I said.

“How much you got?” she asked.

“I have twenty shillings,” I answered.

"Hmmm, you came here with twenty bobs," she said. I kept quiet because I didn't understand her mother tongue. "Do you need a girl?" she asked.

"Yeah, yeah," I said nodding gently.

"How much will you pay?" she asked.

"Is it not for free?" I asked.

"Where did you come from?" she asked.

"I came from Sudan," I answered.

"Sudanese, nothing for free of charge here in Kenya. Pay me what you got," she said.

"I don't have money," I said.

"Do this, if you don't like me. I will call another girl and then you could pay her," she said.

"Oh no, I'm not looking for sex," I said.

"And what then are you looking here in the Koinange Street?" she asked. It is a red-light district.

I cast a glance at her and she put a pistol on my forehead. She ordered me to lean against the cold wall of the telephone booth. I did it and raised my hands. She searched my pocket and found a red leather wallet. She checked the wallet and found two ID cards; the school and the Sudan People Liberation Movement (SPLM) Membership. She put the wallet on her pubes and searched me again. Around my waist, she found a hem of shorts. "Why do you wear two pants?" she asked.

"I'm feeling cold," I said.

"Then pay me to warm you up," she said. She put her hand in the pocket of my shorts and found a bundle of seven thousand shillings. She pulled it out and

gave the money to her friends. I closed my eyes and she slapped my cheek. "Are you a son of Dr. John Garang?" she asked.

"No! I'm a high school student," I said.

"And where did you get more money?" she asked.

"My school fees," I lied.

"Your school fees!" she asked. "All men come here with money like you are skirt-chaser. I think you are one of them," she said.

"Believe me, I'm not a masher," I said.

"I know you are a fox so don't try to fool me. Kiss me," she said.

"No, I can't. I think you know the HIV/AIDS nowadays. It's killing thousands of people every day. I can't flirt with a streetwalker," I said.

"Are you afraid of AIDS?" she asked.

"Yes! I'm afraid of it," I answered.

"Who a deuce...?" she said.

"First thing, you want to know is this? I'm a pastor," I lied. And the God condemns fornication. It is not safe to play sex with a prostitute," I said.

"Are you a pastor?" she asked.

"Yes!" I said.

"Hmmm, you are pastor mkoroh-criminal priest," she said.

"No! I'm not pastor mkoroh," I said.

"Well, I need a holy man to bless me. I have been fucking around, but I didn't get pregnant. However, when God gave me the priest, it is a great joy to me," she said. Two people came and she gagged my mouth with her hand. They passed by thinking we were street-lovers enjoying the nightlife. She grabbed my collar and dragged me to the cracked wall of the city market. On the ground,

there were chunks of brick and the piles of rubbish. The place was stinking of the rotten fish and vegetables.

I lost my temper after telling her several times to leave me. I clenched my fists and knocked her down. She fell on the rubbish while the pistol fell between her and me. I bent over to grab the gun. She got up and kicked me in the abdomen. She spun and gave me another kick. It weakened me. I tried to run away. She kicked my legs and I fell down. She tried to kick me in face, but I caught her left foot and got up. She tried to pull her foot, but I grasped it tightly. She writhed and I pushed her back and she fell on her back. I kicked her in jaw. She screamed in terror. Four people came running towards us, so I ran away. A person hurled a stone at me. It hit my back, but I kept running away.

I came to Uhuru Park. It is a very busy park in the city where the churchgoers gather to worship the God. I like it. The green lawn of grass and flowers attract the butterflies. I stopped and the policemen came to me. "Sudanese, what are you doing here?" Sergeant asked.

"My Boss, ten muggers robbed me," I said.

"Here, in Kenya, people don't walk at night," Sergeant said.

"I know it," I said.

"I think he is a thug," a tall policeman said.

"I'm not a gangster," I said.

"And why did you walk at night?" policeman asked.

"I was going to where I live, but I was lost and the robbers attacked me and took my money," I said.

"Take him to the police booth," the sergeant said. They took me inside and beat me with their batons. "Remove your clothes," the sergeant said. I

removed them and they checked the pockets and shoes. "Why did you do this to me?" I asked.

"Do you go church?" the sergeant asked.

"Yeah, I go every Sunday," I said.

"Didn't you read the punishment of Sudan in the book of Isaiah? Let me tell you, God, Himself, would not come from Heaven to whip you. It's us. If we allow you to enjoy your life here, you might forget your home. We must mistreat you so that you must have to entreat for God to take you back home. The Egyptians abused Israelites so the children of Israel return to the Promised Land. Likewise, if you feel comfortable and happy there would no need to think about your home. We need you to go back to where you came from," the sergeant said.

"Today is our day of sorrow and tomorrow would be your day," I said.

"Give us ten thousand shillings," the sergeant said.

"I don't have a single coin," I said.

"Bring your hands," the sergeant said. They shackled my arms and took me to Nairobi Maximum Prison in Industrial Area. They removed the shackles on my arms and pushed me in a fusty cell. It was congested and there was no ventilation. The inmates slept on the cold dirty concrete floor. I held my nose to avoid the smells of urine and human waste. They gave us maize grains and beans. I refused to eat there. I spent two days and my friends didn't know where I was. On the third day, I was taken to the court. A judge asked, "Young Boy, what have you done?"

"My Lord, I was walking at night in Uhuru Park then the police caught me and took me to jail," I said.

"Are you a criminal?" Judge asked.

"Naw," I said.

"What are you doing here?" Judge asked.

"I'm studying here," I said.

"Why did you walk at night?" Judge asked.

"I came to the city to meet a friend of mine. Unfortunately, a gang attacked me and took my bus fare so I decided to walk home," I said.

"Where do you live?" Judge asked.

"I am staying in Ugumo Estate," I answered.

"You can't walk from city to Ugumo? It is far. Here, in Nairobi, people are not allowed to walk at night. Secondly, you don't have a valid document to live in Kenya. I will charge you on three counts of walking at night, having no valid passport, and being an illegal migrant that would be equivalent to the amount of thirty thousand Kenya Shillings that's a period of three years behind bars," Judge said.

"My Lord, I don't have money," I said.

"What will you do?" Judge asked.

"I will go to custody," I said.

"Will you manage to stay for three years behind bars?" Judge said.

"3 years is not a long period. Nelson Mandela spent 26 years and I'm happy to stay in jail for 36 years. Suffering is a part of man's life," I said.

"Sign this paper. Then get back in the cell," the judge said. I signed the document and put the pen on it. I raised my head, smiled at the judges then marched to the cell, just waving at them. Behind me, I heard a voice, "Young Boy, come back," one of the judges called me. I stopped and made an about-

turn then went to him. I stopped in front of him and he said, 'go back home.' I sweated and rolled my eyes in disbelief. I walked off, looking at the ground.

I came home and my friends were shocked to see me. I got grief for losing my wallet, belt and mobile in the jail. My clothes and shoes were torn and I looked sad. I took a hot shower and my cousin Deng who is in Australia called me. I told him what had happened to me and he sent me three hundred Australian dollars.

I felt happy to get money and I came into the Western Union Bank. In the lines, the customers were moving slowly like the cars at 4 p.m. The breaths filled the bank and it was too hot. I saw a street boy wearing a black ragged jumper and bleached shorts. He covered his nose with his left hand. I went to teller 4 and he went to teller 5. He drew a torn book from his armpit and scribbled amount of one hundred shillings. He gave his chequebook and 100 Kenya Shillings to a cashier. We finished at the same time and I called him, but he was scared of me.

The people of middle class don't talk to the people of lower class in Africa. He thought I was one of the rich people who hated the poor. I pulled out two hundred bobs and gave it to him, but he refused to take the money. The bank clerks and clients stared at me in awe. Some were sad while others were happy. A short fat woman wearing an expensive gold chain around her neck and a diamond bracelet on her wrist said, "Hey! You don't need to throw away your money."

"I don't think I'm throwing away my money. Giving a half of my income to a poor bastard is not a sin. God helps me in order to help people in need," I said. "What for?" the street boy said.

"I'm happy to help you. I understand the life in Africa is hard so if I find someone who has a vision and good planning, I can help him or her. No matter where are you from? I must give you a hand," I said.

I slapped the note in his hand and bounced away happily. I stopped on Kenyatta Avenue and bought a new phone then went back to Woodley. I came home and my mobile rang. I put it on my left ear. "Hi, this is Jangdit speaking."

"What is up? Jangdit, I'm calling from New Zealand," my cousin said.

"How is New Zealand?" I mispronounced.

"No bad and how are you doing in Nairobi?" he said.

"We are fine," I said.

"Well, I got the good news for you. The New Zealand Immigration had granted you a refugee humanitarian visa to come here. I signed it today," he said.

"Oh, that's nice, man," I screamed with joy.

"What is wrong?" Thon asked.

"My cousin said that the New Zealand Immigration approved my visa to go there," I said.

"You are lucky to go to the paradise. I need you to go and do my process to go there," he said.

"I am going to help you," I said.

The sun sank and we returned home. I had a bath and joined people in the lounge. I came and sat next to Uncle Bishop Garang and he began praying for Sudan Comprehensive Peace Agreement. "Almighty Father who is in Heaven, I call upon you today to pour your holy spirit on us. I'm calling you, Lord to protect our leaders: George Bush, Colin Powell, Kofi Annan, Tony Blair, John

Garang, Omar Bashir, Yoweri Museveni, Mwai Kibaki and the rest of the World leaders who are coming for signing of the peace agreement. Lord, be their guardian.”

“Tomorrow is the last day and I hope things are going to run well. You said that, there is time for everything. There is time for sorrow and there is time for joy. We have been living in a deep grave of sorrow for decades, but today I hope you will pull us out of it. There is time for war and there is time for peace. We have been fighting for decades, but today I hope you will bring the peace to the dilapidated nation. I want to see the moonlight. In You, Lord, everything is possible,” Uncle Bishop closed the prayers.

We dined and went to bed. At dawn, Jomo Kenyatta International Airport was tied up. The security controlled the Airport because the world leaders were coming to witness the peace agreement. I came to Nyayo National Stadium.

The presidential motorcades beeped at me. I moved to the roadside. The convoy of presidential cars entered the Stadium and I followed them. The Stadium was dazzling with happiness. The groups of people were dancing and singing cheerfully. I stood and watched them. They were wearing the traditional sheets passed over their shoulders and holding the long shields with the spears made from the cardboard. It was the joyous day. On the stage, a short man, John Garang in a sleek black suit stood in silence and read loudly:

With this peace agreement, there will be no more bombs falling from the sky on innocent children and women. Instead of the cries of children and the wailing of women and the pain of the last 21 years of war, peace will bless us once more with hearing the happy sounds of the children and women who are excited and crying for joy. This peace agreement will change the Sudan forever. Sudan cannot and will

never be the same again as this peace agreement will engulf the country in democratic and fundamental transformations, instead of being engulfed in wars as it has always been for the last 184 years - since 1821, when our country was first invaded by outside powers and exposed to the ravages of the slave trade and predatory commerce of all sorts, and since before independence from 1955 in civil wars. This peace agreement, therefore, signals the beginning of Sudan's second Republic of the new Sudan. From here on Sudan for the first time will be a country voluntarily united in justice, honour and dignity for all its citizens regardless of their race, regardless of their religion, regardless of their gender or else if the country fails to rise to this challenge of moving away from the old Sudan to the new Sudan of free and equal citizens, then the union shall be dissolved amicably and peacefully through the right of self-determination at the end of the six years of the interim period.

John Garang CPA Speech at Nyayo Stadium,

Nairobi, Kenya, January 9, 2005.

John Garang stopped addressing the audience and climbed down the platform. The celebration ended and we returned home. People were happy all over the world not only in Sudan. The Kenyan Bus Company had given us a free ride and Safaricom Company had given us a free call for two hours. I stayed for five months and on June 24, 2005, I received New Zealand Permanent Residency visa. The sun sank and I went to bed. An idealisation of coming to New Zealand made me happy. In fact, going to overseas was my dream. In the morning, my relatives and friends gathered to celebrate my departure. We ate a thanksgiving dinner and the elders gave me a piece of advice. Uncle Bishop spoke:

"I am indebted to all of you who are present here today. We need to pray for Jangdit to travel safely and go to study hard. I have been to America, Australia, UK and Israel. The Education is good overseas. I encourage him to go to New Zealand. It is a good country." "Jangdit, go to study hard. We don't need you to go to get involved in drug. God will lead you and protect you through your journey," Uncle said. The women screamed with joy. I nodded at Uncle Bishop.

"In 1987, 27, 000 lost boys went to Ethiopia and Jangdit was one of them. He was six years old but he endured the hardship as we know that many of the boys had passed away. Tens of thousands were killed during the civil war and 3,800 went to America. I went to USA and told them to study hard and come back to build South Sudan. The Lost Boys are hard-working and I like them," Uncle Bishop said. An old man coughed and yawned as he felt tired.

"Our readings are in the books of Isaiah 18, verse 7 and Matthew chapter 13, verse 3-9. *"The Parable of a farmer in the book of Matthew 13:3-9. Jesus said 'there was a farmer who went to sow his seeds. As he was scattering the seeds: some seeds fell along the footpath and the weaverbirds came and ate them. Some seeds fell on the rocky places... among the thorns, which grew up and the weeds choked them. Some seeds fell on the fertile soil and grew well, yielding thousand sacks,"* Bishop explained.

"In the book of Isaiah 18:1-7, "They will be left to the mountain birds of prey and to the wild animals; the bird will feed on them all summers, the wild animal all winters. At that time, gifts will be brought to the Lord Almighty from a people tall and smooth-skinned from a people feared far and wide, an aggressive nation of strange speech, whose land is divided by rivers," Bishop said.

"Do you know what land and people Prophet Isaiah described in the Old Testament? The land is Sudan and the people are Sudanese," Bishop said.

"Sudan is divided by the Blue and White Nile. And the birds of prey fed on us- Sudanese as well as wild animals. Dinka are the tallest people on the earth and an aggressive nation of strange speeches, whose land is divided by White Nile. Part of *Equatoria* and Jonglei are along the Lower Nile while another part of Equatoria, Nuer, Ngok, Shilluk and Bahr el Ghazal are along the Upper Nile. This is why I referred on these verses to story of Sudanese. We scattered around the world. Wherever you go, you find Sudanese people. Some children fell into the jaws of starvation and died from hunger. Some children fell on the fertile soil "Foreign lands" where they found a better life. Some children fell into the jaws of war and it killed them," Bishop said. "You can stand up," Bishop said. We stood up and sang a psalm of David, 28:6-7.

Praise be the Lord,
For he has heard my cry for mercy.
The Lord is my strength and my shield;
My heart trusts in him, and I am helped.
My heart leaps for joy
And I will give thanks to him in song.

We stopped singing and sat and then Bishop said, "To me, Jesus was paraphrasing the book of Prophet Isaiah and I'm now interpreting it. Those children are not lost boys, they are *the Dispersed Seeds* of South Sudan scattered all over the World. God will protect the lost boys and they will come back home to build our nation. Thank you and God bless you."

The celebration ended and my friends returned to their houses. On July 5, 2005, I came to Jomo Kenyatta International Airport. At 8 pm, I boarded a plane to

Bangkok. I entered and the plane took off. The bumps of airplane made my stomach churn. I peeped through the window and watched the snow floating above the 'Land of the Long White Cloud.' A Boeing 777 landed and I fell on the 'Fertile Soil' where the Dispersed Seeds grow well.

Let there be peace on the Earth.
Let there be peace amongst the people
From now on
I sang.