

Her Beautiful Eyes

“I can’t run any faster, can’t we stop for a while?”

“No Kafa, we have to keep running until we get to safety. Do you know who is following us?”

“Yes, but my feet feel like they are going to crumble into a thousand pieces. Please dad! We have been running for so long.”

“Kafa, I will carry you. We need to at least get to the next town before we rest.”

I started to cry. I couldn’t keep back the flood of tears that streamed down my face as I stood in the arms of my father. We stood there for what seemed an eternity, but it couldn’t have been a shorter period of time. My father picked me up and started running into the night. That moment in time is one that I will remember for the rest of my life. My head was nestled into my father’s chest that smelled of eucalyptus and freshly roasted coffee beans. I could feel the beat of my father’s feet pounding on the ground as he ran.

I saw the villages we passed by, and all of the little lights that shone throughout the houses. The people had no idea what was coming. I wish we could stop and warn them, but I knew we had to keep running. The trees we ran through all seemed to stretch to the sky. The stars were white dots on a blue sea. They seemed to move and sway as the night passed by. My eyes slowly closed. I was tired from all of the running, but I didn’t want to fall asleep. I could hear my father’s pulse and his heavy breathing radiating through his body as my ear was pushed into his chest. All of my senses vanished into thin air as I fell asleep.

I woke up in a small hut. The room was filled with light coming from the little doorway. I smelled the aroma of coffee as the breeze blew it around the room. I didn't know where I was, and I was scared. I didn't know where my dad was.

"I see you rested well Kafa," I heard a voice say from across the room. There was a middle aged woman sitting by the doorway. Her face glimmered as the sun reflected off of it. She looked at me with eyes that reminded me of my mother. Her eyes looked like a bird as it flew through the air. Calm and gentle, not caring about anything in the world. They were just like mom's. More than just her eyes reminded me of mom. The way that she talked, with a smooth voice that seemed to come down from heaven. I can still remember the day when my father and I were separated from my mother. When we had to leave, without saying anything.

We heard that the army was coming to our town, and we had to get out as soon as we could. My father got our belongings together so that we could run away. Me and my mother went to the well to get water. There was a long line of mothers and children, waiting to get water for the long journey out of the country. The rushing noise of all of the villagers was silenced by the sound of gunshots coming from the forest. My mother grabbed my hand and started pulling me away. All of the villagers scattered as we ran back home. I looked back to see the army coming out of the forest. Hundreds of young african men dressed in green flooded out of the forest. I could see their eyes as they shot their guns at the villagers. All of the sudden the tug on my hand stopped. I looked forward and saw my mother on the ground. I knelt down at her side, and started pulling her up. I looked up and saw my dad running down the street. He saw me at my mother's side. He came over, took me by the hand, and pulled me away. I didn't know why

we were leaving mom. I didn't realize at the time, but from the way that dad cried that night I could tell that mom wasn't coming with us.

"Kafa? Are you okay?" It was the same woman. Her hair glistened in the sun, just like mom's. I was frightened of her, but there was something about her that I couldn't stop from loving.

"Kafa," my father came in the room, "we need to keep on going. The rebels are still coming."

"But first you need to eat something. I will get some bread for you two," the woman said as she left the hut.

I got up, not quite sure what was happening still. My legs were sore, but I knew that they would get better. My dad walked out the door into the street. I ran up to him and hugged his leg. I loved my dad, and I needed him even more that mom wasn't coming with us.

"Kafa, I am going to go and ask some questions, okay?"

"Can I come with you? I promise I won't..."

"No. Stay here and wait for me. It won't take me long."

I slid down the wall and sat on the ground. Everything in the village reminded me of home. The smell of roasting coffee beans, the sound of the abandoned dogs as they ran through the street, the chickens running around, and all of the little boys, like me, chasing them. I missed playing in the streets back in my village. I could see my father talking to a group of young and old men. I wasn't sure what he was asking them. I didn't quite understand everything that dad told me. I was only five years old, but I was starting to understand things better now.

"What's your name?" A boy my age sat down next to me, "Are you new here?"

“Me and my dad are running away from the rebels. We are just resting so we can keep on running.”

“How long have you been running?”

“Since yesterday afternoon. We ran the whole night.” He seemed like a nice boy. I think me and him would be friends if we lived in the same village. He wore a blue torn shirt, and a old pair of black shorts. He was chewing something in his mouth, it looked like acacia gum. “Where are your parents?”

“She is going to get some bread for you and your dad.”

“She’s your mom?” I asked. I couldn’t stop thinking about mom when I thought of the woman.

“The rebels did something to my mom. She isn’t coming with us.” I missed my mom. I could remember all of the times we played games together, and the times when we would collect food. We would always go and get water together, but I didn’t think that we would be able to do anything together anymore. I didn’t know why she wasn’t coming with us, just that she wasn’t.

“Are you going to run away from the rebels?”

“I don’t ...”

“Kafa, come on,” he interrupted, “we have to go. The people don’t know anything about the rebels coming, so it’s best if we start running now.”

I stood up next to my father. I wasn’t even half his height, but I felt more like him every day. I still felt sore, but I knew that we had to go, so I didn’t say anything. The woman came around the back of the hut with half a loaf of bread. “I’m sorry, this is all I have to offer.”

“Thank you. We will never forget what you have done for us.” My father turned away and I followed. We started towards the forest, ready for whatever was before us. I looked back and saw the woman and the boy standing by her side. Both standing in the doorway. I still couldn’t stop thinking about mom when I saw the woman. The boy was me, and the woman was mom. I took off running towards her. Something was pulling me there, something I still don’t understand.

“Kafa! What are you doing?”

I kept on running towards the two of them. I stood in front of the woman. I waited there, and then did something I didn’t expect. I clung on to her. Just like I did to mom. The rough dress she wore brushed against my face as I wrapped my arms around her legs. I stepped back, turned around, and ran back to my father. I looked back one more time, and instead of seeing the face of the woman, I saw the face of my mother.

“Goodbye mommy,” I said on a quiet voice.

“What did you say Kafa?”

“Nothing.” My father wouldn’t have understood, but that was how I said goodbye. That is how I said goodbye to my mother, something I never got to do. We kept on running, through the trees, hoping things would be better, but in the end, nothing was the same without mom.