

MY THRILLER JOURNEY

By Daniel Akur

Most journeys have planned to be exciting and enjoyable. My journey...My journey was unplanned, unexcitable, and disagreeable. My journey, however, started around midnight in the year 1987, when I was six to seven years old. The government militias fired automatic weapons on our village in southern Sudan. I was sleeping in a small hut with my elder brother, while my parents were in their own hut. The sound of weapons startled me awake. I called on my brother, who was lying beside me but he couldn't wake up. I started screaming and ran out. I was terrified and confused, didn't know where my parents were. I hear my father say, "Run, run, run!" That was the last time to hear his voice.

I fled barefoot in Adam's suit (naked) into the dark woods, where I joined other boys who were running. I just kept running and eventually I stop. I walked for days, then weeks, and finally months, before realizing I would never return home and see my family again. The rough journey seems an impossible feat for a six-year-old. Just imagine, when the pain in my legs become too much to bear, I cry for help, but no one show up to help. I walked like castrated bull and more slowly as tortoise.

I had gone days without food and water. I sucked liquid from mud and sometimes drink my own urine to keep my throat ddwet. I fed on bitter leaves and roots for survival. I stayed out in rain and hot sun because of fear. Some boys died of starvation and dehydration. What horrified me most was the night. I was afraid of wild animals, leopards, lions, and hyenas. I slept in the trees, and it was very cold, about 40F and I had nothing to cover myself to stay warm. Some other boys who lagged behind became easy prey for lions and hyenas. I kept walking and prayed in my heart, Hoo! (Nhalish) to call on God! Are all children around the world in the same condition? A child elsewhere enjoys the clear blue sky, inhlea the fresh morning air, and drinks a clear cold water from the lily's pond and engulfed by the warmest parental love.

After spending three months in the jungle, living with insects and friend with trees, I reached the border of Ethiopia. I thought life would be better than in the jungle. We cross the small stream to the small town known as Panguda. The other boys and I found a few people in town and the local authority approached us and gave us some beams with maize. They said, boil them and eat them. Your help will be here soon. We spent two weeks without food. Our number started to increase, and the town bebecame a refugee camp, where wwe depended on countable beans and maize. When the beans stop dancing (boiling) with maize, we had a meal.

I didn't have enough to eat in those days, and nowhere to sleep. However, I spent all time picking dropped beans and maize just to survive. I slept on the grass, where the biting mosquitoes didn't allow me to rest comfortably. I keep wondering, are all children around the world in the same condition? Why me? Oh God. A fox has a den, and a bird has nest, but I had nowhere to lay my head.

The camp was overcrowded with no proper hygiene. As result diseases epidemic. Chicken pox, cholera, malaria, and whooping cough killed a lot more boys around me. I was suffering with malaria and whooping cough; I was just waiting for my time to come. I grew weaker and thinner with countable ribs. I lost hope and waited for death. I lay along the road side in dry dusty air like a log of dry wood with no dreams, just waiting death. I grew up like abandoned child; no mother, no father and no future, just waiting for my world to end. I don't know why I survived; maybe it was something that God planned.

In few weeks, the relief workers from United Nations and Red Cross arrived with tears in their eyes. [They] shortly scrambled to provide us with shelter food and medical attention. We stay in Ethiopia as refugee and group of orphans under care of United Nation High Commissioner for Refugee (UNHCR)

After nine years, it came like a dream that United States of America allowed the long suffering orphans to resettle all over States. My morning sun has risen, and I have smelt the western air, the hope I had lost has been restored, I escape the death and found the peace that I was looking for in United States.

Editor's note: The last paragraph differs from the account Daniel gave in an interview, and information from other sources. After four years in Ethiopia, Communists overthrew the Ethiopian government, and the boys found themselves running again – across the raging Gilo River during the rainy season, through the southeastern part of the Sudan, and finally to the Kenyan border, where they lived for nine years in Kakuma Refugee Center until 2001, when the US government resettled 4800 of the Lost Boys of Sudan throughout the United States.