

## My Childhood [REDACTED]

I am a young Somali girl who face hardest moment in life.

I am 18 years old. I was born in Somalia where horror was basic need in our everyday life.

I am a simple person who hides a thousands feelings behind the happiness.

My life in my country was so hard because of so many reasons.

My parents make a decision to give me to someone when I was five years old. My mother, she didn't raise me up as childhood. My family was poor and live in the countryside. But the person I was given to was living in the city.

Always life in the countryside is hard because people in countryside they don't stay one place like the city people. They move from place to place. They came to the cities once in a month for their normal shopping. Their work is to look after their goats, sheep, cows, camels and donkeys but they don't take wool from their sheep like others. Our houses are temporary - made of a mat of grasses so that we can take the mats when we are moving to an other place. We also use the camels to carry our family possessions. Donkeys are also a valuable animal in Somalai and we use them to carry water from the well or rivers when they are far from the living place. Sometimes we have to go far - some kilometres for water so we use the donkeys.

The food we eat at the countryside is maize rice - always with milk. At the countryside we don't use vegetables. Most of the place are dry and people go so many kilometres to find food for their animals. Sometimes they go to the national parks to find food for their animals and they face hard moment there.

When the war start many people lost their lives and the ones who remained became poor and died from lack of food and water. Some people came to villages which is near the cities to do some forms and they can get food for their children. But the people who have camels are better off than others because camels can survive for long period without water. In the dry season a camel needs to drink water once every twenty days, while the sheep and goats need water every nine or ten days, and the cattle need water every two or three days. Life it was that much hard in the bush -or the countryside.

My parents think if they give me to someone life will change for them. Time goes and I was taken by that person. I start new life but nothing changed and it became opposite because their (my family) life was tough still. In some ways it was good for me because the woman she teach me the Quran which means a lot to me - though I didn't finish all. In some ways it was bad for me because I didn't get what every child needs. No one raise me like a child or what child need in his childhood. But most of the girls my age at that time were with dealing with so many problems like mine.

The person treat me worstly. First she never carried out the promise made with my parents and my future. I can only say I was a maid without payment. I used to do what ever she (the woman) told me and look after the house when she is away. I was cooking cleaning and etc. She never think twice that the person she is doing this to is a kid not an adult. But Allah was all the way overcome my sorrows. Day by day nothing was changing in her attitude. I used to

wonder why she is such and such a way with no feelings in her heart. For example if I ask her about my education, immediately she would change the topic and send me to do some chores somewhere else. She never gave me a chance to reach my goals in life. I was young and my mind was busy – like a fifty year old person - because of the circumstances.

One night I decided to confront my fears and talk to her whether she like or not. As I stepped forward to open my door I can hear my heart racing at a thousand miles in a minute but the reality was to face the show I could not care anymore. Nine years of my life was wasted for nothing. As I go near her room my eyes were full of tears because I knew the person she was. I told her I want to help my family and to let me join the schools. But she replied “if you don’t stop this I will send you back to the countryside”.

It was so awful for me and I was so upset about it that it was repeating in my mind like how we repeat songs when we listen to them. So many things were running through my mind and I didn’t know what to think or do. Confusion made the worst because I didn’t know what I really want. I always question myself whether the decision I want to make is wrong or right. It’s a complicated world yet I find myself a part of it - to live and make the smallest things worth of it. When I find myself in this situation the best thing I did was to turn to Allah almighty for his mercy to get through this phase of my life, when I see I didn’t have anyone I can share my problem and what happening to me with.

I am still young and life was so hard to me. I was adding ideas to my mind some weeks and I decided to go away and never come back. It was evening when I finished my work. I put my clothes into rubbish bag and I told the watchman I want to take the rubbish outside. Then I go away and leave that place forever.

I didn’t know other place to go but I won’t live there anymore. I am fighting for my dreams. I went to a friend’s house and stayed there for some days. All that time I was fighting for my dreams. I have no experience and I make many mistakes but that is the miracle of life. Then I go with a friend’s mother to get me out of the country and leave my loved ones. I really want to go back to my family but my mind told me they will take me back to that house again.

I went to Ethiopia. I face so many hardships when I was passing the border but at least I did it - but it was not easy for me. The lady left me and I was alone and no body was helping me. I am in the bus now on my way to Adisababa - the capital city of Ethiopia. One lady, she is next to me, started talking to me saying things like: ‘where are you going?’; ‘you’re young, where is your parent?’ I told her everything. She really help me. She was kind. She take me to her cousin’s house and told her ‘help this girl’. She told me, ‘if I find job for you can you do?’ What she find for me was house-maid and I do because I needed to. I started learning English - step my step.

My sister told me we (my family) moved from the bush and are in small village near the city. Then I came back home because I was firstborn to my mother. When I call my sister she is telling me she was so worried after so long of me being lost and no one knowing where I was. Everyone was happy to see me back and some of them thought I died. But when I see the life of my family I was not happy with it. I was hoping one day it will change and I was so confused at

the same time the fighting in my country continued. Being with my mum was so good - only we are poorest but we thank God because we get something to eat.

I think: 'I have to do something about this life', and I go to the city, Mogadishu, where my step mother live. Mogadishu is most dangerous of cities in the world. I decided to learn more and help my family. It was a good chance for me to learn English. I knew education is the key of our lives but bad luck [REDACTED] was also there to stop the girls from learning. They only allowed the boys. Allah was always there with me all that hard moments and things go the way I want after a while. [REDACTED] were there to disturb me and force my marriage. I refused and run away to my sister who lives in Kenya. I stay there and help my family. After some time suddenly my mum got sick and I have to go back home inside of the horror. My mum was in hospital inside Mogadishu for some days and became better and she went back to the village. I stayed with my step mother again for some time. Day by day nothing changed - life was normal but I didn't give up fighting for my dreams. The beauty of life is to fall seven times and get up eight times. I advise myself no one is too old to learn. If I missed the chance to learn I didn't want my siblings to suffer the same. I was still thinking I would be able to help my family then in early 2013.

The [REDACTED] group come back again for the same issue. I refused again and my brother too he said they won't do that to me and treat me bad. After two days they kidnap him. It was crazy world that I faced. They told my dad to give them a lot of money or they will kill him. My dad didn't have any money so relatives and friends of my cousin collect some money. But it was little bit more. My dad call them and give them the money and they release him. Then my brother walked away and leave us because of this (lack of) safety. I, myself, think about where I can be safe too because no more staying in Somalia - my life was in danger. I talk to my father about it and I told him I want to go somewhere I can be safe and help them. And he told me: 'I want to tell you the same idea'. Then we agree and I leave my homeland and my loved ones to help them and to have better life. It was tough life but I am tougher.

No one will notice your tears

No one will notice your sadness

No one will notice your pain

But all will notice your mistakes.

-----

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

## Chapter 3

### My trip to Australia

It was not easy for me, my trip to Australia.

I came from the horn of Africa all the way to Australia. I hadn't heard about Australia before. What I was looking for was peace, safety and a better life. It was not easy and was a long journey. I decided I needed to leave Somalia and come to Kenya. I was in transit for some hours, then the plane took off to Malaysia where I stayed five days with a smuggler. I paid him huge amount of money and was nothing left for me to use personally. I did all of that to save my life and to help the weakest people who I left back home to have a better future. My days in Malaysia was hard and I worried so much because I was alone and no one was looking after me except Allah. Then I came by boat to Indonesia where I faced unforgettable moments.

We were in the sea like 18hours. When we reached the edge of the water the police saw us. None of us had documents. We ran away from them. Some of us ran back to the water and some to the forest - with a lot of bad injuries in their legs because the forest was rough. The smuggler also ran away from us when he saw the police. The police caught some of us and some of us hid ourselves inside the forest. We were thinking, 'how can we get out and enter the village'? After a while we came out and started walking along the edge of the sea again, but still the police were nearby. We saw their car and we came back slowly. The worst was when we saw an old man and we said to him: 'help us. The police are after us'. He told us: 'many people like you are in the jails in this village. They came without document's'. He asked 'do u have money to give me'? We said 'yes'. He took us to his house. We stayed like 20minutes and when his wife came she asked, 'who are they this people'. He told her: 'they are poor people and the police are after them'. Even she didn't wait for him to finish before she told him: 'they have to leave now or I will report them'. We were so upset and just continued walking for little bit longer.

It became dark but we kept walking. We saw a light so far away we thought it was a torch but when we came near we saw a shadow and we find out it was a car. One of our member went closer to find out who is inside. Someone was inside but the person was sleeping. Then we discuss whether to wake him up because we are nearly to die from lack of water - thirsty and hungry. He wake and he was so surprised and shout. At the same time he asked us 'who are you'? We told him everything. He told us 'I am a taxi man'. We asked if he can help us with his phone. He say 'yes I can help you'. We called the smuggler and we told him where we are. The smuggler told the man where he can bring us, but the funny part was we didn't understand who is the police and who is the smuggler because they all look same. The man dropped us into the hotel. When we sat down to eat food the police was following us because the hotel people had rung them. The smuggler came back to us and told us we have to hide ourselves somewhere. He pushed us inside a toilet and locked us in there for almost 3hours. After the police couldn't find us they left. The smuggler came back and opened the door for us and took us to another place which was better. We were tired. Time had become nothing to me but a march toward my life. I wanted to sleep; I wanted to dream; to pull me from swirling around me; to put an end to this ache that consumes me. It was so difficult and I was just saying to myself: 'my country is suffering, and I am suffering too and my name has changed in to refugee'.

In the morning, when we woke up, the smuggler brought a bus to take us to Jakarta. We are on the way for three days. On the fourth day we reached Jakarta. He took us to a small house in which you can't talk – even is hard to breath- and we stay there for some days. Then one night he told us we going to leave tonight to Australia.

I was so afraid because it was dark and everywhere was so silently and no one was around there, only us. We come out of the house near the edge of the sea. They bring a small fishing boat. We get inside and go to the middle of the sea where another boat was waiting for us. This ship was not that much larger and people were many. Some people became sick and vomiting a lot, but it was a month of Ramadan, and I was fasting all the days I was on the boat. We are 40 and above and the sea was waving a lot, but in God's hand you're always safe. When the journey was 4 days the boat start breaking and the nails wore out and the wood was broken and there was no more nails at all. The water was coming inside from time to time. On the 6<sup>th</sup> day of the journey I gave up hope for life and I was waiting for when the boat will sink. I gave all my hopes to God. I was praying and asking God, 'when will you take my soul away'. Really I became hopeless but when I saw [REDACTED] - she was one of my friends and she was nine months pregnant - I was feeling more brave. I looked at her condition and made myself stronger. I couldn't sit at all because my bottom was cooked like a meat. Since the journey start I was sitting on the wood, the same day the boat became so heavy and crew told us we have to throw our bags.

The journey was 7 days and 8 nights. On the 8<sup>th</sup> night, around 10:30pm, the Australian navy saw us and come near our boat. If they didn't come we would have died. They gave us life jackets. Even they were not with us five minutes and the boat started to sink. We were almost an hour in the water. I was happy when I found myself on the navy ship. I couldn't imagine that I am alive. I was give up for life. I thank God who save me from that ocean. The navy take us to Darwin detention centre and the next day they took us to the Christmas Island.

Christmas Island is a small land but it is safe land. My advice is don't try to risk yourself to come by boat at all.

The past is where we learned the lesson; future is where we apply the lesson. Don't give up in the middle like what I wanted to do that time. It is the possibility of having a dream come true that makes us entrust our life to the unknown.

## Chapter 4

What is happening in my country.

We were born in endless war and grown up with unfair life. There are no rights for young or old and still we cope with it. While some of us suffer without parents, others have parents but the parents have nothing to give them - like food - and make the decision to give them to others and these children are grown up with fear. No one treats them like a child. Others, they already die because of lack of care and food. Still others will look forward to revenge the death of their families and parents when they become age of eleven or fifteen - carrying a gun. This is what we have seen in our past happening to my country.

I refuse to forget any details. I have got such a story to tell again and again. Thousands of my people are homeless and live on the streets, while others try to go to different countries without documents and face jail. No one can imagine how hard or scary it is to travel on a boat or 'illegally'. You just need peace which is the most important thing in the world - and we need a better life. When they come to the right place it can cost them so much problem - like twice what they have had before. So much stress thinking about those they left back home. While away from them they always feel part of them is missing, especially when they are in a troubled country like Somalia where the fighting never ends.

They have come all the way to search for a better life and survive so many things but the worst thing in my country is that always you have to be aware you will die sooner or later. Because there has been no peace for 24 years now we are just thanking God to keep us safe from the cruel people who have no heart; these people whose only need is blood of poor people. Your thoughts will be the world is not a good place for you but then you see the sweetness of peace when we come to the foreign countries. But our parents will never give us a chance to give up and they used to encourage us and do their best to make us grown up. Our parents, they succeed in giving us hope and faith that no matter what life teaches us we have to remember our God is always there to pick us up. I believe no matter how distressing are so many lessons in life, life teaches us that patience is the best thing anyone could have. Whenever you miss your loved ones, think about the sweet moment that you had with them and you will feel better instead of stressing yourself. Too much depression is not good for your life.

My worst night mare is whenever I think how awful it was travelling by boat. I thank God to make me safe in peaceful place. I thought after I survived: I will reach all my goals, all the troubles seem like air to me and I will rise. Although all the past is rooted in pain, I rise and I am ready for the beautiful world. And soon I feel like I will get appetite with a taste of success.

## Chapter 5

What is life.....

One of my best friends used to tell me life is universal, deep like an ocean, hard like a mountain, kind like a mother. Everyday brings new things in life. So many people face so many difficult things but this gives us experience and we learn what life is. The best life is to live with your

family and two parents because they will never see your bad ways. The worst life is when you see how beautiful the world is and you can reach toward it but face so many hardships. But it will one day end. I am in detention now and for sure it is hard to be locked up somewhere but it gives me more experience and I learn many cultures' religions and more. There are so many people with different behaviours - some are good and some are bad. I used to think only Somalis are refugees but I saw other people who came from other countries who also have the same problem like us and suffer the same. I also see some people just came to change their life style they have no problem in their country. They were confused when I tell them about my country and how life is in our homeland. Most of them were shocked but they told me we came to change our life style - its not lack of peace or food that brought us here, it is to increase our life. At the same time others were telling me painful words which is twice more than my problem. In the detention I learn more - so many things - and day by day my attitude was increasing. At the same time you see many things can make you angry. Never mind, I have friends from different countries and some of them become my best ones.

The miracle things, which I always wonder at, is that in 12 hours one person can have different moods. You can be happy or sad anytime but as we are human we face happy or sad. The secret of life is each day, each hour is part of a good fight. Stupid mistakes and impatient people will never reach their goals. When you are near your dream and you fought so hard to get them, you become an unforgettable person. You help the needy and you understand the world always needs patience. One day, one hour, one minute, will not come again in your entire life. Forgive others and speak lovely to everyone. That is what is making our life interesting. We always keep going in our life. Each step may get harder and always we want to give up but if we never give up and continue walking we can succeed in our lives. The view is beautiful at the top and we start everyday with new hopes and leave the bad memories behind. We have faith for better tomorrow. We need to keep smiling and one day life will get tired of upsetting us and make the rest of our lives beautiful.

## Chapter 6

Good People leave memories.

I came so far and left my friends and my loved ones even though I knew I will be alone. But good people are everywhere. My mum used to tell me: 'your friends are your family and some friends, if you know them, are hard to forget. I meet [REDACTED] on the boat. I never think we can be friends but she became like my sister. We share together happy and sad moments. At the same time I meet [REDACTED], she used to give hope and advice to me like her own daughter and help me more. [REDACTED] they were police which I met them in Darwin - they used to encourage me and give me good smiles, which is hard to forget and special. Thank you for all these people who have hope and never give fake smiles: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Understanding is much deeper than knowledge. There are so many people who know but very few who understand you. They give me hope and treat me good and make me to forget I am in detention. I can't forget their good service and what kind of people they were. People with good hearts, who understand what human-being like them needs.

We always hurry up and wait - so close but so far away. Everything that we always dreamed of is close enough for us to taste but you just can't touch it. You just want to show the world but no one knows your home, yet they wonder when and where and how you are going to make it. You know you can but if you get the chance in your face and the door keeps slamming, you feel more frustrated and you feel all kinds of impatience. Waiting we live and we learn to take one step at the time. There is no need to rush. It's like learning to fly or falling in love, it's going to happen and it is supposed to happen and we will find it one step at the time. Love holds surprise and danger of rain in a forgetting world but the bond of their friendship gives me the strength to rise. I know tough time comes and goes but I can always count on my friends to be there for me as I am there for them. I am grateful for them and when an opportunity presents itself I will surely grasp it and not waste it. Every morning and evening I look at the stars shining and the moon open fully it's size then I say to my self 'how far my dreams are. There are always many ways to reach them'. Forever I will treasure my friends and in that way keep them i side my heart so that I don't have to look anywhere when I need them. Always good people give happiness; bad people give experience; worst people give a lesson but the best people like them leave memories.



[REDACTED]

How people struggle in my country, I was writing this when the rest of world was still sleep and the birds were singing. The weather was very calm and the stars were twinkling. I sat outside and looked at the sky. How beautiful is Allah's creation.

Suddenly memories came to my mind. I remember how awful was my past. Many people around the world like to watch horror movies, and they spend money to buy the DVD's. But the real horror is in my country where I was grown up in endless war and horror which was basic need in our lives. Like it or not, the war became like a movie. It continued day and night, no rewind, no forward, and no stopping. Still, people trying to find food inside the horror - the worst things in life. Still people trying to cope with it. If you refused to watch when they killing the poor people, you will be killed too.

When thousands families mourn for the death of their loved one's, thousands of others smile for their new born babies. I was sitting in my room trying to concentrate as the idea came to my mind to write this painful story. In between those 30minute it was so hell to me, full of painful memories. I remembered a near by house was bombed and all the family members died just because they used to work for the government. I stop and reflect as I remember one member of the family who had been with me a little while before talking about how it will be if only we see our country in peace and enjoy it like how others countries enjoy with their peacefull moments.

I just sat and my eyes filled with tears that rolled into my cheeks. Perhaps many people in my country not seeing their dreams being fulfilled. I don't know when that will happen. 24 years of war and painful memories. I am aware of those dead but advising my self every soul will taste death and entrances. Those with smiles and tears living in this world are full of miracles and others are alone in their rooms. No one understands the meaning of peace until they face the reality when they lose their loved one's or their best friends and see everyday nothing will change- just fighting without reason and the bad way of treating people. Young girls will never get time to go to school, just be forced into marriage. It's like the don't have right for their education while others have been raped when they were young and carried unknown babies and they never knew who their father is because of many cruel mens raped them. What a strange world! What we have seen happen in front of us!

You can lose your love ones and you don't know where they are and maybe after a month or years later you can find their bodies in the street. Its a complicated world. Some of us we live in high life, while others have nothing to eat but boiling water and still hope for the best. Each day I am thankful for the nights that turn into morning; friends that turn in to families; dreams that turn into reality; and likes that turn into loves. But everyday we see the blood of our elders and young ones, killed because they used to have relation with the government. We lose our Authors, doctors, teachers etc, but I think someday that will be end. Most of my people, they remember the past, no one will notice what is happening to those they left back home. But the world is like a book. Some chapters are sad and some are happy, but if you never turn the page you will never know what the next page has for you.....

[REDACTED]