



# *Rising Above and Beyond*



## *Stories for Liberian Youth by Liberian Authors*

USAID'S CORE EDUCATION SKILLS  
FOR LIBERIAN YOUTH PROJECT

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## ***Introduction***

The following stories have been developed through the support of USAID's Core Education Skills for Liberian Youth (CESLY) program. The USAID/CESLY project seeks to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for Liberian youth and young adults. USAID/CESLY increases access to education among Liberian youth through alternative basic education, enhances the overall quality of teaching, and collaborates with government and community organizations toward long-term sustainability of education for youth in Liberia. The project helps Liberian young people develop the skills and attitudes necessary to progress in the conventional academic system, transition into skills training or livelihoods, maintain healthy lifestyles and participate in their communities.

One of the key focus areas of the USAID/CESLY project is the promotion of a culture of reading among youth in Liberia. When reading skills are strengthened, performance in all content areas increases.

The following stories have been developed by Liberian authors. The intent of these stories is to produce works that are specifically suited to Liberian youth, with themes that touch areas of interest relevant to their lives, create a passion for reading, and stimulate critical thinking.

The stories are written at a basic level so that emerging and basic readers can access the content.

Those who use these stories in the classroom may choose to use the stories to practice the basic components of reading (such as phonemic awareness, decoding and word recognition, vocabulary, oral reading fluency, and reading comprehension). The stories can be used with speakers of the Liberian dialect of English to explore, differentiate and learn to correctly employ the different spoken and written registers of English in use in Liberia. The stories are intended to provide content that will allow one to bridge that transition, so that readers can become competent and fluent in both spoken and written registers and learn how to correctly code-switch.

The stories can also be used to stimulate critical thinking, produce generative themes, and raise issues that make students want to turn the page. After reading a story, a facilitator may want to discuss with learners, “Why did the story end this way? What happened next? What led to this outcome? Could things have turned out another way?” Critical thinking around the themes in the stories can be developed either in oral discussion or in written follow up.

Equally important to the creation of a culture of reading is a culture of writing. Writing cannot be separated from the act of reading. Indeed, writing is what helps new readers practice and internalize new skills. In order to promote a culture of writing, learners may be encouraged to write new conclusions or following chapters to the

stories contained in this publication. Facilitators can also develop questions that learners respond to in writing.

USAID/CESLY has striven to encourage Liberians to compose works that are relevant to the Liberian context. The following authors are profiled in this publication, all of whom are members of the Liberian Association of Writers.

*Ade Wede Kekuleh*

*Gii-Hne S. Russell*

*James V. Dwalu*

*Llord Aidoo*

*M. Woryonwon Roberts*

*Watchen Johnson Babalola*

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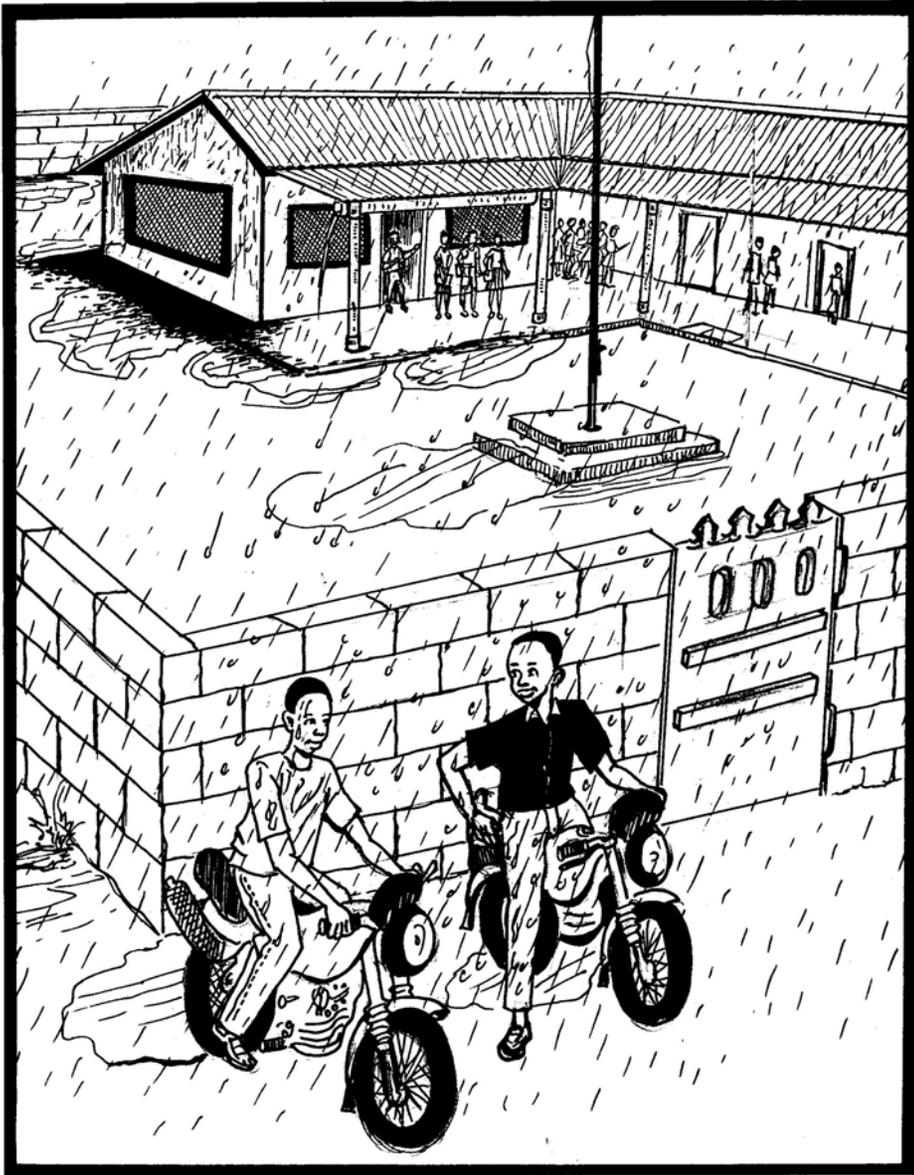
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## Pehn-pehn Ben in “Riding in the Rain”

*Watchen Johnson Babalola*

Ben sat on his motorcycle at the school gate. Rain came down in big drops and wet him down to his skin. But Ben did not move.

School was out for the day and Ben knew that the boys and girls would run out soon. He could hear the school bell ring. Ben was there to take some of those boys and girls home on his motorcycle. The boys and girls would pay him.

Ben sat and sat in the rain but no one came out of the school yard.

“School is out, but the boys and girls are not coming out to ride away on the pehn-pehn,” said his friend Sam. Sam was on his own motorcycle at the school gate too. “It is late. Why are they not out yet, Ben?” he asked.

“It is the rain,” said Ben. “The boys and girls do not want to get wet.”

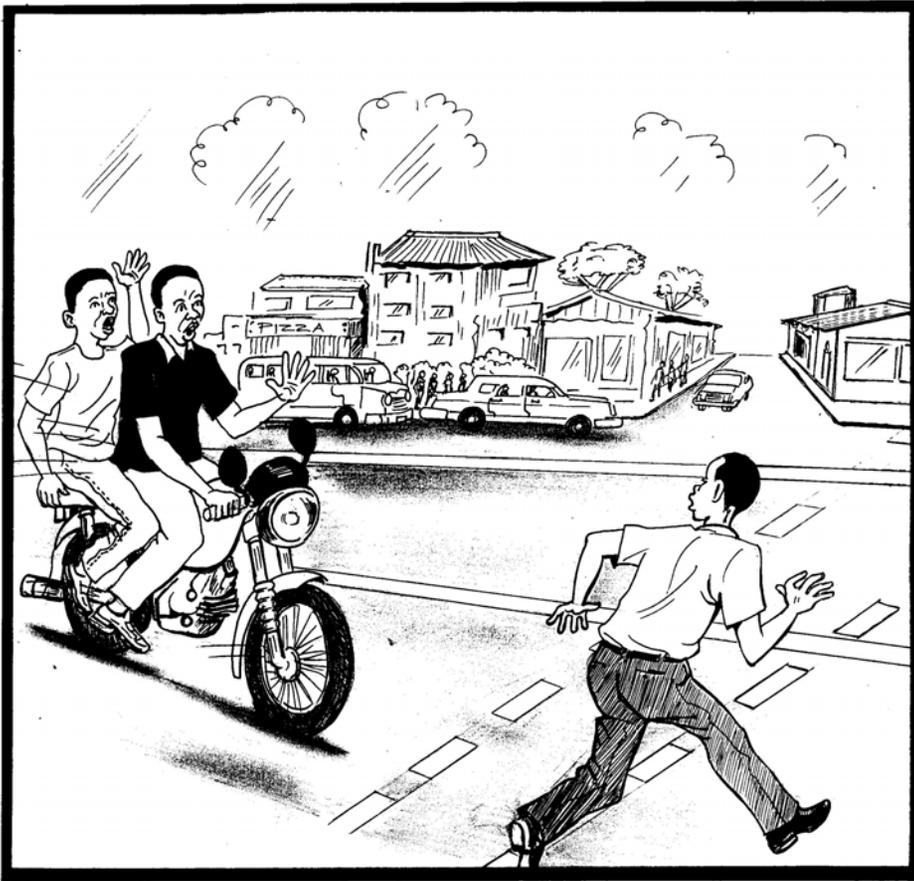
“Then what will we do?” asked Sam.

“I will buy two rain coats,” said Ben. “When it is raining, I will wear one and give one to the boy or girl who rides with me.”

“Yes, that is a good idea,” said Sam. “I will buy two rain coats too.”

“That is right, Sam,” said Ben. “Then no-one will get wet when they ride our pehn-pehn in the rain.”

**END**



## Pehn-pehn Ben in ***“At the Cross Walk”***

*Watchen Johnson Babalola*

“Oh, what is it again? Why did you stop this penh penh?” asked Sam.

He sat at the back of Ben’s motorcycle. His own motorcycle had a flat tire and he was on his way to town to fix it before he lost more business.

“Let’s go, my man. Do not stop for any person and do not stop for any car.”

“Why?” asked Ben.

“Your stop-stop will make us late.” Sam said. “I have to fix this flat tire soon.”

“Look at that man crossing the road,” Ben said to Sam. “Do you want me to hit him?” asked Ben.

“Just go,” said Sam. “He will run when he sees you coming.”

“What?!” yelled Ben. He was getting mad now.

“Yes, my man,” said Sam. “The man will run. He will not stand there for you to hit him.”

Ben was very angry now. He stopped his motorcycle and turned around to Sam.

“That is a bad thing to say, Sam. I will not act like that.”

“But why are you mad?” asked Sam. “That is the way of the pehn-pehn drivers.”

“Do you see those white lines painted across the road? That place is called the cross walk. It is placed there for people to cross the street” Ben said.

“Oh, yes?” asked Sam.

“Yes,” said Ben. “Drivers are to stop for those at the crosswalk to cross.

“But this is not a car,” said Sam.

“All drivers are to obey the traffic rules, Sam. Even pehn-pehn drivers,” Ben told his friend.

“What you say is true, Ben. It is just that I am getting late. I have to fix this tire so that I can make my fish money.” said Sam.

“That should not make us break the traffic rules, Sam. Someone could get hurt or even die. You can eat with

me. I would rather you eat with me, than kill someone else in order to eat,” said Ben.

Ben got back on his bike and drove on.

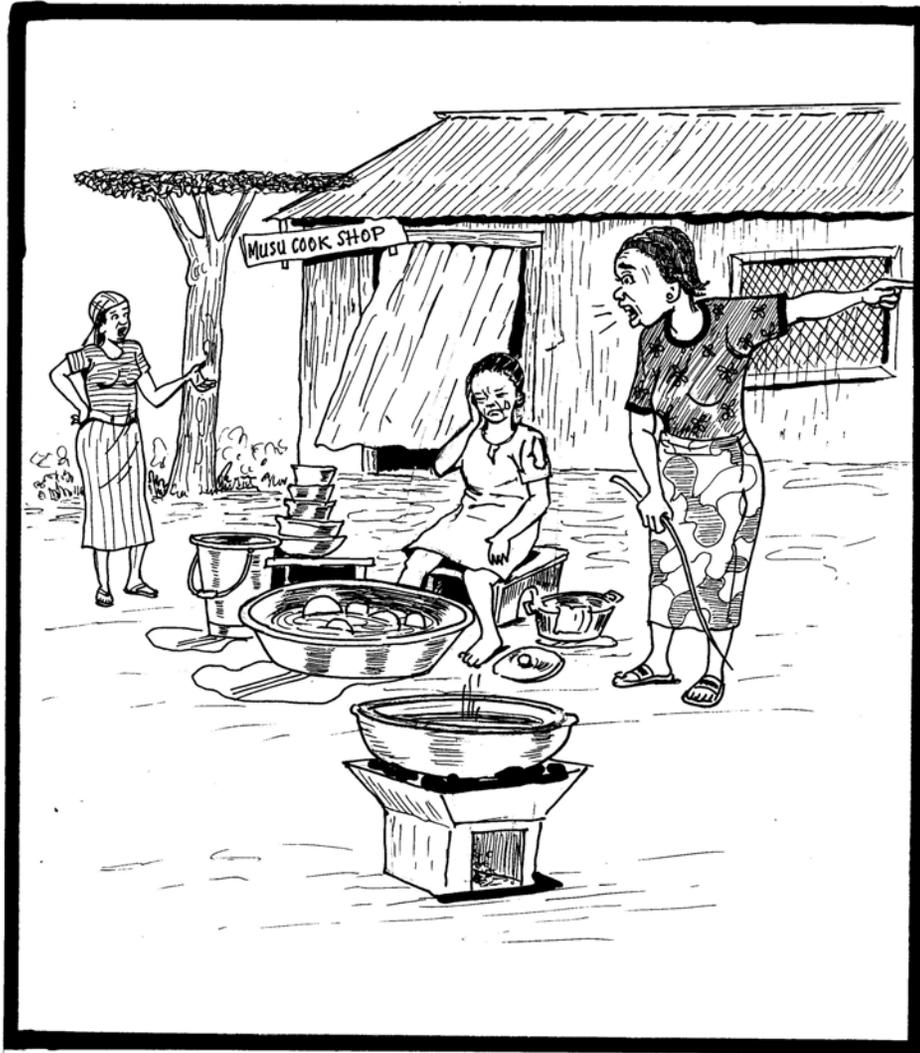
Sam kept quiet as they rode on. What Ben said made a lot of sense.

They drove on and on.

As they reached the next cross walk, Sam softly spoke up.

“Slow down, Ben. There are people waiting at the cross walk.”

**END**



## The House Girl

*Llord Aidoo*

Every day was hard work for Kona.

“Hurry up, Kona!” Ma Musu was calling again. “You wasting time!

My children getting late!”

“I’m coming, Maaa!” Kona answered from inside the house.

“Come put our uniforms on us, Konaa!” all the children called at once.

Kona was cleaning the large rooms. She had just bathed the three children for school, and filled the large kitchen drums with drinking water from the neighborhood pump. It was only morning, and Kona was sick and tired. Something the third grade teacher told her was on her mind. The teacher lived next door, was always kind to her, and treated her like her own daughter. But the teacher had told her she’d report Ma Musu to the police today.

Kona was worried. She thought to herself, “Why should anyone tell the police about her *Ma*? What was wrong with her *Ma*?”

Kona’s real parents lived in Voinjama. Ma Musu had sent for her three years ago. Ma Musu said she’d help Kona go to school. But for three years Kona only worked all day and most nights. Every school day, she sold a big box of *kala* on Boatswain school campus. She’d never before entered the school’s classrooms as a student.

After the cleaning, Kona rushed the children to Boatswain school. As soon as she got back, she swept the big yard. She washed the pots and pans, and washed the children’s dirty clothes.

She was helping Ma Musu count and pack the *kala* in the *kala* box when she suddenly felt very dizzy. Ma Musu hissed at her and told her not be lazy. A few minutes later, several bulbs of *kala* slipped from her hands and fell to the floor.

Whaaack!! Ma Musu slapped Kona hard across the face. “You fool!” Ma Musu yelled. “You waste my market?”

“Ma, I, I, I, I, I —” Kona was saying.

Whaaack!! Whaaack!! Whaaack!!

Kona fell to the ground, but Ma Musu kept on with kicking and punching and stepping on her.

Just as Kona was fainting, the police arrived.

Sister Hawa, the third grade teacher, was ahead of the police. As she saw Kona, Sister Hawa let out a loud wail that alerted the neighbors who soon gathered to see what was happening.

While two policemen held Ma Musu, some of the neighbors helped Sister Hawa revive Kona and clean her face of the dirt and thick slime mixed with blood that stuck in Kona’s eyes, mouth and nose.

All together the neighbors shouted angrily to the police at the station: “We’re witnesses!” they cried. “Day and night there’s no rest for this child. Musu is very wicked to her. Sometimes Musu gives her no food and even makes her sleep outside in the cold!”

The police investigated Ma Musu and charged her for abusing Kona’s rights. They sent her to court where she was found guilty.

For two months Kona lived with the police child protection unit before her real parents arrived from Voinjama. During that time Sister Hawa visited Kona always and brought Kona little gifts, and taught her the ABCs and how to count. Some weekends Sister Hawa asked to take Kona home to spend time together.

When two months had finished, the police located Kona's parents in Voinjama. They traveled down to see their daughter.

Kona's parents were very glad that Sister Hawa behaved like true "big sister" to Kona. They saw that being with Sister Hawa made Kona herself happy. And Kona's parents happily agreed when Sister Hawa asked that Kona live with her in order to go to school.

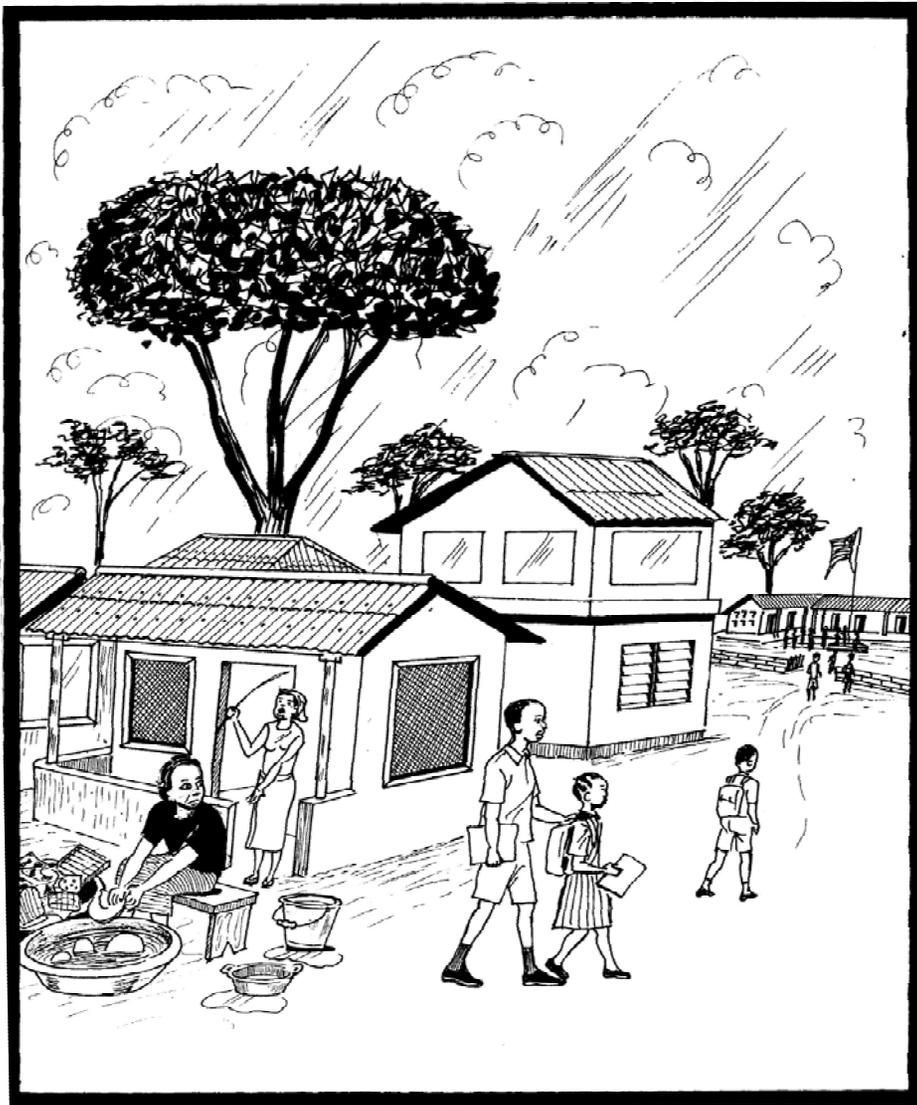
When Sister Hawa agreed to help Kona go to school, she took Kona aside and asked her to make an oath, and whispered something in Kona's ear.....

**END**

*You finish the story...*

*What did she whisper?*

*What do you think happened next?*



## My Child in Monrovia

*Watchen Johnson Babalola*

“But Helena, will you not leave this girl this morning? Since day broke she has been doing work. When will she get ready to go to school?” Mrs. Morris asked her friend. She had a frown on her face as she watched the little girl, Vera, trying to pick up a big pan of dishes to wash.

“Ma, just leave that thing. This is my home. You ain’t know this girl. She can pretend in front of you. Just leave that thing. We on it here,” said Helena as she hissed her teeth.

“I know it is your home, but my friend, all the other children in this area have gone to school. This girl will be very late.” Mrs. Morris was not happy with the way little Vera was being treated by her auntie.

Two years before, Helena had brought Vera as an eight year old child from her village. She told the little girl’s Ma and Pa that she would send her to school. But the first year, Vera did not go to school.

“I do not have money this year.” Helena told the little girl. “You have to help me find the money for your school fees. You will help me in my cold bowl shop.” So for one year, Vera helped Helena in her cold bowl shop.

Vera washed the dishes. There were a lot of dishes.

Vera washed the floor. It was always dirty.

Vera picked the greens-- bunches and bunches of greens.

Vera beat the pepper and onions. The onions made her cry.

Vera served the customers. Some of them were rude to the little girl.

After that second year, Mrs. Morris had asked Helena. "Will Vera go to school now?"

"My shop did not make money. She will have to try harder," Helena said.

"Okay, I will pay Vera's school fees. I will buy her uniform and books."

"Oh! Thank you Ma," Helena said. "Oh! My daughter coming to go to school! I see my blessing coming!"

But this morning, first day of school, as Mrs. Morris was passing to find a taxi on the road, she met Vera with a big dish pan of dirty dishes. That is what made her so angry.

"I do not like the way you are treating this girl. Her parents are in the village telling the people 'Oh our child is

in Monrovia, our child learning book.' And you are here making her sell plastic bags between cars in the traffic and beating dumbboy all day."

"She will go, Ma, she is the one wasting time with the dishes. She is too lazy. All she wants to do is eat."

"Aye my sister. This girl is only ten. What do you expect from her? She does not have the strength of a big woman.

"Oh, but her mouth can eat like big woman," Helena said.

"She is a growing child, Helena. Growing children need to eat well to grow well. Some tight people you see around would have grown taller, bigger if only they had eaten well as growing children," answered Mrs. Morris.

"Oh, yes, oh, that one is true" said Helena. "Vera's family all tight-tight. But one of their sister is living with one woman in Congo Town. The woman can feed that girl. One day I saw her I could not believe. The girl has grown very tall. I was thinking that maybe she is another man's child."

Mrs. Morris laughed. "Helena, it is like that, even with seeds. If you plant a seed in good black dirt and water it will grow fine. But if you plant that same seed in mud, even if it grows it will not look like itself. Children are like seeds in our hands. The way we treat them will be the way

they will grow. If you want this girl to grow like a big tree, that will give fruit and shade to many people, then you have to take care of her well. Allow her to eat and go to school.”

“Vera! Get up from there!” shouted Helena. “Look at her head, there. You can’t hear what the woman is saying? Put those dishes down. Hurry and go to school. I want you to grow to be like big cotton tree!”

Vera let out a squeal of delight, picked up a copy book and hurried out of the yard. As she headed off to school, she looked back at Helena’s face, and met a wide smile watching her.

**END**



## Juah Does Not Listen

*M. Woryonwon Roberts*

Juah lived with her aunty, Gbeh. They lived in Fish Town.

Juah's best friend was Marie. Juah and Marie went to the same school.

Marie used to go out every night.

"I wish to go with you," Juah said, "but my aunt talks too much."

"Sit down there. Just be acting like small girl," Marie said.

One day Aunty Gbeh said to Juah, "I don't want to see you with Marie."

"What is it again?" Juah asked. "Marie is a good girl."

"No! She is not a good friend," Aunty Gbeh said.

"I do not like the way you talk about Marie," Juah told her aunt.

"I will not tell you again," Aunty Gbeh said.

Juah did not listen to her aunty. She told Marie what Aunty Gbeh said.

"Don't mind da old ma," Marie said. "If you mind her, you will not enjoy yourself."

So Juah began to go out with Marie. They went out every night.

Sometimes Juah came home very late.

Sometimes she and Marie would come home drunk.

Most times they were brought home by some boys.

Aunty Gbeh did not know that Juah was going out.

One morning Juah woke up late. She did not go to school.

"Why are you not going to school?" Aunty Gbeh asked.

"I am not well, Aunty," Juah said.

"What wrong with you?" Aunty Gbeh asked again.

"I don't know. I'm just feeling weak." Juah's voice sounded low.

Aunty Gbeh took Juah to see a nurse.

After the nurse checked Juah, the nurse said to the Aunty Gbeh,

"The little girl has belly."

"What! At sixteen! How?" Aunty Gbeh cried.

"The belly is three months now," the nurse said. "She needs to start taking medicine."

Juah bowed her head. Her heart was beating fast.

"Why has Marie put me into this?" she thought.

The boy who made love to her was nowhere to be seen.

Juah's father and mother would be very angry. She has brought shame to the family.

After the nurse finished Juah's check up, she came to speak with Aunty Gbeh. When Aunty Gbeh came out of the office, she was shaking. She looked as if she would burst with anger.

"OK. Thank you, my sister," she said to the nurse.

Then Aunty Gbeh turned to Juah and said,

"So you woman now to get your own fire hearth? Now, pass let get home."

Juah and her aunty walked away for about a minute.

“By the way, who the man that gave you the belly,  
Juah? Where is he?” Aunty Gbeh said in a loud voice.

Juah burst out crying.

**END**



## The Big Man in the Big Car

*M. Woryonwon Roberts*

Wledie was on the road.

The sun was hot.

A man came close to her in his big car.

He slowed down.

“Where are you going,” he asked.

“You man, I don’t want to talk. I am tired,” Wledie said.

“I have not even eaten all day.”

“I am sorry,” the man said. “So where are you going?”

“Home,” the girl said.

“You are a fine girl,” the man said.

“Thank you,” Wledie said.

“Can I give you a ride? I will take you home,” the man said.

Wledie agreed. She got in the man’s car.

“What!” Wledie said, “I am riding air cool car for the first time.”

“Yes. This is your car from now on,” said the man.

“For true?” Wledie asked, surprised. “But how?”

“You are now my friend. What I have is for you.”

“First, we will stop at my house so we can eat.”

“OK. Let’s go. I am hungry,” said Wledie.

The man and Wledie ate. The man came and sat next to her.

He put his hand on Wledie’s breast.

Wledie pushed his hand away. “What are you doing?” she asked.

“I love you,” the man said.

This time he put his hand on Wledie lap. She pushed it again.

“I am scary,” Wledie said.

“Don’t be scared. Girls of your age are doing the same thing.”

“No! I don’t want my ma to beat me.”

“Ok. This money is for you. You can buy plenty things with it and give some to your ma.”

He came closer to Wledie and tried to kiss her.

Wledie pushed him and ran to the door.

The man ran after her. “Come back here!” he shouted.

“How can you eat my food and go like that?”

“No, I don’t want to do it,” Wledie cried.

“I don’t even want your money.”

The man tried to force her to lie down. He tore her dress. Still she did not agree.

She pushed and kicked and ran fast for the door. The man ran too. But he did not run fast like Wledie.

She raced out of the house and began to cry and shout.

Many people came by when they saw Wledie.

They took the man and Wledie to the police station.

Wledie told the police what the man wanted to do to her.

“He wanted to force me to sleep with him. I am just sixteen.”

Wledie cried as she spoke. “He said he wanted to help me.”

“Yes,” one of the men who took Wledie and the big man to the police said.

“We saw the little girl running out of this man’s house. This is not his first time. He brings little girls home all the time.”

The police wrote down everything—all that Wledie and the people said.

“Now we have all that we need to send this man to court. We will waste no time with this case,” said the policewoman who was in charge. “But we will send Wledie to the hospital first.”

**END**

## We Will See

*Ade Wede Kekuleh*



Wehyee was born in the hilly Zleh town, Gbarzon district, Grand Gedeh County. The first of eleven children, Wehyee was always seen as the example for her brothers and sisters. Wehyee's father was not bothered by the fact that his first child was not a male. Wehyee too, did all she could to make her parents happy. She was now in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade. Her parents were proud of her. Many older and "big men" including the town chief came to ask for her hand in marriage, but her father turned all of them down, saying, "Our daughter will learn book. She will not be like other small girls that have married and have children. They look like old ladies now."

Wehyee told her parents one evening, "Too many of our people are dying from simple things. I want to become a medical doctor when I go to college."

"Well," her father said, "It will be good for us. I do not have money here. I will borrow some money from the town chief to send you to your aunt in Zwedru so that you can finish your high school."

“My daughter,” mother said. “You will make me very happy. Every time I see other women who know book, I can be thinking about you. I know you will make it.”

Wehyee’s parents sent her to her aunt in Zwedru, just as they had promised. Her Aunt Bonh was expecting her for days. When she came from work, her houseboy told her that a girl had been brought by an old man from her sister in Grand Gedeh. She was excited to receive the girl. Wehyee’s face looked just like her mother’s. Aunty Bonh welcomed Wehyee into her home. Wehyee and her aunt began living together and Wehyee started school.

### ***Later***

While sitting outside one afternoon, a call came from Grand Gedeh. Aunty Bonh called Wehyee.

“I just got a call from Zleh town that your father is in jail. The man who called said the town chief jailed him.”

“What! Then I have to go right now to see him,” Wehyee said.

“But I am already making way for you to go to Zwedru Multilateral,” Aunty Bonh said.

“I know aunty. But my father is a sick man,” Wehyee said to her aunt.

Her aunt did not want her to go. “Many things have changed here since you came, Wehyee.” Aunty Bonh said.

“Who will take care of things when you are gone? You know I do not trust anyone else. Anyway, don’t stay too long.”

So Wehyee went back to Zleh town to try to get her father out of jail.

She went to the jail house first. Her father was happy to see her but was too weak to talk.

Anyhow, he tried. “The chief ... the chief want our only land. He also wants you to be his...” He bowed his head.

“What is it, father?” Wehyee asked.

The old man tried to speak again but his head was still bowed. “He wants you to be his wife.”

“What! Why is the chief being so hard?”

“I told him that I cannot give him the land. That land has been passed on from children to children. I also told him that you are going to the big school in Zwedru. So I cannot give you to him. So he put me in jail. You know the man get money my daughter. And we poor people.”

“Ok, let me go and see him. I will come back soon for you,” Wehyee said.

The chief was in his hammock in the palaver hut. Wehyee greeted him.

“Please chief, my father does not have the money to pay you back now. And he is a very sick man. So please give us some more time.”

The chief looked at Wehyee for a long time. “I know your father does not have the money. But still there are two things he can give me.”

“Yes, he told me,” Wehyee said.

“First I want the plot of land he has. Second, I want you to marry me.” The chief said.

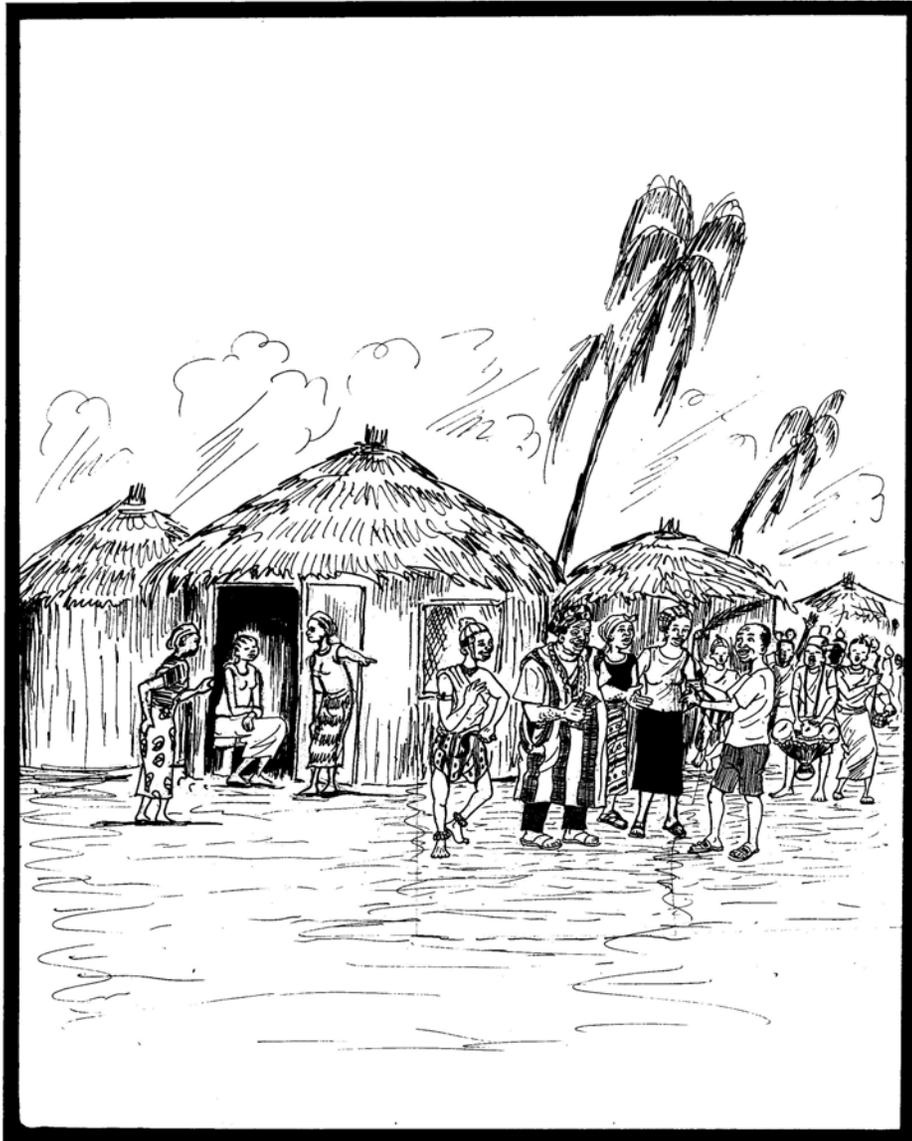
Wehyee thought and thought. Then she looked at the chief. “You and my father have been friends before I was born. I take you as my father. What will your children think of me?”

“Well,” the chief said, “I am giving you people three days to decide.”

**END**

*You finish the story...*

*What do you think happened next?*



## Gbessay's Wedding Day

*Llord Aidoo*

It was the wedding day. Everyone was happy. But Gbessay was not happy. Before the wide compound of small, square huts, Mr. Flomo gave gifts of lappas and cash to Gbessay's aunties. But, he kept the special gold set for Gbessay, his soon-to-be wife.

The guests were enjoying themselves. They ate *torborgee* with rice, and drank palm wine. Some of them blessed the wedding over and over. Some sang songs and poured gin on the ground. A cultural troupe played before the compound with *sasas* that rang *chi cha-cha! chi cha-cha!* . . . In the hot afternoon sun, Gbessay's four sisters sang along and danced with the troupe.

But all morning, Gbessay sat on her bag in her small, half-dark room. She tightly held onto a hundred dollar bill, with her head bowed over her knees. She had refused to come out, or wear the beautiful clothes her mother bought for her. She also refused to see her sisters, or greet any guest.

Soon, her big aunt, Ma Massa, came in and open the windows. "What happen, Gbessay? Why you sitting down here so?" Ma Massa asked nervously.

Gbessay shook her head. She was sobbing. Ma Massa sat down and wiped Gbessay's face. "What you doing so, Gbessay?" Ma Massa's soft voice became hard. "You ain know today that yor big day? You ain know yor husband will feel bad when he see you crying?"

Gbessay sobbed, "Please, Aunty Massa ... I ain want to get marry."

"For what thing? Why you talking like that for?" Ma Massa asked.

"I ain want get marry. You ain see I still small? And—"

"What you say?" Ma Massa turned Gbessay's face towards her own face. "Look-a me good. Me, I was twelve year when I marry yor Uncle Yakpawoloo. But you, you big woman. You fifteen. Who say you small?"

"—I want to go to SCHOOL." Gbessay cried.

"What you call skool?" Ma Massa was very angry. "You want spoil yor luck? You ain know Mr. Flomo da rich man? The man get big car. The man get biiiig house. Look-a you! You ain want enjoy in this town?"

"But I want to continue with school, Aunty Massa," Gbessay repeated.

"*Kpoooh!*" Ma Massay held Gbessay's shoulders with her two large hands. "Better leave this skool business, littl'

girl? That man, Flomo, he more than skool, you ain know? You ain want us to eat? You ain want eat too?"

"But school is best, Aunty Massa," Gbessay's voice trembled.

A funny smile came on Ma Massa's face. "Look-a all yor friends finish gettin marry! Mr. Floma pay yor dowry, and you can't spoil the law! Yor ma and pa know about Mr. Floma now. *Kpoooh!*"

Gbessay was silent for a while. Then she looked straight into the old lady's eyes and said, "I'm going now, now, now! I'm going back to Uncle Fayiah in Robertsport. I ain finished school yet. That marry business Papa sent for me from school for. Nobody can force me in any marry business!" A brave look came over Gbessay as she got up. She looked at the hundred dollar bill and took her bag and started packing hurriedly.

"This littl' girl want spoil her life!" Ma Massa went through the doorway, calling to the people outside. "Yor Come O!"

Gbessay dragged her bag through the back door as Ma Massa's voice mixed with the sasas and dancing. Gbessay reached the main road with a slipper on only one foot.

She quickly stopped the first taxi that drove by. As the wedding guests began to chase behind her, they almost

caught the edge of her dress. But she jumped in the taxi  
just in time and sped away!!

**END**



## Because He Loves Me

*Watchen Johnson Babalola*

“What happened to your eye, my dear?” Mrs. Carr asked her daughter.

“Oh, Mama, last night as I was coming home, I bumped into the side view mirror of a truck,” Grace told her mother.

“Couldn’t you see the mirror?” her mother asked with a look of worry on her face.

“No, Mama,” the teen-ager answered.

“Maybe we should check your eyes. You could need glasses,” said her concerned mother.

“Yes, oh, Mama these days my eyes can be dim. I think I need glasses.”

“Next week after pay day, we will check the doctor, yah?”

“Thank you, Ma,” said Grace as she walked out of the room.

***Two weeks later***

Mrs. Carr's telephone rang as she walked into her office.

The call was from J.F.K. Hospital. Her daughter had been rushed there. She was badly injured from a beating.

"What?!!" shouted Mrs. Carr as she picked up her bag and rushed towards the door. "Beaten? By whom?"

"Her boyfriend," answered the doctor.

At the hospital, Mr. and Mrs. Carr looked down at their beautiful only daughter as she lay sleeping. The doctor had given her medicine to make her sleep. Her face and shoulders were bruised. Her eyes were swollen shut. Her left arm was broken.

"What kind of person would do a thing like this?!" shouted Mr. Carr. "I will have this man arrested!" He turned towards his wife, his face distorted with anger. "You are not taking care of my daughter as you should! You are her mother!"

"She never told me about a boyfriend! I did not know! Why are you blaming me?!" Mrs. Carr shouted back.

"Which kind of family is this man from?" he asked no one in particular. He now spoke a little lower, already sorry for shouting at his wife. He was always gentle and kind with her and he knew that she was a good mother to their children.

"I do not know, my husband, but I can bet that he is from a bad family. Bad families bring up bad children."

The two people were speaking so loudly that their daughter woke up. "Mama? Papa?" Grace called weakly to her parents.

"Hello baby," said her mother. "Don't force yourself to talk. The doctor says you have to rest."

"Sorry, my baby. How do you feel?" asked her father.

"My whole body feels like it is on fire," Grace answered.

"I will have him jailed! I will sue his family!" her father said with renewed rage.

"I beg you Papa, please do not jail him."

"What!?" asked her father.

"He is not a bad man. It is because he loves me that he beat me like this." Grace answered weakly and drifted back to sleep. Her mother and father were so surprised to hear their daughter say such a thing that they were speechless.

Just then the doctor entered. "Sorry Mr. and Mrs. Carr," he said, "but I have to ask you to leave. Grace needs a lot of sleep for her body to get better. Don't worry she is in

good hands. Go home and sleep. You can return tomorrow morning. Let me walk you out. I have something to tell you.”

Outside of the room, the doctor revealed the worst fear of Grace’s parents. This was not the first time that she had been rushed to the emergency room for the same reason. This was the fourth time. “The last time she was rushed here, she was treated for three broken fingers,” the doctor told the horrified parents.

Grace’s parents were silent as they rode home in the crowded Paynesville bus. They were confused. What had happened to their daughter? Why would someone so clever allow such a thing to keep happening to them? And why was she making that stupid comment? Did she really believe it?

*“He beat me because he loves me”* Mr. Carr said under his breath. Just the thought of it made him feel sick.

“If that is the way to show love, then I do not love you, Mama,” he said to his wife as they walked to their house. “In the twenty-two years that we have been married I have never beaten you.”

“No, my husband that is not way to show love. I do not know where Grace got that from but we will deal with it.”

As the days passed, Grace’s body got better and stronger. One day while sitting in their daughter’s hospital room, Mr. Carr asked his daughter, “Where is the man who did this to you?”

“He is afraid to come here, Papa. He is afraid for you to see him.” Grace answered. “Don’t be vexed with him. He is not bad, oh. He loves me. When you meet him you will understand.”

“Why do you keep saying that this man loves you?” asked her mother. “The man beat you up like this and you call it love?”

“Oh, but Ma, if he did not love me he would not beat me. It is only jealousy that is making him to do it. If he did not love me for true, then he wouldn’t be jealous. That is what all my friends say.”

Mr. and Mrs. Carr looked at one another. They now knew where their daughter heard such a thing.

“Listen my dear child,” her mother said. “There are millions of women around the world who, for one reason or the other, allow themselves to be beaten by the men in their lives. Some of them get crippled or even killed. This is not love. People should learn to talk with one another. Violence is not the answer.”

“Grace dear”, added her father, “have you ever seen or heard me lay a hand on your mother?”

“No, Papa.”

“Do you think I do not love her?”

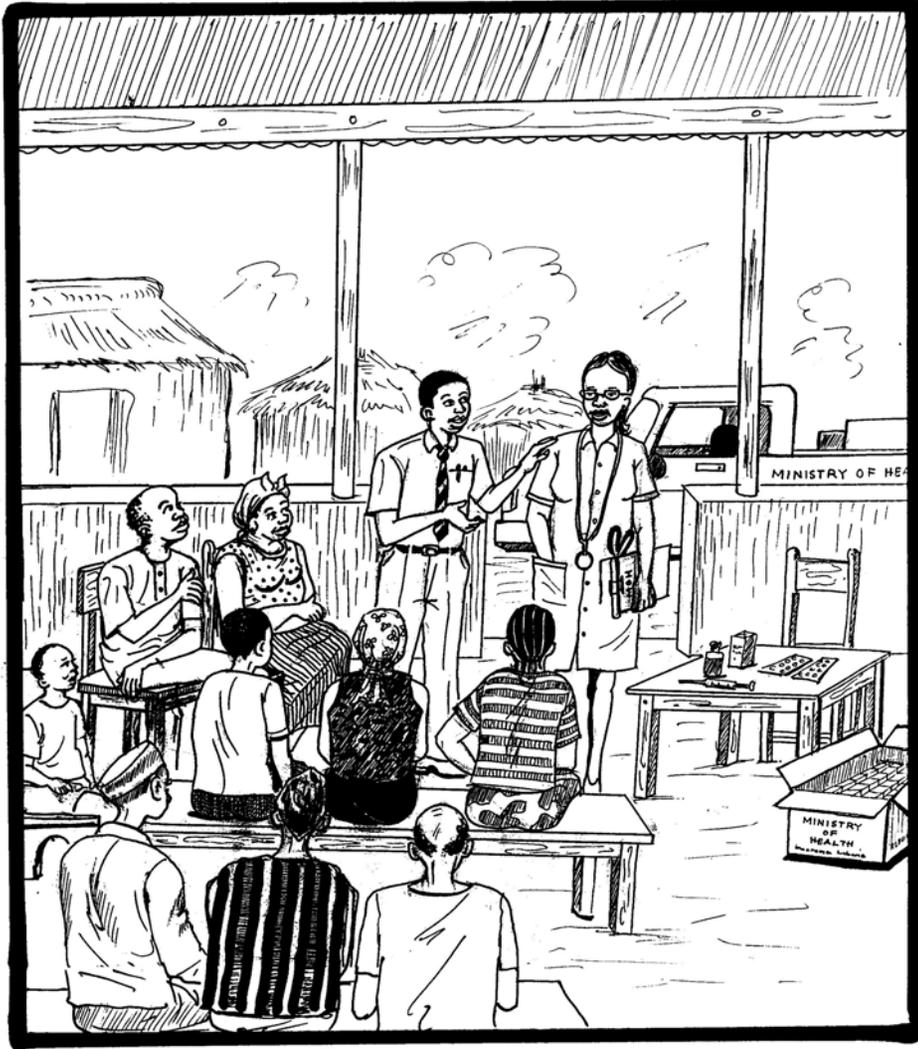
“I know that you love Ma.”

“Good, I hope you also know that many women who stay with a person who beats them lose their self worth and self esteem. As your mother said, some of them even lose their lives. We are not going to stand around and let that happen to you. That man is not showing you love. He is showing you disrespect and dishonour. You are too good for that kind of life.”

Grace bowed her head as tears rolled down her cheeks.

Her parents looked on and hoped that she would listen to their counsel. They hoped that she would refuse to be a punching bag for anyone. They hoped that she would find the courage and strength to walk away from this abusive relationship. They hoped with all of their hearts that she would do the right thing.

**END**



## The Woman Doctor

*James V. Dwalu*

There was no clinic in Toweh town. People died of simple illness. So the town people asked the Ministry of Health to send them a doctor.

The people heard that a visitor was coming. The people waited all day. Many of them did not go to their farms that day. One by one they began to grumble.

“Your be patient, my people,” Tanneh said. She was the women leader. “Dah serious problem we facing in this town-o. So your leh bear patience my people.”

Late in the evening, a white jeep came in with a woman and three men. The Toweh town people were happy. They knew the jeep because it was the same one Doctor Kortu used to come in.

This time a woman was driving the jeep. The woman wore a white blouse and trouser suit.

“A woman driving a car!” Tanneh said. “You are a strange woman.”

The women of Toweh town looked at the woman from all sides. They were surprised to see a woman driving.

The chief looked inside and all around the car.  
“Where is the doctor?” he asked. “My people are sick.”

“I am from the Ministry of Health,” said the woman who drove the car.

The town people whispered to one another.

“So when is the doctor coming?” the chief asked.

The woman in the white suit just smiled and said, “I am Doctor Jugbeh Koon. Doctor Kortu is no longer with us. He has gone abroad to study.”

“Dah nah true,” said a man. “We have never seen this before. So dah wah your wase our time for the whole day?”

“What! God forbid,” the chief said, “A woman doctor for our town?”

“This cannot be,” said one of the male elders. “The health people in Monrovia said they were sending us a DOCTOR. How can they send us a woman?”

“We men of Toweh town cannot have a woman treating us. Other towns will take us to be foolish,” said the chief. “The sickness we dey man dehn geh, dah nah woman suppose to treat us. Even my son was sick. We had to rush him to Monrovia. He had the same man sickness.”

“What sickness is it?” Doctor Koon asked.

“That man sickness,” the chief said. “We will go do country medicine.”

One of the men who came with Doctor Koon whispered to her.

Doctor Koon smiled. “So you men of Toweh Town want to die of simple sickness than to let a women treat you?” she asked.

“Remember it is the government that sent me here. Anything your say, I will go and tell the government.”

The look on the chief face changed. Even some of the elders were not happy when they heard what Doctor Koon said.

“Look my sister,” the chief said, “We can’t disobey our big people but in our home here, different woman ain’t suppose to see different man nakedness.”

“So what do you want me to do,” Doctor Koon asked.

“Tell the Health Ministry to send one man doctor for us. This thing giving we the man denh here hard time,” the chief said.

“There are no men doctors there now,” Doctor Koon said.

“And no man there can do the work she suppose to do on you,” the man who had earlier whispered to Doctor Koon said.

“Kpoo! Then all the men in this town coming die o,” Tanneh said. “What will happen to us ay my people?”

Doctor Koon set up her things in the palaver hut as there was no clinic. For many days only children and women came, especially pregnant women.

“So a woman too can really be doctor?” Tanneh asked.

“Yes,” Doctor Koon said.

“O, I wish I was a doctor. Then our people here will not die from small small sickness denh.”

“A woman can learn to be a doctor or anybody she wants to be,” the doctor said.

“Hm!” the town’s women said.

“Women, men, boys, and girls are equal. They all need to learn to build your town. Women can help men to build roads, bridges, houses, and do many other things for your town.”

The men continued to suffer from the “man sickness”. Still they did not change their minds. Many of

them could not do any hard work again. But the women and children were well and strong.

One day the chief heard that his sick son was cured. . and was coming back home. Much food was prepared in the town. People from other towns were called. The chief called the woman doctor and her team to let them know that he was happy that his son was alive and well. That his son was on his way back to Toweh town.

“You see, my son had the same man sickness. He say he all right now. So he coming home today. So I wahn your to be here too. I too happy today.”

“We will be there chief,” Doctor Koon said.

It wasn’t long when a taxi came into the chief’s yard. There was so much joy when the young man got down. Everyone came to greet him.

“My son, I happy and I thank God,” the chief said.

“Papa, the treatment wasn’t long yah. We was just scare for nothing. And the doctor... hm. I telling you papa. The woman too good...” the young man said.

“You say who?” the chief asked.

“I say the woman doctor too good. Anh feel no pain,” the young man continued. “I hope that the government can send her here.”

The chief and the elders looked at one another. The women looked at one another too then the chief. They whispered to one another. Then there was silence and everyone turned left. The woman doctor and her team were coming. The young man ran to the doctor when he saw her.

“Doctor Koon! Doctor Koon. Thank you-O ma. So you was coming to my home, you aint let me know?”

He ran back and forth between the people and Doctor Koon. “My people dah the doctor this that treated me. This woman aint easy. Thank God she here. All this man sickness business finish!

“Yeh me here nah. I well.” He jumped up and down. “Nothing wrong with me again. Doctor, I geh one big cow here for you.”

The chief looked far off for a long time. Then he looked at the people. He looked at Doctor Koon and her team. He shook hands with her and smiled.

“I ready to do my treatment today. Nah, Nah, Nah. No wasting time,” he said. “You must do all the men denh in Toweh town.”

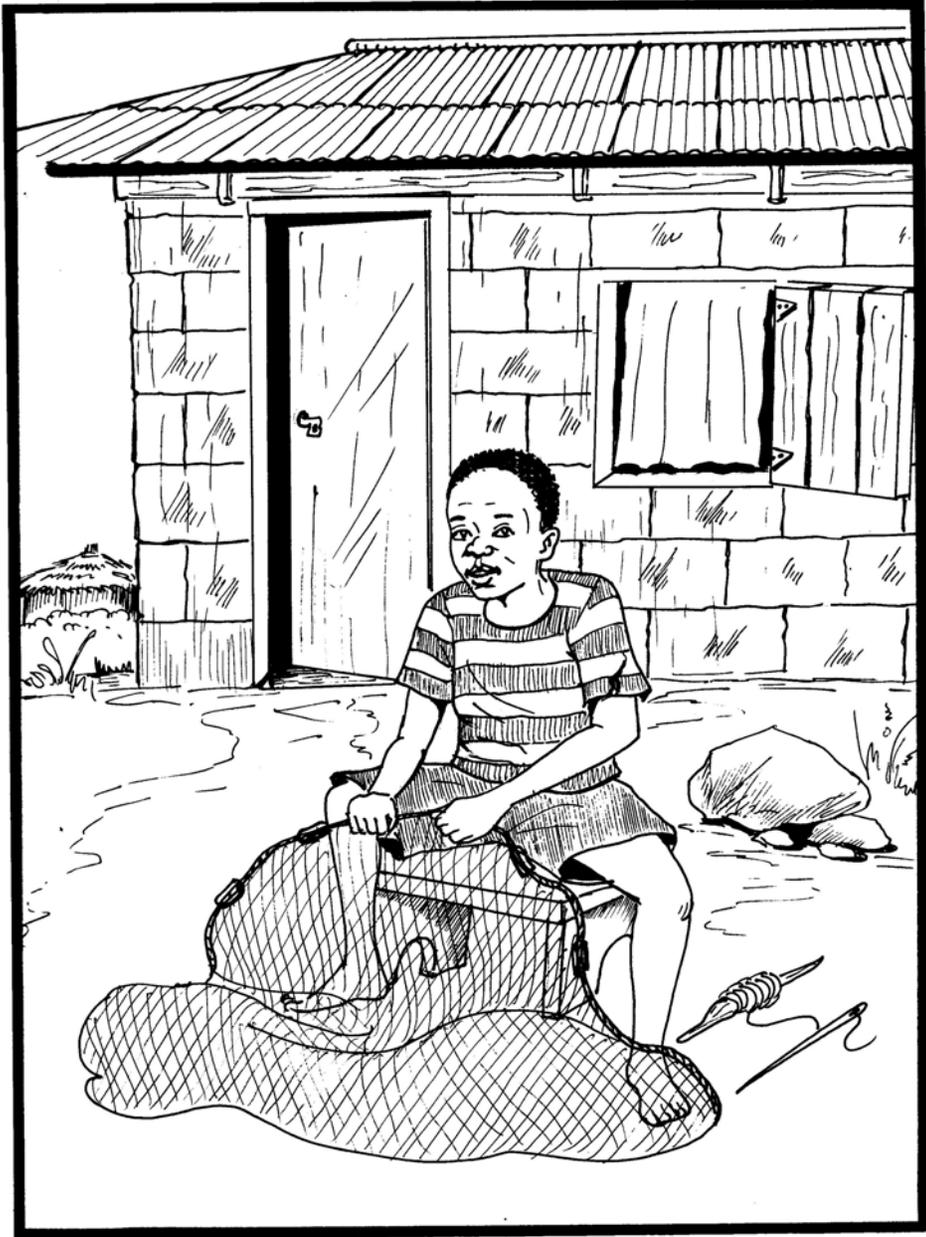
The people clapped as the chief spoke. “Thank you for coming,” said the chief. “We did not know that women could go so far in life. We will send all our daughters to school too.”

The chief turned to Tanneh and asked her to speak for the women in the presence of all; something he had never done before.

“Many of us here are not too old to learn. We want to learn something too. Let some of our children be doctors too.” After a long pause, “We want to even drive cars too!” said Tanneh.

Everyone laughed out loud and clapped. Then Doctor Koon set to do her work the next day, with the chief as the first patient.

**END**



## Tugbeh Makes Nets

*James V. Dwalu*

Tugbeh lived with his parents in Tweh town.

Tugbeh went to school in the Tweh town near a river.

It is a small river but it has many fishes in it.

Tugbeh's parents didn't know how to fish.

They used to buy fish from fishermen.

When there was no money, they didn't eat fish.

That is how they lived for a long time as Tugbeh grew up.

One day Tugbeh sat alone thinking.

His mother looked at him but did not say a word.

So did his father.

They wish they knew why Tugbeh wanted to be alone.

"Is he sick?" Father asked.

"I do not think so," Mother said.

“But he has not done this before,” Father said. “Let us go and ask him.”

“Son,” Father said, “What is it? Why do you want to be alone?”

“I want to learn how to fish,” Tugbeh said

“What!” Mother said.

“Why?” Father asked. “You are still small.”

Tugbeh looked at his parents for a long time. “Then I want to learn how to make nets,” he said.

“To make nets?” Mother asked. “Tell me why son.”

“Some of my mates go to fish,” Tugbeh said. “They go far away to buy nets. So I want to make nets in this town.”

“How are you going learn how to make nets?” His father asked.

Tugbeh thought and thought. “I have an idea,” he said.

“Tell us about it,” mother anxiously said.

“You know Mr. Toe, right? I heard he use to sell nets here long time ago,” Tugbeh said.

“O, yes. I remember him well,” mother said. “He old now.”

“Yes but his brain still fresh,” Tugbeh said.

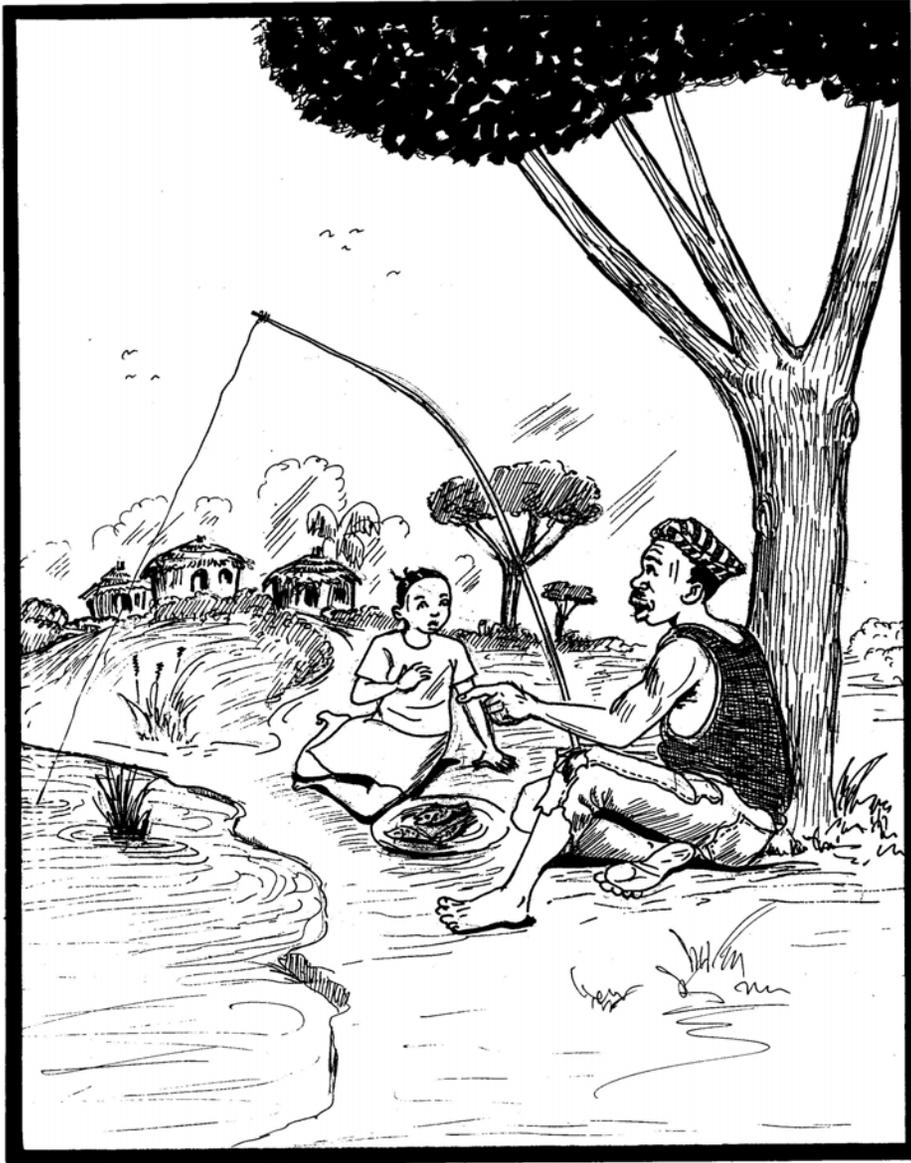
“So how are you going to pay for the teaching?” Father asked.

“Well, I will set up a study class here for little children. After I save enough money, I will buy my threads and other materials. Then I will ask old man Toe to teach me,” Tugbeh said.

So Tugbeh started his study class for children in the neighborhood. As more children came to the study class, the more money he made. Then he went to old man Toe to learn how to make nets. But he did not stop the study class. He.....

**END**

*What happened next? You finish the story. . .*



## Is It Really Too Hard?

*Watchen Johnson Babalola*

The sun was up and the birds sang fine songs at the top of the trees. Zoe and her father sat on the bench by the trees.

“What will we do today, Papa?” she asked.

“I want to take you to the river. I want to teach you how to fish,” her father said.

“But I already know how to fish,” said Zoe. “I know how to fish with a net and with a basket.”

“Yes, I know” said her father, “but I want to teach you how to fish with a pole.”

“A pole?!” Zoe asked in surprise. “But I am a girl. How can I learn to fish with a pole?”

“Zoe you are my only child. I want to teach you all that I know. It does not matter whether you are a boy or a girl,” her father answered.

“But it is hard to fish with a pole. Only boys can learn it,” Zoe said.

“No, it is not hard,” said Papa. “You do not know how to fish with a pole yet, that is why you feel that it is too hard. But you are a smart girl. You can learn to do many things that some people may tell you are too hard or that you cannot learn. You can even learn to do them better than some boys.”

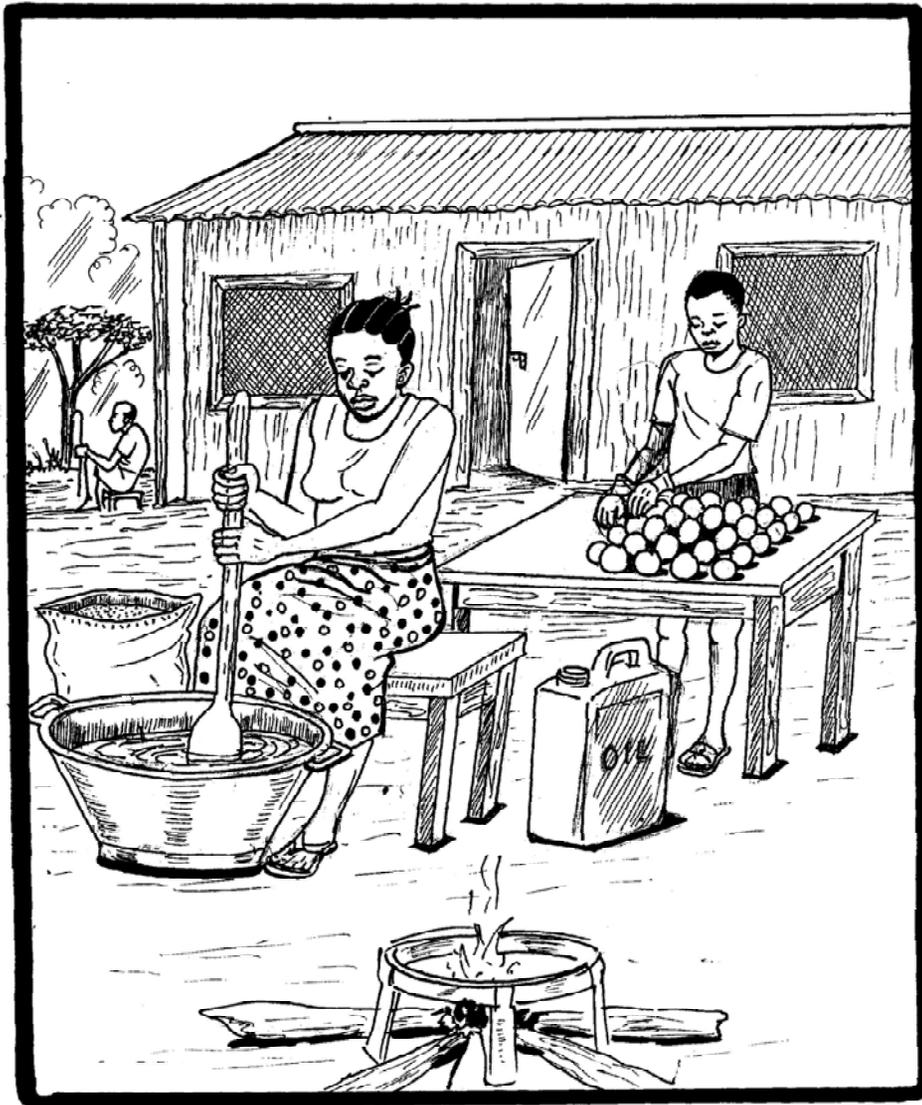
“Okay Papa, I will learn.” said Zoe with a big smile. She loved the idea of doing things better than boys.

Two hours later, Zoe caught a big fish with her pole.

“Thank you Papa” she said. “What you said is true. It is not hard to fish with a pole. It is not hard at all.”

“I told you,” Father said with a smile. “When you do not know how to do a job, spell a word or read a book, it looks hard. But when you try to learn you will find out that what you first saw as so hard is not that hard at all.”

**END**



## Sao Finds a Way

*James V. Dwalu*

Sao's husband had left her with two girls in Tchein. Some said he had gone to Gbokongedeh gold mines in Sinoe. Others said he had gone to Monrovia. No one had heard from him for several years.

Sao and her children lived in a house owned by her mother, Ma Gbeh. Ma Gbeh owned the house Sao lived in. Ma Gbeh took care of the children when Sao was away.

Sao had a little table at the market where she sold small things in front of her house during the day. The goods were not enough to make much profit. The children were in school. Even Sao went to night school.

Sao came home from school one evening with tears in her eyes.

"Come my child. The children sleeping. Why are you crying?" Ma Gbeh said.

"I am out of school, old Ma Gbeh. I aint get school books and right now no money to buy my own," Sao said.

Then she wiped her face. "I put all the lay money I had in the children school business. Ahn wanh them to suffer like me."

“Don’t cry my daughter. You did well for the children,” Ma Gbeh encouraged Sao. “You will find a way. Just rest yourseh first. When day break, you will find a way.”

Sao went to her room. She sat on the bed and looked at her daughters. Then she gave each of them a kiss on the forehead and smiled.

“I will find a way,” she whispered.

“My child, let me help you to sell for a week,” Ma Gbeh promised.

“We aint geh soap on the table,” Ma Gbeh said, “Every day people coming to ask for soap.”

Sao sat by Ma Gbeh and thought for a while.

“What you thinking on Sao?” Ma Gbeh asked.

“I know what to do,” Sao said, smiling.

“Tell me about it,” Ma Gbeh said.

“In one week we will have soap on the table. Then we will have other things too,” Sao said.

“What!” Ma Gbeh said. “How are you going to do that?”

“Just wait. Don’t worry. While you selling for one week, I will be doing something else,” Sao said.

“What is it,” Ma Gbeh asked. “Don’t do anything out of the way. Don’t go near man- o.”

Sao laughed. “I said don’t worry Ma Gbeh.”

“I scare, my child,” Ma Gbeh said.

“You scare for nothing, Ma Gbeh,” Sao said.

The next day, Sao set out to look for job. There were jobs but the people who had them were men. They did not want to give her the job for nothing.

So she went to Jalloh who owned a store.

“I am looking for small small work to do, Jalloh. I want to buy my school books,” she said. “Or give me soap. Let me sell and pay you.”

Jalloh looked at her for a long time and said, “I told you long time to be coming for help. But you say no. You say Ma Gbeh will talk. Big woman like you suppose to be staying with man now. I can even be helping you and the children. Fine woman like you nah suppose to be doing sell-pay business.”

“Why?” Sao asked.

“You too fine,” Jalloh said. “You need someone who will be taking care of you and your children. Your will not suffer again.”

“How will that be?” Sao asked.

“Come on. Don’t act like a small girl. You know what I am talking about.”

“Here is some money. Come see me tonight,” Jalloh said. He held Sao’s hand. She pulled her hand out of his hand quickly.

“Leave my hand before I shout. You think I can love for money?” Sao said. “Is that the only way to help me? You can keep your money.”

She went walking fast out of the store. “The next time you try it, I will call police on you.”

So the next day, she woke up early. She did not wake Ma Gbeh. She set out for the next town to see a lady who taught young women many things.

There were many young women there. Some were learning to dress hair, some were learning to bake, and others were learning to sew or make soap.

“Welcome my daughter,” the woman said to Sao.

Sao told the woman why she had gone to her.

“Now go and look around and see what you want to learn,” the woman said.

“I want to learn how to make soap,” Sao told the woman.

“Ok. You can learn to make soap in few days. After that, we will give you some soap and materials for you to be able to make your own soap,” the woman said. “You can start today since you have come from far away.”

Every day Sao kept going early. Each day she continued not waking Ma Gbeh before she left.

“Just wait. You will see,” she often told Ma Gbeh.

After some days, one evening Ma Gbeh and some people were sitting in front of the house waiting. They were talking about Sao’s new behavior of leaving the house early when Ma Gbeh was still sleeping.

“I think Sao has a boyfriend,” a man angrily said. “Our brother ain’t here so that what she put her hand in. She ain’t going to school again.”

“No! Sao was put out of school because she does not have books,” Ma Gbeh said.

“So that the book she can go look for at that hour of the morning?” the angry man asked again.

“Maybe she can go beg man them for money,” a woman said.

“God forbid! I don’t think so,” Ma Gbeh said. “I have always advised my daughter.”

“Then tell us where she can go every morning and comes home in the evening,” the woman said.

“Don’t let your daughter spoil our own daughter them here oh. You must advise her good o! Anything happen to my daughter I will sue Sao. That all I come tell you.”

Just as they got up to leave, a pickup drove in the yard. Sao got out of the pickup fast. “Ma Gbeh, Ma Gbeh, today you will know your daughter,” Sao said.

The woman from the next town had brought Sao in her pickup.

They greeted everyone. Sao took a bag of soap and soap-making materials from the back of the pickup.

“Sao is a very clever young woman,” the woman said. “She was able to learn faster than all the students I ever had. She can make soap like someone who had been making soap for a long time.”

“Ma Gbeh,” Sao said. “We will always have soap to sell now. Now I can buy my books and go back to school and also be able to help my children.”

The angry man and his friends could not say anything more. They just stood looking.

**END**



## When You Are in Bat Town, Hang Like a Bat

*Watchen Johnson Babalola*

Ma Tee-tee put some meat in the pot. She put some fish, some salt and some oil. The sweet scent of the soup rose in the air. But Ma Tee-tee was sad. She did not smile. She did not talk with the two men who had come to buy food from her cook shop.

“What is it, Ma Tee-tee?” asked the tall one.

“My friend, this shop will soon close down,” she said. “My food is sweet and the place is clean, but business is slow. Most of the food that I fix ends up eaten by my children. They are getting fat, while my shop is closing down. All of my money will soon be gone.”

“Have you tried to find out why the other cook shops cook two, sometimes three times a day and still sell all the food that they cook, while you cannot sell one pot?” asked the short man.

“No, I did not ask. Why should I ask? I know why.” Ma Tee-tee said. “I am not from this town so the people in this town do not want my shop to be open. It is only the two of you, from my own town, who buy from me here.”

“Do not say that Ma Tee-tee” said the tall man. “My friend is right. You need to ask why people do not buy from you.”

“Okay” Ma Tee-tee said. “I will ask, but I tell you I know why.”

The next day Ma Tee-tee stood at the door of her cook shop and talked to people as they passed by.

“Fine boy” she spoke to a student, “what have I done to you or your parents that you people do not buy from my shop?”

“You didn’t do anything to us, oh, Ma Tee-tee. It is just that the salt is too much in your food,” the boy said. “We do not eat too much salt in this town.”

“For true?” she asked.

“Yes, Ma Tee-tee,” the boy said.

“Thank you yah, my son. I hear you” said Ma Tee-tee as the boy walked off.

Next, Ma Tee-tee asked an old man.

“Hello, Papay.”

“Hello, Tee-tee” the old man said.

“Papay, you vex with me?”

“No, my daughter.”

“Then wat ting happen one day I never see you in my shop to buy?”

“You cook too much oil,” the old man said. “We do not eat too much oil in this town.”

“For true?” she asked.

“Yes, my daughter” the old man said.

“Thank you yah, Papay. I hear you,” said Ma Tee-tee as the old man walked off.

Then, Ma-Tee-tee asked a young woman.

“Hello, my sister. Tell me wat ting bad I na do to you since I moved to this town.”

“Like how, Ma Tee-tee?” the young woman asked.

“Wat ting you want me to say? One day you never buy from me.”

“No, Ma-Tee-tee. It is not like that, oh. One day I smelled your soup scent as I passed by and I almost came in to buy.”

“But who stopped you?”

“Ma Tee-tee, don’t you know that we in this town do not eat that meat that you like to cook?”

“For true?” she asked.

“For true, oh, Ma Tee-tee” the young woman said.

“Thank you my sister. I hear you,” said Ma Tee-tee as the woman walked off.

Ma Tee-tee went back into her shop.

“I see why no one likes to buy from my cook shop,” she said. “It is not that I am not from this town and they do not want my shop to open. It is that I cook food that they do not like. I did not ask them what they like. I have been cooking what I feel is good for them. But I will stop from today. I will cook what they like, the way they like it so that they can buy from me.”

The next day she cooked a delicious pot of potato greens, as usual. But that day, she cooked it with just enough salt and oil and, of course, the favorite meat of the people of the town.

By twelve noon, no-one had come to buy. Not a single person. But she did not get discouraged. She told some of her neighbors about her new menu. One man came in the next day for lunch. The following day more people came. Soon the news spread.

By the next week, Ma Tee-tee was happy. Her cook shop was full all day with people who came to buy some of

her sweet food. She cooked up to three times a day and all the food got sold.

When her friend came by the visit, she asked Ma Tee-tee about her business.

“Business moving now, oh. Who can eat crab with shame? My dear, I had to open my ears and shine my eyes. Now my business moving!!”

**END**



## True Sisters

*Llord Aidoo*

Munah and Kwanteh made *pottor* to sell. They dug the clay from the swamp. They washed the clay to remove the sand and grass. Then they rolled the clay into round pieces.

They put the pieces in the sun to dry. After a few days, they baked the pieces and sold them in smaller pieces at the market.

One day, Munah said to Kwanteh as they worked, "We can't just be in this *pottor* thing all life? Why can't we go and learn something better?"

"Something better?" Kwanteh asked. "What are you talking about?"

"They open new vocation school in Buchanan town," Munah said. "We can go learn how to sew. It'll help us."

Kwanteh laughed, "But you think about the school fees? How we will get there. How will our children live if we leave from here?"

“The school is free,” Munah said, “and it’s not far from here. It’s six months only. Mama agree to look after our children. In fact, I’m going tomorrow.”

“You think about it good?” Kwanteh looked at her sister. “You know this *pottor* business get profit. I ain want suffer like other people. I ain want leave my business.”

For few days Munah begged Kwanteh but Kwanteh would not leave. At last, Munah left for Buchanan alone.

She entered a training program to learn how to sew clothes. Munah loved her training so much she completed the course fast. Nearly a year later, she was the best seamstress sewing clothes in Buchanan. She was always very busy with work.

### ***Later***

It was two days before Christmas and Munah had many customers and new work. Some of the women waiting in Munah’s large shop tried on their dresses and *bubas* and went off one by one.

As evening got dark, Kwanteh came in. Kwanteh looked tired from a long walk. She sat down in an empty chair and put a bag with fresh cloth on her lap.

“Get your aunty a glass of water,” Munah told her little girl after she and Kwanteh had greeted each other.

After Kwanteh had rested, Munah said, “You’re so late for Christmas. I am very busy.”

“You must help me, Sister,” Kwanteh replied. “The children have nothing good to wear.”

Munah pointed to a stack of cut cloth on her shelf. “Look over there. I must complete all those by tomorrow evening.”

“The children will have a sad Christmas,” Kwanteh went on.

As there wasn’t time to spare, Munah kept on sewing while she and Kwanteh spoke. Customers came in and out.

“Sister, I don’t have money to buy anything for the children,” Kwanteh said when she and Munah were again alone. “We don’t even have food for Christmas.”

Munah turned from her machine for the first time. “Don’t tell me it’s that hard with your family.”

“Business is not good at all,” Kwanteh said sadly. “The heavy rains have filled the river. These days it’s harder to go in the swamp for *pottor*.”

“How are you managing with the children, then?” Munah asked. “And school will soon re-open.”

Kwanteh looked even more worried now. “It’s hard to explain, Sister. The children were thrown out of school

last semester. Everything been hard since you left us. The other day I was thinking about crediting small money from you to go see about it.”

“—to go see about it?” Munah repeated her sister’s exact words. “To go see about what, Sister? What are you saying?”

“It’s no joke. I was thinking somebody is really witching me!” After thinking a little while, Kwanteh spoke again. “I went to two medicine men. . . and they told me it’s not for nothing.”

“And you believe that thing, Sister?” Munah was very surprised. “You believe those people?”

“I – I don’t know, Sister,” Kwanteh was close to tears. “B-But why must people witch me? I mean, you just look at me. Is this how I used to be? . . .” Munah tried to make Kwanteh stop what she was saying, but Kwanteh wouldn’t stop. Kwanteh continued on, “One of the medicine men told me to give him two goats to stop the witches from sitting on my luck!”

Munah shook her head from side to side, “No, Sister. No! Don’t, don’t do that!”

For a while the two sisters did not speak. They just sat listening to the long sea sound of waves breaking off on the Buchanan beach. Then Kwanteh said, “Yes, Sister. when I think about the day I refused to follow you to the school, I

really regret it. If I had known? See, you doing fine. . . You even moved Mama from the old place. All your children. . . I mean, I’m proud of you.”

Again, Munah nodded quietly as Kwanteh wiped her face and caught her breath.

Before Kwanteh spoke again Munah said, “Sister, you must do this first to put yourself together. You ought to realize no one is witching you. I want to help you! I really want to help you, but you can’t hold that kind of silly idea inside your head.”

Kwanteh’s voice was sore and tired: “You don’t know, Sister,” she sobbed. “You don’t know, Sister. . . O God, what can I do now? Nobody believes me. *Nobody!*”

Munah held Kwanteh’s trembling hand. “Listen,” she whispered, “can we pray?”

Slowly and reluctantly Kwanteh joined in Munah’s long prayer that ended with both of them singing *My Lord Will Do It Again!*

Whether it was the song or the prayer, Munah could not tell, but something was happening to Kwanteh. A reassuring look came on her face as she shook her head again and again and said at last, “Well, it must be true, then. . . Well, maybe. . .” But she couldn’t go on—her voice sounded dull. Her courage failed her.

“Only realize no one is witching you, that is all!”  
Munah joined in. “Witches have no power over people.  
And life has nothing to do with luck. Believe that you just  
have to think right and learn something good and things  
will change.”

It was late that night when Kwanteh left the shop.  
By afternoon the following day she came again. A nervous  
smile was on her face. “Guess what?” She handed Munah a  
piece of paper. “I registered at the sewing school. I’ll be in  
evening classes!”

“You did?” Munah happily took the paper. “What  
great news!”

Munah promised to help her sister Kwanteh learn  
how to sew. And then the two sisters embraced.

**END**



## Old Friends

*Lord Aidoo*

Ujay was afraid. He and Kanneh had sat side by side in the WAEC exams hall. But as the exams began, all the students were moved apart. He thought he would be able to look off Kanneh's paper but his plans were dashed.

Ujay loved football, and did not like to study. In the classroom he got low grades in every subject. The school passed Ujay every year because he was highest scorer on the school's football team.

But Ujay broke his knee in the last football game. And the doctors said he would not play football again.

Ujay's close friend, Kanneh, was the best student in the school. Kanneh wanted to become a medical doctor someday. Kanneh knew the only way to become doctor was by studying hard. So he spent all his time reading and reading.

Unlike Ujay, Kanneh passed the exams and taught classes in Bong Mines to raise money for college. A few years later, Kanneh came to Monrovia and enrolled at the University of Liberia. Ujay, on the other hand, could not teach any subject. He went to work for a packing company and later tried to coach a football team. Things were hard for Ujay and his wounded knee continued to trouble him terribly. Ujay and Kanneh moved along with their lives and went their separate ways.

### ***Ten Years Later***

After long day of seeing patients, Dr. Kanneh looked at the clock. He knew it was time to go home. Dr. Kanneh left the hospital where he worked in Gbarnga. He walked toward his car. After he took out the key to open the door, a beggar with a crutch hobbled to him and asked, "Excuse me, Sir. Did you go to high school in Bong Mines?"

Kanneh stopped and looked. The man sounded like someone he knew very well. "Ujay?" Kanneh said.

Ujay smiled shyly. "Long time, Kanneh!" he said. The two men embraced.

Kanneh invited Ujay for a drink. It had been a long time and Kanneh enjoyed the company of his old friend. But the news of Ujay's life made Kanneh very sad. As they talked about the direction of their two lives, Kanneh realized that if he gave him money Ujay would just eat it. Kanneh thought deeply about the issue.

"Tell you what," Kanneh said at last. "There's this training coming up at the hospital. You could take advantage of it!"

Hearing this, Ujay became a little embarrassed. "Bah, Kanneh," he said. "You know this book business and me . . . we're not really friends. If you want to help me—"

"No, no," Kanneh cut his friend off, "You can make it! The requirement is tenth grade education only. I'll recommend your name to the trainers."

Ujay stared blankly at Kanneh as he spoke.

“This opportunity will help you greatly,” Kanneh went on. “But the only thing I’m thinking is that you have to take the training serious. I mean I don’t want to be embarrassed. You’ll be accepted because of my recommendation. If you go in and flunk and don’t take the training to be anything . . . I mean I’ll be made very shame. Trust me!”

Ujay nodded quietly. Then he said, “I understand, Bah.” He was remembering how he’d slept through his classes in high school, and how he’d played with his studies. “I think I’ll try my best.”

“That’s almost not enough,” Kanneh said. “You must do your best. Tell yourself you’ll always do your best. Especially when the training starts. Promise me you’ll work hard. . . . Very hard!”

“Yes, yes,” Ujay said quietly; he seemed embarrassed by what he was going to say: “I’ll try,” he said. “I’ll do my best. I have caught plenty hard time in life because I don’t know anything. I’ll really try this time, I promise you.”

Ujay and Kanneh spent the rest of the day together recounting the happy events of their past, forgetting the sad moments, and thinking about the future.

**END**



## The Road

*James V. Dwalu*

There were many young people in Piah town, but they were not happy. They had to walk many miles to get to school. They were always late and tired when they got to school. All the cars stopped just right at the school. There were no car roads going to Piah town. The people of Piah town were very hard working. They made large farms. They had many domestic animals too. They had plenty to eat. But only a few people knew how to read and write.

One day the Tokpa, the youth leader in Piah town called his friends, Gorpu and Binda to a meeting. "I have been thinking about what we can do before school reopens. We need a road to come to Piah town. This is too much pain for us to bear."

"It is true," Gorpu said. "As a single woman, I cannot even send my two girls to school because they are too small to walk the distance."

Said Binda, "Many of my fruits get spoil because I cannot take them to the market on time. I even do not feel like farming any longer." "Yes," Gorpu said. "I too might want to go to school. But our children are tired of walking.

I myself might want to go to school. But we are too tired to walk after farming all day.”

“We need a road,” said Tokpa.

“We must let the chief know,” said Binda.

They told the chief and elders about their thoughts.

“How are you going to do it?” the chief asked. “We do not have money to pay people.”

“But we have able and strong young people in this town. We can work with our hands,” Binda said.

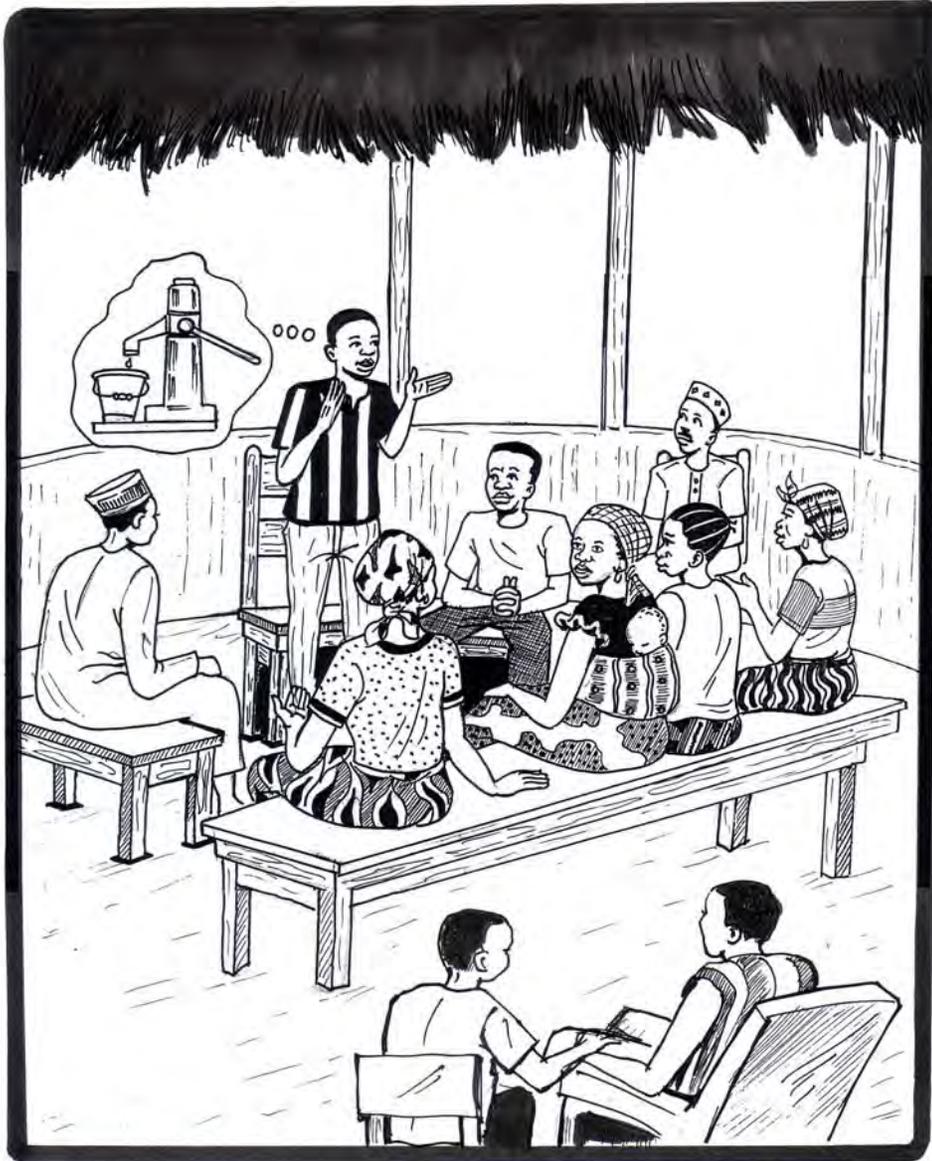
“We will cut the bush and clear the stumps,” Tokpa said. “Then we will ask others to help us. We can even have our own school here if we want to.”

Hm!” said the chief. “We didn’t know that you had such good idea. We will be happy to help. We must get to work before the school year starts.”

**END**

*What happened next?*

*Do you think everything went as planned?*



## Hand Pump for Nyanfor Town

*James V. Dwalu*

Nyanfor town was not at peace. There were loud cries everywhere. Older people too were complaining about their stomachs. Women and children were running about with their sick children. The women picked leaves and roots and gave them to the children. But still it did not help! Everyone's stomach was in pain. And no one knew what to do!

Some of the women ran to the chief with their children on their backs. Others ran to the medicine man.

Ma Juah cried to the chief, "Ay chief, please help me. My only daughter is dying."

"What happened to her?" the chief said, as he got up.

"She only drank a cup of water and her stomach started to run," Ma Juah explained to the chief.

"The same thing happening to our children denh too," some of the other women cried.

"What water is that?" the chief asked. "What place they got the water from?"

“From the creek, the same place we all can get our drinking water from,” Ma Juah said.

The chief called a meeting to talk about the health problems. Women and men were at the meeting. Everyone wanted to talk about the health problems. There was no good drinking water and toilets in Nyanfor town. Children and elderly people were always getting sick. They were spending most of their money on medicines.

The chief said, “People in other towns do not get sick like us. I heard it is the water we drink here.”

“We must waste no time. Let us take the sick ones to the clinic in Toe town,” the chief said.

“But these children are too weak. So let us send for Nurse Tweh,” Ma Juah begged.

The chief sent some men to get Nurse Tweh. Nurse Tweh came hurriedly another woman and a man. The other woman and the man got to work on the people right away.

After some tests on the children, the Nurse said, “there is a cholera outbreak in this town. Where do you get your drinking water from?”

“The creek,” the chief said.

“Let us go and see it,” the nurse said. So they all went to the creek. “What!” the nurse said. “This water is

not safe for you to drink. How can people toilet around the water?”

“Anh believe it still!” Old man Nagbe said. ““But the water looks clean. From the time I was small dah this creek the whole town been drinking from.”

“Old man Nagbe,” Ma Juah said, “let the nurse talk. The woman know what she talking.”

“So old man Nagbe, nobody stomach use to run in this town?” the nurse asked.

“Anh say so-O,” Old man Nagbe said. “But it never use to run like this. Something wrong somewhere. Somebody doing something to us. But we will find it out soon. Maybe witchcraft...”

The chief cleared his throat. “Our children denh sick. No need for all this plenty talking. What thing you want us to do now now to make the children better?” the chief asked.

“How can we make the water safe?” Ma Juah asked.

The nurse responded, “We will spend one week here to make sure your fix the pump. Do go toilet in or near the water. Then boil the water from the creek before drinking it.”

“Your will continue to get sick as long as your can toilet in or near the creek or any other water,” the nurse

said. "When you boil the creek or rain water, all the germs inside will die."

"There are things in the water that you cannot see. So you think that the water is good to drink when you see it looking clean. But small small things are living inside. We call those things germs," the nurse said.

"We must fix the pump quickly," the chief said.

"We need toilets also," Gbeh said.

"O, yes," the chief said, "I forgot about that. We must work together to get more hand pumps and toilets."

So everyone in Nyanfor town gave some money to fix the hand pump and to get few more pumps. They built toilets too. The nurse stayed for one week treating the people of Nyanfor town.

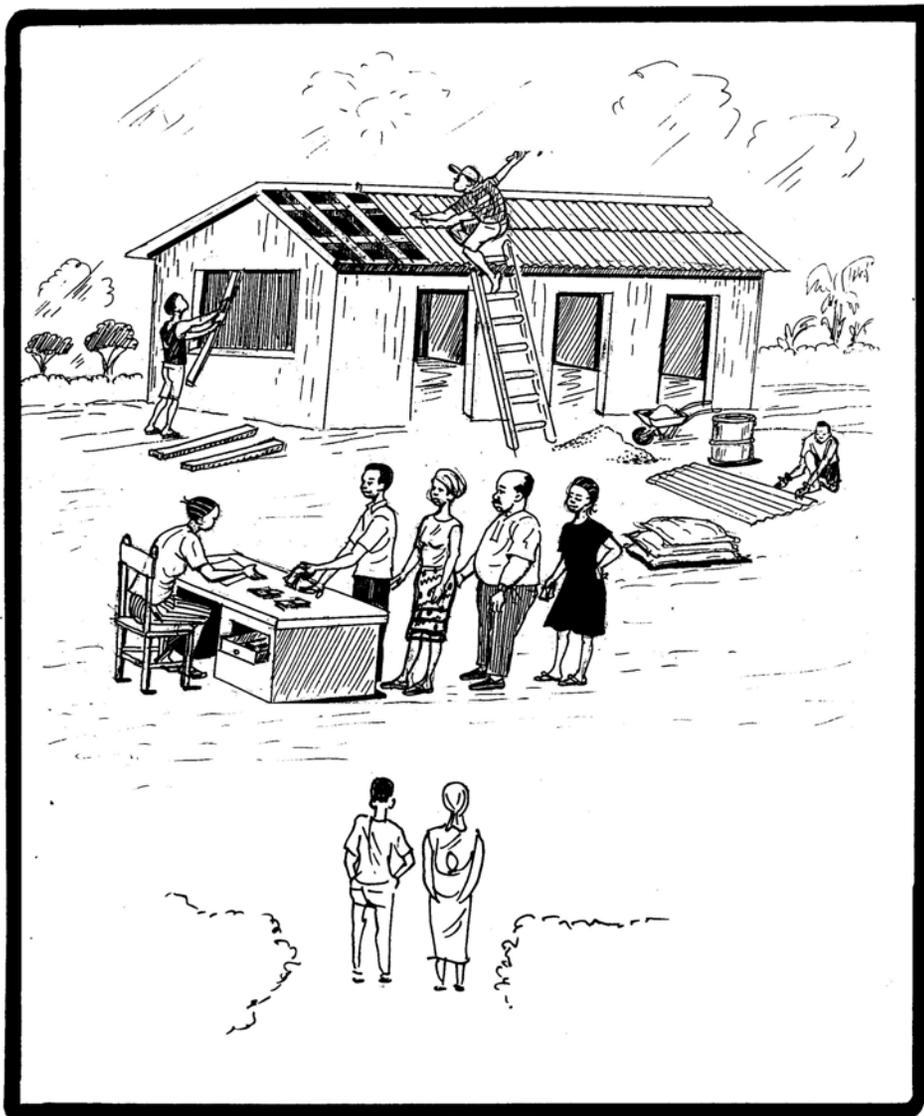
The people of Nyanfor town were happy that they had more hand pumps and toilets. They stopped going to the bathroom around the creek. They also started to boil the water from the creeks before drinking it. Slowly, they began to get sick less than before. They started saving the money they used to spend on medicines. Their children got healthier.

When the nurse wanted to leave the town, the chief called her. He asked the villagers to clap! He wanted to

throw a big party for the nurse. He announced, "Thanks to this nurse, now, all our problems are solved!"

She quickly responded. "Not true! Don't forget! You got to take very good care of the hand pump and the toilets. They are yours now. If you let them, drop you go back to just like before. If you forget to boil water you will get just as sick as before. There are no witches in Nyanfor town. Your children's health is up to you!"

**END**



## Yakpa Town School

*James V. Dwalu*

There were many young people in Yakpa town. Almost all of them did not know how to read and write. Most of them were women and girls. There had never been a school in Yakpa town. Those who knew how to read and write had to walk many miles to other towns.

One day the children and their parents went to the town chief. "We want to have our own school in Yakpa Town. We are tired of walking many miles every day," said Wheagar, the leader of the youth.

"How are we going to do it?" the chief said.

"That is why we have come," Wheagar said. "All of us need to think about how we can have a school."

"I will send message to Mr. Zeon. He is in front of school business in our county."

"Enh hehn!" Wheagar said. "We know our chief will not let us down."

After some months, Mr. Zeon came to Yakpa Town. He called a meeting in the palaver hut in the chief's yard.

“It is good that you want a school,” Mr. Zeon said.  
“But the government says there is no money now.”

“We know government has many things to do,”  
Wheagar said. “But no matter what, this year we must have  
our school! Let us hang head.”

The chief and the elders and Wheagar went to meet  
together and discuss. When they came back, the chief said,  
“We will build the school. Then the government will pay  
the teachers. We will give the teachers a place to stay and  
feed them.”

“Mr. Zeon,” Wheagar said, “Please make sure that  
some of the people who will work in the school must come  
from Yakpa town.”

“We will look into that,” said Mr. Zeon.

“Not just that. We know the school will have some  
other jobs. You must give it to our people who know how  
to do it,” the chief said.

“Ok. I will do my best, chief,” Mr. Zeon said.

For many months the people of Yakpa town  
collected money every month. Wheagar was in charge of  
the collection. After collecting some money, the chief called  
a meeting.

“Our son Paul here, he nah stay long in this building  
business. Me and him fini talking. He will build the school  
for us,” said the chief. “So I wan your to hear from himseh.”

Paul greeted the people first. “Since we ain geh  
plenty money,” Paul said, “we can use dirt from the same  
place we building the school. Each bag of cement we mixed  
with eight wheelbarrows of dirt we will geh eighty dirt  
blocks. Like that we will not spend much money.”

“Enh henh,” a man said. “Dah our son this for true.  
He know the job. If dah some people, they will lie to us.”

“But the man like his home,” a woman said.

Paul built the school. Though it was not completely  
finished and it was not fancy, it had a roof and many class  
rooms.

The chief sent for Mr. Zeon. Mr. Zeon was surprised  
when he saw the school building.

He took many photos of the building with the people  
of Yakpa town standing in front of the building.

“I will go back right away and bring your teachers.  
People from the other towns around here will sure come to  
Yakpa town School,” said Mr. Zeon.

Mr. Zeon kept his word. He came back with six men  
and a woman. They went to have a meeting with the chief  
first. Wheagar and some women were also present. Mr.

Zeon opened the meeting with the following announcement.

“Chief, these are your teachers. Ms. Tarr is their head. She is the principal of Yakpa town School. Also if any one of Yakpa town people know how to teach, we will give the person a job.”

He waited for a while. The chief did not say anything. None of the elders said anything for a while after Mr. Zeon spoke.

“What is it, chief? You have not said anything,” Mr. Zeon asked.

“How can I say something, when a woman is placed as head over men?” the chief said.

“O, chief, in teaching business, anyone can be anyone,” Mr. Zeon said.

“Even the head of our country is a woman. What will she think of you when she hears that you do not want a woman to be the head of the school?”

“When woman go to school, she will be able to do anything,” Mr. Zeon said.

Then Ms. Tarr said, “Even your women here can go to school. We will have special time for them to come to the school.”

“What! How? Many of them are living with men,” said the chief.

“They even have their own farms and children.”

“Well, we just have to tell them,” Ms. Tarr said.

“Telling them to go to school at this time will not be easy,” the chief said.

“What will they think of me?” he asked.

“So this woman wants our women to go to school?” a man asked. “You do not want our women to respect us again? “I even heard that when women go to school, they can’t respect their man denh again.

“O, no. No woman is told that. In fact the women will help their families more,” Ms. Tarr said.

“Who will take care of our homes?” another man asked.

“What good, will it do for us at this age?” a woman asked.

“You will know how to give medicines to their children.

“You will be able to read and even write your own letters,” Ms. Tarr said.

“David reads all our letters,” the chief said.

“What if David gets sick or goes out of town for a long time? Will we wait for him?” Mansnoh, leader of the women asked.

Mansnoh looked at the other women as if telling them something.

“Chief, our fathers, husbands, and brothers, since this is about us, let me and my women go hang head.”

So the women left the men so they could talk.

The woman had their own discussion. “You heard what the woman said,” Mansoh said. “I think it is good for us.”

“You right Mansoh. If David leaves this town, what will we do?” Dwede asked.

“David is from the next town. He is just like us. If he can read and write, then what are we waiting for?” Mansnoh said.

“People will laugh at us. They will say all kinds of things about us,” Wleyenoh said. “They will say big big women going to school.”

“Even if they laugh, it will not be forever,” Mansnoh said. “People will not cheat us again in the market.”

“So true!” Blaydee said.

“Then we all agreed that we want to go to school, right?” Mansnoh said.

“Yes!” they all answered.

So the women went back to the men, clapping and smiling.

“We are back, chief,” Mansnoh said.

“So what have you decided,” the chief asked.

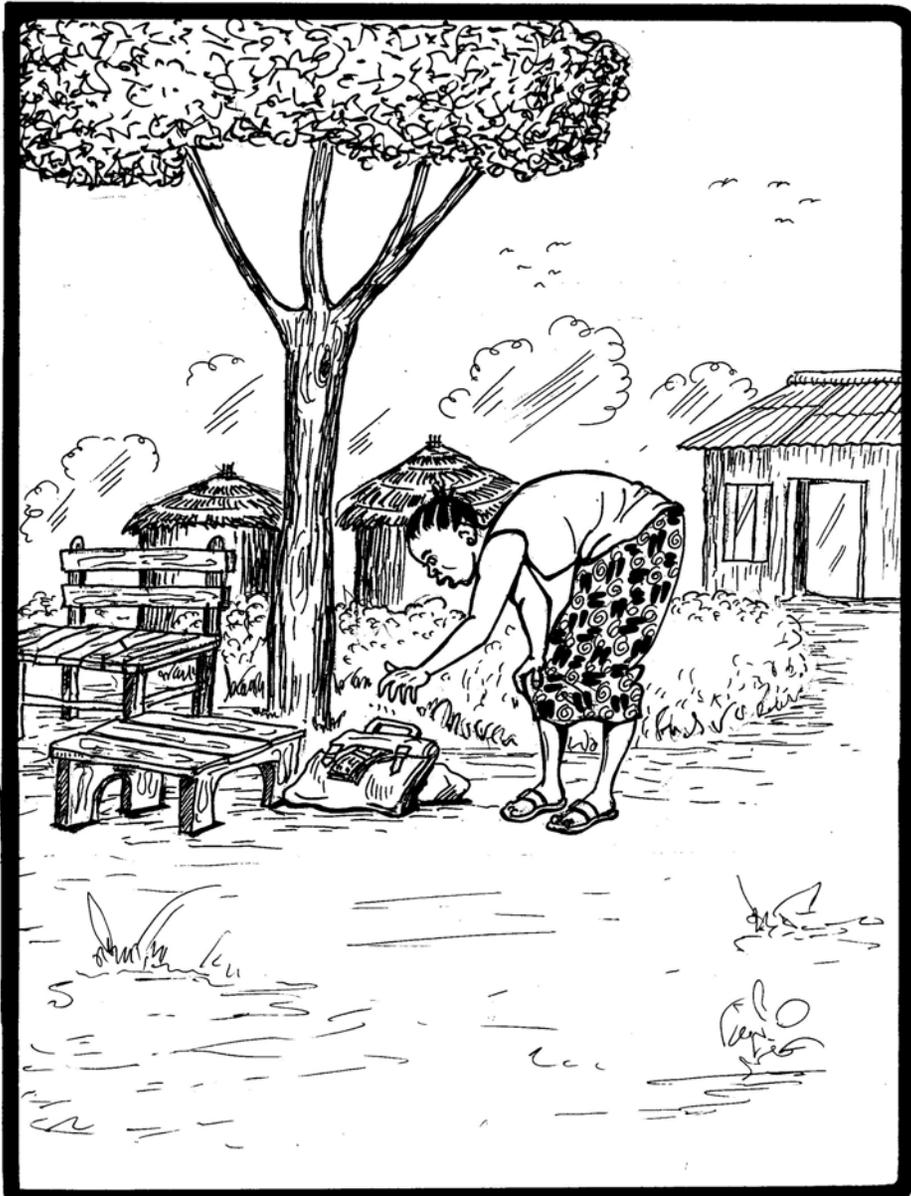
“We agree with Ms. Tarr,” Mansnoh said. “What your say, women?”

“We all agree!” all the women said.

Ms. Tarr smiled. The chief smiled also.

“We have also agreed that you go to school also. Even some of us will join you,” the chief said.

**END**



## The Lost Bag

*Llord Aidoo*

Tanneh sold food in a small shop in Greenville. The shop was under some mango trees next to a big market.

People who bought from Tanneh sat under the trees to eat. Tanneh found a brown bag one morning. Tanneh didn't see who left the bag on her table. There was a lot of money in the bag.

Tanneh had never seen so much money before. She didn't know what to do. She told a friend about the bag.

"God send you this money," the friend said. "You can buy everything you want! You can even build your own house!"

Tanneh was confused about what to do. For two days no one asked for the bag. She kept the bag in her house until she could figure things out.

Then on the third day, a man came looking for his money. The man asked many people. He asked a woman selling rice. He asked a man selling shoes. No one knew of any money.

Tanneh met the man. “How did you lose your money?” Tanneh asked. “How much was it?”

“Thousands of Liberian dollars!” the man said. He was disturbed. “It’s people susu money in a brown bag. All my papers were in the bag!”

After talking with the man some more, Tanneh said, “Come with me.”

They both went to the police. Tanneh gave the police the brown bag she’d found. The policemen read the papers inside the bag. They asked the man many questions. Then they gave the bag to the man.

The man was happy. He hurriedly put the bag down and patted all his pockets for some money. “Here’s something for you.” He took Tanneh’s hand. “You saved me from big trouble.”

“I’m happy you found your money,” Tanneh said. She looked at the man’s eyes. She paused a long time. “But, I don’t want to keep it. I have one request. I did something good for you. I ask you to pass on that favor, and help someone else without that person knowing.”

**END**



## Hinneh Goes to the Hospital

*James V. Dwalu*

Ma Saydah and her son, Hinneh, lived in Pleebo, Maryland County.

One afternoon while at home, Hinneh began to sweat and vomit.

His skin was hot also. He did not want to eat anything.

"I do not feel well, mother and I am also weak," Hinneh said.

Mother began to cry. She ran about shouting.

"My people your come for me o. My son dying o."

Many neighbors came. Some of them came with herbs.

Mr. Mah, the teacher came also.

"Hinneh is sick and I do not know what to do," Ma Saydah told them.

"I do not know what I have done to whoever wants to take my son. He is the only one I have. The witches in this town want to eat my son."

“Here, give him this herb to chew,” a woman said.

“No! Do not give it to the boy,” Mr. Mah said.

“Why not?” the woman asked.

“You do not know what is happening to the boy,” Mr. Mah said.

“I have been giving this medicine to many people for long time,” the woman said.

“In fact this is not for nothing. The witches want to take the woman son from her.”

“No!” Mr. Mah said again. “No one wants to take the woman son. Let us take the boy to the hospital. We must waste no time.”

So the Mr. Mah and Ma Saydah hurriedly took Hinneh to the hospital.

The scent of medicine was everywhere.

They went in to see the doctor. The doctor was called Dr. Nyemadey.

She was the doctor for children.

“What is happening to Hinneh?” Dr. Nyemadey asked.

“Hinneh’s skin is hot. He is vomiting and trembling,” Ma Saydah said.

“I do not know what to do.”

Dr. Nyemadey looked in Hinneh’s eyes.

Then she took a little glass tube and put it under his arm.

After a while she removed it and wrote on a paper.

“Take this to Mr. Sonpon in the laboratory,” the doctor said.

Hinneh acted brave when Mr. Sonpon came with a sharp pin.

He yelled a little when the man stuck his finger.

Mr. Sonpon gently squeezed the finger and put a drop of blood on a glass.

He placed the glass under a microscope and looked in it.

“I can see that you are very ill,” he said.

Then he wrote on a piece of paper. “Take this back to the doctor,” he said.

“What!” the doctor exclaimed, when Ma Saydah gave her the paper.

“The boy has malaria. Mosquitoes bit him!” she said.

“Mosquitoes and malaria!” Ma Saydah shouted.

“Yes, mosquitoes,” Dr. Nyemadey said.

“What has such little creatures got to do with malaria?” Ma Saydah asked.

“Yes they are little, but very dangerous. They give malaria to humans.

They live and breed in waters that do not run, also in old cups and other things with still water.

They also lived in drainage areas that are blocked with garbage”.

“Where do the mosquitoes get malaria from?” Ma Saydah asked.

“Malaria parasites live in the dirty water that mosquitoes lay their eggs in,” the doctor said.

“Mosquitoes live on blood. When they bite someone, the parasites enter that person’s blood and start to get many.”

“Now I know,” Ma Saydah said. “Dirty and still water and unclean places breed mosquitoes.”

“Yes,” the doctor said.

“What can we do to get rid of mosquitoes?” Ma Saydah said.

“We can get rid of mosquitoes by keeping our surroundings clean,” Dr. Nyemadey said. “Mosquitoes like to live in places that have dirty water that cannot run.

Mosquitoes will bite you when you aint sleep under mosquito bed nets. Also remember to go to the hospital first when you get sick.”

“Che! My people. Doctor, thank you yah,” Ma Saydah said. “I know nah hah people can geh malaria.”

Ma Saydah and Hinneh went out. She sang praises all along. “Popo wlee oo! Popo wlee oo! Thank God, my people my son not dying.”

The woman who had come to chase the witches away came to them. Ma Saydah told her the whole story of the doctor, the drop of blood and the mosquitoes. Then they all went together to look for the medicine the doctor had prescribed for malaria.

**END**



## A Day at the Hospital

*James V. Dwalu*

All year Ms. Dugbeh talked about AIDS to her class. She talked about how it was one of the major killers in the world. At first the students were afraid. They had never seen anyone with AIDS before.

Jimmy was one of the best students in Ms. Dugbeh's class. But he was the most afraid and did not ever want to touch anyone with AIDS.

It was now time for the long awaited trip to the hospital.

Ms. Dugbeh stood in the door of the big yellow bus and called out.

"Come out, come out. We are getting late," Ms. Dugbeh said.

The children formed a line out of the class and into the bus.

"Come on, Jimmy," Mrs Dugbe called out. "You are the only one left."

Jimmy looked left and looked right, as if he was looking for something. He came slowly to the bus. He wished he had not come to school.

“I want to urinate, teacher,” he said, as he came close to the bus.

As if the teacher knew what was on his mind, she went with him. Jimmy did not urinate. He thought of other things to say. Ms. Dugbeh kept calling, “Jimmy!”

He wanted to say he was sick. But he knew Ms. Dugbeh and his friends would not listen. He knew she would tell the doctor to check him. It would not be a good thing if Ms. Dugbeh found out that he lied. She would send him home for two weeks.

Slowly he climbed on the bus. All along the trip he was shaking.

“All right everyone. Today you will know all about AIDS,” Ms. Dugbeh said.

At the hospital they were met by a doctor and a nurse. Many doctors and nurses were busy running this and that place. There were many sick people waiting to see the doctors. Some of them were crying. There were people cleaning and people carrying medicines and food from room to room.

“Welcome,” the doctor said. “I am Doctor Cooper, the head of this hospital. This is Marie, the nurse who is in charge of people with AIDS.”

The nurse shook hands with the teacher and the other students. But Jimmy did not want to shake her hand.

“Come on. Don’t be afraid,” the nurse said.

“I heard that you get AIDS when you touch someone who has AIDS,” Jimmy said.

“But I do not have AIDS,” the nurse said, smiling.

“But you take care of people with AIDS,” Jimmy replied.

“Sure. But you do not get AIDS that way. Come on. Let me take you around. You will learn how people get AIDS,” the nurse said.

Jimmy looked in Dr. Cooper’s eyes as he shook his hands with him.

Everyone saw that Jimmy was afraid. His friends giggled.

Ms. Dugbeh and the students were given doctor’s clothes and taken around.

There were many wards in the hospital. Males and females did not stay in the same wards.

“This is the emergency room,” Doctor Cooper said.

“Why is it called the emergency room?” Munah asked.

“It is for people who are seriously ill or badly wounded,” Doctor Cooper said.

“Here they receive quick and special treatment.”

The students went in a large room that had only babies and young children.

“What room is this?” Juah asked.

“This room is called pe·di·at·ric ward. It is for only children,” she pointed at the name over the door.

“Why is it only for children?” Nimley asked.

“Because children are special and needs special care,” the nurse said.

“They are here because we do not want them to catch the same sicknesses adults have.”

Then they came to a door without a name. “Here we go students. This is the room for people with AIDS. Who wants to be the first to enter?” The nurse asked.

Jimmy jumped back. He wanted to run. Then he saw Mrs. Dugbe’s sharp eyes looking at him. He knew she would not spare him a free passing mark. Then Felicia,

another student, entered the room and moved from bed to bed. She and the patients talked freely. She even shook hands with them.

“How did you catch AIDS?” Felicia asked one of the girls.

“Hm! My sister,” the girl said. “I can’t really tell o. I had three boyfriends.”

“What!” Felicia said. “You alone?” she asked. “You how many years old?”

“I am sixteen. My ma and pa aint working. So I had to try for us.

I do not even know which of them gave it to me. Anyway, I am going on well with my treatment.”

“Ok. Keep on taking your medicines. My teacher says you can still live a happy life,” Felicia said.

The class moved to another room. The room had only men and boys.

Jimmy walked to a boy’s bed right away. He knew Felicia was looking at him. If he did not do the same thing, he knew that she would tell the other students in the school that he was selfish and a coward. He went closer to the boy and asked, “How did you catch this disease?”

“I was given blood from someone who had AIDS. The hospital did not check the blood well.”

“Doctor Cooper can someone who is healthy catch AIDS, someone like me?” Blaydee, another boy in the class, asked.

“Yes,” the doctor said. “Anyone can catch AIDS. But in all, there are things we must not do if we do not want to get AIDS.”

“What are the things we must do not to get AIDS?” Jimmy asked.

“Children must stay away from sex until we are above eighteen years old and use condoms when having sex. They should have sex only with someone that is free from AIDS,” Doctor Cooper said.

“Even unborn babies can get AIDS,” Doctor Cooper continued.

“What! How can that be?” Blaydee jumped in.

“Well, there is good news. If a pregnant woman has AIDS, there are medicines she can take so that her baby will not get the disease from her,” said Doctor Cooper.

“Wow!” the class said.

“Hm!” Blaydee said, as she walked to one of the beds. “That is strange.”

“O yes,” Doctor Cooper said. “Scientists are working very hard.”

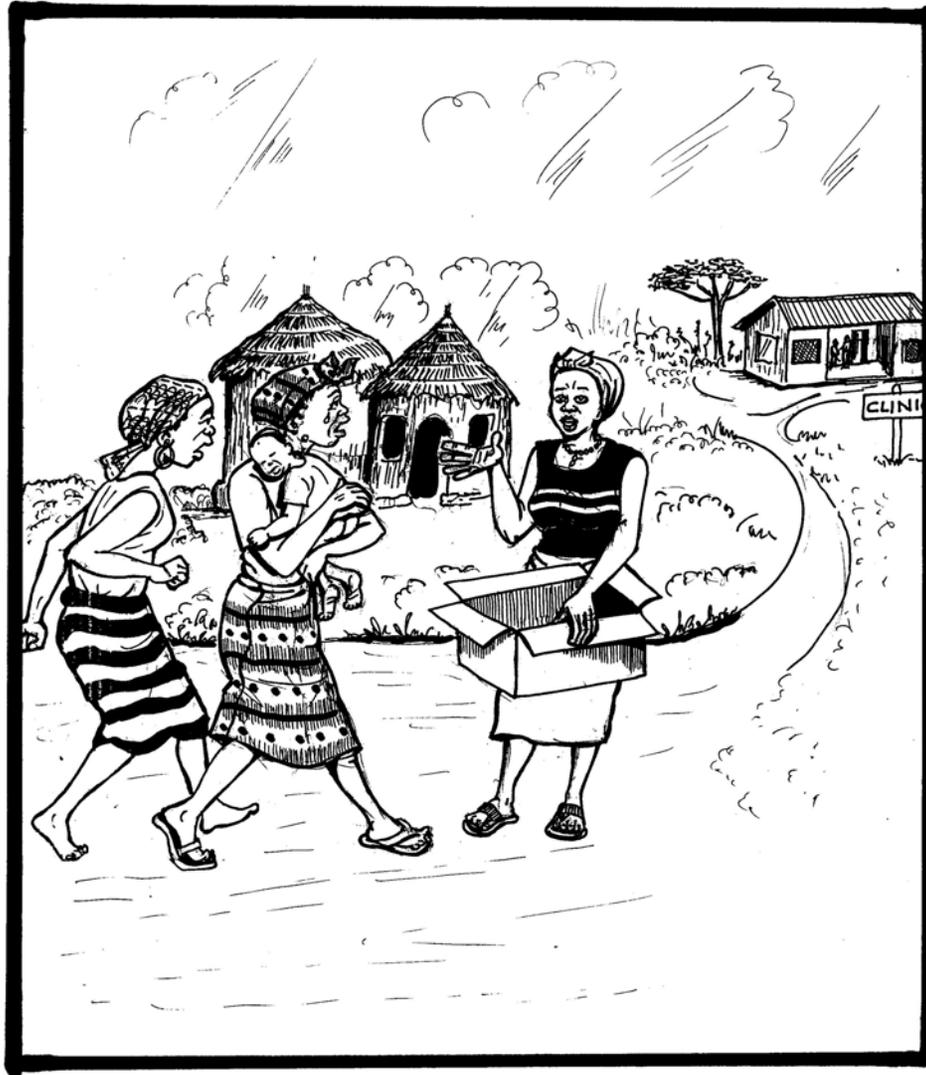
Mrs. Dugbe turned to Jimmy, “Any questions, Jimmy?”

Jimmy looked at Felicia and said, “No, Mrs. Dugbe. Now I know. I will tell others all that I learned about AIDS. After all, people with AIDS need love, care, and encouragement.”

He walked up to one of the AIDS patients and shook her hand. “You see, Felicia?”

“Now boys and girls,” Mrs. Dugbe said, “that’s all for today.”

**END**



## His Name Is Dead Body

*Watchen Johnson Babalola*

“Aye yah my people, your come ooohh, your come!! My daughter baby dying again oooooohhh!! Your come!” Ma Jebbeh shouted over and over as she ran to the village clinic with the new born baby, wrapped in a lappa.

Three of her friends ran along with her, comforting her and giving advice.

“Take time before you fall down with the baby.”

“Wrap him good, Ma Jebbeh. His foot hanging outside of the lappa.”

“Give him a name quick. Name him ‘This Thing’ or ‘Dead Body’. These kinds of children that like to go back will stay if you name them like that. This is your daughter’s fourth child that wants to go back. Let him know that we know his secret. Name him quick, Jebbeh,” advised Ma Mary. Ma Mary was Ma Jebbeh’s best friend.

“Don’t die ‘Dead Body’!” Ma Jebbeh shouted as she ran along without missing a step. “I am taking you to the clinic ‘Dead Body’. Aye man, you can’t feel sorry for your ma? Don’t make the poor woman cry, ooooooh ‘Dead Body’!”

“Nooo, Jebbeh!” shouted Ma Mary. She held Ma Jebbeh’s arm and stopped her from running further. “Don’t beg him. These kinds of children like it hard.”

“Your find a carton! Let’s drag him inside. What Mary is saying is true. When you treat them good that is when they like to hurt your heart,” one of the other women counseled.

“But I told Jebbeh to do this thing from the time that her first grandchild died. But she is hard to believe” said the third friend.

An old milk carton materialized from one of the nearby huts and Ma Jebbeh, eager to do anything that would keep her grandson alive, placed the baby into it. Someone tied a rope around the box and the group of women started to drag the box carrying the tiny bundle down the hill towards the clinic.

“You will see” said Ma Mary. “He knows that we know his secret now. He will be too shame to go back. He will stay this time.”

The group of women reached the clinic and rushed in.

nurse as she picked the tiny bundle out of the carton.

The nurse she picked the tiny bundle out of the carton. A patient standing nearby said, “Oh, this one has been going back, enh? Your did well to drag him..” Yet the nurse turned and look strangely at the patient. “Yes, my sister,” said Ma Jebbeh, as sweat poured down her face. She watched as the nurse rushed the baby into the doctor’s office.

Ma Jebbeh and her three friends sat on the bench and waited for the nurse to return.

After a few minutes, the nurse came outside followed by the doctor.

“Who is the mother of the baby?” asked the doctor.

“The baby ma is my daughter, Doctor’ said Ma Jebbeh, “but she did not come with us. She does not want to see her son go back for the fourth time. All of her children have gone back.”

“The boy will be okay,” the doctor told the women. The good news made the women jump up from their seat with shouts of joy.

“But he is a very sick baby and needs special treatment. You will have to leave him here with us for one month. But I really need to see the mother,” the doctor said.

“No problem, Doctor” said Ma Jebbeh. “I will tell her to come. Thank you oooh! God bless you, my son.”

The women walked happily towards their town. They congratulated Ma Mary for the good advice that she gave which saved the baby’s life.

Every day, Ma Jebbeh visited the hospital and stayed until night. She asked to sleep there but there was nowhere for her to sleep in the hospital.

“I will sleep on the floor,” she begged but the nurse told her to go home and rest.

Her daughter, still too scared to believe that the baby would live, did not go to the clinic. “I will go there if he lives for one month,” she told her mother.

The month passed quickly.

On the day that the baby was to go home, Ma Jebbeh, her daughter and a few of the village women walked to the clinic to take the baby home.

“The baby’s chart still does not have a name on it”, the Doctor told the group. “What is his name?”

“Dead Body” Ma Jebbeh answered.

“What?!” the doctor asked.

“His name is Dead Body” Ma Jebbeh repeated. She smiled brightly at the doctor.

The doctor did not smile.

“Why did you name the child Dead Body?” he asked.

Ma Jebbeh told him all that had happened to her daughter and how naming the child ‘Dead Body’ had saved his life.

“None of her babies lived for more than two hours,” she told the doctor.

“Ma Jebbeh,” said the doctor, “It is good that your daughter is here today. I am not disputing the fact that all kinds of things can happen. But I want you and your daughter to listen carefully to what I have to say.”

He turned to the daughter and said, “Fine girl, you have been killing your own babies.”

“Whaaat?!!!!!!” The women shouted angrily.

“Aaaaaayeee, ma people. The doctor say ma daughter dah witch, aaaayee!!!” Ma Jebbeh wailed.

“Wait and hear what I have to say,” the doctor said firmly. “Did you know that your daughter is on drugs?” he asked Ma Jebbeh.

“What is drugs?” asked Ma Jebbeh?

“All those bad medicine that the people like to use these days to make them high,” the doctor said. “Your daughter is doing it too. And when you are on drugs and pregnant, it makes the baby sick and weak. Even if it lives, it will be dull and hard to learn. When you brought the baby a month ago, all the tests that we took showed us that the mother is on drugs. That is why I kept asking for her.”

“Oh, my daughter. Dah true the doctor saying?” Ma Jebbeh asked her daughter.

“But that common thing Ma. To get high dah na something big,” the daughter answered.

“It is not common, my sister”, the doctor advised. “This is human life. You have to treat it with care. Some other things that can cause the babies to be weak and die are liquor, poor nutrition and when a man beat on a woman while she is pregnant. Sometimes pregnant women stay too long before going to the hospital for treatment. This can also cause the baby to be weak. Please talk to your daughter, Ma Jebbeh, and all the other young girls you know. If they continue in that way and their babies don’t stay alive, then they are the cause. If they change their ways, there will be no need to name their babies ‘Dead Body’ or ‘That Thing’.

“Okay Doctor. Thank you. I will talk to her to stop doing that bad thing.” Ma Jebbeh said as she picked up her

healthy grandson. “Come my daughter, let’s go. It is not too late to change.”

“But weh Dead Body new name nah?” asked Ma Mary as the grateful group walked back to their village.

**END**



## At Last

*Gii-Hne S. Russell*

Everyone was asleep when Zoe arrived in the village near Ganta. She came more often these days, always at midnight. Always in haste, she spent just a day or two and left. She left at midnight after selecting a young woman to take her “goods” to Monrovia for rewards of cash and expensive lappas!

Kou found Zoe’s activities very strange indeed. Kou had tried to find out exactly what goods these women “carried” for Zoe. But no one told Kou anything.

Kou was the village teacher. She and Zoe were first cousins. They had grown up together and been classmates. They had even shared the same bed and worn the same clothes till two years back when Zoe met her rich boyfriend, Adama. It was after meeting Adama that Zoe left school and ran from the village. Next thing anybody knew, Zoe was in “big business.”

Almost overnight, the “big business” made Zoe very rich. She drove her own big jeep, and wore expensive clothes with heavy gold chains. And she had plenty of cash. Each time she came, she brought beautiful gifts for the villagers who were so proud of her they called her “Aunty Zoe.” Even older people called her Aunty Zoe.

It was afternoon of the day after, and Zoe was visiting the small school where Kou taught. Zoe visited once in a while. Those days she came, she and her other friends brought the school children treats of biscuits and koolaid. And the bigger girls got small change and new pairs of slippers. Today, however, it was Kou who sent for Zoe. Kou said it was urgent!

The little children saw the big white car approach. “Aunty-Zoe-Coming! Aunty-Zoe-Coming. . .” They broke from their recess games and chase the car all the way to the school.

When both she and Zoe had drawn aside in her small, reed-walled office, Kou asked hurriedly, “So Yaa too is going with you? To help in your business?”

“But who told you that?” Zoe immediately became suspicious. Zoe never liked anyone nosing in her affairs. She looked round the room. There was a flowing curtain that appeared unusual. Coming inside, she’d passed a strange man who looked to her like the principal.

“Yaa is a child of promise, Zoe. Don’t you think you’re harming this village?” Kou said once more. Yaa was her brightest student. Yaa had earlier told Kou that Aunty Zoe wanted her to take “something” to Monrovia. Yaa said Aunty Zoe warned it was a secret she shouldn’t tell anyone. Yaa nervously showed this “something” to both her mother and Kou. Seeing Zoe’s “goods” made Kou very afraid and very sick!

“What are you talking about?” Zoe frowned. The air inside the tiny office was becoming unfriendly.

“Put it this way,” Kou turned from her old desk. “Do you sometimes think you’re not doing our people any good in this village?”

Zoe quickly lit a stick of cigarette, drew hard on it, and shouted, "Is it a crime to do my own people good? Look at the people suffering round here . . . dying in poverty."

It was the very first time Kou ever saw Zoe smoke. But Kou quickly disregarded the No Smoking rule in her school. "You mean to tell me you don't know it's a crime?" Kou's voice trembled in anger. Her lips were twitching now. "That's no way to stop people from suffering and dying? . . . To slowly poison our children just for dirt sake?"

"You say dirt?" Zoe puffed and smiled to herself. "What dirt? . . . What you mean?"

"What you give, your money, your gifts, everything is DIRT if you poison our children?" Kou's voice was very hard.

"What's the evidence I'm poisoning anybody?" Zoe said harshly. At this point the four other women waiting outside entered the office. The man who looked to Zoe like the principal listened by the door. "Now listen!" Zoe went on. "Yaa's mother begged me to help her daughter. . . I'm trying to help her . . . to help all of them! What do you think

you're doing here anyway? Running a so-called school"—Zoe sighed—"for nothing? What's the benefit of school? I want make Yaa become somebody! You hear? SOMEBODY. You are jealous of that child, that's all."

Kou shot a mean look at her cousin. "Drugs destroy promising minds! Drugs turn communities upside down! Drugs kill! Tell me you don't know so, Zoe?"

Rage flashed in Zoe's eyes as she looked from face to face. "Now," she asked slowly and uneasily, "Who told you I'm doing drugs business? What's . . . where's the evidence? I can jail you forever for lying on me, you know?"

Presently, Kou rushed to the large curtain. She collected and brushed it aside. Yaa sat there with her mother in shock and fright. Beside them stood five huge bags of charcoal. Kou grabbed at the bags, one after the other. She ripped open their straw covers and scattered their contents on the bare floor. Along with the bouncing pieces of black shapes rolled five neat bundles tied like small sacks of rice. Kou roughly took these bundles, cut through their strings, and spilled the contents of white powder on the floor. Out of three of the bundles came three

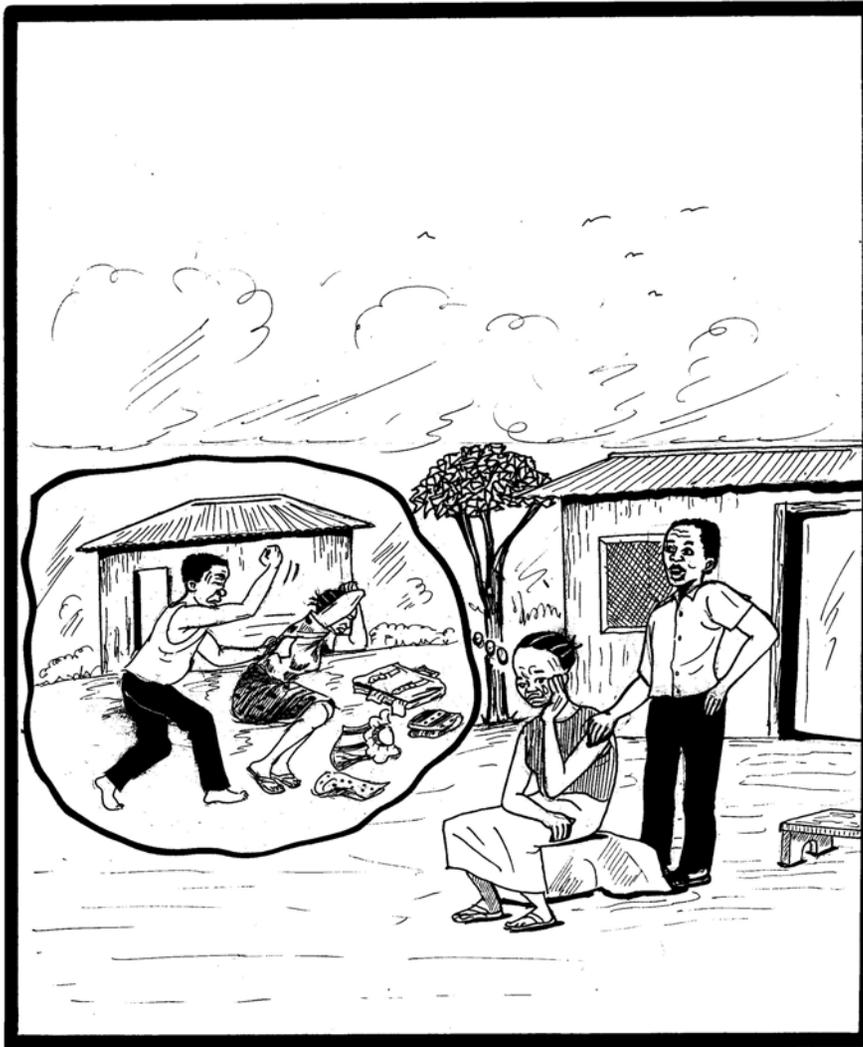
heaps of dried brown grass pressed together in tight squares. . .

“Evidence?” Kou pointed to the dirt floor. “Here’s E-VI-DENCE!” Then Kou jumped to Yaa and her frightened mother. “And here are witnesses. . . Not one, but TWO LIVING WITNESSES!”

The strange man who looked like principal stepped forward before Zoe and her friends. He opened his wallet and said in a deep voice, “You Are All Under Arrest!”

Confused, Zoe shook her head in Yaa’s direction. “Littl’ girl, you betray me-O,! Zoe sobbed. “You betray me bad way-O!”

**END**



## A Story to Tell

*James V. Dwalu*

Konah jumped out of her bed when she was awakened by people quarreling. Then she heard things falling and breaking. She ran out of her room. There were her parents. Her father was hitting hard on her mother. Her mother was crying out loudly. Then her father angrily said, “Today you will have to leave my house.”

“No! I will not leave. I will not go anywhere,” her mother said, crying all along.

“Yes you will leave!” Father shouted.

“No. I have the right to this house also.” Mother shouted back.

“We built it together. So I will not leave!” she continued.

“Shut up, you are just a woman.

You are not supposed to talk when I talk.

I have the final say in this home because I am the man!”

“No, what have I done?” Mother asked, crying.

“I can’t keep you any longer because you cannot read and write,” father said, pushing mother out. Konah ran to her mother. Father pulled her back in the house and slammed the door.

Konah did not sleep all night; she just sat on her bed thinking about her mother.

“How could Father do this?” She asked herself, her lips moving slightly. Finally she fell asleep.

She woke when she heard little birds twittering by her window as they did every morning.

She looked around the room then ran out and looked around the house. Her mother was nowhere to be found.

“My school uniforms have not been ironed. Who will take me to school today?” she wondered. She sat in the corner and began to cry.

“Why are you crying?” Her father asked.

“Where is my mother? When will she come back? Please tell me, Father.”

“All right, stop crying. I will tell you later.”

That day her father did not tell her. After that day he kept promising to tell her later every other day.

Finally she stopped asking. Sometimes she would just sit in front of the house and think the time away. After a while, she thought so much that she wished the bad times away. She wished they had never happened.

All along, she did not forget to go to school and study her lessons.

She stopped wondering when her neighbors told her that her mother had gone to a faraway city and would not be back for a long time. Every day she prayed and hoped that one day she would see her mother.

One morning, a strong wind began to blow. Children were hurriedly sent back home by the school. The wind blew every thing away. People were running here and there in confusion. Children ran either to their fathers or mothers. Konah just stood crying under a big tree. She did not notice that the tree was about to fall. All around her, mothers were running away with their children. One of the women saw the tree and pulled Konah and ran with her as fast as she could before the tree fell. While running, Konah heard SWOOSH! She turned just in time to see the roof of her house and several other houses in the town flying high in the sky like sheets of paper. Every one kept running. Frightened animals ran in every direction. With everything in chaos, Konah and the woman went away to the big city faraway.

### ***Later***

Konah had now grown up into a beautiful woman in the big city. She had finished her studies and was well respected in the big city by everyone. She was always helping other people in need, especially women and children. She always encouraged parents to send their children to school.

One day a young man of the same age visited her at her office.

“My name is Teah. I have heard many good things about you. I like the work you are doing for our country. I am very happy that we have such a caring young woman in our country.”

Konah just sat listening as he spoke.

“Thanks for the homes you are building for homeless women. And also the help you are giving to people living with the deadly HIV/AIDS virus that is killing so many people around the world. There are so many things that I could say.”

Finally Konah spoke. “Thanks for all the praises Mr. Teah. People suffering from AIDS need all the help and support we can give them. We must provide them with medicine and food to help them live longer. As families and

friends, we must encourage people living with AIDS so that they cannot feel rejected.” Konah said.

“I am very touched,” Teah said, “I am a rich man. I want you to teach me how to be helpful to people.”

Konah gave the widest smile ever.

“By the way, if you do not mind, I like to know your parents.”

Konah suddenly stopped smiling. She told Teah her story.

“Do not lose hope. Come with me. We will look for your mother. Please come and have lunch with me at my house today. I have a very good professional cook.”

As they drove to the house in Mr. Teah’s car, every where they passed people waved. Children and old people came to the car to say hello to Konah.

Teah was amazed. “I have never been in a car or walking in this city when people waved to me. How did you do the magic?”

“You just told me every thing at my office. In fact, it is not magic but blessings. I am always with the people. I talk to them whenever I want to do something for them in their communities.”

Lunch was ready when they arrived at the house..  
The palm butter is very nice.” Konah said. “It tastes just  
like how my mother used to cook it. When I taste this food,  
oh, how I miss her.”

“Oh, that reminds me. My cook comes from the  
town you were born in. She is a very good woman. She is  
like a mother to me.”

He sent for the cook. Konah looked up as the  
woman walked slowly to the table. She dropped the spoon  
and yelled with joy. “Mother, I found you.”

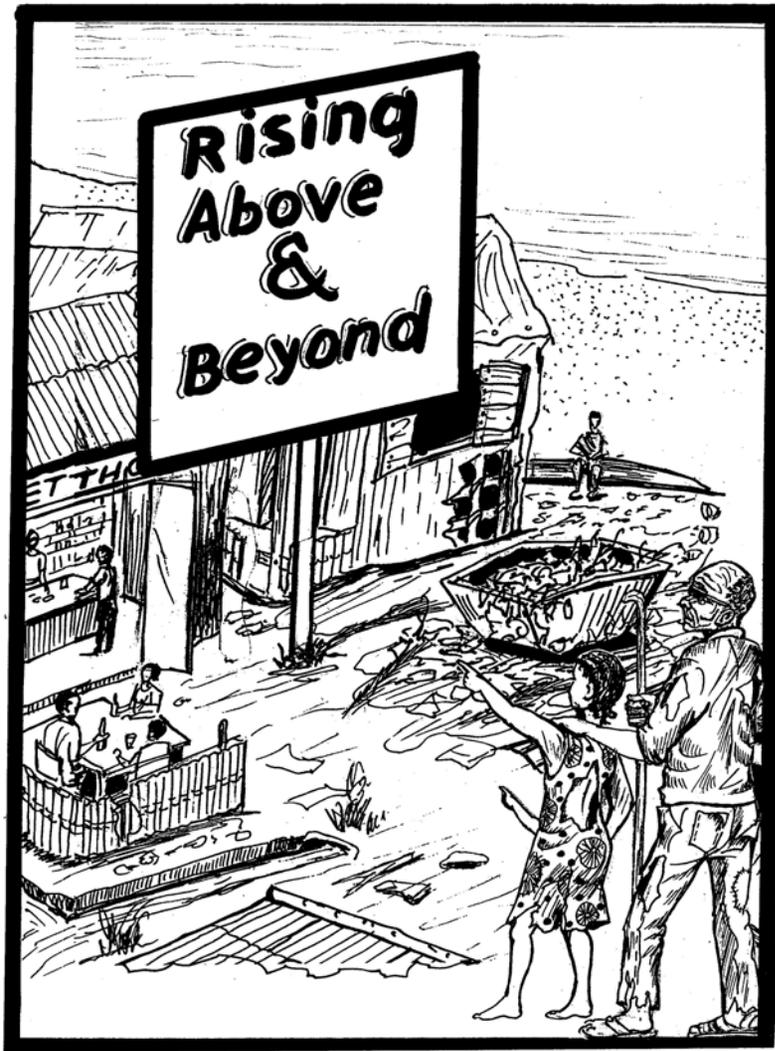
The woman hugged Konah and cradled her in her  
arms. She sat Konah on her lap and cried. Konah cried also.

“Yes, my child you never forgot your mother. Thank  
God that he has brought us back together.”

“All right, let us all eat. Konah, I knew your mother  
was an angel because it had to be someone with a loving  
heart to have a child like you.

“My child, I have good news for you.” Mother said.  
She took a newspaper and began to read it. “I have gone to  
school and can read and write now. I have gone to an adult  
literacy school.”

**END**



## The Blind Man and the Child

*Lord Aidoo*

Zinnah helped her grandfather walk slowly across Buchanan and Sao Boso Streets.

“We are going home,” she said in a tired voice.

Another long day of begging was over. Again, they had made not one single dollar.

Zinnah’s grandfather held onto his old white cane with one hand. Zinnah held onto the old man’s other hand.

That was how the two of them always moved around

Like lots of poor people in West Point, Zinnah and the old man lived in one of the ugly tin shacks beside a huge dump pile.

The garbage from the dump smelled badly, and brought armies of flies and roaches into their shack.

Zinnah slept on the bare dirt floor right under the open window. The ground was hard and always very cold. This made it hard for her to go to sleep.

The small things in dirt from the floor made Zinnah's skin itch. Her body was covered with little sores.

Every day, right before daybreak, the old man woke Zinnah. He woke her when it was still dark and cold.

Sometimes Zinnah complained in a low sleepy voice: "Please Papa, my bones ache.... Let me sleep some more?"

But the old man always said: "Now, don't be lazy! It's best we go before the others, remember? Just when the stores are opening."

The two spent the day begging from before the sun rose until it set across the sky. It was afternoon and a light rain was falling on Water Street. The orange sun was setting in the grey ocean behind the big stores.

Already, most of the stores were closed for the day, and the women behind the many small stalls by the sidewalks were packing their goods away in large boxes.

The old man's hand was cold and weak, and Zinnah was shivering. She was cold, hungry and weak.

She wished they were at home now, but the old man couldn't walk any faster. And West Point was still far away.

Soon, the cloud over the city was getting darker and darker. The loud thunder in the skies behind Ducor hinted of Zinnah's worst fears.

"I'm tired, Papa," she said worriedly, "Let's take a little rest?"

"No, the heavy rains might catch up with us. Let's keep going!" The old man was holding onto Zinnah's shoulder to assure her. She urged him again as her body drooped in the rain.

"At least let's rest a little, papa!"

The old man sat on the step of a store nearby. Zinnah sat by him as the sky got darker. The old man reached out and took her hand.

Zinnah was a girl of ten, but nobody in Monrovia's streets knew she was not a boy. She always wore boys' clothes.

She found old, worn pieces of clothes on the dumps and selected the ones for boys to put on.

Few years back, some bad men had tried to abuse her, and that was when her grandfather advised her to wear boys' clothes and always act like a boy.

Especially when little breasts started growing on Zinnah's chest, her grandfather's fears grew even worse. That was when he decided to leave the displaced camp where little girls like Zinnah were sometimes abused by bad men.

At that time, the old man had not been blind.

In West Point, they built their own shack with old rusty zinc and cartons. The old man started work repairing shoes which provided food and a little extra money.

For the first time in her life, Zinnah , began a real kindergarten school. Her grandfather could afford to travel to the Red Cross Offices at Jamaica road to ask that the Red Cross help to locate Zinnah's mother, Bendu.

Bendu was the old man's only child whom he had not seen nor heard from over eight years since strange men with guns forcefully carried her away from their village on the Bomi highway.

It was the accident with the shoe glue that left her grandfather blind.

Even though the dump was no fit place for human beings, life had not been that hard for Zinnah on the dumps, till the accident.

But after the accident, the old man stayed three months at the MSF Hospital in Mamba Point. Upon his return, Zinnah realized things were never the same again.

First, school was to end for her. Next, she became very hungry all of the time. Then her shoes wore out, and there was no money to buy candles for the long, dark evenings.

To live, they started to beg in the streets of Monrovia. From Waterside, they trekked to every street in the burning sun, and got soaked in the rains. Sometimes they got so sick they couldn't go out for days.

But there was one small compensation in their new life. Before he was blind, the old man had begun to teach Zinnah how to read.

Now, every time they came before some storefront or some street intersection, the old man would ask: "What letters are written on this store?" or, "What letters are written on this street sign?" or, "What does this signpost say?"

Always, Zinnah would carefully spell out the names of the stores, or the names of the streets one by one. And after listening carefully the old man would say the words and explain their meanings till she understood—and learned.

Little by little, Zinnah came to read streets and stores names, and words on signposts, and little sentences on trucks and taxis passing by, and phrases on the colorful banners that flapped in the winds over Broad Street.

Little by little, Zinnah was learning to read the Bible and newspapers well. She collected discarded books and magazines she found on the dump site. These were her treasures and she used them as pillow as she lay on the cold floor.

Sometimes when Zinnah was really hungry her voice became weak and she couldn't pronounce a letter clearly enough, the old man would say: "We're doing this so that you'll not be blind, child!"

"It equals two blind men when a child pilots a blind person round to beg!"

She never quite understood about "... two blind men..." but goose bumps would run down Zinnah's spine as she remembered that it was this same blindness that overturned their lives and threw them both in the streets of Monrovia. She whispered to herself, "blindness brings so much suffering." But the old man could hear her.

To which the old man replied: "They that do not learn to read are blind three times."

The rain was falling heavily and the cold night was well along; and Zinnah was shaking badly now. The old man's teeth rattled sickly, and he shook even more.

The rains fell now with a driving force with the winds rattling the tarpaulin coverings of the many roadside sheds. It tore loose some tarpaulins from the poles to which they were nailed and sent them flying about.

But for Zinnah and the old man, not another life stirred in that black night. Dripping wet, neither of them minded anything now as they moved stiffly away from their place of rest towards West Point.

After a long time, just as the big lightning started tearing through the rains, they reached their shack. They entered and sat pressed together on the small box inside the shack where the leaking wasn't as heavy as it was on the other side.

It was darker inside and more fearsome than the empty streets outside. The cold bit into them and their bodies constantly shook like they had malaria for a long time. Half the night the old man grunted horribly, and his chest heaved in short, heavy fits of breath.

Then, well past midnight, he made one very loud heave and ceased shaking altogether. After that, he became strangely quiet.

The night was long. Zinnah never knew how she passed the night sitting on that box. The crowing roosters woke her when the morning beams of the sun streamed through the scattered holes of the shack's walls.

Slowly, as she realized dawn was coming, Zinnah broke into the song the old man always sang back in the day when he wished to cheer her up:

*Child, you haven't known the feel of warm threads*

*You haven't known how it feels to be full*

*Your toes poke from holes in your shoes like turtles' heads,*

*And sometimes the sores that come*

*Between your toes and under your feet*

*Make walking feel like dying;*

*But someday you'll tell this very tale, child*

*And no ears will say it's true*

*No eyes will believe it's true . . .*

When she got up and stretched, she saw that half the floor inside the shack was covered in brown water up to

her ankle. And to her horror . . . the old man had collapsed face down in the water.

"NOOO! . . . You're sleeping in the dirty water, Papa!" Zinnah quickly reached down and turned him face-up.

She shook the old man again and again. When he would not stir, she let out cries of pain and ran outdoors to the neighbors on the dumps.

But there was nothing her friends at the dump could do for the old man.

The old man had passed!

That morning, they buried the old man by the West Point dumps. This was where many of the dead were buried during the long war. Some nurses in an NGO vehicle stopped when they saw the crowd gathered at the dump. They saw the little child dressed in boy's crying bitterly and one of them went over to offer comfort. The nurse hugged and consoled Zinnah- it was then discovered that Zinnah was not a boy after all.

The ladies took Zinnah away to live with other children who had no parents.

### ***Sixteen Months Later***

Around midday when the sun was high in the sky, two NGO workers from the Red Cross men drove to the dumps.

The men said they were looking for one Mr. Momo who was blind and who had a little boy.

The Red Cross men asked everyone on the dumps about this Mr. Momo, but no one had any clue who he was. No one knew the old man was called "Momo." Then one of the young men remembered the blind man and the little boy. He told the Red Cross men about the ladies from the NGO.

A week later, the Red Cross men found the house in which Zinnah lived. They showed her new guardians an old photo of Bendu cradling a pretty little child. The child was smiling and it looked just like Zinnah.

Bendu, her mother, had recently returned from Freetown along with two of Zinnah's brothers.

"My maaaama?!" Zinnah pressed the old photo close to her heart. "My maaama!...O, my mama!"

The Red Cross men took Zinnah to her mother. Her mother hugged her and warm tears ran down her face. For days, Zinnah and her mother talked about the old man whom she missed dearly. They told stories of how he made them laugh. She showed her mother how he had taught her

to read signs and newspapers. Zinnah even wrote down for her mother the song she sang on the day her grandfather day.

Then one day, Bendu picked up the girl's Bible, her newspapers, the song of the grandfather .... and she paused.

"Zinnah," Bendu asked, "I want you to teach me how to read."

**END**