

Bereket's story



**TELLING
THE
REAL
STORY**



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This book was made possible by Telling the Real Story, a community-based platform that documents and shares the stories of Eritrean and Somali refugees and asylum-seekers and the journeys they take in search of protection. This book aims to give young people an accurate picture of what these dangerous journeys are like for those who embark on them.

We hope the information you find here will help you make a more informed decision, should you ever consider taking the journey yourself.

www.tellingtherealstory.org

Written by: Messai Ali & Christa Odinga-Svanteson
Illustrated by: Jenny Sjödin

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My name is Bereket, I am 13 years old.
Every day I miss my mom.



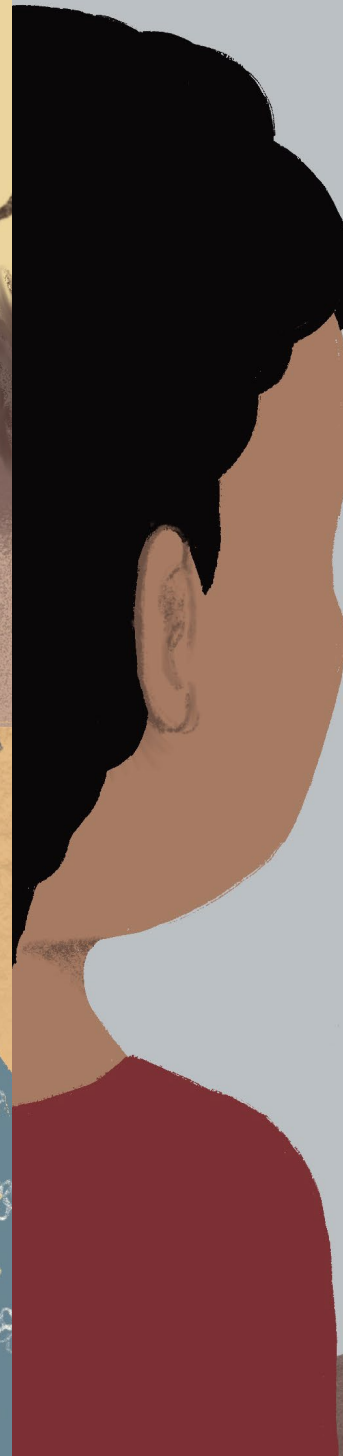
I have 'I love Mom' tattooed on my hand,
so even though we are apart, she is always with me.

When I was younger, I lived in Eritrea with my mother, father, brother and sister.



Then my dad died and everything changed.

We were forced to live with my uncle. He was a bad man. He would beat my mum and shout at her. It made me very angry because she was kind and gentle.



I will never forget how she looked after us. I wanted to help my mother.

I thought if I could make a life for myself far away she could join me and no one would hurt her again.



So I left, I was 8 years old.

Many people I knew had travelled to a refugee camp to get help. It was a long way and I was frightened by wild animals at night.



When I arrived, I was very scared and lonely. It was a big place. But there were lots of other children and I made friends with two girls, Bisrat and Mehret. We talked about how one day our families would join us and we would see them again.



I made the tattoo saying 'I love Mom'.
I promised that one day I would see her again and we would be happy.

After two years of living at the camp, I received a phone call from an old friend. He urged me to travel to Libya because he had met a man who could bring us to Europe. He stated that the individual was a good man who treated him well. I told him I was safe at the camp, but my friend told me I was being silly and that this was my chance to help my mother. He claimed it was my only hope. He was quite persuasive.



I decided to take my friend's advice. Bisrat and Mehret wanted to accompany me on this journey. We had no idea how long or risky it would be. We walked for days and days.



Then a car pulled up and we were forced in. They drove us to a house. They held us there for two weeks. The men were cruel and beat us. We were terrified and wished to return to the refugee camp.

More cars arrived. They crammed a number of us in and drove us away. It was difficult to breathe.

The men thrashed us and they threatened to kill us. We had very little food, and it was so filthy that my skin began to itch.



We were moved again and again.

I've never felt more scared in my life. I had no idea what each day would bring. We were always afraid of getting beaten, and the further we travelled, the more we worried that we might never see our loved ones again.



We were beaten, pushed to the ground and hurt over and over again.
I wish I hadn't left the refugee camp.
I wish I hadn't listened to my friend.

Every time I was scared, I looked at my hand, I thought of my Mom and her smile. She gave me hope.



We got to Libya after many stops.

My friend had lied to me. There was no man to assist me. We were taken to a facility where hundreds of individuals were being held. It was similar to a human market.

There was no air, no light and no space to move.



We had one meal a day. The men demanded money. They tortured men and women who couldn't pay. We could hear them scream in pain.

One day a man was caught trying to escape. They tortured him in front of us. I will never forget what I saw.

I was terrified.

Terrified that I would be next, terrified for when my name would be called. I knew my family would not have the money.



I was afraid for my life. I thought of my mom.
She gave me the strength to plan my escape.
One night I crept to the toilet with my friends
and we climbed through the tiny window.



Bisrat was caught by the guards. They dragged her away.
We ran and ran. We knew they would torture and kill us
if we were caught.



We found a house, a woman gave us shelter but when her husband came home he called the police.



In the morning they took us away to a detention centre in Tripoli.

We are again kept in a dark, crowded and unsafe place. We've been here for months now and I do not know how long they will force us to stay here.



New people are always arriving to the detention centre and today I suddenly see someone I recognize coming through the door.

Bisrat!

After all these months we are reunited.
We are so happy to see each other.



Bisrat is dirty and badly bruised. She tells us about everything that has happened to her after she was caught by the guards.



The traffickers demanded a lot of money and made her call her family but they didn't have enough money so she was forced to work hard on a farm to pay off her debt. She spent long hours looking after the animals. She missed us every day and dreamt of finding us again.

When a group of men came to the farm she was sold to them. They took her to a trafficker's house where she worked day and night cleaning and cooking for hundreds of people.

One day there was an explosion in the kitchen. When the smoke cleared, she could see two young girls lying on the floor. Bisrat can still hear their screams and see their horribly burned bodies when she closes her eyes. She was so relieved it wasn't her by the stove that day.



She prayed every day for survival, and then people began to fall ill from a deadly virus. Countries were closing their borders to prevent the disease from spreading. The traffickers began throwing people on the streets overnight. But they refused to let Bisrat go. She was transported to a large villa with other girls.

One of the men threw nice clothes at them and demanded they wear them. Bisrat was so scared. The men forced them into cars and drove them to a house in the desert. They chained their ankles together and led them into a room full of men shouting prices.



Bisrat felt sick. She was about to be sold to the highest bidder.

Suddenly they heard gunshots outside. They were terrified. Was this where she would die? When soldiers appeared, Bisrat couldn't believe it, she burst into tears with relief.

And then they brought her here, to the detention center in Tripoli.



We are finally back together. We hope never to be parted again.



We do not know what they future holds. We cannot control it. The conditions here are not good, it is crowded and sometimes people are beaten.

We sense that we are not out of danger. We can only draw courage from each other.

