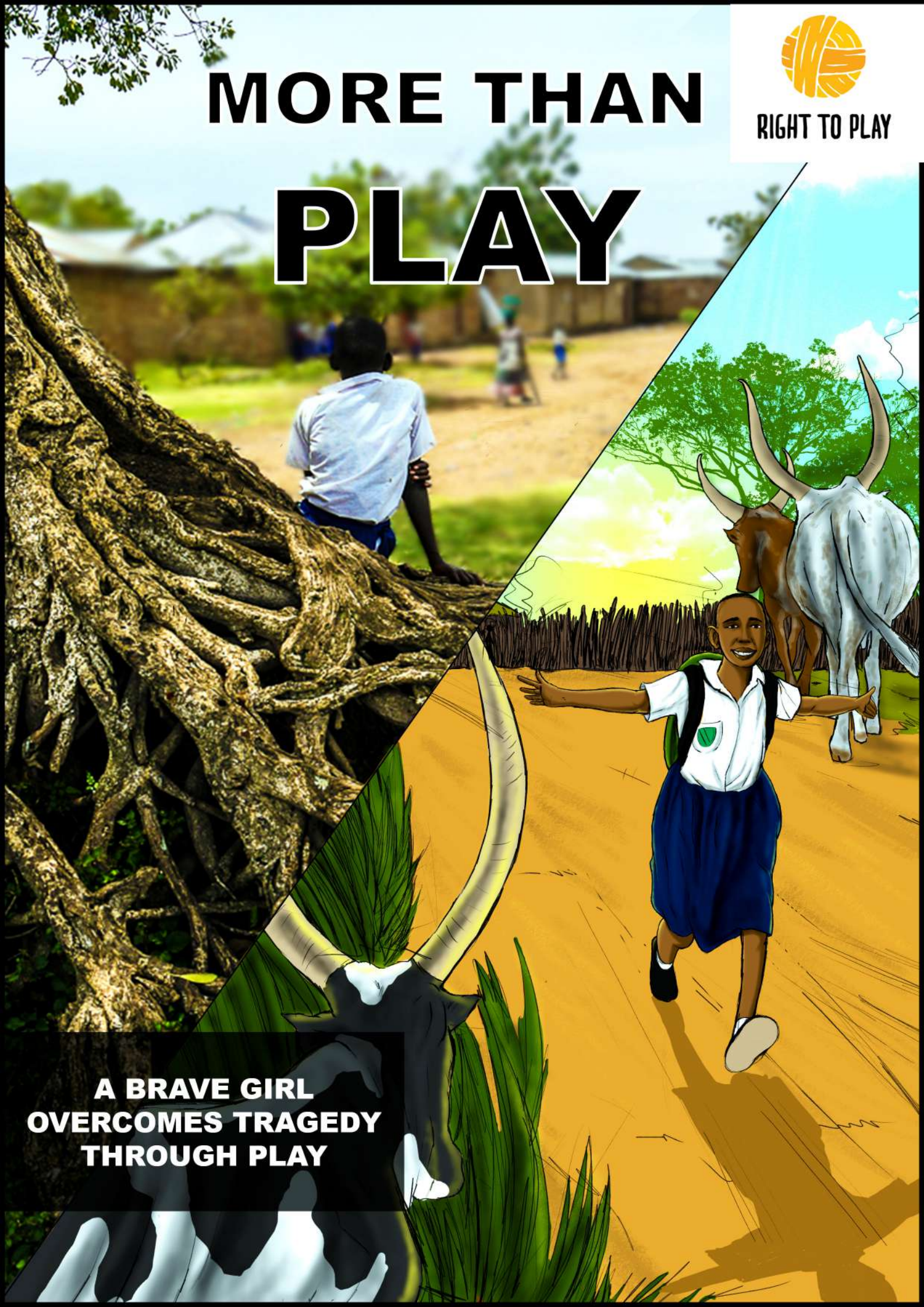


MORE THAN PLAY



RIGHT TO PLAY



**A BRAVE GIRL
OVERCOMES TRAGEDY
THROUGH PLAY**



RIGHT TO PLAY

PROTECT. EDUCATE. EMPOWER.

Education is the single most important investment a country can make for its citizens. Right To Play believes in building a world where learning is playful, where schools are safe, fun places to effectively learn, and where children are engaged and empowered in the learning process. The experiential, participatory and guided approach to play-based learning helps children and youth to make sense of the world around them and develop an internal process of inquiry that allows them to think critically and creatively about their environment and what they are learning. The impact is improved academic performance and the development of critical life skills that support children and youth to survive.

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'MORE THAN PLAY' IS A STORY ABOUT THE STRENGTH AND RESILIENCE OF 12-YEAR OLD RHOBI, A LITTLE GIRL FROM THE KURIA TRIBE IN NORTHERN TANZANIA. WHEN SHE WAS 11 YEARS OLD, RHOBI UNDERWENT A TRAUMATIC CULTURAL RITUAL AGAINST HER WILL WHICH THREATENED HER FUTURE.

HER SUPPORTIVE TEACHER, ANNE, USED HER SPECIALIZED TRAINING TO RESPOND TO RHOBI'S UNIQUE CHALLENGES WHICH PRESENTED A BARRIER TO HER EDUCATION AND HELPED RHOBI OVERCOME THEM.

TODAY, RHOBI IS ATTENDING PRIMARY SCHOOL REGULARLY AND DREAMS OF BECOMING AN ENGINEER. SHE HAS LEARNT THAT HER EXPERIENCE OFFERS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR HER TO ADVOCATE FOR OTHER GIRLS WHO FACE SIMILAR THREATS TO THEIR LIVES AND DREAMS FOR A BETTER LIFE.

AS A JUNIOR LEADER IN A CHILD PROTECTION CLUB SUPPORTED BY RIGHT TO PLAY, RHOBI USES HER VOICE TO ENCOURAGE COMMUNITIES TO END THE DESTRUCTIVE PRACTICES OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION AND CHILD MARRIAGE.

MARA, TANZANIA.

HI RHOBI...

...ARE YOU READY FOR YOUR BIG DAY?

YES! HURRY UP, LET'S GO!

OK, OK! LEAD THE WAY..



REMEMBER CLUB, SPEAK YOUR LINES CLEARLY AND MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL, ENJOY YOURSELVES!
THE WHOLE VILLAGE IS HERE TO SEE YOU PERFORM SO LET US ALL HAVE A GREAT TIME!

RHOBI, SPEAK SLOWLY AND CONFIDENTLY AS USUAL, YOUR STORY IS VERY IMPORTANT.

YES TEACHER ANNE,

...THANK YOU FOR HELPING ME PREPARE IT!





I KNOW IT IS IMPORTANT TO SHARE MY EXPERIENCE, SO THAT OTHER GIRLS DO NOT SUFFER LIKE I DID.

THANK YOU RHOBI! SOMETIMES, WE GO THROUGH THINGS IN LIFE WHICH PREPARE US TO HELP OTHERS. I HOPE YOUR PARENTS ARE ATTENDING THIS TIME?

THEY SAID THEY WOULD COME.



TEACHER ANNE, 26, COACHES THE CHILD PROTECTION CLUB AT KWIHANCA PRIMARY SCHOOL. A MATHEMATICS TEACHER, SHE IS ALSO A TRAINED IMPLEMENTER OF PLAY-BASED LEARNING WHICH EMPHASIZES ACADEMIC ATTAINMENT AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF LIFE SKILLS IN CHILDREN SUCH AS COMMUNICATION, TEAMWORK, LEADERSHIP AND COOPERATION THROUGH PLAY.

THE CHILD PROTECTION CLUB ENCOURAGES PARTICIPATION AND FUN AS CHILDREN LEARN INVALUABLE LIFE SKILLS RELEVANT TO THEIR SITUATION IN LIFE. IT IS A PLATFORM TO SHARE IDEAS WITH THE COMMUNITY THROUGH MUSIC, DANCE AND DRAMA WHICH EVERYBODY ENJOYS.

STUDENTS LIKE RHOBI HAVE LEARNT TO OVERCOME THEIR SHYNESS AND ANXIETY IN FRONT OF AN AUDIENCE---

DURING THE EVENT PUT ON FOR PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY, THE CLUB MEMBERS DEMONSTRATED SEVERAL GAMES THEY PLAY FOR FUN AND ALSO TO LEARN POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR LIKE TEAMWORK AND SELF-ESTEEM.



THEN THEY PERFORMED A PLAY ABOUT CHILDREN'S RIGHTS TO EDUCATION AND PROTECTING THE GIRL CHILD FROM THE DANGERS OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION AND CHILD MARRIAGE.



AT THE END OF THE PLAY, RHOBİ TOOK THE STAGE AND BEGAN TO ADDRESS THE ATTENTIVE AUDIENCE:



HELLO EVERYBODY AND WELCOME TO OUR SCHOOL---

---MY NAME IS RHOBİ AND I WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT HOW CIRCUMCISION ALMOST RUINED MY LIFE.

I WANT PARENTS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS TO PROTECT GIRLS FROM THIS FATE. GIRLS BELONG IN SCHOOL AND SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO STAY IN SCHOOL AND FINISH JUST LIKE BOYS.

I AM 12 YEARS OLD IN STANDARD FIVE
HERE AT KWIHANCHA PRIMARY SCHOOL...

I LIVE IN GIBASO VILLAGE, TARIME DISTRICT...

I LIKE MATHEMATICS AND I ALSO
LIKE TO PLAY WITH MY FRIENDS...



ONE EVENING LAST YEAR, ON MY WAY FROM SCHOOL, I FOUND MY
FATHER AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY HAVING A MEETING...



AT THE TIME I DID NOT REALISE THEY
WERE DISCUSSING MY FUTURE...

A FEW DAYS LATER, MY FATHER ANNOUNCED THAT I SHOULD START PREPARING FOR THE CIRCUMCISION CEREMONY....I WAS SHOCKED AND STARTED CRYING. I BEGGED MY FATHER TO LET ME STAY IN SCHOOL, BECAUSE I KNEW A MARRIAGE PROPOSAL WOULD FOLLOW THE CEREMONY.

SCHOOL IS A WASTE OF MY MONEY! YOUR BROTHERS CAN STAY IN SCHOOL, BUT YOU KNOW WE NEED THE DOWRY FROM YOUR MARRIAGE!

...BUT I AM TOO YOUNG TO GET MARRIED! MY TEACHER SAID CIRCUMCISION IS DANGEROUS; I COULD DIE! IT IS AGAINST MY RIGHTS TO FORCE ME TO LEAVE SCHOOL AND GET MARRIED!

WHO TOLD YOU SUCH NONSENSE!? I NEED TO TELL THAT TEACHER TO MIND HER OWN BUSINESS. SHE CAN'T TELL ME WHAT TO DO WITH MY OWN DAUGHTER, I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ANOTHER WORD, YOU SHALL DO AS I SAY AND THAT'S FINAL!



THE FOLLOWING DAWN, MY FATHER STARTED WHAT HE CALLED "PREPARATIONS FOR ME TO BECOME A WOMAN."



RHOBI! GET UP! A GOOD WIFE IS NEVER LAZY!

MMMHH???



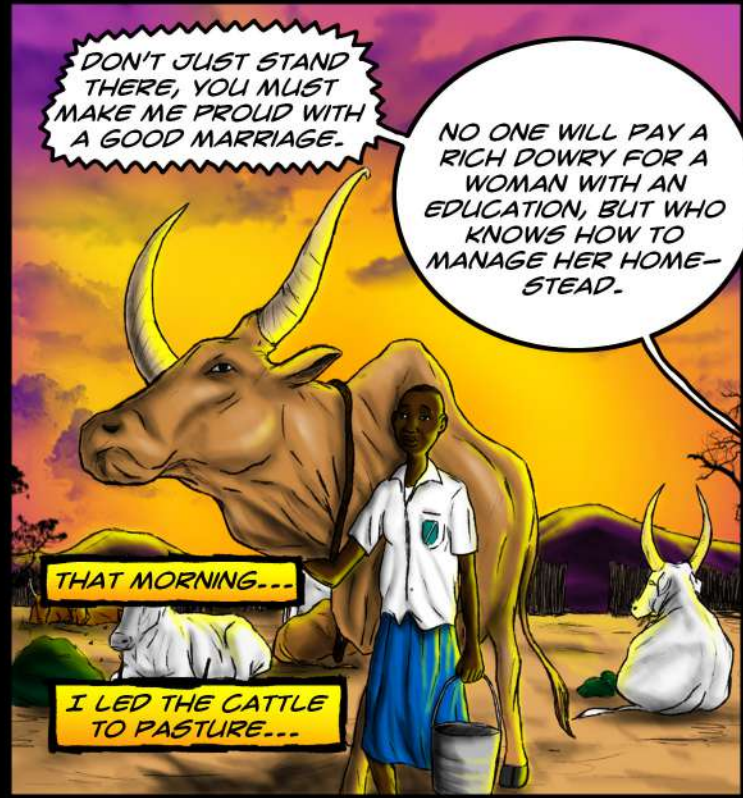
...HE LED ME OUTSIDE INTO THE CHILLY DARKNESS AND INSTRUCTED ME TO ATTEND TO THE CATTLE.

THEY NEED TO BE MILKED AND THEN TAKEN TO GRAZE.



DON'T JUST STAND THERE, YOU MUST MAKE ME PROUD WITH A GOOD MARRIAGE.

NO ONE WILL PAY A RICH DOWRY FOR A WOMAN WITH AN EDUCATION, BUT WHO KNOWS HOW TO MANAGE HER HOME-STEAD.



THAT MORNING...

I LED THE CATTLE TO PASTURE...

MILKED THE COWS...



AND COOKED MAIZE PORRIDGE FOR THE FAMILY BREAKFAST...



THEN I RUN ALL THE WAY TO SCHOOL, BUT STILL WAS VERY LATE. I WAS SO TIRED, AND SAD BECAUSE I HAD MISSED THE MATHS GAMES.

THIS WENT ON FOR WEEKS AND MY TEACHERS TRIED TO HELP ME BY GIVING ME EXTRA LESSONS.



ONE DAY, TEACHER ANNE FOUND ME SLEEPING IN CLASS AGAIN, AND DECIDED SHE NEEDED TO DO SOMETHING ELSE TO HELP ME. SHE WAS GOING TO BRAVELY FACE MY FATHER AND ASK HIM TO LET ME FOCUS ON SCHOOL INSTEAD OF CHORES AND MARRIAGE.

RHOBI, IS IT ALRIGHT IF I MEET YOUR PARENTS? PERHAPS I CAN CONVINCE THEM TO LET YOU FINISH SCHOOL.

UHM... YOU CAN COME ON SATURDAY BECAUSE MY FATHER WILL HAVE GONE FOR A WEDDING ...HE DOESN'T LIKE VISITORS...



I DID NOT TELL TEACHER ANNE THAT I FEARED WHAT MY FATHER MIGHT DO IF HE FOUND A TEACHER FROM THE SCHOOL AT HOME...

WHEN TEACHER ANNE MET MY MOTHER, SHE EXPLAINED TO HER THAT IT WAS MY RIGHT TO BE IN SCHOOL AND TOLD HER OF THE BENEFITS OF EDUCATION

RHOBI IS A BRIGHT STUDENT WHO HAS A GOOD CHANCE OF BECOMING AN ENGINEER ONE DAY, PLEASE TALK TO HER FATHER ABOUT THIS. CIRCUMCISION IS VERY DANGEROUS, AND YOUR DAUGHTER COULD BE HARMED

RHOBI'S FATHER HAS MADE UP HIS MIND AND I CAN'T DO MUCH ABOUT THAT. EVEN IF SHE STAYS IN SCHOOL THIS TERM, THE INITIATION SEASON IS STARTING, AND ALL GIRLS ARE GOING TO THE CAMP FOR PREPARATIONS.

THIS IS OUR CULTURE, RHOBI HAS NO CHOICE BUT TO DO WHAT HER FATHER SAYS.



THE INITIATION 'CUT' IS PERFORMED BY AN ELDERLY WOMAN IDENTIFIED BY THE COMMUNITY TO PERFORM THE RITUAL. SHE IS KNOWN AS THE "OMUSALI" IN KURIA LANGUAGE OR "NGARIBA" IN KISWAHILI.

A FEW WEEKS LATER, I WAS TAKEN OUT OF SCHOOL AND HANDED OVER TO THE 'OMUSALI' WHO HAD SET UP CAMP IN A SECRET LOCATION. ME AND MANY OTHER GIRLS MY AGE STAYED WITH HER, LEARNING FOLKLORE, TAKING RITUAL BATHS AND SINGING AND DANCING. I MISSED SCHOOL BUT WAS RESIGNED TO MY FATE.

ONE NIGHT, I WAS SURPRISED TO SEE MY MOTHER, WHO THEN HELPED ME ESCAPE TO HER BROTHER'S HOUSE. I WAS HIDDEN AT MY UNCLE'S HOME IN A NEARBY VILLAGE SO THAT I COULD CONTINUE SCHOOL FROM THERE...



BUT THEN MY FATHER EVENTUALLY FOUND OUT ABOUT THE SCHEME AND MY HIDEOUT...

HE WAS FURIOUS AND QUICKLY RETURNED ME TO THE "OMUSALI" CAMP...



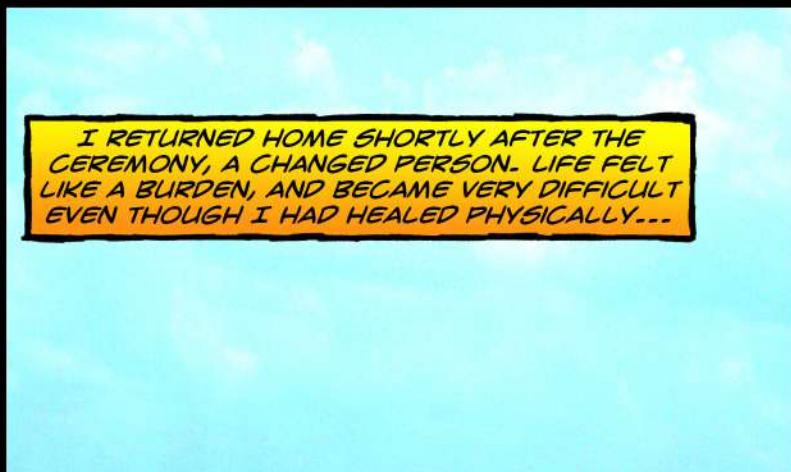
... WHERE THE CIRCUMCISION CEREMONY TOOK PLACE A FEW DAYS LATER.



THE PAIN AND CONFUSION I FELT WERE INDESCRIBABLE. HOW COULD MY FATHER DO THIS TO ME?

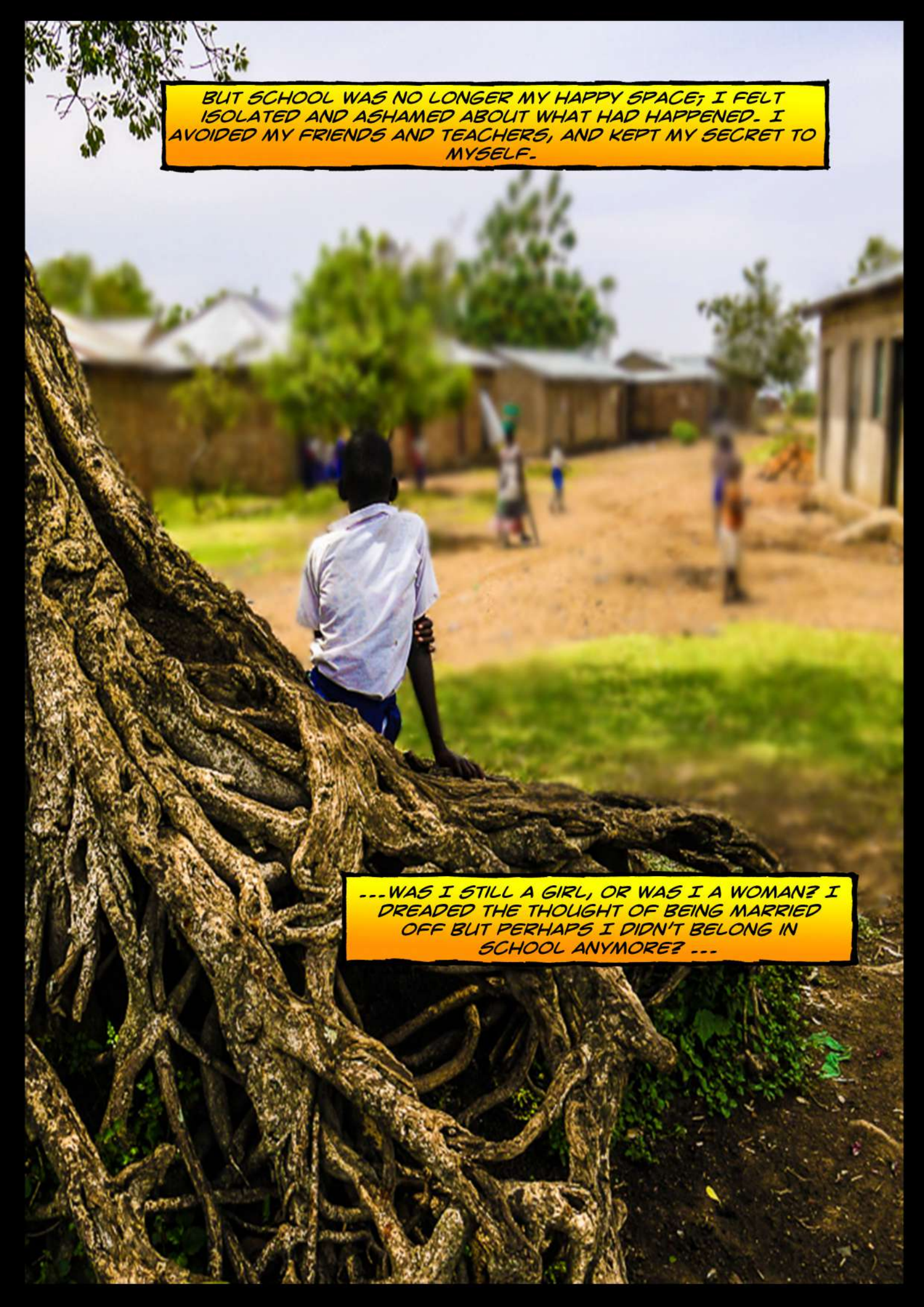


I RETURNED HOME SHORTLY AFTER THE CEREMONY, A CHANGED PERSON. LIFE FELT LIKE A BURDEN, AND BECAME VERY DIFFICULT EVEN THOUGH I HAD HEALED PHYSICALLY...



... DESPITE WHAT MY FATHER WANTED, I RETURNED TO SCHOOL BECAUSE I MISSED MY FRIENDS, AND I THOUGHT THE GAMES AND THE ACTIVITIES OF THE CHILD PROTECTION CLUB WOULD CHEER ME UP AND MAKE ME FEEL NORMAL AGAIN.



A young boy in a white school shirt and blue shorts sits on the thick, gnarled roots of a large tree in the foreground. He is looking towards a schoolyard in the background where other children are playing. The scene is outdoors with green grass and trees under a clear sky.

BUT SCHOOL WAS NO LONGER MY HAPPY SPACE; I FELT ISOLATED AND ASHAMED ABOUT WHAT HAD HAPPENED. I AVOIDED MY FRIENDS AND TEACHERS, AND KEPT MY SECRET TO MYSELF.

... WAS I STILL A GIRL, OR WAS I A WOMAN? I DREADED THE THOUGHT OF BEING MARRIED OFF BUT PERHAPS I DIDN'T BELONG IN SCHOOL ANYMORE? ...

I WISHED I COULD TALK TO SOMEONE WHO KNEW WHAT I WAS GOING THROUGH. WHEN TEACHER ANNE FOUND ME CRYING ALONE, AGAIN, SHE ASKED ME TO TRUST HER AND I FINALLY TOLD HER WHAT HAD HAPPENED---

SHE WAS VERY UNDERSTANDING AND COMFORTED ME. "YOU ARE STILL A CHILD", SHE TOLD ME, AND "YOU STILL HAVE RIGHTS". YOU SHALL NOT BE FORCED INTO A MARRIAGE, SHE SAID AND PROMISED TO FOLLOW UP WITH THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE--

RIGHT TO PLAY SUPPORTS SCHOOLS IN THE CREATION OF SCHOOL COMMITTEES THAT ACT AS A FOCAL POINT FOR DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN STUDENTS, TEACHERS, PARENTS AND COMMUNITY ELDERS.


THE FOLLOWING WEEK WHEN THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MET, I WAS INVITED ALONGSIDE MY MOTHER AND I NARRATED MY ORDEAL TO THE COMMITTEE WHO ASKED MY MOTHER TO TALK MY FATHER INTO ALLOWING ME TO CONTINUE WITH SCHOOL---

...DESPITE ALL THIS I LOVE GOING TO SCHOOL AND I DON'T WANT TO GET MARRIED.


I AGREE!

WE AS TEACHERS, PARENTS AND ELDERS OF THE COMMUNITY HAVE TO FIND WAYS OF BREAKING THESE BARRIERS OF EDUCATION



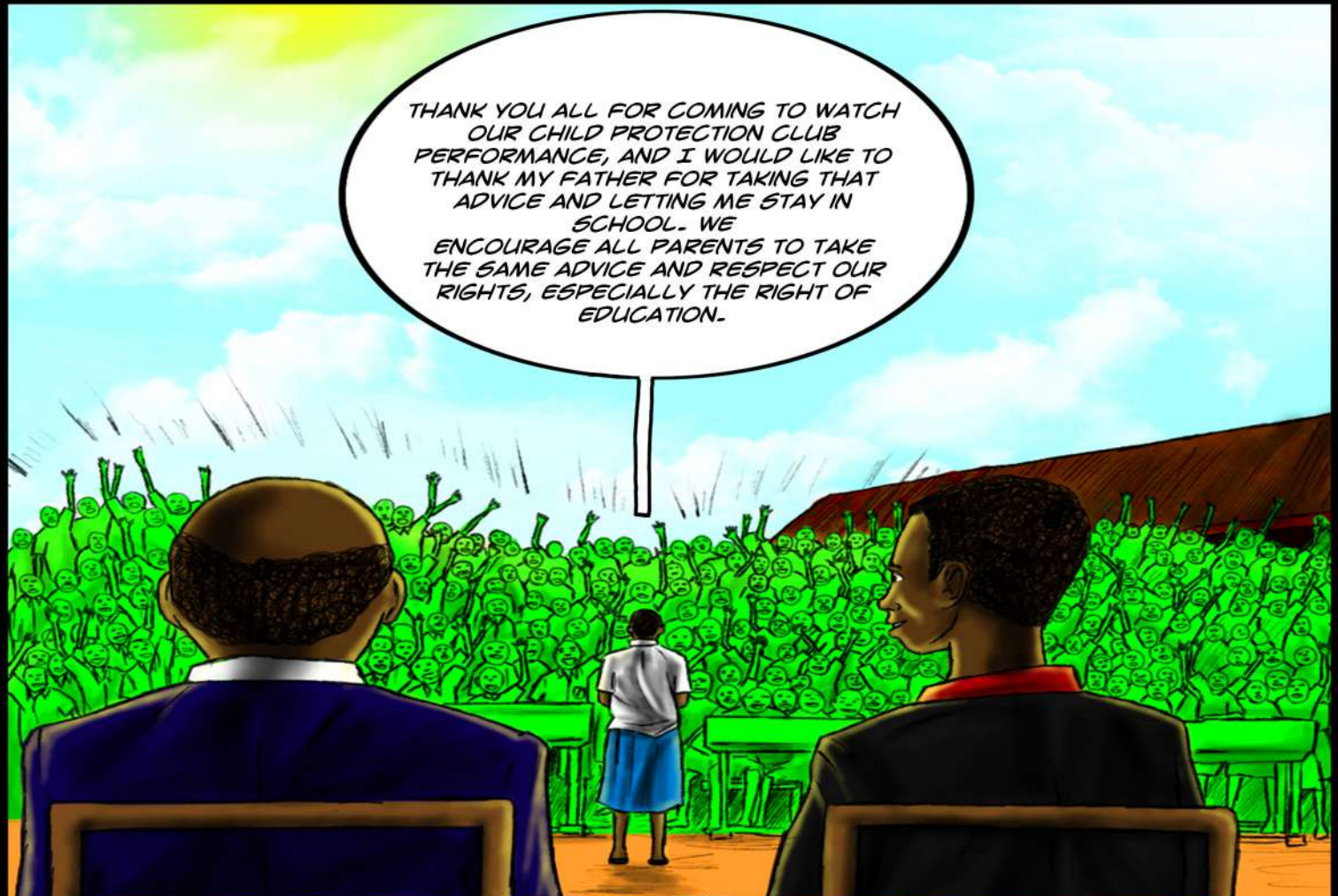


HUSBAND, LET HER GO TO SCHOOL, REMEMBER...HER EDUCATION IS WORTH ALOT MORE THAN 12 COWS!



I HAVE SPOKEN TO YOUR FATHER AND HE SAYS YOU CAN CONTINUE GOING TO SCHOOL....FORGET ABOUT THE MARRIAGE..

MAMA! THAT IS WONDERFUL NEWS!



THANK YOU ALL FOR COMING TO WATCH OUR CHILD PROTECTION CLUB PERFORMANCE, AND I WOULD LIKE TO THANK MY FATHER FOR TAKING THAT ADVICE AND LETTING ME STAY IN SCHOOL. WE ENCOURAGE ALL PARENTS TO TAKE THE SAME ADVICED AND RESPECT OUR RIGHTS, ESPECIALLY THE RIGHT OF EDUCATION.

AS A MEMBER OF THE CHILD PROTECTION CLUB INTRODUCED AND SUPPORTED BY RIGHT TO PLAY, RHOBI LEARNT ABOUT CHILDREN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS. THE CLUB ENGAGES THE COMMUNITY THROUGH MUSIC, DANCE AND DRAMA, IN DISCUSSIONS ABOUT ELIMINATING BARRIERS TO GIRLS' EDUCATION.

RHOBI CONTINUES TO ENJOY SCHOOL AND SEES A BRIGHT FUTURE AHEAD OF HER. WITH THE CHILD PROTECTION CLUB, SHE PLANS TO VISIT OTHER HOMES AND SCHOOLS IN THE REGION, ADVOCATING FOR GIRLS NOT TO BE CIRCUMCISED, BUT TO STAY IN SCHOOL, ATTEND REGULARLY AND FINISH SCHOOL.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO TELL OTHER CHILDREN ABOUT THEIR RIGHTS?

OUR CLUB CAN VISIT OTHER SCHOOLS TO TEACH CHILDREN THEIR RIGHTS.

Some names have been changed to protect the identities of the children in this story.

THE END.





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