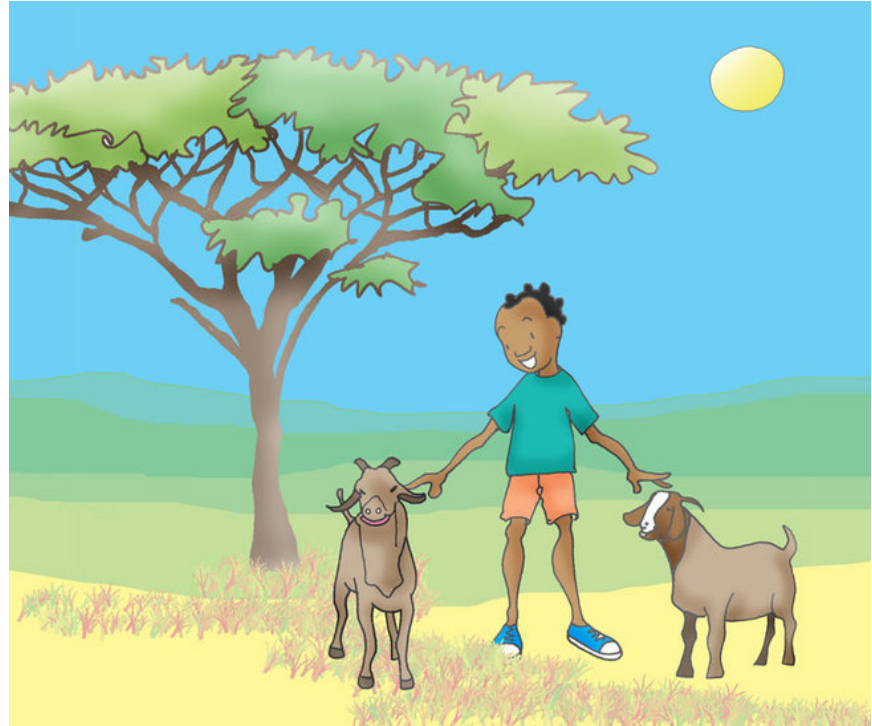




My first day at the market

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English

I live in Kakuma village, a very hot dry place, full of thorny trees, and more goats than people. Even the market place is quiet, with only a few small shops. Most people use bicycles for transport.





One morning my mother called me and said, “Etabo, today you turn six years old. We have a present for you.”

“What is it? What is it?” I asked eagerly.

“Tomorrow we’re going by bus to the market in Eldoret,” she replied, “And we’re taking you with us!”

My first visit to the city! I was so excited that I could hardly sleep that night.

The next day at the Kakuma bus stop, I stood between my mother and my aunt in my new pair of blue jeans and red T-shirt.

I felt very small between my tall slender mother and my big round aunt.





The bus was very full, so I had to sit on my mother's lap.

Tired from the heat and excitement, I slept the whole way and saw nothing.

The sun was just rising when we reached Eldoret market.

At the entrance was a woman selling grains. Over in one corner there were two men getting ready to lay out their sweet potatoes.

Over in another corner was a short woman holding a shiny blue helicopter.

“Mother, mother, look at that helicopter!” But mother pulled me away.





In the middle of the market, there was a large stall that sold different types of fruit.

Some of them I had never seen before.

“What are the names of these fruits?” I asked my mother. She pointed at some: “These are oranges, and these are guavas.”

I turned around and said, “And these?”

Of all the fruits at the stall, I liked the apples most. I liked their shape and colour. I wondered how they tasted. I turned to mother and said, "Could you buy one for me?"





As soon as she gave me the apple, I let go of my mother's hand, took the fruit with both hands, and bit into the juicy flesh.

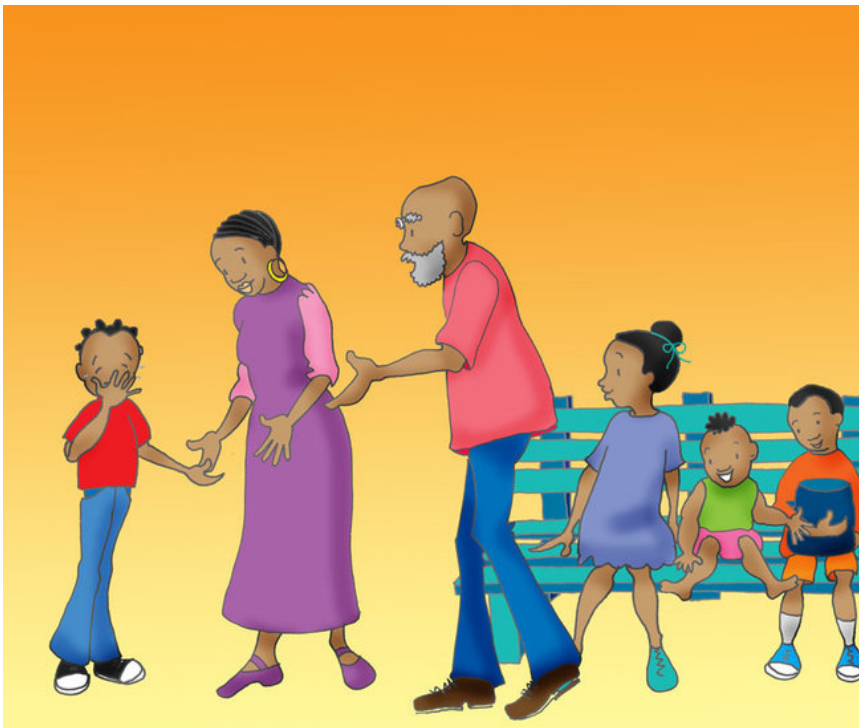
I had never enjoyed a fruit the way I enjoyed that apple.

All I cared about was my apple.

When I finished the apple, I looked up to talk to my mother. But she was not there! I looked where we had come from, but my mother and aunt were not there.

I looked to the right, then to the left. But they were nowhere to be seen. "Have you seen my mother?" I asked the women selling potatoes nearby. They took no notice. I started to cry.





A while later, a woman took me by the hand and led me to a place where there were other children.

A big man with a thick beard asked, "What's your name, boy?"

"E-ta-bo," I replied through my tears.

I wondered if children were also sold at the market. I stopped crying and looked around to see if anyone would buy the children in the room. Soon a woman came in and picked up one of the children.

“I will be the next one to be taken away,” I thought. “And then I’ll never go home again!”

I started crying once more.





When I heard the big man with the thick beard saying, “Where is Etabo?” I cried even harder.

“But I do not want to go with you!” I sobbed.

I ran away from him.

When my mother and aunt heard my name, they rushed to the room.
“Etabo, Etabo!” a familiar voice called.
It was my mother.





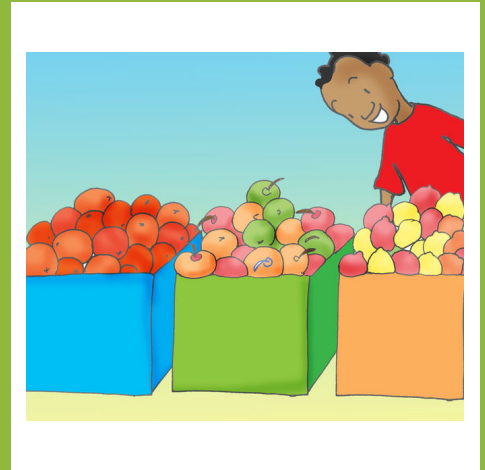
As I got up to hug my mother, my aunt said, "Etabo, we were looking for you to give you your birthday present." And from a big bag, she pulled out a shiny blue helicopter. "It's yours!" she said.

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