

Of Beetles and Angels: A Boy's Remarkable Journey from a Refugee Camp to Harvard

By Mawi Asgedom

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Of Beetles and Angels: A Boy's Remarkable Journey from a Refugee Camp to Harvard By Mawi Asgedom

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The desert, I remember. The shrieking hyenas, I remember....I remember playing soccer with rocks, and a strange man telling me and my brother Tewolde that we had to go on a trip and Tewolde refusing to go. The man took out a piece of gum and Tewolde happily traded it for his homeland....

So begins the remarkable true story of a young boy's journey from civil war in east Africa to a refugee camp in Sudan, to a childhood on welfare in an affluent American suburb, and eventually to a full-tuition scholarship at Harvard University. Following his father's advice to "treat all people-even the most unsightly beetles-as though they were angels sent from heaven," Mawi overcomes the challenges of language barriers, cultural differences, racial prejudice, and financial disadvantage to build a fulfilling, successful life for himself in his new home.

Of Beetles and Angels is at once a harrowing survival story and a compelling examination of the refugee experience. With hundreds of thousands of copies sold since its initial publication, the unforgettable memoir continues to touch and inspire readers. This special fifteenth anniversary edition features bonus materials, including a new introduction and afterword by the author.

please note the updated anniversary edition will be released in June. Orders placed before that edition is available will receive the current paperback

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
In 1983, at age seven, the author and his family arrived in this country, having fled the Eritrean and Ethiopian conflict. "This earnest account of Asgedom's life up to his graduation from Harvard is peppered with powerful moments," wrote PW. Ages 10-up.
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From Booklist
When he was four years old, Asgedom's family left their war-ravaged home in Ethiopia. They spent three years in a Sudanese refugee camp before coming to the U.S. in 1983, where they were settled by World Relief in a wealthy white suburb near Chicago. He later earned a full scholarship to Harvard, where in 1999 he delivered the commencement address. His simple lyrical narrative, both wry and tender, stays true to the child's viewpoint as he grows up, taunted at school, but pretty bad and rough himself. His coming-of-age story is both darkened and enriched by the stories he hears about his parents' lives back home and by the pieces he remembers. At the center of the book is his father, a fierce family disciplinarian, once an all-powerful medical assistant at home, now reduced to a "beetle," unemployed, half-blind, raging at his dependency. Only at the very end, when Asgedom spells out the metaphor of the title, does the message overwhelm the story. What stays with you is the quiet, honest drama of a family's heartrending journey.
Hazel Rochman
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Review
"Asgedom stands as an exemplar of the strength of the human spirit." -- *Harry Lewis, Dean of the College, Harvard University*

A wonderful tribute to the unsung heroism of countless refugee families....The most inspiring story I have read in recent years. -- *Hayelom Ayele, Director/Community Liason, City of Chicago Council on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs*

I am truly awed by Mawi's strength and conviction. -- *Charlie Trotter, Chef/Author*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Derrick Robertson:

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Philip Kirkpatrick:

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Thomas Rice:

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