

Tariku



A story about a child from Ethiopia, told by the children of the association “Let me be a child”:

*Rihana, Bruktawit, Mikiyas, Kalkedan, Eskdar, Meaza, Mekdas, Abrham, Andenet, Nabuyu, Mesekir, Haile, Maron, and Etagegne
Translated by Eyoub, a volunteer from “Let me be a child” in Addis Ababa,*

Helped and edited by the German Author Nasrin Siege, who is a friend of Tapori and ATD Fourth World and and a friend and supporter of the project “Let me be a child” in Addis Ababa.

The old man walked slowly along the street. His name was Getachew. He had nobody to look after and there was nobody who looked after him. He slept in the street like many other people. He begged from passersby to earn a little money and some food.

Some people did not like him. They called him names and they chased him away because they said he was sick.



One day, when Getachew was walking down the street he heard somebody crying. He stopped and listened to find out where this sound was coming from. Then he went slowly toward the source of

the sound and found a little boy who was sitting on the sidewalk between two parked cars.

Getachew kneeled down and looked at the boy.

“Why are you crying?”, he asked the boy.

The boy looked at him, his face covered with tears.



“Are you hungry?”, Getachew asked.

The little boy nodded.

“I have some bread.” Getachew stretched out his hand and offered the boy a piece of bread which a kind woman had given him.

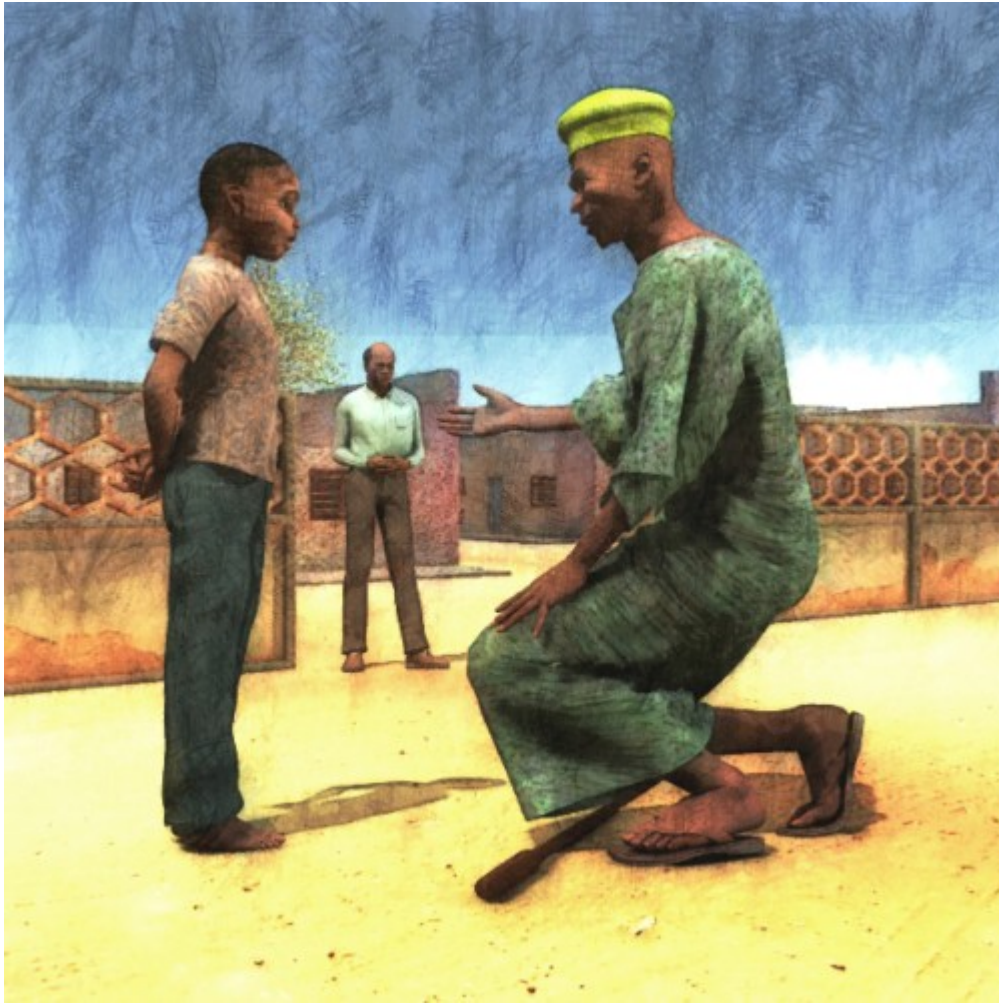
“Thank you.” The boy took the bread and started eating it.

“What is your name?” Getachew asked.

“Tariku,” the boy answered.

“Where are your parents?”

“I am alone”, Tariku sobbed. “My parents have died.”



Getachew did not ask anymore questions. He had met many children in the streets with similar stories. Their parents had died and they had nobody to look after them. Some would walk around together day and night, searching for food. They were always alert not to be caught by the police.

“You can come with me”, Getachew said. “If you want ... I will look after you.”

So it came that old Getachew and young Tariku started begging together. Tariku loved Getachew and Getachew loved Tariku. They were like grandfather and grandson.

So it came that old Getachew and young Tariku started begging together. Tariku loved Getachew and Getachew loved Tariku. They were like grandfather and grandson.

Although Getachew was happy not to be alone, he never stopped thinking about how he could better help Tariku. “A child needs to go to school,” he said to himself. “A child needs a home!” And he was sad that he could not give Tariku an education and a home.

One day when they were passing by a school, he saw Tariku looking sadly at the children chatting happily in their school uniforms. Seeing the longing in Tariku’s face and knowing he’d like to go to school like the other children made Getachew very sad.

Suddenly a boy approached Getachew and Tariku.

“Tariku!” the boy exclaimed, “What are you doing here?”

The boy’s name was Biniam. He knew Tariku. They had lived in the same village and after Biniam’s parents had died, Biniam had gone to stay with his uncle in Addis Ababa.

When Biniam heard that Tariku’s parents had died as well, he felt very sorry for him.

“Ato* Getachew is looking after me”, Tariku said.

Biniam greeted Ato Getachew with respect: “Where do you live?” he asked the old man and when he heard about them living in the street, Biniam shook his head in despair.

“I know,” Getachew sighed, “I wish I could send Tariku to school and give him a real home... but I am poor...”

When Biniam heard these words, his face lit up with excitement. “If you and Tariku want, I can take Tariku to the same project which takes care of me. There are good people who help me to get an education. I even get food and clothes there and medicine when I am sick. Without their help my uncle would never be able to afford to send me to school.”

*Ato: mister, a term of respect



So it happened that Tariku and Getachew went together with Biniam to the “Let me be a child” project’s small house.

Although the house was small and the project already had 42 children in its care, the social workers decided to take Tariku into their care when they heard his story. The other children welcomed him.

When the time came to say goodbye to Getachew, who had been his guardian through the last weeks, Tariku started crying.

“I will visit you every week,” Getachew promised him.

Now Getachew was alone again. But somehow he felt good. He loved Tariku and he was happy that Tariku had finally found a home and the possibility to go to school again.

