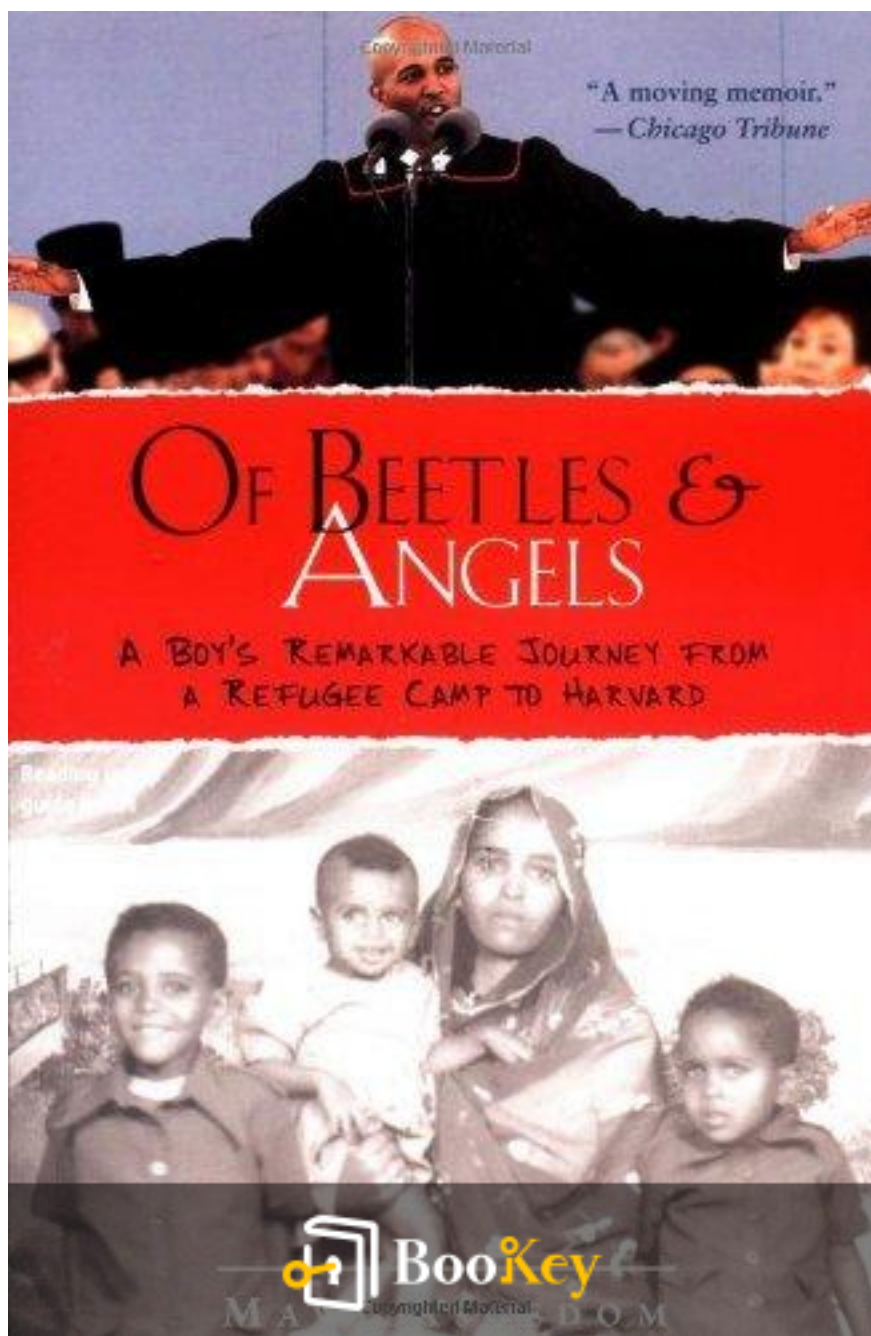


# Of Beetles And Angels PDF (Limited Copy)

Mawi Asgedom



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## **Of Beetles And Angels Summary**

From Refugee to Harvard: A Journey of Resilience and Hope

Written by New York Central Park Page Turners Books Club

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## About the book

"Of Beetles and Angels" is an inspiring memoir by Mawi Asgedom, which chronicles his extraordinary journey from the turmoil of war in East Africa to a new life in America. Born to a loving family in a country ravaged by conflict, Mawi's early childhood was marked by violence and instability. His life took a pivotal turn when his family fled to a refugee camp in Sudan, where they faced extreme hardships yet remained resilient, fueled by the teachings of his father.

Mawi's father instilled in him the importance of kindness and compassion, principles that became his guiding light. When Mawi and his family were granted asylum in the United States, they arrived in a prosperous suburb that was a stark contrast to their previous life. Faced with the challenges of adapting to a new culture, language barriers, and the prejudices of some individuals, Mawi navigated his new environment with determination and a desire for acceptance.

Throughout the memoir, Mawi's experiences underscore the difficulties of the refugee experience while also highlighting themes of resilience, hope, and the transformative power of kindness. The expanded fifteenth anniversary edition includes a new introduction and afterword by Mawi, providing further reflections on his journey. It also features a discussion guide and additional resources, making it an enriching choice for readers in

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both community and educational settings. Through Mawi's story, readers gain insight into the strength of the human spirit and the universal quest for belonging and understanding.

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## About the author

Mawi Asgedom's memoir "Of Beetles and Angels" traces his inspiring journey from the challenges of war-torn Ethiopia to the hallowed halls of Harvard University, encapsulating the themes of resilience, hope, and the immigrant experience. Born into a life fraught with adversity, Mawi's early years were shaped by the civil conflict in Ethiopia, prompting his family to flee to the United States as refugees in search of safety and opportunity.

In the memoir, Mawi reflects on how his experiences have influenced his identity and aspirations. He discusses the unimaginable hardships his family faced in Ethiopia, from loss to displacement, highlighting the importance of his family's unwavering support and strong cultural values. These elements played a pivotal role in Mawi's transformation and determination to succeed academically against all odds.

Throughout the book, he emphasizes the vital role of education as a transformative power, portraying it not merely as a pathway to personal success but as a means to uplift communities and honor the sacrifices made by his family. Mawi's story is not just a personal narrative; it serves as a representation of the broader immigrant experience, shedding light on the struggles, dreams, and triumphs that many face when navigating new worlds.

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With each chapter, Asgedom weaves together his personal challenges with universal themes, culminating in a message that resonates with anyone who has ever pursued their dreams against the backdrop of adversity. His writing invites readers to reflect on their own journeys, celebrating resilience and the hope that fuels the quest for a better life.

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# Summary Content List

Chapter 1: MEMORIES

Chapter 2: THE CAMP

Chapter 3: COMING TO AMERICA

Chapter 4: A NEW LIFE

Chapter 5: GOD'S ANGELS

Chapter 6: PLAYGROUND WARFARE

Chapter 7: DAYS OF MISCHIEF

Chapter 8: LIBEE MIGBAR

Chapter 9: COFFEE TALES

Chapter 10: THE MAKING OF A MAN

Chapter 11: THE UNMAKING OF A MAN

Chapter 12: EYEING THE MOUNTAINTOP

Chapter 13: FATHER HAILEAB

Chapter 14: IZGIHARE YIHABKOOM

Chapter 15: "BROTHER"

Chapter 16: GIVING BACK

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## Chapter 17: MAMA TSEGE'S LEGENDARY HABESHA RECIPES

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# Chapter 1 Summary: MEMORIES

## MEMORIES

### Childhood Remembrances

In this chapter, the narrator delves into fragmented memories of his childhood in Ethiopia, weaving together personal reflections and tales shared by others. A poignant image emerges as he recalls his mother, filled with love and nostalgia, gazing longingly at their home in Adi Wahla just before their departure. This moment encapsulates the deep emotional ties to their homeland and sets the tone for the struggles that lie ahead, underscoring the themes of loss and longing that permeate the narrative.

### Journey to Safety

The family's flight from their familiar life marks the beginning of a dangerous and uncertain journey. Along the way, they encounter various individuals, including a man who convinces the narrator's brother, Tewolde, to abandon their home in exchange for a seemingly innocuous treat—gum. This moment highlights the innocence and naivety of childhood against a backdrop of desperate choices. As they trek through harsh landscapes, they meet a woman crawling across the unforgiving terrain, symbolizing the



relentless plight of refugees. Her struggle serves as a stark reminder of the physical and emotional hardships faced by those seeking safety, laying bare the raw reality of displacement.

### **Arrival and Despair in Awad**

When the family finally reaches the city of Awad in Sudan, the environment is marked by bleakness and despair. Awad, a refuge for many exiles, epitomizes loss and hopelessness, where resources are scarce and the burden of survival is palpable. The narrator paints a stark picture of the psychological impact of exile, emphasizing how the promise of refuge can often be overshadowed by the harsh realities of displacement. Despite the initial semblance of welcome, the narrative cautions against harboring too much hope, as the specter of despair looms large. This chapter serves as a critical reflection on the struggles of refugees, highlighting the resilient yet fragile human spirit in the face of overwhelming adversity.

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## Chapter 2 Summary: THE CAMP

### ### The Camp

#### #### Refugee Life in Umsagata

From 1980 to 1983, the narrator recounts their family's life in the Umsagata refugee camp in Sudan. This camp served as a temporary refuge for numerous displaced families. Life was characterized by limited resources, with the family relying on goat milk, eggs, United Nations rations, and humble garden produce for sustenance. Amidst their harsh circumstances, they had access to some healthcare and a nearby school.

#### #### Education and Violence

The educational environment in Umsagata was marred by severe discipline, predominantly enforced by teachers who commanded unquestioned respect. The narrator recalls the harsh punishments meted out by an instructor who resented their academic achievements, reflecting a cultural norm that equated respect with fear rather than nurturing.

#### #### Survival Skills and Friendships

In an environment rife with bullying and danger, the narrator and their brother Tewolde had to quickly adapt. They learned to stand up for themselves, often engaging in fights to defend their honor. Alongside them



was a brave dog, affectionately named H, whose loyalty proved vital in a pivotal confrontation, transforming the siblings' initial skepticism about pets into a bond of companionship.

#### #### Mischief and Community

Childhood in the camp was not solely defined by struggles; moments of mischief punctuated their days. One memorable escapade involved deflating a tractor tire, a testament to their curiosity and rebellious spirit. Among their peers was Kiros, a boy renowned for his impressive stone-throwing skills, symbolizing both the risks and playful camaraderie found within the camp.

#### #### Cultural Celebrations Amidst Hardship

Despite the hardships of famine, war, and disease, the community displayed resilience through cultural celebrations and dances. The narrator fondly recalls their father's dancing, which garnered admiration and respect, illustrating how traditions could thrive even in adversity.

#### #### Threats of Disease and War

However, the realities of the camp were unforgiving. The narrator faced the grave illness of kala-azar but managed to recover, while the omnipresent threat of war hung over the camp, instilling anxiety about conscription into the armed forces.

#### #### Dreams of Amerikha

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In the midst of turmoil, dreams of a new life in a place referred to as Amerikha surfaced. This land was depicted as an idyllic paradise, rich with opportunities for education and peace. Yet, the parents grappled with mixed advice from villagers—some urged caution about leaving their homeland, while others emphasized the significance of cultural connections and the fears associated with venturing into the unknown.

#### #### The Decision to Leave

Ultimately, the decision to leave became unavoidable due to the ongoing conflict both at home and within the camp. The villagers shared their anxieties about the perceived allure of America, pointing out the potential struggles of discrimination that awaited newcomers.

#### #### Conclusion

As the family prepared for their journey to Amerikha, their community offered a blend of support and apprehension, encapsulating the bittersweet essence of hope paired with trepidation about an uncertain future. Their departure symbolized a new beginning, marked by the promise of opportunity amid the shadows of trauma and loss.

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## Chapter 3 Summary: COMING TO AMERICA

In the chapter titled "**Coming to America**," Mawi Asgedom narrates his family's harrowing escape from the unrest in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Amid the turmoil of their home country, Mawi's parents sought refuge through World Relief, a Christian organization dedicated to helping resettle refugees in the United States. The immigration process proved daunting, filled with a rigorous interview sequence designed to assess their eligibility based on ambiguous questions, forcing them to navigate the complexities of their situation with uncertainty.

The journey toward a new life was momentarily stalled when Mawi's half-sister, Mulu, emerged unexpectedly. Their parents, embodying strong familial values, insisted on Mulu's inclusion in their resettlement plans, emphasizing their commitment to family unity despite the restrictions imposed by World Relief. After much negotiation and determination, they agreed to postpone their departure for a year to facilitate Mulu's paperwork, illustrating the depth of their resolve.

Finally, in 1983, the family—now composed of six members—set out on their long-awaited journey. The farewell scene is filled with poignant emotion as friends gather to bid them goodbye, underscoring the sorrow of leaving behind cherished relationships and memories. Their departure begins with a lorry ride packed with both anticipation and uncertainty, as they travel



through Sudan, stopping in cities like Gedariff and Khartoum. This segment of their journey culminates with boarding a plane bound for Athens, and subsequently, the United States.

Throughout the chapter, themes of family loyalty, resilience, and the bittersweet nature of emigration are vividly illustrated, capturing the complex emotions involved in leaving one's homeland for a new and uncertain future.

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## Chapter 4: A NEW LIFE

### ### A New Life: Summary of Chapters

#### Initial Settling in America

After fleeing their homeland, the family spent their first two challenging weeks in a Chicago motel, supported by World Relief, an organization dedicated to assisting refugees. During this time, they were assigned a caseworker, Beth Raney, who recognized the seriousness of their father's health—he was suffering from malaria. Beth not only cared for the father's immediate medical needs but also dedicated herself to helping the family secure a sponsoring church, key for their integration into American society. Her compassionate approach helped foster trust and connection with the family.

#### Cultural Differences and Connection

Beth successfully connected the family with Bethel Presbyterian Church, a predominantly white and affluent institution. This transition was bittersweet, as the family grappled with homesickness amidst cultural shock. During an early outing, their appearance—being from a different ethnic background—garnered much attention from passersby, further amplifying

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their feelings of disconnection. Yet, the support from their sponsors began to ease their sense of loss, helping them navigate their new surroundings.

## **Unexpected Visitors**

A turning point for the family came when two habesha women visited, bringing with them traditional foods from their homeland. This gesture was not just a welcome taste of home, but a heartfelt reminder of their cultural identity. The women also took the time to teach the family how to prepare familiar dishes, fostering a sense of belonging and comfort during an otherwise disorienting time.

## **Finding Entertainment and Understanding**

As the children sought entertainment to combat their homesickness, they discovered television, which introduced them to a starkly different reality—American media. Their father's response to the violence depicted in shows highlighted their cultural differences and raised concerns about societal norms in the U.S. Through these experiences, the family gradually grappled with their new environment, learning to understand the values and expectations that came with it.

## **New Beginnings**

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After seven weeks in the motel, the family received the joyous news of a home provided by their church sponsors—a significant milestone in their journey. Overwhelmed with happiness, they moved into a spacious two-story house, learning to adapt to their new life. To help afford the rent, they decided to rent out part of their home. As a symbol of their new beginnings, a baby boy was born into the family, bringing further joy and a sense of hope. They named him Hntsa-Eyesus, or Temesgen, translating to "Thank You," reflecting their gratitude for the new opportunities and life they had found in America.

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## Chapter 5 Summary: GOD'S ANGELS

### ### GOD'S ANGELS

#### #### Introduction to Kindness Towards Strangers

In this chapter, the narrator emphasizes the significance of showing kindness to strangers, a lesson imparted by their father. He recounts tales from their homeland, Adi, where angels often take on the guise of beggars or outcasts to test humanity's compassion. These tales serve as a reminder that every act of kindness may have a deeper, divine connection, urging individuals not to judge by appearances.

#### #### An Encounter with a Disguised Angel

The family's commitment to this lesson is put to the test when they encounter a disheveled man, reeking of neglect and hardship. Recognizing him as an angel in disguise, they embrace him with genuine kindness, offering food, clothing, and shelter despite his unkempt state. In gratitude, he presents them with a rainbow-colored address book, which becomes a cherished symbol of love and connection, allowing them to document the contacts of those they hold dear.

#### #### A Visit from a Celestial Angel

Shortly after this encounter, the family is graced by the presence of a young

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woman named Charlene. With her beauty and warmth, she embodies kindness, taking the children on joyful outings filled with music and play. The narrator reflects on her profound influence, likening her spirit to that of a celestial being. Her time with the family leaves an indelible mark, showcasing how kindness can uplift and enrich lives.

#### #### Conclusion of Gratitude and Remembrance

The chapter culminates with a heartfelt message directed to Charlene, expressing gratitude for her angelic presence and the love she shared. The narrator acknowledges her role as a true angel, one who has inspired a lasting legacy of kindness within the family. The chapter beautifully illustrates that angels can manifest in myriad forms, often revealed through acts of compassion that resonate in the hearts of those they touch. Through these experiences, the narrator reinforces that kindness, regardless of its source, holds the power to transform lives.

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# Chapter 6 Summary: PLAYGROUND WARFARE

## PLAYGROUND WARFARE

### Importance of Education

Mawi Asgedom's journey begins with his parents' unwavering belief in the transformative power of education. As refugees from Eritrea, they emphasized that academic excellence was not merely a goal but a pathway out of poverty in America. This conviction instilled a work ethic in Mawi and his brother, Tewolde, who understood that hard work and perseverance could open doors to scholarships and a brighter future.

### Experiences at Longfellow Elementary School

Upon enrolling at Longfellow Elementary, Mawi and Tewolde encountered the harsh reality of bullying and racism. Their classmates taunted them for their appearance and immigrant background, making their transition challenging. Though their upbringing in a refugee camp had given them survival skills, they quickly learned that vulnerability often left them at a disadvantage in a new social landscape.

### Difficulties and Defenses

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Tensions came to a head when a bully named Sam targeted Mawi. Tewolde's fierce loyalty shone through when he intervened, highlighting the close bond between the brothers. Despite slowly making friends and adjusting to their environment, Mawi and Tewolde continued to face prejudice, aggravated by negative media portrayals of Africa that fueled misconceptions among their peers.

### **Challenges with Other African Classmates**

The challenges the brothers faced were not solely from white classmates; they also encountered enforcement from other African students like Frank and Mbago. Rather than fostering a sense of unity, competition and hostility often led to confrontations, adding to Mawi's feelings of isolation and pressure.

### **Consequences of Fighting**

As Mawi and Tewolde navigated their school years, they grappled with their father's advice to avoid physical confrontations. Their father emphasized the importance of staying out of fights to prevent potential expulsion, leaving the boys in a state of confusion about defending themselves against persistent bullying.

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## **Moments of Resistance**

Despite their father's warnings, moments arose where the brothers felt compelled to stand their ground. Mawi learned to assert himself against threats from classmates, sometimes surprising even larger adversaries with his courage and resilience.

## **The Role of Community**

Support often came from unexpected quarters—friends of their peers rallied to help Mawi and Tewolde, illustrating a vital aspect of community. This solidarity reinforced the idea that facing challenges is often easier when you are not alone, transforming a daunting school environment into a place where camaraderie could blossom amidst adversity.

## **Coping through Stories**

At home, Tewolde often turned to storytelling as a means of coping with their experiences. He shared tales about Chinese brothers who confronted bullies, providing laughter and a sense of empowerment. These stories served as a refuge, helping Mawi process the harsh realities of their childhood with humor and imagination. Through these narratives, the brothers found a creative outlet and resilience against the difficulties they faced, showcasing the enduring human spirit in the face of adversity.

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# Chapter 7 Summary: DAYS OF MISCHIEF

## ### DAYS OF MISCHIEF

### **Hoyo Hoyo Celebrations in Sudan**

In Sudan, the villagers embraced a vibrant holiday known as Hoyo Hoyo. This festival, marked by bonfires and torch races, served as a unifying celebration across cultural and religious divides, bringing together Muslims, Christians, and refugees to share in the hope and joy of a prosperous new year. Despite financial constraints that prevented gift-giving like in the past, the spirit of the holiday thrived, allowing the community to celebrate their resilience and unity.

### **Halloween in America**

Upon their arrival in America, the author and his siblings were introduced to Halloween, which they found reminiscent of their Hoyo Hoyo festivities. Eager to immerse themselves in this new tradition, they took to trick-or-treating with enthusiasm, employing clever costumes and a strategic two-round approach to maximize their candy collection. Their exploits revealed a mischievous side, as they reveled in the thrill of the hunt for sugary treasures.

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## **Mischief with Friends**

As the years progressed, the author, along with his friend Tewelde and newcomer Kiros, embarked on increasingly daring escapades. Kiros, in particular, catalyzed a whirlwind of mischief with challenges that pushed the limits of their behavior. One notable incident involved a troubling encounter with an elderly woman, which startled them but failed to quell their adventurous spirits, illustrating the carefree nature of childhood despite its inherent risks.

## **The Parking Meter Incident**

The pinnacle of their mischief came when the boys plotted to steal a parking meter, convinced it would yield a hidden fortune. However, their scheme took a drastic turn when a policeman caught them in the act, resulting in a chaotic escape that left them rattled. This experience served as a stark reminder of their father's teachings about the repercussions of stealing, highlighting the internal struggle between their impulsive desires and the moral values instilled in them.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter poignantly encapsulates the multifaceted nature of childhood,

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juxtaposing the joy of cultural celebrations with the thrill of mischief and the moral dilemmas that come with growing up. As refugees adapting to life in America, the author and his friends navigate the complexities of their new environment, learning valuable lessons about unity, ethics, and the exuberance of youth.

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## Chapter 8: LIBEE MIGBAR

In Chapter 8, titled "Libee Migbar," Mawi Asgedom reflects on the life and growth of his older brother, Tewolde, while exploring the concept of "libee migbar," which means developing a compassionate heart. While the brothers often engaged in childhood mischief, they were also dedicated students, driven by a desire to help their struggling parents thrive. A pivotal moment occurs during a visit to the Wheaton Public Library when they encounter a homeless man. Tewolde's act of sharing their meager sandwiches with him exemplifies his blossoming compassion.

As Tewolde matured, his resourcefulness became evident. He scavenged for tools and equipment, utilizing discarded items to improve his circumstances. One notable instance of his generosity was when he gifted workout gear to a man in need, fully aware of the challenges that come with limited resources.

To financially support their family, the brothers took on various cash jobs. Tewolde's determination led him from small tasks to launching his own cleaning business. Inspired by a supportive teacher who taught him marketing skills, he recognized that self-employment could yield greater rewards than working for others. His aspirations grew as he aimed to secure larger contracts, including cleaning the library, fueled by his strong work ethic and unwavering faith.

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Tragically, Tewolde's promising life was abruptly taken by a drunk driver before he could graduate high school. His untimely death left a profound impact on friends and family, who fondly remember his selflessness and unwavering love for them. Mawi's poignant reflection on Tewolde serves as a heartwarming acknowledgment of their enduring brotherly bond. Inspired by Tewolde's legacy of compassion and kindness, Mawi resolves to uphold these values in his own life, striving to meet the high standard of love his brother set.

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## Chapter 9 Summary: COFFEE TALES

### ### COFFEE TALES

#### #### Family Taboos and Communication

In their childhood, Mawi and his siblings learned to navigate the sensitive landscape of communication with their immigrant parents, who held traditional views on dating and sexuality. Discussions about these topics were often met with an atmosphere of dread, as their parents stressed the potential dangers of premarital relations, instilling fears of diseases and life-altering responsibilities. Instead of exploring these subjects, conversations swiftly veered towards their parents' past, thick with feelings of homesickness and the unresolved pain of familial separation incurred during their migration from Eritrea.

#### #### Cultural Significance of Coffee

Amidst these heavy discussions, the cultural ritual of brewing boona, or coffee, emerged as a vital social activity within the Eritrean community. Coffee gatherings among adults became a cherished moment for storytelling, where the initial reluctance of guests faded with the inviting aroma of freshly brewed coffee. The preparation was a meticulous process involving the roasting of beans and the serving of the beverage in small, distinctive cups, which facilitated camaraderie. These events provided a platform for

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sharing personal anecdotes, often peppered with humor, that highlighted the everyday challenges and misunderstandings faced by families trying to adapt to life in America.

#### #### Narratives of Struggle and Survival

During these coffee gatherings, the adults would recount their harrowing journeys to safety, detailing their experiences of fleeing war and oppression under the Dergue regime in Ethiopia. Mawi's father, a doctor in their village, became a poignant figure in these stories, recognized for his dedication to the well-being of his community. His departure in search of safety left a profound void, and the family's struggle with instability became a recurring theme in their discussions, echoing the overarching narrative of loss and resilience within the Eritrean diaspora.

#### #### Fleeing to Sudan

Confronted with grave threats, Mawi's mother made the brave decision to flee to Sudan with her children, leaving behind their home and possessions. This journey was perilous, characterized by nighttime travel to avoid bombings and the constant specter of illness and fear. Despite facing dangers posed by wildlife and the toll of sickness, the family's resilience shone through as they sought help along the way, demonstrating their unwavering determination to survive.

#### #### Reunion and Resilience

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After enduring the trials of separation and hardship, Mawi's family ultimately reunited in Sudan. Here, they found refuge and access to medical care, with Mawi's father fostering hope by working at a refugee clinic. As they adapted to their new life, grappling with the challenges of their environment, they were afforded the opportunity to immigrate to America. This marked the dawn of a new chapter, a fresh beginning following years of struggle, filled with both optimism and the lingering shadows of their past experiences.

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# Chapter 10 Summary: THE MAKING OF A MAN

## The Making of a Man

### Father's Early Life

The story begins with Haileab, born in 1934 in Eritrea, who faced tremendous adversity from the outset. After losing his father shortly after his birth and having his mother fall ill, Haileab was orphaned and placed in a monastery, where he experienced severe hardship. Later, he lived with a relative, struggling with mistreatment and poverty. At just fourteen, in search of a better life, he made the daring decision to flee to Ethiopia's Tigray province.

### Struggles for Survival

Upon arriving in Mekele, Haileab found some support from his uncle and compatriots, yet he still confronted the grim reality of often going without food. He secured a job at a government clinic, where he toiled relentlessly, balancing his demanding responsibilities with youthful indiscretions. Despite his lack of formal education, Haileab exhibited remarkable determination, teaching himself various scientific disciplines and nurturing a strong desire to elevate his circumstances.

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## **Pursuing Education and Becoming a Healer**

Without a high school diploma, Haileab faced significant barriers to formal medical training. Nevertheless, he seized the opportunity to sit for a critical examination for aspiring medical professionals, astonishing many by outperforming his peers and qualifying as an advanced dresser. His persistence paid off, and over time, he earned a reputation for his exceptional medical skills, often working under challenging conditions to provide care to those in need.

## **Family and Cultural Identity**

As Haileab built his career, he married a younger woman, and they had children together, forging a family that blended their Eritrean and Ethiopian heritages. However, undercurrents of historical tension between their ethnic groups began to surface, leading to divisions that echoed the struggles faced by their parents' generation. This cultural complexity shaped their identities and familial dynamics.

## **Tragic Circumstances and Rising Tensions**

Despite attaining wealth and success, owning both a pharmacy and a clinic, Haileab faced mounting threats from powerful adversaries who opposed his

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medical practice. The moral dilemmas he confronted regarding patient care intensified in an environment fraught with violence and political strife. The oppressive Dergue regime, with its harsh governance, targeted those like him, exacerbating his precarious situation.

## **Fleeing for Survival**

As the political landscape deteriorated, Haileab contemplated a harrowing decision: to flee to Sudan for the safety of his family. This choice meant parting from his loved ones and relinquishing everything he had built, driven by a desperate instinct to protect them from the encroaching violence. In this moment, the weight of his responsibilities as a husband and father became poignant, highlighting the sacrifices he was willing to make for their survival amid chaos.

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# Chapter 11 Summary: THE UNMAKING OF A MAN

## THE UNMAKING OF A MAN

### Transformation and Struggle

The chapter opens with Haileab Asgedom's poignant transformation, as he likens himself to a "monstrous black beetle" after immigrating to the United States. Once a respected healer in Ethiopia, he now finds himself relegated to janitorial work, a consequence of language barriers and systemic limitations that deny him the chance to practice his profession. This transitions him into a painful reality of deteriorating health and increasing reliance on others, illustrating the profound struggles many immigrant fathers endure.

### Physical and Emotional Decline

Haileab's health continues to decline, marked by worsening eyesight and growing frustration. His experiences with the U.S. healthcare system amplify this suffering, as he identifies a troubling trend where financial motives overshadow genuine care. His weakening physical state breeds paranoia and an obsessive concern for mundane household issues, further jeopardizing his emotional stability and deepening his sense of isolation.

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## **Parenting through Hardship**

In the midst of his personal battles, Haileab strives to remain an active presence in his children's lives. Rising before dawn, he employs rigorous discipline through physical training and chores, seeking to instill the values of hard work and resilience. However, his unconventional parenting methods breed tension, as his children grapple with balancing respect for their father's intentions and their own frustrations.

## **Community Engagement and Consequences**

Haileab's yearning to contribute meaningfully to his community manifests in an earnest attempt to clean a local lake. However, a seemingly innocuous action—burning the raked leaves—leads to a chaotic misunderstanding that nearly results in his arrest. This incident underscores the complexities immigrants face as they navigate the often-unfamiliar social codes of their new environment.

## **Cultural Connections and Legacy**

As the narrative unfolds, Mawi reflects on the vibrant community gatherings of his childhood, replete with rich cultural expressions. His father's poetic talents provoke a mixture of embarrassment and admiration within him.

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Through these memories, Mawi gradually comes to appreciate the significant cultural contributions of his father, recognizing the richness of their heritage.

## **Revelations of a Hero**

The chapter culminates in a reunion with an old friend, who reveals to Mawi the heroic and generous deeds of his father back in Ethiopia. This stark contrast between the father Mawi knew and the man he learns about reshapes his understanding. He comes to see Haileab not merely as a victim of his circumstances but as a once-noble figure whose past is affixed with dignity and impact. This revelation invites a deeper reflection on legacy and the intricate human experiences that define one's identity in the face of adversity.

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# Chapter 12: EYEING THE MOUNTAINTOP

## ### Eyeing the Mountaintop

In this reflective chapter, the author shares pivotal moments that shaped his character and aspirations through the lens of his family values, personal challenges, and significant life events.

### **Parental Philosophy and Personal Growth**

The author begins by illustrating the inclusive philosophy of his parents, who welcomed people from diverse backgrounds into their home, instilling in him a belief that true beauty and worth lie beyond external appearances and societal status. Inspired by his brother Tewelde, who consistently saw the good in others, the author aspired to adopt a similar perspective, emphasizing the importance of kindness and acceptance.

### **Academic Aspirations and Challenges**

As familial responsibilities weighed on him, the author found motivation to excel academically. Despite grappling with bullying and low self-esteem during his middle school years, he relied on the unwavering support of his family and faith to persevere. By the time he reached high school, he

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rigorously challenged himself with demanding coursework, showcasing resilience and hard work that ultimately allowed him to thrive in advanced history classes.

## **Grief and Resilience**

The narrative takes a poignant turn with the tragic loss of his brother Tewolde in an accident. This heart-wrenching event plunged the author into deep grief but also served as a catalyst for personal growth. Driven to honor his brother's memory, he resolved to strive for excellence and maintain a positive outlook, channeling his sorrow into motivation.

## **Athletic Endeavors and Support**

Alongside academic pursuits, the author dabbled in athletics; a pivotal moment came when his basketball coach encouraged him to try track. This unexpected exploration led to surprising successes, highlighting his versatility and determination. Financial hurdles arose, but with his coach's support, he secured the necessary sports gear, and his commitment during off-season training translated into remarkable performances in cross-country and track competitions.

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In high school, he further cultivated meaningful friendships across varying social groups, learning to appreciate the inherent beauty in individuals rather than succumbing to social hierarchies. This approach, starkly different from that of many classmates, underscored the transformative power of mutual respect and compassion in bridging divides.

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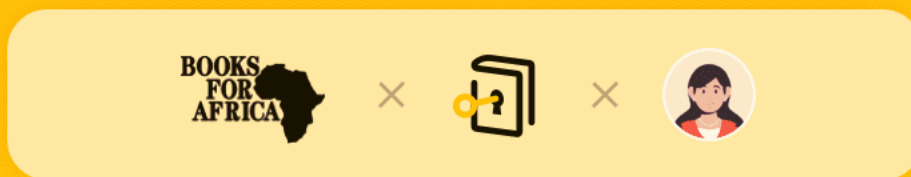




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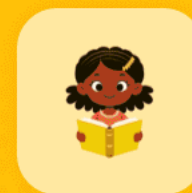
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## Chapter 13 Summary: FATHER HAILEAB

### Father Haileab: A Legacy of Kindness and Resilience

During the final two years of Mawi's father, Haileab, his son was only able to spend four weeks with him. Their time together in December 1997 was bittersweet but filled with warmth as they reminisced on their life together. Sitting on their old couches, Haileab shared stories from the family's early days in America, highlighting the numerous challenges faced by newly arrived refugees, such as cultural adaptation and resource scarcity.

Haileab's kindness and dedication to helping others were evident in his interactions with fellow refugees. One notable instance involved two brothers, Temesgen and Kibrom, who found themselves in legal trouble after an accident. Despite the stress of the situation, Haileab adeptly navigated the court system, ensuring their voices were heard without further incrimination, showcasing his compassion and resourcefulness in dire situations.

Another remarkable act of advocacy occurred when he assisted a family whose son accidentally caused a flood in their new home. In the ensuing legal troubles, Haileab stepped in once more, shifting some blame to the landlords for not sufficiently educating their tenants about plumbing, thereby alleviating the pressure on the anxious family.

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His reputation as a champion for the downtrodden earned him deep respect within the community. Local churches supported his efforts, recognizing his faith-driven commitment to helping those in need. Haileab not only sought assistance for others but also took it upon himself to facilitate support systems for newly arrived families. He offered guidance, translated for individuals at critical appointments, and fostered communication among community members, earning a special certificate of recognition from World Relief Refugee Services.

Despite facing his own financial struggles, Haileab's life was rich with the connections he built and the hope he embodied for others. His premature death in a tragic accident left a significant void in the lives of many. At his funeral, friends and community members gathered to honor him, praising his kindness, compassion, and unwavering support. Haileab's legacy as a guiding father figure and a devoted community shepherd continued to inspire those he left behind, ensuring that his memory lived on through the countless stories of his profound impact on their lives.

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# Chapter 14 Summary: IZGIHARE YIHABKOOM

## ### Graduation Reflections

In this chapter, the author envisions their father's reaction at their Harvard graduation, imagining a moment filled with pride and joy, punctuated by the affectionate interruptions of a proud parent. This reflection brings to the forefront the poignant contrast of loss; the author grapples with the tragic irony of having lost their father to a preventable incident, which casts a shadow over this momentous occasion. The graduation ceremony symbolizes not just personal achievement but the realization of their parents' dreams, as they celebrate the academic success of the next generation.

## ### Lessons Beyond Academia

While Harvard offers a rigorous academic education, the author recognizes that the most significant lessons come from the tapestry of life experiences and the support of a diverse array of individuals. This includes community leaders, family, and friends who have played crucial roles in the author's journey. Emphasizing the value of giving rather than receiving, the author illustrates how these connections and acts of mutual support enrich life beyond the confines of academia. This part of the narrative underscores the broader essence of human relationships and the importance of community in

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individual success.

### ### Inspiration and Legacy

The chapter culminates in a heartfelt message about the importance of cherishing one another and celebrating the collective beauty found in shared experiences. The author frames this sentiment within the context of the immigrant dream, illustrating how perseverance and hope are woven into their family's legacy. They express a sincere hope that readers will carry forward this story, remembering the dreams and aspirations of their parents. The chapter closes with a blessing, "Izghare Yihabkoom," encapsulating the author's wish for goodwill and connection as they invite others to uphold the spirit of support and love that has shaped their journey.

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# Chapter 15 Summary: “BROTHER”

## Summary of "Brother"

### Themes of Brotherhood

In the poem "Brother," the profound bond of siblinghood is central, as it explores the unique experiences shared between brothers growing up as refugees. This enduring relationship is painted against a backdrop of resilience, illustrating how they support one another through life's myriad challenges.

### Shared Experiences

The narrator reflects on their childhood, filled with significant moments that solidified their connection. They recall instances of receiving discipline together, sharing stories, and the trials of adjusting to life in a new country. The narrative highlights their collaborative journey in learning English and adapting to American culture while relying on public assistance, emphasizing the need to navigate these changes hand in hand.

### Challenges and Struggles

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As the poem unfolds, it delves into the adversities faced by the brothers—grappling with poverty, the pressures of a strict upbringing, and the constant fear of familial separation. The harsh realities of life, including violence and loss, are starkly acknowledged, serving as a reminder of the obstacles they must confront.

## **Sacrifice and Love**

Amid these trials, the deep-seated love between the siblings emerges, underscored by the sacrifices they make for each other. Their shared struggles not only reinforce their bond but also highlight the profound emotional support that defines their relationship, showcasing the beauty of love in the face of hardship.

## **Tragic Loss**

The poem reaches a poignant climax with the tragic loss of Tewolde, a significant event that pushes the complexity of brotherhood into the foreground. This separation adds layers of pain and unpredictability, forcing the narrator to grapple with the very essence of familial bonds amid grief.

## **Conclusion**

Ultimately, "Brother" stands as a heartfelt tribute to the enduring

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connections of familial love. It portrays the resilience cultivated through adversity and the indelible memories that shape individual identities. The rich tapestry of experiences shared between the brothers underscores the timeless nature of their relationship, revealing the transformative power of love and sacrifice.

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## Chapter 16: GIVING BACK

### ### GIVING BACK: THE HAT FOUNDATION

Following the publication of his memoir, "Of Beetles and Angels," Mawi Asgedom established The HAT (Haileab and Tewelde) Foundation, dedicating one-third of the book's proceeds to this initiative. The foundation serves as a tribute to his father's and brother's legacies, aiming to uplift marginalized communities in both Ethiopia, Eritrea, and the United States.

A cornerstone of The HAT Foundation's mission was its partnership with World Relief, the organization that had previously assisted Asgedom's family during their resettlement. In its inaugural year, the foundation awarded a grant of \$10,000 to World Relief, embodying a cycle of empowerment where those once helped are now helping others.

In addressing the pressing issues in his homeland, particularly the AIDS crisis affecting Tigray, The HAT Foundation collaborated with the African Services Committee to fund transportation for AIDS patients seeking treatment, thus continuing his father's humanitarian legacy. Additionally, it supported the Selamta Family Project, which innovatively creates supportive family units for AIDS orphans in Ethiopia, moving away from traditional orphanage models.

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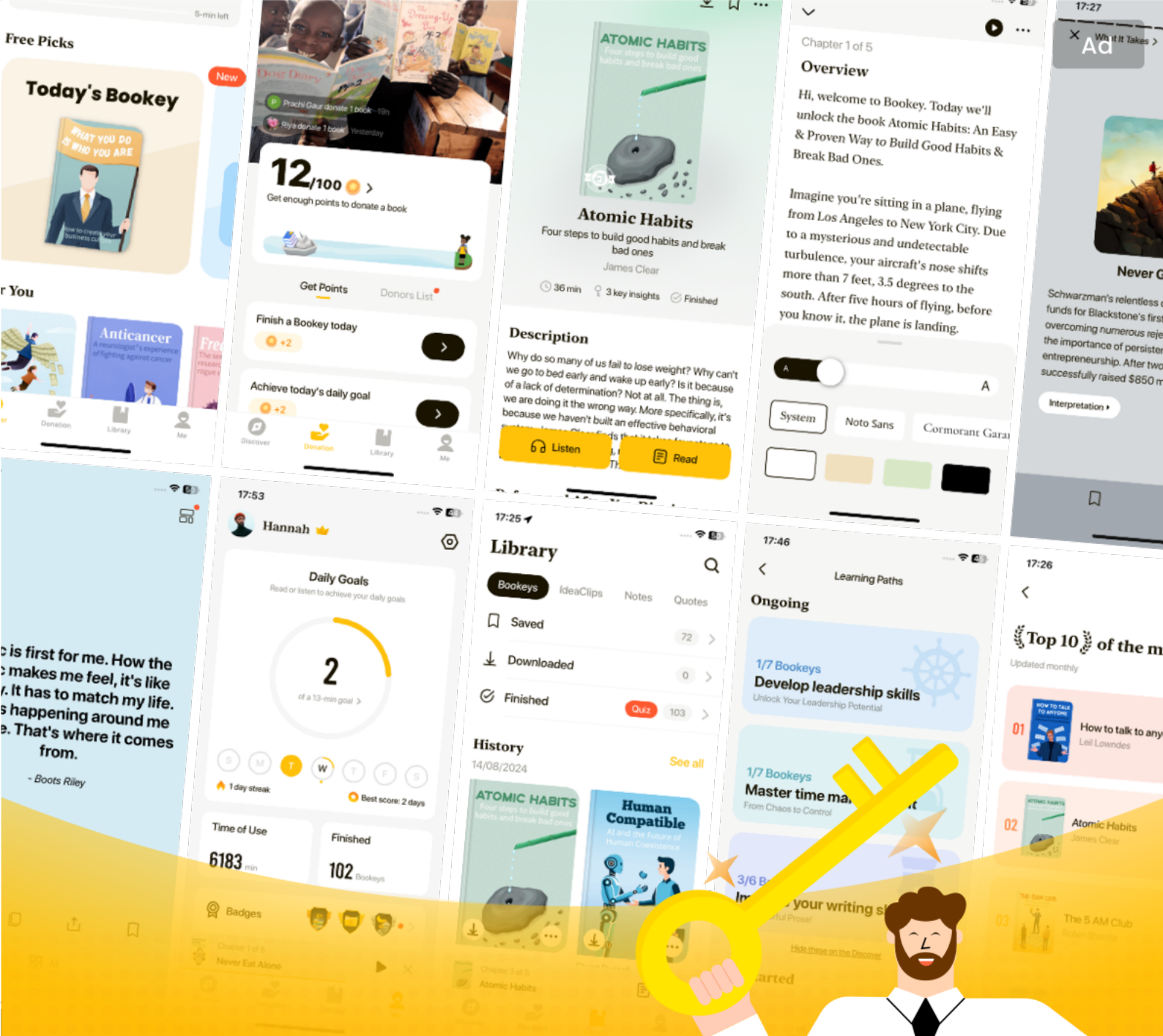
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At Wheaton North High School, Asgedom initiated the Tewolde Asgedom Award for English Language Learners, focusing on recognizing refugee and immigrant students. This award honored attributes of service, character, and leadership, as opposed to solely academic achievements, with \$1,000

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# Chapter 17 Summary: MAMA TSEGE'S LEGENDARY HABESHA RECIPES

## ### Mama Tsege's Legendary Habesha Recipes

Habesha cuisine, an integral part of Ethiopian and Eritrean culture, is celebrated within the Chicagoland community, where Mama Tsege stands out as a beloved culinary figure. Her unmatched cooking skills, particularly revered by her son, Selamawi Asgedom, highlight the deep-rooted traditions and flavors of this cuisine. This summary presents a selection of her notable recipes that utilize accessible ingredients, ensuring that anyone can experience the essence of Habesha cooking.

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## #### Garlic Paste

Garlic paste serves as a versatile foundational seasoning in many Ethiopian dishes.

### - **Ingredients:**

- 2 pounds raw garlic cloves

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- 1 pound green pepper
- ½ pound fresh ginger
- ¼ cup salt

- **Method:** Blend the garlic, green pepper, ginger, and salt into a smooth paste. This can be frozen for later use, empowering you to enhance dishes effortlessly.

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#### #### Tibsi (Pepper Steak)

Tibsi is a flavorful pepper steak dish that exemplifies the spicy and aromatic qualities of Habesha cuisine.

#### - **Ingredients:**

- 1 pound sirloin steak, cut into ¼-inch strips
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ large green pepper, sliced
- 1 jalapeño, quartered
- 1 tablespoon garlic paste
- 1 tablespoon butter

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- 1 teaspoon ground cardamom
- ½ teaspoon salt

**- Method:**

1. In a Dutch oven, heat olive oil, add the beef strips, onion, and garlic paste, cooking until the beef is browned.
2. Incorporate the green and jalapeño peppers, cooking them until tender.
3. Season with salt and cardamom. Adjust flavors to taste before serving.

---

#### Bursoon (Lentil Salad)

Bursoon is a refreshing lentil salad that balances health with flavor, making it a popular choice among Habesha dishes.

**- Ingredients:**

- 1 cup dried lentils
- Water
- 1/2 cup minced green pepper
- ½ jalapeño, minced
- 2 tablespoons olive oil

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- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2 carrots, chopped

- **Method:**

1. Rinse and cook lentils in boiling water until soft.
2. In a bowl, combine green pepper, jalapeño, olive oil, and salt.
3. Mix the hot lentils into the vegetables and garnish with raw carrot.

Season to taste before serving.

---

#### Hamli (Cooked Kale)

Hamli highlights the nutritious benefits of leafy greens, crafted into a savory dish enriched with spices.

- **Ingredients:**

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ¾ cup chopped onion
- 2 plum tomatoes, pureed
  - 1/5 cup garlic paste
- ½ teaspoon salt

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- 3 bunches fresh kale, chopped

- **Method:**

1. Sauté the onion in olive oil until soft.
2. Add the pureed tomatoes, garlic paste, and salt, cooking through.
3. Mix in the kale, cover, and cook until tender. Adjust the seasoning and serve warm.

---

These recipes encapsulate the robust flavors and healthful qualities of Habesha cuisine, inviting everyone to partake in and honor the culinary legacy of Mama Tsege's cooking.

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