

SILENT STRENGTH OF A DAD

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Seaside Publishing Press

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A catalogue record for this title is available from the Seaside bookstore

**B format paperback ISBN
978-9914-771-198**

Printed and bound by Seaside Print Press Seaside Publishers, Malindi
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Contents



DEDICATION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

PROLOGUE

Dear gentle reader

DECLARATION

CHAPTER ONE

FIRST TIME EXPERIENCE

CHAPTER TWO

GENDER EXPECTATIONS

The first cry

CHAPTER THREE

WORK LIFE BALANCE

CHAPTER FOUR

GIVEN A CHANCE TO CHANGE ONE THING

CHAPTER FIVE

HAPPY BEING A DAD?

CHAPTER SIX

CHILDREN WITH MOM/DAD LANGUAGE

CHAPTER SEVEN

CHALLENGES, MISTAKES AND LESSONS OF A FATHER

The opening

CHAPTER EIGHT
BEST MEMORIES OF FATHERHOOD

CHAPTER NINE
FATHERHOOD EVOLUTION

The roles

The shift

The contemporary

The horizon

The evolution

The norms

Gender based violence

CHAPTER TEN
HIS LAST DAYS

Dedication

To my mother, Benter Akeng'o (Nyargi Nera). Dad used to call her '**Sele**', short for Celestine. You are a woman of immense strength, Aheri.

To my siblings, Caren, Emily, Sarah, Jane, and Paul, each one of you has been a light in my life. I will be forever grateful for the roles you have played in moving this family forward. The bond we share, both before and after Ja' departure, reflects our love, strength, and unwavering support for one another. This book is for us all, and I hope it inspires the world.

To my lovely family, who shaped me.

Acknowledgement

Writing *The Silent Strength of a Dad* has been a journey of reflection, gratitude and love. This book would not have been possible without the quiet yet powerful presence of father's everywhere—men whose strength is often unspoken but whose impact is felt in every heartbeat of their families.

I wish to honor my father, Hezekiah Akeng'o Danga, also known as Ja'India, whose silent guidance shaped my resilience, discipline, and compassion. His example taught me that true strength is not loud but steady, not boastful but enduring.

To the fathers who shared their personal stories with me, who sacrifice daily, who lead with humility, and who love without needing recognition, to men who strive to make the world a better place despite mental health breakdown and pressure of being the breadwinner. This book is for you.

I am deeply grateful to my family and friends, who encouraged me through every page, reminding me that stories of love and strength deserve to be told. To my mentor, Mr. Samson Oando, and the readers, thank you for believing in the vision of this work and for walking with me on this path.

Above all, I acknowledge the countless unsung heroes, fathers, whose silent strength continues to shape generations. May this book be a tribute to your legacies.

PROLOGUE

I sought to dig deeper into the story of Adolf Hitler—the man who consolidated power and declared himself Germany’s Fuehrer after becoming Chancellor in 1933. He was an extremist who played a big role in the mass killing of the Jews by using fear and violence to maintain dominance. However, further investigations into his background revealed that his father was the cause of it all, and his own brother also committed suicide as a result of his father’s arrogance and behavior. Hitler’s father was a strict authoritarian father and as a young man in Vienna, he was exposed to anti-Semitic and nationalist ideologies which deeply influenced his world view, my story would have continued but it took a quick pause to come back to the message I wanted to pass. “*The society that heals its boys/men will stop burying it’s girls/women*”, every case of domestic violence features a man whose childhood nobody bothered to repair.

The late Professor Michael Hopkins the Author of the famous book **CSR and Sustainability** (Big Issues of the Day), When I met him for the 3rd time at Light International School, had just finished reading my poetry book, and I decided to ask for his reviews on this book. He said, “That is bloody marvelous, people would read that” (with a loud voice and smiling face, he was always vibrant with a sense of humor). Therefore, the poem below is for the legends who are going to take their precious time to go through this book.

DEAR GENTLE READER



A touch of how each day feels

Dear gentle reader, careful with the leaves

This time the story might not be what it seems

But I hope, yes hope for the dear gentle reader to heal

The sounds that are there but still unheard, the bird that screams

The wind that blows to reset and reminds you of focus

The feet stumble and sound lost away slowly past us

The voice present but unheard how many did you hear

The day, these days, those days and next day we are still here

Don't let it go without a clear stare

Dear gentle reader this is like a river

The source is her but the flow is forever

Words whispering ink pouring tears rolling whenever

Later it's a piece for eternity, not clever but yeah she is however

On the train towards the destination and resting time

The day is filled with breath, the day is wealthy and so are you

Your dear support is heartfelt with love and gratitude all for you

In the times the story is still there to be told, or you write it, yes you

Until next time, dear gentle reader, grab a snack and enjoy your reading.

Declaration

I hereby declare that *The Silent Strength of a Dad* is a work born of my reflections, experiences, and creative vision. It has not been copied or reproduced from any other source, except where the references have been duly acknowledged.

This book was written to honor fathers, their quiet resilience, their unspoken sacrifices, and their enduring love. I pledge that every story, thought, and message within these pages is shared truthfully and with respect for the dignity of fatherhood.

I affirm that the purpose of this work is to inspire, celebrate, and preserve the legacy of fathers whose silent strength continues to shape lives and generations.

CHAPTER ONE

FIRST TIME EXPERIENCE

Many societies expect mothers to be the primary caregivers of children, especially in the early stages of their lives and this is often seen as a good thing. This expectation has spread across different parts of the world and across families. As children grow up, they tend to see their mothers as their heroines and the strength behind their lives. This is not wrong. Fathers, on the other hand, have often been expected to be providers, focusing more on financial support or external responsibilities. This sometimes creates a perception of absence, making children feel that their fathers were not part of their growth. Such perceptions can contribute to minimal interaction and weakened bonding between a child and their father.

As the youngest child in a family of ten; our parents, two brothers, and six sisters, including me, which was later reduced to seven after losing a brother, a sister, and our father, I was not keen enough to notice how the household was run. However, I began to notice at some point, especially when I realized my dad would

appear only twice or even once a month. On the remaining days, he lived in the city, working tirelessly to sustain and provide for the family.

Being the youngest, exposed me to all kinds of protection and care from my sisters, brother, and parents. Still, I was curious about our father since he was just having a glimpse of family time before heading back to his work life. During one school holiday, I asked if I could travel to the city with my siblings to live with Dad. It was during this time that I realized I was my father's favorite child. The memories were on another level, and I observed how happy he was to have me around.

One evening after lunch, he promised to take a walk with me and show me around the company where he worked. I asked him how it felt to be a father and why he decided to have more than two children. He was shocked that such a question came from a seven-year-old girl, yet he was excited to share his story and his first experience of fatherhood.

“When I married my first wife,” he began, “we lived together for many years without children. There were many reactions from different people. Some thought it was a curse, some said my wife could not bear a child, and others said it was my fault. All these were assumptions, though some might have been true. That is why I went in search of another wife, your mother. At first, that did not solve the problem. I stayed with

your mother for two years without a sign of pregnancy, and I started to worry. I began to accept that maybe I was the problem. I was learning to live with the assumption that I might not be able to father a child.

Then I call it a miracle, out of stress and a lot of pressure from your grandparents, I took weeks off work and spent quality time at home with your mother and your grandparents, together with my siblings. That Christmas holiday was a game changer in my life, and when I returned to work, I heard that your mother was pregnant. I was shocked. I could not breathe properly. I thought I was dreaming''.

This brings me back to the questions I asked different fathers about their first experience, and whether it was planned or it was, as they say, accidental," which I do not think is true.

My parents did not plan for this to happen, nor wasn't by accident, but he called it a miracle. They had to live longing for a child, which was not an easy task, especially when other parties were involved. His words were so deep just as if he was expressing emotions because it was painful how he had been mocked that he might die without having an offspring to bear his name, and while we were talking, I could spot some traces of tears in his eyes.

Fatherhood can sometimes be shocking news or a planned occurrence, especially for married couples. A number of single mothers mentioned that the main cause of their situation was an unplanned pregnancy, where the father seemed not to be ready for family life or rather ran away from all the responsibilities that a child would create in their lives.

I never knew my dad carried such a painful story. All I knew was that we had a first stepmother whom I never met, and that was it. It is not only my father, almost every man, especially fathers, has a story to tell. Perhaps they choose not to share. Everyone has a story, including you, dear gentle reader.

One evening, while coming home from work, I met a young man in his thirties. He kindly stepped aside to give me the window seat and helped hold my bag. After handing it back, I thanked him and took out my phone to finish typing a poem I wanted to post on my status. He noticed and asked if I wrote every day. After a short conversation, I brought up the topic of fatherhood. He opened up, and his story was different.

He had gotten a girl pregnant shortly after high school, but he was unaware because he joined a campus far from home. They lost contact, but the woman did not give up searching for him. She eventually found his mother and informed her about the child a few months after giving birth. However,

the mother withheld this information. It took eighteen years from 2004 to 2022 for him to finally learn that he was a father. His son was already an adult in his final year of high school.

He did not know who to blame. He was shocked to discover he had a son whom he met only in adulthood. He later learned that the boy had been asking about his father, which contributed to behavioral issues in school and conflict with his mother. To him, the pregnancy was accidental not because he denied responsibility, but because he had been completely unaware. By the time he found out, he was already in another relationship and expecting another child. He decided his son would continue living with his mother, as he had all those years, but he would take full financial responsibility going forward.

(As a man, what would you have done? ... End of the short trip I had to step out of the matatu.)

I could only imagine the trauma the woman went through, believing she had been abandoned by her child's father, who had no idea the child even existed. The societal stigma of being a teenage mother was even worse without the father's presence. Yet this man never intended for such an outcome. He became a father to an adult. Was this fate, or were circumstances simply unfair?

There are still men who deny responsibility even when fully aware that they fathered a child but that is not today's discussion, so I will not spill the tea.

At another event I attended, I met a divorced couple a Black African man and a white woman who were still friends and co-parenting their teenage son. Curious, I wanted to know how they met and how fatherhood played out in such a union. After several attempts, he agreed to a short interview.

He was careful with his words. My questions reopened wounds he was trying to heal from. It took three meetings before he began to open up, teaching me how difficult it can be for men to share their stories.

He narrated how he moved abroad to join his spouse, striving to become the provider, even though his wife had a stable job and income. A few months into their marriage, his wife became pregnant. It was neither planned nor accidental they were simply ready. The excitement was mutual. He expected to complete his studies before the baby arrived.

At barely twenty-four weeks six months the baby was born prematurely. It was an emergency, and both mother and child were at risk. He became the first family member to see and hold the baby, as his wife was still unconscious. He described it as the best

experience of his life. Holding his son erased nothing of the struggle, but it filled him with joy.

My father once shared how he knelt alone in his room and cried—not from pain, but from overwhelming happiness. He released years of grief, trauma, and judgment.

(So yes, men cry—in private, where even a cockroach cannot witness it. Mmmh... just my thoughts.)

To speak from a feminine perspective, men should be mindful of their actions in relationships. The moment intimacy happens, a seed can be planted. Responsibility should follow. If one claims they are not ready to be a father that same reason should prevent them from engaging in intimacy.

The first experience of fatherhood should be celebrated something memorable, adorable, divine, and magical. It should give purpose, motivation, and a reason to live for those you love.

THE FIRST CRY



She is a woman.

Yes, she is about to give birth.

Restless. Anxious.

Her sanity barely held together.

*She is not alone.
Experts stand ready to help.
Voices echo in her mind,
time rushing ahead of itself.*

*Tension hangs thick in the air
as family and friends wait,
hoping for nothing more
than a safe process—
waiting for the first cry.*

*Her strength carries her through labor.
Her wisdom guides her through each moment.
The long days of waiting are ending.
It is time to bring forth another living soul.*

*The world prepares to rejoice—
documents typed and written,
ready to record a new beginning—
as they wait for the first cry.*

*Sometimes the gender is revealed,
sometimes it remains a surprise.
Here she stands, a queen,
yet also a king in union.*

*A magical seed was planted,
and now it is time to sprout.
This day will never be forgotten:
a life stepping into the light.*

*A mother. A father.
Aunties. Uncles. Grandparents.
Relatives. Society.
Everyone holding their breath,
waiting for the first cry.*

*Yes—the first cry.
The sound that changes everything.*

How was your first-time experience?

CHAPTER TWO

GENDER EXPECTATIONS

It is normal for a couple to have gender preferences, especially for a first child. The reason behind this is still not entirely clear to me perhaps one day, when I find myself in that situation, I will be able to give my own reasons. But again, it is every couple's dream to be fruitful in their union.

According to my father, having a boy as a firstborn was a sign of respect, honor, and superiority within the family. It also meant that, should anything happen to the father, the lineage would be secure and property would be inherited by the son a belief that applies to many African communities. In those days, having a girl as a firstborn was viewed as a curse from the ancestors, and even today there are communities that still hold onto these beliefs.

This thinking is often justified by the assumption that a girl child will eventually get married into another family, leaving the father's possessions unattended and vulnerable to being claimed by uncles or other eligible male relatives. To me, this is a contradiction. Whichever gender comes first should be considered

equally important, unless we were given the authority to choose a child's gender before birth which we are not. At the same time, we cannot entirely blame our ancestors and forefathers for holding such beliefs; they were products of their time and societal structures.

The challenges, however, did not end there. My father often emphasized the fact that the first child was a girl. While that may have solved part of the problem, another arose according to customs, traditions, and expectations placed on him as the first son of my grandparents.

I can barely comprehend the kind of pain my father went through until he finally had a male child. I came as a "bonus" after my parents had struggled to get a son. After three attempts, all girls, the fourth child was a boy but his life was cut short. I never met him either. Sometimes I wonder what life would have been like if he was around, but life did not allow that moment. My parents grieved deeply, yet they held onto hope, knowing that all was not lost.

After several more attempts, another girl was born. Finally, another boy arrived the only brother I know and have met. My father was clearly frustrated by the prolonged pressure of not having a male child, and especially by not having a son as the firstborn. He rarely spoke openly about it, perhaps because he did

not want me to perceive his vulnerability. It was emotional, and I could sense the weight he carried.

I would appreciate more clarification and opinions on this, especially from African fathers.

Now, shifting to another father one who only met his son when the boy was already 18 years old. At that point, one would expect anything, since he was not even aware that he had impregnated the girl. Even when he later learned of it, he knew it had been an accident. Interestingly, this man was in a position to deny everything to claim he had never slept with the woman and that the child belonged to someone else.

I must admit, he was a man of honor. He not only accepted the son into his life but also acknowledged him as his own without demanding proof. Many men in such a situation would seek validation, and honestly, it would be logical. I would not blame them uncertainty can be frightening. When emotions are involved, people often look for the easiest way out.

From my understanding, we all play a role in this life. Whether boy or girl, male or female, strong or weak we are one. The earlier we make peace with this, the better, especially in African societies that still value one gender over the other. Ironically, these same dynamics fuel gender inequality movements that sometimes shift focus entirely to the girl child,

forgetting that the boy child also needs space, support, and nurturing.

Another contrast comes from a different father who welcomed his first child within six months of marriage. He appeared confident that they would be happy with any gender. However, they still went for a scan and already knew it was a boy. This is not unique to them many expecting couples do the same. I often wonder why.

I remember when our fourth-born sister had her first child a boy. For her second pregnancy, she deeply wanted a girl. Perhaps it was anxiety or curiosity, influenced by our family lineage where females greatly outnumber males. There was a belief that if you come from such a lineage, you might bear more males to “compensate” for the imbalance. How this belief came to be is a story for another decade I am yet to experience it myself.

Maybe there is some truth to it. My elder sisters gave birth to several boys before finally having a girl, though with slight variations. Out of panic or anticipation, she went for a scan, and a girl was on the way. Suddenly, everything turned pink we could tell without even asking.

In the first case study, the father who realized his responsibility when the child was already grown had limited space to form expectations about gender. He

had no choice but to accept reality with minimal complaints, instead focusing on explaining his absence for eighteen long years.

In the second case study, the father was older and deeply rooted in culture. When I asked him why the boy child was historically valued more than the girl child, he explained that although the practice still exists in some areas, the percentage has significantly dropped. He also noted that women have increasingly proven their worth in society to the extent that, if unchecked, they may even overpower men.

He explained that women were seen as brave and wise beings. When forefathers observed this, they prioritized strengthening the perceived “weaker” members of the family not physically weak, but spiritually. Girls learned quickly from their mothers and grandmothers, while boys spent most of their time herding livestock or performing heavy chores, learning formal lessons only occasionally. When formal education was introduced, boys were prioritized so they could become stronger, wealthier, and more capable.

In some communities, however, having a male child enhanced a family’s social status, symbolizing strength and continuity. Even in modern society, despite progress toward gender equality, boys are still considered more capable in fields such as

engineering, politics, mathematics, science, and technology.

Fortunately, these stereotypes are evolving. Awareness of gender equality is increasing, and women are steadily shifting the balance, changing how children are perceived regardless of gender. Today, both genders are increasingly given equal opportunities to learn, explore, and compete in the market space, allowing girls to showcase their full potential.

From a religious perspective, according to biblical writers, God gave His only Son, Jesus Christ not a daughter. The first human creation was Adam, a male; Eve came later. Even the animals were created before her. When a savior was sent to rescue the Israelites from Egypt, it was Moses not his sister Miriam. Abraham, the father of nations, was blessed with Isaac, a son. Jacob had many sons, and though he had a daughter, her story was barely told. She suffered violence and faded from the narrative, while the focus returned to the male lineage.

This framing suggests that male children have long been portrayed as pillars and defining identities of households. I do not know much about the Bible, but I believe Jesus also had sisters and brothers. I would have loved to read their stories especially what it felt like to be a sibling of the Messiah.

On health and fitness, gender bias is evident. At the gym, during HIIT classes, trainers often hand heavier dumbbells to men while women are left with lighter ones sometimes color-coded pink or white versus blue or red. We are assumed weak before being given a chance to try.

Another example occurred during a trip to Kirepwe Island for a birthday celebration. Most attendees were women, and the boat carried food and supplies. Without discussion, men lifted the heavy items while women handled lighter ones. No one questioned it—and yet we still fight for equality.

Let us pause and reflect on how society subconsciously reinforces gender norms blue for boys, pink for girls. Why these colors? Why not green and red, or yellow and turquoise? Social media amplifies these roles by romanticizing certain behaviors and responsibilities. Society absorbs and reproduces these scripts, passing them on to future generations.

Unless we consciously unlearn these habits, beliefs, and norms where women are sidelined as weak or incapable they will continue resisting systems that fail them. Meanwhile, men will struggle to uphold unrealistic expectations, often breaking silently. Then we blame each other, and the cycle continues.

In Luo culture, particularly in polygamous families, male children dine with the father in his private chamber. Only wives especially the first wife, *Mikayi* may enter, usually to serve meals. Girls remain with their mothers, cooking and doing household chores. This clearly illustrates historical preference for the boy child.

It will take time perhaps longer than we expect for society to fully accept that both genders are equally important. As girls become aware and supported, they rise empowered and unstoppable. At the same time, boys struggle to maintain a fading crown, often without support systems to lean on.



*Born with the same light
whether day or night, the potential is equal
the mother, the father—the unity is one
the features, the body—rivers flow to one ocean*

*Different paths, equal worth
Divine dreams, journeys differ, values stand
Unlearning old scripts, tearing old pages
starting fresh together, one and one of our own*

*The art of being human—plant those new seeds
Raise the power to choose, be free*

*who said boys must not cry?
Who said girls must not lead?*

*Lead anyway, nurture anyway
Build anyway, speak anyway
If you donate pads for girls,
Carry boxers, vests, and socks for boys too.*

CHAPTER THREE

WORK LIFE BALANCE

I gave considerable attention to studying two fathers who faced immense challenges not only becoming fathers to children who were fragile and vulnerable in their early lives, but also navigating life in a foreign country as students and part-time employees. Many men would struggle in such circumstances. Society often defines men as strongholds and providers, so finding oneself unable to fully meet these expectations can be deeply unsettling.

One of these fathers had difficulty getting on his feet. His wife had a stable job and earned a higher salary than he did. Eventually, they had to decide who would stay home to care for their baby. The wife was not willing to quit her job, as her income could comfortably sustain the family. After long discussions, the father became a stay-at-home dad for over five months, while the wife took on full financial responsibility.

Imagining how this made him feel is overwhelming. It also raises the question of how many men would be willing to sacrifice that much for their families. He did not speak much about the arguments that occurred

during those months, but I could tell it was not easy. Perhaps that strain contributed to their eventual divorce though I cannot be certain, as he refused to discuss it further. The wound was still fresh.

In occasions where women are the primary breadwinners, there can be endless trauma arguments, misunderstandings, and emotional tension. Men are socialized to provide, and when that role shifts, it can deeply affect their sense of self-worth. Beyond societal stigma and judgment toward men who stay home while their wives work, adjusting to reversed roles can be stressful and uncomfortable.

I am not advocating that men should stop working or providing. Rather, such situations require mutual agreement, emotional support, and shared understanding. When handled with care, couples can work toward something better together without anyone feeling overwhelmed. Feeling valuable as a man in such a family setup does not come easily unless the woman is supportive and reassuring.

On the other hand, some women share a painful concern: after standing by their men during difficult times, once the men regain stability, they sometimes “upgrade” their relationships. The woman who supported them becomes an option rather than a priority. There is some truth to this, and the lessons are often harsh. Perhaps patience and gratitude toward one another are what we truly need.

In this case, the man described the relationship as fair, but he suspected his wife was seeing someone else. He felt voiceless and unable to ask questions. Eventually, his suspicions were confirmed. Each time he raised the issue, the wife denied it, creating emotional distance. She often complained of exhaustion after work which was understandable but over time, they seemed to coexist under the same roof solely for the sake of their son.

According to him he was not ready to let the family fumble apart so they had to seek help from the relationship coach and psychologists. He emphasizes that it was not the best moments because the baby being fully dependent on parents who could barely hold up and nurture their relationship, everyone having their own point of view and frustrations, they were not on the right direction to bringing up that little boy and he knew if they didn't try to work something the boy might grew up not knowing him as a father, their relationship was at risk and the baby was still fragile. He was having options and the best choice was to come back home and maybe start again but he was so concerned of his little boy. They tried to push till when the boy was about seven years old then they couldn't take it anymore. The union ended but their friendship stayed and yes he still got to see and spend time with his son.

I think every family is unique in their own ways, what is crucial is finding the balance that works best for each member involved. This can be worked through

by regular open communication, shared responsibilities, appreciating and supporting each other effortlessly, mutual respect of feelings and well being. I might not understand fully what conspires such in marriages today but everyone deserves a chance.

I'm not really sure if I know how my dad felt working away from home but I could definitely tell how worried he would be if he hasn't come home for a whole month. Normally he would find time to appear once or twice in a month. The show up was irregular and we couldn't tell when he was going to appear. He never called or send a notice whenever he was travelling home it was cool gesture, maybe we were used to his absence that he didn't see the need of announcing his arrival.

I remember one fateful evening I got myself in some sort of trouble after receiving some strokes from my mother I ran away to my godmother's place as I always did. I would spend night there or even more days until my siblings were sent to take me home. It was my second home and I was always welcomed there. But this day was different my siblings came the same night, it was very unusual. When I heard a knock at door, my brother's voice I went hiding but the situation got worse, my godmother came to talk to me to follow them back home. But I didn't know why they want me back home this night and very urgently after crying and refusing to go with them my sister mentioned that dad is waiting for me he had arrived,

he had refused to eat his food until he sets his eyes on me. He didn't buy the tales of seeing me in the morning, he did not buy the stories my mother and my siblings created to explain why I would spend a night away from home either. That night maybe he realized that there were a lot of stuffs going on in the family without his knowledge.

I got home only to get food on the table but nobody could eat, you might be wondering why. I also didn't realize how my absence caused a lot of drama that fateful night, for me it wasn't such a big deal this is something I was used to and no one ever bothered to come look for me, whenever I felt angry after being disciplined by my mother I would step out for my peace of mind unconsciously searching for a happy environment and they would let me stay there for days until I decide to come back on my own the same way I left. But this day I wasn't aware I will cause problems not only to my mother to my siblings, everyone was blamed of whatever happened. My dad was very upset even after seeing me he still couldn't eat, that was my first time seeing him like that.

Perhaps he blamed himself for being absent, how he has failed not only as a husband but as a father as the man of the house. No one made a sound everyone was as shocked as I was, I felt bad especially for my mother but there was no way I could have reversed the situation. Maybe my dad was angry at himself being too absent from our lives, maybe he told himself `` if I

could have been around none of these could have occurred``, maybe he blamed himself for prioritizing work over family, maybe he was over thinking and imagining how long this has been happening, maybe the worse have happened in his absence and this was just sign, maybe he wanted to resign and come home be a father to us. And the worse was he never spoke to anyone about it, as a matter of facts the next morning he woke up as if nothing happened.

My dad was the best, but his absence taught us to live without him, it became our new normal life to my mother my siblings and I. We only knew he was just alive somewhere trying to support us financially but never to be too expectant of seeing him often. Speaking about how each one of us was being affected and still not forgetting his own side, he stayed alone without even a pet, he cooked for himself, clean the house, he did his own laundry, he used to spent time alone when not at work (he enjoyed his own company). But we should not also forget all these had to go as long as we were going to school and getting fed and clothed at the end of the day.

To my dad balancing work and family was an obstacle (I honestly do not wish such on any family) that he had to keep pushing at every point of his life. Over time, he grew accustomed to silence and solitude lifestyle. He could only handle the noise maybe from the colleagues at work or while in public places, anytime he came home he loved sitting outside under a

tree quiet and calm and he could even sense when a snake was nearby (very strange right?). When he was diagnosed with cancer, after he had to resign from his job and relocate back home anytime he could hear two or more people talking it would irritate him and disturb his peace and he would tell and call of a person's name even from the steps (until this day I still can't tell how he managed to do all that)

I witnessed a similar dynamic with my nephews. I remember visiting my sister when schools closed. Her husband just travelled back from another city he was recently transferred due nature of his work, their 8 years old son by then went to ask my sister to get him some books they were required with back in school when schools are opening. Now my sister simply told him to go alert the Dad but the nephew thought this was a joke, he stood there proving to the mother that he was serious about his request and need a genuine answer. He was even crying at this point my sister knew something was off maybe they were not in same page anymore when she asked why he was shading tears. My nephew innocently said that he know it's the mother who is always giving and providing him with whatever he needs in school and the Dad always come back during holidays to give money for swimming. Where is the lie? The young man was just right in his own perspective the dad has been missing in the picture and all his needs met by mother not knowing larger percentage comes from the dad. How was he able to know all that information unless it is

communicated to him in a clear manner, for example If a dad had sent in some cash to get the boy some shoes as a mother the best you can do is talk to the young man “here are some shoes for you but we will call daddy then you will tell Daddy thank you” it is simple but it sends a message to this boy that Daddy actually contributed to his new shoes.

Some parents might take this lightly but it’s good to let your kids be aware of what is going on in the other side especially when one parent is not always around. The fact that kids tend to bond to those they see around them often I think it’s crucial to create awareness and let them know why their father is not around and what he is doing for the family.

Let’s assume for instance the dad is working far from home, a son comes home and maybe it’s his birthday and the dad sends money to the mother to get him a new bicycle how many mothers will be honest enough to say “son this is a gift bought by your dad” or maybe just say “this is from your dad and I” or say “baby your Daddy could not make it today but here is his gift, Daddy loves you” this will not only change the way they see their Dads but also know that whatever the man of house is doing he didn’t not abandon them rather he is working hard towards their happiness. How many of us women will step up and advocate for their husbands? Or will they will take all the credit and this young man will see a Dad as a liability in their lives. Women or rather mothers should learn to include their husbands in the daily

lives of their children. Try as much to officiate the existence of the other parent and if possible what they do for the family to be well articulated.

In simple terms do unto others what you wish to be done unto you. It's high time we embrace the absence of a father at home with a significant story or reasons that will not make the toddlers think otherwise as they grow up.

Another Dad had a different scenario, he had ``perfect`` marriage and two intelligent boys that were enjoying both parents in the same roof almost all the time. He had a flexible job and worked few hours and later was working from home fully remote. Now this helped since he said he was able to schedule his time and nothing unusual about his marriage. They spent every weekend together outside with the boys and sometimes will go to lunch with the wife when the boys were in school. To him balancing work with family was the least of his worries.

At this point he wasn't aware what really happened since they broke up, without a genuine reason. She was gone, nothing to show why she decided to step out of the beautiful family they had. What in the name of crisis do we call that? As a matter of fact this man has never recovered from such occurrence. He blamed himself that maybe he was not man enough to keep a woman not just any woman but the mother of his kids. At this point we can clearly see that sometimes the distance may not be the main reason for failure of

relationships and marriages. Perhaps it would have been different when he was absent dad, the wife might have just given out the excuse of loneliness to fix the fact that she had to leave and look for better options. This man was pushed so hard to a point of working online just to be closer to his family and be present in every aspect of their life and mainly to take apart in raising their boys but this was still not good enough, it did not change a thing maybe it made things worse. The shift from being the present dad to being a single dad and now they had to co parent for rest of their days.

Honestly I am a woman but at times I feel heartbroken how some of us treat men, why marry him in the first place? if at all you are in this man's situation, your husband waking up one morning and walks out of the marriage without a concrete reason maybe then we could understand that men behave and pretend to be strong because that is the stoicism enforced to them by the society. On the contrary I wish I had met this woman to get her side of the story because I know before she made that decision she might have seen the need of moving out or even ending things with the husband based on her on terms and conditions(we listen we don't judge). For me I see another human being worthy of love, one who should be listened to and let them understand it is okay to lose control sometimes, relax, breathe and think before you get up again and be the one you want to be. In this he did not just have the problem of trying to solve the puzzle on

what could have been the course of separation but how to start taking care of the kids on his own. He was also worried he might lose the kids. He realized the ex partner had another man wealthier than him. He thought he was not good enough to take care and keep a woman. That's why when men term us as materialistic beings sometimes it's hard to justify ourselves. Or rather we are not sure of what we want our mind is like a child we get swayed easily with what we see. Then now maybe we make decisions that may cause a permanent damage in other people's lives especially the men in our lives. It's not new though even the first woman to be created did it on our behalf this is just a continuation of what she started.

I am not saying that men are perfect they have their weird ways of manipulating women to fall for their trap now that is where we go wrong. This dad was obviously having the best time of his life being close to his family but now he is a single dad and promised himself not to have a wife until his boys are adults. Now that is a lot of sacrifice but worth it. Do you think the same?

I once read a tweet that resonated deeply:
"A man who works long hours is accused of being absent. If he works less, he is called lazy. Yet we overlook how important fathers are. Just as everyone needs love, so do dads."

The fact remains that we overlook how of importance fathers are to our lives. The same way everyone need love is the same a dad should be loved by those close to him.

On the contrary there might be some reasons behind the sudden neglect that women have towards their husbands. I attended a training of some organizations talking about old age, ageing and the marriage support. At this point I realized that some of the mistreatment from women somehow was contributed by the men or the respective spouse. So they conducted a research where men and women were interviewed separately then later brought together for final talk.

A man was complaining that the wife and the kids had ganged up on him they will not feed him properly. For instance they can cook meat for dinner he will be served greens with no single piece of meat in it, if he wakes up late there will be no breakfast for him. And sometimes the woman can leave the house when the children are in school only to come in the evening as if she also went to school.

Another man complained that their first years of marriage was good until a child came into the picture, years later after the child is all grown, the wife would see him coming home from work and she would ask the child to help him with his bag. Something he was used to seeing his wife do for him.

After a series of complains they were brought to a round table. Women seated on one side and their spouses on the other side. It was evident that these women were very confident with their actions and they were ready to be answerable to any accusation from the men.

The first woman stood up looked into the eyes of her husband and asked him when last he communicated to his children, just to let him realize why they are on her side. She mentioned how the husband used to treat her and the kids were watching. Not to forget about the days he had to spend nights and days outside without any communicating till when he lost his job he came back to the family expecting that everything will be okay and they will open their arms wide to welcome him home and also feed him (he left and forgot about them and when he came back they were living their life without him so his presence made no difference).

This guy lost his job well maybe it wasn't a coincidence maybe the woman endlessly wished for whatever was keeping this man away from his family to end and that prayer was answered in disguise and he became a burden to her in return. She even said she had nothing to do with how the children's actions towards their father he brought all that upon himself. The other one said she knew the husband had another woman outside their marriage and anytime she talked, she mentioned it the husband will abandon her and even threaten to walk out of the marriage. She decided

to stay so the kids will be educated and still see their parents in one roof but the spark of intimacy in their union was all gone and buried. There are endless stories about the challenges in the marriages, yes and some of these reasons are what determine how long a marriage can last. A friend mentioned how he was impressed on the commitment of his wife that she has been his best friend apart from being the mother of his kids and he said that same things that make other couples divorce are the same things that make him realize how his wife is committed to their union (Marriage experts should take over from here)



*Time flies
enough with the lies
trying to move, getting high
Staying still, a day at a time*

*Broken pieces never reflect on places
gone teases, kisses to selves
Grow even in distance
embrace the chance*

*Love is divine
Heal, return, realign
do not make it shallow
Let love flow—and we follow*

If you come home to peace, you rest well and in the morning get to work happy and peaceful, you're most definitely going to be a happy boss, happy employee, happy doing what you do or what you love and work shouldn't be a punishment to not spending time with your family, work shouldn't be the jail that get you all caught up in survival mode to a point you neglect the other part of life you were purposely meant to live.

Balance, balance and balance weigh both sides and stay where you can see and equalize the aspects surrounding you in this life.

Balance work and family.

Balance emotions and mindset.

Balance well-being and ambition.

Nothing is impossible. Make life livable. Make it whole.

CHAPTER FOUR

GIVEN A CHANCE TO CHANGE ONE THING

If you stayed with me through the story of the second father, the one who had to welcome his son earlier than expected you will remember that he had many things he wished could have been different. To begin with, his greatest wish was for his son to grow up in his own country, something he had absolutely no control over. Changing that would have been the happiest day of his life.

He emphasized how much he missed the small but vital moments in his son's life, especially after the separation. I would not wish that kind of pain on any parent. He also spoke about how his marriage ended in an unpleasant manner. Things could have turned out better; they could have been one happy family after all they had endured together. But who are we to judge the universe? Nature has its own way of conveying things in our daily lives.

He said separation was one thing, but living miles away from his son was the hardest burden, one he still wishes he could change. Unfortunately, the reality is that the boy must stay with his mother until he is old enough to make his own decisions. We all experience

this tyranny in life: parents making decisions based on what they believe is best for us.

When I asked the other dad who found out about his son at age of 18 years the same question, first he was so disappointed for missing out the journey of his son's life and not to mention being completely in the dark from his mother's silence. The child had already become so notorious in the school serving some suspensions term after term, reason being he did not have a father figure to call him to order.

The boy had made it clear to his mother that he wanted to know his father, and if that did not happen, his behavior would only worsen. At that point, the assumption that he was merely a "mama's boy" did not apply. It is very normal for a boy child to be close to their mothers and same applies to girl child and their fathers me being a very good example, was not applicable. In as much as the mother tried the best she could, the boy did mean it when he said he wanted to find out who his father was.

He said given a chance a change he would have kept in touch with the lady or even try looking for her just for no reason because they never ended their relationship in the first place. Life is general is a misery I suppose, a lot is going on for instance. A man might be living with a wife and fathering someone else's child or even more, same life a man would be having a secret family out of wedlock without anyone

noticing. Same life a man will reject his own blood in the name of not ready or any excuse they come up with, this same life a woman will walk away from her marriage because of another wealthy man, same life a man will have a very loving family but due to demand of basics at home he works tirelessly and miss the beautiful moments with his loved ones, It doesn't balance at all.

My father, without a doubt, was a loving man. What amazed me most was his ability to love all of us equally. None of my siblings ever complained about favoritism. With six daughters and my mother, it was a lot to carry, yet he gave his best and he truly did.

Being the last born made the bond stronger and my own strategy of spending time with him during holidays like Christmas when everyone wants to be at home with mother was a game changer. And come to think of it my name, **Abigael**, that simply means "*Father's joy*" there are things I could not explain regarding the relationship I had with my father but I must admit it was something I would still wish for even in my next life, that is if there is one.

I witnessed my father struggle with work-life balance. When I stayed with him at a young age, he would wake up as early as 5:30 a.m. to prepare breakfast—fried eggs, bread, and black tea, just the way I liked it. He added pepper to the eggs, making them spicy yet sweet. I grew accustomed to his cooking, which

always carried that balance—much like the sweet-and-sour pork I once prepared during my campus training, a dish that turned out to be the best among the crew. Then he would chat with the neighbor and leave her with some cash for my lunch sometimes even dinner in case he was to come back late. I was doing the dishes being that have lived with my mother who doesn't entertain any laziness of any order she even taught me how to cook chapatis at that tender age (even when I take days or weeks before making the chapatis I'm not worried I'm always good at it), but Dad refused to let me cook for myself. He thought I was not ready to be a cook that time glad I became one after he had gone to rest.

He would then dress up to work, he had a bicycle one which one time became the only means of transport from Kisumu city going back home following the 2007 post election violence .He had a favorite long-sleeved flowered silk shirt (the shirt was classy and elegant with some purple and cool color combinations that was easy to style with any pant) he used to wear it almost every Monday if not also some special occasions. The shirt rested on him giving a perfect blend of simplicity, elegance and sophistication. He would go to work for hours and get back fatigued but not showing it at all. I was not able to read all that by then. His work was very demanding and he would take a break of 3 days after one or two or even three months to come home and visit the rest of the family. He became a visitor at his own home. And if there is

one thing he would have loved to change given a chance, it would be having a source of income nearer or while living together with his family all in one place. He also missed some stages in our daily lives and I am certain that his wish was to be there every single day and experience all the moments together.

A father's love is as unique as a mother's. But learning how to be present without neglecting responsibilities is crucial. We all make mistakes and we all deserve second chances. Even Christianity teaches that growth comes from reflection and learning.

I remember of a father back in the days in primary school, he had four daughters and one of them happened to be my classmate. This man would drop his girls in the morning at the gate and picks them up in the evening. The shocking news was they lived just few meters from the school but still he was doing this, where as the rest of us would walk kilometers to get home and nobody cared to do what this man was doing. Later as we were curious when the man keeps doing that tirelessly, we decided to ask the girl from class and wasn't happy either but her astounding answer was that their father was protecting them from being lured into sexual acts by other boys from school or men they meet along the road on their way to or from the school.

As a parent you know better but this man forgot that he couldn't protect or control his daughter's

interactions inside the school compound. Now just to mention some aspects of parental protection like emotional support that deals with love and their well being, financial support, physical protection, health and nutrition amongst other factors, this man was just innocently trying to give the physical protection in uncalculated manner. And if he had a chance to learn or chance one thing about his role as a father, I think it would have been better to educate the girls on the dangers of engaging in sexual immorality at a tender age.

It's so unfortunate that after all that struggles of waking up early as possible to take the girls to school and dedication of still coming for them every evening the second-born daughter became pregnant in Class Eight. The girl mentioned how their father would not even allow them to go play outside or with anyone in the name of bad influence. But any chance they got they would sneak out, (rules are meant to be broken or what?) they would dress like angels falling from above and visit their "boyfriends" come back carrying either a bible or a book (it was devotion or revision time I guess).

Parents it's high time you check where you are going wrong, identify the problem lecture! Teach! Preach! Share! Be friends with your kids don't try to control their freedom but give it at trust level knowing well that you have done the work. If you have the chances to make the changes grab the opportunity with utmost pleasure and do it the right possible way.

Sexual education is a sensitive topic you should introduce at very early phase, face it head on let your child know and be aware and release the need to always watching over what they do, who they talk to, who they play with, what they say or being said to them, you're not God, you will still miss thousands of points in them but if you do what is right then even when you're a thousand miles away nothing will cause to worry so talk do the work and learn to trust your kids.

Children today are exposed to information far beyond their emotional capacity. If a parent assumes the conversations as early as possible you will realize they are in the process of digging more into what they already have at hand. I would recommend what my sister Jane did. She began talking to her son and daughter as soon as they pop into school life and making friends of both genders. There is no perfect time and there is no running a way. There might be another chance meant for changes but do not wait until it's too late. This also creates the safe space for them and they will grow up knowing they can always talk to you in case something is bothering them(depression does not wake with someone in bed one morning and strike, it is a series of build up emotions and unspoken struggles don't let that happen to your own offspring).

The chances can also be being a present dad when it's very possible to do so. I heard a man saying he only spend time with his kids on Sundays the weekends he

doesn't go to work but he will not stay at home either. I know men will support one of their own and its okay I agree you deserve better but there are stages you have to enjoy and experience because the years that goes by before you know it, you are a grandfather wondering where your child went.

One thing I admired deeply about my father was his wisdom. My personal mantra, "*Words and wellness*," came from him. He knew what, how and when to pass his advices and lessons.

The first teachings from him was on dressing code, instead of dictating what his girls should wear he used to buy clothes for us(indirect communication okay I get it), however buggy or long they may seemed it was there to make us understand the respect you get from dressing decently. I came to learn this later after he was gone. I used to complain seeing my mates wearing all these fancy short and eye appealing clothes, but I didn't have an option than to just try look happy in my garments. At this era a lady will dress showing almost half of her body out, walking in the street pulling up and down hoping the rich will notice before the poor sees and yells all sought of words. It's a choice but my father tricked me into this decent dressing I will try break the law once in a blue moon just to know how it feels, do not judge me though(my dress my choice they say...)

His second way was through the bible. And somehow I don't want to sound so religious or holy or an assistant to our creator but that elevated our spiritual life at some point and I will forever appreciate him for that. Knowing and having the ability to pray and speak life into your existence is a gift a precious wonderful wonder.

Another teaching was on time. If we had to go somewhere he was clear on time and by 5 pm every girl would be back home he made sure this goes on even when he was not around. His second in command was not someone to joke around with, she let our father do the talking she carries on with the actions, and that was something that is even recommended ,that parents should not let their children treat them in manner they are not comfortable with. As a parent you must be bold enough and self aware to master the traits of your kids and act accordingly, many parents miss this you can still be a parent and a life coach to your children. If you want the best for them then you should know the best possible ways to follow as a parent (do you have your own parental motives? are you guided or misguided by your childhood experience? Are you a parent or pleasing friend to your children?). Correct what needs to be corrected, adjust what is losing the nuts, elevate the good view and polish the surface to finer touch.

I have a friend of mine he became a father at his early twenties, but what surprised me is how he is very proud of his kids and also doing everything possible to

make sure they don't lack a thing. He gave me a genuine answer that if he had a chance to change one thing then it would, having a clear knowledge of how his kids are, and what they are uncomfortable with in their daily lives and be able to satisfy his kids and they never feel empty. I think he is doing his best and those kids are very lucky to have such a father who is willing to sacrifice and put in the work for their well being.

I know at some point young men or rather boys ran away from responsibilities of being a father not boys only but some grown men too. They creep away from taking the weight and providing as it is required of them. Well even some foreigners that visit our country are shocked to hear that someone can just get a woman pregnant, deny it and just walk away freely. I was having the same conversation with a client, and he said its either you pay for child support monthly or go to jail. These are some of the laws that should be implemented in the constitution for anyone who doesn't want to be responsible of being a parent.

My father left too soon. I could say by any chance he would be still alive then I would be living with him up to this moment. He made me feel safe even when I was scared. He believed in me even when I didn't have the courage to keep going. He was more than just a father he was my best friend and I could easily tell when something was off. He made me feel safe in the midst of chaos.

We almost died together during the 2007 post election violence. He came from work and I had gone to visit my aunt in the neighboring street, he didn't care how dangerous it was to be outside during that time. He risked his life just to make sure I was safe and not hurt or injured. We travelled from the city to village by his bicycle no food or drink, the shops were closed roads were blocked and no vehicles could pass through. Protestants all over and fires burning across major parts of the road, it was just the two of us.

At some point we were stopped by a group of protestants they were armed and they were looking dangerous he even covered my eyes with a piece of cloth, he did not panic but he had to lie that I was very sick and needed to get met to the hospital as soon as possible. He knew there was no going back and no matter what it takes we were to arrive home safely. Our was put on hold for hours as we were waiting for one man that this gang were claiming to be the leader and his words were final.

He had grabbed a lady who was walking from her shop after closing due to the security situation but that was not her lucky their so called leader was having her in the nearest bush in the middle of nowhere. Luckily he came back in a good mood and asked his gang if they would be happy if I die there as they watch just because they were waiting for him (What a narrow escape that was)

If I was to be given a chance to change one thing, I'd plead for the life of my father and be able to see him again, then look him in the eyes and tell him ``YOU ARE MY HERO``.

In life and its evident that no one is perfect, even in the ancient teachings and the bible we are told how people used to burn sacrifices as a way of making truce to the God after committing transgression. We all deserve a second chance and the universe does that every single day we have to get up and try again. A father deserves chances and we need to make it possible for them and this life bearable and safe for us all.

If you are a parent it is never too late to change something you see as an impediment to the life you want for your family. Give yourself a chance as a husband to make things work in your matrimony, give yourself a chance as a wife to ensure peace, compassion and love runs across your family set up, give yourself a chance to right all the wrongs you have been willing to change, give yourself a chance to acknowledge and explain not only the strengths but also the contribution and willingness to display transparency, trust and honesty within the family, give yourself a chance to be the best dad, mom and the most important person in the lives of your loved ones.

CHAPTER FIVE

HAPPY BEING A DAD?

This question might sound very simple, but at some point it carries substantial meaning. Starting with my own dad, his experience through the journey and process of finally becoming a father was excruciating. He didn't choose that path for himself he went through stigmatization and unnecessary views questioning his worth. When he finally confirmed that he could be a dad, I can't imagine how he must have felt. That is the true definition of *light at the end of the tunnel*. My elder sister, to this day, still holds the blessings from our grandparents.

One of the men in my study, who became a dad in a foreign country at an unexpected time, mentioned that at one point he was afraid he was going to lose his child. The baby arrived earlier than expected, and according to other incidents involving the same complication, a large percentage of babies do not survive. His fears about the outcome made the experience unpleasant at first, but the moment the doctor called him in and he held his son in his hands, everything changed. The dad was overwhelmed with happiness, and the first words he spoke to his son were

in Swahili just like the doctor because the doctor was from Tanzania.

He also shared a beautiful reflection about how he would sit and watch his son grow, and how the child reminded him of himself. Is this something every parent experiences? Maybe it is. Seeing yourself through your children is truly a magnificent phenomenon one I do not wish to be left out of.

There are also a number of entities that can align with a father's happiness in the family setup. To begin with spending quality time with children for instance playing games together or watching a favorite animation or storytelling and the list can be endless. I remember the best happiest moments of my father was when having heartfelt conversations together that will end with a meal prepared by our mother. These are the days I would click replay if truly life is a movie.

I had this one friend in primary school, we used spent most of time together we could even get into trouble both of us even when the fault was really one of us. My friend also had a special relationship with her father just like me. She had a younger sister who was finding it hard to understand why she was so close to their father more than her. But later she realized that my friend had favorite movie just like the father and they would later play football just as we used to play back in school. This wasn't meant to hurt the younger sister or even make her feel left out, the truth is my

friend was making the father happy and for a second thought he could jump out of his heart and forget about his problems as he also spend time with his daughter.

Unfortunately, she later lost her father, a few years after I lost mine, and it affected her deeply just as it did me. We looked at each other and wondered why we had to go through the same fate. But the memories they shared are what kept her going.

There was a deejay I knew from a hotel where I once worked. He was still in his early twenties when he became a father. The mother had to travel outside the country, leaving him as the only present parent to their son. At first, he was very hesitant and even considered quitting his job. He could see himself settling into fatherhood and providing for his son, but the more time he spent with his child, the happier he became. He realized how much impact this child brought into his life. He became more focused and determined never to let his son suffer. This child became a source of motivation and happiness for him. Appreciation is another factor that can make a father feels valued and happy within a family setup.

The very first gift I received from my father was a handkerchief, well it may seem diminutive but I received it with a lot of joy and contentment. The following day I washed the handkerchief, hanged it to dry, ironed and folded it nicely then I placed on top of

my school back pack so I won't leave it behind when ready for school. When my father walked into the room he saw the handkerchief it even looked brand new than when he gave it out. He smiled looking at it he grabbed the handkerchief and looked at it closely I saw the look in his eyes that was beyond his expectations.

I had the choice of just throwing the handkerchief into the dirty laundry basket and wait till the day it will be done for me to use it. Everyone was surprised including my mother, the simple gesture of gratitude made their day. I received appraisals that day I mean who wouldn't want that? The message I am trying to put across here is sometimes the man wouldn't know what to do their personalities and preferences differ by far from us ladies. But when they do something it is it would great to show some appreciation towards their efforts however teeny it might be.

Things like helping him tack in his tie properly, uttering positive words of affirmations before he leaves the house, gifting him a T-shirt of his favorite color, playing his favorite music or album on his day off-work, preparing him a delicious meal. It's the thought, the gesture and the efforts that will go a long way.

I may be stepping on ladies' toes here, but I am one of them. It is my prayer that I also get married at the right time, and I believe this is crucial in maintaining a

long-lasting relationship and allowing a man to enjoy family life. I once watched a podcast by a woman I deeply admire from Nigeria, now in her sixties, whose teachings focus on marriage and relationships. She explained how things often change between courtship and marriage—a reality married people understand well. She asked the women in the forum a simple yet powerful question: *If the man in your life were removed, who would you be? Could you maintain the life he has built for you?*

Tafakari hayo.

This brings me to the importance of support and understanding in contributing to the overall well-being of a father, husband, employee or employer, and citizen of a nation.

To begin with anxiety and fear, it happens to everyone old or young, bold or weak, dad or mom. Well maybe we ladies have a way around it we talk and share a lot with friends and those that surround us but the case is different with the other gender. They need persuasion, attention, care, motivation, acts of kindness, lending an ear (is it true when you are married the husband becomes the first child?).

Let's try and imagine a situation where a father walks home from a long day busy day at work (I don't want mention an office not everyone goes there) and he sees his child sleeping on the coach at unusual time. No

information about what is happening he is just seeing it for himself no call or text from whomever was with the child. Now he finds out the child is running some fever and other symptoms but he cannot figure out exactly what is wrong. So the wife pops out and explain how the child got back from school mind you he just got back he has not even rested an inch of his bones. There is a gadget for communication the least one can do is to send a text or make a call if it's urgent, take immediate action of looking for help from nearby chemist or hospital. In as much as the man will pay for the bills or medicine, at least try and understand that he has been out grinding the least you could do is render some help and support where necessary.

Another house the man left in the morning, he was in such a hurry that he did not finish his breakfast. One of the reason for rush is to drop the kids to school on time before heading to work. The wife prepares his favorite dish and drops it at his work place on her way to do shopping. She also calls later to confirm if she can pick the kids from school just in case the husband will be ``working `` late. The kind offer to do what he is obligated to do, act of kindness of serving him lunch at work and other you can be creative about are what keeps the family running and it will determine the overall health of this father and husband.

In women-based podcast some complain how the spouse comes home late when the kids are already a

sleep (maybe he also fell asleep at the parking) the environment a wife and kids brings at home will determine how often you will interacting with the man of the house (if you think I'm wrong maybe you're right but these are things I observed with my own father). My mother treated her king well and deserving, she knew when he gets home first thing after warm welcome is tea and not just any tea, herbal infused tea with snacks and of course had to join him(well I still take herbal tea whenever I crave for it). After the tea dinner will be ready by six thirty after the meal is a round table talk and sharing of challenges in school or in general the prayers time and then time to excuse the two love birds as we get to sleep. He was far but he could use any excuse at work just to come home and spend time with his family and that is something that came with support and understanding from us especially from our mom (always proud of her despite being a lioness).



*She gets up before the light of the day
She cleans her home where she stays
Fierce, courageous, boldly she moves with grace
Her spirit dwelling and praying for better promise to
arise
She is the heart that binds and holds her family
Through every fear, setback, trial and even joy
She is a blessed soul her hands shapes and employ*

*Her smile sparkles just like overseas alloy
Her love remains unchanged
A legacy of motherhood she unfolds
Baking, snacking and techniques of coo-chill
The list continues and possibly countless
She is the strength, joy, mentor and love that binds her
own forever*

The goal to make unique, simple and memorable effortless moves, prioritize healthy lifestyle balance diet. Encourage breaks to recharge and create a conducive environment for peace and relaxation and also playful for the kids as well. Ensure as a father you get enough sleep and ready to kick off a fresh day. Visit a barber shop get your hair done, massage can be better, take a walk in the evening with the kids and wife. Do not over think when it comes to spending time with loved ones.

The happiness comes from within normalize being happy at home make peace with this other gender (we can be unpredictable sometimes but I like it that way) solve your misunderstandings as soon as possible and let your kids see you as a happy father. We learn from our parents and this continues through generations so let all create a peaceful and loving one.

In a family, love is the oil that eases friction, the cement that binds, and the music that brings harmony. Respect each other's uniqueness, interests, passions,

and personalities. Every family faces challenges, and what works for one may not work for another. The secret lies in finding balance that suits your family's dynamics. And if it feels too hard embrace hugs and hearty laughter. The answer is right there.

CHAPTER SIX

CHILDREN WITH MOM/DAD LANGUAGE

I am going to start this chapter by stating that parents will always have the best interests of their children at heart. It is amazing, it is allowed, it is a way they fulfill their obligations and responsibilities of being a parent. Parents want the best for their children in terms of nurturing, loving them, provision, caring and also offer protection as well as basic needs. However, no parent is perfect. Each parent has unique abilities, beliefs, and norms that influence the roles they play in their children's lives.

For instance, mothers often bond with a child even before birth and then spend close to a year or more nurturing and helping the child grow into an independent being. On the other hand, fathers often have to find their way into a child's life, a process that can be smooth or challenging depending on circumstances such as availability and environment.

There are many factors that are often overlooked in parental care, yet they affect a child's life in one way or another. On the positive side, spending quality time is crucial, no matter how busy a parent may be. Taking time to have conversations or share

interesting topics with children helps parents understand them better and learn what they are absorbing from the outside world. Physical touch is equally important we all need love expressed through hugs, kisses, holding hands, and other gestures of affection. As a parent, you may also choose to watch your child's favorite cartoon as a way of showing support and spending time together. Some parents do this, while others do not, and that is understandable because everyone expresses love differently.

The most common acts of love, support, and care from parents include providing a roof over the head, food, education, healthcare, and other daily needs. This responsibility can be overwhelming, sometimes making it difficult for parents to notice when something is wrong with their children.

There are also deeper factors such as feelings, triggers, and childhood experiences that follow individuals into adulthood. When they become parents, these experiences often resurface. This is when some parents struggle with setting boundaries or become overprotective. The urge to compensate for what they lacked in their own childhood can result in overindulgence, which may lead to exploitation or even weaken a parent's confidence in discipline.

To make it simpler a parent can be very strict just like the father who used to walk his daughters to school and from school back home reason being they are still

young to be talking to boss or enjoying the freedom. As a parent he has all the rights and he has his facts and concluded how his actions were the best solutions, meanwhile there is this side of the girls wanting to explore, play just like any other kid and their social and interaction life was only limited to the time they in school. As a matter of fact they became distant and they just enjoyed each other`s companies as they were used or maybe instructed by their father.

This brings me to this part of conversation that almost every parent circumvents addressing as children grow up. The most important left out issue is sex, the basic concepts of the dangers and how one can be sexually active before the right age. Things like drugs abuse and mental health in general are crucial information each child need to be aware of. The way children receive physical needs from the parents is corresponding to emotional and psychological needs. Well most parents would want to talk about it but they aren't aware how to start. This is a long term process but it would better to start early, by maybe naming the body parts as you pay attention to their questions or curiosity. Answer them with total honesty using languages appropriate to their age. Use materials like books, websites, learning videos to keep them informed.

Create a safe space for deep sharing of such experiences whenever they encounter one, do a follow up on how they are handling themselves. Do it time to

time and make it a routine remember it's journey one step after the other. And eventually your child will be able to share and ask for clarifications, you will be left with easy load to worry about other things and not getting stuck in wanting to protect them from anyone who gets closer to them. Sometimes being overprotective as a parent sorry to say to this but it just makes your fear scream louder and hinder the independence, resilience and problem solving ideas of a child.

Failure to set clear boundaries and inconsistent discipline can also bring confusion to a child's behavior and the way of thinking making it difficult for them to navigate on the outside world when their time comes (you will hear a parent claiming "but I didn't raise her that way") we just lack the knowledge.

The truth is that parenting roles are played differently in every family. Finding balance and ways of doing it. Ignorance should not be an option. I will tell you a story of a village thief (it's not a nice nick name for anyone). He would steal sometimes get lucky and go free with it but some days we would get caught and held in jail for days or weeks or months. The mother who is very protective of her son would bail him out and still claim that her son is not a thief as people say. Few years later the son was now warned and he was afraid to steal from other homesteads, the only place he could steal from without being accused, arrested or even threatened was his home. He was stealing the

harvest, the cattle, any valuable thing he could lay his hands on just to sell so he get drunk stimulate and make noise going home to eat his mothers food. Because he is safe there, he is a saint in front of his mother and whether he stole from his mother doesn't make a difference she always protect him from being in danger.

One day the mother became sick, his siblings gave up on taking care of their mother because she was not ready to let them discipline their brother or send him to rehab. But the sickness was alarming and the mother knew she was not safe either since the son had grown and become violent as well. He began walking with dangerous sharp objects like knife as a protection to anyone who wanted to stop him from stealing.

Now he had sold almost all the cattle in the homestead they only had one remaining in the compound. The mother knew if she could not act quickly it will go as well, so she order the other son who was not always around to got sell the cow and keep the money safely incase her situation worsen she can be taken to the hospital. When the village thief realized this a day later, he confronted the mother and during the argument he got agitated and he stabbed the mother with a knife. He killed the mother (whatever you do with this narration is up to you). Discipline, setting clear boundaries honestly I`m not speaking until I see my own. The other I was looking at the progress of my professional dashboard in Facebook then I came

across a meme and it had a picture of a mother. She was carrying a child of about six months, seated on the coach the child looks at the mother with a lot of surprise on his face. The mother had several cables on her face held by masking tape. The caption was reading “charging my energy up before my first born comes back from school”.

She might be in trouble or maybe having a lot of questions to answer to and it's a lot it's true you will need your energy. I used to breath and have a break before my niece and nephew sets their eyes on me I can't imagine what my sister must have felt having them all the time. The beauty is to appreciate that which they bringing and talk to them it will do you good in future.

In a normal family set up, it's assumed or rather common that a girl child gets closer to the father and boy child is closer to the mother and at some point this assumption can be true.

To give a slight example of my family all the girls drew closer to our dad and the only brother is mom's favorite but it depends and every family is all different in their own way.

As a child grows some conversations can be very sensitive especially from opposite sex like father/daughter talking about menstrual cycle. In as much as a father can help in simple education about the whole thing, he might not have all the facts and

basics like a mother does. The same goes to boy/mother conversation about the changes during adolescence for a teenage boy at some point a father has to come in and show the son how to be a man. A friend surprising commented how his daughter is growing too fast and he wasn't okay with it. It is part of life but as days goes by he realized how much he misses his little girl. It is evident that a father can struggle with the drastic changes and independence a girl child portrays and this applies to a boy child.

I had a phone call with my mentor one evening he was asking me random questions according to some topics he was taking me through earlier. He was the one who introduced to reading more books and the first book he recommended was "WHY START WITH WHY BY SIMON SINEK. We arrived at a point where he asked me how I am doing in a foreign town without any family member around to look after me or any relative to monitor my moves and still live and interact with other people without hesitation.

I did not have an answer to that I thought it is something that any other child can do and his answer was shocking. He explained how some things we have gone through in life that we thought was there to harm or hardship or challenges were actually what shape us to be a better self in future. At this error of generation zoomers, our parents want to go extra mile to do everything to protect us so we should not go through the same struggles they went through while growing

up and that is rendering us useless or rather short of self reliant towards difficulties in life.

My own experience was quite different from my parents each one of them played a role. When we speak of last born people think it's a luxury it true but not all the time. In my case my siblings were all grown before I came into the picture, growing up I was tinniest and very dependent to all but they had commitments especially in school and I barely spent time with them. They had friends too and couldn't stay there or with me every single time. But this is not the case there comes a time when everyone was out and about so I was equally rolling alone at home if not for my friends coming by for some dancing or hide and seek moments.

My mother used to pre cook my food I could warm it up and dive into the cuisine, but for how long? She thought it was time for me to learn some cooking and that is when I started preparing my own meal. The first trial wasn't good but with time it went on well and became an expert. With time she started increasing the number from just me and now her being the second person. The numbers were gradually increased and I was to learn how to cook for all of them. When I talk about my hobbies cooking is not just a skill I studied in campus it is something I grew up doing and up to date I can never get wary of cooking not only for others but for myself too.

The same was different with my father he would make my breakfast before heading to work and leave some cash with the neighbor to cater for my lunch and then he will get back from work either prepare dinner or come with cooked food. I will be put off whenever I ask him to let me make my own food whenever he is not around. He was anxious of what could happen in his absence, he was protecting me by all means even though I could see how much tedious it was for him doing all that. He just couldn't let me. Back to Mama she taught me how to wash from a single shirt to my entire weekly laundry and it goes to utensils and other tiny chores. It was starting from small and very simple and step by step was a journey I could learn, sometimes experience a setback but she did not stop until she was sure I was okay and catching up.

Today, many households employ domestic workers, and children grow up detached from chores. It is okay but something like taking their plate or cup to the sink after dinner or breakfast can be a start in showing how to be responsible. Gathering all the toys to the appropriate place after playing or arranging their clothes in the wardrobe after laundry or even putting back the books in the backpack after finishing their homework it can be seemingly irrelevant but with time they will learn how to do things on their own when you are not around so you don't need to worry.

Like when you take them to boarding schools are still going to employ a maid that will always wash their

uniforms, clean their plate, cup or even brush their shoes ready for the next day? Or should they stay junked up dressed in same uniform even if it's smelling for the whole term before they come back home for a clean up? Someone will reach thirty a lady to be precise and she will Google a recipe or how to prepare corn starch '*ugali*' and we think it's cool. There is this group of old men I met once and they told me one thing, they are not against the evolution and dynamic changes in technology and how things are done in the modern world but they are afraid some of the important information that has been passed to them by our ancestors and being buried, we are gradually bringing a culture that used to belong to the foreigners and it will reach a time no one will talk about our roots, our norms our culture and tradition. A simple example a mother teaching her daughter how to cook even now ladies are aware and they know one of the ways to a man's heart is through his stomach. (you should bring more points I want to be prepared before I say yes to someone's son)

Initiate a trial and error tests, where you give them a task then you leave to give them room to thrive on their own get back and inspect the results, correct where necessary measure performances with time and repetition, increase the depth gradually, pay attention to their response in the process allow them to fail and start again (it is for their own benefit after all).

Parental support still remains crucial but there reaches a point to let the child face the chaos, stay close to watch just in case they need intervention but there is no justification or compensation to trauma, struggles, emotional depletion, low self-esteem and other childhood setbacks. Your kids should not be a source of experiment to what you would wish to have in your childhood time but your relationship with your kids should come naturally without any past experiences attached to it.

The language, the reactions and what the parents do also shapes the personality of the children they are raising. These kids are always asking questions, their curiosity is at higher level if you give the right information at the right time you will not have to worry whenever they are out of sight. The older they get the questions become lesser and this indicates that they've started familiarizing with what goes on around them and that is where you have to trust them in their reasoning and responsibility depending on the language and lessons you gave out to them.

Come to think of it if that old man could have just had a one on one banter with his daughters and talk about the dangers of having relationship at that delicate age, it would have saved him a lot time and not to mention the embarrassment.

There is still more to talk about this chapter like the single parenting which I might not be a guru but the

same thing applies. A mother usually acts as a disciplinary pillar of the family whereas a father plays a neutral role and his absence brings some sort of chaos and confusions. No parent is perfect mistakes are part of learning process but when once you realize the gray areas exert to improve self-awareness as a parent. Have the willingness to set the right intentions to your life and that of the family. It is essential in the journey of parenting and I wish you all the best - including my future self.

Where have you been all this day? Billy mommy asked.

*I have been all this day searching for a lady gay,
Billy thought he would see Lilly soon, last Wednesday
was grey*

*Maybe that was the last day to say “never come my
way”*

*Billy lay on top of the chilly hill like a grill enjoying
the sun rays*

*Billy says “mommy but she is too young to be taken
from her mommy”*

*Can she bake or can she brook? Mommy asked
Young boy Billy, Lilly is not, she is not slothful
She came with a pot of flakes, what if it`s fake?
But is it all it takes? This is just one of my tales
I want to know my fate, maybe sit her down*

*Maybe give her space, maybe let breath I hope it
won't be late*

I get the value and the insight

Maybe she can bake, maybe she can brook

Maybe she can make a wedding cake

*Billy says "mommy but she is too you to be taken from
her mommy"*

How old might she be? Mommy asked

She is outstanding not to mention her in person

Learning from assumptions mommy

Lilly the beautiful maiden, maybe she is just a drug

Leaving me helpless, I get addicted to her presence

I do not know if this makes any sense

I am too lost to ask, maybe she is one

Maybe she is two, twice eleven twenty two

*Billy says "mommy but she is too young to be taken
from her mommy"*

CHAPTER SEVEN

CHALLENGES, MISTAKES AND LESSONS OF A FATHER

Some of these challenges have already mentioned in the previous chapters, but some are distinct and sometimes are disregarded. Apart from the struggles of professional commitments and the work life balance, a Dad encounters direct financial pressure of providing for the family and managing financial responsibilities. This often comes in excessive weight on them particularly during uncertain economic times (Kasongo's regime is a good example)

When I asked one of my study Dads about this problem, he said this was supposed to be a whole book on its own not even a chapter. His situation with the wife in a foreign country not to mention the wife was earning higher than him was a story for another time. A vast percentage of men will feel belittled if they would find themselves in the same situation. This dad at first he just wanted to be a dad but come to think of the moment the spouse suggested he should stay back to look after their still-born baby, it sounded like an insult.

There are also some other factors like societal comparison to maintain a certain lifestyle, this can bring about the negative impact on job security and investments. A man might end up overspending beyond his limits. (This can be overwhelming and the debts too). In a family set up where both husband and wife are working, the man of the house may still be the one who pay for almost every bill or expense needed in the family. Well they are just right and it is their responsibility to make sure the family are well taken care of, on the other hand most men in this similar situation wear a masculine mask and hide the vulnerability face from their spouses. Well in as much as they are told to man up the accumulation of such occurrences can affect their mental health and overall well-being.

This reminds of a father back in high school, his daughter did well in her examination and he couldn't afford to take to her school on time. He pleaded with the school principal and he offered to work as a guard at night and part time cleaner during the day to be able to pay the fees just so his daughter will not miss the opportunity of further education. At those gone days I was not even paying attention to how much this father had to sacrifice for his daughter and come to think of it that was a noble and honorable act. He did not bow down to his financial situation wipe off his daughter's future and girl didn't disappoint either. I'm certain she had other siblings as well but this man was determined

because he knew if all goes well she will help with the young ones.

Women often play the victim when it comes to marital or parental difficulties but just like a judge listens to both sides before rendering a ruling this should also be applicable to men. A woman can also endure a lot of nonsense coming from a man that might not be aware of what is going on or maybe he can be aware, and she will not react and later on a huge come back bombs the house and everything takes a different turns. This implies that some actions can be dangerous and once you have children in the picture everyone should be cautious of their deeds. For example the man who was claiming of being neglected by the wife and kids later things came to light that he had been a pain to the family when he was well off. And women doesn't let thing go easily it's we have a book of memories in our mind and the patience to let you do the worse they suddenly turn to give their peace of mind.

This is something that will go on and on in many marriages if not addressed properly and the children get caught up between the lines. The man whose wife walked out of the marriage rendering two boys fragile and innocent in the middle now they had to co-parent. On the other side in their mother's new home lives a man who is trying to be a better father for them as well. He even mentioned how the kids will behave weird every first day he picks them up after spending time with their mother and step-dad.

Communication is a very important tool in every relationship be it from family to the marriage and even at work. Numerous marriages have failed due to lack of communication and it is not ending any time soon. Open discussion, active listening, honesty, expression of feelings, thoughts and ideas should be a priority in the family set up. Still in the context of communication to be precise women should be strategic and smart while trying to pass a message across to the man of the house.

Many think standing for themselves and speaking out their mind is the best thing to do, well yes it is great but how best do you do it? There should be some coaching on how to talk to a husband in matter they will not feel as if they are enough. When you talk to a man he might do as you want but the way you stand and talk to him as if you are a fellow man ready for a fight can take a lot of trust and love away.

My mother had a personality that I really admire, she was bossy for sure she still is but not when the man of the house was around. Her voice will drastically change to soothing, and calming tone, her smile lights up the room she spoke to Dad with a lot of respect no matter the situation at hand. I never saw or even heard them argue and if they did then none us even knew how, where, what and why. It remained unknown to us all.

THE OPPENING



July 2025 in the midmonth I went for my first high end social event. There were delegates from the local government, African and Europe. This was the first time to promise myself to network with at least three strangers. I had attended very few local events but this I was very curious to the core. I had just stopped working for a monthly salary, started living like an artist that has to wake up each morning and think of ways to bring in income as well as impact lives of those around me. Now this was like an opportunity for me to get more insights and ask as many questions as possible.

At the entrance there was a warm welcoming smile from a beautiful lady. She was brown about 4'3 fit dressed in black with touch of Ankara just like it was noted at the invite letter, she had a little African knitted basket that everyone who had business cards would drop as they enter the venue. Next to her a young man was standing also smiling, I remember his smile reminded me of someone I used to have a crush on unfortunately he died in a car accident before I could even know him better.

The waiter was carrying a tray with mock tail juices nicely arranged and there were still more at a shelf I could spot from far. The venue was decorated with

fine linens with a touch of bright elegant Ankara. I had already looked around and spotted few individuals that I told myself I must approach before the day ends. I might sound very confident now okay yes I am but in that room I was just talking to myself and convincing the anxiety to hold it, I was not ready to give in to fear it was a new beginning for me and I wanted to cherish every moment of it.

I walked in I was five minutes early but I found quiet a number inside as well (they know how to utilize their time). I was looking around at a beautiful drawing that were displayed at a counter on top of each table was a finger buffet of various local snacks dried and plated ready for a bite. I saw another drawing of relatively an old lady walking by the roadside and the other side of the road was a family, a man and a woman with two teenage girls and a young boy carried by the man. These pedestrians were heading the same direction but the old woman was lonely, looking closely I began to recite a poem in my head.



*Whatever lives believes and breaths fire
Endless struggle memories drifts away
Fading warmth and fearless desire
Across the road taking a step day by day
Each morning with dazzling breeze
Soft as sunrise towering the tress*

*In the petals of gold or skies of rose
Slowly glowing and sprouting like a morning dew
The journey is on until we decay
From the ashes we find new shapes of life
Seeking answer how you will be in new self
But in loops of emptiness you dream
At times the path is not safe so you scream
Eventually pilling them into a beam
Hiding the smile the life fades
Take a mile already made
New flame shall rise from even the quite dust.*

This last line of the poem took me back when I was in primary school when we used to walk back home, have our lunch and run back to school which was some kilometers away from home, the flame from quiet dust comes in from the days when mom will prepare the food before she leaves for her errands by the time we got back for lunch the food was not too cold nor too hot, we could take it like that or light up the firewood to warm it up, we had to do it in turns the three of us my cousin Steve who was the eldest sometimes when it was his turn he would delegate or intentionally delay on his way for my nephew Nick and I to do the duty and there was this day I was too occupied that I placed my hand on the ashes trying to create space for the firewood and right inside were tinny drops of fire hidden beneath the calm ashes, the fire was there but the ashes were very still without any signs of burning but despite the calmness, it was very possible to make fire. Let this teach you something,

for me I even forgot how to scream I didn't light that fire my nephew did by just using the same tiny flames and a piece of paper effortlessly.

The last line of the poem was also a favorite piece of my friend Faith who I met at the coastal side, turns out we had a lot in common, she read it from my book of collection of poems and yes this is where it came from. As I was still brushing through my mind and thoughts and ideas of pieces of words to make a whole poem complete for this drawing that I had stared at I didn't know for how long, a voice tapped me back to reality and welcomed me to the venue. A lady was standing next to me just tall as myself with make up on she was glowing her wig was layering restful on her shoulder, she was holding a glass of juice with one hand supported slightly by the other one. She was staring at me as if I was Naomi Campbell waiting to be interviewed.

"Hello I'm Anna, she introduced herself (how noble my mind was talking right at me). I replied and introduced myself. You have been staring at the drawing since you got here, does it remind you of anything?" she asked curiously, well I didn't even notice I was lost that much but yes she was right I just saw how time flies and even the tiny boy who was innocently restful in the dad's arm will turn out just like the old lady and that's if he is fortunate enough to make it that far (there is an outbreak of young people going ahead of the old). I looked at her and told her I

just made a poem about it she was shocked and excited at the same time. “it took me two days and four hours to come up with this piece, but it also a reflection of me” she added putting the glass aside and finding a comfortable place to sit. I followed her we sat and she said “it`s my fault” and she went silent for some seconds. A group of musicians were ushering in the whole congregation with sweet saxophone tunes and voices that seem far beyond this world. Everyone was thrilled laughter and happiness filled the room I could even tell I was in the right place. But I couldn’t concentrate that long provided I was so determined to hear what Anna had to say. What mistake did she do and own it that much to draw such an intruding paint. After a few minutes of music the host was giving a welcoming speech and just giving heads up.

The event was strictly two hours so I knew we didn’t have that much time to catch up and from the look of things she seemed a busy woman. Perhaps I could not succeed in trying to set a meeting with her I was also travelling the following morning so there was no perfect time than that present one, I grabbed a drink and requested her if we could step out before the event kicks off. I was very concerned not only about the drawing but how was it her fault? She looked at me and said “you’re still young I hope this helps you in your life some day when you get a husband, I will be brief. She continued. I was married for 6 years we had our wedding when I was 3 months pregnant with our only son. I wanted to continue with my career so after

a while my ex husband got me a good job. The marriage had its ups and down but the main one was my husband wanted another child, I was so focused with job and I saw this as another trap to render me useless. I had friends too who continually advised me not to give in. As result I did not get intimate with him for months, he was still providing as usual but the love between us gradually faded away. He became very cold and unconcerned about me, he was spending much time either with the boy or out of the house.

I couldn't bare this, so I became furious and any time he came back I would demand to know what he was up to. The constant noise and arguments chased him away. One day when I came back from the church with our son his suitcase and his clothes were missing I checked his documents all of were gone too. I later found out he had bought another apartment and was planning to remarry. He sent me the divorce papers and was ready to share the custody of our son. I lost my home and most importantly the man who gave the life I was always dreaming of. The paint is just an illustration on how lonely I get when I think of them, I wanted a big happy family but now I see myself aging faster and alone with no place to call home and no one to call family. I see my son anytime I request but the child lives with his father and stepmother. She finished by saying, we women should learn how and when to shut up" the look on her face it`s as if she was telling me to stop feeling sorry (I was there looking at her confused and speechless) but yes I was. She was

recovering from all that she also left the job and started her own art shop where she do workshops, lessons and also sell the paints. A loud round of applause came from the room upstairs and we both gazed then walked back she gave me a hug and handed me her business card. She also requested if I could send the poem to her email. Anna was just an example of how women ignore tiny obstacles inside a marriage. Again I am not an expert but from the look of things men can be easy to manipulate but for how long? A happiest woman is she who knows how to play along with words, emotions and personalities. Men have ego and they like to be praised if you stand up to talk to a man as if you are ready for his worse side then you are at the verge of losing him to another woman.

Intimacy; there are a lot of tiny factors that may contribute to lack of intimacy inside a marriage (I don't even know all of them). And the ideal one I am going to talk about is what that not only affects couple but extends to the kids living in the same house. Women naturally pay attention to details or changes in an environment, in this case a family set up. A woman can notice a change with how the husband speaks to her or maybe behave around her but sometimes she can decide not to talk about it and rather put a barrier between them. One of these barriers is intimacy, something most men value, I know that 99% of men who will purchase this book will agree with this part big time. And yes a lot of marriages that fail or

accused of infidelity lack of intimacy becomes the top problem. Men take it as their right like without it this law is violated and we cannot blame them really. This is the challenge; a man that lacks emotional and physical connection with the spouse can begin to isolate himself. The feeling of being undervalued, incapable and frustration creeps up and take the best version of him. This man losses his confidence, thoughts of jealousy maybe he imagines another man somewhere is making his wife satisfied and he is just but a co-parent or roommate to this woman.

The emotional strain can take a toll on his mental health leading to stress, anxiety or even low self-esteem and this can affect how he navigates his roles both as a husband and a father. Children can also pick-up even if unintentionally the emotional cues in the room. Where is such kind of tension or dissatisfaction in the marriage, the man of the house may find it difficult to be present or fully engage as a parent. Additionally he can begin to prioritize other things like work, spending time outside with friends or other activities as a distraction. If less or nothing is done to rebuild the intimacy, a lot can be at stake including the entire family unit.

The mistake; men rarely share their thoughts, experiences or even the feelings unlike women we talk a lot and we are left with less pain to deal with. At some point men who end up sharing may also feel vulnerable in the presence of their spouses but this is

very crucial and love goes both way if you can't stand his dark side then why agree to marry him in the first place? There are more of the mistakes men make from seeking pleasure outside marriage, allowing themselves to be looked down upon and not prioritizing mental health and self-confidence.

The lesson; life is a journey so is marriage, the boredom catches up with each living being at a given time in life but that should not be the excuse. Nurturing intimacy can involve creating a safe environment filled with trust, transparency (forget honesty!) love and mutual respect. Supporting and celebrating each other's wins and success is also crucial. Showing appreciation and gratitude for each other's efforts and contribution to the well being of the family can also go along way. Establish a family tradition maybe weekly engaging in night games or any other unique activities, plan for dates once or twice a month have open conversations (the list is endless please do not focus on the least you've done at least add more). Be creative just so that your man feels wanted, valued and loved.

The challenge; lack of personal time; this applies across all the parents both Mom and Dad who work tirelessly to meet the needs of the family, on the contrary the men still suffer this consequence the most. Numerous responsibilities arise once a family is in the picture and a man is expected to take care of the family without failures. Planning for the future,

ensuring the kids get education, healthcare facilities, sorting out their daily expenses amongst other significant needs. All this weighed upon a Father, without proper care for his health his life begins to revolve around the kids and the need to provide for them in the verge of losing himself as a person.

Some research had found out that one of the reasons women live longer than men is as a result of societal pressure. Men neglect their own health focusing more on providing for their families than on self care. A quick example that I would always notice when I visit a SPA is out of ten clients in that room there is either one man or none. And sometimes the man is there to pick up the spouse or waiting for her. Another simple reason is during the offers for screening like cervical and prostate cancer screening normally offered at least yearly by various health care facilities which a very noble gesture that people should always take advantage of, ninety percent will be women and young ladies.

The information obviously can be well articulated but for a man to think that such can be of importance as providing for the family is where they draw the line. The women however know and are aware that this is also part of a healthy living. To top it up this part of my Dad`s life I wanted to narrate it later towards the end of this book but again some of his problems begun here, he neglected his own life. I just mentioned one of the deadliest diseases and it the same that was eating

my Dad up from nobody knows when. I remember one evening my mother received a call from my elder sister (she lived in the city, different street) that Dad had a severe head ache that could not go to work that day. She only found out after passing by Dad`s work place and she was told he called to ask for a sick off. He did not call any of the family members, he never wanted to worry anyone, he never went for check up, instead he said it was just a headache, he drinks water and rest the next morning when he wakes up strong his work life continued.

This part raise a lot of emotions from my side, my Dad`s health was the least of his problems, I remember few months after this on and off headaches he was better, this is the time that one of my sisters had also lost her husband (she had a son). And Dad insisted that she should move back to the city to live with him. It was during the holidays so I was there too, another sister was also in the same house including our only brother who had joined high school and was living with Dad now. Not even a single day was I able to see him rest. I would see my Dad for less than thirty minutes each day from Monday to Sunday. He would drop to check if we are okay and head back to back, I later came to realize that he took two jobs that demanded most of his time. He was working both night and day time with very minimal breaks. He hardly slept, he hardly spent time with himself or even us in the house, he so tightly help up that he couldn't visit Mum frequently as he used to.

The lesson; just like any other human being Fathers also have a sense of identity outside his role as a parent or partner. They also have hobbies, passions or goals that they need and should bring forth in their day to day lives. In the contrary when this is suppressed over time it results to loss of individuality.

When self-expression is no longer there, when self awareness is not in the picture, when personal health and self care is missing in the descriptions of life requirements, when intimacy has lost its taste, when what is termed as happy family is the real life burden one have carry every single ground he steps on, when the societal norms and pressure have all eyes staring at you watching your little spotlight of what life has offered you, when the whole household cries in your name all day long, when the day turn to dusk and looking up to a better dawn. A father is a father, a father is a husband, a father is the source let us make their lives enjoyable when we can.

CHAPTER EIGHT

BEST MEMORIES OF FATHERHOOD

There is a world of wonderful memories that a father can create, experience, and cherish with his children—or even with one child, if we choose to be brief. Referring back to a study on fathers, one dad mentioned speaking Swahili to his son who was barely minutes old. Years later, that same son grew up speaking fluent Swahili and proudly told others that his father taught him the language, even though they did not live in Kenya.

One day I went to visit a cousin of mine he was not feeling well, more reason why I had to drop by his place. He had a wife and two adorable kids a son and a daughter. I got curious and asked him how he would describe his kids and of course the best memories with them. He smiled warmly, clearly filled with joy, especially when speaking about his daughter. Fathers and daughters, it seems, never truly say goodbye how she was so appreciative and loving in unexpected ways. He narrated how he got surprised by his daughter the previous night after being discharged from the hospital. He was taking a nap to rest off and when he opened his eyes there was a drawing placed

just near the pillows. The drawing had a man-like stricture with numerous heart drawings painted in different colors and a note just beneath it reading, “YOU ARE THE BEST DADDY IN THE WHOLE WORLD”(how did she even know about the other Dads in the whole world?) and she wrote her name next to the note.

This may sound or rather seem so simple but it made this man happy when they say it is the simple things in life that matters (even anyone who have read Atomic Habits can testify) he was always talking about how his daughter is his best friend. The son was not left behind either that same night after dinner he received another surprise from the son. It has been a ritual of my cousin reading bedtime stories but not this time when I could barely hold up himself. The son walked into the room and told him “Daddy today it is my turn to read you the story before sleeping” (how did even thought of that, little genius). A lot of parents oversee and underestimate the magic creativity and love that come from their kids, when they could just pay close attention to the energy the kids bring.

Some of my best memories with my father came to me years after his death and obviously I was young to even notice what was going on. As much as he was the workaholic kind of a Dad, he utilized the little time to bond and to express his love fully. He worked for a Chinese company and these people were living closer to their premise, they were very friendly. Once in a

while my siblings would drop me there when maybe they had engagements and I would spend time with the Chinese kids. They taught me how to ride a bicycle (maybe they taught their language too I just don't remember). The days I lived with Dad just the two of us he would wake up prepare the breakfast, sometimes he would sneak off work during lunch hour to come check on and it was a very beautiful time and just so I remember he was very caring Dad.

My Dad was an artist he could sketch up something, color it and make it look adorable. He also used to journal a lot but I did not know all of that till two years later after his demise. According to our culture and norms after someone has departed his or her belongings are to be distributed among the family, relatives or friends and the rest that is not useful to be burnt just to ensure we are letting them go and rest in peace. There was this time I just came from hospital and that same day my mother was up to the task of getting rid of what is not useful from my Dad's suitcase, I offered to help.

I got a watch it wasn't an ordinary watch, this particular one was crafted from sterling silver with lustrous patina featuring refined brushed finish showcasing a master piece edition. It is like one of the watches you see once in a blue moon and get stuck in your head like you've always had or maybe you've had it before in your past life. He used to wear this watch all the time it was one of a kind I was lost for a

second, my mother started complaining but again it also one of the tough time and I saw how she was struggling not to let me see how hurt she was. When my mother stood up to take away the load of things to be burnt a book dropped, it was the journal my Dad had I picked it and decided to keep it. And in there I got the amazing and the best memory I had with him. I came across this picture he drew of me, and at some point I had forgotten about what had happened that particular time but the drawing looked so fresh and reflected all the memories of that fateful day. That day he did not go to work (it was a off day I guess). Then neighbor next door was hosting a birthday party for one of her sons, she gave us a challenge and we were on a dance battle then the crowd was to choose the winner but each round the loser was to step out because we were many. After several trials we remained only two my friend and I and the crowd cheered for her so she won the battle.

I was not happy I thought I did my best, I was even overconfident about winning but unfortunately I lost to my best friend. I got angry I stepped out and I was crying but I had tears coming out of my left eye the other one was as dry as grandma`s biscuits when she forgot the butter. He was just coming back from the shop he looked at me without saying anything but he couldn't hold his laughter. He let the laughter out like a bubbling volcano as he rushed inside to get his journal. I sat down to calm myself so I can go back for the cake, my Dad came back with his book and he

asked me to keep still without moving. All this time when he was drawing he kept on laughing at me, he made it seem so funny that I ended laughing with him as well (ooh dear). Just Below the drawing, he wrote: *“My little dancer, keep trying until your tune does it for yourself, not for them.”* At the time, I did not understand why he wrote those words, right now the same dance puts food on my table he clearly saw it, may every father cherish each moment with their children it`s such a blessing no one wishes to miss.

The current times people are caught up in their daily lives trying to keep up with inflations and economic demands but this should not be the reason you miss out on important days of spending time with your family especially the children.

Children grow quickly. If you wait for the perfect time, it may come too late. Before you know it, they lock themselves in their rooms, your presence irritates them, and they crave distance. They may say, “I love you, Dad,” yet see you only as a hero working tirelessly for their comfort. Some parents cannot recall their child’s birthday, favorite meal, color, or the last time they shared a meaningful conversation.

Spending even a minute a day with your children can leave a permanent mark on their hearts one that lasts a lifetime.

Play video games with them. Explore hobbies together. Go shopping and learn their clothing preferences so you can surprise them later. Create routines for bonding. Ask about new words they use and where they learned them. Be involved, friendly, curious, and playful. Make decisions together. Initiate difficult conversations. Let their lives be your concern.

Create memories. You will thank me later.

CHAPTER NINE

FATHERHOOD EVOLUTION

Exploring the evolution of fatherhood may initially seem out of context, but it allows us to understand how these changes have influenced families, relationships, and even the identity of fatherhood itself in modern society. Fatherhood has undergone remarkable transformations, moving beyond the traditional image of a distant provider to an emotionally present and actively involved figure in family life.

THE ROLES



In the late 1980s and early 1990s, fathers were largely viewed as disciplinarians rather than nurturers. While mothers were seen as natural caregivers and emotional anchors for children, fathers were believed to embody strictness and authority and were often emotionally unavailable in their children's lives.

Fathers were primarily regarded as providers, spending long hours at work to support their families. Although they carried the responsibility of provision,

emotional expressions of affection were uncommon and sometimes even perceived as a sign of weakness. Parenting was largely considered the mother's domain.

Beyond their role as breadwinners, fathers were often distant yet authoritative figures. While some challenged these norms, this perception remained dominant across many societies.

THE SHIFT



From the late 1990s into the early 2000s, fatherhood began to shift as gender roles evolved and societies embraced new family dynamics. The societal views and expectations on gender changed where both parents were seen mutual partners with equal rights in parenting. Fathers were also encouraged to be emotionally present and actively engaging in their children's lives.

There were more discussions and introduction of paternity leave policies that emerged enabling fathers to spend more time with their newborns.

The rise of work-life balance deliberations led to more fathers getting involved in their children's lives, they began being more present showing them love, comforting them, attending school events and sharing everyday parenting duties.

Gradually, fathers became more involved in household responsibilities and shifting away from traditional gender roles. Hopefully fathers are no longer confined to rigid definitions but could be inclusive as well as adaptable to diversification in fatherhood.

THE CONTEMPORARY



In the present day, fatherhood is more diverse and flexible than ever before. Fathers are increasingly immersed in raising their children, embracing affectionate interactions and forming meaningful emotional bonds. Many also step into fatherhood roles for children who are not biologically theirs, providing guidance, stability, and love as father figures.

Shared parenting responsibilities have become the new norm in many households with fathers taking on roles that once seen solely considered exclusively maternal—changing diapers, feeding infants, preparing meals, and even styling their daughters' hair—while also being mindful of their own mental well-being, an area that still requires greater attention.

Social media and internet have given fathers access to parenting communities allowing them to exchange experiences and seek advice. Not to mention, fathers are challenging outdated norms proving that love, care

and emotional intelligence are vital components of their role as parents.

THE HORIZON



The future of fatherhood promises to be even more dynamic, shaped by evolving societal values and rapid technological advancements. Work-life balance is likely to improve with work arrangements, enabling fathers to be more present in their children's lives. AI powered parenting tools and virtual engagement platforms may allow fathers to remain present in the lives of their children regardless of the distance.

The emotional growth of fatherhood will also expand, with fathers prioritizing mental and emotional well-being not just for their kids but for them too.

THE EVOLUTION



Looking back to the 1980s and 1990s within the Luo community, cultural traditions placed fathers primarily in the role of providers. They were responsible for meeting basic family needs, making key decisions regarding land, disciplining children, and passing down wisdom through storytelling and mentorship. Mothers, on the other hand, ensured that children were

fed, clothed, and taught essential life skills such as farming, cooking, and social etiquette.

In polygamous homesteads, the first wife (*Mikayi*) served as the matriarch, guiding co-wives and overseeing household affairs. Apart from her house being strategically built at far end of the homestead facing the entrance, Mikayi also played a central role of maintaining harmony amongst the co-wives and their children and ensuring a peaceful coexistence in the family. In any occasion if Mikayi was not able to handle the situation that is when that is when their husband will be involved to solve the dispute. This clearly narrates that fathers especially who were polygamous had limited time bonding or just spending time with their children unless there was a special occasion.

In the mean time all the boys would gather and dine with their father inside his private chamber whereas the girls would stay with their mothers as they help with house chores and cooking.

The increase of economic pressure over the years forced the fathers to seek and take up other roles beyond traditional jobs like farming and fishing. Many also sought employment in urban or developed areas. On the contrary fathers that earn lower income still and often struggle to balance work and family life, as this comes by taking up roles that consume much of

their time in order to meet up with the family expectations and expenses.

Due some changes in social norms like education, women empowerment enabled the mothers to start working and contribute to the support and sharing of responsibilities for the family. Not to mention the rising cost of living and household expenses that often require dual income for sustainability.

A parent and I mean every single parent would always want the best for their children and for the same reason there some scenario where a man grow up from a poor family where he could barely survive but end up to give a family of his own the best life ever. Maybe the struggles were the source of inspiration to aim higher in life (it should be anyway). Furthermore, it is the need and dedication to wanting a better life for the family that many fathers ought to get themselves all caught up with work ending up being an absent parent (who do we blame?).

THE NORMS



I recently came across an Instagram page of a young woman sharing some of the conversations she had with the dad and they both seemed happy and close in the videos, which I find very interesting and necessary because it loosen up the burden of parent wanting to

know what is going on in their children`s. I also understand that there is a certain age that children tend to gate keep and explore some important areas in their lives without the knowledge or involvement of their parents as it should be.

This lady was a good example of how I would have been with my dad if he was still here but the reason why I brought this up is because back then girls were somehow forbidden to come close to their fathers or rather avoid physical touch especially while approaching adolescent age. It is like girls could not hug their fathers nor the boys hug their mothers. (it is completely different now right?).

A girl was considered a passive asset, when she is of age they marry her off and get dowry as a replacement whereas the boy would be the kin to inherit the father`s land and take charge of their lineage. This type of parenting was barely allowing any child especially females to bond and connect with their fathers.

There are many factors tied up to the evolvement in fatherhood and parenting at large, but most important thing is fathers can now be part of children`s lives be it financially, physical, emotionally name it. There was huge barrier between parents and their children especially of opposite gender and maybe a lot was going into a miss. However, as modernization and urbanization took root some traditional parenting roles

began to shift. Families moved to cities weakening the extended family structure that somehow contributed to parenting roles. Parents are now exposed to the diversity and global parenting styles. This was largely contributed by use of social media and technology. Now that a lot has been happening in the technology field, there is a need for the parents to be cautious in following the right family structure and parenting techniques for the family. If one side is over looked onto to the other, there might be bigger problem to be dealt with in the near future. A combination of preserving a positive side of traditional parenting with a proper embracement of modern parenting should be a starting point (a tree without roots is as well as dead).

According to some reports shared in the media regarding one of the largest informal settlements in Nairobi, Kibra is one of the well known slums that have become a home to many including young fathers who are out navigating the complexities of early parenthood.

While teenage pregnancies is often discussed and campaigns raised to create awareness and fight against young girls becoming mothers, adolescent fathers also face their unique struggles (many of which go unnoticed).

Some parents accept the fate their children had driven themselves to stating that they could barely provide

for proper shelter, the houses at the slum are smaller and when the children grow they tend to lack privacy as parents. They search for a separate house for adolescent children but this comes with minimal supervision from the parents. Falling into peer pressure, young fathers get involved in sexual acts without proper knowledge of the possible outcomes before you know it a boy is raising a child. The child needs to feed, basics, clothes, medication and the child grows responsibilities expands.

The young men often grapple with financial instability, societal stigma and the pressure to provide for their children despite limited opportunities. Some are forced to drop out of school, while others take on informal jobs to support and sustain their families. Just like any other father would strive to work hard in order to see their families happy is the same way the adolescent fathers wake up each day in search of work. But in the slums where poverty is widespread like a virus, these challenges are magnified making fatherhood an uphill battle.

I met a young a father of approximately twenty two years old, he had a shop and his story is not that different from the adolescent fathers. But for him after dropping out of campus when he realized he was going to be a father, he spent the money he had to buy stock. His business grew I only met him when he was almost opening his new mini supermarket and now he is father of a baby girl. He is still running his first

shop and now a mini supermarket. He said “you start by accepting your fate then you think ahead, I personally imagined myself as a Dad and that’s how I kicked off.”

I do not want to talk about the fathers who deny their children even before they are brought to this world (maybe in my next book) but we have to appreciate the ones who have stepped out of their comfort zone to ensure their children never lacks.

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE



This is a very inclusive entity that taps different kind of people all over the world, I had no plans to talk about it anyway but for a moment I thought about the men who are abused in their marriages and chose not to keep silent. Maybe some of them are not even aware that it is happening to them.

This doesn't have to be fully a physical abuse but this can be inflicted emotionally or maybe people are gradually forgetting the meaning of GBV. The fact that it is always a representation of both genders paired as female/male, girl/boy, woman/man, wife/husband, girlfriend/boyfriend, mother/father, a little has been done to the male victims compared to ladies. It encompasses physical, sexual, economic, psychological and emotional abuse, women speaks

more about this than the other gender. The society now turns a blind to other side and they are alone suffering in silence and some are not even aware that it is happening to them. There have more cases reported on femicide than genocide which is still painful situation, talking about it as a lady raises a lot of emotions and talking about this after signing a petition stating “FEMICIDE IS A CRIME” I wonder why it took this long. Many have lost their lives but this is not a topic for today. After some research and just asking around from male friends and fathers I realized men suffer a lot as well but they are not even aware and most perpetrators are their intimate partners.

First it starts as a joke, they just get angry push you aside so hard that you get hurt or walk out on an important conversation, kicking your foot off the path angrily. Soon things start getting physical, sometimes they block the exit, break some valued personal items like phone, before you can figure out what the hell is happening sharp objects are out for use. Just like a video went viral on tiktok a young man speaking out how his girlfriend stubbed him not once not twice but almost each time they will have an argument, and one of the reason is when this man asks her whereabouts the late night calls from other men. According him he still believed that it was all for love (some people need intervention and proper cleansing).

Sexual harassment, assault and exploitation may still be under the waters as male victims often struggle with shame, depression and post traumatic disorder. In some cases men can be carried away with societal norms and get clouded with fear of stigma or legal systems that fail to recognize male victims. Understanding how men experience GBV is essential but again it is not an easy thing to be noticed. A good example comes from the economic abuse where some men face financial control from their partners due to traditional gender roles. This is limiting their independence and ability to express themselves fairly and freely. The most crucial part to emphasize on is the emotional abuse that can also be inflicted in a manner it can be difficult to discern.

To begin with manipulation where the violation comes with emotional threat or acts that force for attention when the demand is not necessary at that time. Sometimes they use a child as a source of threats and so on. Humiliation is another key issue on emotional abuse that often goes unnoticed and even some perpetrators may also not be aware that they are inflicting an abuse. It can be done publicly in the presence of the kids or family members or at a restaurant and sometimes it can be done through isolation. They can use your body physique to describe you or compare you to your friends or a family member that looks better than you. Gradually you start withdrawing yourself cut the friends off and stay

isolated feeling bad about the way you look, ‘*Hit the gym*’.

Intimidation has been given a cover up “silent treatment” the unpredictable mood swings, threats, raising voices when it’s not that necessary, refusing to accept or take responsibilities for their actions these are some of ways some women emotionally abuse their partners. I understand as a woman that we like four cycles in a month and some men are not even aware but do not use these to your advantage causing intimidation or any kind of abuse the man(if something feels off find a way to talk about it)

It is not a walking path recognizing these patterns but a man in this case a father should step up and claim his power. The society currently is over sharing how ladies should speak for themselves to an extreme we end up being too fearless and disrespectful to the men in our lives. Claiming power as the man of the house is crucial that also initiate clear communication on the unwanted behaviors and prolonged use of occurrences. Another way a man can save himself after noticing these deeds is simply avoid it but in marriage sometimes it might end but at least a visit to a professional can also be of help.

Some men bring all these problems to themselves by not doing a background check before settling for marriage, takes me back to the parenting and upbringing like I mentioned embracing both

traditional and modern can be a life time savior. For instance it is well known and still practiced in some communities here in Kenya that a man must pay a visit to the kinsmen of the lady he intend to marry, do a background then the rest continues depending on the agreement. But truth be told men use shortcuts sometimes you end marrying a woman who is still battling with some childhood trauma that you know nothing about and you begin to regret and maybe pin it on every beautiful girl you see walking around. Emotional intelligence should one of the qualities when looking for a long life partner.

There are still more under the carpet about GBV and the impact it brings to the lives parents and their children. A voice must be heard, a feeling must manifest, an action must be taken, a solution is crucial, self awareness is necessary, a journey of seeking solution must begin, support is needed, a remedy must be found, mental health must be a priority it starts with you, the way you put yourself out as a mother as a father that is what the children read, observe and retain.

Mothers be good to the fathers because they need to be mentally fit to provide and cater for you and the children (sometimes just shut up, one or two words are enough, men respond to distance, they are more creative in silence let them figure out the problem and when they bend forward to fix give them that room< take rest and look good as woman) they hide away

from the endless noise, running to bar and having side chicks because there is no peace at home. (I forgot to mention this as one of the emotional abuse) (tigawana, werigo, nyamaza).

**A society that focuses on healing its boys and men
will stop burying its girls and women.**

CHAPTER TEN

HIS LAST DAYS

I never thought that one day I would have to narrate, or even remember, the events surrounding the last moments of my father. Those memories were buried with him, but I later came to realize that I never took the aftercare needed to heal the wounds and let them go. I am obviously not the first child to lose a father, nor will I be the last, but his demise marked my first encounter with death itself, my first time seeing a lifeless body. It sounds strange, I know.

I had attended few funerals in the neighborhood but I never moved an inch close to the coffin maybe I didn't even know how someone would look like inside a casket I wasn't ready to discover either.

Earlier in this book, I suggested that men should prioritize their health and wellbeing, what happened to him was so excruciating and I do not wish such to happen to any man. He was so focused on providing for the family that he ignored his own health. I had noticed some changes in his physique but never occurred too serious, he still appeared strong and jovial from the outside but deep down something was eating him up slowly from the inside, he could feel it

but he chose to play hard. Few months passed with constant news of him being sick, for the first time in my life I heard that he went to the hospital. We even made a joke about it and he laughed like nothing was wrong as a matter of facts he was forced by my sisters. The results from the numerous tests he took were clearly not pointing to something harmful and he got bored by the frequent visits and he chose not to involve anyone anymore. I had just done my rehearsals for my KCPE final exams in primary school. He was living alone in the city my brother had joined high school and of course everyone thought all was good. He assured the rest of the family that he was getting better and no need to any further tests (we believed him). He was a wise one he never begged for attention maybe he knew whatever was eating him wasn't going to stop no matter what was to be done, It's as if he accepted his fate.

After the rehearsals came intense last-minute revisions and preparations for the final exams. I was completely caught up in school—teachers rushing through syllabuses, endless revisions. I heard less from him and that was normal. Just a day to my kickoff day news came in that he was admitted to a hospital and he remained there for two days and later on my mother and sisters had decided to move him back home where they could keep an eye on him. Still nothing seem serious I was even happier that finally I had to spend time with both my parents every single day in one roof. He was looking so pale but he charmed everyone

with a smile and words of wisdom and his voice was still strong sending out a message (“I just need a nap, no need to worry”) always played to be the strong man(again we believed him).

Being that tiny I couldn’t even tell whether he was really suffering from something serious or it’s just how people look after being admitted to a hospital. My sisters were visiting frequently and they would have small private meetings with Mum, I was busy preparing for my papers not feeling any elephant under the carpet. I wrote my last paper and ran back home it was around noon he always had his lunch by noon, he insisted that I should eat with him. That day we had a long chat I was still in my uniforms he asked the grades I was expecting, and he told me that I should have the uniforms on for rest of the day because I was graduating and he was celebrating (we laughed, we whispered mom would ask why I still have them on, the he said “if she asks you tell her to come get the answer from me”) he was tired still playing to be strong (I believed him and hoped for better days). He said that learning never stops, I was just getting started (it sounded like bullshit, what a joke, I thought for myself how could he say that? at his age was he still learning?)

My father loved books. He read widely and enjoyed sharing Bible stories and words of wisdom, all his words were still alive and fresh but his own health was deteriorating, his condition worsening a day after the

other. Attempts to take him back to hospital were in vain and by then my family already knew that his cancer stage was deadly and a little could be done and there was no guarantee of survival especially after surgery. He decided to spend the rest of his days bed ridden at his home, he would eat and sleep maybe take his medicine but he could barely walk by himself he needed all the help we could offer but even at this he still played independent and maybe just wanted mum to do all the helping part (maybe he was just feeling like he is a burden).

I could tell how serious his health was not only from how he was draining each day but also from the frequent private meetings my sisters used to hold with mum, I was worried but that's all I could do nothing more, maybe serving him breakfast and lunch sometimes he would refuse to take dinner, maybe all I could do is sit and listen to him talk but he wasn't laughing anymore his face grew sad gradually, maybe all I could do is to make sure his favorite shirt was ironed just the way he liked it, maybe all I could do is clean up his space and hand over the bible to him, maybe all I could do is pray and hope for his recovery which seemed mission impossible and when seconds turned to minutes into hours into days into weeks and months he was still holding on to little strength he had left. All this affected him emotionally, spiritually, physically, mentally (name it). He was no longer the jovial man I knew, he would eat, sleep, less talk or no

word to anyone maybe sometimes he would talk to mum but for seconds and that became the new normal. There were financial strains in the family as well trying to keep up with his daily maintenance and medication and that delayed my enrollment to high school, he became furious and hostile, he wanted to be left alone unbothered. I used to peep and I would see him cry silently but if I walk in he would pretend to be asleep. He started mastering every single step and he would know who was approaching the room even before you get there (strange right?) we were shocked he could call you by your name just from the footstep even before he could see you.

There was this night where one of my sisters, Jane she was like my second mum she had already sorted how I would join high school one of the nearest best day schools around, because time had passed and there were no signs of any better days for me to join a school of my choice. We were all happy, immediately I was preparing to get to school my admission was already out, that same day after diner we were chilling at the living room my cousin Grace my nephew Niko, my brother Paul, my sisters, mom and myself having some random stories and family time were my favorites. I stood and imitated how one of my aunties was walking she had a serious accident that almost took her life but she got lucky but it affected one of her legs. And she was a funny one, she could also make her walking style funny just to get our attention or make us laugh at her. She is like one of those

aunties you can never be bored when they are around so sometimes she would walk to make people laugh or change the tone of her voice to make think she is someone else or sometimes when she visited and stayed she would pretend to be sick just to have one of us drive with her back to her place only to realize it was a play. I did the same everyone laughed loud at the walk then my brother made a joke on how I was growing tall beyond my age, they all laughed out loud, another joke came in I was called by my nickname (I had a comeback for this one) and the laughter went on and on.

Dad woke up or maybe he was listening all this while but the shocking part was how he screamed and yelled at us with heart piercing and painful words “I am here laying half dead and you guys have the guts to sit down and have fun.” The whole room went numb (a true definition of a moment of silence), it felt as if we were okay with or without him, or maybe he wished to be there to enjoy every bit of it, or maybe he wanted us to know and realize how blessed and favored we were and we should have been grateful for it that none of us was in his place instead, or maybe finally he was losing it. His words welcomed a long silence in the room, everyone had different reaction to what he said one by one people left the living room without saying a word I was still standing I stood there watching everyone leave for bed, I looked around and I was alone I was hurting inside I found myself crying then my nephew came back to check on me we left together

to our room still no words just eye contacts nothing more.

The following day was my first day at the school (they call it “fresher”)the tailor didn’t do me any justice, not only was I having everything new on me but the size were as if I will wear the uniform till my forth year. As tiny as I was the uniform covered almost every part of me (later on two months down the line I took the uniforms for adjustment I know someone can relate).

I was cold inside still wondering the events of the previous night, I didn’t talk to anyone apart from the lady who was seated next to me and the teachers who were keen enough to notice me, guys were looking at me but my mind was travelling elsewhere, it was crazy I felt like a wild flower under the danger of all the creatures living in the forest, some girls were jealous reasons were known to themselves, I did not serve lunch I sat in the class till it was time to return home where I wasn’t even sure how the mood would be. My mind turned into a battle field here I was finally in another level of my education, I should be celebrating, or maybe just be happy and focus, rush the notes to catch up with the rest of class, enjoy the new environment, make new friends, study hard, have a timetable ready but no I never stopped thinking about the situation at home. There was no difference but laughing was prohibited this came from mom saying anyone how wanted to laugh should step outside and away from Dads room, we all agreed not to upset him

anymore just trying to adjust to the changes, it was horrible (and I was the funniest but I couldn't beat my niece Melvin who happens to be my look-alike) idling without making jokes was hard for us we couldn't cope up so we would go to the next neighboring compound let all the jokes out and innocently come back as if nothing and all he knew I don't how, it's as if he had eyes outside.

The class also became my new stage and safe space to do all the funny moves laugh and once I was home no more fun, the classmates had already made friends and I made one my desk mate became my best friend for rest of the years, Agatha, she helped me updating the notes and also teaching me the part that I missed out, she was such a true friend have never had another like her. She was short or maybe I was the tallest one, chocolate just like me, as tiny as myself, I made fun of her round shaped head any time we were having the funny moments or when I just wanted to piss her off, and she would reply "ibor ka chieth okinyi" wuuueh..., she was smart, she would be goofy sometimes but we had more book time and I was very happy to be her friend, she had my locker's spare key and I had hers too I found comfort in her presence.

She became my support system I remember we were the only ladies in physics class I must say she was the reason I did it even though it was one of my favorites at times I was tempted to drop it, Agatha was there for me, she would visit me at home as well helping each

other with class work revisions, she liked biology, I liked chemistry but we both liked physics, she became part of my family. Her story was different she had lost her a Dad two years earlier but she was there for me. We were bullied sometimes we would hide get scared sometimes cry over it then laugh at each again, this went on until I was elected to be the school head girl and then we had to enjoy all the power, that day after the election we celebrated it was like a freedom for the two tiny friends. She was my legal advisor and everything we did together, the best memories I remember it was during a talent show day well I was modeling, dancing and rapping but she was to sing a song and the original song had two artists I stepped in for her on the stage and it was a remarkable moment she won or rather we carried the day, I was not a good singer but she made me be one. Her absence would definitely ruin my day and vice versa I have never met someone like her again (maybe I will but not yet).

Few weeks had gone into my new life in high school, I was learning and catching up well enough, the school was breaking for mid-term. I went home with good results (unbelievable right?) thanks to Agatha but I kept the results to myself the focus was elsewhere and I had to accept. I was determined to do better, so I went to the library for the first time since my admission, I asked for some past papers and other revision materials. The librarian looked me she was wondering why a new student who just joined high school is already asking for past paper (well I had

promised myself to come back and top the class) and it happened over time and again and yes it feels good to be there.

Over the weekend things seemed normal, the man of the house was just at peace having his meals on time and taking his medication which he had complained were becoming very bitter.

On a Tuesday evening of 24 April 2012, he requested for liver to be served as his dinner with ugali or an option of overcooked rice then sweet potatoes and tea with an option porridge the following morning, which was pretty strange because it was unlike him to order breakfast prior he would wake up with different cravings and that's what we were familiar with. But it gave us easy time than ever, we didn't have to wait for him to wake up before he could say what he wanted to eat, so we already had his menu, he was gentle when I served him the dinner he gave me a warm smile which I thought was a trap, after dinner he asked for his medication and by 6:30 pm the man of the house was sleeping like a baby he was snoring that's how we used to know when he is fully resting. That same night after dinner I couldn't sleep it was as if I took some ant-sleep pills, so was my best friend who was my nephew Nick he was still in primary school but he looked after me like a big brother. My brother, my cousin Grace and Melvin(Nick's sister) had already slept, Nick and I sat outside watching the skies there was a full moon and it was bright outside, we were

talking about Dad's health, we were trying to just figure out what was happening to him including the part of swollen shoulder which was growing into a shape of human head (strange right? That was horrible it had a baby-shaped head falling off his left shoulder I don't even wish to describe it, it freaks me out.... who knows the damages it was causing from inside to a point nothing could be done). I only came to see such thing when I was watching a movie "the substance" which was a just a movie. He would scream in pain, sometimes groan heavily none of us could have imagined the pain he was going through, we sat outside just trying to wonder what could have happened, was is because of chemicals from the company he worked for, or maybe this thing was ever since it was too late to cure, was it a curse, all we could do was to sit there and wonder when he was the only one who carried all that pain inside him, and that was a justification enough for the change of his moods couple of time.

Nick got tired and he went to bed, it was around 1:00 am I couldn't stay outside alone reasons best known to me and those who have lived in the village. Still up I took my physics and Math past papers, timed myself 40 minutes 20 questions for each paper. By 2:00 am I was exhausted I rested my head on the books and I went off. Then I had some movement I thought it was already morning, I checked the watch it was 3:00 am I was only gone for an hour but it felt like 8 hours, I opened the door and saw Mom she had changed the

Dad`s beddings because he was bleeding from the swollen head-like thing. I rushed out to see if she needed a hand but she was so concerned why the lights were still on from the room and why I haven`t slept, that left me with no choice than to go in and try or pretend to be a sleep. The lights were off but not my ears, I could hear Dad talking to Mom but nothing was coming out clear I felt easy again and slept off.

By 6:00 am I was up Mom was already washing the beddings she had soaked earlier I had to wake Nick up to help in preparing breakfast for Dad and the rest. Grace also helped to tidy up the rooms before we serve his breakfast he was resting just there silently observing everything both inside and out he even asked if I was the one making his breakfast (which of course I was and I served it earlier because I knew he didn`t sleep the whole night so I thought it would have been better for him to have something to eat before he went back to his sleep), another killer smile from him he said he was not yet hungry but asked me to leave it there.

Mom had summoned my uncle and they were still talking outside I got curious went inside to check on him and I found him struggling to breathe, it was as if something was holding his breath, he was pretending when he saw me he tried to smile but it wasn`t working, I freaked out then he signaled me to move closer and I sat the edge of the bed looking at him in the eyes he could barely maintain the eye contact, it

was as if he was hiding something, or he was battling with death itself or he asked for one extra second to speak, he then held my hand with his left hand and the right one could barely move he tried to raise his right arm but failed, then whispered some words I couldn't even trace, it seemed like a prayer or he was asking for something on my behalf but that was what I could imagine.

His hands were so cold, my body was craving for a heavy warm jacket but I couldn't I was partly numb, I couldn't even open my mouth at this point he was looking at me in the eyes. I had a lot to ask but nothing came out his right hand went down completely but the left one held me tightly his breaths were slower and longer (I don't if you get this.... it was very slow but took long to come by). Immediately Mom and uncle walked in, they asked me to step outside I was still numb then I was dragged out and they went back inside. Nick came and sat next to me I still couldn't utter a word at this point even a blind person could sense some danger. In less than five minutes Mom ran outside letting out a loud traditional chants and screams summoning the living and the dead yet of another loss on the living side and a gain to the ancestral rein.

It was the 25th day of April, 2012 at 8:00 am he was no more.

*This book is written in loving memory of my late father,
Mr. Hezekia Akeng'o Danga AKA Ja India*