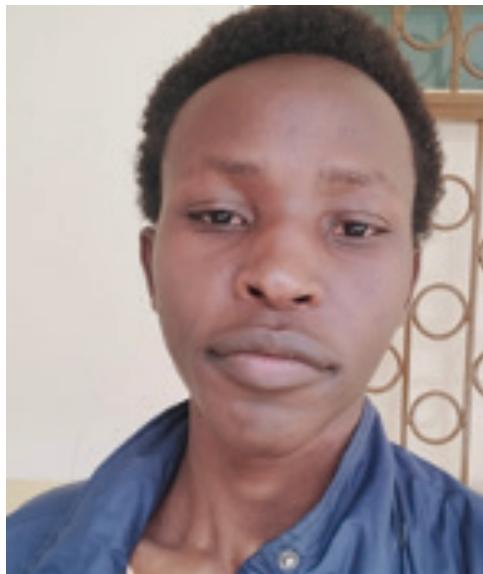


Our life testament

by Lucas Mwangi



My brother, Joseph, and I were born in Naivasha, Kenya. Our mother passed away in 2011, when Joseph was just 6 years, and I was almost 10. Joseph's memories of our childhood prior to our mother's passing are somewhat unclear. Our mother was exceptionally beautiful, kind, loving, and industrious. She worked at a flower farm, and although there were times when we went to bed hungry, she always found a way to comfort us. Our mother was incredibly generous. She often sought out those in need, sharing whatever little she had.

We have an older half-sister, Jacinta, who occasionally visited us. Jacinta lived with her father in Limuru, and my memories of her are rather limited. Our mother was quite secretive about her origins, including her family background and our father's identity.

Before her death, she was in a hospital and we lived in Mji wa Neema children's home. Her passing was a significant

emotional blow for us; Joseph would often cry and we would comfort each other. We continue to miss her dearly. At times, I find myself pondering how different our lives might have been had she still been with us. After her death, we moved into the children's home officially. Upon our arrival at the home, we found it easy to integrate with the other children, as they knew us and had known our mother. The children had visited our home periodically when our mother was around, so we were acquainted with nearly everyone before joining the home. Joseph was particularly adored by everyone.

In the home, I shared duties with the other children, under the direction of Julia, the matron, who was like a mother to us. Her warmth and love endeared her to everyone, and her cooking skills were much appreciated. Julia was not only a nurturing figure, but

also an exemplary role model, providing guidance and discipline when necessary.

Some of my most cherished memories were created in the company of Margo and Judy. Together, we explored new cuisines, including the introduction of peanut butter, spaghetti and ice cream. Judy brought funds from her friends to buy us new clothes and shoes. Although I struggled to keep up with their rapid conversations due to my limited English proficiency, I grasped the essence of their words. This period was marked by many photographs of my childhood, representing some of the happiest moments of my life. Whenever they visited, we were treated to a fresh collection of storybooks. Judy often read them to the younger children. Margo primarily tutored the older siblings in mathematics, while Judy taught grammar lessons to



Joseph and me. Father Kiriti, the father figure at the children's home, provided care and support, making his presence enjoyable.

As my older siblings moved on to high school, my brother and I remained with "mum Julia." This time deepened our bond with her, as she guided us in our educational pursuits and encouraged us to strive for our best selves. It was during this period that I discovered my quiet, introverted, nature and my love for reading novels and other books. In contrast, Joseph was more extroverted, enjoying playtime and constructing castles from the timber we used for firewood.

At the conclusion of my first year in high school, Julia, moved to the United States to marry and establish her own family. This was a distressing moment for everyone involved.

During that time, Joseph and I were welcomed into the home of a Christian family who had previously adopted a boy from the same children's home. We lived with them until the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, due to certain unavoidable circumstances, we had to leave. This experience proved to be a valuable learning opportunity. Later, we were taken in by another Christian family who were friends of Julia's.

After completing my primary school education, I enrolled in Archbishop Ndingi Secondary School, which emphasized the development of the whole person.

In September 2021, I enrolled at Catholic University of Eastern Africa, where I am a fourth-

year student studying computer science. Campus life has been more than just education; it has been a start at the school of life. I've gained a lot of knowledge about assets, business, finance, investing, and even a little bit about what kind of family I want. The best decision I've ever made was to major in computer science because it will allow me to easily transition into other industries.

I aspire to learn how to run businesses after I graduate. I have interests in real estate, finance, space, and agriculture. When I'm in my 30s, I want to have a family of my own and support my brother. Giving back to the community and assisting those in need primarily with food, shelter, and education is what I would like to do after I have established myself. My goal is to acquire the skills of effective storytelling and self-branding. I want to learn how to communicate, make friends, and carry on with fruitful discussions

Our benefactor, introduced to us by Margo, is named Deepa. I appreciate Deepa for demonstrating to me the benefits of being in the tech industry prior to my university enrollment. She lives in the United States and embodies qualities of sweetness, kindness, love, and a nurturing spirit. Through Kenya Help and Empower the World Foundation, Deepa facilitated dental care for me, which included cleaning and restorative tooth work. This experience was one of the most joyful moments of my life and significantly enhanced my self-confidence. She gave me back my smile. Deepa has supported our daily expenses, including school fees, clothing, food, and health

care. She personally monitors our well-being, both directly and through the foundations. Deepa serves as one of my role models, alongside her cousin Karthik, who made high school physics more comprehensible for me, and Margo, who simplified high school mathematics.

Empower the World Foundation, through funds donated by Deepa to Kenya Help, has supported my brother and me from the time we became residents of Mji wa Neema children's home. Hillary, a dedicated staff member, has monitored our well-being and educational development. He has provided us with valuable guidance and a listening ear, offering effective strategies to address the challenges we face in our education and life. I am profoundly thankful to Empower the World Foundation, Deepa, Mji wa Neema home, Fr. Kiriti, and the guardians who have played significant roles in our lives. Our journey through the various challenges, I have gained important insights about myself and the world around me. As I look ahead, I am assured that I possess the necessary tools and strength to continue crafting the next chapter of my life with intention and enthusiasm.

