Excerpt from *Exit Wound*

The Life Story of Guot Aschouth

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*The events in this story are real and based on the recollections of the main character. They are not intended to generalize about Muslim traditions or to portray the Islam faith as brutal or combative.*

**Prologue**

*Jikawo, Southern Sudan (January 1985)*

The merciful sound of rain pocked the fissured ground where Guot lay. Teeth clenched against the pain that seared his chest, he twisted to lie on his back, gaped his parched mouth heavenward, and waited. Thunder tore daybreak asunder. Heavy, elusive rain echoed, and he pleaded for a few blessed drops to wash the sour, rusty taste of bloody vomit from his tongue. Nothing. Guot then closed his eyes against the terror of that warm winter morning and embraced darkness as he would a beloved brother.

**Wyliediit, Southern Sudan (1969)**

Fussy baby Guot squawked and squirmed as his mother wrestled him into his canoe-shaped carrier. Woven from polished reeds and strips of animal hide, the carrier was Ayak’s gift to her baby, but it could not have been bestowed upon a more ungrateful recipient. Although he wiggled like an earthworm after a rainstorm, his mother’s patient hands always prevailed. On went the matching cover. Guot wailed. Up went the cage-like basket atop her head. He thrashed. Off went mother and son through the thorny brush. He hushed.
Despite her awkward load, Ayak’s steps were steady and sure. When she came upon a massive thaw tree, Ayak removed the basket from her head and carefully set it at her feet. As she peeked at her baby through the warp and weft, the young mother smiled. The gentle sway of her stride had rocked Guot to sleep, and her chores would be far easier to accomplish if he stayed that way. When her bags of woven akub grass were heavy with the curious-looking, walnut-sized fruit, she lashed the clumsy bundle to the top of the baby carrier, balanced everything back on her head, and retraced her steps.

Little Manyok plopped down from the branches of his lookout when he spied his mother teetering up the path. Like a python with its prey, he twisted his spindly arms and legs around her slender body and hung there until he was certain he had conveyed his adoration. To distract this jabbering child from his empty belly and to afford herself and sleeping baby Guot a little more quiet time, Ayak shushed Manyok and sent him to their nearby plot of land with a message for his father that lunch would soon be ready.

Deng, Ayak’s husband of seventeen years, followed the tradition of his Jieng ancestors whose lineage stretched longer than the two-thousand-mile White Nile River. Crawling through sandy mud where ants and termites bit his bare torso and stung the exposed skin beneath his short pants, he scraped tidy furrows with a simple wooden spade. A few rows of beans here. Some sesame there. He dropped tiny seeds into shallow graves. In good years, the harvest was plentiful enough to trade the surplus for more cows, goats, or sheep. But in other seasons, despite his best efforts, Deng’s family did not have enough to eat.

As though bubbling from his thoughts, a joyful sound danced on the breeze. Deng searched the horizon for the sweet source and smiled as Manyok came into view, no doubt sent on this mid-day errand by his mother. As they walked to the river to wash for lunch, Manyok bounced like the pesky Bunyoro rabbit that nibbled the family’s young pumpkin plants. Their progress was delightfully slow. Manyok giggled as he picked dried layers of thick clay from his father’s arms and legs. Deng’s deep laugh sent a flock of terns flying. He playfully bobbed and swayed to avoid Manyok’s tickling fingers.

Just as Ayak ladled the tiar into a large communal bowl, her life’s treasures bounded up the path, belting out joyful songs of
giddy anticipation. Not wanting to be left out, Guot awoke and
wailed a hungry tune of his own. Ayak exchanged a tired, loving
look with her husband who, smiling back, acknowledged the irony
of Guot's timing. She bared her breast, and her baby eagerly
latched on. Her lunch would have to wait.

Deng tenderly watched baby Guot take nourishment from
Ayak. As he savored his own meal, the faithful father silently
prayed for Nhialic’s protection upon his young sons. Heartache
had already been heaped upon their family. He questioned how
much more they could endure.

Ashuaidoet Cattle Camp, South Sudan (1972)

Deng stretched out under the clear Sudan night sky and traced
the ancient summer constellations with his long, black index
finger. Nestled at his father’s side, young Guot stirred, and Deng
lovingly tucked the blanket farther under the boy to protect him
from the night’s chill. Ashuaidoet cattle camp was no place for a
child, but Guot was newly weaned, and the milk vital to his
survival sloshed twenty feet away in the udders of their small herd.

Guot grew up listening to the soothing lullaby of lowing
cattle. A Jieng family’s worth was counted in cows—the more head
of cattle, the greater the family’s affluence and influence. Cows
were the currency of marriage dowries and the fine paid for
misconduct. In years of drought, flood, and ensuing famine, a
family's herd could determine life or death. Milk often provided
the family’s only nourishment.

Guot opened his eyes, and when he whimpered for his
mother, Deng softly stroked his son’s brow and whispered stories
about Ayak, tales of how much she loved her baby and how happy
she would be to see him when he returned home. He then spoke of
their ancestors and how their names were special, selected to help
them and others remember. Deng (rain) is a name given to a baby
born in a year of abundant precipitation, he said. Ayak (drought)
was born when southern Sudan did not receive enough rain. Deng
recounted how they had prayed and offered sacrifices to Nhialic for
Manyok (buck of goat sacrificed before he was begotten) to be
born healthy. The name Guot...Deng stopped. The boy had
drifted back to sleep.

“Agoth.” Quietly the father said the name of his sixth child, a
little boy for whom Deng and Ayak had held great hope. No
parent should feel compelled to give his son a name that means
“mad at the tragic deaths of their babies,” he thought. Deng and Ayak had helplessly cradled their first five children close as each tiny body grew still and then cold. Agoth was their first child to live longer than a day.

Like sunshine after a devastating storm, Agoth was a happy baby with an infectious giggle. Deng wept as he remembered Ayak’s screams the morning she discovered oozing sores blistering the baby’s feverish body. Agoth died of small pox before his first birthday. They buried Malem, their seventh child, shortly thereafter, just a few months before Manyok was born. Some things became neither easier with repetition, nor less tragic with time. In Jieng society, nothing was recorded on paper. The children’s births and deaths were engraved on Deng’s and Ayak’s hearts. The gentle father put his arm around Guot, pulled the boy a little closer, and succumbed to an uneasy sleep.

In the dead of night, Deng awoke to the heinous laugh of a hyena and the piercing scream of a baby. His blood ran cold. “Oh, my God, rescue my son from hyena!” he pleaded as he instinctively chased after the predator. The father sobbed in gratitude when he found a baby calf, and not his young boy, dangling from the hyena’s bloody jaws. After he rescued the calf, Deng sprinted back to little Guot, who trembled with fear and begged to go home.

Baping, Southern Sudan (1983)

The angry snap of whip against flesh filled the dingy hut and made Wangley sound more like a prison than a school. Guot gasped but did not cry as Marat, his hateful teacher, meted out the final lashes. Out of respect for their stoic friend, the other students lowered their gaze and studied their bony knees. They all knew the routine. Perhaps from lack of imagination, or out of sheer laziness, their abusive teacher did not often vary the punishment. Thirty painful lashes on the boys’ bare buttocks and the girls’ hands for tardiness, incorrect homework, or even minor and often innocent disruptions.

Marat was no different than any of the other teachers Guot had studied under in his five years of schooling. All the instructors were harsh Arabic-speaking disciplinarians from northern Sudan. They routinely whipped pupils with branches from the elastic tree and rods of hippopotamus skin, implements intended to fend off wild animals and mad dogs. Guot was unaccustomed to being disciplined with anything but love and respect. To him, trying to
beat intelligence into a student was as smart as playing tag with a swarm of tsetse flies.

Guot’s school was a two-mile, forty-five minute walk down Creep Road, but the heavy rains of the season made some stretches nearly impassable. Although he left home before sunrise, he sometimes arrived late. Marat frightened Guot almost as much as the two enormous black and red king cobras he came upon that morning. Uncoiled, the serpents that slithered just ten feet away were easily twice his height. Sloshing past the glowering snakes through the muddy waist-deep water, Guot’s pace kept time with his quickened pulse. As a consequence of his haste, he carelessly caught his foot on a submerged branch and fell face first into the muck. His heart sank when the startled snakes slipped beneath the surface. Coming face-to-face with reptile royalty was bad enough. Not knowing their whereabouts, or intentions, was worse.

Guot winced as he sat on the dirt in the dim hut with the rest of his classmates. Marat wrote the lessons on the blackboard, and the students copied everything down in their notebooks. The teacher then ordered everyone to leave their notes in the grass-thatched school hut and gather outside where they sat in a circle to practice their Arabic symbols in the sand.

Guot attempted to draw the figures ظ and ض. “Arash, Arash!” Marat screamed as he beat Guot on the head with his stiff hippopotamus-hide whip. Marat could barely speak the native language of his students, but he had mastered a few expletives. To assert his superiority and ensure the students knew his disdain, he also made a point of calling them “Dinka,” a perversion of “Jieng,” the name they preferred. With Guot’s right index finger, Marat drew the alphabets on the ground, scratching so hard that the boy’s hand bled. This continued until another student caught the teacher’s attention.

Speaking Arabic left a bitter taste in Guot’s mouth. To him, Arabic was the forked tongue of political and racial oppression. History was Guot’s favorite subject, but his country’s troubled past saddened him. Britain had ruled the Muslim north and Christian/animist south as two separate entities from 1899 to 1955. When Sudan gained its independence, the mismatched parts were thrown into an ill-conceived, Arab-rulled whole. For nearly two decades of civil war that claimed the lives of at least five hundred thousand people, the government-sponsored Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) bombed, killed, raped, and enslaved its
southern countrymen. In 1972, the government begrudgingly promised them political autonomy.

Although Guot was deeply suspicious of the northern Muslim Sudanese, he cherished the opportunity to learn, so he kept the tales of abuse and hardship a secret from his parents for fear they would not let him attend school. He would endure hell to save his family from poverty.

Baping, Southern Sudan (March 1984)

Guot sat cross-legged on the ground and scowled while he scratched Arabic figures in the dirt. “أخ” (brother)—he traced the twists and turns with a stick as he watched his big brother pack provisions. He’d gone with Manyok the previous day to sell a bull and buy the supplies that Manyok would need for his journey.

“ذهب” (go)—he scribbled. Guot had begged his parents for permission to join his older brother and the thousands of other southern Sudanese who sojourned to Ethiopia in search of peace, protection, and opportunity.

“لا” (no)—he gouged. His parents refused to let him go. They reasoned that a fourteen-year-old was too young and not strong enough for the strenuous sixteen-day journey. Deng and Ayak tried to comfort Guot and reminded him that Manyok would be back soon.

“المدرسة” (school)—his stick broke. Guot erased the string of wiggly words with an angry swipe of his palm. Dust assaulted his eyes, invaded his nose, and made him even more cross. The government based in the north had closed all schools in the south, and Guot was quickly forgetting his lessons. He felt hopeless as the precious learning he had sacrificed so much for faded from his mind. Guot also sensed he was about to lose his brother.

The SAF, Sudan Armed Forces, had turned southern Sudan into a war zone that quickly unraveled the decade-old peace treaty between north and south. Anyone who opposed Muslim rule was brutalized. A few days earlier, Guot overheard the conversation between visiting neighbors and his father. The strained smiles of the adults belied their calm demeanor, and although the anxious dialogue was intentionally hushed, Guot grasped the essence of their angst. Their farms were looted and precious livestock stolen by robbers, or rebels from the government’s SAF.

To defend the rights and lives of the southern Sudanese, U.S.-educated Dr. John Garang, a Jieng tribesman, formed the Sudan
People's Liberation Army (SPLA), a faction that employed the same brutal tactics as the SAF. SPLA rebels recruited reluctant soldiers from southern Sudan villages by using hot metal rods to burn the genitals of old men until they disclosed where the young men and boys were hiding.

One day, the SPLA visited the cattle camp where Guot and Manyok worked. Several of the brothers’ hometown acquaintances who had already joined the rebel faction showed off their weapons of war. The SPLA urged the cattle herders to go to Ethiopia to receive training and acquire guns. They promised the villagers that they could then return to defend their families and property from the SAF and other robbers, because no government police existed to keep the peace. The SPLA assured the crowd that boys too young to join the military training camp would go to school in Ethiopia. Guot's eyes brightened and his ears burned at the mention of school. A renewed chance. His only chance.

“Too young. Not strong enough.” Guot scowled at the memory. His parents’ words scratched his brain like fingernails against a blackboard. He embraced Manyok and followed him with his eyes until the beloved traveler was the size of a blister beetle, just a dot on the horizon. Guot brooded. Ayak put an arm around her somber son and asked if he would catch some perch for dinner. Guot had seen her preparing combo, a peanut stew, so he knew this was a ruse, proof that she still viewed him as a simple-minded child. Ever obedient, he played along.

Guot would have been the last to admit it, but he enjoyed fishing with a few of his former classmates along the banks of the White Nile that afternoon. On the way home, they boasted about whom had caught the prize fish, and laughed about the ones that got away. Their playful teasing broke off as they rounded the bend and faced a huge SAF armored tank and several other military vehicles that blocked the path. With guns aimed at the group, SAF soldiers ordered them to confess their allegiance.

Were they loyal to the SPLA cause? Were they rebel soldiers? Guot knew that their lives depended on convincing the SAF troops of the truth: they were just boys returning from a day of fishing. One of the SAF pointed a gun at Guot’s head. Guot pointed at the fish in his hand, dropped to his knees, and pleaded for his life. After several tense moments, the SAF lowered their weapons and let the young fishermen pass.
That day, Guot made the most difficult decision of his life. He had always been obedient and respectful of his parents, but he knew he must go to Ethiopia to continue his education. He felt that his family’s future, their very lives, depended on it. Two days later, fourteen-year-old Guot left home in the quiet pre-dawn hours while his family slept. For the rest of his life he regretted that he had not said *yin ca mooth agut te be wobe yok* (goodbye).

**Pawell, Southern Sudan – Tierrgoul, Ethiopia (April 1984)**

The black night’s heavy air smothered the sound of the refugees’ shuffling feet and hushed conversations. Suddenly, the ground rumbled. Out of the weary group, only Guot reacted to the slight tremor. He frantically ordered everyone to climb the nearest tree. Seconds later, an enormous topi herd stampeded across the path.

Guot trembled as he climbed out of the tree. Although nighttime was dangerous, daytime travel was deadly. In the heat of the day, temperatures could reach 130 degrees Fahrenheit. Guot was only one day from home, and already he had passed three dead bodies on the road, all victims of heat stroke.

His travels continued in this manner for several days. He hid from the sun during the day. Walked by the light of the stars at night. Cooked a little rice over a fire each afternoon. Guot’s woven raffia sandals were shredded, and his feet were badly blistered and swollen. When the pain became unbearable, he jumped up and down to numb his feet, and then he staggered onward.

SAF forces patrolled the roads and killed anyone caught trying to leave the country. One week into the trek, the threat of being apprehended by the SAF heightened. Guot fled through the jungle at a feverish pace. When SAF forces closed in on him, Guot ran shoeless through the thorny jungle brush and subsisted on raw rice, sparse sleep, and little water for almost a week. Cian-ku-goik (hide-and-go-seek) tactics honed in childhood preserved his life.

Near death from starvation, dehydration, and exposure, and five days from Ethiopia, Guot staggered into the village of Padoi. The locals warned him to flee back into the dreaded, unfamiliar jungle to avoid the enemy SAF. Guot encouraged the group he traveled with to hire two local men to zigzag them through the forest. They agreed with their teenage leader and paid the guides a small sum for their assistance. The guides led them to the western
perimeter of the Dueichen Valley, a trek the inexperienced group
would have died trying to make on their own.

Guot waited until nightfall to begin his twenty-hour journey
across the scorching valley, a deathtrap where the only water
sources were polluted by antelope urine and dung. Drink or die.
Those were the options.

Across Dueichen's desolation, the Jikawo and Akobo Rivers
separated him from Ethiopia. To garner strength for that night's
river crossings, Guot rested under a canopy of trees and dug for
broken briars deep within his swollen, festering feet. When the
thick, moist air developed a pulse, he paused. The curious beating
gradually grew stronger, more insistent, until Guot saw a pair of
SAF military helicopter gunships hovering overhead. He ran
through the thicket of thorn bushes. When his burning lungs and
legs would go no further, he curled into a ball so compact that he
looked like a dark rock within the tall grass. He prayed that his
convulsive panting would not give him away. Gradually, silence
was restored. The respite was unnerving. Guot knew SAF soldiers
prowled the countryside where they searched for southern
Sudanese just like him. Their only crime was a desire to be free
from crushing poverty and religious oppression.

Halfway between the dusk of one day and dawn of the next,
Guot clawed his way up the muddy bank of the Akobo River.
After sixteen harrowing days of tortuous travel, he was finally in
Ethiopia. Chaos surrounded him. Hundreds of other refugees
splashed toward safety. At peace, Guot sat alone on the river's edge
where he soaked in the near-realization of his improbable goal. He
did not sense or see the dark figure that raced toward him in the
moonlight.

Guot grabbed a quick breath just as the force of impact drove
his face into the murky river. He thrashed and twisted against his
captor's wiry arms. Gout's efforts to free himself proved futile. His
captor had him immobilized. Seconds later, Guot was flung
backwards. In the dark, he recognized the pair of fierce eyes that
probed his soul.

"Manyok!" Guot cried. Manyok could not believe his brother
had come so far on his own. He berated Guot for the arrogant
stupidity that could yet claim his younger brother's life. Guot
stoically endured the caustic verbal lashing. Manyok's temper soon
abated, and the boys embraced and talked until dawn.
Guot learned that Manyok had been assigned to remove wounded SPLA soldiers from the battlefields. Confused, Guot asked about the weapons. He reminded his brother that the SPLA promised to give rifles to the southern Sudan cattle herders so they could protect their livestock and families. But, they had been tricked, Manyok explained. The SPLA battalion did not arm the southern Sudan refugees to safeguard their villages. The SPLA enlisted them to fight against the oppressive SAF. Everything had been a lie.

Itang, Ethiopia—SPLA Training Camp, Ethiopia (May 1984)

The refugee camp was not at all what Guot and Manyok had expected. Mounds of overturned earth and maggot-infested shallow graves dotted the camp where forty thousand Sudanese slowly starved to death on meager rations of corn gruel. Refugees flooded the camp because drought-stricken Ethiopia was better than the hell they had left behind in southern Sudan. The only things the dark-skinned southern Sudanese carried with them were tales of genocide, atrocity, and torture inflicted by their own countrymen, northern Muslim SAF soldiers. Slowly, Guot gave up all hope of going to school. Manyok knew that he would not be permitted to return with a gun to protect his family. The well-organized SPLA rebel faction welcomed the brothers into their ranks.

On a January morning in 1985, just a few days into his fifteenth year, Guot and his eighteen-year-old brother deployed to the front line of Sudan’s Second Civil War—Guot to the Bilpham battalion and Manyok to Hippo. Not yet full-grown, the boys prayed Nhialic’s blessings upon each other and parted ways, once more, with weapons in their hands.

Jikawo, Southern Sudan (January 1985)

Jagged breath scraped like brittle branches against Guot’s raw throat as another wave of nausea wracked his bony frame. The boy who stared back from the moonlit pool of bloody vomit was not the man who boldly left home without saying goodbye. Even now, as he shivered on the dark battlefield, he did not regret his decision. His desire to see his family was surpassed only by a determination to save them.

He imagined how his mother’s lips might feel on his forehead as she sent him and his siblings off on an easy walk to school where they would be taught by kind, competent teachers. In his mind, he
saw the strain on his father’s face melt on that future day when irrigation water coursed through fertile fields. He could almost hear the sweet laughter of healthy children playing jump rope, immunized from crippling, preventable disease. He longed for them all to taste the clean, treated water that would flow from a pump a short distance from their hut.

Water. Guot gasped in agony as he stretched for his canteen. Ragged fingernails scratched at the dented metal, but his numb right arm was unable to grip the can. Blessed rain whistled through the still air, and thunder boomed its promise of moisture. He twisted to lie on his back and gaping his parched mouth to the cloudless sky. Pressing clammy palm to sticky chest, he waited for a few sweet drops to wet his tongue. Manyok’s voice echoed through the mental fogginess, “Remember our training. Wounded soldiers who drink will bleed to death and die.” Guot quickly closed his mouth.

Finally, the first ray of stubborn sunshine sliced through the dead of night. Guot blinked to focus his eyes in the grey dawn. He scanned the expansive battlefield in disbelief. The mirage dissipated. Not rain, not thunder, but the hateful din of enemy artillery assaulted his senses. He stared at his chest in horror. The bullet’s path was visible through his bloody flesh. The shell had entered the middle of his chest, torn a tunnel between two ribs, and had exited out his right side.

The ground was littered with hundreds of butchered bodies. SPLA commanding officer, Brigadier General Kerbino Kuany Bol, screamed for his men to retreat. Guot was certain no one remained to obey the General’s command. Determined to follow orders, Guot pulled himself to his knees but then crumpled into an unconscious heap.

Guot awoke to silence and the smell of burnt rubber. His hoarse voice was too weak to scare off the eager, approaching vulture. At the far end of the battlefield, enemy SAF soldiers crawled like angry ants through the tall, dry grass. He watched in horror as they executed the wounded SPLA warriors one-by-one. These countrymen, like Guot, were abandoned during the battalion’s retreat.

Gunshots suddenly blasted from behind and the buzzard took flight. Fellow SPLA soldier, Thon Atem Kuany, warned Guot to stay down. Another spray of bullets sent the enemy scurrying back to the trenches.
Thon winced in pain as he knelt down by Guot’s side and pleaded with him to get up. The SAF soldiers would be back, and he was out of ammunition. Guot looked up at his loyal friend and shook his head. In a raspy whisper, he urged Thon to save himself, to make the trek back to their military station in Nyabileau alone. Suicide, trying to bring him along would be suicide, Guot said.

Thon refused to leave his friend. He put a comforting hand on Guot’s shoulder. They sat quietly together and waited for vultures, or soldiers, or both. Thon prayed for a miracle and engaged his friend in simple conversation to keep their minds off the desperate circumstances. Guot grunted an occasional sentence but mostly gave one-word, one-syllable responses. Thon asked Guot if he believed in the Christian God of the Bible. Guot smiled and nodded.

Guot’s labored breathing relaxed as he related the story of the bishop who wanted to baptize him.

A few years ago, a clergyman had come to Guot’s village to preach Christianity. Many Jieng, including Guot, had found peace in the doctrine, and they wanted to be baptized. The bishop instructed Guot to choose a new name from the scriptures, the sacred name of an angel or prophet or apostle. Guot had refused. He was proud of his own name and didn’t want to disrespect his parents by changing it.

Guot slowly sat up. Hunched over with elbows on knees and chin in hands, he continued the story.

The bishop would not back down. This was the custom of European missionaries in Sudan for more than one hundred years, the bishop explained. Guot would not budge. Guot could not think of any convincing verse in the Bible to support the bishop’s request. The flustered bishop couldn’t either.

Thon chuckled as he pictured this battle of wills. Guot sat a little taller.

The bishop broke the stalemate. He asked Guot to step aside and leaf through the Bible again. Surely he could find a name that rolled off the English-speaking tongue better than “Guot Aschouth.” He resumed baptizing people, obedient Sudanese souls, the soon-to-be “John’s,” “Mary’s,” and “Gabriel’s” waiting in line with their biblical names already chosen. Guot’s name was sacred to him, a talisman from his parents. He apologized for wasting the bishop’s time and headed home.
Thon watched in amazement as his courageous, determined friend tried to stand. Groaning, Guot put his left arm around Thon’s neck to steady himself. The bloody grassland spun around him. Guot vomited.

Guot wiped his wet chin with the back of his hand and explained that his name carried the promise of survival and the responsibility of perseverance. Guot means fortunate, and Aschouth means survivor. Guot took a few tentative steps and used Thon as a crutch before he stood on his own. Together, the only two surviving SPLA soldiers on the expansive Jikawo grassland withdrew to the dry Sobat River bed and trudged toward their camp twenty miles away.

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Postscript

The names of the geographical locations referenced in this narrative are designations Guot learned as a boy in Sudan more than thirty years ago. Many of these tiny villages and temporary camps may hide in the shadows beyond even Google’s vast reach, and some names have undoubtedly changed over time.

Guot’s inspiring story is one of hope and survival. As a wounded teenage soldier, he was selected to receive a Soviet-sponsored education in Cuba. When the Soviet Union collapsed in the early 1990s, funding for Guot’s education was withdrawn, and he was sent to Uganda, again a refugee, and now an orphan. On November 15, 1991, SPLA forces massacred Guot’s family and two thousand other villagers.

Guot attributes his survival during this dark period to several individuals he calls his “Good Samaritans.” One of these people was Mama Keggie, a stranger who gave him a 12-ounce jar of peanut butter that saved him from starvation. Following a series of other miracles, he boarded a plane on June 5, 1995 for America, and in 2000, he became a U.S. citizen.

Although much of the Jieng culture has changed since Guot left Sudan, many traditions remain. After nearly a decade of saving for a forty-four-cow dowry, Guot returned to Africa in the summer of 2016 to marry Mary, his beautiful, patient fiancée, at a Sudanese refugee camp in Kenya. Guot’s next adventure will be to help his bride navigate the jungle-like U.S. Immigration process. Thus begins a new chapter in the life of this remarkable man.