



3. Imagine you have been abducted from your home and sold into slavery. Write a first hand account of what happened to you and how you felt.

Dear God, if you are listening, tell me why. Why me? What have I ever done? At home I never did anything very wrong, I was a good – no. Stop. Don't think about home. It hurts too much. But do – anything to forget the future. The past. I'll remember the past.

My mind drifts back. Straight away I'm home. I can smell the maize meal cooking, hear my brothers and sisters playing, feel the chickens pecking my feet. I remember Mama's happiness. But then I remember when she stops smiling so often. She talks about bad men and fighting and something called the LRA. I ask about it, but I'm too young.

Then *everybody's* talking about the LRA. Mama still won't talk about it, but she never smiles at all anymore. I get information from friends. It's the Lord's Resistance Army, and it seems all about freedom and equality and justice and glory. I'm filled with excitement, eyes shining at the thought of joining them.

Then I remember a few months ago. Mama's worried about me. I run into the house, gun drawn, ready to shoot anything. She puts her hands on my shoulders. "Uli" she says. "You need truth. You can't join the LRA. They kill innocent people. Remember, to kill a man is the worst sin you can commit. Never kill, Uli, for you will lose your soul." I'm shocked. I cast away my weapons and dreams and calm down.

A few weeks later I'm walking outside the village and my peace is shattered. A man walks up to me. "Are you interested in freedom?" he whispers. I don't answer. He continues. "The LRA are very interested in brave lads such as yourself" I run, but I'm not chased. He's standing there, watching.

I'm snatched two days later. I'm feeding the chickens, when I'm grabbed from behind. A hand is over my mouth, and I'm dragged towards a van. Trying to fight but being held too tightly, I'm bundled into the van, still with my captors holding me. I feel a burning pain on my head, and the world swims away.

I wake up on the floor in a tiny room with a barred window and nothing else except a boy, regarding me gravely/ His name was Kai. He'd been kidnapped by the LRA, as I found I had been. Through the weeks of hunger, bullying and threats, he became my friend. We were child-soldiers-in-training, and were taught to attack and kill. I wouldn't have survived without Kai.

I can't think any further. It's too painful. But I must, to keep fear of the future away.

Then came that fateful day when I was ripped from sleep by two LRA men and marched to a yard, where I nearly fainted. Kai was there, a gun pointing at him. I was pushed to stand in front of him. I felt metal as one gun was jammed into my hand and another against my head. A test: could I kill my friend? If I couldn't, I would be killed and so would he. I must kill Kai. I had to be a murderer or die. What should I do? All of a sudden I could hear Mama. "To kill a man is the worst sin you can commit. You will lose your soul." I knew what I had to do. "NO!" I shouted, dropping the gun. Then a man was holding my head so I couldn't turn it, my eyes so I couldn't shut them. All I could see was



Kai when the gun went off and he fell to the ground, a bloody hole in his head. Then I was dragged away to this room, thrown in, and as the door was shut, leaving me in darkness.

Oh God, why have you done this to me? What will Mama be thinking? I was always her favourite, her eldest child. Mama. I love her so much – wait! What was that? Oh Lord, help me! It's footsteps. Coming towards this cell. I'm going to die, I know it. They're getting closer. I can't die! I'm not ready! That's the key in the lock! And that's the bolt being shot back. Help me God, don't abandon me. The door is swinging open. There's a man with a gun in the doorway. Please God PLEASE! He's speaking. Wait, what did he say? "Goodbye" he says, and points the gun at me. Please God! Mama wouldn't want me to die! Mam-

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