



# Of Beetles and Angels: A Boy's Remarkable Journey from a Refugee Camp to Harvard

*By Mawi Asgedom*

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Here is an unforgettable true story of a young boy's remarkable journey from a refugee camp in Sudan to an affluent Chicago suburb where his family survives on welfare. Following his father's advice to treat all people - even the most unsightly beetles - as though they were angels sent from heaven, Mawi Asgedom overcomes racial prejudice, language barriers, and financial disadvantage, eventually realizing his dream of a full-tuition scholarship to Harvard University. *Of Beetles and Angels* is a compelling survival story sure to inspire readers of all ages and backgrounds.

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In 1983, at age seven, the author and his family arrived in this country, having fled the Eritrean and Ethiopian conflict. "This earnest account of Asgedom's life up to his graduation from Harvard is peppered with powerful moments," wrote PW. Ages 10-up.

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From [Booklist](#)

When he was four years old, Asgedom's family left their war-ravaged home in Ethiopia. They spent three years in a Sudanese refugee camp before coming to the U.S. in 1983, where they were settled by World Relief in a wealthy white suburb near Chicago. He later earned a full scholarship to Harvard, where in 1999 he delivered the commencement address. His simple lyrical narrative, both wry and tender, stays true to the child's viewpoint as he grows up, taunted at school, but pretty bad and rough himself. His coming-of-age story is both darkened and enriched by the stories he hears about his parents' lives back home and by the pieces he remembers. At the center of the book is his father, a fierce family disciplinarian, once an all-powerful medical assistant at home, now reduced to a "beetle," unemployed, half-blind, raging at his dependency. Only at the very end, when Asgedom spells out the metaphor of the title, does the message overwhelm the story. What stays with you is the quiet, honest drama of a family's heartrending journey.

*Hazel Rochman*

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Review

I read this book in one sitting and then left my chair convinced that the world was a better place than when I had sat down. --Allison Morris, New England Children's Bookselling Advisory Council

In 39 Years of teaching, I have never assigned a book the kids like so well. --Judith Pond, 8th grade teacher, Richmond Middle School, Hanover (NH)

Our students have read Of Beetles and Angels and heard him speak. Mawi is a hero to my students and to me. --Dr. Patricia Harvey, Superintendent, St. Paul MN Public Schools

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**Jeannine Ricks:**

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it and luxuriate in reading.

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### **Elois Montgomery:**

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### **Monique Hightower:**

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