

Move Forward - Don't Run Into Walls

“Ka-boom!” For the third time this week, Aberash woke up to the sound of his village, Pibor, being attacked. Sure, he was used to it, but that didn't make it any easier for him. Aberash jumped out of his bed and sprinted to the room that his father slept in. His father had left the night before to go to work. They needed more money now than they ever had before, so his father decided to work that night. His father had never worked at night before, so Aberash became even more distraught than usual. An anxious Aberash slowed down as he neared the door. He didn't know what to do. A week earlier he had lost his mother and didn't know if he was going to be able to survive knowing that he lost both of his parents to the war. He nudged the door open and hesitantly crept through the doorway. For the first time, he had no one. There, in his dad's room lay an empty bed. He understood what it was like to provide for yourself, but he could always count on his father coming home every night. Without thinking, Aberash ran outside into the chaos. A few feet away, lying pale on the ground, he saw his father. He started to run, but other villagers quickly stopped him. They told him that going out to where his father was laying wasn't safe, but Aberash didn't care. Right then he wasn't thinking, he wasn't processing, he was just doing. All he could do was act. All he could do was try to save his father. He made his way over to his father, and kneeled down next to his pale, dying face.

“I know that I am not going to last long, but I wanted to tell you to live your life to the fullest. I want you to have adventures. I want you to not wake up in the morning and go to sleep at night with the fear that you might not survive through the day. Finally, I want you to find love, just as your mother and I did, so under my bed I have left a plane ticket and a few hundred

pounds for you. Take them and go live your new life, in America,” said Aberash’s father, using all of the strength in his weak, pale body.

Aberash couldn’t believe what he had just heard hearing. He quickly shot back with, “You’re not going to die! You are, we are, of the Azikiwe family line. We do not give up. Your father never gave up, your grandfather never gave up, your great-grandfather never gave up, yet here you are giving up!” Aberash’s father just smiled. Aberash’s father just smiled. Astonished and infuriated by his father’s response, Aberash demanded, “What?”

His father replied, “You’re passionate, just like your mother.” With that Aberash just couldn’t restrain himself from crying. He had been able to withhold his tears, until his father’s words made the situation feel more real to him. After a few painful minutes of silence his father said, “There is a difference, son, between giving up and realizing that there is nothing else that you can do once your time has come,” and with his last breath he whispered, “Good bye, son.”

At this, Aberash fell apart. His knees gave up on him, he could not move his arms, and he fell face down in the sand. His face turned red as red as blood, his eyes swelled up, and he just laid there, face down in the sand. It was like his whole world had disappeared. To Aberash, it had. He had lost everything, and his father wanted him to act like nothing had happened. He wanted him to pretend that He fell down on the ground and he just couldn’t get up. The villagers made a vain attempt to pull him away, but all Aberash did was scream and resist. After many failed attempts through the night, the villagers finally left him to himself. Aberash eventually cried himself to sleep.

Aberash woke the next day to hear birds chirping. He was in awe. *How can there be days where I wake up to the sun shining and birds singing, and others where I wake up to the see my father die right before my eyes?* He thought. He thought about his father. He thought about

America. He thought about leaving everything behind. He didn't know what to do. For hours he sat on hot, wet ground pondering what he should do. Occasionally, he would just yell. Not at a person or for any reason, but just to yell.

After a hours of sitting and contemplating what to do, he heard a voice. This voice was no ordinary voice. This was a loud and boisterous voice. He quickly looked around to see who had spoken, but no one was near him and none of the villagers seemed to be distracted by the voice. He heard the voice again. This time the voice spoke. "Aberash," the voice said in its deep voice. It spoke again. "You have a long life ahead of you. Don't worry about the past. You cannot look back. If you do you will just run into walls, which in my opinion is not the best option. Look forward. Be the best you can be." Aberash's mind was just about to explode when he heard the voice one last time. This time he recognized the voice. "That's all I wanted for you son, so, please, start your journey. Go to America." The voice quickly disappeared and above him flew a honeyguide. It was light yellow with a blue stripe down its back. Aberash began to walk back home.

Four months later he arrived in America with the money that his father had left him. As he stepped off the plane he noticed the same honeyguide that flew above his head in Pibor. He knew that he was not alone.