

Dedication

To my son
You came into my life without words,
But with a language that taught me strength,
Shook my faith and built a fire I never knew I carried.
This book is because of you.

To every autism mom and dad,
This is our story.
Our rage, our tears, our victories.
May it remind you that you are not broken.
You are a warrior.

Foreword

There are stories you write with ink: neat, quiet, obedient.

And then there are stories you carve from bone, with hands trembling, heart bleeding, truth screaming.

When I first suspected something was different about my son, I hoped I was wrong. I hoped it was only a delay. That one day he would look up, meet my eyes, and say the word I craved most:

Mama.

But the word never came.

Instead came eruptions. Nights that were not restful but episodes. Judgmental stares in public. Isolation that wrapped itself around me like fog.

And silence.

Not the peaceful kind. The kind that echoes.

This is not a book of answers. It is a story of endurance, grace, rage, faith, and the wild, relentless love that keeps you standing long after your knees give out.

I did not write this as an expert but as a mother tired of being told, *Wait. Accept. Hold on.*

A mother who longed to hear "*Mama.*"

Who cleaned blood from her arms after another meltdown.

Who held her screaming child like a grenade in her arms as the world parted like water.

People stared. Whispered. Looked away - not out of mercy, but discomfort.

The shame stung like a slap.

Worse was how no one asked if we were okay.

I became the mother who Googled "autism" at 3 a.m. while her world fell apart.

Pleading with God, one more time, to let my son be still.

If you are a parent walking this same tightrope, in the trenches, this is for you.

You are not alone.

CHAPTER ONE: GRACE UNDER FIRE

When everything familiar collapses, some mothers stand anyway.

Some mothers are made in delivery rooms. Others are forged in the fires that follow. My journey into motherhood was not marked by lullabies and warm bottles, but by late-night meltdowns, silent milestones, and grief so loud it nearly swallowed me whole.

Unspoken, Unravelling

He came into my life like a whisper on October 25th, 2015.

Within months, he turned into a riddle no one could solve. A beautiful, mysterious boy who looked like me, breathed like me, but did not seem to belong to this world.

From the beginning, everything about my son felt exceptional.

I remember it like it was yesterday...August 2016, Kenya School of Government, Lower Kabete. Attending a management course. I had carried my 10-month-old baby boy with me from Kisumu.

My firstborn. My light.

As I entered my hostel room after the day's lectures, his nanny came rushing to me, grinning like she'd seen a miracle. "Kimmel just walked on his own! He can walk! He can walk!" she cried.

I froze. My heart swelled with pride and disbelief. He was walking? Already? My boy! I beamed with joy. My handsome baby boy. The pride of my womb. Beating every milestone like a boss.

Being married to a Lunje at the time made my son's arrival all the more monumental. "*Ameleta Ndume*," (It's a baby boy) they said. I had wanted a girl, but the boy I got was beautiful, healthy, and strong. So perfect, I declared to myself. He would marry 10 wives if he had to. I wanted 100 grandchildren.

The dream was alive.

Until it shifted.

Signs in Silence

Once we visited my mother-in-law. She looked at him, puzzled. "How old is he?" she asked the dad. "Two," I answered for him. Her eyes narrowed with maternal instinct. "I've had children. All babbled by the age of one. There's something more going on here."

My husband brushed it off. "He'll catch up. A mere speech delay."

But I knew.

His gaze never met ours. He smiled, but not in response to us. He spun in circles. Screamed as though unraveling from the inside. Never asked for food. Didn't notice when I left the room. He could stare for hours yet remain unmoved by the sound of his name.

Then meltdowns and tantrums rushed in like a storm.

That was when the secret Google searches began, the glow of my phone lighting a truth I wasn't ready to face.

My son, my golden boy, was fading before my eyes.

And with each silence, a small part of me disappeared with him. I told myself it might still be nothing. I clung to that thought, even as the truth pressed harder against the edges of my conscience.

The Daily Chaos

A day with him was a constant, chaotic hurricane. Just wind, noise, and destruction on repeat. No pause or predictable rhythm existed.

I dreaded the sunrise.

I feared the nightfall.

And the worst part? An off-switch did not exist. No remote control. It was an endless loop of chaos and exhaustion.

By age three, my son still didn't seem to calm down. Not for a second. He'd sit and immediately spring up like a coil. On. Off. On. Off. He was a livewire, constantly buzzing, running, climbing, biting, scratching.

A meltdown could start from something or nothing at all. Perhaps you misplaced his toy. A sound outside triggered him. Perhaps the temperature changed, or possibly your expression. Sometimes even the air appeared to offend him.

I lived with the raw, relentless frequency of a child whose body rejected stillness.

If you dared to help during a meltdown, bites broke your skin, scratches left marks, and hair-pulling forced you to your knees. He growled. Roared. Screamed. And cried. Not like a child, but as if something sacred inside him was breaking and he couldn't explain it.

We didn't have nights. Not like normal families. My son treated sleep as if it were his enemy. He would rest for about an hour, two if the universe showed mercy, then wake with the energy of a marathon runner at the start line.

Lights off? Not in our house. He'd climb onto furniture, flick the switches, and let the bulbs blaze like stage lights. On. Off. On. Off. It became a manic rhythm that drilled into our minds like a cursed lullaby.

The Water

Oh God!! The water.

Taps were his playground. Kitchen, bathroom, dining room, if there was a tap, it would be running. Sometimes I'd wake up to a flooded kitchen, utensils floating, drawers soaked.

We tried everything. Turned off the mains. Locked doors. Locked in there, he brought the storm into the room with us. He'd yank blankets, stomp on us, slap our faces, bite our shoulders and backs and tummies. He'd find windows and try to throw things out.

Sometimes, he'd try to throw himself out. We had to grill all windows and balconies. Even with the grills, you would find him trying to squeeze his head between the grills. If it did not fit, he would attempt to climb over it. The screams from our neighbors became our alarm system. "*Huyo mtoto ataangnkaa!*" (that child will fall!). And we sprinted on cue. A family of paramedics inside our own home. The panic! The dash! My goodness! Eh! We ran.

He smashed glassware one by one - plates, mugs, jugs. Gone. He'd throw them, watch them shatter, and run straight towards the shards. I developed a mother's sixth sense for flying tackles, diving in front of him to keep his bare feet from blood and disaster.

And the neighbors. Bless their tired souls. Every day, a knock at the door. "Here's your spoon." "Your plate again." "This toy was outside our door, but I think it belongs to Kim."

There was this day I received a thermos flask. My thermos flask. From a motorbike rider who waited outside our estate gate. I found it unbelievable! It was in perfect condition. Intact. I still have it. The gentleman smiled as he handed it over to me. A plastic smile. The community's way of saying, "We see you, but we can't handle you."

The Food Wars

When the doctors suggested a Gluten-Free, Casein-Free (GFCF) diet to manage Kim's condition, I blinked. It was just bizarre for him to go without wheat or milk.

They called it "dietary intervention," but I saw it as a betrayal. Kim adored bread and milk. He could finish a loaf in one sitting and still go scavenging. A stack of chapatis could vanish in seconds. And he hunted milk. Supermarket aisles, strangers' glasses, your cup if you looked away too long; if milk existed, he'd find it and drink it.

Still, we made the shift. Cleared the shelves. Read every label like detectives. If it had wheat or dairy, back it went.

Then came the reign of porridge.

By age three, Kim would eat only millet porridge. Nothing else. We tried bribing, begging, even “*you’ll eat when you’re hungry*” strategies. If it wasn’t millet porridge, he’d push it away with astonishing force.

Every meal became a battle: me with a spoon and hope, him with silence and resistance.

Ten months later, his palate revolted. Millet was out. Rice and black tea became the new gospel. For two years, we ate what he ate. I ordered sacks of rice straight from Mwea. We ate so much rice, I half-joked the grains knew us by name.

Sometimes we laughed about it. Most times we just chewed in silence. It was sacrifice dressed up as simplicity.

The Great Escape

One visit to my maternal grandmother’s home with my sisters showed just how far things had gone. Kim was about four.

Breakfast was served. Millet porridge.

I’d forgotten to mention that millet was no longer on his menu. That we had moved to white rice and black tea. He glanced at the bowl, pushed it away, and, without a word, bolted out the front door, across the compound, straight through the gate.

He ran like he was possessed. Like he was wild.

We screamed as we shot after him like startled antelopes. That boy could run, and worse, he found it enjoyable.

Thrilling. The chase. The wind in his face.

It felt like a game to him. Pure sport.

For me, every step pounded with panic. My heart thudded from the fear of what could happen if we didn’t catch him.

The more we chased, the more fuel it seemed to add to his little feet. When we finally caught up, panting, wheezing, almost weeping, his faced glowed with joy.

Smiling. Flapping. Euphoric.

And in that instant, our panic melted into helpless laughter. We clasped his hands, breathless but laughing, our sides aching from the sprint and the absurdity of it all.

That day taught us something: we could catch him, but we couldn't contain him. Not really. Not yet.

But thank God we got him. What we didn't get back was peace. Because peace had long packed up and left, replaced by a constant state of high alert.

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This was how motherhood found me. Not in soft coos or milestone cards, but in the daily storms of a boy who danced to his own beautiful, bewildering beat.

And somehow, I danced with him. Even when the music hurt.