

CHAGA



and the
CHOCOLATE FACTORY

A story for Stop the Traffik

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Chaga and the Chocolate Factory

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Chaga and the Chocolate Factory

The African sun was bright.

The African air was hot and dry.

And Chaga shuffled slowly along the dusty West African road.



A man pedalled by on a brand new bicycle. Chaga wished he was that man and not a poor boy with six poor brothers and sisters. And a poor mum and a poor dad. And two poor dusty feet.

Suddenly, the man stopped. He climbed off his bicycle and he looked back at Chaga.

'You, boy!' he called. 'What do you think of my bicycle?'

'How strange,' thought Chaga. 'Is this man a magician? Can he read my mind?'

And he was so surprised that he blurted out, 'I like it. I like it very much!'

'Would you like a bicycle of your own?' the man asked.

And Chaga nodded his head. 'Yes sir,' he said. 'Yes, I would!' But that was a dream, surely. A dream that would never come true for a poor ten year old from a tiny village in Mali.

'Take me to your parents,' said the man. And his smile was as bright as the sun. 'I come from a place far away where boys like you earn more than enough to take care of their families and buy themselves bicycles, too!'

The African sun was bright.

The African air was hot and dry.

But Chaga flew down the dusty road, his arms wrapped round the waist of the man on the bicycle. And his hopes and dreams were flying too!



When they reached Chaga's house, the man spoke with Chaga's parents. And with tears in their eyes, they said, 'yes'. Tears of sorrow, because they would miss their son. And tears of joy, because this job was far more than they could ever hope to give him, scratching out a living on their tiny farm.



'A cocoa plantation. A chocolate factory!' That's what the man had said. That's where Chaga would be working. And he could hardly sleep that night for the dreams of chocolate and bicycles - and even chocolate bicycles! -that kept him awake.

They set off the next morning, picking up other boys along the way. And when the man had gathered a parade of boys, a truck - a truck! - mysteriously appeared. Perhaps this man was a magician after all, thought Chaga, as the boys climbed aboard, laughing and talking and joking.

The truck drove all through the night, and most of the next day, too. The world looked very different. Chaga had never been to this part of Mali before. And when he said so, one of the older boys, laughed. 'Of course not! This isn't Mali at all. We are going to the Ivory Coast. That's what the man told my parents.'

A new life. A whole new country. And for the first time, Chaga felt just a little bit scared.

They reached the plantation that evening, and when they had waved goodbye to the Bicycle Man, the boys were led to a tin shack.

'This is where you'll sleep,' said a new man. But he did not smile. Not at all.

One by one, the boys went into the shack. And oh, the smell!

The air was thick with sweat. The floor was damp with urine. And Chaga could hardly breathe. There were other boys, already in the shack, huddled in corners and squeezed together on straw mats. Chaga turned to the door.

There must be some mistake, he thought. This could not possibly be the Bicycle Place. But as he turned, the door slammed shut, and the lock clicked cold and hard behind him.



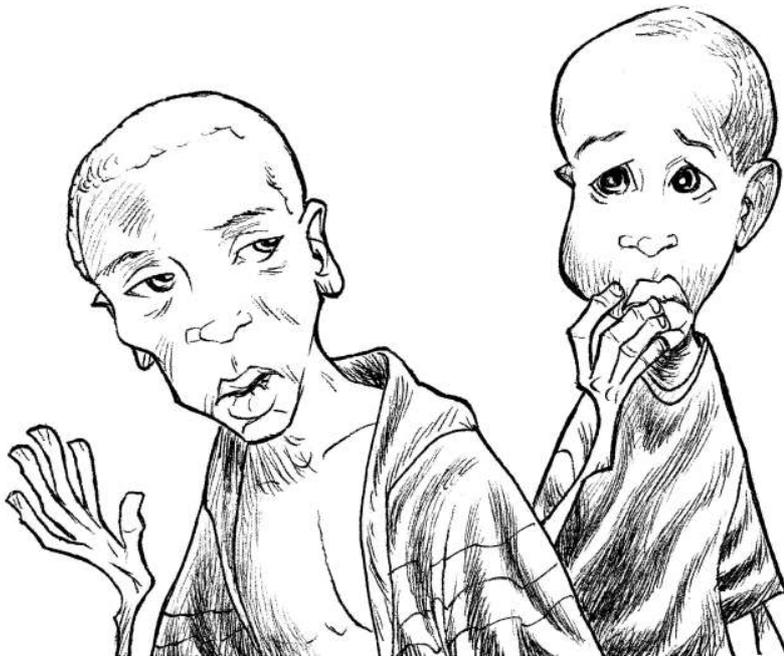
Some of the bigger boys threw themselves at the door, hoping to burst it open with their shoulders or their feet. But Chaga just dropped to the floor, rubbing the tears from his eyes with the back of his hand.

'They won't break it down,' a voice whispered. 'We have tried that before.'

'What is this place?' Chaga whispered back. 'The Bicycle Man said that we would be making chocolate.'

'The Bicycle Man,' the voice sighed. 'So he is still up to his old tricks. The Bicycle Man brought me here four years ago. And I have seen no chocolate. Or any bicycles, either.'

Chaga peered in the direction of the voice, and as his eyes got used to the darkness, he could just about see the boy to whom the voice belonged. He was older than Chaga, surely, but much, much thinner. His name was Bokhari.



'Then what do you do?' asked Chaga.

'We carry beans. Bags and bags of cocoa beans. From one end of the plantation to the other. They give us just enough food to survive. And when we get sick or when we die, they find other boys like you to take our place.'

'Then why don't you leave?' whispered Chaga.

'And go where?' Bokhari answered. 'We are miles from our homes, and with locked doors at night and armed guards by day, there is little chance for escape.'

'Escape?' shuddered Chaga. 'You make it sound like you are prisoners.'

'Not prisoners.' Bokhari sighed. 'For we have done nothing wrong to be imprisoned for. No, we are not prisoners. We are slaves.'

Chaga felt the tears in his eyes again, and he put his hands over his mouth to cover his sobbing cries.

'Go to sleep.' said Bokhari. 'They will come for us early. There is nothing you can do.'



Chaga tried to sleep. But his dream - his beautiful bicycle dream - had turned to a nightmare, and nightmares kept him awake till dawn.

The nightmares were bad, but Chaga's new life was even worse. At six o'clock the next morning, the boys were forced out into the light and put to work. Heavy bags of cocoa beans, some bigger than the boys

themselves, were loaded onto their backs, and they carried the bags all day, twelve hours a day, until they wanted to drop.

Some of the boys did drop, spilling their beans onto the ground. And Chaga watched in horror as the farmer beat those boys with sticks, then loaded the sacks again onto their bleeding backs.



Bokhari took Chaga under his wing and taught him how to get by in that terrible place. And Chaga learned quickly. He learned not to trip, and not to complain, and never to ask for more of the meagre corn paste that he and the rest of the boys were fed.

Six long months passed - day after day the same. And after a while, Chaga believed that he would never see his family again.

And then, one morning, when it was time to leave the shack, Bokhari did not move.

'Come. Hurry!' whispered Chaga to his friend. But when he took hold of his hand, it was cold. Bokhari was dead.



Chaga staggered out of the shack, and some of the men went in, to take his friend's body away. And that's when one of the bigger boys dropped his sack and started to run.

The men ran after him, but before they could catch him, another boy, and then another started to run, as well. And before he could think, Chaga was running, too. It was a chance, a desperate chance, but his only chance. So Chaga ran.

His tears a prism in the bright African sun, gulping down lungfuls of hot African air, Chaga ran.



Some of the boys were caught. He could hear the men celebrating in the distance and only imagine the beatings those boys would get. But Chaga

ran. He thought of his home and his family and his poor dead friend. And Chaga ran.

He came to a road and a passing truck nearly ran him down. And when the truck stopped he didn't know whether to run again. But the man in the truck was a policeman.

'There are boys! Slave boys!' Chaga gasped. 'Working at the cocoa farm.

My

friend is dead. You must help them, please!' Then he collapsed onto the dusty road - a quivering bundle of tears and sweat.

The policeman took Chaga to a place that was safe. He was given good food to

eat and clean clothes to wear. And because of the things he told the police,

the cocoa farmer was arrested and the rest of the slave boys were set free.

The African sun was bright.

The African air was hot and dry.

And Chaga walked down the dusty West African road.

There, up ahead, was his village. There were his parents. There were his brothers and sisters.

And there was no one to hold him back. No one to tell him what to do.

No one to treat him like a slave any more. So Chaga ran to greet his family.

Chaga ran.

THE END? Not Quite....

Chaga and the Chocolate Factory: the rest of the story is up to YOU!

The name of this story is all wrong, isn't it?. Shouldn't it be

'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory'?

But, in a way, both Charlie and Chaga's stories are much the same.

Like Charlie, Chaga was just a boy. And, like Charlie, Chaga was also very poor. And even though there was no Golden Ticket Competition in Chaga's village, there was that Bicycle Man who promised the boys a better life if they would only go with him.

And that, of course, is where things turned bad. Not funny bad, like the bad things that happened to Veruca Salt or the characters in Lemony Snickett. But really bad. Real life bad. Like you would never put into a made-up story for children.

That's because Chaga's story is based on the true story of a boy from Mali who really was lured away to a 'Chocolate Factory'.

Chaga's story had a happy ending - just like Charlie's. But today (that's right - today!), in little cocoa farms all over the Ivory Coast, there are thousands of children just like Chaga who still work as slaves. The big chocolate companies have known about this for years. And six years ago, agreed to do something to stop it. But even after all that time, they still can't tell us for sure if the chocolate they sell was made by regular workers or by trafficked children like Chaga.

What chocolate can you buy? Fair trade chocolate does not use labour from trafficked children.

Go to **The STOP THE TRAFFIK Good Chocolate Guide** for your essential shopping help to buy brands you can safely buy. You can find it at www.stophetraffik.org

STOP THE TRAFFIK is asking all chocolate companies to give us chocolate that has a "traffik free guarantee" and print it on the label to prove it.

Remember, If we can just think a bit more about what kind of chocolate we buy and what kind of chocolate we eat, and if we tell as many people as we can about children like Chaga, then the chocolate companies will have to do something and listen to what everybody is saying.

We want to be able to buy and eat chocolate that has got a
TRAFFIK FREE GUARANTEE so we can do our part to give lots
more children like Chaga a happy ending, too!