

ESOL VOICES: Student Spotlight

Landu Tuvibidila

Landu Tuvibidila is an ESOL student from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Landu immigrated to the United States five years ago and now lives in Rochester with her husband and three children. She is in the school of health sciences and physical wellness at MCC. In this narrative from her childhood, Landu shares a story that highlights the challenges of receiving medical care when you can't pay for it.



Landu Tuvibidila, 2017

A Brave Girl

"No matter what happens, stay brave." One day, when I was 12 years old, I was with my little brother at home. He was 2 years old. My mom was at the market, my dad was at work, and my sisters and my brothers were at school. My class schedule was in the afternoon, so I was taking care of my brother before going to school.

It was 10am, and my little brother was hungry and crying. I told him to stop crying, so I could cook food for him. I gave him his toys to play with. Meanwhile, I took a pot and put water inside. In Africa, electricity is not stable. We rarely used an electric stove, and I was using something like a small barbecue grill. I lit the fire and started to cook. When the water became hot, I went back inside the house to get the corn flour. I left my little brother outside playing with his toys.

My big mistake was that I forgot to cover the pot. He was throwing his toys, and suddenly, one went inside the pot. As he was a child, he didn't know that the water was already hot. Unfortunately, he put his right hand in the water to get his toy. After that, he screamed. When I came outside

and saw his hand was burned, I was traumatized.

Yet, I had courage; I put him on my back, and I ran with him directly to the hospital without putting my shoes on. The hospital was located at the corner of our street. Our house was the first house and the hospital was the tenth. It took me ten minutes to reach the hospital. When we arrived at the hospital, I saw a short man, who wore a white gown with a stethoscope around his neck. I didn't pay attention to the other staff, and I went straight to him.

"Sorry doctor, can you treat my little brother?"

"What happened?" the doctor asked.

I replied, "He put his hand in the hot water."

"Where is your mom?" he asked me.

"At the market," I answered.

"Go call your mom," he said.

I went straight to where my mom was selling goods at the market. When she saw my face, it showed her that something was wrong because I was sweating, and my heart was beating so fast. "What is wrong with you? Where is your little brother?"

she asked me.

"He is in the hospital." I explained to her everything that was going on.

She couldn't scold me. She told me, "Wait for me. I'm closing, and then we can go together to the hospital."

When we arrived at the hospital, the doctors hadn't even touched him. They said, "We cannot treat him without money."

We begged them, but they didn't even want to hear about it. My mom didn't have much money for the treatment. Instead, she took 'lumba lumba' (traditional medicine) and put it on my brother's burned skin. He was sleeping while crying.

After that, my mom called my dad. He stopped working, and he arrived at the hospital; however, we had already returned home. He came home and told my mom to go back to the hospital. He took my little brother and held him in his arms. I was behind my mom. My father was a big, tall man. When we arrived at the hospital, as soon my father walked in, everybody was silent.

"Where is the doctor?" said my father.

"In his office," responded one of

the nurses.

“I want to see him right now,” my father said.

In his office, the doctor heard my father’s voice. He opened the door. My father looked at his face and carried my little brother into the office.

Finally, they treated him. They put cream on his hand, and the cream removed his skin. I couldn't look at it

twice because it was really disgusting.

On our way back home, my little brother was crying. I was crying, too. I felt guilty. Yet my parents couldn't blame me because I was very small. They admitted that it was their fault. They couldn't leave me with the baby. I felt guilty because when you are with a baby, you have to be watchful. Babies don't know what they are doing.

The day after, my little brother felt well. My mom and I went every day to the hospital for the dressing. After a couple of months, he was completely healed, but he has a lot of scars on his right hand. His hand looks like a leopard. Nowadays, it is his turn to take care of my kids, as I used to do for him. All my kids love him, and they are happy to live together with their uncle.



ESOL Voices a collection of stories written by ESOL students at Monroe Community College. This publication highlights our students MCC who come from all over the world. Look for a new story in the Tribune each month. We hope you will find these stories interesting and inspiring.

Katie Leite & Pamela Fornieri, ESOL Program, May 2017
