



The Girl with Three Legs: A Memoir

Soraya Miré

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When Soraya Miré was thirteen years old, the girls on the playground would taunt her, saying she could not play with them—not as long as she walked with three legs. Confused and hurt, she went to her mother, who mysteriously responded that the time had come for Soraya to receive her gift. Miré too soon discovers the horror of the “gift,” female genital mutilation (FGM), whereby a young girl’s healthy organs are chopped off not only to make her acceptable to a future husband but also to rein in her “wildness.”

In *The Girl with Three Legs*, Soraya Miré reveals what it means to grow up in a traditional Somali family, where girls’ and women’s basic human rights are violated on a daily basis. A victim of FGM and an arranged marriage to an abusive cousin, Miré was also witness to the instability of Somalia’s political landscape: her father was a general for the military dictator Mohamed Siad Barre, and her family moved in the inner circles of Somalia’s elite. In her journey to recover from the violence done to her, Miré realizes FGM is the ultimate child abuse, a ritual of mutilation handed down from mother to daughter and protected by the word “culture.”

Miré’s tale is a dramatic chronicle of the personal challenges she overcame, a testament to the empowerment of women, and a firsthand account of the violent global oppression of women and girls. Despite the horror she experienced, her words resonate with hope, humanity, and dignity. Her life story is one of inspiration and redemption.

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