

## Giorgis's travels: The incredible adventure...Part III

Written by Sirak Habtemichael

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Giorgis didn't leave any choice for the Somali authorities because he did not have any paperwork. Accordingly, it was decided for Giorgis to be deported to where he came from. "That was out of the question", Giorgis said to himself and cut a deal with the Somali authorities to allow him to work for a couple of months and make some money for his way back. Giorgis was not at all planning to go back home; In fact by then he had already developed the idea of going overseas.

While working in Mogadishu according to his deal with the authorities, Giorgis was looking for a way out. Making his way from the Mogadishu port was impossible because he was under surveillance; that is why he had to come up with another plan. Somehow, he decided to go south to Kismayo and then to Kenya. His day of departure was nearing and he had to think fast. He camouflaged himself out of Mogadishu and started his way south, where after hundreds of kilometers of ups and downs he finally arrived in Kismayo.

Kismayo was much better than Mogadishu for Giorgis; at least he met an old Eritrean man with visual impairment and was very helpful to him. "He was a nice old man and was amazed when he heard my story. He let me stay at his place and found me a job to make my living. But of course that was not what I wanted, I had to leave and find a way out. I studied Kismayo, but I found it hard to use the port for it was not that busy".

Accidentally, Giorgis thought of the Djibouti port. He thought it was busy and that he could find a way out from there. Again he had to travel all the way back through Mogadishu, Berbera in Somalia, where he had an experience from his previous travels, as well as Ogaden, Harer and Dredawa in Ethiopia to finally arrive in Djibouti. Dredawa was his final breakthrough to Djibouti. As if he had the needed travel documents, Giorgis bought train tickets and started the way to Djibouti. The journey was smooth till he reached the Djibouti checkpoint, but Giorgis knew exactly what he was doing. He jumped of the train a couple of kilometers from the checkpoint and traveled the rest of the way on foot without being caught.

Giorgis had already become an expert at blending into new society and so Djibouti was not that of a problem for him. "Djibouti is a small city with a relatively busy port. There, I was able to track a couple of Eritreans, one of which owned a laundry. That man was of great help to me; he fed me, gave me extra clothes and even allowed me to stay with him until I settle down. But of course, settling down in Djibouti was not my intension."

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Giorgis stayed in Djibouti for two weeks, during which he met an Eritrean man called Tekle Haileselasie who had a similar mission with Giorgis. They both studied the port carefully. They identified each one of the ships that were making port call, where they came from and where their destination was; they even studied what time they were departing.

One time, a very big Dutch ship called 'Sub Marinade' arrived. It came from Rotterdam, Holland, and had a cargo of some giraffes and other wild animals from Kenya to be transported to California, the US. "I said to myself, this is the one. It was going to the United States and I was able to study every detail about the ship. Tekle and I were doing everything in secret. We found out the ship was departing at 6 p.m. that same day, so we had to stay prepared. We stayed rumbling around the port without catching any attention and finally around four in the afternoon, we were able to sneak into the ship and find a perfect hideout under a crane".

The time of departure arrived exactly two hours after Giorgis and Tekle jumped into the ship. The ship blew its horn and departed the Djibouti port towards Bab El Mandab. Giorgis and Tekle were able to notice the fading port lights of Djibouti as the ship cruised further and further from the port. The journey was long and tiresome of course, besides they didn't have anything to eat. So Giorgis had to come up with a new idea. Giorgis said, "I was able to notice that there were two kinds of crew in the ship. One was an Indonesian crew ship of laborers and the other was a Dutch crew of marines. Just a few meters opposite to where we were hiding was cafeteria of the Indonesian crew and I thought we should break into their cafeteria during the night."

Somewhere around midnight, both Giorgis and Tekle sneaked out of their hideout and went directly into the cafeteria. They found rice and ate a whole lot load to keep them steady for the daytime. For three consecutive days, they used the same old technique to feed themselves. After three days of rice eating however, both of them were sick and tired of rice. Giorgis laughs remembering how naïve their actions were. "We couldn't bear eating rice for the entire journey, so we thought of going into the Dutch cafeteria, which was a bit further. And so I said to Tekle that I would go to the cafeteria and see what they have got."

Giorgis went in and what he saw was mouth watering variety of food including cheese, milk and bread. He grabbed a few things for himself and his friend, but just while he was making his way out the lights were turned on and a Dutch marine in his night clothes came face to face with Giorgis. The man screamed just at the sight of Giorgis and Giorgis told him he was hungry and needed something to eat. The Dutchman run off from the cafeteria and brought a handful of Dutch marines with him. They caught Giorgis and his friend, some kilometers before they completed their first phase of travel in Egypt. By then, they had already traveled around 2,100 kilometers.