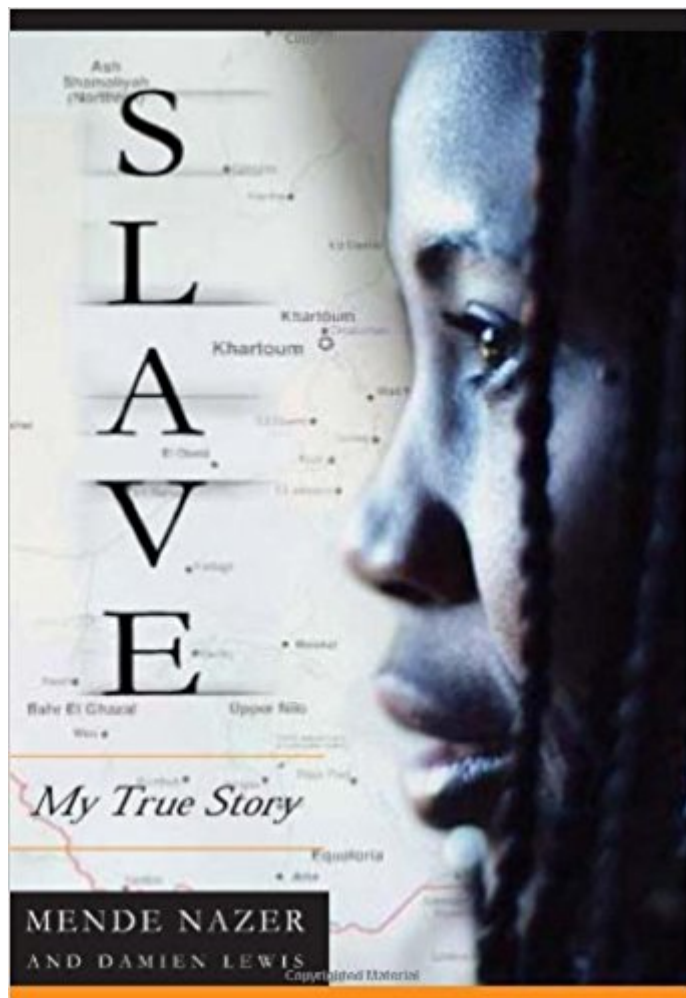


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# Slave: My True Story



## Synopsis

Mende Nazer lost her childhood at age twelve, when she was sold into slavery. It all began one horrific night in 1993, when Arab raiders swept through her Nuba village, murdering the adults and rounding up thirty-one children, including Mende. Mende was sold to a wealthy Arab family who lived in Sudan's capital city, Khartoum. So began her dark years of enslavement. Her Arab owners called her "Yebit," or "black slave." She called them "master." She was subjected to appalling physical, sexual, and mental abuse. She slept in a shed and ate the family leftovers like a dog. She had no rights, no freedom, and no life of her own. Normally, Mende's story never would have come to light. But seven years after she was seized and sold into slavery, she was sent to work for another master—a diplomat working in the United Kingdom. In London, she managed to make contact with other Sudanese, who took pity on her. In September 2000, she made a dramatic break for freedom. *Slave* is a story almost beyond belief. It depicts the strength and dignity of the Nuba tribe. It recounts the savage way in which the Nuba and their ancient culture are being destroyed by a secret modern-day trade in slaves. Most of all, it is a remarkable testimony to one young woman's unbreakable spirit and tremendous courage.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Born into the Karko tribe in the Nuba mountains of northern Sudan, Nazer has written a straightforward, harrowing memoir that's a sobering reminder that slavery still needs to be stamped out. The first, substantial section of the book concentrates on Nazer's idyllic childhood, made all the more poignant for the misery readers know is to come. Nazer is presented as intelligent and

headstrong, and her people as peaceful, generous and kind. In 1994, around age 12 (the Nuba do not keep birth records), Nazer was snatched by Arab raiders, raped and shipped to the nation's capital, Khartoum, where she was installed as a maid for a wealthy suburban family. (For readers expecting her fate to include a grimy factory or barren field, the domesticity of her prison comes as a shock.) To Nazer, the modern landscape of Khartoum could not possibly have been more alien; after all, she had never seen even a spoon, a mirror or a sink, much less a telephone or television set. Nazer's urbane tormentors-mostly the pampered housewife-beat her frequently and dehumanized her in dozens of ways. They were affluent, petty and calculatedly cruel, all in the name of "keeping up appearances." The contrast between Nazer's pleasant but "primitive" early life and the horrors she experienced in Khartoum could hardly be more stark; it's an object lesson in the sometimes dehumanizing power of progress and creature comforts. After seven years, Nazer was sent to work in the U.K., where she contacted other Sudanese and eventually escaped to freedom. Her book is a profound meditation on the human ability to survive virtually any circumstances. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

**\*Starred Review\*** The shock of this title is that it refers to what is happening right now, in Sudan, Africa, and also in the West. Ten years ago, when Mende Nazer was about 12 years old, she was captured in an Arab raid on her remote Nuba village, and, with about 30 other black Muslim children, she was sold into slavery. For eight years, she toiled as a domestic worker for a wealthy family in Khartoum, beaten and abused by her vicious owners, who then sent her to work for a relative in London, an important Sudanese diplomat. With only broken English and no friends, she remained locked up and isolated until finally she managed to escape and tell her story. And it doesn't end there: the U.K. refused her asylum ("Slavery is not persecution"). Now in 2003, the British government has given in to the global pressure of human-rights groups and allowed her to stay. Journalist Lewis helped her escape, and he spent months interviewing her. He tells her story in a clear, compelling, first-person narrative that conveys her young voice with powerful authenticity. Her memories of childhood in her Nuba village are idyllic (except for her brutal circumcision, described in graphic detail). But the core of the book is her daily labor and abuse as a house slave. The details are unforgettable, capturing both the innocence of the child and the world-weariness of one who has endured the worst. Hazel Rochman Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Mende Nazer was born into the Karko tribe, one of six Nuba tribes located in the Nuba Mountain region of Sudan. Mende Nazer lived with her siblings and parents until she was twelve years old. *Slave* is the autobiographical story of Mende Nazer's years in captivity and of her fight for freedom. The book is co-authored by Damien Lewis. Damien Lewis, a British journalist is well versed in the atrocities of war and slavery in Sudan. Lewis co-authored, *Tears of the Desert*, also in my list of reviews. Mende Nazer begins her story with the horrific night raid perpetrated upon her peaceful village, by Arab mujahidin. The purpose of the raid: to steal children for slavery. The practice of murder and kidnappings of the Nuba, Black Africans tribes, is not unknown to the Sudanese government. Mende Nazer reveals the raw, emotional story of her childhood, and of her years as a slave. Recommended.

*Slave* by Mende Nazer and Damien Lewis recounts the life of a young Nuba woman from the mountains of Sudan. The book begins Nazer's life story in the Nuba mountains where everything appears to be comfortable and pleasant. She goes to school, is the baby of a doting family, and is busy enjoying her extended family and friends. While there are some ugly setbacks in her life including an incredibly painful circumcision, she is largely happy. Nazer gives a thorough description of her life as a child. The reader has an incredible look into a largely remote area and people. She describes not only her childhood, but also the way of life this nation lives out even today. Nazer does not permit the outsider to view her or her people as a primitive group, but as a complex people who love and cherish their children, extended family and friends as much as any other people. Additionally, she talks of dress and fun activities and relations between her people-nation and others. Not everything is beautiful, as she explains when relating her experience with circumcision, and some painful occurrences due to the birth of her sister's first child. This small world is completely destroyed when Arab raiders arrive in her village and burn it to the ground, rounding up all the children they find. After being kidnapped, and experiencing an attempted rape, Nazer is then delivered to slave traders who sell her to a woman teetering between momentary sanity and extreme violence. Her life as a slave begins at the age of either twelve or thirteen, ages being largely unknown among her people. Due to her young age, lack of education and naivety, she is easily bound to her owner and never seeks escape. She keeps hoping she might one day see her family, but is uncertain if they are even alive after the village raid. Nazer is finally sent to England to live and work for her owner's sister. She finds out later that she is working for a Sudanese ambassador. *Slave* is an interesting book full of

both laughter and horror. Among the moments of incredible violence that sometimes leave her in the hospital, Nazer also makes the reader laugh with her discovery of certain commodities like running water. The book reads much like a novel, but with the tension that this is in fact an autobiography. It is a page-turner, so the reader should be prepared not to set it down. Moreover, it shows the insidiousness of human trafficking; how it is not only a “third world” problem; how it infiltrates the homes of those sworn to protect; and why traffickers prefer children. Rachael Williams-Mejri Editor Grace As Justice Magazine

I made the unfortunate mistake of buying this book used, and I ended up receiving a copy that had been written in on many of the pages, with words underlined and notes written in the margins. Except for that, the only thing I disliked about this book is the fact that it started on the day of the raid, and then went back in time to several years before the raid. I much prefer my stories to be told chronologically, and find it rather annoying when authors sucker people into continuing to read by putting a major, traumatic event first only to go back and explain the events leading up to it. That being said, this is an amazing story. It's incredibly hard to believe things like this still go on either unnoticed or ignored. I finished this in one day and about half the night--I just couldn't put it down. The way Mende's native culture is described is very vivid, and for me it was easy to imagine and feel everything the Nuba people were. The fact that her childhood seemed so carefree and happy made the raid all the more traumatizing. Just as a forewarning to those of you who haven't read it: there are parts in the story that are VERY graphic, and it includes some rather controversial topics (like circumcision and very young girls getting engaged/married). There are instances of rape and other appalling abuse. This is not a book for those who can't handle reading about that sort of thing. The amount of detail there is makes it difficult to read (emotionally). It's difficult to articulate how profound this story is without spoiling it. Anyone who hasn't read it should.

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