



Sara Shewangizaw
04/05/1952 - 05/15/2020



Sara Shewangizaw was born on April 5th, 1952 in Addis Abeba, Ethiopia to her mother Yewebdar Abebe and her father Shewangizaw Belete. As her only surviving daughter, her mother was very protective, and they were very attached to each other. When she was a child, Sara had 4 dreams that she shared with her mother at different times, the first dream she had she saw herself wearing a diamond ring and her mother told her she would have a daughter one day, the 2nd dream she had she saw herself wearing a ruby ring and again her mother told her she would have a 2nd daughter, the 3rd dream she had she saw herself inside a church and a big bell from the top of the church falling onto her head and her mother told her she would have a powerful son and the 4th dream she had she saw herself digging the ground deeper and deeper and pulling out a very big and ancient church cross and her mother told her she would have another powerful son. Sure enough years later at the age of 19, she met Fikre Mariam Million who loved and adored her and knew at first sight she will be his wife one day. They got married not long after and one by one she had the 4 children she dreamt about years before, 2 girls followed by 2 boys.

Sara was a woman of so much hidden talents, creativity and gifts. She was beyond beautiful, words cannot describe. Her beauty made her a legend and etched forever in the minds of many who admired her. She was so regal and classy that she looked like a movie star and a model. She loved beautiful dresses, jewelries, perfumes, eye liners, lipstick and shoes. She loved looking good and being stylish in her own creative and trend setting way. She was very funny and witty and will say things that will make one laugh out loud because it was always unexpected but yet timely and hilariously fitting. She was very intelligent and although she never had continuing education, as a kid as well as sporadically as an adult, any class she took, she always got straight As. She passed her driving license at first try right after moving to the United States when she barely spoke English at the time and her US citizenship exam which she studied on her own.

She was very thoughtful and incredibly generous. Every holiday both the American and Ethiopian, she would call everyone she knew one by one from her small little phone book that she kept very closely. She would start making her calls very early in the morning so she can be the first one to wish everyone happy holidays. She was deeply intuitive, empathetic and loyal. She was friends to all, she comforted and consoled so many. She would spend hours on the

phone with friends in need one after another, as they confided in her their deep secrets and challenges. She gave everyone who needs her, her time and shoulders and wiped many people's tears and tried her hardest to bring smile to them and make them feel understood. It was very important to her that they knew they had someone they can count on, especially as they, like us were struggling to adjust in a new country, all the while was she was battling her own depression and anxiety, feeling unloved and unwanted, despite being loved by everyone who knew her or even saw a glimpse of her.

Sara was a woman of deep devotion and love of God. She visited so many churches from Virginia, to DC to Maryland and had endless rosaries, bibles and church pamphlets and pictures of Jesus, Mariam (virgin Mary) and all the angels from St. Gabriel, St. Michael to St. Urael and all the other angels in between, all of whom she always turned to help her cope with debilitating depression and anxiety. She endured unimaginable suffering from deep untreatable depression majority of her life and covid-19 the last 3 weeks of her life. But through it all, God was always by her side and no doubt after she passed her test of faith here on earth, he took his daughter back and welcomed her into heaven accompanied by all the angels she prayed to right into her loving husband's arms whom she carried in her heart the last 18 years they were apart.

Although we will miss her tremendously, we will always remember and honor her, as long as we live. Through each of us she will always live. Her legacy will be carried on by her 8 grandchildren she was blessed enough to see, 4 boys and 4 girls. Rest in peace in heaven, our beautiful, free spirited mother who was a sister, wife, aunt, mother-in-law, grandmother and friend to all.



My mother was my very first best friend and older sister I never had. She was my epitome of beauty, I idolized her and loved her so much and wanted to be her. Like her, all my life I wanted to marry a man like my father and have 4 kids, 2 girls and 2 boys. I followed her everywhere she went. I followed her so much that when I was a child, I fell on my face and cracked open my skin under my eyebrow that left a small scar. When I got older she told me how I got that scar and we used to say that was my proof of love and whenever she felt unloved, I will just show her my scar and we would laugh.

When I was a child the longest games I ever played was pretending to be her and putting on her shoes and carrying her purse. Since I was a child up until my late twenties, I would always go to the bathroom with her and we would spend so much time in there talking, she would tell me all her secrets and her stories and when I got older I began to tell her all my secrets and stories. She cultivated a relationship where I tell her everything and keep nothing a secret because she believed a mother should always be someone you feel the safest and the first person you share all of you are and want to be with and there is nothing a child can do that a mother should ever judge nor condemn. She was my diary that I shared everything with just as I was her diary that she shared everything with.

I was her protector and played a role of a friend and a therapist the majority of my life. I loved everything she loved, the kind of music she loved I loved, the artists she loved I loved. Any place she went I went with her, I was her shadow, whenever she went to visit anyone at their house, at hospitals and to comfort anyone who lost someone, I was always right there with her. When she want to meet up with her friends at restaurants or go on a night out to listen to Ethiopian music, she always took me along. Even though I was surrounded by all adults and there was no one my age to play or talk to, I loved being there because what mattered to me was that I was with her. When I got older and started driving, the same way she took me everywhere, I took her everywhere with me too.

I treated her like she was my child, I constantly kissed and hugged her, I called her all kinds of cute names like she was my child, I called her cutie pie, mommisha, sarish, sarisha. When we talk on the phone I would blow her so many kisses that my friends used to think that I was talking to my boyfriend and they all used to be so shocked when I would tell them it was my mom. I feared her dying all my life, that when she was asleep I would check her breathing, I remember once when I was a child in Ethiopia and once when we were in America, she was laying on her bed and she did not respond to me when I called her so I screamed on the top of my lungs.

I believed her if I loved her really hard that my love will save her from the deep depression and anxiety she had that robbed her so much of her life and so much of our life with her, but no matter how much and how deep I loved her, my love was not enough to save her. Depression and anxiety, not only robbed her of her life and robbed us of her but the world was robbed of her many hidden talents and gifts not fully realized, she was an amazing writer and poet, she was so gifted with her hands that anything breaks, she will take it apart and fix it TVs, phones and any kinds of electronics. Even while she was in a nursing home the last few years of her life, whenever her phone broke and she was anxious to get it fixed, she would fix it herself before the

technicians had the chance to fix it and she shared with me how they would kid around with her and tell her that they were afraid she may take their jobs away from them.

Sarish I love you very much, always have, always will. I will miss you greatly, as much as I was your therapist, you were mine too, you always gave me the best advice from your own experience. Thank you for teaching me how to be empathetic, how to love, how to pray, how to be a devoted wife and in your challenges and suffering, you taught me the value and dire necessity of self-love, confidence and self-care. May you rest in eternal peace finally and be fully the free spirit you always were on earth. May you reunite with your loving husband and have a 2nd wedding and honeymoon as you left us on the month of your 49th wedding anniversary.

Love,
Your daughter Mariam Fikre



Sarish, I love you yene Enat, yene Konjo. I wish you knew how loved and adored you are and how much you have impacted each of us and those who knew you far and wide. I am so proud of you and your strength to withstand so much pain and loss and still have a guiding light and love in your heart. I have learned how to love, to give and to overcome so much because of you. Sarish, you were not only my mother, but in some ways my sister and daughter too. You were a beautiful mysterious figure to me as a young child but we built the strongest bond as I grew up older and started to understand more. We shared a bond of searching for life's meaning and purpose as we shared endless tears and joy. You always believed in me even when I had no clue about my own value and worth. In some ways, I picked up where your dreams left off as I grew to share them with you on our endless talks, tears and laughter.

Sarish, I miss you so much. You had an open heart that allowed you to feel the pain and sorrow of others and you had the ability to love with such warmth and compassion. You embraced others and uplifted their spirit even when it came at the expense of yourself. Yet, no one understood the dept of your own sorrow and pain that even our love could not fulfill. I remember as a little kid bartering with God to give up my pinky if HE would just allow you to be fully happy. My endless need to make you happy expanded my heart in ways I am just now beginning to understand. Yet, despite what you were feeling, you smiled to the outside world and got up every day to raise us the best way you could. You sacrificed your endless dreams and freedom to fulfill your role as wife and mother. I want you to know that you did very well. You raised us well and you showed us how to love deeply no matter what. You will be forever etched in my heart for the rest of my days.

I will see you in the birds that fly, I will see you in the sun that sets, I will see you in the plants that grow wild and in the trees that stand tall even in the darkest storms. I will see you in the faces and dreams of my children and in the laughter of all your grandkids. I want you to know that you no longer have to worry or stress. I promise you that I will live every day to its fullest and feel your presence and spirit wherever I go and in all that I ever do. I will love you to the depth of my soul and will keep your memory alive in my children so that they may pass it on to their children. I am forever grateful to be your daughter and all the lessons I have learned about life. I will miss you terribly but even as I wipe my tears I will smile forever more for I will know that your spirit is soaring freely and will have found eternal peace. May your soul rest in heavenly peace and may your presence always be with us.

Love,
Your daughter Rahel Fikre



Sarish, I struggle writing this letter to you in your absence as much as I struggled saying them to you while you were with us. It is precisely because you were my best friend and the source of my happiness that I found it so hard to accept your reality once your burdens multiplied after dad's death. Though as much as my mind tried to turn away, my heart would not let me forget the ways we used to bond through struggles and moments of laughter. Even now, these moments we shared come and go in staccatos, the times I would sit in the front seat while you drove around Addis listening to tapes of Kuku Sebsebe, Mahmoud and Tilahun. The memories I have are as fleeting as the memories I have of your smile. In a lot of ways, I have been grieving your loss long before we said our last goodbyes, I desperately wanted the mom who was the center of my life, the mom who sheltered me from the storms of a new country, the mom whose food I always craved, the mom who gave me advice, the mom who always found ways to pick me up.

There is a reason I learned to be funny, it was to bring back your laughter, a way to wipe away your tears you kept buried inside. I never knew back then how much pain you carried within, but with each passing loss and the wisdom gained through life's wrenching education, I began to realize the depth of your pains. But the Teddy who once coaxed smiles on your face by telling jokes and mimicking characters on TV was unable to do so, where I once found shelter in your hugs I learned to seek comfort in flight. It's only now in reflection that I realize the profound nature of your courage, in spite of your crucible you raised four kids who all went on to attain the American dream. Martiq, Rahel, Million and I owe our compassion, our desire for justice, our ability to analyze and our drive to seek a better world to you. I told you when I first introduced you to Betty that the catalyst for our connection was a letter I wrote extoling the virtues of women. But if you were not there to teach me the value of caring for others, I would not have been able to write that letter to begin with. Everyone always talked about your beauty and the grace you carried yourself with, but your beauty was far from skin deep, it was your heart and your empathy towards others that was truly astounding. It was this same heart that refused to give in and fought off this plague that is darkening our world, your light flickered on long enough to teach us one last lesson. You brought us together again and repainted the image of sadness with memories of your strength, our loss is Fikrish's gain, the journey you started with him before we were born you now renew in heaven. I love you Sarish, may you rest in eternal peace.

Love,
Your son Teodros Fikre



Dearest Sara (my loving mother):

Thank you for the life you gave me, nurtured, like a gentle gardener, by your love and spirit. You were the soil in which I grew; the sun that always radiated warmth and light, even when storm clouds gathered; and the rain that soaked me in kindness.

I was not the easiest of sons. I regularly came home with injuries that you would patiently tend. New cuts and scrapes from playing too rough with my friends? No worries. You'd give me rubbing alcohol, Neosporin, and a band-aid and send me right back out the door, never standing in the way of my need to be free. I remember the time I came home with one missing front tooth and the other turned sideways after I fell, face first, into a tree after (again) playing too rough with my friends. You did not lecture me. Instead, you held my hand and gave me a towel to hold while you pulled out the still-secured sideways tooth — you knew that my pain would be all the lecture I ever needed.

This is one of the things that, in hindsight, I admire and love most about you as my mother: you always gave me space to grow, to experience life and learn lessons on my own. Sure, you would counsel me, guide me, and, at times, plead with me. But you always recognized that you were raising an eventual adult, a man — even if if you wished, secretly, that I would stay forever young.

Now, dearest Sara, the tables have turned. It is I who must come to grips with the fact that your spirit is free — even as I wish, quite openly, that you had more time to see you grandchildren grow, and to welcome great grandchildren.

I must give you the space you need to grow in spirit, just as you did for me, your spirited son. Just know that you can always find comfort in our memories, which we will share when our spirits meet in my dream. And since you live in my heart, you will be with me, in real time, for every adventure — you no longer have to wait for my stories.

I can never repay the life you gave me. But through me, I hope that you are able to feel the afterglow of your enduring love, which resides in me. To the best of my ability, I will try to be a gentle gardener; rich soil; a reliable sun; and nourishing rain — just as you were to me.

Sincerely, your loving son,
Million Fikre



Saraye you are not only my sister but you are also my best friend, I love you. I am going to miss you. You are always on my mind.

Love,
your sister Terry



My Memories with Sara Every Tuesday

The first Tuesday I surprised her I just walked into her room after not seeing her since we were teenagers.

She was shocked and very surprised. We spent our day together after all those years crying and enjoying each other's presence.

After that first Tuesday we spent time just talking old memories and friendship, every single Tuesday I went to visit her.

The last Tuesday I got to visit her was March 16th where we were forced to say goodbye to each other because of covid-19.

After that day she called me often to reminded me to stay home, just like Sara to worry about others.

Sara loved her kids and talked about them all the time; she would tell me how her son was a comedian.

Sara was a beautiful woman. When we use to walk on the street in Addis, I never saw one car driving by without turning to look at her.

Sara chose to join her loving husband whom she missed very much and leave us behind. God bless them both.

Goodbye till we meet again my beautiful friend. Love you and miss you.

Your friend and sister,

Martha Kebede





Reunited at last, rest in peace together

