



The Bitter Side of Sweet

By Tara Sullivan

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For fans of Linda Sue Park and *A Long Way Gone*, two young boys must escape a life of slavery in modern-day Ivory Coast

Fifteen-year-old Amadou counts the things that matter. For two years what has mattered are the number of cacao pods he and his younger brother, Seydou, can chop down in a day. This number is very important. The higher the number the safer they are because the bosses won't beat them. The higher the number the closer they are to paying off their debt and returning home to Moke and Auntie. Maybe. The problem is Amadou doesn't know how much he and Seydou owe, and the bosses won't tell him. The boys only wanted to make some money during the dry season to help their impoverished family. Instead they were tricked into forced labor on a plantation in the Ivory Coast; they spend day after day living on little food and harvesting beans in the hot sun—dangerous, backbreaking work. With no hope of escape, all they can do is try their best to stay alive—until Khadija comes into their lives.

She's the first girl who's ever come to camp, and she's a wild thing. She fights bravely every day, attempting escape again and again, reminding Amadou what it means to be free. But finally, the bosses break her, and what happens next to the brother he has always tried to protect almost breaks Amadou. The old impulse to run is suddenly awakened. The three band together as family and try just once more to escape.

Tara Sullivan, the award-winning author of the astounding *Golden Boy*, delivers another powerful, riveting, and moving tale of children fighting to make a difference and be counted. Inspired by true-to-life events happening right now, *The Bitter Side of Sweet* is an exquisitely written tour de force not to be missed.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Gr 7 Up—Escape for 15-year-old Amadou and his eight-year-old brother, Seydou, doesn't seem likely. The boys were hoping to pay off the family's debt but instead were tricked into picking cacao daily. They are forced to meet unreasonable quotas or be beaten or left with no supper. The boys see little hope for freedom until Khadija shows up. She is the first girl to enter the camp, and she is a fighter. The three band together to escape. The trio are appalled to learn that the cacao pods that they were forced to harvest are used to create candy that is enjoyed by rich children. This story is not only intense but also educational, as listeners might think twice about the chocolate that they purchase, where it comes from, and what sacrifices were made to obtain it. J.D. Jackson's narration relays the intensity of each day faced by the children. VERDICT Readers of *Copper Sun* by Sharon Draper will especially enjoy this title, as it sheds light on a true problem on the Ivory Coast. ["An engaging story that will engender empathy in readers": SLJ 1/16 starred review of the Putnam book.]—Karen Alexander, Lake Fenton High School; Linden, MI

Review

Praise for *The Bitter Side of Sweet*: **An ALA Notable Children's Book – 2017**

“A **gripping and painful portrait** of modern-day child slavery in the cacao plantations of the Ivory Coast.”—*The Wall Street Journal*

★ “A **tender, harrowing story** of family, friendship, and the pursuit of freedom.”—*Kirkus Reviews*, **starred review**

★ “In crisp, accessible prose, Sullivan draws readers into a most compelling story of survival under unspeakable hardship, bravery, and teamwork... **Absorbing and important.**”—*Booklist*, **starred review**

★ “[A] **heart-wrenching survival tale.**”—*Publishers Weekly*, **starred review**

★ “An **engaging story** that will engender empathy in readers.”—*School Library Journal*, **starred review**

★ “Curriculum connections abound and even reluctant readers will be drawn to the **suspenseful plot and distinctive characters.**”—*SLC*, **starred review**

“**First-world readers will learn much about how their pleasures are underwritten by the labor of their third-world peers...** The resolution...is an as-good-as-it-gets kind of compromise that leaves much room for the activism advocated for in the author's note that follows.”—*The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*

“This **beautiful story** of love triumphing over cruelty and profit stands out as **an excellent book discussion choice or classroom study.**”—*VOYA*

About the Author

Tara Sullivan is the author of the award-winning and critically acclaimed *Golden Boy*. She was born in India and spent her childhood living in Bangladesh, Ecuador, Bolivia, and the Dominican Republic with her parents, who were international aid workers. She received a BA in Spanish literature and cognitive science from the University of Virginia, and an MA in Latin American Studies and an MPA in nonprofit management from Indiana University. She currently lives with her family in Massachusetts.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Rebecca Morales:

What do you in relation to book? It is not important together with you? Or just adding material when you require something to explain what yours problem? How about your extra time? Or are you busy person? If you don't have spare time to do others business, it is give you a sense of feeling bored faster. And you have free time? What did you do? Every individual has many questions above. They must answer that question simply because just their can do that. It said that about e-book. Book is familiar on every person. Yes, it is right. Because start from on pre-school until university need this specific *The Bitter Side of Sweet* to read.

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James Rodriguez:

The Bitter Side of Sweet can be one of your starter books that are good idea. Many of us recommend that straight away because this reserve has good vocabulary which could increase your knowledge in vocab, easy to understand, bit entertaining but delivering the information. The copy writer giving his/her effort to place every word into enjoyment arrangement in writing *The Bitter Side of Sweet* but doesn't forget the main position, giving the reader the hottest in addition to based confirm resource info that maybe you can be considered one of it. This great information may drawn you into brand new stage of crucial contemplating.

Timothy Rhine:

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