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It took Ayanle three days to travel from Egypt to Greece by boat. Just as he and the other passengers had begun preparing for arrival, they saw another ship heading towards them. At that moment the smugglers told them to be quiet.

"I heard gunshots and the captain told us Somalis to hide in the basement," Ayanle recalls. "The shooting led to an explosion. People were afraid for their lives."

The better life Ayanle was hoping to find quickly turned into a nightmare as he found himself caught in the midst of a fire which would end up burning his entire body as he tried to escape. Unable to bear the pain he jumped into the sea and struggled to stay afloat, swimming, as a last resort, towards the very ship that was shooting at them.

"Imagine being a third-degree burn victim," says Ayanle. "No one can tolerate that amount of pain in the sea. I saw my life flash before my eyes... but I had to continue fighting for my life. Luckily I could swim, but the others couldn't. I could hear them screaming."

As soon as Ayanle and the other survivors were rescued, they were rushed to a hospital.

"The next day I woke up with my entire body covered in white lotion," Ayanle remembers. "There was a police officer standing outside. He asked what I needed and I told him a glass of

water. He gave me a glass of water and the doctors came to check on me. That is the last thing I recall.”

Ayanle fell into a coma which lasted nearly one month. When he awoke he couldn't remember anything, he couldn't eat, and the treatments were far from over. As his condition improved, he was placed in a camp where he joined the many others waiting in hope of being granted asylum.

“The asylum application process takes ages,” Ayanle says. “You lose your self-confidence along the way.”

At the time of this interview, Ayanle was still awaiting his asylum decision in Sweden.

Listen to Ayanle recount his painful journey to

Europe.

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