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AIDS ORPHANS IN TOGO

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Summary :

This is a story about an orphanage welcoming kids whose parents died of AIDS, in the northern part of Togo. Between the walls of this institution, they rebuild themselves in a friendly and intimate atmosphere. Three different series make this work: daily life at the orphanage, portraits of kids, still life from the orphanage.

Synopsis :

“Living in Hope” was founded in 1999 by Marie-Stella Kouak, a catholic sister born in Dapaong (Togo) in 1967 who went to Belgium to attend a nursing school. A handful of volunteers joined her to assist those who suffered from AIDS, who were more and more numerous in the remote Savanes region of Northern Togo. As antiretroviral therapy wasn’t available in Togo until 2006, she spent her first years organizing funerals and trying to provide a dignified death to those who were treated as outcasts by the rest of the community.

Soon, the sister was faced with the dire issue of the remaining children with no one to care for them. This drove her to open a first orphanage called Saint-Augustin in 2004 and a bigger one in 2010. The latter, Sainte-Monique, hosts younger children of both sex and girls. The following photos tell the story of the life in Saint-Monique’s house, inside the wall of this house, kids with hard stories found a new family, Here, older girls take care of younger kids and become their «big sisters ». They take care of almost everything: cooking, dishwashing, laundry, for them and their “little sibling”, not to mention school and homework. There is only one adult, Mama Rita, who is supervising them.

Besides the two orphanages, the association supports 1250 children living in foster families. It also runs a shop, a sewing workshop and a farm that generate income for the charity. In 2017, a new health center was inaugurated and more is planned for the coming months: a maternity hospital and a primary school.

Marie-Stella’s priority is that “her sons and daughters” get a good education, a qualification and a stable life so that they won’t reproduce risky behaviors that would spread the disease and create new orphans.

Informations :

Story shot in February 2013, December 2015 and December 2019.

Captions can be extended to create a “story”. In case of need all the first name of the kids can be refound through the Sister.

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Sister Marie Stella Kouak, the founder of the NGO and the orphanage

DAILY LIFE IN THE ORPHANAGE



Evening time, girls in charge of the babies are washing them before dinner.



“Harmattan” season
is starting, because of
wind and dust kids can
have some respiratory
problems



So girls are watering the soil to avoid dust to fly.

Girls are preparing “la pâte”, a corn and millet staple eaten with different sauces. They cook in an outdoor kitchen, using wood.



All the girls are taking care of their hair tonight, they wash it and use some kind of beauty products.



A few days before Christmas, the association is having a Christmas party for the kids. They will sing, two Misses will be elected and some gifts will be offered to the winners of some contests (dance, recitation, etc). Early in the morning, older girls are putting some makeup on young girls.





Once older girls have left for school, the younger kids are watching some cartoons on TV.



It's the end of the afternoon, girls are bathing the young kids they are in taking care of.



It's the end of the afternoon, girls are bathing the young kids they are in taking care of.



Water is thrown in the street in front of the orphanage after the bath.



Daily scene in the yard
of the orphanage.



Girls are cleaning the seeds of millet and corn. Then it will be transformed in some kind of flour before being used for the preparation of "la pâte".



Daily scene in the yard of the orphanage. Kids play with the bike of a visitor.



A young girl from the orphanage, behind is the wood used for cooking.



Kids play in the outdoor classroom used for evening tutoring.



Kids attend evening tutoring before the exams.



Kids attend evening tutoring before the exams.



In 2013, Marie was in the hospital, she felt very weak. Sister Marie Stella was scared that she would be the first girl living in the orphanage to die. But she recovered perfectly.



Marie, 2 years later at school. She was not able to go to school during one year but she recovered perfectly.



In one of the schools where the kids from the orphanage study.

Teenagers are doing their homework either late after 8pm or early around 5am. During the exam period they have less responsibilities and have more time to work.



In the sewing workshop where the girls who can not go to school learn a job. They are often girls who arrived late at the orphanage and where not sent to school before.





Hélène resting in her bed.



Girls sleep in dormitory
accommodating 8 to 10
people.



A girl installed her mattress in the corridor to have more air.



Girls wake up very early, around 4 or 5 so very often they take a nap in the morning



In one of the dormitories, the temperature was so high this day that this girl decided to take a nap on the floor.



Girls prepare for the special “Christmas” party.



Girls prepare for the special “Christmas” party.



Two girls play with felt-pen..





Marie-Françoise is making her sewing exercise for high school



A boy plays in the yard
with a homemade toy.





In the study room



A girl plays on the benches of the outdoor chapel.



A girl during the daily prayer. It is held outside around a small cave dedicated to "Notre dame de Lourdes", or sometimes also in the small chapel in the yard.



Every evening, voluntary kids pray with Mama Rita, the only adult in charge of the house.



A girl take care of a newborn who arrived very recently at the orphanage.





Evening time, girls prepare food.



Evening time, girls are preparing food for the following day, they clean seeds for the preparation of “la pâte”.



Evening time, around the “kitchen”, older kids are helping younger ones to eat.



A young girl wash dishes
after the meal

Morning time, very early,
kids just woke up and
girls are washing the
kids with the hot water
they just warmed.





A girl feeds a baby.



Evening time, girls pre-
pare food.



A girl prepares food in the kitchen.



The choir of the orphan-
age during a rehearsal



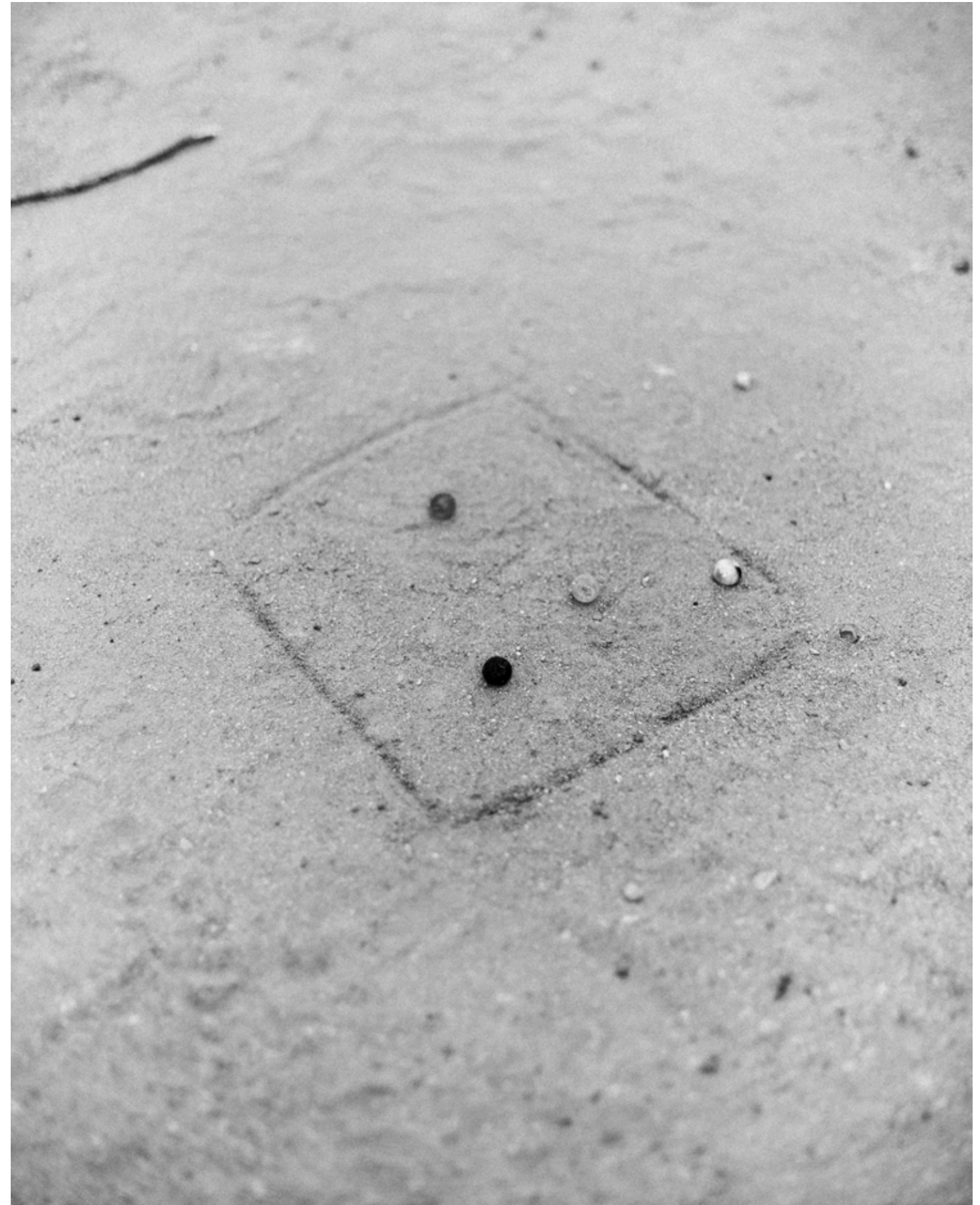
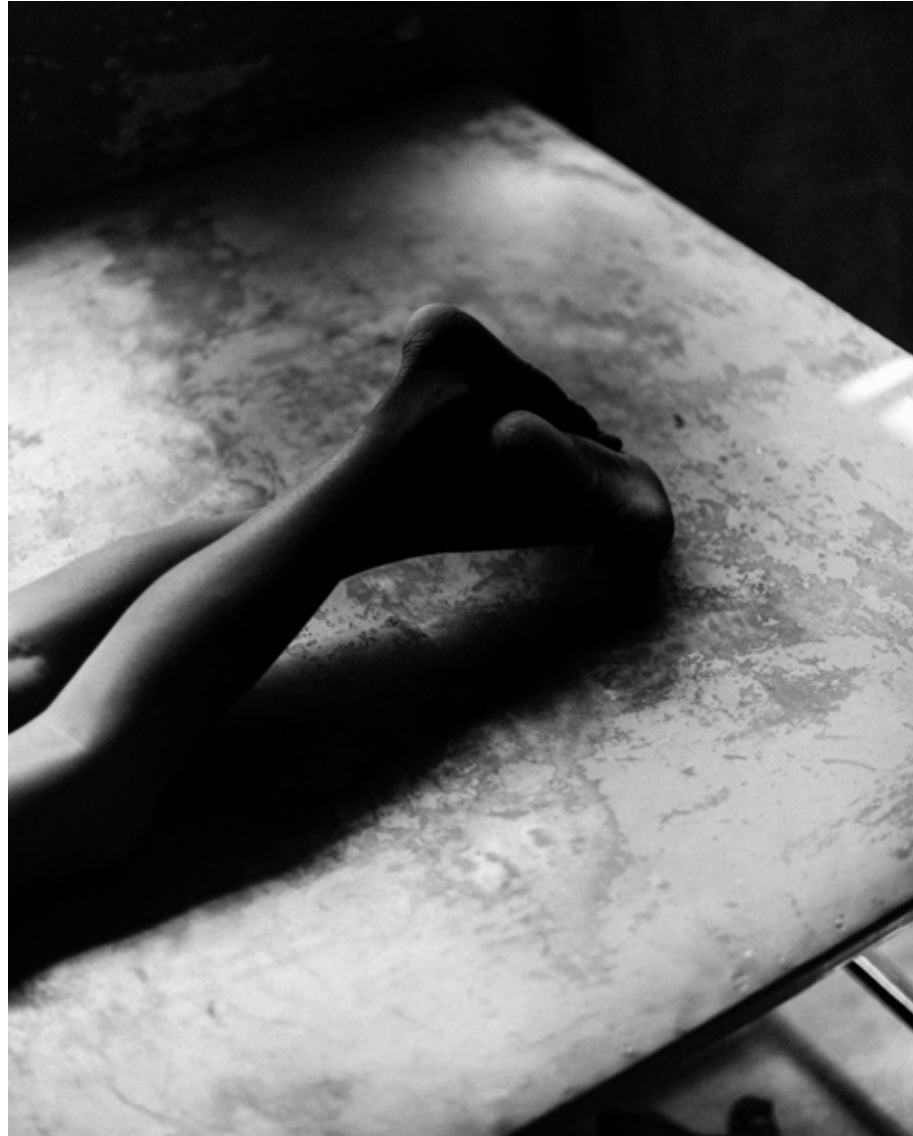
Girls watch the choir of the orphanage during a rehearsal



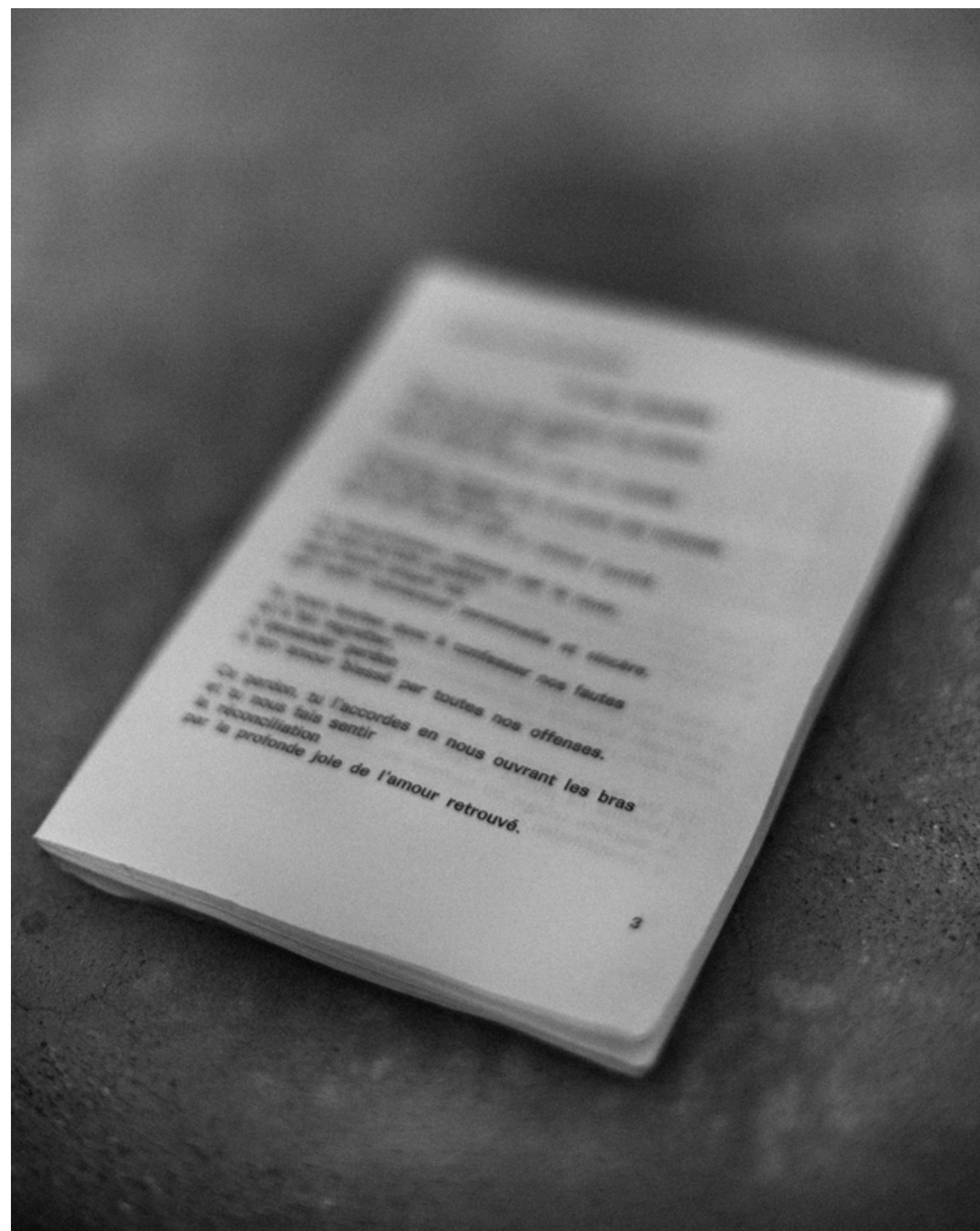
Two girls are preparing for the prayer of the following day.



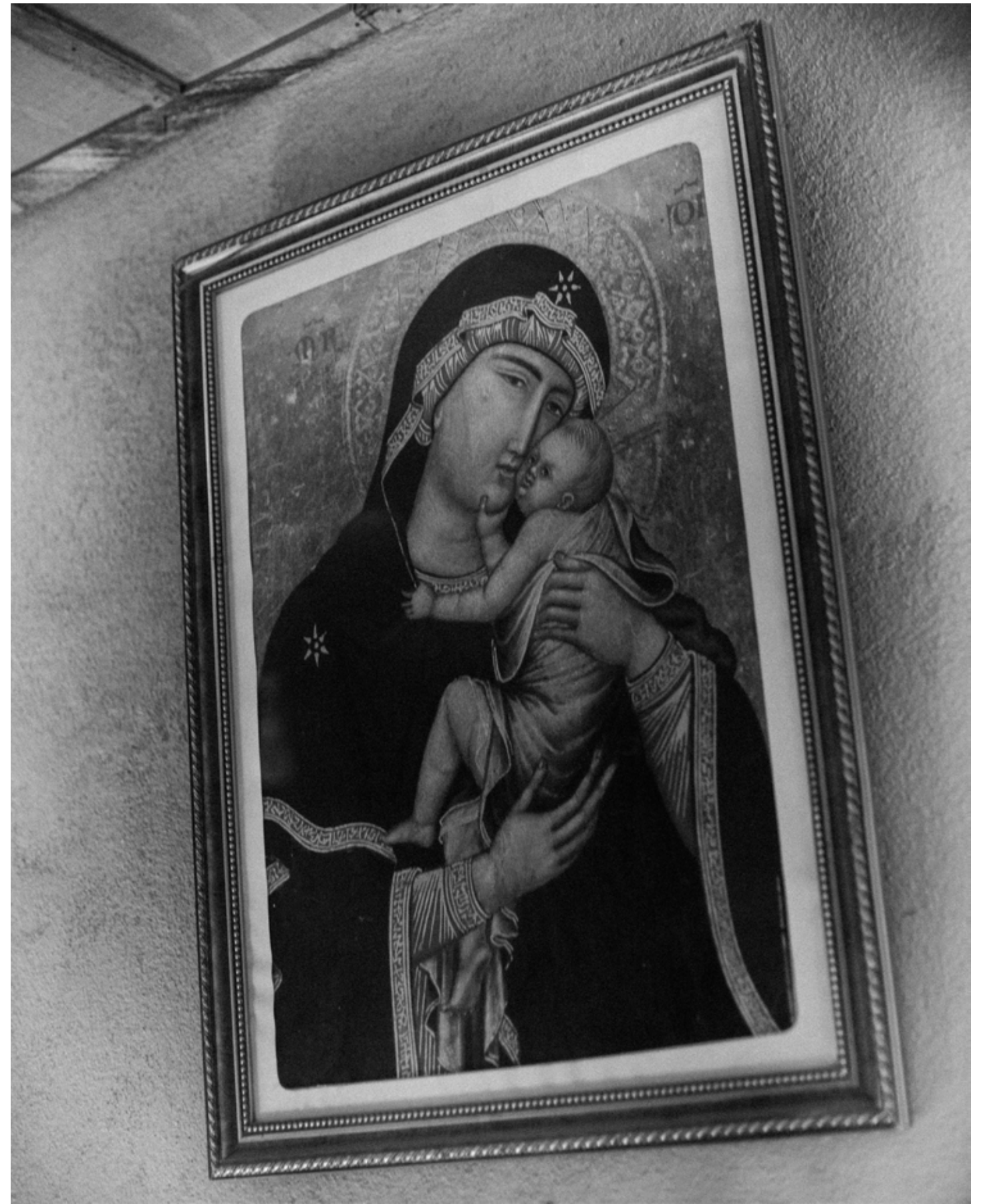
STILL LIFE



left - The feet of a kid during his nap
right - A game played by the kids in the yard



left - A cross hanging on a mosquito net.
right - A prayer book. Last sentence says "par la profonde joie de l'amour retrouvé" which can be translated as: "by the deep joy of the regained love"



In the study room, a painting of Mary and Jesus.



Cauldrons in which girls are preparing food



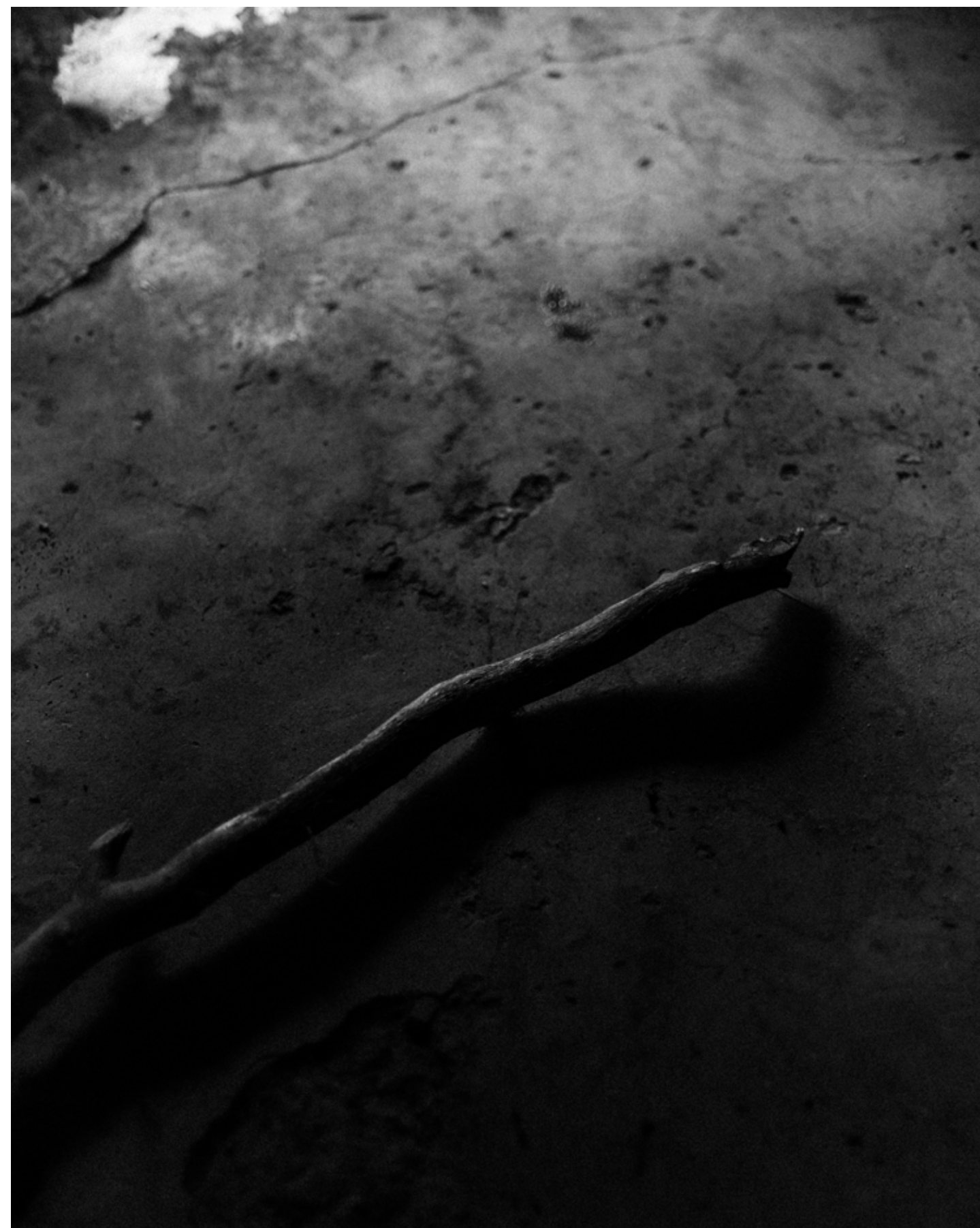
The tools used by the girls to clean the corn and millet seeds.



Corn seeds



This stone is used to crush spices in the kitchen



left - the instrument used to mix "la pâte", a very heavy piece of wood
right - firewood



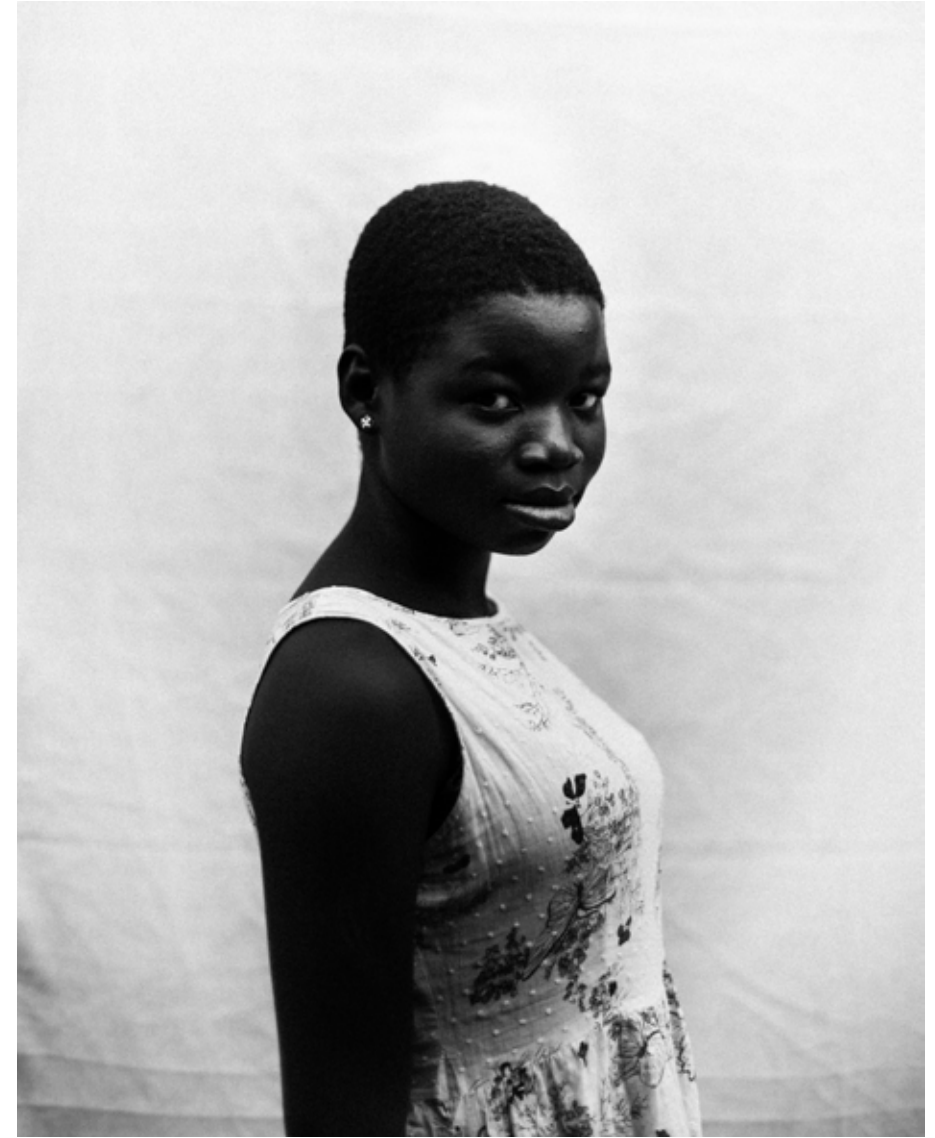
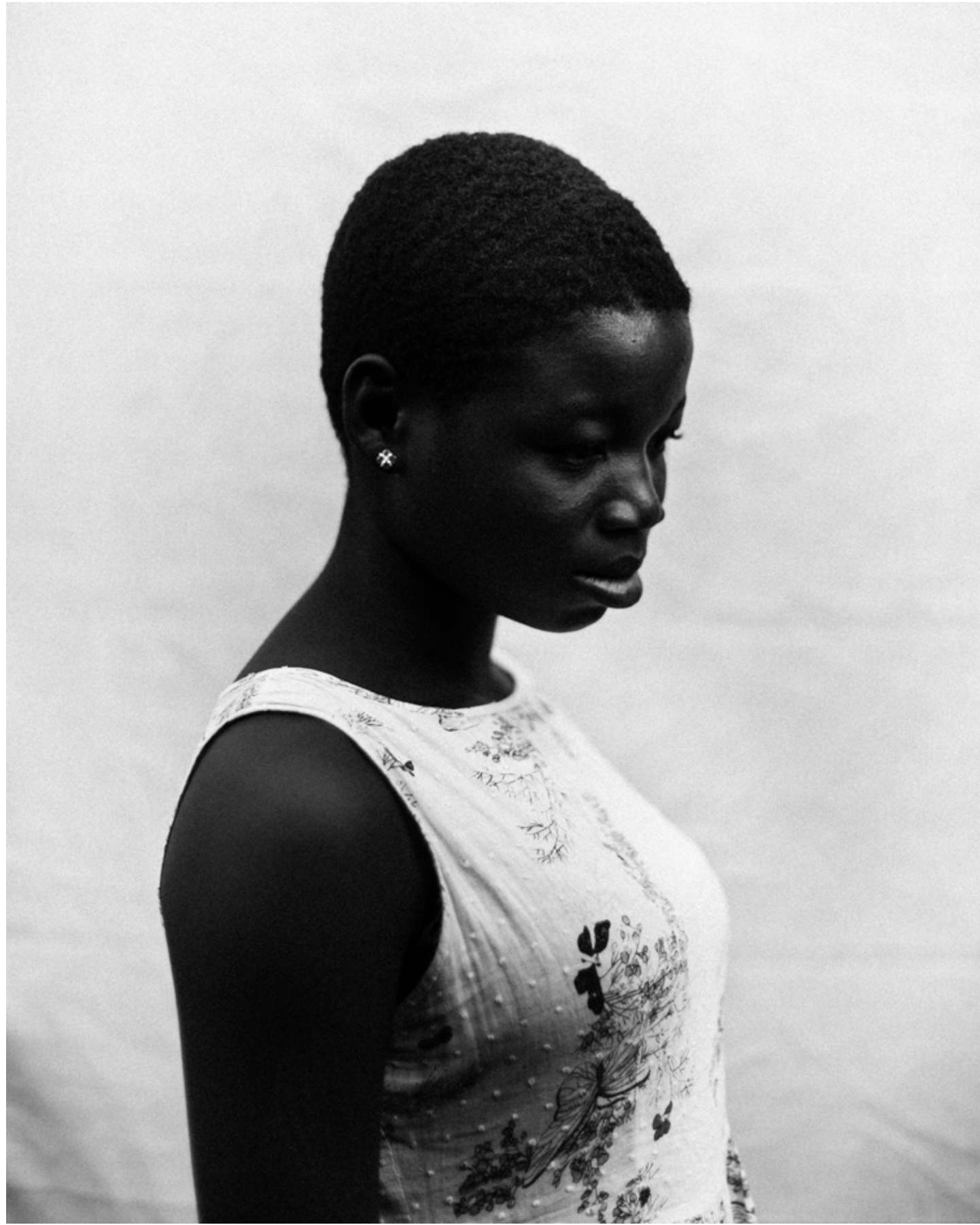
Homemade broom...

PORTRAITS OF KIDS OF THE ORPHANAGE

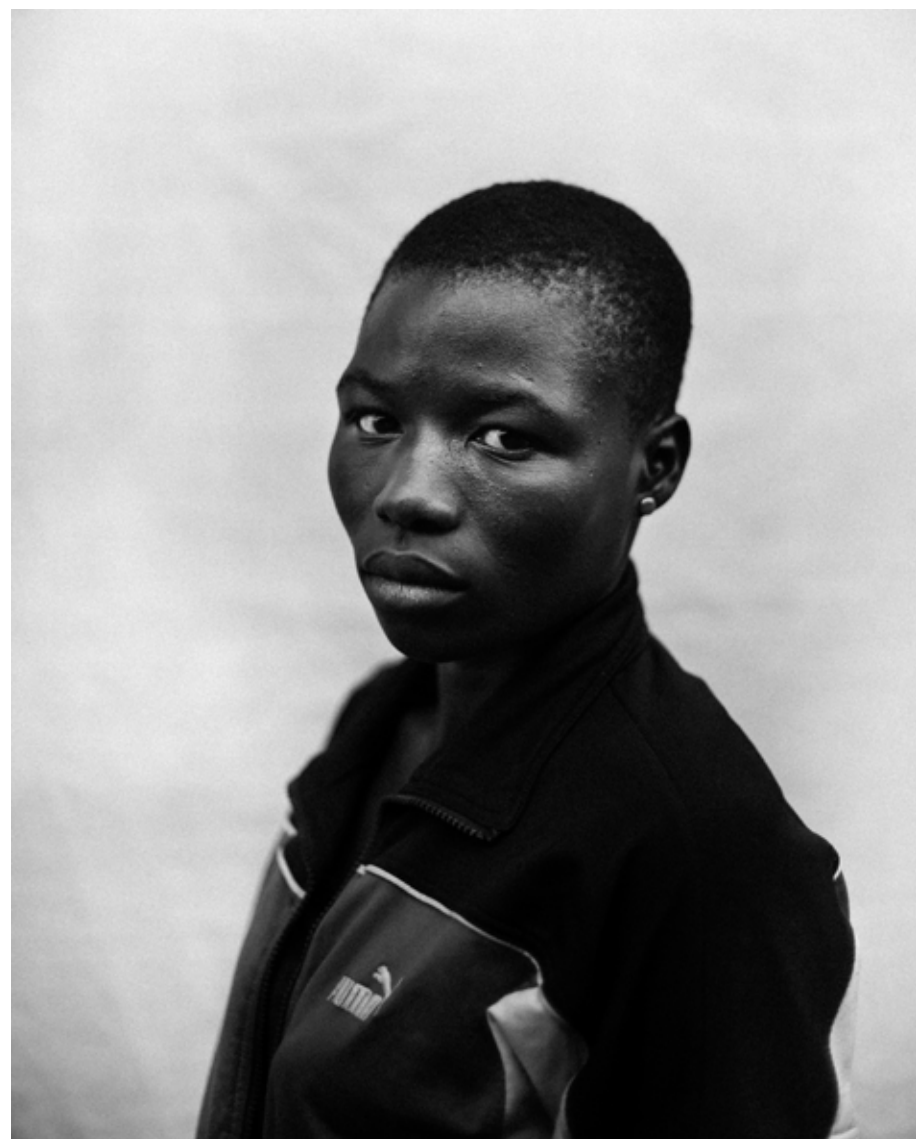
(in case of need, detailed information are available for all the kids)

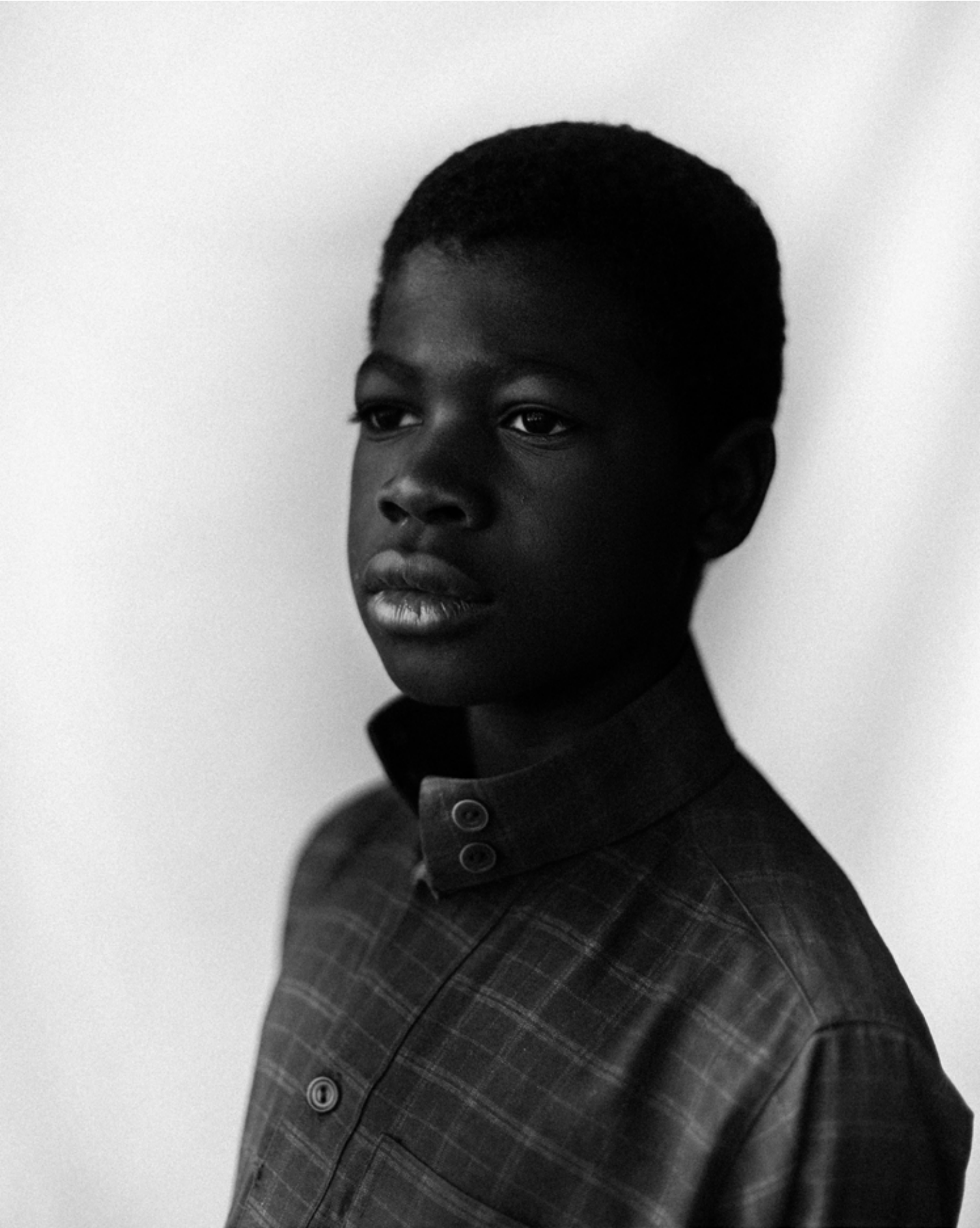


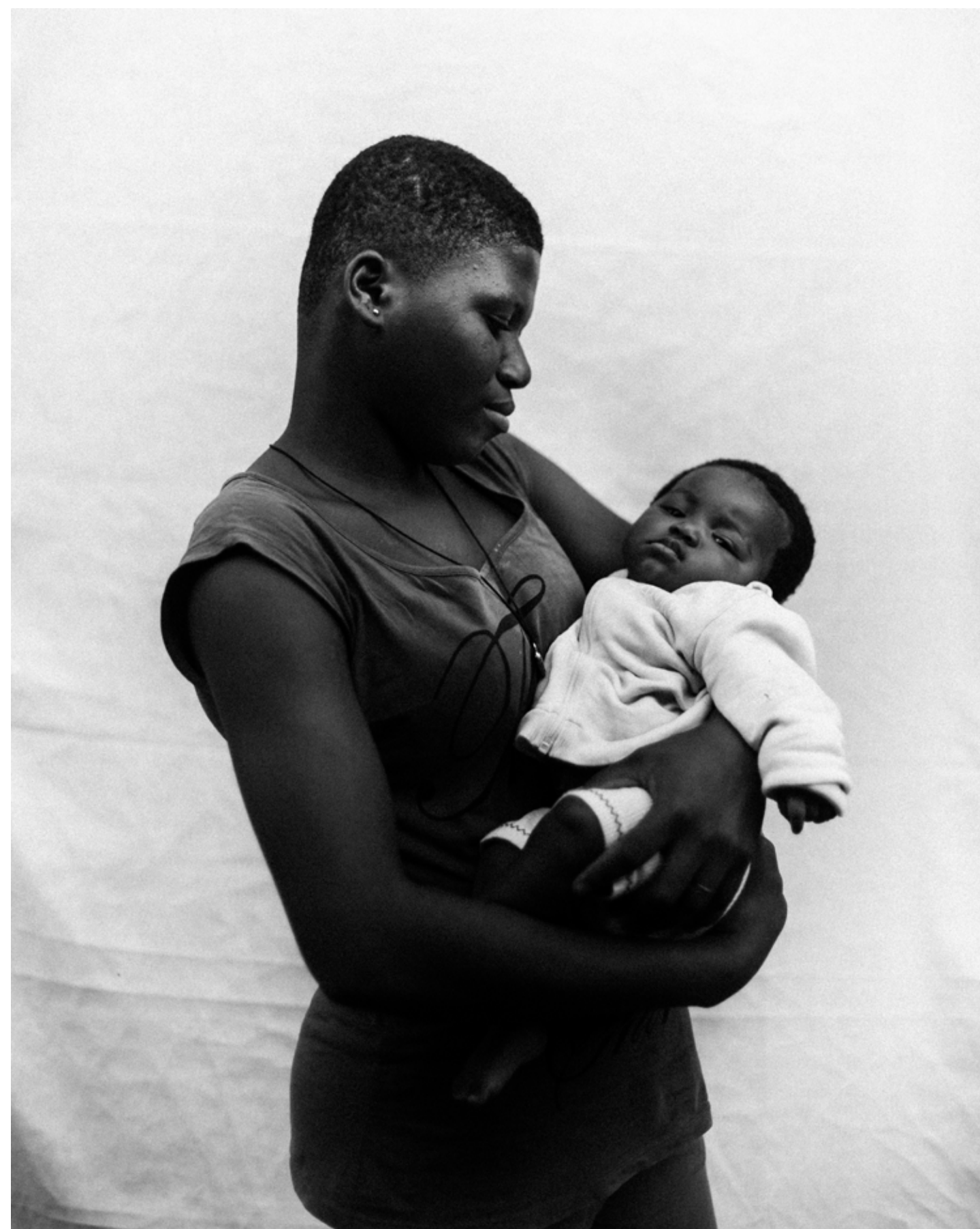














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