

Aliyah: The Heart That Never Gave Up

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The morning light crept through the thin curtains of a small wooden house, brushing across the weary face of twelve-year-old Aliyah. Her school uniform hung neatly on the wall, pressed and ready, though her heart felt unbearably heavy. That day would be her first day back at school since her father’s funeral.

Her father had been a kind man - a farmer who came home every night smelling of sweat but wearing a smile as warm as the evening sun. He used to lift Aliyah high into the air, laughing as if the world held no pain. But one rainy night, he had a heart attack and never make it.

Since that day, everything changed.

Aliyah’s mother tried her best to fill the void. She sold vegetables in the market, sewed clothes for neighbors, and stayed up late just to make sure her children had something to eat. Aliyah, being the eldest of six siblings - four little sisters and one younger brother - learned to help in every way she could. She fetched water, cooked rice, and guided her siblings with the tenderness of a mother.

But fate was not done testing them.

A year after her father’s death, her mother fell ill. It began with a cough that wouldn’t go away, then nights of fever and mornings of exhaustion. Despite their prayers and borrowed medicines, one morning her mother didn’t wake up. Aliyah’s world collapsed.

Her siblings cried for days, clinging to her like fragile branches in a storm. They were orphans now - six young children in a world too cruel for their innocence. Their grandmother took them in, comforting them with gentle words and stories under the moonlight. But a year later, she too passed away, leaving them once again without a guardian.

Soon, their grandmother on their mother’s side came to care for them. She became their light for a while - cooking, praying, and guiding them with love. But another year passed, and death claimed her too.

Aliyah began to question why their life was full of loss and pain. It seemed that every year, someone they loved was taken away.



Then, one afternoon, their aunts gathered them together. “You can’t all live here alone,” she said gently. “You’ll each have to stay with different relatives so that you can eat and go to school.”

The room fell silent.

Aliyah looked at her siblings - little Akima, who clung to her; Asiya and Amera, who stared with tearful eyes; and Amir, the only boy, trying to be brave though his lips trembled. She couldn’t bear to see them separated.

“No...No!” Aliyah said firmly, her voice trembling but full of resolve. “We’ll stay together. I’ll take care of them.”

Her aunt sighed. “Aliyah, you’re just sixteen now. You can’t do this alone.”

Aliyah met her gaze. “If Mama and Papa were here, they would have done the same.”

And so, she stayed - the eldest child becoming both mother and father to her six siblings.

Life was hard, but she faced it with quiet strength. Their days began before sunrise. Aliyah cooked whatever was available - rice, dried fish, or food given by kind relatives and then sent her siblings to school before heading to her own classes. Afterward, she worked washing clothes, sweeping yards, and selling bread - anything to keep food on the table.

There were nights when the cupboards were empty and the children went to bed with only water to fill their stomachs. Yet Aliyah never let despair win. She told stories, sang lullabies, and whispered, “We’ll be fine. One day, we’ll have a better life.”

Her teachers noticed her perseverance. Despite the exhaustion written all over her face, she remained one of the most diligent students. When she finally received her high school diploma, she felt the weight of every hardship melt into tears of pride.

“Papa, Mama,” she whispered, looking at the sky, “I did it. And I’ll keep going.”

After graduation, an aunt from a nearby town helped her find work. Aliyah accepted, leaving her siblings with a trusted neighbor. She cleaned houses and saved every peso she earned. But she never lost sight of her dream - to become a teacher, just like the ones who once believed in her.

At night, when the world was quiet, she would open her books and study by the dim light of a candle. Her hands were rough, her body tired, but her heart - her heart remained unbroken.

Years passed, and through determination and kindness from those who saw her potential, Aliyah enrolled in college. She took up Education, balancing her studies with part-time work. Her siblings, now growing older, helped in their own ways - selling snacks, doing errands, or watching over one another.

It wasn't easy. There were days when she wanted to give up, when the burden felt too heavy to carry. But she would look at her siblings' faces, filled with hope, and remember why she started.

Finally, after years of struggle, the day came when she stood on a stage again not as a high school student this time, but as a graduate teacher. Tears rolled down her cheeks as she received her diploma. The applause that followed seemed to echo all the way back to the little wooden house where it all began.

Soon after, Aliyah found a teaching job in a nearby school. Her first salary was small, but it meant the world to her. She bought rice, school supplies, and new clothes for her siblings. That evening, they gathered around their worn-out table, sharing a simple meal of adobo and rice. It was the happiest dinner they had had in years.

As she looked around the table, Aliyah realized that every hardship had shaped them not into victims, but into survivors. Her siblings were growing, studying, dreaming. They were together, and that was enough.

That night, before going to bed, she whispered a silent prayer. "Thank You, Lord, for never leaving us even when it felt like everyone else did."

The moonlight fell softly on her face, and for the first time in years, Aliyah smiled without pain. The little girl who once lost everything had become the woman who gave everything.

Though her parents were gone, their love lived on - in every sacrifice, in every lesson, and in every dream, she helped her siblings reach.

Aliyah had become more than a sister.

She had become the heart that never gave up.