



THE HOUSE ON HOPE STREET

I woke up when my mom called me for the third time from the kitchen. I looked outside through the window which is always left open because we can't afford to repair the old fan which stopped working last week.

It was still dark outside and I could hear the noises from the neighbouring houses on the street.

"Keena, how many times have I told you that girls should wake up before the sunrise?" My mom called out from the kitchen, which is only a wall away from the bedrooms.

"I'm awake mom. I just need a few minutes." I said in a sleepy voice.

My mother peeked from the kitchen and found me still lying on the floor.

"That's enough. Come help me in the kitchen." She said in a steady voice and stared at me.

"Just go. Let me sleep peacefully." said Joel, who is my little brother who is only two years younger than me and turned to the other side.

I knew mom is going to keep staring till I wake up. So



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So I let her win this time and went to the kitchen.

"This is unfair, Joel can sleep till he wants and I can't?"

"Of course you can't. You are a girl heena and you are ten years old now. It's time for you to learn these chores."

My mother paused for a second and continued.

"Just look at your friend Mary, she is also ten and she even know how to make rice. Oh god! Lilly is so lucky to have a daughter like her." By the time she finished saying this, I had already left the kitchen and it made her even more angry and then she started mumbling.

I sat outside to clear my mind. Our house was tiny and had only one room and a kitchen. Toilet was outside.

Then I remembered. Today is the first day of school this year. Well not for me because I stopped going to school & when I was seven. It's not just me. None of the girls in our street goes to school. I don't understand why. But we have this belief that girls are just made to stay at home, take care of family and children and that they can't do anything more than that.

I brushed my teeth and went inside. I looked at the

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clock. It was half past six and mom was still in the kitchen. I helped her with something and expected her to say sorry for earlier. It hurt me when she said Maey's mom is lucky to have her. I know she ~~meant~~ ^{thought} that I'm useless because I ~~couldn't~~ ^{don't know how to} make rice. That's ridiculous. How could she say that.

"Leena, get ready. You are coming with me today."
She said casually.

"where?"

"To work. So you can help me and learn a few chores." She said glancing to one side.

"Are you serious? What about school?"

"What about it? You know girls in our street ~~won't~~ ^{don't} go to school."

"I know. But I thought you'd let me go."

"Leena we talked about this. It's not gonna work. Besides I don't have the money to sent both of you to school."

My mom seemed weak and skinnier than usual.

I didn't say anything. I just sat in the room cried

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Silently. I knew arguing with her won't change a thing. So I got ready and went with her. She works in the next street next to ours where all the rich people live. She does mostly cleaning and laundry. From what she told us, some of them are nice.

First we went to a very big white house. And when I rang the calling bell a young lady who is definitely not more than 30 opened the door smiling and she closed the door as we got in.

"Is she ^{your daughter?} ~~leena~~?" The lady asked, still smiling at me.

"Yes mam. She is going to help me from today." Her smile faded and asked me what my name is.

"Leena?" I said nervously

"Which class are you in?"

"Madam, she is not going to school. None of the girls in our street goes to school and besides I don't have the money to send both of them to school. So I thought you should go and Leena can help me." My mother paused and looked at me and continued.

"I sent her to school ~~to~~ till second standard against

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our family and neighbours. But now I don't think I can."
She wiped a ~~tear~~^{tear} from her left cheek and continued her work.

The lady looked at me and asked "Do you want to go to school?"

I nodded as in Yes and smiled.

"Do you like studying?"

I nodded again. ~~and~~

"What about your friends? Do they want to go?"

"They do. But it's the older people that won't let us study. ~~My~~ Everyone knows government schools are free. But they are afraid to send us because we are girls."

I told her ~~and~~ without any hesitation.

She told me that ~~after this~~ she is coming with me to see my friends and I agreed.

When we reached there I called my friends and they came wondering who this stranger is.

She asked the same questions to them and they too ~~asked~~ answered just like I did.

She looked happy to hear them. They asked her name

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and she said "Jenny."

Jenny told the parents about free education for children and they didn't seem impressed with her.

"Or I'm gonna have to report you to the government. It's their right to study." Jenny said hoping they will fall for this.

"Come on, you can't deny their rights. Girls are the hope and of our future. Girls are not just meant to be in the kitchen. They are also made to conquer the world and fly."

Jenny is awesome. At last she made them agree.

And we started going to school. Every girl in our street who had dreams but was afraid to stand up for it now have the wings to catch them. Isn't it beguiling? To 'have a dream? And working for your dreams is what makes you, you in life.

"Jenny is awesome. I want to be just like her."

I heard someone say that and felt the same.

Jenny is a doctor and an amazing woman.

The whole neighbourhood changed after this. When I

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Looked at people, I saw hope and light instead of
 Poverty and disappointment. The whole Street was full
 of hope. And, I live in a house on the Hope Street ~~now~~^{now}
 And I know I will make my mom Proud.

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