

TI DOLL

A LITTLE GIRL GROWS UP OVERNIGHT

Eight-year-old Ti Doll had lost her father and had endured years of hard labor and the torture of hunger. Now, she was about to become captive in the "prison of pain and darkness" that she had always feared.



Ti Doll had been **awake most of the night, too afraid to close her eyes.** Roaches crawled across the tiny wooden table in the dark. The one and only small candle was nearly gone as it flickered in the darkness. The dull flame cast an eerie shadow on the murky walls of her "kay pay" or mud hut. Her real name was Lovely, but everyone called her Ti Doll or "little doll." She was such a beautiful baby when she was born. Now, her long, black hair was thinning and starting to turn red from severe malnutrition and, even though she was only eight, she looked to be six. Her little arms were just like those of a skeleton, but she was still beautiful to everyone who knew her.

Thirteen Children, One Mother, Lots of Rats

The tiny, two-room hut was home to **thirteen children and their mother.** There was very little room for a family this size. All of the children were told to sleep on a mat in one direction because there was not enough space for them to roll over or even stretch out. They lay cramped, like "**thin little sticks**" all in a row. **Rats scurried** into the hut, taking cover from the heavy rain. It had been raining for days in the mountains. Lovely **could hear the rats** running around in the dark, **scratching and chewing.** A few times she had even felt their tails brush against her feet. She knew the rats had gotten into the small **bit of rice** that lay in a sack in the corner.

The Bone-Breaking Fever

The heavy rains would always bring in more than just rats. Rain also brought in large clouds of **mosquitoes,** the kind that carried the "**bone-breaking fever.**" Lovely heard the mosquitoes buzzing around her head in swarms. Nearly all of the children had suffered with this horrible virus, and now Lovely was starting to feel the **excruciating pain in her feet and all of her joints.**

Mud and More Mud

Since the walls of the "kay pay" were sticks covered by a mixture of dirt and water, the rain quickly turned **the dried, powdered dirt into streams of muck.** Water seeped in under and around the sticks that were plastered with the dried mud. Lovely knew that everything inside their hut would be soaked with the "**thick and gooey mud**" come morning. Many times, the children would wake up and try to find a "dry place to sit," **but it was useless.**

Lovely longed for the sun to come out and dry the wet and muddy floor. Even with all of her siblings helping, it was always such a mess to clean up. She knew that in the morning, sick or not, she would still have to make the long trek with the bucket down the mountain to the river and back up again, as she did every day. They would need water for bathing and also to clean up all the mud and muck.

As daylight broke, Lovely and her siblings began to get up. She glanced over to the corner where her mother kept a large cooking pot, a cup for coffee, and some big wooden spoons. The little bit of rice that had been left in the sack was now **mixed in with the mud** that had seeped down the walls. They would all have to work extra hard to try and **“wash the rice”** to save **what the rats had not eaten**, as this was the only rice they had left.

The Odds Were Against Her and Her Children

Life had always been rough, but when Lovely’s **father died** a year ago, things went from **“bad to much, much worse.”** **Her mother, now a widow, had to survive in the toughest mountains in Haiti with thirteen children and no job. The odds were against her...and her children.**

The older boys were always sent to tend to the small garden behind their hut, which was full of thousands of small rocks on top of the bone-dry, hard ground. Between the poor soil and the lack of regular rainfall, it was almost **useless to try and grow anything.**

Wash Clothes and then Drink the Water

The older girls would have to try and wash the family’s “clothes,” which were really just rags. Some of them would go to the dump to try and salvage a few plastic bottles to collect water. None of the children had ever attended school. All were ragged, and **nearly every one of them was barefooted.** The Haitians in the mountains always said, “Wash clothes and then drink the water.” It means, **“Do whatever you have to...to survive.”**

Lovely’s village was located along the border of the Dominican Republic and Haiti, over rough roads and through riverbeds filled with jagged rocks. She had always heard stories of children who were sold to workers in a sugar cane camp or “batey” and that **once you were there, you could “never escape.”**

Lovely straightened her tattered dress and tried to adjust her braided hair. The old door to her hut was ready to **fall off its hinges.** Rubbing her eyes, she went outside to wash her face and prepare for the long trip down the mountain with her plastic bucket. Little did she know that her mother had “other plans” for her and her sister Hannah on that day.

An Old Pair of Shoes and a Hair Ribbon

Lovely’s mother followed her outside the hut with a pair of old shoes and a hair ribbon in her hands. “We have got to get you looking pretty. You and your sister are going over the mountain with me today.” And with that, she put the pair of “big shoes” on Lovely, and the ribbon in her hair. **Her mother was taking both little girls to sell as servants near the Dominican border. She desperately needed money for food.** It was a decision her mother would sadly regret for the rest of her life.

A Long Walk and a Short Good-Bye

The walk across the mountain was **long and grueling.** Lovely’s “big shoes” kept falling off and did nothing to protect her tiny feet from the **sharp and jagged rocks.** They walked the “back way” through the thorn bushes and past the garbage dump that was regularly “used as a toilet.”

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Lovely and her sister clutched their mother's hands as they walked across the mound of broken glass bottles and rusty tin cans, swarming with flies and rats. A sickening stench of "dead things" filled the air.

After hours of traveling in the heat with no water, no food and deep cuts on their feet, they finally reached a road "in the middle of nowhere." Soon, two cars drove up and two men got out and started to talk to Lovely's mother. Then, they **"put some money in her hands."**

Her Mother's Last Words

Lovely's mother hugged her sister and then hugged Lovely. With tears in her eyes, she told her young daughters, **"You will be working for their families."** Then she added, **"Be good to the men, and they'll be good to you."**

With both young girls sobbing, their mother turned around and began the "long walk home across the mountain" by herself. One man took Lovely by the arm and placed her in the back seat of his car. The other, took her sister to the second car. Both drove off together but soon, the cars separated on the road and Lovely's last memories of that fateful day were those of her sister, weeping with her frightened face pressed firmly against the car window.

A Little Girl Grows Up Overnight

Now Lovely, a mere child, had the workload of a grown woman. She had to clean the house, cook dinner, carry water, wash clothes, and care for younger children. Each night, she would lay on the floor and cry herself to sleep. She cried for her mother and her sister, **whom she never saw again.** Things went from bad to worse for this poor but beautiful little doll. The man of the household abused her until she was no longer a child. She was made to cook for the entire family but **given only "scraps" of food for herself.** She no longer felt like Ti Doll.

Lovely often thought about her father, her brothers and sisters, and her mother. Each night, **she faced the pains of hunger** just as she had done so many times before. But now, **she was also feeling guilt, abandonment, fear, and pain...along with the hunger.** She tried so hard to please the family she served but she was never good enough. Lovely was beaten time and time again. She was called names, spit upon, humiliated and **abused.** She had become a **"slave child"** with no rights, whatsoever. She simply was just another "number."

When we heard this story from one of our missionary partners, we became so "sick to our stomachs." We lay in bed at night wondering about these two little girls and where they were, what they were doing, and if they were still "surviving." As parents and grandparents, this not only "makes us angry," it "breaks our hearts" into pieces. We often ask the Lord, **"Why do we have to hear these stories over and over again and have our hearts broken and feel so helpless?"** We say, "Lord, please don't let us hear yet another story. We can't bear it. Let others take on these heavy, heartwrenching burdens."

Then, the Lord speaks to us in His still, small voice, and in His whisper says, "That's why you hear these stories. Your heart must be broken before you will act, and when you act, you will save many other children from lives such as this. **But, if you do nothing, many more will surely die."**

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Since you are our partner and closest friend, you must help us “share this load.” It is way too much for any missionary to do “by himself.” Without your help, children just like Ti Doll will go hungry or starve, or much worse be **forced into slavery** and child trafficking. We have lived here and believe us, “it all starts with food.” We can get the desperately needed food donated and “with your help” transported here to our Love A Child (LAC) Village in Haiti.

Even though there is no cost to us for the food, we must still pay the full cost of shipping the food from the States, across the ocean to Haiti and through Haitian customs. We must then pay to haul the food from the port to our LAC Village. Each container consists of 270,000 meals and costs \$10,000 to get it here.

This Means that:

- **\$16** will provide 432 meals
- **\$24** will provide 648 meals
- **\$500** will provide 13,500 meals
- **\$48** will provide 1,296 meals
- **\$120** will provide 3,240 meals

Every gift counts. Your gift, whether it be small or large or the widow’s mite, would help us feed so many hungry children, just like Ti Doll and her brothers and sisters, as well as keep all other outreaches of Love A Child going. Please, read over the enclosed August Hunger Reply Card and give your gift today.

We pray that your heart will be broken and crushed with the things that break the heart of God and that this story “will forever change your life.” And, when you give, the Blessings of Psalms 41:1-3 will come upon your life in a way that you have never known. **You are the lifeline** to these hungry children, our littlest neighbors. You are the one they are depending on, and you are the one who can rescue them. Please give today.

On behalf of the hungry children,

Bobby and Sherry Burnette

Missionaries Bobby and Sherry Burnette

P.S. When we receive your gift, mark the enclosed coupon that you would like a beautiful Psalms 41:1-3 scroll to hang on your wall, and we’ll share with you the “rest of the story” about Ti Doll. Trust us, this is one ending that you will want to hear!

You can give your gift online today at: www.LoveAChild.com



Love A Child is a 501(c)(3) non-profit Christian Humanitarian organization serving the needs of children in Haiti. In addition to being a member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA), Love A Child has earned the Independent Charities of America “Best in America” Seal of Approval and eleven consecutive Four-Star ratings from Charity Navigator.

2013 Financial Statement:

- Haiti Outreaches
- Fundraising
- Administrative

