

Shoes with missing patches of rubber trudged the pavement. With her shagged second-hand uniform, the 14-year-old girl, Clove, continued her way back home. Her socks were brown from dirt stains, her shirt had strings of cotton hanging from the edges and the straps of her bag were made out of a dainty thin material as if it would break at any moment.

She pushed open the door to find the same old plastered walls, chipped floorboards with bludges in the wood and the four other children cramped in this two-bedroom house. Their home felt like an abandoned cottage, alone and far away from anyone else. Crying, loud screams from behind her caught Clove's attention as she sighed and went to attend to her 5-year-old boy.

"Cloveeeee, I'm hungry," her younger sister crawled beside her.

"I know, I know but we just gotta have the food we have right now," Clove replied holding her brother in her arms. "Don't cry Niko, I'm here now."

Niko's tears slowly dried out and Clove carefully placed him on the ground.

She walked to her bedroom and kneeled beside her mother's bed. Her mother ever so slightly moved her head towards Clove, lifting her hand to Clove's cheek.

"Don't worry ma, I'm going to work for the factory a few streets down, we'll be able to get enough money for your surgery."

"Clove," her mouth barely releases any voice, "how?" she struggled to even talk.

"Don't worry about it, soon we can move out of here," Clove grasped her mother's hand providing warmth to the tender wrinkles in her skin.

Her mother barely released the words but under her breath, she whispered, "I love you."

The darkness crept into the sky as street lights faintly glowed with light. Clove walked down the paved concrete carrying her tote bag around her shoulder. She adored the night sky watching the billions of white speckles glimmer above her. Reaching for the door handle, she pulled the rusted knob with the little energy she had left.

Her eyes come home to catch Mia's head peeking out from the door frame. "Clove it's nearly 10 pm, where even were you?" Mia's 12-years-old and the second oldest sibling in the family coming after Clove.

"Don't worry about it," Clove blatantly replied.

"Hmmm, you've definitely looked like you've been working."

With reluctance, Clove revealed, "I'm working at the factory."

"The one near that construction site?"

"Yeah."

"Why though?"

“I think you should be sleeping now.”

“Cloveeee, doesn’t the benefit cover enough money for us?” Mia continued whining. ‘If you’re concerned about this place it’s not that bad. It’s even kinda comfy.”

“Do you wanna live in this den forever?” Clove’s eyebrows bent down and the corner of her lips narrowed. “Look at this place, there’s 5 of us living here in this two-bedroom house. Mas’ sick, we’re surviving on bread and canned beans whilst we can barely pay for basic needs. You may not worry now but when you’re older you’ll see how much of a wreck our lives are.” Clove froze in place realising what she’s words came out of her mouth. Her hands held her face as she collapsed to the ground. Mia stared timidly with moist eyes. The other 3 siblings walked out to the scene hearing every word Clove spat out. “I’m sorry everyone,” Clove’s tears streaked down her hands. The sound of sulking fills the room while everyone wheeped into their palms.

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The children in New Zealand who suffer from poverty aren’t very known today. This act can be unnoticed and children are neglected and have a stressful mindset from a young age. Around the world, there are very high numbers of malnourished kids and/or without basic needs. 13.5% of New Zealand children are in this situation. As the government continues to help the poor in New Zealand I hope that this problem comes to mind for kiwis when poverty is discussed.

I talked about the social issue of poverty. This is when an issue is affecting people in a society or community. People around the world lack sources of health civilities, clothing and basic needs in general. This is an injustice to those who suffer. Tying into this is human rights. Having an inadequate supply of food and improper housing is a basic human right. As this is fundamental for a child's growth and the safety of a person.

Clove shows a strong mentality throughout most of the story but she is a human who struggles too. She keeps her real emotions a secret and that’s expressed through the art piece. She’s seen in her dirty clothes outside. Though she’s alone and looking rough, she actually feels exhilarated and free. She adores the outdoor environment and being connected with the stars. It’s the time when she can focus on herself from always feeling stressed for her family members.

As the oldest child in her family, she feels the need to put the weight and pressure upon herself. The basic necessities like the food she struggles to provide for her family members. Many Kiwis are able to obtain food from local food banks though it’s not explained in the story, Clove’s family is actually quite far from free food sources. So once in a while, she is able to pick up food though she actually has to try to buy food herself and she applies for work to do. Besides the point, many children can work underage to try to earn money for their families.

In the story, it says her mum is receiving benefits. Clove’s mum receives the sick benefits as she is unable to work and provide for her family. This is around \$200 after tax but it depends on the criteria people follow. There are other reasons the general public who suffering problems can apply to receive money for like housing costs:

- Power, gas, water bills, heating - those who can't pay their bills can receive up to \$200.
- Food - there are services like WINZ and this can be \$550 for a family of three kids once in 6 months.
- School- Uniforms, stationery etc. can be up to \$550 for 14-year-olds and over but younger people receive less money.

There are actually quite a few ways Kiwis can get money but Clove's family don't really know how to apply for these. They only have the sick benefit and WINZ which they receive about \$120. Clove being the only one capable to provide for her family, has human feelings herself. She's exceeded the amount of stress a 14-year-old should go through. These are human rights that she and her family don't receive.

\*Keep scrolling to see the art\*

WHAT DO I BRING FOR FOOD TODAY?

HOW AM I GOING TO PAY FOR MA?

HOW AM I GOING TO AFFORD FOR MIA'S NEW SCHOOL?

AH, I'M FINALLY FREE

WHAT IS MY LIFE?

