**Judy**

Gladwell Wachira, founder and director of Girls Hope Rescue Mission (GHRM), has long fought to help save girls who are victims of various types of violence. Through her tireless efforts, she has managed to help save over 400 girls between ages 4 and 17 from various injustices. Judy was the 77th girl the Girls Hope Rescue Mission was able to give a home to. She is now proudly in pursuit of a college degree in social work, and she is already engaged in helping those at GHRM.

At the age of eleven, Judy’s parents decided to marry her off for money to make ends meet. Despite such a practice being against the law in Kenya, this was a common practice, as families under financial stress are pressured to trade their own children in exchange for dowry.

Judy felt betrayed by the people who raised her. Even friends of her family pressured her into following through with her parents’ decision. Her fate seemed sealed: married to a stranger and forced into a life she had not chosen. It wouldn’t be a stretch to compare it to a prison sentence. Her light dimmed as her hope dwindled.

Judy’s only fortune was that she didn’t have to suffer in solitude. Her schoolteacher, the one Judy turned to for help, sought every way to help her find a way out of the situation. Fortunately, their prayers were answered by Gladwell Wachira, the founder and director of Girls Hope Rescue Mission. Gladwell took Judy under her wing and brought her into the nest she had painstakingly made. She recognized the girl’s pain and gave her a new home and a new future.

While Judy was able to escape her fate, she was in an environment that she was a stranger to. To leave everything behind and walk into a new world was overwhelming for an eleven-year-old. For the first month at GHRM, she couldn’t recognize herself. She was unsure of her place in the world and stated that she believed she was “a curse to this world.” Gladwell carefully comforted the girl and embraced her wholly. The motherly leader helped Judy navigate the rough waters that she was going through as she developed connections with the girls around her. They too shared fates similar to hers and seeing how they flourished now warmed Judy’s wounded heart. She was welcomed and loved. She found new hope.

Gladwell gave Judy and the other girls responsibilities. The girls would wake up early and help out in the many tasks of the mission. Their schooling couldn’t be forgotten either. Judy found another kind teacher who helped her bounce back to her former shining self. The girl was given the tools and knowledge to survive on her own. Through Gladwell’s help, she was able to graduate from high school and pursue a college degree. She found that what she had faced and how she had gotten through it all made college life easier for her than for many of the other students. She found that she could leverage her skills into a newly found passion.

While she was away studying, Judy wasn’t always able to keep in touch with her GHRM family, but after her first year at college, she made her eventual return to the mission. She was welcomed by the warmest of receptions from all the girls, which left a feeling of finding a hearth on a cold winter night. She found Gladwell busy in her work helping the children that reminded Judy of her new place in the world. Not only was she given a path out of the dark, but Gladwell inspired her to take the path she did: to use her degree to start a project that would help other vulnerable people; to give light to those who were lost and love them like the mother that Gladwell was to her.