



The Heart of Barangay Pag-asa

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As the golden morning sun rises over Barangay Pag-asa, young Lito steps onto his front porch and breathes in the sweet aroma of freshly baked pan de sal. Roosters crow in the distance while colorful jeepneys rumble down the paved street, waking up the bustling neighborhood. Across the road, Aling Nena unlocks her sari-sari store, greeting everyone with a bright smile.



Lito walks down the narrow cobblestone alleyway, carrying a tray of warm rolls to share with Mang Pedro, the village carpenter. Children in bright t-shirts run past, playing a lively game of patintero with chalk lines drawn on the ground. The neighborhood echoes with friendly morning greetings as mothers hang laundry on colorful clotheslines overhead.



Near the central plaza, Lito notices a large crowd gathered around Mang Cardo's small wooden house, which sits low near the riverbank. Storm winds from the previous night had shifted the foundation, leaving the cozy home tilted and vulnerable. The neighbors exchange determined looks, ready to lend their hands and hearts to help their dear friend.



The community leader, Captain Berto, blows his brass whistle to call everyone together for a traditional bayanihan effort. Men and women gather long bamboo poles, stout ropes, and sturdy wooden planks from nearby workshops. Lito eagerly steps forward, offering to carry water pails and tools for the hardworking adults.



Working in unison, dozens of neighbors position themselves around the wooden house, slipping thick bamboo beams underneath its frame. Sweat glistens on their brows as Mang Pedro calls out a rhythmic counting rhythm to coordinate their strength. Lito watches in awe as the whole community lifts together, heaving as one single powerful force.



With a collective shout of encouragement, the heavy wooden house rises into the air, supported by dozens of strong, willing hands. Slowly and carefully, the neighbors carry the entire structure up the gentle grassy slope toward safer, higher ground. Lito runs alongside the moving house, cheering enthusiastically and guiding the path ahead.



Once the house settles securely onto its new stone foundation, tears of gratitude fill Mang Cardo's eyes as he thanks his wonderful neighbors. Women arrive carrying giant steel pots filled with hot chicken arroz caldo and pitchers of sweet kalamansi juice. Everyone sits together on wooden benches, sharing a feast prepared by the whole community.



As afternoon turns to evening, the children gather under the shade of a massive mango tree to play games and share stories. Lito proudly helps his friends build miniature bamboo toy houses using scrap wood left over from the day's repair work. Laughter and music fill the warm breeze as guitar chords drift from a nearby porch.



String lights twinkling like stars illuminate the barangay court, where families gather for an impromptu evening celebration. People dance, sing karaoke, and toast to unity, proving that no hardship is too big when faced together. Lito sits beside Mang Cardo, feeling a deep sense of pride and warmth in his heart.



Under a sky full of glowing stars, Barangay Pag-asa quietens down into a peaceful night. Lito walks home with his parents, looking back at the cozy houses standing tall along the friendly street. He realizes that a true neighborhood is built not out of wood or stone, but out of love, care, and unwavering unity.