

WILLIAM G. JOHNSON



The amazing
story of an Arab
girl who became
a champion for
orphans

**NORMA:
BEYOND
THEIR TEARS**



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Chapter 1

Grace

They found her on the beach. Clad in rags, left alone on the sand.

No name. No identification.

Thin, emaciated.

Age? They estimated eighteen months. But who knew?

Her mother knew, but her mother had gone away. Desperate, her mother had given up hope, wrapped her in rags, carried her to the beach and left her, hoping that someone would find her and give her a chance to live and to grow.

The baby was one of the lucky ones abandoned every day all over the world. She was found before her body gave out from lack of food and water, from the sun's fierce heat.

They took her to a safe place, a home set up to help kids just like her. They bathed her, fed her, loved her.

She was a pretty child. They called her Grace, a biblical name that means pleasant or beautiful.

Grace survived. With loving care and nourishment, she gained weight and grew bigger. She smiled, laughed, and began to speak. Grace was on the road of hope, of promise, of potential.

Grace is an orphan. Technically, an orphan is a child who has lost one or both parents.

Recent estimates indicate that the number of orphans worldwide is approximately 140 million. There are so many, and every one abandoned, neglected, vulnerable.

Some are victims of natural disasters. When the tsunami crashed into Indonesia on December 26, 2004, some 230,000 people perished, leaving behind 150,000 orphans.

Other orphans—some seventeen million—lost one or both parents to AIDS. Of these, fifteen million lived in sub-Saharan Africa.

In more than fifty countries children under the age of eighteen are coerced or induced to serve as soldiers.

Worldwide, an estimated 300 million children are subjected to violence, exploitation, and abuse. They are forced into child labor, crime, and prostitution.

Orphans—are they the saddest heartbreak of our messed up world?

Many, like Grace, are left abandoned, alone, and nameless. But no one is nameless before God. God sees, knows every one. God sent His son Jesus to save children along with the rest of humanity. Jesus showed God's love for the children: He welcomed them, blessed them, cared for them.

What about us?

“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world” (James 1:27).

Augustine tells us:

What does love look like? It has the hands to help others. It has the feet to hasten to the poor and needy. It

has the eyes to see misery and want. It has the ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men. That is what love looks like.

So many children are in desperate need of food, of shelter, of safety, of education, of love—what can one person do?

This is the story of what one person is doing to help. This is the story of an Arab child, technically an orphan, who became the defender of orphans, who provided the home for Grace.

This is Norma's story.