**The Last Train**

The platform clock ticked toward midnight as Asha clutched her satchel and glanced at the empty tracks. The last train was late, and the station, usually alive with chatter, felt hollow. A single lamppost flickered, casting long shadows.

She had made her choice hours ago—leave the village that had bound her dreams with duty. Her father’s words echoed: *“Your place is here.”* But the unopened letter in her satchel said otherwise. It bore the seal of a university abroad, offering her a scholarship and a life beyond the narrow lanes she had always known.

A distant rumble broke her thoughts. Headlights cut through the fog. The train screeched to a halt, doors sliding open with a hiss.

She hesitated. For a heartbeat, she saw her mother’s tired smile, her little brother chasing kites, her father bent over the fields. Could she abandon them?

“Boarding?” the conductor asked gently, as though he could see her turmoil.

Asha stepped closer, her hand trembling. Then a voice carried through the mist—her brother’s. He stood at the far end of the platform, waving wildly. “Go!” he shouted. “Go before you change your mind!”

Tears welled in her eyes, but a smile broke through. She climbed aboard, the doors shutting behind her with finality.

As the train pulled away, Asha pressed her forehead to the glass. The station blurred, then vanished. Ahead lay uncertainty, but also possibility. For the first time, the weight of staying lifted, and the promise of becoming filled the night air.

She whispered to herself, “I’m on my way.”