

FELIPA MAMANI – BRAIDING THE LOOM OF LIFE



**Felipa
Mamani**

Dedicada a la confección de prendas de vestir en la ciudad de El Alto, en La Paz, las manos de Felipa son su mejor instrumento para cortar las telas, doblarlas, plancharlas y confeccionar. Inició con un pequeño taller y ahora cuenta con un equipo de trabajo, lo cual la motiva a trabajar por ser una jefa amable y justa. Felipa va trenzando el telar de su vida minuto a minuto, recordando su origen, su fortaleza y la generosidad que heredó de sus ancestros.

Illustration by Bancosol

The paths of life sometimes take the form of paths that are full of obstacles. These are moments when everything gets uphill, exhaustion overcomes us and we feel that we fall to the dark bottom of a very deep well. From that gloomy and desolate background, we look up and see in the distance a small light that indicates the place of departure. How can we reach it?, what can we do to get there? Suddenly, in a magical instant, something incredible happens: transform the nightmare into a good dream and driven by an impressive and indescribable inner energy, we begin to move forward.

That's part of what Felipa has had to go through. At the age of five she wandered the streets of La Paz selling anything to contribute to the finances of the household: vegetables, seasonal fruits, notebooks, sachets, wipes, handkerchiefs. She collected every coin from the sales and gave it to her mother. Those were tough years. Games and joys were hardly present in her childhood. Being the eldest daughter, in a family of seven siblings, at an early age she had to assume responsibilities and caregiving tasks.

When she turned fifteen, she left school to work full-time. She managed to finish high school in the evenings. Between her work, the care of her brothers and the housework, Felipa understood at a very young age that inside there was a strength that allowed her not to surrender to anything or anyone.

Years passed and Felipa found love. From that relationship Yoselin was born. But on the day of labor she was informed about her daughter's hydrocephalus diagnosis. Once again life was getting uphill. Without knowing very well how to face what was to come, she sought support in her partner, but he decided to just leave her, right there in the clinic with her little newborn in her arms.

Frightened, alone and in debt, Felipa looked at her daughter's beautiful, luminous face, and again defined that nothing would stop her. It took her five years to pay off the debt from Yoselin's first surgery. Then she went to work incessantly, looking for how to undertake some activity that would give them a better pass.

A few years later, with the support of her sister and a lot of effort, she managed to buy a house. She was determined to give her daughter what she could not have in her childhood, nor in her youth. Mobilized by an unbeatable force, she understood that Yoselin was the one who gave her the wisdom necessary to get ahead, to fight, not to surrender.

You have to put your whole heart into making projects and dreams a reality

One day, Felipa understood that every person comes into the world with a gift. Hers was, without a doubt, sewing. One of her great skills is to know how to cut the fabrics, fold them, iron them and make them. Then, already installed in the city of El Alto, she opened a small sewing studio. When she started the business, Felipa was left alone working until dawn, to deliver her orders on time. Today her studio is consolidated, has loyal customers, and has even achieved to hire other people, a matter that fills her with pride.

Linking threads, Felipa is braiding the loom of her life. Fate and love reunited her with José, with whom she decided to grow her family. So came Alexis and Brayan, who are already 9 and 11 years old.

She is currently strengthening her studio; she dreams of expanding it to a large warehouse to increase production and have more people hired. "Hopefully with everyone working calmly and happily", says Felipa.

Yoselin is already thirty years old and is her best company. Every day you can see them together in the studio. Felipa pays attention to every detail of the workday and Yoselin watches attentively from her wheelchair, in the midst of the maelstrom of the seams, sharing every minute of mending, stitching and stitching, cutting and making. Meanwhile, in the background, you can hear the incessant swing of the sewing machines.

Felipa is a caring mother, a task that does not stop, day and night, 365 days a year.

When the workday is over, the return home is always to meet to cook and share. They are homely moments that leave their soul charged with energy to move forward. On those intimate occasions, Felipa reminds her children that they must put all their heart to realize their projects and dreams. Between them they smile with their eyes. They all share the same brightness and intensity in the eyes. It is the seal that identifies them. As if it were a trait of past lives that accompanies them since immemorial times. A lot of temper and resilience emanates from her pupils.

Determined to put the best of herself in her work and to obtain profits, Felipa advances decisively so that her children do not suffer what she had to resist. At least, she already breathes calmly because she sees them enjoying their stages, those moments they deserve to have as children and young people. With Yoselin, emotion floods everything. With her the challenges have been, continue, and will continue to be greater. Felipa is a caring mother, a task that does not stop, day and night, 365 days a year.

And like every caring mother, she must endure the uncertainty of not knowing what will happen to her daughter when she is gone. To reduce uneasiness in the face of this lack of certainty, she aims to be a great businesswoman. But not to accumulate resources, but to leave a legacy to her children. She imagines that they will be the ones who manage the studio and that they will also remain united as siblings, caring and loving each other forever.

The imprint of fight, and an admirable ability to get ahead, today embraces everything in Felipa's life, leaving a deep mark on her children, her greatest admirers. Of the five-year-old girl who roamed the streets of La Paz, only a vague memory remains.

And so they go forward together braiding paths: linking the threads of each of her destinies, inspired by the tenacity and courage of a dreamer, determined and courageous woman who opens paths with her heart set on every detail, in every jungle, leaving for posterity the best manufacture, of the noblest fabrics, to have a dignified, just, generous and kind life, as Felipa always dreamed for her family.