

Rami Rifi

## The Boots That Changed My Life

There are moments in life that can stay with you forever. Moments that shift your perspective and continue to remind you of the good in the world. For me, that moment came in the form of a small pair of dinosaur boots.

I will never forget that day when a kindergartener named Gilbert walked up to one of my charity's donation boxes at my school. He was small, reserved, and was holding his pair of dinosaur boots. It was evident how much he loved those boots; the soles may have been a bit scratched, and the colors were a little dirty, but they clearly played a role in the countless adventures he had experienced with them. Before placing them in the box, Gilbert looked up at me, and with the innocence of the 5-year-old kid he was, he said, "I love these boots so much, but I hope another kid like me can love them just like I did."

That single moment made my world stop because he was a just child who treasured and adored this pair of boots that he loved for so long, yet he was willing to give them away not just because he had to, but because he wanted to make someone else happy. It was such a simple act, yet it carried the power of something far more. I remember feeling a lump in my throat as that was the exact moment that I realized that generosity does not come from how much one donates because it truly comes from how much their donation means to them.

The pair of dinosaur boots became a symbol for my charity, Play Passion Project, and me. It became a reminder of why I started the charity in the first place since our mission has always been more than just shoes; it has been about hope, dignity, and how far a single act of kindness can go. Every time I think about Gilbert, I am always reminded of the tens of thousands of children and families we have been able to help. Whether they are from local schools, shelters, or on our trips internationally, all of it started from that one act of selflessness by a five-year-old boy who believed that love can be shared across the world with a single pair of boots.

I am so thankful for the countless lessons the dinosaur boots have given me. I have learned that kindness has no age limit and that every act of compassion and kindness can be the roots of a movement more impactful than anyone could possibly imagine. The boots remind me that gratitude is not about what we receive, but also about the difference everyone has the power to make with a single pair of shoes.