

Stories of Kindness and Courage

Inspired by the Teachings
of Pope Francis

Stella's Courage to Speak Up

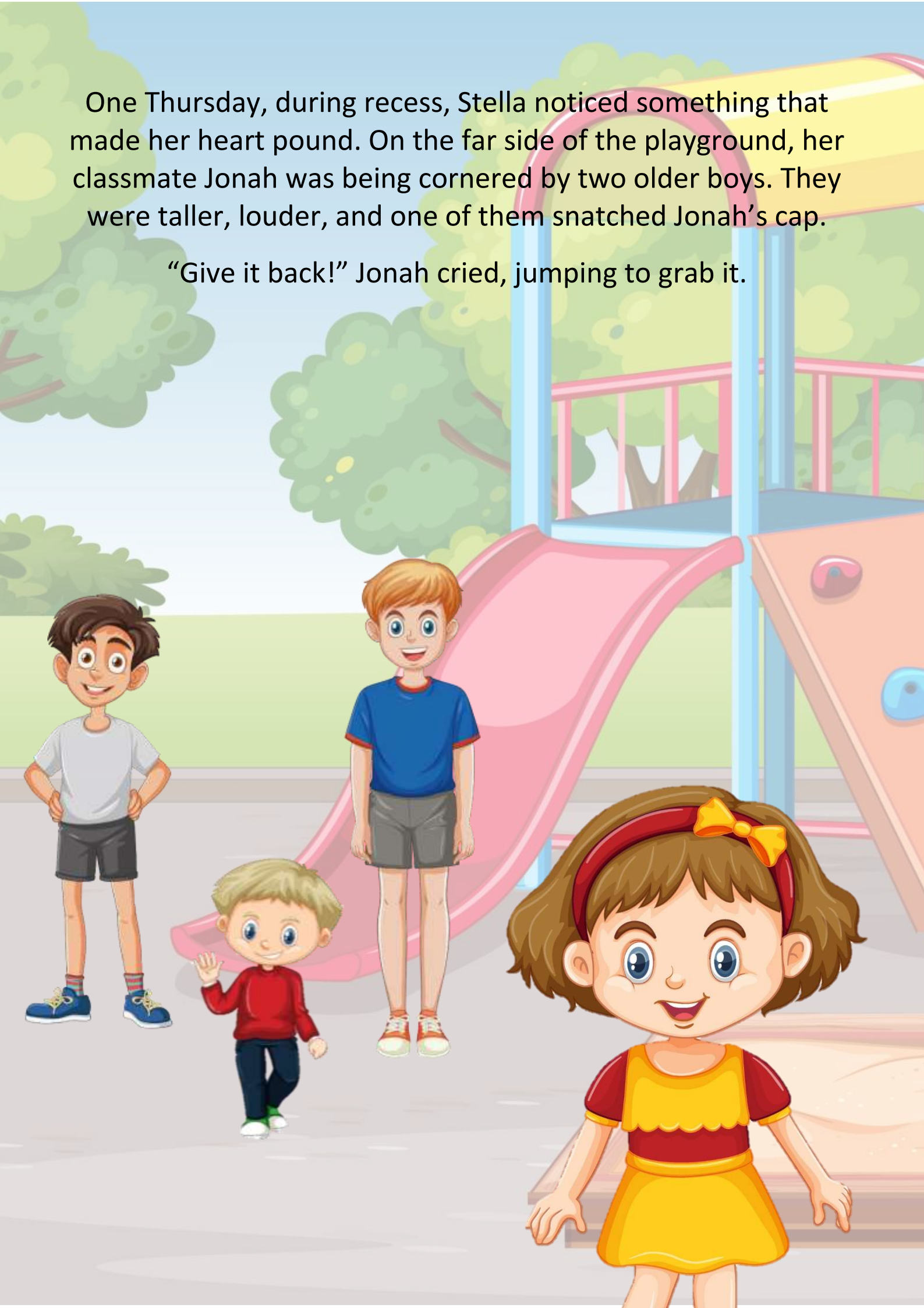


Stella was usually quiet. She loved drawing in her sketchbook, listening to birds, and reading about explorers who sailed across oceans or climbed mountains. But when it came to speaking in front of people - her voice often hid like a mouse in tall grass.



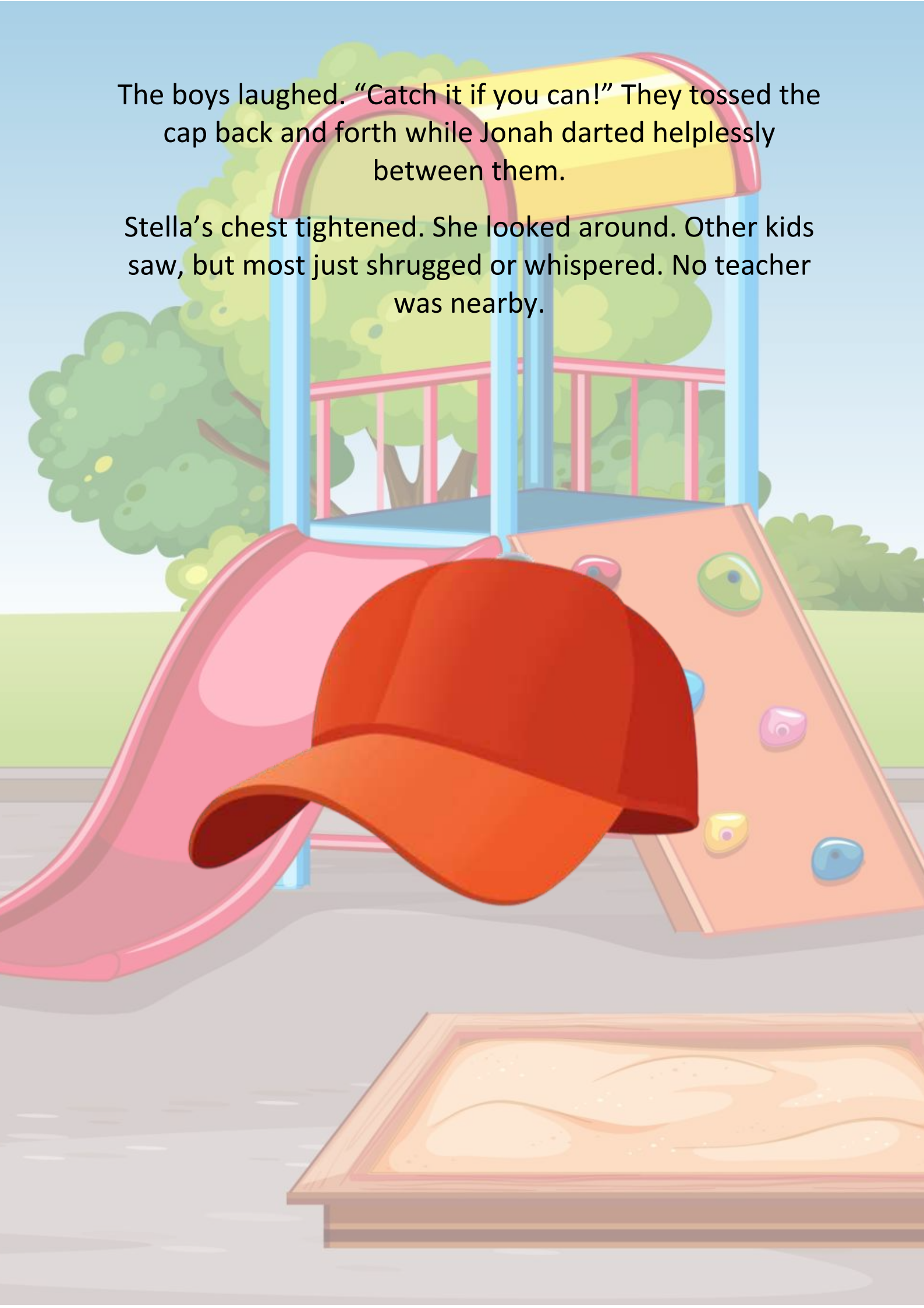
One Thursday, during recess, Stella noticed something that made her heart pound. On the far side of the playground, her classmate Jonah was being cornered by two older boys. They were taller, louder, and one of them snatched Jonah's cap.

"Give it back!" Jonah cried, jumping to grab it.



The boys laughed. “Catch it if you can!” They tossed the cap back and forth while Jonah darted helplessly between them.

Stella’s chest tightened. She looked around. Other kids saw, but most just shrugged or whispered. No teacher was nearby.



Someone should do something, she thought. Then a louder thought followed: But what if that someone is me?



The Struggle Inside

Stella's legs felt heavy. She wanted to step forward, but fear glued her in place. What if the older boys turned on her? What if they laughed at her too?

She remembered something her dad had told her once, when she was too shy to raise her hand in class: "Courage doesn't mean you're not afraid. It means you do the right thing even while you're scared."



And something else - her parish priest had quoted Pope Francis at Mass: "Children occupy a privileged place in God's heart. Whoever harms them will be accountable to Him."



Stella's hand clenched around her sketchbook. Jonah was being hurt, even if it wasn't with fists. If she stayed silent, wasn't she letting it happen?

She took a shaky breath. Then another. Her heart beat faster, not with fear this time, but with decision.



Speaking Up

Stella marched forward, voice trembling but loud enough:
“Stop it!”

The older boys froze, surprised. Stella stood straighter.
“That’s not yours. Give it back.”

One boy smirked. “Or what? You gonna make us?”



Stella's knees wobbled, but she held her ground. "I don't have to. I'm going to tell Ms Santos."

The boys glanced at each other. Ms Santos was strict but fair, and they knew it. With a groan, one tossed Jonah's cap onto the ground. "Fine. It's just a dumb hat anyway."



They stomped off, muttering.

Jonah scooped up his cap. His face was red, but his smile was wide. “Thanks, Stella. I didn’t think anyone would help.”

Stella’s hands shook, but she felt taller than ever. “You’re welcome.”



The Teacher's Guidance

Later, Ms Santos called Stella aside. "I heard what happened. Thank you for speaking up. That was brave."

Stella bit her lip. "I was scared



“Of course you were,” Ms Santos said gently. “Courage doesn’t erase fear. It walks with it. And you showed something powerful: protecting others matters more than staying silent.”

She added, “When we stand up against harm, we are planting peace. Even if our voice trembles.”

Stella’s cheeks warmed. Maybe her voice wasn’t as small as she thought.



The Circle of Courage

The next day, Ms Santos led a class circle. “Sometimes,” she said, “we see things that aren’t fair or kind. What should we do?”



Hands went up. “Tell a teacher,” said Karim.

“Stand with the person,” added Lila.

“Don’t laugh or join in,” said Aisha.

Jonah raised his hand. “And say something. Like Stella did.”



The class clapped softly, and Stella's cheeks flushed pink. She looked down, doodling stars on her notebook, but inside her heart felt steady and bright.

Ms Santos nodded. "When one of us speaks up, we give courage to others. Stella reminded us that silence helps the problem, but a voice - even a small one - can stop it."



A New Promise

That weekend, Stella drew a picture of a tree with roots deep in the earth and branches wide like sheltering arms.

Beneath it, she wrote:

“Even the smallest voice can grow into protection for others.”

She taped the drawing to the classroom’s Welcome Wall.

Beside it, she wrote a promise:



“I will use my voice, even when it shakes, to stand up for what is right.”

Jonah signed his name under it. Then Lila. Then Karim. One by one, the whole class added their names until the page looked like a sun made of signatures.



Stella stared at it, amazed. What had started with her shaky words had become a promise for everyone.

And for the first time, her voice didn't feel small at all. It felt strong.



The background of the entire page is a stylized illustration of a sky. It features large, soft, white and light blue clouds. Several small white dots are scattered across the blue sky, representing stars or distant planets. A few simple black silhouettes of birds are shown in flight. At the bottom, there are rolling hills in shades of light blue and green. A large, bright yellow sun or moon is partially visible on the right side, with rays emanating from it.

Reflection Question:

When you see something unfair or unkind, what could you say or do to help?

Seed of Action:

Choose a simple phrase you can remember (“That’s not kind,” “Please stop,” or “I’ll get help”). Practice saying it out loud once this week, so your voice is ready when it’s needed.



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