

A Stone in a Pocket

Clara was six years old and had a special pocket in her jacket. It wasn’t magical like the ones in fairy tales, but for her it was, because it held small things that seemed important to her: a heart-shaped stone, a shiny button, a feather she had found in the park.

One Saturday morning, while they were having breakfast, she saw her father sitting at the table with his coffee cup in his hands. He didn’t look unwell, but he had that look that seemed to be thinking about a thousand things at once.

Clara chewed slowly and asked:

“Dad… are you a little tired today?”

Her father smiled, as grown-ups do when they don’t want to worry anyone.

“A little, yes. But it’s okay, sweetheart.”

Clara got down from her chair, walked to the coat rack, and put on the jacket with the special pocket. Then she went to her room and opened the drawer where she kept three new treasures: a blue hair tie, a small drawing of a sun, and a candy she’d received at school.

She ran back and put everything on the table.

“I’ve decided something,” she said seriously. “Today we’re going to make the ‘When Grown-Ups Are Tired’ Kit.”

Mom raised her eyebrows in surprise, and Dad chuckled softly.

“Oh, really? And what’s in that kit?”

Clara began to explain it as if she were a very important doctor.

“The blue hair tie is to remind you that the sky always clears up again, even if there are clouds. The drawing of the sun is so you don’t forget that I love you even when you don’t feel like playing. And the candy… it’s because sometimes a sweet taste makes your heart feel sweet too.”

Her father looked at the objects as if they were jewels.

“Clara… this is the most beautiful kit in the world.”

She climbed onto the chair and added,

“But something’s missing.”

She put her hand in the special pocket and took out the heart-shaped stone.

“That’s the most important thing,” she said. “It’s for when you’re speechless. You put it in your pocket, touch it with your fingers, and you know you’re not alone.”

Her father stood still for a few seconds. His eyes shone, as if the coffee had become something hotter than coffee.

“Do you know what’s wrong with me, Clara?” he said finally, in a very soft voice. “Sometimes we grown-ups act like we can handle everything… and we forget that we can also be taken care of.”

Clara shrugged, as if it were the most normal thing in the world.

“It’s just that I’m small, but I know how to take care of others. And so does Mom. And you take care of me too.”

Her mother, who had been listening in silence, put her arm around her father’s back.

“Today we’re all taking care of each other,” she said.

Clara clapped her hands.

“Exactly! And now… second step of the kit: a hug that lasts until the tiredness goes away.”

She opened her arms as wide as she could, and Dad took her and hugged her tightly. Mom joined in the hug. And for a few seconds, the kitchen was filled with a quiet calm, the kind that makes no noise but fills everything.

When they separated, Dad took the heart-shaped stone and put it in his pants pocket.

“I’m going to keep it all day,” he said. “And when I touch it, I’ll remember something: that my heart has a home too.”

Clara smiled. Then she took the drawing of the sun and stuck it to the refrigerator with a magnet.

“That way the sun won’t escape,” she explained.

Her father looked at her as if he saw her as older than she was.

“Clara…” he said. “When you grow up, maybe you’ll forget about this special pocket.” But I’ll never forget what you put in there today.

She shook her head, very determined.

“I won’t forget. Because it’s not a pocket for clothes. It’s a pocket of the heart.”

And that day, without big surprises or new toys, Clara discovered something that parents already knew, but sometimes let slip: that love isn’t always about doing grand things. Sometimes it’s a small stone in a pocket, a drawing on the refrigerator, and a hug that says, without words: “I’m here. And so are you.”