

Caterina and the Hug Corner

In the Moon classroom, where the walls were sun-yellow and the books contained stories that sometimes opened and sang, lived a teacher named Caterina.

Caterina wasn’t just any teacher. She had curly hair like cotton balls and eyes that shone like two stars when she smiled. And she smiled a lot, a whole lot. Everyone said her voice sounded like a soft melody, like the buzz of a happy bee.

Every morning, when the twelve boys and girls of the Moon classroom opened the door, Caterina greeted them with a hug that tasted of strawberries and a spring morning. It wasn’t a quick hug, no. It was a hug that said, “I’m so happy to see you; you’re very special to me.”

Classes with Caterina were magical. Sometimes, the classroom transformed into a vast blue ocean, and everyone swam with their arms, singing songs about fish and mermaids. Other days, it became a forest full of giant mushrooms, and they had to crawl on all fours like bears, making faces that made everyone laugh.

They painted colorful dragons that breathed flowers instead of fire, and they built castles with plastic blocks so tall they almost touched

the ceiling. But of everything they did, there was one thing that was the most special of all: the Hug Corner.

The Hug Corner was a small place, with pillows as soft as clouds and a blanket that was all fur. When someone felt a little sad because they found a drawing difficult, or when someone got a little upset about a toy, Caterina would say in the sweetest voice:

“Hey, it seems you need some time in our special corner today.”

And off they went. No words were needed. Caterina would sit with the child, give them a tight hug, and sing a quiet little song. Sometimes, she would tell them a short story in a voice that sounded like the rustling of leaves. Caterina’s affection was like a soap bubble that enveloped and protected you. After a few minutes in the corner, the sadness would vanish like a frightened ghost, and the heart would fill with courage and joy once more.

One day, Laura, the youngest in the class, brought her favorite rag doll, “Pepet.” But during recess, Pepet got tangled behind a tree and got a small tear. Laura began to cry tears as big as peas.

Caterina didn’t say, “Don’t cry.” Nor did she say, “It’s just a doll.” She went over, picked up Pepet very carefully, and sat with Laura in the Hug Corner.

“Pepet is very brave,” Caterina whispered. And even brave people sometimes get a scratch. But look.

She took out a small makeup bag with threads of all colors and a needle without a point. With hands that seemed to work magic, she began to sew the tear, stitch by stitch, while she sang:

Stitch, stitch, stitch,

the wound will soon close,

with a golden and blue thread,

Pepet will be healed.

When she finished, the wound had become a small golden line that looked like a smile. Laura stopped crying. She picked up her doll, pressed it to her chest, and then hugged Caterina with all her might.

“Thank you, teacher,” she said in a small voice.

“You’re welcome, my love,” Caterina replied, returning the hug. “In our class, everything can be fixed with a little patience and lots and lots of love.”

And so it was. Because Caterina knew that the most important lessons weren’t in books, but in the warmth that filled the Moon classroom: a warmth that grew with every song, every laugh, and above all, with every hug that made everyone feel loved and safe.

And at the end of the day, when the parents came to pick up their children, the children said goodbye with a hug that carried a sense of promise: tomorrow they would return to experience another wonderful adventure with the sweetest teacher in the world.