

Maria and the Thought-Eating Bug

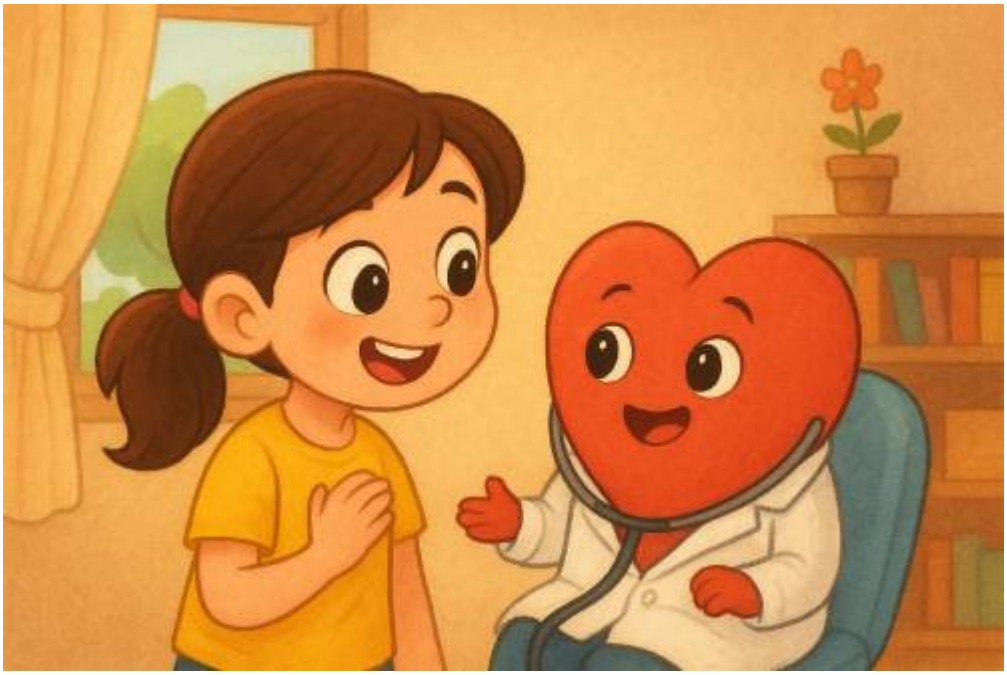
In a house in the heart of Catalonia, with windows overlooking a park full of trees, lived a twelve-year-old girl named Maria. Maria loved to chase after a soccer ball, fill blank sheets of paper with her brightly colored paints, and tickle the dogs that walked by on the street. She had a smile that lit up the room and a laugh that sounded like tinkling bells.

But one day, a Little Gray Bug crept into her life.

It was small and silent, and it curled up on her shoulder, whispering things in her ear that weren't true. "Maria, it's not enough," it said. "Your body isn't the way it should be. Everything would be better if you were... different."

Maria, who was clever and brave, initially ignored it. But the Gray Bug was persistent. Its whispers grew louder and louder, until they were all she could hear. Little by little, she left the ball in a corner, her colored pencils went unused, and her tinkling laughter was locked away in a drawer. She no longer saw the colors of the park; everything had turned a sad gray.

Seeing her joy fading, her parents took her to a special place: Dr. Heart’s office. She wasn’t a typical doctor in a white coat with bitter syrups. Her office was filled with damp pillows, picture books, and the scent of freshly cut flowers.



Dr. Heart looked at Maria with a calm smile and said, “This Gray Bug you’re carrying on your shoulder feeds on the sad thoughts you give it. But I have good news: you can choose to feed another, much stronger one.”

From a drawer, she took out something wonderful: a Little Blue Bug, round, soft, and a bright blue like the summer sky.

“This little one is your best friend,” the doctor explained. “She’s stronger than a bear and faster than a hawk. And the best part is, she only eats good things.”

“Good things?” Maria asked, curious.

“Yes!” the doctor said enthusiastically. “She loves a good bowl of Bravery, a thick ‘I Can Do It’ smoothie, and finally, a huge Self-Kindness cake.”

Maria, though a little hesitant, decided to try it. That very afternoon, when the Gray Bug whispered to her, “It’s not enough,” instead of listening, she searched for a brave thought: “I am strong.” She fed her Little Blue Bug.

And then something magical happened. The Little Blue Bug grew a little, and its blue light became brighter. The Gray Bug, annoyed, shrank a little.

Day after day, Maria continued to feed her new friend. She gave her spoonfuls of “I Like Myself Just the Way I Am,” glasses full of “I Deserve to Be Happy,” and, when Maria had a tough day, a comforting mash of “It’s Okay to Make Mistakes.”

Each time the Little Blue Bug grew, the Little Gray Bug became smaller, weaker, and quieter. Until it stopped being a big, heavy creature and became a mere speck of dust, barely visible.

The Gray Bug didn’t disappear forever. Sometimes, on cloudy days, Maria notices a tiny whisper. But now she knows exactly what to do. She takes out her Little Blue Bug, big, strong, and bright, and gives her the best food: a laugh, a happy memory, or a simple “I am valuable.”

And the whisper falls silent immediately.

Today, Maria paints again with radiant colors, runs through the park feeling the sun on her skin, and her laughter, like the tinkling bells, has come out of the drawer to stay forever. Because she discovered that the power to scare away the darkness had always been within

her; she just needed to remember to feed it.