

Noemi and the Gratitude Stone

1

That morning, the sun peeked out from behind the clouds, curious to see what Linda had planned for her little ones. Shortly after, the teacher walked into the school, her face lit up with imaginative thoughts and a smile full of hugs to give. As soon as everyone had arrived, she said, "Good morning, little ones, today we're going to the river to collect something very, very special!" There was a burst of excitement, then Giò exclaimed, "Can we also swim?" Linda replied, "We'll just dip our feet!" Diana the wolf said, "There are small colored fish in the river!" Noemi, worried, asked softly, "Do they eat toes?" Diana reassured her, "Nooo, they just tickle." Ughetto the owl shared, "I read in a book that there's a river with five colors! But it's a bit far from here."

2

Upon arriving at the river, miss Linda approached the shore and said, "Look, little ones, what wonderful stones! The water makes them even shinier! They come in different shapes and colors, observe them and choose the ones you like the most, but... not too big."

Noemi, a bit scared, picked up a pink stone. Giò, hopping in the water, picked three, while Diana played with the fish and quickly grabbed four pebbles when everyone was leaving. Ughetto chose five, all nicely round and of different sizes. The teacher picked some too.

3

Back at school, Linda said, "Little ones, today we will transform the stones into something that will make you happy and feel lucky: they will be gratitude stones. It works like this: carefully choose a stone and then always keep it with you, in your pocket, inside your backpack, under your hat. Every now and then, during the day, take it out and whisper, 'THANK YOU for...' and then think of something to be thankful for."

Noemi timidly asked, "Do we only say it, or can we also draw?"

The teacher replied, "What a beautiful idea! How about we start now? Choose a stone and then make your drawings!"

4

When everyone finished their drawings, each wanted to show their colorful THANK YOU. Giò was, as always, the first and, showing his drawing to his friends, explained, "THANK YOU for the trees that grow hazelnuts and the holes where we can sleep in winter. THANK YOU also for the butterflies I love to play with."

5

Diana had hung her drawing on her long and beautiful tail. She showed it to the others and, with a smile, said, "THANK YOU for the strawberries and the rainbow."

6

Ughetto, showing his drawing to everyone, said, "Thank you for the book 'Alice in Wonderland'. It's mathematically magical."

7

Miss Linda saw that Noemi had also finished her drawing but didn't have the courage to show it. She kindly asked, "Noemi, can we see your drawing with your thank yous?"

Noemi, with a sweet smile, nodded, then whispered, "Thank you for the sweet carrots, the sun, and... for my mom."

8

Ughetto asked, "Do you have any THANK YOUs too, teacher?"

Linda took her stone and began, "THANK YOU... for the blue color of the sky in the morning, I look at it while smiling coming to school. THANK YOU for every little flower I meet on my way and thank you for the orange colors of the sunsets I see going back home. THANK YOU for you... who are in my life and thank you... for the honey!"

9

Noemi suggested, "Miss Linda, can we color the stones?"

Giò added, "And can we give them to whoever we want? That way everyone will be happy and feel lucky?"

Diana said, "I also want to give them to my friends in the forest!"

Ughetto calmly added, "It's a great way to make everyone happy, almost as much as a good book."

So, while the students colored the stones, the teacher prepared the cards with the instructions for using them.

10

The day was almost over. The first mom to arrive was Noemi's mom. As they were walking home, suddenly, the little girl stopped, looked at her mom, and said, "THANK YOU mom, for the carrot sweets, for the hugs, for the bedtime story..." and, for the entire way home, she continued listing her THANK YOUs, which seemed to never end, like the stones of the river, like the water flowing over them. The mom, moved, hugged her. The other little ones, returning home with their moms and dads, shared their THANK YOUs and, in

the following days, gave gratitude stones to uncles, grandparents, and friends!

11

The remaining stones were hung with ribbons on a big tree near the school. Next to it, miss Linda placed a basket with a note: "Instructions for using the gratitude stone, to be happier and feel luckier!"

In no time, the forest was colored with stones, animated by gratitude, and illuminated by smiles.

Because the world changes like this: one Gratitude Stone at a time!