

The Golden Notebook



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Ben was a small boy with messy chestnut-brown hair that stuck up in tufts. He had large hazel eyes and a few freckles across his nose. He wore a bright red hoodie with a front pocket and white sneakers with green laces. One sunny morning, Ben found something strange on his way to school. A small golden notebook lay on the sidewalk, glowing softly.



The notebook was about the size of Ben's palm. Its golden cover had swirling patterns that seemed to move in the light. When Ben opened it, the pages were thick and cream-coloured. On the first page, words appeared: 'This notebook records acts of courage.' Ben's eyes grew wide. He tucked the notebook under his arm and hurried to class.



In class, Ms. Harlow stood by the board with her clipboard. She wore a teal cardigan and round glasses. 'Children,' she said, 'we will have a courage contest. Do something brave, and write about it. The winner gets a special prize.' Ben's heart raced. He wanted to win more than anything. He patted the golden notebook in his pocket.



Ben thought about what to do. He could climb the tallest tree. He could speak in front of the whole school. He could help the janitor carry heavy boxes. Each idea seemed bigger and braver than the last. But the notebook stayed quiet and dull. Ben frowned. 'Why don't you glow?' he whispered. The notebook gave no answer.



At lunch, Ben saw a new girl sitting alone. Her name was Mia. She had pale freckled skin, long sandy-blonde hair in two low braids, and wide blue eyes. She wore a soft yellow sweater with a daisy pattern. She clutched a worn grey teddy bear. Mia looked down at her lap and didn't eat. Ben noticed her hands were trembling.



Ben wanted to be brave, but talking to a new girl seemed scary too. He took a deep breath and walked over. 'Hi, I'm Ben,' he said. Mia looked up with frightened eyes. 'I'm Mia,' she whispered. 'I'm new, and I don't know anyone.' Ben sat down beside her. The golden notebook in his pocket felt warm for just a moment.



Ben asked Mia about her teddy bear. 'His name is Mr. Snuggles,' she said softly. 'He helps me when I'm scared.' Ben smiled his gap-toothed smile. 'That's a good bear,' he said. They talked about their favourite colours and games. Mia's shoulders relaxed a little. Ben forgot all about the contest for a moment.



But then Ben remembered. He still needed a big, brave act to win. He looked around the playground. Some kids were playing tag. Others were climbing on the jungle gym. Ben thought about climbing the highest bar. He stood up to go. 'Wait,' Mia said. 'Please don't leave me alone.' Her voice was small and shaky.



Ben looked at Mia's worried face. He looked at the jungle gym. He wanted to win the contest so badly. But Mia looked so scared. Ben sat back down. 'I'll stay,' he said. Mia gave him a tiny smile. They watched the other kids play. Ben told Mia funny stories about his dog. Mia giggled. The golden notebook grew warmer.



That afternoon, Ms. Harlow asked the class about their brave acts. Children shared stories of climbing trees and speaking up. Ben stayed quiet. He hadn't done anything big. He had just sat with Mia. But when he thought about it, sitting with her had felt brave too. The notebook in his pocket began to glow, faintly at first.



At recess, Ben saw Mia standing alone by the fence. Some kids were running past, and Mia looked frightened. Ben ran to her. 'It's okay,' he said. 'I'm here.' He took her hand and led her to a quiet corner. They sat on a bench and talked. Mia's wide blue eyes looked less scared. The golden notebook glowed brighter.



Suddenly, the notebook flipped open on its own. A new page appeared, and it was filled with warm, sparkling light. Words wrote themselves on the page: 'Ben showed true courage. He chose kindness over winning. He helped a friend feel safe.' Ben stared in wonder. Mia smiled. 'What is that?' she asked. 'It's my notebook,' Ben said. 'It records brave acts.'



Ben showed Mia the glowing page. 'You see,' he said, 'bravery isn't just about doing big things. Helping a friend takes courage too.' Mia hugged her teddy bear. 'You helped me,' she said. 'Thank you, Ben.' Ben felt happy and proud. The notebook's light seemed to shine right through his red hoodie. He knew he had done something truly brave.



The next day, Ms. Harlow announced the contest winner. Ben didn't win the prize. But Ms. Harlow said, 'Ben showed a different kind of bravery. He showed kindness.' She gave him a special star sticker. Ben smiled. He didn't need a prize. He had a friend. Mia waved at him from across the room, and Ben waved back.



Ben and Mia became best friends. They played together every day. The golden notebook still recorded brave acts, but now Ben knew that courage had many forms. Sometimes it was climbing a tree. Sometimes it was speaking up. But the bravest thing was being kind. Ben felt lucky to have the notebook and even luckier to have Mia.



One day, Ben found a note in the notebook: 'Keep being brave, Ben. Kindness is the brightest courage of all.' The notebook glowed softly, then faded away. Ben knew he would never forget its lesson. He looked at Mia, who was laughing with Mr. Snuggles. Ben smiled his gap-toothed smile. He was ready for any adventure, as long as he had friendship and kindness.