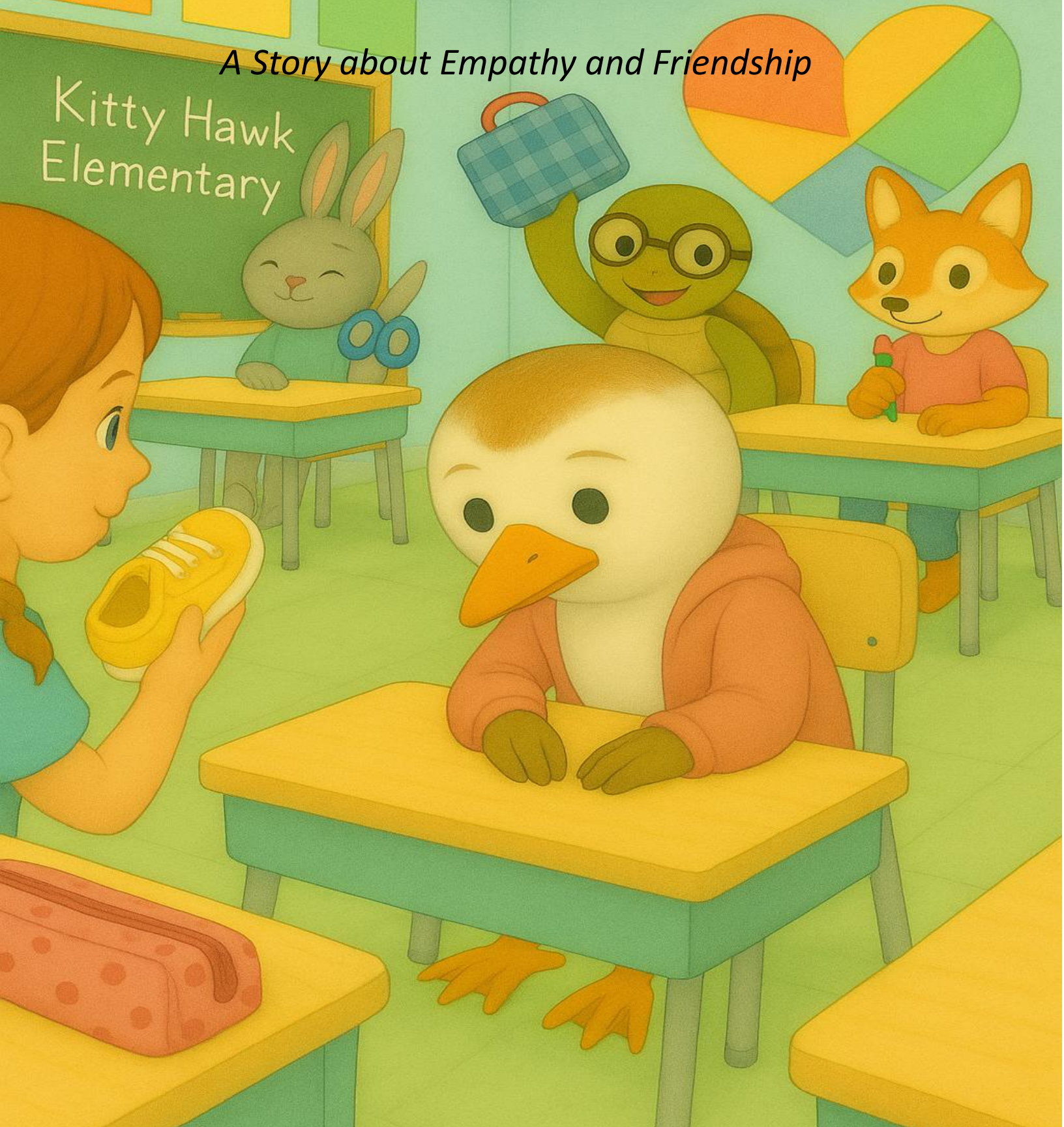


# The Heart That Heard

*A Story about Empathy and Friendship*



## Forward

This storybook was created by the Outer Banks Coastal Conservation (OBCC), a nonprofit organization whose mission is to foster environmental stewardship and a deeper connection to the Outer Banks of North Carolina through outreach, education, and conservation efforts.

We believe that small stories can spark big change. That is why we have made this book available as a free resource for parents, teachers, and community members.

All materials in this book may be freely downloaded, shared, printed and used for educational or nonprofit purposes.

To learn more, access additional resources at: [www.theobcc.org](http://www.theobcc.org).



One chilly morning at Kitty Hawk Elementary, the classroom buzzed with chatter. Everyone was showing off something new—pencils, sneakers, lunchboxes.

Everyone except Leo. Leo sat quietly, fiddling with the same old eraser he'd had since last year.

"Why so quiet, Leo?" asked Sandy, his classmate, smiling kindly.

Leo shrugged. "Just tired, I guess."

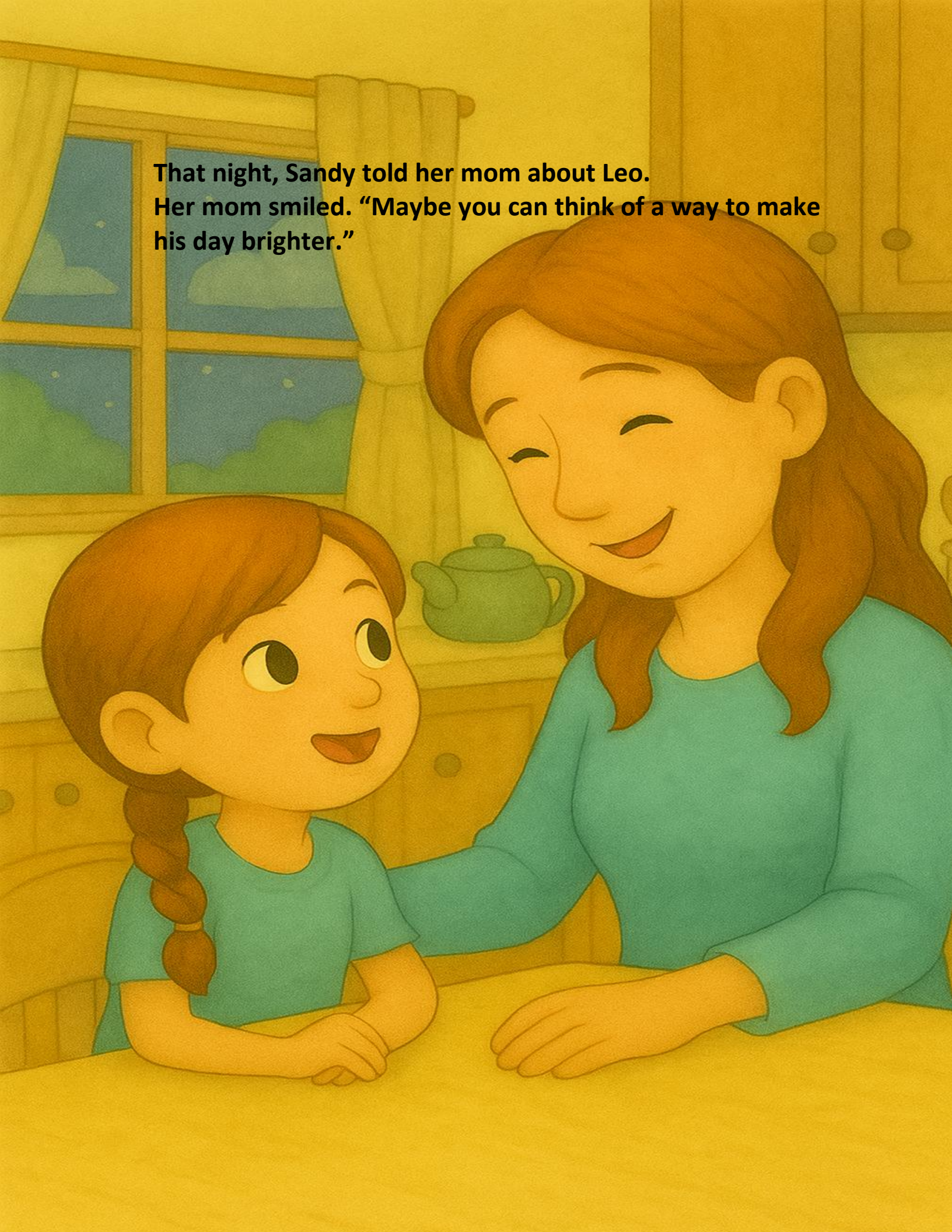


At recess, when the everyone ran to the swings, Leo sat on the bench. His shoes were torn, and his jacket had a hole in the sleeve. No one seemed to notice—except Sandy.

She remembered how her mom once said, *“Kindness starts when you notice someone else’s hurt.”*



That night, Sandy told her mom about Leo.  
Her mom smiled. "Maybe you can think of a way to make  
his day brighter."



The next morning, Sandy made a plan. She brought an extra granola bar in her lunch and quietly slipped it next to Leo's. When he found it, he looked around. Sandy just smiled.

"Thanks," he said softly.

"For what?" she asked, pretending not to know.

"For noticing," he replied.



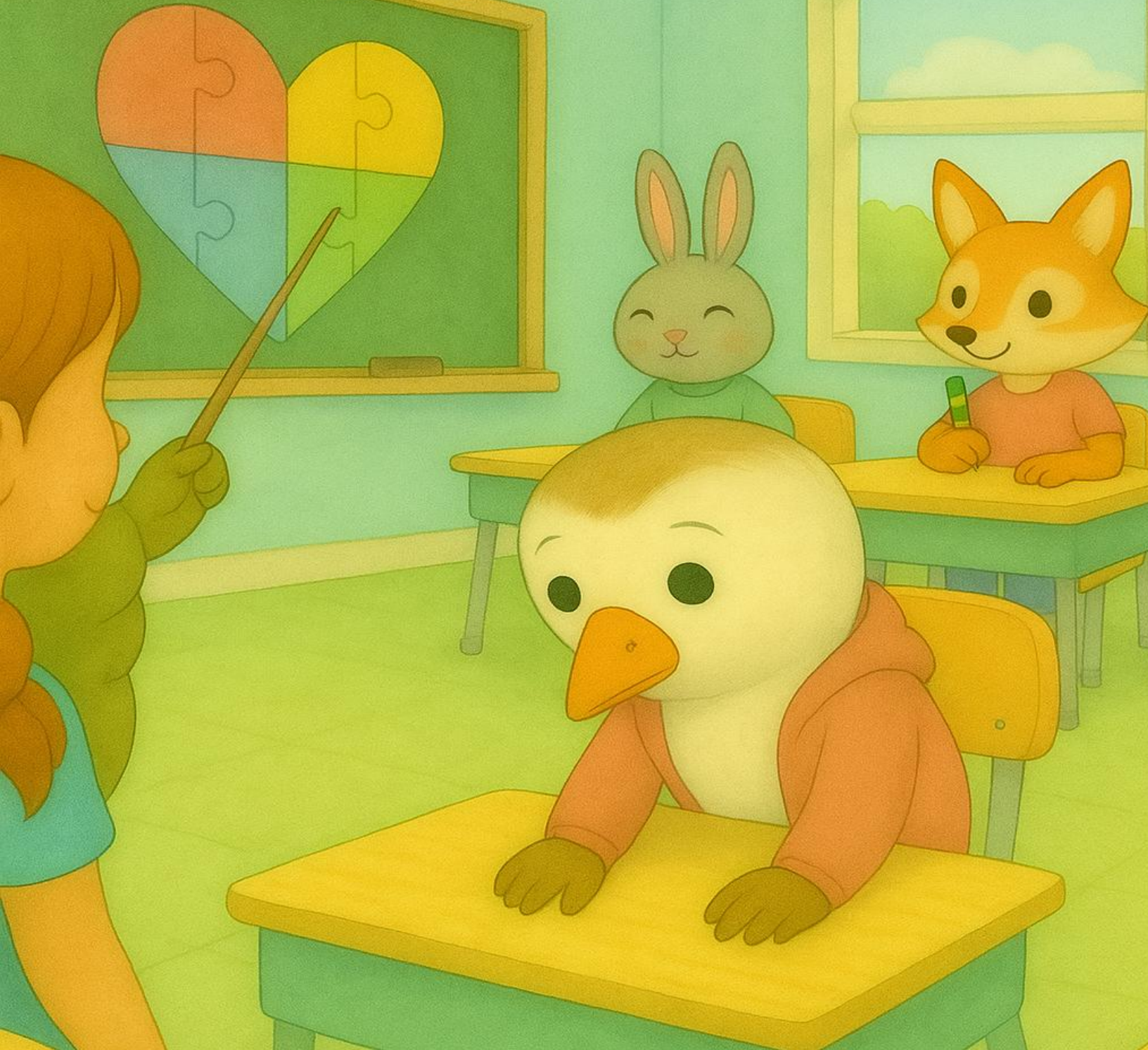
Over the next week, Sandy's small acts spread. When another student dropped their crayons, Leo helped pick them up. When a shy classmate needed a partner, Leo volunteered first.

Soon the classroom felt different—warmer, softer.



One day their teacher, Ms. Green, drew a big heart on the board.

"This," she said, "is our *Empathy Heart*. Every time someone shows kindness, we add a piece of color."



By the end of the month, the heart glowed with every shade of crayon in the box. Sandy and Leo stood beside it, proud.

Ms. Green said, “Empathy means listening with your heart—and you’ve all learned how powerful that can be.”



That afternoon, as the bell rang, Leo handed Sandy something small—a shiny sticker shaped like a heart. “It’s your turn to keep it,” he said.

Sandy smiled. “We’ll take turns forever.”



# Moral of the Story

Even the smallest act of kindness can make someone's day brighter—and kindness grows when you share it.

## Did You Know?

- ***Empathy*** means understanding and caring about how someone else feels — it's like having a “heart that hears.”
- Even small acts of kindness — like sharing a snack, helping a classmate, or offering a smile — can make someone's whole day better.
- Studies show that kindness can actually make *you* happier too! It helps your brain release “feel-good” chemicals like serotonin and oxytocin.
- When one person is kind, it often inspires others — creating a *chain reaction* of caring, just like the Empathy Heart in Sandy and Leo's classroom.
- You don't need something big or fancy to show kindness. The most powerful gifts are free: noticing, listening, and sharing from the heart.