



Snug Like a Turtle

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THE COZY BEAR HUG



Leo and his Momma walk hand-in-hand down a sun-dappled path toward the park. The trees are lush and green, and the air is filled with the sweet scent of blooming flowers as they enjoy their favorite morning tradition.



They reach the edge of the quiet pond and pause to look at the turtles. Several turtles are balanced on a large, flat rock, stretching their legs out to catch the warmth of the sun.



A sudden clack from a falling branch makes the turtles retreat instantly. Leo watches as their heads and limbs vanish into their sturdy shells, leaving only smooth, still shapes behind on the rock.



Momma explains that the shells are like warm, cozy hugs that help the turtles feel safe. She tells Leo that the shell helps their bodies feel calm when things get too loud or when they feel a little bit worried.



In their cozy living room, Momma shows Leo how to make his own shell. They both wrap their arms around their chests, hugging themselves tight while taking slow, deep breaths in and out together.



The next morning, the walk to school feels different, and Leo grips Momma's hand a little tighter. His stomach feels wiggly and full of butterflies as the big school building comes into view.



Before going inside, Momma kneels down to Leo's level and whispers that he should remember to be snug like a turtle. Leo gives a small nod, trying to be brave even though his tummy still feels very fluttery.



The classroom is full of energy, with bright lights and many children talking at once. Leo feels a wave of sadness and misses Momma so much that his chest begins to feel tight and heavy.



Remembering Momma's lesson, Leo wraps his arms around himself and squeezes tight. He closes his eyes and takes a long, slow breath in and a gentle breath out, just like they practiced at home.



Leo's shoulders drop and the wiggles in his tummy start to fade away. He opens his eyes to see the sun streaming through the window and realizes that he is safe, brave, and ready to play.