



The Courage of Caleb

by Frances Brigando



Caleb loved drawing, especially fantastical creatures with bright colors. One day at school, as he happily sketched a unicorn with a rainbow mane, a boy named Mark snatched his drawing and crumpled it. Caleb felt a knot of sadness and confusion in his stomach, unsure what to do.



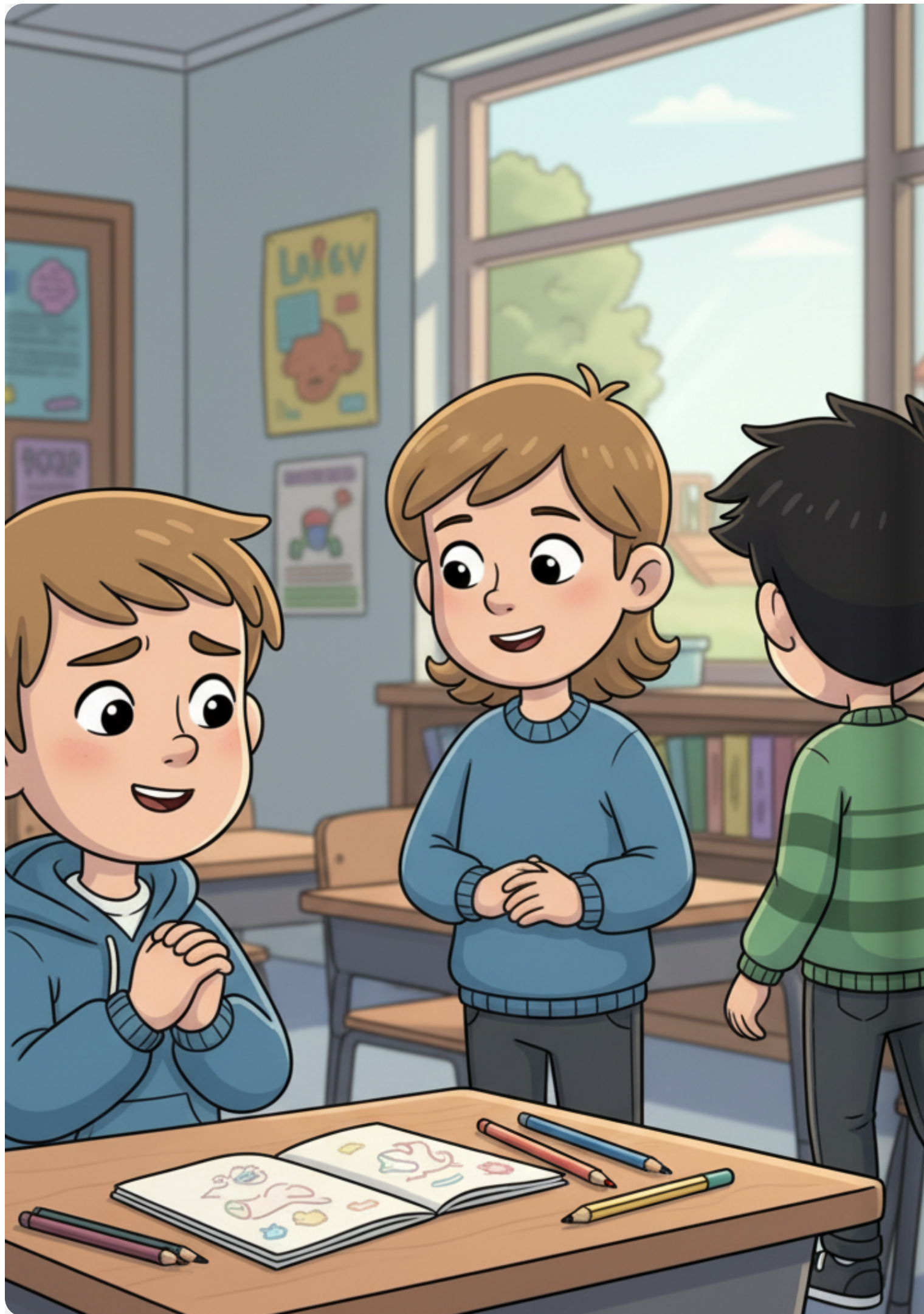
Mark and his friends often teased other kids, making them feel small and alone. Caleb noticed other children hiding their drawings, avoiding the playground, and looking unhappy. He wondered why Mark acted this way and if there was anything he could do.



That evening, Caleb talked to his mom about what happened. His mom explained that sometimes bullies act out because they are feeling unhappy or insecure themselves. She helped him understand that it wasn't his fault and gave him some strategies to try.



The next day, Mark started teasing a girl about her new shoes. Remembering his mom's advice, Caleb stood up, saying, "Leave her alone, Mark!" Mark was surprised by Caleb's unexpected response and stopped teasing the girl. Caleb stood tall and strong.



Caleb realized that speaking up could make a difference. He started practicing other strategies. He learned to use a calm, firm voice, walk away from trouble, and tell a trusted adult. His confidence grew, and he started to feel braver.



Slowly, Caleb and some of his classmates started a "Kindness Club." They talked about feelings, practiced being friends, and found ways to include everyone. The playground started feeling brighter, with more laughter and fewer hurtful words. Caleb learned that a little courage could change everything.