Hood and the Grey Cloud

A story about sadness... and calm thoughts

For ages 5 to 9



Child Protection Office

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Hood and Ayoub were best friends. They did everything together.

They sat side by side in class, shared their sandwiches
at break time, and laughed until their eyes watered.



One day, Ayoub came close to Hood and said in a quiet voice:

“Hood... my dad found a job in another city. I’m moving to a new school.”



The next morning, Hood walked into class
and found the chair beside him empty.

He felt as if a heavy grey cloud was sitting on top of his head.



Hood came home. He didn’t eat his favorite food, and he didn’t play with his toys.

He sat quietly by the window… and the grey cloud grew bigger and bigger.



Mama Jumana sat down gently beside him, stroked his hair, and said:

“I see a sad cloud today, Hood. Will you tell me what happened?”

With tears in his eyes, Hood said: **“Ayoub is gone, Mama.”**



Jumana hugged him and said:

“It’s natural to feel sad, my love. When we’re far from someone we love, we feel sad. Your sadness means your heart knows how to love.”

Hood felt a little better... **because sadness is allowed.**



Jumana brought paper and crayons and said: **“Let’s play the game of three letters!**

A is what happened. B is the thought we tell ourselves. C is how we feel.”

Then she whispered: **“And here’s the secret: thought**

B is what makes the cloud grow bigger… or smaller!”

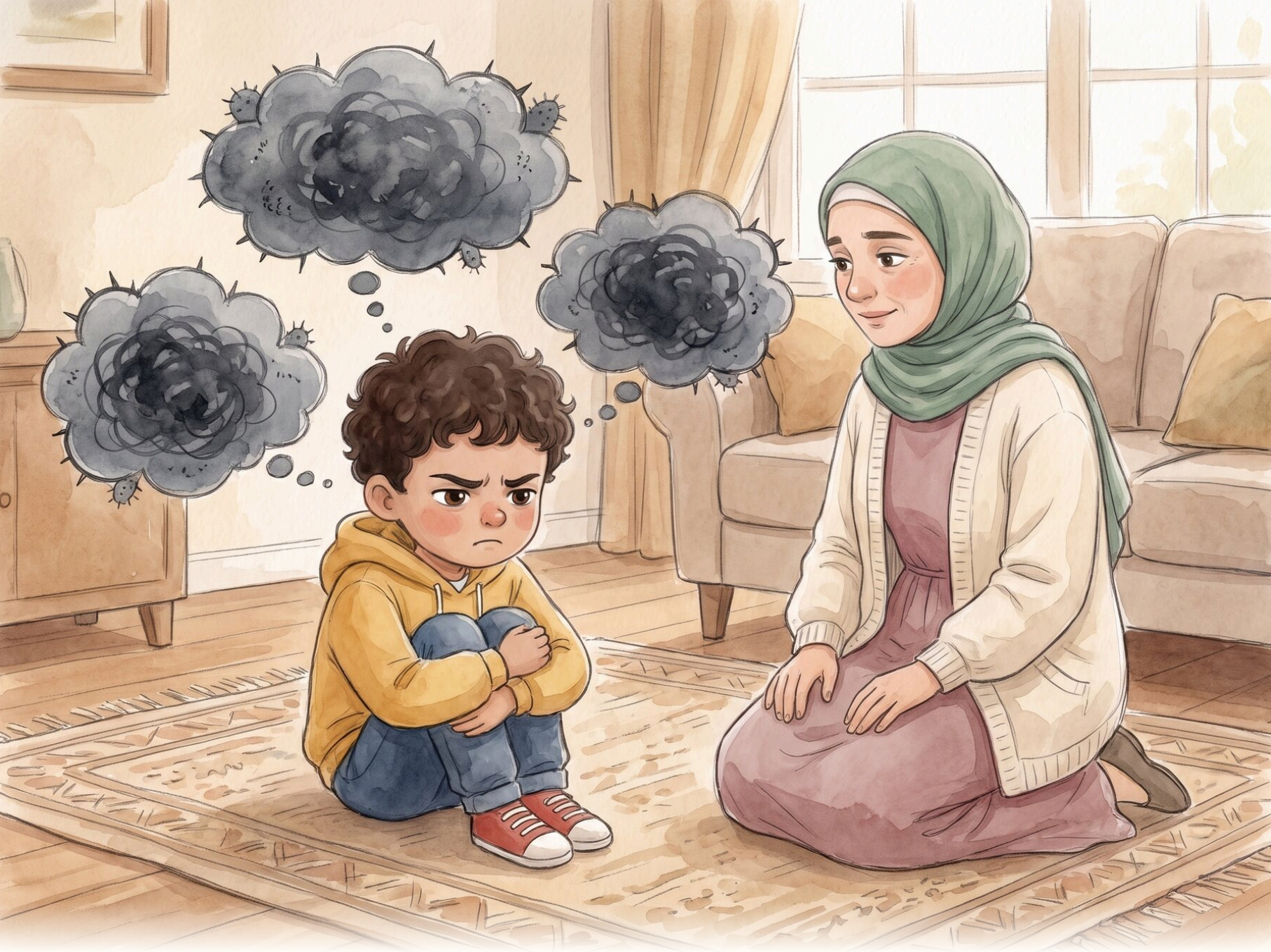


Mama said: **“Imagine two children who see a little puppy.**

The first one thinks: It’s going to bite me! So he gets scared and runs away.

The second one thinks: It looks friendly! So she smiles and comes closer.

Same puppy… but a different thought, so a different feeling!”



Jumana asked: **“Now, Hood, what do you tell yourself about Ayoub moving away?”**

Hood thought for a moment, and said:

Ayoub must stay with me forever! **I’ll never have a friend like him again!**

This is the worst thing in the world, and I can’t stand it!



Mama said: **“These are thorny thoughts. They make the cloud very heavy. Let’s be detectives and ask each thought: Are you true? Are you helpful?”**

Hood put on his detective hat and picked up a big magnifying glass.



Thorny thought number one: **Ayoub must stay with me forever!**

Mama asked: **“Is there a rule in the world that says friends never move away?”**

Hood thought: “No… his dad found a new job, and that’s nobody’s fault.”

Then he said: **“I really wished he would stay… but not everything I wish for happens.”**

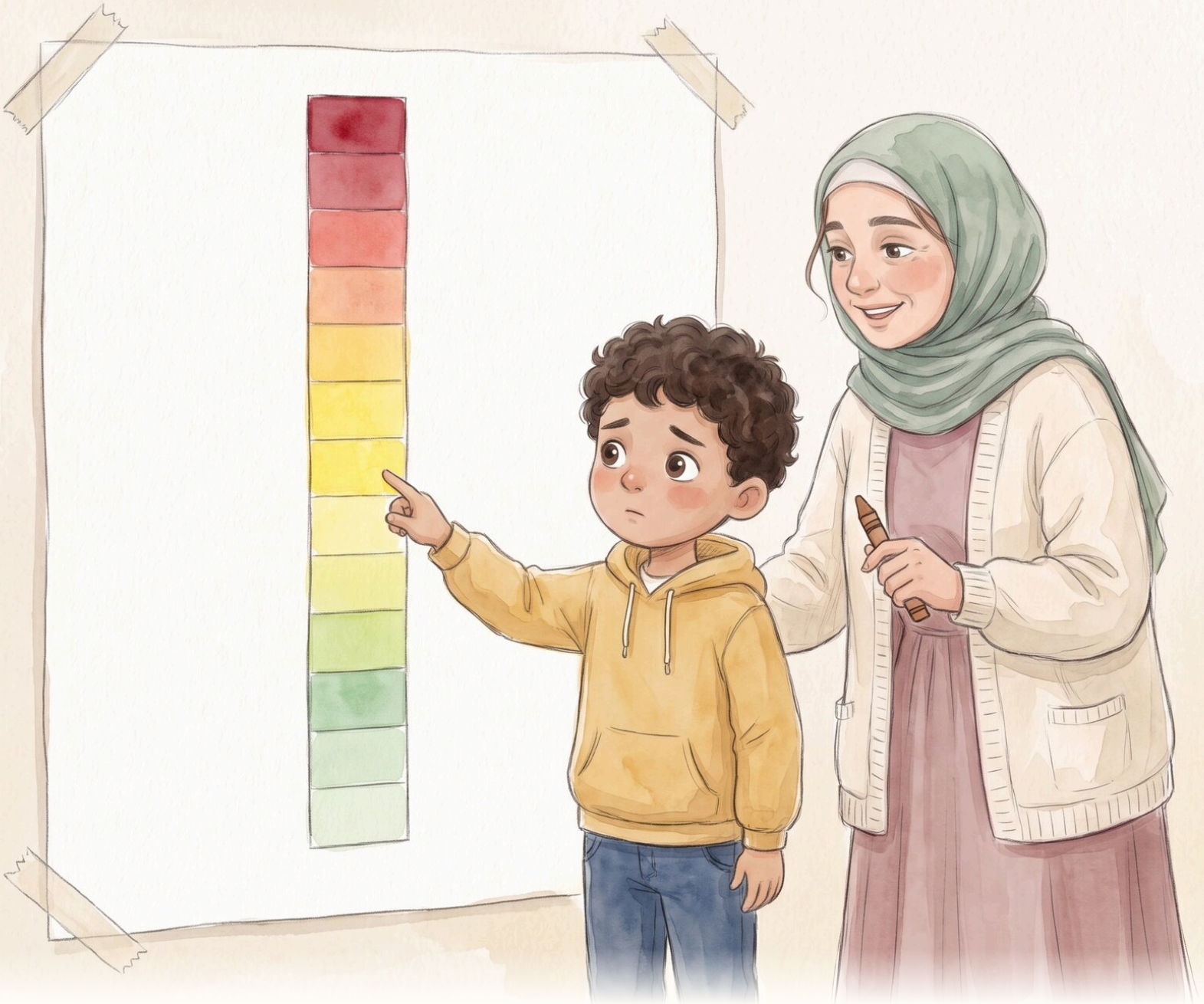


Thought number two: **I'll never have a friend like him again!**

Mama asked: **"Did you know Ayoub on the day you were born?"** Hood laughed: "No! I met him in first grade."

She said: **"So your heart knows how to make friends."**

Hood said: **"Ayoub is a special friend... and I can make new friends too."**

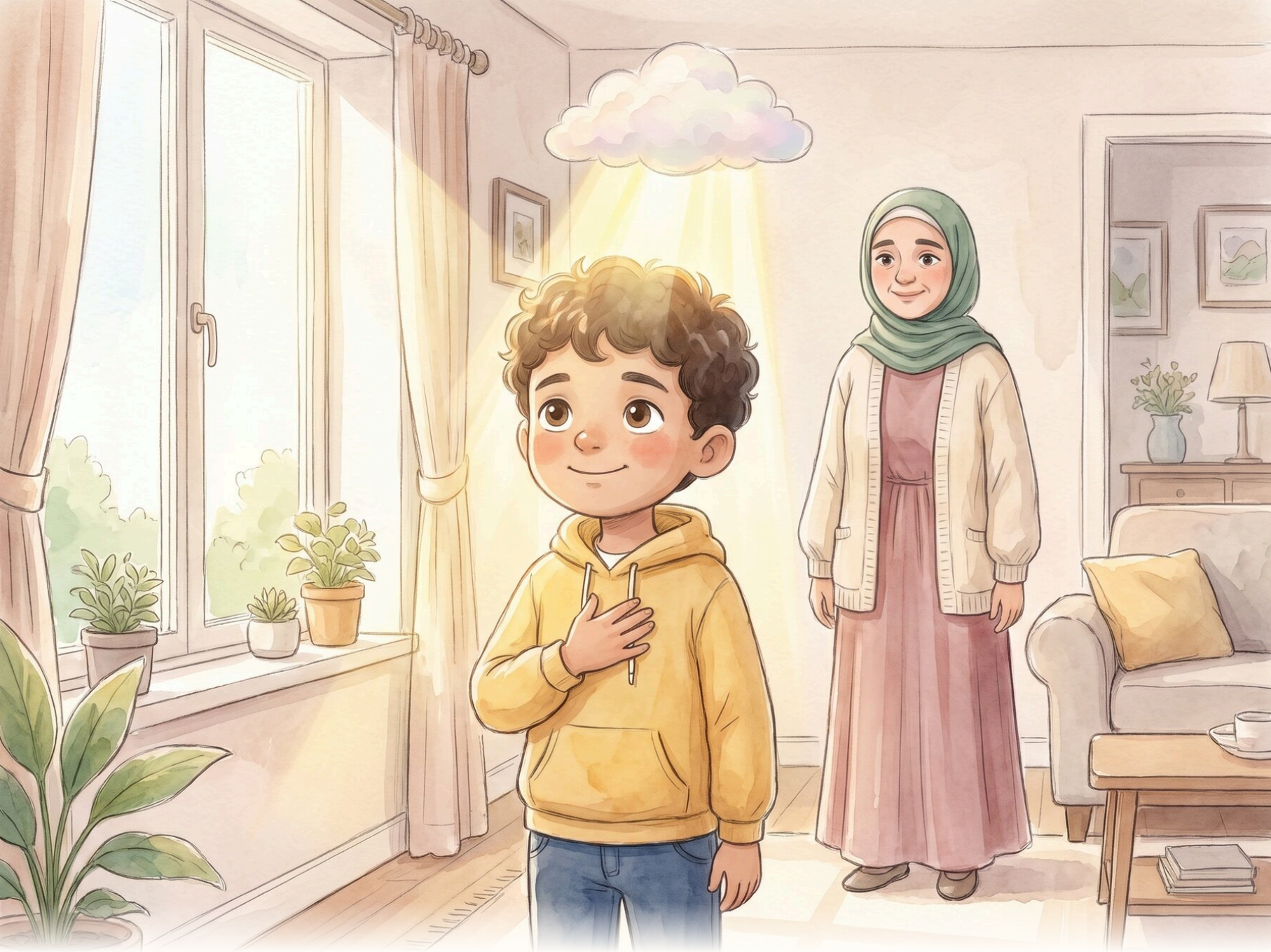


Thought number three: **This is the worst thing in the world!**

Mama drew a “feelings ruler” from zero to ten and asked: **“Where shall we put Ayoub moving away?”**

Hood said: “Maybe at five… it hurts, but it’s not the end of the world.”

Then he remembered: **“And I went to school for two days without him… so I can stand it!”**



Mama asked: **“Does the thorny thought help you play and have fun?”** Hood said: “No, it makes me want to be alone.”

Then he said in a confident voice: **“I’m sad because Ayoub moved away, and that’s okay... but I can stand it, and I can be happy again.”**

Suddenly, the cloud became small and light, and a sunbeam peeked through.



Mama asked: **“Now, what can we do?”**

So Hood drew Ayoub a picture of the two of them building a sandcastle, and wrote underneath: **“You are always my friend.”**

Then they filled a little box with their photos and happy memories.



On Friday, they called Ayoub on a video call.

Ayoub shouted happily: **“Hood! I missed you so much!”**

They talked about his new school, and agreed
to meet at the park in the next holiday.



At school, Hood saw a new boy sitting alone at break time.

Hood remembered the grey cloud, so he went over and said: **“Hi! I’m Hood. Do you want to play with me?”**

The boy smiled and said: **“I’m Sami!”**



That evening, Hood told his mother: **“Mama, the cloud has become really small!”**

Jumana hugged him and said: **“Sadness is a guest that visits us, then leaves, Hood. And whenever the cloud feels heavy... question your thoughts.”**

And Hood fell asleep smiling, dreaming of meeting Ayoub at the park.

A Guide for Parents & Educators

This story is built on Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), developed by Albert Ellis. With children, the goal is not to erase sadness, but to help the child feel a healthy sadness that fits the loss, instead of the despair and withdrawal that absolute thoughts create.

1. Accept the feeling first

Jumana did not start by correcting Hood's thoughts. She acknowledged his sadness and reassured him that it is "allowed." REBT distinguishes healthy negative emotions (sadness) from unhealthy ones (depression and despair); the aim is to move from the second to the first. pp. 5–6

2. The ABC model (the game of three letters)

A the activating event, **B** the belief, **C** the emotional and behavioral consequence. The puppy example shows the child that the same event leads to different feelings depending on the thought. pp. 7–8

3. Thorny thoughts (irrational beliefs)

- **Absolute demands:** "Ayoub must stay with me forever."
- **Overgeneralizing:** "I'll never have a friend like him."
- **Awfulizing:** "This is the worst thing in the world."
- **Low frustration tolerance:** "I can't stand it." p. 9

4. Disputing (the detective hat)

- **Logical:** does my wish mean it must happen? p. 11
- **Empirical:** what's the evidence? Did you know him on the day you were born? p. 12
- **Catastrophe scale:** placing the event on a 0–10 ruler and reviewing evidence of coping. p. 13
- **Pragmatic:** does this thought help me? p. 14

5. The calm thought (the new effective philosophy)

Preference instead of demand: "I really wished... but not everything I wish for happens," and frustration tolerance: "It hurts, but I can stand it."

6. Behavioral homework

The drawing for Ayoub, the memory box, the video call, and reaching out to a new friend, Sami. Action strengthens the new thought and turns it into experience. pp. 15–17

Questions to talk about after reading

- How did Hood feel when he saw the empty chair?
- Which thought made the cloud heavier? Which one made it lighter?
- Have you ever felt sad about something? What did you tell yourself?
- What calm thought could you tell yourself?

A tip

Don't rush your child out of sadness, and don't say "Don't be sad." Listen first, then play the detective game together with their thoughts. If sadness lasts for weeks, or affects sleep, eating, or schoolwork, consult a mental health professional.