

## One Morning in Room Five

Room Five was unusually quiet. Mrs. Grey, the principal, knew that at this time of the morning the children of Room Five would be working at their learning centers. Normally those centers brought about a lively and—sometimes boisterous—exchange of ideas and educational philosophies.

Mrs. Grey stopped and stood in the doorway of the near-silent classroom. The only sound that could be heard was a small voice coming from the reading corner. It said,

Mother Bear gave Bradley Bear the tent poles to hold. But when Bradley saw a chipmunk, he dropped the poles and started to chase it.

The voice faltered occasionally, but kept going.

Father Bear said, "We need to put up our tent, if we are going to have a place to sleep tonight." Bradley Bear watched the chipmunk scurry away as he handed Father Bear the tent poles, one-by-one.

A group of children, who were figuring sums with the help of math cubes, had stopped mid-problem. A few of them were still holding the cubes in their hands. Mrs. Grey quietly pulled out one of the small chairs from under the math group's table and sat down next to them. On the voice read. Sometimes it slowed to sound out a word, but it was gaining confidence.

When they finished putting up the tent, Bradley Bear saw they had their own canvas castle in the woods. He got out his own sleeping bag and unrolled it—without being asked.

Sunlight fell in patches on the classroom floor near a group of students seated in a circle. They had been playing math games. They, too, had stopped and were facing the reading corner. A mom, a classroom volunteer who was helping them, turned and caught Mrs. Grey's eye.

Father Bear said, "We will need our chairs, if we are going to rest our feet after the hike." Bradley Bear watched the blue jays fly to a far away tree as he unfolded his chair, leg-by-leg.

The voice read on. Mrs. Grey thought about all that had been done. She had attended several meetings to develop educational plans on behalf of the student. There had been the numerous consultations she had had with his teacher, Mr. Ridgway, and his reading specialist, Miss Molina. She had often seen the school

secretary administering instructions, admonitions, and words of encouragement to the student. On more than one occasion, she had seen the school custodian take the reader aside and, kneeling to his level, explain to him how things worked.

Bradley Bear walked around the big rock he had longed to stand on and gathered firewood stick-by-stick. And when he was done, he found his own marshmallow roasting stick and laid it by the campfire circle—without being asked.

Outside the classroom's big picture window, the spring breeze slowed and the leaves on the trees became silent. The story kept coming. The voice was gaining speed.

When the sky grew dark, the stars glowed, and the flames danced in the campfire, Bradley Bear roasted his marshmallow. And when it caught fire, Bradley Bear blew out the flame—without being asked.

Kelly, her math cubes forgotten in her hand, turned to Mrs. Grey and said, "Adam can read now." The children of Room Five applauded.