

(3) Thank You, Mr. Falker

Trisha cherished the quiet moments she spent listening to her grandfather read aloud. Sitting close beside him, she watched as he turned the pages with care, his warm, steady voice bringing each story to life in the most magical way. “One day,” he told her with a proud smile, “you’ll be able to read these books all by yourself.” “I can’t wait!” Trisha beamed. “I’m going to read every book in the world!”

When Trisha finally began school, she was filled with excitement and determination. She sat upright in her chair, eager to learn. But when her teacher pointed to the words written on the chalkboard, Trisha's smile faded. The letters didn't stay still—they twisted, danced, and blurred together.

“They’re moving,” she whispered in confusion. She attempted to sound them out just as her teacher had demonstrated. “Buh... ah... tuh?” she guessed hesitantly. “That says ‘bat,’” the teacher responded gently.

But Trisha didn't see the word "bat." All she saw was a jumbled collection of shapes and lines that made no sense. “Maybe I just need more practice,” she told herself. Yet despite her determination, the letters continued to defy her, and the harder she tried, the more discouraged she became.

At lunch, a classmate suddenly shouted, “Trisha can't read!” “She's always guessing!” another added mockingly. Her face flushed with shame, Trisha looked down at her tray and said nothing. Later, alone in her room, she whispered to herself, “I'm not stupid... I'm just slow.” Year after year, she kept hoping something would change—but it didn't.

Then, one September morning, a new teacher arrived.

“Good morning, everyone! My name is Mr. Falker,” he announced with a wide,

sincere smile. “And I already know we’re going to have a fantastic year.” He had a strong, enthusiastic voice and read stories with such energy that the entire class was captivated. He made each student feel seen and valued. But despite Mr. Falker’s kindness, the teasing continued. One afternoon, a boy smeared sticky honey across Trisha’s book. “Maybe now she’ll stick to reading!” he jeered.

Trisha ran into the hallway, tears spilling down her cheeks. She collapsed to the floor, hugging her knees tightly. “I just want to read,” she whispered through sobs. “Trisha, what’s wrong?” Mr. Falker asked softly. “They’re right,” she cried. “I’m dumb. I’ll never be able to read.” “You are not dumb,” he said firmly. “You are smart, creative, and capable. You simply learn differently and I’m going to help you. We’ll work together, starting tomorrow.” “Really?” she sniffled. “Really,” he said with a reassuring nod.

From then on, Trisha stayed after school every day. Mr. Falker guided her patiently through letters, sounds, and words. Some days were frustrating. “I can’t do this,” Trisha said. “Yes, you can,” he replied. “You’re improving every single day.” Then one afternoon, something changed. “C... a... t,” Trisha read slowly. “Cat! It says cat!” Mr. Falker’s eyes lit up. “You did it! You really read the word!” From that moment, Trisha’s progress soared. Soon, she was reading entire pages, and eventually, entire books.

At the end of the year, Trisha wrapped her arms around Mr. Falker. “Thank you,” she whispered. “Thank you for never giving up on me.”

Years later, Trisha became a writer. In one of her books, she shared the story of a little girl who couldn’t read—until one remarkable teacher helped her believe she could.

That little girl was Trisha. And that teacher?

Thank you, Mr. Falker.