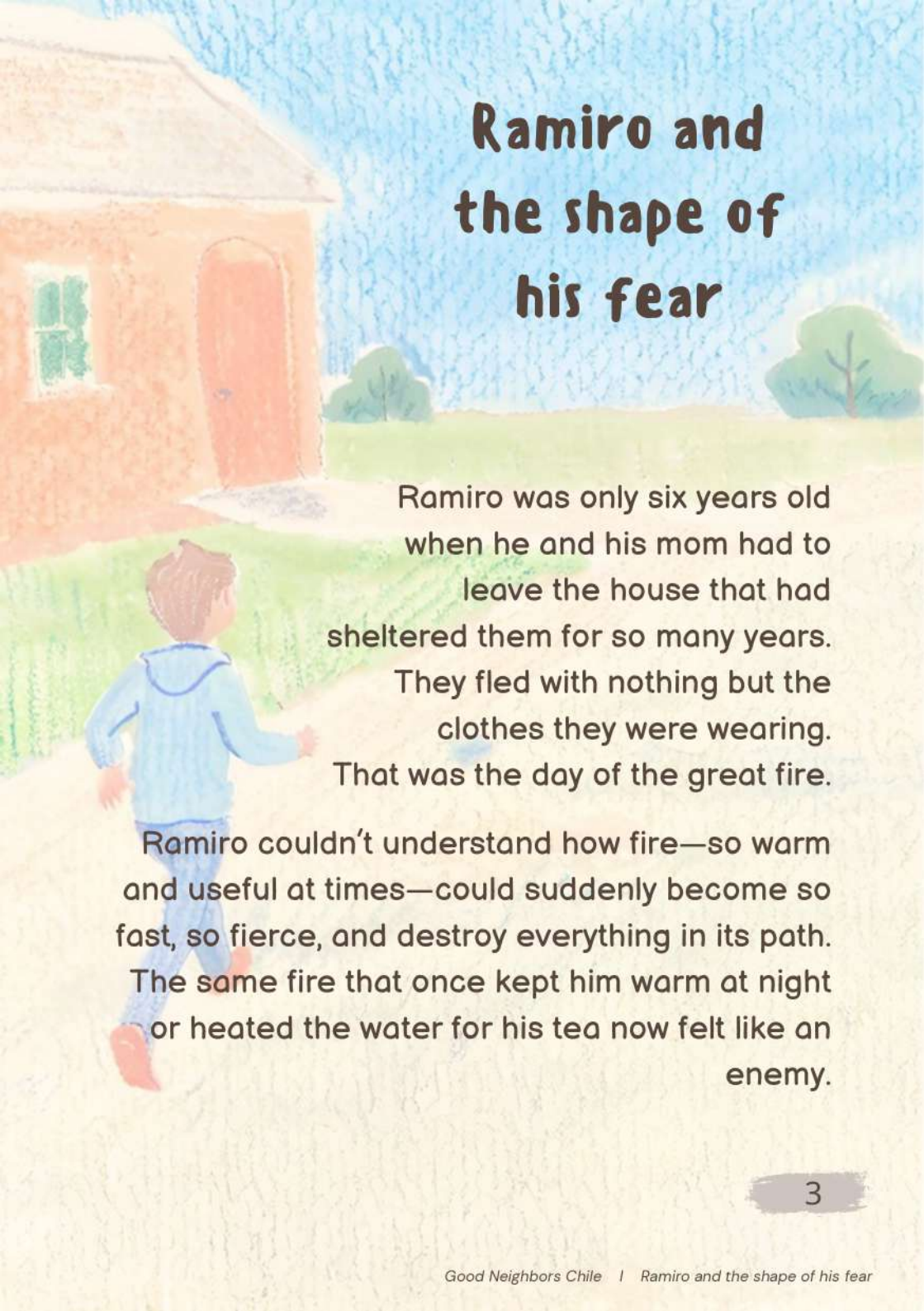


Ramiro and the shape of his fear



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A watercolor illustration of a young boy with brown hair, wearing a blue hoodie and blue pants, running away from a large, orange-brown house. The house has a red arched doorway and a window with green shutters. The background shows a green lawn, a blue sky with light clouds, and a few green bushes. The boy is running on a path that leads away from the house.

Ramiro and the shape of his fear

Ramiro was only six years old when he and his mom had to leave the house that had sheltered them for so many years. They fled with nothing but the clothes they were wearing. That was the day of the great fire.

Ramiro couldn't understand how fire—so warm and useful at times—could suddenly become so fast, so fierce, and destroy everything in its path. The same fire that once kept him warm at night or heated the water for his tea now felt like an enemy.

After the emergency passed, things didn't feel normal anymore. At night, Ramiro couldn't sleep. During the day, he felt scared all the time. Sometimes his hands felt hot, and he tried to shake the feeling away, as if flames were still there. Then he would realize it was only a beam of sunlight coming through the window, and he would try to calm himself.





His mother noticed that the sparkle in Ramiro's eyes had faded. She sat close to him and gently asked what was wrong.

Ramiro told her that his chest felt tight, that sometimes it was hard to breathe, and that his head kept replaying the moment they had to escape the fire. The images wouldn't go away. Full of anguish, he looked at her and said, "Mom, I don't know how to make it stop. Please help me."

His mom realized that since the day of the fire, she hadn't really talked with her son about what had happened. She had been in survival mode. Taking a deep breath, she tried to calm herself. With a soft voice, she said, "My dear, some people lost everything in the fire, and others had to leave their homes. What we lived through was very hard. But today, we are safe. We are together. Would you like to draw with me and put on paper everything that's been scaring you inside that little head of yours?"



Ramiro agreed, though he wasn't sure how he could draw something so dark and frightening. Slowly, he began to color—black, brown, and red. So much red.

As he drew, his hands trembled, but he couldn't stop. He drew flames, birds flying away, dogs and cats running to escape. Then, filled with anger, he crumpled the paper and threw it far away.



His mom picked up the paper, opened it, and looked at what he had drawn. There were no clear shapes—just an abstract mix of colors, a large patch of emotions. She tried to put into words what her son was experiencing.

That big stain, she realized, was his son's emotions pouring out. Not just one feeling, but many mixed together: sadness, fear, and anguish.

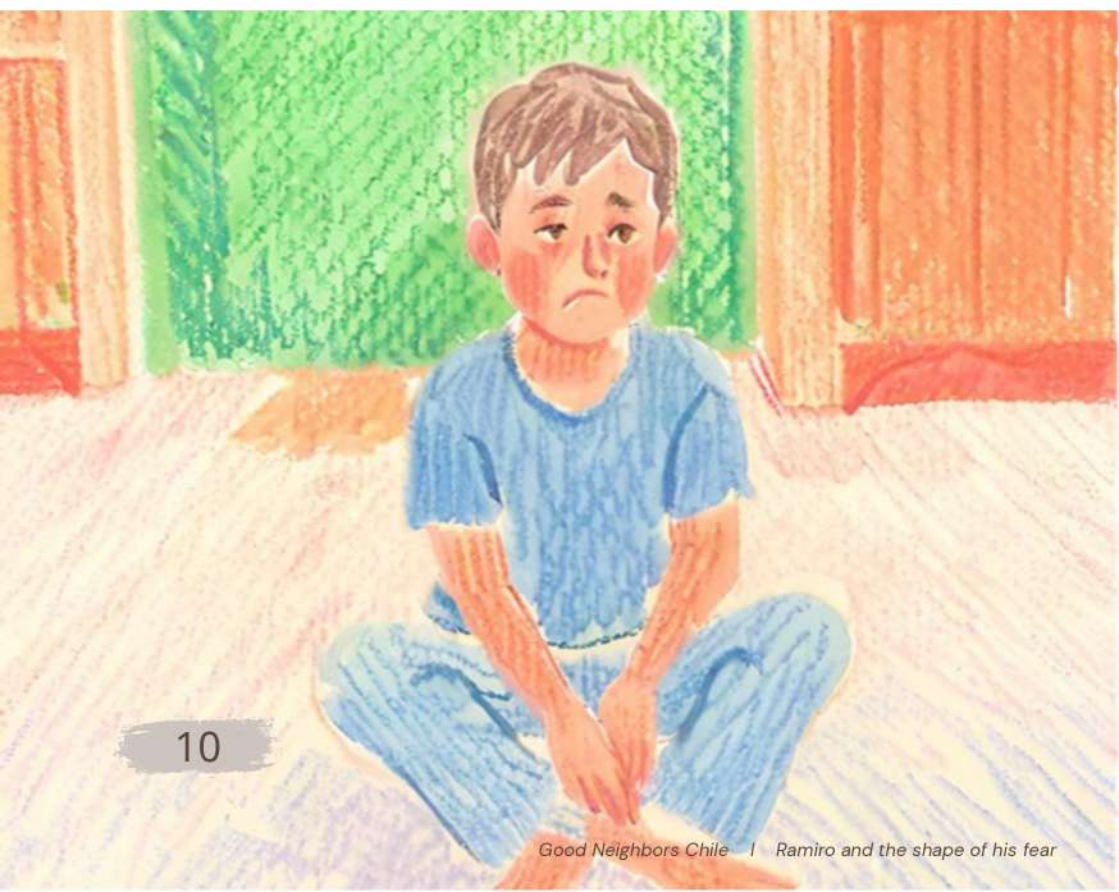


With great love, she told him that even though those feelings were uncomfortable and unpleasant, they needed to be seen, understood, let out, and talked about.



After drawing and talking, Ramiro felt a little lighter. He wasn't less sad, but the tight feeling in his chest had eased. Expressing what he felt had helped. Still, something lingered—images kept popping up in his mind.

"How can I make them stop?" he wondered.



He asked his mom, knowing he could trust her. Tenderly, she explained that thoughts are just thoughts. There's no need to fight them or force them away. It's better to let them come and go, like little clouds moving across a blue sky.

"This thought comes, it goes, and maybe comes back again... and we breathe. Always breathe," she said.



Ramiro didn't fully understand how he was supposed to accept his fear or those memories of the fire. But little by little, he stopped resisting them. Just as his mom had said, the thoughts began to move freely through his mind.



Slowly, Ramiro started to feel better. He learned to accept his emotions. And whenever he didn't understand what he was feeling or how to express it, he remembered that he could always ask his mom for help. She was there for him—and he felt it.

Even though he didn't know what the future might bring, Ramiro knew one thing for sure: they were a team. His mom would take care of him and protect him.



Because that's what families who love each other do. They care for one another. They help each other.

When Ramiro thought about his mom, his heart beat fast for a moment and he felt strange. At first, it scared him—but then he understood.

That feeling was love.

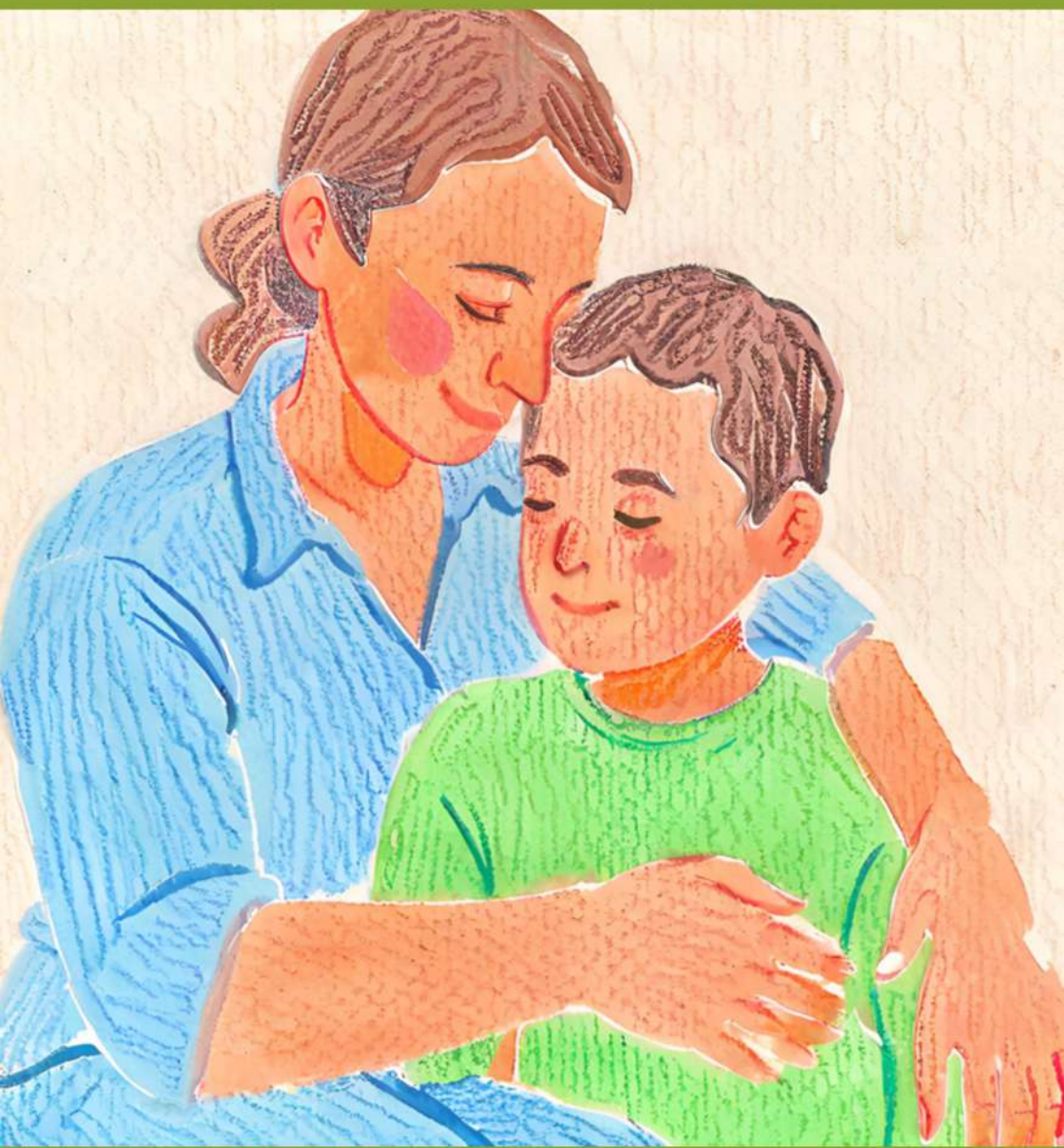


Credits

A contribution from Good Neighbors Chile

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