

The Boy and the Axolotl



Çınar BİBER

The Boy and the Axolotl

Çınar BİBER



Mateo lived in a bright little town with a big blue lake nearby. He loved to explore and ask questions about everything he saw. One sunny morning, his teacher, Miss Luna, showed the class a picture of a funny smiling creature. 'This is an axolotl,' she said, tapping her clipboard with a smile. 'It lives only in the lakes of Mexico.'



Mateo leaned forward, his dark brown eyes wide. The axolotl had feathery pink gills like a crown and a wide, upturned mouth that seemed to say hello. 'It looks like it's always happy!' Mateo laughed. Miss Luna nodded. 'It is a special amphibian, and it needs clean water to survive.' Mateo's curiosity sparked like a little fire.



That afternoon, Mateo told his best friend Sofia all about the axolotl. Sofia's curly puffs bounced as she listened. 'We should build a model of the lake for the school project!' Mateo said, his gap-toothed smile shining. Sofia clapped her hands. 'Yes! We can show how everything in the lake works together.' They shook hands and promised to meet after school.



Mateo and Sofia met at the lake's edge, carrying a big cardboard box. They gathered sticks, pebbles, and soft green moss. 'The axolotl needs plants to hide in and clean water to breathe,' Mateo explained. Sofia wrote notes on a pad. 'Let's make sure our model shows that.' They worked all afternoon, their sneakers muddy and their hearts happy.



Back at home, Mateo painted a tiny axolotl with pale pink clay. He gave it feathery gills and a big smile. 'You're the star of our lake,' he whispered. He placed it gently in the box. That night, he dreamed of swimming with axolotls in sparkling water. The little creature seemed to wink at him and say, 'Thank you for telling our story.'



The next day, Miss Luna asked the class to share their projects. Mateo stood proudly beside his model. 'This is Lake Xochimilco,' he said, pointing to the blue paper water. 'Axolotls live here, and they need clean water to stay healthy.' His freckled nose wrinkled as he smiled. The class leaned in to see the tiny pink axolotl.



Mateo showed how plants in the lake make oxygen for the water. 'The axolotl breathes through its gills and its skin,' he said. 'If the water gets dirty, the gills get sick, and the axolotl can't breathe.' He placed a small cup of muddy water next to the clean water. 'See? Dirty water hurts the habitat.' His friends nodded, understanding the problem.



Sofia held up a picture of a trash-filled lake. 'Sometimes people throw garbage into the water,' she said. 'That makes it dirty and dangerous for the axolotl.' The class gasped. Mateo added, 'The axolotl's home is rare and special. We must protect it.' He looked at his model and felt a strong wish to help the real lake.



Miss Luna smiled warmly. 'You've explained it beautifully, Mateo. Rare habitats like this deserve our care.' She adjusted her glasses. 'What can we do to help?' Mateo thought for a moment. 'We can keep the lake clean by picking up trash and telling others not to pollute.' Sofia raised her hand. 'We can make posters and invite everyone to help!'



The class decided to plan a Lake Clean-Up Day. Mateo and Sofia made colorful posters with a smiling axolotl and the words 'Keep Our Lake Clean!' They hung them around school. Miss Luna helped them write a letter to the town council. Everyone was excited to make a difference. Mateo's yellow backpack was full of posters and hope.



On Clean-Up Day, families gathered at the lake. Mateo wore his teal axolotl T-shirt for good luck. Everyone picked up litter and learned about the axolotl's habitat. Sofia led a game to sort trash into recycling bins. 'Look!' she shouted. 'The water looks clearer already!' The sun sparkled on the lake, and Mateo felt proud.



After the clean-up, Miss Luna gathered the group. 'You've shown that teamwork and kindness can protect a rare habitat,' she said. 'The axolotl needs clean water, and you're helping to keep it that way.' Mateo's heart swelled. He looked at his model and imagined the real axolotl smiling back at him. 'We'll keep helping,' he promised.



That evening, Mateo sat by the lake with Sofia. 'Do you think the axolotl knows we're helping?' he asked. Sofia grinned, showing her missing tooth. 'I think it does. And I think it's saying thank you with its big smile.' They watched the water ripple and felt happy. Mateo knew that even small actions can make a big difference.



The next week, Mateo brought his model to the town library. More people came to see it. He told them about the axolotl and its need for clean water. 'This rare habitat deserves protection,' he said. People listened and promised to help. Mateo's freckles danced as he smiled. He felt like a real guardian of the lake.



Miss Luna presented Mateo with a certificate for his hard work. 'You've taught us all something important,' she said. The class cheered. Mateo blushed and held up his tiny clay axolotl. 'This little guy thanks you,' he said. Everyone laughed and clapped. The axolotl's smile seemed to grow even wider.



Mateo and Sofia stood by the lake one last time. 'We'll keep the water clean for the axolotl,' Sofia said. Mateo nodded. 'And for all the creatures that live here.' They tossed a pebble into the lake and watched the ripples spread. The axolotl's home was safe for now, and they knew they had made a difference.