

# The Five Golden Stones



This is an excerpt from "My Heart Is in This Stone"

by Noldi Christen and Christine Lesueur.

This book was inspired by the 5,000 little stones and messages sent by children from around the world during the Tabori Special Stones campaign, and includes the stories behind seven of them.

One fine spring morning, a grandmother climbed her way up the hill to the Taporí house. In her sack, she carried a treasure - five small, round, golden stones to give to Taporí for the Special Stones campaign.

As she arrived in our house, she placed the stones on the big table, sat down and began to speak:

"These five stones come from my grandchildren, Valeria, Rachel, Marco, Michelle and Roxana. It was Valeria who had the idea to paint them gold.

I want to give you the message that goes along with her stone, but first I want to tell you her story...

Sometimes, if we know how to look, gray rocks can become gold nuggets and a green toad can change into a prince or princess.

When Valeria was born, we were all very worried about her. Her birth had been difficult. Would she live? Nothing was sure. Thankfully, in a few days, everything worked out. Well, not everything. She was nearly blind.

From her first breath, I felt very close to Valeria. I wanted her to have a good life because I know what it's like to have to struggle from such a young age. I was born into a very poor family.

The doctors weren't able to do anything for Valeria, except give her glasses.

So, even as a small child, she had eyeglasses perched on her little nose. The thick lenses looked like the bottoms of soda bottles.

The older she got, the more unhappy she became.



When she started school, it became worse. Everyone made fun of her. Her classmates said that she looked like a toad with big eyes. One day, someone even wrote on a wall of the school in big letters, 'Valeria=Toad-Eyes.'



Valeria came home in tears. Her dad took her in his arms and tried to make her feel better, but it didn't help.

Valeria cried and cried and threw her glasses across the room, smashing them into a thousand pieces.

When Valeria's father saw how upset she was, he got a bucket of water and a brush and went to the school. He scrubbed and scrubbed the wall until all the hurtful words were gone. That wall had never been so clean!

Still, in school nothing changed. Valeria went back without her hated glasses. But since she could not see anything, she kept bumping into people, sometimes even stepping on their feet.

She could not read what was written on the board and when she looked in her books, everything was fuzzy and made no sense.

The other children thought that she was being clumsy on purpose and said that she was stupid.

The more her classmates treated her this way, the more Valeria suffered, and her grades got worse and worse.

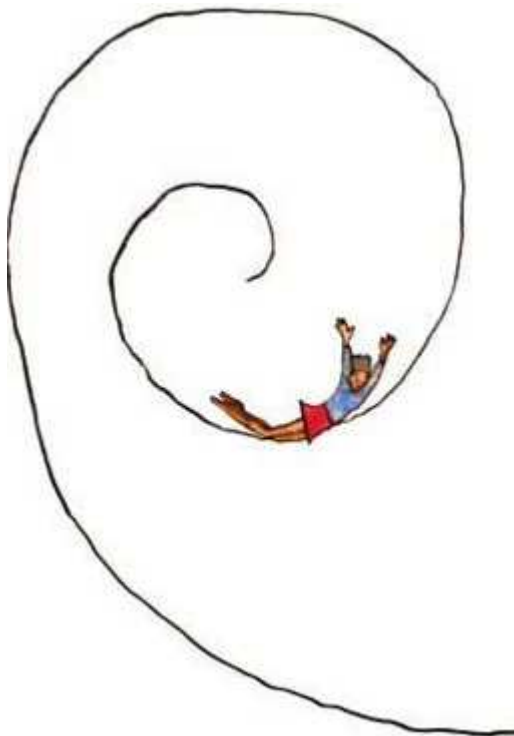
Two of her classmates, Britt and Yvan, did try to be on her side, but alone they didn't dare go against the others.

Some mornings, Valeria would have a stomach ache. The next day, it would be a headache. She did whatever she could just so long as she did not have to go to school. She would even hide under her bed, hoping no one would find her.



When I learned what was happening to my

granddaughter, my heart just sank. It wasn't right!



So I gathered up my courage and went to see her teacher, then the principal and even her doctors.

I said the same thing to each one: 'You have to help us. You have to help Valeria find some happiness and enjoy going to school. She has suffered for too long!'

The doctor said that she needed a new pair of glasses, very attractive ones, still with special lenses, but not as thick. They would cost more, but the doctor

would work it out.

That would help, but was that enough? What use would the prettiest pair of glasses be if behind them were two eyes full of fear? Valeria's eyes had lost their sparkle.

I think her teacher really understood that something else was needed besides a nice pair of glasses for Valeria to smile again.

So one day, the teacher invited the parents to join their children in her classroom. She began to tell them about Valeria, from her birth up to the time she hid under the bed.

The teacher told everything in a simple way, not saying much about when the children wrote 'Valeria=Toad Eyes' on the wall. The children who had written that felt very ashamed.

When it was time to go, everyone left in complete silence.



Since that day, things have changed. Now other children have joined Britt and Yvan in becoming friends with Valeria.

They learned how to get along better and to laugh together.

And so, little by little, friendship returned among the children and Valeria got back her beautiful smile.

Her grades are getting better. No more failing marks!

The most wonderful thing is that behind those glasses you can see her eyes sparkle!





That's the story of my granddaughter, Valeria, who has friends now.

I wanted to tell you so that you will understand better the message that goes with the five golden stones.



The grandmother then handed us a piece of paper, upon which was written:

**I want these golden stones to be part of a prince's crown. I read once in a fairy tale that a toad changed into a prince simply because someone loved him. Valeria**

