**Anxiety weighs down the heart,
but a kind word cheers it up
Proverbs 12:25 – A Proverbial Story
By Ted Hildebrand and Chatgpt**

It was a gray morning in Maplebrook. Rain tapped against the glass in steady rhythm, on this gloomy fall afternoon. Outside, the sky hung low and gray, mirroring the heaviness in Naomi’s heart.

Inside a small café tucked between a florist and a bookstore, Naomi stirred her coffee absently, her eyes fixed on the swirling cream that didn’t quite mix in. She hadn’t slept much. Anxiety had moved into her chest like an unwelcome tenant, heavy and unrelenting.

Her job at the marketing firm had grown increasingly demanding, and with layoffs looming, every meeting felt like a trial. Meanwhile, her personal bills were piling up, and on top of that, her mother’s recent health scare had pulled Naomi back and forth between worry and helplessness. No one could see it, of course. On the outside, Naomi wore her usual polite smile. But inside, her heart was sinking.

As she sat in the café, she pulled out of her purse a jumble of receipts and old pens. She slid out an envelope addressed to her in handwriting that was overly neat.

It was a letter from Mrs. Turner, her high school English teacher.

Naomi hesitated, then opened it, anticipating more bad news.

*Dear Naomi,*

*I know you’re off chasing your dreams, but I wanted to remind you of something. When you were in my class, I saw a fire in you—not just talent, but kindness, resilience, and courage. You were always helping the others, encouraging them when they doubted themselves. I never told you how much that meant to me.*

*Life won’t always be kind, and you won’t always feel strong. But remember: "Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up." You’ve offered many kind words to others. Let this be one for you.*

*Keep going. The world needs your light.*

*With gratefulness,*
*Mrs. Turner*

Naomi read the letter three times. Each time, something in her heart loosened. The anxiety hadn’t disappeared, but it felt less suffocating now, as if someone had cracked a window in a stuffy room. She smiled, a small, reluctant curve of her lips.

She looked up from her table, but something had shifted. The heaviness hadn’t vanished, but it had loosened, just a bit—like a too-tight collar finally unbuttoned. It wasn’t just the words; it was the simple act of being remembered.

Later that day, at work, Naomi decided to do something unusual. She stopped by her colleague Marla’s desk. Marla had seemed withdrawn lately, always avoiding eye contact in meetings.

“Hey,” Naomi said gently, “I just wanted to say—you’ve been doing amazing work lately. I know things are tense around here, but I really admire your attention to detail as well as your showing up early and leaving late.”

Marla looked up, her eyes wide. “Wow... thank you. I’ve been feeling pretty overwhelmed.”

Naomi smiled, recognizing the look. “Yeah. Me too.”

That day, something started to shift—not just for Naomi, but for everyone she spoke to. One kind word at a time, the fog began to lift.

Mrs. Turner’s old proverb lingered with her, becoming a quiet mantra: *“Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up.”* And so Naomi carried that torch forward, discovering that kindness didn’t just help others—it reminded her she wasn’t powerless in the face of worry.