



Maya's Perfect Swish

Bukola Edmondsondeigh



Maya, an 11-year-old with a bright smile and a head full of bouncy curls, loved her Catholic school. But more than anything, she loved basketball. She'd spend hours watching her older brother, Jamal, practice dazzling moves on the court, dreaming of the day she could play like him.



One sunny afternoon, a notice appeared on the school bulletin board: "5th Grade Basketball Team Tryouts!" Maya's heart did a little flip-flop. This was her chance! She felt a mix of bubbling excitement and a tiny flutter of nerves.



Tryouts were a whirlwind of dribbling, passing, and running drills. Maya zipped across the court, her sneakers squeaking with every turn, showing off her quick feet. But when it came to shooting, her shots often clanked off the rim or sailed wide, making her cheeks flush with frustration.



A few days later, Coach Miller posted the team roster. Maya's eyes scanned the list, her breath held tight. There it was: "Maya Johnson"! A huge grin spread across her face, but a small worry still tugged at her – she really needed to improve her shooting.



First practice was energetic and fun, but Maya's shooting struggles continued. Her teammates cheered her on, but the ball just didn't want to go through the hoop for her. She worked hard, trying different angles, but the basket felt miles away.



After practice, Jamal, who played on the JV team, saw Maya looking a little downcast. He knew that look well. "Trouble with your shot, little sis?" he asked with a knowing smile. He offered to help her practice after school, and Maya's face lit up.



Every day, Jamal taught Maya his secret shooting tips in their backyard. He showed her how to hold the ball, bend her knees, and follow through with her wrist, like a graceful swan's neck. Maya practiced diligently, shot after shot, until her arms ached.



The day of Maya's first game arrived, bringing with it a rush of excitement and butterflies. She dribbled the ball down the court, her heart pounding with anticipation. Suddenly, she had an open shot!



Taking a deep breath, Maya remembered Jamal's words: "Focus, form, follow-through!" She squared her shoulders, bent her knees, and released the ball with a perfect arc. Swish! The net barely moved as the ball sailed cleanly through the hoop! Her teammates erupted in cheers.



Maya beamed, high-fiving her teammates, feeling a surge of pride and accomplishment. They might not have won every game, but she had learned that with hard work, a little help from family, and believing in herself, she could achieve anything. Her perfect swish was just the beginning!