

The Color of My Clouds



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Maya sits at her desk in a sun-drenched classroom, but while her classmates are vibrant and full of color, she feels wrapped in a soft, translucent gray mist. The teacher's voice sounds distant, like it is coming from underwater, as Maya stares blankly at her open notebook.



Walking through the crowded school hallway, Maya feels an invisible weight pressing down on her shoulders, shaped like a heavy, dark cloud. Everyone else seems to move with ease and laughter, while every step she takes feels like walking through deep, thick sand.



During lunch, Maya sits with her friends and puts on a bright, painted-on smile that doesn't reach her eyes. She mimics their movements and laughter, terrified that if she stops for a second, the dark cloud will become visible to everyone around her.



In the middle of a quiet exam, Maya's heart begins to race like a trapped bird against her ribs for no reason at all. The letters on the test paper start to swirl and blur, and the ticking of the wall clock sounds like a deafening drum in the silent room.



Seeking a moment of peace, Maya finds a hidden corner in the school library behind the tallest bookshelves. She hugs her knees to her chest, finally letting the mask slip as a single tear tracks through the gray mist that follows her everywhere.



Mr. Aris, the art teacher, notices Maya lingering after class and sits down at a nearby table with a gentle expression. He doesn't ask about her missing assignments; instead, he softly asks how her heart is doing today, offering a space of genuine kindness.



The words begin to pour out of Maya like a broken dam, describing the heaviness, the grayness, and the fear of being misunderstood. Mr. Aris listens without judgment, his presence acting like a small, warm lantern that begins to pierce through Maya's thick fog.



Maya begins visiting the school counselor's office, a cozy room filled with soft pillows and calming plants. Here, she learns that her feelings have names and that there are tools, like deep breathing and journaling, to help her manage the weight of her clouds.



A few weeks later, Maya joins an after-school art circle where she uses vibrant blues and purples to paint the clouds she carries. As she expresses her internal world on the canvas, she realizes that other students are painting their own shadows too, and she feels less alone.



Standing in the vibrant school courtyard, Maya still has her cloud, but it is smaller now and lined with silver light. She takes a deep, clear breath and reaches out to a younger student who looks overwhelmed, offering a kind word and a spark of hope.