

Friends Across the Ocean

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Bright morning sunlight streams into a cheerful American classroom as a smiling teacher holds up a stack of colorful envelopes for an international pen pal program. Eight-year-old Lily sits at her wooden desk, her eyes wide with excitement and curiosity as she looks at the globe standing on the front table.



Lily carefully opens her very first assignment envelope and discovers a neat photograph of her assigned pen pal, an eight-year-old girl named Yuki who lives in a cozy neighborhood in Japan. Surrounded by her colored pencils and notebooks, Lily feels a flutter of nervous butterflies in her tummy while wondering what her new friend is like.



Sitting at her bedroom desk with a pink gel pen, Lily writes her very first letter in English, introducing herself, her favorite dog, and her love for painting. She decorates the borders with bright yellow sunflowers and carefully slips the letter into a bright blue envelope stamped with a soaring airplane.



Far across the vast Pacific Ocean, Yuki sits at her low wooden table in Japan, gently opening the international envelope with a delighted smile. She reads the English words and responds in natural, age-appropriate Japanese: はじめまして、ゆきです。日本にすんでいます。たのしみです！ (Nice to meet you, I am Yuki. I live in Japan. I am so excited!), translating it gently for her new friend while sketching a cute drawing of her fluffy cat.



The girls begin exchanging letters filled with delicious descriptions of their everyday meals, from Lily's favorite gooey cheese pizza to Yuki's warm bowl of steaming ramen. Yuki writes: わたしのいちばんすきな食べものは、おかあさんがつくるおいしいおにぎりです。 (My favorite food is the delicious onigiri my mother makes.) Lily reads the English translation below and her mouth waters as she imagines tasting a triangle rice ball.



As more letters travel back and forth across the ocean, Lily and Yuki discover that they both love riding bicycles in the park and collecting smooth, shiny rocks. They glue photographs of their favorite hobbies into their letters, giggling as they realize how many fun interests they share despite living miles apart.



The seasons change, and the girls eagerly share stories about their favorite cultural holidays and family traditions. Yuki writes about the beautiful cherry blossoms blooming in spring: はるになると、きれいなさくらがさきます。おはなみをします。 (In spring, lovely cherry blossoms bloom. We have cherry blossom viewing parties.), while Lily writes about carving glowing pumpkins for autumn.



Sitting side by side on their respective floors thousands of miles apart, Lily and Yuki look over their growing collection of letters and realize they have become the best of friends. Their initial nervousness has completely melted away, replaced by a warm bond of understanding and mutual curiosity about each other's worlds.



With full hearts, the girls send handmade drawings and bright photographs capturing their daily lives, expressing how much their cross-continental friendship means to them. Yuki adds a sweet note: とおいけれど、私たちはいつもともだちだよ。 (Even though we are far apart, we are always friends.), bringing a joyful tear to Lily's eye as she reads the English translation.



Standing together side by side in a bright, imaginative dreamscape bridging two distinct cultures, Lily and Yuki wave happily toward each other across a glowing blue ocean. The story closes with both girls looking forward to a lifetime of sharing letters, proving that true friendship easily crosses oceans and cultural borders.