



A New Friend at the Canteen

Connie Connie Lia sema



The morning sun shines brightly over the bustling school courtyard as Daud and Isyak walk together, sharing jokes and laughter. Their stomachs growl in unison, signaling that it is finally time for their favorite part of the day: recess.



As they navigate through the crowded corridor toward the canteen, the savory aroma of fried noodles and fresh pastries begins to fill the air. Daud leads the way while Isyak animatedly describes a goal he scored during physical education class.



Suddenly, they notice a girl standing alone near a row of lockers, looking lost and clutching her notebook tightly. She has long dark hair and wears a school uniform that looks brand new, still crisp and without a single crease.



Daud and Isyak slow their pace as they approach her, realizing they have never seen her in the hallways before. The girl looks up shyly, her eyes darting between the two boys and the busy path leading toward the food stalls.



Isyak gives a friendly wave and asks if she is okay, noticing the slight flicker of nervousness in her expression. She offers a small, tentative smile and introduces herself as Isabella, the new student who just joined their grade today.



Isabella explains that she was trying to find the canteen but got turned around by the many twisting hallways of the large school building. Daud immediately offers to guide her, assuring her that they are heading to the exact same spot.



The three of them walk together, with Daud and Isyak pointing out important landmarks like the library and the principal's office along the way. Isabella begins to relax, her grip on her notebook loosening as she listens to their funny stories about the teachers.



Upon reaching the canteen, the space is filled with the cheerful clatter of plates and the hum of students talking. Daud helps Isabella navigate the queue, explaining which stalls have the best snacks and which drinks are the most refreshing.



They find a bright table near the window where the garden outside is visible, and they invite Isabella to sit with them. As they share their meal, the conversation flows easily, and the initial awkwardness of being a stranger begins to fade away for Isabella.



By the time the bell rings to end recess, Isabella is no longer the lonely girl by the lockers, but a friend among friends. Daud and Isyak walk her back to her classroom, happy to have turned a simple lunch break into the start of a wonderful new friendship.