



# Maya's Brave New School Year

Yanicka Busutil Fava



Maya stands in front of her mirror, backpack slung low, a tiny worry cloud hovering over her head. Her eyes are big and a little wobbly, and she clutches a small, fluffy toy tightly. The vibrant colors of her room feel a bit too bright for her nervous tummy.



Maya enters the school hallway, which is a whirlwind of colorful kids, giant lockers, and new posters. Everything seems to move too fast, and the sounds are a loud, happy buzz that makes her want to pull her hood up. She feels like a small, quiet mouse in a bustling carnival.



In the classroom, a new teacher, Ms. Lily, stands at the front with a beaming smile and a stack of colorful books. Maya sits at her desk, feeling tiny, her shoulders hunched slightly as Ms. Lily introduces herself and her exciting plans for the year. Maya's pencil wiggles nervously between her fingers.



During lunch, Maya picks at her sandwich, watching other children laugh and chat easily. She feels a little invisible, a small island in a sea of new faces and lively conversations. A discarded banana peel on a nearby table seems more interesting than trying to join in.



Ms. Lily walks by Maya's desk, noticing her quietness. Instead of saying anything, she gently places a small, sparkly sticker of a smiling sun next to Maya's notebook. Maya looks up, surprised, a tiny flicker of warmth spreading in her chest. The sun sticker seems to wink at her.



During art class, Ms. Lily asks everyone to draw their favorite animal. Maya, usually hesitant, finds herself sketching a whimsical, striped cat with enormous, curious eyes. She adds tiny, swirling patterns to its fur, getting lost in the rhythm of her pencil. A tiny spark of joy ignites within her.



A classmate, Leo, with bouncy red hair and an even bouncier smile, accidentally drops his crayons, sending them rolling under Maya's desk. As they both reach for a purple crayon, their hands bump, and they share a quick, unexpected giggle. The purple crayon seems to glow with a friendly aura.



Ms. Lily gathers the class for story time, reading from a big, illustrated book about a brave little squirrel. Maya, nestled among her classmates, feels the gentle rhythm of Ms. Lily's voice and the warmth of being part of the group. The squirrel on the page looks like it's winking just at her.



Later, during a science experiment, Maya, usually silent, raises her hand with a small, but steady, question about the bubbling liquid. Ms. Lily smiles warmly and answers, encouraging her curiosity. A small, confident sprout of courage begins to unfurl in Maya's heart.



As Maya walks home, the setting sun paints the sky in cheerful oranges and pinks. She thinks about the day – the sticker, the cat drawing, the shared laugh, and her brave question. A hopeful smile blooms on her face, realizing that even big changes can bring bright new adventures.