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Group: 2 (Forms 3-5)
Topic: American Pen-Pal

American Pen-Pal

My name is Zaheer Az-Zuhri and last year, my American pen-pal moved to Malaysia. I still remember how I looked when I saw her at my house's front door; my mouth agape as I stared down at the person standing in front of me. The beautiful brunette calmly stated, "Hello." And with that one greeting, I fainted.

The next morning, I woke up as usual and thought, "Wow, what a dream...." Never once did I think I would be able to see her again, even if it was in a dream. "Oh well."

Brushing off the sleep, I shook my head. Then I got out of bed, went to the bathroom and got dressed. Afterward, I headed downstairs for breakfast. And sure enough, she was there, eating right alongside my big brother. She was happily stuffing down Nasi Lemak, like she had been doing it all her life.

Downing the rest of her orange juice in one gulp, she said, "Took you long enough!"

And from that moment on, my life changed and couldn't get any better.

"Selamat Pagi!" A new student made the greeting in front of the class. "My name is Sonia Evergreen. I'm from US, and I'll be your classmate for the next few years because of my dad's job."

I sent her a thumbs up from the back row, proud that she had been practicing the Bahasa Malay words I wrote her.

Our class happily accepted her with open arms, and a bunch of boys and girls started asking her questions until the class period ended.

"Do you know Taylor Swift?"

"No."

“Have you ever seen the snow?”

“Yes.”

“What’s your dad’s job?”

“He’s an ambassador for the U.S. That’s why we moved here.”

Suddenly, the bell rang, and we all exited class.

"Wait up!" someone called from behind me, tugging on the back of my t-shirt.

"Hey," my friend nudged my shoulders. "Your girlfriend?"

"Not quite," I gave him an ambiguous reply.

"Can I take her then?" My other friend interrupted our conversation.

I shrugged. "You might want to practice speaking English to the mirror first."

My four-eyed friend frowned. "Man that hits home..." I laughed.

Suddenly, I felt a warm sensation on my right shoulder. I knew before I turned around that it was her.

Her red lips formed a pout as she said, "Why didn't you wait for me after class?" Using eye-contact, my friends picked up on the message that I wanted them to leave us alone.

"Sorry about that. Come on, let’s go to the canteen." I said. Having her eyes focused on me really did send me the chills.

“Okay,” she said. “And, would you kindly let go of my arm please?”

"Ahaha... sorry~" I didn’t even notice. It felt natural, like it was before. Yes, I still remember those times. When crystal snowflakes fell from the vast night sky and the lush-green grasslands were covered in winter snow. The birthplace of this girl. And, a childhood friend of mine.

It all started back when I was still in elementary school. You see, I am half-Malaysian and half-American, and I spent the first half of my life living in America. The problem was that I was lonely at school. I was friendless. But with a turn of luck, I managed to befriend one single girl. And that very same girl was now walking side by side with me.

She also lived next to my home. A neighbor. A classmate. Because we were always together with our families, we became best friends.

I believe it was winter when it happened. An incident that traumatized her for life. She was bullied by a group of girls, and they framed her for stealing the school's missing pet rabbits. Knowing this, I couldn't just sit back and watch. Seeing her crying to the point of locking herself in her room, I decided I had to make my move.

I put my detective skills to use, tracking down a group of six eighth and ninth graders who had been seen walking around the school halls the afternoon the rabbits went missing. I watched those same students torturing a kitten by throwing rocks like it was some kind of game. Inferring that those were the students who had bullied and framed her, I alone went head-to-head with them. In addition to saving the kitten, I made them confess that they were the ones who stole the missing rabbits. And Sonia – she was there, watching as I fought the gang. Turns out the kitten was her pet, and she was searching for him. In the end, we successfully cleared her name.

After the incident, I gave her a present. A music box, since she liked music. And, it was a memento for her, since I had just found out I was moving back to my home country. It was sunset when I gave it to her, and it marked the end of our winter in America together. We had remained pen pals ever since I had moved back to Malaysia.

Fast forward to the present. She had become accustomed to our way of life, and also, somehow, my beautiful girlfriend.