

MAZE MATES

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INT. BUS - AFTERNOON

A young boy named MAKOA (7-9, Puerto Rican-Hawaiian) sits by himself in a corner of the bus as it comes to a stop. A teacher, KIANA HALE (20s, Hawaiian), stands at the front of the bus. She has on a gold locket necklace.

KIANA

Alright kids, we've made it to the
Pineapple Garden Maze!

The rest of the students cheer. Makoa stays silent.

KIANA (CONT'D)

First, before we set off, can we
give our bus driver a biiig mahalo?

She signals over to AHE HALE (50s, Hawaiian).

STUDENTS

MAHALO!!

Ahe puts his hand to his heart.

KIANA

(to the students)

Okay, we will all exit one-by-one
and then we'll take a group photo!
Hāhai ia ʻou! [Follow me!]

She exits the bus and stands outside to make sure every student steps off. As each of them walk out, she counts on her fingers and mouths their names. One student is missing.

CUT TO:

Makoa looks out the window and watches another kid sharing ice cream with his mom. His legs are tucked into his chest, and there's a stuffed sea turtle toy in his arms. Kiana walks up to him.

KIANA (CONT'D)

Hi Makoa!

He doesn't respond. She looks at his toy.

KIANA (CONT'D)

I see you've brought Mr. Leo with
you!

He holds his toy tighter. Kiana takes a breath.

KIANA (CONT'D)

Are you sure you don't want to join us? I'm sure other kids would love to play with you!

Hen remains silent. Kiana holds her locket.

KIANA (CONT'D)

Okay, Makoa. I'd love to see you in there, but you're welcome to stay here until the trip is over.

She looks at him, trying to still show some enthusiasm, but he just looks out the window. She gets up and walks back to the front of the bus. She turns to Ahe.

KIANA (CONT'D)

(whispering)

E kala mai, e papa [Sorry, dad].

AHE

(whispering)

Ua maika'i [It's okay]. You're doing your best.

Kiana just nods, then steps off the bus. Through the window we watch as Kiana gathers the students together for a group photo in front of the building. Ahe smiles at her, then glances over at the rear-view mirror. Makoa hasn't moved.

CUT TO:

INT. DOLE BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Inside, there are rows upon rows of pineapple themed toys, gummy bears, jewelry, accessories, and clothing. There are several teachers/chaperones trying to keep their student groupings together. In the midst of the chaos, we focus on two young boys named OWEN (8-10, White) and TOMMY (8-10, Black) who are walking through the action figure aisle.

OWEN

You know what would be cool

TOMMY

What?

OWEN

If we had wings, then we could just fly over the maze and get to the end in like, two seconds.

TOMMY

Mmmm, it wouldn't be as fun.

OWEN

Yeah I guess, but having wings in general would be awesome.

TOMMY

Did they say we win anything if we finish it first?

OWEN

Ummm YEAH! We get to eat TWO dole whips. That's like, two whole pineapples!

TOMMY

Oh, I thought we'd get a toy.

Tommy grabs a figurine of a red forest bird with a pineapple slice in its mouth.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

You know, I can mimic the sound these birds make when they know a volcano is about to erupt?

OWEN

Tommy, that's the least surprising thing about you.

Tommy puts the figurine back.

OWEN (CONT'D)

How are we friends again?

TOMMY

Cause no one else gets me. And I think you're pretty cool.

This makes Owen smile.

OWEN

You're cool too, Tommy.

TOMMY

So can I show you the sound...

OWEN

No.

CUT TO:

INT. BUS - AFTERNOON

Makoa is still sitting, holding Mr. Leo close to his chest. Ahe walks over and sits in the seat in front.

AHE
So, how are you kid?

Makoa shrugs his shoulders.

AHE (CONT'D)
(pointing at Mr. Leo)
Say, who got that toy for you?

A beat.

MAKOA
Māmā.

Makoa closes his eyes and holds the doll close to his chest. Ahe looks around.

AHE
You know, I'm sure there are other kids who know how you feel Makoa. You're not as lonely as you think.

Makoa looks at Ahe.

AHE (CONT'D)
And Miss Hale understands too, but she wants you to have some fun! And hey, ice cream can fix anything.

Makoa looks down for a moment, then back at Ahe.

MAKOA
Are the Dole Whips really that good?

Ahe laughs.

AHE
Yes! You're gonna love it kid!

Makoa cracks a small smile.

AHE (CONT'D)
Here, let me take you to Miss Hale. Hāhai ia'u. [Follow me.]

CUT TO:

EXT. PINEAPPLE GARDEN MAZE - CONTINUOUS

All of the remaining students and teachers are gathered by the entrance of the maze. The children cannot contain their excitement as a DOLE STAFF MEMBER (30s, Australian) walks to the front of the crowd. She stands right below the overhanging arch that reads "Enter".

STAFF MEMBER

Hello and welcome the largest maze
in the whole world!

An eruption of cheer and claps ensues.

STAFF MEMBER (CONT'D)

Two groups will go at a time,
having around 30 minutes to
complete...

As the staff member explains more of the rules, Ahe and Makoa sneak through the crowd to find Kiana. She's looking down at her locket. Ahe taps her shoulder.

KIANA

(whispering)

Papa?

Ahe steps aside, letting Makoa stand in front of him.

KIANA (CONT'D)

(holding in her
excitement)

Makoa! I'm so glad you decided to
join!

Makoa smiles at her as she pats his back, guiding him to stand in front of her. She looks back at her dad as he walks away mouthing the words "Thank you". He winks at her as he leaves.

STAFF MEMBER

Alright will the first two groups
line up now?

Kiana and another teacher from a different school named LEILANI (20s, Hawaiian) gather their students in a line next to each other.

Makoa still holds onto Mr. Leo as he stands in between two of his classmates. No one else is talking to him. He looks over at the other line and watches as Owen and Tommy run to the front, laughing and talking.

Makoa looks at their interaction and holds Mr. Leo closer to him. Kiana kneels down beside him.

KIANA
Hi Makoa! Are you excited?!

MAKOA
Yeah, I'm just nervous.

KIANA
Oh I understand. I can walk with you if you'd like?

MAKOA
It's okay, I can do it on my own.

KIANA
You sure? If you need anything I won't be far behind. Do you want me to hold onto Mr. Leo for you?

MAKOA
(defensive)
No, I want him with me.

KIANA
Oh, good idea. Maybe he can help you choose what path to follow!

This makes Makoa smile.

KIANA (CONT'D)
Okay well, don't go too far.

She pats him on the shoulder as she gets up.

STAFF MEMBER
Okay! Are you ready to enter the maze?!

Another eruption of cheers.

STAFF MEMBER (CONT'D)
Alrighty then! On your marks...

LEILANI
(to her group)
Please remember to stay close!

Owen and Tommy look at each other and laugh.

STAFF MEMBER
Get set...

Makoa holds Mr. Leo tightly in his left hand as he attempts to mimic the way Tommy and Owen are standing.

STAFF MEMBER (CONT'D)

GO!!

Tommy and Owen immediately start running, Makoa attempts to follow them, while the rest enter at the same time. Kiana is concerned at how quickly Makoa ran off.

CUT TO:

INT. PINEAPPLE GARDEN MAZE - CONTINUOUS

Tommy and Owen are out of breath as they stop in front of two possible paths to take.

OWEN

Okay, I go left you go right.

TOMMY

Aw man I wanted to go left.

OWEN

Ugh fine, see you at the exit!

They both head off in opposite directions. The next one to reach this part is Makoa. He closes his eyes and uses Mr. Leo to pick which way he goes, counting "Eeny, meeny, miny, moe". Mr. Leo decides on right, so that's where Makoa goes.

MONTAGE SEQUENCE:

- Tommy is still on his own, going down different turns and paths.
- Owen is also still by himself, and starting to get annoyed at not finding the exit.
- Kiana is back with some of the other students. She calls out Makoa's name.
- Makoa is starting to have confidence in himself, striding through the maze as if he knows exactly where he's going.

END OF MONTAGE.

INT. PINEAPPLE GARDEN MAZE - LATER

Makoa reaches a part of the maze where there are ten different paths to choose from. He starts to go one way, then changes his mind to go another way.

He starts to panic, breathing in and out until he just sits down, bringing his knees to his chest and holding Mr. Leo tightly.

MAKOA
 (quiet sobs)
 Mama...mama...I miss you.

A girl, LILAH (7-9, Filipino), appears from another pathway. He doesn't notice that she's near him until she sits criss-crossed in front of him. She's holding a similar stuffed sea turtle.

LILAH
 (quietly)
 Are you okay?

This startles Makoa a bit, he wipes his tears away with his hand.

MAKOA
 Oh yeah, I'm sorry.

LILAH
 Why are you sorry?

He shrugs his shoulders.

LILAH (CONT'D)
 It's okay to cry. I cry sometimes.

Makoa looks down at Mr. Leo, then notices she has her own sea turtle toy.

MAKOA
 We have the same turtle.

Lilah looks down at her toy. She smiles.

LILAH
 Her name is Evie. My papa got it for me.

A beat.

MAKOA
 This is Mr. Leo. My māmā gave it to me a month before...

Quiet.

LILAH
 Yeah, same with my papa. I miss him everyday.

Tears start to well up in Makoa's eyes again.

MAKOA

It just, it makes me feel
so...weird. It makes me feel like,
there's a missing crayon I can't
find. Like something's wrong with
me.

LILAH

It's hard to talk about with other
kids. I feel like they see how sad
I am all the time, and who wants to
hangout with someone like that?
Someone who's sad all the time?

Makoa looks at both of their sea turtles.

MAKOA

I guess we're kinda hanging out
now, right?

Lilah smiles. Suddenly, Tommy and Owen both run out of
opposite paths to where Lilah and Makoa are. They're
disappointed upon seeing each other.

OWEN

Where were you? I thought you
finished already!

TOMMY

Honestly I had no idea! It's like I
kept going in circles and in
circles...and in circles....

OWEN

Great, so none of us get the Dole
whip or free toy. AWESOME.

They both turn at the same time, realizing that Makoa and
Lilah have been sitting there.

OWEN (CONT'D)

Oh...hi.

MAKOA AND LILAH

Hi!

Tommy walks over to sit next to them, while Owen still looks
around for any clues on which path to take.

TOMMY

Tell me your names!

MAKOA

Makoa.

LILAH

Lilah.

TOMMY

Cool, I'm Thomas, but most people call me Tommy. And that kid over there, is Owen.

They all stare at Owen as he still debates what path is the best option.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

He's my best friend. How long have you been friends?

Lilah and Makoa both look at each other.

LILAH

We kinda, just became friends.

TOMMY

Oh, cool!

Owen walks over to the rest of them.

OWEN

It's over, my pineapple dreams are over.

He sits next to Tommy.

MAKOA

How did you two become friends?

TOMMY

We met when we were babies.

OWEN

Our moms started a library together a while back, after our dads, well...

Silence.

TOMMY

It was when we were like two.

OWEN

Yeah, sorry I didn't mean to be weird.

MAKOA
It's not weird.

LILAH
Yeah, it's okay.

They all smile.

LILAH (CONT'D)
But, how are you so... happy? How
are you not sad about, missing them
all the time?

OWEN
Well, I have Tommy. And my mom, and
his mom.

TOMMY
Yeah, life's not too bad when you
have friends to help you through
those, bad times.

Makoa looks down at Mr. Leo.

MAKOA
I don't have any friends.

Owen pats Makoa on the back.

OWEN
Well, you do now!

They all look at each other, smiling.

OWEN (CONT'D)
So can we try to find the exit?
Maybe they haven't run out of ice
cream yet!

They all collectively stand up.

TOMMY
Makoa, do you want to lead?

Makoa shyly steps in front of their little group, looking at
each hedge-lined path. He confidently points to the fourth
one on the right.

MAKOA
This way!

They all run together down the path Makoa chose. A newfound
hope and a newfound friendship.