

# Jaden and the Locker with the Blue Star

*A ZenPals story about fitting in and being yourself*

Jaden's fingers tightened around the straps of his backpack as he stared up at the new school building. It was taller than his old school. Louder, too. It smelled like sharpened pencils and cafeteria tacos.

He had moved to this town last month, and today was his first day at Redwood Middle School.

Jaden felt like his sneakers were glued to the pavement. He didn't know a single person here.

Inside, Jaden found his locker-number 117-with a faded blue star sticker on it. The sticker was crooked and peeling at the corner.

"I guess this is me," he whispered.

The hall buzzed with voices and footsteps. Kids high-fived and called out to each other. Jaden quietly tucked his books into the locker, wishing he could disappear into it.

In first period, the teacher introduced him:

"This is Jaden. He just moved here from Chicago. Let's all make him feel welcome."

Some kids smiled. A few whispered. Jaden gave a small wave and sat in the back.

At lunch, he wandered into the cafeteria, clutching his tray of pizza and baby carrots.

He spotted a table of kids laughing over a comic book. One of them wore headphones. Another had sparkly purple boots.

Jaden walked toward them... then stopped. What if they didn't want someone new at their table?

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So he sat alone at the edge of the room.

That night, Jaden told his mom, "Everyone already has their people. I don't fit."

She looked at him with soft eyes.

"Maybe they don't have your people yet. Maybe they're still waiting to meet you."

He frowned. "But what if I'm too different?"

"Different is exactly what makes you special," she said, kissing his forehead.

The next day, Jaden noticed someone. The kid with the headphones was sketching dragons in his notebook - just like Jaden used to draw at his old school.

In art class, the girl with the sparkly boots turned to him and said, "That shading on your tiger? That's sick. I can never get it that good."

"Thanks," Jaden said. "I like your boots."

She smiled. "They squeak when I walk."

At his locker, Jaden peeled off the faded blue star.

He reached into his bag, pulled out a marker, and drew his own sticker: A galaxy filled with dragons, stars, and a rocket ship.

He pressed it over the old one. Now his locker felt like his.

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Later that week, the dragon-drawing kid looked up at lunch.

"Hey, you wanna sit?"

Jaden nodded. They swapped sketchbooks and started laughing.

By the end of the week, three people waved to Jaden in the hall.

Two months later, Jaden wasn't the new kid anymore.

He saw a nervous student standing alone by the lockers, clutching a schedule.

"Need help finding yours?" Jaden asked.

The student nodded. Jaden pointed down the hallway.

"Mine has a galaxy sticker. It's right over there."

Talk About It

- Have you ever felt like the new kid?
- What helps you feel like you belong?
- How can you help someone else feel welcome?

Take a moment to talk about it with your child. Every conversation helps build empathy, confidence, and kindness.