

Maya's Song

Felicity Yeoh

You know how when you're concentrating so hard that you end up thinking about something totally different?

Miss was teaching us to add numbers bigger than ten. I fixed on that carry-the-one to make sure I didn't lose track of it.

But then this Chinese song started playing in my head, the one my dad sings in the kitchen:

"Just carry on, like you have to do

Who knows what anyone is going through

Share the load until the journey is done

Together, you carry on."

Dad hands me the ladle and says, Eddy, your turn! I give it my best, especially when he's making our favourite curry and we sing "curry on" instead.

Except it was "carry one" instead of "carry on" playing in my head and-

Tap. Tap-tap. Tappity tap..

Oh no.

Maya was tapping. Which meant she was about to--

Umm, uh-uh mmm uh. Umm, uh-uh uh huh.

Humming! There might be a time and a place for that sort of thing but it is not in Maths.

I stared at Maya but she didn't notice. She tapped and hummed.

"Maya!" I hissed. "STOP IT".

"Eddy!" Miss glared at me from the board. "No talking. Lose one house point."

But Maya didn't lose any? It didn't add up.

Later it was free play. There was only one person at the junk modelling table...but it was Maya. I suddenly remembered how much I liked football, but as I turned away-



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"Hi, Eddy!"

"Oh, I'm not invisible?" It came out a bit snarky.

"What?"

"You got me in trouble. In Maths. For talking, because I had to make you be quiet."

"But I wasn't saying anything!"

"Not saying," I said. "Tapping. And humming."

"Oh," Maya said. "I didn't realise I was doing it."

"Again!" I pointed out. "Doing it again."

"Sorry." Maya looked down at her junk model.

Oof. But I wasn't ready to say "it's all right", so instead I asked, "What's that?"

It was a tissue box with rubber bands stretched over the hole in the top. She plucked one and it went ping.

"Is that like a ukulele?" I asked, and she nodded. "My Dad's teaching me the ukulele! Can you play something? That song you were humming?"

She looked up at me. "You just said it's annoying!"

"But I haven't heard it properly."

Maya hummed, then sang this song that made me feel tired, but in a nice way. I didn't understand a word.

"What does it mean?"

"Hmm." Maya thought.

"It's a long way from home

The path is full of stones



Readers aged 5-11

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I remember how far I've come

Continue on my own."

"Oh, a sad song," I said.

"It's supposed to be encouraging!" Maya laughed. "Remind us that we can do hard things."

"Is that why you hum it?" I asked. "For encouragement?"

Maya's brown eyes widened. "I guess so. Sorry."

"It's all right," I said. "It's a good song. Now, can I have that other tissue box? And are there any more bands?"

