

### 1b3- Belonging

At lunch that day all The Wave members who were in the cafeteria sat at a single long table. Brian, Brad, Amy, Laurie, and David were there. At first Robert Billings seemed tentative about joining them, but when David saw him he insisted he sit at the table, telling him they were all part of The Wave now.

Most of the kids were raving about what was going on in Mr. Ross's class, and Laurie really had no reason to argue with them. But still she felt odd—all that saluting and chanting. Finally, during a pause in the conversation, she said, "Does anyone feel kind of strange about this?"

David turned to her. "What do you mean?"

"I don't know," Laurie said. "But doesn't it feel a little weird?"

"It's just so different," Amy told her. "That's why it feels weird."

"Yeah," Brad said. "It's like there's no in-crowd anymore. Man, the thing that bugs me the most about school sometimes is all these little cliques. I'm tired of feeling like every day's a big popularity contest. That's what's so great about The Wave. You don't have to worry about how popular you are. We're all equal. We're all part of the same community."

"Do you think everyone likes that?" Laurie asked.

"Do you know anyone who doesn't?" David asked.

Laurie felt her face grow flushed. "Well, I'm not sure I do."

Suddenly Brian pulled something out of his pocket and held it up to Laurie. "Hey, don't forget," he said. He was holding up his Wave membership card with the red X on the back.

"Forget what?" Laurie asked.

"You know," Brian said. "What Mr. Ross said about reporting anyone who breaks the rules."

Laurie was shocked. Brian really couldn't be serious, could he? Now Brian started to grin, and she relaxed.

"Besides," David said. "Laurie isn't breaking any rule."

"If she was really against The Wave she would be," Robert said.

The rest of the table became silent, surprised that Robert had said anything. Some of them weren't even used to hearing his voice, he usually said so little.

"What I mean is," Robert said nervously, "the whole idea of The Wave is that the people in it have to support it. If we're really a community, we all have to agree."

Laurie was about to say something, but she stopped herself. It was The Wave that had given Robert the courage to sit at the table with them and to join in the conversation. If she argued against The Wave now, she would really be implying that Robert should go sit by himself again and not be part of their "community."

Brad patted Robert on his back. "Hey, I'm glad you joined us," he said.

Robert blushed and then turned to David. "Did he stick anything on my back?" he asked. Everyone at the table laughed.