

The New Girl

Rita loved school. She had so many friends there. There was Neha, Priya, Vikas, Akshay and Nikhil. They all played together everyday.

One morning the teacher entered class and said, "Children, I have an announcement." A shy little girl walked in to the classroom. "This is Nisha. She will be your new classmate. Make her feel welcome." The teacher continued.

"Hello Nisha" said everyone in unison.

Nisha smiled shyly, mumbled hello, and made her way to an empty desk. Class started and everyone got busy with their work.

Soon it was time for games. Rita and her friends were playing cricket. Vikas was batting. He hit the ball so hard, that it sped off to a far away corner. Rita ran after it to fetch it and bumped in to Nisha. Rita was startled. "Hey Nisha why are you sitting here all by yourself? Come and join us."

Priya called out "Rita. Hurry up! What happened? Did the ball eat you up?"

Rita replied "I am coming. Wait."

But Rita's friends were getting impatient, so they came to see what was going on

Rita said "Come on Nisha. Hurry. Everyone is waiting."

Nisha looked terrified. She did not move.

Vikas was getting impatient. "Let her be Rita. She is a silly scaredy cat."

Rita gave Vikas an angry glance "Stop being so mean Vikas. I remember how shy you were on your first day. You wouldn't even tell teacher your name."

Everyone laughed and Vikas blushed.

Rita turned back to Nisha. "Nisha, first day of school can be scary. But please play with us. You'll feel better. I promise. Come."

Rita gently took Nisha's hand and led her to the place where they were playing. Nisha joined in. The game was fun. Vikas and Neha could not decide if they should run or not and then Rita got poor Vikas run out in the confusion.

Then it was Nisha's turn to bat. Rita kept encouraging her. She called out "Thats a good shot Nisha." Later when Akshay was batting, he hit the ball high into the air. Nisha and Neha both ran to catch it and collided but Nisha managed to actually catch the ball. Nisha and Neha both burst out laughing. "Great catch" Rita called out and Neha and Vikas also came and patted Nisha on the back.

By the time the game was over Nisha felt comfortable with her new friends. She played with them everyday, but Rita and she became best friends. They would sit together in class everyday, share their crayons and pencils.

Then one day it was raining very heavily. As people stepped in to class they left little puddles on the floor because of the water dripping from their umbrellas and raincoats. Rita stepped in to class and was closing her umbrella, so she did not notice the water on the floor and slipped. She had a bad fall. Her water bottle rolled off to a far corner of the class and her bum hurt. Worse, her bag wasn't zipped up and her books and tiffin spilled out. Her pencils and crayons were rolling all over the floor. Her tiffin had burst open and the rice pudding in it, splattered everywhere.

Rita's skirt was wet, and her hair was covered in rice pudding. Her shoes were a sticky mess. Rita looked really funny and everyone was laughing and giggling. Rita could not stop the tears. All her friends were laughing at her instead of helping her.

Just then Nisha stepped in to the class and was upset to see Rita in such distress. She ran to Rita and helped her get to her feet. "Rita, are you hurt? Come, let's go to the bathroom. I'll help you clean up." Nisha helped a limping Rita to the bathroom, where she helped her clean her hair, wash her shoes, and change into clean clothes.

On the way back to class, Nisha said, "Don't worry about your tiffin Rita. I'll share mine with you." Nisha also helped Rita collect her belongings.

Rita smiled gratefully. "You are very kind Nisha. Thanks for helping me out and not laughing at me at that time. It felt horrible to have the whole class laughing at me."

Nisha patted Rita on the back. "That is what friends are for." Then she added sheepishly, "But you did look really funny."

Rita grinned. "I suppose I must have had rice pudding dripping out of my hair"

Rita and Nisha both laughed together remembering what Rita looked like.