

THE FIRST DAYS OF SCHOOL



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Thikra went home from school sad. She went inside, put down her schoolbag, and sat in silence. Her mother asked her, “What’s wrong?”



Thikra remained silent and didn't answer. Her mother asked again, "What's wrong, sweetheart? Don't you like school?"



In a sorrowful voice Thikra said, “I like it.”

Her mother asked, “Then what happened? Why are you sad?”



“All the girls play together while I sit alone,” Thikra said. “I don’t have anyone to play with.”



“And why don’t you play with them?” asked her mother.

“I’m too shy, Mommy,” Thikra said. “They’re all friends, and they don’t know me.”



“Don’t say that, Thikra, they’re your classmates and your buddies,” said her mother.

“No, Mommy, no one likes me,” Thikra said, tears falling from her eyes.



Thikra's mother hugged her and said to her tenderly, "No, sweetheart, you're a wonderful girl, and everyone at school will love you."



“How so, Mommy,” cried Thikra as she sobbed, “how so?”

Thikra’s mother wiped away her tears. She kissed her and said, “I’ll teach you things that will make everyone at school love you.”



Thikra's mother sat with her and taught her how to make a beautiful doll out of cotton and fabric. She taught her how to make the hair with black yarn, and bracelets and necklaces with thread and beads. She taught



her how to make a dress out of colorful scraps, and how to make shoes and a bag and books from paper. “So she can go to school like you,” her mother said, laughing. Thikra giggled in delight.



When the doll was finished, Thikra's mother placed it in a beautiful box. Then she got a bag and filled it with colorful yarn, cotton, fabric scraps, and some colored paper. She told Thikra, "Sit with



your friends and teach them as I taught you. Work with them as you and I did.”



The next day, Thikra went up to her classmates. She greeted them and politely introduced herself. “My name’s Thikra, and I want to get to know you,” she said.



The girls welcomed Thikra. They told her, “We want to get to know you, too. My name is Mariam...And I’m Amal...And I’m Reem.”



Thikra smiled happily and said to them, “Look at this beautiful doll that I made with my mother. Would you like for us to make one like it?”



The girls were delighted. In a polite and gentle manner, Thikra began explaining to them what her mother had taught her. She distributed the work among them.



One of them made the dress, one made the necklace, one made the bag, and one made the books and shoes.



Thikra was very happy as she worked with her classmates and they enthusiastically asked her, “How do I make this, Thikra?” “Teach me how to make this.” “Is this right?”



Thikra graciously replied, “Beautiful...Lovely...Yes, do it like that...Good job, Mariam!...You’re so skillful, Amal....How wonderful! I can’t do it nearly as well as you, Reem.”



By the time recess ended, the result was astounding. Another beautiful doll—that Thikra made with her friends!



And to their surprise, their teacher had been happily watching on in admiration. She walked up to them and embraced them. “What wonderful cooperation and work and friendship,” she said.



“I’m so pleased with you, and proud that you’re my students.
Who taught you how to do this lovely work?”



Mariam said, "It's all thanks to Thikra; she taught us."

Thikra said, "It's all thanks to my mother; she taught me all this."



The teacher looked at Thikra with love and tenderness. “Good job, sweetheart, good job! But which one of you will keep this doll?”



“We’re four friends,” said Thikra, “so we’ll work together to make a doll every day until we have four dolls, and each of us will choose the one we like.”



The teacher applauded in admiration. She kissed Thikra and her friends and told them, “You’re wonderful girls, and I want to be your friend too.”



She looked at Thikra in admiration and said, “I’ll do like Thikra, and prepare other lovely activities for you that we can do together.”

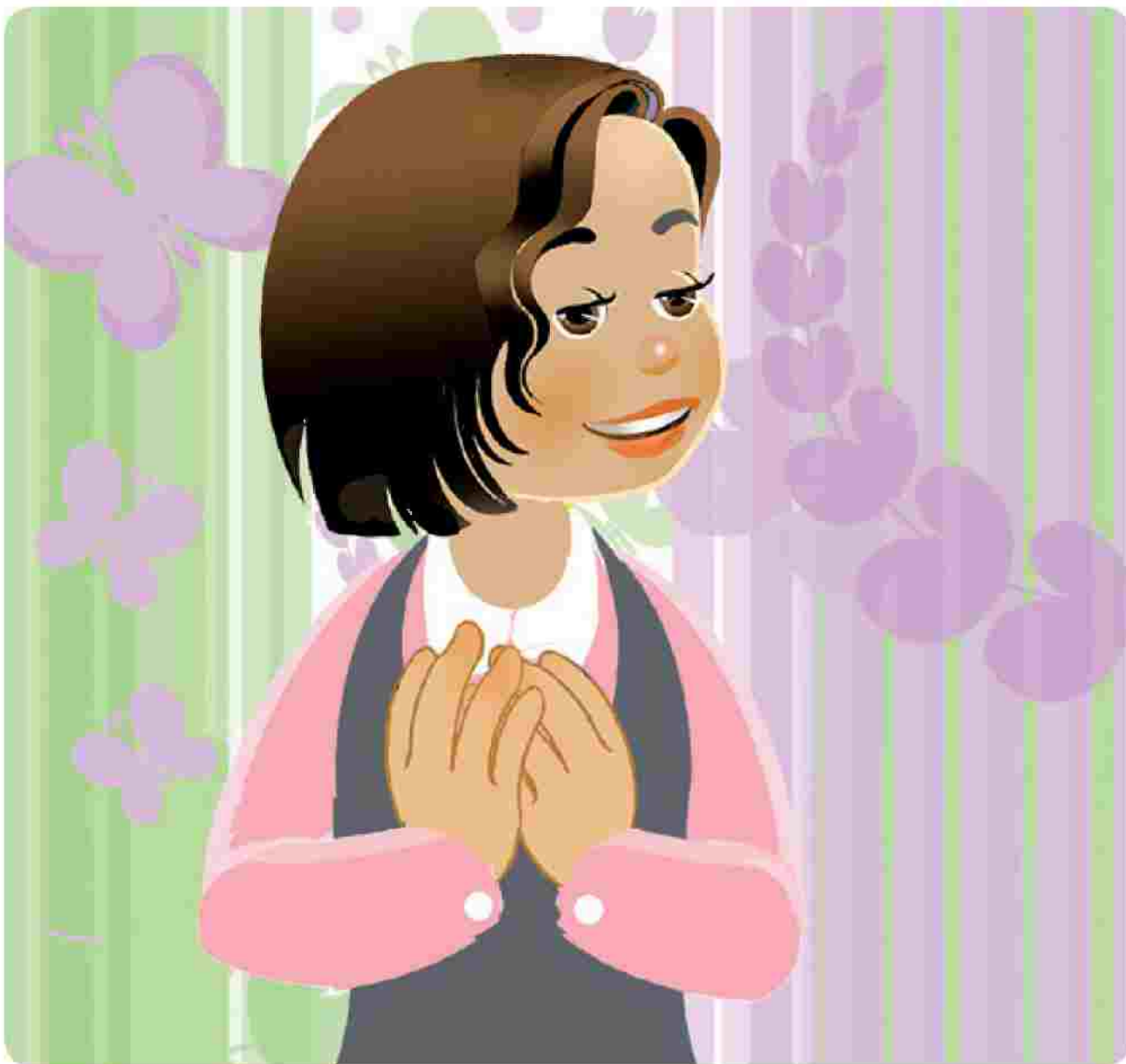


Other groups of girls crowded around them, clapping and crying, “Me too! Me too! Me too! We’re all friends and we all want to take part. We all love Thikra!”



Thikra went home bubbling with joy.

“I have friends, Mommy, I’m so happy!” she said.



“I love school and I want to learn all kinds of lovely things from you to teach the girls. I want to be friends with all my schoolmates. I love them all, Mommy!”



She threw herself into her mother's embrace and said, "It's all thanks to you, Mommy. I love you! I love you more than all the world!"