

Chapter 1

The New One

The morning began like so many mornings—a bit loud and, above all, very ordinary. Chairs scraped across the floor, someone was still quickly looking for a pencil, and somewhere something fell that clearly wasn't supposed to fall.

Foezel sat in his seat, looking around with half-interest while pretending he was thinking deeply about something important. In reality, he was mostly thinking about how he might come up with a joke that would make everyone laugh.

The door opened.

Not with a bang... but quietly.

In the doorway stood Flossie.

She wore a red scarf that sat a little crooked, as if she had tried to fix it along the way but got distracted. Her hair stuck out in all directions, and her gaze slowly moved across the classroom. When she stepped inside, she almost tripped over a table leg and made a little hop to stay balanced.

“That was on purpose,” she muttered softly to herself.

A few children immediately started to smile.

“Hi,” she said.

Soon, children gathered around her.

“Do you want to sit next to me?”

“Will you play with us?”

“We have fun games!”

Flossie tried to look at everyone at once, which didn't really work.

Suddenly she paused, looked at the window and said, "That light... it's beautiful," and then continued talking happily.

Foezel had seen everything.

"That's fast," he muttered.

Normally, he was the one who got attention. Now it happened without him, and it made him feel strange.

Then Flossie suddenly looked at him.

She walked straight over.

"Hi," she said again.

"Uh... hi," he replied.

"You look like you think fun things," she said.

"How do you mean?" Foezel asked.

"Like you want to say something, but you keep it for later," she said.

"I do that too... but then I forget it."

Foezel didn't know what to say.

"Maybe," he said.

"Good," Flossie smiled. "Then I want to hear it."

She sat next to him, knocked over a pencil, picked it up, gave it to the wrong person, took it back, and put it in the right place.

Foezel looked at her.

"She's a bit strange," he whispered.

"Yes," Flossie said cheerfully. "I hear that a lot."

"But they usually mean it nicely," she added.

For the first time that morning, he smiled a little.

Maybe, he thought, this day wouldn't be so ordinary after all.