



The Spill from the Other Table

A tipped cup and a mistake that was not hers

For ages 9-12





Chapter 1

The Question About Blue

Faigy was making a paper sea for the classroom wall.

At the next table, Henna mixed blue paint with a little white. Morah had put small cups of washable paint on trays, with water for brushes. The girls wore painting aprons.

"That blue would be good for my sea," Faigy said. "Can you tell me how you mixed it?"

Henna turned to answer. Her sleeve caught the water cup beside her elbow.

Water ran over the tray and onto Henna's unfinished picture.

Morah came at once. "Leave the wet papers and the floor to me. Move your chairs back."





Faigy moved back, clutching her dry sea.

Chapter 2

It Started with Me

Morah cleaned the small spill and moved the wet picture to a safe drying place.

Henna looked unhappy. The paper had curled at one edge.

"I'm sorry," Faigy said.

"For what?" Henna asked.

"I asked you about the blue. If I hadn't asked, you wouldn't have turned."

Henna looked at her sleeve. "I didn't notice the cup."

Faigy put her own picture away. She did not want to enjoy a sea after ruining someone else's.





When Morah asked why she had stopped, Faigy said,
"The spill was because of me."

Chapter 3

What Each Person Did

Morah pulled up a chair.

"You asked an ordinary question," she said. "You didn't move the cup or touch Henna's arm."

"But she turned because I spoke."

"Yes. And we can look at the rest of what happened, too."

Henna came over. "My sleeve caught it. I put the cup very close to my elbow."

Morah nodded. "I'll check that the cups have more space before we paint again."

Faigy studied her own apron.





Several things had happened near the spill. That did not make every one of them a wrong thing she had done.

Chapter 4

Kind Is Different from Guilty

"Can I help Henna?" Faigy asked.

"You can ask what help she wants," Morah said.

"Helping doesn't mean the accident was yours."

Henna wanted Faigy to hold the dry sketch from which she was working, while she copied a fish onto a fresh sheet. Morah had supplied the paper and kept the wet materials aside.

Faigy held the sketch without adding her own lines.

The fish looked grumpy.

"It has had a wet afternoon," Henna said.





Faigy smiled.

Chapter 5

Her Own Sea

Afterward, Faigy took out her own picture again.

She finished the curl of one wave. Enjoying it did not make her unkind to Henna.

At cleanup, she found a pencil she herself had left in the wrong supply cup.

"That one is mine," she said, and put it where it belonged.

She could correct something she really had done without collecting every nearby accident as her own.

Before the girls left, Henna pointed to the sea.

"Now I want to know how you made that wave."





Faigy showed her. Morah had already moved the water cups farther from their elbows.

