



# YOU ARE DIFFERENT

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My first day at school is something I want to remember. A strange thing to say about such an experience.

Growing up watching my favourite cartoon characters go to educational institutions and engage in all sorts of cool stuff, made me excited to go to school. I was so not ready for disappointment.

I don't remember much of what I did in class but what happened during the tiffin break is what I still look back on to this day.

You know how kids have the best imaginations and they can derive some wonderful things seemingly out of nowhere? That day was an example of exactly that.

During recess, the playground was filled with a roster of unique characters. The kids who were hogging the see-saw and the swings, the ones who were doing their homework for the next class, the kids who were just running amok kicking up dust everywhere, and then you have the loner, which was basically me. I was having my soggy, cold sandwich when I saw a group of my classmates running into the gap between the school building

and the boundary wall. After a while, they emerged, screaming in terror. They kept repeating the same act as I kept watching them. I wanted to join them but the midday heat did no favours to convince me. Even though I was very shy and introverted, a part of me wanted to belong to something that others collectively enjoyed. I wanted to feel included.

Turns out, they were basically running towards the generator at the back of the building. It would bellow out a sound randomly and all the kids would pretend that it's a monster who was scaring them away because they were trespassing. I left my lunch box by the corner of the building and joined them without saying anything. We went running to the generator, only to run back in false horror as it tried to eat us up. After a few times, everyone just stopped in their tracks. Before I could realise it, I saw everyone staring at me.

"No one plays if he does." A voice sounded from within the crowd.

A taller boy stepped out from the mosaic of white shirts and green pants.

"We don't know you, so you can't play with us."

I was really taken aback by this logic so I promptly introduced myself. My knees were shaking as I had never interacted with so many people at the same time before.

"Not good enough. You're a bad apple and we can't have you spoiling our group." His tone clearly implying his hatred and disgust.

You know how kids can derive things out of nowhere? This was also an example of that.

Right after that everyone started asking me to leave as I was ruining their fun. I had never been rejected so badly. I felt like I didn't belong. A far cry to what I wanted to feel. I felt like an outsider, a freak, someone who should not associate himself with anyone.

I slowly walked away towards the bench after picking up my lunch box, still in shock. I felt angry at myself. Why was I different? Why was I a bad apple? Why can't I just be normal? Mind you, I was literally a normal boy who just joined school 2 months after the session starting date. That was what set them off. I sat down on the bench that was searing hot from the sun but I didn't feel anything. My mind was filled with a cacophony of

voices telling me I am an alien. That's when I felt it.

I couldn't bear the thought of the kids judging me as I gave away the fact I was upset. Yet, I wanted to cry. I wanted them to realise they made me feel bad. Each tear drop felt heavier as I saw the group of kids going to the generator and running away from it. The dust kicked up from the playground clung to the tear trails on my face as I realised that people are unkind to something that they don't understand. Even when that something is a person who exhibits the same emotional responses as they do, wears the same uniform as they do, and wants to have friends like they do. Wiping my tears proved to be as fruitless as trying to show them that I was hurting.

I was different that day and I am still different now. I might be a completely different person but I feel like life is like a porcelain saucer. You will break it, and you can fix it with super glue. But you'll still see the cracks. They never leave you, and they shouldn't. They will remind you of the tough times where you broke, but they'll also remind you that you can be whole again. Someday, you'll even find saucers that have cracks just like you do.