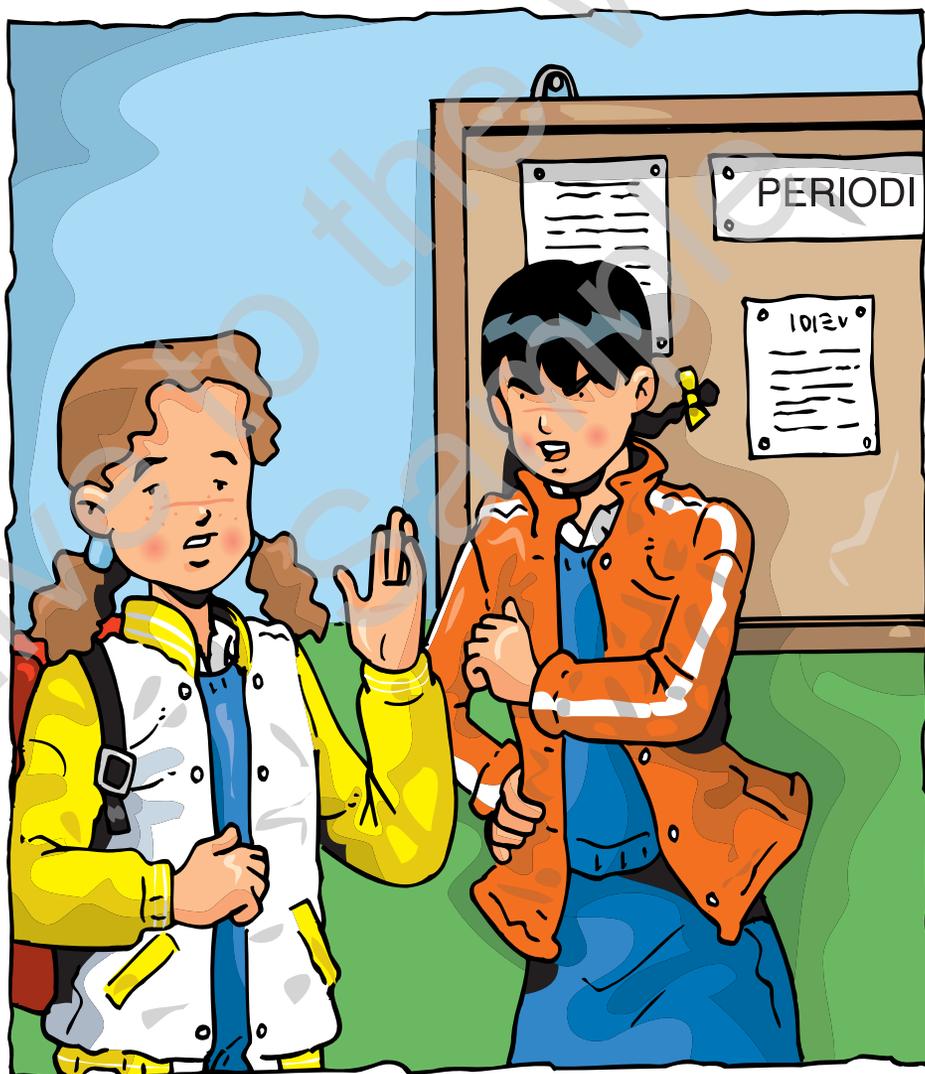


## Chapter 26

## The Big Deal

Alice asked Sandra why she hadn't come to the community centre.

"My sister had free tickets to the bowling alley and I wanted to go," Sandra replied.



"Oh," said Alice.

Sandra turned to her. "What's wrong? You sound like I committed a crime!"

"Well, you promised to come."

"So?" said Sandra. "What's the big deal?"

Alice felt miserable. Sandra wasn't even sorry! Didn't it matter that you did what you said you would do? Alice felt betrayed—she decided to talk to Tiffany about it.

"I don't want to say bad things about Sandra," said Alice, "or make you say them. I just want to understand why I feel so hurt and that I can't trust her any more."

"Well," said Tiffany. "She went back on her word. It wasn't good. But, if she usually keeps her word, maybe forgive her this time?"

Alice sighed. "Well, she does. But... "

It wasn't just that, she thought. Sandra had a way of elbowing in on things. The three of them were good friends, but sometimes when Tiffany and Alice were talking, Sandra would barge in and demand to know what they were talking about. Not that they hid anything from her—but Alice felt that she and Tiffany had a right to talk together without sharing every single detail. And, even though Sandra was always welcome to come with them if they went somewhere, she never waited for them to ask her. Sometimes she even made them change their plans. Alice felt a little trampled on.

She heard herself saying many of the things Tiffany and Alice had said to her. Suddenly, she understood how her friends had felt.

Tiffany tried to explain all this to Sandra.

But Sandra became angry. Why shouldn't she go to the bowling alley?

"Well," said Tiffany gently. "At least admit that once you'd volunteered, you should have shown up."



"Was I the only one who didn't show up?"

"No," said Tiffany. "But—"

"So go and talk to them about it!"

Tiffany had to confess to Alice that she had not got through to Sandra.

"She just thinks she can do whatever she wants!" said Alice. "I could forgive all the other stuff, but I do want her to admit she shouldn't have given her word if she wasn't going to come to the community centre."

Fortunately, something happened that evening. Sandra's sister had asked Sandra to come to bowling next week—then she told her that a friend was coming instead.

Sandra hit the roof. "But you asked me! Now you're going back on your word!" And she heard herself saying all the things Tiffany and Alice had said to her. Suddenly, she understood how her friends had felt. Then her sister said, "Well, I really wanted to ask her, but you elbowed in. I asked you just to get you off my back!"

"Once I'd said I'd come, I should have stuck to it. There's no excuse. It was selfish of me."

Sandra was crushed. Now she felt truly sorry. She called Alice and said, "Alice, you're right. I'm sorry. Once I'd said I'd come, I should have stuck to it. There's no excuse. It was selfish of me. And—and I'll try to be considerate in other ways, too." She realised she had been slightly jealous of Alice's and Tiffany's close friendship.

"That's all any friend could ask," said Alice warmly.