

Rumors

Rachel and Suki had been best friends forever. In fact, they spent so much time together that they could finish each other's sentences. They were in the same class at school, but their teacher Ms. Lee made them sit in different groups because they talked too much if they sat together.

One day, Suki left school early because she had a doctor's appointment. During the afternoon recess, Rachel was playing four-square with some other kids from her class. As she was standing in line waiting to join the game, Tony whispered in her ear, "Hey, Rachel, I heard that Suki is mad at you."

Rachel whirled around. "What?" she said.

Before he could respond, it was her turn. Even though she was normally one of the best four-square players in her class, when Darius hit the ball to her, she missed a really easy shot and was out of the game.

She lined up again, and Tony ended up behind her. Rachel asked him where he had heard that Suki was mad at her. Tony said that Jacob had told him, and that Brianna had told Jacob, and that Suki had told Brianna. Rachel knew that Tony sometimes liked to stir up trouble between other students, but she really trusted Brianna. She decided that there must truly be something wrong.

That afternoon, Rachel walked home from school by herself. She kept thinking about Tony's words. She wondered why her friend was mad at her. She couldn't think of anything she had done. She also couldn't figure out why Suki would tell everyone else, but not her.

When she went downstairs for dinner, she barely touched her food. And that night, Rachel tossed and turned in bed. She really couldn't figure out why Suki was mad at her. At first she was sad about it, but then she started to feel angry. What hurt the most was that her friend hadn't trusted her enough to come to her to talk about it. Finally she thought to herself, "If Suki wants to be mad at me, I can be mad at her. Two can play that game."

The next day Rachel left her house ten minutes earlier than usual so she wouldn't have to walk with Suki. When Rachel got to school, she walked over to where Tony was talking to some kids from the other class. They started asking Rachel where Suki was. Tony stood in the background, listening as Rachel told them the story of how Suki had told everyone except her that she was mad at Rachel.

When Suki walked into the schoolyard, the whole group turned and glared at her.

Rachel missed the small grin that passed over Tony's face because she was so focused on glaring at Suki. As soon as Suki saw her classmates glaring at her, she stopped in confusion. She turned to Rachel and seemed about to speak, but just then the bell rang, and everyone ran to class.

Suki and Rachel sat across the room from each other. Rachel continued to glare at Suki, who seemed almost ready to cry. Soon everyone in class had noticed. When they started partner reading, Darius asked Suki about the problem.

"What's going on with you two?" he whispered. "You're usually inseparable."

"I have no idea!" Suki said. "Yesterday I left school early, and everything was fine. This morning she left for school without me, and now she won't talk to me. It's really driving me crazy! But you know what? If she wants to play mean, I can too!"

Darius started laughing. "You two are so emotional anyway!" he said. "This should be interesting." He decided to hang back and see if there was anything he could do to stir up even more tension. He didn't really want to see anyone get hurt, but the prospect of a fight between two girls who had been best friends for years was just too good to pass up. Like Tony, Darius enjoyed creating trouble--as long as he didn't get caught!

During recess, things got even worse. Rachel ran to the other side of the schoolyard and joined the same group of kids she had spent time with before school. Suki ran to the four-square area with Darius and Jacob. The two girls glared across the playground at one another, while their classmates watched in astonishment. They were so used to seeing the girls spend so much time together, that they really weren't sure what to make of this new development.

All the time, Tony lurked in the background, watching the show unfold before him. At one point, he walked up to Suki and said, "Hey, what's wrong with Rachel? She's saying some pretty mean things about you. Do you think the two of you might get into a real fight over this?"

Darius overheard what Tony was saying. He remembered how Rachel had gotten a higher score than him on the last math quiz and decided it was time to try to get a little revenge. He chimed in, "She has no reason to be mad at you. You should teach her a lesson!"

"I'll teach her all right," Suki said, and threw the ball at the wall as hard as she could.

On the other side of the yard, people wondered why the two girls were mad at each other and what Rachel was going to do about it. Tony crept across the playground and slid closer to Rachel. "Do you think that you'll end up fighting?" he whispered.

Just then, the bell rang; it was time for their weekly spelling test. Nobody could

concentrate, and it was obvious when they corrected the tests as a class. Ms. Lee glanced at the scores after she had collected the papers and raised her eyebrows.

The rest of the morning went by very slowly. Finally, it was time to go to lunch. Suki and Rachel sat at the opposite end of the cafeteria from each other, trying hard to look as though they weren't upset.

"Suki, I heard Rachel is going to fight you after lunch. Are you ready?" asked Tony.

"Rachel doesn't scare me," Suki said.

Tony walked over and sat down near Rachel. "Hey, Rachel," he said, "Suki says you're afraid of her." He could barely contain his glee as he saw Rachel's hands tighten into fists.

After everyone finished eating, they went outside to the yard. The whole class gathered near the bathrooms. A circle formed around Rachel and Suki.

"Fight, fight, fight!" the crowd started chanting. Rachel and Suki glared at each other and inched closer together.

Just then, Ms. Lee broke through the crowd clustered around the two girls. "What's going on here?" she shouted.

Suki and Rachel looked at each other, and then back at Ms. Lee. "She's mad at me for no reason, and she wants to fight me!" they both said at the same time, pointing their fingers at each other.

Ms. Lee looked confused. "OK, one person at a time. What happened?" she asked.

Rachel started talking first. "It all started yesterday. Tony said that Suki was mad at me, and that Jacob had told him, and Brianna had told Jacob. And I didn't even do anything to Suki!" she wailed.

From out of the crowd, they could hear Jacob and Brianna's loud protest. "I never said anything like that!" both students claimed at once.

Then Suki told her story. "When I left school yesterday, everything was fine. Then today everyone was glaring at me and whispering behind my back. Next thing I know, people started saying Rachel wanted to fight me, and here we are!" Suki said. "I was never mad at Rachel in the first place!"

"You weren't?" Rachel asked, sounding shocked. "But Tony said that Jacob said that Brianna said that you were!"

Suddenly, the two of them started to put things together. Their eyes met, and they both mouthed the name "Tony" silently. Together, they turned to face their teacher.

"Ms. Lee," Suki said, "I think we just figured out what happened."

"Yep," Rachel chimed in, "Somebody tricked us into being mad at each other. And that somebody is standing right over there." She pointed towards Tony.

Ms. Lee nodded, but then faced the girls. "I'll deal with him in a moment," she said. "Rumors or no rumors, you have only yourselves to blame. Don't you know by now that you need to trust your friends and go to them first if you think they are upset with you for some reason?"

The girls looked embarrassed. They realized that even if Tony was partially at fault for trying to stir up trouble, they were responsible for their actions, not him. They also realized that they were old enough that their teacher shouldn't have to tell them this.

"Suki," Rachel said, "I'm so sorry I was mean to you. I should know that you would come talk to me if we were having trouble getting along."

For a moment, Suki thought about pretending to be mad at her friend still, to pay her back for some of the pain she had caused that day. Then she took a deep breath. She relaxed and smiled. "You're forgiven," she said, "Now let's go study together so we don't fail the next spelling test, ok?"

As the two girls headed for a nearby bench, Ms. Lee and Tony walked back toward the school office and Darius breathed a sigh of relief.

1. Why didn't Ms. Lee let Rachel and Suki sit next to each other in class?

- A. They tried to help each other with their work.
- B. They didn't get along very well at school.
- C. They talked too much if they sat together.

2. When did Tony start the rumor that Suki was mad at Rachel?

- A. On the day that Suki left school early for a doctor's appointment.
- B. When Suki was on the playground and Rachel and Tony were in class.
- C. At recess time when Suki was playing a game so she couldn't hear it.

3. Why did Rachel believe Tony the first day he said that Suki was made at her?

- A. Tony sounded like he really knew what he was talking about.
- B. Tony said that Jacob told him about it, and Rachel trusted Jacob.
- C. Tony said that Brianna talked about it, and Rachel trusted Brianna.

- 4. How did Suki feel the next day at school when Rachel acted mean toward her?**
- A. She was okay with it because she had figured out what was going on.
 - B. She was very confused because she didn't know what was going on.
 - C. She started to feel really sick to her stomach and wanted to go home.
- 5. How did Rachel feel about Tony?**
- A. She trusted him because he usually knew what was going on at school.
 - B. She didn't trust him because she knew he liked to stir up trouble.
 - C. She thought he might be telling the truth because he liked Rachel.
- 6. When did Suki decide to act like Rachel and get mad too?**
- A. After she talked with Darius about being upset.
 - B. When Rachel gave her a mean look in class.
 - C. When Darius asked her what was going on.
- 7. How did Rachel feel after she thought about what Tony had said?**
- A. She felt angry and hurt because she thought Suki didn't trust her.
 - B. She was very worried that she might be losing her very best friend.
 - C. She didn't care that Suki was mad because she was getting mad too.
- 8. What kind of friends had Rachel and Suki always been?**
- A. Good friends.
 - B. Just neighbors.
 - C. Best friends.
- 9. What showed that the problem between Rachel and Suki was affecting the whole class?**
- A. The students started to talk a lot in class, and Ms. Lee got very upset with them.
 - B. The students were all thinking about the problem and didn't finish their homework.
 - C. The students couldn't concentrate and did poorly on their weekly spelling test.

- 10. What seemed to be the biggest problem for Rachel about Suki being mad at her?**
- A. Some of Rachel's friends believed the rumor.
 - B. Suki told everyone about it except Rachel.
 - C. All of the kids at school were talking about it.
- 11. What did Rachel think about the rest of the day after Tony told her about Suki being mad?**
- A. She couldn't figure out why Tony would want to tell her something that didn't make any sense.
 - B. She couldn't figure out what she had done to make Suki mad and why Suki hadn't talked to her about it.
 - C. She could figure out when Suki decided that she didn't want to be friends with Rachel any more.
- 12. How did everyone find out that Tony started the rumor with a lie?**
- A. Jacob and Brianna said that they never told Tony anything about Suki being mad at Rachel
 - B. When Ms. Lee asked why they were fighting, Tony confessed that he started the rumor.
 - C. Everyone knew it wasn't possible for friends like Suki and Rachel to be mad at each other.
- 13. What was this story mostly about?**
- A. How best friends need to trust each other.
 - B. Why best friends should never listen to rumors.
 - C. How friends can become enemies over little things.
- 14. What did Tony do to get Suki in a mood to want to fight?**
- A. He said that Rachel wanted to fight.
 - B. He said that Rachel said Suki was a coward.
 - C. He told Suki that fighting would settle things.

15. What will Rachel and Suki probably do the next time they hear bad things about each other?

- A. Figure that what was said is not true, and never talk about it.
- B. Never listen to anything bad that is said about either one of them.
- C. Listen to the bad things, and then get together to talk about it.

16. What was Ms. Lee like?

- A. She wanted her students to do well in school but didn't care much about their problems.
- B. She wanted to hear the truth and to help her students understand the right thing to do.
- C. She didn't care about the reasons students start to fight as long as they stop doing it.

17. What was Darius hoping would happen between Rachel and Suki?

- A. They would never be friends again.
- B. They would get into a fight.
- C. They would get into trouble at school.

18. What actions by Tony showed what he was really like?

- A. He would say things to make matters worse and then stand back to watch what happened.
- B. He tried to tell Rachel and Suki things that would help them understand what was going on.
- C. He told other students that they should tell Rachel and Suki to get into a fight to settle things.

19. How did the story end?

- A. Suki wasn't ready to completely forgive Rachel for the pain Suki felt.
- B. Tony and Darius had to go to the school office to see the principal.
- C. Rachel and Suki were best friends again, and Tony was in big trouble.

20. What did Ms. Lee want Rachel and Suki to understand about what had happened?
- A. It was good for Rachel to accept the rumor as true until she talked to Suki about it.
 - B. Rumors should never be listened to, especially if it is about one of your friends.
 - C. They caused the problem because they didn't trust each other enough to talk about it.