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Ronda and the Red Rubber Ball

By

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I was new to Randalia. My family moved in the middle of the school year and I wasn’t accustomed to farm life with all its strange sounds and smells. Just walking into the barn made me gag. Cows chewing and mooing and swishing and squishing. You had to watch where you were stepping all the time. Smelled worse than the city dump to me. Dad would just smile and say, “That’s the smell of money!”

“Class let’s welcome our new student,” announced my teacher, Mrs. Randolph. “Randy and his family have just arrived here from Rochester.”

Standing there in front of the entire fourth grade class I felt the room begin to spin. I remember mumbling something like, “I think I’m going to be sick.”

But it was too late. Too late to run and too late to hide. I erupted like an active volcano. My breakfast of chocolate milk and peanut butter toast came spewing out of my mouth, nose, eyeballs, and ears for all I knew. Boys and girls screamed and took cover underneath their desks.

When I finally opened my eyes to survey the damage; there sitting directly in front of me covered in goo was the biggest girl I had ever seen. She had arms like legs and legs like people. Ronda.

Later I would learn that Ronda ruled the fourth grade, especially the playground. Whatever Ronda wanted to play the class played. On Mondays, the kids skipped Double Dutch. Tuesdays they climbed the monkey bars. They would fly high in the sky on the swings on Wednesdays. Thursday was slippery slide day, and today, Friday, was the big kick ball game.

“You’re going to regret this NEW kid!” Ronda snarled while wiping the slime off her chin. I wasn’t off to a very good start.

When the bell finally rang for recess I couldn’t move. I sat terrified, glued to my seat while planning my escape route.

“New kid!” Ronda dropped a red rubber ball onto my desk. “You’re the pitcher for the other team.” And she stomped out of the classroom with the entire class in tow.

When I approached the playground, my team was already on the field. I smiled weakly at the catcher and strolled slowly to the pitcher’s mound.

“Any special rules?” I questioned, stalling for time.

“Just pitch the ball!” Ronda shouted. “I’m up first.”

Ronda looked even bigger behind home plate. All arms and legs and feet the size of extra-large pizzas! It appeared hopeless. I closed my eyes and launched the ball.

Bounce…bounce…the ball hopped closer toward Ronda. I started to giggle. All I could imagine were those giant pizza feet. She stopped and stared at me.

“Strike one!” The catcher called out as the ball rolled across home plate.

Ronda stomped her feet. “Hey, new kid, nobody laughs at me!”

I started to laugh out loud. I just couldn’t help it. Her legs had morphed into fried chicken drumsticks right before my eyes. I squeezed my eyes tightly to shake the image from my mind. But when I opened them again, she had grown wings!

“What’s so funny?” roared Ronda, who hadn’t moved an inch. “Nobody laughs at me. I kick home runs and you chase them. That’s one of the rules!”

I gulped hard and tossed the ball in her direction. I couldn’t suppress the tickle welling up inside my belly. Before the ball crossed home plate, I was into a staggering snicker that exploded into a guffaw. I was out of control!

Ronda stood motionless. All wings and legs and one big eye. She had been transformed into an entire school lunch.

“Strike two!” The catcher called out.

The kids began to murmur. Ronda had never struck out. She rocked back and forth on her drumsticks. She flapped her wings and pointed her carrot stick finger at me. “Just get it near the plate and it’s outta here!”

I let out a holler and lobbed the red rubber ball with all my might. “Here comes the red-hot spaghetti meatball!” I fell to the ground in a rolling fit of laughter.

“Meatball! Meatball!” shouted a boy from centerfield. “Kick it out here, I’m starving.”

Ronda froze. Everyone was laughing.

“Strike three. You’re out!” bellowed the catcher.

The children all held their breath.

Ronda stood motionless as a spoiled picnic lunch. No one dared move from this historical moment. The great Ronda had struck out!

“Gimme!” She snatched the ball from the awestruck catcher and made a bee line for me. All arms and legs and one red rubber ball. I sank slowly to the ground; I wouldn’t dare throw up on her again.

“Hey, new kid, ah, I mean…Randy.” She squatted down to meet me eyeball to eyeball. “Here, and she handed me the ball. I couldn’t kick a meatball.”

And we laughed together.

Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.

Proverbs 19:11