





Room to Read®

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There was once a girl named
Chameli. She was the only daughter

of wealthy parents. She went to school and was in the third grade.



Chameli's mother had a lot of beautiful jewelry. One day, Chameli's

mother showed her all the jewelry and also taught her their names.



The next day Chameli secretly took out her mother's sirfhula (a head flower made of gold) and wore it.

With the sirfhula on her head, she left for school.



On her way, she met her friends Champa and Sohan. They were amazed to see the sirfool on her head.



At school, Chameli was the center of attention. Everyone stared at her, and talked about her. Nayantara composed

a silly song: Look at this girl, who is
that? Why, it's Chameli, in her Gorkha
Hat!



Teacher saw the sirfhula on Chameli's head, but said nothing.



In the class, Alka called to Chameli,
“My elder sister has lots and lots of

jewelry. You have only one piece, and it's not even yours. It's your mom's!"



When Chameli returned home from school, her mother gasped, “Oh my

goodness! You are wearing a sirfhula!
Wow! How beautifully it suits you!"



Chameli was so pleased by her mother's compliment. She felt so beautiful in the jewelry, she started

asking to wear something every day.
“Mama, couldn’t you please get me
my very own ring, anklets, earrings,
sirfhula, and nose-stud?”



Chameli's parents wanted to give their daughter everything she wanted. So

her mother took her to the goldsmith's shop.



The next day, the goldsmith came to her home to delivery the jewelry. Chameli put on everything! She was

sparkling. She went to school covered in gold from head to foot.



During break, all the students of the school gathered round her. Chameli was thrilled. Her friend Kopila asked

her, “Why don’t you dance for us, Chameli?” Everyone clapped and sang and Chameli started dancing.



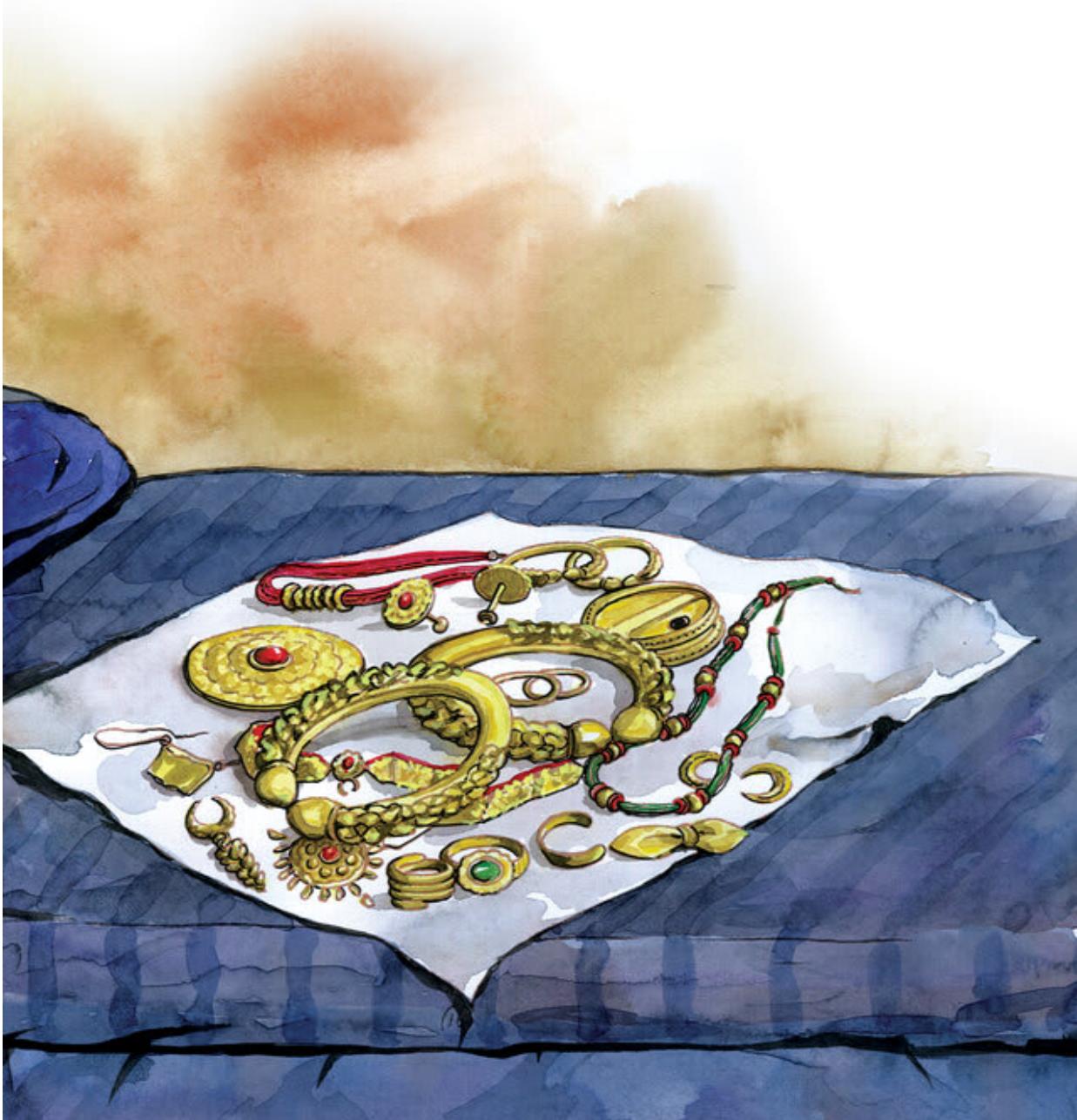
It started raining while Chameli,
Tilaja and Alka were returning home.
The red mud on the path became

slippery. Chameli slipped, fell down, and dented her beautiful sirfhula! "Why did you push me, Tilja?" she demanded. But Tilja had not even touched Chameli.



Chameli didn't want to dent any more of her beautiful jewelry. Decked out from head to foot, she always stood

aside while her friends played sports and games.



One day, Chameli took off her jewelry to take a shower. She dumped them

together. The weight of the anklet
broke some parts of the sirfhula!



Chameli noticed the damage in her sirfhula only when she was back from the bathroom. “How dare someone

break by sirfhula?” That day, she did not go to school. She went to the goldsmith to get her sirfhula fixed instead.



The next day, she lost one of the earrings. Chameli suspected one of her friends had taken it. The teacher

asked every student in the class if he or she had found it.



The day after, her nose stud was broken. Chameli went to the

goldsmith to get it fixed. She missed her school again.



One day, teacher asked everyone in the class to draw a picture of Chameli. Chameli was thrilled! Exactly like a

model, she took her seat in a chair. Students drew her picture very quickly and stuck them on the board. The pictures were very different from one another!



In the picture drawn by Tilja, Chameli looked handcuffed with a gold chain of bangles.



Her friend, Sukbahadur, drew the picture where Chameli's anklets chained her together.



Chameli was so angry! That was not how her jewelry looked at all. "Tilja and Sukahadur," the teacher said.

"These are nice pictures. They show a lot of imagination."



Day by day, Chameli's friends stopped spending time with her. This made Chameli very sad and lonely. She was

so mad, she sat all by herself in the last bench.



During break times, she sat alone on the chautari and ate her tiffin. Gazing at the beautiful birds in the sky, she

said to herself, “The birds are lonesome like me.”



In class, the teacher declared the result of quarterly examination tests. Though a bright student in the past,

Chameli failed in two subjects.
Chameli began to cry.



The next day, the principal asked her to come to his office. “Chameli, You had a very good track record both in

studies and sports. Your spirit once spread everywhere. But you are seduced by the lure of gold. You should know that gold does not have a spirit, my child."



"Gold has no spirit." Chameli could not stop thinking about the principal

had said. At home, she threw off her jewelry angrily.



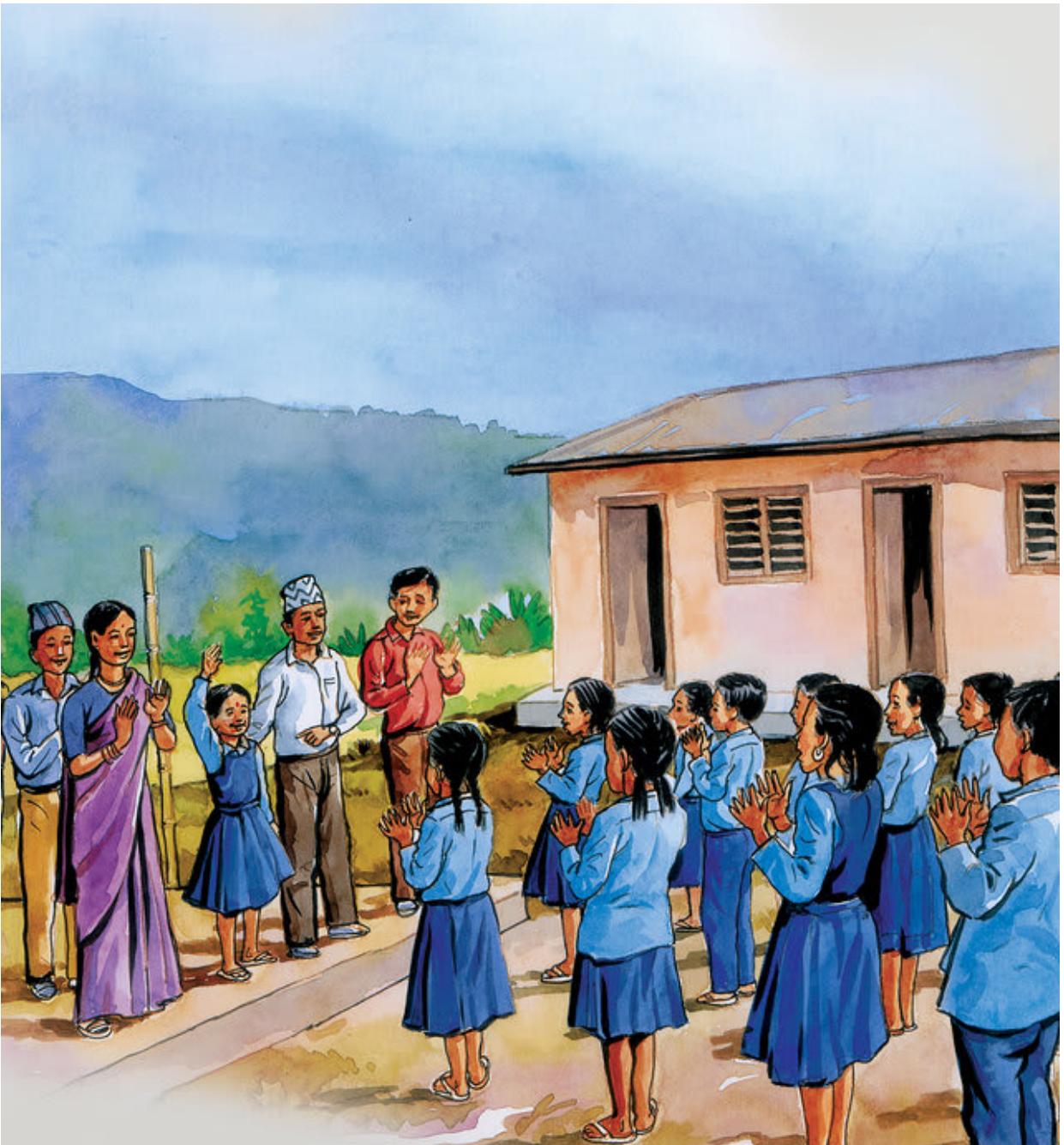
The next day, she took her jewelry to the goldsmith. “Will you please melt them and turn it into a ball so that I

can give it to my mother to keep for now?” When it was melted, the goldsmith handed it over to Chameli. Chameli gave the gold ball to her mother.



Chameli went to school that day with no jewelry on at all. Then she joined in a game with her friends. They all

gave her hugs, but Chameli hugged
Tilja for the longest time of all.



When the head teacher's eyes fell on her in the assembly, she called her out of her line and said, "Chameli is in

her true self today. She is sure to spread her spirit from now onwards again.” That made Chameli smile. She was glad to have her friends back. And they all clapped to see Chameli find her true spirit again.



In the classroom, Chameli wrote something in a sheet of paper and pasted it on the board for everyone to

see: Friends, please listen to what I
say Drowning in gold is not the way
Family and friends know your your
spirit You must listen inside to hear it.
And it was Tilja who added---
Chameli spirit's sparkles brighter than
gold!



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Chameli's Sparkle (English) Chameli loves her golden jewelry. Before long, she loves it more than anything else, even her friends. How will Chameli learn to sparkle without gold? This is a Level 3 book for children who are ready to read on their own.



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