

Ms. Arithmetickle Goes To Kindergarten

By: Leslie A. Davidson

On the night before the very first day of school, Ms. Arithmetickle was so worried that she could not sleep. She tossed and she turned. She closed her eyes and tried counting sheep but the sheep jumped and they bumped and they ran all over the place.

In the morning Ms. Arithmetickle dragged herself out of bed. She looked in the mirror.

“You wanted to be a teacher,” she told herself, “and now you’re a teacher.”

“Get a grip,” she scolded. “Get a grip and get yourself to school!”

So Ms. Arithmetickle got herself to school. She pushed open the big, outside doors and walked slowly down the hallway. She walked past a blue classroom door and a green one. She walked past a purple classroom door and a red one. She stopped in front of a bright, yellow classroom door.

The sign on the door said:

WELCOME TO KINDERGARTEN

Teacher: Ms. Arithmetickle

“That’s me,” Ms. Arithmetickle moaned.

“I’m the teacher,” she groaned.

“What if they don’t like me?” she fretted

“What if I lose one?” she almost sobbed.

The bell rang and the classroom filled up with Kindergarten kids. Ms. Arithmetickle helped the Kindergarten kids make nametags and showed them around the classroom. She showed them the sandbox and puzzles and dress-ups and the puppets. She showed them where to find the blocks, the play-dough and the books. Pretty soon all the kids were playing happily.

“Good!” Ms. Arithmetickle thought to herself. “ So far, so good.”

“One, two, three, please look at me,” she sang.

All the kids looked at Ms. Arithmetickle.

Then she sang the clean-up song and the kids put all the toys away. Then she sang the come to the carpet song and all the kids came and sat on the carpet. Then she sang the getting-to-know-you song.

“Sheesh,” said Jonathan. “Enough singing! When do we play?”

“I really have to pee!” called Cole. “I need to go NOW.”

Then everybody had to pee. Everybody had to go NOW.

The kids quickly lined up for the trip down the hall to the washrooms. They walked in a wiggly-wobbly line. The boys’ washroom was on one side of the hallway and the girls’ washroom was on the other. Ms. Arithmetickle counted heads as the kids scooted by her and into the washrooms. She counted seven girls and eleven boys.

“Eighteen children,” she said to herself.

And then she repeated it two more times so she wouldn’t forget.

“Remember to flush,” Ms. Arithmetickle called sweetly through the washroom doors.

“Wash your hands, please.”

Ms. Arithmetickle waited and waited and then she waited some more. She tapped her feet and crossed her arms. She listened at the boys’ washroom door and then she listened at the girls’ washroom door.

“I AM COUNTING TO TEN AND THEN I AM COMING IN,” she finally called in her very best, serious-teacher voice.

“One...two...three.... four...”

Girls and boys tumbled through the washroom doors and into the hallway.

“Five, six, seven, eight...”

“Nine...ten,” said Miss Arithmetickle as one last girl and one last boy pushed open the washroom doors and slipped into the wiggly-wobbly line.

Ms. Arithmetickle walked down the line gently touching heads and counting.

“Seventeen...eighteen!” counted Ms. Arithmetickle when she reached the end of the line.

“All here!” she said with relief.

She was just about to lead the wiggly-wobbly line back to Kindergarten when Jonathan bounced up beside her.

“My turn!” yelled Jonathan.

Then Jonathan raced down the long line of kids. Jonathan bopped kids on their heads and shouted numbers.

“One, two, three, four, five, six, eleventy-seven, ONE HUNDRED!” he shrieked.

Jonathan bounced and bopped and counted. He bopped kids on the head and they ducked and ran away. Soon all the kids were bouncing and bopping and ducking and shrieking numbers.

“Yikes!” squeaked Miss Arithmetickle. “Worse than sheep!”

“BOYS AND GIRLS!” said Miss Arithmetickle in her very best, I-mean-it voice.

“BACK IN LINE NOW!”

All the boys and all the girls scurried back into line.

Isabel took Miss Arithmetickle’s hand.

“That was fun!” Isabel said.

Ms. Arithmetickle and Isabel led the wiggly-wobbly line back to the Kindergarten room.

Miss Arithmetickle settled everyone back on to the carpet.

“Where’s my friend?” cried Jonathan.

“What friend, Jonathan?” asked Ms. Arithmetickle.

My new friend! The kid with the dinosaur t- shirt. I gotta find him!”

Jonathan leaped up and headed for the door.

Ms. Arithmetickle leaped up and headed for the door, right after Jonathan.

All the other kids leaped up and headed for the door, right after Ms. Arithmetickle.

“Whoa!” Ms. Arithmetickle said to Jonathan.

“Whoa!” Ms. Arithmetickle said to all the other kids.

“Jonathan,” she explained, “I counted heads. YOU counted heads. Eighteen children went into the washrooms and eighteen children came out. No one is missing.”

“My friend is missing!” insisted Jonathan.

Other kids were nodding.

“Uh-huh,” said Isabel. “I remember him... the kid with the dinosaur t-shirt. He’s missing all right.”

Ms. Arithmetickle turned and ran to her desk. She snatched up a paper with the names of all the children in the class. She quickly counted.

She counted all the way to eighteen and then she gasped.

“Nineteen!” she said in horror as she counted the very last name.

“I saw his nametag,” said Isabel. “His name starts with the up-down-up letter,” Isabel added as she drew the letter in the air.

“N?!” Ms. Arithmetickle guessed. “His name starts with N?!”

She ran her finger down the list of names.

“Nathan!” she cried.

She looked at all the kids. She read their nametags.

No Nathan!

Ms. Arithmetickle tried to get the kids into a wiggly-wobbly line but they were too excited. They tumbled through the doorway into the hall.

They screeched to a halt in front of the washrooms.

“Jonathan, check the washroom,” Ms. Arithmetickle said. “If Nathan is in there, ask him to please come out now!”

Ms. Arithmetickle held her breath. She stared at the boys’ washroom door as it swung shut after Jonathan. All the kids held their breath and stared at the boys’ washroom door, too.

Then Jonathan banged the washroom door back open.

“He’s in here all right!” Jonathan called.

“Thank goodness,” breathed Ms. Arithmetickle.

“Hurray!” chorused the kids.

“But he’s not coming out,” said Jonathan.

Ms. Arithmetickle pushed open the boy's washroom door and marched right in. All the Kindergarten kids marched right in after her.

“ Oh, Nathan,” Miss Arithmetickle said softly as she knelt down beside a little boy in a dinosaur t- shirt. His face was wet with tears.

“You said to flush before we came out,” Nathan whispered.

“I did, Nathan. Why is that a problem?” Ms. Arithmetickle whispered back.

“My big brother told me that last year a Kindergarten kid got sucked down the toilet. I'm scared to flush,” he ended with a sob.

“Sheesh!” said Jonathan and he whipped into the cubicle and flushed the toilet.

“Okay now, Nathan?” asked Ms. Arithmetickle as she gave him a hug.

Nathan nodded his head.

“Buddy,” Johnathon said as he put his arm around Nathan. “ Let me tell you about big brothers...”

Back in the hallway Ms. Arithmetickle looked at all the kids.

“I made a big mistake,” she told them. “I didn’t count carefully.”

“You should practice,” said Isabel. “Let’s play the counting game!”

“Good idea!” laughed Ms. Arithmetickle and she led the kids out the big doors to the playground.

Ms. Arithmetickle and all the kids roared around in the sunshine, tapping each other on the head and shouting numbers.

When everyone was all puffed out they flopped on the grass.

“I love counting. My favourite number is five. I’m five,” said Isabel.

“What’s your favourite number?” Isabel asked Ms. Arithmetickle.

Ms. Arithmetickle thought about Isabel’s question. She looked at all the Kindergarten kids flopped on the grass around her, at their rosy faces, at their happy smiles.

“Nineteen!” Ms. Arithmetickle said. “Yes, I think nineteen is my new favourite number!”

That night Ms. Arithmetickle crawled into bed. She didn't toss. She didn't turn. She closed her eyes and counted sheep. She counted nineteen happy sheep in a wiggly-wobbly line.

And then, with a big smile on her face, Ms. Arithmetickle fell fast asleep.

