

## The Dress

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One evening, Maya was making plans for her birthday. She sat in the living room with her father and instructed him on what to get for her.

"I want a chocolate cake...only a chocolate cake...and white candles on top, please ensure they are white...and five-differently coloured balloons, and of course, Nina's blue dress," she told him gravely.

Her father, who was writing all this down, looked up. "Why Nina's blue dress?" he asked.

"Because it is the only one that is the colour of the sky," she answered. "You know daddy, blue is my favourite colour."

"Is it?" replied her father who knew why, overnight, his daughter's preferences in colour had changed. Maya's cousin Nina had come to spend the weekend at their house. Nina was coming from school, and she was really excited because she had a role in the school play. She had been given a lovely silk blue dress, which was to be her dress for the play, just before coming to Maya's house. So, she brought it with her and showed it off to Maya. When held up against the light, the dress shimmered and Maya fell deeply under its spell.



From that minute, she began to tell anyone who would listen, that blue was her favourite colour and that she would wear only a blue dress to her party. Not just any blue dress, though. "One that has all these lights and pleats in front, just like Nina's."

Since her birthday was the following day and since Nina's play happened three days after that, Maya's intentions were clear to everyone, including Nina. Maya wanted to wear the dress for her birthday party.

She spent the entire day convincing her hapless cousin that they were soul sisters and that what belonged to one, naturally also belonged to the other. So, Maya's dolls and wardrobe of dresses were Nina's, and Nina's blue dress was Maya's. And Nina could not be so selfish as to deny her cousin the brief pleasure of wearing the blue dress for the party, could she?

Poor Nina! Not knowing how to react to her cousin's relentless talk of selflessness, she deeply regretted having brought the dress with her. She could see, in her mind's eye, a resplendent Maya basking under all the attention, at the party. Maya wearing the blue dress that was rightfully hers. How unbearable.

Maya's parents, who knew they would be in for the most spectacular display of tantrums if they stepped in, were in a dilemma. How could they make their daughter see what she was doing was plain bad manners, without giving her a chance to act like a martyr?

The next day, when the birthday girl woke up, she found her parents and Nina already up and awake. Nina got up and handed the blue dress to her. "You can wear this to the party. It's my birthday gift to you," she said smiling to the surprised Maya. "But you have to give it back to me as I have to wear it for the play."

"Wow, thanks so much," beamed Maya, who hadn't imagined that victory would be this easy. She had been getting ready to be all teary-eyed and mope about until, a few minutes before the party, her desperate family members would let her wear the dress.

"Now for our gifts," said her father, and Maya saw that he and mother were holding two tickets. Tickets to the newest children's fun spot in town. Maya had heard so much about it that she was dying to go there.

"But hang on a minute," added her mother as she rushed forward to claim them. "These should belong to Nina. After all, these two are soul-sisters. And if Nina is giving her new dress to her cousin to wear, it's only fair to expect Maya to hand the tickets to Nina."

"Sure, we'll go together," gushed Maya.

"If they are mine, I get to decide who comes with me, don't I?" replied Nina, then turned to Maya's mother. "Aunty will you come with me?"

"What about me?" asked an uneasy Maya who did not like where the conversation was heading.

"Nina will only use these the first time," explained her mother. "After that the tickets are yours."

"What will I do with them once they're used?" wailed Maya. "I can't use the same tickets again, can I?"

"Well, if you demand to be the first one to wear Nina's dress, then she too can demand to be the first one to use these tickets," said father. "The rest is your problem."

That silenced Maya for a while. A little later she returned the dress to her cousin. "Sorry, I was being mean," she said. "You wouldn't have liked it would you, if I had worn your dress first?"

"No, I wouldn't have," Nina told her. "And please take these tickets back. They are yours."

"They are ours," responded Maya. "We're both going. Just think how much we'll have to describe to the kids who come to my party in the evening."

(Source: <http://www.pitara.com/talespin/stories/online.asp?story=138>)