Feifei
This is The English We Speak, I’m Feifei…

Rob
And hello, I’m Rob.

Feifei
Rob, it’s very kind of you to bring me to this cafe and to buy me a milkshake – I love milkshakes.

Rob
Did I say I was paying? Anyway, I wanted to talk to you about work…

Feifei
…..mmm, strawberry, my favourite.

Rob
Errr, yes, me too…. But back to talking about work – you know we’re moving the desks around?…

Feifei
…Why do milkshakes taste so good?…oh look I’ve finished mine.

Rob
…..as I was trying to say, it looks like you’ve got the short straw.

Feifei
Oh, that’s why I’ve drunk my milkshake quicker than you – I had a short straw!

Rob
No, Feifei. Forget the milkshake – if you get – or draw - the short straw, it means you’re the person in a group who gets the most unpleasant outcome in a situation.

Feifei
Right, and why have I got the short straw?
Rob
Well, I’m afraid they’re moving your desk to just outside the toilet!

Feifei
We’ll see about that – let’s hear some examples of other people who’ve got the short straw...

Examples
It looks like I’ve got the short straw – I’m doing the late shift while everyone else goes to the pub!

Oh dear, Tom’s got do the washing up after our dinner party – looks like he’s got the short straw.

We were given free tickets to the theatre, but I got the short straw because my seat was right at the back and I couldn’t see a thing!

Feifei
This is The English We Speak from BBC Learning English and we’re talking about the expression ‘to get the short straw’, which describes a person in a group who gets the most unpleasant or difficult outcome in a situation. You can also say ‘to draw the short straw’. And Rob, you’re saying I’ve got the short straw in the office reshuffle?

Rob
Yep – that’s why I thought I’d take you for a milkshake as a way of making you feel better about it.

Feifei
You mean, as a way of saying sorry more like. I’ve seen the new office plan and you were supposed to sit by the toilet but you changed the name to mine – what a cheek!

Rob
Well… errr… How about if I pay for your milkshake?

Feifei
Maybe, if you buy me another milkshake.

Rob
Oh OK then… remind me what flavour?

Feifei
Strawberry – with TWO long straws.