

The One With The Freckle

by Brenda A. Ferber • Art by Valeria Petrone



I'm Alex. That's my brother Brian. I have a freckle. Brian doesn't. That's how to tell us apart. I'm the one with the freckle.

Brian and I, we do everything together. Everything. But not today. Today is our first day of kindergarten.

Brian skips off to Mrs. Davidson's room. He doesn't look back. He's not even a teensy bit scared.

I don't feel like skipping. I don't even feel like standing. I feel like I just ate a bad bologna sandwich.

My backpack is heavy. I have crayons, glue, six pencils, two folders, two notebooks, and one photograph of me. And a picture of Brian. Just in case.





My teacher, Mrs. Olson, tells us to tape our photographs onto our cubbies, right below our names. I dig a picture out of my backpack.

It's not me. It's Brian. I look at his picture. I try to feel brave.

“What a nice picture,” says Mrs. Olson. She hands me a piece of tape.

She doesn't see the missing freckle. Maybe nobody will.

I tape Brian's picture right below my name.

We sit on the rug. Mrs. Olson starts talking. I look around the room. Does Brian's classroom look just like mine? It's not that different from our preschool.

All of a sudden, I hear Mrs. Olson say something about recess. Something about us having recess with the other kindergartners at 10:30. At recess, I can play with Brian!

After rug time, Mrs. Olson takes us on a tour of the school.

We count goldfish crackers in math. Then we eat them.





Mrs. Olson reads us a funny story about a dog getting ready for kindergarten.

I barely have time to miss Brian.

But then it's time for free play. I look around the room. Here comes that bad-bologna-sandwich feeling again. Kids are playing on computers. Kids are building with blocks. Kids are coloring. Everyone has a friend. I miss Brian.

I sit on the rug by myself. I look at the big clock on the wall. Too bad I can't tell time. Will recess ever come?

After the skinny hand goes around a couple times, Mrs. Olson sits down next to me.

“You know, Alex,” she says, “There are only fifteen minutes until recess. Maybe you’d like to help Zachary with that puzzle.”

Zachary is sitting at one of the round tables. He’s trying to fit two pieces together that just don’t go. He could definitely use my help.



“OK,” I say. I show him the right piece.

Finally, recess. I’m on a mission to find Brian. I climb to the top of the junglegym. I can see the whole playground from up here.

No Brian.

“Hey,” says Zachary, climbing up behind me. “Can you do this?” He swings across the monkey bars.





“No problem,” I say. I swing across,
too. Then I hang upside down.

“*Ooh ooh eeh ahh ahh!*” I say,
scratching like a monkey.

Zachary starts laughing. Then he
acts like a monkey, and I start laughing.

Zachary points to the tire swing and says, “Come on, let’s go get dizzy!”

“Well, I’m kind of looking for someone,” I say.

Zachary shrugs. “Suit yourself,” he says. He heads off toward the tire swing.

I take one last look around the playground.

This time I see Brian. He’s digging in the sandbox with a curly-haired boy I don’t know.

“Hey, Brian!” I call.

Brian smiles and waves at me.

I start off toward my brother. But then I hear Zachary. He’s laughing. Really hard. I look over at the tire swing. Two kids from our class are spinning Zachary around like crazy. I bet I can push him faster than that.

“Hey, Zachary,” I call. “Wait up. I’ll show you my tornado spin.”

After recess, we go to our cubbies to get our lunches.

I look at Brian’s picture.

“Hi,” I whisper. “We’ll play after school, OK?”

Then I take Brian’s picture down and put up the one of me.

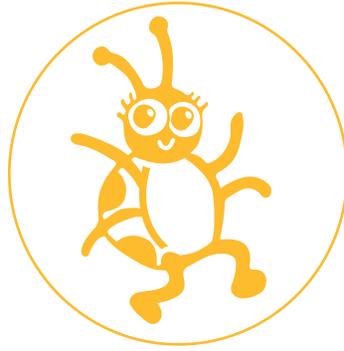
I like having that freckle back where it belongs. 🐛



ALEX



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