

# Different

By: Aliza J & Samuel L

I walked into my new school, where I would find new people, classes, rules, but most importantly, a new life. I spot my new friend Waterboy, who I met last week at my first volleyball practice. He was handing out water (hence the name). His real name is Allen, and he's the coach's son. I see him put his stuff into his new locker "Hey Oakley!" Allen/Waterboy called out, "You coming to practice this week?" "Of course!" I called back. It's not like I had anything else to do. Well other than stand up for my brother. Oh yeah, speaking about him, he has autism.

Kids make fun of him all the time. I was hoping this new town would be better, but when we moved here in the summer, I still had to stand up to his bullies every day. Speaking of my brother, Jake there he comes. He's in the first grade, I'm in 5th. Jake is hiding in a corner and a crowd of big boys are circling him. Unfortunately, I already knew what was going on. I walked over there. The big guys were 5th graders. "Hey, what are you guys doing?" I asked them, even though I already knew. They were trying to bully my little brother. "Look at him! He's so weird, and he looks so funny!" The biggest guy of all, in the front said. The group clustered around him all laughed. "He's not weird, he's just.....different!" I protested. The boys laughed. Allen appeared in front of me. "Back off guys. YOU heard her. He's just different." "Sure. Different, weird, either way he's not normal." the guy said, scoffing. "C'mon guys, let's go. These kids are ruining our fun." the boys all walked away. I turned to my brother. "Come on, I'll take you to your class." I whispered to him. "Thanks Oakley" Jake whispered back in his sweet little voice.

I turned back to Waterboy, silently thanking him with my eyes, and my expression on my face. He understood and nodded back. As I walked down the hall with Jake to his special needs class, I realized something. I realized that no matter which town we moved to, which state, country, even continent, it would always be the same. People would never accept by brother's autism unless they got to know him. And that wasn't going to change by us picking up our things and moving when things go bad. There will always be that one group of kids that insist on being mean to him, but there would also be those people who are willing to stand by our side. Take Waterboy, for example. He helped me stand up to those bullies. And of course, I too would always, always be there for Jake. Jake will always be unique. People will always bully. But the important thing is I (and people like Waterboy/Allen) will always stand by him, and accept that Jake is DIFFERENT.