

Second

After Ryan Van Meter

It is the second day of kindergarten and I see Ari reading alone in our classroom. She sits in the reading nook, all by herself, very focused on some book that is mostly full of pictures. She is not an outgoing kid. I am. This means I must initiate. For some reason I am drawn to her. Maybe it's because opposites attract. I sit down next to her and begin to try and read what she will be so intent on reading for our whole conversation. She doesn't say anything to me even though I am craning my neck to read over her shoulder. She is five and I am four and a half, so I am struggling with the words more than she is. She flips the pages before I have even read the first sentence. I'm impressed. I am her first friend in our class but she is my second. I already did the same thing to the other shy girl in our class. But I will know after this day that my second friend is the best one, the one that will last. Years from now I won't remember the book she is reading. It might be *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*. It could be a book about dogs (her favorite animal). That doesn't really matter. All

that matters to me in this moment is making a new friendship. A best friendship.

I like to watch Disney shows, and what I love about them is that every character has a friend. A best friend. A best friend that they are always with—that they spend all of their time with. I have learned from watching *Good Luck Charlie*, *Shake It Up*, and *Wizards of Waverly Place* that best friends have to always



She is five and I am four and a half, so I am struggling with the words more than she is. She flips the pages before I have even read the first sentence. I'm impressed.



be together. They go over to each other's houses every day and basically become a part of the other's family. They hardly ever leave each other's side. I want to experience this for myself. I swear this will be how it is with Ari and me from this day on. We will have weekly playdates and spend all of our time together in the yard—just like Teddy Duncan and Ivy Wentz, Cece Jones and Rocky Blue, and Alex Russo and Harper Finkle. We will have our own secret language and special songs that no one else will understand.

So there Ari and I sit in silence—Ari reading, me watching her read and thinking about our new friendship that I have created

in my head. The friendship that she hasn't experienced, but I have. In a moment of courage I ask her:

“Do you want to be friends?”

She looks at me and responds with the smallest little voice,

“Yes.”

I revel in the silence after this moment. She is my best friend. I did it.

I notice her focus on the book. I want to stay like this forever.

“*Best friends?*” I ask her, only to confirm what I already know.

She nods back to me, and I smile before the teacher separates us to our different assigned seats.