

CHAPTER ONE

“Pink cupcakes,” said Jasper, shaking his head. “Who brings pink cupcakes to school? I mean, what *boy* would bring them?”

“Pukey Diaper, that’s who.” Nicky shoved his coat into his cubby.

Jasper laughed. “Good old Pukey,” he said. He shifted into a goo-goo baby voice. “Wah, wah, Mommy! Please bring pink cupcakes. It’s Valentine’s Day, Mommy!”

Charles, down by his own cubby, thought Jasper’s imitation of a baby was pretty bad. Maybe he didn’t have any younger brothers or sisters. Charles knew that his own brother, the



Bean, had never actually said “wah, wah, wah” in his life. And he had definitely never heard it from Luke Piper, the boy they were talking about. Charles looked around, hoping Luke was not nearby to hear the other boys making fun of him.

Luke was short and skinny, but he wasn’t a baby. True, he had thrown up in class once — right after lunch, so it was kind of obvious that the spaghetti and meatballs had not agreed with him. That wasn’t his fault. Anybody could get sick. But it had earned Luke a new nickname that seemed to be sticking: Pukey Luke.

Then somebody, Jasper maybe, had pointed out how Luke’s mom always came along on field trips, and spent every Wednesday afternoon helping out during math class, and was always waiting to pick him up after school even though he lived close enough to walk home. “What, is he a baby who needs his mommy around all the time? Does

Piper need a new diaper?” Jasper had said one day out on the kickball field. And the rest of the nickname was born.

Their teacher, Mr. Mason, didn't know about it. In fact, not every kid in class knew. Jasper and Nicky were the main ones who used the mean name, and only quietly, when they were far from any grown-up or tattletale kid.

Charles had heard it, and he didn't like it. Luke was okay. He had an awesome Lego collection and could build just about anything. Once, for Sharing Circle he had brought in a whole Star Wars scene, with all the characters and everything.

If Luke had heard them call him Pukey Diaper, he didn't show it. He mostly ignored Nicky and Jasper, keeping his head down and his eyes on his schoolwork when they were whispering his name. Now he poked his head into the cubby area. “Cupcakes are ready,” he told Charles.