

LEVELED BOOK • K

New Planet, New School



Written by Karen Mockler
Illustrated by Reginald W. Butler

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I had a lot of friends back in my old school, on my old **planet**. When the school year ended, though, my family moved across the **galaxy** to Planet Zox.



Planet Zox has **species** from so many different planets, just walking down the street can be an adventure. So can going to the grocery store.



Actually, I sort of liked my new planet until it was time to start school.

“I won’t fit in,” I complained to my parents that first morning. “Nobody there will be like me.”

“They don’t have to be like you in order to like you,” Mom said.

It took me a minute to sort out that sentence.



Once I got to school, I kept my eye out for other humans.

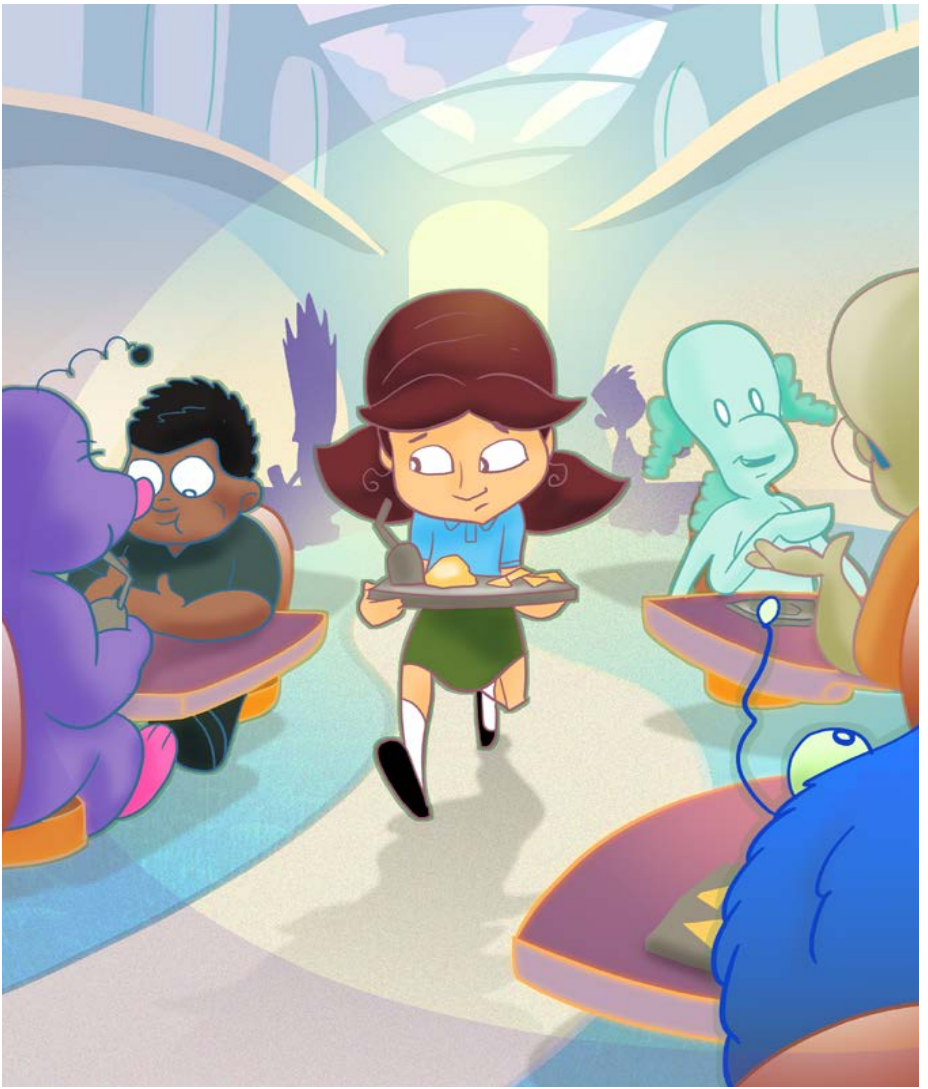


I spotted a few in the halls, but the only one in my class is Swiss Pumpernickel. When I walked in that first day, some of the students started to **tease** him.



“Way to go, Pumpernickel. Looks like you finally got yourself a girlfriend,” they said.

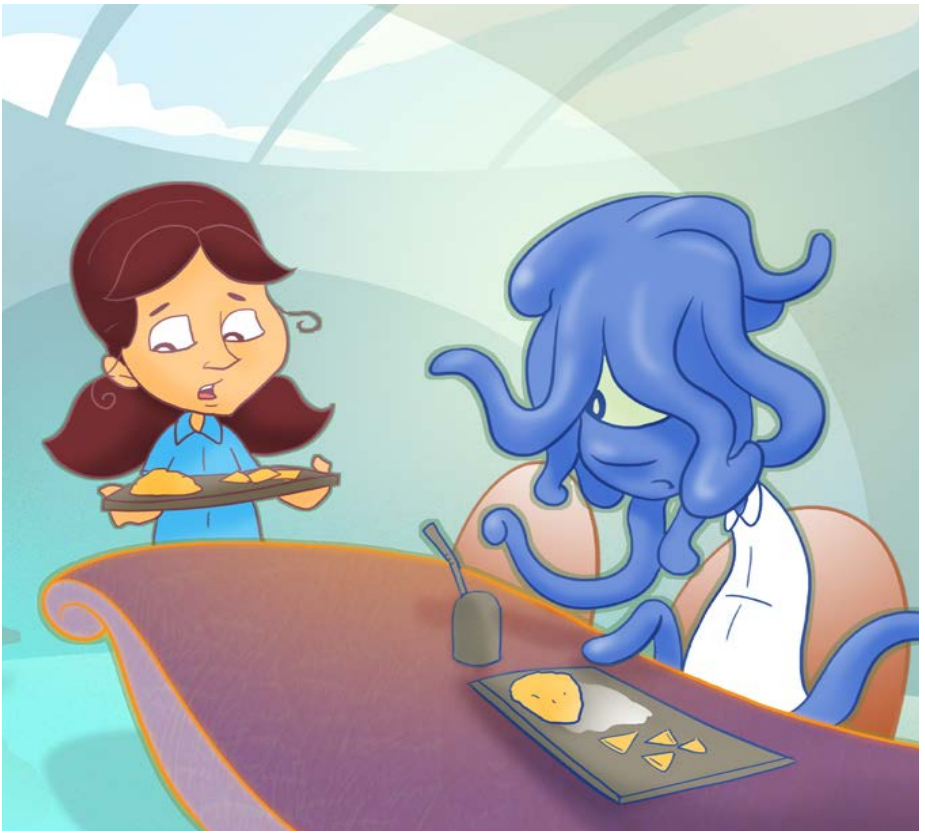
Swiss Pumpernickel turned red, then glared at me—as if it were my fault for being human!



After that, nobody talked to me all morning. I looked for some humans to sit with at lunch, but they were all sitting with other species.



I only found one table with any empty chairs. There, alone, sat one of my classmates, Hululialana. She was so wrapped up in her **tentacles**, I couldn't find her face.



I approached with caution and spoke with great care.

“Hello, Hululialana,” I said.

Slowly, several arms lifted. Then one arm unwound itself, floated toward me through the air, and pulled out the closest chair.



I took a seat. “Thank you,” I said.

We looked at each other, then away.
She began to wrap herself up again.



“How’s your first day going?”
I quickly asked.

Hululialana shrugged—I think. “I wish I were still at my old school,” she said.

“Me, too,” I said.

She looked shocked, and I laughed.

“I mean, I wish *I* were still at my old school,” I explained.



“At least you’re not the only human,”
Hululialana said. “I’m the only
Hulu.”

I thought for a moment. “That
makes you special,” I said.

“That makes me a **freak**,” she said.

“Well, let’s be freaks together,”
I suggested.

Then, for the first time, Hululialana
smiled.



From that day forward, school on Planet Zox has been pretty darn fun.

Glossary

- freak** (*n.*) one who is abnormal or unusual in appearance or behavior (p. 14)
- galaxy** (*n.*) a large group of stars, planets, gases, and dust (p. 3)
- planet** (*n.*) a large, round object that travels around a star (p. 3)
- species** (*n.*) a group of living things that are physically similar and can reproduce (p. 4)
- tease** (*v.*) to make fun of; to provoke in a playful way (p. 7)
- tentacles** (*n.*) long, flexible limbs on an animal, especially an invertebrate (p. 10)

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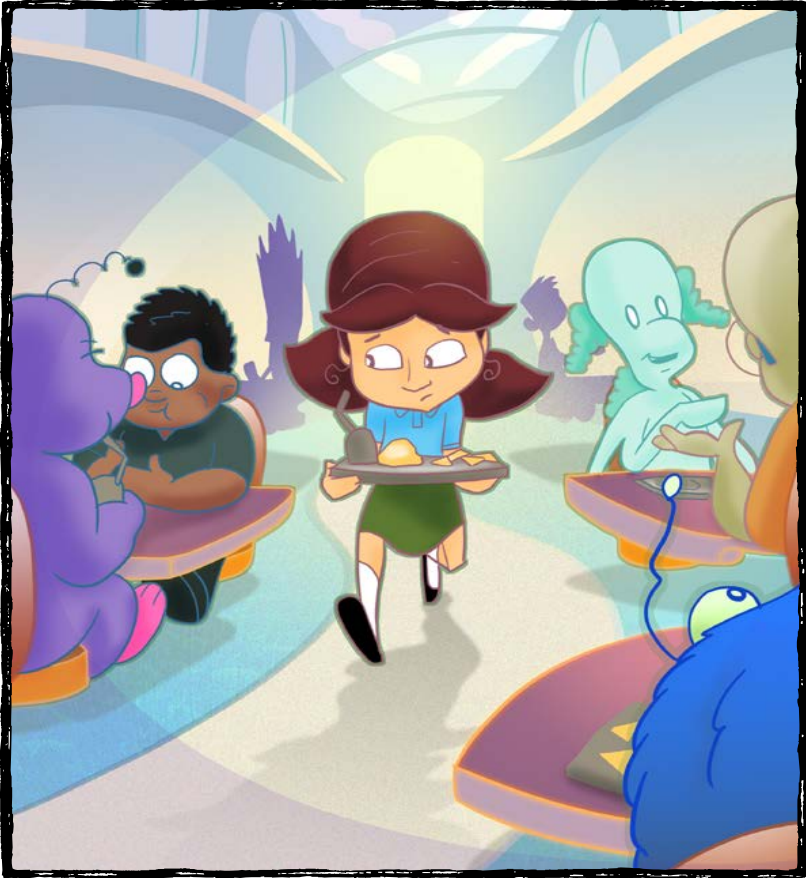
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