

Attainment's

**Life
Skill
Stories**

4

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Story

1

Two friends' backpacks are accidentally switched, switched back, switched, and switched back again without them knowing it.

Can You Smell Those CDs?

Alfie walked into math class and sat down next to Jenna. He was wearing his new shirt and hoped Jenna would like it.

Jenna smiled at him and said, "Hey, you! Nice shirt!"

Alfie said, "Thanks..." But inside, he was shouting, "Yes! She likes it!"

Jenna said, "Do you have that CD you were going to make for me?"

Alfie was still thinking about his shirt and did not hear Jenna.

Jenna laughed and said, "Alfie, did you hear me? Do you have my CD?"

Alfie opened his backpack and reached in to get the CD. He looked in his math book and in all the pockets. He thought about where he had put it. He looked in his math book again. He bit his lips and frowned.

Jenna watched him. Then she said, "Alfie, didn't you make it?"

Alfie's eyes opened wide. He kept looking for the CD and said, "Yes, I did make it. But, it doesn't seem to be here. I know I put it in here."

Jenna's happy look was gone. She said, "Alfie, that is what you said yesterday. You aren't really going to make it for me, are you?"

Alfie grit his teeth. His lips hardly moved as he said, "I told you I made it. And, I put it in my backpack."

Jenna slowly said, "OK. Calm down. If you put it in your backpack, it must be there."

Alfie threw his backpack in front of Jenna. He growled, "Fine! You find it."

Jenna carefully looked through the backpack. Finally, she said, "It's not here, Alfie."

"No kidding? Did you think I couldn't see? I know it isn't there. I made one two days ago. I put it in my backpack to give you. But it wasn't there yesterday when I went to get it. So, I made another one last night. I put it in my backpack for today. So, where are they?" Alfie asked.

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Jenna looked back at the backpack. She sniffed a couple of times. Then she asked, "What's that smell?"

"What do you mean? What smell?" Alfie asked.

Jenna gave the backpack back to him. She said, "Smell inside your backpack. What is that?"

Alfie put his face in his backpack and smelled. "Well," he said, "It smells like fresh paint."

"That's what I thought," Jenna said. "Why would your backpack smell like fresh paint? Do you have something in there that you just painted?"

"No, I don't. The last time I painted was in grade school. My work wasn't worth keeping!" Alfie said. "I'm not sure why it smells like that. I don't remember it smelling like that before."

Kara came into the room and sat down beside Jenna. She put her head in her hands and started to cry.

Jenna said, "What's wrong, Kara?"

Kara said, "Well, I'm going to get an F in art class. I did my project last night, but it isn't in my backpack. My teacher doesn't believe I did it. So, she says I get an F on it."

Jenna said, "What's going on with backpacks? Alfie says the CDs he put in his backpack just disappeared, too. And, for some reason, his backpack smells like paint."

Kara stopped crying. "CDs? There are two CDs in my backpack. I don't know where they came from."

Alfie was listening now, too. He said, "Let me see those CDs."

Kara pulled the CDs out and handed them over.

Alfie took them, looked at Jenna, and said, "Look, Jenna! They say 'Fun Mix for Jenna.' I told you I made two of them!"

Jenna smiled at Alfie. Then she looked at Kara and said, "Why do you have Alfie's CDs?"

Kara said, "I have no idea. Did you say your backpack smells like paint? Let me see it!" She reached in and took out his math book. Stuck to the back cover was a painting. It was dry enough not to smear, but wet enough to stick. "My project!" Kara said as she ran out of the room with it.

"Whoa," Alfie said, "I didn't even see that picture stuck to my math book."

"Well, Kara sure is glad it was there!" Jenna said. "Did you know you two have the same backpack? How do you think you switched them—twice?"

"We put our stuff together in the gym before and after school at track practice. I guess we were talking and not looking. I'm so glad I've got my own backpack now!" Alfie said.

"Me, too! I'll love these CDs. Thanks a lot!" Jenna said as she smiled and slipped the two CDs into her backpack.



What do you think?

1. Which item from the story do you think it would make the *most* sense to keep for years: Alfie's backpack, Jenna's two CDs, or Kara's art project? Explain.
2. As a rule, it is *not* OK to look through someone else's backpack. Why was it OK for Jenna to look through Alfie's backpack?



What would you do?

What is one thing Jenna said that showed she had lost patience with Alfie and did not believe him?



Story 2

Dan, Ben and Lizzie go to a wake for their grandfather and remember playing checkers with him.

Playing Checkers

“That’s my sixth gutter ball in a row,” Dan said. “I guess I just can’t bowl today. I’ll be lucky to break 30.”

“Let’s go to my place and watch the World Series,” Alfie said. “That won’t take so much energy.”

“Good idea,” Dan said. Alfie Ennis and Dan Ward were cousins. They went to the same high school. Alfie was a sophomore and Dan was a freshman. Their mothers were sisters. Dan’s grandfather on his father’s side had died yesterday. Dan was feeling down.

Back at Alfie’s house, they turned on the TV. The game was in the third inning. Alfie said, “Look who’s up. Think he’ll hit a home run?” Dan did not answer. Alfie said again, “Think

Rooster will hit a home run?" Dan still did not answer. Alfie stopped talking and just watched.

About an hour later, Dan said, "I need to go to the ATM. I have to move some money and make a payment."

"What payments do you have to make?" Alfie asked.

"My dad gave me money to buy my MP3 player. I'm paying him back. Let's go to the ATM by the grocery store," Dan said.

Alfie said, "I heard it's supposed to rain. I'll get umbrellas."

The two of them walked the two blocks to the store. When they got there, Dan could not remember his pin number. Finally, he said, "I guess it doesn't matter. I'll just do it later."

The next day, Dan went to a wake for his grandfather. Lots of neighbors and relatives came. Dan sat with his older brother, Ben and his little sister, Lizzie. There was a back room with food for the main family members. Dan, Ben, and Lizzie took a plate of cheese and crackers to their chairs. They talked and nibbled.

Ben was a senior. He was named after his grandfather. He said, "It is so odd to see an obituary for 'Ben Ward.'"

Dan said, "I bet it is odd. Can you read it to me, please?" Dan had tried to read it earlier, but he had trouble with it. And, he really wanted to know everything it said. Dan had a learning problem. It made reading hard. In school, the teachers gave him extra help. Quietly, Ben read it aloud. Lizzie listened too. She was in 5th grade. She could have read it on her own. But, she still liked to have her big brother read to her.

Lizzie asked, "Why did Grandpa die?"

"He died from diabetes," Dan explained. "It's a disease. His body could not use food right. It made his organs not work like they should."

"His organs?" Lizzie looked puzzled. "His piano worked. I used it."

Dan smiled. "No, not his piano. An 'organ' is a musical instrument. But, the word 'organs' also means 'main parts of the body.' For example, your heart is an organ. Your kidneys are organs."

Lizzie asked, "Are my lungs organs?"

"Yes, they are." Dan said. "Grandpa's eyes and heart were hurt by diabetes."

"So, that's why he couldn't see?" Lizzie asked. "The food he ate hurt his eyes?"

"Yes, it is sort of like that," Dan said. "His body couldn't use food right. So, his eyes and heart were sort of broken."

"Why didn't he go to a doctor for eyes and hearts?" Lizzie asked.

"He did," Dan said. "His heart doctor was Dr. Freems. He helped as much as he could. His eye doctor was Dr. Mertz. He helped a lot, too. But, in the end, Grandpa's body just wore out."

Lizzie said, "Oh." Then she climbed onto Dan's lap and they hugged. They were still hugging when their Aunt Sue walked up. Aunt Sue was their dad's sister.

Aunt Sue bent down and hugged the two of them at once. She said, "You two look so sweet sitting here. We are so lucky to have such a nice family. We'll all miss Grandpa, but we still have each other." After Aunt Sue left, others came to talk to Dan and Lizzie.

A neighbor said, "Sorry for your loss. I know you spent a lot of time with your grandpa."

Lizzie said, "Yes, we did. Grandpa played checkers with my brothers and me. I'm little. But I still won sometimes. Grandpa gave me candy when I won."

A great aunt said, "Your grandpa and I had a lot of fun when we were kids. We played outside whenever we could. He used to try to scare me with snakes and frogs. But, it didn't work. I liked all the animals."

Grandpa's oldest brother came over. He said, "He was my little brother, you know." He stood too close. Dan had to back up three times.

All night long, the room was full of neighbors, friends, and relatives. Dan was surprised to see that he knew almost everyone. But, they didn't all know each other. He introduced some of grandpa's "people" to some of his other "people." It was a long day, but a warm one.

After the wake, Dan got a text message from Alfie. "Want to hang out?"

Dan texted back, "No. Not tonight. I'm going to play checkers with Ben and Lizzie."



What do you think?

1. Dan forgot his pin number. Why do you think people have to memorize pin numbers instead of writing them down and keeping them in an easy-to-find place?
2. Alfie took umbrellas on the walk to the store because the news report said it was going to rain. News reports are often wrong. Do you think Alfie was silly to take the umbrellas on their walk? Explain.



What would you do?

It takes strength to be positive when people are down. Think about Dan in the story. Say you were his friend. What would you do to help him deal with losing his grandfather?



Story

3

A high school boy and girl start to date, but he keeps it a secret from the football coach who doesn't want players dating.

Watch Me!

"So pretty!" Jenna said to Kara. "I want a guy to take me to a fancy restaurant!" Jenna Pratt and Kara Ohms were both in their second year of high school. They were looking at a magazine while waiting for math class to start.

Alfie Ennis was listening to the girls talk. He didn't say anything. But, he thought, "I can't afford places like that. She'll never go out with me. I'm already saving money for dating. But not that much money." Bart Thomas turned around. He smiled at Jenna. Alfie thought, "That's it. I have to ask her out before Bart does." He thought about a low-cost date. After math class, Alfie walked with Jenna. He said, "Do you want to go on a picnic tomorrow?" He held his breath.

Jenna said, "Sure! I love picnics. What time?"

Alfie took a breath. He said, "Great! How about 11:30?"

"That'll work," she said. "I'll make some fresh lemonade. And, I just made some cookies a few days ago. I put them in the freezer to keep them fresh. So, I'll bring some of those, too!" Jenna said. She added, "I'll be watching you tonight!" Then she left to go to her last class.

Alfie was thrilled. He started daydreaming about the picnic.

"Hey, Alfie! Are you in there?" Bart said while he waved his hand in Alfie's face.

Alfie came out of his dream world. "What do you want, Bart?" Alfie asked.

"The team meeting starts in five minutes," Bart said. "Are you going?"

"Yeah, let's go!" Alfie said. He couldn't believe it. He'd almost missed a team meeting because he was thinking about Jenna.

Alfie thought about Coach Wick saying, "Don't get involved with a girl. Girls ruin the best athletes. You'll have plenty of time to date later. I'll be watching you." Then, Alfie realized Coach Wick was talking to him. The coach said, "Where are you, Ennis? Are you in la-la land?"

Alfie knew he had to keep Jenna a secret. He said, "I'm here now, Coach." He carefully paid attention through the rest of the meeting. He thought to himself, "I can have a girl and play football. I'll make it work." That night, Alfie ran onto the

field. He remembered Jenna saying she would be watching him. He played his best game ever. At the end of the game, he said to himself, "Yeah, I can do both."

The next morning, Alfie was up early. He checked out the local newspaper. There he was on the sports page making a touchdown. He looked through the rest of the newspaper. One article showed all the hiking trails in town. He smiled and thought, "Maybe Jenna likes to hike. That's free."

Picnic list in hand, Alfie went to the store. He bought some grapes, cheese, ham, and fresh bread. At home, he used a smooth knife to cut the ham and cheese. He used a serrated knife to cut the bread. When everything was cubed, he filled three zipper bags. He washed the grapes and put them in a fourth bag. Then he packed the food into a picnic basket. He added a blanket and plates. He also put the hiking trails article in the basket. A little after 11:00, he left for Jenna's house.

When they got to the park, Jenna spread out the blanket. Alfie put the food on top of the basket lid. They ate the food with toothpicks and laughed. They used wet wipes to clean their hands when they were done. Alfie was packing up when he got a thorn in his leg. He opened the picnic basket to get a bandage. Jenna saw the article about the trails. She said, "We should check out these trails next weekend."

Alfie smiled and said, "Yes, we should!" Then he added, "I was hoping you would like doing things that don't cost much."

She asked, "What are you doing tonight?"

“Nothing really. What are you doing?” Alfie asked.

“Maybe watching a TV movie at home,” Jenna said. “That is, if you don’t mind doing things that don’t cost a lot.” Alfie laughed. They went to Jenna’s house and checked the TV schedule. They found two movies that sounded good. They’d each seen one of them before. They were deciding which one to watch when the doorbell rang.

Jenna went to the door. Alfie heard her say, “Hi Coach Wick. Come on in. I’ll get my dad.”

Alfie froze on the couch. He wondered, “What is Coach Wick doing here? How did he know about Jenna and me? Should I hide?” But, he didn’t think about hiding quickly enough. Coach Wick was in the room.

Coach said, “Alfie! I didn’t expect to see you here.”

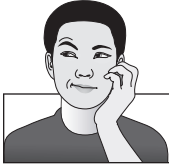
Alfie said, “I didn’t expect to see you here, either, Coach.”

“I’m here because Mr. Pratt is a good friend. What are you doing here, Alfie?”

“Well, Coach,” Alfie said, “Jenna and I are watching a movie.”

“Hmmm,” said Coach Wick. “You sure played a good game last night, Alfie. I suppose you think you are going to prove me wrong about having a girl and playing football.”

“I sure hope to, Coach!”



What do you think?

1. Since Alfie plans to spend as little money as possible on his dates, do you think it makes sense for Alfie to have a savings plan for dating? Explain.
2. Why do you think Alfie used two different kinds of knives when cutting the cheese, ham, and bread?



What would you do?

Alfie was pricked by a thorn. He had a tetanus shot two years ago. Do you think he would need a booster for something as little as a thorn and if so, does he need it after only two years?