

# Keith and Keith

BY JANE SCHERER

**I**t started right when school did — that first day — as Mrs. Rankin called the roll. I was half dozing in my seat missing the lost summer, even though it had gotten boring at the end.

"Keith Robinson?"  
"Here," I said and heard an echo from the back of the room. "Keith Robinson," she called again, frowning.

"Here," I said again, louder. The echo answered just as loud.

Puzzled I turned around to see a small skinny kid raise his hand. There were two Keith Robinsons in the class; and I can tell you, that was one too many.

Later I found out that he was Keith James Robinson. I was Keith Jason, but that didn't help much.

"Mr. Kreasy, you have to change my room!" I pleaded with the principal.

"Change your room? What's wrong, Keith?" he asked. He put his arm around my shoulder and led me to the soft leather chair in front of his desk.

"There's another kid named Keith Robinson in Mrs. Rankin's class." My voice must have sounded panicky.

"I know that," said Mr. Kreasy. "New boy in town. Sure does mess up the records."

"That's it! That's it!" I cried. "What's it?"

"Well, it messes us up, too. And Mrs. Rankin," I said. I didn't want to be a snitch, but that other Keith Robinson had been late every single day of school. I was getting marked tardy for it.

"How so, Keith?" Mr. Kreasy asked.

"Well, he has been late...er, once or twice...and Mrs. Rankin thinks it's me." Once or twice, that was funny. Now I know how twins must feel.

"Well, explain it to her," Mr. Kreasy said.

"I have." The other Keith Robinson just laughed when I tried to explain who was late and who wasn't. "What am I going to

tell my father when he sees all those tardies on my report card? He has a thing about being late!"

"I'm sorry, Keith, but I can't change your room," Mr. Kreasy said.

My heart sank. "Why not?" I groaned.

"There isn't another fifth grade class in the school. Sorry."

"I'm sorry, too."

"Maybe you can wear something...distinctive. Or talk to Mrs. Rankin and let her get to know you so that she won't be as likely to mix the two of you up."

"Yeah," I mumbled as I left his office.

"Suppose we start using middle names for you two boys?" Mrs. Rankin said the next day. She looked very disturbed. The pages

in her attendance book were beginning to look like Swiss cheese from all the tiny eraser-hole marks.

So the next day Mrs. Rankin called Jason Robinson instead of Keith Robinson or Keith J. Robinson. Only I had forgotten and didn't realize she meant me.

"He's here, Mrs. Rankin," the other Keith answered.

"Thank you, Keith," Mrs. Rankin said.

"You're welcome," I said.

"Not YOU!" she screamed, and I had to stay after class for not paying attention.

So that didn't work, and Keith James Robinson continued to come in late which made it very hard for Keith Jason...ME.

When I got home, I asked my

mother if she would mind if I changed my name.

"Change your name, Keith? Why?"

I tried to explain to her, but after awhile her eyes got that glazed look.

"I don't think your father would like it. Keiths have run in the family for generations. Why your granddad is Keith and so is your uncle."

"I know," I said. There was one Keith too many in the Robinson family...ME.

Then a funny thing happened. Keith James Robinson got an A on his math paper, but I got credit for it! I have never gotten an A in math.

And you know what? The other Keith didn't like it one bit.

"Oh, it's all right when you come in late, and I get blamed. But it's not so alright if our grades get mixed up." I grinned evilly.

"OK, OK," he said. "You help me get the mark straightened out, and I'll never come in late again. I promise."

"How are you going to do that?" I asked.

"I have a plan. You come and get me every morning. That way I'll be on time. You're never late."

"So what do I get?" I asked, but suddenly I knew. "OK, I'll come by for you and ..."

"And?"

"You help me get an A in math."

"That's impossible!" he yelled. "Well, I'll settle for a B+ or even a B. What do you say?"

We shook on it.

The next morning I walked to Keith's house in plenty of time, and he was outside waiting. This was going to be easy, I thought.

We started down the steps and then ...

"Hold up a minute," he cried all of a sudden. "I forgot my book report, and it's due today."

"OK, go get it, but hurry it up." I looked at my watch.

After awhile I looked again. And again. I started to pace up and down.

Finally he came out. "I couldn't find it at first. My little brother must have moved it."

Even though we both ran all the way to school, we were late. BOTH OF US! Boy, was Mrs. Rankin mad!

I'm thinking about dying my hair or getting a Mohawk. Mr. Kreasy said something about distinctive. I looked that up in the dictionary. Yeah, but what would my father say?

Anyway, I'll have to think of something. SOON!

*If you enjoyed reading "Keith and Keith," you might like Toad Food and Measle Soup by Christine McDonnell or 4b Goes Wild by Jamie Gilson. Both books are available at the library.*

