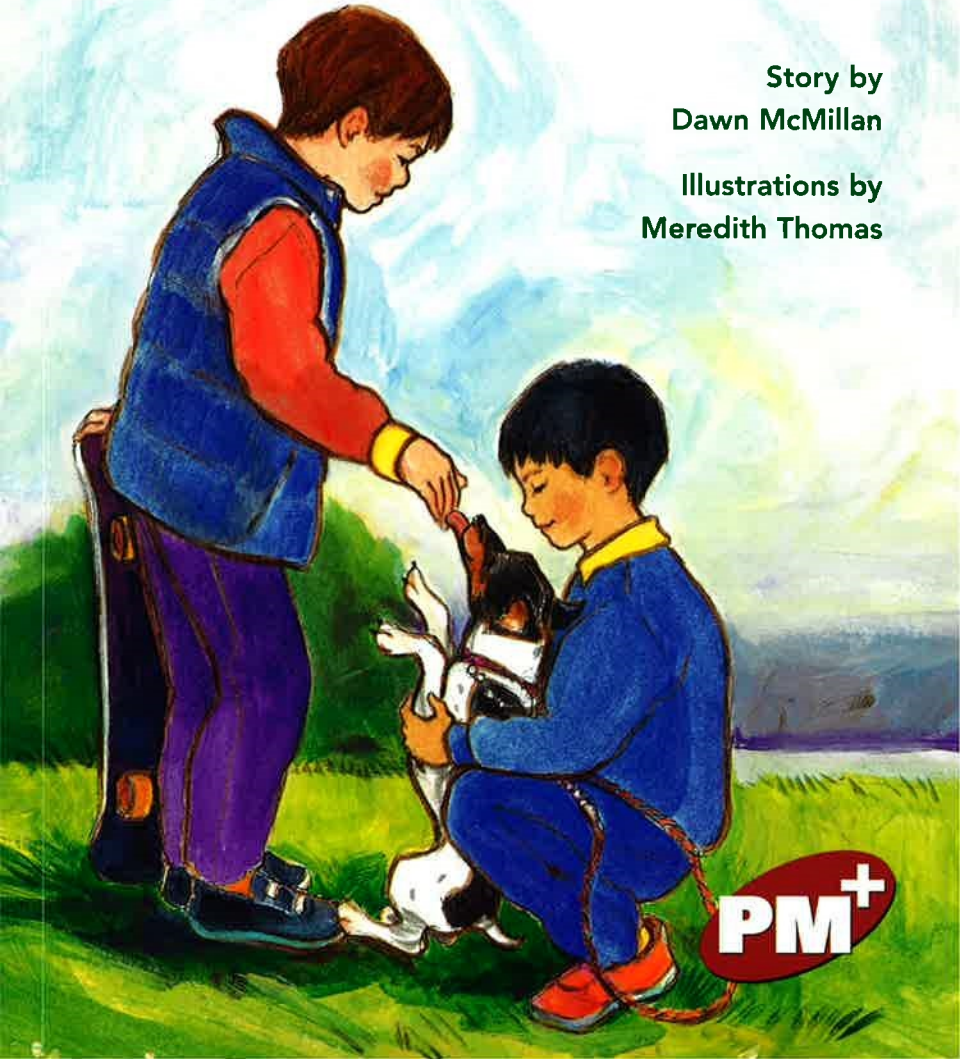
Needing a Friend

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Chapter 1

Someone New



On the first morning of the new term, Tony waited at the school gates for Jeff to arrive. The bus was late. He looked down the road again, and at last he could see it coming. As it pulled into the stop, Tony saw Jeff at the window and waved. The students stepped off the bus, calling excitedly to their friends.

"Hey, Tony!" shouted Jeff. "Great to see you!"

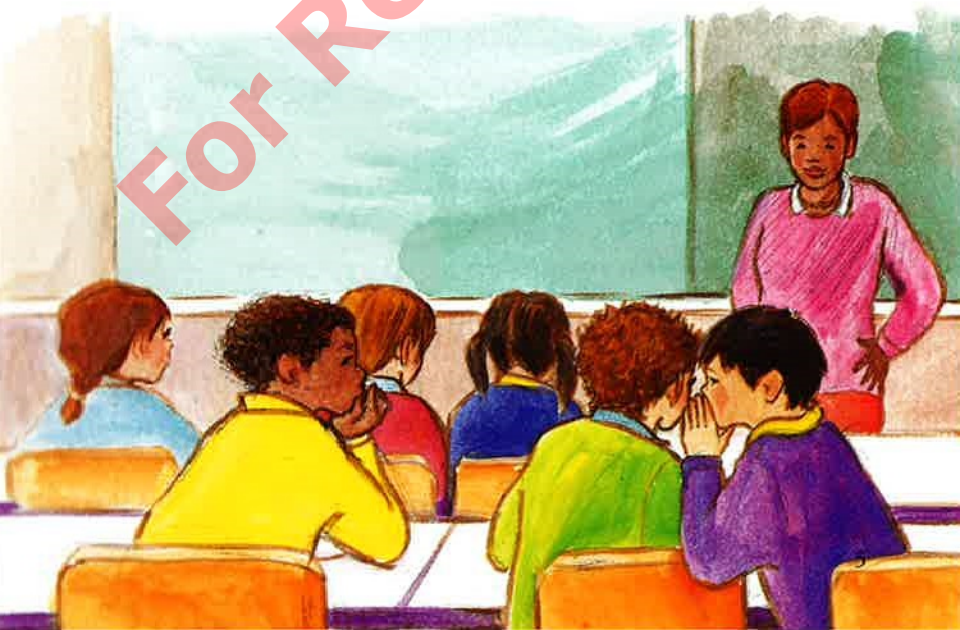
"You too!" Tony replied. He gave Jeff a friendly push, and they laughed together.

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The bell rang and they all rushed in to put their bags away and head into class. Mrs Hogart was there, smiling and chatting to everyone. The chatter stopped as she walked to the front of the room.

"Good morning, everybody," she said. "This morning we have a new student joining our class," she smiled. "His name is Jamie. Jamie's mum has asked me to talk to you before he arrives. She thinks it's a good idea for you to know a little about him."

Tony looked at Jeff. "I wonder what's so special about him?" he whispered.



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Mrs Hogart continued. "Jamie has Asperger Syndrome," she said. "Does anyone here know anything about Asperger Syndrome?"

Everyone was silent.

"Asperger Syndrome is a condition that can make people behave in different ways from most other people," said Mrs Hogart. "Often they have problems making friends, and sometimes they seem to be in a world of their own."

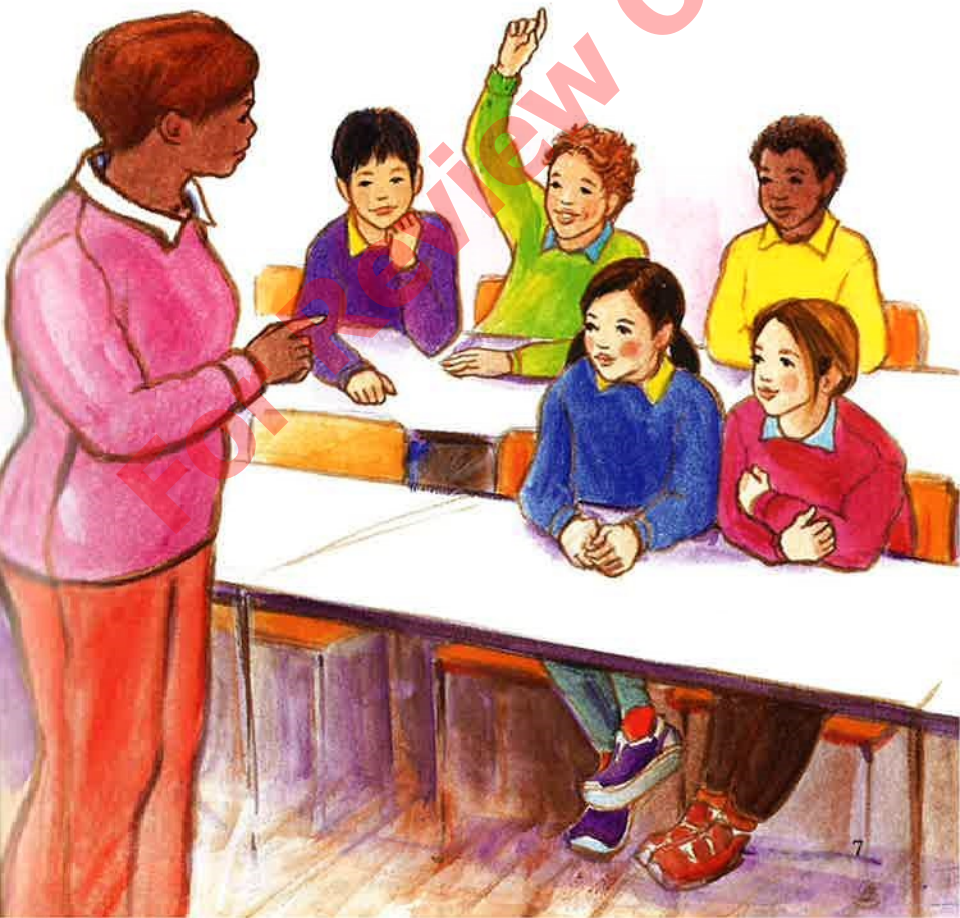
Jeff raised his hand. "How did Jamie get Asperger Syndrome?" he asked.

"Good question, Jeff," answered Mrs Hogart. "Jamie was born with the condition. He is a very intelligent person. People who have Asperger Syndrome are often very interested in one special thing and become experts in that subject. Jamie is very good at maths, and he knows all about animals."

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Miss Hogart continued. "Jamie may not want to join in with all of your talking. Sometimes he doesn't understand jokes so he might feel left out if you are having fun, and he doesn't like it if anyone comes too close to him."

"How can we help him to settle in?" asked Jeff.



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"First of all we need to keep to our timetable and classroom rules," answered Mrs Hogart. "Jamie doesn't like too many changes or surprises. He may get upset if he becomes confused. We need to accept that he may do things in a different way."

"Jamie might teach us better ways of doing our work!" laughed Tony.

Mrs Hogart laughed too. "That's a good thought!" she said. "We're always looking for new ideas. And it won't do us any harm to stick to our routines and rules either!" she grinned. "We might get a lot more done!"



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