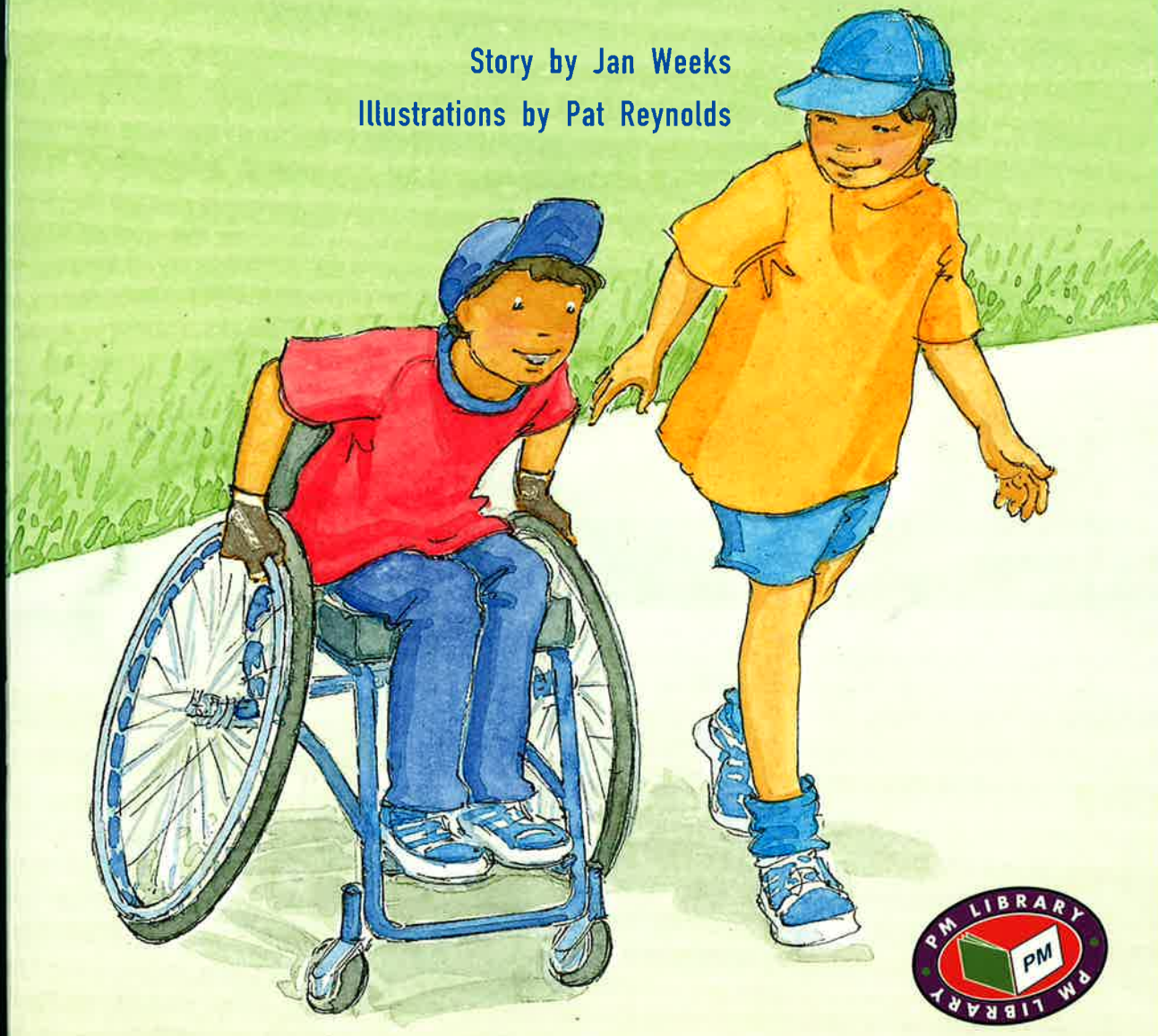
The Walkathon

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Illustrations by Pat Reynolds



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My name is Peter, and I use a wheelchair to get around. I can do a lot of things in my wheelchair, and this year I want to be in the School Walkathon.

At the Walkathon last year, Mrs Hunt let me help hand out the oranges and drinks to the walkers. The teachers and parents said I was an expert and that they couldn't have managed without me. But handing out oranges isn't the same as doing laps.

"Are you going to give out drinks and oranges again this year?" my friend Michael asked.

"I suppose so," I said. "But I really wish I could push myself round the course, doing laps with you."

"The path is a bit bumpy," said Michael.

"And I couldn't manage the sloping bit," I said, gloomily.



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Sometimes being stuck in a wheelchair is no fun at all. Other times it's not so bad. I'm really good at moving my wheels around. I can catch and throw, so Michael and I often play with a ball. Michael makes sure I'm not left out of things.

"If I get the mystery prize," said Michael, "I'll share it with you."

Mrs Hunt has taught us for nearly two years, and last year she gave a mystery prize to the person in our class who walked the most laps. Olivia won it.

"What's the prize going to be this year?" Michael asked Mrs Hunt.

Mrs Hunt laughed. "It's a **mystery**," she said. "When you've won it, you'll know."

"There's no way I can possibly win it," I said to Michael.



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"Peter really wants to go in the Walkathon this year," Michael told Mrs Hunt.

Mrs Hunt looked at me. "It's not a good course for a wheelchair," she said. "Some of the ground is uneven, and the hilly part would be too difficult."

"I know," I said.

"But I could push Peter over the hard bits," said Michael. "Would you let me? That way we could both be in the Walkathon."

"I'll think about it," promised Mrs Hunt. "It's not a bad idea, but it would be hard work on the slope."

That afternoon, Mrs Hunt called a class meeting. Michael told everyone about his idea.

"Michael needn't do all the pushing," said Olivia. "We could all take turns. That way no one would get too tired."