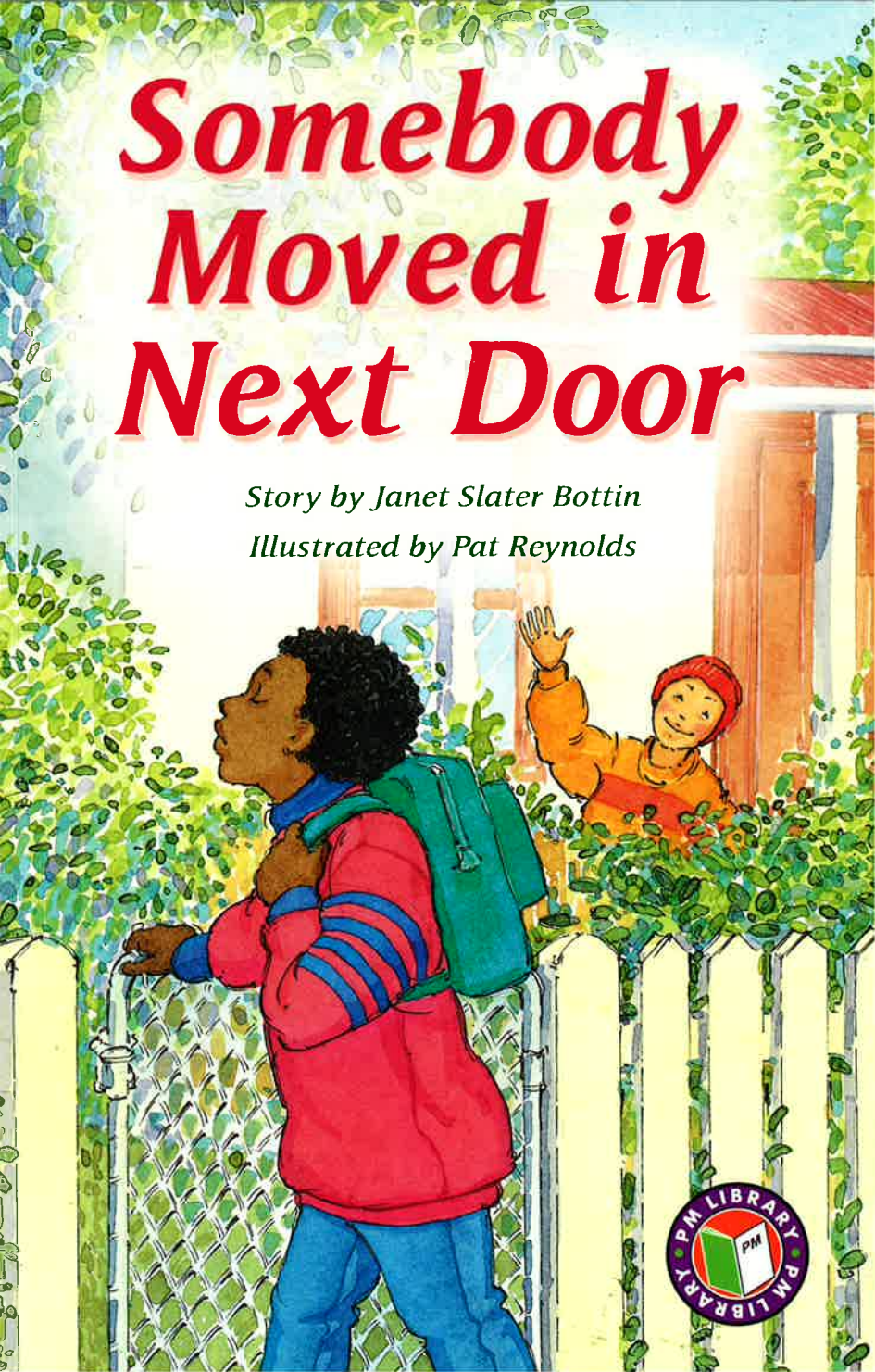
Somebody Moved in Next Door

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Chapter 1

A New Neighbour



Once I lived in the most boring street in town. Down one end lived the 'small fry' — little kids. At the other end were the 'big fish' — teenagers. Living in the middle was... me. Just me. None of my friends lived *anywhere* near.

Sure, I saw them at school. But *after* school ... BOREDOM. Nothing to do — no one to hang out with. Just me in the middle. Alone. The only eleven-year-old kid in the street.

Then the neighbours moved out from next door. For weeks I watched their place and waited, and hoped...

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Finally, a removal van arrived, followed by a station wagon.

A man and a woman climbed out of the front of the station wagon. Then somebody wearing jeans and a sweatshirt and a beanie climbed out of the back.

I couldn't tell if it was a girl or boy. But I didn't care much. The main thing was that this 'somebody' looked the right age. My age!

In the middle of this great event in my life history, Mum called me inside to get ready for my dental appointment! I begged her to try to change the appointment time, but Mum just couldn't see how the arrival of new neighbours with a right-sized 'somebody' could be more important than drillings and fillings.

I didn't get to see that kid again until after I got home from school the next day. The kid was wandering up and down in the front garden next door, peering at the ground. You could tell he'd lost something — or maybe *she'd* lost something.

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I still couldn't work out whether it was a girl or boy...

I'm a sociable person — mostly. I make friends easily — usually. So I decided to be my mostly sociable, usually friendly self and call out to that kid. "Hi there!" I yelled. "My name's Charlie. I live next door." (Which was pretty obvious.)

The kid didn't even look up! It was as if I didn't even exist! So I tried again.



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"Hey!" I bellowed. "As I said, my name is Charlie. What's yours? Have you lost something? Can I help you find it?"

How did that kid respond to my offer? It marched up the path into its house and *slammed the door!* I was flabbergasted. I was outraged. I was *furious*.

All the years I'd waited for a friend to move in next door, and when I finally thought I might have one, what did I get? *A snob*.

"I know what you've lost!" I yelled. "Your manners! And maybe your brain as well."



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I told my friends all about our new snooty neighbour at school the next day.

"What a jerk," sniffed Birdie.

"You can say that again," said Carlos.

"What a jerk," said Birdie.

"Don't waste your time worrying about it," said Tan. "We've got more important things to think about — like the Rubbish Recycling Competition..."

The Rubbish Recycling Competition had been organised by the Environmental Issues Department. It was a team project for school

