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Chapter 1

Jared Meets the Magician

BEEP, BEEP, BEEP, BEEP!

Jared Moore hit the “snooze” button on his alarm clock. He sank back under his big blue quilt for five more minutes of sleep. When the alarm went off again, he sat up, yawned, and looked around his room.

The walls were covered with posters from his two favorite basketball teams, the Boston Celtics and Miami Heat. His two favorite players, Ray
Johnson, formerly a Celtic, and Johnny Schmidt with the Heat, smiled at him from posters behind his bed. His green-and-white Celtics jersey, Number 2, hung over his desk chair.

Best of all, his lucky basketball, signed by Johnson himself, sat next to him on the nightstand.

Jared yawned and stretched his long arms. He reached for his lucky ball and held it up in his big hands. He dreamed of meeting Ray Johnson someday. But that wasn’t all. He even dreamed of playing professional basketball. But if he couldn’t play pro ball, he wanted to work with animals. He also dreamed of having a girlfriend!

The truth was that Jared loved animals almost as much as he loved basketball, especially his golden retriever, Lucy. He couldn’t stand it when people didn’t treat their pets right. He couldn’t stand it when people didn’t treat each other right, either. Most of all, he hated bullying.

Jared put his lucky ball back on the nightstand and grinned. “Finally!” he said out loud, “Today’s the day!” His first day of work at Pet Place. He felt excited and a little nervous. Pet Place had real
animals, a lot of them, and he would be taking care of all kinds of pets. “That will be so cool,” he thought.

He showered in record time and jumped into clean clothes. On his way out the door, he tapped the “Magic 2” on his Celtics jersey for good luck. Then he ran downstairs, calling, “Mom, I’m ready to go!”

His mother was waiting for him at the bottom of the stairs, holding up her hand like a stop sign. “Whoa, there—slow down, Jared!” she said, laughing. “I’m surprised you’re moving so fast. You’re usually as slow as a turtle in the morning. Matt won’t be picking you up for an hour yet.”

Matt was Jared’s volunteer mentor from school. Sometimes he gave Jared a ride so he didn’t have to take the bus.

Jared sighed a big sigh. “Aw, Mom, I have to wait an hour? So what’s to eat?” As usual, he was hungry!

He was six feet, three inches tall already and still growing! In fact, he could eat and eat, and
be hungry again 10 minutes later. Jared grabbed some milk and cereal and made himself breakfast.

One more hour to wait…

KNOCK. KNOCK.

Matt was here. Time to go!

“Hey, J,” Matt said, giving Jared a high-five. “How are you doing, buddy?”

Matt was one of Jared’s favorite people. His friendly voice and smile always made Jared feel good. Even though Matt was as big as a giant football player on the outside, he was patient and kind inside. Jared knew that was what counted. Most of all, he liked Matt because he could talk to him about anything. Matt was almost like his big brother.

“I’m nervous,” Jared said, as the two climbed into the front seat of Matt’s little red car and buckled up.
Matt smiled at Jared. “That’s okay,” he told him. “Everybody feels a little nervous in the beginning. Just remember how much you liked everyone you met at Pet Place. You can ask them for help if you have any questions about what to do.”

“Yeah,” Jared smiled. “I guess you’re right. Everybody I met was cool!” He thought for a moment, then added, “especially Tamika. She’s really cute!”

“You mean the shy girl at the checkout counter you told me about? Maybe she likes you, too, Jared,” Matt said with a wink.

Jared felt embarrassed. He liked Tamika, for sure. Besides Tamika, he was looking forward to seeing the animals at Pet Place every weekend. There were cats and dogs, hamsters and gerbils, rabbits and fish—even a few lizards and snakes. Jared liked them, too.

But how would he know where to find everything? There were aisles and aisles of pet food and toys. “I hope I’m ready to take care of the animals,” he thought.

“What if I mess up, Matt?” he asked out loud.

“Don’t worry. Everyone makes mistakes,” Matt told him. You’ll do better and better as you get
more **experience**. The most important thing is to try your best.”

“Yeah, I can do that. I think my chore list will help, too.” Before lunch he had to feed and brush the animals. After lunch he had to clean some of the cages and put the pet food away. In case he forgot what came next, he knew he could check his list or ask somebody. That made Jared feel better.

Matt pulled into the Pet Place parking lot. He put his hand on Jared’s shoulder and smiled. “Remember – just do your best, J!”

“Thanks, Matt,” Jared said, as he climbed out of the car. “I’ll call you later, okay?” Then he took a deep breath and walked straight to the front door. Surprise! His new boss, Mrs. Shaw, was right there to say hello. She was a short, round lady who shook Jared’s hand.

“Welcome back to Pet Place, Jared!” she said, smiling. “Come on back to the staff room with me.” Jared followed her.
A few of the staff waved hello to Jared, including Tamika. “She remembers me,” he thought with a grin.

In the staff room, Mrs. Shaw showed Jared his locker. “You can put your stuff in here,” she said.

“Cool!” Jared thought. “Maybe I can tape up a photo of Ray Johnson!”

He turned off his cell phone and put it in his backpack with his iPod. Then he stuffed the whole pack into his locker.

Next, Mrs. Shaw handed him a green work apron. On the pocket it said “Pet Place” in yellow letters. Over the letters, a smiling puppy and a shy kitty peeked out. And over their heads, a red nametag said, “My Name is Jared.”

“Go ahead—put it on,” she said with a big smile. “Welcome to the Pet Place family!”

Jared grinned and slipped it on. “I look like a real employee now!” he thought.

His first chore was to feed the puppies. “This will be easy,” he thought. I feed Lucy every day at
home. One, two, three scoops of chow for each puppy, just like Mrs. Shaw showed him. He filled a water bowl for each one.

Jared finished feeding all the puppies except one. She was a small yellow dog wearing a red collar. Her name tag said “Waffles.” He knelt down in front of her cage.

“Hello, Waffles. Are you hungry?” Jared said. He scooped the puppy chow into her food bowl. Then he filled up her red water bowl.

Next he opened the cage. “Okay, girl, here’s your…” but before Jared could say “breakfast,” Waffles jumped out of her cage, knocking over the red water bowl.

WHOOSH! Down the aisle she ran, whirling past people like a yellow tornado. Jared took off running behind her, yelling, “Waffles, come back!” Customers jumped out of the way. Over at the checkout, Tamika was watching it all.

WHOOSH! Around the corner and back up the aisle came Waffles. Jared was right behind
her. Suddenly the puppy came to a halt and began to drink the spilled water. Jared grabbed her. “I’ve got you now, you goofy pup!”

But Waffles wiggled away. WHOOSH! Off she ran again.

“Oh, no!” Jared groaned. This time Waffles was running straight toward a tall stack of dog food. The boxes were piled high. Would she knock them all down? Jared was getting frustrated. Jared thought, “I need a plan…”

But Waffles had a surprise for him! Just before she reached the stack of boxes, she stopped and turned toward him. “Ruff! Ruff!” she
barked happily, wagging her tail. Her big brown eyes seemed to say, “This is fun! Can we play some more?”

Jared finally understood: Now he had his plan. “I’ll try walking away. Maybe she’ll chase me,” he thought.

He waved at Waffles and called, “Come and get me, girl!” Then he started jogging toward her cage. He stopped and peeked over his shoulder. She was following him!

When Jared stopped, so did she. When he started running again, Waffles did too. Each time Jared stopped to peek back at her, she stopped too. Each time he ran towards her cage again, she followed behind him.

Step by step, his plan was working! No disaster this time.

By now, all the customers were watching the action. Out of the corner of his eye, Jared noticed Tamika was giggling. “This isn’t funny,” he thought.

Soon Waffles was back drinking the spilled water. She was so thirsty, she forgot all about Jared! This time he really caught her. “Got you girl!”
he scolded playfully. He put her back in her cage and locked the door.

Jared grinned and shook his head. “What a big fuss over a little puppy, he thought.

Suddenly he stopped smiling. Across the room, he saw Mrs. Shaw. She was walking towards him. “Uh-oh, here comes trouble,” he thought. “She’ll be mad when she sees the spilled water. What should I do?”

Jared grabbed a roll of paper towels from a nearby shelf and began to clean up. He worked fast. By the time Mrs. Shaw reached them, he had most of the water wiped up. But he still had to explain how Waffles escaped.

“What happened, Jared?” Mrs. Shaw asked.

Jared gulped. He was scared. “Am I going to get fired on my first day of work?” he wondered. Maybe I’ll tell her I tripped and spilled the water…”

But then he heard Matt’s voice in his head, “Be a man, Jared. Do what’s right!”
Jared spoke up. “It was my fault, Mrs. Shaw. I was going to feed Waffles and she – somehow – just got away. I’m sorry.”

To Jared’s surprise, Mrs. Shaw laughed. She told him, “Don’t worry, Jared. Waffles escapes all the time. We call her the Magician. By the way, you did a great job catching her by yourself! No one has ever done that before. The next time she escapes, just press number 3 on the wall phone and tell us. Okay?”

“Now you tell me!” Jared thought. But he was proud of himself. He caught Waffles, and he told the truth.

That night he called Matt and told him all about his first day at Pet Place, and how he met “Waffles the Magician.” At first Matt laughed, but then his voice turned serious. “Congratulations, J. Way to go!” He was proud of Jared, too.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Vocabulary Words</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>aisle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a walkway between sections of seats or shelves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>bully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a person who is mean to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>customer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>one who buys goods or services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>employee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a person who works for someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>escape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to free yourself from something or someone</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to participate in or watch an event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>fired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>an employee’s job is ended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a wise and trusted counselor or teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a person who has a skilled job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>volunteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a person who offers their skills for free</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Emotion Words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Excite</th>
<th>Frustrate</th>
<th>Nervous</th>
<th>Surprise</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>to have a strong feeling</td>
<td>being unable to do something</td>
<td>being excitable or sensitive</td>
<td>something you didn’t expect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Test Yourself

Directions: Circle the correct word that fills the blank.

1 Jared hit the snooze button on his _____________ clock.

- alarm
- grandfather
- radio

2 Jared loves ____________.

- fish
- animals
- birds

3 He got a job at a _____________ store.

- grocery
- convenience
- pet
**Comprehension Quiz**

**Directions:** Circle the letter of the phrase that finishes the sentence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Choices</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| **1** | Jared was excited because today... | a. he started his new job at Pet Place.  
b. he would meet Ray Johnson.  
c. he had a date with his girlfriend. |
| **2** | Matt is Jared’s... | a. volunteer mentor from school.  
b. twin brother.  
c. basketball buddy. |
b. Jared built a tower of dog toys.  
c. Jared was fired. |
| **4** | How did Jared catch the Magician? | a. He showed her a dog treat.  
b. He caught her in a net.  
c. He tricked her to chase him back to her cage. |
| **5** | Who is the Magician? | a. Mrs. Shaw, Jared’s boss.  
b. Waffles, a small, yellow puppy.  
c. Matt, Jared’s mentor. |
| **6** | What did Mrs. Shaw do when Jared told her about Waffles? | a. She ignored Jared.  
b. She yelled at Jared.  
c. She laughed. |
| **7** | Circle the job that Jared does NOT want to have. | a. Professional basketball player.  
b. A teacher.  
c. A pet store employee. |
### Sequencing Activity

Directions: Circle the letter of the phrase that answers the question.

#### What happened in Chapter 1?

1. **What happened first?**
   - a. Jared was feeding the puppies.
   - b. Jared caught Waffles.
   - c. Jared made a plan.
   - d. Waffles escaped!

2. **What happened next?**
   - a. Jared was feeding the puppies.
   - b. Jared caught Waffles.
   - c. Jared made a plan.
   - d. Waffles escaped!

3. **What happened after that?**
   - a. Jared was feeding the puppies.
   - b. Jared caught Waffles.
   - c. Jared made a plan.
   - d. Waffles escaped!

4. **What happened last?**
   - a. Jared was feeding the puppies.
   - b. Jared caught Waffles.
   - c. Jared made a plan.
   - d. Waffles escaped!
Chapter 2

Jared Takes a Chance

Jared stared into his dresser mirror. “Oh, man!” he groaned. “Just look at that zit on the tip of my nose!” he said. Then he thought, “What will the girls at school think? Maybe I should hide it under a Band-Aid.” He frowned.

“JARED! You’ll miss the bus!” his mom called up the stairs. It was her last warning.

“Yikes—the bus!” Jared remembered. “I’m on my way, Mom!” he called back.

In what seemed like one motion, he grabbed his backpack and shot out the front door. He ran three blocks without stopping and got to the bus stop just one step ahead of the bus.

“Morning,” Jared greeted the bus driver as he climbed on board, still out of breath.
“Way to go, kid, you beat the bus!” the driver said with a laugh, giving Jared a thumbs-up. A few people clapped. They all saw Jared’s race to the bus.

But Jared was embarrassed. He was not a show-off. With his face feeling hot, he slid into the nearest empty seat. Luckily, he had it all to himself. He put his pack next to him and stretched out his long legs.

The bus pulled away. Jared noticed most of the kids on the bus were listening to their iPods. But he liked to look around. Besides, there were all kinds of new signs and posters inside the bus. One showed the earth from space. “Live Green! Keep the Earth Clean!” it said in big green letters.

Another one spelled out the message “Just Say NO!” in red letters. Giant red X’s crossed out cans of beer, packs of cigarettes, and bottles of pills. Jared knew that meant: Say “No to drugs.” Side by side