

# SCHOOL SWAP

## Chapter 6

“My mother gets very confused,” Mr Jones explained to Jay as they walked through the corridors of Sunset Nursing Home. “She often doesn’t know where she is, or even when she is.”

Jay nodded, pretending he understood. Mr Jones sighed. “Just play along with it, Jay, whatever she says.”

He stopped at a door and gently tapped.

“Who is it?” a wavering voice replied.

“Say something,” whispered Mr Jones.

“It’s me...” Jay was unsure of what he should be saying. “It’s Samuel.”

Mr Jones nudged Jay through the door.

A little old lady was sitting up in bed. Her white and wrinkled face looked like a cracked china plate.

“YOU’RE NOT MY SAMMY!” she screamed when she saw Mr Jones’s body standing there. “GO AWAY!”

But then she spotted Jay’s body behind and suddenly smiled. “There you are, Sammy. You’re late home from school.”

Jay glanced down at Mr Jones, who stepped forward. “I’m home now, Mum,” he said, and gave her a hug.

When he let go, Alice looked at Jay as if this were the first time she had seen him. “You must be Jay’s teacher.”

“That’s right, Mum,” said Mr Jones, “this is Mr... Jay.”

Alice stretched out a tiny hand to shake. “Has he been very naughty today?” she asked.

“No more than usual, Mrs Jones,” Jay said, grinning.

Alice gave her son a worried look. “Oh no, Sammy. What have you been up to?”

“Nothing!” replied Mr Jones.

But Alice had turned back to Jay. “He’s a good boy, really, Mr Jay,” she said. “He just likes mischief a bit too much. His last teacher got so angry all the time, especially when he put the goldfish in his glass of water!”

“Mum... you’re embarrassing me!” said Mr Jones.

His mother turned back to him. “Sammy, promise me you’ll behave yourself and be a good boy for Mr Jay.”

Mr Jones stuck his hands in his pockets and looked at the floor. “I promise,” he mumbled. Jay tried not to giggle. Droney Jonesey had been a troublemaker at school!

“And Mr Jay,” she said. “You promise me that you’ll remember Sammy’s a good boy really.”

“I promise,” said Jay with a huge grin.

“You need to be kind to each other, because you can never know how hard it is to be someone else,” said Alice.

Mr Jones looked back up at Jay. “I think I’m beginning to understand what it might be like, Mum,” he said.

“Good,” said Alice. “Now shake hands on it.”

They reached over her bed and took each other’s hand. Then she put her own hand on



top.

Time stopped.

Jay looked down into his own eyes; they were growing up to meet him. “Oh no,” he thought, keeping tight hold of his hand. “I’d forgotten how bad this feels!”

WHAM... his stomach launched itself upwards to meet his brain and the world spun wildly away.

When Jay's insides finally settled back into place, he slowly opened his eyes and looked up into Mr Jones's smiling face.

"There you are, Sam," said Alice, looking at her grown-up son. "Have you come straight from work?" It seemed Alice Jones could recognise her son in any body.

Mr Jones smiled. "How are you feeling, Mum?"

"Oh, much better, but a bit sleepy. I think I'll take a nap now." She turned and looked at Jay. "And I think you should get this young man home to his mother."

Mr Jones nodded and leaned down to kiss his mother goodbye while Jay headed into the corridor and bumped straight into his own mum.

"What are you doing here?" he said.

"Working," she said. "The agency rang and asked me to cover a shift. What are you doing here?"

"I'm... I'm..." Jay tried to come up with a good reason that wasn't "I had to come because I was stuck in my teacher's body and he needed to visit his sick mother." Luckily, Mr Jones had just followed him out.

"Hello, Mrs Isaacs," said Mr Jones. "Jay's here for a history project, interviewing older people to find out how things have changed over the years. Jay's one of my best pupils."

Mum's face flushed with pride, Jay's with embarrassment.

"I can tell you more about it at Parents' Evening next month," Mr Jones said.

Her face fell. "Oh, I'm not sure I'll be able to make that," she said. "I'll probably be working."

Mr Jones gave her a smile. Jay had never seen him look so friendly; he looked less like a cold cup of tea and more like a warm pot of fresh coffee. "There's a teaching assistant's job coming up at school soon," he said. "Maybe you could apply for that? You wouldn't have to work evenings. I could put in a good word; you're obviously a hard worker."

"Do you really think I could?" she asked.

"Of course," he replied. "Anyway, I must be off," he said, giving Jay a cheeky wink. "I have exciting lessons to plan."

Jay watched him go out of the door. Was that really Droney Jonesey he was watching, whistling his way home?



“Wow!” said Mum. “You don’t know how lucky you are, Jay. All my old teachers were grumpy and strict; nowhere near as nice as Mr Jones.” She put an arm around his shoulder. “I wish I were you.”