**The Jollys**

**Alan Gives a Speech**

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CHAPTER 1

Ms. Green’s Big Surprise

It was a Friday morning. The bell had just rung, and class was about to start.

“Good morning, class!” greeted Ms. Green.

“Good morning, Ms. Green!” responded the students.

“Thank God it’s Friday! Today, I have a special surprise for you all,” said Ms. Green.

The entire class gasped in excitement and began whispering to each other.

“What do you think the surprise could be?” asked Sophia.

“I hope it’s a cake or something sweet. That would be the perfect way to end the week,” answered Elizabeth.

“Ms. Green has never brought sweets to the class before, so that would be a huge surprise,” said Tom.

“Maybe, she will not arrange any homework this weekend. I’d choose that over sweets any day,” laughed Alan.

Seeing how excited her class had become, Ms. Green smiled. She put her finger on her lips and gently gestured to her class to quiet down.

“Today, we will be writing and delivering speeches!” announced Ms. Green.

The students began muttering amongst themselves. Elizabeth then raised her hand.

“Ms. Green, what’s a speech, and where are we delivering it to?”

“Good questions, Elizabeth. A speech is when you talk to an audience,” Ms. Green explained. “Delivering a speech means to present the speech. You don’t actually take it somewhere. It means the speaker will stand in front of a group of people and talk about something.”

“What should we talk about?” asked Tom.

“You will talk about something that you love. For example, Mason could give a speech about his pet mouse. He could write about his pet mouse’s name, age, personality, and what he loves about it. Afterward, he will read it in front of the class.”

Alan’s eyes widened. “In front of the *whole* class?”

“Yes. Today is all about sharing what you love with everyone in the class,” clarified Ms. Green. “Are there any questions?”

The students all shook their heads.

“All right then! I will give you all an hour to write your speeches, then you will all take turns delivering them. Please approach my desk if you have any questions.”

CHAPTER 2

Writing Time

All the students were eager to talk about what they love, all except Alan. The thought of standing in front of his classmates and giving a speech terrified him. He was too nervous to write, *I have to talk in front of the entire class? What if I stutter? What if nobody understands me? What if everyone laughs at me? What if I forget how to read?*

Ten minutes later, Ms. Green noticed that Alan was not writing. She called his name and invited him over for a talk at her desk.

“Is there something wrong, Alan? Do you need help with your speech? If you want, I can help you get started.”

“Ms. Green, I don’t like this assignment. Can we please do something else instead? We’ve never had to give speeches before.”

“I’ve read your work before, and I think you're a great writer, Alan. Why don't you want to talk about something that you love? Are you embarrassed?”

“No, I’m not embarrassed,” Alan paused. “I simply don’t want to talk in front of a lot of people. It’s scary.”

“Public speaking can be scary and uncomfortable, but it’s an important skill to have.”

Alan looked at the floor and rubbed his hands together nervously.

“Could I please just deliver the speech to you privately? I promise that it’ll be super well-written.”

Ms. Green gently put her hands on his shoulders.

“We are all friends here in this class. Nobody is going to make fun of you or laugh at you. Would it be helpful if I shared a trick with you that might help?”

Alan nodded his head nervously.

“When speaking in front of a lot of people, you can try focusing on a single person. Just pretend that there are only two people in this classroom,” she said.

Alan sighed.

“If I imagine that you and I are the only people in the classroom, I won’t get nervous?”

“Exactly. You only need to focus on telling me, and only me, about the thing you love,” smiled Ms. Green.

Alan nodded and headed back to his desk. He felt better about this assignment and began writing his speech. Amazingly, his ideas flowed steadily from his brain to his pencil. Time moved quickly for Alan.

“All right class, it’s almost been an hour. You have ten more minutes to wrap this up and get ready for your speeches,” announced Ms. Green.

“ten more minutes?” Elizabeth scoffed. “I’ll be done in two minutes.”

“I’m going to need all the time that Ms. Green could give us. I’ve got so much to talk about!” said Sophia.

“I’ll be done soon. What about you, Alan? I noticed that you started later than the rest of us. ” asked Tom.

Just as Tom asked him, Alan finished his last sentence.

“Yeah! I just finished,” Alan smiled. “You’re going to love my speech, Tom.”

“All right, kids. Time’s up! Are you all ready?” asked Ms. Green.

“Yes, Ms. Green!” responded the students eagerly.

“Then let’s get this show on the road!”

CHAPTER 3

Speech Time

“Who wants to go first?” asked Ms. Green, raising her eyebrow.

Elizabeth’s hands shot up at once, and soon after, Sophia’s and Tom’s hands followed. Alan timidly kept his hand down and avoided making eye contact with Ms. Green.

“Elizabeth, I saw your hand first. Please come to the front of the class and start your speech.”

Elizabeth’s speech was about her favorite sport, soccer. After her speech, everyone clapped as she walked back to her seat.

“Wow, I didn’t know you loved soccer that much. I love soccer too!” said Tom.

“That’s awesome, Tom! We should play soccer together sometime, during recess!”

“Next up is Sophia. Sophia, please come to the front of the classroom,” said Ms. Green from her desk.

Sophia skipped to the front of the class and delivered a lovely speech about her beloved pet, hamster. After she finished, the class applauded.

This time, Ms. Green gestured for Tom to give his speech. He smiled and walked to the front of the class. His speech was about skateboarding. After Tom finished and returned to his seat, his brother looked at him.

“I knew you were going to talk about skateboarding. You’re so good at it.”

“Of course! Skateboarding is my favorite sport. It’s so much fun, especially when you go fast. What is your speech about?”

“You’ll see.”

Alan walked to the front of the class, looked around, and gulped. Seconds passed as Alan stood frozen, silently staring at the crowd in front of him, while clutching his speech between his sweaty hands. Alan began to panic, he wanted to run away. Suddenly he remembered Ms. Green’s advice. *Just pretend like the only people in the room are you and one other person.* He took a deep breath and looked at his brother.

“Hello! Today I will talk about my best friend. We eat together, play together, and we even go to school together. People say we look like each other, but I disagree.”

At this point, Tom knew that the speech was about him. Throughout his speech, Alan focused on his brother and talked about all the similarities he and Tom shared, as well as the things he liked about Tom. After Alan finished his speech, he walked back to his desk to find his brother standing up, with his arms open for a hug.

“I’m so happy to be your best friend and your twin!”

“Me too, Alan. Me too.”

Alan smiled at Ms. Green, and she smiled back at him. *Excellent job, Alan. I knew you could do it.*