

Recess Friends

Jason didn't like playing soccer like the other kids.

By Gayle Kinney-Cornelius
(Based on a true story)

Every day at recess, Jason sat under a shady tree and read a book. Most of the other kids played soccer. Jason had played with them before, but he didn't really like it. He wasn't very good at running fast or kicking the ball. And being around lots of kids running and yelling made him uncomfortable.

But Jason didn't like feeling lonely and left out. The other kids seemed to have so much fun! He wanted to have fun with friends too.

One day at recess, Jason looked up from his book. He noticed Kira sitting at a picnic table, reading. Then he saw Mark kicking a rock against a wall. Why weren't they playing soccer like all the others?

The next day, Jason watched again. Kira was reading at the picnic table, just like yesterday. Mark was sitting on the ground. He was twirling some grass. Jason went back to reading. But he kept looking at Kira and Mark. Maybe they liked doing quiet things too.

That afternoon, Jason talked to Mom. "Every day at recess, I read a book," he said. "But the other kids play soccer."

"There's nothing wrong with that," Mom smiled. "I was the same way when I was your age. Always reading."

Jason smiled too. He liked it when he and Mom read books together.

"I thought I was the only one who didn't like

soccer," Jason said. "But there are two other kids who don't play either." He told Mom about Kira and Mark.

"Maybe you could be their friend," Mom said.

Jason nodded. "Maybe. But I don't know what to do with them."

"Well, you and Kira both like reading, but that's something you do by yourself," Mom said. "What else do you like to do?"

"I like to play checkers," Jason said. "And there's a checkerboard at school."

"Hmm," Mom said. "What could you do with that checkerboard? Maybe at recess?" She pretended to think about it.

Jason laughed. "I think I have an idea."

The next day when the bell rang for recess, Jason grabbed the checkers set. He walked over to the picnic table where Kira was reading. When she looked up, he held up the game. "Want to start a tournament?"

"Maybe," Kira said. "But there are only two of us."

"Wait a minute," Jason said. He ran over to Mark, who was sitting in the grass again.

"Hey, Mark," Jason said. "Want to play checkers? We could start a tournament."

Mark smiled. "I play checkers with my dad," he said. "I'm pretty good at it."

"OK!" Jason smiled back. "Let's go play." ●

This story took place in the USA.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOANNE LEW-VRIETHOFF