

# Not So Different After All



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Ages  
7-8



Ali was just like any other little boy.

He liked going on walks with his dog, Max.

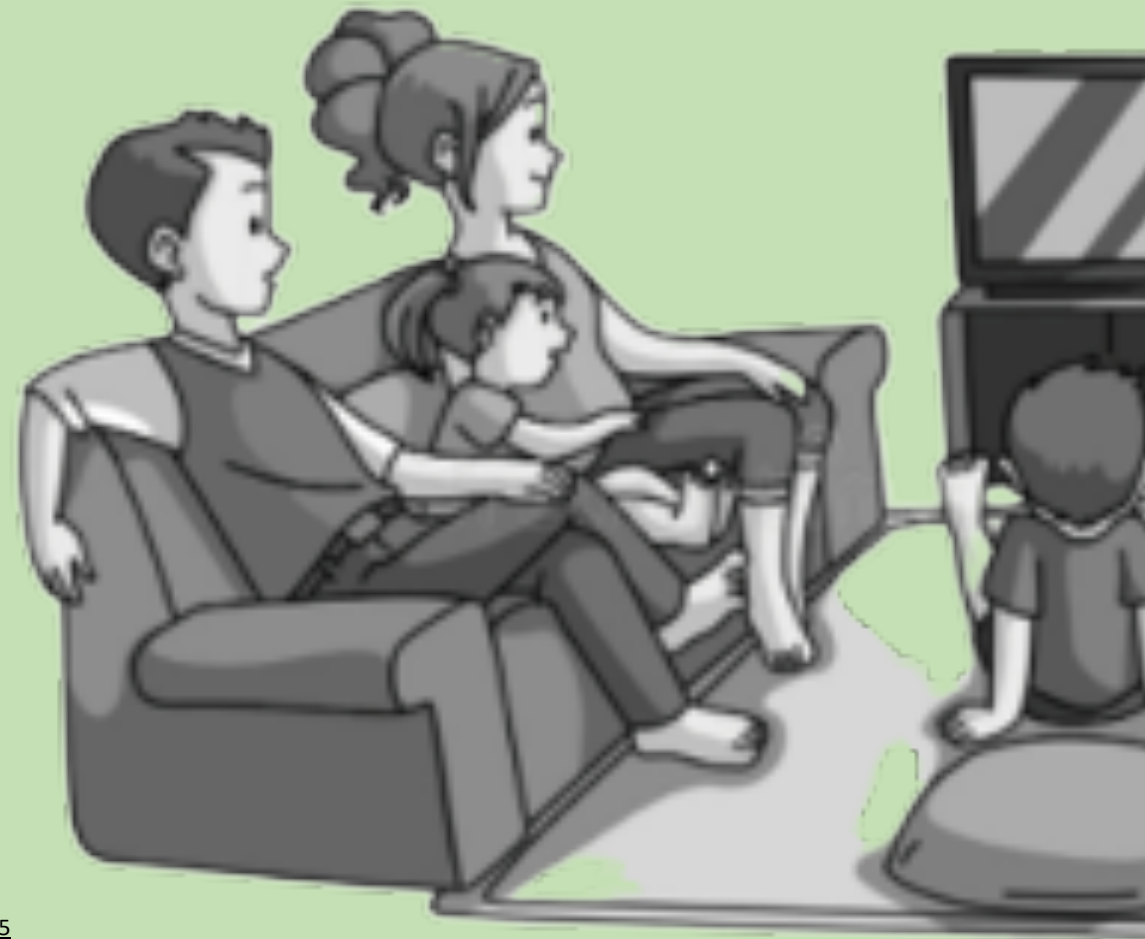
He liked watching TV with his family. He

liked playing video games.

And just like many of the other children, Ali

did not enjoy going to school.

However, his reasons were slightly different.



School reminded Ali that he was different.

All the other kids made sure he never forgot that.

“Don’t listen to them”, were the words his mother always said to him when dropping him off at school.



Walking into the classroom was like stepping into a warzone for young Ali.

The stares, the whispers, the comments were matters he never quite got used to.



“Why does he still act like that?” was the first thing he heard that day.

Ali knew he looked and behaved differently from everyone else because of his disability.

But he never understood why the other kids were so mean to him. None of them had ever tried to get to know him.



Some days were better than others. This day started off particularly bad.

“I heard it’s contagious!” Ahmad, one of the boys in his class whispered to everyone.

Within an hour, the rumor that Ali’s disability was contagious had spread all around the school. The other children wouldn’t even go anywhere near him and made sure to avoid him entirely.





“Don’t listen to them”, Ali repeated his mother’s words over and over again, trying to remain calm.

But the loneliness was starting to get to him. All he wanted was a friend, but no one would give him a chance.





“Hi”, Ali lifted his head to find his classmate Samira smiling at him. “Want to see something fun?” she asked him.

Ali was surprised and unsure by Samira’s question. After all, he had learned not to trust his classmates.



Samira took out a deck of cards from her pocket, “Pick a card” she said excitedly to Ali.



Samira and Ali spent the rest of the recess hour together, sharing magic tricks and stories.

Their laughing and talking had even drawn the attention of a few classmates, who were curious and fascinated by the magic tricks and seemed to have forgotten about the rumor.



“Wow!” Ali heard a few kids exclaim as he showed Samira a trick his father had taught him.

“Do you think you could teach me?” Ahmad asked, stepping towards Ali.

Ali smiled and handed him the deck of cards.



Over the next few days, Ali and his classmates continued to spend time together and get to know each other.



Ali was able to make very good friends that accepted and understood him.



For the first time in a long time, Ali felt happy.

He felt he belonged, even though he was autistic.

Every morning, Ali would happily run towards the car saying the words he never thought he'd say, "Hurry up Mom, I don't want to be late for school!"



*THE END*



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