The Push
A Story of Friendship

Written by Patrick Gray
Illustrated by Justin Skeesuck and Matt Waresak
In an ordinary town,
in an ordinary house,
there lived a boy named John.

John slept in a bed like everyone else;
he ate food like everyone else;
he loved to play like everyone else.

But he was different from the other kids in town.
When John was born, his arms and legs didn’t work. He couldn’t do all the things his friends could do. He couldn’t dress himself.

He couldn’t brush his teeth.

He couldn’t tie his shoes.

He couldn’t walk.

When he wasn’t sleeping, he was usually in his wheelchair.

But there were some things John was an expert at. He could give any statistic about the Boston Red Sox since they got their nickname in 1908. He could make people laugh until milk came squirting out their noses. And he could solve the most complicated math problems in his head.
One summer, just before school started, John saw a moving truck at the house next door.

"Would you please wheel me outside so I can see the new neighbors?" John asked his mom.

As his mom parked him at the end of the driveway, John saw a boy carrying a box. He was wearing a Red Sox hat.

"2004!" John shouted.

The boy turned around. "Sixth World Series title!"

"And eleventh American League Pennant!" John replied.

The boy walked over to John. "My name’s Marcus."

When Marcus stuck out his hand, John said with a smile, "My hands don’t work."

"That’s okay," Marcus said, lifting John’s hand. "How about this?"

"That will be our handshake!" John said.
One day at recess, when the leaves were starting to crunch under John’s wheelchair, their classmate Timothy handed out invitations to all the boys in the class.

Marcus opened the envelope for John so he could read it.

“We should go!” Marcus said.

“I’m not sure.” John looked down. “I can’t feed myself.”

Marcus shook John’s hand just like the first day they met. “If you don’t go, who will make us all laugh until our sides hurt? Besides—I can feed you.”

In no time, Marcus and John were best friends.

They were in the same class at school. When John wasn’t helping Marcus with his math homework, they watched baseball games together or played chess. (Marcus moved John’s pieces for him, but John almost always won.) Sometimes they explored the neighborhood, with Marcus skateboarding behind John’s wheelchair.
when Marcus moved next door to John, they knew instantly they’d be friends. Now John and Marcus do almost everything together. They go on lots of adventures, with Marcus pushing John’s wheelchair and John fueling their escapades with jokes. Through their friendship, the boys discover that their unique gifts make them stronger together.

Based on the friendship of real-life best friends Patrick Gray and Justin Skeesuck, The Push teaches kids that people of all abilities have important roles to play and that we’re all better together than we are on our own.

Justin Skeesuck has been a graphic designer and artist his entire adult life. However, his battle with a degenerative muscular disease has caused him to lose use of his hands. Justin now uses voice-controlled software to continue his artistic dreams. The images in this book were colorized by Justin himself.

Patrick Gray was inspired to write The Push after making the long trek across the Camino de Santiago in Spain with his best friend, Justin. He hopes this story will inspire kids to develop deep, lifelong friendships that enrich their lives.
TWO BEST FRIENDS, 500 MILES, ONE WHEELCHAIR, AND THE CHALLENGE OF A LIFETIME.

Read about Justin and Patrick’s real-life friendship in *I’ll Push You* or watch their incredible journey across the Camino de Santiago in their award-winning documentary.

**Find out more about Justin and Patrick at [www.illpushyou.com](http://www.illpushyou.com).**