



CHAPTER 1

Meet Joey Knight

When Joey Knight was a toddler, his mother asked him to get his brown sandals. Like most toddlers, the word “brown” didn’t mean anything to him, but he went to his room and picked up the only sandals he had. His mother was pleased.

As Joey grew older, color words still had little meaning for him. He wasn’t interested in puzzles. This baffled his parents.



“The red piece fits in here with the other red pieces,” his father said. Joey didn’t get it. So many pieces

looked “red” to him. He figured his parents were just smarter than he was.

At pre-school, Joey’s teacher often asked the children what colors they were wearing. He always wore his blue shirt and his brown pants. His mother had told him what colors they were. He remembered because he wanted to please the teacher and answer correctly. His mother didn’t understand why he wanted to wear the same thing every day.



Crayons were a problem for Joey. He knew the blue one. At least he thought he did. But sometimes, when he picked out a blue crayon, his mother said, “No, that’s purple.” At pre-school, he watched to see what crayon the other kids chose, then he tried to do the same. He ignored his crayons as much as he could. He’d draw with a pencil instead.

In kindergarten, Joey drew a picture of a cow and painted it green. He thought it was brown. All the children laughed. Soon after, the school nurse tested Joey's color vision. She told his mother and his teacher that he had a severe color vision deficiency (CVD). Joey didn't understand what that meant. He thought he was stupid because he couldn't learn his colors.



Then Joey's teacher labeled paints with pictures like "Bear" for brown, "Fire Engine" for red, "Sky" for blue, "Tree" for green and "Pumpkin" for orange. She also

taught Joey the first letter of color names so he could “read” the color names printed on crayon wrappers. That made Joey feel special.

In first and second grades, Joey often read directions like, “Pick up your pink crayon.” But by that time he could read the color names on his crayon wrappers, so he could find the pink crayon and follow the directions. If he needed help, he’d ask his teacher or one of his friends.

In upper grades, colored maps were sometimes a problem for Joey, and so were colored computer monitors. As he grew older, clothes got to be a problem, but his mother helped him with matching colors. She made sure he didn’t leave the house looking weird.

Sometimes his friends would say things like, “Look at that neat



plaid shirt.” It looked blah to him. He didn’t tell his friends that. He didn’t want them to know that he saw colors differently from them. He wanted to be just like them. Even the kids who knew about his color vision would forget about it.

When Joey was 15, he took drivers’ training. Signal lights sometimes gave him trouble, but he didn’t tell his driving instructor. He was afraid he might flunk. “The red light is on the top and the green is on the bottom,” he reminded himself.

In high school, Joey explored jobs he might be interested in. He thought of being a policeman, but realized policemen need good color vision in order to describe what people wore and the cars they were driving. Discouraged, he realized many occupations that interested him required good color vision. What was he to do?



That's what this book is about — what can Joey do? Although Joey Knight is a fictitious person, everything that happened to him has actually happened to people with CVD, and these things continue to happen to them every day.

This book will answer questions like: How is it that some people can't see colors like most people do? How does this affect their lives? If you have a color vision problem, what can you do about it? If you know someone like Joey, how can you help?