



I think pomegranates are now my most favourite fruit in the whole wide world. Not just because of the way they taste, but because of how they look. On the outside they look like extra-shiny balls that have been dipped into a bucket of sunset colours, like peach and pink and gold. But the inside is even cooler, because when you pull one open, it's like finding a million sparkling red rubies all squashed together inside a round suitcase and bursting to get out.

‘You have to push each one out gently,’ Mum had said, when she had cut mine open and shown me how to pop the seeds out. ‘See? As if you’re plucking out jewels from the roof of a cave!’ She showed me how to peel off

the skin lying between the seeds too – but I didn't like that part so much because the peelings looked like bits of old snake-skin that I'd seen in a zoo once.

I meant to give the pomegranate to the new boy at home-time, but I was so excited that I couldn't wait until then. So as soon as the bell for first break began to ring, I hid the pomegranate under my school jumper and hurried out into the playground with it. We're not allowed to take food into the playground because we're only supposed to eat snacks in the dinner hall. But I wasn't going to eat it or make anyone else eat it, so I didn't think it counted.

The new boy followed us out because he knew we were his friends now. He had stopped disappearing every break-time and only went to have his Seclusion during lunch-times. Even Ms Hemsli had stopped coming out during first breaks and went to the staff room, which I think meant she knew we were the new boy's friends too.

'Here!' I said as soon we got into our corner of the playground. And pulling the pomegranate out from under my jumper, I held it out to him. 'It's for you!'

Josie and Michael looked at each other and Tom

looked at me, as we all waited for the new boy to say something. But he just stared and stared – first at us and then the pomegranate – and didn't say or do anything.

'Knew you should have put a sticker on it!' whispered Tom, shaking his head.

Then, slowly, the new boy reached out and took the pomegranate in his hands.

'Home,' he said quietly, his lion eyes getting very big. 'I . . . have . . . home . . .'

'Yes!' I said. 'Your home in Syria! I've seen it. On a map. You know, MAP?'

The new boy fell quiet. And then, for the first time since we had met him, he smiled. Not a small smile, or a side-smile or even a half-smile, but a real, proper smile that went from one cheek to the other, and which made his eyes smile too. He opened his mouth to say something when, suddenly, Brendan-the-Bully pushed past us.

'Gimme that!' he said, and he snatched the pomegranate from Ahmet's hands.

'Give that BACK!' I shouted, feeling scared and angry all at once.

'Make me!' sneered Brendan-the-Bully as he turned around to face me.

I don't know why, but sometimes, when someone you don't like looks at you right in the eyes, they suddenly seem to grow taller and you suddenly seem to grow shorter – even when, really, you're both the same size. Usually it's only for a few seconds and then you grow back to your normal height again. But sometimes it goes on for so long that you wonder if you'll ever get back to the height you used to be.

This was one of those times. When Brendan-the-Bully turned to look at me, he stared into my eyes so hard and for so long that he seemed to grow by at least two more inches. But I was feeling so hot and angry that I could feel my ears going red and I didn't care. I took a step forward and tried to grab the pomegranate back.

'Go on! Try again!' laughed Brendan-the-Bully, as he whipped it away and held it high above his head. I could feel my face getting redder and redder and my legs getting shorter and shorter as I tried to jump and snatch it back from him. Then suddenly, he threw the pomegranate to Chris, who was standing behind me. Chris caught it and tossed it up and down in one hand, waiting for one of us to try and do something. Josie and

Tom and Michael all lunged forward but Chris was too quick, and threw the pomegranate to Liam, who quickly threw it back to Brendan-the-Bully.

This might have carried on all break-time, because Brendan-the-Bully likes playing this game and no one has ever beaten him at it. But then what happened next was so unexpected, so shocking and so fantastic that even Brendan-the-Bully didn't know what to do!

Because suddenly, with a huge roar, Ahmet ran straight at Brendan-the-Bully, and like an angry lion, crashed into him with his head! Brendan-the-Bully fell backwards and onto the floor, his legs swinging up into the air. We all gasped out loud, but Ahmet didn't stop there.

He jumped on top, with his face red and patchy, and punched Brendan-the-Bully as many times as he could, shouting something that none of us could understand. Someone behind us cried out 'FIIIIIGHT!' and everyone in the playground ran over to watch. But – and this was the most shocking thing of all! – it wasn't really a fight. You need two people – at least – to be fighting for it to be a fight. And Brendan-the-Bully WASN'T FIGHTING BACK! Not at all! Not even for a second! Instead he was holding his arms over his face

as Ahmet continued punching and roaring and shouting at him with all his might.

‘BREAK IT UP NOW!’ shouted a voice as the crowd parted, and Mr Irons and Mrs Sanders came running through.

But Ahmet wouldn’t stop. He was like a machine that didn’t have an off-button and he continued to punch and punch and punch just as hard and as fast as he could.

‘RIGHT, YOUNG MAN!’ cried Mr Irons. And, grabbing him by the back of his jumper, Mr Irons lifted Ahmet up off Brendan-the-Bully, whilst Mrs Sanders pulled Brendan-the-Bully back onto his feet.

Everyone fell quiet, but I don’t know if that was because we were all wondering what was going to happen next, or because none of us could believe that Brendan-the-Bully had actually been hurt. His face was bright red and his eyes looked watery, and there were tiny stones from the playground floor stuck to the sides of his cheeks.

With a horrible glint in his eye, Mr Irons stared down at Ahmet and shouted, ‘WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU’RE DOING, BOY? EH? EH?’