

The Great Mango War

BY LUBAINA BANDUKWALA

When the doorbell rang and Sitaram the fruit-wala hauled the first of the mangoes into the house, Noorie let out a sigh. Now everyone will go all gooey-eyed as if some Shah Rukh Khan-type himself has come into the house, she thought. Yup, there's Mom picking up a ripe yellow mango and holding it to her nose, eyes closed in ecstasy.

"We used to wrap these in newspaper and line them on the shelves to ripen. The whole room would be fragrant with the aroma of ripening mangoes," Noorie's mom reminisced, her hands cradling a mango.

Dad's eyes glazed over as he backtracked into the past. "Ras Gala — what an event that was. The whole family, all fifty of us, and the juicy *ras* of at least six different varieties of mango..."

"Mangoes mean summer holidays, *na*?" said Dadi, as she added a start-of-the-season tip to a beaming Sitaram's payment.

Noorie rolled her eyes. She had seen the fanatical look in Dadi's eyes and figured that almost all future meals would feature a mango in

some way. Eeek! Really, there should be a law against adult nostalgia trips, particularly those that involved mangoes. What was to like about this fruit? She much preferred strawberries.

This summer hardly felt like the holidays. Noorie had a tuition calendar so packed it could rival the schedule of the busiest CEO. She picked up her maths books, reluctantly taking the piece of mango that her mom forced on her. Mom just

couldn't understand that she did not like mangoes!

Out she slipped onto the landing to head downstairs, the sad piece of mango still in her palm, when the lift door opened to reveal Arushi.

Arushi of the elfin face and glossy hair. Arushi the Traitor. Arushi the Enemy from 603.

Ugh! How come she hadn't gone on summer vacation?

"So, what are you eating? Hapus, is it? Such a rubbish

fruit," Arushi sneered.

Noorie felt the blood rush to her head. Of course Arushi would find any reason to pick a fight. And of course she, Noorie, would react.

"Oh! And what kind of mango could be better than an Alphonso, the king of fruits?"

"Kesar, of course. My uncle sends us boxes of it from our farm in Gujarat." Arushi rolled her eyes in a most annoyingly superior manner.

Noorie ignored what she decided was a crass reference to owning mango orchards and said, "Flavourless. Simply can't

compare with the Alphonso."

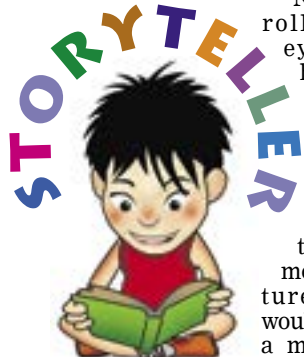
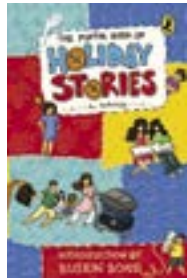
"Oh yeah?" said Arushi just as the lift doors opened to the ground floor.

Without another word, both girls walked off on their respective ways. All thoughts of a peaceful holiday at an end, all Noorie could think of now was how to make Arushi eat dust. (And the Hapus mango, which she absolutely, certainly, definitely didn't care about. But Arushi needn't know that.)

► *To be continued*

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BOOKWATCH



● This is about Sera, the ant. Sera lives in an ant colony with thousands of other ants, and works hard all day. She also nurses a dream — of being able to fly! But how can ants fly, wonders her sister, Hira. One day, Sera hits upon a lovely idea. And she shows Hira how to fly! It's good to dream, the story suggests, we then try to find a way out. The artwork on the pages are simply awesome. Take a look.

SERA LEARNS TO FLY
AUTHOR: VINITHA
PUBLISHER: KATHA