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opening extract from

Marvin Redpost: A Magic Crystal ?

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"Fight!"

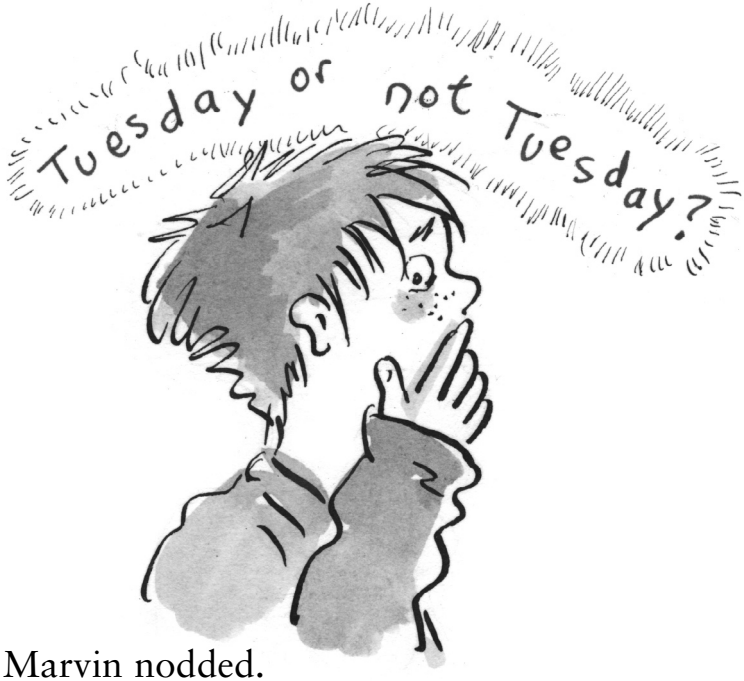
School was over, but Marvin Redpost stayed in class. He needed to ask Mrs. North a question.

She was going through some papers. Marvin walked to her desk, then stared at her until she noticed him.

She turned to him and smiled. "Yes, Marvin?"

"Excuse me, Mrs. North," said Marvin. "When's the book report due?"

"I told you Tuesday," said Mrs. North.



Marvin nodded.

Mrs. North returned to her papers.

He still didn't know when the report was due. Did Mrs. North mean that it was due Tuesday? Or did she mean that she told him on Tuesday when it was due?

Mrs. North looked at Marvin again. She seemed surprised he was still there. "Do you have another question?" she asked.

He shook his head. He didn't have another question. He had the same question. He took his book and walked out of the classroom, then out of the building.

There was a great commotion out on the playground. A large group of kids had gathered near the swing set. Marvin could hear a lot of yelling. He heard someone shout, "Fight!"

He ran to see what was happening. When he reached the crowd, he could see two boys fighting on the sand, next to the swings. One of the fighters was Stuart Albright.

Stuart was Marvin's best friend.

Marvin pushed his way through the crowd to get a better look. The other fighter was Nick Tuffle.

Nick was also Marvin's best friend.

Marvin had two best friends. And they were rolling around on the ground, clawing and hitting each other.

"Get'm, Nick!" shouted Clarence.

"Kill him, Stuart!" yelled Travis.

"Rip his guts out!" screamed Heather.

"Tear his head off!" cried Gina.

Suddenly everyone stopped shouting as Mr. McCabe made his way through the crowd. Mr. McCabe was the principal.

Mr. McCabe didn't have to say anything. Nick and Stuart stopped fighting. They untangled themselves from each other and stood up.

"I'm surprised at you, Stuart," said Mr. McCabe. "You too, Nick."

"Stuart started it!" said Nick. His face was red with anger.

"I did not," said Stuart. "You did!" The pocket on Stuart's shirt was torn. His glasses hung crooked on his face.

"You said I liked Casey Happleton!" said Nick.



Everybody laughed.

Except for Casey Happleton.





"That's because you said *I* liked Casey Happleton!" Stuart replied.

Everybody, except Casey, laughed again.



"You do!" said Nick.

"I do not!" said Stuart. "*You* do!"

"I hate her," said Nick.

"I hate her more than you!" said Stuart.

"No way!" said Nick.

"That's enough," said Mr. McCabe. "Now I want both of you to tell Casey you're sorry."

"What for?" asked Nick.

Mr. McCabe stared at him.

Nick looked down at the ground. "I'm sorry I hate you, Casey," he muttered.

"I don't care," said Casey. She had a ponytail that stuck out of the side of her head.

"I'm sorry I hate you, too," said Stuart.

"Whatever," said Casey.

Judy Jasper whispered something to

Casey. Then the two girls laughed.

Mr. McCabe took Nick and Stuart to his office. Everyone else started to leave, too.

Marvin didn't know what to do. He was supposed to go to Stuart's house after school today. But he knew Stuart wouldn't be going home for a very long time.

Someone tapped him on the shoulder. He turned around.

It was Casey Happleton.

"Do you want to come to my house, Marvin?" asked Casey.

"Okay."

