



IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN EASY for her to forget about it – after all, it was only a piece of cake – but the next day it happened again. This time it was a piece of bread that was stolen – not an ordinary piece of bread, though: this one was covered in delicious red jam. You can lose a plain piece of bread and not think twice about it, but when you lose one spread thickly with red jam it's an altogether more serious matter.

The owner of this piece of bread (with jam) was a small boy called Sepo. Everybody liked this boy because he had a habit of saying funny things. And people like that, because there are enough sad

things in the world as it is. If somebody can say something funny, then that often makes everybody feel a bit better. Try it yourself: say something funny and see how pleased everybody is.

This is a picture of Sepo.

You will see that he is smiling. And this is a picture of the piece of bread and red jam. Yes, if you saw such



a piece of bread sitting on a plate your mouth would surely begin to water. And yes, you might imagine how delicious it would taste. But would you really eat it if you knew it belonged to somebody else?

Of course not.

It happened at lunch-time. Every day, at twelve o'clock precisely, the school cook, a very large lady called Mma Molipi (MO-

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LEE -PEE), always called Big Mma Molipi, would bang a saucepan with a ladle. This was the signal for all the children to sit down on the verandah and wait to be given a plate of food that she had cooked with her assistant and cousin. This assistant was called Not-so-Big Mma Molipi, and, as the name tells us, she was much smaller than the chief cook herself. This is a picture of the two of them standing together. You will see how different they are.



"Time for lunch!" Big Mma Molipi would shout in her very loud voice.

Then Not-so-Big Mma Molipi would shout, in a much smaller, squeakier voice, "Time for lunch!"

Big Mma Molipi's food was all right, but not all that all right. It was, in fact, a bit boring, as she only had one recipe, it seemed, which was a sort of paste made out of corn and served with green peas and mashed turnips.



"It's very healthy," said Big Mma Molipi. "So stop complaining, children, and eat up!"

"Yes," said Not-so-Big Mma Molipi. "So stop complaining, children, and eat up!"

As you can see, Not-so-Big Mma Molipi did not say anything other than what she heard her larger cousin say. She thought it was safer that way. If you said anything new, she imagined, then people could look at you, and Not-so-Big Mma Molipi did not like the thought of that.

It was no surprise that many of the children liked to make lunch a little bit more interesting by bringing their own food. Some brought a bit of fruit, or a sugar doughnut, or perhaps a sweet biscuit.



Then, after lunch, when they all had a bit of free time before going back into the classroom, they would eat these special treats. Or, if they had nothing to bring, they could watch other people eating theirs. Sometimes, when you are very hungry, it's the next best thing just to watch other people eating. But this can also make you even hungrier, unless you are careful.

Sepo had brought his piece of bread and jam in a brown paper bag. While Big Mma Molipi served lunch, he had left the bag in



the classroom, tucked away safely under his desk. He was sure that this is where he left it, and so when he went back in and saw that it had disappeared he was very surprised indeed.

"My bread!" he wailed. "Somebody's taken my bread!"

Precious was walking past the open door of the classroom when she heard this. She looked in; there was Sepo standing miserably by his desk.

"Are you sure?" Precious asked.

"Of course I'm sure," said Sepo. "It was there when we went out for lunch. Now it isn't, and I didn't take it."

Precious went into the classroom and stared at the spot being pointed out by Sepo. There was certainly nothing there.

"I'll ask people if they saw anything," she said. "In the meantime, you can have half of my biscuit. I hope that will make you feel better."

It did. Sepo was still upset, but not quite as upset as he had been when he made the discovery.

"There must be a thief in the school," said Sepo as they walked out into the playground. "Who do you think it is, Precious?"

Precious shrugged. "I just don't know," she said. "It could be ..." She paused. "It could be anyone."

Sepo looked thoughtful. "I think I may know who it is," he said. He did not speak very loudly, even though there was nobody else about.

Precious looked at him quizzically. "How do you know that? Did you see somebody taking it?"

Sepo looked furtively over his shoulder. "No," he said. "I didn't see anybody actually take it. But I did see somebody walking away from the classroom door."

Precious held her breath, waiting for

Sepo to say more. He stayed silent, though, and so she whispered to him, "Who?"

Sepo did not say anything, but after hesitating for a moment or two he very carefully pointed to somebody standing in the playground.

"Him," he whispered. "It's him. I saw him."

Precious frowned. "Are you sure?" she asked.



Sepo thought. If you ask somebody what they saw, they often have to think for a while before they answer. And they often get it wrong. But now Sepo said, "I'm sure - I really am. And look at him. Don't you think that he *looks* as if he's been eating too much!"

"Don't say anything," said Precious. "You can't accuse another person of doing something unless you actually saw it happen."

Sepo looked doubtful. "Why not?" he asked.

"Because you could be wrong," said Precious.

"But I'm not," said Sepo.