

SHOWDOWN AT ST. ANN'S - Leseprobe

It was raining hard when Tyler got out of the school bus. It wasn't far to his house, but far enough to get wet to the bone. Brrr! A November rain in northern Maine is not just wet, it's wet and cold.

As soon as Tyler got home from school, he went straight to his room and put on some dry clothes. Still cold, he went to the kitchen to make himself a hot drink. His mother was there, just home after work with her usual cup of coffee. She took one look at her son and knew that something was wrong.

'Hi, Mum,' he said quickly.

'Hi.' She continued to look at him a moment, then said, 'Is something wrong, Tyler?'

He shook his head. 'Everything's fine.'

'Hey, come on. There *is* something. I can tell by the look on your face.' Mrs. Sullivan looked Tyler deep in the eye.

'Aw, it's nothing.' Tyler gave a nervous little laugh. 'I, uh, got hurt playing squash, that's all.' Tyler put a large cup of milk in the microwave and set it for ninety seconds.

'Where?'

'On the arm.'

'Let me look.'

Tyler rolled up his shirt sleeve and showed her his arm.

'Oh, Tyler. It's black and blue!' she said, her eyes open wide.

'It's no big deal. It's what happens when you get hit by an object traveling at over 100 miles an hour!'

His mother shook her head slowly. 'An object?'

'Yeah, a hard black ball – a squash ball. It happens all the time. It's a fast game.' Tyler took the cup of hot milk out of the microwave and mixed two large spoons of cacao into it.

'Do the other players get hit like that, too?'

'Sometimes.'

'Well, I wish you'd be more careful.'

'I'll try,' Tyler said with his best smile. He hoped his mother would go now.

As if she could read his thoughts, she finished her coffee quickly and stood up.

'Hey, I've got to be going. My aerobics class starts in ten minutes. Your dinner is in the oven. See you later.'

'See you, Mum.' He smiled at her again.

As soon as his mother went out, Tyler sat down with his hot chocolate and closed his eyes. He rubbed his aching arm and thought about what happened. It was like watching a video. There he was on the school grounds, on his way to meet Shirley. But when he reached the

place where they always met, she wasn't there. Suddenly, he saw a girl who looked like Shirley with a group of boys on the opposite side of the grounds. He hurried towards them. As he got closer, he saw that it was Shirley - surrounded by Rajon Russell and his gang!

The Russell gang! They were brutal. Everyone at the school was afraid of them. They took what they wanted and the teachers looked the other way.

Tyler was afraid of them, too, but right now Shirley was in trouble and needed help. He went straight to her and took her by the hand. He started to take her with him but three of the biggest boys blocked his way.

'Where you going to, dude?' Rajon got in Tyler's face and laughed. Then, without warning, he hit Tyler on the arm. Hard. So hard he cried out. After that, Rajon took Shirley's sandwich and walked away, his gang with him. Tyler took Shirley in his arms. She was shaking all over.

When Tyler opened his eyes again, his face was red with anger. It wasn't right. Rajon Russell and his gang ruled the school and no one could do anything about it.