

Fat  
and  
Skinny

JENNY PAUSACKER

**FAT AND SKINNY**

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## CHAPTER ONE

It was the end of the first week at school and Grant McPhee hummed a little song as he walked across the playground.

*Back to school, back to school,  
I'm not going to be a fool.*

Grant's family had moved house last year and Grant had only been at his new school for one term. He hadn't made any friends yet. But things will be different this year, thought Grant.

Then someone shouted from behind him, "Hey, Fatso, catch!"

Grant turned around. A football was flying through the air. He held out his hands, but he was too late. The football thudded into his stomach.

"Oof!" said Grant and held his stomach tight. He looked at the football, bouncing on the ground. Then he looked up at Peter Murray, Angelo Tagolini and Wayne McIntosh.

"It didn't hurt you," said Peter. "You're too fat."

"Kick it back, Fatty," said Angelo.

Grant picked up the ball, kicked at it — and missed. The football rolled slowly along the ground and the three boys groaned in chorus.

"Oh, weak!"

"Can't even kick a ball."

"He ought to *be* a ball. He's round enough."

They ran off with the football and Grant sat down sadly. "I hate this school," he said to himself. "No one likes me, because I'm fat. Only bad things

happen.”

He looked across the playground and groaned. Another bad thing was happening. His little sister Annie was marching towards him, crying loudly.

“Graaant!” she wailed.

“Go away,” hissed Grant, waving his hands at her. “You mustn’t talk to me at school. I told you that.”

Annie didn’t listen. “Grant!” she said. “That girl called me Skinny Annie. She said you must eat all my food.”

“Oh!” said Grant, turning red. As he stared at Annie, the football landed at their feet and Angelo, Peter and Wayne ran up again.

“Hey, look at that!” shouted Wayne. “It’s Fat and Skinny.”

The boys danced up and down, singing.

*Fat and Skinny went to war,  
Fat got shot by an apple core.  
Fat and Skinny climbed a tree.  
Fat fell down the lavatory.  
Silly Skinny pulled the chain.  
Fat was never seen again.*

“You’re horrible,” said Annie. “I don’t like you and I don’t like school and I’m not going to come back next week.”

“She’s a little toughie,” said Angelo. “Is she your sister, Grant?”

But Grant didn’t answer. He was walking away, very fast, to the trees by the school fence. He crawled under the tree branches into a little cave of leaves and started to hit his stomach.

“Why are you hitting yourself?” asked a deep voice.

“I’m fat,” said Grant, with his eyes shut.

“What’s bad about fat?” said the voice.

“It’s not normal. I’m the fattest kid in the school.”

“Well, someone has to be,” said the voice.

“Huh?” said Grant and opened his eyes.

There in front of him was the fattest kid in the world.

## CHAPTER TWO

“Wow!” said Grant. He stared and stared.

The fattest kid in the world was as round as a balloon and as hard as a rock. Fat cheeks, fat hands, fat stomach, fat knees. Much fatter than me, Grant thought. The kid gave him a big fat grin.

“Don’t you mind being fat?” Grant asked in wonder.

“I *am* Fat,” said the kid.

“That doesn’t make sense,” said Grant and the kid grinned even more. Then the tree rustled and Annie pushed her way in.

“Who are these people?” she asked Grant. Annie asked questions all the time. It was her first week at school and she wanted to know everything.

“People?” said Grant and looked again. There were two kids but Grant hadn’t seen the second kid, because the second kid was the skinniest kid in the world.

The skinniest kid in the world was as straight as a pencil and as neat as a greyhound. Skinny face, skinny arms, skinny bottom, skinny legs. Much skinnier than Annie, thought Grant. He laughed.

“What’s so funny?” asked the skinniest kid in the world.

“You!” said Grant, still laughing. “They called *us* Fat and Skinny — but *you* are.”

“That’s right,” said the fattest kid in the world, looking pleased with Grant. “We are. We’re Fat and Skinny.”

Grant stopped laughing. “You reckon you’re Fat and Skinny? Like in ‘Fat and Skinny went to war’?”

“Yeah,” said the skinniest kid in the world. “Why not?”

“Because Fat and Skinny don’t exist,” Grant explained. “They’re just people in a song.”

“We are not, too,” said Fat indignantly. “We’re real. Look at us.”

Grant looked. The two kids were definitely real. They had curly black hair and smiley black eyes and they wore shorts and big white shirts. They looked like twins, except that one was incredibly fat and one was incredibly skinny.

“Are you brother and sister, too?” said Annie.

“No,” said Skinny. “We’re Fat and Skinny.”

“Well, are you girls or boys?” said Annie.

“No,” said Fat. “We’re Fat and Skinny.”

“Oh, I see,” said Annie happily but Grant frowned.

“This is a silly game,” he said.

“Oh yes,” said Fat. “I almost forgot. We want to play a game with you. Have you got any chalk in your pockets?”

“Yes,” said Grant. He pulled out a white chalk and a pink chalk. “But —”

“Have you got any chalk?” said Skinny to Annie.

Annie fished around in her pockets. At last she found a tiny piece of yellow chalk and gave it to Skinny.

“Now,” said Fat, talking very fast. “We’re giving you three adventures, two for Grant and one for Annie. We’ll draw arrows on the ground with your chalk and you’ll follow the arrows to the adventure. Did I say that right, Skinny?”

“Yes, you said it right, Fat,” said Skinny. “But it’s not fair. Your kid gets two adventures and my kid only gets one.”

“Well, my kid had two pieces of chalk,” said Fat. “And it *is* fair. Right now, fat people have a harder time than skinny people.”

“Skinny people have a hard time too,” said Annie. “‘Eat up, eat up, eat up.’ That’s all people ever say to me.”

“She’s right,” Skinny said to Fat, getting excited. “And you win all our fights, because you can sit on me.”

“No, I don’t,” said Fat. “You win all our fights, because you run away so fast.” Then they both laughed and gave each other a big hug.

Grant stared. Fat and Skinny were the strangest people he had ever met. He didn’t like the way they talked about fatness all the time, but he liked the idea of an adventure. He opened his mouth to ask a question, but just then he heard the school siren.

“Off you go,” said Skinny and pushed Grant and Annie out of the leafy cave. “Don’t forget — watch out for the chalk arrows. Goodbye.”

“Goodbye,” said Grant and Annie. They ran off across the playground. Annie asked questions as she ran.

“What are adventures? Will I like them? When will we have the first adventure? Are they magic people?”

“I don’t know,” puffed Grant. “Maybe they were playing a joke on us.” Grant always tried to look after Annie and he didn’t want her to be disappointed.

At the school door Grant turned round and looked for Fat and Skinny. But the sun shone in his eyes and he could only see the fat black shadow of the tree trunk and the skinny shadows of the branches.

## CHAPTER THREE

All the way home Annie looked for chalk arrows, but she didn't find any. By now Grant was sure that Fat and Skinny had been playing a joke on them.

But after tea when he was clearing the table, he walked on a white chalk arrow. He jumped, as if he had stepped on a snake. Annie ran over and saw the arrow too.

"Look, there's another one," she whispered and ran off, following the arrows. Grant just stood and stared, until Annie came back.

"They go to the bathroom," she said. "Ask Mum if we can have a bath." But Grant was still staring at the arrow, so she called out. "Mum, we want a bath."

"All right," said Mrs McPhee, still washing up.

"Now!" said Annie.

Mrs McPhee laughed. "You're not always so keen to be clean," she said but she went down to the bathroom. Annie skipped along behind her and Grant followed more slowly. He walked on the chalk arrows and rubbed them out, in case his mother saw them.

Mrs McPhee filled the bath and left Grant and Annie washing themselves. Grant sang, "Keen to be clean" to himself, while he thought about the arrows. Fat and Skinny hadn't been in the kitchen — he knew that. So the arrows were magic. He shivered in the warm bath.

Annie kept looking around and asking questions. "Where are Fat and Skinny? When does the adventure start?" But she was busy diving for the soap under Grant's toes when Fat said, "Hello. We've come to have a bath."

Skinny slid into the bath at once, shorts and shirt and all. Then Fat stood up on the edge of the bath like a diver.

"Stop it," said Grant in alarm. "The bath's too small for four people."

Fat jumped, Annie squealed and water splashed up in the air. Grant shut his eyes. When he opened his eyes again, there was water everywhere — pale green water with golden lights in it, like the sea. Far away Grant could see tall pink cliffs.

“Where are we?” asked Annie, splashing wildly.

“In the bath,” said Skinny.

“What are those pink things?”

“The sides of the bath,” said Fat. Annie laughed happily and Grant smiled too. He turned on his back and floated in the warm green water, staring at the white sky of the bathroom ceiling and singing.

*In the bath I love to float.*

*I am like a little boat.*

“I’m cold,” said Annie.

“Me too,” said Skinny. “We’ll have a race.” They splashed away and Grant floated on. Then he heard Fat singing beside him.

*Fat is warm and fat can float.*

*Fat is A fur overcoat.*

Grant turned over and trod water. “That’s wrong,” he said to Fat. “You can’t say, ‘Fat is A fur overcoat.’ It sounds wrong.”

“Maybe the ‘A’ is a special kind of ‘a’ — a fat ‘a’,” said Fat hopefully.

“No,” said Grant. “But listen, you could say, ‘Fat’s a furry overcoat.’”

“Yes, that’s right!” said Fat excitedly. “Let’s sing it.” So they sang together.

*Fat is warm and fat can float.*

*Fat’s a furry overcoat.*

Fat gave Grant a big hug and Grant hugged Fat back.

“It’s a funny song, though,” said Grant. “You can’t swim in a furry overcoat.”

“No,” said Fat. “But you can swim in fat.”

Then Annie and Skinny swam up. “We found some fish,” said Annie. “They’re fat and skinny too. Why are they fat and skinny?”

“I don’t know,” said Skinny. “Why are we fat and skinny?”

“We just are,” said Annie.

“See!” said Skinny. “So are the fish.”

Annie kicked water at Skinny and Grant dived down to see the fish. They were blue and green and long and skinny and fat and round, just like Annie had said.

Grant dived again, deeper and deeper. He opened his eyes and looked at the pink bottom of the bath. He saw a huge black ring, with a little metal ring in the middle.

Grant held on to the little metal ring and looked around. There were no more fish down at the bottom of the bath. Then the huge black ring jumped under his hand.

Grant was curious. He pulled the metal ring harder. The big black ring lifted right up. Then water started to swirl past Grant, faster and faster. The black ring bounced up and down, then it shot away into the water.

Grant put his hands to his mouth in horror. He had pulled out the plug!

## CHAPTER FOUR

Grant looked up. The green water was rushing down towards him in a funnel. And round the funnel spun Skinny and Annie.

Grant looked at the plug hole. The bath was bigger, so the plug hole was bigger too.

“Annie!” he gasped. She might go down the plug hole — and Skinny too.

He shot up to the top of the water and breathed great mouthfuls of air. Fat swam towards him at top speed.

“Quick,” shouted Grant. “We have to save Annie and Skinny.”

“Right,” said Fat. “We’ll stop up the plug hole.”

Grant and Fat took deep breaths, then dived. The water sucked them quickly down to the plug hole. Grant lay across one half of the plug hole and pulled Fat across the other half. Now the water couldn’t run away.

Then Annie and Skinny bumped into them. Grant and Fat held on tight and Annie and Skinny swam away quickly. Grant held his breath and held his breath and held his breath, until he couldn’t hold his breath any more. Any minute now he was going to take a big deep breath of water.

But just then Fat pulled on his hand and they shot up to the top of the water, as fast as they could go. They gasped and puffed and panted.

“Swim fast,” shouted Fat.

The water tossed and turned as it ran down the plug hole. Grant and Fat swam hard against the green waves.

“Over here,” called Skinny and Annie.

They pulled Grant and Fat up on to a white ledge. “It’s the soap dish,” Annie whispered to Grant. “I asked Skinny.”

Fat and Grant puffed and panted and Skinny and Annie shivered and the green water swirled around below them. Then it gurgled away down the plug hole. The bath was pink and shiny and empty.

“Let’s slide,” said Skinny. So they slid down the slippery pink cliffs and sat in the puddles at the bottom of the bath.

“What an adventure,” said Skinny with a big sigh.

“The water’s gone,” said Fat, “and the magic’s gone too.”

And suddenly the bath was small again. Now it really was too small for four people. Annie’s knee was in Grant’s mouth and Fat was lying on top of Skinny.

Grant pushed Annie out and then climbed out himself. Fat just lay there and laughed. But Skinny kicked and yelled and heaved — and finally pinched Fat. Fat jumped up quickly then.

“You shouldn’t feel the pinch,” said Skinny. “You’re fat.”

“Fat feels,” said Fat with dignity. “Fat feels, the same as skinny.”

Grant liked that. He would say it to Wayne and Angelo and Peter, if they teased him again.

They rubbed each other down with towels. Grant dried Annie’s hair and she held onto his hand tightly. “I don’t want to go down the plug,” she said in a small voice.

Skinny hugged her. “Don’t worry, Annie. The bath was a magic bath today, but tomorrow it will be small again. Even skinnies can’t go down small bath plugs.”

“And us fats were there to save you today,” said Fat proudly.

“Thank you,” said Annie. “I was scared at the end but I liked the water and the little fish.”

“Time to get out,” called Mr McPhee through the bathroom door.

“Oops,” said Skinny. “We’d better go.”

Skinny jumped on to the hand basin and climbed out the bathroom window and Fat followed. But the window was too small and Fat got stuck.

“Help,” called Fat, but Skinny just laughed and said, “You sat on me. Now it’s your turn.”

“Don’t worry,” said Grant kindly. “We’ll push you through.”

So Fat wriggled and Grant and Annie pushed and Fat popped through the window — just in time. Mr McPhee walked into the bathroom.

“What a mess,” he said. “What have you been doing in the bath?”

Grant and Annie looked at each other and smiled, but they didn’t say a word.

## CHAPTER FIVE

Grant woke up suddenly the next morning because Annie was sitting on his feet.

"I can't find any arrows yet," she said. "Will I have my adventure today? Will Fat and Skinny come back?"

"I don't know," said Grant crossly. Then he was sorry. He was older than Annie, so he knew he should be kind to her. "You can play with my train set," he said.

She dragged it out into the hall and played with it, until Mr McPhee came out and fell over it.

"Kids!" he said. "You ought to go out and run about a bit."

"We'll go to the new adventure playground this afternoon," said Mrs McPhee.

Annie looked quickly at Grant. "*Adventure* playground," she whispered.

"It's just an ordinary playground, silly," said Grant. He was cross, because he was still a bit scared of Fat and Skinny's magic. But then he was sorry again and he played trains with Annie all morning. Annie was very pleased with herself.

After lunch they set off for the adventure playground. Grant liked the big long slides and the swings. He flew like a bird in the air. Annie liked the rope bridge and the jungle gym. She walked across the rope like a cat and hung upside down like a little monkey.

Then Mr and Mrs McPhee found some friends of theirs and Annie found the yellow chalk arrows.

"Come on," she said to Grant. "It's my adventure."

“Some kid probably drew them,” said Grant, but he followed Annie to the see-saws. The arrows stopped.

“I told you so,” said Grant. “It was just a kid.”

“No,” said Annie positively. “We have to get on the see-saw.”

“I hate see-saws,” grumbled Grant. But Annie was sitting on the see-saw already, so Grant sat on the other end.

Thump! went the see-saw. Grant banged down and Annie shot up in the air and they stayed that way.

“See?” said Grant. “It won’t work. And do you know why? Because I’m too fat and you’re too skinny.”

“Oh yeah?” said Annie. “Fat and Skinny can see-saw.” She pointed to the see-saw next to them.

Fat was sitting near the middle of the seesaw and Skinny was sitting on the far end. And the see-saw was going up and down.

“Oh,” said Grant. He wriggled down the see-saw until he was near the middle. His end of the see-saw went up in the air too and he and Annie see-sawed to and fro. Grant sang a little song to himself.

*Tit for tat, Skinny for Fat,  
They can play on a see-saw.  
In this game they’re both the same.  
I know ’cos Annie and me saw.*

“That’s right,” said Skinny. “Fat and Skinny are just the same on a see-saw.”

“But they’re not really the same,” said Grant without thinking. “I’d rather be skinny any day.” Then he blushed bright red. He’d never told anyone that he hated being fat.

“Well, let’s be skinny for a while,” said Fat.

“What?” said Grant in surprise. Then he shot up into the air. He looked down the seesaw at Annie — a little fat round Annie. Grant patted his stomach and found he was thin.

On the next see-saw Fat was skinny and Skinny was fat. They still looked the same, in their white shirts and shorts. But Fat looked like Skinny and Skinny looked like Fat.

“Let’s go,” said skinny Fat to skinny Grant.

They walked across the rope bridge and hung on the bars of the jungle gym and played chasey round the trees. Grant felt as light as a feather. He kept bouncing up and down and patting his thin stomach.

“This is great,” he said to Fat. “When I’m fat, I pull the rope down and I feel silly on the jungle gym and I puff when I run. I like being skinny.”

Then Annie bounced up. “Grant!” she said. “When I’m fat, I slide faster and

I can push harder on the swings. I like being fat.”

“Oh, no,” said Grant. “You can’t like being fat. No one does.”

“Well, Annie does,” said Fat, “and I do. You can be skinny one day, if you like. But right now you’re fat and Annie’s skinny and that’s the way it is.”

And suddenly Grant was fat again. Tears came to his eyes.

“Rats,” said Annie, pinching her arms. “I wanted to show Mum and Dad what I looked like when I’m fat.”

Grant laughed and the tears went away. “They’d have a pink fit,” he said.

“What’s a pink fit?” asked Annie. “And where’s my adventure?”

“This way,” said Skinny and pointed to another yellow arrow.

## CHAPTER SIX

They followed the yellow chalk arrows down the path. Then the path started to go up a hill and got lost in the grass.

“What do we do now?” said Annie.

“Run!” said Skinny and they ran, shouting and laughing.

“Oof! Not me,” said Fat and Grant agreed. They puffed and panted and climbed and climbed. Half way up the hill Grant turned and looked around.

“The playground’s gone,” he puffed.

“Of course,” panted Fat. “You’re in a magic playground now. Stop talking, Grant. We need to save our breath for climbing.”

At the top of the hill Annie and Skinny were playing chasey. Fat and Grant just flopped down on the grass.

“That was good,” said Fat with a big sigh.

“But Annie and Skinny got here faster,” grumbled Grant.

“Skinnies are speedy,” said Fat with a shrug. “But we all see the same view.”

So Grant looked at the view. He could see the round tops of dozens and dozens of little green hills. Tall thin gum trees grew here and there on the hills and there were masses of green bushes and narrow creeks between the hills.

“This is a nice place,” said Grant and Fat beamed at him.

Skinny and Annie got tired at last and flopped down beside Fat and Grant. They lay and listened to the birds singing.

“I like running,” said Annie. “Running is best.”

“No, it’s not,” said Grant. “Swimming’s best.”

“No, it’s not,” said Annie, poking out her tongue.

“They have fights, just like us,” said Fat to Skinny.

Grant didn’t want to fight. “They’re both best,” he said to Annie.

But Annie didn’t care any more. “Can we run down the hill now?” she asked Skinny.

“We can float down on the wind, if you like,” said Skinny.

“Wow!” said Grant and Annie together.

“Sorry, Grant,” said Fat. “We can’t fly. We’re too heavy. Watch!”

Skinny whistled loudly and a wind blew up. It blew straight past Fat and Grant, but it swept Skinny and Annie off their feet. They blew up and down like autumn leaves.

Annie nearly blew away on a big puff of wind, but Skinny caught hold of her hand and taught her how to ride the wind. They lay on their stomachs like surfboard riders; they rode the wind like horses; they turned on their backs and lay on a bed of wind.

Then Skinny whistled up some birds and Annie and Skinny played races with the birds. They flew all over the sky and Grant watched in amazement. At last the wind set them down gently at the bottom of the hill.

“I want to ride on the wind too,” said Grant. “It isn’t fair.”

“Yes, it is,” said Fat. “You can’t do everything. And this is Annie’s adventure.”

“I suppose so,” said Grant. “Okay, let’s walk down.”

“Oh, we don’t have to do that,” said Fat. “Fats can roll.” And Fat started to roll down the hill, faster and faster, like a big white wheel.

Grant watched for a moment, then he started to roll too. He rolled over and over. The hills and the sky rolled with him, in big blue and green circles. Grant bounced up and down on the soft green grass, until Annie shouted to him.

But Grant couldn’t stop. He shut his eyes and waited for the splash. Then he bumped into something warm and soft. He stopped rolling and sat up.

He was on the very edge of the creek and he was sitting on Annie. Grant got up quickly. “What happened?” he said.

“I ran,” said Annie. “And I stopped you.”

“Thanks,” said Grant. “Running *is* best today.”

“Yes, it is,” said Annie. “I saved you this time.” She added, “I want to fly again.”

“All right,” said Skinny. “Go up to the top of the next hill and wait till I whistle.”

Grant puffed and Annie ran up to the top of the next hill. Then Skinny whistled and the wind blew up. Annie whirled through the air and Grant whirled down the hill. He sang as he went.

*I can roll, I can roll.*

*This is better than a stroll.*

The wind dropped and Annie dropped down beside him. They sat up and looked around. They were back in the adventure playground, sitting at their mother's feet.

"Well, you've been having fun," said Mrs McPhee.

"Yes, it was a good adventure," said Grant and he winked at Annie.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

They didn't find any chalk arrows the next day and even Annie didn't look very hard for them. But on Monday, just before they set off for school, Grant stepped on a pink chalk arrow in the hall.

He followed the arrow to the hall cupboard. Inside the cupboard a big pink arrow pointed to Annie's skipping rope. Grant shook his head in puzzlement but he put the rope in his schoolbag.

"Why are you taking my skipping rope?" asked Annie.

"I'm following the arrows," said Grant and Annie hopped up and down in excitement.

"Maybe we can miss school," she said hopefully.

But they followed the arrows up the road to school. Then suddenly the arrows stopped. Grant and Annie looked beside the road and found pink chalk arrows on big stones in the grass.

The arrows pointed to the green circles of the football field. Between the tall thin goalposts they could see two small white figures.

"Fat and Skinny!" shouted Annie and ran. Grant ran after her, more slowly. Fat and Skinny caught them and hugged them.

"Hello," said Skinny. "This is goodbye."

"But what about my adventure?" puffed Grant.

"Oh, you'll have your adventure," said Fat. "But we wanted to say goodbye first."

"That's upside down," said Annie. "People say goodbye last."

"We don't," said Skinny. "And we wanted to answer any questions that you

have.”

Annie’s eyes lit up. She always had questions. But for once Grant got in first.

“Who are you anyway?” he said. “And why are you here?”

“We’re here because people need us,” said Fat. “There has to be a fattest and a skinniest, so we’re it. We know all the good things about fatness —”

“And all the good things about skinniness,” said Skinny. “So we can tell everyone about them.”

“What about people who aren’t fat or skinny?” asked Annie. “Do they have any good things?”

“Of course. They’re in the middle, so they can do some of the things fats can do and some of the things skinnies can do. That’s good and fat’s good and skinny’s good.”

“But being fat isn’t good,” said Grant with a frown.

“Not always,” agreed Fat. “Sometimes I get tired of being Fat, so I take a turn at being Skinny. We change by magic but you can change by running and swimming and eating different food.”

“Being skinny isn’t always good either,” said Skinny. “I sometimes change too. But when I’m Skinny, I like being skinny and when I’m Fat, I like being fat.”

Grant stood and stared at the grass. Annie pulled on his shirt. “What are you thinking, Grant?” she asked.

“I was thinking of a song,” said Grant.

“Sing it,” said Annie, so he sang.

*Fat can swim and fat can float.*

*Fat’s a furry overcoat.*

*Fat can roll and fat can slide.*

*Fat feels very warm inside.*

*Fat can plug the bath up tight.*

*Fat is really quite all right.*

“And skinny can float on the wind,” Annie said dreamily.

“Good,” said Fat. “Now you’re ready for your last adventure. Where’s the skipping rope, Grant?”

Grant took out the skipping rope. “Why — ?” he started but Fat interrupted.

“Now we’ll take one end and Annie and Skinny’ll take the other end. All right. Pull!”

Grant and Fat pulled and Skinny and Annie fell over at once.

“Unfair again,” said Skinny but Fat just said, “Well?”

“All right,” said Grant. “I know what to do now.”

## CHAPTER EIGHT

When Grant and Annie walked into the playground, Angelo and Wayne and Peter were playing football again. A long pink arrow pointed towards them.

“Here come Fat and Skinny,” Wayne giggled and Angelo sang:

*Fat and Skinny climbed a tree.*

*Fat sat on a bumblebee.*

“Hey, do you want to play football, Fatso?” called Peter. “I’ll kick *you*, if you like.”

Grant took a deep breath. “No thanks, I don’t want to play football. I want to play tug-of-war,” he said, holding out the skipping rope.

Peter and Wayne and Angelo looked at each other. “Why not?” said Wayne. “We’ll pull you over, Fatso. But *she* has to go away.” He nodded to Annie.

“It’s her rope. She can watch,” said Grant.

Wayne shrugged and grabbed the rope. Angelo stood behind him. Peter looked at Grant. “Oh well, I’ll have to go with Fatso,” he said.

Grant was scared inside, but he remembered the adventure of the plug hole and held on tight. Wayne and Angelo pulled as hard as they could. They tugged and tugged until their faces were red. But they couldn’t move Peter and Grant.

Then Grant pulled on the rope with all his weight and Wayne and Angelo toppled over. Annie cheered.

“It’s not fair,” said Wayne, getting up. “Fatso’s as big as two boys.”

“Well, I’m only *one* boy,” said Grant. “Sometimes it helps to be fat.”

“Yeah,” said Peter. He was on Grant’s side now, because Grant had won the tug-of-war. “You’d be good at football too. You could flatten the other boys. I’ll teach you how to kick.”

“Thanks,” said Grant. “I’ve never played football, because I’m fat.”

Angelo stared. “Don’t you mind being fat?” he asked.

Grant tried to remember Fat’s words. “Well, fat people can do some things and skinny people can do other things and people in the middle can do a bit of both.”

“I’m not in the middle,” said Wayne. “I’m normal.”

“So am I,” said Grant. “I’m a normal fat person and you’re a normal middle person. If you call me Fatso, I’ll call you Middleso.”

“Middleso! Middleso!” shouted Peter and Angelo.

“Oh, shut up,” growled Wayne. “Come on Fa — Grant. Let’s see how you can kick.”

Grant took the football. He had won the tug-of-war and he had argued with Wayne and now he was learning to play football. Annie ran up and he waved her away. “Not now,” he said.

But Annie wouldn’t go. “It’s Fat and Skinny,” she whispered. “They’re leaving.”

She pointed to the fence. There stood Fat and Skinny in their big white shirts, smiling and waving. Annie waved madly and Grant raised his hand.

Then Skinny whistled and a wind blew up. The dust in the playground swirled around and Fat and Skinny’s shirts blew out like the sails on a sailing ship.

Fat and Skinny sailed up into the air. They waved to Grant and Annie one last time, then floated away into the sky like white balloons. Soon Grant lost sight of them against the white clouds.

He looked away. The other boys were rubbing the dust out of their eyes.

“What were you staring at?” asked Wayne.

“The big fat clouds and the little skinny clouds,” said Grant.

Peter thought this was a joke. “And the middleso clouds,” he said, laughing loudly.

But Annie nodded and Grant smiled at her. She grinned back, grabbed her skipping rope from Wayne and ran away to find the kids in her grade.

“Okay,” said Grant. “Now how do I kick this football?”

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