

Chapter 1

‘Ahmed! Ahmed!’

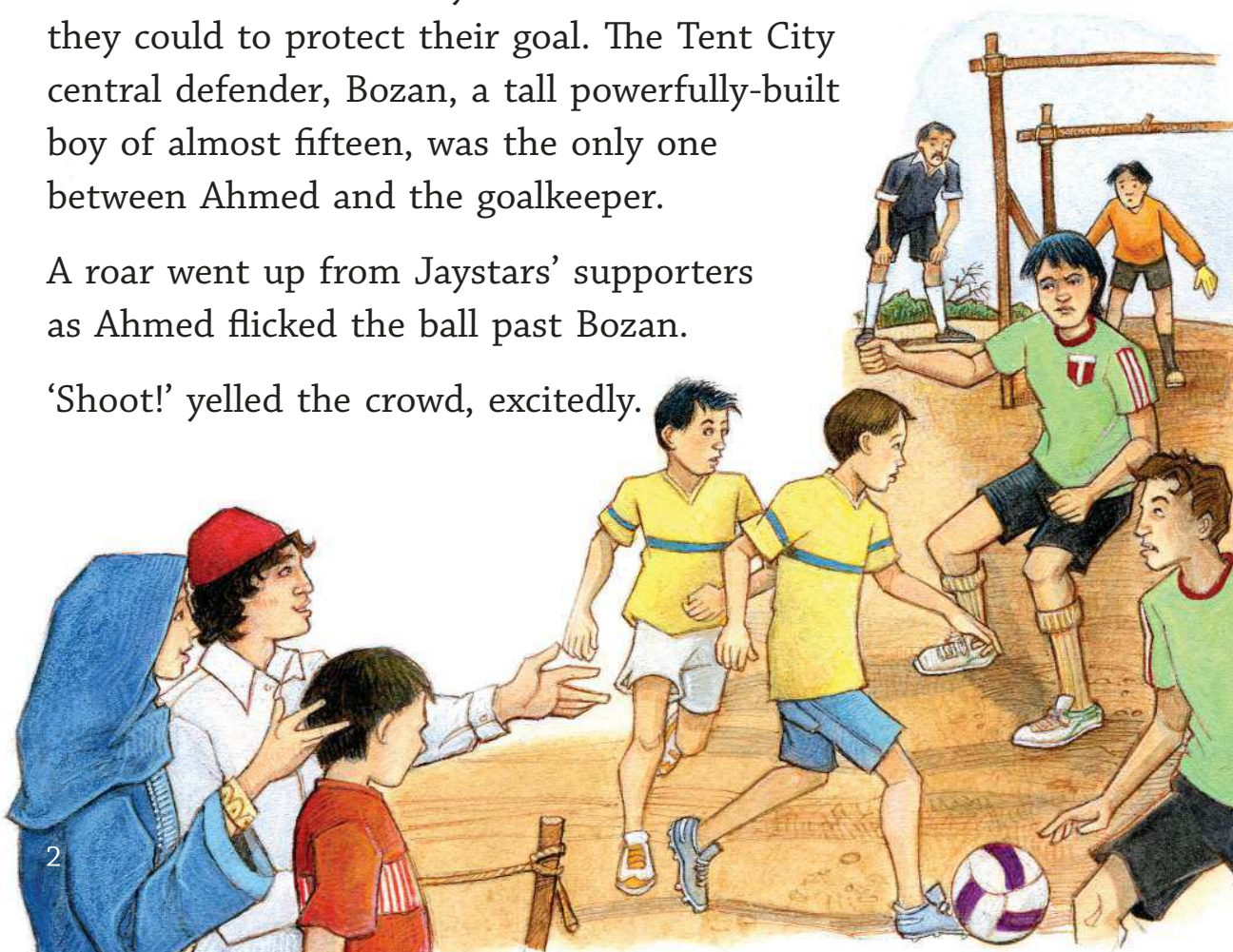
Eleven-year-old Ahmed cut infield, heading for the Tent City goal. The supporters of Jaystars chanted and shouted in excitement.

Jaystars were one of the best teams in the refugee camp’s Under-15 Football League.

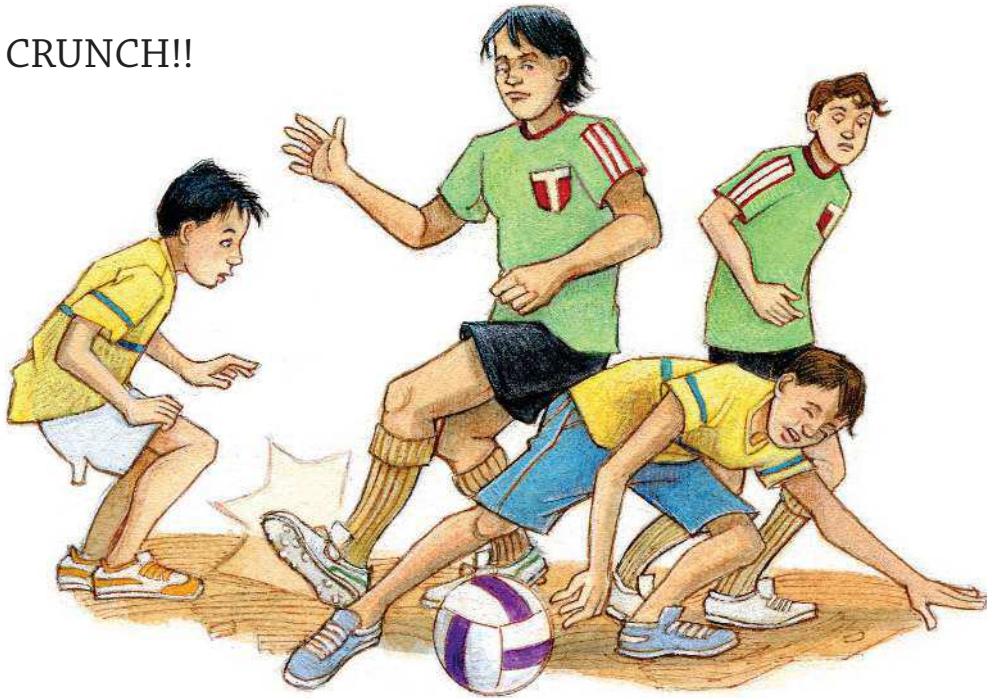
The rest of the Tent City team ran back as fast as they could to protect their goal. The Tent City central defender, Bozan, a tall powerfully-built boy of almost fifteen, was the only one between Ahmed and the goalkeeper.

A roar went up from Jaystars’ supporters as Ahmed flicked the ball past Bozan.

‘Shoot!’ yelled the crowd, excitedly.



CRUNCH!!



Boos and shouts of disapproval were heard as Bozan made a crunching tackle from behind, that caught Ahmed's ankle and sent him crashing to the hard, dusty sand.

Ahmed rolled over, his face wretched in pain.

The referee blew his whistle and wagged a warning finger at Bozan.

Ahmed's best pal, Mustafa, helped Ahmed to his feet.

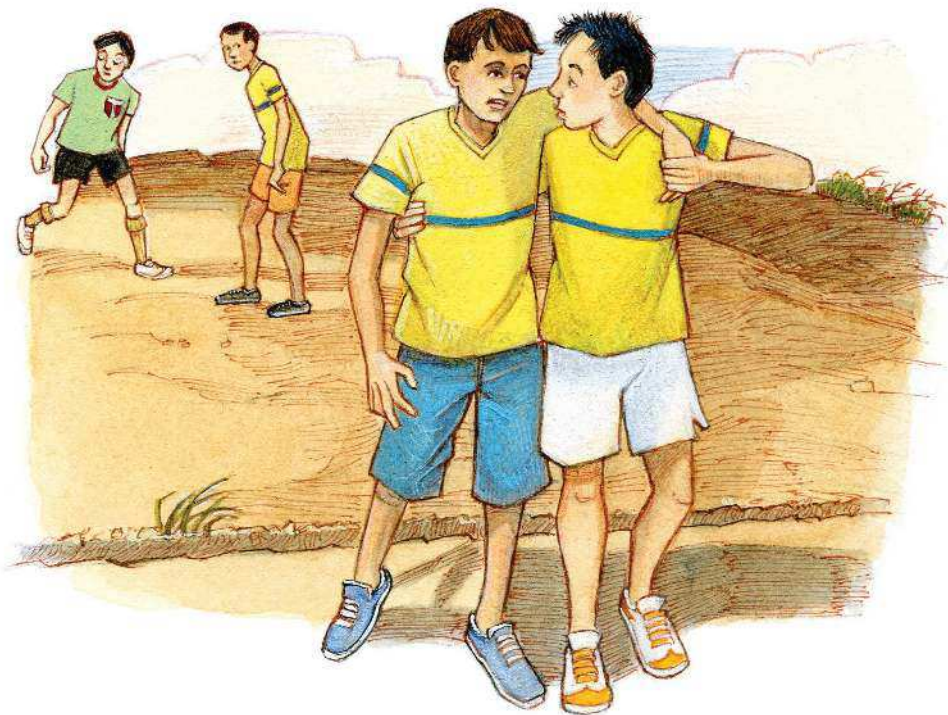
'That hurt!' winced Ahmed.

He looked at his ankle, which was bruised and bleeding from the studs of Bozan's boot.

‘The referee should have sent Bozan off,’ complained Mustafa. ‘That was a goal-scoring opportunity. If you’d have scored, we’d have drawn. And with Tent City, the top team in the league!’

‘Maybe Urdal will score from the free kick,’ said Ahmed.

‘No chance!’ said Mustafa. ‘Tent City have had time to get their defence back in place.’



Mustafa was right. Urdal’s shot was blocked by the wall of defenders. As the ball was kicked into touch, the final whistle went, with Tent City the winners, 3-2.

As Ahmed limped off the pitch, he found Bozan blocking his path. And not just Bozan. Bozan's gang was with him, and it included some older boys.

'How's your ankle?' sneered Bozan, nastily.

Ahmed didn't answer. Bozan and his gang had a bad reputation as bullies in the camp.

Bozan put his face close to Ahmed's.

'You made me look a fool today!' he said, angrily. 'You made me look slow!'

