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Lubna and Pebble

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Reviewer:

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Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

On the title page we see a boat laden with people, and then the story starts with Lubna's huge eyes looking at a pebble. She had found it when she and her father arrived on a beach in the night, and she takes it with her into the World of Tents, feeling that Daddy's salty arms and the pebble will keep her safe. With a felt-tip left in the tent, she draws a face on the pebble, and Pebble now smiles at her. She tells it everything about the war, her home, and her brothers, but we are left to imagine what happened. Daddy tries to keep her warm as winter arrives, but Lubna, red-nosed with cold, is worried that Pebble might catch cold, so Daddy finds a shoebox and a tea-towel to keep it warm. A little boy appears, with no words at first: he just blinks and stares, but Pebble's smile makes him smile, and he introduces himself as Amir. They become friends, and play together, though Lubna tells Pebble, 'You are still my best friend?'. One day Daddy tells Lubna that they are leaving for a new home, and she is happy, but sad for Amir. That night she thinks about what she must do, and next day she gives Pebble, the shoebox and the pen to Amir, so that he can draw the smile back on, and tell Pebble when he misses her. Again we see two huge eyes looking at the Pebble, but this time they are Amir's eyes.

This is a beautiful book, all rich colour and unusual angles, with some clever touches. When Amir first appears, he is standing on a representative tree with very dark green leaves, but when he is given Pebble in the shoebox, his tree is full of red blossom, showing that he himself has blossomed.

It is to be hoped that this book will enable younger readers to empathise with displaced people, and to understand that children caught up in the ongoing refugee crisis are just children, but it also a lovely book to share and to think about what friendship means.

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