Pomegranates hold a rather special place in my heart. I suppose that's a weird statement, because I've gotten a little ahead of myself in my storytelling now, haven't I? This tends to happens when I'm more then just a little excited, and as I said, pomegranates hold a rather special place in my heart.

Growing up, my father would procure pomegranates from the grocery, or at least I suppose that's how he obtained them, because if I'm honest I have no clue how the dark red fruit entered our home. I couldn't even tell you where it was stored or kept in the waiting because my memory falls short there, what I know is that when Dad decided to indulge in them, out would come the prized item along with a few cloth napkins, a knife, and sometimes a bowl.

He'd carve a small bit out of the fruit for my siblings and I, then the prized piece was placed in the oversized old gold, cloth napkins and handed around, generally while we were all in the living room of a night watching perhaps the Disney Sunday Night Movie, or the weekly airing of MacGuyver.

We'd have to spend a fair bit of time digging around in the thick and filmy white pith as we pulled back the hard textured skin looking for the sweet-tart red jewelled seeds. Each time you broke a little more away a pop of color would surprise you, and you knew you'd found a new pocket of yummy goodness to indulge in. To this day a little thrill of excitement still gets me each time I find a pocket of hidden seeds!

I'm sure we made quite the mess in consuming the fruit, after all, the sticky juice is dark red and stains your hands, and even when washed often leaves them a beautiful dark purple hue that I'm not too opposed to, for a time. I've been known to have to wash my glasses, even as an adult, after eating a pomegranate, but I suppose these are the aspects that as a child we didn't consider.

Rather, we just indulged in the fruit. The secret sections, and the memories associated with the delightful surprise of being included in the snack. Which is likely why I always consider it a glorious reason to celebrate when I stumble through the produce section of my local grocery and see American Pomegranates.

Now, first I have to confess, that I'm an Expat, and at the time of writing this I am currently trapped overseas due to Covid. However, I've been here for over a decade, by choice, and in all the years I've lived here I can always tell when the US pomegranates are in shop because they are big and beautiful, and generally nominally overpriced. For some reason, the ones grown here are often small, battle weary, and produce very little interior content which is always disappointing for their incredibly high price, and the effort one must exert to extract the goodness within.

I can often be found wildly making a bee-line to the small group of pomegranates lined up like Christmas baubles in my local grocery. Each fruit nestled into a round moulded shape on the rubber that's lining the produce shelf. It gets me some weird looks too, as I stand there considering which $4.50 fruit I will proclaim as my own and and cradle all the way home. If I can find them cheaper I've been known to buy 2 or even 3 at a time!

I, like my father, have also been known to sit down and slice one open and pass out small section to my own children. To offer them the chance to hunt for the jewelled seeds that make the best sweet-tart snack ever. And at other times, I'm greedy and eat the whole thing myself, unless of course my now much more grown children catch me in the act, and ask why I didn't tell them it was time for pomegranates.

One year, for Father's Day, while living overseas, I purchased a Pomegranate tree for my father. I was actually quite worried about the purchase when I made it. I mean, for one thing, it was going to be mailed to him, and I had no idea how traumatising it might be for the tree. Yes, I laugh about that thought now, but at the time I was genuinely concerned it might result in a tree that wouldn't produce anything.

I also remembered the small fruit orchard he'd begun to grow on a property in New York. He'd been very keen to be sure he had at least 2 of each tree to be sure they produced fruit, and so I worried that buying one single tree might cause issues. But, I was equally reminded of a small orange tree he had in a pot. It produced the tiniest oranges known to man, and often they were bitter, but we still took great delight in being allowed to pluck one from the small tree and be able to eat it.

As it turned out, the single tree faired pretty well for a while. I got reasonably regular updates from Dad about how it was going. It produced 2 fruits rather quickly, or so it seemed from many continents away. One was consumed and deemed delicious, while the other was being allowed to grow longer in hopes it could hold out until our arrival. To be honest, I can't remember if that small fruit made it that long. Perhaps because the idea of consuming the fruit myself had never truely crossed my mind as much as purchasing a gift that had such a significant meaning to me, and hopefully to my father.

Each Sunday my husband makes pasta for all the men-folk in our home, being the only women , and having a gluten allergy I make myself a big salad to consume instead. I'd picked up a beautifully huge pomegranate at my local supermarket a couple of weeks ago, and pulled it out to add half to my salad.

As I sat there picking all the beautiful jewel shaped seeds for my salad, and making sure none of the bitter pith fell into the bowl, a wave of memories swept over me, and I was momentarily lost to the noise of screeching birds and cooking food, and the chaos of scrambling teens going on around me in the kitchen as I allowed myself to indulge in all those memories.

I was thinking of my late father, and wondering whatever happened to that pomegranate tree. The words I wrote about tumbled through my mind and I debated abandoning dinner to get them down on paper, and instead began to write it down in my head. I felt a smile on my face as I remembered those napkins, not very absorbent as I recall, and the typical gaudy gold of the 70's and 80's, but effective for wiping our sticky fingers on. Movies and shows flashed through my head, although which ones we specifically watched while eating pomegranate may forever remain a mystery, for it was not where my mind was focused.

My husband asked how much longer I had to go as he was nearly done cooking, and it pulled

me from my reverie. As I looked down at my cutting board to access the question, because lost in thought as I was, I had no real answer for him, I realised that after breaking off half of the pomegranate what remained looked a bit like a heart to my eyes. I chuckled to myself, and then after a second thought I ran off to fetch my phone and snapped a quick photo, the results being the above photo.

People often ask the question, what is love? Love is many things to me, and one of those is bright red pomegranates.

The Reluctant Author