

Maurya's Magical Monsoon Morning

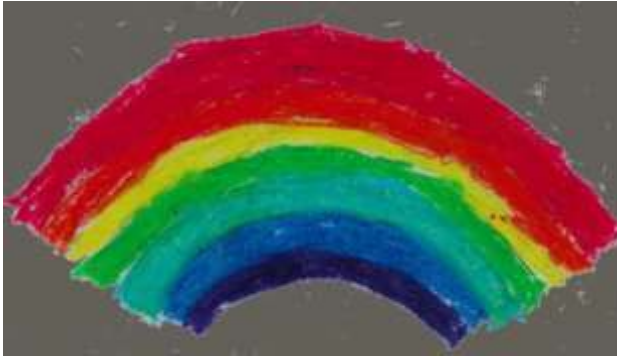


One Saturday morning, Maurya woke up when the sun shone in to his eyes through the curtains. He was excited, because he loved playing tennis with his papa on sunny mornings. But, when he opened the curtains, he was surprised to see that it was raining heavily, and the sun was shining brightly through dark Gray clouds. How was that possible? He wanted to know.



He ran out of the house in his pyjamas. He lived on the 21st floor of a high-rise building, but he was too excited to wait for the lift. So, he ran down lots and lots of stairs. Finally, he was out in the open soaking in the rain, on the lawn, in front of the building.

As he looked around, he saw the most terrific rainbow. It was bigger and brighter than any rainbow he had ever seen, even in a story book. Dense clouds covered the entire sky except the sun. The rainbow looked beautiful against the Gray background.



Maurya ran around the lawn whooping with joy. Suddenly, he noticed something strange. There was a tree laden with bright red pomegranates right in the middle of the lawn. Maurya was sure that neither the pomegranates nor the tree had been there the previous day or ever before. Where did they come from? What was going on?

Bursting with curiosity, Maurya plucked a pomegranate. It felt quite real. He had a sudden urge to taste it. But he could not open it with his bare hands. So, he found a sharp rock and banged the pomegranate with

it, till it broke open and the pretty red seeds spilled out.



Maurya picked up a handful of the seeds and put it in his mouth. They tasted delicious, but as he chomped on the seeds, he felt very strange. His insides began to squirm and wiggle. Maurya got scared and tried to spit out the seeds, but he found that he couldn't, and then he noticed that his mouth was turning into a beak, A BIG YELLOW BEAK.

Now Maurya was really frightened. What was happening to him? Were the seeds poisonous? He looked at his hands and noticed they were becoming feathery and then he saw that claws were sticking out of his bedroom slippers. Before he could do anything about it, he had completely transformed into a giant black cuckoo bird and his pyjamas lay ripped to shreds on the ground.

Maurya screamed in panic, but all he could hear was a raspy "Koo Koo". Terrified, Maurya started flapping his arms and running around, but of course, his arms were no longer arms. They were wings! So, he found himself soaring in to the air. *I can fly*, he thought, astonished. In fact, he was so surprised, that he stopped flapping and fell back down, plop.

I can fly, I can fly Maurya thought, elated. *I had always wanted to fly, and now I can.* So, forgetting all his worries, Maurya spread his giant wings and took to the sky. He reached up to the 46th floor where his friend Gamala lived. He went and perched on her window and looked through it. Gamala was fast asleep.

Lazy girl, Maurya thought and shouted out her name. But all that came out was a loud screechy "Koo Koo". Gamala was startled out of her slumber and stared at the giant black bird at her window. Frightened, she started throwing her toys at it. Maurya just about managed to dodge a glass bottle of red poster colour.



Scared that Gamala might maim him, he flew away higher in to the sky and decided to explore the city from high above. The rain had ebbed and the rainbow had faded. But from up there, Mumbai looked like it was made of Legos. Tiny toy cars zipped up and down long Gray strips.



Maurya reached a part of the highway where the metro construction had just begun. Suddenly 4 lanes had to merge in to one and created a colossal traffic jam. Maurya remembered his school bus had been getting

stuck at this very place for 10 minutes every day. But now he could just fly over the mess. Delighted he began to sing and filled the air with melodious koos.

Maurya merrily flew over buildings and billboards. Suddenly he heard the most frightening sound. A huge scary object was heading for him at great speed. *My goodness! It's a plane,* Maurya realized and veered away just in time.



That was a close shave, Maurya thought trembling, and decided to steer clear of the airport and watch out for planes.

The rain had completely stopped. Maurya decided to fly west. He wanted to see the open sea from high above. So, he crossed Juhu beach and flew over the waves. But once all he could see was water, he was scared. He had never realized how huge the

sea really was.



Maurya looked for the sun so he could fly away from it, back east. He was relieved once he could see the shoreline again. All this flying had tired him out, and he really needed to rest, but he couldn't stop until he had crossed the sea.

When he reached Juhu beach, he felt thirsty and longed for some coconut water. But his beak wasn't good for pecking through the hard outer shell of the coconut. Maurya decided to go home.

As he flew back, he realized he was tired of being a bird, but what could he do about it? Perhaps his Mama would know. But would she recognize him? Maurya began to cry thinking he would be a bird forever.

Just then he noticed his building and landed on the lawn in front of it. He had

hoped that eating a few more pomegranate seeds would turn him back to normal. But the pomegranate seeds, had disappeared and so had the tree and the fruits. They had vanished like they never existed. Maurya walked around crying. He went to the kids play area which was his favourite part of the society grounds.

Perched on the slide, he noticed something. The lawn was bone dry and so was the playground, except for a tiny puddle, even though it had rained heavily only a little while ago. The puddle too was drying fast. Maurya remembered that the strange day had begun with the sun shining brightly through the heavy rain. He remembered the unnaturally bright rainbow.

Perhaps the rain was magical, he thought. It gave him an idea. He swooped down and drank in the last few sips of the puddle just as it dried away. He smiled with relief as he saw himself being transformed back in to a little boy. The feathers were gone and he was clothed in his pyjamas again. He touched his face and felt soft lips instead of a beak.

When he reached back home, Mama had breakfast ready on the table. Waffles were his favourite weekend breakfast. 'Maurya

you naughty boy. Where have you been?" Mama shouted. "You know you are not supposed to go out until after breakfast."

"But Mama, it was raining and there was a beautiful rainbow ..." Maurya began.

"Oh, enough with the lies Maurya! Can't you see the sun is shining and there is not a drop of water anywhere or a single cloud in the sky?" Mama sounded angry, so Maurya quietly ate his waffles.

After breakfast, Gamala came for their play date. "Aunty I saw a giant cuckoo bird today, as big as a dog, and scared it away with my toys." She recounted, proudly.

"You kid and your silly stories. Maurya says it was raining and you say you saw a cuckoo the size of a dog."

"But it was raining when the giant cuckoo came to my window, aunty." Gamala insisted. "Maurya you should have seen it. It was huge. Bigger than you even, I think."

Maurya grinned and decided to keep his magical adventure story to himself. Perhaps he would soon have another one

soon. In the meantime, today was the perfect sunny day for some tennis with Papa and Gamala.



The cover art was done by Mini G and some of the crayon drawings in the book were done by Pell G. Mini G is 4 and Pell G is 7 and they are both daughters of Kanika G.

Mini G and Kanika G set out for a walk in the rain in their housing society to celebrate the onset of the 2019 monsoon in Mumbai. That's when they came up with the idea for this story. They discussed various possibilities while they walked,

and drew inspiration from the
magical monsoon scenes and sounds.

