



**PRATHAM
BOOKS**

The Birthday Cake

Author: Andaleeb Wajid
Illustrator: Kabini Amin

Level 4

At the end of a street, there was an old house with yellow walls, a creaky gate and a tiled roof. An old woman lived there, alone.



Azad, Haniya, Charulata and Piyush were often found playing on the street, screaming and shouting.

“Don’t make so much noise!” their parents told them but the four children never listened. They kept screaming and shouting as they played games.



Once, their cricket ball fell inside the old woman's garden. They waited for her to return it to them. She didn't.

This happened many times. The children never got their ball back.



One evening, the four of them jumped over the wall.
They wanted to try and get the balls back. Long
shadows fell on the garden wall.

They looked up and saw the woman at the door.

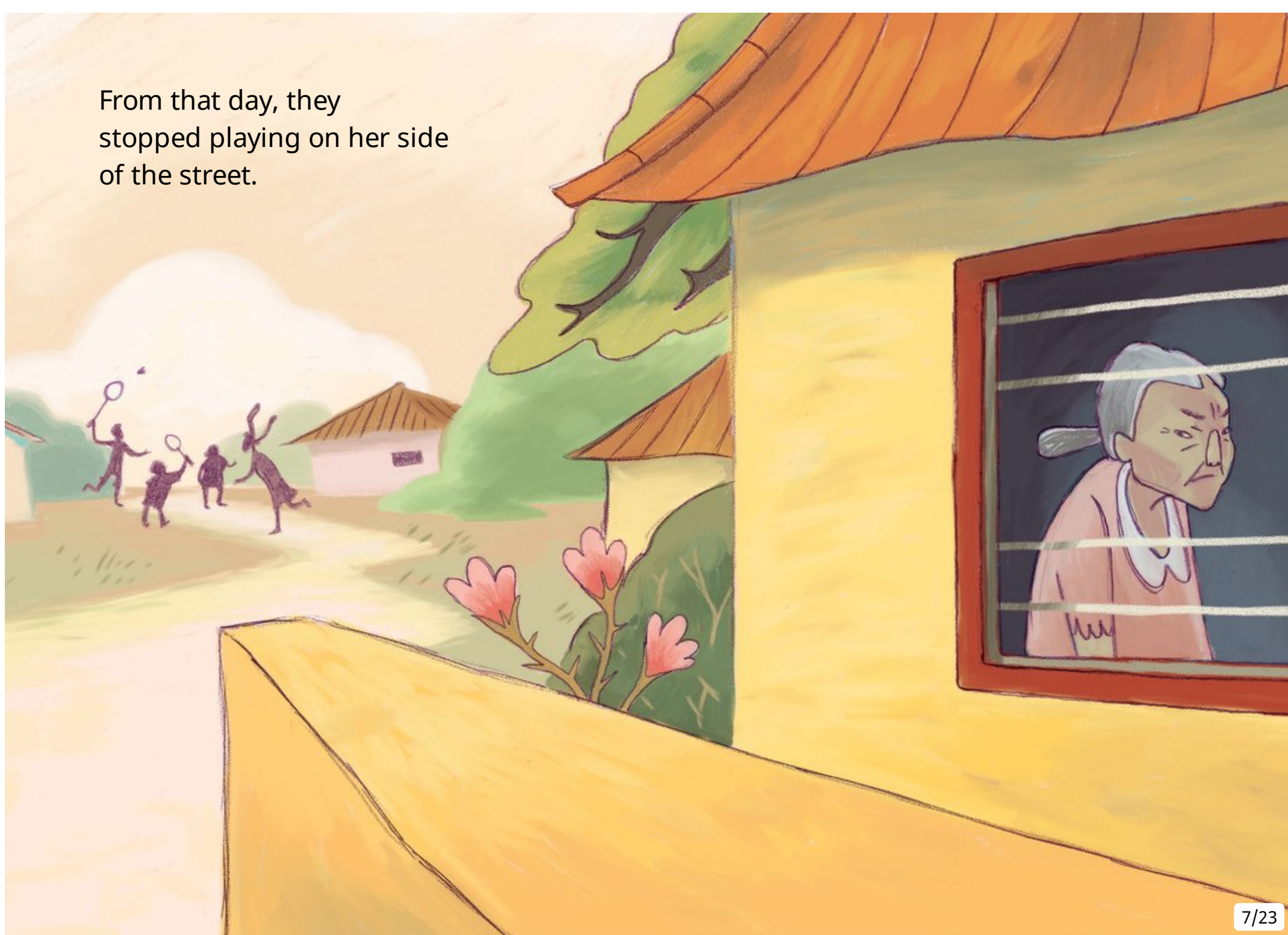
“She looks creepy” Piyush
whispered.

“Fool!” Haniya whispered back.
They all ran away, a little
scared.





From that day, they
stopped playing on her side
of the street.



One day, the children saw a postman cycle to the old woman's house. She took the envelope from him and went in, shutting the gate in his face.



The postman was back on his cycle and about to leave when Haniya stopped him. "What did you give her?" she asked. The postman smiled. "A birthday card from her insurance company." "They are her friends?" Charu asked. The postman shook his head.



“Old people don’t have friends who can send them cards for their birthdays?”

Haniya wondered.

“That’s not true. Old people have friends. But who would want to be friends with her?” Piyush asked.

He was the youngest and got scared easily.

“Imagine no one wishing her for her birthday!” Charu said.

“But she must be a hundred years at least. There’s no one her age to wish her” Piyush said.



“We can wish her,” Azad said.

“Yes, and I’d still like people to wish me for my birthday even if I’m 100,” Charu said.

“So? You want to go and wish her? She’ll gobble you up!” Piyush said.

“No, but what if we...” Haniya trailed off.

“What if we... what?” Azad asked.





“What if we bake a cake for her?” Haniya said.

Everyone looked at her like she was mad.

But then, cake! How could they say no to that?

“Can you make it look like a cricket ball?” Piyush asked. “Maybe she’ll get a hint then.”

“No,” Charu said, rolling her eyes.

Everyone was excited now. They decided to bake the cake at Charu’s house. Her mother never minded if they made a mess in the kitchen. But they all had to pool their money for the ingredients.



“Why are we doing this again?” Azad grumbled as he collected everyone’s pocket money. He would be going to the shop to buy what they needed.

“Can you imagine not celebrating your birthday?” Haniya replied.

When they had bought the ingredients, they chose an easy recipe from a book.



The kitchen did become a mess but everyone had fun – there was flour, bits of broken eggshells.

“Can we slice the top off to taste it? She won’t know if the cake is short, no?” Piyush asked. Azad shook his head.

“No, you won’t stop at just that!” Charu argued. “Can I at least taste the icing?” he asked. “You can lick the bowl when we finish,” Haniya said.

The children frosted the cake as best as they could. It was a little wobbly.

“Do we have to give it to her?” Azad said, when it was finished.

“Come on, we know how to do it now. We can bake one for ourselves later. But it’s her birthday today,” Haniya reminded them.



Charu's mother helped them
put the cake on a tray and they
walked down the road.



Everyone was nervous. What if she threw away the cake? They waited for the old lady to come outside her house.

She appeared at the gate, her eyes squinting as she looked at them.

“What is it?” she asked them, sharply.



“Happy birthday, Aunty!”
they all said together.



For a long time, the old woman said nothing. At last, she opened the gate and let them in. Piyush entered last, staying close to Charu.

They looked around the garden. In one corner, they saw all their cricket balls piled up. No one said anything.

“Come,” the old lady said, opening the door of her house.

Inside the house, the children sat on the edge of the sofa. They put down the tray with the cake on the centre table.



“Sit. I’m getting a knife,” she said and walked away.

“Knife? Why?” Piyush asked, looking scared.

“To cut the cake, silly,” Charu admonished him.

They looked around the house. Almost everything was dusty and neglected.



“Look! It’s her,” Haniya said, pointing at some photo frames on a shelf. In the photos, she was young and happy.

“See? She was not always a hundred years old!” Charu pointed out to Piyush.

The old lady walked back inside and the kids returned to the sofa in a hurry. In her hand, there were plates along with a knife. She cut the cake and served them.

“Don’t think this will make me return your cricket balls when you play outside again,” she told them but her tone was not harsh. The children looked at each other as they ate quietly.



Then Azad cleared his throat. "You also eat the cake, aunty. It's good. We made it," he said.

The old lady nodded and ate some of the cake.

When the children got up to leave, she said, "Take your balls and go."



Some days later, a ball fell into the old lady's garden.

At first, she seemed annoyed.

Then she smiled, picked it up and threw it back to the kids.





Fraternity

Look around you and you'll see how different we all are from each other. Whether it's the way we talk, the way we think or the way we look, no two people are exactly the same.

Fraternity is the idea that while we are different, we are all equally important. It is an idea of kinship, and of mutual support. We all have emotions, dreams and hopes. We all feel pain, happiness, anger and love.

Promoting fraternity among the citizens of India is one of the central tenets of our Constitution.

We can all come together, to become one, no matter who we are.



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The Birthday Cake

(English)

Azad, Haniya, Charulata and Piyush love to play in front of their house — as long as they avoid the grumpy old woman at the end of the street. One day, when they find out that it's her birthday, the four friends decide to bake her a cake. After all, no one should spend their birthday alone. A charming story about fraternity and empathy.

This is a Level 4 book for children who can read fluently and with confidence.



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