

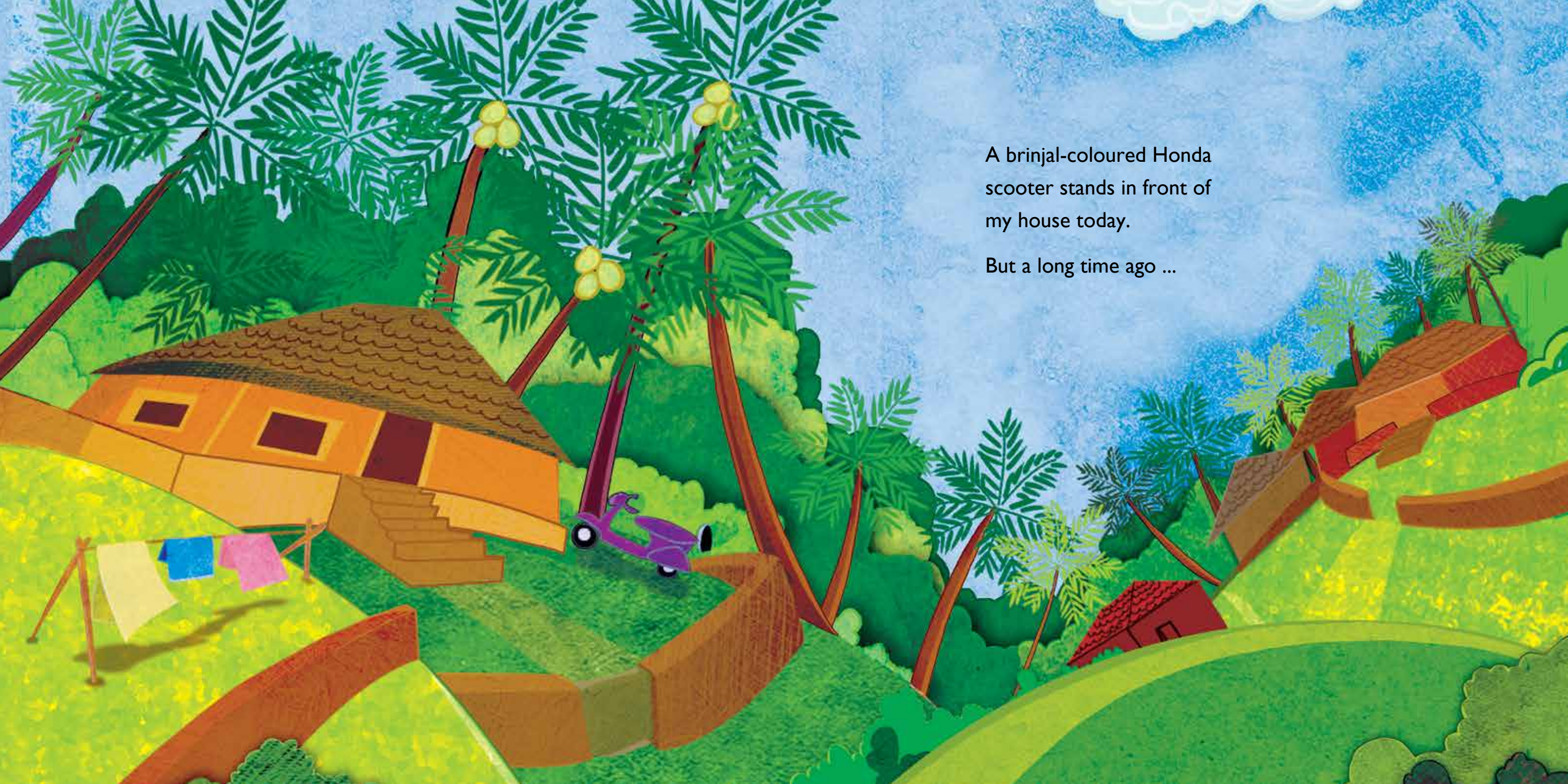
Paavannan

The Bicycle

Art by Ayush Rajvanshi
& Mohit Srivastava



a 300m thinkbook from Katha 

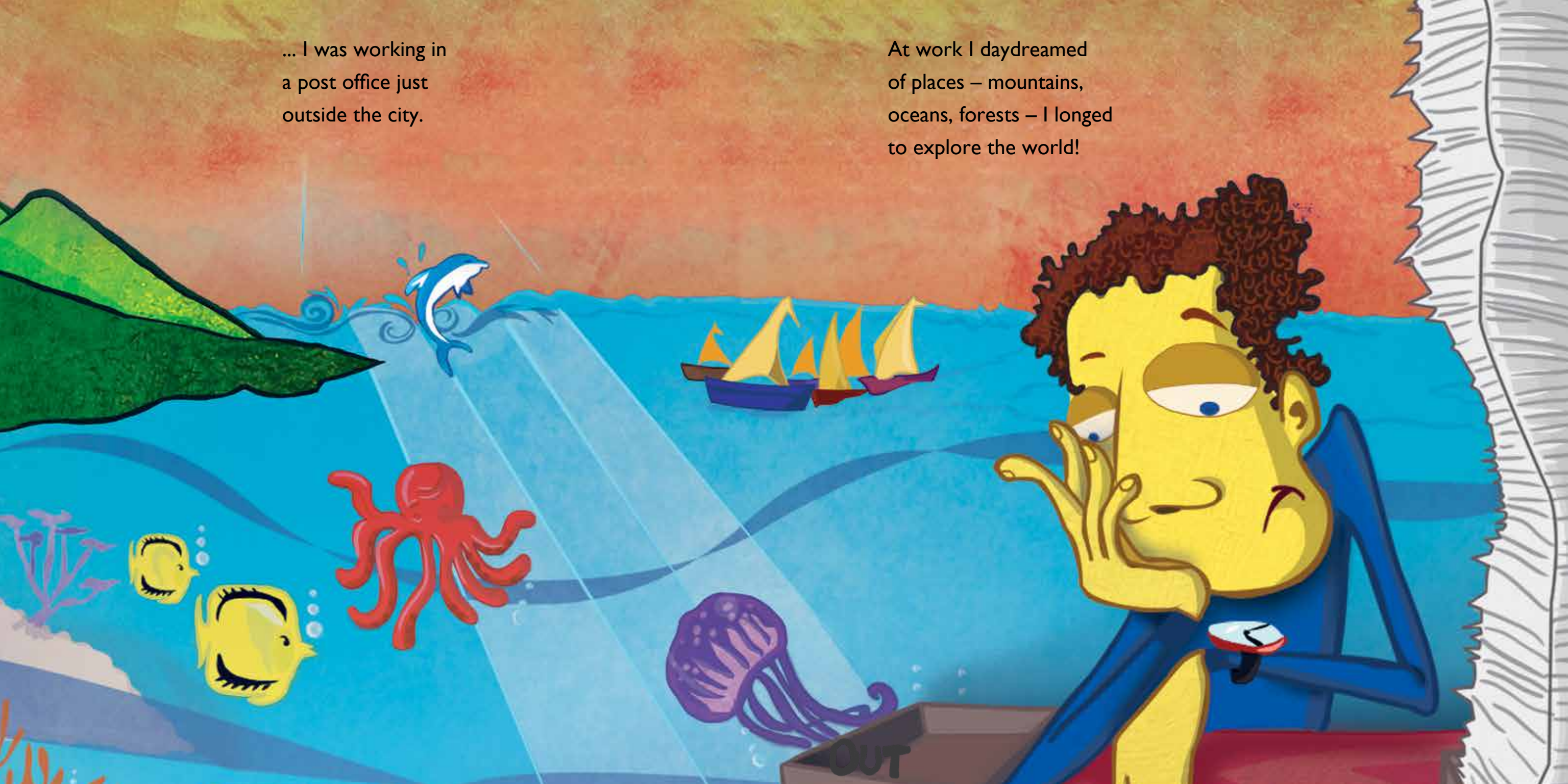


A brinjal-coloured Honda scooter stands in front of my house today.

But a long time ago ...

... I was working in
a post office just
outside the city.

At work I daydreamed
of places – mountains,
oceans, forests – I longed
to explore the world!



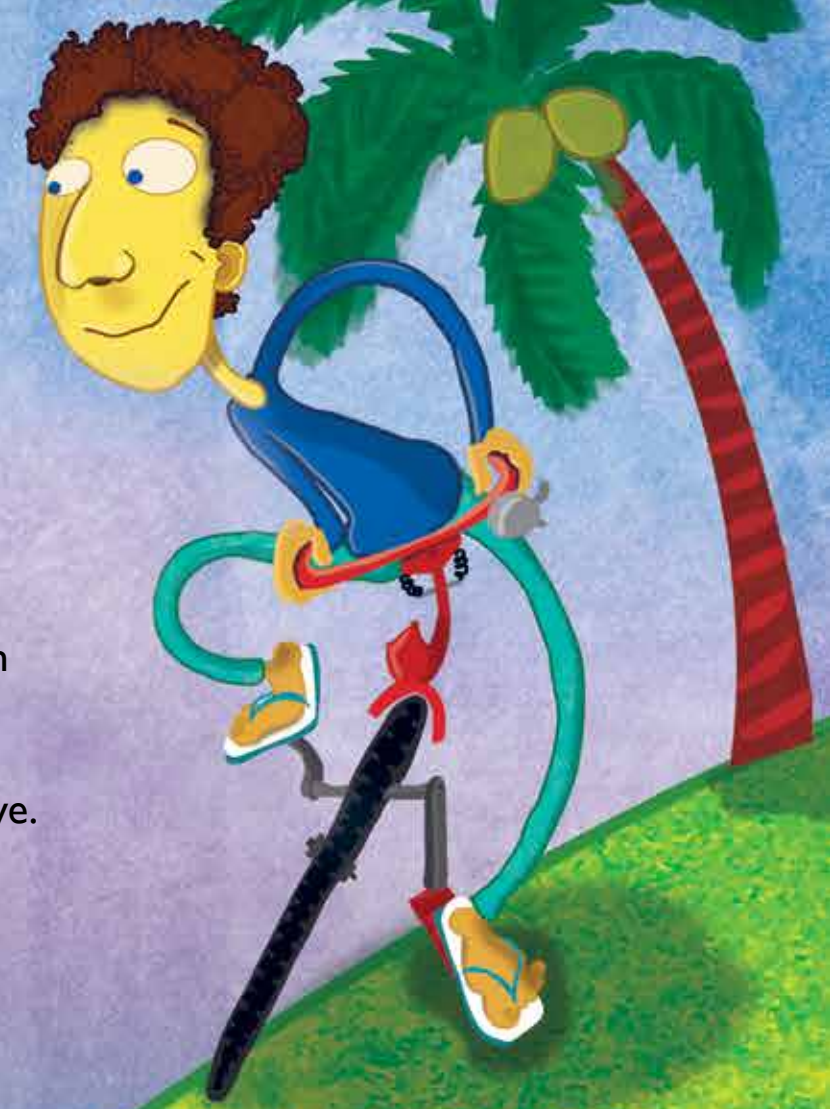
So, one day I purchased a bicycle.

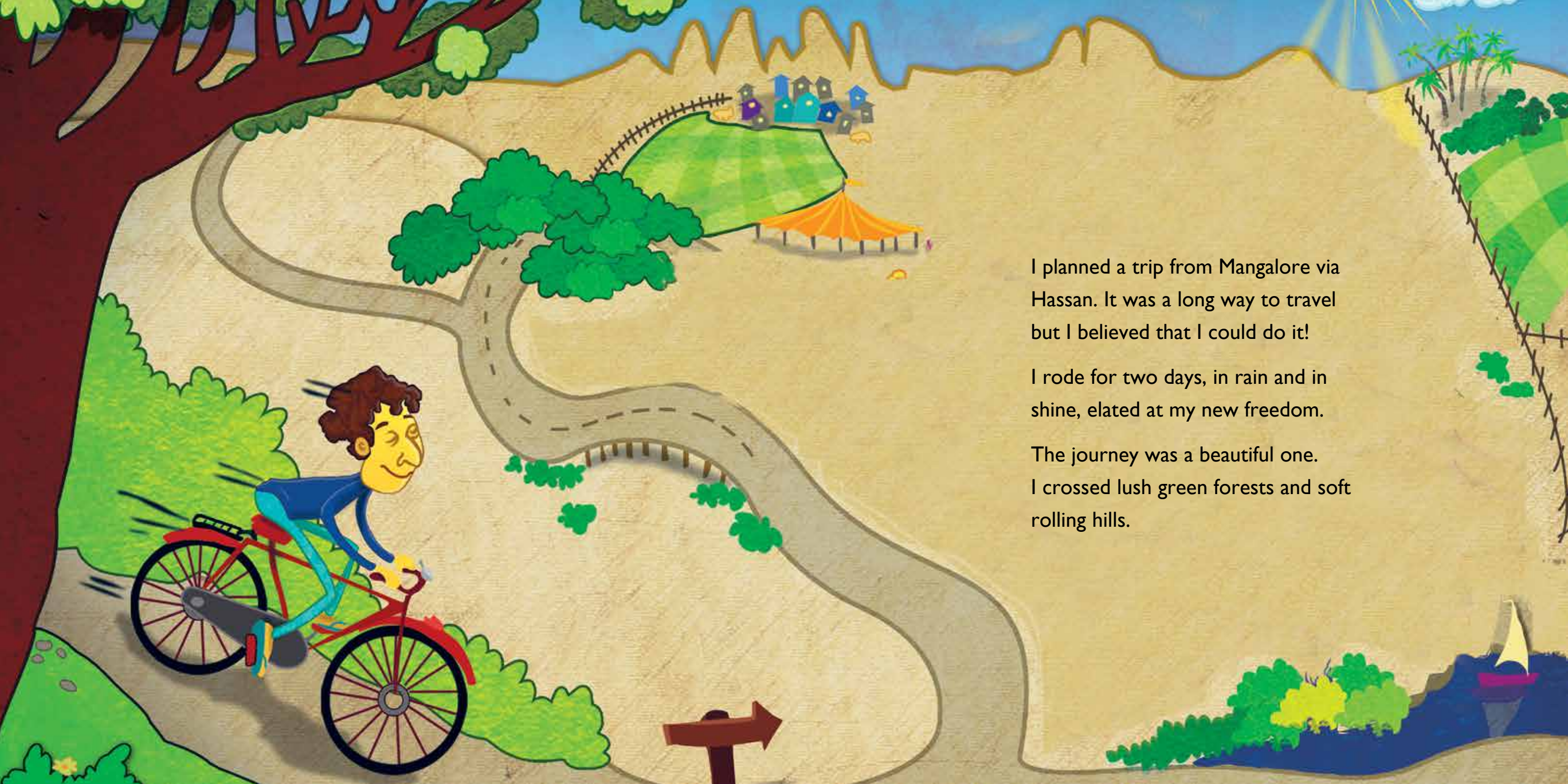
From then on, I would ride far away into the wind's embrace.

I rode to familiar towns. I rode to unfamiliar towns. I rode to places where there were no people at all ...

I wished I could keep on riding forever.

So I applied for long leave.





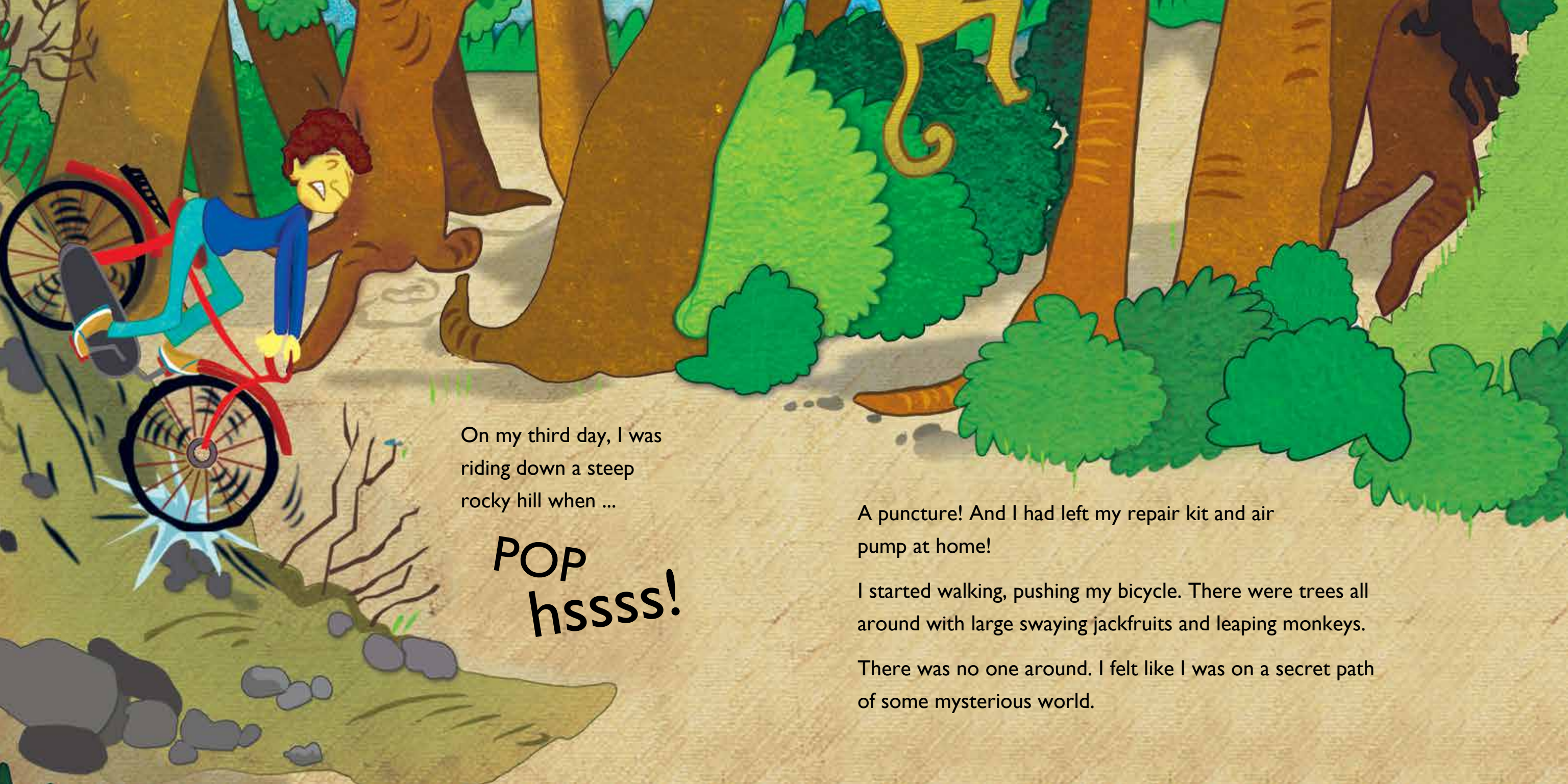
I planned a trip from Mangalore via Hassan. It was a long way to travel but I believed that I could do it!

I rode for two days, in rain and in shine, elated at my new freedom.

The journey was a beautiful one. I crossed lush green forests and soft rolling hills.

The rainy season had just arrived, but getting wet in the drizzle was a joy.





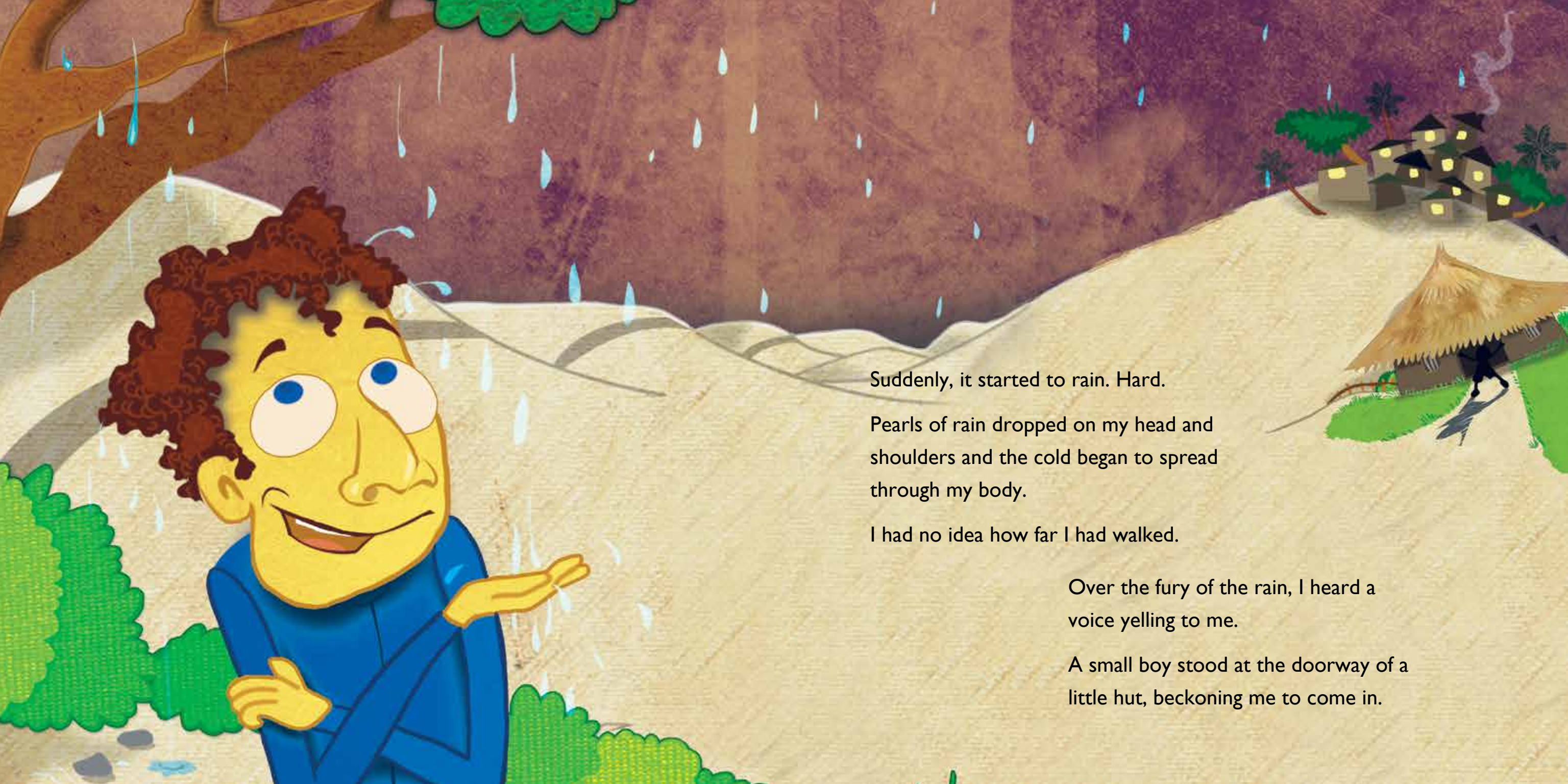
On my third day, I was riding down a steep rocky hill when ...

**POP
hsssss!**

A puncture! And I had left my repair kit and air pump at home!

I started walking, pushing my bicycle. There were trees all around with large swaying jackfruits and leaping monkeys.

There was no one around. I felt like I was on a secret path of some mysterious world.



Suddenly, it started to rain. Hard.

Pearls of rain dropped on my head and shoulders and the cold began to spread through my body.

I had no idea how far I had walked.

Over the fury of the rain, I heard a voice yelling to me.

A small boy stood at the doorway of a little hut, beckoning me to come in.



He asked, "Where are you from?"

"Mangalore," I said.

"All that way by bicycle? It's 200 kilometres from here!" said the boy. He stared at me in wonder. "Can you really travel that far by bicycle?"

I nodded.

"To the Himalayas?"

"Mm."

"To Pakistan?"

"If you set your heart on it, you can go anywhere."

The boy began to frown.

"I badly want a bicycle but Amma won't buy me one."

I took one look at his mother. I understood why.

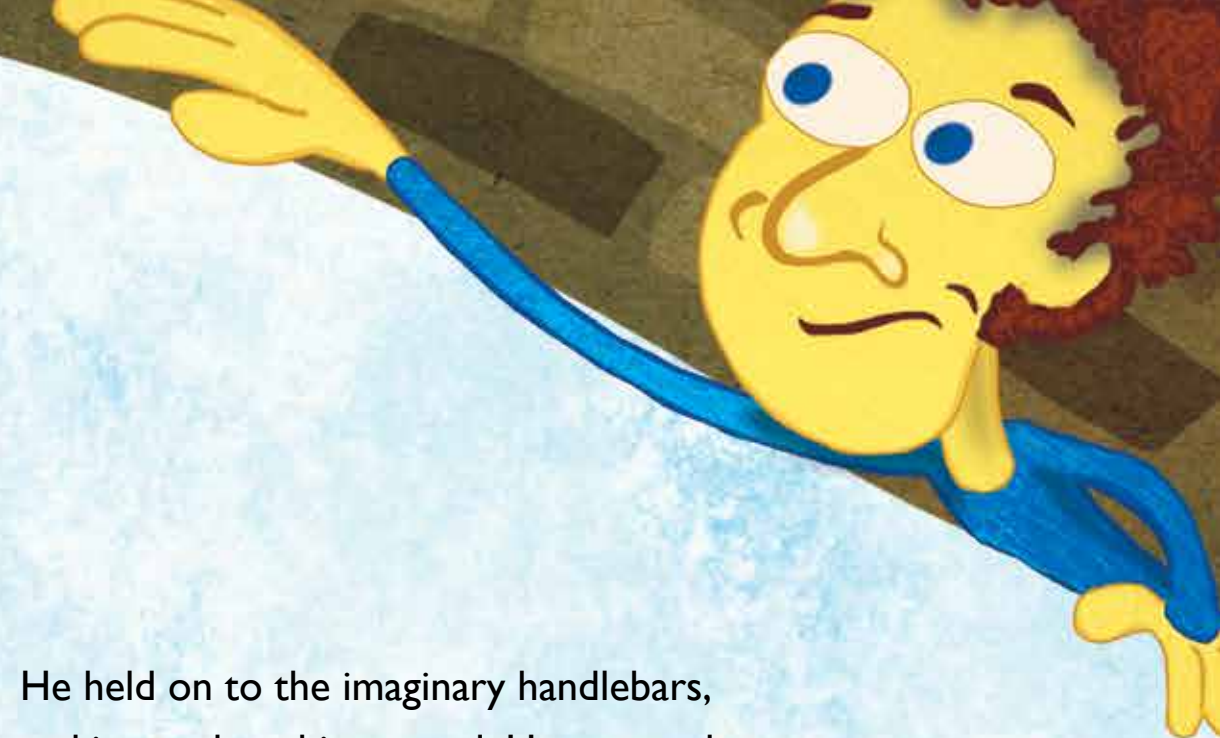
"You're still a small boy. When you grow up, Amma will definitely buy you one."



“But who’ll teach me to ride?”

“I will,” I said, “as soon as the rain stops.”

He began to pretend he was riding a bicycle around the room.



He held on to the imaginary handlebars, making a whooshing sound. He swerved to avoid an imaginary bus.

“Brake, brake!” I yelled.

We both burst out laughing. Like brothers, we shared the same streak of madness.

That night, he went on and on about Bangalore,
Lalbagh, Cubbon Park and Ulsoor Lake.

“I’ll visit them all someday,
on a bicycle, just like you!” he said.

His eyes shone.





The next morning the rain stopped. The boy and I went to a bicycle shop in the next town to fix the puncture.

On the way back, I said to the boy, "Hop on!"



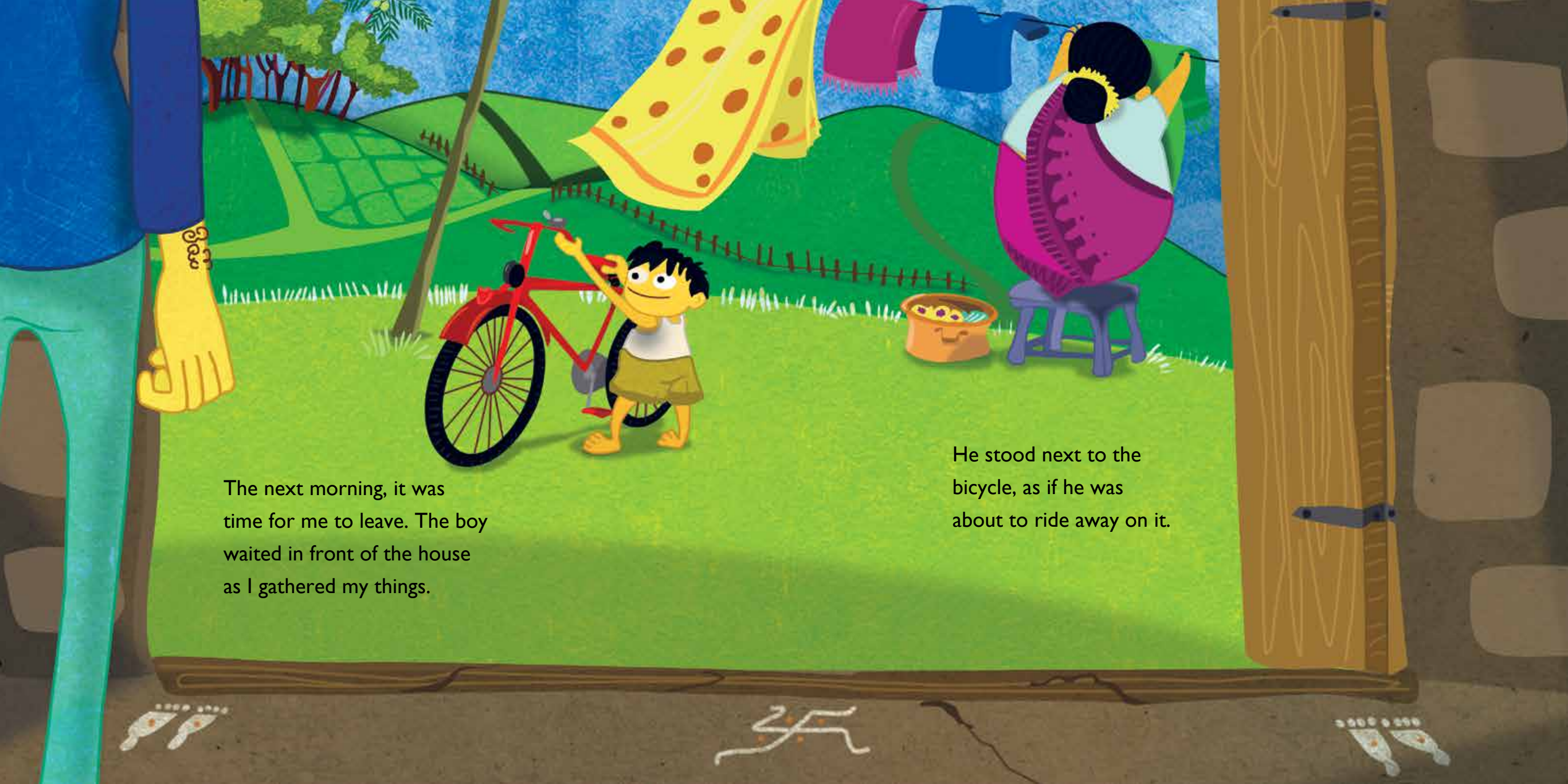
His joy knew no bounds.

I held the bicycle steady as he straightened his back and reached for the pedals.

He was small for the bicycle but not by too much. He started to roll forwards.

“I feel like I am flying!” he exclaimed.

The boy was a quick learner!



The next morning, it was time for me to leave. The boy waited in front of the house as I gathered my things.

He stood next to the bicycle, as if he was about to ride away on it.



He walked me to the boundary of his town.

And then he said, “Would you mind if I rode around the block one last time? I will come right back!”

“Okay. But ...” Before I could finish, he was away!

I watched cycle rickshaws, auto rickshaws with their yellow tops, lorries, and many people moving in every direction.

As he disappeared round the corner, I thought of his family, his dreams, his passion.



At that moment, a bus to Hassan
stopped in front of me.

I came to a sudden
decision ...



I quickly climbed on, smiling.
The bus left immediately.

I looked down the street and
thought I could see his face,
beaming at me from afar.

Hassan, Bangalore



Paavannan, a prolific writer, translator and editor, began writing in the 80s. Six collections of his stories, two novellas and a poetry collection have been published. His novel *Sidharalgal* received an award from the Government of Tamil Nadu in 1990. *Paaymara Kappal* was selected as the best novel for 1995 by Ilakkiya Chintanai and Thirupur Thamizh Changam. He won the Katha Award for Creative Fiction in 1998 for his Tamil story "Payanam." He has edited an anthology of Kannada Dalit writings and a collection of modern Kannada poems. He is by nature a wanderer and fond of travelling. This story is about a small boy he came across on one such occasion.

N Kalyan Raman, a technocrat, has written book reviews, articles and essays in English and Tamil. He translated Bertolt Brecht's *The Exception and The Rule* into Tamil in 1978.

Agush Rajvanshi is a graduate from the National Institute of Design in Animation and Film Design. He has designed shows for Sesame Street in India and worked on projects like the Terra Quiz and Wills India Fashion Week. His short film "The Earth Story" was selected to open the UNESCO conference on climate change in Copenhagen.

Mohit Srivastava is a Bombay based award winning artist and storyteller.

KATHA

Katha is a globally recognised non-profit organization (www.katha.org) that has been working in the literacy to literature continuum since 1988. Our nearly 30 years of experience is in publishing and education for children in poverty.

"An educational jewel in India's crown."

— Naoyuki Shinohara, Deputy Managing Director, IMF

"Katha stands as an exemplar for all the creative projects around the world that grapple with ordinary and dramatic misery in cities."

— Charles Landry, *The Art of City Making*

"Katha has a real soft corner for kids. Which is why it ... create[s] such gorgeous picture books for children." — Time Out

"Katha's work is driven by the idea that children can bring change to their communities that is sustainable and real, just as the children do in [their books.]" — PaperTigers



This edition first published 2021

Copyright © Katha, 2014, 2021

Text copyright © Paavannan

Illustrations copyright © Katha

A3, Sarvodaya Enclave, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi 110 017

Phone: 91-11 4141 6600 . 4141 6610

E-mail: editors@katha.org, Website: www.katha.org

ISBN 978-93-92454-65-6

Our Mission: Every child reading well and for fun!

KATHA is a registered nonprofit organization started in 1988. We work in the literacy to literature continuum.

Devoted to enhancing the joys of reading amongst children and adults, we work with more than 1,00,000 children in poverty, to bring them to grade-level reading through quality books and interventions.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form without the prior written permission of the publisher.

10% of the net proceeds from the sale of these books goes to support reading and life long learning programmes for underprivileged children.



These books are specially made with love and care by the Katha team, for 5 to 12 year olds.

They are part of our UntextBook Initiative, to bring the joy of reading through literature and fabulous artworks.

Take your child from wordless books to books with 1200 words.

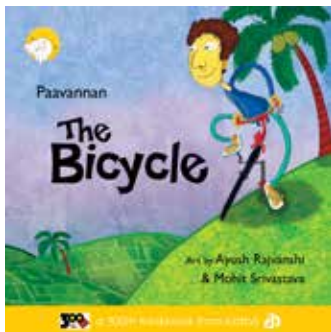
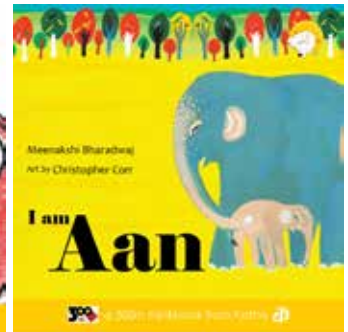
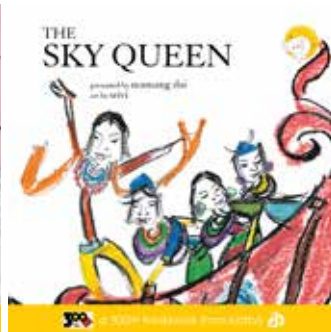
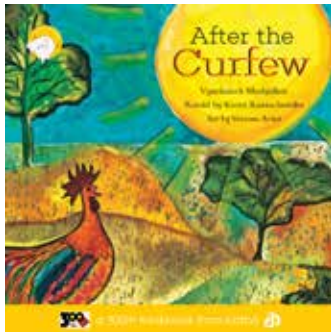
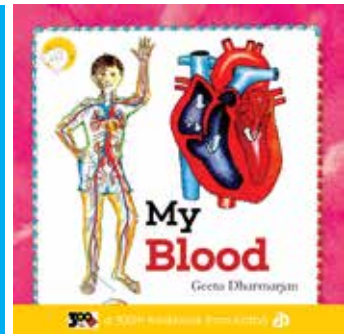
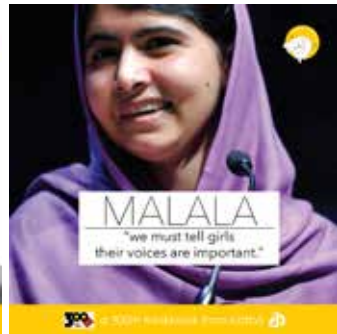
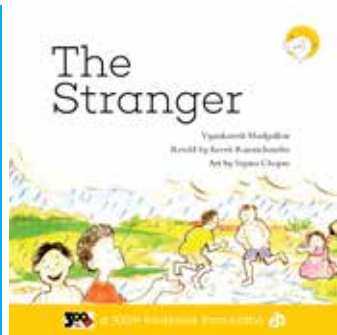
Stories and poems from 3,500 years of literary history.

Read with your children.
Colour their world with imagination.

Join the 300 Million Citizens' Challenge!
Create a world where children are reading for fun and meaning.
To join: 300m@katha.org
To volunteer: volunteer@katha.org

I Love Reading Library is a unique series of books that brings new and diffident readers into reading fluently. With high-quality content and design to match the learning needs of children who are at different reading levels, it brings together the finest literary creations and artworks from India and the world. Our books manifest Geeta Dharmarajan's StoryPedagogy™ - a unique pedagogical model, which promotes the joy of reading specially for first-generation readers, and takes the child into the fascinating world of BIG Ideas and TA-DAA!
(Think, Ask, Discuss, Act and Achieve).

Katha's Holistic Early Learning (KHEL!) Lab offers workshops to teachers in government, non-profit and private schools. These are F2F (Face-to-Face) workshops supported by online sessions leading to a "Reading Teachers' Certificate" for teachers, school administrators and volunteers.
To know more, write to us at 300m@katha.org



FOR OUR BOOKS

www.books.katha.org

“[Katha]...a special and unique moment in Indian Publishing history.”
— The iconic The Economic Times

for children

ISBN-978-93-88284-81-3

9 789388 284813

₹ xxx

www.katha.org