



FLUTE

in the

FOREST

Leela Gour Broome

RUSKIN BOND RECOMMENDS

'A charming story, full of incident and
good feeling. Atiya's flute has
a special magic of its own'
—RUSKIN BOND

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A FISHING TRIP

Three months went by in a flash and the village school closed for the summer holidays. Atiya always looked forward to the holidays.

Today being a Sunday, Papa had promised to take her fishing. Angasammy, the cook, quickly made a packed lunch for the two of them and put three bottles of cold water from the fridge into a cool box. For good measure Atiya added a packet of chocolate and some banana chips. Outdoor trips always made her ravenous.

While he put two fishing rods into the back of the jeep, Papa got the gardener to dig up some worms which he would use as fish bait. Atiya threw in a bag with sun caps, a small rug and some lacto-calamine lotion—in case they were bitten by mosquitoes. Papa started up the engine, revving it up with gusto. Dhola sprang into the back of the jeep, barking with excitement. Atiya climbed carefully into the front, flinging her walking stick under the seat. As her father inched the jeep out of the front porch, still shouting orders to Manniar, the junior guard in charge for the day, Atiya saw the sun peeping out from behind the thick canopy of trees around their garden. The sky was clear with not a wisp of cloud. She looked forward to a super day with her father.

‘Which way?’ Papa hollered with an enquiring grin. The engine roared and Dhola’s yappy barks added to the racket.

‘The other side of the sanctuary, please . . . please?’ Atiya begged. She knew her father did not like to leave the vicinity of his beloved forest—but today was Sunday. He smiled at her indulgently.

‘Okay, the other side!’ Papa replied. ‘But it’s going to be a long ride, and we’ll have to hunt for a good fishing spot. The riverbanks are sharp and jagged—it’s not easy to get to the water there.’

‘I’ll just sit close by, even if I cannot reach it,’ Atiya told him, happy that he’d agreed to her request. He was in a good mood. After a very long time, she finally had her father to herself!

The drive through the sanctuary was super. Their jeep bumped along on rugged and desolate mud roads. In the distance, a tranquil herd of spotted deer munched grass in an opening, undisturbed by the noise of the vehicle. Their white tails flicked up and down, registering their approach, keeping the flies away. The leader stood erect and still in their midst and watched them proudly. Only his tail moved every now and then.

A rat squeal