

Up World, Down World

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Level 3



Fatima loved Sunday afternoons. After a lunch of beans and kofta, Maa would read the newspaper on her favourite chair and Baba would sneak away to take a nap.



Fatima could patter away with her book into the lively green forest near her house. The forest creatures would be sleeping, so it would be just her, curled up in the quiet hug of the forest trees.



Fatima would sit down in the shade of the Arjuna tree and gaze into the leafy Up World. Maa had warned her not to climb the tree's branches. It was safe down below. Fatima didn't know what was in the scary Up World.

But that day, Fatima was in for a surprise. As she turned a page, Fatima felt a dull **THUMP!** on her head.

"Ouch!" she yelled, rubbing her sore head. It was a tiny book, barely the size of a pea.



Fatima looked up and saw a furry animal trying to hide behind a bough of leaves.

"Hello! Is this book yours?" she asked, peering into the Up World. But she got no answer.



The pea-sized book belonged to Gopa, a young dormouse who lived in the Up World.

Gopa's little house, made of soft dry leaves and twigs, was in the Arjuna tree as well. The dormouse had often seen Fatima reading, and loved the yellow ribbons in her hair.



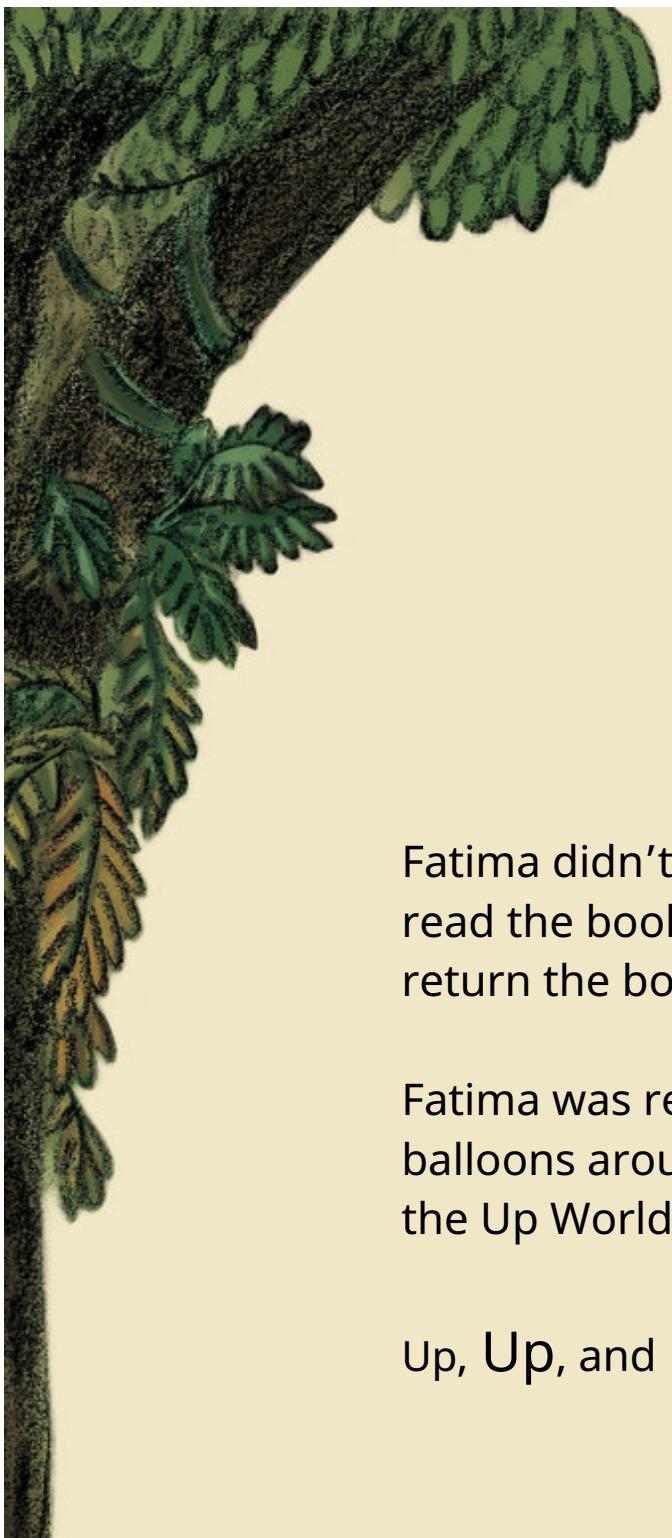
But Gopa's Amma had warned her about the terrors of the Down World.

All the animals were fearful of Fatima and other human beings and tried to remain invisible to the Down World.



That Sunday, Gopa had been swinging on her green, leafy hammock and reading. She was about to turn the last page when a strong breeze blew the book out of her small, furry paws. Down it went! It bounced on the branches and floated away. The book fell **THWACK!** and hit Fatima on her head.

Gopa's tail quivered and ears twitched. The Up and Down World should never meet, she thought and bolted home.



Fatima didn't climb the tree but kept squinting and trying to read the book. The letters were too small! Finally, she decided to return the book to the shadowy, furry creature.

Fatima was really clever – next Sunday she tied five shiny, red balloons around her waist and suddenly, she was floating up. To the Up World!

Up, Up, and **Up** went Fatima, until she reached the tree tops.



Gopa was brushing her bushy tail when she spotted five, shiny red balloons!

"Oh, balloons! Maybe it is someone's birthday," she thought excitedly. But what was this?

There was the girl with the yellow ribbons attached to the shiny, red balloons.

"Run, run away!" squeaked Gopa, "The Down World humans are here!"



But Fatima was faster. Fatima offered Gopa the book and asked, "Is this yours?"

Gopa grabbed the book quickly and smiled. Fatima giggled. She caught Gopa staring at her ribbons and tied one in a neat bow around her tail. Fatima and Gopa held hands and went off exploring!



Fatima and Gopa ran and skipped over the gaps in the trees of the canopy forest.

They bugged Baankey the fruit bat, who was sleeping upside down. Baankey did not like being poked. He grunted grumpily, and flapped away to the next branch.

"These kids will never let me rest," he thought. Soon he was away in Dreamsville, where he was hanging out in a fig tree, biting into the fleshy, sweet fruits.



Gopa helped Fatima hop over the long lines of weaver ants who were too busy to even stop and say hello. With long spindly legs and bubble-shaped bodies, the weaver ants scampered all over the tree.

These ants love teams! They work together to stitch large leaves into cozy nests.



Next, they bumped into Firki the canopy frog.

"He looks like a rainbow," thought Fatima. "Yellow feet, red eyes, and a blue body!" Firki was so surprised to see a human in his canopy that he almost let go of his strong grip on the branch! He croaked a weak hello and turned to pounce on his lunch – a grasshopper!

"I thought only the Down World had frogs," said Fatima, who loved chasing frogs around her house pond.



Hari the Hornbill was watching them from a distance. He really wanted to be friends with them! Hari was a friendly bird but he made very loud noises, which is why some animals kept him at a distance. But Gopa and Fatima didn't mind at all.



"The Up World isn't so scary after all," thought Fatima. "How silly I was."

"The people from the Down World are pretty cool," thought Gopa. "I am not frightened anymore."



"Sob! Sniff."

"Uh, oh, I think Vaidya is crying," said Gopa.

Her sharp ears picked up sounds easily. The two friends hurried towards Vaidya, a green vine snake, who was very shy.



"What is wrong, Vaidya?" asked Gopa.

Vaidya sobbed, looking greener than usual. "They cut down the tree that was my home. Now I don't know where to go," he cried.

Baankey, Dipu and other animals also popped out of their homes. Vaidya was homeless.

"A new, concrete road is going to be built and humans cut down my tree," wailed Vaidya.

Cutting down their home! The Up World was alarmed and upset.



"We must help Vaidya," said Gopa.

Fatima, Gopa and their new friends formed a search party. They searched and searched and found a snug tree-hole home for Vaidya. Fatima layered the home with soft leaves and orange flowers, Vaidya's favourite colour.

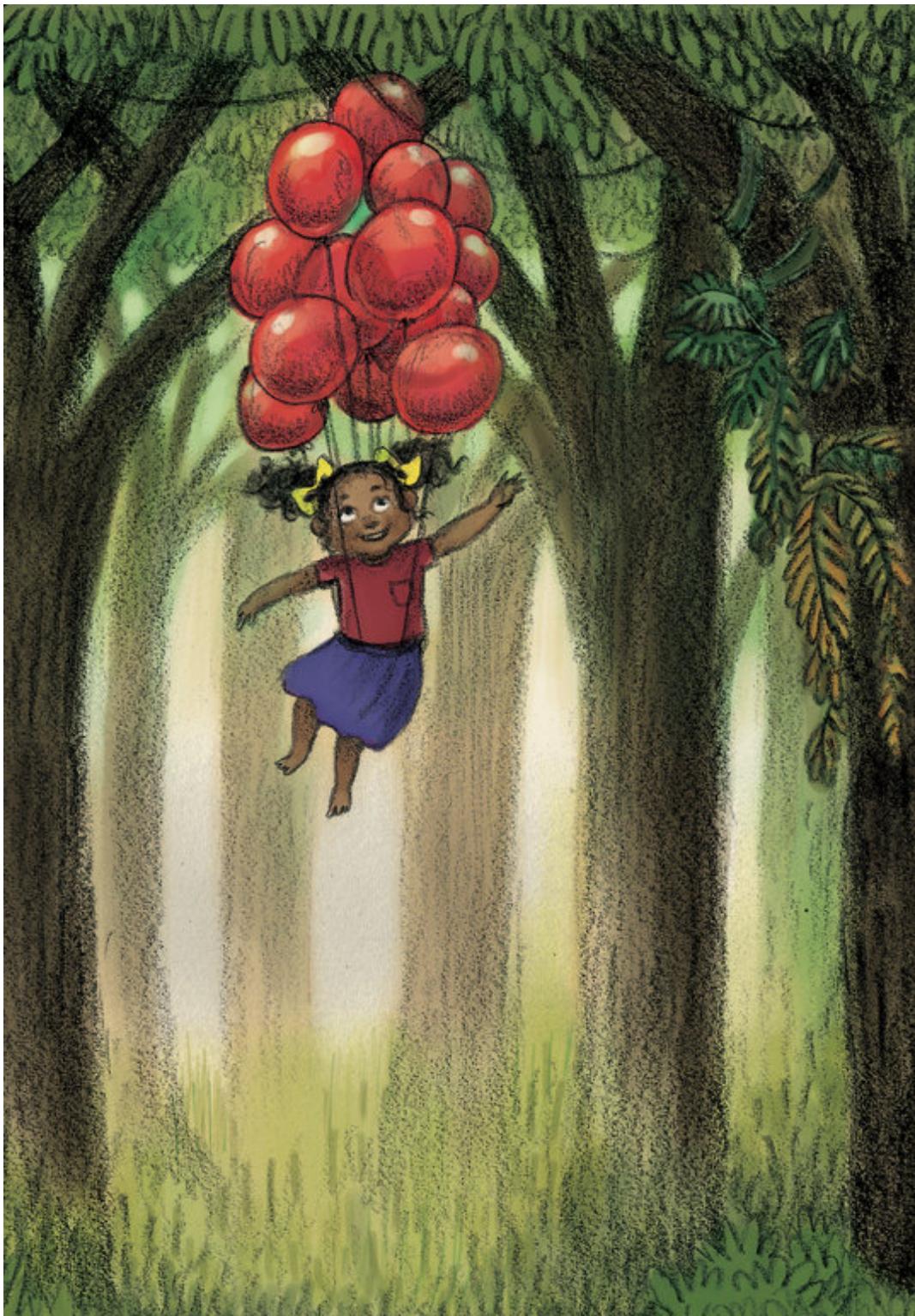
Vaidya loved his new home. "I can't believe I have so many friends! We need to have a party," he said.



And what a party it was. Everyone got their favourite food. Gopa got nuts, Hari got fruits, Baankey was too sleepy to get anything, the ants brought home-stitched, leafy cushions to sit on! Nobody wanted Firki's grasshoppers. As for Fatima, she had to get the balloons.

For the first time ever, the Up World and the Down World were just One World.





Meet Fatima's Friends in the Up World

Gopa and her friends live in the vast forest canopies of India. That means they don't live in the Down World, like us human beings. Instead they live in the Up World, in the swinging branches and swaying leaves of trees.

Many creatures that live in forest canopies are now used to living in tree tops. If you're lucky you will spot some of them, but most of these animals know how to hide themselves cleverly. So you have to be patient!

When scientists go to learn about these canopies, they have to use ropes or ladders, because the trees are very tall. Some even use very large hot-air balloons to get up there. You can imagine just how Up Fatima had to go with her balloons.



Here are some of the animals who live in forest canopies:

Malabar spiny dormouse: This bushy-tailed animal likes to live in trees in quiet, undisturbed forests. It loves to eat fruits and nibbles on pepper sometimes. This dormouse sleeps like a hedgehog, curled up with its tail protruding OUT.



Hornbill: These birds are vividly coloured with long and strong beaks. These sociable birds love to eat fruits, insects and even small animals. They make nests in holes in trees and when they have babies, they make a mud wall to cover up the hole, much like making a house!



Green vine snake: A bright green, slender tree snake that hides in the leaves of a canopy. It moves very slowly. You can find them not only in India but also Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam.

Tree frog: There are several kinds of tree frogs and they come in various colours. They can have white lips or red or yellow eyes and brown feet. They are usually very small, half the size of your palm, because they have to jump around delicate branches. They spend most of their lives up in the trees.

Fruit bat (aka Megabat): They hang upside down. Try to imagine what the world looks like to them! They love to eat fruits and being busy in the trees. They can be super noisy too. You can hear them from a long way off. They have keen senses of sight and smell and are very helpful to us because they pollinate the flowers and fruits we love.



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Up World, Down World

(English)

In a canopy forest in India, the Up World and Down World have always been suspicious of each other. But it all changes when Gopa the dormouse drops her book by accident on Fatima's head. A story about the biodiversity of the canopy forests and friendship.

This is a Level 3 book for children who are ready to read on their own.



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