

The Window Wonders

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Chapter 1

Shattered



Kai is my best friend. We live in the same neighbourhood, and even though we grew up together, he still surprises me with some of his wild ideas.

We were over at his place one day, doing homework together, when he looked up and pointed his pen at me. “Hey, Vikram. Do you know how to make a basketball bounce really, really high?”

When Kai asks a wacky question like that, a million answers race around inside my head. “Well,” I said, “you could get on a rocket, go up to the International Space Station and drop it from there. That’d work.”

Kai got a faraway look in his eyes. “That’s not a bad idea.” He shook his head. “But I meant right now.”

I sighed. “I give up. How do you make a basketball bounce really, really high?”

Kai dropped his pen on the table and closed his maths book. "Wait here," he said, "and come outside when you hear my whistle."

"I guess you want me to finish the rest of the maths problems while I wait," I said.

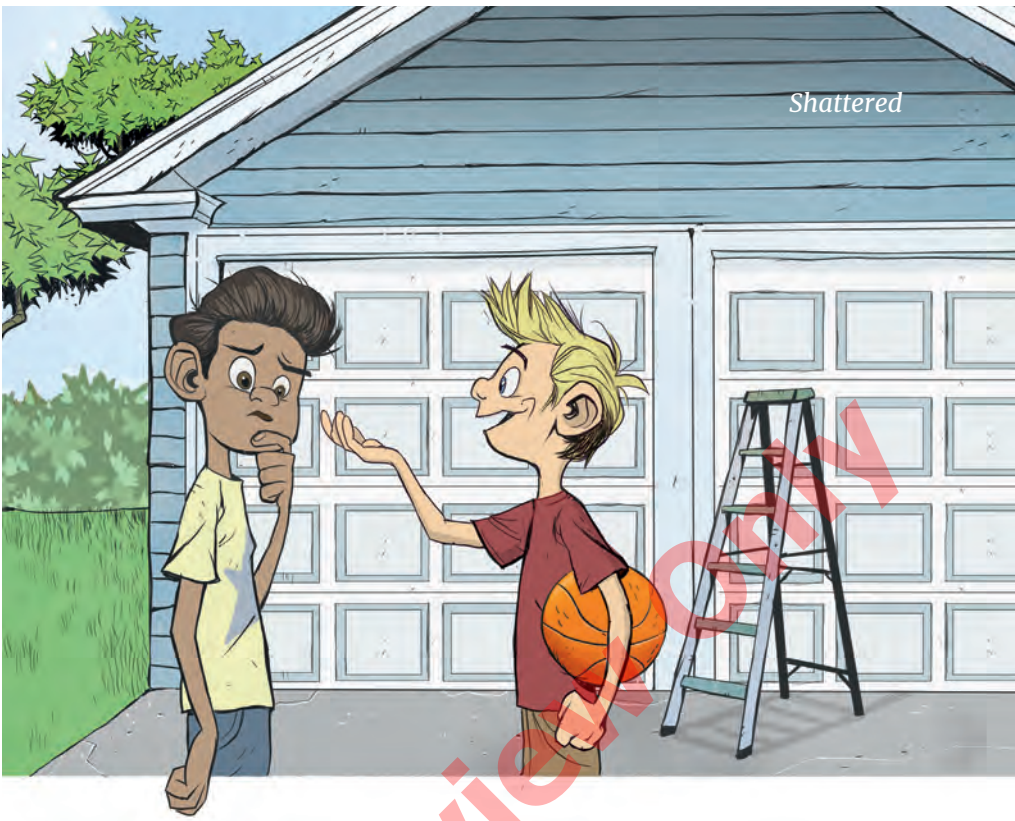
Kai gave me a fist bump. "And that's why we're best friends, Vikram."

I got on with the problems, which was easier without Kai. He has a few annoying habits when he's bored, and he gets bored easily when he's doing homework. For instance, he taps his pen on the table in front of him. *Tap, tap, tappity tap.* Over and over and over again. He doesn't even realise he's doing it.

I had just finished the last problem and was stretching my arms over my head when I heard Kai's whistle. He's a good whistler. If he really got going, I reckon you could hear him on the other side of the country.

I wandered out the back. Kai has a nice backyard with plenty of lawn and garden and some big trees. There's even a birdbath, because his mum likes seeing birds having a good splashy wash.

Kai was on the concrete area in front of the garage, next to a ladder. He had a basketball in his hands, and he was grinning. "I bet this is science, or something," he said.



Straightaway, I saw what Kai was planning.

“If you try to bounce the basketball from the top of that ladder, it’s going to go on the roof of the garage.” I pointed. “Or get caught in that tree, and you’ll never get it down.”

Kai grinned. “This is another reason why we’re a good team. I dream the dream, while you pay attention to the details.”

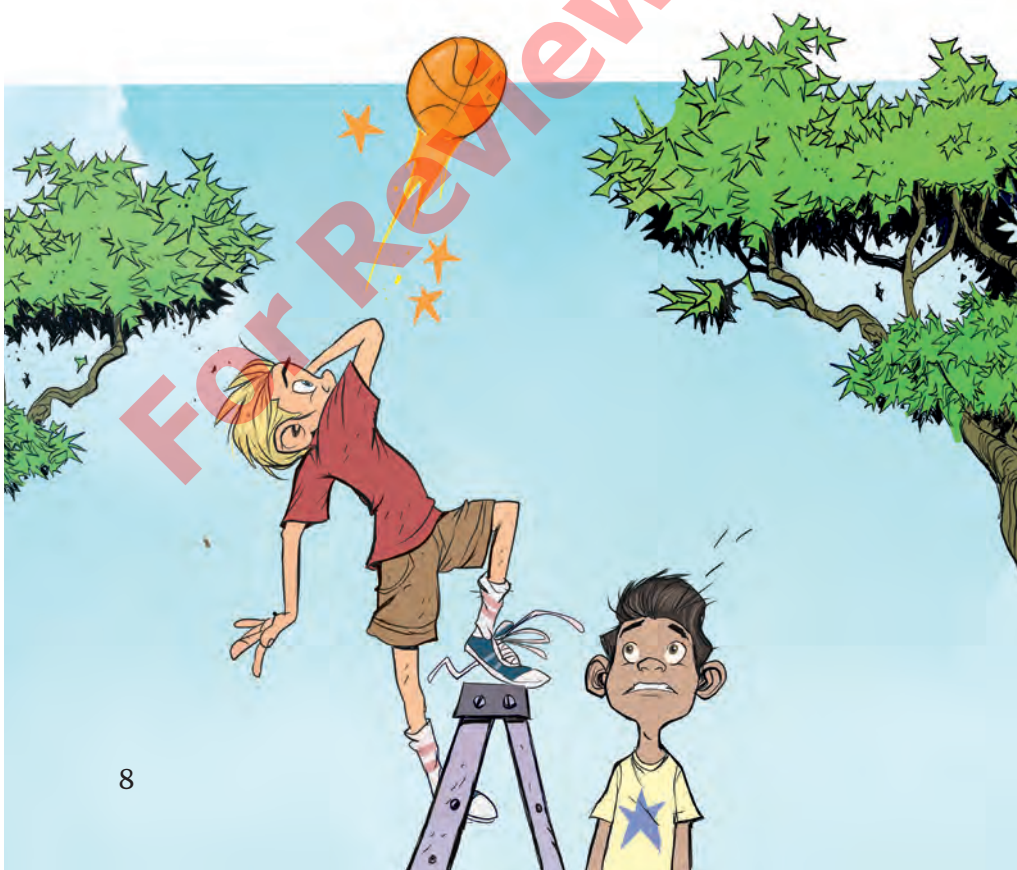
“Here,” I said, and I dragged the ladder closer to the birdbath. “You’ll be better off if this thing is facing the other direction.”

“Got it.”

Kai climbed right to the top of the ladder. He wasn't really watching where he put his feet, so I steadied it. After all, I had seen plenty of Kai's disasters in the past. I'm not saying that Kai is accident-prone, but he once got his finger stuck in a drain just because he wanted to see if he could touch the water at the bottom. The fire brigade had to come and help get his hand free.

"Are you ready?" Kai asked, looking down at me.

"You know what?" I replied. "I'd be a lot happier if you'd hang on to the ladder with one hand."



"I'm fine," he said. "I reckon I could be a tightrope walker because my sense of balance is so good."

Did I tell you that Kai has a lot of confidence in himself?

"Okay," he said. "One, two, THREE!"

Kai heaved with both hands and threw the basketball up as high as he could. It shot into the air like a rocket. At the top of its climb, it slowed and paused. Then it began to drop back down to earth, faster and faster, until it landed on the concrete path with a satisfying *SMACK!*

Kai was right. It did bounce really, really high, but it went a little crookedly. After it had gone up really, really high, it came down again. But instead of landing on the concrete, it hit the edge of the birdbath. While Kai and I stared, the basketball shot off at an angle, right through the big kitchen window. Glass shattered with a horrible crunching noise that sounded like very expensive trouble.

Kai turned to me. "I can honestly say that I didn't expect that to happen."

Chapter 2

Dollars Down the Drain



I offered to go inside with Kai, because it was partly my fault, after all. I'd moved the ladder, hadn't I? Kai shook his head. "It was my stupid idea," he said. "I guess I'll face the music."

He trudged through the front door. His head was down and his shoulders were slumped. I packed up the ladder and leant it against the garage.

Kai came out some time later. His shoulders were even more saggy. "I have to pay to get the window fixed," he said.

"How much will it be?"

Kai told me and I nearly fell over. "That's a fortune!" I said. "It's going to take you forever to pay it off!"

"It was a big window." Kai sighed. "Lots of glass. That means no spending money for me for a long, long time. Goodbye, chocolate bars. Farewell, comic books."