

# BAAJE AND THE DOKO BASKET

By Kate Stonham

Phew! Anu was glad to put down the heavy basket and rest. Baaje, her grandfather, was watching. 'I wish I was strong enough to help you,' he said.

Anu lived with Baaje and her parents in a small village in a country called Nepal. The family grew rice and at harvest time, everyone helped to carry it in special baskets called 'dokos'. Everyone except Baaje. 'He's too old to work,' said Anu's father Mohit. 'He can't even remember it's harvest time.'

Baaje did have a bad memory, but Anu loved him very much. He was kind and wise and he always made her feel better if she felt sad. 'Look up at the sky!' he would say at night. 'Only when it is dark can you see such bright stars of hope!'

But Mohit didn't feel the same way. 'My father is sleepy, clumsy and always breaking things,' he complained.

Things got worse and worse until one day, Anu arrived home to find the village in uproar...Baaje had forgotten to close the door of the goat pen! 'I've had enough!' muttered Mohit to Anu's mother. 'There's an old hut in the forest. We'll carry Baaje there in the doko basket tonight - and leave him there.'

Anu had heard every word. She went to her aunt and uncle to tell them about Mohit's terrible plan. 'I've got to stop him!' she said. 'But I'll need your help.'

That night, Baaje was fast asleep as Anu lay in her bed. Although her eyes were shut, she was wide awake – and waiting. She watched as her parents crept in with the doko basket. They picked up Baaje, put him in the basket and covered him with a blanket.

Suddenly there was a loud shout from outside. 'Come quickly!' cried Anu's aunt urgently. 'The goats have escaped again!' As her parents ran off, Anu smiled. Her plan was going well.

A dark shadow slipped through the door. Her uncle gently lifted Baaje out of the doko basket and carried him away. Then Anu climbed in and covered herself with the blanket.

Just in time, for her parents were coming back. They lifted her up - and carried the basket into the night.

Anu rocked and swayed as they travelled towards the forest. She could see nothing - but she could hear everything. She listened as they crossed a bridge over a gushing river. Soon the sounds changed to the rustling leaves of trees and the cries of forest monkeys.



At last, Anu heard the creak of a door. They had arrived at the hut. Her parents put the basket down, shut the door and left.

Anu sat up and looked around the small, empty room. Baaje would have been so unhappy here all alone. How could her father do such a thing!

By the time Anu's parents returned home it was morning. 'Time to get up,' her mother called out. But when she pulled off the cover...Anu's bed was empty!

She and Mohit were so busy searching for her that at first they didn't hear the small knock at the door. There on the doorstep was a basket covered with a blanket. Mohit jumped as the blanket moved. Someone was rising up from underneath. It was Anu!

'One day, when I'm old, my son might send me away from my home in a basket just like this,' she said quietly.

Mohit hung his head in shame. 'I felt angry with Baaje,' he said quietly. 'We're so poor we can't afford to buy food for him. But don't worry. We shall find a way.'

Anu's uncle walked in. In his big strong arms lay a sleeping Baaje. 'We must never tell him what happened last night,' he said as he gently placed the old man back on his bed.

'Ah, another lovely day!' cried Baaje as he slowly began to wake. 'Now where's my breakfast?'

That night, Baaje and Anu were looking up at the stars as usual. 'I know we are poor, Baaje,' said Anu. 'But will things ever get easier?'

'Ah now,' replied Baaje. 'When life is hard it feels like you are carrying a heavy basket. But if you carry the basket with a smile on your face, it will feel so much lighter.'

And with that he gave her a great, big wink.