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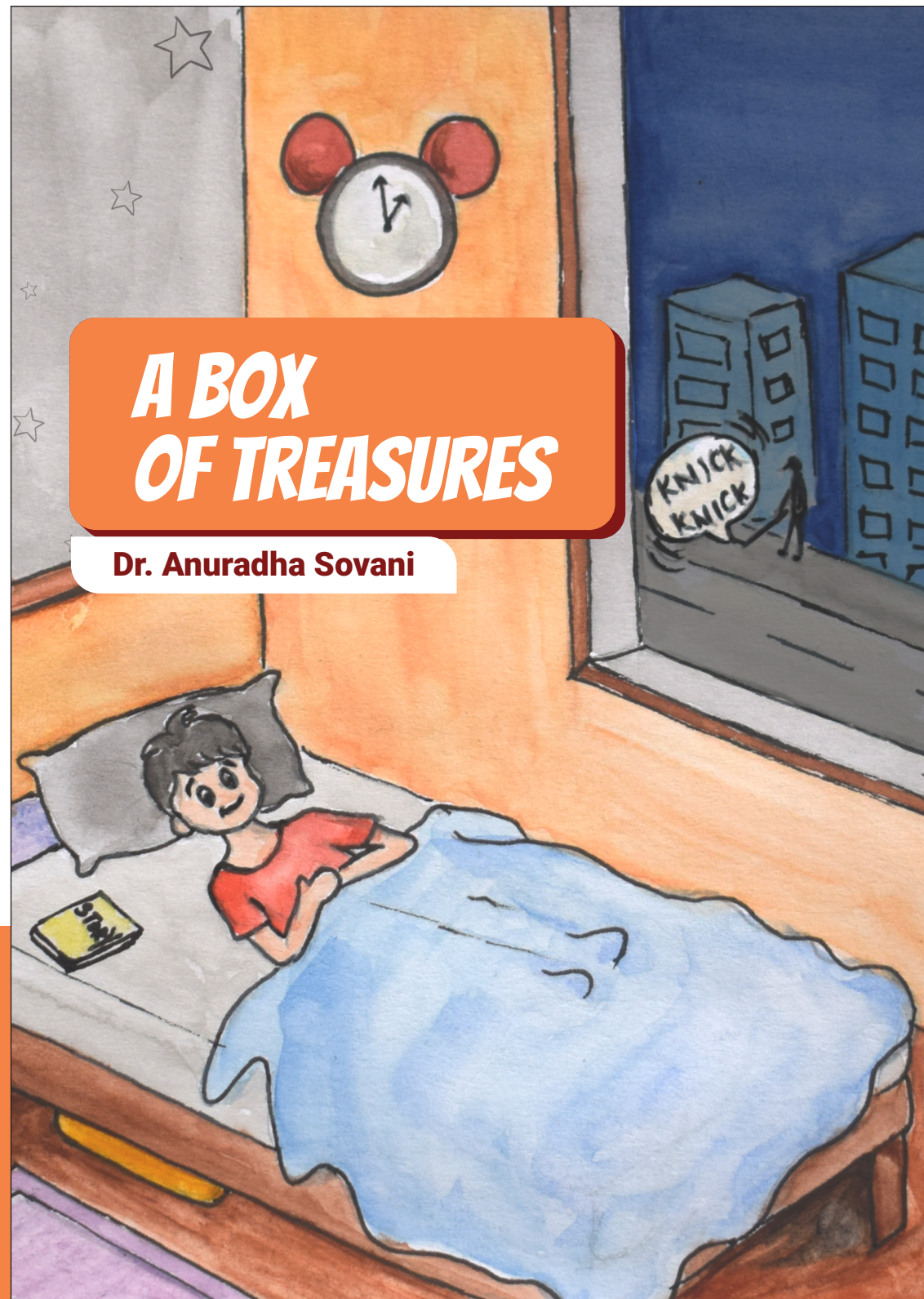
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A BOX OF TREASURES

Dr. Anuradha Sovani

A box of treasures

Story By - Dr. Anuradha Sovani

The whole world slept, but Vik was awake. Actually, the whole world can never be asleep at the same time, Vik thought. The earth is round, so while it is pitch dark here, there is a sunny morning somewhere else, and a bright afternoon in some other place. Vik felt good that someone somewhere was awake when he was.

It had been an amazing Sunday. Vik's mom and dad had cooked up a delicious meal for them all, and Vik had eaten till he thought he would burst. Then with thick curtains drawn against the sun blazing outside, Vik had been lulled to sleep under the lazily turning fan. He had woken up when the shadows were long, and was not at all sleepy now. He did not mind. This was fun too. Night time was mystery time.

He watched the shadows chase across the wall. It was as if the darkness held a mirror to the world outside: when a car went from right to left on the road outside his house, the shadows ran from left to right. So as soon as Vik heard a car, he would guess which way the shadows would run, and he was right every time.

Vik could close his eyes and listen to the sounds of the night, and tell what time it was. If the watchman came knocking his stick, it was past midnight. If it was super quiet and there were no car horns, just some dogs barking far away, then it was even later, but not yet dawn. And then the birds and squirrels would start chirping after a few hours, because they always knew it was dawn before the sky actually

became lighter.

Vik wondered whether to take out his biscuit box of treasures from under his bed. But he decided to unpack it in his head instead. There was the tooth, of course, which had just fallen out. He had not yet had time to bury it in the garden. His friend had told him that if he buried it deep in the soil, his new tooth would come out straight and strong. Vik knew that was not true, but it would be fun to bury it anyway.

Then there was his color wheel, which he had colored in equal parts with all the rainbow colors with his new color pencil set. His dad had told him that if they spun it really fast, the colors would disappear

and turn white. He had to try that too, soon. So the treasure box was not just a treasure box, it was a box with treasures that had more hidden treasure within each.

He wondered what other people's treasure boxes would contain. His mother's box would surely have lots of books. She was always reading whenever he found her free. She looked so happy when she read. He loved watching her. When she read stories to him, she would be excited and laugh with him. But when she was reading alone, he could look at her and tell if it was a sad story or a happy one, and the funny ones made her laugh out loud. So he guessed each book was sort of like a treasure box by itself.

His father's box would probably have tools; hammer, nails, pliers, and stuff to make things with. Big gardening shears and tools to dig the soil. Those were good treasures, he thought. Just a few treasures could help you make so many more. Dad loved making stuff, and repairing broken things, and gardening. Vik was going to learn that from him.

The Uncle next door? His treasure box would be full of cigarettes. Vik knew where he hid his cigarettes because people at his house did not let him smoke. Uncle coughed when he smoked; his fingertips looked yellow, and his teeth looked kind of black and his face looked grey. Vik did not like to get into the lift with him, because his shirt smelt of smoke.

There are no treasures inside cigarettes, Vik wanted to tell the Uncle next door. Dad's toolkit would make shelves and grow flowers, and Mom's treasure box would have stories and poems and pictures. Maybe his teacher in school would stuff words and letters and numbers inside her treasure box because she loved writing them all on the blackboard in her neat handwriting.

But Uncle's treasure box would have black stuff that looked like mud, rolled up into tubes of paper, and maybe some smoke and some bad smells and depressing colors. What use were those? I can try telling him, thought Vik sadly, but I don't think he will listen. His cigarettes will call out to him louder than I can.

I guess each one of us had to build their own treasure box, Vik thought. Whether to make it happy or ugly was our choice.

