

Dancing on Walls

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Dancing On Walls (English)

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“I wish...” murmured Shirvi. “I wish I could sweep the entire courtyard with a wave of my hand!”

And powder the rice and plaster the walls with fresh cowdung and...



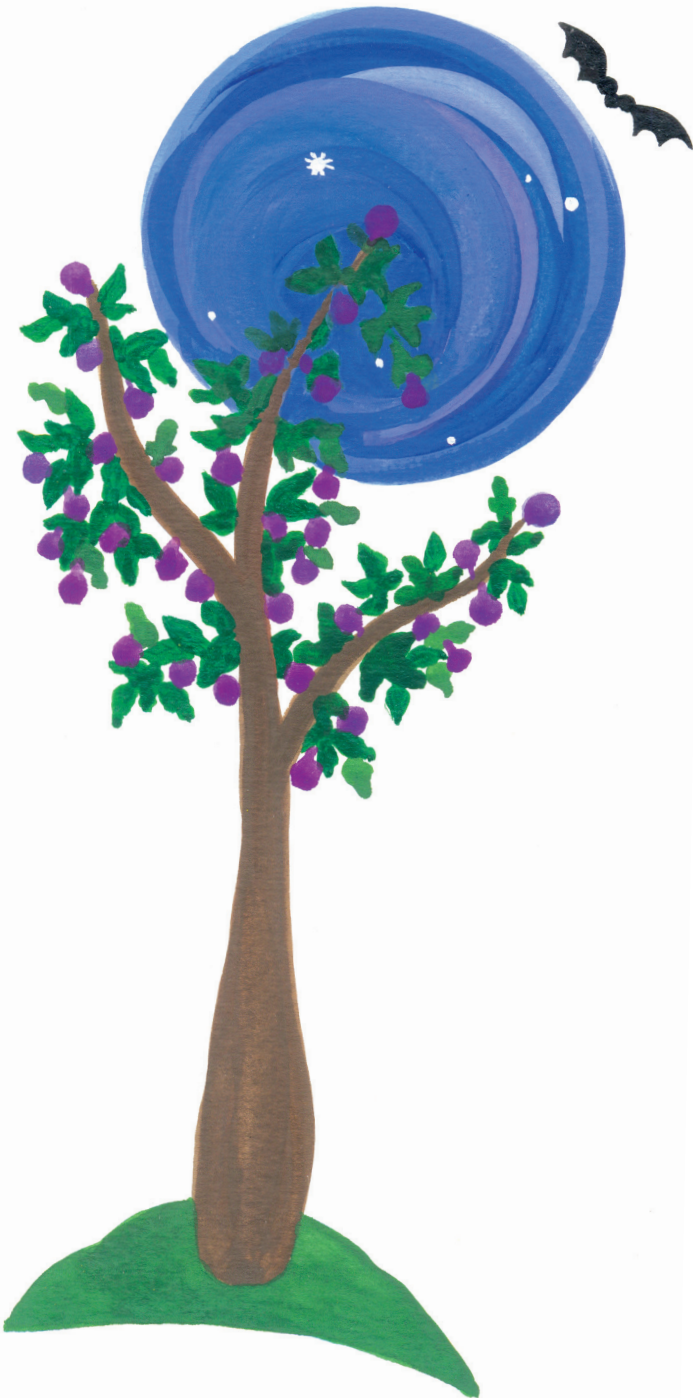


Shirvi lived in a village in the Sahyadri hills. It was the night before the harvest festival and a big yellow moon was rising slowly. Her parents and two sisters had gone to the market to buy some things for the celebrations next day.

Shirvi had stayed back because she wanted to give her parents a surprise by finishing all the work before they returned.

It was getting late. Her parents would soon be back. That is why Shirvi murmured, "I wish..."





“Kook! Kook! Kook!” called a bird. A startled fruit bat took off from a fig tree. A shooting star blazed across the night sky.

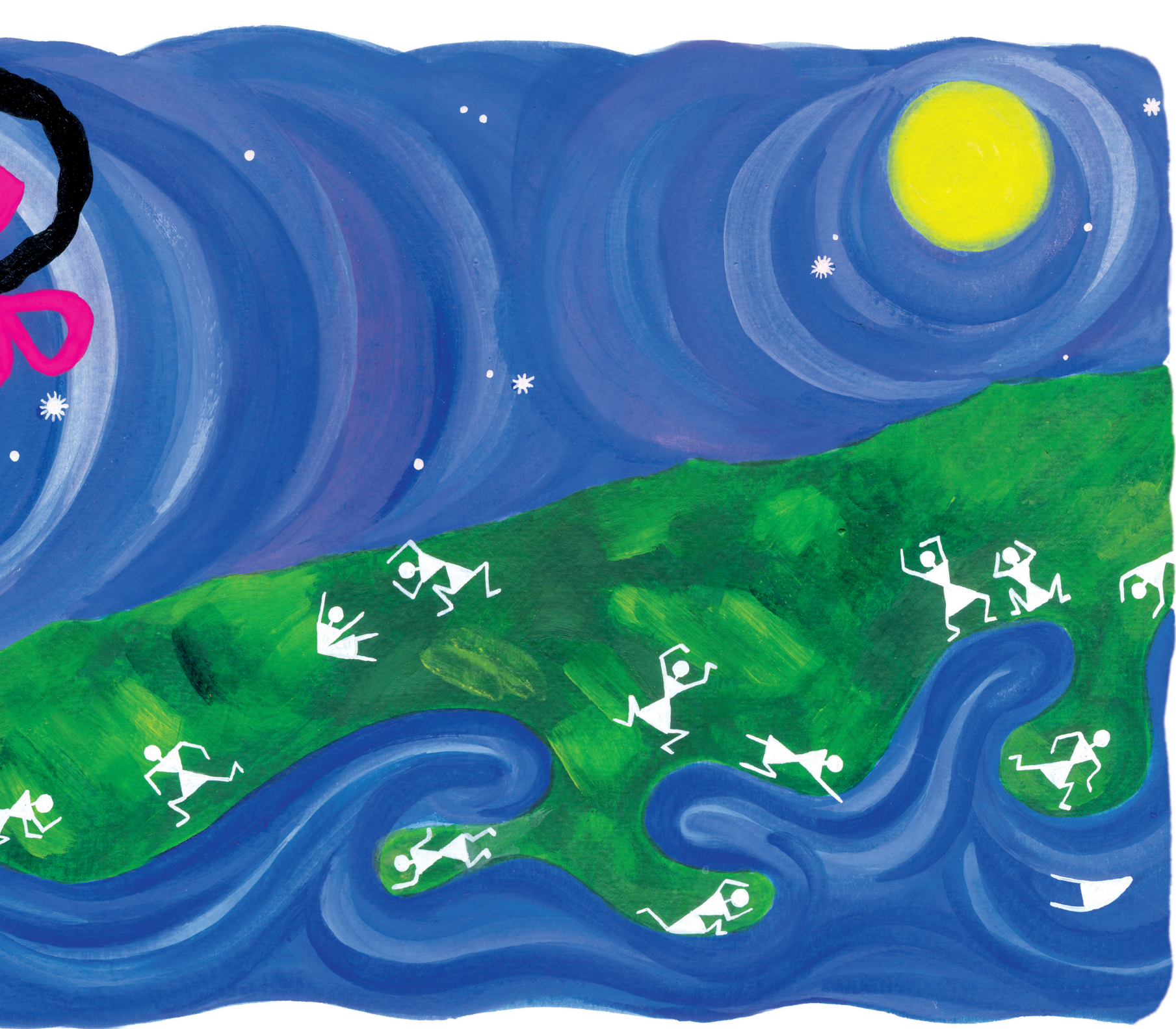
Suddenly Shirvi saw something by the river. It looked as though bits of silver were floating down to earth from the big harvest moon. She ran towards the river. There she saw tiny silvery creatures sliding down the moonbeams, one by one.



Then Shirvi noticed that hundreds of silver creatures were running up and down the river bank, waving their stick-like arms and calling for help.

One of them had fallen into the water and was being carried away by the current.





Shirvi quickly broke off a thin, long branch from a tree, and put it into the water. “Grab the stick, little one,” she called out.

It held on as Shirvi slowly pulled it to safety.

“Thank you,” the creature said.

“It was nothing,” Shirvi replied.

“But who are you? Where have you come from?”







“From the moon, of course,” said one creature stepping forward. “We are the moon people. Sometimes we come down to earth to climb the trees and smell the flowers and listen to birds sing.”

“But we don’t know how to swim,” added another. “There’s no water on the moon, you see.”

“And now, we must do something for you.”

“But... but... how? You are so little,” said Shirvi.





“Didn’t you wish for something?”
said the creature she had
rescued.

Before Shirvi could say anything,
the silver creatures went to work
cleaning the rice and powdering
it, sweeping the courtyard,
plastering the walls... In seconds
the work was done.

“We work at the speed of light!”
said one of the creatures.
“And now let’s dance!”





One of them began to play a soft tune on a reed flute. The others gathered around, clapping their hands and clicking their fingers. They moved slowly at first and then faster, faster, faster.

“What is happening here?” a voice rang out in the night.



The dancers were startled. They leapt up in sparkling flashes of light onto the freshly-plastered wall. One after another they jumped, with the flute-player in the centre, and the others in a spiralling circle around him.

More people came out of their homes to see what was happening.





Meanwhile, Shirvi's parents returned.
When they saw the pictures on the wall,
they thought she had drawn them.
“This is beautiful, Shirvi!” said her mother.
“Yes, beautiful!” murmured the others.
Nobody had ever drawn anything so
beautiful before.





From that day on, the Warli people began to decorate their walls with shining white figures, dancing, singing, taking the cows to graze, ploughing, praying...

But only Shirvi knew the secret of dancing on the wall!





This book is dedicated to my daughters – Yasmín, Shanaaz, Mahjabeen and Nusha; my grandchildren – Mehdi, Sophia Jena and Ziya; and my grandnieces and nephews – SophiaMaya, Aaniya, Inaya, Ishaan and Zain. I hope it will help them know India better, as well as all the people who make it great. – Shamim





The wall paintings of the Warli people of Maharashtra are famous worldwide for their simplicity and their liveliness. Beginning with the story of little Shirvi who wants to give her parents a happy surprise, author Shamim Padamsee takes a whimsical imaginary journey into how the art may have been born. And along that journey, Shirvi meets the magical moon people...

SHAMIM PADAMSEE has travelled widely in India and the world. She is passionately interested in early childhood learning and is presently director of an educational organisation that runs schools in Maharashtra, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh. She enjoys sharing her insights about the wonderful diversity of India. She lives in Mumbai and this is her first book for children.

A student and teacher of art, **UMA KRISHNASWAMY** lives and works in Chennai. She has a special interest in all forms of folk art and craft and has illustrated several books for Tulika. Her work in *And Land Was Born* and *Out of the Way! Out of the Way!* has been greatly admired.

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