



**PRATHAM
BOOKS**
A Book in Every Child's Hand

Long Live Friendship! A Humorous Play for Children

Author: Meera Dixit

Illustrator: Shailja Jain Chougule

Level 4



Rita Rakesh Yash Sheela Rohan

A gang of friends between the ages of 11 and 14.



Vikram Yamdoot Yamraja Watchman

Vikram - very popular in the gang, captain of their cricket team.

Yamdoot - Yamraja's messenger, has been instructed by Yamraja to bring Vikram to him.

Yamraja - God of death, but here he is shown to be funny and childish, loves watching TV.

Watchman - Stands outside Yamraja's palace and guards it.

Backstage

Set Design Team, Costume Design Team, Light and Sound Designers, Prop Makers, Chorus

The making of this play

It is great fun to be able to act and direct plays on your own. When Meera Dixit was looking for a contemporary play that could be enjoyable as well as easy to perform by students, she could not find the right one for the situation. So she wrote this play which her students could stage without professional help. It was first staged in 2011 and has been a big hit with students every time it has been performed.

Designing the costumes for Yamraja and Yamdoot

Be creative. Use paper, newspaper, thermacol and other material available in school to create the settings.

This play works well with three settings - the garden where the characters first meet, an indoor room, and Yamraja's durbar. Three of the characters need specific costumes, or just headgear and jewellery to set them apart from the other characters. They could wear beaded necklaces and head gear made out of papier mache.

Music and drama

Make up a jingle or a chorus. A few singers could sing these with musical accompaniments from the wings to set the mood for a scene, or to add drama to important moments in the play.

No permission needed

You must have observed that at the end of most plays in books, there is a line that states that you need the permission of the playwright to stage the play. However, to stage this play you need not do so as it is copyright-free. This means you can stage the play as you wish. Feel free to incorporate new ideas.

Scene 1

When the curtain opens, there are a few children on stage, in a garden setting. They are discussing something.

Rita: Hey, have you heard about Vikram? It seems he has malaria. No wonder he had such a high fever!

Rakesh: Yes, I heard about it. I spoke to his mother yesterday. She said that he is finally being treated with the right medicines.

Sheela: Poor fellow, how on earth is he going to write his exams now?

Yash: Silly girl, how can he be a poor fellow? Lucky he can't write the exams. How I envy him! No studying, no tension, no mother breathing down his neck. Just lie there waiting to get better... Poor fellow, my foot. (*Going near Rita*) Look at me, all I do is study all day.

Rita: (*laughs*) Naturally you have to study all day. How will you pass otherwise, stupid?

Yash: Don't you have anything better to do than to pull my leg? Wait till I tell the gang about what you did the other day! You know, she... (*Rita stops him.*)

Rita: Sh! Sh! If you say anything more I will...

Rohan: Oh no! The third world war is about to begin. You two never give up, do you?

Yash: It's her, she is so.. so.. so... irritating! Just because she studies well she thinks no end of herself.

Rita: I don't give up! Ha! It's Yash who starts the fight, not me.

Rohan: Stop it, you two! You're worse than kids. Hurry up, don't you remember we have to go and see Vikram?

(Yash and Rita are making faces at one another. All depart from one wing of the stage. Return to the stage from another wing).

Scene 2

(This is Vikram's home. The children can hear Vikram speaking to an unfamiliar voice. As they enter they can see that Vikram is talking to someone. This person is dressed weirdly, and looks like a mythological character. He is Yamdoot, Yamraj's messenger.)

Yamdoot: *(Yamdoot is talking to Vikram who is lying on his bed)* Come on child. I am Yamdoot and you must come with me.*(Takes out something from his pocket)* See, it says here clearly that your expiry date has come, my dear. So you will now have to say good bye to the world and come with me to my world.



Vikram: *(Looks confused)* What do you mean come with me to my world? Who, may I know, has sent you? *(pointing to the paper)* And what is that?

(Vikram is trying to look at the paper, Yamdoot is trying to pull him out of the bed and all the while gazing at the clock. The children are watching all this and are trying to figure out what is happening).

Vikram: Hey! What are you doing? Why are you trying to lift me? Listen...

Yamdoot: I am Yamdoot, Yamraj's messenger. And, I do not have to listen to you. I only listen to my boss. Understood? Come on, get up! *(looks at his paper)* We have to leave. Once I hand you over to Yamraj, I have an immediate appointment in Delhi. You see, we Yamdoots are very busy these days.

Hey, *(goes very close to Vikram)* let me tell you something. I love to work overtime, we get paid well for that. But enough is enough. We have to leave now kiddo, too much overtime is not good either. *(He is about to drag Vikram out and leave when the children decide to take action.)*

Yash: *(steps out and stops him)* Hey, who are you and what are you doing?

Sheela: Yes, tell us....

Rita: *(Walks around Yamdoot, looking very official)* So you call yourself Yamdoot. And where do you think you are taking Vikram? *(Yamdoot has a firm grip on Vikram's hand)*

Vikram: *(looking surprised)* Hello all of you!

Rakesh: Hi! How are you feeling now, Vikram?

Vikram: Better, much better. But never mind me. Meet my visitor who calls himself Yamdoot. *(Yamdoot glares)*

He says Yamraj has ordered him to take me to his abode.

Rakesh: He is going to take you? Where? *(looks up)*

Sheila: This is too much!

Rohan: Yamdoot, whom are you taking with you? Him? *(points to Vikram)* Without our permission? How dare you!

Yash: *(Putting his hand on Yamdoot's shoulder)* Listen Yambhaiyya. This is Vikram, our best friend and the head of our gang.

Sheela: *(Shoving Yash aside)* Also the captain of our cricket team!

Rakesh: All right. So he has malaria. That does not mean that you can pick him up and take him away.

Rita: This is simply not acceptable! It's sheer dadagiri!

Rohan: This is not dadagiri. This is Yamgiri my dear. Yamgiri!

(By now Yamdoot is thoroughly irritated, and very confused. He is touching his moustache knowing full well that if he does not take Vikram to Yamraj all hell will break loose. The very idea is frightening and he looks worried.)

Yash: Nothing doing Yambhai. You cannot take Vikram with you and that's final. *(tries to pull Vikram towards him, Yamdoot does likewise.)*

Yamdoot: I am very confused.

Rakesh: We can see that. *(laughs)* Anyway, one thing is definite. Vikram is not going anywhere. Is that clear?

Rohan: How can you just take him like that?

Yash: You need to have some sense to understand things. *(Yamdoot puts his hands to his head, getting quite angry)*

Yamdoot: Hey Bhagwan! *(Realizes his mistake)* Yamraj what do I do now? Why don't these kids understand that Vikram has to go with me. Come, we are getting very late. *(Pulls him. Rohan stands in front of them like a shield. Holds on to Yamdoot.)*

Yamdoot: (*Upset*) What shall I do with you now?

Rohan: Whatever you want. I am all yours.

Yash: (*Laughs*) Ya, so what was Rakesh telling you my friend?

Yamdoot: Me?

Yash: Yes you.

Rohan: We were telling you that this is the 21st century and this is India.

Sheela: And malaria is not a deadly disease here any longer.



Rohan: Besides, there are medicines available now to cure malaria which Vikram is taking.

Sheela: It is only a matter of time before he gets better. Here, look at his medicines (*Drags Yamdoot to the medicines. He is worried.*)

Vikram: Yes, see these are my tablets. And my fever is almost gone.

Rita: There you go. He is going to be fit and fine in just a few days. *(Stamps her foot by mistake on Yamdoot's foot.)*

Yamdoot: Awww...

Sheela: Anyway, now you know that in India malaria is a curable disease. So how can you take him away?

Rakesh: Go find another target.

Yamdoot: Ha! How can Vikram get better? *(Takes out the paper)* Look at the expiry date. It is now. So stop all your nonsense. *(Shoves the kids away.)* I must leave with him. He has to die.

(The kids start beating Yamdoot)

Yash: If anybody has to die it is YOU not him. *(pointing to Vikram)*

Yamdoot: Oh god.. please stop beating me! Are your fists made of iron! Oh stop... I'm dying!

Yash: Oh, this was just a sample of what is to come. Do you want to see what is in store for you?

Yamdoot: No, no! *(in a pitiable voice)*

Rohan: *(Holding Yamdoot)* Alright. But only on one condition. Vikram goes no where. Or else... *(raised hand)*

Yamdoot: That is not possible. He has to go with me. If I do not produce him in Yamraj's darbar, I will lose my job. How will I run my house then? How expensive things have become...

Sheela: Who cares about your job!

Rita: Fine. If you insist on taking Vikram, you can.

Yamdoot: Really? (*eyes lit up*)

Rakesh: Yes, but only on one condition. If you take him you have to take all of us too...

Sheela: ...as we want to meet this Yamraj.

Rakesh: Yes, we want to meet him. Who is he to decide that just because Vikram has malaria he must be taken away?

(They all surround Yamdoot shouting slogans. By now Yamdoot is at his wit's end. He knows that now he has no choice.)

Chorus: Down with bullies! Down, down bullies!

Yamdoot: Ok, let's all go. But please stop hitting me. See how red my cheeks have become! Let Yamraj decide what to do next. Let's go. *(Everybody departs from the stage.)*



Scene 3

(They now enter Yamraj's darbar. They are continuously screaming and shouting. There is a gate keeper standing there.)

Gatekeeper: Hoi! *(Sees Yamdoot)* Ah! Yamdoot ji, why have you picked up so many children? *(Looks at something that looks like a register)*

You were supposed to bring only one child but you seem to have brought a whole cricket team. Your math was always a little weak. *(Gatekeeper smiles to himself)*

Yamdoot: Oh god, here I am almost dead, and he is teasing me?! Do you think I am stupid? *(to the gatekeeper)* Can't you see? Look at me! Look at my clothes, my cheeks – they are red and I am in pain. Bully!

(By now the children are getting, very impatient. They are dying to meet Yamraj. Rohan is holding on to Vikram's hand in a firm grip)

Yamdoot: These kids just did not want to listen to anything I said. They insisted that if I took Vikram they would come along too. And when I said no, they slapped me. Look at my cheeks.

Rohan: Naturally! All Vikram has is malaria and he is going to get well soon. Who is Yamraj to pick on Vikram for no reason?

Gatekeeper: *(Now he too looks worried)* Sh! Sh! Don't talk so loudly. What if Yamraj hears you? No one has dared to speak about him in such a manner!

Rakesh: Are you letting us in or shall we....?

(they are about to pounce on the gatekeeper when Yamraj's voice can be heard from inside.)

Yamraj: What a lot of noise! Who is that? How dare someone disturb me! Everyone in my kingdom knows I watch cartoon network at this time. No one disturbs me at this hour!

Yamraj: Aaaah, so much noise! I hate noise. Send them in. '**Down, down, Yamraj!**' in my kingdom? That too in my own house? How dare they!

(Children enter Yamraj's den pushing the gatekeeper)

Gatekeeper: *(to the children)* Now look what you have done! Yamraj is angry. (A little scared) Sorry Maharaj, but there are some children here. They say they are from India.

Yamraj: Some children have come from India! Where is Yamdoot? I had asked only for one boy, Vikram, to be brought. Has Yamdoot brought him or not?

Yamdoot: Yes Maharaj, I have brought him. But his friends insisted on coming along too. They just would not listen to me, Maharaj. They forced me to bring them too and beat me up when I refused. Look at my cheeks, they are so red.

(The kids are impatient. they are shouting 'Down, down, Yamraj! 'Yamraj Hai Hai')



Scene 4

Sheela: Eee... Yamraj! The real Yamraj! Wait till I tell everyone when we get back home!

Rohan: *(On seeing Yamraj)* Wow, I can't believe this. You actually exist!

Rakesh: *(Puts his hand on Yamraj's shoulder. Yamraj is stunned. Nobody has had the guts to do this before.)* Hi Yamraj, how are you?

Yamraj: *(Shoving his hand aside)* Hey, hope you know who you're talking to! I am Yamraj. Yamraj. *(Stands straight)* The whole world is afraid of me, do you understand?

Sheela: So what? I am Sheela, Sheela from Mumbai, India. *(The kids are discussing something with one another)*

Yamraj: *(yelling)* Stop it at once! I hate noise. Just tell me who among you is Vikram. Let him come forward. He should have been dead long ago. We cannot delay his death any further. We all have our targets. I want only Vikram! *(Everyone holds on to Vikram)*

Rita: What do you mean you want Vikram? I want a Mercedes Benz. But does that mean I will get one?

Rohan: You don't always get what you want.

Yash: Well, this time you are not getting what you want. And if you want Vikram you must want us all.

Sheela: Buy one, get five free! You will more than meet your target. How's that?

Rita: Yamraj, Vikram has malaria. It's not a life threatening disease. Don't you know that? And you have the cheek to call yourself Yamraj *(laughs – Yamdoot hears the word Cheek and realizes that he is in pain.)*

Chorus: Down, down, Yamraj!

Yamraj: Quiet! I can't stand noise. This is too much. *(to Yamdoot)* Where have you picked up these many kids from? I had asked you to bring only one but this is an entire cricket team!



Yamdoot: Yamraj, I had gone to Vikram's house and just as I was about to take him away these kids came and insisted on coming with me. When I said I wanted only Vikram, they pounced on me and beat me up. Look at my cheeks, they are so red. They said that I could not take Vikram alone (*Yamraj is trying to pull Vikram towards him. The kids are pulling him towards them.*)

Yamraj: These kids are from India you say?

Yamdoot: Yes Maharaj, these days you hear a lot about how they fight injustice. They stand united and are ready to die for a just cause.

Yamraj: But I have not seen any children standing up for a just cause. These kids seem special.

Yash: Of course we are special! Find a better excuse to pick up someone, Yamraj.

Rita: No way... We will not let go of Vikram and if you want him, you will have to keep us too. *(They are all talking at the same time. Yamdoot and gate keeper are stunned. Yamraj hates noise they know.)*

Yamraj: Stop it, how many times do I have to tell you that I hate noise. Wait, *(takes out his diary)* I have never seen kids like you before. Never seen children so loyal to one another. Hats off to all you kids from India. *(starts to cry. The kids are amused to see him cry)*

Rita: Yamraj is crying. I can't believe this.

Yamraj: *(Still sobbing.)* Go, go before I change my mind. Take your friend and go, he will get better, he is in good hands. He is lucky to have friends like you. Go away!

(Kids are ecstatic – Long live Yamraj! they shout loudly!)



Yamraj: *(Putting his hands on his ears)* Noise, so much noise, I hate noise. Now I get it. India is a noisy country, so naturally these kids are also a noisy lot. Hurry up and leave or else...

Vikram: *(Goes and hugs Yamraj)* Thank you Yamraj! Thank you very much. You are not so bad after all *(Yamraj is too shocked even to react)*

Rakesh: Come, lets go. Now he knows he can't mess with us!

Vikram: Forget it, friends! Remember, all's well that ends well. *(They depart as noisily as when they had arrived. Yamraj is too stunned to react. Yamdoot is relieved. He is drinking water and is about to leave when Yamraj catches him.)*

Yamraj: Where are you going? Can't you do anything correctly? You messed up, so now you have to work overtime and go back to India and...

Yamdoot: Oh no! Not there again! *(Tries to run and gets caught. He is beaten.)*

Yamraj: You will go to India and you will not be paid for extra work done. Understood?

Yamdoot: Yes, Maharaj. I will do as you say. Just don't hit me anymore. Look at my cheeks. *(Looks in a mirror)* Red as an apple!

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Long Live Friendship! A Humorous Play for Children

(English)

When Vikram falls sick, Yamraj thinks its time to take him in. Vikram's maddeningly stubborn friends think otherwise. The play takes a serious issue and presents it in a light-hearted vein. Children can easily and quickly stage and self-direct this hilarious play. Perfect for annual school days and neighbourhood events.

This is a Level 4 book for children who can read fluently and with confidence.



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