

THE FIREBIRD



CHITRA FERNANDO
Illustrations by Panchali Ellepola



Popsicle Books
COLOMBO



Published by Popsicle Books, 2019
an imprint of the Perera-Hussein Publishing House
www.pererahussein.com

ISBN: 978-955-0041-11-4

All rights reserved

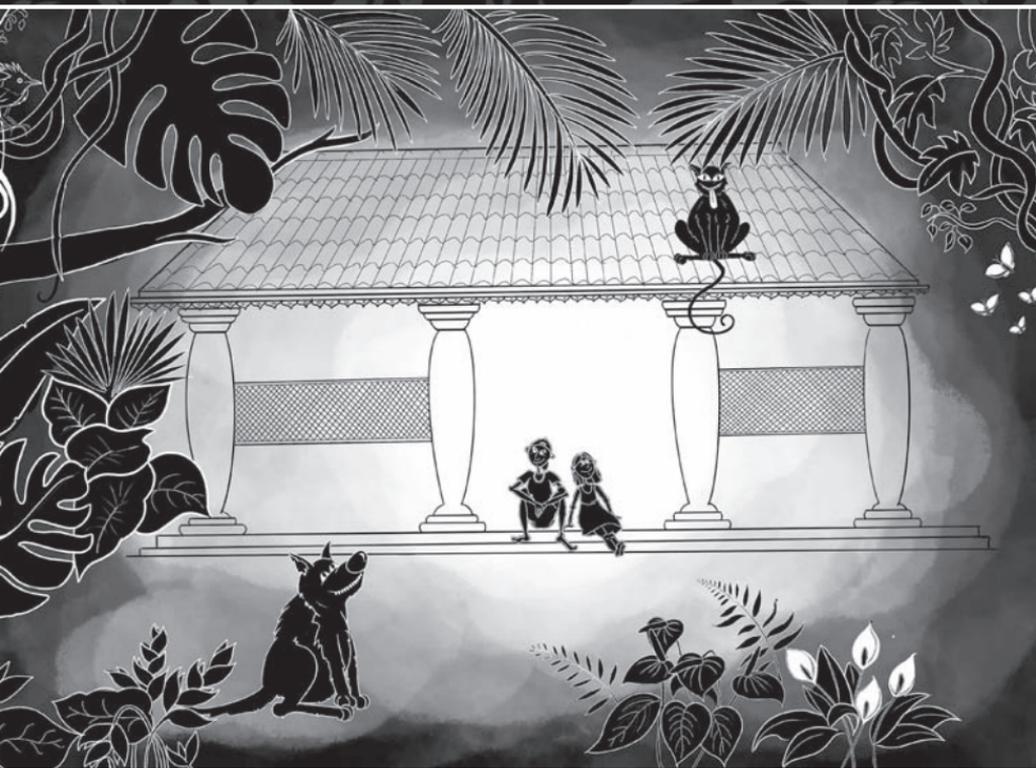
Copyright © 2019, Suranganie Fernando
Illustration Copyright © 2019, Panchali Ellepola

The right of Chitra Fernando to be identified as the author
of this work has been asserted in accordance with
the Copyright, Designs & Patents Act.

Printed and bound by Thomson Press



To offset the environmental pollution caused by printing books,
the Perera-Hussein Publishing House grows trees in Puttalam –
Sri Lanka's semi-arid zone.





ndrajit and Nalinika lived with their father and mother in a little yellow house at the foot of the hill. In the house was also Podihami, their plump cook, Kooka, a big black dog and a little cat called Kalu, with eyes like emeralds and a long pink tongue.

The garden around the house was very large. There was a smooth lawn in front of the house with pineapple, hibiscus, orchids and bougainvillea growing in wide beds, very neat and beautiful. Behind the house was an untidy but fascinating

thicket full of trees, creepers, green-gold beetles, furry caterpillars, birds and butterflies.

Indrajit and Nalinika, had, besides Kooka and Kalu, one green beetle in a glass jar, and two caterpillars in a cardboard shoebox. But, of course, it was Kooka the dog and Kalu the cat who reigned in their hearts – especially Kalu in Nalinika’s heart. He was a very handsome and knowledgeable creature who loved roaming on the rooftops and dozing on the windowsill in the sunshine. The cat

also loved leaping on the kitchen table, especially when there was food on it.

Then, Podihami would scream, "Arh, you greedy animal. Out of my kitchen. Out, out, out," and run behind him with a wide broom.

Kalu would then vanish into a tree. Podihami when in a temper was someone not only the erring Kalu, but also Indrajit and Nalinika wished to avoid as much as possible. But Podihami in a good humor was a real delight. In the late evening, after dinner was cooked she would settle down

by the kitchen hearth to a chew of betel. Indrajit and Nalinika would wait until she had the wad of betel leaf, chunam, lime and arecanut comfortably tucked away in a corner of her mouth. Then, they would beg her to tell them stories. This she was only too willing to do.

When they were all settled by the fire on which a pot containing a broth of red onions, garlic, pepper, and coriander bubbled merrily she would begin. She told them tales of princesses and princes, of cobra kings with glittering gems in their



hoods, of horrid ogres with fiery eyes in the middle of their foreheads, teeth like elephant tusks and ears like winnowing fans! Then Indrajit and Nalinika would clutch each other's hands and look fearfully at the dark corners of the kitchen – just the kind of spot a passing ogre would fancy!

The tale they liked best was the one about the Firebird. "It is said," Podihami would begin, "that in a certain country there lived a prince and a princess. One day when the princess was walking in