

1705

It was cold and dark outside as they flew out of the window, with Arjan clasped underneath Khushi.

The stars shone brilliantly against the velvet night. A crescent moon hung so close by in the sky that Arjan felt he could reach out and touch it. Down below, the entire town was lit up like a gigantic Christmas tree.

I don't want the ride to end. We will be home soon and Khushi will go back to Guru ji. Arjan sighed.

But Khushi had other plans.

“Arjan, if I could fly you to the one person you’ve always wanted to meet, who would you pick?” asked Khushi.

“Guru Gobind Singh ji!” Arjan exclaimed as he remembered all the heroic stories he had heard. “That would be amazing!”

For the first time, he forgot all about the pencil.

“Prepare to be amazed, my friend,” smiled Khushi. “We’re flying back to the past!”

They soared so rapidly in the sky that Arjan felt lightheaded. The brightly lit city below them disappeared. Khushi and Arjan were weaving in and out of the stars. It was so bright that, at times, Arjan had to close his eyes.

Something strange had happened. Khushi was barely holding Arjan. He seemed to be flying on his own, right underneath the falcon.

We are orbiting in space! Inter-galactic time travel!

Suddenly, Arjan heard a deafening sound. It was louder and more powerful than thunder. It seemed like they were piercing through the sound.



Arjan felt a shiver of fear run through him. He was afraid he was getting swallowed up in the thunderous explosion and would never be able to come out of it.

I wish I was home with mom and dad.

Then it was all over. Khushi and he were gliding down to what seemed like a campground. Tents fluttered in the breeze in an open field dotted with large-limbed trees. The campsite was deserted, except for a few soldiers guarding the tents.

Fearsome sounds greeted them as they got closer. Arjan could hear metal clashing with metal, men screaming and groaning, and strange thuds. Amidst all this rang out the rousing victory cry of the Sikhs — *Boley so Nihal, Sat Sri Akal.*

Arjan felt another shiver run down his spine. “Where are we, Khushi?” he asked with a tremor in his voice.

“We are in Anandpur in 1705. Not far from the battlefield where the Mughal and Sikh armies are locked in fierce combat. Even though the Sikhs are outnumbered, they are putting up a tough fight.”

“Why are they fighting?” asked Arjan.

“The Mughal Emperor of India is a bigot.”

“A bigot?” asked Arjan.

“A person who is not tolerant or respectful of other people’s beliefs. Aurangzeb, the Emperor of India, is a bigot. He is not allowing people the freedom to practice their religion. Guru ji is standing up to his tyranny and wants everyone to be free to follow their own faith. Guru ji believes in equality and respect for all people.”

“Very cool!” said Arjan.

“Prepare for landing in Guru ji’s court,” announced Khushi.

Arjan waited breathlessly.