



ASHA and BAZ

Meet Mary Sherman Morgan



Illustrated by
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(Book 1)



By Caroline Fernandez



Common Deer Press

Published by Common Deer Press Incorporated

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Published in 2022 by Common Deer Press
1745 Rockland Avenue
Victoria, British Columbia
V8S 1W6

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Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Title: Asha and Baz Meet Mary Sherman Morgan /
by Caroline Fernandez.

Names: Fernandez, Caroline (Blogger), author.
| Patel, Dharmali, 1981— illustrator.

Description: Illustrated by Dharmali Patel. | "Book 1".

Identifiers: Canadiana (print) 2021036954X
| Canadiana (ebook) 20210369558 | ISBN 9781988761671
(softcover) | ISBN 9781988761688 (PDF)

Classification: LCC PS8611.E7495 A92 2022 | DDC jC813/.6—dc23

Cover and interior illustrations: Dharmali Patel
Book Design: David Moratto

Printed in Canada
CommonDeerPress.com



CHAPTER 1

THE GREAT ROCKET CHALLENGE

The science class was abuzz with brainstorming the best ways to build a paper rocket. Kids sat in pairs on the floor, on desks, even out in the hall, as they worked together on their rockets. Ms. Wilson, the science teacher, went from group to group checking on their progress.

“How do we launch the rocket into the air?” Asha asked her best friend Baz. “We need the rocket to launch out . . . not up.” Baz chewed on his lip as he always did when he was trying to sort out a problem.

“Any questions?” Ms. Wilson asked Asha and Baz when she popped by their spot in the corner of the room. All the kids thought Ms. Wilson was the best teacher in the school because she came up with fun class projects.

“No questions. We’re good.” Asha replied quickly.

Baz felt uncomfortable being put on the spot. He just stayed quiet and tried to blend in with the wall.

The Great Rocket Challenge was a project and a competition. The teams had to make a paper rocket fly the farthest. However, the challenge was that they could only pick their rocket supplies from eight items:

- **white computer paper.**
- **tape.**
- **scissors.**
- **paper straws.**
- **glue.**
- **pencils.**
- **cardboard rolls, and**
- **markers.**

The team with the rocket that flew the farthest would meet Chris Hadfield, the Canadian astronaut, at the school assembly! Asha and Baz wanted their rocket to be the one that flew the farthest. They wanted to win the rocket competition.

“Ours is going to be better than yours!” bragged the team nearest to Asha and Baz.

“Pfft . . . not possible! Do *you* have Baz on your team? No, *you* don’t,” Asha shot back. Everyone knew Baz was the smartest kid in science class. He was amazing in math and problem solving. Asha, on the other hand, was creative and curious. She was definitely the most outgoing in the class.

Asha and Baz were best friends and always picked each other for partners. They even had a plan to be partners when they grew up. Baz would be an animal biologist and Asha would be a teacher. They would travel the world together teaching people about saving animals.

Asha and Baz looked around the class. Some teams were using the cardboard rolls as rocket bodies.

“Too heavy,” said Baz.

Other teams were using glue to attach paper straws together.

“Too messy,” said Asha.

A few teams were making paper airplanes.

“Not even rockets!” Baz whispered.

Asha and Baz brainstormed a different way to build a rocket. They decided to make a light yet solid rocket using only three items for construction: paper, a pencil, and tape.



They cut a rectangle of paper to be the rocket body. They rolled the paper snugly

around the pencil and taped it to itself. Then, they folded over the top of the paper to make a rocket nose cone. Finally, they cut three small triangles to attach to the bottom as rocket fins. Carefully, they slid the paper rocket off of the pencil. Success. It looked like a real rocket!

Launching the rocket was their roadblock.

“What if we connected the bottom of the rocket to the top of my water bottle and then squirted water through it?” Baz suggested. “The water would create energy to blast the rocket.”

“Wouldn’t the water soak the paper?” Asha wondered.

“True,” said Baz.

“Wet paper can’t fly,” said Asha. “Plus, water isn’t on the supply list anyway.”

Baz looked stressed.

“Keep thinking,” Asha encouraged.

Baz looked around at the teams and chewed on his lip. Some were already testing their rockets. “We are falling behind,” said Baz.

“We’ll figure it out. Don’t worry,” Asha said, trying to boost his spirits.

“Start cleaning up. It’s time for lunch,”

Ms. Wilson said cheerfully. "After recess you can continue working on your rockets."

Asha and Baz cleaned up the rocket supplies.

"Since it is so nice out," Ms. Wilson announced, "you can have lunch outside."

The kids clapped all at once. Lunch outside was a treat. Ms. Wilson really was the best teacher!

The bell rang out and everyone went outside. Groups of kids sat together on the playground eating, talking, and playing.

Asha and Baz headed to the edge of the playground, where the grass turned into sand.

"So how do we get our rocket to launch?" Asha asked as she plopped on the ground and took out her thermos and fork. She quickly dug into her delicious curry, enjoying every bite.

"Let's talk out the problem," Baz suggested. He loved planning. Baz sat next to Asha and began munching on his plain cheese and butter sandwich with the crusts cut off. "We need our rocket to go the farthest. For it to fly, we need energy. Something to push it across the classroom," Baz said in between bites.

“And water can’t do that,” said Asha pointing her fork in the air.

“Right. We need to use something on the supply list. But also something that won’t break the rocket,” said Baz.

“Correct,” Asha replied, then swallowed.

They finished their lunches and wiped their mouths with the backs of their hands. They put their containers back in their lunch bags and put their lunch bags on the grass.

Just then, Asha noticed an extraordinary stick lying in between the sand and grass. It wasn’t rough and covered in bark like all the other sticks in the schoolyard. This stick looked as if it had been polished by someone. It was as long as the length between Asha’s wrist and elbow. The wood was a dark chocolate brown at one end that flowed into a warm honey yellow at the opposite tip. This unusual piece of wood also had an interesting bend to it. Asha and Baz were both drawn to the odd stick.

“Wow, look at this!” Asha declared picking it up.

“Can I hold it?” Baz asked.



“Just a minute,” Asha replied holding up her hand like a stop sign. “I know just what to do with this stick . . . let me draw our rocket.”

Asha bent down to the sand and drew the outline of their rocket. First a nose cone at

the top, then a body tube in the middle. Finally, she drew three rocket fins at the bottom.

“Get in!” Asha invited Baz.

Asha and Baz stepped into the rocket ship. Asha touched the stick to the sand as if she were pressing a button. “Blast off!” she yelled. In that exact moment, the south wind blew sand into a gentle tornado around them. Asha and Baz were transported through space and time.

“What was that?!” Baz exclaimed as the mini tornado died out.

“Magic?” Asha guessed.

“On second thought, never mind,” Baz said taking a few steps back in fear. “I don’t want to hold the stick after all.”

“Look,” Asha said pointing down to the sand. “The rocket is gone.”

The rocket ship drawing had disappeared with the tornado, and written in its place was a name and a year:

MARY SHERMAN MORGAN. 1957.