The summer holidays have begun. It’s time for Maddy and Go to visit their maternal grandmother who lives in Ranigunj. It’s a three-hour train journey and their father is going to drop them off. As they set out for the journey, brother and sister hold hands and smile at each other. Their eyes sparkle with joy. No school, no studies, and no duties for the next one month. It’s time for them to get pampered like a prince and a princess.

Their grandmother lives with a maid in a beautiful, one storied house. Maddy and Go can’t believe their eyes when they see their favourite cousins there. Ishi, Dharmi, Ram, and Treya live in Kolkata. Their father is Maddy and Go’s maternal uncle. They are very rich, but the four kids don’t have any airs. They jump in joy when they see each other. Their grandmother has made a nice and tasty meal for them. Everyone has a hearty lunch, and the old lady looks on happily.

Maddy and Go become a little sad when their father leaves in the evening. But when they gather in the backyard and start playing hopscotch, Maddy and Go get over their gloom easily. They spend the entire evening playing games. Maddy has learnt climbing trees recently, and he entertains his cousins by climbing the huge mango tree and plucking ripe mangoes from the highest branches. The rest of the kids assemble under the tree and catch the mangoes that Maddy throws at them.

As night falls, a cool breeze starts blowing. Their games are over for the day and they carry all the mangoes inside. Treya is cutting the raw mangoes into small pieces to make a spicy mix with salt and chilli powder, when the maid enters the kitchen. Without saying a word to them, she picks up some mango pieces and starts eating. Ishi and Dharmi get agitated by this. “Why are you eating our mangoes?” asks Dharmi. Ishi adds, “Yes, Maddy got these mangoes for us.” Ram, who is the youngest among them all, gets inspired by the rage on his sisters’ faces and snatches the remaining mango pieces from the maid’s hands. The maid looks at the kids sadly for a moment and walks out. Go feels bad for the maid, but she keeps quiet.

A week passes by. Maddy and Go slowly notice that something has changed about their cousins. All of them have become moodier and surlier than before. They don’t laugh as much as they used to when Maddy cracks jokes. This baffles Maddy and Go, but they don’t mention this to anyone. One night, Treya cooks rice and *dal,* and their grandmother says, “Treya, darling, the dal is very good. But from next time put a little less chilli. It’s very spicy.” Treya gets offended on hearing this remark. She takes the entire container and pours the remaining dal over the kitchen sink. “Don’t eat it if you don’t like it.” Their grandmother is flabbergasted. Treya stomps off to the room that the kids share. Maddy goes after. “*Didi,* are you all right? Grandma, wasn’t trying to hurt you.” Treya rounds on Maddy. “Leave me alone, Maddy. I don’t want lectures.”

When everyone goes to bed later that night, Maddy goes to his grandmother’s room. He sits beside her on the bed and asks, “Granny, what’s wrong with everyone? Treya *di,* Dharmi, Ishi they all have become short-tempered. They scold Go when she forgets to turn off the tap in the bathroom. They scold me when I don’t listen to them. They were not like this before. They were all so sweet. What happened?”

Grandmother brushes her withered hand over Maddy’s head. “I will take care of them.” There’s a sadness in her milky eyes that Maddy doesn’t miss. For some unknown reason, his heart also sinks. He sleeps with his grandmother that night.

The next morning, grandmother wakes them up early and takes them to the temple. Once their prayers are over, they all sit in the temple garden. Grandmother starts talking to them. “Treya, Maddy says you are being rude and short-tempered with him and Go. Why?”

Treya looks angrily at Maddy, while Maddy gets scared. Treya keeps quiet for a while and then says, “Who is he to talk?”

Grandmother gets stern now. “You have hurt your brother and you should apologise.”

Treya retorts angrily, “I am also hurt. Who apologized to me?”

Now grandmother’s voice gets soft and she holds Treya’s hands. “Maddy and Go also lost their mother when they were very young. They cried and cried for months. Go fell sick. But see, they moved on. They learnt to take care of each other. You are still going to meet your parents every month.”

Maddy gets confused. “What happened, granny?”

Grandmother explains. “Your uncle lost his job and had to take out all the kids from school. So now they are going to live with me and go to school here. That’s why they are sad.”

Maddy looks aghast at the news and falls silent. Go is too young to understand anything and she keeps quiet. The other kids also don’t have anything to say. Grandmother looks from one kid to another. After a long silence, Treya pulls Go towards herself and hugs her. “I’m sorry. I won’t scold you again.” She then smiles at Maddy. “Sorry.”

Grandmother hugs Treya tightly. “We all get hurt, sweetheart. But only we can change every wrong into right. Let life be unfair. If we keep doing our duties fairly, then one day we will get all the happiness we deserve.”

Treya nods silently. Maddy puts his arms around Treya. Go follows after him and soon the whole family is hugging each other.

Blurb:

Maddy and Go are visiting their grandmother. They are excited to meet their favourite cousins again. They have always been fond of each other, but this time Maddy and Go are hurt by their cousins’ behaviour. Their holiday is not turning out the way they had hoped. It will take granny’s wisdom to put things right again.