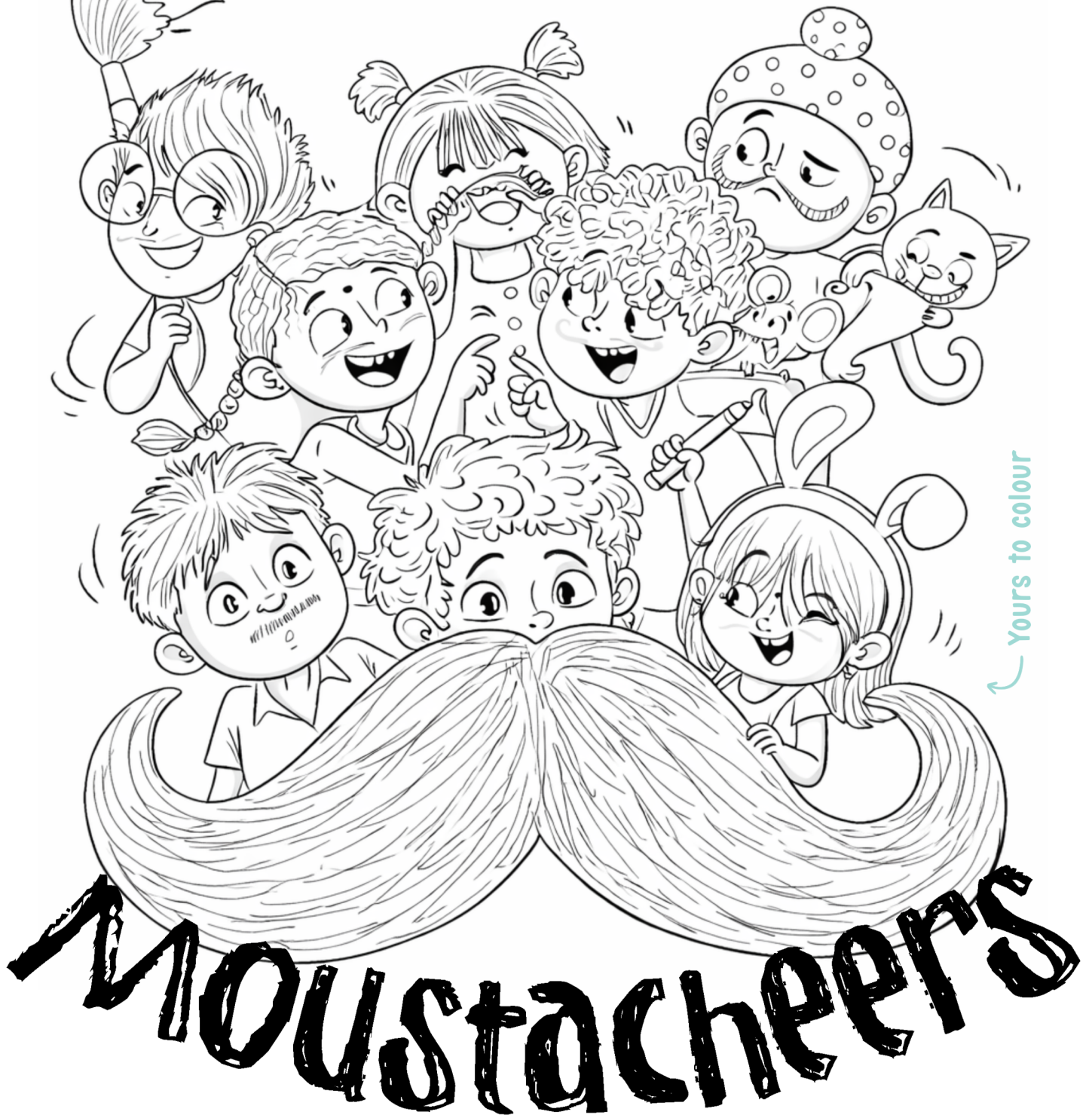


Venkat and the



Yours to colour



Author
Sambhavi Ganti



The
**Purple
Bean**

READ | THINK | CREATE

Author:

Sambhavi Ganti

Cover Design:

Sonal Goyal

Illustrations:

Sahana Satheesh



<https://www.purplebean.in/activities>



The Purple Bean - Venkat and The Moustacheers

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First published in 2026 by Ganti Media and Content Pvt. Ltd, Chennai

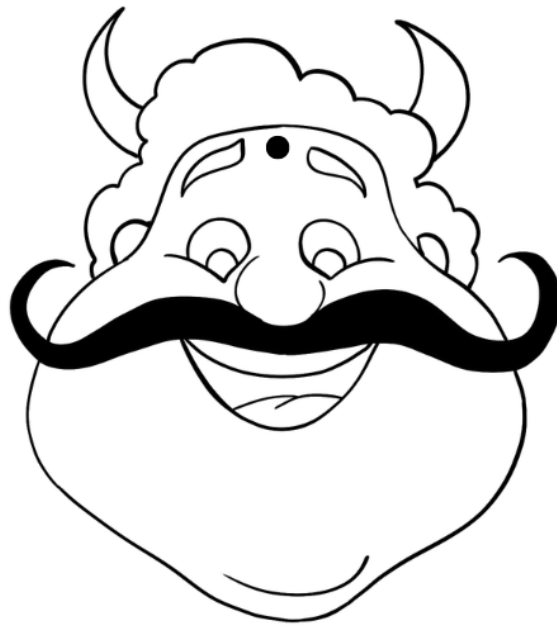
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Venkat and The Moustacheers

Nine-year-old Venkat was taking a nap. He hated naps and thought they were a waste of time. But he'd been out for a movie the night before and then gone for skating class early in the morning. After a great lunch followed by two large mangoes, Venkat settled down to read his latest book. He'd fallen asleep on the sofa while reading.

Four-and-a-half-year-old Pragya, Venkat's little sister, was thinking of something to draw. Her art supplies were spread all over the living room floor. Pragya looked up from her blank page, saw her brother and giggled. Venkat really looked quite funny. One of his legs was stretched out on the sofa, and the other was dangling from the edge. He had a cushion under his head, and his mouth was slightly open. A half-open book was balanced on his chest. It had an image of a smiling Asura on the cover.



Naughty little Pragya took a couple of sketch pens and drew a colourful moustache on Venkat to match the Asura's. Then, she started copying the drawing of the Asura into her book.

Venkat and The Moustacheers

After a long, peaceful nap, Venkat woke up at four-twenty five. He looked at the clock and jumped. He'd promised his friends that he'd be down to play at four-thirty. Venkat praised Pragya's drawing, put on his shoes, grabbed his Kerf gun and raced down the stairs to meet his friends.

John, Vijay, Vidya, Arhaan, and Jeet were marking the space for the evening's bullet battle. They all looked at Venkat's moustache and laughed.

"Hello, Venkat Uncle. I'm glad you could make it at last", said Vidya. Venkat didn't understand why Vidya was calling him Uncle.

"Don't make Venkat Uncle angry", said John, giving Venkat a friendly pat on the back.

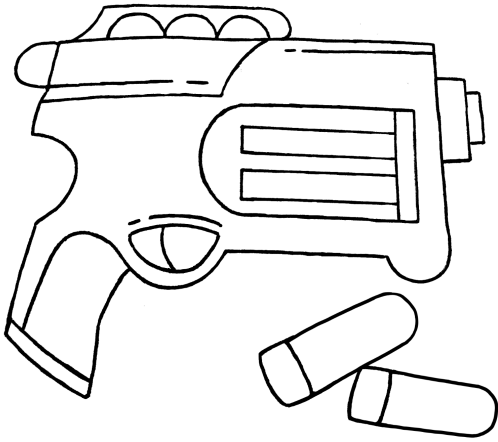
"I think he might actually be a dangerous Asura named Venkasur," Jeet said seriously. Jeet had lent Venkat the book so he could see how Pragya had copied the Asura's moustache.



"Well, whoever he is, I'm glad he's here. I want to play now. My cousins don't have kerf guns, and I missed our game", said Arhaan.

Venkat still didn't understand why his friends were making jokes about him. So he changed the topic and said, "Arhaan, Jeet and me against Vijay, Vidya and John".

Venkat and The Moustacheers



The children loaded their Kerf guns with sponge bullets and started shooting each other. The game didn't really have any rules. As all the children were forbidden from shooting their Kerf guns at home, they would gather in the parking space of the apartment building in the evenings to play together.

The children played various games until it was time to go home. Venkat's friends kept making silly jokes all evening. Venkat was slightly annoyed, but he was a good sport and

continued to play.

Venkat's t-shirt was soaked with sweat by the time he got home. So he immediately went to take a bath. When he saw his reflection in the bathroom mirror, he finally understood why his friends were joking all evening.

"Pragya!" Venkat yelled, coming out of the bathroom.

"What's the matter, Venkat? Why are you yelling for Pragya?" Taatha asked. He took one look at Venkat and understood what was going on. "Never mind, go on", Taatha added with a smile.

Pragya was in the kitchen. She was chatting with Amma, who was making pasta for the children as a treat. Lakshmi Aunty, their cook, was making rotis for the grown-ups.

"What happened, Venkat babu*? Why are you yelling so much? Pragya is right here in the kitchen", said Lakshmi Aunty.

*Hindi speakers might wonder why Lakshmi Aunty is being so respectful towards a young boy. But "babu" is just the Telugu word for boy. So Lakshmi Aunty is simply being affectionate.

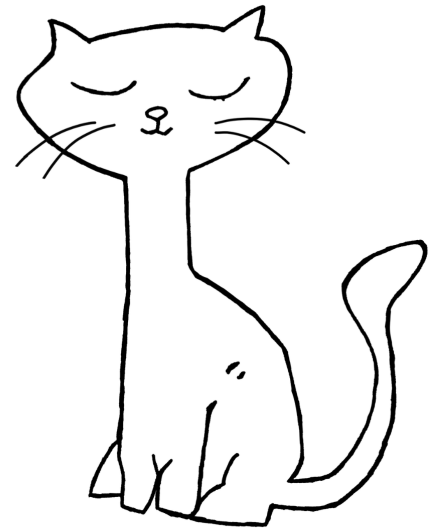
Venkat and The Moustacheers

Amma looked at Pragya suspiciously. “What mischief have you been up to now, young lady?” she asked.

Pragya squealed and ran out of the kitchen and out of the door of their flat. A bewildered Amma chased after her. She took one look at Venkat and said with a smile, “I think you should get the honour of chasing your little sister”.

“Yes! I’m going to catch her”, Venkat yelled and ran after Pragya. Venkat wasn’t very angry at Pragya’s harmless prank, but he was determined to catch her and take revenge of some sort.

Pragya squealed and ran towards the stairs. Jeet opened the door to see what the fuss was all about. Candy, the cat, ran away as usual. Jeet groaned and went in search of Candy.



Pragya ran up the stairs towards Arhaan and Aisha’s house.

“Aisha! Open the door! Quick!” Pragya yelled as she knocked on her friend’s house.

Fatima Aunty, Arhaan and Aisha’s mother opened the door in surprise. “What happened, beta? Are you hurt?” Aunty asked with concern.

Fatima Aunty saw Venkat running up the stairs with a colourful moustache on his face and a sketch pen in his hand. She immediately guessed what might have happened. “Arhaan! I think your friend needs your help to catch a little culprit”, she said, laughing.

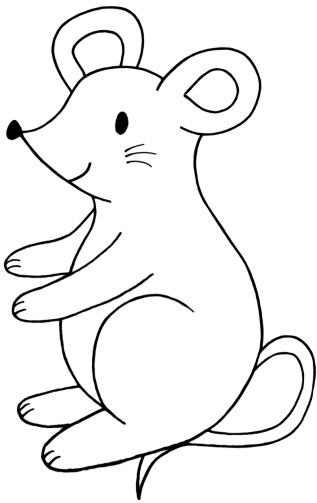
Arhaan came to the door, and Venkat stopped to catch his breath. “Why didn’t any of you tell me what was on my face?” Venkat demanded.

“It was more fun not to!” said Arhaan simply, and shrugged.

Venkat and The Moustacheers

“Well, that’s not cool! Help me catch Pragya now. I want to paint a moustache on her face”, said Venkat.

While the two boys were talking, Pragya slipped out from behind Fatima Aunty. She ran towards the stairs again. Vijay and Vidya lived on the same floor. They were playing in the corridor with Fluffy, their pet mouse. Fluffy was startled by the commotion, and he ran away, too.



“Catch Fluffy! Candy is out loose!” shouted Venkat as he ran up the stairs behind Pragya. Arhaan was right behind.

“Oh no!” cried the twins as Fluffy scampered into the open lift.

Venkat and Arhaan chased Pragya up to the fifth floor. She ran towards the end of the corridor where John’s family lived. John heard the sound of people running and came out to see what was going on.

“John! Stop Pragya!” said Venkat.

John was very fond of Pragya because they attended the same art class. He blocked the way into his house so Pragya couldn’t go inside.

“This is not what Kumar sir taught us to do in class, Chinnu”, John said, addressing Pragya by her nickname. Pragya giggled. Venkat grabbed Pragya and tickled her.

Vijay and Vidya came out of the lift, holding Fluffy. Jeet had also come up the stairs after locking Candy in the house. He didn’t want to miss any of the fun either.

“You know, there’s only one thing left to do”, Venkat said to his friends.

“What’s that?” asked everyone.

Venkat and The Moustacheers

Venkat pulled a brown sketch pen out of his pocket. “Pragya will have to keep me company till the ink wears off”, he said. Laughing, he drew a moustache on Pragya.

“Come to think of it, you should keep me company too. You didn’t tell me what was going on”, said Venkat. He swiftly drew a moustache on Arhaan’s face.

“Hey! That’s not fair. None of the others told you either!” said Arhaan. He grabbed Venkat’s sketch pen and drew a moustache on Vijay’s face.

“Wait! Let me get my colours. If I’m going to get a moustache, I want it to be in a colour I like”, said John.

Soon, all the children were sporting colourful moustaches on their faces. John’s mother laughed to see them all. “What a funny-looking bunch! I’m not sure what everyone will say when we go to your cousin’s wedding tomorrow! I might have to cover up that moustache with some of my makeup” Aunty said to John. She took a photo of the friends and posted it on their building’s group chat.

When Venkat and Pragya came home, Amma greeted them with a broad smile. She said, “Your photo came home before you did!”

Venkat tried his best to wash the ink off whenever he could, but the colours still took a few days to fade completely. As for Pragya, Amma hid her sketch pens as punishment until the moustaches wore off.





How did you like the story? What would you have done if you were in my place?