Piku's Little World

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Piku loved summer afternoons.
He played with the cats that dozed on his window ledge.
He chased the sparrows on the balcony.
He fed the squirrels that lived on the mango tree.
But most of all Piku loved the stories Mummy read him in bed.
The heat made the cats curl up in a ball. The sparrows slipped into their nests. The squirrels hid among the leaves. Sometimes Mummy fell asleep in the middle of a story. But Piku lay awake, listening to her snores go *khhhh khhhh khhhh.*
He shut his eyes tight if the shadows made scary faces on the wall.

Until evening came with a cool sigh.

But Piku did not like summer evenings when...
...the lights went off *phut*.
He *huffed* and *puffed* over his sums by the lantern.
The mosquitoes sang *pnn pnn pnn*.
The geckos ran *tut tut tut*.
The crickets called *crr crr crr*. 
Sometimes he went to the terrace with Papa to look at the big black sky. They counted the twinkling stars, spotting the bear and the dog that hid among them.

When the lights came back on, everyone went aaaaah.
Then one day Mummy was gone.
Piku came home from school and asked the cats if they knew where Mummy was. They purred and licked his hand.

He asked the sparrows. But they twittered away.

He asked the squirrels, who squeaked and ran.
Piku asked Papa if he knew where Mummy was. Papa said she was gone far away, for a very long time.
So Piku waited for Mummy every day. He played with the cats and sparrows and squirrels all afternoon. But no one read him a story anymore. The shadows made scary faces on the wall.
At night, he counted the stars in the big black sky. And the shadows filled his dreams with spiders and roaches and ants.
Then, one afternoon, Piku picked up a book and turned a page.

And oh!
The kings and queens, fairies and witches were suddenly alive. The words made them laugh and cry, sing and dance.
Since that day, Piku read a new story in bed. The cats stopped by to listen as they licked their paws. And once again, his dreams felt soft like teddy bears and bunnies—and sometimes they were lit with his Mummy’s brightest smile.
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Piku loves long summer afternoons and does not like dark summer evenings. But his afternoons become darker, when, one day, there is no one to read Piku a story. Will Piku’s books remain unread?

This is a Level 3 book for children who are ready to read on their own.