

Title: Mynah Celebrates Diwali

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It was two days before Diwali and Mynah was aimlessly swooping from tree to tree.

Spring in Otahuhu had never felt so sad. It was cloudy, cold and raining.

Mynah was in no mood to celebrate Diwali as she sat in the Pohutukawa tree. Even its red flowers couldn't cheer her up.

Tui was perched up drinking the nectar of the flowers and had been observing Mynah for some time.

"What's up, Mynah?" sang Tui.

Mynah flew up and sat beside Tui, quietly picking at her feathers for a few seconds before explaining to her long time friend.

"It's Diwali in two days time. I miss my home, my friends, and my family. I miss the sun, the sea and the warmth."

Tui listened to Mynah and finally said, "Don't worry my friend. We're all here. It will all be okay."

There was silence again.

Mynah brushed her wing against Tui without saying anything and flew off.

Seeing Mynah so sad worried Tui and got him thinking. He flew off to find his friend Karoro the Seagull. That very afternoon they came up with a plan.

That night the strong, fast Karoro an excellent navigator flew over the liquid green mountains and skies over and past Aotearoa to the warm, deep blue seas of Fiji.

As instructed by Tui, she landed in a mangrove in Suva.

In the quiet not so quiet night, Karoro found Lulu the Owl, Beka the Bat, Ugavule the Coconut Crab and Belo the Heron.

Karoro gave them gifts of figs and nectar from Aotearoa and retold Mynah's story.

“Poor Mynah, we miss her too. This is the first Diwali we will celebrate without her. She needs a homecoming party for Diwali.”

“Oh, “ exclaimed Belo, “but there’s only one day to Diwali and it will take Mynah days to fly back home.”

Karoro then revealed Tui’s plan and the team flew into action.

Ugavule husked some of the juiciest, tastiest coconuts. Beka gathered mangoes and guavas. They placed them in cloth made of coconut bark.

Belo and Lulu shared the load. The two gathered the bark cloth together in their magnificent claws.

Ugavule jumped on the Karoro’s back and they all launched off into the night towards the airport at Nausori.

The Cathay Pacific flight from Nausori was due to leave for Auckland and the last part of Tui’s plan was revealed.

The crowd - the strangest of companions – took up position on planes wing. “The fastest way to get to Aotearoa with Diwali just a day away,” said Karoro grinning cheekily.

Within minutes, the plane started taxing down the runway.

“Skytrip! Skytrip!” yelled Ugavule.

In the time being, Tui had gathered all their friends in South Auckland. After collecting fruit and nectar, they sat excitedly in a Kauri tree at the Manukau harbour awaiting their international travellers.

It was almost Diwali evening when they arrived. The motley group disembarked at the Manukau Harbour and were flying off to Otahuhu before the plane door had opened.

A strange cloud and shimmer lit up the sky above the Mynah. She looked up from the Manuka tree not knowing what to expect.

The cloud looked strange and yet so familiar.

She couldn’t believe her eyes. It was an Owl and not just any Owl. It was Lulu, her friend from Fiji leading the way.

Lulu’s feathers lit up this darkest night of the year – like the people had done with small clay lamps when Sita and Ram had returned from 14 years in exile on the first Diwali night in India.

Alongside Lulu flew Beka the Bat, Belo the Heron, Ugavule the Coconut Crab on the Seagull Kaoro’s back and Tui joined by the white heron, Kōtuku, Ruru the NZ Owl, Blackbird, Sparrows and Pīwakawaka the Fantail.

Mynah cried with joy and flew up to greet them.

Kotuku carried a Black fern that she planted to mark this gathering and the celebration and renewal of life.

"Happy Diwali!" sang Tui and the other birds. Feathers floated down from the sky as Mynah flew around hugging her friends.

The Diwali feast was spread out: guavas, mangoes coconuts, figs, other fruit and nectar from various flowers.

"Hang on. One more thing," said Mynah as she flew off.

A few minutes later Mynah returned and sheepishly added some lamingtons to the feast She had been so sad before that she hadn't prepared any sweets for Diwali.

Offerings were made to the Goddesses and Gods, for peace, love and prosperity, for good to prevail over evil all over the world.

Food was passed from beak to beak. The beautiful aroma of happiness spread over Otahuhu. A sliver light glowed and lit up the clouds over Aotearoa - the glow of friends and family sharing stories on this Diwali night.