

A CHILD IN THE LIFE OF THE DAY

The plane soared through the blue skies making somersaults. It chased and overtook a big eagle.

The pilot was thrilled.

Then he saw the enemy plane!

It was shooting arrows at him. He ducked the first arrow and turned his plane quickly to the right. He jammed his brakes and slowed the plane down. The enemy plane went past him.

Vasishta laughed.

He took out his catapult and let go a paper bullet at the enemy.

Parthappa was hit squarely in his ear. Parthappa yelled out.

Vasishta clenched his fist and shook it in triumph.

"Vasishta, write your spellings" his mother, Laluma to all, admonished him.

"Vasishta, spell your writings", Parthappa, his father, added.

Vasishta was squatting on the floor doing his home work.

He wrote M*E*E*N.

A doubt rose in his mind.

"Amma! what does mean mean?"

"How do you spell mean" Amma asked

"There's only one way to spell mean" Vasishta said "But I don't know why I wrote m e e n instead of m e a n"

"Why did you write it like that if you knew that the spelling was wrong?"

Amma was in a mood for scolding and Parthappa was getting worried his dinner will be slightly spoiled.

Vasishta had a good point and both he and Amma wanted to know the answer.

"I think I wrote it like that because I knew it did not mean mean and I was getting confused so I wrote it another way so as to not get confused. Now I forgot what it means. I know it does not mean the same thing as mean means when we say, for example, "I know the meaning of the word 'mean'."

"Try thinking of it by saying like Akka, "You are very mean!"

Amma helped Vasishta.

"Ah! I got it". Vasishta thanked Amma.

Vasishta got back to his home work. He liked the letter m. It had that ...mmmm... feeling of goodness as when he said amma. He also liked the capital letter M. It always reminded him of hills.

He climbed the first hill and then the second.
The sun was going down.
It looked pretty and red as he placed it between the hills.
Akka was already on top of the other hill with Bianca.
Bianca in her white coat was looking orange in the sunset.

Bianca's tail was not wagging.

Vasishta was alert at once.

He saw a dark figure. It was a short and dirty man with a beard standing with his bicycle. He was going to block Akka's way!
Vasishta had to fly to the next hill to save his sister from this man.
He had no idea of how to get there!
He knew he had to fly to the next hill if he was to save Akka. He had to think fast.
If only somebody could throw the boomerang with him holding on to it.
He could pick Akka up and come back!

He had an idea! He could fly! Fish blew out air under water to float in water. He could blow water in air and he could float in air. He had to. He took his water-bottle and drank as much as he could.
It was true!! His coat became like superman's and he flew to akka.
He punched the short man. The man pulled out his sword.
Vasishta used his pencil against the man's sword.
The man was too strong for him.
"Look! How beautiful the sun is!" Vasishta cried out pointing out to the sun behind the man.
The man turned and looked towards the sun.

Vasishta immediately poked the man's big backside with the pencil that he had just sharpened.
The man went screaming down the road holding his bottom.
Vasishta felt as important as HEMAN.
He couldn't help grinning.
That spoilt his mood a bit as HEMAN never grinned especially after a fight.

Vasishta pushed the man's cycle down the hill after him.

Akka did not even notice what had gone on.
But Bianca came and licked him all over.

"Amma! See amma! Bianca has stamped all over my books!" Vasishta screamed.

Bianca had just come in from the garden with Akka.

Bianca was telling Vasishta about all the nice time she had, jumping all over him while doing so and licking him just at the places Vasishta had covered with his hands.

One of her feet was muddy and a footprint was on one of the pages of Vasishta's exercise notebook.

Vasishta saw it. He thought of his teacher. He saw his teacher twitting his ears just as she had done his partner in school a few days earlier.

His partner had only torn a page. He did not have a dog's footprints on his book!

Vasishta saw himself standing up and being disgraced in front of his friends. He saw his teacher bringing down the heavy ruler on his knuckles as she had done with the biggest boy in his class for scribbling funny pictures on his note-book.

Vasishta burst into tears. Nobody listened! He cried a little louder and threw his compass box on the floor. That made a sufficiently loud noise! Amma must have heard that.

"What has happened, Vasishta?!" Akka was all sweetness.

"It's all your fault!" Vasishta showed Akka the book. I don't know why I go around saving her, Vasishta thought.

Akka was all concern for him.

Vasishta cried out a bit louder to get Amma to come over from the kitchen.

Amma came out from the kitchen with her rolling pin in hand.

Parthappa quickly got up and called Bianca for a walk.

Bianca was happily licking everybody in sight.

"BAD GIRL BIANCA!! VASISHTA, PICK UP YOUR COMPASS-BOX AT ONCE!" Amma shouted.

"B-A-A-A-A-D GIRL, M-A-A-A-D GIRL" Parthappa added.

"Naughty Girl" Akka joined in.

Bianca went under the cot.

"What's the use of shouting at Bianca" Vasishta reasoned. He was after all Bianca's best friend.

"Who's going to repair my book? It's all Akka's fault."

Amma soon had the situation under control. The children went for lunch and Parthappa sat down to repair the book. He tore out the page and copied Vasishta's home-work and his teacher's signature from the torn page.

Parthappa was quite satisfied. The notebook looked as if it had never been trampled on before; Parthappa had also not added an extra mark to the teacher's grading like he did for his notebook when he was in school.

"How did you remove the stain Parthappa?" Akka asked when she had returned after lunch.

"You are a great artist, Parthappa" Vasishta flattered his father. He showed Akka the torn page.

"Oh. Wow!" Akka said. She was happy that Bianca had been forgotten after all.

Vasishta realised that he had made a tactical error. He should not have accepted Parthappa's artistry. Now he has to go back to his studies.

Amma gave Parthappa an extra spoon of *ghee* on the steaming hot *Sambaar*.

Another day of the child's life had ended.