



Level 3

Sringeri Srinivas Keeps His Promise

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It was the weekly hair wash day for Sringeri Srinivas. He had made a promise not to cut his hair until scientists had learned to manage the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which had caused the terrible pandemic.



In three years, his hair had grown so long that he would sometimes trip over it.
His hair had grown so long that birds would try to nest in it.
His hair would get so dirty that the whole family had to help wash it.



Today, as usual, Parvatamma had collected many buckets of water in the courtyard. Homemade herbal shampoo was kept ready.



Shiva and Shankari began to scrub their father's scalp.
Just then little Uma came running, waving a newspaper.
"Appa, Appa," she shouted. "Look, look, the government says the pandemic is over!"



Sringeri Srinivas got up suddenly. Soapy water got into his eyes and dripped on his clothes. The news was so good that he forgot to get angry.



Wiping his eyes, he turned to Parvatamma. "Thank God it is over. And thanks especially to all the scientists for the vaccines and the medicines they quickly made. So, Devare," he said, lifting up his hands to his Gods, "I have kept my promise. Now I can cut my hair at last."



Parvatamma was very happy. Three years of living with Sringeri Srinivas and his long hair and itchy head had not been easy. The children, too, felt great relief. Months and months of making fancy hairstyles for their father had been hard.

And yay! No more family hair wash days!



Other families in Chikkooru village were also happy. Many villagers had followed Sringeri Srinivas's example and their hair was too long and too dirty as well. No one was happier than Bhimanna. Soon, he would be busy cutting people's hair again.

But how could one person cut so much hair?



The villagers held a meeting to discuss the problem.

"Why not have a hair-cutting festival?" asked Naganna, the carpenter.

"We can invite all the barbers from nearby villages to help. We can have a grand feast, too."

Everyone thought it was a great idea.



"OK, but I will be their barber-in-chief," said Bhimanna, firmly.
Soon, barbers from many villages came along with their tools and their families, happy to get some business at last.



People gathered in every corner to have their long manes cut.
Some wanted to look like popular film stars. Some like cricketers. Youngsters wanted the latest styles.



Snip, snip, snip, went the scissors.
Ooh, ooh, aah, went the relieved villagers.



Just then, little Uma came running, looking worried. "Appa, Appa, maybe COVID-19 is back. There are thousands of new cases everywhere. Our Chikamma has just tested positive too!"



"STOP!" said Sringeri Srinivas to Bhimanna, who was busy chopping off heaps of his hair.
"Now what shall we do?"



Everyone fell silent.
Scissors stopped moving.
Combs fell to the ground.



“Relax,” came a booming voice from under a cloud of shaving foam.
It was Dr Ashok, from the nearby village. “Yes, the virus has not gone away, but it is less dangerous. We must be careful, but there is no need to be afraid.”



Everyone started to talk at once. There was much confusion all around.
Suddenly, Sringeri Srinivas stood up from his chair.



His hair was half long and half short. Bunches of his cut hair were all over his clothes. The children started to laugh at the sight. He glared at them with his famous frown. They became quiet as mice.



"I have an idea," he announced. "Let us all keep one lock of hair but cut the rest. This lock of hair will remind us that the virus may be down, but it is not out. It will not let us forget that we have to be always alert. What do you think?"



Everyone started to talk again. The barbers gathered in a group to decide whether they could agree to such a strange plan.



Dr Ashok gave a hearty laugh. "What an original idea! I like it. Manianna," he said to his eager young hairdresser, "keep some of the hair on the back of my head long. It will remind my patients to take care of their health!"



Once the doctor had approved it, everyone decided to accept the proposal. One by one, the hairdressers returned to their customers. Each one wanted a different part of hair to be kept long. The barbers had to be very creative.



By the time all the haircuts were done, each villager looked very special indeed. Sringeri Srinivas was very proud of his long single strand, which Bhimanna had curled down to his waist. "Thank you all," he bowed to the talented barbers, who were busy packing up.



Everyone joined the villagers for a grand feast.
Byrappa sang his new song, praising the scientists and the Gods.



All the cut hair was collected to send to wig-makers, for cancer patients who often lose their hair during treatment.



News about this new hairstyle spread far and wide, right up to Doddooru, the big city. Sringeri Srinivas became even more famous than before. Suddenly, hairstylists everywhere had to learn new ways to cut hair.



"Now we will all learn to be careful, no matter which virus comes along," laughed Sringeri Srinivas, twirling his long strand of hair.

"I too want a haircut like that," said little Uma.

"Shush," said Parvatamma, "One in each family is really quite enough!"

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Sringeri Srinivas Keeps His Promise

(English)

The COVID-19 pandemic is over. It's time for Sringeri Srinivas to cut his hair at last. But just then, some alarming news comes his way. What will Sringeri do?

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



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