

Saving Yogi Banks

'Mom! I have a puzzle for you'

'Later Vansh, first get in the car. Where is Ayush? Did you see him?'

'No, *bhaiya* hasn't come out of the class yet.'

'Okay... you get inside and take the water, right?'

'Yes, Mom'

'There he is... Ayush!... Ayush!' Priya waved as she called Ayush. Ayush waved back.

'Got late again today?'

'You know our teacher Mom, she's always the last one to free the class'

'Okay *baba*, now hurry up, we've to pick up Dad on the way too'

'Really!'

'Yeah, he told he'll be getting free early today and can't wait for the carpool'

'Yay! We'll be going out today evening?'

Reversing the car, Priya did not reply.

'Did you hear that Vansh! we're going to the plaza tonight!'

'Really Mom!'

'Hold on both of you, we're not going anywhere tonight. Now please keep quiet and let me drive'

'Mom! I have a puzzle for you', Vansh couldn't wait.

'Go on son...'

Excited, seven-year-old Vansh started, 'So suppose that you are going on a highway at 100 kmph. Suddenly there are three guys in front of you. One is an 80-year-old man who...'

'I know the answer!', leaned Ayush from the rear seat.

'Keep quiet *bhaiya*, the quiz is for Mom'

'I will ask Mom'

'No, no, I will ask'

'Quiet! Vansh, you continue'. Priya entered the motorway towards central park.

'So, there is one 80-year-old man who is about to die in 15 days; there is a 5-year-old boy; and there is a young policeman'. Priya couldn't help imagine Manish, her husband.

'So, the question is, Mom, whom will you hit?'

Ayush smiled wide. Priya frowned. Vansh barely held his excitement.

'What kind of question is this? Who will you hit?'

'Tell, tell! or will you give up?!'

'Okay, let me think.... Umm...', Priya noticed a vibration on her phone. There was some text. 'Definitely not the policeman,' she already felt some relief as she spoke, 'and also not the kid. Old man, I will hit the old man!'

'Wrong answer! Wrong answer!', both Vansh and Ayush shouted together.

'Agh... quiet, don't shout in my ear, both of you'.

'Mom! wrong answer – You will not hit anybody. You'll hit the brakes!!'

Oh, that was stupid, she thought.

There was a red traffic signal ahead. They stopped.

'You lost!'

'Okay *baba*, I lost. I will hit the brakes', she checked the text message. It was Manish.

*Will be late. With a rescue team at
Trinity Hall. Dog stuck-up at 5th floor.
All safe. You reach home. tc.*

'Oh my God!'

'What happened Mom?'

Priya noticed where they had reached. Trinity Hall was just a couple of kilometers towards their right. She could take a U-turn to home.

'What happened, Mom?'

'Nothing. Dad will be late. We're going home'

Less than ten seconds for the traffic light to turn green, she was still thinking, and reconsidering. Home was 5 km south. She decided to take right.

'Okay, now listen. Dad is nearby only, and busy. We'll go there and wait for him and see if he's getting free soon, or else we leave after some time. Okay? You both will sit quiet'

'Yes Mom'

* * *

By the time they reached Trinity Hall, the news was already on the radio. Ayush and Vansh understood the situation and were concerned too. Knowing that their Dad was heading the rescue, they felt involved as well.

The dog, *Yogi Banks*, belonged to the owner of Trinity Hall, an upcoming shopping store in the city. It was a four-story building and housed leading fashion brands. As an expansion, construction of a 5th floor was underway. Apparently, from this floor, Yogi had ventured on to a mobile tower atop adjoining roof through a construction plank, and then slid over to one of its corners about midway on the tower. The tall tower itself was mounted on the fringe of the roof of this building, and Yogi sat precariously at the edge of a tower member, at height of about 4-5 stories. People in the market had tried to get him back on the plank, but Yogi wouldn't move. Fearing a misstep, fire brigade & police was called in, and also the telecom company which owned the tower.

Priya realized that a lot many people were already involved. She managed to park the car about 300 meters away in a parking lot, and a faint commotion could be heard, along with the emergency vehicles' sirens. The fire brigade could be seen too, partially hiding the tower. The crowd gathered on the other side as well, till a T-junction about half a kilometer away from their car.

'Should we stay here?' She was having second thoughts, but then she thought they're in an isolated parking, and not adding to the traffic. No harm staying. She called up Manish. He didn't pick up. She messaged him conveying their location.

'What is going on, Mom?', Vansh asked.

'Son, as they told, they're trying to save Yogi who's stuck up on this tower...'

'Is there a (electric) current on the tower too?', said Ayush, 'Why is he not coming back the way he went there?'

'I don't know son, maybe he slipped there or something. And don't worry, there's no current in the tower, he'll be fine. It's not an electric tower you know', Priya wasn't sure about the voltages and situation, but she assured Ayush anyway, 'See they told fire brigade is already there, so fireman will go there and save Yogi'. She explained them how firemen not only doze off the fire but also had the ladder equipment so reach high places.

Manish called.

'You're still here?'

'Yes, we're fine, don't worry, how are the things down there?'

'The dog is just frozen out of fear'

'Oh! poor puppy...'

'He's not too young though, about seven years. But he's just damn scared because the tower is too high... not responding at all to the calls'

'We can see the fire brigade ladder from here. But it doesn't seem to reach the tower'

'Yeah they're on it. That's how I got to call you. You can see the ladder? You're on which side?'

'Towards central park. The police barricade is visible too'

'Okay, I'm also towards this side only. Yeah, the fire brigade had difficulty veering in due to roadblock caused by the construction material. The guys are trying. The dog is safe... don't –'

'Yogi. His name is Yogi Banks', she interrupted.

'He has a name? Sounds like James Bond!'

She could see Ayush and Vansh cheering, 'It's all over the news, Captain!'

'Okay, I'll hang up now, there's a call. You guys leave in thirty if it doesn't end, right?'

'Right.'

* * *

After about forty minutes, the trouble still remained. To conserve the car battery, they were now listening the radio over phone.

'...firemen are still struggling to reach Yogi. We have Mr. Agnihotri from fire department with us on the line who's coordinating his men down here...'

'Mr. Agnihotri, people are worried about Yogi. We're getting calls from around the city. Could you share what's happening here with our listeners?'

'See, the problem is the vehicle could not move near the building initially, due to these concrete slabs down on the road.'

'We hear that the JCB was called in too'

'Yeah, but the lane is too narrow you know... We were able to move some blocks manually, and made some progress. But you can see there's still some distance we couldn't bridge. Our people are able to reach near the tower at the top, but still that's about five meters short. The ladder overhang is at its extreme, going further can be risky. Our men are unable to reach there. So, we're considering other options now.'

'Is there a plan, sir?'

'Look the problem which is further complicating the situation is that the dog is – '

'Yogi, sir'

'...yeah, Yogi is very much scared and just curled up at this tower's edge. He's not even opening his eyes, responding is a second thought. We have to be careful that he sees us and understands our move. Earlier we thought offering an extension ladder, but then dropped the idea.'

'We don't know how he will respond'

'Exactly. We're afraid that even if he decides to move, whether he'll be able to keep his balance or not...'

'Rightly said, sir'

'Let's see. We're now considering rappelling down the tower'

'Really? From the top? There's an access from the top...'

'There's an access from the top but from the other side. The telecom company people are supporting us. The service access to the tower however, is from the terrace side. And, the... er. Yogi is stuck up on the opposite'

'Towards us'

'Yes, that's just making the things difficult for us. Let's hope that rappelling works out'

'Sir, one more thing...'

'I'm sorry guys I'll have to leave the discussion here'

'Right sir, sure, thanks a lot', the RJ continued, 'So friends, this was Mr. Agnihotri from fire department talking to us just now. He's monitoring the situation closely here, and we're keeping our fingers crossed. It's time for a song, you're listening to Planet Radio, with me Nitin...'

'What did he say Mom?'

'They're trying to reach down to Yogi by a rope now'

'Mom, what if Yogi cannot catch the rope?'

'It's gonna be all fine son, he doesn't have to catch the rope. See there're so many people there for him.'

Vansh looked outside.

* * *

'It's been six hours since the morning now, and the rescue efforts still continue. Half an hour ago, a rappeller tried to reach Yogi, but it was decided to abort the plan in between when Yogi was seen fidgeting dangerously. Good thing is that he opened his eyes, and seemed to notice the people for the first time. The rappeller is still on the top. To tell us more about the situation here,

we're talking to police inspector Mr. Manish here. Mr. Manish has been coordinating the rescue operations since morning. Over to you, sir'

'That's Dad!', Vansh exclaimed

'Shhh... listen'

'Hi Nitin, thanks for your support'

'Sir, please tell us about the progress, what happened, what halted the effort?'

'We have not aborted the rappelling attempt yet. We feel that till now it's the best plan that seems to be working. We're only taking a cautious approach'

'And what's that, sir?'

'The rappeller realized that when he was nearing Yogi, he moved without a warning. Probably he got startled or scared or something. So, we halted in between'

'Right. He seems to be very anxious'

'He's stressed out really. He's there since morning, and without water. The rappeller tells us that he could barely open his eyes and looked very timid. We got worried if he may faint out of shock... things could become difficult. The challenge seems more psychological now...'

'We can see a team of doctors here too...'

'...yeah, they were in fact alerted through your channel and came up to help us. This has been a great help...'

'Sir, you are the men with the nerves here'

'...No really, we now have a vet specialist with us who's guiding us. A useful input he's given is to remove the helmet that rappeller is wearing. That appearance probably freaked out an already fraught Yogi, so this time he'll be going without the helmet...', Manish added, 'and wearing a smile'

'Oh really? The risk...'

'Safety is not an issue, we're taking care of it. There's gonna be a backup rappeller too this time for this'

'Okay...'

'And to make Yogi comfortable, the doc has suggested to sprinkle some water. But we're cautious'

'Yeah, can't take chances'

'Can't take chances. One more thing. This time from the terrace which holds the tower, we're going to tie a safety net too. It will be like a ramp from the balcony of the second floor till the ground – just in case Yogi can't make it. So even if there's gonna be a fall – which could be about two stories high – we're gonna be prepared for that as well. Initially we were thinking of making a net out of the sarees from the Trinity Hall, but experts tell us that the hitting speed from a fall this high is gonna be like more than forty-kmph, so we've called in for a professionally built Kevlar net. We're trying to take 360-degree precaution, to the best extent we can'

'Good luck to you, sir. All of our wishes are with you and your team'

'...and Yogi!'

'Certainly! Thanks a lot, sir, for your valuable time'

'Thanks...'

'So friends, this was inspector Manish with us, giving us a detailed account of the next plan. The ordeal at Trinity Hall continues. Yogi Banks, seven-year-old pet is showing a brave face in this situation. The atmosphere here is of concern as well as of hope. In about an hour from now, it would also start getting dark. The team here is confident that this next attempt will be a success... Time for a short break.'

'There will be a net to catch him this time, Mom?'

'Yes son, as a precaution, there will be a safety net too.'

* * *

'Look Mom, that's Dad!', Vansh pointed.

'Hey Vansh! Stay here. Dad's coming here'. Vansh won't listen. Priya ran after him, 'Ayush, you stay in the car. Don't move. Okay?'

'Dad!! You're a hero! You saved Yogi!', Vansh ran to jump on his *Hero*.

Priya followed, and gently hugged *her Hero*.

'Everybody did Vansh. Everybody did it', Manish looked at Priya, 'You didn't leave?'

'They won't let me! Their Dad's fighting here being hero, how could they let go? Just be thankful that I managed to hold them in the car'. Manish looked back with smile and cuddled Vansh.

'I don't know! Had it not been for the safety net, the turn of events tonight could've been different!' Priya noticed a rare softness in Manish's voice, 'It's just fortunate...'

'I know, dear...'

'Let's go home'

Priya nodded, with the keys.

'What? You'll be driving? Fine...Ah, Ayush!'

Ayush hugged him, 'You saved him, Dad!'

'We all saved him. And the safety net saved him!'

Priya cranked the car, and turned to look back, and took a pause.

'What?', Manish looked at her.

'Nothing,' she smiled, and turned back again, 'So kids! Let's put on *our safety net!*'

'You kidding? Its over!', Manish looked bemused, kids confused.

'Seatbelts Captain! Let's put on the seatbelts!', she winked.

Everybody laughed, 'Oh that!? Yeah sure!'