

# English Story

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## CGC Stalwarts

Tuks is in a bad mood today. Nothing seems to be going right. First, he runs out of toilet paper in the bathroom, when it was needed the most. Then the phone starts ringing while he is in the shower. He was expecting an important call. But this particular caller is from many time-zones away, and probably didn't realize that it's still early in the morning for Tuks.

Tuks dashes out of the shower, picks up the phone, only to find out – it's an over-zealous telemarketer from India pitching Bollywood movie channels on the Dish Network. Tuks was never particularly interested in noisy, song and dance filled Bollywood movies. The dripping crowd, Tuks, looks around and notices what a mess he has created on the carpet. The shower is still on, as he forgot to turn it off in the rush to catch the phone, wasting all that hot water. He could even feel the warmth of mist the full force of shower is creating. He likes to take shower with it turned all the way up. The strong jet of spray on his back soothes his nerves, cleanses his soul, and makes him fresh. He installed a special shower-head just for this purpose.

Now, he is irritated. He should have been in the shower right now, under that powerful nozzle. But no, he is talking to a telemarketer at this early hour. Could he dip into his usual sense of humor, and help out this woman on the phone? May be. Instead of hanging up, he takes a deep breath, and started sweet-talking to the poor woman. You are trying to sell Bollywood movies to me, right? Well, let me give you a piece of that right now. That ought to teach you a lesson! Needless to say, the caller hung-up shortly after Tuks started singing “*Tum pass aeye...*”

Tuks' wife is in bed. She is not an early-morning person. Neither is Tuks, but nature called early today, and things started to go south. As he hung up the phone, out comes little Tula from her room. Obviously, she is looking for the bathroom. She always finds it challenging in the incoherent state that she is usually in, after waking up in the morning. She would bump into things, head toward another room or go in a

circle, and still won't find the bathroom. She was told to walk with her eyes open. But, that doesn't seem to happen, and it's a well-known ritual every morning for the Tuks-family.

As Tuks steps forward to help Tula find her way, he senses something has gone amiss. Before he could follow-up on his thought, he notices Tula looking at him, her eyes wide open and jaw dropped. Only then he realizes that he forgot to grab the towel while stepping out of the shower!

Just as Tuks jumps back in the bathroom and closes the door, the phone starts ringing again. This must be the call he was expecting. But he is not about to step out now with Tula giggling away right outside.

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What's wrong with Tuks this morning? He's always quick to answer a call, especially when it's expected. But this morning, it kept on ringing. May be he was really late to retire last night, Ankan wonders, as he hangs up the phone, and heads out. He'll try again later.

It's a bright and cold morning at this mountain top. Ankan has been tied-up with his field-work at this remote site for the last couple of weeks. There is very little contact with the outside world except through the electronic means. But that has been patchy since last week. There is no normal cell coverage. Calls are made using a special radio link patched through their branch office in the nearest town. Ankan barely stays in touch with CGC, hardly fifteen minutes of net access every night, and that's what makes him impatient. Otherwise, he enjoys this remoteness. He tries to catch up with his memoir writing that he had been putting off for years. This serene surrounding really helps.

Last night the net access was dreadful. In addition to occasional freeze-ups, it was dropping characters as Ankan was trying to be quick on his heels, while checking on some recent posts at CGC. Now, those combined with his habit of making typos, it was a disastrous session. He was worried that his posts will be misconstrued, which has happened before, and needless to say, even without the aid of this unreliable connection. But last night, he topped all his past gaffes by banning himself by triggering a language-filter, and now he can't get on CGC.

Soutik is very busy this week with his project deadline looming. As much as he hates to bother Soutik with this type of SOS calls, he may not have another choice. At least he didn't lock himself out of his little digital assistant, which would have been even more painful, as all his passwords are on it.

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Soutik is telecommuting today. Without having to worry about the 45-minute drive each way, and all the nuances that go with it, this way he gets more time to work on the project. He needs to finish his part this week. He may be able to extend it till Sunday. But that's it. Considering the current status, he is not in a bad shape. He just needs to put some extra hours, and this telecommuting helps.

He takes a break, and walks out to the backyard to enjoy the fruit of his labor of love, gardening, when the phone rings. It's from Ankan. After the obligatory exchange of pleasantries comes the request to un-ban him. Soutik smiles. It seems like the frequency of this type of request is going up as time goes by. Initially, it was probably once every few months, now, every other week. Soutik worries about Ankan.

"Are you OK, Mama?" Ankan hears the same warm appellation that always gets to his core.

"Oh, I'm fine. It's just these dumb keyboards that always get me", shrugs off Ankan.

Yeah, right. Every keyboard in the world is dumb when I'm the chief, chuckles Soutik. He wonders how Ankan manages to keep himself out of trouble from other online activities like email and banking. He makes a quick pit stop at CGC, and takes care of the issue.

"OK Mama, where were we?" back in the garden, Soutik whispers to his budding plants with a gentle rhythmic tone. This sheer gentleness, coming from a bear of a man like Soutik, would be overwhelming to mere mortals, such stark is the contrast. But for people who know Soutik, it's no surprise.

All of Soutik's friends are his Mama, and so is he everyone's. Then there are his car, desk, PC, plants in the garden, neighborhood trees, streets etc. Everyone and everything gets a Mama-shower from him. Some wonder if he hears those plants speaking back to him. At least from looks of the satisfaction on his face, it sure seems so.

But, make no mistake about one thing though. It's about CGC. It's his baby. Someone messes with CGC, he messes with Soutik - pure and simple. Mama or no-Mama, one will get the brunt of Soutik's fury, if one gets on the wrong side of CGC. If one has any doubt, one just needs to ask those unlucky fellows who got beaten-up back in Soutik's school days. Now, he does not get upset quite that easily, but that's just a matter of changed threshold. Once it's crossed, exits the 'gentle-Mama', and enters the 'tiger-Mama'.

Back in his study, Soutik turns on the net-radio and logs on to CGC. As he gets comfortable in his chair and grabs his mouse, CGC banners gradually fill up the screen. Soft bluish glow reflects on his face. Soutik feels a surreal warmth as he glances over latest posts from friends.