



The Girl Who Could Not Stop Laughing

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An explosive sound erupted across the 4B classroom. Gundappan Sir, the maths teacher, knew exactly where the bomb had exploded. "HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!!"



'T. Sundari! Please leave the classroom,' he said. The class went quiet and everyone looked at T. Sundari, who sat on the fifth bench.



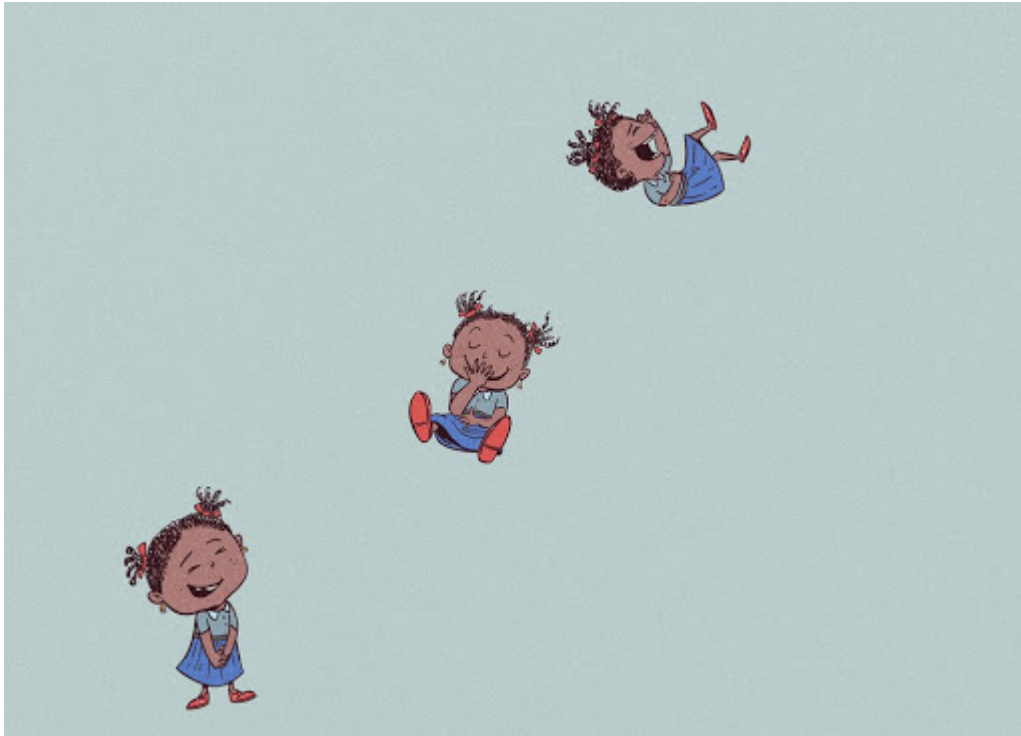
'But sir! Please sir! I tried to control my laughter but it burst out of me!' Everyone in 4B burst out laughing too.



T. Sundari laughed a lot.
She laughed for nearly
everything.



For example, last week, a classmate told T. Sundari this joke: Q: Why does Maths Sir always look sad? A: Because he has to solve so many problems. T. Sundari had narrowed her eyes and giggled. No wonder everyone laughed when they saw Gundappan Sir now.



Every joke evoked a different reaction from T. Sundari. Sometimes a polite laugh: "Tra la la ha ha!" Sometimes a giggle: "Pehehehehhee". Sometimes a guffaw: "AHAHAHAHA!"



Sometimes a Ghatotkacha* laugh: "MUHAHAHAHAHA"
Sometimes, when T. Sundari tried really hard to suppress her laughter, it would burst out of her like a bomb: "Mmmmmprrrrrfftrrrrrrahaahaha HAAHAHAHA-HAAHAHAHA!!!"

*In the Indian epic, Mahabharata, Ghatotkacha is a huge and powerful rakshasa with a loud and rumbling laugh.



T. Sundari was worried. Was there something wrong with her? Why couldn't she stop laughing? She needed to do something. Stuffing a hanky in her mouth didn't help. It just popped out of her mouth when she laughed.



T. Sundari made a list of things she found funny:
5. Tickling 4. The word bonda 3. People slipping on banana peels 2. Toilet jokes 1. Farts



'I will make sure I never laugh at these again,' decided T. Sundari.



Next day, during library, P. Manigantan moved behind a bookcase and let out a delicate sound right next to T. Sundari: Poot poot potrrrrrrr T. Sundari, who knew a fart when she heard one, erupted in laughter, forgetting all about her list! This was not going to work. It was time for plan B.



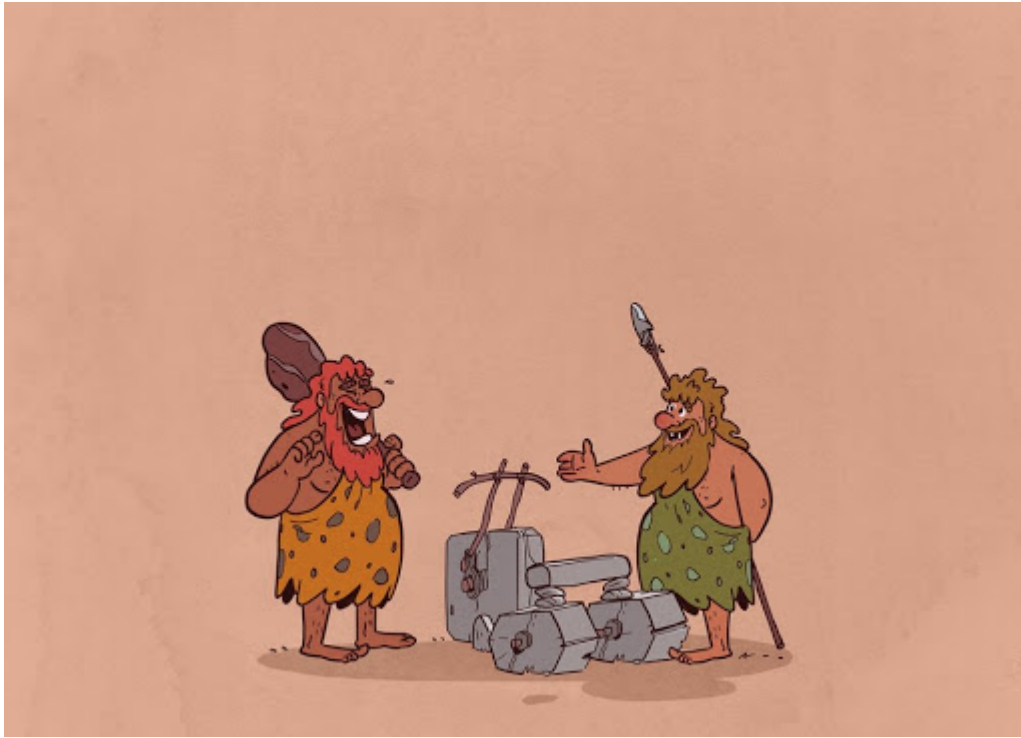
Skandu Anna, T. Sundari's older brother and a scientist, was plan B. Maybe he could invent a machine that could stop her from laughing? When T. Sundari told him what was bothering her, Skandu Anna, who was usually the serious sort, burst out laughing.



T. Sundari wondered if this was a family problem. Did they all have the same laughing disease? No, Skandu Anna explained. 'T. Sundari, it's very normal for human beings to laugh when they find something funny. Some people laugh more than others and that is fine.'



'Really?' said T. Sundari, who had always been told she laughed too much. 'Yes, in fact, laughter is good for health,' Skandu Anna reassured her. 'It releases chemicals that bring us joy.'



'Did you know even early humans laughed?' Anna asked her. T. Sundari imagined a man with a large beard and big club giggling like her in drawing class. 'Yes,' said Anna, 'Human ancestors were laughing long before they had language. It was their way of telling each other that everything was okay.'



'Today, we laugh to show others that we like them or to express our happiness. Other animal species can laugh too, T. Sundari. 'Like chimpanzees, bonobos, rats, dolphins and even dogs!' Anna told her. The thought of her pet dog Muthu laughing set T. Sundari off again.



When the laughter finally subsided, Anna said, 'Do you know you just exercised, T. Sundari?' 'How, Anna? We were talking the whole time.' 'Whenever you smile even a little, the muscles of your face get to work. So each time you giggle or laugh, it's a complete workout for your face,' Anna told her. 'Ooh,' said T. Sundari, 'will my cheeks have biceps then?'



Anna smiled, 'Not biceps, no. Those are in your arms. But whenever you laugh, the zygomaticus major and minor muscles in your face help pull your expression upwards and outwards in a smile.' 'But what about the sound? That makes others laugh too,' said T. Sundari. 'So when you breathe, air passes through your vocal cords into your lungs. But when you laugh, the air is



held back, leading to those rhythmic 'ha-ha-ha' sounds that you can't seem to stop,' Anna explained.



'So, T. Sundari, you understand that laughter is perfectly natural? So long as you're not hurting anyone's feelings, there's nothing wrong with a good laugh.' T. Sundari felt so much better.



'It's almost tea time. Shall we have a bonda then?' said Skandu Anna, knowing perfectly well what would happen next. T. Sundari couldn't stop laughing. Not even after the bonda was in her belly.



Can you do all these laughs?

Ghatotkacha - MU HA

HA HA HA Bomb Laugh -

mhrrrrrppppbbhttttttAAA-

HAHAHAHAHAHAH Witch of

Wadanapalli West - ee hee

heee heee Giggle - gehehe-

hehe Gargle - gluglugglu-

gglahahahah Fake Laugh -

teeheehee

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