



soon as she wakes up. Achu misses hugging her till it is time to get up. She has been letting ammamma give him a bath. She hasn't been breaking up his Dosas into pieces or putting them in his mouth. All she has time for is to say "hurry up Achu" or "I don't have time to wait around". She has not even listened to the new nursery rhyme he learned. Achan and amma come to bed late because they are staying up, talking so much and laughing with everyone.

"Vallya ammayi, can you go back to your house?"

Vallya ammayi took a step back and didn't talk. Then she sat down and hugged him.

"What's wrong?"

"This is our house."

"Yes, it is. Did we bother you too much? Poor baby. All your routines are upside down. We have to go back in three days. But Achu, this is my house too," she laughs. "I will miss you so much, Achu kutty."

Vallya ammayi stays busy "catching up on things". They are away every day till dinner time. Amma has time to watch cartoons and play games with him. He helps Achan work on the motorcycle and helps Achachan water the plants. Ammamma has more time to read and play with Achu, but she is quiet. Vallya ammayi hugs and kisses him when she returns at night.

Now they are gone. Amma says it takes a long time for the plane to reach America. She promised to let Achu talk on the phone with Vallya ammayi when they reach America.

"Chechi, someone here wants to talk to you. He has been crying and saying he didn't want Vallya ammayi to go."

Achu tried to talk.

"Achu, are you there? This is Vallya ammayi. We will come again soon. "

"When?"

"In two years."

Achu sobbed.

tree. He likes it so much he asks to hear it again and again. She starts the story pretending to plant a little banana tree in Achu's palm. They feed and water it and watch it grow bananas. They are stunned when the bananas disappear. She asks each of his fingers if they saw where the bananas went. Achu always laughs when her fingers run up his arm trying to catch the thief who is hiding in his armpit. Sooo ticklish!

Vallya ammayi asks about Achu's friends and teachers. After he is done with the stories, she asks sometimes "Is that real or make-believe? I love listening to your stories. You have good imagination." He sang for her the new song he learned in school. She said her favorite tiny song is Kunjunni Mashu's "Njan poyale njanam varu".

"That is a hefty poem, Achu kutty," she says smiling. Huh? Grownups are funny.

When Vallya ammayi went with mamman and chechis to mamman's family, the house went quiet. Even Timmy missed them. After they return, Achan takes them to visit relatives, friends and temples. Sometimes ammamma and achachan go with them too. Achu couldn't go because Amma made him go to school. After school, Amma takes Achu with them for shopping. Vallya ammayi buys sarees for everyone. Once Achu whispered to amma, he wants a tee shirt. Amma hissed back "please don't ask. She brought you clothes from America." Sometimes they go to cinemas and restaurants or the beach. Achu likes going to the ice cream shop.

Now Amma is too busy. She doesn't have time for anything. She gets up and goes to the kitchen as

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