



Zigzag

Asha Nehemiah

Supplementary

The family that shelters a new pet is totally taken up by the commotions it creates at home. Read on the story to find out there is a turn of events when they get to know the reality



Dr. Ashok T. Krishnan's clinic usually sounded more like an ancient Chinese torture chamber than a child specialist's clinic. This was because the tiny children who were his patients left out a variety of blood-curdling yells and ear-splitting sobs.

'It's all because my patients were making so much noise and crying so loudly, ' he apologized to his wife one evening, 'that Somu couldn't hear me properly. He rang me in the clinic to ask whether we could keep Zigzag with us when he leaves for Alaska. And now Somu thinks I said "yes", even though I clearly said "no" ! I know you are busy getting your painting ready for your exhibition next w...'

'Zigzag!' interrupted their nine-year-old daughter Maya.

'Isn't that Uncle Somu's prized giant green-and-gold fighting beetle, the one that spits deadly poison straight into its opponent's eye?'

'No, no,' corrected her older brother Arvind, eyes shining in pure delight. 'The beetle is called Spitfire. Zigzag must

be Uncle Somu's pet snake. The African sidewinder! You know, the one that slithers Zigzag all over his house!'

'You're both quite mistaken,' their father hastened to explain, seeing his wife's horrified expression. 'Zigzag is a most harmless, unusual and lovable bird. Apparently, it was bred by a genuine African witch doctor, who gifted it to Somu when he-----being a child specialist like me -----cured the witch doctor's son while he was touring the deepest jungles of equatorial Africa last month. Somu says the bird is an absolute treasure and a real help. It's his favourite pet, you know.'

Somu might be your best friend, but most of these so called "favourite" possessions that he has given us were absolute nuisances!' countered Mrs. Krishnan angrily. A talented artist, she applied a dab of yellow-ochre paint onto her painting titled Sunset at Marina, paused for a moment to survey the effect and then continued, 'Remember the rare insect-eating plant he brought back from the wettest corner of the Amazonian rainforest! He insisted that we keep it because it would eat the mosquitoes in the house and now that wretched plant requires a room heater to keep it alive in Chennai!'

'Ma!' protested Arvind, 'That's not really true. Uncle Somu's given us some really fabulous gifts.'