

THE GREAT MOTØ-MATIC HOUSE

The
Incredible
Adventures
of Ziptux
& Dibbly

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Chapter 0

YOU ARE FROM EARTH, AND *THAT* MAKES YOU SPECIAL.

That's why you are the first in the universe to read about Ziptux's and my Grandbot's marvellous adventures. Wait... did I hear a question? It sounded like: *What's a grandbot?* Silly old me. I keep forgetting you live on Earth. So chances are you have never heard of something like this. It's quite simple, a grandbot is a robot's grandfather.

And the reason I said you are special is because Ziptux was from Earth, just like you.



He was born in a big country called India. Well, big by your standards at least. But when he and Grandbot met, he was ten and a half years old and lived in a small country called Switzerland. And that is a little country by aaaaaany standard.

His family had moved there in the Earth year 2006 because his father, Mr Kapoor, had taken up a new job as the Chief Engineer for a big company. His company made all sorts of machines – like contraptions that generate this thing you call electricity, and big boxes which pull other boxes that run on metal tracks screwed to the ground, and many other such things. Mrs Kapoor was the manager of a shop that sold strange little metal gadgets that you wrap around your wrists and they keep going **tick-tick-tick-tick-tick-tick...**

Did someone ask: *And who are you?* Sorry, I thought I had introduced myself. Hello, I am Trib. And as you have already worked out by now, I am a robot. And you are right on the second

count as well: I am not from Earth. I am from Gaia, as was my Grandbot, Dibbly.

Did you say: *Where is Gaia?* It's certainly not in your solar system. In fact, it's not even in the same galaxy as Earth. A spaceship travelling at the speed of light would take around ninety-nine-and-a-half trillion Earth years to get there Gaia. That's how far it is. But you don't want to sit around in a spaceship for that long, do you? That's why you will need something like the Photon-Magnifier-Spectrum-Pulveriser, which would get you there in a couple of helical minutes.

Oh, that reminds me of something. Can you guess the most surprising thing Grandbot learnt when he came to Earth in the year 2017? Apparently, your scientists believed nothing can travel faster than light. **Can you imagine that!** It's like thinking you cannot freeze water. As I write this, it must be the year 2900 or thereabouts. I guess your scientists have figured





out a way to travel a little faster by now. At least, I hope so!

Coming back to Ziptux's and Grandbot's adventures... some happened on Earth, but often they ended up on planets and in galaxies far, far away. But before I take you along with me to all these places, I should answer the two other questions you must surely have.

First, *How did they meet?* Oh, that was an adventure in itself – in fact, their first one and it happened thanks to Ziptux's favourite sport – cricket. And how, with a little help from Grandbot, he saved the universe from the worst sporting catastrophe that could have ever befallen it. Thanks to that, they became great friends, and Grandbot came to Earth with him so they could always be together. I promise to tell you the full story in one of the future tales.

And second, *Why was he called Ziptux?* I know it sounds like a strange name for a boy from Earth. That wasn't his original name, though it

was what Grandbot used to call him. The boy loved this name so much that he asked everyone – his parents, friends and even teachers – to call him Ziptux. I have seen his panograms, and somehow this name suits him really well. He was tall, with slightly ruffled hair and always had a smile on his face. His real name was... Wait a minute, does it matter? No, right? All that matters is the fantastic adventures they had together.

And here is the first one. It happened the very next day after Grandbot landed on Earth...





Chapter 1

"Shower time, Ziptux," Mr Kapoor called out.

"Already?" Ziptux sighed. He was putting the finishing touches on a Lego moon rover. Apparently, in the year 2018, most children of Ziptux's age on Earth spent practically all their time staring into small screens playing something you call video games. But not Ziptux. He was fascinated with science – things like machines, electronics and anything to do with space. For example, this moon rover he was building was his own design, which he had made using these things you call Lego bricks. (I think they are one

of the few useful things you have on earth.) The only other thing that surpassed Ziptux's love for science was cricket. And, like I said before, in one of the future tales you will get to know more about his cricketing passion and how that led to him meeting Grandbot.

"What's a shower?" asked Grandbot, handing him a wheel, which Ziptux snapped into place.

"It's one of the most boring things we humans have to do," Ziptux said, smoothening the green T-shirt he was wearing – his favourite, incidentally – and getting up. "And more so on a Friday evening."

"Should I go tell him you don't want to do it?" Grandbot said, gliding away.

"*Arey* no, Dibbly," Ziptux held his arm. "My family still doesn't know about you. And shower time is definitely not the time to tell them that from now on a robot from another planet will be living with us." (The word *arey*, by the way, is a Hindi word that can be used





to express surprise, annoyance or sometimes just to start a conversation. And you know that Ziptux came from India, whose national language is Hindi.)

I don't think I have told you much about my Grandbot so far, except that he was from Gaia, right? He was 3.7 trombotic units tall, which translates to around ninety-five Earth centimetres, and shaped like what you would call an egg. That is such a silly name for a shape that is reserved for the very best robots in the universe! He was made of cerviza, an indestructible material in a shade of proqual, a colour that cannot exist on Earth because of the strange shape of your galaxy.

Unlike humans, he didn't have a face, eyes or ears, though he could speak, hear and sense things around him. He did that through his thirty-six sensorial receptors, which looked like small circular LED lights approximately one centimetre wide. These were embedded into his

exterior plating in a neat circular band around the widest part of his body. He could choose when and by whom he wanted to be seen or heard and had feelings, just like you humans. And you could see how he was feeling by the way the receptors would softly light up. When he was happy or excited they would be a combination of bright yellow and red. When sad they were light grey – you get the idea, don't you? There were two little fibrotic arms embedded into his body, which he popped out when needed. Unlike the kind of robots you see in your so-called science-fiction movies, he was not the kind who could destroy planets with lasers, or lift spaceships using magnetic levitation or any of those crazy sounding things. What made him really special was the knowledge in his data banks. He knew practically everything about nearly everything in the universe, which, as you will get to read, came in quite handy during their escapades. And there was another thing he did better than





anyone in the universe – it was his ability to land himself into sticky situations! He could even create them when there were none to begin with. Ziptux, on the other hand, was very, very good at getting out of them. So, as you can imagine, their combination worked out rather well.

“That was a quick shower,” said Mrs Kapoor, as Ziptux reached the dinner table. Grandbot was already there, hovering invisibly over the food laid out on the table. Of course, only Ziptux could see him.

“Ma, who was the greatest inventor ever? Quick, you only have two seconds,” Ziptux tried to change the topic.

“There were many...” Mrs Kapoor started.

“Sorry, Ma. Time’s up.”

“But there was one thing they all had in common,” quipped Mr Kapoor. As you get to know him over these tales, you will see how he was always up to some little mischief or the other. “They had their best ideas while having a bath.”

“Pa, pleeease...” Ziptux sighed, while Mrs Kapoor just smiled.

“...Which could have helped you in your project,” Mr Kapoor continued.

“What project?” asked Mrs Kapoor.

This project Mr Kapoor was referring to was something that Ziptux had convinced his class teacher that the whole class should do. It was a simple thing. But as we go along, you will see that small things often turn out to be bigger than what they seem at first.

“In science, when we were learning about the great inventors, we started coming up with ideas of things they should have invented. So I suggested we do a class project.”

Mrs Kapoor put her fork down, “Sounds interesting.”

“It is, Ma,” he beamed. “Everyone has to list three things they don’t like doing and would rather have done by machines and come up with designs for what those machines should look like.”





"I am sure that a homework machine would be the first one on everyone's list," said Mrs Kapoor.

"Yes, Ma. But guess what? Mrs Schmidt has already banned that one."

Hah, I can bet that would have been one of the first machines many of you thought of as well, right?

"That's why I like her," she smiled.

"Wait Ma. I just had an idea," cried Ziptux. "Why don't we do our own project?"

Wait a second, I just had a little idea myself. And before you ask, robots do not need a bath to have good ideas. I was thinking this might be a good time for us to start a little project of our own. Just like what Ziptux and his family are going to do. You can start making your own list of things that you would rather have done by machines. What do you say to that? Excellent. But for now, let's get back to Ziptux's project.

"There you go," Mr Kapoor jumped in. "I told

you showers are good for you.”

“Paaa...” Ziptux made a mock angry face at his father.

Before Ziptux could say anything else, Mr Kapoor exclaimed, “The first one on my list will be the Bath-o-Miser.”

“What Miser?” asked Mrs Kapoor.

“Something that I wished I had when Ziptux was seven.”

“But what is it, Pa?” asked Ziptux. He knew that if his father was thinking about something that he wished he had, it was bound to be something a little out of the ordinary.

“I will explain later,” Mr Kapoor replied nonchalantly. He knew that with his comment he had lit a spark in Ziptux, who would not rest till he had wormed the information out of him.

“Pa, please... now,” Ziptux pleaded.

“Un-uh,” Mr Kapoor waved his finger. “First I want to know what’s on your list.”

Ziptux knew what his father was up to. And





The Great Moto-Matic House

he also knew that Mr Kapoor would not be able to resist talking about his Bath-o-Miser and whatever else he had on his list for too long. So he just shrugged and turned to his mother. "Ma, you go first."

"Unlike the two of you, I don't keep thinking up machines," she replied.

"But if you did," said Mr Kapoor, "I think the first one would be..."

"Wait, wait. I need some time. Can we discuss this at dinner tomorrow?"

"No, that's too late," said Mr Kapoor. "Let me tell you what the second thing on my list is..."

"Please... Let's wait till tomorrow," pleaded Mrs Kapoor.

Ziptux joined in. "No, Ma. Today. Please..."

After lots of no's and pleases, Mrs Kapoor finally conceded. "OK, OK. But give me an hour at least."

"What do you think, Ziptux?" Mr Kapoor looked at Ziptux.

“OK Ma, an hour sounds good,” Ziptux casually replied, flipping a pea towards his mouth.

Grandbot caught the pea in mid-air and flipped it back into his plate. Ziptux gave him a little stare. Grandbot smiled, which meant his receptors glowed a soft red, and zoomed away.

“Thank you, my dear son and husband,” said Mrs Kapoor, who had not noticed this little pea disappearing act. “I am off then. Bye bye...”

As they were clearing the table, Ziptux asked, “Pa, what’s this Bath-o-Miser?” See, I told you that Ziptux would not be able to hold on much longer.

Mr Kapoor smiled and asked, “You remember how much you hated taking a shower when you were seven?”

“Do you think it’s any different now, Pa?”

“Not really. But back then, nothing, absolutely nothing could’ve made you take one on your own. And you remember whose duty it was to make sure you had one?”





The Great Moto-Matic House

"Yours, of course," laughed Ziptux. "And you used to go hide so you did not have to bathe me, and Ma would always discover your hiding place."

"I wish I had found better ones," Mr Kapoor shook his head. "The Bath-o-Miser would've made our lives so much easier."

"You mean something like an automatic shower or a bathing machine?"

Mr Kapoor's face lit up. "Yes. And I had even drawn up a rough design, though for some reason, I never got around to making one. If I had, I would have been a billionaire."

I have to say that he was bang on about this. Here's why... Do you know who is the universe's third richest person? He is called Hamamda. And what does he do? He owns a company which provides showering services for distressed parents everywhere. Just like Mr Kapoor, the act of giving a shower to young ones sits on the top of the *I wish I didn't have to do this* list of parents

all over the universe. What surprises me is that no one had ever thought of making a machine for this. Hah, looks like we are about to get one at last. Poor Hamamda, there goes his company!

“Awesome. Do you still have that design Pa?” Ziptux asked.

Mr Kapoor shook his head. “Unfortunately, no.”

“But do you at least remember what it looked like?” He just could not wait to get started.

“Kind of,” Mr Kapoor replied. “And this little project of ours is the perfect chance to design it again.”

Ziptux, who was in the process of putting the last glass in the dishwasher, suddenly stopped and said, “Why just design it?”

“Meaning...?” Mr Kapoor stopped as well. A smile slowly appeared on his face as he understood what Ziptux meant. You can see where this is leading, can’t you?

“Yes,” Ziptux smiled back. “We should simply





The Great Moto-Matic House

build it!" His mind was already cooking up options of what the Bath-o-Miser could look like.

"Now?"

"C'mon Pa. We have a full hour. How hard can it be for you?" Ziptux knew how much his father loved these little projects.

I guess by now even you can sense that Mr Kapoor was also eager to build this little invention of theirs. So instead of answering the question, he said, "I will get my drawing kit," and rushed off.

"And I will go clear up my desk," Ziptux snapped the dishwasher shut and vamoosed.



Chapter 2

In less than a minute, both of them were in Ziptux's room. "So what are we aiming for?" Mr Kapoor asked.

"A 30-second shower," said Ziptux.

"Really? That's too long. I was thinking more like five."

"I like this machine already," Ziptux beamed.

"Which means there can be a maximum of five steps," Mr Kapoor said, holding up the five fingers of his right hand.

"Then the first step has to be something that removes my clothes," Ziptux offered.



"A centrifugal separator fitted with seven hydraulic clasps is the best thing for that," Mr Kapoor replied, playing the role of chief engineer of this project. He drew a rough sketch on a big piece of yellow paper he had laid down on Ziptux's table.

"...Which should flip me on to a conveyor belt," Ziptux flipped a ball from his left hand to the right one to demonstrate how he imagined it should happen.

"That will propel you towards..."

After ten minutes of frantic planning, the design was ready... well, a rough one at this stage, but a design nonetheless. Grandbot hovered close by, his receptors glowing green, which meant he was intrigued. I wish I could have seen what they had come up with.

Ziptux stepped back and declared, "This is amazing, Pa." His eyes twinkling as he stared at the drawing of what was going to be the answer to **THE** biggest problem he had faced during

his entire life. Granted that he was only ten and a half, but three hundred and sixty-five showers a year, maybe even more, multiplied by ten and a half is a lot of showers, especially if that's one of your least favourite ways to spend your time. And what had happened over the last ten odd minutes was soon going to change all that – well, we hope.

He was already visualising himself standing in front of that centrifugal separator when he heard Mr Kapoor say, "But there's a slight problem."

These words brought Ziptux back to reality. "What Pa?"

"We don't have any of these parts at home," Mr Kapoor replied.

Clearly, he and his father had got too excited about their little invention. "And it's too late to get it from your factory, isn't it?" Ziptux looked at his watch.

His father simply nodded. Looks like their





little project had stalled even before it had started. But Ziptux was not going to let this happen. “Time for some *jugaad* then,” he declared. (Just so that you understand, *jugaad*, which as you can guess is a Hindi word, means taking a unique approach to solve a problem, using limited resources in an innovative way. It may sound like a mouthful, but that was exactly what was needed at this moment. And Ziptux was quite good at finding solutions to problems.)

They hunched over their design again. Half an hour later, surrounded by many chewed off pencil tops, crumpled papers and discarded erasers, they came up with not just one, but three new designs. Grandbot desperately wanted to jump in, but knew this was not the right time to reveal himself.

“That’s awesome Pa,” Ziptux said.

“You think so?” Mr Kapoor picked up one of the designs. “I have never really made anything like this.” Now it was the practical engineer

talking. The one who would do meticulous planning, look for any possible mistakes, check and recheck before he built anything.

“Of course they will Pa,” Ziptux urged him. He knew what his father was thinking. “We better test them quick. Only twenty minutes left.” Ziptux pointed at the clock. It was 9:40 PM already.

“Yes, but which one?” Mr Kapoor asked. As you will see in the future tales, coming to a quick decision was definitely not one of his strengths.

“I like the second one the best,” Ziptux said.

“But I like the third one better,” Mr Kapoor replied, scratching his chin even more vigorously.

“Yup, that’s a great one as well, Pa. Let’s go with that.” Ziptux picked up the other two designs and kept them on the chair. He then studied plan number three. “I think I can collect the parts for steps one and three. But the things needed for two, four and five will be too heavy for me.”





“No problem, I will get them. See you in the upstairs bathroom in five minutes.” And both of them rushed off again.

Five minutes later, they met.

“Pa, I can’t find my tennis racket or my old dart gun. And I don’t know where you keep the drilling machine.”

“And I can’t bring the car tyre, the gardening pipe and the lawnmower here without your mother finding out about it,” Mr Kapoor said.

“Then we have no choice – we must make do with whatever we’ve got,” Ziptux said. “And Ma will be ready with her list any minute now.”

They had managed to collect:

- 1 bicycle
- Lots of clothes pegs
- 6 scrubbing brushes of different sizes
- 1 large fan
- 1 cricket ball catching net
- 2 long pieces of rope

- 2 hairdryers
- 2 mattresses

I don't know what you think, but these things hardly look like the building blocks for an automatic shower machine. Ziptux knew that as well, but he was not the sort to give up at this stage. "That means more *jugaad*," he said. You remember what *jugaad* means, don't you?

So they stuck the plan on the wall and started all over again. After another five minutes, with the new set of corrections done, they got down to assembling their little machine.

"Pa, the fan keeps slipping off the bathtub."

"No problem. Try tying it to the bicycle."

"But this rope is too short..."

"No time to get a longer one; leave it then. Just pull the mattress closer..."

"OK. And instead of hanging the hairdryers from the ceiling, they can go there..."

"Careful, the brushes are upside down..."





After ten more minutes and many, many more changes and shortcuts, they studied their handiwork.

“It’s nowhere even close to our design,” declared Mr Kapoor, ever the sceptical engineer.

But the daring Ziptux immediately replied, “For all you know Pa, it might work. But just to be sure, I am keeping my pants on.” He smiled and stood close to the cricket catching net placed next to the bathtub filled with water.

“Good luck Ziptux,” Grandbot said, all his receptors glowing red. Ziptux winked at him. Mr Kapoor reluctantly came forward and pegged his clothes to a rope tied to the door handle and the shower cubicle.

“When I say GO, you jump. OK?” Mr Kapoor said. He rushed to the bike and lowered the front wheel – to which were attached the scrubbing brushes – into the bathtub. “GO!” he cried and started pedalling frantically.

Ziptux jumped.

As he did so, his shirt came off, though the best way to describe it would be that it was ripped off. He then sailed high up into the air, dragging the rope with him, and landed on Mr Kapoor. The impact sent both of them crashing into the water. As they fell, the bike landed on the mattress, bounced up and knocked over the fan and the hairdryers. Luckily for them, instead of landing in the bathtub and electrocuting them, the hairdryers thudded against the wall and safely came to a rest in the laundry basket. Ziptux's night clothes, which were attached to the other rope, swirled around the bathroom like leaves stuck in a mini tornado.

They sat in the bathtub, drenched, watching everything come down around them like an un-orchestrated juggling act gone horribly wrong, which, as you would agree with me, indeed happened. Grandbot laughed away, bobbing up and down. Just then, the door opened and Mrs Kapoor rushed in and cried, "What happened?"





The Great Moto-Matic House

Is everything OK?”

“Well, kind of...” Mr Kapoor managed to mumble, wiping water off his face. “Maybe we should have used magnetic pegs.” I tell you, ever the engineer.

I will spare you the details of what Mrs Kapoor thought of their little experiment, what it lacked and what she had to say to them. A few minutes later, the mess cleaned up and dressed in his favourite blue pyjamas, Ziptux joined his parents in the dining room.



Chapter 3

"So whose list should we start with?" Mr Kapoor asked, pulling out a soggy piece of paper from his pocket.

Mrs Kapoor shook her head. "Sorry, I am not having any of this. If this project will lead to more such disasters, we better stop now." Thankfully, she was often the lone voice of reason in the family.

On hearing the word disaster, a certain someone who, unknown to the Kapoor family, was crouching in the garden under their open living room window and listening to everything, sniggered. No one heard him, except Grandbot



of course, whose acoustic sensors are sharp enough to hear two atoms colliding with each other millions of light years away. Hearing the noise, Grandbot flew over to the window and peeked outside. Ziptux did not notice that, for he was concentrating on the discussion. Grandbot came back to Ziptux and tried to say something to him, but Ziptux just gave Grandbot a quick glance and a small wave, as if asking him to stay quiet. Who was this person that Grandbot had spotted? Like you say on Earth, hold your horses, you will get to meet him soon. But for now, let's get back to the Kapoor family.

"It was my idea," Mr Kapoor said, laying down the paper on the table. "So I am the one to blame."

"No, Ma," Ziptux jumped in. "Pa said it will not work. It was I who said we should test it."

"Doesn't matter who said what," frowned Mrs Kapoor. Man, was she cross with both of them. "You could've hurt yourself."

“Sorry Ma. We’ll be careful the next time. Pa...?” Ziptux looked at Mr Kapoor, who just nodded and poured a glass of water for himself. As if he hadn’t had enough to do with water already.

It didn’t take a genius to see that she was upset. “Sorry or not, we are not doing this project,” she declared.

“Come on. Please?” pleaded Mr Kapoor. “It’s only a list.”

“And it has the potential of becoming the list of some of the coolest machines in the universe,” Ziptux added, as if these words would magically change her mind.

This reference to the *coolest machines in the universe* prompted another snigger from that hidden someone.

“Dear, you make machines at work all the time. Do you really want to do more of this at home?” asked Mrs Kapoor, trying hard to suppress her irritation. “And moreover, the kind that cannot really exist or work.”





Mr Kapoor ignored the reference about these machines not working and tried another explanation. "But at work I never get to make stuff like this. This is just for fun, pure and simple."

Ziptux added, "And Ma, you always say we never do anything together." Well, that argument was irrefutable. Typically, she only got back home every day around eight thirty in the evening after her store closed. And Mr Kapoor often had to travel abroad for his work. And on the weekends Ziptux almost always had a football or cricket game on at least one of the days. Which, as you can see, didn't leave much time for them to do things together as a family.

"And here's the chance," Mr Kapoor added seriously. Ziptux spotted a slight smirk on his father's face and knew that maybe, just maybe, they might get their way.

Mrs Kapoor didn't reply. She just sat with her arms crossed, looking at both of them. Mr

Kapoor poured himself another glass of water while winking at Ziptux. After a few seconds, she shook her head and sighed. "The two of you... But promise, only a list."

"Deal!" Ziptux and Mr Kapoor gave each other a triumphant high five.

"OK. I will go first," said Mr Kapoor.

"We already know the first one dear," Mrs Kapoor laughed. "And we've seen it too." This was what Ziptux loved about his mother, her ability to balance logic and emotions.

"I know, I know," Mr Kapoor waved his hand. "OK, the second one... You know I don't like to shave. I wish there were a clock which turns itself into an electric shaver at six AM every morning. Then it comes over and shaves my face while I am still sleeping."

"But Pa, what if it shaves your head instead?"

"I cannot imagine seeing half of your hair missing," Mrs Kapoor laughed again.

"Neither can I," replied Mr Kapoor, running





his hand through his hair. "And the third thing I would love to have is something that senses snowfall and automatically clears our driveway. Then instead of shovelling snow, I can sit with a nice cup of hot chocolate. In fact, it would be even better if it could get me the hot chocolate first before it goes out to clear the snow."

"And it should make snowballs and keep them ready," Ziptux added.

"You don't need a machine to do that for you," smiled Mrs Kapoor. "I'm not sure my list would come anywhere close to this. Ziptux, do you want to go next?"

"Sure, Ma," Ziptux said, winking at Grandbot, whose receptors were lit up orange.

"Who are you winking at?" asked Mrs Kapoor, who could not see Grandbot.

"No one Ma. I wish I had thought of the Bath-o-Miser," Ziptux said. Grandbot tried to whisper something in Ziptux's ear, but Ziptux gestured to him to wait.

“Only if you had taken more showers,” Mr Kapoor quipped.

Ziptux gave Mr Kapoor a friendly shove with his arm and went on, “The first one I want is a Lego organiser. After I am done building the model, this machine should disassemble it, organise the blocks and put them back in the box. Imagine how much time I could save.”

“I hope it can sort out my socks too,” added Mr Kapoor. “I can never find the correct pair.”

“Pa, I don’t think any machine will be able find your socks. The second one you can guess as well,” continued Ziptux. “I wish there were a knife that could suck out all the vitamins from broccoli. And squeeze them into every piece of sausage or cheese I cut with it. And the third one is a self-emptying dishwasher. That’s one thing less from my housework chores.”

“Nice list, Ziptux,” Mrs Kapoor said, ruffling his hair. “Looks like I had guessed all of them.”





The Great Moto-Matic House

"Thanks, Ma, but I'm not sure if I can guess yours."

"Let's see," Mrs Kapoor said and took out a neatly folded piece of paper from her pocket. "Whenever we go on vacation, I spend a lot of time packing. I wish there were suitcases that collect the correct clothes for the trip, pack them and wait by the door, ready for us to leave."

"I wish my schoolbag was like that," Ziptux hoped.

"Second. You both know how bad my skiing is. I wish I had skis with automatic brakes that help me to slow down and some balloons that inflate so I don't get hurt when I fall."

"No, Ma. It will ruin my epic ski-fails photo project."

"I am sorry my dear son," Mrs Kapoor smiled. "The last invention I want is a kitchen that senses what we want to eat and then cooks it. So if I want to bake a cake, it mixes

the ingredients, puts the batter on the baking tray, sets the oven and has the cake ready for us to eat.”

“Then I will not need my self-emptying dishwasher,” added Ziptux. “What do you think will happen if I go near the kitchen?”

Mr Kapoor replied, “We will eat pizzas for the rest of our lives.”

“That gives me an idea,” Mr Kapoor exclaimed. It’s about time he had an idea; after all, he had just had a bath, hadn’t he? “With these machines our house will become an automatic house.”

“Pa, how about the Moto-Matic House?”

“Moto-Matic. I like the sound of that,” Mr Kapoor took out his pen and wrote, or tried to write on his wet list.

“But we know that none of this can be real,” Mrs Kapoor said.

Ziptux thought differently though. “Of course it can be Ma. Just that no one has built this stuff so far.”





“Maybe we should ask Torquemedis? I am sure he can help,” Mrs Kapoor offered.

Everyone burst out laughing. *Why?* Just wait a few more seconds and you will know.

“He will turn it into a Toto-Tragic House,” Mrs Kapoor replied, still laughing. “So looks like you are ready for your project then.”

“No Ma, we still need to design our machines, don’t we?” Ziptux protested, hoping to stretch his luck.

Mrs Kapoor put on a mock stern face. “Remember what we agreed Ziptux?” Mr Kapoor pointed to the clock as well. As Ziptux reluctantly got up, Grandbot, who had gone back towards the window again, rushed back to Ziptux, his receptors still glowing a pale brown.

* * *

That someone who I talked about earlier – the one crouching under the living room window and listening to this entire conversation – was

The Great Moto-Matic House

Torquemedis. He was on his usual nightly neighbourhood prowling, trying to steal ideas for his new inventions. And looks like he just might have hit the jackpot.

