

The girl who caught lightning: Part I

By: Mahika Bagri

For all of those readers who enjoy reading as
much as I do.

I'm startled awake. I had the same dream again and all the memories come flooding back to me. The quarrel with my parents before they died, the police, the car, every single detail. I can hear the ringing of the sirens in my ears. I know exactly why the accident—no, murder took place. Yet, Satya, the policeman in charge of the case, had refused to investigate. He said I was too naive to understand what was going on, but I understood all of it. Satya was corrupt with only money on his mind, but he was also the DGP (Director General of Police) so no one would question him. His decisions were final. The irony of his name speaks for itself. Satya means truth, yet he's such a dishonest man. I snapped back into reality and looked up at the verdigris clock put up on the otherwise empty wall on my left. It's 2:00 A.M. The dust on the wall makes it look like it hasn't been cleaned for over a century. I want to go back to sleep, but before I can, a silhouette moves in front of me.

"You're the first one up today," Dhaanvi ma'am says "You know what that means."

"Yes ma'am," I promptly reply. I had hoped I hadn't woken her up. It's my thirteenth birthday today but no teacher here cares. The first two kids to wake up at our orphanage don't get to study for the day, they have to quickly dress and do all the work: mopping, washing the dishes, cleaning the floors... before I could finish the list, someone interrupted my thoughts.

"You know what that means right? Off the bed NOW!" It was ma'am. "Nadish, because you have woken up, you are on duty with Adhya," she commanded as she took one of our hands in each of hers.

Her nails bit into my skin as she pulled us out of bed. She tugged my arm so hard, my muscles felt like they were going to tear. I tried to get off the floor, back on my feet, but ma'am clutched our hands tightly, pulling until she

finished dragging both of us out of the narrow rusty door. My knees, burning due to the friction.

Nadish glared at me. "Thanks a lot," his eyes said. A few moments later he sighted reconsidering. All the kids at the orphanage are pretty close knit so I knew Nadish couldn't stay angry for long.

Once ma'am leaves, he says, "Let's go, we have to finish the work, but we'll get through it together."

I looked at my wrist, ma'ams nails dug deeper than I thought humanly possible. I held my right hand with my left to get a closer look, I could see my flesh. I groaned as Nadish touched the blood over my wound.

"It stings," I said, telling him something he probably already knew.

"You should wash it and then tie some tissue onto it," he whispered. It reminded me the teachers here won't even buy us band-aids. They keep most of the money the government funds them as their salary, and it really irritates me. They should get sued, but the police think we're just little orphans who understand nothing. Absolutely nothing!

"Earth to Adhya," I shudder before I realize it's just Nadish. "Let's go before ma'am comes back."

After a few turns, I walk into the dimly lit kitchen thinking about how today is going to pass. Roshan sir interrupts my thoughts.

"You guys are finally here, I've been waiting all morning!"

It has been less than 6 minutes since Dhaanvi ma'am dragged us out. Roshan sir always over exaggerates, it's as if no one has the right to live but him.

He gives us our to-do list, "Wash the dishes from yesterday. Mop up the whole place. Make and serve lunch. Clean the lunch table. Take all the trash

out... Oh, and we won't have enough lunch today. You are allowed to eat the leftovers from our plates."

We're making lunch, I want to shout. We are making it and he won't let us eat it. Even if there is a surplus quantity, the teachers find a way to finish it all (or at least put it in their plates so we'll be too grossed out to eat it). Nadish must understand how I'm feeling because he puts his warm hand in mine, warning me not to say or do anything stupid.

Nadish waits for sir to leave before telling me to go wash the blood of my wound.

"Are you sure?" I ask him, "You could get into trouble." He reassures me, firmly telling me to leave. I know it can get him into big trouble, but I'm also the most courageous and reckless child this orphanage has seen.

When I walk out, the ice cold breeze hits me, causing goosebumps all over my exposed skin. I am suddenly aware of the fact that I'm wearing the same sleeveless white dress I was wearing the day of my parents funeral. I haven't worn fresh clothes since that day. The teachers at the orphanage claimed they were selling my clothes for my benefit, but they kept all the money. We need better people to help us. Caring, selfless, considerate, helpful and most importantly truthful.

"Satyameva Jayate," I whisper, "Truth alone triumphs." This is from the national emblem of India, yet it seems there is only corruption in the air here.

As I started walking as my eyes started to burn. I could cry here, I was alone. The orphans found their hope because of me, I wasn't about to show them how weak I was. Plus, the teachers punish us for showing any emotion at all. I was aware that I wasn't crying because of the wound, but because of all the emotional pain I had been through. I have always been physically strong yet emotionally weak.

After walking for about half a kilometer, the small lake comes into view. I wiped my eyes with my sleeves; this is the place that keeps me strong. The water shimmering in the moonlight creates a breathtaking effect. The lotuses and water lilies look enchanted. Sadly this is the only non-polluted lake in the area. I want to stay here, play all day, go back to being a kid, but that could get Nadish into big trouble. I take a deep breath and I feel the fresh air fill my lungs. I kneel down slowly, careful to keep my balance as I wash off my wound. My knee might get scraped, but I'd rather risk that than an infection.

Suddenly, I hear a loud boom. My body twitches in fear almost causing me to fall into the water. I look up and see grey clouds filling the sky, threatening to spill if I don't move quickly. Lightning strikes towards the water. I need to remove my hands now! A new fear arises, what if I'm electrocuted? I'll die, but will anyone even come looking for me? It starts pouring, turning into a thunderstorm a few seconds later. I jerk my right hand out of the water as I see lightning strike the lake. No! My left hand, I'm going to die. I wait for my organs to start declining after I feel electricity pulse through me. Nothing happens.

I pull my left hand out of the water. I slowly place both my hands on the cement footpath. My hands haven't numbed, but I feel a new electricity buzzing through me. As I stand up I slowly put my left hand out. Elbows locked out. I steadily press all the major nerves. Ok, all ok. I start thinking about the dream I have every birthday, it's really happening. I test my theory. Automatically my elbow bends into a 150° angle on its own as I focus all my energy into the palm of my hand.

"Wow," I think to myself before I realize what's happening.

Almost naturally, a small ball of electric blue light buzzes, resting on the top of my left palm. I feel exhilarated. This is all too unrealistic to be true. Yet,

here I am. It took only 5 years, 5 terrifying nightmares, for this to become a reality. I bend my fingers into a fist, extinguishing the electricity. My brain is still trying to process it all as I start heading back to the orphanage.

The teachers will definitely question where I've been, because of my drenched dress, yet I mustn't tell them anything. Best to cover all the evidence before they see anything. Especially my superhuman abilities, until it's time to strike. Strike against corruption and all things nefarious.