

# ARISING STARS



## Birthday Nightmares

by Tina and Anit

Nina whirled around and once again the echoing footsteps behind her stopped. Now she was really getting scared. This had been going on for fifteen minutes now. As soon as she started walking the soft thudding noise of the shoes would start and as soon as she stopped it would stop too. When she had turned around she heard the quick shuffle of feet on the pavement as a man quickly hid behind a tree or a bush. This had happened several times but she never got a good look at the man.

At first she thought nothing much of it. But seeing that the guy wasn't letting up and realizing that she was alone on a pavement in the dead of a dark winter night with no one to come to her aid should she face some danger, Nina decided to hail a taxi and go home.

To her dismay she could not find a single empty taxi around. Nina was getting quite worried when suddenly to her relief she spotted an empty yellow taxi approaching.

"Taxi!" called out Nina in a voice quite unnatural and unlike her own. It was high and squeaky and she sounded quite jittery and nervous.

As the car skidded to a stop near her, she realized that the footsteps behind her had stopped. Nina was thankful and told herself that she always over reacted to things like this. She turned around just to make sure. To her relief there was no one there.

With a smile on her face, Nina started telling the taxi driver her destination, when suddenly she felt someone grab her by the arm.

"Why Nina! What a pleasant surprise! What are you doing here? Let me walk you home," said a man to Nina as he dragged her roughly away from the taxi. To the driver the man yelled, "Hey Mister! It's okay. You can go. Nina won't be needing a taxi."

The taxi driver shook his head in an irritated way and drove off.

Nina looked incredulously at the man. He was huge. Minimum six feet three. He was aged about nineteen to twenty and reeked of cologne. He had the grip of iron as Nina painfully felt as he held on to her arm. She yanked her arm indignantly away from him.

"Who?" asked Nina slowly. "are you?"

"Guess" said the man, leaning in. "I don't know you! Why are you following me about like this? Why did you tell the taxi driver to leave? You can't do this you know, you jerk!" Nina, who was shrieking in a shrill, high pitched voice, was now on the verge of hysteria.

The man, slightly taken aback by her reaction took a step forward and opened his mouth to say something, when without warning Nina kicked him where it hurt with her four inch high clogs.

The man let out a loud moan and doubled over in pain. Nina, taking advantage of the situation, kicked her clogs, picked one of them up (in case it came into use later), and broke into the fastest run of her seventeen-year old life. Those many tiring hours spent practicing for the track and field events in school were

really paying off now. Nina had run up quite a big lead by the time the man recovered and started chasing after her. She began to think while running. Her house was five blocks away. It was 9 o'clock at night. There was no sign of life on the street she was on. Not a single taxi around. And this wasn't one of the best parts of town.

Suddenly Nina noticed there was a dead end in front of her. She had run past the last road which turned to the right! The footsteps behind her were getting louder, which meant that the creep was gaining on her. Not knowing what else to do, Nina headed for the gates of the last house

As Nina looked around the room she thought to herself: "Was that my imagination, or did he just chuckle to himself as he left the room? Naaah, it must have been my imagination."

The room was modestly furnished, but it was a bit dusty. The room looked like it had been recently used. There was a bed, a bedside table, a few chairs, a table and a dressing table.

Nina sat down on a dirty old chair in the middle of the room and closed her eyes. "What a rotten way to spend your 17th birthday," she thought to herself. "Nowadays, you're not even safe as you walk home at night!"

Suddenly, a cold clammy hand touched Nina on her shoulder. She was about to scream out in terror when another clammy hand clamped her mouth shut.

"Listen kid, I'm not gonna hurt you, so don't scream for God's sake! I'll let go of you if you promise not to make a peep. Deal?"

It was HIM! The creep on the road! How on earth did he get into a two storied room?

"Deal?" asked the man in a hoarse whisper. Nina quickly nodded, and the man let go of her. She shot out of her chair immediately and grabbed her clog.

"You make one move buster — one move — and I'll scream the house down. I'll scream so loud the whole neighbourhood will hear!" she declared threateningly while shaking her clog at him all the while. She ran to the door and turned the door knob. The angry look on her face disappeared and the look changed to surprise when she discovered that the door wouldn't open.

"Oh my God," she said disbelievingly. "Well, what do you expect? The old geezer locked you in. Don't you know who he is?" asked the man.

"I don't believe you. The lock probably got jammed, or maybe he did it by mistake. Why should I believe you anyway?"

"Read this and then you'll understand why," said the man angrily, and shoved a card into Nina's hand.

Nina opened it up cautiously, and let out a gasp of surprise. "Oh my God," said Nina for the second time. "I don't believe this... Oh my..."

"Now do you believe that I'm not going to do anything to you?" asked the man.

"I guess so... I don't know... Look — how did you get in here? And what did you mean when you said that didn't I know who the old guy was?"

The man, who (according to the card Nina had just read) was called Sid, walked over to the door and tried the lock. While doing so, he answered Nina's questions. On seeing whose house Nina had just run into, and seeing that she wasn't coming out he got worried. The guy who lived in the house had been tried — twice — for the murder of two young hitchhikers, but was acquitted both times due to lack of evidence. But everyone around the neighbourhood who knew

the old man thought he was an old crackpot who was perfectly capable of murder. So Sid, seeing the light in the upstairs bedroom, had climbed up one of the pipes and got into the room through the window.

Nina listened to his story wide eyed. "Out of the frying pan and into the fire. So how am I going to get out of here. That weirdo might be back any minute!"

"Why, go out the same way I came in," said Sid with a wry smile on his face.

This irritated Nina, and she still wasn't sure whether she really trusted Sid, despite of what it said on the card.

"No way! If there's anything I'm really scared of, it's heights. I'm not climbing down from here — not on your life!" The look on her face showed that she was adamant.

"Well, have you got any other ideas?" Sid asked.

"As a matter of fact, I do." Nina took out a hair pin which held up her long hair. She looked around the room for a newspaper. Opening the drawer of the small bedside table Nina found a recent copy of the Penthouse. Nina raised an eyebrow. This was not she had expected the old man to read in his leisure time.

Perhaps what Sid was saying was true. She slid the magazine underneath the door and then started poking around the keyhole with her hair pin. To her relief, the key, which was still in the lock, fell down on the magazine, which Nina quickly pulled in again. Jubilantly, she turned the key in the lock and slowly pushed open the door. The hall outside was dark. Nina and Sid crept out cautiously. Nina was still clasping her clog in one hand.

Continued on next week

## A Child's Plea

by Susmita Roy

"AND they lived happily ever after..." read out little Nisha to Chumpli with a satisfactory smile on her lips. Nisha always read out bed-time stories with happy endings to her cutsy-pie teddy, Chumpli. She was kissing him goodnight when her mother's upraised voice came clear and sharp to her ears.

"You rascal! This time I won't stand it!" Nisha's mother was yelling. The six-year old was wide eyed and listening. Her mommy never shouted; she was always demure, amiable and always smiling. Nisha knew Papa often scolded her Mommy but Mommy always smiled later on; Nisha understood why Papa never had time for her and always came home a long time after her bed time.

Mommy had explained, it was because her Papa was a very big businessman and had lots of work to do just like Nisha had lots of work to do at school.

Nisha thought her mother so very foolish that without having supper, she stayed up for her father. Couldn't she go to sleep alone like Nisha? But then mommy didn't have Chumpli. Why don't you send papa to bed without his supper oneday? You'll see he'll come home early after that. It always works for Chumpli, you know, Nisha had advised her mother once.

Somehow, Nisha knew that she was going to be a wee bit more clever than her mommy when she was all grown up. Mommy said so, anyhow. Once when Nisha caught her mother

secretly weeping on her pillow, she knew why. She had seethed with rage and had returned to her room to confide in Chumpli. "Mommy says I'm supposed to love. Papa but I don't — I don't!"

But this time it was different. Nisha could feel it in her bones. Her mother was shouting, screaming and sobbing. Nisha could hear it all; her ear was pressed close to her door and Chumpli was pressed close to her heart. If the furry bear had life, it would have been able to hear the rhythmic and rapid thumps of the child's heart. Nisha was scared. She sat still against the mahogany door. There was an unexpected horrible silence.

Smash! the beautiful crystal vase which had stood proudly on the dressing table since the couple's marriage day had been broken into smithereens. The terrified girl's hands went over her ears and she buried her pale face in the folds of her nightgown as fragments of crystal entered her room through the gap below the door.

"Oh, why don't they stop," sobbed Nisha. "God, are you punishing me for being naughty? I promise I'll be a good girl if you stop mommy and papa fighting." Salty tears rolled down the cheeks of the little one who had never needed to cry. When her tears dried, Nisha opened the door a little and peeped but with swollen eyes. Her mother, all disarranged, was thrusting clothes into a suitcase and papa was watching, arms crossed. Nisha read the wall

clock: it was one in the morning. Where would mommy go? She'd get lost in the dark! Nisha shivered. "Nisha darling!" It was Nisha's mother coming towards her room. "Wake up and get dressed dear." "Get dressed? For what? Nisha couldn't understand. Then she understood. Her mother was going away and she wanted to take Nisha. But Nisha didn't want to go away; she wanted the comfort of her own bed and her room and the only home she knew. But mommy wouldn't move now, papa had held her back. He said that Nisha wouldn't go. And Nisha didn't want to but she wanted her mommy. No she also wanted a papa — her papa. She was greedy. She wanted everything, the love of her mommy, her papa and the warmth of her home. Nisha screamed and she screamed again and again until she could no more. Would anyone hear her plea? Nisha felt herself falling into a whirlpool of emptiness. Before Nisha fainted, she saw her parents running towards her.

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me. Please call the police!" "Hum... Let me go and see if he is still out there," said the man while slowly walking to the window. He pulled apart some grimy curtains and peeped out. "Yes, there is a man outside. A big beefy man."

"Yeah, that's him!" cried Nina excitedly. "Okay dear, I'll call the police if you really want me to, but first you must have a glass of brandy. You look shattered — a drink will calm your nerves," advised the old man.

"Well... if you really think so..." said Nina uncertainly. "Yes, yes, come along. You can lie down in the guest room upstairs while I fix you a drink. There will be plenty of time of call the police."

He led Nina upstairs to a bedroom. The door was coming off its hinges and creaked as the man opened it. He switched on the light and told Nina to take a rest.

"I'll be back in a moment dear," called out the man as he closed the door.

## Flame is Fleeting

by Sasheen

BRIAN Lara blazed his name through history, when he smashed a short-pitched Chris Lewis delivery to the boundary, taking his personal score to 369, thus eclipsing fellow West Indian, Sir Garfield Sobers' previous world record of 365 runs. April 19th 1994 marked the emergence of a talented youngster into the international Cricket scene with bursting speed.

The run-hungry Lara was not satisfied with only one world record to his name. He continued his record breaking streak when he scored century after century for his English county, Warwickshire. During his summer with Warwickshire, Brian Lara became the first person in cricketing history to score 500 runs in one innings, with his epic knock of 501\* against Durham, passing Hanif Mohammed's world record of 499 runs. From then on every single cricket fan and anyone with a fleeting interest in cricket became a "Lara — maniac". He was red-hot property and advertisers longed to get their

hands on him and cash in on his success. It was possible for him to become a millionaire in a calendar year.

But fame, they say, is fleeting, and this proved true in the case of Brian Lara when he failed to make big scores in a recent series against India in the very same series, his Indian counterpart, Sachin Tendulkar flashed with the willow. Fans dropped Lara like a hot potato for Sachin Tendulkar. Granted, Tendulkar is a gifted batsman but Lara is equally talented and he's got the records to prove it. Lara's failure with the bat in India was blamed on "too much cricket," but I cannot convince myself to believe this. After all, he is only human and one lack-luster series does not prove anything. The West Indies upcoming tour of New Zealand may prove to be a very productive one for Lara. Lara has already said that he will try to make amends for his poor performance in India, by making a few big scores in New Zealand. If his words come true, Sachin Tendulkar is likely to find himself short of (fickle) fans.

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## A Camping Met with Adventure — III

Continued from last week

Meanwhile Atiq and Masud were both necklocked and couldn't break out of the iron hold. Atiq took the spray near him. He squeaked out to Masud "Hold your breath!"

With that he sprayed the gas hard on the man's face. The man limped and fell to the ground.

Yousaf was necklocked as well. He felt the muscle of the man bulge as he tightened his hold. Black spots were appearing in front of the boy's eyes.

He was in danger of passing out. He quickly bent over and pulled the shorts over his head hard on the ground. The others came up to him. The man pleaded to be let go.

"Atiq use the sleeping gas on him and the tall one," commanded Hassan.

Atiq was ready. He said: "Poor dear. Suffering from insomnia. Well not for long. Now you will hit ground zero before you can blink. With that he squirted hard. After that they tied and gagged them though they were asleep!"

Hassan called in the cave. "Tanvir where are you?"

They heard a muffled sound. He was also gagged and bound together. Masud quickly cut the rope. Tanvir wasted in filling them on with what he

had heard. They pretended to be the men that night. Their final capture was an easy prey.

The next day they got the police and the men were arrested. The five boys were highly praised for their valour. The reporters got a great story. When it was out on the papers the next day, everyone was delighted with them.

In the afternoon, when the five were roaming near school, they saw Shahida loom in their view.

"Hassan, here she comes. I wonder why she is coming to school today," Yousaf said. "She isn't performing for the prize giving ceremony, is she?"

"How am I supposed to know that? We seldom talk," "Look guys, she is coming in our direction," Atiq informed.

Hi Hassan. Great job you've done. Your valour and shrewdness has no comparison. Say Hassan — I would like to talk to you after today's rehearsal. See you later. Bye."

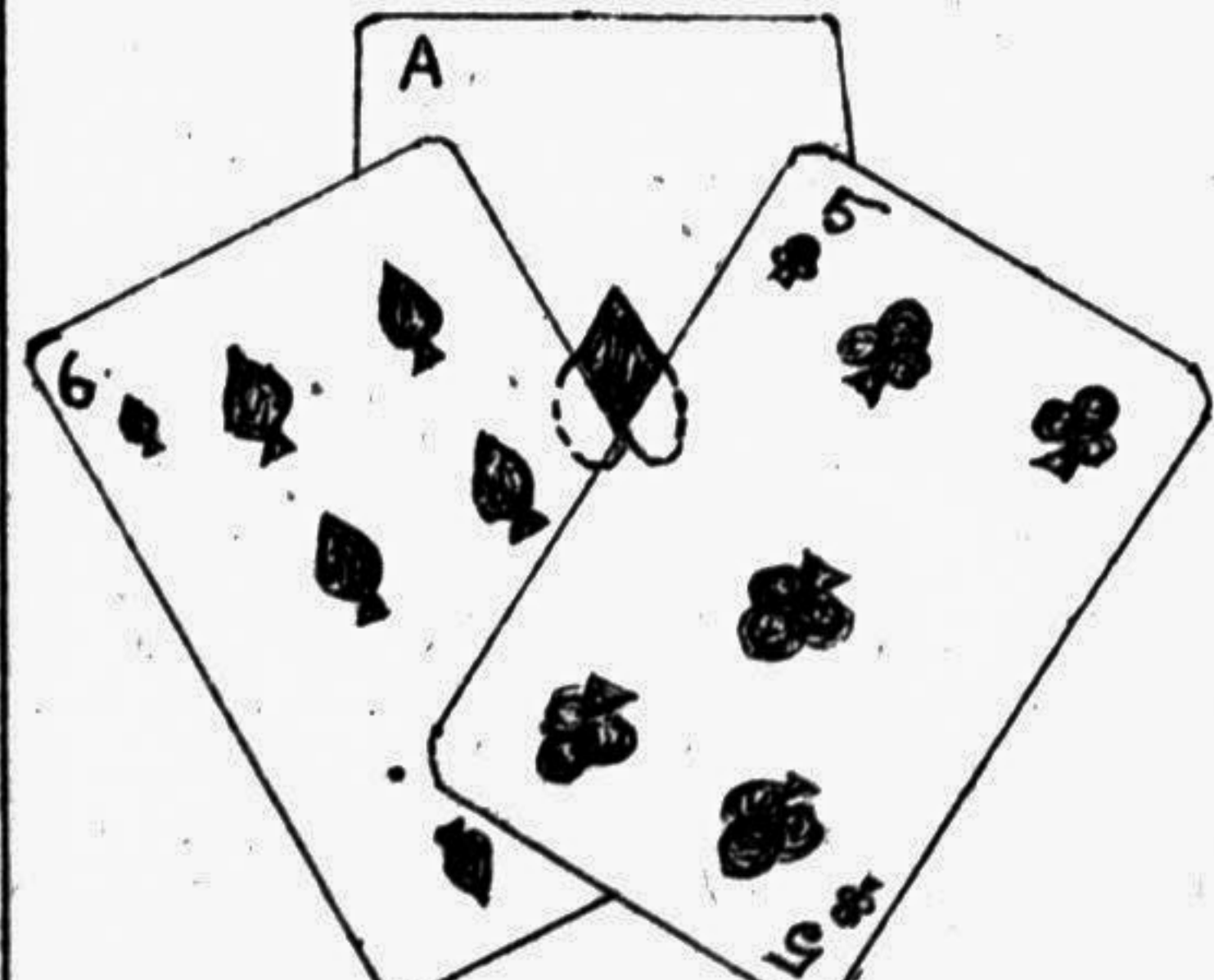
After she left, Tanvir said "Isn't that a nice way to get others to talk to you. What's wrong Masud. You look a bit lost."

"Oh it's nothing. Hassan when are we going to our next camping trips in the woods?"

End

## Abacadabra

'The Case of Missing Ace'  
From: Magician Subrata Biswas (Barisal)



Magic: Show three ordinary playing cards — ace of diamond, five of clubs & six of spades. Display the three cards. Now shuffle it, and ask to a spectator to pick out the ace of diamonds. He combs through the three cards several times but the ace has vanished from the three cards. Remove the ace card from your pocket. Secret: Hide the ace of diamonds cards in your pocket when you show the three cards to the audience, the centre card is not actually ace of diamonds, it is ace of hearts.

## An Unpleasant Start

by Taranum Laila

A warm breeze greeted us as we stepped out from the airport building. My friend Saman and I had just landed in Sri Lanka — a country in which we had never been before. Carrying our luggage we stood outside, under the summer sun, waiting for our friend — Usha to pick us up. Usha was our Sri Lankan friend.

Very soon, we saw three tough looking men approaching us. Worn out from the long journey, I wasn't exactly looking forward to the fact that we were about to be mugged within the first half an hour in a new country. There was a middle-aged man who looked as if he was the leader. The two other men were looking very dirty in their old jeans, and dirty T-shirts. Their sight was enough to scare us. So, while I was looking around for a security guard, they took out a dagger and came near us. I was debating in my mind whether to scream or not (which was quite inevitable), when the hoarse and rowdy voices very clearly conveyed the message to give all our valuable belongings to them.

What do you think we did? With a circle of spectators not moving forward to help, two female tourists, we were about to give away our purses, which

contained travellers cheques, and Master Cards. I wasn't the least bit happy, to think of giving away the money I had saved for the trip. I had worked hard to earn it and wasn't about to give it up that easily. But when that horrible dagger glinted in the sun, I thought, "What's the use of all this money, to dead women?"

We were told to hurry up. Suddenly, we saw four armed police officers, coming out of the blue, and grabbing the muggers. Then, we saw Usha running towards us with a concerned look on her face. She immediately said, "I am so sorry, that all this happened. Such a way to begin your stay in Sri Lanka! As soon as I came here, I started looking for you two. Then I saw some people gathering up. Curiously, I watched the muggers advance towards you. I thought that I on my own could barely help the situation. So, quickly I called the nearest police station and now you are safe."

We checked but our luggage from the police officers and followed Usha! For the muggers, it was going to be a long, unpleasant vacation behind bars. As for us, we were going to enjoy a whole summer in the beautiful island of Sri Lanka.

## THE MISSING MACHINE

DR JAMRUL CHANGED ALL HIS ADDRESSES A WEEK AGO. IT MEANS HE KNEW WHAT HE WAS GOING TO DO!

THAT NUT CASE WAS WELL-AWARE OF THE INVENTION OF DR AMJAM AND HE HAD HIS EYE ON IT!

THE MACHINE CONTAINS URANEUM WHICH IS NOT AVAILABLE IN THIS COUNTRY... SO FIE FREALLY CAN'T RE-MAKE THE MACHINE FSOON!

FMEANWHILE THIS FMOUSTACHE FIS FGROWING FAST, FEVEN FIE FCAN'T FTIRM FIT FPROPERLY... FYOU FUNDERSTAND FWHAT FAI FSAI?

FJAMRUL FIS A FFOUL... FIE MEAN FOWL... FLET FME FHAVE FAN FAPPLE...

FAI FWILL FKILL FJAMRUL