

A Midnight Adventure

Arpita Ram (13)

Illustration: Shamli Rana

WHENEVER I had my annual vacations, I went to my grandmother's home in Buxar, Bihar. So, as always, when I was in Class VI, I went there with my two cousins Sushma and Abha *Didi*.

In the village, we slept on the terrace during summers. And sleeping on the terrace with my mother, grandmother and cousins was great fun. We used to chat and tell each other stories till we fell asleep.

One day, as it was very hot. Sushma *Didi* asked me, "Arpita, why not sleep on the terrace today?" But that day my mother had gone to my aunt's house and I was feeling a bit scared to sleep on the terrace, so I declined. My cousins had told me many scary stories about the bamboo garden behind our home. From the terrace, I could see the bamboos waving in the wind, just as if a ghost was making the bamboos wave.

But Sushma *Didi* insisted, "Oh, come on, Arpita! Nothing will happen. Please come!"

I ultimately agreed and went up with *Didi* to sleep on the terrace. My grandmother was already there. But because my mother wasn't there, I was not able to sleep comfortably. My grandmother and Sushma *Didi*, however, fell asleep in no time. My eyes were closed, but I was still awake.

Suddenly, I felt something! I opened my eyes and looked at the phone. It was almost 1 a.m.

"Waaah...waaah...!" I heard a strange sound,

like a girl's cries. I sat up and looked at the bamboo garden.

'Ah...is that a girl in a white saree amidst the bamboo stalks?' I wondered as I stared, but the girl had disappeared within seconds! I was terrified.

"Nani! Naniiii!" I screamed.

"Don't disturb me. Go to sleep," Nani spoke without even opening her eyes.

I then tried to wake up Sushma *Didi*.

"What happened, Arpita?" she asked sleepily.

"Please *Didi*, let's go down...! I'm feeling scared!"

"Tell me what happened?" she asked.

"I'll tell you tomorrow."

We went to our room.

The next day, when my mother came back, I told her everything. She harshly said, "Nothing like that happens, Arpita! You must have been dreaming!"

After a few days, as we were returning by train to our home in

Arunachal, my mother said, "Arpita!

When I was about your age, I too had seen a girl in that bamboo grove!"

"Huh? So why didn't you tell me this before, when we were in Nani's home?" I asked.

"I didn't want to scare you more!" she replied.

After a brief silence, my mother continued, "Later when I grew up, I got to know that when moonlight falls on a waving bamboo branch, it can make it look like a person."

"Oh!" suddenly, I realized that there was nothing to be scared about in the bamboo garden.

From that day onwards, whenever I visit my grandmother's home, I keep looking at that bamboo grove at night thinking, 'Will I see that girl again?' ❀

