

woman to put it on.

Leslie's voice shone into the room. It was a narrow restaurant, slotted into the street like all the others, but in ours, his voice breathed through it. We both stared out the red neon-buzzed window to the street below.

'We'll have to make a sign to carry,' I said.

'What?'

'For his funeral.'

My father lifted his eyes to mine and swiftly back down. He picked up his chopsticks and wiped the oily ends on a tissue.

'You loved to draw when you were a boy.'

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On 1 April 2003, Leslie Cheung jumped from the twenty-fourth floor of his hotel. In a note he said, 'In my life I did nothing bad.'

My father and I carried a big placard that read, 'In my life I did nothing as good as you, Leslie.'

Destiny

Shalini Akhil

I was very young when my obsession started; sparked by the cartoon version, it intensified with the television series. Every weekend I'd be rendered speechless from the first bars of the intro to the closing credits as I watched in awe, stretched out flat on my belly on the lounge-room floor. Every year, I'd get the show bag from the Royal Easter Show, and when we got home I'd sneak up onto the garage roof and fight off make-believe villains whose faces always ended up resembling those of my brothers. They were no match for me: my reflexes were lightning fast, my aim was true and my hair flowed like streamers, dark and glossy in the sunlight. It felt right, being her. A perfect fit. It was destiny.

When I grew up, I would be Wonder Woman.

Then one day, my grandmother came to stay with us. She

stayed for a while, and she watched *Wonder Woman* with me. After a few sittings, I thought she was ready to hear my secret. I told her about my destiny. Though she commended me for thinking about the future, it seemed she wasn't as sure about my choice as I was. As we discussed my plans, my grandmother reminded me that I was Indian. It was then I began to realise I could never grow up to be exactly like Wonder Woman.

My skin was the wrong colour, my eyes were the wrong colour, and my legs just weren't long enough. Not that it would have made a difference if they were, because my grandmother didn't like the way Wonder Woman dressed. I tried to explain to her that what Wonder Woman wore was a costume, a special costume to fight crime in. But my grandmother kept saying she thought it looked like she'd left the house in her underwear – like she'd forgotten to put her skirt on. You can fight all the crime in the world, she said, but if you leave the house without putting your skirt on, no one will take you seriously.

So we started to think about what an Indian-girl crime-fighter might wear. Truth be told, I wasn't too impressed with Wonder Woman's choice of outfit either; in the cartoons her pants had looked okay, but in the TV series they looked a lot like those plastic protector-pants they put over babies' nappies. Initially, I had tried to make up reasons why she'd wear them – maybe she needed the extra padding just in case she ever fell over, or maybe the seat in her invisible jet wasn't very comfortable. But no matter how I tried to explain it to myself, I couldn't really see why they thought putting Wonder Woman in a pair of sparkly nappies would make her better at fighting crime.

My grandmother suggested that Indian Wonder Woman could wear a lungi. That way she could run and kick and squat and jump, and still keep her honour. I wasn't so sure about that, so my grandmother made me a deal. She said that Indian Wonder Woman could wear a lungi over her sparkly pants, and that way if she ever needed seven yards of fabric in an emergency, she could just unwind it from around her waist. She could use the fabric to wrap the bad guys up in and then tie them up with her rope. I thought that sounded like a good idea. We sketched a lungi over Wonder Woman's legs.

My grandmother didn't really like Wonder Woman's top, either. She said that super heroes should have functional clothing, and that a strapless top just wasn't practical for a lady as active as Indian Wonder Woman would be. She liked the colours, though, so we kept the basic design and added some shoulder straps. I wanted them to cross over on the back, and my grandmother said she could sew me a top like that, so we drew it into the plan. Finally we moved on to her accessories. My grandmother thought that all of her accessories should be made of 24-carat gold, and that her earrings should be more than just two red studs. Maybe they could be crafted from rubies instead; that way they'd still be red, but better than before. I didn't really mind about the accessories; all I wanted was a red Wonder Woman top with criss-cross straps at the back.

At lunchtime, my grandmother mentioned that rolling rotis was like a magic power. I didn't really believe her. But then I watched her as she rolled them one after the other, and they all turned out perfectly round. I don't know how she did it, because when I tried, they looked more like blobs or squares. When my grandmother rolled her rotis, they spun slowly around and around underneath her rolling pin, and she didn't have to pick them up and stretch them out with her hands like I did. I was a little disappointed, but she said that it had taken her a while to learn, and that she'd train me. My grandmother said that the magic rotis were very good with super-hero eggs, so I asked her if she would make some for me.

My grandmother chopped up some onions and some chillies to add to the eggs. She said they would make me run faster and help me to see better in the dark. She fried them in a little oil and we both coughed; she said that was a good sign that the power in them was very strong. She beat some eggs and poured them into the frying pan and stirred them around till they were done. She sprinkled some salt over the eggs and divided them between two plates. My grandmother said I could pick the chillies out into her plate if they were too hot for me, but I managed to eat some of them. The eggs tasted good with the magic rotis.

I felt sorry for the old Wonder Woman. I imagined her eating her peanut-butter and jelly sandwiches alone, without a magical

grandmother to suggest wearing a lungi over her embarrassing sparkly nappies. That day, I decided to change my destiny. When I grew up, I was going to be Indian Wonder Woman.

Dancing Lessons

Cindy Pan

Daddy took my hand in his firm capacious one and we walked the cows' trail towards the dam. The water lilies were still open. Vibrant cerises and melting lemon yellows merged with the snowiest of whites in their crisp, sharp petals. How I would like to spend my days basking on those cool, emerald lily pads, nestling inside the lilies at night. The sun was going down and the breeze was cool.

'Yes, Liang Liang. You will be the first.'

'Do you think so, Daddy? Really?'

'Yes. No one has ever done that before. Many people can winning Nobels prizes, but no one has ever winning Nobels prize in every single categories before. No one!'

'But how?'

'What?'

'How will I do that?'

'You are genius! For you, you will have to working very hard but if you trying very hard, you can do it. I know you.'

'I will try hard, Daddy. I always try hard, but I don't know if ...'

'No, Liang Liang, I know you,' he paused and considered, adding suddenly: 'I've known you all your life!'

'Well ... I've known you all my life too,' I countered. I had hardly realised I had known him for so long.

'That's right! Liang Liang, you will make our Pan's family very proud one day.'

One day. While Daddy mended the fence, I sought a spot free of fresh cow pats. I lay back in the grass and thought about one day. What was my life going to be? I had wanted to be an artist,