

## Long bony fingers

*By Gargi Pant; Illustrations by Anup Singh*

Somu loved to read ghost stories. Every time he paid a visit to the library, he got back a teeth-chattering horror tale. It was a signal that he was getting ready to play a scary trick on his friends. He was 10 years old.

His parents had learnt to recognise the signs now. The days on which the slim boy's cocker spaniel eyes shone brighter than ever, and his brown wavy hair seemed to have a movement of their own, they knew that he must have read a ghost tale and was hatching a plot to scare someone.

The problem was that Somu loved reading. And so he did a lot of scaring too. But he was liked for his funny jokes and his helpful nature, so no one really minded (though a few friends had often thought of making him feel a sense of fear). Fear that was very different from sitting in bed with a whole lot of munchies, bed sheet pulled up to the chin and reading a story for the pleasure of its thrills.



One day Somu's friend Pavan asked him over to his house after school. Somu's mum and dad said he could go - but they told him to come home before dark.

"Remember, now," said his dad, "you'll have to walk home through the park." (something about the park....)

Promising he'd leave early, Somu set off for his friend's house. He had a great time reading stories and looking at the pictures in some of Pavan's exciting monster books. Time flew by and when Somu looked up he saw it was pitch dark.

"Oh no!" he gasped. "I have to get home!"

Somu began to walk along the path through the park that had fallen eerily silent. How dark it was. Why couldn't the park officials put some lights? Then he remembered that most of the park lights had been broken by them during their cricket matches. In fact, if a boy succeeded in breaking a park light with a soaring six, he was considered a hero! Now it didn't seem a bright idea any more. Especially when the chirping sound of the crickets had become deafening. If someone came up behind him, he wouldn't be able to hear their footsteps.

And then he heard that noise. It came from behind. It was a human voice.

"Guess what I can do with my long bony finger and my long pointed teeth"?

Somu yelped and started to run, but the pounding footsteps followed him. Finally, out of breath, he stopped and asked in a quavering voice:

"Who's there"?

But all he heard was the voice saying:

"Guess what I can do with my long bony finger and my long pointed teeth"?

Somu started running again. The footsteps followed behind him. Once more he stopped and asked, "Who's there"?

"Guess what I can do with my long bony finger and my long pointed teeth"? Again the same thing. Why couldn't he say something else!

Poor Somu took to his heels again. As usual, when he got a stitch in his stomach he stopped and asked, "Look, who is it?"

"Guess what I can do with my long bony finger and my long pointed teeth"?

Somu ran down the path and found himself at his doorstep. But it was locked! And the footsteps were right behind him. With no more strength left in him Somu stood there and asked, "Who's there"?



"Guess what I can do with my long bony finger and my long pointed teeth"?

Somu gulped and gathered his last bit of courage to ask, "Who are you and what can you do with your long bony finger and your long pointed teeth"?

BmBmBmBmBmBmBmBmBmBm...Hahahahahaahaha, went the monster.

Somu closed his ears and eyes and sat on his doorstep in fear. Then he opened his left eye a teeny weeny bit. The monster was right before him. He seemed to be wearing black trousers turned up at the end, as was fashionable. As his eyes climbed up the ghost's figure, he got a shock.

It was his father!

"Somu, did I not tell you to come home before dark?" said dad.

"You did, Daddy", sniffed Somu.

Well, I thought I would sneak up on you and give you a scare for a change, just like you do to others after reading one of your horror tales!", said Somu's dad.

Somu looked at his father for a long time. And then they went inside the house making monster noises.

BmBmBmBmBmBmBmBmBmBm...

(Source: <http://pitara.com/talespin/stories/online.asp?story=141&page=1>)