

# “Life is an adventure”

Written by: Meenakshi Thangadurai, 12 yrs

## *Glossary:*

Amma - Mom

Appa - Dad

Patti - Grandma

Tatta - Grandpa

“On your marks. Get set. GO!”, yelled the coach.

Hi, my name is Meena and I’m running at the provincial cross country running race of 3.5km. I moved to a town called Grand Valley 2 years ago, and since then I got interested in participating in running races. My Patti and Tatta came from India earlier to visit us for a couple months. I go to several extracurricular classes including dance, singi—Oh no, this is the final lap! I have to sprint! I started running as fast as lightning and crossed the finish line just in time.

“First Place again! Woohoo!” I yelled.

My parents were so proud.

“Now I can go to nationals, right?” I asked

“Yes Meena!”, said Amma proudly.

We all exited the track field and headed home. I was so tired that I slept in the car.



The next day, I was relaxing.

“Achoo!”, sneezed Tatta.

Patti and Tatta aren’t used to the cold october winters here in Canada, since it is hot year-round in India. Amma told Tatta to try some steam inhalation for his cold, but he hesitated. So, I said that I will do it first before Tatta.

Appa boiled the water and added oregano leaves for aroma. Then, he placed it on the floor. I placed a blanket on top of me so I can inhale as much of steam as possible. I

started inhaling the steam. When I was done, I accidentally removed the blanket the wrong way! Hot steaming water spilled on my left thigh and left arm!

“Meena!”, Amma cried appalled.

“Call the ambulance! Oh poor girl.” Patti said worried.

I was speechless. I didn't know how to react or what to say. What would happen to my school? Will my leg and arm be okay? Questions swirled around my head.

But before I could think about anything else, the doorbell rang and the paramedics rushed in to help. They put gauges around the burnt areas to cool down the skin. My leg was shaking, not because I was scared. Because the skin was hot! I got placed in the ambulance and flew to SickKids Children's Hospital in Toronto. The paramedics even gave me a teddy bear for comfort in the ambulance. I saw how worried Amma looked. She looked more frightened than me. I know how that feels. I just wish I could tell her that I will be okay, but even I wasn't sure. Especially in this circumstance.



We finally reached the hospital and doctors as well as nurses rushed in to help me. From there, all I can remember is that the doctors gave me an anaesthesia that made me fall asleep so they can conduct a surgery.



I wake up in a hospital room. The TV playing the news, my hand hooked up with ivy, beautiful murals on the walls, and my hand as well as my leg wrapped in layers of gauge. Amma looks at me sadly. She begins to cry. I feel like crying as well, but I have to keep it together if I have to cope with whatever this adventure will take me.

“I should have made sure you were more careful. How could I have just let that happen. I'm so sorry Meena. I feel terrible”. I tell Amma that it will be okay. Before I could say anything else, doctors and nurses arrive into my room to see me. They begin asking many questions regarding my burn, but I was just too drowsy to answer properly. I guess I was going through many pain medications, including morphin every 4 hours. After the doctors left, Amma and I got to choose what food to eat from the menu. I chose spaghetti as always, and

Amma settled with a salad. As I was waiting for the food, Amma was doing work online for her job, while I was scrolling through channels on the TV. Since this incident happened, I stopped going to some of my extracurricular activities such as dancing.

Just as I was thinking away, a young women holding a bag of activities came into the hospital room and introduced herself as Morine, a social worker. Her job was to comfort and entertain me when I was here at the hospital. She then pulled out board games for us to play, and we even made some slime! It was a dream come true. As we were finishing up tic-tac-toe, the lunch lady brought us our food, so Morline left to let us eat. As Amma fed me the food, I felt like I was dreaming. The pasta sauce melted in my mouth, while the spaghetti danced around! The food was delicious!

As the evening arrived, Appa came to see me from work. It was nice to see him after a busy night. Appa stayed for a while, but then he left as he had to be home for Patti and Tatta.



As a couple of days went by, the doctors and nurses were preparing for surgeries. They told my parents that the burn was a full burn which meant the hot water burned all 3 layers of skin, but didn't reach the bone. *sigh of relief* However, that ment I needed a skin graft, where the doctors will take some skin from my other thigh and place it on the burnt one. Knowing this, I was glad that nothing worse happened to my leg.



Weeks of going back and forth to the hospital went by. The doctors and nurses planned to perform 2 surgeries on me. On the first surgery, the doctors had placed a donner skin to see how my skin reacted to make sure I was ready for the actual skin graft.

I laid on the bed in the surgery room, ready for my second surgery. I wasn't nervous at all. But soon enough, I drifted to sleep smelling an orange flavour through my breathing mask.



A week after my second surgery, physiotherapists began coming to my room for a period of time to help me walk, since I was unable to even move my legs. The physiotherapists taught me small exercises such as wiggling my toes to start moving. From there, I slowly began to lift my legs up and down. I began using crutches and practised walking up and down the stairs. Soon enough, I slowly began to walk! So I was sent home.



At home, I began to continue my online school after a month in the hospital. I also carried on my singing lessons online on the bed. During this time, my parents and family supported me through helping me walk at home, and inviting my friends, Mathew and Natasha to entertain me. We had a lot of fun together!

5 months after my surgery, I began dancing again! And 2 years later, I began running cross country races. I still went to checkups and appointments at the hospital every couple months as well.



This whole “burn adventure experience” changed me and how I think of myself. It made me stronger. Even though this was a difficult time, the effort everyone made to help me get better is unbelievable. Maybe I look different in the outside and my appearance changed. However, I am the same person in the inside and became confident than before. I am who I am. This accident came by and tried to stop me from doing anything I enjoyed, especially running and dancing. However, I went the extra mile and ignored the negative impacts of it. Instead, I make do for what I have with self-esteem. Remember, everyone is different so don’t be ashamed of yourself or afraid of what others would say. If you always stay strong, you may gain confidence and discover the other amazing side of you. So, no matter what obstacles come your way, nothing should stop you from pursuing your ambitious dreams.

Life is an Adventure. And you never know where it can take you.

*THE END!*



*To my fellow readers:*

When I was 10 years old, I also had a burn accident like Meena. I went through many surgeries and appalling events. As you read, you can see that this was a very tough time for not only for me, but also my family too. I would like to tell all readers that it is very important to stay away from the stove, kettles, and hot items. It's also a good idea to listen to your parents when they warn you about staying away from hot appliances, as they know more about hot items than you.

Just keep in mind that if anything happens to you that is tough, try these 4 practices:

1. Stay strong and confident
2. Try having some self-esteem
3. Think about the bright side instead
4. Use positive self talk

- Meenakshi Thangadurai, 12 yrs old