



Chapter Two

Next morning, while Lalchand was at the paper merchant's buying some cardboard tubes, Lila went to the Elephant House to see Chulak. When she heard what Lalchand had told him, she was furious.

‘Mount Merapi – Razvani – the Royal Sulphur – and he wasn't going to tell me! Oh, I'll never forgive him!’

‘That's a bit drastic,’ said Chulak, who was busy making the Elephant ready for his new job. ‘He's only thinking of you. It's dangerous, after all. You

wouldn't catch me going up there.'

'Huh!' she said. 'It's all right to let me make Golden Sneezes and Java Lights, I suppose – little baby things. But not to let me become a real Firework-Maker. He wants me to stay a child for ever. Well, I'm not going to, Chulak. I've had enough. I'm going to Mount Merapi, and I'm going to bring back the Royal Sulphur, and I'll set up as a Firework-Maker on my own and put my father out of business. You see if I don't.'

'No! Wait! You ought to talk to him—'

But Lila wouldn't listen. She ran straight home, packed a little food to eat and a blanket and a few bronze coins, and left a note on the workshop bench:



Dear Father,

*I have completed my apprentice
ship. Thank you for all you have
taught me. I am going to seek the
Royal Sulphur from Razvani, the
Fire-Fiend, and I shall probably
not see you again.*

Your ex-daughter,

Lila

Then she thought she should take something to show Razvani her skill, and packed a few self-igniting Crackle-Dragons. One of the last things she had invented was a new way of setting them off: you just had to pull a string instead of setting light to them, because the string was soaked with a solution of fire-crystals. She put three of them in her bag, took one last look around the workshop, and slipped away.

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