

Fly, little boat

MATILDA

On a wintry day,
At a lightless bay,
A boat floats on an ice-still sea.
The waters part,
The stars a chart,
Directions in a world of melancholy.
As one looks on,
It starts to dawn,
The boat's sunk into invisibility.
You think it'll rise,
Fly into the skies,
For a second, abandoning rationality.



New Market to Nimiso

HIYA ISLAM

There is a deep-rooted charm to this part of Dhaka, at New Market, a bustling zone of hawkers, shops and people, of all sorts. It is here where “fixed price” is a fallacy, the world is your oyster and you can get your hands on virtually everything as long as you can bargain.

If the heart doesn't get what it wants, walk to the neighboring turf, *Gausia*. Tees for fifty, shoes for a hundred more. Pitch in a few more hundred for a pair of pants and decent accessories and you would have a complete outfit. Hashtag OOTD. Post.

“160 taka apa, niben?!”

Naomi looked back abruptly, annoyed at the hoarseness of his voice; he was too close. She was not the *apa* the seller called out to yet she turned to see what could be so cheap. But the object in question remained out of sight.

“120, diley den”, a woman in her mid-twenties haggled back, turning away from the shop.

As Naomi counted change in the rickshaw, a boy popped into sight. A boy dressed better than most paupers, selling candies. She was not the one for sweet tooth but felt compelled to hand him a ten-taka note anyway.

Suffering from the pangs of existential crisis en route, a man in his 40's, with a missing-hand came across at a signal. His held out his left hand murmuring gibberish. Feeling estranged, she dug into her pockets but the rickshaw took off quickly as the lights turned green.

Next stop, Nimiso- home to unnecessary items schemed to melt hearts and tagged to break the bank. She picked up a keyring dangling from a hook hang of phone cases. A stranger's second thoughts turned fluke. It was a miniature version of the life-sized Pink Panther grinning at the window. Then, she headed to the stationary aisle at the far end of the store. She stood in front of the rack shelved with notebooks, in a haze. After 15 gruelling minutes, it came down to 3 spiral A5's, none worth abandoning.

At the cashier, her eyes wandered to a neat sign that said “Buy one, get one” that pointed to a line-up of nail polishes. Instinctively, she picked bottles for cherry red and nude brown.

Back at home, the day's shopping piled over the stack from yesterday and the day before. Curtains pulled, trash full of take-out and the laptop still plugged in at yellow. Naomi has been out of work since the past eight months or so. The one-year internship was to be renewed into a full-time job, presumably. But it is not always that we get what we want. She lost count of the firms she had applied. Besides, she never heard back from them. She felt as if her career ended before it could even take off.

But it is alright. It is okay to drain the savings a little, to feel a lot better. She pulled open a drawer full of overdue bills and scavenged out skin care for depressive episodes.

Apply the mask on clean, washed skin generously. Massage over face and neck and leave on overnight. Rinse off with lukewarm water in the morning.

She tore open a pack of sleeping mask, put it on and went to bed at 4:38 PM.

Hiya texts back faster than light and that is just how everyone should be, in her opinion. Find her at hiyaislam.11@gmail.com

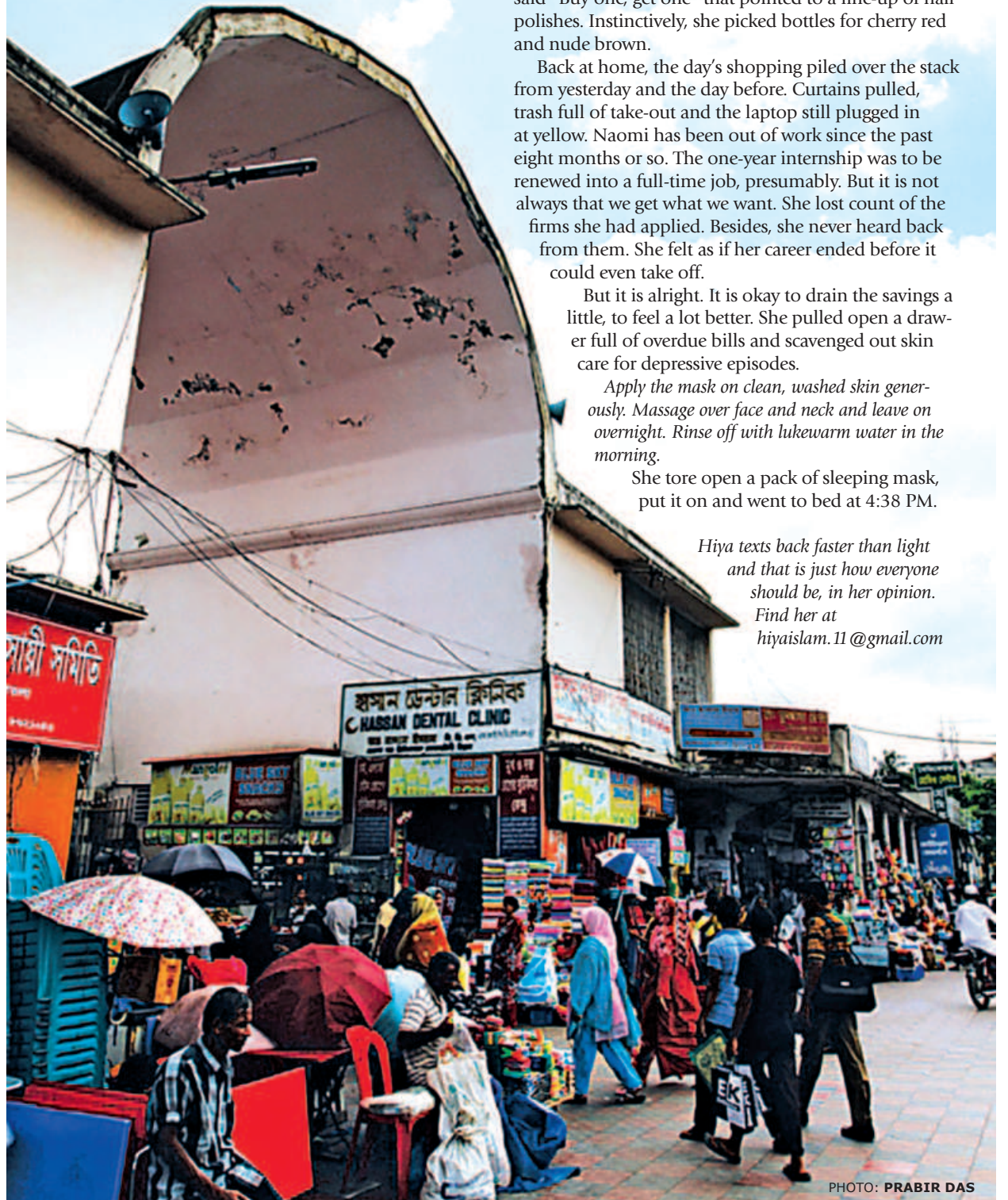


PHOTO: PRABIR DAS