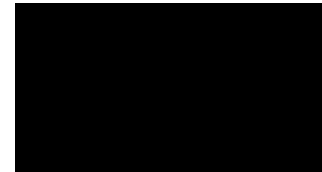


THE DEFINITIVE  
**YOUTH**  
MAGAZINE

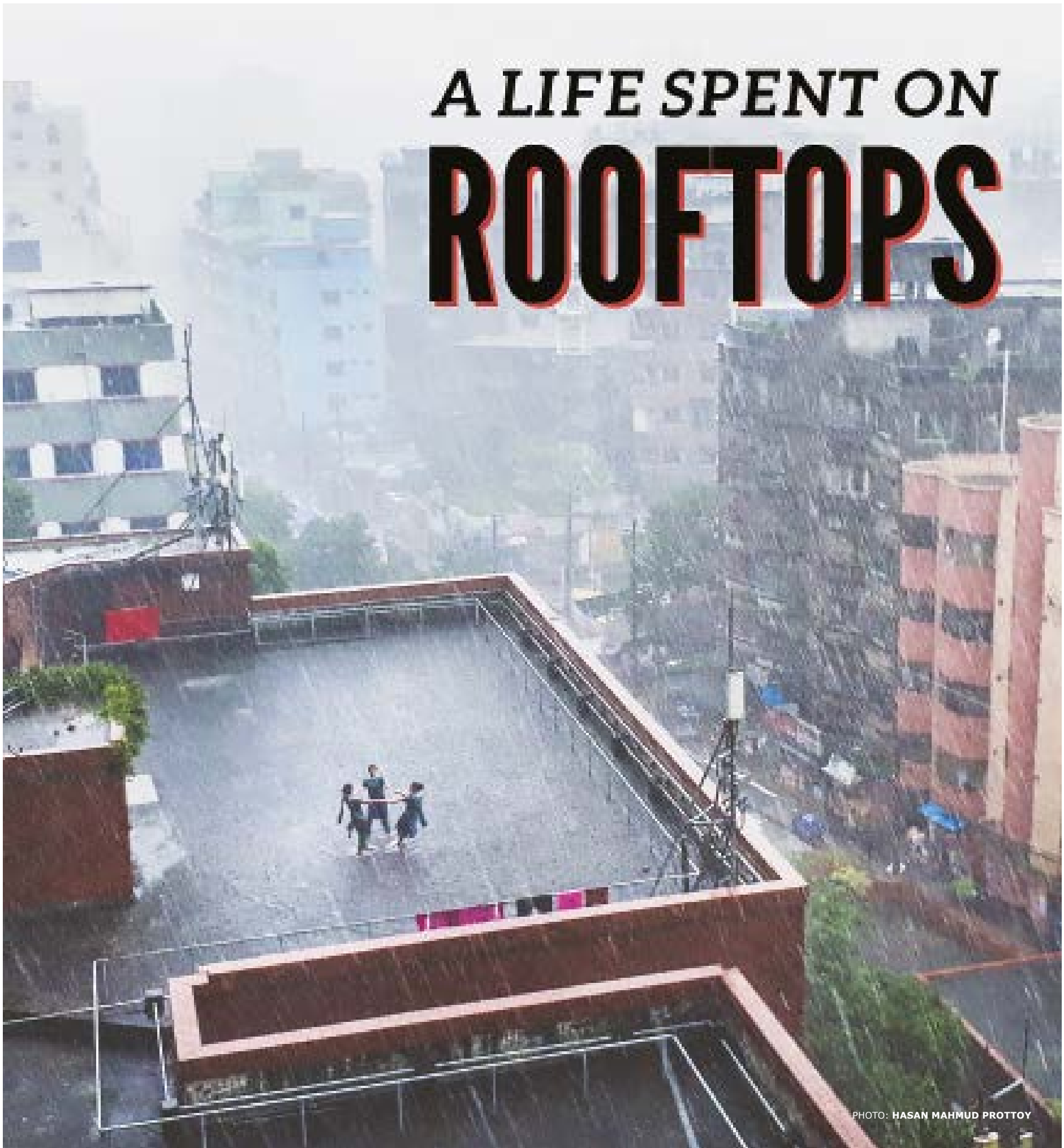
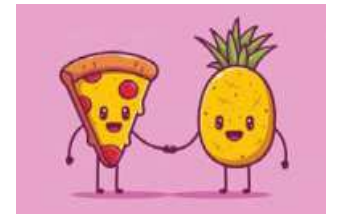
# SHOUT

DHAKA THURSDAY JUNE 18, 2020, ASHAR 4, 1427 BS | A PUBLICATION OF *The Daily Star*



WHY WE SHOULD  
CARE ABOUT  
#BLACKLIVESMATTER  
**PG 3**

PINING FOR MY  
PIZZA  
**PG 6**



# A LIFE SPENT ON ROOFTOPS

PHOTO: HASAN MAHMUD PROTOY

# EDITORIAL

Three months in and we still don't know where we are. If this shutdown was a 15th century Spanish expeditionary voyage, we'd point to the next piece of land that we lay our eyes upon and call it India. Alas, we aren't Columbus and the Earth has been thoroughly explored, and so our voyage continues.

I've noticed there are two types of people in shutdown (excluding people actively combating the disease – godspeed to them). There's the angry person on the keyboard, who's aggressively following everything that's trending on the Internet. These dedicated individuals will always have a good assortment of things to agree with, disagree with, and vehemently oppose. They find joy in making themselves heard on the Internet, as a matter of catharsis more than anything.

The other type of shutdown people is the roof-going, moon-watching, book-reading, show-binging, thought-thinking person who is enjoying life more than ever. Their loneliness doesn't kill them, and they must confess they wish things never changed.

This week's SHOUT has a bit of both. Probably because it is made by people in shutdown. Of which there are two types. As discussed above.

– Azmin Azran, Sub-editor, SHOUT



## PLAYWATCH

### GAME REVIEW



# The Non Gamers' Game

UPOMA AZIZ

As a child, every afternoon my playdates and I would go up to the roof of the tallest building in the community and stare at the clouds and make up a new story each day. This would be a good time to admit that I am not much of a gamer, but this game definitely catapulted me back to my carefree days.

*Sky: Children of The Light* is the newest game from thatgamecompany, the creator of *Flow*, *Flower* and *Journey*. It has been termed as a social indie-adventure game released for Android on April 7, 2020. It's a role-play game where the goal is to explore the seven realms, complete the quests and make friends on the way.

The graphics of the game is a treat in itself, you could stare at the screen making your avatar run or fly through the clouds and even *that* feels good. The mission of your avatar as a child of light is to complete the constellation by saving the spirits that remain scattered throughout the kingdom. The seven realms represent seven different stages of life, hence differing in colour and settings. The spirits will give the player "cosmetics" and other collectibles that affect gameplay. Other than that, finding lost stars help strengthen the wings of the avatar, enabling one to soar higher and float longer.

This game has claimed to focus strongly on social mechanics. It allows you to meet and befriend other players,

with whom you can exchange gifts, and can help each other out as your bond intensifies. The part I found unique was that this game allows a hand holding feature, that means you can guide another friend along the journey or they can guide you; I found this endearing because once I entered the game I was confused about what to do, and a fellow player took the hand of my avatar and went to places I could have never found on my own.

Another thing that pleased me was that the music was very calming, and not monotonous at all. In fact, the entire game is so relaxing that I found several other videos claiming *Sky* to be "the most relaxing game ever played". The game makers say that they focused on the avatar being able to explore the beautiful animated kingdom, and treasures could be awaiting at the wildest of places. You could not really get lost if there is no fixed path to follow.

And of course, you don't need to be a gamer to play this game. All you will need is your Android phone, this game has a rating of 4.7 on Google Play, which goes to say that I am not the only one to have been enthralled by it. If you are bored, anxious, or both, maybe a new way to spend your time is just a click away.

*Upoma Aziz is a walking-talking-ticking time bomb, now going off without detonators. Poke her at your own risk at [www.fb.com/upoma.aziz](http://www.fb.com/upoma.aziz)*





# Why we should care about **#BLACKLIVESMATTER**

**AAHIR MRITTIKA**

The incident that sparked the momentum of #BlackLivesMatter movement happened on the other side of the globe, and yet, young people in Bangladesh are hurt.

They are condensing complex information—institutionalised racism, how South Asians propagate it, cultural appropriation—using resources on Instagram and Facebook. A plethora of articles, podcasts, movies, and books, are being shared around as people have voluntarily begun to educate themselves and others. I see petitions and donation links up on everyone's bio, and we're even coming up with alternative ways to help. It's remarkable that the concept of racism, something many of us don't face directly, managed to infuriate us to this extent. It's important for many different reasons, and one of them is how this serves as a point of reflection.

Look around you, do you know someone from a minority group being denied their rights? Sexism, prejudice based on religion, colourism—human beings are judged and opportunities are withheld based on unfair criteria in schools, workplaces, and even in our homes. Dehumanising others based on an arbitrary factor isn't new. I believe many of us

are guilty of doing it, some consciously and some unknowingly. Even if someone isn't directly partaking in discriminatory behaviour, staying neutral still makes one guilty.

This is a good opportunity to think about all those times you ridiculed someone because of their ethnicity, bullied boys for being "feminine", or made a sexist remark. I recently saw someone, who continues to use transphobic language to "roast" their friends, post a long note on how they've educated themselves on the history of the n-word. While it's great that so many of us are learning to be more sensitive, being selective with what you want to support is unethical and performative (and possibly bandwagoning). Being a tolerant and thoughtful person means finding all forms of discrimination abhorrent.

We need to figure out how to create positive changes in our own environment. Experiencing the BLM movement has equipped us with knowledge on how powerful and useful social media is. We raised funds just by streaming YouTube videos filled with ads, and learned about artists of colour at the same time. We're using our personal accounts as platforms to share and discuss relevant news. Conversations aren't limited to any age groups or news outlets, allowing us a diversity of opinions. Statistics and

complicated concepts are presented in constructive formats like short videos or flashy posters. It's possible to create awareness on important issues with some well coordinated clicks of some buttons. This generation is now equipped to support local artists, to raise funds for RMG workers suffering from low incomes, and to stand against the injustices minority groups face.

We can't only limit ourselves to posting on social media once a while when it's trendy. We have to be active in real life as well. If you witness your friends having toxic locker room banter objectifying women, make sure you hold them accountable. If your parent uses a racial or religious slur, inform them on why they're wrong in doing so. I know it can be incredibly exhausting to get your points across but since we understand how social conditioning works, we have a responsibility to target and break down problematic mindsets. It may be difficult for us to participate in protests halfway across the world, but we can sure use it as a point of reflection from where we can start bringing positive change.

*Aahir Mrittika likes to believe she's a Mohammadpur local, but she's actually a nerd. Catch her studying at mrittikaahir@gmail.com*

## Mother Nature vs 2020: *A half-time pep talk*

**PROTEETI AHMED**

Okay. So, you've somehow managed to make the last 45 minutes go on for about half a year. It's almost as if this is a year-long game for you and you've successfully managed to mess everything up continuously for six months. Come on guys, don't you remember what this team is? You are 2020. You were supposed to be *the* team. But instead you're letting Mother Nature plough their way through you—quite literally.

If you're going to be adamant in prolonging your own suffering, remember this: by the first 15 minutes of this game, you managed to let Mother Nature set your world on fire, cause floods and earthquakes, and then start killing you off with a new virus. You managed to almost start a third world war and impeach a US president all by yourself. But then the virus really decided to show up. China, we were rooting for you. Iran, what happened?

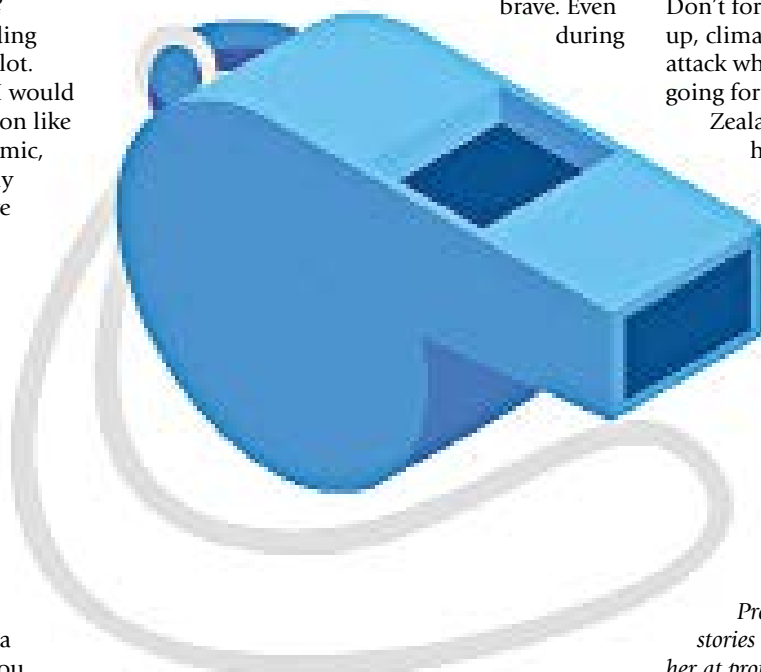
By the 30th minute, Mother Nature had you crippled. Italy, you went down first, and then the rest of you guys; France, Spain and the UK decided to follow suit. It's like you can't even see Germany and South Korea labouring up and down the

wings, the only ones among you who really tried. At one point near the end, it was like there was only New Zealand carrying you along. Good going, Kiwis, more of the same in the next half, yeah? And you, Canada, you can't just flip your hair through everything, eh?

But I am done reprimanding you. You've been through a lot. Some might say too much. I would describe your current situation like this, you're fighting a pandemic, and that's not even your only immediate priority. You have a Herculean task in front of you: facing Mother Nature—while she's winning. However, this is the beautiful game, and you can definitely bring this home.

Yes, you're only half-way through and you've conceded four goals, but I know you have what it takes. You've proven it time and time again. Japan, you've been through hell and back. Forget about a postponed Olympics. UK, you

can handle it all—Brexit, and even the royal breakup. From balcony concerts, to mastering cooking skills, to just being generally wholesome when humanity needs it. I have also seen you be fierce and brave. Even during



the first half, I noticed you standing up to the occasion and fighting injustice. Keep that spirit up!

Let's regroup, focus, and try harder. You have heroes among you. Remember them. Don't let them down, and don't give up. Don't forget to breathe. Keep your guard up, climate change and inequality will attack when you least expect it. We're going for a defensive 5-4-1 this half, New Zealand up front. For the remaining half of this game you are, each of you, entire nations with fire and spirit.

You know what? You don't have to win against Mother Nature. You just have to be your best selves. You just have to continue to do what you've shown the potential for, what you've shown you're capable of. And then go do it for those who are no longer with you but paved the way, and for those you haven't met yet. Because you can.

*Proteeti Ahmed is trying. Share life stories that also follow Murphy's Law with her at proteeti.14@gmail.com*





# A LIFE SPENT ON ROOFTOPS

*"We can crawl to a rooftop and inhale the light below and stars above as we laugh and forget the world we left on the ground." - Victoria Erickson*

**MRIITIKA ANAN RAHMAN, OSAMAN BIN AHMED & HIYA ISLAM**

When I think of my home from miles away, the years of memories I have growing up there come rushing. I find my mind escaping to the rooftop to savour a moment alone under the open sky, in the middle of the concrete jungle that is Dhaka.

Going down memory lane, the rooftop had always been at the heart of my childhood. I remember *Maa* holding me in her arms and taking me around, teaching me names of all that we could see. A few years rushed past as the number of children in the family grew and they all followed suit; sunbathes and oil massages were a ritual for all at dedicated times of the day. For a few of us, the roof is also where we took our first steps.

On that note, the rooftop has been a part of many firsts in my life. This is where I learned how to ride a bicycle. Working the balance while keeping eyes on the road—a colossal task—there were days I'd look behind to see if my dad was there to keep me safe. As days rolled by and the many bruises healed, the lingering fear faded. And then one day, I'd started riding on my own; it was a moment to cherish forever.

Living as part of a joint family had its perks. I was never lonely. We never ran out of games to play. *Borof pani, kana maachi, chhowa chhui, ekka dokka, gollachhut*—the list goes on. As we grew out of these games and moved on to sports like cricket, football or badminton, all within the restricted space, the trouble



began to rise. At some point, someone would send the ball or shuttlecock flying beyond retrieval. And then it was another game to get back our stuff from neighbouring rooftops or the street down below.

The call for Maghrib prayer would mark the end of day. The kids would scamper away. *Djinn*s and other supernatural creatures came out after dark, we were

told. The sky painted a deep blue colour on our faces, and when sometimes it changed to orange, we'd stay back longer on the rooftops just to see the chemistry in the skies.

Amidst all this, we'd never miss *Dada*, the one man who got me into rooftop gardening. I remember how he made lemonade for us from the first lemon my plant bore. Over time, the number of plants in my little garden grew and so did the incidents of stolen fruits. I remember *Dadu* grinding henna leaves and applying the henna on the palm and tips of my fingers. In between the many flower pots I would often find dragonflies. *Baba* and I would chase them while *Maa* would yell at us fearing we'd trip over the edge. That being said, these rooftops are a reason to spark new friendships between the young and the old.

The roof bears witness to the birth of relationships, be it a meeting with strangers waiting to be friends or a full-fledged wedding. Time and again, the rough cement floor gets adorned with *alpona*; new art being painted over the remains from the *holud* of an older cousin. In this way, the rooftop builds traces of man-

dalas as new families get sewn into a sacred bond. Coming to the top of the roof, it is these teeny-tiny bits of relic that take me back in time—the hours spent honing dance moves and perfecting harmony, the bickering over spots and of course, the days of celebration and feast. This place is never tired of hosting people. From birthday parties to *Eid er chand dekha*, from solo strolls to hangouts, the rooftop beckons you.

And every winter, BBQ nights were something we all looked forward to. Be it with friends or family, there is always a snug vibe attached to this get-together. As the BBQ grills gather dust in a locked cabinet throughout the rest of the year, these are taken out on chilly winter nights to prepare juicy chicken and fish amidst familial hokum and de trop culinary advice. The nights grew dark but we would not go down. Circling around a makeshift bonfire and sharing blankets, we'd spend hours listening to ghost stories.

Although rooftops sound like a sly location to rendezvous, as teenagers, the experience has not fared well for most of us. In hindsight, it is anything but clever. As we grew older, we seemed to go out more often

than go "up". Walking up here on a random Sunday, I miss the guitar and impromptu karaoke with my friends. Writing lyrics, singing out of tune yet managing to catch the attention of certain someones from rooftops around; an excuse to kill time while making memories.

This place of whatever square metres is a cure to everything, a sanctuary whenever one needs it; for privacy or some fresh air the balcony can't compensate. Watching the sun come up or go down, I've spent untold hours on the phone, sitting in the same spot I call mine forever. Over time, I may have quibbled for custody with unnamed men and snotty kids.

Years down the line, my rooftop experiences have changed. As an adult, sometimes at the end of a long day of pushing through Dhaka traffic, I'd take the elevator past my apartment, all the way up to the top floor and to the roof to breathe on my own for a moment, before going back down to my home which, although loving, could often feel crowded. The roof also became a place where I could savour an occasional treat picked up on my way home without being guilt-shamed into sharing with the entire household (read: ice cream when the rest of the family has a cold), choosing the lights and sounds of the city beneath me over a repetitive TV show episode.

I remember one lazy summer afternoon when it started to rain—not drizzle, but full on shower. Cats and dogs, as we learned in childhood. I seized the moment and raced to the roof to be in the rain like I hadn't done in so many years. I could see the places a younger me had made splashes in the puddles, ran across the water barefoot with little regard for my life. I had glided right underneath the hanging clotheslines, where so many of my outfits had gotten mixed up with the neighbours' over the years, leading to confusion over the never-before-seen clothes that magically appeared in my closet. Sitting on the gleaming roof as the rain gave way and the sun came out, I couldn't help but smile—what is it about rooftops that make the rain seem so magical?

Another way in which the roof gave me peace and solitude when needed, was by being the perfect spot in the evenings to sit down with a good book. There are few things in life that can be more comforting than nice sunset views, breezy weather and a page turner.

The roof is more than just an open space, dear reader; it is where life happens. The more you think back on, the bittersweet the heart gets. As we get along with our lives, this place remains the space we can never turn down. And as I recall my memories of my home and my upbringing, I realise that somehow, someway, my rooftop had a special role to play.



THE DEFINITIVE YOUTH MAGAZINE  
**SHOUT**

PHOTOS: ORCHID CHAKMA & SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED





**ECHOES BY**  
ASRAR CHOWDHURY

# THE DAYS OF OUR LIVES

On March 25, 2020 Bangladesh went under lockdown to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Schools, colleges, and universities were shut down indefinitely.

Not knowing when education institutes would open, students found themselves in an unknown territory. They had enough time to do whatever they wanted. No travelling meant a few extra hours each day. The concept of wake-up time vanished. You could wake up at 12 noon and tell yourself it's 7 AM summer-time in the UK. "Morning has broken, like the first morning." Get back to sleep! The platform was created for kids to have the time of their lives.

I got worried students would get bored. When boredom persists, it can deteriorate mental health. My worries were soon put to rest, though. Thanks to social media, people tell you what they're up to. I was pleasantly surprised. Young kids in Bangladesh started finding innovative ways to utilise the "gap year" they got.

Soon my Facebook newsfeed showed young people enrolling in online courses in Coursera and MIT Open Courseware to update their skills. Coursera offered free enrolment for limited time due to the pandemic. Others were busy learning professional software; photo

and video-editing and other technical skills from YouTube tutorials. Once finished, many posted in social media that they've completed. Some posted their certificates which were adding over time. What a wonderful way to utilise time with efficiency.

Those not into professional skills were busy elsewhere. Some were cooking, posting their dishes on Instagram. Dalgona coffee trended. "Jilapi or Jalebi" and "Golap Jaam or Gulab Jamun"—these were the questions. Mehendi on the hand. People going bald, growing beards, and whatnot. Some were exploring latent talents. Painting and sketching on different media. Needlework and knitting. Singing songs, reciting poetry. And yes, there were those who started watch parties, came on Facebook Live, had Zoom sessions, and organised webinars.

Every picture has two sides. When people of the same cohort share the same activities, it can create peer pressure. How? Many of my friends are into online courses. They're utilising their time efficiently. My parents see or hear about my friends. No prize for guessing right, I'm mildly asked why am I not doing the same? Forget your parents. If your friends are debating "Jilapi or Jale-

bi", you'll soon find yourself searching YouTube tutorials on how to make the sweets.

Schools teach us to be the best. As we grow, we're measured against one unit of performance or another. How good are we against our peers? This has a practical side. It creates competition to make us tough to survive in a world that can be very cruel. But then, not all of us are designed to compete. Some of us prefer to sit on our own, gaze at the sky, and daydream while the world passes us by.

If you didn't develop a skill, read no books, watched no movies during the pandemic, or didn't do what your friends did, ask yourself: *does it really matter?* As long as you're

happy, doing what you are, and especially in good health in the pandemic—"tomorrow never dies".

Life is a journey, not a race. A journey to be appreciated and enjoyed. Stay safe.

*The author teaches Economics in classrooms. Outside, he watches Test cricket, plays the flute and listens to music & radio podcasts. Email: asrarul@juniv.edu or asrarul@gmail.com*



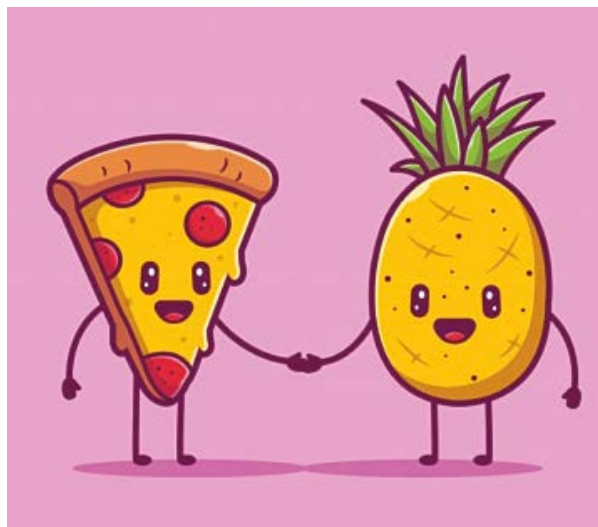
## Pining for my pizza

**ROSHNI SHAMIM**

Hi, there. Yes, I'm talking to you. Yes, yes, all is well and fine. I'm actually going to save you from all the sharing graces of small talk and rather jump straight into sharing about how hard long distance relationships really are in fruit life. It's more along the lines of impossible, honestly, just like getting that perfect jiggle on your panna cotta. I guess when the love of your life is on the line, distance becomes only a number. Wait, or was it age? Never mind, that isn't even the point. You see, if distance was all it took to make this relationship work, I would travel across the world every weekend. Life is never that simple though, is it?

Okay, I'm spiralling. Let me begin properly, this time right from the start.

My name is Pineapple Comosus and I live with my family in Hawaii. The reason why I'm traveling halfway across the globe is to have a secret rendezvous with my boyfriend, Pie. We first met at our mutual friend, Chick's housewarming party. Mr. Pizza Do, better known as Pie, was also another guest. As I had already heard all about Pie's cryptic aura, I had naturally expected a quiet, somewhat brooding boy hovering like a wall fly at some invisible corner. So when Chick called me over to introduce to her friend who I could spot laughing loudly from a mile away, I was pleasantly surprised to meet a boy who was equal parts charismatic and funny.



I wish I could say the rest of the meeting went smooth like butter, but that ingredient does not exactly sit very well with me. I ended up ruffling a few toppings off his head, with snarky comments of how jalapeño doesn't really seem his style and if it is true that he is secretly seeing that bad boy Coke on the side. Pie seemed taken aback at a little pine cone like myself shaking off his chilly flakes. He came back at me by asking if it was true that I was dabbing with

curries nowadays. The rest of the evening was a total blur. Pie and I ended up talking the whole night, pretending to not feel the oven preheating.

Unfortunately, there were enough raised eyebrows at the party for us to become conscious of everyone around us. The next few days that Pie and I had before I flew back home were spent on secret dates with endless conversations and baking.

I know what you are thinking. Who even hides relationships in 2020? Well, this story is a little complicated. For unfathomable reasons, society won't accept Pie as my boyfriend. It is a tale older than time, but the condiments of our community have shunned our pairing forever. I guess I understand their perspective, the idea of a tropical fruit with a cheesy dough being the last straw, but how to convince the heart?

Well anyway, there you are then. It has been a very draining journey for us, mentally and of course physically. But it just makes us more certain that we want to be with each other. Perhaps, someday, Pie and I will not need to hide. Until then though, it was nice to meet you. I hope I gave you some insightful food for thought.

Also, I think it is time to fasten your seat-belt.

*Roshni's fascination with pineapples largely stems from her not-so-secret wish of traveling to Hawaii. Mail her an itinerary at roshni.shamim@gmail.com*





ILLUSTRATION: RIDWAN NOOR NAFIS

# SONG THAT SPEAKS HALF TRUTH

SAMIN SABAH ISLAM

Sing me a song of merrier times.  
Efface the crooks and all their crimes.  
With words of the past of a war-torn child  
Before being orphaned, vilely exiled.  
Indite for me words for lusher of green  
A city of dreams, both chaste and clean.  
Tune this song about the brave martyr,  
Died for his country, without doubt or fear.  
Sing me this song that speaks half-truth.  
Briefly allow my battle wounds to soothe.  
I'll imbibe this tune and ignore my scars,  
For tomorrow I must awaken and face my wars.

# SPACE

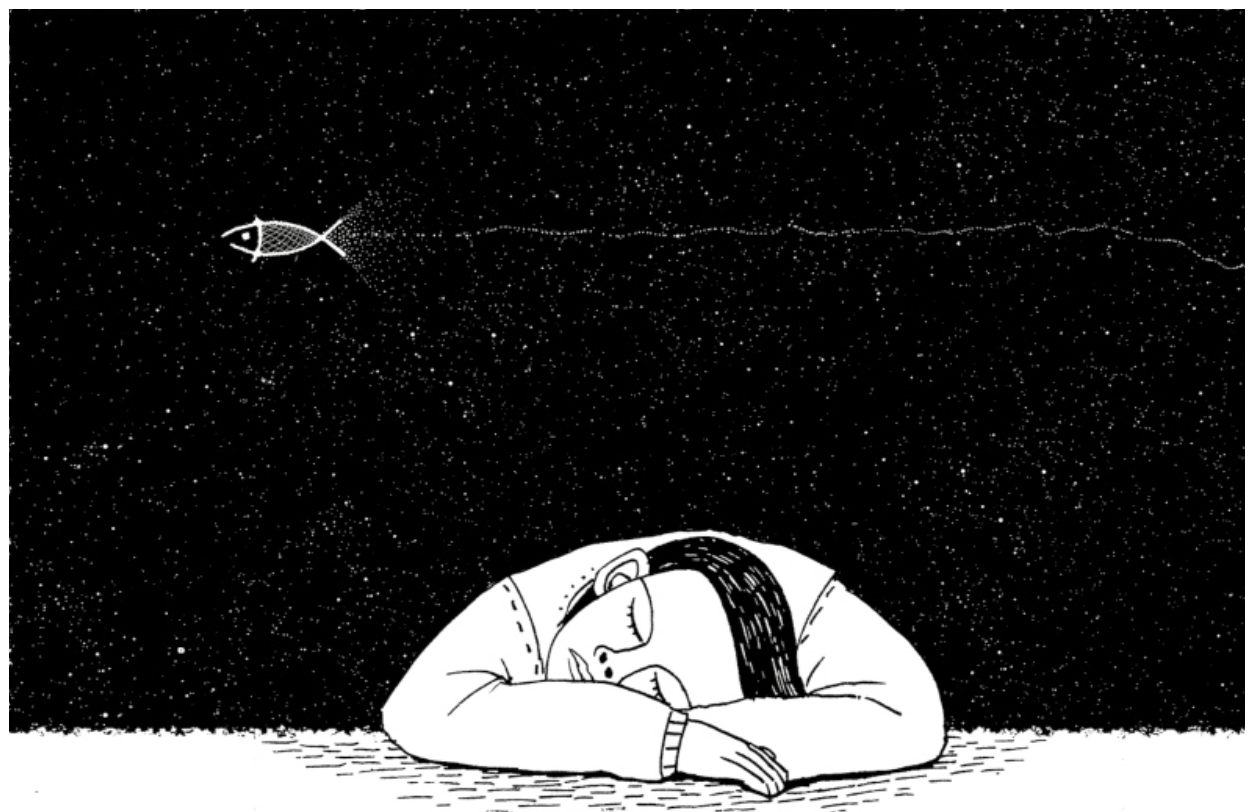
MASHAEKH HASSAN

Opening her eyes doesn't make a difference, the space is pitch-black. Unsure if she overslept, she looked around, noting the distinguishable shades of the lingering darkness. Estranged by familiar faces, Esha, in this new habitat of hers, wants to cling to the tranquillity she's still in search of. Among other things, Esha longed for her own space. She has it now. A space where she feels comfortable, albeit a cramped, dark, and sort of a personalised one. As nobody judges her current lifestyle and neither does anyone start an unwarranted lecture out of the blue, this place feels like no less than a sanctuary.

As uncomfortable as the place is, it provides her with a safe distance from people she wants to avoid. To her knowledge, she can't leave. Luckily, she doesn't want to. At least, so far, the thought hasn't crossed her mind. She is quite oblivious regarding how time works here. This place is remotely analogous to a labyrinth, yet capable of making one feel lost. A place she wants to be in for a period even unbeknownst to her, despite the sprinkled problems.

*I'm never going back, she often reminds herself.* Sometimes in an enthusiastic tone as if she's got other viable options, and less often than that in a suppressed one. Amidst all these incidents, something about this place soothes her. Without being sheltered from reality, here was where she felt protected. Perhaps because of the absence of judgmental eyes around her or the presence of agency she has always longed for, she doesn't know exactly why but she likes the place.

There was nothing about the darkness like a promise of dawn, but surrounded by an ambience that comforts her. So, she sleeps. She wakes up just to sleep again. She sleeps to forget frustration she can't help embracing for losing the track of time. She sleeps to make up for many sleepless nights, for the nights she cried to feel better, for each night which felt like an eternity. But she doesn't want them to pass as she isn't looking forward to a new day. Because a new day pushes her to her old routine, to the old people who fill up her emptied chest with more reasons to make her spend another night crying. Not experiencing the happiness that she clearly deserves isn't something that makes her sad nowadays, it's just the sleepless nights. She's exhausted. She wants sleep. In the



past, happiness was a luxury she rarely felt, whereas sleep felt like a necessity. Somehow throughout her past she had been deprived of both.

Most of the people who caused that, feel guilty now. Others have successfully blanketed the thoughts after disparate and desperate attempts. The ones with guilt often come near Esha's current vicinity to express their guilt. True to her constructed nature and current forcedness to conform to the reality, Esha never responds. The silence makes it easier for those people to convey their thoughts more expressively. It's easier to keep blabbering while being assured that the other party has nothing to offer them but silence. Esha listens to them when she isn't sleeping. Sometimes her sleep is interrupted by their voices. She

cannot interrupt in return. She doesn't want to. Listening to people asking for forgiveness makes her angry. "Why now?" she asks. To her, such cry for forgiveness seems like a task solely done for getting rid of the weight of their own guilt.

One of the reasons Esha likes this place is that at least she doesn't have to see their faces regularly like she had to when she wasn't in this grave. Undoubtedly, they wouldn't expect Esha to respond. Although listening to such shallow cries gets annoying at times, it still doesn't outshine the positive aspects. It's like a new life within a single life while being dead. That's no less than a new birth to her.

*The writer is a student of Anthropology at Brac University.*





# TRANSLUCENT TRANQUILITY

Lie with me, here,  
In the softness of grass.  
Come down from your heaven  
In this madness of calm silence.

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PHOTO & TEXT:  
UDAYAN GHOSH

