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HISTORY LESSONS PG 3

PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN **CHANGING TIMES PG 6**







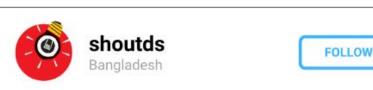
EDITORIAL

We have something special for you next week.

Ever since SHOUT came into existence (we celebrated 7 years last week!), we've been a platform for young writers who love to write fiction. A lot has changed but what has remained a constant in all these years is our Page 7, *Fable Factory*. I don't have to tell you that it's one of our finest; readers and writers from around the world send us stories every week, hoping to get published in that section. The magic of Fable Factory is its freshness, its originality, and its youthfulness. It is—if I may claim—the longest running weekly English fiction page in the country. We've published over 500 stories and poems; never missed a week, never missed a beat.

Therefore, next week, we'll celebrate fiction. We'll celebrate Fable Factory and bring you the best of young Bangladeshi fiction—with an 8-page special fiction issue of SHOUT. *mic drop*

– Kazi Akib Bin Asad, In-charge, SHOUT

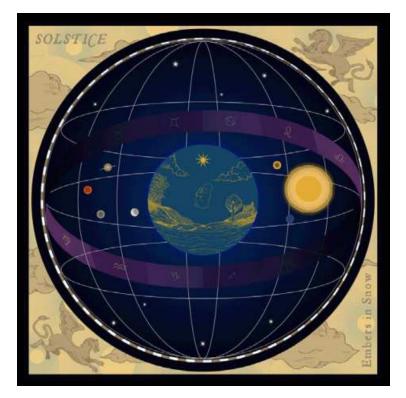




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ALBUM PREVIEW



Music of summer days and winter nights

TASNIM ODRIKA

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Embers in Snow is the solo musical project of singer/songwriter Rakat Zami who has been a part of the underground indie scene of Bangladesh for about a decade now. After the release of several EPs, his first full length album is finally making a debut on July 25, 2020 and SHOUT received a sneak peek of the whole album before its release.

Solstice begins with the track titled "The Woods" where the singer takes a long walk into memory lane and seems to yearn for lost love and days long gone. It is a fitting starting track as the listeners are able to take a glimpse into the heart of the concept of the entire album; love, loss, and frustration, with a tinge of hope in every song. Spanning nine tracks, the listeners delve into a voyage of the inner turmoil of the songwriter which is backed beautifully by ethereal riffs.

My personal favourites from the album are "Downtown" and "Snowland". Although both these songs have been a part of his previously released EP, *Northern Tales*, they have been reshaped to fit musically with the album.

"Downtown" took me into the middle of a busy café, sipping coffee and pining for an old flame. It is a bittersweet song that brought feelings of nostalgia along with acceptance of reality. "Snowland" with its slow and tragic melody signifies a befitting conclusion. What attracted me to this particular track is the guitar riff that is repeated throughout the whole song along with the haunting vocals taking place in the last three minutes of the song.

In conversation with Rakat Zami, he talked about his favourite track from the album, "Safira".

"I had originally written the song back in 2014 and I think it is the perfect representation of how my music has changed over the years," he shares.

What shines through the whole album is the lyrical acumen of the songwriter where he masterfully creates visual landscapes in each of his songs and the listeners are cascaded through these different worlds. A common theme that permeates every track is winter and cold weather. This is great for a July release because it instantly takes you back to the long cold nights that we so sorely miss during every summer.

"Solstice is a synonym for apex or peak. The album represents my place with music at this given point in time. I think this is the best that I can offer, for now. It's my peak or highest point with music," tells Zami.

Keep an eye out for the album release by following Embers in Snow on Facebook at facebook.com/EmbersInSnow and Youtube at https://www.youtube.com/c/embersinsnow/ featured

Tasnim Odrika can be reached at odrika_02@yahoo.com



The gaping holes in our history lessons

NAFISA AFSARA CHOWDHURY

Growing up, history had never been a favourite subject of mine. Naturally, memorising innumerable dates and difficult names is not any 15-year-old's preferred choice of activity. As I recall those lessons now, I realise that the mindless memorisation was not in fact our biggest problem, instead, it was the stories that they chose to tell us and the ones they suitably left behind.

DESCENDING FROM GREAT LIES

Perhaps if my eighth grade teacher hadn't so deeply venerated Churchill as a hero and unabashedly glorified the contributions of the British Empire, I would understand much sooner that there's more to Zainul Abedin's 1943 Bengal famine paintings than a couple of starving children on the streets. Perhaps, if I was introduced to the other side of the horrific story, I would slowly develop the ability to be more conscious earlier on and not allow my worldview to be reduced to such Eurocentric notions. Of course, this single lesson had not been the only influential factor, but denying its part would be foolish, as contemporary history lessons continue to be steeped in faulty ideologies.

As one would expect, my own experience is not unique to many of those around me. Zohra Ahmed*, 21, a first-year university student similarly believes that her school had failed at teaching her the important facts. She says, "My history classes never discussed anything related to



the oppression that Christopher Columbus inflicted on the native people upon his arrival, but went at lengths to have us believe that he was some sort of hero, an explorer, who had noteworthy achievements. It wasn't until I learned about the controversy of celebrating Columbus Day that I came to realise how misinformative my lessons truly had been."

Another recent school graduate, Anil Zaman, 19, had also expressed his discontent, saying, "I went to a Bangla medium school, so while the figures may have been different, they were equally problematic. I was taught to believe that Gandhi was a benevolent leader who struggled for India's independence, but nothing about his racialPHOTO: **AFP** ly discriminatory views and exploitation of

young women." We often fail to realise that these very stories hold significant power to construct a

child's understanding not only of the world but also of themselves, and we commit a gross disservice to them by perpetuating problematic narratives through these lessons. Be it an English or a Bangla medium school, the problem remains pervasive in both systems. These sanitised versions of history do nothing to protect us as children, and instead end up creating adults who are not equipped to critically engage in nuanced conversations about current world issues, as we fail to make crucial connections between the present and the past. Inevitably, it comes as no surprise that most students in our country continue to harbour prejudiced opinions of this kind. After all, can they be blamed? **RETHINKING OUR LESSONS**

In recent times, educators from around the world have raised concerns about not teaching students the difficult truths of our past. While addressing such sensitive issues isn't a simple task, they believe that teachers can offer small glimpses in a simplified and age-appropriate manner. Even though students may be too young to entirely grasp the complexities of these topics, it would certainly open up room for counter-narratives. Several organisations such as Rethinking School and Teaching Tolerance based in America have been working towards accomplishing these very goals. Unfortunately, there aren't many such initiatives in our part of the world, but these organisations along with several resources available online can serve as effective models to take a step forward.

We live in increasingly turbulent times where it has become much harder now to deny the existence of institutionalised ignorance and it certainly demands that we prepare our students with deeper purposes of knowledge and learning.

*Name has been changed for privacy

Sometimes when Nafisa isn't crippled by self-doubt and procrastination, she writes and paints things. You can reach her at sara. chow26@gmail.com

ILLUSTRATION: JUNAID IQBAL ISHMAM

This Eid, avoid the Cowvid

FAISAL BIN IQBAL

The Cows for Cowvid-19 (CoCo) Group is a special task force formed by a group of independent cow bodies that seeks to prevent the spread of Cowvid-19 among cows. The disease is already widespread among humans, and the group fears that with the arrival of Eid, this disease will spread to cows too through the interaction between the two species.

Therefore, in order to prevent the spread of Cowvid-19 among cows, CoCo has issued a set of rules that must be followed by those who're interested in purchasing a cow, or have already purchased one and are taking care of them at home.

BRING YOUR REAL AND ORIGINAL MEDICAL CERTIFICATE

Only those with proper documents certifying that they've tested negative for the virus will be allowed to enter the farm or cattle market. For a list of hospitals that provide such certifications, please feel free to visit the CoCo website. Holograms are mandatory.

NO MASK, NO COWS

You'll not be allowed to come within three feet of a cow if you're not wearing a mask. The mask should be Moo-95 graded, and it should be worn in such a way that it fully covers your mouth, nose, and ears, and partially covers your eyes. Cows will be wearing masks as well, so skip the teeth-checking this year. If you're purchasing a cow for Eid, you might as well get them face masks or shields instead of garlands.

HANDS OFF THOSE CHEEKS

We understand the importance of grabbing hold of a cow's thighs and its behind in order to judge its meat mass. But, given the circumstances, we have to ask you to avoid doing that. Their hips don't lie, and you can tell that just by looking at them. The need to assess the cow's body physically is unnecessary this time around.

SANITIZE YOUR HANDS BEFORE PETTING

As much as cows enjoy you petting them, we're going to have to ask you to not do that as well. However, we understand the human need to see and feel the cow for yourself, and hence, we'll be allowing minimum petting with the precondition of sanitizing your hands before and after the petting session. Or bring your specialised cow gloves.

CONTACTLESS FOOD DELIVERY

Once the cows have reached your place, they're now yours to take care of. The first and most important safety precaution you need to maintain here is contactless food delivery. Once you get the food for your cows, you simply keep it at a safe and reachable distance from them. Don't bother feeding them with your hands; they never liked it anyway.

Faisal wants to be the very best, like no one ever was. To stay home is his real test, to survive the pandemic is the cause. Write to him at abir.afc@gmail.com



PHOTO: STAR/LS ARCHIVE

IT'S A FROZEN FASCINATION

ROSHNI SHAMIM

There is no denving that all our childhood memories now hold deeper significance in our lives. Perhaps the most important one



PHOTO: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

has been the one right in front of us all this

Most of us have at least once heard the infamous phrase, "You scream, I scream, we all scream for ... Ice cream!" Until very recently, the impact of this little phrase did not altogether hit me. Yet, as I craved for a few particular flavours of ice cream, cringed at the thought of other meddlesome flavours, realisation meanwhile did a pretty little walk and sat down in front of me, eyes fluttering and lips pouting, with her hands folded in patient anticipation.

This is when I realised that ice cream is really just our own embodiment of love. It sounds absurd. Laughable, too. But rings absolutely true as a fact. Think about it; do you really love the same flavours now, that you did when you were 12? Or has your taste palette evolved, so to speak? ICE, ICE, BABY

One word—ice lolly. Wait no, that's two words actually. You see? Just the word(s) itself messes with your mind, much like your childhood puppy love. Everything about ice lollies is summer in a box, where Accidentally In Love is being played on repeat in the background. Ice lollies are almost always the first-ever ice cream item that you taste as a child, so that brain freeze is naturally inevitable. As you grow older though, it is not that you start to dislike the lolly, you just overcome the fascination from it. **CORNELLI CRUSHES**

The same waffle cone topped with different flavoured scoops. Sound familiar? For those of you who ride fast in the crush lane, you are well affiliated with the idea of enjoying that waffle cone in varied doses. Some days, it is a caramel scoop and on other days it is vanilla with that crusty chocolate bit. It is also no surprise that the ending is always the same; a tiny, chocolate portion at the pointy end of the cone, waiting to be consumed fast. Soon enough, the cone is gone, and so is your crush

DOUBLE CHOCOLATE FUDGE Did you feel that guilty yearning stir inside you? Don't worry, we have all been there. Lollies and cones may be great, but it holds no weight in front of a double chocolate fudge scoop, just like your first love. The best part is realising that the deeper you dig into the scoop, the more you love it. Sure, you may be wary of the intensity initially but soon enough, all that rationality goes out the window. So what if it could potentially lead to diabetes, or even worse health issues? In the grand scheme of things, it is always worth it.

DOUBLE SCOOPS

Oh dear, this is a tricky phase of life. Anybody who is ordering double scoops of different flavoured ice cream is going through some heavy confusion. In hindsight, it sounds like such a great idea— Swiss chocolate and stracciatella, yummy in my tummy! We get so swept up in the moment and the idea that we forget how, sooner or later, the flavours will begin to melt and merge, creating a weird confusing taste altogether. Remember this for always: one is better than two.

VANILLA DREAMS

Ah, you have finally reached the end game. You are surprised, but in the most pleasant way possible. After all the years spent on endless flavour tasting, you have somehow unexpectedly landed on vanilla. It suddenly now feels like you never really looked at the vanilla section before. Silently sitting, it always seemed muted, keeping itself in a private corner. Underrated as a flavour, you always figured this isn't your match. Today, though, it hits you differently. There is no giddiness and maybe also no screaming sparks, but it has settled deeply in your heart anyway. It feels cold and warm at the same time, and you feel you have finally found home.

All this ice cream talk has probably left you craving for some of your own preferred flavour now. However, the question remains, are you ready to settle down for vanilla?

Roshni believes as long as you love ice cream, who cares what your flavour is? Meanwhile, let her know your final chosen flavours at roshni.shamim@gmail.com



ALL ABOUT CAKES



PHOTO: SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM

SVEDA AFRIN TARANNIIM

You know why cakes are perfect? Cakes can be anything you want them to be. Whatever shape, size, design, flavour or colour.

The first cake that one needs to make if they want to start baking is the classic and simple vanilla cake. It is sweet, soft and just indulgent enough. If you can make the perfect vanilla cake, there's a really good shot that you can bake most other cakes with some guidance.

As a kid and even now, I love cakes. So much that I would write about all of my birthday cakes in my journal. I still remember the vanilla cake with blue flowers I had for my 11th birthday. Cakes seem to bring everyone together. As I grew up, I realised it wasn't just the taste I enjoyed, it was the art that cakes are. It might sound funny or even dramatic to someone who doesn't understand the art that it is and the beauty it holds.

Start with arranging all necessary ingredients, measuring them out and laying them ahead of you. This might seem unnecessary, but will make your work at least ten times easier. Moreover, laying them out will allow all the ingredients to reach room temperature which is always a good thing unless the recipe states otherwise.

I'm absolutely convinced that people who say they're not cake people have just not found the right cake yet. I'm sorry if I come off as prude, believe me, I respect people's choices. However, being someone who watches at least a hundred cake making and decorating videos every day (not even exaggerating... okay, maybe just a little), and has been making cakes for a while, I can tell you there's a cake for evervone

Once you've gotten the ingredients in order, start preparing the wet and dry ingredients separately. Whisk three and two-thirds of a cup of flour, a pinch of salt, a teaspoon of baking powder and three-quarters of a teaspoon of baking soda together in a bowl and set aside.

There's carrot cake for the health conscious, there's chocolate cake for the ones young at heart, there's red velvet for those who like something extra, there's caramel for the ones who know how to truly enjoy life and then there's vanilla for the timeless lovers. You need a truly mature palette to be able to appreciate vanilla, don't come at me.

In a separate bowl, cream one and a half cups of butter and two cups of regular sugar together. "Creaming" is just a fancy term for whisking butter and sugar together for a fluffy, cream-like structure. Once you've achieved that, add in three eggs one by one, *completely incorporating each one completely* to the butter-sugar mixture before adding in another. Once all the eggs have been added, add in a tablespoon of vanilla extract and stir until smooth

The world of cakes is a bright one. Like art, it sometimes expresses through replication and sometimes through its strokes and representation. You would be surprised by how many types of decoration techniques there are and how closely they resemble art done on paper. Pointillism, for example, a technique that uses a collection of carefully constructed and placed dots to cover a canvas is often used to adorn cakes.

Do not freak out if it looks curdled, it's supposed to look like that. Add the buttermilk (one teaspoon vinegar in about a cup of milk to make up exactly one cup) and whisk away. Sift in the drv ingredients and no matter how much you want to give up and dump it all in, don't. Trust me. Don't sift it all in at once, alternatively fold the ingredients and sift again. This aerates and uniformly mixes the batter.

You may have seen cakes with life-size flowers, often real ones to garnish cakes; they are very popular on Instagram. What you may not know, however, is that many of these extremely life-like roses may just have been made out of sugar. Oh, the things sugar can do. Rock candy, isomalt, gumpaste are all names for different forms of sugar, and they can be moulded to make some of the most breathtaking and delicate structures.

In a clean, separate bowl, whisk two egg whites. Emphasise on "clean"; the bowl must have never been tainted with anything even slightly savoury let alone spicy. The egg whites can tell, and you will be left with a droopy sloppy mess.

Making cakes is probably one of my favourite things in the world. The clarity, the uniformity, the need for rules, the



space to make your own, are just a few reasons why I'll always find myself going back to baking at the end of a very rough day. I'd choose it over sleep. You can feel the stress leaving you with each step and each fold. You can picture stress and let it go with each pour of the batter.

Assuming you haven't disappointed the egg whites, you should have nice and foamy goodness in a bowl that will elevate your cake from a regular dry, dense and chewy bar to a fluffy, smooth and uniform piece of heaven once you have folded it in. Line cake pans and divide the batter between three 8-inch cake pans and bake for about half an hour in an oven preheated to 350 F or 175 °C for happiness.

Being able to bake and find this whole world has been a revelation to me. It is a secret that I've let very few people in on, until now. Cakes can be pure magic, just as long as you treat them well.

Syeda Afrin Tarannum would choose 'The Script' over 'G-Eazy' any day. Continue ignoring her taste in music on afrintara@ gmail.com



ECHOES BY

ASRAR CHOWDHURY



When universities shut-down because of the pandemic most people thought they'd re-open within a month. It soon became evident that the virus was here to stay. Almost all public universities in Bangladesh have halls of residence. Some of them have *Gono Rooms* where too many students are housed in a single room. Re-opening would make social distancing a challenge to enforce. Thus re-opening prematurely disappeared from the equation.

Keeping public universities shut for a long time opened up twin challenges. First, session jams, for which public universities in Bangladesh are known, would become prolonged. The challenge that was unforeseen was the mental health of students. Staying at home with zero or minimum social contact was becoming detrimental to the mental health of students in what was coined as the "new normal".

Doing something may not solve a problem. Doing nothing will make a bad situation worse. Public universities had to re-open. Today's *Echoes* tries to explore where constraints lie for public universities. It's based on the experience of economics students of Jahangirnagar, Barisal, Mawlana Bhashani and BUP.

II Constraints outside the control of universities: The first problem students across Bangladesh are facing is: connectivity. Most students don't have access to Wi-Fi. Wi-Fi isn't available everywhere. Although most students have a basic smartphone, weak



network, frequent disconnection, and network fluctuation are posing a challenge to attendance.

Many students are getting out of the house and walking a distance to locate themselves to the nearest tower. If classes are being held for even four hours a day, many students are exposed to outside weather. They need an additional power bank for back-up power.

If experiencing online lectures in real time is a challenge, then streaming or downloading recorded lectures where made available is another challenge.

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

Public Universities in

Changing Times

Data costs: This varies. It depends on data consumption per class and over a week or a month. Students from the above universities are spending Tk 150 on average per week for data connectivity. This constraint is partially in the control of universities. Mobile operators have started offering packages for online classes. Special packages at affordable rates for students can be arranged over time.

Mental health: Prolonged online classes and gazing at screens is posing a challenge not only to the eyes, but also to the mental health of students. This is a challenge that needs to be considered by universities, the students and their families.

Online education is here to stay for some time. It's the "new normal". What will work and what will not work will become clear only over time. Each university will have constraints that are unique to themselves. Respective university authorities can address them based on their experiences. There will also be some common constraints which can be addressed by the University Grants Commission, the parent body of universities in Bangladesh.

Cooperation between universities and their students; and students with their families may be the best way out of the challenges public universities and students are experiencing now. Our students are our future. They are very dear to us. Whatever we do, we'll have to put their welfare first, but also remind ourselves, we have to proceed ahead.

Special thanks to Refat Ferdous of Economics, University of Barishal; Subroto Dey of Economics, Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University and students of Economics, Jahangirnagar University, and Bangladesh University of Professionals for their cooperation.

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

Why do bad movies have cult followings?

JISHAD BIN SHIRAJ AL HAMID

Have you ever sat down with your friends to watch a movie only to find it horrendously bad just 10 minutes in? And even though it was bad, you and your friends still wanted to watch it for some reason? Most popular movies known for being notoriously bad are *The Room, Troll 2, Birdemic: Shock and Terror,* the *Sharknado* series—the list goes on. Here's why people like them so much and go back for repeated viewings.

To answer why bad movies gain cult followings I'd have to delve into the psychological aspects of it. I'll try not to make it boring. When *The Room* first came out back in 2003 it was met with raucous laughter from critics and audiences due to the sheer stupidity of the plot and the characters and pretty much everything. But as time went on it eventually formed a fanbase with it getting sold out midnight screenings each month around the US.

When people gather together to watch films such as *The Room* there is a communal aspect to it, everyone's there to laugh at the movie and just have a good time. The sense of communion within like-minded people is what gets viewers from all over to catch midnight screenings and throw plastic spoons at the screen in unison when a particular scene shows up. Followed with meet and greets with the man himself, Tommy Wiseau, seals the deal for fans of the movie.

Enjoying bad movies, or what is also known as "paracinema", are movies which are out of the mainstream realm. And viewing them with an ironic stance gives people a sense of being an expert critic, whereas they're just an average viewer and their favourite movie is *The Nun*. Anywho, not all movies are made equal though, some are deliberately bad just for



the sake of being bad, such as *Sharknado*, but others just missed their mark like *The Room* and *Birdemic: Shock and Terror* (quite the title). These movies are the ones with a

cult following because the creators behind the movies put their heart and soul into it, which is respectable in comparison to those making a bad film just to earn money at the box office.

Passion projects such as *The Room* even inspired a book titled "The Disaster Artist", which was later adapted into an Oscar-nominated feature film starring James Franco. This just goes to show the impact of a bad movie on the industry. Maybe it was a blessing in disguise?

Next time you and your friends are deciding on which movie to watch, maybe you ought to look outside the box, you may not witness a patrician flick, but you and your friends will have a fun time, and at the end of the day, that's all that matters.

Jishad says he loves movies, but he hasn't seen all of them, so he's a liar. Send him some recommendations at jishadshiraj66@gmail.com

FABLE FACTORY





The Departure

NUJHAT ASLAM

I'll walk past the sea shore, None to witness my departure– As the marine drive's deserted. Only soft traces of my footprints Left behind.

The full moon shall stay bright Leaving me under the spotlight The waves reaching my bare feet– Shall be the eager audience.

I'll walk past leaving behind, The scattered pebbles of memories. And the rush of waves Shall erase all traces So that you won't follow.

WIRED

MASHIAT LAMISA & SHEGUFTA ARMIN AHSAN

What if we met not in this decade but in one where love would be a mechanical process? Would it be different then? Or is it what it is? What if we met at an age when engineers created love like they create machines now? What if the first time you saw me was in a small tube inside a laboratory or in a box that ran on a key? What if the first time my heart skipped a beat was when I saw how perfectly your insides were programmed in JavaScript and Python? What if chemical reactions between my mechanical lips and yours created magical sparks the first time we kissed? Would it be different then? Or is it what it is? What if marriage meant our hearts getting intertwined medically and not just signing off our bodies to each other for our carnal desires? What if the small laundry bag never existed for you to work on in the morning when I left for office? What if I gave you hologram flowers instead of the real lilac I got for you years ago? What if you could make love to me any way you wanted typing away as many codes as you needed to after a whole day's work? What if your labyrinth of suffering was programmed to another galaxy? Would it be different then? Or is it what it is?

* *

I think I would quite prefer that. A decade where love is still a process – something to fall into, something to live through – instead of an obligation or a nuisance. Would engineers be god then? Or would they be the devil? Creating such a feeling only to have it evade you? Creating love that is always there but not quite? Creating soulmates you walk past on bus stands without a glance? What if I knew the first time I saw you in all your wired glory that you were the one? What if I still couldn't reach out because the tubes that held you had walls that were just a little too thick? Or the box that housed you had a key I couldn't turn? What if the missed beep of your mechanical heart jumbled up the codes that ran my programs? What if none of that mattered in the end and the sparks our lips created held colours and patterns so bright and intricate not even the engineering gods could replicate them?



We would still hold hands and shiver at the feel of electrons flowing in perfect lines from the center of our nervous systems to the ends of our silicon toes. We would still smile at each other – for each other – and the imperfect teeth that were the only flaw in our otherwise perfectly designed self would show through making it a bit more real. Not an obligation. Not a nuisance. When we're ready to be finally intertwined, our hearts synchronized meticulously so that they sounded one resonant beat instead of two, we would be signing off our souls to each other not just our bodies. I would type a sonnet every morning in hopeful fonts and affectionate colours for

ILLUSTRATION: RIDWAN NOOR NAFIS

you to read when you return from work in the evening. I would store away every holographic flower that you get me in my RAM and they would stay with me till my wires burned or my system crashed unlike the lilac that wilted just a day after it was given. I would make love to you anyway "you" wanted, typing away as many codes as "you" needed after a whole day's work. I wouldn't worry about the labyrinth of suffering in another galaxy as long as I had you with me in this one.

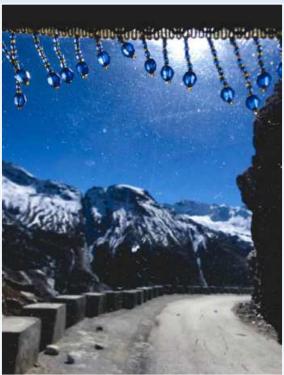
I don't know about different but it would be beautiful all the same.

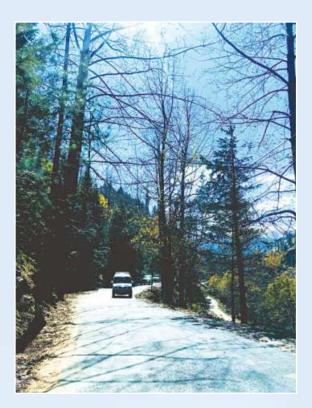
Not an obligation. Not a nuisance.



KALEI DOSCOPE









ESCAPE TO ETERNITY

I have travelled so far In the hope for an escape Leaving the terrestrial chaos of your city Reaching this sublime eternity Trying to contemplate what I have always wanted I have found a question rising in the air, Is this the escape to eternity?

PHOTO & TEXT: N R NILOY



