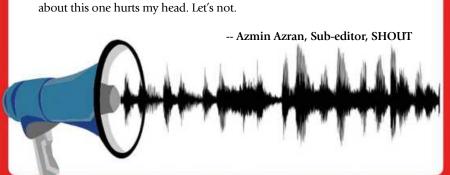


## EDITORIAL

It took me a long time to realise that creativity is a process. It feels stupid admitting this after seven years writing and editing for a magazine, but when I started at a tender age, I was all aboard the creative spark train. I'd spend weeks making excuses to myself and my editors while I waited for the spark. It sometimes came, but in most cases, all I had to do was just sit down with some time and a calm head and think. From personal experience, I believe one must discover their creative process. It doesn't have to make a lot of sense as long as it works, but you also have to be open to changes in this process. Read our cover story for more on the topic.

Also on my mind this week are Covid-19 vaccines. Where are they? Are they here yet? When can I get one? There's way too much information out there about vaccines, wouldn't it be nice if someone gathered up all the information and summarised it for us?

Lastly, sculptures. They're also on my mind this week. But thinking about this one hurts my head. Let's not.





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### **GAME REVIEW**



## MAFIA DEFINITIVE EDITION

### Great game or wasted potential?

### **OSAMAN BIN AHMED**

The original Mafia game released back in 2002 was definitely one of the best games of the Pentium era. The game featured mechanics ahead of its time and had great visuals. Fast-forwarding eighteen years, Hangar 13 of 2K Games Inc. has remade this old classic. So, does it live up to the expectations?

PLOT (SPOILER FREE)

Simply put, *Mafia: Definitive Edition* is a complete remake of the original. Hangar 13 has made no changes to the core plot whatsoever. The game had vast potential to improve on the already successful, yet old formula. Character dialogues have been recorded from the ground up. This brought a few significant changes to the narrative and has taken a U-turn from some occasions that previously caused tensions. The game has some extra cut scenes that gives the player more behind the scenes to the plot. This results in better story development.

### VISUALS

The game certainly looks great when paired with decent hardware. Graphical fidelity has come a long way, so has our expectations for realism. Missions such as "A Trip to the Country" really shows the detailed water reflections, rain and lighting effects. Here, *Mafia* checks more boxes than it misses. The game has great details on characters' faces, clothing, vehicles, and has decent lighting effects.

Speaking of lighting effects, Lost Heaven looks more like a 1930 Chicago rip-off than ever. Like most games, *Mafia* is not perfect. Xbox users have experienced ghosting effects when against certain surfaces. The central characters in the plot no longer have the same faces as the original, only bearing very slight

resemblances. The characters are equally lovable. Good or bad, you be the judge. **SOUNDTRACK** 

The game definitely has impressive environmental sound effects. Screeching of tires, gunshots from the 1930s guns are satisfying to the ears. There's a drawback though. For those who loved the car radio from the original might be disappointed as the cars have only two radio stations with 30 or so vintage tracks. GAMEPLAY

Mafia provides a great driving experience to those who can use the simulation option. The simulation options open doors to mechanics such as tickets for speeding or disobeying traffic signals. Old, but still not present in most modern games. "Lost Heaven" should have been made more interactive by adding accessible shops, bars and options for side gigs. The story mode does not have any monetary value. Guns are given, with no options for selections. Fines don't cost anything either.

Mafia comes with its fair share of issues. During my hours of gaming, I have experienced quite some bugs. Invisible cars with drivers, enemies standing still on a chase, Tommy falling on bottomless pits under the streets, and unrealistic damage on cars to name a few.

Despite some of its flaws, Mafia: Definitive Edition is still a great remake of the original. Players, be it veterans or new to the series, will have a great time experiencing the best campaign in the Mafia trilogy.

Osaman is a curious mind always wondering about AI, simulations, theoretical physics and philosophy. To discuss nerd stuff DM him on www.fb.com/osaman.binahmed





PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

## Respecting work. All work.

### **ANUSHA MOURSHED**

There seems to be an unspoken rule that says people from fairly well-to-do families cannot do jobs that are usually considered "too small" in our society. This includes a wide range of positions starting from being a salesperson to a driver on a ride-sharing service, all of which are unfortunately looked down upon equally.

Even in the most gruelling times of need, these jobs usually don't appear to be taken into consideration as an option for most. An alarming number of people, especially the educated would rather remain hungry than put food on their plate by waiting tables or working at a supermarket. They tend to assume that this will vandalise their social image and misplace them in the hierarchy.

However, the boundary of this sanctimony seems to be confined to our country

only. People seem to have no issue doing these same jobs for financial stability in a different country, where they often emigrate for educational purposes. In this particular instance, they appear to have a much more accepting approach towards their work which gives birth to a question that asks why it cannot be the same in our own motherland as well.

Diving deeper into the reasons, parental pressure seems to play a major role in establishing this outlook. I think it is safe to say that we are all familiar with the very customary demands of numerous parents who have an unwavering desire for their children to become doctors or engineers and nothing even slightly different. It is seen that when children are constantly reminded of this from their adolescent years, this notion eventually gets instilled into their systems despite a lot of their unwillingness to go into these fields. Ulti-

mately, many of them are unable to excel in these sectors, and some even end up unemployed. Hence when they wind up having to do "small" jobs that they never intended to, they are labelled as "failures".

If an individual is able to respectfully make a living for themselves through a certain job, there is no reason to deem it undignified. It is important to recognise that a thicker bundle of money at the end of each month and a fancier title does not make you better than anyone else. Moreover, if you can financially sustain yourself from a younger age through the vast availability of these jobs, there is no reason to dismiss the opportunity so abruptly, especially if you are in need of it.

Although it is true that some jobs require more qualifications and carry more responsibilities than others, it does not mean that the others are not valuable. Every job holds relevance and somehow

contributes to the community; starting from janitors to CEOs of multinational companies. The amount of respect you treat people with should not simply depend on their job title or the figure of their salary. You reveal your identity based on how you treat people regardless of where they come from or where they work.

If you are a young individual looking to financially support yourself, someone who is currently unemployed and in need of a job or even if you are simply bored and looking for new experiences, do not hesitate to give these jobs a shot. Even though it is easier said than done, turn a deaf ear to the naysayers, and make your own decisions for yourself.

Anusha often has a lot on her plate. Send her memes and motivation at anusha. mourshed 11 @gmail.com



## The Race for the First Vaccine

### **HIYA ISLAM**

Since the advent of vaccines by Edward Jenner in 1798, the course of medical history has changed forever. Vaccines are one of the most successful health interventions, saving three million lives every year.

As we close in on December, almost a year after the first Covid-19 case sprung up, the numbers of people infected have anything but declined. Much to the dismay of anti-vaxxers, there have been vast advancements towards several immunization biologics. China, Russia, the United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom are already availing some of the options; there are seven vaccines approved for early or limited use.

The race for a vaccine has led to a variety of projects based on mRNA, viral vectors, proteins and inactivated forms of SARS-CoV-2. Some are also being repurposed -- existing vaccines being redesigned to combat the coronavirus.

There are at least 87 pre-clinical vaccines and 58 clinical vaccines being tested and no approved vaccine yet for full use. Whoever reaches the finish line first, the vaccine should not be overvalued in terms of its efficiency and market dominance. More vaccines are to emerge over time and are predicted to outdo one another. Meanwhile anyone remotely being capable of fighting the virus would be heralded as the ultimate saviour.

Recently, three vaccines at Phase III trials have been taking the headlines by storm with staggering efficiency data. We know what these are. And each comes with certain logistical challenges to beat when it comes to mass production and consequently, distribution.

Pfizer and BioNTech's BNT162b2 and Moderna's mRNA-1273 are the same in a sense that both are made of a genetic molecule, mRNA which requires extreme cold conditions to keep it intact and functional. While Moderna requires a significantly lower temperature of -20 °C, Pfizer demands that it be -70 °C. However, both imperatives are posing outstanding difficulties in transport and storage in hospitals and clinics, from bottles to needles. Like many other vaccines, these too require two doses approximately a month apart, increasing the delivery load. It is said that the access and distribution is now a much greater problem than creating the vaccine itself. As countries place orders for millions of doses, these vaccines may be manufactured in one continent and required to be shipped to another, all the while maintaining arctic icy conditions.

This means that the planes, trucks, trailers, warehouses, and the provider facilities will have to be equipped with ultra-cold freezers for the first time. For developing and underdeveloped nations, where a regular fridge is a luxury, experts have expressed concerns and urged to find solutions for efficient delivery. The problem is that the countries that need vaccines the most, are the least ready to receive them.

The sub-zero temperature naturally calls for more dry



DESIGN: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

ice that has been in shortage in the wake of the pandemic. And, cold-resistant glass vials because glass cracks under extreme cold. To tackle this, Corning is on track to produce millions of a new type of pharmaceutical-grade glass vials to contain the frozen vaccine.

Pfizer has developed a special kind of GPS-tracked "cool box" meant to store 1,000-5,000 vaccines for up to 15 days, if the dry ice stock is carefully replenished. The boxes should be closed within a minute of opening and to add more, should not be opened more than twice in a day. When diluted, each vial makes up for 5 doses. Once thawed, the undiluted vial is usable for only 5 days while a diluted one lasts for 6 hours in a refrigerator. The strict terms imply that providers need to accurately predict how many arms to inject on a daily basis. Otherwise there is

either a waste or a deficit.

From manufacturing to distribution to provider facility to administration, the cold-chain needs to stay put. Logistics companies worldwide are striving to upgrade their cold infrastructure. The problem has arisen because these vaccines have been tested to be at least 90 percent effective in said conditions and have not had the chance to be investigated differently owing to the urgency of the matter.

The other leading vaccine by AstraZeneca and Oxford University, AZD1222, can be served chilled at 2 to 8 °C meaning no necessity of deep-freezers. It lasts as long as six months however, its efficacy ranges from 62 to 90 percent. Requiring two doses, it is priced at around USD 3 to 4 per dose, much cheaper than Pfizer's (USD 19.50) and Moderna's (USD 32 to 37). This vaccine is very feasible. especially for rural areas, to use with existing healthcare settings. But AstraZeneca and Oxford have faced criticism for lack of transparency with the results from trials. And most recently, a trial volunteer has claimed to suffer severe side-effects from the vaccine. However, the manufacturer, Serum Institute of India (who have also been conducting trials in India as per the manufacturing agreement), has denied the allegations and has assured that the product will be released only when proven to be completely safe.

There are still certain questions to be answered. How long does immunity last? So far, it is unknown if the mRNA vaccines affect infections. Only the clinical symptoms of SARS-CoV-2 were successfully combated. Preventing infections reduces the spread while preventing symptoms decreases the rate of hospitalizations. So would it stop asymptomatic transmission? We don't know, but the future is not as dark as we once thought.

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### SYEDA ERUM NOOR

Have you ever looked at a painting and wondered what the artist was thinking when they made this? Found yourself wondering what the idea behind a beautifully written poem could be?

Most artists who indulge themselves in any form of art have a process that's unique to them. Artists see a world through a lens that only they can make sense of. It is then up to them to try and show others what they do. Their craft is the lens, helping you see into the beautifully complicated mess of an artist's mind.

I found myself wondering if all of these artists across all these mediums had a similar process for creation. I wanted to know how an idea was born, and how it ended up being prepared for an audience.

So I asked: Where does one get ideas?

The most common response to this question was "personal experience". Almost everyone agreed that these ideas were born from an emotion so intense that something had to be done about it. An artist, no matter the medium of art, uses art to explain the very thing they can't seem to articulate in everyday language.

"I can't write about anything that doesn't have a little bit of me in it," explains Shounak Reza, reader and poet. "It would have to contain something from my own life. Something that impacted me on an emotional level, a memory, or a fleeting feeling."

Sharar Galeeb Chowdhury, singer/songwriter and copywriter at Adcomm Limited, tells us in detail how he came up with his very first song, "The song came at a time of great distress. I was eighteen and had just started dating. I came home a little earlier than usual so I had some time to talk to the girl. She didn't pick up. I knew it wasn't a big deal, rationally. But I felt something that, to this day, I cannot explain properly,"

He further explains. "It can possibly be explained as insecurity, anxiety, worrying. So I picked up my guitar, strummed the last pattern we learned in class, and sang

whatever came to me naturally."

And a song was born. From a feeling so

intense that it was almost too much for the human heart to contain.

Some get their ideas by allowing themselves to dream, letting their minds wander

selves to dream, letting their minds wander until something strikes them. A thought that drives them to action.

Aaqib Hasib, a development sector

radio Hasib, a development sector professional and fiction writer, explains, "Randomly thinking of the words 'what if'. Thinking up things that are crazy and stupid. Constantly being open to such ideas is important. Not every idea will be good. But the process helps with continuing to come up with more. One of which is bound to work out."

Then there are artists who look into inspiration. "I would say observing and looking at other people's creative work gets me started," Waeza Rafique Salwa, an artist and BRAC University architecture student states

"Sometimes I'll be inspired by a movie," agrees Syed Afrid Iqbal, business analyst at Canadian Tire and a filmmaker/script writer. "Anything that intrigues me or if I find my observations to be different from others."

Quazi Abrar Hasan, photographer and environmental science student at Independent University, Bangladesh, tells how this medium of art is based mostly on inspiration. He tells us about his personal experience, "I'm an instinctive photographer. Whatever looks good or aesthetically pleasing to my eyes, I can imagine what it would like through a lens."

An idea or an experience is far from a fully-produced film or a painting hanging on a wall. But, what happens after?

"I take out my phone and write down whatever is in my head at that moment," explains Roshni Shamim, executive at Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center and fiction writer. "It doesn't have to make sense. Be it a word, a sentence, a tiny detail. It goes down in my notes, where I can deal with it later."

Most of these artists agreed on "word

vomit", as they discussed how the initial stages of getting an idea out of the head. When an idea is born, it isn't fully developed, nor can it be fully understood. All one knows, is that it excites them.

"Sketch, sketch, sketch," says Waeza, "I always note down or sketch my ideas." "Get a guitar, figure out chords and

record on my phone," Sharar agrees.

Other artists find that they need to bask in that moment, let that idea marinatewithin them — then and there.

"I do nothing but try to concentrate on it," Adhora Ahmed, another fiction writer and contributing writer at SHOUT, explains. "By focusing on the detail, I work out a scene or context in my head."

Some artists, however, find that a technical approach is best.

Afrid explains, "I break down the idea into different parts. Start a mind map, followed by a storyboard. Once I feel like I'm getting somewhere, that's when I start to write."

Similarly, Abrar shares how technicalities apply when taking the photo. "I like to keep my photos as raw as possible. I use the built-in filters of my camera carefully and choose them according to the lighting and the mood of the setting I am working on."

The raw form of one's craft is exactly what is best and hence, the job is done. Other times, however, the raw form isn't at its best. This is when artists take up the daunting task of drafting and redrafting. This process can, like most aspects of an artist's process, be rather experimental.

Most also agree that getting space from their art is important. The process of crafting can be so intimate that one can find themselves lost in the pursuit of perfection.

Abrar shares that he doesn't look at his pictures until he reaches his studio, giving himself the space he needs to get in the proper headspace to edit these photos. Similarly, after noting his feelings on paper, Shounak stays away from it, making sure he can come back to it with a fresh mind.

Most artists rely heavily on criticism and opinions from their audiences, ensuring

that they are covering every angle, taking everyone's perspective into account.

"The next step is critiquing. I make sure to show anyone who's willing," Afrid says, "And I want to hear what their take is. I want to see what they saw was what I was trying to show."

While it's important to take into account what other people say, Waeza comments that it's also important to stay true to oneself. "I get opinions and constructive criticism. According to which I make changes. Or sometimes don't."

As we can see, there's no one way to do it. Everyone operates differently and it takes time to figure out what exactly is your process. All aspiring artists, take years of experience and experimenting, to figure out which process brings the best out of them.

Throughout the process, what's important is to keep those creative juices flowing. When asked about how one can do so, the most popular response was maintaining journals. Why? Because this allows an artist's mind to run free. You pour out ideas, like an open faucet. Undoubtedly, the quality and originality gets better with time. It gives you the freedom to think, to let your brain run wild because that's how some of the best ideas are born.

When it comes to words of advice from one aspiring artist to the other, Aaqib urges that everyone should cut themselves some slack when it comes to the constant struggle of remaining original. The others agree.

"It's how you tell the story," he explains. "How would you take something someone else has done and do it differently?"

The creative process is a journey that's unique to every artist. The base concepts, however, remain the same. The need to create. To communicate through different mediums of art. To connect with people on a deeper, more intimate level.

So, what's your creative process?

Syeda Erum Noor is dangerously oblivious and has no sense of time. Send help at erum. noor1998@gmail.com

### 5 SHOUT

# Living as a Non-tea Drinker in a Tea Crazy Nation

### **FARNAZ FAWAD HASAN**

Yes, you read the title right. I don't drink tea. And I know that your mind has already started forming the words, "You haven't had the right tea yet" but trust me no matter how many different kinds of tea you make me try, my unrefined palate won't get accustomed to the acquired taste.

Living in a tea-crazy nation where tea is like social currency, not liking it is akin to committing a crime. The long pauses, intense glares, and the insinuating inquiries that come with my polite declinations of friendly tea offers are enough to make me feel like a social outcast. It often makes me wonder how it feels to be yearning for tea, for I have no inclination for the steamy, leaf-soaked liquid. Sometimes it becomes really awkward in situations where I find myself sipping on a glass of water while everyone else is bonding over the hot beverage.

Things get more difficult when I feel a bit under the weather because the first advice I get is "Drink tea." It becomes really difficult to explain why I don't like tea and that it's not at all a pretentious act. Most people go on blabbering about how they can't live without 'n' cups of tea every day and how "TEA IS LIFE" but to me, it's just flavoured boiled water (*I can* 



Looks appealing, sure. But I don't like tea.

hear peoplegasp in the background).

Although you might judge me for being an "uncultured" oddball, you won't

PHOTO: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

be disappointed to know that making tea is actually one of the first skills I learned. Like how my friends and family look at me when they force me to guzzle down the hot cuppa, I too look at them with anticipation when I serve them my tea. Yes, I occasionally do regret not being able to join in with the storm you brew over a cup of tea or the warmth you tea-lovers feel with each refreshing sip but I do not enjoy drinking tea.

So, how do I survive without tea you ask? It's really simple. I just do. After years of avoiding this leafy gunk, the idea of depending on something for caffeine has become foreign to me. I don't feel the need to drink it nor do I comprehend why people rave about it so much.

However, the older I am getting the harder it is becoming to decline an invitation for a tea party and things of that sort without coming off as rude. This national treasure has truly become an inconvenience for folks like me. Yes, there are a lot of us, just hidden in plain sight.

Therefore, the next time you find someone refusing to drink tea, offer them something else instead. Juice, milk, water, anything. Anything but tea.

If you ever catch the rare glimpse of Farnaz Fawad Hasan sipping on "Maltova Cha" know that she has a super boring class ahead. Reach her at farnazfawadhasan@gmail.com

### CARING FOR YOUR CATS THIS WINTER

### NISHAT TASNEEM SHAHARA

My newly converted cat-mom friend texted me one night, worried sick. She wanted to know whether something was wrong with her kitten, *Mono*, who has been sleeping too much. I reassured her that eating more and sleeping more is normal for cats in colder seasons.

If you were wondering, this is exactly what it's like to be a cat parent. After about fifty expensive vet visits myself, I have realised that such paranoia is a part of parenthood — even if you are a parent to mean little fur-babies. But my friend's fears weren't entirely unreasonable. Winters can be especially tough for cats, who are more vulnerable to flu or the deadly pneumonia.

This article is a beginner's guide to help you ensure your cats have a healthy, warm winter. Please consult a vet and get professional help when necessary.

### STAY IN

Keep. Your. Cats. Indoors. This will guarantee that your cat is not exposed to the harsh cold, or contracts flu from unvaccinated local cats. If your cat is used to being outside, lure them in with warm sleeping spots and fun toys. If heated beddings are too fancy, fill water bottles with hot water, wrap them up and leave them in your cat's favourite napping spots. Keep your cats entertained and well fed, and they will spend more time inside the house.

### CAT PROOF

If you haven't already cat-proofed your house, take this opportunity to check everything. Cats tend to seek out



PHOTO: @MIMIDOESCATTHINGS

warmth during winter and this makes open stoves and old heaters with exposed radiators hazardous. Be vigilant, and limit what your cat has access to.

### CALL VOLIR VET

It is best to visit your vet right before winter hits. You can get all the necessary vaccinations, ask about any available flu shots and get a general health evaluation done. Discuss the current diet you have for your cat, and ask whether any supplements are necessary. Learn the symptoms for hypothermia, common flu and pneumonia so that you know what an emergency is and what can be handled at home. If you have a senior cat aged above eleven, they may require extra attention. Bring it up with your vet.

### FOOD HABIT

Along with any vet approved supplements, introducing natural homemade food into your cat's diet would be a good idea. It will help decrease chances of dehydration as opposed to a diet based on dry cat food. You need to make sure your cat has access to fresh water and remember to change the water a few times daily for it to not get too cold.

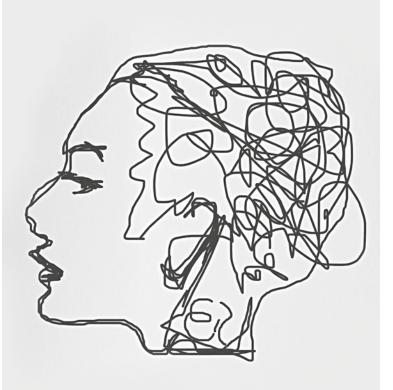
We tend to assume our local stray cats are resilient enough to be fine with winters. However, know that short-haired local breeds are more vulnerable to the cold than others. If possible, leave water bowls with fresh water outdoors, where you know the local cats hang out. Check under your cars, bonnets and around the wheels before getting into your car in case any stray cat has taken refuge in the warmth of the car engines. You can also put up temporary shelters for your alley cats in your garage. Let us take care of our *Mono*, and extend that love to those who need it.

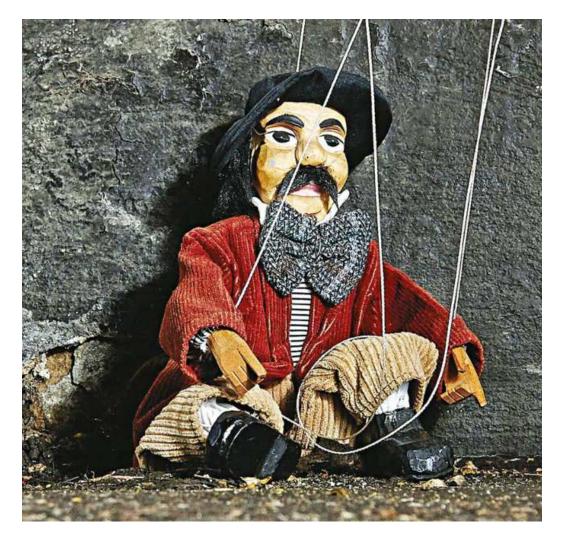
# ODE TO CHAOS

### **NUSRAT TABASSUM**

Chaos! Take me. Obliterate me. Incinerate me. Take every nook and cranny Of this deranged soul of mine And scatter it in Eternity's vast nothingness. Let this unsettling mind Settle in every resting peddle, In every grain of light That passes through the great oblivion. Let this stagnant carcass dissolve and Float in the great wave of Kanagawa. Let this baffled cognizance die and Become a spotless white sheet of paper. Celebrate lucidity's demise and Let insanity take over. Let insanity take over.

The writer is a student of Criminology at the University of Dhaka.





## Stringed

### **ADHORA AHMED**

"That's a wrap!"

The lights dim as my will to live brightens. It's Thursday, which means I'll get a good night's sleep. I have a gig with the troupe at some cultural programme on Saturday, but at least I can rest for this one night. I head for the green room to pack my things. Tarin peeks her head inside to ask if I'd like to join the others in the cafeteria. I turn her down.

"It's been a long day, you know."

I'm already on the bus when I remember it's almost the end of the month. Oh no, that means I'm behind on rent! I hope I won't run into my landlady today. I'm in no mood for her passive-aggressive hints. But I don't even see the point of paying my rent on time. It's not like the money goes to fixing the leaky pipe in my bathroom.

It's not my fault I'm behind on rent. That reminds me, I should swing by the boss' office on Sunday. He'll make the usual excuses, budget cuts and low ratings, while sitting on his tacky leather throne with a towel thrown over the headrest. What's up with the towels? I swear to God, all these big shots sit in the same chair. He must think our work is easy. We don't have to write our own lines, we just move the strings of the puppets and talk in a funny voice. Well, Shikdar, you old man, why don't you try that for one whole day? Let's see if your grubby little fingers and vocal cords remain intact.

I don't run into my landlady but her son

instead, feeding his cat on the stairs. Based on its size, I'd say all my rent goes to its nutrition. It's ironic for a puppeteer to be apathetic towards children, but I don't like this kid. He's done nothing, really. It's just that I've seen him watch my show. Good thing I don't have to show my face on screen, or I'd never hear the end of it. His mother doesn't really know that *this* is my line of work, playing with puppets. All I've told her is that I work on TV, to make myself seem respectable enough.

I'm too exhausted to stay up and practice my lines for the Saturday gig, so I turn in early. But sleep has chosen to elude me tonight, just when I need it. Good, now I'll feel miserable thinking about how my life's turned out. How my parents bossed me around in the first half of my life so that I don't become something like this, how I rebelled to *become* something like this, because of course my dumb head thought I'd taste freedom once I broke away from their shackles. Well, are you free now? Aren't your landlady and Shikdar and the other big shot organisers of your various gigs stringing you around, just like your silly little puppets?

Anyway, why do my thoughts always circle back to them? Do they all secretly control my mind, too? I really should get some sleep and regain my will to live.

Adhora Ahmed tries to make her two cats befriend each other, but in vain. Tell her to give up at adhora. ahmed@gmail.com









## LINES

I drew lines on the sand, you drew across my heart
I joined the sea and land, you want to keep them apart
Hurt, I drew my final line, between you and me, between wrong and right
They call it colour, but I named them black and white

PHOTO: **SYED TALHA** TEXT: **KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD** 









