

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

