

RISING STARS

Child's Play

by Naheed Kamal

"WHAT to you want to be when you grow up?" The young woman kept asking the children. "Alive", I thought to myself cynically. Magazine covers tell about the brutalities of war, violence in general and of all the sad and pathetic victims of violence, the young top the list. When you look into the eyes of the little Kurdish boy who has been sprayed with napalm you see the real effects of war. I always have a cut out of that little boy with me and its amazing how people ignore the fact that its there staring into their faces. Why do I keep it with me? It make me humble; it would make any half decent human being humble to see that face. My friends and I used to call it the "Lord of the flies Syndrome", the primitive urge to maim and kill. Its there in all of us and once this aggression is tapped into, killing comes easily. Killing does not come naturally, we are conditioned to it, it is an acquired taste, passed on to us by grown ups. Like the picture of the napalm victim most of us refuse to acknowledge the fact that it really exists. Perhaps it is the result of the gun culture; we have all become accustomed to too much violence to be shocked by any form of it.

Children, say the poets, are born training clouds of glory. Theirs is a sheltered and blameless time; they are expected to play, to learn, to feel life... they are the essence of life. They are not supposed to die for a cause and they are certainly not meant to kill. Yet every day in battle fields of violence they die, not merely as the innocent victims of war but sometimes they are the ones fighting the war. Victims of war in a different way but victims none the less. All around the globe children as young as eight are fighting for causes they barely understand. War

and violence robs a person of not only innocence but of youth as well. A ten year old may not have the strength of a soldier 20 years his senior but in this age of light weight weapons children can be taught the use as easily as any adult. Children may not make



by Judith G. DeCosta

I started out as a promising day, with the sun showing pleasantly high in the sky. This was the day we were going to visit Father's aristocratic friends out in the country to spend the day at their castle. I myself, was not too keen on this expedition as these people were perfect strangers, of whom I had never heard of until just a few days ago. My worst fears were confirmed by my first glimpse of the infamous place. It looked like something out of a horror story, looming in the dark. I thought I'd feel less awful if it was day, but no—we were to spend the night here!

So the guns were mere hunting relics! Was I ever disappointed. As it turned out, they were not even used now. The two men talked about boring things and the two women, that is my mother and Jessica's gossiped. I was bored stiff, practically falling asleep, when all of a sudden, a young man sprang out of nowhere, seized a gun from the showcase after smashing the glass and brandished it in front of us all. With everyone frozen in fear I got a good look of him: he had sunken eyes, wore shabby clothes, was unshaven and had his hair hanging uncombed in his eyes. He took the gun with him into the "backyard", running out and screaming madly to no one in particular, "I'm sorry for all I have done, goodbye." Saying this, he held the gun to his head and shot himself. So much for a quiet evening, I thought to myself, dumbfounded.

Jessica, in the meantime, ran out of the room shrieking. I thought she was comforted so I followed her. Whoever

he was, he must have meant a lot to her.

In the privacy of her room, Jessica confided in me: "I loved Edward more than any thing in the world," she sobbed. "We were to marry, in spite of Papa's disapproval. My father hated him and arranged for him to have an accident in which he received serious head injuries and has been quite unstable since. Obviously, he still loved me because he asked me to marry him again." At this point she broke down and cried bitterly. I felt so sorry for her. Whereas I hadn't known anything about her just a while ago, I now shared an innermost secret.

A night's stay turned into a week-end stay because I did not want to leave my new friend when she needed someone by her most. Her family was little help, only too happy to be rid of Edward. I sat by her at dinner coaxing her to little avail, to do more than push food around in her plate. In just over a day she seemed to wither to nothingness.

By the end of the weekend, Jessica was dead too. She woke up early to get the gun from downstairs—this must have been as no body saw her carry anything to her room the night before and shot herself holding a pillow to her head to muffle the shot; she was found in a few hours by the maid who was taking her breakfast to her.

The reason for all this taking of lives was a complete mystery to all. Well, so it seemed until the day of the funeral where Jessica's father poured out all his sorrows openly, to everyone present. Due to some family dispute, long before the birth of either Edward or Jessie, Thomas Wilson was deprived of his birth rights and in a fit of rage, he threw up the estate work, left his family and went off to London under an assumed name where he started all over again. Here, he took another wife who bore him a son whom they called Edward. Some years after Edward's mother's death, when Edward was about four years old, his father gave him up to his wife's relative and returned to his former family as Lord Thomas Wilson; somehow re-claiming his title.

Thus, Jessica and Edward were a brother and a sister who had fallen in love in complete ignorance of their existing relationship. Only too late did Edward's foster mother tell him the truth and Edward was shocked.

Old Blockhead did not want to repair the house, so he

The United Nations states that as many as 200,000 children are bearing arms around the world. In El Salvador the army has forcibly conscripted boys under 18, while boys as young as 13 have sworn allegiance to Ethiopia's leader Mengistu Haile Mariam. Most child warriors belong to rebel groups. The Mujahedin have boys as young as 9 fighting in Kabul. In Burma the Karen rebels recruit 12-year-olds, and the F M N in El Salvador have gone one step ahead, they are an equal opportunities guerrilla group and allow the young girls to fight alongside boys.

Nightmares of war are littered by images of children fighting: Impassive Khmer Rouge kids, taught to massacre civilians, even their parents. Iranian ten-year-olds sent into battle fields unarmed as human mine sweepers, with Khomeini's picture pinned to their clothes.

Children are not always forced to fight, they often volunteer due to circumstances. They become conditioned to fight. Despite the fact that the sight of children waging a war is painful the concept of using child warriors is not new. In centuries past youngsters were also used to baffle the enemy. There is however a difference between being trained to fight and being used to make a symbolic point, but in the end it is innocence and naivety being abused.

The Children's Crusade of the 13th century comprised of thousands of boys and girls, sent unarmed and undefended to the Holy land; their youth was meant to awe the enemy. The children went along believing themselves to be fighting for a just cause. Most died on the way and others were enslaved. They never reached their destination and the point was not made. Death on the battle field is not only an honour but to Muslims it is a

guarantee of eternal life, the gateway to heaven is open to all martyrs. In Afghanistan boys are urged to fight by the parents. In Burma combat has become a matter of heritage, where the Karen rebels have been fighting for over 4 decades. In Northern Ireland, although the country is not officially at war, the state of siege caused by conflicts between the Catholics and Protestants has made violence and death an everyday thing. For the youth it is a way to pass time. Even though Gang violence and Campus violence doesn't fit the Geneva Convention standard of war: their has been no invasion, no minefields or refugee camps. Instead there are small armies of youth who have taken up arms and are fighting one another and the police. In Los Angeles Gang violence is the closest thing the US has to battle within its borders, the death rate is just as high as in any war zone. Similarly in Dhaka Campus violence combat stripped of all the familiar rationales of war. These youth emerge from the streets as psychologically scarred as any of their compatriots in the battle fields.

Eventually the shock of seeing children fighting fades. Like entering a darkened room the eyes soon adjust to the dimmed light: the mind too becomes accustomed to the sight of the boys among the men, the death and violence.

In the end it is all a dangerous game, an adventure. The young are conditioned to believe in the fairy tale qualities, the glory of victory, the honour of death... they wish to play at being soldiers but it is amazing how well they learn to play the game and how fatal the consequences.

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Not with a bang but a whimper.

T S Eliot.

"I AM A GHOST"

— By Soheli Sadeque Teena

E VERYONE in this world is very scared of us. GHOST! But actually they don't know that sometimes we are also harmless. They never want to know our feelings and what we want. How are people to know about us? If they hear the word ghost or a haunted house, they run for their lives.

I am a poltergeist ghost. People are very scared of me. Since I am invisible, I introduce my existence by throwing things and making noises. I actually enjoy this. But I don't like hurting people. When I was alive, I was also a human, and obviously was scared of ghosts, so I know how people may feel. But now I also know how neglected ghosts feel. I like kids. I scare them when they don't listen to their parents.

I live in an old castle at a place name Orona. Since nobody live here, I have haunted it for years. Sometimes my friends also come to visit me. They are all ghosts like I am. My age is 104. But it doesn't bother me. A ghost is immortal. I had many adventures in my life. Most of my adventures are exciting. I would like to tell one of adventures of my life, since I became a ghost.

Once it so happened, that a man who didn't believe that my castle is haunted, challenged his friends that he will spend a night alone in one of the rooms of my castle. I was very happy to hear this, for I have planned to frighten him

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was fun, to make one's kitchen dirty. As I am a ghost, I would like to say one thing, that I am a real happy ghost.

Shadows

Mehrin Ahmed

Shadows — block, mysterious, deep, Darkens the world and haunts thy sleep.

The weary sun leaves the bloody sky.

To sanity we bid goodbye. For the hour of the Shadows, has come, has come;

Greedy they flock and swarm.

Fear rules supreme in this nightmare. Men forget to love, smile or care.

Shadows flicker in the depth of your eyes — Reflections of this world's agonies and cries.

"Help!" shouts one, "Kill!" shouts another;

The world fights, brother against brother.

Volcanoes erupt, cities go up in flames.

Men and nature are playing death games.

Havoc, amok, chaos everywhere;

The world is thrown into confusion and despair.

And above it all the shadow rules.

"Oh, you puny men are fools!"

A ray of sunshine purges the night.

Ruined cities look up to the light.

The wick of a candle is to a glimmer of hope or is it?

Guns and Lovers

Tale from 'Laughing Together'

Old Blockhead Repairs His House

In a little village, there lived a man and his wife. The man was called Old Blockhead, and his wife was called Ma Blockhead.

They lived happily in a little wooden house far away from other people. The roof of their house was full of holes and the walls were rotten. Ma Blockhead planned to repair the house.

Ma Blockhead replied, "This is our house, isn't it? Then we should repair it."

"Actually," said Old Blockhead, "I don't want to do it. And I don't know how to do

made all kinds of excuses. First he told Ma Blockhead that he had a lot of work to do. Then he told her that he was tired. And finally he told her he was sick.

Ma Blockhead replied, "This is our house, isn't it? Then we should repair it."

"Actually," said Old Blockhead, "I don't want to do it. And I don't know how to do

it."

Ma Blockhead shook her head. She thought, "How can I persuade Old Blockhead to repair the house? Look at the roof. It leaks. And the walls — they've got holes in them."

"A good idea," said Old Blockhead readily.

"My dear husband," said Ma Blockhead sweetly, "I think you should repair this house."

"Me? Did you say ... me?" asked Old Blockhead. He was shocked.

Old Blockhead did not want to repair the house, so he

imagined cycling in a crinoline!

Great wars often influence fashions. During the Second World War the style of women's clothes became military-jackets for instance, had square and padded shoulders. After the war, this fashion changed to the voluminous, more feminine, new look of Dior, the great French designer.

Another big change happened after the First World War. Women who had worked for the first time with men in the factories during the war, began to dress with greater freedom and started to wear short skirts.

Today, what we wear is largely a matter of personal choice, convenience and what we can afford.

Many of the fussy clothes of our ancestors, often requiring yards and yards of material, would be too expensive to produce today. They would also be unsuited to modern living.

HAIR CARE

Sabah Moyeen

OTS of shampoos say natural ingredients. What do they really do?

Here are some popular ingredients used in hair products, and what they do for your hair.

• Balsam: conditions scalp and has healing and soothing antiseptic qualities.

• Chamomile: increases shine and brings out natural highlights.

• Cucumber and sea kelp: nourish skin and supply vitamins A, B complex, C and E.

• Honey: produces vitamin C and minerals.

• Apricot and Avocado: prevent dryness (avocado also produces vitamin A).

• Jojoba: promotes growth and fights dandruff.

• Aloe vera: replenishes lost moisture, accelerates growth, is good for oily scalps and controls dandruff and other scalp irritations.

• Apart from shampoos, egg yolk (from 2 eggs) mixed with 2 table-spoons of vinegar and one table-spoon of oil provides a special treat for your hair.

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