

RISING STARS

When the Girls Come Marching In

by Naheed Kamal

It all began with the "Original Sin" when Eve was tempted and so condescended Adam into it too. (Proof: Women are the weaker of the Sexes). Then we also Pandora who got curious and had to peep into the box and let out chaos into the world (Proof: Women are curious). And then there was Delilah who brought about Samson's doom (Proof: Women are wicked) perhaps we are weak, curious and even wicked! This may not be much of a philosophy but, Good girls may go to heaven, Bad girls go everywhere! True that curiosity kills the cat but satisfaction brings it back! Hell, it has been said, is for the children... think about that. It is a sad but true fact that women and children have always been the world's scapegoats. Why are we the scapegoats? The reason behind it is simple, because males fear us. Take for example a bully. He bullies because he is actually a coward and so he picks on anyone weaker than him. If he was brave then he would have realized how silly his actions really are.

Ours is a nation dominated by religious fanatics and hypocrites. Our culture intertwines with our predominant religions. It is hard to break free from such a tradition. The stigma of being a woman in our society is terrifyingly lonely. Women are made to believe that they cannot make it on their own. Our minds are conditioned so as to always look down upon the girls. The birth of a son is celebrated with joy and triumph. It is proof of a father's manhood. The birth of a daughter is celebrated but with less favour. It is proof of a mother's weakness.

We are at the end of the 20th century and are walking on the edge of the 21st, yet the Universal mind has not been able to accept the idea of universal suffrage and equality. It is still very much a male dominated world. What is it that makes a woman such a threat to both males and females?

Despite the fact that so many women are playing vital roles in our society, a woman is not considered "safe" unless married. A single successful woman is considered a threat

not only by a man (for he fears she is out to get his job) but also by a woman (for she fears she is out to get her man!). When in fact the truth is that the single woman is happy the way she is and has no time for trivial jobs or pathetic men. The feeling is longly and very few women are able to carry on without completely giving into a man. Everybody needs a hand to hold on to an everybody

she be logical, sensible, a vegetable.

Perhaps I exaggerate but the point is made. In a society like ours where we have our feet in two different worlds at the same time, it is difficult to know right from wrong. We grow up with two different influences. One which propagates that a girl is to be seen and not heard (at childhood this applies to the boys as well

parents do not mean us any harm by choosing for us, but still so many girls are married off at an early age and have to spend the rest of their days too busy to use the talent they have been bestowed with, or end up devastated by divorce or separations. We can call it 'fate' or 'luck' but our dependence on such ideas are much too deep. Our fate is what we make it, it is not divinely devised.

The world seems to forget that the female mind has its own thoughts, wants, ideas and ambitions. A girl is born with a mind of her own (just like a boy!) yet most girls end up giving in to the demands of others, especially the males in their lives. Be it a father, brother, husband or boyfriend the girl must do as 'he' chooses. Those who do break free from the vicious cycle are instantly the cause of a scandal. The ideas which abound all around us make us think the way we do. From birth onwards we are made to believe that life means marriage. This idea is changing now but even then most end up married by the age of 20. Over the years the female mind has been moulded into what it is today and it will take a while to break out of this mould. "You must marry" ... well of course we will marry but not yet.

Every man or woman dreams of the ultimate union. It is however not necessary for a girl to spend the first part of her life being trained for marriage: marriage to a man chosen for her by others. Mothers, aunts, uncles, grandparents and every one else will scream 'bloody murder' if the darling daughter wants anything but a happily married life. No one stops to think that 'Hey, she is capable of making a success out of herself on her own'.

Our parents face a difficult situation and we are caught between two worlds. On one hand we have the "Ancient regime," so to speak, those who are forever regressing, 'keep the girls locked up'. And on the other hand we have the "Call of the wild", that is the world out there telling us we can do better. Our choices are limited and at one point or other we are bound to fall off the wagon, and then we have



On the edge of the 21st century

needs someone to rely on but often we let the hand holding ours lead us into a game of "follow-the-leader," with him the leader and you the disciple.

The world at large expects the girl to be "good", to obey her parents, do as she is told and eventually to marry and have children and live happily ever after. It is expected that

but when they "grow up" this is no longer applicable, then there is the world at large, the media, friends, magazines, songs, idols, etc. telling us that we should have our own way. For such a person it is not possible to accept any Tom, Dick or Harry placed before her and take him for better or for worse, till death do us part, without having doubts. Our

to carry on by plucking up the pieces on our own, we can go our own way. Perhaps I have generalised far too much. I have not seen the pleasures of an early marriage and cannot see their point of view.

But the point I am trying to make is that there are those who would like to be single and successful before joining the band-wagon. The situation has changed and there are men who prefer their wives to be self sufficient and independent. They encourage their wives to make use of their potentials. It is only the weak men who are just too blind or too insecure to face the facts. Now there are girls who realize the importance of being successful. Yet there are many who are unable to see themselves using the knowledge they have. They consider marriage as their only way out of the rut.

There is a woman who is a talented artist: a painter and a singer. She has been married for 6 years and has two daughters but in the years she has been married she has not touched paint on a canvas nor has she practised a song. Then there are those who get lucky in an unlucky way. A woman I know is 25, the mother of a son and was married for 7 years. Now she is divorced. She is lucky to have been able to carry on with the help of family and friends. She is able to live with the stigma of being a divorcee in a society like ours because she is brave and crazy. The only reason girls in our society are unable to break away from the vicious tradition is for fear of having none to turn to. Few girls have a family or friend to turn to during trying times and so instead of a divorce or separation she opts for the easy way out... suicide.

Young women today want to combine family and career. We owe this to our predecessors, those who had the courage to break free and pave the path for us. We still have a long way to go up a very rocky path but we can do it. We understand our parents' fears. They think if they let the kids run free then we will go wild!

We have come a long long way from the days of 'suttee'. These are brighter days...of equality and universal suffrage. Differences will always arise: that's how the world is. As long as we know where we stand things can only get better, for now there is no turning back.

The Pudding

by RiMaz

While I was trying to adjust my eyes to the bright light, I was pulled out through the window by some kind of force. I tried to hold on to the window, but the window was also curious to find out what was happening, so it sent me through, even though I did not volunteer.

We know the proverb "Curiosity killed the cat." If we take the window to be the cat and me to be its victim then the proverb would be changed to: "The cat's curiosity killed the mouse". Luckily, however, it did not come to that.

As it happens in movies, at

eyes and three mouths and innumerable limbs each. They wore black and white suits. "Gluttons like me" was my first impression when I saw their excess of mouths.

I tried to think of a way to escape, but that appeared impossible — I forgot to mention that they were three metres wide. I had visions of being used as a human guinea pig and I was scared stiff. One thought comforted me — their size indicated that they ate well and I would not starve. So there I was, having these conflicting thoughts, with half a dozen extraterrestrial beings coming towards me. ... smiling?

I was so shocked by the six



started planning the attack.

After the half-kilometre trek to the other side of the house, I would have to pass through my sister's room. She's a light sleeper, so I would have to wear socks. In the dining-room, the light switches are old-fashioned and make a lot of noise, so I would also have to take a torch. I began making the preparations.

Suddenly, the window flew open. Actually, only birds and airplanes can fly by themselves, but the window did open in some way or other. Then, a brilliant light flooded the room and nearly blinded

this point some heavy metal music began to play in the background. Suddenly (I think I used this word before), the bright light (which you had all forgotten about) disappeared and its place was taken by a bluish-green light. It was an eerie sensation, since the air around me also seemed bluish-green. None of this scared me because I was thinking of something else — the pudding. My thoughts returned to my surroundings when thousands, or maybe hundreds, well actually five or six pink creatures began to surround me. They were two metres high, had two

faces with eighteen grins on them, that I was unable to move or speak even when the ETs shook hands with me and gave me their cards. They also apologised for taking my Mom's pudding, but they said that they had enjoyed it very much and were taking it so that they could analyse it and make it themselves. They then talked a while about how the weather here was much better than on Mercury, and they would probably return here on vacation.

They also said that it was a pity that I had laryngitis. Then they left.

Unlucky Old Clodpole

Old Clodpole was invited to two feasts, one upstream and one downstream. A dish of buffalo meat was going to be served at the feast upstream. At the feast downstream, beef was to be served. Old Clodpole wanted to go to both feasts.

"I'm going to a feast," said Old Clodpole to his wife before he left.

"Aren't you going to eat something before you go?" asked his wife.

"No, you go right ahead and eat that cold rice," he replied, walking jauntily towards the jetty.

"I'm going to the feast upstream first," he said to himself.

The food is nicer there. Then I'll go to the feast downstream, where the food is not so delicious," said he as he rubbed his fat stomach. He would almost taste the delicious food.

When he arrived at the jetty, the tide was out. He found it difficult to row in such shallow water, especially as he was going upstream. He had to row really hard. Finally, he arrived at the feast, out of breath.

Unfortunately, he arrived just as the guests were leaving. The feast was already over. The host hurriedly came towards

Old Clodpole. "Please forgive me, Old Clodpole," said the host with regret. "A lot of people came, more than we expected. All the food is finished." The host apologised several times.

"That's all right," said Old Clodpole sadly. "Some other time, I think I'll go back home." Old Clodpole then rowed downstream. "Just my luck," he said to himself. "I'll try the feast downstream. Oh well, beef curry is just as delicious as buffalo meat curry." He then rowed with all his strength.

At that time, the tide was in. Rowing downstream when the tide was in was as bad as rowing upstream when the tide was out, especially when his stomach was rumbling. So he rowed as though he had no strength at all.

He finally reached the house where the feast was being held. He quickly climbed onto the jetty and almost ran towards the house. "This time I must be lucky. The guests have not gone home yet," he said to himself cheerfully.

As soon as he reached the steps he heard the guests saying goodbye to their host. A few minutes later, they came down in dozens. Old Clodpole



was very disappointed. The host who came out with the guests saw Old Clodpole standing by the steps looking forlorn. He went towards him.

"I'm sorry, Old Clodpole," said the host, with deep regret. "The feast is over. There were too many people. All the food is finished."

"You mean, there is not even a bit left?" asked Old Clodpole sadly. He was so unbearably hungry that he asked without shame.

The pots are licked clean, Old Clodpole," replied the

host, shaking his head. "Never mind," said Old Clodpole in a weak voice. "Just my bad luck."

Old Clodpole then went home. He reached his house, exhausted. He felt so weak, he almost fell down.

"Any cold rice left?" Old Clodpole asked his wife, almost fainting with fatigue and hunger.

"I thought you ate all that lovely food?" taunted his wife.

"Yes, the food sounded good. But what I ate was air. Anyway, nobody's cooking is as good as yours, my dear wife."

from "Laughing Together", a UNESCO publication

show. Shamu was the name of a dolphin bigger than the first two dolphins we saw. The Shamu at the beginning of the show was splashing water on us.

Then came the best thing which we all looked forward to: The man flying in the air. First the man went into the water and Shamu with his mouth flicked the man out of the water.

RIDDLES

1. What is the difference between a hungry Archie and a hungry Jughead?

2. Why is February Mr. Lodge's favourite month?

3. What is the shortest month?

4. What is the month he sees Archie the least because it is the shortest month?

5. A hungry Archie longs to eat and a hungry Jughead longs to...

The Search for Perfection

by Dina Sobhan

The twinkling lights scattered over the delicate pale blue of the horizon signalled the coming of the new day. As the moon peeped out, its amber eye between the green velvet of the mountain peaks, I understood that time had come for me to arise and begin my journey. Although I had only a vague notion of who I was and what I was searching so desperately for, I knew I had to go.

My heart resembled the starry night, icy and cold, and enveloped in darkness with mere splatters of hope to guide me. With only a few belongings to call my own, I set off into the velvet miasma of my thoughts, down the long winding road of loneliness and suffering. On the periphery of the narrow path lay looming forests of subtleties and implications. I did not stop for fear of discovering the unknown; I did not want to search for an answer in that which emphasized the abyss within myself, rather, the despair of the evening wanted to find an escape in the world of farces and delight, song and celebration. Such a world did exist somewhere; I knew that such a place did exist. It was only a matter of time until I would find and conquer the Heavens.

I walked for days, months, years, only to find that the restless dove was still fluttering its wings against the steel grids surrounding and fortifying my heart. As each moment slipped into the new kaleidoscope of dreams and illusions, I found the dove weakening. As a tear of crimson rolled from my eye black as coal and devoid of expression — the clouds threatened to expel their rage and end this insanity.

I still did not stop, the dove had not died, could not die until it had found an escape. I could not refuse myself the truth, no matter how better and agonizing it would be. I continued on the path of huminescent eternity, absorbing the warmth, the pain, the whippers of the stones and the

spread its rays over my delicate soul, I felt the cage shatter into a million little fragments and fly to the corners of the endless oceans. To remind myself of what I once was, I collected a few of those splinters and placed them in my palm. The key had transformed itself into the white

dove, which flew into the fading twilight.

In time, my hand held the most exquisite symbol of perfection: a single scarlet slice of perfection. I raised my head to the skies and smiled for the first time in an eternity. I had found love.

QUIZ CLUB

- Here are this week's Quiz Club questions:
1. Who invented Telegraph Signs?
 2. What orchestra has given more concerts than any other in the world?
 3. What is the National Anthem of the US?
 4. What is an oboc?
 5. Who was Jesse James?
 6. Which planet was the only one discovered in the 20th century?
 7. Which is the largest desert in the world?
 8. Who was Louis Braille?
 9. What does biodegradable mean?
 10. What is a Dodo?

- Answers to January 24th's Quiz Club
1. Henry James
 2. 1863
 3. Nargis and Raj Kapoor
 4. Bibhuti Bhushan Banerji
 5. 5 billion years old
 6. Hawaii
 7. Cruzeiro
 8. The Beatles — sold over a hundred million singles and a hundred million albums.
 9. David Jones
 10. Bram Stoker (1847-1912)

A Day in Sea World

by Asheq Khan (Grade 8)

It was one pm and the first show, "The show of the dolphins", would start at 1:30. So we went for a little walk through the shops. We saw many things in those shops, shirts, cups, hand-fans, all with the picture of dolphins.

After that we went to see the show. Two dolphins and two men came. One of them had a whistle to command the dolphins. Then the show started. First, the dolphins started dancing. A man went into the water and the dolphin pushed the man through the water like a speed-boat with its mouth. And after every event, as reward the man gave the dolphins fish to eat. Finally, the last event: it was a nine feet jump by the dolphins over the rope. The first dolphin jumped over it

successfully. But the second dolphin was afraid to jump. Then they gave her a fish and she jumped.

The next show was at 2:00 p.m. So we had to hurry. It was a skating show. In the show they showed a drama through the skating. The next show was the water-skiing show. First they showed a speed-boat race. There was a slope in the middle of the river made of concrete. So we can guess from it the excitement of the next event. It was a speed-boat with a skier. The speed-boat went by the slope and the skier jumped over the slope. The following event concerned a speed-boat with six skiers trying to make a pyramid. First time they failed, but the second time they were successful. The next show was the Shamu

show. Shamu was the name of a dolphin bigger than the first two dolphins we saw. The Shamu at the beginning of the show was splashing water on us.

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