

RISING STARS

Is This What I Ordered?

by Judith G de Costa

WHEN you walk into a restaurant in any five star hotel, irrespective of whether it be here in Dhaka or in London, there are two factors you'd be a fool to forget. One is that the meal may not just live up to your high expectations. The second is even more crucial: don't forget a fistful of currency or that piece of plastic we are so often urged never to leave home without, the credit card. The hidden message between the alluring aroma and the tasteful decor is we treat you like kings so long as you pay like them.

In that case one would fancy that life is made rather simple. You are rich, the hotel has high standards to attain, so Fate has thrown you two together, right? Wrong. Even if you fancy yourself well-off, these nasty inventions — five star hotel restaurants — have a wicked way of making you feel high and dry before you even realize it once they serve their (choke!) culinary masterpieces.

The hotel I'm presently referring to is the one often described in International Travel Magazines as 'Dhaka's ONLY oasis of luxury'. Hence, you're held there at a king's ransom. Recently, a friend and myself had a wild idea. We were practically loaded with cash burning holes in our pockets and decided: what better way to spend it than to have ice-cream at Hotel...? My friend was convinced that the ice-cream there tasted like Manna from heaven and the service too would be great (his words). I played along coolly because here was this guy eager to impress me and ready to blow every penny he had — and more — and took along a little extra cash just in case we would need it. Once seated in the restaurant, we asked for menus in a fashion which hinted we were there to have a four course meal, even though it was tea-time. Hence you can figure out the waiter's surprise when we ordered two vanilla sundaes.

Whatever picture you form of the face of that bewildered waiter, I can assure you that nothing in the world could give you any idea of what we felt like when our order arrived. Two level scoops of very ordinary vanilla ice-cream lay melting at the bottom of the shallow dish, over which a spoonful of chocolate sauce and a handful of peanuts had been added, more, in my opinion for the self satisfaction of

and trying to pop back into my mouth. What entitled us to two mealy sundaes would have got us a decent meal for two in any other extremely respectable restaurant. If it was a Chinese restaurant, we both could have had more than we could take; if it was a deli...

While mentally calculating the opportunity of his wasted funds, I began to study the growing horror on my companion's face. He too, serving me for I was sure he was out to ruin the respectability of the nice people who run that place. When I ordered a banana split, I got a banana so raw that it seemed far too young to split in any literal sense and a dollop of ice-cream which would fit exactly into the shell of that scrawny piece of fruit, if it were scooped out.

Thus the list of culinary tragedies one is likely to come



whoever prepared it — than for the benefit of either of the silly geese who were about to eat it. As one has always been taught never to disrespect food, I began to eat the waiter's proud offering silently and my companion followed suit. The tense silence which prevailed was broken only when I thought exactly how much was this bowl of goo coating us and consulted my companion, who repeatedly assured me he was ready for anything. I would not take chances. However, once I actually saw the listed price, the ice-cream was climbing the long walk back up my throat

looked like he was going to regurgitate. I realized just from his expression just how handy the extra cash I took along was going to be and when I fished it out, his face lit up so bright that he looked as if he'd just made a mental note that I was going to be his best friend for life from then on.

I seem to have all the rotten luck possible with ice-cream orders, for not very long before the horrible incident at the Five Star Hotel, I found myself in the respectable little establishment which translated into Bengali says "But what is this?" This in fact, was the exact question I asked a waiter

across at a commercial eating place is endless. Those born at home are a private matter and I prefer to keep it that way. So you'll come across 'ColeSlaw' minus the cabbage which is as good as a banana-split with the banana left at home; scampit in which the only thing worth acknowledgement are the big-not large-pieces of shrimp, and so on.

Now, allow me to relate a near-fatal encounter with a certain recipe for fried rice which I remember trying in some tacky 'Chinese' restaurant quite a while back. What I more clearly remember is stalking out the moment I

tasted the food and stumbling to the door through the very dark room. I do know what place I'm talking about, but I will refrain from using names. God alone knows what other names it may be known as now, if it still serves that very disgusting Fried Rice which tastes like a cross between 'khichuri' and a curry-rice salad.

Then there have been the odd plates of fried chicken which looked like crows and tasted even worse. More recently the presumably delectable duck something-or-the other at newly opened restaurant which would taste better if one could cut through it and chew with ease, I would say.

I haven't yet gone to a restaurant where I've had to dump my napkin and make a grand exit (clumsy ones such as that mentioned above are exceptions) and I do not ever intend to do so. But at the rate at which our top restaurants are regressing, that day, I believe, is not far away. At the risk of sounding like an over-zealous food-critic seeking vengeance on the chefs at the afore mentioned eating-places, and being denied entrance to any restaurant listed, I am only trying to help them in realizing how poor a public opinion they generate. For instance the poor guy who took me for ice-cream to Hotel Five Star, which I still refuse to name, was so flabbergasted that he immediately ripped up the stamped bill I was so intent on keeping as a memento. He even swore never to step in there again! But that's another story.

If I do survive — and I'm not dead by then — perhaps my suffering was worth it. I've missed quite a few days of school by now — at least by my judgement — and who is going to blame me? Of course, if I don't reach home in time, then I won't have to hand in my thesis. But I should thank God I was intelligent enough to put all of my irreplaceable research and associated written matter on a cartridge which is safe and sound in my pocket — where's my cartridge? Oh no, it's not in my pocket!

Oh no, I feel like crying. Life is not fair. Boo hoo.

Space, Bubbles and Me

by ASK

Day 2. As I was saying, all in all, this bubble can hold eight people and sustain them for seven days in Space. After that, the people are placed in extended suspended animation. That's technical jargon for life freezing. What this beast does is that it sticks a needle and some chemicals into my body and orders my cells to slow down or else. If my cells obeyed, I'm frozen to death and all the stuff that was used in keeping me alive is shut down and much less energy is consumed and the bubble systems work at keeping me alive while frozen. If my cells haven't obeyed, well... I die. Not exactly what I call a very pleasant thought.

In any case, this thing uses it as a last resort, because it isn't fail proof, and the survival rate is only one in four. I have this rescue bubble all for myself, so I can live in Space for about fifty days.

Horrible, isn't it? I'm depressed. I am so lonely. I've never been so self-centred before in my life. There's nothing I can do. I can listen to the radio, but what good is that going to do? Music, news. Big deal. Am I going to sit here and do nothing?

You bet. There is nothing I can do, so there's no point in doing it, is there?

I miss my parents. My friends. Especially what's-her-name. I can't say that I feel the same way about my little brother, though.

If I do survive — and I'm not dead by then — perhaps my suffering was worth it. I've missed quite a few days of school by now — at least by my judgement — and who is going to blame me? Of course, if I don't reach home in time, then I won't have to hand in my thesis. But I should thank God I was intelligent enough to put all of my irreplaceable research and associated written matter on a cartridge which is safe and sound in my pocket — where's my cartridge? Oh no, it's not in my pocket!

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Day 3. Where are those idiotic rescuers of mine? It shouldn't take this long for anybody to track a rescue beacon. I know that it is working because... well, because it has to. If I die, I am going to sue the company which manufactured this rescue bubble for every cent they've got. I mean it. Let this recorder bear witness to my threat.

Wait a second. If I'm dead, how am I going to sue them? I must talk to my lawyer in this regard...

I hope you understand, Mr Rescue Bubble, that if I die, your company is going to be in for a lot of hell. Once I contact my lawyer, anyway.

Day 4. I did not eat in the last three days since I thought that the food would be poisonous. But my stomach's been waging a battle with my brain. It told my brain, 'I'm in need of food. If I don't, you are going to die.'

My brain, the smart aleck it is, said, 'Forget it. We are not going to risk any poisoning, whatsoever.'

My stomach may not have a brain of its own, but isn't stupid. It replied, 'Then I'm going to make a lot of trouble for you.' And I moaned and groaned for the next three hours, crying out in hunger.

My brain surrendered. But it whispered, 'Get the computer to make a pizza. Extra-large, ultra-deep crust, with the works. Loads of toppings. Beef, cheese, anchovies, kelp, tomatoes, peppers. You know, the Works.'

It turned out that the computer can make any food you wanted, as long as there was enough reserves. Since I had forfeited three days worth of food, it made my pizza without any qualms. And I had...

The Works. A sight, my pizza wouldn't have won any beauty contests. Then again, any pizza, wherever and whenever it was made, that was made according to my excessively out-

geous specifications is not a likely candidate, either. On the other hand, the pizza tasted wonderful. At first, at least. I can tell you one thing: it was better than any starship-food I've come across. It made me almost think that the accident was a blessing in disguise. Almost — but I'm not as crazy as I seem.

Anyway, around half an hour later, my stomach was saying 'Please, I've had enough!' But my brain told me, 'Feed it everything you've got. We have to show your stomach who's the boss here. You don't want to be a slave to your stomach, do you?' There were two slices of pizza left at that time. I looked at them sickly. 'Go on,' my brain coaxed. 'You can do it! You aren't a Masters at Nanomechanics for nothing, you know. Remember the first days in University...'

I moaned, but this time not in hunger. I took a slice and chewed on it bit by bit, swallowed and leaned my head against the plastic wall with a thud. I couldn't finish it.

The stomach took the opportunity to say, 'Didn't I tell you to stop eating? But did you stop eating? Noooo. You had to be a big shot and eat that extra-large ultra-deep crust pizza with everything on it. I am soooooo full now. I wouldn't be surprised if you threw up now.'

I ran to the sink and threw up.

The wise guy stomach — who, I have now decided, is no better than my brain — said, 'I'm not surprised.'

Day 5. I have been known for my pessimistic, emotional — usually depressing — outlook at things. And without question, this is one time when it has been justified.

I will not be rescued. I will not be rescued. I will not be rescued. I will not be rescued. I will not be rescued. I will not be rescued. I will not be rescued. I will not be rescued. I will not be rescued. I will not be rescued. This is very pessimistic of me, isn't it?

(to be continued)

The Night of the Jaguar

Rupak Salahuddin Class VII, London

OUR story begins in a isolated village in West-Bengal (India). An English gentleman by the name of Dr Sam Donaldson was passing through the village when he saw some men carrying a wounded man on a stretcher made of bamboo shoots. He ran to the man and saw that the man was dying. There was no time to waste. He explained to the chief of the village that he was a doctor and that the man was dying and he could save him. After some time the chief allowed him to do this operation.

After some time the operation had finished. But the village people would not let him go until the man was completely better. This however took several days, during which the good doctor managed to learn a little Bengali.

When the man was healed the man swore that he would not rest until he had killed the creature a jaguar, that had done that to him. After some time the doctor persuaded some of the people to go with him to kill the jaguar and to make the jungle a better place for everyone. With the doctor was Antu (the man who was nearly killed by the jaguar), Bhimantu (the chief's son) and Arnab (one of the people who helped the doctor save Antu). The hunt was on!

At first light the four men started their long and perilous journey. With the chief's blessing and short farewells, they set off. The doctor knew very well that each of them were afraid of the fact that they may not be able to return to see the people and the life that they loved so well.

The doctor had gone to a British army camp and brought some guns and ammunition. Although Antu and Bhimantu refused to use the weapons and said that they would rather use their own traditional weapons, the doctor and Arnab used the rifles.

They decided that they would go along the main path for the beginning of the journey, and if they did not see any sign of the jaguar then they would leave the main path and go into the forest.

The hunters had only the idea that they were after one jaguar but unknown to them they were after a boy and his jaguar. Kim had seen the hunters and he knew what they were after. But unfortunately for them Kim knew the forest. He had been born in the forest, and he had lived there all his life. Kim quickly set about making a couple of traps for his hunting friends.

That night the hunters, after no luck at finding the jaguar, decided on a spot to sleep for the night, a safe place (or so they thought). At 12 O'clock at night a sharp scream filled the forest. The doctor quickly sat up, when suddenly he heard Antu screaming. He rushed to the direction of the sound and saw Antu. He was in a frantic state. He was saying things that nobody could understand. Then the doctor managed to pick up some words. He had seen the jaguar!

The doctor ran toward the direction. And then suddenly he came face-to-face with the jaguar.

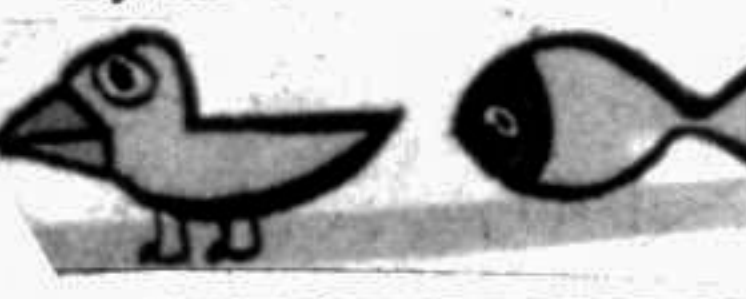
He was stunned. He stood there without saying a word. It seemed like an eternity.

After some time Arnab came from behind the jaguar and was about to kill it. He

slowly took aim so as not to make any noise. He aimed very carefully, and just as he was about to shoot, a knife came from nowhere and hit him in his left leg. Right now the doctor didn't care if the jaguar killed him or not. He took his gun and was about to fire when the same fate that met Arnab met him. A knife came from nowhere and hit him in his left leg.

The jaguar saw his chance and leapt into the bushes. Just then Bhimantu came pulling a young boy by the ear. He explained that the young boy had injured them.

After a lot of interrogation it was decided that the young boy be sent to the village to live with one of the families and that people be kept away from that area of the forest. Of course the boy did not agree, but we children never have our say, do we?



NATURE

by Tadiib Muqtada

Green trees and yellow flowers swaying back and forth, Swaying with the wind coming from the south,

The wind is blowing in my hair, And the flowers are blooming everywhere,

It is a beautiful day, Like a scenic picture in a way,

Every flower and every tree, Is looking so fresh to me,

That is because nature is here with me, And I'm happy as can be.

QUIZ CLUB

Here are this week's quiz questions. Please send in your answers by next week. Remember, you may win a very attractive prize if you get all the answers correct!

- Q1. In which year did Mother Teresa win the Nobel Peace Prize?
- Q2. What is the largest delta in the world?
- Q3. In the World Cup Cricket this year who won the 'man of the series' award?
- Q4. The award for man of the series was a car. What model was it?
- Q5. Who discovered Mount Everest?
- Q6. Who discovered oxygen?
- Q7. How many players are there on each side for volleyball?
- Q8. With what sport is the term 'caddie' associated with?
- Q9. Who wrote the famous Bengali novel 'Gora'?
- Q10. Who wrote 'Paradise Lost'?

Answers to September 19th's Quiz Club:

- 1. Adrenaline
- 2. Hydrophobia
- 3. David Copperfield; Oliver Twist
- 4. 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' by Coleridge.
- 5. Floccinocinithilipillifigatorm — meaning stupid in simple English.
- 6. Naomi Campbell, the super model
- 7. Piano, Harpsichord, Spinnet, Church Organ
- 8. 35 years.
- 9. Deep Penetration Strike Aircraft
- 10. Cutlery

Jokes

Dad: You're going to have a new brother or sister soon. Which would you prefer?
Bob: I'd prefer a puppy.

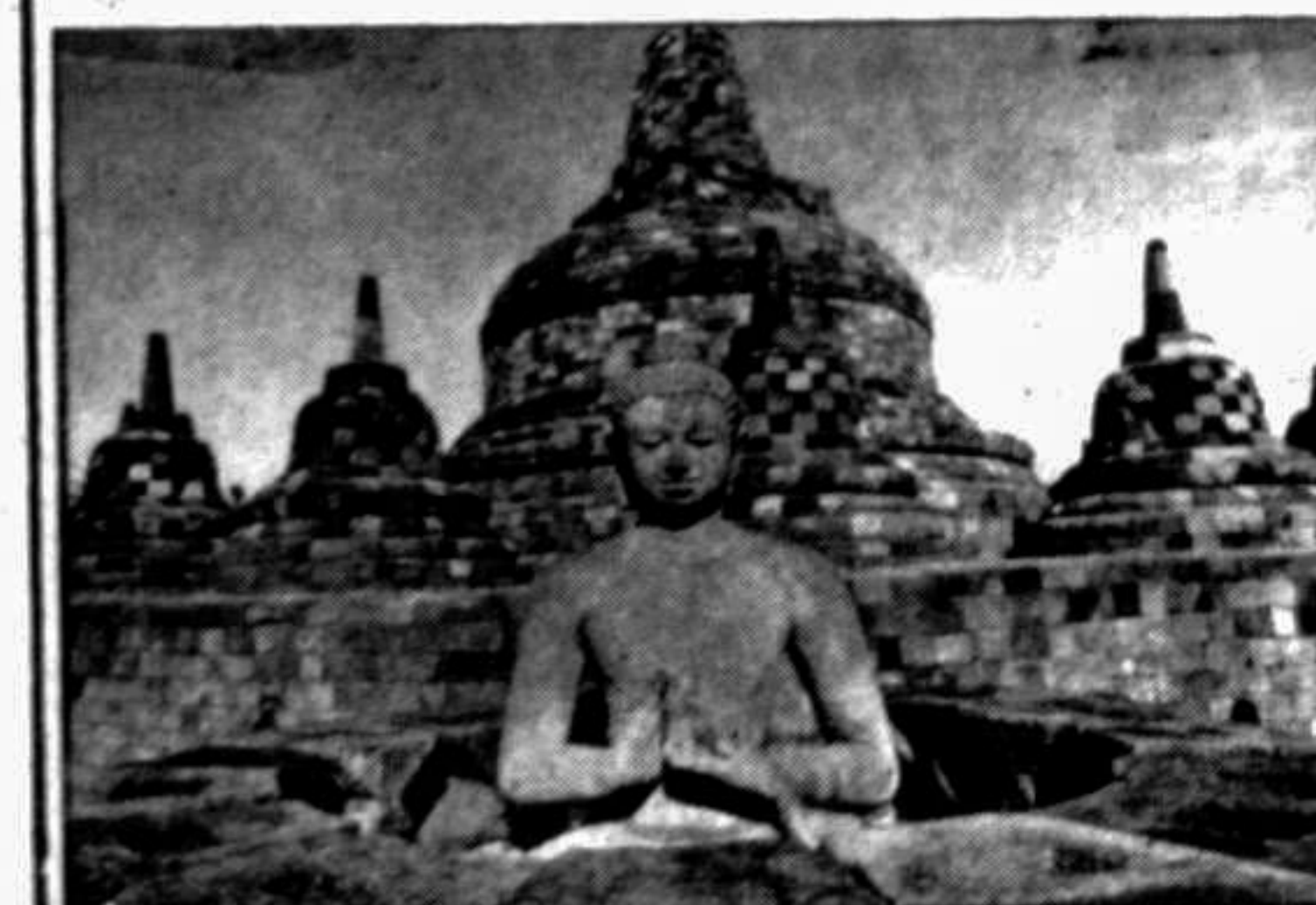
Big Bill isn't really bald, you know, he just has a very tall face.

A man was deaf, but couldn't afford to buy a hearing aid, so he hung a piece of

string over his ear.
"Do you hear better with that string over your ear?" a friend asked.
"No," said the man, "but people shout at me now."

Picture Quiz

Here is a new picture quiz for you to solve. Can you guess what it is? By the way, the answer to the last picture quiz was Victoria Memorial in Calcutta.



Fill out this form and send it to us, and you will be a member of the Rising Star Club. Send in your writings, illustrations, and cartoons. It is an ideal opportunity to express yourself through the print media.

Name: _____

Father's Name: _____

School: _____

Full Address: _____

Telephone No. _____

Class: _____