

# RISING STARS

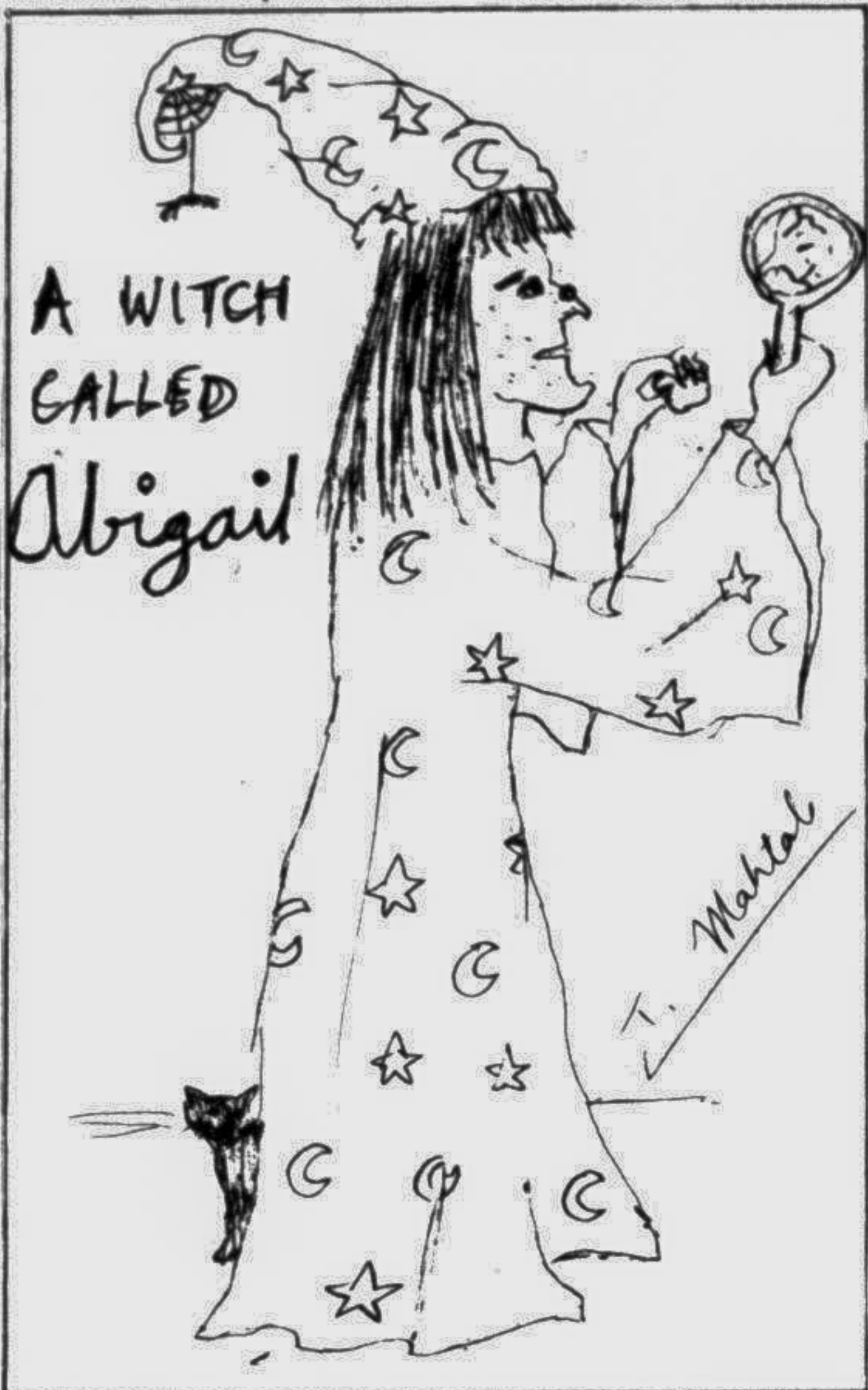
## A Witch Called Abigail — I

by Tazeen Mahtab

**T**HIS story opens in a part of Ireland upon a steep hillside bathed in early morning sunshine. At the bottom of the hill nestles the village of Rudeliff-ton. About halfway up the hill, almost hidden by thick vegetation and climbing vines, is a ruined old castle.

typical witch. She had a dry face with a nose and chin which were so pointed that they almost met, a wart perched on

which was dressed in a long black gown and hat decorated with moons and stars. Now she flashed about in a



the end of her nose and black hair hung down to her shoulders. And to finish it off, the

At first glance it appears uninhabited, it was in a great state of neglect. Nettles and brambles grew up everywhere while old gnarled trees hung with thick creepers shut out most of the sunlight. An air of great gloom and silence hung over everything like a thick cloak. The castle itself was in a greater state of disorder. The moat was filled with slimy green water from which came a foul smell. The rotting drawbridge looked as if it could not support a mouse, let alone a human being. The walls of the castle, where they could be seen, were black with age and covered with moss and lichen. The rest was blanketed thickly by ivy. At the top of the castle several turrets jutted out above the battlements.

But from the window of one of these turrets issued forth the sound of snoring which rose and fell rhythmically. Inside the tower-room, on an old bed, was what appeared to be a dusty black heap of clothes. The dusty heap of clothes suddenly sat up with a start, and became alive, gowned with protest at its beauty nap being interrupted.

"Shut up, you old flea-boy!" a voice said irritably from the heap and a face emerged. Witch Abigail Toadsoup jumped off the bed and gave herself a shake. I guess you all know what witches look like and that there's no need for me to remind you. But in case you've forgotten, I'll tell you. Abigail Toadsoup was a

ugly) herself. First of all, Abigail spent half-an-hour tying knots in her hair. Then she puffed on some Shunk-Tail perfume, whitened her face with some Mummy-powder, and said to her cat Midnight (the black stole) who had been watching her, "Well, Midnight, time for breakfast!"

"Murr-row!" answered Midnight, licking his chops. The pair clattered down a flight of rickety stairs to the grand(?) dining-hall. A long table in the middle of the dark room was set with two places at each end. Abigail and Midnight each took a seat.

Abigail looked at the candles in their old-fashioned candle-holders which stood on the table, and snapped her fingers. Nothing happened, she snapped her fingers again and this time a thin wisp of smoke came from the candles. Abigail let out a cry of exasperation and yelled out a string of curses. Immediately the candles turned a pale shade of green and drooped. The witch uttered an exclamation of disgust. She muttered a spell and the old chandeliers above her head began to shine.

Abigail then said to Midnight, who had been waiting patiently, "What would you like for breakfast?" "Mrraw!" answered Midnight, a plate of fired mice appeared before him. The witch settled for some toad-stools on toast. They began happily tucking in. That was when they heard it.

Someone or something was shuffling across the drawbridge. The drawbridge was creaking dangerously with every step. Then the bell for the main entrance rang out. Abigail and Midnight were frozen to their chairs. Who in the world would come to this old deserted castle?

**B**ACK in Bombay, everything was in chaos. Sudhir and Sanjay were wise to the situation in Jupiter within an hour of Majid's stating the group's demands. Sudhir had begged Suresh to stall for time. There were hurried meetings with the heads of RAW-India's version of the CIA. A space operation could be mounted but it would take too much time. Majid would never wait that long. He had Sudhir at his mercy, what with the construction site rigged with charges and his brother held hostage. But, as Sanjay kept on telling him, the "terrorists", as they had been branded by the Indotech staff, could not be allowed to go through with this. It would do irreparable harm to Indotech. To make matters worse, news of the Bangladeshi plight had leaked out and they were being called heroes back home. The Bangladeshi government was pressurizing Sudhir to let the men return safely. Not that he gave a damn about the Bangladesh government, but the publicity would tear Indotech apart. The incident might lower Indotech in everyone else's eyes, might infuriate the Indian public against him, but it could be repaired. There was too much time and money invested in the Jupiter project to let a band of Bangladeshi terrorists blow it up. And above all, he could never jeopardize his brother Suresh's life.

It was amazing that throughout all this, Majid's band of men were portrayed by Indotech and the Indian press as terrorists. Not one soul in India had pondered as to why they had resorted to this attack in the first place.

Suresh Bose couldn't believe what he had just heard on the radio transmitter to Earth. His brother was asking him to surrender to those filthy Bangladeshis. It was inexplicable—they would emerge winners now. But Sudhir knew best and

## Revolt IV

By Sagheer Bin Faiz

Suresh had never disobeyed his elder brother. He had said the terrorists would probably leave Suresh unharmed, he'd safe once he go inside India. What Sudhir didn't realize was that the terrorists were planning to land in Bangladesh, not India, in the country's only spaceship base on the outskirts of Dhaka in Uttara. And once in

you. Trust me!" And so it was that Suresh had handed himself over to Majid a man, and the junkie had set off towards Earth.

Against Sanjay Oberoi's vehement protestations, Sudhir had used all his clout to prevent



Bangladesh, they would open their mouths to the press and the government about what had happened in Jupiter. The Bangladesh government would press a truckload of charges on him then. He explained all this to Sudhir, who reassured him. "Don't worry. We'll extradite you. Their government has no power. I won't let anyone harm

any attempt by the Indian government to shoot down the junkie. It was made clear that if Suresh Bose was harmed, the repercussions would be severe. And Sudhir had adequate influence to make his threats effective. Similar messages were sent to Bangladesh.

Bangladesh's meager Space Force

Foree had sent an army shuttle to the atmosphere to ensure the safe return of the junkie. India had sent in a similar escort but the Bangladeshi government had told its Indian counterpart that it would tolerate no interference in getting the junkie back to the Uttara base. Normally, the government would perhaps not have mustered enough nerve to pass on such a threat, but this time, the pressure from JS and the political parties was tremendous. Majid would have been amazed and perhaps elated to know that the breakthrough by his men had turned into a political issue. Already, congressional inquiry committees had been formed to answer an enraged public as to how and why the Bangladesh government had allowed those 8000 men to be shipped off in a junkie, to live in Jupiter for 2 years in such abhorrent conditions. Amazingly, no one had uttered a word when the 800 men had been sent. It had taken the attack by Majid's band to draw attention to their plight. Politicians were running for cover, everyone was washing their hands of the Indotech deal.

Ahsan El Shams, political reporter for Bangladesh's top-selling daily, observed these events with a complacent smirk. He had predicted all this from the start but no one had listened then. He was now heading the press entourage aboard the Bangladesh Space Force escort.

Majid had allowed him and a photographer to enter the junkie as soon as it entered Earth unharmed and the 8000 Bangladeshis aboard breathed a sigh of relief.

"You'll get a hero's welcome!" Ahsan told Majid. "Though the international press doesn't know whether to brand you as a terrorist or as a crusader for human rights."

Majid smiled weakly at him and said, "Tell them I'm just a poor air-rickshaw puller who got homesick!"

## The Jewel of Bengal

by Ahmad Mursel Anam

**O**NE day our Bangla teacher said that the Bengalees are the best nation of the sub-continent as they have achieved the two world famous awards, the Nobel Prize and the Oscar. It is well known that the Nobel Prize was given to Rabindranath Tagore and the Oscar was awarded to Satyajit Ray.

There is hardly any educated person in Bangladesh who hasn't heard of Satyajit Ray. He was a film director and a writer in one and the same person.

He was born in Calcutta on May 2, 1921 and was died on April 23, 1992. He was respectively the only son and the grandson of two famous Bengali writers, Sukumar Ray and Upendrakishor Ray Chowdhury.

In the field of Bangla film Satyajit Ray is a famous name. He has directed 28 movies and 5 feature films. All of his movies have educational value. He wanted to tell us things about life and society. As for example, we see how the fall of a dictator takes place in "Hirok Rajar Deshe". In "Ganashatru", he showed us that he who is righteous, always gets help. He indirectly urged us not to leave the way to establish righteousness as the hero of the movie.

He has received 64 awards including the prestigious Oscar. There are only a few people who haven't heard of Feluda or Professor Shanku, the two protagonists Ray's novel and stories. Yes, Satyajit is not only known in the world of movie but

also a celebrated name among the writers. I think he is more famous as a writer than a film director. His stories, as well as his movies, has inner meanings. In the story "Ashamanjo Babur Kukoor", he has insinuated those people who think that money can buy everything. He said that even a dog laughs at such persons. By the story "Khagam", he wanted to tell us that an evil-doer has to pay for his evil-deed.

40 books, written by Ray, have been published till today. He has received a lot of prizes, including the Juvenile Literature prize by the National Council of Educational Research Training for his writings. He has also written stories and songs for others' movies and also worked as a commentator in two feature films.

He was also a graphic-artist. He drew pictures, not only in his books, but also in some famous writers' books, such as in Bibhutibhuson Banerjee's "Aam Atir Vepu". Even a few days before his death, when he was in the hospital, he drew the last pictures of his life, a tree without leaves, in which were hidden the portrait of 15 great persons of India, Indira Gandhi, Chittaranjan Das, Nehru, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa etc.

He has also received a lot of other awards. The mentionable are — "Ligion the Honour" (Ligion of Honour) by the French Government, the Oscar by the Academy of Motion

Pictures of New York, the Doctor of literature degree from Ravindra Varati University, a Doctorate from the Calcutta University and the National Professor award by the Indian Government. Ray was also among a very rare few who had received the Bharat Ratan award, the highest award given by the Indian government.

The death and birth anniversary of Satyajit have passed a month ago. But surprisingly, there was no news in the newspapers (at least I didn't see any). I don't think the organisations related to cinematography, remembered this day.

Although Ravindranath has left mark in each and every section of Bangla literature, Satyajit is not lagging far behind. Satyajit has written novels (such as Tintorator Jishu), short stories (e.g. Khagam), songs, fairy tales (Shujon Harbola) etc. Moreover, he has directed movies and has achieved the Oscar. So he can be considered as an able successor of Tagore.

In our country, a seven-day cultural programme was organised for Tagore's birth anniversary. Why there was even no news about Ray's birth anniversary? As his ancestors were of this country, he has more right to be remembered than any one else. So, in the end, I hope that he will be in our mind forever and at least a news would be published in the birth anniversary of this allrounder jewel of Bengal.

## Fun Competition

We here at Rising Stars have arranged for its valued readers a story writing competition every alternate week. An illustration with an introduction will be given by our cartoonist. It is for the readers out there to end the story as they please. The best story will be published and remember the story should reach us (The Daily Star of office) within a week from publication. A grand reward awaits the winner, maybe an offer from Spielberg himself...!

Good Luck!  
RS Editor.



## The Aliens

Knuts and Bolts have freshly arrived from planet "Djintira", located in the Parallel Universe called 'Hem A Yet Pur'. Their landing in Dhaka was quite accidental. Knuts and Bolts did not know the existence of Parallel Universe (what is it, anyway?). Their sudden arrival in our Dhaka was by no means a good idea for them. But for us, it is a good idea to begin a bizarre story.

Knuts and Bolts arrived at the zero hour, the time for thugs, police and home going journalists. The two fools did not know anything about the city (for instance, on arrival Bolts asked the road "Who art thou?").

So the first thing they did was to step on manholes considering those as "Matter Transmitting" devices. Indeed, within seconds they realised that some strange matters with stranger fumes had been transmitted all over their bodies.

Within the next few seconds, they heard footsteps running towards them. They could also hear sound of whistles.

What is going to happen now? To be or not to be! And what are they going to do now? Make up your own story and send it soon (before any Tom, Dick or Einstein sends one)!

Cartoonist!

## An Analysis of the Ancient History of Astronomy

by Harvey A Ellis

**F**ROM the dawn of time, the ancient men were fascinated by the sky. The Sun rising in the east and setting in the west, the stars glowing at night and the moon shining brightly. All these astronomical occurrences governed the lives of our ancient ancestors and upto this very day — our lives as well.

To give everyday of importance in the history of astronomy would be a mammoth undertaking, but according to logical arguments it can be said that astronomy is as old as Himesapientis (scientific name for early man). Among the earliest peoples to make systematic studies of the stars were the Mesopotamians, the Egyptians and the Chinese, all of whom drew up constellation patterns. It seems that some constellation pattern date back to 3000 BC probably earlier. The first essential among ancient civilization was the compilation of a good calendar. Probably the first reasonably accurate value of the length of the year (365 days) was given by the Egyptians. They paid great attention to the star Sirius (Sothis) because its "helical rising or date when it could first be seen in the dawn sky, gave a reliable due to the time of the annual flooding of the Nile, upon which the Egyptian economy depended. The Pyramids are of course astronomically aligned.

The Egyptians had no idea of the scale of the universe, and they believed the flat earth to be all important. So too did the Chinese, who also made observations. It has been maintained that a conjunction of the five naked-eye planets recorded

during the reign of the Emperor Chuan Hsu refers to either 2449 or 2446 BC.

The earliest data — collectors were the Assyrians. The Library of Ashurbanipal (668-626 BC) includes the "Venus Tablet" discovered by Sir Henry Layard and deciphered in 1911 by F X Kugler. It claims that when Venus appears, rain will be in the heavens, when it returns after an absence of three months, hostilities will be in the land; the crops will prosper. Early attempts at drawing up tables of the movements of the moon and planets may well date from pre-Greek times, largely for astrological reasons; until relatively modern times astrology was regarded as a true science, and all the ancient astronomers (even Ptolemy) were also astrologers.

Babylonian astronomy continued well into Greek times, and some of the astronomers such as Naburiannu (about 500 BC) and Kidinu (about 380 BC) may have made great advances; but we know relatively little about them, and reliable dating begins only with the rise of Greek science.

Little progress was made in the following centuries, though there were some interesting

Indian writings — (Aryabhata 5th century AD) and in AD570 Lidorosus Bishop of Scirle was the first to draw a definite distinction between astronomy and astrology. The revival of astronomy was due to the arabes. In 813 Al-Mamun founded the Baghdad school of astronomy, and various star catalogues were drawn up, the most notable being that of Al-Suffi (born about 903). During this period two supernovas were observed by Chinese astronomers; the star of 1006 (in Lupus) and 1054 (in Taurus, the remnant of which is today seen as the Crab Nebula).

The improved 'Alphonstic Tables' of planetary motions were published in 1270 by order of Alphonso X of Castile. From then on astronomy began to take a definite shape and discoveries were made in the years to come.

Astronomy is a vast science, some of which still remains a mystery to us but as man advances through time, new and state of the art technology has enabled us to gaze more closely at the heavens, and its members thus unravelling some of its mysteries.

Reference: Guide — The Guinness Book of Astronomy

## My Kind of Life

by Sanjida Shaheed

I bet it would be fun  
If I lived in a little, wooden cottage.  
Just beside the blue, wavy sea,  
Honeysweet fruits would grow on the trees.  
Now and then I'd blow a gentle breeze,  
Yes, it would be so much fun.

I'd make a little dinghy,  
And then would go fishing in the sea,  
Lobsters and shell-fish I'd catch and cook.  
Then I'd eat and read a story book,  
Yes, that could be so much fun.

I'd not be lonely, no not I,  
A parrot I'd have and a cuddly puppy.  
We would share our meals, tears and joy.  
We would share everything old and new, too.  
I bet that'd be so much fun.

Nobody would glare at me or frown,  
And I'd be free from all stress and strain.  
Songs of merry birds would often be heard,  
Fragrance of flowers would delight my heart.  
The morning sun would shine upon my face,  
I'd be so glad in nature's embrace.  
Nothing in my life would ever be more fun.

I shall run away one night, but not in the sun,  
And enjoy my kind of life in lots of fun.

## A COMIC MONSTER



## JOKES

Claude was so wealthy that even the bags under his eyes had his initials on them.

The hereditary peer was boasting of his ancestors and generally acting in an arrogant and disdainful manner towards one of his fellow club members who was a self-made man. Eventually, the man could stand the peer's attitude no longer and said, in a loud voice: "From what you have been saying it would appear that the nobility of my family begins with me, whereas that of yours ended with your father."

He's so wealthy he even bought a kid for his dog to play with.

The extremely wealthy man (who had inherited his wealth) bought his son a slum. He wanted him to have everything he missed when he was a child.