

RISING STARS

The One Unleashed again

by Chowdhury A A Quaseed-Bin-Husayne

THE heavy black clouds traversed the skies as though they were being hounded by the darkness of the night. The full moon sent down momentary gleams of light through them down to the forested hillsides from where it appeared to be a pale silver off glistening with an eerie glow. The dense, almost impenetrable fog banks lay in swirling masses upon the woods through which the group of youngsters treaded. The winter was cruel in its reign. They shuddered through their coats and cravats. But the question was: why were they shivering? Was it just the chill of the night; or was it the endless melancholy whines of the wolves mourning their dead... a faint but unmistakable sound; a cry that dampened the heartiest spirits a cry that signalled death.

"Why trouble the one who has been resting for the last 200 years? The youngest of the group of five discouraged, "please don't." None heeded the pleas. Leaving the kid above, the others descended down the shaft of the well to what they discovered was a perfectly built tunnel rather than a natural cave. As they advanced, their flashlight beams lacerating the gloom, they could not help but gape at the carvings on the stone walls: diabolic scenes of slaughter and bloodshed; the figure of evil beings and gargoyles placed on pedestals and the ever increasing awareness of the presence of what seemed

to be a power that pervaded the whole atmosphere. It was there, and it was slowly suffocating the youths who pressed on with their determination until they arrived at the heavy iron doors which had sealed the tomb of "the thing" all these decades.

They contemplated the task once more, and themselves: all wrapped and cloaked in webs and the dint of 200 years. "Let's do it" they all agreed.

The great key, studded with gems, was raised from the elevated slab of marble where it had lain buried in dust and inserted into the rusty lock..... moments later the doors were thrown open under the pressure of the hearing shoulders of the youths, to reveal within a great crypt with a profusion of columns and arches..... they could hear wind whistle! A swift exchange of glances was enough proof that their resolve had failed. They all bore the same stricken look: puckered eyes, parted lips..... a blanched face. Within their hearts pounded like heavy metal drums.

"Let's get outta here said one. The others turned about in response. That is what they all ardently wanted, though none felt like voicing the feeling in fear of being proclaimed a coward.

With an explosive crash the doors swung shut before the quartet could even come half way to it. They burst into a crescendo of screams as they hurled themselves onto the

iron panels which only added to the still echoing sounds of the shutting doors. They pounded with their fists, and flash lights and kicked only to howl out with pain as the bones creaked on metal.

..... But the entire pandemonium was drowned by a roaring resounding laughter from a heavy voice that said "..... you have found me..... won't you stay?"

Looking back over their shoulders in the feeble glint of dying out flashlight, the youths caught a glimpse of a raised axe.....before all went dark.....forever.

On the surface, the kid turned to bring help as his friends gave no sign of returning. But rotating about he found himself staring into two burning eyes of ember set into a face radiating whiteness, a figure that loomed twice his own size draped in black..... clutching an axe that bore the stains of fresh blood. The man grinned exposing two serpentine fangs and teeth that glistened in the light of the moon.

The last words the boy remembered hearing before he collapsed into a comma that had persisted for days, were cold and demonic — a declaration of authority, an admonition to the world. The friend had laughed a brutal blood curdling laugh as he had thundered like a storm. "2 long centuries I have been contained and now the world shall lend to my wrath.....again".

The Cursed Blade

by Gazala Yasmin
Hoque (Urmi)



IT sounds as if the story of the Herero knife, its gold handle studded with jewels, had come from the pen of a fiction writer, but not so. The knife carried a curse — at least 28 people suffered a violent death after coming into contact with it. The story of the knife begins back in 1917 when it came into the possession of a German army officer, Lieutenant Froelich. He believed that the chief of the African Herero tribe knew the whereabouts of a treasure trove. Froelich and three soldiers kidnapped the chief and his wife, and tortured the woman with the knife until the chief was forced to tell that the fortune in gold was buried in a certain kraal. The lieutenant led his three soldiers against the kraal and slaughtered everyone in it. The officer then murdered two of his own men, his mind filled with greed. But other natives had seen the massacre and followed Froelich and his companion as they drove off in a wagon loaded with treasure. While they slept that night, the two Germans were killed and their bodies left with the wagon — and the treasure. Twenty-five years passed and two gold prospectors chanced to camp on the spot. The sands had buried the treasure wagon and the two men, searching for firewood came across the top of the wagon.

Mainly out of the curiosity, the two men scooped away the sand and uncovered the two skeletons of Froelich and his companion and the gold — plus the tarnished knife. The two men polished the knife up and took off into town to sell the gold. This done, they bought tickets for Johannesburg the next day. But that night one of the men was killed in a drunken brawl.

The other man sold the knife to a firm of jewellers in Johannesburg, Cohen and Rosenblatt.

Cohen took the knife to show to his wife, a few hours later the couple were killed by burglars who broke into the house.

Already 25 people had died after being connected with the knife but "Cohen's son, to whom the dagger had passed, scoffed at the idea that it carried a curse. Some weeks later, while driving his new sports car, he spun off a straight road and crashed over a cliff. He was number 26. From now on no one wanted to own the dagger and it passed quickly from hand to hand.

One man, named Sturman, bought and displayed it on the wall of his home. A few days later he was killed by lightning.

The knife lay unclaimed amongst Sturman's effects until a wealthy American instructed his agent in Africa, Dark Nathan, to purchase it for him. Nathan bought it and quickly hurried to dispatch it at the Post Office relieved to get rid of the accursed blade. As he walked out of the Post Office, Nathan was run down and killed by a lorry. From that time nothing more has been heard of the Herero dagger. With such a reputation no one wishes to find it.

THE land of fairies was far beyond earth. It was a land where people lived in harmony and animals never got squashed. The land of fairies was ruled by King Neyo I. King Neyo was ageing and soon would not be able to rule his great, and glorious kingdom. The heir to the throne was a boy, the son of King Neyo. His name was Leona Neyo. But his friends called him Le. Le was a very bright and resourceful boy. He knew what to do and how to do it. He had passed his studies at a very early time.

It would not be long before the king would have to retire and Le would take his place. But to do so he would have to go to Earth and give any ordinary human three wishes. Now to you and me that sounds easy. But if a boy came, said he was a fairy and that you would get three wishes would you believe it?

But this was a long time yet. For only before had the king gone for a check up (fairies can't do every thing you know) and the doctor had assured him that he had nothing to worry about. Unfortunately the doctor was a con artist and the poor king died only two days later. The con artist was bought before the queen and the queen took away his powers.

The poor prince, however, had a problem even worse than the con artist. If the prince did not get a earthing three wishes, and if the prince did not succeed then he would also lose all his powers. All the people of fairy land loved and respected the royal family. The queen was grief stricken. And anyway if another royal family came they would probably change all the tax rules.

The next day the prince was up nice and early and was practising his wish giving trick when the queen came and said "Good morning," dear, the prince (who was trying to make a frog into a princess) "What are you going to be doing today?" the prince (now practising his disappearing butler trick on the scared butler) replied "I'm going to earth to give a earthing three

The Fairies

by Rupak Salahuddin

wishes." And after hearing that queen almost fainted.

When the queen had aroused from her little fainting act, the prince came to her and said "Mummy I am going to the world of the mortals to give some mortal three wishes." "Please be careful, won't you dear?"

"Mother you worry too much, but then again being a mother I suppose that that comes naturally."

In the twinkling of an eye Le found himself on Earth, London, England to be exact.

Now Le decided that he had better begin work since he only had two days (and since he had not brought any clean under-pants) for three hours he wandered around the streets looking for a normal child to give three wishes to. But this was not easy because every child he saw was just not normal. The boys either wore earrings or wore their fathers clothes which were 10 sizes bigger than theirs. And the girls? Well, the less said about them the better.

After a long search Le sat down and began to think where

would be the best possible place to find a normal child. Then a thunderbolt literally hit him. Back home his teachers told that a School was where earthlings came to study, if he was to look for someone in the school the chances were he would find somebody.

In the twinkling of the eyes, Le found himself outside a school. He decided to investigate. Naturally they had schools where he came from, but being heir to the throne, he had a private tutor. No sooner had he stepped inside than a crowd of around 600 screaming school children came trampling over him. So this is what a school is like, he thought to himself. He decided that it would be wiser to wait outside. After 20 minutes all had gone and not one was the kind of person that Le needed. He had almost given up hope when 4 children came out.

His tutor Ms Knowall once told him that on earth some children indulged in a thing called bullying. Now this seemed to Le like that bullying. Now the small boy that was getting hurt seemed normal enough to Le. This was that person that Le wanted. The boy was being carried by two of the other boys. The third bully came behind them with a stick.

"So David how much have you got today?"

"None, my mother didn't have my dinner money"

"Now, now David, we know you better then that. Frisk him NOW!" the two boys started taking things from the boy.

"I wish I were strong enough to beat you up. I wish I was better than you so you couldn't make fun out of me anymore. I wish you all disappeared."

This was it. Le finally got his chance. He gave the boy David all his wishes one by one. His mission was over. He was successful. In the twinkling of an eye, he went back home.

Two days later, Le was crowned King Leona of the Fairies. All the subjects were happy. His mother got all the chocolates she wanted, his friends got all the games they wanted.



DEATH OF AN OLD MAN

by Md. Kabiruddin

THE old man stood at the edge of the cliff and laughed. The lake lay far below him. The world seemed suspended in space, an island floating on nothing, anchored to the feet of the man on the cliff. He felt the wind in his spine. The wind was strong enough to ruffle the blue grey waters into irregular wavy patterns of white horses.

He laughed at the thing that has happened to him, that morning and at the thing which now lay ahead.

"I will give all my properties to the orphans..... you don't care about me anymore." He told his son, Shahed, that morning. Shahed's face was alight with terrible fury. "Dad, you are a lunatic..... you should be in an asylum. You have made my life an utter misery these last few years with your stupid senseless insubordination and your idiocy and your malevolence. There is no place in this house for a guy like

you... get out of here and let me live in peace, you are nothing but a nuisance."

The old man was mortified into silence. An emotion compounded of anger and disgust made his heart lurch in strong unsteady beats. Without another word he got out of the house.

He did not laugh as his eyes stopped in awareness of the earth around him.

He gazed at the restless water below him and cried over his fate. The place reminded him of the days when he and his son used to come together. His wife died when Shahed was only seven and he had to go through lots of difficulties to raise him up. "What have I done to deserve this" he said to himself and began to cry, then he shook his head and stopped crying because he knew he will never be happy again. "I can find peace only in death now". He stepped to the edge, raised his arms and dived down into the lack below.

JOKES

by Fardeen Chowdhury

1. What is the eraser say to the pencil?
Don't move, or I'll rub you out.
2. "I just saw someone carrying my wife's coffin away!"
"This is a grave situation!"
3. Why did the dinosaur cross the road?
Chickens weren't around at that time.
4. Why did the dinosaur cross the road again?
Would he be stupid enough, not to?
5. What did Alexander Graham Bell invent?
The telephone bill.
6. "Dad Tom's been throwing stones at your greenhouse!"
"What? I'll show him.....!"
"You'd better. Six throws and he only got it once".
7. "Fred, Tom called you a silly twit!"
"What.....? I'll teach him!"
"You'd better. I thought it over and it's not the least insulting."

Do not Smoke

by MR Q Choudhry

Do not smoke. Do not smoke. Smoking is a bad habit. If you leave smoking, you are a strong and wealthy.

And if you do not leave smoking, you are a weak and sick.

Please do not smoke. Please do not smoke.

Notice

Due to unavoidable circumstances the last episode of Mystery will be published next week. We deeply regret the inconvenience.

Returning from the Brink of Death

by Zahid Anwar Hoque (Shagar)

HAVE you ever wondered what it would be like to stand in the dock at the Supreme Court on a charge of murder, and be found guilty. To see the black silk cap being placed over the wig of the Judge, and then hear him sentencing you to be taken back to the prison, there to be hanged by the neck until you are dead? And can you imagine your feelings when he solemnly adds: "And may God have mercy

for each execution, but this one had already been used for several. One day I seized a chance to glance inside it. One of the names was Khallilur Rahman, who had been hanged eight months before for the murder of a young lady. Against his name was the comment: "Sullen. Refused to play cards". Another name was Forman Ali Bhuiya with the comment: "Screamed and made a lot of trouble when his time came".

At the end of the first week, the Governor of the prison came to my cell. He said, "I have here in my hand a paper which instructs me to your cell. He said, "I have in my hand a paper which instructs me to inform you that the OC of the Sutrapur Thana has fixed the date of your execution to be September 15th, at eight o'clock in the morning". He spoke quietly and courteously, and I could not think of anything else to say in reply but "Thank you".

Then began a period of burning resentment-resentment at the injustice. I am not a particularly religious man. Like very many Bangladeshis, I be-

times think, "that's an awful black cloud up there, but I'd better take a good long look at it while I can". And the sky would clear and I would be sorry that my black cloud had gone away.

I did the last thing that was left. I sent an appeal for mercy to the President. Of course, I could not send it personally to him; I had to send it through the Home Minister. Against the Governor came with a paper in his hand. "I have to inform you that the Home Minister, on behalf of the President of Bangladesh, can find no grounds for interference with your sentence. Accordingly, you will be executed tomorrow morning at eight o'clock". He was as courteous as before, and again I heard myself saying "Thank you". I was strangely calm. The resentment had burnt itself out.

On the afternoon of that day a bell rang loudly through the prison. All the prisoners were locked away in their cells. I was to be taken to the visitor's section to see my father and mother for the last time. Prisoners are not allowed to

At ten o'clock an Imam came to the cell. He gave me a cigarette and made awkward conversation. He talked, among other things, of football. In the end, he said, "Tomorrow, I'll be by your side. If you want me to, I'll read the burial service as we walk over. If you don't want me to, I won't. I'll be just with you. He was a good fellow.

It was a few minutes after midnight, with less than eight

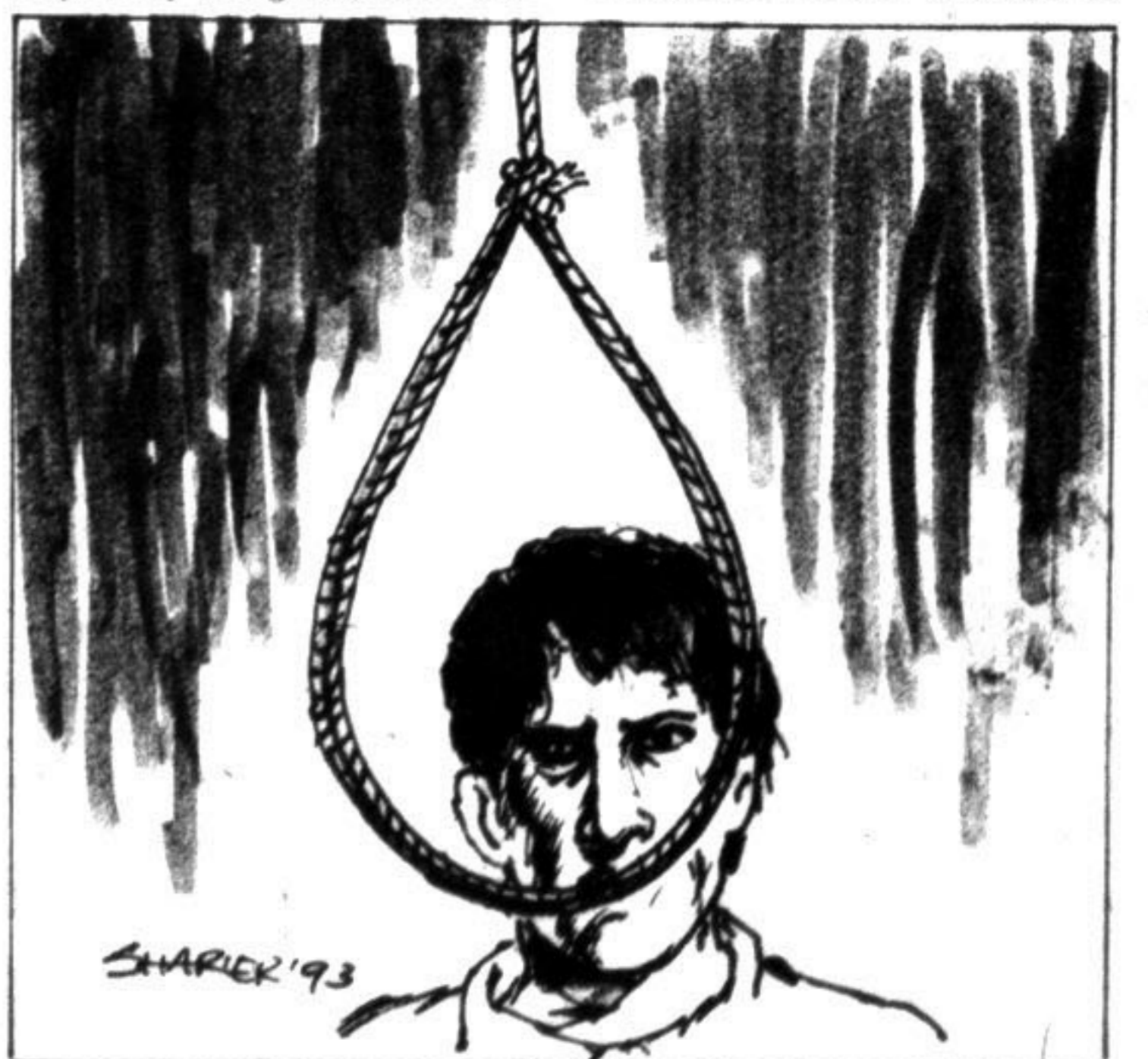


on your soul — particularly when you know that you are not guilty? And can you picture yourself in the condemned cell for the next thirty days and nights, waiting for the morning of your hanging?

I can tell you something about this. It was in the middle of summer that I was condemned to death. I was taken back to the central jail at Begum Bazaar facing Nazimuddin Road, in the older part of Dhaka city, and put in the condemned cell. Six prison officers had been selected to be with me, two at a time, night and day, until I was hanged. There was nothing special about the cell: it was just two ordinary ones knocked into one, and furnished only with a narrow bed, a table and three chairs.

The officers were very good fellows. They brought small luxuries for me from time to time, and the wife of one of them sent a bunch of flowers from her garden everyday. I lived on the ordinary prison food, but I was allowed ten cigarettes. Ten cigarettes don't go very far, though, in the condemned cell. I could have smoked two hundred. The officers used to give me one or two of their own now and then. We talked and played cards, until the early hours of each morning. Sometimes my mind would drift away for a while, but then a voice murmured in the back of my head, "Haven't you forgotten something?"

The officers used to keep an occurrence book, in which to record anything special that I said or did. You would think that a new book could be af-



lieve there must be a God somewhere, and I leave it at that. But after the visit of the Governor nobody could have convinced me of the existence of any God anywhere.

There was still my appeal. Sick with anxiety, I waited day by day. Thirteen days passed and I was informed at last that it had failed. With a week left, I began the countdown: 160 hours.....159.....158..... I would gaze up at the barred window of the cell and some-

catch a glimpse of a condemned man. In the evening, back in the condemned cell, I heard a thud from across the passage. A few minutes later I heard it again. I looked enquiringly at my two officers. They glanced at each other and then looked at the floor. When I heard it the third time I realised what it was. The executioner was trying out the drop. As calmly as I could, I tried to picture the scene as it would be the next morning.

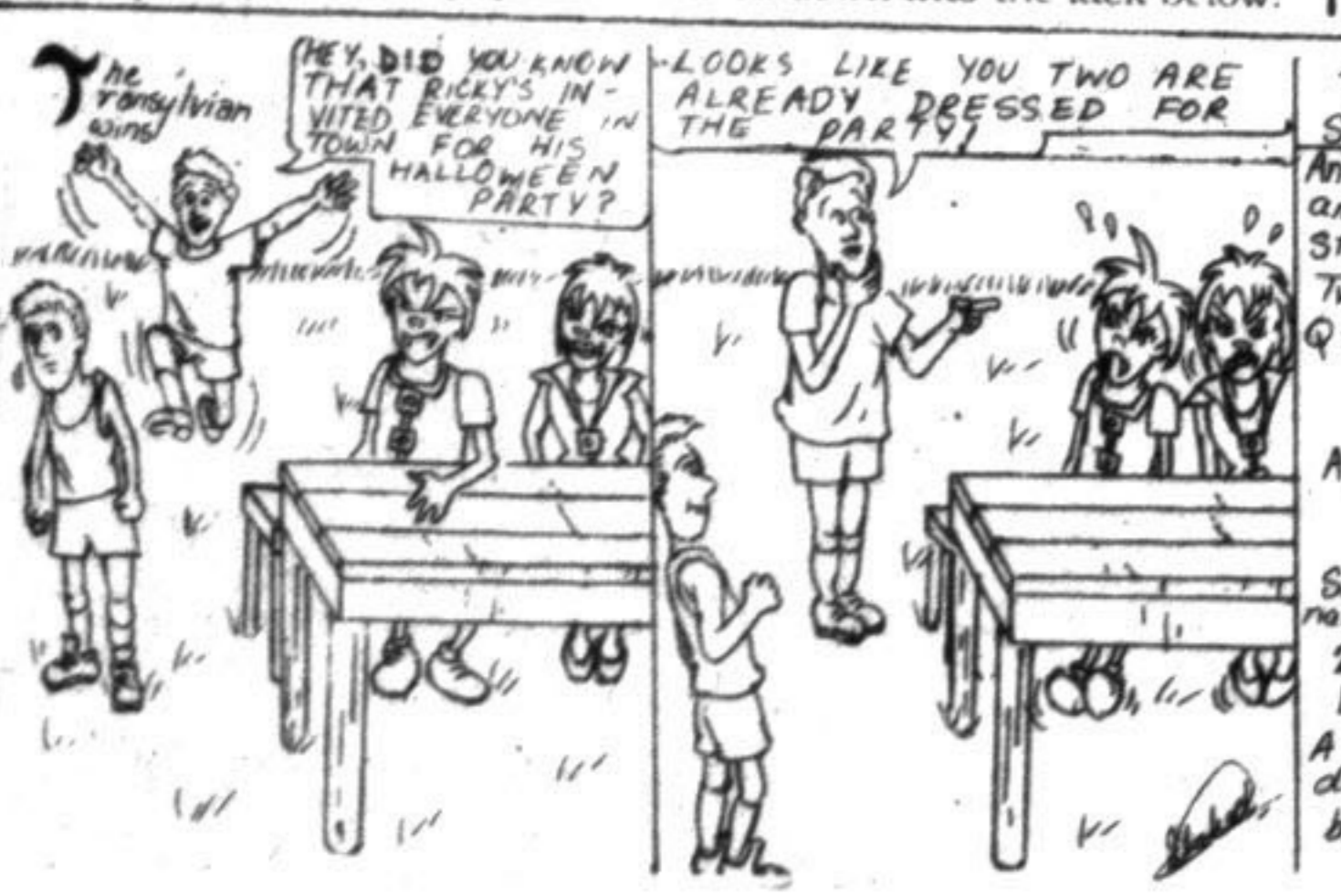


hours left, that the cell door opened suddenly, and the Governor came in quickly. "Manik", he said, smiling "I have good news. I have just received a telephoned order from the Home Minister for the cancellation of your execution. Half an hour ago, Parliament voted to abolish Capital Punishment in this country. I am very happy for you".

"Thank you" I said for the third time. He shook my hand and so did my two officers.

I was in the same condition when five minutes later, I was whisked out of the condemned cell, and put into an ordinary one, in a different part of the prison. Next morning I was officially informed that my sentence had been commuted to one of imprisonment for life, and within a week I was transferred to Joydevpur prison under Gazipur district. I soon learnt that, in Bangladesh law, a sentence of life imprisonment does not necessarily mean that one will spend the rest of one's life in prison. With good behaviour one can be on parole after fifteen years. However, that is still a long time though in a prison like Joydevpur, and during the ensuing years I often asked myself whether it might not have been better for me if that vote in parliament had been cast one day later.

But everything in life ultimately comes to an end, and now, free, fit, and forty-six years old, I know the answer to that question.



THE TRANSYLVANIAN TWINS STICKER COMPETITION
Answer the easy questions below and get a chance to win Free Stickers of "The Transylvanian Twins", Morticia and Zapr. How many fingers do the Transylvanian Twins have on each hand?
ANS: THREE (TICK 1 BOX)
FOUR
FIVE
Send your answer, along with your name and address to: 2-KAJAL, ESKATON GARDEN RD., DHAKA.
A winner will be picked out by draw and his/her name will be announced later.