



## The Telephone Call...

by Satyajit Ray

Translated by Adeb Z. Mahmud

Crrring... crrring...  
Biresh Niogy looked at the telephone on his bedside table and then at the table clock standing beside the phone. The clock's digital display showed 11.52 pm. He was more surprised than annoyed. He did not usually get phone calls at this time of the night. He was just about to close his book and turn off the light. The phone went on ringing. Reluctantly, Mr Biresh picked up the receiver.

'Hello...'  
'Six two one three one one?'  
'Yes...'  
'Is Mr Biresh there? Mr. Biresh Chandra Niogy?'  
'Speaking...'  
'Oh, good evening...'  
'Good evening...'  
'I'm terribly sorry to call you at this hour...'  
'That's all right. Who...'  
'I need to talk to you about something...'  
'Who is this?'  
'My name is Ganapati Shom...'  
'Mr. Khan felt the urge to slam down the receiver...'  
'I'm afraid it won't be possible for me to talk right now. I was just going to bed. Besides, I don't think I know anyone by that name...'  
'But I know you. I know a lot about you. You are a doctor. You have been living in this

'He used to study at the City College then...'  
'Yes...'  
'Did you know that your son had a friend named Sriptoti?'  
'Maybe. I didn't always keep track of my son's friends...'  
'Sriptoti was my youngest son. He was a very good boy — a brilliant student. Your son, Arup, was his closest friend. But unfortunately, my son began to associate with some unsocial boys. He began to take up bad habits. Arup still felt for his friend and tried his best to bring Sriptoti back to the right path again; but all his efforts failed. Did you know all this?'

'I've seen this friend of Arup's. But I didn't know he had fallen into bad company...'  
'Let me tell you about an accident now. My son began gambling. He lost thousands in gambling until he was up to his neck in debt. Then he went to Arup for help. He threatened to commit suicide if Arup did not help him. Do you know how Arup helped him?'

'Now I understand...'  
'What?'  
'There was a ring in the safe at our house. It belonged to my grandfather. It was a diamond ring...'  
'Yes. Your grandfather was the house-doctor of the

'Does your son still have the ring?'  
'Yes, but he wants to return it to you. He does not need it any longer. He wants to give it back to its proper owner and free himself from the guilt...'  
'Does your son want to meet me?'

'Yes — and right now. He's already on his way. By now, he has probably reached your house...'  
'What did you say his name was?'

'Sriptoti...'  
'And your name is Ganapati?'  
'Yes...'  
'Did your names appear in the newspaper recently?'

'As a matter of fact, yes...'  
'Wait, let me think...'  
'Take your time...'  
'Mr Biresh did not need to ponder for long...'

'Yes, I remember. I saw your names in today's paper. Three persons were killed in a road accident on the Barackpur Trunk Road. One of them was the driver of the car, the other two were a father and a son — Ganapati Shom and Sriptoti Shom...'

'You're right; I'm the same Ganapati Shom...'  
'You... you... th-that means...'  
'It means exactly what you're thinking...'

'But... that's impossible...'  
'Why should it be impossible? Can you hear any sound?'

'Yes, I can...'  
'What is it?'

'Somebody is knocking at my door...'  
'In the silence of the quiet night, Mr Biresh clearly heard someone knocking on his front door. Then he heard on the phone —'

'Open the door. My son is waiting for you...'  
'No... no — I... I won't open the door...'

'Mr Biresh felt his throat drying up. The receiver was now shaking in his hand. Again the voice on the phone —'

'Even if you don't open the door, he can get in. He has that power. Now, do you hear any noise?'

'Somebody is coming up the stairs...'  
'Don't you worry, Mr Biresh. He's not going to bother you. He will only go inside the room next to your's and leave the ring on the table...'

'Terrified, Mr Biresh cried out, 'No no — call your son back, call him back...'  
'Oh, but it's too late for that now. He's already on the second floor...'

'Mr Biresh heard footsteps in the next room. The steps stopped for a moment, then they were heard again. This time, they were going down the stairs. The voice spoke on the phone —'

'You have nothing to worry about any more. Put down the phone and go to your next room. I'll go now. It was a pleasure talking to you, Mr Biresh. Good night...'

'Mr Biresh replaced the receiver in the cradle. Even in January, he felt he was sweating. For a while, he sat still on his bed, dazed. Then he got up, went cautiously into the next room and turned on the light...'

'Yes, there it was, lying on the table. Even in this dim light, it was glittering with all its brightness — his grandfather's lost diamond ring which, he had found after seven years...'

'headmaster's hand!'  
'The next day, I bought things for every one, a small bag for my mother, a set of pens for my father, a paint box and some stickers for my sister and three rubbers for myself...'

'No one could ever guess how happy I was. I thank Allah for letting me win the prize...'

'Jokes'  
'What did the beaver say to the tree?'

'It's been nice gnawing you...'  
'What kind of bolt is of no use?'

'A thunderbolt...'  
'Teacher: I've had to punish you every day this week, Gloria...'

'What have you got to say?'

I was looking forward to my three weeks' stay on the lonely island. I wanted to get away from the chaos of civilisation for a while, and I kept my vacation a secret from my family and friends...'

'But I was smart enough to tell the local travel agency my whereabouts in case of an emergency. The agency was good enough to supply me with a flare gun and a starter's pistol in case I faced trouble...'

'Soon the day came when I sped off in a boat to an island off the shores of Bengal. A pleasant sight met my eyes as I stepped off the boat. It felt great to be twenty! I thought, 'There were coconut trees swaying gently; warm, white sand and a puff of smoke over the tree tops...'

'Wait, there's not supposed to be any smoke on a lonely and uninhabited island. I immediately turned back to the boat, but it was already half way to the horizon. So, with a frown, I decided to investigate...'

'What I found was not at all pleasing. There, stood a girl cooking. Impossible it was supposed to be a lonely island. What is this girl doing here?'

'Hi, she said, 'I'm Sareeka. Pleased to meet you...'

'I'm Saadi. I looked at her and added further, 'I thought this was a lonely island...'

'Amazing, so did I! Fine, all I needed was a girl on my island to spoil my vacation. Surely the travel agency had messed up somewhere...'

'I tried to explain to her as politely as possible, that it was for the loneliness that I came...'

'I said, 'Since we both came here to be alone, you take half the island and I'll take the other. As far as I'm concerned you won't even exist! It was a bit blunt, but I thought the message got through to her...'

'I pitched my tent, picked food from the wild and spent my first two and a half weeks in sheer bliss. I camped in a clearing a little way from a spring. I spent days climbing the various tropical trees, swimming in the salty sea and fishing. I even trooped around and mapped down my locality...'

'With my knowledge of geography, I found that the island had a limestone base. So I knew that there must be a lot of underground caves...'

'At night I would lie in my hammock, look up at the clear, starry night and play my flute. Then I would let the wind and mother nature rock me to

## Talk About Lonely Islands

by Mir Saaduddin Ahmed

sleep. True enough, nothing could have been better...'

'However, on the last night of the third week, a thunderstorm started brewing, and I had to spend the night in the tent. I didn't know why, but I had a premonition of danger. Surely enough, as the thought passed my mind, I heard a

were strewn and scattered all around the place. With an aching back I plodded back to my place. To my utter astonishment my things were packed and Sareeka was gone! I thought that since I would be leaving that day, I might stop at her campsite and say thanks and bye...'

the little stream. From there I saw another set of her track on the other side of the stream. The area on this side of the stream was unfamiliar as I had had no time to venture so far. But the situation at the moment was quite urgent and so I ran along following the tracks. There came a point when the



mysterious rustle outside my tent. I went to check and there stood Lady Doom herself! What in Heaven's name are you doing in my half of the island?'

'Well, you see, Sareeka started, 'my tent collapsed and I was wondering if I could get some help...'

'I got her hint. In no way am I going to help you! I yelled. Half an hour later I was busy fixing up her tent...'

'Completing the task I returned to my campsite, and to my surprise I found her sleeping in my tent. I forced myself to go back to her campsite and spend the night there. With a groan I literally hit the sack! Half way through the night the tent collapsed again...'

'By morning the storm had subsided. Leaves and twigs

tracks dried out so I had to stop. It was then that I heard some sobbing...'

'Further on among the foliage, I saw a type of pit, which seemed to be the source of the crying. I peered down but it was too dark to see below as the leaves of the trees cut out the sunlight...'

'I said, 'Sareeka, are you down there?'

'The response was a train of words in a tear stained voice...'

'Saadi, you're here. I tried calling out but I don't think you heard me. I was walking and all of a sudden I fell. I thought that I'd be left here all alone until I... Her voice trailed off...'

'Calm down girl! I ordered her and she quietened. Take it

Back at the camp, I found the boat hadn't come. It was late. What a stroke of luck. So, I helped Sareeka pack up. She was smiling now and looked kind of sweet. We struck up a conversation and talked until we saw the boat coming...'

'A lady from the office had come along too. As soon as the boat docked, the lady came up to me and started apologising. 'I'm sorry sir that we were so late, and sir, I can explain about your companion...'

'The poor lady was absolutely rattled...'

'I took pity on her and said, 'OK lady, I won't sue you and your company...'

'As we got on board, I looked at Sareeka, who was going back too, and all I could say, with a smile, to her was, 'Talk about lovely islands!'

## Purana Palton

by Anjum Hossain

A small neighbourhood  
Amongst many others,  
just off a busy highway  
In the bustling city of Dhaka  
In the small, but richly cultured country of Bangladesh.

A small civilization,  
Old but new,  
With its own unique identity.  
Its own sights and sounds  
Its own familiar faces and places  
Its own festivities and celebrations.

On an average day, at Purana Palton,  
The serene silence of the early morning is broken before sunrise  
By the peaceful "Ajan".

The sacred call that summons all to prayer  
And eventually welcomes the day!  
Soon the crows start their loud, annoying cawing,  
And the usual shuffle of feet and sandals along the road begins.

Gradually the scorching sun rises,  
Luminating the sky with bright hues of orange;  
It fills the atmosphere with heat and humidity.  
As it pours out love and warmth upon the people.

Shops lining the street open with life!  
At a street corner, rickshaws gulp down tea at a rickshaw stand.  
Through the window of a large, luxury home,  
A "bua," a maid, is seen taking down a "moshari," a mosquito net;

And next door a poor but strong woman wrapped in a torn sari  
Enters a straw hut, her home, with a baby on her hip.  
The sound of a rickshaw bell pierces through the air;  
Suddenly, a rickshaw comes into view

Pulled by a thin, yet strong, dark man—  
Tired, exhausted, tiny beads of sweat appearing on his forehead;  
He struggles but continues to ride and tug along his rickshaw;  
Then, he and his rickshaw disappear around the corner.

In the distance, you hear a loud nasal voice crying—  
"Hari Pateel!" "Hari Pateel!"  
The sound draws nearer and nearer —  
and gets louder and louder,  
Until at last,

You see a short, stubby man balancing on his head  
A large bundle of "pots and pans"  
"Hari Pateel!"  
When no one responds,  
He heads on.

As his image disappears,  
His voice crying "Hari Pateel!" is still heard.  
Then it dies down,  
Softer and softer,  
Farther and farther away.

Until, finally—  
The sound is gone!  
From far away,  
The busy rumble of the highway can be heard  
And felt!

The day wears on —  
Hot and humid  
And busy!  
The "Ajan" still calls faithful followers to prayer.  
Soon, the house lizards start appearing,  
And the crickets start to sing

"Night is coming!"  
"Night is coming!"  
Then a dark midnight blue blanket falls over the sky,  
Hiding the warmth of the bright sunshine.  
The day comes to an end,  
But soon, morning will arrive,  
And another day at Purana Palton will begin!  
And, as people come and go,  
They discover the beauty of this special place  
Purana Palton!

## Doppelganger

by Gazala Yasmin Hoque  
(Urmi)

THE Doppelganger, your own psychic double, has puzzled scientists and researchers for centuries.

Although reports come from all over the world, especially Germany, from where the name originated, but it rarely occurs in Britain.

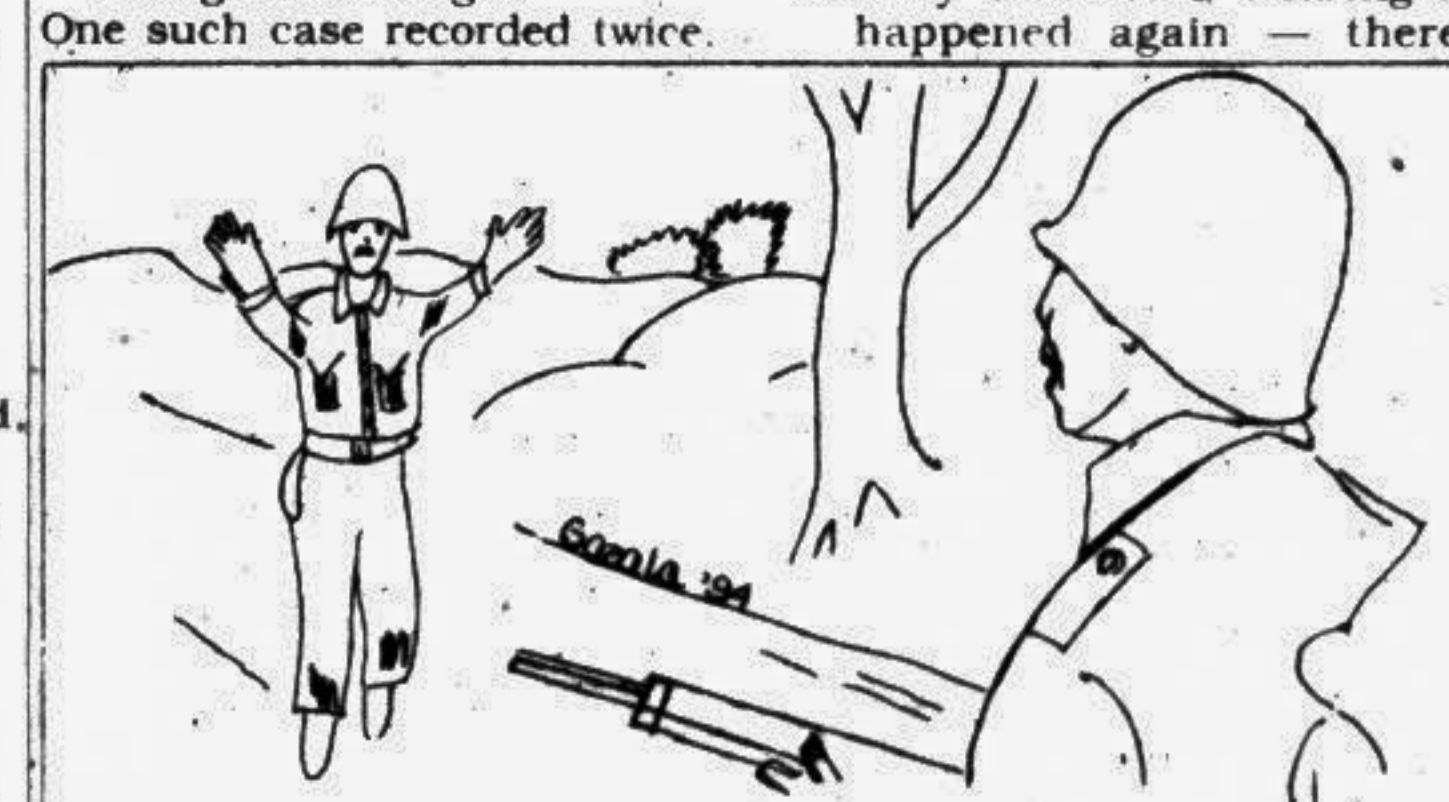
In Britain, it is known as the Fetch, and the superstition is that if you meet it, it is an omen of death, but in many cases it could be regarded as a guardian angel.

One such case recorded twice.

pelganger experience. He was now married with two children.

In June 1964, the family were on a camping holiday in the Laurentians in Canada. The weather was fine but the wind was very gusty. As the family walked in single file through the trees, the wind swayed the treetops alarmingly.

As they came to a clearing it happened again — there



having happened to an American, Alex B Griffith, in 1944. He was then an infantry sergeant in the US Army in France. One late summer's afternoon he was in charge of a patrol near Rennes. Everything seemed quiet as the patrol made its way along a dusty, narrow road.

Suddenly, a figure appeared in the road a few yards ahead, the sergeant gasped in amazement, the figure was an exact duplicate of himself, even to the strip of sticking plaster on his chin.

His double was frantically waving his arms, quite obviously warning him to go back.

Griffith and the patrol retreated and as they did so a jeep roared past, going up the road. After a few seconds the sound of a Spandau machine-gun shattered the quiet and the jeep crashed off the road. Throwing its occupants on to the road, all dead. There was a hidden German machine-gun nest up the road.

If the patrol had continued along the road, they would have been wiped out.

Some twenty years later Griffith had another Dop-

stood the same figure that he had seen twenty years ago. It looked just the way it had looked, combat uniform, helmet, even to the plaster on the chin, and it was giving the same message — go back! Griffith needed no second telling and about turned his family at the double. As he did, there came a loud crackling, splintering of wood, a loud crash and a swirl of dust as a huge tree smashed into the earth, where Alex and family had been a few seconds before.

Much less useful was the Doppelganger of school-mistress, Emile Sagee. She taught at a school for young girls, the Pensionnat de Neuvelce near the Baltic port of Riga. The principal was a Monsieur Buck. She had not been at the school long before strange things began to happen. Her pupils would often claim to have seen their in two places at the same time.

One day in class, Miss Sagee was writing on the blackboard when the class suddenly started to scream — there were two Miss Sagee side by side.

easy and listen to me.' I figured that she had stepped on the roof of an underground cave. It might have been a 12-foot fall. I asked her, 'Can you stand up or move?'

Her answer was, 'My ankle hurts!'

Either she had broken it or sprained it. In either cases, however, precautions had to be taken.

I told her, 'Wait down there and don't cry. I'll be right back...'

As fast as I could, I ran off to the tent. There I collected some ropes and bandages.

Back at the hole I threw down the ropes. I said, 'Sareeka, can you tie the ropes to yourself? I'll try to haul you out...'

She answered in the affirmative.

I said, 'Be ready at the count of three. On three I heaved and after a lot of sweat, I pulled her out. On being out, she was quite happy. As a matter of fact, she hadn't broken her ankle, she would have been jumping up and down. I then took the bandage and remembered the number of times I had seen my father bandage up his patients. With skill, her ankle was firm and secure.

Now the problem was how to get her back to the tent. She definitely could not walk, and I was certainly not going to carry her, so I did what most of the kids do in tropical countries. I got a branch of a coconut tree and placed her on it. Holding the other end, I pulled. It made quite a good caddy.

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'Talk about lovely islands!'

## Unexpected Prize!

by Nadia Nayma Mujtaba

I had written an essay on the topic, 'His Majesty's Visit to our School'. It was an imaginary essay writing competition because His Majesty had never visited our school.

I waited for about one week to know if my essay had been accepted until I gave up hope. But after a few weeks, at night when my parents were listening to the radio they heard that I had won a prize!

In the morning when I woke up my parents told me what they heard last night. I told the news to all my neighbours.

When I went to my school our science teacher read out the names of the children and teachers who had won prizes in the essay writing competition.

I was very happy but surprised to see it printed in the newspaper. I dreamed of getting the prize every day and every night.



I didn't give up hope, though I didn't get my prize at least not until a month passed! After a month had passed I received a cheque of a hundred and fifty ngultrums, from the headmaster. At that exact second I felt so happy and excited I didn't even mind the arm ache I got by shaking the

## Jokes

'What did the beaver say to the tree?'

'It's been nice gnawing you...'

'What kind of bolt is of no use?'

'A thunderbolt...'

'Teacher: I've had to punish you every day this week, Gloria...'

'What have you got to say?'

## Just for You

Dear Ishfaq,  
Get serious about your life and change your attitude about destiny. Hope you live a long and pleasant life in the land of submarines.

Love  
'Tasaud'

Dear Anwar,  
You have become fat. Stop drinking 'Red cow' milk because it will make you more fatter. Control your emotions and get a hair cut.

Love  
'Tasaud'

## My Mother

by Tasin Ahmed  
Waking up in the morning, I see  
You are not beside me, my mother.

I search for you everywhere. But nobody cares for me. When everybody sleeps in the warmth of midsummer, just then I search for you everywhere.

I search for you in the mountains & hills, I search for you in the kindness of my sister. But what I find is the face of a mother, unknown to me. But I don't find you for my kiss. There is nobody who suits your face.

There is nobody who suits your smile. I still don't see your face. I return home, with a burden of extreme pain. But I look for you everywhere. And my search will be everlasting.