



Those Creatures of the Night

by Zinnia Ahmad

I T was one of those rare occasions when sleep seemed to have taken a vacation. The funny thing about this sleep business is that it's there when you don't want it, e.g. the night before an Economics test, and it just isn't there when you long for it, e.g. a Thursday night. As the table clock announced the start of a new day, making twelve 'peep' sounds, I could feel myself as alert as ever: my pupils were still the same size, my heart was beating away at the same rate and somehow, the yawns had disappeared.

I had just finished Jon Land's 'The Alpha Deception'. I glanced at the piece of paper on my desk debating whether to do the Business Studies assignment or leave it for Saturday night. Finally, good conscience ruled over. After all Saturday night could get marred by other stuff like loadshedding which seems to happen almost every day. Now, if I was on the board of directors of PDB... Oh, well, no time for day-dreaming.

I read the neatly — typed question for almost the hundredth time that day and wondered how and where to begin. Begin at the beginning, according to Lewis Carroll. So I decided to start off with the definition of a key term. Before I could write the last letter of the first word, I became aware of the presence of my arch-rivals happily drinking my blood from my feet. With a deft stroke I sent two of them to heaven (or rather, hell). After a further couple of victories and defeats from both sides, I sat cross-legged on the chair, carefully covering up my feet. Several seconds of peace passed by. I was almost finishing my first

sentence when my attention was diverted by a quick movement on the wall in front of me. I looked up to see a lizard — a creature which when I see makes me feel as if my insides were out — running up the wall towards the 100w bulb surrounded by crawling, creeping, black and green, anonymous insects. When it was about 5cm from them, it stopped. Probably deciding which one to digest first

proceed. I was deeply absorbed with the answer plan when the sudden 'tick-tick' of the lizard, sounding like a mini-explosion in the still of the night, made me jump up a few centimeters. I landed back on my chair to realise that it wasn't calling me but its partner who was stationed on an adjacent wall. Despite another call, she for maybe. It was a he and the first one a she, or — oh, well, who cares? did

I feared, they had landed right on my assignment paper. My reflex action was to scream with a frequency of... Hz and run at the speed of light knowing what km/h out of my room.

'What's going on? That was my mother, after I had crashed with the closed bedroom door, yanked it open and stumbled over my sister's tricycle. I explained her my situation at the rate of 80 words/min. Her calm and sleepy reply was: I see no reason for you to act like a kid. This sent my temper to 99.99 C. Reasons: (1) She acted as if the fact that a couple of tangled lizards landing on my desk at 12:10 am was the most natural thing in the world that can happen. (2) She compared me to a 'kid', a term I simply loathe.

This latter accusation determined me to show her that I was no coward. I stalked towards the direction of my beloved bedroom. My pace got slower as I approached it. I halted at the doorway and carefully peeked in. I had never been so relieved in all my 15 years on this planet. The lizards were nowhere to be seen. All the same I noiselessly entered the room and inspected the area around the desk.

No. No lizards anywhere. I crumpled up the just started assignment on which the eerie creatures had set foot upon and started on a fresh page.

And it was then that the climax of all the climaxes occurred. A flying — no, not a saucer (this is still the 20th century) but a cockroach invited itself into my room. At the same time it made a gentle landing at the foot of

my bed. I made a clumsy ascent onto my chair. Despite the height of 7+ feet from the ground to my eyes, I was frozen with fear, as I watched every move of that despicable, abominable, loathsome, detestable, abhorrent, disgusting and 'eekie' flying living thing.

I was in a state of acute cockroachphobia, even after it had crawled under my bed. I counted down from 10 to 0, trying to abate my heavy breathing. I slowly kneeled on the chair. Then, bent down low to look under the bed, only to find the cockroach looking back at me.

Things had gone too far and I started to panic. Silently, saying goodbye to the never-done homework, I carefully walked onto the other end of the bed and scrambled onto it, blessing the guy who thought of the mosquito net.

It was then that I realised the lights were still on. The next few moments were a state of blur, mixed with fear and dark, as I put the lights off and got back to bed and finally, under the blanket.

And even from there, I could hear the eerie noises of the cockroach as it flew across the room and landed on the curtains. The lizards must have appeared on the scene, too as I heard the irritating 'tick-tick'.

At last, sleep crept through the mosquito net and took me to dreamland which was worse than reality. I was being chased by a giant cockroach through a jungle and came to a clearing where two dinosaurs were fighting. While somewhere the background there was a loud 'tick-tick' sound warning me about the deadline for submitting the Business Studies assignment.



(Maybe I should have taken Insect Psychology instead of Business Studies). Then I slowly advanced towards them. With a quick dart of the tongue it captured its desired prey.

Well, the lizard can have its feast, I thought and directed my 'think tank' towards that loathsome question, wondering how to

not move. Then, he (the first one) got frustrated and started chasing her (well, atleast they have this one characteristic common to us). The chase went all over the four walls and finally onto the ceiling. The next thing I knew they were directly above my desk, tangled up with each other. And, the next thing was, as

Sole Survivors of a Plane Crash

by Fermi Nasir

EVERYTHING went black as the plane started to go round in circles and down towards the ground. My best friend Nadeem and I were headed for Chicago. We came a long way when suddenly the plane started to give troubles and that was the beginning of a nightmare.

We started from London on a fine Saturday morning. Suddenly I started to feel dizzy and bent over to tell Nadeem about how I was feeling, when the plane started to lose height. I again began to have that empty feeling as all the passengers started to scream and shout while the air hostess and the captain tried to make us calm. When the whole aircraft became quiet the Captain's voice boomed in the microphone as he announced that the aircraft developed some major difficulty and that was why it was losing height. I grabbed Nadeem's hand to gain confidence. A few seconds later the plane caught fire and then everything went black.

The next thing I heard was faint sounds and after a few minutes of research I discovered that some one was calling my name. I slowly opened my eyes and saw that Nadeem was calling me. "You OK?" he asked me and I said "yeah, just my head, it is still sore". "How

long have I been out?" I asked and he said a long time. I slowly sat up and asked him "where are we?" He said that he wasn't sure but as far as he was concerned we were in a jungle.

I stood up and we started to walk. We both were very tired, thirsty and were starving but all we had with us was money. After half an hour I sat down. I was so tired that I couldn't even take a step! We were both so thirsty that we tore leaves from trees and licked the dew drops on them. Like that we quenched our thirst, though not exactly. Then it started to get darker and darker and then the setting sun announced the end of the day. We spent the night in the jungle and in the morning I awoke first and then for the first time I looked around me and saw green trees, birds and insects. They were there before but I actually didn't notice them. Then Nadeem awoke and we again started our journey. I felt fresh but I was ravenously hungry. Suddenly I saw something red just before my eyes it was a Kitkat which Nadeem held out for me. He didn't have any more so we shared it. Nadeem said that he had put it in his pocket before boarding the plane.

Then for the first time I noticed water. It was a small outlet perhaps of some river and instantly remembered what my mom always says "water outlets always lead to rivers or an ocean." We followed it and it led us to a river. Here the worst part was that I could not swim but that day luck favoured us and fortunately the water was shallow and we walked across. On reaching the bank we walked for a minute or two and saw civilization. The people there were friendly and they helped us a lot. They gave us food and let us rest in their houses.

Those villagers helped us reach Manhattan where, the citizens helped us reach Chicago. There we reported the accident to the airport and as we were on our way to my uncle's place Nadeem told me "that was quite an adventure" and I said "yeah, and I will never forget it".

That evening many reporters came to take our photo and to hear our story. As the last reporter from the Chicago Chronicle was about to take our photograph I seemed to come back to reality. I realized that I was nowhere in Chicago but in my own bedroom sitting on my bed reading in the news paper the story of two helpless sole survivors of an aircraft.

Have You Heard?

by Susmita Roy

- (1) Your scientific name is Homo sapiens, which means "Thinking man".
- (2) The largest fish known is a kind of shark that is 15m long — the height of a 4-storey building.
- (3) Two poisons, sodium and chlorine, join chemically to form a new, nonpoisonous substance—table salt.
- (4) More than 200 million meteors are in Earth's air every day. People do not see most of them because they are too small to burn very brightly (in the atmosphere as 'shooting stars') or to reach earth.
- (5) The gurgling sound in your stomach can be quite loud at times. This sound is caused by gases that form during digestion and get trapped in your stomach.
- (6) The length of the small intestine is about 5 times your height. The small intestine is coiled and folded so that it can fit in a space smaller than the size of a medium sized book.

Why Hadn't She Known?

by Tahmina Ahsan

Tears trickling down her cheeks, They sparkle as they fall. Making a pond as they drop down. All her sadness seem to wash away with it. But the poor state of mind never cools off. When someone next to the heart Seems lost in the shadow of the earth.

Waiting day and night for his arrival; Ages lost, but the end is not in sight. She waits for him, day and night Often she is taken away by thoughts.... Her heart seemed to nip with fright. The memories of those felicitous days Deep in her heart lies. She recollects her future dreams Which now seems to her only seeds. She was in a state of melody With a pierced up soul and moist eyes She longs for those happy moments But she has nothing to do, but lament.

She is half asleep and half awake In waiting for him The sparkle of her eyes are gone Her eyes are thirsty to see him in the morn. Her husband — he was a brave warrior,

One who could defend his enemies Only with a single fence of his sword. Oh! why had she allowed him to go? Why hadn't she told him 'No'?

The Human Torches

By Gazala Yasmin Hoque (Urmī)

NO-one knows why some people burst into flames, the scientific phrase is "spontaneous combustion in human beings", but it has been happening for thousands of years. In biblical times it was called "Fire from Heaven" or "A Visitation from God" whatever it may be called, it is one of nature's greatest unexplained mysteries. When it does occur, the cause of death is recorded as "unknown".

Take these actual cases, usually fire is confined to the victim whilst the surroundings remain untouched.

22-year-old Phyllis Newcombe was happily dancing in a dance hall in 1938 when, in an instant, she was enveloped in flames before several hundred people and burned to death. The coroner decided that the woman's dress had been set alight by a cigarette.

In the summer of 1938, Mrs Carpenter was enjoying a holiday with her family, boating on the Norfolk Broads, when she was enveloped by flames and was soon reduced to ashes before the eyes of her horrified family. The family and the boat were completely untouched.

In 1943, Madge Knight burned to death in her bed in her Sussex home, yet the bedclothes were not even scorched.

In the case of Mrs Reeser of St Petersburg, USA, who spontaneously burned to death in 1957, the easy chair in which she was sitting became a pile of ash and metal springs, yet police,

soon on the scene, found her skull reduced to the size of an orange and one foot that had been untouched in a slipper.

In April 1970, an 89-year-old widow, Margaret Hogan, was found burned to death whilst sitting in her favourite armchair in her Dublin home. Although Mrs Hogan's body was reduced to ashes, the chair was not badly burned and the linoleum beneath was only slightly charred.

Another widow, Euphemia Johnson, 68, of Sydenham, London, was consumed by flames in 1922, but her clothes and room were completely undamaged.

In 1939, 11-month-old Peter Seaton, of London, was in bed when a visitor to the house rushed to his room alarmed by the boy's screams. When he opened the door he was met by a searing blast of heat. The young boy died in the flames — yet the room was hardly damaged.

It seems incredible that a human body can burst into flames without actually being set alight and continue to burn without more fuel to keep it burning. Stranger still, it seems that the phenomenon is not confined to living people, for there was the corpse of a Mrs Sattow that was consumed by fire whilst in a coffin in a locked mortuary.

These unexplained conflagrations are but a few of the many that have occurred, and, stranger still, why such intense heat can reduce a body to ashes, rarely damages the surroundings.



A Casual Analysis An Intricate and Complex Character — Sherlock Holmes

by Naina Ahmad

IT takes all sorts of people to make a world. Everyone has a definite personality. There are people who fascinate others by the presence of the elements of uncommonness and novelty of their characters. This personality or character may have a side which may seem out-of-the-ordinary and fascinate others or influence them to a certain degree.

For example, Mahatma

jolly or funny.

Sherlock Holmes is undoubtedly, a favourite among the young, adventure loving, generation. He is not a real character and yet he is. He is not an ordinary human character, God has not bestowed him with the gift of life, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has Doyle's vivid description of this character has almost

carefully sorted and categorized. Whenever I need these, I take the necessary information out, the others are left undisturbed.

He is a man of deduction. He is influenced by facts; and emotions such as fear, anger, love, hatred or joy cannot reach him. As he says, "We must not let our hearts influence our minds."

Truly, there is hardly a character like him. He is a man of drama and suspense and even though he may solve a case from the very beginning, he awaits facts to ascertain his solution and keeps his companions in the dark.

He is a man of irregular habits and controversial nature. He is calm yet very excitable. He is lazy yet very active some times over-active. We might find him one day sitting in his favourite arm chair in front of the fire place with a pipe of tobacco held between his teeth deep in concentration. His twinkling eyes and a murmur now and then indicates that a case is on hand. He is active though apparently he seems to be lazy. He may suddenly jump up, grab his cloak and arrive at the location of the crime. He frequently checks his own assumptions muttering to himself: "I thought so" and "so that figures" as he crawls around on all fours to hunt for hidden clues. He trusts no one and is not partial. As he advises, "When all else fails, the solution that is left must be the answer, however improbable it may be." Thus we see he has a wide and open mind.

Again we may see him in his rooms at Baker street with his eyes close-under the influence of heroine. He claims that during days of "no-work-to-do" and "no-scope-to-use-my-brains", heroine helps to sharpen his brain, made dull by infrequent use (what an excuse!).

We may find him at his laboratory, mixing chemicals of "not-to-pleasant" odours and heating liquids. Then, only the tingling and twanging of the test tubes and flasks can be heard and, of course, an occasional explosion or two.....

Sherlock Holmes, in spite of his absolute secrecy and reticence, may be considered as one of the most novel characters ever created and is a unique genius. All his clever deductions and wonderful reasoning enable him to be appreciated by all. Thanks to Doyle we have a complex and intricate character worth giving our attention to.

Thank you, Doyle!



Gandhi, his conviction for non-violence and truth, his truthful character has had an influence over many peoples' lives. Other may consider President Abraham Lincoln's character as an ideal for them.

But what is character? Character is the mental or moral qualities that makes one person different from another. The crown and glory of life is character. It is thus an amalgamation of a few qualities of head and heart.

Every individual has his or her favourite character. A certain person's character may impress someone but not others. The characters may be from real life or from a novel, dead or alive, serious minded,

made him come alive, at least in the minds of his readers.

Doyle depicts Sherlock Holmes as a private detective. Precise like a computer in some branches of science, he is completely ignorant in some others. Even though he remembers all criminal cases of the past years, he doesn't know whether it is the sun which moves round the earth or if it is the other way round.....

He is a genius, whose brain has a capacity to take in every tiny detail, to get rid of the unnecessary ones and to retain all the relevant ones. He describes his own brain as, "..... a store room full of information and knowledge all

A Dark New Year

by Trishna

A university teacher along with his wife and sister went to Ramna Batamul, 1st Baishakh 1401, to enjoy the function, organised every year by Chhayanaut, welcoming the New Year's Day. But when a gang of dirty-minded men abused his wife, the helpless sister of his fainted. When he protested he got beaten up.

Two friends went out to celebrate the New Year. The rickshaw stopped at a traffic signal. Suddenly one of the three rascals from another rickshaw made a swoop to kiss one of the girls. The girl was mortified with shock. Shocked were the surrounding people. For a moment Bengali culture and the new century looked lost.

Ramna's Batamul. A group of men surrounded two Dhaka University girls. Spoilt they are; spoilt is their mentality. Not a hand but a beast's paw, which harassed the girls again and again. To save themselves the girls escaped from the park by climbing up the wall. Their clothes were torn, their dream of pleasure, shattered.

But no, the incidents were not condoned. Some protested, although a very few in number. Songs, and poetry recitals were performed beside the 'panta' stalls, while hands foraged on women's body. Then some women stood their ground and retorted by punching hard and slapping on the ugly faces of those animals. There were protests but they didn't learn their lesson. So now is the time for organised protests.

The people ready to celebrate Pahela Baishakh probably didn't know what awaited

them. Enduring the scorching heat of the sun many had bought new clothes from the market. But they didn't know that those days when one could fearlessly enjoy the cultural programmes have been long lost. Nowadays Pahela Baishakh, Ekushey February, Book Fair or Baishakhi Mela mean a crowd of cheerful girls who visit there and come back home with welling eyes and torn clothes.

The males who do such shameful acts may be your father's, uncle's and also your son's age. They form a crowd according to their plan, cage a helpless girl and then in the convenient time open their masks and quench the thirst of their shameful hands, nay their prurient minds. These things happen in the presence of thousands of policemen and in broad daylight. Those vile hands are the same, hands of a father or brother's. Stalls in line and in the crowd of 'panta' sellers the women get harassed in the dirtiest way, their clothes stripped in Hindi-film style. Those two girls couldn't ride on a rickshaw as a matter of right. One of them had to bear the horrible experience of getting kissed by a stranger.

And that too at a place close to the Kakrali Mosque. This year during Pahela Baishakh more than thirty women's 'dupatta' have been snatched away and sarees pulled apart by dark hands. And more than hundred have regretted being born as females through weeping. The youth who got caught by a woman again was saved by the same woman's pity from the

public wrath. A woman is always a woman — soft-hearted and merciful. She is not as strict and determined as all the insults and embarrassment should have made her and that is why men still continue their shameful assaults. The public has cough two or three of them red-handed. But then how come they have not been made crippled, as that is what would have served them right? As a result of all this parents have decided not to let their daughters go out of the house. The fundamentalist groups clap their hands in delight and satisfaction because for them it's a dream come true. But unfortunately, the government has not yet uttered a single sentence against these happenings and those filthy men. These are no big deal for them. As if it is not a problem. There are no laws against these doings and by the time they are ignored, raping women will be seen as normal happenings as winking and whistling are nowadays. Just the way people now are used to seeing dead bodies on the roads after hard-tails and clashes.

To stop all the abuses, we better not be dependent on the law, because the law-makers are themselves involved in some cases. The answer to an abuse should be double retaliation. And to do this the women should come forward, may that be in Lorena Bobbitt's way or any other way. In future we want to spend a New Year's day in delight and safety. We wish to see smiles on every woman's face and not a shadow of shame and tears-filled eyes. We want to see proud females and not regretting ones.