



In the kiddie story The Bald Witch, Hans Christian Andersen has created a reprobate witch who turns little children into immobile stones with the wave of her hair (which I suppose acted as her magic wand). When two kiddos discover the secret, they hoodwink the witch (by what means is a rather irrelevant matter here) and used the magic hair to return the tiny tots into their previous selves.

Ah, the people of the late 20th century are so saved there's no such magic hair to assail us with any such catastrophic phenomenon, right? Wrong! 'Cos the ordinary hair alone that we do have has the capacity to dictate our life without any help of *abracadabra* or *horcus pocus* (for whatever else is left in the world of sorcery). Least of all, hair is not alone. It has so many bro's and sis's to team up with — eyebrows, eyelashes, moustache, beard, sideburn, whisker, fur (animals aren't outcasts, ok?) — you name it and it's there.

God's been so pivotal in painting hair. Hair is naturally coloured black, brown, yellow, tawny, green, blue — ha ha, just kidding (after all, why not?). But whatever colour it is, with age good of hair turns grey. Now, this is a baffling issue — say a person had yellow hair which with age began to lose colour. Now how can his/her hair be grey when, all the colour that practically exists on his, her head is a hotch-potch of yellow and white? (English, I sometimes think, has some rather preposterous ways.)

I however assure you, age is not always responsible for grey hair. Only a few days ago, I detected a white hair (okay it was grey, if that's what you prefer calling it) on my head. (Unlucky me!)

When age discolours hair, people go through anything to find a reliable hair dye (human nature is quite hypocritical, or so it seems — while kids act like adults, again adults try their utmost to disguise age).

Another thing that embitters a person's mind almost as much (or perhaps even more) efficiently is baldness. When a poor chap finds out in his 20s, his hair is falling off, apathy gets the better of him. Poor devil Little does he know that worry brings no cure, but only adds to the misery by accelerating the process. And when a mother shaves her little one's head (for whatever reason), the poor kid becomes the laughing stock of the class — the humili-

Hairy Pursuit

by Auditia Aura Aunima

ating nickname 'bellu' accompanies him every where like a sticky piece of adhesive tape. But baldness does not necessarily always act as a bugaboo for all people. For example, Buddhist Monks, Brahmins and performing Hajies all find a supernatural link between baldness and the deity. Bald also spells bold — US Marines have to go bald by military regulations. And again there is celebrated cantrix Sinead O'Connor who deliberately chooses to be a 'skinhead'.

People who have a hunky-dory amount of hair go through

voluminous efforts to acquire a hair style right for their personality (I only hope suddenly an umpteenth number of people won't decide they need a hairdo like Valdarama's to look their best).

The length of hair is a debatable issue. While modern working girls tend to have shorter hair, more and more males are going for long hair, hence when I encounter a creature in ponytail, I ponder fruitlessly whether (s)he is a 'bhैया' or a 'maiya'. Conservative society vociferously poo-hoo-poo's at

long-haired males — calling them punks. But would they care to explain the cases of hermits and ancient Chinese males? I suppose they are/were punk rockers too? Whatever they are/were, don't you try having long hair in Singapore, if you're a male — there's a strict ban and you'll end up in the cooler?

Hair that grows elsewhere is worthy of tautological talks. It may grow prominently (over a girl's lips) and it may not grow richly where needed (on the chin of an adult male). Moustache of a male reveals a lot about him. There're so many styles for it for each of the species of men — there's the aristocratic *Mirza*-type (where the ends are tilted upwards), the ludicrous Charlie-Chaplin type and the business-looking Doctor/Lawyer/VIP type (like Justice Shahabuddin's!).

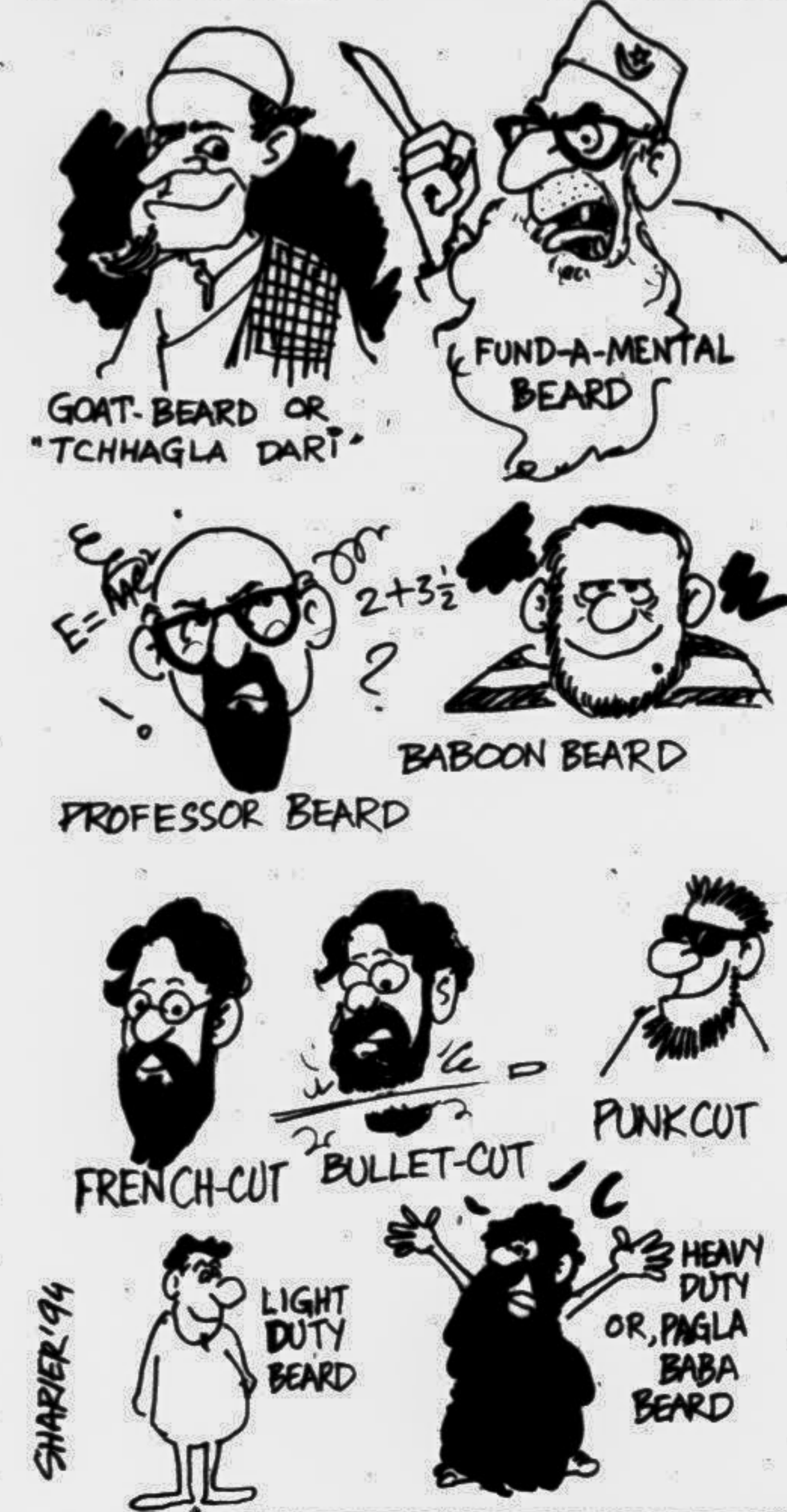
People who keep a beard keep it with style. I have a liking for Eric Clapton's beard (probably 'cos I'm infatuated?). But what about people who have a dowdy tress of hair on the chin as an infernal excuse for a beard? The sight of those people always reminds me of just one but extremely appropriate word — 'ranchagol'!

There are some women I've seen who pluck their entire eye-brows and draw comical half-moons instead (I never quite understood their sense of beauty). And then they are the butterfly *bangla* heroines who paint their eye-brows thick pitch-black (Now, how can a couple of miniature painted black 'snakes' turn on the mood of the hero? Search me!).

The hair on the head acts as a good target for displaying both positive and negative emotions. A girl may feel ecstatic when her love runs his fingers thru' her hair. And yet, the same girl, when agitated, like many people, might pull out locks of her own hair! And why small children prefer holding the hair of big sis' or mummy will always remain a mystery to me.

Let me end this endless debate by saying that hair has some other significance on our life other than just embellishing physical appearance or indicating personality. Hair plays a role on measurements (though only verbally) — when a person mentions something of hairs-breadth, he/she unknowingly refers to a width of 1/4800 of an inch. Some measurements, huh?

BEARD SAYS IT ALL



Friendship

by Kazi K Arafat

Friendship — it's a tender gift

Of Heaven, not of Hell — is the easiest load to lift And helps us lead our lives well.

Friendship is no conundrum —

It's as serene as it is good; It's part of life's curriculum

Of Happiness, it's the food.

Friendship is for human beings

And for animals.

Unlike all other deceitful things —

It's all true, and never false.

So let us now join our hands And pray aloud to God —

That we can be as together As the peas in a Pod.

by Manwar Islam

Khan (Rumi)

SUCCESSIVE success make a man great. But it is very painstaking to acquire success. No doubt, regular study, industry and honesty is the key to success but in spite of this there is another thing which can spin life in two ticks. That's 'Friends'.

Though I have earnest longing to define of 'friends' but I can't. It is unknown to me. But according to Oxford dictionary he is one's friend whom one knows and likes well. Life is such a place where unmindful persons stumble at every step. On the path of life, many type of hindrance can come and go like rains and clouds. The presence of a real friend decreases the burden of sorrow. Only a true friend can appease the mental agony in that hostile circumstances. The great poet Tennyson remarked 'Make new friends. But keep the old. If these are silver, those are gold.'

If you ask me a question, what qualities should real friends possess? My answer is simple. They do not need to possess any great quality. Friendship, in fact, is a matter of understanding — understanding between two people. Making friendship is not so easy as it seems to be. By sowing seeds of suspicion in the heart, one can live anyhow on the earth but can never extend amicable hands. In fact, slightest doubt can annihilate friendship. A venomous serpent is better than a traitor, as a close friend.

'Hatred ceases not by hatred but by love' — should be our slogan. We have to make friends and remember the maxim by Dr Johnson — Friendship is a burning candle. Let it die. It gives that happiness and success which money cannot buy.

Fatal Attraction

by Shahed Latif

solace to my doomed self, now I am an addict.

After I became addicted to drugs I found that my academic status was going down, then one day I found that I couldn't even get the passing marks. From that day on I stopped studying, but my father still sends me money and he had written not to worry about money if need be he would sell everything he has but I must get educated. What my father does not know that I am a drug addict, a terrorist, and earn enough to buy back his lost lands.

What ever money my father sends me I use it for drugs.



Recently I need it frequently so I have started mugging people. I take their hard earned money, their belongings to pacify my violent urges. One day, one of my friend and I stopped a businessman near Moghbazar. He said that this was his first earning and begged us not to take away his money, but we were determined and my friend stabbed him in several places, before taking the briefcase. We started running, clinging to the bag, as if it ours. Next day on the paper we read that he was dead.

This is what drugs did to me, for my own need I killed a man. He is someone's son like me, maybe he has a brother like mine, maybe he had a sister and maybe he was married and had children. I have orphaned the woman and I have snatched him away from his parents — just for my addiction.

Now-a-days I cannot even go to the University to meet my old friends because my name has been registered in the police diary. A few days back there was a gun battle at the University in which two students were killed by some-

one else, but in the police diary, it is my name. The police is looking for me everywhere, and I am on the run.

I have written to my father back home that I have left the hostel because of too much violence, when actually his own son is a wanted man. What will happen if my father comes to know about it? What will happen if my mother? She has already lost her speech, after Rehman died and now if she knows about me then I am not sure now she will bear this. I have been cheating my father, my mother and myself mercilessly.

Most of my friends who took me into this world have given up drugs and now they are fully cured. But I could not come out from this. And I think now it is too late, I can not come out of this world, maybe I will not either. I wanted to have a good life, that is why I came to Dhaka. My father gave me everything he had, now we have nothing. I can never forgive myself. I am guilty of the sins I committed. I am guilty of being tempted.

I would like to say to my young readers and the new generation never, for the sake of fun take drugs, never touch it even for one day because will pay with life for such desire. You are the hope for tomorrow. Always remember that life, it comes only once, enjoy it, love it and live it.

The Little Black Bear

by Lubaina Choudhury

The naughty black bear Had to swear. Not to be naughty again But he could not Keep his promise. So he had to Get a beating again.



My Tragic Life

by Tarannum Laila

I was born in a small town called Ripon. The shoe-maker created me with a lot of care, and the result was wonderful. I looked quite elegant in my navy blue leather skin. I felt good in my court shape and was proud to know that I was latest in style.

But as I was expensive, nobody in that little town could afford to buy me. I waited six long months in the shoe-shop, by then, my price had fallen and I was feeling quite left out.

Once an Asian lady, who was very slim and pretty, came towards me. I was so excited that I fell off her hands. She picked me up gently and tried me on. She liked me as I was comfortable, as well as elegant and bought me without hesitation. I was shut in a box and then taken outside in a poly-bag. It was so dark inside the box, that I didn't know what was going on. Till my mistress reached home.

Light flooded through the box. My mistress was getting ready for a party. After she finished dressing she put me on. Oh! She was going to take me to a party. For the next half hour I was not so delighted as my mistress kept walking and I felt cold everytime my face was slapped to the ground. Finally, she reached the house. Inside, I could smell delicious dishes and soon, learned a lot about my mistress.

Her name is Sumaiya. She was a young student studying in Leeds University on Accounting. She wanted to be a Chartered Accountant. Life with Sumaiya was delightful in summer as she walked with me on the soft green grass of the park. But the best part, was whenever she had any ice-cream she would offer me

some, even if it happened accidentally. Sumaiya was kind, she took a lot of care of me. Once, she went shopping and bought a blue sundress just to match my colour.

The golden and crisp summer days were gone too soon. I had to get ready to survive through the harsh autumn and winter winds. The weather soon became horrifying as I had to tread on a lot of dirty brown leaves and muddy water. But then there was more to come my toe-caps were about to burst and the warm lining inside me had worn off. I was in a bad shape.

Suddenly, the tragic news of Sumaiya's dad's death, arrived. He was in her home country, Bangladesh. My mistress cried and cried. She had to leave to look after her family properties in Bangladesh. Her dad had died before her exams. If she had given the exams then she would have had her degree. But now, a big responsibility hung over her head. She had to leave. So, she left me, too.

This time in a bin bag filled with the things she had used in the previous year. She took the bag near the bin and dumped me in. I heard a car zooming past me. Sumaiya must have cried a lot before leaving, she had to leave a very bright future ahead of her.

Well, there's not much of a future left for me either. I am dying now. I have felt and shared the joys and sorrows of a student during my lifetime. Even though I don't have a heart but I feel something pounding in my chest and as if it is going to break. I wish I could look at the sky, the green and then die breathing fresh air.

The Horror of That Night

by Farhana Yusuf

THE lightning flashed and jerked me back to consciousness. Rubbing my eyes, the first thing that struck me was that I was sitting in an upright position with my seatbelt on. Before I could question myself as to how I came to be in such an obnoxious position, the torrential rain beating outside my window pane took my memory back to the time when I had the accident.

I was travelling pretty fast as it was a solitary road. I increased my speed and drove on until a truck came with equal speed from the opposite direction. I swerved the car to avoid the truck just as its powerful headlights focused right into my eyes. My image blurred and then the next thing I know my car toppled over and bounced like they show in movies and hit a tree. And then everything went black.

I must've hit my head hard because blood was trickling down from my forehead. Clicking off the seatbelt and releasing myself I groped my way out of the battered car and looked around for the first time. You can imagine that what I saw before me was not very reassuring or satisfactory for that matter. It was dark and I was standing in a kind of clearing just beside the road. All around there were thick trees all dark and dreary and in the midst of all these lay a narrow lane.

I figured that if I could follow the track and fortunately find a shelter for the night it would be much more wiser than sitting beside the roadside waiting to be rescued. God knew when. By this time I was soaked to the skin and water was dripping from my sweater.

As I took a few steps towards the lane praying desperately that I might find some help, lightning flashed over my head and thunder boomed like cannon in the silent night. I had already entered the narrow lane and had gone a little further when something made me realize that I was not alone. I hugged myself hard and looked around. No one.

I tried to ignore this uncomfortable feeling and walk on but the same emotion kept crawling back to my mind. It was as if when I walked somebody or something walked behind me and when I stopped, it stopped. After going a little further, my heart jumped with joy at the sight of a two-storeyed house. All the lights were on, so I didn't have to grope my way through the short range of stairs to the porch. When I reached the door a sweet and polite voice like that of an old lady told me 'come in'. Mind you, reader, I didn't expect the direct 'come in', rather I was prepared for a series of 'who is it?' and 'what do you want?'.

In any case I pushed the door open and went in. Expecting to see someone there I was baffled to find the hallway empty. I said, 'Hello! Is Anybody there?' No answer. But from the room opposite there came the sound of TV in high volume. Sighing with relief, I prepared myself for an encounter and this time opened the door without knocking. Oh dear! What I saw took my breath away. The TV was off, the room was absolutely quiet but the cushions in

the sofa were arranged as if someone had just been sitting there.

Not hesitating I shut the door and began to think. Hmph! Then I bellowed out loud: 'Look, is this some kind of a hide and seek game you're playing, huh?' 'Cos if you are I'm in no mood to join. I just had an accident, got myself injured, am soaked to the skin and about to catch pneumonia. We can perhaps play when I'm in a much more presentable condition,' silence greeted me.

Then came the smell of food — delicious food and there was the sound of dishes being removed as if someone was busy cooking. Exasperated, nevertheless eager and hungry under the circumstances I entered the kitchen only to find it empty without even a stove. 'Oh boy, am I starting to hallucinate?' I asked myself as I went upstairs.

Readers, you may imagine me foolish to have such thoughts under the circum-

stances, but I did feel like a character out of a Walt Disney cartoon. What was it called? Goldilocks and the Three Bears? That's it, yes! Only here, there weren't any bears, here I thought suddenly. Through the only bedroom door, came the sound of music — soft and soothing music.

Following the same style I went and as usual there was no music. The bedroom was practically empty except a chest of drawers and a bed which seemed just slept in. This time I really got suspicious and scared when I heard the sound of shower running in the bathroom. Taking my last chances I opened the door and yes!! the same thing happened — the shower was running alright but there was nobody under it.

This has got to be it! There must be some kind of a spirit or ghost in this house. This is a haunted house. I was shaking so hard that I hardly knew how I found my way out, as I came out running. I heard shrilling laughter echoing louder and louder and I covered my ears and ran. I hadn't stopped running until I reached my battered car — back where I had started from.

I was still shaking like a leaf as I realized that it was almost dawn. It was a miracle that I didn't get slaughtered by the ghost or goblin or whoever or whatever the hell it was.

This is 12 months after that fateful night. Still there hasn't been a single night when I didn't go to bed without the thought of the flash of lightning, the booming of thunder, the headlights of the truck, my accident, the journey to the haunted house and that night.

Wasting

by Sadia Karim

Some poor, some rich Some poor, some rich. Not a single piece of bread Or a shawl, beautiful and red.

But look at us with food and clothes —

We are wasting much food And throwing away clothes.

Try not to waste a single bit. Once you have done it, You will see a magical thing.

PLANET PROFILE

Name: Jupiter

REVOLVING round the Sun, but at much greater distances from it than the Earth, are the four great planets Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune.

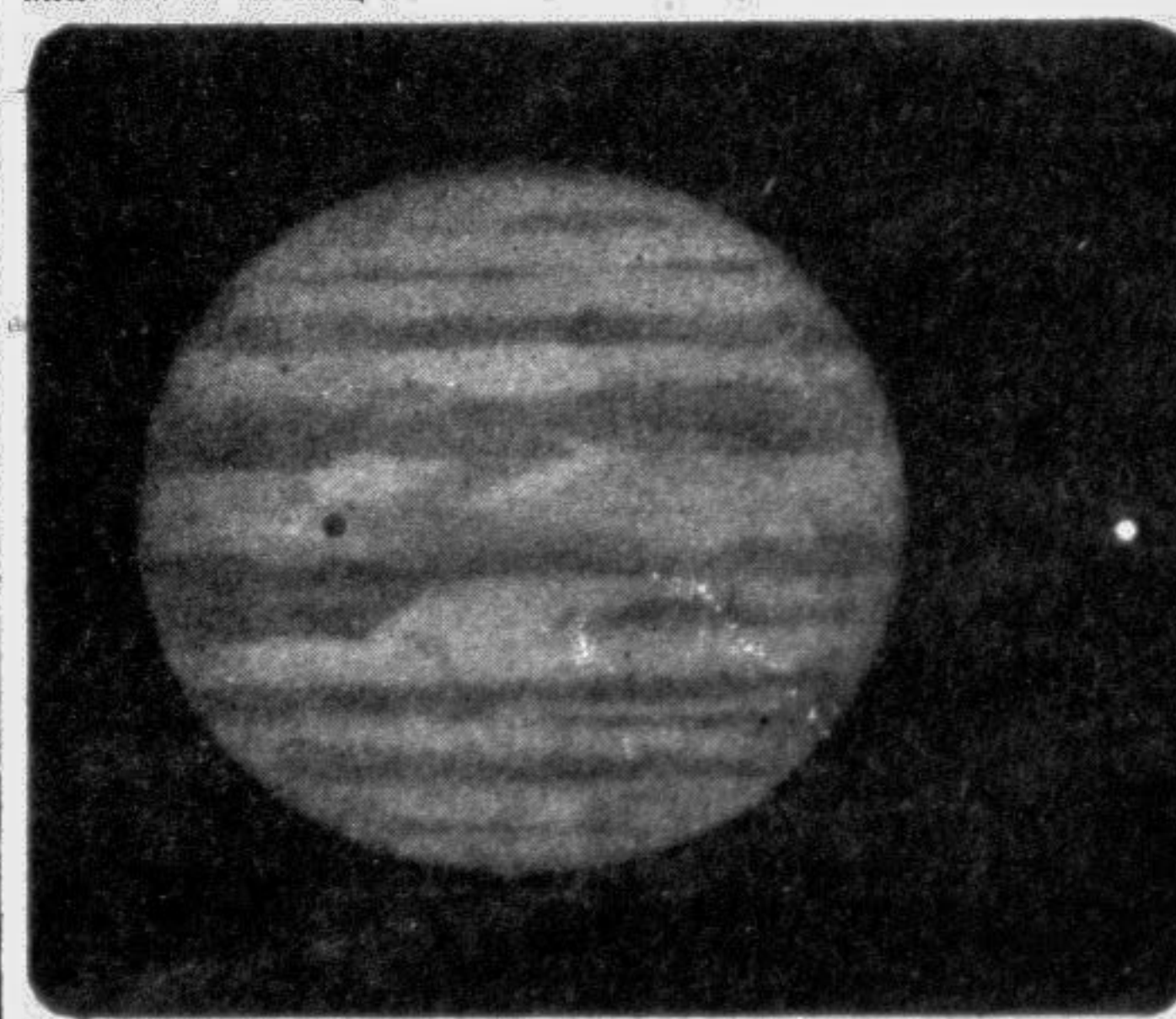
Jupiter is the biggest planet — it is bigger than all the others put together, and equal in volume to 1,312 Earths. Because of its enormous weight it has a very powerful force of gravity, and this means that if you could land on Jupiter from a space-ship you would find yourself so heavy that you would hardly be able to get about. A twelve-stone man would weigh a quarter of a ton on Jupiter, and if he once lay down he would probably be unable to get up again.

This great force of gravity also means that the atmosphere at the surface of Jupiter is very dense — so much so that you would have difficulty in moving about in it.

You could not breathe it, either, for it consists chiefly of ammonia and another poisonous gas called methane (found in coal mines). The temperature on Jupiter is about 300° F. below zero, so you would not expect to find any liquid water there, though there is probably plenty of ice.

It is now thought that the solid, rocky planet of Jupiter is much smaller than it appears, and that it is overlain by ice many thousands of miles thick.

Above that comes the dense atmosphere, full of clouds of ammonia droplets and frozen crystals, so that the sky is never visible from the surface of the planet. The attendant family of twelve bright moons which circle about Jupiter would never be seen by anybody on the planet — though we can see half of them quite clearly from the Earth!



Jupiter, with one moon and the shadow of another clearly visible. Courtesy The Wonder Books of Wonders