

RISING STARS

Only a Joke

by Susmita Roy

"TANDRA, are you sure it's a good idea?" asked Shelly in a concerned voice, while stooping over to watch Tandra at her work. "Sheesh, sure I'm sure, you fool," Tandra cried in exasperation. Only Tandra called Shelly names like fool, Garu (cow), Dum Dum and what not but she didn't mind. She'd been Tandra's best friend for seven years and she knew Tandra like the back of her hand — and a little better.

Tandra might mutate people's names, and tease vulnerable boys but she had a warm heart and was a room-brightener. She was always full of schemes and had countless tricks up her sleeves but Shelly was in doubt whether the prank of the anonymous valentine card would be such a good idea, specially because it would be sent to Mumu. Now Mumu was different. She never took things lightly and it took absolutely ages for a joke to penetrate her ears and tickle those auditory nerves. However, both Shelly and Tandra liked the quiet back-bencher who was branded by Tandra as a harmless baby elephant.

Tandra agilely picked up the folded piece of paper she was writing in and frowned at it critically with her head tilted at a specific angle. Her witty eyes instantly knew the defect. Being an amateur artist she swiftly drew a plump heart into which she shot an arrow. There, now you may comment on my master piece, Miss Worry-head. Tandra archly looked at Shelly who now skeptically eyed the 'masterpiece'. The valentine card was indeed well-done and even Shelly would have fallen for the joke had she been the victim. Besides the red heart the card contained lines which seemed to radiate masculinity and truth:

Mumu, my love,
My heart has ached for you since the day you captured it with your lonesome look and warm smile. You'll be my Valentine forever and forever....

Your Admirer,
Shelly looked at the wicked eyed Tandra who was suppressing excitement and amusement. Tandra was hopeless; she'd never grow up. Shelly sighed. It was never any use advising the pig-headed girl who always had her own way. Tandra was off in a jiffy towards Mumu's desk. No one was to be seen in the room. The timing was perfect. Mumu noiselessly walked into the classroom just as Tandra turned round to face the door after having slipped the card in between the pages of Mumu's maths book.

Mission completed! Tandra mused to herself as she greeted her classmate in her usual joyful manner. Tandra had only climbed a few steps when her instinct told her to turn back and have a peep at Mumu who might have discovered the passionate Valentine card by then. And as if Tandra had the sharpest instinct ever, she found Mumu staring unbelievably at the red heart on the card. The plump white cheeks of the girl had flushed red like two ripe tomatoes, white eyes gleamed with pleasure and surprise as they went over and over the lines written in the card. As if she was being watched, Mumu hastily looked around the room and relieved to find no one, she returned her attention to the piece of folded paper which had made her head spin. Tandra who had by that time skillfully shifted to an inconspicuous position was busy stifling a giggle, hands on mouth. It was the most hilarious thing she'd seen in ages. It was the best joke of the year! She couldn't

believe how gullible Mumu was. That wonderful poor creature had actually kissed that card and put it lovingly into her pocket! Tandra couldn't believe her eyes. Before she burst into a fit of laughter once more, she escaped into the bathroom to shed her happy tears.

That night Tandra tossed in her bed and wondered if Mumu would be tossing and turning sleeplessly in her own bed thinking about her first ever valentine card. She'd be dying



to know who her anonymous knight in shining armour was. Lord, if only she knew Tandra grinned, "but the real fun's going to be when I tell her the truth!" Tandra involuntarily felt a little bad about playing such a practical joke on someone as nice as Mumu but it was only a silly harmless prank, wasn't it? Tandra tried to 'sleep off' the feeling. Tandra, I'd like to confide to you about something... Mumu privately told Tandra the next morning, "you're almost my only true friend, and I know you keep secrets... er... it's about this Valentine card I got yesterday." Mumu with an embarrassed look told Tandra how she felt special for being cared for and admired. Tandra listened solemnly as Mumu talked on endlessly. By the time Mumu had finished, Tandra understood how seriously Mumu had taken the card and how strongly she felt about it. Tandra had decided to conclude the joke by telling Mumu the truth and had been sure about having a good laugh over it at the end.

But now, Tandra was perplexed. Her head was in a turmoil, as she thought about the consequences of telling Mumu the truth, the hard truth that it was she, Tandra who had played such a cruel joke on her. How would her friend take it? It would be so unfair to shatter her dreams — to tell her that no knight had actually wanted to carry her off to dreamland. Maybe it would be best not to tell Mumu at all. No, Tandra wouldn't be able to live with that burden of guilt weighing down on her. "Ugh! Tandra sat up in her bed that night. I can't bear even thinking about what a horrid thing I've done." On the morning of the 16th February, Tandra walked up to Mumu who was sitting alone in the common room. Mumu looked up in surprise at the intruder and quickly hid the folded paper she'd been looking at. Tandra had a burning gaze in her eyes which were tired from the want of sleep. "Give me that card," she ordered harshly. Before Mumu knew what was happening, Tandra snatched her beloved Valentine card and had torn it into a hundred pieces. Tandra took Mumu's face in her hands and spoke softly, "It was only a joke, you silly creature, only a joke!" Tandra fled from the room in unhappy tears.

Dilip Kumar — the Legend of Today and Tomorrow

by Rabeth Khan

SOME people really let their presence be known in the minds of others Dilip Kumar is such a person. Yes, the Dilip Kumar who ruled the film-world of the sub-continent for a very long time.

His sudden visit to Bangladesh created rippling waves throughout the country. Just when the country was in a deep political crisis, his arrival served as a perfect reprieve from the exhaustive monotony. From the early 40's Dilip Kumar started his colourful career which then stretched for the next two decades or so. He was then the undisputed king of Bollywood. His famous films include 'Anand', 'Aan', 'Daag', 'Ganga Jamuna' and others, which still today have the power to rock our hearts.

Members of the young generation (like me) haven't really been lucky to see this legendary figure at his best. Though some of the youngsters had a chance to see him by the courtesy of video cassettes. But naturally one thing was evident, that Dilip Kumar didn't have a large number of young fans. Surely Shahrukh or Amitabh would have been clear winners in that respect. The youngsters would also be a bit surprised to hear that, both Shahrukh and Amitabh rate Dilip Kumar as one of the best they have seen.

Initially I wasn't very interested to meet Dilip Kumar, but as time wore on, I thought that it would be a memorable experience to meet one of the cinema greats. So accordingly after a lot of hassle, I finally managed to get ten minutes for an interview with the star.

Putting on my best outfit I proceeded to Sheraton, where Dilip Kumar had been staying at 5.00 pm sharp. Within a few minutes, he met me and after a little introduction, my short interview began. The first question I asked to him was, what the current status of Indian films was. He said that the general standard of both film and acting have gone down with of course a few exceptions. He pointed two reasons for this decline. One was, because of the cheap stories and excessive violence and the other was that the stars of this generation are too eager to acquire their own house, car as easily as possible. In those days, he said getting to the top position was very difficult and then staying there for a long time needed consistent acting skills. When I asked him if he was satisfied with his career, he replied with an elegant smile, "I have done what I could and I am satisfied with it. But rating my acting skills has always been a work of the public." I asked him to evaluate the position of the Bengali film industry. He replied, "I have been very busy in the past and so I can't give a clear opinion, but as far as I know it is slowly up the ladder. It should come up, because cinema is still the main source of public entertainment. And greater development can be made in life and society using this popularity of cinema."

Going over to a different area, I asked him whether he wants to join entertainment business, like another famous figure Amitabh Bacchan who runs his own entertainment

TV channel ATN. He replied, "Look, I am sure that you know, I have directed a few films and am closely associated with the Film Industry. But I haven't yet decided to join entertainment business or to become a director." As my scheduled time was already over, I asked him a rather unexpected question: if he was planning to open an acting school so that someday some aspiring young actor would be able to follow his footsteps to stardom after his death. At first he quipped with smile, "Hey young man, am I too old now that I have to think of death? But really I haven't thought of setting up any school. I am eager to pull myself as long as I can and think of the school at the appropriate time."

My last question to him was to give his opinion on his visit to Bangladesh. Dilip Kumar replied, "I am very happy and lucky to come to your country. I will never ever forget the warm love and respect shown to me. It is unfortunate that my wife Sara couldn't come. But surely, we will come here again when I am free. I really hope that the attitude of love, peace and friendship of the people and the country stays the same." With these words, I thanked him for giving his valuable time and wished for his wellbeing. I looked at his watch and found out that I had been speaking for more than twenty minutes without being aware of it. Even time had to bow to this great individual. The sweet melody 'chupake pyarka ujjan, le chole' will always ring in our ears. Hope to see you again, Dilip Kumar.

I N 1989 when almost all my close friends joined the same school, South Breeze, I was delighted as then, good or bad whatever it would be, we'd be able to share it. The first day of class-VI was not as horrifying as the first day of school but it was again different. There were strangers turning back from the front seats and staring, some asking names and other details about ourselves, teachers talking in friendly tones which was not quite usual in my previous school and many other incidents.

Months later, our naughtiness broke out of its shell and we got prepared for turning into a bunch of trouble makers. Except for the Principal, I don't remember another teacher who failed to fall the victim of our naughty acts. I remember the whole class getting scolded terribly by a teacher for throwing ink at her and making an irritating noise out of a device that one of us had, thus interrupting her lecture. Since she had already suspected our gang, this time we did the same with a substitute teacher. He would throw small pieces of chalk at any student who failed to answer his question in the class. The most hilarious incident that still dwells in my mind about him is the one that happened before our science fair. Me and two of my other best friends were in the lab taking help from that particular sir for our project. He was to show us an experiment and then we were to follow him. He did something wrong and the whole apparatus exploded with a loud sound. We were all, safe from any injuries but the Principal did not let him go without a few of her straight yet sharp words. As he got scolded, the three of us were busy enjoying a good, stomach-aching laughter.

In school, our class was soon the most talked-about one, being the most pestering bunch. Everyday our class had the least number of pupils wearing ties (which was compulsory), the greatest number bunking games and hence the

"LOOK, Anuragh, I really can't help you in these matters. You know how I detest romance!"

"But, Michi, this time I'm really, truly, desperately in love, and without your help, I don't know how to make her look at me twice!"

"How can I help you when I don't even know what kind of guy a girl likes? I've never felt that way — and you know that. But I think plastic surgery might help..."

"I'm not in the mood for jokes. I need your help, and you just turn away. Some sister I've got!"

"Remember, I'm not your sister, I'm your cousin, therefore, I have no responsibility over you. But if you really love your frog princess so badly, then you can phone my friend Tushi, she's an expert in such things."

"Okay, What's her number?"

"Can't they at least wait until I've finished the story?"

The phone had been ringing for five minutes, and, as always, in the middle of the comic. There was nobody home, and Tushi had a hard time in persuading the elderly maidservant that the telephone was not a stereo which played "modern music".

Mad at whoever the persistent caller was, she put down the Jughead Jones Double Digest and picked up the receiver.

"Hello."

"Hello, is this 387032?"

"Yes, Who's speaking, please?"

"I'm a cousin of Tushi's friend Michi, can I please speak to her?"

"Hi! I'm Tushi, and you must be Anuragh. Michi told me

about your plight. You've got my complete sympathy. I know how it feels to be spurned by someone you hold so dear...."

"Well, are you prepared to help me?"

"I'll see what I can do. Listen, I'm pretty busy right now. Can you call me later?"

"Sure thing. Bye till then!"

Anuragh did call later, like Tushi told him to. Not only did he call, but he also sent her a card on Valentine's Day to thank her for helping him get his Valentine.

Missing South Breeze

by Trishna

greatest number of students getting punished. For the yearly magazine that year, the ones caught without ties the greatest number of times, were made to write an article dealing with ties as a punishment. The articles were eventually printed but fortunately without the writers' names which thus saved them from getting swallowed by the parents."

Then gradually the years passed by and with time we had become from naughty to devilish. Often we would place a pin on the teacher's chair and when he/she sat on it — Ouch! Once we had powdered chalk and put it on the blades of the fan. Then to save ourselves from our own trick, the ones sitting close to it shifted at the back. When the fan was switched on by the unfortunate 'not-so-liked' teacher, I guess you can imagine what had happened. The consequences — whole class

punished or taken to the Headmistress.

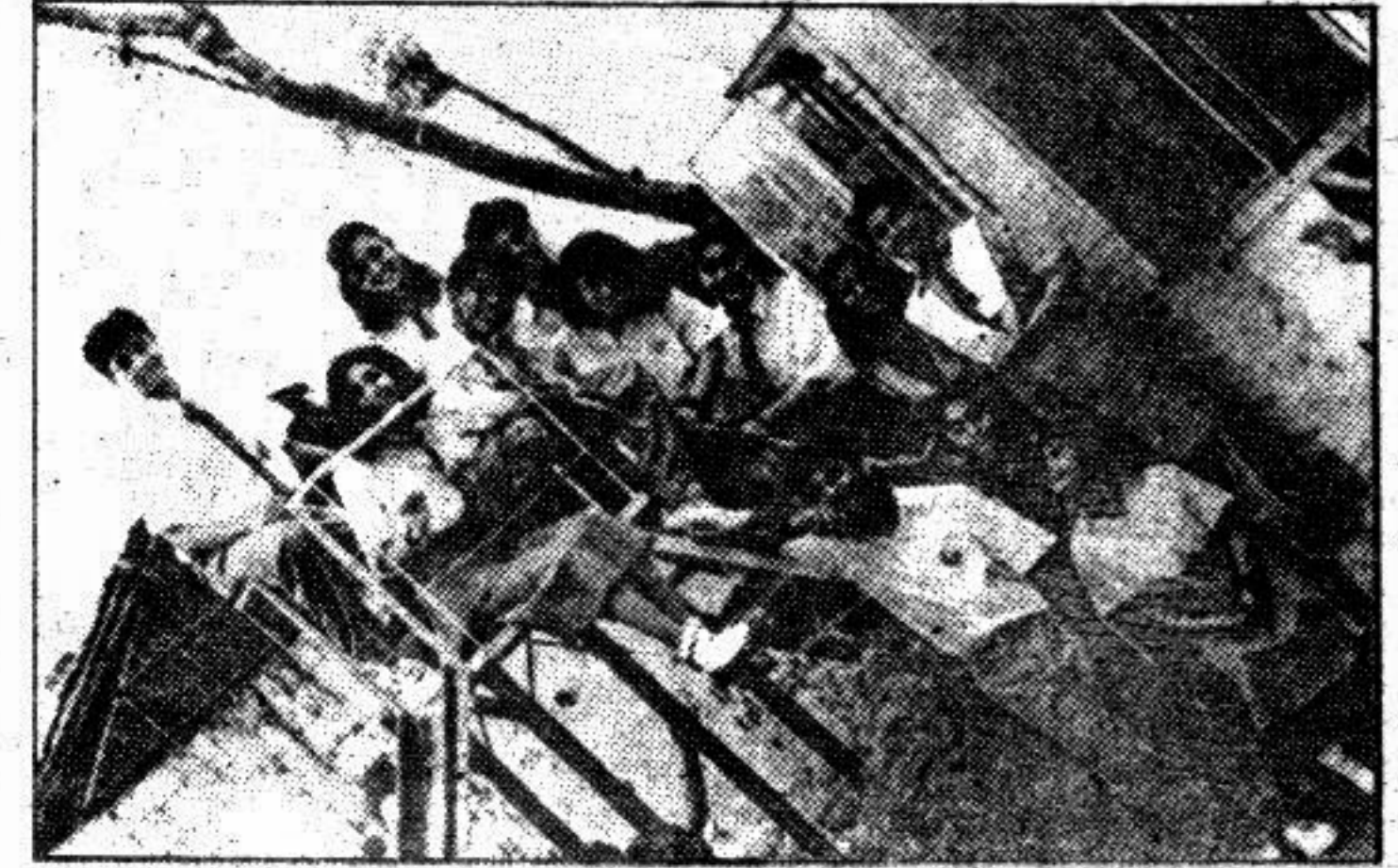
In 1990, a play, 'Cinderella' was acted out with perfection by some of the students. During the rehearsals for the function that followed, we got friendly with our seniors. But we didn't play any pranks on them and after all, there was a special flavour in bugging the teacher. So we remained in quite good terms. The most hilarious part of the play was that one of my best male friends had to dress up as a girl to play the role of Cinderella's step-sister. Even today he blushes at the very mention of that.

1991 was the most monotonous one with giving farewell to the seniors who had become good pals of ours and getting tired of playing tricks. But then came the following year — 1992, which brought us the golden days and the best time of our life. In the month of October, our class,

i.e. Class IX and X were taken to Sylhet from school. Every bit of the journey, the stay and the place was, in one word — marvellous. Its difficult or rather impossible to describe how much fun we had and how happy we were there. The teachers were more like friends

except for a noted one who couldn't stop finding faults in our doings. But nevertheless, that didn't really bother any of us from enjoying. Those four days were the best days of my life and I owe it all to South Breeze.

1993, was the end of everything — the practical jokes and hence the punishments, the shoutings, the exams, the homework, the glares of the teachers, the dos and don'ts, the monotonous classes, the



Childhood and happy at South Breeze



South Breeze — the walls which enclose sweet memories

tedious sports days, the rehearsals for functions and what not? At that moment it seemed like a relief to be rid of all those. But surprisingly, today when I'm sitting among a class full of new faces in college, it is those very things that miss. If only I had known that those bitter yet sweet things would make me thirsty for their presence once again, in my life. Now they are all memories to be cherished and the days are forgotten though moments remembered. The faces I used to see everyday hardly come in front of me once a month! Today I notice changes in some, while the rest, still are the same. Our surroundings have changed, the people around have changed and so has attitude, with time. But we all have the same sweet memories in our hearts from which nothing can divide us, no matter where we are and how. We all have our own South Breeze to be remembered — forever.

The Phone Friendship

by Kazi Khaled Arafat

fire guarantee of her perfection.

So, being quite smart, he was always able to devise a reason to call her.

He buzzed so often that his friends took to teasing him about falling for girls he hadn't even seen. (And in a way they were right.) He telephoned so regularly that even his aunt, Michi's mother, who doted upon him as if he was a baby, found reason 'enough to show her disapproval. His parents, being very lenient, just smiled.

"Our son is growing up." "But look at the phone bill!"

And what about Tushi's parents? Tell me, how does the father or mother of a teenage girl feel when his or her daughter answers the phone everyday, and say "Hi,

so-and-so boy!" If the guys were different, it wouldn't matter much. But the same boy, daily! There should be a limit!

"Tushi, tell him that there should be no more phone calls here."

Obediently, Tushi conveyed the message. However, instead of telling Anuragh directly, she gave the message to Michi to pass on to the guilty party. The message was duly delivered — not only to Anuragh but also to many enraged ears.

His parents gave him hell, his family scolded him, and his friends kept on teasing him. His pride was lost, and the only way to recover it, he thought, was to take revenge, starting from crank-calling to slandering to dirty-letter-writing, he left nothing untried. His last piece was a letter that ended with "yours vindic-

tively", and included the lyrics of Slayer's "213":

"Sadistic acts a love so true
Absorbingly masticating a part of you
Death loves final embrace
Your cool tenderness
Memories keep love alive
Memorial will never die".

The next day he dialed 387032. The sweet day in spite of the cold.

"Hell, Tushi, I've got to tell you something."

"I'm all ears."

"I wanted to say sorry for my beastliness. It was all my fault, but I never admitted it. It was my falling in love, my phoning for help, my continuation of the phone calls that landed you in trouble, and I'm feeling very bad about that. Will you forgive me?"

"I have to say sorry, too, Anuragh. I should have told you directly to stop calling, instead of causing what I caused."

"Anyway, we're friends now, the hostilities have ceased, and we will all live happily ever after."

"We'll talk later. Bye!"

"There's just one thing, Tushi. Valentine's Day is coming up, and I need your advice. I have a crush on a girl who doesn't know that I exist. What shall I do?"

"You have my complete sympathy. I know how it is to be spurned by someone you hold so dear...."

"Well, are you prepared to help me?"

"I'll see what I can do. Listen — I'm pretty busy right now. Can you call me later?"

"Sure thing. Bye till then!"

Anuragh did call later, like Tushi told him to. Not only did he call, but he also sent her a card on Valentine's Day to thank her for helping him get his Valentine.



Crazy World

by Tasin Ahmed

warriors' think thrice to take any preventful act against the Serbs. They regard the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina as an internal affair an excuse to remain silent. They don't even care to prove themselves as the superior as they already think they are through mined mottos. When an innocent child, dies they search for his community. For an instance they do feel the pain but very soon get over it.

Yet these same people find the O J Simpson case more interesting and important than the death of hundreds of civilians. When Kashmir burns, they remain silent. When Babri Mosque is at-

But when the question of survival comes, when we face the hard task of reality that we will have to save them, our true faces are exposed.

When we see countries change their views — dividing the people of this world with the help of a communal knife — we really feel hopeless and shameful when Iraq invaded Kuwait, there was not much for the leaders of the foreign countries to think about rather than jump to their feet and prepare for the war. There motto seems to stand for establishing peace through war, through the deaths of innocent people — people who don't belong to their class, their community, or religion. But these same foreign

tacked, they remain speechless. But when writers like Taslima Nasreen or Salman Rushdi write anything about a religion that seems to threaten the West they open their half-closed eyes and find it really interesting. The search for human rights and the need for establishing peace in this world and bringing communal harmony through the world suddenly arises in their hypocritical minds. What a shame for this beautiful world and for the people existing here. Organisations such as Unicef, Unesco, Nato, OIC seem to be

in a fantasy world; when the decision is taken to lift the arms embargo from a particular community for example, a certain country decides to withdraw its troops from the UN mission. What a shame that is!

This world was supposed to be different. Different organisations were established with the intention of bringing harmony through the world and to wash away the communal dirt from the heart of every person belonging to every community.

But when we watch the present world — we shiver. A thought arises in our mind — Is this world a ruthless world and have we all gone crazy?

Happy Valentine's Day
to all you Rising Stars readers!