

RISING STARS

JOURNEY THROUGH WILDERNESS

Cringing... I went on the alarm clock. The boisterous sound rang beside my ears, breaking through the silence of the early morning. I opened my eyes to welcome another new day. With the maximum reluctance, I managed to raise myself from the easy bed and after prolonged stretching, went for washing.

After getting ready for college, I come out of the room to see my mother set the breakfast table. A cup of milk and slices of bread lied there on the table for me to swallow and put them inside my stomach which, at that moment, contained no sign of appetite. After I finally finished eating, I took my books and bags while my mother followed me to the door and whispered prayers as she waved goodbye.

As I stepped out of the door, a different world awaited me. It was a world which was in no way similar to the one I just had left behind — a world which could build me or destroy me. I noticed the boy next-door peeping through the newspaper, he was reading, sitting in his balcony and enjoying a cup of tea. Then after having a glimpse of this figure, he smiled, rather annoyingly (as his favourite sport gear walked away.)

I walked through the narrow lane lined with tall, green trees, towards the main street, in search of a rickshaw. I passed a few of those little shops that sell tea and cigarettes. Melodious whistles reached my ears and I complimented them in silence. They surely were experts at making the music; it definitely required a lot of practice, and that I knew they did, now and then at the very sight of one of my kind. On the main street, I came across rickshaw-pullers smiling mysteri-

ously and asking or rather insisting me to ride in their vehicle.

Getting up on one, I tell him, the puller, to put up the hood as I, being a girl, feel safe and much more secured to have a shelter over my head. As the vehicle advances towards my college, a car with two passengers pass by my rickshaw. One of them turns to discover what is under the shelter and then a few moments later, from nowhere it appears beside me again. This time one whistles while the other puts out a dirty finger through the window. I sit wondering what pleasure they could have obtained from that inane act.

Finally I reach my college and paying the puller, I enter the gate which introduces me to yet another new world. Boys and girls scattered all around the area. Some carrying books, some rushing to classrooms, some disappearing behind trees, some chasing girls with flowers or letters and some just sitting idle ready for attacking their preys. As I pass by them with trembling feet and a frightened heart, they throw a paper plane at me and then burst into guffaw. Others take the trouble of turning to see what is going on. Then they continue whatever they were doing. Later, I join my friends and enter my classroom.

After long hours of monotonous lectures, the final bell rang at last saying goodbye to my classmates. I set for home immediately. I felt much relieved when I reached there. It is probably at such a time, that is after harassments, teasings, boring classes and torturous heat of the outer world, when you taste the unparalleled sweetness of home. At the lunch table, my mother announces that she needs to

go to the super market and I would have to accompany her. Even though I was fatigued and unwilling to go to such a repugnant place, I had to agree to what she said. A couple of hours later, my mother hurried me to get dressed. That ended my rest and obeying her I headed straight towards my wardrobe.

We went out of the house in the evening and walked down the lane in search of rickshaws. On the street many cars

crowd of hundreds from one shop to another until my mother could make up her mind. At times, people would push up hard and pass by without an apology, well then again, it is not necessary in case of intentionally committed mistakes. Suddenly a paw crept up my back and I turned back to discover a man — smiling as if we had been acquaintances when finally we came out, the air felt much refreshing and cleaner.

As soon as we entered, my father complained about us taking so long and staying out till dark, etc. etc. mother, ignoring his sayings, started her stories, about the crowd, the traffic jam, and the high price of the items. I walked to my room for some rest after washing and changing. I picked up the newspaper that lied idly on the bed. I turned through the pages as at once I stopped. My attention was drawn by the news of the housewife's brutal murder. I read the entire piece as my heart filled up with shock. The two rape cases that were filed months ago has yet not been solved and the criminals neither found nor arrested. How pathetic! I turned on to the last page and I shuddered to see the picture of the woman — a victim of acid. A life destroyed by her husband for dowry's sake. I had had enough for the time being so to feel lighter, I joined my parents who were engaged in a conversation. It was on the common subject which parents discuss frequently when their daughters become adults. At a point, my father stroked on my head through my hair and said, "now that you're young, we're worried about you, all the time. Once we put your hand in a man's hand, we'll be free from all these worries" I lifted my head and could not help staring at him in wonder.

On the Bridge, Below Heaven

EVERYTHING is so quiet. Too quiet. Is that the sound of water, the sound of the river below? Ripple — ripple but it's so very different in the night. I can even hear the wind whistling past — the wind is so strong. It's making my cotton nightie cling to my body. It's such a wonderful sensation... but is there anyone about? No, who would be on this bridge at half past three in the morning? I have to hurry up or I might change my mind. I hate indecision but damn, I've got that quality.

Mmm... the air smells delicious — so, so earthy. Is it fresh cowdung? I love that scent too. Scent? Did I say scent? Hal Hal! What a time to replace 'stink' by 'scent'. Maybe you love everything — even cowdung when, when you're about to... Hey, how about a little waltz on this humongous dance floor. God, this bridge looks tremendously enormous. La-Lala-la, Ri-riri-ri... I dance well. It's a pity no one's looking. I'm so light in the air — it's as though if I could leap a little higher I'd reach the moon. The sky is so clear — infant, too clear. Some of those stars twinkle, a few don't — the stubborn ones. I guess you can't blame planets for not twinkling. I hate being factual; it's an irony that I studied sciences I wonder what if there was a heaven beyond a sphere of stars. Ptolemy's idea, wasn't it? Who cares? I probably won't end up in one anyway. Maybe there's no space for me in any heaven. Hmph, I'd rather be the queen of hell. Save a space for me in hell. God — You don't like cowards like me, do you? You hate sinners, don't you?

No one loves me — not even God. Sniff. I should've got some tissue, the unperfumed ones mother bought yesterday. Oh, mother, sigh, you'll miss me, won't you? But you should be happy 'cause I'm not going to cause you anymore trouble. You, father, Amit, the whole world got hurt because of me. I'm always the cause — the

cause of pain, shame and grief. Well, I hope you can forgive me one day. What am I thinking all these for all over again? I've already thought and thought for days. Besides, that note's going to be helpful — it explains everything. I wonder who's going to find it and when? Hal Hal! It's just like in the movies.



Oh gosh, I'd better hurry up before they start looking for me. In that cinema I saw the other day, that fool of a heroine took so long in jumping off the cliff that a man came and grabbed her just in time. Why can't they just leave other people alone. Interference. I hate interference. I hate everything, I hate the air, the stars, the bridge, the water

mid most of all I hate myself. Now I loath myself.

Why did I have to be born in the first place. It's not fair on me — I hadn't any say in my birth. But then, who does? Why does man exist anyway? Why couldn't Earth be devoid of living beings like any other decent planet. Then there'd be no one to think about and solve riddles about existence, space, black holes, the big bang or the big crunch. Who would know anything about hunger, poverty, unhappiness, frustration, anger, fear... Am I scared, afraid of this height? Why is the river so far below the bridge? It'll take ages to reach the water. What if I change my mind in mid-air?

That be the pits! I wonder if I can do a somersault while I'm about it. Ha! My laugh sounds a bit hollow now, doesn't it? Is my pulse rate faster? It must be adrenalin.

I won't, yes, I will not chickenout now; I'm too close to being free — Shame on me for even thinking that I might. Shimul, where's your courage, your ego — you lily — livered chicken? Cluck! Cluck! He! He! I'm cackling too much. Sad people always laugh in excess, they say.

Moon light on water-waves. Ripple ripple, splash splash — beautiful. Oof! Look there's an extraordinarily wonderfully lovely hue in the horizon. It's purple or violet, no-pink. Look at it change colour. Gold, orange and now scarlet! — as it veils of colours opening one by one. I could scream. It's too sacred to be seen — I don't deserve it. Hey, where's the moon? Oh my hard, it's gone — disappeared, help it's dawning. But I don't care, I love it. I love every moment of it. I want to see the sun, that big wonderful red disc. Mmm: the air, inhale it Shimul. Breathe, breath deep and exhale even deeper. Get all that despair, pain, frustration — everything evil out of your system. Ah-h, what peace. You're a new person now. The dawn has shown you your way. Celebrate your new life, girl.

You're not a coward, you're no chicken. You're now brave enough to face the world's challenge. I challenge you world! The whole world against a girl — no, a mature woman. Ha! So you thought I'd flee — flee like an immature love creature. No, I can and will be strong; no unwanted breeze can break me — Shimul. Life is so very short and there is so much to do. I want to start all over — life's game isn't easy to win but losing is. I won't lose in the easy way. Be it the hard way, I know I'll win.

Goodbye river, I'm going home. Home to my family and friends. Thank you O river for teaching me so much. Ripple on as you always did and always will.

AVIK & JOY IN THE MISSING MACHINE by Sharier



Beethoven: The Symbol of Change

LIKE many of the past composers, Haydn and Mozart, Beethoven grew up in a family that regarded music with high esteem. The esteem, however, sometimes crossed to torture. It is said that his father sometimes made him practice piano till dawn. Such conditions later paid-off since at the age of twelve he had composed several piano compositions. Although Beethoven has shared a musical background similar to past composers, he grew up to be a musician whose personality and music was very different than any other musician of his time. His attention was more towards expression than form — a shift that would define the beginning of a new period, the Romantic period. Beethoven's music life can be divided into three periods. The first period, when he was still influenced by Haydn and Mozart, consists of such compositions as the Pathetique piano sonata and the First Symphony. This period ended around 1802. The Third Symphony, the Fifth Piano Concerto and Opera Fidelio belongs to the middle period which ended about 1816. In the third stage, Beethoven suffered from deafness and thus created very intense and individual works like the Ninth Symphony, the Missa Solemnis and the string quartet, Grosse Fuge. If there is one word that characterizes Beethoven's works, it is "change". He was deeply affected by the French and industrial revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. A lot of the changes that took place in human life and philosophy did not escape him. He, in fact, made these changes the basis of most of his work. Beethoven had shown that he more than any other composer represented the new artist in the field of music. Musicians also say that Beethoven's music was very dynamic and demanding. That was very different from other composers whose aesthetics involved calmness and serenity. For Beethoven, the aesthetics lay in the strange and struggle. In Vienna, Beethoven rapidly became the favorite music attraction of a close knit aristocracy. But he never served aristocracy. He rebelled against such social conventions as the aristocracy. To make his point clear he created the Scherzo, an alter-

Dhaka Summers

zombie and the lively, non-studious cool cat. The studious zombie wakes up early, before the summer sun, and grabs a harmonium, which is supposed to be melodious and which I don't doubt is. Then he or she practices 'Sa', 'Re', 'Ga' at the top of their lungs. After sometime, he or she settles down at the desk and begins to study. They are in a world of their own. The summer heat doesn't bother them, the electricity failure doesn't bother them. They finish the year's syllabus or at least try to, during the 'vacation'. Yawn! Yawn! Let's see how the lively, cool cats spend the day. He or she wakes up reasonably late in the morning. Skips the breakfast somehow and blasts the CD player. He or she, tired of listening to the compact discs, then grabs an interesting novel. After lunch, a compulsory, one hour telephone chat. Then maybe a little walk on the road or an ice cream at Dolce Vita. They prance around the town but they never ever study. Two extremes, two different world, sounds pathetic. For those average, active ones there is always a summer's job. It could be babysitting your baby cousin or neighbour. It could be washing the car. It could even be selling jugs of lemonade. If these are not your style, you can sit home and make accessories, handkerchieves, little purses. If these are not appealing you then take week long courses. Courses that will bring out a talent you never knew you possessed. There is just so much to do with summers. All this added up might be wonderful, might be awful, but it is up to you to enjoy the summer. In time you will find that your fond memories are tangled up with the sweaty Dhaka summers.

