

ARISING STARS

I slipped out cautiously from under the astonished gaze of a mourner who had been mesmerized by my golden and red polka-dotted suit.

I inched soundlessly towards the sound, my heart in my mouth, the 8-inch diameter magnifying glass in my hand.

I neared the tombstone where the hanky panky was going on and peered viciously through the glass. The silhouetted figure shrieked, did a double somersault backwards and snarled, "You silly twit! What are you dressed up like a monkey for?"

I being the husband of the deceased, thought she was being unnecessarily rude to such a grief-stricken man. I started to say something in my defence when that pi-

'You Murdered Your Wife, MR Jones'

by Suchismita Roy

HERE are the four most imaginative short stories in answer to the September 1, '95, Competition: Short Story. Among these writings two of them were selected as the winners. The winners are Suchismita Roy from Dhaka and Tee Irphanes from Chittagong. Please collect your prizes from The Daily Star office by September 30, 1995. Thank you all for participating and cross your fingers for the next competition coming up soon.

The funeral was in full swing, and I managed to wriggle out of a few prying eyes. Behind me was the mango grove that shrilled under the pall of the foggy white. Suddenly I could see a figure in silhouette stalking towards the source of the muffled groan that broke in the eerie silence of the night.

teous groaning sound made itself audible again.

I whipped around the tombstone and saw what writers relish in calling "a blot upon the landscape", namely a reclining figure with a complexion of a

banana leaf. The figure then raised a shaking finger and whispered desperately, "Oh... oh, this burning sensation in the pit of my stomach, go away thou son of a worm... Hey you. Help me... ooooh... aah.."

Hearing his plea for help, I the magnificent one, put on my deer stalker cap, thrust my notepad against his nose, clutched his shirt collar and said in my most pompous voice, "I arrest you in the name of the Law. Anything you say may be taken down as evidence against you in Court."

At this, the silhouetted figure, who I discovered to be a young willowy lady of rosy cheeks, starry eyes, graceful form, beguiling smile... Excuse me, I drift from the subject in hand... At this, the young lady wrapped herself against my trembling legs (sigh!) and breathed, "Forgive him, O gorgeous one, he murdered your wife only because he had three wives and seventeen children to feed. Now he is paying the price for it. He is turning an elegant shade of turquoise."

I nipped quickly to the green one's side, opened his mouth wide and with a pair of forceps brought out a piece of half-digested cake. It is not nice to leave evidence lying around. No one knows what might happen. Times are bad you see. The cake I threw into the nearest bush and prepared to speak.

"Bow down, you pathetic excuse for an emerald," I said in a deep resonant voice, "Your saviour has come." Saying this, I gave him some

alka-seltzers to relieve his upset stomach which had been upset by the funeral sweets. Tsk! tsk!

The green one grovelled for some time and then crawled away. As I walked off jauntily whistling "Death's a cool thing, baby" by the Zombies, the beautiful one cried plaintively, "Sir?"

"Yes?" I questioned agreeably, basking in the hot sun of self-admiration.

"Would you mind telling pretty ol' me how a big brainy thing like you knew that he was your wife's murderer all along?"

I felt my pulse fluttering and felt the deer-stalker cap tighten around my head. I shyly hesitated and started plucking the fringe of my coat. Feeling her eyes on me, I glowed hot uncomfortably and said, "Well, it's rather complicated you see. You'd rather not stuff your pretty empty lil' head with boring details." I detected a dangerous glint in her eyes but it was soon covered by her fluttering eyelashes.

I decided to go for it. I said, "Well, the corpse being my late wife, I was determined to catch her killer. As everyone knows my wife was poisoned by strychnine." I liked the sound of strychnine. I said it twice rolling it over my tongue and mouth to get the full flavour of that word.

She gasped impressed "Ooh!" I proceeded, "I read a lot of thrillers and murder stories, you know the newsprint ones, the ones you can get for a penny or so,

From there, I got the idea that the killer likes to come to his victim's funeral and he's the one who's usually stuffing himself with the funeral sweet. So I put low doses of strychnine in the funeral sweets. And so there you have it! Did that get into

your head you beauty with (thankfully) no brains?" I looked at her for approval.

She smiled sweetly and then kicked me squarely on the shin. "Empty lil' head huh?" A vicious blow on my nose followed by "All beauty no brains, you chauvinistic pig?"

"What did I do?" I whimpered.

"You murdered your wife Mr Jones."

"How did you know, I didn't tell anyone."

"No, you addle-headed nulsop, no one knew that your wife died of strychnine. Only the CID, the killer, and I knew."

When they were hauling me away, I gasped out, "Hey Beautiful, what's your name?"

"Inspector Norse," came the gruff reply "and don't call me Beautiful."



SHARIF 1995

A Lesson on Mystery

by Tee Irphanes

THE funeral was in lamenting progress. I decided to go far from that blubbing sight in search of a mute night.

The whole village looked poor but beautiful under the white scarf of the strong and dim fog. I was passing through the mango grove. Walking bare-footed on the bog grassy land I sank into deep thoughts about Sumon's uncle. I was collecting memories of this numinous neighbour in the album of my mind. Suddenly I saw a figure in silhouette which was advancing slowly towards the weak and plaintive sound.

Amazingly he was following the scrubbed land. This thing seemed mysterious to me. Without the slightest hesitation I decided to follow him.

I waited for a minute to make a fair distance. Then I started my work. I was walking very carefully. Looking at his back I could guess that he was an elderly man, but I couldn't guess who he could be. So the mystery swelled as I knew everyone in that village. Suddenly I heard the hooting of an owl and instantly it rose in my mind that following that man ain't

suspicious at all. But I threw the obsession and persisted in going on my work like a complete detective. I felt chuffed at this. But who knew my pleasure would remain for such a short time?

Suddenly the man stopped and I hid in a moment at the back of a large mango tree. He was looking at right and left as though he had lost the way. My eyes were adhered to the figure. He turned back and in the yellow light of the moon I saw his face and most impossibly it was Sumon's uncle who died eight hours ago. I lost all my animation in fear. I cried out and... and I don't know what happened then.

Subsequently I discovered myself on the bed. I could only mutter 'ghost, ghost', then again I lost my sense. When I got back my sense for the second time, I felt stronger. And my dear mom explained me everything. In a nutshell I can tell you, whom I saw, was actually the twin brother of Sumon's uncle who was coming from Comilla to see his brother for the last time.

At that moment I wished to lose my sense for the third time in shame. But I couldn't.

THOUGH I was still depressed by the death of my close friend, I could not resist a little touch of adventure.

The visibility wasn't satisfactory but I still could see the suspicious figure pacing forward in a nervous motion. I followed him for few more steps, until I couldn't see him anymore. I went to the spot where I had last seen him, and tried to locate him, but in vain. All I could see was the creepy tombstones.

Just as I was leaving, I accidentally found few footprints on the ground. I followed the prints, which took me near a tombstone and stopped there. I never believe in ghosts or sorts, but still I couldn't explain the sudden

disappearance of the footprints. As I was exhausted and mentally drained I decided to call it quits for that day.

The next morning when I woke up, the first things that came to my mind was the experience I had the night before. As I was a journalist, I had a busy day ahead of me. So I decided to do some investigating at the cemetery that very night.

I left my office at five o'clock sharp and it was one of the rare days when I can office early. I grabbed some snacks and rushed home. At 7 o'clock, I decided to go out.

The Shadows of the Dark

by Rabeth Khan

Anyone at that moment could have mistaken me for Sherlock Holmes because of my clothes. I attired in a pair of dark trousers, long hanging coat, a leathered cap on my head and a pipe in my mouth. The only difference was that, I didn't have either the brains of Sherlock or the faithful Watson beside me.

When I reached the cemetery, the number of people there was absolutely small. I walked through the graves as casually as possible but my dress gave it up. All the people there gave me looks of all kinds. Anyway, within an hour, the whole cemetery was empty except me. I went near the strange tombstone and hid behind a nearby tree. As I was looking at the tombstone, I was surprised to see the thickness of the tombstone. It was much

bigger than the normal tombstone. Just as I was beginning to go near I heard footsteps and I quickly went back to my hiding place.

Then, happened next shocked me. I could not take my eyes away. A short, stout man pushed a certain place in the tombstone which gave way to an opening in form of a door, and he went in. I again rubbed my eyes to ensure that it was happening for real and not an optical illusion.

After the man went into the tombstone, I waited for a few moments and then went near the tombstone for my own investigation. After a few minutes of futile search I kicked the tombstone in anger. And thus to my relief, the secret door opened and I went in.

I felt a lump in my throat as I watched the moving silhouette beginning to fade away. I stood rooted to the ground and stared. Nothing. Blinking several times I finally decided that it must have been a piece of my imagination.

I was on my way once again through the loathsome damp, trying to evade as I walked the brooms and nettles that seemed to be popping up every now and then. The night was getting darker and I knew that I just had to get out of that place. Another groan, this one even louder. I paused and listened trying to guess what this one could have been.

A rippling sensation on the back of my neck gave me the awareness that someone or something was near, and watching I turned my head so sharply that I felt my neck crack. There, in one of the deep shadows, in the flesh, was the creature whose silhouette I had thought I had seen earlier. It was a man leaning against the nearest tree, head drooping and arms hanging loosely by the sides.

He looked as though he was about to collapse then and there. It was impossible to see his face with his head dropping so low. All I could see was the top of his hairy



FATE

by Malina

was staring into the face of the very person whom I had seen buried a while ago.

This person was a dear friend of mine who had been killed in an accident yesterday when his car went over the edge of a hill-side road with him in it. But then it was him who was dead then who or what was standing before me?

I looked into his eyes. They were a luminous jet black, stricken with pain. From the look in those eyes I could tell that there was something he wanted badly to tell me. I opened my mouth to speak but could not find my voice.

A part of me wanted to believe that it was really my friend, alive but the other part found it hard to accept that the same person who was so full of life could look like death itself. The next moment, he lifted his hand weakly and put out a quivering finger at me. It was as if he was giving me some sort of warning.

A wind blew by carrying particles of dust along with it.

was seated at one corner. Not wasting another minute, I tip-toed back to the surface of the so-called grave and went to call the police.

When the police left with the arrested persons, the reporters and I sat down on the eventful tombstones. The whole incident's which happened for the last two days crossed my mind one by one. I was also elated to think about the publicity and recognition that I was to get the next day.

Just as I was preparing to go, a chilly wind whiffed past me, and something seemed to touch me softly from behind I looked around and a chill ran down through my spine. Naturally I couldn't see anyone. I walked around the tombstones towards the gate of the cemetery, when I suddenly felt a warm kiss on my cheeks. It was followed by the sweetest 'thank you' by a female voice. I laughed and thought, who knows, maybe there is something called ghost, specially a female one.

They were all over my face and in my eyes and made it difficult for me to see. When I looked again, my visionary friend had vanished. I looked all around but there wasn't a trace of him. Shaken and unsure what to make of the whole thing I sat down on the ground.

I sat dazed for a while but finally managed to get up and be on my way as it had already gotten quite dark. My head was whirling and I could not put the matter out of my mind.

By the time I got to my car it was almost mid-night. I started up the engine and drove out on the hilly road. I turned a curve and the next thing I knew a large vehicle with two glaring head lights came roaring at me.

It was so close that before I could veer the car out of the way the big monster charged into me. Then everything went black.

Quiz Club:

Notice: Dear quiz crackers! You might have observed that on 8.9.95, Quiz Club presented a number of questions but inadvertently, the answers to them were printed there, as well. Due to such an error, Quiz Club has decided to annul the last week's (8.9.95) quiz competition. Please accept our apologies in this regard.

- And, for this week, we have 10 quizzes without the answers, of course! Crack them, send the answers (as soon as possible) and win away the Quiz Club prize!
1. Who is the writer of the book 'No one writes to the Colonel'?
 2. Which drama series won the 47th Emmy Award?
 3. What is the full form of CFC?
 4. What led to the resignation of President Nixon in 1974?
 5. In which year the first Arab-Israel war took place?
 6. Which part of Vietnam was supported by the Westerns in the Vietnam civil war?
 7. Where in Egypt the great Pyramids are situated?
 8. What is Mitochondria?
 9. Which is the longest river in the World?
 10. In which part of North Bengal, the largest amount of mangoes are grown?

Top Ten Singles

1. Scream — Micheal Jackson
2. This Ain't a Love Song — Bon Jovi
3. Hold Me, Thrill Me, Kiss Me — U2 (Batman Forever)
4. Reflections — Paul Young
5. Kiss of Death — Black Sabbath
6. A Girl Like You — Edwyn Collins
7. I Need Your Loving — Baby D (Now 31)
8. Scenery — Neil Young
9. Kiss From a Rose — Seal
10. Wings of a Cloud — Quiet Riot

Hot Hit Albums

- The following five Albums were Sold like Hot Cakes in this week.
1. Sound Track's BATMAN FOREVER
 2. Paul Young's REFLECTIONS
 3. Quiet Riot's DOWN TO THE BONES
 4. Black Sabbath's FORBIDDEN
 5. Now - 31 (mixed).

Classical

Jagjit Singh's 'Cry for Cry' is now available at markets. Ghulam Ali, the sub-continent's famous Gazal singer, has presented an album of Bengali Modern songs, 'Ganer Ek Asharey'. Out of eight songs, his fans have earlier heard four of these songs, but in Urdu

Source: Soor Bichitra Ganer Dali

An Identity Crisis

The Middle Child

by Muneera

I feel lost, I don't know where I really belong. It's so difficult to find a proper identity when one is the middle child. You are neither here nor there.

It all started after my younger sister was born. I had been my parents' second child until then. All of a sudden my status changed and I became the middle child. As we started growing up and my brother started getting things which I didn't, my mom's explanation for this was,

"Dear, your brother is the eldest, he gets it before you, that's the way with life". Then I fought with my younger sis and she was supported by my parents, the answer was, "but dear, she is the youngest, you must bear with her!"

When my parents went to see a new flat, I wasn't taken but my brother was because, "I was too young — what would I understand?" My kid sis was taken along because, "she was too young to be left behind".

When we had birthday parties, my brother got to choose all the games because, "he was the eldest, wasn't he?" After he left for college, I was thrilled but it was short-lived. Now my younger sis got to plan everything because, "oh dear, she throws such tantrums but she is the youngest child in the family and we do have to bear with her".

I was too young to watch late night movies as my brother did and as I painfully grew up, I was allowed one day, but so was my younger sis, 'cause by then she had grown enough to join me. I may have been too young to climb trees when my brother did, or too old to go swimming in the river when we visited grandpa's village, but my sister was always young enough for these sports. My brother got to do all the *pan-ditee* because he was the eldest, where was I?

I was never old enough to express my opinion on any matter while my brother was around (then I was called a 'pakka burra', get lost...?). When he left, my sister was old enough to discuss anything from the neighbour's

age to my mistakes, oh, boy, oh boy.

In this long and tedious journey of growing up, I have never been old enough or young enough for anything that I ever wanted. My kid sis was always "old enough" to get to do something or "young enough" to get away with something else. Bearing with the oldest child's first rights and youngest child's tantrums (oh sooo sweet!), it's a wonder that my parents didn't forget my name!! Okay,

In this long and tedious journey of growing up, I have never been old enough or young enough for anything that I ever wanted.

okay, so I wasn't really neglected, so I really did get enough, but there were lots of things I wanted, which I didn't get because I never qualified for the age limit. (By the way, exactly how old is old enough or young enough?)

Being *boro* has all its respectability and power, after all the kings eldest child ascends to the throne. Being *chhoto* has all its gateways to heaven and else, but being *mejho* means lost. The 1st child is the ever-sentimental eldest child and the youngest, always the ever-long baby-talked bosom one. Somewhere along the line, the middle one arrives but where does he go?

I have always been trying to figure out a slot to fit into. Perhaps I ought to get together with all the other *mejhos* of all families and we can then call up a seminar in which to explain our feelings to our parents? ... NAH, they wouldn't be able to attend, cause they would either have a first child's graduation to attend (it's the first child in the family you know...) or else a youngest child's parents night at school or college — else they would feel neglected you know. After all they are the *obujh chhotos* of the family and have to be borne with!!

Pushy People

by Rafi A Chaudhury

HAVE you ever had an experience with a pushy brother or sister? For those who have brothers or sisters elder to them, will often find them pushy. They command you to do this and that. My brother, Abishek, who's three years older than me, constantly orders me to do work, work, and work.

All day I hear him saying the same old things. "Rafi, do this! After you do that, clean my closet! Finish that and do my blah, blah, blah!" Just because he's older than me, he has to take advantage of me. He does not even say "please" or "thanks" to me. (You can be sure of that!)

One day he told me "Clean up my room and make my bed and... I can't take this anymore! I could almost feel my blood boiling. With my teeth gritted, I counted to ten. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven eight, nine, ten! On the count of ten, I couldn't hold my anger anymore. I told Abishek off. "You can make your own bed yourself and clean your room too. And about told you to clean the garage but you pile that work on me, huh? Big boy, I'll say! You pip-squawk!"

You can't even make your own bed! How weak you are! Should we check your temperature, little boy? Should we take you to the hospital for a complete check-up? My brother was totally astounded! He didn't utter a word or interrupt me. I ended by saying "You better go and do your chores now. Don't forget to clean up the garage, too dear brother. Ta, Ta!" and coolly walked out and closed the door. The I ran to my room and took a deep breath. Everything was all right from then on.

Life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, and my rightful rights to take a break. From then on, my brother had never ordered me. I had broken free! I had won my liberation!

And, for you guys, out there. Remember, whenever your elder brother or sister bosses you around, just talk back to them. Remember too that I, Rafi the Great, have found the cure for being pushed around. "Thank you, thank you. No applause, please! After all, I am very modest, am I not."

(If I was a tattle-tale, I'd tell you that I was practicing my little speech for my brother for the last two days, while showering. But, mum's the word. I don't tell secrets.) Well, dear reader, this is the conclusion of my story. Rafi, signing off. Over and out!

The writer is a student of Class III, Sunbeams School