



The Devil-Worshipper

by Md Kabiruddin



THE car was rocking from side to side as it swerved around the bends of the twisting road. There were three people — Debashish who was driving the car and his two friends, Moose and Shanta. Moose spread out a map to find the village of Bhuapur.

"Your uncle's house isn't far away," he said to Debashish.

"How long are we going to stay here?" asked Moose.

"My uncle told me to look after his house while he is away on a business trip. We will return as soon as he comes back..." explained Debashish. "Don't worry, it's gonna be fun..."

He turned left and headed north. He was looking for the turn-off to the road that would lead him to Bhuapur. He almost missed it and then jammed on his brakes, moved back and signalled right. Half an hour later they reached their destination. Moose slipped out of the car and looked around. They were shut in by the high walls of the neighbouring gardens and above a blank expanse of brick in which a single narrow door was visible. Debashish pressed the bell and stepped back to get a better view of the house. At that moment the door in the wall swung open disclosing a fat-faced manservant.

"Aren't you Naku Miah?" inquired Debashish, but the man was already gesturing to them to enter, so they followed him up a short covered path and the door was slammed shut behind them. "My uncle told me a lot about you," he said to the servant, but the man only nodded and led them across the big room.

"The guy is deaf and dumb. I'm certain," whispered Shanta. As he spoke the servant led them up the stairs. They walked past a grandfather clock, ticking slowly and steadily in its dark wooden box. On the floor above, they conducted a quick examination of the bedroom, and all of them were beautifully decorated. They decided to sleep in the same room for the bed was big enough for two and Moose would sleep on the sofa which was placed on one corner of the room.

The steady sound of the ticking grandfather clock came faintly from the ground floor. Then the little noises of the night were hushed and an immense silence, brewing and mysterious, seemed to engulf them. Shadows began to loom where no shadows existed before. Debashish was awakened at midnight by the sound of a door banging somewhere in the house. He thought he heard a sound, a slow deliberate chuckle coming from downstairs. He lay there for a while, listening but he didn't hear the noise again. Some-

where in the house, the door continually banged and paused. Meanwhile both Moose and Shanta were awakened by the banging. They all sat up at the same time looking at each other.

"It's the wind," said Debashish. "Somebody has got to go down there and close the door!"

"What's that?" exclaimed Shanta. The shadows in the corner were forming a mass of darkness. Something was moving there. Debashish got up and switched on the light. There was nothing in the corner.

Moose suddenly rubbed his hands to keep them warm, swirling and twisting about their legs. Then they all heard a faint low moaning. They turned and looked towards the wall on their left. Something was moving in the corner. A violent mist began to rise from there. They remained where they were, the blood draining from their face, quick tremors of terror running down their

There was something terrifying about that once quiet room and they could all feel it.

Debashish found some candles, and a match box. He struck one and lit all the candles. They flickered wildly and then went out. He picked up the match again and lit the nearest candle, but it was snuffed out immediately by that cold wind. He tried again but they wouldn't burn. He then turned to look at his friends — they were all confused. Shanta's teeth were clattering now.

An unearthly chill seemed to creep up out of somewhere, swirling and twisting about their legs. Then they all heard a faint low moaning. They turned and looked towards the wall on their left. Something was moving in the corner. A violent mist began to rise from there. They remained where they were, the blood draining from their face, quick tremors of terror running down their

bodies. An awful stench of decay filled their nostrils as they gazed at a dark face that was taking shape.

Time ceased to exist for them. An utter silence seemed to fill the room. Then a piercing scream penetrated the silence. They stood there rigid, numb with fear. A tiny pulse throbbed in Shanta's forehead. "Let's get out of here," shouted Debashish. But Shanta couldn't drag his gaze from the malignant eyes which glowed in the black face. Debashish realizing that his friend was being hypnotized, grabbed him by the arm and dragged him towards the door. But it was locked from outside. They banged and pulled, shouted and kicked at the door, but it wouldn't budge an inch. They turned to face the dreadful figure. It was mocking them with a terrifying chuckle.

"The window...let's get out from the window," cried Debashish. Fortunately there was a tree close to the window. Debashish raised a foot over the sill and balanced himself on the nearest branch. He then climbed down and slumped to the ground. Moose did the same thing. But when it was Shanta's turn, the window slammed shut on its own accord. His friends could hear him banging and shouting but there was nothing they could do. They remained there, the sweat streaming down their face and staring with fascinated horror at the figure behind Shanta. The face grabbed his neck with one hand and pressed his mouth against the glass of the window. The glass was misted by his cold breath.

"Help me," he pleaded quietly. But his friends only stared with horror at the scene inside the house. The dreadful figure pulled him back and banged his head against the glass. The glass shattered and blood began to trickle down the wall. He then threw the lifeless body down and laughed.

"Let's get out of here," shouted Moose almost pulling him. With all the speed they could muster, they ran towards the fence beyond which their car was waiting. Moose had broken out into a sweat and was gasping for breath. When they reached the fence, Debashish saw that his uncle was standing beside the car.

"What's happening here?" Debashish panted.

"You're all here to be sacrificed to the Devil," said his uncle showing the bared teeth in a snarl of ferocious rage — his eyes glinted hot and dangerous with the glare of insanity.

"What are you talking about?"

shouted Debashish. But he only gave an evil laugh. "Oh God," sobbed Moose. "Oh, God, dear God. He's a devil-worshipper."

"Don't be afraid, if you are sacrificed to the Devil your soul will become immortal...Don't you want to be immortal?" said the devil-worshipper with an evil smile on his face.

Debashish felt that if he didn't do anything fast, both of them were going to die. With a sudden access of bitter fury, he turned to his uncle, and seizing him by his shirt, shook him like a mad man. "You murderer, he thundered, "I'll kill you." But he wasn't too fast for the devil-worshipper. With an incredible swiftness, his arm flew back and the next second his fist struck Debashish with a smashing blow full beneath the jaw. For a fraction of a moment he was lifted from his feet, and then he crashed on his back. Now it was Moose's turn to do something. With the agility of a bull he lowered his head and charged him with silent animal ferocity.

But the devil-worshipper moved aside with lightning speed and caught his neck in passing. He jerked him off his feet and sent his spinning head foremost against the car. The side window shattered. Moose's lifeless body slid down leaving traces of blood on the car. Debashish realizing that his friend was dead dashed for the car. He flung open the door, tumbled in and got the engine going. The car rocketed forward, piercing the silent darkness of the night with its great headlights. Then to his joy he discovered that he had left that sandy road behind and was running through a well-lit street towards his home. He passed through the twisting streets, now silent while its inhabitants slept. He then pulled up before a twelve storied building. He ran up the stairs to the first floor where his flat was situated. He was almost out of breath.

He had never subjected himself to such physical exertion. He allowed himself to smile a bit thinking of how narrow his escape had been and also felt sad knowing that he had dragged his friends into such terrible death.

Once he was inside his well-decorated room, he heard a noise. It came from his bedroom. "Who, who's there?" he cried out, but there was no reply. And now the door was slowly opening. It swung back upon its hinges. Then the Devil walked out with an evil sneer on his face. The red eyes began to glow in the dark face.

"Oh God!" cried Debashish.

His whole body began to jerk. He tried to run away but a relentless force was drawing him towards the silent menacing figure...

For The Love of A Country

by Sadir R Chowdhury

THE Army had secured all of Dhaka. They controlled everything from communication to transportation to water supply.

They had done such a good job that to other nation it seemed as if the war had already ended. Opening up the schools and offices and declaring that everything was alright was merely a facade. None of the true atrocities that occurred were heard outside of the country. Everyday, hundreds of people were killed and tortured for absolutely no reason; they never did anything.

Kamal Bhai also told me that since Dhaka was secured, the army was advancing into neighbouring cities and towns. They burned down huts randomly. They tied up families into a bundle and shot each of them one at a time. Torture was a common occurrence.

However, the Pakistani army had one disadvantage. They did not know the area as well as the Mukti Bahini. The Mukti Bahini hid in boats and participated in guerrilla warfare against the army. Another advantage was the geography of East Pakistan. East Pakistan was filled with marshes, lakes and rivers. On the other hand, West Pakistan was rather dry. Pakistani soldiers were very superstitious and they never got near the water bodies. This made the army much weaker. The Mukti Bahini were able to take over all of the land that was near the water.

After a while, the Mukti Bahini regained most of East Pakistan. Independence was almost guaranteed.

It was now December. The war had been raging on for eight months. Though East Pakistan was giving very good fight, the West Pakistani army refused to give up. On December 5, Kamal Bhai and Tarek came to me with wonderful news.

"You'll never guess what happened," said Tarek enthusiastically. His boyish face was lit up with joy.

"Hmmm. Let me think. Could West Pakistan have possibly agreed to grant us our independence?" I said with a touch of sarcasm. I was convinced that the war was nearing its end.

"Nope," replied Kamal Bhai with a grin. I racked my brain trying to figure out what was going on. At the end, I gave up.

"You're right. I'll never be able to guess. What's going on?"

"Indira Gandhi sent her army to help us rebels," Tarek said with a huge smile.

"What?" I asked.

soon as possible. The Pakistani army was looking for him, and if he was found he would be killed.

Even though none of the members of my family participated directly in the guerrilla warfare, we all supported the *Joy Bangla* group. My father donated large sums of money to the Mukti Bahini to help them in any way possible.

Without telling us what was wrong, my father simply said, "we must leave Dhaka tomorrow."

To be continued.

Mohammedan Sings The Last Song!

by Ishrak Ahmed Siddiky

THE curtain falls on this year's cricket league. This year's champion is Mohammedan. The played all their games like champions, and won the cup quite easily. While their archrivals Abahani became too confident of winning, and got the third position. Abahani couldn't play their natural game. They were in a great dilemma. They started well, but at last lost their grip. Brother's Union this year played really well. They didn't start well, but after winning the Jewel Mustaq, Sriti tournament, they got back their confidence and started playing some adorable cricket matches. They became runners-up with 24 points.

Brothers Union achieved this due to their captain Ziauddin Ahmed Shovon, who all the time gave courage to his players. Biman another force in the domestic cricket league couldn't play according to the expectation. They also got the third position with Abahani. They didn't start well, but at last they played some good cricket to take the third position. Nothing went right for

them this season. In the last match they fought well with Mohammedan. They went down by two wickets.

At the last match, Mohammedan Captain Aminul Islam, behaved very badly with Pakistani umpire, Mehbub Shah. It wasn't expected from a player of his calibre. But he later apologized. Next year Bangladesh is going to play in the ICC Trophy. They must start practising from now, or later they might face tremendous problem. BCCB already started looking for a good coach. They are soon suppose to get one. Meanwhile Pakistani Master batsmen Zahir Abbass wanted to coach the Bangladesh team. But BCCB led down his proposal by thinking about the failure of Mahindra Amarnath. In fact they are looking for some one professional, and they would prefer if the coach is from England or Australia. They have already told the ICC about this matter. And they are going to get a

Sri Lanka deserved the Cup more than any other nation. Sri Lanka played in twenty World Cup matches from 1975 to 1992, and lost 16 matches, while winning only 4 of 1992 and never reached the quarter finals. In this year's competition, the islanders won all the six matches that they played with the giants like India, Australia, minnows Zimbabwe and Kenya, and the team of England. They played very well, under the leadership of Arjuna Ranatunga, and with great players like Aravinda de Silva, and Srinath Jayasuriya. The greatest advantage of the Sri Lankan players was that they were always relaxed. Ranatunga was always very relaxed, played well, and took swift decisions. "Arjuna played well," said Mark Taylor, the captain of runners-up Australia. The victory of the Sri Lanka team, constituting both Sinhalese and Tamils, should be seen as a sign of re-unification. This shows that the Tamils and Sinhalese population of Sri Lanka should unite for the future.

However, the chaos at Eden Gardens shows how idiosyncratic the Bengalis are. They love cricket, and were emotional when they saw their national team lose to Sri Lanka. However, the next day, 13,000 people of Calcutta signed a statement that they are sorry for their behaviour. During the chaos at Eden Gardens, one Indian was seen with a placard that read, "We are sorry! Congratulations, Sri Lanka!" West Bengal Chief Minister Sri Jyoti Basu also apologized on behalf of the people of Calcutta.

"It is a form of recreation, and the public loves cricket," says a middle aged man, who was seen playing cricket on the streets. While the twelve nation tournament was going on, the people kept on guessing as to who would take the Cup home. West Indies, Pakistan, and Australia were the 'hot favourites', while India, England, and South Africa were supported by many. In the latter part of the tournament, a large number of Bangladeshis supported Sri Lanka, who made it to the finals, and won the Cup. The students and a faction of the working populace were able to enjoy the competition to the fullest extent, because of the

Why is Life So Complicated For Us?

by Somaiya Shameem

THAT'S THE SPIRIT, BOY, WHEN I WAS YOUNG I USED TO BE FRUSTRATED TOO...



WHY does life have to be so complicated? This is probably the question, most teenagers ask and the very same question that baffles adults who ponder over it's importance. On the other hand, this is the question to which no teenager ever finds an easy answer. Why does it have to be this way?

This is the age when we teenagers are considered to be neither children, nor adults; we are dangling somewhere in between. Maybe life itself is very simple. Maybe we are the ones who make it complicated. Perhaps we find life complicated because during this phase, we face situations we never had to deal with before.

Maybe it is simply because adults don't consider our problems to be problems in the first place, and helping us is a far-fetched fantasy. Once I came across a quote saying that, "How efficient you are as a parent depends on whether you think teenagers have problems or teenagers are problems." I think the parent's efficiency depends upon how much they can help their child to face his/her problems.

Some people like to believe what they understand. Others like to understand what they believe. At this age we don't know what to believe because in our society very few people practise what they preach.

Maybe life is complicated because if we deal with problems at this age, we will turn out to be wiser adults, with the knowledge to solve problems we are faced with. Then again, why do even adults have to face problems?

It is almost as if someone up there is testing us. Testing for what?

Answer?

Maybe that is what life is all about and there is no use moaning and groaning. Most people say that this is the age to have fun. So, go ahead! Have fun and enjoy life to the fullest. But always maintain your limits. Study seriously and face your problems courageously. You'll see that life will turn out to be just fine. But you have to live with the 'teenage blues'.

After all, if you want a place in the sun, you've got to put up with a few blisters.

Can You Wipe Her Tears?

by Samia Israt Ronee

I have a little friend. I won't tell you her name, but yes, we can assume a name for her. How about Sarah? Sarah and I have been friends for many years. What a good friend she is. All her secrets are known to me and mine are known to her, too. But still, sometimes I can't understand her. Sarah becomes emotional but yet, I used to play with her. One day, Mummy had given me my bath and told me to go to their house, play there for exactly half an hour and also said that after I return, she would wash my face with the newly bought children's soap. That soap was the toast of all children. Anyway that the soap business, let's not bother with it! I went to play. But Sam, I was then a little girl, a playful child! How could I have known that the hands of the clock moves so fast; it was in no time that an hour or so had past.

When I knocked our door no one answered. I cried and cried but still Mummy didn't open the door. When the next door aunty came, she also knocked. It was only then that I realized that she had locked the door. Next she told me, she couldn't stop loving her Mummy. But whenever she recalls this incident she blames herself and at the same time that weird feeling comes up and makes her weep. And when she is afraid, or sad she herself remembers this story and makes herself think, "I've been through such a bad time that I must leave Dhaka tomorrow." But, I know Sarah doesn't want that feeling, and not to mention those tears. I can't help her.

