

SHAILA woke up in the middle of the night. The moonbeams filtering in through the open window made craggy black shadows on her face.

Her husband, Amin was still sleeping beside her. She couldn't remember why she woke up so suddenly. She was also sweating heavily although cold wind was blowing in. Was she having a nightmare? Maybe she was. She couldn't remember. She suddenly felt thirsty and cursed herself for not bringing the water jug before going to sleep. Now she had to go downstairs and fetch it from the kitchen.

She got up and walked towards the door, turned the knob and it opened with a creak. She switched on the light and started descending the stairs, turned left and almost screamed with fear. There in front of her was a man standing. She let out an air of relief when she found out that the figure standing in front was just an idol of a Demon.

This terrifying idol was here when her husband first brought the house. She tried to get rid of it from the very beginning but there was no way her husband would dispose of it.

Here in the middle of the night it looked so alive. For no explicable reason it made her shiver. She felt as if the demon was really staring at her and in another minute it would start to move. She quickly moved into the kitchen, grabbed the jug from the table and made her way back to her room.

This time she didn't pause to look at the idol. She was about to open the door of her room when she heard a noise downstairs — the sound of someone shuffling. She froze and listened carefully. No sound now, had she imagined it? Maybe.

Then suddenly she heard a nerve-shattering scream — it came from her room. Without wasting another minute she ran inside just to find her husband sitting bolt upright in bed howling like an animal. Shaila's brain was in a whirlpool, she couldn't understand what could possibly be happening.

"What's wrong... why are you screaming?" asked Shaila — her voice was unsteady. There was no response from her husband. But instantly he stopped screaming and looked at her in such a way that made Shaila shiver from head to toe.

There was a terrifying malevolence in his eyes. Then something caught her eyes. The idol that was downstairs few minutes ago was now standing in one corner of the room, bright stream of ray, radiating from its body. Oh, God! gasped Shaila. Her eyes were staring, cold perspiration broke out upon her face. Meanwhile her

'THE IDOL'

by Md Kabiruddin



husband's face was bleeding, the skin began to sag off. There was blood all over the place. It wasn't her husband sitting there any longer. It was something abhorrent there.

He glared at her malevolently and laughed aloud, horrendously, filling her ears with its braying sound. If reached a high pitch and his body rocked backwards and forwards mocking her. The most ghastly thing was that he began to peel off his own skin. Pulling the skin off as if it was a mask and he was trying to take it off. Then in the room there was a howl like magnified echo, and mingled with it was a threnody of voices screaming.

There was a mixture of howling and laughing as if the room was filled with wild animals. Shaila covered her face with her hands — trying to cut herself off from the terrifying world she was in. Instantly the noises stopped. She opened her eyes and saw that everything was back to normal. Her husband was sleeping as she had left him few minutes ago. She stood looking around her, sweat trickling down her face. She couldn't understand what was happening. Had she been imagining all these?

She knew it wasn't a dream. She was still carrying the water jug. What was it then? Shaila's brain was badly shaken up. Anyway she drank water and went to bed. Before going to sleep she peered at her husband

closely to make sure everything was Okay. Feeling relieved she began to sleep peacefully. But after half an hour she was shaken out of her slumber by a loud crash which came from downstairs. She woke up trembling. "Amin... there's somebody downstairs." She whispered. But there was no response from her husband. She turned and found that Amin wasn't in bed. She looked around the room. He wasn't in the room either. Pushing the blanket aside, she saw that there was blood on the bed. "Amin..." she called out. But there was no reply.

Then came a nerve-shattering scream from downstairs. She quickly ran down the stairs and went to the drawing room — that's where the scream came from. With almost incredible swiftness she switched on the lights and found her husband crouching in one corner. For some inexplicable reason she felt that he wasn't her husband anymore — but somebody else.

He was making a horrible noise in his throat like an animal. "Amin... w-what's wrong?" she stammered. Amin turned to her. She went numb with fear whose she saw that the flesh had been ripped off from the face leaving the nose and mouth and there was blood and it was dripping on the carpet he stood up smiling. "Oh God, it's happening again," she gasped.

She turned and saw that the

idol was standing behind her. Something told her it wasn't a dream anymore. She was living in the real world — no illusion but plain reality. No one from mere description can have the idea of the situation she was in. A helpless weak person placed completely under the force of evil.

She began to run with all the speed she would muster. She moved across the kitchen flung open the front door and literally bursting out from the house. She was still groggy from the shock. But her progress was halted. The lawn was filled with long body of spitting snakes. Not just one type of snake but there were boomslange, puff adders, black mambas, cobras and other venomous species.

"Hey... what are you doing outside in the middle of the night?" It was her neighbour Tareq who always come late at night and happened to see Shaila on the lawn.

Shaila tried to speak but nothing came out, only her lips moved. She only managed to stammer the word snakes and pointed her finger in the direction of the lawn. "What snakes!.. there's nothing here, where's your husband?" He was confused. Shaila turned and saw that the coiling reptiles were gone. She was confused too. Is she going crazy? Are all these things happening inside her mind. "Tareq, please, come inside with me.. I want to show you something."

When they both went inside the house, she told him everything that had been going on. He laughed and said you must be having hallucination. I'm sure your husband is sleeping quite peacefully in his room! He was right. Amin was in bed, snoring. He was surprised to see Tareq. Shaila explained everything to him. Both Amin and his neighbour laughed out loudly. Eventually they were able to convince her that it was just a figment of her imagination.

Saying goodnight to both of them, Tareq set off for home. On his way out he saw the idol and instantly felt something. It seemed that the thing was alive.

"What's wrong?" asked Amin who had come down to see him out.

"Nothing..." he said abruptly. Tareq opened the door and got out on the narrow path and started walking towards his house.

He waved to Amin from the other side of the fence and for some reason, he stayed there as if he suspected something. Then shook his head and went on his way home.

There was an evil smile on Amin's face. Tareq had failed to notice the pool of blood that was on the carpet....

IT was all Marian could do to keep herself from laughing aloud. Her husband Siraj M. Chowdhury had come up to her and was thanking her for the evening. She nodded quietly and looked away from him. Marian was standing in the verandah and the gentle zephyr was fanning her soft hair. She carefully went over the plan, probing, testing and searching for flaws. And eventually she gave a satisfied chuckle. Because, as for flaws — there were none.

S M Chowdhury was a business magnate who himself had no idea how much money he had. After his first wife had died several years earlier, he married Marian, alias Marian. At that time, he was at least thirty years older than Marian. But now the latter was apparently gaining on the former. Marian led an unhappy life as she had been unable to cope with the new surroundings which seemed to her totally unfamiliar and hostile. But all the odds were against her, and Marian was unable to neither stay nor leave; moreover she came from a poor family and ironically, her family wouldn't have her back. And it was then Marian realized something had to be done — and fast.

That afternoon, Mr Chowdhury had brought home along with him a guest. In spite of his nonchalant attitude, the guest, who proved himself to be an inveterate smoker from the inception of their conversation, had, Marian found out, distasteful manners. He was constantly coming on to Marian ever since he entered the house, though he himself was not really much younger than Mr Chowdhury. At one stage, as Mr Chowdhury left the room to get some tobacco, the senile bloke started cracking obscene jokes. Marian, who was not really fond of guests, had found the guy loathsome. And she had stormed out of the room.

Later, Siraj had a quiet conversation with his wife and said, "Look—the old slob is a loaded fish — OK? Please — just tolerate him for tonight... for my sake!" And Marian had meekly agreed. It was the very evening that she devised her plan.

TWO
During dinner, Marian remained quiet and unsusceptible. And the occasion ended uneventfully. And after a few drinks, the guest left. As Siraj turned to her, to her horror, Marian found him saying that he had invited the guy over to lunch

PERFECTION

by Adnan R Amin



Competition of the Month An Opportunity Across the Board!

Who or What is Amin?...
Can Marian somehow deceive the law?...
THE endings of the two articles, 'The Idol' (by M. D. Kabiruddin) and 'Perfection' (by Adnan R. Amin), both printed on this issue, have left the people here in the Rising Stars with a quest for knowing what will happen next. Thereby, we have set this Competition, giving you the opportunity to continue either or both the articles (we'll choose the best) from where the writers have ended. We believe that your responses will quench the tantalizing desire, that has been inflicted upon us by Adnan R. Amin and M. D. Kabiruddin.
Limit: 800 words
Deadline: 11.10.96
Special Attraction: For the winners, we have special awards plus their articles will be printed on this page. For the rest, well, we will try our best to print your entries as well.

the next day. Then he thanked Marian for the evening and left.

Immediately after his departure, Marian sneaked down to the dining hall and went over to the table. She picked up a napkin and carefully picked up the glass. Ashan Rajib, the guest, had drunk from. And going upstairs she secured it in her closet.

The next day, Ashan Rajib arrived punctually and Siraj went out to greet him. The three of them sat down to gether for a final chat before settling down for lunch. Marian had cooked herself

and she was dressed beautifully. Her gaze met Ashan's as Marian picked up the knife to slice the lamb roast. But unfortunately, as she struggled with it, her grip loosened and the knife slipped out leaving a deep gash in her hand. Everyone was at a loss what to do. Blood was gushing out and suddenly Ashan stood up and pulled out a handkerchief from his pocket. Marian smiled gratefully and dabbed her severed hand carefully. She reminded herself to keep the handkerchief instead of returning it, for

the last time. Then Marian cautiously picked up the knife, had it washed and handing it over to Ashan Rajib, asked him to complete the unfinished job. He complied and the meal ended in fun, laughter and jokes.

THREE

She was careful not to smear the fingerprints on the handle of the knife, and wore plastic gloves. Siraj was in his study. And Marian knew it was time to finish him off. She surreptitiously slipped in, crept up to him, drew the knife and drove it right into him. The wound was fatal and Siraj died almost immediately.

Marian was aggrieved yet strangely relieved. This household had been like a prison for her. Her family was restricted from seeing her or visiting her.

Nor was she allowed to visit them. The staff in the house treated her with indifference and maybe even subtle disrespect. But of course prior to her engagement, Marian knew what she was getting herself into. Yet she agreed to it as she realized this way she could help her family financially. But her incarcerated soul badly needed some fresh air to breathe. And in order to do that Marian felt it was imperative to have Siraj removed. So one day she decided to kill him.

Standing in the study room, Marian dropped the knife on the thick plush carpet knowing it had Ashan Rajib's fingerprints on it. Immediately the expensive carpet became smeared with blood — which seeped down from the knife. She then took out the handkerchief that belonged to Ashan and carefully placed it in Siraj's hand and closed the still fingers around it. The glass that she had secured earlier, was brought down and placed on the mantelpiece at the far end of the room. Finally everything was set.

FOUR

When Marian phoned Ashan Rajib and asked him to come over immediately to discuss a very important matter, he readily agreed. And soon the doorbell rang and he arrived. Marian showed him to the study (he did not notice the corpse as it was in a dark corner) and asked him to wait. Then swiftly she came outside and locked the guy from the outside. And it was only then that Marian made a phone call to the police station.

'The Best Amusement Park'

by Naomi Ahmad

ON our winter vacation we went to Singapore. We did not know anything about Singapore and so our aunt, at whose house we were staying, advised us to go to Sentosa Island. So one warm sunny day we started for Sentosa Island.

To reach Sentosa Island we had to cross a shimmering sea by cable cars. It was fun riding the cable cars. When we reached Sentosa Island we were surprised. We expected to see just an amusement park with rides. But there it was — a beautiful spread of land which stretched as far as one's eye could see. It looked as if it was basking in the warm tropical sunshine, gleaming like an emerald in the shining sea. We bought some booklets about Sentosa and also started to read it.

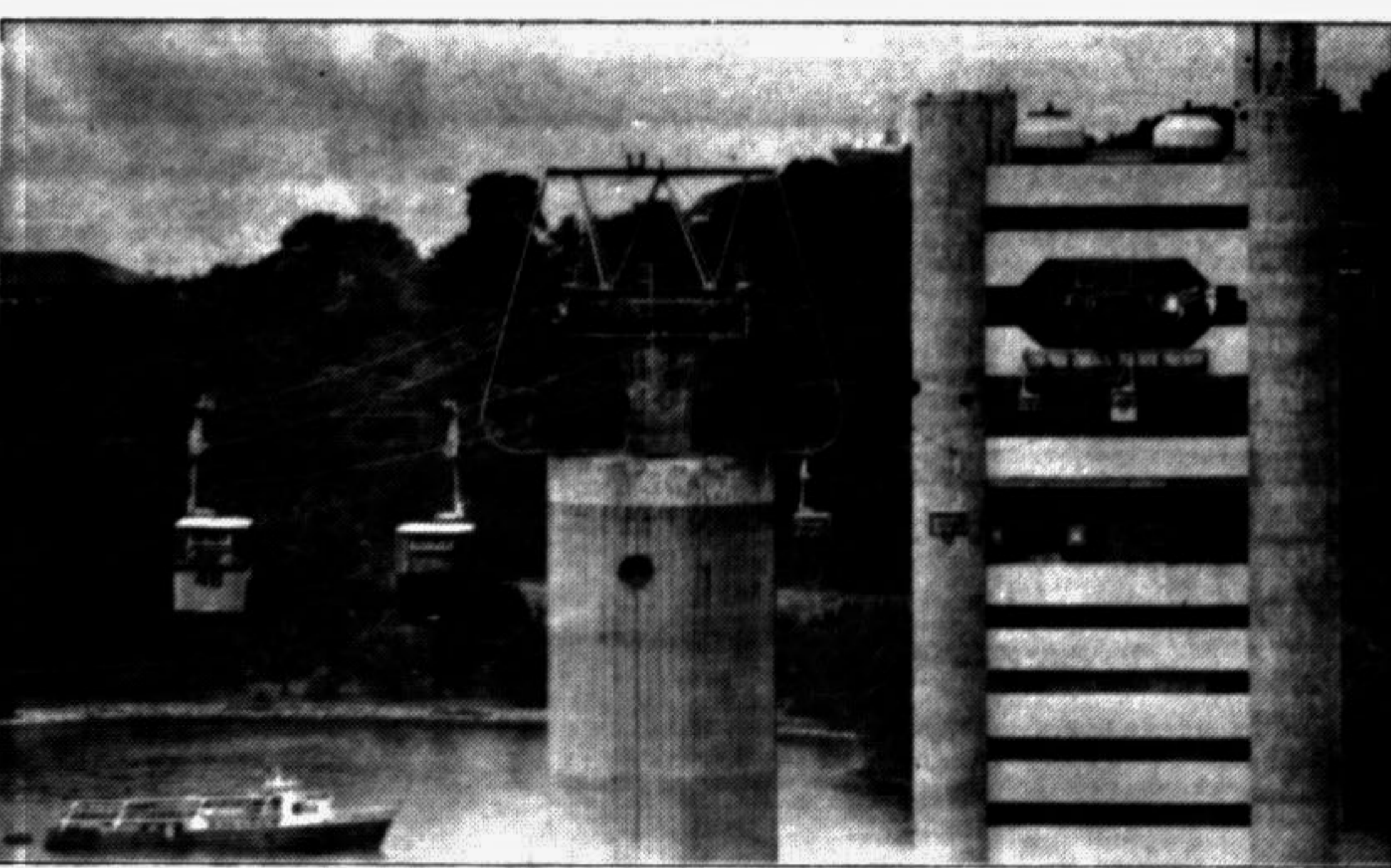
Sentosa had every thing. It had sandy white beaches, tropical fish, flora and fauna, historical enclaves, adventure theme parks and also had 5 star hotels. It is one of the major attractions Singapore offers to millions of visitors from around the world.

First we went to catch Bus No 2 at Station 4 and went to see the Pioneers of Singapore. To see these particular places we had to go to a certain station and catch a certain no of bus.

The Pioneers of Singapore is a surprising life like tableaux that traces the lives of immigrants and famous pioneers who helped build Singapore.

Next we went to the Underwater World. We went to Station 2 and caught bus no. 2.

Underwater World is Asia's first and largest tropical fish oceanarium. Here we see more



Singapore's Amusement Park is just enthralling!

than 5000 tropical fish, eels, sharks and other marine animals.

Inside Underwater World we first stopped at a place where there was a pond with various fishes swimming in it. Beside it there was a sign which said that these fish were harmful and that we can touch them. I touched and lifted a starfish. Its colour was black and it felt rough and rubbery in my hand. It also moved in my hand which frightened me so much that I released the star fish in the pond.

Then we went to a dark room where there was a small movie

about the fish. We saw it. It lasted for about only twenty minutes. Afterwards we started seeing the fishes and also took some pictures of them.

From here we walked over to the main attraction of the Underwater World — the glass tunnel. The tunnel was truly fascinating it was illuminated by a soft bluish white light. It side and the dome shaped roof were all made of glass. What was so enthralling was that the whole tunnel was under water! There were fish swimming all around the tunnel. The fish were of beautiful bright hues and of

varying size. There were big lazy fish. Swimming slowly along the lower side. There were tiny multicoloured fish who were friskier in nature and darted about all around the water. Some fish seemed to be afraid of us and covered away while some were friendlier and swam close to the glass. We could walk along the tunnel gazing at the fish or we could ride on the moving conveyor belt which would take us along the tunnel.

The tunnel was so exciting that we entered it again and again. Once we saw a big, elec-

tric eel. It was flat and shaped like a diamond with a tail. We also took a picture of it. It showed its teeth and seemed to smile as the shutter clicked.

Next we walked over to the Rare Stone Museum. We enjoyed the walk very much. There were many beautiful trees and Shrubs planted along the road. The Rare Stone Museum is a collection of over 4000 rare stones with waterfalls and animals sculptured on stone by hands of Nature. We took great delight in seeing these wonderful stones.

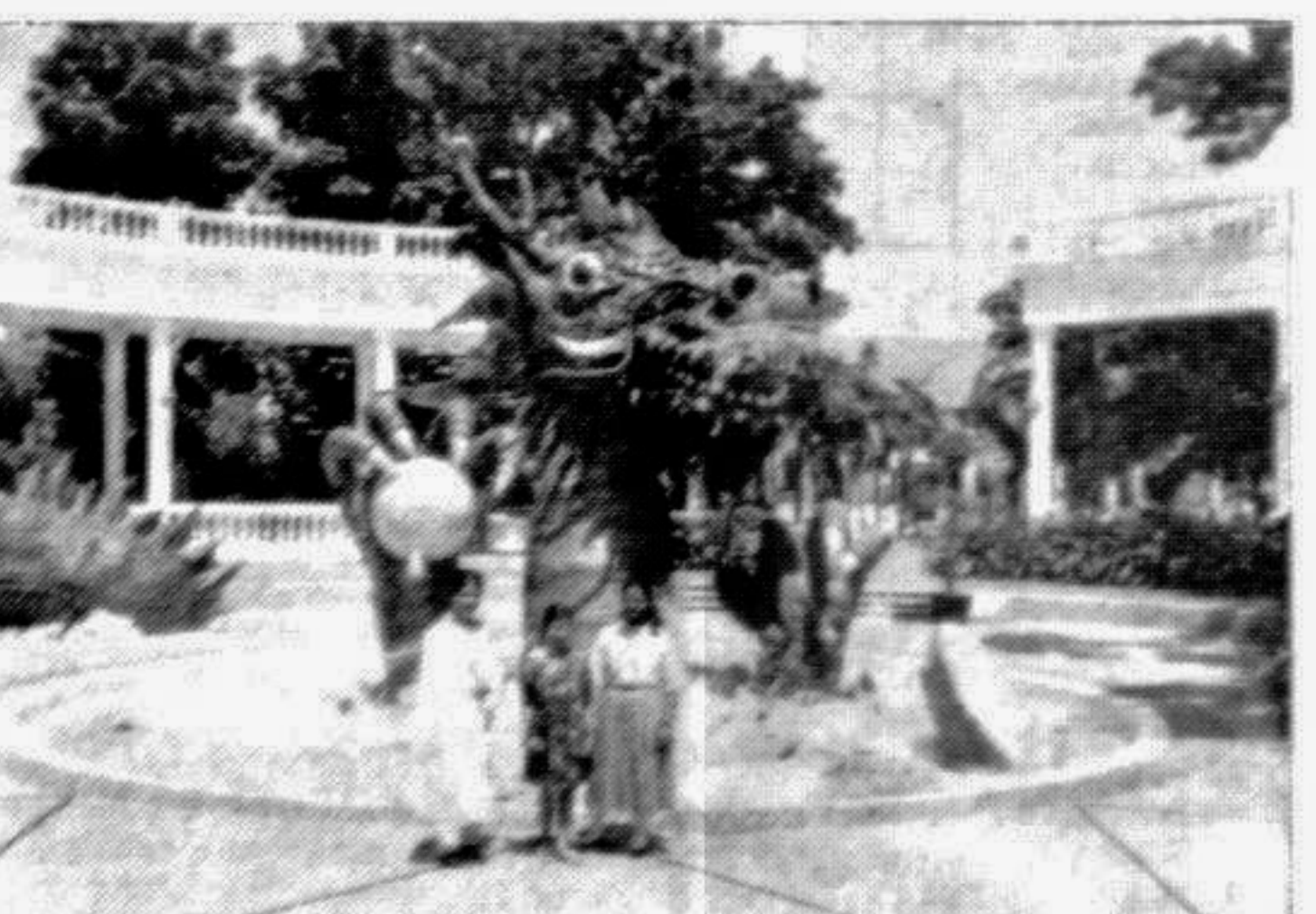
Then we had our lunch in Sentosa Food Centre there were many kinds of cuisine and we could not decide which one to choose. At last my sister and I had Western Cuisine and my parents had Indian Cuisine.

After we had our fill and had a little rest we hurried to the Nature Ramble and reached there just in time to feed the monkeys and peacocks wandering there. The keeper gave us nuts for the monkeys. The monkeys were very suspicious. They studied our faces, very closely while they took the nuts from our hand and peeled the skin. Then still looking at us, they put the nut in their mouth and ate it up. Once I patted a Monkey on his head but the monkey thought that I was trying to hurt him and made a face at me.

Afterwards we went to the Musical Fountain. We had heard that the Musical Fountain was specially good in the evening and so we went to the evening show. When the show started the Musical Fountain became a breathtaking sight of coloured water dancing to a symphony of light and Music. We had bought coke and other soft drinks and some chips and we enjoyed them while watching the show. We were so engrossed in the show that we forgot the time. When the show finished we were surprised to find out that it was time for us to go home.

We wanted to go to other places but we did not have the time. There were other places like Flower Terrace, Orchid Fantasy, Fountain Garden, Beaches, 'Asian Village', 'Fort Siloso' and other places. We were all very sad to leave Sentosa. We had the adventure of our life from the moment we stepped in to the moment we left.

Someday I hope Dhaka will have an amusement park as interesting as this one which will thrill people from all over the world.



Sentosa Island



The Glass Tunnel

Quotations

Compiled by Paula Aziz

1. Be curious always! For knowledge will not acquire you, you must acquire it.
2. Until you make peace with who you are you'll never be content with what you have.
3. Laughter is a tranquilizer with no side effects.
4. Only when a tree has fallen you can take the measure of it. It is the same with men.
5. A friend of all is a friend of none.
6. In the race of uncertainty there is nothing wrong with hope.
7. We cannot become what we need to be by remaining what we are.
8. Suspicion always hunt the guilty mind.
9. Misfortune never comes alone.
10. Always laugh at your self before others do.
11. A thing of beauty is a joy forever.
12. Comedy is simply a funny way of being serious.
13. Cherishing children is the mark of a civilized society.
14. Forget all you have learned. Start dreaming 'Anon Paris 1968.

Notice

DEAR Avid Readers! A little cooperation from you and we hope we'll be able to shape up the two pages, the Teens and Twenties and the Rising Stars, just the way you want them to be. The following questionnaire we believe will provide us with a rough idea. So, if you want these pages to be more pleasurable to read, stuff the following lines and send it right away to us.

1. The sort of articles fascinate you most and would revel in reading them in these two pages : _____
2. Do you think we should bring out special editions featuring issues of common concern? If yes, what could be these issues? _____
3. Should there be more quizzes, competitions, jokes or cartoons?
 Yes No
4. What aspect(s) of these two pages need(s) to be improved? _____
5. What if the pages were dropped? How would you react? _____
6. Additional suggestions? _____
7. Do you want to be a contributor?
 Yes No

If yes, please write your name and phone number. We'll do our best to contact you.

Name : _____
Phone no : _____

We appreciate your time in filling this Questionnaire.
— Rising Stars Editor.