

"THE ROYAL DEAD PALACE"

"The Short-Cut Run"
I was the middle of the night. Me, Rafi, Fahad and Saqib were on the road walking. We were returning from the cinema, where we saw a horror film. We were talking about the film, just then I looked at my watch and saw that it was too late for dinner. "Come on, loose barrels, hurry up. I don't want to be late for our dinner tonight." I complained in a rough voice.

by Dewan Farhan Quadir

"Well then, lets take a short-cut through the forest," suggested Rafi shivering in the cold. He is a tall fellow, smart in his looks with a comical face, and is in the same school with us. Where as, Fahad is a tall, strong and wise person, who looked like a black African cow. I am not so smart looking like the others, but I am medium built and always the last hope of my friends. Saqib, the only trouble-maker was just the opposite of us; he is lucky that he escapes from all the trouble he makes.

pictures of the young prince, us and stood hypnotized.
"The Three Secret Doors"
A moment before, we saw the prince so beautiful and now instead of the prince, there was a creature with no skin, only raw flesh on his body, teeth were like the ones of a vampire and it had big purple coloured nails. It wore a black gown and looked at us angrily with its blue eyes. We also discovered that the palace was filled with bats and spider webs. By seeing all this we were shivering with fear, there were several other rooms, but we saw three rooms, decorated with human skulls and bones. "Now, lets be serious and split out" said Fahad seriously and feeling courageous.

We agreed to his proposal, and split into three different directions, with life in one hand and courage in the other, without knowing what will happen in our horror filled dark future.

"The Key To The Mystery"

All of us went inside the rooms urged by our curiosity mixed with fear. The doors opened by itself but as we went inside, my door suddenly closed

"Well, said Fahad, 'but I don't want to be late' and they all agreed.
After a few hurricane steps, we noticed a foam of smoke, rather colourless and looked frozen, as if it couldn't move. We followed the smoke as a tracking device, while Fahad and Saqib were looking for clues. I called them with my hand, and they followed me to a bare space of land and to our amazement we all scrambled out of words.

"Our First Horror Turns Into Error"

The palace we saw, was really haunted. Bones of men and animals were lying here and there. The moon was shining at the top of the palace yet the palace looked black. From the outside, it seemed that the inside was dark, except the top-most floor, which was lighted. The trees were looking bare.

Just then, in a twinkle of an eye two hands emerged from the ground, grabbed Saqib's feet and half buried him into the ground. We were sorry for him as our late service couldn't save him, and by that time he was fully buried in the ground. Then in a minute or two a thunder struck onto Saqib's amazing grave, and to our astonishment, we were speechless to see that instead of Saqib, there stood in front of us a Zombie.

"Free Do—Om"

We ran in different directions, but it seemed that our ghost friend was everywhere. We struggled into a great fight. When it came to me, I managed to block it's blow with my flutery and tricky skills, that is, by hiding here and there. But once it was out of order, with a hard thigh kick I sent my zombie friend flying through the air into the middle. Our only escape was the palace door, and we rushed to it. It was locked, and a hard kick from Rafi flung it open. We dashed inside the palace and shut the door. It was so dark and dusty that we could hardly breathe. Lucky for us, that we brought our torches along with us. We lit them, and saw that the wall was filled with beautifully framed pictures of a youth in a royal dress. We suspected the pictures to be of the dead prince. Suddenly we smelt something, which was just like the one of a rotten dead body. We again looked at the

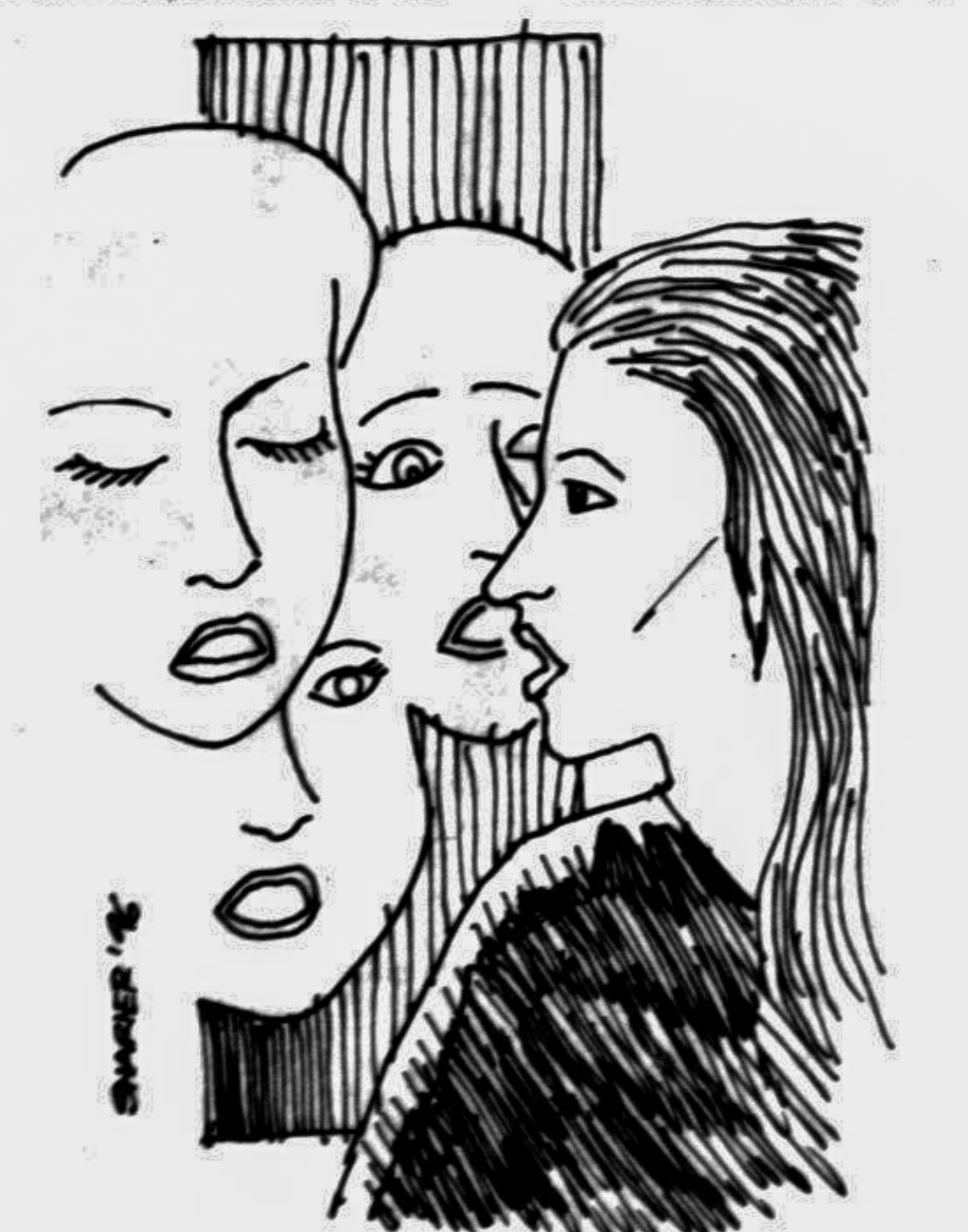
by itself behind me and I understood that the same had happened to my friends as I heard their panic stricken scream. It was just like a narrow coffin shaped corridor, on reaching the end of it, I saw my friends again, then I understood that, we were in the same room. In that room, we saw a narrow staircase going up round and round. Rafi's torch also went out and our only hope was Fahad. Lead by Fahad, me and Rafi entered the staircase. We climbed higher, and came to an empty room which was lighted. We searched for sometime and found nothing, except Fahad, who found a book on the shelf, on it was written in big capital letters —

"The Royal Dead Palace"
We read the book thoroughly and found out some important points on. Here, I am giving in some of the contents of the book:
This is a spell, spelt by my

step-mother. I hated her for trying to poison my father. Actually she is the dead devil, disguised as a beautiful woman. When she understood that I knew who she was, she killed me and fled away putting the palace in a horrific spell. If a person can face all the horrors and then reach here and afterward burn this book and the evil queen's picture above the fireplace, her evil spell will diminish, but, be careful, the dead can be dead, but on the fire you will be lead."

"We Solve The Mystery"
After reading the book, Rafi looked above the fire place, at the Evil Queen's picture and said jokingly, "My! Isn't she beautiful. I am in love with her."
"Are you nuts?" complained Fahad "She is a ghost of a dead, disguised as a female."
"Just kidding," said Rafi.
"Well, then let's burn them," said Fahad.

"Not so fast, matey," I objected. "First we must find out what that 'the dead can be dead, but on the fire you will be lead' means. It looks like some kind of sign trying to tell us something."
"You mean, like trying to caution us," said Rafi.
"Exactly," I continued "probably the fire thing, I mean, what kind of fire? Is it lighted fire or smoky fire or burning fire or mm... wait a minute its the burning fire."
"But, where does the fire



burn?" asked Rafi.
"Gotta point there," Fahad said.
"Where does the fire burn?" I continued "It burns in the stove in the wood, in the gas or oil plant or, it — burns in the fireplace. That's it, it burns in the fireplace I mean we have to burn the things in this fireplace."

"Thanks matey, and I got the rest," pointed Fahad. "That is, if we lead the things to the fire to burn then something dangerous may happen to us, probably it can lead us to death," he finished.
"Well, who fears death," cried out Rafi "If we gotta die here then its better to die with courage."
"Then let's," stood Fahad.

"We Save The Day"
Rafi and Fahad carried the picture to the fireplace and at that moment, something unexpected happened. We saw a shadowy figure grasping near the fireplace. When it turned to us we were horrified to see that the dead ghostly body of the prince standing there as if it was about to tear everything into pieces. Then something like a ghost appeared from the Evil Queen's picture and went inside the dead prince's body and then did a thing to Rafi and Fahad, which was done to the dead prince to kill him. I was horrified to see them. They fell on the ground senseless or probably dead, but if they died they died like a hero, as they were able to throw the picture in the fire. Well, I couldn't bare the death of my friends, so if they die, then I will also die. And then with a dive of flash I grabbed the book and managed to flick the page into the fire and dashed out of the room and went coming down the stairs, I stumbled and fell down rolling down ten feet. Then I don't remember any thing.

When I woke up I found that, I was in a bed inside a hospital and my friends were next to my bed. Saqib later returned to normal, and that my friends didn't die also. I later heard that when our parents saw that we didn't return home at eleven at night, they phoned the police. Luckily, Rafi's handkerchief that fell down in the forest gave the police a clue about where we were and so they saved us here.



The Haunting Memories

by Sadia Sharmin

I watched, petrified and helpless, as my father was dragged out of the house by the uniformed military men. I watched as my mother ran after them, begging them to let go of my father. I saw them smiling cynically, and the sound of their barbaric laughter sliced through my soul. Then came the sound of the bullet—Bang!

Father! I woke up with a start, only to find myself in the present world — a long time ahead of those dreary moments. And yet, my life was still overcast by the shadows of the traumatic past. In the profound darkness surrounding me, I saw visions of my father's blood-spattered body, and my mother's stony form beside it. And the memory — the vivid impression of the past — made me feel the void in my life once more, as I had felt twenty-five years from now. The pain was as excruciating and the wound as fresh as it had been when I had discovered myself all alone in this hostile world.

I was only four years old at the time when the West Pakistanis were haunting our lives and turning this world of ours into a living hell for us. During the Liberation War, I had been too young to perceive the atrocities of the Pakistanis. And yet, even a child like I was, could not stay naive under the circumstances. That night, I could not understand why every one seemed so petrified all of a sudden. I could not imagine why our neighbourhood suddenly become dark; neither did I comprehend why my mother put a firm hand over my mouth, or why we all went stealthily to hide in the basement. It was only when someone dragged out my parents and shot them, that the gravity of the situation struck me. It was only when no one came to hold me and assure me that I would always be saved and protected from the uncertainties of life, that I recognised what those brutal men attired in green had really done to me.

The murder of my parents had done a great deal in building up the strongly patriotic person that I am now. The incident had exposed me to the cruelties of nature and of people, and in the process had weathered and hardened my soul. On the sixteenth of December, our Independence Day, when the people of the entire country — i.e. the new Bangladesh — were rejoicing its victory, I also experienced an inexplicable sense of satisfaction, as I realised that the murder of my parents and millions of other Bangladeshis had finally been avenged.

Every time I look up at the Bangladeshi flag, swaying proudly in the gentle breeze, it makes me feel that by enduring the loss of my parents, and by facing the hardships offered to me by life without fleeing our country from the web of oppression. The death of my parents had squeezed out the last bit of tranquillity from my life. The dreadful memories that keep coming back to me, have made my life a hell. And yet, amidst the tortures, I sometimes experience a queer feeling of satisfaction for having restored peace to our beloved country through our sacrifices.

Personal Crusade

by Md Atiquzzaman

CONSIDER a child if its age is less than six months, then the child merely recognizes its existence in a subtle manner. Recognition comes through the five senses. The child beams with an unearthly wonder in its eyes. It wants to grab everything within reach, only to satiate the sense of feeling, touching. Once the object, big or little, living or non-living, is within its clutch, the next destination is inevitably the mouth. Everyone smiles at the child. So does the child; it imitates a lot... well, that's all it can do! But surprising is the fact that the child cries as well! No one has time to teach it how to cry, though.

Presumably, it is once again one of these five senses, sense of pain deep down inside rooting from hunger... a feeling and yet another wonder for the child. The best responses it can make are, throw the arms and legs as far as possible and make a loud sound. Then we say, "Baby's crying."

The most pleasing fact is that, at this stage the child requires little recognition. A child above two years or more can live without anything else but attention. With the billions of 'whys', 'whats' 'bring me's', 'take me's', 'Give me's', 'don't give hers' the child never hesitates to disrupt your conference, your gossiping, your naps, sewing, cooking and... any/all of your activities. One of the enviable qualities of a good writer is his or her memory, if it is strong. When the writer is recalling an incident/accident or is trying to pen down his or her personal crusade of intermingling thoughts, the writer should do so as chronologically as possible. Omission of sequences, disorder in chronology might turn out to be fatal for a reader wanting lucidity. I conferred with a woman. She was not a writer and yet possessed, as I found, this quality, to a great extent. I

A Journey Through History

Tenochtitlan and the Spanish

by Jihan Anika Rahman

VELAZQUEZ, the governor of Cuba had given us an order: to go to Mexico and find gold and treasure there, and to convert the people who lived there into Christians. This is what my story is about. From Cuba, after crossing the great sea, we landed on a Peninsula. It was called the Yucatan peninsula of Mexico. We walked a long while until we sighted a small village. Filled with curiosity, we walked up to the village. The strangers gave us a place to stay, and offered us food and gifts. It was quite a comfortable place. Cortes, our leader, a strong, fit, bold and brave man, soon made friends with the natives, and they offered us a young woman called Dona Marina. She was a lot of help to us later.

After that village we met many other tribes, and received gifts. One of the natives told us that there was a powerful tribe called the Aztecs. No one knew that this would be a beginning of a great battle. These friendly natives told us how they sacrificed their people and how rich they were, with pearls, diamonds, gold, and other precious stones. This made Cortes' eyes flare with greed.

One day, five strangers came with presents for Cortes. They were five Aztec messengers, who had brought precious gifts, and who told us not to go near Tenochtitlan, the capital of the Aztec land. The Aztec messengers were held prisoners, but at night Cortes freed them, telling them to go back to the Aztec tribe and tell their king, Montezuma II that the Spanish would enter Tenochtitlan as soon as possible.

In no time, we were on our march with some warriors of friendly allies who would fight with us. The journey was long and tiring. We crossed tropical forests and could feel the wetness and the shade the trees offered us. We came to volcanoes and could feel the smell of smoke and steam in the air. After that, we had to cross the desert, the hot sun making us sweat and exhausted.

Finally, we came up to a shimmering lake where the reflection of the sun made it look as if there were diamonds under water. In the middle of the lake there was an island. Everyone forgot their exhaustion and tiredness and stood mouth open. It was a marvelous place, full of people, beautiful statues, and grand temples. Then we eyed a big procession coming towards us, with riches, and jewellery. A man was sitting proudly, but looked frightened, sitting in his throne, in the middle of the procession. He was dressed in fine clothes with three or four necklaces studded with precious stones, hung around his neck, and some rings on his fingers. That man was Montezuma, holding a procession in honour of Cortes. They gave Cortes some precious gifts, and Cortes knew that we had arrived at the conclusion of a long journey.

As we went in the village, we saw sacrifices held on the top of the temples. I heard fearful cries of the prisoners as their body was cut open, and their heart ripped out. Blood squirted on to the floor. The skull was thrown in the skull rack with pieces of skin and flesh hanging on. I closed my eyes. Such a beautiful place ruined by sacrifices! As we moved on I heard some of the Aztec people screaming and shouting like mad. Why! It was the horses. They had never seen horses before. We were very well welcomed and I felt pleased. The more we stayed with the Aztecs, the more we saw the beauty of the

enough sleep. We were fighting with all our strength and courage, killing and killing. The horror of battle seemed to fill our hearts, we were fighting for gold, but they were fighting for their future of their tribe. The end of the battle came by itself, a bit too fast. After some days of fighting against the Aztecs, with all our might, we had made the Aztec empire come to an end. We walked down the empty streets and started celebrating our victory. The sun set, as darkness fell over Tenochtitlan, just as the last sparkle of beauty died. Next morning the sun rose, we had a different feeling, a feeling as if the world had begun, from the beginning, and would be full of luck and fortune, and that is how we determinedly built up the city again, in a Spanish style.

The writer, age 10, reads in Grade 5, St George's English School, Rome, Italy.



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.

- The sort of articles fascinate you most and would revel in reading them in these two pages:
- Do you think we should bring out special editions featuring issues of common concern? If yes, what could be these issues?
- Should there be more quizzes, competitions, jokes or cartoons?
 Yes No
- What aspect(s) of these two pages need(s) to be improved?
- What if the pages were dropped? How would you react?
- Additional suggestions?
- 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: _____
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We appreciate your time in filling this questionnaires.
— Rising Stars Editor.