

DUPPET POWER

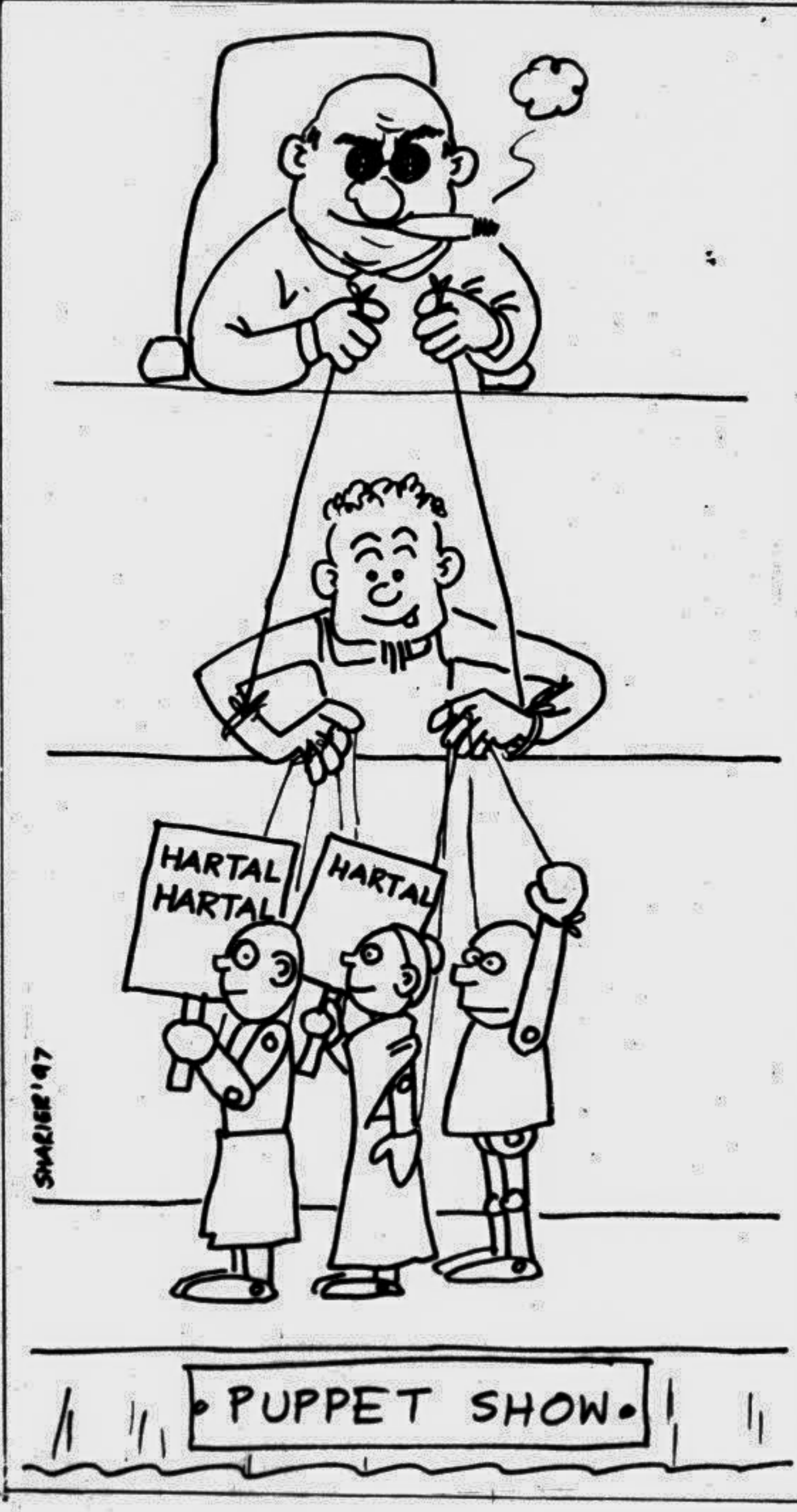
BY SALEEN LOVELL

ON 20th March, 1997 a friend of mine came to me and exclaimed, "I feel totally young and bodacious again!" I asked him, "What's up dude? What's all the fuss about?"

"I've just been to the most mesmerizing puppet show at the Muktiyudhya Jadughar. You should see it for yourself! Hah! what does he take me for — those puppet shows are for puppies. Well, curiosity at last killed the cat — there I was, buying an entry ticket to the puppet show the very next day. I entered the arena a few moments beforehand and found that I was among a group of very few grown ups — most of the spectators were of the next generation kiddos. I felt a little sheepish. What the heck! — I said to myself, sometimes being with kids is good for health. It brings up remembrance of the past.

Anyway, on the stage there was a woman equipped with a Harmonium, a man with a Dhol (who, I later found out, was the group leader) and a man with a Mondira. Seeing only three people on-stage I began to have second thoughts about the show. But I spoke too soon — as the show began and progressed, my doubts were gone (with the wind). The play started with the woman (who was at least 60 years of age) singing Salam, Salam, Hazar Salam, a song which, at the time of Liberation put fire in many a Bangladeshi's hearts. It still has the same old power. Puppets wearing dresses of blue and white danced meticulously with the music. Then the woman started singing a song with lyrics something like, *Ke jeno amay Dakey, Aye Rater Belae* (Somebody's calling me in the dead of night). Two female puppets, wearing striking dresses performed luscious moves and expressions which was a lively that I almost started to dance with them.

By this time the terrace besides, which the show was being conducted was houseful (mostly consisting young-ones). After the show, a man in a puppet, equipped with a hand-made speaker made an announcement that Sheikh Mujib would give a speech at the race-course tomorrow — a re-enactment of 1971. In the background the woman was singing *Mora Ekti Phool Ke Bachabo Boley Juddha Korl*. Then, gradually, scene after scene passed and puppets of many types and kinds came and went, doing funny and silly things, and sometimes acting serious. But the main theme was about the Liberation War of 1971 — the great speech of Sk. Mujib, the attack of the Pakistanis, the fight of our brave Muktiyudhhas, and also a most hilarious act of the family life of a Brahmin and his wife.



What was extraordinary was the perfection to which the puppets were being controlled. Hats off to those *Machhosh* of the Royal Bina Puppet Dance group of Medda, Brahmanbaria. During the show I glanced to and from to see how the spectators were reacting. A man had brought with him his little daughter and was so knee-deep in trance that he probably forgot he had a baby-sitting duty. Another woman, accompanied by her tiny-tot, was swallowing the show, while her guardian (?) or baby was having sweet-dreams. It was a scene to enjoy. I myself was literally scolding the man in front to sit at a tough 25 degree angle for my convenience. One thing is for sure —

this doll-dance made every adult remember their past. And it was so beautiful to see and hear the spontaneous giggles and laughter of the toddlers. After forty-five minutes of puppet power, all the performers (puppet and person) danced slowly to our national anthem and we all rose to utmost respect. This unique show teaches youngsters as well as adults to respect one's nation and at the same time the history of 71, which is the most important time for us. The show lasted for only two days and I consider myself lucky to be able to boast about being a part of it. Bravo to the organizers of such a show and of course — thanks to my friend.

ACIDENT? or...

by Syeda Mushreque Shahher

SEVENTEEN years later, I again remembered about Stuart Hartford. I don't know why. My name is Elirs Johnson. Today I visited Stuart at the cemetery again. I still line with the guilt of his death. Seventeen years before, I was a transfer student from Minnesota to Palm Beach High School, Florida. It was my first day at my new school and I was already late. Entering the class, after the bell had rung, I got a seat at the last row of the class, beside a boy. This boy seemed better than half of the other boys. I had seen in the class. Most of the others looked and may be were punks. Some were wearing jeans which were torn at odd places. Others even had tattoos and pierced ears. The rest were chewing bubble-gums in a way the cows chew cud. "Hi!" I said to the boy next to me. "Hi! My name is Stuart Hartford," said the boy and smiled. Instantly I seemed to like him. Hey! Stevy, cut the crap talk sissy! The friendly atmosphere was broken by this sudden jere from a boy who looked too big in the class. His name, I later learnt, was Duke. Duke was the leader of all the punks in the class. Stuart seemed to be afraid of Duke and didn't protest against this remark made at him. But, I protested by saying that he, Duke had no right to say what he had. Duke just gave a cackling laugh and told Stuart to tell me to shut up or else. I was about to say more, but Stuart's warning hand on me stopped me. Stuart and I became very good friends. After a few weeks, I noticed that Stuart seemed very nervous and quiet in class. He even stopped coming to my house and talking to me. After a lot of coaxing and promises, I made Stuart talk. This is what he said. When Stuart had come to school as a new student, everyone bullied him. So one day, when Duke came to him with a sheet of paper and explained that Stuart could join as a member of a friendly gang of Dukes. Stuart agreed. So Duke

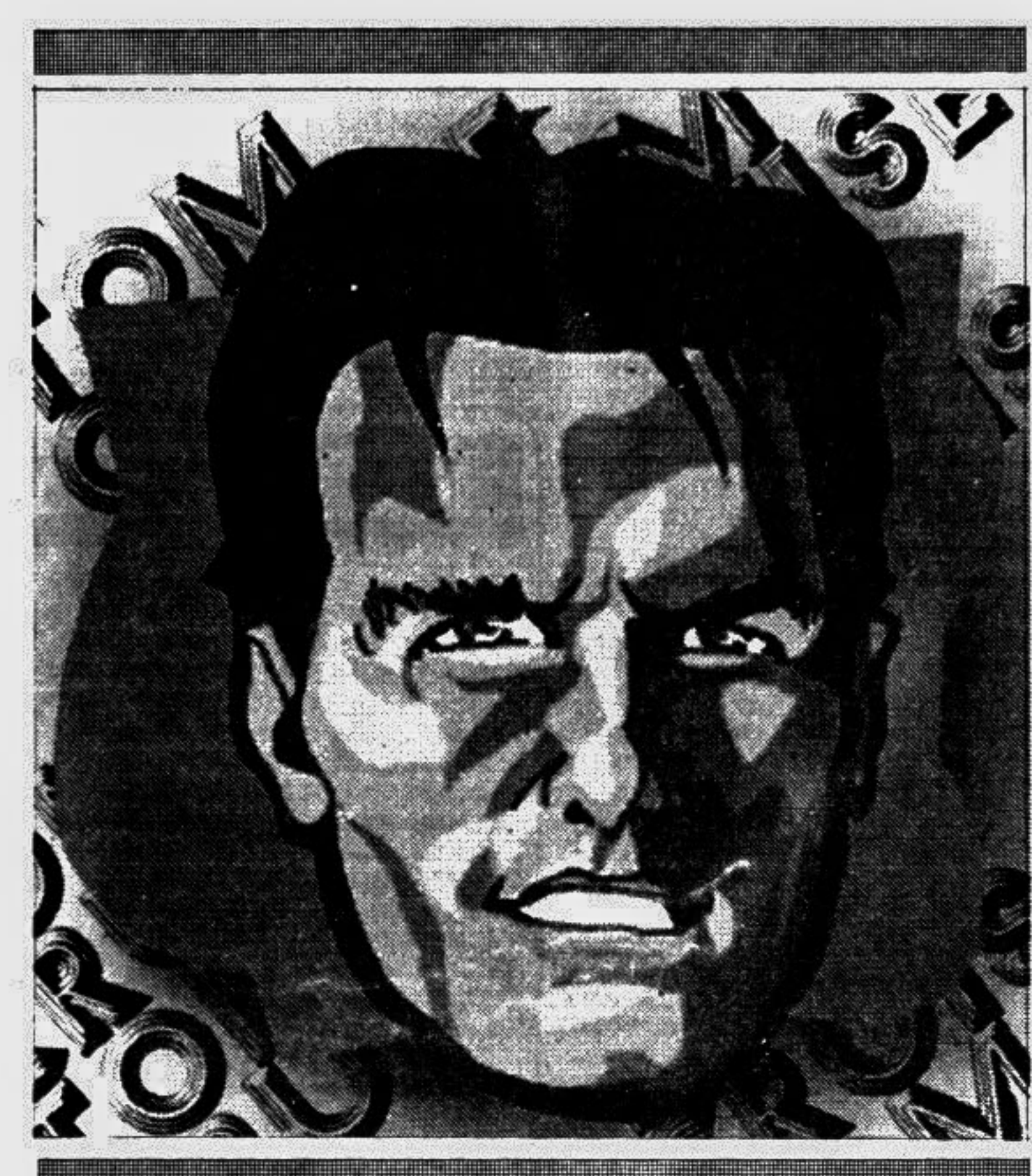
made him sign on the paper. A few days later Duke came to Stuart and a few other of the punks in his gang and said that they were going to carry out a major operation. Then there was a lottery which would say which member would carry it out. Stuart's name was chosen. When he asked what he was supposed to do, the horrifying news was disclosed to him. By signing on that paper every member had signed a contract which involved arms and drugs supplying from a certain dealer to certain people. He had already carried out two to three such transactions. Somehow he was always chosen to do these dirty and dangerous transactions. Whenever he wanted to leave, Duke showed him his signed contract and threatened to beat him even if he thought of leaving and told any one else about it. Now Stuart was supposed to carry out still another operation. Thus Stuart ended his story. Stuart hadn't dared to tell his parents for fear that they would inform the police and Duke would beat him up. But the signed contract was nearing its expiry. This was Stuart's golden opportunity. The next day Stuart came to school and said that this operation which was two days later would be his last. I was very glad for him and again swore not to tell anyone about this. The next two days were weekends. On Sunday I got up late as it was a holiday. As I was finishing breakfast, the phone rang. It was the police! Stuart had a severe accident and they had got my phone numbers from his pocket. They now wanted his address. I was too shocked for words. Stuart's parents were informed and Stuart was admitted to a hospital. From then on my guilt started as Stuart never revived. I had hoped that Stuart would get better and all would be right, as I couldn't just make myself break my promise to Stuart and tell his parents what had really happened. Later I got to know, Stuart had not really had an accident. He had gone to deliver the drugs and there Duke had turned up with a proposal for him. A renewal of the

contract! When Stuart had repeatedly refused to sign, a few of Duke's people had beaten him up very seriously. Then they had injected him with contaminated Maracaine, a drug which makes people unconscious. They had hit Stuart on the head with such a blow that he had suffered from instant brain injury. He had several badly broken ribs and other major complications. When in the hospital, Stuart suffered from a pain high up in his stomach, under the ribs. Then, suddenly, he began to writhe on the operating table, drawing up his legs. The blood pressure that had risen, now began to fall. A gurgling sound brought the surgeon's attention to Stuart's face. He pulled off his oxygen mask. To his surprise he saw that Stuart was salivating like a mad dog. The doctor suctioned Stuart's nasopharynx. The secretions showed, the oxygenation stayed normal, but the doctor still didn't know the cause. All he could think of was an allergic reaction. Suddenly, Stuart's pulse quickened, convulsions distorted his face in a series of seemingly uncontrolled twits and spasms and spread rapidly to other muscles until his body became whacked by jerks. He spewed up green bile and before anyone could react, Stuart suffered a seizure. Stuart's seizure movements slowed as paralysis, suddenly, somehow took effect. Then to the doctor's shock and horror, Stuart's EKG disintegrated into senseless fibrillation. His heart had stopped beating! External cardiac massage and counter shock had no effect on him. But eventually Stuart's brain was dead and therefore in a coma. He was being tube fed and respired. After two weeks Stuart died in his coma and everything was finished. I was left with guilt and without a friend. Stuart's parent's faced the loss of an only child and Duke found another simple person for his transactions. No one knew about Stuart's accident. His mother asked me, "Was it an accident?" Or... I have still not gathered up the courage to answer her, because I'm a strong believer of keeping promises. All that I could say was a mere "I'm sorry." I only hope Stuart, and his parents understand and forgive me in their respective manners.

Tom Cruise Defying the Odds

TOM Cruise's career provides a phenomenal example of defying the odds by dint of sheer determination. For starters, there was that "Brat Pack" stigma to sidestep. Though never officially, a member of that once-promising crop of film stars — Judd Nelson, Emilio Estevez, Molly Ringwald, Ally Sheedy, Rob Lowe, and Demi Moore-Cruise was tainted by proximity. In the end, only he and More graduated from acting out high school and post-college trials and tribulations to score adult roles and achieve significant, bankable star power. Cruise alone has racked up well over a billions dollars in box-office receipts during his career — and he's just getting warmed up. Easily outdistancing his horny, eager-boy characterizations is such coming-of-age flicks as *Losin' It* and *Risky Business*. Cruise went on to cement his reputation as a serious actor by helming the escapist action films *Top Gun* and *Days of Thunder*, and by holding his own in teamings with larger-than-screen legends Paul Newman (in *The Color of Money*), Dustin Hoffman (in *Rain Man*), and Jack Nicholson (in *A Few Good Men*). For his sterling portrayal of paralyzed Vietnam vet Ron Kovic in *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989), Cruise took home a Golden Globe and received an Academy Award nomination for Best Actor.

That Cruise even surmounted the stumbling blocks of his difficult childhood to make any sort of positive contribution to the world is a credit to his steely resolve and his mile-wide competitive streak. He endured a peripatetic childhood, as his electrical-engineer father, Thomas Cruise Mapother III, dragged Cruise, his mother, and his three sisters with him to at least a dozen different towns looking for work. Despite having consistently acquitted himself admirably as an actor, despite having tested his athletic prowess as a means of fitting in. Academics were another matter entirely; he was hampered by a form of dyslexia, and, bouncing from school to school, he was hard-pressed to



develop or sustain any learning skills. His parents divorced in the mid-seventies, and Cruise became the "man" of the house, as his father dropped off the scene. (He later died of cancer.) After a knee injury derailed Cruise's chances for a professional wrestling career, and after a year spent studying at a Franciscan monastery failed to provide answers to his future, Cruise awakened to the calling of acting: he co-starred in high school productions of *Guys and Dolls* and *Godspell*. Ever his own demanding taskmaster, Cruise set a ten-year deadline for himself to build an acting career. Abandoning school, he headed off to New York, where he struggled through auditions and night classes, and lived off hot dogs and rice — "like an animal in the jungle," he has said. Shot down on audition after audition because he wasn't "pretty" enough for television and because he generally came across as far too intense, Cruise nonetheless trekked west to read for a part in a situation comedy.

The casting agent's version of a "thanks, but no thanks" was to tell him to get a tan, since he had bothered traveling so far for the reading. But Cruise was not about to give up, and he succeeded in landing a fleeting appearance as an arson-prone teenager in the deplorable Brooke Shields film *Endless Love*. Without a dollar to his name, Cruise hitchhiked back to New Jersey after fulfilling his day's work on the film. He arrived back home to learn that he had landed a minor role in *Taps*. He was subsequently bumped up in the credits on that film when he inherited a more prominent role, as a trigger-happy cadet, from another actor who didn't make the grade. Finally, his marked intensity had found an appropriate channel of expression. Despite having consistently acquitted himself admirably as an actor, despite having tested his athletic prowess as a means of fitting in. Academics were another matter entirely; he was hampered by a form of dyslexia, and, bouncing from school to school, he was hard-pressed to

defamation suit against a German publication called Bunte for publishing a fabricated interview in which he allegedly stated he was "sterile, has a zero sperm count and cannot produce children." That one wouldn't have been too difficult to prove.

Tom Cruise will no doubt continue to write his own ticket for decades to come. At thirty-four, he has already taken his first confident steps down the career path of actor-turned-directors Clint Eastwood and Mel Gibson with his impressive producer-actor double duty in 1996's \$64-million blockbuster *Mission: Impossible* and with his directorial debut effort on an episode of Showtime's series *Fallen Angels*. From an acting point of view, he stands in line to inherit the sophisticated-action-hero niche from Harrison Ford (a sequel to *Mission: Impossible* is already in the works). Cruise followed up *Mission* with a Golden Globe-winning, Oscar-nominated performance as a sports agent on a losing streak in Cameron Crowe's *Jerry Maguire*; he next co-stars with Kidman in Stanley Kibrick's thriller *Eyes Wide Shut*. As for projects in the works at his own production company (which inhabits a cushy suite of offices once occupied by movie mogul Howard Hughes), Cruise tackled Robert Towne's screenplay about runner Steve Prefontaine. Pre, and is set to produce the film version of Evan Hunter's novel *Criminal Conversation*.

Real Name: Thomas Cruise Mapother IV
Profile: Actor
Birthdate: July 3, 1962
Birthplace: Syracuse, New York
Sign: Sun in Cancer, Moon in Leo
Education: High school dropout
Relations: Ex-wife Mimi Rogers; current wife: Nicole Kidman; kids: Isabella, Connor Anthony (both adopted)
Quote: Let's just say there's not a drop of Jewish blood in him. — Rob Reiner, on Tom Cruise

short STORIES

by Naureen Rahnuma Daulat Ara Begum

Rise

THERE was a time when I could run, jump, carry heavy things with my hand," recalled Naureen. "Now all I could do is to walk carefully and not to carry heavy things." Just a year before, Naureen had been an able teenager in form. In milliseconds a freak car accident changed the course of her life leaving a traumatic memory to her happy family. Would she ever be all right again? The doctors seemed to doubt it. But Naureen was impatient of her waiting to becoming all right. Summoning the love of her family and the power of her faith, she began the toughest struggle of her teen. I remember praying at my grandma's grave and eating some snacks in a confectionery and talking with my and uncle, whom I'll see no more. We were heading towards our house in Uttara by our car. But we couldn't reach there at the right time. We were delayed, but we did went to our house at last. I went to my house after 14 days and my uncle went home after some hours, but by the time he went, he was no longer in this world. My cousin wasn't injured, although she went home late. Our car driver was driving the car really fast. It was the end of June and it was evening. It was raining slightly and the road was slippery. And a mile or so before the Zia International Airport, our car collided with the road island and was crushed badly. My uncle died on the spot and I was badly injured and unconscious for sometime. My cousin was also unconscious for sometime, but she regained consciousness after some seconds or minutes. The driver was unconscious and he was injured, but not badly. My cousin maneuvered out of the car and waved her hands at the passing cars for help. No one stopped. There were women in some cars, but they didn't stop either. A pedestrian then told her about the police HQ, which was only two or three minutes walk from the accident spot. She went there and called for help and also phoned our home.

My mum was at home. She with my another uncle and my aunt came to the accident spot by another car. When they came, they couldn't find both me and my uncle. I was taken to hospital by 2 police constable and a pedestrian. A university student took my uncle to a hospital called CMH in Cantonment area. My mum, aunt, uncle and cousin all went to that hospital. The doctors declared him dead. He had a brain injury. My mum told me later that my aunt was as still as stone. She wasn't crying. She was holding my uncle's head and was repeating different "Surahs". My mum was crying for both my uncle and me. She was like a crazy woman, when she couldn't find me. "Where is my sister?" my cousin kept on saying. "How on earth can a girl disappear from a place where there are lots of people?" "I was so scared" I was taken to CMH hospital by a scooter and was treated immediately. A car driver of my uncle saw me lying in a stretcher. I was unconscious till then. He informed my mum and my relatives promptly. I regained my consciousness in the X-ray table. The doctors were doing every things they were supposed to do. My thoughts moved back to my home and my conversation with my uncle and cousin in the car. At my home, before I was going out one of my uncle send me a book. I didn't know that before I got into the car. My cousin told me about the book and she also told me that I'm gonna read the book after I go home. I said that I was dying to read the book. In the car my uncle was talking about buying me some books. It was held that on our way to home, he'll buy me some books. But nothing like that happened. I looked and saw that mum was there. She had spent the night sitting beside me. Nurses and doctors moved in and out of the room checking the machinery, taking tests, asking questions, marking charts. Among them there was a doctor, tall and slender wearing horn-rimmed glasses, named Dr Amir Hussain (Colonel). He asked me how I was feeling. He

explained that the wires in my mouth was to stabilize my jaw until they could operate. What he didn't tell me was what I most wanted to know: would I be able to walk again? At around 8, I was wheeled out of the intensive care room. The doctors sent me for a CT-scan to take an X-ray of my brain. They suspected that I could have had a brain injury. I was so scared. The room where the scanning was done was air-conditioned. I was alone in that room lying on the X-ray table. Although there was a blanket on me, still I felt cold. A belt was fastened around me. Then after the CT-scan, I was wheeled back to my room. Anyway the CT-scan report was all right. The doctors removed the pipe from my nose and I started eating through my mouth. My father and brother was in Sylhet. They came to Dhaka and then came straight to the hospital. My father came running to me and he kissed me on my forehead. My brother started talking to my mother about me. My father sat beside me holding my hand and looking at my face. The whole day had been a parade of friends, family, doctors and nurses. My father talked with the doctors about my treatment. Night fell and after everyone had gone I found myself feeling anxious and uncertain. The whole night my father, my mother and my brother sat beside me in turns. I couldn't sleep until 10 o'clock. At around 12 AM, a doctor came and injected penicillin in me. He also measured my blood pressure. Afterwards I fell asleep. The next morning I was taken to a room from the intensive-care room. Lots of people visited me that day. Doctors and nurses also came to me. My bed was beside a window. I saw the sky after a long time. It was after only two days. I saw the sky, but to me it seemed that I haven't seen the sky for ages. I saw people working in fields and I saw people walking. I was eager to start chasing my new dream — a dream of recovery, but it wasn't that simple. Soon afterwards the night came. The doctors were still injecting penicillin in me after every 6 hours. The night ended and another day started. In the morning I was visited by doctor. They said that the next day I would be operated. My father then sat beside me and told me about the operation in details. He told me that I wouldn't be allowed to talk for a week. At first I didn't agree, but then he made me understand that I had to do that for the sake of my recovery-my dream. Night fell and I was thinking about my fate. The next morning would be my moment of truth. The surgery that was planned would set the course for

the rest of my life. I had no idea what the doctors would find. I knew that I would never be as able as before. If I do, it would be a big miracle. As I lay there, all I hoped that I'd wake up after the operation and my body would be back as before. There hours. That's how long I was on the operation room. The doctors opened my jaw, cleaned out tiny bone chips and cut through my jaw bone. They put the broken bones in place and inserted a metal plate. They attached the plate with 4 titanium screws. Then they put wires around the teeth in both the upper and lower jaws. The wires in the lower jaw was attached with the plate and both the wires in upper and lower jaws were attached with each other. They also changed the plaster in my leg. Then I was taken to a room in the intensive-care unit. I passed 2 days by sleeping and sometimes I would wake up but then I couldn't stay awake for long. I felt asleep. I was like a drunkard. Then, I was taken back to my room. There my real struggle started. I couldn't talk. I felt like dying. My father bought me a small notebook. I wrote down the things which I wanted. The needle through which saline was getting into my body, was blocked twice for writing. The doctors changed the needle twice. I was only sucking liquid food through a pipe. The doctors were still injecting penicillin in me. Every thing was in a chaos. Like this I spent 1 week. Blessedly, the wires from my upper teeth were removed and I started talking. It was a fantastic relief. I was excited, eager, okay. I thought, I've got that out of the way. What's next? More questions were flooding my mind. When will I be able to sit up? When will I be able to walk? Again, no one offered answers. The doctor's concern were more immediate right now-liver enzymes, blood pressure, other vital signs. The surgery was finished. Yet, I was just as helpless as before. I was still flat on my back, my body unfeeling, virtually inert. I couldn't control my arms. They flopped aimlessly, when I lifted them. My hands were totally limp. My fingers felt dead. I was totally dependent. I had to ask for everything. Could you prop that pillow under my shoulder? Could you wipe my nose? May I have a drink of water? Could you turn me a little bit this way? A little bit that way? Can I have something to eat? The nurses and attendants were great. One of them was always there to help me beside my father, mother and brother. Even so, it was hard to get adjusted to this routine.



To Be Continued