



fiction

# The Abandonment

by Saeif Morshed

"MUSIC was an outlet for emotions to flow" Susan concluded. From love to sedition, from tears to joy. It laced your life not only with the mellifluous melody but with its enticing tune of egotism, fame and the whole sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll syndrome.

The drug romance associated with rock 'n' roll and its stars led astray young misled, starstruck adolescents like Susan into following their idols pursuits. First cigarettes were inhaled, holding it in a posture resembling the famous people on her bedroom walls. These posters obscured the brightly coloured wallpaper befitting a callow adolescent but not an ever more venturesome teenager who sought to delve into the harder stuff of narcotics.

This capricious fantasy would come to a climax on a September night in the polluted haze of Rotherhithe, overlooking the murky depths of the river Thames.

In this unkempt history — soaked quarter of London, Susan would enter the fray-drunk and jaywalking — with a friend also in the same state and unable to carry a conversation. These destinations, a student's flat which was so obvious to recognise by its interior beautification's containing magazine posters pinned onto morbid walls depicting musicians and actors. There were 50's portraits of leather-clad, pouting men like Marlon Brando and James Dean as well as a poster of Beatrice Dalle, the star of Betty Blue-staring skywards, with her voluptuous mouth and vitreous eyes.

This appreciation of student idols however was torn a part like a seamstress unhappiness with her work by posters of hair — bouncing sun-coloured goddesses baring their dream-like bodies with no inch of corpulence around their sucked in waists and athlete-toned legs.

It was in this destitute abode that Susan and her companion would delve into the intolerable depths of the underworld. They would reach the infernal hell at the bottom as they were taking what was classed as a hard drug, LSD.

The initiation for this drug was to be handled by the student who resided in this dingy place. He commenced the induction by taking out from his pocket what appeared to be a rectangular block of normal postage stamps. Delicately and almost incredulously, he the drug dealer-sharing his knowledge with two fervent and starry-eyed disciples proceeded to tear off four of these minuscule tabs. One each for the debutantes while two for himself, for he was the supreme being amongst the group with his experience in narcotics being the credentials for this self-appointed position of status.

Upon seeing one of these postage stamps, Susan's larynx rended out a shriek of laughter. On this sinister fragment was a comically drawn penguin with spaced-out shades and a winning smile suggesting the recalcitrant mammal had been sexually satisfied in one way or the other. She could not fathom how this benevolent, unscrupulous picture could possibly cease her mind of normal circulation leaving it of the usual thoughts that were processed on a daily basis.

Without much adulation she placed the explosive little fiend into her alcohol-exhaling mouth. The sofa-sitting student advised his expansive followers to first let the soon-to-be swallowed mind-bender nestle and gouge around the inner-depths of their mouths. This drug rehearsal was in aid for the LSD virgins to savour the imaginary flavours of their first narcotic consumption. There was however an ulterior motive: to give the hallucination enhancer the chance to cause maximum devastation before entering the bowels of human waste.

These instructions were followed with a fevered anticipation but nothing was happening. No out of body experience. No belief in being Superman and wanting to stop freight-carrying trains of the Midnight hour with the rangy arms of puerile youth.

All Susan could feel was her drunken state still having maximum holdings on her bodily parts, resulting in a hyper active state of manner feeling no inclination to sit down and slacken. The student who sat like a Buddha in self hypnosis waiting for the dreams to take hold — was becoming perturbed by Susan's comical movements and brooding disclaim. He knew that the vision molester which held the key to forbidden worlds, would eventually unleash its invisible charms when diverged and consumed in the nether regions of his life-torn body.

Once the penguin had been cleansed of its acidity and cremated to ashes — with sunglasses crushed and winning smile saddened — smoke fumes would start to arise from the discarded carrion, commencing their trip to the rigid unspectacular thinking mind: the banal thought provider, the rational, sensible thinker and the palisade against the unknown.

The prolonged waiting for this key to the unknown to access a flight to victorious lands began to tire Susan and her companion who was mentally drained and feeling lethargic to the point of sleep with her eyes beginning to close their shutters.

Invigorating conversation with the serene student of Rotherhithe made one feel on the verge of certain lunacy. It was like conveying thoughts with an unclothed mannequin: untouched and unadorned with an identity and a personality by a dressmaker, but instead let to debase in a poorly lit warehouse with other faceless, lonesome front window debutantes.

Without too much adulation and the need for approval, the two now drug experienced teenagers concluded that this Saturday night was not the intoxicated ebullience they had predicted. Instead the night possessed the banal dullness of staying at home which they both decided to head for. Exiting the house of the discontented, the wrath of two acid-tongued females could be heard through the grey streets of Rotherhithe cursing a student who was not even handsome enough to try and swoon.

Taking the East London Line Tube, they headed for New Cross in order to catch a train to Sidcup, their home place. The tube train had an alarming stench filling the carriage resulting from discarded litter which lay in between cloth-worn chequered seats.

The putrescent state of the tube train seemed to imitate the surrounding area's environment of greyness and di-

lapitation, with concrete tower blocks standing motionless in the night-sky, like the statues of Easter Island having to face a torrent abuse of cold winds which seemed to howl like wailing banshees. However, the people commuting on the tube train portrayed more aliveness and variance than this melancholy scenario. There were a group of black youths all dressed up for the night, in loud banter with one another.

A crowd of Bengali teenagers casually dressed up in baggy jeans and hooded jackets were discussing the latest Bollywood blockbuster, mimicking

out of her skull. Her alcohol smile would have to be saddened before she reached the front door, due to her father waiting by it in order to inspect the remains of his beloved daughter.

Time had come for Susan to transfer into a sober mode by straightening her walking pattern, keeping her alcohol lacquered mouth shut and dipping her head in order to conceal her floodlit eyes. A short conversation piece would be then be preprogrammed into her voice pattern to limit drunken drivel and ensure a quick passage to the safety of her bedroom. The communication

menace-created from the imagination of the mind-appearing, just craving to transport the infant to a pernicious world full of ice-hockey masked serial killers, gothic-lit, axe wielding dwarves, brutally-stained teenagers of the going down into the cellar variety, and naked, hanging parents with eyes punched out of their vault beam crushed red-resin faces.

In her youth, Susan was also forever unable to sleep. Her imaginative fear though occurred only when she lay her head on her pillow with one of her Dumbo-like ears pressed firmly onto it. The pillow would start to transmit waves of sound in a slow rhythmic manner which would echo into her fearful mind and form the image of angel-winged, skull-faced ghosts with black vacuums replacing the eyes and nostrils. They would be flying in formation with the sole intention of gliding through her window and maiming her in Stephen King fashion on her Simpsons quilted bed, blood-staining their comically drawn winning smiles.

The acid tab began its pulsating voyage around one thirty am during a programme showing music promos. It seemed to enliven Susan's senses from the right side of her body gradually acidifying its way to the controls at the top of the summit (the grey matter) Her floodlit eyes started to sharpen their vision whilst remaining in a rigid position. Body movements could only be done in a more robotic and slow-motioned process. Her ears seemed to deafen and then come back to normal ability in the same way when yawning. Moreover, the grey matter started to become devoid, waiting for input to process new thoughts.

Susan continued to be glued to the TV screen. Another pop video was showing, picturing images of children in Halloween masks who seemed to be lurching over trying to entice her into their 14 inch world.

Minor hallucinations such as these would have been fine to cope with, but something more foreboding was transpiring. Behind the visual display an internal malfeasance was lurking. Her body began to feel anaesthetised as if cursed by a lepers woes. If she tried to cross her emotionally dead legs together, the feeling that she was making an incision into of her limbs arose. Resting her slender back on a cupboard wall made the spine feel that it was bending beyond recognisable shape, to a certain point before the insurmountable pleasure would break it into pieces. The same process as a child bending a ruler waiting for its imminent breaking point. There was now no drunkenness in her tainted soul but an unknown sensation was billowing like chimney smoke through her insides. This macabre being could be felt breeding its sullen hatred.

The drug of the Woodstock festival had taken over the asylum. Susan knew she could not let the Easy rider take control giving her the unwanted privilege of hallucinatory powers. Death was by her side, caressing her insensated body, giving it a white glow of extreme coldness. How she wished for the night to be over. For the sun to shine its hazy rays over her death stricken body.

In order to survive and see the morning sun, a battle would have to be commenced against her debutante drug. The ability to hallucinate would have to be

smothered by a determined attempt to transmit normal thoughts into her mind. With prayers of sugar — sweet saccharine levels of devotion to God-to console and keep her at ease-about of furious concentration was commenced to try and destroy this sinister being. The sound on the picture box was turned up to try and distract her from the turmoil within while the process of going to sleep was discounted in fear of it being an eternal slumber.

The technicolour image provider however was doing its best to try and remind Susan of the anguish and the dark side that she was facing that mundane September night. A supposed salacious looking S&M woman was piercing her left nipple in order to place an earring on it. A feeling of vomit was threatening to emit from Susan's now sober month. All that was needed now was Darth Vader to appear on the screen and she would believe that the Dark Side had indeed infiltrated her room.

To overcome this despondency, Susan decided to avert her eyes from the TV and stare towards one of the posters on the wall, which seemed less threatening: a poster of REM'S Michael Stipe during their Out of Time period. Usually this poster of the singer holding a rose under each eye was quite pleasant to look at possibly even quixotic. Tonight, however with acid in heart and mind it became the most terrifying thing in her room.

Looking through the vocalist's vapid blue eyes with hazy light obscuring the pupils-Susan was in a trance visualising flames, not signalling hell but for some unknown reason the beginning of Apocalypse Now with the Doors The End' playing in her ears. Was Jim Morrison entrancing her to the other side in his own mystical fashion?

It was three o'clock in the morning and the suffering was still refusing to depart: Windsurfers were now strutting their staff on the picture box, surfing through endless waves under a resplendent blue sky illuminating the 14-inch screen David Lean style. Susan was now on the verge of absolute despair as the consternation was multiplying two — fold causing a teenage girl to continually flashback through her past, isolating the good times and cherishing them whole heartedly due to the feeling that her last breath was near.

Memories were flooding in now. The time when she kissed her first boy friend behind the car park of the nearby multiplex cinema. The time when she won her sportsday award for best athlete in primary school. The time when she smoked her first cigarette and actually inhaled properly, leaving her head to swirl round for the next twenty minutes — the same feeling when swinging round and round as a kid to the point of sustained dizziness.

With the door shut, the room had become a fortress where a teenager lay beyond despair and in the plight of fading away to obscurity. Opening the door would make the walls translucent and let outside's surroundings and emanations infiltrate her room. More importantly though it gave Susan the opportunity to escape this void, this room full of a teenager's woes and regret for talking an animated being so pleasing to the eye and so facetious to the mouth, but alas with a deleterious punch to end this falseness of opinion.

To be continued



the stars in exaggerated movements and voices. A tattered old man was clutching a can of extra strong beer with sore red eyes, no doubt revisiting some distant memory of a better time, while a Chinese couple were eloping with each other, cooing constantly in a sickly sort of way.

On the train to Sidcup the clientele were mostly white people travelling from the city to their suburban abodes. The atmosphere was more subdued and docile but Susan and her alarmingly swaying companion were doing their best to try and reverse this process. Both were rapt with laughter about the lack of hallucinatory powers that they had attained. They put it down to the fact that the acid-glazed penguin probably lay inebriated in their hooch-spiked paunches. Susan then proclaimed that the mammal was too drunk to unleash its incantations and was instead kneeling in a toilet facing position, waiting to vomit. Passengers ignored their rantings by looking straight ahead in the same manner when walking by a beggar or a person in need of help (Their ears nevertheless would be aware of the situation but would choose to overlook it believing it to be someone else's problem).

Their came a parting of ways at Sidcup Station as both headed for their suburban refuges. Susan's journey consisted of muttering to oneself and grinning like a possessed maniac with eyes so illuminated that they seemed to bulge

filler would be designed to link with her father's questioning over whether she had a good time or not, giving the response that everything was fine in a spurious, joyful tone. Proceeding this came the ascent of the staircase which felt like climbing up a descending escalator and was done standing up as unwavering as possible, to avoid suspicion of being intoxicated. Finally came the prosaic swagger to her parents room, murmuring some reassurances to her concerned mother before finally entering her own room.

With the fortress door closed and the shedding of clothes to reveal undergarments done, the production of slipping into bed and putting on the picture box via remote control was performed. Susan's brain was now beginning to swirl around in a drunken haze while her mouth was grinning in a Cheshire cat manner, feeling a radiating and tingling presence — the alcohol buzz which was making her face feel like an illuminated torch.

Through her own naivety she believed this to the now resuscitated fiery penguin taking hold of her blessed — out mind. Alas if only the penguin had such little reviving ability. The baneful minstrel was now sober and just itching to take control of its unsuspecting victim. A victim who could be as frightened as a child trying to sleep alone in their bedroom, too afraid to close their shutters and let go consciousness in case of a brooding, satanic blood-exhaling

review

## A memorable memorial

Waheedul Haque

THE Professor Noman Memorial Foundation brought out last December, ostensibly on the occasion of the first death anniversary of the late-lamented educator, a souvenir in the 1/8th double demy format doing a lot of credit to itself as well as speaking of the esteem he was held in by the contributors to the volume.

Teachers of the English language and literature at the college or university level had a way of becoming legends during the British colonial times. That tradition was carried forward by some during the two-decade spell of brown colonialism under Pakistan. In independent Bangladesh, academics excelling in teaching English seem to have preferred the road taken by such illustrious predecessors as Buddhadev Bose and Vishnu De, choosing to write and lecture in Bengali and on the whole on

topics of Bengali life and literature. Maybe for this or other unknown reasons classroom mesmerisers and enlighteners are a rarity these days. Teachers now grow in eminence more because of their prowess in extramural activity than teaching and guiding the pupil.

Mohammad Noman was an exception to this. He was not much of a writer — I do not recall reading any of his writings in any form. Whereas many of his peers have dozens and tonnes to their credit. But then he taught, in the classroom as well as outside. And didn't do anything besides. He was a master craftsman of his trade in the classroom, that is as established in society as any godly legend. But what impresses one on a casual leafing through the souvenir is the generous and endless anecdotes there are in it narrated by the best in our society. And all these relate to the teacher Noman outside the classroom. A wise and generous friend, al-

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ways ready with scholarly help or whatever was one in need of.

The contributors to the souvenir read like a who's who of Bangladesh's intellectuals. Shamsur Rahman, A Z Obaidullah Khan, Al-Mahmud, Anisuzzaman, Alauddin Al-Azad, Abdullah Al-Mamun, Abdul Mannan Syed, Azad Choudhury, Kabir Choudhury, Wahiduddin Mahmud, Ataus Samad, well, who isn't there! They all have recalled their association with Professor Noman with love.

One would not expect the memorial foundation to wrap up its activity with the publication of this very laudable souvenir. We propose that the foundation publish a Noman memorial volume with contributions from all around the globe, particularly the subcontinent, the subject being the teaching of English language the second language and literature. Anywhere in the world, and specially in Bangladesh.

