

CINDERELLA

THE RESURRECTION

By Mohammed Farhad



NOTE: At the time of writing this story, I was neither drunk, nor stoned. I didn't feed on live chickens either. I was completely sane, however many may question that. Any resemblance to real people, computer hardware or vegetables - living, dead, or in limbo - is purely coincidental. Any resemblance to the fairy tale is intentional. If you didn't guess that, then you're probably the one who ate live chickens.



Not so long ago and not so far away, there lived a middle-aged fat truck-driver named Bill. He and his girlfriend had been living together for a couple of years (what's the world coming to?) and as the days rolled by, little elves brought them a beautiful baby daughter (but we all know what really happened). The overjoyed parents decided to name her Cinderella, not because they liked the fairy tale, just that it sounded sophisticated.

A week after Cindy (as she was lovingly called) grew her tenth tooth, her mother ran off with a richer truck-driver who had a VCD player and wore genuine 'Versachee' socks. He was also thinner than Bill and drank the classier Fosters beer instead of Bill's Budweiser. Scientific tests reveal that alcohol is bad for your memory and can also help you drive your car off a cliff. No wonder the truckers of Aricha Road have so many widows. Her mother's absence didn't bother Cindy all that much because they only met just over ten teeth ago and that isn't enough time to get to know a person well. At least not well enough to miss. After the break-up, Bill started going to church regularly once every three months. Each time, he knelt in front of the altar and cried his eyes out begging the Lord to change his second name to Gates. It didn't work, sadly. There are some things that God considers too petty to do. This was one of them.

On the day Cindy learnt to walk by herself, Bill married a fat middle-aged dancer. I assure you, it was not of the ballet kind, not even close. 'Exotic' is the best euphemism for it. She looked a lot

like Bill except for the facial hair which, quite obviously, Bill had none of. This dancer brought along two daughters of her own, and both of them were miniature versions of her. By the way, her name was Nikki and her daughters were yet to be named (very busy single mother).

Now this woman, Nikki, was a total bi***. She gave all the quality infant formula to her kids but fed Cindy with only fat-free yogurt. She gave her kids Lego to play with, but for Cindy she just bought a stick and a wheel from a local flea market. While her kids watched Power Rangers on Saturday mornings, Cindy had to dislodge the just-too-often clogged toilet. Soon after her fourth birthday, which was cruelly not celebrated, Bill's throat clogged too and he just couldn't dislodge the flu-pill that was stuck there.

Poor Bill died choking on a pill that was supposed to rid him of the ton of snot that had accumulated somewhere in his otherwise empty skull.

After Cindy's father died, her stepmother was soon promoted and now she ran the bar she used to dance in. Her daughters Kimi and Miki started to look a little less like her (probably the green house effect) but that was about it. Their minds morphed into Nikki's at Einstein-defying speeds. Bechari Cindy had to do all the cooking (microwave frozen-dinners), cleaning (darned dishwasher), and washing (walk to Laundromat). Once the three kids got to kindergarten, and all the way through high school, she was forced to do her

stepsisters' homework for them. They were always mean to her. They always made her wear rags while they strutted about in good-looking clothes that didn't quite look good on them. They didn't let Cindy watch TV while they sucked in every second of those crummy soap operas. They made her eat dried oats for breakfast while they had cookies and milkshakes. They had Pentium PCs while all she had was a beeping calculator. They even forced her to wear men's underwear! Not even new ones at that, usually it was those left by Bill. All of you who had an urge to vomit, raise your right hand. All of you who didn't, go pick your navel.

To be continued...

MILLENNIUM WINTER

By Ehsanur Raza

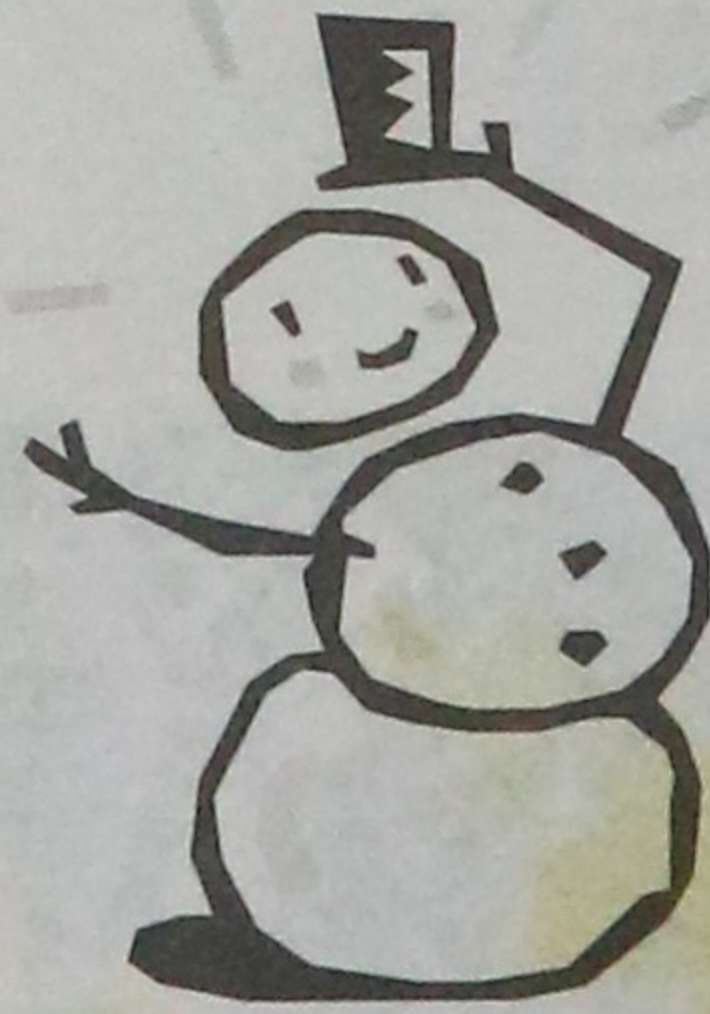
Every year at around this time schools close down, days become shorter and tomatoes become cheaper (but not necessarily in that order). It's a time when you can't figure out whether the hazy horizon is due to fog or smog. In other words it's winter. And this time it was also the winter.

Some complain about winter. For others it can be great. Someone who knows someone I know has given up smoking with the help of the weather. He puffs an unlit cigarette and exhales. He imagines that his steaming breath is smoke. I just wonder what he is going to do when summer comes and he can no longer see his breath.

The specialty of this winter is that it contained one Eid, one new Millennium and one supposedly disastrous disaster called the Y2K bug. A doomsday fanatic bet me something would happen. I bet otherwise even though I was broke. I figured that if the world did come to an end I would have bigger things to worry about than paying up. Especially that of meeting in hell all my fiends whom I owe money. The fanatic now believes everything is set on a timed destruction. Though he is not betting anymore.

Shopping frenzy broke out as the first Eid of the new century approached. People always freak out on Eid shopping; the Millennium weather just provided a good excuse to freak out more. The big day announced itself with a sudden cold wave. Most people wore the thin traditional Punjabi to the mosques. During the prayers people were shivering so badly that the lines looked like several centipedes suffering from seizures. It was pretty difficult keeping your mind on prayers.

Early winter weather was very tame, more like summer with the air cooler turned on in economy mode. *Melas* such as the WBA were great hunting grounds for both males and females. On one such fine day I set out to join the wildlife of the city. Nearing my destination I had to stop at a red light. I was waiting for the light to turn green when suddenly a brownish feathery bundle was thrust in my face. For a moment I thought the furry creatures from the movie *Critters* were attacking me. Then I realized these were birds and a little boy with a toothy grin was asking me to buy them. Before I could utter a word one of them bit me on the nose. The boy giggled and ran off. Biting my nose was not enough for the bird. A wet whitish blob marked my black jeans. At that moment



the light turned green and according to Murphy's law the car behind mine started blowing its horn. I had to move on which saved the boy from grievous bodily harm.

Those were migratory birds that come to our country every year and promptly get shot/caught, sold and eaten. This was one time I did not feel sorry for them.

At the fairground there was a big jam caused by confused throngs of people. It seemed the ticket counter was lost and everyone was searching for it. Theoretically tickets are sold at a place approximately near the entrance gate. But here there was just a pile of arms and legs wriggling like a jar of earthworms. From somewhere within emerged a man holding aloft several tickets in the manner of a wrestler who just won the championship. Yes, the ticket counter was behind the pile of limbs. Since I had no choice I plunged into the crush of humanity and was, er, crushed. The next few moments were a blur. Somehow I managed to buy my ticket without losing any valuables except my chewing gum. It fell out while blowing a bubble and stuck to someone's pants. While checking to see if I still had my wallet something sticky came into contact with my fingers. A green piece of gum was stuck to my hip pocket. Oh well, I guess you get what you give. After acquiring my ticket I walked over to a man who was unsuccessfully trying to remove from his pants the remains of, um, my chewing gum. I sympathized with him and showed him the gum stuck on me. His face turned all red and I realized it was his gum. Well, serve him right if my gum ruined his pants.

Near the gate I met my friend who held up

two tickets. Why did he not let me know earlier? Before I could blow my top he dragged me inside. And I could not see anybody. There was so much dust. It seemed akin to stepping onto another planet. People dressed in all colors of the rainbow materialized in and out of the dust. Girls in 8-inch heels and their bizarre boyfriends in neon green T-shirts wandered aimlessly. Face paint was quite popular, as there were a number of teens with camouflage and tribal war paint on their faces. There was also a various display of headgear. Along with the usual caps that say Reebok on the front and Nike on the back there were all these new bedtime caps. Rather like wearing a sock on the head. Some probably were socks. Some guys looking like bank robbers wore ski masks that covered their entire face leaving the eyes and mouth free. Leather jackets were the most favored by wannabe macho guys even when the sun became hot enough to hardboil eggs. *Weird* is chic.

The stalls displayed a lot of STUFF which nobody bought due to the 50% added to the original price. Well, nobody except the poor guys who came with their girlfriends and wanted to appear Generous with a capital G. To preserve our limited savings we left as soon as we spotted a group of our female friends.

On our way home two men wearing ski masks approached us. They seemed like two more fashion conscious citizens. But one of them took out a knife and asked us to hand over the money. I took out a packet of gum and handed it over. Then I took out a gun and was about to hand it over when my quick-thinking friend told the muggers to hand over their money. They also gave up their ski masks and two other wallets they had picked. Thankfully the wallets did not contain any ID so we got to keep them. Mugging muggers is profitable.

I was so happy at becoming solvent again that I drove all the way home smoking the tyres and being an absolute hoolligan. In my room I posed in front of the mirror like Fox Mulder and tried to twirl the gun. It fell from my hand and broke. Too bad, I paid 150 taka for it at the fair. It looked very authentic. I took off all three of my earrings and my cowboy boots with the metal toes and went to the bathroom to wash up. The paint they applied on my face at the fair took some scrubbing. I had a skull design done. The hairdresser did a good job with the brown dye and the spiky hairstyle. I looked in the mirror and reflected on the day. Winter sure brings out a lot of weird people.

The Animal Within

By ScarFace

The cry of a wounded animal
Rings out in the horizon
A half-hearted strangled noise
Echoes in the lonely planet.

Shackles clank together
In an unholy resonance
Yet they hold strong.

Enough of this nonsense
I have had more than I can handle
See the agony? See the pain within?
Can't you see its killing you
It's killing me...

Killing the animal within.

The Law of Nature

By ScarFace

The Nature of Law
Is the law of nature.
Nighttime creatures fly around
Waiting to grab a piece of
Decaying flesh.

That's what you are,
A bundle of decaying flesh.
And so they grab you.

You could have been a human.
You could have lived and loved.
Yet when the laws of the dark
Invite you to a nightlong fiesta,
You forget to say NO.

And that's the end of
The human we used to know.
That's the end