Happily Ever After?

Newspapers and entertainment magazines are always trying to delve deep into the lives of film actors. No one pays any attention to those who devote their lives to making films a bit crispier for the audience. Once described as "extras", they are now called junior artistes. This week *the Star* interviews some of the junior artistes of our film industry.

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A group of young men wearing blue and khaki police uniform and ammunition belts are on the hunt for the notorious bandit Kali Sarder. They carry small guns on their waist and one of them has a battery operated walkie-talkie. The band of police is led by a young man, the hero of our story, who instructs the group as to how to go about doing their job. A dozen policemen are to surround the village so that no one can get out and they can carry out their search for Kalu with ease. Around 10 to 12 villagers gather under a banyan tree, in fear of their lives. Suddenly there is a burst of gunfire. Most of the policemen fall to the blood spattered soil. But the hero escapes the attack and attacks the villains on his own.

This scene has been played a number of times in several Bangla films. The hero is always the one single-handedly taking on the goons. He is the one who escapes a huge disaster without an injury. The hero -- the commercial profits of the film rests on whose shoulders -- gets much more scope, attention and space than the junior artistes. In fact, in the above mentioned scene, the junior artistes appear on the screen for a few minutes. But they carry the memory of these few minutes for the rest of their lives.

We enter the premises of the Bangladesh Film Development Corporation (BFDC) on a bright, sunny morning. You will find people gather around the Bangladesh Film Artists Association (BFAA) from as early as nine in the morning. They are here with the hope of getting a role, no matter how small, in the films. People from different age groups are called inside the office for an interview and later assigned to different shooting spots according to their specific talents. After working at the BFDC for many years, actors learn that even junior artists can impress the audience in their own charismatic ways, and thus, put in their best foot forward and try their best to get selected for a film.

Muhammed Sulaiman, in his eighties, has to wait in a line to get a small role in a film even years after working in the industry. When he realises that we are