

CIRCLES IN SQUARES

Magic in a Bottle

KARIM WAHEED

Montu struggled to finish the plate of rice. "You didn't have to inhale bhaath, did you? Where are you off to anyway?" – Selina asks.

"Well, tomorrow is hartal, and I need to deliver this package. It's urgent."

He'd asked for Tk 12,000 – 6000 in advance – and the client agreed. The family of three had been struggling to make ends meet. Six-year-old Shujon has been unwell and medicines aren't free. Montu knows he's taking a risk, but he needs to do what he needs to do.

Montu fiddles with his Nokia; 6:15pm. He needs to get a move on. It'd take about 10 minutes to get to Farmgate.

He calls Selina. He tells her to stay home. He asks after the bag.

"What bag?"

"The red bag I left next to the table. I told you not to move it."

"And I didn't."

"Where's Shujon?"

After three days of fever and coughing, Shujon is feeling better today. While his parents were busy with the meal, he slipped out and took the red bag with five bottles

of soft drinks. Shujon loves the sparkly, sweet

drinks. He thinks they're magic. He

wants to share them with

friends.

Horin

RUMMAN R KALAM

My name is Rafiqul Islam Horin. My parents, Apel Sarkar and Komola Begom wanted me to reflect their personalities. My grandparents Fahad Zaman, and Bideshini Horini (she's from somewhere in West Asia) brought me up. My grandmother would sit on her husband's lap and talk about how dubstep reminded her of the old country; where cups brimming with thick coffee and rugs would keep her warm while my grandfather would stroke his pens. He had a weird habit. With his eyes fixed on me, his head bent at an awkward angle, he would stroke his pen and keep repeating "Horin, Horin, my little Horin."

On my twenty-fifth birthday, the eve of my graduation from a bi-directional institution, my father called me into his room. "My son, it was always our dream that you became a rapper with a medical degree," he said.

"Dad, I have a business degree, that's impossible," I replied. He pointed at his track pants, "Impossible is nothing, my son."

He then took off his sweat pants and tied the legs around my neck like how hipsters tie their mufflers.

"Impossible is nothing, Horin," he said in his hopeful, sonorous voice.

"Impossible is nothing, dad," I replied.

A Difficult Social Scenario

ZOHEB MASHIUR

The ship snapped in half and sank into cold water. Much like my marriage. *Ha ha.*

That bit of wit I'd said out loud. No one was amused. The old Egyptian next to me had refused to leave until his family had been seen to safety – but a burly Swede had ignored his protests and thrown him into the boat. No particular reason to assume his family had made it onto the subsequent boats. He'd been busy having a hysterical fit that'd risen up to eleven when I cracked my joke. The Third Assistant Engineer was shooting me dirty looks. An awkward position.

When on a lifeboat at night with the last 25 people you might ever meet, it's important to make friends. I'd gotten off to a rocky start so I decided to start afresh. Sitting across me was a lovely Caucasian girl. I told her I liked her coat, and she burst into Turkish tears – very unpleasant. A Cypriot translated for me: the coat had belonged to her little sister.

The Third Assistant Engineer asked if I knew how to swim. The burly Swede twitched his muscles. It was all very awkward.

Khatiya

KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

You ready?

Mmhmm. Ready, Captain Shihab.

Okay. In 3, 2, 1 - GO!

ZOOOMMMMM!!!

Yay, we're off to space!

Shihab *beta*, have I not told you to stay away from the *khatiya*?

But Abba, that's my chariot.

Chariot?

Yes, one day I'll fly to the unknowns in it. I want to be an astronaut. I'll have my own white spacesuit. I'll take all my friends with me.

Oh, really? What will you do out there?

So many things. I'll fly so high, through the clouds and over the moon. I'll be so famous, everyone will know me as the "Star".

Hahaha, *In Sha Allah*, my son. You will be a star.

Twenty odd years later, the Imam stands before many like him, watching Shihab before them laid down in his favourite chariot. A man puts his arm around the Imam and whispers in a broken voice, "He is really going to be a star, *bhaijaan*."

Before them, Shihab lies facing west, prepared in his white suit. Ever ready for the out-of-the-world experience.

Breathless.