



Chronicles of an Unlucky Home Tutor

CHAPTER ONE

MUNSHI

Tutoring is a rite of passage for young Bangladeshis. But even though most of us see it as a lucrative and convenient part-time job, it doesn't always work out the way we plan it.

After barely crawling through my O Levels I followed in the footsteps of my peers; I set on a journey to impart my incomplete, misguided knowledge on others, partly for the greater good, mostly because I needed money to fuel my Pringles addiction.

I was lured in by the promise of easy money and as an "O Level graduate" I felt I was more than qualified to take the responsibility of my juniors. But just as we all have horror stories to share about a few choice teachers, there are also students that spawned from the fires of hell. Over the course of a few articles, I shall use the stories behind my woes, my psychological bruises and my anatidaephobia to show you the dos and don'ts of the tutoring realm.

My first student was referred to me by a friend of a friend, who used to teach her before. The circumstances that led to his departure were murky at best, which frankly, should've been enough of a hint. Nevertheless, tingling with excitement for a chance to finally earn money and be "independent", I drooled the entire way to the student's home.

I was interviewed on my first day by her grandparents; they appeared to hail from affluent and highbrow surroundings and genuinely cared for their granddaughter. The father worked abroad most of the year but the identity and whereabouts of her mother were shrouded in mystery. I assumed she had passed and being the gentleman I am, deemed it insensitive to bring it up. My gut was telling me something more dubious was afoot but my gut was battling explosive diarrhoea at the time so I ignored it.

The student herself was a joy to meet. Polite, perceptive and eager to learn, I couldn't hope for a better vessel to bestow my broken knowledge upon. We quickly went to work and she managed to absorb everything I explained to her immediately. The first few lessons went as well as can be hoped for, until I started hearing screaming from one of the other rooms.

I figured it was her siblings roughhousing, but I never saw any of them around the apartment. In the subsequent days the screaming escalated, interspersed with crashes and dull thuds. I began to think maybe my bug-ridden stomach was on to something.

After some mild sleuthing, mainly on social media, I found out that her mom suffered from bouts of paranoia and aggression. Further grilling told me that the last tutor she had was sent to the hospital as a result of her mom's impromptu rampages. Of course that was enough to make me lose control over my bowels but I tried to soldier on and remain optimistic. That was before I got attacked myself.

With several scratches to remember the incident by, I ran out and never looked back.

Just goes to show that life isn't all sunshine and Pringles. Before taking on a student, it is important to have references from people who personally know not only the individual but also their families. The monthly wage is not worth a trip to the hospital.

Best One-liners from Teachers

SALMA MOHAMMAD ALI

Take a walk down memory lane from the time you first sat in a class room. What do you remember most clearly? Is it recess, the lessons that seemed to draw on forever or the random one-liners your teachers pulled after which holding back your laughter proved difficult? Reflecting back to *all the years* spent as a student, I recall the following lines being frequently used by my teachers and even though each teacher is different, I'm sure you are familiar with most:

1. Is this a fish market?

When exactly this phrase will be used depends on the teacher's threshold of patience. A very strict teacher will respond to a few mere whispers with this line while others will wait till the classroom has reached a state of uncontrollable chaos and will be convinced that it is no better than one of the most crowded, noisiest places – a fish market.

2. This is not your bedroom/living room!

If the teacher should find any student slouching, resting their face in their hands or simply sitting in a position that ensures the slightest bit of comfort, they will respond with this line paired with a stern glare until the student adopts a more robotic posture.

3. I have eyes at the back of my head.

This metaphor(?) is used to threaten students lest they wish to peek at their peer's exam script or discuss answers while the teacher's back is turned.

4. I will take the/an exam tomorrow.

Groan

5. Pin drop silence!

Either the teacher has assigned time for silent reading or quickly needs to go to the next room to bring something and they want "pin drop silence". I can't say how many other teachers have done this but mine once picked out a pin from the board and let it

drop to the ground to see if we were following instructions.

6. Bashay eishob shikhaye?

Misbehaving with another student, failing to be punctual in class or incorrectly answering a very easy question may earn you this reaction, roughly translating to "Is this what you've been taught at home?"

7. If the girls behave like this what should I expect from the boys?

When a group of male students are being particularly noisy, a teacher may not be too alarmed because "boys will be boys" but when it's a loud group of giggling girls, the teacher is likely to react with disappointment and shock as girls, apparently, by nature are meant to be soft spoken and quieter, thus more *well-behaved* compared to boys.

#EverydaySexism

8. When I was your age...

Struggling with a math problem on the day you're learning it? Your disappointed teacher will probably sigh, "When I was your age, I could solve tougher problems."

9. What is so interesting?

Please share.

If you hear this, it means you're BUSTED. Maybe you were looking out the window for too long, or were caught whispering/passing chits

instead of paying attention and now you must share your topic of side talk or worse – say who you were staring at through the window. Embarrassing, I know.

10. I will send you to the principal's office.

This is every teacher's last, and probably favourite, resort (and usually just a bluff). When all their other warnings fail and the teacher is completely fed up with the student, he/she will be dealt with by the all-powerful principal.

Salma Mohammad Ali fears she is becoming a crazy cat lady and uses writing as a means to grasp on to sanity. Send her your views/hate/love at <https://www.facebook.com/salma.ali209>



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