



WORDPLAY

Respite never quite caught up;
Those lissome fingers slyly curved to poise
Never did leave my thoughts.
As I drove down with her in that murkily lit road
They haunted me much like the sharp edge of her lips
Instilling a craving to touch, to hold, to breathe,
and a fearful desire to bare my skin
For her nails to carve.
The pain would suffice as respite,
only when her breaths would fog my window shield.

ADNAN FAKIR

Adnan M. S. Fakir teaches Economics at BRAC University. Outside he directs a documentary film series called "Finding Bangladesh," writes, takes photos, does social activism and travels a lot. He can be reached at adnanfakir@gmail.com.

STRONGER AND BRIGHTER

AAHIR MRITTIKA

There's a certain beauty in the incomprehensible
There's a certain glamour in pain.
The way you heal, the way you resolve.
It's called being alive.
Hearts will break and tears can't be kept in forever.
The emptiness will swallow you.
Pain will be whipped on your mind again and again;
And here's a fact, it'll hurt more than marks on your flesh.

But you can survive.
Still you're speaking, your heart is beating.
You can still fight.
And sometimes, that's enough.
Maybe you aren't okay.
Maybe you haven't been in a long time.
With time you'll cure.
Memories will fade into dull, forgotten storage
Kept up somewhere in dusty attics.
Wounds will remain as scars and nightmares.
But as the tide takes you again and storms come back greyer
You can stand upright,
Stronger and brighter.



When will I Play?

NICOLE MOONSTONE

"But Mother, when will I play?" The little boy questioned his mother after she gave him his list of things to do throughout the day. Mother sighed and looked disappointed.

"I feel so guilty," Mother complained later on at the dinner table. "He keeps asking when he would play and I go crazy trying to fit in all his studies in one day."

"He's a boy after all. He must go to that field everyday. Would do him good you know," Father advised.

"Who will take him? You? You are never home then," Mother snapped.

"I always have so much to do! I must cook fresh food every day, keep the house pristine, get the children to achieve perfect grades *and* do some of those projects you keep pushing me to. It's not fair. I am only one person."

"Well, you *are* a freelance architect, you know. I only give small projects, like office interiors and such," Father mumbled a reply.

"Those are not small projects, Father," Big Sister interjected. "And either way, Little Brother is tired when he comes home from school. If he has cricket practice as well, then he would never do any studies at home." Saying that, she flopped back onto the chair and winced.

"Is it your back this time?" Mother asked hurriedly. "Or your shoulder? Where does it hurt?"

"It. Hurts. Everywhere," Big Sister growled through gritted teeth.

"It's so strange. When we were little, I don't think we knew what pain even -"

"Well, Mother, trust me, we don't *ask* for it."

"Oh dear," Mother sighed again.

"When did that backache start?"

During class seven or eight, when you had to carry all those heavy bags."

"It is ridiculous!" Father ejaculated passionately. "Like I am always

saying, there should NOT be heavy books for children to carry. Why do they have to learn so much out of books? When will they learn about real life if they always have their head buried in textbooks?"

"I have told the school about it countless times," Mother nodded. "I am even worried about Little Sister. She has started to have some back pain too."

"Oh don't bother blaming the school." Big Sister grumbled. "Do you remember when I was there? We did not do many of the things they did. I remember doing algebra in class five. Little Brother is doing it in class two. It is because of those parents -"

"Oh yes. They go to teachers and complain that their children are not learning enough," said Mother. "They keep saying that they do not get their value for money; that other schools teach things this one does not. It is all so ridiculous."

"There must be something wrong with their heads," Father nodded wisely.

Big Sister rolled her eyes. "They judge their children by grades and scores," she informed. "And if things don't go as expected, they blame the school. This is Dhaka. Those students have private tutors at home and some even go to out-of-school coaching from Little Sister's class. Class six. What a life."

"Where is Little Sister anyway?" Father asked.

"She's still sleeping. She came home at five today. Something about a Student Council at school." Mother replied.

The little boy wandered towards his mother with a notebook and pencil in hand. "Twenty-seven spellings, Mother. Each ten times." He handed Mother the notebook. "I still have my math homework and it is almost bedtime. It's not fair, Mother. When will I play?"

