

HEART

"Tomorrow at Listennial?" I asked. The woman with the curling locks of dark hair and almond eyes just smiled at me and left. My watch beeped and a new event was added to my calendar.

"Listennial 2030 with CELENA KHAN at 0610H, 29/12/30."

Another one added to the list. I whistled as I saw her profile picture, she seemed out of everyone's league, let alone mine. This year's been good hunting for me. Scrounging for the right forums is an art form that not many understand. Most people depend upon their social media accounts to spoon-feed information. Unfortunately for them, by the time the data hits their feeds, it's either too old or too filtered down. Call it the digital version of Chinese whispers. I digress. I better make a post on the 100 Club. I am officially a member today.

I took a cab to the 500 Club. Once inside the car, I swiped the "WATCH VIDEO" tab and spent the next 5 minutes watching a short documentary on the dangers of not taking care of your body. I was in pristine shape. Laughing out loud, I thought about how the rest of the world is in top physical condition too.

Smiling and shaking my head, I got out

of the car and walked towards the reception. The door opened for the first time since my registration tour. This time I didn't have a guide, I was a newly promoted member after all. All around me, people were taking selfies and peacocking in every way possible. Next stop, the 1000 Club.

Listennial 2030 was as you would expect. The artist lineup included over 300 performers. Celena and I were here for 2FEET's performance. I personally didn't care much for the band but her profile said she was completely devoted to them. That's all I needed, to be honest.

"Hey," I greeted her.

"Hi there, Aser," said Celena. She raised her arm to show me the 2FEET wristband and I did the same in reply. We both smiled and synced the bands with the tickets on our watches. The show began.

It was all lights of every colour. Some of them I didn't even know existed. The music bubbled up from my own body and I realised the PA system was there just to make the oldies feel comfortable. 2FEET were as much of a band as they were magicians. Their compositions mixed wild tribal beats and expansive symphonies that were woven together by the dreamy voice of Asmira, their vocals. I found my body

swaying to the voice and my fingers intertwined with Celena's. I thought she'd be another notch on my account but the electricity in our hands said something completely different. She smiled and leaned in towards me—

I inhaled sharply and heard the repeated wailing of the Hyper Engaging Art Rendering Technology.

"BLOOD GLUCOSE LEVELS—CRITICAL," said a woman's voice.

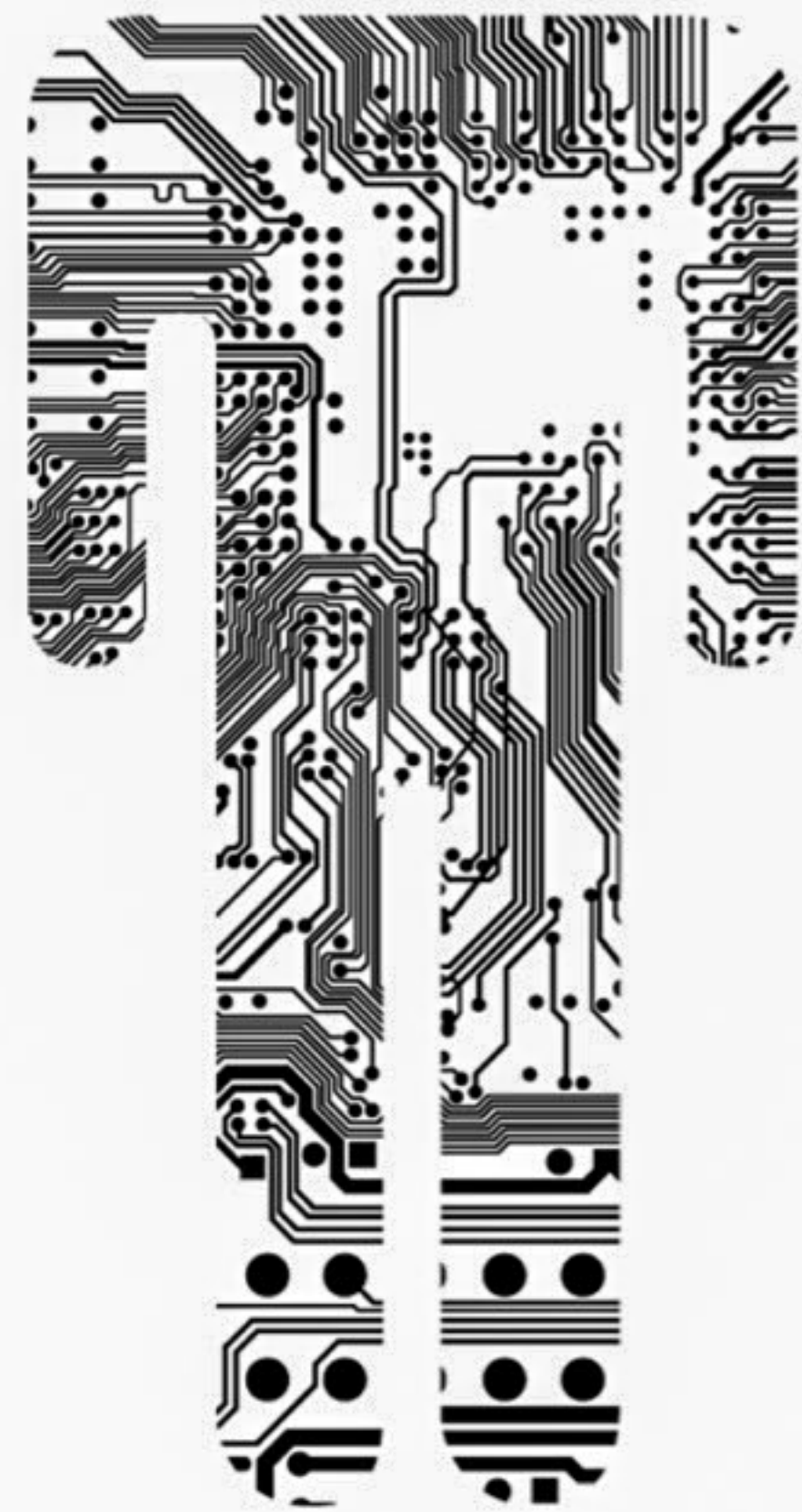
I got out of my HEART cube and fell onto the floor. Cursing myself, I pawed the cabinet for the glucose injections and stabbed myself with it. Lying on the cold tiled floors, I wiped my tears with bony hands that barely had any muscle tissue for the injection.

"It's okay, Aser. There's no reason to be upset. You are not unique in your own situation. Do you want to talk to any of the other 2.3 billion people currently in your situation?"

I nodded and opened my eyes to the large viewport on the wall.

A skeletal figure of a smiling woman with wispy black hair was calling me. The picture was enough to push me back down onto the floor with a fresh wave of tears.

Celena was ugly.



WORDS & ILLUSTRATION: RUMMAN R KALAM

A BIRD FROM PARADISE



SADIA TUBA

It's a winter late noon,
Is it a town or a village?
Or, just a soft earthen box?
Soon everything is about to be wrapped by the twilight.
Birds are returning home.
And, I am here with my sum up anguish.
Under the grey carpet sky,
Trying to organize some puzzled thoughts,
scattered on my rainbow surface.
Thinking about the slash I once bore.
I remember the merciless soil has just smashed my flesh!
I often feel the rustling sound of human feet.
But no one is there to rescue me.
I am circling, circling...
around the emptiness!
Remembering my lost verses.
Embraced by the haziness.
Where am I?
Suddenly,
I hear the chirping sound of a bird.
Has arranged a cozy seat on my window.
Its emerald feathers are layered with endearment.
And the crystal eyes carry blessings.
I wonder is it a bird from paradise!

The writer is a student of BRAC University.

LITTLE GIRL IN MY DREAM

AFROZA HOSSAIN

To believe that dreams could be reality
Is the hope this world has been devoid of.
To imagine life with the colours in attendance
Is what reality has shattered.
To trust without hesitation and indecision
Is what the world has forgotten long back.
Little girl, I only met you in my dreams
But I know you exist; that golden laugh of yours lighting up the world around you.
Your eyes shine so bright in your intelligence
It's overwhelmingly beautiful.
Little girl, when you grow up, I want you to stay true to yourself.
I want you to believe in your flaws, not hide them.
Your heart is a masterpiece, share it
Even if pain is inevitable.
I don't know why you appeared in my dream among unending nightmares
Maybe I missed who I was; I know I do.
Little girl, I was awed by your purity.
Always remember who you are,
And even when times will be hard, you will be free in your own world.

The writer is a student of grade 7 in Sunbeams School.

