

# Mistakes

MONEESHA R KALAMDER

Kashem stands outside his small, two-bedroom tin-shed house. The summer heat has warmed up the air, creating a vacuum. Nothing moves. No leaves, no grass. It's boiling inside. The heat woke him up, he didn't have much sleep at night. He came back from his long trip all the way from Benapole around 4 in the morning. Kashem used to be a helper, but he recently got promoted to a truck-driver. He considers himself lucky.

He thinks of his wife Sajeda. He is very lucky indeed. Sometimes at night he sings to her. He likes to sing, but he likes to sing for Sajeda more. She gets embarrassed, thinking of the neighbours overhearing, begs him to stop. "Let them hear," he says, "can't I sing to my wife?" She doesn't say anything else, but he notices the shyness that creeps up into her face. Shyness, pride and happiness. She's happy and so is he.

He thinks of the two dozen red bangles hidden in his bag. He bought them from the Indian border for Sajeda, who is three-months pregnant. He bought a toy truck too, though he hopes his child never has to drive one. The truck is painted just like the one he drives. Yellow and blue. He didn't really get to see Sajeda properly last night when he arrived, he had gulped down his dinner and crashed onto their bed. He imagines her face when he will show her his gifts for them. For her and their first-born. He pictures his future with his family. When Kashem goes away on trips and his little boy misses him, he can play with the toy his father brought him.

He comes back into their bedroom, peeking into the kitchen. He notices that his wife forgot to take her lunch to work, packed in a little blue plastic box. He can't really blame her for forgetting it, she had to serve him a meal at 4 and go to work at the garment factory at 6:30. It's very bad for his wife to skip a meal in this condition, so he decides to drop off her lunch at work. This gives him an excuse to see her. Bless his wife and her little mistakes.

He puts on his Hawaiian shirt, picks up the lunch box—whistling as he leaves his home. It's a twenty minute walk to his wife's workplace. As he reaches there, something feels off. The shops in

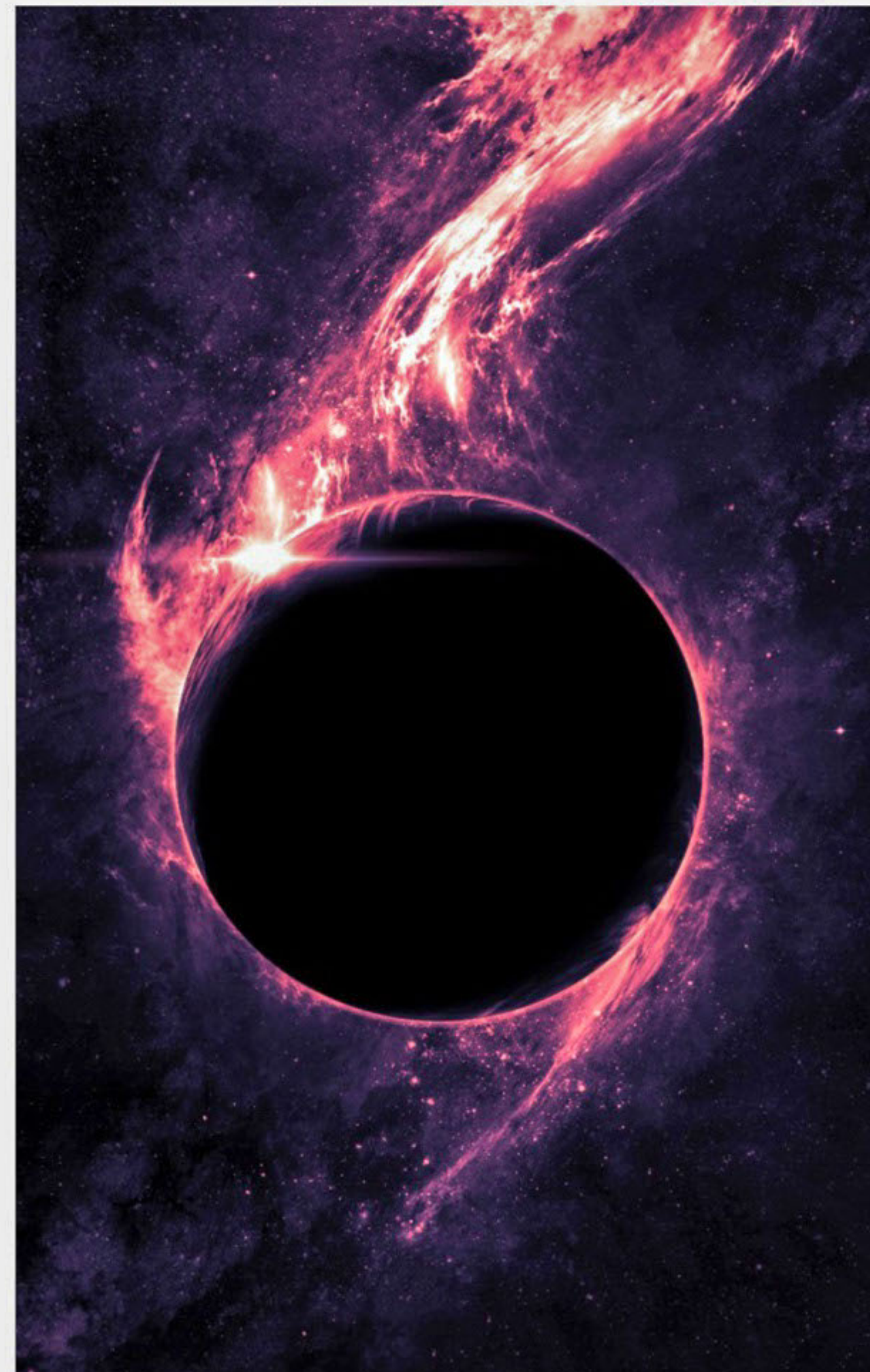
the building are closed, so is the bank. The compound is strangely empty, but he can hear machines roaring in the garment factories above. Kashem wonders what's wrong. He has only been away from home for two-and-a-half days, what has happened so soon? He can't quite put a finger on it. "Oh well," he thinks, "I'll find out soon enough." He practically runs up the staircases, all the way up to the fourth floor, where his wife is hard at work.

He spots her from a few feet away. Smiling, he goes to her and taps on her head. She looks up, annoyed. Her face breaks into half a smile and half a grimace when she sees him. What is he doing here, she wants to know. Kashem is confused. His wife has never reacted to him like this. It leaves him a little curious, and quite hurt. He holds up his hand. "You forgot your lunch," he tells her. She stares at him. Grabs his hand and says, "Kashem, we need to leave." "What's wrong?" he is concerned. "They told us we need to come to work today or they won't pay last month's wages and will fire us." Kashem is very confused by this babbling. He can sense the agitation in everyone around him, but he doesn't know why.

His wife blabbers on, "it's not safe here...crack...here in the building...yesterday..." He doesn't understand half the things she says, but he understands enough to realise they need to leave. He pulls her up. "Screw the job," he says. He takes her hand and turns toward the stairwell. Suddenly, the whole building rumbles. Everyone stands up. Kashem has almost reached the stairwell. Another rumble. Something is happening. Sajeda is in hysterics. "I shouldn't have come to work today," she says, "I made a mistake." Kashem doesn't pay attention to her. He starts to climb down the stairs with his pregnant wife in his arms. In the next second, he doesn't know where he is going because the stairs beneath his feet have moved. He looks up- to see the roof coming crashing down on them.

In a nearby slum, two dozen red bangles and a little toy truck keep waiting.

*Moneesha R Kalamder is a former Hogwarts student and celebrity Quidditch player. She is looking to live a quiet life in the Muggle world but struggling to find her place. You can talk to her about magic and other things at [mkalamder9.75@gmail.com](mailto:mkalamder9.75@gmail.com)*



# VOID

SABRINA SAMREEN ISLAM

The mind's a void,  
 Devoid  
 Of thoughts and words.  
 Blinding white, dreary, bleak.  
 And voids in my mind reek,  
 Of nothing.  
 Nothing, in all its venomous form and cruel  
 despair.  
 I wish it were something instead.  
 The heart's a barren  
 Field of sighs, hopes, rising and crest fallen.  
 Voids encompass me, shroud me.  
 Cloaked in void, all I see  
 Are voids born out of void.  
 Might I try? Could I get past?  
 Malignant void, trampled down hopes.  
 Dwindling bright, luring evil.  
 Should I pursue my thoughts, still?  
 And I wish I wrung words of void.  
 Churn them out, words, and forgotten glory.  
 And icy tentacles ensnare me.  
 I struggle to free.  
 Voids, render me powerless,  
 Nebulous of acquired trophies, buried in distant  
 past.  
 And voids command, as I desperately seek a last  
 Resort.  
 And I navigate unknown alleys, trespass  
 uninhabited terrain,  
 Try to retrieve thoughts out of a numb brain.  
 I crave words and a way out.  
 I hope against hope, pray that I might,  
 Witness,  
 Some grass, pretty roses and a patch of sunlight,  
 Instead of void.

*The writer is a student of North South University.*