

SAVED BY THE PLASTIC. REALLY?

EHSANUR RAZA RONNY

Is it a bird?
Is it a plane?
Is it a water bottle?

It had little to do with Superman. He wasn't anywhere around, which is a good thing. Because then he would give me a lecture about how his 'S' stands for hope. And how we need to hope. Of course, then I would have punched him in his ridiculously chiselled jaw and needlessly broken my fist.

"What hope?" I thought, as I waded through knee-deep water. For one, I was hoping that the brown colour of the water was due to the mud and only mud. Except I was wading through Dhaka's apartment-filled area called Dhanmondi. There is no mud there, just miles and miles of clogged sewers where no ninja animal could survive.

To go back and answer those first three questions, it was 'a' and 'c'. A: it was a dead bird floating along after having finally given up all hope on us



humans. It didn't believe in Superman either. C: there were bottles, bottles everywhere. If we used a message in a bottle every time the city flooded, the mobile operator bosses would suffer quite a few cardiac arrests from the precipitous drop in business.

We are a wasteful bunch throwing out plastic bags and bottles everywhere. Every time it rains and the roads swell up, watch what happens after it clears. All the sewer exits are seen blocked by trash. We are effectively plugging the cities and turning them into massive bath tubs. And the bath is involuntary.

What was I thinking going out on such a day? It was for my job, unfortunately, just like the hundreds of

other people trying to use the roads that day. It is a thing we need to do so we can pay for the ruined, wet shoes we need to replace.

People have come up with plenty of ways to survive this damp hell. A friend of mine works on the other side of the country in Bashundhara. It is a 15 kilometre trip that takes two hours to cover by car and 1.25 hours if you walk. But we don't walk because, well, that sounds suspiciously like exercise.

He uses the bike services. He uses buses. And sometimes he will spot cars of acquaintances and jump in before anyone can say no. But none of this can withstand the sheer terror of a 30 minute rain because that is how long it takes for

us to experience Venice.

His only refuge is in carrying plastic bags. The bags serve to protect the cellphone, shoes and wallet. Then they are put into another plastic bag for added precaution. We once tried walking with plastic bags on our feet to avoid the dubiously muddy waters. In practice, both our hips occasionally still hurt from the painful, slippery landing.

In the end, it is that very same plastic thing protecting us that is killing us. Just makes you wonder, would we need all this saving if we didn't throw around all the trash on the roads in the first place?

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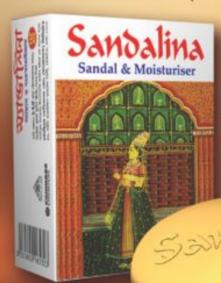
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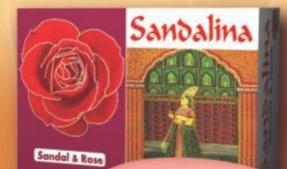
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