



# WHERE DID I PUT THAT DAMNED PENDRIVE

AZMIN AZRAN

I remember the first time I saw Rafiul bhai. We just moved into our new Mirpur house, and I accompanied my mom when she decided to visit our next door neighbours. Rafiul bhai was sitting in front of a computer screen on a reclining chair, with half his bottom hanging out. He was playing drums on his enormous potbelly to a song I later discovered was Metallica's 'Seek and Destroy', one of Metallica's best tracks, if you are into them for the thrash side of things. Early Metallica was a thing to behold, it almost makes you wish Mustaine had never left and Megadeth never existed. Anyways, let's not get sidetracked. Rafiul bhai was an opulent young man who liked thrash metal and that was when I had met him. It must seem to you like this Rafiul person must've had a huge influence in my life for me to remember our first meeting in such detail. He has had a huge influence on me but that is not why I remember this meeting, no one remembers events because of the people who were in it, it has more to do with the thing that actually happened. For instance, I have a girlfriend of seven years, who claims I was picking my nose with my middle

finger the day we first met, and I had eventually proceeded to eat fuchka with that hand. See, I don't remember that because I do that every other day, but only once have I ever had a person call me *indur* on the first meeting and explain to me the difference in sounds achieved from patting, slapping and punching an empty, full and half empty stomach respectively.

This was in 2004, when I was nine and did not know enough words, and I'm not sure I do now. I was into Hindi movies and serials a lot at that time, and for years I thought Rafiul bhai mispronounced the name 'Inder' like many heroes have in Indian movies. It did not occur to me that a man who laughed for exactly 93 seconds when I had asked him what 'rain-days-vooz' meant wouldn't be able to say 'Inder' but I was stupid back then. I found *Indur* endearing, and tried to meet him at least once a day, to hear him call me *Indur*, if not because I was excited about his theory about how if we took every human on the planet and made one out of their median characteristics, they'd be intolerably boring.

By the time the 2010s arrived, the one picture I have stuck from that time of Rafiul bhai in my head was him patting down his legs and thighs in search of a thing he had put in one of the many pockets of his cargo pants. The early 2010s were the time for dual sim phones, micro SD cards, flash drives, and using them to share media. I didn't go to Rafiul bhai's house too often at that time, he was constantly in the middle of exams and had a look of delirium about him every time they were close by. We did meet on the rooftop for a game of cricket from time to time, and I used to call him to ask him to bring new music, and some other delights if he were so kind to bring it along.

Once he had made his way from the second floor of the building to the seventh floor roof, huffing and puffing and red faced, I'd wait for him to calm down as he leaned back on a wall and stroked his belly. "You see Indur, this belly gives me so much trouble, but it's like a pet now. I've had it for years, I've fed it, I've maintained it, but now I can't let it go. I'm like a balloon, a month of running in Shangshad bhaban, and it'll be gone,

poof! But I don't have the heart to kill this glorious thing," he would tell me, never removing his hand from his belly. It was then that I would ask him if he had brought the pen drive, and that was when the patting of the pockets on his legs and thighs began, until around 78 seconds later, he'd extract a battered looking drive from one of them.

It was in 2012 that Rafiul bhai left us. No he didn't die, he just got a scholarship to go study in Canada. I didn't know I was sad about him leaving until he started telling me how the human body reacts to extreme subzero temperatures. "I'll have to start wearing underwear when I'm in Canada," he told me, "remember Indur, nothing in the world is more important than your anatomy. Make sure your organs are in good shape." I was weeping by the time he was done telling me this, and he put a hand across my shoulders and said, "Aww, don't cry, you idiot. Your body will be just fine in Dhaka. And if you ever do go to Canada, you can always wear start wearing underwear. It's not that bad."

*Azmin Azran has untold tales of things that never happened waiting to escape his mind. Get him to talk at [azminazran@gmail.com](mailto:azminazran@gmail.com).*