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for entire nights. By her early adulthood, Nauroze knew something was deeply wrong with her family. They were not special or god's children like her older relatives claimed to be, they were a family passing on a crazy gene. But each crazy was just a little different from the other. Each crazy philosophised differently. Chose their life's trajectory differently. But she saw it now, they all moved in waves. And eventually all of them crashed and burned.

Her grandfather Ali, a successful businessman at first, a raging madman in his later years. His uncle, Shahadath, a roaming mystic, who claimed to have walked to Sylhet from Baghdad to spread the word of god, walked naked through the village in his final years before withering away. She knew her father too would be one of them. A bright glow, before the wick gave away. It was simply a matter of time before the decay began.

Nauroze returned to their home in the Middle East after that one summer and started school again. As summer rolled to winter and yet another summer came by, Nauroze tried, much against her will, to get back to her old routine. But she failed. Everyday, she found herself praying quietly for a chance to return to Bangladesh. The sugary, tube-well water sherbet, bananas and toast for evening snacks during that far away summer were still vivid in her memory.

Still, she knew she had to navigate this desert city and bide her time before she could return. But return would be sooner than she had anticipated.

One afternoon, after she returned from school, she saw her mother crumpled with the telephone set in her hand, almost livid, screaming into the phone "What do you mean he does not recognise us? How will I care for the business on my own and who will look after the children? No, no you cannot keep him in a lock-up. Stop with the *hujurs*. Take him to a hospital. He is mad."

To be continued ...



ILLUSTRATION: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

ALMOST USEFUL LIFE HACKS

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What it means is that most of my colleagues who have been saving up to buy a car or pay for their children's education are now looking for small bank loans to fan their smoking habit.

Others have found that cigarette taxes have brought people closer. "We now go on smoke breaks, light just one cigarette and quickly pass it around so that not a single puff is wasted," said one smoker friend in mid-huddle.

Casually chatting while a cigarette burns from the fingertips is a thing of the past. Now cigarette breaks are shorter too, much to the relief of office admins who can continue counting the hours their employees spend at office. Perhaps I could offer time-share cigarettes where people gather to take puffs at discounted rates.

Speaking of jobs, there has been no increase in income tax in general but more professions are being brought into the collection net. Matchmakers are not particularly happy as they consider themselves

an NGO by offering services for humanity. What they do is make hopelessly single people and divorce lawyers happy. I know a matchmaker who I always thought was just a bored and nosy aunt. Turns out, all her free invites to biriyani feasts at hunting grounds known as weddings also bring in a tidy amount of cash. Potential brides and grooms are selected to be connected in the future like a human shaped Tetris game. She is extremely annoyed at the tax hike. She would be even more annoyed if she paid the taxes.

All is not doom and gloom though as coconut husks are seeing a drop. Which makes you wonder why coconut husks even have a tariff. Well, turns out a coconut is not just good for throwing at neighbours you really dislike. I have 12 coconut trees at home and I never knew they were a taxable money-making plant. All this time it was only costing me money by falling and scaring the dogs who then go around digging up my wife's potted plants and once peeing on my shoes.

Turns out, coconut husk is great for

scrubbing dirty objects like Dhaka University's preference for driving their buses on the wrong side of the road. The husk ash can also be used as fertiliser. And it can be used to actually simply grow plants straight on the husk itself. That has the added benefit of plants not being affected by typical soil-based pests and dogs. All of which makes it a big business. And all this time I was throwing money in the form of old coconuts at my annoying neighbours.

Every day you learn something new and not always is it useful as fertiliser. What is useful though is knowing taxes on hand-made confectioneries is lower, meaning more of your mullah stays in your pockets. Of course, do wash hands but you know those just became costlier so in the end, we are back where we started—hoping not to get hit by Mars.

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