



ILLUSTRATION: NAHFIA JAHAN MONNI

After page 14

news couldn't."

There are some meals I remember for other reasons: for their simplicity, for how good they tasted and for the experience shared with my friends and family during those meals.

"What goes on the table has never mattered as much to our lives as what goes on around the table—the scene of families, friends, lovers coming together, or breaking apart; conversation across the simplest or grandest board. This, ultimately, is who we are." I can attest to that statement. I will not forget that one particular meal I had in Barishal. As we sat across a cramped table in a small *bhaat er hotel* and ordered plate over plate of fluffy, rounded, steaming hot mounds

of rice, *shorisha ilish* floating in yellow mustard oil, dishes of bitter gourd fry, and runny dal, the table first turned completely silent before exploding in raucous joy. "How good is this *ilish*? It is so oily and fragrant. I could die for this *ilish*. In fact, if that had been my last meal, I would die a happy person. And we all know how elusive happiness is, especially in this time and age."

There was laughter and some more conversation. One person talked about their college years coming to an end and how much they feared for the future, another talked about their ideal last meal in elaborate detail—a *roshogolla*, soft and spongy, sweet but not overpoweringly so. This prompted the schoolteacher sitting next to our table to suggest us to try

Shoshi *er mishti* inside another alleyway in the city. We were quick to take on the offer, just in case we died on our way back to Dhaka. The river was rough, after all, the launches cramped and over-crowded. And launch accidents, at least until a few years ago, were a common occurrence.

So off we went to Shoshi *mishti*. It was hidden in another discreet corner of the city, but somehow the establishment was so old and so famous, despite its humble setting, that pretty much every rickshaw-puller knew the location. Still, they insisted that if it was sweets we were looking for, we should go to the newer, more modern chain stores that had opened up in the commercial area of the town. But upon our insistence, they ended up taking us to Shoshi.

Good thing they did, because we ended up eating nearly three plates of *Roshogolla* and some *mishti doi* (sweet yogurt) each.

As I recall these adventures, I cannot help but take a quick detour to the haors of Sunamganj, where I feasted on fresh *bowal* fish from the haor in a tomato gravy garnished with crisp coriander leaves and tonnes of green chili, then some duck in a spicy gravy and plenty of *alo bhorta* (boiled potatoes that are crushed and spiced with crushed red chili and mustard oil).

However, this is by no means the end to my memorable meals on journeys. How can I forget eating freshly cooked duck meat in a blend of Bangladeshi spices, reduced to a thick, gravy consistency at the bus stop at Chapainawabganj, or the *Kalai er ruti* (a flatbread made with crushed pulses) much like the corn tortilla that was used to scoop up the duck curry or the *begun bhorta* (grilled aubergine that is pounded lightly and mixed with pungent mustard oil, freshly sliced onions and dried red chilies)?

Food is like a keyhole, a famous haiku-esque meditation, something I live by: "We have happy days, remember good dinners."

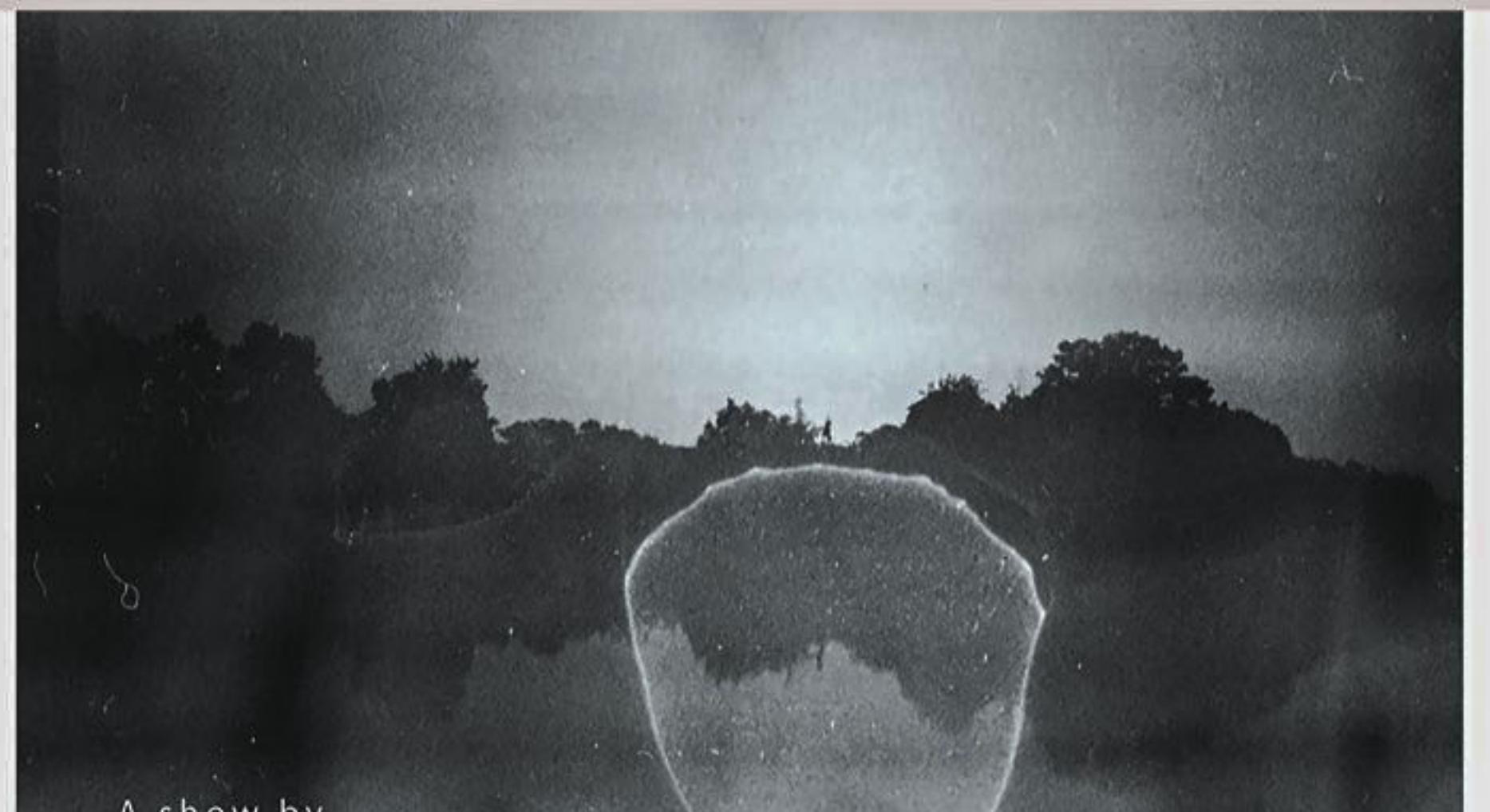
Debris of the night

Organiser: Shunno Art Space

Venue: 5/6, Zakir Hossain Road, F Block, Lalmatia, Dhaka, Bangladesh 1207

Date: Jul 19 - Aug 10

Time: 6pm



shunno
art
space



Artist talk by
20 July 2019
Time: 6pm

Abir Abdullah
Principal, Pathshala South Asian Media Institute

Counter Foto, Mirpur Campus
14 East Shewrapara, Mirpur, Dhaka 1216

Organized by: **KAALO**
Counter Foto Students' Forum

Artist Talk by Abir Abdullah

Organiser: KAALO

Venue: Counter Foto Mirpur Campus, 14 East Shewrapara, Bindubitto Goli, Near to Monipur High School, Mirpur, Dhaka-1216, Bangladesh

Date: July 20

Time: 6.00 pm