

**Editor and Publisher**  
Mahfuz Anam

**Editor (Star Weekend)**  
Sushmita S Preetha

**Staff Writers**  
Md Shahnawaz Khan  
Chandan  
Zyma Islam  
Nilima Jahan  
Maliha Khan  
Abida Rahman Chowdhury  
Sarah Anjum Bari

**Staff Photographer**  
Kazi Tahsin Agaz Apurbo

**Graphics**  
Debashis Kumar Day

**Production**  
Shamim Chowdhury

*Published by the Editor from  
Transcraft Ltd, 229, Tejgaon  
Industrial Area, Dhaka on  
behalf of Mediaworld Ltd.,  
52 Motijheel C.A.,  
Dhaka-1000.*



PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

# The shepherd of floating dreams

**IQRA L QAMARI**

I sometimes think of Dhaka as an ancient twisted folk tale—one with a mystical, rusty lamp with a faux genie. You can rub the relic, expecting some sort of triple-wish wizardry but will get mocked instead for even attempting such a foolish thing. Other times, I think of it as that scary bedtime story whispered to children in the shadows of the night to teach them the most frightening lesson of all—to not believe in magic. For Jamal though, the playful little boy with honey-coloured eyes, the charm of life had not yet dried up.

“But Baba, how do I know you are telling the truth?” Jamal had shouted after him the last time he saw his father, before he had walked out the door only to never enter it again. The only family he had ever known ceased to exist that day, when a four-wheeler driven in a drunken stupor collided with Jamal’s father on the road.

They had come to the ruthless capital driven south by the pangs of poverty before Jamal’s memory had fully crystallised. Jamal’s

first recollection of his father was of him selling a plethora of balloons to a bunch of exuberant kids swarming him like insects on an unwrapped candy. His father had a bellowing laughter that rang louder than all the other balloon vendors. Jamal would look at him in awe, left speechless by his soaring spirits and spectacular sleight of hand even in the face of a cruel world. In their dingy, dim-lighted shanty, he treated Jamal’s ears to delightful stories of dungeons and dragons, fairies and fawns—all things otherworldly that should be kept away from a boy of six who would sooner or later be slapped by the merciless reality of their circumstances. As if predicting that Jamal would be left alone to fend for himself, his father also taught him everything about the trade.

Once, he confessed to Jamal how he whispered wishes into empty balloons before inflating them with helium. “You whisper your wishes, Jamal, and in that way you will feel a sense of ownership over your desires. The thread caught in your fingers will remind

you that you are in control. You will be like a shepherd herding his floating dreams.”

“But I will have to sell those balloons, won’t I? Age is turning your brain into mush, Baba,” Jamal teased him.

At this, his father chuckled and replied, “But not everyone can be a seller of dreams, Jamal. Many out there claim to be, but they aren’t. You can be one secretly. And one day, you might just have these wishes granted if you believe in the magic. When you whisper a wish into the universe, it might just find a way to materialise, because you are one tiny important detail in its gigantic puzzle.”

His father had looked like a wise old tree, an anachronism, and imparting these words, he had left the house for his usual work day. Jamal had shouted after him, “But Baba, how do I know you are telling the truth?”

The question would never be answered. After his father’s accident, a stranded Jamal went to live with a distant uncle who helped him start his own balloon selling trade.

*Continued to page 3*