

NILIMA JAHAN

Four years ago, when I joined *The Daily Star* as an intern for *Star Weekend*, I never thought that I would become so attached to the place the way I am today. I have been socially awkward all my life; slow at making friends, reluctant to join office parties, and anxious about replying to the work group thread on Facebook (we call it "Monday is the new Tuesday," as we go to print on Tuesday). Even then, I don't know when and how this place has become a home, and my colleagues have turned into my family members. There was a time when I would get up early in the morning, take a bus and come to my cubicle, located at the darkest corner of the section, and take the last CNG ride back home at night. I remember every one of my colleagues, especially Maliha Khan, Zyma Islam, Abida R Chowdhury, and none other than boss lady Sushmita S Preetha apu who all tried their best to help me through life with a "This too shall pass" attitude. This is a note for my colleagues and a thank you isn't really enough to express how grateful and overjoyed you have made me over these years. And I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, my readers, for accepting me as a writer and reading the stories I would gather every weekend. Every Facebook text, letter and email was a true inspiration for me to write a better piece on human rights, particularly women and child rights, lives and livelihoods of informal sector workers, crimes and corruption. Thank you again, and for sure, this is not a goodbye.

ZYMA ISLAM

The average word count of one of my articles is 2,000 words. Every week, it takes about four days of dogged reporting, around 32 sleepless hours of sitting in a desk-chair while my cats provide patient company, an entire coffee pot, the most terrible Bollywood dance numbers, and many distracting DIY videos to churn out these 2,000 words. Writing English is not hard, and should not take so much time or effort—just ask our colleagues in the newsroom. News is gathered, reports are constructed and handed over to the press, all in a day's work. But here at *Star Weekend*, we take up the challenge of not only making you read—but also of making you care. You see, beyond fund-cuts at newsrooms, beyond censorship and newspapers shutting down, our journalism is threatened by how desensitised our readers have gotten to all the wrongs happening around us. We do not blame you for a moment—when the daily rate of incidents of rape is around three, when our elections are questionable and our forests are getting industrialised, when our world is a cruel one, desensitisation is only a basic survival reflex that our bodies kick into. And yet, the world does not stop being cruel, and those stories must be told. And so, we sit down to figure out what prose, which visuals will best transport you to a fishing village in the Sundarbans, and introduce you to a farmer who was forced to sell their lands off to factories because of rising soil salinity. Or how to take you with us to talk to the petty drug dealers of Karwan Bazar railway slum who have been bearing the brunt of our war on drugs. The aim is to craft a journey for you through places to meet people you would not otherwise encounter, hoping—very ambitiously I must say—that it will make you act, or at the very least, make you care. Hoping that if you are an entrepreneur, you will not forgo the environment for industry, if you are a lawyer, you will know how the system fails our most vulnerable, if you are a development worker, you will be cognisant of who you are underserving, or if you are a citizen, will be aware of the failings of state and society. Before we turn the lights off today, thank you for always challenging us to be better, more compelling, more sensitive storytellers than we could ever have even imagined becoming.

MALIHA KHAN

I entered *The Daily Star* around two and a half years ago. Having always wanted to be a journalist like Rory Gilmore, I did not actually know what it entailed. I had not worked at student or college newspapers as many did or even started writing for youth supplements and magazines at a young age. A series of coincidences led me to reporting and journalism at the grand old age of 25 and I am indebted to some of my early mentors and friends and colleagues in the business whose work I admired and tried to learn from. Writing is a painstaking process for me—involving hours and days in front of the computer until something takes shape from the mass of information I have there—and I am afraid I'm not the best company then. So, guys, I'm not actually grumpy all the time, it's just the timing.

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

It is time to bid a tearful farewell to my home, the *Star Weekend* section of *The Daily Star*. I joined this department in 2013 when I was a third-year student at Dhaka University. I was a naïve young man who had little idea about journalism. In the last six years, I was fortunate to work with some of the most brilliant minds and in the process, I learned to practice journalism without fear or favour. There is no doubt that my years in *Star Weekend* have positively transformed me and taught me to be a man of ethics and integrity. My extremely talented supervisors and my amazing colleagues have injected in me the pride of being a member of *The Daily Star* family. I will really miss those days and from now on, my life will never be the same. However, I will always remain thankful to my colleagues with whom I spent some of the best and most resourceful years of my life.

KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

A visual representation of my thoughts on this last day.

