

THE DEFINITIVE
YOUTH
MAGAZINE

SHOUT

DHAKA THURSDAY MAY 21, 2020, JAISHTHA 7, 1427 BS

A PUBLICATION OF The Daily Star



THE DIGITAL EID
EXPERIENCE
PG 3

A PANJABI'S
TALE
PG 6



SALAMI HEIST



ILLUSTRATION: JUNAID IQBAL ISHMAM

EDITORIAL

There are two sides to a coin. You can toss it however you want, and regardless of the outcome, one thing remains constant. Its value.

Likewise, this year and more specifically the upcoming Eid will be remembered differently by each and every one of us. When all this is over and we'll be old enough to have our grandkids around us longing to hear a story, the experience of 2020 will be unique to every individual who has lived it. A few of us will laugh and sing songs of triumph, that it was a cosmic comedy; some will shed a tear or two, over days of hardship and lost family and friends. Nevertheless, won't it be a story to tell?

May the light at the end of the tunnel show itself very soon. Until then, and beyond, we are all in this together. Stay home, and Eid Mubarak!

-- Kazi Akib Bin Asad, Sub-editor, SHOUT



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PLAYWATCH

TV GUIDE

DESIGN: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

What TV Schedules Might Look Like This Eid

ADHORA AHMED

Dear viewers, Eid Mubarak from Moja TV! As you know, like everything else this year, Covid-19 has challenged the way we celebrate Eid. Fear not, for we are introducing our week-long Eid Bonanza, where we will bring back your favourite programs from past Eids, when life was much simpler. We also plan to host live talk shows with your favourite stars via Zoom. So stay home, tune in to Moja TV and have loads of fun!

First day

7:30 AM: Live talk show with Bablu Tasnim (subject to guest's ability to install Zoom)

10:00 AM: Morning news

10:30 AM: Movie *Koshter Jibon* starring Patla Khan, Shona Moni etc.

2:00 PM: Covid-19 update

2:30 PM: Telefilm *Ar Bhallage Na* starring Bablu Tasnim (we still love him)

5:00 PM: Children's puppet show *Jontronapur*

7:00 PM: Evening news

7:30 PM: Natok *Pandemic* starring Anika Maisha, Nazmus Sakib etc.

8:30 PM: Celebrity game show *Beche Thakar Khela* with Chompakoli and Jontrona the Puppet

10:00 PM: Night news

11:00 PM: Bollywood Music videos from various artists

Third day

7:30 AM: Art videos from various musicians

10:00 AM: Morning news

10:30 AM: Movie *Koshter Jibon Returns* starring Patla Khan, Shona Moni etc.

2:00 PM: Covid-19 update

2:30 PM: Telefilm *Ektuo Bhallage Na* starring Bablu Tasnim

5:00 PM: Children's puppet show *Jontronapur*

7:00 PM: Evening news

7:30 PM: Natok *Pandemic* starring Anika Maisha, Nazmus Sakib etc.

8:30 PM: Celebrity game show *Beche Thakar Khela* with Chompakoli and Jontrona the Puppet

10:00 PM: Night news

11:00 PM: Bollywood Music videos from various artists

Fourth day

Dear viewers, we regret to announce that due to extremely low ratings, we are going back to regularly scheduled programming. We would also like to apologise for the mishaps that occurred yesterday, and for failing to cheer you up during these tough times. We sincerely hope that next Eid will be merrier. Until then, stay home and stay safe.

Adhara Ahmed daydreams too much. Send her reality checks at adhara.ahmed@gmail.com

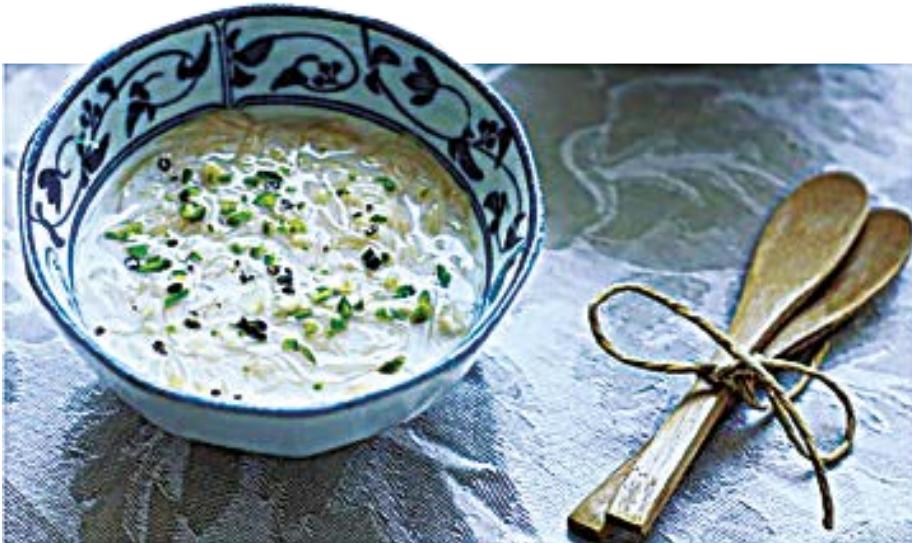


PHOTO: STAR/LS ARCHIVE

THE DIGITAL EID EXPERIENCE

AAQIB HASIB

There are some traditions which we just cannot leave behind. Our Eid day routine is just one of many traditions that need to be maintained, irrespective of what's going on in the world outside.

But, wait. Hold on to your horses, before you jump into your car and drive over to the shopping malls. Because that's not what I am talking about, and by now we can all agree that wasteful shopping should be a no-no in general.

However, what I am talking about is the classic Eid day, and there's plenty of ways to go about it without endangering anyone's lives, and all the while, still preserving the overall spirit of the occasion.

Eid Breakfast

Truly, there isn't anything like it. Family members congregate at the relative's house closest to the location of the *Eid er jamaat*. Or, in some cases, everyone goes over to the place of whoever makes the best breakfast, your chicken roast with *porota*, *payesh*, *mutton rezala*. Sorry I'm getting a bit dreamy just thinking about it.

This time around, though, while you can't have grandma's famous roast, you can still greet the whole family in a group video call. Just get on WhatsApp, Viber, Messenger, whichever app has all of your family on, and you can wish each other "Eid Mubarak" as face-to-face as possible.

Plus, this way you can mute any annoying relatives who keep bringing up their kid's results or the myriad academic achievements that just ruins the vibe of the conversation.

Natok Time

Watching the Eid TV programs throughout the day is a way for the older family members to reconnect. They sit there, sipping their Coke and eating the second dessert, usually *shemai* and just

watching some drama or comedy which features some of their favourite actors, occasionally gossiping about their lives in between commercial breaks.

Well, I'm here to tell you that is still possible. There are countless ways to organise an online watch party, whether through Discord, Kast, or the variety of similar services available out there. I'd suggest that family members with enough technical knowledge run a trial of their options the night before, so everything functions smoothly on the big day.

Extra bonus because this keeps your parents off your backs for the rest of the day.

Salami (not the meat) Time

I'm sure all of you have been waiting for this one. For those of you who are lucky enough to still be graced with this classic Eid tradition, don't be dismayed. We live in a digital world, and just because your chacha isn't going to be able to hand you crisp 500 taka notes, doesn't mean he can't give you something.

Prepare your digital wallets. Send your wallet numbers, QR codes, bank account number, whatever it is you have.

Now, fair warning, there will be a few of your older relatives who will refuse to budge. The core ritual of performing the *salam* by touching their feet is crucial to them. How else will they know if you're worthy?

There is, however, a way to circumvent this. Two words: feet pics. Ask them to send you pictures of their feet, take a printout and video yourself performing the *salam*, and then send it back to cash it in, boys and girls. You gotta do what you gotta do.

Finally, don't forget to appreciate all the Eids from the past when you didn't have the restrictions of quarantine around, and try to make the most of this one. After all, Eid only comes every so often.



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SALAMI HEIST

SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM & FAISAL BIN IQBAL

PLOT

Thirteen-year old Sumaiya has a plan to pull off one of the biggest, and most daring, *salami* heists the world has ever seen. The target—her own parents and relatives, who happen to be some of the most miserly people she has ever known. Teaming up with her brother, and cousins, Sumaiya vows to take down the very institution that brought her up, by extracting a hefty sum of *salami* from the relatives during their annual Eid reunion party, at her grandparents' house.

SYNOPSIS

Sumaiya is a teenager with high ambitions but no source of income. Recently, she's had her eyes on a beautiful pair of heels and some collectible Hot Wheels, which she'd love to buy. Unfortunately, she's already spent all her pocket money on another pair of heels and some other collectible Hot Wheels. However, there's no way such minor inconveniences are going to stop her, for Sumaiya has a plan.

Every year on the second day of Eid, all of Sumaiya's closest relatives visit her grandparents' house. They enjoy themselves to the fullest and make the most of their visit. Sumaiya's plan is to acquire as much *salami* as she can from them, by teaming up with her younger brother Abdul and her cousins Anika, Joyita, Sadman, Sami, and Fahim. But getting *salami* is easier said than done, because most of her relatives are not going to empty their pockets that easily. Hence, Sumaiya has devised an elaborate plan that will help her do just that.

Will the plan pan out the way she expects it to, or will Sumaiya's relatives have the last laugh? Only time will tell.

EPISODE 1: SET IT UP

[Chaand raat. Forty-two hours before the heist.]

With less than two days at hand, Sumaiya decides to call her team over a Zoom meeting to review the

plan one last time.

"Alright team," says Sumaiya as she shares her 59-slide PowerPoint presentation with everyone else on the screen. "Here's the plan, in brief."

"We've total of six targets: dada, dadu, boro chachu, boro fuppi, chhoto fuppi, and last but not the least, my dad. Or as you call him, Pintu chacha. All of them are categorised in two different tiers."

"Tier 1 contains the easiest targets: our grandparents, and boro chachu. Extracting *salami* from them will be a piece of cake. Tier 2, on the other hand, consists of the rest of our dear relatives, who'll surely prove to be a handful when it comes to bringing out the money."

"Ugh, chhoto fuppi is the worst," grunts Anika. "Last year, she gave me 50 taka as *salami*. In this capitalist economy, that amounts to nothing. I sometimes wonder how on earth she managed to land that corporate job at—"

"Hey, watch it!" interrupts Joyita. "That's my mom you're talking about. At least you got 50 taka out of her. Your mom drove me away when I approached her for *salami* saying that she's going to pray so that I may get a decent husband. Can you guys believe the audacity of boro fuppi? I mean, I just turned 12 last month."

"Don't worry, guys," assures Sumaiya. "This year,

things will be different. If any of our tier 2 targets resist our demands, we'll switch to Plan B—'B' for blackmail."

"So... We kidnap Anika and Joyita, and demand ransom for them?" asks Fahim.

"Err, no. But we do use a similar tactic."

The meeting then went on for a few more minutes before everyone called it a night. Tomorrow is Eid, and the next day, all of them were going to become rich.

"Just one more day, Abdul," Sumaiya says to her little brother. "After that, we take what's rightfully ours."

EPISODE 2: EXTRACTION

[Eid, Day 2. Ten minutes before the heist.]

What Sumaiya and the gang usually hated every year, has become a perfect disguise for their final

three minutes. We have to take our marks inconspicuously, and as discussed."

"Smile, look around, and shout the code words if anything goes wrong," she adds. "I'll be there as soon as I can. We cannot fail. Not today."

[An hour into the heist. Money collected: half of the estimated budget.]

With a simple investment of a few bucks, Sumaiya had devised the perfect plan. Giving dada and dadu their favourite *mishti paan* right after lunch had worked its magic. This, followed by Sami's family famous oil

massage was the perfect method to get in their good books. As expected, dada and dadu had cleared out their purses, and given them the exact amount they had expected from them.

Collecting money from boro chchu was even easier. All they had to do was huddle around him, and ask about the wonders of living abroad. All the synchronised "oohs" and "ahhs" had established the perfect

meeting.

The seven cousins are sitting in their respective spots at the table while the elders chat about old days and new politics, none of which matters right now.

"I hope you guys remember the plan," says Sumaiya in a low and careful voice. "If not, this is the time to ask. In exactly seven minutes, boro chachu will leave the table telling everyone that he has an urgent call to make to someone in another time zone, just to remind everyone that he's an important man and must be taken seriously."

"This is not a time for giggles," declares Sumaiya, as Sadman and Joyita chuckled at her last comment. "Once boro chachu leaves, everyone else will disperse in about

grounds for the euphoria to kick in, and that had done it. He paid them a good *salami*, and walked off humming the tunes of Africa by Toto.

EPISODE 3: F IS FOR FAMILY

[Two hours into the heist.]

With all preparations in place, Sumaiya and team move in for the final leg of their plan.

"Auntie's *saree* is gorgeous, isn't it?" Joyita points out to her mom. "Must've cost way more than yours."

"Why... How could you say that, Joyita? Have you seen the unique embroidery and delicate material of my *saree*? Price isn't everything, quality matters too. Besides, how would you know whose *saree* cost more? I can't go and blatantly ask now, can I?" says chhoto fuppi, flustered.

"Oh, but I can," replies Joyita. "I can go to her, and while asking for *salami*, make inquiries about it. She won't



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

thing. Time was running out.

"Dad, can you please go check the kitchen faucet? It seems to have a low water pressure," asks Sumaiya, hesitantly.

"Water pressure, eh?" Sumaiya's father shoots back. "Or do you want to record me eating *laddoos* so you can extort me for *salami*?"

Sumaiya was shocked to hear her dad talk about the plan in such detail.

"Surprised?" The Pintu jeers. "Abdul has told me everything. You know, you really should have covered your bases and checked your team's loyalty. I offered him a new 200 taka note, and he slipped into telling me everything. I knew something was up when you guys hadn't fought once throughout the day. Now quietly go to your mom, and hand all the money over. They will put it where it's safest."

Sumaiya was shattered, not just because those heels would never be hers, but also because her beautifully devised plan had just fallen apart. It was one thing to not get enough *salami*, but to get so close and then lose it to the age old "mom's safe purse"?

The heist can't be over; this was only a minor setback, Sumaiya told herself. The money was theirs, and she would rightfully win it back.

To be continued...



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A panjabi's tale

OSAMAN BIN AHMED

The cupboard creaked open, revealing his gleaming face. With sheer haste, he began to shuffle around the few shirts he had, discarding and throwing them on the floor as if looking for something very specific. His eyes shone up as he held a black shirt aloft. He mumbled, "She would love this."

A sharp, womanly voice interrupted him. "Sameen, tidy your clothes before you go," she asserted. He replied, "Not now, ma. I'm running late." She stared blankly at him as he sped past her, buttoning his shirt as he went. The cupboard doors closed, revealing a thin ray of sunlight. I looked around, marvelling at the freedom my neighbours possessed. Ever since I was gifted to Sameen, I have been imprisoned inside this transparent barrier.

The tweed suit, a prized possession of my owner, jeered at me as he exclaimed how useless I was. Existential crisis encroached my mind. The store tag on my neck whispered, "You have what he does not. Look at your beautiful embroidery. While your colour may not be the best thing in the world, it is our imperfections that make us the perfect version of ourselves."

Days passed by. My dream was about to come true. One such afternoon, Sameen, much to my amazement, picked me up. Taking me to the same woman as before, he stated, "Ma, I will wear this for Eid." She asserted, "Beta, there is still one week for Eid. Besides, I am not letting you go outside." He

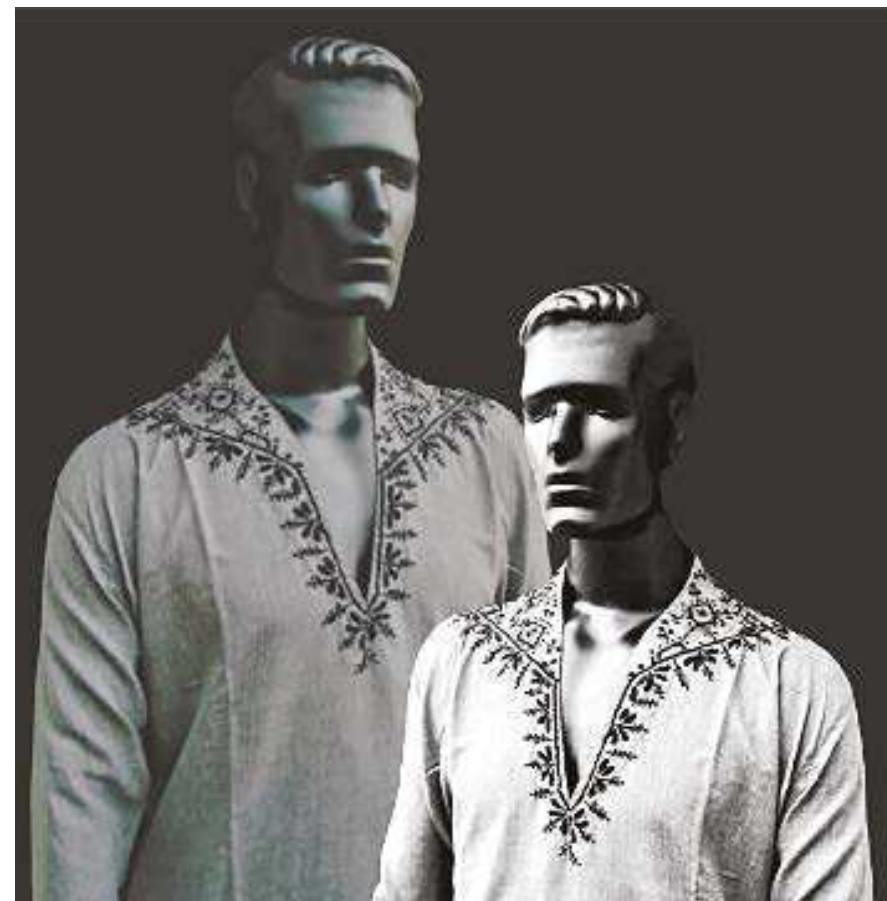
smirked, saying, "We have Discord." After one long journey around the house, I was rested back to my humble abode. I was elated, as a glow of smugness radiated from me.

It was a couple of nights before Eid. Sameen's joyous screaming had broken the cold silence inside the cupboard. The door opened, revealing his face, as he placed a packet above me. I now had a competitor. Atop me was a dark blue *kabli*. The air around me felt heavy due to the presence of this intruder. I couldn't help but feel suppressed under the weight; weight that was definitely not physical. I comforted myself by realising that I was indeed Sameen's first choice.

The following night, Sameen picked both of us. He folded us in half and pressed it against his body, standing in front of a mirror. He stood still for a minute. He then looked left and right as he nodded and mumbled inaudibly. Suddenly, he threw me on the bed. I flew towards the bed, as I watched him speeding towards the other room. All my hopes shattered with the blink of an eye. Guess the tweed suit was not wrong about me.

Two years have passed since the incident. I have no hopes whatsoever for often it ends in pain for me. Why am I like this?

Osaman is one such guy who has caused such pain to many panjabis before, with some of them ending up as tablecloths. To send a hypothetical high-five, poke him on fb.com/osaman.binahmed



DESIGN: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

Eid dishes I will miss this year

ANTARA RAISA RAHMAN

I am not much of a foodie. Like Josh Hutcherson playing the mean older brother in *Zathura*, the only thing I do know how to prepare (perfectly) is water. No, I'm not proud of it, neither is my mom. However, much like my love for food puns, my love for certain dishes made exclusively for Eid is what keeps me going in life.

Today I will be giving you a glimpse of the food I look forward to every year on Eid day, and the food that gets me egg-cited for this holiday.

WHEN LIFE GIVES YOU LEMONS, MAKE LEMON CHEESECAKE

I still remember tasting this dish for the first time and wondering where it was all my life. So, naturally this is what I will be missing the most this Eid. I'm sure everyone in my friend group will agree as well. This cheesecake is something we grew up fighting for, and the reason I'd have less of everything else. The lemony taste mixed with a bit of cream and crunch makes this dish something I would travel miles over, no joke. If only I could right now.

JORDA, A BIYE BARI CLASSIC

Amidst the extravagant dishes found at this friend's place, the only thing I have an eye out for is the simple yet elegant *biye bari* dessert: *jorda*. Even if there is *kacchi* to my left and some hybrid version of cake pops



PHOTO: STAR/LS ARCHIVE

to my right, I always find myself looking straight ahead at the end of the table, where the *jorda* bowl always is. Talking about this is making me miss friends, Eid and weddings altogether. Great.

DESSERTS BY THAT ONE FRIEND ALL OUR MOMS LOVE

We all know at least one person who is loved by all our moms and secretly envied by all of us. In my case, that is one of

closest friends who never misses the chance to make some delicious desserts for her loved ones. From tarts, snowballs, tiramisu to a classic gourmet cake, this girl can do it all. And because this is something a sweet tooth like me looks forward to every Eid, it is also something I will sincerely miss this year, among other things.

DIY FUCHKA

This is a classic example of our mothers

taking food we like to spend money on, learning how to recreate it, and sometimes, doing a much better job at it. So how would *fuchka* not make the cut? Something my friends and I always look forward to is the homemade *fuchka* and *tok* that can be found in at least one of our homes every Eid. Although this street food has a reputation for being the reason we go home late after school or coaching classes, for me, this also turned into a homey snack I crave all year round.

BISCUIT CAKE TIRAMISU

Ending the list with a dessert my mother has been making since I was in elementary school. This dish brings back memories not only from Eid hangouts with friends, but also from midnight baking sprees and coming home to a sweet treat because why. The funniest thing is that I'd think something as delicious as this would fade from memory, but it did. Luckily, many Eids ago my mother finally decided my friends also deserved to try out this magnificent dessert. I won't lie, these dishes along with the memories surrounding it make me miss friends and family the most this time of the year.

Antara wishes to conquer the world someday and bring back an alien from Pluto. To know more about her evil schemes, send an e-mail at antara56.ar@gmail.com

ROUGE

SARAH WASIFA

I was adopted on October 19, 1996.

I had a drawing. All done with the one third of a crayon I managed to wrestle from the other kids in Baba Salim's orphanage. All my pouch had was that and two dried moths, much to the horror of my new parents. I held the pouch close as they guided my arms into a new jacket, speaking of a new life and new toys.

The jacket did not fit.

Do you like it? Do you want it zipped up? Look, it also has a hood. Do you want it up?

No, I want my *ma* and *baba*.

This city burned no lights for me. It didn't stand, it did not stop. It never searched for two individuals who disappeared one night after kissing their child goodnight, nor did it mourn for the girl dropped off at an orphanage when she was sleeping.

Why?

Hush now. We shouldn't talk. We shouldn't think.

I saw the other kids piling at the windows, eyes wide, shining with pity and resounding awe; their faces bleak and pulled tight over bones. The Baba himself. No one much bothered about the papers, or the lack thereof. A bright red car with a nazar ornament.

There wasn't much I registered.

Back then, the city would get impossibly hot even when November rolled around. We used to beg for ice chips and hoard

them till our cheeks could hold no more. Cars kicked up dust like moths scared off by an action too rogue. I arrived at their home. They held promises of love, and to a younger me, parched of affection, it spelt hope.

Just like that, I had a family again.

It was as if I had never left. A bed of my own, photographs by the table, a whole new box of crayons. Even a new name. All I remembered of a time before Baba Salim's were wisps of cobwebs in a brand new house.

Oh my my, what are we drawing today?

I am drawing our house. I am a very good artist, right? Look, there's ma and you, and, and that's me. I once drew this at the other place-

He had to wipe his eyes afterwards. That's how good of an artist I was.

It was freedom I hadn't known for long. I could laugh at the dinner table, and still go to sleep with a full stomach.

But they were sad, my new parents. I'd hear them cry, often finding them in the aftermath of a storm, holding my toys, crying of a phantom pain I couldn't understand.

Ma would ask me to go to my room, and I would comply. I never knew how to handle people crying. Hours later, I would hear her footsteps, lighting the stove, hauling a pot, and the cascade of a few more falling. Her swatting at the moths and mosquitos, and him setting the table.

I knew they would come get me. I once overheard them talking about

moving to a new place. Someone had said it would be good for the family.

Family includes me, right? I got scared for a second there.

Summer was intrepid, and homework was quickly forgotten when I came back home that day. *Ma* and *baba* weren't home, and drunk in my newfound liberty, I went ahead and put on rouge, rubbing kohl like those ladies on TV, and a long string of pearls. I pretended a pencil was a cigar and the spare curtains were a shawl.

I was a lady in a parlour, sipping on watery tea, and hearing the ice melt and fall inside the fridge. The electricity had gone again.

Should I open the windows?

It would only invite insects in.

But it's so hot.

I just can't do it babe; the heat just gets to me. It gives me the morbs, old sport.

The pane knocked a glass and a few papers off the table.

Papers with ticket confirmations for two.

For the first time in years, I went to sleep without food.

They knew I knew. I knew the girl in the pictures wasn't me. I knew I hadn't been enough.

I packed my bag, as they packed theirs. I wish I could fit there, that they would take me with them.

Did they have any regrets?

Ma cried. *Baba* cried.

Who they were crying for, I would never know.

Baba Salim opened the gates for the car, and unloaded my bag. He looked at me, blinking as his eyes adjusted. I was here again, a moth pushed from the light.

They took you because you looked like their daughter.

Pity, pity, pity. Pities galore.

We will come get you. Let us settle first, and we will.

In the days that follow, I know they will call me, voices strained, trying to explain how they are working to bring me into their home. The smaller kids would pile at the windows to the office, an audience to a facade taken too far.

In the transition from autumn to winter, when these dull moths flock to the lights, their wings play shadow puppets on the walls, a reel spinning out of control. Their presence is unprecedented, much to the chagrin of anyone around. So, in the twilight of the mornings, there are always millions, as it seems, of wings littering the floor. Just wings, like petals of an extinct flower, shed as a final attempt to stay alive.

I shed my name. I shed everything I knew about living to live a life with people I could call *ma* and *baba*.

There were no more calls after I threw the telephone out the window.

I was left on October 9, 2000.

Sarah Wasifa sees life as a math equation: problematic, perhaps with a solution, and maybe sometimes with a sign to tear off a page and start over again. Help her find 'y' at sarah-wf77@gmail.com



ILLUSTRATION: RIDWAN NOOR NAFIS

