

THE DEFINITIVE
YOUTH
MAGAZINE

SHOUT

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RECONSIDERING HOW WE
SEE VOLUNTARY WORK

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ECHOES AT 100

PG 6



WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE

A STUDENT TENANT

IN DHAKA

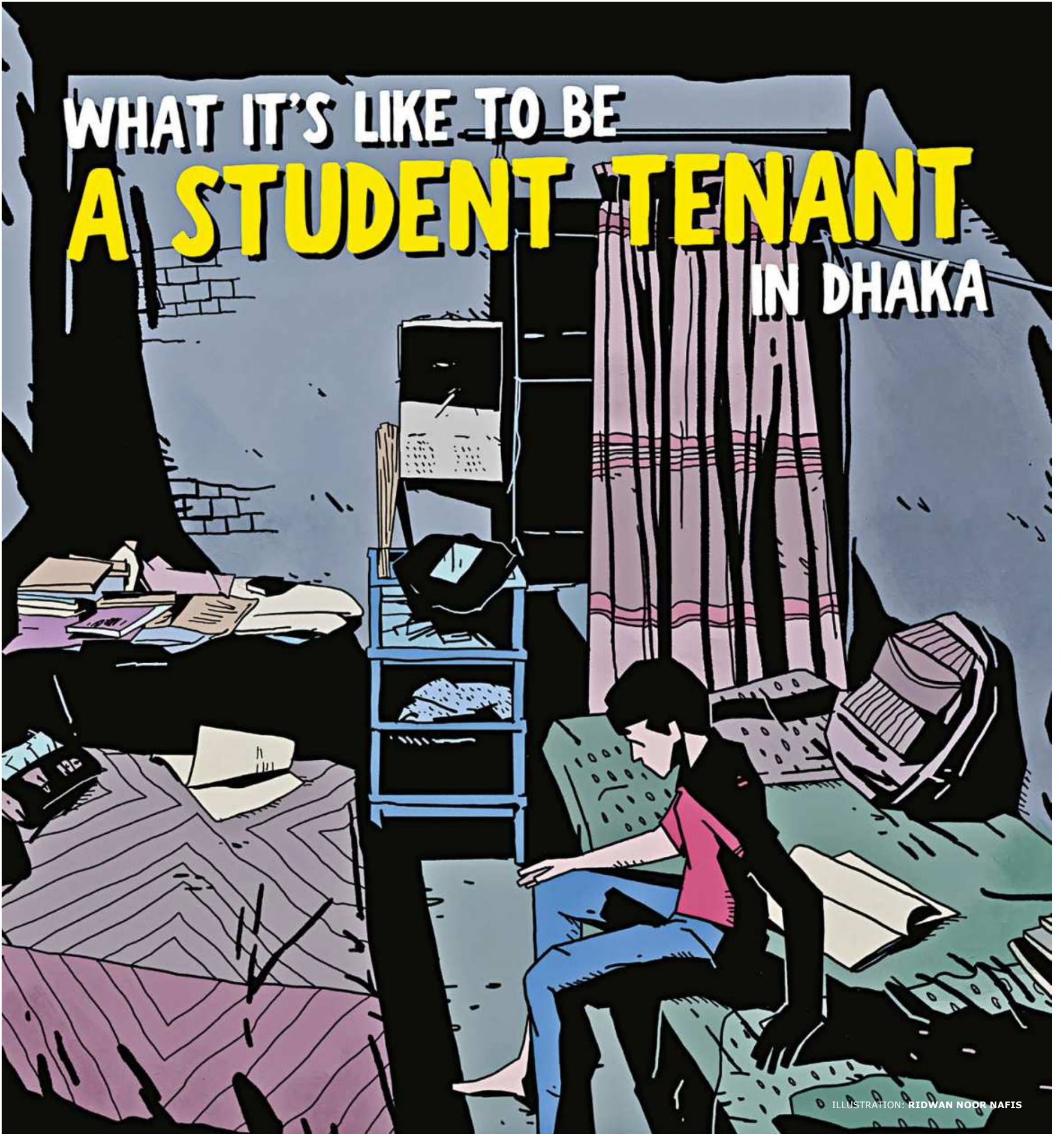


ILLUSTRATION: RIDWAN NOOR NAFIS

EDITORIAL

Being a reader comes with its own sense of guilt. In my head there's a certain number of books you have to read per month to retain the status of a "reader", sort of like renewing your membership to some kind of cool club.

Sometimes, my telling people I'm a "bookworm" is followed by a quick explanation/apology. "I have so much going on right now so I'm not reading actively, but there's like a big pile on my desk." But simply having a big pile of books on one's desk doesn't make someone a bookworm.

But trying to give in and be swept away by a Regency romance isn't as easy when you can't focus on anything for more than five minutes, owing to constant anxiety over your workload.

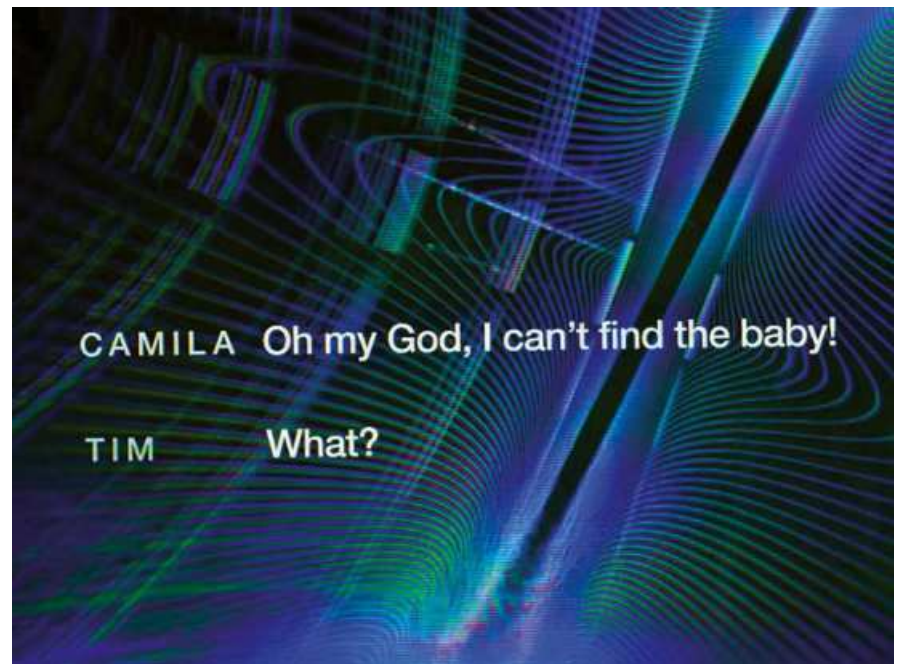
Why is there so much guilt involved in a hobby that was such a major part of me growing up? An elitist attitude about books having to be read and not listened to through audiobooks, certainly doesn't help. But I'm coming around to accepting that if you want to have a lifelong passion, you must evolve in your approach and be accepting of the many forms it takes throughout your life. Perhaps two quick pages after each long day before bed it will have to be.

-- Mrittika Anan Rahman, Sub-editor, SHOUT



PLAYWATCH

TV SHOW REVIEW



CALLS: A worthy successor to *The Twilight Zone*?

RASHA JAMEEL

As an absolute sci-fi nerd, I've had a significantly hard time bidding adieu to the late 50s classic, *The Twilight Zone* (1959). I had to accept that it was over and done with, and I, alongside fellow fans of the classic American show, had to move on.

The early 2000s remake came, but it was an absolute disaster. I eventually found solace in Charlie Brooker's *Black Mirror* (2011) and Jordan Peele's reboot of *The Twilight Zone* (2019). I thought sci-fi dramas couldn't get any better on television.

Then came Apple TV+'s new sci-fi offering: *Calls* (2021).

Apple TV's latest drama is by no means an original. *Calls* (2021) is the American adaptation of a popular French series of the same name, co-produced with Canal+. Even though the first season boasts a star-studded ensemble cast of Pedro Pascal, Joey King, Nick Jonas, Rosario Dawson, Aaron Taylor-Johnson and many more, I still had my reservations given the show's genre and episode length. I didn't find the show promising enough based on the premise of a "podcast-style sci-fi drama."

I was pleasantly surprised after giving it a try as a midnight binge-watch upon my friend's insistence. Not only had *Calls* (2021) managed to elevate the experience of sci-fi television for me, but it had also provided an insightful look into flawed interpersonal relationships shared by people. Both of the aforementioned concepts are quite difficult to pull off in a tv show where each episode is limited to a duration of about 12 to 20 minutes and there is no actual drama playing out in the conventional video format. The

waters here are tricky to navigate and the Apple TV+ drama succeeds in its efforts for the most part.

The graphics in each episode play a significant role in conveying the tension exhibited by the fictional characters in question. Audio waveforms, circled points, and intersecting lines act as visual stimuli, making up for the sensory information the audience is missing out on. You won't see the actors' sense of distress popping up on their faces, but it will be registered by a peak or two on the buzzing waveform. The lines will give you a sense of a distance between characters, both geographical and emotional, while the circles symbolise a sense of connectivity. Noteworthy mentions include the episodes "Mom", "Is There a Scientist on the Plane", and "The Beginning", each of which feature the most complexly-designed waveforms as distorted loops, cobwebs, and the digital imagery of an airplane in flight.

The writers of *Calls* (2021) may have taken inspiration from a French podcast of the same name, but they really put in the effort to break new ground with their own stories. Some episodes proved to be true game-changers in the genre, while some fell flat in comparison. The show's strength lay in its depiction of human emotions, from a strained father-daughter relationship to the suspicions of a conflicted husband to the trauma of an orphaned young girl, all of which are set against the backdrop of a central narrative building up to global catastrophe involving disturbances in time and space.

Now, to answer the question posed in the title of this review: considering the potential this show has, it might just be the next best thing after *The Twilight Zone*.



Reconsidering How We See Voluntary Work

AAHIR MRITTIKA

Voluntary work has always been a popular medium for the youth to engage with social issues and it's been particularly refreshing to witness youth-led organisations spearheading impactful projects.

As young people learn to recognise that exposure isn't a valid form of payment for unpaid internships, a similar line of thought comes to mind regarding voluntary work. Where do we draw the line between working out of one's passion and being exploited?

Exploitation looks like demanding long hours and maximum effort for a job that pays nothing, except for some level of social and self-fulfilment, by taking advantage of people's emotional involvement. It genuinely freaks me out when I see recruitment posts asking for graphic designers and writers who must be ready to give several hours of their day. And this recruitment is largely targeted towards middle and high schoolers who can have a difficult time setting boundaries when offering their skillset.

It's important not to undermine the work they've put in. A single Instagram infographic requires intensive research and stressful deadlines. Plus, it can be incredibly emotionally taxing and triggering to constantly be exposed to violence, abuse, and mental health -- issues which are often the subjects of work in volunteer organisations.

It's important we ask ourselves if the



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

work we put in is meaningful or useful the way we consider it to be. While I've assumed that people volunteer because they feel strongly about a cause, many do it to enhance their résumé. We know this trope: doing the bare minimum for a day, disrupting communities instead of thinking about sustainable forms of development, and feeding into their own saviour complex.

Not only do the admissions officers see through it many times (in the con-

text of using this volunteer work to boost applications when applying for university abroad), you might end up causing more harm than good. For example, feeding people living in poverty and taking 1,000 photographs of yourself doing so instead of contributing to mechanisms that teach them to stand on their own feet, promotes a saviourity complex. Even if there's some net benefit to providing them with food one day, you need to reconsider the

framework of your organisation.

Having said all of that, this discussion does have several moral dilemmas. The fact that we're having this conversation screams privilege because we can decide to not partake in voluntary work, but the people we work for can't wake up one day and deny their reality. Many organisations may not have the funding to pay their workers, and that doesn't mean work can stop. But you must be mindful of how much you ask from volunteers, and look into foreign donors or fellowships for potential monetary support as well.

Social activism and justice must not be a choice as long as systemic inequality exists. There are ways alternative to volunteerism like donations, amplifying underrepresented voices, making existing resources accessible, and giving up space. For the youth age demographic, this time is for you to grow creatively. Find a balance so that the trade-off doesn't become your mental health. Perhaps working on your skills will lead to opportunities to help your communities better. If voluntary work is something you enjoy, then definitely stick with it, but know that everyone has a different way to contribute.

Aahir Mrittika likes to believe she's a Mohammadpur local, but she's actually a nerd. Catch her studying at mrittikaahir@gmail.com

Foreigners Can't (or Won't) Pronounce My Name Right

ADHORA AHMED

I started university last year in the midst of the pandemic, although not in the way I had imagined. Instead of trying to adapt in another country, I now wake up at odd hours to stare at a screen that's mostly black boxes, unless the instructor is sharing their slides, and cringe inwardly whenever my name is mentioned. If Covid-19 didn't happen, these things would've been a figment of my imagination, except the inward cringing because nobody there would get my name right.

Don't get me wrong, my university is great. My professors and classmates are nice. The student body is diverse, international students making up a significant portion of it. Despite all this and the additional comfort of doing classes right from home, the anxiety of having to introduce myself creeps in.

As an introvert, I like to keep the introduction period as brief as possible. However, I knew that this time it would take a little longer. My name can be difficult on foreign tongues, in this case native English speakers. This language simply does not accommodate one of the phonetic sounds in my first name. I'm not new to this since I've had to explain the pronunciation of my name to non-Bangladeshi teachers at school. This would be the



DESIGN: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

same -- or so I thought.

Despite the mental preparation, I wasn't ready for the onslaught of cringe in the first few weeks of the semester, and for my anxiety spiking up whenever the introduction period spiralled into a linguistics lecture. Since they won't get it right anyway, I soon stopped correcting them. In fact, hardly any

of them asked for the correct pronunciation, which I thought was a relief.

Over time, I've grown accustomed to this name-butchered. I now respond to something that isn't my name without batting an eye. I thought I'd become numb to it, but when I was sharing this anecdote with friends, I couldn't bring myself to

imitate the ways my name can apparently be pronounced. I felt embarrassed, which made me question the numbness I claimed to have felt. Was it just a flimsy coping mechanism?

In an interview with Ellen DeGeneres, comedian Hasan Minhaj shared anecdotes about his own name-related mishaps. When he was advised to change his name at the beginning of his career, Minhaj replied, "If you can pronounce Ansel Elgort, you can pronounce Hasan Minhaj."

I wish to have Minhaj's confidence and patience someday, yet it makes me wonder why foreigners who speak in English as their first language are unwilling to ask about names that don't roll off their tongues easily. My university likes to promote their liberal ethos of multicultural inclusivity. While such policies are welcome and reassuring for international students like myself, sometimes the simple act of wanting to know the correct way to say an interesting name can mean a lot.

If you are one such student having to respond to a distorted version of your name every day, I feel you. Hang in there until they get your (and my own!) name right.

Adhora Ahmed tries to make her two cats befriend each other, but in vain. Tell her to give up at adhora.ahmed@gmail.com

Plight of a Pseudo Reader

TAZREEN JAHAN BARI

It was a rainy Friday. And like any Bangladeshi reader, I was about to snuggle in with a book after having stuffed myself with some *khichuri-ilish*, when the world as I know it came crashing down. The realisation hit me with painful clarity -- I am not a reader anymore. I have not been one for a very long time.

I have been adding more books to my to-be-read pile. I have been buying books for every occasion to justify a semi-questionable consumerist streak. I have been taking pride in calling myself a reader in social settings. I have been taking aesthetic photos to revive my bookstagram account that never quite took off. And yet, I cannot remember the last time I read a book.

BEGINNING OF THE END

It started with a simple case of a reading slump. Days became weeks. And long before I could comprehend what was happening to me, months went by without me reading a single book. Like any reader desperate to cling to the title of a "reader" to justify their dark academia aesthetics, I too denied it first. But one term is only valid for so long. So, I tried my hands at paraphrasing and started calling what I was going through a reading hiatus. When an entire year passed by, I should have realised the end is here.



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

THE DENIAL

You see, someone capable of taking a nap in the face of impending assignment submissions, and someone used to cutting the back end of a tube of toothpaste before calling it truly empty, cannot be expected to accept the truth without a scuffle with denial first. And so, I took the help of

lists and impulsive buying to cover up my non-reader status. I smiled brightly, buying new books and increasing my to-be-read pile as if I were not the same person who has not picked up a book to read in ages. But the shame and guilt that comes with not reading followed me around until it had my poor heart maimed at last.

BITING THE BULLET

Having lost the game of denial, I took refuge in acceptance. What used to give me joy can only offer a sense of guilt and loss now. So, it is time to rip the band-aid off and bite the bullet once and for all. Dear reader who has been nervously relating to this traumatic experience, let me break it to you -- you are not a reader anymore.

A NEW BEGINNING

Like most life changes, accepting is the truly hard part. Once you have accepted you are not a reader anymore, you will see that the scrutiny of the increasing number of unread books on your shelf and the guilt you associate with not reading like you used to will vanish into thin air. Even the spotlight syndrome impaling you with fear of judgement at the thought of coming out as a non-reader will become manageable.

So, own your status as a non-reader. Cherish the good memories you made while reading in the past. Find a new hobby. And just in case the thought of changing your whole aesthetic paralyses you with fears of an identity crisis, remind yourself that change is inevitable.

Tazreen is your typical angry liberal arts student who likes to blame it all on capitalism. Send her anger management tips at tazreenzahan@gmail.com

What it's like to be a student tenant in Dhaka

H. RAINAK KHAN REAL & RASHA JAMEEL

Some might call adulting a challenge, some might dismiss it as just another phase in life. For university students who reside in rented spaces in Dhaka, it's a rather complicated affair. From living on instant noodles to dealing with problematic property owners, student tenants have to navigate many hardships to live in the city. We talked to a number of students to get the nitty gritty on what life is like as a student tenant.

Among the students we reached out to, very few described the transition from living with family to living solo as being completely unpleasant. There is always the dreaded element of uncertainty, be it in managing your personal expenses yourself for the first time or getting accustomed to living with people you don't really know well enough.

Swagata Das*, a Brac University alumna, spoke about how living in a rented space was quite unnerving for her at first, "I was unsure whether my roommates would take to my presence and initially had a fear of being judged in a communal environment."

For those who weren't particularly fazed by the transition, they confessed to being quite shaken up by the drastic changes in living conditions. Gone were the days of relying on parents to deal with finances and household chores.

which every roommate contributes a fixed amount: 2500 taka. If our supplies run out before the month ends, each of us contribute an equal amount again to buy necessary products," stated Iftakhar Uddin, third-year Computer Science and Engineering student from the University of Dhaka (DU) who lives in a rented apartment in Motijheel.

The students who choose to eat outside either don't want to deal with the extra expense of a cook and grocery shopping every month, or find better alternatives like eating at local hotels or university cafeterias. Jafrul Alam, studying Accounting and Information Systems at Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP) and staying at a rented apartment in Mirpur DOHS, informed us that they are accustomed to eating breakfast at the university cafeteria, and lunch and dinner at home prepared by a cook.

Rent, of course, is a key factor to be considered when looking for apartments.



PHOTOS: ORCHID CHAKMA



PHOTOS: DARSHAN CHAKMA

Based on our research, the primary concern amongst these students seemed to be associated with food. From the students we reached out to, one half appeared to totally depend on local food hotels near the apartments and on university cafeterias, while the other half took the extra hassle of doing the groceries and cooking their meals either by themselves or by employing someone. Those who opt for a balanced meal at home, often buy a fridge through equal contribution from roommates.

"My eight roommates and I had to cram our groceries into one tiny refrigerator. Every now and then my groceries would go missing as someone else would confuse my purchases for theirs. It was quite difficult to keep track," recalled Fardia Ahmed*, an Environmental Sciences major from North South University.

"Since we prefer to eat meals at home, we assign monthly managers amongst ourselves who are responsible for buying as well as tracking expenses related to groceries and food for a month. Thirty days' worth of groceries and food products are bought at the beginning of each month in

Being the capital, increased rural to urban migration has accelerated the already growing demand for rented apartments and as a consequence, high rents are charged within both city corporations of Dhaka, compared to other districts of Bangladesh. To mitigate the issue, students commonly rent apartments together with others who share similar residence problems.

"My friends and I rented a two-room apartment in the New Graveyard area in Azimpur for 14,000 taka per month back in 2018. Considering the inadequacy of space, the five of us later rented a three-room apartment in Joynag Road, Bakshi Bazar for 16,000 taka. This is a much better deal as the apartment space is sufficient for five and is located within walking distance of our university," said Noor Ahmed, currently a third-year Nuclear Engineering major from DU.

Variations in apartment rents are mostly based on location, though negotiation plays a key role during the determination of final rent. During the pandemic, student residents have been caught up in an even larger dilemma regarding the rent they're

being charged. Due to all the confusion surrounding the reopening of university campuses, students have been unsure about whether to stay at home with parents or in Dhaka. As a result, many are currently paying full or close to full rent out of fear of eviction, even though they're occupying the space in question for a few days at most.

"I've been paying a reduced rent of 3000 taka instead of 4000 taka even though I returned to my home district last year because of the country-wide lockdown due to Covid-19 pandemic," comments BUP's Mustakim Iba Quashar, who is renting an apartment in Mirpur DOHS.

Notably, Section 18 of the Premises Rent Control Act 1991, prohibits the landowner from threatening their tenant with eviction unless the latter has been found guilty of violating any of the terms of agreement. However, there are currently no tenant laws in place to ensure reduction of rent under the circumstances of a financial crisis.

As we looked into the living facilities at rented spaces, a majority of the interviewed students said that they have to pay predetermined bills and service charges.

Tanvir Mohammad Farhan, a fourth-year Geography and Environment major from DU, said, "For a two-room apartment in Wireless, Moghbazar, we pay a service charge of 950 taka per month, which includes gate fee, water bill and waste collection fee."

Most of the students we interviewed also reported paying electricity and gas bills separately. Though the gas bill was fixed, we were told that their electricity bills fluctuate depending on holidays and seasons. Uninterrupted availability of gas is expected by the students as they are paying fixed bills every month, but students from several areas complained about either low pressure of gas or unavailability of gas during the afternoon.

Moreover, almost all the students we spoke to confessed that they never really feel safe with their possessions at rented apartments, since strict security measures aren't always guaranteed. Some students cited cases of harassment, bullying, and theft

which largely remain unresolved as the property owners themselves often refused or hesitated to get involved in the renter's "personal affairs".

Kate Rosario* from Independent University, Bangladesh discussed one such incident where her roommate forced her into a "subtle situation" by occupying a significant amount of space with her husband at the flat she shared with Rosario. "The property owner refused to step in and was of no help in the matter," Rosario mentioned.

Even though in some cases security within the apartment space was somewhat ensured, the same couldn't be said for the garage and other locations.

"Theft is very common in Kalshi, Mirpur. Thirty thousand taka was stolen after thieves broke into one of the apartments. A friend of mine who came to us for a visit got his bicycle stolen. Even the bicycle of the property owner himself got stolen," reported Shifat Sharif, a student from Military Institute of Science and Technology.

"Bottom floor apartments are most susceptible to theft and stealing of bicycles is a common occurrence," according to Masum Billah, a fourth-year undergraduate student from DU living in a rented apartment in Chankharpul.

Student tenants already have more than enough on their plates as they try to build a secure future for themselves in a competitive academic environment. The trying circumstances that they often have to face at rented spaces only further test their resolve. This struggle is largely unnecessary, and a huge barrier to success for many. Proper regulations, enforcement of such regulations, and a healthy rapport between community leaders, students, and university authorities can only lead to a better and healthier experience for student tenants in our city.

*Names have been changed upon request

Reference
The Daily Star (May 5, 2020). *Protecting tenants' rights during Covid-19*.

This Is Why You Should Invest in Art

AYRA AREEBA ABID

The mere ability of creating anything over nothing delivers sheer bliss. After being intrigued by colours, in the late 2000s I finally expressed my wish of being admitted to an art school. This was perhaps one of the best decisions I have made in my life so far. Art can be so rewarding but can only be felt once you start immersing yourself in its creativity.

The following steps are only a guide. I urge you to add in or exclude from the stages I mention.

BUILDING A CREATIVE SANCTUARY

We find joy in different customs, through different paths and from different sources. Art, for one, can be therapeutic when you wield your brush over a canvas or sketch delicate, black and white portraits. Art can be induced through self-expression, a sense of individual identity. Forming identities can be daunting, but it is a process and evolves through time and practicing art.

FINDING A SUITED MEDIUM

Use different mediums and observe what works best for you. Personally, I am comfortable working with watercolour, pens and pencil but my skills have dropped over time due to a lack of devotion. Thus, it is imperative that we devote time and schedule intrinsically, in order to form greater strengths in the field. Even if you're not the Leonardo da Vinci of the 21st century, allow yourself to form an identity of your own. Studies suggest art may promote individual well-being and psychological health. So, if you're looking for a way to cope with the



uncertainty and the advent of adversities the pandemic is presenting currently, art might just be the right getaway for you to choose!

LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE

It is sadly, however, the case in many art schools in Dhaka where village landscapes are solely the topic focused on. There is little to no creative liberty, as Fatima Jahan

who is now a university student, says from her experience attending art school in her childhood.

Samrin Haque, a high school student, however has differing views, as she sees her art school as a safe place attended by like-minded people. My cousin who attended art school with me says, "I enjoyed working in the classes as traditional

Bangla music played in the background. Sometimes special appearances by famous musicians would exude an aura of charisma through their remarkable live music."

Another cousin of mine remarked that for her art was like a "recreational activity" and "a momentary retreat from strain." Suraqa Noor, a university student, particularly loved her teacher's method of motivating students from all age ranges. However, when she joined her O Level art classes, she disliked the idea of drawing the same thing in every class. Liberty to choose topics in local art classes is minute and comprehension of detailed construction of complex yet basic anatomy compositions are vastly discouraged in art schools.

The ability of birthing reality from personal imagination equips artists with a sense of gratification while permitting the critics to interpret however they wish to. If you need a tip on problem-solving skills, I'll tell you a secret, dear readers. Art will present you with this expensive skill.

Ayra Areeba Abid's favourite word is 'serendipity' and she's a linguistics geek. Connect with her at areeba.ayra@gmail.com

THE DEFINITIVE YOUTH MAGAZINE
SHOUT



ECHOES BY
 ASRAR CHOWDHURY

ECHOES AT 100

I
Echoes first appeared on October 3, 2013. It started as a fortnightly column. Over the years, it had its ups and downs. It missed instalments. It even vanished for about 18 months when yours truly suffered a heart attack and before that a period of depression. And yet, seven and a half plus years later, *Echoes* rings a centenary bell.

II
 My first encounter with The Daily Star was in 1992. The daily was a year old. Shamshad Mortuza, my batchmate at Jahangirnagar University, and university correspondent of The Daily Star, advised me to write a piece on the Beatles. I sent it to the popular supplement, *Rising Stars*. In mid-stream, it caught the eyes of the late Madan Shahu. The piece ended up being printed as the lead article of the *Star Weekend* magazine. I soon found myself contributing to *Rising Stars*. Its editor was Raffat Binte Rashid. From 1992 to 1996, I was part of a team, where we all had a wonderful time with Raffat at the helm.

Although I left for studies at the University of Cambridge in 1996, The Daily Star was always in my heart. It's hard to get over things you fall for in your youth.

During 2002-2004, I did translation,

literary pieces and some book reviews in the *Weekly Literature*. Khademul Islam was the editor. Although Khadem Bhai was encouraging, I realised literature wasn't my cup of tea.

In November 2007, I called Shahnoor Wahid, the founding editor of the then youth magazine, *Star Campus*. Through Shahnoor Bhai, another sprint of infrequent contributions started. Elita Karim became its editor afterwards. She proposed I do a column. I gave some thought, and named it *Post Campus*, after *Star Campus*, obviously.

In June 2013, *Star Campus* released its final issue and with that, *Post Campus* became history. I thought it was the end of my association with The Daily Star. I was 43 by then. Elita got in touch, again. *SHOUT*, the new youth supplement, invited me to do a fortnightly column. I couldn't believe my luck. My favourite Pink Floyd piece "Echoes" sounded apt with *SHOUT*. And thus started a journey so far with three editors, Karim Al Waheed, Rumman R Kalam, and presently Kazi Akib Bin Asad.

III
 The late Madan Shahu advised me well. First: always ask for the word limit. Second:

edit well before submitting. Otherwise, the editor will edit. You could find that embarrassing. I never forgot Madan Da's words of wisdom.

It's possible to develop writing skill with water-tight limits over time if you don't write at the last moment. And you have time to edit before submission. One could argue, people think better when they're confronted by a deadline. The adrenaline runs fast and smooth. The problem with this line of thought: adrenaline can go wrong sometimes.

If you give time, you think better. Your thoughts are more organised. Complex sentences become simple. Readers pause between sentences. Then move to the next sentence that connects the flow of reasoning. You can predict the feeling in the readers' minds as you throw words and sentences. Each paragraph or section throws a particular thought. The whole piece then connects like a jigsaw puzzle, with a conclusion that can be open-ended so the thoughts of what you write "echo" for some time. If you write at the last moment as a rule, the adrenaline won't always run smoothly.

Finding a topic for *Echoes* is the first challenge. The next challenge is to ensure topics don't belong to a particular genre, and



DESIGN: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

don't overlap over time. If that happens, you soon become a *one-trick pony*. This is why when I run out of ideas, *Echoes* misses instalments.

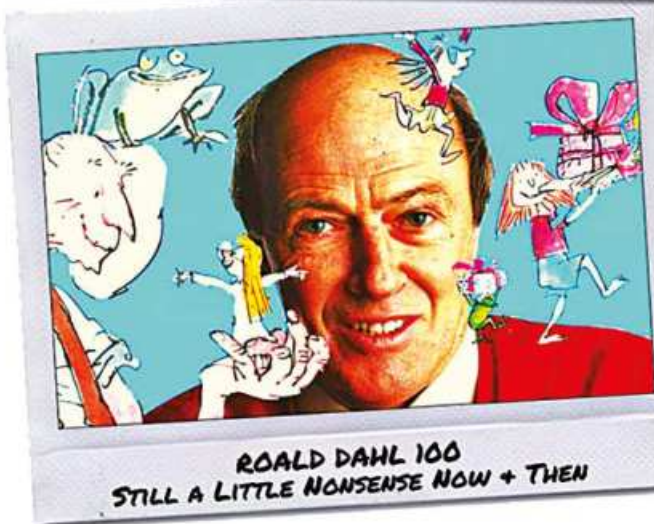
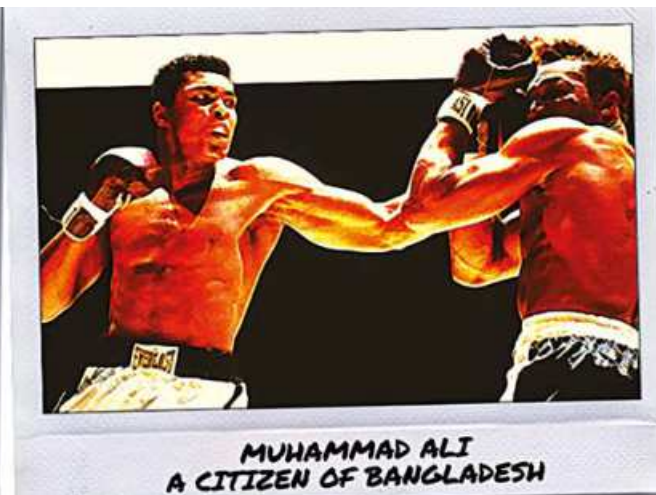
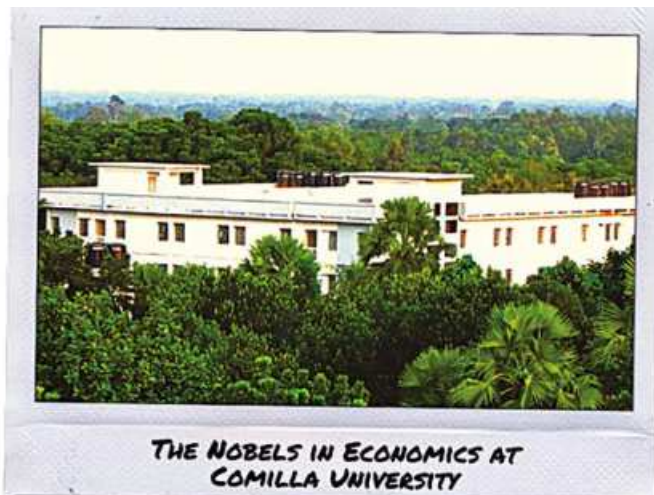
I was 43 years old when *SHOUT* invited me to start this column, in 2013. It's a privilege to be associated with young people, but it also puts moral responsibilities on my shoulders. The youth of today are special. Not only will they guide Bangladesh soon, they are extremely clever, creative, and highly competitive. Topics have to be relevant to the youth, but also have to have a set of universal aspects: to make the reader think, look back, and think again. For this, I have to remind myself each story has to be free of technical jargon.

I also try to remind myself, young people need to see the world through ethics, morality, and empathy. Then young people tend to see life as a journey where experience is appreciated more than success or failure.

IV
 With its centenary instalment, today's *Echoes* also celebrates my almost thirty-year association with The Daily Star. In this time, I've seen its youth weekly start with *Rising Stars* and transform to today's *SHOUT*. Faces and places have changed over time, but one thing remained constant: The Daily Star has always encouraged free-thinking among the youth in Bangladesh.

Being able to have been a part of this atmosphere is something special. It's in this special place that *Echoes* looks forward to keep traveling with the young of tomorrow's Bangladesh.

Asrar Chowdhury teaches Economics in classrooms. Outside, he watches Test cricket, plays the flute and listens to music and radio podcasts. Email: asrarul@juniv.edu or asrarul@gmail.com



Some notable post *Campus* and *Echoes* over the years

Six feet under hell itself

SYEDA ERUM NOOR

Rituals from when time was young,
Filling our daughters' lungs with sand,
To leave her innocent words unsung,
To keep from a life of reprimand.

Envious of your safe haven,
You're six feet under hell itself,
Where we live like hollow knight ravens,
Living a deadly stretched farewell.

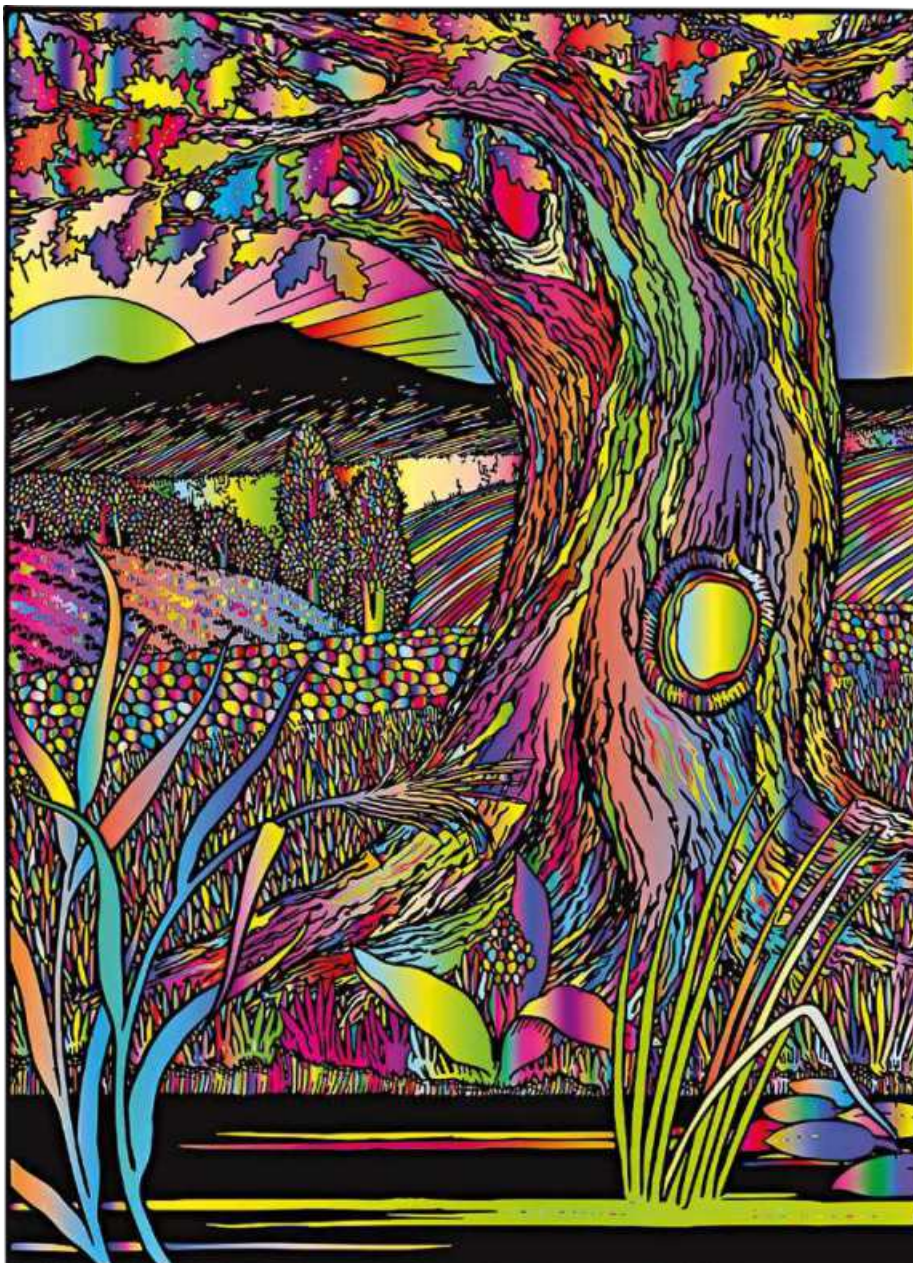
We mourn our honorary loss
But celebrate your great escape,
From hammered fate up on a cross,
From being pressed on ticker tape.

Where buffaloes wear suits and ties
And humans prowl on sets of two,
Where you live and breathe through compromise
And mean nothing more than honeydew.

Send words of love up through the ground
To get us through this tortured realm,
Of broken souls and vicious hounds,
Of empty eyes that overwhelm.

I won't bear any daughters,
To keep them from these Satan's pawns.
I'll navigate these dark waters,
With battered sails of ripped nylon.

Syeda Erum Noor is dangerously oblivious and has no sense of time. Send help at erum.noor1998@gmail.com



THE FALL OF THE WITNESSES

IPSHITA KAJURI

Me and hundreds of my brothers and sisters have been here for quite a long time now. At the very beginning, our family members numbered in the thousands, but due to deforestation, we are now barely in the hundreds. Every time one of us falls, it is also the fall of a witness to history. We are witnesses of the many historical events, ranging from when the military club of the British used to be here, to the surrender of the Pakistan army, marking the victory of Bangladesh.

Right from the era of the British, our family members have been standing on this ground. The British used to have a military club here. We witnessed how they loathed the Indians and thought them to be inferior. We also witnessed how the nationalism of the Indians led to them being thrown out of the Indian subcontinent. We are also witnesses of the Partition of Bengal in 1905 and later the Partition of India in 1947. Horse races used to take place here every Sunday back then, and it used to be filled with the hustle and bustle of many visitors.

Then came 1969, when me and my family members witnessed the love that our Father of the Nation received from the common people. After the students uprising resulted in the withdrawal of the Agartala Conspiracy Case and acquittal of Bangabandhu, a civic reception for him was arranged in these premises. We are witnesses of how he became Bangabandhu from Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and the

love that the common people showered upon him. And much more was yet to be witnessed.

It was March 7, 1971. We witnessed how a leader, with his passion and oratory, could encourage a whole nation to fight for its freedom at the cost of its own blood. That is the day when the premises rang with the words "The struggle this time is the struggle for freedom; the struggle this time is the struggle for independence". Me and my family members were just listening in awe. Then came the scary night of March 25, 1971, when the Pakistan army attacked the University of Dhaka and killed hundreds of people brutally. Nine months of bloodshed followed, and we are also witnesses of the end of the Liberation War, when the Pakistan army surrendered right in front of us, marking the victory of Bangladesh in the Liberation War.

Despite being witnesses to so much, my family members have been brutally murdered, decapitated from time to time. Now it is being said that the few of us remaining will also be murdered in order to beautify the area. But remember that every time one of us is killed, witnesses of history are also being killed. If all of us are murdered like this, the day will come when history itself will be murdered. That would mean the death of memories, and a nation can never prosper without knowing its roots, which lie in its history.

The writer is a second year BBA student from North South University.

My Journey to Becoming a K-Pop Stan

FATIMA JAHAN ENA

If you asked 18-year-old me what's on my playlist, it would mostly be songs composed by bearded men who like saxophone solos and *The Diary of Anne Frank*. If you also asked me about my opinions on K-pop, I would scoff and say something hyper-pretentious, like how manufacturing the music takes away the "music" of it.

Fast forward to my present-day playlist (or YouTube history) overflowing with K-pop. Clearly, something had happened recently.

My debut as a K-pop "stan" happened one night when my friend decided to show me some of her favourite EXO fancams. Before that night, I had begun to dip a toe into the K-pop world with some cheery girl group songs. But one particular Kai fancam marked my point of no return. I had to devour more.

It started mildly enough, with me looking at fancams and listening to the songs. Then came the infamous "crack" videos and I was a goner. Since then, my Instagram, Pinterest and YouTube feeds have all been filled to the brim with K-pop content.

Now that I have (almost) fully integrated into the K-pop world, I tried to understand why I was so against it in the first place.



One of the reasons could be that the Western media had my world in its grip for most of my life. I grew up with predominantly American/British shows, music and books, which made me look at Asian media through a Westernised lens. This made K-pop seem too campy and kitschy. From my perspective, the genre was closer to the overdramatic Bollywood songs rather than the cookie-cutter American music that I was habituated with. Even though songs

from "the West" could be cheesy, too, I was kinder to them compared to K-pop.

Another reason for my unjustified hatred would simply be how everyone disliked K-pop, so I did, too. There really is no other way to explain it. On top of that, I had convinced myself that the only valid genres were either classic rock or anything that sounded remotely alternative.

Post-rock music made entirely of beep-ing combined with the sound of an old

generator? Yes.

Pop music originating in Korea? No.

The general hatred towards pop music in general could be a contributing factor as well. People who were inclined to enjoy rock or alternative music generally expressed distaste towards pop music by calling it inauthentic, manufactured and soulless. Combine that with a distaste for Asian campiness and you have a super annoying music elitist on your hands.

As an adult, I can acknowledge how my thinking process was completely biased and unfair. Moreover, it made me disregard the hard work the idols and pop stars in general put into their craft. They have the immense pressure of being entertaining and charismatic in every single show.

Regardless, I am extremely glad that I grew out of being a hater. It feels like I unlocked a whole new world and found great music.

If you're still adamant about listening to K-pop, I understand. Nonetheless, I would still encourage you to give it a try. Just remember to have an open mind and contact me when you stan Loona.

Fatima Jahan Ena likes complaining about capitalism and her forehead. Find her at mail2ena@gmail.com

HONEST ONLINE GROUP PRESENTATIONS

BUSHRA ZAMAN

Imagine you're in class, and the teacher announces a group presentation where members will be picked randomly. You find yourself in a bunch with people you are not too well acquainted with, your presentation deadline is in three days, and to make matters worse, because of the pandemic, the entire thing is online.

What could go wrong, right? Allow me to tell you.

Losing all trace of your group members

You look up your group members' names on Google Classroom or Zoom, and proceed to look for the same names on social media, only to find no such people exist after browsing for an hour. Do they perhaps have a Prince/Queen/King in front of their actual names? Did they use a pet name? They might not even be on social media; you can never know for sure. Hence you proceed to do something awkward.

Texting strangers

"Hello, a person with a name similar to my group member's and a locked profile prohibiting me from identifying you in any way," you think, as you begin typing a message. You hope and pray that this

is the person you are looking for, and that if not, you do not get posted for being mistaken for a creepy stranger texting randomly. You press the send button anxiously, wondering whether this would be any less awkward in person, questioning your social skills. You suddenly realise the email option exists. But the same applies to trying to locate them using the email address provided by an educational institution; a lot of similar options pop up, so you can never be sure if you are reaching the correct person or are just being marked as spam.

Communication

After much difficulty, you finally find all your group members. In every group presentation there is usually one person who initiates the group chat. What after that, though? Do you wait for instructions or give them yourself? Would that be perceived as being bossy? It gets worse when they seen-zone you. I mean, please, I am just trying to graduate here. Even after proper task distribution, the lack of ability to distinguish between excuses and truth is a whole other issue, because you cannot judge solely via texts.

Internet issues

You are about to give the presentation, but right before the show begins, the person who was supposed to be presenting the slides gets disconnected. This is why it is important to have backup, kids! Always keep an extra copy of the presentation slides. Also, can you imagine if you were presenting, and midway you realise nobody heard anything you said thus far? *shudders*

Background interruptions

Hearing background noises can absolutely break the continuous flow of information being relayed in a presentation. While some distractions may be cute, such as a pet making a sudden appearance, it still isn't professional. What do you do when your class hears you being yelled at for finishing all the ice cream in the house because of a sad movie you watched last night?

Did you ever have any embarrassing online presentation situations you would rather never re-visit? Let me know.

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