

DARKNESS AND HOPE

FAHMI MASNUN ASHRAF

I clean up after my demons,
And when I'm almost done,
I glance back and I realise –
I'm running in a circle.

Running like a guinea pig,
Caught in an endless loop called life.
I live like an inanimate object,
Subject to someone's mindless experiments.
The cruelty and the frailty –
I don't think I want to live
Like this anymore.

I'm living through a cyclone,
I'm living through a storm,
I'm falling in the void,
Where's the golden life they promised me?
They lied.

I'm here at the bottom of the darkness.
I look up,
And I dare to hope.
And I dare to build stairs,
Made of threads of light
And hope, in my mind.

The writer is a student in class 9 at Manarat Dhaka International College.



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

Fleeting Memories of an Online Bound Student

NABEEHA UMAMA KHAN

The gloomy sky above me grumbled, promising downpour.

Dhanmondi 7/A buzzed around me, full of life, yet I was stuck on the pavement in a trance. A rickshaw zoomed past, ringing indignantly as I hopped away, my eyes still locked onto the building in front of me.

My eyes took it in hungrily – every brick and glass, rapidly renewing the rusted images that had been burned inside my head for the past year and a half. The world around me melted away, my mind a time machine of its own as it dragged me down to the past.

I was still standing in the same place, but everything around me had changed. Things were happier. I could hear the loud ringing of the bell, signalling the end of the class. I could see myself rushing out, laughing along with my friends as we celebrated the twenty-five minutes of freedom, impatient to get a last-minute bite as the precious tiffin-time minutes raced away.

Soon the scene changed, and I was in class, huddled around with my friends as we panicked to get in a final revision before the test. I could hear us cheering loudly as Miss gave in with a small smile, saying she would just ask us orally instead.

The first drop of rain hit my forehead and took me to another memory – a rainy Thursday. There I was, in class, with all of our eyes glued to the storm brewing outside, praying that the rain would continue until school was

over. Fast forward a few hours and we were outside, laughing and twirling in the rain with paper boats floating behind us in the water-logged ground.

A car honk brought me out of my trance, and suddenly, like a bucket of cold water, quite literally, I was brought back to the haunting present. The happiness was gone, and I was again standing in front of a lifeless building, a place that I had called home for half a day for the past three years.

A painful sigh escaped deep from my chest as I tugged my eyes away, staring off at the dark sky overhead as the rain pelted on my face, my drenched hijab clinging onto my head for dear life.

A passing mother's sharp warning at her child to not put his hand out reminded me of my own *Ma* at home. I could almost hear her fussing as she saw me soaking wet, nudging me to the shower as she prepared a steaming cup of ginger tea, all the while mumbling, "We'll see who looks after you when you get a fever."

The thought of my *Ma* had me moving with a smile as I walked home. Just before I turned the corner, I turned back to glance at my school for the final time with a promise that drowned in the howling wind. One day I will be back there with my friends again, laughing and studying, and everything will be alright.

One day.

The writer is a student of Class IX

