

THE DEFINITIVE
YOUTH
MAGAZINE

SHOUT

DHAKA THURSDAY AUGUST 5, 2021, SRABAN 21, 1428 BS

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PLAY LIKE A GIRL

PG 4

VITRIOL
PG 7



FOR THE LOVE OF THE
(UNPOPULAR) GAME



EDITORIAL

The 2020 Tokyo Olympics are currently underway. As I write this, the US has the most medals, while China has the most gold medals.

We've sadly never won at the Olympics. In fact we're the most populated country to never have won at any sport. Now that you have several Olympic related facts at your disposal, you can make of this what you will.

In today's issue, we talk about the turbulence many of our own athletes face on their journeys to pursue sports. We also talk about how our schooling system treats its female athletes from a young age. You can also take a cool quiz to figure out which Olympic sport you would have excelled at.

This is not a themed issue. This is not not a themed issue.

-- Mrittika Anan Rahman, Sub-editor, SHOUT



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PLAYWATCH

BOOKS



DESIGN: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

Books on Astrophysics for Nerds Noobs

SABIBA HOSSAIN

If you're a space enthusiast, thankfully there are scientists who wrote simple, sophisticated yet mesmerising books that won't bore you to death, unlike textbooks, and still teach you basic astrophysics that you wish you had learned sooner.

A Brief History of Time by Stephen Hawking

Considered a classic in the field of astrophysics, *A Brief History of Time* will teach you everything from basic science like Newton's Laws to complex theories like the Hawking radiation. It is written in such a simple manner that you don't need to have a science background to understand the book's approach to the astounding world we live in, or the miracles around us.

If, however, you think this book is too elementary for you, you can pick up Hawking's *The Universe In A Nutshell*, which discusses mind-bending topics such as black holes, time dilation, and more.

Astrophysics for People in a Hurry by Neil deGrasse Tyson

As you can guess from the title, this book is for you if you're an impatient individual. It will explain everything from the Big Bang Theory to dark energy, but unlike *A Brief History of Time*, you will need prior knowledge of ninth grade Science before reading this one.

The book mainly focuses on celestial objects and astronomical concepts, so it's a big win if you're an astrophile.

Hyperspace by Michio Kaku

If you're interested in the Grand Unified Theory, *Hyperspace* is for you.

With his engaging narration and simple explanation, Kaku describes the history of hyperspace, how we came to believe that we have four dimensions rather than ten, mass populations' involvement in it, and the cultural impact this holds.

For instance, did you know Picasso's paintings are drawn in such a way that they will only make sense to a person living in the fourth dimension? Not just painters, con artists or kings -- this book tells the tales of scientists, their successes and failures.

In brief, if you want to know about sophisticated concepts like string theory, quantum mechanics or the theory of relativity without doing an ounce of math, this book is your go-to.

Seven Brief Lessons on Physics by Carlo Rovelli

If you freaked out reading this list and want to read a book under an hour (trust me, I've timed this) but still be dazzled by the stupendous beauty of physics, give *Seven Brief Lessons on Physics* a read.

Rovelli covers everything from the theory of relativity to quantum mechanics in this relatively short book. It's a possibility you won't understand anything in depth, but the book is bound to awaken your inner inquisitiveness, leading you to read other books in this field.

Even if you don't feel interested enough to learn further about the topics discussed in this book, the narration itself is sure to leave you feeling lively, ecstatic, and mellow.

Sabiba Hossain is a Hufflepuff who plans on going into hibernation every winter but never succeeds. Send her fantasy book recommendations at fb.com/Sabibastro

The Fine Line between Rudeness and Honesty

BUSHRA ZAMAN

If someone were to give you honest feedback, would you consider them to be helpful or rude?

Sometimes status updates or memes have quotes in them referring to people, "saying things as they are" or "being blunt for the betterment of others" when in reality, they can be borderline rude.

The reason why rudeness and honesty cannot be correlated is because not only does it allow individuals to speak rudely using honesty as an excuse, but it can also make polite individuals seem deceptive. This especially proves to be a problem when you do not know the person well.

Allow me to elaborate.

Suppose you asked someone to participate in a survey regarding the effectiveness of a business idea you came up with. If the person pointed out valid flaws to you in a derogatory manner, you would likely correlate their brutal choice of words with the honest truth.

Demotivated, you would disregard your business idea completely. You may even think the person did you a favour by being "blunt." However, a much better option



would have been for the person to provide constructive criticism. That way, you would have received honest opinions without having to compromise your self-esteem, which is how it should be.

While conveying the truth politely is important, it does not, however, indicate that the truth should be sugarcoated under the guise of politeness.

If you were to falsely appreciate a doomed business idea, the to-be-entrepreneur would suffer greater losses in the

future undertaking the business venture than they would from being hurt by honest feedback. We must be honest, but not rude; polite, but not fake. In all this confusion, how can we differentiate between rudeness, sugarcoating, and honesty?

Maybe the best option would be to simply look at opinions or statements from a larger scale. In the example of the business idea, if you were to ask more than one person for their opinions, statistics could help bring out anomalies in opinions. So,

if a person was offering you false feedback, chances are their opinion would be ruled out as an anomaly. The same applies to the case of individuals sugarcoating the truth so as to not come off as rude.

It may be faster to find a way around the problem, rather than tackling the actual problem itself. However, the root cause should be identified, to eliminate the issue.

In this case, giving kids constructive criticism when teaching them, say, art, while keeping in mind that their spirits should never be crushed, could be a start to not only teach ourselves how to be honest without being rude, but to also teach future generations to do so.

Maybe give medals for encouragement, but also lightly ask if they believe they could have made improvements? Perhaps this is an example of how parenting books can be helpful for both kids and adults.

If you are dealing with thick-headed people, however, then maybe using a dictionary to point out differences may work just as well.

Bushra Zaman likes books, art, and only being contacted by email. Contact her at bushra-zaman31@yahoo.com

The Sung and Unsung Heroes behind Music Production

SABIH SAFWAT

Dances have the dancers, choreographers, sound and lighting technicians among others. Films have actors, scriptwriters, directors, and about a million other technicians involved.

Music is no exception to this, we have artists in the limelight and artists behind the curtains, neither group being less important than the other.

COMPOSERS

These people build a musical piece from scratch. They come up with main melodies, supporting tunes called harmonies, the foundation of the song and chord progressions.

Composers may or may not write music for specific instruments. Names we are all too familiar with include Beethoven, Mozart, and Bach, who were, first and foremost, composers.

In recent times though, musicians who receive recognition working purely as a composer are usually movie and video game score composers like Hans Zimmer, John Williams and Nobuo Uematsu.

LYRICISTS

The ones behind the stories told by the songs are the lyricists.

While bands across most genres tend to use lyrics written by their own members, some use lyricists outside their groups, like how Rumman Ahmed writes for Artcell.

Professional lyricists are prevalent in the Asian pop music scene, while the western pop industry sees songwriters ranging from Joni Mitchell to Taylor Swift, who, in addition to writing the lyrics, also



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

compose the tunes for the songs.

ARRANGERS

If composition is the meat in the stew, arrangement is the spices.

Arrangers decide which instruments are suitable for which melodies and harmonies the composers have written. They also add or change elements to the composition so that the song flows well and delivers the intended effects to the listeners.

Orchestras and the pop music industry both rely heavily on professional arrangers.

PERFORMERS

Of course, writing isn't the end of it, the music needs to be performed to reach the audience.

Vocalists and instrumentalists are the faces of the music scene, artists that people are familiar with. Majority of the performers dabble in other creative roles, but many build themselves solely on performing.

Members of orchestras, session musicians in the recording industry, and most pop idols rely on their companies for the music to sing and dance to.

SOUND ENGINEERS

The common practice in modern producing music is to record each instrument's parts in a song separately in the studio and later mix them into one track.

Recording engineers, with their in-depth knowledge of acoustics, make sure the sounds are captured as best as possible with the available equipment. Mastering engineers ensure the finished track sounds good on all platforms the music may be distributed in including streaming sites, CDs, and vinyl.

Mixing engineers are indisputably the most important of the lot. They take the separately recorded tracks, process them digitally to sound the way the artist wishes, and produce complete songs. Mixing is a vast field owing to the sheer number of possible techniques to manipulate sounds, and no matter how good the composers and performers are, a song can't reach its full potential without a good mixing engineer.

Sabih Safwat spends most of his time with headphones on, wandering through familiar and unfamiliar soundscapes. Send songs to listen at sabihsafwat@gmail.com

Play Like a Girl

NASHRAH HAQUE

Let us imagine a school that restricts the subjects one could take based on their genders.

A school, where girls are not allowed to opt for Math or Physics because they are the more “masculine” subjects and the only way to access restricted subjects was through extra tuition in their own time and expenses, after school.

As absurd as it sounds, this is the reality for many girls when it comes to Physical Education (PE) or Sports classes in many schools. When it comes to accessing training to become skilled in sports or activities in PE classes, girls are usually left behind.

Often, their playtimes are completely cancelled after they’ve reached a certain grade, with little to no regard for their possible aspirations.

“Up until grade 6 we had a games class where we would go outside to play either football or handball. But in grade 7, that class was substituted for sewing classes strictly in the girls’ buildings. The boys still had a designated period for sports. This was incredibly unfair as I remember no one in my class wanted to give up sports for sewing as no one was really interested in the latter,” Fatima Jahan Ena, a former student of Maple Leaf International School shared.

Many girls we spoke to believe they are not treated equally to their male peers in settings where everyone is supposed to be given equal opportunities. They talked

about how they wanted to participate in the same activities as their male classmates, but their teachers told them they couldn’t because it was “meant for males” or “because you’re a girl” or “because it’s not on the schedule.”

“We weren’t allowed to play out in the field after grade 4, the girls would be asked to sit in class while the boys went out to play,” described Mithi Munzeleen Sarwar, who studied in Marie Curie School.

She adds, “We weren’t allowed to wear the sports uniform either because girls were not allowed to wear shorts.”

Sabrina Ahmed*, a former student from Sunnydale School, spoke about how she never even had the chance to explore her interest in sports, since, from a very young age she was not given the same opportunities as her male peers.

Something as fundamental as sports should not be subjected to unnecessary gender roles. Sports encourage good health, leadership abilities, teamwork, self-reliance, and continuous learning. One should not be deprived of it based on their gender. The area of participation in sports becomes problematic when schools fall into the habit of providing “girls sports” or “boys sports”, and when they encourage boys over girls.

Teachers have the ability to affect how students perceive the world around them through their lessons and classroom behaviour. This is a privilege that should be

made use of.

Farzeen Ghani, a recent A Level graduate, stated, “I was not allowed to play with the boys and the fact that I even wanted to participate in sports got me bullied.” Since childhood, she has been subjected to a great deal of discrimination as a result of her participation in sports.

With no support from school, and no girls’ team to participate in, Farzeen only had herself to help her pursue her passion for basketball.

“I would go to Gulshan Club after school every day with my basketball, sit and watch other people play. I didn’t have the confidence to go and play with them, or even, in front of them. When I would come back home, I would watch YouTube videos and teach myself,” Farzeen recalled. She did everything she could to hold on to her love for basketball, despite not having a proper coach.

Ultimately, Farzeen overcame the societal pressures that continually hindered her from playing, and is now a part of Deshi Ballers, which works to create a safe space for female athletes all around Bangladesh.

Farzeen’s perseverance was ultimately rewarded with opportunities, including the opportunity to be trained under Ruthie Bolton, an Olympic gold medalist, the opportunity to attend a mentoring program hosted by ESPN, and even play with the national basketball team. However, it is important to note that most girls do not

receive the same privilege, even if they try and persevere.

“No girl should be told she can’t play a sport just because of her gender. Something needs to change because girls are missing out on opportunities that will benefit them for the rest of their lives. Playing sports in this country for young girls and women should be a right, not a privilege,” Farzeen urged.

Terrible PE experiences are a common occurrence among girls. A startling number of girls shared similar stories of being made to feel uncomfortable, of not being allowed to try the same activities as males, of being bullied, or being made to feel inferior was prevalent in each story. They have all, in one way or another, been made to feel like there’s no point in trying or pursuing their interests further.

It has become impossible to overlook the roles many schools have played as, both, gatekeepers of physical opportunities, and advocates of restrictive gender standards. Schools and instructors must critically examine the environment they are harbouring, and the lessons they are giving through their actions, in order to bring about change that is much required.

**Name has been changed upon request.*

All Nashrah cares about is smashing the patriarchy. Help her at nashrah.haque01@gmail.com



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For the Love of the (Unpopular) Game

SYEDA ERUM NOOR

When I was 14, I was introduced to the wonderful sport of table tennis.

It wasn’t the kind of sport the popular kids would be wrapped up in playing. It wasn’t one that would be playing on television screens all the time, or one that was discussed at dinner tables and parties. It was one that had people raise their eyebrows and go, “Oh. How does that work?”

If not that, they’d laugh with a dismissive wave of the hand, saying, “I bet I could beat you.” I never quite understood it.

In my mind, whether or not it was popular didn’t really matter. A sport is a sport nonetheless. And it was a game that I enjoyed. I was working just as hard as anyone else, putting in the effort and time. There was no difference, other than the fact that from time to time, I’d have to explain table tennis to those who didn’t know about it or laugh off casual insults thrown about.

“It seemed so easy for everyone to dismiss it as being ‘easy,’” says Saif Sakif Ahmed, captain of the North South University table tennis team. “No one bothered to understand it, and so everyone had already concluded what I did was easy, and therefore, not worthy of praise. Somehow, I didn’t measure up to other athletes.”

It was a divide that was ever present, going as far back as school days. Going to my school tournaments, we’d have a bus full of spectators to attend our football, basketball or volleyball matches. When it came to anything other than that, people were seldom there.

“I immediately noticed the difference in the buzz and energy of people between my football games and my table tennis ones,” agrees Syed Irfan Noor, student of Stride International School, national-level table tennis player and member of the school football team.

For me too, this feeling carried through when I decided to pursue table tennis on a national level. The stadium was empty and our award ceremonies were sombre, with no one but the players and their coaches. While we celebrated our victories, they were easily dismissed by other people.

I soon came to realise that my achievements in table tennis didn’t quite mean the same as the other sports. Most of the time, I accepted it as a consequence of choosing a game that didn’t appeal to the masses.

As time passed, however, it became increasingly difficult to ignore the challenges that came with it. As it turns out, I’m not the only one. Dola Barua, badminton player and national-level multiple award-winning cyclist, states, “Social barriers have always been, even to this day, my biggest challenge. Most people don’t consider cycling to be a sport.”

The root of the problem has always been the same: lack of awareness. This unawareness was starting to affect more than just recognition or simple acknowledgement of our hard work. It was starting to affect our opportunities and



hinder our chances to ever reach our true potential.

“Not many resources are going into events and games, and no one takes this seriously,” says Dola Barua.

“Tournaments are less frequent, which is a huge disadvantage in itself,” agrees Saif. “We don’t get the chance to compete, to practice playing with pressure. We can’t learn if we can’t compete.”

National Muay Thai fighter Mohammad Rashed adds, “There’s a big gap in the resources available to us. It’s difficult to come across proper training facilities and trainers.”

We do have one thing that most refer to as an advantage: less competition. Most of us athletes don’t see this as an advantage, however, because we play these games out of passion and the drive to grow and become better. A lack of competition ends up being another challenge.

“We don’t get a chance to play against higher rated players,” says chess player Tamjid Ahmed Tanu, from North South Uni-

versity. “There aren’t enough clubs or platforms for us to play.”

Most of us don’t play only for the sake of winning. We play because we love the game. So, in my opinion, a lack of competition makes the awards I’ve won that didn’t require a decent fight mean little to me. It is unfulfilling to be unable to play to one’s best potential. Without competition, there is no growth. And our motivation is impacted if we have nothing to reach for.

“We don’t get to compete as much,” Beauty Ray, national archer, agrees. “We don’t have as many players and it eventually begins to affect our personal motivation. If there’s no chance to aim higher, we’re stuck.”

There is a lack of funding and federation initiatives due to these sports being immensely unpopular, and so players can’t even consider going professional. The option to do this full time is ruled out and so, for every athlete, there comes an abrupt end to their growth. Priorities change. The years of time and effort do not bear any fruit.

“We can’t afford to keep playing if we can’t earn a living from it,” says a saddened Saif. “No matter how much I want, it’s sad to realise my passion won’t last as long as I would have hoped.”

This lack of opportunity, recognition and publicity is not only affecting the participating players at present, but also aspiring talents who may have otherwise been attracted.

“Trophies and award ceremonies were my single motivation to start when I was younger,” recalls Maryam Noor Yunus, former national handball player. “It drew me in when I saw players being acknowledged for their talent. Love for the game grows with time, but initial attraction comes from recognition.”

Why would anyone be motivated to play, let alone win, where their victories become meaningless? Was their hard

work dismissed because the sport isn’t as popular as other ones?

Everyone agrees, support from the government, federations, and relevant authorities is necessary.

“With some support from the federation, we must try and drive more of our forces and resources in attracting players, in helping grow the community,” says Beauty.

Already, many of us are seeing a change for the better, a small step in the right direction as more effort is being poured into giving these sports and the athletes that come with it, a shot.

“I do see some progress being made,” says Saif. “Our university athletics club is actively trying to allocate better resources into organising more tournaments. It’s a start. There’s still a long way to go.”

Dola agrees, remembering her early days as a cyclist. “I was the only one there. With no other women to participate against, I competed against the men. Now, there are over a hundred female cyclists and counting. It tells us we’re on our way.”

In the end, each and every one of these athletes remained rooted in their position and their unwavering love and respect for their sports.

“Passion and willpower are the only things you need,” Dola asserts. “You need nothing else but yourself to spread the love for the sport. Keep participating and don’t let these obstacles stand in your way.”

We have our fair share of challenges and setbacks, but what keeps us going is our passion for the game. We have no other motivation or inclination other than our love for it. As do all other athletes, without a doubt, no matter the sport.

Being an athlete is so much more than just playing a game. It’s about discipline, passion, dedication and an unspoken respect for all kinds of sports and athletes.

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





ECHOES BY
ASRAR CHOWDHURY

Do You Know the Meaning of Friendship?

ASRAR CHOWDHURY

I
Muhammad Ali was spot-on when he said, "Friendship is the hardest thing in the world to explain". Because friendship is a personal experience.

Each experience will be different from the other. Each person has their own version of why their friendship lasted to become a diamond, or dissolved like salt in water.

Even though friendship is "so easy to look at, so hard to define" like in Dylan's "Sara", the song he wrote for his first wife, people have been trying to find an answer to the meaning of friendship. It's easier said than done, though.

II
Friendship starts by chance – at any place, at any point of life. Two like-minded people meet. One looks at the other and goes, "What? You too? I thought I was the only one."

Once a friendship kicks off, it's spring time. The friends get to know each other. They share and care, and form a bond of trust, the fabric of a successful friendship.

But then, trust has multiple dimensions. This complicates things. Trust has to be mutual and transparent. It has to be nurtured over time. If broken, it's one of



the two who has to make the first move to mend, and the other has to tango to make ends meet. Trust can be put to the test, though.

Spring only comes once a year. The skies could be cloudy at other times; there could be rains and storms, or even snow. The sun could become so hot that the earth will start to crack. There could be an earthquake, tsunami, or a cyclone. Harsh weather always tests friendship. Harsh weather also unravels hidden faces of friends. These faces could be fantabulous. They could

also be dangerous.

The next element of a good friendship in testing times is respect. If the two friends have grown mutual respect for each other over time, chances are high, they will accept each other in spite of all the limitations of the other.

III
The friendship between the Rolling Stones' Mick Jagger and Keith Richards is unique. The two first met when they were seven, at primary school in Dartford, Kent. They were separated in 1954 when Jagger's

family moved out. They met again on October 17, 1961 at Dartford Railway Station. Jagger was carrying LPs of Chuck Berry and Muddy Waters. Richards told himself, "What? You too?" Thus began one of the longest lasting friendships in musical history.

The two have gone through times when it was evident it's the end of the Rolling Stones. And yet, over time, they survived because they had mutual trust and respect for each other.

Viewing friendships with a little bit of pessimism is good. The reality is, no long-lasting friendship, like Jagger and Richards, has ever been perfect. Arguing and fighting are parts of friendship, just like sharing and caring.

However, if two friends have grown mutual trust and respect for each other, they will forgive and forget and start afresh.

Quoting CS Lewis again, "Friendship, ...has no survival value, rather it is one of those things that give value to survival."

And again, Muhammad Ali said, "If you haven't learned the meaning of friendship, you really haven't learned anything."

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

How Not to Prep for Exams

NUZHAT HASSAN CHOWDHURY

The cityscape is painted golden with sunshine, the weather is divine and your favourite restaurant is calling your name. But you cannot go out and enjoy this beautiful day because you have an exam coming up.

We've all been there, trying to live life to the fullest but being held back by our academic obligations. Here you go – some pro tips on how *not* to use the limited time you have to prep for your exams.

DON'T PROCRASTINATE

Procrastination is often a result of the fear of failure, which is common among perfectionists.

Remind yourself that you have written countless gruelling exams over the course of your life and ask yourself, if you could overcome all of those, why would this one be any different? Additionally, pretend you're "too cool for school" and actually don't care about grades to trick your brain into forgetting about your crippling fear of failure. No harm in trying, right?

DON'T PANIC

The key is to worry just the right amount, enough to motivate you to be productive but not so much so that it'll terrify and convince you to give up before even trying. You're already offering your educa-

tional institution your (or your parents') hard earned money, don't offer it your sanity too. No need to feed its ego.

DON'T OVERTHINK

Make sure to leave your worries at the study table before calling it a night. Dwelling over the possible outcome of your exams can disrupt your sleep cycle due to the anxiety, negatively impacting the next day's productivity.

Your educational institution has likely given you hair fall, back pain and a quarter-life crisis; don't let it give you sleepless nights as well. Besides, can you imagine letting something live in your mind rent-free? In this economy? Yikes.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO VENT

Avoid bottling up your feelings. Confiding in a confidante about what's bothering you can help put your mind at ease, thereby improving focus.

Turn to a friend who's willing to listen (without imposing, of course). Encourage them to vent about their own struggles



too, and turn the conversation into a therapy session in which neither party offers or receives sound advice (or money) on how to deal with the situation at hand.

This may sound fruitless, but it could provide some much-needed solace during such trying times.

DON'T GIVE UP

If all else fails and you end up not being able to study the entire syllabus within

the deadline, use the weapon of bewilderment. When writing the exam, make up answers that are so bizarre that even the professor starts questioning the legitimacy of their own knowledge.

Write something so profound yet so baffling that your professor has no choice but to spare you some points in recognition of your indestructible will to pass the course.

Most importantly, don't forget to be kind to yourself. Regardless of the outcome of your exam, life will go on. If the outcome is favourable, be proud and pat yourself on the back. If not, I suggest jamming to "Nobody's Perfect" by Hannah Montana, guilt-free.

Good luck!

Nuzhat enjoys baking but simply cannot find the required ingredients. Tell her about your favourite baked goods at nuzhatchowdhury07@gmail.com



VITRIOL

SARAH WASIFA

There it is. There it is again. The only bar of soap dunked in the sink.

How repulsive.

(Then again, what soap washes out guilt?)

Sir? There's only ten minutes left for the hearing.

Sir?

The courtroom is dark. I wonder why everyone is late. Papers, papers – oh they're here. Why do I worry? I'm prepared to lose.

(I need to lose.)

There is a child sitting in the jury. Brows furrowed; he meticulously peels the webs from between the slices.

Maybe they're selling them outside the court. I should get some for home.

"Are they sour?"

He nods. "Would you like some?"

(No.)

I see his shoes. Mismatched. I saw them last month on the benches. Too small to know what's exactly wrong beyond the fact that he had thrown fistfuls of dirt into a grave.

(Apparently a five-year-old is a good candidate for the picture below a red headline.)

Do you miss your father? Someone had pushed a camera to his face after the hearing was over.

My father's working overtime. He'll be back soon.

"Do you know where my father is?"

I feel the guilt seep back into my hands. What do I tell him? A five-year-old won't know manslaughter from murder, much less the evil I've dipped my fingers into.

Maybe I'll–

"Did you kill him?"

Sir?

"The court is in session. We call case–"

There are people on the pews now.

Faces I don't know, and a bereaved family. Mismatched shoes on the floor, and I'm the defendant. The three teenagers beside me look like death, eyes swollen with apathy.

Guilty.

"Will the defendant–"

The people are gone.

"Am I dead? Drugged?"

The child pulls out a gavel from out of seemingly thin air.

"Dead, no. But it's never too early to start your trial."

It is all sorts of impossible.

"I did not kill your father, kid."

"Why do you keep washing your hands?"

Nerves aren't welcome in my line of work. Yet my hands are scaly from the vitriol of cheap soap and isopropyl alcohol.

You can't be less guilty than the ones you're defending.

"I'm not guilty."

The people are back. The widow, the teenagers, the jury.

"The defendants plead not guilty–"

The people are gone.

"The defendant pleads not guilty! A trial is fair in this court, and we will... you will present your defence."

It is dizzying, the mirage of faces gnawing at my eyes. I'm the mortar, I'm the pestle, folding the guilt smaller and smaller still until it fits into a single bullet hole.

The widow is back.

"1st January 2016. A body was found near the lake, with a single wound. Time of death could be estimated to be 12 hours prior. No witnesses, and the sound covered by the fireworks from the party next door. The accused, three teenagers, were last seen in the vicinity before midnight. Eyes high off of some resemblance of store-bought freedom. The victim, a father of one, left this apartment at 11, having forgotten his kid's birthday, hoping to find a cake."

Guilt is itchy at best, chronic at worst.

I heard about the case before seeing the file. Passed around till the price rose. Until someone insatiable took up and waded through the wake of their morality.

(I took it to lose.)

There was a text on my phone. Before the first hearing. A picture of my son's school. From an unknown number.

"I can see the blood on your hands, sir. Why did my father die?"

Fists balled up in my robe, there's a man begging me to save him. He is alive. His eyes are not.

Why did I die?

When you pull the trigger, is it the bullet that kills?

Is it the finger?

Is it who that finger belongs to?

Or is it the shroud that protects them?

Criminals come in all forms. The worst come in the guise of goodness, with promises of justice. The lock-pickers; the sweet numbers, lack of circumstantial evidence, and the grind of mechanisms as the lock breaks.

I'm sorry.

I must've fallen asleep on the chair again. My palms are hurting.

Is he resting in peace?

"Sir? Ma'am called. You had to pick up a cake?"

Oh.

I reach home safely with a cake. I wonder how many do.

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

SHOUT Quiz: Find Your Inner Olympian

SHADMAN MUHTADI

The 2020 Tokyo Olympics are almost over. But wait, out of the 339 events, do you know which one is *your* calling?

Find out based on your answers to this short quiz! Ready, set, go!

1. *It's the weekend, and you've managed some free hours for yourself. How are you planning to spend it?*

- Going to the gym. Fitness is my passion!
- Sleep isn't harming anyone.
- Learning new life skills is my jam.
- It's party-all-day time!

2. *It's been a busy day and you're happy to make it home, starving. In a normal world, what would you do?*

- Visit my favourite restaurant and grab that pasta dish.
- Just order something online and be done with it.
- Go to the kitchen and cook a meal.
- Invite friends over, order a pizza, and tell them I'm up for a feast!

3. *Which sports from your school days do you recall the most?*

- I used to run for miles!
- Nobody could beat me in board games.
- Water is life. I was into swimming.
- Nothing specific. Any games I played with my buddies.



4. *It's movie night, on Netflix. Which of the following are you going to pick?*

- Some heart-pounding action film.
- Only a good rom-com can fix my mood.
- Something suspenseful because I can hold my nerves.
- The story of three college mates set out for an epic adventure.

5. *Which of the following pets resembles you the most?*

- Dogs. They're so active and lively all the time.
- Cats. I like how comfortable they feel around me.
- Parrots. They talk. Can pets get any

cooler?

- Fish. An aquarium can fit so many of them.

6. *You got an unexpected week-off. Where are you headed?*

- The mountains, because I want to reach newer heights.
- The beach, because sunsets are amazing.
- Places with history, and therefore, trivia.
- Reach out to colleagues and head towards the nearest resort.

Congratulations, you're through! Time to match your responses with the final result.

If you picked mostly a's, you are up for challenges all day, every day! You never back down no matter how difficult life gets. For courageous souls like you, hurdles, sport climbing, and weightlifting are some appealing Olympic events.

If you picked mostly b's, you're less likely to get into anything physically challenging. You've found a comfort zone in working smart without breaking a sweat. You, the intelligent, would excel in archery, shooting, golfing, skateboarding, and fencing – events that require tremendous focus and mental fortitude.

If you picked mostly c's, the devil is in the details for you. You thrive on working with specifications and excel in them. You are capable of technically outclassing most of your opponents, too. Figure skating, diving, and rhythmic gymnastics can be your hunting ground in the Olympics.

If you picked mostly d's, you're the life of the party. And teamwork is your modus operandi. You can shoot your shot in the team events like artistic swimming, basketball, rugby, volleyball, rowing, and water polo. You can definitely go for the doubles events as well.

Go for gold!

Shadman Muhtadi got stuck in the '80s with a faulty time machine. Send him reality checks, book suggestions, playlists, and escape routes at shadman100712@gmail.com

How to Draw a Typical Bangladeshi Village Scenery

HASIB UR RASHID IFTI

Arts and Crafts is a real academic subject under the national curriculum now, so it's time you took drawing a typical village scenery seriously.

As the local record holder of the "highest numbers of *gram er drisho* drawn per hour", I thought I could be the right person to give you a few simple tips on how to draw the perfect Bangladeshi village scenery.

THE RIVER

The river has to go through the middle of the village, providing sufficient water supply to the only two families living on either side of it.

The river typically contains two boats, one of which is sailing and the other one is comfortably docked near the bank. There are two people on the sailing boat -- the boatman with the oar, and his partner sitting there doing absolutely nothing. Make sure both of them are smiling. There should be three fishes in the river, visible, all of them smiling.

THE SUN

Draw four mountains in front of the sky and shove the sun somewhere between mountain number two and three. Draw a few straight lines popping out of the sun to prove once and for all that light travels in straight lines. However, make sure the rays are alternatively long and short.

Now on to the most important aspect of the river: the reflection of the sun. No

matter how primitive the rest of your painting looks, this particular portion is going to make you fall for the beautiful delusion that you too can draw.

Tilt your pencil a tad bit and draw thick continuous lines right under the sun. Once you're done breaking your pencil in the process, take a step back and appreciate the most beautiful sun ever drawn. You're welcome.

THE HORIZON

To make the sky beautiful, add a few pieces of perfectly white clouds here and there and a plane in the middle of nowhere (maybe even a UFO if you want to let your inner Bob Ross out).

Get creative with the birds. Your choices are V-shaped birds or tick-shaped birds. Who knows how those tick-shaped birds fly defying the laws of physics with one of their wings being shorter than the other? But they do.

THE HOUSE

Your typical house should have two windows on either side of a door, and steps in front of the door. Though it's a humble thatched-roof house with one banana tree in the back, it has its own separate road leading from the river bank straight to its doorstep. The width of the meandering road must be exactly equal to the width of the door.

THE PEOPLE

There should be children beside the perfect yellow haystack; a boy and a girl. The girl



ILLUSTRATION: AYRA AREEBA ABID

in her red frock and perfectly puffed hair is skipping rope as the boy stares and smiles at her, creepily. No matter how many characters you draw, make sure all of them are smiling as wide as possible based on your flawed assumption that Bangladeshi villages are utopias where people have no real problems.

Remember, whoever said art is subjective didn't have to deal with Arts and Crafts as a subject.

Hasib Ur Rashid Ifti reads books, idolizes Osamu Dazai and plans to check his email any day now. Send him book suggestions at hasibur-rashidifti@gmail.com