



PHOTO: BAATIGHAR DHAKA

What it's like to work at a bookshop

SHIMIN MUSHSHARAT

When my favourite bookshop in Dhaka asked me to join their team last year, I said yes in a heartbeat.

It took me a good few weeks to believe that my job was to find books for readers of all tastes. The happy readers, the melancholic ones, the productive readers, and the indecisive ones. Young readers, grumpy readers, and scary readers.

Each day, as I walked into the bookshop, I inhaled the smell of books – old and new. For the first time in 24 years, I felt a sense of belonging. Here, at a bookshop.

I stood in front of the shelves and perused through them — fiction, essays, art, architecture, film, self-help, and a personal favourite, new releases. I knew exactly who would love to read each book I looked at.

One day, I found a collection of short stories. Allow me to rephrase, the collection of short stories found me. It was old and precious. I took a picture of the book, held it close, and whispered, "Go make someone happy." A few minutes after I posted the photo, an order was placed for the book.

Ordinary magic is the best kind of magic, I realised.

I met a little boy whose mother was looking for the Bangla translation of *Living to Tell the Tale*. I happened to know exactly where it was, since the book happened to be one of my favourites. The shade of red from the cover was that of the boy's glasses. He asked if the person on the cover was Einstein. I smiled

and introduced him to Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Unimpressed, not knowing the magic this man was capable, the boy asked, "Who's that?"

One such morning, I met my favourite author in the cafe corner. Casually, and miraculously. I told him how much I loved his work. It did not even occur to me to ask for an autograph.

One of the fellow librarians started to call the place where I take photos my "studio". The name stuck. When I lost my favourite book, and therefore my heart, the bookshop held me together. And when I received an autographed copy of that same book as a gift, the broken heart began to heal.

I have lived and breathed stories since I was about six years old. Books have always been my saviour and my sanctuary. I was that child who was found reading in a corner at family functions, the friend who always had a book in her backpack, and the date who reads on rickshaws because she needs to know what happens next.

So, from mastering the art of carrying as many books as my hands can hold, dealing with papercuts regularly, getting new releases delivered to my desk fresh off the press to having the occasional impromptu conversations with readers browsing the shelves, working at a bookstore has been the most gratifying experience I have ever had.

Shimin reads everything she can find, talks to cats, and writes a lot of letters. Send her a book at shim.mush@gmail.com

Going out to play after a long time

TAMJIDUL HOQUE

For most young people, the only form of exercise usually comes from going out to play with friends as they often fail to save time for physical workout due to the nature of their hectic schedules. Thanks to the pandemic though, even that opportunity had been lost.

However, with the restrictions slowly easing up, many of us have started to go out and play more.

As I joyfully return to the field to play football after months, I was taken aback by how much I was struggling to keep playing.

As soon as I stepped on the pitch, I felt unprepared. I could feel a tight feeling of breathlessness in my chest after just one sprint. I still carried on.

Soon, my heart started beating rapidly, barely keeping up with the body's demands. My stamina soon started to run out and fatigue set in. Muscles began to ache, and any kind of movement became painful. Ultimately, I had to give up.

Much to my surprise, the effects didn't end there. The pain and the tiredness remained for days. I even lost the physical and mental energy to go about my daily activities. The question that immediately crossed my mind, and maybe many others like me was, "How do I change this?"

An effective but often ignored way to deal with this is to do warm-up exercises before one starts playing. While going out to play with friends, we almost never think about this, whereas, professionals always warm up before training or playing to get their bodies ready for the game, and avoid potential injuries.

One of the more obvious things we could do is play more. The change in one's fitness level is not going to happen overnight. Many of us get out to play once and then forget about playing again for a while. Thus, we never build up the stamina that is required to play. As a result, we keep struggling whenever we return to the field.

To reduce long term discomfort caused from playing, it's very effective to take a short nap after a game as your body releases growth hormones to repair your muscles and reduces overall fatigue.

A lesser-known yet important step for a quick recovery process is to jump into a cold shower after returning home after a game. Cold showers help remove the lactic acid that gets stored up in the muscles and cause pain, and may also reduce inflammation of the muscles.

With the new variants on the rise, we may have to resort to staying inside more. However, we can hope to return to the field regularly once things are better, and we shouldn't be discouraged by the struggle we face while playing. Instead, we could maybe put in a little more effort and planning into playing for the sake of better health and good times.

Tamjidul Hoque loves talking about football and watching anime. You can find him on twitter at twitter.com/TamjidulH24



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