

THE DEFINITIVE  
**YOUTH**  
MAGAZINE  
**SHOUT**

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MUST TOYS BE GENDERED?

PG 3

FOR THE LOVE OF STREET  
CRICKET

PG 4



# WHY YOU SHOULD GO TO THERAPY



ILLUSTRATION: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR



# EDITORIAL

Making lists is probably one of my favourite things to do, I can do it in my sleep. I've spent many hours filling up pages in my planner, detangling the knots I've made in my brain trying to figure out how I can fit in over twenty hours of work in a few hours.

However, the one list I've never thought to make was a bucket list. Be it due to its uncertain nature or my overall sense of cynicism, bucket lists never appealed to me too much.

I got to ride in a helicopter recently. I even got to sit next to the pilot, and look at my city, along with a few others, from five hundred feet above the ground. And I'll tell you what I told everyone who asked me, it truly is better than you can imagine.

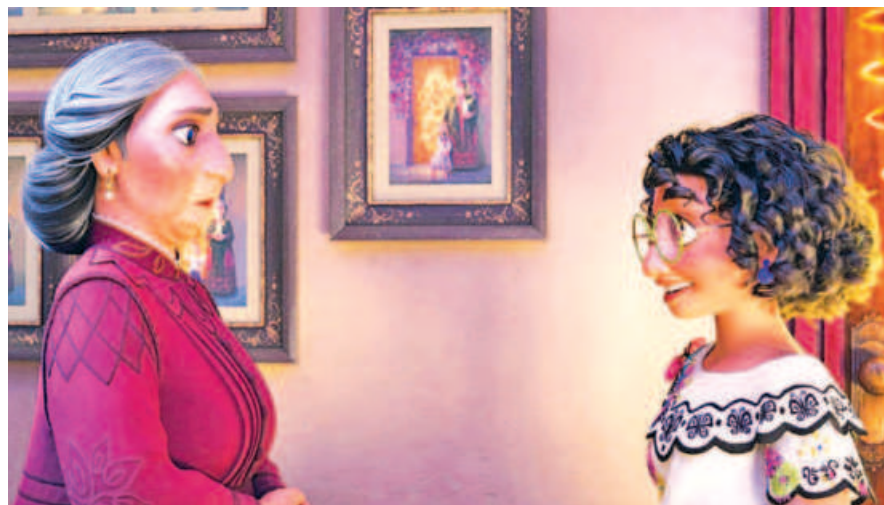
We saw flocks of white birds, possibly pigeons, fly together in perfect harmony. We chased the shadow of the helicopter and giggled like little kids when a shift in altitude gave us a tingly feeling in our gut. It was wonderful, and it made me think that maybe making a bucket list wouldn't be the worst.

-- Syeda Afrin Tarannum, Sub-editor, SHOUT



## PLAYWATCH

### MOVIE



## Exploring generational trauma and familial expectations in Disney's *Encanto*

**SARA KABIR**

Underneath the bright and cheerful surface of the narrative of Disney's latest musical, *Encanto*, lies a darker truth about the after-effects of the Colombian civil war, generational trauma, and the heavy burden of familial expectations.

*Encanto* opens with Mirabel, the empathic yet somewhat awkward main character, introducing her magical family known as the Madrigals. Surrounded by family members who can do everything from conjuring flowers and snowstorms to even healing people with their food, Mirabel feels out of touch and often left out. Perhaps because of Mirabel's close-yet-far proximity to her family, it's no surprise that she sees the growing cracks in her family's foundation – metaphorical and literal – and attempts to save them from it.

Amid the bright colours and toe-tapping musical numbers, the movie features Disney's first all Latinx cast, capturing the complicated intergenerational misunderstandings and staggering weight of expectations resulting in trauma. Each Madrigal is given a responsibility that they are expected to uphold at all costs, even their mental health. We see the Madrigals suffer from hypervigilance, insecurity, social anxiety, low self-esteem and self-confidence, depression, and more.

Having suffered the trauma of losing her husband and her home as a young mother due to civil unrest, the family's matriarch, known to all as Abuela, becomes trapped in the idea of upholding their place in society. She fears the loss of her place and home in society otherwise. She loses sight of her family's happiness and fails to realise that they are human

beings who want to change and explore new possibilities as they grow.

As a result, Abuela now has exceedingly high expectations for her family. Anything out of the norm, like Isabella and Luisa doing anything out of their predetermined roles, sets her off. Her trauma results in her being short-sighted and retreating into what she knows to be true, like a cocoon.

Abuela remains in denial of bringing her house down until Mirabel opens her eyes to it. It is only when Mirabel breaks this cycle of abuse and helps each family member accept themselves for who they are that we see the Madrigals begin their life anew.

While the story is inspired by and based on the Latinx experience, we can't help but feel that some parts of the story ring true for South Asians. We, too, have often faced the burden of living up to our family's expectations, the burnout that results from being a former gifted child, and proving our worth by being of service to others.

*Encanto*'s story is one we can relate to and understand on a personal level. It shows the struggles of older siblings having to bear the family's burden until they feel like they will crack under pressure, and gifted siblings being put on a pedestal they cannot deviate from. It shows the struggles of the weirdos, the oddballs, the misunderstood black sheep of the family, and the struggles of those that are left out.

Magical and fantastical, but at its core, *Encanto* is a story of a family trying to support each other and make their own place in the world – one we can all connect with and relate to. *Encanto* is a story of letting go of the past to discover one's true potential. It is a story of belonging.

### TITLE OF YOUR MIXTAPE



**A**

The Scientist  
Coldplay

Lights Are On  
Tom Rosenthal

All I Want (Part 1)  
Kodakone

Where's My Love  
SYML

**B**

How  
Clairo

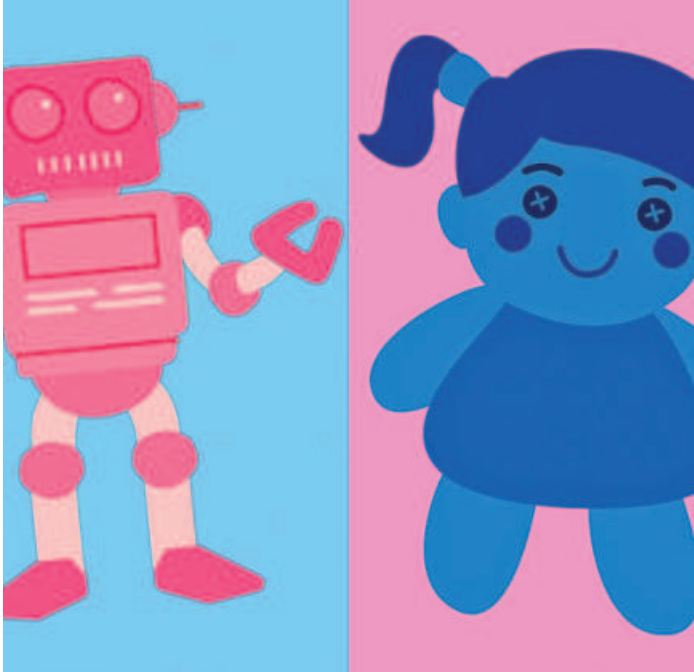
Tongue Tied  
Grouplove

Time Is Running Out  
Muse

Heavy  
Linkin Park

Email us at [shoutds@gmail.com](mailto:shoutds@gmail.com)  
with feedback, comments, and reader  
submissions within 500 words.



**OPINION**

# Must toys be gendered?

**AYRA AREEBA ABID**

Growing up, most children and parents have the notion that pink is for girls and blue is for boys. The same can be said for the toys that are marketed towards children and their parents.

The way that the portrayal of specific cartoons can be drastically different, like Barbie versus Ben 10, toys are also responsible for overall gender segregation and, to a certain extent, the promotion of sexism.

An extremely popular brand of chocolate chooses to have two separate kinds of containers, a pink one for girls and a blue for boys. Inside, you'll find different types of toys for each of the two sexes.

Toys centred towards boys are notorious for being more traditionally "masculine", in the sense that they are more action-centric. Building blocks, cars, action figures, and even weapons are promoted for boys. While girls are expected to play with dolls, kitchen utensils, and play dress-up among others.

The toy shops in Dhaka, like most toy shops around the world, keep their toys separated at different aisles. One side is entirely bright pink, exuding a gentle, sweet, and calm aura. The other side meant for boys seemed more active, and gave a general vibe of being tough.

This reinforces the stereotype further that males have more strength, are expected to be braver and more outgoing. While females are expected to be more ladylike, reserved, and caring.

Apart from distinctive colours, there are also products displaying floral prints meant to portray femininity and its expected qualities, such as vulnerability. While products for boys lean more on darker colours and athletics.

Often, the two sexes will be attracted to the ones that are sort of "assigned" to them by societal norms. This particular mindset can follow them well throughout their lives, stretching through milestones. Thus, many people are often stuck in a loop where the gender roles assigned to them dictate their life choices, which in turn strengthen the prevalence of such roles in the first place.

Stereotypes seep in quite early since our childhood, often beginning with the toys we are given and choose to play with. Labelling will only continue to make idea of segregation more concrete and it is irrational to be utterly blind to preference due to societal norms and the urge to follow them.

In order to gradually end this mindset, it is highly imperative to pay attention when children close to us get to the age to play with toys. The idea of segregating toys since childhood and everything relevant should be nipped in the bud, so as not to let it grow and harbour in the minds of children.

Gendered toys have been a common stereotype for ages and it is high time we re-consider such choices.

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

## STRESS CULTURE AT UNIVERSITIES

# Is it time to take a break?

**SABIBA HOSSAIN**

"Once I start going to university, I'll become super active."

This resolution may seem familiar to some of us who rarely participated in activities outside the classroom. We thought university life would be the meaning we were looking for, handing us solutions to our problems on a silver platter. Unfortunately, as we may have soon found out, things don't usually pan out like that.

From being purely focused on academics to taking up ten jobs at a time — the motivation quickly takes an overwhelming turn, leaving us exhausted at the end of the day. Often, we struggle to juggle all the activities on our list. At some point, we begin to question our enthusiasm for such an experience.

"I didn't get much chance to participate in extracurricular activities at high school. So, I wanted to have eclectic experiences at University," says Nibedita Paul, a freshman in Military Institute of Science Technology.

However, she experienced burnout trying to balance exams and activities. "When I tried to engage myself in activities, I struggled with studies. It was really difficult," she adds.

At the same time, the presence of hustle culture at institutions make us feel as if our worth is singularly tied to the work we do, thus making it impossible to leave jobs that may exhaust us.

"I'm tutoring four students, volunteering in an organisation in order to learn photography, videog-

raphy and editing among other skills," says Mehrin Tazin, a freshman at IBA, University of Dhaka.

"However, I now understand that I've taken too many things in my hand without realizing."

She adds, "I haven't stopped doing any of these activities. Instead, I break the task into small pieces."

Even people who were involved with extracurricular activities at school seem to struggle. That may be due to the differing nature of activities we do at school and university. Participating in extra-curricular activities at universities is often especially difficult due to the added pressure of preparing for jobs while also maintaining a good CGPA.

We are living in a time when everyone is an overachiever. Those who focused on academics at school and dreamt of being an overachiever who simply did more with their time, often find themselves exhausted by this ordeal. Thus, it is important to take a break sometimes.

Taking a break from activities doesn't mean leaving them forever. One can always come back when they feel ready. It is also important to understand that leaving the things one may have once loved to do, doesn't make them a careless underachiever. Sitting down to watch a movie or completing a reading challenge does not make one lazy. The time has come for us to normalize taking breaks, at least for the ones who are to follow us.

*Sabiba is a Hufflepuff who plans to go into hibernation every winter but never succeeds. Send help at fb.com/Sabibastro*



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA



# Moving to Bangladesh after growing up abroad

NUZHAT HASSAN CHOWDHURY

It's not easy to uproot your life from one country and start calling a completely different place "home". The feeling that you don't belong usually comes with the culture shock as a package deal.

I grew up in Saudi Arabia and moved to Bangladesh only a few years ago. I had to leave behind my closest friends, and the environment I was so familiar with, to shift to a place I barely knew. Soon after my arrival, I had a bone to pick with restaurants that called any

random wrap a shawarma, and any rice with orange food colouring kabsa.

Growing up abroad also meant missing out on growing up with extended family members. I never really had the chance to become friends with any of my cousins, or celebrate festivals with them.

Even now, we are practically strangers. Many times, when speaking in Bangla, I have been told that I mispronounce certain words. This puts me in a minor existential crisis, having realised I'd been saying these words wrong for about 20 years. However, I soon understood that wrongly speaking a language would be the least of my worries.

One of the first challenges I faced after moving to Dhaka was the need to get used to the chaos. I was accustomed to a quieter life back in Al Jubail, Saudi Arabia.

Here, no matter where I go, I always feel like there are too many people. I start to feel out of place and soon realise that perhaps I am too soft to survive this city. I stopped being as soft-spoken as I used to be when I realised that that trait has little to no value here.

My safety concerns have increased drastically since moving. I still have to give myself a pep talk before crossing the roads and feel the need to stay on guard every second I spend outdoors. Although it is not easy for women in Saudi Arabia either, I feel it's significantly more difficult in Bangladesh due to the additional challenges.

On the upside, I've met wonderful people during my time here. I've made new friends, learned new

things, and I have a better understanding of the culture in Bangladesh now.

Settling into a new country, learning new norms and adapting accordingly was a difficult process, one that often confused and surprised me. There are things about my previous home that I'll always miss, and the people I grew up with there will forever have a special place in my heart.

For now, I'll cherish my old memories and focus on making new ones at my new home.

*Nuzhat zones out every ten minutes. Tell her to snap out of it at nuzhatchowdhury07@gmail.com*



# For the love of street cricket

*It was a busy, cold Dhaka afternoon at the height of January winter. But this meant little to our protagonists in their pocket-sized Melbourne Cricket Ground.*



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

SYED TAMJID TAZWAR

Taped-over tennis balls, slippers that encompassed imaginary cricket stumps, and a fervour to imitate their favourite cricketing figure. Two bats; the one on the crease clearly better than the other. The younger kid who is just there to field; the slightly older kid who is doing everything. I realised I wasn't just witnessing a one-off phenomenon, but a timeless image.

Dhaka, as a city, is in perpetual love with cricket. The extravagance of the Premier League or glamour of the UCL can't seem to reach the hearts of the ordinary, as much as cricket can. Be it an ordinary match against Zimbabwe, a World Cup closing ceremony, or even an idle noon in BPL, the city's extended love affair for cricket comes at a full display with dozens gathering in front of every electronic store and tong with a TV. This love affair extends to this city's many alleyways and roads with space enough to accommodate a cricket pitch.

Kids taking up a significant portion of the street to play cricket may seem like an annoyance. Surely, they must be causing trouble for every unfortunate passer-by or vehicle that chooses to go that way.

But the effortless coordination in which everyone playing moves around to make way whenever someone comes by makes up for the disruption. Even the rules for street cricket are set in a way that helps the match blend in with its surroundings. Play too recklessly, and you are out. Break someone's window, and you have to pay a fine.

No point in lifting the ball off the ground, as it won't score you some extra points. The ball gets lost, and you have to pay from your own pocket. In many cases, even pace bowling is not allowed due to its risky nature.

Growing up, I have had my fair share of experiences playing street cricket. Sadly, I never became good at it. If there is a way to complete an innings, misplaying every shot and doing everything wrong, I have probably done it. I even broke my nose, moving around carelessly around a wannabe Gilchrist's line of sight.

Regardless, I still remember playing in the streets so fondly. The endless chattering about no balls, the urge to finish a match before Maghrib seems all the more vivid now.

The reason why street cricket is so popular seems pretty obvious. There aren't enough suitable playing grounds. But throughout the years, street cricket established itself as something more than just a replacement for real cricket.

As the skyline of the city slowly kept rising and the area dedicated to sports and amusement kept decreasing, people's love for cricket didn't stop. As a result, street cricket kept on rising in popularity more and more in the last few decades.

Street cricket has slowly become a testament to this city's love for cricket.

*Syed Tamjid Tazwar is terrible at cricket. Send him batting tips at syedtaazwartamjid@gmail.com*

# WHY YOU SHOULD GO TO THERAPY

AMRIN TASNIM RAFA

*What do you need therapy for? You have probably started looking for a "justified" answer to this question, racking your brain for a strong valid reason that will seem viable enough, or does not sound like an excuse.*

Therapy, or any sort of help for mental health issues, may be long neglected concept in Bangladesh. But the need for it is long overdue.

Through pop culture or the media, pretty much every single one of us young people has come across the idea of therapy, and many of us have considered giving it a shot. However, a regrettable majority out of this group of people have not been able to show up to receive any kind of help.

For young people living at home, therapy is not accessible without your parents supporting you, or at least knowing about it. The concept of mental health is approached differently by us, the young generation, and our parents and grandparents, the older generations.

"One big struggle I face is actually gathering the energy to go up to my parents and tell them that I would like to try therapy since they will most likely take it as a personal insult. My parents have a certain reluctance to not only take me to therapy but even acknowledge its existence," shares Zuhayer Khan, a grade 11 student at Scholastica, on why he had never been to therapy despite considering it.

"If I do mention the desire of therapy to them, I would be met with a tedious process that may end in me getting therapy. But I do not feel going through all that would be worth it."

Brac University student Nusrat Chowdhury\* thinks that the hectic schedules of young people are another prominent barrier to receiving therapy.

"When you need to go to therapy sessions regularly, oftentimes your appointments may clash with class or work. And due to our mindset around mental health and how it is not yet considered a valid reasoning we can give to our teachers and employers, a lot of people feel guilty about missing work and let go of therapy altogether," she says.

Given that many young people feel the need to go to therapy because they feel anxious and overwhelmed due to their workload, it is important to take some time out of work to care for their mental health, otherwise, it often deteriorates more over time and jeopardises the work they were worried about to begin with.

Naomi Sharif, an HSC graduate from Viqarunnisa Noon School & College, shares how therapy turned out to be a very rewarding initiative for her. She explains, "I was suffering from hopelessness and weight loss throughout 2020. I missed classes and the recordings kept piling up. Eight months in, my best friend pushed me to go see a professional and get myself assessed. I tend to avoid talking about my feelings, but I'm glad I went to therapy.



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

The first thing I told myself after that was that I was not at fault for my months of inefficiency."

Soon, Naomi started considering therapy sessions and caring for her mental health as a lifestyle change, and her wellbeing improved considerably. She considers any progress to be beneficial, however small it may be, and practices setting small realistic goals for herself.

Naomi and her friend eventually founded the mental health awareness organisation Mindspace, which recently launched "Vent by Mindspace", a psychological help hotline service supervised by professionals.



Even if we do not need help ourselves, Naomi's story tells us the importance of being informed about symptoms of illness so we can detect them in our close ones. A small nudge on our part, encouraging our friends to go see a professional, can go a long way in improving the quality of their lives.

Furthermore, the thought of the costs is something that keeps a lot of people from considering therapy, and according to Dr Sayedul Ashraf Kushal, lead psychiatrist and managing director of Lifespring, we often consider caring for our mental health to be a luxury, even though conse-

quences of untreated mental illness is lifelong.

"For common mental illnesses that afflict the youth, such as depression and anxiety disorders, if you complete the suitable course of treatment alongside actively working towards getting better, the process will not be very lengthy, and therefore not require you to bear its costs for very long. If finances are a barrier, consider public hospitals such as Dhaka Medical College Hospital, which provide generally affordable mental health services, relative to private hospitals or organisations," comments Dr Kushal.

Asked about his professional opinion on how parents and their children should approach the idea of therapy, he adds, "When your child asks for help, never tell them that you have also passed the stage of life they are at, because you have not. The world was not as globalised or fast-paced before. Very young kids are exposed to things they are not prepared for, are not old enough for, and there is little we can do about it."

Currently, one in five people are neurodivergent, he mentions. None of them are 'crazy' or 'insane'. The treatment of mental illness is somewhat similar to improving the circumstances the child is living in, relative to before. As parents, there is no need to take personal offense when the children require help.

On how to approach therapy to benefit most from it, Dr. Kushal says, "As a patient, for therapy to work, a bit of effort and willpower is required on your part."

Therapy is an option worth considering; an option worth the time and effort it would take for giving it a shot. Do not go in expecting to find solutions overnight, however, it does empower you to take steps to go out there and seek the help.

So, do you need therapy? There is no need for an answer. You can go to therapy for no particular reason at all. Life, with all its uncertainties and complications, is enough.

Even if you do not think you have a mental illness but have been grappling with uncertainty for long enough for it to be daunting, going into therapy can present you with fresh new perspectives on tired old problems.

These are difficult times, it is not unusual to struggle. We have been stuck in our houses long enough for it to be forgivable to get stuck in our minds.

*\*Name has been changed upon request*

*Amrin Tasnim Rafa is always confused, it's literally her dominant personality trait. This is maybe her email, she can't be sure: amrinrafa@gmail.com*





# Modern-day Davids and Goliaths on the race track

**EAHSAN ABEDIN**

Formula One. The most prestigious motorsport in the world. Going 160 kilometres faster than planes taking off, it's the world's top car manufacturers (and Red Bull) fighting on the most glamorous circuits to see who built the best race car in the world.

Formula One is the highest class of international car racing where 10 teams, with two drivers each, race around the world to claim the championship. The drivers face off in potentially life-threatening conditions, sporting open-wheel single-seater cars, inches away from each other. And being an F1 driver comes with its own set of risks as it's deemed one of the most dangerous and physically intensive jobs out there.

Although F1 is not as popular in Bangladesh as other sports, the Bangladeshi populace's interest in racing series has seen significant growth in recent years. As a kid, I'd always seen one driver dominating almost every track of F1. Winning races and championships in style, and setting world records, Lewis Hamilton single-handedly made F1 predictable.

However, with so much that happened last season and after binge-watching F1: Drive to Survive, I got a sneak peek into the sport's true magic and all that goes on behind the scenes.

Like many other sports, F1 has a jaw-breaking intensity and excitement to it. Your favourite driver overtaking another feels like a boundary in cricket; getting a podium makes you feel triumphed — almost as if your team won the El Clasico. But, the adrenaline rush you feel seeing cars zoom past, taking risky turns, making sub-2 second pit stops while they chase time itself is something exclusive to the sport.

There's more to the blood, sweat, and tears drivers put behind to compete on such a level. Their hardship, redemption arcs, and dreams to race for their favourite teams are enthralling. The fierce rivalries, teammate turning on teammate, and new tales of Davids and Goliaths being constantly made on the track — the sport comes with its own set of climaxes as each season unfolds.

Under all that rivalry, though, drivers share compassion and respect. Once in a while, they leave their differences aside and celebrate their mutual love for the sport and, of course, speed.

All of that paired with unpredictable factors costing teams entire races and millions of dollars, will make you bite your nails on race weekends. As teams start to put their faith in new and young drivers, this is the beginning of a whole new era. Your respect for the sport and its drivers only increases with time as you learn its rich history and imagine the unthinkable achieved by legends like Fangio, Senna or Lauda while they gave their lives on every press to the throttle.

Formula One is the pinnacle of motorsport. It has inspired generations of rivalries, and brought generations of people together. It has given us heroes, and also taken them away, and there really is nothing like it.

*Eahsan is unsure if his experiences generated his personality or is it the other way around. Send him help at [eahsanabedin@gmail.com](mailto:eahsanabedin@gmail.com)*

**satire.**

# Watch Hollywood movies with a Bangladeshi CSE student

**HASIB UR RASHID IFTI**

Made-up statistics on the world's most trustworthy site, Facebook, show that 60 percent of CSE students face a common request from their friends: "Can you please hack a Facebook account for me?"

While in the real world a computer engineer would struggle to decide which code to steal from GitHub, Hollywood plays a crucial role in raising unreal expectations from CSE students.

How would a real-life computer engineer deal with Hollywood movie scenarios?

**THE MATRIX**

To begin with, an actual computer engineer wouldn't even respond to Morpheus' invite or follow the white rabbit. Neo's job in the Matrix is pretty stable.

In a country where there are more computer engineers than computers, a 9 to 5 job at a leading software development firm is damn lucrative. Is the red/blue pill thing even a choice? At least in the Matrix, I'm stuck at an underpaid, dead-end job.

Moreover, being a programmer outside the Matrix is pretty tough. I ransacked stack overflow and couldn't find a single code on how to break into the Matrix or simulate cool ammunitions in it. It might come off as a surprise but coding isn't technically GTA Vice City where you type "NUTTERTOOLS" and get unlimited ammo.

**SKYFALL (OR ANY JAMES BOND 007 FILM)**  
Imagine getting employed by a Bond villain after graduation and getting transferred to a creepy, isolated island. You'd have to spend your hours trying to break into one of the world's most highly secure secret agencies and steal their encrypted data.

Furthermore, universities in Bangladesh don't include "How to encrypt your boss' evil plan to end the world and make it look like a cool holograph" course. However, if you can encrypt the plan after 10 years of hard work, a smug-faced spy would almost always decrypt it without any prior knowledge in programming.

**MISSION IMPOSSIBLE: GHOST PROTOCOL**  
Pardon me, but I seem to have missed the course where they teach how to press random buttons to break into Russia's most sophisticated prison to get Tom Cruise out in style. Although, if you press "Enter" very hard in the end, it doesn't matter whatever gibberish you type beforehand. The guy pressed "Enter", he must be doing something right.

In every movie, the IMF ends up getting disavowed. The employers make it very clear that if someone is compromised, they wouldn't take any responsibility. The private sector lacks job security, but spending your life in a gulag for getting a code wrong isn't a price worth paying. All of this for some mere 25,000 bucks a month and yet they won't take anyone below CGPA 3.8! Classic corporate extortion.

In every movie, they end up saving the world at the very last second. In the real world, though, as pressing random buttons isn't an option, a more flexible deadline would be helpful. A reasonable villain should understand the struggles of hacking and consider pressing the doomsday button once I'm done asking my topper friend how to break into the firewall of the world's most high-tech nuclear plant.

*Remind Ifti to be quieter at [hasiburrashidifti@gmail.com](mailto:hasiburrashidifti@gmail.com)*





# Hellgoers

**ZABIR KHAN**

In the dead of the night,  
When all spilled blood turns blue,  
When the moon fails to show itself,  
Where do I find you?

Walking the path of uncertainty,  
To chase those unborn possibilities, impossibilities,  
Wearing your misfit fingers into mine,  
And walking out of the line.

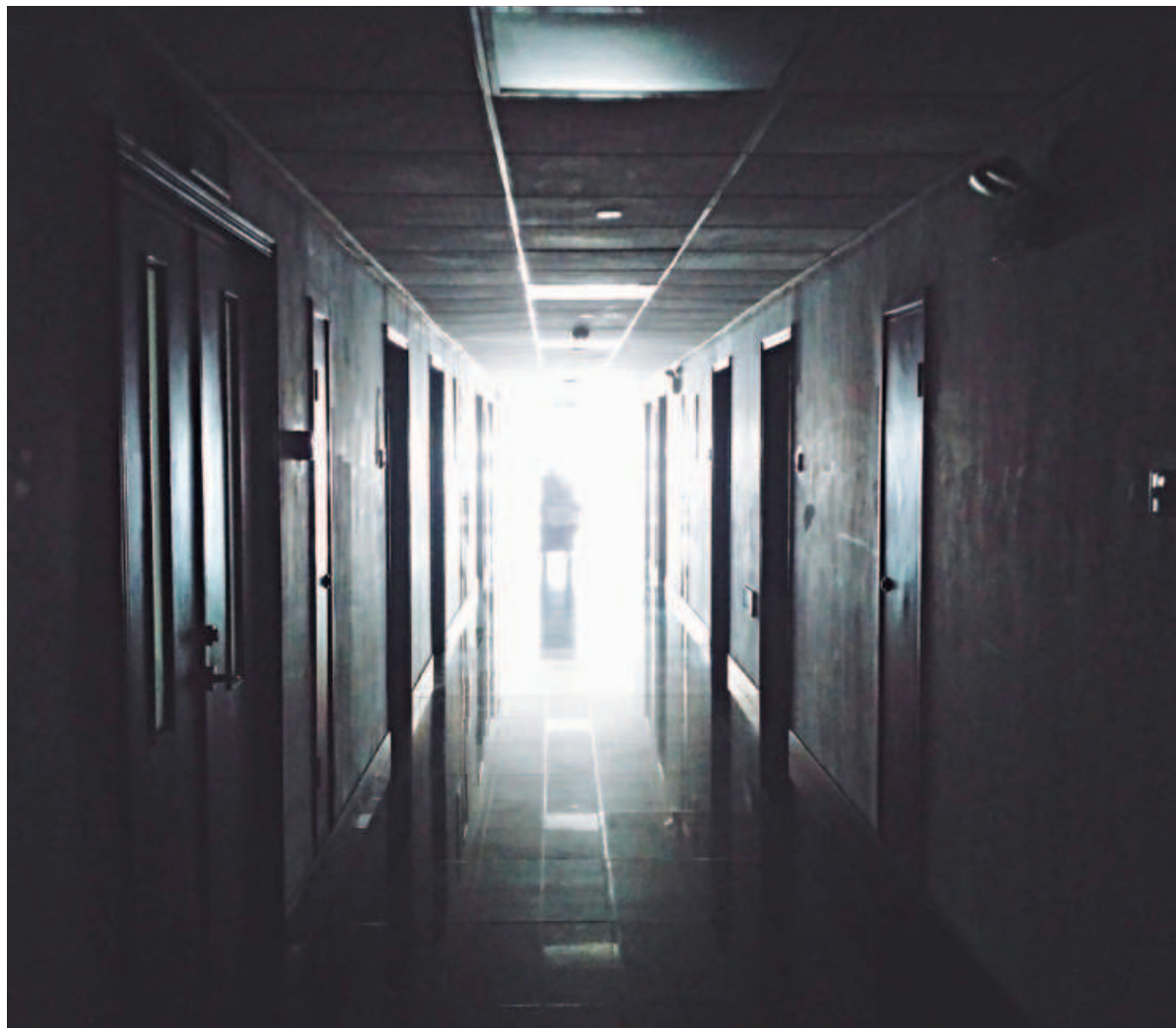
Living in the memories,  
Memories that never existed,  
And a kingdom of lies.  
A kingdom that I've built,  
The lies that I've lied;  
Lies I love to live in,  
Lies I love to believe in.  
Lies that buried the truth  
And erased the escape route.

Plot? There's no plot,  
Only conspirators plot.  
There is no conspirator,  
There are no syndicates,  
There's only you.  
But aren't you enough?

Heavens, heavens never looked down.  
We never looked up,  
Doubting the future,  
Polluting our eternal existence.

The fire would only burn the best —  
If I burn with it, burn in it  
And burn with you.  
Burning is all we will get  
If we die together tomorrow, or today.

*The writer is a student of class 10 at Rangpur Zilla School.*



# CHOICE

**BUSHRA ZAMAN**

I have always found it difficult to make a choice. Even the simplest of choices.

Choices are subjective. Personally, I believe decisions involving oneself are easier than making choices that impact others. See, I could make the biggest mistake of my life but I would still have the ability to limit the disaster to just myself and not others.

But what if something you wished for had detrimental effects on someone else's life? The academic success you longed for could have come in the form of a scholarship which someone else might have needed more. Your asking for wealth could have come at the cost of a loved one who left you their wealth. You'd think these scenarios sound extreme, that such hypothetical scenarios could never apply to you, until one day, you make a decision that emotionally cripples you for years to come. Had I known this, would I have made the same choice to not see my grandfather when I knew he would be passing away?

I remember when my grandfather first fell ill, as grandparents unfortunately inevitably do at some point in life. I chose to see him because I had full belief he would recover. My idol. The one person in my universe who could never do wrong. But then the frequency of my grandad falling ill gradually increased. What was strange was that all this did was further consolidate the idea that my grandfather would just keep coming back. He'd be alright no matter what storm hit him. The man was made of steel.

On one such day that my brain had registered as a

usual day at the hospital, my grandfather stopped getting better and instead started to get worse. The decline in health was so fast it made my head spin. It was almost New Years, and there were parties and loud music everywhere; I could not have hated celebrations more in all my life. Amidst all the music and partying, I cried into my prayer mat as I made a choice.

I thought of the ventilator and how much pain such a beautiful person was going through just to give the rest of us the comfort of only the mere possibility of having him alive. With a heavy heart, I sobbed onto my prayer mat as I begged to have him stop suffering from pain any longer; something very different from the usual, "Please heal him," because deep down I knew this gem of a person's time was up. I then made the choice to not see him in his final moments.

You may think this was incredibly selfish. It was. However, for the first time, what seemed like an awful choice made sense. Not going into the ICU allowed others to go in in my place. People who needed to be with the wonderful human in his final moments. People who could give him the strength he needed rather than my emotional mess of a person bawling over his current state.

What did I get out of it? A memory of my idol to haunt me for the rest of my life, where his last words to me in his healthy state were that he would come back.

The only consolation, if you ask me, is that in my heart, he never left.

*Bushra Zaman likes books, art, and only being contacted by email. Contact her at bushrazaman31@yahoo.com*



# Roadblocks in research for women

**BUSHRA ZAMAN**

Societal gender biases can discourage women from pursuing careers in research, and this can start from when young women start their research-based theses.

Interest in research begins with a good teacher or professor who awakens a sense of curiosity in you and keeps you on the pursuit to figure out why things are the way they are, and if they can be modified for the better. If you are lucky enough, you get a chance to work in a good research lab during your undergraduate thesis, and that is when you get first-hand exposure on how scientific research labs work for the first time.

However, what if you were unlucky and were told you should not focus on scientific research because of your gender?

Being a female research student myself, I have noticed specific trends in how society perceives the work women do in labs. The first thing I have observed is the concern for whether a woman will be able to manage work hours and the hours she may need to spend time at home; the only problem with which is how a work-home balance should be a general concern and not one just limited to women.

Women are still the only ones subjected to comments such as “How will you balance working in a research lab for long hours and taking care of your kids?”, whereas this concern should apply to everyone interested in research, regardless of gender.

If you believe research is your true calling, listening to snide remarks from a never-before-seen relative about work-personal life balance would quickly become tiresome. All interested individuals should be able to participate in research according to their qualifications, not based on their gender.

For the future development of research in our country, it is essential that individuals keen on research are never suggested otherwise on account of their gender. The more people actively participating in research, the more scope it creates for improvement in the quality of research and facilities.

It is also saddening how people bring up comparisons of the pay scale for research keeping in mind the effort put in, pointing out how one can be paid much more handsomely with less effort and casually adding in how women would just be better at home.

Contrary to concerns that arise because of the mentality of the members of society, more tangible barriers to women



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

researchers also exist. Sometimes it is necessary to travel long distances in order to retrieve chemicals or buy laboratory apparatus or machinery. This can pose safety threats to women depending on the area required to be visited, and the mode of transportation taken. As a result, sometimes women simply opt out of this or are advised that it is best that they opt out of travelling to such places.

However, going to these places allow you to build connections and find sources of suppliers for chemicals or apparatus or laboratory services which

can prove to be of use in the long run, as explained by \*Sameera Bashar, a student of Biochemistry from a leading private university in Dhaka. She mentioned how although she understands why safety precautions are recommended for female students travelling distances for research purposes, she was concerned about her networking skills and contacts could which would have definitely helped her with research-based jobs in the future, and how she feels she may be missing out.

Not everyone has had such experiences, though. Dedicated female students have defied all odds and gone on to prove how gender has nothing to do with the contribution a person can make to science. I myself have a supportive supervisor, as does Anika Tursa Promi, a Biochemistry and Biotechnology major at Independent University, Bangladesh.

She said, “As a woman, I’ve been fortunate to work comfortably on my thesis without any pressure or discrimination

from family or faculties. Not just while working on my thesis, my faculties have always been considerate and supportive of my work or need regardless of my gender as they have always been forthcoming in helping and guiding me.”

In a discussion about this article, Muniza Mehrin Zaman, a neuroscience research student now studying in Canada, explained to me why she loves what she does, “Research gives me the chance to explore unlimited possibilities which is what is so intriguing about it. You don’t know what you might stumble upon.”

I could not have explained the reasoning behind my love for research better, and remain in hope of one day when a larger number of girls keen on research can feel the same.

*\*Name has been changed for privacy*

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