

FABLE FACTORY

Three Wishes

SARA KABIR

Three wishes, only three wishes demand.
Take it or leave it,
No refunds command.

You'll ask what all the rest do,
Beauty, and fame,
and riches galore.

A trip to the moon,
Or maybe a fountain of fortune.
Offers and gesture,
and maybe dreams too?

Speak to your soul;
No! that's too soon.
Who am I talking to?
What did I hope to do?

A beacon of hope,
A tool for destruction,

A chalice of madness,
A symbol for more.

Day in and day out,
All I do,
is grant wishes for these fools.

They never ask,
for world peace or freedom,
An end to this injustice,
A way out of this pandemonium.

It's never the things that matter.
It's never the things that should.

So, three wishes and three wishes only.
What will I grant today?
Another meaningless rant.

Three wishes and three wishes only.
Take it or leave it,
so I can one day be free.



PHOTO: SARA KABIR

CAW!

HASIB UR RASHID IFTI

Just ten minutes past midnight on New Year's Eve, Kaiser grabbed onto all the fireworks he could and ran straight out of his house. As he bolted down the stairs, a few of them fell from the box. But Kaiser couldn't afford to lose more time by stopping and picking them up. It was 11:51 PM on his watch already. Just nine more minutes before 2033.

Kaiser still remembers New Year's Eve of 2022. The entire neighbourhood was up on the roof, ready to see Kaiser and his friends' fireworks party. They had bought some ten thousand taka worth of fireworks and sky lanterns. They kept the party going up until 3 AM in the middle of the night. The party poopers were complaining on social media about the commotion and the pollution. They finally had to stop when the older neighbours intervened and started nagging them. But Kaiser was older now. He had his own apartment and there was no way anyone could stop him from celebrating the whole night.

Sure, he had lost some of his friends along the way. His friends had grown up and no longer had time for New Year's parties. They had lost their way of living and were busy adulting. Kaiser had a job too, but that didn't mean he had to stop enjoying the little things in life. When that lantern goes up in the sky, it's not just a ball of fire going up; it's something that's been lit up with your own hands and is going to stay up for miles in the sky. It's your signature on the canvas of the clouds.

Kaiser moved into the neighbourhood months earlier. Usually, the fireworks would start hours before 12 AM back in



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

the old days. But this time around, Kaiser couldn't even hear a single firecracker explode anywhere. As an impatient Kaiser ran out of the gates of his building, he found himself in a deserted street.

As he walked further, he saw people chatting with their friends and waiting for the clock to hit midnight. There were only two minutes left and yet nobody was ready.

"I'll teach them how to have fun!" shouted Kaiser, struggling to catch his breath. Just 60 seconds. He pulled out a matchbox from his pockets and put the large firecracker in the middle of the street.

As he stared at his wristwatch, waiting for the second's hand to hit the sweet spot, he ignited the matchstick.

Suddenly, someone grabbed Kaiser. Another person kicked the firecracker away and both of them pushed Kaiser onto the ground. Snatching his fireworks box away, a voice snickered, "Firecrackers, huh! Hey Mrinmoy, come take a look. When was the last time you saw one of these?"

"What do you mean? It's New Year's Eve," coughed Kaiser as he got up.

"How old are you dude?" laughed the other voice, "Fireworks are so 2022! There

are babies, old people and pets in almost every house in the neighbourhood. These millennials are so selfish, I tell you. They are willing to go to any extent to celebrate the stupidest of customs, even if someone else has to pay the price."

"Don't you people have fireworks parties in your neighbourhood?" asked Kaiser with a hint of desperation in his voice.

"Unless you want to get bullied as a loner with no friends, I suggest you keep the fireworks in your cupboard, dude," Mrinmoy laughed, "How irrelevant do you have to be in 2032 to light up stupid loud sticks? And don't even get me started on sky lanterns! When you boomers launch them up in the sky, don't you selfish people even think twice about where the lanterns are going to land? And that they might start a fire by accident? Grow up, grandpa!"

Kaiser fell to his knees. He buried his face against the dirt and started sobbing. He had lost everything. His new year's fireworks, his friends and the only connection he had to his past. He had become what he feared the most about growing up – irrelevant. Picking up the rest of the fireworks or whatever was left of them, Kaiser trotted back to his house.

Sitting on the electric pole above Kaiser's head, a crow breathed in a fresh gust of clean air. The crow flew past Kaiser and sat on a fence to get a closer look at Kaiser's crying face. "I told you ten years ago, Kaiser. My time will come," said the crow.

All Kaiser heard was, "Caw!"

Remind Ifti to be quieter at hasiburrashidifti@gmail.com