



ILLUSTRATION: AZRA HUMAYRA

HUMOUR

My GPA and I are in an on-again, off-again relationship

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Most of us have at least had one relationship in our lives where dealing with the other party feels like facing off with a dementor. They wipe away every trace of happiness from your mind, or simply make you question your sanity. But the worst of the bunch for many is the no-amount-of-therapy-can-fix-this relationship we have with our GPA.

We were just kids when we fell in love

We met for the first time back in fifth grade. I liked GPA, but I didn't see her for who she truly was, and I had no idea what love or relationships actually entailed. I only had to show up to classes, do my daily homework, remember to bring pens, and she was happy with me. I would listen to older students' warnings and promise to myself that I won't ever let my relationship with her become like that.

As time went on, she started complaining that she was being taken for granted, demanded more, and expected better from me. By the time we got to high school, things were quite rocky. I started avoiding her for fear of being rejected. I put in more time and effort, skipped family functions, cancelled plans with friends, and uninstalled my social media accounts. All of my attempts kept failing to sway her to my side. Still, I did not stop trying.

By the time graduation rolled around, I had to talk myself out of giving up every day. I had finally had enough of her passive-aggressiveness and impossible ultimatums. I thought I would start over in university, and I would get a fresh start.

You set fires to my forest, and you let it burn

It's common knowledge that high school sweethearts rarely make it, if ever. But I overestimated us, turned up the volume to drown out the noise, and listened to "They Don't Know About Us" on repeat. I did everything I was supposed to do. I sat in the front row with laser-sharp focus, showed unnecessary enthusiasm, and obnoxiously nodded along

with every word. I took notes aggressively, with a wide range of coloured pens, sign pens, and highlighters.

I even dared to occasionally give some advice to younger students: "Just manage your time wisely" and "Discipline is the key". Who did I think I was, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar?

I promised myself every night, "I'll wake up early to study," but I didn't wake up early (shocking, I know). I promised myself, "I'll just watch the recording later (no one watches the recording later)."

Midterms arrived, and reality smacked me hard in the face. I downloaded the PDF that was shared in the department messenger group, stared at my phone screen, and my brain went, "Have I *always* been *this* dumb?" University doesn't test what you know; it tests how well you can pretend to understand slides that were never explained.

Meanwhile, my friends were all out there thriving and pretending that they were motivational speakers: "Don't let numbers define you." Except those numbers decide my scholarships, my internships, and whether my parents will still pretend to love me.

For you, I would cross the line, I would waste my time, I would lose my mind

After completing the first semester, I had tricked myself into thinking, GPA isn't the villain, I am. I was out blaming professors, classmates, when it was me procrastinating like there was no tomorrow. So, I started going to consultation hours, watched Law School fan-made videos, made a foolproof schedule with every minute accounted for. It slowly started working. We sometimes flirted when I scored well in a quiz, but then we fought again, when too many lab reports were due at the same time. My progress was being noticed by professors and classmates, and I was like, "Yes, validation, inject it directly into my veins."

Except that old adage proved true, "The path to hell is paved with good intentions" during finals week. I was juggling too many half-done assignments, missed quizzes,

and group projects at the same time. I found myself in a strange new love triangle: me, GPA, and groupmates who thought contributing meant reacting to texts with a thumbs-up emoji. I started to spiral. My sleep schedule was gone; I'd open Google Drive and realise it hadn't been updated in two weeks.

That's when I was forced to acknowledge, GPA and I had different love languages. Mine was "words of affirmation", even if they are untrue, and GPA's was "acts of service", like submitting assignments on time, which was something beyond my capabilities. I was just done with it all. Why can't she just appreciate the effort? Why does it always have to be about the results?

Cause loving is hard, it don't always work, you just try your best not to get hurt

When my GPA went from three-point-something to let's-never-talk-about-it, I finally decided to put my foot down and try the healthy way, aka going to therapy. There I came face-to-face with a whole other issue; wasting three hours sitting in sweltering heat, stuck in traffic.

So, I had to make an effort to reconnect with my friends instead, and that's when I figured out, every one of us is miserable in some way, shape, or form. One friend is pretending to love the major his parents chose for him; after all, who are you to contradict the one paying your tuition and sponsoring the life you are accustomed to living? One is living on instant noodles, regrets, and self-hate. Lastly, there's always that one friend who somehow has the perfect GPA and swears they barely studied.

While my GPA graph still might look like Bangladesh's economy, unpredictable and tragic, I came to realise, our GPA doesn't display the level of our intelligence or its lack thereof, rather it demonstrates how well we adapt to a broken system. We aren't constantly at each other's throats anymore. Instead, we are civil like divorced parents with joint custody; she gets my sanity on weekdays, I get the weekends.