



# MS BELIEVER

TASNIM ODRIKA

The grass seemed greener on the other side. That's where I wanted to go most of the days. As I laid down, the pitch dark suffocating me, I closed my eyes to dream of the lush green scenery that was waiting for me on the other side. It calmed me.

I lived in this vast field and getting to the other side was not an easy task. You could take the long route and cross the entire field; passing through each and every obstacle that lay ahead. Now, the place was also covered with deep chasms and the short route meant falling into a hole so deep that it would carry you to the other side. The odds of this happening was very low and the ones that fell into these deep holes had to waste away their entire lives there, unable to get out.

But the place wasn't all that awful. There were flowers here and there. Some of them had the sweetest smell, an enthralling smell, which would for a second make my wish of going to the other side feel absurd. And if I could have stayed by these flowers I wouldn't have wanted to.

Alas! Ferocious monsters also inhabited the place. Some of them would sneak up behind you if you are not careful and push you down deep gorges. Others were so big that jumping down into the holes seemed easier than facing them. Being a particularly timid person, most of my times were spent in deep dark holes, afraid of facing what stood outside.

I was down in a hole at that very moment. It was not a very deep hole and I could get out of it if I put a bit of effort. But I was tired. I recalled all the times I had previously fallen down and I was scared of getting out because I knew I would fall down again. I could just glimpse the light that shone above and I craved to smell the flowers. But I could also hear the faint footsteps of the hairy beast. It was circling me above, ready to push me down again if I tried getting out.

# RED

TABEYA AZDASIH

I don't think I could be happy if I couldn't get angry. Red isn't my favorite color but God is it luxurious to feel,  
 to roll around in,  
 to have and to hold.  
 My anger is like a velvet cape  
 and the world around me is winter.  
 Words snap at my skin  
 like an electric whip and I scream  
 but all I can hear, all I allow myself to hear,  
 is the sound of velvet against skin.  
 Who would I be, had I been silent?  
 Who would I be if I could not scream?



ILLUSTRATION: RUMMAN R KALAM

# THE UNCOVERING

RUMMAN R KALAM

"Aklima, I have never done this before..."  
 Fahrukh hesitated before looking quizzically at his girlfriend.

"If we were always scared of doing things we never did before, then you wouldn't have been born, Fahrukh!" said Aklima with her tinny laugh.

The teenagers were both sitting on the couch. The 60 inch 4K TV was off but the screen still reflected the couple in stark clarity as if to taunt them on what they are missing out on. Fahrukh's parents were out for the evening, going to the rooftops of those lavish hotels in Gulshan to spend some time alone—in the middle of a party.

"I don't know... I never did it myself before. It always... happened. I don't know," said Fahrukh.

"Are you saying that you never even saw someone doing this before? Are you being serious?"

"Yes," the tiny voice of Fahrukh replied.

"You mean to say that you never even saw someone on the streets doing it even? You're bound to see it sometime." Aklima's voice cracked in exasperation.

"My Pajero's windows are tinted,"  
 whimpered Fahrukh.

"Oh God. This is absolutely unreal,"  
 Aklima replied.

"Well, you don't have to do it if you don't want to," Fahrukh's voice swelled with indignation, "I only asked you because I trust you and have no one else to turn to with this. Honestly, it's embarrassing."

Aklima softened her expression.

"What about when you were growing up? I'm sure you seen it... on, erm, the TV?"

Her eyes lit up.

"The computer?" she asked.

"I don't know. It was always covered or under pyjamas. Never out there. And you know I don't spend my time watching the junk they produce on the internet that turns your brain into mush. I'm better than that," said a proud Fahrukh.

"Alright, then. I guess we better start. This is going nowhere." Aklima was finally over her initial surprise.

"Well, first you have to grab it at the base. Hold it firmly, but not too firm or else you'll regret it. Then you pinch the tip and slide it downwards," she demonstrated peeling the banana, "See? It's that easy."