

**FABLE FACTORY**

# HALO

**SABIH SAFWAT**

So lost in your righteousness  
 You fail to contain the violence.  
 The demons in this world are ones you create  
 With intolerance, estrangement... blind hate.

Maybe your path's the one leading to heaven,  
 You'll attain eternal peace, surrounded by angels.  
 Does that give you the right to  
 Inflict wounds, trample on faith?

Black and white, good and evil,  
 That's where it all goes wrong.  
 Ever thought to pause and think for yourself  
 If those old fairy tales are worth the blood shed?

I'm sure it's warm and comforting for you  
 I'm glad you've found a way to solace.  
 Just, please, don't  
 Drag me there with you.



# Would you let me cry?

**HASIB UR RASHID IFTI**

"Your Amma called," whimpered Abba,  
 "She's not... well. She wants to see you."

It's always your Amma or Arko's  
 Amma. It's never Renu.

"What do you mean she's not well?  
 Where's she been all this time?" Arko  
 asked coldly. Amma's not been with  
 them for some 7/8 years now. He lost  
 count a few years back. With the pro-  
 motions incoming, 2046's been pretty  
 tough.

"She's been staying at your Mama's  
 old place. Near Keraniganj. She wouldn't  
 tell me much. She just said we should go  
 see her and hung up," Abba smiled, "9  
 years and still the same drama."

Arko stared at his old man. Abba  
 always resented the idea of sentiment,  
 even as a kid, according to Arko's Fupu.  
 That's how the idea of building that  
 junky old machine came to his head. It's  
 rusty now but that machine broke the  
 family into pieces. The idea was pretty  
 simple - whenever you feel like crying,  
 you go to the basement and put those  
 special goggles on. You inject the serum,  
 connect the wires and gently go numb.  
 It wasn't painful. You were just left with a  
 feeling of emptiness. Except you couldn't  
 comprehend why you felt empty in the  
 first place. It sucked away the pain, the  
 tears or the very reason why tears existed.

Abba built it when Arko's elder brother  
 Abir was 12. After a few years of trial  
 and error, he perfected the device and  
 Arko started using it as early as 4. He  
 doesn't even remember the first memory  
 of pain. Abir told him stories of tears after  
 their parents fell asleep but they were  
 hard to believe.

It was a damp brick house surrounded  
 by drains on opposing sides. The trees in  
 the front secluded the house from chaos.  
 A woman in her 30s opened the rusty



collapsible gate and showed them in. The  
 musky air made Arko feel a bit dizzy. As  
 the woman stopped in front of a small  
 room with its entrance covered with dusty  
 curtains, Arko followed his father in. Even  
 on a bright sunny afternoon, the room

was dark and foggy. Arko looked around  
 the sooty walls. He could feel the wear-  
 iness of the floor against his bare feet. The  
 chill from his feet reached his spine as he  
 saw his mother lying on the bed.  
 Wrinkled skin under her sunken eyes

looked like she'd been crying every day  
 for the past 9 years. Her head, once so full  
 of hair, was now bare skin with separa-  
 ble strands. With all her strength, she sat  
 straight and gathered whatever was left of  
 her voice, "Arko."

Arko stood there. His eyes could see  
 but his vision went blind. Abba limped to  
 the bed and sat beside her. In a muffled  
 voice, she told Abba, "No more tears to  
 suck out, see?"

Arko's hands started shaking, his bones  
 clattering. He fell onto his knees. With  
 his hands on the floor, he lifted his head  
 up and stared at his father with blood-red  
 eyes, "Abba, can I cry?"

Arko's shirt ripped itself into shreds.  
 Slits on his back fleshed out into wounds.  
 Arko screamed at the top of his lungs as  
 tears came pouring out of the wounds  
 on his back. As Abba stood with awe and  
 shock, Arko let out all the anguish he'd  
 been storing up for the past 35 years.

Amma rose from her bed and crawled  
 towards him, crossing the pool of tears.  
 She took him in her arms, "When did you  
 stop using the machine?"

"Just after Abir left," cried Arko. He  
 buried his head against her warm neck. As  
 he put his hands on her back to hold her  
 tighter, he could feel the tears from her  
 flesh wounds pouring all over his trem-  
 bling hands. Wounds he saw on Abir's  
 back that night before he left. Wounds  
 that his father didn't have.

"It's beautiful, isn't it?" sighed Amma.  
 Arko closed his eyes. As he rubbed her  
 back gently, he couldn't feel the wrinkles  
 or the wounds anymore. Only the tears.  
 Tears softened her coarse skin each pass-  
 ing second.

"It is," whispered Arko.

*Remind Ifiti to be quieter at [hasiburrashidif-  
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