THE DEFINITIVE YOUTH MAGAZINE

HALO

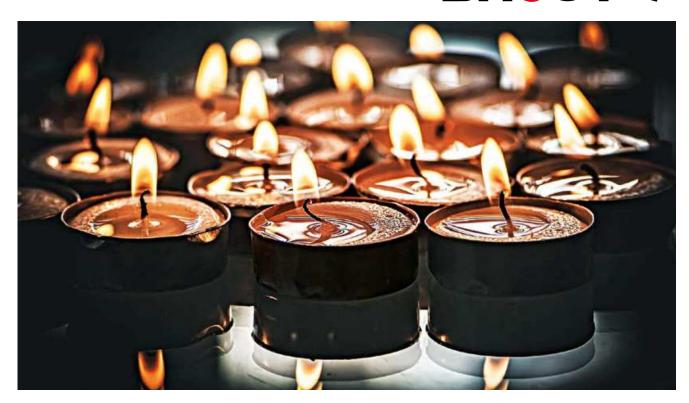
SABIH SAFWAT

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.

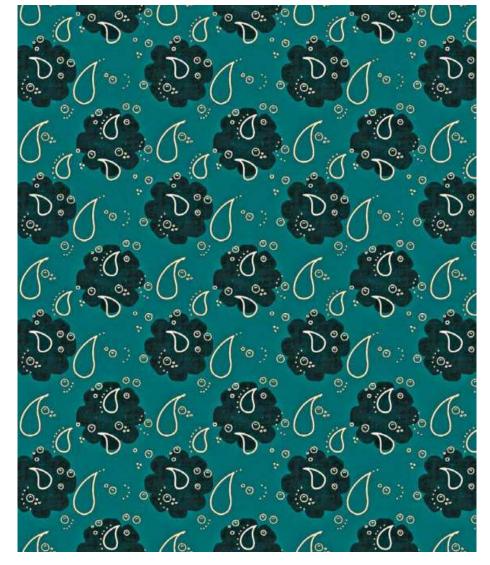
"What do you mean she's not well? Where's she been all this time?" Arko asked coldly. Amma's not been with them for some 7/8 years now. He lost count a few years back. With the promotions incoming, 2046's been pretty tough.

"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 weariness 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 separable 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 cluttering. 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 trembling 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 passing second.

"It is," whispered Arko.

Remind Ifti to be quieter at hasiburrashidifti@gmail.com