

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
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 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 hasiburrashidifti@gmail.com