

Salvage

By

Akber Wahid

The streets are buzzing with people. Cars fill up the street, moving quickly. People are walking along the sidewalk. Parents with kids. Kids running around by themselves, people are sitting just watching.

ARJUN (34), is on the sidewalk. He is in his usual, tattered outfit. He has a shoe in his hand and examining the soles. His son, KABIR (8) is dressed in clothes as old and dirty as his fathers, he comes closer to take a look at the shoe.

ARJUN

What do you think, can it be salvaged?

Kabir looks at Arjun in confusion.

KABIR

What do you mean, "salvaged"?

ARJUN

Salvaged, meaning, fixed or saved.

KABIR

Oh, I understand now. Salvaged means if the shoe can be fixed or not.

ARJUN

Exactly.

KABIR

You're so smart, Papa. Where did you learn all of these things?

ARJUN

Well, son, I learned a lot in school when I was young. I learned from your grandfather too.

KABIR

Papa. Do you think I will be able to go to school?

ARJUN

(sighs)

One day, Kabir. I promise you one day I will save up enough money to send you to school where you can learn everything you want.

Arjun looks at Kabir and smiles.

(CONTINUED)

ARJUN

So, do you think it can be fixed?

KABIR

I don't know, Papa. It looks like it's really broken. I don't think it can be repaired. Maybe you should just tell the man to throw it away because it is too broken.

ARJUN

Let me tell you something, son. Just because it looks really bad, does not mean that it's broke. There is always a way to try and fix it. You just have to keep working towards it and figure it out even if it is really hard. I want you to remember that. No matter how broken or impossible something seems, you will always try to figure out a way to fix it.

KABIR

(smiling)

Don't you mean salvage it, Papa!

ARJUN

(laughs)

Yes, Kabir. I mean, salvage it. Always remember to try and salvage it.

KABIR

Okay, Papa. I will

Arjun rubs Kabir's head and pinches his cheeks. He smiles at Kabir.

ARJUN

Good. Now go check on your mom and I'll meet you both home after I finish up here.

Kabir leaves his fathers part of the sidewalk and walks toward the main road. As he walks he sees kids his age running around, playing with each other.

He stops and stares at them while smiling. The kids continue to run around and chase each other pretending not to notice him. Kabir, loses his joy and continues on to his mother.

(CONTINUED)

Kabir reaches his mom, FARAH (32), who is standing in the middle island of the street. Her clothes are torn and dirty. She is walking back and forth on the island with her hands cupped asking for money from the people in cars that are stopped at the light.

KABIR

Mama! Mama!

Farah turns to see Kabir. She is surprised to see him.

FARAH

Kabir! What are you doing here?!
You know I don't like you coming here.

KABIR

Papa told me to come check on you before we go home. Is there something wrong?

FARAH

No, nothing is wrong. Why don't we head home now, ok?

2

INT. - KABIR'S FAMILY TENT

2

Kabir and Farah enter their tent. There is not much inside it other than some sheets on the floor that are used as beds. There are a few lanterns and candles which are used as a light source.

FARAH

Kabir, go outside and wash up before I get dinner ready. Your father will be home any minute and will be very tired, so we don't want to make him wait.

KABIR

Okay, Mama.

3

EXT. - STREETS OF LAHORE OUTSIDE THE TENT - SUNSET

3

Kabir goes outside of his tent and heads to the communal water fountain. He gets to the water fountain and washes his hands and face. He turns back and starts to go back to the tent. As he is walking to it he sees Arjun in the distance. He gets taken over with happiness and immediately starts running over to his father.

(CONTINUED)

KABIR
Papa! Papa!

Kabir screams to Arjun.

Arjun is walking with shoes in his hand, examining them. He does not hear Kabir.

KABIR
Papa! Papa! Look at me! Papa!

Arjun still walking and examining the shoes hears Kabir. He looks up and sees Kabir by their tent, smiling. Arjun smiles and waves back at Kabir.

Kabir turns back to call Farah. As he is calling her he hears a loud screeching sound, followed by screams. Kabir quickly turns toward the noise. Kabir's mouth drops and he stands frozen.

Farah comes out the tent.

FARAH
What is it Kabir? What was that noise?

Farah sees Kabir standing and looking. She sees in the distance that there is crowd. She runs over to Kabir.

FARAH
What is it Kabir? Did you see what happened?

Kabir does not say anything. His mouth still open, tears stream down his face. He starts to tremble. Puts one hand over his mouth and uses the other to point at the crowd.

KABIR
(quietly)
Pa...Papa.

Farah is shocked. She turns and starts running towards the crowd. She reaches the spot and sees Arjun on the ground with blood all around him. She runs and kneels beside him.

FARAH
Arjun! Arjun!! Wake up, Arjun! What are doing, get up! Kabir is waiting for you. He wants to talk to you, Arjun. Wake up! Arjun!

Farah starts to sob uncontrollably. Kabir arrives by her side and starts to hold her. The crowd looks on. Sirens are heard among the usual traffic noises.

(CONTINUED)

FADE TO BLACK:

TITLE CARD READS:

1 Month Later.

4 EXT. - STREETS OF LAHORE - MORNING

4

SYED
Hurry up and let's get to work,
boy!

Kabir has a black garbage bag in his hand. He walks toward a horse-driven trolley and throws it on. SYED (28) has the reigns of the horse and is sitting on the trolley watching Kabir.

SYED
Easy there! Make sure you don't
break my trolley or I won't be so
easy. Now go to the next house.

Kabir nods and continues walking. He rings the doorbell of a house and a woman opens the gate. She tells Kabir to wait and comes back with a few garbage bags. Kabir takes them and softly puts them on the trolley.

Kabir and Syed head on to the next house. As they are going, kids walk by them talking with each other. Kabir notices them and stares. He admires their school uniforms, backpacks, and notebooks in their hands. He becomes hypnotized. Syed snaps at him to hurry up. Kabir starts walking again, looking back at the kids as he does.

5 INT. - KABIR'S FAMILY TENT

5

Kabir enters the tent. He sees Farah laying down, staring at the ceiling.

KABIR
Mama? I'm home.

Farah gets up from laying down and sits. She forcefully puts a smile on her face.

FARAH
How was your day, Kabir? Did you
collect a lot of garbage?

KABIR
Yes, Mama. I got my pay today from
Syed.

(CONTINUED)

Kabir hands the money to Farah. Farah takes it and quickly tucks it away. She puts her hand on Kabir's face and rubs it affectionately.

FARAH

Thank You, Kabir. We need this more than ever now.

KABIR

I know, Mama. I just wanted to know if I could maybe have some money this time to buy something.

FARAH

What did you want to buy?

KABIR

I just wanted to buy a notebook and pen, maybe, Mama. I saw these kids today going to school and I want to go to school too, Mama.

Farah puts her head down. She wipes away a tear from her cheek and looks back up at Kabir, smiling.

FARAH

I know you want to study, son. I know...I know you had fun learning new things from your father. I'm sorry, right now we can't afford to send you to school. We can't even afford to buy you any supplies if we want to eat for the rest of the month.

Kabir looks at Farah and attempts to smile.

KABIR

It's okay, Mama. I won't get any books. I'll do what you say. I'm going to go to the fountain to wash up before we eat, okay?

Kabir heads out the tent. He walks behind their tent and begins to cry.

6

EXT. - STREETS OF LAHORE - MORNING

6

Kabir walks through the streets and reaches Syed. Upon reaching Syed, Kabir yawns and covers his mouth.

(CONTINUED)

SYED

Hurry up and let's get to work,
boy!

Kabir is walking along Syed who is driving the horse trolley. They do their usual routine of going to houses and collecting the garbage.

Upon reaching a house and collecting the garbage, Kabir sees more kids on their way to school. Some saying bye to their parents and departing. As Kabir watches the kids running with each other he sees a book fall out of one boy's backpack.

Kabir starts to walk over to where the book dropped. He looks and turns his head in the direction of the boy who dropped it. Syed is organizing the garbage bags on the trolley and does not see Kabir wander off. Kabir gets closer to the book and sees that the boy who dropped it still has not noticed.

Kabir bends down and picks the book up. He examines the book. He feels the cover and the pages inside. He looks at the writing. He holds the book tight to his chest.

Kabir then removes his tight grasp of the book. He looks up at the boy in the distance who still is walking away. He begins to head in the boy's direction. As soon as he takes two steps he feels a hand come down with a lot of force on his shoulder.

Kabir stops in his tracks. He looks up and sees WOMAN(1) standing there looking down at him. Woman(1) grabs the book out of Kabir's hand.

WOMAN 1

What are you doing? You thought you
could steal my son's book didn't
you? You thief!

Woman(1) slaps Kabir in the face two times.

WOMAN 1

Well? Are you going to answer me or
not? Or do you not know how to
talk? You stupid kids these days.
All you do is go around trying to
steal.

Woman(1) points at Syed.

(CONTINUED)

WOMAN 1

Is that your father over there? Of course he's a garbage man.

Woman(1) grabs Kabir by the wrist and takes him towards Syed. Kabir has tears down his face from the slaps. He is holding one hand on his cheek. A small crowd with both kids and adults has formed they are watching Woman 1 and Kabir.

WOMAN 1

Hey! Garbage man!

Syed turns to see Woman(1) holding Kabir.

WOMAN 1

Next time why don't you watch your son instead of sleeping on the job. Why don't you buy him a book so he doesn't have to steal.

Woman(1) lets go of Kabir and leaves. The crowd has begun to disperse too. Syed is looking at Kabir very angrily and Kabir is staring at the ground still holding his cheek.

SYED

What's wrong with you? Do you want me to lose all my business? Because of this I'm taking one week's pay from you. Idiot. Now hurry up and collect the rest, I want to finish quickly.

7

INT. - KABIR'S FAMILY TENT

7

Kabir enters his home after finishing with Syed. His mother is laying in the same position as the previous day. She does not notice that Kabir has a big red mark on his cheek.

KABIR

Mama, I'm home. How are you feeling today?

FARAH

(softly)

I'm fine, son.

Kabir looks at Farah endearingly. He then sees the photograph of Arjun that is resting next to Farah. He walks towards Farah and sits down. He picks up the photograph and smiles while tears drop from his eyes.

Farah snaps out of her daze and notices Kabir crying. She sits up and holds him.

(CONTINUED)

FARAH

What's wrong, Kabir? What happened?

Kabir tells his mother the story of what happened while he was collecting garbage. He tells her that he has lost one week's pay because of it.

FARAH

Kabir! Why would you act so foolishly. You know you should not be picking up any garbage that Syed doesn't tell you to. Now we will have to watch even more how we spend the money if we want to eat.

Kabir begins to cry more. Farah sees this and stops scolding him.

FARAH

It's okay, Kabir. It can't be changed. Just go wash up for dinner.

Kabir walks outside the tent and continues to cry.

8

EXT. - STREETS OF LAHORE - MORNING

8

Kabir arrives at the usual meeting spot to start the day with Syed. He is walking different than usual. His head is down, his pace is slower and his back is hunched.

SYED

Hurry up and let's get to work, boy! Stop walking so slowly, what's wrong with you.

Kabir and Syed go around and make the usual rounds of going to houses and collecting garbage. As the trolley gets more full they stop and Syed begins to rearrange it to make more room.

Kabir is on the side not too far away. He is sitting on the curb with his arms on his knees and his head in between them staring at the ground. He has no expression on his face. He is startled when he is tapped on the shoulder by a BOY(1) who looks a few years older than Kabir.

Kabir looks up and recognizes the boy from yesterday's crowd when he was slapped by the woman. Kabir immediately pulls his head back in fear of getting slapped. The boy smiles at him in return.

(CONTINUED)

BOY 1

Hey man. I saw what happened yesterday and that was wrong. I know you weren't going to keep the book. You always do your job and don't bother anybody. So, here, I want to give you this.

The boy hands Kabir a notebook. Kabir is reluctant to take the book and first looks around to see if anybody else is there. It is almost like the book Kabir picked up the day before except it is dusty and has tears and markings on the cover.

BOY 1

Take it, trust me. It's mine, you won't be slapped for this.
(chuckles)

Kabir firmly grasps the book

BOY 1

I know it's not a new book, but I found it in my house. Nobody has used it. Just pretend like you don't see the tears.
(laughs)

Kabir holds the notebook in his hand. He has a shocked face. A few tears roll down his cheeks and he begins to smile. He stands up and gives the boy a tight hug. He lets go and looks down at the book. He examines it and feels it all over, flipping through the pages. He closes the book and looks back up at the boy.

KABIR

It can be salvaged.

Kabir smiles.

CUT TO BLACK

(ROLL CREDITS)