Forbidden Fruit

*Introduction to the piece:*

*Rape is the fourth most common crime against women in India. With an alarmingly high number of cases reported every single day, it is certainly a grave social issue. The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act has no clear guidelines on abortions beyond 20 weeks. As a result, many victims of sexual assault have been denied an abortion and have been forced to continue with the pregnancy, which can be extremely traumatic for an already traumatized victim. ‘Forbidden Fruit’ aims to serve as food for thought- to generate social consciousness about sexual assault, its consequences and the pain a victim is forced to endure.*

With sparkling eyes, he said, "Mama, tell me a story!

A new one this time- with kingdoms, battles and glory..."

The mother of twenty years smiled weakly at her five-year-old son.

Closed her eyes, and with a hint of melancholia began.

"Once upon a time,"- her tone as hard as rock.

"There was a blissful kingdom joyful round the clock!"

Her glazed eyes into an old dream seemed thrown

"Upon this happy kingdom, the sun always shone!"

"Did it live happily ever after?" asked the lad, bright.

A pregnant pause punctuated the ever so still night.

"My dear child, if only things had gone that well...

No, upon the poor kingdom, great misfortune befell."

"Towards the kingdom on a dark, moonless night,

Rode a sinister assailant when all was quiet.

Ruthlessly, the kingdom gates he did tear,

House after house, stripped the kingdom bare."

"Satisfied with his malevolence, he sat complacent.

Smiled, even, as he listened to the screams of torment.

Hungry now, lazily he pulled out his apple,

And ate till his bottomless stomach was full."

"He left the kingdom- in ruins upon his whim.

Nonchalantly strewing his pips behind him.

The hapless kingdom, once the most royal lair,

Lay sorrowful and scared, broken and bare."

Distractedly upon her son her eyes did sweep,

And beheld that the little boy was fast asleep.

Yet she went on; of her story's halt not a trace,

Tears crawling across her scarred, bruised face.

"To the crumbling kingdom's aid, its neighbors came,

Though the kingdom would never quite be the same.

In the quietest corner, a little apple plant did shoot,

The kingdom dwellers knew whence it had its root."

"To cut it down they resolved, livid with rage,

For looking at it took them back to the outrage.

'You can't cut it down,' the voice did sting.

The voice belonged to the neighboring king."

"'The plant is more than twenty weeks old,

A life is at stake. You must do as you're told.

Water it and nurture it as you would your own.'

The weak, helpless kingdom could not even moan."

"The end," she whispered as she started to weep.

Transiently, he awoke and fell right back to sleep.

He didn't have her eyes, though he bore her name.

Even six years hence, she would never quite be the same.

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