

Sneak Peek
Of

The First

By

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Qayya

Mt. Imarcu was vast, with Malice's compound in its center. Outside, near the rocky sea, was the site where demonic factions enforced their torture and punishment on others. They wanted everyone to witness what would happen if they stepped out of line—death.

The stars and moon glowed in the cool night as villagers watched the guards drag me to the spot where a massive fire blazed.

I shivered—partly from the cold, partly from a sudden, unexpected fear. I would be lying if I said I was not a tad afraid, not of dying, but of what comes after. Is it painful? Is it darkness? Or just nothing? Taking a deep breath, I forced myself to ignore the ache in my chest and awaited my fate.

I stood there, listening to the demon explain what my crime was. My crime—HA! I had stopped a demon from beating a woman to death in front of her child. My crime was stepping out of line and laying hands on a demon.

“Anyone who disobeys us will receive punishment under the law, as we have told you many times before. Our Lord Malice has come tonight to hand down this girl’s sentence personally.”

Malice? For the first time that day, I shook violently as my heart twisted and my blood boiled—not out of fear, but with utter anger. Malice was the Dark Lord who had ruthlessly tortured and murdered my mother right in front of me many years ago.

Standing tall, I gulped back the bile that threatened to surface as Malice strolled into the clearing. As his cold, dark eyes swept the crowd, the air grew tense with fear. Even the sky shifted from clear to stormy.

No one spoke. Malice’s demeanor spoke volumes. The only sounds were the falling rain, the whistling wind, and the crackle of the flames.

Malice met my gaze, and another shiver went down my spine.

He grinned wickedly. “Tonight, we must execute four women who have defied the laws I have set to make this world more... durable. I give you food, clothing, and shelter. In return,

you are only asked to work off your debt and to follow the laws I have put in place to maintain order. Am I not considerate?"

No one dared speak.

"Do not blame me for your inability to listen and follow the rules. You brought this on yourselves. If I do not punish you, we will have a society where things get out of hand and become chaotic, a world you do not want to live in."

The wind picked up, blowing through my hair. The waves crashed fiercely as thunder and lightning streaked across the sky.

Malice finished his speech, and cheers erupted from his demonic followers. Without warning, two strong, oversized hands lifted me off the ground.

My pulse quickened with each second as they dragged me across the terrain and tossed me at his feet. I noticed the mark of a snake coiled around a dragon on Malice's shoulder as he wrapped a stiff hand around my neck and lifted me.

He squeezed, and my right eye twitched. Summoning as much saliva as I could in my dry mouth, I spat in his smug face.

Satisfaction coursed within me as fury blazed in his dark eyes.

His fist met my face, and pain struck me for the third time that night.

Without regard for the consequences, I scratched his haughty face as hard as I could. Blood streaked his cheek, and gasps rippled through the night.

We stared at each other, and a glimmer of rage and lightning flashed across his face. Seething, he tossed me to the earth, and all the air left my lungs. Covered in dirt and blood, my body throbbed. I endured the aching pain, but did not move. Trying to focus on breathing, I kept my eyes closed until hands gripped my body once more, yanking me towards the water as thunder boomed.

Leaning in, he whispered in my ear. “Too bad—you will never know why I killed your mother.”

My eyes widened as I met his wicked gaze, and my heart stopped.

“If you see your mother again, ask her why.”

Shocked by his words, I did not notice the ball of fire he hurled at me until flames seared

my body. The force of the blow lifted me into the air, and I screamed as the fire consumed me. Lightning struck mid-flight, hitting the ring my mother had given me on my right hand. The ring glowed brightly under the cover of darkness. I shut my eyes against the fierce glow, and darkness filled my mind as I crashed into the depths of the sea.

Want to continue the journey?

Read
Under the Cover of Darkness:
Book One
Before reading the First!

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