

Sneak Peek

The First

By

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Chapter One

Qayya

Have you ever wondered why many people go through so much each and every day? The struggles they experience in their lives...I believe in a higher power and have faith that something is out there that is bigger than me, than everyone. However, one thing I can't seem to wrap my mind around is, why?

Why all the destruction, pain, chaos, and death? Why must I live in a world where I'm judged not by the kindness of my heart and actions, but in a world where one must suffer because of the pigmentation of one's skin, sex, or beliefs.

To live in a world where children have been snatched away from their parents at

birth; or separated from their families to make a profit. An existence where if I dared open my mouth to speak my mind, I would be punished by those who rule. So, what do I do...sit back and watch women like myself—forced into submission by wicked and treacherous men? Or swallow the fear which was beaten into me since the age of three? Definitely *not* the latter.

Which is why I'm currently tied to three other women as we await our *death sentence*. That's right, I'm standing in long dirty white torn clothes, covered in dirt and bruises. My feet were bare, scraped and blackened; wrist and mouth were bound. My long thick black hair carried tree leaves and mud. The three ladies next to me were shaking beyond reason. I should also be in tears, trembling, with my heart trying to break out of my chest, yet I'm not doing any

of those things—because unlike the ladies next to me—I welcome death.

Do I want to die? Of course not.

However, I can no longer take the abuse, not just the physical, but emotional and mental torment, I've endured *each and every* day. How much longer will I have to put up with Malice and his men? Until they take every ounce of life I have left? I prefer to go out with a little pride, rather than like my mother who was ripped apart and left soulless until they showed mercy and slit her throat, teaching me the lesson—*Do as you're told or you too will meet your mother's fate.*

That happened many years ago before I reached womanhood. Yet, not before a man touched me. Now, whenever a man glances my way, I shiver and tense up at the thought of him physically placing hands on me. That is what this world has

done to me. If I thought for a moment that I could live in a world where terrible things didn't happen, I wouldn't welcome my future fate so effortlessly.

The doors to the dungeons opened, breaking me out of my train of thought. "Rukay?" called a harsh voice. The demon must not have been that smart, or he could see that I cannot answer with my mouth tied. I grunted. He finally realized no one could speak and came closer to untie my bruised lips. "Which of you four parasites is Rukay?" he asked again.

I met the dark, cold gaze of the man who said my name with such spite and answered, "It's Ruqayyah." I tried to sound strong, but it came out as a croak. I tried to think back to when was the last time that I had any water.

"Don't talk back! Follow me," he snapped. Dragging the heavy chains which

bonded my hands and feet, it felt like minutes had already passed by the time I reached the front of the small cell. The demon roughly released my sore wrists and ankles. "If you move out of line, I'll kill you on the spot." I bit back the part where I was about to die anyway. Maybe it was from years of submission and learning not to talk back, or how my mother always warned me about my tongue. So, I didn't say anything.

"You dumb parasites always getting into trouble," he ranted. "You're not even smart enough to do as you're told...bet you think you're going to try and run."

I glared at him as he chuckled and declared (since I was going to die anyway), "I wouldn't dream of it." He slapped me hard across the face.

"I thought I told you not to talk back. No wonder you're getting put to death, you

don't listen, now move it!" The pain from his hand still stung my cheek, and blood dripped from my split lip, but I refused to cry in his presence.

As I walked behind him, I reached into my clothing and grasped the ring my mother gave me. I had never worn it. I'd always kept it hidden, in case a demon tried to take it. The thought of selling it for food had crossed my mind a few times, but I could never bring myself to do it.

I viewed the guard and noticed he was not paying me any mind, and I glanced back down at the ring. It bore a gold band, with four separate colored crystals, divided by diamonds. It was exquisite. Placing the ring onto my right finger, it glowed, and a pleasant warmth embraced my heart. A tear slid down my face while I thought about how I'll have my mother with me as I join her in death.

Outside, the crescent moon and stars glowed in the night. Mt. Imarcu was a large island, in its center held a spot where many *factions* enforced their torture and punishment on others. They wanted everyone to witness what would happen if they stood out of line—death. Villagers were compelled to observe as they forced me to the center, where a massive fire burned in the chilly night.

Shivering in part from the cold night, and a bit from the fear that I had unexpectedly begun to experience. I would be lying if I wasn't a tad afraid, not of dying but of what happens after. Taking a deep breath, I forced myself to ignore the ache in my chest and awaited my fate.

I stood 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 for being 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.”

The blood in my veins ran cold, Malice! For the first time that day, I shook violently, and my heart twisted. Not in fear, but in utter anger.

Malice was the Dark Lord who tortured and murdered my mother ruthlessly in front of me many years ago. Straightening up tall, I gulped back the bile that threatened to surface as Malice strolled up to the center. He was tall, yet burly, with cold black eyes and long black hair. The atmosphere in the clearing shifted, and fear roamed the area. Even the sky promptly altered from clear skies to stormy weather.

No one spoke, Malice's demeanor spoke volumes. The only sound heard in the vicinity were the drops of rain beginning to fall. Malice bore a mark along the side of his neck of a snake that I had never seen before. He met my gaze, and another shiver went down my spine. Grinning wickedly, Malice said, "Tonight, we must execute four women who disobeyed the laws I have set up to make this world more...durable. I give you food, clothes, and shelter. In return, you are only asked to work off your debt and follow the laws I have put into place to keep everyone on the same page." Again no one dared to speak.

"Don't blame me for your inability to listen and follow the rules. You put this on your own selves. If I do not punish you, we would have a society where things would

get out of hand and chaotic, a world you do not want to live in.”

The wind picked up and began blowing through my hair. The waves of the sea started to splash in a vigorous manner. Thunder and lightning streaked the sky as Malice finished his speech, cheers rang from his demonic followers.

Without warning, two strong over-sized hands lifted me from the ground. My pulse increased by the second as they dragged me across the terrain. Malice placed a cold hand around my slim neck, while my right eye twitched uncontrollably. I summoned as much saliva as I could in my dry mouth and spit on his smug face. Satisfaction coursed within me as fury blazed in his dark eyes. Malice’s fist met my face, and pain struck me for a third time that night. Except, I didn’t care—rage, disgust, and *malice* came over me. Without worrying

about the consequences, I scratched his haughty face with all I had. Blood appeared on his cheek, and gasps rippled through the night.

We stared at one another, and a glimmer of rage and lightning flashed across his face. Seething, Malice tossed me to the *earth*, and all the air left my lungs. Covered in part dirt, and a portion of blood, my body throbbed. I endured the aching pain but did not move. Trying to focus on breathing, I kept my golden-brown eyes closed, until hands gripped my body once more, yanking me towards the water. Thunder boomed as Malice smiled. He leaned over and whispered into my right ear. “Too bad, you’ll never know why I killed your mother.”

My eyes expanded as I met his gaze, and I tensed up. My heart stopped, and the blood drained from my face. “If you see

your mother again, you can ask her why.”
Then he sent a ball of fire into my body.
Shocked from his words, I didn't notice the
heated blaze coming towards me until I felt
the flames on my body. The force of the
power tossed me into the *air*, and I
screamed as the *fire* consumed my body.
Lightning struck mid-flight, hitting the ring
my mother gave me, and part of my body.
The ring beamed brightly in the night, I
shut my eyes from the fierce glow, and
darkness filled my mind as I crashed into
the deep *sea*.