

Path to False Innocence

by Faiza Hussain

Is it safer here in a confined home or outside in a world that hates my people? Mom seems to think so since she always tells me that every day. 'It not safe for a child with magic in a world ruled by those without' What would she know?! I just want to be outside so badly! Why can't she let me have this one thing?!

Sonia thought when her mother grabbed her by the hand. The air tensed as the redhead curly haired woman dressed galaxy designed sundress, glared at her daughter. Sonia didn't look upward as she struggled to get outside of her mother harsh grip on her hand. Instead, her mother bent down and shook her daughter by her shoulders. She raised her hand as if to slap her daughter but decided against it. The only thing Sonia did was look down thinking to herself with tears threatening to come down thinking to herself. Stupid Mom! Why is she always like this?! I didn't do anything wrong! Stupid maid! It's their fault for stopping me! I would have burned the curtain and see the outside! Instead, they are always acting like snitches! I can't even talk to mom since she going to punish me! She so scary when she mad!

"Sonia..."

"Momma, don't be mad! I just wanted to open the window. It too hot so I wanted to open the window for some fresh air." Sonia rambled getting defensive. Her body felt cold, shaky. It was as if she couldn't breathe. She didn't want to talk to her mother but she knew that no matter what there was no winning.

“Sonia! Don’t you interrupt me when I am talking! You know that what you did wrong! You tried to go outside and you also burnt that poor young maid hands when she stopped you! Besides what would you know, you stupid child, about fresh air when you never got to breathe the outside air?! There nothing fresh about that air! I should have your father remove those damn windows!” Sonia flinched as her mom yelled.

“It not my fault that she scared me!” Sonia wanted to yank her hair.

There never was any way of winning with her. Instead, all she had was these windows that were barred from the inside with a lock to prevent her from opening it or even pulling the blinds. The locked door and windows taunted her. A whole world outside her home and not once throughout the eight years she existed did she see it. She could only imagine what it is like. A world where other people existed. Would she meet other people like her?

“This world is too dangerous! You are Nai living in a Sanki’s world. If only you weren’t born with these damn green markings on your skin than you would have been able to hide that you have magic. You are Zedur’s gift to the ungrateful Sanki.” Sonia’s mother sighed at her daughter. How many times did she have this conversation? She wanted to smack some sense into her redhead daughter.

“But you and dad are Sanki!” Sonia protested.

“But we are your parents. The only Sanki you can trust are the ones in this home. We are only doing this to protect you. I can’t bear the thought of you getting hurt. No... No! It better if you never leave home!”

Sonia wasn’t sure what to believe. Mom and dad are always allowed to leave home to the outside but never her. Even the maids could leave. Dad wasn’t even home often! Mom is

always saying things like “Oh dad has to because of his ‘political position’ whatever that means. Mom never tells me anything! I am not a child! Every time she would ask her mom, all she would get was a smile. Every. Single. Time. Always a different response to her questions. It was almost a game to Sonia about what new response her mother would tell her.

“Why can’t dad be here?” She asked the winning question. As always, her mother smiled a smile that was almost snake-like.

“Sonia, your dad can’t obviously be with seen with a child like you silly. After all, if he was seen with you then he loses his position and it would be known that he has a daughter! You are our precious little secret. It better this way, isn’t it? After all, you get to be with mommy.” There was always something about those final words that made Sonia shutter.

“I suppose.” Sonia grabbed the bottom of her dress. She was trying not to cry as her mother dragged her to that room. She wanted to stop her mom but she knew it would do nothing to help it.

“Sonia, I know that you want to go outside but if people knew they wouldn’t be kindhearted. You are born different in a world that hateful to other people.”

“Then why doesn’t dad do something?!”

“And have him get killed for that?! Sonia, you are never going outside! If I must, I will get the handcuffs.”

Sonia stayed quiet. She didn’t want the handcuff again. She knew that her mother wouldn’t understand. There must be people that want the Nai to be treated like people. Like those heroes in the storybooks. Instead, she puts her in secured rooms with cameras watching her

every move. She hated being in her own bedroom. A room that she attempted to burn with her powers only to have her mother fireproof the room. Now it a room filled to the brim with toys that she outgrown with no windows at all with cameras on every corner of the room. She looked at her mother as if to pleading but her mother told her again that it was too dangerous to have her see the world before shutting the door. Sonia would have rushed to leave but the sound of the locking of the door made her stop. Sonia wanted to destroy everything the damn stupid room the moment she rushed inside. Her eyes searched for a victim when her eyes came upon her stuff animal. Her hand grabbed her stuff horned toy Bramre that sat on her bed smiling a crooked sad smile, the kind of smile that said, "I am trying to be fine so please don't hurt me." So innocent yet always taking the blunt of Sonia's anger. Her grip so harsh caused a large tearing noise. Fire erupted from her hand as her markings glowed. The fire burst as the arm of the toy started to catch the flame. The screams of the tiritis seemed almost as if bramre, itself, was screaming. It was as if the tiritis were experiencing their death again as Sonia was burnt the limb.

"The pain!"

"Stop it, please! My arm is burning!"

"Someone save us!"

It didn't matter that the stuff bramre wasn't saying anything. Ever since Sonia set foot outside the voices, the screams didn't stop. Now everywhere she went they stood there and watched her every goddamn move! Those nameless tiritis haunted her as much as that her bramre that has been with her since childhood. Even though she was now an adult, but she sure didn't feel like it. Her mother hid her from this world. Nothing prepared her for it when Máirín showed her the outside world. Máirín's words was that as her only Nai-friend or rather her only friend

that she needed Sonia to see the world she romanticized. Máirín was convinced that the real evil lied in the non-magical Sanki and she wanted Sonia to understand that.

“Bramre it would be better if you weren’t born into this world. This life is something else. Home is just terrible but that world I went outside too was...”

It was cruel, since all her life she dreamt of this world that flowery and filled to the brim with pink and black grass as far as you can see. Instead, it a world with streets paved with blood stain outside her hometown. Walls that barricade her hometown fill to the brim with the wealthy. Her hometown so beautiful and clean while the rest filled with Nai beggars and tiritis. It was the first time that Sonia saw tiritis, they were just downright horrifying with wounds from their death. Some were kids with faces burnt off. When Sonia told Máirín, she looked horrified and tried to explain to Sonia about how acid throwing is often used when it comes to hate crimes against Nai. The cops don’t do much to help us Nai. It didn't matter if it was right in front of them. That poor woman screamed as those Sanki beat her without anyone help. Máirín stopped Sonia yelped when one of the tiritis grabbed her. Apparently, she was the only one who can see them, could hear and touch them. They looked at her as if she was some savior sent by Zedur. A savior who was too late to save them. She didn’t stop her reaction until the door opened with a slam.

Soon enough a maid rushed into the room and took Bramre from her. The limb burnt off as the maid rushed to fix Bramre. Sonia watched horrified as the maid brought another stuffed animal, tearing its arm off and began to stitch the limb to Bramre. All she could see was those tiritis who die. Their screams of pain as the process happened in front of them. Once she got her bramre back, Sonia could no longer handle herself.

“Bramre please make it stop! Make it go away! You were supposed to protect me!” She cried for one of the first few times in years. Her cries are mixing with the tirit’s screams.