

Sweet music circulated through the ball, people dressed in extravagant attire streamed into the grand room. A girl sat outside in the courtyard, flowers hung from the cobblestone archways above her. People surrounded her, offering gifts. The constant praise seemed to stress the girl. Politely, she turned each of them down. She chuckled and shook hands, each of her movements careful and precise as if carrying the weight of the world. The princess was soon to be an empress, with the death of her mother she had no choice but to ascend the throne. "Metris!" A girl called out and ran to the princess, knocking over objects "excited?" The girl smiled at the princess warmly as she crawled onto the stone bench beside her.

"Sister," Metris chuckled and embraced her "you know you can't act so rash..." Metris brushed her sister's wild red hair out of her face.

"But it's your big day!" Metris's sister jumped down from the marbled bench and twirled around. Metris looked around self consciously and pulled her sister, Mira, to her.

"Come, let's go inside, perhaps you'll find something to eat" Metris led Mira into the ball. Without hesitation Mira skipped over to the desserts section, cookies, puddings, pies and lavish cakes sat in a wide array. Mira quickly stuffed her face with the treats "happy?" Metris looked at Mira and chuckled

"mhm" Mira mumbled, waving her away. Metris sighed with relief and slipped away. A woman dressed in all white and gold approached her.

"Are you ready for the ceremony, your majesty?" The woman dipped her head.

"I guess.. I mean- of course.." Metris smiled

"After you," Metris inhaled sharply and started up the stairs of the great room, they spiraled into an overhang. She towered over the participants of the ball, they looked up to her faithfully then bowed their heads. Metris looked at the woman before her sternly and held out her hands. The woman placed a sword in her left hand, and a book in her right. Each represented what Metris must display as an empress, the sword for courage, bravery and governing, the book for knowledge, intellect and judgment. It was a well known fact across the kingdom of Sedarina that these items represented an empress's attributes, so the guests needed no further explanation. Metris closed her eyes and kneeled down, her trusted handmaidens walked over to her holding a crown. Its jewels

glistened, golden drapery hung down. The entire ball seemed intrigued, even Mira had stopped indulging in the deserts. Metris breathed in as the crown was placed over her head, it weighed her down and she faltered as she lifted her head. The crowd erupted into applause

“Queen Metris, queen Metris!” they shouted. The orchestra, located on another great stage of the ballroom, began playing again. Metris eyed her handmaiden with relief “I don’t think I’ve ever been so nervous in my life” Her handmaiden, Rosemary, smiled and hugged her

“This ball is for you! Let’s dance!” Rosemary took her hands and led her down the stairwell. Quickly, Mira skipped over.

“My big sister, an empress!” her face was covered in sprinkles and frosting. Metris looked at Rosemary and giggled

“Here,” Mira looked annoyed as Rosemary wiped her face.

“Rosemary and I are going to stay up a bit later, time for you to get to bed!” Metris snapped her fingers and two servants scurried over

“your majesty?” they dipped their heads.

“Please, escort the princess to her room, it’s far past her bedtime” Metris smiled and ruffled Mira’s hair.

“Of course, your majesty” Mira looked annoyed as the servants led her from the ball. Rosemary then looked at Metris

“come! Let’s dance!” Participants gathered for a toast, Rosemary poured Metris sakura juice, its petals gleaming pink. Metris narrowed her eyes at the few strands of electrically purple hair in her drink, shrugged and drank it. Hours passed, the festivities continued. By the time the sun had risen they had finally ceased. Metris stumbled to a stairwell and leaned on it

“Perhaps too much spinning, but ugh. The room is spinning now. . .” Rosemary held onto Metris’s arm

“ Metris? Are you alright- ?” She thought for a moment then looked at Metris “how could the sakura juice hurt you? I made it myself in the kitchen. The councilors had ordered for only the best petals” Metris groaned

“Come to think of it, my glass was rather-” She was interrupted by Two guards who had caught sight of her

“Is her majesty alright?” they looked at Metris with concern. Rosemary butted in “She seems alright, just tired. Take her to her room, order for a doctor” Hesitantly they helped Metris up. A servant stood by the door, her eyes widened at the state of the empress

“Are you alright, your majesty?!” She looked shocked.

“What.. oh yes, of course, just tired is all,” her eyes scanned the crowded room, worried faces stared at her “you all may leave” They looked at each other then bowed and hurried off. Metris trembled, her eyes darting around the room. “Just Sakura juice, that’s all it was..” A blurry image appeared in her mind, the silhouette of something- or someone pouring a kind of powder into her drink. She breathed heavily and fell to the ground “I need-” Metris trembled as her voice trailed off. Some time later A servant knocked on the door

“Hello your majesty, may I come in?” There was no answer. “Your majesty..?” She thought for a moment before carefully opening the door. Upon noticing the empress she rushed over “The empress is hurt!” Guards, servants and doctors flooded into the room, two guards lifted her onto the bed. Mira stumbled in, wiping tears

“Metris!” She yelled and rushed to her side. The doctor looked at Mira with annoyance as she tugged at Metris. Two guards took Mira and held her back

“let the doctor work, miss..” Mira sniffled and backed up. The doctor sighed

“she was poisoned. . .” he lowered two small droplets of shimmering red berry juice onto her eyelids, dispersing, they soaked into her veins and within seconds she rose.

Mira ran over, hugging her. Metris clutched her head and sighed. Her eyes seemed to light up a crimson red, due to the after effects of the treatment. The doctor bowed, dipping his hat. “We are happy to see that you're alright,” Metris rubbed her eyes. The doctor then breathed in “we assume you’ve been poisoned.. Do you know of anyone suspicious, your majesty?” Metris lifted her head quickly

“Poison? Do you think I'm gullible, doctor?” She narrowed her eyes at the doctor, annoyed with the assumption. He sensed the threat in her voice

“hm.. Perhaps you just need rest- “ She got up swiftly  
“I’m the empress, I’m fine..” Mira held her hand “Please have breakfast made for Princess Mira and I..” She walked down the stairs entering the lovely dining room, a flowering golden chandelier hung from the ceiling, cherubic faces lined the golden rims of the ceiling. Rosemary, who had been dusting, caught sight of the two and hurried over “Metris!” she curtsied “word had got around that you were poisoned..” She took a deep breath and leaned into Metris “you're alright now, aren't you?” Mira glared at Rosemary with loathing, Metris giggled and shooed Mira away  
“of course, i'm quite alright..” Rosemary smoothed Metris's hair.  
“good, well I suppose you're hungry, right?” Metris nodded  
“We should wait for Mira-” Rosemary interrupted  
“no, no! I insist we eat together, in the courtyard!” Rosemary took Metris's hand and led her outside. Two guards looked at them then at each other. Rosemary pulled out a seat, Metris sat by her. The guards watched from afar. Rosemary crossed her hands and looked at Metris “I've prepared this for you.. “ she took the lid of a dish. A white cake sat on the platter, blue frosting oozed from the cake. Metris looked intrigued  
“This is lovely! Thank you” She looked at Rosemary tenderly and smiled. A messenger bursted into the room, Rosemary glared at him. Out of breath, the servant pulled a long letter from his satchel  
“an urgent message for the empress!” It read: “Your majesty, the empress. You are required to attend a meeting with the council for a problem that has arisen. We hope to see you at today's council meeting.  
Thank you, your majesty,  
-Counselor Warren, Redwood, Tunica, Setemawren, Oxynfeld and McTanre”  
Metris rolled up the letter and passed it to the messenger  
“Thank you” The messenger bowed and scurried away. Rosemary took Metris's arm  
“But- can't you stay, please?” Metris narrowed her eyes and glanced down at Rosemary's hand which dug into hers. Rosemary had caught sight of her glare and let go quickly. Hastily, Metris got up and looked at Rosemary

“I’ll be back soon. . .” She scanned the room “then we can resume the picnic” She looked at her reassuringly. Rosemary nodded and moved from Metris’s way. Large golden encrusted doors flung open, a large council sat at an adorned round table, each looked over with surprise at the young empress and got up. Metris sat down “you may all be seated” They all sat down. Metris sighed and looked around, a chandelier sparkled overhead “The council has requested to see me, what is the problem?” A councilor raised her hand. “Yes councilor Redwood?” Redwood rose to her feet “with all due respect your majesty, “ she drew a breath “we believe there to be a traitor in our midst” Metris nodded “go on” “The day you were poisoned, what had you eaten- or drank” Metris narrowed her eyes “I couldn’t recall everything I had consumed on that night, it was quite a bit- “ “You’re in denial” Redwood added plainly, her eyes had seemed to pierce Metris. The other councilors looked shocked. “A commonly served drink was Black Rose preserves, but the servants could never recall you liking it, so you didn’t drink it.” Metris looked on edge “So who do you suppose poisoned me, councilor?” “You had Sakura juice, who had prepared it that night, especially for you?” Metris sneered “My handmaiden- Rosemary, but she-” Her expression quickly turned to hatred. “How dare you accuse my handmaiden?!” Metris clenched her teeth and stormed up to Redwood. The counselor looked unfazed “Do you deny Rosemary making your drink?” Metris widened her eyes, the realization had hit her. “It can’t be. . . I had known her since I was a child, she’s always been my friend” Redwood straightened her collar and eyed Metris “I recommend an execution, for your sake” Metris nodded, fighting tears. Meanwhile in the courtyard Rosemary sat, awaiting her friend. Metris bursted into the courtyard, several guards trailed behind her carrying heavy swords. Rosemary got up, shocked.

"You're under arrest for the attempted murder of Empress Metris," Metris stepped forth, glaring hatefully.

Rosemary knocked over a chair, backing away with horror, though seeming overly animated.

"A offense punishable by death" Metris hissed as guards shackled Rosemary. Her eyes dilated

"Metris, I did nothing of the sort! You know me, I'm your best friend" She stuttered looking for the right words. Metris waved away the guards, they dragged Rosemary away. Metris shook and stumbled, adjusting herself on the stone bench. Redwood walked in and sat by Metris, who had been crying on the bench. She sighed and adjusted her hair covering, electric strands of purple hair peeked through her covering. Redwood smiled in an attempt to comfort the empress

"I'm so grateful that you trust me, you always can" Redwood shook her head with distaste "That Rosemary had always been feeding you lies, lies that I'm 'Untrustworthy' Isn't that terrible?" Metris curled into herself and looked away, the glint of Redwood's purple hair caught her eye. She reached out and touched her hair, Redwood pulled away quickly "Oh! Isn't it pretty? My servant did it for me a while ago-" Metris narrowed her eyes

"I remember that night, electric purple hair in my drink" She observed it "that poisoned drink. . ." Redwood flinched.

Redwood breathed heavily, sweat dripping from her brow "It was Rosemary!" She struggled to speak. "she had been lying to you the whole time, she never cared about you!" Redwood got up and paced around Metris as a shark would its prey. Redwood glared "And don't forget her conspiracies about how your mother died-" Metris grabbed Redwoods collar

"Don't ever mention my mother, you're pathetic. . ." Redwood sighed calmly and lifted Metris's hand from her collar

"I suppose you have me all figured out then," She grinned. "I did try to poison you. I suppose I can finish the job, right here, right now" Swiftly, she reached for her dagger when suddenly Rosemary and her guards stepped forth. The guards encircled Redwood,

aiming their swords. Rosemary walked by Redwood and smiled slyly. Metris walked towards Redwood "So this was a setup?" Redwood glared and dug her hands into the carpet. Metris didn't answer.

"Take her away" The guards ripped Redwood from Metris. Rosemary nodded casually, stepping over the struggling Redwood

"I told you" Metris chuckled and looked out from the courtyard

"From the purple hair, I suppose you were right," she sighed. Rosemary then looked disturbed

"and if it wasn't her?" Metris looked over

"Then I'd assume it was you, but Redwood wasn't clever enough to fool me that you poisoned me, I did need proof though" Rosemary then sighed and sat by Metris

"Well the whole kingdom has their proof now" Rosemary thought for a moment before smiling mischievously "Does this mean I can take Redwood's place?" Metris glared playfully

"Don't push it" They laughed, though being empress was hard Metris knew she always had a friend to rely on.