

Chapter 1

Moorrose stood before her closet attempting to make the hardest decision of her short unexplored lifetime. Red or blue. Thousands of strange permutations of the one incendiary emotion came to mind, each trying to quash the other with rational intellectualization hoping to silence the shame. She had failed, she had lost a ceremonial war none believed she could win, herself included. But the point of the icicle had solidified within her chest, now that the results had been announced, reminding her that a conceptual failure - however often it had played through her mind - could not capture the all-encompassing cold of reality.

Today was the coronation of her sister, Isamora, who would become the Matriat Nojat, the successor to the Matriat, her mother. She could watch the parallel scene from the false distance of her mind, hoping to outwit the pain of reality through objectivity. However, she was searching for both objectivity and reality through the fiction of her imagination. Isamora would not waste her mind upon such quandaries, she reminded herself, though still noting her active participation in the same trap of logic that simultaneously paralyzed and violated her all-too-conscious consciousness.

The dresses, she pointedly shifted her gaze to the external. One blue, one red. Neither willing to bend in its conviction of unresolved brightness. Muted tones would be more appropriate for this occasion. Invoke the dust white of the line of Nort, signaling the end, what has already passed. However, musing on The Lines of Fate Moorrose felt antiquated in the disjointedly secular city of Mar-bet. She reminded herself, daintily fiddling over the lines woven into her dressing gown, that the more rural constitutes had elected to believe in not only The Lines of Fate but their elusive Weaver, both edifying and irritating the The High Woven; who commended them for their faith but resented them for their lack of devotion to her and the monetary gain of the ceremonial incenses, which had only recently become popular and lucrative - but only for a city believer searching for quick salvation, those in the outer towns remained sated by base customs, a fiscal disappointment to be sure.

Moorrose had gleaned that much off of The High Woven from many dinner parties of attempting to learn her birth name. It had been fruitless, no one who became Woven retained or repeated something so individualistic after departure from society in lieu of studying the lines. Isamora had dared her to, offering not only the prize of sisterly love, but the all too elusive beacon of respect. Moorrose in her predictable failure only gained shame and distance.

In truth the speculative color of the dresses mattered not, the consequences of the color would only produce a ripple in the lines of fate and the great chain of history. Simply a subject for gossip to be traded in the lively social currency of the city's opinion. Only the test before her truly mattered. It had to be her mother. Moorrose's clothes were curated each piece laid before her with care and the expectation of obedience, choice was never offered, only eluded to with the prospect of power, but power was taken not given and certainly not handled by your mother in the confidence of her propaganda master.

In short she'd never had a choice before. Well maybe if she had been like her sister, Isamora, she would've forged her own choice, but Moorrose had suffered from an abundance of trust and lack of understanding, that changing the game meant usurping the great test she was trapped in. However, it could've simply resulted in greater shame and it could never be proven if Isamora had curated her own image and Moorrose would never ask. Sisterhood ended with the beginning of the great test, though no one seemed willing to name it for what it was, labeling it as a vote of the people and if the people remained occupied by good trade, technological advancement, and pretty dresses to discuss they could believe it was. She wondered how many fell for the ruse, the gentle ploy of the monarchy to retain its relevance and remind the

ever-expanding church that The Lines of Fate wasn't the only sculptor of the collective conscience.

So what would it be, red or blue? Moorrose could hear her makeup artists, dressers, and hair stylists pacing outside the door, exchanging a fleeting muttered comment with veiled congeniality. Time was not an ally this morning. She stared onward at the dresses, forcing her eyes to eat the volumes of symbol woven into each stand, coming to the simple conclusion: Red was the moon of Majet, only read by The High Woven. The heavenly body's waning into darkness marked the beginning and end of each year, and the time of darkness being the time of all great reading from The High Woven, six prophecies for the new year and one for the great chain of history. Blue, however, was the fleeting Noctou moon, each month a new round of personal prophecies and possibilities. So what would Moorrose be, old, noble and inscrutable? Putting forth the ever so subtle jab that she was beyond the reading and reach of commoners. Or would she be blue, quick to fall into darkness and rise again, impatient, flighty, and irrevocably common? Neither were particularly flattering, but in the third of the 17 month year, the blue Noctou moon was on the rise, despite its continuous wax and wane its upward trajectory across the sky was clear. The red Majet moon's path was a constant one. Upon this realization Moorrose knew which one had been chosen for her to choose, but Moorrose also knew how to disappoint.

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