

The story so far-

Snowblind

Lanna and her family arrive in the empire hoping to make a new life for themselves away from the oppression of their clan. Due to Freya's injured feet they have to stop in the first village they come to- 892

There they find a place to live and acceptance as long as they adapt to the imperial way of life. As field hands, their strength and resilience makes them welcome additions to the village.

Lanna soon finds herself on the marriage market and the Headman's son, Hemil, is the first to send the match maker to her. Lanna and her family decide to give Hemil a chance, but he falls short of Lanna's southern expectations and ends up insulting her. Through persistence he wins her back and she agrees to his betrothal.

Lanna's family have no coin for a bride price, so Hemil concocts a scheme where he steals from his own parents in order for Lanna to pay to be married.

All seems to be going well, until Lanna suffers a seizure while working in a rice field. An imperial caravan is passing at the time and this attracts the attention of Chowa- the First Chemist of the Emperor.

Chowa removes Lanna from her family and Hemil against her will and they begin a long journey to the palace.

During that time the caravan is attacked by rebels, Chowa poisons Lanna to teach her a lesson in careful work and Lanna's womb is purged because she had sex with Hemil before marriage and she cannot be allowed to have a child at the palace.

On arriving at the First City Lanna beholds the wonders of ages past and what humans were once capable of making. She enters the flower hall, home of the concubines, to assist Chowa in her work. The Emperor changes her name to Li.

Slowly Lanna becomes aware there is a 'presence' that haunts her thoughts, but it seems to be attempting to help her.

After adjusting to her new role, Lanna manages to anger Ceseed, the ninth concubine. Ceseed attempts to humiliate Lanna, but her attempt is derailed by the support of Itzander the princess of Haven.

Ashioto bids Lanna to come to his rooms and tests a truth formula on her. He gets a little more truth than he would like and strikes her. To compensate for this, he gives her the easy job of overseeing the last of his immunity programme.

Lanna suffers a seizure after the presence connects to her mind and asks for freedom. After recovery Lanna continues to serve Ashioto but manages to almost choke on a lemon and for the first time she realises just how attracted to Ashioto she is.

Her seizures increase in severity. Chowa comes clean about her reasons in bringing her to the palace. Lanna could be a Seer. Someone who can help keep the emperor safe.

Ashioto issues his first edict. It appears a minor change to the economy, but it is actually quite radical. Lanna is asked to dance at the celebration and later Ashioto asks for her opinion on the edict.

After another seizure Ashioto's true character is revealed. He is cold, calculating and burning to rule and change the nation. His feckless attitude is a front to avoid removal from the throne. With Lanna as Seer he could rule the nation as he saw fit and gain back some of the past glory of the empire.

Lanna agrees to become Seer and the book ends with Ashioto presenting her to the Hall of Law.

Icedancer

Lanna is trying to buy meat from the kitchens. This is illegal and she is trying to be stealthy and failing. She gets a slight injury, apparently by accident but obtains dried meat and leaves. The presence in her mind warns that her blood had just been sampled. Lanna goes to tell Chowa but instead finds Ashioto in the workshop. He orders her checked for poison.

Lanna later finds the woman she bought the meat from is dead.

The presence in her mind is more able to communicate now she is Seer and Lanna finds out he is called Lucas.

Ashioto seems much more attentive to Lanna, and she is shocked when he asks for her hand in marriage. He gives her a wax seal with instructions to snap it if she wants to wed him. Lanna asks for time to consider.

To help Lanna open her mind and use the Seers implant, Chowa takes her to the Observists. She is taught better meditation techniques at the observatory.

Usia, one of Ashioto's sword-maidens, attempts to assassinate him. The head of Legislature, Ethaan saves the emperor.

Lanna and Itzander visit Usia in prison before her execution. They find out that the assassination was organised by Ashioto's sister. Ethaan allows Lanna to leave a bit of metal in the woman's cell so she may end her life herself rather than face an execution.

Ashioto catches up with Lanna, proving he can track her movements. He loses his temper, but Lanna stands her ground in the face of his anger.

A few days later Lanna is captured and hidden in a cellar. Ethaan's elite guards rescue her, but Ashioto is also there to aid them.

Ashioto takes Lanna to his chambers and gives her poppy to ease her pain. He is giving her a bath when Ceseed bursts in and sees them together. Lanna is instructed to keep her kidnap secret but her time in Ashioto's chamber becomes palace gossip.

Ceseed and several other concubines threaten Lanna, but she rejects their efforts publicly in front of the entire Flower Hall. Chowa scolds her for this and Lanna decides to get some petty revenge by breaking into Chowa's laboratory. There, Lanna finds Lucas a captive being experimented on by Chowa. Lucas reprograms Lanna's implant with his blood meaning he can connect his mind more firmly to Lanna's.

Chowa tells Lanna that Lucas is a captured Augmented, the race that almost wiped out Lanna's four hundred years ago. Though Lucas denies this, he won't give specifics while still a prisoner.

Terrified, Lanna refuses to sleep until she can block Lucas from her dreams. The visions of his home and people must be lies. She goes for five days without sleep until Ashioto notices and makes her rest. Frez becomes her new assistant to ensure she takes care of herself.

Itzander calls Lanna to her chambers and reveals that Ashioto called Lanna's name when he was with Itzander. She begs Lanna to become a concubine. Lanna refuses.

Lanna is given wider access to the palace and can now visit the hall of discipline where the guards are trained. Ashioto arrives and spars with Ethaan. Ashioto is injured and demands Lanna attend him. He kisses her and she runs from him.

Edicts are issued at the winter solstice, three of them including the right for immigrants to own property. This sounds like Lanna has influenced Ashioto's decisions. Ceseed is stripped of her ranked status, and this is also seen as something Lanna has ordered.

Later, Ashioto loses his temper and asks why Lanna is delaying in her decision to wed him. He threatens to force her to choose.

In an attempt to foil Ashioto's plans, Lanna tries to keep Ceseed in the palace by making her an assistant in the Hall of Law, but she suffers a seizure and Ceseed is blamed for this and is forced to leave the palace.

While unconscious Lucas reveals more of his background and how the observist order is actually a mechanism of augmented control all over Pler.

Ethaan also reveals himself as an observist.

Lanna finally decides she will marry the emperor, but she bargains for several concessions, including Hemil's letters that Ashioto has hidden from her and control of Chowa's research in the imperial archive.

Lanna reads Hemil's letters and realises the horrific state of the village she left behind and vows to help. Ethaan meets her and she discovers not only has Ashioto called Mika, (Hemil's sister) to the palace to be a concubine, but he has refused aid to dozens of villages, 892 included.

Ashioto announces their engagement and orders Lanna into seclusion to await marriage. Lanna allies herself with Ethaan to dethrone the emperor.