

Excerpt of *The Sapphire Eruption - The Sword's Choice* series

Vienne approached Crystalline. It was a beautiful sword. Her blade was slightly, almost imperceptibly blue. The blackish grip was long enough to accommodate both of her hands. And the silvery quillons were short and perpendicular to the blade, while the wheel pommel was decorated with an interlaced ornament.

Then she picked her up, it was a light sword. She held her with her delicate little hands and, with a bored gesture, used the sword to touch the water. Without waiting, she shrugged while proceeding to leave the sword in its place, on the small altar, another day more. The worst thing about not having any princess chosen yet was that she would have to do the same thing tomorrow. She was about to turn around when something strange happened. Her eyes could not stop looking at the water. What ought to have been small ripples formed from steel touching water happened to become a whirlpool... which gradually grew bigger. Vienne turned away, but it was too late. The whirlwind had caught her. It was beginning to drag her to the bottom. The water was submerging her so she tried to stand on her feet, keeping her balance to avoid being drawn under while unsuccessfully looking for something to cling to. But the whirl did not stop its effort, dragging her harder until it finally managed to overtake her. Vienne tried to scream for help, but she couldn't. The whirlpool dragged her completely under. The water silenced her screams. This lasted for only a few seconds, which for Vienne seemed like years. It all ended with a thunderous explosion. The water shot out in all directions, revealing a clear path to the shore. Then, after a brief pause, the shoreline disappeared. The room had returned to normal.

Igüenza opened the door, alarmed. She had anticipated what had happened. With a cry of amazement and joy, she approached Vienne and hugged her while sobbing. Vienne was completely shocked and scared, too much to understand what had just happened, or perhaps frightened precisely *because of* what had just happened. Crystalline had chosen her heiress. The Lacrima.

"It's over, dear, it's over," Igüenza whispered sweetly as she combed Vienne's hair with her old bony fingers. Vienne returned her hug and tried to hold back her tears, without success.

The ten soldiers of the Royal Guard made the Aquo reverence and stood in position, motionless. Her sisters looked at her and exchanged glances between them, more than aware of what had just happened. The majority of them did not know how to feel, as something that had become their day-to-day routine—performing the ritual of the passage of water, as it was called—had come to an end. Many of them felt happy for their sister, Aienne looked particularly proud of Vienne, others envied her, some felt sorry. Not so in the case of her older sister, Katienne, whose nails were pressing so tightly against her palms she had started to bleed.

Her world of fantasy was crumbling in front of her. She had hoped to be the heiress, and not without reason. Her mother, the queen, had more than insinuated that she would be a *great* queen. How could she tell her otherwise? Katienne was the living reflection of her mother, not only in appearance, but also in her way of being, even her manners. This had led her to create her own fantasy. In fact, she had everything planned. She had chosen her first husband and had even known what palace rules she would change as soon as she was queen.

A feeling of repulsion ran through her entire body as she looked at the rightful heiress. She would not have forgiven any of her other sisters had they been chosen—but Vienne? It had to be a joke, the worst she had ever heard. Vienne's comportment was the complete opposite to Katienne's way of being. *She would be a terrible queen!* she thought. How could the Aqua

Deus choose her? She was really trying not to think badly of her god since she knew it would know best... but believing in the good judgment of her god was not proving easy at all.