

Erique and Sarin walk down a bustling but well-kempt street in the Royal City towards the grand tents of Le Cirque des Fugues. Erique has donned his most absurdly floofy pants and Sarin is wearing one of her new court dresses.

Erique: ah, it is a beautiful day for le Cirque, Mademoiselle Sarin *(he boops her)* it reminds me of my youth. *(he blinks)* my... youth? Did... I have a youth? I can't... I can't remember... *(he shakes his head, waves a hand)* it... is not essential at the moment. Shall we procure some refreshments?

Sarin: *(grabs a number of sugary confections, she is bouncing a little)*

Erique: *(he laughs)* I'll take that as a yes. *(he pays for the treats, smiling affectionately at Sarin the whole time)* Shall we find our seats, sweetie? Ooh, or since I'm acquainted with the ringmaster I can get us a backstage tour!

Sarin: Ok!

Erique: *(he leads them behind the main tents to the staff tents, locating the ringmaster's tent, and taps on the fabric while doing a rather accurate impression of a knock on a wooden door)*
hello, anyone home?

There is a soft click behind them. A tall woman with clockwork enhancements along her limbs has a pistol pressed to his temple.

Mechanical Gunwoman: Eric?

Erique: actually it's Erique (*he shoots her a wink*) how are you, Goldeneyes?

Goldeneyes: The restraining order clearly states a full day's travel away and it still applies.

Erique: ...I know. I just... I wanted to take my daughter to the circus. (*he hugs Sarin*) isn't she adorable?

A man in a long burnt orange coat embroidered with elaborate flames pushes aside the tent flap, a tall hat in his hands.

Ringmaster: What is this abo—Eric. Hello.

Erique: hello, Ma—are you currently using another name? My name is Erique, by the way.

Madwa: Isn't that what I said?

Goldeneyes: What you said, in a terrible accent.

Madwa: I do not change my name as I do not make it publicly known. Why are you here?

Erique: to show my daughter your magnificent circus. And also ask for a backstage tour for my precious Sarin. *(more hugs)*

Goldeneyes: Fuck off, "Erique".

Madwa: I can't let you backstage. If you attend the show, I will have to have security monitor your behavior.

Goldeneyes: You can't be serious.

Madwa: Cassandra. I can take care of myself.

Erique: Madwa... Please... I know you would do anything for your kids, and I'm trying to do the same for mine. *(he ruffles Sarin's hair)*

Madwa: Security will be watching.

Goldeneyes: Any suspicious behavior and you get a bullet between the eyes.

Madwa: *(sighs)* Yes. Now please take your seats.

Erique: ...I'm sorry, Madwa. Thank you, we'll do that. *(he walks with Sarin to their seats in stunned silence)*

Sarin: Who were those people?

Erique: the ringmaster and one of the performers, Goldeneyes. I... used to be what I think you might call friends with Madwa... I forgot that I hurt someone close to him, and... at the time I didn't think there would be any consequences for that but... there were. I'm sorry you didn't get to see backstage. *(he solemnly pats her head. He then stands on his seat and time freezes as he begins to monologue)* It is now that I realize my actions have consequences for which poor, sweet Sarin may pay the price. I perhaps cannot undo my past deeds, but in the future, I will be sure to act in a way that will never impede her happiness ever again. I shall send an apology to Madwa as well as possibly a bouquet of the finest flowers from the Royal Garden. And afterward, I shall take Sarin out for ice cream, because she is so clearly devastated and is in desperate need of more sugar. *(he steps down, and then takes his seat as time begins to flow again)*

Sarin nods, turning to watch as the show begins. She slowly begins to smile and does not stop for the duration of the performance.