



THE
MUMMIES
RETURN

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-STORY-

HUNTEROPERA

-ART-

BALTHAZARDRAGON

The hands did not tear at him. The lips and the teeth did not bite. Imhotep had been torn to pieces and had those pieces devoured before. He had deserved it when it had happened then, though he had thought differently then. Anck-Su-Namun had taught him differently. The woman he had loved and seen himself damned for had shown him true.

Imhotep had served at the right hand of a mortal king that would become a god upon death. Pharaoh Seti I of the 19th Dynasty, Consecrated of the God Seth. He had been that man's priest, meant to serve in life and the afterlife. His soul had, all the days and nights of his life, been light as a feather. He had carried the secrets of divinity, of life and death. The rewards for fulfilling his purpose had been great.

Imhotep's own weakness had ruined everything.

Anck-Su-Namun, his lord's lover. His divine mistress. Not his wife, not his concubine, she fulfilled a sacred purpose. No man could touch her save Pharaoh. Imhotep had seen her, loved her from afar. He could have any woman save for those of Pharaoh's family and her. He had been content. He had thought her lovely.

They flirted and it was meaningless. They spoke of their Pharaoh with an intimacy only they possessed. Their conversations became more, became less holy. They hid and they struggled with what they had begun to feel but they both gave in to base passions.

It was she that convinced him that there was some rightness in what they did. How could love be wrong? They kept their affair a secret, but when it was revealed they killed Pharaoh to cover their crime. Anck-Su-Namun had died in the escape, but that was fine. It was fine. Imhotep knew the secrets of life and death. He would bring her back across the river and they would flee together.

But he was caught and punished. He was condemned with the Hom-Dai curse. Twice he had been pulled into the world since then and, at the last, Anck-Su-Namun had done the pulling. She then abandoned him and left him to die while he saw the strength of true love between his enemies. He did not know what had happened to her since she had abandoned him. It did not matter.

He did not matter.

All of the hands grabbing him were different textures of rot. They pulled the warmth from his blood and marrow, feasting on what life was left to him. It would, he knew, take him a long time to die. There was no measuring time here and in this place.

Imhotep knew that when a mortal died that they were presented to Anubis, and their soul's weight would be measured against a single feather. Those lighter than a feather would pass off into the afterlife. Those whose souls weighed heavy, however, were condemned here – a valley of writhing souls crawling over one another, feeding upon one another, tearing one another apart until nothing was left.

There was no escape from this place save through divine intervention, and the one soul that might have acted on his behalf was the Pharaoh he had betrayed centuries before.

He shivered as another strip of warmth was pulled out of him, as his flesh crackled and withered. As his body failed. As his life ended and his soul would rot like the poor wretches around him. He would suffer and then he would be nothing and he deserved both.

Fingers dug into his brow, careful pressure along the ridges above his eyes.

He was pulled from the of the groping hand, pulled up and up and out. He was thrown to the blasted ground of a place he had never been but did recognize. He had authorized archaeological studies of temples that had been built in Egypt a thousand years before he had been born. This was a laboratory city, like Hamanutra but older, much older.

Imhotep took deep breathes, feeling warmth in his lungs, hot air in and out. He was brought home and his power had come with him. He felt strength in his limbs, in his arms. He kept his head bowed, his eyes closed. He was back in Ma'at, the mortal realm. Back in the ruins of what had once been his empire.

“Priest.” A soft command. The woman who spoke was wrapped in fine silks and marked with a script that tickled his mind. “Of all priests, you have seen the world that has come and you have been cursed for your crimes.”

“I have,” he said, acknowledging both truths. There was warring light and dark around the speaker, a woman with strange eyes and long dark hair. She looked like Anck-Su-Namun. She looked like the mortal woman that Nefertiri had become. Perhaps, Imhotep thought, he was simply bad at differentiating between women.

“Tell me of the world that has become.”

He did. He spoke of how their ancient world had been plundered and her secrets plumbed by lack-wits who barely understood them. The true secrets were guarded by the Medjai, the lingering remnants of a priesthood that now served a different god. He spoke of the wonders of the modern age, metal birds that flew and metal beasts and roamed the land and metal serpents that followed metal pathways, of metal held in the hand that vomited smoke and fire and death.

“There is much metal,” his rescuer said, and he nodded agreement. “Rise.”

He did. She was shorter than he was. Pretty. There was a warring nimbus around her, the light of divinity and the darkness of a different sort. He wondered who she was but he knew who she was, a part of the ancient Pharaohic bloodline. He was being given a second chance to serve.

“What would you have me do?” he asked.

“Walk faithful by my side,” she said. “Come to me when I call and walk your own way I must be alone. Be mine. Be mine.”

“And what would you do to this world we walk?” Imhotep asked.

“I was promised this world,” she said. The words were simple, the tone quiet – not a boast, simply a true statement. “I was promised this world and I was betrayed. When my father turned my birthright from me to gave it to a thoughtless cruel other, only one of my kin offered justice.”

He knew that when she spoke of her kin she spoke of the gods.

Something of her story tickled his mind.

“I will have what I was promised,” she said. “My kin desires a body and has seen one he believes to be worthy, one you have fought in the past. A man, a...”

He recognized it when she tried to speak the name Rick O'Connell.

The mortal man who had beaten him twice now.

He nodded, staring at her. He could see the ambition in her eyes. He could see the hatred coiled there and he knew who she was. How could he not? He was a priest and she was one of the gods he revered. Given her words, her description, her story, she could only be Ahmanet, Chosen of the God Set, who had murdered her own family and killed her brother as a babe, who had tried to bring the God Darkness into the world.

Though she could not know it, the priesthood he served had been created to oppose her. How could she know that when it had been created after she had been imprisoned? He knew it. He had heard stories of

her when he was a child and, despite the many things he knew he had never thought she was real. She was here, now.

She would burn all the light from the world and rule from darkness.

“Priest?”

He took a step back. She could crush him like an insect. He knew this. He was alone against her and if he stood here and now he would lose, be condemned back to the valley of withering souls. He could follow her but he had never wanted to rule, only to be loved.

She could not love him. She had loved her father and look what had happened.

He needed to get away.

“Priest?”

He spun, dissolving into sand, flowing away from her.

The last thing he saw of her was a terrible smile.



It felt the whole war had passed and Rick had barely spent any time at all with his wife and child. They had been busy, working with British and then American and finally Allied Intelligence, fighting the occult wing of the Nazi war Machine. Their home in Cairo had served as a base of operations throughout the war, Evie telling men what they needed to know to keep the Nazis out of Hamunuptra.

Rick had read her every letter, detailing the sorcerer's duel she waged with the witch Britta von Stengl and Commandant Walther Rauff and the Major Arnold Ernst Toht. He'd also kept busy, running around the Mediterranean with Izzy, the two of them running messages and sabotaging supply lines everywhere from Paris to Madrid to Casablanca and into Germany itself.

But all of them could see the war nearing its end and there were stories of horror coming from the Nazi prison camps. Evie had been sent home to spend time with Alex, who had spent the war operating as a spy catcher with John. They'd all of them kept in touch but tonight, Rick thought, tonight was the first time in years all of them would be together again.

“All we need is Ardeth and we could have a proper reunion.”

“what was that?” Izzy asked.

“Nothing,” Rick said, offering a wide grin. “Just thinking aloud.”

“Most of us can do that in our heads,” Izzy said, his grin matching Rick's.

The dirigible pulled low through the smoke and ruin over London. Their home was just outside the city and he had Izzy bring the ship low for resupply and repair, near the stables of the estate they'd purchased with gold from Hamunaptra. Technically, Rick had learned, he was a lord now.

He drew the line at having staff. The poor orphan boy he had been couldn't reconcile himself to the idea.

The place came with a staff but he let Evie and Jonathan deal with them.

He shouldered his bag and stepped off the dirigible and walked towards the estate, wrestled open the door and dropped his things. The art style inside the aging but well-maintained Tudor was a combination of British, American, and Egyptian, though he'd brought home some keepsakes from his time around the Mediterranean.

Looking around, he let out a deep breath and let the tension in his shoulder settle.

It's good to be home.

“Rick!”

His wife threw herself at him, staggering him. He held her in his arms as she wrapped herself around him, kissing him until her lips found his and then he was kissing her back, melting into the most beautiful woman in the world.

“It's good to see you, too,” he whispered, one of his hands supporting her ass as he shifted and pinned her against the wall. “Is anyone else home?”

She shook her head, her grin matching his.

They started in the entrance and made their way to the kitchens, losing clothing as they went, teasing one another. The war had put a few more scars on his librarian but she was as limber as ever, the ancient martial knowledge of her past life as an Egyptian princess making her one of the most dangerous hand-to-hand combatants in the world. The things it let her do with her legs, her hips, her...

“mmmm...,” Rick hummed, vision swimming as he was overwhelmed. His erection was painful and teased and his wife was flushed and tight and gorgeous. His skills were all recent but he was no less dangerous for it. She was whispering things to him in a rush of languages that played along her tongue on his body, his fingers doing their best to chart her every curve, her every.

They almost made it to the bed the first time. She came before he did, still shaking along him as he came inside her, panting as he fell onto her, as she rolled him over and trailed kisses down his chest, her eyes flashing mischief as her lips found his root and brought him right back up.

Blankets were pulled off the bed and they made it up and fell off and rolled and laughed and then he was inside her again and she was pushing him down, riding him, pulling him up to her breast as his hands trailed down her back, were in her hair, pulling her straight and keeping her there as her hips rolled and twitched, as they came together and fell in one another's arms, panting and laughing and kissing one another.

She moved eventually to get into the bath and he followed her and she pulled him in and before long they were at it again, and again, and again.

She was beautiful. She was perfect.

She was intelligence and mischief and cleverness and she was so gorgeous it *hurt*.

“*ʿEṣṣwā ʿEṣṣā*,” she said, which meant *I love you*. He was pretty sure she didn't know she had spoken in ancient Egyptian, but he'd learned some phrases for when she slipped into that long dead tongue.

“I love you, too,” he answered, holding her.

He could almost believe the worst was behind them.



Physically, her kingdom had been small compared to what it would become. Two places that could generously be called cities – Abydos and what would become Hierakonpolis – with a number of villages along the Nile Valley, not so far north as the sea and not so far south as the nubian cattle herders. They had trade along the Nile, controlled the central hub of the long waters. The first pharaohs were crawling out of the old chieftaincies.

As the empire spread so did the influence of the Gods that empowered them, and gods do not like to give up what they have taken. That was why Ahmanet's enemies had dragged her so far from her home, far enough away that her gods could not and would not find her while she was poisoned and bound. Set had placed so much of himself in her and they could not take the risk.

She had been freed by mortals that knew nothing of her, fools seeking secrets of the ancient world. She had murdered them all while they screamed in languages she did not understand. In the end, she cracked open their rib cages and read their hearts and learned, and learned, and learned what she could.

It took time to walk from the land between the rivers to the furthest part of what her empire had become, but she made that journey. Some poor fools thought to get in her way and she had killed them, too, empowered by ancient hekau and alchemies they could not hope to understand.

Some special few recognized her for what she was and they fell to their knees and prayed. She spared these that remembered. She touched their hearts and blessed them with words from their dead and knew that they would serve her in the world to come.

The priest had been a disappointment.

Only when she stood in the waters of the Nile did she stop. Under a moonless night she split the tide between Ma'at and Du'at, reaching down past Anubis' judgment for those recently passed that might be of use to her.

A corrupt scholar who sold the relics of her kingdom and had hoped for more.

A keeper of gates who had once held the life of Set's chosen vessel in his hands.

A liar, a scoundral, a thief, the lowest of men who lived only for his own survival.

A warrior, a fighter, a guardian who had once tried to murder the child in his care.

The lover, one who knew the ancient ways, knew the failed priest, knew ambition.

She pulled them out of the dark and into the world, breathed life into them, shaped their bodies and bound them to her. She told them what she needed and let them work out the details of achieving what she wanted, because that was what they were for.

“You let him escape,” the lover said. The others scurried to her whims but the lover was pliant, open to being touched, there to be touched. Ahmanet indulged herself, allowed the lover to please her, to warn her. “Imhotep is dangerous.”

Ahmanet smiled, cupping the cheek of her worried subject, bade her put her tongue and hands and breasts to better uses. She could sense the priest through the magic he thought he controlled. She could feel the pull of him, the weight, and she knew where he must go.



“Are they still at it, Uncle John?” Alex asked. They both listened intently to see if mother and father were still screwing like rabbits, but there was no obvious sound. Still...

“Probably,” Uncle John said, pouring each of them a stiff drink and draining half of his before handing Alex the other.

The two of them had been running counter-intelligence throughout the blitz, aiming to find and outing several German agents and providing aid to the rebels in France. They'd been very busy throughout the war, especially when the SS and their agents had dipped their fingers into occult practices they knew little about.

Alex had been fighting such things even as a child, and was bothered less than Uncle Jonathan.

“Are you alright, Uncle?”

“Just so,” Uncle Jonathan said, forcing a smile. The malaise of the Great War had never left him, and surviving a second one was unlikely to do him much good. Alex frowned and wondered how to help.

There was a knock on the door.

“Are we expecting anyone?”

“I don't think so.”

Alex decided that, given the comparative level of sobriety between them, Uncle Jon should not be the one to answer the door. Jon was smart enough to agree. So Alex went to the door and opened it and looked up and

It is important to know that Alex had been marked by a millenia old curse as a child. Kidnapped by ancient evils and dragged across the world. Been engaged in a conflict with a god-like evil torn from the ancient world, and that was before the second world war had started. Since then there had been assassinations, clandestine affairs, adventures enough to shatter the childhoods of less prepared children.

Every O'Connell knew to greet danger with a smirk and a quip and action. All of them had seen more than their fare share of horror, of pain, of supernatural threats the likes of which few brave men could hope to face with their sanities left intact.

And so, when Alex screamed, the house responded.

Imhotep was on their front door. Imhotep the First, Priest to Seti I of the 19th Dynasty, who had nearly killed all the O'Connells at one time and then again, who had twisted modern Egypt to his will. He stood on the front doorstep of the O'Connell home dressed in a fine black suit, though he did not wear shoes.

“𐀀𐀁 𐀂𐀃𐀄 𐀅𐀆𐀇” he asked, though Alex was too frightened to hear the words.

“What?” Uncle John said, sounding exasperated as she rounded the corner and then screamed and picked up a pistol and shot and shot and shot and Imhotep stood there as the bullets slammed through him and did nothing.

Mother and Father appeared on the upper landing, father's pants mostly buckled and his shirt unbuttoned. Alex watched, fascinated as father assessed the situation and grabbed a saber and slid down the bannister. Mother had memorized some spells from both the Book of Life and the Book of Death and she called upon them now.

Alex turned from them to face the monster had haunted his dreams. Imhotep was doing nothing to defend himself. He seemed both amused and resigned. What was it he had said – 𐀀𐀁 𐀂𐀃𐀄 𐀅𐀆𐀇

It meant 'may I come in?', a request.

“Wait!” Alex called, and his parents did.

“*Maat neteru neteru nehemu sihemu kholi*,” Imhotep said. “*Imhotep hennu ma'at neteru kholi*.”

“What's he saying?” Father asked.

“He blesses our house with peace,” mother said, calling her magics back. “He needs our help.”

Close enough, Alex thought.



“It is you to whom I owe the greater apology,” Imhotep said. Rick had poured the ancient undead priest a brandy and the ancient undead priest sniffed at it before sipping at it. “But I nonetheless owe an apology to you all.”

Alex was translating for Jonathan and Rick. Evie understood him perfectly.

“what is it, exactly, that you are apologizing for,” she asked.

“The betrayal and murder of your father in ancient times,” Imhotep said. Evie felt the pang of pain and loss in her soul but she bit it down, closing her eyes and nodding and taking a deep breath. “I thought I acted for love, and I was wrong. The two you showed me the truth of that and I would preserve your love if I could.”

“Why?”

“I failed your father, completely,” Imhotep admitted. He wasn't asking for acceptance with his apologies, she thought, simply stating that he had been wrong. “Perhaps I might serve his daughter more faithfully in these strange times.”

“what are we being threatened by?” Rick asked, and Alex dutifully translated.

“Another mummy, a legend in my time who I now know to be real,” Imhotep said. “She was released by your most recent war and is seeking to fulfill an ancient pact.”

“Is the pact with a dark god?” Rick asked.

“The darkest,” Imhotep confirmed. “Set.”

“Who's Set?” Rick asked, looking to her for answers. “A death god, right?”

“No, a God of Darkness, the king of the upper kingdom until he was deposed by Osiris,” Evie said.

“Osiris was a god of death who united the upper and lower kingdoms, who then died when Set killed him.”

“Oh, that old chest nut,” Rick muttered. “Set sounds like a great guy.”

"He is not," Imhotep said, once Alex translated the conversation. "This mummy, Ahmanet, will need to find a mortal host for Set to inhabit. Once she does this, Set will enter the world and begin a thousand year reign of darkness."

"Any idea who the chosen mortal is...?" Rick drawled. Evie had a sneaking suspicion that it would be "You," Imhotep said, but he was not looking at Evie.

"Wait," Rick said, "me?"

"Are you," Evie said, "are you sure?"

"Normally they go after mom," Alex added.

"I went after your mother because I needed divinity for the spell and I sensed your mother's divinity before I knew what it was," Imhotep said. "I do not know what Ahmanet needs, but I know she has chosen you."

"How long do we have?" Evie asked.

"Minutes," Imhotep answered, sipping his brandy and then setting the glass down. He stood and took off his suit jacket, unbuttoned his cuffs and rolled up his sleeves.

"Minutes?" Jonathan squeaked. "Did you say minutes? Did I hear that right?"

"She can sense me," Imhotep said. "She is drawn to Rick by the promises of Set himself. I have tried to give you what warning I could. The sun sets on your British Empire, and she will be here at dusk."



"You ready?" Rick asked, handing Alex a loaded gun.

"Dad, I've been killing Nazis for the whole war," his child answered, and Rick felt a swell of pride as Alex checked the gun and grabbed a sword, just in case. "We've got this, right, Uncle John?"

"Right." John took a deep breath. Rick was a little more worried about his wife's brother – they'd been in their twenties back when they'd first met and Jon had always been haunted by the past, despite the good head on his shoulders.

"Jon, can I get you and Alex up top?" Rick said. "I'd like the two of you to play sniper for Evie and I and... Imhotep," Rick finished, looking at the Mummy. He still couldn't believe the creature was on their side this time. He was half expecting this to be some kind of trick. "Hey, Alex, can you translate this for me?"

"Sure, dad."

"Hey, Immie, what's the deal with the new Mummy?" Rick asked. "Is she a bigger, badder version of you?"

Imhotep scowled at the shortening of his name, but considered the question and answered slowly. The rest of his family – Jonathan included – understood some of the answer and all of them looked terrified by whatever calm words Imhotep answered with.

“*Imhotep*,” Imhotep “*Imhotep*,” she continued, her eyes boring into his, freezing him and warming him. He was sweating, shaking, found himself erect and gasping. “*Imhotep*,” she continued, her eyes boring into his, freezing him and warming him. He was sweating, shaking, found himself erect and gasping.

“What'd he say?” Rick asked.

“*You do not understand,*” Evie translated. “*The practices of my order were based on what was left of her practice after she was dead. We developed our own paths, certainly, but she knew things the rest of us did not and she had had nothing to do but develop new paths in her captivity.*”

“That sounds,” Rick frowned, “Absolutely terrifying.”

The front door exploded and a whirlwind of white sand swirled in and melted into a pretty young woman.

Jonathan yelled and shot her in the head. She looked mildly annoyed and gestured at Jonathan and he went flying across the room before she looked eyes with him.

“Excuse you,” Evie said, stepping in front of him and unloading two pistols, dropping them before stabbing at the undead princess with a pair of ancient sai. Rick followed up with a bronze age saber, the antiquity of the weapons causing the mummy to back away quickly, her strange gold eyes going wide.

“*Imhotep*,” she swore, eyes on Evie. “*Imhotep*,” she swore, eyes on Evie.

“That last part sounded like a threat,” Rick said.

“It was,” Evie answered.

The mummy smiled.

“*Imhotep*,” she continued, her eyes boring into his, freezing him and warming him. He was sweating, shaking, found himself erect and gasping. “*Imhotep*,” she continued, her eyes boring into his, freezing him and warming him. He was sweating, shaking, found himself erect and gasping.

“Is she coming onto me?” Rick asked. It was hard to breathe. Evie nodded. “Lady, I'm flattered. Maybe curious. I'm also very happily married, so no.”

“I don't think she's going to take no for an answer,” Evie muttered.

Above them, Alex screamed.

“Where is your Madjai now, boy?” a voice bellowed from above. The saber Alex had been using flew down from above and clattered on the floor. Rick risked glancing up and saw a large man in red stalking his child with a savage glee. “You fought like a woman and will die like a man!” The man wrapped his hand around Alex's throat.

“Imhotep!” Rick called. “We could really use you-”

“Good morning, Princess,” Anck-su-namun purred.

Evie shot awake. Her father's lover was lying on a bed next to her, resting her head on Evie's arm, her own arm thrown over Evie's chest. She struggled but her arms and legs were chained and pulled taut to the corners of the bed, holding her in place and giving her very little room with which to struggle.

She struggled anyway.

“Get off me,” Evie spat, but Anck-su-namun only smiled, leaned over and kissed her lightly on the lips.

“No,” she answered, brushing Evie's hair from her eyes, leaning down and kissing her forehead, her hairline, the other woman's hand making an idle trail around Evie's breast and down her belly, down towards-

“Get off!” Evie yelled, bucking as wildly as she was able.

“Oh, princess,” Anck-su-namun growled, lips brushing the side of Evie's neck, “It has been more than three thousand years since you've been able to give me orders.”

“Whatever it is that she is saying, I am agreeing with it!”

Both women stopped to look at the speaker. Evie squinted, trying to recognize him through the fog of time and poor lighting.

“Is that,” Evie paused, “is that Gad Hassan? The prison warden?”

“Is that who he is?” Anck-su-namun asked. “Disgusting man. He knew your Rick. Wait – was your Rick a criminal? Your father would be so disappointed with your choices.”

“You're one to talk,” Evie said.

“Oh, Princess,” Anck-su-namun's grin was savage. “There is no ancient court to save you now. No priesthood. No lover. Nothing to save me from indulging my curiosity.”

“What are you-?” Evie stopped talking as Anck-su-namun pulled a dagger from the side of the bed and ran it down Evie's bare arm.

“I am going to strip you,” Anck-su-namun purred. “I am going to strip you and then I am going to play with you, and when I am finished I am going to give you to that disgusting man and then, finally, I will give you the royal ending you have always deserved. Princess.”

Anck-su-namun pushed herself up to her knees and bowed down low over Evie's belly, the knife tracing a path through her shirt, the tip pressing against her flesh. Evie froze, trying not to shiver as she felt the other woman's warm breath and the cold cold blade on her skin. Her shirt fell away and Anck-su-namun rolled, kissing up the path the knife had just come down as the blade attacked her pants, cutting them neatly away, leaving Evie in just her underthings.

“My princess dresses like a whore,” Anck-su-namun smiled, kissing along the edges of her panties,

her top of her bra. “And I would know.”

The bra was cut away, cold air swirling around her breasts, tightening them as Anck-su-namun kissed them, teased them, pulling what was left of her bra away. The knife was at her panties, cutting through them, tugging them deep between her cleft until she gasped and then being pulled free.

Evie gasped as her tormentor curled fingers along her entrance, light father-touches, soft little teases.

“A brilliant man was willing to damn himself and kill his king, your father, for my touch,” Anck-su-namun whispered, nibbling on her ear, her neck, as she moaned and blinked back tears. “Let us see how long it takes me to reduce my king's daughter to a snivelling little toy.”



Jonathan groaned and rolled over in the ruins of his sister's home. Everything hurt. He slowly pushed himself up, his knees aching, his back aching. *That's a real curse*, he thought, *getting old*. Something in his knee clicked as he got to his feet and limped his way downstairs.

Imhotep was lying down, pinned to the floor by a knife. He was bleeding very badly and not moving.

“You alive?”

“What?”

“I asked if you were alive,” Jonathan said.

“Not in three thousand years,” Imhotep answered. Jonathan couldn't tell if he was joking or not. *Probably not.*

“Do you need help getting up?” he asked.

“I need help getting this dagger out of me,” Imhotep said. “It is a thing of the Madjai, meant to keep me in place and to hurt me.”

“It looks very successful,” Jonathan said, and Imhotep remained silent. He pulled the dagger out. Back in Great War, in the trenches, removing such a weapon would have killed the person it had been in. Imhotep started to heal. “Neat trick. I knew some good men who would have liked it.”

“Your good men have found their peace,” Imhotep said. He groaned, stood, looked around the room.

“We have lost. We are doomed.”

“What do you mean they found their peace?”

“They do not follow you, like so many do,” Imhotep answered. “They were not cast into the valley of those whose hearts weighed more than a feather. They reached the afterlife in peace.”

“Tell that to their families.”

"That is a task for the priests of this age," Imhotep said, sounding bitter. "My day is done. It is better than my day is done."

As Jonathan considered that, Imhotep poured himself a glass of Rick's brandy and drank it.

"What are you doing?"

"We lost," Imhotep said. "Your brother and sister are gone and we are alone. We are doomed."

"You are not alone, I promise you that!"

They both turned and said the word Madjai at the same time, Ardath Bey stepping through the wreckage towards them.

"Is it true, creature?" Ardath Bey asked. "Do you fight with us this time?"

"I do," Imhotep answered.

"You step back into the service you condemned three thousand years ago?"

"I do," Imhotep repeated.

"What can you tell us about our enemy?"

"As you are to me, I am to her," Imhotep answered.

"Her keeper?" Ardath Bey asked, and Jonathan watched as emotions warred across Imhotep's face.

"Outclassed," he finally said.

"We managed to defeat you."

"And so I come to you for aid."

"A show of faith?"

"Desperation," Imhotep said, setting the brandy down. "For all that it matters. We have lost and do not know where they are."

"Um," Jonathan said, holding up his hand. They both looked at him, clearly having forgotten that he was there. He hated when they did that. "I might have an idea."



Anck-su-namun's fingers drummed along her thigh, in to out, knee and higher, higher. Evie moaned and screamed as the fingers pulled away just before her core, bucking her hips and trying to catch those fingers. Above her, Anck-su-namun's long hair washed down, brushing along her skin, her breast, settling in the core of neck before her tormentor moved her hair up, across Evie's cheek, soft brushes

that felt like electricity across her skin.

Her other hand was on Evie's naked hip, brushing up and down the curve of her, a slow lazy pendulum of soft pressure, gentle teasing, a wider exploration that circled her breast and cupped her wetting core, tracing rivers of excitement across her belly, over and along her chest.

This was a seduction and Evie didn't want it but the longer it went the more her body responded, the more her body pulled and strained, the more whimpering noises came from her mouth, the more tears spilled from her eyes.

She wouldn't beg.

She promised herself she wouldn't beg.

But Anck-su-namun was smiling down at her, feral, confident. She'd devoted her whole life to learning how to give pleasure in a way that no one in the modern world could equal. This wasn't a kindness, it was a new kind of torture that pulled the breath from Evie's lungs, put tears in her eyes, made her breasts ache and her hips buck, that stripped away all dignity and left her begging, she was begging, she had promised herself that she wouldn't beg but Anck-su-namun was pulling her away from herself, smiling down at her, touching her and touching her and

“Do you want it so badly, little princess?” anck-su-namun teased.

“Fuck you,” was that Evie wanted to say, shaking her head and desperate, but instead she whimpered “fuck me” and Anck-su-namun smiled, gentle finger touches teasing her, spreading her, opening her.

Evie was crying when Anck-su-namun pressed a finger into her, then two, then three...

Her hips were shaking, bucking, her whole body trembling, long low moans caught between her tormenter's lips on hers, tongue doing tongue inside her tongue

She gasped. She screamed. She moaned and Anck-su-namun smiled and growled, low and throaty.

Evie whimpered when the delicious touches left her quivering and empty and cold.

“She's ready for you,” Anck-su-namun said.

Evie had forgotten they weren't alone.

The last time Gad Hassan had put a hand on her thigh she'd slapped it off. He'd confessed to being very lonely and she'd pushed him away and Rick had nearly died for it until she'd outsmarted him and saved Rick's life.

Her cleverness abandoned her now. She had nothing to bargain with. After everything that Anck-su-namun had done to her she couldn't even think of saying no.

Gad Hassan was drooling when he climbed between her legs. His erection hung like a weapon, the head sliding into her without resistance. He felt amazing. After everything that had been done to her, he felt amazing.

Saliva spilled from his lips and coated her breasts. He slobbered all over her face as he kissed her, bit her, as his hands mauled her defenseless body. He thrust in and out of her, every touch burning her, pure electric after her time with Anck-su-namun. Gad cared nothing for her, her needs, her pleasure, but it was still the best fuck of her life.

Evie screamed, writhing, head shaking as she came, as she convulsed on her rapist's cock, as she begged him to keep fucking her, riding ever-rising heights of ecstasy.



He finished before she was ready, pulling his softening cock out of her, leaving her crying, begging him to continue, begging someone to keep fucking her, to please put something in her.

Anck-su-namun leaned down and kissed her, keeping her hair away from Evie's sensitive skin.

“Such a pretty whore you make,” Anck-su-namun teased. “A pity that is the last time a human cock will find a home inside you.”



Lock-nah was glad to be alive. He had long considered himself to be the pinnacle of all that was male and had returned to life with the memory of his one defeat ringing in his mind. The Madjai had cheated but that was what the Madjai did, cheat. If he hadn't been so infuriated from his time tending the O'Connell boy he would have had a clear mind to see the cheat coming, and he would have torn the leader of the Madjai to bloody chunks with his long hard sword.

There was no sign of the Madjai now, but his revenge would come.

First and at last he would have his revenge.

During the attack on the the O'Connell house he had found the boy and slammed him with a chair until the boy crumbled to the floor. *You fought like a woman*, he had taunted the boy, *now die like a man!*

But the boy had been unconscious and he did not want to kill the boy while he was unconscious, so he picked him up and dragged him away, somewhere private where he could take his time beating the boy to death.

The boy had been tied at the wrists and the ankles, hands behind his back and a gag forced in his mouth. He threw the boy in the back of his car and eyed the boy, looking for hard muscle, but the boy looked like he had grown up in the shape of his mother more than his father. Perhaps that was why he had been so easy to drive unconscious.

Baltus Hafez still had keys to the British Museum and they took the boy there, to one of the store houses near the Egyptian wing. He threw the boy on the ground, admiring the firm legs and ass.

“I am no Greek,” he hissed at the boy, “but sometime before you die I will pin you down and treat you like a woman, boy. I have waited too long not to fuck you rotten.”

He cut the boy free and walked away, letting the boy rub blood back into his numb hands and feet. He kicked a sword to the boy, picked up a saber and swung it through the air.

“You've had twenty years to prepare for this, boy,” Lock-nah growled. “Show me what you've got.”

He attacked.

The boy was sly. The boy was quick. He fought like a Madjai, like his father. The boy didn't have the power to defend himself from Lock-nah's assault. The boy faltered, then hissed when Lock-nah disarmed him, spun and wobbled when Lock-nah backhanded him across the face.

His shirt had come loose.

“What's this?” Lock-nah growled. There was some sort of binding across the boy's chest, a wrapping. Had the boy been injured before their fight? Was that why the boy was so easily defeated?

He grabbed the boy's slender wrists with one of his meaty hands, tore the boy's shirt open with the other. Buttons scattered across the floor. The wrapping came next, revealing

“You,” Lock-nah said, staring. He paused. “You are a woman.”

“The breasts tend to be a giveaway, yes,” the boy said. The boy's name was Alex. Alexander? No. Lock-nah was not a stupid man, but... Alexandra, perhaps? No. Alexandria. Named for the library. That made more sense.

“When did you become a woman?” Lock-nah said.

“And this is exactly why I dress as a boy,” Alex muttered.

She kicked off the wall, knocking him off balance and free herself. She rolled and grabbed her weapon, picking it up and coming for him. Brave, for a woman. He could see it now, the curves of her. The shape of her legs and ass. Her breasts. The slenderness of her, slender coiled power like a snake. He smiled.

“I will keep you,” he said. “It is more fitting. I will beat you down and fuck you like a woman, then flip you over and fuck you like the boy I thought you were.”

“Between now and then,” Alex smiled, “I'm going to fuck you up.”

She still was not strong enough to beat him, but he found himself imagining her screams after he forced her underneath him. It distracted him, made him enjoying drawing out their duel more. He still disarmed her. Still pushed her down. She wrapped her legs around his waist, pulling him in closer. He could feel his erection meet the wetness between her legs. Her hands wrapped around the back of his neck, their eyes meeting.

“I used to have nightmares about you,” she said. She pulled herself up, kissed him, pushed her tongue into his mouth. His saber clattered to the floor as he pushed her against the wall, his erection straining through his clothing. Her breasts were so firm, so warm on his chest, her lips devouring his own.

He had never known a woman like this.

He had never known a woman like this.

Lock-nah fumbled for his pants, for her pants, revealing her long strong legs and the weapon between his. He impaled her and she gasped, tightened her hold on him, then rocked her hips down on him and squeezed with muscles he did not know a woman could have. He gasped. He shuddered and almost lost his balance. His responsive thrust slammed her against the wall, made her moan in pleasure and pain, her fingers scratching up his back and making him hiss.

She pushed him down, straddling him. He rolled over, dominating her. She pulled him close, pushed her hips onto him and spun him around, riding him again. Were they fucking? Fighting? He'd never known anything like this before. He'd never known

Her hair was short and her eyes were flashing. Her lips kept finding his and then parting when they spun, flipped, wrestling to be on top. He bit her breasts, mauled them. Pulled at her hips, at her head, running his fingers through her hair. He could feel himself quicken inside her, his thrusts fast, short, violent, dominant, dominant, domina

Lock-nah came inside her and shuddered, fell. She was riding his weakening erection.

“Enough,” he said, but it wasn't enough. She moved herself to his face, riding him, her fingers curling around his balls, his cock. He gasped, his tongue inside her. She came on him. She *came on him*.

Gods, what a woman this was.

He was panting, trying to catch his breath.

She stabbed him in the heart with a knife.

“I don't suppose you know what a honeypot is, do you?” she said, getting off of him and pulling up her pants, rebanding her breasts. She looked like a slight youth. He pulled the knife from his heart and gasped, bleeding, feeling his body weaken.

“What is-?”

“Mom and dad and Uncle Jonathan used to say that the person doing the violence is the one at fault for it,” Alex said. “You threatened me, attacked me here and in my home. I believed you. This is the price.”

She was watching him die.

She was watching him die and she had no fear of him.

Her Uncle and the Madjai and Lord Imhotep burst into the room. He learned Baltus was dead, that Baltus had given away their position. Lock-nah stared at Imhotep, who could see the girl who killed him and was not surprised.

“Did,” Lock-nah struggled to speak. “Did you know?”

The girl translated for him. Imhotep answered.

“He says many of the Egyptian Gods had a fluid relationship with gender,” the girl said. “He says he knew and said nothing because he did not care.”

Lock-nah did not know what to think of that, but he knew his thoughts did not matter. He did not have much longer and the thoughts of a dead man mattered little. He locked eyes with the Madjai, tried to speak and couldn't.

He fell at last into a waiting and infinite darkness.



Anck-su-namun used her and used her and used her again, wringing a stream of endless orgasms out of her that left her feeling chilled and powerless. Her whole body felt sore. Her throat was dry. She could barely move, barely think. She was bare and barely aware when her bindings were undone and her limbs fell limp and useless.

Evie was rolled on her belly. She moaned, cried out as she felt something press between her ass, press deep inside her. She felt herself spread and felt like she would split in half and all she could do was twitch and cry as her tormentor shoved the agonizing presence home.

“You will be filled, princess,” Anck-su-namun whispered in her ear. “For all eternity, you will be filled to bursting. I pray that you think of me when the time comes. I pray that you learn to pray to me for a salvation that will never come. I hope you pray anyway, and I want you to know I will think nothing of you.”

It hurt when Anck-su-namun touched her hip, grasped her hip, used her hip to flip her back on her belly. There was another baton, too long and too thick, tapered towards the end. Enough of Evie's mind had returned for her to know where it was going. A metal ring pushed out the end.

Between her legs, she felt it press against and into her, settling deep inside her, pushed deep to the edges of her womb before it settled. A simple heavy lock snapped shut through the rings, binding the invaders in her ass and cunt together. She moaned as Anck-su-namun took Gad's dirty briefs and shoved them in her mouth, deep enough that they pressed her tongue down. The sour taste brought tears to her eyes. The smell made her want to wretch. She could barely breathe.

Her legs were brought together. Long linens wrapped around her ankles and down her bare feet, around and between her toes and then moved back up to her ankles, binding them further. The linen moved up her calves, to her knees. She could feel her legs forced to press together, the way it made her more aware of the girths trapped inside her. She moaned, tried to move her arms as the linen moved up her thighs, moaned again as her legs were pressed tighter.



She could feel the linen framing her ass, and then a criss-cross of linen around her hips, between her legs, back around her hips. Even if she had possessed control of her body she would have had trouble bending at the waist, the linen so tight against her it may as well have been a second skin.

Anck-su-namun moved higher, wrapping her pretty belly, stopping just under her breasts. Smiling, Evie could do nothing but watch and feel as Anck-su-namun leaned down and licked, then kissed each nipple. She was smiling as she hooked two loops of linen around her arms, under her armpits and lifting them up past her shoulders.

Evie whimpered. She could feel the linen wrapping around her wrists. She was just getting movement back when the linen around her wrists was pulled tight, forcing her arms over her breasts and then locking them in place. She was hyperventilating now, terrified, trying to push the briefs out of her mouth. Anck-su-namun held them in place with a single finger, smiling down at her until she could no longer fight.

She wanted to beg. She wanted to plead. She would do anything if only Anck-su-namun would listen.

Anck-su-namun kept binding her.

Linen so tight it brought her arms in tight, flattened her breasts. She could feel her elbows pressing against the bottom edge of her ribcage. It was hard to breathe. Linen across her breasts, her arms, her shoulders, moving up her neck.

“You are very beautiful,” Anck-su-namun said, leaning down to kiss her forehead. “A pity.”

Evie tried to scream as she felt the linen slither across her face, felt it pull tight against her cheeks, her lips, trapping the briefs inside her. She struggled as much as she could but she was a worm, less mobile than a worm. The linen wrapped around her head, catching her hair in strips, leaving only her eyes. Everything else was covered. She could barely breathe. She could feel her own sweat, her own stink trapped in the linens with her.

There was a sense of weight above her shoulders. An ache under her arms. She was pulled up past standing and she struggled but she could barely move. She screamed but she could not be heard. She felt Gad touch her ass and Anck-su-namun touch her cheek. The two of them moved her and she could see where they were taking her, over a hole in the bricks. She was so hot. She was boiling in linen. There were symbols around the hole, golden signs that she thought she should be able to recognize but she was so hot and so scared and so-

“It is ancient magic,” Anck-su-namun whispered. “I stole the knowing of it from my lover, your father’s priest, in ancient times. He always wondered about the transfer of power, but he was a powerful man. The goddess I worship is more powerful still but she desires your power – and why would I deny her?”

Evie struggled, tried to free herself.

She could not.

She felt something crawling inside her and she screamed, felt hundreds of little legs brushing against her insides. She screamed. She screamed as a thousand nerve endings came to life, as she felt herself blush in the heat, as she writhed and seethed and felt a wave of pleasure threaten to drag her away.

Anck-su-namun laughed.

“Like you, they are trapped,” Anck-su-namun explained. “Move too much and they will awaken. The hole will keep you and them suspended in time, not hungry, not needing to drink or piss or shit. You

Black flies and grey sand and the walking goddess. She moved across the sea, through the killing fields and towards Britain.

Her lover was waiting.



Her father stood proud and tall in the dark.

“Little one, do you know where you are?”

They were standing in the capital, overlooking the torchlight that pushed back the dark in the night. The people were sleeping, the slaves were sleeping, only guards and priests and royalty up at this hour of the night.

“Home, father,” she said, and he smiled.

“Yes,” her father said. He smiled as he said it. Gentle. Kind. “But do you remember how you got here?”

He smiled. He offered her his hand and she took it as she frowned and thought. How did she get here? Where else would she be?

“Do you remember your suspicions?” her Father asked.

She nodded. She did. She had spoken about them in private, her disdain for the concubine Anck-su-namun and her increasing distrust towards her father's priest.

“You were right to be suspicious,” her Father said. “For want of one another they betrayed me. Alas, had they been honest of their desire I would have indulged them. I loved them both.”

“I remember,” she said, slowly. “I remember seeing them kiss behind your back. I remember your priest drawing your sword from your belt and... and...”

“He killed me, yes,” her Father said. “Ran me through the belly and drove my own sword into my heart. Anck-su-namun struck also, and they kissed over my corpse.”

“I called the madjai,” she said. He wiped the tears from her eyes. “I called the madjai. The concubine killed herself but the priest escaped.”

“The madjai caught him at Hamunaptra,” her Father said. “They punished him. He stands with you now.”

“Stands with me now?” she asked, bewildered. Her voice sounded very small. “Father?”

And she could see herself, mummified and hanging in the dark, tormented by cruelties left by the concubine thousands of years in the future. She was helpless, weeping, alone. She was

"You are here," her father said, pulling her back to him. "You are here with me."

She took a deep breath and steadied herself.

"How is this possible?" Evelyn O'Connell and Nefertiri asked at once.

"There is divinity in our blood," her Father said. "I was a living god in my mortal days, and I ascended to my post in the afterlife. I was consecrated to Set in life, and I serve as one of his nobles in the afterlife. The magic that binds out in the future is magic of Set, twisted past his purpose."

"Can you help me, Father?" Nefertiri asked.

"I cannot," her Father said, giving a brief shake of his head. "Not directly. The dead have little truck with the living, but you hang between life and death and so we may have this time together."

"For how long?" she asked. She felt safe in her Father's arms.

"Long enough to remind you," he said, and fell silent.

He held her. He had died and she had been the survivor. She frowned. Nefertiri had fallen. To her death? No, no. Evelyn had fallen and been saved by Rick O'Connell. She had survived. She had survived and her father had died. She had a brother who was not of age and there needed to be a pharaoh. She had been made pharaoh.

The divinity in her blood had been awakened.

The blood of Set, brother of Osiris. God of the desert and of chaos. God of travellers, of storms, of violence. The God that protected Ra when Ra slept, who stood against the oblivion serpent Apep and saved the world from oblivion every single night. The God who had been betrayed by his brother and had betrayed his brother in kind, only much more effectively.

"There is woman from the age before ours who stole her birthright," her Father said. "Do you remember?"

"I do," she nodded. "Ahmanet, who was named to be pharaoh at her father's passing, who thought she would be cast aside when her father remarried and had a son. She who, out of needless fear, killed the father who would have held her promise to her. Ahmanet, who called on the power of her blood early and twisted it out of fear."

"She killed her family and ended her line," her Father nodded. "She acted out of fear and became her own nightmare. She lives in fear now. She has trapped you in the future time."

"Why trap and not kill?" she asked, but she knew. *She knew.* "I possess an awakened divinity, while she calls upon her own nightmare."

"Will you settle her, little one?" her father asked. "Will you tell my priest that I heard his cries, and if he serves her better than he served me they will both find their place in the afterlife?"

"I will," she said, nodded. "I will not say the same to Anck-su-namun."

"I would not want you to," her Father said. He ran a hand through her hair. "I have learned I should have listened to my daughter. My priest has learned the value of faith and loyalty. My daughter had learned wisdom and courage such as I never knew. But Anck-su-namun has learned nothing, and so she must return to nothing."

"I will not mourn her," she said.

"I might," her Father sighed. "Fool though I be for it."

"Father?"

"Our time here," her Father said, stepping back from her. "It is almost done. I am proud of you, Nefertiri... *Evelyn O'Connell*." He stammered the strange syllables, the future syllables.

She nodded.

She wept.

She was alone in the dark.



The fight went wrong almost as soon as they entered the temple.

Alex had learned that they had taken Evie back to Egypt, which wasn't surprising. The British had taken everything from the ancient empire that they could find and wasn't nailed down. Jonathan was still a bit of scholar and he'd grown up in Egypt, studying just like Egypt. They turned to him and he led them true.

"There are several temples that were meant to act as a transfer of divinity to divinity," Imhotep said. "I admit that, even in my day, I did not see the point."

"And now?" Alex asked, her accent cleaner than Jonathan's.

"Now I am terrified," Imhotep said, though her appeared calm. "I am terrified because they were ancient in my day, and I worry that Ahmanet had them built in preparation for this. It means she has been planning this for five thousand years."

"We will defeat her," Ardeth Bey said.

"Your order did not exist when she first walked the sands," Imhotep answered.

There was nothing to say to that.

Jonathan's contacts were mostly criminal in nature, but they had seen a beautiful woman and the old prison warden moving through what had been Asyut, near the capital of the eighteenth dynasty. They took a faluka down the Nile to the ancient city, still a teeming metropolis. Through the alleys they went, down the dark roads and into the ruins that were hidden from the modern world, into a temple held together through ancient magics.

Gad Hassan was there with a stolen machine gun.

“Evie?” he said.

The linen wrapping her began to tear. The linen holding her up to the disk snapped but she did not fall, walking through the air. Her arms and legs were free and she was walking, the linen falling from her face. She spat something from her mouth, looked at Gad Hassan.

“Anck-su-namun,” she said, and Jonathan watched in horror as all the moisture in Gad's body was pulled out, leaving him a desiccated corpse that fell to ash.

“Evie?” Jonathan said.

“It's okay,” she said, and she sounded like her. She stepped down and wavered a little and he reached out and held her. She shook her head and took a deep breath. “Anck-su-namun.” She spoke the name like a curse.

Anck-su-namun paused. Imhotep and Ardeth Bey were both on the ground. The former concubine was straddling Alex, was smiling, was about to kill her.

“Get off my child, you bitch,” Evie said.

Every grain of sparkling sand rushed forward and caught Anck-su-namun, slammed her into the far wall of the temple. Evie staggered closer to her.

“You will never kill another member of my family, not ever again.”

“Oh, and will you fight me?” Anck-su-namun taunted. “I taught you how to fight. I taught you-”

The sand moved again and scoured every last piece of flesh from her bones. The bones dropped to the temple floor and cracked. Evie stepped on them and looked at Imhotep.

“Anck-su-namun,” Evie said. She reached out and he knelt and she touched his head. “Anck-su-namun.”

Imhotep bowed his head and nodded.

“Rick is still outside of London,” Evie said.

“You're sure?”

“I'm sure.”

No one asked how she was sure.

“How do we get there?”

“Anck-su-namun,” Imhotep said. “Anck-su-namun.”

“What did he say?” Jonathan asked.

“We can go wherever there's a storm,” Alex translated.

“Finally, the shitty UK weather works in our favor,” Jonathan muttered.

“I think I know how to do that for all of us,” Evie said, then frowned. “Just, ah, one thing before we go.”

“What?”

“Would everyone mind turning around, please?”

“Really?”

“Really.” Evie paused. She was flushed, and Jonathan could have sworn he heard insects scuttling about somewhere. “Better still, could everyone please leave the temple and I’ll meet you all outside?”

They did as she asked.

A couple minutes later they heard her gasp loudly and then it sounded like a couple of canopic jars shattered. Imhotep's face turned a bright red.

Jonathan thought about asking about that and then decided he didn't want to know.

Evie emerged looking wide-eyed and with a strange smile on her face.

“Are you okay?” he asked.

“Peachy,” she said, and the sands rose up around them.



Rick was trying to decide if his current headache was better or worse than the hangover from a three week bender. He'd had a few of those between the orphanage and the military and he remembered them being pretty awful, but his current head pain was also not a lot of fun.

If he couldn't have alcohol he thought coffee might help. Tea, at least. *Water. Anything.* He'd have happily gone and got some if he'd been able to move, but he was bound tightly to an alter with his limbs spread out. He'd pulled on each limb in turn and then all at once and the bindings held.

A bright light shone in his eyes, which did wonders for making his head ache word.

“Please stop that,” he growled.

“It is only light, O'Connell, light for the dark.”

“Beni?”

“Hello, O'Connell.”

“What are you doing here?”

“Feeding you,” Beni said. He fixed the light to the wall, an actual torch. He had a tray with him and a spoon and some sort of slop.

“What is that?”

“Oatmeal.”

“I hate oatmeal.”

“I know.” Beni smiled at him, dipped his spoon in the goop and took it out. “Say 'ahh'.”

“Untie me, Beni.”

“She'll know if I do,” Beni said. There was fear around his eyes. There was always fear around his eyes. He looked like he was trying not to cry.

“Beni?” Rick asked.

“Lady, there are easier ways to get laid,” he said, and rolled off the altar. He kept it between himself and her, circling as she stalked him. Her hips swayed and she smiled and growled, low in her throat. She leaped up on the altar and grabbed him by the throat, standing and pulling him up with one hand, tearing off his pants with the other, cradling his balls with the other.

She was cold. She was warm. She was smiling and pulled him close, kissing him.

“*She tasted like ashes and sand.*” she said.

She tasted like ashes and sand.

She was naked. The coils of her wrappings slithered off of her. She *was beautiful*, her skin the color of pale shadows, cool but not cold to the touch, her golden eyes focused entirely on him. He felt like they were the only two people left in all the world as she lay him down, as she straddled him again.

It felt like being dipped in the Nile on a too warm day. Refreshing. Rejuvenating.

And yet he did not want this and she did not care what he wanted.

“Should I come back?”

They both turned. Evie was standing in the doorway, wrapped in linens and little else – it was, Rick thought, a *fantastic* look for you.

“You look amazing,” he said, utterly forgetting the woman on top of him. Evie smiled.

“Thank you,” she said. “Do you mind if I take over?”

“Please, yes,” he said, sounding strangled.

The creature on top of him hissed, offended, as his wife walked into the room.



He was pretty and he was *hers* and then *she* walked in and ruined *everything*.

Never mind that she was beautiful. Never mind that she was pharaoh. Never mind that *he was inside her*, the minute she walked in he only had eyes for *her*.

Nefertiri.

Nefertiri, the pretender.

She stood and he popped out of her, a trail of excitement connecting the two of him.

“You should have stayed in your pit,” Ahmanet growled.

“You should have been loved,” she said.

Ahmanet roared.

She roared.

She was so full of hate.



They were in the blasted ruins of a city thousands of years removed from her own and there was so much she didn't understand but she understood all she had to. *She* had been *promised* a throne. She would have been a good ruler. She would have been a wise ruler. But her father had married someone new and had a child with a cock between his legs and *he took his promise away-*

“He never said that.”

Ahmanet roared. The ruins of this city were full of things stolen from her kingdom, but the fools had brought her power *here*. She could use their crime to rule *them*. She would use their crime to rule *them*.

She rode a wind of grey decaying sand towards her enemy, towards Nefertiri. She pushed and the two of them flew threw the strange stone that made up this place. She summoned more sand, more sand, rain and howling wind beating down on them both. She called forwards the spirits of the dead, the dread and shadows, called on the violence of her lord and

Nefertiri answered in kind. Her sand sparkled gold, the spirits that came to her terrible and beautiful and it wasn't fair. It wasn't *fair*. She had done everything she was supposed to but Nefertiri was calling on the powers of a pharaoh and, worse, the powers promised to a pharaoh touched by Set himself.

Even her god had abandoned her.

“No,” Nefertiri said. “Your father never took your birthright away. Set never abandoned you. You let your fear rule you. You should have been loved. Do you hear me, Ahmanet? *You should have been loved.*”

Ahmanet roared.

The pain of a child abandoned for five thousand years.

Rain turned to blood. The sand around them both buzzed like flies. Animals died and living skin boiled from within and peeled and burst. She called forth all the magics she could think of, all the curses, all the hekou. She called on every power, every monster, every atrocity she could think of.

Nefertiri did not blink, did not falter. She walked forward through horror.

“You let fear overwhelm you,” Nefertiri said. “You were neglected when you should have been loved. You twisted yourself and twisted the god you called upon. You became everything that scared you. You-”

“Silence!”

“NO.” Nefertiri's voice rolled like thunder, the single word echoing across the ruined catacombs of this united kingdom. Ahmanet rocked under it. “I am a pharaoh, chosen by Set. You are a pretender of your own making, cursed by your own fear, but I promise you, Ahmanet – I will set you free.”

She was close enough to hit. To scratch. To hurt.

Ahmanet did. She did her best. She lashed out and she wailed and she was held, held, held as her howls gave way to sobs, as Nefertiri held her in strong arms and helped her sit and held her and rocked her and ran a hand through her hair and kissed the top of her head.

“You need to let it go,” Nefertiri said. It could have been a command. Should have been. Nefertiri made it a request.

“I don't know how,” Ahmanet confessed.

“We will find out together.”

Nefertiri held her, and Ahmanet shuddered and pushed the air out of her lungs and closed her eyes and settled. For the first time since her half-brother had drawn breath, Ahmanet felt safe.



In the chaos of the after-war, Beni Gabor smuggled himself to America and moved to the Mojave Desert, so like the lands he was fleeing. He changed his name to Benny Swann and settled close to the Colorado River. The rest of his life was quiet.

Magic and deception came naturally to his son.



“Well, that was hot,” Rick said. They found him some clothes that mostly fit.

“Gross, dad,” Alex rolled her eyes.

“I don't know,” Evie said, smiling at them both. “It was nice to stretch our horizons a bit.”

“Really.”

“Really.” Evie had found a jacket to wear over the torn linens. “I would like a bath.”

“Can I join you?”

“Yes.”

“Gross.”

Jonathan found them a car. Ardeth Bey joined them in the bath.

Alex and Jonathan both went out for the night.

“Are you doing okay?” her uncle asked.

“Everyone in our family needs therapy,” Alex muttered. Her uncle didn't argue. They all supported one another and that made them strong, unbreakable.

“It was bad, but it could have been worse,” her uncle said.

“How?”

“I heard they found mummies in China,” her uncle shrugged. “We could have gone there.”

“Why would we-,” Alex couldn't stop from making a face. “Why would we go to China? Dad was raised in Egypt, you and mom grew up there, like, our whole family history is tied to the UK and Egypt. Why would we go to-”

“See?” Jonathan grinned. “That would make no sense, right?”

“Right,” Alex seethed. “Can we please just go get something to drink? There has to be a pub around here somewhere-”



The stood in the shadow of the pyramids. There were mortals milling around them, harassing others, but their magic kept them from the eyes of everyone except each other.

Ahmanet walked and the priest walked with her. He was handsome, she thought. An equal for the man Nefertiri had claimed. He was dressed in a black noble's suit cut in the style of this time, a short jacket that folded over his chest and long pants that covered his legs. He did not wear the shoes these people did and neither did she.

Nefertiri had breathed life back into her. Her skin was golden tan, her hair long and lustrous. She felt warm. Nefertiri and her family had adopted her. The priest walked with her, at her side. Her aide. Her concubine. She felt the way he watched her, the curves of her, the cleverly designed patterns that left hints of her exposed between webs of black, her long legs swishing long black threads.

She paused and looked down the length of the sphinx, down past its head. Red and white and black lights shone through the early evening night. She had learned to recognize the electric hum. She tried to

sound out the strange language of this strange time.

“Kentu,” she said, paused. “Kentu cky Fri ed Chi Cken. What is Kentu cky Fri ed Chi Cken?”

“Some form of foodstuff, brought here from a far distant land,” Imhotep answered. “A warlord came and conquered many lands, and where he went to left the means to feed his armies.”

“Where are his armies?”

“Gone,” Imhotep said. “But the means of feeding his army now feeds our people.”

“It is strange, this world we find ourselves in,” Ahmanut said. She reached his his hand and took it.

“Your world is dead and gone. Mine, more so.”

“Perhaps it should stay that way,” he said. She smiled at him, at the electric lights, at the city sprawl that knew so little of magic and had embraced something else entirely. She could not imagine so many humans.

“Perhaps,” she agreed. She smiled back at him. “Shall we see what the new world has to offer?”