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Nosheba turned left and right in front of the mirror, liking how lovely she looked.

The gown was long and swept the floor, glittering with some tiny gem stones on it. Her long dark hair was perfectly packed, a light makeup done on her, making her look so young and beautiful. Oh! She loved herself! ●

"You look astonishing, My Queen" Nivea commended from behind.

"I'm sure the King would fall in love with you over again the moment he sets his eyes on you".

It made Nosheba's heart blossom.

"You know why I like you, Nivea? You're always too good with words".

Nivea also lowered her head in a blush.

"T...The pleasure's all mine, My Queen. Thank you so much" she beamed.

A knock was heard on the door and Nosheba insisted on checking it out, having a feeling it was Raksha. With the length of her gown sweeping the floor, she walked to the door and opened it to the face of Raksha who was holding a small covered plate.

"Blessed Selene!" His eyes beamed as he gave her a slow head-to-toe stare.

"My goodness, Nosheba. You're looking stunning".

"Thank you, Raksha" she chuckled lightly, still holding the door open as she had no intentions of letting him in.

Raksha noticed, and didn't look comfortable with it.

"Someone might see me with this. Let me come in..."

"I'm about leaving, Raksha. Remember I have dinner with the King. What's the problem?" Nosheba cut him off, trying as much as possible to soften her voice.

His presence was so irritating to her now, but she didn't want to show it just yet. ●

"Uhm...Okay" Raksha shrugged and looked down at the covered plate in his hand.

"Well, the poison is ready. I've mixed it with the soup just like you said and all that is left now to do is serving it to her. But how do you intend to do that, My love?"

Nosheba smiled, taking the plate from him.

"You've done a great job, Raksha. Now, just leave the rest to me". She said as she opened the plate to confirm it.

"Okay. But..."

"I really need to go now, Raksha" she cut him off. "You know I need to give this first to Shilah before going to the King. And I wouldn't want to keep the King waiting".

And before he could say anything else, she banged the door on him. ●

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Shilah laid quietly on her bed, staring at the ceiling which was the only thing that could prick her interest at that moment.

The atmosphere was dark already. So, she had to lit the lanterns in her room that gave a shadowy coverage all over the room. And that was exactly what Shilah needed - the calmness, the coldness.

Her hand caressed her flat tummy - a habit she had developed few days ago and she really couldn't tell why - since she wasn't pregnant. 4

She thought of how her life would become. Since the test results were announced, the King hadn't even summoned her to his room. Perhaps, he was busy with his pregnant wife.

She was totally happy for him and the pregnant wife. But somehow, she felt bad he wasn't spending much time with her unlike before. Could it be possible...she was now addicted to his presence and didn't want to be away from him for so long? But, why would she get addicted?

Urgh! She couldn't be in love, right?

She turned restlessly on the bed. And just then, a knock was heard.

Oh! She really hoped it wasn't Dyani 'cause she badly wanted to be alone at that moment.

"Who's it?" She asked tiredly, trying to sit up.

But her legs froze when she heard that intimidating voice:

"It's Queen Nosheba". 22

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Shilah was shocked at the mention of the name - Queen Nosheba.

Queen Nosheba?.

What on earth would she be doing in her room?

She sat still on the bed, trying to think it through. Oh! The spirits would bear her witness that she really didn't want any trouble from that woman - especially not now she was pregnant.

She could remember the first time she had come into the Palace and tried greeting her; the Queen had nearly hit her face and warned her never to try speaking to her again, and since then, she's been trying her best to avoid her. So, why was she in her room now of all times?

"What's taking you so long?" The pesky voice asked. And taking a deep breath, Shilah stood up and left to open the door.

Queen Nosheba stood there with the a little round plate in her hand, having a cover on it. And those round eyes of hers.... were obviously beaming.

Recalling her last warning to her, Shilah couldn't tell if she were to greet her since she was standing in front of her door.

"Have you forgotten how to pay your respect?" Nosheba suddenly asked coldly, making Shilah understand she really wanted it.

Well....

"Greetings, My Queen" She bowed her head and greeted a little nervously, her hands fiddling in front of her.

Nosheba answered with only a smile for a few seconds, probably admiring the way she bowed before her.

"Dear Shilah. How're you doing?" She cooed, and that was when Shilah lifted her head.

"I'm doing just fine, My Queen. And...And you?' she replied.

"Oh! Well, I'm awesome. And so is my baby' she paused and touched her tummy with one hand.

"Tell me, Shilah; are you happy for me... that I'm pregnant?" ①

Shilah forced her eyes to meet with hers.

"Of...Of course, My Queen. It's the best news so far for me. I mean....we all know how badly the King needs a male child. It doesn't matter who bares it; just as long as a male child is provided, it's enough, My Queen". She answered respectfully and bowed.

Nosheba smiled - sarcastically.

"You do have a point" she said.

"It doesn't matter who bares the child; just as long as a male child is provided. Now, I see you have a pure heart".

She paused and sighed.

"Actually, I'm here for a purpose. Where I come from, it's a tradition that the Queen serves soup to her co-wives when she's carrying an heir. And since I've become the fortunate one, I've decided to carry it out that tradition. I've given it to Chaska, and as soon as I'm done with you, Dyani would be next. So...here you go". She opened the plate and stretched it to her.

Shilah was puzzled and never expected such gestures from the Queen. Was it really a tradition? And even

if it's a tradition, she actually never expected her to extend it to someone she didn't like.

Well... she still saw it an honor that the Queen was being lenient with her.

With a bow, she collected the small portion of soup from her and took some swig. Mm. It tasted a little sour. ⑫

"Thank you, My Queen" she bowed gratefully, noticing the wide smile on Nosheba's face.

Nosheba couldn't believe it. Oh! She had really taken it! Yes! It's done!!

She couldn't cloak the smiles on her face as she stared beamfully at her.

"I should be the one thanking you, Shilah" she beamed.

"For honoring my tradition".

Closing the plate back on, she turned around and left.

Shilah stared at the Queen's back as she walked away, still finding it amusing she had offered some soup to her. The baby must be getting her really excited, right? Well, she wouldn't blame her - any woman in her shoes would be as happy as she was.

With a shrug, she turned around and walked into the room, laying on the bed to get some sleep.

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Nosheba's joy knew no bounds as she walked into her chambers. Nivea was there, trying to feed some pap to her baby. And as soon as Nosheba walked in, she ran to her and hugged her tight.

What? Nivea was shocked. That was the first time the Queen was ever hugging her!

"I did it, Nivea! I did it!" She laughed and clapped hysterically.

Nivea stood up with the baby.

"She.... she drank the soup?" Nivea asked in disbelief, staring at the empty plate in her hand.

"Oh, yes! She scooped it right in front of me. The poison was taken!" She laughed harder.

"Oh, my! Bless the goddess, My Queen! It's finally over! The baby will be out and you'll finally be the only pregnant wife of the Queen!" Nivea exclaimed.

"Exactly! You're so smart, Nivea. Please, while I'm away, having dinner with the King, I need you to be on the lookout for me, okay? Hang around her room to know when she starts screaming and all. I need you to confirm the baby's really out". Nosheba instructed.

"Of course, of course, My Queen. You can trust me on that".

"Oh! Poor Shilah" she scoffed.

"Her baby will be long gone before she realizes she was ever pregnant".

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In the King's chambers - cold and gloomily dark.

The round table had been decorated with various meals, jars of wine and two empty cups.

A red cover had been sprayed on it right before the meal was set; and right there beside each plate was a litted candlestick.

The women serving the table, rounded up and stepped back in scrutiny, then the leader amongst them walked towards the window.

"We're done, Alpha King" she informed.

No response was heard, and with a bow, she turned around and left the room with her assistants.

King Dakota stood facing the window, his both hands crossed at his back - just staring into space and saying nothing.

His gamma stood behind him, observing. And for a few minutes, both men were silent.

"Why don't you look excited, Alpha King?" Pishan finally asked, his words clear and sound in the cold room. ②

King Dakota tilted his head to give him a backward glance:

"What're you talking about, Pishan? How excited do you expect me to be?"

"As excited as a man who's just getting his first son after so many years and four wives" Pishan took a step forward.

And the King, taking a deep breath, turned back to the window.

"I'm excited about Nosheba being pregnant, Pishan" he said. ①

"I mean, she's carrying my son, and my joy can't even be questioned. I'm just ... worried - about something else".

"Who? Shilah?" Pishan asked and scoffed.

"She's sick she will be treated, Alpha King. What's there to be worried about?" ③

King Dakota said nothing.

"Why don't you just admit it? You were expecting Shilah to be the Pregnant one, not Nosheba. You wanted all these ..." He paused and pointed his hand around.

"You wanted it all to be with her. Right?" ②

"Don't misquote me, Pishan" Dakota gruffed.

"Am I really misquoting you, Alpha King? Or you just running away from the fact?" Pishan scoffed and took two steps closer.

"Is your heart, perhaps, getting warmer towards her?" ①

"Just stop, Pishan. You say that which you know nothing about" King Dakota cut in.

"Oh! I do know about love, My King. I've experienced something similar to that" Pishan replied. And that was the moment the King turned to look at him.

Pishan was his right hand man and knew him like the back of his palm - same with him.

And if there is one honest thing he knew, it was the fact that Pishan had never fallen in love. Definitely! No matter the beauty of the lady, he's never been enticed.

"What're you talking about, Pishan?" He asked with furrowed brows. ①

"You've never had a lover. Or, have you?"

Despite how close they were, Pishan knew there was no way he could tell him about that in particular. He just smiled and stared down at the floor. And just then, the door opened with a guard coming in. ⑦

"Sorry for the interruption, Alpha King. But Queen Nosheba has arrived".

That was more than a relief to Pishan as he took in a deep breath.

"Your date is ready. I'll leave you two, Dearest King" he bowed and left the room, still having that victorious smile on his face.

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Nosheba walked into the exurbant room, being firstly welcomed by different aroma of dishes - and the sweet fragrance that always clocked around the King's room.

She paused at the door and took in a deep breath with her eyes closed, before re-opening them and looking around to find the King sitting across the table.

Oh...

"My King" she hastened her steps and walked towards him.

"Greetings, My King".

She was full of life and blossomed - the King noticed.

"Please, Nosheba, take a seat" Dakota pointed out and she took the empty seat in front of her - now facing the King.

The King ran a quick glance round her body, scrutinizing her dress to be sure it was exactly what he wanted. And when Nosheba noticed it, she blushed helplessly - finding it alluring that the King was staring at her. This moment was just so special to her.

"How're you doing, Nosheba?" Her heart beamed when he asked.

"Oh! I'm doing just fine, My King. And I actually feel better now that I'm here. The baby's fine as well" she answered quickly, touching her tummy at the end.

If that wasn't a smile.... well, she thought she saw the King smile.

"That's good to hear" Dakota nodded.

"I had the cooks make different meals just incase you might... you know? Have those different cravings".

"Oh! That is more than thoughtful, My King. I'm glad" she lowered her head.

"Please, don't worry; I'll just dish them out".

And standing up, she started dishing the meals herself.

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Dinner with the King had taken quite long as Nosheba took her time in selecting each meal and eating courteously. Perhaps, she was purposefully slow 'cause she wanted to spend much time with the King and enjoy the moment.

\*Oh! Come on, Nosheba; the King is yours now. Carrying his heir has automatically made you his favourite  
\* a tiny voice spoke into her head. And at some point, she smiled.

At long last, her labour was not in vain. The irritation she had to pass through, having sèx with Raksha all the time and enduring every humiliation from Chaska was never in vain. And at long last, she was going to prove to that man that she isn't worthless - like he thought. Just at long last.

Everything was falling into place for her.

King Dakota could only pick at his food as his indigestion was at work again. He didn't meet with Shilah. Hence, couldn't activate his hunger as usual.

Of course, he could've gotten her if he wanted; but he just couldn't bring himself to have sèx with her just so he could eat with another woman - and he couldn't tell why. Maybe, it was because he felt he'd be using her unfairly. ④

Or maybe it was something else. ⑦

Nosheba noticed the King was hardly eating his meal; but well, there was nothing she could do about that. ④

She took in more meatballs and drank a lot of water. ②

"Is there something else you need?" King Dakota asked, wiping the side of his lips with a napkin.

"Oh! Not at all, My King. I'm actually full but just trying to finish this up" Nosheba answered ecstatically.

She couldn't believe this was the man Raksha wanted her to help in killing. He must be such a fool.

Few minutes went by with either of them saying a word to each other. Then suddenly, the King dropped his spoon and leaned back on his seat, just staring keenly at her face.

It made Nosheba cringe and stop eating as well. Why was he just staring at her that way?

"Ask me for one thing, Nosheba" he spoke calmly.

"Anything at all. And I'll make sure it's granted".

A stunned silence dropped into the room immediately.

Nosheba's spoon dropped from her hand in shock, a loud bang resounding in her head.

She gasped and covered her lips with her palms, finding it shocking. Whaaaaat????

"My King!" She called in a whisper, disbelief echoing in her words.

The rare opportunity! The King had given the rare opportunity to her!!

"Oh! I can't believe this" she scoffed ruefully and shook her head. "What have I done to deserve this, My King?"

"Well" Dakota sighed and adjusted on his seat.

"You can say it's my own way of thanking you, Nosheba, for carrying my heir".

She giggled and covered her face with her palms for some seconds, finding it so amazing. Goodness! She really couldn't believe this!

Well, well, well, what could she possibly ask for? She needed to be quick!

She ran her eyes around, trying to come up with a quick reply. This was a very rare opportunity and a thing any Queen would die to have. No matter the request, the King was sure to deliver.

Should she ask to be made his Luna?

Oh! Of course, that wasn't necessary 'cause she was already his Luna. Yes; the mother of his heir has the greatest chances of becoming his Luna. So, she probably shouldn't waste this special request on that.

Yes! How about... something to honor her in a famous way? Imagine the other Alphas and VampLords, all gathering in her name...?

With beaming eyes, she looked at the King.

"If...If My King wouldn't mind, I'd want you to... throw a feast in my name" she paused and lowered her gaze to the table.

"I'd want you... to invite the other Alphas and VampLords and other people of high class, My King. The party should be held for the cause of celebrating your heir. If it pleases you, My King". She concluded with a bow.

King Dakota dived into another silent moment, his jaw on his hand as he stared at her.

Shilah. He remembered Shilah.

The first day he had asked Shilah that exact question, she put him first, and not herself. She had given up her request, just for his happiness. ⑥

Hm. That lady was indeed unique. It was never faked.

Nosheba's heart was racing really fast. Oh! She really wanted him to say yes to her request. She could imagine Chaska being there as well - wearing her swollen jealous face; but then, she'd have no choice as she wouldn't be able to disobey the King's orders.

People of high class would be there - all for her sake. And the news would spread all across the world - that she, Nosheba, has become the Favorite wife of the King. Hence, the future Luna. And she'd make sure her father would be there as well. ②

She laughed heartily in her mind. Oh! What a perfect day it'd be.

But, why was the King taking so long to reply - she suddenly looked at him.

"Your request will be granted, Nosheba" he finally said, changing position on his seat.

"As soon as this dinner is over, I'll hold a meeting and make sure the feast takes place in less than a week from now".

Nosheba gasped again and bowed her head.

"Oh! Thank you so much, My King! Thank you; thank you. I'll never forget this". She placed her palms together and said, excitement ringing all over.

"Please, don't stress yourself, Nosheba. You should sit properly and eat" he pointed out and she bowed again before sitting up.

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The happiness was so evident on Nosheba's face as she walked out of the King's room.

For the first time, she waved and smiled at the maids she came across - even before they had greeted her.

Her time was here! Her time to be at the top and rule! This was it! ⑦

She chuckled heartily and hummed one of her favorite tones all the way to her room. Oh! It was a tone she hadn't hummed in a very long time. And that was because she had no reason to.

Getting to her chambers, it dawned on her there might be just another goodnews waiting for her. Of course, there should be! Shilah!

She walked into the room with ecstasy but couldn't find Nivea in, just her baby alone on the bed - sleeping. Where did Nivea go? She should be there to give her some feedback about Shilah.

She was about going to check the bathroom when the main door opened and she turned to see it was Nivea.

"Where did you go?" She asked impatiently.

"I'm sorry, My Queen. I went to peep at Queen Shilah's room. This would be the seventh time I'm going there" Nivea replied, having a displeased look on.

Nosheba's brows arched.

"The seventh time? Wh...Why?"

"Because.... she hasn't screamed yet, My Queen. As a matter of fact, she doesn't even seem to be in any pains". Nivea answered, puzzling Nosheba some more. ④

"What're you talking about? Is she in?" She asked. ①

"Yes. At...at my fifth time of checking, I had actually seen her going to get some water. She looked perfectly fine, My Queen, and it made me wonder if she really took any poison" Nivea said. ①

But that's not possible - Nosheba muttered, taking some steps forward.

It's been hours already and the poison should've had it's effect on her a long time ago. What could be



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It was already morning.

Queen Nosheba paced thro and fro in the room, her eyes looking dangerously angry and her steps depicting how impatient she was.

Hands on her waist, she'd bring them down at some point and swing them angrily. What in the name of Selene was taking him so long - she grumbled.

Finally, the door went open and turning to have a look, she spotted him coming in with Nivea.

"What took you so long, Raksha? Do you think I have nothing to do, just standing here and waiting for you?" She snapped at him, even before he'd catch his breath.

Raksha was muddled.

"Hey, calm down, my love. What's the problem?" He asked, bewildered. And taking a deep breath, Nosheba signaled Nivea to leave the room and she did.

"You look so pissed, My love" Raksha went closer and touched her cheek.

"What's the problem? I thought we were going to...."

"Why did you give me a fake poison yesterday, Raksha?" Nosheba finally let it out, her chest rising and falling heavily.

Raksha's brows furrowed.

Huh?

"What're you... talking about?" He scoffed.

"I was just about asking why Shilah's not been rushed to the Physician yet. I thought you were yet to carry out the plan".

"And why would I hesitate till this morning, Raksha? As soon as I got the soup yesterday, I took it to her and watched her drink it. But it's morning already, and she's still breathing just fine!" She rasped, her eyes holding anger Raksha has never seen before. He was equally confused.

"But that's not ... that's not possible" he shook his head.

"If truly she drank the soup, the baby must be dead by now".

"Well, there's no way the baby would die a silent death, right? Nivea has been checking up on her since yesterday, and I'm telling you, Raksha, she's as strong as ever! There's been no pain, no bleeding, no rushing to the Physician - nothing at all! She's just fine!"

"Hold on; are you sure she really drank the soup?" Raksha asked.

"Oh! Please, don't call me stupid. I said I watched her drink it! Like... she drank it right in front of me and not in her room! I saw it, Raksha! That soup went down her throat!" Nosheba stated raucously and turned her back against him.

"Then...what could be wrong?" Raksha pondered.

"That poison is one of the deadliest pregnancy termination herbs. There's just no way it wouldn't kill a child".

He caressed his fingers on his jaws and took some cogitative steps around.

"Are you sure she's pregnant in the first place?" He turned to Nosheba and asked. ①

"For Selene's sake, she is! There's no way the healer could've made a mistake. And from every indication

on Shilah's body, she's definitely pregnant. I know it!" She hissed irkly.

"Then, something's definitely wrong" Raksha bobbed his head.

"Because there's just no way that baby would survive that poison. That Shilah of a lady.... I've just never trusted her. There has always been something.... something different about her".

They both went into silent for a while, with Nosheba being extremely angry. Why wouldn't it work?? Just why???

"I need to be alone, Raksha" she finally turned to him and say.

"I need to be alone and think of a way out of this mess".

"We should do that together. Let's...."

"I need to think alone, Raksha" she cut him off.

"Please, just leave! I'll let you know when I come up with something". She turned and backed him again.

Even when Nosheba was angry, she'd never speak to him this way - Raksha thought silently.

Deciding she really needed an alone time, he turned around and left the room. ②

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As soon as he was out, Nivea rushed in.

"My Queen, what's happening?" She asked worriedly as she rushed to the panting Nosheba.

"Did he say the poison was fake?"

"He claims it's deadly" Nosheba gritted.

"That fool! I don't even know what to believe now".

She felt slight cramps on her abdomen but ignored it. ①

"But.... if it's deadly, then how come it didn't kill the child?" Nivea asked, staring downwards.

"I don't know, Nivea, and I don't have the time to think. I need to find a way to get rid of that baby before the mother finds out. If Shilah finds out, she's definitely going to tell the King. Hence, the King's attention would be divided. And when she finally puts to bed and it turns out to be a boy, it'll be worst! Everything will be over on me! Oh! I need to act quickly 'cause I'm sure it wouldn't be long before she realizes the truth!" Nosheba queried.

"Oh! That's so true, My Queen. But what can we possibly do?" Nivea asked, but Nosheba gave no reply as she walked over to the window.

She needed to think of something else - something quick.

What could she possibly do to get rid of that baby once and for all? An idea was slowly creeping in....

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The news was already circulating round the Palace like wild fire that the King was holding a feast to celebrate the coming of his son with Queen Nosheba.

Preparations were getting into place. The King had held a meeting with his beta and gamma and both were already discharging the plans. It was going to be awesome!

Shilah brushed her hair in front of the mirror, noticing how smooth and glowy her face looked. Although, she had some scanty pimples that weren't there before, but they didn't stop her face from developing such new and glowy look. She could tell she looked more beautiful. ⑤

Managing a small smile, she dropped the brush and left the room afterwards, heading to the King's chambers to answer his call.

She felt really nervous going there - couldn't exactly tell why. Perhaps, she felt he'd change towards her, or he might only see her as his hunger tool or sleep tool. Oh! What is she even thinking?

Either ways, another part of her felt so happy she was going to see him again.

Getting to his chambers, she awaited the guards to inform him as usual. And when they returned and granted her permission into the room, she walked in and met the King sitting and reading a book. Her heart gave a mighty leap, having an eye lock with him.

Gulping hard, she lowered her head and walked towards him.

"Greetings, My King" she bowed courtly, her hands in front of her.

King Dakota, in his usual hesitant state, said nothing immediately as he flipped through the pages of his book.

"Please, sit" his grumpy voice finally came and Shilah took the seat on the other side of the table.

She could notice he was looking different. She couldn't quite point it out, but it was very obvious something about him was different. ①

"How have you been, Shilah?" Her heart gave another leap when eh asked that question.

Caring about her... she's really missed it.

"I'm fine, My King. Thank you.

"And...are you good as well?" She replied.

"Yes, I'm fine. I called for you about an hour ago. What took you so long to come over?"

She lowered her gaze again.

"I'm so sorry, My King. I just... I was trying to freshen up" she answered tamely.

"Hm" Dakota hummed and glanced into his book.

"And last night, you didn't make my sleeping tea for me". He added and nervousness crowded Shilah immediately. ①

Hold on; has she been the one changing or what?

"I'm... I'm really sorry, My King" she bowed.

"It's just that.... I heard you were having dinner with Queen Nosheba and didn't want to disturb in any way. I was thinking.... the Queen might spend the night here" she answered lamely.

Indeed, that was a very lame excuse because Queen Nosheba sleeping there or not has nothing to do with the King's tea.

Well, she couldn't tell him she had been so sad and weak and slept off earlier than normal.

Taking a sigh, King Dakota returned his gaze to his book and so they stayed for a long time.

"My King..." Shilah suddenly called, and the King paused to look at her.

"Uhm...Sorry I didn't say this yesterday. Congratulations on Queen Nosheba's pregnancy. It's a great thing you'll finally be having an heir, My King. I've noticed...the curse is gradually being overcome".

She had this bright smile on her face as she spoke - one that pleased the King.

He chuckled and looked into his book without saying a word.

But.... did he just chuckle? She thought.

After a while, the King finally dropped the book and stood up.

"Come with me, Shilah. Let's have some practice". His hands at his back, he started towards the door.

"Some practice?" Shilah pondered, wondering what he could possibly be talking about.

Well, not wanting to just sit and know, she stood up and followed him out of the room. 2

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Queen Nosheba's carriage pulled over in front of the little hut.

Stepping out in her long black dress and hoodie over her head, she looked around to be doubly sure no third party was around. Yes; it was just her rider and her.

The place had not changed one bit - still looking as local and stuffy as it used to look. It definitely wasn't good for her health - Nosheba thought.

She gave a final glance at the carriage rider who was still positioned on his seat; and adjusting her hoodie properly, she walked towards the hut. 8