



"Tell me more about the curse," I whispered, leaning forward. The words felt heavy on my tongue, weighted with all the questions that had haunted my dreams.

But Amen's eyes darkened, shadows dancing in their depths. Before I could press further, he rose in one fluid motion. His hands found my waist, lifting me as though I weighed nothing more than a feather.

My breath caught in my throat as he settled me onto his lap, his arms wrapping around me with possessive certainty. The sudden intimacy made my heart race.

This wasn't the formal distance between Pharaoh and concubine – this was something raw and real, something that frightened me with its intensity.

"Enough talk of curses," he murmured against my ear, his breath warm against my skin. His embrace tightened, and I felt the steady rhythm of his heart against my back, a counterpoint to my own racing pulse.

He buries his face against the crook of my neck, his breath warm against my skin. My pulse races wildly, my hands instinctively pressing against his chest as if to steady myself.

"I have missed you," he murmurs, his voice raw, low, vibrating against my collarbone. "Every moment apart from you has felt wrong."

My breath catches. The raw honesty in his voice made my chest ache. I turned slightly, studying his face in the flickering lamplight.

"I've missed you too," I admitted softly. The words felt dangerous, like offering up a piece of my soul to the gods themselves. "More than I should. More than makes sense."

His fingers traced idle patterns on my arm, each touch sending sparks through my skin that felt like tiny bursts of magic.

"There is no 'should' between us, Neferet. What we share... it is divine. Ordained by the gods themselves." He pressed a kiss to my temple, his voice dropping lower, resonating with something ancient and powerful.

"I have never known this before," he continues, his grip tightening as though I might disappear from his grasp. "This pull. This hunger. It is madness, Neferet. From the first moment I saw you, I have fought against it, telling myself it is the work of the gods. But the truth is..."

His lips graze my jaw, the barest whisper of a touch, sending a tremor through me. "The truth is, I do not want to fight it. I cannot. I do not want to be without you."

A shiver rolls down my spine, the weight of his confession wrapping around me like a spell.

As his hands caress my back, as his warmth engulfs me, I feel myself unraveling, caught between the fierce temptation of his presence and the terrifying certainty that if I surrender, I will never be free of him.

"You are dangerous, Pharaoh," I whisper, my fingers curling into the fabric of his robes. "You weave your words like silk, entangling me before I can see the snare."

He chuckles, the sound dark and knowing. "And yet, my sweet lotus flower, you do not pull away."

I let my fingers drift, tracing the sharp angles of his jaw, the rough scrape of stubble against my touch.

"If this is divine will," I murmur, "then it is a cruel game the gods play."

Amen's grip tightens, his gaze darkening with something unreadable.

"Perhaps," he breathes, his forehead resting against mine. "Or perhaps the gods do not play games at all. Perhaps they are simply... watching."

His fingers stroke along my spine, sending waves of heat curling in my stomach. The space between us is nearly nonexistent now, his breath mingling with mine, the promise of something dangerous lingering just beyond reach.

The silence stretches, thick with unspoken things, with desires neither of us dare name.

Then, suddenly, his lips curve, and the mood shifts.

"Come," he says, his voice playful now, as though he has decided to spare me from the weight of his earlier confession. "I have been kept behind palace walls for too long. Walk with me through the city tonight."

I blink, startled by the sudden turn in conversation. "The city?"

He nods, his expression unreadable once more. "Not as Pharaoh. As a man. As I was when you first met me."

I hesitate. The idea is absurd—reckless. If anyone were to recognize him, the consequences would be unimaginable.

"But... how?" I glanced toward the palace walls, solid and imposing in the moonlight. "The guards..."

"Trust me." He stood, keeping me steady as I found my feet. "I've been slipping past palace guards since I was a child. Some habits are hard to break – even for a Pharaoh."

There was pride in his voice, a hint of the rebellious spirit that still lived within the divine king.

I should have refused. Should have remembered my place, the proper distance between a king and his concubine. Should have recalled all the warnings about propriety and duty that had been drilled into me since childhood.

But the adventure in his smile was infectious, and the thought of exploring the city with him, away from the suffocating walls of the palace and the watchful eyes of the harem...

"Yes," I said, surprising myself with my eagerness. "Show me everything."

His grin widened, and he took my hand. The touch sent another surge of power through me, like lightning contained in human form.

"Follow me, my sweet lotus flower. And stay close – the night holds many secrets, but not all of them are meant for mortal eyes."