



## Chapter 24



I barely register the cool night air against my skin as he presses me against the marble pillar of the balcony. The world beyond the harem fades—the golden sands, the temple spires, the Nile winding its eternal path beneath the stars.

None of it exists at this moment. There is only him. Only us.

Amen's fingers trace my jaw before tilting my head back, his gaze dark with something deeper than desire. Possession. Need. A hunger I feel mirrored in my own body, burning through my veins like sacred incense curling toward the heavens.

"Neferet," he breathes my name like a prayer before capturing my lips in another searing kiss.

Every time he touches me, something unearthly stirs inside me. As though the very fabric of my soul is unraveling beneath his hands, begging for him to mold it into something new, something bound to him.

I have never wanted anything the way I want him.

His mouth leaves mine only to trail along my throat, his teeth grazing my skin in a way that sends a shiver down my spine.

"You feel it, don't you?" he murmurs, his voice thick with meaning. "The way you belong to me. The way I belong to you."

His words should make me wary. Should awaken the logical part of me that knows I am still without answers, still standing at the precipice of something I do not fully understand.

But his hands press against my hips, drawing me closer, and logic vanishes like morning mist before the sun.

"Yes, I do," I whisper, and I mean it.

Goddesses help me, I mean it.

His growl of approval rumbles against my skin as his lips claim mine once more, his grip tightening as if he is afraid I will slip away. The kiss deepens, pulling me into a void where nothing else matters.

My mind—my body—becomes his.

I moan softly as he lifts me, pressing my back against the pillar as his body fits against mine perfectly, every movement deliberate, teasing. His knee parts my thighs, his strength undeniable as he holds me there.

"Amen," I gasp, my fingers tangling in his dark hair as his lips find the sensitive hollow just below my ear.

"Say my name again," he commands, voice rough, edged with something dangerously close to desperation. "I want to hear it from your lips when you beg me for more."

His hands slip beneath the sheer fabric of my robe, skimming over the heated skin of my thighs. The teasing pressure of his fingertips sends liquid fire pooling low in my stomach, and I let my head fall back with a breathless whimper.

I should tell him to stop.

I should demand the truth from him, insist that he explain what is happening to me—why his touch makes me feel like I am losing myself.

But I can't. Because I do want more. More of him. More of this fevered, intoxicating madness that only he can bring.

I shift against him, welcoming the heat of his body, my nails dragging along his shoulders. The night wraps around us like a sacred veil, sealing us within this moment.

Then—a flash. Pain.

A sudden, sharp pressure in my skull that sears through the pleasure like a lightning strike. I suck in a sharp breath as the vision grips me, an unwelcome intruder in the midst of my bliss.

Darkness.

A figure standing in the water, blood spreading in violent ripples. Blood in the Nile. Shadows writhing in darkness. Amen's face, twisted in agony as something dark and terrible pulled him under. The golden mask of Osiris, cracking down the middle...

Pain shot through my head, sharp and sudden. Then a pulse of something wet, warm, slipping past my lips.

Blood.

The coppery tang of it fills my senses before I even understand what is happening. I lift a shaking hand to my nose, my fingers coming away stained red.

The moment shatters.

Amen stiffens instantly, his heated gaze snapping to my face. The air around us shifts, the power he exudes turning cold, razor-sharp.

"Neferet," he breathes, his voice no longer laced with desire but with something far more dangerous.

Concern. Panic.

Without hesitation, he reaches down, tearing a piece of his own expensive robes, gently pressing it against my nose. His touch, once burning with passion, now trembles—just barely, but I feel it.

I watch as his eyes darken, a storm gathering in their depths. He stares at the blood staining my lips, my chin, his own fingers.

Something about my blood unsettles him.

My heart pounds against my ribs, fear finally managing to carve its way through the lingering haze of desire.

He shouldn't be this shaken.

I reach up, gripping his wrist before he can pull away. "Amen —"

"Rest," he orders, his voice suddenly devoid of the warmth it held only moments ago. "You need to rest."

He doesn't let me protest. Instead, with quiet care, he lifts me into his arms and carries me back inside, the intensity of the moment giving way to something heavier, something unspoken.

The softness of my bed meets my back, the silk sheets a stark contrast to the tension coiling in the air between us. His fingers linger against my cheek for a breath, then trail down my leg beneath the covers, a touch that is both a silent farewell and a teasing promise.

"You always test my patience," he murmurs, amusement

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"You always test my patience," he murmurs, amusement lacing his tone despite the gravity of what just occurred.

I try to respond, to demand an explanation, but he steps away before I can find the words, retreating toward the door.

With one final look, he is gone.

I lay there, my head still spinning, trying to make sense of what had happened. The vision played over and over in my mind - the blood, the shadows, the mask.

What did it mean? And why had my body reacted so violently to Amen's touch?

Sleep refused to come. After tossing restlessly, I lit an oil lamp and pulled out the stolen scrolls. If answers existed anywhere, surely they would be in these ancient texts.

My fingers trembled as I unrolled the first scroll, scanning the hieroglyphs for any mention of Osiris. Hours passed as I read about the god's death and resurrection, about his eternal bond with Isis, about the magic that flowed between them.

One passage caught my eye:

"When divine power meets its match,  
the very elements tremble.

Life and death dance on a knife's edge,  
creation and destruction intertwined..."

The words blurred as exhaustion finally claimed me. I drifted off surrounded by papyrus and questions, the lamp burning low beside me. In my dreams, Amen's kisses tasted like blood and destiny.