



## Chapter 35



"You danced beautifully tonight," he said, his voice smooth, warm. "A captivating performance."

I held his gaze, expression unreadable, refusing to let the weight of his words affect me. I would not play this game. Not when he had spent days avoiding my touch, keeping me at a careful distance.

After a long pause, I lowered my eyes, glancing toward the revelry around us.

"Thank you," I said simply, the words hollow, detached.

The moment stretched between us, taut and silent. I could feel the flicker of his surprise, the hesitation in his breath, but before he could question me, Heket seized the moment, filling the space with effortless conversation.

I let the evening slip by in silence.

My mind drifted elsewhere—to the dream. The blood-red waters of the Nile. The cryptic warning that still clung to the edges of my consciousness, elusive yet persistent.

It was only when I felt the distinct sensation of being watched that my thoughts returned to the present. A cold weight settled in my chest.

I scanned the room, searching for the source of the unease tightening my spine. And then I found him.

Safety.

He was watching me. Unblinking.

The military commander sat among the other dignitaries, clad in the rich linens and gold adornments befitting his rank, but there was something unmistakably out of place about him—about the way he sat rigidly, his wine untouched, his focus entirely on me.

He did not mask his scrutiny, did not glance away when I met his stare. He simply observed, his dark eyes piercing, his expression unreadable.

A lifetime ago, that gaze belonged to me. A lifetime ago, I had loved him, had envisioned a future at his side. But that was before the betrayal. Before he had taken what belonged to me and turned his back without hesitation.

Now, there was nothing left between us but the ruins of what could have been.

And yet, the way he looked at me now—watching, waiting—it unsettled something deep inside me. As if he sought something. As if I were a mystery to him now.

A shiver crawled down my spine.

Why?

Was it the hunger for conquest that had drawn him to Kiya? Did he look at me now because I belonged to another man—one greater than him? Or was there something else—something elusive?

Unnerved, I averted my gaze and soon excused myself. Bowing to Pharaoh, I retreated from the grand table. The crisp night air embraced me on the balcony as I leaned against the stone railing, attempting to steady my thoughts.

stone railing, attempting to steady my thoughts.

Sahety's stare.

The dream.

A shift beneath the surface—an enigma.

I closed my eyes, focusing on the scent of jasmine in the breeze, or the distant murmur of a festival outside of the palace walls. But as I turned to leave, Amen blocked my path, illuminated by faint torchlight.

His unreadable gaze bore inten—serious and resolute.

"We need to talk," he said.

My heart faltered—those words never bode well.

## **End** *of* *The* **Chapter**

A Chance Meeting



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