



Chapter 48



The small black puppy wiggles in my lap, its warm body pressing against me as I run my fingers through its short, sleek fur.

It's so tiny, barely bigger than my forearm, yet full of energy, its dark eyes gleaming with curiosity. The moment Amen placed it in my arms, my heart melted.

"It was meant as a gift for me," Amen had said, watching my reaction closely, "but I thought you could use some company."

He had given me no time to respond before pressing the pup into my hands. And now, as I sit with it nestled against me, I realize how much I already adore the little creature.

I let out a quiet breath, my eyes drifting down to the small creature nestled against me.

"I had a dog like that once," I confess, the words coming unbidden. "A long time ago. When I was still a child."

Amen tilts his head slightly, interest flickering across his face. "You never mentioned that before."

I shake my head. "It was a long time ago. I suppose I never let myself think about it much." My fingers still briefly against the pup's fur, memories surfacing with unexpected clarity. "It was just like this one—loyal, affectionate. Always at my side."

A faint smile tugs at Amen's lips. "Sounds fitting."

A small laugh escapes me, but it fades as I continue. "It didn't live long," I admit, my voice quieter now. "It got sick. There was nothing we could do. It was gone too soon."

Amen's expression shifts, his eyes darkening slightly. "I'm sorry."

I shake my head again, as if to dismiss the lingering ache that had been buried for so many years.

"I never realized how much I missed it," I murmured. "Not until now."

As if sensing my emotions, the pup presses its tiny nose into the crook of my arm, nuzzling against me with a soft whimper. I let out a quiet laugh, brushing my fingers over its small, velvety head.

"You were right," I say at last, looking back up at him. "I did need this."

Amen's smirk is soft but knowing. "I usually am."

I roll my eyes, but there's warmth behind it. "Arrogant."

His lips quirk higher. "Content, actually. Seeing you smile."

Werel arrives just then, carrying a small clay bowl filled with food. She kneels beside me, setting it down, and the puppy immediately pounces on the meal, devouring it with wild enthusiasm.

Both of us laugh at the sight.

"It eats like a beast!" Werel exclaims, shaking her head in amusement.

I grin, an idea forming in my mind. "Then we should give it a name to match."

Amen leans forward, a glimmer of amusement in his gaze.
"Choose wisely. Names have power, after all."

Werel hums thoughtfully. "A name of a warrior, perhaps? A hero?"

"No." I consider this for a moment, then shake my head. "A creature of the night. A predator."

My gaze flickers toward the pup, watching as it fiercely attacks its meal, unbothered by anything else in the world. A great and terrible name surfaces in my mind, one both feared and powerful.

"Apep," I say at last with a smirk. "After the serpent that tries to swallow Ra every night."

Werel snorts. "A rather ambitious name for something so small."

I smirk. "He'll grow into it."

Amen watches our exchange with quiet amusement. The sight of him standing there—tall, regal, yet relaxed in my presence—sends a strange warmth through me.

But his visit tonight is not just about the dog. There is something else.

When we are finally alone, he speaks.

"I want to try it," he says.

I blink. "Try what?"

"Oneiromancy." His expression is serious now. "Lately, my

Onemancy. His expression is serious now. "Lately, my dreams have changed."

A small prickle of unease spreads through me. "Changed how?"

He hesitates, as if debating whether to tell me. Then, with a sigh, he continues.

"At first, they were ordinary—walking the palace halls, speaking to my council, preparing for ceremonies. But then things began to shift. The halls became darker. The walls began to crumble. And each night, I saw more." His voice grows quieter. "Each night, I died."

A chill runs down my spine. "Every version of the dream ends the same way?"

"Yes."

I reach for his hand without thinking, gripping it tightly. "Then we have to do this."

His fingers tighten around mine. "I thought you might say that."

We waste no time preparing. I follow every instruction written in the scrolls, carefully measuring the ritual oils, mixing them with the sleeping draught, chanting the incantations necessary for guidance.

And yet—nothing works.

Again and again, I attempt the ritual, refining each step, adjusting every detail. And each time, failure.

Hours pass. Frustration builds. I begin to doubt myself, my

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Then, suddenly, an idea strikes me.

"Maybe we're doing this in the wrong place," I say, pacing the room. "The Temple of Isis—it's where all of my visions take place. If there's anywhere that could strengthen our energies, it's there."

Amen studies me for a long moment. Then, he nods. "Then let's go."

Using the hidden passages, we slip through the palace undetected, making our way into the city under the cover of night. The streets are quiet, the air thick with the scent of earth and lotus.

When we reach the temple, a familiar priestess greets us. She does not question why we are here. Instead, she silently hands me the items I need—sacred oils, enchanted herbs, and a stronger version of the sleeping draught.

It should be enough.

But then I remember the words from my vision.

"The dreamer must claim their own vision. If they do not, the dream will claim them."

My blood. That is what I am missing.

If I am to walk freely within Amen's dreams—if I am to protect both of us from whatever lurks within them—then I must claim this vision as my own.

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Without hesitation, I retrieve my dagger. Holding it over the mixture, I press the blade against my palm and slice.

A single drop of my blood falls into the draught, dissolving instantly.

For the sake of our safe passage—I do exactly as the vision instructed.

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

A Chance Meeting



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