



## Chapter 56



The palace library was quiet, save for the flickering oil lamps that cast long, trembling shadows across the sandstone walls.

I had spent so many nights among these scrolls, pouring over forgotten wisdom, unraveling secrets hidden in the divine scripts. But tonight, there was no comfort.

Tonight, the silence was uneasy.

I sensed Sahety before I even could see him.

Our paths collided in the dimly lit corridor between the archives. He had been patrolling the grounds, his presence a mere extension of the suffocating watch he had kept over me these past days.

He was waiting. Expecting something. For a long moment, I did not give it to him.

Then, unwillingly, the words left my lips. "I suppose I should thank you."

The words tasted bitter. A debt repaid through clenched teeth.

Sahety's face shifted—surprised, then pleased. He smiled, as if this moment was something he had long awaited.

"A rare thing," he mused, his voice tinged with amusement. "Hearing you say anything to me that isn't a curse."

I did not return the smile. He took the small moment of truce and seized it, stepping closer.

"It means something," he said, taking another slow step forward, "to hear you say that."

I did not reply.

Instead, I turned my attention to the table, to the scrolls before me, to anything but him. I had already offered him more grace than I had intended. My gratitude, however reluctant, was the only thing he deserved.

But Sahety was not satisfied. He never was.

"May I speak with you?" he asked.

I wanted to refuse.

I wanted to turn and leave. But some misguided sense of honor—some stubborn attempt to acknowledge my own reluctant gratitude—held me in place.

And so, I listened. At first, it was nothing more than idle conversation.

He spoke of the court, the shifting tides of politics, the security of the palace. I gave him only the barest responses, my patience fraying with each passing moment.

Then, the subject changed.

"You still hate me," he started, watching me too closely.

I felt his gaze moving over me, studying, as if searching for some hint of warmth that did not exist.

"I don't think of you enough to hate you." A lie. And we both knew it.

He chuckled darkly, shaking his head. "I deserve that."

A slow, almost wistful smirk curled at his lips, his gaze flickering over my face, lingering on my lips, before lowering to my throat. A long pause. Then, in the quiet, he spoke.

"Kiya still wears the same perfumed oil you did when we were younger," he murmured, almost wistfully. "It never smells the same on her."

A violent sickness coiled in my stomach, twisting like a venomous serpent, squeezing my lungs. My breath caught.

He took a slow step forward.

"I think about you every night. Every time I look at her..." He tilted his head slightly, his eyes hooded, his voice dripping with something that curdled my blood. "I wonder what it would have been like—if it had been you instead."

I stiffened. My throat constricted. "Stop."

The word lashed from my tongue like a blade. But he did not listen.

Instead, he took another step. Closer. His presence was an oppressive weight, suffocating, leeching the air from the room.

"I still love you, Neferet." I turned from him. Disgust, fury, revulsion—twisting, spiraling, clawing at my insides. "I swear, I will never let anyone harm you."

Then—he reached for me. His fingers brushed my wrist—gentle, seeking, pleading.

My voice was steel, honed to a lethal edge.

"Don't you dare."

But then—something in him shifted. His expression darkened. The last flickers of feigned regret, of pretended longing, dissolved into something far worse.

Like a mask cracking, revealing the monster beneath. His hand shoots out, wrapping around my wrist with bruising force. Before I can scream, he yanks me against him.

"You arrogant bitch." His breath is hot against my face, reeking of wine. "After everything I've done for you, you still think you're better than me?"

Fear floods my veins, cold and paralyzing. This isn't happening. This can't be happening.

I tried to rip free, but he only twisted my arm, wrenching me forward, forcing me still.

His grip tightens until I feel bones grinding together. "You should be grateful." He forces me back against the library table, his massive frame caging me in. "You owe me."

His words slithered into my ears like a serpent, coiling, tightening, suffocating

I struggle, but he's too strong. Has always been too strong. His other hand tangles in my hair, jerking my head back.

"You belong to me," he snarls. "Always have. Or do you really think you're anything more than the Pharaoh's whore?"

His laugh is cruel, empty of everything I once loved about him. "A pretty toy, draped in silk, spreading your legs for a living god." His hand slides down my body, rough and possessive. "But you're still mine."

Commented [Ma1]:

But you're still mine.

I fight harder, clawing at his arms, but he slams me down onto the table. The impact knocks the breath from my lungs. Books scatter, scrolls hitting the floor with dull thuds.

"Stop," I gasp. "Sahety, stop—"

He pins my wrists above my head with one hand. The other tears at my dress, ripping the delicate silk like paper. Cool air hits my exposed skin, and bile rises in my throat.

"I've waited so long," he growls, pressing his body against mine. His hand covers my breast, squeezing hard enough to hurt. "Watched you parade around in these flimsy dresses, teasing everyone with what belongs to me."

Tears burn in my eyes - not from fear or pain, but from pure, murderous rage. His fingers slide lower, pushing beneath the torn fabric, and something inside me shatters.

No. Not this. Never this.

His hands— His hands were where only Amen had touched.

I thrashed. I clawed, kicked, twisted, every part of me screaming. But it wasn't enough. He was stronger. And I was losing.

Rage ignited inside me. A fury unlike anything I had ever known.

I would not let him take this from me. I would not let him take me.

A rage so deep, so pure, it roared through my veins like fire.

A rage that didn't just belong to me—it belonged to something older, something darker, something waiting beneath my skin.

I felt it awaken.

My free hand—fingers coated in my own blood from clawing at him—shot up, pressed against his forehead.

The magic surged. Like a floodgate breaking.

Sahety screams. Blood pours from his nose, his eyes, his mouth—an endless crimson flood. He staggers back, clutching his face, momentarily blind.

I don't hesitate. My hand finds his sword, and in one fluid motion, I drive the blade deep into his chest.

The steel slides between his ribs with terrible ease. His body jerks, a wet gasp escaping his lips. His eye widens—first in shock, then in recognition. He sees me clearly now, perhaps for the first time.

"Nef—" Blood bubbles from his lips, cutting off my name.

Then he crumples, dead before he hits the floor.

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

A Chance Meeting