

The Pharaoh's Favorite

Chapter 9

Power thrummed through my veins as I met Amen's challenge.

"Bring me a knife," I commanded, shocked by my own boldness.

His laugh echoed in the night air, rich and carefree, as he turned to retrieve an ornate sword from the wall. With a boyish excitement, he almost leaped into motion, his long, loose black hair swaying with each step.

He moved with an energy that made him seem younger, almost like a child about to ride a horse for the first time. I couldn't suppress the small smile that tugged at my lips as she watched him, the sight a stark contrast to the composed Pharaoh I'd expected.

The sight disarmed me, and for the first time that evening, I felt a fleeting sense of ease. He reached the wall and pulled the sword free with a flourish, its jeweled hilt catching the moonlight like trapped stars.

Turning back to me, he presented the weapon with a theatrical bow, his dark eyes sparkling with mischief.

"A gift from the Hittite ambassador," he declared, his tone mockingly grand. "Though I doubt this was the use he intended."

I bit back a laugh, his infectious energy momentarily chasing away the tension that had wrapped itself around me all night.

For a man who wielded power over an entire kingdom and a living god among men, Amen seemed unexpectedly... human.

The blade's weight settled in my palm, cold and certain.

"Hold out your hand," I said, my voice steady despite the bit of tremor in my chest.

Amen extended his hand without hesitation, the golden ring on his finger catching the light. The confidence in his gesture only made my own uncertainty more glaring.

I murmured a prayer to Isis under my breath and drew a shallow cut across his fingertip. The bead of blood that welled up seemed unnaturally vivid against his bronzed skin.

“You didn’t even flinch,” I said, surprised.

“I’ve faced worse,” he replied smoothly, a hint of amusement in his voice. His dark eyes held mine, steady and unyielding.

Ancient words spilled from my lips, darker than prayer, older than empire. Without breaking his gaze, I slowly brought his bleeding finger to my mouth.

The taste of royal blood exploded on my tongue – copper and power and something else, something divine. His eyes darkened with a hunger that had nothing to do with magic.

Then it came – a flood of whispers, faint at first but growing louder, threading through my mind like a thousand silken threads.

My vision blurred, replaced by flashes of light and shadow. Images surged forward – a serpent coiled around the sun, shadows chasing a golden glow, the gods standing silent and watchful.

“You got two questions,” I whispered, the power of Isis surging through me like wine. “Choose wisely.”

His first question cut through the haze, precise as a blade:

“What lies beneath the third stone of the Temple of Karnak’s inner sanctum?”

Images flooded my mind – midnight rituals, secret passages, a golden ankh buried generations ago. The truth spilled from my lips before I could stop it:

“A sealed chamber. Inside, the original crown of Upper Egypt, hidden during the Hyksos invasion.”

His eyes darkened. He already knew this – had likely placed it there himself. But his second question carried more weight:

“What awaits me if I continue down my chosen path?”

The vision struck like lightning. Blood on marble floors. A golden mask shattering. Two figures intertwined – blessed or cursed, I couldn’t tell. Power that could rebuild or destroy an empire.

“Death,” I whispered, then stronger: “Or divinity. The scales balance on a knife’s edge, and I...” I met his gaze, shocked by my own certainty. “I am the weight that tips them.”

His sharp intake of breath confirmed what we both knew – no ordinary seer could have known these things. No simple priestess could have seen so deep.

“Remarkable,” he said, but his eyes held something darker than mere satisfaction.

Something hungry.

The praise warmed me more than it should. No one had ever looked at me like this, with such raw appreciation for what I could do rather than just what I was. A blush crept up my neck as I smiled, whispered thanks falling from my lips.

His hands caught my face, thumbs stroking my lower lip. His eyes, dark and full of hunger, bore into me as he growled, “I warned you before,” he murmured, voice rough with desire. “If you kept looking at me like that...”

Memory crashed over me – dawn breaking over the Nile, the taste of freedom and possibility on my lips.

“That was my first kiss...” I confessed, the words escaping before I could catch them.

At my words, something dark and raw flashed in his gaze, igniting a fire deep within me. His lips crashed onto mine in a brutal kiss, full of need and longing.

My back hit the balcony railing as he pressed against me, one hand tangling in my hair while the other claimed my waist. The taste of wine and desire mingled on our tongues as I clung to him, my fingers splayed across his chest, feeling the rapid pulse of his heartbeat beneath the cool linen of his clothing.

Amen’s fingers traced a path up my side, gently caressing my skin as he pulled me closer. I moaned as he claimed my mouth once more, his tongue delving deep as he explored every inch of me. The tension between us mounted, an unspoken language of need and lust as I gasped for breath.

The balcony railing dug into my back once more, a harsh reminder of reality as I felt myself overwhelming in his arms.

His kiss deepened, and I felt my knees weaken, my body unable to bear the intensity of the moment. When my legs gave out, he caught me effortlessly, his arms firm and steady as they held me close.

Amen’s strong arms locked around me, holding me tightly against his chest. His lips curled into a wicked smile as he pulled away, his grip tightening as he looked down at me with a hunger I couldn’t deny.

His voice was low and husky as he whispered in my ear, “I think that’s enough for tonight.” But his grip didn’t loosen, his hand still firmly on my waist as he continued, “You can ‘serve’ me another time.” The word rolled off his tongue with a promise of filthy delights yet to come. “If you want to.”

The choice he offered was an illusion. I was his concubine – my wants meant nothing. Yet as I looked up at him, still tasting whispers of copper and kingship on my lips, I realized something that terrified me far more than any lack of choice.

I did want to.
