



Chapter 51



The moment I stepped into the Golden House, a strange feeling settled in my gut—an unease I couldn't quite shake.

I moved quickly through the corridors, my mind still caught in the whirlwind of everything we had seen and experienced within the dream.

But even as exhaustion tugged at my limbs, I remained alert. Something told me that the peace of this night would not last.

I was nearly at my chambers when a figure stepped into my path, blocking my way.

Heket.

She stood with her arms crossed, her expression unreadable, save for the flicker of satisfaction in her dark eyes. I barely slowed my steps. I didn't have the patience for her venom tonight.

"How curious," she drawls, tilting her head, eyes glinting in the flickering torchlight. "You disappear in the middle of the night, and now you return just before dawn." Her voice is smooth, laced with mock intrigue. "One might wonder where you've been, Neferet."

"Where have you been?" she demanded, voice laced with accusation. "It's late."

I met her gaze with cold indifference. "That is none of your business."

I moved to brush past her, but she shifted, stepping directly into my path again. Her lips curled into a smirk—dangerous, knowing.

"One might also wonder why you care so much about my movements," I said, not troubled by the harsh tone of my voice.

Her smirk widens, as if she was hoping I would say that.

"Oh, I don't," she assures me, her tone falsely sweet. "But you are drawing quite a bit of attention these days, aren't you?" She takes a deliberate step closer, lowering her voice. "These are troubling times for Egypt. Soon, danger will lurk at every corner. Even the Golden House won't be safe. Not for those who stand out. Not for those who are... important."

The air between us tenses, her words laced with something darker than mere spite. A warning. A threat.

I force myself to remain unmoved, lifting my chin in defiance. "If you're trying to frighten me, Heket, you'll have to try harder."

She lets out a low, throaty chuckle. "Oh, Neferet. Frightening you would be far too easy." Her fingers brush against the sheer fabric of my sleeve, a mockery of affection. "But breaking you? That would be far more satisfying."

I step back, my blood running hot. I could slap her. I could carve a sharp retort into her pride and walk away victorious. But I don't. I refuse to let her see how deeply her words sink into my mind.

"Then you will have to do better than cryptic whispers." Without another glance, I turned and walked away from her.

But as I reached my chambers and closed the door behind me, my fingers trembled slightly at my sides.

It was no empty threat. The next few days proved that.

It begins as whispers in the night.

At first, I ignored them. The palace walls carry voices, sometimes amplifying distant murmurs, making them seem closer than they truly are.

The first incident came in the form of a falling clay pot. I had been walking through one of the side courtyards, mind lost in thought, when something inside me screamed to move.

I barely stepped aside in time before the massive vessel crashed to the ground where I had just been standing, shattering into hundreds of jagged pieces. The servants rushed in, gasping in alarm.

A freak accident, they claimed. A coincidence.

I knew better.

Then came the scorpion, nestled between the sheets of my bed. I had been about to slip beneath them when I caught the faintest glimmer of movement.

I froze.

Its tail was raised, poised to strike. The only thing that saved me was my vigilance.

Another accident.

Every night, I heard them—the strange whispers outside my chamber doors, the careful footsteps that disappeared the moment I rose from my bed to investigate.

Yet, every time I opened the doors, I found nothing but the cold emptiness of the halls.

The third attempt was more daring—more personal. A cobra, coiled and waiting among my silken garments, its deadly fangs bared. It took three guards to remove it safely.

With a gasp, I throw myself backward, my pulse roaring in my ears. The strike barely misses, the snake's head snapping back with a violent jerk as one of the guards slashes his blade down, severing it in one swift motion.

The message was clear.

This was Heket.

The crude, obvious nature of these attempts reeks of her arrogance—her desire to terrorize rather than kill outright. But if she thinks I will cower like a frightened doe, she is sorely mistaken.

My anger festers, growing darker, sharper, fueled by the relentless sandstorm that has swallowed Thebes for four days and the suffocating tension over the military unrest at the border.

The wind howled through the palace corridors, carrying with it the scent of dust and dread. A sandstorm had swallowed the city, shrouding everything in golden chaos for four relentless days.

The heat pressed down like an unbearable weight, and with it, my anger festered.

But worst of all? I still have no chance to see Amen.

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But worst of all? I still have no chance to see Amen.

No chance to seek comfort in his presence.

The ache of it gnaws at me, twisting inside my ribs, leaving me restless and irritable. I force myself to keep busy—studying, reading, practicing what little blood magic I can in secret.

Anything to keep my mind from spiraling into frustration.

I had not seen him since our parting in the main palace. His duties consumed him, and with the looming threat on our borders, there was no room for distractions.

I was alone.

Until the whispers changed.

One morning, as I sat in my chamber, trying to read but unable to focus, a disturbance rippled through the Golden House. It was not the hushed plotting of concubines, not the veiled mockery that had grown ever more pointed in recent weeks.

This was something different. A deep, unsettling silence.

Then came the scream.

It echoed through the halls, raw and filled with horror. A servant girl ran past my door, her hands clutching at her face, sobbing hysterically.

I shot to my feet, my pulse hammering. Werel burst into my room a moment later, her face pale.

The words left my lips in a whisper. "What happened?"

It echoed through the halls, raw and filled with horror. A servant girl ran past my door, her hands clutching at her face, sobbing hysterically.

I shot to my feet, my pulse hammering. Werel burst into my room a moment later, her face pale.

The words left my lips in a whisper. "What happened?"

Werel hesitated, as if dreading the answer herself. "It's Nebetta," she finally said, voice shaking. "She's... dead."

End of The Chapter

A Chance Meeting



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