



Chapter 93



The gates of Thebes trembled under the weight of monsters birthed from nightmare.

Blood, sand, and smoke clouded my vision as my blade sliced through the thick neck of a jackal-headed creature. Its body crumpled at my feet.

But even before I could catch my breath, the foul thing began knitting itself back together.

These beasts defied the laws of Ma'at itself.

Jackals with scorpion tails, vultures with human hands, serpents that, when cleaved, doubled their numbers.

A mockery of nature, of balance, of life.

Around me, my soldiers fought valiantly, their shouts lost beneath the chorus of inhuman screeches. General Ahmose roared above the chaos, his bronze blade flashing as he drove it through another abomination's throat.

"Hold the line! For Egypt! For the Pharaoh!"

Their courage burned brightly, but I could see the fear in their eyes. Our finest warriors struck blow after blow, and the monsters only rose again, stronger and angrier.

Desperation gnawed at the edges of my mind. Conventional weapons were useless.

We needed something more.

I closed my eyes and reached inward, past the fear, past the exhaustion that made my limbs feel like stone. I called to the fragment of Osiris buried within me.

And it answered.

Water surged from the city's reservoirs, from sacred fountains, even from the very air. Rivers of it rose, swirling around me like serpents, their power responding to the will of a god through a mortal vessel.

The Duat creatures howled as the water touched them, retreating as their corrupted flesh sizzled and burned.

But every moment I wielded Osiris's power took a toll.

Black spots flickered at the corners of my vision. Blood trickled from my nose, ignored in the frenzy of battle. My body – mortal and frail, no matter the title I bore – strained under the divine energy coursing through it.

Still, I fought.

Until I saw her.

Atop the eastern wall, silhouetted against a dying sun and a rising dust storm, stood Neferet. My heart plummeted into my gut.

"Neferet!" I bellowed, horror twisting my voice. "Get back inside!"

She didn't move. Or perhaps she couldn't hear me over the din.

Or perhaps, gods help me, she chose not to listen. And then she leapt.

I moved instinctively, shoving aside a vulture-creature, slashing through a serpent coiled around my legs.

I surged forward, frantic, desperate to reach her before she hit the ground. But she didn't fall like a mortal.

Sand rose in a cushion, softening her descent, cradling her like a mother would a child. She landed in a crouch, rising fluidly, her linen dress billowing around her.

The monsters immediately turned, abandoning us for her. Their howls grew frenzied, gleeful. They sensed Seth's lingering presence.

"No!" I shouted, cutting down another beast. "Stay away from her!"

I fought my way toward her, cutting a bloody swath through the writhing horde.

But Neferet... Neferet was not defenseless.

With a flick of her wrist, pillars of sand shot upward, impaling jackal-headed monsters mid-leap.

She moved like a dancer, a priestess performing sacred rites. Her control was precise, not wild like Seth's chaos. Every motion purposeful, every strike exact.

"Behind you!" I shouted as a vulture-beast lunged at her blind spot.

Neferet spun on the balls of her feet, her hands weaving in sharp, commanding gestures. Sand erupted in a shield, smashing the creature back into a heap of broken wings and

gnashing teeth.

She turned to me, grinning fiercely, a warrior's grin. Her eyes—thank all the gods, remained clear green.

"I told you I could help," she said, breathless but unbroken. "I still can use *his* powers."

Relief and awe tangled painfully inside my chest.

Fighting back-to-back, we created a seamless harmony – her sand and my water.

Where I faltered, she surged forward. When she tired, I shielded her flank. No words needed to be spoken. Our hearts moved in perfect unison.

And yet, as quickly as we felled them, the monsters regenerated, more ferocious each time.

"We can't defeat them one by one!" I called out over the roar of battle. "They'll just keep coming!"

Neferet's voice rang clear in reply. "Then we send them back! Together!"

Understanding sparked between us.

Side by side, we moved to the center of the battlefield. I summoned water in vast, churning circles, the current pulling at sand, blood, and broken bodies alike.

Neferet mirrored me, commanding the desert itself, whirling sand into tight, dangerous spirals.

Faster and faster, our elements spun: two forces, two wills,

becoming one.

The ground trembled beneath our feet. Reality itself seemed too thin.

"Now!" I shouted.

Together, we drove our powers downward. The sand and water pierced the earth – not into stone, but into mist. Into darkness.

The ground cracked open, revealing the yawning maw of Duat – the realm of the dead.

The monsters shrieked as the vortex dragged them toward the rift. They clawed at the ground, at each other, desperate to resist the pull. But it was useless.

One by one, they were swallowed by the underworld.

Until, finally, silence fell.

Neferet collapsed into my arms, her body sagging against mine, trembling with exhaustion. I caught her easily, cradling her against my chest.

"It's over," I whispered. "We're safe now."

The ground sealed itself once more, leaving only scorched earth and bloodied sand where the rift had opened.

"You should have stayed in the palace," I murmured, brushing a blood-matted curl from her brow.

There was no anger in my voice, only awe. And profound, shattering relief.

She smiled faintly, her eyelids fluttering closed. "I couldn't let

She smiled faintly, her eyelids fluttering closed. "I couldn't let you face them alone."

I pressed a kiss to her forehead, lingering, memorizing the heat and life of her skin.

She was real. Alive. *Herself*.

As I carried her back through the ranks of battered, bloodied, but cheering soldiers, I couldn't stop replaying the sight of her commanding the sand itself.

Wielding Seth's power, but not consumed by it.

How had she done it? Was it strength of will? Or was it a sign that something far more dangerous lay ahead?

I didn't know.

But as long as I drew breath, I would stand between her and whatever storm awaited.

End of The Chapter

Chapter 93



Comments

2



Gifts

1042

Commented [Ma1]: