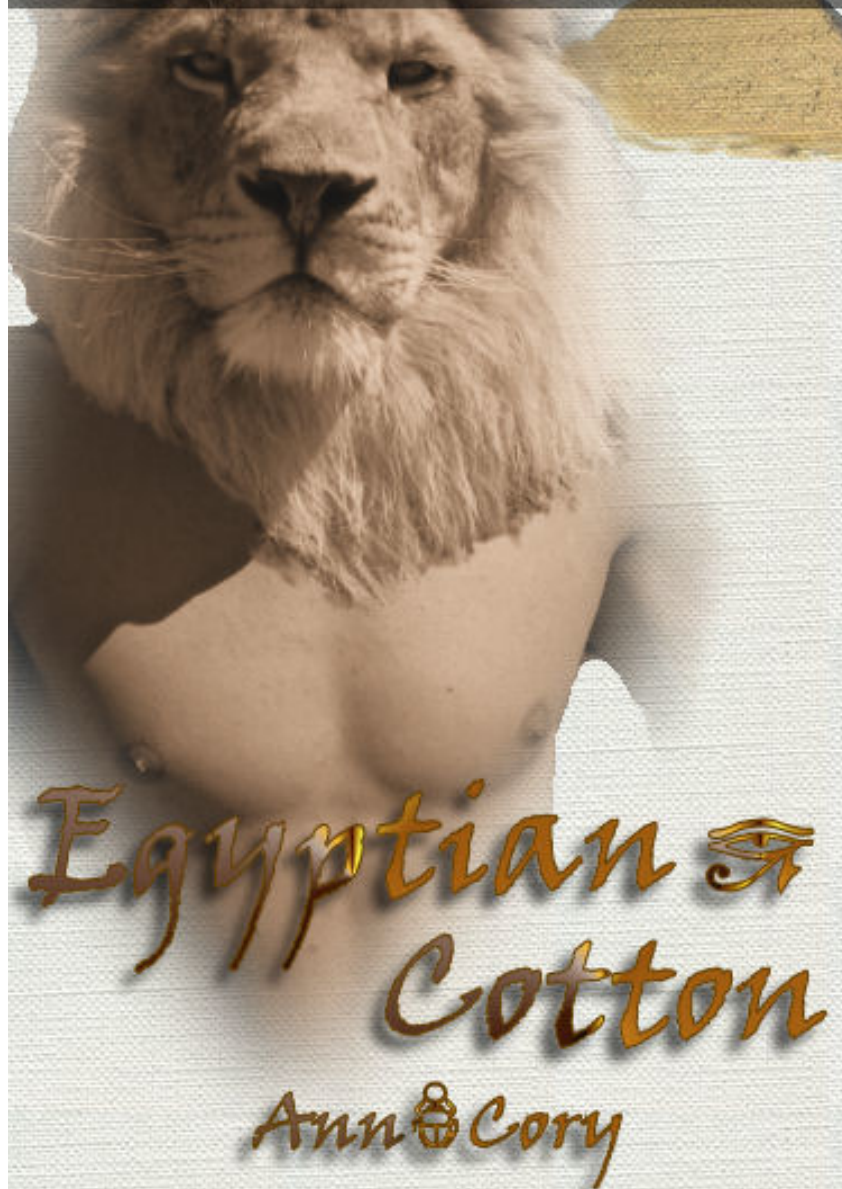


Mardi Gras Publishing Presents...



Egyptian & Cotton

Ann & Cory

Egyptian Cotton

By

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Prologue

Amber ripped open the bag to inspect her luxurious purchase one more time. What a steal! She found an exuberant bargain at the International Marketplace. Wonderful, lavish sheets of Egyptian cotton, that happened to be soft to the touch and highly seductive. For a long time it had been her fantasy to swath her body in its sacred threads, to imagine herself a Goddess, the Queen of Egypt herself. All that happened to be missing now were the handsome stealthy men ready with fans made of palm tree leaves. Loyal slaves to address her every whim, even undressing her on demand if need be.

She snickered at her girlish dreams as she pulled off her old starched sheets, letting the new ones float across the mattress to nestle along each corner of the bed. Gingerly she tucked in the ends as she imagined how scintillating it would feel to lay down on them. Even more exciting, she imagined herself wrapped in a sweaty embrace with a handsome Egyptian prince whose cock would slide inside her like a giant asp.

Her body shuddered at the explicit thought. It had been a long time since she had a real man. One who worshipped her even knowing what it meant to be attentive. A man with physical strength, a strong, firm body, with of high intelligence to entice her body as well as soul. She was not looking for an average Joe. They were all over the place, watching her tight ass wiggle within the confines of her tight skirts and thongs. Men today are not the same as like years ago. They lacked honor, conviction, hell even a satisfactory sex drive.

She fought back her bitter thoughts all the while smoothing the sheets along the mattress, her palms flirting with the feel of those enticing sheets which caressed her every touch.

Sleep Amber. Sleep.

She paused in mid-breath, her heart thudding inside her chest. Had someone called out her name? Not only was she horny, now she could add manic to her list. Must have been out in the sun too long.

Sleep Amber. Sleep.

Her lithe body grew heavy, along with her eyelids. Lullaby-like whispers fluttered through her mind, hauntingly melodic in origin. Her body swayed like a small boat in the harbor, rocking gently against the pier. She felt such a burst of energy just moments ago but now her whole being ached to lie down just giving in to the sultry call. Before she had the chance to remove her clothes, she collapsed in a heap on the bed as the entire room went dark.

Chapter One

Slowly she came to consciousness, her eyes blinking back a thin layer of gray film until it dissipated. Vibrant hues of scarlet red, sunburst orange, and midnight blue awoke her senses, surrounding her body in their visual splendor. Soft music played nearby which brought a moment of comfort to her otherwise fragile state of mind. *Is that Egyptian music I hear?* Pillows in assorted different sizes decorated with ornamental tassels piled high cascaded around her head and body, with sheer curtains flowing from all sides of the mahogany four-poster bed. *Sleek, crimson rain!* She wondered where the thought came from.

Amber wondered if she happened to be stuck in a dream unable to fully wake up or perhaps not wanting to at all. What was back in the real world worth sticking around for anyway?

Rich tapestries hung on the walls along with brass sconces adding a hint of mystique. The room was well lit with candles and brought a golden glow of warmth. A large square tub encrusted with jewels sat in the middle of the room, filled to the rim with water. She struggled to remember her last thoughts, though vague as they were. The darkness. The sheets. The strange hypnotic voice in her head just before her eyes closed. Wherever she was now, it wasn't where she last was. Judging by her surroundings, she wasn't anywhere she had ever been.

Amber moved to get out of bed and then realized her hands were bound with metal cuffs. The last time she had woken bound to anything, was after an unflattering night of a pity drink-fest where her best friend turned out to be a Screaming Orgasm. After her fifth one, she had seen the hunky bartender turn into two hunky bartenders and a vague memory of stripping to music. Hours later she woke handcuffed to a barstool with a serious lecture from the bar owner explaining that she had gotten out of hand.

The sound of footsteps brought Amber out of her somewhat now amusing reverie. She turned her head gasping at the salacious looking creature that stood only a few feet away. Bronze forearms crossed before an equally dark massive chest. Broad shoulders. Muscular biceps that she did not doubt resulted from hard work. Long, shiny black hair

with straight strands that teased along his smooth-looking pecs. Chiseled abs much like the cover models for bodybuilder magazines, though more realistic begged to be touched.

Her fantasy came to a brief halt where a bright, white cloth wrapped around his tapered waist hanging an inch above his knees. Beneath the intrusive garment was a sizeable bulge that made her pussy moist and wet. What Egyptian treasure lay under there? Her imagination ran wild. On his feet, he wore a strange type of sandal with straps that wove around his well-defined calves.

She raised her eyes back up along his mouthwatering form, stopping momentarily at the jade green collar with gold embroidery fastened around his neck, and then continuing upward until their eyes locked. His dark green eyes like emerald spheres. His face bore a peaceful repose, if not curious.

"I – I..." Amber tried to formulate an intelligent sentence but her voice caught in her throat.

He put a finger to his full lips as he spoke in a deep, husky voice. "Hush now, my dear lady. Do not be alarmed." His words vibrated around her ears, sending tingling sensations along her skin as well as up and down her whole body. Amber couldn't figure out why she wasn't screaming her head off right now, considering the vulnerable state she happened to find herself in. Her only sane explanation was the shock of being in such close proximity with one of the most luscious men she'd ever seen in her life.

The beautiful stranger appeared to be intently focused on her, as if he could strip her bare with a single glance. An odd thought crossed her mind and she looked down. It didn't take long for her to figure out that she was nude beneath the sheet. Things were becoming a little tricky.

When she found her voice, it came out in a breathy high squeak, not at all becoming of her. "Where am I?"

"You are in my homeland. Egypt."

The words swam in her head for a few seconds without really gathering any strength. She was more lost than before but it didn't begin to explain why she was naked. It had to be a dream. No wonder people swore by Egyptian cotton.

"I'm afraid I don't understand. Am I being held prisoner?"

There was something majestic in the way his long hair moved when he shook his head back and forth.

"I am as surprised as you, though not at all displeased." His eyes twinkled.

Amber snorted. "Well of course you aren't. A naked woman shackled to your bed. What man would scoff at that? If I am not a hostage, then release me. I want to go home."

She struggled against the binds to show her discontent.

"Please, fair lady, I am not at liberty to release you. Only my leader, Arcaum, can unlock the chains. He holds the key. I am sorry."

Her mind and her body were working separately, at the moment. On one hand, she wanted to snatch off the white linen from around his torso and get up close and personal with his cock. On the other hand, the whole damsel in distress thing was far too cliché for her.

"I insist you bring him here so I may demand to be freed." She found it difficult to present an intimidating look when her body melted at the sight of him.

The stranger walked toward her with his hands held out, in a gesture of peace. "Please, it is not as simple as you may think. I promise you have no need to fear me. My name is Seth. I will not cause you harm. You have my word."

Amber tried to move back against the pillows. She succeeded in pulling the sheet down, uncovering her entire body.

A proud smile erupted on his face. "Ah. The scenery has greatly improved."

Her face burned red.

His fingertips grazed across her calves and circled around her kneecaps. Goosebumps showered her skin. Even with such a strong physique, his touch was gentle and soothing.

There was a noticeable contrast between his dark skinned flesh and her pallid color. Enough to arouse her curiosity. Did Egyptian men make good lovers? Amber's eyes darted to the bulge beneath the garment again. Was his cock just as dark? Could it be as massively built as the rest of him? The questions were like a thousand tongues poised at the entry of her heated core.

"What do they call you where you are from?"

“Amber.”

“Your name is as beautiful as your eyes. They are like a mirage of crystal blue rivers in the middle of a dry, arid desert. When I gaze into them, I feel my own eyes taking a drink, and it quenches my thirst.”

The way he looked at her warmed her body, like a flame starting at her toes, blazing all the way to her head.

“Thank you. I’m flattered. That is very poetic.”

“I am sure you hear such things all the time where you come from.”

She resisted the urge to laugh. “Actually, no.” Unless catcalls from flabby construction workers with pit stains counted as flattery.

“I am surprised. I would gallantly fight for you if you were my lady.”

This time she did laugh, and heartily. Men did not fight over her. Ever. Amber shook her head giving him a serious expression. “I don’t understand. How did I get here?”

“It was late in the evening when I found you here. I did not have the heart to wake you. With your beautiful raven strands lying across your cheek, you were so peaceful.”

“Not even a small clue to help me figure things out?”

“Why don’t you tell me what you last remember? Maybe I can help you with this beguiling mystery.”

She swallowed hard and moistened her lips. How long was she supposed to be chained up? Her arms were starting to tire.

“The last thing I remember was going to an open air market. Our winter was unusually long this year, so I’d been itching to get out and explore. You can find the most incredible bargains at market.”

He nodded politely and smiled. His fingers circled around her upper thigh and trailed back down along her knee. She took a deep breath in, trying to concentrate.

“I visited all of the vendors, looking for something that caught my eye. At the far end of the market was a man in a turban, setting out several stacks of beautifully wrapped sheets. I remember asking him what kind they were. He said Egyptian cotton. If you were to shop for them in any store in the city, I guarantee you’d pay an arm and a leg for them.”

The look on Seth's face was priceless. Amber realized how violent her words sounded. She laughed as she shook her head.

"I think you took me literally. What I mean to say is, the sheets cost a lot of money. The vendor was selling them for a mere fifty dollars. Outrageous! So, I picked up a package. "

"What makes Egyptian cotton extra special?"

She laughed at his naivety. "Are you kidding? It's the softest, silkiest, most luxurious cotton in the world. People pay a pretty penny to have your cotton. They aren't all created equal." Amber couldn't believe herself. She sounded like an infomercial!

"Ah yes, the cotton plants grow along the Nile delta. I often drink and lounge near there."

An image of his wet naked body nearly did her in. "I've always wanted to see the Nile."

"I will show it to you someday. If you would like."

A smile started on her face until she realized what his words implied. "What do you mean someday? I can't stay here."

"Where are you going to go?"

Chapter Two

Amber thought about his question a moment, trying to figure out a way not to sound stupid.

“Nowhere at the moment. You have me in a bind here.”

“I rather enjoy you in binds.”

His hand moved along her thigh caressing his way across her lower belly. A band of gold wrapped around his upper right arm, showing off his powerful muscles. Streaks of blue paint lined his other arm in a pattern of a mountain peaks. Amber’s body shook against his feathery touch. Damn him! She knew nothing about him, or even why she was bound on a bed, in Egypt next to a man who set her pussy on fire. She had a feeling he would make a fine lover. Attentive and gracious. As fuckable as he was, if she wasn’t a prisoner, why wouldn’t he let her go?

“I still don’t understand why I’m here.”

“I think you are here because I wished for a divine woman to come to me, just the other night. Each evening I look out at the stars and make a wish. None have ever come true, until now.”

His eyes were luminous, grazing across her body. The fine hairs on her body felt singed wherever he looked.

“I like the way you feel. You are unlike any of the women of the village here.”

She could get lost in the beauty of his words.

“I am sorry. You were telling me about the sheets you purchased. What happened after you left the market?”

“Let’s see. I had lunch with my friend Erin. We talked about our boring jobs at a stuffy law firm for measly pay and benefits. Then I came home. I couldn’t wait to try out the sheets.”

She paused a moment, remembering the odd sensation she’d felt right before her mind went blank.

“Here’s where my memory ends. I placed the sheets on my bed. All of a sudden, I heard a voice call my name. When I opened my eyes, I found myself here.”

“Do you recall the voice? How it sounded, male or female?”

“No. I’ve never heard it before. It wasn’t scary at all. More like, a lullaby.”

“That is strange. Perhaps you heard my wish to find someone like you.”

He sat on the edge of the mattress, his leg brushing against her side. She was painfully aware of how charged her body felt around him. This man was a stranger, but at the same time she was relaxed around him, almost like they had met before.

His hands continued to roam along her stomach, outlining her belly button, with fingers drifting lower. When she looked at his arms, his legs, and his body, she saw a warrior. A man with strength and honor to go with that luscious body. She could stare at him for days and fantasize what it would be like to have him thrust inside her.

“Your skin is soft, like layers of satin. I can only imagine what you feel like, here.” His fingers circled along her sleek mound.

Against her better judgment, Amber’s body was surrendering to his stimulating touch. She wanted to shake herself aware that she was in the presence of a stranger and needed some control. Instinct had betrayed her for the explicit thoughts of what he would feel like between her legs. His fingers tenderly raked her sex. She groaned.

Breath jagged as her pulse raced. Her vision blurred, as blood rushed and swirled in her head. Little rushes of noise from inside her head resounded, making white spots dance before her eyes. There was something about him, the way he moved, sensual and erotic, yet in a compassionate way.

Amber parted her thighs, feeling the fervent heat escape from between them. This wasn’t like her, she didn’t behave this way, but she wanted him. From deep inside a carnal hunger was getting in the way of her rationalization.

A build up of emotions crammed inside her body, trying to awaken all her senses at once, and it made her bold.

“I want you to touch me.”

Chapter Three

He removed his hand, painfully aware how strong his yearnings were to take the sumptuous woman. Her suggestive pose in the bed, with her shackled hands, she was something like a queen. From the moment he found her, his cock had ached to sample her feminine warmth. To hear her desire nearly sent him to the floor, but he was concerned of how she would see him.

“There are some things you don’t know about me, my lady, which may...make you apprehensive.”

“I don’t know anything about you. For all the times I’ve weighed in my mind about having sex with a total stranger, this is the first time I have actually wanted it, without question.”

Seth found it difficult to shift his gaze from her milky skin. Her face was flush and her creamy breasts mesmerized him with their rhythmic motion as she breathed. He believed in complete honesty, especially with someone he wanted for a mate. Her beauty left him spellbound and unable to think clearly.

“I’m afraid I am somewhat complex. What I mean is...”

“All men are complex. Trust me.”

He chuckled. The way her ruby lips moved when she spoke only made his desire grow stronger. How could he tell her what he was? Alone with her for a mere few hours and all ready he wanted her. Not as a piece of property, but to share his life with. If he took things too fast, she might be scared and it would be devastating. He would never have believed he could fall in love so swiftly.

None of the women in his village could measure up to her in splendor or presence. He had tried to find a mate among his people, but none stirred his heart. Until now. How could he expect this woman understand that he was not what she saw before her? Secrets would only cause pain, but the truth would guarantee losing her.

“I want to tell you something, but I fear it will make you change your mind.”

She looked at him through her long, black eyelashes, a look more potent than a lightning bolt. “Put your fingers inside me to check for yourself how sure I am.”

His cock strained tight against the wraparound fabric. He wanted to fight the rapacious needs but he was losing. Whatever she asked for, he wanted to give. "Woman you are undeniably tempting. Your lips alone provoke me."

"Then what are you waiting for?"

"I don't wish to hurt you."

"Please. I beg you, Seth. Fuck me."

Chapter Four

Obediently he stood from the bed and removed the cloth collar from around his neck. She liked the way his black hair shone against the candlelight. His thumbs sank beneath the white cloth and slid it down around his feet. Amber tried not to stare, but it was impossible. He was definitely all man with a cock that was bound to do some damage. Had her hands been free she would reach out and stroke his smooth shaft, and follow it up by the forceful suckling of her lips.

He nestled his body between her legs. Dark skin illuminated by candlelight like melted milk chocolate. With his hands, he parted her thighs further and sniffed her sex. His fingers traced along her silky-smooth folds, opening them up wide. Warm breath traveled along her exposed sex and she sucked in her breath. The anticipation of how it would feel was overwhelming. Wisps of sandpaper flickered along her clit, so softly, but with just enough force to awaken and entice her whole being.

He splayed her wide open and licked her from the base of her sex all the way up to the tip, taking his time as he went.

“Oh god!” The blood drained from her face. Where had this man been all her life? His tongue snuck deep into places that lay dormant for years. Places otherwise undiscovered. She strained against the bedpost, pulling her wrists as her body tingled from the unexpected explosions within. Greedily he lapped at her, his tongue slithering between the damp contours, seeking out every possible crevice he could discover.

“Seth...” her voice trailed off, lost in some euphoric time warp.

He continued flicking along her swollen nub, teetering the raw muscle back and forth with his textured tongue.

Amber could hardly contain herself. “Faster, oh please, I’m so close,” she cried, her body nearing liberation. Her eyes welled up with tears from the searing pleasure.

He lowered his face further answering her pleas, lapping in rapid strokes, concentrating on her clit, stronger, deeper strokes until she felt the first spasm.

A tiny trickle started from somewhere inside and crashed through the dam, moistening her insides with a light creamy film. Seth lapped it up too with slow, steady strokes while her body continued in a series of jolts.

"Fucking incredible," she forced out between pants. "I can't believe what a rush that was."

"I enjoyed savoring every last drop of you."

He moved up and licked at her bellybutton, dragging his tongue up between her breasts.

"Are you up for a little more, or shall I let you rest?"

"Are you kidding? While I'm tied up, you can have your way with me. I insist."

His laugh was a mix between a soft roar and a laugh.

She beamed at him. "There's something irresistible about you."

He rolled his tongue around her nipple and it shot straight out, begging for more.

"I find these irresistible."

She half closed her eyes, the room swaying while he towed his tongue around in circular motions, teasing the tips of her nipples into submission.

"You drive me crazy," she murmured, enjoying the coziness he brought to her.

He rose up, the hardness of his cock pressing firmly against her thigh. His beautiful eyes caught hers in a thoughtful gaze.

"Could you ever be with a man like me?"

Why was he talking? She didn't want any serious questions right now. Her body ached to feel him inside her. While she couldn't deny a growing attraction, her mind was on sensory overload with lustful notions.

"You mean, as in forever? Can we just take things one step at a time?"

His breath smelled of her sex, and it turned her on, driving her appetite for him into a ravenous need.

"Please, I want you so bad right now. Can't we talk about this later?"

A disappointed look settled over his face as he recoiled. "You don't understand. I am faithful. One mate, I'm only looking to be with one mate. I need to know the depth of your feelings."

How did she feel? At the moment she'd say anything to feel his massive body drive between her legs, for him to plow into her like a never-ending vessel diving to her frenzied depths. The last thing on her mind was her future, with or without him.

"I can't think that far ahead Seth, my mind doesn't work that way. What I do know is, I'm completely smitten with you. You're a fantastic lover, and I want you to fuck me everywhere possible. All I can offer right now is my honesty and my willing body."

What was wrong with this guy? Most men would kill to have such an open invitation, a female begging to shove his cock so far up inside her he was afraid there was no way out. However, not this man, he was different. He was...like the men she only dreamt about. After years of dealing with men who lacked commitment and conversation, here was one who was asking for it. She was the one with the problem now. "What more do you want from me?"

"Your heart."

The hardness of his sex against her thigh was distracting. All she could think about was the way he brought her to an incredible orgasm. Only, he was looking for more.

"Would I ever be able to go home again?"

"No, I am afraid not."

His tone was melancholy. "Is there something you aren't telling me? You have me in an awkward position right now, asking me to decide my future and if it involves you. I can't pretend you don't excite me Seth. Dammit. My body is on fire right now. What is it you aren't telling me?"

Chapter Five

He sat back on his legs, stroking her calves and the top of her feet.

"I require a bride."

"What? You require? Wow, I think that is a definite first for me. You need to get a book on how to woo women."

"Please, hear me out. I haven't been completely honest with you."

Her ruby lips sank into a frown. "You did bring me here, didn't you."

He lowered his head, eyes downcast. Shame racked his body. This wasn't the way to treat a lady, but desperation had blinded him.

"Yes, I did. I was afraid if you knew the truth, you would never consider being with me."

"Tell me honestly, how did I get here? And why? No more lies."

"Very well. You were followed home after buying the sheets at the market. The salesman in the turban was sent to bring a woman here."

"As what? Slaves?"

"To assist me in finding the perfect mate."

"I'm thinking barbaric here, I'm not sure why," she said coolly, "either that or caveman era."

He didn't know what to say. She had every right to be angry. What a mess he had made of things!

"I am sorry."

"You're a goddamn sex god. Don't tell me you can't find a woman here in Egypt."

"I've searched many times but always came up empty. No one affected me the way you did."

"Was I the only one brought here?"

"Yes."

"Help me out here. I've been chained up, lied to, and misled. The fact that you are sexually attractive to me lessens my anger, and keeps me from lashing out at you."

“It was wrong for me to bring you here under false pretenses. I am ashamed. I thought if I could seduce you, offer you anything you wanted, then you would forget your former way of life. It was wrong.”

He liked the sexy way her eyebrow arched when she asked questions. “Why the urgency to get married?”

“If I don’t marry, I will lose my only hope of becoming leader. I will be sentenced to death.” Even the words left a horrid taste in his mouth.

“Who would do such a thing?”

“Arcaum. He has wanted to see me dead for many moons. I fear he will get his wish. A bride would allow me to take back what is rightfully mine. It is tradition and I must honor it. For the good of my people and my family.”

“What’s in it for me? What would I get out of all this?”

“I offer you a lifetime of love, honesty, companionship. I would be with you every step of the way. I will never betray you, leave you, or hurt you. You would be my queen, my lady, and my equal.”

She laughed. “You’re good, I’ll give you that. You know the right words to sway a girl into submission. And the right moves.”

“It was never my intent to sway or coerce you. If you are uncomfortable with the idea, I will do whatever it takes to get you back home safely. Your life means more to me than my own.”

A loud knock resounded from the doorway, ending their conversation abruptly. Seth struggled to his feet. He feared the worst.

“Whatever you do, please don’t make a sound. I beg you.”

Chapter Six

Fear passed through his eyes and he turned away. She listened as the door creaked open. A guttural, husky voice ricocheted off the walls and made its way back to her ears.

"I hear you have a woman in your chambers, Seth. Is this rumor or truth?"

Immediately she knew it was Arcaum. For the first time since being here, she was scared. Amber strained to hear their conversation.

"It is true."

"So, you believe you've found a mate? You think you can take my position of power away? Well, I won't allow it. The old tradition has been denounced. A bride will not be enough to secure your aspiration to follow in your father's footsteps."

"Understood. It was wrong for me to bring her here. I wish to send her back home, safely."

A sinister laugh followed, sending shivers down her back.

"I am afraid that will not do. She knows of our existence. I cannot have that. She will have to be taken care of for good. Allowing her to go home again would be a mistake."

Amber tensed. Did he mean to kill her? What the hell? Now would be a good time for some time warp tunnel to open up and swallow her. Home had never meant anything to her before, but right now it sounded damn good. She struggled against the bindings but couldn't loosen her wrists.

"She has seen nothing. You have my word."

"I'm afraid your word is of little value to me."

"I won't let you harm her. She is innocent. No one would believe her about us."

Amber swallowed a lump in her throat. Us? What did that mean? They were talking in riddles.

"Not good enough. She must die."

"You will have to go through me first. It won't be easy."

The leader growled and raged, his anger reverberating through the room. Shivers crept along her skin. Seth would protect her, she was confident, but she feared for his safety.

“The only way I’ll let her live is if she changes her mind. You have until tonight to appear before me with your bride, or I will come and slay her myself. As for you, a month in chains will be your punishment for your insolence, along with a hundred lashes. Afterwards you will join your father in his pitiful grave.”

Silence followed and she strained to hear more. Whatever they were saying, she couldn’t make it out. Her eyes welled up with tears. She was torn. Why did she feel strongly for a man she hardly knew? Sure, he had brought her to an amazing climax, and his gentle ways were a far cry from the selfish guys back home, but was she mistaking this newness for something else? She couldn’t claim to have loved any one man. Maybe this one was different. Before this morning, she knew nothing of his existence. She wouldn’t have believed he existed either.

Amber heard the door close and waited.

Chapter Seven

Seth tried hard to summon up a smile when he returned, but there was no mistaking the concerned look on her beautiful features.

"I am sorry if you overheard. You will not be harmed, I give you my word."

"If there is nothing else I believe or hold faith in, know that I trust your word explicitly. I take it your leader is displeased with my being here."

"I don't care. Let him kill me, but he will not touch you."

"Please don't say that. It frightens me. Why did he keep bringing up your father?"

"My father was the last male born with any godly powers, a pharaoh to our people."

"A king?"

"Yes, though it didn't help him in the end. He died protecting my mother. Arcaum fell in love with my mother. He decided she was to be his. I barely remember it now, but my father fought bravely, unwilling to give up my mother to such ruthlessness. Arcaum slew him with a sword of the ancestors, the only way to damage a god, and it killed him instantly."

Her lips trembled. "I'm sorry, Seth. What happened to your mother?"

"Arcaum ordered her to come lay with him as his new bride. She gathered my brothers and I together and bid us farewell. She told us to always be true to our mates and that love was stronger than the powers of any God. We watched her walk into the night and remove the sword from our fallen father. She used it on herself."

Her eyes filled with tears, making her even more stunning. "Nooo. Oh, I am so sorry."

"I have been biding my time, waiting for a chance to avenge him. That time has come. He will no longer beat down the traditions my father worked hard to build. The people of Egypt deserve more."

Seth could feel the anger rise inside and he pushed it back down. He did not wish to frighten her further.

"Forgive me."

She shook her pretty head. “No. You’re entitled to your anger. It wasn’t right what he did.”

“None of it matters right now. What I must do is get you to safety. I will not allow any harm to come to you.”

“If Arcaum dies, who will become the new ruler?”

“I will. Provided I have a queen beside me.”

“And if you lack a queen?”

“A new one will be appointed and the position will never again be offered to me.”

“But if you’re the heir to your father...”

He let out a deep sigh. “There are traditions of this country you cannot understand. We are governed by a set of rules. To go against them would be going against my father, and I respect him far too much.”

“You are truly a man of honor. I’ve never seen someone with such nobility and conviction. It impresses me.”

“I only wish I had impressed you enough.”

He took a key from beneath the pillow and unlocked the shackles. “There, you are free to move about. We need to get you out of here before Arcaum returns.”

Her brows furrowed. “You had a key the whole time?”

“Do not be angry. I needed to see if you would fear me. I needed you to trust.”

Her disappointment weighed heavy on his heart.

“I may be too trusting. You haven’t been very honest with me.”

Seth dipped his chin. “You are a wise woman. Now, let us be on our way.”

“Wait a minute. Give me a moment to think here. I am concerned for your safety. When you first asked me to stay, I wasn’t thinking clearly. You had me...focused on one thing.” Amber smiled and rubbed her wrists. “I’m almost sorry to have the shackles off. Being vulnerable added some spice to the situation.”

He smiled at her boldness, but dark thoughts hounded him. “I refuse to have you stay in order to save my life. I am through with allowing Arcaum to decide the fate of our people. It has been eating away at me for my whole life, and it needs to stop. Because of your presence and the love I feel toward you, I can stand up to him.”

“If I chose to stay, would I have to change who I am?”

“Never. I like you for the person you have shown me. The changes you make would be the obvious ones with living here and adapting to our ways. When I watched you sleep, I imagined our time together, and how I would look forward to every moment with you, teaching you of our ways, and learning of your ways. A partnership. But as I said, I will not have you change your mind out of fear.”

“You silly man. Why do you continue to think I do things for you? I can be selfish if I want. I’ve listened to you, and now you must return the favor and hear what I have to say.”

“Of course, please, I’ll not say another word.”

He sat at the edge of the bed and wrung his hands.

“Your sensitivity is rare, as is your level of devotion. All the traits I’m looking for in a man, I can see in you clearly. Stability, honor, nobility, and a strong desire to be faithful. Those qualities are admirable and true. I see now your mother instilled these into you, therefore proving herself loyal by her actions. It’s not the threat of death for either one of us that makes me reconsider.”

“No?”

“It’s because of the emotions I feel inside. You’ve captured me in more ways than one, and I want to stay with you.”

Seth realized he’d been holding his breath and let the air out. “Don’t stay if your heart says otherwise. I don’t want you staying out of pity.”

“You’re insufferable. I’m talking about me here. Focus. I’ve walked through life with my head down, afraid to take risks. You’ve given me a chance to explore a path I could only dare to take. You’ve made what was once a dream become reality.”

He climbed over her, his hands resting on either side of her body.

“And you are certain of this decision?”

“More so than any others I’ve ever made. Look at where fifty dollars got me. I always knew there was something special about Egyptian cotton.”

He tossed back his head and laughed heartily. A small vibrating sound came from his throat.

“Are you purring?”

Seth paused. Should he tell her now? He was being a fool! She was declaring her love for him and still he kept a secret. Before he could speak, she ran her hand along the side of his face. The contact surprised him. Soft, tender hands. His cock reacted with a surprising tug.

“Now that we have things sorted out, I think my husband-to-be should get back to business here.”

“Is that so?”

“I’m still dripping wet for you. It wouldn’t be right to leave your bride dissatisfied, would it?”

She arched her back, teasing her nipples along his chin. He growled lightly, and shook his head.

“You have an insatiable appetite.”

Her breasts bobbed as she laughed.

Seth bent down and teased at her nipples, wrapping his lips around the crested tips, suckling at them until her body shuddered.

Chapter Eight

He lowered his hand between their bodies and played the head of his cock along her damp opening. She couldn't believe how far into delirium he could take her. Every motion a further descent. Amber's body was everywhere at once, a restless entity of endless holes, begging for each one to be filled and pleased until she was spent. The tightness in her abdomen reminded her how long it had been since she had felt like a woman, taking her beyond the expected brink.

He taunted her slick opening, rousing her to the point of no return.

"Please, Seth," her voice cried, a combination whine and desperate plea, her need so great she couldn't handle another second.

"Is this what you want?"

He plunged inside her, prodding open her pussy remarkably wide as he sank between her saturated lips. Her body jolted while he pulled out part way and then reentered, gorging her with his considerable length and width. His tongue fastened to her nipples, bringing her back to the euphoria, only stronger this time, without the sudden rush, but a languid motion to keep her stuck in the oblivion for as long as she could hold on.

Growls, purrs, and gentle groans escaped his throat, sounds she would expect to hear from an animal. She placed her hands on his lower back, pressing him as far in as he would go. She raised her hips up off the bed, matching his plummets.

"You are an amazing woman, Amber."

She reached up, entangling her fingers in his silky hair. The way he groaned her name was taunting enough.

He threw her legs over his shoulders and slid further inside. This was her man, who she happened to love him with all of her being. Surges of power raced throughout her body, increasing all her senses to a point she never imagined.

Her muscles clenched tight around his cock, squeezing it like a fist around his shaft. The waters churned inside again, as she felt the second release on its way. She

reached down and rubbed at her clit until her second orgasm exploded, racking through her body with fevered propulsions.

“Turn over, my lady.”

Amber rolled over and up onto her knees. His hands gleamed over her ass, following the curves of her hips. He slipped his fingers inside her soaked folds and then lubricated her tight hole. Instinctively she tensed. This would be a first for her, though she'd longed to experience it.

“Go easy on me with that big cock of yours.”

“I will always be gentle with you, my lady.”

With his finger, he tenderly worked at the muscle. It was a mix of pleasure and pain as he prodded inside further each time.

“Relax. It will help.”

He gathered more of her juices to slather the entrance until he was able to slide in two fingers together.

“Mm,” she moaned at the increase of pleasure.

In a single movement, he replaced his fingers with the head of his cock and slowly worked it in. Every inch of him slunk inside and it brought overwhelming sensations. Amber pushed back into him in slow motion until she got carried away and slammed against him. His grip around her womanly curves tightened. Grunts escalated. Her thighs quivered as she neared a powerful orgasm. He moved his hand to her clit and stroked it furiously.

“Come with me, my beautiful bride.”

“Yes,” she whispered, her voice catching as she experienced her third orgasm. Seth let out a final moan and spilled his heat inside her. They were locked in a series of spasms, their bodies a single unit. When the jolts subsided, he carefully withdrew and laid on the bed, pulling her into his arms.

She kissed his chest, beaming uncontrollably “My, you are full of surprises. I've had many firsts with you today.”

“Did you like the way it felt?”

“It was exquisite. You've spoiled me.”

“I promise many nights of lovemaking.”

Amber laughed as she snuggled into his warmth. "I think I can live with that. In many ways, I am excited to learn about your culture. I'll definitely want to buy new clothes. Unless of course you'd rather I wandered around in the buff."

"The men around here would drop like flies to see your glorious silhouette walking around at sunset."

She shrugged. "I only care what you think. I hope I make a good queen. You say I'm not like your people. What if they don't accept me?"

His fingers glided along her arm. "You need not worry."

He leaned forward to bring his lips close. Amber closed her eyes and parted her lips. His breath was warm as it escaped down her throat. The intensity and depth of his kiss fully aroused her. No man had ever turned her on like this. Their tongues graced one another, lips moist with saliva. As he pulled back, she opened her eyes, his face a bit blurred from the erotic haze her mind had slipped into.

"Now, my lady. If you would like to clean yourself up, the bathwater is always heated. It's a wonderful way to relax."

"I'm very relaxed right now, but it sounds heavenly."

Seth helped her from the bed and she almost fell. She rose laughed as he helped steady her.

"My legs are kind of wobbly."

"Do you need help?"

"Are you kidding me? You're the one who got my legs like this in the first place. You know how to satisfy a woman."

She took his arm and enjoyed the gentleman escort. At the foot of the tub, she dipped her toe in and delighted at the soothing temperature. Slowly she descended the steps and rested on the tile. Jewels in royal colors of blue, green, and red shone brightly along the ceramic tub, and a small pillow sat in the corner to lay her head against.

"I feel like royalty."

"Get used to it. Soon you will be."

The water swirled around her neck, relieving the last remains of tension, as she made herself comfortable. It definitely beat her small excuse for a bathtub back at home

with its guzzling drain and rusted spots. From a small crystal bottle, she watched him pour in a fragrant liquid.

“What did you add?”

“Close your eyes and see if you can guess.”

Aromatic scents of honeysuckle filled her nose. She took a deep breath in, her body melting like butter.

“Mm. Honeysuckle is my favorite. A girl could get used to being pampered.”

“It’s the least I can do.”

She opened her eyes and watched him stalk around the room, glancing out the window as he continued to wring his hands together.

“You’re not helping me to relax here.”

“Forgive me. I really should go seek out Arcaum before he gets here first. He means to kill you. I don’t want to give him any kind of head start.”

“Tell him I’ve changed my mind. He won’t have a reason to hurt me then, will he?”

Seth shook his head, jaw clenched. “I don’t trust him. Often he says one thing and does another. Lies and deception are all he knows.”

She moved along the water to the other end of the tub, and rested her arms on the ledge to be closer to him.

“Please, you are putting yourself at a terrible risk. I don’t want to lose you. I need you here with me or let me come with you. We are stronger if we work together.”

“It will turn ugly. Not a place for a beauty such as yourself.”

“What are you going to do? Kill him?”

He redressed and washed his hands in the basin. “I won’t let it get that far. I am not a killer. Bloodshed and destruction do not change things or solve problems. I must convince my people to elect me as their new leader, thus taking away his power. They will decide his fate, not me, and not Arcaum.”

“I want to come with you.”

“No, I can’t let you take that risk. I would worry too much about your safety and lose my focus completely.”

Men! Why were they always thinking her weak and demure? “When are you going to step back and see my own strengths? I don’t need you to fight for me. I can take care of myself.”

He knelt down and brushed the tips of his knuckles along her chin. “You can’t compete with the likes of Arcaum. He could tear you apart with one swipe.”

The image in her mind was unsettling. Filled with teeth and claws. She hoped he meant with a weapon.

Seth stood and started to walk away. “I have something for you. I’ll be right back.”

She inhaled the honeysuckle as she soaked in the luxurious bath. It had been the strangest and most pleasant day of her life. A dream within a dream. Her body melted in the water.

When Seth returned, he held a golden box with a satin ribbon.

“I took a guess, but I think the size is right.” He set the box on the bed.

“What is it?”

“A gown. While perhaps not as lavish as Egyptian cotton, I can assure you it’s made of precious silk, spun by the finest weavers we have.”

Amber reached out her hand and he helped her out of the tub. In his arms, he wrapped her tight, kissing the sides of her neck.

“I’m all wet.”

“I like you wet. Inside and out.”

“Be careful or I’ll pull you over to the bed right now.”

“Tempting offer. If I didn’t know any better, I would say you were trying to stall me.”

She batted her eyelashes at him. “Whatever do you mean?”

“Mm hmm.” He kissed the tip of her nose. “You’re adorable. I had better take care of things so we can start making plans for our wedding. Try the dress on. I promise I will be back soon. I cannot wait to see how it graces your figure.”

She wanted to stop him, but it wasn’t her place. This was his country, his people, *his* fight. Still, she felt close to him. His mission came from a place inside she would never understand, and she worried he’d never be free until Arcaum was gone for good.

Amber placed her hand on his shoulder. When he turned, she kissed his cheek.

“Promise me that you’ll be careful.”

He nodded and left out the door.

Chapter Nine

Seth could feel the changes take place as he walked outside. Fur grew along his chest and his eyesight changed dramatically. The night air was still, but smelled of danger and violence. He had to get to Arcaum before anything happened to Amber. She was the best thing to come along in his life. His mother would have loved her and considered her family.

Up ahead he could see a bonfire. Members of his clan were gathered around it, their eyes sad and dejected. What he wouldn't give to see them smile again. They had lost hope long ago, and he meant for them to see happier times. A figure approached from behind the Zephyr Pyramid.

"I don't see your woman with you. Did she change her mind? Perhaps she wishes to see you dead. As I do."

Seth snarled. "Leave her out of this."

"Why have you come? To add more dishonor to your family name?"

His paws tightened into fists. "My father was an honorable man. He was well respected and admired by all. The biggest mistake he made was entrusting you in our clan. Had he not given you permission to join us, you would have been dead that night. To dismiss that is immoral. You are the one without honor."

Arcaum's eyes lowered to a menacing stare. "You have no idea what it is you speak of, you were too young at the time."

"My eyes did not deceive me. I saw it in my mother's eyes. You knew she would never leave my father's side."

"Untrue. I had more to offer. I would have given her the world."

"She had the world but you took it away. Her love was for one man and one man only."

Arcaum shook his head. "I had thought her of great intelligence until she turned me down. She was as senseless as your father."

Seth struck out at him with his paw. "I am warning you. I will not listen to you defame my family."

“You fool. I could kill you with a single blow.”

“Go ahead. You plan to kill me one way or another. It will not be as easy as you would like. I do have part of my father’s godly powers within me.”

“Threats will get you nowhere. You are no match for what I can do.”

With a deafening roar, Arcaum came at Seth, his mouth wide and teeth positioned for his neck.

Chapter Ten

Amber finished drying her body with a towel. She opened the beautifully wrapped box. A dark emerald green dress lay inside, with a black velvet sash around the waist. It was the most exquisite garment she'd ever seen in her life! She carefully pulled it over her head and delighted in the sensual material brushing against her flesh.

In the far corner, she noticed an oval mirror, and went to admire herself. The dress showed off her cleavage nicely, the color made her face radiant. The hem stopped just above her knees, accentuating the length of her legs. Also inside the box was a pair of dainty sandals with silk straps that crisscrossed along her calves. He had good taste. She would reward him well later.

Amber looked around the room, running her hand along the beautiful artwork that adorned the walls. With a sigh, she stared out the window. This wasn't right. While it was gratifying to know her man would fight for her, she worried about what kind of confrontation he would be up against. She twirled in her gown and smoothed her hand along the silkiness. All dressed up and nowhere to go. Curiosity got the better of her.

She walked to the door and looked out. The sun had set leaving the sky with streaks of gold, pink, and lavender. Her feet sank into the sand when she stepped out. Seth would be upset if he knew she was going to look for him. She wouldn't interfere, unless he was threatened or hurt.

Through the twilight she walked, slow and cautious. Eerie shadows had her pulse pounding. Amber kept looking back so she would remember which path she took. A smoky smell circulated in the air and she heard crackling sounds in the distance. After a short ways, she stopped. New sounds echoed around her. What was all that noise? Amber found it difficult to move. With her mouth closed tight and heart racing, she waited.

From somewhere off to the side, angry shouts rained out. She quickly ran in the same direction. A large bonfire blazed in the darkness with many people gathered around. New scents filled the air, cold and unexplainably evil. Immediately her eyes

searched out Seth. His back was to her and his arms were flailing madly. When he turned to speak to someone, she gasped.

From the waist down, he was the same, but the rest of him had changed. His head was shaped like a lion cub with fuzzy ears. He had a large feline nose that sprouted pearly white whiskers. A thin layer of golden fur covered his chest.

In a short distance from the crowd, a massive creature towered, looking far more dangerous than she had imagined. Unlike Seth, he had a mature lion's head surrounded by a glorious mane with golden twine woven throughout it. Short black hair swept along his neck. His chest was also covered with a thick layer of golden fur. His torso was the same as Seth's, but he had a tail that whipped wildly side to side. Next to her love, he loomed, with claws glinting against the firelight. She wanted to turn and run, but piercing black eyes sought her out, and she couldn't move.

"I see you brought the woman with you."

Seth whipped around, and she wished at that moment she could disappear.

He stole up close to her, his eyes never leaving the big cat. "I told you to stay behind where you would be safe. I didn't want you to see me like this."

"I-I'm sorry, I needed to be here. You're going to be my husband. We're a team."

Arcaum roared loudly, baring his sharp pointed fangs. Inside Amber felt herself begin to shrink. She was no match for a manbeast.

"The foreign lady of yours is fetching. No wonder you want to mate with her. You have quality taste in pretty things. I think I'll take her for myself."

Seth growled. "As a matter of fact, she's changed her mind. She will be *my* queen."

Arcaum glared at Amber. His gaze bore through her gown and burned into her flesh.

"Then she's smart too. I like intelligence and brains when attached to succulent yards of woman flesh."

"It is time you stepped down as leader!" Seth struggled with the words but didn't back down. The crowd gasped and looked at one another. Amber imagined if his

mother could hear, she would be proud of him. "Being heir to my father, it is my place to take."

Arcaum let out a tremendous roar and doubled over in a fit of laughter.

"You dare defy me? I took you in when you were an orphan, and allowed you to stay on with the rest of the clan. This isn't the way I expected you to repay my kindness."

"You killed my father. It was because of you my mother took her own life. I had nowhere else to go. You had me backed into a corner. No one is here because they owe you, it is only because people are afraid to do their own thing and displease you. But no more."

"I don't see any takers, Seth. I think you're on your own. As for your woman, I will see to it she is well taken care of. And kept satisfied."

Amber slunk back, desperate for a place to hide.

"You won't lay a paw on her."

Seth stood before the crowd, his presence commanding attention.

"What say you to a new leader? For too long we have let Arcaum decide where we hunt, fight, and live. You saw what he did to my father, and how my mother was forced to take her own life. His actions have been selfish and self-serving. Enough is enough. I will not allow it to continue."

Several cheered, their arms thrusting into the air. Amber watched the change of expression in their eyes from fear to respect and admiration. All they wanted was someone to care about their needs. They believed Seth would deliver.

"It has taken me until now to find strength inside myself. I wish to carry on the traditions of my fathers and the Gods before us, as well as to honor my mother and all our mothers for the sacrifices they have endured. I ask you to keep with tradition, and allow me to rule, appointed by each one of you who wishes for a better life, without worry and fear. There will be no more battles. Our males will reside with their mates to be caring fathers and partners. We will preserve our people the way we were intended, and not because we have been ordered as such."

The crowd hollered and roared. Amber shifted her eyes away just in time as she saw Arcaum approach. "Seth, look out!"

Chapter Eleven

Amber pointed behind him and he lunged out of the way. A silver bladed sword plunged into the soft earth, barely missing his body. The vicious looking lion came at her, his jagged claws stained scarlet, aimed and positioned for her midsection.

She dodged his swipe only to fall back, narrowly missing a second attempt. Cries of outrage and anger broke out from the lion people and they banded together. Arcaum was sent hurling to the sand, pinned to his back by those who tired of his evil ways.

"Fools, don't listen to him. You want weakness? Here I thought you wanted strength. None of you would be here right now if it were not for me. You will die in his hands. Like his father he will be a poor, worthless king."

His growls were quickly replaced with injured cries and pleas to let him go.

Amber looked away as the others clawed at him. A gentle fur covered arm swept around her waist and she turned to see Seth.

"I think the people have spoken."

"You gave an amazing speech."

He gave her a concerned look. "Are you hurt?"

"No, but I should have listened to you. I'm sorry. I didn't want you to feel alone, but it's obvious you have many on your side. Looks like you will have your chance to reign after all. I'm very proud of you."

"Thank you, but I only care about you being by my side."

She kissed his furry cheek. "I have a feeling your mother, father, and the Gods are smiling on you."

"I hope so. Let us leave the others alone to decide the fate of our former leader."

He scooped her up and carried her inside. All ready he was changing back into the man she'd first woken to. Questions gathered on her tongue, ready to spill forth. She did her best to show some tact.

"Are all the Egyptians here like you? Part man, part lion?"

“Most of us are part creature, though some are not part lion. Those who look like me are descendants of Aker, an ancient lion god. He met and mated with Asthartet, a lion head goddess. You won’t find our kind anywhere else, only here in Egypt.”

“How often do you change?”

“When provoked or for battle, the change is immediate. Otherwise, it happens mostly in the wintertime. I have learned to control it instead of allowing it to control me. Others are still learning.”

“I guess it makes sense since I heard you purring and growling during sex.”

“Ah. You happen to bring out the animal in me.”

She laughed as she stroked the last bits of fur on his chest before it completely disappeared.

Seth took both her hands. “Will you forgive me for keeping it a secret? I should have told you, but the timing was off.”

“I’d like to say it would have made a difference. However, it wouldn’t have. I am smitten with you. As a man or as a beast.”

“You are an amazing woman.”

A wave of mischief swept over her. “You aren’t the only one who can turn into something else.”

His beautiful eyes glimmered with curiosity. “How’s that?”

“Around you I can turn into a wildcat.”

He smiled. “Temptress.”

Amber pulled at the cloth around his waist and let it fall. She couldn’t help but notice he was more than ready for her.

“I think kitty wants her toy.”

“You realize I only bought you the dress so I could take it off you. As sinful as you look in it, I prefer you bound and naked.”

With a playful look, she pulled back the sheer crimson curtains. Magic still radiated from the bed, a portal that took her from a small, boring existence to a place of enchantment and fantasies come true. Mischief coursed through her veins and she turned her back to him.

“Could you help me with this?”

He didn't need any coaxing. The zipper slid down as she wriggled herself free from the garment.

"Is this how my bride-to-be would like to spend our first night together?"

Amber knelt and wrapped her fingers tight around his cock, enjoying the way it thickened between her palms. She kissed the tip of his smooth head, as she stared up into his sultry eyes.

"Before you ravish my body, I'd love to sample your foreign goods, oh mighty king."

"I must accommodate my queen in any way possible."

Her tongue lapped along the underside of his shaft and then she enveloped his length with her lips. He was a mouthful. The tips of her fingers brushed his balls and made him growl.

"That's it. You had your sample."

Seth grabbed her and swung her on the bed. He reached for the shackles and placed them around her wrists again. She wasn't about to struggle. His body astride, he devoured her nipples while thrusting his fingers in and out of her stretched pussy. It was unfathomable she could orgasm again, but it didn't take long before he manipulated her clit so hard it throbbed. He hovered above her as he pushed her knees up, spreading them wide.

"Woman, you keep me in a constant state of arousal. If this keeps up, I will have to rule Egypt from our bedroom."

"I'm all for that."

His slick cock plunged between her folds. He pinched her nipples, gentle at first, then with a firm grip. Her body buckled and writhed beneath him.

She turned her head from side to side, her wrists straining against the bindings. He seemed to know every part of her needed to be touched. The fire built up again between them as she rocked her body with his.

"I can't hold back," he cried and pumped faster until she could feel his eruption. She was close to the edge, but content as she was. He pulled out and slid himself down her body. His tongue flickered adamantly against her clit, while shoving three fingers in and out of her drenched womb. Amber gnashed her mound against his lips.

"Right there, yes, right there."

All it took was a long, deep suckle to her clit to bring her to a thunderous orgasm.

For a moment, she couldn't hear anything but her heart pounding inside her chest. She looked at him, her mind in a fog.

"Mm. I am so glad you brought me here. I wouldn't want to be anywhere else."

"It would seem you've gained an acquired taste for many things from my country. Cotton. Silk. Men."

"I'm starting to think anything Egyptian is better."