



Loose Id

THE LOST ONE

TALES OF THE MAGICIAN, BOOK TWO

MELINDA BARRON

TALES OF THE MAGICIAN 2: THE LOST ONE

Melinda Barron

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Chapter One

The moon was high in the cloudless Egyptian night. The man stood in between huge stone columns decorated with hieroglyphs. A smile lit his face as he watched the beautiful woman dance around the edge of the pond. Moonlight flooded the room through open doorways.

She swayed back and forth to the imaginary music, arching her back so that her long hair touched the stone floor. The silken fabric she wore outlined her body. Her hands moved up and down her sides, sliding at times to cup her breasts before sliding down to the V between her legs.

The man watched; his eyes glazed. She was so beautiful, so graceful. She raised her face to the moon again, as if to give it a light kiss. Then she turned to her watcher and smiled.

“Come to me, handsome one. Let me love you.” She held out her hand and he moved toward her. As he neared, she laughed and slid the sheer fabric from her body. When she was naked, she waded into the pond. The water came up to her large breasts, which she caressed gently. Her hair floated on the water and she sighed as she stroked her nipples.

“You are slow, my love. Hurry, for I can’t wait to have you inside me.”

“Nebetta? How is this possible? What’s happening?” He stared at her, his cock hardening as her hands dipped under the water. She threw her head back and moaned.

“Do not question this gift. Come to me. Love me.”

Derrick needed no further encouragement. He shed his clothes and joined her, the warm water hitting him just above his waist. She danced around him as he neared, her hands drifting down and stroking his erection.

“My love, there is a huge crocodile under the waves that wants to devour me. Whatever shall I do?” She grinned mischievously.

“Perhaps you can tame that crocodile.” Nebetta circled around Derrick, the water lapping at their bodies.

Her wicked smile returned and her dark eyes flashed desire.

“Will this help?” She dropped to her knees, her head disappearing moments before her mouth closed around his hardness. Pleasure spread through his body as she ran her tongue up and down his length.

“Betta, baby, oh yes.” He wove his fingers into her hair and massaged her scalp as she sucked him. She pulled away and shot out of the water, a large smile on her face.

“Perhaps the warm spot between my thighs will work better to soothe your hungry beast.”

She moved slowly toward the edge of the pond. Derrick followed, his cock throbbing so hard he feared he would burst before he entered her.

When she reached the edge she turned and braced her hands on the stone. She gave him a sensuous grin.

“Take me. Take me now.” Her breathy words floated around the stone columns, winding around them and weaving back to Derrick.

He took her hips in his hands and bent close to her ear. “I love you, Betta.”

“And I you.”

He placed his cock at the opening to her wetness and pushed ...

“Derrick? Derrick, wake up. Are you all right?”

Derrick opened his eyes. Instead of Nebetta’s brown gaze hazed with lust he looked into Julia’s concerned green eyes.

“You were moaning loudly, and saying something about crocodiles.”

Noble’s grin appeared over Julia’s shoulder. “I think our lover was having an old-fashioned wet dream about Nebetta.”

Derrick lifted the sheet and groaned. “Crap. I haven’t done that since I was in high school.”

Julia followed his gaze and laughed. She covered her mouth when Derrick shot her an evil look, and Noble squeezed her shoulder.

“That’s OK. It’s washday anyway. Was it an incredible dream?” Julia reached down and cupped his deflated cock.

“Almost too real to be a dream.”

“I felt it, too.”

The three people turned toward the disembodied voice that came from the table sitting near the bed. Resting atop the table was a beautiful ivory paddle doll. Inside the doll rested the spirit of a concubine to Ramesses III.

“How is that possible? It was my dream.”

“I don’t think it was a dream, Derrick. I think it was a memory, something we both shared.”

“That’s not likely. It was obvious to me that the dream was from ancient times.”

Noble sat up and stared at his friend. “How do you know that?”

“No electricity. Lights came from braziers placed around the pond. The building was a temple, and it looked newly finished. The reliefs were bright, as if they’d just been done.”

“Ramesses’s temple,” Nebetta said. “It was built right before Peneb-Ra captured my ka in the doll.”

Julia bounded from the bed. “The temple! It’s in Medinet Habu. If your memories are from the Temple then maybe that’s where Nebetta’s body is hidden.”

She ran from the room and the two men lying in the bed stared at each other.

“Memories?” Nob shook his head and Derrick shrugged his shoulders.

Julia jumped back on the bed, kneeling at the bottom as she thumbed through a book.

“Baby, Derrick’s not having memories. It was a wet dream.”

“No, Derrick, remember you told us the story that Nebetta told you about her and a man making love in the temple pond? It’s a memory.”

Derrick shook his head and then laughed out loud. “The only problem with that is you have to live something to have it become a memory. And I wasn’t alive when the temple was built.”

“The memory belonged to Nebetta. She projected it into your mind. We all know that she can do that.”

Even as the words left her mouth Julia knew that to anyone else they would sound crazy. The spirit of a concubine who could project thoughts...who could live in a paddle doll?

“Look, the temple was finished around 1175 BC. That would be the right timeframe. If she spent a lot of time there maybe that’s where Peneb-Ra hid her body!” Julia’s voice was rising with each syllable. She shook the book back and forth at the naked men who stared at her with smiles on their faces.

“You know what’s sexy, Derrick? A naked Egyptologist sitting at the end of a bed spouting dates and holding nothing but a book. Makes me wanna fuck her.”

“Oh, I like that idea. Can I watch?”

“Of course. Come here, baby.” Noble raised his eyebrows and quirked his finger at Julia.

“Would you two be serious, please?”

“I’d join you if I hadn’t just doused the sheets dreaming about Betta.”

“Noble! Listen to me.” Julia’s voice rose with anger, even as she felt wetness form between her thighs.

“Are you coming up here or do I have to come and get you?”

Julia crossed her arms over her chest. “Our main goal in life should be finding a way to locate Nebetta’s body and transfer her ka back inside. I have a legitimate idea here and you two are ignoring it.”

“Sweetie, it’s almost three in the morning. We can’t jump in the car and head for Luxor. We have to work tomorrow, and the next day. Maybe this weekend we can plan a trip and go visit the temple. Until then, my cock is hard, and it’s crying out for you.”

“Well...” Julia giggled as Nob sprang toward her, deftly turned her and pushed her into a prone position, her head resting on Derrick’s chest. He covered her body with his and rained kisses along her neck and shoulders.

“My main goal in life, right at this moment, is pleasuring you. We’ll talk about finding Nebetta in the morning.”

Julia relaxed into Derrick’s chest as Nob kissed his way down her body toward the now aching V between her legs. His tongue flicked back and forth across her clit as Derrick’s hands drifted to her breasts, tweaking her nipples until she sighed in pleasure.

“Whatever you say, my darlings, whatever you say.”

* * * * *

Ahmed Nubi rose from his bed at six that morning. He showered, dressed in a short white kilt, prayed to the sun god Amun, and then walked slowly to the room he used as a temple. He was not looking forward to the upcoming meeting.

Inside the temple he found three priests already waiting for him. They were dressed much like him, except they all were older, and they glowed. At thirty-eight, Ahmed was considered young for 2006. In the year in which he actually lived, during the reign of Ramesses III, he would be considered old. The men waiting for him were well into their fifties. They bowed and exchanged greetings, and then Ahmed prepared himself for the verbal beating that he was about to receive.

"We are disappointed in you. We felt the surge of energy when you captured Peneb-Ra's ka. How is it that you failed to locate the paddle doll before this event?"

Ahmed took a deep breath to try and channel all his energies into steadying his voice. The images of the three priests standing in front of him grew brighter. Ahmed worked to get hold of the feelings that battled inside him. His mind said he must do his duty. He had been sent forward in time to destroy an evil magician and locate the trapped ka of a harem woman. He did not expect to find himself identifying with the people of this time. Those feelings could cause him to break his vows, and lose everything he had worked for since joining the priesthood twenty-three years ago.

Already he was bending his promises by not telling his fellow priests the truth about Nebetta.

"I was not the first person inside the magician's house. Someone searched the contents before I arrived."

"Whether or not that happened should not matter. Use your magic to locate the doll and bring it back to us. Pharaoh grows angry at the wait for his possession."

Ahmed swallowed a heated retort at the words. That was the problem -- to Pharaoh, Nebetta was no more than a possession, a woman that he kept in his harem because she

brought him great physical pleasure. He might desire her but he could not give her the love that Derrick would when she was finally freed. Pharaoh had dozens of other women that could slake his lust. And after the betrayal of the harem revolt, Ahmed doubted Ramesses would ever truly love again.

The elder priest on the right cocked his head and smiled. "Explain to us, please, what happened when you captured the ka of Peneb-Ra. You have failed to tell of that event. The plan was for you to locate his ka and then we would capture him and use our combined magic to banish him to the underworld forever. Yet you captured the magician's spirit on your own. Why?"

"As I said, I was not the first person inside Peneb-Ra's house when it was discovered. Because of that I was forced to make a decision to capture Peneb-Ra before he could do more damage. If I had waited he might have escaped."

"We want details, Ahmed, not a vague telling of events."

The young priest squared his shoulders. "Peneb-Ra's house was discovered by an archeologist named Noble Walters. He and two other archeologists, Julia Rafferty and Derrick Matthews, worked on the excavation. The ka of Peneb-Ra was there, searching for the paddle doll and the spirit of Nebetta. I worked with the three to capture Peneb-Ra's ka because he had taken over the body of a man who was providing funds for the dig."

The eldest of the priests cleared his throat. "If Peneb-Ra attached himself to these people he did so because he thought they had some knowledge of Nebetta. He was obsessed with her. If he thought that, then there must be some truth to the matter. Question them, find the paddle doll."

"I have tried, but..."

"Your excuses are unacceptable. Find the doll and return the woman. You have one week."

The images of the three priests shimmered and then faded away.

Ahmed pushed his tall frame into a chair and ran his fingers through his long black hair. In his own time, he had followed custom and shaved his entire body, wearing wigs when he wanted to have hair. But since living in modern times for the past ten years he had allowed his hair to grow, and it now flowed down his back in silky folds.

“Why did you lie to them?” His assistant, Niku, stood in the doorway, her eyes curious, her tone questioning but not accusatory. “You know exactly where the paddle doll is. You’ve known since the moment it was found.”

Ahmed nodded, his eyes hooded against her gaze. He did know, of course. He felt the energy surge the moment that Julia Rafferty had taken the doll from Peneb-Ra’s house. He’d sensed the doll on Julia’s person at the dig site and at his house. He’d even heard Nebetta’s voice in his office at the antiquities department. He could have taken Nebetta by magic or by physical force. Yet he had not acted.

“Do I have to explain myself to you, also?”

“Ahmed, I have been your faithful servant since you entered the priesthood. I followed you here to serve you. I would not presume to question you. I am, however, curious.”

When Ahmed did not answer, the older woman sighed. “What is your plan for taking the paddle doll?”

“I don’t know, Niku. I don’t know.”

Chapter Two

Derrick took a long drink of water and tried to stare at the guards around Peneb-Ra's house without looking like he was staring. He frowned as he counted the men. Four of them, at four in the afternoon. It seemed like overkill to him, seeing as how the house was boarded up and not accessible to anyone not approved by Ahmed.

"Perhaps we can just ask him." Nebetta's voice was low and Derrick shook his head.

"We've tried that, baby. It won't work. Before we make the trip to Medinet Habu we need to get back inside the ritual room and take a look around."

Nebetta remained silent and Derrick rubbed the doll through the material of his cargo pants. He could feel the heat radiating from her, which meant that she was either excited or upset. He voted for the latter.

"Tell me what's wrong."

"What happens when we can't locate my body? What happens if we are never able to make love?" Her voice cracked and Derrick took a deep breath. He knew they were thinking of the same thing, of the fantastic dream he'd had the night before, of the feel of their bodies together.

"I won't stop looking, I promise. Come hell or high water, you'll be put back where you belong."

"I don't think I could stand it if we could never touch. I feel closer to you than I've ever felt to a man."

"Even Ramesses?"

"Pharaoh was a great man. But you put yourself at great risk to capture Peneb-Ra; and you did it for me. I will never forget that, whether or not I am made whole again."

"Baby, let me tell you a story. It's an old fairy tale about a princess named Sleeping Beauty. She's been enchanted, placed in a permanent sleep by the spell of an evil witch. In the end her handsome prince rides up, kisses her, and breaks the spell. I'm your prince, Nebetta. I'll break the spell you're under. I promise."

"And how did this Sleeping Beauty reward her prince?"

"By loving him forever and ever."

"I like that story."

Derrick chuckled and turned his attention back toward the magician's house. It was just after five and four men were replacing the guards on duty. Once again, Derrick thanked the stars that the officials with Cameron University had seen fit to continue their dig site at Saqqara. The ancient cemetery was near the magician's house, and no one would notice that he and Nob had taken turns for several days watching the comings and goings in preparation for breaking into the structure tonight.

They purposely hadn't told Julia of their plan.

"And why is that?"

"Betta, you need to stop doing that."

"If you are silent, then I cannot communicate with you. I must read your thoughts."

"We didn't tell Julia, because Nob is overly protective," Derrick said with a grin. "He's afraid that if she knew our plan she would try to sneak in there before us."

“I see. Will you tell her tonight?”

“No. We’re not planning on bringing her with us. We decided it would be best to leave her at the house, do the dirty deed, and face the wrath of Julia later.”

“Three people searching would be better than two.”

“I agree with you, but Nob doesn’t. And for all intents and purposes he is the leader of our group, since he’s in control of the dig.”

“And how do you plan on getting out of the house without her?”

Derrick laughed. “Nob’s idea is to exhaust her with lovemaking. When she’s soundly sleeping around two in the morning, we sneak out, break in, find what we need, and come home. And she won’t know a thing about it. We’re going to take a digital camera in and take photos of the ritual room.”

After Derrick explained that photos were something akin to paintings, Nebetta’s voice took on a serious note.

“And what about me? May I come?”

“No, you’ll stay at the house with Julia. I don’t want you any nearer to Peneb-Ra’s house than you are right now.”

“But he’s...”

“Don’t argue with me. I realize we captured his ka but that doesn’t mean I trust him. Or his house.”

Nebetta remained silent and Derrick cocked his head. “Well? Aren’t you going to argue?”

“No, my love. Your word is law.”

* * * * *

“That was good, don’t you think?”

Julia turned toward Nob, who was leaning against the kitchen counter.

“I think any dinner I don’t have to cook is delicious. What’s the occasion?”

Derrick smiled. “No occasion. We just thought it was unfair that you did all of the cooking. You work all day, just as we do. And trust me, you didn’t want either of us to cook.”

Julia put the last of the take-out leftovers into the refrigerator, and then turned to her lovers.

“What’s for dessert?”

“You.” Nob’s voice was low. “We thought a nice, long, hot lovemaking session would ease the tensions of the day, for all of us.”

Derrick slid behind her, pulling her into his arms. He cupped her breasts and gently squeezed, eliciting moans from both Julia and Nob.

“Such a beautiful sight,” Nob said.

“Isn’t it?” Nebetta’s voice was as low as Noble’s. She giggled as Derrick and Noble quickly undressed Julia, and then lifted her so that she was sitting on the kitchen counter.

The women’s moans mixed as each man took a nipple in his mouth and suckled. Their hands gently massaged her thighs and she rocked into their touch.

“Me first,” Nob said with a grin. He pulled Julia to the edge of the counter, spread her legs and lowered his head.

“Tell Nebetta what Nob’s doing,” Derrick whispered in Julia’s ear. “Describe it for her.”

“He’s, oh lord, he’s licking my clit. Oh, oh...”

“And? Tell her how it feels.”

“Warm, and tingly, and, oh, I can’t talk, oh.”

Noble slipped two fingers inside Julia’s slick channel. She bucked into his fingers and begged to be fucked.

“You didn’t have any problem talking then,” Derrick said. “Tell her, tell her exactly what he’s doing.”

“He’s got his. Fingers in my. Pussy, oh I. My clit. He...” The words came out in clumps of three, around Julia’s heavy breathing.

“Oh, Julia, you look so beautiful. I can’t wait until that is my tongue upon your softness.”

Nebetta’s words sent Julia over the edge. She came hard, lifting up off the counter as Nob continued to lick her clit and fuck her with his fingers.

When her hips settled, Nob rose and kissed her deeply. “You taste so good, baby.”

Derrick kissed her neck. “Do I get a taste?”

Nob laughed. “Sure. Let’s go into the living room.”

Once in the other room both men undressed quickly. Nob sat down on the couch, fixing his ass on the very edge. He spread his legs wide and grinned at Julia.

“Come here, baby.”

She faced him and started to straddle him, stopping when he waved his finger back and forth with a smile.

“Not tonight. Turn around.”

“But how will...”

Nob put his finger to Julia’s lips, stopping her questions. He turned her until her back was facing him, then gently eased her toward his cock.

“Lower yourself down.”

Julia pushed down, locking gazes with Derrick, who was stroking his cock, as her pussy devoured Nob’s erection. When Derrick knelt in front of them, and then lowered his face to her pussy, she threw back her head and moaned.

Her clit throbbed under Derrick’s tongue as Nob rocked her back and forth on his cock. Nob pulled her back until she was lying across his chest, her legs on either side of his.

“Does that feel good, baby? Let Nebetta know how good it feels. Don’t leave her out.”

“Oh, Betta, I can’t wait, so good, so very good.”

Nob’s sharp intake of breath made Julia stop talking.

“Fuck, yeah,” he whispered. “More.”

She angled her head to look down. Derrick was running his tongue up and down her folds, and then running it up and down Nob’s cock as it slid in and out of her wetness.

“You like that?” Derrick’s voice held more than a hint of mischief. He pulled Julia up gently. When Nob’s cock sprang free he wrapped his lips around it and sucked it deep into his throat.

“Oh, yeah.” Nob bucked his hips and sent Julia jiggling on his lap. She laughed as she ran her fingers through Derrick’s hair as he continued his assault on Nob’s cock. Nob continued to moan and buck as Derrick wrapped his fist around the lower portion of his friend’s erection and doubled his efforts against the head, flicking his tongue back and forth over the slit before taking it totally into his mouth again, and running his teeth gently up and down the shaft.

“You’ve done this before,” Nob said.

Derrick lifted his head long enough to laughingly say, “once or twice,” before sucking his friend all the way down again.

Nob’s fingers found their way to Julia’s pussy. He fingered her clit as she watched the sight before her.

“It looks so wonderful,” she said. “Betta, did you know about this?”

Nebetta giggled. “Yes. Derrick told me that he wanted to swallow Noble’s seed.”

Her words were all it took. Nob let out a guttural, “oh, fuck yeah,” and came. He shot into Derrick’s mouth as his friend sucked greedily, his fingers gently caressing the other man’s balls.

As Nob rode out the wave of orgasm, his fingers increased their assault on Julia’s swollen nub. She yelled out her pleasure as Derrick licked the last of his treat from Nob’s

cock. When she had regained her senses she stood and pushed Derrick onto the floor. She lowered her mouth onto his dick and sucked.

Derrick lifted up to a sitting position, and turned his eyes to Noble, who sat up on the couch. Their gazes locked.

“Pissed?” Derrick’s words came out on a hiss, his arousal obvious as Julia continued to work his erection.

“Surprised is more the word. I liked it, though.”

“Good.” Derrick moaned. “Cause I loved doing it and I want to do it again.”

“Only if I can try.” Nob smiled as Derrick warned Julia that he was about to come. He watched his friend caress Julia’s head as she swallowed his essence.

She rose to her knees and kissed him, laughing as Nob slid in back of her and added his lips to the kiss.

“This takes things into a whole new direction,” he said.

“I was going to ask before I did it,” Derrick said. “But you were right there, and looked so tasty. I just couldn’t resist.”

The three lay down on the floor, with Julia pressed tightly between them.

“Shall we take this into the bedroom?” Noble asked.

“Oh, no,” Julia replied. “We need our strength for our little B&E later tonight. We should just rest, now.”

The two men stared at each other, and when Julia laughed, Derrick shook his head.

“Betta!” Derrick’s voice held a note of irritation.

“I didn’t tell her, I promise. I wanted to, but I did not.”

“Do you think I’m stupid? You two have been skulking around Peneb-Ra’s house all week, flashing fingers at each other as to how many guards were there at any one time.

What was the plan? To wear me out and then sneak out and leave me behind? I don't think so. I'm a part of this, too."

Nob shook his head and then sighed. "The best laid plans..."

"What time are we planning on going?" Julia said. Then she turned to Nob and frowned.

"Do you feel that? Heat and vibrations. Where is it coming from?"

The three sat up, still closely entwined. In a corner of the room the walls seemed to shimmer. A light wind moved through the room and Nebetta squealed.

"Peneb-Ra! He's back! Derrick, save me."

Derrick pushed up off the floor to grab Nebetta's box as Nob grabbed a blanket and threw it over Julia.

"Go to the bedroom, now!" He pushed her aside as a male form took shape across the room. The wind died down as the form materialized.

"Ahmed?" Julia stopped in the bedroom doorway and pulled the blanket closer to her naked form.

"I am sorry," Ahmed said. He brushed his hands down his blue robes and smiled. "Please forgive my entrance. It was the only way I could be assured you would believe what I have to tell you, and the quickest way to get your attention."

"I knew it! You're in league with Peneb-Ra," Julia said angrily.

"No, I'm not. But there are things you need to know, and time is of the essence."

"What do you want?" Derrick held the box close to his body. It radiated heat and glowed brightly as it did when Nebetta was afraid.

"For starters, I would like to speak with Nebetta."

The room grew silent and then the original three occupants exchanged nervous glances. Ahmed stood where he was, his hands crossed calmly in front of his body.

“We don’t know what you’re talking about,” Derrick said.

“Please, we are past that. If you do not cooperate I will simply take the doll. I assure you that I am quite capable. I could take her magically, and make it so you would have no memories of past events. Or we could sit down and discuss the situation rationally. Nebetta, the choice is yours.”

“There is no...”

“Derrick, my love, it is all right. If he meant me harm he would have taken me already.”

“That is true,” Ahmed answered.

“Tell us who you really are,” Derrick said.

“I have told you the truth about my name. I am Ahmed. But I am not the person you think I am, that is true. I am a servant of the Brotherhood of Medinet Habu, a priest of Pharaoh. I have been sent here to recover Nebetta and return her safely to the king.”

“That’s not possible,” Noble said. “I’ve known you for the last seven years.”

“It is possible, my friend. Perhaps we could sit down, as I have suggested? And maybe you could find some clothing?”

Derrick and Noble exchanged startled glances, as if realizing for the first time that they were naked.

Derrick finally took a step toward their unwanted visitor. “We have your word that while we dress, and while we sit and talk, there will be no funny business? No magic?”

“You have my word,” Ahmed responded with a bow.

“If you’re lying, I warn you that I know magic of my own. I could take you down.”

Ahmed shook his head and a slow smile appeared on his lips. “I know of your magic, Derrick. But I assure you, it is no match for my own.”

“Let us hear what he has to say,” Nebetta said. “If he can help free me from the doll, then I will welcome his help.”

“But he’s here to take you back,” Julia said. “You heard him.”

“Yes, I heard him. I heard him say the choice was mine. And mine it shall remain.”

Chapter Three

“I knew that I recognized you.” Nebetta’s voice was soft. “I’ve seen you. At the temple, and in the harem. You were much younger, but it was you.”

“Yes, it was I.” Ahmed took a sip of his tea and smiled at Derrick.

“I wish her no harm. Please, relax for a moment.”

“What if I don’t believe you?” Derrick stood on the other side of the room from where Ahmed, Noble, and Julia sat around a table.

“I could have taken Nebetta at any time. I felt her essence the moment Julia awakened her.”

Julia lowered her head and then laughed.

“Just like you heard her in the office that day.”

“Exactly. And I find myself in a quandary. My fellow priests say that Ramesses wants her back, immediately.”

Nebetta gasped, and Derrick felt his stomach drop.

“He is still alive?” The concubine’s voice was soft.

“He has a few years left. And he wants you back.”

After an agonizing moment, Derrick cleared his throat. "What is your problem, Ahmed?"

"I find myself having a totally modern thought. Does Nebetta want to return to Ramesses, or stay here, with you, Derrick? My old self would have loyalty only to my duty, and to my Pharaoh. Now, I believe it is up to her."

Derrick felt as if the weight of the world were on his shoulders. Nebetta loved Ramesses. Would she jump at the chance to return to her royal lover? Or would she want to stay with him? He'd never even held this woman in his arms, and the thought of losing her broke his heart.

Silence permeated the room. After what seemed like an eternity, Derrick cleared his throat. His voice was shaky when he whispered, "Betta?"

"There is no choice." Her voice was strong and Derrick felt his heart drop. She was leaving. Back in her own time she would be whole again, able to love. He was sure that somehow she would not remember her time in the future.

How could he live without her? How could he pass his days without her stories, her laughter, the warm feeling she produced in him?

"I want to stay here."

"You are certain? Because once the choice is made, it will bring great consequences, for both of us."

"I am sure. How could I leave, my Derrick? Pharaoh has many people to love him. He will not miss me. My place is here, now."

Derrick shook his head. He wanted to take Nebetta into his arms, but of course that wasn't possible.

Nebetta had chosen him. She wanted to stay here, away from the only home and family she'd ever known. He felt elation, arousal, and fear, all at the same time. What if he

didn't make her happy? What if, after she'd been restored, she regretted what she'd done? Would she leave him? Would she beg Ahmed to send her back to Ramesses?

The feel of Julia's hand on his shoulder broke his thoughts. He shook his head and smiled at her. Then he turned to their visitor.

"What about her body? Do we know where Peneb-Ra hid it?"

Ahmed shook his head. "Unfortunately, no. I have tried several spells to break through the shield that he placed around her. My brother priests have also tried. All of them have been unsuccessful. As you know, he was very powerful."

"What if they find her back in your time?" Derrick shook his head at the absurdity of the words. Time travel and magical spells. Who would have thought that these types of things were real?

"Once Nebetta's ka awakened here, in the future, the chances of restoring her in the past disappeared. We would have to restore her here, and then transport her back."

Derrick nodded. "So what do we do, then?"

"Research. I have been in the house several times, to no avail. I thought that perhaps if we took Nebetta back inside, she might remember things that could aid in our search."

"Let's go right now." Derrick stood up and made his way toward the door.

"I think, perhaps, we should wait until the morning. Peneb-Ra's house radiates the evil that he was, as you know. Taking Nebetta back inside may set off magical currents that could cause things to happen. I would rather face those things in the daylight."

Julia shook her head. "But he's gone, we've captured his spirit. He can't harm us any more."

"We captured him, yes, but he has yet to be destroyed. For that, I would need the help of my fellow priests. They are more concerned with Nebetta right now."

"You mean he could come back?" Noble spoke for the first time.

"It's a possibility, however slight. I would not like to give him any chances. We go during the day, after I've had a chance to prepare a spell to protect us against any remnants of his magic."

Ahmed stood, and shook hands with the men. He lightly kissed Julia's cheek and gave her a reassuring smile.

"Please be at my house by nine tomorrow morning." Then he shimmered and disappeared.

"I didn't see that coming," Derrick said, running his fingers through his blond hair. "He blends in as a modern Egyptian."

"This is all so surreal," Noble replied.

"I told you Egyptian magic wasn't something you wanted to mess with," Derrick said.

Julia sat down and put her head in her hands. "This is all my fault. If I hadn't gone to the house that night, then Nebetta would be safe and back where she belongs."

"Then I never would have met Derrick, or you two. I have made my choice and I am happy with it."

Noble pulled Julia from the chair and kissed her. "Come on, baby."

He gave Derrick a meaningful look, and then led Julia from the room.

"Betta, you have no idea how happy I am right now."

"Oh, I have some." She giggled. "For I feel it, too. Derrick, I know that you love me. I love you, also. We will be happy, together. If I am never whole again, I will be happy just to be next to your heart. And other places, of course."

She giggled and Derrick shook his head, a grin on his face. "You're a naughty woman, Betta."

“Perhaps you shall have to punish me?” There was a hopeful tone in her voice and Derrick’s grin widened.

“Maybe I will. And I hope it will be soon.”

Chapter Four

“Keep these with you at all times. I’ve charmed each one of them for you individually. They will protect you against residual magic in the house. However, if you feel something stronger than a nudge, please tell me.”

Ahmed placed a scarab amulet into each of their hands. They all nodded and then turned toward the structure. It had been sealed after the four of them had captured Peneb-Ra’s ka. Knowing that Ahmed had been back inside angered Derrick, but he knew there was nothing he could do about it.

When he stepped over the threshold, Derrick felt a chill run down his spine. Nebetta’s box hummed in his pocket. The essence of evil still lingered, although it had no real power.

“Are you OK, baby?”

“I’m fine, my love.”

Derrick examined the house, amazed once again at how perfectly it was preserved. The building included the main room, sleeping chamber, library, and two ritual rooms where Peneb-Ra served the local citizens as a magician.

A brief discussion ensued about how best to tackle the search.

“Julia should look at the scrolls,” Noble said. “She’s the best at translation. Except maybe for you, Ahmed.”

The Egyptian shook his head. “Julia’s an expert, and I agree that she should take the library. Noble, you should search the room where Nebetta was found. Derrick and I will tackle the ritual rooms together. Once again, be on the lookout for any magical threats.”

Noble handed lanterns to each person, then led Julia to the back part of the house. Derrick led the way into the ritual rooms. When Noble kissed Julia and left for his own work, Derrick felt a nudge at his heart. Soon enough, if all went well, he would be able to kiss Nebetta that way.

A soft moan resounded in his head and he knew she was thinking the same thing. He wanted to respond to her, to tell her that he loved her and wanted her, but Ahmed’s voice broke his concentration.

“Peneb-Ra would not have left anything here in the open for everyone to see. We need to look in the hidden room.”

He handed Derrick a long piece of steel, which Derrick inserted into an ankh hieroglyph. He ran the rod from the top to bottom of the stem, and a door popped open. The two men pulled it further back, and then entered the cold room.

“Look for the words Nefer-Aneksi. That’s how Peneb-Ra referred to Nebetta.”

“My beautiful captive. What a wacko.” Derrick shook his head. “I’ll take the north and south wall. You take the east one.”

Derrick stared with revulsion at the west wall, which held a painting of Ramesses III under Peneb-Ra’s foot. Nebetta was also in the painting, naked and in a submissive pose. Anger burst through him and he clenched his fists.

He swallowed his revulsion and turned toward the south wall and started to read.

Hours later he thought his eyes would fall out of his head. Peneb-Ra had been a sick, sick man, obsessed with power and control. The spells on the north wall had all been about hurting someone, physically and mentally.

"Something's wrong here," he said.

"Besides the fact that all these spells deal with hate, destruction, and death?" Ahmed turned toward Derrick.

"That, too. Look at the bottom of every second one. There are glyphs that are out of place. They don't make any sense, and they don't match the spell above them."

Ahmed frowned, and turned toward his wall.

"You're right. On this wall, too."

"At first I thought it was just mistakes, but I realized it was happening too frequently for it to be a mistake. I think maybe we should have this room photographed. Then we can place the photos side by side and examine them that way."

"That is an incredibly dangerous idea. In the wrong hands these spells could wreak havoc. Anyone could see those photographs."

"Maggie."

"Who?"

"The photographer, Maggie. She could do it. We have a darkroom at the university house. She could take the photos, develop them there, and get them back to us. No one but the five of us would see them."

"Six." Nebetta's voice was strong.

"I'm sorry, Betta. You've been so quiet I thought maybe it would be best to leave you out of this." Derrick pulled the box from his pocket and ran his fingers over the wood.

"I don't like it here, true. But I could help."

"Is this woman trustworthy?"

“Very,” Derrick said. “We should approach her about it tonight. We could have the pictures by tomorrow night.”

“We will have dinner at my house, around eight.” Ahmed’s invitation came out as more of a command. He started for the door and stopped when Derrick called his name.

“I want to ask you something without the others here. Is it possible for a person to go back in time?”

Ahmed nodded, and then his eyes darkened.

“It is a bad idea, Derrick. It will not help us in our quest.”

“It might,” Derrick replied. “If I could somehow find my way into Peneb-Ra’s confidence.”

“The magician trusts no one. Do you not think I know your real reason for wanting to visit my time? I understand your physical desire for her, but in Pharaoh’s household it would not be possible. If you were caught, you would be punished by death. Are you willing to risk that?”

“Yes.” Derrick’s voice was tight. The idea had formed in his mind last night as he lay in his own bed and listened to Noble and Julia make love. He wanted Nebetta in his arms. It was looking more and more like that would never happen, unless he went back to her time. He and Nebetta had discussed it, and both of them thought the idea had merit.

“A gracious thought,” Ahmed said. “But have you taken into consideration that she would not know you? In her time you do not exist. In her time, she is a servant of Ramesses, a concubine who lies down with one man, and one man only. She is not a woman whose soul has been captured.”

“I would know him anywhere,” Nebetta said.

“You say that now. But what would you say then? Think about it, Nebetta. And how would you take a lover? You know the workings of the harem. If you were caught, Pharaoh would punish you in horrible ways, and feed Derrick to the crocodiles.”

“If my going back could help us, though. Would you do it then?”

“Prove it to me. Prove that this trip would be anything other than a disaster and I will consider it. Now, let us go and find the others.”

Derrick stroked Nebetta’s box and her soft hum filled the air.

“Betta, I know you’ve been with more men than Ramesses.”

“Yes, but only with his permission. Ramesses was the first man with whom I ever joined. And Ahmed is right, he would never allow it. I am his property.”

“Not for long.”

Chapter Five

“I feel like I’m being led into the inner sanctum. It is just photos you want, isn’t it? We’re not about to perform some arcane ritual, are we?”

Derrick turned to look at Maggie Barrington. She was a pretty woman, comfortable in her own skin, tall and buxom, with long, wavy red hair. Sitting on Ahmed’s patio, with the Nile flowing behind her, she looked beautiful.

“We save that for later.” He laughed. “Maybe after dinner.”

Maggie returned a nervous grin and looked uncertainly at Julia who laughed and shook her head.

“We wanted to stress to you that these photographs are for our eyes only.”

“We’re not shooting porn inside there, are we? *Debbie Does The Magician?*”

Maggie’s comments brought laughter from everyone except Ahmed, who frowned and shook his head.

“I’m not sure I understand.”

It was Maggie’s turn to frown, but before she could open her mouth, Derrick held up his hand.

"Ahmed's led a sheltered life. No, Maggie, we want photos of the ritual rooms in the house. But the walls contain spells that no one should see. We can trust you to be quiet, yes?"

"Of course. I'm going to need electricity for my floods, though. We'll have to haul one of the large generators inside."

"Not a problem," Noble said. "We want to start tomorrow."

"But I'm photographing a mastaba, and..."

"Tomorrow. This job should be your main focus right now."

"OK, Nob; you're the boss."

"That's settled, then. Shall we take a walk down to the Nile before dinner?" Ahmed stood and offered Maggie his hand. She took it and smiled at him, and Derrick fought to hide a grin. He remembered Julia's comment that Maggie had the hots for the Egyptian. Right now, Derrick was happy that they were focusing on each other.

As the two couples made their way toward the river, he slipped back inside the house and quickly walked toward where he thought Ahmed would place a temple room. He had to have one, he was a priest.

Ever mindful that at any time Ahmed's servant could come along and ask what he was looking for, Derrick opened doors and quickly dismissed three rooms. At the end of the hallway he opened a door and knew he'd hit the jackpot.

A huge statue of Amun-Ra dominated the room. Braziers were placed around, and statues of smaller gods were placed on shrines. For a man who had embraced modern western thought, Ahmed obviously still worshipped the ancient gods.

Derrick slipped inside the room and pulled a small pen light from his pocket. He knew that Ahmed probably stored his spell book somewhere in this room. If Derrick could find it, he could locate the spell that Ahmed had used to travel through time and use it himself.

He had purposely given Nebetta to Julia, so that the Egyptian woman could distract everyone when they started to question why Derrick had disappeared.

The beauty of the room took his breath away. Statues of Isis, Bast, Osiris, and Mut were beautifully carved and adorned the corners of the room. A small altar sat in front of the statue of Amun-Ra. But other than that, the room was bare.

Derrick went to each statue, hoping to find a hidden compartment where the book was secreted. After a futile search, he stood in the center of the room with his hands on his hips.

“Are you that determined?” Ahmed’s voice startled him. He turned toward the door and frowned when he found it closed. Then he turned back to the altar. Ahmed stood there, a curious look on his face.

“I am. I can’t tell you right off hand how it could help, but I know it would.”

“Would it do more than ease your cock? I know that it has been in use, very recently if I recall.”

Derrick laughed. “It’s not about sex. Well, partially. I know I can find something to help us, something that will free her spirit from the doll, and help us find her body.”

“I believe the key to finding her body lies in the carvings in the ritual room,” Ahmed said. “We just have to decipher the glyphs. That’s why we’re taking the photographs. After thinking about it, I have come to believe your idea has merit.”

Derrick sucked in his breath and then Ahmed held up his hand.

“This trip will not be without danger. Peneb-Ra had to plan carefully to succeed in hiding Nebetta’s body as well as he did. I could give you a few days back there to try and feel things out. There are other matters to consider, also.”

“Such as?”

“I am not in favor with my fellow priests at the moment. They hold no loyalty to anyone but Ramesses. If they know what we are doing, why you have gone back, they would become angry. It could mean death for you and for me. Therefore you would have to avoid them, at all costs.”

“How could I integrate myself in court?”

“My brother would help. You could stay at his home, and he will introduce you as a distant relative from the lower region. You will have to shave your head, however.”

Derrick laughed. A giddy happiness built in his stomach and spread through his body. The idea of actually seeing Nebetta was foremost in his brain. Also, there, however, was the idea that he would see ancient Egypt firsthand. As an archeologist he couldn't ask for a more perfect gift.

“The court is at Medinet Habu right now. Pharaoh is inspecting his mortuary temple. We will need to perform the ritual there. I will need a few days to contact my brother and make the necessary arrangements.”

“I'll be ready.”

“You must tell Noble and Julia. They will object to the idea, I am sure, and it will be up to you to convince them.”

Derrick nodded, then he cleared his throat.

“Thank you, Ahmed.”

“Don't thank me now, Derrick. Thank me when you have returned safely. Thank me *if* you return safely.”

Chapter Six

“Are you crazy?”

Derrick took a few steps back as Julia threw her hands up in the air and waved them around. They were standing on the patio at Ahmed’s house. Their host had taken Maggie on a tour of his gardens to give the three time to talk.

“Lower your voice, Jules.” Nob patted her on the behind and she swiftly moved away from him.

“Lower my voice? Have you lost it, too? And you, Derrick. Do you think Nebetta’s going to lead you to her body? And what about Peneb-Ra? In Ramesses’s time he’s still alive and well. He’ll know you’re there, and he’ll know why. Do you think he’s going to say, ‘Oh, Derrick, come on over. Let me show you where Nebetta’s body is’? No! He’s going to sense you, and he’s going to kill you. End of story.”

“Ahmed and I have already covered that. A spell will work to confuse him. He’s mortal, just like us.”

“Well, it’s just out of the question. And you!” She wheeled on Noble and pushed her finger into his chest. “You knew about this! You’re an idiot, too!”

"I love it when you're feisty." Nob kissed her quickly and pulled her into his arms. "I found out about this just before dinner. This is Derrick's decision, Jules. We can't stop him."

"Nebetta, please, talk some sense into him." Julia's voice was plaintive.

"He and I came up with this plan together, Julia. I believe, as Derrick does, that this is the answer to our quest. We have found nothing here."

"This is a risk I'm willing to take. I hope I can have your support, both of you."

Derrick stepped behind Julia, who was still buried in Noble's arms. He put his arms around her and clasped his friend's shoulders. He lightly kissed Julia's neck, and then leaned in and kissed Noble.

"You have mine," Noble whispered. "But if you don't come back I'm going to hunt up your mummy and kill you all over again."

Both men tilted their heads toward Julia, a questioning look on their faces.

"When do you leave?" Her voice was sad. She laid her head on Noble's chest and Derrick could feel her sigh.

"Saturday, around midnight. We'll have to go to Medinet Habu. Ahmed says the court is there right now. You two can work with Maggie on the photographs and try to decipher the code Peneb-Ra used, and what those scrambled hieroglyphs mean."

"While you put your life on the line. If Ramesses finds out..."

"Julia, think about this. Would you, as an Egyptologist, turn down a chance to actually see ancient Egypt in its entire splendor? That right there should be reason enough, but really, I'm doing this for Nebetta. I need her. I want her."

Nebetta's soft moan filled the air and Julia nodded.

"They're back." She nodded in the direction of Ahmed and Maggie, who were strolling toward them as if neither had a care in the world. "It's getting late. We should get Maggie back to the commune, and then get ourselves home."

The two men exchanged a sly look, and Julia shook her head.

“What?”

“We just thought that since I was leaving soon that we’d celebrate.” Derrick raised his eyebrows. “Ever gone parking with two men and a concubine at the same time?”

* * * * *

“Where exactly are we?” Julia playfully pushed Nob’s hands away as he reached for her blouse.

“It’s an old abandoned temple,” Derrick said. He quickly slipped out of his clothes and stroked his cock. “No one’s ever excavated here because it’s so far out. Lots of columns and a huge flat slab that’s perfect for making love.”

“Making love in the moonlight, how wonderful.” Nebetta’s voice was soft.

“It will be,” Derrick replied. “In a few days, this will be you and me, Nebetta.”

Julia giggled as both men undressed her, one working on her top and the other her bottom. When they were all naked, Nob pulled her in for a kiss. He claimed her lips roughly, pushing inside with his tongue as Derrick moved in behind her. When Nob broke his kiss, Derrick twisted her lips to his, doing the same.

Julia watched in fascination as the two men’s lips met next to her face. Their tongues darted out of their lips to dance around each other’s and she giggled, darting hers out to meet theirs. Soft, sweet kisses passed among the three of them for several minutes, and Julia could feel the wetness forming between her legs.

Finally, after a sweet eternity, Noble nodded and Derrick led her to two large stone columns that were covered in hieroglyphs. Nob placed a blanket on the ground between them and gently kissed Julia again.

“Stand between them, baby.” Nob’s voice was soft. “Put your hands on each one, and then spread your feet.”

The desert air was cool, and Julia shivered. She did as instructed, the moonlight illuminating her body.

“You look beautiful,” Nebetta said.

She moaned in response as both men knelt in front of her. Each one kissed a hip and ran his tongue over the skin.

“Guide us, Betta. Tell us what to do.” Derrick’s voice was husky with need.

“Worship her with your tongues, but be careful to stay away from her beautiful center. Make her beg for that.”

“Hey!” Julia’s protest came out on a groan as Noble and Derrick both began to lave at her with their tongues, licking and gently biting her skin, but staying away from her pussy, which ached with need.

She shifted, and made to move her hands away from the columns. Then she jumped when Nob slapped her ass.

“Stay in position.” He took a nipple in his mouth and sucked gently. Derrick did the same with the other one, and Julia threw her head back, thrusting her breasts further into her lovers’ mouths.

“What does she taste like?” Nebetta’s voice was full of wonder and Julia quivered even more.

“Sweet honey,” Derrick said.

“The sweetest,” Noble confirmed.

They licked their way down her body, tickling her with their tongues, and admonishing her to stay still when she wiggled.

When they were both laving the area around her pussy, Julia groaned.

“Ask them, Julia. Ask for what you want.”

“I want them to lick me.”

“But they are, little flower. Tell them *where* you want them to lick. I want to hear you say it. Remember, they told me I could give directions.”

“Betta, I’m going to make sure you’re tortured like this.”

“I hope so, sweet Julia.”

Noble and Derrick continued their assault, driving Julia crazy as they teased and tormented her. Finally, she could take no more.

“PLEASE! Lick my pussy.”

“Yes, ma’am,” Derrick said. He lay down under the columns.

“Lower yourself down.” She sighed in pleasure as he ran his tongue along her slit. She shivered as he pushed her open and began to lave at her folds. Her pleasure doubled when Noble lowered himself over Derrick and lavished the same attention on her clit.

Their tongues danced around her, sending shockwaves of pleasure through her body. Julia squeezed her eyes shut, and then opened them to study her lovers. Nob’s hips were moving in a gentle fucking motion and she moved her head enough to see that he’d placed his cock on top of Derrick’s. Derrick has spread his legs, wrapping them around Noble’s ass in encouragement. Their cocks were rubbing together and the muffled sounds emanating from both of their lips showed they enjoyed the friction.

Nob pulled back from Julia’s clit and dropped his gaze to Derrick.

“Is it good?”

“Very. Don’t stop, man. So good.” Derrick grabbed Noble’s hips. “Faster. Yeah, like that. Oh, tell me it feels good for you, too.”

“It’s incredible.”

The idea made Julia even wetter. She thrust her hips into Noble’s face and wrapped her fingers into his hair.

“Love it. Oh Isis, yes. Make me come. Make each other come.”

In response, Derrick slipped his tongue inside her tight opening, fucking her with it in rhythmic thrusts.

"They're naughty boys." Nebetta laughed. "How sexy they both look, rubbing their rods against each other as they pleasure you."

Nebetta's words were all it took for Julia to go over the edge. She clutched Nob's head harder as she came. Derrick's tongue worked itself further inside her.

"So good. Yes, oh yes! Don't stop, please! OH!"

She reached out her arms and scratched at the columns for support, marveling at the exquisite pleasure she felt as both men continued to work their magic. Another spasm of bliss spread through her as she ground herself against them.

When she thought she couldn't take any more, she tried to push away. Noble put his hands on her hips and held her in place as his thrusts against Derrick's cock increased. Derrick dropped his head onto the blanket and whispered, "Fuck, yeah. I'm gonna come."

"Come Derrick, come." Nebetta's voice spurred the men on more. "You, too, Noble. Both of you. Show us how good it feels as your cocks meld into one."

Both men thrust harder and harder; guttural moans filled the air they found their release.

"So good." Nob's voice was full of wonder. He pulled Julia's face to his for a kiss, claiming her mouth until her soft, muffled moans joined theirs.

Nob stood and helped Julia to her feet. She stumbled a little, her legs like jelly.

"You OK?" He pushed her hair back and kissed her forehead.

"Perfect. You? And how about you, Derrick?" She threw her arms behind her back to pull Derrick in for a kiss.

"Fantastic." The word came from both of their mouths and they all laughed.

“Derrick, will you bring me here soon?” Nebetta’s voice was plaintive and Derrick felt a pull on his heart.

“I promise, baby. Very soon.”

Chapter Seven

“How exactly are we going to do this? We can’t just put down candles and perform a ritual in front of everyone.”

The four of them were in the main room of Ramesses’s temple at Medinet Habu. Tourists were everywhere, snapping pictures and posing for photos in front of columns and reliefs.

“It will be best if we come back at midnight. I can spell the guards so that they don’t see us. I’ve chosen to use an outer ritual room that is not often in use. My brother, Abana, will be waiting for you there.”

Derrick’s stomach had been in turmoil all morning. He was nervous and agitated. Things were going well, but he was still anxious about what he was about to undertake.

Maggie had finished taking photographs of the room yesterday. She’d developed the film, and promised to have eight by tens for them when they returned from what she thought was a pleasure trip.

“What if he’s not there?”

“He will be. We need to shave your head tonight. And I’m sure you’d like some time alone with your friends.”

Derrick nodded. He, Noble, and Julia had made love again last night, this time slowly and gently. When they were done, he and Nob held Julia between them while she cried.

“What if something goes wrong?”

“It won’t. Relax, and you two have to promise me to take care of Nebetta.”

“We will.” Noble had clasped his arm and nodded.

They’d lain there in the comfort of each other’s arms, holding each other tight, until Julia had finally fallen asleep.

“The only thing missing is Nebetta,” Derrick whispered to Nob. “But that’s why I’m going. You know you would do this for Julia.”

“I would. But that doesn’t mean we won’t worry about you any less. Still, take some notes while you’re there, so you can tell me everything when you get back.”

Now all that was left was time alone with Nebetta. The concubine had been strangely silent since they’d arrived in Luxor. He had the paddle doll tucked safely in the pocket of his cargo pants. He rubbed it through the material and Nebetta hummed.

Ahmed smiled and nodded.

“I’m going to take a cab back to the hotel and join Julia and Noble. You should familiarize yourself with the temple. Remember, my brother will tell people that you are a distant relative from the lower portion of Egypt. You are a scribe by trade. That way you can talk with the other scribes and learned men, and perhaps learn more about Peneb-Ra.”

Derrick nodded. His heart skipped a beat and he put his hand on his stomach.

Ahmed clasped his shoulder, and walked toward the car park.

“You are nervous?” Nebetta’s voice was shaky. “So am I. Perhaps this is not a good idea, my love.”

Derrick nodded at the tourists who were milling about, and walked outside the temple to a bench that sat far away from anyone. He sat down and opened his guidebook.

“It’s the only idea, Nebetta. We’ve talked about this.”

“But I have changed my mind. Better for us to be together this way, than for you to perish in my time.”

“I’m not going to perish. Relax. I can take care of myself.”

“Danger lurks at Pharaoh’s court. It is as Ahmed said. I will not know you.”

“I’ll know you, and it will be enough for me to know that you’re here, waiting for me.”

Derrick stood and began walking through the temple. Various walls were decorated with scenes of Ramesses III’s victories over the Libyans, and the Sea People. He shivered when he passed the pond. It had been in that place that he dreamed of making love to Nebetta.

“Where did Ramesses stay while he was here?” Derrick let his gaze wander the room.

There is a palace nearby for the court, near the village,” Nebetta replied.

“Does the harem stay there, as well?”

“Those of us who travel with Pharaoh do, yes. I will be there. When you see me, challenge me to a game of Senet. I am very good at it, and love to play.”

“As long as you don’t mind losing.”

Nebetta laughed, and Derrick nodded at a woman who gave him a funny look. He knew he must look strange, sitting on a bench and talking to thin air. He put his finger up to his ear, as if to push in a phone earpiece and the woman nodded and smiled.

“It is you who will lose, but only at the game. You will never lose my love.”

“You’ll never lose mine, either.”

“Come back safely. I will miss you terribly.”

“Keep an eye on Julia and Noble. Don’t let them get into any trouble. They’re quite good at that.”

Nebetta laughed and Derrick stood. One last trip around the temple, and then to the hotel for dinner. By this time tomorrow, he would be in ancient Egypt.

Chapter Eight

“Don’t get up too quickly. We still have time before dawn. Close your eyes and rest for a moment.”

Derrick shook his head. There was a buzzing in his ears, and his fingers and toes felt as if they were on fire. Where was he? He searched his brain for a memory. The image of Julia laughing as Noble shaved his head popped into his mind.

Then of the trip to the temple, where Ahmed had spelled the guards and their group slipped past the sentries. He remembered the altar. It was cold under his half-naked body. Ahmed had placed a scarab on his heart. And then what? Julia’s soft cries of distress, her voicing the opinion that what was happening was wrong. A sistrum sounded, Ahmed saying words he couldn’t comprehend, that had quickly faded, and a soft cry that didn’t belong to Julia.

He squeezed his eyes shut. It was Nebetta’s cry. She’d been crying when he’d left the twenty-first century and arrived here, in the time of Ramesses III.

“Keep your head down. I am Abana, brother of Ahmed. Your journey was safe. Welcome to Medinet Habu.”

The words echoed in his brain. Then he let out a long breath. It had worked. He had been transported back in time.

"I'm OK. I can sit up now."

"Slowly. You will be disoriented for some time. Once again, I bid you welcome, Derrick. Or should I just say Der. It will be easier, for our situation. Your full, modern name may raise suspicions."

Derrick nodded, started to sit up and felt the rush of blood to his brain again. He lay back down quickly.

"We have time," Abana said. "The court is sleeping. The priests will not be up for hours."

Derrick squeezed his eyes shut, and then opened them again, slowly. The man standing above him came into focus. He was a younger version of Ahmed, tall and muscular with shoulder-length black hair that looked real. His brown eyes showed deep concern.

When he was in a sitting position, Derrick shook his head and shuddered. He was cold, and a tingling feeling was centered deep in his fingers and toes.

"It will take a day or so for the effects of the travel to wane," Abana said. "My house is small and secluded. You will be safe there."

"I can't wait a day."

"You must. If you rush into things now you will only leave yourself vulnerable. Ramesses is always cautious. And Peneb-Ra knows of your arrival."

"What?" Derrick jerked his gaze up to the younger man, and then grabbed the stone slab for support.

"I saw him earlier, searching around the temple pond. He will have recognized the shift in the energy, as will the priests when they awaken. They will be suspicious of you, but we can work through that. I will tell the priests that I received a visit from Ahmed. He is not here right now, but is still undergoing some training at a secret temple. They will think

nothing of it if I tell them that he came in to visit me for a while. They will be satisfied with that explanation. But the magician, he will not be easily swayed. You must be cautious around him.”

“I understand.”

Derrick remembered all too well the evil that was Peneb-Ra. The magician was a madman. He was dangerous and Derrick would avoid him at all costs. At the same time, he had to find a way to discover the plans that the magician had for hiding Nebetta’s body. It was going to be like walking a tightrope.

He swung his legs down and stood. His thighs and calves felt like jelly. Abana held his arms tight to help keep him in an upright position.

“When you are ready, we will leave.”

Derrick nodded and Abana released his arms. He took a few tentative steps. His legs felt stronger, and his mind was clearing somewhat.

“I only have a few days, three at the most. I can’t sit around and wait forever.”

“Then after you have rested we will make an appearance at court. I know of an apprentice who is working with the magician. He likes his beer, and his women. We will bribe him tonight and see what he knows.”

* * * * *

Derrick tried not to act like a tourist as he examined the beautiful reliefs in the temple. All his years of study had not prepared him for the splendor that surrounded him.

The temple itself was a masterpiece, full of colorful reliefs and beautiful columns decorated with hieroglyphs. It was amazing to see the structure in such pristine condition, considering that when he’d first seen it, it had been more than twenty-five hundred years old.

He ran his fingers over a carving that contained a cartouche with the name Ramesses III. Was it really possible that in a few short minutes he was actually going to see the great king in all his splendor?

Derrick smiled. That thought was thrilling. But more thrilling was the idea that in a few moments he was going to see Nebetta, the woman that he loved, for the first time in his life. Well, not exactly the first time. She'd projected herself into his dreams, so he knew what she looked like. But now, he could see her in the flesh, where he could actually reach out and touch her. It was the idea of touching her that was driving him crazy. Somehow, somehow, he had to get her into his arms in the next three days. He couldn't go back to his own time without tasting her, feeling her, loving her.

"Are you ready, Der?"

Derrick shook his head out of his daydreams and nodded. Abana had been very helpful and very patient. Once Derrick's mind was clear, he'd wanted to rush to the palace and see what he could discover. Abana had held him back, warning him that such actions would arouse suspicions.

So they'd waited. They'd eaten bread and mutton, and had drunk their beer using a straw to filter out the impurities. The yeasty drink had been strongly flavored, but hadn't provided much of an alcoholic kick, for which Derrick was thankful. He'd need all his wits about him tonight.

"Shall we?"

Derrick ran his hands down his kilt and nodded. He felt a little foolish, dressed in the short linen material and nothing more, but it was how things were done here. His shaved head was covered in a shoulder-length black wig. Part of him was glad there was no mirror around for him to look into.

They made their way toward the palace, where Abana nodded at the guards, who then let them pass without incident. Loud, happy noises filtered down the hallway and Derrick's

stomach turned flip after flip. This was it. He hoped he remembered his instructions and his new identity. And he hoped that he didn't run and gather Nebetta in his arms the minute she came into view.

When they stepped into the room, Derrick recognized it immediately. It was the room where he and Nebetta had made love in his dream. It was exactly the same as it had looked with one exception. In his dream, it had been he and Nebetta only. Now, the room was full of people. The men were dressed in kilts. The ladies were dressed in short skirts and many of them were bare breasted.

In the center of the room was the pond where he and Nebetta had played. It was now filled with several women who were laughing and splashing each other.

Derrick closed his eyes and remembered the way Nebetta had called for him, had taken him in her mouth in that very pond. Sweat formed on his lip and he squeezed his eyes closed. He could see her in his mind, laughing and smiling, trailing her fingers over his chest and then leaning in for a kiss.

Then he opened his eyes and there she was, standing near Pharaoh's chair. She was staring at him, an impish smile on her face. She had a low-slung kilt wrapped around her waist and her breasts were bare. Her smile widened and she shook her head in a playful fashion. Then she kissed Ramesses on the forehead, leaning over to whisper in his ear.

It hit Derrick at that moment that he was staring at Ramesses III, the great warrior king, considered by many to be the last great Pharaoh to sit on the throne. He was strong and powerful, his gaze piercing. His eyes narrowed as Nebetta spoke to him. Then he nodded and ran his finger over her stomach.

The message to Derrick was unmistakable. *She belongs to me, and you should know that.* Derrick averted his gaze and swallowed the lump that had formed in his throat.

Nebetta moved into the room, smiling and laughing with the people as she went. Each time she stopped she turned her head toward him, a look of desire in her eyes. Derrick felt as

if someone had placed a vise around his stomach. She was moving toward him. What would he say to her?

Hello, you've fueled countless of my fantasies and dreams. Can we go somewhere private and fuck like rabbits now?

Abana placed a hand on his arm and Derrick whipped his head toward the younger man. The look on Abana's face was kind, and understanding.

"I will leave you with her for a while. But, you must remember that we need to talk with the apprentice tonight. Information is your main purpose here."

"I know that." Derrick's breath was coming in shallow gasps.

"The bond between you is strong, otherwise she would not center on you so quickly. But be cautious. Ramesses watches her every move. Loving her without his permission could bring about your death."

When Nebetta neared them, Abana bowed to her and moved toward a group of men standing opposite the pond.

Derrick worked to control his pounding heart, and when she stopped before him, he repeated Abana's move.

"You are new here. Abana's cousin, they say? Such a handsome man to have never been at Pharaoh's court."

"If I had known you were here, I would have come sooner."

"Such sweet words. How long will you stay in Pharaoh's presence?"

Derrick swallowed hard and glanced at Ramesses. Even though the great king was talking with another man, Derrick knew that the Pharaoh was watching them intently.

"Only a few days." He wanted to touch her, to reach his hand out and stroke her breast, to take her lips with his own. He felt his cock harden beneath his kilt and hoped that the tent factor didn't go into effect. Everyone would know then that he had a hard-on for Pharaoh's favorite concubine.

"A pity. You and I could get along well, I think." She smiled and then turned back toward Ramesses. When she neared the king, another beautiful woman came to her and put her arms around Nebetta's waist. The two kissed gently and turned their gazes to Ramesses, who nodded and rose from his chair.

Nebetta and the other women left arm-in-arm. Conversation stopped as Ramesses moved from his seat to follow the women. When he was gone, it started again and Derrick felt as if his legs had turned to lead.

He remembered Nebetta's stories. The woman was another concubine, Keyitia. Nebetta had talked often of the activities between the three of them.

Abana returned and nodded. "Come this way. The apprentice is waiting for us. His name is Ipu." "

"Where is Peneb-Ra?"

"A good question. He has not made an appearance tonight. You will feel his presence when he enters the room. But you must be cautious, even when he is not present. He knows that something is happening, and he knows that you are not of this time."

"How could he?"

Abana shook his head in disgust. "Are you as powerful as Ahmed tells me, to ask such a foolish question? Peneb-Ra's power is great. He will try to harm you, thinking you are here to harm him. He thinks everything revolves around him."

Derrick opened his mouth to object, then closed it when Abana held up his hand. He walked toward a middle-aged man who had obviously had quite a bit of beer.

Abana clapped the man on the shoulder and then turned to Derrick.

"Ipu, this is my cousin, Der. I told you about him, remember?"

The older man nodded and grinned. He clasped Derrick's forearm and bowed.

“Welcome to Medinet Habu. Abana tells me you are a magician who might possibly be in search of an apprentice. I would love to find a new position. Tell me, what are your strengths?”

Ipuy leaned toward Derrick and moved his head back and forth, as if examining his face.

“You seem honest enough, but I have been wrong in the past.”

“How can you doubt him, Ipuy? He is my cousin.”

“Tell us, how have you been wrong?” Derrick cleared his throat and did his best to look trustworthy.

Abana shot Derrick a look of approval before turning his gaze toward Ipuy.

“My current master, he is evil.” Ipuy lowered his voice and leaned toward his companions. “He has been given a great chance to please the Pharaoh. He is twisting it toward his own purposes.”

Ipuy drained the rest of his beer and burped. He wiped his hand over his mouth and shook his head.

“Forgive me. I speak out of turn.” He started to move away and Derrick grabbed his arm.

“Nonsense. We are all friends here. Let’s get another drink and you can tell me your story. After all, if we are to work together, I should know all about you.”

Derrick watched Ipuy digest the idea. He nodded and the three of them took a glass of beer from a passing servant. Once they were seated in a corner, Derrick took a sip of his beer, grateful for the straw that prevented the barley bits from entering his mouth. Then he cleared his throat.

“Tell me what troubles you, Ipuy.”

“My master, he seeks to rob Pharaoh of his possession. If I did not think he would kill me, I would tell Pharaoh himself.”

Derrick bristled at the image of Nebetta being a possession. Before he could voice his opinion, the apprentice continued. "I wanted to be a magician, but I have not the skill. Even at my age, I am still an apprentice. I had to work for Peneb-Ra after losing my last position." As if realizing he was making himself look bad, Ipuy straightened his shoulders. "I do have some skills, though. I am sure I can help you. You never did tell me what your strengths are. How is your magic used at your home?"

"I help those who are distressed." Please let him accept that meager offering, Derrick thought. "But tell me more of Peneb-Ra and his plan to rob Pharaoh. Is he taking gold, or jewels?"

"Something much more precious. Pharaoh wishes to take his favorite concubines into the land of the dead. Peneb-Ra is fashioning the paddle dolls to carry their kas. But he has decided to keep her for himself. For the past several days, I have been fashioning a place for..."

The air stirred around them, and Derrick felt the hairs on the back of his neck stand up. He looked at Abana, who nodded and darted his gaze to the door.

Derrick turned slowly. Even though he'd never seen Peneb-Ra, he knew the magician as he walked into the room. He was tall and muscular, with piercing black eyes. Derrick knew that women would think he was handsome. If they knew his soul, however, they would run for their lives.

Peneb-Ra's gaze did not stray around the room, but centered immediately on Derrick, Abana, and Ipuy. The frown on his face deepened and his eyes crinkled in disgust. Then, suddenly, a scornful grin appeared on his face. He inclined his head to Derrick and laughed.

"You know him? You are a spy, aren't you? He sent you to see if I am loyal. Pig! Liar!" Ipuy stood and backed away from Derrick. His hands were shaking, and beer slopped from his cup to the floor.

“No, I’m not. I can help you if you’ll only let me.” Derrick tried to touch the other man’s arm, but he dragged it away.

Ipuy turned toward Abana. “I thought better of you.”

“It is true. Do not run like a child. We can help you.” Abana stood and stepped in between Derrick and Ipuy.

Ipuy turned to run and Derrick decided it was now or never.

“Tell me where he is going to hide her body. Then we can hide you from him, take you to a place where he cannot find you.”

For a moment, Derrick thought Ipuy would spill all his secrets. When he shook his head, Derrick wanted to slap the man.

“How do you...? I must think. Tomorrow, ask me tomorrow,” he said softly.

Ipuy bowed to his master, who was now inches away. Then he turned and fled.

“Should I be worried that you’re trying to take over my position at court?”

Derrick turned toward Peneb-Ra. The older man’s eyes were full of humor. Under that humor was anger.

“How could I ever take the place of a magician as great as yourself?”

“How indeed? Make sure you remember that, *Der*. Battles may be won by others, but I am always the victor in a war.”

He bowed low, and then turned, his laughter trailing in his wake.

“How does he know?”

“I do not question what Peneb-Ra knows,” Abana said. “His evil is a powerful thing. I must warn Ahmed there might be a chance of the magician slipping through his bonds in the future.”

Derrick shook his head. “There is no chance.”

Abana snorted. Before he could voice his opinion, a young boy ran to Derrick and tugged on his arm. When Derrick looked down, the child forced an object into Derrick's hand, and then turned and fled.

Derrick opened his palm and frowned. A small, black marble cone rested in his palm. Then he remembered Nebetta's words the night before he left. "Challenge me to a game, for I love games."

"A Senet piece," Abana said with a chuckle. "Pharaoh will be touring the temple all day tomorrow, taking part in inspections and rituals. The members of his court will be here, amusing themselves. It seems as if you've been invited to the party."

Chapter Nine

The room was not quite as noisy today. The sounds of sticks hitting boards filled the room. Derrick grinned as he remembered his college classes on life in Ancient Egypt. Egyptians loved games. The most popular of the two were Hounds and Jackals, and Senet. In Hounds and Jackals, the players battled for control of the board.

Derrick had spent much of last night questioning Abana about the rules of Senet. As he knew them, players moved their pieces around the board, which consisted of three rows of ten squares each. They rolled sticks to determine the number of squares they could move, and whether or not they could move a new playing piece onto the board.

The first player to get all five of his game pieces around the board and into the “House of Truth,” was the winner. Derrick had played the game on his computer, but he knew that the rules that modern men had made up might not match those of ancient times.

He found Nebetta lounging near the pond. She smiled brightly when he came into view.

“You are late. I expected you much earlier. My charms must be slipping.”

“On the contrary. I wanted to make sure I was presentable to the most beautiful woman in Pharaoh’s court.”

Nebetta threw back her head and laughed. “Abana did not tell me you were a seducer of women. It is information that is most interesting.”

She moved past him, her nipples brushing against his arm. Derrick fought to contain the surge of desire that shot straight south. It wouldn’t do for him to attack her here. He turned to watch her walk toward the board. Today she was dressed in fine red linen, cinched at the waist by a white tie.

She sat down next to the board and raised her eyebrows at him.

When he was seated opposite her she held out her hand.

“You brought the missing piece?”

Derrick opened his palm and offered her the marble cone. She placed it on the table and nodded.

“As a guest, I will allow you to throw the sticks first. But I must warn you, I am an expert at this game. Your reels will not stand a chance against my cones.”

Derrick took a seat on the other side of the board, which sat on a table and looked to be about two feet by two feet.

“If you think I’m afraid of losing, you’re mistaken.”

“Am I? We shall see, Der. Throw the sticks.”

Derrick rubbed the ivory pieces in his hands and then dropped them on the table.

“Fours. You get a cone on the board the first try. You must think yourself lucky.”

“Skill.” Derrick took one of his reels and sat it on the fourth square of the board.

Nebetta took the sticks and mirrored his actions. She opened her palms to drop them on the table, and then stopped, raising them up to her mouth and blowing on them gently.

Derrick shifted to accommodate his hardening cock. He was glad he was sitting. He moaned softly and she murmured her approval at his reaction.

Then she dropped the sticks and yelled, "Sixes." She moved her cone onto the sixth square and picked up the sticks to take an extra turn. By the time the game was almost done, Derrick knew she hadn't been bragging. She was good, and she was beating him soundly.

When she'd moved all her cones off the board she raised her eyebrows.

"Again?"

"Of course. I have to redeem myself. Would you care to make it interesting?"

"I would take all your debens and leave you with none. That wouldn't do."

Derrick stared at her, marveling that there was always a smile on her face.

"Well, then we could play for something else, like a kiss."

Nebetta lounged back in the chair, her smile deepening.

"If Pharaoh heard what you'd just proposed he'd feed you to the crocodiles."

"And what will you do? Will you tell him, or will you consider the wager?"

She stared at him as she considered the possibility. Finally, she picked up the sticks.

"One kiss for me if I win, which we know that I will. If you win, I'll allow you two, for you will be the first person to beat me in some time."

Nebetta stared at him, her expression shifting from humor to desire.

"Your eyes are the color of the Nile. How is that possible?"

"I'm not from here."

"True, but never have I seen eyes such as yours." She licked her lips, and Derrick thought he would overturn the table to get closer to her. She sighed deeply as her gaze dropped to his lips. She dropped the sticks, looked at her throw and laughed.

"Sixes. Too bad for you, Der. I hope your kiss pleases me, or I will have to hand you over to the Medjai."

She moved her cone and gave him an evil grin.

"My tongue could please you in many ways." Derrick threw his sticks, grinning when they came up sixes. He replaced Nebetta's cone with his reel and put hers back at the gathering place.

"A lucky throw. How would your tongue please me, Der? In my most secret of places?"

Nebetta's brow creased when her sticks read three. She moved her cone and gave Derrick the sticks. Her fingers lingered in his palm as she dropped the ivory.

"Forget the game. Let's go and play a different game, in private."

"Afraid of losing? It's only a kiss, Der."

"What if I want more than a kiss?"

Derrick knew he was pushing her, that he should back off and settle for a kiss. But if the dream he'd had was a memory, then he wanted to make sure that memory had a basis. He wanted Nebetta, tonight.

"What you are suggesting is treason. I am Pharaoh's property. For you and I to join, he would have to give his approval."

"What he doesn't know..."

"I would know. I would never betray him in that fashion."

Derrick accepted the sticks and took his turn.

"I'm sorry if I offended you."

She nodded, but remained silent. Derrick could tell that ideas were running through her mind, but he didn't try to push her. He allowed his gaze to drift to her lips, imagining them pressed against his own, or wrapped around his hard cock.

The game passed quickly, and Derrick fought to concentrate on the play. He moved his pieces without thinking, his thought straying to Nebetta and what she would feel like in his arms. His thoughts were so far from the board that he failed to notice that she'd beaten him until she giggled. She looked at him with mischief in her eyes.

"I do believe I'm owed a kiss."

"Only one?"

"You are wicked."

He leaned over the table and she pushed at him gently.

"Come back tonight, after the court has retired. You may pay your debt then."

"What if I can't wait that long?"

She stood and put her hands on the table, and bent toward him.

"Can you not wait for my kiss?"

"No. I want it now."

She leaned toward him, her loose linen sheath dropping to give him a perfect view of her breasts. When he moved his lips toward her she pulled back and shook her head.

"Not until tonight." She moved into the private part of the palace, turning at the entrance to smile at him again.

Derrick sat for a few moments, trying to gain control over his unruly cock. When he finally felt it subside, he stood and made his way quickly to Abana's house.

He'd barely made it inside the door before the younger man came running out of the back room.

"Ipuy is dead."

"What?"

"Found this morning, amongst the reeds. It was made to look as if he slipped and hit his head. Everyone knows he'd had too much beer the night before."

"Peneb-Ra." Derrick felt fear take hold in his stomach.

Abana nodded. "You are going home, tonight. I have already contacted Ahmed so that he will be in the temple waiting for you at the right moment."

“Not tonight.” Derrick shook his head. He’d come so far. He didn’t plan to let the chance to be alone with Nebetta slip through his fingers.

“Tonight. You have no choice. If you stay here, you will suffer the same fate as Ipuu. Then where will Nebetta be? Alone, in your time. You can help her best by going home.”

Derrick shook his head violently, but Abana did not see. The Egyptian had already turned to walk toward the room he’d come from earlier. Despite what Abana said, Derrick knew there was no way he was leaving tonight. He just had to find a way to get around Abana before the allotted time.

Chapter Ten

Nebetta ran the ivory comb through her hair. Unlike many ladies at court, she chose to keep her own locks. She loved the feel of it around her shoulders, and she loved washing it while Pharaoh watched.

Today, though, her thoughts were not on Ramesses, but on the strange blue-eyed stranger whom she'd bested at Senet. He was a handsome man, strong and lean, with great muscles. He also had the most beautiful eyes she'd ever seen. Where did one come from, to have eyes of this color?

Der made her blood stir and caused the river to flow between her legs. How she wanted this man, wanted to feel him inside her. She wanted to taste his lips and wrap her fingers, and mouth, around the root of his manhood. She closed her eyes and imagined the feel of him, the taste of him.

It had been years since a man had affected her this way. Ramesses had always made her knees weak, but this man did more than that. When she saw him her heart raced, as if it wanted to jump from her chest and run to him. The feeling made her body tingle. At the same time, it made her want to run for cover.

What if Ramesses found out how she felt? Physical love was one thing, and Pharaoh would probably allow a joining. But would once be enough? And how would the great king react if he knew how she felt?

“You are deep in thought, little flower.”

Nebetta turned her head toward Ramesses, who stood in the doorway behind her, his arms crossed in front of him.

“I was thinking of you, great one.”

“I should have your tongue cut out for lying to me.” His smile showed that he would do no such thing. “You obviously enjoyed your afternoon at the gaming boards. Did the young magician amuse you?”

“He was very entertaining, but he didn’t play well at Senet.”

“Who does when they face you? What did he lose to you?”

Nebetta worried her lip and then smiled. “A kiss.”

“Just one? There must be something wrong with him if he wagered only one kiss.”

“He wanted to wager more, but I refused.”

“Your loyalty warms my heart. Tell me, do you want to lie with him?” Ramesses trailed his fingers down Nebetta’s arms. She in turn, smiled at him and ran her lips around Ramesses’s chin, darting her tongue out to taste his skin.

“Yes. I want him.”

Ramesses gave her a shrewd look, and then smiled. “I indulge you too much. The answer is no.”

Nebetta pouted. She ran her hands down Ramesses’s chest and thighs, and then up his kilt, encircling his cock and pumping gently.

“Great one, he could never replace you. Let me taste him, just for the night. I will make it up to you, I promise.”

She kissed his shoulder and chest as her hand continued to work his shaft. When she heard his soft uttered moans she knew that Der would be hers that evening. She forked her tongue out to lick Pharaoh's chest.

"Please?"

"Harder." She complied, laying her head on his shoulder.

"I can hear your heart, great Pharaoh. Would you deny me this one little pleasure?"

She felt his cock let go of his stream in her hand as his arms came around her. He lifted her lips to his.

"Only this once. And I will be watching."

* * * * *

The Egyptian night air wrapped around him like a shroud. Derrick shivered as he stepped into the room. The pond was clear, the moonlight reflected in the stillness of the water. Nebetta stood on the edge, swaying to imaginary music.

She swayed back and forth, arching her back so that her long hair touched the stone floor. Sheer silken fabric outlined her body. Her hands moved up and down her sides, sliding at times to cup her breasts before caressing her way down to the V between her legs.

Derrick watched her and his heart beat rapidly. She was so beautiful, so graceful. She raised her face to the moon again, as if to give it a light kiss. For a brief moment, he felt horrible about drugging Abana. When he'd found the mandrake root in the marketplace earlier he knew he'd found the answer to his dilemma. He'd given the Egyptian just enough to make him sleep through the night. He'd deal with the consequences of his actions in the morning.

He rubbed his cock as he watched her dance. When he stepped from the shadows she angled her head and caressed her breasts.

"I'm here for my kiss." His voice was deep with desire.

“Come to me, handsome one. Let me love you.” She held out her hand and he moved toward her. As he neared she laughed and slid the sheer fabric from her body. When she was naked she waded into the pond. The water came up to her large breasts, which she caressed gently. Her hair floated on the water and she sighed as she stroked her nipples.

“You are slow, my love. Hurry, for I can’t wait to have you inside me.”

“Are you offering more than a kiss? Nebetta? How is this possible? What’s happening?” He stared at her, his cock hardening as her hands dipped under the water. She threw her head back and moaned.

“Do not question this gift. Come to me. Love me.”

Derrick needed no further encouragement. He shed his clothes and joined her, the warm water hitting him just above his waist. She danced around him as he neared, her hands drifting down and stroking his erection.

“My love, there is a huge crocodile under the waves that wants to devour me. Whatever shall I do?” She grinned mischievously.

“Perhaps you can tame that crocodile.” Derrick followed Nebetta as she circled around him. It was just like his dream, exactly like it. That meant that Ramesses was somewhere nearby, watching them. The idea made him nervous, and excited him at the same time. This wasn’t exactly something he could write for academic publication. But if he could, the article would be a humdinger.

Nebetta giggled. “We’ll see if this will help.” She made to dive under the water, but Derrick stopped her. A confused look spread across her face.

“I want my kiss.” He stepped closer and kissed her forehead. His lips moved to each eye, and she moaned softly.

Derrick cupped her face in his hands and tilted it toward his.

“Do you want me to kiss you, Nebetta?”

“Yes, Der, kiss me.”

He gently moved his lips against her, caressing them without making full contact.

“Oh, never has it felt so wonderful. I know you from my dreams.” Her whispered words caressed his lips and he claimed her mouth, taking her lower lip between his own and sucking gently.

“You are my dream, Nebetta, my only dream.” He kissed her again, this time pushing his tongue through her lips to claim possession of her mouth. She kissed him back, greedily, her tongue sparring with his own.

Derrick held one hand behind her neck, keeping their lips locked as his free fingers trailed down to her breast. He gently tweaked a nipple and she moaned into his mouth. He broke the kiss, threw back his head, and growled lowly. Then he lowered his head and captured her nipple with his lips.

“Der. We have done this before. How can...?”

He lifted his face back to hers. He could see the confusion in her eyes. Behind the confusion was desire. Derrick gently caressed her cheek. “Shush, Betta. We’re living a dream.”

She bit her lip, and then grinned shyly. “A magnificent dream. I want to taste you.”

Their lips met again, then she pushed away and laughed, her head disappearing underneath the water.

The reality of her lips wrapping around his cock far outweighed the dream. He was afraid that he would explode in her mouth, but he didn’t stop her. He couldn’t stop her if he wanted to.

“Oh! Nebetta.” He wrapped his hands in her hair as she sucked him greedily. When she broke off and came up for air he captured her in his arms again and kissed her savagely.

“I want to be inside you.”

“And I want you inside me, in every way possible. Take me, Der. Love me.”

Derrick wrapped her in his arms and lifted her up. Without being told, she wrapped her legs around his hips, and pushed herself down onto his cock.

"It is a big crocodile." She giggled in his ear. She bounced gently and they both laughed. When he was fully inside her, their gazes locked. He lifted her up, and lowered her back down several times, her soft whimpers sending tingly sensations up his spine.

Nebetta groaned as Derrick cupped her ass and started walking toward the stairs. She ground herself against him as he walked and he tried to still her hips.

"Careful, or this will be over very, very quickly."

She kissed him, wrapping her arms around his neck to bring his face closer to hers. When they reached the edge of the pond he lifted her up onto the stone floor.

"No, Der. I was very happy where I was."

He situated her to the edge, and gently pushed her legs apart.

"What are you doing?"

"I want to taste you." He lowered his head between her thighs and ran his tongue along her slit. Then, he darted it along her seam, the wetness seeping out and coating his tongue.

"You're delicious. And I see you follow customs about most of your body hair."

Nebetta laughed, then threw back her head and moaned loudly as his tongue parted her folds and wiggled around her tight nub.

"You're wicked."

In response, he sucked her clit into his mouth and increased the pressure on the sweet morsel. He nibbled gently, and then licked her until her moans turned into desperate cries of need.

"Der, please."

“Come for me, Nebetta.” As the words left his mouth he sucked harder. In his mind, he knew that she would understand what he wanted, even if the words did not translate as they should.

When she pushed his head down harder and cried out in pleasure, Derrick knew that she had known. She bucked against him and called out his name over and over, her fingers digging into his shoulders and back.

Finally, she pushed him away enough to lower herself into the water. She pulled him close and whispered, “wonderful, so wonderful,” against his lips before capturing them with her own.

“Take me now. Spill your seed in me and make me yours.”

Derrick nodded. He was so far gone he would do anything she wanted. She tasted better, felt better, than he’d thought possible. His dreams did not do justice to the reality of Nebetta.

She wiggled until her back was to him, then pushed him backwards so she could bend.

Derrick caressed her hips, and then encased his cock in her wetness, groaning as he slid back and forth. He wanted to hold back, make it last. Who knew when he’d get this chance again? But his body had other ideas.

He plunged harder and faster into her tight passage, marveling at their joined sounds of bliss.

“Nebetta.” He leaned over her and nibbled on her shoulder. “I love you. I need you.”

“Der.”

“Tell me you’re mine.” He pumped her harder, working himself deeper inside her and loving her soft purrs that greeted his thrusts.

“I can’t be...”

“You can. Say it. Tell me you feel it, too.”

“Yes, Der. I feel it.”

Derrick groaned deeply, and thrust harder, emptying himself inside her. He stayed inside her, his cock throbbing as he ran his tongue along her ear and kissed it gently.

“I love you. I want you with me, always.”

Nebetta lifted tear-filled eyes to his. “Who are you? You know that I belong to Pharaoh.”

“Not any more. You are mine. Say it. You know it’s true.”

Nebetta bit back a cry, and then whimpered.

“Isis, help us. I am yours. And we are as good as dead.”

* * * * *

From his place between the outer columns, Ramesses watched the lovers as they rode out the waves of passion. The intimacy between them stung his heart, and he dug his fingers into the shoulders of the lovely concubine who was on her knees before him, working her magic on his staff.

She pulled back and gave him a frightened look. “Great one? Have I offended you?”

“Finish.” He pulled her mouth back to his staff and seethed as Nebetta and the young magician exchanged words. He couldn’t hear what they were saying, but he knew it wasn’t good, at least not for him. He should have never indulged her.

He had shared her before, true, but always on his own terms. He should have seen the danger of this man the moment his name left Nebetta’s lips. He grabbed the concubine roughly, turned her and plunged himself inside her, covering her mouth with his hand to keep her silent.

It didn’t take him long to spill his seed. When he was done, he focused on Nebetta and Der, who were still in the pond, kissing and stroking each other’s arms.

The young magician had to die, soon.

Ramesses pushed the concubine away, and called for the Medjai.

Chapter Eleven

“My memories are changing.” Nebetta’s voice was soft, and full of fear. Julia, Noble, and Ahmed were sitting in their hotel room. Nebetta’s box and doll sat on a table.

“How?” The fear in Julia’s voice was evident. She spun around to Ahmed. “I told you this was going to happen! This is entirely your fault. You let him go!”

Nob pulled Julia into his chest and rocked her back and forth. “Betta? What’s happened?”

“It was him, at the pond. Before, it was just a man that Ramesses wanted me to love. This time, it was Derrick. And Ramesses has had him jailed.”

Julia’s cries increased and she pounded her fists against Noble’s chest.

“Do you know what happens?” Noble tightened his hold on Julia and turned his gaze to Ahmed.

“No,” Ahmed said. “I only know that he drugged Abana. If Abana can get into the jail to place the scarab on Derrick’s heart, then we can perform the ritual and bring him back. If not...” The Egyptian shook his head.

"Then he'll be fed to the crocodiles." Julia pushed away from Noble and faced Ahmed. She rammed her finger into his chest repeatedly. "You tell that brother of yours to find him and save him. NOW!"

"It won't be that easy, Julia. Derrick knew the risks. Abana will not be allowed near him."

"But I could be." Nebetta's voice was strong. "Tell Abana to talk to me. Tell him to explain everything and give me the scarab. I will find a way to get to Derrick and save him."

"Betta, I don't think..."

The phone rang, startling everyone in the room. Noble picked up the receiver and nodded at the others as he greeted Maggie.

"Good. Thanks, Mags. No, we'll be back tomorrow at the latest. Do me a favor, though? Make copies of the photos and fax them to us here at the hotel? That would be great. Thanks."

Noble hung up the phone and then shook his head.

"Look, we can argue until the cows come home about who knew what, and whose fault this is. It won't do us any good. I think Nebetta's idea is the best. We need to make contact with Abana and tell him to get the scarab to Betta. She can get it to Derrick."

Ahmed crossed to the window and stared at the Nile. "I'm sure I don't have to tell you that justice in Ancient Egypt was swift. I hate to bring it up, but Derrick may already be dead."

"Then we're wasting time!" Julia stomped her foot. "Call your brother, now."

"Very well, I will retire to my room and return in a few moments."

"No, we want to go with you. Or just do it here." Julia shook her head at Noble, who sighed.

Ahmed nodded and motioned toward the door. When they were all in his room, he pulled the curtains and opened a small suitcase. From it he withdrew a statue of the Ibis-headed god Thoth and placed it on the table, surrounding it with candles of various shapes.

"Thoth. The god of magic, and some say of moon and time." Noble looked at Ahmed for confirmation. Ahmed nodded and continued to light candles. When they were all lit, he placed his hands together in a classic symbol of prayer and started to chant lowly.

The room glowed, much as it had when Ahmed appeared to them in Cairo. Julia shook her head at Noble, who raised his eyebrows. Seconds later the figure of a man appeared. He glowed and Julia gasped.

He was the spitting image of Ahmed, only a few years younger. He bowed toward Ahmed and turned a curious glance at Julia and Noble.

"Our concerned friends want to know how Derrick is faring." Ahmed inclined his head toward his brother.

"He is still alive, but I have not been able to see him. His execution is set for dawn."

Julia gasped and then started to cry.

Abana's look conveyed his sympathy. "There is nothing I can do. I am very sorry."

"But I can. Tell him, Ahmed, tell him to bring me the ritual instruments. Give me instructions and I will see that it is done." Nebetta's voice was strong.

"I can hear you, Nebetta. But no one is allowed inside his prison. Pharaoh is very angry, and you have been forced into seclusion. You know what your punishment will be."

Nebetta sighed. "I do. But you can spell me past the guards."

"I can. But it is very, very dangerous. If we are caught..."

"It is worth the risk. Tonight, after the sun god sleeps."

Abana looked at his brother, who nodded.

"Tonight then." Abana bowed and disappeared.

Julia turned toward Ahmed. "What will Nebetta's punishment be?"

"I will be beaten." Nebetta's voice was soft. "We can only hope it will not be until tomorrow, until Derrick has been safely returned."

"Beaten? Nebetta, we can't allow that!"

"It is the way of things, Julia. I am willing to accept the penalty if Derrick is saved."

"Why don't we just have Derrick bring her back with him? That would save the problem of having to find her body."

"She is already here." Ahmed pointed toward the paddle doll. "She cannot exist in the same time in two different guises. Plus, if he brings her back now, then her ka will not be placed in the paddle doll, and the events of the past month would not have happened."

Noble shook his head in disgust. "This really sucks."

"I warned you all of the dangers," Ahmed said. "We have changed history, and in essence, the future. If we continue to meddle in past events, there is no telling where it will lead."

Chapter Twelve

Nebetta wiped her tears from her eyes and tried to catch her breath. From the moment the Medjai had taken Derrick she'd cried and pleaded with Ramesses, who wanted nothing to do with her at the moment. He hadn't even screamed at her, or told her why he was angry.

But she knew why. He'd seen her loving Der and knew that what they'd shared was more than physical. This was her fault. If she hadn't let her feelings show then Der would be safe, and they could love in private.

She'd never felt anything like she had when Der took her in his arms. He was so strong, so loving. When he was buried deep inside her she felt as if she was complete. How could she live, knowing that he died because of her?

The door to the room swung open and Keyitia entered. She placed a basket on the floor, and waited until the Medjai had closed the door, then she ran to Nebetta and gathered her close.

"Why? Was it not enough for you to share the great one's bed? Why did you have to throw yourself at a magician?"

"I love him."

“He will be dead by morning. And you? You are to be beaten and sold. Did you think that Pharaoh would allow your betrayal after the harem revolt?”

Nebetta shivered and began to cry again. Keyitia hugged her again and let her own tears fall.

“I will miss you so.”

“You must help him. Please, Keyitia!”

“There is nothing I can do. I did manage to convince Ramesses to let me bring you beer and bread. He is so angry that he wants to watch your punishment. He has already sold you.”

“To whom?”

“Peneb-Ra.”

Nebetta gasped. “He wouldn’t!”

“He did. The magician came to him after you were caught. He offered to buy you. Ramesses agreed, but said he would have to leave court immediately. You will go to Saqqara to live.”

“He should just kill me now. Living with Peneb-Ra will be a fate worse than death.”

“Ramesses said the same thing. He said he would get pleasure from knowing that you were suffering under the magician’s care.”

Keyitia stroked Nebetta’s cheek, then she lightly brushed their lips together. “I am so sorry.”

“Don’t grieve for me. Once we are gone from here I will see that I join Der in the land of the dead.”

“How? He will be fed to the crocodiles and not receive a proper burial. His ka will not be admitted to the land of the dead.”

“I will find a way.”

The two women hugged again and then the door burst open. The Medjai ordered Keyitia from the room, and slammed the door behind her. Nebetta hugged her arms to her chest and shivered. She couldn't bring herself to open Keyitia's gift of food.

Tears clouded her eyes as she wondered where Der was, and if he was frightened, or resigned to his fate. She buried her face in her hands and began to cry again. So absorbed was she in her tears that when a hand touched her shoulder she shrieked and pulled back.

She ran toward the door and stopped when a soft voice reached her ears. Then she turned toward the sound.

"Abana? What are you doing here? How did you get in here?" She turned her head toward the door and then turned back to the young man. Understanding dawned. Abana was a magician, and could control time and space.

"I have a story to tell you, Nebetta, but it has to be done quickly. Then, we are going to take a little trip to see Der."

"That is not possible."

Abana smiled at her and shook his head. "Trust me, Nebetta, and just listen. Do not interrupt for we have little time. Do you want to save your lover?"

Nebetta straightened her shoulders. "You know I do."

"Then just listen, and then do exactly as I say. I'm going to introduce you to a man named Derrick, and his friends, Julia and Noble."

* * * * *

Derrick pressed his head against the wall and slid to the floor. There were no windows in the small cell, so he didn't know if it was light or dark. That meant he didn't know how much longer he had to live.

A picture of Nebetta's face as she rode his cock centered in his mind. She was so beautiful, so soft and willing. He loved her so much. It was worth it, just for the chance to hold her in his arms for one night.

He thought about Julia and Noble. The thought of losing them hurt as much as the thought of losing Nebetta. He knew they would know what was happening, knew that he would be dead by dawn. He guessed being crocodile food wasn't too horrible a death. If he offered the right part of his body the jaws would rip him to shreds quickly, and he wouldn't feel anything. He hoped.

His heart sank lower as he wondered what was happening to Nebetta. Would she face the same fate? Or was Pharaoh's love for her enough to save her? He closed his eyes and said a prayer for her safety. If she lived, then he could die in peace.

He drew his legs up to his chest and lowered his head between them, fighting back tears. Would the guards tell him about her? Doubtful. They hadn't even brought him food, or beer.

"Are you crying for me, or because you fear death?"

Derrick jerked his head up so hard he slammed it against the wall.

"OW!" He jumped up, his hand going back to soothe the ache in his skull. "Betta? How?"

"Abana sent me...Derrick."

"You know my name?"

"Yes. He told me everything, my love." She crossed to him and brought his lips down to hers, pressing against him, and moaning in pleasure.

"We don't have much time. He gave us a few moments alone and then he will be here, to take you where you belong."

"I belong with you." Derrick lifted her so that their faces were even. He kissed her tenderly, then deepened the kiss as she wrapped her arms around his neck.

“Not here. Not now. In the future we will be together. You shall see.” She pushed away from him and pulled at his kilt.

“Take me, Derrick. Take me now, before anyone comes.”

“Betta, I don’t think...”

She closed her mouth over his, silencing his objections. Her hand strayed to his cock, which was hard and ready for her. She broke the kiss and pushed him backwards. He stumbled and landed on the floor.

A grin split his face as she straddled him. “What do you call your rod in the future?”

“It’s a cock.”

“A cock. I like that word. I want your cock inside me, Derrick.” She rose on her knees, and then took him inside her in one quick movement.

“You would sacrifice everything for me. I love you, Derrick.” She leaned down and kissed him, then rose back up and began to rock back and forth.

She rode him hard; putting her hands on his chest, she bit her lip to keep from crying out.

Derrick bracketed her hips with his hands to encourage her to ride faster. When he could tell she was on the edge he pushed her folds apart and pulled on her clit. She fell against him and screamed into his chest just as Derrick emptied himself inside her.

“I love you, Betta. I’m sorry this was so rough. When we get back I’ll make it better, I promise.”

He pushed her hair away from her face and kissed her.

“She can’t come with you.”

Derrick whipped his head toward Abana.

“What is it with you guys? First your brother walks in on us and now this? Get the hell out!”

“We must go. The guards are coming for you.”

Nebetta stood quickly and Derrick followed, adjusting his clothes and gathering Nebetta’s hand in his.

“We’re ready.”

“I cannot go, my love. But I will see you again. I promise.”

“What? No!”

Nebetta kissed him quickly. Footsteps echoed in the hall outside as Nebetta pulled away from him.

Derrick moved to take her hand again, but Abana pushed him to the floor and placed the scarab on his heart.

“No! Not without Nebetta!” Derrick tried to stand, but Abana put his foot on his stomach, knocking the wind out of him and forcing him back into a prone position. The younger man began the chant as Derrick reached his hands toward his love.

“Betta!”

“I love you. Always remember that.”

“NO!” The room began to spin as Derrick felt blood rush to his head. His body felt heavy and he felt the sensation of falling into a deep hole. He remembered it from his early trip and he groaned as nausea rolled through his stomach. He reached for Nebetta but she was gone. The room was empty except for himself and Abana.

“Trust me.” Abana whispered the final words and the world went black.

Chapter Thirteen

He woke on the floor, with Julia's concerned eyes focused on him.

"He's awake! It worked!" She kissed him quickly and Derrick tried to lift himself up. The world spun and he lay back down.

"Gently," Ahmed said. "Stay where you are. Give yourself time to recover."

"Betta? Where's Betta?"

"Still in her time. Pharaoh's advisors tried to blame her for your escape but could not prove it. In the end, you will be remembered as the great magician that escaped from Pharaoh's prison cells."

Derrick laughed and then focused on Ahmed. "Told you I had magic. Nebetta, baby, are you all right?"

The room remained silent and Derrick struggled to a sitting position.

He looked at Nob, who shook his head. The look of horror on Julia's face sent his stomach plunging to his feet.

"Betta?"

"Yes, that is the part of the plan that we could not tell you. Nebetta is no longer in the doll. She is once again a slave to Peneb-Ra, sold to him by Ramesses."

“What?” Derrick pushed himself to a standing position. He grabbed the chair behind him for support. “Send me back!”

“To what?” Ahmed threw his hands up in the air. “If we had not taken you when we did you’d be dead.”

“I’m dead without her.” Derrick took a few, unsteady steps. “Where is the doll?”

Julia was crying. Noble gathered her in his arms and rocked her back and forth.

“On the table,” Nob said, pointing toward the sitting area. Derrick walked on unsteady legs. He picked up the doll. Gone was the heat that Nebetta always produced at his appearance. He hugged the doll close to his chest and growled low in his throat.

“I knew I should have brought her back.”

“She couldn’t be here in two forms,” Ahmed said. “You must trust Abana and me. She will be here, it will just take time.”

“No. Let’s go back and get her, right now.”

“Derrick, think with your head and not your heart. If we bring her here now, then she is never captured into the paddle doll. If that event never happens, then none of the past month’s events will take place. Julia will not find the doll, because there will be no doll. You will not travel to Egypt to help them unravel the mystery. Nebetta would not exist to you, in any form.”

“That can’t be true. I still remember her. They still remember her.” He pointed to Nob and Julia. “You need to send me back!”

“Derrick, your memories will fade if Peneb-Ra never binds Nebetta to the doll. You must believe me and do as I say.”

Derrick slumped into the chair.

“So what is your plan?”

“Nebetta must convince Peneb-Ra to bind her to the doll. When she does that, the doll will again contain her ka. After that happens, we alert Abana and he will locate her physical

form in the past and bring her forward so we can reunite her ka and her body. We will know his plans and be able to watch him more closely. In the alternate past he hid the body before anyone knew what was happening.”

“What if she doesn’t convince him?” Derrick could hear the anguish in his voice. “Please, send me back to her. Ahmed, I’m begging you.”

“She will. You must have faith.”

Julia raised her head from Noble’s chest. “What happens if she doesn’t convince him?”

“If the binding ceremony does not take place, one morning you will wake up and have no memory of these events. You must believe me when I tell you there is no other way.”

Derrick nodded. “I would just wake up back in New York?”

“Possibly. Or you would remember your reasons for your trip as being about something other than Nebetta. Until then you will remember everything, including your love for each other.”

Noble and Julia crossed the room and sat on either side of Derrick. They put their arms around him and clasped each other’s arms in a giant hug. Ahmed nodded at them, and then slipped quietly from the room.

Once inside his own room Ahmed took a deep breath and exhaled loudly. When the priests from his time figured out what had happened his life as he knew it would be over. He prayed to Amun that nothing reflected on Abana.

He should have known better than to have let Derrick go back to the past. As he predicted, it had brought nothing but disaster.

Chapter Fourteen

“They’re pretty good pictures, if I do say so myself. I don’t think the faxes did them justice.”

Maggie spread the photos from the ritual room on the table in Ahmed’s house. She smiled shyly at the handsome man, who returned the favor and then picked up a photo.

“I made sure they stayed in order, so that you could read the spells in the correct position. I numbered each one on the back. The hieroglyphs at the bottom of each spell don’t make any sense to me. They just seem random, which is something I’ve never seen before.”

Ahmed passed a picture to Derrick, who took it and nodded. He’d been lackluster in the week since they’d been back from Medinet Habu. Julia and Noble had returned to work at the university dig site.

They’d picked up the photo faxes when they left the hotel, but he hadn’t the heart to look at them. He missed Nebetta. Missed her laughter and her jokes, and the not-so-subtle way she talked to him about lovemaking.

It broke his heart to think of her at the mercy of Peneb-Ra. He knew the magician was evil in his heart, and would not take Betta’s feelings into consideration as he searched for his own pleasure.

“Do you have enlargements of just the random hieroglyphs? The larger ones?”

Ahmed’s voice broke into his thoughts.

“Right here. I was going to try and figure it out for you, but I couldn’t get anything out of it, just a bunch of garbled words.”

“You’ve done good work, Maggie.”

“Thanks. Anytime you need anything, just holler at me. I’m always glad to help. So any clue what this is all about? I know something’s happened with you guys, I just don’t what.”

“Academic curiosity,” Derrick replied. “I did my thesis on magic and just wondered what the real thing was like.”

The real thing? He knew more about real magic than he’d ever wanted to know.

“OK, well, I’m going back to work. I just wanted to drop these by, since nobody came to pick them up. Oh by the way, Derrick, I love your new chrome dome. Get tired of hair? Or did you just want to give the ancient customs a try?”

Derrick ran his fingers over his head. Sprouts of hair were reappearing, but it would be some time before he had a full head of hair again.

“Just wanted to try something new.” He shrugged his shoulders, and then turned his gaze toward the photos again.

Ahmed put his hand on Maggie’s arm and they walked toward the front door.

“Forgive us. You did what we asked, in the time frame we asked. We’ve let you down. Let me repay you later this week, with dinner. Will you be my guest?”

“I’d love to. Thanks.”

“Good. Saturday around eight?”

Maggie nodded and Ahmed walked her out the door.

Derrick picked up a photo and stared at it. The random glyphs were larger than the symbols used in the spell. They all knew it was some sort of code left behind by Peneb-Ra, but they needed to figure out exactly what it meant.

Not that it mattered much any more. Nebetta had still not made an appearance. His heart ached at the thought of Peneb-Ra between her thighs. He hoped once again that she would be able to keep that from happening, but he knew it was a false hope.

Ahmed came back inside and walked to the table.

“Let’s decipher the symbols and see what we come up with.”

“Why? Peneb-Ra has her and she is now truly a captive. It makes me sick to think of what he might be doing to her.”

“And your solution is what? To just lie down and die, Derrick? If you do, then you are less of a man than I imagined.”

Ahmed pounded his fist on the table and Derrick shot out of his chair.

“I just lost the woman that I love!”

“You dishonor her by sitting around feeling sorry for yourself.” Ahmed’s voice reverberated around the room. “If this is how you act, you don’t deserve her. Is your love not strong enough that you would fight for her? Perhaps I was wrong about you. You are a coward. Perhaps she would be better off if we leave her there.”

Derrick pushed away from the table, doubled up his fist and sent it sailing toward Ahmed’s face. The Egyptian moved. Derrick’s fist hit air, and then he fell to the floor. Ahmed’s loud laughter filled the room.

“That’s more like it. Now, shall we go to work?”

* * * * *

Derrick stared at the photographs in front of him. Maggie had made eight by ten enlargements of the symbols that didn’t seem to match the spells. There were seven of them.

He and Ahmed had spent the afternoon trying to put them together in some order where they made sense, but nothing had come together.

Now he sat on his bed with them spread out in front of him. Nebetta's paddle doll, now lifeless and cold, sat on the bed next to him. He picked it up and rubbed the surface with a gentle stroke.

"Talk to me, baby, say something."

Silence permeated the room and Derrick shivered.

"Please. Baby, come back to me." He wanted to scream, to throw things and beat his fists against the wall.

Ahmed was right. There was still a chance that she could convince Peneb-Ra to bind her to the doll, and she could be saved. Derrick had spent too much time feeling sorry for himself. It was time for action. He picked up the first photo and stared at it. Next, he picked up a notebook and wrote the symbols down in an effort to see some correlation between them. When he was done, he spoke the words aloud to see if they made more sense to his ears, instead of his eyes.

"Heartbeat. Sarcophagus. Sealed Room. Magical Amulet. Plants, or greens. Navel. Ka."

"Studying for a test?" Noble stood in the doorway, his arms across his chest and a smile on his face.

Derrick returned the smile and shook his head.

"These are the mysterious symbols. They don't make any sense. There's got to be some order to them."

Noble shook his head. "You know, we may not need them. These photographs were taken before the switch in time. Perhaps when he binds her this time Abana will be able to find her and set her free."

"It's weird, you know, thinking I changed events in the past. Scary. If my trip means that Nebetta will never be here with us, I'm not sure what I'll do."

“She’ll be here. She’s resourceful and strong. She’ll find a way.”

Derrick stroked the doll and smiled.

Noble raised his eyebrows and grinned. He moved to the bed and sat across from his friend.

“Julia wanted to come and jump you last night. But we agreed that, under the circumstances, we’d wait for Nebetta.”

Derrick nodded. Julia was sweet, and tempting, but then again so was Noble. What he really wanted, though, was Nebetta. He couldn’t have her right now, of course, but he had to remain positive and think it wouldn’t be long before she was back in his arms.

“While Julia’s not here, can we talk?”

Derrick laughed and held up his hand in supplication. “I was wondering when you were going to bring it up.”

“Well, you have been rather busy, traveling through time and such.”

“So, where do you want to start?” Derrick looked at Noble.

“How about with you sucking my cock? Not that I didn’t enjoy it, I did, but it knocked me for a loop.”

“I’ve always had the desire, just to see what it was like. When we touched each other before, I wanted to take it further, but chickened out. Nebetta gave me the courage, told me not to be ashamed of anything.”

“Well, just so you know, I’m glad that she did.”

They both laughed.

“What’s so funny?” Julia stepped into the room. When she was close to Nob, he pulled her in for a hug.

“Just trying to stay positive,” Derrick said. “Let’s take a look at these, and see what we can come up with.”

Julia took her spot on the bed and they took turns passing the photos back and forth.

“What about Ahmed?” Julia laid the last photo in the line.

“He doesn’t know what to think,” Derrick said. “None of these make any sense. I mean sealed room? These were found in a sealed room.”

“Maybe there’s another one,” Noble said. “We should go and measure.”

Derrick sighed in frustration. “We could. But you could be right about these not being needed. I hope things will be different now.”

All three of them stared at the doll, as if willing it to speak. When nothing happened, Derrick stood and gathered the photos.

“We’re not getting anything done, and I’m tired. Tomorrow we’ll go back out to the house and see if we can figure out what these mean.”

Noble and Julia started for the door, then stopped when Derrick cleared his throat.

“I may not be up for sex, but I could sure use the human contact. Can I sleep with you?”

He gave them a puppy dog look, and Julia held out her hand.

“You’re always welcome. You know that.”

Derrick picked up Nebetta’s doll and then took Julia’s hand.

* * * * *

Nebetta sat, her legs drawn up in front of her, her arms wrapped around them. The lash marks on her back stung, but were healing. While her body ached, her mind was at peace with the fact that Derrick was safe.

When his cell had been found empty, she had been questioned, but had managed to convince Pharaoh that she had nothing to do with his disappearance. Despite that fact, her punishment had gone on.

Each time the lash had fallen, she'd defiantly stared at Ramesses. Abana's words had rung through her mind. "If you want this to work, you must convince Pharaoh to send you to Peneb-Ra. He must still bind your ka to the doll, or all is lost."

"Why can't you do it?"

"And hide you in his house? No, it would never work. He must be the one to bind you."

Nebetta had taken Abana's words to heart, had endured the punishment, and told Pharaoh that she no longer wished to share his bed. That she hated him, that she would rather serve the evil that was Peneb-Ra than allow Pharaoh between her thighs again. The look on his face had almost broken her heart.

Until she thought about Derrick. She wanted Derrick, needed him. She couldn't live without him. If this was what it took for them to be together, she was willing to make the sacrifice.

The door to the room opened and Peneb-Ra came inside. Her stomach rolled as he stared at her, his hands on his hips. She felt ill as his stare turned into an evil smile, and his hand drifted to his cock.

"Where is your magician now? Will he swoop down on us as a hawk and take you away?" His voice was deep, and Nebetta fought back panic. He laughed and shook his head. "No, he will not. You belong to me now. For always. You will do the things to me that you did for Ramesses, but you will enjoy it much more."

Nebetta threw back her head. "Do you think so? How long will it be before Ramesses decides that he wants me back? No one can please him as I do."

"Now, you will please me. Come here. Now."

She could see his erection pushing against his kilt. She knew there was no way around it. If she ran, he would possibly kill her. Or worse. She stood, crossed to him and fell onto her knees.

“Good. You already know your place.”

Derrick’s face flashed through her mind as she massaged Peneb-Ra’s thighs. Her hand had just gone under his kilt when he grabbed her hair and jerked her head back, the pain shooting through her shoulders.

“Tell me everything about the magician you fucked.”

“I thought he was just a man, I swear it. I knew nothing of his powers.”

Peneb-Ra pulled harder. “Don’t lie to me.”

“I swear it. I know nothing of him.” Her fear gathered in her chest. What if he didn’t believe her? She fought back a wave of nausea. What would he do?

He dropped to his haunches and brought his face to within inches of hers.

“If I find you were lying to me, I will make you suffer pain and humiliation such as you never dreamed. Do you understand me?”

“Yes. I swear it. All I wanted was his body.”

She gasped when Peneb-Ra gently stroked her face. “We shall see.” He stood and waved his fingers. His clothing disappeared and his cock strained inches in front of her face.

“You belong to me now, whore. Show me that you understand this.”

Derrick, forgive me. If she wanted to be with Derrick again, if she wanted to hold the man that she loved, she had no choice. Peneb-Ra’s laughter filled the room as she closed her eyes and bent to her task.

Chapter Fifteen

Ahmed tapped his foot and looked at his watch. Derrick, Julia and Noble were late, which was unusual for them. They wanted to look inside the ritual room again, to see if they could get a better feel for the symbols.

Isis knew he'd tried and hadn't come up with anything. He ran his hands through his hair and thought about his conversation with the priests that morning. They'd let him know that his mission was over. Ramesses no longer wanted the woman. They ordered Ahmed to destroy Peneb-Ra's ka and return to his own time immediately.

He'd convinced them that leaving wouldn't be that easy, that he had things to take care of here before he could leave. They told him to wrap things up and get back. Hopefully, after Nebetta had been found and relocated to the twenty-first century, he could go home and they'd be none the wiser about how he'd deceived them.

Abana had sent him furtive messages for a week, saying only that Nebetta was still alive and living at Peneb-Ra's house. The house was magically sealed, and Abana could not make contact with her. He was worried about her, but had caught brief glimpses when she'd stepped outside the house with the magician.

“Ahmed?” Maggie’s voice interrupted his thoughts. He turned toward the pretty photographer and welcomed her.

“I was wondering if I could go back inside the house. I’d love to take photos of that mural in the secret room. I mean, if that’s OK with you.”

Ahmed glanced over her shoulder to see his three friends approaching.

“We are going inside right now. Do you have your equipment with you?”

“It won’t take me a minute to get my lights.” She turned and fled, throwing back a greeting at the approaching archeologists as she ran toward the cemetery.

Ahmed explained her presence to the newcomers, and Derrick frowned.

“Is that wise?”

“It’s just a painting,” Ahmed replied. “There are no spells inside it. She has helped us in the past and I think she deserves this small favor.”

When Maggie returned, with Chris and Joe helping her carry equipment, they all went inside.

Once they were inside the sealed ritual room things were a bit cramped.

“Wow!” Chris ran his fingers along the wall. “This is awesome. How come we’re just seeing it now?”

“We had to find a way in,” Julia said. “It wasn’t easy.”

Ahmed nodded. He didn’t want her to tell them that the presence of the magician made it dangerous, or that there was the possibility that Peneb-Ra would find a way to escape his bonds and put them all in peril again.

Joe stepped up behind his boyfriend and ran his fingers along the words.

“Too cool! And the painting! Man, this guy was a real narcissist.”

Maggie set up her lights and began taking photos of the wall.

“I’ll take it in sections, and we can recreate the mural by piecing them together.”

“We’re taking measurements,” Derrick said. “You guys can help. We want exact dimensions of every room and of the outside.”

Chris and Joe took a tape measure and were assigned the inside rooms.

Derrick and Noble took the outside walls, while Julia offered to stay and help Maggie. When it was lunchtime, they headed over to the excavation site, selected trays and compared notes.

It didn’t take long to realize that the measurements matched. There were no more hidden compartments in the house, unless it was something underground.

When lunch was over, they all stood and stretched.

“I guess it’s back to a boring old Mastaba,” Joe said. “Too bad. Being in the magician’s house added some spice to the day.”

Maggie playfully stuck out her tongue. “You peons may have to go back to work, but I still have photos to take at the house.”

“Yes, you can bring them to dinner on Saturday,” Ahmed said. “As a matter of fact, why doesn’t everyone come? Chris and Joe, you too. We will have a good time. Now, if you will excuse me, I must get back to work. See you Saturday around eight.”

* * * * *

Julia moved the light according to Maggie’s direction. “Sorry about Saturday.”

Maggie shrugged her shoulders. “That’s OK. I’d kinda hoped it would just be Ahmed and me, but, that’s the breaks.”

The photographer tilted the tripod up, focused her shot and clicked the shutter.

“This mural really is fascinating. Look at the intricacy of the work. The colors are so bright; it’s almost as if it was painted yesterday. Look at the reeds, and the sarcophagus. Absolutely beautiful.”

Julia felt a shiver run up her spine. She'd never looked at the mural very closely, just at the horrifying image of Peneb-Ra killing Ramesses, and enslaving Nebetta.

She took a step closer and realized that off to the left of the main image was a scene from the Nile, the green reeds surrounding the blue waters. Nestled amongst the reeds was a small sarcophagus. To the right of that was a Mastaba.

"It's too far. It must be the tomb."

"What?" Maggie turned toward Julia with a frown on her face.

"From the Nile. It's too far from here. He must have used one of the tombs. But which one?"

"What are you talking about, Jules?"

Julia jerked back to reality. "Oh, sorry. Nothing, just mumbling to myself. Archeological fever, you know. I'm fascinated by the magician who lived here. It's all pretty cool."

"Yeah, but you're talking about which tomb?"

"Nothing, like I said, ignore me."

"OK. You guys are being secretive about something, aren't you?"

"No, not at all." Julia laughed with delight, and hugged herself. "I can't believe it! Can it be so simple?"

"Right." Maggie scowled and stepped up to the tripod. "Anytime you want to let me in on the secret, I'm game."

Julia nodded and tried to remember the words that had been on Derrick's list. She hurried from the room and found Derrick and Noble in the main sleeping chamber of the house.

"It's the mural."

"What?" Derrick put down a scroll and stepped toward her.

“Give me the list. Now!”

He pulled the paper from his pocket and gave it to Julia. When she started laughing, he and Noble exchanged curious glances.

“The mural is the clue. Look, in the mural there is a sarcophagus hidden in the reeds by the Nile. Peneb-Ra has a magical amulet around his neck. There is a heart painted on Nebetta’s chest. She has two navels, one painted on her side and the other painted in the middle of her stomach. It’s all there; look at the list, heartbeat, sarcophagus, sealed room, magical amulet, plant/greens, navel, and ka.”

“There’s not a sealed room in that painting, or a ka, Jules.”

“No, but it’s in a sealed room. And we all know this is about putting a ka back in a body. I’m telling you, I’m right.”

“You could be,” Derrick said. “But it’s not a map. It doesn’t tell us what he was planning on doing.”

“Geeze, do I have to do everything around here? When Maggie’s done we’ll examine the painting from top to bottom. Somewhere in there is a clue to where Peneb-Ra planned to hide Nebetta’s body after he bound her to the paddle doll for Ramesses. The planning for that started long before Derrick showed up so it will be the same now as it was before. If we can find the location, we can tell Abana and he might be able to use the information.”

Derrick laughed. “It’s a gold star for Julia.”

“I want more than that.”

“Talk to me later,” Derrick replied, kissing her forehead. “I think a suitable reward can be arranged.”

* * * * *

“OK, we’ve been staring at this thing for hours. Nothing’s slapped me in the face. How about y’all?”

Derrick inclined his head toward Noble and Julia, who were sitting on the floor. Noble was backed up against the wall, with Julia cradled between his legs and arms.

“Nothing.” He shook his head and Julia did the same.

“I was so sure. It has all those words in it.”

“True, but that doesn’t mean he would leave a roadmap.” Derrick scratched his head. He reached into the pocket of his cargo pants and rubbed Nebetta’s doll. The ivory was warm to the touch. He shook his head. It was just wishful thinking, of course. The warmth came from his hand, not from Nebetta.

“Maybe the reeds are the clue, although I can’t see him hiding a body near the water. Too much threat of crocs there,” Noble said.

A warm feeling spread through Derrick’s hand. His stomach turned flips and he could have sworn he felt warm breath on the back of his neck. What was happening to him? He turned toward the altar and stared. An outline of Nebetta’s body seemed to appear, and then disappear before his eyes.

“Did you see that?”

“What?” Julia stepped up and shook her head. “I don’t see anything.”

“I don’t think Peneb-Ra was worried about four-legged crocodiles. I made him believe that Ramesses wanted me back, and that he would have to hide me by binding me to the doll, and placing my body in a secret location.”

“Nebetta?” Derrick’s voice was soft and full of hope.

“I have missed you, my love. My body cries out for you even now.”

“I can’t believe it’s true. Baby.”

Nebetta giggled and Derrick let out a war cry, while Julia and Noble laughed and hugged.

“Hurry, you must tell Ahmed where I am. Abana can rescue me and we can be together.”

“But where?”

“In the mastaba that is farthest from the house and closest to the Nile. Abana will know. We will be together very soon. But don’t delay. Peneb-Ra may change his mind. Please hurry.”

Derrick ran from the room with Julia and Noble hot on his heels.

Chapter Sixteen

Abana watched Peneb-Ra struggle with Nebetta's body. The moon god was almost ready to go back to bed but the magician was sweating profusely, and Abana fought to keep from laughing out loud. Served the vulture right. He held up his hands to indicate to the Medjai that they should remain quiet.

It hadn't been hard to convince Ramesses that Peneb-Ra intended to kill Nebetta to get back at the Pharaoh for what he considered a slight. Even though the great king had banished her, he still cared for her. They had spent years together, and Nebetta had seen Ramesses through the Harem Revolt. He ordered his Medjai to investigate. If the magician had truly killed her, he ordered them to capture Peneb-Ra and execute him, immediately.

For all his strength and power, the magician was still a very nervous person who trusted no one. At least Peneb-Ra's death would ring true to the history books. He would be executed because of Nebetta.

The magician disappeared inside the mastaba, and the leader of the Medjai tugged on Abana's arm.

"We should take the woman's body to Pharaoh for proper burial."

"I'll take care of it. You take care of him. But be careful. Do not give him a chance to use his magic upon you. Sneak up from behind, quietly. I will wait here, and if you have need of my magic, I can surprise him. Keep your amulets at the ready."

The Medjai nodded and motioned for his men. He repeated his instructions and they all nodded. When Peneb-Ra came out of the mastaba, without Nebetta's body, the Medjai threw his arms over his head in an order to move toward the building.

Sounds of a struggle and upraised words soon reached Abana's ears. He cringed as Peneb-Ra screamed, and then fell silent. Abana walked toward the cluster of men and grimaced. Peneb-Ra was dead, a large spear sticking out of his chest.

"Take him to court."

"You will need help with the woman."

"Let me go inside and see. You stay here."

The Medjai frowned, but nodded. Abana stepped inside the mastaba. It was dark. He checked behind him to make sure no one was watching, then he muttered words for guidance, and a glow appeared before him.

"Find her." The glow began to move inside the tomb, darting from room to room until it rested at a doorway near the back of the mastaba.

Abana followed the light, pushed opened the door and watched as the room turned from dark to light. Nebetta's body, lightly wrapped in linen, lay on an altar. He gently caressed her face, and then looked to her chest. Her breathing was shallow and he breathed a sigh of relief.

He darted a glance at the door, then pulled a scarab from his pocket and placed it on her heart. He quickly tore the wrappings from the sistrum and shook it, beginning his chant immediately.

The ceremony had to be finished before the Medjai became suspicious and decided to investigate. Once Nebetta's body had been transported forward he could blame her disappearance on Peneb-Ra.

Nebetta disappeared quickly and Abana prayed to Isis that Ahmed was waiting on her. His part was done. He closed the door and moved to the front of the tomb, dismissing the spirit he'd called upon for help.

The light had barely disappeared when the Medjai burst inside.

"There is no body," Abana said. "He must have used his magic to make her disappear. Since he is dead, she is gone forever."

"Humph! Pharaoh will not be pleased."

"If he is looking for someone to blame, you can point to me. It was I who had us wait to follow him. I will take the punishment."

The Medjai nodded in agreement and Abana fought the urge to call him a coward. His part in these events was over. He could only hope that things turned out well for his brother, and that Ahmed would soon return home.

* * * * *

Maggie adjusted her flood lamp and trained it on the relief painted on the tomb wall. This was one of the older mastabas, and she was inside one of the back rooms. She pondered whether or not she needed an extra flood lamp, and then decided against it. The generator already powered two lamps. A third one might drain it, and then her work for the day would be done until it could be recharged.

As she set up the shot her mind flickered back to the ritual room in the magician's house. Julia had definitely been hiding something, but what, Maggie couldn't decide. She knew that in the near past the three of them had gone through something. But they wouldn't tell anyone what had happened.

It had something to do, Maggie knew, with the house that Noble had discovered. It was an evil place. People could feel it seep into their bones when they were inside. She fingered the amulet in her pocket. Ahmed had given it to her when she'd first taken photos of the house for them. Now she carried it everyday. She had two reasons for it. One, the atmosphere in the house had made her nervous, and she believed wholeheartedly in Ancient Egyptian magic. And two, Ahmed had given it to her.

The dark-headed man thrilled her. She wanted to find a way to let him know she was interested, but she'd never been very good at that. Maybe during dinner on Saturday she'd find a way to let her true feelings come out.

She shivered as a cold draft filled the room.

"Where did that come from?" She closed her fist around the amulet and did a three-hundred and sixty degree. She was alone, but the chill had not left the room.

A strange glow appeared in the center and Maggie backed toward the doorway. When the woman's body appeared on the table, she hit the floor running, not caring that she'd left her camera behind.

"Noble! Derrick!" She ran out into the sunshine, her heart beating rapidly.

"Maggie, what's wrong?" Chris grabbed her. "You're shaking."

"Where's Noble?" She clutched at Chris's chest, and then turned her gaze to Ahmed, who was running toward them from a mastaba just south of them.

"What's wrong? What's happening?" Ahmed pulled her from Chris's arms and gathered her to his chest. "Tell me, little lamb, what's wrong."

"Inside, there's a woman. I..."

Chris made as if to run toward the mastaba, but Ahmed stopped him.

"I will take care of it. I'm sure it's nothing. Take Maggie back to the camp and get her some water."

Chris looked confused, and then nodded. He led Maggie toward the tables. When they were out of sight, Ahmed strode into the mastaba. The glow coming from the back of the tomb lit his way.

When he saw Nebetta's body on the table he smiled. Abana had done his duty, now it was time for Ahmed to do his. First, though, he needed to reassure Maggie that nothing had happened. Then, he needed to gather his friends close, so that they could greet Nebetta when she joined their world.

Their plan had worked. Once Nebetta was restored, his work here would be done and he could return home. A strange sense of foreboding rolled through his belly. He fought it down and went in search of Derrick, who was waiting for Nebetta's return in another mastaba. They'd misjudged the place, but not the time.

He couldn't wait to see the smile on the lovers' faces when they were reunited.

Chapter Seventeen

Derrick gently stroked Nebetta's cheek. Her skin was warm and he closed his eyes and sighed. He'd unwrapped her body so that when the others showed up, they could start the ritual immediately.

"Soon, my love." Her voice was soft.

"He needs to hurry." Derrick stood and began to pace. Nebetta's body lay on his bed. Ahmed had spelled them both back to the house when workers began rushing to the mastaba to see the body that had appeared.

Ahmed was now at the site, trying to calm Maggie and deal with the aftermath of Nebetta's return. A noise from the front end of the house caught his attention. Julia's laugh, and then running footsteps let him know they were here.

"Wow!" He turned toward Julia's voice. She'd stopped in the doorway, then took several tentative steps inside, a mixture of fascination and disbelief mingled on her face. Noble stepped in behind her, his eyes wide with wonder.

"Where's Ahmed?"

“He’s coming,” Noble replied. “He took Maggie back to the commune to try and calm her down. She went from being scared out of her mind to madder than hell that he told her she’d imagined things.”

Nebetta’s giggle filled the room.

“I hope I didn’t frighten her too much.”

“Nebetta, it’s good to hear your voice.” Julia did a happy dance, and then pulled Noble in for a hug.

“Yours too, Julia. Hello, Noble. You have no idea how happy I am to be here.”

Ahmed called out from the front of the house and Noble called out for him to come back. When he stepped into the room, he smiled.

“Maggie is very angry. It’s a good thing Nebetta’s body was wrapped, otherwise she would recognize her at our little dinner party on Saturday.”

Nebetta’s laugh was infectious, and everyone joined in.

“Let’s get this done,” Derrick said. “What can I do?”

“Nothing. This is a sensitive spell. I need you to remain silent and just watch, no matter what happens. I do need the doll, though.”

Derrick kissed the ivory, and passed it to Ahmed. He went to stand by Julia and Noble and they all joined hands.

Ahmed stepped closer to Nebetta. He took the doll and placed it on her heart.

“Are you using Peneb-Ra’s spell?” Derrick’s voice held tension.

“No, too dangerous, I believe. I’ve altered a spell from the Book of the Dead. Since Nebetta’s not technically dead, I couldn’t use the real one for joining the soul and the body in the land of the dead.”

Derrick bit his lip. “Is that wise? Maybe we should use the one on Peneb-Ra’s wall. He did the original spell. Surely his would work.”

“Lest you forget, Derrick, Peneb-Ra’s ka is trapped in this world. He is powerful and I don’t want to give him any chance of grabbing a shard of magic and finding his way free. We risk that right now, anyway.”

Derrick nodded, then they all watched in fascination as Ahmed spread out his arms and began chanting in ancient Egyptian.

“What’s he saying?” Noble pressed his lips against Julia’s ear.

“Come forth those who are lost. Come find what you seek. Look upon your earthly body and join with it now. Spirit and body be one. Spirit and body be one. Come join together now.”

The room glowed, and then a huge beam of light shot out from the paddle doll. Nebetta gasped, and her body jolted.

“Derrick!” Nebetta’s gasps turned into moans, Derrick moved toward the bed, but Noble pulled him back.

“Remember, no matter what happens. Stay here.” Noble held him back while Derrick struggled to get free.

“Julia, grab his hands!”

Ahmed continued to chant, as if in a trance-like state, and Nebetta’s cries still filled the room. Then, suddenly, silence prevailed. Derrick looked at Ahmed, who still chanted under his breath. Nebetta’s body lay still. The glow from the paddle doll dimmed.

“Nebetta?” He could hear the fear in his voice. “Baby, please, say something.”

Ahmed opened his eyes and lowered his arms. He sighed deeply, then touched the doll. Nebetta’s body jerked again, and her eyes fluttered opened. Noble loosened his grip on Derrick, and pulled Julia to him.

Derrick ran to the bed. When Ahmed nodded, Derrick gently stroked Nebetta’s arm.

“Betta?”

“The world is spinning.”

“Lie still.” Ahmed’s voice was stern.

Nebetta looked up into Derrick’s eyes. A smile lit her face and her lips parted.

“My love.”

“Yes.” Derrick lowered his lips to hers, gently brushing them together.

“She must remain motionless for a while,” Ahmed said. “No lovemaking for a day or so.”

“What’s a day when we have a whole lifetime together?” Derrick kissed her nose and forehead.

Nebetta giggled and then looked over his shoulder.

“Hello.” She fluttered her eyes at Noble and Julia. “Thank you, all of you.”

She sighed deeply, and closed her eyes.

“Betta?” Derrick shook her gently and then turned accusing eyes on Ahmed.

“She must rest. Feel her pulse if you don’t believe me. Do you not remember the sensation of your own travel?”

Derrick nodded. He lay down next to Nebetta, pulling her up against him. Tears fell from his eyes as he rested his head on her shoulder.

He was vaguely aware of the other three leaving the room. Foremost in his mind was that Nebetta was lying next to him, warm and alive, and in the twenty-first century. He could love her without fear of Pharaoh’s wrath.

A smile lit his face as he closed his eyes and joined her in sleep.

Chapter Eighteen

Nebetta took a sip of coffee and made a sour face. Then she laughed and kissed Derrick, pushing her tongue inside his mouth and throwing her arms around his neck.

“Careful! This stuff is hot.” He put the cup on the counter and returned the hug. She stood between his legs, dressed in one of his shirts. She looked delicious, and he stifled a laugh as he remembered her awe at working the buttons on the garment. He was shirtless, but still wearing the jeans he’d worn last night when they’d fallen asleep together.

Warmth filled his heart and belly as he remembered waking up next to her. She’d already been awake, studying him intently with a huge smile on her face. Then she kissed him and pronounced that she was starving.

He’d wanted to take her this morning, but she’d slept through the night, and he was worried that she didn’t have all her strength back yet. He’d given in to her demand for food, making coffee and toast and feeding her dates. Now, from the feel of her lips against his, his worries were moot.

“Love me, Derrick.” She ran her fingers up his back and then threw back her head to give him better access to neck and chest. Derrick ran his tongue down her skin, reveling in her warmth and vitality.

The sound of a clearing throat brought him back to reality. Noble and Julia stood in the doorway, large smiles on their faces.

Nebetta squealed with delight, pushed herself away from Derrick and ran to Julia. She took the other woman in her arms and kissed her soundly, cupping her chin to tilt her head. She pressed down and pushed her tongue against Julia's lips, which opened tentatively. She broke the kiss with a loud smack and licked her lips.

"You taste delicious," Nebetta whispered. "If it wasn't for you, I wouldn't be here." Her fingers trailed between Julia's thighs. Julia jumped and gave a nervous laugh.

"You're welcome, Betta. We're very glad you're here."

Nebetta grinned and turned her attentions to Noble, who stood directly behind Julia. She cradled his neck and pulled his lips to hers.

"How many times have I watched the three of you together? Let us go and play now, the four of us." She ran to Derrick and threw herself into his arms. They kissed with a deep hunger, breaking only when Noble cleared his throat again.

"Julia and I think you two need some time alone. We'll be back for dinner, and we can play then."

Derrick nodded, and Nebetta pouted. When they were gone, she grabbed Derrick's hands and pulled him toward the bedroom.

"I want to make love on the bed. Never have I felt anything so soft and inviting."

At the bedroom door, she twirled away from him, her arms out as if to encompass the world. At the bed, she feverishly tried to work the buttons on the shirt, her cries of dismay making Derrick laugh as she failed to unbutton the shirt.

"Here, let me." He pushed her fingers away and began to push the buttons through holes, the material opening to reveal her luscious breasts. He hissed when her hand cupped his cock.

"Is your cock ready for me, Der?"

“Baby, it’s been ready for you since the first time I heard your voice.”

Nebetta laughed and dropped to her knees in front of him. She struggled with the button and zipper. She threw up her hands in frustration and growled.

“Take him out! I want him everywhere. I’m tired of waiting!”

Derrick looked down at her. He raised his eyebrows up and down as he slowly undid his jeans.

“Stop teasing me!” She massaged his thighs and their gazes locked. When the fastenings were undone, Derrick wiggled his hips and groaned when Nebetta’s hands disappeared inside his pants.

She stroked his cock and then released it from its prison, engulfing it in her mouth immediately. The warm, wet welcome made him groan and he buried his fingers in her hair.

“Baby, you’d better slow down. I can only last so long.”

She replaced her mouth with her hand and shook her head.

“No. I want to taste your essence, feel your seed sliding down my throat. We have all day, remember? A lifetime, you said.”

His cock disappeared inside her mouth again and her greedy sucking made him shiver. He fought to hold back as her mouth slid up and down his shaft, but he knew it was useless. She teased his balls with her fingers, and Derrick lost it. He thrust himself against her repeatedly as he shot wave after wave of come into her mouth.

Nebetta’s muffled cries of triumph deepened his pleasure and he growled out her name.

“You’re going to be the death of me.” A full body shiver overtook him as she sucked him deeper, taking the last of his come inside her.

“Not for a long time, I promise you.” She lay down on the bed, dropping the shirt so that she was naked. His cock twitched as she lay down and bounced on the mattress. Then she dipped her fingers into her wetness and moaned.

“Come and play with me, Der. Show me how happy you are that I’m here.”

Derrick quickly slipped out of his clothes, then knelt on the bed, his head resting between Nebetta's soft thighs. He ran his finger over her slit and marveled at her cry of delight. She was so very wet. He parted her folds and dipped inside her, tracing his finger up and down, from her clit to her tight butt and back.

"Yes. Promise me you'll take me everywhere."

"I promise, Betta. I'll take you here." His tongue snaked out to caress her folds. He pushed her legs apart and delved inside her, wiggling his tongue into her wetness and marveling at the feel of her softness.

He darted in and out in swift thrusts as her hips started to buck in response. When he knew she was close to the edge, he traced his tongue up to her clit and gently bit her. She cried out in pleasure as she came, pushing his face further down and clutching his head between her thighs.

"Derrick! More, my love, more. I want you inside me."

Derrick's cock stirred. It wouldn't be long before he was ready to fuck her. He pulled his mouth away from her clit and pushed her thighs back apart, opening her nether lips so that he could draw little figure eights around her pussy with his tongue.

Nebetta pounded her hands on the mattress and squealed in delight. Derrick suddenly pulled away, then flipped her over; she rose up on her hands and knees.

"My love. Bury yourself inside me."

"Where, Betta? Here?" He kissed her wet pussy.

"Yes, Derrick, yes."

"One day, I'll take you here." His finger pushed gently against her rosebud and she backed into him in invitation. Her sighs of pleasure made him shiver and he pushed gently, his finger disappearing into her dark opening. He sawed it back forth gently as he placed his cock at the opening to her pussy.

“Have I told you this morning how much I love you?” He nudged the head of his cock inside her and marveled as he felt it swell even more.

“Tell me again.” She arched back, taking him fully as he groaned.

“I love you, Betta. So very, very much.”

He grabbed her hip with his free hand as his cock and finger slid in and out of her welcoming body.

“I love you, Der. Harder, take me harder.”

When he pulled his finger from her ass, she grumbled at its loss. He grabbed both her hips and pounded into her. It was almost as if it was the first time he’d ever been inside a woman. He’d never felt such wonder, such joy. Nebetta was here, in the present. There was no one to stop them from being together. And she loved him.

“Finger your clit, baby. Come with me.”

“Clit? Oh, yes, I know.” She giggled, and then moaned as her fingers assaulted her tiny bud.

He rose up and molded his body to hers, licking her shoulder blades as his thrusts increased.

“Derrick! It’s, oh!” Her pussy squeezed around him as she came and Derrick lost it for the second time that morning; he shot stream after stream of his essence inside her, marveling at the fact that she continued to clench him with her wetness. Her pussy continued to spasm around him and he shivered at the feeling.

When he was done, he pulled them onto their sides, their bodies shaking with pleasure and exertion.

Nebetta turned her head so that it was resting on his chest. “I want to bathe with you, sleep with you, eat with you, stay with you, always. I don’t want you to ever leave my side. Promise me, Derrick, promise me.”

He pressed his lips against hers and moaned. “I won’t ever leave, I promise.”

Chapter Nineteen

People teemed through the Sharia Muski, the most crowded shopping market in Cairo. Derrick laughed as Nebetta picked up a gauzy silk scarf and draped it over Julia's shoulders. She started bargaining with the merchant, who enjoyed the banter and laughed away her prices with a shake of his finger.

They'd bought several pieces of clothing for Nebetta, who acted as if she'd lived in this century her whole life.

"Sorry about last night," Derrick said, darting his gaze to Noble, who was watching the women with fascination.

"Don't sweat it, man. There's always tonight. You two were sleeping soundly when we got home."

"She wore my ass out. Damn, if you thought she was horny before. I thought I was gonna have a heart attack and die."

"You'd die happy."

Derrick laughed. Yes, he would. He and Nebetta had made love all afternoon, falling asleep periodically, only to wake up and attack each other's bodies again. It was a wonder to him that his cock had any life left.

“We have to get her papers, make her a U.S. citizen so I can take her home with me.”

“Already working on it. Ahmed came out to the site yesterday to see how things were going. He said the paperwork would be ready tomorrow night at his dinner party.”

“Really? How is he doing it so quickly?”

“With a flick of his magical wrist,” Noble said, a frown marring his face. “He seemed a little withdrawn about something, but he wouldn’t share.”

“We can ask tomorrow night, figure out what’s going on.”

Derrick let out a loud “oomph” as Nebetta flung herself into his arms.

“I’m hungry.”

“You’re always hungry.” He kissed her greedily then laughed. He was laughing a lot now. How had the fates brought him this beautiful woman? He stroked her cheek and kissed her nose.

“Julia and I are going to cook.”

Derrick gave both women a startled look. “Cook? What are you going to cook?”

“Pizza.” Nebetta laughed and then looked questioningly at Julia. “Did I pronounce it right?”

“Yes.” Julia hugged Nob.

“Pizza? How’d you come up with that idea?”

“Nebetta said she wanted to try it after watching us eat it before she was released.”

“OK, pizza it is.”

* * * * *

“Open wide.”

“In this position I think those should be my words.” Derrick caressed Nebetta’s sides. He was sitting crossed-legged on the floor, his back against the couch, with Nebetta on his lap. Noble and Julia were in the same position.

The women had insisted they eat this way, so that they could feed their men.

“Do as I say, or there will be no food for you.”

“Yes, ma’am.” Derrick opened his mouth and watched with wonder as Nebetta picked up a slice of pizza and moved it toward his mouth. Cheese dripped from the end. She wrapped her finger around the dripping strand, pulled it loose, and sucked it into her mouth.

His and her groans of pleasure filled the air.

“Delicious,” she whispered.

“I agree.”

She gave him a knowing look and lowered the food to his mouth. As he chewed she took an olive from the slice and popped it into her mouth. Then she exchanged smiles with Julia.

“What do you think?” Julia offered Noble a bite and he chewed happily.

“It is good, spicy. I like that. Especially this, what did you call it? Pepperoni?” To emphasize her words she pulled a slice of pepperoni from the pizza and ate it heartily.

She wiggled on Derrick’s lap and he groaned.

Julia looked down at Noble and Derrick laps and laughed.

“Are those pepperoni logs in your pants, or are you just happy to see us?”

“What do you expect, when we have half-naked women on our laps feeding us?” Derrick groaned the words out, while Noble studied Julia intently.

The women had changed into clothing they’d bought at the bazaar, gauzy harem pants decorated with bangles and ribbons. Their see-through tops left nothing to the imagination.

When they’d eaten a few pieces of the pie, the ladies stood.

“Stretch your legs out and move closer together,” Julia said. “We’ll be right back.”

“More food?”

The two threw mischievous glances over their shoulders and disappeared into the kitchen. They returned seconds later. Each had a plate in one hand, and a cup in the other. The women had taken off their tops. Their nipples were hard, and both men’s eyes widened at the beautiful sight.

“Dessert.” Julia said as they both straddled their men again. They lowered the plates so that they could see.

“Honey cakes,” Nebetta said. “Flour, honey, dates, and nuts. They are very tasty. Something from my home, to complement the meal from your home. For the top, honey.”

A fine line of honey dripped from her finger as she lifted it from the cup. She moved her finger to Julia’s mouth and traced her lips with the sweet treat. Julia opened her mouth and sucked Nebetta’s finger in.

The temperature in the room rose considerably. Nebetta pulled her finger away and dipped it back in the cup, this time offering the honey to Noble. He repeated Julia’s motion.

After Derrick had received his taste, the women drizzled honey on the cakes and fed them to their lovers.

“They are yummy,” Derrick said. He pulled Nebetta to him and kissed her until they both moaned. He cut his gaze toward his friends to see that they had done the same.

When the kisses broke, Nebetta again dipped her finger into the honey. This time, she locked gazes with Julia and traced the honey around Julia’s hardened nipple. When Nebetta lowered her head to take the bud into her mouth, Julia moaned and cupped her neck.

“That’s incredible,” Noble whispered, his voice husky.

“Very.” Derrick’s hands caressed Nebetta’s back as she laved her tongue over Julia’s breast.

Nebetta kissed Julia, and then stood. She offered her hand and Julia took it. As they moved toward the hallway, Nebetta looked at Derrick.

“Bring the honey.”

The men arrived in the bedroom in time to see Nebetta slide Julia’s pants from her hips, her hands caressing the other woman’s behind and legs as she lowered the material to the floor.

“In the center of the bed,” Nebetta whispered, kissing her gently.

Julia nervously caressed Nebetta’s arms as they kissed again.

“It’s all right, little flower. On the bed.”

Julia sat against the headboard and was soon joined by Derrick on one side, and Noble on the other. Both men had shed their clothing, their excitement evident as they each pulled one of Julia’s legs across their laps.

Nebetta knelt between Julia’s thighs and moaned.

“I’ve wanted to do this for so long. Each time you touched each other, I wanted to be there, wanted to caress and lick and suck. Wanted to feel your warmth and love.”

“You’re here now,” Derrick said hoarsely.

“Thanks to all of you. First, I want to thank the woman who found me, who listened to my cries for help.”

Nebetta ran her finger along Julia’s slit. Julia threw her head back and hissed as the other woman’s fingers parted her soft lips and caressed her folds.

Derrick’s eyebrows rose when Nebetta dipped her finger in the honey and transferred the sticky treat to Julia’s clit. She lowered her head and flicked her tongue around the bud, increasing the pressure as Julia’s moans of pleasure filled the air.

She pulled back and coated the bud again, this time sucking it into her mouth with a ravenousness hunger. Her own moans mixed with Julia’s as she sucked and licked, delighting in the woman’s softness.

"You taste so sweet," she whispered. Both men had taken one of Julia's nipples into their mouths. Derrick ran his fingers through Nebetta's hair as she stroked and sucked on Julia's pussy.

"I'm going to come. Oh, Betta." Julia's cries of desire filled the air.

Noble moved his lips from her nipple to her neck. "Come, baby. Tell Nebetta how good it feels. Tell us all."

"So good. Warm, tingly fingers stroking every part of me. I can't...I can't...oh, oh..."

Julia threw back her head as Nebetta gently bit her clit.

"That's it," Noble whispered. "Yeah, baby."

His words turned to a deep growl as Nebetta captured his cock in her mouth. She sucked him in deep, her fingers continuing to work on Julia's pussy. She pulled away long enough to place Julia's hand on Derrick's cock. She nodded her approval as Julia stroked him firmly. Then she lowered her head and sucked Nob deep into her throat.

"He tastes good, doesn't he, baby?" Derrick kissed Julia, then lowered himself over her so he could kiss Nebetta's cheek. She moved her head and stuck out her tongue. Derrick mimicked her actions and together they stroked either side of Nob's cock with their tongues.

"Oh, fuck. That feels so good."

They alternated sucking Nob into their mouths as Julia caressed his chest. When Derrick sucked Nob into his mouth, Nebetta's tongue sought out his balls, then they would trade places. Each time, they licked the orbs as they tightened up in anticipation of a massive explosion.

When Nob knew he could take no more he yelled for them to stop. They both looked at him and shook their heads in confusion.

"Too soon," he groaned. "Plus, I think Nebetta needs some attention. Jules?"

Julia nodded and bit her lip. She pushed away from the men and pulled Nebetta close to her, kissing her with wild abandon.

Derrick moaned as Noble's hand wrapped around his cock and stroked. When Noble leaned over to whisper in his ear, Derrick roared with approval.

"Fuck, yeah. Betta, have you ever heard the term sixty-nine?"

The women broke their kiss, Julia dissolving in laughter and Nebetta looking confused.

"What is this sixty-nine?"

"Stand up, baby." Derrick shooed everyone from the bed, then placed a pillow in the center.

"Betta, put yours hips on the center of the pillow and lie down."

She obeyed immediately, her confusion turning to comprehension when Julia straddled her face.

"I've never done this before," Julia said. "I hope I get it right."

Nebetta caressed her thighs and began to lick Julia's folds. Julia moaned and lowered her head between the other woman's thighs. She hesitated a moment, the sensations from Nebetta's tongue sending chills through her body.

Nob stroked her hair. "Just do what you like us to do to you, baby."

Julia ran her tongue along Nebetta's slit. Her tentative licks became bolder after Nebetta's muffled cries of approval filled the air. She parted Nebetta's lips and probed for her clit. She found it quickly, darting her tongue around the bud. The woman's murmurs of approval told her she'd done something right.

Nebetta mirrored her action so that both women were lavishing attention on each other's clits. Noble and Derrick caressed Julia's back as the women pleased each other. They matched each other stroke for stroke, licking and sucking, their muffled groans sending both men into overdrive.

"I want to make you come," Julia whispered. "I want to feel it. Tell me, Nebetta, tell me where to lick."

“Here.” Nebetta flicked her tongue around Julia’s clit, and then down her slit to her tight opening.

“And here.” She darted her tongue around the opening, and then took a long, leisurely pull back up to Julia’s clit.

Julia mirrored her actions, licking in the exact same spots and reveling in the increased movement in Nebetta’s hips.

“There, Julia, there!” Nebetta cried out. She clutched the sheets as she came, her body pushing up into Julia’s. Nebetta grabbed the other woman’s hips, her tongue fervently lapping at Julia’s clit in an effort to produce the same result.

It didn’t take long for her efforts to pay off. Julia screamed out as her orgasm overtook her. She shivered when Nob gently lowered her down on her side and lay down, spoon fashion. behind her.

Derrick tenderly positioned Nebetta so that she was on her side. Each man lifted his lover’s leg over his hip and entered her. Whimpers of pleasure and bliss filled the air as the men thrust greedily into their lovers.

“Lick her, baby. Lick her while Nob fucks her.” Derrick thrust harder as Nebetta traced Julia’s clit with her tongue.

Noble encouraged Julia to do the same. The added sensations sent both ladies over the edge again, the men increasing their thrusts as the ladies’ cries of pleasure rang out.

“Oh, here it is!” Nob’s voice broke as he came, plunging in and out of Julia’s slick pussy with abandon. He collapsed behind her, holding her close to him and laughing as he heard Derrick’s muttered, “Fuck, yeah!”

When all movement on the bed had stopped, and the room was silent, the ladies sat up and kissed.

“You taste wonderful,” Nebetta said against Julia’s lips.

“You too. We told you there would be room for you in the bed.”

“I love you all. I’m so very happy to be here.” Tears sprang from Nebetta’s eyes and Julia hugged her tightly. Seconds later, two sets of masculine arms wrapped around them and the foursome sat together, locked in an embrace.

When Nebetta’s crying ceased, Derrick, Julia and Noble wiped her cheeks, their fingers and hands overlapping. Then, wordlessly, they stood, straightened the bedding and crawled into the bed together. Within moments they were all asleep, cuddled together in a bundle of arms and legs.

Chapter Twenty

"Where did you say you were from, again?" Maggie examined Nebetta as if she were under a microscope.

Nebetta tossed her dark hair over her shoulder. "Luxor."

"That's where you met Derrick?"

Nebetta answered with a nod. She suspected that this woman, Maggie, was in love with Ahmed, and feared that Nebetta also desired the handsome man. Her suspicions were confirmed when Ahmed stepped into the room and Maggie's face took on a dreamy look.

She studied Maggie's eyes as she unabashedly followed Ahmed's progress into the room. When their gazes met, he smiled and made his way toward them.

"Nebetta." He bowed toward her, then took Maggie's hand in his. "Maggie, thank you for coming tonight. I was afraid that after yesterday you would change your mind."

"Well, I have to admit it was strange. More than strange. But it wasn't your fault."

Ahmed smiled and cut his gaze to Nebetta, who tried to stifle a laugh. Derrick had told her that this pretty young woman had discovered her body in the mastaba.

"Derrick told me of your fright," Nebetta said. "Those tombs can be very scary."

Maggie nodded. She eyed Nebetta suspiciously.

"If you'll pardon me," Nebetta said. "I believe Derrick wants me."

Ahmed coughed and laughed under his breath at the play on words.

"I'm sure he does."

Nebetta moved toward Derrick, who was talking with the two young men who were so obviously in love with each other.

She molded herself to his side and kissed his neck.

"Chris, Joe, this is Nebetta."

"Interesting name," Joe said, offering his hand.

"My mother was from the old world." She shook both of their hands and leaned into Derrick's shoulder.

From the corner of her eye she saw Ahmed's servant motion to him from the doorway. The woman looked frightened. Nebetta poked her finger into Derrick's side. When he looked her way, she subtly inclined her head toward the doorway.

Ahmed and the woman were now exchanging words. The Egyptian nodded at her and moved down the hallway.

"Something's wrong," Nebetta whispered in Derrick ear.

He lifted her chin with his fingers and kissed her, murmuring, "you're right," against her lips.

Ahmed was gone for ten minutes. When he returned he looked pale and drawn.

Nebetta wanted to run to him and ask what was wrong, but she knew this was not the time. After dinner would be sufficient. She just hoped whatever it was could be easily handled.

* * * * *

"Is there no way around it?" Derrick's voice was angry, and louder than it should be.

Dinner had gone well, or at least as well as could be expected when their host was obviously distressed. Ahmed had put on a good front, and only the foursome who knew him best knew that something terrible had just happened.

When dinner ended, Julia offered to take Chris, Joe and Maggie on a tour of the gardens. Now, Ahmed stood with Derrick, Noble and Nebetta, a sad look in his eyes.

“Do not worry about me. I knew something like this would happen.”

“But banished? They will never let you return? What about your magic?”

“I still have it; that is something they cannot take away. But the priests figured out what happened. They knew that I’d played a part. I deliberately disobeyed my orders. I have no one to blame but myself. Truly, I am lucky they did not decide to put me to death.”

Nebetta shivered and pulled Derrick closer.

“You’ve lost everything, for helping us? For bringing me here?”

“I did what was right, Nebetta. Do not worry about me. I have become quite accustomed to living here. I will miss Abana, but other than that, I believe this is where I belong.”

“You still have your job,” Noble said. “And us.”

Ahmed smiled, and then shook his head. “My job was due to my position as a priest. Starting next week I will have to look for a new job, as a modern man. I may need your assistance in locating a position.”

“You can work with us,” Noble said.

“I thank you, Noble. But I believe I can find a job at the museum. I had a feeling this was coming. I brought home personal effects from the office today.”

Derrick cleared his throat. “What about...him?”

“Peneb-Ra? They told me I could clean up my own mess. I will have to destroy his ka alone. His box is resting in my office. From the glow it has been emanating, I believe he is very angry at being held prisoner.”

“Serves him right,” Nebetta said. “Leave him in there, forever.”

“Too dangerous,” Ahmed replied. “I will find a way, and when I do, Derrick, I will require your skills to help me destroy him, forever.”

Derrick nodded. The foursome stepped back from each other as Julia and the others moved toward them. Noble pulled Julia toward him for a kiss, and Derrick could see him whispering in her ear. She gave an indignant snort, then crossed to Ahmed and hugged him tightly.

“Something wrong?” Maggie looked at them all.

“Nothing,” Ahmed said. “Absolutely nothing. Shall we go inside? We’ve made baklava for dessert.”

He led them toward the house with a smile on his face. Derrick could see the sorrow lying just under the surface, but knew there was nothing they could do about it at this time.

* * * * *

Derrick cupped Nebetta’s face and brought her lips to his.

“Have I told you today how much I love you?”

“Once or twice, not nearly enough.”

She laughed and kissed him back. They’d dropped Julia and Noble off at the house so the couples could have some alone time.

Nebetta had insisted that he “take her parking” at the abandoned site.

He dropped his face to hers again, darting his tongue over her lips before slipping it inside.

“Love me, Derrick.” She clasped his hands.

“With pleasure.”

He picked up a blanket and took it a strong slab with columns at the four corners. Nebetta molded herself to his back as he spread the blanket, her fingers undoing the buttons of his shirt.

"I think I'm adjusting to your clothing very well." She ducked under his arms and clasped the button of his jeans. He started to help her and she pushed his hands away.

"I want to do it." She laughed with glee when the button popped open.

Derrick hissed as she slowly pulled the zipper down, her fingers trailing over his hard cock.

"You're wicked."

"Am I?" She backed away and stripped off the sundress she was wearing. She trailed her fingers down her body, dipping them inside her pussy as she licked her lips.

"I'm wet for you, Derrick. I need you."

He gently lowered her to the blanket and knelt between her legs. He kissed each shoulder, then trailed kisses over her breasts, pausing to lick a hardened nipple. When it was moist, he blew warm breath over it.

Nebetta shivered and moaned as he repeated his ministrations on her other nipple.

"Take me in your mouth, suckle me."

"Not yet. I want you crazy with desire first."

Nebetta shifted her hips up and down to let him know she was already there. He chuckled and moved his lips to her stomach, his tongue darting out to lick her bellybutton until she laughed with delight.

"Derrick, please!"

He licked the area where her thighs met her body, running his tongue along the smooth skin.

"So good. Salty yet sweet. A very tasty treat."

He pulled her legs up and kissed each thigh, alternating between the left and the right, flitting his tongue out at times to tease her even more.

Nebetta tried to sit up but he shook his head.

“Let me explore; just lie back down. Be a good girl, and I’ll give you what you want.”

She lowered her eyes to his cock, which pointed straight to the heavens.

“Now. I can see that you want me as badly as I want you. Please!”

“No. Lie back down, or we’ll leave.”

“Who’s evil now?” She sighed and did as he said.

“Where was I? Oh, right here.” He lifted her leg and kissed her knee and calf, trailing his tongue down to her heel and back up. “You’re absolutely perfect.”

“Derrick, touch me!”

“Where, Nebetta, where do you want me to touch you?”

“On my pussy. That’s what you call my center, right, my pussy? Fuck my pussy, Derrick. Fill it with your magnificent cock.”

He ran his tongue over her slit, then parted the folds and licked her wet labia. He ran his tongue in circles around her clit.

“Come for me, Nebetta, my sweet concubine.”

“Yes, my love. My great one.”

He laved at her clit, then applied pressure on the engorged vein above it, and continued to lick. Nebetta’s hips shot into his face as she screamed out her pleasure.

“My rescuer. My love. Take me.”

He continued to lap at her clit until he felt another spasm rock her body.

“Derrick, please.” Her voice was weak and he smiled to himself. He rose above her and placed himself at her wet opening. Her eyes were closed and he could see tears on her cheeks.

“I want to hear you weep for pleasure every night for the rest of our lives.”

He pushed himself inside and then held himself there, half inside her, half waiting outside, as if asking for permission to enter. Her eyes opened and their gazes locked.

Derrick lowered his hips and claimed her fully.

“Is this what you wanted?”

“Always. I’m not complete without you inside me.” She wrapped her legs around his hips and they began to rock together.

Nebetta cupped his face and brought his lips to hers. She nibbled around his lips and Derrick thought his body would explode. He moaned his release against her lips and then crushed her lips with his own.

His breathing came in short, uneven rasps. He tried to move off her but her legs held him in place.

“Marry me.” He laid his forehead on hers and fought to get control of his body again.

“We are already married, Derrick, in our hearts.”

Derrick could feel his cock pulsing inside her again. “Marry me in the modern way. A ceremony with a cake, flowers, candles. I want it all. I want to show the world that you’re here, and that I love you.”

She giggled and pulled him down on top of her. “Whatever you want, my love.”

Epilogue

Ahmed's house overflowed with flowers. When Derrick found out that Noble and Julia had been planning a wedding, he insisted that the ceremony turn into a double wedding. The two had been reluctant at first, but had finally agreed.

"We don't want to take away from your day." Julia had protested.

"Nonsense, Jules. We wouldn't be here if it wasn't for you two. We want this, both of us."

The ladies had chosen flowing, diaphanous gowns, Julia's in green and Nebetta's in purple. The men were dressed in black linen pants and white linen shirts. Derrick's hair had all grown back, and Nebetta took great pleasure in ruffling it whenever she had the chance.

Maggie acted as maid of honor for both women, while Chris and Joe stood up for the men. Ahmed performed the ceremony, even though he told them he didn't "know how legally binding it would be."

"It's binding to us," Derrick answered. "We can't thank you enough for everything. We want you to do this."

Ahmed had nodded, a pleased smile on his face. "Then it would be my honor."

The ceremony took place in the gardens at Ahmed's house, with the Nile providing a spectacular backdrop.

After performing her bridal party duties, Maggie acted as photographer. She posed everyone in groups, and took shots of the couples as they fed each other cake and other food.

When they'd taken off in two horse-drawn carriages, Maggie went back into the house to gather her equipment. She hadn't talked to Ahmed, really talked to him, since the dinner party a month earlier.

She knew that something had been bothering him that night, and had wanted to ask what. But she'd felt strange, felt as if she'd been intruding. Then, he'd been busy with his new job at the small museum. His new position, which was a step down from his earlier job, puzzled her. She wanted to ask about that, too.

She packed her final bag and took a deep breath. It was now or never. The house still had a few people milling about, including Chris and Joe, who were laughing and talking with some of the university students.

The garden still held people, but Ahmed wasn't among them. She went back into the house and moved down the hallway. She knew she shouldn't be moving about his house as if she owned the place, but now that she'd made her decision she wanted to find him.

The doors were all closed. She knocked on several and received no answer. Toward the back of the house she saw a partially opened door. She pushed it open and realized that she'd found Ahmed's office. The room was tidy, except for the desk.

A smile lit her face as she realized that his desk was littered with the photographs that she'd taken of the magician's house. She picked up a few of them and nodded. Not bad, even if she did say so herself.

Warm air seemed to fill the room. Maggie frowned as she looked at the closed windows.

"Ahmed?"

The air seemed to stir again. Maggie turned toward a shelf of books. Nestled in between two large volumes was a non-descript box. Well, plain except for the glow that it was putting out.

Archeological fever took over and she walked toward it. The glow brightened and she bit her lip. She shouldn't, really. This was Ahmed's property. It was obviously just a box, though. It wasn't a treasure.

Perhaps the treasure was inside? She ran her fingers over the lid, and then shivered at the warm sensations that spread through her body. The air stirred yet again and she wondered about the draftiness of the house.

A voice whispered inside her head and Maggie closed her eyes.

"Release me, little one. Let me out."

Maggie opened her eyes and shook her head.

What the hell?

"Ahmed, is that you?"

"Yes, little one, it's me. The others are busy. Shall we play a little game?"

"Where are you?"

"Seek and ye shall find. Ask for me to come out."

"Is this your version of hide and seek? Where are you?"

She glanced around the room and laughed.

"Ask me to come out. Ask me to reveal myself."

Maggie shook her head, a grin splitting her face. "You're strange, you know that? Very well, reveal yourself. Come out, come out wherever you are."

The wind picked up, and then quickly died down.

Maggie put her hands on her hips and shook her head. She did a three-hundred-sixty degree turn of the room. Ahmed had still not appeared. A sinking feeling attacked her

stomach. He was either playing a sick game, or there was a speaker system in the room. Either way, no one was “coming out.”

“You know what? I’m leaving now. I’d hoped to talk to you before I left. Will you come out, please?”

When no one appeared, Maggie shook her head in frustration. She left the office quickly, slamming the door behind her. She never heard the evil chuckle that filled the air as she closed the door.

 THE END 

Melinda Barron

Melinda Barron loves to explore Egyptian tombs and temples, discover Mayan ruins, play in castles towers, and explore new cities and countries. She generally does it all from the comfort of her home by opening a book.

Melinda is the fourth of five children born to an Army officer and his wife. A longtime newspaper journalist, Melinda has loved to read and write from an early age. Now she lives in the Texas Panhandle with two cats, Amelia and Pippin, and enough books to, according to her brother, open her own library. In addition to reading and writing Melinda enjoys travel, cross-stitching, watching movies and spending time with her friends and family.