



Chapter 41



The weight of the scrolls in my arms was nothing compared to the weight of what they represented. Amen's decree had shattered decades of tradition—granting me privileges that no concubine before me had dared to dream of.

The right to leave the Golden House at free will, to visit the Temple of Isis freely, to step beyond the threshold of the main palace and enter the royal archives. It was not just a favor—it was a statement.

A declaration of my status. A mark of distinction.

But power, even borrowed, always comes at a price.

The air in the Golden House had shifted, thick with unspoken tension. Whispers swelled in my wake, sharp as daggers, slicing through the corridors as I passed.

The resentment was no longer concealed behind polite smiles—it burned openly in the gazes of the other concubines.

Heket, in particular, barely concealed her fury. Her sharp eyes followed me like a predator watching its prey, her mouth curling with contempt. I did not doubt that if given the chance, she would have gladly dragged me down into ruin. She had always despised me—but now, it was personal.

Even Meritaten, who had long remained distant and unreadable, regarded me differently. Her poise was the same, her tone still cool, but there was something new beneath it—something sharper. Calculating. I could not tell whether it was anger or something else, something quieter and more dangerous.

Only Nebetta remained unchanged. When our paths crossed, she still offered me a soft smile, but the light in her eyes was dimmed, replaced by something I had never seen before—worry.

It was not just the concubines.

The priests were outraged.

A woman—even one trained in the ways of Isis—had no place among sacred texts, no right to tread the halls of divine wisdom. They made no effort to hide their discontent.

Their protests reached Amen, their voices rising in fierce opposition, decrying his decision as reckless.

I had expected their outrage, but what unsettled me most was the underlying defiance in their tone.

I had watched these same men bow before Amen, speaking honeyed words of faith and obedience. But now, I saw it for what it was—a performance. Their loyalty was not devotion, but necessity.

Amen did not yield to their anger.

His decree remained firm, his authority absolute. And yet, even he was forced to compromise—allowing restrictions on what I could access, limiting the scrolls permitted for my eyes. The priests had fought, and while they had not won, they had not lost either.

And that troubled me.

If they could defy him now, openly, what might they do if given the chance? If ever they found a way to twist his power to their advantage, would they hesitate to take it?

I pushed the thought aside. That was a concern for another day. For now, I had what I needed.

As I made my way back through the palace halls, my mind already lost in thought, I was abruptly pulled from my contemplation by the murmur of voices.

The throne room doors were slightly ajar. From within, I could hear the steady, authoritative voice of Amen, mingled with the tones of foreign envoys.

A royal audience.

I should have been focused on my next steps—on how I would begin deciphering the texts, on what new truths I might uncover. But something made me pause.

A sound. A murmur of voices, deep and deliberate, filtering through the towering doors of the throne room.

I slowed my steps.

At first, I considered moving past them, reminding myself that this was not my place. That whatever transpired beyond those gilded doors was not meant for my ears.

And yet—there was something in the air.

A tension. A hushed intensity.

I shifted into the shadows of one of the massive pillars, pressing my back against the cool stone. From this vantage point, I could listen without being seen.

Inside, a man was speaking. His voice was smooth, practiced, laced with the polished courtesy of a diplomat.

"A gift, Pharaoh, from the lands of the East," he said. "Twelve of the finest women, trained in every art of pleasure. It is said your harem is lacking in variety, and as such, we present these beauties to replenish it."

A cold sensation coiled in my stomach.

The silence that follows feels heavy, charged. I hold my breath, waiting.

"And what of these women's wishes?" Amen's voice carries that careful control I know so well - the tone he uses when holding back anger. "Did anyone ask if they desired this... honor?"

The diplomat laughs, the sound grating against my nerves. "Their desires are irrelevant, great Pharaoh. They are yours to use as you see fit. For pleasure, for heirs - and if they don't survive your divine appetite..." He pauses meaningfully. "Well, there are always more where they came from."

My fingers tightened around the scrolls.

I could almost feel the foreign envoy's smirk, his confidence that his words had struck the right chord. That this offer, wrapped in silk and submission, would be eagerly accepted.

Then—Amen spoke.

Commented [Ma1]:

Commented [Ma2R1]:

Commented [Ma3R1]:

His voice was calm, but there was something in its measured steadiness that sent a shiver down my spine.

"Are they slaves?"

The room grew still. A rustle of shifting robes. An uncomfortable hesitation.

"They are a gift, my Pharaoh," the man answered smoothly.

Amen's tone did not waver. "You did not answer my question."

Another pause. This one longer.

Then, finally—"Yes."

The air in the chamber seemed to shift.

I recognized this silence well. It was the kind that came just before a storm, the eerie stillness before lightning split the sky. I knew Amen's moods well enough now to recognize the edge beneath his composure.

But to these men, he was only Pharaoh—the young ruler whose power they sought to mold, whose weaknesses they tested. They had miscalculated.

A cold realization settled over me as I pressed deeper into the shadows.

They did not know who they were dealing with.

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