

Azzy tapped his sharpened pencil against his desk as he sat there staring at the paper upon it transfixed. The page had not a single word on its red lines, and the clock that hung above the door within the office ticked in conjunction with every tap of unused writing utensil. He turned his auburn eyes to the piles of research notes that laid scattered on the other side of his desk, then back to the emptiness that stared back at him.

“How have I not written anything?” he lamented. The rabbit’s ears dropped down as he thumped his foot against the floor. “I have all my research on Seth, I just need to write it out.” Azzy’s eyes were then drawn over to the clock. Each tick passing by reminding him of how he was expected to have something, anything in a few months from now of his book on the collected myths of Seth. But how to organize the chronology? What to say about the deity? His effect on the people of Egypt? Nevermind just writing down the collected myths. Suddenly, the door underneath the clock burst open. A goose with round glasses framing the splotchy red markings around her eyes and an unkempt suit walked in carrying his own bundle of papers, and Azzy immediately worried he’d be adding to the pile.

“Dr. Azzy,” the goose began.

“Hello there, Dr. Akil, what can I do for you?” Azzy asked.

“Well, I was requested to fetch you by a woman who dropped by earlier. She told me she had something interesting you may want to see,” Akil explained. Then Akil extended out his arm to hand Azzy the papers. Though wasn’t intrigued in getting more paper to add to the piles, he took it and thanked Akil. Azzy then began rummaging through the stack just given to him, but instead of his eyes glazing over, they grew wide with intrigue.

“The was-scepter of Seth?” Azzy said in surprise. “An archaeology team found the relic of a god?”

“That’s the story she provided at least.” Akil adjusted his glasses and craned his head out closer to Azzy and ruffled his feathers. “So, are you interested?” he asked with a smile. “It has been some time since your last adventure and by the look of it,” Akil scanned Azzy’s desk, “you’ve accomplished nothing with your current book.”

Azzy scratched his head as he contemplated what was being offered and looked past Akil over at his leather jacket and traveling goggles hanging off the wall. Several years since he had last gone on an adventure, and this seemed to promise to offer a similar experience. He laid back in his chair and gave Akil a smile. “I’ll go see her. Where did she ask to meet?”

“A small restaurant in Cairo, she only gave me coordinates, no name,” Akil said. He pulled out a folded piece of paper from his pocket and handed it off to Azzy. “Do be careful out there, Dr. Azzy. I wouldn’t want anything to happen to you. You nearly died during that adventure in the Valley of Kings.”

“The Valley of Kings was nothing, Akil, I got out alive and found the stolen crown for the museum.”

“You were poisoned and stabbed several times,” Akil said with a frown.

“Yeah, but I survived, so what’s your point there?”

Akil sighed. "Nevermind, just stay safe and keep your wits about you around that woman. Something about her seemed off."

"Something seemed off about the guy who poisoned me and stabbed me several times too, but--"

"Yes, yes! You survived! I get it!" Akil cut him off. "I wish you best either way, Dr. Azzy."

"Wish you well too, Akil, I'll be seeing you soon!" Azzy hopped up and jumped over his desk and Akil as he squawked in surprise and quickly ducked. Azzy grabbed his jacket and goggles, and threw them on till they fit just right and waved farewell after apologizing to the stunned goose behind him, then bounded out the door. Time for a new adventure. To Cairo.

The trip to Cairo was simple enough, a short one-hour drive and the sky began to be filled with skyscrapers reaching upwards like the pyramids that weren't far away. Light began drowning the roads as dusk drew close and streetlights flicked on across the roads. Azzy checked his GPS for where he'd be going from here. The Al Khal, a restaurant specializing in local cuisine in a fine dining environment seemed to be where the woman was interested in meeting up. Azzy smiled to himself as his eyes returned to the road, her tastes in restaurants were as good as her tastes in ancient artifacts it seemed. When he reached the restaurant, he parked his car beside a blocky building with a multitude of windows, more than most buildings of the size would find necessary, each with curtains hanging at the side to stop all the golden light flowing out from illuminating too much of the road. He walked up into the restaurant, adjusting his goggles and jacket, and was greeted by a fox with tall ears and a brown and gray coat of fur dressed in a suit.

"Welcome to Al Khal, how can we help you?" the waiter asked.

"I think I have a reservation? Name is Azzy," he replied. The waiter looked down a list on the lectern and then nodded.

"Ah yes, Dr. Azzy, it says here you have a reservation with Ms. Miamie. Right this way please."

"So that's her name?" Azzy whispered to himself. The restaurant itself had curtains hung similarly as they were in the windows dividing the building into different dining sections for patrons. Each section was abuzz with people, each dining to their delight. Azzy could smell the aroma of lamb and aged wine hanging in the air as his nose twitched, noticing that one section had a noticeable lack of delicious food wafting through the air and was as quiet as a night in the desert. There sat a buxom woman in a simple gray tee and plaid jacket. She had the horns of a moose and she played with her lop ears as her golden eyes darted around looking around for someone. The waiter stopped at her table and pulled out a cushioned seat for Azzy to sit on. The woman, Miamie he presumed, looked at him with a sensual smile as she saw the hare approach and get comfortable in his seat.

"May I take your order?" the waiter asked.

"Red wine for now," Miamie said with a dismissive wave.

“As you wish. I’ll take your full order once I return if you’re ready.” The waiter then left, leaving the two adventurers by themselves.

“So, you’re Miamie?” Azzy asked as he paroused the menu.

“And you’re the rabbit, I take it?” she said with a flick of her purple dyed hair.

“A hare actually,” he mentioned as looked up from the menu. The light of the flickering candle between them promised to reveal so much more about her, but Azzy couldn’t discern her intentions at all.

“Whatever. But yes, I’m, Miamie. Best treasure hunter this side of the world,” she went on.

“A jackalope too. Your kind is as rare as the treasures I write about,” Azzy noted as he put the menu down.

“It takes a rarity to find them, honey,” she laughed. “But yes, I’m a jackalope. However, that’s besides the point. You got my letter, didn’t you?”

“I did. My colleague told me I’d be interested and I’m curious to learn more.”

The waiter then returned with cups and a bottle of wine. He poured them each a glass and pulled out a notepad. “May I take your order?”

“Rice!” they both exclaimed at the same time. They then looked at each other with surprise.

“Two rice? Very well then. If you need anything else, do wave me over,” the waiter said and departed.

“It’s what I typically order at these places,” Azzy admitted.

“Yes, I’m sure it is. Now about the scepter, do you know what happened to the archaeology team?”

“Not quite,” Azzy shrugged.

“Reports say they had every ounce of water sucked out of their body and were left at the entrance of the temple,” Miamie said as she took a sip of her wine.

“That’s wretched!” Azzy said. “How does that even happen?”

“They say the temple is protected by an accursed guardian and filled to the brim with traps!” Miamie laughed. “Nothing I’ve dealt with before, but it’d be good to have some help, don’t you think?”

“Traps sure, but there’s no such thing as accursed guardians. It’s all myths made to help protect these places. I should know after all,” Azzy said proudly.

“But what if there was? How would you deal with it? Being told it doesn’t exist isn’t stopping it,” Miamie joked.

“Er, well yeah, I guess you’re right. I’ve dealt with grave robbers before, I imagine it can’t be that different. Speaking of... you’re no grave robber, are you? Some of you treasure hunters can be unscrupulous.”

Miamie seemed a little taken aback, as if offended by this motion and dismissed him with a flick of her hand. “No, no, I just intend to bring this to the Egyptian Museum for a small profit.”

“If the scepter truly is the armament of a god, then it could wield untold power. I wouldn’t want it to fall into the wrong hands,” Azzy said with a squint.

“Well these hands are clean, love,” she said with a sultry smile. She raised her hands up and wiggled her fingers in jest.

The waiter then returned with two plates filled with rice and various legumes. “Your dishes,” the waiter said. “May I get you anything else?”

“No thank you,” Miamie said and then her eyes turned back to Azzy as the waiter left. “So, will you help me? It’s at a small temple dedicated to Seth in the Valley of Kings.”

Azzy scanned the jackalope, trying to get an idea of her intentions. Something was off, but even then, if he was there, maybe he could stop any greed that could overtake her. A find like this needed to be protected. Azzy sighed and took a bite of his koshary while he contemplated for a moment.

“Well?” she said.

Azzy swallowed. “I’ll do it.”

“Good, now enjoy your food, it’s on me. We’ll head out tomorrow morning.”

Azzy didn’t feel quite hungry after the conversation, but finished his meal nevertheless. His thirst for adventure wasn’t sated quite yet, but his sense for danger was in overdrive the rest of the evening.

Azzy woke up to a loud knock on his hotel room door. He jolted upwards and hastily got on some clothes, taking time to appreciate the pyramids in the distance easily seen through his window. The Valley of Kings would be pretty easily accessible too, perhaps easier to get to compared to some other places he’d visited before, but—

“Hello? Are you there?” Miamie shouted as she knocked again.

“Coming!” Azzy yelled as his trail of thought was disrupted. He hopped over to the door and opened it up, the jackalope he’d gotten to know yesterday dressed much more properly for the destination than yesterday. Compared to her relatively light athletic gear, Azzy looked like a protagonist from an 80s adventure movie with a modern twist in his duster jacket and weather-proof goggles snug over his forehead.

“Don’t you think it’s a little warm for all that?” Miamie asked.

Azzy was too busy packing a few more things into his hiking backpack too notice at first, but then slowly looked over at Miamie and said a quiet “No.”

“Whatever you say. I got us train tickets for the trip, which should take us about ten hours to arrive. We can discuss things a bit more while we’re on the way,” Miamie said.

“Oh? We’re taking a train?”

“How do you typically get there?”

“Car?”

“You really need to get with the times, man,” Miamie sighed.

“I just like doing things like my contemporaries!”

“What? From the movies?” Miamie laughed.

“N-No,” Azzy muttered.

“Let’s just get going, alright?”

Azzy nodded and they left for the train station. Despite being nearly late for the train, they were able to board without too much issue. Not many people were on board today, mostly Cairo locals and a few dozen tourists, even then, the two found seats away from the other passengers.

“So...” Azzy began as the train began chugging along.

“Yes?”

“You didn’t really tell me much about that accursed guardian protecting this tomb,” Azzy mentioned.

“You seemed more interested in if I was a tomb robber than a supposedly mythical guardian,” Miamie replied. She looked at Azzy with a frown.

“Yeah, sorry about that, I’m still not too sure on all of this, but I’m sure you’re fine,” he said. There was a tinge in regret as he winced at telling her that. Was he any better than her if he lied too? But maybe she wasn’t lying. Why did this have to be so hard? Miamie inspected him, sure and he was sure she knew he was holding back his true feelings, but she seemed placated for now as she took her eyes off him.

“The guardian is said to be an immortal priestess of Seth. Granted a bit of his power to keep it protected,” she went on.

“How’d you find that out? I thought the archaeologists who discovered it died?”

“I have connections,” Miamie smiled. “I brought symbols of Horus with me in case it ends up being true, it may be able to repel her.”

“You make her sound like she’s Seth herself when you do things like that! Likely not going to have any effect on her if she’s just a normal priestess.”

“Did you miss where I said immortal?” Miamie laughed.

“Well, immortal or not, that shouldn’t make her suddenly scared of falcons. If anything, we need to figure out how she killed those archaeologists, but we’ll need protection,” Azzy noted.

“I brought over a dozen knives,” Miamie mentioned.

Azzy looked taken aback. “A dozen?! Isn’t that overkill?”

“Overkill is *two* dozen, one dozen is perfectly reasonable,” Miamie said casually.

“I’ll take your word on it,” Azzy said. He got comfy in his seat again, though moved a dozen or so centimeters away from Miamie.

“You deal with the traps and puzzles, and I’ll take care of any stabbing. Sound good to you?”

“Yeah, that works. Will be nice not to have to fight for my life for once.”

“I never said you wouldn’t, but you’ll at least have someone to help when the going gets tough. For now, let’s just relax. We have a while until we reach our destination.”

Miamie pulled out her phone and earbuds and put them in and began listening to music

while Azzy pulled out a pocket book on the history of the Valley of the Kings. Miamie snickered when she saw it.

“What is it?” Azzy asked. His eyes were wide with worry.

“You’re just a nerd,” Miamie teased. Azzy thumped his foot and crossed his arms.

“I’ll have you know I’m a respected professor! That’s why you hired me isn’t it?”

“It is, but I also would’ve bullied you in college. Just how the world works,” Miamie joked.

“And I’m sure you were the talk of the town?”

“Maybe I was,” Miamie smiled. She then gave him a pat on the and pushed him back a little bit. “I’m going to listen to music, you enjoy your book.”

Azzy frowned, though he couldn’t deny there was something a bit appealing about her. Well, this book wasn’t going to read itself.

When the train arrived at the destination, Azzy and Miamie got off with everyone else. Miamie looked around, people busying about as they boarded small open buses to the main tombs. “Follow me, where we’re going, we can’t take the bus.”

Azzy seemed as if he wanted to say something while grabbing a falcon feather off the ground, but Miamie then grabbed his hand and dragged him off quietly before anyone could notice them around. They dropped behind a few crates left behind and when the coast was clear, began traveling over dusty barren hills as the wind whispered gently past them with secrets of ages long past.

“Did you bring water? I was going to buy some around here after we got off the train, but you seemed to be in a rush,” Azzy mentioned.

“It’s only going to take an hour, don’t be a crybaby,” she laughed. She then pulled out water bottles she had in a side bag and threw him one. “Don’t drink it all too fast,” she teased.

“It’s just proper survival out here! I would rather not have someone find us dehydrated.”

“You’ll live, now keep up the pace slowpoke!” she hopped across the sand with relative ease, her leporine legs giving her ample bounce and balance. Possessing similar features, Azzy followed close behind as he kept himself cool from the sun.

The desert heat pounded down upon them with its full wrath, as if they’d already received Seth’s full ire despite not even having disturbed any tomb yet. Despite this, Azzy seemed fine, the breeze of the wind keeping him cool enough, with a few mouthfuls of water when he felt necessary. Miamie on the other hand was panting as her jumps grew less powerful as the minutes passed. However, over the horizon was a small entrance into a mound almost impossible to notice if you weren’t looking for it.

“Are you doing okay? It seems like we’re almost there,” Azzy said. He offered her some of his water as hers was already empty.

“I thought it’d be easier to get here,” Miamie said after taking a sip. “I typically deal with colder environments. How are you keeping cool?”

“Ears are made to regulate heat out here, very handy for my profession,” Azzy smiled. “At least when they don’t make me stand out for everyone who wants to stab me,” Azzy added.

Azzy grabbed Miamie’s hand and helped her down the dune to reach the temple entrance at the bottom. They slid more than walk or hop down to the bottom, but when they reached the entrance, they could feel chilly air leaking out and rushed in to escape the sun’s wrath. Once inside, the pair sat down and relaxed, taking another sip of water and taking in their surroundings as they both turned on their flashlights. In the artificial light, Azzy spied pillars of sandstone holding up the roof, hieroglyphs and art praising and depicting Seth painted everywhere. However, Miamie let out a squeal immediately.

“What is it?” Azzy asked frantically as he turned his flashlight over to her.

Miamie simply pointed to what her light revealed, several small scorpions skittering about.

“Scorpions? Don’t worry, they won’t bother us if we don’t bother them much,” Azzy explained.

“Are... you sure?” Miamie stuttered.

“They won’t, trust me, I’ve seen my fair share.” Azzy then got up and shined his light down the hall of the temple. Cool stagnant air filled his legs as took in a deep breath and looked at the unknown before him. “Let’s get going now. You know which path we have to take? These temples have lots of paths we can take.”

“I should be able to lead you there, just follow me,” Miamie said anxiously as she sidestepped the scorpions.

Further into the temple they ventured. Miamie had her eyes locked to what lay before her, but Azzy was taking time to inspect whatever hieroglyphs he could and writing them down in a notebook while he held his flashlight under his arm. “See anything interesting?” Miamie asked, eyes still ever forward.

“From what I can infer, the hieroglyphs tell of the story of Seth and his feud with his brother, but there also seems to be mentions of someone else I’ve never heard of before named Thema.”

“Thema?”

“Yeah, Thema. No pharaoh by that name, nor any god I know. Perhaps she’s the elusive priestess you heard of in legends?”

“It’s possible, no one has been stupid enough to explore more beyond the entrance where all the corpses were laid.”

“Well be on your gu– WAIT!” Azzy yelled. Maimie stopped her tracks, as still as a statue as an arrow flew out and hit the wall beside her. “Those hieroglyphs say keep out... and I heard a pressure plate sink under your foot.”

Miamie lifted her foot up and the plate beneath slid back up as well. “Could’ve warned me earlier?”

“Just have to be a bit lighter on your feet next time.”

“At least I’m alive, you’re doing okay so far, nerd,” she said with some snark.

“I try my best,” Azzy joked. “Are we getting close?”

“Yes, we should be. There’s supposed to be a barricade we’ll have to open before we’re able to get into the inner chamber, just do better with it than this or we may die for real this time and if that happens, I’m haunting you forever.”

“But I’d be dead too.”

“Some ghosts can haunt ghosts, idiot, and I’ll be damned if I don’t end up as one of those.”

“You got me there. I promise I won’t mess up, or let you die provided you don’t let me die,” Azzy commented.

“I have no intention of killing you,” Miamie began, “you’re too valuable and too cute,” she joked.

“I am quite popular with the girls,” Azzy smiled.

“I’m sure you are, now let’s get out of here before I get shot by an arrow.”

A few moments later, they came upon a door as tall as the hall at the end of it. Similar etchings were upon it, a clay dish on a pedestal in front of it flanked by two unlit braziers. Azzy pulled out a lighter and lit a fire in the braziers, illuminating the hall enough that they put their flashlights away for now.

“What does it say?” Miamie asked. Azzy inspected the hieroglyphs and began mouthing the words.

“It looks to say, ‘Give me what is rightfully mine and crush those who brought me ruin’,” Azzy told her. “So... probably some of the fire, and... something connected to Horus?”

“Where are we finding something connected to Horus here?” Miamie sighed. “All this way for nothing.”

“Well, luckily for us...” Azzy pulled out the falcon feather he found earlier. He then dipped it in the fire and dropped it in the bowl. “Glad I picked that up!”

The doors then shuddered and opened up as the fires from the braziers slinked down the moats of oil wrapping around the inner tomb like snakes, lighting it aglow. As the two walked in, they noticed it looked more like a throne room than a tomb, two sarcophagi in the middle of the room, while crumbling thrones sat beside an obsidian black scepter. The paintings within this room depicted Seth, but also another woman and man who looked to be falcons Azzy didn’t recognize. Was this Thema and her husband?

“All’s well that ends well, no weirdos here!” Miamie announced as she casually walked over to the scepter, but before she could get even halfway through, the lid of one of the sarcophagi slid open as a dog-like woman crawled out. Her snout was long, and her ears tall, fur as black as the scepter they wished to claim.

“You dare enter my palace?” the woman declared angrily. “I am Thema, blessed by Seth and his highest servant. You’d best to leave right now lest you end up like the prior trespassers.”

Miamie froze like a deer in the headlights and Azzy panicked, wishing he had that feather again hoping it’d do something like Miamie suggested a symbol might earlier. Instead, he used his second best option: words.



“We have no intent to hurt you!” Azzy said. “We just want to preserve the scepter of your master.”

“You think I’d let you leave with such an artifact? It’s the only reason I remain,” Thema scowled.

“I understand, but we wish to preserve the legacy of this place, not destroy it,” Azzy said and began slowly approaching her. Miamie seemed to have disappeared, however.

“Come no closer, I will kill you,” Thema said as she put out a hand swirling with sand.

“Why do you want to stay here? Only to protect the scepter?” Azzy asked as he tried to make himself look disarming.

“I-I wish to continue to see my husband, he was the light of my life, and I his, but he was taken too early. My lord promised if I protected it, I could watch over him too. This is why I can’t let you have the scepter, no matter what.”

“I’m sorry,” Azzy said. He was mere meters away from her now. Thema seemed confused by his kindness.

“You’re sorry?”

“Your lord was betrayed and you likely felt the same by your husband's death, neither were justified and you never deserved that. But to stay here and watch over a corpse? Join him in the afterlife, we’ll keep the scepter safe. I swear on Seth’s name that if I betray you, then he may punish me with the full fury of the desert,” Azzy swore.

“You’ve done more than those fools I met earlier, or any other before you,” Thema said. “Thank you. I cannot let you take the scepter, but, if you are willing to take my place, then I will accept. Can I trust this to you on your promise?”

“You can,” Azzy assured her.

Thema smiled. “So it is done, the oath is sworn.”

“But none for me,” Miamie smiled. She was by the throne and had her hands on the scepter. Thema turned toward her immediately and with the fury of the desert, shot a blast of coarse sand towards her. The jackalope quickly dodged it and before the guardian could follow up her attack, she too dissipated into sand as the magic of her oath was transferred.

“What are you doing, Miamie?!” Azzy yelled.

“Taking what I came here for.” She then pulled out a gun from her bag and aimed it at Azzy. “Don’t move or I will shoot.”

“I knew I couldn’t trust you,” Azzy scowled.

“Well at least you’re smart... well not that smart, but smart.” Miamie walked past Azzy with a smirk while she twirled the scepter around in her other hand and held the gun square at him with the other. “Thanks for the help, my ride should be here soon. Bye-Bye for now.”

Then, when she got to the door, she ran off into the darkness, Azzy able to do nothing.

“First day on the job and I already failed. Great. Hey Seth, before you smite me, give me a chance to get your scepter back, okay?”

There was no reply, just grim silence. Good enough for him. One adventure may be ending, but another one was certainly about to start.