

Pilot: "The Book of Thresholds"

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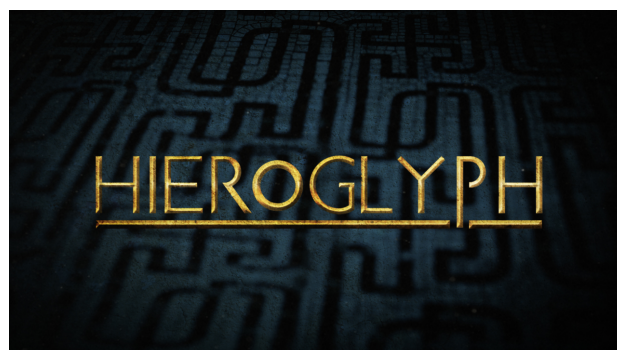
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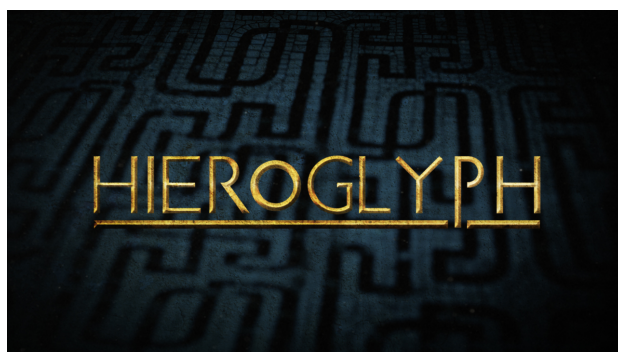
EP. #101

"The Book of Thresholds"

CAST

AMBROSE	Max Brown
SHAI KANAKHT	Reece Ritchie
NEFERTARI KANAKHT	Condola Rashad
PESHET	Caroline Ford
RAWSER	Antony Bunsee
LOTUS	Kelsey Chow
VOCIFER	John Rhys-Davies
BEK	Hal Ozsan
ODION	Erick Avari
DJET	Adam Leadbeater
ZITA	Klariza Clayton
REN	Tasie Lawrence
WERIN	TBD
KHETI	Robert Washington
TARIK	TBD
SPYMASTER	Paul Blott
WRAITH	TBD *
ASP	TBD *
PALACE GUARD	Goreth D'Oyley
WARDER	David House
WEATHER PRIEST	Hugh Elliot

*non-speaking



EP. #101

"The Book of Thresholds"

SETS/LOCATIONS

INTERIORS

ROYAL PALACE
THE PHARAOH'S CHAMBERS
THRONE ROOM
NEFERTARI'S SUITE
STABLES
THE BLACK CHAMBER
CORRIDOR
ATRIUM
PESHET'S HOME
PESHET'S BEDROOM
SACRED PARLOR
IMPERIAL HOARD
HYPOSTYLE HALL
VAULT ENTRANCE
THE ABATON
OUBLIETTE
THE LAIR
CROCODILE PIT
PASSAGEWAY
TEMPLE OF THE PRIMORDIAL ONE
PRAYER STALL

EXTERIORS

ROYAL PALACE
PALACE GARDENS
NEFERTARI'S SUITE
PALACE GATES
PESHET'S HOME
SACRED PARLOR
IMPERIAL HOARD
WATCHTOWER
THE ABATON
OUBLIETTE
SCARABGATE
APOPHIS ALLEY
MARKET
BACK ALLEYS
TRADE STREET
VERANDA
TEMPLE OF THE PRIMORDIAL ONE
WATERFRONT

ACT ONE

1 OMIT 1

1A INT. IMPERIAL HOARD - HYPOSTYLE HALL - NIGHT 1 1A

A cavernous chamber forested with towering columns. Sparsely and unevenly torchlit. Gongs of alarm RING in the distance.

A Bowman with a torch, TARIK, hurries by.

1B INT. IMPERIAL HOARD - VAULT ENTRANCE - NIGHT 1 1B

A long, dim subterranean hallway yawns before us. Torches FLICKER uneasily. At the end, a heavy iron door with an impossibly complex lock (with several interlocking dials).

An armed sentry (WERIN) stands guard with his partner (KHETI). They listen to the BELLS, concerned. Tarik enters.

TARIK
Hold your posts.

WERIN
What's happening up there?

TARIK
I don't know...

KHETI
Is it a breach?

TARIK
Just hold your posts. Kill anything that rounds that corner. Let nothing get to the vault.

He leaves in a hurry.

Werin and Kheti exchange a worried look as they hear frantic SHOUTS from the chambers above.

After a moment, the SHOUTS have fallen silent. Werin and Kheti lock their eyes on the end of the hallway.

KHETI
Is it over?

A fog begins to fill the far end of the dim hall, creeping towards Kheti and Werin.

WERIN
No...

Nervous, Werin and Kheti draw their swords as the fog encroaches and overtakes them, growing thicker and thicker.

Kheti squints into the milky haze.

An attacker suddenly lunges. It's Tarik, now maddened and bloody. He swiftly skewers Kheti and turns towards Werin.

TARIK

Another one! Demons! Everywhere!

He pulls his sword from Kheti's dead body and faces Werin.

WERIN

Wait! Stand down! You've taken leave of your senses!

Unconvinced, Tarik attacks Werin, swinging his sword in a panic. Forced to defend himself, Werin kills Tarik.

Horrified, Werin backs away from the body.

We see a shadow behind him, coalescing in the fog -- a Dark Figure in a wicker mask and cloak.

Werin backs towards the mysterious Figure. It leans forward and WHISPERS a short phrase in Werin's ear.

At that, Werin's eyes flutter and roll back. He collapses.

The Figure advances past all the fallen Bowmen and approaches the wide vault door.

The Dark Figure raises its hands, palms open, and bows its head, WHISPERING fervently, almost praying, indistinct words that hiss and echo in the empty silence.

The lock dials spin wildly as we hear the THUNK THUNK THUNK of the door's massive bolts disengaging, as if by command.

The thick slab of a door drifts ajar.

The black, yawning space beyond the door sucks the fog out of the corridor. The Dark Figure calmly enters the chamber.

2

INT. THE PHARAOH'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT 1

2

A dim bed chamber with an open wall. Beyond, hints of a darkened skyline -- obelisks and palm trees silhouetted against the rosy, pre-dawn clouds. Four men convene:

ODION SEN (59), the High Priest. A scholarly, cryptic man.

CAPTAIN RAWSER (56), head of the Pharaoh's Guard. He wears polished leather armor and has a bronze cobra medallion.

BEK PENROY (30), the Magister, highest-ranking advisor to the Pharaoh. A frustrated-looking man in formal vestments.

And finally, KING SHAI KANAKHT (25), a young ruler, with a cool charm in his smile, and a quiet violence in his soul. He wears his night clothes, a robe and linen trousers, pacing barefoot across the cold marble -- a king who likes to feel his realm under his feet.

ODION
Acacian pirates?

BEK
This was no simple pirate attack.
The Satrapy is a far more likely
culprit. We are at war, after all.

ODION
The Satrapy's priests are illiterate
in our magic.

BEK
As far as we know...

RAWSER
What about Tauket? Rumor has it
they've been raising an army.

SHAI
We could waste a lot of time listing
everyone who wants me dead. Let's
start with what's missing...

*
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ODION

According to the Hoard Bowmen, just one scroll, a Black Shelf text called the Book of Thresholds.

SHAI

That does not sound encouraging.

(beat)

What do we know about it?

RAWSER

Not as much as we'd like, your majesty...

ODION

The vault houses the oldest and most dangerous magic known. Scrolls with the potential to unleash catastrophes the likes of which the realm has not seen in centuries.

Shai looks out towards the skyline, thinking, worried.

SHAI

Odion...

Odion glances at Rawser and Bek and approaches to sidebar quietly with the Pharaoh.

ODION

Your grace?

SHAI

Might this be the first spark of the premonition you related to me?

Odion frowns, searching for a response.

ODION

(hushed)

Perhaps... It's impossible to say.

Unsatisfied, Shai turns from Odion in a burst of frustration.

SHAI

Gentlemen, your collective incompetence has become a liability. The shadow of apocalypse hangs over us, and you can't answer my simplest questions... Get out.

*

Odion and Rawser bow and leave. Bek remains behind. Shai doesn't look at him.

SHAI (CONT'D)

Did you not hear me, Magister Bek?

BEK

I was thinking we could take stock
of our options, your grace, and --

Shai wheels around and backhands Bek.

SHAI

Your options are insufficient.

3 EXT. PALACE GARDENS - NIGHT 1 (CONTINUOUS) 3

Rawser waits at the bottom of the stairs. Bek hurries out,
wiping his bloody lip.

BEK

He's bringing someone in.

4 INT. THE ABATON - OUBLIETTE - MORNING 2 4

A deep, pit-like cell tucked somewhere in the bowels of the
earth. The only entrance or exit is a grated cage lid in the
ceiling, hopelessly out of reach.

CRAFT

The man at the bottom is AMBROSE (32). His drained and abused physique is the shadow of someone who was once lean and nimble, before his time here in the worst place on earth. Long hair. Matted beard. His eyes betray a lingering spark of intellect, like a jackal. He lies here in a fetal position, naked, grimy.

Footsteps approach. Ambrose opens his eyes, listening. A pair of WARDERS open the lid of the pit. Ambrose looks up.

WARDER

The Pharaoh wants to see you.

Off Ambrose, stunned.

5	OMIT	5
6	OMIT	6
7	EXT. THE ABATON - DAY 2 (CONTINUOUS)	7

Ambrose squints as the Warders pull him out from the subterranean prison onto the sunlit dunes. He squints his dark-adapted eyes against the blazing sun.

From over his shoulder, we strain to see the shining city -- Atum, a fantastical City of the Pharaohs.

Title card: Hieroglyph

8	EXT. PALACE GATES - DAY 2	8
	A soaring edifice with carved sphinxes and golden bas reliefs. PALACE GUARDS escort a cleaned-up Ambrose into the gates.	
9	INT. ATRIUM - DAY 2 (CONTINUOUS)	9

Sunlight spills into the atrium of the royal residence onto a long reflecting pool planted with reeds and lily pads. The Guards walk Ambrose through. Rawser joins them.

AMBROSE

Captain Rawser. I was starting to worry you'd forgotten about me.

RAWSER

I should be so lucky. *

Ambrose chuckles to himself. He doesn't realize he's being watched from the shadowy balcony above and behind him.

There NEFERTARI KANAKHT (30), the Pharaoh's half-sister, leans against the rail, watching like a falcon. A rare, exotic beauty with short black hair and the coal-dark eyes of a thinker. Immaculate, the very picture of control.

Beside her, her handmaiden REN (21), a somewhat shy, artistic young woman, fiercely loyal.

REN

(nervous)

Is that him, my lady?

Nefertari nods, satisfied.

NEFERTARI

Yes... Yes, it is.

10 EXT. THE PHARAOH'S CHAMBERS - DAY 2 (MOMENTS LATER) 10

Rawser leads Ambrose out onto the sunlit terrace overlooking the city beyond. Scantly-clad CONCUBINES loiter about.

A PIGLET scurries past Ambrose.

The Pharaoh hurls a spear. It sails past Ambrose to skewer the fleeing pig. Concubines and SERVANTS applaud the mock hunt.

Shai motions Rawser and Ambrose over as he sits by the pool, glancing with some idle interest at a pair of Concubines in the water. Apparently naked and kissing. LOTUS (19), young and wiry. And her best friend, ZITA (20), graceful as a gazelle.

SHAI

You must be Ambrose.

(beat)

A little privacy, my dears.

The Concubines chatter and giggle as they scamper off.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN: As her friends head around the corner, Lotus lingers at the curtain, eavesdropping on the Pharaoh.

ON THE TERRACE: The Pharaoh gestures to a small table as he uncorks a bottle and pours a silver cup of wine.

SHAI (CONT'D)

Have a seat. Drink?

AMBROSE

I've been dry for five years. Seems
a shame to indulge at this point.

CAA

Suddenly, Rawser punches Ambrose hard in the stomach. Ambrose doubles over coughing.

RAWSER

He is your king, and you will address him as such.

SHAI

(calling him off)
I think he's gotten the picture.

Rawser hesitates before retreating to stand silent vigil some distance away. Ambrose sits, still coughing.

AMBROSE

Maybe I will take that drink...

Shai starts to pour another cup, then glances up expectantly.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

(adding)
... your majesty.

Shai grins and passes the wine to Ambrose. Bottoms up.

SHAI

The most notorious thief in the Kingdom. Marauder of the King's Barque and the Grand Hall. You're still something of a legend.

AMBROSE

I hadn't heard. They tell you nothing in the Abaton.

SHAI

Well you can't rob the Royal Tombs without making some impression.
(beat)
Gave my father a well-deserved headache. The pompous bastard never did sort out how you did that one.

AMBROSE

Trade secrets, your grace.

Shai smirks at Ambrose's gall.

SHAI

I'm right in assuming you dealt in some mystic contraband?

Ambrose shifts uncomfortably.

SHAI (CONT'D)

Relax. I don't blame you in the least. The demand was out there and you were only meeting it.

(beat)

(MORE)

SHAI (CONT'D)

I'm sure it must seem downright tyrannical, the way we insist on keeping the Old Words locked away. All those ancient formulas and incantations... But no one remembers the chaos before the Red Kingdom -- when magic was everywhere. Summoning a plague should not be as easy as reading from a scrap of parchment.

AMBROSE

Unless you're the Pharaoh?

Shai narrows his eyes at Ambrose, and seems to be calculating ways to hurt him, but his smile soon shrugs the jab off.

SHAI

Well, someone has to keep the order.

AMBROSE

Is that what this meeting is about, your grace? Order?

SHAI

You might say that.

He leans forward and gets down to business. His cool voice suddenly has an air of hushed urgency.

SHAI (CONT'D)

Last night, a thief broke into the Inner Tier of the Hoard, and walked out with a scroll -- the Book of Thresholds.

*

BEHIND THE CURTAIN: Still eavesdropping, Lotus mouths "*Book of Thresholds*," committing the name to memory.

ON THE TERRACE: The conversation continues.

AMBROSE

Can't say I've ever heard of it.

SHAI

No one's heard of it. We like to guard the obscurity of items in the Hoard. No one has touched any of the Black Shelf texts in centuries. They are the most dangerous incantations in the Hoard.

*

*

*

Shai gets up to pour himself another drink.

SHAI (CONT'D)

For now, all we know is that the censors who sealed it away had reason to fear it. And that is reason for me to want it back.

(MORE)

SHAI (CONT'D)

(beat)

These are fraught times, Ambrose. Tensions with the Rebel Province in the South have been mounting. The Tauketi High Priestess openly admits she would do anything to hurt us.

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(beat)

Meanwhile there's the war in the East. The Satrapy's forces have seized our colonies in the Lowlands.

(beat)

Salah war parties prowl the Western Deserts... Acacian pirates on the North Coast... We are surrounded on all sides. And now, a scroll of untold power has gone missing.

AMBROSE

Due respect, majesty, but I had nothing to do with this raid. I'm loathe to admit my limitations but I have been alone in a pit for five years.

SHAI

I know you didn't take the scroll. But I suspect you're the sort of man who can find out who it was.

*

Rawser clears his throat.

RAWSER

I beg your pardon, your majesty, but how can we trust him not to run?

Ambrose glances at Rawser with a flash of spite. With his still shackled hands, Ambrose places a set of keys on the table in front of Shai.

AMBROSE

I'm still here, aren't I?

Stunned, Rawser checks his belt where the shackle keys had been hung. Shai grins, impressed.

SHAI

That's a start.

Off Rawser, stunned.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN: We see Lotus hurry away, unnoticed.

A massive stone falcon's head looms over a yawning, door-less entrance. WORSHIPPERS drift in and out the cavernous interior.

12

INT. TEMPLE OF THE PRIMORDIAL ONE - DAY 2 (SAME)

12

Lotus glides across the wide marble floor to one of the countless prayer stalls lining the dark and majestic chamber. She opens the wooden door and slips inside.

CAPA

13 INT. PRAYER STALL - DAY 2 (CONTINUOUS)

13

A ring of lit candles on the polished floor. A gossamer curtain divides the front from the back.

CAA

Lotus takes off her sandals and steps into the circle. She kneels on the floor and bows her head. It has all the ceremonial trappings of a legit ritual...

We see the vague outline of a hooded, monastic figure on the other side of the translucent curtain. He takes a seat on the floor opposite Lotus. We'll call him the SPYMASTER (for now).

SPYMASTER

The Hidden One is in his Land.

LOTUS

Blessed be the Mother Land.

SPYMASTER

Report.

LOTUS

The Hoard has been raided. The Pharaoh brought in an ex-thief to find the missing scroll.

SPYMASTER

What is the scroll?

LOTUS

The Book of Thresholds...

The Spymaster is silent for a moment.

SPYMASTER

Thresholds? You're sure?

LOTUS

Yes.

He gets to his feet, steps forward, and crouches right next to the curtain, so close that Lotus can almost make out the shape of his lips, whispering even lower than before.

SPYMASTER

Follow the thief's investigation. Contact me as soon as he finds it.

LOTUS

A royal concubine's absence is not long unnoticed.

SPYMASTER

Do what you can. This is the rare moment around which history pivots.

*

LOTUS

I will not disappoint.

SPYMASTER

For the Mother Land.

LOTUS

For Tauket.

14 INT. ATRIUM - DAY 2

14

Bek catches up with Rawser.

BEK

Did you know he was still alive?

RAWSER

What do you think?

BEK

It's madness to trust a notorious criminal who's been simmering in the dark with a task this important.

RAWSER

You're his Magister. You should be advising him against this madness. He's unraveling. He hasn't spoken to the Council of Three in months.

BEK

He's been keeping me at a distance. He thinks I'm courting his sister.

RAWSER

You're lucky that's all he thinks.

BEK

Don't believe everything you hear.

RAWSER

I hear the sighs coming from Nefertari's chambers.

BEK

How I spend my time is my business.

RAWSER

Advising the Crown is your business. You are the last advisor he hasn't pushed away. You pursue your desires at the Empire's peril.

Ambrose crosses the chamber on his way out. He stops beside Rawser and Bek, not bothering to meet their eyes.

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AMBROSE

Gentlemen...

*
*

RAWSER

Try anything foolish, and I will hunt you down...

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*
*

AMBROSE

If anyone thought you could, I
wouldn't have this.

*
*
*

Ambrose slides a ring onto his finger, smirks, and walks away. *

BEK

We're just sending him out into the
Kingdom? With the Pharaoh's ring?
After all he's been through, who's
to say he won't use the scroll
himself to bring the sky down on us.

RAWSER

So lets be sure he "disappears"
before he finds it...

15

EXT. PALACE GATES - DAY 2 (CONTINUOUS)

15

Ambrose steps into the crowded streets of Atum, drawing up his
hood -- unshackled for the first time in five years.

END ACT ONE



ACT TWO

16 EXT. MARKET / EXT. TRADE STREET - DAY 2

16

Cobbled streets curve down to the crowded riverfront. Dark-skinned MERCHANTS and MARINERS. HUNTERS with braided beards.

From some distance, Ambrose watches an OLD MAN with a cane lock up a curio shop, tucked in the madness of the souk. Ambrose tails him through the busy crowd, getting closer.

The old man slips into a narrow alley between the stalls. But as Ambrose reaches the corner, he finds the alley empty.

Suddenly, the man is behind Ambrose, holding his knotty cane hard against the thief's neck.

VOCIFER

I should kill you for wearing that face. What's your name?

AMBROSE

You know my name.

VOCIFER

Don't even try to play me, boy. I invented lying.

AMBROSE

It's really me, Voce.

He lets Ambrose loose. Ambrose turns to see VOCIFER (77), a rough, but charismatic old man with elaborate face tattoos, braided gray hair, and a gnarled cane. He paces, suspicious.

VOCIFER

Prove it.

AMBROSE

When I was ten, I asked you to teach me to be a thief. You said you would if I could steal the ring off your finger...

VOCIFER

Only because I was sure it was impossible -- until you'd done it.

He inspects Ambrose closely, slowly coming around.

VOCIFER (CONT'D)

It is you, isn't it?

Vocifer suddenly laughs and throws his arms open.

VOCIFER (CONT'D)

Come here, boy! Oser's arse!

*

Ambrose laughs and gives his mentor a warm embrace.

17

EXT. VERANDA - DAY 2 (MOMENTS LATER)

17

Overlooking Trade Street. Ambrose and Vocifer sit by the railing, sipping beer from a clay cups.

VOCIFER

We all thought you were dead.

AMBROSE

I thought so too.

VOCIFER

Why did you say they pulled you out?
To find a scroll?

AMBROSE

The Book of Thresholds.

Vocifer ponders.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

You know it?

VOCIFER

Not offhand. I can look into it.

AMBROSE

No need. I'm getting out of here.

VOCIFER

Are you sure that's a good idea?

AMBROSE

I've spent the past five years in a
pit, every morning wondering if it
was the day they'd execute me.

VOCIFER

It's odd that they didn't. King
Typhon beheaded beggars for less.
You were the most wanted thief in
the realm... It's as if someone had
an interest in keeping you alive.

AMBROSE

And who ever it is has my thanks.

VOCIFER

You don't want to know why?

AMBROSE

I should seek them out and demand to know why I can walk in the sun? Either I'm dead or indebted. The fly doesn't stop to ask the spider why he was spared... All I want now is to find the woman I left behind and get as far from here as possible. Where is she?

Vocifer frowns.

VOCIFER

She thought you were dead...

AMBROSE

She isn't married, is she?

Vocifer shakes his head "no."

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

Just tell me, Voce. Where's Peshet?

VOCIFER

Scarabgate... She's an adoratrice.

Ambrose looks up from his beer, surprised and hurt.

18

EXT. SCARABGATE - DUSK 2

18

Storm clouds gather. Distant THUNDER. Ambrose passes a woman under an awning -- Lotus, watching him. He doesn't seem to see her. Her ankle bracelet JINGLES as she walks away.

Ambrose arrives at a door painted with a crude white ankh. He takes a breath, and knocks. No answer. He turns and starts to leave. Behind him, a woman opens it -- PESHET (24), mystic, warm, and sensuous. This woman knows magic.

PESHET

Yes?

Ambrose doesn't turn. He stands motionless in the street. She stares at his back, some part of her starting to realize.

PESHET (CONT'D)

Ambrose?

He shuts his eyes, overcome.

AMBROSE

I can't tell you what it's like to hear my name on your lips after all these years.

He turns to face her. She gasps and rushes out to him, wrapping her arms around him.

CAA

They kiss, sick with emotion. Some distant hesitation finally pulls her lips away. She touches his face in disbelief.

PESHET

You're -- you're alive! I thought they killed you! You're alive!

She hugs him again as the rain starts to fall.

19

INT. SACRED PARLOR - DUSK 2 (LATER)

19

Cozy, festooned with oil lamps and lurid icons of goddesses. Peshet carefully lights a clump of incense as Ambrose keeps his eyes in the shade of his hood.

PESHET

You're on a mission for the Pharaoh?

AMBROSE

For now...

PESHET

Put your hood down. I hate trying to talk to you like this.

AMBROSE

It's too bright.

She douses the nearest lamp. Then she delicately pulls his hood off, crouching to meet his eyes. Her mood brightens slightly at the sight of them, until she meets his eyes.

PESHET

You're going to run...

AMBROSE

Not without you.

The lid of a boiling pot CLATTERS. Peshet flees to fix tea.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

We can go tonight. Ride east until we meet the Sun on the horizon.

PESHET

I was never an outlaw at heart, you know. It was a phase that ended the moment you got caught.

AMBROSE

You're a woman of faith now.

PESHET

I always was. You keep forgetting -- you found me at the Isis Academy.

He comes up behind her and folds his arms around her waist. She doesn't surrender to him, but doesn't squirm free.

AMBROSE

How could I forget that girl in her vestments? So literate and curious.

PESHET

So you just wanted to seduce a schoolgirl, is that it?

AMBROSE

I didn't want to seduce anybody.

She puts the tea kettle down, starting to give in a little to the familiar embrace. She smiles slightly and shuts her eyes, letting him smell her hair and neck.

PESHET

That's funny. Because I remember a certain night in the library...

AMBROSE

You kissed me.

She turns to meet his eyes.

PESHET

You knew I would.

And she does kiss him. The kiss deepens and crescendoes, and she pulls away. They lean their foreheads together.

AMBROSE

Let's get out of here. Right now. They'd never catch us, Pesh. I don't need anything but you.

PESHET

I can't...

AMBROSE

Why not?

PESHET

Because I need this. I need my practice. I need my faith.

AMBROSE

After all these years, you'd put more faith in fairy tales than me?

She backs away, hurt.

PESHET

You were dead. I cried more tears than you've ever seen and I cried them alone. Those "fairy tales" were all I had in the end. Don't you dare blame me for trusting them now.

AMBROSE

You're an adoratrice. How am I supposed to feel about that?

PESHET

It doesn't mean what you think.

AMBROSE

It doesn't mean people pay you to have sex with them as a goddess?

PESHET

I'm not a whore. I'm a holy woman. I'm a surrogate for the goddess. It's a sacred rite.

AMBROSE

You lie with strangers!

PESHET

You haven't the slightest idea what you're talking about.

AMBROSE

I know you can't so much as kiss me... But if I was some nameless drifter, we'd be in bed by now.

PESHET

If you were a believer, maybe we would be.

AMBROSE

Well I can pretend to be a believer just as easily as you can pretend to be a goddess.

Hurt, and afraid he's still the only man who can talk her out of her beliefs, she opens her door to the rainy night.

PESHET

Get out, Ambrose.

20 EXT. SACRED PARLOR - DUSK 2 (CONTINUOUS)

20

Ambrose steps out into the rain as Peshet leans against the doorframe, watching him go, more sad than angry. He turns around and heads back towards her.

AMBROSE

Okay... How much is it? I want religion. How many atons for a night with the goddess?

PESHET

No, Ambrose.

AMBROSE

Why?

PESHET

Because you don't want religion. You want me.

AMBROSE

What's wrong with that?

PESHET

I'm not for sale.

She shuts the door, leaving Ambrose in the rain.

21 INT. THE BLACK CHAMBER - NIGHT 2

21

We're tight on a model of the city as lurid, red storm clouds ominously churn and billow over it. THUNDER rumbles outside.

Wider, we see the city model is at the bottom of a pool. A white bull lies dead at the top of a ramp, its throat cut. Stone channels funnel his blood into the water, forming the clouds over the map. Chanting PRIESTS carefully stir and sculpt the "storm" with their long staffs. Odion watches.

ODION

Mind the clouds over the inland hills. Don't want a flash flood.

Shai enters.

SHAI

Tuning the storm.

ODION

Just about to bring it in for the night, your grace.

SHAI

You sent word that you've learned more about the scroll?

He leads Shai away from the weather map.

ODION

Yes. We believe the Book is an invocational text. It's said to contain formulas for channeling some of the more -- *volatile* Intellects.

SHAI

How volatile exactly?

CAA

ODION
Anubis, Set, Montu, Sekhmet... Gods
of death, chaos, pestilence, etc...

Shai grapples with this for a moment.

SHAI
What is the worst Tauket could do
with such a text?

ODION
Tauket is the least of our worries,
your grace. These are gods. We've
gone centuries without a
manifestation event. If anyone
actually manages to use the scroll
to summon a god to this plane, it
will do as it pleases.

Brimming with anxious determination, Shai turns to go.

SHAI
Have your priests calculating
countermeasures.

He pauses -- one last question.

SHAI (CONT'D)
Have you been tracking Bek?

ODION
He visited her room last night...

SHAI
And...

ODION
He left in the morning, your grace.

The Pharaoh scowls to hear his suspicions confirmed.

22

INT. ATRIUM - NIGHT 2

22

The leftovers of the rain drip from the open roof. By the
torch-lit columns, Ambrose talks to a pair of PALACE GUARDS.

PALACE GUARD
You aren't supposed to be here.

AMBROSE

Yes, I keep hearing that. Just show
me to my quarters.

CAA

Passing through shadows some distance away, Nefertari stops and clocks Ambrose's black mood.

NEFERTARI
I'll show him.

The Guard nods and leaves Ambrose to gape at her beauty.

NEFERTARI (CONT'D)
Ambrose, is it?

AMBROSE
Yes -- your grace.

NEFERTARI
(laughing)
Sadly, I am without grace. I'm only the Pharaoh's humble sister. You can call me Nefertari.

23 EXT. PALACE GROUNDS - NIGHT 2

23

They stroll.

NEFERTARI
Your investigation is going well?

AMBROSE
We'll see. I'm hoping a few hours' rest will clear my mind.

NEFERTARI
Very wise. My mother always said -- the still croc catches the fawn.

AMBROSE
Your mother must have known my mother...

She smirks to herself.

24 INT. STABLES - NIGHT 2 (MOMENTS LATER)

24

Nefertari opens the door to a room in back of the stables. Floor, lined with hay. Water drips from holes in the roof.

NEFERTARI
Not the best room in the palace.

AMBROSE
Better than a pit in the Abaton...

She cocks an eyebrow.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)
On the surface at least.

She leans against the doorframe.

NEFERTARI

Yes, well, remember that this is the
palace. You can't trust the
surface... You can't trust anyone...

CAA

AMBROSE
Not even you, my lady?

A long pause. She gives him a playful half-smile.

NEFERTARI
Especially not me.

AMBROSE
I've grown weary of playing
treacherous games.

NEFERTARI
Ah, but you have an enviable hand.
The most powerful man in the world
needs your help.

AMBROSE
To what end?

NEFERTARI
I suppose that's up to you.
(beat)
Goodnight, Ambrose.

24A INT. STABLES - NIGHT 2 (LATER)

24A

Ambrose lies in his bed of hay. He takes off the Pharaoh's ring and turns it in his fingers. He looks at it as he considers Nefertari's advice -- and Peshet.

AMBROSE (PRE-LAP)
Who's moving magic these days?

*
*

25 EXT. TRADE STREET - DAY 3

25

We see the ring back on Ambrose's finger as he exchanges some atons for a knife in the market. He walks with Vocifer.

*

VOCIFER
Wait. You're recovering the scroll?

*

AMBROSE
You play the moves you have.

*
*

VOCIFER
What happened to running away?

*
*

AMBROSE
I'm not giving up on Pesh. But it
will take time to win her back. I
intend to buy that time.

*
*
*
*

VOCIFER

Well, I'm relieved to hear it. I
looked into the Book of Thresholds.
It's a worrisome piece of work. It
sounds as if it's some sort of
invocation text. It summons gods.

*
*

AMBROSE

(doubtful)
Gods, Voce?

*

CYAA

VOCIFER

Call it whatever you like. The point is it's not a magic that can be wielded like a tool. It's a power with a will of its own. I'm no praying man myself, but I'm telling you -- if that door is opened, something will come out.

*
*
*
*

AMBROSE

(friendly)

Calm down, old friend. I'm on it. Just tell me whose rock to look under first.

*
*
*
*

VOCIFER

You remember Djet? He's taken over.

*

AMBROSE

What do you mean "taken over?"

VOCIFER

The other bosses are dead. No one moves any contraband without Djet.

Ambrose gapes at Vocifer in disbelief.

AMBROSE

Djet? That minnow?

VOCIFER

Don't underestimate him. There's nothing more dangerous than a weak man with power.

Ambrose splits from Vocifer, heading away with purpose.

VOCIFER (CONT'D)

Where are you headed?

AMBROSE

Where else? Apophis Alley.

VOCIFER

Try not to get yourself killed.

26 EXT. APOPHIS ALLEY - DUSK 3 26

A seedy thoroughfare lined with windowless stalls. Ambrose keeps his head low. PROSTITUTES beckon from shadowy doorways.

27 INT. THE LAIR - DUSK 3 (CONTINUOUS) 27

A bar in a gutted subterranean mausoleum. All eyes are on Ambrose. THUGS crowd the tables and bar, big meaty titans with intricate snake tattoos coiling up their bulging muscles.

DJET

Ambrose...

DJET (51) has the burly, twisted physique of a burnt-out prizefighter. A long scar across his leathery face and a flinty stare in his cruel eyes.

AMBROSE

Good news, Djet. I'm not dead.

DJET

Not yet at least.
(to his men)
Feed him to the crows.

END ACT TWO



ACT THREE

28 INT. PASSAGEWAY - NIGHT 3 28

A dank stone hallway, lit only by a handful of hanging oil lamps. Followed by his two BODYGUARDS, Djet drags Ambrose down the ancient floor by his hair.

AMBROSE
You're making a mistake.

DJET
The mistake was yours. I sent you on a raid and you never delivered.

29 INT. CROCODILE PIT - NIGHT 3 (CONTINUOUS) 29

Djet throws open the doors to a storage room, dragging Ambrose to some sort of open well carved into the floor.

DJET
You strut in here like the fatted fowl. But you know what I see? Meat. Just meat. *

Djet grabs Ambrose by the collar and hoists him over the well. Ambrose looks down. At the bottom, glistening creatures stir -- HISSING, SNARLING, and SNAPPING -- crocodiles. *

DJET (CONT'D)
You were always quick with a quip, Ambrose. Well? Any final thoughts?

Ambrose smiles and flashes the ring on his finger -- the unmistakable seal of the Pharaoh.

AMBROSE
Just one. Could you be sure the Pharaoh gets his ring back?

The look on Djet's face -- *Fuck...*

30 INT. THE LAIR - NIGHT 3 (MOMENTS LATER) 30

Djet has cleared the bar out so he and Ambrose can speak in private. They sit across from one another. A single oil lamp dangles above them -- the only light in the room.

DJET

The Pharaoh has you looking for something other than trouble?

AMBROSE

The Book of Thresholds.

DJET

Never heard of it.

AMBROSE

(chuckling)

Don't game me, Djet. Word has it that no scrap of old magic gets pinched in this city without you knowing about it.

DJET

So imagine my surprise.

AMBROSE

Surprised to find out you're not the biggest croc in the rushes?

DJET

You've been gone a while, Ambrose, so I'll fill you in. There are no other crocs.

AMBROSE

Easy, then. If I can't give the Pharaoh the scroll, I'll give him your name. Call it poetic justice.

DJET

(through gritted teeth)

Are you trying to talk me into gutting you?

Ambrose meets his intensity.

AMBROSE

Try it and see what happens.

DJET

Go ahead and tell your Pharaoh that Djjet has his scroll. We'll see what happens to you after he shakes me down and still can't find it.

Ambrose narrows his eyes at Djjet, increasingly puzzled.

DJET (CONT'D)

I tell you what, Ambrose. Bring me this scroll everybody wants so bad and we'll call your debt settled.

AMBROSE

You can't touch me.

DJET

I don't have to.

Realizing the sideways threat, Ambrose glares.

AMBROSE

Are you threatening her?

Djjet raises an eyebrow ominously. Ambrose's eyes drift to the lamp hanging over the table. He stands, smirks, and pinches the flame out, plunging the room into darkness.

He yanks off his hood, and for the first time, we see why he wears it all the time -- his dark-adapted eyes can see far better than Djjet and his henchmen, stumbling blindly.

In a blur, he relieves one Bodyguard of his dagger before using it to knock both guards out. Suddenly, Ambrose rests a dagger blade on Djjet's throat.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

(whispered in Djjet's ear)

I'd be careful about picking on guys who've gotten used to the dark.

And with that, Ambrose goes.

31 INT. NEFERTARI'S SUITE - NIGHT 3

31

Warm oil-light flickers on a paper veneer behind which a feminine shadow rises from her tub. Ren hands her a towel to dry herself. She blows out the lamp, darkening the screen.

A moment later, Nefertari emerges, tying a thin, linen robe around her waist. She sits at her vanity. In the dull mirror, she spots a shadowed face outside her partially open door. She gasps and seems to relax when she realizes who it is.

NEFERTARI

Shai. You startled me. Come in.

The Pharaoh strolls in.

SHAI

Sorry. I've just been roaming the halls, dwelling on some things.

With a look, she sends Ren away.

NEFERTARI

What sorts of things?

Shai sits on a nearby chaise longue and stares into space.

SHAI

A premonition Odion relayed to me...

She stops brushing and eyes him purposefully. He looks at her, weighing his trust in her, and finally decides against elaborating further.

SHAI (CONT'D)

Nothing you should worry about.

She turns back to brushing her hair.

NEFERTARI

You talked to Bek about it?

SHAI

"Bek." You're so casual.

NEFERTARI

He's more than the Magister. He's your friend.

SHAI

And yours too, right?

NEFERTARI

You don't confide in him like you used to. He's just concerned about you. We both are.

SHAI

You spoke with him?

NEFERTARI

The other night.

SHAI

In passing?

NEFERTARI

We shared some wine.

*

Shai sees the empty clay bottle on the night-stand, the scattered candles burned down to their nubs, the fresh roses on the dresser. He runs his hand over the bedspread.

SHAI

How touching. My sister and the Magister, sharing their concern for me over a drink of wine.

*

NEFERTARI

Your plans are a mystery to him. He sees you sending a thief to find a scroll and can't make sense of it.

SHAI

Then you can explain it to him. Ambrose was your idea.

NEFERTARI

A dangerous text was taken from the Hoard. I just suggested you consult a professional raider.

SHAI

You suggested him in particular -- as if you knew something about him.

NEFERTARI

Everybody knows something about him. He's the most notorious contrabandist alive.

SHAI

What else is he?

NEFERTARI

Is that not enough?

SHAI

It isn't all. You know something about him. Something you haven't said. I've been reading that face for as long as I remember.

NEFERTARI

I don't lie to you, brother.

SHAI

Oh? Did Bek spend the night?

She meets his eyes in her mirror. She purses her lips and finally answers, unashamed.

NEFERTARI

Yes. He did.

He joins her at her mirror and gently rakes his fingertips through her long hair. His eyes, utterly pained.

SHAI

Why do you waste yourself on your lessers? You could be my Queen. Nothing would please me more.

NEFERTARI
You are my brother.

His eyes fall on a stiletto letter opener on the tabletop.

SHAI
Half-brother...

NEFERTARI
It isn't done anymore.

Suddenly, Shai tightens his grip on her hair, pulling her head back as he grabs the stiletto and presses it to her neck. Stiff, she betrays no dread as he snarls in her ear.

SHAI
I decide what's done. I could have you right now if I saw fit. I could strip you naked and pin you to the cold marble and no one would stop me. I am the Pharaoh.

Slowly and calmly, she reaches up to touch his wrist.

NEFERTARI
(whispering)
You're also the brother I've always relied on to protect me.

He catches sight of her face in the mirror -- nervous but restrained; his own face -- red and *frustrated*, so unlike a Pharaoh. Slowly, he puts the blade down and composes himself.

SHAI
I would never hurt you. You know that, right?

Nefertari gives him an obligatory nod. He turns and curtly leaves. She breathes a sigh of relief.

32

EXT. WATERFRONT - NIGHT 3

32

Ambrose walks along the empty waterfront. Waves slap against the stone slipways. Moored ships sway gently in the tide.

Ambrose stops and turns, thinking he heard FOOTSTEPS. The strand winds behind him, vacant.

He continues. More FOOTSTEPS. Looks back, catching sight of a darting shadow, ducking behind crates. He is being followed.

Ambrose runs, threading the maze of crates and cargo bails. FOOTSTEPS behind him. He stealthily hops from the deck of one boat to the next, from dock to dock and along old stone piers.

Glancing over his shoulder, he can't get a clear look at his pursuers through all the shadows and clutter. He darts from the waterfront into the city.

Ambrose keeps running, darting abruptly around corners, deeper and deeper into the narrowing back-alleys. We see his pursuers. Two masked men (WRAITH and ASP) in padded black, like urban ninjas, each with a long sickle-sword.

Ambrose rounds the corner to find a dead end. No more alley. Just three stone walls... And a door...

Moments later, Wraith and Asp round the corner into the dead end. They investigate the wooden door, now kicked in, but stop at the threshold --

The rotted stairs extend just a few steps before dropping to a jagged heap of debris on an abandoned cellar floor. Before they realize the trap, Ambrose shoves them from behind, sending Asp over the edge to be skewered on the rubble below.

Wraith catches his hooked sword on the step and hurls himself back up, kicking Ambrose into the alley, where he stumbles to the ground. Wraith comes out swinging -- nimble, swift, lethal. He's trying to take Ambrose's head off.

Ambrose dodges one swing, then another, and surprisingly -- catches Wraith's wrist and twists the sword out. In the same breath, Ambrose swings the stolen sword -- and sends Wraith's head rolling across the uneven cobblestone.

As the body falls, Ambrose drops the sword and turns away, closing his eyes to sort himself out. He crouches to inspect the body, and shudders when he notices --

A bronze cobra buckle on the man's belt. They aren't Djet's hoods. They're Nightmen, the Pharaoh's Guard.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

34

INT. THE PHARAOH'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT 3

34

Shai lays on his bed, shirtless, arms folded behind his head. He shuts his eyes, furrows his brow, and sighs.

LOTUS

You seem sad, my lord.

He turns and watches Lotus approach from the shadows. A beaded net tunic hangs provocatively on her otherwise naked body.

SHAI

I was just imagining something I can't have. Something so close but so far out of reach.

She climbs onto the bed and stands on her knees beside Shai, letting him touch her.

LOTUS

I'm in reach, my lord.

He runs his hand absently along her stomach and chest.

SHAI

And you will do... for now.

He grins and hooks his finger in the mesh to tug her down to his lips. They kiss for a moment. He pulls away, wincing playfully at something unseen.

SHAI (CONT'D)

Mmm, I think it's about time you two switched places.

Suddenly, Zita crawls into frame from down below Shai's waist, smiling and somewhat winded. She squirms her way up to kiss the Pharaoh as Lotus bends to replace her.

Offscreen, a man CLEARS HIS THROAT. The concubines whirl to look. Zita screams. Lotus cowers. The Pharaoh just smirks.

A hooded figure, Ambrose, sits across the room.

SHAI (CONT'D)

Master Ambrose. What a surprise.

(to concubines)

You may return to your quarters.

I'll send for you if I need you.

The girls quickly dress and go. Shai fastens his skirt.

SHAI (CONT'D)

I'm startled at how easy it is to slip past my guards.

AMBROSE

Not easy. I did have to hold my
breath.

SHAI

And why shouldn't I have you drawn
and quartered for it?

AMBROSE

Because the fact that I can makes me
valuable to you, your grace.

Shai smirks.

35 INT. THE CORRIDOR - NIGHT 3 (CONTINUOUS)

35

Lotus gently shuts the chamber door. Zita pauses to wait for
her. Lotus gestures for her to go ahead.

LOTUS

(whispering)
Go. I'll be right there.

ZITA

(whispering)
What are you doing?

She watches Zita go and gingerly pushes the door open just a
hair. She crowds the crack and listens.

36 INT. THE PHARAOH'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT 3 (CONTINUOUS)

36

AMBROSE

Besides. It was necessary. Someone
in your palace is trying to kill me.

SHAI

What makes you say that?

AMBROSE

A pair of Nightmen with an urge to
open my throat.

Ambrose sets the pair of cobra pendants on the table.

SHAI

You killed them?

AMBROSE

I did what I had to. But they're
your men and I just thought you'd
like to know, your grace.

SHAI

Indeed.

AMBROSE

And that concubine you had tailing me earlier -- I hope for your sake she's less clumsy in your chambers.

Shai leans forward, digesting this unexpected revelation.

37 INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT 3 (CONTINUOUS)

37

Zita peeks around the corner, stunned to find Lotus still listening at the chamber door.

ZITA

(whispering)

Lotus! ... Come on!

Zita grabs her by the arm and drags her away.

38 INT. THE PHARAOH'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT 3 (CONTINUOUS)

38

Shai watches the door out the corner of his eye, keenly aware of the WHISPERS in the hall as he talks to Ambrose, pretending he's not surprised to hear about the concubine.

SHAI

Which one?

AMBROSE

Pale. Long hair. She was just here.

SHAI

Oh? You saw her, did you?

(off Ambrose's nod)

What about the scroll?

AMBROSE

I need to talk to the Hoard Bowmen.

SHAI

Captain Rawser interviewed them.

AMBROSE

I'm well acquainted with Rawser's blind spot. I can read the details he would miss.

SHAI

The Bowmen are a monastic lot. They don't much talk to outsiders... Show him the ring. I can't promise he'll cooperate, but I can promise he'll be punished if he doesn't.

AMBROSE

He'll cooperate, your grace.

Shai smirks at Ambrose's certainty as the thief rises to go.

39 OMIT 39

40 EXT. IMPERIAL HOARD - DAY 4 40

Ambrose crosses the dunes to the Hoard. We move past him, towards the Watchtower.

41 EXT. WATCHTOWER - DAY 4 (CONTINUOUS) 41

Gothic, cold stone walls. Werin stands at the crown of the open tower overlooking the grounds, busying himself with a coil of rope, trying to ignore Ambrose.

CAPA

WERIN

I told Captain Rawser all I know.
Why don't you just ask him?

AMBROSE

Because he's a pompous windbag and
my mind wanders when he speaks. Just
tell me what you saw that night.

Suddenly, Werin's tone of voice shifts to something oddly
remote, as if he's reading from something.

WERIN

It was no one.

Ambrose clocks the strange tone and notices Werin's trembling
hand. He smirks. He's figured something out.

AMBROSE

You didn't see anyone?

WERIN

It was no one.

AMBROSE

That's odd, don't you think?

Werin's snarl returns.

WERIN

What's odd is that I'm expected to
cooperate with a raider.

AMBROSE

You know the Pharaoh sent me...

WERIN

The Hoard has outlasted dynasties on
our watch. My grandfather guarded
the Hoard. My father guarded the
Hoard. And who are you? A scrawny
hyena gnawing on the scraps of
history. I'm to take you seriously
just because you have a ring?

AMBROSE

Did I not mention my problem with
pompous windbags?

Werin turns back to his business with the rope.

WERIN

Get off my tower, you degenerate,
before I toss you off myself.

AMBROSE

There's an idea.

Suddenly, Ambrose twists the rope around Werin's arm and tosses him over, planting his foot firmly on the excess slack. Calmly, he lets the guard dangle hundreds of feet in the air.

WERIN

What are you doing?

AMBROSE

Jogging your memory.

Ambrose lets his foot off the slack, just enough to let flailing Werin fall ten feet or so, before stopping him again.

Then Ambrose heaves Werin back over the edge, dropping the coil of rope at his feet. He sets the startled Bowman on the floor, leaning him against the wall. Werin catches his breath.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

You okay there?

WERIN

Have you lost your mind?

AMBROSE

I've found yours. You were under a deception spell. False memories. An old trick. My crew used them all the time. The only thing that breaks it is the sensation of falling.

WERIN

That's impossible. We're conditioned to resist such parlor tricks.

AMBROSE

Oh? Tell me again who it was.

WERIN

It was no--

Werin stops as he realizes that isn't what happened. He stares off into space, stunned to discover the new memory.

WERIN (CONT'D)

It was a woman... Gods, how did I forget that?

*

AMBROSE

You're sure it was a woman?

*

WERIN

It was in her voice.

*

AMBROSE

What did she say?

WERIN

I don't know. Some sort of
incantation. It made me pass out.
Drove the other Bowmen mad.

*
*
*

AMBROSE

Tell me more.

WERIN

I don't have more. She was a
professional. Practically a ghost.
Just a whiff of roses and pinewood
and she was gone.

Ambrose raises his eyebrow -- an epiphany.

42

INT. THE PHARAOH'S CHAMBERS - DUSK 4

42

Lotus sits on the edge of the bed. Zita paces, arms crossed.
They're waiting for the Pharaoh.

ZITA

We're in trouble...

LOTUS

We're not in trouble.

ZITA

He never asks for the same girls two
nights in a row.

Shai enters, cutting Zita off.

SHAI

Hello girls.

They stand and bow slightly. Shai shuts the door behind him.

SHAI (CONT'D)

Sit down. Please.

Zita sits in the nearest chair. Lotus sits uneasily on the
edge of the bed. Shai paces around them.

SHAI (CONT'D)

My father had a concubine called
Dahlia. She was a spy. She passed
state secrets to Tauket -- until,
overcome by guilt, she confessed to
my father.

(beat)

Do you know what happened to her?

Lotus and Zita exchange wordless glances.

SHAI (CONT'D)

She was spared. And eventually, she
gave birth to me.

(beat)

(MORE)

SHAI (CONT'D)

I can appreciate how a young girl
might get caught up in things.

CAA

He rests an idle hand on Lotus's shoulder.

SHAI (CONT'D)
What is Zita short for?

ZITA
My lord?

SHAI
Zitamun? Daughter of Amun, right?
It's pretty. Why shorten it?

He starts to rub Zita's neck and shoulders. Zita furrows her brow nervously. Lotus watches, tense.

ZITA
I don't recall, my lord.

SHAI
You must have thought it would be easier to get a position in the royal court without a reference to Tauket's patron god in your name.

ZITA
Zita is just what my mother always called me, my lord.

He smiles and pulls up a stool and sits across from her.

SHAI
You were at the pool when Ambrose arrived, right?

ZITA
Yes, my lord.

SHAI
And out in the hall when I was talking to him last night?

Zita nods sheepishly.

SHAI (CONT'D)
Do you know what we were talking about? Do you realize what's happening? An extraordinarily dangerous scroll has been stolen from the Hoard.

ZITA
(quiet)
I didn't know that...

He shoots her a look as if to ask, "Really?"

ZITA (CONT'D)
(quieter)
I'd heard rumors...

SHAI
Did you leave the night before last?

ZITA
No, my lord, I was here all day.

SHAI
You're sure?
(to Lotus)
Was she here, Lotus?

Lotus sputters, no idea what to say.

SHAI (CONT'D)
Lotus can't say. Why is that, Zita?

Zita just stares at Lotus in disbelief, her eyes begging -- *Help me out*. Shai smooths Zita's hair and smiles reassuringly.

SHAI (CONT'D)
Just say it, Zita.

ZITA
My lord?

SHAI
Tell me you're a Tauketi spy.

Ice-cold panic seizes her. Stunned, hurt, and terrified, she can barely form the words to protest.

ZITA
Wh-- What?

SHAI
It's okay. We can sort it out.

Lotus silently watches Zita's desperation, tears welling.

ZITA
I'm -- I'm not a spy.

He stands to retrieve something from his bedside table.

SHAI
Zita, dear, we can't work something
out unless you tell me the truth.

She crumples to her knees, begging him to believe her.

ZITA
I am telling the truth, my lord. On
my life, I'm not a spy.

SHAI
On your life? ... So be it.

He turns and swiftly drives a long thin knife through her temple. Zita falls back, dead.

Lotus screams. Frantic GUARDS burst in.

SHAI (CONT'D)
We're fine. Remove the body.

They do, leaving a streak blood across the marble floor. As they leave, Shai wipes the knife clean.

LOTUS
(voice cracking)
She wasn't a spy...

SHAI
I know. I wanted you to witness how denying the accusation will end.

She gapes, wide-eyed.

SHAI (CONT'D)
Come now, Lotus. Tauket recruits from within the Ipet and we like controlling who they will recruit. A farm-girl from the borderlands? I knew you'd be a spy before you did. It's the only reason you're here.

She stares at the smear of Zita's blood on the floor. Shai turns her head to face him.

SHAI (CONT'D)
So here's what will happen. You will not tell your handler any of this. You will tell him only what I ask you to tell him. Starting tonight, you are a counterspy.

He smiles down at her, letting it all sink in.

SHAI (CONT'D)
You've had a rough night, my dear. Time for bed, I think.

LOTUS
Yes, my lord.

Faltering, she gets up and shuffles to the door.

SHAI
Where are you going?

She stops and turns. Shai sits on his bed, smiles, and gently (almost too gently) pats the sheets -- an invitation.

SHAI (CONT'D)
Take off your nightgown.

She peels her gown off. She crosses the bloody floor tensely, as if she's never been naked, and slips into bed with Shai.

43 EXT. SCARABGATE - NIGHT 4

43

The wind blows plumes of desert dust down the empty thoroughfare as Ambrose stands across from Peshet's place. Her windows are dark. Ambrose works up the nerve and crosses the street. After a barrage of knocks, she comes to the door.

PESHET

What do you want, Ambrose?

He looks over his shoulder.

AMBROSE

Ask me in, Pesh.

PESHET

We've been over this --

AMBROSE

We need to have a conversation. And we need to have it inside.

Finally, she steps aside and motions for him to come in.

44 INT. SACRED PARLOR - NIGHT 4 (CONTINUOUS)

44

Tight on curls of smoke drifting up from a censer. Ambrose steps inside the parlor and draws a deep, nostalgic breath.

AMBROSE

There it is. Roses and pinewood. I can't tell you how often I tried to remember that smell in the Abaton.

Peshet throws up her hands, exasperated.

PESHET

What is this about?

AMBROSE

Djet doesn't have the Book of Thresholds. Meaning the thief never tried to sell it.

PESHET

It's hours before dawn. What does this have to do with --

AMBROSE

My list of thieves who know lock-charms is short. But my list of lock-charmers who'd break into the Hoard to steal one holy text they had no intention of selling is exactly one person long.

(beat)

I know you have the scroll, Pesh.

She frowns, knowing she's caught.

PESHET

Have you known the whole time?

AMBROSE

No... I wasn't even looking before.
I meant everything I said.

CAA

PESHET

Don't take it from me. Please.

AMBROSE

Where is it, Pesh?

Without a word, she goes back to her altar and clears off some books and trinkets to reveal the unfurled scroll: ancient paper embroidered in unreadable symbols.

PESHET

I'm so close to getting it.

AMBROSE

You tried it already?

PESHET

Maybe my pronunciation was off.

AMBROSE

Why would you be so reckless as to raid the Hoard by yourself--

PESHET

I'm tired of pretending! Ancient adoratrices didn't just pretend to be the goddess. They channeled the goddess. I'm tired of symbols and metaphors. I want to be humbled. I want something -- real.

AMBROSE

Am I not real?

PESHET

You weren't here.

AMBROSE

Are your gods here?

PESHET

You let me try the incantation. Right now. If nothing happens, take the scroll. But if the goddess comes, you let me keep it.

AMBROSE

There are no gods, Pesh.

PESHET

Then you can only win.

45

INT. SACRED PARLOR - NIGHT 4 (MOMENTS LATER)

45

Standing behind her altar, Peshet reads from the scroll. With a measured and impassioned tone, she lets the ancient, impenetrable language spill from her lips.

PESHET
 (subtitled)
*(Sekhmet, Giver of Ecstasies, your
 humble servant offers her body as a
 threshold unto this mortal plane.)*

She closes her eyes and continues from memory. Ambrose crosses his arms, watching with increasing discomfort.

PESHET (CONT'D)
 (subtitled)
*(The world yearns for your touch,
 Blessed Awakener. Let this flesh
 become thy glove. Fill me, Fire of
 Heaven. I belong to you.)*

She finishes and opens her eyes. An uneventful moment. Ambrose arches an eyebrow, unimpressed. Peshet's hope starts to wane.

Suddenly, the lamps go dark. Silence. A breeze caresses Peshet's hair. An instant later, she convulses.

AMBROSE
 (not buying it)
 Cut it out, Pesh...

The seizure throws her into the wall. Candles blow out. Ambrose removes his hood, takes a step closer.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)
 Peshet, stop!

Her spine arches as she grunts through gritted teeth. Then, she relaxes. She stands limply in the darkness behind the altar catching her breath, head down.

She looks up. Her expressionless eyes catch the torches outside, flickering in the dark like a cat's eyes.

PESHET (SEKHMET)
 Peshet is absent. Her body is
 inhabited by Sekhmet, the Lioness,
 the Revelator, Queen of Passion.
 Submit to her, Ambrose of Atum.

Her voice has a different quality to it, as though not who it was seconds ago. Ever the unbeliever, Ambrose scoffs.

AMBROSE
 I'm flattered she knows my name...

PESHET (SEKHMET)
 I know all of your names, even the
 name you yourself do not yet know --
 the name written in your blood.

AMBROSE
 (unsettled)
 Pesh... What is this?

PESHET (SEKHMET)

This, Ambrose of Atum, is the night
you lie with the goddess, and begin
to fathom your destiny.

She unties her robe, letting it fall. Her body cloaked only in
darkness. As temptation builds, Ambrose clings to caution.

AMBROSE

I don't believe in the goddess...

She advances like a predator through tall grass; fluid and
silent; her shadowy, hourglass silhouette passing through
teasing slashes of light.

PESHET (SEKHMET)

You will... You will.

She presses herself against him, curls her fingers in his
hair, and pulls his face to her lips -- and he is hers.

46 INT. PESHET'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 4 (MOMENTS LATER) 46

The thunderstorm has returned, more intense than earlier. Rain
LASHES the roof. Lightning flares. Thunder CRACKS.

We're tight on the lovers as they tangle in the dark. His lips
on her collarbone. Her legs pushing against twisted sheets.
His arms clinging desperately.

46A INT. THE BLACK CHAMBER - NIGHT 4 (SAME) 46A

On the pool-map of Atum, a thunderhead of billowing blood has
begun to pile itself up, blistering with lightning. One of the
Weather Priests leads Odion down to the map.

WEATHER PRIEST

We've got a storm forming over the
Scarabgate district.

ODION

Is it us?

WEATHER PRIEST

No sir.

ODION

(concerned)

Then snuff it out.

The Weather Priest tries to disperse the cloud, but one of the
thunderbolts shoots up his pole and knocks him back. Odion
watches in horror as the storm-cloud bulges and roils, taking
a shape resembling the roaring head of a lioness.

47

INT. PESHET'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 4 (SAME)

47

Lightning flashes outside as Peshet tosses her head back. Her amber eyes blaze. She clenches her teeth and we see that they've grown sharp and predatory.

Claws split from her fingertips. She digs them into Ambrose's bare back and rakes them down, gouging his flesh.

COPY

Ambrose gasps, wide-eyed, not from the pain, but from the storm of visions that have suddenly surged into his mind:

-- *A knife to Peshet's neck...*

-- *Ambrose and Nefertari kiss passionately...*

-- *A crown in Ambrose's hands...*

-- *Flames consume a statue bust; the paint blisters and blackens, obscuring the face as a boiling, skull-like shadow.*

TO BLACK:

END ACT FOUR

COPY

ACT FIVE

48	EXT. SCARABGATE - NIGHT 4	48	
	Thick storm clouds slowly clear from the face of the moon. A scrawny cat darts across the quiet street.		
49	INT. PESHET'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 4 (CONTINUOUS)	49	
	Peshet sleeps. Ambrose sits on the edge of the bed, staring through the door into her parlor, where the scroll still sits on the alter. He turns to look at Peshet. Fast asleep. Her hair splayed across the pillow. Then back to the scroll.		* *
50	OMIT	50	*
51	OMIT	51	*

COPY

52 INT. NEFERTARI'S SUITE - NIGHT 4 52 *

Outside, rainwater drips from the palm fronds and pools on the stones. A chorus of hushed moans seethe in the background. *

On the steps to her alter, Nefertari straddles Bek under the curtain of her open linen robe. *

She moves herself against him with a tenuously quiet urgency as we see his hands sliding under the sheer fabric to hold her hips. A brief, sharp sound spills from his mouth. *

NEFERTARI

Sshh, someone will hear.

Bek bites his lip, finishing as he stifles the last of his moans in his throat. She rolls herself off to lay beside him.

BEK

That was -- incredible.

Bek laughs, exhausted. Nefertari catches her breath, turning her finger in her hair.

BEK (CONT'D)

I can still smell the rain...

After a pensive silence, Nefertari quietly spills it.

NEFERTARI

My brother knows about us.

A shared look of anxiety. *

53 INT. PESHET'S BEDROOM - MORNING 5 53 *

Peshet opens her eyes, waking up to sounds in the next room. She looks under the sheets and notices her lack of clothes. She sits up in bed with a confused look on her face. Ambrose is gone. Did he take the scroll? *

54 INT. SACRED PARLOR - MORNING 5 (CONTINUOUS) 54

Ambrose putters in the kitchen, brewing a pot of tea.

PESHET (O.S.)
It worked.

He looks up to see Peshet standing in the door, holding the bedsheet around herself and beaming.

PESHET (CONT'D)
It was Sekhmet, wasn't it?

AMBROSE
You don't remember -- anything?

PESHET
(impishly)
No, but I see you didn't hesitate to take advantage of the situation.

AMBROSE
(unamused)
I didn't know what was happening, Pesh. For all I knew, it was a kind of game. It's not as if you've never invited me to your bed.

PESHET
What happened? Did you have a vision? What did you see?

AMBROSE
Maybe it was something you put in the tea, or burned in the incense.

She chuckles, still too excited to be offended.

PESHET
You think I was playing you?

AMBROSE
Is there anything you wouldn't do to keep that scroll?

PESHET
Why can't you just accept that something miraculous happened?

He turns. Peshet gasps when she sees the gashes on his back.

PESHET (CONT'D)

Oh gods -- your back...

CAAA

He grabs his shirt and quickly pulls it on.

AMBROSE

The memory of holding you is the only thing that kept me sane for five years in the dark. The smell of your hair. The feel of your skin. The conviction that I'd be there again one day and know I was whole.

A beat as Ambrose allows himself to take in her face. Then, he forces himself to look away.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

What happened last night was a cruel shadow of that memory.

Peshet frowns at Ambrose as he puts on his sandals.

PESHET

Where are you going?

AMBROSE

Somewhere far away. There is a game being played and I want no part of it. I will not be a pawn.

PESHET

You can't run.

AMBROSE

Well I'm not going to turn you in.

PESHET

The Pharaoh will kill you.

AMBROSE

Only if he catches me.

She sits across from him and holds out the scroll.

PESHET

Just take it.

Ambrose just looks at the scroll and chuckles.

AMBROSE

I can't take the last thing in this world that means anything to you.

PESHET

It's not the last thing that means anything to me...

He meets her eyes, starting to brim with tears.

PESHET (CONT'D)

I wouldn't trade your life for it.

AMBROSE

I don't know what I am to you...

PESHET

Important... Take the scroll.

CAA

He looks down at the scroll, then back to Peshet. He takes the scroll and touches her cheek.

She gives him a bittersweet smile. He nods and leaves, not giving himself a chance to miss her.

55

INT. NEFERTARI'S SUITE - MORNING 5

55

Nefertari reclines as Ren touches up her body art -- a tattooed flower on her chest embellished with painted vines. Ren takes a fine paintbrush to her lady's skin to meticulously detail the new vines.

NEFERTARI

You're quiet today, Ren...

REN

I'm fine, my lady. Some trouble sleeping. That's all.

NEFERTARI

What's kept you up?

REN

It's nothing, my lady. You have so much on your mind.

NEFERTARI

Ren, my dear. I can read you like a book. What's wrong?

The conversation slips into a more hushed tone.

REN

It's the scroll...

NEFERTARI

Ambrose will find it.

REN

That's what concerns me, my lady.

NEFERTARI

You're worried you will be implicated?

REN

I'm worried you will, my lady. If he brings the adoratrice in and she recognizes me, your brother will infer your involvement.

NEFERTARI

That's just it. Ambrose will die before he turns her in. She must give him the scroll to save him.

Ren stops painting to gaze at Nefertari, impressed.

REN

They were lovers...

Nefertari nods.

NEFERTARI

It wasn't enough to create a mystery for him to solve. For him to impress, it had to be a mystery he could not fail to solve.

REN

What if he solves the rest?

Nefertari leans her head back to let Ren paint the vines up her neck. She closes her eyes and smiles.

NEFERTARI

I'm counting on it.

56

EXT. PALACE GARDENS - MORNING 5

56

A small party. ARISTOCRATS in their finest mill about the gardens and connecting atrium. Peacocks pace the tiled floor. Concubines sun themselves. Lotus sits among them. Nearby, HONEY-COVERED SLAVES stand stoically, drawing the flies away.

Ambrose enters carrying the scroll. He meets Nefertari's eyes. She nods a small greeting from across the way. FLASH to his vision: *kissing Nefertari passionately...* Unsettled, Ambrose nods to her and heads to Shai sitting by the pool.

AMBROSE

As promised, your grace.

He casts a glance towards Rawser. The Captain hangs his head.

SHAI

Did you find the thief?

AMBROSE

No, your grace... Word has it the thief already skipped town.

Shai takes a hard look at Ambrose, but he doesn't flinch. Shai smiles and passes the scroll to Captain Rawser (cradling his bandaged hand). Rawser takes the scroll and goes.

SHAI

Job well done, Ambrose.

(beat)

(MORE)

SHAI (CONT'D)

I could not possibly return you to the Abaton after this. I can't free you without equivocation, but I can offer you a sort of freedom.

CAA

AMBROSE

What sort, your grace?

SHAI

Two choices. The first being a life in exile. You'd be free to wander the whole of the earth beyond the boundaries of my kingdom.

AMBROSE

But never to return?

SHAI

Well I can't have a presumed dead thief of some prestige living as he pleases in my realm. What sort of message would that send?

AMBROSE

What's my second choice, your grace?

The Pharaoh takes a seat across from Ambrose. He stares off, almost laughing for a moment at his situation. *

SHAI *

Only the most desperate of times would lead a man like me to sit down with a man like you. And yet... *

(then) *

My Head Priest has forecast that my reign will end in bloodshed before the spring. I need someone I can rely on if I am to have any hope of thwarting my fate. Pharaohs sometimes rely on an agent called the Scepter, a one-man solution, a precision instrument to finesse the most delicate problems. I want you to be the Scepter. *

Ambrose considers this offer, recalling Nefertari's advice.

AMBROSE

So it would seem the most powerful man in the world needs my help.

SHAI

Your impudence amuses me, Ambrose... But only to a point...

AMBROSE

Perhaps we need each other's help.

They eye one another and share a cautiously knowing smile, each man's wheels spinning, each thinking he has the other right where he wants them.

SHAI

The Steward will show you to your
new quarters.

57 INT. CORRIDOR -- MORNING 5 (MOMENTS LATER)

57

Ambrose smirks to himself as the Steward leads him along -- he's right where he wants to be. But he pauses, seeing something on the wall. His smile fades.

Before we see the object of interest, we FLASH to an image from Ambrose's vision: *The burning bust; its subject, an anonymous shadow boiling in the flames.*

Here and now, this is the very bust that stands before Ambrose, intact and unblemished -- such that he can see it is a sculpture of the Pharaoh himself, Shai Kanakht.

TO BLACK.

