

~ To Capture A Heart ~

by Ali Vali

Disclaimers: First of all bad history, so if you want to stick to the facts read Shakespeare. But if you think it would have been interesting to have Ramses be a woman that falls in love with a Hebrew slave you've come to the right place. The characters themselves might remind you of certain people depicted on television, ignore that fact for it is merely a coincidence. If you decide to sue though know that I am a poor person not worth your time and effort.

Now for the sex part, and yes there is a sex part. If you find that a relationship between two women distasteful try eating pineapple it does wonders for that. Seriously if you are underage and live someplace where that is not allowed move on, literally.

Sit back and enjoy the story and if you have something wonderful to say about it write to me at terrali20@yahoo.com. If you have nothing nice to say then be fore warned that I probably know more curse words than you do so don't tempt me.

Lastly I want to thank the love of my life, you know who you are, for encouraging me to write my first story. And thank you to all the wonderful bards that I have read for the last couple of years, this is my thanks for all the wonderful moments of reading you have given me.

Ramses III had been buried for two months in the glory that was afforded all of Egypt's great kings. The statues and monuments he left behind would preserve Ramses's legacy for generations to come, but the greatest treasure that he left was his heir.

Ramses IV was born to the pharaoh and his queen in the second year of their joining, and from birth was the image of the king. Complications from the birth resulted in the queen's death two months later leaving Ramses devastated from the loss.

The child inherited her father's name since after her mother's death; the king would father no other children after losing his great love. A daughter would become the king of all of Egypt, so for the remainder of his life the pharaoh devoted his time into molding the child into a great warrior, leader and king.

The child grew and thrived under Ramses's tutelage leading his legions into war expanding the empire he controlled, and she would eventually rule. The soldiers had adopted the nickname her father had called her since childhood, so she was known throughout the empire as Hawk. The older Ramses had compared her spirit to the great bird, noble and in his opinion driven once the prey was in its sights.

Ramses III had taken great pride in having his daughter stand by his throne in his last days showing such strength, she would carry on his line and his name, of that the old man had no

"Whomever among you did this step forward now!" her commanding voice bellowed. Everyone but Hawk seemed to be frozen in place as she scanned the crowd of bowed heads looking for her assailant. The crowd murmured but no one stepped forward knowing that to do so would mean instant death from the pharaoh's guards who had now drawn their swords.

"Step forward now, coward, or I will have the lot of you killed!" screamed Philbus, part of the royal guard and Hawk's cousin. From between the prostrate figures stepped a small blonde headed boy with a slingshot trying not to look scared. "Have him whipped twenty lashes," ordered Philbus.

"Philbus, step away from him, and the first one to lift a whip to this child will earn a much crueler fate by my hand," said Hawk.

But, sire, he tried to kill you," complained the soldier.

"Really, Philbus do I look that feeble in your eyes? Come here boy," Hawk ordered as she dropped to a chair under the small field tent that had been set up for her comfort. The child dropped at her feet and started crying before anything else could be said. "Rise, boy, and let me look at you, I promise no harm will come to you. Now stop crying and tell me what you have against me that you were trying to kill me."

Feeling the strong hands help him up, Samuel looked into the face of his king with watery green eyes. All the warnings his mother had issued on the use of the slingshot were screaming in his head now that his practicing had injured the one person everyone knew could kill you without question. "I wasn't trying to hurt you, King Ramses, I was just practicing I swear."

"What are you practicing for, boy?" asked the amused Hawk. She looked at the slingshot in his hand then to the boy that showed more courage than anyone in her royal court would have given the situation. His bright green eyes never wavered looking directly into hers through his tears.

"To be in your legions and serve you," Samuel told her.

"You will address your king as sire, slave," Philbus yelled. Before Hawk could react, Philbus struck the boy across the back with the cane in his hand. Hawk flew out of the chair and into her cousin's face. Pulling the ornamented cane out of the surprised man's hand she pulled back and hit him across the cheek with it. The blow knocked Philbus down and left a long cut from below his eye down to his jaw line.

"I do not like being disobeyed, Philbus, especially by one of my soldiers." Taking the cane and breaking it in two over her knee she threw it down at his chest. Recovering from the hit Philbus jumped to his feet in a defensive posture as if he were getting ready to attack.

"Even you can not be that stupid, cousin, but if you are then come on I'm waiting for you. I'll kill you and feed you to that crowd there." Hawk jerked her head toward the now intent looking slaves. They were still on their knees but many of them had raised their heads enough to see what was happening under the pharaoh's tent.

Remembering his position Philbus quickly backed down and bowed. "Forgive me, sire, I only acted with your safety in mind."

"Next time let me decide the punishment for any disrespect, now get out of my sight." Turning her attention toward the boy that was now howling in pain, Hawk knelt before him and lifted his shirt to check for damage. An angry welt was bleeding across his back and the bruising had already begun. Hawk sat the boy in the chair she had just occupied and tried to calm the child down so that the wound could be cleaned. "Corby, bring me a little wine and have one of those women bring a basin with water to clean the boy's back." Corby, the captain of the royal guard and Hawk's friend from childhood ran to get a cup of wine and the attention of one of the waiting slaves for water.

"Tell me your name so that I can stop calling you boy?" asked Hawk as she held the still crying child.

"Samuel, sire, my name's Samuel," the boy answered as he wiped his tears with the back of his hand.

"Well, Samuel, this has been an exciting day so far don't you think?" Samuel could see his friends looking at him from the edge of the crowd in awe that he was sitting in the tent of the Egyptian pharaoh.

"If you say so, sire."

"Samuel, who are your parents and where can I find them and explain what happened?" asked Hawk rising from the ground. Samuel followed the tall body until it towered over him, and he was sure Hawk was going to kill him.

"I wanna do that myself, sire."

"Why?" asked the amused pharaoh. She arched her brow at him and waited to hear his explanation. After the handful she had been as a child, Hawk was fairly certain where the boy's reluctance was coming from, but she wanted to see if he would admit it.

"Might get in less trouble that way, sire." With each admission the boy's head got closer to his chest.

"By what, leaving out the part where you tried to kill me with a stone?" asked Hawk, the brow going higher on her forehead.

"Yes, sire," admitted Samuel. The answer came out in a whisper, and the boy now looked like Hawk had sentenced him to death.

A sigh of relief swept through the crowd for Samuel when they heard the tall ruler let out a loud deep laugh. "I like you, boy, so stop calling me that, call me Hawk." Taking the cup that Corby

had handed her, Hawk let Samuel take a sip to calm him and to numb the pain a bit. "Where's your father, Samuel?"

"Don't have a father, he's dead, sire, and my mother and me are slaves in the house of Larlis. I come here to practice my shooting with my friends once I'm finished with my chores." Samuel explained as one of the soldiers put salve and a bandage on his back.

"I think once I'm finish you won't be in too much trouble, Samuel, so come on before your mother starts to worry." Hawk picked the boy up and carefully arranged him in the circle of her arms to not bring any further pain to his back.

Stepping out of the tent with her charge she walked to the head of her guard who was still bleeding from the wound she had inflicted and told him, "Get yourself cleaned up and meet me back at the palace. You are to be relieved of duty and reassigned once I figure out where to put you. And before you think of harming this boy or his family for your troubles, Philbus, think of your face as only the beginning."

Philbus glared at her before bowing and heading in the direction of the palace healers. The crowd was in shock that the pharaoh herself had punished Philbus for what he had done to Samuel. For once they bowed with respect for their leader as she walked past them with the small boy. Maybe the future didn't look so bleak under this pharaoh's rule.

As they walked through the streets headed toward the nobleman's house that owned Samuel and his mother, the boy pointed out the homes of his friends and their parents. Hawk heard the sadness in the boy's voice for the conditions that surrounded them, and wondered where such a young boy had learned such wisdom for the world around him in so little time.

"Can you keep a secret for me, Samuel?" she asked.

"Yes, sire, I mean, Hawk." The boy leaned back in her arms to look once again at the eyes that reminded him of the sky.

"I am going to build new homes for your friends so that when you come to visit, they won't look so sad. That means I'll be here more often to make sure it's done properly, and they're happy. How does that sound?"

"Thank you, sire." His arms went around her neck again in more of a hug than in an attempt to keep himself in place.

Their walk took them out of the slums and into the more affluent section of the city. The great homes belonged to the traders and noblemen of the city, and behind the grand walls lived those that had grown rich with the assistance of the throne.

Larlis, the man whose home they were headed toward, was a slave trader by profession and the

wares he traded could be found in almost every home that lined the street they were on. Hawk was familiar with the man and found him to be a parasite that was cruel to those in his possession. She was having a hard time picturing Samuel in his care.

One of the guards that marched in front of them broke from the formation as they came up to the house to announce the pharaoh's arrival. Larlis came running down the front walkway once he realized that the pharaoh was indeed in the group that had stopped in front of his home.

"Sire, my apologies for not coming sooner." He bowed toward the king and noticed that she held one of his slaves. "This slave will be punished at once for causing you to have to come out of your way. Sarah, come and take this boy away, I'll deal with him later."

Hawk ignored the man groveling in front of her and looked to the young woman coming to collect the small boy. Her blonde hair shone in the sunlight, as did her eyes in the brief glimpse Hawk got of them before the woman ducked her head. She was naked under the thin tunic she wore and the outline cast by the sun displayed a beautiful figure.

"How old is your son, Sarah?" asked Hawk stopping the young woman's steps.

Sarah couldn't believe that the pharaoh had addressed her. When she saw the tall figure of the king holding Samuel she was afraid that her precocious child had gotten himself in trouble. "Five, sire, but how did you know he was my son?"

"His eyes, lady, are like your own. Tell me, are you as mischievous as my little friend here?" asked Ramses. The smile on Hawk's face was mirrored by the one on Samuel's when she had referred to him as a friend.

"Please, sire, I'm just a slave and don't deserve for you to address me as lady. I hope my son hasn't caused you any problems today. He was supposed to be playing with his friends, and not be anywhere near the palace. If he is to be punished then I ask you to let me bare it for him." Sarah had not looked up from the time Hawk had handed back her son, so she missed the teasing look in the pharaoh's eyes when she asked the question.

"He didn't cause me any trouble, Sarah, your son Samuel just agreed to take a walk with me to show me his home. He also was considerate enough to show me the homes of all of his friends as well along the way. Young Samuel here is a very wise and gracious guide, so I'm honored that he's my friend and keeper of my secrets isn't that right, my boy?" asked Hawk looking at the boy in the young slave's arms. Hawk had kept her voice light in an attempt to get Sarah to look at her again.

"Yes, Hawk, it is. Mama, meet Hawk, she's the king you know." The boy introduced his mother to Hawk like he had known her his entire life.

"Insolent, boy," hissed Larlis as he raised his hand to strike Samuel. Before the slap could be delivered, Larlis found his hand caught in an iron grasp and two blue eyes glaring at him. Sarah's head came up just a little in time to see Hawk stop her master's hand. A part of her cheered the

pained look on Larlis's face, but another greater part knew who the man would take his humiliation out on later.

"Hit this boy for something that I told him to do, and I will cut this off." She said squeezing his hand. Larlis bent at the knees from the pain shooting up his arm and was quick to answer.

"My apologies, sire, I had no idea."

"Sarah, please go inside and gather you and your son's possessions, you are coming with me." The slave looked at Hawk with confusion so she added, "I have come to pay your price to Larlis, so go on."

The group watched the girl run to do as she was directed with Samuel following close behind with a huge smile on his face. "Corby, give Larlis four gold coins for the woman and her son."

"But, sire, the girl alone is worth at least two hundred gold pieces," complained Larlis.

"Larlis, let me explain something to you, so that even you will understand. You are mine, as is your house and everything in it. It is my birthright, or have you forgotten who I am? The gold is for the little trouble and consideration you have shown to the two of them, the rest you can consider a gift to the throne."

"Yes, sire." The man bowed his head and tried to graciously accept his fate. To complain any further now would lead to his losing a lot more than two slaves.

Coming out of the house with only a small bag in one hand and her son in the other, Sarah waited for the pharaoh's next directions. Hawk looked at her and smiled to ease the woman's mind to her intentions then unclasped her half cape to wrap it around the thin tunic Sarah still had on.

"Come here, lady," she said softly "I can't let you walk to the palace like that."

"I'm sorry, sire, if it displeases you, but it's the only one I own." Sarah's head now went down in shame and not respect for the pharaoh.

"It doesn't displease me, Sarah, I just don't want people staring at you and bringing you any discomfort in doing so," said Hawk as she stood still holding up the cape.

When Hawk had pulled the cape away from her shoulder, Sarah noticed the large blood stain on the front of the stark white tunic as well as the little grimace when Hawk put her arm up to wrap the red cape around her.

"Sire, you're hurt."

"Yes, dear lady, it's one of the pitfalls of being king. Someone is always trying to kill you. Just today a fierce soldier made an attempt on my life here in the city. Perhaps you know of him?"

asked Hawk. She looked over Sarah's head to the blushing face of the young woman's son. If Hawk didn't know better, Samuel looked like he was looking for a place to hide before the next part of the story came out.

"I'm sorry, sire, but I would not know of such things. Was he captured?" asked Sarah.

"No he actually surrendered, but he told me that it was all a mistake and he was just taking target practice. Maybe I proved to be an easier target than the stick he was aiming for," answered Hawk sweeping her hand down her body.

"Oh God, please tell me Samuel wasn't the one that did this to you?" asked Sarah in a small voice, her hands going up to her mouth.

"I'm afraid I can't do that, Sarah, your son is a good shot. I apologize for what happened to his back but I assure you that the person was punished, and that while you are in my care no harm will come to you and your son," Hawk promised the small slave. As the guards and the others gathered in the yard watched with fascination at Hawk's treatment of mother and child, Hawk turned her attention to the slave trader. "Larlis, I'll be coming into this area more often in the future so I trust you'll have sandals on the feet of all your slaves. I also expect the clothes the women will be wearing are not so that I can read a parchment through."

"Yes, sire," answered Larlis still rubbing his wrist where Hawk had grabbed him.

Hawk had noticed that both the child and his mother were barefoot which would make the walk back to the palace painful for them even though the sun wasn't in the middle of the sky any more. "Corby, could you please carry Samuel back for me and be careful of his back. And send one of the boys for my chariot, I've walked more this afternoon than I do during a battle."

"Yes, Hawk, I would be happy to." Corby thumped his closed fist to his chest and ran to carry out Hawk's requests.

Taking care not to aggravate her own wound Hawk picked up the small woman and started back toward her home. "Please, sire, I can walk. You don't have to trouble yourself, and you're hurt."

"All this concern today on my behalf. Perhaps I need to get out in the sun more often so people won't think that I am at death's door. Are you uncomfortable?" asked Hawk looking down into eyes like Samuel's.

"No, sire."

"Do I frighten you?" the pharaoh persisted.

"No, sire."

"Do you really want to walk in the hot sand for the two leagues it will take us to get back to the palace?" Hawk asked her last question.

"No, sire."

They walked after that in silence listening to Samuel's conversation with Corby. Sarah looked at her new owner through the corner of her eye wondering what life held for her and Samuel now. Larlis wasn't great, but usually after taking his nightly pleasure with her he left them alone for the most part. What would the pharaoh want from them, and would Samuel be made to pay if the pharaoh was displeased. As if reading her thoughts the pharaoh started talking to her and eased her mind.

"Don't worry, Sarah, I don't want anything from you, or your son. After what happened today he stood before me with the courage of a warrior to accept whatever punishment I wanted for what had transpired. That is hard to find in one so young, you've done a good job so far in his upbringing."

"I just thought that with me he would have a better time of it once he becomes a man than he would under the roof of Larlis. If you so desire, I can send you back if you can not bare the thought of being with me."

"No, sire. Thank you for your kindness."

"Sarah, call me Ramses, or call me Hawk, but the title sire will drive me into the desert if I hear it too often."

"Yes, sire," answered Sarah quickly. After the word had slipped out the guards were treated to their second deep laugh from the pharaoh.

The chariot was waiting for them along with two others once they reached the wide main road that lead to the palace. Large statues of past pharaohs lined the sides, forever keeping watch over their heirs who now ruled in their stead. Hawk motioned for Corby to bring Samuel and place him in her chariot along side his mother. Four gleaming black stallions stood prancing in place waiting for their master's touch that would send them racing down the road. The beautiful animals had a large crest in the shape of a hawk across their broad chests, which made Sarah think that they probably could fly as big as they were.

"Ready, Samuel?" asked Hawk.

"Yes, Hawk, ready, mama?" asked the little boy.

"Would it make a difference if I said no." The look on her face was not one of anticipation like that of her son's, Sarah was terrified of what came next.

"Trust me, Sarah, this is the best part of being king," Hawk told her.

With a loud yell and a flick of her wrist the four black animals took off with a roar. Corby and Denu followed in their own rides daring Hawk into a race. Knowing that their path was straight

cutting down the risk to her passengers, Hawk let the child like spirit in her out to play. Corby and Denu not only guarded her, they were her oldest friends.

From the time they could walk, their names where screamed by every palace inhabitant at one time or another for the trouble the three caused. Adulthood had not calmed the adventurous souls they were as children and the palace maids fully expected to see them racing along that main avenue for many years to come.

As they neared the vast building that was the palace they started to slow having all decided to call it a draw. They gained a new member into their club in Samuel, who stood in front of Hawk holding on and cheering the king on. His mother had never heard anything more wonderful than when the black demons started to slow their pace. When she did finally open her eyes the sight of her future home brought tears to her eyes. *The king of Egypt truly does live like a king.* The rich laughter coming from the tall body next to hers brought her out of her thoughts. *Weren't kings supposed to be solemn and serious?*

"Close, Corby, but not close enough, you should thank Sarah and Samuel for weighing me down giving you a chance. Come on and let's get you two settled," said Hawk to her two riders.

Hawk entered the palace and was instantly surrounded by servants, all of whom were having a melt down after noticing the blood coming from her shoulder. Getting most of the older women that had met them to settle down, Hawk sent them to prepare rooms for Sarah and Samuel. Along with the rooms, clothes, sandals and other essentials that were ordered, Hawk added trays of food for them to snack on until dinner.

Sarah watched as the women led Hawk away to her private rooms leaving her and Samuel standing with the remaining maids. She had to fight the urge to ask Hawk to take them with her to wherever in the palace she was headed. Fear of the future was still there, but Sarah suddenly found that she didn't want to be without her newfound protector.

The rooms they were given were not what Sarah expected, in that they were lavish and the bedrooms opened to the Nile River. Such accommodations verified her suspicions in that she was to be the pharaoh's new pleasure slave. *She has shown Samuel and I nothing but kindness, so maybe this won't be so bad. The king has to be better than Larlis,* thought Sarah as she examined her new gowns and the other items she found on the bed in the room.

One of the maids cleared her throat from the door to get Sarah's attention and not startle the young woman. "Child, the pharaoh is expecting you and the boy for dinner, so would you like my assistance in getting ready?"

"Yes, if it is no bother to you. My name is Sarah and you probably saw my son earlier, his name is Samuel," answered Sarah. Nina didn't miss the total look of confusion on Sarah's face as she took in her new home.

"Then he would be the one taking shots at Ramses's fish with his slingshot off the steps leading into the river." Sarah turned to go out and get her son before he broke something or injured someone else. "No don't bother going out there to scold him, the bigger child of the two is out there cheering him on," said Nina.

"There are other children that live in the palace?" asked Sarah. The lost look on her face only grew as she gathered in more information.

"Yes, but just one, her name is Ramses IV, Pharaoh of Egypt. Now come, Sarah, let's get you into a bath, those chariot rides can get dusty. My name is Nina and I'll be here to assist you and Samuel in your rooms." Nina gently took her arm and led Sarah to the bathing chamber.

"I can take care of the rooms, Nina, so you don't have to trouble yourself. Can you tell me of my new master?" asked Sarah. The warm water looked inviting as they entered the bath. It seemed strange to her that they would waste all these fineries on her thought Sarah as she looked to the white milky water that smelled light Night Jasmine.

As Nina helped her into the perfumed bath, she told her of Hawk and her life. The story Nina told her included the part of the death of Hawk's mother and how her father had raised her.

Sarah listened as Nina told her of Hawk's victories on the battlefield for her father, and of the devastation she felt when the old man had died. She and all the maids Sarah had seen that afternoon had been with Hawk since her birth, and where the only mothers the woman had ever known. Nina confessed that she had been Hawk's wet nurse and her two sons, Corby and Denu, were now heads of the palace guard. They were no longer slaves, but the palace was the only home they ever known so they stayed and cared for Hawk.

"She'll be kind to you and your son, so don't fear her. You just ask me if there's anything you need and I'll see to your comfort. Now are you ready to go out to the river? You are dining on the royal barge tonight." In the new gown she had on and after the bath, Sarah was truly breath taking. Nina could easily see what had caught Hawk's eye, the young woman had a natural elegance about her.

"Thank you, Nina, you have made me feel better about our circumstances."

"I don't know what you mean, child, but don't mistake the pharaoh for her father. God knows that he was kind but strict man. His daughter has a lot of her mother in her so you will be cared for."

They walked out into the cool evening from Sarah's bedroom to the riverbank where Samuel and Hawk were waiting. Hawk held out her hand to Sarah to help her on board then turned and embraced Nina giving the old woman a kiss on the top of her head. "Corby came close today, Nin, so close we had to call it a tie."

"Foolish children, you will kill yourselves on those things one day mark my words. Now go on and don't keep your guests waiting," said Nina cocking her head toward Sarah.

Sarah almost fell overboard when she heard the maid fussing at Hawk, and that the king not only put up with it but also was now bowing to the older woman.

"Don't tell anyone, Nin, but that is going to be my new queen." Hawk whispered in her ear.

"I know that, you big trouble maker, that's why I'm rushing you."

Sarah listened to that laugh again as Hawk jumped from the pier to the middle of the barge. *She is truly beautiful when she laughs and she bows to her maid. Who is this person, and why am I here?* That question and many others were on Sarah's mind when she bowed to her master as she boarded.

"Sarah, please, don't do that when it's just us. I bought your freedom today so that's no longer required, unless we are in public. You and your son are free, so enjoy what life has to offer you. I'd like for you to stay until you decide what you would like to do or where you would like to go. Enjoy our hospitality and let me enjoy your company, yours and your son's," said Hawk. She took a seat on the cushions across from Sarah and Samuel, and signaled the serving staff to begin with the meal. Toward the back of the barge the order was given and the oarsmen started their cadence setting them in motion.

The small woman didn't know how to react to that news of freedom so she chose to throw herself at the pharaoh's feet in gratitude. Samuel would have a chance now as a free man to make something of his life besides shaping stone.

"Please, Sarah, get up and let's eat, you don't have to do that," said Hawk lifting the woman up gently. Hawk helped Sarah back to her seat and invited them to start eating.

They spent the remainder of the meal enjoying the food and Hawk's explanation of what they were passing along the shore. The oarsmen turned at Hawk's command when she noticed Samuel falling asleep on his mother's lap long after their meal was complete. When the barge glided back to its berth behind the palace, Hawk carried Samuel up to his room.

"Good night, sweet lady, remember to call for Nina if you need anything. I enjoyed our dinner and would like to do it again if you are agreeable." Hawk told her from the door of their apartment.

"Where are your rooms, sire?" asked Sarah. It was bad enough that her body would pay for the lovely evening, she didn't want to degrade herself anymore than necessary by having to ask someone for directions.

"If you head out the back, my rooms are the ones on the end of the palace. The ones that jut out over the water, but if you have need of me just ask Nina and she will send someone for me," answered Hawk.

"I prefer to come to you sire since Samuel is in the other room," answered Sarah bowing slightly to the pharaoh.

"All right, good night, Sarah." Hawk responded, confused as to the woman's last statement. *Did Sarah not want her son to spend time with her?*

Sarah watched the retreating figure flanked by two guards, wondering how long she should wait before following. Things were going so well that she didn't want to anger her benefactor by seeming ungrateful.

"Nina?" Sarah called in the direction of the maid's room.

"Yes, child, do you need something? How was dinner?"

"Everything was wonderful, and Samuel and I had a wonderful time. Could you watch him for me until I get back? He shouldn't be a problem since he is already asleep, but if he should awaken tell him I'll be back soon."

"Let me call you an escort if you are going out." Offered a worried Nina. Hawk would not like the young woman walking the corridors at night by herself without protection.

"No, Nina, thank you but that won't be necessary, I know the way I think," said Sarah. The best way to get to Hawk's rooms seemed to be by way of the back walk, so Sarah headed out in that direction. With each step she tried to build her courage so that the night would go well. She and Samuel's future depended on it.

Sarah slipped out the back and walked along the marble floors of the backstretch of the palace. When she approached Hawk's rooms Sarah noticed Corby outside talking to another man giving directions for the rest of the watch. *Good at least I won't be killed trying to get to her.*

Corby smiled when he noticed her and directed her to where she could find Hawk. Walking into the spacious sleeping chamber Sarah noticed the pharaoh looking out on the river from the balcony. The tall woman looked relaxed with just a rope draped over her shoulders and her feet were bare. Her short black hair looked soft to Sarah with the moonlight bouncing off of it, but the relaxed posture changed in an instant when Hawk heard someone behind her.

The quick movement of her turn caused her robe to open revealing a long muscled body that was ready for attack. Hawk changed her posture as soon as she saw that it was Sarah standing there and not someone that meant harm.

She knew she should look away, but Sarah's head refused to budge and stayed glued to Hawk standing there looking like a goddess. Sarah looked at the pharaoh wondering what it would feel like to be under that hard body. Hawk could awaken her desire if she was a gentle lover, and for once the task before her did not seem so horrible. Ramses was a touch Sarah actually desired at this moment.

"Sarah, do you need anything?" asked Hawk. She cocked her head to one side and waited for the smaller woman to answer.

As an answer Sarah untied the knot over her left shoulder allowing her dress to fall in a pool at her feet. "I hope that you are pleased, sire." She said as she sunk to her knees and bowed her head to the floor in a position of subservience. She waited for the pharaoh's reaction for what seemed an eternity before she heard the low voice.

"What are you doing?" asked Hawk. The fists that she had unclenched when she realized it was Sarah in the room balled back up at the woman's actions.

"I am here to please you, sire," answered Sarah not looking up.

"Sarah, get up and put on your gown. **Now.**" Hawk stopped before saying anything else trying to get her temper under control. After a few deep breaths she went on. "Have I done something to make you think your role here is one of a whore? Or is it that you think so little of me that you think this is what I require because I offer you a kindness? Go back to your rooms and to your son, Sarah."

"Please forgive me, sire, I misunderstood." Sarah pleaded as she stood and retied her dress.

"**CORBY!**" yelled Hawk looking past Sarah.

"Yes, sire?" asked the man that had seemingly appeared out of nowhere.

"Escort Sarah back to her apartment. And the next damned person that calls me sire tonight will be hanging off the end of my sword." With the command given Hawk turned and retreated into her rooms.

"Please, King Ramses, let me explain," whispered Sarah through her tears. She and Corby watched as the broad back turned a corner and vanished.

"Sarah, don't cry, she won't stay angry long, she never does. Whatever happened will be forgotten after a good sleep. If she is still upset in the morning, I will take her out and spar with her and it will be a distant memory."

Corby didn't ask what had happened between them but he had a feeling he knew. Sarah's actions had wounded the big idiot's pride. Hawk wanted to court this one, not have her go so willingly into her bed like the countless others. He would have to talk with his mother before retiring for the evening thinking that maybe she would be better suited in explaining it to the young woman than he would.

Nina found Sarah lying on her stomach crying into her pillow after speaking to her son. The older woman stroked Sarah's hair and explained what her position was now within the palace,

and what it was not. It was difficult for Sarah to understand given where Hawk had found her, but Nina kept at it until it sunk in. "Child, don't assume what Hawk's motives are, if you are unsure ask her and she will enlighten you."

"Sarah?" Hawk asked from the door of the bedroom.

"Sire, is that you?" asked Sarah. She sat up in the bed and tried to wipe her tears away before Hawk saw them.

"Please, Sarah, call me by my name. Are you all right?"

"Yes, Hawk, I'm just sorry that I upset you. My hope is you won't send us away for my mistakes," answered Sarah. At the admission, her tears started again.

Interrupting Hawk before she could say anything else to Sarah, the guard standing behind her spoke. "Sire, there's a messenger from King Neftu waiting to see you."

"Nina, send for Denu to stand guard while I deal with this. And, Sarah, don't worry I'm just sorry that I lost my temper," she offered with a smile. Sarah tried to return it but Hawk could see her lips still trembling in an effort not to cry.

"Be careful, Hawk, I don't trust that man, much less his daughter," said Nina, as she and Sarah watched Hawk walk out of the toward the throne room of the palace.

"Will she be all right?" Sarah asked Nina. Sarah had not missed the venom in Nina's voice when she talked of the official visitors.

"She'll be fine, child, it's just that Neftu and his daughter Dalia never come here unless they are in trouble. Either that or they are trying to find new ways for that snake to crawl into the pharaoh's bed," answered Nina.

"King Neftu?" asked Sarah.

"No that would be his daughter's desire." Sarah took that into consideration and didn't like the feeling that had crawled into her heart.

"King Ramses, I send word from King Neftu who is three days ride behind me. He seeks an audience with you upon his arrival."

"Go back and tell my friend he is welcome in my house. If there is anything he needs before he gets to my door tell my guard and it will be taken care of."

"Thank you, King Ramses." The messenger got up to leave and bowed again at Hawk's next concession.

"We'll be sending a contingency of warriors back with you to assure you safe passage into the city. Safe journey to you," said Hawk waving the man to go.

Hawk walked passed the messenger headed back toward Sarah's rooms followed by Corby. "Keep an eye on them my friend until I know what Neftu's game is. And if he has brought that leech with him make sure to remind me to up the number of guards around me."

Corby laughed at the king's description of the neighboring king's daughter. Her infatuations with Hawk were well known by the whole realm just by the woman's actions whenever she found herself in Hawk's presence. *It will be interesting to see how Dalia reacts to Sarah and Samuel once the princess sees the king's eyes when she looks at the two together. Sometimes it's good not to be king.*

Sarah heard the footsteps that were heading toward her apartment, then the person stopped to talk to the large guard that was standing in her doorway. Sarah lay awake wondering if it would be possible to see the king again that evening. She was still reacting to what Nina had told earlier when Corby had brought her back from the king's rooms. Why would the king of all of Egypt be interested in a Hebrew slave girl and her son? How long would it take for Ramses to throw her out on the streets with the rest of the beggars once she discovered Sarah's condition? Larlis had left her with more than emotional scars.

"Do you ever dream, Sarah?" Hawk's voice cut through the stillness.

I didn't even hear her come in, thought Sarah as she felt the bed move when the king took a seat.

"Not really, sire, for what would a slave dream?" asked Sarah. Hawk sat with her back to Sarah looking at the billowing sheers that hung at the back of the room.

"Of freedom, of a better life perhaps. I dream sometimes, of my father who is now crossed over. He was my greatest advisor, my greatest teacher, and my most trusted friend. From him I learned to be pharaoh and I learned the secrets of Egypt. I miss him. Do you think that admitting that feeling makes me weak?" asked Hawk in a soft voice.

"No, sire, it makes you human," answered Sarah putting her hand on the pharaoh's shoulder. She would try her best to comfort Hawk in any way she could.

"There's a caravan headed this way from one of the southern tribes and should arrive in three days, so I may gone from your company for awhile. Remember to ask for anything you desire and it will be done," said Hawk. Sarah felt the bed move again as Hawk stood to leave.

"What can I do to repay my pharaoh her kindness to me and my son?" asked Sarah trying to get the woman to stay.

"There is nothing that I want from you, sweet Sarah, so stop worrying. I am just tired and thoughts of my father and Neftu have made me more so. They actually made me forget the reason why I came to see you in the first place."

"I'm sorry for upsetting you earlier with my temper. Your body is not the reason I did what I did today, but don't think that I am without interest. I just want the desire to flow from both ends of the river, Sarah. Do you understand what I am telling you?" asked Hawk.

"Yes, Hawk, would you like to rest here for a moment if you are tired?" Sarah asked shyly, still not sure if the pharaoh meant what she said about the use of her name.

"Isn't that easier to say than sire, Ramses or pharaoh?" asked Hawk with a laugh.

"Yes it is, but tell me, Hawk, how did you come by that name?" asked Sarah from her side of the bed.

"My father gave it to me because of my hunting skills and some of my other antics. It stuck, and now the bird for which I am nicknamed is part of my crest. What sort of names are Sarah and Samuel? Are you Hebrew?" asked Hawk. She stretched out next to Sarah and felt the aches of the day come all at once.

"Yes they are old family names. I'm named for my grandmother, and Samuel is named for my father. I was taken when I was ten so when I bore my son, I named him to keep my memories of my family alive through him." Sarah could feel the heat coming off the body next to hers and fought the urge to move closer. The breeze that was blowing the sheers was making it a little chilly in the room.

"Are your parents down in the quarry section?"

"Yes my father is a master sculpture for your house and my mother works as a medic in the slave hospice. Due to my position, I was not allowed to go back to see them to check if they are still all right."

"I can arrange that if you like, by taking you there whenever you want. Sleep now, Sarah, and I will see you soon." Hawk rolled to a seated position and moved to leave again.

"Please, sire, stay with me and I will watch over you while you sleep. How is your shoulder wound? Would you like for me to change the dressing for you?" Sarah asked and offered anything to get Hawk to stay. In a short time she had come to enjoy the pharaoh's company.

"I can see where Samuel inherited his love of talking. If I stay, will you promise to rest with me and not keep watch? People watching me sleep makes me nervous, and my shoulder is better than my pride. I may never live down that it was such a young boy who landed such a good shot."

They laid side by side for the rest of the night, each lost in their own thoughts and dreams. As the

sun started to filter through the sheer linens that were hung from the ceiling as a barrier to the river, Hawk woke up. The weight and warmth that covered her left side had pulled her from the land of dreams. When she opened her eyes she found that Sarah had migrated to her side of the bed during the night and was now using her as a pillow. Hawk didn't move enjoying the feel of this woman on her even though the responsibilities of the day were calling.

"I'm sorry, sire," Sarah told her, having been awakened by the change in cadence of Hawk's breathing.

"Let us not begin at the beginning again, Sarah, please call me Hawk."

"Ok, Hawk, I didn't mean to use you as my personal pillow," Sarah started, but stopped when Hawk quickly got off the bed and ran out of the room toward the river. Trying to figure out what had caused that strange behavior Sarah sat on the bed and waited to see if the king would return from whatever had sent her running from the room.

"Mama?" called Samuel. He came into the room rubbing his eyes still half-asleep looking for his mother.

"In here, Samuel," she called to her son. The king's actions now made sense to her and Sarah's respect for the woman grew.

"Good morning, you two, did you sleep well in your new home?" asked Hawk as she came strolling in from the back of the palace.

"Hawk!" cried Samuel as he ran to his new friend.

"Hello, Samuel, and good morning to you Sarah." Hawk looked past the child plastered to her leg to his mother who sat smiling at her on the bed.

Sarah smiled for what the pharaoh had done on her behalf. Hawk didn't want Samuel to come in and find them in bed together giving him the wrong impression of his mother.

"Are we going out on the boat for breakfast, Hawk?" asked Samuel.

"No, my boy, we are eating on land this morning, and we have to make it fast. I have some guests that are arriving soon so I'll be tied up for the rest of the day and maybe tomorrow in preparation."

"Ah I was hoping to go riding with you today," whined Samuel.

"Samuel, the first thing that every pharaoh must learn is that responsibility comes before pleasure, though I tried my father's patience on that rule more than once. Nin can tell you stories of my corrupted youth if she hasn't already. So as soon as I am done preparing for King Neftu, I will take you riding. We can race Corby and Denu to show them who has the better team, and perhaps we can talk your mother in to coming with us." Hawk looked toward the bed again and

offered a winning smile hoping to entice the young woman into going.

"No thank you, I prefer to watch from the steps as you corrupt my son," said Sarah shaking her head.

"Ah, dear Sarah, to become as bad to the core as I am takes years of practice," said Hawk spreading her arms out at her sides.

"You can not convince me of that, Hawk."

"I didn't mean bad in a bad way, Sarah, I meant bad in a good way. You two enjoy your day and if you like have Nina bring you to meet me later."

Hawk picked Samuel up placing him next to his mother on the bed then left the same way she had come in, through the back of Sarah's room. The moment Hawk stepped out to the black marble of the river path headed back to her own rooms, advisors surrounded her telling her their opinion of why Neftu was visiting. Hawk who only nodded to appease the older men that had once served her father already knew his reasons. She smiled and rolled her eyes at Corby who walked by her side already thinking of Dalia and the border raiders that Neftu would complain about.

Later that day as the advisors argued about how to handle Neftu and his demands on Ramses, Sarah stood outside the room waiting for a break in the verbal din to get Hawk's attention. "Sire, you can not just give him what he wants, it will only embolden him for the next time," said Mika the head advisor.

"Much like you, Mika, in your manner today for example." Hawk said in a flat tone looking at the older man with void of expression. The room grew silent from her statement and the fact that Sarah has stepped into room unannounced.

"Sarah, come we are finished here. The mystery of Neftu's visit is solved and the fighting among us is also done so I thank you for a welcome diversion." Ramses waved Sarah to her side and arched a brow at the men in the room as a hint to get moving.

"Sire, I came to see if you were hungry? Nina has set up lunch under the canopy by the river next to your rooms." Sarah told her as she slightly bowed her head. Hawk got up and swept past everyone in the room. When she reached Sarah Hawk held out her hand to the young woman. Hawk was becoming quickly addicted to the smiles that Sarah gifted her with. Unlike all the others in her life always wanting something from her, Sarah seemed eager to please just for the sake of doing so.

"Let us not keep Samuel waiting, lady. I owe you whatever you desire for saving me of a death of boredom if I had to sit in there one more minute."

"I'll just take you having lunch with me today, Hawk. Do you have many of these meetings with these men?" asked Sarah reveling in the feel of Hawk's hand covering hers.

"More than I would like, Sarah, more than I would like. Having lunch with you though would be something I would never tire of if you gave me the chance."

"Are you flirting with me, sire?" asked Sarah coyly.

"Would you run screaming out of the place if I said yes?" responded the pharaoh, pulling them to a stop.

"No, I just want not to make any more mistakes on that score," answered Sarah pulling on the large hand in hers to get Hawk moving again.

"Just so that we are clear, first I will get you to fall in love with me making it impossible for you to live with out me. Then I will do everything within my power to make your life here so wonderful that you will not want to leave. And lastly I will help you with Samuel so that through him you can have hope and dreams for the future."

"You have a sweet tongue, sire."

"You have no idea, Sarah." Said Hawk in a low voice causing Sarah to blush.

"And how do plan to accomplish all that, sire?"

"Well if I had a palace, a kingdom to offer and a charming personality it might be easier to pave the way for me. Wait a moment, I do have all that so what do you say, Sarah, are you interested?"

"I would be a fool to say no, sire." The servants working along their path looked at the couple and wondered what Hawk was telling the beautiful blonde woman that was making her both laugh and blush.

They stopped their walk when they had reached the end of the corridor to admire the vast view of the river the spot provided. The palace was built in tiers especially along the back so that the waters of the Nile could be used to feed pools and fountains leaving those lucky enough to see it in awe of the grandeur of Egypt. Sarah looked out from Hawk's side and wondered if her father had ever come here to carve the marble that surrounded them giving the palace its elegant look. It was a bit overwhelming to go from slave to being courted by the pharaoh all in the span of a day.

Looking at the woman beside her Hawk asked, "Are you all right? Do I frighten you with such talk?"

"No, sire, but I would like to ask you why me? I'm no one and I'm sure there would be so many others more worthy of your attention and your affections. I'm afraid when you know all there is

to know about my past I'll fall short in your eyes." Sarah lowered her head and willed herself not to cry. When she felt the warm fingers under her chin urging her to look up, the tears came unbidden to her eyes.

"The only thing short is your height, but everything else screams out strength. It has taken strength to endure under Larlis has it not? There have been many that would like my affections yes, but it must be mutual and that has up to now not happened for me. Yesterday I saw a vision in a thin tunic and she has run away with my heart and my thoughts and I feel so alive. I don't want your gratitude, Sarah, I want you to care for me but I will not force you."

There in sight of the ancient waters Hawk leaned down and kissed Sarah, not a kiss of conquest or of desire but of gentleness and caring. Hawk had cupped Sarah's face in her hands and from the first touch of the small woman's lips never wanted to let go. Sarah had to grab onto Hawk's tunic to keep herself on her feet. The touch of the pharaoh's lips sent a fire through her blood that was a new experience for her. The woman's words and her actions had freed the former slave's heart from its prison of non-feeling.

For the next two days Hawk spent what time she could with Sarah and Samuel further cementing their bond and feeding the glow within Sarah's heart. Nina looked on and relished the laughter and smiles that seemed to be a permanent fixture on the pharaoh's face when she was in the company of the two small blondes.

Sarah stepped into the throne room with Nina and Samuel, standing well to the left of the raised dais that sat under a grand mosaic that depicted the gods of Egypt. Samuel was quietly standing in front of her taking in all the sights and the people that were waiting for the pharaoh to come in and take her throne. Nina had helped them both get dressed and gave them a quick lesson on their conduct while they were in the grand room.

The palace seamstress had been busy sewing new clothes for the two blondes and Nina was proud to see they didn't look any different than the rest of the courtesans present. The older woman had glared at a couple of people when they had entered knowing that the rumors of where Sarah had come from and what she meant to the pharaoh had spread like fire through a dry field. Those that were caught quickly turned away not wanting Nina to go back and tell Hawk of their behavior.

"Why are there two chairs, Nina?" asked Samuel pointing to the dais.

"The larger one is for the pharaoh and the smaller one is for her queen. Hawk's situation is different than any Egypt has witnessed before in that Ramses made her pharaoh and not queen, but we that raised her know his reason for doing so."

"She has a queen?" Sarah whispered the question in surprise. *What does she want with us if she already has a queen?*

"No, child, Hawk still looks for the one that would capture her enough for her to give the greatest possession she has."

"What is that, Nina, the throne?" asked Sarah.

"No, child, Her heart. Whoever is lucky enough to get that, gets the whole of Egypt for that is who the pharaoh is, Egypt. That woman's children will rule for Hawk once she has gone to the land of the pharaoh's and joins her father. The love her parents shared is the love I wish for her, only hers should last longer than then time her father had with her mother." Nina hoped that Sarah understood the hint that she had given. If Sarah could truly come to love Hawk, she had the world to gain by it.

"I wish for the same thing, Nina, our pharaoh seems to be a kind and compassionate spirit she deserves no less from her mate. May her gods see that her wait is not too long."

"I think, child, the gods are smiling upon her now and the Hawk's seeking has come to an end."

The drums began to sound as the advisors entered the chamber dressed in their ornamental white robes adorned with gold and black piping. They took their position to the right of the dais and bowed as Ramses entered behind them.

Sarah looked at Hawk in total awe. The king's stride displayed nothing but confidence, confidence that let the people gathered know everything would be all right because she was there to lead them. The stark white short linen tunic was a nice contrast to the dark tan on the impossibly long legs. Over Hawk's shoulders was draped a midnight blue cape that was trimmed with leopard skins and her short black hair was combed straight back. Hawk looked like the leader of her people. Behind her trailed Corby and Denu with her scepters, sword and crown.

"Drives the advisors crazy that she won't wear the crown at these things," whispered Nina.

"Why should she, look at her. You could put everyone here together with her and still know who the king was," answered Sarah. She committed to memory the brief glimpse she had gotten of the pharaoh when Hawk stepped into the chamber.

Hawk continued her walk toward the throne looking at the tops of people's heads as she made her way since they were all bowed, all but one. His soft green eyes looked at her and by his look she could tell he thought she looked impressive. Hawk winked at Samuel and stopped. When he saw what she had done he knew he had been caught looking at her when he should have been looking at the floor, but rather than be covered he winked back and smiled.

Everyone in the room was tempted to look up when they heard Ramses's rich laugh echo through the chamber. By the silence in the room except for her laughter they knew she had stopped walking before reaching the dais.

"Come here, boy, and walk with me," she told him through her mirth. Sarah almost fainted when she saw from her bowed position that it was Samuel that moved forward. *God what has the boy*

done now? Too late she had realized that her son had not lowered his head when the pharaoh had walked in after her advisors.

Samuel walked up until he was at her side and waited to see if he was in trouble for not doing as Nina had told him. Hawk for her part stood with her arms crossed over her chest and admired the difference in the boy from just a few days. Gone were the dirty streaks on his face and the worn clothes and bare feet when she found him. With his combed blonde hair, fine linen tunic and new leather sandals Samuel looked to her like a Prince of Egypt.

Hawk looked at him with a somber face and arched her eyebrow as if waiting. He took the hint and bowed his head, which caused a smile to break out on the faces of Hawk, Corby and Denu. Once he was in the correct position she tapped him on the top of the head and smiled down on him to let him know he was off the hook.

"Very good, son, now would you like to sit with me so you can see better?" asked Hawk pointing toward the throne.

"Yes, sire, I would," answered Samuel nodding his head.

She took his hand and continued on her walk to the throne. She flared her cape back so that it hung behind the backless chair and sat, Corby and Denu taking up flanks behind her. Hawk motioned for Samuel to sit on her knee so that they could continue with this nonsense. With the boy settled she raised her hand and motioned to Corby.

"Hark all those who have business before Egypt, the Pharaoh Ramses IV bids you welcome. Come and pay homage to Egypt." Corby announced in a deep booming voice letting everyone know that it was now all right to look up. The silence was broken for a moment with the hushed murmurs of the court when they saw Samuel sitting with Ramses. The pharaoh leaned down and whispered in the boy's ear for a moment and they waited to see if she would explain who he was.

Samuel raised his small hand and silence once again fell upon the room. When he saw that what Hawk had told him worked, he turned around and laughed causing her to join in his fun and laugh along with him.

"Sire, King Neftu wishes an audience with you to discuss matters of his realm." The advisor who had addressed her bowed from the bottom of the stairs.

"Send his party in and Egypt will hear his woes."

Samuel jumped a bit on her lap when the drums started again but with a more frenzied beat. The moment the drums started the chamber was filled with dancers who moved their bodies in perfect sync with the beat. Samuel's eyes were glued to the floor watching the perfect bodies covered with leather and feathers go through their exaggerated movements. They were the announcers of King Neftu meant to impress the pharaoh. As quickly as the drums had started they stopped with the dancers parting along the middle of the room from the dais to the back. Once the last dancer moved from the middle there stood King Neftu and his daughter the

Princess Dalia.

They moved toward the front of the room with a regal flair to where Ramses and Samuel sat finally arriving at the bottom step of the dais. Neftu bowed deeply from the waist showing Ramses the proper respect. Behind the African king stood his daughter Dalia, bowed but not as deeply as her father. She stood up straight and looked at Ramses with open lust in her eyes. It would be only a matter of time in Dalia's opinion before Ramses succumbed to what she had to offer.

"Pharaoh Ramses, I bring gifts from the rich land of the Nile and come to ask for the help that only Egypt can provide." Neftu started as some of the dancers laid skins and other treasures on the stairs leading up to the throne.

"Neftu, my friend, we will discuss those matters later when we sit together and talk about the border raiders that are chipping away at what is yours and the rebels that are leading them."

"Sire, how do you know these things?" asked Neftu.

"I am Egypt, Neftu, and her eyes see wide and far, and her ears hear the slightest whispers in the wind."

Ramses stood Samuel up and sent him with a pat back to his mother before standing herself. Dalia's eyes followed the child until he came to a stop next to the beautiful woman standing next to Nina. *She does not sit on the throne with her so my chances are not lost*, thought the princess.

"Dennu, accompany Samuel and his mother back to their apartments. Perhaps later the boy would like to practice his shooting on targets other than myself."

"Yes, sire." The large man saluted her and turned to join his mother Nina and her two charges.

Hawk led the visiting party along with her advisors and Corby out of the chamber and to an open room that contained wide columns that were painted with colorful hieroglyphs. The slightly elevated room offered an impressive view of the city that while close to the palace, seemed a thousand leagues away. The low tables that were surrounded by plush pillows were loaded down with food that had been cooked with the flavors familiar to the visiting king and his entourage. Dalia immediately moved to seat herself next to Hawk not wanting to miss any opportunity to get next to the pharaoh.

Back in the throne room Sarah watched Hawk lead the visitors out for their negotiations she imagined. A feeling of jealousy came over her when she saw that both she and Samuel had been effectively dismissed, but the princess got to adjourn with the rest of them. The look of want was not so hidden on the beautiful face as Dalia walked out on Hawk's arm, and the fact that she was royalty meant that Dalia stood a better chance of being with Hawk than her. Dennu led them away back toward their rooms chatting with Samuel about the better points of the sling shot while Sarah followed trying to figure a way back to the pharaoh's side.

"Ramses, would you walk with me and show me the river?" asked Dalia. The talks with her father and Ramses concluded with the promise of a legion of soldiers led by the pharaoh's cousin Philbus to wipe out the raiders that were becoming a greater threat to her father's rule. Now Dalia wanted to have her own talks with Ramses and extract her own promises that included the king in her bed. Having one of her attendants inquire as to who the boy and his mother were lifted any worry from Dalia's mind when she found out they were merely slaves.

"Dalia, I'd love to walk with you but know my answer will be the same as always when it comes to your requests. You are a beautiful woman Dalia, wait until you find the one person that will pursue you with as much vigor as you waste on me. I know that your father would love nothing better than such a permanent alliance with Egypt than to see you sitting beside me, but that will not be."

"Ramses, do not be so rash until you have tasted the fruit." Dalia moved closer and wrapped both her hands around Hawk's bicep.

"Sire, may I trouble you for a moment?" asked Sarah. Seeing the pharaoh walking along with the princess Sarah took a chance and approached the two as they were talking.

"Sarah, you may trouble me whenever you desire. What can I do for you?" asked Hawk. Relief flooded Hawk's body and she peeled Dalia's hands from her.

Sarah now had the pharaoh's attention and desperately searched for something to ask. Thinking only to interrupt them before the princess sunk in her claws, she hadn't thought ahead of a reason for her intrusion.

"Come on, girl, Ramses is waiting," hissed a perturbed Dalia.

"Corby, would you escort the princess to her quarters for the night, it seems there might be a problem that needs my immediate attention. Dalia we will finish our conversation in the morning." Sarah was amazed again as the guard appeared out of nowhere to do Hawk's bidding. She was beginning to wonder if the man had some sort of magic cloak.

"Yes, sire, princess, this way please," Corby bowed and swept his arm out leading the way.

"Sire, I'm..." started Sarah.

"Thank you, Sarah, for saving me the trouble of finding my own means of retreat. That woman has got more hands than the gods intended. Would you like to walk with me and enjoy the moon tonight?"

"Yes, Hawk, I would like that," answered Sarah taking the large hand that Hawk held out to her.

Hawk looked over the woman before her, much like she had her son earlier in the day. Sarah,

like Samuel, looked vastly different after a bath and new clothing. Not that Hawk hadn't found her desirable before, but now Sarah was awe-inspiring. Nina had taken extra care in pinning her hair up to mimic the style that the courtesans were wearing giving the young woman a very sexy appearance now that her neck was showing.

They walked along the rooms where earlier in the day Hawk had granted Neftu's request. She pointed out to Sarah the various monuments and other buildings of importance that were lit up with torches in the distant night. The small blonde listened to Hawk while enjoying the feeling of the hand that enveloped her own.

Stopping at the corner of the open room to look out at the black sky that was lit with its own celestial torches, Hawk gathered up Sarah's other hand. "Sarah, you look beautiful tonight."

"Thank you, Hawk." The blush that seemed to be constant since meeting the pharaoh was back on Sarah's face.

"The morning I met your son, I told him a secret that he promised that he would keep for me, and now I would like to share another with you. Do you promise, like Samuel, to keep my secrets?" Ramses moved closer to her but did it slowly so as not to scare the smaller woman.

"Till my death, sire."

"I lost my heart out there a few days ago," said Hawk pointing to the city. In the full moon's light they could both see the outline of the buildings and the oil lamps people had lit in their homes. Looking back to Sarah, Hawk continued, "To keep it close to me, I brought it back with me to my home. My one wish is to keep it close to me for the rest of my life."

"I promise not to share your secret, sire. Is there anything that I can do to help you keep it safe?" asked Sarah. She stroked Hawk's cheek as she remembered her conversation with Nina earlier.

"Never leave my side, Sarah. Stay here with me and let me love you. For that, I will give you all that I possess."

"You don't want me, sire, I am a slave as is my son. I know that you have given the ultimate gift of freedom but the rest of your people will always see me that way, and your advisors will never let a Hebrew sit on the throne of Egypt."

"Egypt gets to decide who sits upon her throne, my love, not my advisors. And, Sarah, I am Egypt." Hawk pulled the woman even closer and slowly dipped her head to kiss the soft lips under hers. The kiss remained soft and gentle echoing what her words had said just before. Sarah sank into the embrace and the strong body that provided it. How could she have lost her heart in such a short time? Hawk was so different than what she was accustomed to. The tenderness the ruler displayed was intoxicating.

"I'll not force myself on you, Sarah, so tell me now if this is something that you truly do not want." Hawk ran her fingers down Sarah's jaw to her neck fully prepared to walk away if that

was what the woman wanted.

"Will you kiss me again so that I may decide?" asked Sarah. She tipped her head back again inviting the pharaoh to do just that.

Hawk took her up on the invitation pulling the woman against her with more desire and turned up the intensity of the kiss. She pulled the pins Nina had put in Sarah's hair out letting the blonde locks fall through her fingers. "I take it the answer is yes?" asked Hawk as she held Sarah close to her.

"The answer is yes, Hawk, and I think you knew that when I walked out and interrupted your previous moonlit stroll." When Dalia had pulled Hawk into a more intimate position, Sarah's feet had taken off from her room like they were on fire.

"Dalia will be crushed," said Hawk.

Hawk walked Sarah back to her apartment finding Nina telling Samuel a story about the pharaoh as a child. Both mother and son found out that Samuel wasn't the only one to get in trouble with a sling shot as a child.

"Old woman, where will the mystery be if you give away all my secrets?" bellowed a teasing Hawk. "And, you two, don't encourage her by laughing at her stories," she told Sarah and Samuel. Hawk took a seat in the chair by the bed and Sarah came to stand by her side.

"Come on, Samuel, kiss your mother goodnight and then it's off to bed for you." The boy kissed Sarah and Hawk goodnight after reminding the pharaoh of her promise of a chariot ride.

"I will stay with Samuel tonight should he need anything if he is to awaken in the night sire. Please have a pleasant evening." Nina told her for both their benefits.

"I will leave you now, Sarah, to get your rest," said Hawk. She pulled Sarah onto her lap so that she could give her a kiss goodbye, but her hands seemed possessed in wanting to feel Sarah's skin. Sarah initiated another kiss by pulling Hawk's head down by the two handfuls of hair she had a hold of when the pharaoh tried to pull away.

"Are you tired, sire?" she asked.

"No, but if I don't leave I can't promise that I won't touch you, or that I could stop."

Sarah pulled away and stood before the seated ruler and repeated her actions from the first night she had spent in the palace and untied her dress letting it hit the floor. "As I asked you before, sire, does what you see not please you?"

"Yes, Sarah, it pleases me, but I don't want to rush you." The way that Hawk's eyes raked over her skin pleased Sarah inordinately.

"It is I who mean to rush you, sire." Sarah added seductively.

She sat on her knees in front of Hawk and worked on untying one sandal then the other tossing them aside. Motioning Hawk to rise, Sarah followed her to a standing position so that she could lift Hawk's linen tunic over her head leaving the pharaoh naked. Sarah then let her training take over and let Hawk make the first move.

The king moved to stand behind her close enough so that Sarah could feel the heat of her body but not close enough so that she could feel her skin. "Tell me, Sarah, what makes you feel good? I want to make you feel wonder, and I want you to stop me if I do something that does not. I want to touch you and help you release your passion. I want to make you feel so good that you will crave my touch and no other. I want to feel your heat."

As she whispered the promises in the small ear, Hawk began the mapping of Sarah's body with her hands. The words and her touch were having their effect on Sarah as her nipples grew hard and small bumps raised themselves on her skin as if she were chilled. The touches and the verbal onslaught were both relaxing her into Hawk's body and exciting her at the same time. The hands never lingered any one place for too long, exciting one area then moving on. Sarah could feel the wetness between her legs grow and it was a new sensation. No one had ever cared about her pleasure enough to excite her to the point that it would increase her comfort.

Sarah felt her knees start to tremble so she reached her hands back to hold onto Hawk. "Hawk, take me to the bed," Sarah requested before she fell to the floor. The hands that had been burning her skin stopped and then picked her up and carried her to the bed. Hawk placed her gently on the surface then covered the small body with her own bracing her hands down so as not to put her whole weight on Sarah. Lowering her head, Hawk kissed first Sarah's lips, then her eyes and then the rest of her face. She could feel Sarah's hands on the small of her back urging her to continue what she had begun across the room. Rolling off to lie next to Sarah, Hawk put her hands on the smooth skin of the other woman's body watching the nipples grow harder and the chills more pronounced.

When Hawk lowered her head to take a nipple into her mouth and dipped hand in-between Sarah's legs, she heard the small woman gasp. Rolling her fingers around to lubricate them Hawk started by pressing them up against the hard pebble that was the center of Sarah's excitement. The move caused Sarah's hips to rise up off the bed and her hands to grab Hawk's hair smashing her face into her breast. Wanting Hawk's mouth on hers again Sarah then pulled on Hawk's hair to give the woman a clue. Hawk kissed her as she continued to stroke the length of Sarah's sex enjoying the moans that were coming out of Sarah's throat. Sarah surprised her by rolling Hawk onto her back so that she could move her hips better to match the rhythm Hawk had set with her hand. The stars that they had walked under that night paled in comparison to the ones behind Sarah's eyelids when she lowered herself onto the long fingers.

"Ah ...that feels...feels...so good," Sarah panted as she felt her body start to tense. Hawk had curved her fingers up and in and was using her thumb to stimulate Sarah's center to up the pleasure. Keeping her hand still Hawk let Sarah move as fast or as slow as would make her feel good. The pharaoh heard and felt Sarah's orgasm in numerous ways. One by the grunts Sarah

was making, by the surprisingly strong grip on her shoulders and by the flood of desire that now coated her stomach. A doubling of the grip on Hawk's shoulders and the stilling of all movement followed by the screaming of the pharaoh's name sent Sarah over the edge falling to earth again by collapsing on the muscular body under hers.

Pulling her hand out from between their bodies Hawk moved her hand to Sarah's back to hold her in place. Sarah's breathing relaxed until it evened out in sleep leaving Hawk in an almost painful predicament. She decided to keep her word and not push Sarah, so she kissed the blonde head and joined her in sleep. Their positions didn't change for the whole night, and it was how Nina found the still sleeping bodies the next morning. Going back to take care of Samuel before the child had the opportunity to disturb them Nina let him go off with Denu for a while to take in some target practice.

"Sire," said Nina in a soft voice.

"Yes," answered the sleep raspy voice.

"Neftu and Philbus are waiting for you in the column room whenever you are ready. I have taken the liberty of having food sent up for you and Sarah, and the maids are preparing the bath."

"Thank you, Nin. Where's Samuel?" asked Hawk. She relaxed back into the bed covered by the warm body of Sarah.

"He is with Denu, sire, shooting at fish the last time I checked."

"Good, Nin, could you call Corby for me?"

"Yes, sire."

Hawk gently lifted the still sleeping woman off of her so that she could put on a robe before Corby arrived. Pulling the soft sheet so that it covered all of Sarah's nakedness, Hawk walked into the front room. She was glad that Sarah felt comfortable enough in her surrounding to keep on sleeping.

"You desire something, Hawk?" asked Corby. He bowed his head a little before taking in the rumbled look of the pharaoh.

"I desire a great many things, Corby, but less so than I did yesterday. Send someone you trust down to the quarry and ask for a sculptor with a wife that works in the slave hospice. If there is more than one couple that fits that description, ask which of them has a daughter by the name of Sarah.

Corby, explain to your men that they are not to frightened these people in any way, I only want to find out where they live. Once I am finished with my idiot cousin and Neftu, have Denu and my chariot waiting. We are going on an excursion this afternoon."

"As you wish, sire," said Corby bowing slightly ready to leave the room.

"Hawk, where are you?" came the soft voice from the bedchamber.

Hawk turned her head toward the sound before turning back to her trusted guard, "That, my friend, is your cue to leave."

"I'm right here, my love." Hawk answered from the wide doorway.

"I missed you when I opened my eyes," said Sarah.

"You were sleeping so peacefully that I didn't want to intrude in your dreams."

"I'm sorry, Hawk." Sarah had a sorrowful look on her face as she sat on the bed holding the sheet under her chin.

The apology was not what she was expecting. *Does Sarah regret already that she slept with me?* Hawk prepared her face to mask any reaction that the rejection would bring. Just a taste of what her life could be like with Sarah in it made it unbearable to think what it would be like if the woman decided to leave.

"You have nothing to be sorry for, Sarah."

"But you were so wonderful to me last night, and then I fell asleep."

"There will be plenty of time for that, my love, but for now we must eat so that we will have the energy for that later."

Hawk brought Sarah a robe like the one she was wearing and led her out to the covered part of the terrace where Nina had the table set up for their breakfast. Sitting on plush pillows, they fed each other bits of food from the various different trays there was to select from until they had eaten their fill.

"You make me so happy and make me feel so special, Hawk, that I would die if you took it away. I would be happy to remain just as your pleasure slave if you would promise not to send me away."

"You'll stay with me, my love, but not as a slave. I have other plans in store for you and your son. After today I want you both to move into my private quarters in the palace. These rooms are nice but everything I need to run the realm is over there." Hawk pointed the east wing of the palace. There was located not just her sleeping quarters, but the library and other essentials she relied on to make her decisions.

Hawk continued talking of the plans she had for Sarah and Samuel when she noticed that instead of happiness the small woman was crying quietly into her shoulder. Putting two fingers under the quivering chin Hawk asked with her eyes what the problem was.

"When you find out the whole truth about me you will send me away I know you will," sobbed Sarah. When Hawk pulled Sarah onto her lap, the small woman sobbed into the strong neck.

"Sarah, unless you are a cleverly disguised killer, I think I know everything there is to know about you."

"No, sire, you don't. I know that you are aware of what my position was in the last house I served in but there is something that I have neglected to tell you. Larlis has left me with child sire."

"Is he Samuel's father as well?" asked Hawk. Sarah was surprised not to find a look of disgust in the blue eyes that seemed to be looking into her soul when she lifted her head up.

"Yes, sire, he is and even if you don't want me now please send me anywhere but back there again. Master Larlis wasn't the most kind person when he found out I was pregnant with Samuel because I could not accommodate his needs."

"Sarah, this is your home now and if it would please you, I would be honored to help you raise this child too. You're not the only one who has captured my heart, my love, your son has had a hand in my emotional captivity as well," said Hawk. With a large hand she wiped the tears streaming down Sarah's face. The woman on her lap soaked up the attention by leaning into the healing touch.

"You would accept this child as your own?" asked Sarah with doubt in her voice. To have the pharaoh say yes would be too much to dare and hope for.

"Your sons will rule Egypt when I am gone. They are not of my blood but they will be of my heart." Even though there were still tears in Sarah's eyes, the smile returned to her face and she ran her own hand along the pharaoh's cheek. Hawk leaned forward and softly kissed Sarah lips, which tasted salty from all the crying.

"And how, sire, do you know this will be a son for you? There is another possibility you know." Sarah asked with a much-lifted spirit.

"I am pharaoh, love, that makes me always right."

Sarah laughed at that answer then spent another long sweet moment kissing her savior. Her good mood continued as Hawk carried her into the bath holding her in the water so that she could relax. "You have to be careful now and not do anything strenuous. I have to tell Nin to keep an eye on you when I can't be there." Sarah had a feeling this pregnancy would be a lot different than her last. Sarah smiled as under the water Hawk ran her hands along her midsection trying to find evidence of the child she carried.

"I will miss her when we move to the other end of the palace," said Sarah. She pulled her hair to the side and rested her head on Hawk's shoulder loving the feeling of the large warm body behind hers.

"Nin isn't going anywhere, love, she will be happy I'm sure to return to her own set of rooms located not far from our own. She was here only to offer you comfort and welcome on my behalf," Hawk said as she kissed the inviting neck under her lips.

"You are so sweet."

"Don't tell anyone that or I will be forced to feed you to the crocodiles. Now unhand me, woman, and let me finish up with Neftu and Philbus then I have a surprise for you."

"What are you doing with Neftu and Philbus?" asked Sarah. The realization came quickly that the question was inappropriate of her and Sarah bowed her head. "I'm sorry you don't have to tell me."

"I am sending Philbus with Neftu as the leader of the legion I promised the king to get his local raider problem solved. Philbus will of course be furious but it will teach him a valuable lesson on disobeying a direct order from me. There's that and the fact he struck the child who is to be my adopted son," Hawk answered just as quickly. It was her way of letting Sarah know that there were no secrets between them now.

"Well then you do have to tell me what my surprise is."

Your surprise is I'm taking you and Samuel for a ride this afternoon."

"That isn't a surprise that's torture and you know it. Did you mean that about Samuel?" asked Sarah jumping back to something Hawk had said.

"No."

"Oh I thought not." Sarah lowered her head again thinking that she had misspoken for the second time that morning.

"I meant that about Samuel **and** the child you now carry, Sarah. You do understand though there will have to be some changes in the way that Samuel and this baby will have to be raised, but perhaps their origins will give them better insight on dealing with the slave population. But a ruler of Egypt has to be more than a Hebrew, my love, he must be history."

"They will become you?"

"Yes." It was now Hawk that lowered her head thinking that Sarah could not live with that possibility.

"That would be my greatest hope. You aren't the monster my father talked about and if my children were to become more like you, that would be a treasure." After another quick kiss Hawk lifted her body out of the bath and stood while the attendants finished their job.

Sarah watched and was again overtaken by the powerful force of her jealousy as the servants dried and dressed Hawk. She was sorry that the morning had gone so quickly and she had not had the opportunity to touch the tall lean body. "Sire, isn't there anything else that I could interest you in, besides going for a ride?" Sarah asked as she moved the girl that was combing Hawk's hair to the side. She finished the job then moved to tie off the tunic that had been pulled out for the pharaoh.

"Sarah, I promise you that you are going to love what I have in store for you, but first it requires you to get on the chariot."

"But you said I had to take it easy and not strain myself, I think riding behind those four beasts of yours falls into that category."

"I promise that nothing is going to happen to you."

Hawk finished dressing and kissed Sarah before leaving to meet with the visiting king. She left word with Nina that everything that belonged to Sarah and Samuel were to be moved to the king's quarters. Nina laughed when Hawk told her that she was to keep a watchful eye on her future queen because of her condition. Hawk couldn't have been more excited if she had fathered the child herself.

"You are going as my representative, Philbus, and careful if you think of messing this assignment up. I am done turning my back to your mistakes just because you are the son of my mother's sister. Put to rest your dreams of being pharaoh, Philbus, that honor comes from my father not my mother, and his blood runs through me not you, cousin. The only reason you have a position here at all is a favor to the memory of my mother, try and remember that. Your role with me is changing so do your best that it doesn't slip any further than it has already." She was seated at the low table in the column room signing the decree of help Neftu had requested. Once Philbus was dealt with and dispatched, Hawk would be free to leave the palace with Sarah and Samuel for their surprise.

"Yes, sire, and will the princess be staying on as she has requested?" asked Philbus. The soldier stood at attention trying to keep the hatred he felt for Hawk off his face.

"No that request will not be granted. Dalia will be returning with her father."

Without any further word for Philbus, Hawk stepped out of the room and went to wish Neftu a safe passage through her lands. Dalia fumed that her request to stay in the city with Ramses had been denied and begged her father to talk with the pharaoh. She wanted Neftu to tell Ramses that it would be an insult to him and his people for Dalia not to stay. Dalia couldn't get Ramses to love her if she was in the jungle instead of here in the city.

"Sire, about Dalia," started Neftu as they neared the front of the palace. The man loved his child and tried to indulge her when he could.

"My old friend, do not think to insult my hospitality by mentioning her request again. I have love for you and your people as they are part of my own, but I do not love Dalia in that way she desires and it is time for everyone including her to realize that. Go and take care of these rebels that trouble you so, and may the gods smile upon your lands and your family," said Ramses.

"Yes, sire, thank you." Neftu bowed in front of Hawk again and followed the woman down the front steps.

From the litter Dalia watched as the pharaoh's horses were brought around to the front of the palace. The large hawk emblem on the crest of the great black stallions shone in the sunlight, and for an instant so did her mood in thinking Ramses meant to ride with them out of the city. The pharaoh stepped out of the palace with Dalia's father heading toward her horses and her father toward his own litter. *That is the most handsome woman I have ever seen. Trust me Ramses you will not get away from me for long, my love, you are meant to be with me.*

What Dalia didn't count on was the small woman and child that followed behind the pharaoh. The child was the same one that had been seated on Ramses lap on the throne the day of their arrival. *Why were they always with Ramses?*

When the pharaoh stood on the street of kings bidding Dalia's father farewell, the child who was on at least the tenth step called for her and jumped with no warning. The strong arms caught him just in time. The blonde woman that had been descending with the child almost fainted by the act, and Dalia saw that the pharaoh and child threw their heads back and laughed. This did not look good and Princess Dalia needed time to think about what to do.

"That is how that overgrown adolescent got her name!" cried Nina from the top of the steps when she saw what Samuel had done. It seemed that the more time the boy spent within the walls of the palace, the more he was possessed by the ghost of the child Hawk.

"Perhaps, sire, you should adopt the name your father and mother gave you at birth, and give Samuel the moniker your father gave you later." Suggest Corby looking at the pharaoh and child.

"What do you mean, Corby?" asked Sarah finally arriving at the bottom of the steps, and walking into Hawk's embrace.

"The boy though not hers, acts just like the Pharaoh Ramses. This latest stunt just proves it. My mother is right, while Hawk is a legendary hunter she got the bird's name when her father had to snatch her out of the air on more than one occasion. It seems that Ramses has found her own little fearless hawk, pray the gods let him soar as high," answered Corby. He bowed to the blonde woman at Ramses's side causing the heat in Dalia's litter to rise with the act.

"Come on, little Hawk, climb aboard and you too, my love," said Ramses. She put the child down in the chariot and held her hand out to Sarah. Once they were both safely in front of her, Hawk gave a sharp cry and flicked the reins sending them forward. They were followed down the street by a pair of dark eyes already planning her next move to rid the way of any

competition.

Corby and Denu followed in their own rigs, and they were followed by a large number of palace guards. Corby had another large number of guards waiting at their destination, he wanted to be prepared for anything. A pharaoh of Egypt had never walked into the slave quarters of the city, so Hawk's protection became paramount.

In deference to Sarah's condition Hawk went slow, keeping the horses at a steady pace as not to jostle her around too much. While they were on the main road Ramses lifted Samuel up so he could see past the horses and handed him the reins for a moment letting him get the feel of the team. Had she given him all the treasures in her vaults, it would not have produced a bigger smile on the young boy's face.

Sarah for her part leaned back into the strong body behind her and enjoyed the scenery as it passed. Going this slow she didn't mind the ride as much but wondered where they were going when they turned off the main road. When they reached the edge of the quarry she was afraid for a moment that Hawk meant to drop her and Samuel off at the slave quarters now that the king knew of her condition.

Her fear grew as the chariot stopped at the entrance to the slave village and Hawk stepped off. "Come, love, for your surprise."

"Couldn't I wait here for it?" asked Sarah gripping the edge of the chariot. She felt faint and the inside of her mouth had gone dry.

"No it will be better if we walk. Come on, I'll keep you safe. I promise you have nothing to fear."

Realizing she had no choice, Sarah released her grip from the chariot and took the pharaoh's hand and stepped off. Samuel showed no such fear as he held his arms up to Hawk to be carried. With Sarah's hand on one arm and Samuel tucked into the other, they headed into the village following Corby who knew the way.

As they passed each hovel with its occupants standing outside bowing as they passed, Sarah finally realized that the people were all here and not working even though it was a workday for them. They arrived at a home that had no one outside and stopped. Her fears were realized in that this would be their new home.

Hawk let go of her hand and put Samuel down. The rest of the people on the streets looked on in curiosity as to what the pharaoh was doing at Habish Samuel and Isa's home. The pharaoh motioned aside Corby and went to the door herself to knock. Though there were a multitude of people around the echo of the knock could be heard for blocks for the quiet. The king turned around and smiled at Sarah who was clutching Samuel's hand. An older man with strong beefy arms and a gentle smile opened the door. Looking into the green eyes that reminded her of Sarah and her son, the pharaoh smiled back at him. The stone he shaped every day had shaped his strong build, but he did not look bitter as he looked into Hawk's face.

"Yes, sire, is there something that I can do for you?" Habish asked as he lowered his head.

"I've come to visit you and your wife. I hope that you do not mind but I have brought guests with me?"

"No, sire, it is our honor that you step through our door." Habish bowed deeper and stepped aside leaving the doorway empty to allow the woman entry into his home.

"Give me a moment man and we'll be right in."

The broad shoulders of the pharaoh had concealed the person that she was talking to, so Sarah waited quietly for her fate. She could feel the eyes of all those around her burning into her skin. Finally Hawk turned around from her conversation and motioned them forward.

"Come on, love, I have someone here I'm sure you want to see."

Hawk walked through the low door first and reached for Sarah's hand. The older couple stood in the main room with their heads bowed trying for the life of them to figure out why the pharaoh would visit them. "Habish and Isa, I have brought Sarah back to you for a visit. Sarah, I'm sure that your parents have missed you so why not bid them hello." Hawk gently pushed Sarah forward to the people that had not seen her in years and kept hold of Samuel's hand until the couple had had a chance to welcome their daughter.

Habish and Isa's head whipped up without thought that the ruler of Egypt still was in the room and it could cost them their lives. Sarah had been gone so long and even though they prayed every night there was never any word on if she was still safe. Sarah let go of Ramses's hand and ran into their embrace. Samuel gladly stayed back with Hawk and watched as his mother was smothered by kisses by the couple. They kissed her and touched her hair as if to confirm that she was real and really there.

When the crying had slowed down and everyone was over the initial shock of seeing each other again, Sarah motioned for Samuel to come forward. "Mama and papa, this is Samuel, my son. Samuel, these are your grandparents, Habish Samuel and Isa." The crying began again as they went through the same ritual with Samuel. The boy caused Hawk to laugh when he informed them that his name was Samuel, but they were to call him Little Hawk because that's what the pharaoh called him. The rich laughter reminded them all that there was another person in the room, and though she was seated quietly by the cook fire, she still was the ruler of Egypt.

"Habish, may I speak with you for a moment?" asked Hawk.

"Yes, sire, whatever you desire. Please accept my greatest thanks for bringing my daughter back to me if only for a short while."

"Your quite welcome, Habish, and I hope you know you'll see Sarah whenever you please from now on. I have another reason though for coming here today. I came to ask your permission to join with Sarah. I ask you for your daughter's hand Habish."

"You mean to make her your pleasure slave?" asked Habish with a dangerous edge in his voice. In his assumptions, Habish had missed what the pharaoh had said. Habish kept his voice low so that the others in the room wouldn't overhear what had the potential to be an uncomfortable conversation.

"No, man, I mean to make her my queen. Weren't you listening?"

"I'm sorry, sire, but that is not allowed within our religion. Would you forsake Sarah's soul for your pleasure, and what of Samuel?" asked Habish with no humor left on his face.

"Samuel and his brother will grow up to rule Egypt along with their mother long after I am gone. And you are wrong, I would never forsake anything of Sarah's, I love her. I want to make her happy and give her children the world, but I am honorable and will not go against your wishes." She paused and smiled at her lover's father, "Even though we both know that I could."

Turning her attention to Sarah and rising from the chair Hawk told her that she was going outside but to take as long as she wished. Sarah moved over from her mother before the tall woman made it to the door and stopped her by grabbing at Hawk's tunic. "Are you all right, love? Has something upset you and wish to go back?" asked Sarah seeing the tense lines on Ramses's forehead.

"No, my love, I will be outside talking to Corby and Denu. Enjoy your visit and don't give me another thought, I'm known throughout Egypt for my infinite patience."

"I'll just bet, and you know better than that. I could never forget you if only for a short time." Sarah stood on her toes and kissed Hawk gently on the lips forgetting her parents where in the room. For as unhappy they were to see Sarah's action, it was as pleased Samuel was to see it. If Ramses wanted both he and his mother, then he could truly become Little Hawk.

"You whore yourself to that woman?" her mother asked once Ramses had cleared the door. Sarah's shoulders tensed and she chose not to turn around.

"No, mama, I love her and she loves me."

"This is wrong and you know it, Sarah. You've been gone from us but you can't have forgotten all that we taught you, and where is your other son?" her father asked.

"I am with child, father, and Ramses insists that it will be another boy. And it is you that are wrong, not her. For most of my life I have known nothing but misery and pain. The only love that I remember is here within these walls, but that seems like a lifetime ago. Then along came someone who has shown me nothing but kindness and love, and it has been a gift from God not a curse."

"The pharaoh is a powerful woman, Sarah, but even with all that she controls, she can't father children. What did she do, lend you out to one of the servants to produce bastards for the

throne?" hissed her father. In their anger towards all that had happened to Sarah over circumstances they could not control, Habish and Isa forgot the small boy sitting in the chair Ramses had just occupied.

"No the man they sold me to did that with no love and tenderness. Our God says that it is only right between a man and a woman, but I would rather die than have to go back to Larlis's bed." Sarah stood her ground and never bowed her head to her father.

"Mama, I thought you said my father was dead and he was a good man?" whispered the child in the corner of the room. They had all forgotten that Samuel was still there and had not left with Ramses. The three adults stood frozen in place thinking about all that the child had just heard. The tears running down his face was testament that he had understood more than they wanted him to.

"No, son, your father is right here and I don't feel I'm all that bad," said Ramses from the doorway. She had come back in to check on Sarah and Samuel after hearing the argument begin in earnest. "Father's come in all forms, son. Yours is just a little different but that doesn't mean that I don't love you." She knelt so that the boy could run into her arms and finish his crying. "Come on, my boy, let's see if we can interest some of these people out here in some games."

She left with the now smiling boy without a word for the three that stood watching the exchange. Habish knew that Hawk had every right to punish him for his harsh words but was glad she wasn't lying about being honorable. Sarah stayed to finish what they had started but wanted nothing more than to go out and be with her son and Ramses.

As their visit went on, they heard laughing and shouting coming from the street. A look out the window showed the pharaoh dressed in only her short tunic running down the street behind two young men in a foot race. As they crossed the finish line she was able to overtake one but not the other. Atop of Denu's shoulders Sarah could see her son had a wonderful view of the race, and the little boy pumped his arms in the air and cheered Ramses on.

"Good man, now that you have beaten me though I'll have to have you killed." Hawk told him as the laughter around her came to an abrupt stop and the face of the victor paled visibly. "Kidding, man, I'm kidding. You will have to talk to Corby before we go about a new job as messenger with those quick feet."

The laughter started again as the crowd saw that the pharaoh was not like the rumors. She was not a demon. When they sat down to drink some water to cool down from their games she told Samuel that he should share with the people their secret. The little boy did a valiant job at trying to explain about their houses, but got stuck on some of the words so Ramses finished for him.

The construction of the new dwellings would take up their time from now on instead of new monuments for her. They had plenty of time for those, but for now it was time to clean up the village they lived in so that disease and sickness could be kept low.

The people grew more comfortable with her and asked questions when they heard the rumble of

carriages in the street. The royal cooks looked nervous but they followed Nina's directions and brought enough for an army. *It was suppose to be an engagement celebration but that will have to wait* thought Hawk. She asked the families to bring out their tables to the street so that they could sit and eat together. One of the men that had been talking with her went in to help Habish bring out his table so that the family could join in the feast. The excitement of new homes built by their own hands was the topic of conversation for the evening.

"So this was your secret with Samuel?" asked Sarah. She had walked out behind her mother and went to sit with Ramses. Hawk, as everyone addressed him now, was off to the side playing with the friends he hadn't seen since the day he and Sarah had left for the palace.

"Yes it was something I have been planning that we have put into motion just recently. These people deserve it; my horses live better than they do. The idea came to me in a dream from my mother so it is not a bribe for you to love me, Sarah."

"I already love you, Ramses, as does your son Hawk and the little one I am carrying," said Sarah putting her hand to her midsection. Ramses's hand covered hers in an instant making even the most dense in their audience realize why.

"Then I want you to know that I asked your father for your hand and he refused me."

"But you didn't need to do that, love."

"My heart, just because you were born here doesn't mean that you deserve to be treated any less like a human being. The things that I have that I cherish most are my name and my honor. To treat you with any less respect would be to taint both."

The world around them fell away as they got lost in each other's eyes. Everyone had the good sense to keep talking, but none were blind to the love the two shared. The young ladies in attendance cheered Sarah on for her good fortune. The marriages here for those that got to stay with their families, were arranged so that love came after, if at all, if you were lucky. To see it written so plainly on someone's face and the fact that Sarah was free to choose was refreshing. The banging of a cup on the table brought the pharaoh's head around.

"Thank you friends for coming tonight to this special celebration. We are honored tonight by having with us Ramses Pharaoh of Egypt, and it is because of her that we are eating this fine food." Habish paused as the shouts and clapping started at that comment earning a nod from the king.

"There is another reason for our celebration tonight. Tonight I am honored to give my permission and my daughter's hand to King Ramses for joining. Isa and I are happy Sarah will become the next queen of Egypt and my grandson Hawk will someday be pharaoh. To King Ramses and Sarah." Habish lifted his cup and drank laughing at the astonished look on the king's face. Someone in the crowd started playing music and the party went on late into the night with the bravest among them coming up to offer their congratulations.

When it was time to leave Ramses loaded Sarah's parents into one of the food carts going back to the palace with a promise that they could return home if they so desired. Sarah wanted her mother close by to plan her joining even though they were a bit out of their league on this one.

Habish and Isa were given the same apartment that Sarah had when she had arrived at the palace and settled in for the night. Retiring to their quarters they put the sleeping Hawk into bed and headed for the baths.

"Tell me, love, are you happy?" asked Ramses. She cupped her hand and dripped water onto Sarah's shoulder.

"I feel like I have died and gone to heaven, Ramses. I don't know why you want me, but I'm glad you do. But for now, sire, there is something we must do."

"What's that, Queen Sarah?" asked Ramses. Sarah turned around to face Ramses before continuing.

"The queen would like very much to make love to her king."

Ramses lifted Sarah out of the bath and set her on the floor and wrapped a towel around her. Taking care of the now sensitive nipples, Ramses dried her queen and then herself. Picking up the small woman again, Ramses brought her into the bedroom and laid Sarah down. Sarah could feel her breathing start to quicken and her inner thighs start to get wet when the pharaoh lay down next to her.

When Ramses stretched out, Sarah flipped the tall woman onto her back so that she could straddle the rock hard abdomen. Having her lover sitting on her gave the pharaoh a good view of the woman that would be queen. Sarah's skin was creamy white and soft. Two full breasts with pink rosy nipples swung slightly when she moved, and the hair between her legs was as blonde as that on her head. Ramses smiled because of the fact that patch of blonde hair was now painting wet lines on her midsection.

Lying on top of Ramses gave Sarah an equally good view of the woman she was to marry. Ramses was tan on the parts that the sun touched most and olive toned where it was not. There was a layer of muscle just under the skin everywhere giving her a sculpted look. Two small breasts with dark nipples that stood at attention were perfect in Sarah's eyes, and the sensations produced by the rippled muscles of Ramses's abdomen were driving Sarah mad.

"Touch me, my heart, I can't wait anymore." Sarah told her as she draped her body over the one beneath her. Ramses rolled them over and slid down Sarah's body once the small woman was on her back. Before Sarah could protest the missing body, Ramses buried her head between her legs. "Oh, love, don't stop that feels so good," Sarah screamed as Ramses sucked the hard pebble into her mouth.

The sensation was like no other that Sarah had ever experienced as Ramses alternated between sucking and licking at the hard point. Sarah put her feet on Ramses shoulders so that she would

have more leverage to push up, and when she thought that she could not feel anything more pleasurable, Ramses slowly pushed two fingers into her opening causing a flood of wetness to come out.

Riding the fingers and pushing the face harder against her sex with her hands Sarah lost all ability for speech and could only moan. When Ramses felt the slick inner walls start to tighten, she sped up her pumping making Sarah come. The orgasm was fierce and Ramses almost passed out when the strong little legs clamped down on her head. Sarah's crying brought Ramses out of her cocoon worried that she had hurt her.

"What's wrong, Sarah?"

"Nothing, love, I just have never felt that before." Sarah told her as her heartbeat slowed a little. Before there could be any further conversation Sarah sunk her hand into black curls that were wet with desire. It was Ramses's turn to start gasping. Taking her fingers, Sarah stroked between the lips of Ramses's sex finding the hard point of want. Sarah felt selfish as her own desire swelled again when she started touching Ramses. She kissed the soft lips that tasted like her with passion and moaned into Ramses's mouth when she felt herself be lifted and placed in a straddled position on a strong leg. When Ramses lifted a little it brought a great relief to the throbbing between Sarah's legs.

"Let me take care of you, Ramses, don't worry about me," Sarah told Ramses, but her actions not reflecting her words as she rocked against the leg.

"Touch me, love, and come with me," Ramses told her. As Sarah buried her fingers deep within the pharaoh, she pressed herself on the strong leg feeling another orgasm beginning. Moving against each other's sweaty bodies, they fell into a mutual rhythm that left them screaming each other's names at the same time. It was a position they woke up in later with Sarah glued to Ramses's leg and her fingers in between the pharaoh's legs, which made them, repeat the process all over again.

"Sire, it can't be done, it would be an insult to all who came before you," said Mika the senior advisor. The older man was pacing at the base of the dais throwing his hands in the air to make his point.

"Mika, are you telling me what to do, or giving lessons on history?" asked Ramses. She sat on the throne and watched the man's theatrics already growing tired of their opinions.

"I served your father, Ramses, as I now serve you. I watched you grow from a baby into a fine ruler and I feel like you are my own, but now you have lost your way."

"You are not my father, Mika, so careful where you tread, old man."

Mika stood below the throne in a fury. When he and the other advisors heard the news coming

from the slave quarters, they had demanded an audience with Ramses for an explanation.

"I speak for all here to tell you this will not be permitted. No Hebrew whore and her son will sit on the throne of Egypt, I will not permit it!" screamed Mika. He had tried reason and now he was beyond all patience. "Your father made a grave mistake in making you pharaoh, he should have followed tradition and made you queen. It is clear to all of us that you need the influence that only a man can provide."

Sarah had entered the chamber in search of Ramses to ask her to have lunch with she and her parents only to stop. The whore comment had been like a slap in the face because it was so close to the truth. Their love for one another might not be enough to stand up to so many generations of hate.

"Are you so willing to throw it all away for this bitch, Ramses? Surely if you are in heat, we could find you a suitable mate but not her." Mika continued.

Ramses looked at the grief on Sarah's face and prayed to the gods that her next move wouldn't turn Sarah against her.

"Sarah, my love, come here and sit with me. We were just discussing our upcoming joining." Ramses stood from his chair and descended the stairs to escort Sarah to the throne that sat next to hers. Coming to rest on one knee in front of Sarah, Ramses continued, "Mika here thinks that my father made a mistake by giving me this chair and the lands that go with it. He thinks you and our sons are whores that have blinded my judgement. And he thinks that I am in heat for you love."

When she finished talking, Ramses stood up and turned to face the group of men at the bottom of the steps. Her posture told them that Mika had been wrong in thinking she could be easily intimidated. They all saw it, save one and they stepped silently away from him lest they share his fate.

"Mika, you're right." She began making him smile thinking he had won. "You served my father and now me, but today you have overstepped yourself a bit. What makes you believe I would allow you to speak to me in the manner you have displayed here? Tell me, Mika, do you think you're man enough to take this chair away from me? Do you think because I'm a woman I'd be weak and do your bidding, old man?" With each question Ramses screamed louder and Mika lost his bravado he had possessed moments before. The anger that had coursed through him was now replaced with fear. This was the great warrior and defender Ramses that their foes spoke of on the battlefield.

"I will show mercy today, Mika, and forgive you for all the liberties you have taken with me. They will be forgotten." Ramses finished in a softer tone coming to a stop directly above the old advisor.

I knew that she was weak and will not punish me. With this victory it will garner me support to remove her from power, thought Mika. He turned and looked at his fellow advisors with an air of

superiority on his face. With their heads bowed the rest of the men took another step back from him.

"What you said about the queen though, Mika, that is unforgivable and not pardonable. The woman you see sitting here will be your queen. She has given me a son and in a few moons will gift me with another. They will bear my name and with that will come our throne, and yes, I would give all of this up for her," said Ramses pointing toward Sarah. She turned to face the seated woman on the last statement.

There was another angry outburst about to come out of Mika's mouth when he saw her move her hand. His mind barely registered the fluid motion before he felt the incredible pain of the dagger sticking out of his gut. When he looked up at her, Mika saw in Ramses's hand the twin to the one she had already thrown.

"Mika, there is your queen," Ramses said pointing again toward Sarah, "I think you owe her an apology for the harsh words you have said against her today. I insist." She looked at him tapping the blade in her palm as a sign that the apology was not negotiable.

"My queen, forgive an old man his tongue. I was merely giving the pharaoh my advice on the matter." He was able to get the statement out but his pain was making him pale and sweaty. It would be only a few moments more that he could remain standing he was sure.

"There, Mika, that wasn't too difficult I trust? Now you are ready to meet your ancestors having paid all your wrongs." Mika listened not fully comprehending the words. His last thought before the dagger split his heart in two was that the pharaoh had said she had forgiven him.

"Is there any other discussion on my joining this morning and how it will affect my ability to rule?" asked Ramses of the other men in the room.

"No, sire." All of the remaining advisors said simultaneously looking at the still body on the floor.

"Good, you are dismissed. Corby, are we ready to go?"

"Yes, sire."

Ramses waited a few heartbeats before turning and facing Sarah. Her fear came from what had just occurred. There were times when people had to see that there were consequences to challenging the throne. The right to rule belonged to only one, and at that moment it was hers.

When Ramses did turn around and face her future wife, she found Sarah crying. Silent large teardrops were falling down the beautiful face as Sarah looked at the body stretched out at the bottom of the stairs.

"No one has ever bothered to defend my honor before. Of course, I have no honor so why would they do so? Why do you do so now?" she asked Ramses, her eyes never leaving Mika's body.

"Sarah, had you chosen your lot in life then you would have to live with people whispering about your choices forever. But you did not choose your life, my love. You are a virtuous woman who was robbed of her dignity and virtue by circumstance, and no other reason. I mean to treat you as such, and so will everyone else," said Ramses moving closer to Sarah.

"Thank you, Ramses. You make it easy to believe that, and you make it easy for me to love you, sire."

"For the first time since my father, Sarah, I love someone more than that chair upon which you sit." Ramses told her as she came and kneeled before Sarah's throne. Reaching up and running her fingers along Ramses's jaw and then into her hair, Sarah pulled the kneeling woman in for a kiss.

"I love you, my queen," said Ramses when they pulled apart.

"And I love you. I came to get you for lunch. My parents and little Hawk are waiting in the column room. It is that all right?" asked Sarah.

"I would love nothing better, then after I would like your parents to join Hawk and I on an errand in the city."

"I'm sure they would love nothing better especially if our son gets to ride with you."

The lunch was another opportunity for Habish and Isa to relax around Ramses and get to know the person their daughter had fallen in love with. Ramses treated Sarah and Samuel with respect and love and it was easing their fears the more they saw. Sarah looked at Ramses with her son on her lap giving him advice on how to improve his aim with his slingshot, and it warmed her more than all that Ramses had given her up to that moment. Samuel was happy here, happy with this woman. Children couldn't fake such affection, and Ramses was proving to be a wonderful parent.

After their meal Ramses led them to the front of the palace where Corby and Denu again stood waiting with the teams of horses. Ramses had talked Sarah into coming with them after promising the future queen that they would go at a snail's pace. Corby and Denu each took one of Sarah's parents so that no one had to walk.

When they stopped in front of Larlis's house Ramses could feel the shivers travel down not only Sarah's body but also Hawk's as well. There were no pleasant memories here for either of them, and were not anxious to step foot on the grounds again.

"Trust me, you two, this house will hold nothing but happy memories for you in the future. I mean to make Larlis pay for his crimes against you, and the many others like you that came before. My father let this man get away with too much and that will end today." Ramses told them as she stepped off the back of the rig. The soldiers she had ordered were already surrounding the house and Larlis was arguing with the captain that there had been some mistake. When he saw Ramses relief flooded his face and he hurried in her direction.

"Sire, there has been an error on someone's part for I haven't committed any crime to be treated in such a manner. These soldiers have been here since this morning causing talk among my neighbors that I am a thief to the throne. Now that you are here I'm sure that this will be settled and you can dismiss these men. Tell me sire, how is the pleasure slave that I gifted you with?" asked Larlis.

Ramses slapped him hard across the face sending the weak man flailing to the ground. "Larlis, do not speak of your future queen in such a manner, it angers me. There is no mistake here little man, you are a criminal and deserve to pay for your crimes. From this day forth you will be sent to live and work in the quarries to pay your debt to Egypt. You will lose your house and all your possessions to become a sculptor. Just think, Larlis, you will learn to shape rock so that it will glorify me and my sons."

"That little bastard of mine is who you will call son, sire? You will become the joke of Egypt for putting a slave on the throne. Sarah is good, but not that good, sire, surely you could do better," said Larlis rubbing his cheek at her feet.

"Corby, have him taken to the quarries and put in the work force directed by Habish. I'm sure that Sarah's father will enjoy having the man that repeatedly raped his daughter work for him on a daily basis. And while her father teaches Larlis the art of carving, Habish can tell Larlis how comfortable he and Isa find their new home. It will be my gift to them for giving me the greatest gift I've ever received, the love of Sarah. Oh and, Corby, have his tongue cut out for his disrespect of the future queen and our children. Have the Hebrews do it, I'm sure that their methods are so much better than our own."

As Ramses gave the order Habish was standing right behind her listening to who this man was and why he was being treated the way he was. At first he had thought that the pharaoh got pleasure off the misery of others, but as he heard that this was the man that had treated his Sarah like a common slut, his anger started to grow. Larlis wasn't long for this world once he got into the quarry he would see to that himself for the sins he had committed against his daughter.

"Sire, it would be my pleasure to watch over this man for you and have his tongue taken care of. Thank you sire for the gift of the house, but Isa and myself don't need all of this we are simple people." Habish told her from a bowed position. It was all he could do to keep calm and not rip Larlis apart with his bare hands.

"Habish, do me a kindness and call me by my name, we will be family before to long so it would seem rude to have you call me sire. I give you and your wife the house so Sarah and Hawk will have an easier time of coming to see you as well as your friends. This is your home and anyone you wish is free to come and visit with you. I'll leave with you an escort of soldiers so that at any time you wish to come and see us they can take you, but don't think of this as a prison. Think of them as your neighborhood watch to keep you safe. You are after all the parents of the queen of Egypt, it would reflect poorly on me if something were to happen to you."

"Thank you, sire, I mean, Ramses. Now child if you don't mind I would like to take Larlis here to

meet some of my friends down at the smith's. A pair of hot tongs should do the trick."

"Habish, don't feel that you have to stop at the tongue, and don't feel like I need another sculptor. Larlis is my gift to you."

"Ramses, you are truly a good person. Come on, scum, I'm going to repay all the misery you visited upon my daughter." Habish picked Larlis up by the hair and started roughly pushing him down the street.

As she watched her father and Denu escort Larlis down to the slave compound, Sarah thought that revenge tasted like fine wine and was acquiring a taste for it. Thank goodness this was the last of her nightmares less she become some bloodthirsty shrew.

Isa and her daughter walked through the house with Mendos seeing what had to be done and what changes the ladies wished to make. Ramses promised them a stipend so that they could pay workers and not have to keep house slaves and was financing the changes to the house.

A few candle marks later Sarah found Ramses sitting under an olive tree with Hawk in the yard after walking through the house and exorcising her demons. Ramses was right, with her parents here living their last years in comfort instead of at labor gave Sarah's a sense of peace when she looked at the house that had been the setting for her worst dreams for over eight years. She had been so young when she had given birth to Samuel that she felt robbed of her childhood, but because of him Ramses had come into their lives. And with Ramses had come love and healing.

"Have I told you today, Ramses IV, Pharaoh of Egypt how much I love you and how wonderful you are?" she asked the woman reclining against the old tree.

"No and I believe I can have you whipped for that."

"Who would administer that punishment, sire?" asked Sarah. She pushed windblown black hair into place before sitting down next to Ramses.

"No one who would live to see another sunrise in my kingdom."

Samuel listened to their conversation and asked, "Hawk, are you going to join with my mother?"

"Yes, son, I am if that's all right with you. As the man responsible for her up to now it is my duty to ask for her hand in marriage. So what do you say, little one, do I have your approval?" asked Ramses holding her hand out to the boy.

"Yes, sire, but if she is to become your queen do I have to go away?"

Surprised at the question and why he would ask it Ramses told him, "No, son, that would make you Prince Hawk, future pharaoh of Egypt."

"Do I get my own chariot and horses?"

"Yes but I think your mother will make me wait a few years before I can give you that as a gift."

"What should I call you, sire, now that I can't call you Hawk?"

"What would you like to call me besides sire?"

"You said at grandmother's that you are my father. I always wanted one cause all the other kids I played with had one so could I call you papa?"

"Yes, son, if that's what you like I would love it," answered Ramses. She pulled the boy in for a hug before sending him back out to the yard in search of ammunition for his sling.

"You may have to kill a few more advisors over that one, my love, the first time he says that in the throne room. Just look at him, he loves you so much, almost as much as his mother." Sarah told her as they watched Hawk running around the yard ripping olives off the tree when he couldn't any more on the ground.

"The two of you have captured my heart, and for that I will be forever grateful," said Ramses bending over to steal a kiss. "I love you, my queen."

They sat together and watched their son run with the abandon and freedom of children wondering what the future would hold. The one thing they could count on was that their love would grow and bare fruit like the trees they sat beneath.

For many years to come Ramses and Sarah would return to the spot and watch their grandchildren pull the olives off the tree and aim at the many targets the yard provided. And the love they shared was the greatest legacy left by this pharaoh to her people and to her children.

The End

This is the first story of Ramses and Sarah Stay tuned for a joining and trouble from down the Nile.

The story of Ramses and Sarah continues in [Promise Me Forever](#).

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