

~ Promise Me Forever ~

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 and fall 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 but 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, if you find that a relationship between two women distasteful try eating pineapple it does wonders for that. For those of you out there who are allergic to pineapple I'm still researching an alternative for you, but seriously if you are underage and live someplace where that is not allowed move on, literally.

This is the sequel to "[To Capture a Heart](#)" so you might want to read that one first before tackling this one. A whole lot of people get killed in this one so be forewarned. There is violence.

I want to send out a very special thank you to my beta reader Jaden Rose. She made the clean up in this story so much easier for me, and gave me great encouragement to get it done so soon. I also want to thank all the great bards and readers who sent me all that great mail on the first story. It was much appreciated.

Now 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 forewarned 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. This is your Valentine's Day present this year baby. And thank you to all the wonderful bards that I have read for the last couple of years, this my thanks for all the wonderful moments of reading you have given me.

"Ha!" screamed Ramses over the hooves of the horses. She flicked the reins of the team encouraging them to go faster, much to the delight of Samuel, who stood in front of the pharaoh. Beside them, running a close second and third, were Corby and Denu. The wide avenue that led to the palace had been cleared for the afternoon giving the pharaoh, her son and her two friends the opportunity to do some friendly racing. Ramses had added a second set of reins to the team so her adopted son Samuel, now referred to as Hawk by the palace servants and guards, could learn to deal with a chariot rig and to give the boy something to hold onto.

The duo was winning the race as they reached the part of the road where the tall statues of former kings lined the sides ended. Now they were engaged in the second leg back to the palace. From within the palace, seated in the shade, the boy's mother sat watching from between her

fingers as she hid her face behind her hands with the maid Nina. "Does she have to go so fast?" asked Sarah.

"Child, you may have given birth to him and he looks so much like you, but now that he has taken up with those three overgrown children you have lost him forever. But I guess the gods blessed them with all that stupidity so that they go through life with a sense of fearlessness." Sarah laughed at the old woman's observations and was relieved to see all three rigs finally stopped. With the lather on the horses there would be no further racing today.

Watching her Ramses with her son Sarah had to laugh again. Ramses's life had changed as much as Samuel's and her own, going from having multiple women in her bed but not in her life, to having a child and a future wife. With Hawk perched on her shoulders Ramses gave instructions to the tenders that were there to gather the horses. It was for Hawk's benefit as well as the horse's, as Ramses wanted him not only to learn to care for the things that could someday save his life in battle but also to care for the people that would do the same.

"Now that the horses are being taken care of how about we go find your mother and see if she wants to go for a swim? This heat is getting unbearable," Ramses asked the child sitting on her shoulders.

"Yeah mama looked mad yesterday cause it was hot and she's getting fat too."

"Son, please don't tell her that, she's not fat she's going to have a baby. I promise she'll feel better once I move us all to the summer palace."

"Did you two leave any sand out on the road or did you insist on dragging it all in here with you?" asked Sarah when the two reached the top of the stairs.

"See? I told you, papa, she's mad," whispered Hawk.

"My queen, could I interest you in a swim to cool off?" asked Ramses as she dropped to her knees and bowed allowing Hawk to jump down.

"You were wrong, Nina, the gods blessed her with a very small amount of intelligence as well as all that stupidity," Sarah told the maid seated next to her as she eyed Ramses for her reaction. There was still a little fear in her heart that Ramses would one day just send her back to the life of a slave. Sarah wanted to engage Ramses's playful side, but how far to tease was still an unknown variable.

"Stupidity? Old woman, you are suppose to be up here singing my praises of how wonderful I am, not that I'm dull headed. My love, don't believe a word this woman tells you she's just jealous that I picked you over her," said Ramses.

"Oh hard choice, pharaoh, a young beautiful woman over your nursemaid. May all your decisions in life be so easy," Nina chortled.

Walking over on her knees Ramses stopped in front of the chair Sarah was sitting in but didn't lean in for a kiss. "Aren't you glad to see me, sire?" Sarah asked the king.

"Yes, majesty, I am."

"Not glad enough to kiss me? You've been gone all afternoon after all."

"You just told me I was dirty, my queen, I didn't want to offend."

Tapping the side of Ramses's head Sarah told her, "See, dull headed," before pulling the pharaoh forward for a kiss. Four moons together had made them comfortable with each other, but had failed to dampen down the desire that was always just below the surface.

"How about you let Corby and Denu take Hawk swimming and I give you a nice cool bath?" asked Sarah.

"If you want to cool me off, woman, you had better stop kissing me like that."

"I don't want to cool you off, sire, I want to clean you up and then after I do that I want to make you sweat."

"Sarah, my love, you are truly a gift from the gods."

Ramses sent the boys in the direction of the pools with a promise that she and Sarah would join them for dinner. Corby and Denu were enjoying their extra duty as mentors to the young prince, so the two royal guards went happily to their task. In his time in the palace Hawk had begun his training that would continue until the day he sat on the throne. His tutors enjoyed schooling the boy, finding that both Hawk and his mother were quick to learn and quick to question what they had been taught. The two small blondes were loved by all the servants that worked in the palace setting the stepping stones for the respect they would need to maintain their positions when they joined Ramses on the dais.

Ramses watched the three head out to their fun noticing that the tunic Hawk wore was a smaller version of the one she had on. The boy had blossomed under her roof, filling her with a sense of peace from the love the child shared with her. Hopefully the fates would give Ramses the time she needed to establish Hawk as her rightful heir so that the changes she had begun would take root. And time is what she needed to make the changes within the realm that would forever alter Egypt.

Feeling Sarah come up beside her, Ramses looked at her with sympathy for the growing burden Sarah was carrying. Deciding to wait for their joining until the birth of their second child, so that the adoption ceremony could take place the same day Ramses got a quick lesson on the many moods of an expectant mother. Careful not to laugh in front of Sarah, Ramses got incredible delight in watching Sarah do anything from walking to eating for about three people. The heat was slowing down Sarah's daily activities and eliminated her visits to her parent's new home now that the renovations were nearly complete.

Ramses called over one of the maids that served Sarah when they entered their quarters and gave her some quick directions which sent the young girl running from the room. "Sit down, my love, and let me take off your sandals, your feet seem a little swollen today."

"Yes, your son seems to be making me swollen all over and this heat is just maddening," said Sarah, falling heavily into a chair.

Ramses started with Sarah's sandals then moved to remove her shift. Sarah had taken to wearing the thinnest clothes she could find that were still respectable in public in an attempt to stay cool. Sitting before Ramses now naked, Sarah felt a bit self-conscious due to her condition, wondering if the pharaoh would find a new bedmate until the birth like Larlis had done. Smiling at her Ramses divested herself of her own clothing then kissed Sarah's belly before standing to pick the pregnant woman up.

"Ramses, my heart, don't, you're going to hurt yourself. I may be enormous but I can still walk."

"I carried you the day we met and I can carry you now so relax and enjoy the ride. I'm going to bathe you, feed you and put you down for a nap."

"But, Ramses, you have needs. I can see it in your eyes when you look at me but..." Sarah started crying before she could finish. She knew that even if Ramses did have sexual needs there was no way that the king would find her attractive. The memories of Larlis's harsh words when the future queen had been eight moons pregnant with Hawk came flooding back causing her to cry harder.

"Love, what's wrong?" asked Ramses. Having been lectured by Nina about the emotions that were a part of pregnancy, Ramses had a feeling that she knew what the problem was but would proceed with care, less she make the situation worse. Cradling Sarah in her arms she walked them into the bath, stretching out but keeping her arms around Sarah. Ramses sat holding Sarah until she felt the crying slow then with a cloth started to bathe the upset woman.

The rhythmic strokes along her skin calmed Sarah's emotions down but the fact of what had upset her was still in the back of her mind. Turning around so that she could face Ramses and return the favor, she felt the embrace around her midsection tighten keeping her reclining against her partner's chest.

"I want you to relax, my love, and let me take care of you. This condition isn't easy especially at this time of year and I want to thank you for doing this for us. To tell the truth I would rather fight a legion of men alone than have to bear it. That should tell you which of us is braver." Ramses spoke in a tone meant to soothe Sarah's body as well as her mind. "You have been so wonderful through all of this and one more full moon you will give me the third best gift I have ever gotten."

"The third, love?" asked Sarah.

"Yes. The first was your love, the second was Hawk and this child will be the third. But that does not mean I love them any less than I love you. I want to be there always for all three of you. I have watched you since you came to live with me and my love for you grows with each passing moment."

"I don't know why you would want to look at me much less watch me for any length of time. I'm as big as one of your horses. I just know that you will seek out relief in someone else's bed and I don't blame you, but it is killing me inside to think about it. I have no claim on you, Ramses, so I'm sorry for burdening you with my insecurities."

"Do I have a claim on your heart, Sarah?" asked Ramses.

"You have not only claimed it, you own it. My life with you here is beyond what I ever could have imagined and it's not because of the palace and everything in it, but you. To have you love me is the greatest thing that could have happened to me."

"What makes your claim any different than my own? I know that I own your heart, Sarah, but you must know by now that you have mine as well. I love you, my queen, with all that my spirit can give you. There is room for you and our children in my heart and no others.

I see my future in your eyes and in the happiness of my son. How can I look at you? Easy. I look at you because that is what I do when I want to see great beauty. The sight of you now doesn't repulse me, love. It does what it has from the moment I first looked at you it excites me. Yes you are a little different but that's a good thing. Do you know our baby moves around in there while you sleep? I think that he's ready to come out and go for a ride with Hawk and me. Sarah, you take my breath away, my love, so don't doubt my feelings."

"But I am always so tired, Ramses, and I can't help but feel that I am neglecting you."

"Sarah, I have needs, that's true, but for now those needs have changed. I need for you to be comfortable. I need for you to be calm and I need for you to be well rested." Running the cloth over her own body to wash away the sweat and dirt Ramses then lifted Sarah out of the bath. Having sent the attendants away knowing that their presence made Sarah nervous and jealous, Ramses dried her lover then her own body. Finished with that task she lifted Sarah into her arms again and carried her over to the open part of the balcony that overlooked the river. No matter what time of year it was there was a breeze blowing off the water here. That was why the architects had built the pharaoh's rooms here.

The young maid had followed her directions well. There were plush pillows placed on the floor along with their lunch and the sheer linens had been drawn to give them privacy but did not prevent the air from flowing through. Laying Sarah down Ramses poured them some juice before joining her. For the next hour she hand fed Sarah lunch, throwing in just the right amount of kisses and hugs that were meant to convey affection but not to arouse.

"Well, majesty, I promised I would bathe you and I have. I promised I would feed you and that is now accomplished since we ate everything Nin had brought up from the kitchens. And I

promised to put you down for a nap, so close your eyes and enjoy the breeze."

"You're leaving me?" asked Sarah getting upset again.

"No, love, I am going to sleep with you. I need all the rest I can get so that later I can chase our son around getting him tired enough to go to sleep." The answer calmed Sarah down again and she turned on her side ready to go to sleep. She slipped into the nap with a smile on her face when she felt the large warm body cuddle up behind her and the strong arm pull her closer. Her condition prevented them from sleeping normally which was Ramses on her back and Sarah on top of her, but she enjoyed going to sleep and waking with the big hand covering her midsection. When Ramses held her like this it even quieted the baby, letting Sarah get some rest.

When she awoke some time later in the quiet of the cocoon they were in, Sarah reveled in the gifts that Ramses had given her. Not the material things the pharaoh had provided, but the thoughtfulness in her actions when it came to her comfort. She closed her eyes again feeling the warm breath of the pharaoh on her neck and the feel of her skin along her back. Ramses was right in that the breeze coming from the river was making her feel better and the nap had left her well rested. When Sarah opened her eyes again she almost cried out when she saw they were no longer alone.

Sitting next to them was a beautiful young woman with brown hair and two beautiful blue eyes. Only one other she knew had eyes like that and she was still asleep behind her. The woman smiled as if reading her thoughts and Sarah was surprised that the usually alert Ramses was still asleep and not up and questioning this woman.

"Sarah, she sleeps because she dreams of you and your two children but don't worry I mean you no harm. My child has begun down the path of her destiny and I came to see the woman who will help build her legacy."

"It might be best if you left and came back when the pharaoh is, well not asleep," explained Sarah. Sarah thought of Ramses's reaction to waking up and finding this woman sitting there watching them, it would not be good if she had to guess.

"Sarah, like I said I am here to see you, not Ramses and our time is short so shall we begin?" Sarah could only nod her consent thinking the less noise she made the better the situation would be.

"Has Ramses ever told you of Risea?"

"Yes, Risea was Ramses's mother. She died a short time after giving birth leaving the pharaoh with only the child as a reminder of the love they had shared," said Sarah.

"Does she talk of her often?" asked the stranger.

"As the birth of our child draws closer Ramses speaks of her more often and her frustrations because she never got to know her. The fear of my death because of this pregnancy is in her heart

or so Nina explained." Sarah talked to this woman in a low voice feeling like she could trust her.

"Sarah, you can trust me and I have come to bring you a gift. Do not be afraid but I am Risea."

"That can't be. You're dead," said Sarah as she moved to get up and wake Ramses.

"Sarah, you know in your heart I speak the truth, so listen to why I'm here. You will live a good life with my daughter. You are going to be the guiding spirit who will help her to bring peace to our people. Stop thinking that you are inferior and take your rightful place at her side. How do you believe that a pharaoh of Egypt came to love a slave? What brought my child to your door?"

"My son brought her to me," answered Sarah.

"Hawk was my messenger, waking Ramses's heart with a rock. Ramses was in the place where no pharaoh had ever walked because she was drawn there by a dream I sent her to find you. The love you share now is what her father and I wanted for her. It is the same love we shared from the moment we met and it is the type of love you will experience for an eternity.

As a tribute to what you have given Ramses I come to you today with a gift from Isis. The child you carry now will be given Ramses's spirit. Your child will become the next pharaoh of Egypt."

"My queen, Ramses will soon announce at our joining that Hawk will be her rightful heir so you are right, and if your influence brought this about I thank you," said Sarah. She was amazed Ramses hadn't awoken through this whole monologue considering that the queen wasn't speaking in a low tone. Ramses's hand hadn't moved from their child and Sarah could still feel her breath on her neck so she wasn't concerned.

"Yes, Sarah, Samuel the Hawk will be her heir but he will not be pharaoh and by his own choice. Ramses was right about the child you carry, it is a boy and he will follow his parents to the throne. Look at my child's hand, Sarah, Larlis may have planted the seed but you and Ramses will reap the harvest with a child of your own," Risea directed Sarah's attention down her naked torso to Ramses's hand. "Now put your hand with hers," the spirit spoke again. From their joined hands a bright light began to glow and Sarah could feel the warmth the light was generating.

"This child will be ours?" asked Sarah.

"Yes, Sarah. In a half a moon when you have settled into the summer palace your son will be born. But take care of your house, child, for there is danger living near it and it is waiting for its time to strike." With that Risea was gone waking Sarah up. She pushed sleep aside and looked to the spot the queen had been sitting. Her tears began again when she thought *it was just a dream. I wanted it so much to be real.* Turning around Sarah looked into the blue eyes she loved and wished all the harder that what she had seen had not been a dream.

"My sweet Sarah, the sleep was suppose to dry your eyes, not make them worse. I think it is time to move you up the river and out of this heat."

"I'm sorry, my warrior, I just had a wonderful dream and I was just sad to wake up and find it was only such. I love you, Ramses, and I'll follow you anywhere."

Ramses kissed her softly and echoed Sarah's declaration of love. She traced Sarah's bottom lip with her tongue asking the small woman to let her in. Sarah opened her mouth happily, knowing by Ramses's actions and the look in her eyes that she still found her attractive and desirable. It wasn't just idle talk on the pharaoh's part to make a pregnant woman feel better. Still behind Sarah Ramses took their still joined hands and dragged them down Sarah's body stoking Sarah's desires. By the time the two hands reached between her legs Sarah was wet and ready.

"I want to make you feel good, my love, but I don't want to hurt you or the baby so stop me if I do," Ramses whispered in her ear.

"The only way you would hurt me, my heart, is if you were to stop," Sarah answered. Pulling Sarah closer into her body Ramses made her more comfortable so that Sarah could open her legs. Keeping their fingers together, Ramses dipped them into the wetness between Sarah's legs searching for the hard clit.

"Look, highness, we have found something else that's swollen," Ramses teased her.

"Yes, sire, ah...I believe it needs immediate...immediate attention." Taking her time Ramses stroked the nub with long slow strokes. Sarah's bottom was pressed right over her own need so Ramses started pumping up into her with the same cadence her fingers had set.

The hand between her legs, the feel of Ramses under her and the panting in her ear were driving Sarah mad. She pushed down into Ramses harder and faster which made the hand between her legs act in kind. "Faster, warrior, yes like that. I'm so close lover, make us come." Sarah told her as she slammed her legs together trapping their fingers. Ramses pumped a few more times then joined her in falling over that edge of total bliss. They stayed in their tangled embrace with their hands cupping Sarah's sex until their breathing and heartbeats got back to normal.

"You were right, love, you did tell me you were going to make me sweat and you did," Ramses told her as she kissed her neck.

"I wouldn't want you to think your wife doesn't keep her promises," said Sarah.

"Ramses, do you remember my first night here when you asked me what my dreams were?" asked Sarah.

"Yes, my love, I do. The fact I had gotten so angry with you still makes me feel bad."

"Love, you have nothing to be sorry for it was just a misunderstanding and considering our current position, one that should be forgotten. I asked you that because my dreams are changing and I was wondering what my role is going to be?"

"Sarah, you will be queen and with that role comes the obligation of the people of Egypt just like

the one I have because I am pharaoh. You are also mother to the heirs to the throne, which means even more obligations to the people you will rule. Molding Hawk and this new baby into effective rulers will take our lifetime. When it is his time, Hawk must possess all the wisdom and knowledge we can give him so that he can make good decisions."

"During my father's reign we fought to expand our lands. Tribes like Neftu's have been allowed to remain on the lands that have been conquered but they answer to me. With my father teachings, I learned to be a warrior and a leader of men. As king my priorities have changed, I want peace and I want to love you. For those that think that is weak, they will find out that the warrior sleeps but is not dead. I won't tolerate any disrespect and I hope that the head advisor Mika will be remembered as an example of that."

"Your role Sarah is to stand by my side and help me rule. I want also to serve you majesty by being a good spouse and partner. I want to love you, raise children with you and I want to make you happy."

Sarah's eyes swelled with tears again at the long proclamation, the one thing she had learned in her time with Ramses was that words weren't her strong suit. "Ramses, it would be enough for me to just be your wife the rest is unimportant. I only hope I don't disappoint you. You own me, sire, not because I was a slave but because you too have captured my heart. I am your woman, and no throne or realm will ever change that." Sarah stopped talking and turned her head toward Ramses after her last statement so that they could share a kiss. She had started the conversation to find a way to tell Ramses about the dream. Sarah didn't think Ramses's would be angry, she was just unsure what the reaction would be.

"What's the matter?" asked the deep voice in her ear when the kiss ended.

"What makes you think there's something wrong?" Sarah answered the question with a question of her own.

"Because your face is all pinched and the baby is trying to kick his way out of here."

"You think you're so smart," Sarah told Ramses teasingly.

"Not only that, I'm good looking too. Now come on an tell me what's wrong." Ramses teased back.

Sarah told Ramses her dream and all that Risea had told her. The pharaoh let the woman in her arms tell her story without interruption. The description that Sarah had provided of the woman in her dream painted a vivid picture of the woman that visited her own dreams. Ramses never knew if the image her mind had provided was what her mother looked like since she had no memory of her. Sarah took the silence to mean that Ramses was some how displeased with what she had said.

"Now what's wrong?" Ramses asked. She had been thinking of her own dreams of her mother when she felt the small body against her tense.

"Are you mad?"

"No, love, I was just thinking it seems logical that my mother would come to you in a dream. You are going to make her a grandmother for the second time and if what Nin says about her is true, she loved children. It would have been wonderful to have known her, and if she had lived I'm certain that she would have loved you, Samuel and this baby."

"Now I have some packing to do to get you moved before the birth of my son. I was born in the summer palace and that is where the new pharaoh should greet the world don't you think? Did she tell you why Samuel wouldn't take the throne?" Ramses asked as an after thought.

"No, love she didn't, we'll have to wait and see what other plans he has for his life. Maybe he's destined to be a horse breeder if his papa keeps him in a chariot for most of his life."

"His papa has these two blondes in her life who look at her with big green eyes and I swear I find my head nodding yes before their request is spoken. That boy is as hard to say no to as his mother is and we both know I have no power to do that. If the truth be known, I have become your slave if only to see that smile." Ramses told her then kissed Sarah again.

The sun was beginning to set turning the air cooler than was good for Sarah to be out in. Ramses covered them both with a blanket stealing a few more moments with Sarah before the world intruded on them. Sarah felt the lips on her neck curve up in a smile and wondered what Ramses found so humorous. The king smiled after hearing the distinctive footsteps that had been around her all her life. It was the only person that would interrupt them in such an intimate setting.

"You'll definitely have to join with her now, Ramses. Doesn't the fact she's getting ready to give birth tell you Sarah might not want you pawing her all the time? You should be ashamed of yourself," Nina continued her fussing as she moved around the room picking up, ignoring the raised dark brow on the face that was propped up on a large hand. Ramses was about to get up when she felt the small tug that kept her in place.

"Thank you for your concern, Nina, but I happen to like her paws right where they are," Sarah told her sweetly taking one of the big hands and kissing it.

"Don't encourage her, child, or you will be forced to go through life with her plastered to your back like that."

Ramses laughed as she rolled onto her back before sitting up. Leaving Sarah in Nina's care, she dressed and went out to the docks to supervise the packing of the barges that would transport them to the cooler climate of the northern Nile.

The entourage that traveled with them would be large, as all that did business with the throne went with them. For a few months the villages outside the summer palace swelled in population. The larger more affluent merchants kept summer homes of their own so that they would be close to the pharaoh.

Corby stood in the middle of the chaos, directing the move so that it would be as smooth and as safe as possible for Ramses and her family. When the slaves that had been waiting for their next set of directions dropped to their knees and bowed, Corby shook his head and turned. "I'll never get anything done now. Why don't you go be pharaoh somewhere else for awhile?"

"Did you have lunch with your mother or something? I am here to see if you packed Habish and his wife's things as well as collected them from their house?"

"Yes, sire, Denu left to get them as soon as he dropped off a very grumpy little boy who wanted to go," said Corby.

"Good man, Corby, I'm sure it was the lure of another ride that upset Hawk more than anything you or Denu did. Since you are so in control here could you tell me what flat bread is and where I can find some?"

Hearing that Corby didn't answer the slave kneeling at their feet took a chance. "Sire, you can find it in any home in the Hebrew section would you like for me to get you some?"

Ramses looked down on the man thinking that his profile looked familiar somehow. "Do I know you?" she asked him.

"I won the race against you the day that you brought Sarah back to see her parents, sire."

"What's your name?"

"Isaac, sire." "Isaac, I would be in your debt if you were to do that. It is for your queen who is at the moment having cravings for things that I don't know how to find. Perhaps it is some sort of test on her part." Ramses called over one of the guards and gave him directions to bring Isaac to the slave village and return with him once he had procured some bread. With a smile for Isaac and Corby, she walked back toward the palace.

Habish and Isa arrived as the sun set, anxious to see their daughter. When the joining had been postponed Sarah's father had grown cool toward Ramses thinking that it was not the pharaoh's intention to marry his daughter. To have the king so readily embrace a slave sounded like a children's tale to him, and Habish could see this one would have no happy ending. His daughter would have a home for her children but she would have no honor and his heart felt weighted down by the knowledge.

The palace servants directed them to the room that overlooked the city where they had dined with Ramses and Sarah before and asked them to wait. Ramses arrived before Hawk and Sarah to meet with the older couple. Their demeanor with her had not gone unnoticed, and the timing on when it began had also not escaped her notice. What she had planned for tonight would undoubtedly make her ancestors angry from the grave but it would make Sarah happy as well as

her family. It was Ramses's gift to their traditions.

When she entered the room Habish and Isa bowed from their sitting positions showing the proper respect. *At least I get that*, thought Ramses as she took her place at the head of the table. "How are you two doing?" she asked trying to make small talk until the rest of the guests arrived.

"Fine thank you, sire. How is Sarah since we last saw her?" asked Isa.

"Sarah is a large, hot, unhappy woman who can't seem to get enough to eat," said Sarah from the doorway. Her parents got up to embrace her and bid her hello as Sarah smiled over their shoulders at Ramses.

"Papa!" yelled Hawk from behind his mother. He waited in Ramses's arms for his grandparents to stop fussing over his mother before interrupting them.

"How was your swim today?" asked Ramses.

"Corby, Denu and me had fun today, papa. They taught me how to dive off the dock and splash lots of water everywhere."

"That's good, but remember that is for the dock and not for the bath. Nina will never let me hear the end of it if you start doing that."

"She said she wanted to talk to you about that after we eat cause I did it already." The boy told her as he smiled and rested his forehead against hers.

"Sire, I'm sorry to intrude but there is someone here named Isaac with a guard and he has something for you," relayed the maid that had stepped behind her.

"Send him in before your queen lives another moment unsatisfied." Ramses laughed. Sarah raised an eyebrow in question as the young man entered the room with a basket. When he pulled off the cloth and Sarah saw the object of her cravings she laughed at the lengths Ramses would go to for her happiness. Maybe this would allay her father's concerns on the matter and he would share more than pleasantries with the pharaoh.

"Thank you, Isaac, make sure the guard brings you back home. Nina, give Isaac his basket back with maybe a tradeoff from the palace for the kindness he has shown his queen." Ramses directed as she looked at Habish and his wife. *See I'm not all bad*. The look of surprise on the older man's face almost made her laugh out loud, but for the sake of propriety she held her feelings in. Sarah walked up to her giving her a full smile of her own as she stretched up to give Ramses a kiss for her thoughtfulness. *Wait to see what I have planned next old man, we'll have to call the healers in on that one*, Ramses thought as a small chuckle did manage to escape. *She's up to something*, was the only thought running through Sarah's mind as she watched her lover act almost giddy.

When Nina returned, Ramses called Corby over and gave him the word that would set her

surprise in motion. Corby proceeded to clear the area surrounding the room they were in of all palace guard and servants. Ramses wanted to give this to Sarah and her family, but she didn't want the headaches that would come from the advisors finding out what was to take place. *I would hate to have to kill any more of them, makes me look tyrannical* thought Ramses as she pictured the group of older men who argued the merits and downfall of every decision she made. When Corby came back into the room and nodded, Ramses proceeded.

"I am glad to have you all here today before we head out tomorrow. Upon the birth of our second child, Sarah and I will be joined in a ceremony that honors Egyptian traditions. At that joining Hawk and the new baby will be named as my heirs and thus heirs to the throne. In my heart I am already joined with Sarah and her children."

"Sarah, when we met, I promised you happiness if you gave me the chance to win your heart. I love you and what I am about to do I do, for you and your family, but before we go any further there is an important question that I want to ask you. Sarah, I love you and I love our children. I pledge to you my heart, my name and my sword you will always be cherished, loved and protected. Knowing that, would you join with me?" Ramses asked as she looked at Sarah.

"Yes, Ramses, I would join with you without hesitation. I love you too, sire, and my pledge to you is that I will always be at your side until only death parts us. When that happens I will wait for you in the afterlife and there we will be together forever." Sarah responded with tears in her eyes. Ramses kissed her gently then turned to Sarah's father.

"Habish, I will spend my life protecting them and giving them the best life I can make for them. Four moons ago, I asked you for Sarah's hand in joining and you were gracious enough to grant me my wish. Tonight I ask again and I am prepared to join with her in the traditions of the Hebrews in your ceremony. It will be witnessed by the people in this room and by your God, but no other. I will ask your word that it not leave this room after it is done and I don't think I have to explain as to why that has to be."

"Habish, I ask you again for your daughter's hand and for the right to claim her children."

Habish and Isa looked at her as if to see when the pharaoh would start laughing at the joke she had just proposed. Ramses was in love but not enough to wed Sarah according to their traditions. Doing so would be the only way in their eyes that Sarah's children would not be bastards and by history, Egypt's pharaoh's cared nothing about that. He turned around when he heard someone else enter the room, and seeing who it was made Habish start to cry. Denu led an old man by the elbow into their presence and it surprised no one considering what she had done already when Ramses bowed to him and he not to her.

"Habish, I tell you if you live long enough, God will show you miracles. When this young man carried me up those front steps I thought that I was entering the gates of heaven, so I'm glad to see all of you because that means that I am at least still alive."

"Rabbi, there is no other way to describe the last few moons than to say miraculous. I am honored by your being here to join my daughter Sarah this evening." Turning to Ramses Habish

continued, "Thank you, sire, for this gift. I ask your forgiveness in doubting your sincerity in your love for my daughter. I have been taught all my life to believe that God works in mysterious ways and it is not our place to question why, only to have faith and follow. I have faith in you and in your promises to me so yes, I grant your claim to her and to her children."

Nina watched as the Rabbi went through the Hebrew ceremony that would join Ramses in Sarah in their traditions. Coming from the slave quarters herself long ago as a child to work in the palace, she never thought she would see the day when a pharaoh would stand and go through the rites and speak the words that were necessary. The maid knew that Ramses didn't believe in the God of the Hebrews but from the look on Isa and Habish's face that didn't really matter. It was that the king was willing to give a little away of her own beliefs for the woman she loved. That made Nina smile, knowing that she had cast an influence on Ramses's heart and mind. *Risea, you would be proud of the woman she has become and the woman she has found to share her life. I owe you much and I hope that you are pleased in how I have kept my promise to you. You are gone, my beloved queen, but your goodness lives on in Ramses.*

When it was done and they sat with the holy man to eat, Habish reached over and clasped Ramses's shoulder. It wasn't exactly what he had planned for Sarah but now in the eyes of God she was wed and her children had names so it wasn't that bad. It was a shame thought Habish that his daughter couldn't have children with this woman she joined with. Ramses was a beautiful woman who would have had beautiful children. God had been gracious enough to have Hawk favor Sarah and not that animal that had sired him and Habish wished the same for this baby.

"Sire, what is your prediction for this baby? Is it going to be a boy or a girl?" asked Habish. His demeanor toward the pharaoh had noticeably changed immediately after the ceremony that had taken place. Isa was sitting next to Sarah talking and touching her stomach feeling the baby move.

"Sarah will gift me with another son, Habish, in half a moon." Ramses told him with certainty.

"Are you a mystic, sire?"

"No, Habish, I'm just always right, one of the enjoyments I have as pharaoh."

"Don't forget good looking, my warrior," whispered Sarah into Ramses ear.

"That is only important when it comes to you, my love. Shall we retire for the evening?" asked Ramses.

"Thank you all for coming this evening and I want to thank the pharaoh for making it possible. We have an early start tomorrow, so goodnight." Sarah announced to everyone. Corby followed them back to their quarters as Denu had left to bring back the Rabbi.

In another part of the palace one of the guards that had been dismissed by Corby earlier in the evening left his post. Walking toward the barges that were standing ready for the boarding of the

royal family the next day, he was vigilant for the person he was there to meet. Toward his left another soldier dressed in the uniform of a royal guard stepped out of the shadows to get his attention.

"What was going on in there?"

"I'm sorry, sire, but Corby dismissed us and there were no guards present in the room except he and his brother Denu."

"Idiot, you should have snuck back there and looked to see what was happening. Ramses is up to something and I want to know what it is. The rest of my men are waiting up the river and I want no surprises when they attack. It is time for someone to sit on the throne that will honor Egypt's traditions and not give them away for sake of bedding a Hebrew slut. Ramses has much to answer for and it is time for revenge. Now get back to your post before you are missed."

The soldier walked away thinking that the man had lost his mind. Trying to kill the pharaoh for whatever reason would result in death for anyone that tried. To go to Corby or Denu now and tell them of what awaited them up the river would only uncover his own role in the plot, so he went back to his post and prayed that the pharaoh would never become wise to his involvement.

From the balcony of their room, Ramses looked down toward the river not seeing the two men talking in the shadows. Something had pulled her from bed, but looking out over the water she didn't hear or see anything out of the ordinary. Pulling on her robe, she went out in search of Corby with the intention of sending him on a walk down by the docks. Her father had taught her long ago not to ignore your gut and hers was telling her that something was wrong.

By the time Corby and a contingent of guards went down to the river and search, the small boat carrying the rebel was gliding down the dark waters of the Nile. He would have to travel most of the night to reach his camp so that when Ramses entourage arrived in two days time they would be ready to strike.

"Ramses, are you coming to bed?" Sarah asked from the darkness of the room. She had been watching Ramses standing at the balcony for awhile, and by the set of the broad shoulders something was wrong.

"Sorry, love, I thought I heard something and it woke me up. I was just waiting for Corby to come back and tell me if he found anything down there."

"Come back here and keep me company until he comes back. You know that he and Denu would never let anything happen to you." Ramses walked back to the bed and joined Sarah. They spent some time talking about the upcoming trip and their future plans together. Corby reported back that all seemed clear but that did not put to rest Ramses feelings. The safety of Sarah and the children was paramount in her mind, so she would double the guard around them tomorrow just as a precaution.

In the morning Ramses went down and did a personal inspection of all the vessels that would be

near the royal barge. Her relationship with Sarah was still not well received by many within the realm, and until she had wiped away that sentiment Ramses would not relax her stance when it came to Sarah and Hawk's safety.

She was in the middle of a conversation with Corby about guard placement when she felt a tug on the hem of her tunic. Looking down she saw Hawk standing there waiting his turn to speak. Seeing that she had stopped talking the little boy jumped right in to the conversation. "Papa, you promised me to practice today before we left but you are taking too long down here and I got tired of waiting for you."

"Can't have that now can we? Come on, Hawk, let's head to the weapons room so you can pick your poison before we go. It will give us something to do so that we stay out of your mother's way. Corby, take care of those men for me and be ready to go by the time the sun is high, we want a favorable tide and that would be it."

Corby bowed slightly and headed to carry out his orders. "It will be taken care of, sire. Majesty, have a good time."

Sarah watched them coming back from the river from the balcony, knowing where Ramses and Hawk were headed. The thought of her son learning to wield any type of weapon scared her, but both Nina and Ramses explained that to master them all the child would have to start at an early age. Ramses's family had never been figureheads on the throne and each was expected to prove themselves in battle before the crown was handed off to the next generation. To show cowardliness on the battlefield would be to show it in your decisions.

"Stop your fretting, child, it is nothing new that will begin today. As gentle as Ramses is with you and that boy is as fierce as she is on the battlefield, so say my sons. She bent to our traditions, Sarah, you must give her the freedom to practice her own. Samuel is her son now too and he must start in his lessons to follow her. In the end you and I both know that to so will be a better life for him than it would have been to live the life that had been destined for him. He will rule instead of pulling on the stones that build the city and think of the ramifications for our people if he does. Ramses is kind but to have Samuel on the throne the lives of so many could be made that much more tolerable." Nina told Sarah from behind her.

"But he is my son, Nina, and he is only a baby. Babies don't play with weapons, it isn't right."

"Don't you trust Ramses?" asked Nina.

"Nina, don't ever ask that of me again. That question has but one answer and that will never change. I trust her with my life."

"Then you must bend on this one, child, even if you have doubts. For the sake of your relationship and your love for her don't question her on this issue. You may not like it and for all we know she might not like it, but it has to be so accept it. Samuel's life won't be all war games, Sarah. His education will be balanced so that his first choice won't be battle, it will be words, that is Ramses's way. It was the way of her father but not until the winter of his life. As a young man

it was all he thought about and as a father it gave him such pride to see Ramses win time after time. It earned her the respect of every soldier that fought with her and erased all doubts as to whether a woman could be pharaoh."

"Her success now comes not from force of her hands but from the force of her words. It surprises me that for one that speaks so little could impact so much when she does talk. You have improved her on that I think. She talks more now in a day than she did in a moon. Don't worry anymore, Sarah, you two balance each other. Samuel will have no choice but to grow to be a good man in a home that has so much love for him."

"Thank you, Nina, but I don't think that I will ever stop worrying about either of them and it will only add to my load when this one comes along."

"You are a wife and mother, Sarah, is there any other life for us but one of worry?"

In the practice room Ramses stood in the middle with Hawk at her side. She looked at the walls lined with every weapon used in battle and it brought back a flood of memories. The hours she spent in here with her father teaching her to use every one of them were some of her most cherished. It was in this room and its twin in the summer palace that they had talked, cried, learned each other's secrets and learned the art of war. Here was where Ramses showed her father how strong she was not only physically but also in character. She had proven his choices right and she loved him for never cursing the gods for not giving him a son.

Some of the small weapons here that were used for beginners had been in her family for generations. They were all made of wood so that it decreased the risk of injury until the student was ready to move up to the next size and finally, to the weapons that would be issued to them for life. It was her son's turn now and she would let him pick where they would begin their lessons. After an explanation that covered the use of everything he saw, she stood and let him touch the set that he would be using for the next couple of years.

"Hawk, I want you to pick which one you would like to begin with. You will have to learn to use all of them so we might as well begin with what you would like to do the most."

"Papa, which of these are you the best with?"

"The sword, son."

"Then I would like to begin with the staff."

Ramses looked at him trying to figure out his logic and was coming up at a loss so she asked.

"Why ask me that then pick the staff?"

"Because the sword is what I am going to be best at so I'm gonna save it for last. That way I get all this other stuff out of the way and I can do everything to be like you." It made Sarah feel better when she walked in and found Ramses laughing so hard she was crying, and Hawk was at her side laughing for all he was worth. It didn't matter to the little boy what his papa found so

funny it was just nice that he could make her laugh.

Noticing Sarah, Ramses wiped her face and walked over to her wife. "You are not allowed in here, highness."

"And why is that, sire?"

"Because this is where I will get to know my sons. The place they will tell me their problems, their successes, their secrets and their loves. No queens allowed for all that."

"But I thought they were my sons too?" asked Sarah.

"They are at anytime they are outside this room. Just this one time you can stay so you can see that I'm not out to hurt the boy."

"Thank you, love, I'm just worried about him," Sarah confessed.

Ramses made Sarah comfortable at the corner of the room where she could see what Hawk would be learning. Pulling her staff off the wall and handing him a smaller version Ramses went through the practice moves with Hawk letting him familiarize himself with the weapon. It would be weeks before they touched them together in a sparring match, first the boy would have to learn the moves that when done fluidly enough looked like a dance. After learning three of the maneuvers Ramses was pleased with Hawk's progress. For a young child he moved with grace and confidence. He showed Ramses that he had the potential to become a great warrior with the right guidance.

They headed to the barge together, moving slowly in deference to Sarah's condition. After double checking the area and the barges Corby gave the go ahead to push off and begin their journey to the summer palace. With good weather and good tides they would arrive in three to four days. While Sarah slept, Ramses worked with Hawk and showed him more moves with the staff. The student watched his teacher with rapt fascination as she moved through the whole routine. It would take time he thought but he would be that good and make his papa proud of him.

By nightfall they had made good time and had stopped for the evening meal to be prepared. Ramses and Sarah stayed on board the barge while Hawk explored the shore with Denu and some of the others that had disembarked. Sarah was tired and was content to spend the evening reclining against Ramses. The pharaoh was telling her a story from her childhood and Sarah was laughing at the similarities Hawk seemed to share with his adopted mother. Imagining raising her son alone with the amount of energy he always had in abundance made her feel pity for Ramses's father, who had done the job alone. It was amazing to the small woman to watch Hawk grow up and change so dramatically in such a short time. Ramses had allowed the boy the freedom to let his rambunctious nature loose and it had allowed the boy to grow in confidence. Ramses kept telling her it would be what he needed when he became a leader.

"You sounded like a handful, sire," Sarah told her with a smile in her voice.

"You mean you don't think I'm a handful now, wife?" asked Ramses.

"Yes, but with a few well positioned moves on my part and you are clay in my hands," answered Sarah.

"Do tell?" Ramses responded as she dipped her head for a kiss.

"Ramses, promise me you'll never leave me. I don't want to live my life without your love and if something happened to you I don't think that I could bare it," said Sarah.

"My love, I promised you a happy life and I have no intention on backing out of that now. My love is yours forever just as I hope yours is mine. Now lie back my love and get comfortable while I go out and find our son."

"Promise me, warrior," Sarah demanded more forcefully.

"I promise you, love. Forever."

Propping Sarah up on some pillows to make her comfortable, Ramses headed out to shore to find their son and bring him in for bed. It had gotten late and she still hadn't shaken off the feeling from the night before that something wasn't right. Being out here in the open even surrounded with soldiers left the pharaoh edgy and she was anxious to get Hawk back to where she could keep an eye on him.

She found them around a fire listening to some of the men tell stories of their battles with the pharaoh back before she took the crown. Hawk listened as if memorizing the tales he was hearing about the woman that was his papa. He was happy to see the subject of the stories walking toward him, but he wasn't pleased that she was there to take him to bed. Bidding the men good night Ramses carried him back to their barge and listened as the boy retold all he had heard that night. A fleeting thought crossed her mind as she listened to him that before too long he would be too big for her to carry him this way. Because of her condition he was already too heavy for Sarah to carry him so the boy had gravitated toward her for the affection he craved. Ramses made a promise to herself not to make the boy feel left out once the new baby arrived. If it was the will of the gods that they had to grow up she would savor every moment of it having missed so much of Hawk's life already.

"Is he asleep?" whispered Sarah.

"I finally had to knock him over the head with my staff but yes, he is asleep."

"What!" came the heated whisper from the small woman on the bed.

"Calm down, love, I was only kidding. The men got him all riled up out there by the fire telling him war stories of my glory days and the boy was a little wound up. I told him another story about border negotiations and that part of ruling he didn't find so fascinating, it put him right to

sleep."

"You are mean," teased Sarah as she watched Ramses get undressed for the night. Looking at her spouse naked was something she never grew tired of. Ramses had a powerful physique that gave her the appearance of motion even when she was standing still. Considering how muscular the pharaoh was, Sarah knew that all that power was capable of extreme gentleness and give the kind of pleasure she wasn't aware existed before she met Ramses.

"But you still love me anyway. Imagine that? Move over woman and let me get in there. You need to sleep and I need to keep thinking about those border negotiations."

"Why, love, are you having problems along our borders?" asked Sarah sorry that the teasing had ended so soon.

"No, but if you keep looking at me like that we might scare a few fish out of the water with the noise." Ramses told her as her hand grazed Sarah's hard nipples. The quick intake of breath told Ramses that she could interest Sarah in just that.

"Is there some fish shortage that I don't know about that scaring a few of them would lead us into famine?" Sarah asked feeling the sensations Ramses was causing in her breast to shoot in between her legs.

"No I think we could afford to lose a few of them and still eat. Speaking of eating..." For the rest of the night the guards were extra vigilant hearing the strange noises that permeated the night air every so often.

"Enjoy the whore tonight, Ramses, for tomorrow death will be waiting for you." The voice whispered from the shore. It was the only other sound that broke the night quiet except for the whispers of two women in love.

Nina sat with Sarah watching Ramses move through the different exercises with Hawk. "Look at him, if she told him to jump over the side and swim he would do it. I've never seen such a look of adoration aimed at another person before." Nina commented looking at Sarah and noticing the same look on the young woman's face when she looked at Ramses. "Then again maybe I have. You know, Sarah, you two keep up at this pace and I wouldn't be surprised that when we make this trip next year you won't be in the same condition."

"Leave me alone, Nina, I'm in love and I'm happy. Ramses just makes me feel so..."

"Well loved?" provided Nina.

"Yeah, well loved. I just look at her and I don't know what comes over me but it's acute, whatever it is. It might be the thick black hair, the blue eyes or those shoulders but I may wear her out if this doesn't die down a bit."

"Bite your tongue, child, most women would kill for that feeling when they look at their spouse so don't complain."

The morning melted into the afternoon and after a playful lunch Sarah settled down for a nap. Ramses had become more restless the further they moved to the north and had skipped the chance to settle down with Sarah to stand and look toward the shore for signs of anything wrong. She was watching Hawk work on what he had learned so far when something in the corner of her eye caught her attention. Standing on the open deck she scanned the bushes that lined the shore for what had moved when a spear flew from the opposite shore headed toward Hawk's chest. She turned and lunged in the boy's direction when she heard the zinging sound the weapon made catching it inches from her son's heart. Throwing Hawk to in the direction of where his mother slept she called to Corby and Denu to ready the men for the attack.

The oarsmen heard her calls and sped up their cadence moving the barges through the water at a quicker pace. The cover of the shore kept her from seeing who was responsible and stupid enough to attack her and she moved to intercept another spear that had been thrown at the royal barge. Sarah woke up when Hawk came flying into the room and hearing Ramses's yelling to the men. She sat up and screamed as she watched another spear was thrown in her lover's direction. Ramses turned to face her and tell her that everything would be all right, giving their attackers just the distraction they needed.

"Sarah, stay there and keep Hawk with you. Don't worry, highness, I'll take care of you both. I love you," Ramses yelled to her. Their eyes met and told all the other things they had between them that didn't need words. She heard the first one coming from behind her but missed the one coming from in front of her. The spear embedded itself into her chest knocking her off the deck and into the waters of the Nile. Corby turned from his covered position when he heard the anguished cry that had escaped Sarah's throat and didn't register what had happened. There was only the open empty space on the barge behind the one he was standing on.

The attack continued and Corby was positioning their archers to fire back when his mother's voice cut through the mayhem. "Corby, she's dead."

"Who, mama?"

"Ramses she was hit and fell overboard and I don't see her." The old woman was as hysterical as Sara was. The quickened pace of the barges meant that they were already some distance from where the pharaoh had fallen in. Corby had no choice but to order them to stop so that they could find Ramses. As soon as he did they charged from the shore and for the first time Corby was able to identify that the attacking forces were made up of both Egyptian soldiers and Neftu's men. *Good gods Philbus what have you done?* That was the only explanation that the loyal guard could fathom. Not willing to lose most of his men, Corby called for Denu to stand down his men as he did the same. Alive they could come up with a plan to turn the situation around, but that would have to come later.

The small boat that carried Philbus and one of his captains glided to the side of the royal barge so

that they could board. When they were on the deck Hawk flew from his mother's side with his staff swinging and connecting with Philbus's middle, knocking the air out of him. "You killed her, you killed my papa. I hate you." Hawk screamed at them as he prepared to make another strike. Philbus recovered and swung his arm out striking the boy across the face sending him crashing into the deck.

"Put the slut and her bastard on the slave barge. They will be my gift to Dalia when we reach the summer palace. You too, old woman, your precious Ramses isn't here to protect you now so get out of my sight before I feed you to the crocodiles." Nina helped Sarah to her feet and went to collect Hawk. She wanted to get the young woman and her child as far away from the pharaoh's cousin as possible. Philbus had always been in her opinion a bit mad and after what he had done it only proved that point. *Ramses, what hell have you left us to*, thought Nina as Denu steadied another boat to move them.

"Get Corby here now," Philbus told his captain. "He should find out now what the price will be for any attempt at defiance." The captain moved quickly to find the head of the royal guard.

"Don't bother, Philbus, what do you think you are doing?" asked Corby from the barge in front of the one the traitor stood on.

"You will address me as sire, Corby, now order your men to turn over their weapons until we reach the summer palace. They will be bound until we do reach our destination and there we will decide their fate. I am in charge now and I am not the soft bitch my cousin was, so be careful not to anger me, Corby."

Corby watched as more of Philbus's men came aboard the royal barge to settle in for the remaining part of the trip. Once Philbus went inside the structure built onboard where the sleeping quarters were located, Corby jumped in the water and swam past three barges in search of his family. He spoke with Denu while he watched his mother take care of Sarah, who seemed to be in shock. Hawk's head was lying in Denu's lap having not regained consciousness from the slap that he had received from Philbus. Together they huddled and mourned the loss of their king and their friend. Each in their own way loved Ramses and knew that with Philbus in charge their lives would change for the worse. They would share their new hell with the slaves and servants of Egypt because the new pharaoh had different ideas of ruling.

Too far away for the barges to see, a young man struggled to reach the shore with the lifeless body in his grasp. When he was able to touch bottom he dragged the pharaoh the rest of the way on her side so as not to push the spear any further in than it was already. Isaac could still see her chest rise and fall slowly; flooding him with relief that she was still alive. "You have to wake up, sire, and tell me what to do. I'm a laborer not a healer." He sat for what seemed like an eternity watching her chest to make sure the life force was still there when he saw the eyes flutter open.

"Isaac, what a pleasure to see you," Ramses laughed causing her to cough filling her chest with pain. "I see I have picked up a few new accessories," she continued when the pain passed. Isaac

was thrilled that not only was she awake but she was joking, maybe with the grace of God they would make it through this.

"Isaac, I want you to listen to me carefully because we are going to have to pull this thing out. Lift my tunic in the back carefully and see if it went all the way through," she directed from her side. Ramses could see that the slave was nervous so she spoke with the most soothing voice she could muster.

"Yes, sire, the tip is sticking through." Isaac informed her.

"Good now do you see if there are any barbs or spikes attached to the tip, Isaac?" asked the pharaoh.

"No, sire, it is smooth."

"All right, that means we can pull it out without having to push this damn thing all the way through. When you are ready, grab the shaft and pull it out as quickly as you can. When you do there is a possibility that I might pass out again so don't worry too much about that, it's my usual reaction to being speared like a fish," the pharaoh explained.

"This has happened to you before?" asked the astounded slave.

"No but if it had I would imagine that the normal reaction would be to pass out from the pain. Doesn't that sound logical to you? Rip off a piece of my tunic and use it to stop the blood once you pull it out. Are you ready?"

"Sire, I want to apologize for any pain I may cause you, I've just never done anything like this before." Isaac told her as he rubbed his hands together as if to warm them. Ripping two pieces from his own top and laying them next to the pharaoh, Isaac positioned himself in front of the pharaoh. With a quick prayer that everything would be all right he pulled, ripping the spear and a painful yell out of the king. Following her own logic Ramses passed out from the pain of having the spear pulled out of her shoulder. When she came to Isaac was sitting next to her holding the bandages in place with a worried look on his face.

Seeing that she was awake again made him feel better and she even laughed when the look of relief washed over his face. "Good job. I owe you a debt, my friend. Could you tell me what happened and who attacked us?"

Sitting on the shore together, Isaac told her what he had seen before jumping in the water after her. The slave had watched her get hit and fall from the barge in front of her where he had been assisting Corby. The royal guard had befriended him after meeting the day the pharaoh had visited Habish's home. Coming out from his hiding place and without thought of the consequences the young man jumped into the water and dove to find the king. By the time he found her, the barges had sailed on leaving them alone where they had landed. The description he gave her of the men that came out of the bushes was all she needed to know who it was that had taken her family.

"Isaac, I need to take off this tunic so that we can tie this bandage in place and I need you to help me. The one good thing about this is that the idiot who threw this thing didn't hit my sword arm. We need to get moving because we have at least a five day walk ahead of us."

"But, sire, you're hurt," said Isaac.

"They have my family man and I know Philbus, they will not be safe for long."

"Sarah, you must eat something child, it will do you no good to get sick now." Nina tried again to get the young woman to eat something. "Ramses would want you to be strong now child, if not for your sake for the sake of your baby. She wanted a son and I don't want you to disappoint her."

"She's gone, Nina. She promised me forever just last night and now she's gone. How could God be so cruel to give you a taste of happiness and then take it away so soon? Where is Hawk?" Sarah asked starting to get up.

"Look ,child, he's over there with Denu resting. Don't worry we won't let anything happen to him. See Corby is here too and we will watch over you and the boy, but you have to eat something."

Sarah ate without tasting anything. Looking out into the darkness she could see the passing shoreline meaning that they would not be stopping for the night. Whatever their fate it seemed so unimportant at the moment as her thoughts turned to Ramses.

Warrior, are you listening to me? I don't know what to do now that you have left me here all alone. Going back to the life I knew is not what scares me, it is the living without you that is terrifying. I will gladly work till my hands bleed until it is my time to join you if you will be waiting for me on the other side. You broke your promise, but I love you so much that I am willing to forgive you this once.

I promise you now to try and go on if only to tell your children about the person you were and from the telling, hope that they grow to be like you. You should have seen Hawk today love, you would have been so proud of him fighting for you. Even when Philbus knocked him to the ground he didn't lose the grip on his staff. He will be lost now without his papa. Look over us now, love, and know that I love you with all my heart. We all do. Sarah finished her prayer and wiped the tears from her face. Nothing in her life hurt as much as this did.

Facing away from them she listened to Corby talking to his family making plans that included the hiding of her parents. Philbus had been away helping Neftu when her parents had first come to the palace, so he didn't know of their existence and Corby planned to keep it that way. "At the pace we are traveling we should be at the palace by midmorning. I heard Philbus say that Dalia is waiting for him there, trying on the royal jewelry no doubt. If we can, we should try to stay

together until I think of what to do." Corby told Denu and Nina.

Leagues behind them Ramses and Isaac moved at a slow pace following the river to the same destination. Traveling at night left them open for attack by the local river wildlife but it protected them from the heat of the day. Ramses was frustrated at the wound in her shoulder, it was throbbing and the blood loss was making her dizzy. She had no choice but to stop for the night and find shelter. Isaac had to help her change the bandages and then they needed to get some rest. She smiled at the slave who walked beside her, the fear evident on his face but he tried to look brave holding the spear he had pulled out of her shoulder. She had asked him to bring it with them having every intention of burying it into Philbus's heart.

"Don't worry, Isaac, I'll take care of everything. Let's stop here and rest for awhile my shoulder is starting to hurt and I'm getting tired. It's too bad that you didn't think to pull one of the cooks into the water with you." He laughed at that thinking that maybe she had heard his stomach growling for the past three candle marks.

"Sire, do you think that this man will kill Corby because he is loyal to you?" asked Isaac.

"I plan to make it to the summer palace before he kills anyone Isaac so don't worry about that. If it makes you feel better, Corby is more than capable of taking care of himself and I'm sure he is as concerned for you as you are for him. Have you gotten to know Corby well in these past few moons? I haven't seen you around the palace so I take it he has been going to see you at the village."

He looked at her face trying to read any meaning into the questions. Would she be mad over the fact that he had befriended the guard and had in fact been living in Corby's quarters for the past two moons. It was obvious now that the pharaoh had no knowledge of the move or the relationship. Sensing his hesitance, Ramses guessed that there was more to this story than she had heard from Corby and maybe there was more than friendship that had developed between the two men.

"Isaac, do you know how long I have known Corby?"

"Yes, sire, you were born two moons before him. Because his mother served your mother and then you, Corby and you have known each other all your lives. He told me that his brother Denu was born three seasons later and a season after that their father died."

"I see you have gotten to know my friend rather well because you are right, I have known Corby all my life. I have fought with him and I have gotten into trouble with him and there is just one thing I have never seen him do."

"What's that, sire?" asked Isaac now forgetting his fear and becoming generally interested in their conversation. He missed Corby and getting to know more about him from the only person that probably knew him best of all was making him feel better.

"I have never seen him fall in love, my friend, so I would ask you as a favor to me that you take care of his heart and don't hurt him." She said it softly and with a smile to let him know that she was not angry with them for keeping her in the dark.

"I promise, sire, I'll never hurt him. Please don't be angry with him for not telling you that he moved me to the palace. I haven't been just sitting around, Corby has me mending weapons and helping him with other things. The night you came to the slave quarters we were able to talk and found that we had an instant liking of each other. I thank God every day for your visit that night. I learned two valuable things. One, that you are not a tyrant and the other was that there was love for me in the world."

"I'm happy for you both Isaac. I was beginning to think that there was something wrong with Corby in that he never showed interest in anyone. Sarah has taught me that love is important in everyone's life. I'm glad you found it with Corby, he's a good man and from what I know of you he will be happy."

They sat side by side, each lost in thoughts of the ones they loved. Sleep came to Isaac first as Ramses watched him drift off. She had much to be grateful for when it came to the gentle young man sleeping next to her. He had risked a lot to save her from what would have been certain death. As she watched the water flow by her thoughts turned to Sarah and how she was doing. All the stress of the day couldn't be good for her wife so close to the birth of their child.

Sarah, my love, I wish you could hear me. I beg any god, even your one God, that you stay safe until I am able to get to you. I made a promise to you and our children and I have no intention on breaking it. You have brought me such joy in the short time that I have known you that a part of me will die with you if something were to happen to you. I make another promise tonight, if something does happen to you or Hawk the land will run red with the blood of Philbus and Neftu. They and their men will share the same fate at the end of my blade.

I will see you soon, my love, so be strong. When I hold our son in my arms and look down on your beautiful face all this will be a distant memory, a memory that I will spend eternity trying to make you forget. Kiss Hawk for me and watch over Nin and know that I love you.

The morning brought them closer to the end of their voyage and to the beginning of whatever misery Philbus had in store for them. Sarah looked out on the horizon of the north where she could barely make out the outline of the palace. When they sailed closer she could see that it was smaller than the one in the city but not by much. Surrounding the structure there was a mix of both Egyptian and tribal soldiers. It must have not been much of a struggle to capture the city since the bulk of the pharaoh's men were traveling with them. When news of Ramses's death circulated among her men, their moral to fight had been effectively dampened. Sarah had to give Philbus credit for such a bold stroke; he had killed the snake by cutting off the head.

In her lap, Hawk was still sleeping. The bruise on his face looked angry and carried the perfect

imprint of Philbus's fingers. Running her fingers through his hair was the only thing that kept him quiet. When he had come to the previous night, he had been inconsolable when he realized that Ramses was no longer there. It broke her heart the way he had cried over the death of his papa. He would call for Ramses and when there was no answer he cried that much harder. The barge hitting the side of the dock brought her out of her thoughts. *Well let us see what fate has in store for us.*

The soldiers yelled at them to get moving and line up on the dock. Slaves were being assigned to different tasks from unloading, to reporting to the palace to taking care of setting up. When they lined up for their assignments one of the soldiers told them, "Not the lot of you, Princess Dalia and Philbus have special plans for you." The other soldiers that were standing around them started laughing and Sarah could see Corby taking inventory of who was present in this group. Once the boys had helped their mother off the barge they were herded in the direction of the palace where they were locked in a room in a section of the servant's quarters.

"What's the matter, Corby?" Sarah asked him once the door had been locked. She had watched him as they were brought to the palace and he looked like he was looking for someone.

"I'm sorry, highness, I am worried about Isaac. He was on the barge with me and I haven't seen him since yesterday. I hope that he is all right and the guards haven't figured out that he works for me." He couldn't help but blush when he finished talking about Isaac giving Sarah a clue as to their relationship.

"Don't worry, Corby, I'm sure he is scanning the crowd too looking for you."

"Sire, would you like to stop?" Isaac asked seeing that she was now sweating profusely. After sleeping for about four candle marks they had set out again and had been moving without rest ever since. Instead of getting an answer from her, she motioned for him to stop talking and be quiet. Cocking her head to the right she concentrated her hearing on an area a little inland from where they were standing.

"Isaac, I want you to stay here and keep low. There is someone over there and I'm going to see who it is," she whispered directly into his ear. Taking the spear out of his hand she moved into the lush vegetation that was abundant in this section of the Nile disappearing before him without a sound. Crouching where she left him, he hoped that she would be all right and not leave him here alone. He had never been out of the city and had no idea how to get to the summer palace or back home.

With the adrenaline running frantically through her body Ramses forgot about the pain in her shoulder. There was a small camp in front of her in the clearing made up of mostly messengers that had no doubt been left behind by Philbus incase word got back to the city and they were followed by more soldiers loyal to her. Waiting for one of them to break away she planned her own attack.

"Ansec, keep watch I have to visit the bushes. That meat you cooked last night is bad enough that we could use it as a form of torture if we capture any prisoners." The soldier called out as he headed toward the river. Passing the still figure he never saw her as the spear came out of the front of his throat cutting off the scream. When she slashed it to the side his last sight was the spray his blood had made on the leaves in front of him as he fell to the ground. Ramses stripped him of his dagger and sword before folding back into the cover.

She circled around to the back of the camp counting men as she moved. With the dagger she had taken off the first one she cut through the back of one of the tents finding another soldier sleeping sending him on his way to a permanent sleep by slashing his throat. *Two down and three to go* she thought as she looked for the weapons of the man she had just killed. The other three were around the cook fire watching the fish that was roasting over it.

"Come on, old bastard, my cooking isn't that bad. Hurry it up the fish are almost done." Ansec called down to the bank. He was about to head in that direction when he got no answer when she stepped out of the tent. The three of them never had a chance to reach for their weapons. Ansec fell to the ground first when the spear neatly cleaved his heart in two. His compatriots fell beside him each with a dagger sticking in the same place.

"*Good shot, Ramses, not a drop of blood on the fish.* Isaac, come on up here." She called down to the riverbank. The sound of his footsteps picked up considerably she guessed when he came across the first guard. Ignoring the three dead soldiers around the fire they sat in front of one of the tents and ate the fish the men had been cooking. "The first one I killed was right, Ansec was a horrible cook. Let's finish up here then see what weapons we can find. Maybe we can even find you a new tunic since I'm wearing most of your old one in bandages. With any luck these idiots have a boat somewhere near by and it will save us some walking."

"What exactly are we going to do, sire? I don't mean any disrespect but we are only two and he has an army."

"Isaac, I don't need an army, I have you." She laughed at his expression, if she didn't know any better she would have to say that the slave looked like he was about to faint. "We are going to chip away at Philbus one man at a time until there are no more and I am free to rip his heart out of his chest while he watches. We have only just begun and see there are five less men than there was a moment ago. Think of it as one of those stones that you see being shaped in the city, Isaac. They are large and cumbersome then they are chipped away a rock at a time making them into something else."

They finished their meal and searched the camp for anything they could use. The men did have a boat further up the river hidden with reeds. Isaac volunteered to paddle giving the pharaoh a chance to rest her shoulder, though he was beginning to doubt she was human after looking at how easily she dispatched the group at the camp. He had no doubt that given enough incentive she could paddle up the river and kill an entire army in time for dinner that evening.

"So you are the slave queen that has turned Ramses's head," said Dalia as she stepped through the doorway with a group of guards. "What is so special about you? You are plain and obviously well used considering your condition, I believe Philbus might be right and Ramses has in fact lost her mind. Comparing us there is but one clear winner."

"Yes and it was me," answered Sarah. Dalia gave her no warning as the princess's hand connected with her jaw.

"Do not speak unless I tell you to, slave. Yes, slave; don't think that I am going to treat you the way the pharaoh does. When Ramses gets here there will be one simple choice for her either she comes with me or you will die. Knowing our noble ruler's heart she won't allow you to die, so I will win." Dalia finished with a laugh.

"Princess, Ramses is dead so no one wins." Corby told her from his seat on the floor. He didn't understand the sick game Dalia was playing, but Sarah had been through enough.

"Don't lie to me. Philbus has her down the river and is bringing her in a couple of days."

"He isn't lying, Dalia, Philbus had Ramses killed with a spear to the chest, she won't be coming here or anywhere else but to join her parents." Denu added.

"But that wasn't part of the plan. My father agreed to help Philbus if I got what I wanted in the end. Ramses was to come and live with me in trade for Philbus taking the throne." Dalia looked genuinely shocked at the news of Ramses death.

"Now you will pay for your crime with living under the reign of Philbus, may the gods have mercy on your people. My guess will be slavery don't you agree, brother?" asked Denu.

"Yes, brother, Philbus never did tolerate Neftu's people well. Always after both Ramses and her father to turn the tribe into workers and pleasure slaves. It will be a fitting end for you, Dalia. You wanted Ramses but you will get the pleasure of bedding her cousin until he tires of you and feeds you to his horses." Corby added.

The princess left in search of Philbus to confirm their story. She had no intention of becoming anyone's slave much less Philbus's. The man repulsed her but he was the only way to get what she most desired. Finding him in the throne room with a group of his soldiers Dalia barged in.

"Where is Ramses, you bastard?"

"Now, Dalia, is that any way to speak to your new master. I will grant you an answer to your question though because it will give me great pleasure to do so. Ramses is dead at the bottom of the Nile. Dying with her were her rights to the throne so prepare yourself for your new life serving the new pharaoh. Don't fret though, princess, yours will be a good life as a pleasure slave serving me and a few of my generals. Working on your back has to beat scrubbing pots in the kitchens don't you think?" asked Philbus, causing the men around him to start laughing. Coming up to her Philbus balled up his fist and punched her hard enough to knock her to the floor.

"Interrupt me like that again and I will cut you up so bad even your precious father won't recognize you, bitch."

"Sire, what do you want us to do with the other prisoners we are holding in the palace?"

"Leave them alone for now. Sarah will be of no use for me until she has given birth to Larlis's bastard. Then she will share Dalia's fate. My cousin was willing to risk her crown to bed the little slave so she must be good. Why else would Ramses, who always did have a weak spot for the ladies, settle on just this one? I want the city secured and the word passed to all of Neftu's men that if they don't want to find themselves hauling rock to make no attempt at escape."

"Isaac, paddle for the shore," directed Ramses. They were a couple of candle marks by foot from the city and the only way they could enter would be by the cover of night. With the sun setting by the time they reached the outskirts it would be full night. Pulling the boat out of the water and hiding it, they set off without a plan of what to do once they got there. Isaac took Ramses silence to mean he should follow suit considering they didn't know who was lurking out around them.

Tired from their walk, Ramses led them toward the river and the bustle of the unloading still going on. Isaac looked at her like she had lost her senses when before heading into the crowd she ducked into what looked like the opening of a cave. Grabbing his hand she led him through the passageway heading away from the waters edge. She didn't walk too far before she pulled him into a sitting position. The only sound in the complete darkness was the sound of their breathing.

Hearing Isaac's near panting, Ramses tried to calm him down by whispering to him. "Isaac, don't be afraid there isn't anything in here that will hurt you. Further into this cave is the entrance to the tomb of the first Ramses, so at the moment we are the only living things in here. Let's try and get some sleep and we'll head back out there once the workers quit for the evening."

"Are we going to die, sire?"

"Could I ask you to do something for me before I answer your question?"

"Anything, sire," answered Isaac.

"Would you call me Ramses, and the answer to your question is no. I can only imagine your plans, Isaac, but mine include joining with a beautiful woman named Sarah, a new baby and teaching my son Hawk how to use the staff."

The request and the confession set his mind at ease. Whatever the pharaoh had planned it wouldn't include charging into the palace and reclaiming her throne. A possibility that had crossed his mind but he figured that it would only get them both killed. In the blackness that surrounded him, Isaac thought of Corby's smile and of seeing it again to make himself feel better. The pharaoh slept beside him already dreaming of the blonde that dominated her thoughts.

When they woke up, the area around the entrance was quiet except for the night insects that swarmed over the water. Before Ramses led Isaac out of their hiding place she felt she owed him the right to know what she had planned while sitting there waiting for the opportunity to head out. She had been sitting there for awhile listening to the slave sleep and had come up with the only way she knew to throw Philbus and his men into a panic.

"I'm going out there and start killing men leaving them as messages for Philbus. I will leave no wounded and I will take no prisoners. The soldiers I sent with my cousin to help Neftu are the ones that helped him with this attack along with a large number of warriors from Neftu's tribe. It is the only way that I can think of to start whittling away at his numbers, which means that this might take more than one night. If you don't feel like this is something that you can help me with then I want you to stay here until I come back."

"Sire, if I get caught killing palace guards I will be skinned alive."

"It's Ramses, and not if you are doing it with me," said Ramses.

"Then, Ramses, I would like to help you so that we can find Sarah and Corby."

Standing at the entrance to the cave armed with the weapons that they had found at the camp down river, Ramses listened for any footsteps on the dock. Cocking her head she heard the methodical steps of someone who was walking then would stop and start walking again. A sentry guard posted along the water's edge looking for any boats in the water. When he turned again to walk his route, a silent death awaited him. To make this work, Ramses released the dark warrior that lived within that had won all those battles for her father. When she felt the man's neck break she dropped him to the ground at her feet then pulled the dagger from her belt and cut out his heart and threw it in the water. Isaac watched and looked like he was going to be sick but followed her nonetheless as she moved to the next guard.

By the time they were near the palace, thirty-four men laid dead all with broken necks and their hearts were missing. The dawn was approaching and when Isaac looked at the pharaoh, she looked like a beast that had bathed in human blood. She had left a trail of heartless bodies from the river to the back entrance of the palace. Not hiding one of them surprised Isaac in that none of the guards walking along the back terrace of the pharaoh's home saw the destruction. Motioning him to move back toward the river they walked in a different direction to get back. Thinking they would head back to the cave he was surprised when they headed further north along the bank. Sitting down with a loaf of bread and some fruit they had found next to one of the dead guards they ate a little before finding a better hiding place. Isaac chewed slowly as he watched Ramses head into the water and wash off the red death that covered her. He could only imagine the reaction from Philbus once the sun came up and he found over thirty of his men were dead.

"Isaac, eat up and get some rest, when they find what I left for them we might have to be prepared to move. I can't account for what my cousin's reaction will be, only what I would do in the same situation."

"What would that be, Ramses?"

"I would spend all of tomorrow looking for the person who did it and throw their heart into the river to join those of my men."

When the light broke over the city and the bodies that were left to rot were starting to collect flies, they were discovered and the alarm was raised. Far away enough to keep their cover but close enough to hear Ramses checked her wound and watched over Isaac as he slept. The scar that the spear puncture would leave would at least be on the shoulder opposite of the scar that Hawk had given her from his slingshot the day they had met. It was the one battle wound that she wore with pride because of the healing the cut to the shoulder had brought to her heart.

"I want to know how this could happen? None of these men were Neftu's, only mine. Find the bastard who did this." Philbus screamed at the captain standing in front of the throne.

"But, sire, the men said it wasn't a person, but a spirit. The spirit of Ramses who has come to take revenge on those who have betrayed her."

"Listen to me and listen carefully. Double the guard around the docks and the back of the palace whoever is out there had better not get in here or I will personally cut out your heart myself."

"Yes, sire."

Philbus watched the man go, thinking about what he had said. The only logical explanation had to be that one of Ramses's men escaped their detection when they attacked the caravan. He had watched the warrior from Neftu's tribe sink the spear into Ramses's chest himself so it couldn't be his cousin. She was without a doubt dead. To make sure he thought of the one person that would know and Philbus had a special technique to make people talk.

Having four guards follow him to the servants' section of the palace Philbus walked into the room where he was holding Sarah and the others. Directing two of his men to grab Corby he turned and walked away without speaking a word.

Tying him so that he was spread between two columns, Philbus walked up behind Corby and tore away his tunic leaving him naked. The royal guard had been tied in the front section of the palace to gather information from him and also to be used as an example for defying Philbus. From her position in the trees Ramses watched her cousin uncoil his whip knowing his intentions. Moving back to Isaac she told him to stay low while she tried to get closer. She didn't want the slave to watch as his lover whipped for Philbus's amusement, it would mean their own death sentence if Isaac ran out to help Corby.

"Please, sire, let me go with you. I promise to not get in your way but I have to know that he is all right." Nodding her agreement they moved along the buildings that bordered the palace. Getting a head start on their nighttime activities Ramses dispatched every guard they came into

contact with. As more bodies fell in the morning sun they both listened to the whip lash out time and time again. The only thing that they didn't hear was Corby crying out. *Good for you, Corby, don't give the bastard the satisfaction. Trust that I will make him pay for all the marks he leaves on you promised Ramses.*

"Does it hurt, Corby? Ask me nicely and I'll stop. Now tell me you son of a whore, is my cousin still alive?" Philbus asked him as he cocked his hand back to deliver another blow. The cuts he had already delivered had left the guard's back badly cut and bleeding. "Even if she's out there looking at you now, Corby, there is no way that she will get to me. I have your men locked away and mine are more numbers than she could handle alone."

Ramses moved away from the palace again seeing that the beating Corby was getting was slowing. She would have to wait until nightfall before attempting to move into the palace but she was determined to find Sarah and Hawk tonight.

The panic increased when the next twelve bodies were found at the front of the palace. Some of the men who had believed the story of an angry spirit abandoned their post and headed into the trees. Ramses struck all that she could hunt down leaving the bodies the same way she left the others. With the help of Isaac they dumped the bodies into the river so that they would float down river past the docks. After about five bodies had been spotted, the fear in the air was almost visible.

"What do you think they did with Corby?" asked Sarah. After Philbus left with him that morning no one else had come to their room. From the shadows on the wall from the high window they could see that another day was coming to a close. Shifting on the floor trying to find a more comfortable position, she waited for Denu to answer her question.

"I don't know, highness, but I have to admit that I'm worried about him. The pharaoh's cousin is one of the cruelest people I have ever met. Ramses father tried to guide him after his father had been killed in a battle in the south but even he failed. Philbus always thought he should get the crown after his uncle died because he was male. It didn't matter in his mind that Ramses's father was of no blood relation to him, his mother was sister to the queen so it was his right. Even as a child you could see that he got pleasure out of hurting things that couldn't fight back. You will never see him fight alone because he is a coward." Denu talked while removing his half cloak that was part of his uniform and moved to place it behind Sarah's back.

"I am lucky I have you all here with me if I can't have Ramses," said Sarah as she went back to running her fingers through Hawk's hair. Her son was starting to worry her in that he had gone back to the silent sully little boy from Larlis's house. Losing Ramses was bad enough, but Hawk had had to watch as it happened.

When the sun set, but it was still early Ramses decided to move toward her home. "Isaac, we are

going to go into the palace and it is important that you stay quiet and focused. If you see any guard I don't care what method you use, kill them. We can't be found or all the people we love in there won't stand a chance."

"I'm ready, sire."

Because of the panic she had caused, it was easy to maneuver to the palace. All the guards were now moving in groups trying to live out the night. Ramses's face turned up in a smile when she saw this thinking that they would be only easier to kill in packs. Taking a moment to think about where they were holding Sarah and Hawk, she was left with only one answer and that was the servant's wing. Thinking like her enemy she knew that Philbus would want to show the group that they were born slaves and under his rule they would die slaves. Seeing the heavily guarded door confirmed her suspicions.

When Isaac moved toward the room without looking around him Ramses grabbed his arm and yanked him back behind the pillar where they were hiding. Philbus was crazy but he wasn't stupid. Pointing toward the other pillars Isaac saw the second group of soldiers that were watching the group watching the door. Snapping her fingers softly so the group by the door wouldn't hear her, Ramses got the attention of the second group of guards who moved together to the place where the sound was coming from. Calling to their partners down the corridor the four moved toward the pillars. Once they walked past them in an effort to see if someone was hiding there the snapping stopped. As if from thin air the first guard was impaled by a thrown sword and the man next to him had a dagger in his throat. The third was struggling against her and the fourth was dead at the end of Isaac's sword.

"Ok now we go fishing since we have all this bait," Ramses whispered to him as she threw the first body to the middle of the corridor. When the second man hit the floor the guards by the door started calling for the remaining two with a slight tremor in their voices. Ramses motioned for Isaac to step into their line of vision and she was going to move along the columns until she was behind the remaining men. Taking a deep breath to build up his courage, Isaac stepped from behind the pillar and stood in the middle of the corridor with a sword in his hand.

"Look boys it's nothing but a slave, a dead slave now that he has killed two of Philbus's men."

"Actually all four of them are dead and I didn't kill them, King Ramses did," Isaac told them with authority. His easy demeanor came from looking into the blue eyes smiling back at him from behind the guards.

"Oh so you command the spirit of Ramses do you, slave? If you do then I suggest that you do so now because we plan to kill you."

"I call on the great spirit Ramses to kill these three men and eat their hearts to feed her revenge," Isaac sung out in an amused voice. The men laughed at his command until the sword sliced through the chest of the man in the middle. The other two turned to see who had attacked them when the daggers sunk into their chest. Their last thoughts were of disbelief that it was Ramses that had taken their lives.

"The great spirit of Ramses?" the pharaoh asked Isaac as she pulled her sword free wiping the blood off on the dead soldiers tunic.

"It was the best I could come up with at the moment. I thought it was effective."

The keys to the door were on the belt of the last guard she had killed with the sword. Turning the lock slowly Ramses entered with caution not knowing who was being held inside. The thick door had muffled the sounds from the corridor so all of the inhabitants were still sleeping when she entered. Giving her eyes time to adjust to the darkness she almost cried when she saw the two forms huddled together on the floor.

Isaac watched as she moved toward them slowly as if savoring the moment or to assure her mind that they wouldn't disappear. Sitting beside Sarah, Ramses just stared at her. She took in the bruise on her cheek and the dirty tunic. It didn't take away from Sarah's beauty in the pharaoh's eyes. Reaching out with her fingertips Ramses touched Sarah's hair and that action did cause the tears to run down her face.

The movement caused Sarah to wake and see who was sitting right next to her. A sob came up from her throat thinking that it was only a dream but it seemed so real. Ramses was there but when she would wake she would be gone just as Risea had been. "I miss you so much, my warrior," she whispered afraid to touch Ramses less the figure go away.

"I am here, my love, and I don't plan to be separated from you again."

Ramses moved her hand from Sarah's hair to her neck so that she could push the woman forward for a kiss. When she leaned forward to touch her lips to Ramses's, it woke Hawk. The kiss didn't last as long as the pharaoh would have wanted but when the scream of "Papa," came from the little boy she had to sit back when he jumped up and hugged her. "I knew that bad man was lying and you didn't die. I hit him with my staff for saying that, papa, just like you showed me." Ramses hugged the little boy tight and looked at her wife, life had never seemed more perfect than at this moment. Sarah wiped the tears away and tried to convince herself that she was indeed awake and Ramses was no spirit.

"You would think that I wouldn't have any tears left after all the crying I have done in the last two days," she told Ramses as she waited for Hawk to finish his greeting.

"I love you, Sarah, and I made a promise to you, I'm just here holding up my end. Are you all right? The both of you look tired."

"We're fine now that you are here. I hate to talk ill of your family but your cousin is insane," Sarah told her.

"I see bondage has done nothing to harm your sense of humor, my love. Come on we have to get out of here. Son go wake Denu and Nin we have to find out where they are holding my men and Corby."

Standing and holding Ramses as close as her midsection would allow Sarah took the opportunity to collect on her welcome kiss while the others got ready. "I was so lost without you, I wanted to jump over the side with you when I saw you fall. I love you, Ramses."

"I love you too and I would have come back from death to protect you, I'm just sorry it took me so long to get here. I see that my cousin has been busy," said Ramses as she ran her fingers over the bruise on Sarah's cheek.

"It wasn't Philbus, my love, it was Dalia that did that." Putting her head on Ramses's chest she could feel the tension building along with Ramses's anger on her behalf. When she opened her eyes she noticed for the first time the young man by the door armed with a sword.

"Ramses, who is that?" Sarah asked her not moving from the pharaoh's embrace.

"That, my love, is one of our new palace guards. Isaac was the one who pulled me from the water saving my life." Sarah smiled at the young man thinking that Corby would be happy to know that he had been with Ramses all along. When she looked up at the pharaoh again she noticed the blood seeping through the tunic Ramses had on.

"You're hurt!"

"Yes it's one of the downfalls of being pharaoh someone is always trying to kill you," Ramses answered. They both laughed thinking about the day they had met. Ramses had forgotten about the pain in her shoulder the minute she saw Sarah but now the throbbing was back after Sarah had reminded her.

"Something else my cousin has to pay for, and Dalia will wish she never set eyes on me after I am done. And as for her father, Neftu will soon learn what is meant when people say the power that is Egypt."

"Papa, where are we going?" asked Hawk.

"We are going to find Corby and the rest of our men then we are going to pay a little visit to our cousin Philbus. Denu where are the men?"

"Sire, they were being used as labor at the docks so I would imagine they have them in the quarters down there."

"Good grab a sword from one of those men out there and let's go. Once we have them in place we'll come back and look for your brother. Nin, are you up for a walk?" asked Ramses.

"Yes, you heathen, let's go. I can't believe that you let us sit in there for two days before you came for us. Your wife is pregnant don't you realize? Sitting on that hard floor is not good for her back." Ramses laughed at the fussing old woman knowing that it only meant that Nina loved her. It gave the pharaoh comfort to see how attached Nina had become to Sarah and Hawk, *she*

will make a wonderful grandmother to our children.

"Sarah, where are your parents?" asked Ramses.

"I don't know, love, Corby kept quiet about who they were so my hope is that they have been assigned to a job somewhere in the city along with the rest of the slaves."

With two of them cutting a path through the guards Philbus would be missing even more men come the morning. They found the men loyal to Ramses in the soldiers' quarters as Denu had predicted. After killing the few sentries that were stationed outside the locked door they released them and headed toward the armory to distribute weapons. Leaving Sarah and Hawk with the protection of Denu and her men Ramses headed back into the palace to collect the last thing that Philbus could use against her tomorrow. For in the morning would come to an end the silent killings of the past two nights, tomorrow she would face Philbus and crush him.

"Please don't leave us again, Ramses, I just got you back," begged Sarah.

"I promise I won't be long love I just have to go back in there and find Corby. There will be no hostages for Philbus tomorrow once I'm finished tonight. Now stay here with Denu and the men and I won't be long."

"I'm coming with you, sire," Isaac said from behind them. He had figured out who Ramses was going back for and he would not be denied the right to be there when they found Corby.

"No, Isaac, I want you to stay here with the rest, I promise you I will find him and I'll bring him back."

"No I want to come with you. If it is true that you are in my debt for saving you, this is my price for doing so."

Following her hand signals they headed for the front of the palace to the place they had last seen Corby. There were twelve guards around the area making it difficult to get any closer than they were. The front of the palace was bare of any hiding places for the simple strategy of being able to see for leagues anyone approaching the steps. As if a gift from the gods the winds picked up and rain clouds were moving in. The light provided by the moon and the night sky were doused providing perfect cover for Ramses and Isaac to move rapidly up the steps.

Looking from behind one of the large columns that held up the front of the palace Ramses could see they had cut Corby down but had left him on the black marble floor to bleed.

"We'll string him up again at dawn for the pharaoh's pleasure so don't die on us, Corby. Maybe the spirit of Ramses will come and save you tonight before the sun touches the sky." The guard taunted the naked man lying at his feet.

Ramses had to hold Isaac back from charging to Corby's defense. "If you just run in there they are going to kill him. I know these men and they hate Corby for the relationship he and his

brother have with me. Now pay attention and follow me," ordered Ramses.

They moved along the outside of the row of columns getting wet from the light rain that had started falling. Waiting for them to stop their games at Corby's expense she drew her sword watching as Isaac did the same. Two of the soldiers stepped close to where they were standing making it easy for her to kill them quickly and toss them down the steps and into the blackness of the night. One of the ten left sat off to the side sharpening his sword when he heard someone whisper in his ear, "Thank you, mine was getting dull from all the men I've killed in the past two nights." Not bothering to use the sword, she broke his neck leaving him looking like he had fallen asleep. Three of the nine men left were sitting on the edge of where the rain was hitting looking out at the sky talking, they never heard her over the patter. As she was throwing the last of them over the side down the stairs one of the six that remained turned the corner and tried to sneak up on her instead of calling for help. She turned just in time to see the stunned look on the man's face as he looked at the sword sticking out of his chest from behind. Isaac kicked the soldier off his sword sending him to join the others at the bottom of the steps.

"Thanks, Isaac, I must be getting slow I didn't hear him coming."

"I need help with the last five so I couldn't let anything happen to you. I have never killed anything in my life, sire, I thought it would have been harder to do. I just saw him heading toward you wanting to harm you and I had no choice."

"It's all right, Isaac, it isn't hard to kill a man it is just hard to live with the fact that it can be so easily done."

Three of the remaining group were taking their turn to sleep and were killed where they lay. Having only two more to worry about before they could get to Corby, Ramses listened to any noise that would give her a clue to where they were. The noise she did hear made her laugh quietly. Isaac looked at her in question when she pointed in the direction of the corner column. The guard was sitting in a chair with his head thrown back obviously enjoying what the other guard kneeling in front of him was doing, if the moans were any indication. She drove one sword into the kneeling man's throat pinning him to the sitting man's groin. Isaac covered the man's mouth to muffle the sound of his scream from having the pleasure he was receiving turn to excruciating pain in a moment. He crossed his legs in sympathy shivering at the sight before him. To silence him permanently, Ramses drove the other sword in her hand into his heart.

"That is what it means to come and go, Isaac," she told him when they turned to get Corby.

"You are a very strange, but fascinating person, sire. I am glad that you are my friend because your idea of a joke carries a high price," said Isaac.

Ramses looked around to see if there would be any more guards coming to replace the ones that had been left to watch Corby, while Isaac went to find something to wrap him in for the move back to the others. "Corby, wake up please, it's me Isaac."

"Isaac, love, what are you doing here?" asked Corby.

"Pining over you so let's get going," Ramses answered for him. "Oh all right kiss him then we'll get going." She told Isaac when their reunion was cut short.

"Ramses, I'm sorry for not telling you about Isaac sooner," Corby began but fell silent when she waved off the apology.

"Don't be sorry for falling in love, man, Isaac is a good man and I'm glad to have him around. Tomorrow we will have to find him a job that will let you spend more time together though I think you will be spending some time with the healers for a while to come."

"As are you, sire," added Isaac.

Ramses picked Corby up and settled him across her good shoulder. It was killing her wounded shoulder but Isaac was too small to carry his bulk and Corby was too hurt to walk. When she started walking Corby couldn't help but moan a little from the deep cuts along his back and legs that were being stretched open from the movement. "Hang in there, my friend, and I'll try and make this as painless as possible." Said Ramses as she moved to the section they had come up from. They avoided all the patrols roaming the property on the way back not taking any chances with the injured man Ramses was carrying. Nina started barking orders as to what she needed to clean her son's backside through her tears as soon as they saw Ramses approaching.

Lying on his stomach Corby concentrated on the hand that was holding his as his mother cleaned the bits of leather Philbus's whip had left in his cuts. The extent and depth of the wounds would scar leaving him the reminder of the other man's anger, but looking at Isaac's eyes it would not change the way he felt about the royal guard. "Don't cry, mama, we are all together now and Ramses is alive," said Corby.

"That man deserves whatever Ramses has in mind for him. All the suffering he has caused just for the sake of power deserves no less. And as for that pit viper in heat, she deserves to suffer along with him. Dalia's obsession with Ramses is what gave Philbus the excuse to try this." Nina said as she kept cleaning her son's wounds.

"Don't worry, Nin, I'll take care of it in a few candle marks. Have you met Isaac?" asked Ramses.

"Yes, troublemaker, I have met Isaac, don't you go showing any of your bad habits I don't need another one to worry about. Take off that tunic because you are next after I finish with Corby."

When she sat on one of the cots in nothing but a loincloth so that Nina could clean the puncture in her shoulder, Ramses laughed as Sarah worked in tandem with the old woman to clean her up. "Child, you get more holes in you than I don't know what but I want to thank you for loving me enough to bring my Corby back to me. He looks so much like his father it hurts me at times but my sons and you are what I have in the world."

"Nin, you know I couldn't leave him there and when I am done all these bastards will pay for their treachery." She leaned over and kissed Nina on the crown of her head when she bowed to

the pharaoh as a sign of her devotion and thanks.

"And you, I think my chest is clean enough now, wipe it one more time and I'll have to find us a quiet spot." She told Sarah.

"I think that's a wonderful idea, sire, let's go," answered Sarah. Nina watched them go with a shake of her head and a smile on her face

They lay together on a pallet the men had put together until it was time for Ramses to go. The men all had their orders and were just itching for the sun to go up so they could pick a fight. With her hand over their active baby Ramses sent up a silent prayer of thanks to her mother for her warning and for the chance to do this again. "Your mother was right, love, when she came to me in that dream. In a short time the rest of what she told me will come to pass and I will give birth to our son in the same room she gave birth to you. Do you think what she told me about your spirit will be true to?"

"That won't matter, Sarah, I will love this baby like I love Hawk. Are you hurt in anyway after all that has happened?"

"No, love, go to sleep I want you alert for what you have to do tomorrow."

Before she drifted off to sleep Ramses felt Hawk crawl into the pallet in front of his mother. He lay on his side like they were and pulled Ramses's hand off his brother and on to him. Nina and Denu checked on them smiling at the sight of the small family before going out and sitting with Isaac and Corby again.

The first pink rays of dawn came through the window waking Ramses from the most peaceful sleep she had gotten in days. Working her way free of the two smaller bodies snuggled up to her she cleaned herself up and found a uniform to put on. "Come back here and keep me warm," Sarah whispered from the bed. She looked disappointed that Ramses had dressed and looked ready to leave.

"Only for a moment, love, then I have got to go. The sooner I get this done the sooner I get to move you to our rooms in the palace." She sat on the edge of the pallet and looked at the two people she loved most in the world. It would be the motivation she would take into battle. When she got up to finish dressing Sarah thought back to the first time she had seen Ramses in the throne room. She was dressed in the royal clothing but didn't wear the crown and scepters and to Sarah they weren't needed. Ramses posture and bearing made her stand out as the ruler of Egypt not the manner of her dress.

Dressed as a common field soldier, Ramses still looked menacing, to Sarah's eyes she looked like an agitated King Cobra ready to strike. "How can you look so deadly and good at the same time? You are making me wet just looking at you, sire," Sarah told her as she ran her fingernail along the leather armor covering Ramses chest.

"Thank you for putting that thought into my head right before I leave. This battle should be the

shortest in my career," said Ramses.

"I love you, Ramses."

"And I love you, Sarah."

She left after kissing Sarah not wanting to see her wife crying. Outside Denu and the men stood waiting for her command to begin. "Denu, lead a force of men through the back of the palace and drive them out the front. The rest of the men and I will be waiting for you at the entrance. I am not interested in any prisoners. Make Philbus's men an example to any others that dare try this again. If you find Philbus or Dalia, detain them until I arrive, I have special plans for the two of them."

Feeling the energy washing off her in waves the men caught the fever of battle. Together with Denu they bowed and struck their chest with their fists as they shouted, "Yes, sire."

Waiting until she and most of the men that were with her cleared the back of the palace on their way to the front Denu began his part of the attack. The alarm within the palace was sounded as the soldiers outside saw the coming force, but to no avail. The killing began almost from the moment Denu gave the order to move forward. Soldiers from Philbus's forces dropped next to the warriors from Neftu's without thought. The sentries in the palace seeing how quickly Denu was moving started their retreat out the front. Most of them thought they would find refuge with Neftu and his daughter among their tribe.

As they ran out the front, a worse fate than Denu awaited them when they saw Ramses standing at the head of her men. Unlike Philbus, the pharaoh was not afraid of battle and accepted her responsibility at the head of her men not at the sidelines sending soldiers in to die in her name. It was over in less than a candle mark and only about twenty of the traitor soldiers were left standing. Philbus was found hiding with the slaves in the palace with Dalia at his side. Found with him were the crown and sword that belonged to the pharaoh.

Bringing Philbus into the throne room where Ramses awaited him, Denu stood with a beefy hand around his neck. "Sire, what should I do with him?"

"Don't kill him just yet, Denu, I have plans for him. Strip him and tie him to the same columns he bound your brother to but don't have him whipped....yet. Find Dalia and place her in the next section of columns." Ramses continued.

"Strip her, sire?" asked Denu.

"Yes, Denu, strip her. Keep them alive until her father gets here. Neftu has much to answer for. Take a group of soldiers with you and deliver a present to the great king for me Denu. Use the remaining soldiers and have them load one of the barges with the dead from this morning then have the prisoners row them to King Neftu. Tell them there are my gift to him for his loyalty and I expect him here in less than a week to collect Dalia."

"It shall be done, sire."

Moving out of the throne room and into the slave quarters Ramses went in search of Sarah's parents. Finding them sitting together with the maids that were assigned to Sarah and the pharaoh's rooms she told them where Sarah and Hawk were. Releasing them to move about the palace they were glad to be out from under lock and key and started on the clean up. Habish and Isa joined their servants in preparing Sarah's room trying to finish the job quickly so the young woman could lie down once Ramses returned with her.

Holding Sarah in her arms, they were all smiles as the pharaoh carried her through the palace leaving bowing giggling servants in their wake. Having Sarah back they felt comfortable that they could tell their stories of rape and torture at the hand of Philbus's men and have them get back to the pharaoh. They were just slaves but they felt that the crimes committed against them could be added to the tally Philbus had run up against Ramses and her family.

"Sire, let me carry her before you rip the stitches in your shoulder," said Habish when he saw them enter the room.

"Thank you, Habish," Ramses had given up on getting the couple to call her by her name.

"Is everything taken care of?" asked Sarah of Ramses. The pharaoh was walking along side her father as he carried her into their bedroom.

"Yes, highness, for now."

"Your queen has an order for you then, sire."

Bowing deeply at the waist Ramses told her, "I am but your humble servant."

"Little Sarah, I could never imagine when you were born and the healer put you in my arms for the first time that you would grow up to have the pharaoh bow to you. A wise man once said that it takes a strong will to know when to bend. I am glad that my daughter is the only one you bow your head to, sire, it makes me feel that she will be protected for life as well as loved. She deserves no less." Habish bowed to Ramses after putting Sarah down and left them alone in the room.

"I think that you are starting to wear him down, love" said Sarah.

"Oh do you think he will come to love me as much as he loves you?"

"Well let's not hope for too much too soon. Are you ready for your orders?"

"Why yes I am highness what can I do for you?"

Sarah lifted one of her feet a little off the surface of the bed and ordered, "Start rubbing." The maids in the other room laughed at the exchange they were eavesdropping on and at the rich

laughter coming from the pharaoh. The moaning coming from the queen told them that the pharaoh was as good at following orders as in giving them.

They spent their days after the battle resting and checking on Corby's recovery. Ramses waited for Neftu's arrival and had to have both Philbus and Dalia gagged to stop their incessant whining that echoed through the palace. The guards reported to Ramses that even through the gags both Philbus and Dalia were demanding to see her. True to her orders the two stood for most of the day as a naked spectacle of entertainment for anyone lucky enough to be visiting the palace on business. Having Ramses back allowed the normal flow of the city to continue as was evident in the busy market places.

On the fifth day after leaving, Denu returned with an empty barge and the men he had taken. He relayed to Ramses that Neftu was three days behind him and scared of the pharaoh's retribution for his part in the coup attempt. On Denu's promise that he wouldn't be killed upon entry into the city, he planned on coming to pick up his daughter Dalia.

"No I won't kill him the moment he gets here, where's the fun in that?" asked Ramses. "After he's been here for a day or two then I'll kill him."

"Sire, the others you had me look for will be here probably a day before King Neftu, they are anxious to meet with you and have much to tell you about the running of the tribe under their king."

"Good, Denu, now go and find your mother. She's been worried about you, and get yourself a good meal you deserve a little pampering. Don't let Corby get too far ahead of you on that score."

"How is he, sire?"

"With Isaac running his fingers through his hair all day, I'm sure he's doing fine. It will scar and Philbus cut deeply into his back but I don't think the damage will hurt his movement forever. Go and see him that's probably where Nin is, and if you can pry his eyes away from Isaac I'm sure he'll be happy to see you."

"Thank you, Ramses."

She spent the rest of the morning with Hawk in the weapons room practicing with his staff. After working up to actually hitting their two weapons together Ramses let him go with the servant girl that had come to collect the prince for his lunch, bath and nap. Thinking that the girl had a good idea for her son, Ramses headed for her own bathing chamber and to her wife's bed for the afternoon. The baby had started dropping, leaving Sarah wanting to do nothing but lie down until he finally decided to make an appearance. The foul mood that she had been in had left Ramses no other recourse but to lay with her and hold her. Every so often Sarah was able to lie on her side long enough for Ramses to rub her back that had started to ache constantly two days prior.

"How about a nap, highness?" asked Ramses when she stepped in from her bath.

"Tell me why I am so tired if all I do all day is lie here on this bed?" whined Sarah.

"It won't be long now, love, so let's see if we can get some sleep."

Having pillows piled behind her supporting her in a sitting up position was the only way Sarah found any relief from this baby pressing on everything in her body. She was finding it relaxing to run her fingers through Ramses's short-cropped hair as the pharaoh slept on what was left of her lap. Looking past the shears hanging along the wall of the room Sarah looked out at the river. It was so different here than from their room back in the other palace. It was greener and not as wide but the churning waters looked just as mysterious to her. When her gaze returned to Ramses she saw the movement at the end of the bed as Risea sat down to visit with her again.

"Sarah, I have come to tell you that you have done well and I am pleased. Because you shared my warnings with Ramses you are both still alive and well. Something that important deserves a reward don't you think?"

"My queen, thank you for keeping her safe and bringing her back to me. For just that one brief moment I saw how empty my life would be without her love. You owe me no reward, it is I who wish to honor you."

"Nonsense, daughter, I come to offer relief. Are you ready to bring my grandchild into the world?"

"More than anything highness."

"Then let it be so."

The spreading wetness on the bed woke them both. Ramses looked amused and Sarah looked mortified. "Don't be embarrassed, love, I think our little pharaoh has decided to come earlier than my mother said." Sarah was about to tell her about her dream when the first contraction hit, getting Ramses to move quicker than Sarah had ever seen.

For the rest of the afternoon and into the night Ramses paced outside the rooms listening to Sarah scream, curse and cry in the company of Nina, Isa and the healer. Thinking of her mother Ramses was frantic when candle mark after candle mark passed with no progress in the birth. The only smile that would cross Ramses's face was when the string of curses from Sarah would waft through the doors of the bedchamber. It seemed that her wife knew even more curses than she did and made a point to remember to ask her later where she had picked up some of the expressions.

She almost ran in the room when Sarah let loose with an ear shattering scream only to be held back by Habish. "Not yet, sire, trust me she doesn't want you in there at the moment. Her mother was the same way. Those slim hips are lovely to look at for their spouses but murder when it

comes to the birthing of children." The old man actually laughed at the thought and of the fact he was currently restraining the pharaoh. The next sound they heard was the wail of a baby, making Ramses pick her father-in-law up off the floor and into a heartfelt hug.

After what seemed like a lifetime Nina walked out and called for Ramses to come in. Running past her surrogate mother Ramses skidded to a stop in front of the bed. There Sarah was holding a bundle in her arms and tears were running down her face. "What's the matter, love, are you all right?" asked Ramses.

"I'm just fine, sire, come and meet your son." Sarah was crying for the gift that Risea had in fact delivered. She waited to see Ramses's reaction when she first looked at their son. Handing her the bundle Ramses sat and awkwardly not having any practice holding babies. When the pharaoh pulled back the blanket she was greeted to a healthy baby boy with a full head of shiny black hair and an uncanny resemblance to her of all people. When she laughed at the sheer joy of the moment the baby opened his blue eyes and looked at her albeit unfocused and smiled.

"Gods, Sarah look at his eyes, love, they are like mine. He is a gift from the gods love just as you are a gift to me." Ramses could help but laugh from the happiness she felt, it felt like she might burst from the emotion.

"Your mother has blessed us, Ramses, look at him. She was right, we reap the harvest."

The fussing brought them out of their musings. "Let me have him, love, I think he's hungry." The sudden shock of the force of his suction made her suck in a breath. "Wonderful he has your looks and my appetite, I may never survive."

Ramses looked on moving behind Sarah when she changed the baby to her other breast, holding them both as the baby continued feeding. "What do you want to name him, warrior?" Sarah asked Ramses.

"You went through all the pain, love, why don't you decide."

"Our first son carries one of your names so it is only fitting that this one carry on the other. Ramses V, meet your papa," Sarah cooed to the baby getting him to pause in his sucking. "Until he is big enough to carry around such a big name why don't we call him Ram in honor of what he has been doing to me for the past three moons?"

"Ram it is, Sarah, and thank you for sharing this with me."

Laying the baby along side her, Sarah watched him sleep after his meal. Ramses had gone out to get Hawk so that he could meet his new baby brother. It was truly astounding to look at someone so small and have them look so much like the one she loved. If Ramses had fathered the child he wouldn't have looked so much like her. Waiting for Ramses to come back with Hawk she repeated the ritual she had done five years before counting fingers and toes. Ram was so different from Hawk as a baby from the size of their hands to the difference in their hair. Brushing through the thick black hair made her laugh remembering that it had been moons

before she could do the same with Hawk.

"Do you believe he will grow to love horses, short blondes and figs?" asked Isa. In the short time they had been in the company of the pharaoh had not gone without notice of the ruler's favorite things. She and her husband could no longer deny that their daughter was here of her own free will and loved Ramses from the heart and not from obligation.

"Oh, mama, isn't he beautiful? I wish you had seen Hawk as a baby, imagine the exact opposite of this big boy and you can picture him. That was such a bad time for me having him alone and missing you and papa, but now it is as if I'm in a dream."

"Sarah, do they have the same father considering how different they do look?" Isa asked delicately. She had been preparing Habish since she had left the room for the possibility.

"Yes, mama, they do but something happened to me this time that I don't think you would understand." Sarah began her story of the dream that had helped them get to this point. Isa looked skeptical but there was no denying the resemblance between this baby and the pharaoh.

Their time together was interrupted when Ramses entered with Hawk. Ramses had spent time with him in explaining Hawk's role in the baby's life. Seeing them all together made Isa feel jealous all most that she had not had this luxury with Sarah. She was happy for Sarah but sorry for all their missed opportunity.

"Sire, you have a beautiful son," said Isa.

"I have two beautiful sons but an even more beautiful wife, Isa. To have you and Habish here will be good for them, I think family is important for it passes on our family's story." Holding Hawk up so he could see his brother, Ramses was simply beaming at the baby.

"If I could keep that look on your face I would give you a child a season," said Sarah. The look on the Ramses face was charming to watch. From the moment she had held the baby she had fallen in love all over again and it was plainly written in her eyes. Nina had told Sarah in one of their afternoon talks that Ramses had never been around babies so it would be interesting to see how she adjusted.

"No, I think that two are enough for me but that doesn't mean that we can't keep practicing the making them part." Ramses said watching the beautiful blush that ran up Sarah's neckline.

"Ramses, my mother is here," Sarah chastised.

"I'm sorry, love, I'll try and behave."

"Yes, sire, I hope you know that my daughter is off limits to you now." Isa added.

"What?"

"Only until her body heals, sire, only until then."

With relief washing over her Ramses asked Hawk, "What do you think of your new brother, son?"

"Papa, he looks like you."

"Yes a little doesn't he?" answered Ramses.

"But why don't I look like you?"

Ramses had to think about that question before answering. Hawk was young but he was proving to be wise beyond his years with some the questions he put forth. "You do look like me, son, not in your hair and your eyes are like your mother's, but in other things."

"Like what, papa?"

"Like the way you hold your staff and the way you love horses. According to Nina you know how to get into trouble like me and you love your mother like I do. Don't you think you look like me in all those things?"

"Yeah but I don't have dark hair and I'm not tall," said Hawk.

"I wasn't tall either until a few seasons passed Hawk, give yourself a chance and you'll get there I promise. But you know something, son?" The little boy looked up at his idol and shook his head. "It isn't how tall you get to be or the color of your hair that will be the most important thing that you will become in your life. It is the size of your heart and the amount of courage you show in anything that life will test you with that will determine the way that people remember you. And when you look at those two things you are big and tall. You are my son and nothing will ever change that."

"I love you, papa."

"I love you too. Now kiss your mama and let's go so she can get some sleep."

Sarah awoke some time later panicking for a moment when she couldn't find the baby next to her on the bed. Looking at the foot of the bed she found Ramses walking with the bundle securely in her arms cooing to her son. "Hey there, little man, what is that unhappy face about?"

"It means that he is either wet or hungry," answered Sarah. Ramses gave her a sheepish grin at having been caught in a conversation of baby talk. "Why don't you call my mother, love, and have her change him then I can feed him. With any luck he should sleep for a couple of candle marks before he has to be fed again."

"I'm sure Neftu, Dalia and Philbus will be thrilled with the fact that I will be sleep deprived by the time I have to deal with them."

"Have you considered what you are going to do with them, love?" asked Sarah.

"Yes I plan to sentence them to hard labor as slaves for the rest of their lives. There is nothing more than I would love to do than to have them killed for what they did to you and Hawk but this option might give them more time to consider the ramifications of what they have done."

Ramses didn't go any further when she saw Isa enter the room. She took her grandson to the station they had set up to care for the baby and started the process of getting him dry. Ramses watched over the older woman's shoulder as if supervising the job she was doing making Isa a little ill at ease. "Love, come back here and let mama finish. You make her any more nervous and she's liable to drop Ram on the floor." Ramses went and sat on the bed waiting for Isa to finish. Ramses smiled at Sarah getting the smaller woman to rest her head on the broad shoulder.

Retrieving the now dry and content baby Sarah unfastened her sleep shift to feed him again. Having changed into her own sleep shift Ramses sat holding the two of them watching as their son took his fill from his mother. He had his blue eyes opened and one tiny hand wrapped around the pharaoh's finger. "If you think that means he's ready to start wielding a staff or something think again," Sarah told her sternly.

"But the boy has a good grip," teased Ramses.

"And you might find yourself with a new bed somewhere else in this palace."

After the feeding Ramses set the sleeping baby in a small bed Nina had set up next to theirs. When Ramses came back to lay behind Sarah and pulled her back she heard a small protest. Ready to move back and give her wife some room Ramses found herself pinned to the bed by a very alert Sarah. "I have been waiting moons to lie with you like this again and not have anyone between us. I missed you, Ramses." Relieved that she wasn't going to be sleeping on the floor Ramses gathered Sarah up into her arms and kissed her. They enjoyed the snuggling knowing that it wouldn't go any further until Sarah had had the chance to heal.

That night set the pace for many to come in that no sooner than they went to sleep, a scream worthy of a pharaoh would cut through the night waking his parents. The first time it happened that night Ramses was up and next to the bed in a defensive stance before she realized that they weren't under attack. Moving to get the baby in the middle of the night Ramses tripped over the chair Nina had been using to sit with Sarah sending the pharaoh crashing into changing table. That brought the guards running making Sarah lose all control on her laughter. The guards had brought torches with them so the look of the king with baby clothes all over her gave the queen the best laugh she had in days.

"Would you like me to keep watch to make sure he doesn't spit up on you?" asked Denu. The piercing glare the comment got him from the pharaoh sent him running after the other retreating guards.

"Do you think you can get up from there and pick up your son before he wakes the rest of the

guards and they get a personal tour of our sleeping chamber?" asked Sarah.

"You are enjoying this a little to much, my queen."

"It's not everyday that I get to see you so off balance, love, forgive me if I find it amusing," Sarah told her sweetly.

"Maybe it's a good thing I can't get you pregnant. Many more awakenings like that one and I would lose my mind." Turning to the baby Ramses looked down on him seeing that he was quite passionate in showing his displeasure at being ignored. "And people think I'm impatient. Son, you have got to find a quieter way to tell us you're hungry." Sarah laughed at the conversation Ramses was having with the baby who upon hearing the deep voice quieted down and waited to be picked up. After his feeding Ram was taken by Isa who promised to look after him until it was time for him to eat again.

"Where is Ramses this morning, Nina?" asked Sarah.

"The pharaoh is meeting with the rebel leaders Philbus had been sent to fight, highness. Denu met with them when he went to deliver the king's message to Neftu and arranged for them to get an audience with Ramses. It should be quite a shock for them to come in and find Dalia hanging off the front columns of the palace."

Sarah thought about the life that awaited Dalia now that she had been instrumental in the plot to overthrow the pharaoh. She would be lucky if Ramses assigned her to be a pleasure slave like Sarah had been in Larlis's house. Dalia hadn't grown up to have any knowledge of hard labor but there was a part of Sarah that wanted the princess to get to know just that. She had done all that scheming to get into Ramses's bed and almost got herself killed instead, which deserved punishment in Sarah's mind.

"I'm sure that Dalia doesn't expect Ramses to treat her in any special way after what she did would she? The fact that she teamed up with Philbus of all people is not going to work in her favor when her father gets here and Ramses makes her decision as to their fate. The blow that man gave Hawk across the back is always in the back of her mind so if her cousin believes in any of the gods my advice would be to start praying now," said Sarah.

"There are no gods Philbus can pray to love that would make me forget or forgive what he has done," answered Ramses. She had finished her meetings with the visitors from Neftu's land and wanted to check on her wife and baby. Hawk had finished his lessons for the morning and was tagging along so that he and Ramses could head to the weapons room once the visit was done. "Neftu will be here by tomorrow and then it will be done. After my visit this morning with Selba, the leader of the rebel forces, I have come to the conclusion that Neftu is even more stupid than even I gave him credit for. He has been stealing from me and has enslaved a large number of his people into his forces against Egypt. Maybe it is time to put a woman in charge of the northern tribes and Selba seems like a perfect candidate. At least she understands that given the proper

motivation I can be called upon to crush people like Neftu into the sand and I don't expect that she will give me the headaches he has. Enough about that, how are you, love, and the mighty screamer?"

"I am feeling much better. The healer was just here and said that I should be up in a few days. There was no tearing which is good I just feel a little sore. If you are up to it once you finish with Hawk maybe you would like to take a slow walk through the gardens with the four of us?"

"If you think you should there is no other place that I would rather be."

Pleased with Hawk's progress Ramses pushed him harder to learn the moves that would eventually become so engrained that they would be as natural as breathing. His reflexes and forward thinking even for one so young would make him stand out on the battlefield when it would be his time to go. Once they were finished Ramses pulled down her sword and ran through the warm up exercises then through the routine she and her father had developed that kept her in battle ready condition.

Her son watched her in awe as the sword glittered in the afternoon sun, as did the sweat that was pouring from her skin. Denu had told Hawk that his papa was an even better warrior than was her father. There were still some older soldiers that had served under both and when it came to defense of family and land there was none better. Hawk's dream was that one day the soldiers would say that about him.

Before heading back to her family Ramses walked to the front of the palace to visit the now quiet prisoners. The two had gotten the message that their screaming was getting them no response so they had quieted enough to have their gags removed. Seeing Ramses approaching got the first agitated response out of both of them in a day.

"Ramses, cut me down from here immediately. Once my father hears of this you will be made to pay I swear it," screamed Dalia.

"Princess, you should be glad that you are my prisoner and not Philbus's. If that were the case I'm sure that you would have been raped and beaten by now. My advice to both of you is to shut up and listen before I have the gags put in place again. We have a new heir to the throne and I don't want him disturbed. Princess your father is coming tomorrow and that is when we will decide your fate for the crimes against me and my family."

"We?" asked Philbus speaking for the first time. Since his cousin had strung him up here he figured that it would be a matter of time before she killed him. Now it proved him right that the slave Sarah had made her weak in even punishment. Given the opportunity to live he could rebuild his forces and try again given time.

"I do not sit on the dais alone any more, cousin, and the crimes you committed were not against me alone either. Sarah will have her say in the decisions I must make tomorrow. I am just sorry for your mother, Philbus, did you not consider her when you thought up this plot you tried. You alone will bear the responsibility of what happens to her."

"Ramses, she had nothing to do with this. She is still in her home in the city and had no idea of what I would try."

"You know the law as well as I, Philbus, and since you have pushed me on enforcing it as written for so long I will take heed this time. The advisors will be thrilled don't you agree?" With that she turned and walked away leaving them to contemplate their demise alone. The guards had told Ramses that for candle marks when they were first tied up Dalia had spent her time telling Philbus what an idiot he was and how stupid she was for believing he could get rid of Ramses. Ramses laughed out loud at the thought that for once Dalia was right about something.

The next morning arriving by litter King Neftu stepped out at the bottom of the steps leading up to the palace immediately looking to the right and finding his daughter hanging naked from two columns. The gravity of the situation he found himself in came crashing down on him knowing in that instant that Ramses would never overlook what happened. His only wish now was that the pharaoh offered mercy in that what they had done would not order their deaths.

"Neftu, if you know what is best for now you will walk past her and ignore what you see for now. Ramses is waiting for you and I think it best you don't keep her waiting," Denu told him as they started up the stairs.

"How long has she been there like that?" asked Neftu.

"Since their capture when Ramses retook the city. She has not been touched or harmed in any way, which is more than I can say about my brother. Corby is still recovering from the whipping he took in that same spot days ago."

Neftu was surprised when they entered the throne room and found that most of the court that was usually present were indeed there. He figured Ramses would have closed the room to any visitor considering what was to happen today. Falling to his knees and bowing at the bottom of the dais he waited for Ramses to acknowledge him.

Ramses looked at the man lying almost prostrate on the floor and didn't say anything, she was waiting for the rest of the players in this little tableau to arrive. Hearing the drums start up like they had for her made the first smile grace her face since sitting on the throne, the beating meant Sarah was entering along with the two princes of Egypt. Today would mark not only the end of this chapter of insolence from some of her subjects but it would also be recorded that it was the day she adopted the two boys as her heirs and took a queen. It was good to show the people their future and have them get use to the idea.

Walking a bit slower than usual, Sarah entered looking like the queen she would soon be. Wearing a smaller jeweled choker that matched the one Ramses had on and a long white linen tunic, the people bowed in respect. The outfit and royal jewelry signified her new status, the one that would become official today.

At her side walked Hawk smiling up at Ramses reminding the pharaoh of the first time the boy had been in the throne room back in the city. She had explained to her son that there was no place for him to sit and it was his duty to stand by her with his hand resting on the right arm of the throne. That would signify him as the next pharaoh of his people and her son. Walking behind the two of them was Nina holding a bundled and sleeping Ram. When they stopped next to the still kneeling Neftu, Ramses stood and descended the steps and scooped Sarah up into her arms carrying her so that she wouldn't have to climb the stairs in her still sore condition. Once Sarah was situated with Ram in her arms Ramses sat down and looked out at the group gathered. She could tell that they were dying to get out of there so that they could start their gossiping at the positions of everyone on the dais.

The last of the expected arrived surrounded by guards, now dressed and bathed Philbus and Dalia walked to where her father was. As Denu pushed them to their knees to join Neftu, Ramses was ready to begin.

"I will not waste my time in repeating the charges against the people you see before me so I will instead issue a warning. To some of you having a woman sit on this throne is a sign of weakness. If you are standing here today thinking that I want you to step forward. I don't care how many of you there are step forward and have your say. These three tried and failed and because of their failure all of their men are dead. The price of failure is death but that will not be the outcome today. Before any of you think that it is because Philbus is part of my family, listen to what the punishment will be."

"For the rest of their lives Philbus and Neftu will be chained together to work in the quarry. There they will work as slaves subject to the same expectation of workload as everyone else. As for you, Dalia, who was so anxious to get into my bed that you helped my cousin in trying to kill my family and me I have something else in mind for you. Since you tried to usurp her place I think the queen should name your punishment. Love, what do you wish to do with Dalia?"

"If I was a cruel woman I would sentence her to the fate Philbus had in mind for her as a pleasure slave, but even my heart is not that cold. Ramses, since the princess was so anxious to get into your bed would it not be fitting for her to get her wish?" asked Sarah sweetly. Ramses looked at her with the same level of amusement wondering what her wife had in mind because it certainly wouldn't be Dalia anywhere near their bed.

"What ever you wish, highness, will be carried out," Ramses responded.

"Then I think the laundry that does our sheets will be gaining another worker. If in between your sheets is where she wanted to be then who am I to deny her that pleasure," Sarah reasoned. From her kneeling position the crowd watched as Dalia's body stiffened once the queen was finished. They had not known what to expect from the queen but she was proving to be as worthy of respect as Ramses.

"Excellent suggestion, love, but don't worry, Dalia, you won't be down there alone. Philbus's mother will join you in your labors. It will be her share of the punishment for her son's crimes.

Perhaps my aunt will think about how she should have taught Philbus obedience as a child instead of filling his head with dreams of being pharaoh because of who her sister's husband was."

"As slaves, the three of you will have plenty of time to think about the foolishness of your plan. As you start working, you think because of past positions you are not expected to work as hard as those next to you think again, punishment will come heavy and swift at the end of a whip. Or if you dream of escape I will spend my life hunting you down. Once caught you will pray for a slow death but the gods will not hear you over your own screams." Ramses explained. "Dennu, take them out of my sight. Make sure that their first stop is at the forger's to be fitted for leg irons and collars."

"Yes, sire, it will be done." Dennu tapped his chest with his fist and motioned for the guards to remove the three prisoners made slaves.

As they moved to Dalia she stood on her own and screamed up at Ramses. "This isn't over, Ramses, I promise you."

"Dennu, make sure that when we return to the city that her leg irons are attached to those of Philbus's mother for that outburst. Now for more important matters."

Ramses turned to Sarah and Hawk moving toward her throne when she thought of something she had forgotten. Having the new royal guard Isaac hand her the spear that one of Neftu's men had used to wound her she called to Philbus. When he turned to face the dais again the spear sliced through the space separating them and plunged into the exact spot she had been wounded. "Not that there will be a next time, cousin, but you would have done better with soldiers who have as good a aim as I do."

After the three were removed from the room those gathered moved aside as the high priest of Isis's temple entered and approached the dais. Bowing slightly the old man started up the steps followed by two other priests there to help him with the next ceremony. "Ramses, step aside and let me see your new family," the high priest Suard ordered gently. Stepping up to the lower throne he took the baby from Sarah and unwrapped the blanket covering him. Ramses smiled as the priest looked at Ram then at her as if comparing the features. "You have been blessed I see, child. I told your father long ago when I held you that you would be smiled upon by the gods because of the sacrifice Risea made. Now look at your son and see that my words rang true. Your other son Hawk will be a great warrior, Ramses, like you are for our people. Because of him and your teachings we will be blessed by peace for generations to come." He turned to Sarah last and gave her back the baby before addressing her. "Highness, you are mother to the two princes of Egypt and keeper of the pharaoh's heart. Treat your people the way you treat her and the gods will smile upon you and your children. From what Risea and Ramses III founded you will build on ensuring that not only the Egyptian people survive but so will the Hebrew nation. Take care the gifts that Isis has blessed you with."

Standing Hawk before him first, Suard turned the boy's right hand palm up and filling it with sand, in the other palm he wet with water from the Nile. "People of Egypt hear me. In the

beginning we were blessed by Isis with a pharaoh that ruled with a firm but fair hand. From that line came Ramses III and then his daughter Ramses IV and now the great goddess gives you Prince Hawk son of Sarah and Ramses IV. With the life that comes from the Nile and the power that comes from the land he claims his right as Ramses's son to the throne of his forefathers. Let it be written and let it be so." Suard repeated the rites for Ram while Ramses held him and when it was done the two young boys were officially adopted and had staked their claim as next in line to rule.

Handing Ram to Nina once again Sarah came to stand next to Ramses. The rite of joining and anointing a new queen was as quick as the other two Suard had already performed. Tying their hands together the aged priest went through the prayers to Isis. Once he finished he bade them both to take their thrones. Stepping behind Sarah first Suard placed the queen's crown on her head and handed her the scepters of power then repeated the same with Ramses. When he finished his prayers Suard and the other two priests stepped down from the dais as did Nina and the guards. "I give you the Pharaoh of Egypt Ramses IV and her queen." Everyone present including the priests fell to their knees in homage to the seated pair.

There was a feast after it was done so that the people present could get to see and congratulate the pharaoh and Sarah. As the festivities carried on the people were treated with the sight of their pharaoh truly in love with the woman seated at her left. The queen looked at Ramses when Hawk fell asleep on the pharaoh's shoulder, silently requesting that they retire for the evening. It would take some adjustment on her part in getting used to everyone bowing as they stood and headed toward their rooms.

With the boys put to bed and waiting for Ramses to join her, Sarah stood and looked at her body in the reflection of the bath water. With a little time hopefully her figure would return and she would again resemble the woman that Ramses had fallen in love with. "I hope that she is patient with me and knows that I won't always look this way," she said softly to herself. Hearing the soft chuckle behind her Sarah turned and saw Ramses standing there as naked as she was. The worry on her face relaxed when she saw the pharaoh drop to her knees and bow her head.

"Highness, forgive this humble servant in being so remiss."

"And what am I offering forgiveness for?" asked Sarah.

"If you have doubts about your beauty, highness, and whether or not I see it then I have been remiss in stating my feelings." Standing Ramses moved behind Sarah. "You are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen, Sarah. You are beautiful love from your hair that is like summer sunshine and is always soft to the touch to your feet. There has never been a moment since I first saw you that I don't look at you without desire. I have a feeling that it will always be so and you and I both know I am always right." Standing and coming behind Sarah, Ramses brought the smaller woman into an embrace. She knew she couldn't make love to Sarah but surely Isa didn't mean that she couldn't touch her. Running her hands from Sarah's stomach up to cup her breast Ramses looked at the nipples that were hard and moist from the milk Sarah was producing.

"Please, Ramses, we have to stop I can't, not yet."

"I am not going to hurt you, love, I just want to touch you." Ramses told her as she dipped her head to kiss Sarah's neck. Her hands released Sarah's breast and roamed down her body to the front of her thighs. "I know I can't have you yet but that doesn't mean that I don't want you." The fingers just brushed through the blonde hairs covering Sarah's sex but didn't dip in. "I want to feel you on me while I am making love to you. The touch of your skin sets me on fire." Ramses took the nipples in between her thumb and index finger and just slightly applied pressure. "I will wait but it will be hard not touching you, not being able to love you. You have to promise me, Sarah, that you will heal quickly so that I can show you how much I love you." Turning her wife around the pharaoh captured the red lips in a passionate kiss. With her hands now on the cheeks of Sarah's butt Ramses sucked Sarah's tongue into her mouth causing the blonde to whimper.

When they broke apart Sarah's only comment was "You are very forgiven and you are very convincing. I'll have to visit the healer tomorrow to see if there is anything that I can do to speed this process up."

A moon later...

Ramses sat in an open room off the water surrounded by advisors talking about the expansion of the land to be cultivated for the planting that season. If the plight of the slaves was to improve then the lands currently being planted would have to be expanded pulling slaves currently assigned to building to work in the fields. Her advisors were arguing over how much land to expand thinking that what the pharaoh had in mind was too much.

As the argument was getting heated, Sarah swept in. The men seated around the pharaoh bowed quickly at the new visitor hoping that she would reason with Ramses to change her current rulings on the upcoming planting. "Highness, how is the baby?" asked the head advisor seated next to her spouse.

"Getting bigger by the day, thank you. I'm am sorry to disturb you sire but I just visited with the healer and thought you would be interested in what he had to say. So if you are finished discussing the intricacies of this season's planting, might I have a word with you?"

Ramses jumped up and grabbed Sarah's hands in worry. "Are you all right, love? Are you sick?"

Turning the king around so that she could keep their conversation as private as she could she shook her head. "No, sire, I just thought that you would like to know that unlike the rains our lands have been blessed with this summer season, our drought is over."

Ramses looked at her in confusion. Like Sarah had stated they had had a good rainy season ensuring the success of the crops planted, there was no drought. "Sire, why don't you give them what they want just this one time and I will give you what you have wanted for over a moon now." She hinted as she raised one pale brow. The look Ramses was giving her made Sarah think

that she would have to borrow Hawk's staff for a well placed blow to her lover's thick head. Trying to cut through the confusion she ran her nails along the tight abdomen in front of her finally getting a response out of Ramses.

"Demini, this discussion is over, I will agree to your plan for now so go and see that the work is begun." Ramses ordered the new head advisor.

"Thank you, Queen Sarah," Demini said as the rest of the advisors followed him out of the room.

"You are thanking Sarah?" asked an amused Ramses. There was no answer as the men just picked up their pace heading toward the front of the palace and down the stairs.

"I do believe that they are getting use to having you in my life. It makes me so much easier to deal with," said Ramses.

"Now, my queen, you mentioned something about the end of our drought?"

"Yes if I could interest you in an afternoon nap then I could explain that much better."

They walked to their rooms arm in arm stopping every so often to share a kiss. Ramses was having a difficult time fighting the urge to pick Sarah up and run the rest of the way but her wife seemed pleased at the rate they were going so she decided to play along. In their sex life Ramses had figured out that Sarah liked to torture her as much as possible by driving her to the point where she thought she would die from wanting and then, and only then, give her what she wanted.

"What did you do with Ram and Hawk?" asked Ramses.

"They are spending the afternoon with Nina and their grandparents. Nin packed them all a picnic lunch and they were headed toward the riverbank with Denu in tow last I saw them. I fed the baby so he should be happy for a couple of candle marks so I thought I would make you happy for a couple of candle marks."

Reaching their sleeping chambers Ramses lost the inner fight with her control and scooped Sarah up into a crushing kiss. It had been driving her crazy watching Sarah in the bath and in their bed but not being able to touch her the way she wanted to. Untying the tunic at Sarah's shoulders Ramses stood back for a moment as it fell to the ground. The admiring stare did wonders for Sarah's self esteem and moved to pull off Ramses clothes.

Once they were both naked Ramses picked her up so that they were at eye level causing Sarah to wrap her legs around Ramses's hips. Sarah was ready since she had been thinking about this since that morning when finally all the residual soreness had disappeared. Ramses moaned into Sarah's mouth when she felt the wet curls brushing at her skin. Lowering the blonde to the bed Ramses wasted no time in breaking the kiss and moving down the body she craved.

Spreading Sarah open Ramses skipped any big build up and dove right in finding the hard nub

and sucking it into her mouth. "Oh yes, I missed you, warrior," was the last coherent thing Sarah was able to say as the mouth on her sex sucked harder.

Grinding herself against Ramses's face Sarah had to pause a minute when the pharaoh slipped a finger into her and just held it there. Ramses was letting her set the pace and it started Sarah's hips moving again. It didn't take long before Sarah shut her eyes tight and an animalistic cry cut through the air. The orgasm had been strong and sweet, but too fast.

Grabbing a head full of black hair Sarah pulled her lover onto the bed and indicated that she wanted her in a sitting position. There was no talking as she slid off the bed and kneeled in between the impossibly long legs. Sarah was interested in trying something different this time. Dragging her nails along Ramses's inner thighs caused them to part even more allowing Sarah to scoot closer. Taking a deep breath to savor Ramses's scent, she ran a flat tongue from the wet opening to the throbbing clit. That prompted a big hand to grab a handful of blonde hair urging her on.

"Highness, I didn't tease you so get on with it." Ramses told her as the pharaoh felt those wicked nails scraping down the back of her legs. Sarah had a unique talent for knowing what would make her feel good, while driving her insane at the same time. The grip on the blonde hair tightened as the tongue picked up speed but didn't change positions. Not moving her hands from behind Ramses's legs Sarah kept licking until she could hear the breathing change in the woman above her.

Ramses was unlike her in that she didn't make a lot of noise during their lovemaking, her spouse had often teased her that since Sarah was the more talkative of the two it made sense that it would carry over into their sleeping chambers. It surprised her when she heard the first moan and then the, "Oh gods, Sarah" that followed.

When the last lick caused a flinch Sarah looked up with a smile from her kneeling position. "I take it you liked that?"

"Yes, highness, that certainly beat discussions on land clearing."

"That is the best you can do, sire?"

"Well, highness, considering that I'm about to pass out from pleasure, yes it's the best I can do. Give me a few moments and I'll try harder."

"You, sire, don't have to move because I think you are in a perfect position," said Sarah looking at the now prone panting woman on the bed.

"Perfect for what?" asked Ramses.

The answer came in the form of a dripping Sarah who was sitting on her face. Even from her position Sarah could feel the smile that was on Ramses's face. "I take it you like this?" Sarah asked Ramses.

"Love, don't take this wrong but you talk too much."

"And to think I brought you here because it is cooler," said Ramses as she watched the sweat roll off both of them. Life was so perfect for her after the arrival of this small woman lying next to her.

"My love, do you know how much I love you? You have given me so much that I feel like I am cheating you at times for not being able to repay you. You have given me children, happiness and yourself. It seems inadequate, but thank you," Ramses finished.

"You can repay me, though it is not necessary, by promising me one thing," said Sarah.

"Anything, Sarah, ask and you will have it."

"Promise me forever."

The End

The story of Ramses and Sarah continues in [Sex, Wives and Misunderstandings](#).

Comments to: terrali20@yahoo.com