

# **BLESSED LANDS EGYPT**

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Chapters 1 - 6 preview

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# Chapter 1

The doorbell rang. Honute was expecting his twin sister Honuti. She sounded excited over the phone. "Take a deep breath and tell me." He told her. She inhaled a deep breath, held it for a few seconds and let it out in one big rush of air. "I got promoted." She said. Honute, blinked a few times. "Really?"

"Yes." She replied.

"This is wonderful news. We'll celebrate tonight. Bring Anumetus."

The doorbell rang again. Honute stepped out of the kitchen. "I'll get it." He said to no one in particular and stepped the short distance to the door. Their apartment, Hypatia and Honute, was modest. It wasn't as large as some of their friend's. His position as a local priest brought home a decent check. It was Hypatia who was the bread winner of the family. Her salary was nearly twice that of his meager pay. His check paid the bills and living expenses. Her check paid for the apartment. Honute looked through the peep hole and saw his twin. He opened the door, "Honuti!" He gave her a big hug. The last time she came over for dinner was about six months ago. The evening had been pleasant enough in the beginning then Hypatia had had a little bit too much to drink. The same old resentment bubbled up to the surface and they argued about the old issues.

"Come in, come in." He said.

Honuti stepped in and handed him a bottle of date wine. He took it and patted Anumetus on the back. Anumetus

nodded and smiled amiably. He was a quiet decent looking guy. His hair was jet black and his skin was olive brown. Honuti complimented him by being almost pale white. Honute smiled at the vast differences between the two. He was tall and dark, she was Honute's height with very fair skin. Her hair was a flowing brown when it wasn't tied up in a ponytail. Honute looked at his own complexion. He was several shades darker than his twin, but his was the result of being out in the sun giving blessings to pilgrims and local worshipers. "Dinner will be ready in about thirty minutes." Honute took the wine into the kitchen and found a corkscrew. He popped the cork and poured three glasses. He sniffed the air and turned to the oven. Several game hens baked golden brown were nearly done. He took a cooking brush, dipped the head into a jar of butter oil and wiped each bird until the skin was shiny. A clear pot of mixed vegetables boiled silently. He lifted the lid and tipped in a little bit of salt. The air filled with the smell of carrots, cabbage, and peas. The second pot was bubbly and spat out a smooth flour gravy sauce. It hit the counter in a wet splat. Honute grabbed a cloth and wiped the spot up. He dropped in some whole black mushrooms and stirred until the mushrooms disappeared. The mushrooms had been declared out of season, but Lucutus, the store owner grew them in the store basement. They were a gift. Honute had blessed his store, for free, when Lucutus thought he run into bad fortune and told Honute that he could not pay him much. Creditors and the regional Vizier visited that afternoon. Lucutus said that he tried praying to Bes, but he believed his prayers fell on deaf ears and so needed a priest. A few weeks after Honute blessed the store Lucutus came into an inheritance from a nearly forgotten relative. To show his appreciation Lucutus told Honute that he can have up to two pounds of anything in the store, each week, for the rest of his life. Hypatia had been furious when

she learned that Honute performed the ritual for free. She screamed, yelled, and threw things across the room. She had fumed for several days until Honute brought home two pounds of Royal Honey. He told her it was a gift. She didn't believe him and promptly checked the credit cards and bank account for recent transactions. Royal Honey sold for \$100.00 an ounce. She pressed Honute further for the truth. He said Lucutus gave it to him to show his appreciation. She blinked several times and stared at him in silence. He shrugged and suggested he would take it back if she wasn't happy with the honey. She continued to stare in silence. After a few moments, Honute repacked the Honey and left. An hour later he returned with two pounds of lamb and dates and cooked dinner. The two sat in total silence chewing and swallowing. Occasionally the deafening absence of sound was cut by the contact of metal utensils against ceramic plates. After dinner, Honute cleaned up and washed the dishes. He went into one of the rooms that had been converted into an office. Both had their own office – it was an easy arrangement the two made. Several hours later Hypatia tapped lightly on the door. She stepped in and asked how much did the lamb and dates cost. She was balancing the book and needed to make an entry. He looked up from reading and said, "It cost nothing. It was a gift," and buried his nose back into his prayer book. Hypatia tried to conceal the pained look on her face as she closed the door. Realization hit her hard at what Honute had traded in exchange for the Royal Honey. And that was pretty much how their life went.

Honute walked out the kitchen with the three glasses in his hands.

Honuti took two and gave one to Anumetus, "To success and prosperity." She said.

Honute looked up when he heard keys in the front door. He crossed the path to greet Hypatia. The door opened and he

saw his wife was in a foul mood.

Hypatia noticed Honuti and Anumetus standing in the living room holding glasses of wine. She said, "What are you doing here?"

Honuti reacted to the indignity and was about to reply when Honute said, "Remember Hyp, I left you a message on your voice mail at school."

Hypatia glared at Honute.

"Honuti got promoted and we are celebrating. I cooked us a nice dinner."

Hypatia blinked a few times. Her jaw muscled worked silently. "Congratulations. Maybe it's a good thing that one of you is ambitious."

Honute cleared his throat. "How about we have a nice evening. This is something special."

Hypatia responded, "I'm not hungry. I ate something earlier and I feel tired. You guys enjoy yourselves." She headed for the bedroom.

Honute watched her in stunned silence as she walked down the hall and slammed the door shut. He looked at his twin and her fiance. He let out a deep sigh and shrugged. "I'm sorry, Honu. I don't know what's gotten into her. Lately, she's been in a bad mood."

Honuti drained her glass and sat on the couch.

Anumetus sipped at his and sat. For the moment he decided to remain quiet.

"Nute," Honuti began, "Don't worry about it. She just had a bad day."

The group was silent for a bit. Honute sighed. "Maybe we should celebrate another time."

Honuti smiled slightly. She figured her brother wanted to talk to Hypatia. She nodded, gave Honute a kiss on the cheek and collected Anumetus for their departure.

Honute stood on the balcony looking out over the city. It was late and most of the city lights were out. The air was clear and smelled of recent rain fall. The streets were slick and had a shiny appearance in the late night. Hypatia was asleep in their bedroom. After Honuti and Anumetus left, Honute, determined to find out once and for all what was wrong with his wife, stormed through the doorway to their bedroom. Hypatia was still in her work clothes – white linen sheet folded and wrapped around her body and sandals still on her feet – was sound asleep. It wasn't that he didn't love his wife or that she didn't love him, it was that they hardly saw each other. She was head lecturer and astronomer at the University of New Heliopolis, Great Temple of Amon-Ra. Her workload tripled when the previous head lecturer, Dr. Turtukilo took another post at the Serapis Institute of Technology, Lower House of the Temple of Ptah. So, like all the other nights, Hypatia would drag herself into the apartment, walk into the kitchen to grab a bottle of Honey ale and sit and vegetate. She would mutter something about the school looking to hire more help. Same thing every night, except this night. She insulted his sister and embarrassed herself. Honute unwrapped the cloth around Hypatia and placed it in the laundry basket. He placed her shoes by the bedside and drew the covers and tucked his wife in. Just before he left he kissed her on the forehead and blessed the room. He mumbled a long memorized prayer. He prayed to Isis and asked her to help him and Hypatia find their happiness.

# Chapter 2

Dr. Theoris ran the simulation again. She pushed her dull dark gray framed glasses high up on the bridge of her nose. The glasses were a gift. Her father gave them to her when she received her first Ph. D. That was twenty years ago. They bothered her then and they bothered her now.

The computer predicted that the two atoms would behave as one. “Akila, could you get me the data on the Entangle Range?”

“Yes, Doctor.” Akila had been Dr. Theoris’ assistant for five years. Akila was working toward a Doctorate in Magickal Manifestation. Theoris had been the leader of Manifestation investigation for the last decade. No one in the Blessed world could match her accomplishments. So, it was fortunate that Akila was able to work with the Doctor on her last step forward into the unknown science of Magick. “Here you are, Doctor.” Akila handed a thumb drive to Theoris.

Theoris took it and slide the black matte rectangular device into her computer’s port. She clicked out several commands from the keyboard and hit the enter key. The Plasma flat-screen monitor pixilated a graph. Theoris’ glasses slid to the tip of her nose. Subconsciously she pushed them back up. She nodded at the results and turned to Akila, who was waiting patiently. Theoris pressed her lips together. “This proves that anyone can perform magick.”

Akila nearly shrielled with delight but squelched the impulse quickly. If Theoris could remain calm then she could

to. She tried to sound as dry as Theoris sounded. "Yes, Doctor. Excellent news."

Theoris looked up at Akila and smiled. Her student was working out perfectly. She was learning to control all irrational behavior and act and think objectively. Theoris considered herself blessed. Akila was brilliant, level headed, young, and cute all at the same time. Her poise and curvature was almost beguiling. Akila's two little ponytails rested on each shoulder. Theoris particularly liked and appreciated the sky blue bows at the end of each ponytail. She knew that Akila was going to make a lot of great contributions of her own one day. Theoris nodded. "Yes. The next thing we must do is begin experiments. The Human Trials Committee gave us the go ahead to start the studies again. We can experiment on one person. Do you have any suggestions, Akila?"

Akila smiled. "That is good news Doctor. I actually do have a suggestion." She had considered the Manifestation Theory correct. She had to. Why else spend all that time and money on getting this degree? "I was thinking that we need an individual who is already working in a position that would require an extreme belief in magick."

Theoris nodded and encouraged Akila to continue.

"We should be most careful of the extreme zealous cults. They tend to be over enthusiastic and might be a trifle dangerous."

"My thoughts exactly." Theoris said and pushed her glasses up.

"Maybe a local priest. Someone devoted to the trade, but not overly ambitious."

Theoris smiled. She nodded. "Excellent idea. I personally know the head priest of the Temple of Thoth, god of intellect, arts, writing, and all that is science. He's been trying to date me for the last ten years. Maybe I'll take him up on his tedious

offer.”

Both women giggled.

Honute rose early the next morning. He noticed Hypatia was not in bed. He heard clanking in the kitchen. He dressed himself in a slumber robe and walked out of the bedroom into the kitchen. Hypatia he noticed had discovered last night's dinner in the refrigerator. She had heated a leg and thigh of one of the game hens. The mushroom sauce was in a small pool next to the meat. She dabbed a tear of monkey bread in the sauce, bit and chewed a piece off while eating a chunk of hen leg. She looked up and a frown formed on her face.

Honute chose to ignore the look and greeted her with a smile and a cheery, “Morning, Wife. How are you feeling?” He grabbed an empty cup and placed a bag of date and cilantro tea in the cup. Hypatia stared coldly at him. He felt her eyes pierce deep into the back of his neck as he filled his cup with water. He continued to ignore her as he side stepped to the microwave and placed the cup in and set the timer to sixty seconds. He took a deep breath, let it out, and turned to face Hypatia.

“I want a divorce.” She said.

Honute froze in shocked surprise. “What?”

She repeated but this time the words came out biting. “I want a divorce.”

Honute felt as if the words had teeth and ripped a piece of his heart away. He was at a loss as how to answer.

“Well, are you going to say anything?” Hypatia challenged.

“What would you have me say? ‘Don’t divorce me?’”

She answered, her upper lip curled in a way that made her look ugly. “Don’t you want to know why?”

He nodded slowly. When she had that look on her face Pharaoh himself withdrew and hide.

“I no longer love you.”

The microwave dinged.

Honute’s head snapped back as if it were struck. “But why?” He started, “I know we don’t see much of each other any more.” He was at a loss and desperate for a way out. “We can make time. I’ll ask Setenaju to ease my responsibilities. We can make it work. . .”

She cut him off and simply said. “You are not the man I thought I married.”

“W-What do you mean?” He stammered out.

“You are weak and complacent.” She said. “You have no ambition. All you do is tend to the Temple and sweep and wash at the feet of Thoth. You grab what is given to you instead of taking what you want.”

“But, Hyp, you knew I wanted to be a Priest when you married me.” He grabbed a chair next to her and sat down. He reached out to her hand.

She withdrew it as if his touch was venomous. She placed both hands in her lap.

Honute cleared his throat. “I told you from the beginning of our relationship that all I ever wanted to be was a priest. Nothing more.”

She looked down at her hands, rage barely in check, and said with a clenched jaw, “I know, but I thought you were just being humble and didn’t want to scare me away with boastful talk.”

His face twisted up from hurt and disbelief.

“I was wrong.” She said, her face turning a deeper pink. “I want someone ambitious, not a lower minion priest caring for an abject sycophantic god!”

Honute looked heavenward and uttered with conviction in his voice, “Oh, Lord-God Thoth, please forgive the words coming from Hypatia. Her heart is filled with hate, but it is not

toward you. Please over look her. . .”

“Shut up!” She yelled. “I hate you and your god! You and your fawning over a god of letters!”

Honute slammed his hand on the table surprising both of them. “Thoth is not a lower god. He is part of the Ennead and must be given proper respect. As a scholar, Thoth should be your god. . .”

Hypatia got up from the table. “I no longer want to be with someone who is just content with bathing a statue. I’ll be staying at the University. I told the landlord that you will be responsible for next month’s rent. When you get back from your daily minion feet washing and blessing I’ll be gone.” She walked away into the bedroom and slammed the door.

Honute sat at the table in disbelief. What had he done wrong? Apparently, Isis hadn’t heard his prays last night. He got up and walked to the bedroom. He lightly tapped on the door. “I need to dress and get ready for work.” He tapped again.

A moment later the door opened up and Hypatia throw out some of his robes and sandals. She shut the door again, hard.

Honute gathered up his clothes in his arm as if they were a symbol of his pride. With a bowed head he walked into his office and got dressed. Luckily, he had access to the second bathroom that was between both rooms. Twenty minutes later he walked out of the apartment and followed the long worn path to the Temple of Thoth, god of intellect, arts, writing, and all that is science. Today he had to cleanse his thoughts and be pure of heart and mind. Today, Guriamon, the head priest wanted to talk to him. Honute prayed to Ma’at, Thoth’s wife, for a good outcome. He needed it. The other shoe hadn’t fallen yet.

# Chapter 3

Ferruk entered his chamber. He slammed the door behind him, stormed over to his highboy and knocked all the contents off. Someone knocked at the door.

The door slowly opened and a capped head poked through. It was Arrutyi, his man servant. "Master, are you okay?"

Ferruk spun around and yelled. "Yes, I'm all right you fool!"

"It was that I heard. . ."

"Get out!"

Arrutyi backed his head out and started to slowly close the door.

"Wait!" Ferruk said. A smile formed on his face. He wouldn't have to perform any rituals until later this evening. He had time to enjoy the day and all the luxuries that came with power.

"Yes, Master?" He said stepping into the room.

"Draw my bath and have Ayrui join me."

Arrutyi bowed out and closed the door. He hurried to tell his daughter that the Master had summoned her to attend him. It pained him that his daughter should also serve as Master's slave. But he and his daughter came from a long lineage of slaves. All the way back to Tutmoses III. They have always served the likes of the Royal family that was until recently. Pharaoh Futloramon IV gave his family servitude to Ferruk-amon Islat Huytrep-Ra, Mighty Priest of the Middle Lands. Ayrui was but ten at the time. Her mother had passed away just a month before. It was a tragedy, but Pharaoh had favored

Trequyi and he gave her a wonderful funeral. After that, things changed between his family and the Royal family. The Pharaoh no longer used him for special projects. Pharaoh even stopped placing a Poki flower on Trequyi grave. A month later the Pharaoh gave Arrutyi and Ayrui away to his present master. A most devious and evil vile creature. Arrutyi wondered why the gods would allow such a man to bless their lands and people. It was truly a mystery.

Ferruk stepped into the warm water. He grabbed a glass of wine offered to him and sipped at the content inside. He bent forward to expose his back. Ayrui rubbed a sponge against it and let the soapy water cascade back into the tube. "Wash my front." He said and laid back. He parted his legs to let Ayrui run the sponge between his legs. He smiled and sipped more of the wine. "You know Ayrui, you have always been my favorite. Even Seth became envious when Futloramon gave me you."

Ayrui continued to rub up and down. She replaced the sponge with her hand and massaged him. "Yes, Master."

Ferruk arched his back a little. "Take it and finish me off."

Ayrui bent down and engulfed him with her mouth. She expertly stroked him. She would continue until she felt him swell and at the last second remove her lips and let him spend himself. She did this every day for as long as she could remember, and everyday she hated it. She sworn to the Goddess Isis that one day she would take his life and then to pay for her crime take her own life.

Ferruk moaned and tensed up. His body quivered as he spent himself in the bath water. After several seconds he grabbed Ayrui hand and made her stroke him until he was hard again. When he was ready he told her to take off her clothes slowly. She obeyed and stepped into the tub. She straddled him and moved her body up and down tightening

and loosening her legs in the process. Water splashed on the floor with each down stroke. Ferruk moaned deeply and nuzzled his face in Ayrui's breast. He grabbed the sides of her hip and moved her up and down at his pace. Within seconds both cried out and collapsed. The water had turned cool and Ferruk shivered. "Get me a towel. I'm ready to get out."

Ayrui forced herself to get up. She had become weak from her orgasm and she fought to move in a manner respectable of a slave doing her master's request. She dripped out of the tub, walked across the floor and grabbed a large fluffy towel from the rack. A dozen other towels sat puffed up and waiting. With the towel outstretched she waited for Ferruk to stand up. When he did she covered him and rubbed him dry. He walked over to a make-up desk and peered into the mirror. Ayrui had his make-up case open. He took out his favorite eyeliner and began putting together his face. Ayrui waited patiently, handing him various things he requested, shivering every now and then from a draft that breezed through the room.

Ferruk gave himself a smile in the mirror. He thought he looked handsome as usual and any woman who resisted his charm was a fool. He got up leaving Ayrui wet and naked alone in the bathroom.

Ayrui waited a few minutes before she allowed herself to shake uncontrollably. She drained the tub and scrubbed the sides and bottom harshly. Once she was satisfied that Ferruk's essence had been sucked down the drain did she draw a quick bath for herself. She made the water steaming hot and forced herself to accept the heat as a means to rid herself of his touch. She scrubbed hard. Ayrui hated him and prayed to Isis that one day she would have the strength to erase him from the Blessed Lands. If not today, then maybe tomorrow. She scrubbed harder and nearly chafed her skin raw.



# Chapter 4

Honute sat in the reception area waiting for Guriamon, High Priest of the Temple of Thoth. Honute had lead the early ritual of the Sun God Ra and the morning rites of Thoth. The prayers had been perfect. He hoped that Guriamon would appreciate his dedication and that punishment would not be too severe, though he couldn't remember if he had done anything wrong. Minutes passed quickly, at first. Then they passed slowly. Ten into fifteen, fifteen into twenty, thirty then forty. Honute waited.

Guriamon opened the door. "Ah, Honute, thank you for waiting so patiently. Come in."

Honute gathered himself and walked in. Two women were seated in front of Guriamon's desk. One looked to be in her late fifties and the other in her early twenties. Both were beautiful. The older one was dressed in a gray business skirt suit, a most un-Egyptian like attire. The younger one was more appropriately dressed in a traditional white cotton wrap. The edges were trimmed in dark blue and seemed to match her eyes. The wrap clung to her body in all the right places and Honute blushed by the decadent thought of his hands touching all those spots.

Akila watched as Honute walked in and stopped cold. He eyed Theoris first. She noted the quick display of emotion on his face. He disapproved of her business skirt, blouse and suit jacket. Theoris had told her that years ago she made a

conscious effort to not wear traditional clothing. The Doctor felt that it demeaned women. Akila then locked eyes with the priest. He blushed and looked away.

Guriamon cleared his throat. "Honute, this is Dr. Theoris, Magick Manifestation Expert and her assistant Akila."

Honute nodded to each woman.

"You will be working with them. I'm releasing you from your duties . . ."

Honute's eyes popped open and his head snapped back as if he had been struck, hard. "But High Priest, have I done something wrong?"

Guriamon said, "No, no, nothing wrong. Quite the opposite actually."

Honute breathed a sigh of relief.

Guriamon continued, "You will help Dr. Theoris with her theory. You will continue to receive your regular pay and the Doctor is going to give you a sort of Per Diem for participating."

"Extra pay?" Honute said slowly.

Theoris stood up and said, "Priest Honute, your participation would be most important to my research." She stuck out her hand.

Honute looked down at it. His mind spinning and going in different places all at once. He saw his hand reach out and shake Dr. Theoris' hand but he didn't remember feeling her hand around his. He was in a daze and just let what happened happen. He remembered somewhere between shaking Theoris' hand and walking outside that he asked what her research was all about. She nearly sang out that it involved learning how to do magick. He laughed but stifled it when she gave him a stern look that suggested next time he was to ask for permission and the privilege to laugh out loud.

Ten minutes later Honute was sitting in the back seat of

Dr. Theoris' car. She drove an expensive large luxury model that probably cost his entire years' salary. He looked out the window as the car sped passed the various street merchants, playing children, and gutter urchins. New Heliopolis was built on the new plan of Enlightenment. Pharaoh himself oversaw the building of this city. Rumor had it that he built it on the words from the Oracle. She told Pharaoh that this new city would bring a fantastic and wonderful age to the Blessed Lands. That was what the rumors said. Maybe it was true, maybe not, but from the normal business in the streets it would take a miracle to bring about this new age.

Ferruk and the Oracle sat in her gathering chamber. Both sat at her large oval oak table with Ferruk sitting on her right side. She had her bowl out and colors started to swirl in a complex movement. She looked into it and started to moan and chant.

“Homage to you, Great God, the Lord of the double Ma’at! I have come to you, my Lord, I have brought myself here to behold your beauties. I know you, and I know your name, and I know the names of the two and forty gods, who live with you in the Hall of the Two Truths, who imprison the sinners, and feed upon their blood, on the day when the lives of men are judged in the presence of Osiris. In truth, you are ‘The Twin Sisters with Two Eyes,’ and ‘The Daughters of the Two Truths.’ In truth, I now come to you, and I have brought Ma’at to you, and I have destroyed wickedness for you. I have committed no evil upon men. I have not oppressed the members of my family. I have not wrought evil in the place of right and truth. . .”

Ferruk sat impatiently as the Oracle recited the mid chapter of The Coming in the Day from the Book of the Dead. She did this as a way of protection. Ferruk saw it as theatrics.

“ . . . I have not killed. I have not given the order to kill. I have not inflicted pain on anyone. I have not stolen the drink left for the gods in the temples. I have not stolen the cakes left for the gods in the temples. I have not stolen the cakes left for the dead in the temples. I have not fornicated. I have not polluted myself. I have not diminished the bushel when I’ve sold it. . . ”

Ferruk tried to stifle a loud yawn, he only half succeeded.

The Oracle continued “. . . I am pure. I am pure. I am pure. My purity is the purity the great heron in Heracleopolis. Behold, I am the nose of the God of Breath, who gives life to the people, on the day of completing the Eye of Ra in Heliopolis, on the last day of the second month of winter, In the presence of the pharaoh of this land. I have seen the Eye of Horus when it was full in Heliopolis! Therefore, let no evil befall me in this land in this Hall of the Two Truths, because I know the names of all the gods within it, and all the followers of the great God.”

Ferruk nearly fell asleep in the Oracle’s half sphere, but caught himself in a snap jerk moment. If this hadn’t been serious he would have laughed at himself.

The Oracle moaned loudly and said, “Behold.”

The bowl of colors smoked and the contents swirled. An image appeared. A priest standing next to a young woman blurred from her side and reappeared. The scene changed and the priest rose high in the air, arms out stretched and legs crossed at the ankles. The priest spoke words but the bowl of future remained silent. Then the priest was dressed in all gold and he climbed the stairs of the Great Temple of Ra and sat in the High Priest Chair of Power – Ferruk’s chair! The image disappeared

Ferruk’s face was drained to pale white. He witnessed his end. “Can this be undone?” He asked the Oracle.

With her intense dark eyes she said, "Maybe."

"Maybe. How? You must tell me."

The Oracle got up and walked to an open doorway. "Come back tomorrow and I will have an answer for you."

Ferruk was furious for having been dismissed like this a second time. He fumed over the Oracle's seemingly lack of respect for his position. If Pharaoh hadn't favored this old crone to near worship he would have executed her on the spot. He stood up and chanced a glimpse in the bowl. He looked closely and thought he saw a word. The surface of the liquid shimmered and lapped at the edge of the bowl. A smile formed from his thin lips and he laughed as he stepped away from the table and walked out the Oracle's room of Gathering. The bowl had given him a clue. It gave him a name he occasionally looked up. It displayed, "THEORIS."

# Chapter 5

The University of New Heliopolis was a gathering of large modern buildings. It covered an entire city block and was not unlike a small city within a large city. Theoris' car passed through the main gate. Honute stared out the window and swallowed hard.

Akila thought she heard something. She looked back and saw Honute gazing out the window. His face was nearly pressed firmly against the glass. "Is there something wrong, Priest Honute?"

Honute started breathing again. "Nothings wrong. It's just been awhile since I last visited here." He lied about nothing being wrong. Hypatia's office was buried somewhere within this small kingdom. The car traveled deeper and further into the little kingdom of science and mystery. Honute prayed to the one god that all this mighty institution claimed allegiance – Thoth, god of scribes, mathematicians, scientist, and everything erudite.

Hypatia walked into her office and over to a small counter against the wall. On it was a small refrigerator, coffee maker and a microwave. She poured herself a cup of steaming coffee and sat at her desk. The window behind her had a view of nearly the entire campus. She could see the entrance way and the main parking lot. She had a lot of stories about the goings on in the parking lot after hours. She turned her chair around and faced the window. She thought of the meeting she had

only minutes ago. The Chairman of the Board and CEO of the University gave her news. The University was promoting her officially to Head Lecturer and Chair of Astronomy. Also, the school was temporarily relieving her of her secondary duties and several other lesser lecturers would be assigned to her as assistants – that was, until the school hired her permanent staff. When her predecessor left he took his entire staff. This left her to perform his, hers, and all the in between duties. It had been exhausting. Everyday she would drag herself home to find Honute relaxing in his office reading over his prayer book. He always had dinner ready and he joyfully did all the household chores. Hypatia needed only ask and Honute would do it. Being a dutiful husband was the least of her worries. He did it all and without complaining. Even his love making was dutiful. He never failed in quenching her sometimes seemingly insatiable sexual appetite. Honute some how knew when, where, and what to do. Bringing on one wave after another wave of blissful intense orgasms. Then when he was certain her hungry had been satiated would he allow himself a minuscule amount of pleasure. Even after love making he was respondent to her needs. Sleeping on the wet side of the bed or fetching clean sheets. He often loved lighting candles and burning wonderfully smelling incense. Hypatia loved cedar wood and recently Glycerin Aloe. It was just recently that she realized she wasn't really happy. Honute was what many woman dream of marrying. A caring sensitive attentive dutiful husband who worshiped the very ground you walked on. What she came to believe she wanted was a go-getter. She wanted Honute to be at the top of his game instead of sitting on the sidelines passing out bottles of water. She wanted him to tell her that he had a rough day firing half a dozen people and that the old man pissed him off so bad he had to tell him where to stick it. And then he would tell her how impressed the old man

was by his ass chewing that he would give him a raise. That's what she wanted to hear. Not some meaningless dribble about how he blessed a hundred pilgrims in two hours or that the head priest was inspired by his morning Sun ritual. She wanted Honute to be reckless, daring, adventurous, aggressive. She wanted him to be like the men in those romance novels. Men who had a hard edge about them that screamed 'I could cut your throat just as I look at you!' She wanted Honute to be bad. Hypatia had been daydreaming for nearly an hour while looking out the window. Dr. Theoris' car pulled into her parking spot. It was right next to hers. She read the Doctor's memo on her proceeding to the next step in her research. The University had been all abuzz about her new theory on Magick. Everyone believed in it, but not everyone was capable of doing it. That is until now. The Doctor had requested some of the University's resources – medical, physics, electronics, anything and everything to measure, record, and hopefully reproduce results. Even her department would be involved. And as head of the Astronomy department she was in control of the Zettatron, the most powerful and sensitive cyclotron in the southern half of the Blessed Lands.

Theoris parked the car in her assigned spot. Honute watched with a growing sickening feeling as Hypatia's car came into sight. Of all the worst luck in the Blessed Lands would this happen to him. His wife's car inches away from his face. Dread covered him in a cold and icy touch – the gods have not been good to him.

Akila noticed the pale face of Honute. "Priest Honute? Are you sure you are all right?"

Honute swallowed hard and shook his head. "That is my wife's car."

Theoris placed the car in park. She looked over her shoulder

at Honute. "You're Dr. Hypatia's husband?" She looked closer. "Ah, yes. The last Joyous celebration. I remember. Funny how one forgets certain details."

Honute didn't remember Theoris but he remembered the celebration. One of the other residential professors, Dr. Turtukilo, had embarrassed himself. Apparently, he had gotten drunk, with three other faculty members, and was caught head bobbing on one of them. Honute himself had stumbled on the orgy. He had been looking for the restroom. He backed away giving his most sincere apologies and stepped into the Chairman of the Board. He, too, had been looking for the restroom.

Akila said with a little bit of sadness in her voice, "But why would that be a problem?"

He took a deep breath. "This morning she asked me for a divorce."

Akila said, "Oh. Sorry to hear that."

"She said she would be staying at the University."

Theoris thought about that. "I don't think it'll be too much of a problem. We really don't have to go anywhere near the Astronomy department. We may not even need to use the Zettatron's magnetometers. We could probably requisite one of the portable models."

Honute nodded.

Theoris said, "Of course, the occasional running into each in the hallway may not be entirely avoided. Is this going to be a problem?"

Honute shook his head. "I don't think so. She was pretty calm about it. It should be very civil . . . and awkward."

Theoris nodded, opened the car door and got out. The others followed.

Hypatia noted that two other individuals were in Dr.

Theoris' car. Theoris got out first, followed by a younger woman, Akila was her name, if memory served Hypatia correctly. She took a mouth full of coffee as the third person stepped out the car. It was Honute! Coffee splattered on the window. She grabbed several tissues from the box on her desk and wiped the window clean. She saw Theoris, the younger woman and her husband walk into the Psychology, Cognition, and Behavior building across the street. 'Oh boy' was her thought. 'When things got better did they get worse?'

# Chapter 6

Honute followed Dr. Theoris and Akila through the double doors leading into the building. They only had to walk past a few doors to reach Theoris' main office. Honute stepped in and saw all sorts of electronic equipment. Monitors against the wall, long thin neon bulb like fixtures and lots of wires on the floor.

"Mind the wires." Theoris said stepping over a branch of twisty vine like strands. "We'll set up in the smaller office. Akila, could you take Priest Honute there. I'm going to gather a few things. I'll be back in a bit. Make him feel at home, please."

Akila nodded. "Please follow me, Priest Honute." Honute followed Akila into a small office. A couch ran along one wall, a desk and two chairs against the other. On the third wall was a table that had a small refrigerator, a cardboard box with stuff in it, a microwave, and a coffee maker. This office had a window view. He noted Theoris' vanity wall. She had all her awards, certificates, commendations, and all sorts of other recognition nailed and pasted up. Honute walked over to the wall and noted several Ph.D plaques. A commendation plaque was next to them. 'In recognition for service above the call of duty the collective regions of the Blessed Lands awards Dr. Theoris this plaque of Commendation.' It was dated about ten years ago. Around the same time Honute served in the War against the Infidels. He noted that Theoris received the Commendation for identifying and later coming up with a cure for the Night Sweat plague. A bio-weapon developed by the Infidels. Honute,

himself, escaped several strikes. He moved on to the next item – this particular plaque dredged up nightmares he wished to not live again. The War was the reason why he became a priest. He had enough killing and murdering humans in the name of defense and the preservation of the Blessed Lands. Luckily, Pharaoh and the Cursed Lands, as his fellow compatriots loved to call it, agreed on a truce. It had been six years now. A little more than the length of his marriage. Honute hoped that his pending marriage disaster would not be the coming sign of war.

Akila watched Honute move from plaque to plaque. She found him strangely curious. His physical build seemed that of a soldier, but he behaved like a humbled soul. She noted the slim waist and solid arms and thighs under his plain cotton robe. It wasn't tight on him and it wasn't too big either. It just seemed to fit him so well. He moved gracefully, like he had been a dancer or performed in one of the traveling circuses. And his eyes spoke volumes about the man. Not once had she seen them unfocused. He seemed to note everything within his view. She remembered how he stared out the window and took anything in. The cars, the people, the buildings, everything. To her, Honute seemed to be an enigma. "Priest Honute, may I get you anything while we wait for Dr. Theoris?"

"Call me Honute." He said while staring at another 'I love me' plaque.

Akila caught herself smiling. She wiped it off her face. "Okay, Honute. May I get you anything? Water, tea?" She left it at that.

"Tea sounds nice." He turned around and caught her staring at him. He smoothly smiled back. "Are you having tea as well?"

She hadn't planned on it, but it made sense to drink with Honute. "We don't have a lot of flavors. Raspberry, Lemon

Date, Kiwi Aloe, and Bark.”

Honute said, “I’ll take the Bark.”

Akila walked over to the table with the coffee maker. She reached into the cardboard box of stuff and pulled out a box of tea. She then reached into the refrigerator and pulled out a plastic one gallon container of water. She poured a third of the water into the coffee maker and placed a half dozen bags of tea in the plastic pullout top. After replacing the container of water and the box of tea she turned the coffee maker on. She heard the drip hiss sizzle of the water as it gurgled its way from the tubing inside the coffee maker. After several seconds a dark brown liquid poured into the clear coffee pot. Akila reached into the box again and grabbed two yellow plastic cups.

Another minute later Honute and Akila were sitting on the couch sipping Bark tea. Honute particularly liked Bark because of its bitter aftertaste bite. It had a sort of thin oily texture when it touched the tongue but went watery after a second or two inside the mouth. Then the aftertaste was so bitter that it tasted almost sweet. And Akila made it strong – the way he liked it.

“Am I really going to learn magick, Akila?”

Akila had been quietly sipping her tea. Dr. Theoris had been gone for nearly fifteen minutes. Akila didn’t want to stare at Honute, but she wanted to study his face. His skin was a little dry but that was due, she reasoned, to the arid air most of the time during the summer months. She noted his eyebrows. Not thick but not thin. She didn’t think he would look good with the current fad of men plucking their eyebrows until both were paper thin. She decidedly thought he looked much better natural. “Yes, we at least hope so. Dr. Theoris identified the gene responsible for controlling our ability to do magick. She thinks that we all have the capability. It’s just only a matter of learning how to trigger the gene.”

Honute took a sip of tea and let the liquid linger on his tongue. He felt the warm liquid slide down his throat and heat up his insides. "Really?" He was intrigued, but the nagging thought that Hypatia was probably one or maybe two buildings away kept him from completely relaxing and enjoy Akila's company. "But why me? I'm just a simple priest."

"Being a simple priest is exactly why she chose you. In order for us to be successful we need someone who is religiously dedicated but not overly zealous."

Honute laughed. "Over zealous you'll find I'm not."

Akila smiled and Honute found himself smiling back. It was her lips he was most drawn to. When she relaxed her face her lips had a natural part to them. The top and bottom would separate just enough to show a little bit of teeth. He also liked the way she blushed.

"The person must also have good focusing ability."

Honute nodded. "But how will you know?"

"The first thing would be to get a baseline record."

"Baseline?"

Akila nodded, "Yes, record your brain and physiological activity. Record your DNA and identify other useful markers, run test on your meditative ability, and test how deeply and easily you can go into a trance."

Honute sipped the tea. "A lot of stuff. Then I'll learn how to do magick?"

Akila smiled, "We hope so. I hope you are not averse to receiving medication?"

"Medication?" Honute almost choked on his tea. "What type of medication exactly?"

Akila regretted she mentioned the drugs. Dr. Theoris wanted to get Honute comfortable with them before she would tell him about the drugs. But the conversation had been going so nicely. She swallowed hard and slowly answered, "I

will be honest with you. We are going to do a lot of things. Some are going to be pleasant while others are going to be a bit uncomfortable. Everything will be completely safe and there is no risk to you well being. . .”

“But what type of medication?” Honute pressed.

Akila took a deep breath. “Some will be psychotropic and others would have physiological effects on you.”

Honute tried to keep a distressed look from his face and his voice. “Such as?”

“Such as controlling your blood pressure and heart rate.”

“Oh.” Was all he said. Honute took a big sip from the cup. The tea had gotten cold and tasted bad. “I think we need to heat up the tea.”

Akila nodded and automatically collected the cups, walked over to the microwave, and placed them in the center. She set the timer to thirty seconds. “Honute, it will be safe, for the most part. There is a chance that something could go wrong, but Dr. Theoris is very skilled and she will have a staff of medical personnel working with her.”

Honute became unfocused and drifted back to a time when he was cold wet and miserable. It was about seven years ago and the war was not going well. He led his squad over a hill and right smack in the middle of the enemy. It was about twenty of them. IQ said the area was clear for at least another ten aturs. Hell broke loose when they cleared a clump of trees. The enemy hyped up on STIM took them by surprise. Half the squad had been killed in less than a second. Honute had been wounded before he stepped behind a large tree for cover. He surveyed the area and spotted the enemy about half a ‘minute of march’ away. Pieta, Kiluyt, Figuli, and Saviofa were firing back. Honute figured he could toss a grenade the full distance if he had the proper coverage. He yelled out that he needed

cover soon. He pulled the pin loose and yelled 'grenade!' The entire area was sprayed with automatic fire. A second later the grenade concussed the enemy. Honute threw five more to make sure he got them all. When it was silent he limped over and poked at several of the bodies. All dead. He checked the pocket of one and pulled out a hypo spray syringe. It hadn't been used yet. On the outside cover it had writing in the Infidel's language STIM. The enemy had doped up and attacked them.

Honute refocused his eyes. "I'm sorry I drifted."

Akila looked him in the eyes. "Where'd you go?" She handed him a warm cup of tea.

"A rather bad place. I served in the war." He lowered his head.

"Oh." Akila said and she sipped at her tea. After several seconds of silence she asked, "Was it bad?"

Honute nodded. "The enemy had been hyped up on drugs . . ." He trailed off.

Akila thought for a moment. Her eyes opened wide in comprehension. "Ah, I see." She sipped at the tea again. She was excited because she understood what he meant. He didn't have to completely spell it out for her. "Will this be a problem?"

He looked her straight in the eyes. He wanted to say 'What do you think?' but instead said, "I don't believe so. I just have this thing about drugs and medication. Pharaoh's Royal Army would sometimes have us use drugs to fight better. After the truce I got out and became a priest."

Akila nodded in understanding. Her father had served in Pharaoh's Royal Army and had been killed in action. It was the worst time of her life. Her father being killed and later her mother getting cancer, but she was a big girl now and she knew her parents would be proud of her – if only they were alive. She

smiled sweetly and innocently at Honute. She really wanted to get to know him better. A soldier and then a priest. It must have been really horrible she thought. "You need not worry. It will be safe and you would be doing a service to the Blessed Lands."

Honute sipped again and smiled. Yes, he really did like Akila. She had a smile that would smooth away all the troubles in the world. He secretly wondered if she was seeing someone or dating, but then he banished those thoughts. He was probably her father's age. Besides, she was way too smart for a humble man as himself. She seemed full of life and energy, almost like Hypatia. Then it hit him. She seemed to be very much like Hyp. Her mannerisms, the way she walked into a room, how she sat, and her smile. She smiled not just with her lips but with her entire face. She probably had Hypatia's drive and ambition he thought. Hypatia was probably right to leave him. He was too complacent for the likes of an ambition woman. He sighed and gave Akila a smile. "Tell me more about this program. How are we to make magick?"

Dr. Theoris walked into Hypatia's office. Hypatia had been staring out the window when she noticed Theoris purposefully walk out the building, across the parking lot, and into her building. She figured the good Doctor wanted to discuss some points, so it didn't surprise her when Theoris walked through the office threshold.

"May we talk?" Theoris asked.

Hypatia turned her chair around, leaned back and said, "Why of course. Anything in particular you'd like to discuss?"

Theoris stepped up to the desk. "Yes actually. I'll cut to the chase."

Hypatia nodded.

"Your husband is here."

“I know. I saw him walk into the building with you.”

Theoris eased up a bit. She stood a little more relaxed and not as aggressive. “He is my research subject.”

Hypatia nodded again and sat with her back straight against her chair. She absolutely dreaded this. “I understand.”

Theoris stared down at the other woman. “I know about the pending divorce.”

Hypatia swallowed hard. She nodded.

“And I’m hoping that the marital issue between the two of you will not interfere with this research.”

Hypatia couldn’t do anything but listen to Dr. Theoris. For years Theoris had been the dominating force behind the University. Even the Chairman of the Board and CEO bowed down to her influence. Disagreeing with her would be so much as career suicide. She lifted her chin up. “Honute and I are able to work this out amiable. It shouldn’t be a problem. I told him that I will be staying here at the University until I found a place of my own.”

Theoris nodded approvingly and smiled. Her face lightened up and she seemed to have relaxed a bit more.

Hypatia wondered what other bit of personal information Honute told her. It pissed her off that Theoris was in her office throwing her weight around. This was her office and she didn’t appreciate the bitch doing this. ‘Screw you,’ was her thought but she instead said, “Dr. Theoris, you know you will have my full cooperation in your research. You have nothing to worry about.”

Theoris’ face brightened. “That’s what I figured. I just had to be sure.”

Hypatia thought ‘self-righteous bull bitch.’

Theoris pulled up a chair and sat. “I hope I’m not disturbing you or anything. I’d like to discuss with you a possible joint paper on some of my research.”

'The bitch just made herself at home!' "Not at all. A joint paper sounds wonderful. What in particular would I be able to make a contribution?"

Theoris rested her shoulders against the chair. Her lower back was away from the chair and the effect made her look like she was slouching.

Hypatia tried not to stare but it was at best difficult not to notice the older woman sitting with such bad posture. She tried to maintain eye contact with Theoris and noticed the Doctor looking intently at her.

Theoris rested in the chair and allowed herself to relax. She eyed Hypatia in a way that would make most individuals uncomfortable. She noted how Hypatia's chest rose and fell with her breathing and how supple her breasts were. Theoris wished that Hypatia was not sitting behind her desk. She wanted to see all of her. From her shoulder length hair to the tight clinging cotton wrap she worn to the tips of her pretty painted toes. Hypatia was definitely someone Theoris wanted to get to know. She thought how interesting it was that she noticed her much more knowing that she was divorcing Honute. Maybe it was the thought that she was no longer attached to a man and that she would find herself alone at night. Very late at night. "Oh, I almost forgot. Congratulations on your recent appointment."

Hypatia replied, "Thank you. I didn't think it would happen soon enough."

Theoris nodded. "Well, when the Chairman asked me about filling the position I couldn't think of a better person than the one working in the position. You know how some men are, not particularly imaginative."

Hypatia held in her shock and surprise. Theoris implicitly admitted that she had some part in her finally getting this position.

“It is obvious that women are the more superior.” And she laughed.

Hypatia laughed with her and worried why the Doctor was becoming so chummy. Last week, she barely got a nod of recognition. Now Theoris was chatting as if they were good friends.

Theoris sat slowly straight in the chair. She cleared her throat. “Do you have any plans to celebrate your promotion?”

Hypatia swallowed hard. “I hadn’t thought about it. I hadn’t expected the promotion. If I were to go home Honute would insist on cooking a celebration meal, blessings and everything. But all this morning my thoughts were only of getting a cot placed in this office. . .”

“A cot!” Theoris blurted out.

Hypatia nodded and pressed her lip inward and together.

“Why not a hotel? Any relatives in New Heliopolis?”

Hypatia shook her head. “I have family over in the Four Corners area. And I was trying to save a little money.”

Theoris chortled. “You got a promotion. You should be thinking big now. Don’t tell me Honute controls all the accounts and credit cards?”

“No, I handle all that. I didn’t want to take all the money. His salary would never pay for the rent, I did that, but I didn’t want to leave him without a place to live. At least not for another month or two.”

“How sweet of you Hypatia! I can see some of the reason why he married you. Very thoughtful. Okay, tonight you will be my guest.”

Hypatia was horrified. “Thank you, Doctor Theoris, but I couldn’t impose.”

“Call me, Theoris. We are equals now, and you would not be imposing. I have a house that is way too large and empty for me. It’ll be nice to have some company and it’ll be much more

comfortable that some old cot.”

“But, Doc . . . Theoris that is so generous of you.”

“Nope, not another protest. I insist. You will be my guest tonight and I am going to take you out to celebrate.” And she gave Hypatia a steely cold gaze.

Hypatia felt a cold chill envelope her body. She felt trapped and tricked. Her mind raced to find a graceful way out of being Theoris’ guest. But she couldn’t come up with something satisfactory. She felt powerless and couldn’t see a ‘safe’ way out of this predicament. “Yes, Theoris.” Then she thought, ‘I’m gonna make you pay for my company. Expensive dinner, expensive drinks, expensive deserts. Wait and see! I’ll cost you so much money tonight it’ll be cheaper for you to pay for my hotel room for a month.’ And she relaxed and smiled. The evening won’t be so bad after all. Honute can eat his meal over his prayer book. She would dine on caviar, water crest crackers, lobster, two hundred deben wine, and super rich, high fat, high cholesterol desert.

