

The Queen

This story begins with an end. The end of a life. Queen Nefertiti, ruler in Ancient Egypt, took her final breath, and began her journey to the underworld.

On Earth, Nefertiti was known as one of the most beautiful queens to ever walk the Earth. Even in death, she was a beauty to behold.

As Nefertiti waited for her sins to be weighed, and her soul to be judged, the God Osiris laid his eyes upon her delicate and elegant features, and fell instantly in love. Osiris was known to be a merciful, and forgiving God, who was fair and kind to those who passed through from one life to the next. He watched her in line, gracefully awaiting her turn for judgement. His heart ached to be with her, but he knew that the underworld was no place for a woman of such grace and beauty. Without so much as a conversation with her, Osiris used his power and magic, and instantly returned Nefertiti to the land of the living, forever immortal, so that the world could always feel the warmth of her glow. Osiris felt merciful, and content in his decision Nefertiti, unaware of such a gift from the gods, awoke one morning on the outskirts of the Valley of Kings, and stumbled towards the city.

Set, God of war, chaos and thunder, saw this, and immediately smiled a wicked smile at the thought of toying with his brother Osiris' plans.

After all, Osiris held no jurisdiction in the land of the living. Osiris was able to help this woman, and give her immortality, but she was off limits to him while she was in the land of the living.

"Immortality is what you want, then my dear brother, she will endure forever". Set instantly used his authority and power to cause upset and mischief. With a waive of his hand, the people of Egypt hardened their thoughts to her name, and instantly shut out any possibility of her making a magical or godly return to Earth, from the underworld.

When Nefertiti returned to the city, she could not convince a single soul that she was who she claimed to be – after all, why would a supposed dead-reborn queen be walking outside of the palace, alone, and without guards. The great Queen Nefertiti had died, and her body had been properly laid to rest in the Valley of the Kings – surely this woman claiming to be Queen Nefertiti was an imposter. Set's magic had worked – no one would believe her.

She was rejected by her own people, as being a fake, and a lunatic. Without title, money, servants, or family, Nefertiti was forced to accept her fate, and resign herself to her new, lower station in life.

Nefertiti roamed the land for centuries, moving on when questions arose of her lack of apparent ageing. She was forced to work jobs which she was as far beneath her station – servant, cosmetics, and entertainer.

Centuries passed, and Set decided that it was time to pay Nefertiti another visit. By this point, she found herself living in Greece. Nefertiti had managed to become quite skilled in pottery. She had begun to achieve a respectable level of admiration for her work, and was beginning to prosper. Set, his mischievous gaze cast upon Nefertiti, decided that it was time to meddle once again. Set watched Nefertiti working, and upon seeing her most grandiose and formidable vases, knew how best to intervene. A wealthy family who commissioned a black and gold vase with depictions of gods and goddesses, return to Nefertiti's shop to purchase the vase that she made. As the wealthy couple left her shop, with the vase in hand, not only a few feet from the door, Set used his trickery to shatter the vase. The man holding the vase tried clutching the falling pieces, but it was too late. The vase was ruined, and it was not his fault. Nefertiti was accused of intentionally selling defective goods. Due to the man's status and wealth, Nefertiti was instantly guilty, and sentenced to slavery. She lost her shop, her savings, and her freedom.

For decades, Nefertiti worked as a slave – bought and sold several times over – no family ever owned her long enough to notice her immortality.

Centuries passed. At one point, Nefertiti managed to secure her freedom, from one particular family, for years of continual service. Again, Nefertiti found herself at the bottom of society, forced to work hard, and struggle for every comfort and necessity.

Years passed, and Set felt once again that it was time to play games. When he checked in on Nefertiti, she was living in Rome. The year 50 AD was looking like a promising year. Nefertiti had managed to rise up, despite the rigid structure of society, and found peace with her position as scribe to Emperor Nero. She was back among 'her people' – people of power, prestige, authority, and wealth. One day, while scribing for Emperor Nero, Set changed her writings when she had finished. Nero, seeing these 'mistakes', immediately banished Nefertiti from Rome, accusing her of intentionally trying to mislead him of his financial accounting. Nefertiti, ashamed, alone, disheartened... and immortal... left the city in shame, once more to wander the land in search of a new beginning.

Nefertiti spent centuries moving from one city to the next, and from one village to another. She worked as a laundress, as a shop keep, and finally, as a florist. Nefertiti had caught the eye of a young French noble, and under the advice of the noble, was summoned to court by Louis XVI. Nefertiti found her place among the ladies at court, and for a brief moment, enjoyed the comforts and niceties of palace life. She was finally where she wanted to be – among leaders, among influence, and among privilege.

However, as fate, and godly powers were at odds with her success, it was at this time, when Set involved himself once again in her life. Upon seeing Nefertiti's glowing happiness and success, Set became infuriated – why had she not remained a slave? Why had he not defeated her emotionally when she was ruined the last time?

Instead of simply removing Nefertiti from the palace, Set removed the entire royal system from the country. Chaos, bloodshed, and instability reigned, instead of royalty. In 1789, Set ignited the French Revolution. Nefertiti was forced to flee Paris. King Louis XVI was beheaded, and a new era began. Nefertiti, no longer a lady of the court, escaped to the countryside. She found work here and there, working as an inn keeper and seamstress.

Finally becoming a master of managing fear, and quelling her worries, she had learned how to become resourceful, independent, and self-reliant. With no family to turn to, and no family fortune to help her, her wandering lifestyle had taught her how to be truly strong and resilient. She headed to Calais, and boarded a boat to England. Perhaps a new life, in a new land, would help her find a new homeland.

Time passed. Sun rises, sun sets, and days blend into one another. In 1942, Nefertiti found herself working with the British Secret Intelligence, during the Second World War. Her life had been fairly peaceful for the last 153 years, despite several conflicts, and a world war. Although her country had known hardship, Nefertiti had gracefully risen, yet again, towards the top of society.

Nefertiti had been working on translating secret intelligence for the British when once again, Set emerged into her life. He could not believe this frustrating woman – no matter how many times he tried to break her, she rose, unbroken, and stronger than before.

Nefertiti had submitted her most recent translations to her supervisor. The manilla envelope lay on his desk, unopened. Set saw to it that the envelope magically made its way into the wrong hands. Nefertiti, unfairly accused, of leaking documents of national importance, found herself, once again, relieved of her duties.

Nefertiti, familiar with loss and disappointment, used this setback as an opportunity. She boarded a ship for Halifax, and sailed to Canada, where she began working at a munitions factory, to support the war effort.

After the war, Nefertiti relocated to Toronto, and then eventually worked her way west towards Vancouver. She began working as a temp in a printing and publishing company, before meandering her way through web design and marketing. Nefertiti had made quite a name for herself in the industry, and was quite successful. She had begun to consider Vancouver 'home', and even toyed with the idea of adopting a cat.

But when you're Nefertiti, happiness can only last so long. Set enjoyed this new digital age, and the digital chaos it could cause. He loved tormenting Nefertiti. He couldn't wait to torment her again. He loved watching her fail. With a simple, solitary, powerful glance, Set changed Nefertiti's fate once again. Her digital identity had now been stolen, her accounts all locked, and her e-files all deleted. Set crippled her financially, and effectively erased her legal identity. She had been ruined, yet again. She could no longer conduct her web design business, access her bank accounts, or even login to her email. Nefertiti, as a digital being, ceased to be. She had had enough. Hundreds of years of ups and downs, successes and failures, had finally caught up to her. She had navigated death, financial ruin, slavery, monarchy collapse, and now, identity theft. Being deprived of her identity in a digital age pushed her too far. Nefertiti sank to the floor, and for the first time in centuries, she cried. For the loss of dignity, the loss of hope, and the loss of belonging, to an underworld where she was destined to be. She remained there, on the floor, feeling shattered, frayed, and wrecked.

She left the building, and waited for her bus to take her home. Solemnly, she stood in line, unsure of which steps to take. Vacantly, she stared ahead of her, letting her thoughts drift through her consciousness, like a meandering creek.

She boarded the bus, and took an empty seat, unaware that the finely-dressed man sitting next to her was none other than her personal tormentor, Set. He had come to admire his handywork, and revel in the destruction.

"Tough day?" he asked, with a subtly smug and distant tone. He couldn't help but smile to himself, and delight in the knowledge that he held such power over her. Nefertiti, pausing only to momentarily refocus her attention back to the present, slowly raised her gaze from a formless distance, to the man at her side. She sighed heavily, looked him directly in the eyes, with a fatigued air of resignation, and quietly stated: "nothing I can't handle." With that, she turned away, and resumed her personal and quiet contemplation. Displeased with her answer, Set tried again, to force his victim to break before him. "Come on. You can tell me. Everyone has a breaking point. Surely you found something you can't handle." Nefertiti, stoic and unshakeable, in the most powerfully detached and sober response that could be commanded, simply responded in a way that highlighted her unwavering steadfastness and remarkably royal caliber of fortitude and resolve: "nothing can break that which was created unbreakable. I was destined for greatness, and destiny always wins." With that, she simply glanced away, with a neutral and dignified air.

Set, for his part, huffed indignantly. As god of war and chaos, how had he been unable to shake this infuriating woman? How had he managed to cause so much chaos in her life, but not her soul? He exhaled angrily, and stared out the window. This was beyond exasperation. This reached further than loathing. This was something entirely new for Set... this was... this was love.

On a busy bus, on a busy day, in a busy part of town, silently sat a god of war, and an immortal queen. Both of whom, sat silently, pondering their next move.