

CHAPTER ONE

King Ahmoses III



“Well? Are they dead?” Queen Neferemu asked. The king didn’t immediately respond. He stood there, peering into a small, round mirror. It was fixed to the end of a golden staff resting on the marble floor. With both hands gripped firmly on the staff, he held the mirror close to his right eye. King Ahmoses III was either concentrating so hard that he didn’t hear his wife, or just plain ignoring her.

“Well?” the queen repeated, with a bit more urgency this time. “What is it you see through the Eye of Horentus? What does it show you?”

“Hush now, my queen! Hard enough it is trying to make out what little the eye is willing to show me without these constant interruptions.”

Moments later, the king slowly pushed the staff and mirror away from his eye and let out a sigh. He turned to the queen and said, “They are alive, but for how long I cannot say. They have landed in Asteena.”

“Asteena?” the queen said with a gasp. “This is at the bottom end of the valley. For thieves and pickpockets is this place a breeding ground. These children who will know nothing of this world, nowhere will they be safe in that...that...cesspit. It is a certainty they will not survive long there all by themselves.”

The king slumped back down on his golden throne with a big sigh. The magnificent chair was made of a hardwood frame carved into elaborate decorations. Peacock feathers were woven into a lattice around the frame. Intricate gold leaf patterns pressed into it on either side glistened in the light. The backrest and seat were covered with plush, maroon velvet. At the back, it rose to a point just above the king’s head, with a crystal sitting at the apex. Covering the crystal was a miniature golden crown—a symbolic gesture of royal status.

The king thought hard, his chin resting on one fist. He tapped the fingers of his other hand on the maroon velvet clad armrest. His Divine Majesty’s eyes shifted as he concentrated.

Paraded around the brightly lit throne room were twelve guards—six on either side. Each man stood to attention with a spear in his right hand. Their leather straps of armour wrapped around their bodies revealed their muscular form. None of their faces was visible through their warrior’s hoods.

Two more guards stood either side of the door just beyond the dozen or so steps leading down from the throne. All stood perfectly still, their eyes fixed on the king through narrow slits in their visors—waiting for his next utterance or gesture to immediately obey.

The king casually reached his hand out to his side, all the while maintaining his glare towards the main door of the chamber. Queen Neferemu took the hand, stroking it gently.

Joshua and the Magical Temples

The king turned to his wife. She was a slender woman with sleek curves. Her face was painted with colourful make-up. Dark lines traced the outlines of her eyes. She looked down at her husband seductively. A tight, golden, full-length gown clung to her skin, accentuating her figure. Sequins glistened from the light streaming through several openings high up in the stone walls on either side of the room. Her hair was brushed upwards into a cone shape. Golden ribbons wrapped around it both directions to tie it all together.

Without turning his head, the king snapped his fingers with his free hand. A servant immediately approached him from the side. He was carrying a writing block. Upon it was a piece of yellow papyrus and a quill made from a peacock feather resting next to a stone bowl of black ink.

“Jafar will be their guide,” the king eventually declared, taking the quill in his right hand. He began writing onto the papyrus. The queen smiled. She continued to stroke his hand gently.



Joshua and Sarah peered around the small room. The stony walls were bare. What little light there was streamed in through gaps around the wooden door in one corner of the room and from the small candle resting on a stone block in another. There was a hubbub outside. Indistinct shouting and talking was muffled by the closed door. Joshua didn't understand what was happening. *Why are we here? What is this place?*

“These look like bags of wheat or something,” Sarah said, running her hands over the hessian sacks they had just stood up from. “I think this might be a...storage room perhaps?”

“Look at the walls,” Joshua said. He ran his hand down the smooth yellow sandstone. “I’ve never seen anything like this. Have you?”

Sarah shook her head. “What do you make of this?”

Beside the candle on the stone block lay a piece of papyrus with a long, colourful feather resting on it. She picked them up and handed them to Joshua.

“This feather,” he said, inspecting it closely. “It reminds me of something. But...”

He took the papyrus and read it carefully. He understood the words but he had no idea what it all meant. It read as follows:

Hello Joshua. I know this must all be confusing to you. If you can remember her name, then all is not lost. I have left you something to help you to remember. I only pray that you do. If you want to live, you must come at once. He lives but He is weak. This makes Him desperate and even more dangerous than ever before. You are our only hope, Joshua. I pray your memory is still intact and that you can save us all.

- Yours hopefully, His Divine Majesty, King Abmoses III

Sarah read with him. She then took the feather from Joshua and studied it carefully. It was a long, blue and red feather but neither of them had any idea where it came from or what it meant.

Joshua and the Magical Temples

“What does this all mean?” Joshua asked, looking at Sarah.
“Who is this...King Ahmoses?”

“Luana,” Sarah gasped.

Joshua squinted at her with a confused expression.

“That’s who the girl is,” she said with wide eyes. “That’s who he’s referring to. I’m sure of it. Only...I don’t know who she is...or was.”

As they both stared at the papyrus, the words faded. Within moments, the papyrus was completely blank. Joshua and Sarah’s jaws dropped.

“Look!” Sarah exclaimed.

Letters in black ink appeared on the papyrus again. It was like an invisible quill was at work—writing before their very eyes. This time it was different words. After a few seconds, a new message was complete. It read:

Hello Joshua. You are in Asteena. It is not safe there. You must leave the city immediately and head north. Jafar will find you. You must do as he tells. Remember, your lives are in danger so you must act without delay. I hope to see you very soon. Our lives may be in your very hands.

- Yours as always, His Divine Majesty, King Ahmoses III

Joshua and Sarah continued staring in disbelief at the new message on the papyrus.

“Someone obviously knows you’re here,” Sarah Said.

“But who? Who is this king?” Joshua asked. “Asteena? Where’s that? I’ve never heard of it. Have you?”

He continued staring at the papyrus.

“How did these words just appear?” Sarah asked. “It’s almost like someone is talking directly to you. And who is...Jafar?”

Joshua looked up at the door. The hubbub outside continued. The light pouring through the cracks came and went, as if shadows were being cast by people walking back and forth outside.

“We only have questions here,” Joshua said, looking at the light coming and going. “I think some of the answers might be on the other side of that door.” He rolled up the papyrus and stowed it in his keeper bag.

“There’s only one way to find out,” Sarah said. She walked over to the door and pushed it open. Joshua followed her out.