THE SERPENT'S SHADOW

THE GRAPHIC NOVEL

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Disney * HYPERION

Los Angeles  New York
I think Apophis has arrived.

That's it? Tear apart the museum unseen? You afraid to show your face?

I am everywhere. I can destroy anything and anyone you value.
YES, WE'RE DONE.

THUNK!

THANKS, ZIA.

NOW, WHERE'D THAT BACKSTABBING GHOST GO OFF TO?

The gangplank was lowering.

Seine strolled to the edge of the plank, waiting as the boat raced toward the black-sand beach.

IT'LL BE FINE, CARTER! I'LL BE RIGHT BACK!

TAS!

“Bind!”

AGH!

SPLOSH!
KA-BLAM!
The landscape hurtled toward my face.

I now understand the whole thing about wearing seat belts.

Zia had a smooth landing.

Me, not so much.

Your injuries are extremely grave.

Luckily, I brought healing balm.

It's very rare, and this is my only jar.

So don't get injured anymore.

Yes, ma'am.
Zia rubbed blue paste on the cuts, burns, and bruises that covered my upper body. The gash mended. The wounds disappeared.

Inside my chest, I swear I could feel my ribs mending. I took a deep breath and was relieved to find it didn't hurt.

I can't believe you granted Setne permission to give bloodstained blade orders!

And now we're stranded in the land of demons, the most dangerous part of the Duat.

Yeah, maybe not my best idea.

Bonk!

Our gift-wrapped ghost was trying to crawl away.

We could leave him like that, but he's got the Book of Thoth.

No hurry, he won't get far, how about a picnic?

I like the way you think.

Carter, about the Serapeum and my channeling of Ra's power.

I wanted to tell you, but I didn't understand what was happening to me. I was frightened.

I was the Eye of Horus, I understand.
RA'S DIFFERENT. HE'S MUCH OLDER AND HIS POWER IS MORE DIFFICULT TO CHANNEL.

WHEN I TAP INTO RA'S POWER, I SENSE PANIC. HE FEELS IMPRISONED, HELPLESS.

REACHING OUT TO HIM IS LIKE TRYING TO SAVE SOMEBODY WHO'S DROWNING. THEY GRAB ON TO YOU AND TAKE YOU DOWN WITH THEM.

His power tries to escape through me and I can barely control it. Every time I black out, it gets worse. Ra wants me to be his host. I fear I'm too weak to control his power.

In the catacombs with the Apis bull, I might've killed you.

But you didn't. You saved my life! If I've learned anything working with Horus, it's about striking a balance.

You're the key to bringing him back!

Sometimes you have to follow your heart.

I'd never pictured my first date being on a bone-littered riverbank in the Land of Demons, but at that moment there was no place I'd rather be.

Hmmm... The Book of Thoth is sinking.

We'd better fish it out.

Blub blub
IS THERE ANYTHING ABOUT THE SERPENT’S SHADOW?

YES, HERE IT IS. IT LIES IN THE LAND OF DEMONS. SO WE'RE IN THE RIGHT PLACE, BUT THIS MAP?

THE LAND OF DEMONS IS HUGE. FROM WHAT I'VE READ, IT'S CONSTANTLY SHIFTING, BREAKING APART, AND RE-FORMING.

AND IT'S FULL OF DEMONS. WE WON'T BE ABLE TO GO ANYWHERE UNSEEN, AND EVERYTHING THAT MEETS US WILL WANT TO KILL US.

I'M GUESSING YOU CAN GUIDE US TO THE SHADOW.

MM-MM!

HOLY HORUS, PAL! WHY DID YOU TIE ME UP?

THAT DEMON CAPTAIN WAS GOING TO TURN ON YOU ANYWAY.

THIS IS HIS HOMELAND! DEMONS DON'T EVER BRING MORTALS HERE UNLESS THEY'RE FOR SNACKS.

REALY???

AND THAT'S WHY YOU WERE RUNNING AWAY WITH THE BOOK OF THOTH?

I WAS GOING TO SCOUT AHEAD!

I WANTED TO FIND THE SHADOW SO I COULD LEAD YOU THERE! BUT THAT'S NOT IMPORTANT—IF YOU LET ME GO, WE CAN FIND IT TOGETHER.

I HAVE PICKED UP SOME TRICKS THAT ONLY GHOSTS CAN DO.

I CAN GET YOU THERE UNSEEN.

UNTIE ME AND I'LL SHOW YOU. YOU WON'T REGRET IT.
I'm pretty sure I will.

FAH.** Release.**

Thanks, champ! Now...

Let's work on your disguises!

Perfect, you'll blend right in.

Don't worry, you're still human. They're just glamors--disguises.

What about yours?

You can't improve on perfection, pal. This outfit works anywhere.

The demons won't even bat an eye, assuming they have eyes. Now, come on!
How to describe the Land of Demons? Let's see. It was a land. It was full of demons.

The landscape was like an optical illusion, crumbling, rearranging itself constantly.

**As we stumbled along, I became more aware of the presence of Chaos.**

Everything was being pulled in the direction we were traveling.

Exposure to Chaos energy had very nearly killed me and Sadie before, but for some reason I felt almost fine.

**Every once in a while, Setne checked the Book of Thoth for directions.**

**THOTH DID AN EXCELLENT JOB ON THIS BOOK! IT SERVES AS A MAP, COMPASS, TOURIST’S GUIDE, AND FARMER’S ALMANAC TIMETABLE.**

**Something was protecting us, an invisible layer of warmth keeping the Chaos at bay.**
The area around Zia shimmered like vapor off a hot road.

IT IS HER, CARTER. RA SUSTAINS US.

Soon I heard a roar in the distance. The horizon glowed red. We seemed to be moving faster, as if we’d stepped on an automated walkway.

CAN YOU FEEL IT? JUST OVER THE CREST OF THIS HILL...

BEHOLD!

OUR DESTINATION!

THERE YOU GO, THE SEA OF CHAOS.
Looking at the Sea of Chaos, only one thing seemed safe: a giant obelisk rising straight from the sea, perched on a spiral jetty.

Zia performed the summoning spell, reading carefully from the Book of Thoth.
The white obelisk seemed to cast a shadow across the sea, but as the shadow darkened, I realized that it wasn’t the silhouette of the obelisk.

Rather, the shadow writhed across the surface of the water like the body of a giant snake, and its tail was anchored to the obelisk.

GOOD WORK!
WE'VE SUMMONED APOPHIS'S SHADOW!

THANKS, ZIA!
I’LL TAKE IT FROM HERE.
HUMAN CIVILIZATION HAS GROWN OLD AND ROTTEN.
WITH EVERY ATTACK, CHAOS INCREASES.
SOON, IT WILL BE ENOUGH FOR ME TO RISE.
I WILL SWALLOW THE SUN GOD AND FLING THE WORLD INTO DARKNESS!

At the entrance to the room, the two obsidian crocospinhxes turned and blocked the exit.

I THINK I'LL DESTROY YOU WITH THE GUARDIANS OF MAYA.
YES, THAT WILL BE AMUSING.

Fire-breathing sheep. Oh joy.

INITIATES, THIS IS WHAT WE'VE TRAINED FOR.
LIKE WE'VE PRACTICED. THREE... TWO... ONE...
Oh, Carter. You are way too trusting. After that business on the riverboat, you gave me permission to cast a glamor spell on you?

Changing a glamor into a straitjacket is sooo easy.

It's nothing personal. I needed you two! Well--one of you, anyway.

That invocation spell had to be cast by a mortal--or I would have cast it myself ages ago.

Apophis will want to kill Ra and the rest of the gods, and destroy the House of Life. That much I'm fine with.

But the whole mortal world? No worries. I'll spare most of it. I've gotta have someplace to rule, don't I?

Instead of casting the execration, I'll blackmail Apophis, see? He'll destroy only what I let him destroy.

Yeah, yeah. This is the part where you say, "You're mad, Setne! You'll never get away with it!" But the thing is, I will...
I've been getting away with it for thousands of years!

TAS!*

**Bind!**

URGG!

FAH!*

**Release!**

Sadie's eyes were so full of pain that I wanted to apologize for even asking.

He's not coming, he's...gone.

I know how to capture the shadow give me the Apophis figurine.

Sis, where's Walt?
Sadie, I’m so sorry about Walt. Are you okay?

I’m fine!

The figurine absorbed the darkness.

Soon the shadow was completely gone, and the statue was midnight black.

I spoke the binding spell I learned from Walt, all the way to the last word.

Hi-nehm.*

“Join together.”

Shadow captured. The exorcism will be easy. We have to be facing Apophis, but otherwise it’s the same spell we’ve been practicing.
THAT'S ANOTHER THING
THIS MAGGOT LIED ABOUT.
WHAT SHOULD WE DO
WITH HIM? SHOVE HIM
INTO THE DRINK?

MMM!

I WISH.
BUT RESTRAINING
OURSELVES FROM ACTS
OF VENGEANCE IS WHAT
MAKES US DIFFERENT
FROM APOPHIS.

RULES HAVE THEIR PLACE.
THEY KEEP US FROM
UNRAVELING.

OSIRIS
HAS TO BE THE
ONE TO DECIDE
SETNE'S PUNISHMENT.
SINCE WE PROMISED
TO BRING HIM BACK
TO THE HALL OF
JUDGMENT.

FINE. YOU DRAG
HIM ALONG, THEN.

HE'S A GHOST. HE
CAN'T BE THAT
HEAVY.

Moving away from
the Sea of Chaos
was even harder than
moving toward it.

UH-OH.

Four winged demons
descended upon us.
Three defeated.

One survivor.

Smell ya later, chumps!

He escaped!

We'll have to worry about Setne later....

Look!
In the cratered field below us, demons had gathered—hundreds of them, all marching in our direction. We were trapped between the Sea of Chaos and a hostile army.

THREE OR FOUR HUNDRED DEMONS AGAINST TWO KANES AND ONE ZIA. I DON'T LIKE THOSE ODDS.

AT LEAST WE CAN GO OUT FIGHTING.

The battle lines opened momentarily.

CHAAARGE!
The entire Sunny Acres Godly Retirement Community had unleashed their geriatric wrath on the forces of darkness.

A sleek black car barreled into combat. The driver had to be a maniac, going out of his way to hit demons.

VROOOOM!

SCREEECH!

BES!

THE ONE AND ONLY!

SHIELD YOUR EYES. THINGS ARE ABOUT TO GET UGLY.

REALLY, REALLY UGLY!
Heh! No demons can withstand a BOO BLAST.

The shadow spell worked, you crazy kid!

Thank you for giving me my life back. And I don't just mean my shadow.

Okay, get in the car! We're going for a ride.
We played a game of hit-the-demon on our escape from the battlefield.

ONE POINT FOR THE RED DEMON!

WHACK!

TWO POINTS FOR THE DRAGONFLY HEAD!

WHACK!

The limo leaped a flaming chasm...
...and slammed to a stop on the beach of bones.

Light blazed in the darkness upriver.

Hey now, we're just in time to catch Ra's sun boat.

The crocodile-headed god Sobek steered from the bow, knocking aside random river monsters with a big pole.

Bast was there, and sitting upon his throne, our senile friend Ra.

HALOOOOOOO! WE HAVE COOOOOOKIES!
YOU GUYS, THE CEILING’S COMING DOWN!

A CAMEL, WALT? SERIOUSLY?

WRONG AMULET, SORRY!
LORD RA,
SIX MONTHS AGO
YOU OFFERED ME
A PIECE OF YOUR
SOUL FOR
SAFEKEEPING.

TODAY,
I VOLUNTEER
MYSELF AS YOUR
HOST IN THE
MORTAL REALM,
TO FIGHT THE
 SERPENT.

A blinding flash of light...

...and then only
Zia stood before
the throne.

I SEE NOW,
IT'S
ALL ABOUT BALANCE,
ISN'T IT?
MY
THOUGHTS AND HIS.

Then, her form
began to shift.

OR IS IT
MINE AND
HERS?

REBIRTH,
AT LAST, THROUGH
ZIA'S COMPASSION!
I FORGOT WHAT IT
IS LIKE TO BE
YOUNG AND
POWERFUL.
Standing in Zia’s place was the world’s buffest, most golden grandpa.

Bow to your king, you insolent whelps!

No, Lord Sobek.

I am not their king.

FRESH clothes?! No Fair!

I got you, girl.

SNAP!
I AM REBORN TO FIGHT MY OLD ENEMY, NOT TO ASSUME THE THRONE.

THAT IS YOUR DESTINY, CARTER KANE.

CHAOS HAS LEFT THE REST OF THE GODS DIVIDED AND CONFUSED.

THEY WILL NOT MARCH INTO BATTLE WITHOUT A LEADER.

TAKE MY CROOK AND FLAIL, UNITE THE HOUSE OF LIFE, RALLY THE GODS IN MY NAME, AND TAKE THE THRONE.

BE THEIR PHARAOH. CARTER KANE.

I couldn’t figure out what was weirder—that the king of the gods was giving up rule to a fifteen-year-old, or that the girl who kissed me on the beach had become a buff old man with a voice deeper than mine.

...ACCEPT.

EXCELLENT. ON THAT NOTE, LORD SOBEK, STEER US TO THE SUNRISE.

THE SERPENT IS RISING IN GIZA!

Past the gates, the river turned to clouds and poured into the morning sky.

AT LAST RA HAS TRULY RETURNED! LET HIS PEOPLE REJOICE! LET HIS THRONGS OF WORSHIPPERS ASSEMBLE!
Nobody down below was assembling, Nobody was rejoicing.

Directly ahead, three pyramids rose on the plains of Giza. Sandstorms and lightning raged.

The storms took the form of an enormous serpent. Apophis was becoming tangible. The desert boiled and the pyramids shook with a horrible resonance.

Some of the oldest structures in human history were about to crumble.

Carter and Sadie Kane, this is where gods and mortals must part.

No way! We've got the shadow. We're in this fight together!
A much more human battle is being waged in the Hall of Ages.

If you don’t help your uncle and your friends immediately, there will be no one left to save. The House of Life will crumble.

We gods will hold Apophis off until you come. Follow the Hieroglyphs.

The Hieroglyphs led to a hole punched into the base of Giza’s giant sphinx.

A tunnel had been blasted open.

It looked like the work of the rebels.

This tunnel opens just across from the Hall of Ages.

Let’s go!
Underground, we faced mayhem. A dozen rebels had formed a wedge blocking the doors to the Hall of Ages, and our initiates were trying to get past them.

It seemed backward. Shouldn’t our side have been defending the doors?

We leaped into the fray, aided by the strength of Isis and Horus.

BANANA SLUG!

HAMSTER!
Carter, Sadie! They caught us by surprise! These rebels are blocking us from reaching the Hall of Ages.

Amos is trapped inside, alone against a squad of the rebels' leaders!

Closer to the doors, the main wedge of enemies seemed to be focused on a single attacker, who was ripping through their ranks with his bare hands.
Walt had arrived, and he was using magic.

He tore through the enemy line, compressing rebel magicians into oversized canopic jars—while throwing other ones with inhuman strength.

He touched another rebel and instantly encased the man in mummy linen.

IS EVERYONE ALL RIGHT?
WALT, YOU'RE CURED!
AND USING MAGIC... HOW?!?

Lowering my vision into the Duat revealed the truth.

"Anubis thinks there's a way to extend my life," Walt had hinted on the way back from Thoth's.
Walt and Anubis, Walmubis?

Walt smiled and put his hand on the doors. Gray ash spread across the surface.

Open the doors, you annoying boy! We have to rescue Amos.

The bronze crumbled to dust and we poured into the Hall of Ages.

We didn’t get far before our rescue attempt sputtered to a stop.

Hovering midair in the center of the hall was the strangest avatar I’d ever seen. Part sandstorm, part fire, vaguely human.
DEFEND!

I'm on it.

Or rather, Geb is on it.

HA-DI!*

"Destroy!"

Sadie behind you!
The good news: Amos wasn’t fighting alone. The bad news: his backup was the god of Chaos.

**THIS IS FUN, LITTLE MAGICIANS! DON’T YOU HAVE ANY MORE TRICKS?**

**SET! NO KILLING!**

It was hard to comprehend that Amos would ever willingly channel the red god’s power.

Yet he was doing the impossible. He was winning.

**BAH! COME ON, AMOS, LET ME HAVE SOME FUN.**

**I ONLY WANT TO STRIP THE FLESH FROM THEIR BONES!**
Come on, Horus! We have to help.

It's regrettable, but we must let him die. He hosts Set, our old enemy.

He has been corrupted. He is already gone.

Two rebels swooped in holding magical lariats.

I recognized them as the rebel leaders Sarah Jacobi and her deputy Kwai.

Set himself in the hall of ages!

Confusion. Chaos. This is what comes from following the path of the gods! This ends now.

Jacobi caught the Set avatar around the neck with a lasso.

ROAARR!!!
The other rebels followed suit, lashing ropes around his legs and arms.

Set roared with outrage, but the avatar began to shrink.

I realize she was speaking with divine words, just like Seine had done. She was using magic to paralyze my friends.

FOLLOWERS OF THE KANES: THEY HAVE BROUGHT YOU NOTHING BUT TROUBLE, IT'S TIME THIS ENDED.

AS YOUR NEW CHIEF LECTOR, I WILL GIVE YOU AMNESTY. THEN WE WILL BATTLE APOPHIS TOGETHER.

KANES... TROUBLE... NEW CHIEF LECTOR... AMNESTY...

DON'T LISTEN TO HER! SHE'S USING A SPELL. JACOBI AND KWA! ARE IN LEAGUE WITH APOPHIS!

TREASON.
A shadow crossed in front of me. A bare hand snatched the blade out of the air.

WHO--

WALT STONE, BLOOD OF THE PHARAOHS, AND ANUBIS, GOD OF THE DEAD.

WE SPEAK WITH ONE VOICE ON THIS MATTER.

NO ONE HARMS SADIE KANE.

AAAIIIEEE!!

The floor closed behind her, leaving no trace that Jacobi had ever existed.

One leader down, one to go.

Kwai swooped in.

YOU'RE TOO LATE.

HA-HA! THAT'S MY BOY! NOW GET THOSE OTHER MAGICIANS TO LET GO OF ME!
EVEN NOW, MY MASTER DESTROYS THE OLD GODS...

...SWEEPING AWAY THE FOUNDATIONS OF YOUR WORLD.

ALL OF YOU WILL DIE.

HE WILL SSSWALLOW THE SSSUN.

ARF! ARF!
REBELS! YOUR LEADERS ARE DEFEATED!

APOLLO RISES ABOVE, RA NEEDS US! WHO DO YOU STAND WITH?

They bowed before Ra’s crook and flail.

GOOD ANSWER.

WE HAVEN’T MUCH TIME.

FOLLOW ME. I WILL SHOW YOU THE BEST TUNNEL TO HIGHER GROUND.
To say Apophis was huge would be like saying the Titanic took on a little water.

Since we'd been underground, the serpent had grown. Now his coils stretched across the desert for miles, wrapping around the pyramids and tunneling under the outskirts of Cairo, lifting entire neighborhoods like old carpeting.

He dashed Ra's sun boat into kindling with one flick of his tongue.
WE'RE GONNA NEED MORE GODS.

I sent my ba high above the pyramids into the Duat.

Ghostly shapes swirled in the fog of the Duat. I called to them.

GODS OF EGYPT! YOU'RE NEEDED IN GIZA.
The shapes swirled into the familiar silhouettes of gods I’d fought before.

ORDERS FROM A MORTAL?? WE ONLY FOLLOW THE STRONG.

I AM CARTER KANE, EYE OF HORUS, RA’S CHOSEN SUCCESSOR.

JOIN ME IN BATTLE OR I’LL SMITE YOU WHERE YOU STAND!

STRONG WORDS. WE LIKE THAT.

HE WIELDS THE TOOLS OF THE PHARAOH!

COME. THEN!

HE IS STRONG!
My ba returned to earth. I opened my eyes.

You’re back!

But where are the other gods?

A thunderclap rang out above.

And the sky was filled with light.

They’re right behind me.

Let’s do this!
Walt leaped into action, his hand glowing gray with weird power.

*SADIE, NO!*

Walt’s strange gray aura spread across the criosphinx’s body like an infection.

Walt saved me, but at a great cost to himself.

THAP

It fell apart to dust.

**YOU USED MAGIC TO SAVE ME? WALT...**

**IT WAS THE ONLY WAY...**

I lowered my vision into the Duat.*

*“Realm of spirits and magic”*
First tip on fighting a giant Chaos serpent: don’t.

Even with a squadron of gods and magicians at your back, it’s not a battle you’re likely to win.
As we charged closer, the world fractured. Apophis slithered in and out of the desert as well as in and out of the Dust, splintering reality into different layers.

Neith sniped at another snakehead with her arrows.

Hapi rode one version of the serpent’s head, his massive fists pounding between Apophis’s eyes.

Amos and Set sliced through the empty air, shouting command words at nothing.

The goddess Serget rode a giant black scorpion parrying a version of Apophis’s tail with her stinger in a bizarre sword fight.
Our allies fell aside in Apophis’s fun house of evil. Ra’s crook and flail guided Carter toward the sun god. Apophis’s sheut guided me toward the serpent.

It felt like we were running through layers of clear syrup, each thicker and more resistant than the next.

WE HAVE TO GET TO RA. CONCENTRATE ON HIM!

Ahead of us, a bright light shimmered as if through fifty feet of water.
At the middle of the Chaos storm, walls of red and gray smoke swirled around us. Ra's sun boat lay in ruins before us.

YOU'RE JUST IN TIME. THE SERPENT IS GROWING STRONGER.

Above rose the true head of the serpent—or at least the manifestation that held most of his power.

His skin was solid, glistening with golden-red scales. His mouth was a pink cavern with fangs.

Before him floated a glowing ball of light too bright to look at directly.
CARTER, SADIE, THANK THE GODS!

YOU'RE JUST IN TIME. OUR ENEMY IS GETTING STRONG--

It was Ra!

??
YOU'RE TOO LATE, LITTLE ONES. RA WILL BE MY BREAKFAST TODAY.

CHOMP!

NO!

With Ra's light extinguished, darkness immediately overtook us.

ZIA--RA--THEY'RE GONE.
DESSSTINY CANNOT BE CHEATED! I HAVE SSSWALLOWED RA. NOW THE END OF THE WORLDS SSSS AT HAND!

I DIDN'T COME BACK TO LIFE TO GET KILLED AGAIN! EXECRATE THAT SNAKE!

HURRY, CARTER AND SADIE! WE WILL DISTRACT HIM WHILE YOU COMPLETE THE SPELL!

There was no need to consult a scroll. We'd practiced this exorcism for months. We knew the words by heart.

The only question was whether the shadow would make a difference.
The statue dissolved in our hands. The shadow disappeared in a puff of vapor...

...and an explosive wave of darkness knocked us off our feet.

SHORTEIGHTED MORTALS!
YOU HAVEN'T JUST KILLED ME. YOU'VE EXILED THE GODS!

HA! AT AND CHAOS ARE LINKED, YOU FOOLS!
YOU CANNOT PUSH ME AWAY WITHOUT PUSHING AWAY THE GODS.

WE EXILE YOU BEYOND THE VOID. YOU ARE NO MORE.
He was cut short (literally) when his head exploded.

Yes, it was just as gross as it sounds.

The body of Apophis crumbled into sand and steaming goo.
The room was filled with the writhing coils of a giant red snake. The magic of Apophis encircled my friends, pulling apart the museum from Foundation to ceiling.

It was now or never: I had to restore order before the building toppled on us.

I channeled the power of the goddess Isis. I forced myself to focus, and I spoke the most powerful of all divine words:

MA’AT!
The Duat collapsed, layer upon layer, until the plains of Giza were one reality again.

The serpent’s legacy on the earth shattered—the wars, murders, turmoil, and anarchy Apophis had caused since ancient times finally lost power, no longer casting their shadow across our future.

Well done, Carter and Sadie Kane. You are Champions of Ma’at.

The gods shimmered like a mirage. Led by Ra, they advanced toward us.

My old enemy Apophis was not wrong. When chaos is pushed away, the gods of order must also distance themselves. Such is the balance of the universe. We must retreat into the sky.
WITHDRAW? YOU MEAN--FOREVER?

WHEN YOU'RE AS OLD AS I AM, YOU LEARN TO BE CAREFUL WITH THE WORD FOREVER.

KEEP THE CROOK AND FLAIL FOR ME. YOU ARE THE RIGHTFUL PHARAOH, AND TAKE CARE OF MY FAVORED ONE.

Light blazed around the gods.

FAREWELL, MY FRIENDS.

When it faded, they were gone.

Two dozen weary magicians stood around a smoking, serpent-shaped mark in the desert as the sun rose over the pyramids of Giza.
Amos called a general assembly in the Hall of Ages, so we made our way back underground.

The mood in the First Nome was light and festive.

Magicians were trading stories, mingling and checking in with old friends.
PSSSST!

You did good, pal. Not the way I would’ve handled it, but not bad.

TAS!

Oh, not that. We’re done playing that game.

But don’t worry, pal. I’ll see you around.

I suppose we’ll have to deal with that git sooner or later, but for now let’s go to the general assembly.

Carter and Sadie, on behalf of the House of Life, I thank you. You have restored Ma’at!

Apophis has been excreted, and Ra has once again risen into the Heavens, but this time in Triumph.

Well done!
THE PHARAOH'S SEAT HAS BEEN EMPTY FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS, AND TODAY, RA CHOSE A NEW PHARAOH.

COME FORTH AND TAKE THE THRONE.

Amazingly, the creaky old chair didn’t break under Carter’s royal butt. And he even had some kingly stuff to say once he got up there.

I ACCEPT THE THRONE. RA HAS GIVEN ME AUTHORITY TO LEAD THE GODS AND MAGICIANS IN TIMES OF CRISIS, AND I’LL DO MY BEST.

WE ARE AT PEACE. WE CAN REBUILD AND EXPAND THE HOUSE OF LIFE.

IF WAR COMES AGAIN, I’LL BE HERE AS PHARAOH.

BUT AS CARTER KANE?

AS CARTER KANE, I’M A KID WHO HAS A LOT OF CATCHING UP TO DO. I’VE GOT MY OWN NAME TO RUN AT BROOKLYN HOUSE AND I’VE GOT TO GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL.

I’M GOING TO LEAVE DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONS WHERE THEY SHOULD BE— IN THE HANDS OF THE CHIEF LECTOR, AMOS KANE.
The crowd applauded wildly. Either they approved of me, or they were relieved that a kid wasn’t going to be giving them daily orders from the throne.

The best part of saving the world? The after-party, of course!

For the first night in ages, we’d be able to sleep easy.
The next morning, we packed up for a morning flight back to Brooklyn.

Carter stayed behind.
I wanted some more time with Zia. A proper date.

The same tunnel system that connected the First Nome with Giza also happened to be tied to the Cairo metro in the downtown center.

Um, after you, Zia!
AMOS has lots of help at the first Nome now. He thought it would be good for me to spend some time away, try to live a more typical life.

You mean, like, leave Egypt?

Your sister suggested I stay at Brooklyn House and attend American School. She said—how did she put it...?

Would you mind if I stayed in Brooklyn House? I could help teach the Initiates, but if that would make you uncomfortable—


Americans are an odd bunch, but they grow on you.

So that’s a yes?

Yes, I mean. Unless it would make you uncomfortable. I wouldn’t want to make things awkward or—

Carter?

Hush.
Back in Brooklyn, a familiar figure waited for me at Freak’s roost.

Walt?: What are you wearing?

Anubis picked it. Now that our bodies are merged, we have to share styles too.

Is this another goodbye? I’ve had enough good-byes today.

Actually, it’s more of a hello. My name’s Walt Stone. From Seattle. I’d like to join the party.

Very funny. You think you can just merge with a god and surprise me with an “oh, by the way, I’m actually two minds in one body”?

I don’t appreciate being taken off guard.

I did try to tell you, several times. Anubis did too. We kept getting interrupted.

No excuse.

I’m still wait. Anubis can stay in this world as long as I’m his host, and I’m hoping to live a good long life.

My eyes probably answered for me: No, please. Not ever.

But I couldn’t very well give him the satisfaction of my saying that out loud, could I?

I’m not going anywhere, unless you want me to leave.

Well, I suppose I could tolerate it.
I OWE YOU A DANCE, MAY I?

HERE? WON'T YOUR CHAPERONE SHU INTERRUPT?

I'M MORTAL NOW. HE'LL LET US DANCE, THOUGH I'M SURE HE'S KEEPING AN EYE ON US TO MAKE SURE WE BEHAVE.

TO MAKE SURE YOU BEHAVE.

I'M A PROPER YOUNG LADY.

I'LL HAVE YOU REMEMBER THAT MY FATHER IS YOUR EMPLOYER IN THE UNDERWORLD. YOU'D BEST MIND YOUR MANNERS.

YES, MA'AM.

SO YOU'LL LET ME STICK AROUND? LET ME EXPERIENCE A TYPICAL TEENAGE LIFE?

I SUPPOSE. NOT THAT I'M AN EXPERT MYSELF, BUT THERE IS ONE RULE I INSIST ON.

IF ANYONE ASKS YOU IF YOU'RE TAKEN, THE ANSWER IS YES.

GOOD, BECAUSE YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE ME CROSS.

TOO LATE.

SHUT UP AND DANCE, WALT.

I THINK I CAN LIVE WITH THAT.
Hmm—I suppose it was rather impressive.

The coils of the serpent burned away like fog in sunlight. So did his hold on the artifacts in the room.

My staff shattered.

Magic this powerful has a cost.

You use too much, and you can burn out. It happened to my mum. And it almost happened to me.

I fell.
So there you have it.

The various catastrophes plaguing the world have lessened, and we are dealing with an influx of new initiates as the school year gets under way.

We're still teaching the path of the gods. Together, Carter, Amos, and I will make Egyptian magic stronger than ever. And that's good, because our challenges are not over.

I'm still worried about Sethe on the loose with his horrible fashion sense and the Book of Thoth.
As for you lot out there, we're never too busy for new initiates. If you have the blood of the pharaohs, what are you waiting for? Don't let your magic go to waste.

Brooklyn House is open for business!

THE SERPENT'S SHADOW

RICK RIORDAN
ADAPTED BY ORPHEUS COLLAR
I glanced around to see the room hadn’t collapsed. But the entire exhibit was in ruins.

I have a feeling we won’t be invited back as “Friends of the Dallas Museum” anytime soon.

You guys did great!

Let’s check on JD Grissom and the Dallas Magicians.

The first time my brother and I entered an Egyptian museum together, we lost our father.

The second time, we unleashed some demons and almost lost an initiate.

No casualties this time, except me—so far.
I’d love to say we found all the Texas magicians safe and sound. We didn’t.

The well-kept lawn that had been host to a thriving party was now a crater as big as an Olympic pool.

I wondered how many magicians had died.

JD GRISSOM. THE TEXANS—THEY’RE DEAD. ALL OF THEM.

We didn’t have time to mourn our comrades. The mortal authorities would be arriving soon to check out the scene.
Our ride home glided over from the museum's roof.

Freak the griffin is a beautiful monster, if you like psychotic falcon-headed lions.

Tears stung my eyes, and it wasn't from the wind.

Toronto.

Chicago.

Mexico City.

And now...Dallas.

Fog swallowed the boat. With a defiant squawk, Freak pulled us into the Dust.
The Duat’s fog cleared as we sailed over New York’s East River toward home.

Regular mortals wouldn’t see anything but a huge dilapidated warehouse, but to magicians, Brooklyn House was as obvious as a lighthouse!

It was almost midnight, but the Great Room was still buzzing with activity.

Our youngest initiates, the ankle-biters, drew crayon pictures on the floor.

The rest watched the news. The Dallas disaster was all over it.
YOU'RE ALIVE!

DON'T SOUND SO SURPRISED.

OUR TEAM IS SAFE. THE MAGICIANS OF DALLAS... NOT SO LUCKY.

Living at Brooklyn House felt like having a dozen brothers and sisters. It helped during times of grief.

WALT, ALYSSA, FELIX... YOU'VE DONE ENOUGH TONIGHT. GET SOME SLEEP.

SADIE, WE NEED TO DISCUSS WHAT HAPPENS NEXT. PLAN B.

We walked to the most secure room in the house: the library. It's where we hatched all our most secret and dangerous plans, and where we held our most powerful artifact.
Our most dangerous artifact: a representation of the enemy, carved by Wali, to perform Plan B: an execration.

We'd seen execrations performed before. They were powered by binding a creature to a copy of itself, then destroying the copy.

Plan A:
- Awaken RA!
- Restore him to his THRONE OF FIRE
- Watch him kick butt
- Winning!!

Plan B
- In case of emergency - Break glass

It wasn't a perfect solution, and it had the side effect of killing the spell caster. It was our last resort.

MUFFIN? How did you get down here?

MRORRW!
Bast! Aren't you supposed to be at your... um... Night Job?

Babysitting Ra? Yes, I left my post.

We felt a ripple in the Duat, a deep disturbance.

I had to make sure my kittens were alive.

Apophis is rising. We couldn't stop him from killing all of Dallas.

The attacks are getting worse.

Bast pointed to a curious little box.

I know you are contemplating an excreation. So we gods have found a way to power the spell without sacrificing your own lives.

It's empty.

Look closer.

I peered through the Duat... to see a little shadow.

Pharaohs often buried their shadows within a protective shadow box like this so it would not be lost in the afterlife.

It was more than a trick of the light—it was a part of their soul.
I’ve read about the Egyptian concept of the soul before... it had multiple parts.

Like one hand with five fingers, one soul with five parts.

The first part is the **BA**, our personality.

The BA can leave the body when we dream, or it can come back to the earth as a ghost after we die.

It usually appears as a large glowing bird, with a human head.

Second is the **REN**, the secret name.

The ren is the part of the soul our friend Bes had sacrificed to help us pay a gambling debt to the moon god Khonsu. Now Bes was a hollow shell of a god, hidden away in the underworld’s divine nursing home.

Next is the **KA**, the life force that leaves the body when it dies.

The ka could also power magic spells, but doing so could be deadly.
Dead souls’ hearts are weighed on the scales of justice against the feather of truth. If they come up wicked or untruthful, their hearts are eaten by the devourer of souls, Ammit. Or as I called him, “Poohchiekins.”

THE RECORD OF GOOD AND BAD DEEDS, IT’S THE BIT THEY WEIGH ON THE SCALES OF JUSTICE IN THE AFTERLIFE.

LAST IS THE SHEUT, THE SHADOW OF THE SOUL.

MORE THAN A PHYSICAL SHADOW, THE SHEUT IS THE SILHOUETTE OF THE SOUL. IT CONTAINS A COPY OF ITS NEEDS AND DESIRES.

IN ANCIENT TIMES, THE EGYPTIANS USED THE SAME WORD FOR STATUE AND SHADOW, BECAUSE THEY’RE BOTH SMALLER COPIES OF AN OBJECT. THEY WERE BOTH CALLED A SHEUT.

WITH A STANDARD EXECRATION, YOU DESTROY A STATUE THAT REPRESENTS THE ENEMY, BUT IF THE SPELL COULD BE CRANKED UP BY DESTROYING A MORE POWERFUL REPRESENTATION...

SHADOWS AS COPIES...

GET SOME REST, ANSWERS MAY COME EASIER IN THE DAYLIGHT.

I GUESS THE QUESTION REMAINS IF APOPHIS HAS A SHADOW AND WHERE WE CAN FIND IT.

YAAWN
Sleep, easier said than done. And not just because I had a snoring baboon for a roommate.

You're still pondering an execration?

Horus? You're looking very, uh...

...very pigeonly.

I still think a frontal assault is the way to go.

I looked for a falcon, but they're a little scarce in New York.

I wanted something with wings. Pigeons have adapted well to cities and aren't scared of people.

Noble birds. Don't you think?

Noble, yeah. That's the first word that comes to mind when I think of pigeons.

Let it be known that you are still my favorite host.
WE ARE STRONG ENOUGH, YOU AND I. WE SHOULD COMBINE FORCES, CARTER. LET ME SHARE YOUR FORM AS I ONCE DID. WE COULD LEAD THE ARMIES OF GODS AND MEN AND DEFEAT THE SERPENT.

I'M NOT WORRIED ABOUT RULING THE WORLD. WE NEED TO SAVE IT!

DO YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT APOPHIS'S SHEUT?

ALL LIVING BEINGS HAVE A SHEUT. EVEN GODS. EVEN APOPHIS.

AS FOR FINDING IT... YOU ASK A GOD OF WAR ABOUT A SUBJECT BEST SUITED FOR A GOD OF KNOWLEDGE.

THOTH IS STILL IN TENNESSEE AT THAT RIDICULOUS PYRAMID OF HIS. CONSULT WITH HIM.

AND BEFORE YOU GO, SUIT UP. IT COULD BE DANGEROUS.

LOSING CONTROL OF HOST--

--WE'LL TALK LATER.

Go.

Plop.

Go.
The next day, I passed under the giant statue of Thoth in the Great Room. It was time to go to Memphis.

News had traveled quickly around the world about Dallas within the magician community. But if the apocalypse was happening, you couldn't tell by our initiatives.

Considering how badly last night had turned out, everyone seemed in strangely good spirits.

ANYBODY SEEN SADIE?

SHE'S IN HER ROOM!
KNOCK KNOCK

Hullo, brother dearest. Come to get tips for what to wear to the dance?

What? No, uh—dance?

BROOKLYN ACADEMY FOR THE GIFTED has invited us to its first dance tonight! I've mentioned it to you a dozen times. Three other schools will be there.

The timing couldn't be better. We need something to boost our spirits after Dallas. Anyway, what do you want?

HORUS VISITED ME LAST NIGHT. HE SAYS THOTH MAY BE UNDER ATTACK.

THOTH MAY BE UNDER ATTACK.

WE CAN'T WAIT.

NOT EVEN FOR A FEW EXTRA HOURS? OKAY THEN, YOU VISIT THOTH.

YES, LET'S GO! AFTER THE DANCE.

YOU'RE KIDDING!

I'M THINKING ABOUT PLANS FOR DOOMSDAY, AND YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT BEING LATE TO A DANCE?

TAKE AN INITIATE WHO DOESN'T CARE ABOUT THE DANCE. I'LL MAKE SURE OUR TROOPS ARE WELL RESTED AND ENTERTAINED BEFORE THE BIG BATTLE BEGINS.

EVEN ARMIES IN THE FIELD FIGHT BETTER WHEN THEY TAKE BREAKS FOR ENTERTAINMENT, CARTER!

I'M SURE SOME GENERAL SOMEWHERE HAS SAID THAT.
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Of course we had serious business to deal with. That's why I insisted on partying first.

I chose black lowlights, a strapless dress, and dark makeup for that fresh risen-from-the-grave look.

For jewelry, I wore a pendant Walt had given me with the Egyptian symbol of eternity, shem.

Walt had a matching anulet. Unfortunately, the shen amulets didn't mean we were dating exclusively.

Or even dating at all.

The only other boy I liked, Anubis, was a god who never visited. If Walt had asked me out, I think I would've been fine with it.

But Walt was dying. He had this silly idea that it would be unfair to me if we started a relationship under those circumstances.

We were stuck in a maddening limbo—flirting, talking for hours, but eventually Walt would always pull away and shut me out.

By sunset, I was ready to lead my troops into battle.

I marched straight to the Great Room...

...where I saw something that made my blood curdle.

WALT STONE!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN COMBAT GEAR? WE HAVE A DANCE TO GO TO!!

I'M GOING WITH CARTER TO SEEK ANSWERS FROM THOTH IN MEMPHIS. SHADOW MAGIC MAY BE OUR BEST HOPE TO BEAT APOPHIS!

BUT WHAT ABOUT YOUR CURSE? YOU'RE SAFER GOING TO THE DANCE. WAIT.

THERE'S LESS CHANCE YOU'LL HAVE TO USE MAGIC TO DEFEND YOURSELF.

I'M BRINGING MY BEST DEFENSIVE TALISMAN IN CASE WE RUN INTO TROUBLE.

IF THINGS GET TOO CRAZY IN MEMPHIS, I CAN CONTACT YOU THROUGH MY SHEN AMULET.

Our shen amulets provided us a magic line of communication. In emergencies, they even gave us the ability to summon the other person to our side.

AND I CAN ALREADY FEEL THROUGH THE SHEN AMULET THAT I CAN'T CONVince YOU TO COME WITH US.

WALT--

--IF I DON'T GO, THE OTHERS MIGHT FEEL OBLIGED TO STAY TOO.

AFTER DALLAS, WE NEED A GOOD NIGHT!

Wait flew off with Carter, taking all the joy out of the evening for me.

I'd still have to go and pretend to have fun.

I wondered if this was what being a grown-up felt like.
I gazed up at Anubis’s warm eyes and his exquisite lips—the first I’d ever kissed.

Anubis?! It happened on my birthday last spring, and though I thought I’d gotten over it, his presence now made all the old feelings come back. Push it aside, Sadie.
Suddenly, spirits were twirling all around us, luminous apparitions in eighteenth-century clothes: the red uniforms of British regulars and ragtag militia outfits. They pirouetted with lady ghosts in plain farm dresses or fancy silk.

**THE BATTLE OF BROOKLYN HEIGHTS, 1776.**

**HUNDREDS OF AMERICAN AND BRITISH TROOPS DIED RIGHT WHERE WE'RE DANCING.**

The ghosts seemed to be dancing to a different song.

I strained my ears and could faintly hear violins and a cello.

**HOW ROMANTIC.**

You certainly know how to show a girl a good time.

**IT'S A LOOPHOLE, I ADMIT.**

These ghosts could use a night of entertainment, just like your initiates.

**BUT TO THE PURPOSE OF MY VISIT...**

**THERE'S BEEN GRUMBLING AMONG THE GODS ABOUT OUR SITUATION.**

I've come to say good-bye, Sadie.
OUR SITUATION?

US...

AS FAR AS I'M AWARE, THERE IS NO OFFICIAL "US." YOU'RE NEVER AROUND!

THE GODS HAVE FORBIDDEN ME TO SPEND TIME WITH YOU, SINCE I DON'T HAVE A HUMAN HOST.

TONIGHT, I BREAK THE RULES TO DISCUSS SHADOW MAGIC. YOU AND CARTER ARE RIGHT TO SEEK APOPHIS'S SHADOW.

WE GODS HIDE OUR SHADOWS BECAUSE THEY CAN BE USED TO DESTROY US.

BUT THE SAME MAGIC THAT CAN BE USED TO DESTROY OUR SOULS CAN ALSO BE USED TO REBOOT THEM.

I KNOW BES'S SACRIFICE HAS WEIGHED ON YOU. SHADOW MAGIC COULD REVIVE HIM.

The souls of the dead started stretching, caught by a huge gust of wind.

UH-OH. TIME'S UP. HE'S COME FOR ME.

MY GREAT-GREATGRANDFATHER. SHU!

WHOOSH!

Shu was one of those ridiculous godly names I'd heard before.

AH. THE GOD OF FLIP-FLOPS. NO, WAIT. LEAKY BALLOONS. NO--
I remembered the story of Nut and Geb, the sky and earth. Ra had commanded Nut’s father, Shu, to keep the two lovers apart so they would never have children who might someday usurp Ra’s throne.

That strategy hadn’t worked, but apparently Shu was still trying.

I don’t remember you wearing a pilot’s outfit.

I’d prefer to be invisible. Thank you very much, but you mortals have polluted the air so badly. It’s getting harder and harder.

Haven’t you people heard of spare-the-air days? Carpooling? Hybrid engines? And don’t get me started on Cows!

Did you know that every cow belches and farts over a hundred gallons of methane a day?

There are one and a half billion cows in the world. Do you have any idea what that does to my respiratory system?
SHU, PLEASE ALLOW ME TO FINISH TALKING TO SADIE--

OH, TALKING! DON'T PLAY INNOCENT, BOY. I KEPT YOUR GRANDPARENTS APART FOR EONS.

THE COUNCIL OF GODS HAS DECREED NO FURTHER CONTACT BETWEEN GODS AND MORTALS—EXCEPT AS HOSTS!

AT LEAST LET ME TELL HER ABOUT WALT! SHE HAS A RIGHT TO KNOW!

NO! YOU ARE HEREBY BANNED FROM FURTHER CONTACT WITH THIS MORTAL!

AND AS FOR YOU, GIRL, STAY AWAY FROM HIM! YOU HAVE MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO DO.

What had Anubis wanted to say about Walt?

**Anubis was the guide of the dead. No doubt he'd been preparing Walt for death.**

**Anubis might have wanted to warn me that the time was right—as if I needed another reminder.**

**Anubis: off-limits, Walt: at death's door.**
Shu's wind had blown the dance hall gazebo down. Hopefully none of the mortals had seen anything.

A golden light caught my attention.

A horde of ghosts, a blustery wind god, and now a portal!

So much for being normal for a night.

On the other side, I could make out faint images of a subterranean city. The First Nome.

Portals don't just appear randomly. Whoever had summoned it really must have wanted to talk to me.

I think this one's for me.
The rebels. Last spring, the worst villains in the House of Life formed a hit squad to destroy Brooklyn House.

We beat them, but they swore to fight us another day.

The Hall of Ages.

Swirling curtains of multicolored light tell Egypt’s history.

The first section of light was gold—the Age of the Gods. Farther along, the Old Kingdom glowed silver, the Middle Kingdom was coppery brown, and so on.

It’s a looong hall.
At the end of the hall, the curtains of red light for the modern age changed to dark purple: the recent past.

Visions swirled of a world in chaos, serpentine monsters, and rebels killing innocent magicians.

This is horrible!

They do not recognize Amos Kane as Chief Lector. They distrust the Kanes for using the power of the gods. Now they’re systematically killing anyone who allies with the Chief Lector.

Did they... did the rebels have something to do with Dallas?

Possibly. Let’s not linger. Your uncle Amos awaits us.

Traditionally, the Chief Lector’s place is beside the Pharaoh’s throne. But in light of recent events, he’s spending his time in the War Room.
It seemed incredible that not even a year had passed since my brother Carter and I learned we were blood of the pharaohs, imbued with the gift of Egyptian magic, completely clueless of our heritage and powers.

If you told us that nine months later we'd be hobnobbing with high society from the Dallas chapter of the House of Life, I would have laughed!

Unfortunately, our reason for visiting was not to party.

This is a dapper group! Shame we're wearing combat gear for a gala.

We have to be prepared for anything tonight. Look, there's our man.
Sadie! Welcome to the War Room.

We haven't had to use this room for many years, but recently there has been a crisis of leadership in the House of Life.

Has Zia briefed you?

A little.

Rebels have been gathering their forces. They do not recognize me as Chief Lector.

Here, see for yourself on the map.
A figurine burned at the sword of another.

THE MAP SHOWS US MOST OF OUR ENEMY'S MOVEMENTS ACROSS THE WORLD, AND ALLOWS US TO SEND OUR FORCES BY MAGIC TO WHERE THEY ARE NEEDED.

THE TOKENS STAND FOR ACTUAL FORCES.

Aophis sends his demons to terrorize our allies. The attacks are COORDINATED.

THE REBELS STRIKE WHEREVER WE ARE WEAKEST.

THE FEAR GENERATED BY EACH ACT OF TERROR TURNS MORE AGAINST US.

THE REBELS HAVE BEEN CONVINCED WITH LIES. THEY'VE BEEN TOLD THE KANES ARE DEMONS.

CHAOS IS SEDUCTIVE. THEY BELIEVE THEY CAN MAKE A NEW WORLD BETTER THAN THE OLD, AND THE CHANGE IS WORTH ANY PRICE—EVEN MASS ANNihilation.

Amos had been possessed by Chaos before, by the Chaos god Set.

HOW COULD THEY BE SO STUPID!

Aophis has made promises of power, or he is simply controlling their minds.

Compared to Aophis, Set was a minor nuisance. Considering what Aophis could make a person do made me shudder.
YOU GAVE THEM AMNESTY WHEN THEY ATTACKED BROOKLYN HOUSE.
WE SHOULD’VE KILLED THE REBELS WHEN WE HAD THE CHANCE.

WE ARE SERVANTS OF MA’AT—ORDER AND JUSTICE. WE DON’T KILL OUR ENEMIES FOR THINGS THEY MIGHT DO IN THE FUTURE.

SOME MAY STILL BE TURNED BACK TO OUR SIDE.
A YOUNG DEFECTOR FROM RUSSIA HAS SUPPLIED US WITH INTELLIGENCE ON THE REBELS’ MOVEMENTS.

THEY ARE RIGHT UNDER OUR NOSES, IN ASWAN.

FROM ASWAN, THEY WILL MARCH NORTH TO ATTACK US HERE IN THE FIRST NOME.
ATTACK THE FIRST NOME? HERE? THAT’D BE SUICIDE.
IT’S SURVIVED FOR FIVE THOUSAND YEARS!

WE DON’T HAVE THE NUMBERS TO HOLD OFF AGAINST OUR ENEMIES.
MANY OF OUR BEST MAGICIANS HAVE DISAPPEARED, POSSIBLY TO THE OTHER SIDE. WE’VE GOT SOME OLD MEN AND A FEW SCARED CHILDREN LEFT, PLUS ZIA AND ME.

WE WILL HAVE TO FIND STRENGTH THROUGH OTHER MEANS.

SET. I WILL FOLLOW THE PATH OF THE GODS.
AMOS, NO, PLEASE.
IT WILL BE DIFFERENT THIS TIME.
WE'VE BEEN COMMUNING. I THINK WE CAN WORK TOGETHER.

THERE HAS TO BE A BETTER WAY!

BROOKLYN HOUSE.
YOU CAN MOVE PEOPLE ON OUR SIDE WITH THIS BOARD, RIGHT?
BRING MY INITIATES HERE TO EGYPT.
THEY FOUGHT AGAINST THE REBELS BEFORE. WE WON THAT BATTLE.

CARLTON WILL HELP TOO!
ONCE HE AND WALT GET BACK FROM MEMPHIS.

CARTER AND WALT ARE IN MEMPHIS?
THERE HAVE BEEN MANY DISTURBANCES THERE OF LATE.
I HOPE THEY ARE READY FOR A FIGHT.
MEMPHIS, TN.
PYRAMID SPORTS ARENA.
THOTH'S HOME BASE.

Freak brought us to a glassy black pyramid along the Mississippi River. It was the abandoned sports arena that Thoth had appropriated for his home.

HMM. MAYBE WE SHOULD HAVE GONE TO SADIE'S DANCE AFTER ALL.

CHAPTER 3
Climbing up the side was an army of demons.

Through the dust I could see snakey coils wrapping about the pyramid.

Thoth stood at the peak throwing hieroglyphs like grenades all around him.

Wait, that's a full-scale demon war. Got anything better than a camel this time?

Let's see how they like my sphinx amulet.

Meanwhile, his assistants, a troop of baboons and ibises, engaged the enemy.
After our experience at the Dallas Museum, I didn’t much care for sphinxes, but thankfully this one was on our side.

I called on the power of Horus, and was encased in a twenty-foot-tall hawk-headed apparition.

Freak banked hard across the side of the pyramid. He gulped down smaller demons and shredded the larger ones with his buzz-saw wings.
It was going great, until...

CARTER KANE, YOU ARE STUPIDLY PERSISTENT.

EHH?

WHAM

AAIEEE!

I recognized that voice.

HIDING BEHIND THE GODS WILL NOT SAVE YOU FROM WHAT MY MASTER BRINGS. APOPHIS WILL RISE!

Face of Horror—a demon from the Red Pyramid, and the secret mouthpiece of Apophis. We’d killed him in the shadow of the Washington Monument, but now he was back.

I got better. My master heals all wounds.

Face of Horror? I killed you!

Surrender Ra to me, I will spare you. You will ride the sea of chaos. You will be master of your own destiny.

Have the gods promised you anything as fair?
Face of Horror's spiel was interrupted by Thoth.

TO FIGHT THE DEMONS? THEY'LL BE BACK AT SUNRISE.

I IMAGINE THE OTHER GODS HAVEN'T COME TO MY RESCUE BECAUSE THEY'RE HAVING SIMILAR PROBLEMS. RA WAS RECENTLY BROUGHT BACK, AS YOU MAY RECALL.

THE SUN GOD MUST BE GUARDED ON HIS NIGHTLY JOURNEY. THAT TAKES A LOT OF GODPOWER.

SORRY, MY BAD. WELL, PARTLY. SADIE HELPED.

They've been attacking at dusk and dawn for the past two weeks.

Now that you're here, you may as well come inside.

I think you'll find my headquarters much improved since your last visit.

There's much to discuss, and you have to try my barbecue!
I'll say this for Thoth. He knew how to decorate a pyramid.

I knew sooner or later you'd come to the conclusion that your only hope of victory was a shadow execution.

You mean it's a real thing? What is it, and how do we perform it?

Knowledge of any value can't be given. It must be sought and earned.

You're a teacher now, Carter. You should know this.

Right. The other gods think I'm a sellout. Over the centuries, I've divulged too many secrets to mankind. I taught you the art of writing. Of magic. I founded the house of Life.

That's why magicians still honor you. Help us one more time.

Your other option is not to help us and let Apophis destroy the world.

Point taken. There is a way you could find the Shadow's location.

I can guide you a little. But you'll have to connect the freckles, as they say.

Dots.
Dallas’s leader, JD Grissom, was chatting with his guests when we pulled him away for an emergency meeting.

Mr. Grissom! A word, please?

Carter and Sadie Kane!

You’re a long way from Brooklyn!

We didn’t have much choice pulling Mr. Grissom from his guests, considering the danger he was in.

An attack from the Serpent Apophis?

I thought the Serpent was defeated six months ago.

He was, but he hasn’t stayed down.

The bonds of his prison have come loose. He’s been gathering strength, and one day soon will make good on his wish to swallow the sun.

Until then, the Serpent is biding his time, settling for smaller attacks on nomes* that seem secure and happy, nomes like this one.

These other attacks... you mean Chicago and Mexico City?

And Toronto, and a few others. Each time, Apophis and his minions have left no survivors.

Apophis has a pattern.

The other attacks all happened on the night of the new moon, when darkness is greatest.

Believe me, he’ll hit your museum tonight, and he’ll hit it hard.

*Provinces*
“LONG AGO, WHEN I WAS YOUNG AND NAIVE, I WROTE A FIELD STUDY CALLED THE BOOK OF THOTH.

“IT DESCRIBED EVERY FORM EACH GOD CAN TAKE, THEIR MOST SECRET HIDING PLACES—ALL SORTS OF EMBARRASSING DETAILS.

“I NEVER MEANT FOR HUMANS TO READ THE BOOK, BUT IT WAS STOLEN IN ANCIENT TIMES BY A CRAFTY AND MURDEROUS MAGICIAN.

“DOES THE NAME SETNE RING A BELL? IT SHOULD!


“Born as prince Khaemwaset, heir to the throne of Ramses, he battled monsters, adventured in the duat, conquered gods, and broke into sacred tombs. He created curses that couldn’t be lifted and unearthed secrets that should have stayed buried.

“HE'D STOP AT NOTHING TO POSSESS THE SECRETS OF THE UNIVERSE. HE WANTED TO BE A GOD, YOU SEE—NOT THE EYE OF A GOD, A FULL-Fledged IMMORTAL.

“SETNE USED MY BOOK TO FORMULATE A NUMBER OF SPELLS, INCLUDING THE SHADOW EXEcrATION.

“Fortunately he died before he could take full advantage of it.

“IF YOU NEED THE SPELL TO DEFEAT APOPHIS, YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO CONVINCE SETNE TO TEACH YOU THE ENCHANTMENT AND LEAD YOU TO THE SHADOW OF APOPHIS.

“Shluk!

“But how? He's dead!”
"Death was not the end for Setne. He's continued to cause trouble for thousands of years in the Underworld, as a Spirit!"

Osiris sentenced him to oblivion many times, but Setne always managed to evade punishment.

He got a lighter sentence, won appeals, made plea bargains, or he simply escaped.

Recently, your father became Osiris.

He's been cracking down on rebellious ghosts, trying to restore Ma'at to an underworld increasingly bending to chaos.

Now Setne is scheduled for a new trial. He will come before your father tomorrow, and Setne will need to make a deal to survive.

Go to the Hall of Judgment. Intervene in the trial. Convince Setne to show you where he hid my book of Thoth. Lead you to Apophis's shadow, and teach you how to destroy it.

If he doesn't escape, kill you, or betray you, he may decide to help you. Now--

--It's almost dawn. You two had better leave before the demons return. Good luck.

And by all means, give Setne my regards!

If you live long enough to do so, of course.
Walt and I held on to the boat on our way back to Brooklyn. Maybe it was lack of sleep after a night of fighting and conversation with Thoth, but Walt was not looking healthy.

**IT'S THE CURSE.**
I've not got long to live.

**I WON'T LET IT STOP ME FROM HELPING YOU BEAT APOPHIS.**

**ANUBIS THINKS THERE'S A WAY TO EXTEND MY LIFE.**

Until sunset tomorrow, at the very latest.

**IT'S NOT A CURE, AND THERE COULD BE SIDE EFFECTS.**
You might not like it; Sadie might not like it.

He's been helping me make sense of my powers.

Your powers... are you talking about that death touch you used on the ciosphinx in Dallas?
YES, AS THE CURSE GETS WORSE, MY POWER BECOMES HARDER TO CONTROL.

UH, WALT? NOW WOULDN'T BE ONE OF THOSE TIMES YOU LOSE CONTROL, WOULD IT?

WALT, LET GO OF THE BOAT!

WALT! YOU REALLY NEED TO GET A HANDLE ON THAT POWER!

SORRY!

AAAAAAAAH!

We made a soft landing in the Brooklyn House pool.
A weird creature was waiting for us. It spoke with Sadie’s voice:

"GASP!"

"IT’S STILL EARLY MORNING. I DON’T SEE ANY INITIATES EATING BREAKFAST OR PREPARING FOR ‘MAGIC PROBLEM-SOLVING 101.’ WHERE IS EVERYBODY?"

"WE’VE SHIPPED OFF TO EGYPT, JUST SOUTH OF CAIRO."

Sadie had the harebrained idea to create the perfect shabti to be her avatar and do all her chores, like a remote-controlled robot. Not being much of an artist, Sadie had fashioned a vaguely human figure out of flowerpots.

"STOP SMILING! I CAN SEE YOU, CARTER. OH--AND, UH, HULLO, WALT."

There’s an emergency at the first nome. Zia brought me here at Amos’s call. The house of Life is facing a civil war.

Sarah Jacob! And her forces are marching on us, timing their attack to Apophis’s rise. I called the initiates here to defend the Hall of Ages."
WE'RE TRAINING! JOIN US HERE!

WISH WE COULD, SADIE.

WE CONSULTED WITH THOTH. ALL HIS SHADOW MAGIC RECIPES WERE STOLEN EONS AGO BY A ROGUE MAGICIAN NAMED SETNE. WE'RE GOING TO SUMMON A BOAT TO THE UNDERWORLD TO TALK SETNE'S GHOST INTO SHOWING US WHERE THEY'RE HIDDEN.

THE LAND OF THE DEAD, EH? MAYBE I SHOULD JOIN YOU THERE. I WANT TO VISIT BES.

DON'T FRET. I THINK IT WILL HELP US WITH OUR SHADOW PROJECT.

RIGHT, I'LL MEET YOU TWO AT THE HALL OF JUDGMENT BEFORE SUNSET TONIGHT, TA!
Opening a portal can be easy when you ask the right goddess. I sauntered over to a half-destroyed shrine to Isis.

YOO-HOO, ISIS? ANYONE HOME?

I ANSWER THE CALL.

ARE YOU SPEAKING OF ANUBIS? SADIE: THERE ARE RULES.

PROXIMITY TO THE GODS IS DANGEROUS. IT MUST BE REGULATED WITH UTMOST CARE. YOU KNOW THIS. YOUR UNCLE IS STILL TAINTED FROM HIS EXPERIENCE WITH SET.

IF IT ISN’T MY GOOD FRIEND WHO DECIDES WHOM I CAN AND CAN’T DATE.

I imagined wheelchairs, IV poles, and all the forgotten old gods of Egypt situated on a boiling lake of fire.

The House of Rest, retirement home to the gods.

EVEN THAT ONE STRUGGLES WITH IT.

IF YOU JOIN WITH ME, YOU’LL UNDERSTAND.

IT’S TIME WE UNITE AGAIN AND COMBINE OUR STRENGTH.

SOMEDAY, FOR NOW I NEED TO BE SURE MY DECISIONS ARE MY OWN.

Zia? She’s never shown interest in the path of the gods. What was his talking about?

BEFORE THEN, I NEED HELP WITH A PORTAL.
When I opened my eyes, a square of darkness the size of a doorway hovered in the air.

AMOS, I JUST SPOKE TO CARTER. I’VE SUMMONED A PORTAL TO MEET CARTER IN THE UNDERWORLD.

WHAT DO YOU THINK? ARE OUR INITIATES PREPARED TO FACE OFF AGAINST THE WORST HIT SQUAD THE HOUSE OF LIFE HAS TO OFFER?

OUR ADDED NUMBERS ARE ENCOURAGING. THANK YOU, SADIE.

IT IS DONE.

GOOD LUCK. I WILL WAIT YOUR CALL.

I WISH YOU WOULD STAY HERE WITH US, BUT I KNOW HOW Stubborn KANES can be when we put our minds to something.

STILL, IT’S NOT SAFE TO TRAVEL ALONE, EVEN BY PORTAL.

ZIA!

YES, CHIEF LECTOR?

PLEASE ACCOMPANY MY NIECE TO THE UNDERWORLD.

Zia looked apprehensive.

CHEER UP, IT’LL BE A LAUGH. QUICK TRIP TO THE NETHERWORLD, FIERY LAKE OF DOOM. WHAT COULD GO WRONG?
SUNNY ACRES
Retirement Home
For the Gods.

Carter and I had been to the retirement home
for senile gods before. It was a sorry sight.
The head nurse was Tawaret. All the residents
received her care, but the one who got the
most attention was dear old Bes.

“One more
bite, Bes. You
can do it.”
EAT YOUR LUNCH.

HE WAS HERE. TRAPPED FOR EONS.

ZIA, HAVE YOU GONE MAD?! THAT WAS A PERFECTLY INNOCENT WHEELCHAIR.

EH??

The scarab amulet around her neck glowed with heat.

MISERABLE AND ALONE. FORCED TO ABDICATE HIS THRONE.

He was trapped here without the will to live.

The amulet had been given to her by Ra after the battle of Brooklyn House six months ago.

SADIE!
So, are you here with a plan to stop Apophis’s rise?

Six months ago, our “Plan A” to overcome Apophis was to revive his archenemy, the sun god Ra.

A plan involving the gods?

We succeeded, but Ra had woken up senile, demented, and completely helpless.

Our best allies, the gods of Egypt, were now too distracted babysitting the sun god to give us much help.

Six months later, the only Plan B we’d come up with was too horrible to contemplate.

The gods are busy. We’re working on a plan of attack. But tonight we’re here on defense.

Defense.

You think you can protect Dallas better than our magicians? I hope your team is top-notch.

They’re amazing! Come on, we’ll introduce you.
It broke my heart to see Bes in his catatonic state.

Dear Bes, we're going to help you.

Sadie thinks we can restore Bes's soul with shadow magic.

If we can restore his shulet to his body, he could be himself again! But we need to find it first.

You are the person who was closest to him. I'm wondering if he ever showed you his shadow.

Tawaret blushed. What you ask is very intimate.

I saw his shadow once, in Sai's: a city on the Nile Delta.

"Sai's was the home of our friend the hunting goddess Neith. She liked to invite Bes and me on her hunting excursions. We would flush prey for her to catch."
"One night after dinner, Bes and I sat alone on the walls of Neith’s temple, watching the moon rise over the Nile."

"I felt so close to him. Just for a moment, I looked at the wall next to us, and I saw Bes’s shadow in the torchlight."

"Normally gods guard their shadows closely. He must’ve trusted me a great deal to reveal it."

"This is a good place for me to leave my shadow."

"That way it can always be happy. Even when I’m not."

"That night was a few thousand years ago. The temple is gone. Most of the land has reverted to marshes."

"However— you’re Bes’s friend. If you search the area, his shadow may appear to you. And if Neith is still around, she might be able to help. That is, if she doesn’t hunt you instead."

"Worth it."

"I saw a boat crossing the lake of fire."

"Carter has a steamboat?"

"Looks like our ride out of here."

"It’s something of a family heirloom... "EGYPTIAN QUEEN" "Queen of the Nile"
The Egyptian Queen belonged to our parents when they were alive. We can summon it once a year.

The only drawback to the Egyptian Queen is its captain.

WELCOME ABOARD, LADY KANE.
I AM AT YOUR SERVICE.

Bloodstained Blade had followed our orders in the past, but that was little comfort. He’d slit our throats if he ever got the opportunity!

DINNER IS PREPARED.

LORDS CARTER AND WALT AWAIT YOU IN THE STATEROOM.

On the other hand, we needed to get to the Hall of Judgment.

I was hungry and thirsty, and I could endure a twenty-minute voyage if it meant enjoying a chilled Ribena and a plate of tandoori chicken with naan.
Uh, Hi, Zia. Carter, how...are things?

Other kids checked their cell phones, but for the last six months I’d been obsessed with a bird bath. Zia and I liked to scribe—a magical way to get face time with each other.

This was the first time they’d been together in person in six months. Awkward!

We didn’t get far into dinner before a loudspeaker crackled with Bloodstained Blade’s voice.

My Lords and Ladies, we have reached the Hall of Judgment.
The black temple housing the Hall of Judgment looked just as I remembered. We made our way up the steps from the dock and passed between rows of obsidian columns that led into the gloom.

We'd visited a couple times since our father hosted Osiris, but we hadn't yet seen how he ran the courtroom.

My father was fair but stern. He didn't take excuses from anyone.

All rise! The Court of Osiris is in session!

If Setne was as bad as Thoth said, my father would show him no mercy. He'd toss this guy's heart to Ammit the Devourer like it was a doggie biscuit.
SETNE, also known as Prince Khaemwaset--

--you stand accused of heinous crimes! You have blasphemed against the gods four thousand and ninety-two times.

You have used magic for evil purposes, including twenty-three murders...

...and one incident where you were paid to kill with magic.

You plotted against three separate pharaohs and you tried to overthrow the house of life on six occasions.

Most grievous of all, you robbed the tombs of the dead to steal books of magic.

How do you plead?

Not guilty!
SILENCE!
YOU USE DIVINE WORDS AND ATTEMPT TO INFLUENCE MY MIND, WARPING THE MOST SACRED MAGIC OF MA’AT.

EVEN IN YOUR BINDINGS YOU ARE DANGEROUS.

YOU HAVE BEEN SENTENCED TO OBLIVION MORE THAN ONCE. THE FIRST TIME YOU MANAGED TO PLEAD FOR A REDUCED SENTENCE, VOLUNTEERING TO SERVE THE PHARAOH WITH YOUR MAGIC—

—YET YOU ESCAPED EN ROUTE. YOU KILLED YOUR GUARDS AND SPENT THE NEXT THREE HUNDRED YEARS SOWING CHAOS ACROSS EGYPT.

AS HOST OF OSIRIS, I WILL NOT TOLERATE THE EXISTENCE OF A VILLAIN LIKE YOU, EVEN AS A SPIRIT.

SERVANTS OF OSIRIS’S COURT—READY HIS HEART!
WE WILL WEIGH IT AGAINST THE FEATHER OF TRUTH.

IF HIS HEART IS SHOWN TO BE WICKED, WE WILL FEED IT TO THE DEVOUER OF SOULS.

GRRR....
Hey, Poochiekins!

Please do not call me the devourer of souls "Poochiekins"! Sadie and Carter, I'm working. What are you doing here, my children?

Dad, please, we need custody of Setne.

We've figured out a way to defeat Apophis using a shadow exorcism. But only Setne knows where the spell can be accessed.

You want answers from this wretch? Guards, let him hold the feather of truth while he explains himself.

Speak truthfully, Ghost. Or the feather will incinerate you.

It's true, I stole the Book of Thoth in my mortal life. The book explains how to find the shadow of Apophis, how to capture it, and how to cast the exorcism.

Tell my children where it's hidden.

The feather didn't burn him.

I'm the only one who can retrieve it. There are traps, curses...and you'll need my help deciphering the notes. The spell is complicated!

Not that easy, while I was alive I hid the Book of Thoth and guarded it with curses that only I can undo.

See? Being honest.
NO. ABSOLUTELY NOT. I WOULD NEVER RELEASE YOU. ESPECIALLY NOT TO MY CHILDREN. YOU ARE A SERVANT OF CHAOS.

I'M A LOT OF THINGS, BUT A SERVANT OF THE SNAKE? NO, I DON'T WANT THE WORLD DESTROYED. THERE'S NOTHING IN THAT FOR ME.

IF I CAUSE YOU ANY TROUBLE, YOU CAN TIE ME UP LIKE A CAMEL AT MARKET.

I WON'T TRY TO ESCAPE--AT LEAST NOT UNTIL I LEAD YOU TO THE BOOK OF THOTH AND THEN GET YOU SAFELY TO THE SHADOW OF APOPHIS.

FOUR OF US, ONE OF HIM.

HE'S KILLED HIS GUARDS BEFORE....

SO WE'LL BE MORE CAREFUL. TOGETHER, ALL OF US SHOULD BE ABLE TO KEEP HIM UNDER CONTROL.

SADIE'S GOTA FIND THE SHADOW OF BES. AND ACTUALLY, IT'S A GOOD IDEA.

OH, EXCEPT... SEE, SADIE'S GOT HER LITTLE SIDE TASK, DOESN'T SHE?

DON'T BE SURPRISED, PRINCESS. YOU SERIOUSLY NEED TO WORK ON YOUR MENTAL DEFENSES. READING YOUR MIND IS WAY TOO EASY.

PERFORMING A SHADOW EXECDRATION IN REVERSE COULD RESTORE BES AND BE A GOOD TEST OF THE MAGIC BEFORE IT'S TIME TO FACE APOPHIS!

HOW DID YOU...?

SADIE, HE'S TRYING TO DIVIDE US.

YOU CAN SAVE BES AFTERWARD.

...
I won't go to my death without knowing I've done everything I could to save my friend.

Besides, Bes could be an invaluable aid in the battle to come. Let Sadie act on her conscience.

Let her follow her heart.

Sadie, I'll join you to find Bes's shadow. With the state of my curse, I likely won't live to Doomsday anyway.

Perfect! If you two succeed, then Sadie will know how to capture a shadow and can rendezvous with us in the Duat, where we'll hunt down the Serpent's shadow. Everybody wins!

What do you say, Lord Osiris?

All I ask is that when I come back, the Court take my good deeds into consideration when you sentence me. How fair is that, huh?

May Ma'at protect us all.

I'll allow it.

Oh, we'll have fun! Shall we get going?

Doomsday isn't gonna wait!
Our crack squad of magicians was busy raiding the gift shop.

Walt is our resident master of amulets and charms.

Alyssa follows the path of Geb, the Earth God.

Khufu is our baboon.

Aagh!

And Felix...

I found my path. I'm supposed to follow the God of Ice!

Egypt is a desert, who's the ice god?

I have no idea!

Don't worry about the gift shop. We'll clean it up, Mr. Griswold! But first, can you show us your Egyptian collection?
EGYPT, SOUTH OF CAIRO.
LATE AFTERNOON.

The Egyptian Queen burst out of the underworld and into the Nile River like a breaching whale.

The day was slipping by. Tomorrow at dawn, the rebels would attack the First Nome, and Apophis would rise.

AH, FRESH AIR AT LAST!

DON'T GET USED TO IT.

Despite the magical bindings restricting his freedom, Setne had managed to give himself a makeover.

CHAPTER 5
YOU'RE GOING STRAIGHT BACK IN MY DAD'S CUSTODY ONCE OUR BUSINESS IS DONE. NOW, WHERE ARE WE GOING?

THE SERAPEUM OF APIS.

IT'S A LONG TRIP, AND APHISIS IS MORE THAN LIKELY TO SEND A THREAT AFTER US... DEMONS OR A RIVER MONSTER!

GIVE ME CONTROL OF THE CAPTAIN. I'LL GUIDE HIM EXACTLY WHERE YOU WANT TO GO.

IF YOU THINK I'M GOING TO FALL FOR DIVINE WORDS TO RELINQUISH CONTROL OF A BLOODSTAINED DEMON, YOU'RE NOT THAT SMART.

SUIT YOURSELF...

Up ahead, a monstrous shape rose from the Nile and I nearly discovered the hieroglyphs for "accident in my pants."

BRRRAAHHH!!
Standing before us was the tallest, fattest, bluest, most cheerful hippo giant I had ever met.

YAY! HIPPO TOSS! I LOVE THIS GAME!

Few things are stranger than watching a giant hippo fly, it careened wildly, kicking its stubby legs as it sailed over the marshlands.

DEADLIEST CREATURES IN THE NILE, EVEN MORE SO THAN CROCODILES.

The water’s been infested with them the past few weeks.

GET OUT OF MY RIVER, MINION OF APOPHIS!

MY NAME’S HAP! WHO TRAVELS ON MY RIVER?
Hapi is the god of the Nile, provider of bountiful harvests and protector of the Nile.

Why, yes, I am happy! I'm always happy, because I'm Hapi! Are you happy?

Uhh...yes! We're having a very happy day. But what's going to make us even happier is a trip to the Serapeum of Apis.

The Serapeum?

That's pretty far inland. If you are planning to get there by boat, it's going to be a challenge.

And if you're relying on a demon to captain your ship, you're already off to a rough start.

May I suggest an alternate form of travel?

Apophis's minions are even larger as you get closer to Giza! It's been quite a week clearing them out.

Hapi pulled two weird seeds off his head that looked like fish eggs.
They’re Hapi pills. Swallow one each and I guarantee you’ll have a trip where you imagine.

I know I’m going to sound like a public service announcement here, but for all you kids at home: if somebody offers you Hapi pills, just say “No!”

They tasted even worse than they looked.

Within a minute I began to feel queasy. And then...

Carter, you’re melting! Y-y-you too...

Being liquidated is not fun.

We turned into puddles.

I felt myself evaporating and moving inland at incredible speed. I couldn’t exactly see, but I could feel the movement and the heat of the desert as we were pushed west.

I materialized somewhere else, gasping for air.

I focused my molecules on one mantra: Serapeum of Apis, Serapeum of Apis.
For some reason, a huge slimy tarp of fish scales was hanging off the pilot's house like a snagged parachute.

OH, GODS OF EGYPT--

PLEASE DON'T LET THAT BE HAPY'S LOINCLOTH.

THE BOOK OF THOTH'S UNDERGROUND. FOLLOW ME!

YOU'RE GOING TO LOVE THIS PLACE!
I did not love this place.
The hall was musty, dark, and lined with sarcophagi much too large for humans.

I built all this. In my mortal life as Prince Khaemwaset. These are the burial chambers for the Sacred Apis Bull.

He had the perfect life. All the food he could eat. A harem of cows—every perk. Only had to show himself in public a few times a year for big festivals.

When he turned twenty-five, he got slaughtered in a big ceremony, mummified like a king, and put down here. Then a new bull took his place. A great gig!

Killed at twenty-five. Sounds awesome.

Not impressed? Wait until you see the shrine of Apis.

Setne led us to a dead end and spoke a spell.

Time for the behind-the-scenes tour.

Showtime, kids.

The dead end disappeared, revealing a hidden room.
The shrine of Apis! I built this chamber just for my chosen priests and me.

The book of Thoth is right here in the dais. As soon as the bull moves—

The bull moves?

Why yes, of course!

This is part of the security system, see? You distract the bull, I'll grab the book of Thoth from the dais. I have complete faith in you.

Take cover!
Cows with freaking laser beams?

Completely unfair!

I see it! The book's right there!

Dead end.

Carter, if you have any connection with him at all, now would be a good time to summon the power of Horus.

I summoned the power of Horus. Light flickered around me. My skin felt as thick as steel, my muscles as powerful as hydraulic pistons.
Three tons of laser-blasting bovine craziness versus a raging hawk god. Who do you think would win?

CARTER!
The entrance to Dallas’s Egyptian wing was flanked by two sphinxes with the bodies of lions and the heads of rams. These Criosphinxes were the only guardians most pharaohs needed to keep their temples safe.

If only it were still that simple.

If you find any weakness in our defenses, let me know. I’m going to go back to entertaining my guests!

Yes, sir!

We fanned out into the Egyptian wing, inspecting artifacts for signs of Apophis.

Egyptian exhibits always brought up bad memories... gods I’d met and fought in person, reminders of the afterlife.

Most upsetting of all: a small alabaster statue of our friend Bes, the dwarf god.

We’d only known Bes for a few days, but he’d literally sacrificed his soul to help us.

It’s okay, Sadie. You can’t save everybody.

Wait was one to talk. He suffered from an eons-old, incurable curse on his bloodline.

It got worse every time he used his own magic, so he only drew power from amulets.

Now each time I saw him I was reminded of a debt I could never repay.
So much for the avatar.

ZIA, SAVE YOURSELF! RUN!

NOT ZIA.

I AM KHEPRI, THE RISING SUN.

I WILL NOT BE DENIED.
Carter?

Zia fell unconscious, steaming.

Zia!

Her skin was too hot to touch.

Ouch!

Hey, pal! Good job! I got the Book of Thoth!

Shall we move on?
There was no question. Zia had used the path of the gods.

Too hot to handle, eh? Most who call on the power of Ra spontaneously combust!

At least you’ve got the Book of Thoth! If she dies, it wasn’t for nothing...

If she dies, I will...

You’ll what? Exe...crate me?

You still need me around, pal. Who else will get you through the land of the demons in one piece?

Which reminds me. We need to get back to the River of Night. ASAP!

How about I go tell your captain where we’re heading. Do I have your permission to give him orders?

With pleasure!

Zia’s fever subsided.

I kissed her forehead and I stayed by her side, holding her hand.

I was distraught. He didn’t even have to use divine words.

Fine, just get out of my sight.

...
I felt a lurch as the boat entered the Duat.

CREEAK...

LORD KANE, IT'S TIME TO DIE.

BLOODSTAINED BLADE? BACK DOWN. THAT'S AN ORDER.

NEW ORDERS: KILL CARTER KANE. TAKE HIM TO THE LAND OF DEMONS.

MAKE SURE IT'S A ONE-WAY TRIP.
Wait and I made our way upriver on the back of Philip of Macedonia.

In the distance, I saw a clearing with a few clumps of mud brick sticking above the grass like rotten teeth.

WE'RE HERE. THE RUINS OF SAIS, SOMEWHERE NEARBY, IS BES'S SHADOW.

CHAPTER 6
On the shore, a symbol had been scratched into the dirt.

**TWO ARROWS AND A SHIELD.**

**THIS IS NEITH'S SYMBOL.**

**SHE RULED SAILS IN ANCIENT TIMES. MAYBE SHE CAN HELP US NOW.**

**MY CURSE... DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME.**

---

**I CAN MANAGE IT, SADIE. IF I DIE FOR SOMETHING I BELIEVE IN, THAT'S OKAY WITH ME.**

**BUT DEATH DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THE END. I'VE BEEN TALKING WITH ANUBIS, AND...**

---

**GODS OF EGYPT, NOT THAT AGAIN!**

**PLEASE DON'T TALK ABOUT HIM.**

**I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT HE'S BEEN TELLING YOU.**

**YOU... DO?**

**HE'S BEEN PREPARING YOU FOR THE AFTERLIFE. YOU'LL DIE A NOBLE DEATH, GET A SPEEDY TRIAL, AND GO STRAIGHT INTO ANCIENT EGYPTIAN PARADISE.**

**NO, IT'S JUST-- YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. IT'S NOT LIKE THAT.**

---

**WELL, THEN WHAT IS IT LIKE? I DON'T NEED ANOTHER PERSON I CAN'T BE WITH.**

**SHRINK PHILIP BACK TO SHABTI SIZE AND LET'S GO, EH?**
We came upon a clear path of mud-brick ruins.

You must be Neith. I understand you're a friend of Bes and Tawaret's.

Sadie Kane, the others told me you would come.

Russian magicians. After that, a few demons came by. They all wanted to kill you.

I destroyed them.

Mortals, magicians, demons, the tax collectors... anyone who invades my territory pays. I take trophies.

Neith dug out a necklace strung with ragged squares of cloth—denim, linen, silk.

Do you think me cruel? Oh, yes. I collect the pockets of my enemies.

The goddess was a nutter. Unfortunately, we needed her help.

I know what you're looking for.

Bes's sheut dwells in my realm--in the shadows of ancient times.

In the what now?

Neith shot a glowing arrow into the sky.
As Neith’s arrow sailed upward, the air rippled.

A shock wave spread across the landscape.

Where the mud-brick ruins had been, a proud temple now stood.

WE’RE IN THE PAST?

A SHADOW OF IT.

A MEMORY.

IT MAY BE YOUR BURIAL GROUND, UNLESS YOU SURVIVE THE HUNT.

YOU MEAN-- YOU’RE HUNTING US? BES IS YOUR FRIEND, YOU SHOULD BE HELPING US!

WE’RE NOT YOUR ENEMY! APOPHIS MEANS TO DESTROY THE WORLD TOMORROW MORNING.

I’VE SEEN THE END COMING FOR EONS.

YOU SOFT MORTALS HAVE IGNORED THE WARNING SIGNS. WHILE I’VE PREPARED AN UNDERGROUND BUNKER STOCKPILED WITH FOOD, CLEAN WATER, AND ENOUGH AMMUNITION TO HOLD OFF ANY ARMY!
EVADE ME UNTIL SUNSET, AND I'LL FIGHT WITH YOU AGAINST THE SERPENT. YOU CAN EVEN LIVE IN MY BUNKER IF YOU CHOOSE.

I'LL EVEN GIVE YOU A FIVE-MINUTE HEAD START.

BUT I SHOULD WARN YOU: I NEVER LOSE. WHEN I KILL YOU, I'LL TAKE YOUR POCKETS!

YOU DRIVE A HARD BARGAIN, BUT FINE.

COME ON, WALT!!

WE SPLIT UP AND BUY TIME. WE CAN SHARE THOUGHTS THROUGH THE AMULETS, YES?

AND THEY CAN TELEPORT US TO EACH OTHER'S SIDE, RIGHT?

I DESIGNED THEM FOR THAT, BUT--

TWO TARGETS ARE HARDER TO CATCH THAN ONE.

IF WE GET IN TROUBLE, ONE OF US CAN WILL THE OTHER ONE OUT OF DANGER.
HUFF!
HUFF!
HUFF!

Huh?

Kick!

Too easy.

Did you know I'm also the goddess of weaving? I have enough twine for a millennium of macramé!

Khufu pointed to a trail of destruction racing toward us.

It missed Carter, and came straight at Walt and me!

I grabbed my wand...

...and spoke the first command word that came to mind.

**DROWAH!**

"Boundary!"
ALIVE! IT WORKED.

WONDERFUL, WALT!

IS THAT A THANK-YOU?

WE HAVE TO GET INTO NEITHT'S TEMPLE.

TAWARET SAID BEB'S SHADOW IS HIDDEN HIGH ON ONE OF THE PARAPETS.

WE'D BETTER SPLIT UP AND TRY AGAIN.
I was almost to Neith's temple when I heard Walt's voice in my mind.

SADIE, HELP!

I pictured Walt standing next to me, preferably without an arrow in him.

THANKS!

I SEE IT! BES'S SHADOW!

WALT, HOW DO WE CAPTURE IT?

YOU DON'T.
YOU RAN WELL AND EMPLOYED TRICK MAGIC.

A GOOD TRY, BUT I ALWAYS WIN THE HUNT!

ARROWS DISSOLVING IN MIDAIR, EH?

AS AN EXPERT HUNTER, YOU MUST UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF TIMING.

IT'S SUNSET. WE'RE STILL ALIVE. WE WIN.

TRICKERY!

VERY WELL, YOU MAY GO, BUT I WILL NOT FORGET HOW YOU TRESPASSED ON MY TERRITORY!

WHEN APOPHIS RISES, I WILL FIGHT AT YOUR SIDE. UNTIL THEN...

WATCH OUT FOR FALLING ROCKS.

All around us, the temple began to crumble.

N'DAH!*

**“Protect!”**
The air rippled as the magic shock wave contracted, transforming the landscape back to present-day Egypt.

The last walls of the temple were reduced to a pile of worn mud bricks, but the shadow of Bes was still visible against them, slowly fading as the sun went down.

Walt readied his magic wand, much to my dismay.

We need to capture Bes’s spirit before nightfall....

Put away your wand, Walt! Using magic will kill you!

Ahem...

Anubis?

I’m sorry to intrude, but Walt—It’s time. Have you made your decision?
Walt was born under the shadow of death. That's why we understand each other.

Walt pulled a handmade shabti of Bes out of his bag.

Sadie, watch Walt now.

Walt chanted, and the shabti absorbed the shadow of Bes like a sponge soaking up liquid. The wax turned as black as kohl.

Walt spoke the last word of the spell.

Hi-nehm.

"Join together."

With horrible certainty, I knew it would be the last spell Walt ever cast.

The hieroglyph for "join together" blazed silver against the dark wax.
I reversed the wording of an exorcism spell. Instead of erasing Bes from the world, I tried to draw him back into the picture, this time with permanent ink.

I imagined Bes as I had known him.

Chauffeur... savior... friend.

The wax statue disappeared.

Walt, did it work?

No answer.

Walt's eyes were closed. His forehead was rapidly cooling.

Oh, please-- no.

Anubis, do something!
ANUBIS!

That's it? You take his soul and leave? I HATE YOU!

Suddenly, Walt opened his eyes.

-GASP!

Go through the gate. It will take you to Carter. He needs your help.

His voice sounded clearer, free of pain—but still weak.

I'll meet you at the first nome at sunrise. If you're sure you don't hate me.

Hate you? Why on Earth would I hate you?

Sadie. Hurry. You know the spell now. It will work on the serpent's shadow.

I lowered my vision into the Duat.

Oh no—What have you done?
Too many puzzle pieces fell together at once. Wait was following the path of Anubis.

I’m not proud of how I acted, but I turned and fled, leaping straight through the doorway of darkness.

At the moment I didn’t even care where it led, as long as it was away from that deathless creature I had thought I loved.
While Sadie was having her supernatural guy drama, I faced off against an ax-murdering riverboat captain dead set on changing his name to Even-More-Bloodstained Blade.

The Egyptian Queen weaved drunkenly in the current of the River of Night. I had to get control of the boat before we crashed!
I ran for the wheelhouse.

No one was steering. I saw a dark strip up ahead—land. We were headed straight toward it.

ENOUGH!
I HAVE SERVED THE KANES TOO LONG!

WE ARE DONE!