

The Inheritor of Sins

Chapter 1:

The morning light of the holy Sun shines on the great pyramids of Egypt. The slaves are woken by painful whips on their body, their mouths shout no cries, to flinch was the privilege of the young and the inexperienced and suffering was as natural as the fact that the Sun rises in the East.

The royal family, after having slept on soft sheets, is woken by the morning light of the Sun, shining through the window of their rooms. The Pharaoh, moves on to the roof of his palace to observe the work being done on the pyramid being built since the last 45 years. The Pharaoh's wife joins her husband, wondering whether the pyramid would be completed in their lifetimes.

The Pharaoh never witnessed any war or hardships in his life, his forefathers were much more fierce and cruel, they dedicated their entire lives to destroy all the dangers to Egypt. The last 20 years were the most peaceful years in the history of Egypt.

The Pharaoh had only one wife and three kids. The eldest was his daughter, Muanah, she was a silent kid with ordinary intelligence and talents. The second child was Shachar, he was terrible at athletics but possessed extraordinary intelligence and curiosity. The third child was Dhabihah, she was a playful toddler.

When the time of breakfast arrives, Shachar rushes over to the table and starts munching on everything even before the food testers try it. Despite several attempts, he could not be stopped. No one in the royal family was strict enough to scold their child. Not to mention that the food had never been poisoned in the last 50 years, at least that is what the rumors say. Muanah silently sits by her brother's side, looking at him sucking the food off his fingers. It is one of the only moments when a faint smirk is seen on her face. Dhabihah sits by the Pharaoh, she has a habit of being fed by the Pharaoh himself. The Pharaoh's wife just enjoys seeing this lively sight of her family while eating the food.

After breakfast, the Pharaoh indulges in his work of ruling and monitoring the pyramid. The children are taught mathematics, natural sciences and religion by the teachers. The teacher was explaining the significance of obeying the Pharaoh. Shachar Interrupted, " Master, what happens when you don't obey the Pharaoh?" The master answers, " You are executed. " Shachar continues on, " What if everyone decides to disobey the Pharaoh, there will be too many people to execute." The master, startled by the question, answers " Bu- But the Pharaoh's is the incarnation of God, he will wipe all of them with no efforts." The professor immediately moves on to another topic.

It was clear that Shachar's curiosity led him to unorthodox thoughts. His questions, if they were asked by a common person, would have gotten him executed. But none of that matters when he is a genius, worthy enough to lead the nation. Shachar was able to decode military strategies

and the latest military drills are actually based on his own inventions. He had all the qualities of a ruler : he was smart, able, and deeply cared about his people. With great abilities, comes a great flaw; Shachar was extremely careless when it came to his own well being, he didn't take baths, he ate whatever food was out there without any concern and he was physically inactive too.

Other than his abilities and flaws, he was a person of love. He often pitied the slaves, he often advocated for justice to the slaves only to be turned down while being told that slavery is a necessary evil, the Pharaoh's tomb can never be prepared without them. It was believed that slavery was the way for sinners to achieve the favor of the Pharaoh. Though Shachar wasn't content with the explanations, he decided not to argue further.

After his session of being taught, he looks after his younger sister Dhabiha. They play with the clay toys, shaping and coloring them. Dhabiha was pretty skilled when it came to shaping those cup-like toys while Shachar used to color it, probably because he often ended up breaking the pot whenever he tried to shape it.

Muanah, on the other hand, practiced the art of warfare. She wasn't particularly skilled, but she was good with axes and slingshots. She had assumed that she would be the guard to her younger brother when the time comes. Furthermore, her mother often said that she would be the shield of Shachar.

The Pharaoh's wife, Himara, spent her day guiding the servants and attending the children.

On that particular evening, when Shachar was writing something on a stone, he saw a Scorpion limping his way across the window. It was weak and small, it had an arm and a leg missing too. Shachar observed it, he wondered if animals and insects needed to obey the Pharaoh too. He was wondering about the principles of Pharaoh's powers when the scorpion finally stopped moving. Shachar gazed at it for a minute or two until he realised that it was dead. Shachar actually wondered if there was an afterlife for insects too. It didn't take him long to question the whole concept of afterlife in itself. Shachar had been growing sceptical of the truths of the Pharaoh and the teachings given to him; he wondered if the afterlife was real. He was interrupted by a servant who told him that the Sun was setting and it was the time for him to be in his room.

Shachar spent the rest of the day reading the manuscripts and attending to some trivial matters.

At night, his eyes were wide open and laid awake. He just couldn't get his mind over the thought of the afterlife. "What if there is nothing after death? What would become of me? No, there must be an afterlife, people have believed in it for hundreds of years, there must be a reason." His curious mind decided to explore the possibilities of the things in the afterlife, "If I enter the afterlife, will father and mother be there for me?" He wondered. "If that is the case, would it be the same for my grandparents and their forefathers too? Will mother love me more than she loved her parents? Will she stay with me? But wouldn't I love my own kids and prefer to stay

with them? Ahh! I can't think of anything that can be satisfactory." Shachar was tired of thinking, he tried to sleep while putting his thoughts to an end. When you desire to avoid something, that thing pursues you harder than ever before. Shachar wasn't able to sleep until an hour later.

The dawn came and everybody got started with their daily routines. Shachar woke up quite tired with the thought in his mind, "I want to know more things before I die." The servants entered his room and pleaded with him to bathe, it had been 3 days since he last did so. He finally decided to give in and went to the Royal bath.

As he was bathing, he remembered something. It was the lesson he learnt about the pyramids, he remembered that they were the tombs of the kings. The tomb was surrounded with things needed by the king in the afterlife. As curious as he was, he thought of checking it out once; after all, he lived to know more things.

Shachar clearly knew that it was prohibited for him to leave the area of the castle, but he knew that he wouldn't face any major consequences if he did so. All that needed to be planned was the way to escape. His mind was engulfed in the thought of possible ways to leave the castle, he did not focus on the lecture and he was zoned out while playing with Dhabihah too. It was obvious to others that he had something in his mind but they brushed it off as it is common for adolescents at the age of 15.

In the evening, while he was writing something. He looked out through the window. He saw the servants taking giant wooden logs towards the pyramid. Following them were some more servants carrying large leaves, loads of fruits and a large seat on which the Pharaoh used to sit on during the festivals. It was the eve of the festival of Ruah. The Pharaoh does his procession to the pyramid every year and sacrifices an animal for the prosperity of the nation.

Shachar chuckled at himself for not realising this golden opportunity. He could just find a way to sneak out of the crowd!

Shachar was daydreaming his plan when he found Muanah returning after her training, passion from the front of his room. Shachar shouted, "Oh! Sis! Are you done with your training?" Muanah almost jumped upon the sudden call. "Saha! Yeah, I am done with it." Muanah spoke softly. "Come in the room, it has been a long time since we had a chit-chat." It was indeed unusual for Muanah to talk much, she often chose to stay out of others' matters and spent her time honing herself as a warrior.

Muanah entered his room. The room was shabby — the water containers were spread across the floor, the toys with which Shachar played along with Dhabihah were just lying at the corner of the room and a large writing stone and a chisel were kept by the window.

Even though Muanah rarely visited Shachar's room, he was already familiar with this messy condition of it. The only peculiarity was the writing stone. "Have you been writing something?"

"Yeah, maybe you should read it once I finish it.", Shachar replied, "Anyways, I wanted to talk to you about something..." "Well, speak up what you want to say."

"Sis, have you ever thought about what you wanted to do with life ? I mean.. you often chose to stay silent and don't share things, I thought maybe I could know more about you." Shachar inquired. Muanah was pretty intrigued by the question, she never looked at Shachar as a mature person; to her, Shachar was always the young clumsy but smart brother whom she needed to protect. She answered, "I have often thought about whether I could have any dreams, but nothing comes to my mind. The only thing that I do is practice my skills for a battle which may never even occur in my lifetime. But I am sure that hard work has a reason. Saha, I am not as smart as you are, but I can definitely be your shield. But where did this question suddenly come from ? Are you thinking about something, Saha ? You looked zoned out during the lectures too." Shachar felt a bit ashamed that his odd behaviour was too obvious, but he carried on, " Yeah, there has been something up my mind. I have been wanting it so badly. You know, the pyramid, I wanted to see what was being built inside it. " Oh, don't you know that the tomb for the Pharaoh is built there?" Muanah spoke instantly. "Yeah, I know that but... I wanted to see something for myself. Can you help me with that ?"

Muanah thought that she heard some footsteps nearby, but it must have been her imagination. Muanah thought of considering Shachar's wish but she spoke, " Don't you know that we are prohibited from going there? Maybe the knight, Dhoka, can take you there if you manage to convince father."

"No!" Shachar exclaimed, "It has to be you! If there is someone whom I can trust, it's you. I can't bring myself to trust the new knight." "Bu-", Muanah tried to speak but was interrupted by Shachar, "For years you have been practicing sword fighting, what is it for ? If you want to really protect me, then stay by my side when I am going to do something. Tomorrow's the festival of Ruah, both of us are old enough to attend it there near the pyramid. This is the perfect opportunity for you to ask Father to guard me there, I don't think there will be any better chance any time soon." Muanah chose to stay silent. With a nod of her head, she went towards her room.

Muanah was thinking hard about Shachar's request, it was indeed a great chance for her to finally do what she has been training for years. It was decided: at night, she will ask the Pharaoh to let her be the guard to Shachar for the day of the Festival of Ruah.