

**A Cats Tale**  
**The Nine Lives of Isabelle Book I Amun**

Published By Robert Dixon at Smashwords

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**By Robert Dixon**

## Introduction

We have all heard of the saying that a cat has nine lives, but where did it come from? Sure most humans would say that it's because cats are so lucky, but I am here to set the story straight. A cat having nine lives is not because that cat is lucky; it is because that cat upset a goddess! Plus, guess what? All of those nine lives are not as the same cat! I should know, because I'm that cat.

Hi! My name is Amun, but you can call me by my current name, Isabelle. I am currently on life number nine and I can't say if there will be any more lives after this one, but believe me, a rest would sure be nice. In my other lives I have been either a male or a female cat. I have never been anything else, not a human, or any other kind of animal especially a snake (ugh!) or a dog. As the saying goes cats rule and dogs drool, I really couldn't see me as a mindless drooling dog. Believe me, I have seen enough of them through my other lives to know that cats are definitely on the top of the chain as far as animals go, and this may include humans as well.

What? You ask. How can a cat be higher than a human? Well, just look at us; we have been idolized since before the days of the pyramids. So much so that even the Egyptian Goddess (Bast) was worshipped for us. We do not need humans to survive, but they depend on us to rid them of mice and other such creatures. Sure they may reward us for our efforts with a nice warm place to stay, some table scraps to tide us over till our next hunt and even a nice fur rubdown occasionally. But most of them know that we will only tolerate so much and are quick to bare our claws or sharp fangs should the mood strike us.

We are in our element when we are left alone to roam or explore our world and surroundings. The human I have now knows this independence well and lets me do as I wish. Sure, she complains when I explore the top of the table, especially when there are other humans present and there are tasty morsels of food upon it, but I am gracious enough to remove myself as to reduce her embarrassment. I allow my hostess to stroke my fur when I feel she needs my attention and I always give her a swift paw or nip when she displeases me.

I can always tell when she is upset or troubled with things and after living as many lives as I have, I've seen more than my share of troubles. I try to comfort her as best as I can in those moments, but I mostly wind up swatting her on the cheek, as if to say, "Snap out of it!" I find this approach works well and I can get back to my more pressing endeavors (napping) sooner, but more of this current life later. As I said, this is my ninth life and it is pretty cushy, but believe you me, the road to getting where I am today wasn't so smooth. In fact, at times it was downright rocky! Plus, the garden times were unpredictable! The garden is where I went in-between lives. The garden times were nice, but you couldn't kill anything there, and as a cat with all these mice and birds, and snakes, (drool) all over, believe me this heaven was hell!

Remember I mentioned a time before the pyramids? Well I guess that was very fortunate for me to include that, due to the fact that there is where my journey and now yours begins.

## Chapter One

Like I said, I was first born a cat in Egypt, that is, it is this life that I first remember. My mom, Isis (named after the Goddess Isis) was beloved of Isom, a servant girl to Cheo who worked in the palace of King Akhenaten and Queen Nefertiti. Sounded pretty important the way mom said it, but it still boiled down to the same thing, pest killing!

My dad, according to mom, was a real tough mau (Egyptian for cat, or one that meows) that she met while on patrol in the granaries for mice. He didn't work there, just happened to be passing through. Mom was a force to be reckoned with in her own right, being the biggest cat that worked the palace grounds, Grandpaw was part leopard according to mom.

I found out through my older sisters that their mating ritual was the stuff of legends and is still mentioned by the palace guards and workers who were witness to the event whenever my mom would pass by on patrol.

The story my sisters told and later expanded upon by mom, was that the day started out as usual for Mom in her life at the palace... "Isis!" called Isom, "Here kitty! Come get some fresh milk!" Isis, the very large female palace cat, came bolting around corner at the sound of her human's voice. "There you are! I knew you wouldn't want to miss out on this treat." Isom said, as she stroked the cat's fur.

"You've got that right!" thought Isis, "Nothing like goat's milk to give me strength to go out patrolling!" Isis accepted the milk and the fur rub graciously and even rubbed her sides on her human's legs as they walked back to their chamber together, once the milk was gone.

Along the way she saw her two daughters lounging in the chambers of another servant. Isis called out a hello to each and they both helloed in return. She saw just how fat they had become, living as they do. No granary duty or patrols of the palace grounds. The only action they see is an occasional mouse that makes it past my patrol outside. "Maybe it is all my fault they have become so soft," she thought, "perhaps if I let more slip in."

Her thoughts drifted so that she almost missed an asp slithering alongside the wall close to their chamber. It was Isom's shriek that brought her back just in time to see the thing coil back into a striking pose. Isis became a black streak that was only a blur to the vision as she attacked and swiftly killed the snake.

With the snake still dangling from her mouth, dead and limp, she saw her daughters come out of their chamber. "Way to go Mom," they called out, "thanks, but we would have gotten it!"

"Kids," she thought, "I'm glad I am through with all that!" She thought back to their father. He was much smaller than she was, not a good hunter and wasn't very lucky either. He was unfortunate to have scampered out of the palace one day after the kittens were born and right under the wheels of a passing chariot. "Served him right," she thought, "for producing these two." At least they were cute kittens and were quickly taken off her paws after they were weaned.

As she let the snake drop from her mouth Isom came over and gave her fur a great rub. "You know? I can see why even the king has heard of what a great cat you are." she said, "Come and rest before the night sets in." With the asp cleanly discarded out the hall window, they entered the bedchamber and Isis curled up on Isom's sleeping mat and drifted.

She awoke to the sounds of raised voices and cheers coming from the hall. As she went to investigate, she saw Isom and others leaning and waving out the hall windows. Isis clambered up to the window ledge in front of Isom and saw the King going by in his chariot, followed closely by his Queen driving her own chariot. "OK", she thought, "that was interesting, but it doesn't mean a thing to me." So Isis went back to bed.

Her next awakening revealed the Sun God Ra was driving his chariot past the mountains in the west and it was getting dark, "Time to hunt!" she thought. If she had known what was coming next, she said she would have stayed in bed! The patrol started out pretty routine as it always does. A few mice trying to slip in by the stables, a few snakes sliding along the bushes near the palace steps, but as she turned the corner towards the granary Isis said she caught the scent of, something.

"It seemed as if eyes were watching me the closer I got to the storage bins." She did quick turns to see if the culprit was closing in, nothing. Her attention turned to a rather large mouse that was trying to enter the space under the granary door, which really wasn't a space at all, or a way into the granary, stupid mouse. The granary was constructed in such a way that it was sealed tighter than one of the tombs down in the Valley of the Kings, she would know, that is where she was born.

Isis and her Dad use to explore all the tombs. His job was to protect the tombs from thieves and such. Grandpaw, being part leopard, is where Isis got her size from and skills. When humans talk of curses being placed on tombs, that was the job of Isis and her Dad! They would scare the wits out of anyone who would come to desecrate the tombs of the kings, and send them screaming for their lives.

Isis was little more than a kitten when Isom came to visit the tombs with Cheo. She and her Dad would usually hide in the dark recesses watching everything, but Isis had failed to find a spot big enough for her to be totally hidden from sight and Isom saw her. Without fear she came over to the spot and knelt down to look at Isis in her hole. Isis tried to scare her off with hisses and spits, but they were only half-hearted, due to the fact that this human had brought something in her hand that smelled wonderful. Her mouth was watering so hard that it was difficult to hiss; it was more like someone doing a raspberry, with a lisp!

The human opened her hand and offered the kitten the contents. Isis discovered later that she had given up her independence and time with her father for cheese. As she made short work of the cheese the human touched her fur. It was a soft caress that felt soothing, like when she would rub against her dad or mom as a kitten. She was lifted into a basket and Isom said, "I think I will call you Isis!" That was the last she saw of the Valley of the Kings, or her dad.

The granary stores were sealed tight, with only the aroma of grain escaping to entice hungry rodents. It was as she was choking down the fat tail of this stupid mouse that Isis was knocked flat! "Hey there, good looking!" purred out the ambushing attacker, "What's a cute thing like you doing in these parts?" Isis staggered back to her paws and looked up to see what it was that had just floored her, ready to strike back.

"What I saw almost laid me out again." He was the biggest mau I had ever seen since my dad, he might have been a bit bigger, and man was he gorgeous! "What did you do that for?" Isis hissed.

"I simply could not resist!" he purred back, "I had seen you on patrol the last time I passed through here and you intrigued me enough to cause me to stop longer this time

through, and, might I add, that I am now glad I did!” The large leopard mixed mau circled Isis, careful to stay just out of claw length.

“I may make you change your mind about that last bit.” she hissed, careful to keep her front to him as he circled, then added, “If it is a meal you have stopped for, I will make you regret your poor choice!”

“A meal?” came the low response from the mau and with a wink. “That is not why I stopped.”

Isis realized now just what this handsome mau was after and coyly hissed, “It would be easier to make a meal of me than to get that! Now, be gone or be dead!”

The larger male chuckled slightly and said, “I think I am up to that challenge, my dear.” His constant circling was obviously creating the effect he had hoped for. Although Isis was smaller than he was, she was very capable of fending him off, but she was getting dizzy. He looked determined to make this one his.

The howls from the two in their circling dance attracted the attention of some guards and palace workers. They debated whether to stop the exchange, but settled for placing wagers instead. The crowd grew as the howling grew. Isom came running to the palace wall to see, as well as my sisters when the word spread through the palace. Her instinct was to rush down into the granary yard to protect her beloved pet, but the guards held her back.

Isis was keeping pace with the larger male, but was feeling more and more vulnerable as the circling became faster. She admired the stranger’s style, turning this into a challenge of wills, but she didn’t have the need or the time to have more kittens! Her eyes were focused on his, locked in his matched pace, then he stopped. She saw the expression on his face had changed and his eyes had caught something and in a flash he had sprung towards her. Isis had her claws at the ready and raked the stranger across his stomach as he leapt, over her? She quickly turned to see the handsome mau snatch a cobra in mid strike that was aimed to bite her. The cobra went unnoticed by both while they were circling until the stranger spotted it about to strike. The snake did not stand a chance of winning against the savage attacker and was quickly destroyed.

With his stomach scratched up pretty good the mau retreated to one of the granary doors, away from Isis, and the humans watching from the wall. Isis stood there for a moment looking at the shredded remains of the cobra, then toward the door where the mau went. She went to the doorway and saw the handsome mau slumped down in the corner.

“I knew you would be fast,” he said, “but I had no idea!”

“I am so sorry!” Isis cried, “I thought you were attacking!”

“If this was what was in store for me,” he said, “I’m glad I didn’t! Ouch!” The mau licked the wounds on his stomach.

“I think you will live.” Isis said, relieved.

“Yeah, just a scratch!” he chuckled back. “Well I guess I should be moving on,” the mau continued, after a final inspection of his wounds, “I have a long way to go.”

As the mau was getting up to leave, Isis said with a wink, “Aren’t you forgetting what you came here for?”

The two remained in the doorway for almost an hour and this was causing the watchers on the wall to become concerned, when all of a sudden the mau came trotting out. The blood from his scratch encounter with Isis was clearly visible to the observers,

who let out gasps. Isom screamed and the mau was heading out of the granaries when the spear of a disgruntled bet loser came flying towards him. He never heard a sound until it was too late, and it was the gasps of the watching crowd that alerted him. The spear thrower's aim was true and the large mau was well on his way into the afterlife before he even realized he was doomed.

Isis did not realize what had happened, she was exiting the doorway and saw the handsome beast had slumped into the dirt of the garden. She ran over to him and then noticed the spear. "No!" she cried, "Not again!"

"Don't worry my dear Isis," he said weakly, "It's just a scratch..."

"I didn't even get your name!" she wailed, but he was gone. She did not hear the disappointed shouts from the wall, the wage losers, nor did she hear the shouts of jubilee from the winners. What she did hear was the approaching steps coming toward her in a fast run. She weakly turned to the sound and felt her heart leap when the approaching sounds were those of her Isom. Isis, weak with sorrow, collapsed in the dirt across the unfortunate mau.

She said she awoke back in her home, on a mat of her own, with Isom tending to her. She was still mourning and it felt good to lie there and be tended to. Milk and cheese were close by and Isom fed her the cheese and dipped a cloth in the milk and let it flow into Isis' mouth. The food made her feel much better and she was back on duty in a few days.

Mom said she continued her patrols and guard duties at the granary until her stomach became so large that she couldn't climb up and down the palace steps. The thought that kept going through her head was is she going to explode or be doomed like her own mother was because of the size of the kitten inside her? Mom's mother was large, but nothing compared to her daughter's size. The trauma was so great to her that she survived only by sheer will to nurse her kitten. Within three weeks of delivery Grandmew was gone, but had given just enough nourishment to her daughter to ensure her survival. Fortunately Mom had a father that stuck around and provided the protection and food that she needed. This made her miss her handsome mate even more.

Mom said the labor lasted what seemed an eternity to both her and Isom. Both did their part, one the labor and the other providing comfort. My sisters were also around, but proved mostly a source of antagonism to their mom. The closer she got to delivery, the less comfort she found. Her comfort came only when I was born. I looked like my mother, mostly black, with shocks of gray and white, no tail and tufted ears. Mother admitted that she had survived the birth due to her own size and that she had already given birth prior.

## Chapter Two

I grew fast and was soon following mom on her patrols. I had the best teacher and was quick to learn the skills needed to be a great killer, yet I had a gentle streak as well. This last part drew the attention of the queen and her nephew. I spent my time when off patrols hanging out with him and following him about the palace grounds. The boy liked to rub my fur and watch me perform my duties on patrol. He was also the one who named me. "Aten," the boy said, "You are a great warrior! I can only hope to become

half as skilled as you. A swift and merciless killer at times, yet you also have the gentleness to be beloved by those around you, even my uncle sees your greatness.”

I thought, “I just do as I was taught.” My eyes diverted to where Mom was stalking her prey in the granary yard. I saw her make swift meal out of a fat rat that was trapped in a crack.

As I grew in favor with the royal family so did my acceptance in the palace proper. I was welcome in the chamber of the queen and the nephew, as well as the throne room. King Akhenaten saw my presence at war counsel as a good omen. I had heard that the Pharaoh had once been great in battle, but age had slowed his once masterful military mind. I was present when the beautiful Queen Nefertiti posed for statues of her; she would stroke my fur as a distraction to posing. I had even heard that the nephew of the queen, whom I had grown very fond of, would become king before too long. This was due to the fact that the king and queen had only produced daughters. The boy was to wed one of them and ascend to the throne.

“Let’s go for a ride,” Nefertiti called to her nephew, “I’ll let you drive my chariot!”

“OK, but I want Aten to come as well.” he called back.

“A little protection is always welcome,” she said, “most certainly, bring him!” Meanwhile, I had been stalking a scorpion as it scurried along the tile toward the throne room, when I heard the call from the boy I slammed my massive paw squarely on the scorpion, sending it instantly into the next life. I turned and trotted off toward the calling voice.

The queen and the boy were pulling out of the palace gates in the chariot when I came rounding the palace steps. In what had become a game to the boy, and me, I kicked it up into pursuit speed. The speed that I reached as I passed the palace guards had them shaking their heads in disbelief and in what has also become a tradition, I zipped through the closing gate with barely a stone to spare. The dust was kicking up high behind the racing chariot as I caught up, and with one great leap landed flatly on the chariot platform at the feet of my friend and the queen.

“Where are we going?” the boy asked his aunt.

“To the Valley of the Kings.” came her response, “To pay our respects to the great Pharaohs of the past and to ask of them to impart their wisdom to you, my future king.”

“A perilous outing indeed.” he said, “I am comforted in knowing that Aten is along to protect us from grave robbers and thieves!” I looked up at the mention of my name, but was more interested in the passing scenes as we raced along the Nile, through Thebes and up to the Valley of the Kings.

I had been on other chariot rides before with the young king to be, but never had they passed this way. The river was loaded with barges that drifted and made their way to distant markets. We saw great stone statues along the way and more as they approached the Valley of the Kings. As we entered the area I could feel eyes upon us, and this brought me to full alert. They tied up the chariot and walked to the tomb area, the queen noted that construction was going well on the tomb that would hold her and Akhenaten when they passed. They saw that a few articles scattered about proved the thieves were busy as well. This left an impression on the young boy and gave him some ideas as to how better protect his tomb when the time came.

As the boy and the queen entered the new tomb area I nervously scanned the surrounding stones that contained many areas that could keep a snake hidden and in a

position to strike out at a passing leg or arm. I also couldn't shake the feeling that we were being watched. The boy was busy talking to the queen and did not see the snakes coiled on the rocks he was about to pass.

I caught them mid-strike, one in my mouth and the other with my paw. The one under my paw was ripped to shreds as I spun to send the snake that was in my mouth slamming into the rocks. The force of the blow sent pieces of the snake showering down like rain. "You never cease to amaze me Aten! This must be at least thirty times you have saved my life!" the boy said, after he recovered from the shock of what he had just witnessed. He and the queen entered the tomb.

"Just as fast as your mother." came a voice from up above me. This was startling enough to cause me to jump almost ten feet away from the voice, into the rocks. "Just as jumpy, too!" the voice laughed, "So the rumor is true, the palace guards took out poor Horus, but not before he gave her you! Welcome Grandson! Welcome home." I looked up into the rocks above me and saw a mau that was equal my size and more.

"You know of me and my mother?" I asked the stranger, "You know of my father?"

"Know you?" the older mau chuckled, "Why, boy, you are the spitting image of me as a youngster. Plus you have the color of your mother, which she got from her Mom. As for the tale of your creation, I may be some distance from the palace, but news of that event carried far down the Nile. I am Anubis, your Grandpaw, I was named after the God of the Dead because I patrol and protect the tombs. Your father, the unfortunate Horus, used to patrol here with me."

The queen, with nephew in tow, chose that moment to leave the tomb and discovered me staring up at the large leopard-mau mix. The boy picked up a rock, but before he could hurl it in the direction of Anubis, he was gone. "Come, Aten," said the boy, "time to head over to the temple." With that, we walked back down the path and over to the temple of the kings, followed secretly by Anubis.

As the boy and queen entered the temple I stayed outside and my Grandpaw reappeared. "It was I who suggested to Horus to check in on your Mom, for I had not seen her in years." he said, "He reported back about what a great hunter she had become. I could tell that he had become fascinated with her and that something like what happened might occur, but I never thought Horus would get hurt in the process. You have the blood of excellent hunters running through your veins and endless courage and loyalty. I have already heard of your exploits and the favor you have in the human world, but be careful, my son, for these humans have a strange way of rewarding loyalty."

"What do you mean by that, Grandpaw?" I asked, without realizing just how good it felt calling this old mau by that name, "Strange?"

Anubis uneasily answered, "You know that I have been patrolling here for a very long time. I have seen many burials that have taken place, from small ceremonies to large full-blown ones. Every ceremony has the same routine. First comes the dead, next the family, followed by the things that the dead one loved most in life and what they wanted with them in the next life, mostly food and wealth. Sometimes though, that included pets, and sometimes slaves and such."

"I can understand that." I replied back, "So?"

"Some of the things that go in never come back out!" cried Anubis, "Especially the pets and slaves."

I finally understood what my Grandpaw was saying about rewarding loyalty. The truly loyal servants had made themselves so indispensable that the king needed them in the afterlife as well, this meant death prematurely in this life. I could see that I was already a candidate for this early entry into the afterlife, but the boy who would be king is young and by all rights he would most certainly outlive me! It is at this time that the young boy and queen reappeared from the temple and headed toward the awaiting chariot. I called out a hasty goodbye to my newly discovered Grandpaw and he called back for me to tell Mom that he is doing well and missed her.

On the ride back I kept thinking about the things I had learned today, and counted myself fortunate for having traveled along. I met my Grandpaw! I learned of my father, Horus! I couldn't wait to tell Mom of this, but even though I was glad to have this new knowledge of my family, it had come with a harsh realization of what could happen if the king so wished.

### Chapter Three

Mom was on patrol in the garden when I got back to the palace. I decided to tell her the news of my discovery in the Valley of the Kings and headed to the garden. Since the encounter with my father a little more than a year before, Mom had become very jumpy when on patrol. Today was no exception. Even though I called out to her at some distance, she still leaped about five feet in the air. "Aten!" she hissed, "You know I can't stand it when you sneak up like that!"

"I wouldn't quite call this sneaking." I laughed, standing on the other side of the garden.

"You know what I mean." she retorted, "It's just like, um, you sound so much like someone else."

"You mean my father, don't you?" I said, as I approached, "That's part of why I'm here." I recounted my trip out to the Valley of the Kings and of my encounter with Grandpaw, the story of my father and of the reward for loyalty tale.

"I'm glad to hear that my Dad is well, it has been so long since I left there." she said, "I am also saddened to find out that it was my Dad who sent your father to look in on me. I am so sorry you never got the chance to know him, for that matter so am I, but at least now I know his name. Thank you." she paused, sorted her thoughts then continued. "As for the loyalty bit, I have heard of that as well, here in the palace and it is true."

"It is a good thing my boy is young then." I replied, "I will be gone long before him."

"Yes, that is true." Mom replied, "Very fortunate, so you better make sure he lives for a long time."

I set about to do just that. I became the future king's shadow, protecting the boy from any harm that came his way, from scorpions to snakes. We slept in the same chamber and I even thwarted an attempt on the boy's life as an assassin entered the chamber in the dead of the night, only to face my claws of fury. The would-be assassin exited the chamber using the window, about a fifty-foot drop, because he could no longer see. The stop at the end was much more merciful than I was. It was my mission and I was bound and determined that this boy lived a long time.

Things and events happened quickly after a year of being dubbed the protector. The old king died and passed on the kingdom to the boy. The queen left the kingdom and all

but vanished. The young king moved his palace back to Thebes and restored the original deities to be worshiped, including Amun, the king of the gods. Under Akhenaten's rule there had only been one Supreme Being, Aten, who I was named after, but the people were upset with this and so the new king gave the old gods back to the people. He even changed his name to show the people his belief in the old gods. This is how I became now known as Amun.

The new king set about returning the names of the old gods to the temples and statues, which Akhenaten had removed when he gained the throne from his father. Peace and prosperity flourished under the king, it was hard to believe this boy of nine was King of Egypt! We spent many days out on hunts, or racing the chariot up and down the streets of Thebes. I became his supreme protector and he even had an amulet made for me, which I wore around my neck. Talk about impressing mom and the sisters! Plus it allowed me free access to everywhere I wanted to go, and not to mention, the other palace cats were drooling all over it!

The young king grew as I did and I protected him from everything and everyone, except for Queen Ankhesenamun, his wife and the daughter of Akhenaten. He and his young wife had tried to have children, but were unsuccessful in their attempts. I would lie at the king's feet in bed and would hear him call out in grief during the night. The king had resigned himself to the fact that he would have no heirs, but with the help of his advisors laid out the foundation of future dynasties and government within Egypt. He made sure the armies were strong and the people were prospering. He even devised his tomb to thwart grave robbers as it was dug with a few extra changes in design.

He provided air holes to the tomb and false rooms. There was also a spring that was diverted to the tomb that would provide fresh water. The tomb was honeycombed with small passages from chamber to chamber. The purpose of these new designs had the tomb builders baffled, but they carried out the instructions. The king must have had premonitions about some unforeseen death and set about with instructions for after his time came.

I was stalking a snake in the throne room when I heard, "Amun! Let's go!" At this I scrambled down the hall and down the steps to see my friend in his long chariot with a few palace guards.

"Must be a special trip!" I thought as I leapt into the back of the chariot at the foot of the king. The ride was familiar as they made their way along the Nile and up to the Valley of the Kings. "Perhaps I will see Grandpaw again." I thought as we stopped short of the temple, "It has been years!"

As the guards kept watch on the surrounding area, the king jumped off the chariot. They also kept close watch as we walked toward the tombs. I was a bit curious as to why they were here doing my job, but then I saw a band of thieves exiting a recent tomb with the wealth of its' former occupant in their arms. The guards and I gave chase as the looters dropped their goods. I leapt on the back of one as he clambered over some rock and proceeded to shred his shirt and points beneath! The guards were able to inflict some painful reminders to the thieves as well, to stay out of the Valley of the Kings. I scanned the rocks for a glimpse of Grandpaw, and saw him clamped on the backside of one of the looters. He was being dragged down the path out of the valley. I chuckled at this sight and hoped I would have the chance to ask him how long it took for him to get the taste out of his mouth! The king entered the tombs and called out for the guards and I to

follow, which we did. I could see well in the darkness and squinted when a guard struck fire to a torch. We followed a path through a few chambers and then descended from one chamber into another. The path was like a maze and was hard to keep track of where we had been. We finally stopped at what appeared to be a dead end. The king pushed against part of the wall and it swung inward.

I heard a sound from the back of the chamber we had entered and then saw a fountain with water flowing through it. This chamber led to other chambers as well. I noticed a fountain in each chamber that flowed with water and even paused at one for a drink. “Not bad, all the comforts of home!” I thought.

The king looked impressed as well and turning towards me said, “What do you think of our new home?” Only then did I see the small holes carved in the walls, too small for a human to crawl through, but the right size for a cat!

Bolting from the tombs and into the safety of the hills beyond was the first thing that came to mind, and then the king’s voice returned to my ears. “I wish for you to be my protector in death as you have protected me in life. I have made these things,” the king said, as he pointed to the fountains, “to provide you and your family with life giving water.” I understood what the king was requesting of me. The king continued explaining his request at the amazement of the guards who were even more astounded when it appeared that the large cat was actually understanding the king’s words. “The water will attract mice and rats galore, so food will not be a problem either, and I have provided the air with which we breathe. I wish you a long life Amun, I do not wish you to join me in the afterlife as is customary. I want you here to protect me from the grave robbers, to be my curse!”

## Chapter Four

As we exited the tomb and made our way back along the passages to the daylight, I reflected on my friend’s request. I was so astonished by this revelation that I had forgotten all about Grandpaw. This new tomb design was the king’s way of sparing my life upon his death, by providing me a purpose and a reason to remain among the living. I thought about this all the way back to the palace and well into the night as I looked up at my friend from the foot of the bed. I also thought about the life and duties that I now have and how much I cared for my friend, but what I puzzled on the most was what the king had meant when he said “family”.

I awoke in the night and went out into the garden area. After chowing down on a nice juicy rat that unwisely crossed my path I clambered atop a statue of Bast to ponder the mysteries of life. I had become very attached to my young king, had given him years of protection, so why should that stop now? I had seen the devastation that thieves do to the tombs of kings; did I want the same for mine? I thought about his possible meaning of “family”. If protecting the king meant that my mother and sisters would have to be placed in the tomb with me, then we would just flee from the palace and return to Grandpaw in the Valley of Kings. Ra was riding his chariot up from the East as I descended from my perch.

I made it back to the bedchamber just before the king awoke. I studied him and did see the kindness in him, but to seal up my family in his tomb was a different story. “No way!” I thought, “I will have to tell Mom of this, of course, and then we can plan our

escape.” I went about my usual duties and managed to save the king from tripping over a rather large rat that had somehow made it into the palace, past Mom and my sisters. The young king was about to step on the rat’s back as he climbed the stairs to the throne room, which would have caused the king to fall. Later, on one of the king’s visits to the garden, I spotted Mom stalking a snake. I took this opportunity to ask her to meet me back here tonight, which she agreed to.

That evening when the king and queen were down and the palace slept, I once again slipped out and into the garden. Mom was waiting near the entrance to the granary. I told her of the king’s revelation in the tomb and his use of the word “family”. I also told her about my thoughts of escape if the king meant to entomb her and my sisters. Mom thought about all she had heard and knew of this practice of taking possessions into the afterlife and concluded that they were in a no-win situation. If they stayed they would end their lives in the tombs one way or another. She also thought about Isom and the love she has for her. Then she thought of her Dad, of how great it would be to see him once again after all these years. Still she couldn’t give me an answer then, Mom wanted to consider it a little more. With that we parted, she back to the granary and me back to the king.

As dawn was breaking I spied an asp slithering under the door to the chamber, a shadow on the other side of the door silently moved away as the asp entered. The king and queen were still slumbering and were in no direct danger of being harmed by the creature, so I watched it slither along the side wall and it finally came to rest near the chest where the queen kept her wardrobes. I quietly left the bed and exited the chamber into the hall just in time to see the king’s “loyal” advisor turning a corner down the hall. He looked back for a moment, but failed to see me behind an urn. “Hmm...” I thought, “This is going to be tough to protect against.”

I returned to the chamber and made swift work of the asp, only a slight stir from the royal couple as I slammed my paw square on the asp’s head. “No more slithering about for you!” I mused, as I slung the snake out the window. I began to think back to the other creatures that just so happened to find their way into this chamber. One would think the palace was crawling with vermin just by the amount of them that I have killed in this room. From what I have seen, this is not the case. The rest of the palace rooms are relatively clear of pests, except for the rooms that the king used. I was putting two and two together when the king rose from the bed and entered his bath chamber to conduct his morning business. I was left watching at the foot of the bed when the young queen also rose and hastily rushed toward her bath chamber. “Humans!” I chuckled, “Every morning, the same thing! The race to the chamber pot!”

I guess I shouldn’t make so much of that though, I saw the servants enter the chamber after we left, to clean the baths, which included my own spot of sand that was always clean and fresh every day, even sprinkled with a few lotus petals. “Yep!” I thought, “It’s good to be the king’s protector!” But even these little conveniences couldn’t shake my conviction that sealing up my family and me for the sake of tomb raiders was not the answer. There had to be a better way. As the day’s events passed without incident I had a chance to ponder alternatives and the return to the Valley of the Kings was looking more appealing with each passing thought. As for Mom’s decision, that was made easier a few months later.

## Chapter Five

The palace was all-abuzz one morning as the king and queen readied for the day, servants rushing about carrying large trays of food and urns of wine. I watched the royal couple exit the chamber all dressed in their finest clothes, full headdresses and robes. This meant only one of two things, a celebration of birth, which both king and queen had a while back, she turned twenty and he turned eighteen. “Wow!” I thought, “I can’t believe time has passed so soon!” The second reason for the attire and the hustling servants meant that other royal guests were coming. “Whoopee!” I smirked, from the foot of the bed, “I hope they don’t have kids!” I trotted off behind the king and queen as they made their way down the hall toward the throne room. I paused to smash a scorpion as it scrambled to duck out of the way into a crack in the wall. “Thanks,” I said to the smashed remains, “I needed that!”

I was right about the guests and counted myself fortunate that no kids had tagged along. Kids were always a problem because they wanted to chase you around and caused a fuss whenever I tried to discipline them. They would go running back to their mommy to take care of a few scratches, but it was always, “Bad Amun!” Like it was my fault! Today was not going to be one of those days! I saw the royal guests enter the throne room in robes that rivaled the king and queen, so they must be rulers from another land. They brought with them gifts that were carried in by their servants, chests filled with various sparkly things and shiny things, as well as bolts of cloth. I was at my usual spot beside the king as the tribute was laid before him. I kept my eye on a tall muscular servant who carried a rather large chest on his shoulder. He easily swung the chest down and with a thud he placed it at the foot of the throne.

As this servant was coming forward I noticed the usual onlookers peering in from the doorways on the side and rear. I saw Mom’s human giggling with others as they watched the male walk forward and saw her mouth drop open as he swung the chest down. I was quite fascinated with this spectacle, and I also saw the tall servant return Isom’s stare. I then saw something I didn’t know humans capable of doing, she actually started to change color! As she did this she left the doorway and the male servant smiled as he returned to his place behind the royal female. Later in the day as the two royal couples were taking a stroll in the garden I saw Isom and the male servant talking in the hall, very closely.

There was a large banquet that evening and I had an envious position of being seated under the table between the king and queen, so there was no want for tasty morsels. The royal couple sat on either side and I could hear them discussing different matters of state, from alliances to mutual enemies. I heard Isom’s name mentioned at one time, but my attention quickly turned to a rather sizable hunk of meat that the former owner so carelessly allowed to slip from their grasp. “Thank you, grease!” I thought, as I pounced upon it. After the meal was finished and the evening prayers were said in the temple the royals retired to their chambers. As all were sleeping I decided to go pay a visit to the chamber of the “loyal” advisor.

Mom was going down the stairs to the granary when I spotted her. “Hi Mom!” I called down to her from the top of the stairs. She still jumped straight up about five feet. “Oops! Sorry!” I followed up with.

“Aten! Erg... Amun!” she hissed, “Stop doing that!” She paused in her decent and returned to the top of the stairs. “What are you up to this time of night?” she asked.

“Just checking something out.” I said, “I have a suspicion that I want to confirm, so if you hear any screaming...”

Mom gave me a look that said be careful and as I turned to continue down the hall she said, “By the way, have you seen my Isom tonight?” I replied that I had only seen her ogling over that male servant earlier but not since. “Funny,” Mom said, “she didn’t come back to our chamber this evening.” I called back that I would keep an eye out for her over my shoulder and padded off to face an assassin.

There was the sound of heavy snoring coming from the chamber of the advisor when I silently let myself in. I scanned the room and saw him sleeping soundly. I wanted to just jump up there and claw him apart, but I needed more proof. I nosed my way into a clothing chamber and spotted a few lidded jars tucked way back under the advisor’s hanging wardrobe. After hunting vermin for as long as I have, you recognize the scent of your prey and these jars were fuming with it. Scorpions here, deadly sand spiders there, and in between both was an urn filled with asps! “Man, I hate snakes!” With this discovery, I convinced myself that this advisor had higher ambitions in mind. It was far too easy for these guys to seize power, especially since the king had no sons to follow him. A little accident and it would be out with the old and in with the new! So sorry... time to move on!

I was turning to go back and claw this advisor into the next kingdom, when a better idea occurred. Carefully I eased the jars and urn onto their sides and quietly opened each one, saving the asp urn for last. This deed done I scampered quickly out of the room and back to the royal chamber. “Let’s hope he enjoys a little of his own medicine!” I chuckled, as I resumed my position at the foot of the bed. “See how you like it...” With that last thought I drifted into a deep sleep.

The screams coming from the advisor’s chamber early in the morning awoke almost the entire palace. The king and queen hastily dressed and charged down the hall. A large crowd had gathered by the door, but it was still shut. The king was quite upset that none of the palace guards had opened the door to see what was wrong and was about to demand why, when he saw people pointing to the bottom of the door. I snickered when I saw the sand spiders darting in and out of the room, as if protecting their turf. “Get the palace cats over here to take care of this!” the king yelled. The guards took off down the hall and the king turned to me. He raised an eyebrow and said, “Well?” I just looked up at him as if to say my job is to protect you, not an advisor. At that moment my sisters and mother came down the hall followed by more of the palace cats.

“What’s going on here?” Mom asked, “Tell me this wasn’t your doing!”

I looked her in the eyes and said, “I found an inside assassin and now it’s time for him to pay.” The screams were still coming strong from the room, as were the pleas for help.

“It looks like all you managed was to place the palace cats in danger.” Mom said, “How many do you think will get hurt because of your grand idea? It certainly sounds like the advisor is still alive and even if your plan worked and he was killed, who still has to deal with these pests? Us! That’s who!”

Mom was steamed at my poor judgment and I could see that she was right. I knew I should have just finished him when I had the chance. The king looked at me again as the

spiders were starting to come further into the hall. “Tell the other cats to stay back,” I told Mom, “Time for me to clean up my mess!”

I sprang to the door and smashed a spider with each paw as I landed. I kept pouncing and smashing till the flow of spiders stopped coming under the door. A guard stepped up and opened the chamber door and the screams got louder. The crowd saw the advisor hanging from the oil lamp chain over his bed, nightshirt dangling as a few scorpions were trying to grasp it as he swung by. No one noticed the blur that entered the chamber and was making short work of the rest of the spiders and scorpions throughout the room. As I cleared the bugs from the bed I couldn't resist snagging the advisor's nightshirt and sending him on a swift spin. I had cleared the bugs while avoiding the snakes striking out at me as I leapt from side to side. Now it was time to face them, did I mention that I hate snakes?

When I turned over the urn of snakes I had no idea of how many it contained. I saw the advisor holding onto the chain, but his bare feet were on the bed. I kept hoping one of these stupid things would at least have the courtesy of going up there and biting him, but no! They were all focused on yours truly! I was looking out upon a squirming sea of black, and the waves were closing in on me. The sea was pushing me closer to the balcony and at that moment, I struck. Using the pounce and spin technique I was able to take out four at a time with each landing, plus one in my jaws as I crushed its' head and slung it over the balcony. I heard gasps of amazement coming from the hall, but had no time to reap any of the praise, my paws were full and I was getting tired. It was about that time when I noticed another blur enter the fray, Mom! I had learned my tricks and skills from her, so between the two of us the snakes had a snowballs chance in... well here!

The advisor had gotten off the bed finally and was between the door and the balcony when I saw the final asp trying to slither under the bed. With a swift move I snatched the snake by the tail and sent it soaring straight toward him, like an arrow released from a bow. To his good fortune, or perhaps I just wanted him to know that I was on to him, he saw the snake coming and had time to duck. The snake, fangs at the ready, went sailing over him, the balcony and into oblivion at the end of the drop. Our eyes locked as he turned from his kneeling position. In that moment an understanding was reached that I accented with a hiss. “Don't mess with me and don't mess with my king!” As I left the chamber with Mom I said, “Thanks!”

“Don't mention it, really!” she said, snickering, “I'd hate for it to get around that I raised such a bonehead for a cat!” And that was that, the advisor had received his warning and the palace returned to normal. The visiting royal couple had witnessed my skills and tried to get the king to trade me off, but like I said before, there are some perks to being the kings' protector. They had no chance for that, but Mom was a different story. Had she stayed outside the chamber they would never have seen her skills as well. Sure she was the best granary guard the palace had, but humans trade everything it seems, especially if it meant safe and secure borders. Mom was expendable.

## Chapter Six

“Moving away to another palace!” Mom sobbed, as we sat late one night in the garden, “I am just too old to be starting over.”

I saw the moonlight shine off her tears and said, "You know, there is that other option." She turned her face to me and I saw a smile slowly form, her head nodded just once. We knew we had to act quickly with a plan that would satisfy everyone. The guests would be leaving in a few days and would want to take Mom with them. To keep them from coming back here making demands, or jeopardizing any treaties, she must leave when they do. Once on the road, though, many things can happen.

Mom said Isom was pretty broken up about the whole thing, but may now have something else to occupy her time. Isom and the handsome servant of the visiting couple had been spending the nights together. "So," I thought to myself, "apparently the human male likes a female that changes color." I mused about this as I formulated an escape plan for Mom that would get her safely back to Grandpaw in the Valley of the Kings. This would take skill, stealth, speed and most of all... luck! Yes, sir! Lots of luck!

Having the amulet around my neck allowed me entrance into anywhere I wanted and a few scratches were all it took to get a guard to open a door that I could not. Where I wanted to go this time, was to see what the visitors were intending to carry Mom in for the trip. Mom was still considered pretty wild and would need some type of cage. I wandered around the area looking for such a cage when I saw the tall servant and Isom over by some cargo. "Are you sure she will be comfortable in that?" Isom asked the handsome male, "It looks pretty cramped."

I saw the cage that was meant for Mom and had to agree that it did look a bit snug, when he grabbed the female and pulled her close to him and said, "She will be just fine, I will be with her the whole time! It looks small because of the pillows that you insisted on!" He laughed a good hearty laugh and kissed Isom.

I had to endure more of these humans acting foolish for what seemed an eternity, until they left the area. So much time had passed that I had nearly dozed. Fortunately the advisor had ceased with his late night activities and I felt relatively safe in staying away for longer periods. For this to work there will be a time when I will be away all night. I went to the cage and saw the little nest that the pillows had created inside, "Cute!" I thought. The cage had handles in the front and rear, clearly to be used by two slaves or servants with enough distance away from the cage to keep them out of claw reach. "Good idea!" I mused, "Mom will be upset enough by the pillows!" I inspected the frame of the cage; the door was on the side and was latched with a loop and peg that went down from the top through loops in the door. Difficult for teeth and claws to get around from inside the cage, but not from the outside! I decided to test my skill at this latch a few times till I was satisfied. Then it was back to the bedchamber to rest up for what appeared to be a very long day and night ahead.

I awoke with the king and queen as they went about saying their farewells to the visitors and I chose that time to run down the plan with Mom. She knew what she had to do and that there was no turning back. We agreed that she would cause no trouble to the servants who caged her or to the ones who transported her. No reason must be given for them to reinforce the cage. Isom was chosen to place mom in the cage, which she did with tears. As the cage was locked and Mom began to howl Isom fled the area. I witnessed her and the tall servant in another embrace and saw more tears fall. I watched the caravan leave the palace gates and made a mental note in the direction it was traveling, "South, along the Nile." I said to myself, "Plenty of places to rest up overnight." A nagging thought did occur to me, "What if they take a barge?" I decided to

put that thought out of my head for the time and continued with my royal duties. Ra bringing his chariot home for the night could not come soon enough for me.

The day dragged out excruciatingly slowly, but the Sun God finally started his journey's end and I could get ready for mine to begin. I was very impatient with the king and queen as they prepared for bed, they saw me pacing about and the king remarked to his bride something about the fullness of the moon. They bedded down for the night and I slipped off the bed and out the door without noticing the king watching me exit. I left the palace grounds through a secret hole I knew about in the wall. I was running at top speed following the scent and tracks of the caravan. As I came to a point by the Nile my worst fears were realized as the trail turned to a barge dock.

"Just great!" I thought. "Now what?" I was looking around by the dock area when I caught Mom's scent. One of the pillows that had been in the cage with her was discarded along the side of the well-traveled road. I noticed what looked like scuffling marks in the dirt, and then I saw the tracks of the caravan, continuing south along the Nile. It looked like the caravan had split, with some getting on a barge and the others going by road. I think she must have struggled so much about getting on the barge that the royal visitors decided to make the split. I also think Mom had an accident! Phew! Cats really do hate water and so the pillow was thrown away. "Way to go Mom!" I said, as I resumed my haste, following the caravan.

The caravan managed to make pretty good time and I had still failed to catch up to it, as the east was getting lighter. Then I spotted fires up ahead less than a mile further. Boy was I exhausted! I had run the entire way with no food or even a stop for a drink. As I neared the caravan I spotted Mom's cage next to some other crates and tents, a fire was still glowing nearby. I saw that Mom was inside the cage still and that it hadn't been reinforced from her little incident by the river. Before releasing her I had to insure phase two of the rescue was prepared. So, off to the river I went.

I scouted out the perfect location for Mom's "death". I found a nice sandy spot near the river edge that had the scent of crocodile all over it. I peered out into the murky water as I took a drink and splashed my paw in the water. It didn't take long before I saw two beady eyes sneaking closer and closer. Crocs like to surprise their meals and this one was good, but he was playing right into my paws, I was hunting him! As he struck, I leapt back. He followed me up on the shore to the sandy spot as I kept retreating. Once we reached my spot, I stopped retreating. The croc kept coming and opened his mouth in anticipation of a tasty meal, but instead of meat and fur all this croc got was a face full of my claws!

In the short time I had before I did become his meal, I managed to shred a good part of its' face and mouth. Blood flowed from the cuts and soaked into the sand and as I took one final leap, sideways to an awaiting tree, I saw the croc thrashing about in the sand. "Purrfect," I thought, "now to free Mom!" Fortunately, thanks to a very hungry crocodile, phase two went smooth and took little time. The caravan still slept as I returned. Mom was the only creature that heard my approach and I placed a claw to my lips to keep her quiet, we had plenty of time to catch up after I got her free. The locking device on the cage was still the same and as I released the door I motioned for Mom to follow me.

We went behind the stacked crates and I told her of the plan. She returned to the cage and from there went across camp making sure to leave good paw tracks and headed to the

river. Meanwhile I cleared our earlier tracks, as well as my own, and exited behind the camp. I spotted Mom close to the sandy spot as I stayed off the road. She reached the spot where my tracks began and with a pretty great leap of her own, sprung sideways into the awaiting tree. Once there she let out some howls and screams that would curl your tail. The scream continued, then on cue she cut it off, dead stop. I heard shouts from the camp and I knew our ruse had worked. I met up with Mom further up the road at a distance where it was safe to travel on the road once again.

“Poor Isom,” the servants would say, “She got so thirsty that she managed to open the cage and went to the river for a drink, only to be eaten by a crocodile!” I’m sure a servant would be punished, but I didn’t care, my mother was free! We traveled up the road as fast as we could, but the distance was too great to be able to return to the palace before Ra was riding high in the sky. At one point behind the city of Thebes the road into the Valley of the Kings stood. “You will be safe now.” I said, “I have unfinished business with an advisor that I must tend to before I can join you.”

Mom, with a tear in her eye, choked back, “You be careful son, and remember to bring your sisters with you! Oh! And thanks for saving me.”

“No thanks needed Mom,” I returned, “I love you!” At this she rubbed alongside me and then headed off toward her home. “Say Hi to Grandpaw for me!” I called out, “I will see you both soon!”

I had turned and was about to start running towards the palace again when I heard her return wafting on the afternoon breeze. “I will, and do hurry Amun! I love you too!”

## Chapter Seven

The palace was in quite a state when I re-entered through the hole in the wall. Servants were weeping and everyone seemed in great mourning. “Where have you been?” I heard my sisters calling down from the hall balcony, “Something terrible has happened... and it’s all your fault!”

“Oh! No!” I thought, as I bolted up the palace stairs, “The advisor couldn’t have struck so soon... I wasn’t gone that long!” I hauled paw as fast as I could to the king’s chamber.

I passed the advisor in the hall and I heard him remark as I passed, “Some protector you turned out to be!” I also heard a slight sinister chuckle as well.

As I entered the chamber I saw the king’s physicians surrounding the bed and the queen was standing by the balcony clutching a worry shawl. I let out a loud howl and all eyes turned to me, including my friend, the king. “There you are!” he said, “I knew you wouldn’t run off and leave me!” I could see the king had his leg wrapped up tight with a stick inside the wrap. I could see pain on his face and my heart sank. “I was so stupid to think you had run away!” the king said, “So stupid!” He lay back on his headrest as I jumped to his side. He motioned for the physicians to leave and then the queen came over to the bed as well. “I don’t know what possessed me to think I should...” he paused, “I knew you would return to me, my friend.” His eyes looked a bit droopy and I realized the physicians must have given him something to ease the pain. “Stupid chariot...” he said before he drifted to sleep, “Stupid wheel...”

The queen was holding his hand as he drifted off then even she reiterated, “All your fault! Amun!” Then she did something she had never done before, she swatted at me and

pushed me off the bed! “Scat! Leave us alone!” I was dumfounded as to how this all had occurred in such a short time span and left the chamber in search of my sisters. I found them where they usually reside, on the bed in their human’s chamber.

“I hope you are happy with yourself!” one of them hissed, as I entered.

“Yeah! Oh! Grand Protector! Not!” said the other.

“Look!” I hissed, “I’m pretty upset over all this as well! I came here to find out what happened!”

One said, “If you would have stayed put, nothing would have happened!”

“But no, you had to go run off and worry the king enough to make him go look for you!” said the other. It all started to fall into place.

I went missing, the king got worried that something had happened to me, then something must have happened to his chariot. “Stupid wheel”, he had said. Then he must have taken a tumble and hurt his leg. “It is my fault!”

I proceeded to tell my sisters why I had left and they started to feel sorry for the cruel remarks. They were relieved to hear that Mom was on her way to the Valley of the Kings. I also recounted the king’s plan to place us all in his tomb when his time came, and for the need for them to get to the valley as well. This last bit threw them a bit and they said that the life they had here was just too good to give up.

“Hunt mice in the sticks!” they exclaimed, “We’ll take our chances here.” I tried to convince them, but to no avail, they simply refused to give up their pampered life for freedom. I had failed again, first to my king and now to Mom. I left their chamber and almost ran right into the advisor.

“You couldn’t protect him forever!” he snickered, as I noticed some metal ring swinging on his finger, “Accidents do happen!” With that the advisor almost skipped down the hall. I just know he had something to do with this, and I was going to find out! The king was still sleeping and the queen still refused to let me in, so I went about to get my proof... then my revenge!

The chariot stables were toward the other side of the palace. This side is patrolled and protected by another large mau, whose fur was so golden that they called him Ra after the Sun God himself. I entered and was immediately accosted by Ra! “Protector my paw!” he said as he knocked me into a feeding trough for the horses, “I should shred you now!” With that he extended his claws and swung them toward my face, but being a bit younger than he and smarter, I rolled away and sprang out of claw reach.

“Now hold on!” I hissed, “Can’t you give a cat a chance to explain?”

Ra was sitting back on his haunches ready to launch himself again and said, “No explanation will heal the hurt you caused, Amun, but, I’ll give you to the count of ten to convince me not to kill you now! One...”

I proceeded to tell him,

“Two...”

Of my mission to save,

“Three...”

My mother and of the long distance,

“Four...”

The caravan had traveled,

“Five...”

Before I could catch it,

“Six...”

And return to the palace,

“Seven...”

I noticed that Ra had started to twitch in his stance, which signaled that he was about to spring so I decided to tell him of my suspicions of the advisor.

“Eig... the advisor?” Ra questioned, but had stopped twitching. “What about him?”

We discussed the whole issue of the mysterious visits late at night and of the incident in his room, of which Ra said he had heard about and had a good chuckle over the description of the advisor dangling from the lamp chain. I also told him about the comment he had made when I returned from the rescue of my mother. When I described the ring that he had swinging from his finger, Ra’s ears perked up a bit. “Describe this ring.” he said, clearly relaxed now and curious. In the sand I took my claw and drew a circle with a straight piece coming down from it, like a thin key. “Follow me.” he said and padded toward the back of the stable. He sensed my hesitation and laughed, “Relax! I believe you.”

“Whew!” I thought, “About time something went right today!” Ra turned the corner to the chariots and paused at one of the wheels.

“Does this look familiar?” he asked. I looked at what he was pointing to and I saw the same type ring on the end of the wheel.

“That’s it!” I said.

“So that’s what he was up to...” Ra started, “I saw him fooling around with the king’s chariot after the servants got it ready to go.” I knew then that the advisor had made swift use of my leaving to plan an “accident”, but even though he had done this to the chariot I was the one who was ultimately responsible. I had failed to protect my king by saving my mother. Ra was talking about getting revenge on the advisor, but all I could think of was my friend laying up in the bed. I knew the queen was mad at me but I had to get close to him. I thanked Ra for the information and promised him that he, and I, would get that revenge, but for now the king needed a guardian and exited the stables toward the palace.

## Chapter Eight

I nosed my way into the chamber and saw the physicians had returned and were tending to the king’s leg. The queen was not in the room. As I got next to the bed I saw the king halfway sitting with one leg off the side of the bed. He appeared to be trying to get off the bed when he spotted me. “Amun!” he said, “Leave me alone, you quacks!” Brushing the physicians away. “Come Amun!” he said, patting the side of the bed. I jumped up to his side and he relaxed a bit as the room emptied. The king stroked my fur and said, “I was so foolish to think you had run away, but you were gone for so long!” I saw the genuine concern in his eyes as he spoke. The medicine must be working because his face didn’t look as pained. I stayed by his side throughout the evening and never left it all night. The queen eventually came back and gave me the evil eye, but said nothing even as she retired to the bed.

The king awoke during the night on several occasions moaning, but would take a drink out of this cup on the nightstand, give me a rub then return to sleep. As Ra shown into the chamber the next morning the king awoke and asked for food. “Praise the

Gods!” I thought, “Maybe we can get back to business as usual around here and I can avenge my king!” The queen even seemed to perk up a bit towards me as well. The physicians returned and examined the leg, where I had my first glimpse of the wound. “Ewww,” I thought, “that’s nasty looking!” The physicians had set the badly broken leg, but the wound where the bone had broken through the skin was very red and swollen. They applied some ointments and rewrapped the leg and left. I could tell the king was restless here in his chamber as he fidgeted about on the bed. The advisor came and paid his respects to the king, as they talked affairs of the kingdom. I could tell he was watching me like a hawk, as I hid throughout his visit. “One day!” I thought.

Things just about returned to normal with the king being carried to the various parts of the palace by servants toting the king in a chair/bed. Two good-sized servants were all it took to carry the thing and the king had the roam of the palace again, much to the chagrin of the advisor, who would have been just as happy with the king confined to his bed and out of his hair. I noticed the advisor talking to the head physician and assumed it was to check on the king’s progress and dismissed it, until the king took a turn for the worse. Only then did I recall that the head physician was the only one tending to the king now. He had released the others to go about their other duties and he alone changed the bandages and prepared the ointments and medicines. I was present at one changing and saw the wound was starting to fester and smelled funny... like really bad cheese.

The king was confined to the bed again and I saw that even the potion from the cup was not helping with the pain. I noticed the queen crying more often and was becoming more distant. I knew the king was doomed. He would still put on a brave front, but talked more and more of how he was glad to have me protecting his tomb. In this time since the “accident” I had forgotten about my planned escape to the Valley of the Kings and as things were looking worse for my friend I had begun to change my mind as well. I stayed with my friend throughout Ra’s journey as well as Seti’s at night. The queen and the advisor made last minute burial plans and the tomb was being prepared to receive its’ new occupants. I had resigned myself to be the protector in death that I had failed to be in life.

One morning, as I was laying by the king’s side the advisor came in alone, and looking around, closed the chamber door. The king had fallen into a deep sleep and was very near the end. The advisor stood close by, but out of claw length. “You stupid boy!” he sneered, “You thought you could stay pharaoh forever? I’ve waited a long time for this and now I will take your queen and rule. Yes, your pretty bride will be mine, but don’t worry, she will be joining you shortly.” He turned a glance towards me for a second then back to the king. “You two will be very happy together, all snug in your tomb. As for your great plan to keep away the tomb raiders,” he laughed, “your “Great” Protector will have a hard time doing anything as a mummy!” I turned just in time to see a swift flash of a club before it struck the side of my head and all went black.

## **Chapter Nine**

I awoke with a splitting headache in a cage at the back of an area that I recognized as the temple of the priests. In the middle of the area I saw my friend, lying on an altar, being washed by the priests. The king was dead. The priests were beginning the mummification process with the advisor observing. He glanced over at me in my cage

and walked a bit closer when he saw that I had stirred. "Don't worry, you're next!" he whispered with a sneer, "I get the pleasure of sending you to the afterlife myself!" I saw that he gripped the sheath of his dagger tighter as he said that.

"Stupid humans," I thought, "when will they learn that we cats can understand them? We just like to ignore you!" I'm glad he told me his plan; this gave me a chance to plan my escape.

The advisor returned to the priests in their preparations while I studied my situation. The cage I was in had a locking mechanism like the one that was on my mother's cage, a long shaft that ran through a series of loops. Difficult to open from the inside, but not impossible, especially since I had first paw knowledge of how it worked! I tested my skills a bit as I kept close watch on the advisor and priests. The lock slid easily out of the bottom loop, and then the middle. There I stopped and returned the shaft to its' locked position as I studied the layout of the room I was in. There were no windows, or a balcony and only one door at the top of some stairs. If I remember correctly the door is kept locked by the priests, especially if they are processing someone for the afterlife. The king and I came here once when the former king was being processed. The room is located in the temple, which is outside the palace, but within the protection of the walls. The temple is usually overrun with priests, but it is also pretty open with lots of space to maneuver around. If I could make it out that door then I knew I had a shot at escaping the fate the advisor had in store.

I had no idea of the time of day, but that mattered little. The priests went into a fast when a king died, as did the palace, so there would be no breaks for food. My only hope was that the advisor had to go tend to some affair of state and the priests took a break as well. Before I could continue this line of thought I saw the advisor smiling at me. The priests had performed the process quickly, too quickly for my satisfaction, and I noticed the king was being lowered into his sarcophagus. The advisor approached, hand on sheaf. "Oh! Great!" I thought, "Times up!"

It was clear to me that the coward was just going to do the deed from outside of the cage by running his dagger through the bars. Indeed he had drawn the long knife and was almost to the cage, when I noticed a few of the priests had ascended the stairs and had opened the door there. When they were exiting I saw a gold streak flash through the door and down the stairs. As the advisor was preparing to strike, I saw his smiling face change into a sneer, then into an expression of pure hate as the knife blade swung into the cage. I saw, at about the same time, his expression turn to one of extreme surprise and pain, as the knife and he fell sideways away from the cage. Attached to his back with teeth sunk deep in the advisors' shoulder and claws dug deep into his back was Ra!

"I knew he'd be up to no good!" Ra said between chomps, "I had heard what he did to you in the kings' chamber from one of your sisters. Just glad the priests finally opened that door, and that I wasn't too late!" As Ra was working on the screaming advisor I was getting the door open. I sprung free of the cage in time to clamp my teeth into the advisor's knife hand, which was swinging toward Ra. The advisor let out another scream of pain as he dropped the knife. He rolled to his side and yelled at the priests to help and as they were coming forward to do just that, more streaks started flowing into the room and the priests began to scream as well. The palace cats had arrived!

I think this was the most active I had ever seen my sisters! One was attached to the leg of a shrieking priest as the other was biting the backside of another. The advisor had

managed to regain his feet and showed his true colors (mostly yellow, but now mixed with a bit of red) as he bolted as fast as he could for the door! Ra and I streaked past him before he could get to the door, just in case he decided to lock us all in here. We kept the priests and the advisor away from the door as we called for the others to flee the temple. Once all of the cats were safely outside, we also left. I heard the advisor yelling to the palace guards to kill all the cats, but they were so dumbfounded at such a request that they failed to harm a single one as we all fled through the hole in the palace wall.

Ra and I followed the scent trail of the palace cats and caught up with them in an abandoned stable. There were about twenty-five of us in all and we started discussing our predicament. To return to the palace under the rule of the advisor meant death for sure, so we looked at other alternatives. I discussed the Valley of the Kings, and the ones, like my sisters, who were use to being pampered, flatly refused that as an option and chose to disperse into Thebes instead. A few of the more adventuresome chose to follow me, Ra included. We vowed to return someday to reap our revenge. When we passed over the ridge trail and descended into the Valley of the Kings, we were ten strong.

## Chapter Ten

Mom and Grandpaw came into view as we approached with other guardians. They were relieved to see me at the lead. “I thought we had a fight on our paws!” Grandpaw Anubis chuckled, as he clamped a paw on my shoulder, “Glad you could make it! Welcome, welcome all to the Valley of the Kings!”

Mom rubbed up against me in her welcome and said, “What took you so long, and where are the girls?” I proceeded to tell her and Grandpaw of the events that had taken place since I parted with her on the road behind Thebes, the look on their faces ranged from shock to disbelief.

They looked around at the others with me, and Mom cried, “Your sisters and the others were killed?”

I told Mom to relax, “The girls and the rest are fine as well, they decided to find homes in Thebes. We...” I swung my paw around to the other nine, “decided to join you here as guardians.” Once again Grandpaw and Mom scanned the rest of the group, I noticed Mom’s gaze remained just a touch longer on Ra than the rest.

“Welcome to the guardians of the kings! I am Anubis and if there were a leader here, then I guess I would be he.” Grandpaw said, “Life is tough here and food is scarce, but we can use all the help we can get!”

The others came down from their hiding spots and everyone introduced himself or herself. “Mom...” I said, “This is Ra. He saved my life from the advisor.” Mom thanked the older cat with a long side rub that ended with her tail curling under Ra’s chin. “I thought so.” I mused to myself.

After the introductions were made Grandpaw gave us the layout of the area. He showed us the various tombs and where the spring was, and where the best places were to hunt for food. I pulled Grandpaw away after things had settled down and told him that I would be responsible for guarding the new tomb of my king and of the reasons why. He told me about teamwork and such, but conceded that the new tomb area would be my primary protection area.

As he padded off I called out thanks, but he returned, “No need, I can see that this is something that the Gods have determined you do.”

In the days that followed the guardians watched in secret as numerous caravans entered the valley with crates piled high of the kings’ possessions. Finally came the day of the funeral procession and the long chariots of the queen and the advisor, or should I say, the new king. Then I saw the cart carrying the kings’ sarcophagus. The tears flowed down my eyes as I said goodbye to my friend, revenge seething closer and closer to the surface with each drop that fell into the dust. “Soon...” I vowed, “Very soon.” Not one of the funeral party guests saw or discovered us in our hiding spots, but I could see Mom struggling to hold herself back as Cheo and a slightly pregnant Isom, being held by that tall servant, passed by. It was only by seeing him did I realize that the procession also contained other royal visitors who came to pay their final respects. Poor Isom must have also had to endure the news of the tragic fate of her former friend at the jaws of a crocodile. I noticed Mom leaning closer to Ra, burying her face in his fur.

A few days went by before the thieves decided that they had paid their respects long enough and entered the valley seeking new treasure. I had taken to positioning myself within the new tomb during the day, at the end of the tunnel, the secret panel in front of me. This position gave me the advantage of seeing any light entering the maze long before anyone got close. The thieves that failed to flee at the sound of my echoed howls and roars soon found themselves running for their lives as swift claws raked their backs and backsides. One thief got so turned around in the maze that he ran headfirst into one of the false turns and knocked himself out cold! Ra and I had a good chuckle as we dragged him clear of the tomb. When the thief awoke and noticed he was now outside the tomb, Ra and I, who were concealed inside the dark of the tomb, let out roars that would have curled your tails! The thief also had the ability to change colors as well, but his color was sheer white! The panicked thief must have told others of this miraculous event because the tomb went unmolested for many moons afterwards.

During this lull in action Ra and Mom became closer and I noticed that she was beginning to get a bit chubbier in the belly. “Well,” I thought, “it’s about time she gets a chance at happiness!” Grandpaw was having trouble catching food as his joints became stiffer with age. I began delivering food to him, but not that he could see... it was always just sitting there knocked out as he turned the corner of a rock. I always saved that last pounce for him. Mom would see me do this on occasion and would give me a smile and a wink. All was well in the valley and I again began to think of revenge. I decided that it was time to return to the palace, to check up on the new “king”. Ra wanted to come along, but I told him that this was just a scouting trip. I reassured him that he would be with me when the king received justice. With Ra keeping an eye on things in the valley I set off for “home”.

## **Chapter Eleven**

The Sun God Ra was putting his chariot away for the night as Seti took over when I entered the hole in the palace wall. The first thing I noticed was the abundance of rats scurrying about in the garden along with a few snakes. At the top of the stairs a new gate was built in an effort to keep the vermin out of the palace. The gate wall was so smooth that it offered no claw hold for the rats or mice and was tall enough that they couldn’t

jump over it. “Not a bad idea.” I thought, “The sisters wouldn’t have had anything to do if the humans had thought of this earlier.” Then, chuckling, I thought, “Except get fatter.” The guards made a pass and I vaulted easily over the gate. I needed information and the only place I thought I could go to get any, was to find Isom. The chamber door was closed and I couldn’t nose it open, so I scratched! I continued lightly scratching at the door till I heard the soft sound of feet coming to the door. A voice on the other side called out softly, “Isis?”

“Ok,” I thought, “So I pretend to be Mom.” As long as it gets the door open before a guard spots me. I let out my best Mom purr impression and entered the crack in the door before Isom realized it was me.

“Amun!” she gasped out, “I never realized how much you sound like your mom!” I saw that her belly had become quite large, as the time had passed. As Isom stood there staring in amazement I rubbed up against her leg, purring to beat the band. Then as if she were waking up from a dream she cried out softly, “You shouldn’t be here! King Ay gave orders for you and all cats to be killed on sight!” I continued the rubbing and then jumped up on her bed. She came over and sat beside me and began rubbing my fur. I could tell she missed this activity very much.

“My enemy has a name,” I thought, “and that name is Ay!”

“So much has happened since the cat attack of the priests!” she said, “King Ay said that this brutal attack angered the Gods and that the God Amun told him to kill you all!”

At this I was taken aback, “So, he turned the attack on him into an attack on the priests!” I mused, “How else could he defy the cat Goddess Bast and turn us into the bad guys!”

Isom continued to stroke and said, “I wish the queen would return, maybe she could soften his heart.” I was pretty sure that King Ay had made good on his promise of making sure the queen returned to her first husband as soon as he could and the trip was just a ruse. “King Ay is not a good king and the people are suffering. I talked to the new head advisor, Horemheb. He would like to see a return of cats to the palace, but has not had much influence on King Ay.” I decided that I might have an ally in this new advisor. “I see you still wear the protector amulet,” she stated, turning it over in her hand to read the inscription. “To the wearer of this amulet, all things granted.”

“Funny,” I thought, “I didn’t even know that was back there, and that gives me an idea!”

I jumped off the bed and padded to the door, then turned back toward the chamber bath area. The sandbox was still there, as I had hoped, “Not what you’re thinking!” and I smoothed the sand with my paw. I know that the Goddess Bast frowns on two-way communication between cats and humans, but for this to work I needed help in my corner. I scratched three hieroglyphs in the sand with my claw and looked up at Isom. She looked in the sand then took a step back, holding her heart. “This is not possible!” she said, but knelt down for a closer look. She mouthed the words of the glyphs shaking her head in disbelief at what she was seeing. “Isis is home.” she said, glancing wide-eyed at me. I nodded my head in response and she put her hand to her mouth again in disbelief. “You can understand me?” she asked, and I nodded again. “Praise Bast!” she whispered. I then smoothed the sand again and scratched two more glyphs. “King murdered?” she asked, as she read. Again I nodded. “Who did it?” she asked. Once again I scratched out a glyph. “King? The king killed himself?” she asked.

At this I shook my head and hissed. “Just like pulling teeth!” I growled, “Bast will have my backside for sure if this keeps up!” I placed my claw on the mark above the king that stood for new.

Her eyes grew again, but with revelation and not amazement as she said, “Ay was the killer!”

“Bingo!” I thought and turned to leave.

“Wait!” she said, “You mean Isis is alive and went home?” I nodded as I reached the door, I placed a claw to my mouth and Isom said she wouldn’t tell anyone. I nodded again. “What about King Ay?” she asked as she opened the door for me. Her eyes grew wide again as I drew a claw across my throat. Isom saw me pad off in the direction of the advisor chambers, which is where I suspected to find the new guy, Horemheb.

Fortunately for me his chamber door was not latched. I nosed into the chamber and discovered him sound asleep on the bed. I quietly jumped on the bed and noticed that I did not disturb him by doing so. I looked into the face of this advisor and recognized him as one of the lesser advisers to the murdered king. I had no cause to have ever suspected him as having a part in the “accident” and was about to find out how he felt about cats!

As is often the case with my kind I had no problem walking straight up the chest of the sleeping Horemheb and peered at him nose to nose. He awoke with a start, but I was ready for it and jumped to the foot of the bed. When he sat up in the bed I saw him about to shout out and I placed a claw over my lips. Horemheb froze mid shout at this, as his eyes grew wide. “Bast!” he remarked, thinking me the Goddess herself, then his eyes adjusted to the dim light of the room and said, “No, you are Amun! The former kings’ pet! I must have been still dreaming when I saw you...” he paused, as I again placed a claw to my lips. “This is not possible!” Horemheb started loud then finished in a whisper, “Is this the Goddess Bast I am talking to?” I decided, why not! If this gets me through to him any sooner then let’s go, I’ll be Bast. I know I’ll regret it later! In response to his question I nodded once.

“By the Gods!” Horemheb whispered in total astonishment, “Are you here to punish me for allowing King Ay to banish the cats from the kingdom?” Pointing a claw at him I shook my head. “You are not after me?” he responded, a look of relief swept his face, “Then who? The priests?” Again I shook my head. Then he hit on the correct person, “King Ay! Of course!” he said, and then continued, “The priests were not the focus of the attack by the palace cats, were they?” I shook my head once and he followed this line of thought, “The cats were after Ay! I knew it!” Horemheb started to put things together about the new king. I answered as best I could through nods and shakes on most questions. He asked what befell the old king and I responded with a claw across my throat as well as when he asked what happened to the queen. When it looked like he was all caught up to speed, he asked, “What is your wish? Why have you come to me?” At this I placed my paw on the amulet and turned it to reveal the glyphs there. Horemheb read the statement and looked back into my eyes. “You wish the king’s protector to get revenge!” His eyes were wide again as I nodded once. “Your will be done, oh Bast!” he stated, as I turned to go, then he added, “Are you going to kill him now?”

When I nodded Horemheb said, “Wait! The king has placed guards at his chamber door. The people are not happy and assassins are frequent.” He got out of bed and went to his bath chamber to put his robe on. As he came out he closed the door to it and slid a chest in front of it. “If you want to get to him,” he said, “then I had better come along to

help.” I was glad I made the decision to come here first. I didn’t realize I would find someone so eager to help assassinate a king... then I thought, no heirs, no queen, that leaves good ole Horemheb next in line.

“How convenient!” I thought, but revenge would be mine tonight and Ra will forgive me in time. Besides, Mom has a hard enough time keeping fellows around and I would hate to be the reason she lost another mate. Horemheb opened the door to the chamber and exited, followed closely by me. The time has come for my friend to have his revenge.

As we turned the corner to the king’s chamber wing of the palace I noticed a series of guard stands and counted myself fortunate that Horemheb had put on a long robe! I entered the robe before the guards could see me, and this gave Horemheb a little bit of a start. “Oh!” he exclaimed as my fur brushed against his fleshy leg. The guards jumped back to attention as we approached and questioned the advisor as to why he was here. “That cat Amun came to my chamber and I have come to warn you and the king!” he said.

I gulped as I thought, “Oh! Great! He’s going to give me up to the guards!”

I was about to claw my way back to freedom starting with this traitor, when he continued, “I was able to get him cornered in the bath chamber then I closed the door trapping him there!” I rubbed my head against his leg, as he continued, “You must hurry! I don’t know how long that door will hold him!” I heard the guards race by like a herd of mules and Horemheb called out, “I will inform the king!”

I peeked out from the robe when he said it was all clear. We stood before the royal chamber and the future king opened the door just enough, a crack, to allow my access. King Ay was sitting up in the bed as I approached, perhaps due to the noise from the hall as the guards raced away, or simply because it appeared the king didn’t sleep so well at night. This last was evident in the dark circles around his eyes; it also looked like he has not been eating well either, all drawn and gaunt. Like Horemheb said, there was never a lack of assassins, especially if the people were displeased. This position of power he wanted badly enough to plan murder had all but killed him, I simply came to finish the job.

He screamed for the guards as I neared the bed enough for recognition. “Not this time, Charlie!” I thought and kept advancing. To give himself more room to maneuver, he jumped off the bed toward the balcony area. He was looking around for a weapon to use and realized he had jumped on the wrong side of the bed for that, when I sprang onto the bed, now blocking his path.

“What do you want?” he screamed at me, and almost passed out as I drew a claw across my throat. I sat there on the edge of the bed staring at him in his night shirt, only this one was made of much fancier material than the one I had first seen him in. “The king and queen have sent you to strike me down from the afterlife!” he babbled, eyes getting wilder. I jumped from the bed and landed a good five feet from him and he backed up to the edge of the balcony wall. He looked over his shoulder to the distance down and knew there would be no escape that way. With each advancing step I made the claw across the throat motion, this caused his panic to rise to dizzying heights. He saw that he might have a chance to jump over me and took it.

I raked his legs as he sailed over and he added new screams to the ones that still echoed through the palace. He ran to the door, but I saw that it wouldn’t budge. He

pounded on it and screamed for the guards to help him, anyone to help him, but no one came. I saw how this was going down and chuckled. I jumped up on the balcony wall and looked back at the abandoned king. He shifted his gaze back to me and I saw the same look in his eyes that was there in the temple when he was preparing to send me into the afterlife. I saw his murderous gaze scan the side of the bed that had his weapons and he ran over and grabbed a spear.

“If they won’t help me then I guess I will just have to finish you myself! Like I wanted to before!” He drew back the spear and sent it hurling in my direction. The king may have looked feeble but he still had a strong throwing arm and the spear would have got me if I had waited a split second longer to slip off the wall. Before he could react I had leapt from the floor to the bed and onto his head. My claws dug into his scalp as I tried to get to his eyes. He grabbed me across the back and pulled me off his head. Before I could reattach, I felt myself being flung across the room right toward the balcony and the drop beyond. My life flashed before my eyes as I sailed just over the edge, my claws dug hard into the edge and I thought I was going to hang in there... “Whew!” I sighed, then the claws slipped and down I went.

It seemed further, but I felt myself stop a short distance from the ledge. Funny I had never noticed the small thin ledge that lie equal to the room floor, and would have missed it entirely had I not grasped the walls’ edge at the last minute. My back paws were squarely on this new ledge, but there was no room to put my front two down. I heard laughing coming from overhead and knew the king would soon be peering over the edge to taste his victory. I heard him say as he was closing in, “I will have my army kill all the palace guards and servants for this rebellion! Starting with that girl whose pet gave birth to this stupid monstrosity...” His head appeared just as I thought it would and in the place that I went over the edge. In the room I had, I propelled upwards across the top of the king’s head and down his back. The force I used in clawing for freedom had an opposite effect on the king as he was propelled over the edge, headfirst! I heard his screams as he plunged down the drop, the same distance as I had sent the blind assassin years before. Well what was good for one certainly was good for another! You can rest now, my king.

## Chapter Twelve

Just as I thought, Horemheb had informed the crowd that had gathered about King Ay’s antics and that the Goddess Bast had sent the former king’s protector to seek justice. Apparently they thought the goddess had been successful as the door to the chamber opened as I looked down at the crumpled remains of King Ay far below. Prior to leaving the palace and returning to the Valley of the Kings I decided that the “Goddess” needed to speak to the future king once more. I entered the bath chamber of the king and noticed the sand I once used was gone, no surprise there, so I caught Horemheb’s attention on the way out and motioned for him to follow. We went down to the chamber belonging to Isom and entered. Isom was still at the king’s chamber with the others as the future king was getting his final glyph instructions in her sandbox. Horemheb nodded his understanding of the glyphs and I bowed my head low enough to slip out of the amulet and left it lying at his feet. I left him staring at the amulet as if it were some mystical artifact to be treasured, but to me, leaving it meant final freedom, plus it made my neck itch something fierce!

By the time I returned to the valley, Ra had his chariot riding high in the sky. The god's namesake was the first to greet me with news that he was a father! This pleased me to no end and I felt justified in my decision to go it alone. He noticed the amulet was missing and quickly deduced what I had done without him. "You told me you would wait!" he exclaimed, "I wanted to help!"

I replied, "You did, you protected my king while I avenged him." I knew he would be mad for a while, but as he started to play with his new kittens he eventually forgave me. I congratulated Mom on her new brood and she looked happier than I have seen her in years. Her and Ra were great together and Grandpaw even perked up a bit with the new grandkittens to play with. Anubis II and Isom, as the kittens were named, listened with wide eyes and ears to his tales of the old kings and of his adventures with routing out thieves and grave robbers. The pair grew strong and fierce in their duties as guardians.

As for me, I continued my direct protection of my friend's tomb from the periodic raiders. I kept close watch on the new tomb builders as they dug a new tomb in the exact location that was directed by a "Goddess". Before long I could not even enter the tomb of my king, the entrance now being filled and blocked by the rubble and dirt from the new tomb. As the new tomb was completed you would never guess another tomb was near. The new King Horemheb, had followed the final instructions of Bast to the "T", he had his tomb constructed directly above the tomb of my king and had erased all mention of him and Ay from recorded history. Knowing my friend could finally rest in peace I could join the rest of the guardians in protecting not only my king, but also all the others buried here as well. Cats were once again welcomed and had returned to the palace. On my last visit there I saw my sisters had returned to their former human and were as fat as ever.

One day Mom was teaching Anubis II and Isom a few stalking techniques when a chariot entered the valley and came up to the tombs. She decided to check their hiding skills and was paying closer attention to them than the visitors when she caught the scent of something... familiar. "Cheese!" she thought, as she turned to look at the newcomers. Mom watched as a tall male lifted a female off the chariot and set her down. She had a bundle wrapped in cloth in her arms as she came forward. "Isom!" Mom cried as she sprinted down the rocks to her old friend. Isom knelt with her bundle and as she had so long ago opened her palm to reveal her tempting treat. Mom reached Isom but ignored the treat as she rubbed her sides all over her friend.

"I couldn't believe it when Amun told me you were alive!" she cried, "I thought you were dead!"

Mom really chewed me out later for the communication violation, but still gave me her warmest rub, between the rains of "I love you". She was just happy to see her friend.

Isom showed mom her new baby, a strong looking male and then Mom called up to her kittens. Anubis II and Isom's namesake came cautiously out of their hiding places and made their way to their mother and the humans. Isom saw the kittens coming and once again opened her hand with the cheese. Mom told them it was all right and they took the treat and chased each other around as they devoured it. Isom giggled as she watched the two, remembering Isis as a kitten. "I wish you would come back with me," she said, "but I see you are back where you belong." Then she added, "I will come back as often as I can to see you and bring food for you and the others." She said this as she

looked around in the rocks and discovered the numerous cats that were there. Isom kept her promise and so did generations of her family. Returning with food periodically for the guardians of the tombs.

One-day years later, Grandpaw pulled me aside and said he was going on a journey and that I was now in charge of the guardians. He told me how proud he was to have me as a Grandkitten, sorry, Grandcat! We rubbed our stifled good-byes and then he went off into history, on his own terms. It was tough to explain this to Mom, but she vowed to pass down his stories to all future generations of guardians, which she did to countless eager ears for many years. Mom passed on peacefully in her sleep as did Ra before her, but before they did, they continued to produce the fiercest warrior cats the valley had ever known. The mournful howls that rose up from the valley kept visitors and thieves away for weeks.

I eventually met a nice cat as well. On a scouting trip to Thebes, I passed by the palace granary and spotted a cute thing on patrol. Remembering the story of my parents own meeting, I decided to see if I could re-invent a legend. Only this time there were no snakes or spears, Ok, so it wasn't the stuff of legends, but I was able to convince her to come with me back to the valley. Her name was Seti, after the moon god, due to her mostly white coat. We had many kittens and they all grew up strong and carried on Dad's work of protecting the entire valley for sure, but more importantly a little spot of land just short of another tomb. The spot was protected by generations of my children. So well that not a grain of sand was disturbed for thousands of years. All attempts to do any digging on that spot were foiled by a sudden rash of wildcat attacks. My friend slumbered longer than any previous king of Egypt, but all good things eventually come to an end and Howard Carter discovered my friend, the boy king of Egypt, Tutankhamun, or King Tut, in 1922. The richest find in history and in this discovery my friend truly did become immortal!

I lived out my life in the Valley of the Kings with my family and my own Grandkittens. I passed along the stories of Anubis, Isis, Ra and the stories of bravery, betrayal, and justice to new generations. I had a very long life and eventually it too had to come to an end. I would like to say that I had the dignity to take a journey like my own Grandpaw had, but my end came with a little less dignity. My eyes just were not what they once were, and my reflexes had also dulled with age, as I passed the rocks one morning to get a drink at the spring. All I felt was a slight sting on my backside and had just enough time to see a black tail slink back into the rocks before all went dark and I thought, "Man! I hate snakes!"

## The Garden Part I

### Chapter One

I awoke to the sounds of birds chirping and water flowing over rocks. “What the...” I called out. As my eyes gained focus I realized I could see as good as I use to! I stretched and tried to get to my paws, and then I noticed them, my paws, that is. They were huge and covered with white fur! There were no aches or stiff joints either! To my amazement I had been rejuvenated into this big, white pawed, body, or is that transformed? I thought back to my last memory and... Oh! Yeah, the stupid snake! I must be dead. Looking around at the lush green valley I found myself in, I thought, “So this is Heaven!” I walked over to the stream and bent to take a drink. When I saw my reflection in the water I took a step back. I had seen my reflection on numerous times in my prior life and knew the one staring back at me from the water wasn't it!

Forcing myself to look again, I inched my head back over the clear water. I had seen a few other cats before, but what was looking back at me was a lot bigger and hairier than I had ever seen. It, or should I say, I had mostly white hair, with black stripes, huge eyes and ears, I opened my mouth and had a shock as I saw the size of my teeth! Looking down at my paws I turned them over and extended my claws. “Wow! Look at the size of these daggers!” I exclaimed to no one in particular, but I got a reply just the same. I turned to see a deer just down from me taking a drink as well. “Well alright,” I thought, “at least I won't starve here.” Just as I was about to try out my new claws, the deer spoke.

“New here, aren't you?” it said. I said nothing, just stared dumbfounded at the talking treat. “I thought so, always the same thing from the newbies.” it continued, “By the way, I would forget the whole, “About to pounce” attitude. That stuff is simply not allowed here.” The deer noticed that I had lowered on my haunches and was swishing my long tail and called me on it.

My tail! I looked back and sure enough, I had a long white tail that had a tuft of black at the tip. “Wow!” I thought, “Never had one of these before.” I swished it back and forth a few times before I remembered my lunch!

The deer was in the same spot, but was now shaking his head. “Don't tell me, new body as well?” the deer remarked sarcastically.

“Shouldn't you be running for your life right about now?” I growled at the deer, “And screaming! There should be screaming! Lots of it...” That's when I began to notice that we had developed an audience. A few mice and a rabbit stood to one side of the deer and a few birds and a squirrel watched from a nearby tree.

“Nubee?” asked the rabbit to the deer.

“Not listening to you, is he Terry?” the voices of the mice resounded.

The squirrel in the tree said, “I think he is about to pounce, Terry!” The birds were in agreement as well. I put my new paws to my ears in disbelief.

“Since when did animals begin to talk?” I roared.

“I'm sorry...” the deer quipped, “did you think you had the monopoly on speech?” I decided that I've had quite enough of this and launched at the deer.

“Here he comes Terry!” shouted the mice as my claws reached for “Terrys” neck and went sailing through him.

The momentum I had given in the pounce carried me right into the stream as my body went sailing through the deer as well. I landed squarely in the water, and with a bruised ego, I padded for shore as laughter exploded from the gathered on-lookers. The laughter died out as I stood among them and shook! Water sprayed all over the audience as they were rolling with laughter, birds and squirrel included. I had the last laugh! The others looked from me, now rolling with laughter to their soaked friends and busted out anew. "Welcome to the garden, newbie," the deer said, "I am Terry and perhaps now you will listen?" I sat back in the grass and listened to the rules of the garden.

It appeared that Terry had been here the longest of the group and only the rabbit stuck around to hear the rules again, "Ain't been here long enuf to have em memberized!" he drawled out, "Jest got kilt last week!"

"Rule number one," started Terry, "almost no one gets hurt, eaten, or killed, again." To demonstrate this, Terry slammed his hoof down on my paw. My reaction was to pull the paw away, but I saw that Terry's hoof disappeared through my paw and as I pulled the paw away it slid through the hoof ghostly.

"Wow!" I thought, "We really are dead... but the water! I felt the water and so did you two!" Terry replied that we are not ghosts and can still feel, taste, smell, drink, run into trees if we are not careful as well as jump into streams. We can even hug and embrace, with that he laid his hoof gently on my paw and stroked the fur there. I felt the hoof and was comforted in this knowledge.

"But! If the intent is to injure then the act is not allowed and the ghost like action will occur." Terry finished.

"You said 'almost no one' gets hurt before." I questioned, "What do you mean by 'almost'?"

"Well, there are exceptions to every rule and this one applies to snakes." Terry explained, but I cut him off.

"Did you say snakes?" I said hopefully.

"Yes, snakes!" he continued, "You can't kill them or eat them, but you can hurt them. You can stomp, shred, or even bite their heads off as they squirm in agony, but they reform themselves and slink away." Terry finished this line with, "I don't know why, but I tell you, they must have made someone pretty mad to get this treatment! Glad I'm not a snake!"

I chuckled to myself, "At least I can have some fun here!" I was so wrapped up in the snake possibilities that I failed to notice Terry had gotten up and was walking away.

"Wait!" I called out, "What about Rule number two and so on?"

The rabbit raised a paw to Terry and exclaimed, "Ooh! I no this un! Kin I tell em? Huh! Kin I?" The deer nodded and then the rabbit shouted, "Rull numba two iz, Dun't ferget Rull numba one!"

With that they walked away into the woods chuckling. I forgot to ask them about food when I turned to see a bowl appear out of nowhere. The closer I got to the bowl, the more aware of this new body I was getting. My sense of smell told me that the bowl contained milk. I made short work of the bowl and set out to explore this new world, "Burp! Excuse me!" I chuckled, as I trotted off, "I can live like this!" As I scouted around I came across other animals scattered about here and there, some of which I had never seen before. Elephants and camels for sure, but also ones with long necks and feathers! I was beginning to think I was the only cat around when I spotted something...

familiar, lying on a rock in the shade of a tree. My renewed eyes focused on the shape as it raised its head and returned my gaze. "Grandpaw!" I yelled out.

Anubis stood as I rushed forward and said, "Slow down there, young cub! I think you might have made a mistake!" He was backing up a bit when I got to him.

"No mistake! I would know you anywhere! It's me!" I cried, "Amun!"

The other cat did a double take at the name, but said, "I had a Grandcat named Amun, sure, but he wasn't a tiger cub!"

I gave him a puzzled look and thought, "Tiger cub, so that's why I'm so big!" I called out again as he was turning to leave the rock, "But it is me Grandpaw Anubis! I am Amun, born of Isis your daughter, and a guardian of the kings! I don't know why I am now as you see me, but believe me! It is I!"

Anubis stopped mid-turn at the mention of Isis and the guardians and said, "Amun? Is this possible? How can it be?" He then came up nose-to-nose and looked into my eyes. "By the Gods! It is you, Amun!" At this recognition he wrapped his paws around me and I got the warmest hug I have ever had. "Your mother and the others will never believe this!" He said, and as he pulled me forward I said, "Mom!"

Grandpaw led me into a wooded area by a running spring, across a log that spanned the stream to a sheer rock cliff face. I saw the face was full of holes and caves. As we approached he called out, "Isis! Ra! I want you to come out and meet someone!" A tear ran down my eye as Mom came into view, followed closely by Ra. They slowly came closer, a little leery of the larger cub, and then Mom recognized me!

"Amun!" she cried and came running the remaining distance. Being considerably larger in this new body had the advantage of being able to handle Mom's headlong leap into me. Had there been any anger in her, she would have sailed right through me, but since there was only love she landed squarely on me and rolled me over into the grass. "I have missed you so much!" she exclaimed, and then she stepped back and took a good look at me. "I told you the communication violation was going to get you in trouble!" she said, matter of factly then added, "Here is the proof that Goddess Bast is not happy with you!"

I asked mom what she meant by that and she continued, "You are a white tiger cub! This means that soon you will be returning to the land of the living!" Mom paused and called over another cat that I had never seen. "Have I got that right Mom?" she said to the other cat.

"Grandmew!" I thought.

"That's right Isis!" she said, "Cursed by Bast he is!" She came up and gave me a hug equal to Grandpaw's earlier and said, "So this is the famous Amun, eh? You have done some pretty wonderful things, but the goddess is pretty strict with her rules!" I looked around and saw other cats some I recognized some I didn't.

Ra came up and put his paws on both sides of my face and said, "Are you really in there, buddy?" Then he punched me in the arm and laughed, "What finally got you, scorpion, snake, or thief?" he asked. I told him about the last encounter with the snake and he took the opportunity to reiterate Rule number one's exception.

"Believe me..." I said chuckling, "The first one I see better run faster than me!" I turned my attention once again to the new female, "So, Grandmew..." I asked, "Why a tiger cub?" She replied that the tiger cub is sacred and is favored of Bast. "Favored?" I asked, puzzled, "How can I be favored and cursed at the same time?"

Grandmew said, "The proof that you are favored is why you are a tiger cub, you are a white cub because of the violation. The communication violation punishment alone would cause you not to be here." At this she pointed a claw in a downward movement. My eyes got wide and she nodded, "Yes, there is another place, and it is not so pleasant! I said that you had done some good things as well, like getting the cats back into the palace, and getting justice for a human that would have been a great king. These deeds gained you the favor of Bast, but a violation is a violation and this was the only way she could reward you and punish you at the same time. Gods hate to be hypocritical!" I thanked Grandmew for the information and hugged her again.

"When can I expect to be returned?" I asked.

"I wouldn't worry about that too much." Grandpaw cut in, "The main thing is to enjoy the time that you have!"

The others nodded in agreement, then Mom said, "There is someone else here that I would like for you to meet before you return..." she paused then said, "your father."

A large cat came through the gathered crowd and glanced at Mom for a second, then advanced up to me. "Well!" Horus said, "You don't look anything like me!" then, looking back at Mom again said, "Are you sure he's mine?" When he turned back, he was grinning from ear to ear and gave me a wink. His paws wrapped around my neck and he gave me one of the longest and tightest hugs I have ever had!

The tear running down my face matched the one running down his. "My Dad!" I visited with Great Grandpaws, Great Grandmews, uncles and aunts till my head was spinning. "Wow!" I thought, "This is beyond my greatest expectations!" It was amazing the amount of knowledge that was around me and I wanted to soak up as much as possible before I had to leave. Dad and I talked about things he did as he grew as well as Grandpaw, and Great Grandpaw. We all sat around the cliff passing stories, but all were amazed into silence as I retold my final encounter with Ay. When I told them of my communicating with the humans with glyphs and gestures they shook their heads in disapproval, but laughed when I demonstrated the gesture across the neck that I had given Ay. They roared with so much laughter that the females called for us to keep it down.

"It is suppose to be peaceful here!" they called out, snickering, "So how about a little peace... and quiet!" With that they began their own laughter roar that rivaled ours!

I got thirsty and strolled to the spring for a drink followed by most of the others, still laughing. I looked up at the sky and noticed that it was turning dark. "There is still night here in the garden?" I asked, puzzled.

Horus answered, "It just signals a time of rest for those who want it. Not that we need it here, but some like to have a schedule to follow, speaking of schedules are you hungry?" Horus continued, "All you have to do is think "hungry" and food appears. Milk that is, but it is still filling and very tasty."

"Now I know why that bowl appeared out of nowhere." I thought. So as if to test this out I concentrated and a bowl appeared just in front of me. Dad was right about how good it tasted and soon I had lapped the bowl clean. We rejoined the group and I stretched out in the grass, Ra came over and lay down next to me.

"I think a nap is in order." he said, "Lets go hunting for snake when we wake!"

With a big yawn I said, "I can't wait!" I rolled over onto my stomach and placed my head on my paws. As my eyes began to get heavy I thought I saw another tiger cub come towards me from the clearing, but this one was orange. I watched it approach and before

I slipped away I could swear that something looked... familiar. After all the discoveries I had made, it didn't take long before I was fast asleep.

## Chapter Two

It was as if I started to dream immediately. I stood in front of stairs that looked like they led up into the sky, but no sooner had I climbed a few steps, suddenly I was at the top. There before me was an immensely large room that had no ceiling, and in the center of the room was what appeared to be a padded throne. What sat upon the throne was, of all things a larger version of me! Only with orange and black stripes and white under the face and stomach. I was looking around in amazement when the tiger spoke, "Don't be afraid, Amun. Please, come forward."

I had never realized it before, but my tail had kind of disappeared between my legs as I had entered the room. "Chicken tail!" I thought, "Give me away, will you!" The tiger chuckled at this and it was clear that it had read my thoughts, but what did you expect from a Goddess!

"You are very perceptive, Amun. Yes, I am Bast." she mused, "Besides being a guardian for all animals, I am also caretaker for the garden." She made a motion for me to sit next to her, and a new padded throne appeared beside her. Raising an eyebrow at this feat I proceeded forward and jumped up beside her. "Terry explained to you the rules of the garden..." she began, "now it is time for you to learn the rules of your punishment."

Before she began I gulped and asked, "This isn't a dream, is it?" Bast lowered her head to look me in the eyes and said, "No, my child, this is the beginning! Your Grandmew was correct in her explanation that you have gained my favor by performing selfless deeds. This favor means you will be granted the power of "Foresight" that will aid you in the tasks you must perform." she said, and then she added, because she read my thoughts, "The tasks you must perform due to your violations." Bast saw me wince a bit and said, "Believe me, Amun, this is far better than the alternative!" She didn't have to glance down to bring that point home, but she did. "For your violation of communicating with the humans you must return to the land of the living eight more times. I will select the time when you will be reborn and into which form, but you can rest assured that you will always be some form of cat. Now..." she continued, "the rules!"

"You must live each life to its conclusion, suicidal cats are not allowed! In each life there will be an injustice that needs to be prevented or avenged. You must use the foresight to decide which is appropriate. You cannot change the course of history, just like you could not save your friend, Tut, from events that had been set in place." She paused at this and explained, "You don't have the power to change history, only enhance it. King Tut was destined to die as he did, but you helped to make him live forever, thus enhancing history." I nodded a vague understanding and she continued. "In fulfilling your tasks you will be granted one violation per life, so use it wisely." As she explained the rules I couldn't help but to think of how cumbersome this all would be and drifted to the other cub. Bast cleared her throat, "Ahem!"

She asked if I had questions other than the ones she had read in my head. I asked about all the new families this would create for me, and how overwhelming it would be

for me to see more loved ones die over and over again! “Sure you did bring this upon yourself, but I am not a cruel goddess.” Bast said, “You will not produce any offspring or become attached to any other cats in the process of your tasks. As for your birth, your mother in all new lives will be me. I will impart to you, as you wean, all matters of the time in which you are born.”

“Before you begin your next journey do you have any further questions of me, my son?” Bast asked.

“Just one.” I said, “Who was the orange cub I saw before I fell asleep?”

The surrounding area started to become all fuzzy and dark, but before I lost consciousness I heard her reply, “You’ll find out, dear Amun...”

Thank you for reading this First in a series of adventures of Amun the cursed cat. Please check back as I continue to publish the rest of his lives.

Bob

Check out my other works at my author page at:

<http://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/BobDixon>