

ISIS AND OSIRIS

Rise of Egypt

Prologue

The day would come that in the mouths of all people would be the story of how the throne of the greatest civilization on earth came into their land and recovered the dismembered pieces of her lover. Of how she reassembled him and bore him a son. The magnificent story of Isis and Osiris brought hope to the hopeless, joy to the joyless, and united the upper and lower kingdoms with universal common experience.

Great is the story of their love. And of her wrath!

But first, their bed must be prepared...

1. Reflections

The Great Flood had raised the level of the sea to permanently inundate the surrounding coasts and to cover the once majestic land of Tartarus.

Two once powerful men sat staring at now peaceful moonlight reflections off this bringer of death and destruction.

The first man sat thinking *<Leaving you is the hardest thing I have ever done - But I must do what I must do and you must do what you must do - These things being done, we will be reunited one day - I swear it! - When your husband is dead, I shall come to you - If my feet betray me, I will crawl to you on my hands - But I shall come.>*

The second, *<I hurt with the unbearable pain of losing everything - All hope, all dreams, all that I ever accomplished - all that I was, all gone forever do?>*

The first man asked the second, "Are you going to be all right?"

The reply was unending silence.

Dionysus understood. He said, "It *had* to be done, Charon. Call me if you want to talk. I'll be with the others." He rose and walked toward the campfire where the boy, Djoser, cooked the fish which he and Pilot Rhodos had caught.

Djoser, as usual, was excited and animated. "Look what Rhodos and I caught! She taught me how to swim and catch fish. I'm going to excel at both. Oceanids are wonderful teachers, but she doesn't want to go to Kemet with me. 'Not enough water,' she said. I told her of the greatest river in the world and the great delta it empties into, but 'nooo', she will not even discuss it. But she will change her mind, someday!"

Rhodos came ambling up, bringing roots and herbs. "Did I hear my name?"

Djoser jumped up and scurried over to retrieve the foodstuff she had gathered. He slathered her with compliments which she graciously accepted but she quickly turned her attention to Dionysus. "How is Charon doing?"

"He's rolling in self-pity. Like he's the first person to lose everything. He'll get over it."

"I'll take him food when it's ready."

"Maybe give him some intimate sympathy after he eats."

She laughed. "I understand what Dexithea saw in him but he's not my type! He's exactly what a Telchine wants, though. Powerful and exciting. But I don't want to be around when his despair turns to rage. There will be destruction."

Dionysus reflected. "He is still the little server boy wanting a chance to be big in the organization. Well, he did it! Bigger than he ever dreamed of. Now it's gone. Drowned by a flood. Gone with the port. Gone with the Olympians. Submerged with all the lands of Tartarus and much of the civilized world."

He paused. "Now *I'm* getting sad. Can I have some intimate sympathy?"

Djoser piped up, "What about me, Pilot Rhodos? Can I have some intimate sympathy, too?"

Rhodos stood and gathered food for Charon. "Men! You are all pigs!" She glanced at Djoser and added, "Even the pre-men." She took Charon the food which he accepted. He ate in silence as she sat beside him, both looking at sad reflections on a moonlit sea. A sea now covering everything the two had ever known.

He was a good man in desperate need of comfort. Moonlight reflected off the water. She was an Oceanid. She could not help herself.

~ Sunrise ~

Pilot Rhodos commanded Airboat 313 into the clouds along with its three passengers. She looked at the three and asked, "Shall I sing a flying song?"

Charon replied, "Some other time, Sweet. The sound of the wind is music enough, for now."

"Very well, Lord Charon. But I am a Pilot; not a 'Sweet.'"

Dionysus chuckled under his breath. "Choke on *that*, Charon!"

Charon replied, "I stand corrected, Pilot Rhodos."

After a while, Dionysus said, "There's the river. Let's turn north and find the Northern Dilation. We should be able to see it from up here."

Pilot Rhodos said, "Airboat 313 is turning due north and holding until Northern Dilation."

They flew on.

"There!" Djoser exclaimed. "The river is getting very wide. Is *that* what we are looking for?"

"Tallstone should be due east," Dionysus said.

Rhodos sailed on until she was directly over the Northern Dilation. "Airboat 313 is turning due east and holding until Tallstone Camp."

Dionysus scanned the horizon with anticipation. <Tallstone camp - The tall stone - Pumi's stone table - Master-of-masters Seth - Scholars of all knowledge - Winter solstice festivals - The gathering of all tribes - From this place, Kiyā and her children became Titans - The place from where all good things flowed - Tallstone! Annihilated by Olympian gods - I shall despair with you, Charon - Between us, we can cry tears to fill a mighty river - But first, I must retrieve the chest - I so swore.>

Djoser watched Rhodos's every move. At first, she was irritated; thinking he was a boy staring at a woman's body. Then she realized he was teaching himself how to pilot an airboat. She admonished him for not asking to be trained from the beginning and taught him during the time they had remaining. She explained what different cloud formations portended, how to measure wind speed and

direction, the altitude different birds flew, and how to properly tend the fire in the furnace. Djoser was an apt student, both in how to handle an airboat and, hopefully, how to become of interest to a woman. They sailed on.

Rhodos saw it; the fields of Tallstone.

Soon, Dionysus exclaimed, "There it is! I see it! We are headed straight to the tall stone hill!"

Rhodos announced, "Airboat 313 is on approach to Tallstone Camp." She asked Djoser to calculate the rate of descent she should initiate and then flooded his brain with calculations and things to do as they made their approach. She used the calculations Djoser had more or less guessed at. The Airboat overshot the desired landing site but Pilot Rhodos congratulated Djoser on a good first-time landing. The boy was ecstatic. Oceanids are wonderful teachers.

Dionysus was an accomplished landing assistant and he taught Djoser how to assist. Airboat 313 landed, was tethered, and the passengers debarked. They walked to the remains of a once-great civilization.

Dionysus made camp in front of the burned-out Welcome House.

Rhodos told them, "I'll prepare a meal and then I'm returning to Northport. The pilots have a lot going on and I'm already falling behind. It was my pleasure bringing you here, but you are now on your own."

Djoser inquired if he would be allowed to assist her in preparing the meal.

Rhodos answered, "Of course, you may. We can discuss our flight as we prepare the food."

"Wonderful!" *<We can also discuss when you will come to Kemet.>*

The camp was made, the food prepared, served, and eaten. The three males then walked Pilot Rhodos to her airboat, goodbyes were offered, and well wishes made. Rhodos entered her airboat, pulled the tethering ropes on board, began her ascent, waved goodbye, and threw a kiss. The men watched in silence as the airboat climbed to altitude and began its long flight home.

Djoser thought *<She blew the kiss to me! It was for me! I know it was! - She will someday come to Kemet and give me whatever intimate sympathy is! - She will help make me the man that lord Dionysus is going to teach me to become!>*

Charon thought *<What lies before me can never be as great as that which lies behind me - Ariadne, may you die and suffer eternally in the darkness of Tartarus - May I claw my way out of this abyss into which you have cast me!>*

Dionysus thought *<The last story is ended - The new one begins - And Ariadne, it will include us both! - I swear it!>*

2. Carrying the Covenant

Dionysus said, "Come with me, Djoser. Let's go find this chest. I wasn't in my best shape when I hid it. Charon, you inspect the area. See if anything is salvageable. Set up for an overnight stay."

Charon grunted acquiescence and set off to explore the surrounding area.

Djoser followed Dionysus bantering about pilots, Oceanids, and "what exactly does 'intimate sympathy' mean? It sounds interesting."

<Just like me when I was that age.> Dionysus retraced his steps from the charred Welcome House as best he could. The house had been in flames when he had entered and collapsed around him as he was pulling the chest out the front door. He remembered his only thoughts were to get it into the grove

of woods and hide it. He also remembered being more-or-less incoherent. *<Hmm - Where would I have headed? - The chest was heavy - Which way?>*

He second-guessed the path he was likely to have taken.

Djoser ran through the woods, looking through the underbrush. He was still a boy; reckless and energetic. "Is this it? It looks like a yellow metal box of some kind!"

Dionysus hurried over to Djoser and fell to his knees. *<Here it is - The golden chest of Tallstone - Containing the writings of Pumi --- The teachings of Kiya - The knowledge of the scholars - In a wooden chest wrapped in gold - The last remains of the beginning of our great journey toward civilization.>*

Dionysus quietly said to Djoser, "I made a covenant with a great man that if Tallstone were destroyed, I would save this chest. I wasn't told what to do with it. Just save it. So, young Djoser, now that it is saved, what shall I do with it?"

Djoser was a son of a chief whom some already addressed as King Nebka of Kemet. Djoser was young and high-spirited but he was not dumb, and he knew when to play the part of a chief's son. He replied, "Your responsibility is heavy. Take it to Kemet and have Brother Hotep make a proper enclosure for it. A library, maybe. Like the one in which it was stored. The people of Kemet would be honored to protect such a great treasure."

Dionysus looked upon Djoser with renewed admiration. *<Trying to seduce Rhodos when you don't even know what seduction is - Playing the great statesman without a great state to back you up - You're not even officially a prince yet you understand the importance of what I have before me - We are going to do well together, young Djoser - Quite well.>*

He said, "Yes! Of course! You are correct. I had not thought that far into the future. We now have a plan. I *love* plans. To Kemet, young king-to-be Djoser. Let's be off to Kemet with our golden chest."

The two carried it back to the campsite. Charon had not yet returned.

Dionysus sat thinking as Djoser collected wood for a fire. Finally, Dionysus said, "Build a frame that we can set the chest in. Build it so we can attach poles on both sides and use the poles to carry the chest. Tomorrow, we will go to Urfa and maybe find horses to pull your construction.

Charon returned to the small fire. Somberly he said, "I scavenged some swords. They will be more useful than daggers against large predators. I found a lot of things; most best left untouched. I found nothing living. To see the remains of Tallstone in person is more sobering than an abstract discussion. How can men do such things?"

Dionysus replied, "The gods delighted in it, Charon. But let's turn our concerns from our dark past toward our bright future. The world awaits us. We begin our journey at sunrise. Let's explore what remains of Urfa and find treasures to delight our senses, maybe a few kegs of wine and, hopefully, a couple of horses. Urfa had a developed ranching program. There are probably horses still around. A new world awaits us. Let's make it better this time!"

Charon muttered, "Nothing can surpass Olympus Towers."

"I imagine Ariadne is doing quite well in Graikoi."

"Your old lover?" Charon questioned.

Dionysus, taken by surprise, replied, "My old friend," and left it at that.

Djoser, sensing conflict, quickly offered, "Let's test my carrying frame. I'm pleased with myself. I hope it's satisfactory."

The two men hoisted the golden chest using the poles and framework Djoser had hastily constructed. It was more than satisfactory. The two men retired for the night.

Djoser set off to explore the moonlit remains of Tallstone. He found the tall stone obelisk that had been pushed from the crest of the hill during the annihilation; the tall stone from which the camp had taken its name. He sat down to contemplate the engravings on the stone. The head of a lion was carved at the base; above it, a serpent wrapped itself around the obelisk. Above the serpent was carved an auroch on one side and a scorpion on the other. Djoser found them intriguing. *<This obelisk must have been impressive standing on the hill in the sunlight - It could be seen from everywhere - Why were these creatures carved on it? - Someone knows - I shall find out their meaning - There is so much to know and I must know everything - I am the son of a chief - Maybe by now a king - If Kemet is to become a great kingdom, then I must know everything!>*

He sat staring at the obelisk until sleep overcame him.

~ Sunrise ~

The three began their trek in single file. Djoser was in the lead, eagerly exploring the countryside. Firsthand knowledge of Tallstone and Urfa would work to his advantage as he grew into adulthood and took on greater responsibilities. Dionysus and Charon followed, with the transport poles on their shoulders. Each of the travelers carried their usual traveling bag but now each carried the sword and spear which Charon had scavenged.

They did not hurry. It was late afternoon before they faced the entrance to Urfa, the oldest city on earth, and where they stood in silent appreciation.

Dionysus spoke, "Djoser, go find their ranch. They had a large one. It's probably to the south. See if any roads are of interest. Horses will be a bonus. I'll make camp in front of that large building. Charon, you scout for any signs of life. I'll have us a meal by the time you return."

"I love a plan," Charon muttered as he dropped his backpack, but retained his spear, and set off to explore the burned-out buildings.

Djoser was already trotting down the broad avenue leading south.

The fire was burning and the food was cooking when Charon returned. He sat down cross-legged across from Dionysus and pulled a piece of meat from the spit. "Well, someone's still around. The buildings were scavenged not too long ago. Savages, probably."

"The city was wiped out less than a year ago. There would have been survivors. Not that many, but they will be around somewhere. Maybe nearby. They have little reason to believe we aren't here to kill them. We should keep the fire burning and take turns keeping watch tonight." He paused. "Djoser's not back yet. It's late. I should not have sent him out by himself. He's still a boy and probably not skilled in self-defense. I'll head out and try to find him."

Charon stood and muttered, "I'll go with you."

But as they prepared to go, Djoser appeared in the distance. He had a following. Djoser led his troupe to the fire and with great flourish announced, "All right, people with no names, this is Olympian Dionysus and Lord Charon of Port Olympus!"

The people with no names; four men, four women, and their children; fell to their knees and placed their foreheads on the ground, hands grasped in supplication.

Dionysus looked at Djoser for some type of explanation.

Djoser shrugged. "I didn't make it to the ranch, but I am told many people live down that way, and they have horses. I met that man on the road," he said as he pointed to the man closest to them. "We had an interesting conversation. He and his friends and their wives are shunned because they won't do and say the right things, or something like that. I don't understand all of it. They don't use their names anymore because they are ashamed or something. He gathered his friends and they come to you for their final judgment. They are ready to die if that is what you require. I told them I didn't think that would be necessary but that I would make introductions."

Dionysus looked at Charon for guidance. Charon shook his head in bewilderment.

Dionysus said to Djoser, "Prepare drink for them." He then walked to the first man, took both his hands, and gently pulled him up. The man sat back on his haunches but kept his gaze riveted to the ground. "I am Titan Dionysus. I come with peace and goodwill to all who will receive it. Look at me. Tell your brothers and sisters to sit upright. Tell me your story."

The man looked at Dionysus with pained eyes. He said, "Brothers, sit up! Wives and children, too!"

In silence, they raised to a sitting position.

The man told of the destruction of Urfa. "I was once Armstrong of the Clan of the Serpent. I was trained in the ways of war in the lands of the gods. The day came we were commanded to travel to the City of Urfa, kill all of its inhabitants, and burn the accursed city to the ground. These things I did. I killed men and women. I killed babies in the arms of their mothers. I came to a woman with her two small children trembling behind her. She was crouched and held a small dagger pointed toward me. Daring me to approach, daring me to harm her children. There was hatred in her eyes, not fear, but pure, unknowable hatred. I looked into her eyes and saw myself, Armstrong of the Clan of the Serpent, once a proud and honorable man. What had I become? In her eyes, I saw what I had become. I pointed her away from the slaughter and protected her as she and her children scurried away. I killed one of my own men who tried to pursue us. I found a safe place for her and returned to save those that I could. There were so few left to save. So few. I led the army away from the field of slaughter. I commanded, in loud voice, that all here were dead. Return to the river. We have done what we were commanded to do. So, they left. I remained behind as did Fleetfoot, whose story is as is mine. We found two brothers alive but unconscious. They had been beaten by their commanders for refusing to kill as they had been commanded. We are unworthy of names. We are unworthy of life. Judge us as you will."

Dionysus asked, "And the women?"

"My wife is the woman I did not kill. The wives of my brothers came to them because they would not worship the gods of Urfa, as will not we four brothers."

Dionysus asked, "The gods of Urfa?"

"All of them; Zeus, Poseidon, Aries, Hera, Persephone, Hestia, Aphrodite, Athena. All of them! The Urfa Shaman taught his people to honor and worship the very gods who ordered their destruction. We eight could not, would not, do that. The others turned against us. Spat on us. Taunted us. Those that thought as we either changed their minds or became silent. We were eventually driven from the ranch and learned to live in the remains of the city. Now, the gods have returned to judge us! Judge as you will!"

Dionysus replied, "I see. But we are not gods come to judge." *<What is going on here? - What have we stumbled into?>*

He glanced at Charon, seeking some hint of how to proceed.

Charon rose to his full height and with glazed eyes spoke in a monotone. "This is your judgment. You will follow me to the land of Kemet. You will build me a city of splendor greater than Urfa at its mightiest. You will take up your swords but only to protect your families. I wash away your old names. Your names are Enas, Dyo, Tria, and Tessera."

Charon looked at Djoser. "Take the children away to a quiet place. Teach them the language of Kemet. Teach them the songs the mothers sing to their children. Teach them the things the children of Kemet know. You tarry! Take them away. NOW!"

Djoser signaled the children to follow him. He led them toward the abandoned fountain at the entrance to the city.

Charon looked at Dionysus. "Take the women away and learn what you can of the nature of those remaining in Urfa. Go to those people tomorrow and obtain four wagons filled with the supplies we will need for our journey. Accept any who wish to join us and whom these people will accept into their company. You tarry. Do it! NOW!"

Dionysus rose and signaled the women to follow him to the burned-out administration building. *<We will talk tomorrow, brother Charon - You overstep your bounds - But you made a plan, and I didn't - But let's don't let commanding me become a habit.>*

Charon looked at Enas. "Gather your brothers around the fire. We will plan for our coming journey and what you shall do when we arrive."

So, it was commanded. So, it was done.

~ Sunrise ~

Dionysus, Charon, and Djoser shared a morning meal and discussed the previous evening.

Finally, Charon offered, "My apologies for commanding you what to do last night, Dionysus. I was in the fog of planning. I couldn't stop to think. The words were coming out too fast."

Djoser brazenly interrupted, "You had not thought all of that through? You were just talking as the words formed in your mind? How do you do that?!"

Dionysus chuckled. "That's his great gift; 'talk, then think.' It's what got him to the top of the world." He hesitated. "But now, I need to meet these fine people at Urfa Ranch. They sound like an interesting group."

Djoser jumped up. "Can I go with you?" He hesitated and looked at Charon, "Or should I stay with you, Lord Charon, and learn your ways?"

Dionysus replied, "Stay with Lord Charon. He must feed, organize, and train his people. You might be of help."

Charon grunted agreement. In the distance, Enas was rising.

~ Urfa Ranch ~

Dionysus walked toward the Urfa Ranch. *<Four wagons filled with supplies - Animals to pull them - Horses for us to ride - Accept any who wish to immigrate - It sounds easy when you say it, Charon, - Not so easy when you have to negotiate it>*

He walked on. *<Negotiate? I don't have to negotiate - I am a god - According to the women, these people are slaves to the gods - All I have to do is convince them that I am a god - Maybe the biggest god of all - Which, of course, I was! - I wonder if any of these people saw Poseidon obey my command at Tallstone, that time?>*

He walked on. *<Not a great plan but I'm good at acting!>*

He walked on. In the distance, he heard human activity. *<Here we go - You may be dead, Queen Kiya, but be with me, anyway!>*

He entered the clearing, stopped, stood tall, and looked around feigning disgust. *<I should have brought a big walking staff - That would have been a great prop!>*

Finally, a child noticed him and came running over to greet him.

Dionysus said to the girl, "I am the great God Dionysus. Bring your leader to me!"

The girl turned and ran back toward a large hut.

Soon after, a woman ran out, cautiously followed by a man.

She said, "Great God Dionysus, I am Noam, a lowly servant of the gods. I saw you command God Poseidon at Tallstone. I welcome you to our insignificant home." She prostrated herself before him.

"Rise up, woman. I am pleased to see a loyal follower, such as yourself. The man came closer. *<In the name of the gods, is that you, Enosh?>*

The man prostrated himself beside his now-standing wife. Dionysus said, "You are Shaman Enosh, son of Master-of-Masters Seth of Tallstone. Rise up, Enosh!"

The man rose; excited to be so recognized by Dionysus. "Yes, yes, God Dionysus. I am so proud to be in your glorious presence."

<Kiya, I don't know how to proceed! - Help me!>

"You are a Titan! Carry out your orders!"

Dionysus asked, "Are you the most powerful person in Urfa, Enosh?"

"I lead the people here, Great God. They come to me for day-to-day decisions and guidance. Grand Master Shaman Teumessian is our great master, of course. He tells us what the gods desire us to do. He judges our actions to keep us in accordance with the wishes of the gods."

<This is worse than I had imagined - I should tell these people to come to their senses, but I need four wagons full of supplies - Do I save these people from themselves and Teumessian or get the wagons? - Can I do both? - What do I do, Kiya?>

"Don't be melodramatic, Dionysus. Do what is right."

Dionysus said, "Shaman Enosh, announce to Grand Master Shaman Teumessian that I have come to speak to him. He will receive me when the sun reaches its highest. Go now and wait with him. NOW!"

Enosh scurried away.

"Noam, take me into your house and tell me of your life in Urfa."

Noam excitedly led him into her hut. It was filled with metal and wooden statues of the various gods. She had many small bowls containing god-coins. She was thrilled to show the merchandise to Dionysus. "These are idols the great God Hera delivered to me to trade with the people of Urfa. After the wrath of the gods purified Urfa of its disobedient people, I went through what remained of the

houses and took the statues with me for safekeeping. The devout come to me to obtain an appropriate idol whenever bad fortune came upon them." She expressed horror when she realized that she did not have any statues of Dionysus.

Dionysus said, "That is my desire, Noam. I am so far above the other gods, I need no idol. <You are encouraging her, Dionysus - Don't encourage her - Save her from herself - Purified Urfa?!>

She relaxed and rambled on for a while but suddenly asked, "Will you bless my idols, God Dionysus? Will you impart your great power to them?"

He thought <Don't encourage her, Dionysus - Save her from herself - Kiya?!>

But he said, "Stand in front of me, Noam. I will place my hands on your shoulders. My blessing shall flow through your words to the idols.

She gasped with joy. "Oh, great God Dionysus. You pay me and my people such great honor." She turned to face the bulk of her merchandise, bowed her head, and closed her eyes. When she felt his hands on her shoulders, she began. "Oh, great and merciful gods. Hear my words and accept them with my dedication and admiration. From you, all blessings flow. You make the sun to rise and the sky to rain. Through our sacrifices at the Rites of God Hera, God Persephone causes the earth to produce its great bounty. God Zeus shows the love of the Gods for us. God Aries brings the wrath of the gods to the unbelieving. God Hestia watches over our home, hearth, and love for one another. God Athena shows us the glory of the Gods. Aphrodite inspires the warm, nurturing, innocent love of a woman for her husband. Through the power and glory of God Dionysus, I beseech you all to bless these likenesses of you so that the people can worship them and be blessed. In the name of all the gods, please bless these idols, in your names. Amen."

<I'm going to be sick!>

She turned to face him and anxiously asked. "Was my blessing satisfactory, God Dionysus? Was the praise great enough? It wasn't, was it? I did not offer enough praise. Let me try again. I will do much better."

"Your blessing was sufficient, Noam. The gods do not deserve the honors you bestow upon them."

Noam was delighted. "My customers are going to be SOO excited!" she said.

Dionysus said, "It is almost high-sun. I don't want to keep the Shaman waiting."

Noam led him from her hut and down the road to the south. They walked past other huts and came upon a large, opulent house surrounded by a fence. "This is our Temple. Grand Master Shaman Teumessian lives here and receives the men throughout the day. A woman cannot enter through the gate. The women meet in the pasture where Shaman Teumessian teaches us each quarter moon."

"Oh, and why cannot women enter the temple?"

"Because we would tempt the men to think impure thoughts with our presence. One should always think pure thoughts around the gods."

"Thank you, Noam. You have been most pleasing. You may go."

Noam curtsied deeply. "You are merciful and kind, God Dionysus." She giggled and said, "And you have not aged one day since I first saw you meet with Mother Azura." She quickly turned and began her walk back to her hut.

Dionysus was early. He stood at the double gates of the temple. *<You had a choice once, Oceanus; destroy the Olympians or let them live - You let them live - But, in the end, you destroyed them, anyway - I could command my four once-warriors to become warriors again - Kill Teumessian and Enosh and any other rabid followers - To educate the people of Urfa - To what end? - The good would become the evil it sought to eliminate - And save them from what? Themselves? - What difference what they believe? They believe in something - That's better than believing in nothing - That their beliefs are not founded in truth, what difference? - Who am I to judge? - Their truth is not MY truth - They see the gods as the gods saw themselves - Cry out for your people, Valki of Urfa!>*

A bell began tolling from the temple roof. Twelve young boys dressed in purple tunics with gold sashes marched in double file from the house flying purple and gold flags before them. They marched to the gate and upon reaching it, turned smartly to face one another. Two boys continued to the gates and opened them, standing at attention and waiting for their distinguished visitor to enter. Dionysus entered and began walking toward the temple. The boys turned in unison and escorted him to the massive front doors of the temple. Arriving, two boys opened the doors for him. Inside stood Enosh. Across the massive room, in front of a massive altar, stood a man in a leather robe trimmed with fox fur and with a fox-head crown, hands crossed, holding a golden sepulture. Dionysus made no motion to move; he stood taking in the sights. *<Rhea, mother of Olympians, there are monsters other than YOUR children - Despair in the knowing!>*

The bells continued ringing. Dionysus straightened to his full height, became a god, nodded to Enosh, and fell in behind Enosh on their march to the altar. *<They are what they are - I cannot change them.>*

Enosh peeled away when they reached Teumessian. Dionysus stopped, facing the Shaman. The Shaman raised his hand, the bells stopped ringing. Dionysus locked eyes with the Shaman and held out his right hand, palm down.

The Shaman instinctively kneeled and kissed the outstretched hand.

"Rise up, Master Shaman Teumessian so that I may gaze upon you. Your deeds have reached the highest places of the gods, even to the chamber of the mighty Zeus, himself. All are most pleased with you." *<I have already lost my righteousness - A few more lies won't add too much weight - Lie on, Dionysus - Lie on!>*

He continued, "But, too, have we heard that there are unbelievers in this place. Those who do not bow to your authority, those who do not recognize the wisdom of your words. Is this true?"

Teumessian began, "Oh, great and merciful God Dionysus. I have tried, in vain, ..."

Dionysus let him ramble on and then interrupted with, "Enough! Unbelievers remain in your land. The Gods will not have it! God Athena wishes to send God Aries and his hordes to purify this land once and for all, but I, God Dionysus, will not allow it. Most unfaithful people of Urfa have paid for their callousness towards the Gods. I will not let the remaining few unworthy destroy the remaining worthy. This, then, is what shall be done. My attendants have already found four men and four women who are unworthy to remain here. You will know of others. I shall take four wagons filled with provisions. I will lead all the unworthy in your city out of the lands of the gods and into a pagan land where I shall have them build a great city. When they have finished the city, they will look upon it with great pride, saying 'we have built this city without the help of the gods.' I shall send them into their city to dance naked through the streets in celebration. As they dance, I shall say unto them, 'you have disrespected the gods. You did not listen to the teachings of Grand Shaman Teumessian. You mocked his righteousness. For this disrespect, I, God Dionysus, bring this upon you!' And I shall make the sky rain down fire. The fire will rain upon them even as they scream out 'forgive us, forgive us, we knew not what we did. We will heed the teachings of the righteous Shaman.' But I will not forgive them. My

wrath shall rain down upon them in your name until they die their agonizing deaths!" He had been watching Teumessian pupils dilate, his breathing rate increase, his leaning slightly forward. Dionysus fabricated his story to Teumessian's fantasy. "Do you support this plan, Great Shaman?"

"Oh, yes. Yes! The Gods are all-wise and merciful. Your will be done. I shall gather the unbelievers upon your command. Your plan is glorious!"

"Then, so be it! Have four wagons in your pasture prepared for loading by my attendants tomorrow at high-sun. I will command the eight unrighteous to labor thereby filling the wagons. They will need beasts to pull the wagons. I will need three fine horses for me and my two attendants to lead the vermin away. Bring all who do not respect your words so that they, too, can be driven from your land. When I have rid your land of these people, then Urfa will be paradise; all listening to your teachings with great delight. I shall tell the gods of this. They will want to know." With that, Dionysus once more extended his hand, palm down, toward the Shaman.

The Shaman was all too eager to kneel and kiss it.

~

Enosh led Dionysus from the temple.

Dionysus commanded, "Show me the pastures where we will meet tomorrow. Do you have horses?"

Enosh was eager to please. He had heard all that had transpired in the temple and knew Teumessian was desperate to please the god. "Oh, yes, my god. We have many fine horses and four nice wagons with beasts of all manner to pull them and provisions to fill them. We will turn here," he said pointing to the left, "to go to the pastures. The ranch was not damaged in any way by the avengers. Master Shaman Teumessian teaches us that this was the will of God Hestia so the believers could take refuge here after her vengeance against the wrongdoers was complete. 'Great are the gifts of the merciful gods to the faithful.'"

They came to the gates of a fence surrounding a pasture stretching as far as one could see. Enosh said, "These are our pastures. They contain our cattle and horses and sheep and goats and chickens and other, lesser animals. The women, of course, work the einkorn fields to the east."

They entered through the gates and walked toward several large barns. Upon reaching the first barn, Noam said, "Here is where the women gather at sunrise after each quarter moon. Great Shaman Teumessian leads us in prayer to the god of our choice and then teaches us the proper role of women in society." She laughed. "I, of course, always wish to invoke the love of god Hestia. I have seen first-hand the full measure of her wrath and experienced first-hand the measure of her love. She allowed me to witness the death of Azura-the-Faithless as she was roasted alive over the open pit. Azura had tried to eliminate the living sacrifices at the Great Solstice Rites of Hera so necessary for us to grow bountiful crops. Grand Shaman Teumessian had warned Azura to repent, but she persisted."

Dionysus listened in horror, but without comment. *<Half-truths twisted into lies of justification!>*

He said, "I see. May I inspect the horses?"

Enosh led him to another barn that stabled a half dozen horses, any of which would be suitable for himself, Charon, and Djoser. They inspected and talked until Dionysus said, "You have both been worthy hosts. I shall...", he lied, "... certainly tell God Hestia and the others of your faithfulness." *<They are all dead now - Drowned in the great flood of Oceanus - But you don't know that and if you did, would it change your beliefs? - I think not!>*

Noam's heart fluttered. Enosh stammered, "Th-thank you, great merciful god."

"By the way, why does Shaman Teumessian wear that headpiece made of fox?"

Enosh answered, "Because, great god Dionysus, the fox is the cleverest of gods' creatures. That's why."

Dionysus answered, "Yes, of course."

They walked with Dionysus out of the pasture to the edge of the ranch.

Noam explained, "We don't like to get near the old city. The 'Others' may be out there, you know. Those horrible disbelievers."

He replied, "Sweet Noam, tomorrow, I will lead the disbelievers and all who question the true believers out of your land. You will be free of these 'Others' and you can then live your lives in the glorious peace and happiness of a same-thinking people."

Noam sighed a happy, self-righteous sigh. "You are righteous and merciful, God Dionysus. I praise your name." She coquettishly smiled a little smile.

Dionysus then nodded to Enosh and set off to return to the unbelievers waiting at the entrance of the once-city.

~

Dionysus arrived at the camp. There had been a shift in mood. Charon was not especially happy, but he did not appear to be in the depths of despair. The four wives were happily preparing the evening's meal. Djoser had the children playing some kind of Kemetian game. Enas and his brothers were planning the route from Urfa to the lands of Kemet.

Charon appeared to become almost happy as Dionysus recounted his day.

Dionysus then went to the women and told *them* the plan. He used his skills to convince them that no person should be refused acceptance by the group, even people who might have been mean to them. This was the way of enlightened people such as themselves. They were commanded to love *everyone*, even those they did not like! They tacitly agreed.

All was going well.

~ Sunrise ~

The soon-to-be outcasts ate their morning meal.

Dionysus instructed them. "The men will march single file from here to the pastures. The wives will march single-file beside their man to their right. Charon will march in the rear next to Tesseractswife. Keep your sword in full view," he said, looking at Charon. "The people must believe that the sword is to keep the eight under control, but not so sure that it would not be used against them if they interfered. Djoser, you march next to Tessera with a spear. Maintain the same uncertainty as Lord Charon. I will march in front of all of you as if I am leading the unfaithful out of the lands of Urfa. Everyone appear remorseful about being led away. Do not show any of the joy currently residing on your smug faces. Djoser, go scavenge some kind of scepter for me to carry to make me look important. And, until we are out of sight of these people, I wish to appear to be herding the unfaithful out of the land of the faithful; NOT delivering the enlightened from the land of the unenlightened. Am I understood?!"

Djoser rudely interjected. "The Ogdoad should march far enough apart so the children can march among them. And children, I warn you, look forlorn; NOT excited and happy!" Djoser thought, then added firmly, "Am I understood?!"

The children murmured their understanding.

Dionysus thought <Ogdoad? What's an Ogdoad?>

Charon thought <There are too many chiefs in this group!>

Djoser said, "Now, all children follow me. We will search that tall building over there and find a kingly scepter for Lord Dionysus."

Dionysus thought <Clever boy – You'll be a good king – What's an Ogdoad?>

Before the meal was finished, the children came running back. Two boys carried a walking stick almost as tall as a man. It was made of pure Marmaros with intricate icons carved upon it. Set into the top was a magnificent geode of bright yellow. Even covered with ashes, the beauty of the piece showed through.

Dionysus thought <That's identical to Queen Kiya's - Who did this belong to?>

The meal finished, the Ogdoad packed their belongings to be picked up on their way out of Urfa. They embraced every other member of their group, formed themselves into two files, and called their children to join them. They forced themselves to appear forlorn.

Dionysus cleaned the scepter the two boys had brought him. <This staff is magnificent! A golden geode the color of the sun!>

Enas announced, "We are prepared, God Dionysus!"

Dionysus replied, "Follow me, Ogdoads, I shall lead you to a land with freedom of thought!" <GOD Dionysus - I have got to eradicate that title from my name - But not yet!>

He marched to the head of the procession, faced them, raised his scepter high in the air, turned toward the south, and commanded: "Follow me!"

The procession began its mournful march.

Crowds lined both sides of the road to greet them with jeers and insults as they arrived at the ranch. They became quiet as God Dionysus approached but began again as soon as he had passed. All noticed the sword and spear which kept the non-believers cowered together. They did NOT want to be on the receiving end of either.

Dionysus came and turned onto the road to the pastures. Noam and Enosh stood on either side of the path entrance, noses in the air, looking down upon the approaching parade. But they prostrated themselves as Dionysus passed between them. The crowd did not extend beyond Noam and Enosh.

The troupe continued down the short path toward the fenced pasture gate. Teumessian stood there; he raised both arms toward Dionysus. Dionysus raised his scepter to stop those that followed. He took five steps to Teumessian and extended his palm-down hand.

Teumessian bowed to kiss the hand, then stood facing Dionysus.

Dionysus spoke. "Great Master Shaman Teumessian of Urfa, the next time I come to you, I shall come from the sky. I shall bring you news that will be of great joy to you and to all righteous people. Your words and deeds will be vindicated. You shall be called a blessing to those who are righteous. I will carry you into the sky to join the gods on the highest. You are the wisest of all Shamans. I shall

now force the human scum behind me to load what is needed to travel into the lands of non-believers. As they leave, have Noam and Enosh drive out whatever people you wish to join them. Your land will then be purified." He paused for effect. "Your obedient and constant service to the gods is well noted. Great is your name. Until that glorious day that I return to you from the sky, I bid you farewell." Dionysus extended his hand. Teumessian eagerly kissed it and hurried off. The meeting had exceeded Teumessian's grandest hopes.

Dionysus held his scepter high and motioned his troupe toward the barns containing the riches of Urfa.

They entered the barn containing the wagons. Dionysus instructed Enas to select the best wagons and the beasts to pull them. He instructed Dyo to find and select plows, shovels, buckets, hoes, rope, and any other equipment which might prove useful when they reached their new lands. He instructed the women to fill the wagons with whatever food, provisions, and seed they thought appropriate. The children should bring chickens in their coops and whatever other small fowl they found. "Now, Charon and Djoser, let's go select our horses."

Djoser ran straight for the smallest of the group. "Pony' is perfect for me. She will carry me far and fast!"

Charon asked, "Is this the large one you spoke of? It is a fine-looking stallion. Yes, 'Highhorse' will be quite satisfactory, I believe."

Dionysus said, "This one has a fine-looking tail, and she carries it well. Want to be my horse, 'Horsetail?' We are going to have such fun together!"

The three men returned on their horses to four wagons with each pulled by four cows. A large bull was tied to the last wagon. All manner of chickens clucked nervously from their coops placed in the last wagon containing feed for the livestock with salves and ointments. The first wagon contained farm and building implements along with defensive swords and spears; and hidden from sight, immediately behind the driver, rested a golden chest. The second wagon was filled to overflowing with einkorn for making bread, roots, herbs, honey, and other edible foodstuffs. The third carried seeds, camping and bedding gear, and other supplies with which to make comfortable camps and to found a new city. The Ogdoad were ready for their grand adventure.

The three men inspected the treasures with approval.

Dionysus finally said, "Remember, keep your gaze down with abject humility and make no motion of happiness. A few tears from the women will be added value. All watching must be focused on your total humiliation and your too-late repentance NOT on the fact that you are taking half the treasures of Urfa. They will drive some other outcasts to follow us. I hope you will find old and new friends among them. You have a good-looking group, Lord Charon. I hope we can lead them to Djoser's kingdom in good stead." Upon his steed, Dionysus held his scepter high and said, "Follow me!"

With riders upon their backs, Pony, Highhorse, and Horsetail proudly began the procession leading the Ogdoad to their promised land.