

# The reidluvr Archive

reidluvr was a fanfiction author that was active during Era 2 of the NATM fandom. She is known for writing the “Night Life” series and participating in the 2015 Big Bang. This PDF hosts all of her work related to NATM, as well as translations into Russian by Rainy\_Elliot.

This PDF is hosted by The NatM Search as part of an ongoing effort to archive and save fanfiction from 2006 to 2020. They are preserved in their original format, typos and all.

The NatM Search extends its thanks reidluvr for her work, and Rainy\_Elliot for the Russian translation.

night-at-the-musian  
NatM Search Head Archivist

## Table of Contents

Night Life.....	1
Part One: First Night.....	1
Part Two: An Apology Long Overdue.....	4
Part Three: Dark Secrets.....	7
Первая ночь.....	10
In Khonsu’s Orbit.....	14
Part One: Lunar Eclipse.....	14
Part Two: Harvest Moon, Part 1.....	19
Part Three: Harvest Moon, Part 2.....	22
Extended Family.....	26

## Night Life

### Part One: First Night

21 January 2015, [OP](#), [AO3](#)

After making sure the moose and caribou actually made it around the back entrance, Larry decided to make quick stops at each exhibit on his way to the front. He'd never be able to clean up the mess in time, but he wasn't about to let another exhibit get injured or lead Dr. McPhee to believe one was damaged. To his relief there didn't appear to be any issues. It seemed Ahkmenrah really knew how to use his tablet. And speaking of the tablet, Larry realized he should stop by the Egyptian exhibit, in case the pharaoh needed help getting back in his sarcophagus.

Larry mentally winced. Now that the adrenaline worn off, the loud banging and screaming was less menacing and more . . . alarming. He knew now that the pharaoh wasn't evil; was the complete opposite, actually. From the moment Larry released him, the Egyptian was all smiles and eager to help. The complete opposite of how Larry would react in that situation. And given the amount of dust he expelled from his mouth . . . how long had he been in there?

The thought made Larry queasy, but he shook his head to clear it. Nope, not tonight—or rather, this morning. Larry was stressed enough as it was. His mind didn't need to go down that depressing route.

And so, Larry rounded the corner with a large, friendly smile on his face and strode down the exhibit room hall. His cheerful smile fell at Ahkmenrah's stiff figure. He was standing with his back to Larry, hands clenched at his side and trembling with tension. His crown and cloak had been removed, so Larry could see the way his bare back heaved with rapid, uneven breaths.

Unsure of how to proceed, Larry cleared his throat.

Ahkmenrah jumped away from the sarcophagus as if it had burned him. He then snapped his attention to Larry like a child caught doing something he shouldn't. It would have been comical if the circumstances were different.

"Oh, m-my apologies, Guardian of Brooklyn," Ahkmenrah said. He straightened his posture and adjusted the askew jeweled collar. "I . . . it's nearing dawn and I should . . ." His eyes darted back toward the sarcophagus as if it would attack him any second. "I suppose you're here to ensure I put my bandages back on?"

Larry shook his head. "Nah, I don't think we need to bother with that. Seems like too much of a hassle having to put them on every morning and take them off each night."

"You speak as if I will be free to move about again," Ahkmenrah said slowly.

"Well . . . yeah. Why should you be locked up? And, look—I'm so sorry I didn't free you two nights ago. I just assumed Cecil and the others were right but well, now I see they're completely wrong about you—"

"No it's—you're quite all right, Guardian of Brooklyn. Those men led you astray and I know you had what was best for the museum at heart." His tone was light and calm, but Larry was pleased to see Ahkmenrah's entire face begin to beam with pure delight. He looked so young and full of life, making Larry want to be around him because it was so infectious.

Too bad this wouldn't last.

Larry checked his watch. "Well, I suppose this is good-bye then." He stepped forward and held out his hand.

Ahkmenrah chuckled and gripped his hand, grasping Larry's forearm with his other hand. "Good-bye until tonight. I shall look forward to learning more about you, Nicky, and what has changed in the outside world since I was at Cambridge."

"Yeah, about that . . ." Larry cringed. "This is more of a good-bye for real. The museum is kind of trashed and I'm already in trouble with Dr. McPhee. Chances are I'll be fired as soon as he comes in."

The hands gripping his tensed and Ahkmenrah's smile froze. "Oh . . . I see. So there will be another night guard tonight. Perhaps if I had used the tablet better, and had the other exhibits return faster and assist with cleaning . . ." he mumbled.

"Oh no—it's not your fault at all. Honestly, I'm pretty sure some of them would have ended up making more of a mess if they tried to help. There's not really anything that could have stopped this."

Silence passed between them as Ahkmenrah seemed to be involved in some internal debate. After a moment, he squared his shoulders and his expression was carefully transformed into a neutral one. "If that is to be so, then good-bye Larry Daley, Guardian of Brooklyn. I regret that we had only this night to get to know one another. I wish you luck in your future job."

With that he released Larry's hand and stiffly climbed into the sarcophagus. He sat down and it looked like he was steeling himself to go swimming in a shark-infested pool rather than an intricate coffin. What changed? Was he mad at Larry for leaving?

The image of Ahkmenrah screaming inside the sarcophagus flashed in his mind and Larry's sluggish, sleep-deprived brain finally caught up.

"Hey!" He reached out and stopped the lid from closing completely. Ahkmenrah gazed up at him in confusion and Larry tried to ignore the way the lid was trembling. "Hey uh—just because I won't be here doesn't mean you won't be let out, you know? I'll be sure to let the new night guard know not to lock you in and if McPhee won't let me talk to them Teddy will make sure."

Ahkmenrah gave him that smile Erica gave all too often—the one that said I’m-pretty-sure-you’re-lying-but-I’ll-be-nice-and-pretend-I-don’t-notice. And while Larry knew that Ahkmenrah had no reason to believe him, he was more than a little fed up with that look.

“Look, I’m not lying, okay? I promise you won’t be locked up again and I mean it. I won’t go back on my word.”

“Larry . . . please. There’s only so much time until sunrise and I can’t . . . I don’t wish for you or anyone to see me when I’m . . . when the tablet stops working. Good-bye.” With that he slammed the lid shut, leaving Larry with barely enough time to keep his fingers from getting pinched.

Larry could only stand there a minute, staring at the sarcophagus in shock. Ahkmenrah truly believed he was going to be locked up. The thought made Larry feel ill all of the sudden. He turned to slowly make his way out of there.

He’d barely made it four steps before his ears picked up a muted sound from the direction of the sarcophagus. It sounded suspiciously like a muffled sob, and Larry quickly tore out of the room, hell-bent on speaking to Teddy before he turned back to wax.

Of one thing he was sure—Larry was prepared to break into the museum tonight if he had to. He couldn’t let Ahkmenrah down.

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That night, Larry strode into the museum with his heart fuller than it had felt in years. McPhee had given him back his job! It seemed the exhibits escaping was the best thing that could have happened to him, because the news coverage brought in a flood of people all day. No way McPhee could have fired him for that! Despite how difficult and peculiar a man he was, Larry knew he cared about the museum a great deal.

So now, with his job intact, Larry decided that tonight there’d be a party. He had Nicky hide in the office once again with a bunch of things Larry picked up before work. His son was busy putting up the last of the decorations before everyone woke up, and Larry would join him as soon as he could. First, he had to make sure he was there when Ahkmenrah woke up. A promise was a promise.

He reached the Egyptian display with a few minutes to spare. Larry drummed his fingers on the sarcophagus and stared at the tablet. His mind wandered for a bit, mulling over what he had researched earlier that day. At first he wanted to look into Ahkmenrah himself, but changed his mind and looked into a more pressing matter, specifically regarding the pharaoh’s earlier behavior. What he found was disconcerting to say the least, but Larry was determined to help fix it.

Only that was a problem for another night. Tonight, the party and showing Ahkmenrah he was serious were all that mattered. Larry’s gaze wandered and eventually settled on a plague on the far wall. He had been too busy to bother reading it before, so Larry stuck his hands in his jacket and meandered over.

Tomb discovered in 1938 . . . artifacts and body examined at Cambridge University . . . brought to the Museum of Natural History in 1952 . . .

Wait—Larry re-read the first half of the inscription. Tomb discovered . . . artifacts and body . . . body . . . Larry’s mouth dropped as it finally clicked. Did that mean . . . was he really—

Larry trudged over to the sarcophagus as if in a trance. In hindsight it all made sense, but he hadn’t fully . . . With trembling fingers, Larry lifted the lid to the sarcophagus ever so slightly.

Gaping up at him was a sunken face with empty eye sockets and grey, leathery skin stretched like jerky over brittle bone, and yellow teeth protruding above the jaw. Larry dropped the lid as he leapt backward with a shriek. He covered his mouth and breathed deeply to fight the instinct to hurl.

Oh god—Ahkmenrah was real! He was a real live mummy! Larry felt foolish, because to some degree he already knew this, but for whatever reason he hadn’t fully processed the fact until now. Not that the other exhibits weren’t real because in a sense they were, but . . . Ahkmenrah was the actual deal. That was a real person that came back to life each and every night.

And now, knowing that it was a real person that spent the past fifty-some odd years trapped inside, banging and screaming to be let out . . . it made Larry all the more grateful he chose to research what he did. It was obvious now that he had a lot of work ahead of him.

His thoughts were interrupted by the golden glow of the tablet. Larry rushed over to the sarcophagus and waited until he heard a deep inhale before wrenching the lid open. "Rise and shine!"

Ahkmenrah instinctively raised his arms. "Wh-wha'?" He lowered them and blinked groggily, reminded Larry so much of Nicky it was almost eerie.

"Sunset—the tablet—time to wake up, Ahk!" It took a few seconds, but eventually Ahkmenrah gaped at Larry with an incredulous look.

"Larry, you've returned! But I thought you said you'd be fired?"

"Turns out the footprints, sightings, and cave drawings left by everyone got enough attention that the museum was packed all day long." Larry helped Ahkmenrah to his feet and smirked. "So it seems you guys are stuck with me."

Ahkmenrah was beaming. "This is wonderful news!" Without warning, he threw his arms out and enveloped Larry in a quick hug.

"All right, now get your stuff on, we're going to have a little party. Nicky's finishing up the decorations and wanted to ride Remy again."

"Nicky is here?" If possible, Ahkmenrah's smile grew. "Just a moment." The young pharaoh practically bounded over to where his crown and cloak were stored and Larry couldn't help but laugh. He was acting like Nicky on a sugar high. How old was he, anyway? Oh well, that question could be easily solved with an internet search. Now didn't seem the time to ask.

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Later that night, Larry took a break from the festivities to observe from the second floor. Everyone was in high spirits, and Larry marveled at how lucky he was to have such an incredible job. A flash of gold caught his eye and Larry laughed. Ahkmenrah was running from group to group like he couldn't stand still for longer than three seconds. Where he got all that energy, Larry had no idea. None of the exhibits were able to eat, and Larry remembered how relieved he was at learning that. Having to feed everyone each night would leave him broke.

Remy and Nicky soon came into view, and Larry smiled. "It's getting late," he called out. "You ready to go home?"

Nicky shook his head. "No way!" Remy then took after Jed and Octavius and Larry let out a sigh of contentment.

He wouldn't trade this job for anything.

## **Part Two: An Apology Long Overdue**

3 February 2015, [OP](#), [AO3](#)

As the party was drawing to a close, Teddy requested to talk about an important matter with Larry. They made their way to the security office for privacy and Larry locked the door.

"What's up, Teddy? Is anything wrong?" He cringed. "Was the disco ball a bit much?" Teddy chuckled and pat Larry on the shoulder.

"Oh it's nothing like that, Lawrence. Frankly I don't understand the appeal of this disco ball, but that's not what I wished to discuss with you." He paused and heaved a deep sigh. "How is our young Pharaoh faring? I know you haven't spent long with him, but he's obviously taken a liking to you."

Larry rubbed his neck. "Well I'm not sure about that, but ..." (Should he voice his suspicions? It was a personal matter and it wouldn't feel right discussing it with someone else. However, this was Teddy, and with something this important he should probably have at least one other person there to help him out) "I've done some reading and it looks like he's claustrophobic. I'm not sure how bad it is yet, but I have a feeling it's ..."

"Pretty bad," Teddy finished, looking grim. He moved toward the couch and sat on the armrest, looking as if he aged ten years. "I had suspected as much. It only makes sense, given what we've—what I've done to the poor lad."

"But, Teddy it's not all your fault—"

"True, but I stood by and let lesser men dictate the terms of his freedom and passed them on to you." He took off his glasses and held them in his lap. He stared at it for a long time, and when he finally glanced up, Larry could see tears in his eyes.

"I can't forgive myself for what I've done," he began, voice tight. "Our first night guard warned us about him, saying that releasing a real person was too unpredictable, that being in charge of that much power would only bring disaster. At first I believed him, frightened at the thought of my otherwise impossible chance at life being taken from me. As time wore on, I started to question the reasoning behind the order, and felt it was unfair for us to keep him locked up. But I was still afraid and unfortunately by then the guilt had manifested as cowardice. After spending a number of years locked up, how could I expect him to do anything but curse us?"

"I was using Ahkmenrah's tablet for my own selfish desires, making me just as guilty as the previous night guards." There was silence for a few moments as the two men stared at the floor, neither knowing what to say. Muffled noises from the foyer drifted in, and they could hear Ahkmenrah and Nicky supervise the clean-up effort. Hearing their voices stirred a memory in Larry's mind, leading him to a realization he hadn't had a chance to dwell on yet.

"The only reason I let him out was because the jackals were going to skewer me and my son," Larry whispered. There was an unpleasant settling of guilt in his stomach and Larry suddenly felt nauseous. He plopped down on the couch next to Teddy. "It wasn't for him or because I felt it was right. It was completely selfish of me." Larry put a hand over his mouth as the full reality of the situation hit him. "Oh god. If you had let us out, or we hadn't been locked in ... " The image of Ahkmenrah's smiling face, the one full of gratitude and relief, all because Larry had freed him—it only made him feel worse.

"You still released him, Lawrence," Teddy said softly, placing a hand on Larry's shoulder. "At this point that's all that matters."

Larry scoffed. "It'd be easier to deal with if he wasn't so damn happy all the time. I mean, how does someone stay so kind after all that?"

"That's what troubles me the most," Teddy said gravely, leaning back to rest his head against the wall. "I've dealt with men who've been through traumatic experiences, and the longer they delay addressing their feelings the worse the inevitable backlash is. Perhaps Ahkmenrah is already dealing with the issue privately in his own way, but just in case—"

"We'll be ready for him," Larry said, his voice thick but full of conviction. "We'll make damn sure he won't go through it alone. Least we can do, right?"

"Not quite. I've talked to some of the others, and we've agreed on a sort of public apology. It's merely a start, but it needs to be done."

Larry bit his lip. "I think it's a great idea, but what if it backfires? What if it's too much at once?"

"I get what you mean, Lawrence, but what else can we do? Line everyone up outside his exhibit and take turns apologizing?" Teddy shook his head. "Dragging it out will only make it worse. That would certainly fray the poor boy's nerves. Best to do it all at once."

"Okay, but let's do it at the end of the night. Just to make sure. This way he doesn't have to spend the rest of it feeling awkward."

"Excellent idea, m'boy!" Teddy pushed himself off the armrest and held out a hand. "Now let's rejoin the others to ensure this mess is taken care of."

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The next night, around 30 minutes to sunrise, Larry led Ahkmenrah to the foyer under the guise of friendly chatter.

“Ahkmenrah!” Teddy walked toward the two of them, flanked by practically the entire museum. “Mind if we have a word, lad?”

Ahkmenrah’s eyes widened at the enormous crowd gathered before him, but he soon smoothed out his surprise and nodded. Larry fought back the small smirk at the way Ahkmenrah shifted closer to him ever so slightly. (Not like he could blame him—it was a bit daunting having so many eyes trained on you) The night guard crossed his fingers for luck, praying this wouldn’t blow up in their faces.

Thankfully, Teddy got straight to the point. “We all wish to apologize for standing by and leaving you locked up all those years. What we did to you was unforgivable. There was no reason for us to fear you.”

“Yeah, you ain’t scary at all!” Jedediah piped up from the stair railing, where he and the other miniatures were placed. Numerous heads nodded in agreement.

“I know this can never make up for all the pain and trouble we’ve caused you, but please accept our deepest apologies.” Teddy crossed an arm over his chest and crouched into a bow on one knee.

Ahkmenrah took a step back in shock, and soon all the exhibits followed suit, expressing humble respect in a variety of different ways. The Civil War soldiers snapped to attention and saluted him, the animals bowed low to the ground, Jedediah and his men took off their hats and dipped their heads, Octavius and his battalion acted in a manner similar to Teddy after removing their helmets, and so on. Remy even stepped forward and nuzzled Ahkmenrah as gently as he could.

Ahkmenrah entire body was stiff, darting his attention from person to person before finally settling on Larry with a frantic look. Larry smiled warmly and inclined his head in his own bow. However, it was obvious all the attention was starting to get to the Pharaoh. While he had most likely been trained since birth on how to conduct himself in front of a large crowd, the years of solitude were beginning to take its toll.

Larry reached out and tightly grasped Ahkmenrah’s shoulder to ground him in reality, and was pleased to see the frenzied look to his movements slow. Ahkmenrah closed his eyes and took a few calming breaths. His posture straightened with dignity and purpose, and Larry could easily see the royalty born within him shine.

“My friends,” he began, voice soft but full of confidence. “I had already forgiven you, but know that your words are greatly appreciated. It does me considerable pleasure to be surrounded by such honorable people. I look forward to getting to know all of you better in the upcoming years.”

Everyone snapped their attention to Ahkmenrah when he finished, lips parted in awe. Larry couldn’t blame them—Ahkmenrah possessed a level of maturity not found in most adults, let alone someone of his age. (Which Larry had checked earlier that morning—Ahkmenrah was barely twenty-years-old when he died. Talk about depressing)

“Yeehaw! Three cheers for the Pharaoh!” Jedediah hollered, tossing his hat upward. “Hip hip—”  
“HOORAY!”

The entire floor boomed with their echoing cheers, and Ahkmenrah laughed as they all thrust a hand in the air. Once they finished, everyone swarmed forward, taking turns clapping Ahkmenrah on the back or enveloping him in hugs. Attila lifted him off the ground when it was his turn, nearly smothering him. Sacagawea kissed him on the cheek and winked. For the miniatures, Ahkmenrah held out his fingers and they all took turns shaking them.

Larry merely stood back and enjoyed the sight with a smile so wide it hurt. He threw an arm around Teddy, who was watching with moist eyes. “You did good,” he whispered. Ahkmenrah was clearly soaking up all the physical attention, not looking bothered in the slightest. Larry thought back to how Ahkmenrah had hugged him without restraint last night and how receptive he was to the slightest touch. Perhaps this was all he needed. It was amusing to discover Ahkmenrah was a touchy-feely person, and Larry made sure to make a mental note.

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Eventually the excitement died down, and everyone returned to their respective places for sunrise. Ahkmenrah had thrown his arms around Larry and Teddy before leaving, thanking both of them profusely.

Now he stood beside his sarcophagus, his nonexistent heart feeling fuller than it had in many, many years. He had spent many nights dreaming of what it would be like to be freed, and he was pleased to see it was better than he could have imagined. He felt giddy with excitement at what the future would bring, eager for the chance to explore his new home and get to know his new friends better.

He glanced down at the sarcophagus and found it wasn't as frightening as it had been two nights ago. It had taken a considerable effort to work up the courage to get inside, not knowing if he would ever be given the chance to step out again.

But now he needn't worry. Now he knew for a fact he had friends, and their apology erased all fear of possible entrapment.

Ahkmenrah finally had a home.

## Part Three: Dark Secrets

5 January 2015, [OP](#), [AO3](#)

Ahkmenrah's back arched as air filled his nonexistent lungs and warmth spread throughout his body. Once he climbed out of the sarcophagus, he checked the time on the small digital clock Larry had given him. Thankfully, it was just after sunset and not just before sunrise like yesterday. Larry and the others barely returned in time with the tablet so there wasn't a chance to find out what happened at the other museum. Larry said he had a plan to keep the others here, and that he'd go over it with everyone tonight. Figuring Larry would be arriving soon, Ahkmenrah set about getting dressed.

He had just finished putting on his crown when the sound of footsteps alerted him to a visitor. He grinned when he noticed it was Larry, but it fell at the expression on the night guard's face. "Is something the matter?" Ahkmenrah asked, sparing a glance at the tablet.

Larry shook his head. "Look, I ... I hate to tell you this, but I figure you'd appreciate hearing it from me first. I've asked the others not to talk about it but ..."

"What is it?"

Larry exhaled deeply and rubbed the bridge of his nose. He knew he was making this worse by stalling but he wasn't eager to see the look on Ahkmenrah's face. Larry took a breath to steel himself and stared Ahkmenrah straight in the eyes.

"We ran into Kahmunrah at the Smithsonian."

The effect was immediate. Ahkmenrah's eyes lit up with terror and he took a few staggering steps backward. Larry had more or less expected this, but what he didn't expect was for Ahkmenrah to grasp his own throat with both hands, gasping and wheezing as if he could no longer breathe.

"H-hey, stop it! Ahk, stop!" What was he doing, trying to kill himself?! Larry grasped Ahkmenrah's wrists and tried to pull them apart. Damn the guy was strong! Larry thought back to the way Ahkmenrah thrust the lid of his sarcophagus several feet in the air once he was released. Was it possible the tablet give him extra strength?

After a few minutes of struggling, Ahkmenrah's eyes took on a glassy sheen and Larry knew he needed to do something fast. If he wasn't strong enough ...

Without a second thought, Larry swung his leg out, toppling the young pharaoh to the floor. To Larry's immense relief, Ahkmenrah reacted on instinct and released his throat to catch himself. Unfortunately, he was too slow, and Larry cringed at the sound of Ahkmenrah's crown smacking the floor before rolling away. Larry quickly knelt down to help the gasping pharaoh, only to receive a powerful kick to his midsection.

Ahkmenrah screamed something in Egyptian and scrambled away from Larry on all fours. The robe hindered Ahkmenrah's movements so much it was almost comical, but Larry was too busy blinking stars and biting back the pain to offer any assistance. By the time the pain in Larry's stomach dulled to a pulsing throb, Ahkmenrah was tightly pressed against the wall; hair disheveled, clothes askew, with terrified eyes staring straight through Larry at whatever monster only he could see.

Larry groaned. He mentally cursed whichever god was responsible for getting him in these situations. If he had known mentioning Kahmunrah would cause Ahkmenrah to go all ballistic on him he never would have said anything!

Getting closer to Ahkmenrah was obviously out of the question. Larry decided to use the tone that helped calm down wild exhibit animals that wanted to eat him or to try and get Dexter to give back his keys.

"Hey, shhhhh it's all right." Larry spoke softly with his hands held out in a nonthreatening way. Ahkmenrah's frantic breathing slowed down a fraction, so Larry risked inching forward. Ahkmenrah snarled what Larry assumed to be the Egyptian equivalent of "Get the hell away from me!" so Larry quickly backtracked.

"Okay, okay. Sorry—no getting closer. See? Not getting closer." He waited a moment to prove he wasn't going to move. "Come on—it's me, Larry. You remember me, don't you, Ahkmenrah? I'm the night guard at the museum. You know, the Museum of Natural History?"

Ahkmenrah frowned at him, not quite understanding, but at least he didn't look terrified out of his mind. Progress was progress.

And now with the immediate danger over, Larry's chest clenched as he really took in Ahkmenrah's appearance. Call it a result of him being a dad but ... Ahkmenrah looked so young. It was strangely easy to forget, with the way the crown made him so much taller and the regal manner in which he carried himself. Larry only caught reminders of Ahkmenrah's youth in glimpses: when he rode on Rex's back with Nicky, the way he bit his lip and tightly wrapped his arms around himself when dawn approached, the way he laughed a little too loudly at Jedediah and Octavius's pranks, the dorky way he danced, and the way his entire face beamed at the smallest compliment.

But now, without the crown, the rest of his Ancient Egyptian garb looked too big on him, like a child playing dress-up. And the way he was still cowering against the wall with unshed tears in his eyes like Larry was about to kill him ... oh.

Oh shit.

Larry bowed his head. This sudden realization made him ill and there was a slight prickling in his eyes. He had never meant to trigger ... hadn't stopped to think that ... but in hindsight it all made sense. All that talk about killing people and hatred toward the "favorite son?" Larry rubbed his face with both hands before glancing back up at Ahkmenrah.

The Pharaoh's eyes were still unfocused, only now there were a few tears trailing down his cheeks. His chest heaved with rapid, shallow breaths. He looked close to fainting and Larry had to fix this now before Ahkmenrah did just that. Larry spared a few seconds to mull over his words before speaking again, putting as much confidence and kindness in his voice as he could.

"You're safe, Ahkmenrah. Safe. Nothing's going to hurt you here, okay? Your brother is gone. He's never coming back. He can never hurt you again. I'm here to protect you, understand? Me and those freakishly tall jackal statues," he said, gesturing to the crouching giants behind him. Ahkmenrah's eyes followed his gaze to the statues and they both gave him their traditional salute.

Larry watched as Ahkmenrah's breathing grew deeper and slower. His eyes started to refocus and Larry carefully scooted closer on his knees. Ahkmenrah snapped his attention back to Larry, but thankfully this time there was recognition in them.

"L-Larry?" Ahkmenrah asked in a small voice.

A wide grin broke out on Larry's face. "Yeah, buddy," he said, placing a hand on Ahkmenrah's shoulder. "I'm here."

Ahkmenrah let out a shaky laugh. “Sorry, sorry I just ...” He rubbed at his eyes with the base of his palms. “I-I didn’t mean ... I haven’t ...” Larry sat down next to him and was silent as Ahkmenrah struggled to find the right words. A moment or two passed, then Ahkmenrah let out a frustrated sigh and slumped against the wall in defeat.

“I’ve spent so long running from my death,” he whispered.

“He ...” Larry swallowed against the dryness in his throat. “It was your brother, right?” Ahkmenrah nodded with his eyes clenched shut. He took a deep breath and released it, before turning to face Larry.

“He came into my bedchamber while I was sleeping,” Ahkmenrah began, voice barely above a whisper as his eyes glazed over. “I had taken ill, but only a few knew of it. I was nearly delirious with fever, so at first I believed I was imagining my brother’s form. He stood over me, far quieter than I’d ever seen him before, a-and then ... then—” He carefully traced an outline of invisible welts around his throat, made from hands larger than his.

“I b-begged him to stop, but he squeezed h-harder and said I had stolen his life so n-now he was stealing mine.” A strangled sob escaped him and Ahkmenrah quickly covered his face with one hand. His body trembled from the strain of holding back his cries. Larry hesitantly reached out and gripped Ahkmenrah’s shoulder once more. The Pharaoh froze for a brief moment before lifting his other hand to grasp Larry’s like a lifeline.

“Older brothers should never do that,” Larry said. Ahkmenrah nodded and let go of his face with a sigh.

“He wasn’t always that way,” Ahkmenrah said softly. He turned his head to face Larry and a faint smile tugged at his mouth. “We used to be close. He took his role as elder brother seriously, taking it upon himself to teach me everything he knew. Kah ... he even killed a viper with his bare hands to protect me when I had fallen and twisted my ankle.” The faint smile morphed into a bitter scowl. “But soon that all changed.

“My parents could no longer ignore his cruelty toward those who were beneath him. He cared nothing for others, and with my father’s health failing, they couldn’t allow my brother to take his place. They named me next ruler of Egypt, and my brother has hated me ever since.”

Silence fell between them for a time, each caught up in their own thoughts. Larry’s mind whirled from the recent revelation. Even while he was battling Kahmunrah, Larry found it difficult to be too terribly afraid of the Egyptian. Sure, he was obviously completely insane, but the way he acted was so ridiculous it was difficult to take him seriously. But now Larry had proof to the contrary sitting right beside him, proof that Kahmunrah was perfectly capable of carrying out his death threats. To think that Ahkmenrah had been carrying around that horrifying memory for so long ...

Larry’s gaze wandered toward the sarcophagus a little ways from them. Suddenly a sickening thought struck him and he inhaled sharply. Ahkmenrah immediately tensed and leaned closer to Larry.

“Wh-what is it? What’s wrong?”

“Y-you ... all that time—your brother, what he did, and then ... every night you ...”

Ahkmenrah frowned, unable to decipher Larry’s babbling, then followed his gaze to the sarcophagus. It took him a second to make the connection, and when he did the fear came flooding back a hundred-fold.

He had always understood the correlation between the method of his death and the forced imprisonment within his sarcophagus (it was impossible not to), but it was deceptively easy to lie to himself. Only now with Larry here beside him, a living, breathing person who knew, who understood—Ahkmenrah couldn’t hide any longer.

The terror and desperation that gripped him every night he lay trapped in that sarcophagus tore into him. The bandages that were tight against his neck were ghostly reminders of his brother’s fingers. The lack of fresh, clean air always brought him back to when he thought he was breathing his last. The darkness was the same as it was that night—there were far too many similarities.

Ahkmenrah curled into himself. The bitter tears he never allowed to fall cascaded down his face and trickled through his fingers. His throat burned and his anguished cries echoed throughout the exhibit room. He felt his face heat up in embarrassment for allowing Larry to witness this moment of weakness. Not to mention the fact that soon enough the other exhibits would hear his weeping and come investigate. He was supposed to be their leader! He couldn't—

Two arms wrapped around him and held him close. "It's okay, I've got you," Larry whispered. If possible, Ahkmenrah's embarrassment grew, but he no longer possessed the strength to protest. Besides, the last person who held him was his mother just before she died. His body craved this moment of human contact, however brief it might be.

Larry felt the pharaoh snuggle closer and relax against him as the tension melted from his shoulders. Who would've thought Larry would be comforting a 3,000 year old pharaoh? His experiences here at the museum never ceased to amaze him. Why did he ever leave?

Larry had started to gently rock back and forth when a tissue box entered his line of sight. He glanced up to see Sacagawea crouched in front of him. She gave him a proud smile before setting the tissues on the floor. Her gaze traveled to the weeping pharaoh in his arms and her expression turned sad. Larry then remembered she had once been a parent like him. He mouthed a thank you and watched her leave, her footfalls completely silent on the hardwood floor.

Teddy stood at the entrance to the exhibit room, his expression matching Sacagawea's as he watched them. He always put forth a great effort to include Ahkmenrah in the museum's nightly activities, especially when it became obvious that Ahkmenrah suffered from claustrophobia as a result of being locked up all those years. Teddy nodded at Larry and the night guard knew he would ensure the other exhibits wouldn't interrupt them.

Minutes passed as Larry sat with his arms around Ahkmenrah. As depressing as it was, Larry was grateful to be able to give Ahkmenrah the chance he obviously wouldn't permit himself. It was moments like these that made Larry proud, because it reminded him that despite his shortcomings he could still make a difference.

When Ahkmenrah's cries died down to sniffles, Larry held out the box of tissues. Once he explained they were like disposable handkerchiefs, Ahkmenrah tentatively took a few and started cleaning his face.

"Thank you," he mumbled, glancing at Larry sheepishly.

Larry smiled warmly at Ahkmenrah. "I won't tell if you don't." He swallowed against the tightness of his throat. "You deserve to mourn your own death, pharaoh or not."

Ahkmenrah returned the smile and dabbed at his eyes with a tissue. "Th-thank you, Larry I ... I can never repay you for your kindness and all you've done for me."

"Well, as a matter of fact I should be thanking you. Your tablet has given me experiences that've changed my life for the better."

"Oh that's right, your um—your new business." Ahkmenrah looked crestfallen.

Larry smirked. "Actually, that's not what I meant." He stood up and dusted off his pants before snatching Ahkmenrah's crown off the ground. "Ready to hear my announcement?" he asked, holding his hand out.

Ahkmenrah stared up at Larry skeptically, catching the teasing lilt to his voice but not sure what to make of it. "I suppose so," he said, grasping the offered hand.

The two of them then made their way out to join up with everyone else. As they walked, Larry felt his heart swell with happiness he hadn't felt in a long time.

He was finally home.

## **Первая ночь**

Translation by Rainy\_Elliot. 1 November 2015.

Убедившись, что лось и карибу смогли пройти через чёрный ход, Ларри решил на обратном пути по-быстрому проверить остальные экспонаты. Пусть уберут весь этот беспорядок он никак не успевал, ему не хотелось, чтобы кто-то из экспонатов получил травмы — или чтобы Макфи решил, будто он их повредил. К его облегчению, с этим проблем не было. Похоже, Акменра действительно умел обращаться со скрижалью. И к слову о скрижали — Ларри подумал, что стоит заглянуть в египетскую экспозицию, на случай, если вдруг нужно будет помочь фараону вернуться в саркофаг.

Ларри мысленно вздрогнул. Теперь, когда адреналин выветрился из его крови, те громкие крики из саркофага казались уже не столько угрожающими, сколько... отчаянными. Сейчас он знал, что фараон не был злым, очень даже наоборот. С того момента, как Ларри выпустил его, он неустанно улыбался и стремился всем помочь. На его месте Ларри вёл бы себя совсем по-другому. И учитывая, сколько пыли он выдохнул... как долго он пробыл в саркофаге?

От этих мыслей Ларри стало не по себе. Он тряхнул головой, пытаясь избавиться от них. Нет, только не сегодня — вернее, уже завтра. Ларри и так пережил достаточно стресса. Ему точно не стоило сейчас углубляться в подобные депрессивные размышления.

Так что Ларри повернул за угол с широкой, дружелюбной улыбкой на лице и вошёл в гробницу. Его радостная улыбка погасла, когда он увидел застывшую фигуру Акменра. Он стоял спиной к Ларри, обхватив себя руками, и дрожал. На нём уже не было короны и плаща, и Ларри хорошо видел, как вздымается в такт его неровному дыханию обнажённая спина.

Не зная, как ещё отреагировать, Ларри прочистил горло.

Акменра отпрыгнул от саркофага, словно тот обжёг его, и перевёл взгляд на Ларри. Он выглядел как ребёнок, пойманный за каким-то недозволенным ему занятием. В иное время это могло бы выглядеть забавно.

— О, п-прошу прощения, Хранитель Бруклина, — сказал Акменра. Он выпрямился и поправил коллар. — Я... близится рассвет, и я должен... — он вновь опустил глаза на саркофаг, словно ожидая, что тот может наброситься на него в любую секунду. — Полагаю, ты пришёл удостовериться, что я надел свои повязки?

Ларри покачал головой.

— Нет, не думаю, что с ними вообще стоит возиться. Слишком хлопотно будет надевать их каждое утро, только чтобы потом снимать ночью.

— Ты говоришь так, словно мне вновь будет предоставлена свобода, — медленно произнёс Акменра.

— Ну... да. Зачем тебя запереть? И, слушай... мне жаль, что я не освободил тебя две ночи назад. Я поверил Сесилу и остальным насчёт тебя, но теперь я вижу, что они ошибались...

— Нет, всё... ты всё сделал правильно, Хранитель Бруклина. Эти люди ввели тебя в заблуждение, и я знаю, ты хотел для музея только лучшего, — его голос был ровным, но Ларри был рад увидеть, что его лицо просветлело. Акменра выглядел таким юным, и его жажда жизни была столь заразительна, что Ларри не хотелось покидать его.

Жаль, что ему всё же придётся это сделать.

Ларри взглянул на часы.

— Что ж, полагаю, настало время прощаться, — он сделал шаг вперёд и протянул ему руку.

Акменра, хихикнув, ответил на рукопожатие, второй рукой взяв его за локоть.

— До следующей ночи. Я жажду узнать больше о тебе, Ники и том, как изменился мир с тех пор, как я покинул Кэмбридж.

— Да, насчёт этого... — Ларри поёжился. — Скорее всего, это прощание навсегда. В музее жуткий бардак, а доктор Макфи и так уже зол на меня. Скорее всего, я вылечу отсюда, как только он переступит порог.

Руки Акменра напряглись, а улыбка застыла.

— О... ясно. Значит, сегодня будет новый ночной охранник. Возможно, если бы я использовал скрижаль получше и заставил другие экспонаты вернуться быстрее и помочь с уборкой... — пробормотал Акменра.

— О, нет, ты ни в чём не виноват. Честно говоря, думаю, если бы они попытались помочь, то навели бы ещё больше хаоса. Тут уж ничего не поделаешь.

Между ними повисло молчание — у Акменра в душе явно шла внутренняя борьба. Затем он расправил плечи, его лицо приобрело нейтральное выражение.

— Если так, то прощай, Ларри Дэйли, Хранитель Бруклина. Жаль, что мы знали друг друга лишь одну ночь. Я желаю тебе удачи с твоей будущей работой.

Он отпустил руку Ларри и неуклюже забрался в саркофаг, сев в него с таким видом, словно готовился погрузиться в кишасый акулами бассейн, а не лечь в гроб. В чём дело? Он сердился на Ларри за то, что тот уходит?

В мыслях Ларри мелькнула картина того, как Акменра бьётся внутри саркофага, и до его заторможенного, отчаянно нуждающегося во сне мозга наконец дошло.

— Эй! — он подался вперёд и ухватился за крышку саркофага, помешав Акменра закрыть её. Акменра непонимающе посмотрел на него; Ларри же пытался не обращать внимания на то, что крышка дрожала. — Эй... то, что меня здесь не будет, не значит, что тебя никто не выпустит, ты ведь понимаешь? Я объясню всё новому охраннику, и если Макфи не даст мне поговорить с ним, то это сделает Тедди.

На лице Акменра появилась улыбка, которой Ларри слишком часто одаривала Эрика — улыбка, говорящая «ты наверняка лжёшь, но я, так и быть, притворюсь, что верю». И хотя Ларри знал, что у Акменра нет причин доверять ему, он уже был сыт по горло подобными улыбками.

— Слушай, я не лгу тебе. Я обещал, что никто больше не закроет тебя здесь, и так и будет. Я своё слово держу.

— Ларри... пожалуйста. До рассвета не так много времени, и я не... Я не хочу, чтобы ты и-или кто-нибудь ещё видел меня, когда... когда закончится действие скрижали. Прощай, — с этими словами он захлопнул крышку саркофага — так, что Ларри едва успел убрать пальцы.

Шокированный Ларри почти минуту стоял перед саркофагом. Акменра действительно думал, что его вновь запрут. От этой мысли ему вдруг стало дурно. Он медленно повернулся, чтобы уйти.

Он не успел сделать и четырёх шагов, как до его ушей донёслись какие-то приглушённые звуки из саркофага. Они подозрительно напоминали сдавленный плач, и Ларри сломя голову выскочил из зала — ему во что бы то ни стало нужно было успеть поговорить с Тедди.

В одном Ларри был уверен — он вломится в музей ночью, если это потребуется. Он не мог подвести Акменра.

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Когда Ларри вошёл в музей на следующую ночь, его наполняло воодушевление, которого он не чувствовал уже много лет. Макфи позволил ему остаться! Похоже, побег экспонатов на самом деле был для него счастливым билетом, поскольку благодаря новостям музей наводнили посетители. Макфи никак не мог уволить его за это! Каким бы странным и трудным человеком он ни был, Ларри знал, что забота о музее для него на первом месте.

Так что Ларри решил устроить в честь этого вечеринку. Он вновь отправил Ники в свой офис, на сей раз снабдив всем необходимым для вечеринки, что он припас заранее. Его сын заканчивал украшать музей ко всеобщему пробуждению, и Ларри собирался присоединиться к нему как можно скорее. Но сначала ему нужно было встретить пробудившегося Акменра. Обещание есть обещание.

Он появился в зале египетской экспозиции за несколько минут до начала действия магии.

Побарабанив пальцами по крышке саркофага, Ларри посмотрел на скрижаль. Он мысленно вернулся к той информации, что успел найти днём. Сперва он хотел узнать

непосредственно о самом Акменра, но затем передумал и занялся более важным вопросом, а именно — поведением фараона. То, что он узнал, было, мягко говоря, угнетающим — но Ларри был твёрдо намерен помочь Акменра.

Но обо всё этом можно будет подумать в следующий раз. Сегодня на повестке дня — вечеринка и убеждение Акменра в серьёзности намерений Ларри.

Блуждающий взгляд Ларри задержался на табличке на дальней стене. Ларри не успел прочесть её раньше из-за того, что был слишком занят, и теперь, сунув руки в карманы, подошёл к ней.

Гробница открыта в 1938-м году... артефакты и тело исследованы в Кэмбриджском университете... переданы Музеем естественной истории в 1952-м году...

Минуточку. Ларри перечитал первый параграф. Гробница открыта... артефакты и тело... Ларри уронил челюсть, когда до него дошёл смысл. Это значит... Он что, действительно...

Ларри словно в трансе вернулся к саркофагу. Если подумать, всё сходится, но он не был точно... Ларри дрожащими руками приподнял крышку саркофага.

На него смотрело усохшее лицо с пустыми глазницами, тонкой серой кожей, натянутой, словно вяленое мясо, на острые кости, и жёлтыми зубами, выступающими над челюстью. Ларри, вскрикнув, уронил крышку и отпрыгнул от саркофага. Он закрыл ладонью рот и глубоко вздохнул, борясь с приступом тошноты.

О боже. Акменра был настоящим! Он был настоящей мумией! Ларри почувствовал себя идиотом — в некоторой мере он и так понимал это, но лишь сейчас полностью осознал данный факт. Не то чтобы другие экспонаты были ненастоящими, но... Акменра — совсем другое дело. Он был настоящим мертвецом, который возвращается к жизни каждую ночь.

И теперь, зная, что в этом саркофаге провёл, крича и умоляя выпустить его, пятьдесят с лишним лет настоящий человек... Ларри лишний раз порадовался, что решил провести своё исследование. Было очевидно, что ему предстояло много работы.

Его мысли прервало золотистое мерцание скрижали. Ларри метнулся к саркофагу и, дождавшись, когда внутри раздастся глубокий вдох, откинул крышку.

— Проснись и пой!

Акменра инстинктивно поднял руки.

— Чт.. Что? — он опустил руки и слепо заморгал. Акменра до такой степени был похож сейчас на Ники, что это немного пугало.

— Закат — скрижаль — время вставать, Ак! — Акменра потребовалось несколько секунд, чтобы осмыслить услышанное, и он, задохнувшись, недоверчиво уставился на Ларри.

— Ларри, ты вернулся! Но я думал, тебя уволили?

— Как оказалось, следы, съёмки очевидцев и рисунки пещерных людей в городе привлекли так много внимания, что в музей хлынули посетители, — Ларри помог Акменра подняться на ноги и усмехнулся. — Так что, похоже, вам, ребята, от меня никуда не деться.

Акменра просиял.

— Это замечательные новости! — он безо всякого предупреждения бросился вперёд и заключил Ларри в объятия.

— Ладно, собирайся, у нас будет небольшая вечеринка. Ники заканчивает украшать музей и хочет снова покататься на Рекси.

— Ники тоже здесь? — его улыбка стала ещё более широкой — если это только было возможно. — Одну минуту, — юный фараон чуть ли не прыжком бросился туда, где лежали его корона и плащ, и Ларри не смог удержаться от смеха. Он вёл себя как переевший сладкого Ники. И сколько ему вообще лет? Хотя это можно легко найти в интернете. Ни к чему тратить время на вопросы.

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Позже ночью Ларри сделал перерыв, чтобы полюбоваться на остальных со второго этажа. Все веселились от души, и Ларри удивился про себя, до чего же ему повезло с такой невероятной работой. Заметив, что среди экспонатов словно мелькает золотистая молния, Ларри рассмеялся. Акменра носился между разными группами так, словно не мог устоять на месте дольше трёх секунд. Ларри понятия не имел, откуда он черпал энергию. Никто из обитателей музея не нуждался в еде, что Ларри был несказанно рад узнать. Он точно не смог бы кормить каждую ночь такую ораву.

К нему приблизились Рекси и Ники. Ларри улыбнулся.

— Уже поздно, — крикнул он Ники, — хочешь пойти домой?

Ники помотал головой.

— Нет уж!

Рекси устремился за Джедом и Октавиусом, и Ларри довольно вздохнул.

Он не променял бы эту работу ни на что на свете.

## In Khonsu's Orbit

### Part One: Lunar Eclipse

31 October 2015, [OP](#)

“Everyone make sure you have your eclipse shades, they—no Dexter, that’s not how you—Ook, that’s not for eating!” Larry sprinted over to the youngest Neanderthal, knocking over the box of paper glasses he had taken from the Astronomy closet. Dexter chittered at the sight before resuming the careful shredding of the shades he was given.

“Do you think we should help him?” Nicky asked. He was leaning against one of the utility boxes that Ahkmenrah was sitting on.

Ahk shrugged. “I don’t believe our help is needed. I’ve already ordered the more unruly exhibits not to jump over the railing so there’s no real cause for concern. They’re merely agitated.”

Tonight was the first lunar eclipse since Larry had become their new night guard. In an effort to keep everyone from going stir-crazy, Larry decided that occasional “field trips” were in order. Anyone who could make it up the stairs to the roof was allowed to come. However, if they strayed too far they would be banished from future field trips.

Nicky frowned. “Well, I guess you’re right.” Or at least he hoped so, anyway. Truthfully, he wanted to help his father but he felt a more pressing matter required his attention. Nicky arched his back into a stretch, throwing his hands behind his head. As he yawned, he snuck a glance up at his newest friend.

Ahk seemed ... off. Now, Nicky understood that he’d only known Ahk for about a month, (and not even a full month since he wasn’t allowed to visit every night) but they’d become fast friends. Nicky also understood that teenagers could get moody, but Ahk just didn’t seem that type. He was too cheerful and grown-up for that.

No, there had to be something else bothering Ahk. Nicky was determined to figure out what it was and help his friend out.

Ahk watched over the mingling exhibits before him, eyes glazed and unaware he was under observation. He couldn’t explain just how or why exactly, but this evening he woke up feeling strange. Normally he awoke full of energy and excitement, forever grateful the gods had deemed it fit to allow him freedom once more.

All that energy was absent. Instead, Ahk felt sluggish and weak, wanting nothing more than to curl up into a ball and wait for tomorrow night. It bore a faint memory to when he was sick back in Egypt, but that couldn’t be the case.

I'm quite dead, after all, he thought with a dark chuckle. He subconsciously brushed his fingers against his throat. The dead can't get sick.

Ahk turned his gaze toward the moon. Since it was impossible for him to be sick, it most likely had to do with that. Nights the moon disappeared from sight were a bad omen back in his time. Larry had explained to everyone that this phenomenon was called a lunar eclipse and was caused by the earth blocking the sun's rays from reaching the moon, which apparently was the reason there is moonlight at all. According to Larry, the moon doesn't give off its own light. Ahk supposed it made some sense, but it was hard to believe.

It wasn't that he was against science, not in the least. He appreciated all the advancements mankind had made since he was alive, but there were moments he struggled to believe everything. After all, why should his people's explanation with their gods be considered make-believe when he himself was proof to the contrary? If he were brought back to life by the power of the Tablet then surely his gods were real. Yet there were so many who no longer worshipped his gods. Where did the truth begin? How could both his gods and science coexist?

A sharp pain erupted behind his temple. Ahk winced. It seemed that kind of thinking was only going to make things worse. He straightened his back and refocused on what was going on before him. If he was going to make it through this night, he needed all the energy he could spare.

"Okay guys, it's going to start any minute now! Remember to keep your shades on!"

Ahk clutched his head. Why was Larry yelling so loudly? None of the exhibits were hard of hearing. For that matter, no one needed those ridiculous paper glasses. None of their eyes were real so they couldn't be damaged. What good would paper do anyway? And why all this fuss over something that would be over in—

The world tipped violently to the side. Ahk barely caught himself. His entire body trembled as if instead of trying to keep himself upright, he were trying to push the earth away.

There was no kidding himself now. He couldn't keep up pretenses any longer; he had to leave. Whatever strength he had left was disappearing with each passing second.

"N-Ni—"

"Finally!" Nicky hissed. Ahk winced and Nicky lowered his voice some more. "I said your name like ten times! What happened? What's wrong? Are you sick? Can you get sick? D'you need some water? I'll go get my dad—"

"N-no ..." Ahk blinked and tried to focus on the fuzzy Nicky-shaped outline before him. Why were his eyelids so heavy? "Just ... d-downstairs, pl-please ..."

"Uh, okay. If you say so." Nicky moved forward and nearly crashed to the floor as Ahk leaned on him. He grunted from the effort and tried to shift the weight around, but Ahk was too tall. All Nicky could do was drag him around like an oversized blanket. Nicky tried to move Ahk so he was supported against his back like the guys did in movies, but his shoulders just weren't wide enough.

"Ahk I can't—you need a big person t—umph!" At the exact moment everyone "oohed" and "ahhed" Nicky crashed to the ground, smothered in Ahk's unconscious form.

Toward the front, Larry was darting his head this way and that, panic welling up in his throat. He wasn't exactly sure how or why, but amidst the cheers he heard a muffled cry of pain from Nicky.

Various scenarios flashed through his mind, each one worse than the next. Had Nicky fallen off the roof? Forgot to put the shades on? Been accidentally impaled by the bushmen?! Tripped—

Larry ducked to avoid getting smacked in the face by Balak, Attila's right-hand man, who had a tendency of wide hand gestures whenever he was excited. See, that was just the thing with this place. Anything was possible, meaning Larry had to be prepared for whatever danger it threw Nicky's way.

Which apparently included being buried under four-thousand-year-old pharaohs.

"What are you guys doing?" Larry dropped to his knees and rolled Ahk over to his side. The pharaoh didn't appear to be in any immediate danger, so Larry turned his attention to his son. To his

relief, Nicky was already moving and there didn't appear to be any blood. Larry grabbed Nicky anyway and began inspecting him for injuries. "Are you hurt, buddy?"

"Not really. Just a little scrape." Nicky held out his right hand, clearly having used his palm to lessen the fall. "Didn't even break the skin."

"Well we should still clean that up, okay?" Larry said. Call him overly cautious, but it never hurt to be careful. Who knew what kind of diseases were just lying around out here?

A gloved hand rested on Larry's shoulder. "What's wrong, Lawrence?"

"I'm not sure, Teddy," Larry said. Of course the President would be the first to notice. Larry just hoped they could solve this before anyone else did. "Nicky what happened? Did Ahk hit his head?"

"No, he just fell over. He kinda looked sick but he didn't—I wanted to say something but ..."

"It's okay, Nicky." Larry squeezed his shoulder. "It's not your fault."

Larry reached out to place a finger against Ahk's throat then drew it back just as quickly, realizing it was a futile gesture. The Pharaoh didn't have a heartbeat, didn't need to breathe either. The only reason he and the other exhibits occasionally inhaled was purely psychological and partly because of muscle memory. The memory of their real selves involved breathing so they did it. Same thing applied to blinking. None of them really had to, but it was such an ingrained motion they ended up doing it.

But back to the matter at hand, what was wrong with Ahk? If he didn't trip or hit his head then why did he fall? Was there something wrong with the Tablet? It didn't sound like anyone else was affected. Plus, Ahk still had a flesh and blood appearance so it couldn't be that the Tablet wasn't working anymore. (Which Larry was grateful for—he didn't fancy seeing mummified Ahk again anytime soon)

"Good Lord, is something the matter with Ahkmenrah?"

Larry's shoulders slumped and he bit back a moan. He knew Clark meant well, but the man's voice had a bit of a booming quality to it. Larry wasn't sure how such a boisterous man had managed to not get their expedition killed by wild animals, but he supposed Sac had something to do with it.

Just as he feared, Clark's exclamation had turned all eyes on them. The rooftop erupted in a cacophony of noise as everyone spoke at once. They were all questions of concern for Ahk, but Larry couldn't possibly solve the issue when he couldn't hear himself think.

"SILENCE!"

Teddy's command was obeyed almost immediately, leaving Larry to make a mental note to ask for lessons later. He'd more or less gained the respect of the entire museum, but he still had a way to go in terms of getting them to listen.

"Thanks." Larry cleared his throat. "So um, there's no need to panic. I don't think Ahk is in any uh, immediate danger. Has this happened—" Larry paused before rephrasing the question. "Have any of you ever felt sick before?" Everyone shook their heads.

"We're all incapable of getting sick," a civil war soldier said.

One of the Dutch women nodded. "Quite grateful for that."

"—what could be wrong with Ahk?"

"Well he is different from the rest of us—"

Naida, one of the Peruvian alpaca herders, gasped and spoke quietly. "You don't think something could be wrong with the Tablet?"

Whispers rippled through the crowd and some moved closer together. Others began a visual inspection: shaking their limbs, poking their skin, tugging on their hair, etc.

Larry stood up and held out his hands. "Guys, hey guys—calm down, it's okay. If you could all take a step back and let us bring Ahk downstairs we'll try and sort this out."

It took some more convincing, but Larry was able to get everyone to calm down and get off the roof. While he was busy ushering everyone back inside, Attila carried Ahk to the security office with

Nicky at his heels. The young boy clutched Ahk's crown against his chest, fingers tightly gripping the keys to the security office.

Maybe Ahk was just exhausted. He did have to sleep every so often; maybe it had been a while since he last took a nap? The two of them had played a long street hockey game the other day. It could also explain why he seemed a bit cranky. His mom always said he got cranky when he didn't get enough sleep.

Nicky unlocked the door when they arrived, then set about putting pillows on the couch. None of them knew how long Ahk would be unconscious, so they might as well make him comfortable. As Attila laid Ahk down gently, Nicky crossed his fingers for luck. Ahk just had to be okay. He had to.

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The world came back in fragments, followed by hushed voices in a language Ahkmenrah was unfamiliar with. He performed a mental check of himself as he had been instructed to, and while he was pleased to note he was lying upon something soft, his body ached. Mostly it was his head; perhaps he had been knocked out by a blow? Yet he wasn't bound, what could these foreigners want with him?

It couldn't be Kah's followers, that much was for sure. The lack of restraints proved that, though most telling was the unfamiliar language. His brother's followers could barely speak Egyptian properly.

Perhaps he had fallen and some passerby took pity on him? That could explain the kind treatment. Yet Ahkmenrah could feel his royal garb still about his person, so the foreigners could also be after a reward. Either way, his best course of action would be to appear amiable. He'd adjust accordingly if circumstances grew worse.

Suddenly there was a hand on his shoulder, and before he could stop it, Ahkmenrah's instincts took over. He grasped the arm that touched him and twisted it harshly as he stood. Shrieks and yelps of indignation filled the air. Ahkmenrah stared curiously at the man who had touched him. He had pale skin, dark hair, a night guard uni—

"Larry!"

Ahk immediately relinquished his hold on Larry as his memories came flooding back. His temple throbbed once more and the pain sent him collapsing back onto the couch. Ahk clutched the side of his head and moaned. Now not only was he still in pain, but it appeared he collapsed in front of everybody and repaid their kindness by injuring one of his closest friends.

Once the throbbing ceased, Ahk glanced over at Larry. "My deepest apologies," he said, wincing. "I never meant you any harm."

"It's okay," Larry said, rubbing his sore shoulder. "Guess I should let sleeping pharaohs lie, huh?" Ahk's mouth twitched at the weak joke which Larry counted as a win. Truthfully, his arm felt like it was on fire, but he couldn't let Ahk know that. Plus he knew he should be grateful. Were Ahk at full strength, Larry knew the undead pharaoh would have ripped his arm clean out of its socket. The image of the sarcophagus lid nearly crashing against the ceiling was still fresh in his mind.

"So uh, you mind telling us what happened back on the roof? Are you ... can you get sick? Nicky said you looked sick."

Ahk sighed. "I have no answers for you, I'm afraid. I can't recall this ever happening before nor do I have the slightest idea why. All I know is I feel weak and it's difficult to think properly."

"Maybe this will help?" Nicky stepped forward with an ice pack. "Dad said you can't take any painkillers since you um, don't have a stomach but you could use this." Nicky gently placed the pack against his head and grinned when the tension in Ahk's shoulders lessened.

"Thank you, Nicky." Ahk sighed and leaned against the couch. "I hope ... I didn't hurt you terribly, did I? The last thing I remember was falling against you back on the roof."

"Nah, you mainly startled me. I'm pretty tough after all." Nicky puffed out his chest and flexed his arms, pleased when Ahk smirked in response.

"I don't wish to alarm anyone, but we must figure out what's ailing our dear Pharaoh," Teddy said. "Then we can ensure it doesn't happen again."

“It has to be the moon,” Sacagawea said. “Amongst my people, we believe the moon to hold great power. Its brief absence could explain his weakness.”

“But the moon didn’t actually disappear, my love,” Teddy said.

“Yes, but its light still vanished.”

“Well, not exactly—”

“I think Sacagawea is right,” Ahk interrupted, desperate to avoid another culture clash discussion. On the whole, everyone was civil about them and Ahk enjoyed the opportunity to learn about the differences between the museum’s varied cultures. However, there were times the discussions escalated to screaming or sparring matches, which Ahk’s aching head couldn’t handle at present.

“We ... my people also attribute power to the moon. Not as much as Ra’s light though,” he said wistfully. “Perhaps the Tablet only working at night means it’s connected somehow.” He stared up at the other exhibits critically. “Did anyone else suffer in the manner I did?”

Sacagawea shook her head. “We asked the others but no one felt any different.”

“Most likely, your unique connection to the Tablet is why you are the only one affected,” Teddy added.

Ahk inclined his head in a weak semblance of a nod. While he felt they were still missing something, it was an explanation that made the most sense. And despite the inconvenience, Ahk supposed he was grateful it was just him. If this were to affect the entire museum poor Larry and Nicky would be at their wit’s end. He’d never wish that on them.

“Well, now that we’ve got that all figured out let’s give Ahk some space to rest.” Larry made a motion with his hands to shoo everyone out. Teddy tipped his hat, Attila bowed his head, and Sac gave him a warm smile. “I’ll come get you before sunrise,” Larry whispered before he quietly shut the door.

When Ahk turned to Nicky, the young boy was holding out a peculiar object. There were two small circular bowls connected by a curved metal band, and one of the bowls had a string dangling from it. “They’re headphones,” Nicky explained. “This kind covers your ears and they’re pretty good at blocking sound. Here.”

Ahk gasped in surprise once Nicky had finished placing the device over his ears. “It’s remarkable!” he exclaimed. His voice sounded muffled, like he’d pressed two pillows against his ears.

Nicky moved to flick the light switch, thrusting the room into darkness aside from the small emergency light by the power box. His dad said it made sure the guards could fix the lighting should the power ever go out. Nicky was just glad it meant he didn’t have to ask for a nightlight whenever he slept over.

“Well, I guess I’ll, uh, leave you alone to rest.”

Ahk quirked an eyebrow as he lowered the headphones to settle around his neck. Nicky was glancing at the ground and shuffling his feet. “You’re perfectly at liberty to stay, Nicky,” Ahk said, fighting back a smile. “This is the usual time you go to bed yourself, isn’t it? I have a headache, not fallen ill.”

Nicky’s face split into a grin and he bounded over to Ahk on the couch. In no time they were snuggled under the blankets together like always.

“I’m sorry I scared you earlier,” Ahk whispered. “I should have been truthful and alerted you or your father to my condition.”

Nicky shrugged. “You didn’t know what would happen. Just tell us next time, okay? Don’t want you fainting by yourself with Dexter nearby or you’ll be in trouble.”

“I’m certain only your father would have cause to fear that,” Ahk teased, poking Nicky’s ticklish spot. Nicky giggled but resisted the urge to fight back, understanding the gesture for what it was.

“Night, Ahk.”

“Goodnight, Nicky.” As Ahk drifted off to sleep, he sent a quick prayer to the gods that whatever had befallen him tonight would not cause problems in the future. After all, he had only just regained his freedom. Surely he should be granted a reprieve?

## **Part Two: Harvest Moon, Part 1**

1 November 2015, [OP](#)

Waking up each night was normally a pleasant experience, and tonight was no exception. Or at least for the first five seconds.

After that, it felt like someone dropped a boulder on his torso. Then there was this terrible throbbing in his upper chest, and Ahkmenrah suddenly found himself very, very weak. Just lifting his arm drained all his energy. Ahk contemplated just resting a moment, but it was getting difficult to breathe. And not just because he was in an enclosed space—it was actually physically hard to breathe.

Ahk spent the next five minutes trying to push off the lid to his sarcophagus, feeling as if he were trying to crawl his way out of a sandpit. When he finally succeeded, he was drenched in sweat and felt as if he had run around the entirety of Egypt. Twice. The fresh air was welcome, and Ahk decided to just rest for a moment.

He couldn't rest for long, because he became acutely aware of how dry his mouth was, his head hurt so much his vision was swimming, and there was this terrible ... gnawing where his stomach should be, like someone was repeatedly dragging a dagger through it. The pain grew to an unbearable level, but Ahk only had enough energy to lay there and whimper. What was worse was his body started shivering. Ahk refrained from wearing his cloak and crown in the sarcophagus, leaving him with just the wesekh around his shoulders and half-pleated shendyt around his waist. It wouldn't be too much of a surprise that he would find himself chilly in such sparse clothing—except for the fact that he was dead. Ahk hadn't felt the cold for nearly 4,000 years.

Ahk closed his eyes and summoned all the willpower and energy he could muster. It was a pitiful amount, but he wasn't going to spend the night lying in his sarcophagus like an invalid. He knew someone would eventually come to check on him, and he'd rather be found with at least some of his dignity intact. He coiled all the strength to his muscles, grasped the side of the sarcophagus, and pulled himself up and over.

To his horror, his strength gave out halfway. He ended up sprawled on the floor with his cheek pressed against the smooth tile. It was colder here, but Ahk's strength was depleted. Worse yet, he was beginning to suspect what was happening to him.

Suffice it to say, Ahkmenrah was terrified.

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“Hey Ahk, what's taking you so—Ahk!”

Larry broke into a sprint and dropped to his knees beside the collapsed pharaoh. The scene was eerily similar to what happened during the lunar eclipse, except this time Ahk was shaking. Perhaps he had a difficult time getting out of the sarcophagus? But Larry had taken the pins away that first night Ahk was freed, so what was it?

He reached out to gently lift Ahk off the ground, only to find his skin was ice cold. “Oh my god you're freezing!” Larry quickly pulled a limp Ahkmenrah to his chest and started rubbing his arms to warm him up. Ahk mumbled something and curled up tightly against Larry, eyes clenched shut.

Larry's mind whirled with confusion. What was going on? None of the exhibits ever showed any reaction to the temperature before, and Ahk had been just fine out in the snow when they chased Cecil. What changed?

Larry let go of Ahkmenrah for a moment as he shrugged out of his jacket. Ahk whimpered in pain at the movement and Larry wondered what else was wrong. He wrapped the jacket around the Pharaoh, wishing he had something warmer.

As Ahk's trembling slowed, he slowly opened his bleary eyes to look up at Larry. "Th-thank you." His voice was raspy, like his vocal cords were rubbing against sandpaper.

"You got any idea what's going on?" Larry's legs were beginning to lose sensation, so he shifted into a sitting position. Ahk gave a small nod, yet instead of explaining he grasped Larry's fingers and brought it toward his throat. Larry frowned at the action, but froze when he realized what he was feeling.

A heartbeat.

Larry felt a sharp chill go down his spine. "Wh-what ... h-h-how ... h-has this ever happened before?!"

Was Ahk turning human again? But how? Why now? Would it spread to the rest of the museum? There wouldn't even be a museum if that happened! And forget losing his job—Larry would be handed over to the FBI for the greatest robbery in history. It's not like he could tell them the truth. The exhibits would all become lab rats if he did, with Ahk first in line. There was no way Larry would allow that to happen. He was the night guard after all. Even if they became human they were still his responsibility and he had to protect them.

But if Ahk's heart started working again, did that mean ... Larry started pressing three fingers at random places on Ahk's chest like physicians did during physicals. Larry could definitely feel something, but he stopped from trying any further when Ahk cried out in pain.

"What is it? What's wrong?"

Ahkmenrah curled an arm around his stomach and whimpered. "It ... I don't ... m-my head," he wheezed. "I ... I-I can't ..."

Larry placed his palm against Ahk's forehead then drew it back with a yelp. "You're burning up!"

"N-no I ... f-fre-freezing ... *lā a 'rf, akh?*"<sup>1</sup>

Perfect. Now Ahk was speaking Ancient Egyptian. Perhaps he was becoming delirious with fever? But how? Why would turning human make him sick?

Ahk's breathing was more gasps and wheezes now. His back arched ever so slightly as if he were clawing for air. Larry felt for Ahk's pulse again, at a loss of what else to do. To his horror, Ahk's heartbeat was racing like a rabbit. What's more, Ahk's skin felt like it was drying out with each passing second. His skin was shriveling before Larry's eyes!

What the hell was going on?!

"Lawrence, Ahkmenrah! What's keeping you, lads? Everyone is—what in God's name?"

Larry whipped his head toward the entrance, eyes wide with panic. Teddy and Sac stood next to each other, identical looks of concern and confusion.

"Help me, please!" Larry cried. "I think Ahk's dying!"

Sac was by his side in seconds. Her skilled hands flew over Ahk; checking his temperature, pulse, pupils, etc. Larry watched in horrified fascination as Sac pinched Ahk's shriveled skin and the fold stayed in place, like malleable wax.

"Has he spoken?" Sac asked, her usually calm voice tinged with panic. "Does he understand where he is?"

"H-he ... yeah for a little while, but he started speaking Egyptian and I don't think he's really here anymo—"

"He's severely dehydrated." Sac stared at Ahk with a mixture of horror and faint fascination. "But I've never, this is too..." She shook her head. "He should be dead."

Larry choked on air as the full implications of the situation hit him. "Oh my god, he hasn't had any water for 4,000 years! He should have died the moment he woke up! Why—"

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1 Egyptian: "I'm sorry, brother."

“Don’t lose your head, Lawrence.” Teddy placed a hand on Larry’s shoulder. “We can still save the lad. Tell us what to do, my dear,” he said, turning to Sacagawea.

“I need salt and sugar. Water alone won’t be enough.”

“Break room, and there should be a pitcher you can use.” Sac was nearly gone before Larry finished talking. Teddy started after her, but Larry told him to wait.

If for whatever reason Ahkmenrah was fully flesh and blood, after being an undead mummy for 4,000 years ... somehow the word “starving” didn’t seem adequate enough. A strange calmness had taken over Larry as he stared at the dying friend in his arms. Now that he had a clearer idea of what was happening to Ahk (though unfortunately not the why), he could start working on a solution.

“We’re going to need more than just water,” Larry said. “I need you to fetch blankets from my office and my lunch. It’s the brown sac on the desk.” It was only a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and apple slices, but it would have to do for now. “And tell Attila to come in here!”

“Aye, aye, Lawrence!” Teddy’s voice echoed from the hallway, also desperate to avoid wasting precious time.

“Come on, Ahk. Just hold on a little longer.” Larry cradled Ahk closer to his chest. “You can do it. Come on, buddy!”

—

In no time at all, Sac came charging into the room, a full pitcher clutched to her chest. There was a lid on top, which most likely accounted for her speedy return. Teddy returned seconds behind her, though with less grace as he struggled to keep from tripping over the blankets in his arms.

“Hold him up,” Sac instructed, kneeling across from Larry. “We need to do this slowly or he’ll upset his stomach.”

Ahk drank the water mixture like—well, a man with a thousand years’ thirst. Sac tried to pull the pitcher back but Ahk bumped it with his hand. Some of the water splashed on his face, but before the three of them could mourn the waste, something miraculous occurred.

Ahk’s shriveled skin absorbed the water, like a sun scorched earth. Sac glanced at Larry in shock before splashing Ahk’s face again, only with a little more of the mixture. His skin absorbed it all. Not only that, but the shriveled appearance started to fade.

“Come on, help me get all this off,” Larry said, tossing his jacket to the side. McPhee would kill him if they ruined Ahk’s clothes.

Larry quickly removed the jeweled wesekh from Ahk’s shoulders while Teddy and Sac untied the long shendyt around the waist. They knew Ahk wore a shorter, black shendyt underneath as a sort of undergarment. It more closely resembled the typical attire of Egyptian males during that time. Ahk only stripped down to this level when sparring, and while Larry couldn’t help the twinge of guilt at the mild invasion of privacy, it was no matter. Saving Ahk’s life was far more important than propriety.

Sac immediately set about dousing every inch of bare skin she could with the pitcher. It was emptied in less than a minute but Ahk’s skin absorbed it all. He was still shivering, still had shriveled skin, but no longer looked on the brink of death.

*“Daichny ni buruu yuu?”*<sup>2</sup>

“Attila my lad, perfect timing!” Teddy gestured him over while Sac and Larry wrapped Ahk in blankets. “We require your strength to transport our dear Pharaoh to the break room.”

*“Daichny ni buruu yuu?!”* Attila repeated, though he moved forward as instructed.

“We don’t exactly know what’s wrong with Ahk,” Larry explained, recognizing the Hun’s preferred title for the Pharaoh. Daichin meant warrior, and he’d chosen it after the two of them had sparred within the first month of Larry’s employment. “For some reason he’s human again, but he’s dehydrated and starving so we need to keep him from dying.”

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2 Mongolian: “What is wrong with the warrior?”

Larry wasn't sure how much of that Attila got, but he figured the man had worked out the basics. While the others set about gathering everything, Larry put his jacket back on and pat himself down to make sure his keys, wallet, and phone were with him.

"All right!" Larry clapped his hands together. "Attila, you help Sac keep Ahkmenrah hydrated. I'm going to run to the closest store and get as much food as I can. I'm not sure how hungry Ahk's gonna be once he's no longer thirsty but I figure it's going to be a lot. Teddy, can you keep an eye on the rest of the museum while I'm gone? I've got my cell so if there's a problem just use the office phone to reach me."

Teddy saluted him. "Understood, my boy. We'll keep the museum and Ahkmenrah safe in your absence."

## **Part Three: Harvest Moon, Part 2**

1 November 2015, [OP](#)

Larry maneuvered his shopping cart as fast as he could without running into anyone or raising suspicion. Unnecessary questions wouldn't do him any good, though he supposed the uniform helped deflect at least some unwanted attention.

But what to buy? What would satisfy the palate of an Ancient Egyptian? Well, he supposed it didn't exactly matter at the moment. A hunger as ravenous as Ahkmenrah's would make anything remotely edible taste gourmet.

Still, Larry didn't want to feed the poor guy junk.

He eventually decided on heavy foods, the kind rich in calories. Two full rotisserie chickens, an armful of frozen pasta dinners, a few foot-long deli sandwiches, some sushi packets, a mini chocolate cake (Ahk had to try modern desserts after all), buffalo wings from the deli, and so on.

When Larry swiped his card at the checkout, he realized he'd be living on a diet of top ramen for a time. It would be worth it though. Larry wasn't going to let his friend starve after all. He just prayed that Ahk's hunger wasn't equivalent to 4,000 years' worth of meals. He'd be helpless in that case.

To his relief, the museum was still standing upon his return. There were no flames, police cars, FBI vans, or reporters. Only Teddy stood at attention, musket in hand. Larry called out for him and hobbled over. His arms felt like they were on fire! The cashier had been kind enough to place all the food in paper bags to make it easier to carry, but they were heavy.

"Looks like you've got enough to feed a contingent of soldiers!" Teddy teased as he relieved half of Larry's burden.

"How's Ahk?"

"I only checked in on them briefly, but from what I saw the boy's skin is fully saturated and no longer on death's doorstep."

Larry sagged forward, letting out a breath he'd been holding for the past hour. "Thank God for Sacagawea."

"Indeed. Such a remarkable woman." Were the situation less dire, Larry would have teased Teddy about the dreamy haze in his expression that only appeared around the Shoshone woman. Instead he merely chuckled.

"Come on. Let's get Ahk some food before he starts eating the furniture."

—

The sight that greeted them in the break room was an interesting one: the counter was splattered with soggy salt and sugar; there was a wet blanket on the ground; Sac was collapsed at the table, looking a little worse for wear; Ahk was hunched over on the floor, completely smothered in Attila's fur-lined coat and hat which made him look like a child playing dress-up; and finally Attila himself, kneeling at Ahk's side and rubbing his back while he whimpered.

“Who’s hungry?” Larry asked as he and Teddy heaved the bags on the table.

Ahk’s head popped up, a crazed look to his eyes. Larry swore at his mistake and tore into the bags, searching for the sandwiches. Just as he touched one, Ahk’s fingers clasped around the first bag.

“Attila, hold him back!” Larry shrieked. Thankfully the Hun was quick, and Ahk only had time to rip part of the bag to shreds. Larry’s hands shook as he unwrapped the first sandwich. The image of Ahk’s shriveled body gasping for air was enough nightmare fuel for the week, but the sight of him driven mad with hunger broke Larry’s heart.

They couldn’t just let Ahk loose though. Ancient Egyptians didn’t package their food with plastic, so in his fervor Ahk was in danger of trying to bite straight through it. Not to mention the fact that most of the meat had bones underneath, and Larry was afraid of Ahk accidentally swallowing some. It was best to start him off small.

Teddy and Sac at least caught on to some of Larry’s intentions, and in no time at all they unwrapped every sandwich. Larry dumped them all on the table and nodded at Attila. The Hun deftly picked up the squirming pharaoh and plopped him on a chair.

Like a ravaging beast, Ahk tore into the food. The four onlookers watched in morbid fascination as Ahk essentially inhaled the first three sandwiches.

“Wh-what if he chokes?” Larry whispered. At this point trying to perform the Heimlich was likely to get himself killed.

Sac shook her head slowly. “He drank an entire pitcher in one breath and never struggled.”

“Im-Impressive,” Teddy said.

*“Ene ni buruu yum.”*<sup>3</sup>

“Yeah, you said it.” Larry broke out of the trance when he noticed there was one sandwich left. “Shit! Here um, you guys open these. It’s sushi, fish with rice. Don’t let him near the ginger or wasabi—the pink or green stuff—or the soy packets either.” Larry snatched all the frozen dinners and rushed to the microwave. “I’ve got to heat up this pasta. Just keep him eating!”

The next thirty minutes were a blur as the four dashed about to try and abate Ahkmenrah’s hunger. Finally, Ahk began to slow down when one rotisserie chicken and the chocolate cake were all that was left. Until that point, Ahk had only concerned himself with shoving food into his mouth, barely sparing time to chew or even breathe. It was sickening to watch, and Larry found himself grateful he hadn’t eaten yet.

It was curious though, that despite all Ahkmenrah had drunk or scarfed down, he hadn’t displayed any signs of discomfort. His stomach hadn’t even bulged. The Pharaoh was half-naked with his chest laid bare, and he was as thin as ever. Larry had started to fear the unquenchable hunger theory, when Ahk took a break in his gorging to snatch a napkin.

In between bites of chicken he began cleaning the errant bits of food and grease that stuck to his face, as well as what had dribbled onto his chest. He pointedly avoided the others’ gaze, and Larry had to bite his lip to keep from laughing. Now with blood circulating his body once more, Ahkmenrah’s face had turned bright red, from the tip of his ears to the nape of his neck.

Once he was more or less clean, he lifted his head to smile at them. “I can’t thank you enough for your help,” he said, voice hoarse. “Though I must apologize for my behavior.”

“You’d just turned human again and were so hungry and thirsty you went nuts—pretty sure that’s acceptable behavior,” Larry said. Ahk absently tugged on his ear with a sheepish grin.

“Exactly, my boy. Your actions were perfectly understandable given the circumstances.”

*“Ene ni tulaan ölsgölön shig baisan.”*<sup>4</sup>

Sac smiled warmly at him. “There’s nothing to apologize for, Ahkmenrah. We’re just glad you’re alive.”

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3 Mongolian: “That is wrong.”

4 Mongolian: “It was like a battle hunger.”

Ahk's face flushed once more as he moved onto the cake. "What is this, Larry?" he asked as he pulled off a piece.

"Triple chocolate cake. Made sure to save the best for last." Larry grinned. "Prepare to be blown away."

Ahk's eyes lit up with sheer joy at the first taste. "This must be the food of the gods!" He shoved the rest of the slice into his mouth and finished the cake with barely restrained zeal. As he dabbed his face with another napkin, Larry set down a half-gallon of milk.

"Drink it. Trust me, after that cake you'll need it." Ahk didn't bother arguing. He lifted the carton to his lips and finished all of it in one go.

"So um ... are you good?" Larry asked when Ahk set the container down with a satisfied sigh. "Or do you need some more water or something?"

Sac stepped forward and rested her palm against Ahk's forehead. "No more fever," she said with a smile. "Pulse is normal, and your skin is better. Do you feel sick?"

Ahkmenrah pursed his lips into a frown before shaking his head. "No, I feel quite all right. I don't feel ill, nor am I nauseous. Which is quite peculiar, considering," he said, inspecting the table before him. "Did I really consume all of that?"

"I was afraid it wouldn't be enough!" Larry chuckled. "I can still order a pizza or something if you need—" Larry's words died in his throat as Ahk suddenly pitched forward, limp as a rag doll. "Oh my god he must be allergic to milk did I kill him?!"

"He's only sleeping, Larry," Sac said. Her quick reflexes saved Ahk from a painful faceplant. She maneuvered him onto the ground and laid his head in her lap. Attila retrieved his coat and once again draped it over Ahk.

"*Zügeer бага zereg shig,*"<sup>5</sup> he said, reaching out to ruffle Ahk's hair fondly.

Now that the immediate danger was truly (finally) over, all the adrenaline left Larry's body in one fell swoop. He collapsed into a chair and leaned his head back, intent on taking a nap of his own.

The nap lasted all of two seconds.

"What in tarnation was all that confounded hellabaloo?!"

"In all my years I've never seen such an alarming display."

Larry snapped his attention toward the far kitchen counter. "Jed? Octavius? What are you guys doing here?!"

"Came t'see what all the fuss was about, Gigantor!" Jed huffed. "All Mr. President said was that you were takin' care of an issue an' we needed to be on our best behavior."

"Then once we saw the lady Sacagawea and Attila escorting someone to the night guard break-chamber, we knew it to be a dire situation," Octavius said. "It took us a while, but we managed to infiltrate the room before your return. And we entered only to discover our esteemed leader to be in peril!" His grip tightened around the hilt of his sword.

"What's wrong with the Pharaoh, Gigantor?" Jed fixed Larry with a hard glare, but the effect was ruined by the way his gaze kept drifting to Ahk's sleeping form.

After a moment of consideration, Larry ran a hand down the length of his face and sighed. "To be honest, we don't know. Ahk just all of a sudden turned human this evening. Still no idea why, but ..."

"His body returned with a hunger to match," Octavius finished, gaping at Ahkmenrah in awe.

Jed whistled. "Wooo-eee! He was on that like a wild dog on a ham."

"Pardon me my liege, but will this spread to the rest of the museum?" Octavius asked. "Are we all to become human again?"

Larry threw his hands up helplessly. "I have no idea. The stupid Tablet didn't come with an instruction manual!" He buried his face in his hands, rubbing the bridge of his nose. This job was going

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5 Mongolian: "Just like a little one."

to give him a migraine. Every night it was something different. Except tonight reminded him more of the eclipse about a month ago . . .

“I’ve got it!” Larry yelled, leaping to his feet. He pulled out his phone and clicked on speed dial. “Hey Nicky, it’s dad. Is there a full moon out tonight?”

“Huh? Can’t you check yourself?”

“Kind of in a difficult situation here, buddy. Can you just look for me?”

“M’kay. Just a sec.” The phone was set down, and Larry drummed his fingers against his leg as he waited. “Looks like one I guess,” Nicky said a moment later.

“Could you check online just to make sure?”

“What’s going on, dad? Are you okay?”

“I’ll explain everything in a minute, I just need you to find this out for me.” There was a slight pause then Nicky agreed. Larry switched his phone to speaker mode and set it on the table. At the same time, Teddy brought Jed and Octavius to the table so they didn’t have to keep shouting.

For a moment all was silent, save for the tapping of keys and the click of Nicky’s mouse.

“Um . . . yeah it’s a full moon,” Nicky said, his voice echoing around the room. “Oh and it’s even got names. It’s called a Corn or Harvest Moon. Something about farming I guess. What’s this about? What happened?”

“For some reason Ahk turned human and we had to get him food and water before . . . well, he just needed it.” Even with the danger over Larry didn’t want to acknowledge the near death experience.

“Oh. But he’s human, that’s awesome! He can finally come to my hockey games and I can show him my room and the city and we can go get ice cream and—”

“Those are all great ideas Nicky,” Larry began, “and I know Ahk would love to do all that with you . . . but I don’t think it’s permanent.”

The exhibits glanced to Larry sharply. “Whatcha thinkin’, Gigantor?”

“I think it’s just like what you said, Sac.” Larry gestured to her. “Remember, at the lunar eclipse?”

“I said that the moon was responsible.” She glanced down at the sleeping man in her lap. “Since the Tablet is his property, it would explain why the rest of us remain unaffected.”

“But why now?” Teddy asked. “If this occurred every full moon wouldn’t Ahkmenrah have remembered such an event? No one gave him food or drink so . . .”

“Maybe it doesn’t work if he’s trapped in the sarcophagus,” Nicky said.

Octavius let out a snort. “Thank the gods for that.”

“So will Ahkmenrah have to endure this process every time?” Teddy turned to Larry. “I’m not familiar with the pricing of food nowadays, but I imagine it would cause you monetary strain, Lawrence. I don’t wish for you to suffer.” Larry shrugged.

“I’m hoping not, but we’ll just have to see.”

“Each full moon has a different name,” Sac said, shifting the attention back to her. “They were chosen in relation to the season, though I’m not sure what that would mean for Ahkmenrah.”

“Well, during a Harvest Moon Ahk needed to eat a lot of food, and during a harvest you um, well, harvest a lot of food.” Larry shrugged. “Makes sense to me.”

“But what about—”

Larry held up a hand. “Look, let’s just . . . we figured out a lot already. Why don’t we clean this mess and see what Ahk thinks when he wakes up. Nicky, I promise we’ll talk about this more tomorrow, okay? I’ve got to get back to work.”

“kay. Love you. Tell Ahk I said hi!”

—

The next morning, Larry collapsed on his couch, not even bothering to remove his shoes. Turns out Ahk slept for pretty much the entire night. They managed to wake him up toward the end, but only

barely. He was groggy and drained of energy, but had enough to insist he return to his exhibit on his own two feet.

The guy could hardly sit up straight, but Larry didn't have the heart to deny the request. After such a rough night, Ahk was desperate to maintain some sense of control. Both Larry and Sac ended up helping him to the sarcophagus. Sac had to book it to make it to her exhibit in time, but they got Ahk back safely. He fell asleep the moment he lay down, and Larry waited to see how the magic would end.

As the familiar energy lifted, Larry was both pleased and disappointed at the mummified corpse Ahk had returned to. It really is just the moon, he realized.

Later that night he'd discuss what happened with Ahk. Hopefully they could come to an understanding of what happened as well as plans for how to handle any complications in the future. But for right now, it was time for Larry to catch up on some badly needed rest.

He just hoped the other full moons were more enjoyable for Ahkmenrah.

## Extended Family

3 April 2015, [AO3](#)

A few months into the new museum hours, the exhibits were excited to discover they had regulars. There was an elderly couple that brought their grandchildren with them, a family with twin toddlers, and a college student with her younger brother.

The sister and brother, Tash and Arthur, visited every other week. Tash participated in historical reenactments for fun, and the exhibits appreciated the chance to answer questions most never thought to ask. As for her brother, Arthur displayed a fondness for the medieval period. He spent the majority of his time with the Huns and Vikings.

One month however, the siblings didn't show up at all. When they did return, they were subdued; their minds clearly elsewhere as they held each other's hand with a death grip.

Word among the exhibits traveled surprisingly fast. A unanimous agreement was reached that something had to be done. When the siblings paused at the Hall of African mammals, the exhibits made their move.

"Arthur!" Ragnar, the Viking Leader, clapped a meaty hand on the teen's shoulder. "Bjorn is unable to join us today. Would you do us the mighty honor of taking his place?" His question was met with a blank stare.

"... Huh?"

Ragnar chuckled. He turned to his men and soon a Viking helmet, chain mail, and shield were held out to Arthur. "Care to join us as a Viking for the night?"

Arthur stared back and forth between Ragnar and the offered gear before breaking out into an earsplitting grin. "Of course!" In no time at all, Arthur looked like a comical clash of history.

"Whaddya think, Tash? Pretty neat, huh?" Arthur posed with his hands on his hips and chest puffed out. The effect was ruined when the helmet sunk a few inches on his face.

Tash snorted. "You look like a bigger dork than usual." She shoved him playfully, unable to fight back a smile of her own.

"Come, Arthur, there is much to do before dawn approaches."

The group of Vikings quickly disappeared down the hall, and Tash shifted her feet as she watched them go. Her smile from earlier started to fall, but before it could fade completely, the clatter of hooves made her turn around.

"Good evening, my dear," Teddy said, tipping his hat to her. "Since your brother is currently occupied, would you care to join me a while?"

"Sure." Tash started forward but stopped when she noticed she wasn't being followed. She sent Teddy a quizzical look over her shoulder.

"Have you any experience in riding a horse, Tash?" Teddy asked.

“Um, yeah a little.” Tash shrugged and made a so-so motion with her hands. “A reenactment here and there.”

“Wonderful!” Teddy scooted back, leaving a space in front for her to sit. “Climb aboard my dear.”

Tash’s mouth dropped. “Seriously? I get to . . . really?”

Teddy let out a booming laugh. “Certainly! Texas won’t mind.” He leaned forward and whispered as if divulging a secret. “It’s not every day he gets the opportunity to be led by a beautiful woman.”

A light blush coated Tash’s cheeks as Texas lipped at her hair. She giggled and planted a light kiss on the horse’s head. Teddy reached down to help Tash mount with minimal effort, and they set off.

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After regaling Tash with hunting stories he hadn’t shared before, Teddy dropped her off at the Hall of American History. There, she received a personalized lesson in cartography from Sacagawea, Lewis, and Clark. They used the area in the African Mammals exhibit for practice, and the explorers were impressed with Tash’s work. As she rolled up the parchment she had been allowed to keep, Ahkmenrah extended his invitation for the last hour. He taught her how to recognize some of the simpler hieroglyphics, using the paintings that covered the wall of his exhibit.

Meanwhile, the Vikings taught Arthur the basics in sword fighting, how to play hnefatafl, and tips on surviving in the wilderness. Toward the end of the night, Arthur was passed off to Attila and his men. They taught him similar things, but instead of sword fighting Arthur learned about archery and axe throwing.

By the time night hours were drawing to a close, Tash and Arthur were indistinguishable from earlier that evening. A contagious grin was splashed across their face and there was a rosiness to their cheeks from rushing about.

“Looks like you guys had a fun night, huh?” Larry asked, standing beside Tash. Dexter chattered and clapped his hands from where he stood on Larry’s shoulders.

“It sure was.” Tash turned to watch her brother showing off the ivory chess piece the Vikings had carved for him. He was practically vibrating with energy, and the sight made her eyes burn. Tash blinked furiously and faced Larry with a serious expression. “Mr. Daley.”

Larry slowly leaned back an inch or so. “U-um . . . yes?” His fingers twitched toward the flashlight strapped to his belt. “What is . . . I didn’t—I-I mean . . . yes?”

“I just wanted you to know this was exactly wh-what Arthur—” Her voice broke and she inhaled sharply. “What we needed.” Tash smiled at Larry as her lip quivered. “I don’t know how you found such great people for this night program, but you did an amazing job.” A few tears slid down her face. “Thank you.”

The previous trepidation melted from Larry’s shoulders. “Aww, c’mere.” He stepped forward and wrapped his arms around Tash. “I’m just glad we could help,” he whispered.

When they pulled apart, Dexter leapt onto Tash’s shoulder and gave her a hug of his own, nuzzling her hair. Tash hugged the animal back gently and wiped her eyes.

A shriek made Tash and Larry jump, but there was no need for alarm. Ook, one of the Neanderthals, had gotten into the ice cubes again and dropped a handful down Arthur’s shirt.

Larry groaned. “I don’t know how to handle those guys.” He dragged a hand over his face. “Last week it was the toilet paper, now ice cubes . . .”

“I hate to think of what they’ll come up with next.”

“Taaaash! Did you see what Ook did to me?” Arthur’s attempt at pouting was marred by the grin he failed to hide.

Tash fixed him with a dry look. “You sure he wasn’t just trying to improve your dancing skills? God knows you need all the help you can get.” Arthur stuck his tongue at her while the others laughed.

“See you in two weeks then?” Larry asked once the two said their good-byes.

The two siblings turned to each other and smiled.

"Of course!"

"Wouldn't miss it for the world."