The Gods are awake, and they are angry!

Oh – by the way, my name in Neela, but we’ll come to that later. But first let me give you a brief history lesson. When Egypt was the only empire, their gods manifested themselves in human form. And by that I don’t mean that they created new bodies. They planted themselves inside the bodies of existing human beings - mainly pharaohs or the Royal Family. Then the Roman Empire began. They had their own gods and war broke out between them and the empire of Egypt. Two gods tried to stop the war – the Egyptian goddess Isis and the Roman god Neptune. Neptune in the form of Marc Anthony and Isis in the form of Cleopatra. They failed to stop the war and Jupiter, Neptune’s older brother, in the form of the Emperor of Rome at that time [name]. Jupiter had to stop Neptune and Isis by killing their human incarnations. But what he did not realize was that it meant banishing their souls away. He had only realized that he had banished his brother’s soul somewhere in the universe after he had conquered Egypt.

Jupiter spent decades searching for Neptune’s soul, and finally found it at the bottom of the Dead Sea inside a clam shell. With the right spells, Jupiter restored his brother’s form. Neptune searched for Isis’ soul which he found quickly and he restored her too to life.

Then the Greeks came. They wanted to outlaw all gods including their own. The Greeks were magicians and they knew the magic to contain even the soul of a god such that it could never escape. They captured every major god’s soul, both Egyptian and Roman, except for Neptune, Isis and Anubis because they thought them to be already imprisoned. Anubis remained in the Egyptian Hall of the Dead with many of the remaining minor gods. Neptune and Isis lived in Neptune’s underwater palace for many decades.

It was nearly modern day when Isis discovered that she was pregnant. Isis was both excited and worried. She was worried because the Egyptian gods had been forgotten by the modern world, and so their powers were waning. She feared that her soul would disappear entirely once the baby was born. Neptune searched far and wide for a cure but could only find one possible way. He had to imprison her soul, just as the Greeks had done to the other gods. Because if a god is in imprisonment, this is like having a nap for humans. It restores the power the longer they remain incarcerated.

Isis reluctantly agreed, but said that she would have the baby first. A few months later a baby girl was born to Isis and Neptune. That was me Neela.

I had both my mother’s and father’s abilities. I could breathe underwater and control the seas. I could also perform many magical spells without needing the practice required by most Egyptian magicians.

That ends the history lesson.

As I said earlier, I am Neela. I had better tell you a bit more about myself.

I am sixteen years old. I have long brown hair and love swimming and flying. By the way – had I mentioned that I can turn myself into a kite? (The bird – not the thing you fly on a string.)

I was living peacefully with my father when the Greeks finally found out that Neptune had not been imprisoned. They came for us.

My father sensed that the Greeks were coming, and rushed me into the Safe Room. The last words my father said to me before the Greeks entered our house were “Neela – you have to bring back the gods! Both the Roman and Egyptian. Bring back the Egyptian magicians. Bring back the House of Rome.”

My father rushed out of the Safe Room, leaving the door locked tight behind him. I heard a commotion like plates and vases smashing onto the ground. A few hours later I thought it might be safe to leave the room. I saw the house broken beyond repair. Then I saw it. A clam shell lying on the floor with hammers next to it. It looked as if the Greeks had tried to break it open. I rushed to it and picked it up, knowing that my father’s soul lay hidden inside it.

I put the shell in the Duat, which is the magical world layered both above and below the Earth. I searched the house for anything I could salvage. My room looked untouched. (PS – that was probably because of the locking spell on the door, designed to keep out my parents.) Looking around my room I grabbed a magician’s bag filled with wax, papyrus, ink, twine, a wand and two staffs. I also grabbed my rucksack which lay against the east wall. I filled it with a supply of food which I kept under my bed – mostly sweets like bingers, zee-zees and jellyfish puff pastries. I packed two sets of clothes and a map of the magical places, given to me by my father on my sixteenth birthday.

I had no idea where to start, so I figured I should get help. I opened a portal with my staff to the Hall of Judgement – the gateway to the Egyptian underworld. As I stepped through into the bright light I saw Anubis. I stepped out to greet Anubis.

“Neela – we were not expecting you.”

“Anubis – I need to talk to you. Somewhere the minor gods can’t hear. I think what I have to tell you might freak them out a bit.”

“Of course, Neela.”

Anubis led me down a dark corridor which led to a large room which looked like the centre of an ancient Egyptian tomb with ancient tomb art on the walls and with a golden sarcophagus in its centre.

I explained to Anubis what had happened to my father and the quest he had sent me on. I asked Anubis to help me in my quest to re-awaken the gods.

“I will help, Neela. The Hall of Judgement is falling apart without the Lord Osiris. I will help awaken him.

“Neela – we do not know where to start.”

“I have an idea, Anubis, about one of the gods of Egypt. Nephthys is the goddess of water. She mainly spent her time around the Nile. I think that is where her soul will have gone to rest.”

“But Neela, the Nile stretches through all of Egypt. It will take years to search its entire length.”

“I have an idea about that. My father gave me this map. You say a country or place and it shows the most magical locations. Maybe there is a place along the River Nile which is more magical than any others, and Nephthys has gone there. Or perhaps there is a temple to Nephthys along the river, and that will be where we can find her.”

“That is a good idea, Neela. I am not good at summoning portals. Is this something which you can do?”

“We need to find where we are going first. Let’s take a look at the map.”

I pulled the map from my bag and laid it out on the floor. At first glance it looked like a blank piece of papyrus. As I said “Show me the River Nile” the papyrus expanded four times in size and laid out in front of us was a map of the River Nile, almost as large as the room in which we were standing.

“There are three magical places along the Nile. It would be easier if we split up,” I said to Anubis.

“That is a good idea, Neela. Take this shared amulet. I have its twin and we can use them to communicate with each other, or teleport to the other’s location if need be. If you create a portal for me I will go to the ruins of the Temple of Nephthys located at the mouth of the Nile Delta, to see if she can be found there.”

“OK then. I’ll go to the place in the centre of the Nile where Nephthys found Osiris’ body after he was murdered by Set.”

“That is a good plan. Please create a portal for me.”

I stepped forward, took my staff from my bag, and concentrated the power of my mother Isis, the goddess of magic, into the staff. I focussed on the place where I needed to send Anubis – the ancient temple of Nephthys. My staff grew warm and bright in my hand and a portal of swirling sand appeared in front of me.

“I will see you shortly,” Anubis said, stepping into the portal of sand.

The portal closed behind Anubis, leaving only a few scattered grains of sand on the floor of the burial chamber. (Strange place for a bedroom, I thought. But then again, Anubis was the god of death and funerals.)

I repeated the portal process again, this time focussing on where Nephthys had found Lord Osiris’ body. As I was stepping through the portal of glowing sand I remember thinking, “I really hope she’s there.”

--o--

I stepped through Neela’s portal into the centre of the ruins of the temple of Nephthys. I lifted up my shared amulet and spoke into it nervously.

“Neela – are you there?”

“Yeah, Anubis – I got through, but I think we should concentrate on finding Nephthys’ spirit. Let’s say we only call each other if one – we’ve found her, or two – we get into trouble and need some help.”

“I understand, Neela.”

I started walking slowly around the ruins. They were mainly crumbling stone walls and mossy statues. I hoped that Nephthys would be here because she was my mother. I also thought that it meant that I could find her quite easily.

I could sense a hidden door in a part of the wall that had not fallen yet. I stepped over carefully prodding the wall with a stick I had found on the floor, to make sure there were no traps. The wall seemed good to the touch, so I pressed my hand against it and the hidden door opened.

I went down a long corridor full of dust and with cobwebs up near the ceiling. I continued until I found a stone staircase which was not crumbling. Instead it looked ancient yet untouched. I walked down the stairs slowly, thinking to myself that I must be the first one to walk down these stairs in centuries.

I came to a room full of stone shelves with many magical items scattered around on them. One whole shelf held shabti figurines, another held canopic jars filled with the organs of mummified humans. Looking closer at the shelf holding shabti I saw that each figurine resembled a god or goddess of Egypt. I went over immediately to the one which resembled my mother Nephthys and picked it up, only to discover that it was not a shabti. It was a lever, attached to the wall, disguised as a shabti figurine.

The wall made a loud creaking rattle and the stones began to slowly descend into the floor, revealing another long, dusty staircase. As I stepped down I felt my hand grow warmer and warmer as the rest of my body remained cold from being in this underground chamber. This could only mean that there was a god’s soul in this staircase, or in the room below.

I descended the staircase faster and faster until I came to a torch-lit room. As I stepped into the room I wondered how the torches could still be alight after all this time. Then I saw it – a shabti glowing golden on the wall. I was sure that this held the soul of a god. As I picked it up, I felt a god’s soul inside it. To my surprise it was not Egyptian, but Roman.

I held it closer and discerned that it was the soul of Juno, the queen of the Roman gods. I quickly stowed the shabti containing the soul of Juno into my bag. I took the amulet from around my neck and spoke into it.

“Neela – I have found one.”

--o--

I stepped through the portal into sweltering heat of the Egyptian desert. I saw in front of me a small ditch – almost like a coffin. I stepped down into the ditch and I knew that this was where Set had banished Osiris’ gold-inlaid sarcophagus.

I couldn’t see any obvious magical signs, so I morphed into a kite (the bird of prey, not the thing you fly on a string). I flew upwards and started circling around the area. With my improved eyesight I saw something I had not noticed before: a small opening, hardly bigger than an ant, in the side of the small ditch. I decided to investigate.

I landed back on the ground, changing myself back to human and grabbed my wand out of my bag. I said the spell to shrink myself and my wand glowed with bluish-golden light. It was very peculiar. I had never cast that spell before. It was like the whole world was growing around me. To my annoyance, I noticed that the hole was halfway up the side of the ditch which was now ten times my height.

There were many ways I could get up using magic, but I felt that the easiest would be to transform into a miniature kite (the bird of prey, not the… well you know…). I tried to fly up, but in my tiny state even the gentle breeze was impossible to fly against. I had to land and make another plan.

I transformed back into my normal tiny self. I grabbed my magic bag and searched it, looking for the thing I needed. I found it: a tiny roll of twine. I spoke a spell “M’ari’i” meaning “Grow” in ancient Egyptian. The twine tripled in length. With my wand I directed the now elongated rope to the hole and used a fastening spell to attach it the rock above.

I grabbed the rope and pulled, making sure that it was fast. I pulled my way up the rope, buffeted by the gentle breeze which seemed to me to be a raging hurricane.

I made it to the hole and realized that it was nothing more than a now deserted insect’s den. I tried to sense any magical presence, but detected none. There could not possibly be the soul of a god or goddess here.

I heard a voice coming from around my neck. It was Anubis.

“Neela – I have found one.”

“You have?” I exclaimed, grasping the amulet. “Which one? Is it Nephthys? Have you found her?”

“No it is not Nephthys. From your question, I surmise that you have not found her either.”

“So who did you find then? Is it a god? Is it a goddess? Is it Egyptian, or Roman?” I said, firing questions at him like an out of control question-cannon.

“So many questions, Neela. I have one answer. I have found Juno, the Roman goddess.”

“What was she doing in Nephthys’ old temple?”

“I have absolutely no idea, Neela. Your guess is as good as mine.”

I needed to teleport to Anubis immediately to see, well… whatever Juno had manifested her soul into. Not thinking, I used my want to restore my full size, forgetting I was still in the tiny insect hole.

Erupting out, I found myself covered in earth. I shook the soil off myself and opened a golden portal to the location that Anubis has travelled to, seemingly hours ago.

Stepping out of the glowing portal and looking around, I saw Anubis in the burning sunlight of the Egyptian midday.

“Anubis – can you show me? Juno – where is she? What form is she in?”

Anubis replied, “She has taken the appearance of an Egyptian shabti. I have no idea why a Roman goddess has manifested herself in an Egyptian form.”

“Anubis – give her to me. I will put her in my Duat-locker. Where we put my father’s soul.”

“Did you find anything, Neela?”

“No, I am afraid I didn’t. All I found were a lot of dead insect shells.”

I turned around, looking at the steps which led down to where I assumed Anubis had found Juno’s soul. Why would a Roman goddess leave her soul in an Egyptian goddess’s temple? It didn’t make sense.

“I guess”, I said to Anubis, “there’s only one other place that Nephthys could be. The problem is that it’s thirty feet underwater.”

“It is a good job that one of us has powers to control water, then.”

I took out an emblem of a teardrop from my bag and spoke a few muffled words in the ancient Atlantean tongue. I gave the emblem to Anubis and told him that if he held it, he would be able to breathe underwater and have improved underwater vision and movement.

“It’s in the forgotten city of Sundura, which sunk during the Roman invasion.”

I opened a portal and we stepped through. To me it felt so good to be underwater again. I had not been swimming in ages… well, two days at least. I could see that Anubis was not looking too comfortable underwater, but he seemed to be breathing fine even if he could have done with some extra swimming practise.

I motioned him over and pointed in a north-easterly direction. I had swum here before with my father and I knew where the ancient Temple of Nephthys was.

We swam there swiftly. Or at least, as swiftly as one of us could manage. When we finally arrived I swam in, and immediately felt a magical presence. I did not yet know whether it was a god, or whether it was another enchantment on this part of the building.

We swam around, looking for anything which could host Nephthys soul. The problem was, it could be anything: a shell, some seaweed, even just a small volume of water could hold it. Anubis searched to the west. I searched to the east.

On the walls there were many offering left by sailors in thanks for safe voyages.