Beyond the mirror

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Beyond the mirror

by FallLover

Summary

Isis investigates Hathor’s mirror to possibly help Anubis, and is drawn in herself. There, she discovers Horus, Nephthys, Seth, and far more going on than she could ever imagine.

Set after Season 2, Episode 96.

Notes

This was originally published on Archive of Our Own.

See the end of the work for more notes

Isis stood outside Horus' room in Heliopolis, thinking about where her son could possibly be. How she missed him, and worried about him. She trusted he knew what he was doing with the caravan and that meddling foreign god, but he'd been gone so long…

Leaving me to handle everything, she thought with annoyance as she pushed the bedroom door open and went inside. *If he was here, I could focus on helping Anubis while he handles administrative matters.…* The room was empty, quiet, and a little dusty. No one had been in here in a while. She looked around for where Horus might have left Hathor's hand mirror. There was always the possibility he'd taken it with him wherever he went, but he could have also left it behind.

She sensed something: the slightest of magic shifting in the room. Something old and powerful, and trying to hide. It was coming from a chest in the corner. She walked over to it, wary. As she opened the chest, she moved things aside to spot an old mirror on the bottom. She could sense its power even more now.

She frowned at it, recalling Nephthys talking about her mirror that allow you to see into a person's soul. Isis had dismissed it, but the mirror returned, and it was the same as the one Horus now had. She recognized the figures on the back of it: she'd seen Nephthys holding it, though she wasn't sure what Nephthys did with it. Gifted it to Hathor for some reason? Perhaps to help the goddess of love with her relationship troubles?

If we can use it to look into Anubis' soul, Isis thought as she reached down for the mirror, *then perhaps we can better understand what ails him, and how to help.* She wondered if it had come into Horus' hands when they needed it most, after all, especially when Horus wasn't there to help himself.

But as she turned the mirror over, it shone.

Sekhmet's laughter sounded in her ears.

The world went dark.

Isis blinked and found herself standing in a place of darkness. She felt whole and uninjured, but could no longer sense Heliopolis. She cast her senses around, looking for the spell on her senses, and furious at herself for walking into the situation so haphazardly. *Horus said it was blessed! I didn't sense a curse, either!*

"Mother?"

Isis turned to see Horus watching her from a short distance away. He was holding a glowing blue orb in his hand, and had his glowing wings behind him.

"Isis?"

Isis blinked to see Nephthys walk around Horus to better see her. She was wearing different clothes than when Nephthys had left her in the temple of life, and her crown was in place

again.

Isis frowned, confused at the sight of the pair. “What are you doing here? What’s going on?” She wondered if this was some odd illusion created by whatever spell was in the mirror. If the mirror *was* a gift from Ra, then it could have been full of any number of nasty tricks.

“I’m in Hermopolis,” Horus said. “Investigating something related to the foreign god. But Mother, did you look at Hathor’s mirror?”

Isis was glad at least that Horus was still doing his work, but said, “I was trying to use it help Anubis. How did you know I looked at the mirror?”

Horus grimaced and replied, “The mirror is some kind of trap that can lure people or… parts of them, inside, and keep them here. It’s what’s trapped Nephthys here for hundreds of years.”

Isis looked at Nephthys, who looked nervous before her. “What do you mean, hundreds of years? I left Nephthys in Heliopolis.”

“She’s not the real me,” Nephthys insisted, looking determined. “She’s… a part of me, so to speak. I was split from myself and trapped here. By Hathor.”

“What?” Isis demanded, feeling more alarmed by the moment. “Why? When?”

“Before Nephthys and Seth were married,” Horus said, his expression grave.

Isis stared at them both in shock. Then she gazed at Nephthys alone, trying to see if the person before her was some kind of trick. But nothing stood out.

“I looked into the mirror after the first match against Seth,” Horus said. “It’s how I ended up where Nephthys was, and spoke to her.”

Isis’ eyes widened and she demanded, angrily, “Why didn’t you say anything?!” If she’d known Hathor had cast a spell on Nephthys and Horus—!

“You knew this for how long?” Seth called from behind Isis, making her flinch and look back.

Seth stood a few paces away, glaring over Isis’ shoulder, at Horus. His expression was furious.

“Uncle…” Horus said, a bit nervously. “I—”

“Why didn’t you say something?” Seth demanded as he stepped closer. His hands sharpened into claws.

“I was planning to tell you,” Horus said as he stepped towards Seth rather than away. “I just… I worried—”

“About what?!” Seth snarled as he walked past Isis. He was before Horus in moments and snatched the demigod’s headdress off, revealing his face, and making Isis’ eyes widen in shock.

Horus winced.

“You don’t get to hide anymore!” Seth cried out. “No more lies! First your blessings in the first match, then the stupid masquerade with the boat in the second match, and now this?!” He looked at Nephthys, who gazed back at him, steadily.

Horus gazed down at Seth and began, “I was unsure of how to tell you. We were still enemies during the trial, and—”

“Are we still enemies?” Seth demanded, crushing the mask in his hands, ripping through the fabric of the eyes with his claws. “Because I’m starting to think perhaps we never *stopped* being enemies!”

“I didn’t want to upset you!” Horus said, still not backing away from Seth. He tightened his grip on the glowing blue orb.

Isis was deeply confused what was going on here.

“And I was scared that I was… That I’m…” He breathed in deeply. “I was afraid that I was a fake, somehow, too.”

Isis gazed at Horus in horror.

Horus looked like he was in great pain. “I was pretty sure the real me left the mirror, but I doubted if I left it whole… Do you know what it’s like to go through life every day, wondering if you’re who you think you are? If every move you make it suspect? If… if maybe everything you trust about yourself being *real* isn’t?”

Seth simply gazed back at him. His grip on the mask loosened.

Horus breathed in deeply and continued, focusing on Seth, “Sekhmet told me what… I know what you’ve gone through. I didn’t want to bring more doubt and uncertainty into *your* life, too. You have things hard enough as it is.”

Seth looked down at the shredded mask in his hands. Then he looked up at Nephthys, who gazed back at him with a nervous expression.

Isis wanted to know why *Seth* was here. Why Horus and Seth seemed to know each other so well and be getting along so well, despite Seth’s actions. But it felt like she shouldn’t interrupt.

“Are you *really* Nephthys?” Seth asked the woman behind Horus. His voice was thin, pained, and fearful.

Nephthys nodded and smiled at him. “It’s me, Seth.”

“You don’t… remember us being together?” Seth asked.

Nephthys shut her eyes in pain and shook her head. “I’m sorry, Seth. I saw a vision of you with her… me… *That.* After I was trapped here. But that’s all.”

“You don’t remember Anubis?” Seth asked, quietly.

Nephthys opened her eyes and frowned at him. “Who?”

Seth and Isis both stared at her in shock and horror.

“She’s been trapped in here,” Horus said to them both, his expression solemn. “This farce has gone on long enough. We need to get her out.”

“How did you get out last time?” Isis asked when no one else offered anything. “And why didn’t you take her out with you?”

“I don’t know how I got out,” Horus said. “It seemed like the spell that brought me didn’t have a proper hold, and I escaped. Nephthys, though, was brought in intentionally and trapped.” He looked at Isis hopefully. “Perhaps you also weren’t meant to come here. If you return the same way, you can try to undo the mirror, now that you know what it is.”

Isis frowned and said, “It’s a powerful thing to trap us like this…” She was unsure of her own skills. “I don’t know about Hathor, but if this *was* a sort of gift from Ra, that would make sense. She’d pull something stupidly complex like this.”

“And the space connects to chaos,” Horus said, “where Ra was born. It makes sense she could access it again for the mirror.”

“Ra’s always at the center of every battle I’ve fought,” Seth muttered.

Isis scowled and said, “I like this less and less…” Ra was a hard opponent to defeat.

“You can do it,” Horus said. “I know you can.”

Isis smiled ruefully and asked, “Is that your intuition?”

Horus nodded.

Isis turned to Seth, who was still gazing at Nephthys with a lost expression. Isis said, “Anubis is in Heliopolis, looking for answers. He’s lost his memory.”

Seth looked at her in surprise, and then his expression hardened in determination. “Yes. Osiris messed with it.”

Isis frowned at him as she replied, “You knew?”

“He found me in the desert,” Seth said. “He didn’t remember who I was. And… he attacked me at Abu Gorab. His head was infested with these black weeds that turned him into some giant jackal monster and shut off his mind, making him an idiot.”

“They’re keeping his soul bound to his body,” Isis said, making Seth’s eyes widen in surprise. “Whatever Osiris did to help make him a god, this is some sort of temporary patch. Nephthys and…” She glanced at the Nephthys by Horus and then back to Seth. “The Nephthys in Heliopolis and I have been trying to properly bind his body together. He’s hurting badly as is.”

Seth’s expression grew horrified. “I… ripped them out… I thought they were hurting him…”

Isis shut her eyes in frustration, but stopped herself from berating him for his stupidity. She’d almost thought as much. And the Nephthys she knew had also wondered. To anyone not trained in such magic, it could easily be assumed to be worse than it was. But still, she said, “You should have contacted me about it. Remember the last time you tried to help him?” She’d barely stopped him from cutting off more of Anubis’ arm, then.

Seth scowled at her. “Would you have believed me if I told you? Besides, he was attacking me. I didn’t have time to reach out to anyone.”

Isis supposed he had a point. But it was still frustrating. Everything had been happening and no one was keeping her informed.

“You might not remember all of this,” Horus said, stepping closer to Isis and Seth but gazing at Isis. “I’ll do my best to contact you about it when I can to ensure you do.”

“You need to return to Heliopolis,” Isis told him with a frown. “If there is something wrong with you, I should be able to figure it out.”

Horus grimaced and nodded. “I will try to return soon.”

“What is that outsider doing in Hermopolis?” Isis demanded. She looked between Horus and Seth. “And why are you two together?”

“The foreign god’s goal is possibly here or related to this place,” Horus replied.

“You said you’d bring him to Heliopolis,” Isis reminded him.

“I will,” Horus insisted, gazing at her with a firm expression.

Isis sighed, not liking any of this. “Fine. And how are your escapades with the caravan, given the company you’re keeping?” She frowned at Seth.

Seth rolled his eyes and said, “He’s been helping me kill them.”

Isis frowned and replied, “You’re killing your followers?”

“They’re opportunists, murderers, slavers, and rapists,” Seth said, his expression sort of resigned. “They don’t deserve to live if they persist in their ways. And the souls trapped in the curse bracelet are taking their revenge.” He waved his left wrist vaguely.

Isis scoffed and replied, “And yet you let them live and thrive for so long before this?”

“He’s making a difference now, Mother,” Horus said. He stepped forward and put his left hand on Seth’s right shoulder, somewhat protectively.

And Seth didn’t push him away.

“He’s risked his life to get rid of them,” Horus said, gazing at Isis with a firm expression that said he was ready to put up a fight about it. “Many times.”

Isis’ heart raced. Whatever she thought recently about Seth… “When did you get so close?”

Seth grimaced and said, “It just… happened. He’s been following me for a while. He’s not… entirely execrable in a fight.”

“Uncle, really?” Horus sounded a little irritated, but there was also an odd look of… *fondness* as he gazed at Seth?!

Isis stared in shock, feeling her heart race.

Seth smiled ruefully up at Horus and dropped the mask. “Well, you’re lucky that’s as harsh as I’m willing to go, after all of this.”

Horus squeezed his shoulder.

Isis clutched her staff, not sure what to do. Her gut instinct was to pull Horus away, to accuse Seth of seducing another man she loved—

“You look so sweet together,” Nephthys said as she stepped closer, smiling at Horus and Seth.

Seth’s face colored and he crossed his arms. “I um…”

Nephthys chuckled, “You must like him. You only blush like that when you’ve been caught.”

“*Nephthys,*” Seth muttered as his face grew redder.

“I’m just glad that,” Nephthys continued, still smiling calmly, “with everything that’s happened in my absence, there *was* joy.” She looked at Isis sadly. “I have a lot to catch up on, I know.”

“We’ll get you out of here,” Seth said, gazing at her firmly. “I swear it.”

Nephthys smiled. “I believe you.” She looked at Isis, who still didn’t know what to say. “Be careful, Isis, especially around the other me.” She gazed at the shredded headdress on the ground and looked up at Horus with a firm expression. “And you be careful. If that mural shows the future… you’ve seen a preview of it today.”

Horus nodded gravely.

“What mural?” Seth asked, confused.

Horus sighed and said, “This place shows the future. There’s a mural of me, possibly, that shows I’ll die trying to warn people about something.” He gazed up at the sky, which was full of stars. “So it seems I might die in the future.”

Isis was alarmed by that.

“This place is dedicated to Thoth, maybe,” Seth muttered. “I suppose it’s possible he or his followers recorded his predictions…”

“Or the mirror space was curious about me after I was here the first time,” Horus noted. “And… looked into my future. Perhaps I left as much of an impression on it as it left on me.” Horus shook his head. “Something about it feels right. Like I’m on a path that can’t be avoided. But…” he gazed down at his headdress. “Perhaps it can be changed.”

Seth frowned and gazed down at the shredded headdress. “What, you think I’m going to kill you?”

“Or you might have tried,” Horus said with a smile. “But you changed your mind.”

Seth scowled. “I’ll admit I almost wanted to.” He glanced at Nephthys, whose eyes widened. “I’m still not happy.” He looked at Horus with a frown. “You should have told me.”

“I know,” Horus said. “But just as I can remember you and try to avoid… what future I saw. I believe in you. I believe in us.” He smiled at Seth.

Seth scoffed and said, “Yeah, well… I’ll just try to make sure you don’t die for some reason.”

Horus smiled brightly at that. “Thank you, Uncle.”

Seth scowled at him. “Stop making that face.”

“What face?” Horus asked, innocently.

“That face like you plan to—” He looked at Isis and then Nephthys, then away. His cheeks reddened. “Stop it.”

Horus chuckled and wind wrapped around him to form a new headdress. “Okay.”

Isis still didn’t know what to do with all this, but felt it was all beyond her. She had to get back to Anubis, she had to break this mirror… and sort out Hathor. Or whoever was behind this.

If it was Ra, she was furious. And if it wasn’t… she would find out who it was.

“We’ll have a long talk about all this back home,” Isis said, looking between the other three. “Hurry up with whatever you’re doing.” She looked at Seth. “And Seth…”

Seth gazed at her neutrally, looking weirdly like her dreams. Her regrets. Her confusion. Her anger and sorrow.

Isis sighed and said, “Keep Horus alive.”

Seth blinked in surprise, and then nodded, gifting her perhaps a tiny smile as he said, “I will.”

End Notes

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