Bruised but not broken

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Bruised but not broken

by FallLover

Summary

After Horus kisses Seth on the stairs in Hermopolis, Seth gets up and goes to lay down indoors, as per Horus' pushiness. But Seth still has a lot to think about, if Horus' cuddling won't fully distract him out of it.

Set during Season 2, Episode 89.

Notes

This was originally published on Archive of Our Own.

See the end of the work for more notes

Seth eventually managed to push Horus off – after he'd kissed Seth's face and neck a dozen times – and got up off the stairs and walked back past the campfire to an empty hut that Horus found, and had equipped with a bedroll, likely taken from Furball, judging by the smell of it.

Horus wore his facial bruise from Seth happily as he followed Seth inside, and Seth frowned at him in the dark. "And what are *you* doing here?" Seth demanded. He wasn't surprised Horus had followed him, given Horus' antics, but still. He imagined Horus was either still curious about what they'd talked about or wanted sex or something else.

"It's cold," Horus said in his usual earnest way, as if he had no other reason to be there and was completely innocent of any underhanded intention. "If you sleep away from the campfire, it would be bad for you. You're a demigod right now, you need warmth. The bedroll won't be sufficient."

"And *you're* going to provide that warmth?" Seth drily asked. The cat was on his shoulders again, moving around with its little feet, sometimes walking into Seth's long hair and sniffing his neck, as if Seth had changed in the last short amount of time the cat had been wandering elsewhere. It was very cute, at least.

"I can give you my feathers again," Horus offered with a soft smile, already too close to Seth again.

Seth rolled his eyes at the man's audacity. But he also liked the feeling of those feathers, which was annoying in itself, so he said, "Fine. Do it."

"…But it'd work better if I warmed you myself," Horus added.

Seth breathed in deeply, feeling very put upon by everything in his life, which he'd felt for centuries at this point. He could feel Horus watching him, almost vibrating with excitement. But for all he was a bit too handsy, it was nice to have him nearby, making Seth remember everything wasn't just in his head. "If you don't go overboard, whatever. And make the feathers anyway."

Horus perked up at that and hastily knelt down by the bedroll to cover it with the warm, golden feathers. He gestured for Seth to rest on them.

Seth lay down in the pile, grateful for the fast warmth. It *had* been cold on the stairs. But for the first time in a while he hadn't exactly felt embarrassed to lay under Nut's sky where she could see how pitiful he'd become. He'd been open and a bit empty, perhaps, but Nut hadn't struck him down. The sky simply stayed as it was.

Horus pulled the blanket over Seth's legs.

Seth leaned on his side, away from Horus, with the cat resting in the crook of his arm. He felt Horus nestle in behind him, and wrap an arm around Seth's waist, which was proprietary of him, but Seth was too weary to push him away.

Plus, Horus was right: it *was* warmer.

When Horus stopped moving, the room was quiet. Seth could hear Furball and their attendant chatting a little in the distance, but that faded with time. He tried not to think about the war with Ra, or the early human wars he'd taken part of as he established himself as a god to be respected. Before that, they were just the great-grandchildren Ra had chosen to ignore, until she hadn't, and Seth and his siblings had to show that *wasn't* the case. They were strong, and they would make Egypt strong, too.

Isis also said they needed to protect *themselves* from would-be usurpers who would try the same thing *they'd* done with Ra, perhaps overcoming even Isis' magic and creativity. At the time, Seth had thought Isis was exaggerating the danger, but he had never imagined Osiris' actions, let alone how *Seth* would be involved in them. So in the end, Isis had been right: she hadn't been able to protect them all from destruction. And Seth, in all his power, hadn't been able to do so, either, because it was *his* skills that helped bring it all crashing down, even for a good cause.

Horus' head leaned against Seth's, with his short, ruffly hair tickling Seth's: he'd dismissed his headdress, making Seth almost want to turn to gaze into those blue eyes again. "You're very tense."

Seth sighed, reminding himself that Horus was more than his pretty eyes, and some of that *more* was annoying persistence. "Go to sleep."

"Is there anything I can do?" Horus sounded worried and hopeful, like he really would do whatever he could. Seth knew he'd turned his back on his mother to be by Seth's side, more than once now. He turned his back on his godhood, on everything… for Seth.

Somewhere in Seth's chest, the knowledge hurt and warmed him all at once. And he hated that he liked the sincerity of it. But he couldn't really explain that in words that made sense, so he focused on the present situation, with them trying to get rest before the coming day, and noted, "You're the reason I'm tense and you're acting like this? Hmph."

Horus made a very obviously faked and dramatically sad noise and squeezed Seth, but not painfully. "I'd rectify my mistake if I could… Did I ask too many questions?"

Seth wasn't sure. The early mistakes of his life weren't things he liked to dwell on any more than dwelling on what Osiris had done, or what Seth had done as king. But Horus' questions and comments rattled around Seth's head, making Seth think about the words he'd shouted at Osiris on the night Osiris had died, and the quite a bit more that Seth *hadn't* shouted, because it was buried in his heart where he tried not to think about it. But he'd voiced the more important parts of it then: about all that Seth had sacrificed when he'd gone away, only to be unappreciated back home, to have his brother manipulate him, and go behind his back in a place Seth hadn't expected it. Because going to the battlefield had been something he'd done for *all* of them.

Until that night, he hadn't been bothered as much by his own "sacrifices": he hadn't even seen them as sacrifices, really, just challenges to be surmounted, even if he hated them. He understood that he was making the most of his abilities. Osiris was better suited for rule, Isis

for strategy, Nephthys for calm, and Seth was good at destroying things. Unfortunately, his skills couldn't stop and even in some cases encouraged the difficulties his army faced, and he'd just worked on getting better, protecting his people, making a stronger army, a stronger Egypt, and he *had*. But Osiris' actions had made all of Seth's bitterest thoughts come to light: all that he'd worked for over the centuries, all the time he'd given up for the horrors of war, and for what? For Osiris to go behind his back? For his family to disregard his presence in their lives, as he'd always feared they would? Because no matter how hard Seth worked, it didn't really matter. He was never enough.

Osiris had even said Seth's accomplishments weren't his own anyway, and Seth had been hurt and furious in reply, unsure how to grapple with the unraveling of everything he'd worked for in the words of someone he respected.

But Horus made Seth feel like he'd been right to be angry. And it was… the only time anyone had ever done that.

Seth reached down and set his right hand over Horus', feeling the skin there, noting it was real and not a dream. The feathers glowed warmly beneath him, making him wearier but not lulling him to sleep. Not yet.

"Uncle?" Horus asked. He nuzzled Seth's head a bit. "You know you can tell me anything, right?"

Seth chuckled and said, "After what I said today, definitely." He had expected pure disgust or demands for Seth to be quiet. Or perhaps some new revelation about how Seth had things wrong. Instead, Horus had only wanted to know *more.* He'd been on Seth's *side.* He'd been weirdly understanding about Seth's disquiet, which made the whole situation so much more visceral than he'd expected, thinking about old, stupid memories that weren't worth revisiting. It made Seth's life seem to matter in a way it hadn't mattered much to Seth in a long time.

Seth leaned back against Horus, feeling the pace of the younger demigod's heart, the movement of his lungs. Seth wasn't sure what he'd done to get Horus in his life, because it didn't feel deserved – other than someone to defeat him, really. But he was increasingly realizing he didn't fully want Horus out of his life, either, which was part of why he tried to push the demigod away. He knew it was selfish: that he was meant to be punished. But it was nice, too, to have someone on his side, encouraging him to not always blame himself for every problem that existed. Especially since his spirals seem to lead to more sicknesses. And he needed his strength to deal with the curse, and to help restore Egypt. To make up for all he'd done.

Seth wondered what would happen to Horus after Seth's punishment was over. Would Horus marry Hathor? Or find someone else to pester?

The idea was weirdly focusing and irritating, and Seth was annoyed he was irritated by it. Horus' future wasn't his concern. Horus already knew it, and the other gods were going to help him. He'd find someone else he could talk sweetly to and encourage. Someone else to cuddle up to at night and offer warm feathers to.

Why am I angry now? He thought, glaring at the wall. His thoughts were meant to *settle* his annoyance, not make it *worse.* So *what* if Horus moved on? It made sense.

“I’m just glad to listen,” Horus said. “I’m glad you trust me.”

Seth felt his throat thicken, and wasn't sure what to say to that. He suddenly thought that maybe letting Horus stay in the room with him wasn’t a bad thing. For the warmth, really. It *was* rather chilly at night. And who knew what he’d get up to if Seth wasn’t watching him?

Maybe letting Horus in wasn’t another regret to carry.

The cat purred quietly by Seth’s stomach. Horus pressed against Seth's back, keeping the mess of feelings present but not painful, because at least he was there, for however long this lasted. A windbreak against the storm of a long life. *Seth’s* windbreak.

Seth shut his eyes.

End Notes

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