Confession

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Confession

by FallLover

Summary

Horus tells Seth about Nephthys in the temple in the desert.

Set after Season 2, Episode 105.

Notes

This was originally posted on Archive of Our Own, and is being posted here as a back-up.

See the end of the work for more notes

“Because the person I should be with isn’t here,” Seth said. It felt a bit odd to say to someone he knew wasn’t real, but… he’d been distracted by this for long enough, and needed to ground himself.

The blonde illusion still barely holding a sheet over herself raised her eyebrows at him in surprise.

Seth just looked at her, wondering if it was the temple that made her look so different, or his own distorted desires, and if it was something that Nephthys had ever noticed. Nephthys had been everything he’d wanted once.

It didn’t seem that way anymore.

The illusion smiled at him.

And then she vanished.

Seth breathed in deeply, looking around at the dilapidated temple surroundings that had looked like a fancy bed and room before she vanished. Now it was clear no one had been here in years.

That illusion got me good, even if I’m not a human, he thought. He supposed he was lucky she’d only smelled half-good. He wasn’t sure what the coming-of-age ceremony involved, outside sex, but he imagined he was better off not knowing.

He followed Horus’ scent back the way he came: he assumed if the illusion could make him see what wasn’t there, it could *also* make him *not* see what was there, which would explain why Horus had so suddenly vanished earlier.

He walked back into the alcove from before, and found Horus standing oddly, like he was grabbing someone. His back was to Seth. But he otherwise looked normal, with his headdress still on and his wings gone.

“I…” Horus said. He breathed in deeply, clearly struggling to talk.

Seth sighed and walked forward, wondering if he had to knock Horus out of it. “It’s an illusion, you dumb bird—”

“I didn’t want to tell you,” Horus said to the illusion.

Seth blinked in surprise. He wondered just what Horus was seeing.

“I was jealous,” Horus said, looking upset. His hands shook. “Jealous of Nephthys. Jealous of what would happen if he saw her again. If… If they were together again.”

“What?” Seth asked. He remembered Horus brought Nephthys to the sentencing. *Is that what he’s talking about? Why?*

“I thought I could explain it away by saying she couldn’t get out anyway, so it didn’t matter,” Horus said, sounding miserable. “But… I was relieved, too. Because if *she* was trapped in the mirror, then that meant… It meant that maybe… Maybe I had a chance.” He let go of whatever the illusion was and covered his face. “Seth is right. I’m just as bad as my father.”

“Trapped in the mirror?” Seth asked, more alarmed at whatever was going on. “What are you talking about?”

Horus blinked and looked back at Seth, seemingly finally noticing he was there. “Seth?”

“Nephthys is trapped in a mirror?” Seth asked, frowning at him. “What mirror? When?”

Horus grimaced. Then he lowered his head.

There was a bit of silence, during which Seth clenched his hands into fists. He wondered if he’d have to push harder to get Horus to talk.

But finally Horus said, “Some time ago, before Anubis was born, Nephthys got her hands on a hand mirror that can take the memories of love from the person looking into it, and replace them with love for the person shown in the mirror.”

“…What?” Seth said. He’d never heard of such a thing.

“In the mirror, Nephthys saw Osiris,” Horus continued. “And it made her love him. And… forget her love for you.”

Seth’s eyes widened in shock.

“Her memories of loving you were trapped in the mirror. Before the first match, Hathor gave me a hand mirror for luck. It was blessed, though I didn’t know how. After the first match, I looked into the mirror and saw you.”

“Me?” Seth asked, not following any of this. *Nephthys’ memories? Trapped?*

Horus nodded. “And then I was drawn into the mirror, where I met Nephthys’ memories.”

“You met her?” Seth said. This was all too bizarre.

“It was like a shadow of her,” Horus explained. “Almost a copy. She believed herself to *be* the real Nephthys. And in a way she was, but she really wasn’t. The Nephthys in Heliopolis *is* the real one, she just doesn’t remember the incident with the mirror.”

Seth felt his world rocking. He’d never forgotten how Osiris had mocked him, saying that Nephthys had fallen in love only with the *stronger* god.

But it was just some trick?! Seth thought with fury. *And he had the gall to tell me that love as I understand it was some* trick *of Hathor’s, when he was using her fucking mirror to make Nephthys fall in love with him!*

He didn’t notice the sand near his feet shivering from his anger.

Seth himself felt like he wanted to throttle something.

“She told me some of her story, as she remembered it,” Horus continued, drawing Seth back. “And she asked me to tell you about her. At the time, I was over-relying on my intuition, which told she wouldn’t get out. So even if you’d have listened to me, I… didn’t see the point in telling you.”

Seth just stared at him.

“I didn't learn more about it until recently," Horus continued, clearly unnerved by Seth's silence. "Where I learned about what she really was. We were in that dark tunnel, and I met her again... and I realized more about the situation while talking to her. And..." He gazed at the spot where the illusion he'd been talking to had stood, and Seth wondered *just* what he'd seen. But Horus shook his head. "I wasn't sure how to explain to you now, since it's been so long... I was afraid, I..." He grimaced. "But back then, during the trial... you really wouldn’t have listened to me anyway. I didn’t know how to explain it in a way that you would have listened to, not during the trial.”

Seth supposed that made sense: he was *very* hostile to Horus, even if he’d never really viewed Horus as his enemy, but more as a means to an end.

But that didn’t cover everything.

“And *after* the trial?” Seth demanded, growing increasingly angry. “While you’ve been *so worried* and *in love with me?!”* During the days they’d gone walking together, the nights Horus had sat with him. All the desperate confessions, Seth’s recovery in the temple… There were far too many moments where Horus could have said *something.*

Horus bowed his head, and said, quietly, "I allowed my fear and jealousy to control me. I... I have no excuses."

Seth breathed in deeply. Reasonably, he knew they didn’t have time for this: they were still stuck in this temple and needed to figure things out. But he needed the truth when he was finally getting some of it.

Because he’d known that a good thing couldn’t be so good. There had to be an edge somewhere. He knew Horus wasn’t perfect: too young, too naïve, and too lacking in practical knowledge of the world. But he’d thought… He’d thought there was something more. Something honest between them.

But why would he have told me, really? Seth thought. *Even in desperation. I couldn’t have done anything.*

He knew there were other options, though.

Seth breathed in, pushed back his feelings, and asked, “Why didn’t you tell anyone else?! If Nephthys was trapped, then your mother could have done something, especially if it was magic!”

“I didn’t believe she could,” Horus said, quietly. "And I don't know of anyone else who could or would help."

“You didn’t believe…” Seth scoffed. Then he reached forward and shoved Horus back, pushing the younger demigod over so that he fell back on the sand.

Horus gazed up at Seth, alarmed, bracing himself on his elbow.

Seth glared down at Horus, wishing this didn’t hurt, wishing he could trust *one person* in his life to not stab him in the back. “Do you know how much I want to kill you right now?”

Horus’ eyes widened in alarm.

“My wife… was *brainwashed*,” Seth said, feeling his face heat. “I thought it was me. I thought I drove her off. I thought… I thought I was *too weak* for her to love.” His voice hurt. His heart hurt. “But all along, it was just some fucking *mirror!* And she’s been cursed or whatever for however long, and you could have said something, and you *didn’t!”*

Horus grimaced and bowed his head. “I’m sorry, Uncle.”

Seth yelled in anger and turned away, hugging himself. “I trusted you!” He put a hand over his eyes, trying to regulate his breathing.

He remembered when Nephthys came to him to tell him she was pregnant. He hadn’t known then that she didn’t love him. But he’d wondered, as his anxiety grew. As the distance between himself and Nephthys grew. As Sekhmet told him, and Nephthys confirmed it.

He remembered a hand mirror. That *he’d* given to Nephthys. The night before Nephthys told him she was pregnant.

“I did this to her,” Seth said, staring at the temple wall through his fingers. “It’s my fault.” It made such perfect sense now.

“No,” Horus said behind him, sounding alarmed. “No it’s not.”

“If I hadn’t given it to her, she’d have never…” Seth covered his face again, wanting to tear his fingers into his skull. His eyes burned, and he felt tears leaking down his cheeks. “It’s always me. I’m the poison. The *corruption.”* If not for him, Anubis wouldn’t have gone to Duat. If not for him, Isis wouldn’t have suffered. If not for him, Nephthys wouldn’t have been trapped.

“No!” Horus said, grabbing Seth’s shoulders.

Seth breathed in deeply, too much of a mess to push Horus away.

“This isn’t your fault,” Horus insisted. “It’s Osiris. Hathor, maybe, I don’t know. And bad luck. It’s not you.” Horus breathed in shakily, and Seth could smell his fear. “Imagine if *you* had been the one to look in the mirror.”

Seth stared ahead in horror. *Exactly what Osiris would have wanted. Me biddable and loving him to the end.* It was a nightmare.

Horus stayed close, holding Seth's shoulders as if he was afraid Seth would flee. And maybe Seth would have, had he anywhere to go.

"That doesn't justify letting Nephthys take the spell instead of me," Seth said, bitterly. She was suffering, and he'd *let* it happen.

Horus walked around and pulled Seth's hands down, gazing down at him. His bright blue eyes were sad, and somehow, even now, when Seth was angry, they were comforting. He also squeezed Seth's hands, gently. "I'm not saying it does. But you can't blame yourself for this. You are *not* a poison or a corruption."

"Well, I'm not a guardian, am I?" Seth demanded, glaring up at the other man. "I didn't even protect my wife!" He'd failed in his most basic duty.

"The moment you knew," Horus said, gazing down at Seth without cowering away now, "you wanted to rectify it."

Seth frowned at him, wondering what he was on about.

"We aren't in Heliopolis," Horus said. "It would be hard to get there, and who knows if you'd be welcome. Or if I could get in and steal the mirror easily. And even if we had the mirror, then what? Neither of us knows how to undo it. The only one with a chance would be Isis, and it's unclear if she'd help us, or be able to do it. I know you can guess all that. But you want to fight anyway."

Seth pressed his lips together in anger.

"You're protective," Horus said, smiling sadly. "You love her so much. You are a guardian. And you will keep trying to protect those you care for."

It felt crushing and wrong, like trying to fit Seth into something he didn't think he was. But Horus kept looking at him, seeing beneath the filth and the hatred. Seeing who Seth tried to be.

It hurt. And Seth craved it, too.

Seth gazed up at Horus, who so firmly believed in him, when he really shouldn't. "I said I wanted to kill you." He was still angry about the lies.

"I know," Horus said. He released Seth's hands, and his expression grew solemn. "I still love you. And I still want to support you. But I can't die."

Seth frowned, confused at that response.

"I promised you I wouldn't die," Horus said, smiling softly. "I can't break that promise."

Seth's eyes widened. *At a time like this, he—?!*

“But I can support you,” Horus continued. “I’ll go to Heliopolis. I’ll get the mirror. I’ll ask Mother for help.” He breathed in. “I know I was using my intuition wrong. That it made me weak. I didn’t believe it before, but I believe there is a way to free Nephthys. To restore her, even.”

“…You do?” Seth asked, surprised.

Horus nodded, his expression firm. “I don’t know what it is, but it’s possible. I know it.”

Seth wondered what it would be like, having Nephthys… as she was, before everything truly went bad? He couldn’t fathom a spell that could steal memories from a god, let alone one that could put them back together…

“And if you never want to see me again,” Horus continued. He paused and breathed in shakily before finishing, “I understand.”

Seth gazed up at the younger demigod for a while, unsure how Horus was even real.

Horus just gazed back at him, clearly expecting judgment.

Seth snorted as he said, “You’re an idiot.”

Horus’ eyes widened in surprise.

Seth shook his head. “She smelled wrong. The illusion I saw. She smelled *wrong.*”

“…What do you mean?” Horus asked, clearly confused.

“There was something sweet, like some kind of aphrodisiac, likely for the coming-of-age ceremony,” Seth said quietly. “It was likely meant to lure in young people so they could go through it. It smelled almost like Nephthys. But it wasn’t her. It was just… mixed memories and dreams.” He smiled bitterly. “Even if the real Nephthys gets back her memories of loving me, she’ll probably still have the memories of everything else I’ve done, and I doubt she’ll forgive me, or want to be my wife still. We can’t go back to who we were. Neither of us can.” He sighed in frustration.

Horus bowed his head. “I know.”

Seth scoffed. “And yet you wanted me to believe otherwise?”

“I knew hope wasn’t possible,” Horus said. “At least not fully. But I want to support you, and if you wish to hope, then I will support that hope.”

Seth gazed up at him. “You do. And that’s why you’re *not* like your father, among other reasons.

Horus blinked in surprise.

“Osiris didn’t support me,” Seth said, thinking back on Osiris’ various bullshit comments. “He just wanted to control me, and mold me into his own toy.” Seth breathed in deeply. “You

didn’t tell me the truth, but I probably wouldn’t have listened anyway. Maybe that damn trial would have confiscated the mirror somewhere I’d never get to it. Who knows?” He shook his head in annoyance. “But if I’m a guardian, then you’re…” He looked up at Horus with a frown.

Horus just gazed at him, clearly still confused. This demigod who’d stayed by Seth’s side through so many difficulties. Who’d seen Seth when others hadn’t. Who was flawed, and had a lot to learn. But…

You’re mine, Seth thought. His face burned. “You help me calm down. And… you help. Generally. So keep helping me.” *He’s not allowed to die. He promised. And he would have stood up to me to keep it.*

That said something. What, Seth wasn’t quite sure. But it had drawn him back here after seeing through the illusion. Because he belonged here, with Horus. Not somewhere else with a fantasy, Nephthys or not.

Horus finally smiled down at him, and it made Seth’s chest warm. “Of course, Uncle.”

End Notes

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