After the Fight is Over

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After the Fight is Over

by FallLover

Summary

Anubis visits Heliopolis to spend some time playing Senet with Seth, while Seth contemplates how far he's come. Afterward, Horus and Seth relax after a long day.

Notes

This was originally published on Archive of Our Own for Day 5 of ENNEAD Week 2022.

See the end of the work for more notes

Seth was replacing the pieces on the senet board for a new game when Anubis asked, “Do you feel more settled now?”

They were in a quiet courtyard in a secluded corner of the palace in Heliopolis, and it was late afternoon and warm. Court was still in session, so most of the gods were busy there, leaving the pair of them alone. They had already played a few games together.

Today was a bit different, though Anubis had visited his mother first, as was normal, and then arrived a bit… out of sorts to see Seth, holding the senet board under his arm. He’d surprised Seth by removing his headdress, revealing his long, curly black hair, and asking, quietly, if Seth could do the same.

Seth tucked his long red locks back behind his ears as he darted looks at Anubis, trying to hide how happy he was to see the other god. Amidst everything that had happened between them, there was still happiness, particularly that Anubis *chose* to visit him. Anubis was still more quiet and reserved than he used to be, but asking Seth to remove his headdress reminded Seth of old times, when Anubis used to tug it off. And Seth knew Anubis removing his own headdress was a form of trust. It warmed Seth, to know that things, maybe in a little way, where improving between them.

“I don’t know that I feel any particular way,” Seth said, looking out a nearby window to the city below. “It’s a little easier to breathe, I suppose.” The palace didn’t feel as awful as it had when he’d returned, but it didn’t feel like it had before that night with Osiris, either, when he and his family had lived, at least in Seth’s eyes, in happy harmony.

And Seth wasn’t sure he was bothered by that change, either. Some things were worth the loss.

“That’s good, then,” Anubis said, watching him thoughtfully.

“How was your meeting with your mother?” Seth asked, looking back at him with smile. “You didn’t say anything before.” He’d just shown up in Seth’s room, asking to go play senet outside.

“…Calmer,” Anubis said, looking down at the board, but making no move to start playing again. “She’s… adjusting to being back in the real world still.”

“That’s good.”

“…You’re still not talking?” Anubis asked.

Seth smiled grimly. “Not really. We greet each other when we see each other, but there’s… there’s too much right now. I’m still settling back, as well. She’s… the whole thing with that mirror…” He shuddered at the thought of it all, and berated himself for never seeing through it until so much time had passed. “And she’s trying to work things out with Isis, so they’re spending more time together. And Isis and I…” Seth chuckled. “Well. That’s still a whole *thing*.”

“I imagine,” Anubis replied.

“I’m amazed you’re still willing to play this,” Seth said, indicating the board, and then he smiled up at Anubis. “Isn’t this… too much like work for you?”

Anubis picked up one of the white cones and rolled it in his fingers, then smiled. “Here, it’s just a game. Not flesh and blood. And there’s no screams. No viscera. No begging. Just a board, a table, sunshine, and talking with you.”

Seth smiled again, and nodded. “I’m glad you… take the time to visit. It’s always nice to see you.”

Anubis tilted his head, his dark eyes glinting ever so slightly. “I’m glad we have the chance. I’m glad…” Anubis sighed. “I am glad to see you, too. And Mother. And I think you are more… comfortable, than the last time I was here. You seem a little more relaxed.”

“Perhaps I’m just better at faking it,” Seth replied, grinning.

“…Are you?”

Seth’s smile faded. “I don’t think so.” He stretched his arms. “I think it’s… maybe it’s better.”

“Does… Horus make it better?” Seth noticed that though Anubis’ expression was neutral, there was a bit of anger in the look, still, though Seth thought it wasn’t directed at himself.

Seth instantly scoffed. “I would never say that. His ego doesn’t need it.”

Anubis smiled.

Seth walked slowly back to his rooms, trying to imprint Anubis’ smiling face properly onto his memory. They’d clasped hands before parting, which was a step up from slightly awkward nods, but it wasn’t… the same as how they’d been before… everything had gone wrong.

Before I hurt him, Seth though, his smile fading. He swallowed, and remembered all he’d gone through. With Anubis, with Nephthys, with Horus. He wasn’t going to ignore that.

I’m here. We’re here. Anubis wants to see me. And we’re working, ever so slowly, through it all. As far as we can go. He could almost feel them, now, the people he had on his side, supporting him. It was a strange feeling. Not a bad one.

And he remembered that before they’d parted, Anubis had reached out to lightly tug the end of Seth’s hair, like he had when he was small, and then he disappeared in shadows.

Seth breathed out, and smiled slightly.

“You look happy.”

Seth looked up to see Horus standing up ahead, smiling at him.

“Your meeting with Anubis went well?” Horus asked.

Seth shrugged and continued walking up to him, stopping before him. He’d replaced his headdress, happy to hide his flushed cheeks a little. “Yeah. He’s… he was in a bit of a mood today. He’s still having issues with Nephthys. Though I don’t think that’s either of their faults.” He smiled. “But overall, I think… it was good.”

“That’s great to hear,” Horus said, stepping forward wrap an arm around him. Seth moved into the embrace, letting Horus duck his head under Seth’s headdress to nuzzle his left cheek. “Missed you in court.”

“Did Isis yell at you for being distracted?” Seth said, a soft smile gracing his face. He knew Horus was clingy and still found it difficult to realize he didn’t mind all that much anymore.

“I’m better at hiding it these days.” Horus stood up straight, but kept the arm around Seth and lightly nudged him along on their walk. “Satet, though, was frequently reviewing your recent bout and how to defeat you next time you both duel, sometimes whispering suggestions to me for strategy to see if I could predict their success.”

Seth snorted. “She’s a couple centuries too young to think she’s ever going to beat me.” Seth admitted to himself that he liked the younger goddess. She was a sort of bodyguard for Horus, and often at his back during court sessions and meals. She and Seth had gone on hunts together, and he found her a good companion for that. She wasn’t wary of him like the other gods were, mostly because, as she’d explained, “If I constantly have my eyes on you, you have less of a chance to pull something over on me or Pharaoh.”

And Seth could appreciate that.

Horus chuckled. “Really? She’s older than me, and *I* beat you.”

“You cheated. Twice. Satet wouldn’t do that. She’s a war god, like me. We understand each other.”

Horus grinned.

Horus led them back to the private dining area they often ate in, where an early dinner was set up for them already.

A harpist was there to play for them as they ate, and Horus talked about his day, with Seth mostly listening and nodding along or smiling. Sometimes offering questions. Horus had a lot of ideas for how to manage Egypt better, and he often used Seth as a sounding board when Isis wasn’t around.

“It’s not like I was a good pharaoh,” Seth said, licking some sauce off his finger and glancing up at Horus to see the other god’s gaze on Seth’s lips. Seth smiled, and lowered his hand. “Isis would still be a better listener for this.”

Horus smiled. “But you both call me out on different things, which helps balance it out.”

Seth snorted.

Horus dismissed the harpist, who bowed, and carried his instrument out of the room, leaving the two gods alone.

“Do you know how to dance?” Horus asked.

Seth raised an eyebrow. “It depends on what you’re looking for, but of course. I haven’t really found any reason to do it in a while, so I’m out of practice.”

“I’ve never seen you do it.”

“It would be kind of strange if the terrifying God of War just started dancing while everyone’s watching to see if I’ll go evil again.”

Horus chuckled. “Yes, well, there’s just *me* here. You should dance for me.”

Seth raised an eyebrow at him. “Is that an order from my Pharaoh?”

“Would you obey it if it was?”

Seth hummed thoughtfully before saying, “Probably. We don’t have music now, though. Even a martial dance would require something.” Seth watched him. “If you were going to ask me, why dismiss the harpist?”

“I didn’t want you to be uncomfortable in front of an audience.”

Something pinged in Seth’s chest, and he felt his lips stiffen. After a moment, he said, “…I see. Thank you.” Then, eventually, he was able to say, “Still, it will be harder without music.”

Horus quirked his head. “Perhaps you could simply teach me, then?”

Seth laughed. “Why this all of a sudden?”

“During lunch some nobles visited, and they brought performers, and at one point Mother said you used to dance, when you were all younger.”

Seth’s expression sobered again.

“She said you were very good, but she realized she hadn’t seen you do it in a very long time. I wondered… There seems to be so much about you I still don’t know.”

Seth looked away for a bit, thinking back on younger days. Simpler times. That hadn’t been all that simple, really, when he thought about it.

“Seth?”

Seth sighed and stood up, dusted himself off and held a hand to Horus. “Come on, then. Let’s see if you can learn something.”

The dance Seth had them try was meant to enliven spirits on a hunt or encourage warriors before combat. Seth pointed out steps, explained movements, and rearranged Horus' form with his hands as needed, and even made Horus a khopesh to use. Horus was also a fast learner, and soon they were moving quickly, leaping and flipping around the thankfully large room, their weapons cutting through the air. It was a bit uncoordinated without a rhythm to stick to, but they made it work without bashing into each other too much (or stabbing each other), and only a few stumbles.

When Seth called a halt, he was breathing a bit more heavily, and grinning at Horus, who grinned back. "That was good! For a beginner."

Horus grinned back. "Thank you. That was wonderful. You moved like a zephyr."

Seth scoffed. "That was slow. Next time we'll do it faster."

Horus took Seth's hand and pulled him to the bedroom. "I should reward my teacher."

"Oh?" Seth asked, following along with a slight smile. "By fucking me until I can't walk?"

"Would my teacher like that?" Horus asked, pausing before the bed.

"…Perhaps."

Horus smiled and reached out to carefully pull Seth's headdress away, then toss it – with help from a small wind – to a stand.

Seth reached up to pull off Horus' headdress – slightly less gently than Horus had been – and simply tossed it away, uncaring where it landed.

Horus shook his head and reached out to brush Seth's cheek with his fingers. "My teacher takes such liberties."

"Your teacher will be very annoyed if you continue calling him *teacher*," Seth said, smirking.

Horus pulled him to the bed and they fell on it, Horus on his back, Seth on his side, partially overtop Horus. Horus stroked Seth's elbows, and Seth shut his eyes, snuggling slightly onto Horus and the pillows.

A wave of tiredness overtook Seth and he sagged into the other god. When had the day gotten so long?

"Are you tired?" Horus asked.

"…Yes," Seth said, quietly. "I think… meeting with Anubis took it out of me. More than I realized."

"You can sleep."

"…It's so early."

“Mmm…” Horus sat up on his elbow and looked down at him, smiling. “I could make it an order. Would that work?”

Seth snorted and snuggled into Horus’ chest.

Horus slowly pet his hair.

“…I can obey that,” Seth said, smiling.

Horus lowered his head to kiss Seth’s brow. “Then sleep, Seth. I’ll still be here when you wake.”

End Notes

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