

My name is Inhapi. I am from a city called Ionu, far west in the land of Anduron. I have found in my short time in Escudolia that many people do not know what is west of the great forest, just as I did not know what lay to the east. But, here I am now, alone in this place. Nearly. I have met some strangers after our shipped wrecked- I do not know if I can trust them, but I also do not know what else to do. I cannot return home without a ship, coin, and crew. And I must know if the others are alive somewhere. Senedj must be. she had power enough to save me, surely she has survived herself. If not...is her *ka*-soul wandering? Without the rites of going forth, your *ahk*-soul cannot be born. But, surely Hathor would not deny her own servant entrance to *duat*, no?

I found the treaty documents and treasure we brought with us in the wrecked ship. I am no diplomat, but I cannot ignore the importance of this mission even if I am afraid. I am sure that Irit has a job for me. From what I was taught, our concept of faith in Ionu is somewhat more...practical than for those who follow the old gods. Perhaps they would say she has a plan, but I think it is up to me to do the work. I will tell you briefly my story, but then I must think of tomorrow.

I am the daughter of Nimaathap ("truth of Hapi") and Neheb ("he who belongs to the plow"). Both my parents were *bakenhap*, clerics who served Hapi, the god of agriculture and bounty. My name means "from Hapi," a tribute meant to honor him. I think they hoped I would follow Hapi's teachings as well, but I did not. Where I am from, *baken* (clerics, servants) play many roles in society. Of course they teach us how to honor *medju* (the gods), but the gifts granted by their patrons help to sustain civilization. Ionu has very limited resources, and so clerics bless crops, mend buildings, purify water, heal the sick, light the lamps, and count the living and the dead. Some people choose where they wish to serve, others are blessed by *medju* (the gods) and they say are called. They say I was thrice blessed as a child, and so in some ways my path was determined at a young age. But, I follow Irit (the Eye) of my own will and I am honored by her presence inside me.

When I was born, I was told that a black cat gave its life at the same moment. The High Priestess of the *Ichem Irit-Ra* (Temple of the Eye of Ra) believed this was an omen from Bastet, a powerful warrior who protects Ra and one of the many goddesses who serves as Irit (the Eye). The Priestess asked that I be trained at the Temple, but my parents wished for me to choose for myself when I was older and declined.

Then, when I was nine, my parents brought me when they visited the farmland. I had never been outside of the city before. Most people have not been outside the city- it is a very small place with only farmers and the clerics who bless their crops. There is not much place to go, and what is not farm is wild. After Ionu was raised above the desert by the grace of Shu, many of the wild animals died. We had to farm in order to survive and by Hapi's bounty we have, but the land we cannot farm is protected for the animals that remain. As my parents worked, I played in the grass and met one of these animals. I was struck in *irit* (eye) by *tukhed* (cobra) and

now *sukhep* (blind), it is blind. This was my second blessing, from Wadjet, for what I see with my left eye no others can see.

And so my parents relented and I was sent to *Ichem Irit-Ra* where I studied the arts of fighting and divination. Then, when I was 15, I saw the spirit of a young boy who had died three days before. Hathor could not welcome his soul to *duat* because his father had abused him. And so I brought this man to justice and became also Hathor's hand.

I am *bakenra*, a servant of *Ichem Irit-Ra* (the Temple of the Eye of Ra). Many goddesses may serve as the Eye, and so many women may also serve. These goddesses are our patrons, they give us blessings and also purpose. I was blessed three times, and so for me: For Wadjet, I see. For Bastet, I protect. And for Hathor, I deliver judgement. Hers is the hand of the grave, the line between life and death. The line that maintains cosmic order and holds *Isfet* (chaos) at bay.

This may sound like a very strange life to one in Escudolia. But, in Ionu, *medju* (the gods) call us all with some purpose so that civilization can survive, and this is mine. It is true that the Temple is a prestigious order, but I am not special. Many other women are stronger or more powerful than I, and others have also been called by more than one patron. I do not know why the High Priestess sent me on this journey, but I....will do what I must.

My life was happy at the Temple. When I came there, I made friends with Ineni and Mehnet who entered at the same age. They are blood twins which are very unusual in Ionu. Ineni is a talented singer and followed easily the path of consort. Mehnet is a warrior and very gifted with poisons. She will someday rival Bastet herself in combat, and I believe she is more beautiful than Ineni. I do not know why the High Priestess did not send her with us to Escudolia, she would have been a powerful asset to the team. But, now I am glad that she is not drowned in the sea. I hope one day to see her again. The Temple discouraged lovers from within, but we did not care. Mehnet and I were...we were truly ourselves together, and we made each other stronger. I miss her. I miss them both- we were all very happy together. We shared each other's secrets and joys. I keep the scarab they gave me for my birthing day always. Senedj was also there at the temple. She is older than me by some years, and a cousin by blood. I had always looked to her as a child and now we quickly became sisters. She trained me in the art of *heka* (magic) and taught me how to sharpen my mind. She taught me to rely on myself but also to rely on others. I believe I am strong today because of her.

Life at the Temple was hard work, but we enjoyed it. We took pride in it. We trained our bodies hard to protect ourselves and others. Mehnet helped me train hard my seeing eye with my mind to overcome the blindness. We studied history, music, and language. We learned the art of *heka* (magic), and my skill in divination grew. As one of the higher cleric orders, we took many jobs from around the city, including from *suhkpesi* (nobles), *sur* (magistrates, civil servants), and *etyai* (the Pharaoh). When we were young it was exciting, and we had time to enjoy life as well. Mehnet and I enjoyed it very much ;) As we grew older, we came to

understand how the Temple helps to maintain Maat's order, Ra's order, in Ionu and our work became more serious.

After Hathor blessed me with the hand of the grave, many treated me differently from when I was a child. I had always been a little bit outside of others because of my eye. It was very visible, and people respected the power it granted me but some would avoid looking upon my face. Then with Hathor's touch, the Temple received many requests for my services, and though they were grateful they also brought fear and disgust on their faces. It was lonely sometimes, and I am glad that I had Mehnet, Ineni, and Senedj.

I do not know how I am looked upon in Escudolia. I am a stranger here, that seems clear to people I meet. I am accustomed to a certain amount of authority and power in Ionu that allows me to do my job, there is a rhythm to life there, a pattern that everyone abides by. But I find this outside world of the west to be so much bigger and more chaotic. Not of *Isfet* (chaos), but more complex and so...unfamiliar. This seems obvious as I have not been here before, but I mean the feeling of it. The way I move through it. This world, these people, do not even know about Anduron and there is no part of home that I feel here. They do not seem to even care about each other—somehow this is a land of both abundance and war, and I truly cannot understand that. Of course, I expected their culture to be different, but I have only one life to compare it to. It is hard to imagine now how I ever could have thought I was prepared to leave the Temple for this place.

My path was chosen early, and as I said I am honored to serve as the Eye. But, I am also aware I did not choose it. In that way, I am glad to explore this world. But there is much to fear. Not fear as in death (I do not worry about death), but much uncertainty. I suppose I mean, there is much to learn.