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Note:

This story takes place in an Alternate Universe set immediately after the end of 'The Return' miniseries published by Wildstorm comics.

Embracing Dark Desires.

By

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Chapter 3

Somewhere in the forest, WilyKat rushed inside his cave. The young man was breathing hard and was about to collapse. He had run all the way from the farm to his hideout, never stopping until now. Finally feeling somewhat safe, he tossed the stolen goods to the floor and sat down on the pile of hay he used as bed. For a brief moment the faces of the farmer and his family flashed in his mind, but he discarded that thought easily. He knew he was supposed to feel guilt for his actions, but the only thing he felt then was fear. Fear of what was going to happen to him now because, WilyKat was sure, the Thundercats would soon learn of what he did on the farm and it wouldn't be long before they found him and...

"…And then what?" He murmured, his fear surging at the idea of being caged, "Let them toss me into a cell or put me inside a crystal box they will be all too glad to shoot into space?"

No. He would never let that happen, never! Not as long as they kept his sister with them. No, he had to save WilyKit from the Thundercats, because now that he'd killed a filthy slave, he would have very little time to do so; Lion-O, Panthro and the others would surely work harder to indoctrinate her in the lies of the code now, and if they succeeded, he would lose his sister forever. She would forget about him, she would not understand him or the reason he had to punish that farmer with death, she…

"Curse those traitors!" he muttered. "I won't let them have her, I'll take her back, I'll… get arrested as soon as I set foot in Cat's Lair."

The problem, as he knew very well, was that he did not have enough strength. The few magic spells Mumm-Ra had taught him could probably give him a fighting chance against his former friends one-on-one, but it would never be enough to defeat them all or to face Lion-O and the Eye of Thundera. Kat was a former Thundercat, after all, and he was well aware of the Sword of Omens and its nearly limitless power.

"Damn it!" He growled, "If I wasn't so weak! If I could use my magic like master Mumm-Ra can…if I!"

…If he could just unleash his potential, the potential Mumm-Ra had always said he had. He remembered the first time the mummy mentioned such a thing, the first time he'd felt the magic energy surging through his body. It had been during his third year under the service of the dark wizard and, coincidentally, that day he had also felt a deep fear of losing his sister, just like now…

WilyKat, who was then in his mid teens, walked a few steps ahead of Slithe; he was supposed to guide the disgusting lizardman all the way to the cauldron room, where Mumm-Ra would meet him.

"*Why did he send you?" Slithe asked, "I know my way around."*

"*Lord Mumm-Ra ordered me to." Kat answered, "I only follow his orders."*

"*It must be humiliating being his slave, yeees?" The large mutant said with a cruel smile, "I bet you don't feel invincible now, do you cub?"*

WilyKat didn't reply; he just lowered his head and mentally cursed Slithe, thinking of the many things he could do to take revenge on the disgusting mutant for his comments. By then, after three years under Mumm-Ra's influence, Kat had stopped considering torturing your enemies a bad thing, and grinned as he imagined Slithe being put in one of the many torture devices his master had on the pyramid.

"*What, no witty answer?" The lizardman pressed, "How would you like it if I tell you all the things we've been doing to your friends?"*

"*They're not my friends anymore." The teenager answered, "And I… I already know what you do to them."*

"*Oh, really?" Slithe appeared to be somewhat intrigued by this, "Since when?"*

"*That's none of your business, filthy mutant." Kat said and stopped at the entrance of the cauldron room, "Now enter and wait, my master will meet you shortly."*

"*You're not a good servant, you miserable cub." Slithe said as he passed by WilyKat's side, "You're still too arrogant. If you were serving me, I would have taken care of your attitude long ago. Yes, long ago."*

The teenager stared silently at Slithe with anger-filled eyes until the mutant snorted and moved on.

"*Come out Mumm-Ra, I'm too busy running your mines to be wasting my precious time here." Called the lizardman, "Or perhaps you want a drop in production, yeees?"*

"*I tire of your lack of patience, Slithe," proclaimed a deep, raspy voice which emerged from the sinister sarcophagus on the far side of the room. The voice filled the dimly lit chamber and Kat*

smirked as he watched the mutant look everywhere with an expression of barely controlled panic.

"I-I-I am patient." Slithe said, making a great effort to keep his voice calm, "I just don't like to leave my stupid men in charge for too long."

"Not even for a chance of gaining a new personal slave?" Mumm-Ra offered as his coffin opened and he emerged from it. The mummy was followed by a teenaged WilyKit. The female twin was handcuffed and wrapped in a white robe from neck to toe. Her gaze was blank and she walked aimlessly, like a mindless zombie.

"Who are you talking about, that girl?"

The mummy ignored Slithe's question, chained the beautiful girl to one of the tall pillars and, finally, raised his horrid hand, motioning Kat to come closer.

"Yes, sire?" WilyKat asked as he stared fearfully at his sister.

"I've decided to give you to the mutants, boy." The wizard said, "You will go with Slithe and your sister will be sacrificed to the Ancient Spirits of Evil today."

Terror struck Kat as he listened to those words. Working in the mines? Letting his sister be sacrificed? That could not be, that would never be!

"B-b-but my lord, why are you doing this?" WilyKat yelled, "We've done everything you've asked of us and more! I don't deserve that, my sister doesn't deserve that! I want to stay here!"

"If you really want to stay with me… prove it," The dark wizard challenged, with a smile so evil that it sent shivers all over Kat's body. "Slithe, if you force the child to yield, you may take him and do whatever you want with him."

"And…what if I make Slithe yield?" Kat interrupted, his body trembling with fear.

"If you do, then you get to stay here and…" Mumm-Ra paused for a second to study both Slithe, who appeared to be greatly enjoying this development, and the teenaged Thunderian, who appeared three seconds away from dying of a shock of terror, "If you manage to use what I taught you yesterday I will give you a special prize."

"Are you sure about this?" The mutant asked, "I don't want to play any of your sick games, there's too much to do in the mines for me to waste time here."

"I assure you Slithe, this is not a game."

"Just so you know Mumm-Ra, I was hoping for a chance to discipline this arrogant little slave of yours." The lizardman said as he reached for the iron mace that hung from his belt, "I won't go easy on him either, don't blame me if I break a bone or two."

"I expect nothing less from you," The ever living being replied. "You may begin."

The mutant wasted no time and, with speed which defied his size and bulk, he attacked WilyKat, aiming straight for his left shoulder with a seemingly unstoppable descending arc. Kat however, managed to dodge the attack, jumping back at the last moment. But Slithe had planned for this and whipped his tail forward. It struck the young Thunderian fully in the chest and sent him flying all the way to the edge of Mumm-Ra's cauldron.

"You're no warrior!" The lizardman mocked. "You're nothing but a puny little cub. I doubt I can find any use for you… perhaps I'll just kill you here!"

WilyKat, a hand over his bruised ribs, gasped for breath as he fought back the incredible pain he felt. He had to get back on his feet soon, before Slithe was close enough to land another hit.

"I expected better from a former Thundercat; but I can see you're nothing!" Slithe laughed, rising his mace again, "You're no better than the others; in fact, you're even worse, weak and useless!"

WilyKat's eyes instinctively sought out his sister, hoping to find support in her, but she was still in a dream-like state, gazing at the fight yet not really seeing anything. What the hell did Mumm-Ra do to her?

"I wouldn't worry about her if I was you, boy." Mumm-Ra advised, "She is unharmed. I only placed her in a trance to make the sacrifice easier. If you don't want her to die, then beat Slithe with what I have shown you!"

"You're wasting your time Mumm-Ra, this cub has been useless since we were all on Third Earth." Slithe was already right in front of Kat, who had been distracted by Mumm-Ra's words. With a quick move, the reptile grabbed WilyKat by the neck and lifted him up, "He was useless then, he is useless now and he will be useless forever!"

Laughing, the reptile finished his sentence by smashing his mace into WilyKat's side while maintaining a strong grip on his neck. The pressure on his throat was so great that Kat couldn't even scream in pain when he felt one of his ribs crack.

"What will it be, cub? Do you give up?" The reptile asked, "Not that this isn't fun, but I have better things to do than to play with a weak and cowardly little cub."

Struggling for breath, WilyKat tried to sink his claws into Slithe's arms, but the lizardman's scaly skin proved to be quite resistant. This wasn't good. His air supply was almost gone, his strength was abandoning him, his damned rib was stabbing him from the inside and his vision was starting to fade to black. Kat knew it was over. He was about to faint.

"Are you ready to give up, kid?" Slithe insisted, smashing his mace into Kat's side one more time, "Answer the question!"

Kat had never felt so much physical pain before; wave after wave of searing agony spread from his ribs to his legs and arms, causing his body to shake uncontrollably. Was there nothing he could do? Was he really so weak he could not save his sister? Was giving up and abandoning himself to sweet unconsciousness all he could do?

No.

If he fainted his sister would die.

If he fainted it would only prove he was everything Slithe said.

If he fainted he would be no better than the traitorous Thundercats that abandoned him and his sister three years ago.

No.

He would not faint; he would beat Slithe.

But how was he going to do that? He not only had to defeat the mutant, he also had to do it using what Mumm-Ra had shown him the day before or the mummy would probably not forgive his twin! Unfortunately, trying to use magic in the way the sorcerer told him was not an easy thing given the circumstances. Mumm-Ra had explained that magic in its rawest form was channelled by emotion; and that once a person started practicing it, learning how to use spells to cast elaborate magic would not be difficult.

"It seems this is all he's got. Should I kill him or do you want him alive?" Slithe asked.

"Kill him." The wizard answered coldly, "He doesn't have the potential I thought he did. And if he doesn't, then he is of no use to me."

The reptile grinned and lifted his mace, ready to crush his victim's head, "You should thank me, you're getting a better death than a weak embarrassment like you deserves."

WilyKat panicked when he heard Mumm-Ra ordering his execution and his fear escalated when he saw a blurry image of Slithe preparing his final strike. Gasping, Kat tried to look at his sister one last time, but the lizardman's grip was too tight; he was unable to move his head.

"…We… will… not… die… here…" Kat managed to say, trying desperately now to remember how to summon the magic energy of the pyramid. It was his only choice and his final chance at surviving. There was no other way. He had to use magic to please his evil master and in his condition, it was the only thing powerful enough to defeat Slithe. He had to do it if he wanted to live!

"Wrong, kitten." Slithe laughed, "You will die." With those words, the reptile brought down his mace.

But something happened then, something that stopped Slithe's arm just above WilyKat's forehead. It was power, a power that started to flow from the teenager into the mutant's arm. A power that almost made Slithe's skin crawl in the same way Mumm-Ra's presence did. A power that was making his hand burn so much that he had no choice but to drop the miserable kid.

"You… will… regret this… Slithe…" The youth swore, letting his urge for vengeance take over. He could barely stand on his feet and glared at the lizardman with red glowing eyes and an expression of complete hatred, "You… like pain?... Here…take mine!" WilyKat yelled as he raised his left hand and unleashed a bolt of sickly blue light that hit Slithe in the face.

The mutant leader fell backwards as the energy summoned by Kat coursed through him. He didn't know what the cub had just done, but he was in pain, terrible pain.

"Make him stop!" Slithe screamed, squirming in the dirt like a worm. "Mumm-Ra, make that cursed kid stop!"

The wizard, however, didn't lift a finger. Mumm-Ra instead stared at WilyKat with a triumphant smile on his rotten face.

Fortunately for Slithe, his suffering didn't last long. Just when the reptile was sure he would go insane, whatever the kid was doing stopped and the pain along with it. Breathing like mad, his body covered with sweat, the lizardman stared at the young Thunderian in front of him. He jumped back when the kid fell flat on his face, fearing that he would get zapped again.

"Afraid of a child, Slithe?" Mumm-Ra mocked, the ever-living one still smiling, "You should thank me for letting you help me trigger his magical potential."

The reptile ignored what the wizard had said and, with a growl, picked up his mace, intending to smash the kid's head into a bloody pulp.

"Touch that boy, Slithe, and the pain you just felt will be your happiest memory for the rest of your life." The mummy warned, "Leave now, I'll contact you later."

"Make sure I'm never alone with that kid again, or I will kill him." Slithe promised. He knew talking back to Mumm-Ra was a dangerous game, but he was furious and he knew he could at least get away with that much. Muttering every curse and insult he could remember, the lizardman glared one last time at the wounded Thunderian and made a hasty exit, wishing that every magic user in the universe would die right then.

WilyKat felt something cool and pleasant over his chest. He'd been awake while his master talked to Slithe, he just hadn't had the energy to move or do anything. But now, as the coolness invaded his body and the pain was eradicated, he felt his energy returning and he finally managed to open his eyes, only to find it was Mumm-Ra's hand that generated the healing cold.

"You did well, my son," The mummy said. "You do have potential to be my apprentice. I am very pleased with you."

Kat remembered Mumm-Ra's threats of killing his twin and immediately tried to move away from the wizard, but he couldn't force himself to. The cold just felt too good.

"*You don't have to worry about your sister, if that's what you're thinking." The ever living one said as he finished healing Kat's wounds, "I sent her to her room, she must be sleeping there by now and she will not remember anything tomorrow."*

"*But… you said you would sacrifice her…" Kat finally managed to say as he sat up.*

"*I had to tell you that in order to help you awaken your dormant power. There was no other way." Mumm-Ra helped the boy up and offered him a twisted smile, "You do know I would never hurt any of you, don't you?"*

WilyKat lowered his head. He didn't know what to say or think.

"*Have I ever hurt you before? I only did this because it was necessary." The blue skinned mummy said in that low alluring tone he always used when he wanted to convince the twins of something, "And I did stop Slithe from killing you. If I wanted you and your sister dead, I would have killed you long ago."*

WilyKat closed his eyes. Seeing things from Mumm-Ra's point of view, they suddenly became very reasonable. It was true, the wizard had never hurt him or WilyKit, and Mumm-Ra did stop Slithe. Yes, he had to accept that Mumm-Ra didn't want him dead.

"*Now tell me, when you had Slithe at your mercy, did you like it?"*

The youth felt shame for this, but he had to admit that he did enjoy watching Slithe yelling in pain.

"*Well, did you?"*

"*I… yes, master, I did." WilyKat admitted in a low, ashamed voice.*

"*Good, Slithe is no better than those inferior slaves; he deserved punishment for hurting you," The mummy told him. "As long as you and your sister are with me, you will be above them all; you must not regret punishing them if they ever dare to question or hurt you. They deserve no mercy. Don't forget that." Stating this, Mumm-Ra half glided, half floated to his sarcophagus. "Go and rest, my son. You've earned it."*

WilyKat stood there and watched as Mumm-Ra entered his stone coffin. He considered his master's words for a long time before he went to his chambers. In the end, he decided that his lord was right; he and his sister were better, they really were above everyone else. Only Mumm-Ra, his master, deserved to be above them.

WilyKat pushed the memory aside and stared at his blood-stained fingertips, "Yes, we are better." He muttered, "Much better!"

The young man stood and walked to the exit to his cave. It would be up to him to fix everything. With his master recovering his strength after his defeat, he was the only one who could bring order back to New Thundera, and, if he could get her free from the Thundercats, his sister. All he needed to accomplish that feat was power.

"And there's only one place I can go to get the power and advice I need," Kat whispered to himself. "My lord's Black Pyramid…"

Early the next morning, at Cat's Lair…

Cheetarah regarded the young woman standing in front of her. They were both about the same height now, and she was pretty sure WilyKit was as strong as she was, maybe even stronger. The two females were standing on the middle of the bridge which connected the Lair to the main road, just above the deepest part of the cliff. Noticing the younger woman's cold stare, Cheetarah wondered for the first time if having combat training with WilyKit was a bad idea. In the end, though, her curiosity got the best of her. She wanted to know if the girl's skills had improved or if she was going to need retraining.

"Are you sure you want this?" WilyKit asked, stretching her arms a little. "I don't want to cause you any trouble."

"It should be alright," The older female answered, "Besides, I'm the one who had the idea, right? And don't forget, this is only an exercise"

"I know," Kit sighed, reminding herself not to get too carried away. If she fought Cheetarah in the same way she fought the clay golems Mumm-Ra had her practice against everyday, she could probably cause her some real damage.

"Good, then let's start."

But the fight never began. Just as she was about to make her first move, Cheetarah stopped and looked behind Kit, straight at the main road. She could hear an engine approaching.

Kit also heard the sound, and immediately felt something bad was going to happen, "I wonder what it is?" She asked. "It's getting closer fast."

"In fact, it's here already," Cheetah replied. Just then a rusty hover-bike came into view and in less than three minutes, it stopped a few steps away from her.

The visitor turned out to be a young woman, about the same age as Kit. She was a beautiful girl, with white marks on her attractive features, shiny auburn shoulder-length hair and a slim well developed figure. The devastated expression on her face, however, ruined her appearance.

"What's your name?" Cheetarah asked. "Do you need help?"

"My name is Aliona," the newcomer said with an almost trembling voice, as if she was barely containing her tears. "And my father Pum-Ren was killed last night. I want you to find his killer and make sure justice is served."

Cheetarah placed a hand over Aliona's shoulder, "I'm sorry to hear that… we'll do all we can…. Pum-Ren the farmer? By Claudis, I did meet him once he…"

"Do you know who did it?" WilyKit interrupted, not wanting to waste time with her partner's overly sentimental gibberish.

Aliona frowned and stared hard at Kit, her hands turning into fists as she trembled a little, "Yes, I know who did it."

"Well, then tell us who," WilyKit urged.

"It was your brother, 'Lady' Wilykit!" Aliona exclaimed, pointing an accusing finger at the young woman in front of her, "Your damned brother killed my father!"

To be continued…

Notes:

Special thanks to Adam for beta-reading this chapter.