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DJORFF PALACE THE NOVEL

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**The story of two women,
two revolutions and one house.**

Marina Hitchen



CHAPTER THIRTY TWO



March 26th 1979

Egypt and Israel have signed a peace treaty and once all the details have been ironed out Israel will give the Sinai back. Sadat's willingness to make peace with Israel has made him the enemy of all the Arab states, but despite what Amer says he is still immensely popular with his own people.

June 12th

I had a long conversation with Amer today about Sadat. I think he is doing a good job but Amer doesn't agree.

"He has ended all that socialist nonsense that Nasser brought in" I argued. "His open door approach has relaxed most of the tight government controls and that has encouraged private investors into the country and I heard that Egypt is one of the largest recipients of aid from America as well now. The whole justice system is so much fairer since Sadat banned any form of torture so that has to be a good thing. He has even brought some of Nasser's henchmen to trial for their excessive criminal behaviour during the old days. He is the first president who has ever tried to build a real democracy from what I can see."

Amer pointed out that this was all very well for the rich but what about the rest. "He has created a very wealthy upper class mother" he said disdainfully, "and you might even argue that there is now an emerging middle class but what has he really done for the average Egyptian. He got rid of all the subsidies on basic foodstuffs which led to the 'Bread Riots' last year and I don't think anyone is fooled by his 'Believer President' image. Bowing down to the Islamists will only curtail freedom in the end. Putting out the call to prayer on television five times a day and banning the sale of alcohol to everyone apart from tourists doesn't sound like the kind of thing a liberal president would do. I don't know if he's confused or his attempt at pleasing everyone is a definite strategy. It won't work. Calling himself Mohamed Sadat one minute and then promoting liberal democracy the next will antagonise everyone eventually."

I am not as aware of all the ins and outs of Egyptian politics as Amer so can't

put up a decent argument in Sadat's defence but I still maintain he is a better president than Nasser.

November 30th

Violence is escalating in Egypt as Amer predicted. I think Sadat has abandoned all his plans for democracy and even the justice system has gone back to what it was under Nasser.

October 6th 1981

Sadat was assassinated by Islamic extremists today. The Brotherhood never could be trusted.

October 30th

Someone called Hosni Mubarak has been elected as President. He was the only candidate as usual. As Sadat's Vice President Amer says Mubarak won't be making any changes especially not with regard to Egypt's relationship with Israel.

April 25th 1982

The Israeli flag was lowered today in Sinai as Egypt finally regained its territory. Two days ago the last Israeli settlement was evacuated which completes Israel's commitment to giving the land back to Egypt. As Egypt had to acknowledge Israel's right to exist for this to happen Amer believes this to be a complete betrayal of the Palestinians and says he is embarrassed to call himself an Egyptian today.

July 22nd 1983

Amer's twenty first birthday and as promised I have given him the Yemeni fish pendant. He has put it on his car key ring and he was so thrilled you would think I had given him the crown jewels.

June 28th 1984

Amer has been to London and he told me he met Lily Johnson on the train. He seems quite taken with her and says he would like to see her again but he will wait and see if she calls him. When I first heard this I went into a panic but the more I think about it the less bothered I am because I am sure Lily will not call. Whatever could interest her in a child like Amer and I know she isn't so stupid as to put her marriage at risk for him.

July 9th

I discovered today that Amer has been seeing a lot of that awful Lily Johnson. I heard they went to Blackpool together for the weekend. Surely my son cannot be having an affair with an old woman like that. When I questioned him he told me they are just good friends and that he finds her interesting. I sense that he is lying to me but I didn't challenge him.

July 22nd

Amer has turned down my offer of taking him to dinner on his birthday in favour of a night out with Lily.

August 30th

Amer has a new girlfriend and although I don't care for her anyone is better than Lily Johnson. This Melanie is involved in some left wing political movement and is a bit of a social climber. I think she sees Amer as a source of finance for her. From what I can gather he still sees Lily almost every day as well.

September 29th

Amer has dropped Melanie because he says she is a government spy. He is full of tales about meeting Lily's husband and how much he admires him. It's probably because he is in the freemasons. Amer has always been drawn to anyone he thinks is in a secret society. If he is a friend of Lily's husband I don't think him

and Lily must be having an affair after all but I still wish he would stop seeing her.

November 18th

Amer is in love with someone he met at a party. She is a teacher and very pretty. He hardly mentions Lily these days although I know he still sees her.

December 28th

My poor son is distraught. His girlfriend told him she was engaged before and her fiancé was killed in Afghanistan or somewhere like that. She showed Amer a picture of him and he said that this dead fiancé of hers looks a lot like him. He is now convinced that that is the only reason why she is attracted to him and he doesn't want to see her again if she doesn't love him for himself. He has locked himself in his room and is learning to read hieroglyphics.

January 12th 1985

Amer has met a new woman and this time I think it's serious. She works in the bank and is quite a bit older than him. Not as old as Lily Johnson of course but maybe eight or ten years older than Amer. He says he is seeing her every day when she finishes work and will introduce her to me soon. This is the woman he believes he will marry.

January 30th

I met Janice today. To be honest I don't think she is the right person for Amer but he says he loves her. She has been engaged twice before and both of these men jilted her practically at the altar. Janice is very ordinary, bordering on dull, and is not nearly clever enough to be on a par with Amer but she does share his idea of having lots of children so maybe it will all work out.

March 5th

Janice came to see me today and started asking me questions about Amer's dreams. I have no idea why he told her about them because it is obvious that someone as stupid as her will never be able to understand them. She did tell me something I didn't know before that does worry me a little. Amer has become obsessed with the number twenty two she said and he believes he is being followed by men from MI6 in black cars with number twenty two on their number plates. This stupid Janice went to Lily before coming to me who told her that she thinks Amer is schizophrenic and Janice asked me if I had any similar suspicions. Trying to explain to a woman like Janice the significance of dreams and visions is a thankless task and by the end of it she didn't seem to understand any more than when she came.

March 25th

Amer and Janice are engaged. They went for a quiet dinner together somewhere last week where he proposed to her and she accepted. He only told me today and he is taking me into town this afternoon to help him shop for a ring. There is no point telling him he should have had the ring ready when he proposed because it's too late for that.

7.00pm

I helped Amer choose a very pretty sapphire engagement ring and on the way home we stopped off at one of the local farms and Amer bought a calf. He is going to fatten it up and kill it for the guests at the wedding breakfast he said. I had to laugh. Amer has never killed anything in his life.

June 21st

The wedding is in two days and Amer is refusing to kill the cow. He thinks the cow has special powers and bad luck will befall him for the rest of his life if he kills it. We took it back to the farmer we bought it from and he gave us vege-

tables, cheese, honey, eggs and milk in exchange for it. I had to call the caterer to tell her she no longer has a cow to cook and she has changed the menu to salmon, lobster and guinea fowl.

June 24th

It was a beautiful wedding although there were no more than twenty guests. Thank God Amer didn't invite Lily Johnson. That affair is finally over I think. I gave Amer my wedding ring to give to Janice. Technically it is a Paramour heirloom but as Julius will never marry and the ring is mine I don't see anything wrong in Janice having it. It is a beautiful ring but I never wear it as I don't feel as though I belonged to Simon since the day I first slept with Amin.

July 22nd 1987

Today Amer and I had our first proper conversation together since he was married. He told me of his concerns about Janice still not giving him a son and I told him about all the problems I had had conceiving. Then he said that according to the numbers his first child wouldn't be born until the twenty second of October nineteen eighty nine anyway. The numbers two two one zero eight and nine add to twenty two he explained. When I told him that many combinations of numbers add to twenty two he said he knew that but this was the correct one according to Horus.

"From studying Pythagoras I now know that numbers are the language the gods use to convey the truth to humans" he explained. "It is left to the mind to investigate the secrets of these numbers but if someone is lucky like me one of the deities will reveal their meaning. Janice is sceptical but accepts that a thing does not need to be proven for it to exist. Human experience and understanding is limited and there is much that we do not know."

I am not sure I go so far as to believe all this but as Amer says my cognition has its bounds and if someone as clever and logical as Pythagoras believed it then I have to accept there may be some truth in it.

March 10th 1989

Janice is pregnant and is due to give birth in October.

October 22nd

To Amer's dismay Janice did not give birth today.

October 25th

Janice has had her baby and to my disappointment it is a girl. Amer says it is no problem and that his next child will be a boy and probably he will have two sets of twins. He believes this girl to be an extra gift from Horus and therefore should be named Isis. Janice point blank refused to call the baby Isis and finally they settled on Gloria which I think is a horrible name. Amer told me that Gloria is the name of a song that is of particular significance to him and Lily but I should never tell Janice that. I hate the name even more now.

October 21st 1991

Janice came to me today and told me that she needs to help Amer and that she expects me to support her.

"He is not in his right mind Nancy" she said "and hasn't been for a long time. He is so engrossed in his dreams he has forgotten his true self. I have tried asking him when all these dreams began but to him they had no beginning. Once most people have seen that they are dreaming, they wake up but he does not see he is dreaming because he wants the dream to continue on into his life. Well he did at one time but now the dreams frighten him so much that he longs for the ending of the dreams and he says he is willing to pay any price to be rid of them. I have told him that continuing these dreams is not inevitable and if he can only accept that this is a form of mental illness he will be released from them. Just fleetingly does he believe me. Most of the time he doesn't and the price he is willing to pay does not extend to him seeing a psychiatrist although it might extend to him taking his own life. We had a fight last night and I told him that

his world of desires and fears is definitely not my world. I do not even perceive it except through what he tells me about it. It is his private dream world and my only reaction to it is to ask him to stop dreaming. His response to that was if the god Horus tells him that his waking world is a dream and in no way different from the dreams he has at night he would do well to consider that Horus might be right. He is so afraid that all these dreams are about to come true and that very soon he will be sent to Palestine as some kind of Islamic freedom fighter. He is so terrified that he will be compelled to perform terrible acts of terrorism that he can no longer operate on a normal level. I know you have encouraged him with all these flights of fancy in the past Nancy but this is no longer a little amusement; it is deadly serious. I fully accept that there are things in this universe I will never understand but what is happening to Amer now has gone way too far. When he asks me questions like 'if the universe was created at a specific instance, what was happening in the no-time before it?' I can deal with him. This is a question any rational person might ask, but when he talks about the freemasons working through Horus to control him and MI6 spying on him then that is not rational at all. I cannot live like this and if he won't see a doctor then I have no choice but to get away from him. Help me to help him Nancy. You are his mother and I know you love him."

Poor Janice does not understand that my son is special and he sees and hears things that are far beyond any average person's understanding. My son is not mad; he doesn't need a doctor. I cannot help her do this to Amer. In fact I must stop her.

October 22nd

Amer asked me today if he is crazy. He told me that Janice wants him to see a doctor and maybe go into a hospital and he doesn't understand why. He is scared from Janice now. He thinks the government has put these ideas into her head to drive her away from him. He is sure she will not leave him but if she persists with this idea of him going into some kind of mental ward he is sure

MI6 will have her killed.

October 25th

After three more days of arguments Janice has left. We woke up this morning to find that she had packed her things and left in the night without telling either me or Amer where she was going or even that she was going at all. She has not taken Gloria so I am expecting her to be coming back for her.

October 26th

Amer went to see Janice's parents this morning and they didn't know Janice had gone. She hasn't been there or even called them to tell them anything. I am not surprised. These two have been bleeding money from Amer for years and if Janice had told them she was leaving him they would have been bound to put some pressure on her to try and force her to stay. These stupid parents of hers want to get the police involved because they say Janice would never have gone without telling them where she was going and definitely would not have left without Gloria.

October 27th

We had a visit from the police today; it was just routine. I explained that Janice and Amer had been having marital problems and Janice had eventually walked out without telling us where she was going and without leaving any note. I showed them her room and they had a good look round it and seem satisfied that Janice had left of her own free will. They did ask me why she would not have said anything to her parents and I gave them my theory on that. "She will probably call them from wherever she is once she gets settled" I added.

October 28th

Janice has left her wedding ring behind. I appreciate the gesture because it is a family heirloom and if she is no longer part of our family she isn't entitled to it.

Amer on the other hand doesn't think Janice would have left it behind of her own volition. He is starting to think something untoward might have happened to her. Amer never did think Janice would leave him and although he is not admitting it Janice's departure has hurt his pride.

November 2nd

Janice's parents have forced the police to re-open the investigation on Janice's disappearance. They are trying to imply that Amer killed her and they told the police that Janice had complained to them on several occasions that Amer had serious mental issues and might be dangerous. Anyone who knows Amer would realise at once that this is ludicrous. Unfortunately Amer told the police that he didn't think Janice had just walked out on him either. He, like her parents, wants a thorough investigation. He doesn't seem to see that if anything had happened to Janice, which of course it hasn't, he would be the police's prime suspect.

November 4th

The police are making a search of the area supposedly looking for Janice's body. I think one of Janice's uncles is high up in Bradford Met and has pulled some strings to get this big investigation going. They have been back to the house twice and the young officer who I usually speak to told me today that this is a complete waste of police time as the whole local force are certain that Janice simply ran away. I wish she would hurry up and contact her parents and we can get this charade over with.

November 12th

Amer was taken to the police station today for further questioning. He told them that they must know what had happened to Janice so why were they asking him. When he came back my young officer came with him.

"Your son seems to think someone in the government had something to do with

Janice's disappearance" he told me taking me to one side. "We all know she left him for whatever reason but Amer is prolonging the enquiry. I don't think he is thinking straight and his erratic behaviour makes him look suspicious."

I was very cross and pointed out that if Amer had had a hand in Janice's disappearance he would hardly be making up stories; he would stick to the idea that she had walked out which is the truth anyway.

December 14th

After almost two months the police have had to admit that it looks as though Janice left of her own accord and have called off the search for her. I think we are all surprised she hasn't contacted her parents or sent any message to us regarding Gloria but it's probably for the best to make a clean break of it like this.

October 1st 1992

Amer told me today that is almost time for him to leave. If 'they' wanted him to fight in a real war he would be happy to go he said but he doesn't want to be part of any terrorist activities. If he tries to resist he thinks everyone near to him will be in danger. He wants to go to Egypt to look for the cave of gold so that he can try to buy 'them' off. I sat with him for hours trying to explain that he shouldn't take his dreams so literally; they are symbolic. He says he has messages and it is not only the dreams. I think that all the stress Amer has been under over the last year is having an effect on him. He is going beyond what the gods and his dreams tell him and he has disappeared into a world of his own. Maybe he does need help now.

October 15th

I brought a doctor to see Amer today. I told Amer he had come to help him with his stress. The doctor said that all the hashish Amer is smoking is making him paranoid and the first step is to get him off that. He doesn't think he needs hospitalising at this stage.

October 21st

Amer is off the hashish but if anything he seems to be getting worse. He locks himself away in his room most days and won't talk to me. Last night I suggested we could go to Egypt soon if that's what he wants but he told me it's too late for that now. He wouldn't explain why.

October 22nd

My son is dead. He shot himself in the early hours of this morning. The maid found him when she went to take him his coffee at ten o'clock. The coroner is here now but I can't talk to him.