

MAYBE

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The word 'maybe' is a strong word. A word that makes your mind wander to different possibilities. It's neither a 'yes' nor a 'no'. The easiest to use and most difficult to hear. Whenever I asked my parents something they answered with 'maybe'. Ever since I was a toddler.

"Daddy, is there a monster outside of the window?" "Maybe."

"Mom, will you and Dad get a divorce?" "Maybe."

I hate it. I just want clear answers but all I get is a 'maybe'. Sometimes it turns into a 'no' and sometimes into a 'yes'. Like when my parents did get divorced. Ever since they did, I've been living with my father and his girlfriend. And her older son.

He's around three years older than me. Has always been a pain in the neck. Practically the complete opposite of me. Popular, gross and extremely stupid. He has this weird obsession with animal masks. Thinks they're funny or whatever. Thank goodness we have different rooms. So, he doesn't see what I'm doing when I'm alone.

My not-so-secret love to ancient cultures has developed in many ways. I buy books about them and bury myself into the different stories. I use candles and chalk to communicate with lost spirits. I've got a five-thousand-page book with spells to affirm in certain situations. But what I must admit is that I'm not alone in this. My best friend, Milan, is supporting me either way. History class is basically paradise for both of us.

At dinner today I barely spoke to my dad and Nadine. Alex was out with his friends anyway. Some sort of sports event is coming up, if I remember right. The reason I didn't make a sound at all was because I asked Milan to come over. And my stepmother didn't like that at all. She isn't very fond of my best friend. So, I can't let Milan stay over but her son can bring his own friends here. Makes perfect sense. Dad pulled me aside after the food, though, and told me to text her to come over. He'd take Nadine out, he said.

And with a house all to ourselves, what do two teenage girls extremely invested in the past and rituals do? A ritual.

"Hey, Cassie, have you read the spell that brings someone back to life for a night?"

"Which one?"

"Page 3045, at the bottom"

"Yeah, I remember. It needs two people, doesn't it?" I peek my head out of my closet in which I was looking for my chalk.

"And guess how many people we are."

"Milan, I hope you're not saying what I think you're saying."

“What if we could bring back Cleopatra? Socrates? Aristoteles? *Homer*! Do you think it works with gods too?”

“You’ve got to be kidding me. The person stays here for one night. I live here! I don’t know what I will do if any of these people watch me sleep! Besides, this experiment needs a fresh sacrifice. I’m not going to sacrifice myself for someone to watch me a whole night long.”

“Relax, Cass. I was just messing with you. I’ll cut up my finger and let some blood leak. Then we find a spell that makes the person go away.”

I sigh from my closet, letting my box of chalk fall onto the ground. I throw a piece towards my best friend hesitantly. She knows how hard it is for me to say no to her.

“Fine. But if you can’t make-”

“It works on gods too!” Milan screeches.

“No.” My answer comes out sharp, leaving absolutely no room for argument. “We are *absolutely not* summoning a god. Gods are all mighty beings. If we summon one, we might not be able to go back.”

Milan is already drawing a pentagram where my carpet was just a few minutes ago. The candles are already lit up. What could I possibly be getting into? I take a seat right next to her, holding each other’s hand as we read the spell off the book. Blood leaking from her finger that she bit open.

Spiritus, vos vocamus uno nocte.

Vocamus Cleopatram ut interesse nocti nobiscum.

Sit spiritus hic,

sit spiritus hic,

sit spiritus hic.¹

The candles start floating, my hair starting to levitate. Out of all people, my best friend chose to summon the all-mighty Egyptian pharaoh, Cleopatra. Windows slam shut and open, the door starts creaking uncontrollably but my eyes remain shut. You may not, under no circumstances, open your eyes during a ritual.

The book pages start fluttering, some ripping slightly in the middle. When the whole chaos comes to an end we open our eyes a bit, looking at the naked body in front of us. She’s much shorter. Dark hair, eyes closed peacefully. It is in fact pharaoh Cleopatra.

Milan gasps audibly, taking in her appearance as I rush to get a blanket to cover her up.

“All-mighty Cleopatra...” Milan starts.

¹ *Spirits, we call you for one night.*

We call Cleopatra to accompany us.

Let the Spirit be here.

Let the Spirit be here.

Let the Spirit be here.

“Ποῦ εἰμι; Διὰ τί ἐνθάδε εἰμί;”²

Ancient Greek. Cleopatra’s first language was ancient Greek. Also known as Koine Greek. I pull out my phone quickly, pulling up the google translate so I can at least try to speak to her.

“Μετέπεμψάμεθά σε διανυκτερεῦσαι μεθ’ ἡμῶν καὶ διηγήσασθαι ἡμῖν περὶ τοῦ βίου σου.” We have summoned you to spend a night with us and tell us about your life.

Cleopatra stares at me in horror. Despite all those years, it seems that her hair is soft like silk. I want to touch it so bad. Then she starts screaming, shouting something in Arabic. Thank the Egyptian gods that no one is home. And the walls are sound proof.

A glass shatters from her voice. But it seems like the melody the sirens used to lure anyone into their trap in Greek myths. In seconds, I’m falling onto the floor. Head slamming against the corner of my desk. The last thing I can catch is Milan with an uncannily open mouth, like something is crawling into her. Eyes black. Like a void. Before my vision turns black too.

When I wake up, I’m on my bed. Pentagram gone. Candles too. The carpet exactly where it was before. Maybe this was all just a dream. There’s the word again. ‘Maybe.’ I hate it. It’s not a clear answer. Never.

No, it can’t be a dream. The book is on the ceiling. Taped to it on the page where we can summon gods. ‘Osiris’ written in big letters on top. Milan’s writing. Osiris, the Egyptian god of afterlife. Had a brother named Set. God of war, chaos and storms. In that moment I realize I am *in* a pentagram. My bed right in the middle of it. Surrounded by wooden symbols of life.

What is this? Why is this happening? What will happen to me? Most importantly, will I die?

“Oh, you’re awake.” Milan’s voice. But with an accent that wasn’t there before. The pieces click together in my head. Cleopatra possessed Milan. She wants to summon Osiris. No. Osiris is already here. Followed by Set. I am a sacrifice.

My whole body freezes completely, washing white over all my features. I am going to die. As a sacrifice to two Egyptian gods.

“Am I a sacrifice?” I whisper, my voice trembling and barely audible. Cleopatra-possessed Milan answers with one single word that sends shivers down my spine.

“...Maybe.”

² “Where am I? Why am I here?”