

# **The Final Crossing: A Tale of Self-Discovery and Adventure by Vince Santoro**

## **EXCERPT**

Nenshi and Hordekef meandered through the passages, some narrow, some wide enough to parade animals for sale. There was a different mood among the merchants. Nenshi noticed the acrid atmosphere. An unsettled sensation lingered, like a haunting image from a nightmare. The acrimony spread like the annual flooding of the River Iteru - the sorrowful tears of Isis for her dead husband Osiris.

But Nenshi could not let things go unsaid. At the very least to make sure Hordekef was aware of it all.

“Something is very different today,” Nenshi said.

Hordekef surveyed the surroundings. “All I see is the same greedy merchants selling the same worthless merchandise to the same rude buyers.” He grinned and then pushed a short man aside who stood in his way. The man turned and raised his hand to strike but realized the difference in size and strength. He casually submitted to the titan and moved aside.

“Look around,” Nenshi said. “Tehuti may be right, the heqa khasewet may be closer than we think.”

Hordekef laughed. “You are obsessed with this notion of invaders.” He refused to let Nenshi’s preoccupation ruin his day. “If they’re as close as you suggest, the marketplace would be empty.”

“Don’t you see there aren’t as many merchants.”

“That doesn’t mean an attack is imminent.”

Even though there were fewer merchants, the market was still busy. A sea of sellers and buyers overflowed the narrow paths. Merchandise of every kind, from near and far, strewn on tables, hung on ropes, were on display to attract customers. Merchants added their own special calling, chanted or yelled, to solicit a sale.

Nonetheless, Nenshi remained vigilant. Unlike raids, common in small towns, he knew attacks in Thebes were never anticipated. And like many others, he had been lulled in the belief that the Walls of the Prince, there to protect the people, were impenetrable.

“This is the perfect stage for an attack,” he said. “A large unsuspecting crowd is fodder for mayhem.” But he was hardly heard, drowned by squealing flutes, competing with thunderous drumbeats.