

Urgh. Sand. Heat rained down on the desert from the scorching sun above, as staggering blindly across the dunes came a bat draped in loose-fitting robes. She wiped her brow, a little sweat clinging to the sleeve of her billowy white outfit as her feet clad in tough sandals crept over the hot, stinging sands.

"Fucking Soviet time travel devices... last time I do the army a favour... missing my lunch..." the bat grumbled, her tummy gurgling hungrily as she carefully made one step after the other, endlessly striding across the expanse of sand. She inspected the broken, chunky device on her wrist – its size alone marking it clearly as property of the old Soviet research laboratories. It had a certain minimalist charm to it, though, with a few dials and switches on it to properly mark out dates, a wealth of intricate mechanical cogs and gears combined with sophisticated if clunky electronics visible through the crumpled metal casing. It had, at the very least, functioned – though it's current inoperable state left her somewhat stuck somewhere, not to mention somewhere. It was a desert, that much she knew, and judging by the fact her cell was getting zero reception and no GPS, probably at least a few years into the past. As she crested a dune, a city came into view – along the banks of a great river lay mudbrick buildings and floodplains full to bursting with agriculture. The dusty streets were packed with people, positively bristling with activity. Her sensitive ears picked up the traces of language on the wind – Egyptian? Ancient Egyptian?

The smell of cooking food hit her nose as she stepped through the edges of town, her nose tingling pleasantly at the mixed scents of spices and sizzling meats drifting along with the breeze. It had to be a festival – the people, mostly humans, were dressed in their finest linens, with simple jewellery on display as bread and beer was handed out on the streets. The bat smiled as a smiling, dark-skinned human passed her a warm, chewy hunk of bread, and she nibbled at the edges. It wasn't the best tasting bread, but it was rather nice, especially so fresh from the oven.

"Ah, you are not from around here, I think... tell me, beautiful stranger, who are you?" The man smiled at her as he offered her a mug of beer, which she pushed away gently. She was a bit of a lightweight when it came to drinking, and it wouldn't do to be staggering all over the desert when she had no way of getting back home.

"My name is Vostok, I'm... a scholar. A travelling scholar." A half-truth, but she suspected lecturing the poor man on the scientific method wouldn't go down very well. "What's going on in town? Looks like a pretty big festival."

"Ah, our own scholars have predicted an upheaval in the heavens! They predict the sun will be blotted out, and bring forth the bird-headed god! And so, we offer a tribute, in the hopes that we will receive many blessings." The bat nodded, taking her bread and giving the man a last little smile before losing herself in the crowd once more. Bird-headed god? Well, she wasn't a bird, but she did own a particularly fine pair of wings... an evil idea began to form as she grinned to herself, pushing through the crowds to find a temple or some sort of public space to speak from.

With her sensitive ears, it didn't take too long to pick up on the chattering of the clerics and priests. A few felines were dining eagerly on fresh cooked fish, discussing the day's events on a rooftop terrace. Sitting across the street, she pulled her hood up and perked up her ears, listening intently to their conversation. Though they spoke in murmurs and purrs, the bat quite easily heard their plans, grinning a sharp grin as she listened in. They planned to put on a little show for the commoners, to persuade them to increase their tithes and taxes with a little trickery from a false god. When the eclipse occurred, they'd bring out their actor, who would set forth some proclamations... or at least, that was the plan. A certain bat had a few opinions of her own, some wicked schemes to keep her entertained while she fixed up the time machine...

Vostok slipped through the streets as the moon blotted out the sun, casting a pall of darkness over the sandy town. On silent wings, she took off into the artificial night, listening carefully to the ground to find the priests in amongst all the fearful chatter. She rolled her eyes a little at some of the worried, quiet muttering, the people below careful not to provoke the wrath of the gods. The clerics weren't difficult to find, the bat able to hear their snickering and muttering from the skies above as she swooped in to land, her sandals scuffing against the ground as she flapped her wings and stopped her descent. As the light was blocked out completely, plunging the land into darkness, the bat shuddered with the exotic sensation of growth, the intoxicating, tingling heat spreading through her veins as she rapidly began to loom over the temple grounds, the thought of an invisible giant somewhat tickling her as she flexed her toes in anticipation of fun. Echolocation provided the whereabouts of their would-be god as she broke an easy two-hundred feet, and she scooped him from the ground between two fingers, covering his beak as she stuffed him between her

toes, pressing him roughly between warm, bare feet and the hard soles of her footwear. He wriggled savagely, trying to escape as he flailed and screamed, but those leathery paws let nary a whimper escape before the intense, powerful pheromones contained within her sweat pacified him.

As the first rays of sunlight began to spread, she took a first tentative step as a giant, her foot slamming into the ground and announcing the presence of Vostok to the world. With wings spread wide, the fearful people below witnessed the arrival of a true goddess – not some impostor in a fancy robe who had a script to read. Panicking, the clerics just stared up, bound to the spot, as the gargantuan chiropteran monster grinned wickedly over her assembled audience. The frightened gathering of fieldworkers in simple desert garb made no noise above their frightened whispers, staring up at the beast before them.

“People of Egypt, I, Vostok, have arrived as foretold in prophecy! You got one thing wrong, though, it was a bat goddess, not a bird-headed god. I’ll let that one go for now. You’ll come to discover that I can be *very* merciful.” The sun began to shine brightly behind her, a huge bat-shaped shadow cast over the fearful little figures beneath her as she loomed imposingly over them. “Now, clerics, I’m gonna need a few things if I’m going to be your goddess... I hope you have a nice little place for me to stay and put my feet up – otherwise, I might have to put them down. On you. Repeatedly. Until you die.”

The clerics mumbled and muttered to themselves, but the bat heard them all. Having such big ears did provide benefits, occasionally. They wondered amongst themselves how such a thing could happen, how this... goddess, for lack of a better word, had just appeared like so. Had they tempted fate? Was this a test, a punishment from the gods for trying to fool their people? It took a moment, but one stepped forth, a slender, but old and bony jackal with immaculate black fur and intricately designed robes. The sun peering out from behind the moon lit up the chunky jewellery he wore with a shimmering gold sparkle, light caught by the multi-faceted gems he wore in many exotic colours.

“Goddess Bat, we humbly apologise for not having everything ready for your arrival. If you will but give us some time, we can-“

“NO. YOU WILL SERVE ME IMMEDIATELY.” The bat snarled with a wicked, malicious gleam in her big, amber eyes, the sheer volume of her voice rattling through the bones of all her audience and knocking the jackal to the ground, stammering in terror as he scrambled pathetically in the dust, his fine robes coated in a thin layer of red-brown sand and dirt as he leapt to his feet again, assisted by his cohorts.

“I – I’m sorry! P-please, come with us, we will take you to our finest rooms. I don’t think we have a place for one so big, but perhaps we could construct...”

“Smaller is fine.” The bat shrank back down to a more accommodating size as the sun came out again, taking the little impersonator in her sandals along for the ride as he squirmed pathetically against her sole.

“Mmm, but I would like a lovely big temple. Maybe with giant statues of me...” She waved happily to the fearful crowd, who simply took a few frightened steps back, milling around in tentative awe of their new goddess as the priests led her off to the temple, with shuffling sandals and nervous dispositions.

“Your house, goddess Vostok.” The jackal waved his fragile, weathered hands as he showed the bat the inside of the grand temple, a work of art that would last a thousand years or more – if the bat didn’t outgrow it, of course.

“Eh. There doesn’t seem to be a place to plug in my gaming computer. No hot tub, either. Could use more carpeting, too, these floors are a little hard and dusty.” Vostok yawned with a big, happy grin on her face as she teased the priests, looking around the temple, secretly somewhat impressed with the powerful architecture and towering walls - a perfect monument to a big batty goddess.

“I... I’m sorry, my goddess, we will have our slaves build you something more suitable right away. I’m sure the Pharaoh will not mind when he learns that we are hosting such a powerful, beautiful being...” The jackal bowed profusely as he addressed the bat, ducking his head down in submission as she regarded him with a cool, calculating look, watching the flickering of the lamps inside cast a shimmer on his clattering gold jewellery.

“He better not, or I’ll stomp him. Real gods beat god-kings, you know.. He can bring his armies against me, but I will simply dash them against my soles... talking of which, it’s been a long walk to get here, and my feet are *awfully* tired... you can worship me by worshipping them.” Her weatherworn sandals slapped against the stone floor quietly, the tiny passenger pressed against her sole squeaking a little with each well-

placed footstep. Those sandals stepped up onto some dusty stone stairs before a great throne, almost as though it had been built for a giant, or a god. She shimmered slightly, growing to fit the seat, and simply turned on the balls of her feet (with a little yelp of pain from her foot-loving friend) to place her rear delicately in her new throne, grinning down at the priests with a sharp, evil smile.

Slap. Slap. One after the other, her sandals came off, each as big as one of the priests, scuffling down the stairs a little. Released from beneath her, the god-impersonator staggered around, his head still hazy from her pheromones as he simply collapsed besides her throne, worn out from all his fervent worshipping and the smooshing of her soft, brown, leathery soles against his skin.

“Well? I know gods are supposed to have all the time in the world, but the sooner you get to work, the less chance you’ll have of me getting all annoyed and growing even bigger...” That was enough to worry them. Robes flapping with haste, necklaces and bangles clattering as they ran, they scrambled up the stairs towards the feet of their goddess, awkwardly rubbing up against them and licking the dirt up with long, ample strokes of their tongues. The jackal sped off for a moment, much to the bat’s consternation, but returned with an amply-sized jug of pleasantly scented oil to apply to those aching paws. She let him rub it in, stroke by stroke, as she wriggled her toes with pleasure, those long, fingerlike digits grasping and rubbing at the worshippers so eagerly licking and submitting to the goddess above. Low moans of absolute praise whispered from beneath her feet as those pheromones, even with the lightly scented, tingling oil masking the effect, began to warp their minds into perfect, obedient servants to her paws. Above, the bat purred with pleasure, savouring each little lick against her toes as she lightly trampled them against the stonework, their limbs simply smothered by an expanse of cushioned leather.

They licked until she was satisfied, the rumbling purr of their goddess a sign that they had done good work. Tired, exhausted, minds still boggled with pheromones, the bat pushed them away for now with soles that matched their entire bodies for size. They moaned with thwarted lust, little furry forms draped across the stairs pathetically as the bat looked on and snickered. “Good little priests. Mmm, maybe with a little training, you’ll truly be fit for a goddess... but for now, rest up, little friends. You have a big day ahead of you, getting this temple up to my standards, bringing in worshippers to bow at my feet... we’re going to have so much fun.” A little battered and broken, her new clerics staggered down the stairs with sweat-stained hides and aching bodies to their quarters, eager to recuperate after such an ordeal. The giant bat wriggled her toes teasingly after them, and then took a look at the clunky time-travel watch hidden up her sleeve. She slipped it off, examining the cracked casing with prying fingers, setting it aside on the armrests of her colossal throne. As she looked down on the mess of scrambled wires and fizzling components, it looked to her like a simple fix – well, not simple exactly, considering the knowledge of quantum teleportation and time manipulation one would need to even begin considering figuring the mess of electronics out – but something she could do nonetheless, maybe with a few borrowed tools from the priesthood. Urgh, she was going to have to invent the Phillips head screwdriver. She had a lot of hard work ahead of her...

She rested her eyes for just a moment, and when she opened them again, she found she had been asleep. More pressingly, the people of the town were swarming around the temple floor, bowing and praising her profusely. Vostok blinked, a little taken aback at the sudden influx of worshippers, the service seemingly headed by the priests from the day before. Hundreds of little bodies crammed into the temple, from dark hairless skin to reptilian servants to brown and red and black fur, all bowing and bending before her looming feet – she could get used to this, she thought. She took one look at the watch still sitting on the armrest, casing half-off and circuitry showing, and slipped it into a pocket, shrinking down gracefully to speak with her priests.

“Very good. I approve. What have you got planned for me today? Some breakfast, I hope?” She yawned lazily, stretching her wings out behind her head and cracking a few joints, getting a good stretch to counteract having fallen asleep in such an uncomfortable chair. Even at her smaller size, that wingspan stretched out impressively over the priests, a few nervous glances shot between them in remembrance of last night’s events.

“Ah, yes, my goddess! The richest merchants have offered their wares to create you the finest feast a mortal can offer a goddess such as you, with sweet honey, succulent fruits, fresh warm bread...” The jackal – probably the high priest, she figured – nodded and bowed as he spoke to her, clasping his hands

nervously as he sought her approval – and so, she smiled, remembering his initiative in bringing her that wonderful oil.

“Then bring me to it. I wish to see whether you mortals can match the fine dining of the heavens.” She smirked evilly, allowing the gaggle of priests to draw her away from the bowing, praying crowd with a swish of her wings, turning her back on her worshippers and the murmur of prayer behind her as she walked with her clergymen into the back rooms of the temple.

A luxurious banquet assaulted the senses of the bat, rich food tickling her palate just so. A spread of delicious food was laid out for her, the most sumptuous treats from up and down the Nile. The priests sat her down in a gold-plated throne, arranging dish after dish in front of her – deliciously salted meats, sweet, juicy fruit, delicious drinks that slipped down her throat like nectar... every bite was succulent, delicious, and she ate until she could eat no more.

“I trust you are satisfied, my goddess?” The jackal bowed to her in her seat, looking very proud of the feast they had arranged.

“Oh, yeah. Mmm... but I have another appetite to slake. Bring me your criminals, those who have sinned.” She kicked her sandals off onto the table, reclining and yawning against the shining golden throne. At once, the priests departed, leaving the goddess to nap a little in her seat – and she was woken up by the sounds of clanking armour and murmuring worshippers.

“The criminals, your grace. A murderer, a thief, and a blasphemer.” Some temple guards led in three figures at spear point, jabbing them forwards. She rose, growing right up to the roof, more than enough to loom imposingly over the captured criminals – the first of whom she snagged between long, fingerlike toes, pressing him painfully into the stonework.

“I mentioned that I can be a merciful goddess... so I'll give you a choice, slave. Worship my paws for all eternity, or die beneath them.”

The figure beneath, a ragged, dirty crocodile, strained and squirmed against the pressure. “I recognise no gods! In person or no, you are but a simple sorcerer!” Crrrrunch. The bat gave him no response to that, instead pushing down, hard. The firm pressure of her looming soles crushed into him firmly, crunching and cracking his skeleton beneath her weight – and with a sickening wrench, the crocodile was spattered across the ground beneath her feet, broken bones and splintered scales dripping from between her toes.

“I can be a vindictive goddess, too.” She grinned a sharp, malicious grin, the assembled crowd balking a little at the gorey sight – but the temple guards pushed the other two criminals in front of her.

“Mmh... I do feel a little cruel, so here's a little game for you two. You, throw your spear to the ground.” She pointed at one of the guards, who immediately complied, nervously tossing his weapon to the ground in front of that gargantuan bat-shaped altar, the sheer toned perfection and physical excellence of his goddess practically forcing him to avert his eyes in reverence. “Well, here's the deal. I want you to choose between you who will become my favourite little servant, and who will be fodder for my feet. The other one is looking a little bare right now, no?” She teasingly wriggled her toes and displayed her bare, leathery sole, watching the little criminals blanch at the prospect of becoming paste beneath it. Almost instantly, the murderer dove for the spear, but was caught as her foot slapped down on him, crushing him into the stonework and grinding him into nothingness.

“A dirty trick – but who wants a ruthless killer for a slave? You'll be much better when you're all trained up, you cute little thing.” She tweaked the thief's muzzle between her slender fingerlike toes, then sat down on the floor lazily, laying on her side. “Now be a good boy and clean up your goddess. In fact, why don't you all help him...” Immediately, her colossal heels, her gore-spattered paws, were attended to by all present, simply flocking up and eagerly licking the dripping mess away, making sure to lap between her toes with enthusiastic tongues. She purred deeply, caressing their bodies in a sea of brown leather that hugged them tight and radiated a comforting heat...

Oh, god. What had happened? She gripped her throbbing head, grumbling and mumbling as she found herself swaddled in bedsheets. Was she hungover? She looked around at the odd, dark chamber she found herself in, at the few bottles by her bedside, the softly glowing chains illuminating her body as they wrapped around her arms... ah. That could be a problem. She wriggled her arms, watching the chains rattle noisily, as she bowed her head and concentrated... right on cue, the priests swarmed in with a motley crew of guards armed with weapons from all over – not only shining spears, but brutal looking assault rifles, odd futuristic beam cannons, the lot.

"You think you can escape, goddess? Those chains are powerful – don't even think about trying to outgrow them either, because..." Of course she was going to try it! As she summoned forth her willpower, however she found that the chains began to burn painfully and light up, runes appearing on the interwoven links. She hissed and spat, rubbing her wounded wingarms in frustration and pain... "Because we have had our most powerful priests weave an enchantment to bind the gods themselves in there. Not only that, but you fixed that bracelet last night, that ugly, chunky bracelet... and you showed us it's wondrous power. To turn the clock backwards or forwards and plunder ancient tombs and future cities – look at the mysterious tools we have found!" The jackal sneered as he gestured to his little army, who clutched their weapons greedily. "One of our soldiers can kill a thousand men, and in doing so, will help us to control the world... all thanks to you, and this, my goddess." His eyes glinted wickedly as he lifted his arm, revealing the repaired time-watch strapped to his wrist beneath his robes...

"I'm gonna tell you a little story, jackal. Get all comfy cosy while your goddess tells you a little parable. Now, back in my time, you didn't keep your wealth buried in tombs, you used it. But it still needed to be kept somewhere, and those places were vaults locked tight with metal doors. Impregnable unless you had the right keys and codes. It would have taken a lot of hard work to get through those doors, unless you thought... outside the metal box. Now, I know your people are famed for their engineering prowess, but let me remind you of one simple fact – a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. In the case of those vaults, that weak link was not usually the door – a clever thief would instead drill through the walls, or even the ceiling, looking for the weak spot and tapping through. And that, jackal, is where you have made your fatal mistake. These chains are pretty tough, strong enough to hold a dangerous girl like me... but the wall brackets?" Vostok grinned maliciously, flexing her wingarms, made strong from years of flight and fight... "You might have a problem with those." With one, ear-splitting crack, the bat simply lunged forwards, ripping the chains from the walls and leaping onto the jackal from her perch on the bed. Sailing through the air, chains rattling and dragging behind her, she took him to the ground with a sickly crunch as she seized his wrist and the soldiers found themselves reacting far too slowly for the goddess' trained reflexes. She quickly hammered the home button on the watch holding her captive tight, and watching as the world turned blurry and the chatter of an automatic rifle faded away behind her... She reached out a hand as she watched herself go lurching into the past, landing roughly atop her jackal stowaway and giving him a good punch to the muzzle, ripping the watch from his wrist. Beyond her stood a gaggle of military personnel and technicians, eagerly awaiting an explanation for her passenger and general bedraggled appearance. She simply brushed the sand and dust from her clothes, tossed the watch to a random technician – a dopey looking pangolin, as it turned out, who scrabbled and grabbed for the watch in a panic – and strutted off with only a few words. "Fucking waste of my time."

A week or so later, in the desert sands once again...

"Now if you'll look over here, you can see some ancient paintings depicting an ancient religious festival – the annual feast celebrating the bat goddess, Vas'tok."

"Haha, I wonder who that might be..." spying on a tour guide were a tall, slender bat and a small, skinny rat – the former resting her arm on the latter's head as he huffed impatiently.

"Yeah, yeah. I still call shenanigans. You can't travel through time, it's physically impossible. You had to have paid this guy off or something. Painted that on, weathered it a little..."

"Believe what you want, ratty." snickered the bat, scruffing at his hair a little, knocking his glasses askew.

"But wouldn't you want to see me as a goddess? All big, and powerful, my feet crushing nations..." The rat let his answer hang in the air as he chuckled gently, hugging into the bat's leg as the winds whipped quietly around them.