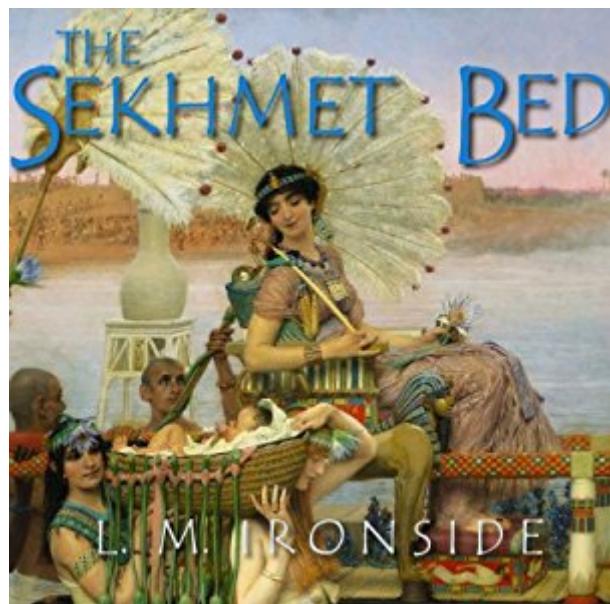


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The Sekhmet Bed: The She-King, #1



Synopsis

Is Ahmose's divine gift a blessing or a curse? The second daughter of the Pharaoh, Ahmose has always dreamed of a quiet life as a priestess, serving Egypt's gods, ministering to the people of the Two Lands. But when the Pharaoh dies without an heir, she is given instead as Great Royal Wife to the new king - a soldier of common birth. For Ahmose is god-chosen, gifted with the ability to read dreams, and it is her connection to the gods which ensures the new Pharaoh his right to rule.

Ahmose's elder sister Mutnofret has been raised to expect the privileged station of Great Royal Wife; her rage at being displaced cannot be soothed. As Ahmose fights the currents of Egypt's politics and Mutnofret's vengeful anger, her youth and inexperience carry her beyond her depth and into the realm of sacrilege. To right her wrongs and save Egypt from the gods' wrath, Ahmose must face her most visceral fear: bearing an heir. But the gods of Egypt are exacting, and even her sacrifice may not be enough to restore the Two Lands to safety.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It's been a very long time since a book actually moved me. Not just make me think, grin, chuckle, or even look over my shoulder. But actually move me. This one did. When I started reading *The Sekhmet Bed*, I had no idea what the story was about other than it takes place in ancient Egypt. So I waded through the opening chapters, intrigued by the cast of regal figures come to life from the dusty pages of history. As the drama unfolded, I found myself lingering on each page while I savored the hypnotic cadence of the prose. I let the author guide me through a world of ancient

temples, pharaohs, princesses, and gods. I feasted with queens, danced with harem girls, drifted down the Nile river on a sail barge, and bathed in the light of the moon while riding in a golden chariot. I heard the voices from the past, telling me their story, telling me about their triumphs and their losses, about the people they loved and how they died. I heard the voices of the divine. And then, I reached the end. I imagine *The Sekhmet Bed* is the kind of tale that an ancient Greek Playwright might have had performed at the amphitheater. It's difficult not to find yourself moved by the sacrifice of Princess Ahmoset, or Ahmose for short, who trades her own happiness for the welfare of her people, subjecting herself to the often cruel whims of fate. Her trials with her sister, Mutnofret, who is always scheming to wrest control of their husband Thutmose, the reigning Pharaoh, as well as take back her birthright as rightful queen of Egypt, sets the stage for a series of heartbreak, but emotionally charged confrontations. One can't help but root for Ahmose as she runs the gauntlet, even at times resorting to sleight of hand or force, to find ways to fulfill her destiny as the Gods chosen Queen of Egypt.

4.5 stars I'll be honest. Normally I shy away from self-published and independently-published books for the mere fact that I have a very strident and strict editor in my head. When I read books, even mainstream, big house-published books, and find errors, that editor aches to pop out and start flaying the pages with a bold red pencil. Knowing that self-published works suffer even more as they lack the polish a professional editor can achieve, I just don't want to put myself through that kind of anguish, as I would no longer be reading the book for pleasure, but constantly seeking out and destroying all the errors. Not to mention many of the stories put out there are often amateurish, juvenile, and downright execrable. However, almost none of those things apply to *The Sekhmet Bed*, and my inner editor and I were able to enjoy the book with a minimum of red pencil usage. I won't bother to synopsize (that's a word, right? If not, it is one now) the novel as it's been done so by others, in a clearer, more concise way than what I could achieve. I will say that publishers should be sitting up and taking notice of Ironside. She's managed to write a novel full of compelling characters as well as intense, atmospheric settings. Frankly, she leaves Michelle Moran in the dust; anyone who compares Ironside to Moran is insulting Ironside. The interactions between characters feel real and authentic; the insertion of mystical elements doesn't compromise the integrity of the historical setting as they're not presented as though they're really happening (except to the person experiencing them, which is only natural; people who have divine visions believe they're real, even if no one else does or understands what they're talking about).

In any novel, first and foremost, I need to be invested in the characters. If I can't find that investment, I cannot care about what happens. Reading becomes a chore. After reading "The Sekhmet Bed," I began to understand this in a better way, because "The Sekhmet Bed" succeeded where, for me, other highly praised books have not. I became emotionally invested in the characters. "The Sekhmet Bed" offers us the princess, Ahmose, and her pharaoh, Thutmose, (whom I adored). Then we get the nasty sister, Mutnofret, and Ineni, the lover. Even Ironside's secondary characters, like Aiya, Twomose and Sitre-In became real, fully-fleshed out. I would pick up "The Sekhmet Bed" intending to read for only a moment, because a moment was all I had at the time. Fifteen minutes, twenty minutes, a half hour later, I would still be reading, even though I felt antsy because I had other things I needed to be doing. I could not stop reading. I had to know what happened next. I had to know what was on that next page. For this reader, that is the mark of a successful novel. Many of the scenes in "The Sekhmet Bed" clearly show how fragile life was in ancient Egypt, even though in some ways, they lived very comfortable, modern lives. Still, the wound caused by an animal bite could fester, and they had no way to stop it. There was danger all around, not only from invading tribes but crocodiles, snakes, and childbirth. Throughout everything runs the gods, their ultimate control, and the need to appease them. I loved how vividly the author shows the power of women in this culture. I learned so much from this book: about ancient Egypt, and about the possible birth, childhood and subsequent power of Hatshepsut, the famed woman who ruled as pharaoh.

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