

Nafereti-Iti

Book One

IV

Lived On The Woman Lost

by

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“Menat! I’ve only just...” She trailed
to silence as, through th’threshold, came
the risen Tey – her rage unmasked;
her ochre eyes untame.

“Again!” She yelled, sweeping her hand
to d’rect the child’s avoidant gaze
unto the proof of quick-paced feet
in sand-soil tracks. Their eyes did meet;
she fiddled with her braid.
Within Tey’s eyes? Th’lament well-versed:
My child, your gifts gestate your curse.

Her pleated dress a sweep of blue
‘mongst white, fringe-trimmed with yellow-gold;
her unfinished eyeline blackened;
her perfumed wig sat, bold –
thus was the girl-child’s moth’ring guide,
as th’sleeping sister woke (her braid
was floating ‘pon her ear ‘n cheek,
its damp end anchored ‘tween her teeth,
where tass’ling-tips splayed frayed).
Through haze, one girl watched ‘nother curse
th’now distant back of their wet nurse.

Voices – awake ‘n waking – spoke:
“Why’d you go out?” “Why do you stay?”
“I go with you most times!” “Would you,
without me, disobey?”
“I can do both!” “I can’t...” “You can!
Just hide it better; do it less.”
She crawled ‘cross to her sister’s bed
‘n shuffled t’where her sister’s head
did shun the carved headrest –
at the bed’s foot, as in the womb,
they lay ‘n silently communed.

Within the hour – up; groomed; dressed.
Proclaimed their tutor: “Good! Come sit,
my dazzling rays of Amun-Ra,
by whom my morning’s lit!
My Sweet One Of The Mother, Mut –
Thoth stakes, increasingly, in you
his” “Seshat!” “Ah yes! Seshat! She,
in you, stakes pride increasingly
for th’wisdom you accrue!
Palm-stem in hand, to futures far
you write the sky’s eternal stars!

And you! When I say Beauty's Come...
Shall I compare to summer's grace,
or – p'rhaps – with winter's wond'rous night,
these features of thy face?
Were Sekh-Met, at Iteru's side,
to see her reflection transform
into your visage, child, she'd scarce
see eyes less luminous; less fierce!
She'd see, Sun Disk adorned,
a matching pow'r 'n equal might
to stalk the black, African night!"

Delighted thus by Tutor-Dad,
the sister 'n the sister learnt
their lessons. Ay felt blessed; adored
those girls – though sons they weren't.
Within their striking intellect
lived on the woman lost, who now
existed in their uttered thoughts
'n in th'ways they agreed 'n fought.
The long horns of the cow,
atop the vulture headdress, loomed;
Hathor 'n Isis bore their womb.

A voice heard – trace of syllables
clearing the mistsome dawn – that calls
the call of one yet guarded;
of one still rapt, enthralled,
'n taken with the dist' approach
of adulthood, its freedom clear
acrest the waves of mirage meant
to lure 'n spur them on 'n tempt
abandon rushed: *Come near...*
Now, look back at – e'er lost; far flung –
that which to which you should have clung!

"Yes, my lioness?" And, as he
lived on within his daytime-dream,
the future approached, pastward-bound,
so charged; with envy, green.
For soon, the dusk, with twilight grip,
of lingering childhood would pass
to Duat and the Atef crown.
Adolescent night soon abounds.
When th'chapt'ring morning asks,
as dawn breaks – red – o'er th'east: *Who's come?*
Sekh-Met 'n Seshat rise as one.