

Day 7

Bristol

Tuesday 7th March 1843

Wa-Set

1 (Thoth). Akhet. XXVIII. 7 Thutmose I

A lattice marked upon the stone in red rests, readying the canvas wall.

"Oi – put it back how it was."

A piece of off-cut – hewn – 's replaced, its miniature scene depicted 'pon its smoother side in its own lattice.

"Sorry..."

Two grids, lain down 'pon each surface, their calculated squares collecting up, in tessellated time, their timeless, abstract forms.

"S'okay. Just: neither me, nor you, nor god-king wants to see Osiris with a massive head."

Gigguhling, she looks o'er at an unmarked column.

"I do want to see it!"

Chuckuhling, he brushed a soot-black line across a register in symmetry.

"I suppose I could always blame the chiseller..."

Smiling – soft – she watched, at work, two men who measured, parallel.

"Must be hard to make those grids on the columns."

He gave a glance toward the men she watched, and nodded, adding:

"Gods, yeah..."

The sun disc set a fire across the pre-noon sky.

They sat upon the scaffold, both, their legs left hanging down, its levelled frame – unswayed – beneath them, with its ladders linking lay'rs. On engineered nature – cut 'n formed; manipulated – now they took the universe within their hands.

"You know ' **KLLANNKK** a cof **PTTINKK** jem..."

"WHAT?"

"I SAID: ONCE I P **KTTRRRMPKKT** WITH A POEM."

"CAN'T HEAR YOU. BUSY SHIPYARD, YOU KNOW?"

The metal of the hull: it rested fast against the wood, its thick-cut form braced by a web of timber – taut, its cross-barred beams 'n struts. Below them, many metres 'long the pull of gravity, were piled up lengths of rope 'n widths of wood 'n sheets of smelted ore. Great wheels to bracket links of chain, tremendous in their coil, rested immovable as men made plans to move them.

There was a lull in 'truding sound.

"The colours..."

"Mm?"

"They sing the sunlight 'long the columned hall."

"What're you on about?" Looking at his friend, he asked.

"I am not here;" (Th'reply.) "I am not now."

"Not now?" Looking at the girl, who sat with legs hung b'yond the scaffold, the man who etched Osiris paused 'n hovered.

"No."

"Hah! When are you, then? And where?"

"A boat of black immensity, that's formed of things unknown – our perch is pressed against the painted walls of Karnak."

Consternation 'cross his brow, he brought his tin-cup to his mouth 'n drank the cold of coffee left; of drink forgotten. Still looking for'd, he asked:

"In Egypt?"

"Yeah. But un-ruined."

"Old Mister Brunel'd be jealous! I've heard him glow with the splendour of their architecture."

Beside, the other man, his tilted head in comprehension, looked far into th'horizons of his vision.

"Ipet-isu..."

"What is that?"

"The name..."

"You can see its name?" His tools now left beside him and his hands upon his knees, the white cloth of his kilt with stone-dust stained, he pondered o'er the girl, the green light of her irides gleaming, confused and yet enchanted by her vision.

"In gold. Abstract forms... Above them, animalistic forms; sails, their canvas catching wind. But the name... is lost to me."

"What else?"

"They are not mere sand 'n stone – deep blue, lapis; em'rald, green; red ochre, ox-blood... Their backdrop: washed in white 'n touched with gold. I can see the arch-like pylons with their flagpoles, obelisks, 'n entrance pathways; there is water at an inlet."

"A river?"

"It is... and yet, it is still. Caught; captured. The water rests; the city's floating."

"Floating?"

"The water doesn't change."

"A river without an inundation?"

"Yes. This boat, the size of halls 'n temples, is being built within a tideless, floating harbour."

The wake drives on 'n out, its rhythm-song sung soft upon the surface, valleyed-peaklines pushingpull crestrighzily tumble – take this passing o'er of energised space displaced (Make way!); merge-meld incompressible fluid; fundamentallpresent life – and through its rippling immortality – ancestral river motion – on the mem'ry of a moment lasts, 'n lives, 'n loves, 'n longs for its brief but eternal time to e'er transcend its evanescence: thus through the Nile 'n Avon pass these stories.

"Look at that sun, sinking."

"Like a ship."

The mid became the late within that afternoon in England. Two men upon a narrow boat; a boat upon a fledgling sea.

The sky ran white with its bleeding clouds: their vayp'ric, icy wisps did weave their rainless way thr'out th'scattered, short light-wavelengths – domed celest'yul. Reflected were its many molecules – it saw its aged face beginning to resemble, now, its dusky death mask, backlit by th'infinite concentricity of the e'er-retreating stars, that yet seem constant, and unlosable, and deathless.

The banks: they sang of winter's depths, yet moved with the impending, trans'yunt spring – a bare branch budded; flit, did the risen birds. Green, brown, 'n black, 'n red, 'n birdsong hues held tight the Avon as it moved – displaced – with th'wake made by the plotless, coursing hull.

"There're murmurations in the river, made of sparrow's wings."

"?"

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"..."

"Also – we're coming to the lock gates."

They came unto the sunken gates, their chamber sealed behind the oak arranged to gaze upstream – chevrons reaching back above the masonry to lev'rage 'gainst the coursing blue.

Off they threw the rope onto the mooring, made of planks pressed to the sloping side, rapt about the bitt that posts a place to stay or launch into the landless tide.

"You go o'er therethen."

"Aye."

"The fuck you doin'?"

Up upon the metal, not the platform path, he crossed in perilous steps. Rolling eyes, the man on t'other side worked to raise the paddle up.

Windlass on the axle:
lift the toothed bar!

Lobbed across the gate, the key flew fine 'n fair 'n fell into the man's two hands.

"Now what?"

"We wait."

As the chamber changed to match the level of the Avon on the outer side, the men looked o'er 'n out across, watching for the fauna of the banks.

Glistenfalling
flickerfast,
lightlaced luminous
turquoiseteal;
traceturning
featheredflittingflight –
fish-hunting,
hov'ring
sov'reign.

"Saw?"

"Where?"

"There:"

"When?"

"Then:"

"Yeah."

"Kingfisher."

"Viz-yoo-ul fleeting flair."

"Like a shooting star."

"A falling flame."

"The forms – they fall in dancely splendour."

"They pass, reflecting fire."

"Rambling, are we?"

"Ain't we."

"Ain't we just."

"Just to ramble?"

"W'thin time 'n space."

"To fill the time?"

"To fill the space."

"With what?"

"With words."

Chuckuhling, he turned his back to the beam, his bum against it – with greatest ease he walked it to the edge.

“Fffffuck you.”

Laughter through a chilly breeze.

Meanwhile, in Egypt: Iteru, with the nighyulism of a barren Earth beneath her, did scorn the plains with the stoicism of her waters.

Bundled reeds on the rapid river ferried, now, two women ‘tween the banks.

“I’m not a woman...” Matted hair blown ‘cross deep-em’rald eyes.

“And yet, you match the Nile for flooding...” Glint in the clouds of her guide-companion.

Silently, her face was taken aback.

“Gross!”

Laughing together, the aft’noon greeted eve’ning.

With soft, slight sadness sang the gaze of the elder to the younger’s plight:

“Still a storyteller – now a woman.”

The canvas sail beat softly as the wind caused it to fold; the baskets rocked on each side, though bound with twine.

“Which way” (The one with glintsome eyes.) “does this shining river run?”

A query in the brow ‘n tilt of head – green-eyed response.

“O’er fields ‘n pastures, abreast the rising sun.”

She rapped her fingers on a basket’s lid.

“In peace” (*rrap rap*) “give life –” (*rrap rap*) “o’erflowing, outburst banks!” (*prrrrap rrap*) “Your might produceth all – f’which we give thanks!”

Percussive were her hands around the drum she had unbound that now sat set between her legs; she passed the torch.

“Oh... Hah! Umm. Kay... Ayeuuh...

I do hate...

to see...

thaaat risen sun go down!

Oh, inundayshuuuun:

please bring it back ‘round!”

A riff from a distant land ‘n time broke in upon their rhythmic laughter – vibration, singing strings of pentatony.

“Shine forth!

Shine fo-orth,

thou god unnamed above!”

“Though none work with you,

do that task you love!”

Male voice; Germanic-Saxon sound – it interceded thus:

“Well now, flow

right on down

to that Celtiiiiic, foamy sea!

Th’old gorge will guide you –

let it channel thee!

Oh, but leave

this here bay

with your tideless spirit-guide

for to teach me truths, no-ow
and in the by and by..."

*Which-a way,
which-a wa-ay
does that blood-red river run?*

From West-fall'n youth, no-ow
on to the dawn-red sun...