

**Nafereti-Iti**

**Book Two**



**William Altoft**

*The sun has brought no pharaoh since  
she fell – Duat-bound – forth by day  
who was not man or boy. I may,  
however, now portend, evince:  
there is one who, out of th'sunfire  
that's set to sear 'n scorch the land,  
shall bear a crown suff'ring no higher,  
smiting all with her risen hand!  
Into th'life of the second son,  
the Beautiful One, now, Has Come...*

The girl-child, become woman, enters the palace  
'neath the rays of the Dazz'ling Sun & the piercing  
gaze of the Great Royal Wife. Khemet sings of  
Iteru's gifts, as the Crown Prince sees the sunset of  
his father-king.

From childhood to burial, via a plethora of poetic  
texts collected into books: this is the second volume  
of a prose-poetic song of Nefertiti's life.

With her name here re-constructed, let now her  
story be re-told...

# Nafereti-Iti

## Book Two

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by

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## In The Shadow Of The Dazz'ling Sun

On folds of rolling, damp, 'n putrid skin –  
scarred o'er with stretching, as its bulk expands  
in bloat 'n blaze of ancience – lay the hands  
of Egypt's giant, flaring red; its king.  
Awash in sweat 'n drool (of abscess born;  
his gums gangrenous 'bout his rotting teeth),  
the upper reaches of his grotesque form  
made mock'ry of the gold it stank beneath.  
The prince, this fourth Amun-Hotep, looked on;  
drew near his retch-inducing father; stopped.  
A wretch, brought 'bout by rank corruption seen  
infectiously to warp, wither, 'n rot  
the one who'd wielded men 'n rallied stone,  
decaying westward 'pon a thriving throne.

Scornsome, pitying, angry, fraught, revulsed –  
the prince's voice unto his father came.  
His mother moved her jewelled, scented arms  
to stay his words by her presented palms  
and, at her movement, his memory pulsed:  
in time gone onward she had moved the same...

"Boys!"

The palms of her hands stood raised, splayed like the hood about a rearing cobra. Poking out her tongue, with her broad nose scrunched, she hissed a-whilst her eyes sang love. Todd'ling to her kneeling knees, the prince fell gigguhling across her lap.

"Cobra Queeeeeeeeeen!"

The shout of the elder brother, Thoth Is Born, came thund'ring as he crashcareened into his mother's breasts as the todd'ling other grabbed his legs 'n pulled.

"Goewayuh!"

"Thutmose –" (Tiye rearranged her sons.) "your brother is only hugging you."

Not yet weaned, Amun-Hotep grasped for to suckle; Thutmose moved aside to stand against the limits of the mat their mother knelt upon. 'Bout his bangled ankles Tiye's fingers fell in a caressful sweep, while the date-palm shade did shield them all from the blessings of the blazing disk.

Just before he stepped away to check a rustling at the courtyard's edge, the Crown Prince felt his kilt tugged up as the Great Wife, nourishing her second son, re-dignified her exposed first.

Rubble rustling;  
bare feet flitting o'er  
the fired earth –  
two beings bound etern'ly.  
"Mum! A kitten!"

Lowering her hands, their implorations  
heeded by her son with begrudging grace,  
the Lady Of The Two Lands 'leased a sigh  
so ripe with thought for the transition nigh.  
A mature man to take the Old Bull's place,

where once she'd imagined her eldest's face...  
Oubast incarnate – on his lap she'd lie!  
In tomb eternal were they now encased.  
The perfumed cones beneath her wig de-formed.  
In scentful silence, she returned his gaze...

Red-brown as the spectre of the flame-lit kiln in the shadow of the serpent's night, her first-born son's soft eyes spoke love from the chair he sat 'n slouched upon.

"It does appear, my Lord Of Truth, that one of your sons is far more interested in your theories than the other!"

At the patronising, nasal sound of the priest's effort to call him out, Thutmose – one hand between his cat's tall ears – commented without turning back:

"E'en as I keep my ears alert – Just as Ta-Miu keeps hers! – to my father's bold expression of the workings of the solar realm, I, to enhance my comprehension, thus employ my eyes: to gaze on sunlight's beauty manifest!"

The wrinkling of the royal nose bridged joy, joining all the features of her face into an expression expressible only in the dance of sinews.

"My son listens, even when he appears not to." The king, rolling his eyes – a smirk simmering 'neath his right-side cheek – at the prince Thutmose's sardonismic retort via loving praise, placed his hands on the high shoulders of the priest 'n bid him leave: "I'll summon you again near evening."

His broad chest, shaved of its thick, dark wool, filled beneath his gold pectoral – the lapis 'n the em'rald rose, then fell; the fat about his belly bustled. Thumbs hooked, now, underneath his gilded belt, the Bull stood muscular 'n pros'prous both – his limbs 'n chest were as of statued stone; his face 'n middle soft 'n full.

And looking on at this colossus, ranging  
strides across the narrow world,  
the second son saw mighty works  
rising o'er the disk-lit sand...

Slobb'ring on the cud of the opium  
ground between the rubble of his molars,  
the king inspired nought within his son  
but despair – level; stretching far. Anon  
a sneer – contemptuous – appeared over  
the wreckage of the pharaoh's face. Thus spread,  
his cold command coalesced. Spittle-led,  
Amun-Hotep raged at his child 'n bled  
the fury of his grief for his first heir,  
who lay embalmed. Now did his gilded chair  
strain 'neath his gesticulations. The walls  
of alabaster 'bout the courtly room  
silently stood, with painted patterns scrawled,  
just as the rock that makes Thutmose's tomb...

Crown Prince,  
Overseer Of The Priests Of Upper And Lower Egypt,  
High Priest Of Ptah Within The White Walls,  
Sem-Priest Of Ptah,  
Son Of The Dazz'ling Sun,

Child Of The Great Royal Wife,  
Companion To The Litter Of Oubast,  
Thutmose –  
may your ba take flight, Duat-ward bound,  
following the Aten west!

May you meet the First Of The Westerners,  
Foremost Of The Divine Booth,  
who will take your heart  
unto the ostrich feather  
placed upon the golden scale  
to mark, with his jackal's eyes alit,  
the lightness of your righteous soul!

Rise across the Field Of Rushes!  
United with your feline be!  
In your gilt, eternal mem'ry will  
your brother bear your un-borne crown!

The light flitflickered 'cross the glyph-gilt stone. Cold in the mourning flame that danced its  
writhsome, woeful fire, the relics of the Crown Prince filled the room that his father left at last.

Thutmose's brother – now the prince adorned with nascent might – had both his mother's 'n his  
father's hands, placed in placation, upon his soft 'n gracile shoulders, shaking 'neath the weight; he  
looked b'yond th'king at gold in burning gloom.

He'd placed, with the help of the queen 'n the timber holds they held between them, the  
limestone coffin-box which kept his brother's felid's soul. The cat had passed ahead to scout the way  
'n now returned – together would they walk her tracks t'ward home.

Now, then, t'was time to snuff the flame; the torch was sanded out; in dreams of beads of glass  
the fire died – left only was the young Amun-Hotep, when all was sealed, his tears falling like  
moments penned by time.

Under alabaster, Amun-Hotep  
the fourth (as yet using his given name)  
walked forth into the hall with wearied step,  
indignant at his father's ire 'n blame.  
The gaze 'n glare of both his parent's eyes  
had beaten down from whence they sat, enthroned  
on chairs that perched, poised, upon lion's paws  
of glitt'ring gold with unretracted claws.  
Now that he'd reached the courtyard arch, alone,  
he stared on blankly for a moment's pause.

In the sky, the Sun Disk hesitated,  
lingering to shine on the prince's breast  
which bared, to the grasp of the reaching rays,  
the jewelled, crescent gold across his chest.  
Below sagged the folds of his loose, black skin –  
paled by his roy'lty; tinged with olive, red –  
up to the kilt he wore of fine linen  
that 'bout his strangely broadened hips did spread.

The Aten yet kept within courtyard view.  
For many years the man who stood there, now,  
had listened – at length – to his father, who  
expounded ‘n elaborated new  
philosophies of th’what ‘n th’whence ‘n th’how  
of th’solar deity which – buried; birthed –  
left ‘n returned to sun or scorch the earth.

In th’early summer of his third decade,  
he stood mature, graced with a slender pow’r.  
With legs crossed over from the thighs, he laid  
his weight against a date-palm that had tow’red  
for many years over the courtyard stone,  
its shade traversing as the hours passed.  
The sun gave in; continued west, at last.  
The prophet of the soaring fire, alone,  
closed both his eyes, their mascara defaced  
by riv’ring tears that ran by lips – thick; pursed –  
to waterfall beyond his chin, through space,  
to wet the ground where he had once been nursed.  
Unseen, two women – half his age, or less –  
passed: one a leopard; one a lioness.



## The Song Of Seshat

*Eternal as the rosettes  
of the leopard's hide;  
endless as the fires of night –  
I write the cycling years  
on th'palm-leaf rib...*

Before a sense of time or space  
did break across the waters 'round  
the benbenet which Atum graced  
(in th'form of the primeval mound),  
the ibis preened his plumage – white –  
with sickled bill b'yond red-ringed eyes  
ere, taking self-made wing to flight –  
'bove sizeless seas; w'thin endless skies –  
he left alone an egg. It cracked...  
From deep within, creation hatched!

Emerging, this occasion (First  
of all which followed!) dawned to gift  
cosmosis of all knowledge; burst  
upon by which, the seas did shift!  
A land in black 'n red came forth,  
'n forth from out that land was born  
a river, running south to north –  
faultless in flow, 'n flood, 'n form!  
Iteru spread to drench the land,  
raising green fields beneath her hands!

I, too, was made as th'land became.  
I, too, was gifted from the dark.  
'Neath seven-petalled flower-flame  
I rose, bearing the leopard's mark  
across my crimson-belted dress!  
A crimson-band about my hair;  
jewel-laden gold 'n lapis fair  
lay collar-curved above my breasts.  
My stylus – hewn of starfire – poised,  
I lay my tablet o'er the void!

Rowboats of bundled papyrus  
upon the banks of Set's desert;  
earth packed 'n dried in th'air for huts  
as beastform palettes came t'be worked –  
the Red Land roared its new expanse,  
as cabin'd reed-boats carried trade  
of lapis, 'n wine from th'Levant;  
as decorated pots were made!



And, as your painted-tombs were born,  
I watched your thoughts take written form!

In carved pictographs (Crude,  
though wondrous!) did your kings proclaim  
their falcon-façade, power-exude-  
ing, Serekh-bounded, royal names,  
even as they fell to few; to three.  
The Bull Of Bat levelled all walls!  
The Catfish raged, mace raised 'bove all,  
'n brought the crowns to unity!  
The king sailed on procession's ships;  
I gifted him my hieroglyphs!

Henceforth,  
I scored the annals  
into stone.

Stretching the cord, I helped the kings  
construct their kingdoms, star-aligned –  
precisely-patterned, Ibis-winged,  
'n steady stretched the great design  
above, 'n thus below must be!  
The Upper 'n the Lower Lands  
saw stone stand high upon their sands,  
adorned with strokes of dynasty!  
There, writ in writing tall 'n bold  
with pigment, Khemet's tales lay told!

I guided all; gave life to thought  
that, uttered only, faced the void  
of vast oblivion, where nought's  
remembered 'n where all's destroyed!  
My miracle (of Thoth's gift made)  
now nurtured, spread, practiced, displayed,  
'n flowered prose-poetic, laid  
for all to see: it's fruits engraved  
on shaped, immortal stone! With it,  
those thoughts echo on, infinite!

Amongst the sons  
of th'sons of men,  
Daughters Of Ma'at stand –  
the vulture perched;  
the cobra raised.

Th'first Lady Of The Two Lands, great-  
granddaughter of the Catfish King,  
was She Beloved By Neith – doth sing  
her serekh of her falcon fate!  
Consort; God's Wife; to God Herself –  
this trail, by Merit-Neith begun,  
was built 'n blazed (Prosper'ty! Health!)  
by She Of Beauty Of Th'Fa-Yum,  
whence Sobek sends his influence,  
cycles of Moon 'n Nile hence.

On cycles more, to Thoth's dynasts –  
the first bore th'one from whom this gold-  
gilt present comes. Her glory lasts!  
Tales of her reign shall e'er be told!  
No desecration shall succeed!  
Child Of Amun, Ma'at-Ka-Ra!  
By land; by water – comes your fleet  
to trade with places strange 'n far!  
Th'Red Chapel tells your Opet tale –  
Hat-Shep-Sut, pre-ordained t'prevail!

The sun has brought no pharaoh since  
she fell – Duat-bound – forth by day  
who was not man or boy. I may,  
however, now portend, evince:  
there is one who, out of th'sunfire  
that's set to sear 'n scorch the land,  
shall bear a crown suff'ring no higher,  
smiting all with her risen hand!  
Into th'life of the second son,  
the Beautiful One, now, Has Come...

## The Teachings Of Tiye

"Quick, Naffy!" "Ben-Ben – look!" They hushed;  
they whispered. Bangled-arm outstretched,  
now Nafereti-Iti yanked  
her sister, face enmeshed  
in mix of metred-motion of  
emotion piqued at th'sight she saw.  
Against a tree, stone-arch beside,  
Crown Prince Amun-Hotep leant; cried,  
his shattered visage raw.  
In awe, 'cross courtyard th'sisters stared,  
rapt; fazed; entranced; repulsed; ensnared.

They moved, as must they had, along  
t'ward those they were awaited by –  
those gathered women bound as one  
in quarters 'n confines.  
Their station – settled w'thin the womb;  
by th'uterine lining declared –  
was 'midst these royal, columned halls;  
painted amongst the palace walls  
they raced, muddied feet bare.  
As voices came on tides of sound,  
the sisters faltered, slowing down.

"I told you they'd've started!" Mut-  
Beneret punched her sister's arm.  
"Fuck off." Her sister grimaced. Then,  
reassessing the harm  
she'd caused to *her* sister's nerves, pushed  
her face into the other's neck.  
"Sorry." Said she. "S'okay." – Reply.  
Into each other's deeping eyes  
they looked. Emotions checked,  
they entered b'side the guilt-chair whence  
th'Great Wife addressed her audience.

Her brutal countenance  
held women (girls) in thrall; enrapt.  
Her hair sang unencumbered.  
Food plucked from an offered plate,  
she ate – indulgent.

Tiye:     *[After deliberate, extended chewing, she swallows]* And thus the Two Sisters choose to  
make their entrance – late, and with their heads held high above me.

*[Nafereti-Iti and Mut-Beneret hastily, clumsily bend at their waists.]*

Tiye:     *[Voice level;]* Stay that way a while. *[raised:]* Silence your jewellery!

*[Black-tinged tears hit heav'ly on the floor as the sisters grasp 'n hold.]*

Tiye: *[Chuckuhling with cruel authority, the God's Wife shifts her comfort]* Your bellies reach further than your breasts. And neither far enough! *[Addressing – picking date-flesh from her teeth – her audience of many]* Some of your stations may have been highly placed; some others low. Your families may think that their careers, their tribute – that these things hold sway. Now you are here, in front of me, vying for the semen of my second-born, destined for his role through heartbr *[She stops; recomposes her unrav'ling poise]* This is what matters: the allure of your eyes; the bowing of your head; the way your mind will shape to his; the store about your middle; your voice to champ'yun him; the blood that readies you for seeding.

*[Tiye clicks at the prostrate sisters as they struggle with discomfort. She points, demanding that they sit. Nafereti-Iti and Mut-Beneret find a place amongst the others – red-eyed; make-up disturbed; faces shamed. One's eyes show sadness; the other's fury.]*

Tiye: *[A mix of pride 'n resignation; thoughtfulness 'n rue]* Above all? What matters – to me; to him; to you; to Egypt – is th'womb within your broad'ning hips. My mother was a Singer Of Hathor... *[Hush-awed already, the audience remains enrapt; engaged]* She was Superintendent Of The Harem. I am the elder lady, now, with female issue of my own: Sit-Amun, Eldest Daughter Of The King; Iset, Henut-Ta-Neb – Ladies Of All Lands. These children are now queens! *[She gazes b'yond her crowd, her fingers finding tactile-trace along the surface of her skin below her navel, mother-made]* Even now... I feel there shall be another Lady Of The Palace.

*[Minutes go by in silence.]*

Those minutes, shorn of speech, yet still  
passed by in peals of subtle sound  
made by the women – girls no more –  
who sat upon the ground.  
The fidgeting, re-adjustments;  
the sound of skin on cloth on skin;  
the stifled crying of a child  
named *Woman*, brought here, left, defiled;  
the sound of thoughts within.  
Still sore was Naf'reti-Iti.  
A hand came t'rest upon her knee.

Into the blaze of blue-green clouds  
wisp-wand'ring 'round dark, pupil depths  
she fell, upon turning to see  
who owned this hand at rest.  
Mascara smudged with inept stroke,  
these eyes – with muscle-movement – made  
off'rings of understanding laced  
with open-friendship. Face-to-face,  
their skin with youth inlaid,  
sat two joined in their sex; their fate.  
The moon o'ersaw the Aten's wake.

Mouthing the words *Hey? It's alright.*,  
this calm compan'yun squeezed; released.  
With enigmatic aura, she  
turned back in poise; at peace.  
The other, if not soothed, at least  
distracted, pondered th'profile made  
beside her as this person turned:  
though young, fraught-forged with all she'd learned;  
composed 'n unafraid.  
She looked away. She watched the queen.  
Into her sister's arm, she leaned.

Tiye: [Gesturing broadly – out 'n up] This City Of The Sceptre – Prosperous crown of Khemet's upper reaches! – is not the only place you will reside. From The Dazz'ling Aten to Men-Nafer; whether Ipu or Abydos – your duties shall be performed by you as expected. You will not always be where I am, nor where He is. [Distant; lost] The Sun King sets, seeking Duat, piloting the Boat Of Millions Of Years... He will rise upon the world enduring, cut in stone forevermore unchanged, with the chaos of transition brought to heel beneath his risen mace!

[Tiye stands from the gilded chair. Her bearing – monumental; her face – honoured by age. Attendants, as if statuary at once animated, movemerge in synchronismic chorus, telepathic'ly tuned. The flickering of flax-made clothing; clinkering of clattered metal moved – in new formation standing, they stood ready.]

Tiye: [Direct; decisive] I will not speak to you anymore today. Undertake your nightly rituals. [A sigh, in facial-physicality and not in sound] Only then may you gossip, and share your secrets of seduction.

[A ripple of relieved 'n surprised mirth made its way through the gathered throng. Until Tiye had departed, they remained.]

### Three Daughters Of Isis

Iridescence –  
swift ‘n stormsome;  
th’pillared clouds crestfall  
‘n tumblerise  
ride wisply weaving  
abreast the horizon  
(Ranged infinite!)  
fall  
to depths of deepest  
colourlessness born  
of blackest night:  
the blue-green iris,  
‘pon the pupil,  
danced.

Kee-ah! Yes No, not K’yah! Kiya, this is my sister, Ben-Ben I told you that we’d Yes I did after we listened to the Great Royal Wife! She sat beside me on the other Exactly, thank you: we talked after, while you went Yes! Anyway, she was gone when you came back and I told you Gods, Ben-Ben, it doesn’t matter! Anyway, this is Kiya and she’s one of us now, cool?

### A Morning Routine

Three bodies bed-born to the limestone baths – Ipet Nesut: Here, The Women Of The King – as showers powered by the servants *Pour!* attending from the gazeless screened-side scored with linen towels tower’d in their waiting piles there placed against the stone-lined edge whilst natron soap strewn latherless upon th’expanse of the paleblackbrownburntolive-skin sketched red where the moving of the flaked flint-knife removed new tufts of black growing o’er the legs ‘n the labia; the mound above, ‘n the arms ‘n pits – now drying (hidden not to one another), oils from the east of the empire *Triumphant!* trickle from the edges of their sun-baked bowls that bear the moisturising mend to the dryharsh cleanse; their close-cropped head-hair ruffled with the rubbing of the scalp.

One goes into the cupboard-room, adjacent; perches ‘pon the seat ‘top the pillared bricks. She shitfarts, leaving there a mess for someone servile to cover up with sand.

For a tongue that is ill:  
bran, milk, and goose-fat to rinse the mouth!  
For sweeter breath:  
little balls of myrrh, frankincense, rush-nut, and cinnamon!

Hathor holds the polished-bronze on lotus stalks *Creation!* to show the daughters in imperfect gleam, their faces in an oval oracle of portable reflection *Kiya! You’ve had that see-face long enough!* then placed beneath their chairs, the ladies sat there in their loungely shawls, loose-lying luxury upon their forms, open to their rolls of fat – the tallow of the fauna formed in myrrh-pregnated cones queued up atop a side-table as their eyes become kohl-curtained/-ringed, the blackness of the upper ‘n the lower lids imploring of the Aten’s reach ‘n reaching boldly in a strong horizon from the corner to the hairline’s edge that tracks the turning of the curving ear (Mix malachite ‘n galena, their green-grey ‘bout the brows ‘n rims ‘n corners!):

Cat's eyes,  
a-morphing almond-esque –  
amuletic accentuation.

Perfumed by the east; bejewelled by the workings of the workshops working metal, stone, 'n glass to plaited filigree, grained-granulation, inlays into bangles, rings, pectorals – prized 'n natch'ul gold gained from the seams within quartz rock; recovered from alluvial deposits, yet the silver sings most highly praised – hoops, studs, 'n decorated faience discs adorn the ears of women of all ranks – recovered fashion brought from other lands.

Naffy, Ben-Ben – hahah look! hehuheh Obviously! I know how to wear them prop'ly Oh, look There No Yeah, there: it's damaged a bit See? The indent is You! Yes: look, you need to replace this! Yes, yes – fine, just go 'n getit done! No you shouldn't, Ben-Ben – she'll bring something better, something silver! Oh, Naffy's ready... hahaheh Okay! Let's go, then!

Clad in all but their wigs 'n their final fine'ry for to leave the place to play their part in the day returned, recycling o'er the earth – now choose the beeswax-resin that does hold the hundred-thousand hairs of other humans, tripartite in style, the ears exposed by bunches bunching up in their blackbrown masses (side 'n side) to push them out 'n forward; front hair bound by ribbon wrapping 'bout a disk of flattened weight suspended (side 'n side) to frame the beaut'yus beauties of the Royal Women's Quarters: daughters, daughter-wives, princesses, wives of Egypt-born, of Egypt-bought 'n -brought, concubines, nurses, servants – working, waiting, waiting, laying, lazing, moving, breaking fasts, preparing, washing, dressing, wiggling, playing, pondering Now here they stand, no longer shawled but elegantly clothed in pleated linen, folds unfolding 'bout their bodies, ready for the dazz'ling day!

### A Day At Leisure

Nafereti-Iti, her sister Mut-Beneret, and her newly-met (though close-become) companion Kiya lounged. They lazed. The three girls (if not women) lay about, lethargic. Picking fibres off the date-pit held between her right-side thumb 'n finger, the woman (if not girl) who will become a man as king let fall a sandal from her propped-up foot, pawed at as it was by kittens. One tripped atopupon its very own legs in a bid to bite her heel. Laughing in a softslight audibility, Nafereti-Iti lay her head against the wooden rest. The length of the hard-backed, hard-based couch cradled her restsome rear 'n back 'n shoulders. She threw the date-pit at her sister's head then reached down for another fruit. Fumbuhling in sightless, muscle-m'yander movement, with her skin sending its reports of the shapes, 'n shifts, 'n textures, she gave up; placed her hand on the linen lying 'pon her belly. A date-pit smacked her right upon the nose.

Mut-Beneret, her sister Nafereti-Iti, and her newly-met (though close-become) companion Kiya lazed. They lounged. The three girls (if not women) lay lethargic'ly about. Her back against the pillar-stone, her legs laid out, the woman (if not girl) who will fade, trailing her nieces, sat hunched for'd in a cuddle enveloping 'round a cat. The aging mother-felid fled not from the fond affection, her tall, sound-seeking ears tracking her young about the scene. Picking up the dish of Henna-paste she'd placed aside, Mut-Beneret returned to tracing words upon her arms. 'Glyphs gleamed in dancing life expressed in abstract extraction – she wrote the river in meand'ring flow from elbow's crease to pulsing wrist. She'd stripped her canvas of its status stones to dance uninterrupted; she'd placed the jewels playfully in an obelisk of fraught proportions. Splashcrashing on the river's surface came a picked-at pit in flight. Iteru soon returned it to its source.

Kiya lay about, lethargic, with her two new-met companions (though they'd become close already) – Naffy, Ben-Ben, cats, 'n her. They lounged; they lazed. The three girls (if not women) were



hard at leisure, leonine in their shamelessly poiseless rest a-whilest the sunfire peaked. Scratching at her itchy armpit, the woman (if not girl) who would be second til she vanished, re-propped her head up with her half-formed fist, slideslipping slightly on her sweat. The cones of perfume 'neath her wig aromatised the air, their myrrh-tinged tallow melting on her head. Trickling to her eyebrows, temples, cheeks, it raced to leap toward the stone, splatting aft' its freefall journey through the muggy air.

### A Practised Duty

In the House Of Neb-Ma'at-Ra,  
Splendour Of The Aten,  
on Iteru's western bank,  
where the fertile soil meets desert sand,  
are learnt the many duties  
of the vast female collection  
who fill the halls with children  
and with life!

The Sov'reign Ruler Of The Nine Bows,  
Possessor Of The Ma'at Of Ra –  
his palace is a city by a city!  
Wa-Set looks o'er; admires!  
Thirty-thousand metres square:  
apartments, halls, 'n chambers!  
Within, behind the bril'yunt white:  
vibrance of coloured form!  
Pottery abounds amidst  
furniture of finest craft!

The duties? These are many,  
whether highly prized or servile.  
Workshops that work flax, linen, hair;  
the teaching of the young.  
You'll find them here,  
their leisure paused,  
those women that you seek –  
Naffy, Ben-Ben, 'n Kiya can't  
abandon now their tasks to entertain!

### A Drunken Night

Kiya come on Shushhhahahahihah Owfuck What was that A what did it Shhh Ben-Ben help me ou  
Stop laughing 'n help me get my foot out the fucking basket Who is Kiy Shit she said she saw  
somebody coming Ow shhhhushh Move a bit over 'n give me the thing The wine obviously I am  
quiet shush as well Are you sure they have though No can you Yeah wait I want more 'n then you  
can What if we go that way instead of through there Shushh Yeah here shh Well I'd rather climb  
that than give up It's just a scaffold Ben it exists to be climbed on that is its purpose in this life  
Ben it's the most fucking torchlit spot in Wa-Set right now Come on Yes Hmmmm Yeah Yes I love  
you Okay love you I'm gonna go first I'll check before you two join Budge Kiy Oi Kiya Yeah I know

but move Whup Shit There Nope There I am Don't distract me cos I have to avoid the tools 'n stuff Hah it actually is pretty fucking dark Nothing Nope Okay I'm just gonna drop this bit No I can see where I need to land You nearly here Cool Kay then Ooffowffuck No no it's all good

**TUNK**

"Naffy?"

*ssssssffffaaaahhhhhh*

"Naff?"

*mmmmnnnnnoooffffhhhh*

"Hey – you good?"

As Kiya, agile as a monkey, dropped herself from the stable scaffold, Mut-Beneret – though concerned for her sister's fate – still slowly slid. Making her way upon her bottom, she traversed one of the narrow platforms.

"I hit my fucking fay"

"Shhh!"

"my fucking face on something!"

Kiya took the face of her friend in her hand 'n raised it, squinting hard. Flick-flickering, the pockets of the torch-flame light fell fleetingly over them both, lighting up the visage of the lioness, left eye now obscured by purpled-black.

"Gods..." (She trailed her shock into a gig'ling fit.) "You have a massive black eye!"

"Help please!"

Kiya kissed the nose on Nafereti-Iti's face, then backed up to the scaffold so their number three could shuffle, without grace, down to the floor.

A sister groaned 'n dug her head into another's neck; a sister comforted – though laughing.

"You look like you headbutted a hippo."

"Shut the fuck up."

"The Most Select Of Places..." The silhouette of Kiya, as she gazed on painted stone, spoke wonder to the vast, re-shapen earth. Her eyesight met the gloom 'n gathered form 'n gathered space, taking in what light rebounded near.

Nursing yet her damaged eye with self-pitying groans, Nafereti-Iti traced her fingers over hieroglyphs.

"Hey – can you still see out of it?" Said Mut-Beneret.

"Yeah, that's fine. It's just the whole... all the rest of it. Around." Said Nafereti-Iti.

"Amun must be most displeased with you for finding us a sneak-way in." Said Kiya.

"Not sure he cares too much about us." Said Mut-Beneret.

"Why?" Said Kiya.

"Cos we haven't got willies." Said Nafereti-Iti.

"Ah." Said Kiya. "We do make the ones with willies, though."

"We're all gonna get black eyes courtesy of the gods if we keep walking through the temple that we're not supposed to be in talking about willies." Said Mut-Beneret.

'Neath th'starlight of the open air  
they wondered, wand'ring, through the streets  
of the complex, weaving out; in –  
soft steps on exposed feet.  
Passing under pylons, between  
stalks of stone-papyrus, upon  
sand that sees cartouches written  
into rock; goose-navigation  
'cross th'Sacred Lake; along

alleys bordered by obelisks:  
thus went these Daughters Of Isis.

Greater than life – the size of those  
whom they had seen in flesh sketched high,  
consorting with the pantheon,  
'comp'nied by concubines,  
servants servile, felines felid.  
Avoidant of security,  
through arch-topped entrances the three  
came through in huddles gig-uh-ly,  
losing their way amid  
the shrines, the storerooms, quarters, halls...  
"Trespassing, seeking oracle."

The girls froze.

"Not even The Mighty Bull, Arisen In Wa-Set, comes into Ipet-Isu when he pleases. And yet" (The voice spat granularity, as if the Giza Sphinx addressed them.) "here you walk – at leisure; drunk."

They looked at each other 'n at corners black, unable to see any form appearing.

"Who" (The voice came at them: this way; that way; thence...) "do you think you are?"

Before Mut-Beneret could get out words to match the prostrate posture she'd shrunk into, two faceless men – stomachs exposed; chests under gilt pectorals; kilted – emerged from the amorphous black carrying together ('pon their shoulders borne) a chair lashed to gold-ended poles. At front; at back – the men stopped still in the centre of the light-flecked room, vacated by the women as they backed away, staring at the figure carried in.

Silver, plated with the shapen-gold o'erlaid, stood Amun-Ra. Crowned, topped with two tall feathers 'breast the Sun Disk, stood the statue. His pleated kilt moved with the leg that stepped a stride toward them, passing not the Was Sceptre he held out, rooted in the ground. No taller than the span of sev'ral palms, he seemed nought but colossal.

"Answer!"

Emitted from all around 'n nowhere – still the voice, cowing into cowering the three who couldn't comprehend the question.

Kiya peered at the statue.

"We're Ladies Of The Ipet-Nesut."

"Correct. Now: ask."

A silence.

"Will" (Mut-Beneret placed a hand in Kiya's as she spoke.) "the god answer?"

And the god moved forward emphatic'ly.

The sudden movement of the men made both jump back as they stamp-stepped forward once. Nafereti-Iti looked on, brow furrowed.

The men stepped back to where they'd been before.

Moods altered; eyes lit; fear forgot – the two together muttered. Then:

Kiya – "Will we be consorts of the king?"

And the god moved forward emphatic'ly; returned.

Mut-Beneret – "Will we be consorts of *this* king?"

And the god moved backward emphatic'ly; returned.

Kiya – "Will I be as great as Lady Tiye?"

And the god moved backward emphatic'ly; returned.

Mut-Beneret – "Will we bear children unto Khemet?"

And the god moved forward emphatic'ly; returned.

Prowling cautiously behind/beside the vocal two, the silent third stopped, stared, 'n asked a question:

"What will I become?"

And the god remained, unmoving.

Exchanged looks across the flit-flicker fire of the light within the gloom.

"Speak!" (Nafereti-Iti threw her voice at every wall 'n corner.) "Come on... Enough of the Yes 'n No. Tell us who we are."

And the god remained, unmoving.

On the gilded, patterned, wooden chair Amun-Ra stood still, striding. Then, as the girls considered slipping away fast:

"You, with the missing eye."

In arrogance yet shaken:

"Yes?"

"Hear this: one of you will reach the heights of favour and then vanish."

Looks exchanged in light-torn gloom.

"One of you will trail behind, waiting on the others' children."

Standing in a line of three, their hands in hands, awaiting more.

"One of you will bear the sun, eclipsed by men of pow'r. Your name and visage rise to last b'yond all."

The men moved – sudden – to turn around 'n disappeared into the darkness.

No voice came for the three as they slipped away.

## The Dialogue Of Shu & Tefnut

My love,  
they court as we two –  
twin lions under Ra!  
My Lady Of The Flame,  
you Tongue Of Ptah:

do you see me in him;  
see you in her?

Tefnut,  
the Left Eye 'N The Right Of Ra,  
Moisture Of The Purest Waters –  
you bear the ankh  
'n she'll bear daughters!

A fierce-some pride,  
you lionesses!

My Lover-Sister,  
watch as Time flows,  
reflecting our love  
to us on its bright surface!  
Ne'er enough...

I'd happ'ly watch 'n re-watch  
as they fall!

My love,  
my brother Emptiness –  
she's fated for my flat-top crown!  
You Who Holds Nut Up;  
Who Holds Geb Down:

he'll bring the sun to life  
with you.

Oh Shu,  
you pacify with cool-calm air,  
the fog 'n clouds your bones –  
you bring Duality!  
Apep o'erthrown,

you'll guide him h'rizonward,  
crayduhling the Aten.

I'll watch with you;  
embrace-entwined we'll be –  
atmospheric!  
Our ankhs enjoined,  
t'gether we'll sit!

Amun-Hotep 'n Nafereti-Iti:  
meet, merge, 'n rise!

Nekh-Bet, clad in supreme robe of feathers –  
thus seemed Lady Tiye in her homage dress,  
bringing forth new women. Amun-Hotep  
sat, all decorated in Khemet's best.  
Straightening from his slouchful posture at  
the entrance of his mother, th' Crown Prince bowed  
nobly from his neck to her world-renown.  
Sev'ral of the ladies b'hind her stood cowed.  
"Amun-Hotep, flame of the Dazz'ling Sun,  
blazing light through Shu 'pon your father's beam,  
here from the Quarters Of The Women come  
menstruating girls." He caught now the gleam  
of rageous, power-passion purpose cast  
by th'one with bruising faint 'neath make-up's mask.

Lucid were the depths within iris-clouds,  
surge-swirling magellanic, locked on him –  
his own impassioned eyes... No other's met  
more than momentarily; gazes thin  
though lovely, servile, 'n with sex-imbued.  
Of course, he knew he need not ever choose  
as all were his. His sister b'side him stood:  
Henut-Ta-Neb, Of Horus In His Heart  
A Consort. Forearms 'gainst the gilded wood;  
hands hung o'er his chest like jewel-painted art –  
she spoke into his ear: "Flame draws us in,  
its pow'r 'n its heat 'n its light the thing  
compelful; magnetismic! Yet t'us brings  
a scorching pain to plague mesmerised kings..."

And yet, my love,  
another stands,  
catching still his eye!  
Kiya – confidence a-grown;  
influence nigh –

steals half his stirring blood;  
steals half his mind.

The other woman,  
to be greatly loved,  
loves her/wants him/knows not  
that where her name  
shall adorn rock

will be carved o'er; replaced –  
a first-born girl.

Look now,  
columns bedecked with  
wooden lotus flow'rs  
are host to walks  
'n talked-'way hours –

the prince 'n queen  
discuss his cattle.

Turquoise  
from the mines of Sinai;  
collars gold 'n beaded belts –  
readied for the festive eve!  
Coned-perfume melts!

The hour of retiring comes.  
A danceful night...

Shake, percussive beads of the menat chain!  
*Sehsheshat! Sehsheshat!* – rattuhling chant!  
Come, Golden Goddess, the singers reach out:  
th'One Who's Beautiful, will you grace us; dance?  
Linens feathered; sequined; gold over-lain!  
Flashing in transparency swirled about!  
Amulets 'n discs onto hair attached  
swing amongst fresh flow'rs – colourful repast!  
The influence of empire: pierced ears!  
Through th'lobes of all – elaborate designs!  
Of date 'n pomegranate tell the wines!  
Voluminous hair framing faces smeared  
with sweat-swept ochre-red 'n black eye-kohl!  
Lily-scent 'n henna 'pon th'young 'n old!

Bes upon the breasts 'n the thighs 'n trunk  
of afrodeeshyac, tattooed dancers set  
on graceful legs of girth 'n hips of breadth!  
Allure exuded; into all now sunk!  
Amun Is Satisfied (Ironical name  
in retrospect!) takes 'to his lap a child  
who's fertile – thus, to him, an open field  
for harrowing at leisure; taming th'wild  
of any/all. The un-torn skin will yield.  
She'll weep – her menstruation early. Tough!  
Panicked among adults out of control!  
Terrified... Cast aside – he's felt enough.  
He looks to her 'n her 'n summons both.



Apart from here they'll go with him in hope.

Sweaty semen pools,  
hard-dries;  
servants place towels.  
Kiya watches th'flight  
of painted water-fowl.

Her hand lies  
on the other's abdomen.

My love,  
they shall be only two –  
You 'n I! –  
once the Aten's  
claimed the sky.

In private chambers,  
sketched o'er with nature,  
they indulge him –  
heir to the Black Land  
'n the gold within.

Leaking; dribbling out his brand,  
they two lie naked.

Nafereti-Iti,  
her hand 'gainst Kiya's face,  
tests her tender soreness,  
her heart now slowing  
back to rest.

Anointed, then!  
Though not she alone.

I shall take your words.  
She'll have his soul.

## The Words Of Amun-Hotep(s)

The beginning of the words of Amun-Hotep, Crown Prince, King's True Son, Son Of Ra, High Priest Of Ptah In Ineb-Hedj, Sem Priest Of Ptah, Overseer Of The Priests Of Upper & Lower Egypt, Acolyte Of Ra-Horakhty (Who Rejoices In His Horizon, In His Aspect Of The Light Which Is In The Aten), at the setting of the Dazz'ling Sun, Amun-Hotep, Neb-Ma'at-Ra, Heir Of Ra, Beloved Of Amun, Majesty Of Horus, whose hand – broad; black – sprawls out to grasp the dusk about the western desert.

"My Father-King now culminates  
in transformation bright.  
Ruler Of The Nine Bows, Sov'reign...  
This place? His city sits within  
Wa-Set's exub'rant light!  
Of all halls in which we were raised up 'cross th'land,  
this palace is the jewel 'pon a jewel-rich hand!

E'en now the Son Of Hapu rests –  
your closest advisor –  
in his grand, rock-cut tomb waiting  
for his friend, leader, 'n Sun-King  
to rule b'yond th'reeds so pure...  
*Let my soul come t'me from wherever it is!*  
*May my wrapped body be never to perish!*

This spell over my brother's ba  
we placed – well, now he'll see  
his father with the Aten merged!  
His hands upon his b'loved cat's fur,  
he awaits royally!  
Our mother 'n myself take Khemet's expanse  
unto us, under whom it shall sing 'n dance!

Thutmose 'n I – to you we looked  
to know our history.  
Broad-browed 'n -nosed – you told us how  
our grandfather by th'Sphinx sat down;  
he drifted into dreams...  
The sun at its height – between the great god's paws  
t'was oraclised to him: My succession's yours!

*Harmachis-Khepri-Ra-Atum*  
*thus spoke to our bloodline!*  
*Upstart priests of Ipet-Isu*  
*returned to grovelling by you,*  
*the solar-king divine!*  
*Now t'was Ra of the north in ascendancy,*  
*the shebyu-collar 'pon our breasts: majesty!*

You told us of our kingdom auld:  
*Pow'r unassailable!*  
*The infallibility of*  
*our station at the apex was*  
*sun-soaked in flame so full*  
*of our godhood immortal! But e'er since then?*  
*The arrogance of wealthy, religious men...*

The Son Of Hapu, he whose name's  
that name that we three share,  
placed his hand 'pon your stone-strong arm:  
*My princes, the insid'yus harm*  
*our land was forced to bear*  
*makes your father a-flame. T'was a woman's rule*  
*that allowed this poison to enact its cruel*

*designs throughout this fertile realm.*  
*Your father will transform*  
*that which his father sparked 'to life*  
*when, with your mother th'Great Roy'l Wife,*  
*breaks a soon-coming morn'*  
*with a new jubilee, sun disk o'er his head!*  
*From then on your father will be in its stead!*

As you showed us the Apis Bull –  
its slaughter; burial –  
who housed Ptah's spirit, Panther-clad  
my brother read that which he had  
mem'ried – impeccable!  
We both stood, father; watched. Incantation loud!  
You 'n I, father, watched, almost painf'ly proud...

As I speak to you; speak to him –  
father, you/he now fades...  
Be the Aten above me, now.  
With sunfire-gold his reign resounds!  
Resounded. Lament – raise....  
Now to me does it fall to stoke th'fire 'n flame,  
t'which I'm heir, to make king absolute again!"

The end of the words of Amun-Hotep, Heir Of Ra, Beloved Of Amun, Aten's Son, King Of Upper & Lower Egypt.

## Long Live The Elevated Woman

Collector Of Souls,  
He Who Harnesses The Spirits,  
Th'One Who Gives Ka –  
Neheb-Kau,  
serpent emerged from earth,  
calmed by Atum,  
in your festival this name we give  
for you to raise;  
for you to examine;  
for you to justify!  
This good name is in glor'yus gold  
laden with lapis-stone:  
Neb-Ma'at-Ra Amun-Hotep!

The Dazz'ling Aten now  
becomes Osiris.

His emaciated body – starved of its prosperity; his mouth diseased; wasted away in stupor – stuffed, its offal gone, 'n wrapped in linen layered over treasures trapped within the wrappings (rings, amulets, 'n bracelets bearing spells of magic auld), lies now atop the sled within the House Of Rest, the Ways near-ready, as the men attach the oxen – standing patient; hides of white – unto the bier bearing th'beloved gone whilst priests prepare with jugs of sour milk to bless the road the proud procession waits to take in wakeful vigil as the banshees pour sandsorrow o'er their grief-dishevelled heads, their knees rent by the ragged ground afore 'n aft 'n all about the slew of wives 'n daughter-wives 'n daughters walking now that th'oxen draw the sled; the bier by white oxen is pulled across the milk-anointed ground as female priests in decoration sing their lament-prayerful-hymns that carry over all, beyond, 'n far, 'n further than the scores of porters carrying tall lotus plants, boxes of flow'rs, food, furniture, accessories of unlimited wealth in their train behind the central few accomp'nying the dead.

The Great God's Wife 'n her Risen Son: they walked westward, hand-in-hand.

I stand here,  
inheriting

*You stand 'n shed  
your linen robe,*

the brute, far-bordered  
might

*your scented body  
bared to me*

of trade  
'n conquest –

*as you lay your  
self upon your back*

total; eternal!

*for the rites of rapine,  
rapturous release!*

Bakh-Et-Amun in the arms of the wet-nurse entourage to Tiye – a new-born born to the failing fire at the sett'ling dusk of change – peeks, peering from her shadely coverings, at the carved rock ahead, her fam'lee going forth by day unto the darkness of a necrosirispulent, k'leidoscopic gloom, torchflame now tearing at the lightless black so far beyond the reach of the sunbeams, crashed 'n broken 'bout the entrance-way whence were conducted (with the coffin raised) the restorative rites of bringing speech 'n sight 'n hearing to the dead – The Sem-Priest purify you! All offerings performed! Your mouth now opened 'n your limbs 'n bones made present by the spells announced! – who wept in his heart at the re-enacted killing of the Foremost Of Westerners, with Set 'n Horus duelling, before being taken down the steep tomb steps, eastward 'long the corridor.

Winding sheets of golden foil, drenched in resin – the mummy of the man become the sun.

I wear the leopard's hide,  
as I did at th'burial,

*You are no longer torn  
as I make claim*

with crook 'n flail of bronze,  
blue-glass, obsidian, 'n gold

*over your unlimited  
fertility*

in my two hands,  
shepherding all Egypt –

*that boasts of deep 'n  
unused soil,*

my formidable might  
moves livestock!

*absorbent to the  
seeds now sown!*

Beyond the well-shaft (where the chamber of the Royal Ka below awaits the Waters Of Infinity; where lies the underworld), lamps lit a-light the pillared hall in its undecorated state to match the plain, white robes of th'mourners, wearing headbands in their grief, 'n them among travel the Djeryt women, winged as searching kites, to seek their brother's scattered form 'n swoop about the coffin as it sees the antechamber on its way into the final hall with its six-columned, eastward watch amidst the beauty of the Amduat that sings of th'underworld in its twelve-hour tale of Ra's bright apotheosis b'yond the depths of monstrous night – abounding in renewal never-ending 'n the form of Amun-Hotep as he greets the gods, his vital spirit near, the tomb is furnished with resplendency 'n treasures practical as over, then, the Dazz'ling Aten now is lain the stone-made lid.

A wrist-guard of red leather – Bane Of Lions 'N Wild Bulls! – lies beside a lock of prince's hair.

I bear the  
Two Powerful Ones –

*You bear my claim  
on wombward,*

Sekhemty, of the  
White Hedjet 'n Red Deshret –

*as t'ward your horns  
uterine do you deliver*

as upon my throne  
I place; am placed:

*your promised egg to me –  
in you we meet*

Nafer-Kheperu-Ra  
Amun-Hotep!

*to lift our Merit-Aten  
from the void!*

The king is dead;  
long live the king.  
The elevated woman  
runs free along the riverbank  
at dawn.