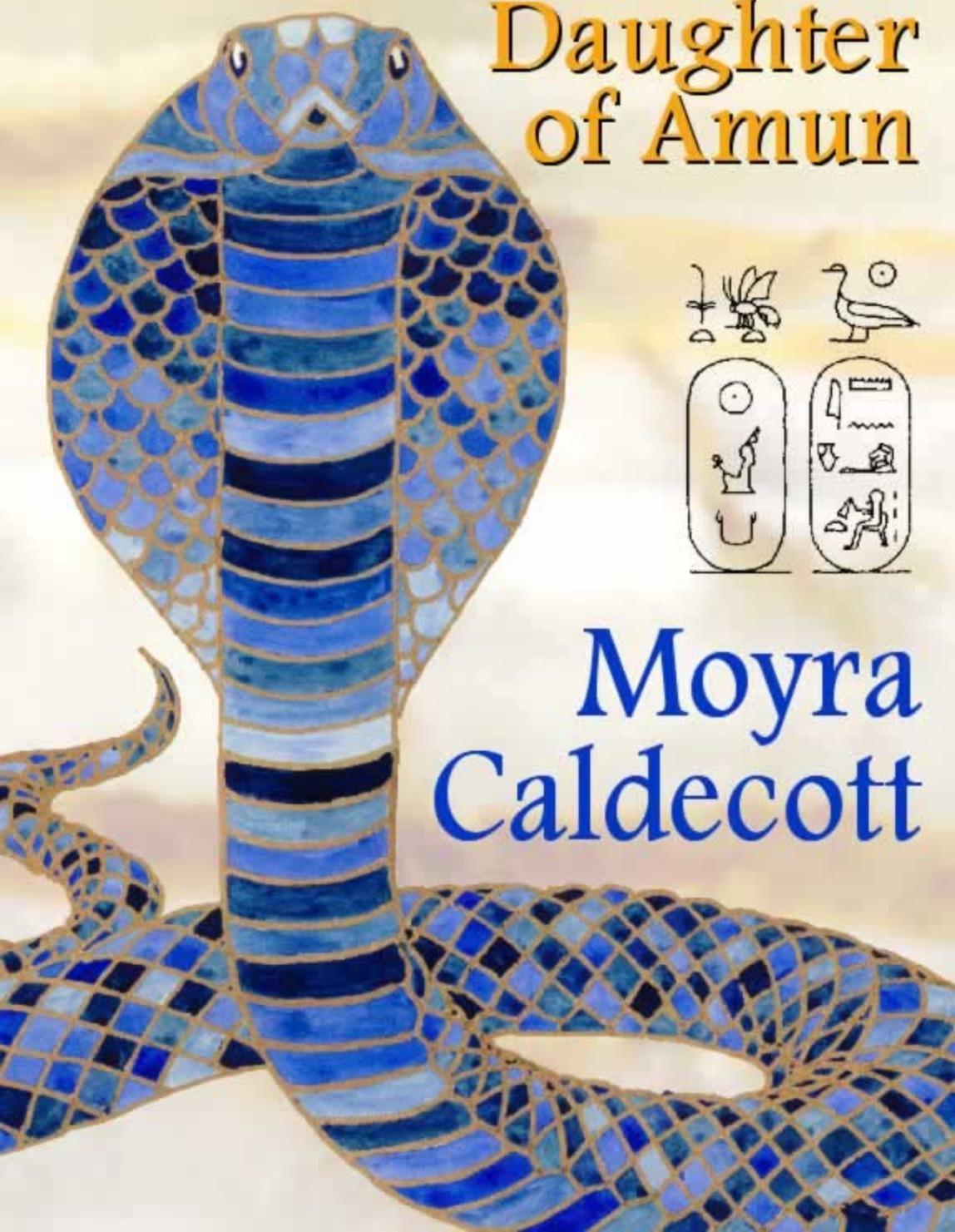


Hatshepsut

Daughter
of Amun



Moyra
Caldecott

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“...May you permit me to reach the eternal sky, the country of the favoured; may I join with the august and noble spirits of the realms of the dead; may I ascend with them to see your beauty...”

*From Spell 15,
The Ancient Egyptian Book
of the Dead*

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INTRODUCTION

The ancient Egyptian belief system appears very confusing to us if we examine it with minds that have been conditioned to expect rational and scientific explanations for everything. But those of us who are aware that a great deal happens that is not amenable to rational and scientific explanation, have no problem in accepting the ancient Egyptian myths, not as fantasy, but as a different way of looking at reality — a way that shows up certain subtleties and complexities that we had not noticed before.

The many gods of the Egyptian pantheon are not to be regarded literally as jackal-headed, ibis-headed, ram-headed — no more than Christians are to take it literally that Christ is a lamb and the Holy Ghost is a dove.

Most people at some point in their lives feel that they have been helped by an invisible someone, and if they don't immediately dismiss the experience as not

having really happened, they will acknowledge their helper by a name drawn from their culture — St. Francis, Buddha, the angel Gabriel or, if they are ancient Egyptian, Ra, Djehuti or Ptah. They will also ponder about a life after the death of the body, about that mysterious part of them that has always felt more real to them than their body. Because we have only hints and clues, but no hard and fast facts about the other world, each culture uses its own familiar images to describe it.

The ancient Egyptians saw the Duat, or other world, in images of rivers, of boats, of fields, of marshes, of deserts, and, as in their own temples, chambers and halls only entered with difficulty through heavily guarded doors. Osiris ruled as king over this world, seated in his great hall on his throne, receiving petitions and passing judgements. A giant pair of scales weighed the heart of the deceased against the feather of truth.

They saw the body as only one aspect of the living being. They believed there were at least nine aspects in all, separating out at death. Some lingered on earth if the funerary rituals and spells were performed correctly, to pass invisibly in and out of the tomb, still taking an active part in the life of the world, helping their petitioners if required to do so, and enjoying the freedom to wander where and when they pleased. Others faced the tests and trials of the Duat and came at last, if “justified” or “true of voice”, to live in a kind

of heaven, much like this world, but better. Others passed on to even higher realms, to the stars and beyond. Which of these many parts of the individual could and would come back to earth, reincarnated, to live again in the flesh but in a different body in a different time and place, is never made clear — but that this could and did happen was part of the belief system. Many a pharaoh had “Repeater of Births” among his many titles.

An extraordinary number of people alive today believe that they once lived in ancient Egypt. The civilisation intrigues and fascinates us. The magnificence of the ruins left to us on either side of the Nile, of the art and the funerary treasures now residing in our museums, of the complex and profound mystic truths revealed to us since their hieroglyphs have been deciphered, has much to teach us. But more and more people find that intellectual interest alone cannot account for their attachment, their obsession, with a particular place and time in such a distant past. Usually these people find that any mention of anything to do with the reign of a particular pharaoh, any glimpse of a particular object from that era, gives them a shiver down the spine, almost a thrill of recognition.

A belief in reincarnation is very old and very widespread. Many civilisations past and present have held faith in it without question. An increasing number of people these days use the word “karma” from the Hindu religion, meaning the working out in a present

life of some problem from a past life. The ancient Celts believed so absolutely in it that debts from one life could be paid off in another. Others, like the Christians and the Jews, have edited out the belief from the main body of dogma, but it still survives in isolated pockets of esoteric teaching.

For a long time the female pharaoh Hatshepsut has haunted me as she has haunted others. Her mortuary temple at Deir el Bahri in the western cliffs opposite modern Luxor, built to keep her memory alive forever, was defaced shortly after her death, her name obliterated and her images broken up or usurped by other pharaohs. No mortuary priests were appointed to perpetuate her cult and see that her “ka” was comfortable and nourished. In the king lists of Abydos her name is omitted as though she had never existed. Yet archaeologists have found references to her that escaped the chisels of her successor and the vandalism of time, and have built up a fairly full picture of her life.

In this novel I have used what the Egyptologists have been able to discover about her, and the texts that she herself had inscribed on obelisks and temple walls. But I have also drawn on clues and hints I have received by less orthodox means. In the end I hope the picture I have drawn of Hatshepsut will have enough of history to satisfy those who want history, and enough of the “other” to make her story relevant to those who are experiencing their own complex and difficult journey through many realms and many lives.

Those who have read my other novels, *Guardians of the Tall Stones* and *The Silver Vortex*, will be pleased to recognise Deva, daughter of Kyra, who set off from Bronze Age Britain to train as a priestess in Egypt, the land of her father. In this book she takes her ancient name Anhai.

CHAPTER 1

Taking Control

The boy, Men-kheper-Ra, looking small and nervous, was seated on his huge throne, almost dwarfed by it. The red crown of the Northern Territories and the white crown of the Southern, fitted together, were balanced precariously on his head. Usually they fitted snugly, but the new Master of the Royal Vestments, recently appointed by Hatshepsut, claimed that he was growing so rapidly that a larger crown was called for. This was the first time he had worn it. It was too large, too uncomfortable, and made him look ridiculous.

Hatshepsut was not yet on the other throne, and this made him uneasy. The hall was filling up with the nobles and officials. His personal attendants, those whom Hatshepsut had not replaced recently, seemed nervous too and clustered as close as they could to each other and to the stepped stone mound on which the two thrones were mounted. Why had she not joined

him? Was she ill? Was he going to have to manage this whole ceremonial occasion by himself? Sweat began to trickle down his forehead. He couldn't wipe it away because already the insignia of kingship were in place and he dared not move. The crook and flail, almost too heavy for him, had to be held at just the right angle across his chest.

The foreign princes were entering now to take their places in the great hall. He tried to remember the words he had been taught to say on such occasions. He had attended many before, but Hatshepsut had always presided and his bored mind had been free to wander where it willed.

He heard a faint tinkle and jangle to one side of him and managed to move his eyes without moving his head, wondering if it were the arrival of his step-mother-aunt at last, but from the wrong direction. It was his mother, Ast, heavily overdressed in tasteless jewellery, kept just out of whisper range by protocol, trying to get nearer him to tell him not to fidget.

The most important thing in Men-kheper-Ra's life at this moment was to keep still and somehow ignore the sweat drops that were setting up an itch as they moved down his face.

Ast, satisfied that her son was now as motionless as a statue, turned her attention back to the scene before her. Light was shafting down from the high slit windows, picking out in gleams and shimmers the gold collars of the nobles and the barbaric splendours of the

foreign princes. There was a continual flow of movement as each individual or group entered the hall, prostrated themselves before the child-king, and then found their correct place to stand. All eyes alternated between the empty throne and the door through which the Regent was expected to come.

Ast became more and more uneasy. She noticed that behind the colonnade that surrounded the throne chamber there seemed to be more royal guards than usual. She narrowed her eyes and strained to see who was who in the crowds. Men-kheper-Ra's own guards were not present. Why? Men-kheper-Ra's own advisors, tutors, secretaries, scribes, were not present. Why? And only a handful of his personal attendants. Suddenly Ast was very frightened indeed and wondered if her son was about to be assassinated. But surely not in front of all these foreign princes? Whatever the internal troubles of Egypt, the Pharaoh must always appear strong, authoritative, invincible to outsiders.

At last, when the suspense was becoming unbearable and the foreign princes had been kept waiting almost to the point of insult, a fanfare of trumpets announced the arrival of Hatshepsut.

In the total silence that followed the blast, she strode in with her entourage of favourite noblemen following behind.

Stunned, the crowd momentarily forgot to fall to the ground. Every eye was opened wide, every throat expelled a gasp.

The female Regent of the Two Lands was dressed as a male king, with ceremonial beard, short kilt, bare chest, royal collar and bracelets — and double crown.

Men-kheper-Ra jerked with surprise and his own crown, which Hatshepsut had arranged would be too big for him, lolled forward rakishly, but did not fall. Ast bit her lip with rage. “What a spectacle!” she thought. She had always hated Hatshepsut and now she was almost pleased the woman was making a fool of herself. Surely she would be disgraced by this, and Men-kheper-Ra called to rule alone.

But no one was protesting. No one was laughing. Each and every one was bowing to the ground as though a real pharaoh were striding through the hall.

Behind her entourage came eight priests of Amun, carrying the holy barque mounted on cedar wood poles upon their shoulders — the golden boat containing the curtained shrine of Amun.

This in itself was unusual. This was a civil occasion, and the god did not usually come to the throne room when civil matters were being conducted.

Hatshepsut mounted the steps to the throne regally, but did not sit down. She turned and stood facing the crowd.

The barque of Amun was brought to rest before her, but not lowered to the floor.

She did not give the signal for the crowd to rise, but there was scarcely a person in the hall who did not raise his or her head enough to stare, fascinated.

Hatshepsut gazed straight ahead at the curtained shrine.

Suddenly three huge golden falcons appeared, apparently from nowhere, and began to circle the hall. Round and round they went, seven times, their wings raising such a wind that every garment and wig and lock of hair began to flutter. The curtain in front of the shrine was blown aside, and from within a beam of light blazed out directly onto the body of Hatshepsut. It was as though she were transformed into gold, her slight figure expanded to tower over them. The three falcons one by one alighted on the back of her throne, also illuminated by the brilliant and eerie light. A voice boomed out. It did not seem to come from anyone in the hall, not even from the shrine. It was in the air above them, vibrating like a mighty drum-roll in their hearts.

This is my chosen one. This is the King who will return the Two Lands to my feet.

Worship him, you princes, you noblemen, you farmers, servants and slaves. Write his name and his mighty deeds on everlasting stone, you scribes. Cover him with my breath of incense, you priests. Hatshepsut. Maat-ka-Ra. Horus of Pure Gold. Sovereign of the Two Lands. King of North and South. Son of the Sun. Beloved Daughter of Amun. Living in Splendour Forever.

Men-kheper-Ra's mouth was open. What did this mean?

The High Priest of Amun, who had all this while been waiting beside the golden barque, now stepped forward and took the crook and flail from the boy's nerveless fingers and placed them in the firm and confident hands of Hatshepsut, the man-woman standing in golden light.

"Rise," the mysterious voice continued. "*Sing the praises of your King.*"

Trumpets sounded again, almost drowning the sound of scuffed feet as hundreds rose to stand bemused before the magnificent luminous figure in front of the throne. Lines of chantresses from the Temple of Hathor, shaking sistrums, came dancing into the hall, leading the people in praise songs for the new Pharaoh. In the excitement of the moment no one doubted that Horus, the Falcon god, himself had given her his blessing. In triple manifestation he spread his wings and circled above her head before he disappeared as mysteriously as he had come.

Many in that moment saw her as sole male King, and swore allegiance to her in their hearts, forgetting Men-kheper-Ra completely. The foreign princes looked at each other surreptitiously, wondering how this turn of events would affect their lives and the relationships of their countries with Egypt. Would a woman keep such a tight rein on them? Would they be safer from Egyptian aggression? Many of them had not seen her

before, and standing as she did now in that blaze of uncanny light, she seemed a force to be reckoned with. She might well be stronger alone than she had been as Regent for that boy. They looked at the faces of the men who now gathered round her at the foot of the throne steps, at the faces of the priests who carried the shrine, and most of all at the face of Hapuseneb, the First Prophet of Amun, who had actually placed the crook and flail in her hands. They were strong faces.

Men-kheper-Ra felt foolish and frightened. What was to become of him? He turned to his mother in despair. As his eyes met hers, she forgot the danger they were in, and like an angry lioness springing to the defence of her cub, she stepped forward and accosted Hatshepsut.

“What about my son? He is the chosen heir of Aa-kheper-en-Ra!”

“Step back, woman,” growled one of the guards who had silently materialised beside Hatshepsut, pointing his spear at her breast.

“Am I to be spoken to thus,” Ast said haughtily, “the mother of the King?”

“Mother of the heir,” Hatshepsut corrected her clearly and distinctly. “The son of Aa-kheper-en-Ra will rule at the side of my Majesty when he is a man.”

Certain of Hatshepsut’s advisors had counselled that it would be safer for her to have Men-kheper-Ra put to death. But she had refused.

Ast hesitated. She was alone. She could feel the

whole mood of the crowd was for Hatshepsut, and everyone present in that hall that day had status and power. Hatshepsut had chosen the moment of her usurpation cunningly and well. She had already proved to be a popular and able regent, so now her claim for greater power could not easily be faulted — let alone the effect of the supernatural dramatics! But it was unnatural, against the laws of Maat, that a woman should become a man. Surely they must see that?

Ast looked around. The admiration and awe on every face was evident. She and her son seemed an absurd alternative to that magnificent golden being standing in the god's light.

Well, she and her son were alive. This was Hatshepsut's moment. Theirs would come.

She stepped back and muttered irritably to Menkheper-Ra, as she passed him, that he should shut his mouth and straighten his shoulders.

The balance of power had suddenly and dramatically changed. From being a temporary regent for a young king, Hatshepsut had become a full ruling pharaoh with Menkheper-Ra in the role of junior partner who might or might not become full pharaoh one day. Announcements to this effect were made throughout the Two Lands so that no one, however remote from Waset, could be unaware of it.

CHAPTER 2

Childhood

When had it all started, this determination to be Pharaoh?

Hatshepsut remembered looking at her great-great-grandmother, the dowager Queen Aah-hetep, sitting in the shade of a sycamore tree. How could anyone be so old? Her eyes were as bright as beads, still taking everything in, her skin folded into a thousand wrinkles, papyrus thin over the stick-like body. She had buried her husband, Se-quen-en-Ra, long, long ago. She had buried three pharaoh sons and her famous daughter, Aah-mes Nefertari, now worshipped as a goddess. She had buried her grandson, Tcheser-ka-Ra. Now she watched over the household of her great granddaughter, Aah-mes. There was no longer a tooth in her head, and her mouth was a thin, sunken line in the lower part of her face, but her tongue was still sharp enough to make everyone jump to do her bidding and cower

when they drew her displeasure. Hatshepsut was at once frightened of her and fascinated by her. If the old creature was in a good mood she would sometimes reminisce aloud, whether anyone was there to listen or not. At five years old Hatshepsut was shrewd enough to sense that what her great-great-grandmother said was worth listening to. It was from her she got the taste for power and intrigue.

Aah-hetep had been more than her husband's queen. She had been a powerful and influential woman and her daughter, Aah-mes Nefertari, had been another. The child Hatshepsut got the impression the old lady didn't think much of her great-granddaughter, the present Queen, because she let her husband, Aakheper-ka-Ra — who wasn't even of the pure royal bloodline, but born of the King by the slave, Senseneb — do all the ruling. The beautiful, elegant Aah-mes seemed always to have some secret that kept her thoughts away from them all. She performed her duties admirably and no one could have faulted her, but she didn't seem really to care what happened outside the walls of her palace. Hatshepsut listened to many a grumble from the old lady that her father wasn't pure enough in blood to rule alone as Divine King, and, although the child loved him dearly, sometimes she felt ashamed of this fact about his birth and confused that it was he with whom she felt happiest.

Hatshepsut shivered, remembering how she had longed for her mother's love.

Once, she saw the Queen, “the God’s Great Wife”, “Lady of the Two Lands”, “Beloved of Amun”, Aah-mes, pacing the cool tiles of the courtyard slowly, evenly, her face composed, her gaze turned inward. And Hatshepsut wanted to call out to her, but she was afraid. Where had the soul of her mother gone? Her form was there — soft muslin flowing around thigh and breast, lifting and stirring in the breeze, the gold on her throat and ear and arm gleaming in the sun. But it was as though there was no one inside.

“Mother!” she felt like calling, but could not.

Hatshepsut was overwhelmed with loneliness.

“Mother!” Her whisper broke through at last and she ran, arms out, wanting her mother’s warmth more than anything in the world.

Slowly the great lady’s head turned. Stiffly she bent towards her daughter, her lips shaped to kiss. But the child could see that Aah-mes was not really aware of her, and that the kiss would not reach her lips. Indeed, would never reach her lips.

That day she wanted to die. It seemed to her that her mother had enough love only for her brothers and none for her.

She remembered how she then ran off and threw a ball into the air. She watched it soaring against the tremendous blue arch of the sky, amazed at the strength of her throw. It was as though, with it, she was trying to throw herself away.

“Amun, Unseen One, Rich in Names,” she whispered

as the ball of red and gold reached its zenith and apparently paused there as though held by an unseen hand. "Take me. Take me now. When Khnum fashioned me on his potter's wheel, why did he not fashion me a male body? Take me back into the Millions of Years. Let me sail with you in the solar barque among the Imperishable Stars!"

Her eyes were stinging and watering as she stared into the burning sky, but she refused to shut them. If anything was to happen she wanted to see it. No one was going to do anything to her without her knowing about it! Her chin was firm, her fists clenched. Was it an eternity she waited for the ball to fall — or less than a second?

It was falling and she was still as she was. Amun had done nothing in answer to her plea. She was running, a small wiry figure, her lips pressed together with anger. What was the point of having gods if they didn't answer one's prayers?

The ball was falling outside the part of the garden where she was allowed to play, but she did not hesitate to follow it. She left the smooth flagstones beside the pool and ran down the steps of the terrace beyond, past the carefully nurtured flowerbeds to the rough, wild area where the gardeners hadn't yet managed to tame the land. She forgot Amun in her attempt to find the ball. At last she saw it under a thorn bush and reached out for it. Horrified, she found herself staring into the cold, gold eyes of a cobra, her hand almost touching its

mouth. She froze. Again time seemed to stand still. She couldn't move a muscle. She looked into the eyes of the cobra and knew that she was going to die. "No!" a voice seemed to scream in her heart. "No! No! No! I don't want to die. I don't want to die!" So Amun was up there, after all, smiling. He would give her what she had asked for, but she no longer wanted it. Nothing had changed. Her mother still didn't love her, her nurse was still mean to her, and she was still a skinny slip of a girl when she wanted to be powerful and masculine and great; but she didn't want to die. The dust of the earth smelled so good. It was familiar. Shameful tears filled her eyes. She felt bitter towards Amun now. She would not plead for her life as she had pleaded for her death. She had asked him for a favour and she would accept what came as a result of that request. Her hand was as still as stone. If only that voice in her heart would stop shouting "No!"

If only — if only death would be quick! She blinked her tears away, trying to get a clear view of her executioner. At last her vision cleared and she could see that the cobra was no longer there. She could see only the ball and the mark on the sand where the cobra had slithered away.

Her knees suddenly gave way under her and she collapsed on the ground, trembling. How much she wanted to live! Small and thin and female she might be, but she would show them! Ah — how she would show them!

A short while later when one brother died, and then the second, she wondered if it were her resentment that had something to do with their deaths. She wondered if Amun had understood her passionate desire to stand alone, triumphant, in the light of her mother's eyes.

And then her great-great-grandmother died — the apparently indestructible Aah-hetep finally ceased to breathe.

*“Aah Aah Aah-hetep
Aah Aah Aah-hetep
Aah Aah Aah-hetep”*

The word became meaningless as the priests intoned it. It no longer sounded like her great-great-grandmother's name. It no longer sounded like a name at all. Would the gods hear it? Would the gods take heed of it? Would they accept her great-great-grandmother? She had thought she would cheat them and live forever. Well, she had tarried so long on this earth perhaps the gods had forgotten her name.

The child Hatshepsut watched dispassionately as the procession wound into the great valley. No one would ever forget *her* name, she vowed. A solitary hawk circled unbelievably high above them. Horus. Waiting. Watching.

They were chanting her great-great-grandmother's

titles now: “Divine Wife of Amun; Royal Mother; Great Royal Wife, joined to the Beautiful White Crown...” The list went on and on. She had lived a hundred years in that sturdy body, shrivelling at last to almost nothing. She had seen so much. Would she take the memory of it with her into the other world, the Duat?

Hatshepsut had seen the paintings and the carvings in her tomb, noted the powerful spells, the prayers, the invocations. If anyone could be protected against extinction, Queen Aah-hetep should be. “But do you *remember*,” she asked the High Priest, “when you go on that long journey, when you go through those great portals, when you cross the Fiery Lake, face the Forty-Two Assessors? When you do all those things, do you remember your life here on earth?”

He said “Yes, you do. How else would you answer faithfully and truly when you are called to account for it.”

“And when you have passed through all that, and if your eternal spirit does not ride with the gods in their golden boat forever and your personal soul does not stay with you in the House of Awakening, but is sent out to be born again in another body, in another time and place, will you still remember what happened to you in this life?” she persisted anxiously.

“Nothing is forgotten. Nothing is lost. Nothing is wasted. But some things are hidden and need to be searched for. You will think that you have forgotten. But everything you will be given to do will have its

roots in what you were. Your heart will remember, but you will have no words for it.”

“And if they open your mouth with the stone that comes from the stars like they do to the statues in the temple and the bodies in the House of Awakening, will you then have the words to speak of it?”

“If someone is there to open your mouth — it may be so.”

“And if no one is there to do it?”

“You ask too many questions, child. Go away and think about the ones I have already answered.”

“When I am grown up I will train as a priest. I will learn the answers to all questions.”

He laughed. The great solemn priest threw back his head and laughed! Hatshepsut flushed scarlet and bit her lip. When she grew up she would make it her business to know *everything!*

After the deaths of Aah-hetep and her sons, Aah-mes became even more remote, not only from her daughter but from most of the court. Hatshepsut turned her attention and affection more and more towards her father.

He at least seemed prepared to allow her to take the place of the sons he had lost.

When she was fourteen her father took her on a long journey throughout the Two Lands, a royal progress visiting every cult centre.

As they approached each quay, Hatshepsut stood silently beside her father at the prow of the royal boat, dressed like a boy in a white kilt, bare-torsoed, with gold on her arms and with a broad collar at her throat. Her head had been shaved and she wore the headdress of the royal heir. At fourteen her figure was slight and small beside that of her well-built father, but even so she drew the eyes of all the thousands gathered on the bank to greet them.

It was unusual for a pharaoh to bring his daughter to present to the god on such a progress through the country. Why was she dressed in male attire? Was the King trying to pass her off as his son? Was he planning to put her on the throne instead of one of his sons by a lesser wife? Surely the god would not allow that! There had been talk of Aa-kheper-en-Ra, son of the King by his favourite secondary wife, Mutnofre. All had assumed Hatshepsut would marry him and rule as queen.

But whatever their queries and their doubts, Pharaoh's visit was an occasion for a tremendous festival of rejoicing. Everyone who could walk had been at the riverside since before dawn, jostling for a view, and those who were infirm or ill or crippled had been carried and placed as near to the landing stage as possible. The Divine King would pass by. He would reach out his hands. Who knew what miracles would occur? Pharaoh was the channel through which the gods poured down their power on the earth. He was their instrument.

Whenever the boat was sighted the buzz of excitement rose to a crescendo, but as it came nearer the crowd fell silent and listened to the gradual swelling of the music that wafted to them over the water. Two rows of choristers, female and male, raised their voices high in praise of the great Pharaoh, while behind them the lutes wove a sweet melody, and the drum and sistrum marked the beat of oars and song.

It was all Hatshepsut could do to keep from singing herself. They visited cult centre after cult centre on their journey, but she never tired of the excitement of arrival, the feeling of being on the edge of a great adventure.

She knew her father had his reasons for introducing her to the priesthood of the various gods. He had plans for her that would need their support, knowing that his son by Mutnofre would be an ineffectual and indecisive ruler. His health had never been good and his chances of a long life were small.

Hatshepsut had never been allowed into the Holy of Holies of the temples, but now she stood beside the Pharaoh, face to face with the divine beings. At first she was disappointed. When the veil was drawn back she was shocked to see that the god was no more than a statue. Then as she stood, in silence and contemplation, the significance of "the opening of the mouth" ceremony was revealed to her. The god was not the statue, and the statue was not the god! The god used the stone image of himself as he used the living image

of himself as Pharaoh, so that the people might have something which they could understand. If the great spirit beings of other realms were to reveal themselves as they really were, the people would run and hide, would shut their ears and their hearts, would not understand what needed to be understood.

At Khemnu she encountered Djehuti, the god of knowledge, and his female counterpart, Seshat, she with the seven-pointed star shimmering above her head, and he with the head of the sacred ibis. As she stood in the shrine, only half listening to the words of her father and the priest, she looked at the hieroglyphs on the walls behind him. She felt she was not reading the mundane and familiar images carved by scribes and craftsmen, but was experiencing ancient and magical symbols that burned in the heart and revealed the secret thoughts of the gods. Djehuti had given language and writing to the world to increase wisdom and understanding. How sad it would be if the world misused it.

At Men-nefer, when her father momentarily drew the veil from the face of Ptah, creator-craftsman god, she thought she glimpsed a vision, a vista so magnificent that she fell on her face on the stone floor in awe and terror. She saw universes, even greater than the one she knew, being continually formed and reformed, a vast and complex pattern in continual change and motion.

The Anmutef priest in his panther skin stooped down and lifted her to her feet, but now, as she looked

fearfully into the god's shrine, she saw nothing but the statue of a man grasping a sceptre of divinity firmly with both hands, gazing steadily out ahead to the horizon of the world and beyond it to whatever mysterious realms lay out of sight.

Still trembling, she forced herself to look into his eyes — and it seemed to her that he lowered his gaze for a moment and was looking deep into hers. He understood what she had experienced and was telling her not to forget it. "You cannot live with that vision," he was saying, "but you cannot live without it."

As though in a dream, she heard the words her father and the priest were intoning. Ptah was silent now. His gaze had gone back to the horizon.

"I promise," she whispered. "I'll never forget it." But already it was fading, and the sense she had had that her own life and the life of her whole land was infinitesimal compared to what lay beyond was almost gone. The sense of her father's importance and her own was reasserting itself. The god before her was no more than a being not unlike herself — perhaps a little more powerful — to be cajoled and bribed for favours.

Perhaps at Yunu, the centre of sun worship, she would experience the true nature of the god again. She both feared and desired it.

The great sun altar was open to the sky, not enclosed in the usual dark and airless sanctuary. The images of the mighty Ra in his three forms — Kheper at dawn, Ra in full power at noon, and Atum in the evening — were

carved on the sides of the altar, but the god himself blazed down on their heads from above, so hot and bright that not even the First Prophet of his temple could lift his head and look at him. At the entrance to his court stood two obelisks, their tips blazing with gold.

Hatshepsut stood beside her father, feeling the heat of the paving stones burning through her sandals. Her eyes watered with the brilliance of the light reflecting off the dazzling white and gold — but she dared not move. The chief priest's invocation seemed interminable and the rows of junior priests bringing offerings and piling them up on the altar endless. She blinked away the water in her eyes and tried to ignore the sweat trickling down her body. On the stone before her she read:

*I am the Eternal Spirit,
I am the sun that rose from the Primeval
Waters.
My soul is god, I am the Creator of the Word...
I am the Creator of the Order wherein I live,
I am the Word, which will never be
annihilated...*

It was happening again! In spite of her discomfort she could feel herself leaving her body and reaching after something only her own eternal spirit could hope to understand.

Once again she had seen behind the mask of the god.

Once again the memory of it was slipping from her.

Her father touched her arm and pushed her gently forward. There were words she had to say, motions she had to make. How inadequate they seemed in the light of what she had just experienced. But it was the custom. It was what was expected. It was part of the order the god had created. She could feel the eyes of the priests upon her, watching her every move, judging whether she was worthy of the role she was destined to play. She spoke the words clearly. She made the ritual motions confidently.

“She is strong,” the High Priest thought. “Her father was right about her. If she supports us, we will support her.” And he accepted without hesitation the offering the King had made in her name.

In spite of Hatshepsut’s expectations after the journey she had taken with her father, he declared his son by Mutnofre his heir. She was betrothed to the prince, and though the Great Royal Wife and Queen had great status and power, Hatshepsut was bitterly disappointed.

Her betrothed, Aa-kheper-en-Ra, found himself at a disadvantage in every respect in his relationship with her.

One day he stood beside her in the garden, looking down at her as she lay asleep under her favourite tree.

The servants had brought out a light couch for her in the heat of the day and, after a long morning of hunting with her father in the desert, she had flung herself down to rest. He could see the air vibrating around her. She was the sort of person who walked into a room full of people and from that moment no one in the room was aware of anyone else. Beautiful women faded into the background. Men became shadows. It was not that she was so beautiful, but she gave the impression of beauty, the impression that beauty was actively being created before their eyes. Every movement of hers seemed to draw the world with it. He couldn't explain it. He had tried to resist staring at her, resenting her effect on him, but time and again he had found himself tongue-tied and awkward in her presence. He knew she half-despised him because his mind was not as quicksilver as hers, because words stuck like flies in honey to his tongue, and because no one noticed *him* the way they noticed her. He knew she had affection for him as her father's son, but never love, never respect, never admiration.

He pursed his lips. He tried to imagine taking that lion body to bed, touching that smooth feline form, feeling the powerful beat of her heart under his hand. She was lying now with only the finest film of fabric over the rise and fall of her breast, and her firm and slender thighs. With his eyes he removed the film and took a step nearer. He didn't touch her with his hands yet he could feel how it would be if he were stroking

her skin, his hands following the curves of her body, his fingertips pausing on her nipples. His mouth dropped open and he could hardly breathe for the wave of desire that flooded through him. He wanted to take her now before her eyes opened. When she looked into his eyes, he knew, he would feel himself dissolving like one of those scent cones on a woman's wig. He would become nothing... nothing.

He took a step closer, sweat glistening on his body, his breath coming in short bursts. "One day she will lie in my bed like any other woman," he told himself. "But first, first I must conquer my fear of her. I must take her on my terms, not on hers."

The garden was deserted apart from the two of them. No breeze stirred. Flowers hung limp. The tree itself seemed to be holding its breath. With a hand that he had to force not to tremble he reached out. Even before it touched her flesh he could feel her energy almost like a physical thing, a vibrant cocoon that surrounded her. He hesitated. Would he be able to handle this woman? Would he be able to keep his own identity, his own power?

He dropped his hand and stepped back with a start. She had opened her eyes and was looking directly into his. She knew what he had been about to do, and he shrivelled under the blaze of her anger. She said nothing. She didn't move. Only her eyes saw him and everything about him.

He turned and walked away as fast as he could. The

moment had gone and he was still afraid of her. “One day,” he promised himself bitterly, “I will conquer her. I will reduce her! She will lie in my bed and I will be master! One day!”

He could not wait for the time he would be Pharaoh and she would have to walk behind him, head down, in humility. Sometimes he chuckled bitterly to think of it. She would never be humble — but she would have to give the appearance of humility, and that would really irk her proud spirit.

Hatshepsut propped herself up on her elbow and looked after him, amused. She tolerated his presence on formal occasions because she knew that in the eyes of the world she had to, but in private she treated him with impatience and ill-disguised contempt. Without her, he would be nothing. It was the purity of *her* royal blood from her mother, Aah-mes, that would give him the status of Pharaoh, son as he was of a non-royal mother. She found it unjust that this was the tradition, and argued against it at every opportunity until even her father, who adored her, snapped impatiently that that was the way it was and she would have to accept it. If Aa-kheper-en-Ra survived him, he would be King, and Hatshepsut would have to content herself with being the power behind the throne. If he did not survive, one of his other sons by one of his minor wives would be King, and again Hatshepsut would have to be content to be Queen. He knew the real power in the Two Lands would always be hers, and that is why he

had made such a point of associating her so often with him on state occasions, but he had thought better of changing the time-honoured form of things for her. It would be too dangerous. The Two Lands were balanced precariously over the Void, and if this balance were not meticulously kept, who knew what disasters might befall.

The news of her father's death came to Hatshepsut when she was in the palace garden at Men-nefer. She had been pacing the shady paths beneath the huge sycamores since the dawn, having woken with a start from a dream of falling off a precipice, her heart pounding, knowing that something was terribly wrong. Gradually the racing of her pulse slowed down and she lay listening to the first sounds of the day, the comforting sounds of the birds that this morning brought no comfort, the distant call of the herd boys on their way to the grazing fields.

She slipped into a light robe and padded on bare feet out of the building into the garden, standing for a long time gazing at the lily buds about to open, before seeking out the avenue of sycamores.

What was wrong? She felt as though everything in the Two Lands was off balance, off course, as though it were a boat caught in a current about to be dragged down into the white water and harsh rocks of a cataract. And then she heard them, the wailing, her

father's many wives raising their voices in the sound of mourning. Her father was dead.

She stood very still, and it was as though everything in existence stood still with her. It was very strange. In all the realms there was no movement. Pharaoh was dead. There was no Pharaoh to be the pivot for all the energies and forces of the many and varied realms. It was as though even the gods were dead.

Hatshepsut's skin prickled with a chill of alarm.

Could this be? Could time suddenly cease and everything be frozen in this way at the death of a Pharaoh? What an awesome responsibility!

She longed for movement, for flow and change, and life. She called out to the gods, but none came to her. And then she felt the presence of the Mysterious Unseen One, the one who for her always seemed to be more accessible than the others though, paradoxically, by his very nature should be less so. The one her people called Amun, yet for her was beyond all the naming of names.

She saw no stylised figure, no powerful and numinous being, but suddenly her fear was gone and she had a wonderful and overwhelming feeling that everything had meaning and purpose and was as it should be.

The birds were moving in the sky again, and a bee alighted on a flower. The women were still keening, but she felt detached from their sorrow. Pharaoh was dead — yet Pharaoh lived. She shivered. What now? Her

father had trained her like a man for responsibility, and she knew it would be she who would wield the real power in the land, yet her role would be a subsidiary one as Great Royal Wife to the half-brother for whom she had no love and very little respect. Her father should not have died so soon — she was not ready. She was angry with him for leaving her.

Ineni, her father's favourite architect and friend, was approaching. She could see that his shoulders stooped more than usual, and his step was slow and heavy. She knew he was worrying about how he was going to tell her the news. Everyone was aware of the close relationship of father and daughter. Aa-kheper-ka-Ra had been ill more than once lately, but each bout of pain had passed, leaving him apparently as fit as he had ever been. He had left Men-nefer in good health the week before to visit the delta lands, and they had had no reports of illness.

The young girl, no longer a child, stood as still as a statue, watching the approaching figure. He reached her at last and stood looking into her eyes.

"You know?" he said.

"Yes," she replied.

He looked around, wondering who had reached her before he had.

"No one," she said quietly. "I just knew."

"You heard the women?"

"Before that."

He was not surprised. He had noticed on several

occasions how her thoughts seemed to leap ahead, as though she had some private communication with the gods.

The funeral barge of Aa-kheper-ka-Ra approached the quay at Waset to the accompaniment of solemn drumming, the royal praise-singers in the prow carrying the swelling majestic hymn that was sung at the death of a pharaoh, the royal praise-singers on the land echoing the theme, chanting his names and accomplishments, preparing the gods to receive this great being into their midst. He had been embalmed at Men-nefer, his capital, but was being brought to the western mountains of Waset to be interred for eternity, the first king to choose the valley beneath the great pyramidal mountain of Meretseger for his secret resting place.

Hatshepsut stood dry-eyed and unmoving beside her half-brother, Aa-kheper-en-Ra, now King. Her mother had already passed out of this realm, but the dead king's secondary wives were making a great noise in the background. Hatshepsut bit her lip. She would have liked to sweep them all away, tossing them wailing into the desert to be swallowed up by the sand. How she hated their clinging, whining, hypocritical worship of him. He was *hers* — not theirs! How dared they pretend such grief when all they were concerned about was their status under the new regime.

Mutnofre stood a step or two behind her son — away from the other women. At least she had some dignity. Hatshepsut had always liked her more than the others. She had been her father's favourite after her own mother. Mutnofre had helped him through the loneliness after Aah-mes died and had been almost a mother to Hatshepsut — or at least as much of a mother as the independent and spiky little girl would allow. Mutnofre was on the whole uncultured, but beautiful and naturally kind. It was not she who pushed her son forward against the other claimants, but Aa-kheper-ka-Ra himself who chose him for his heir. "As long as he is married to Hatshepsut," he stipulated. "Hatshepsut must be at his side." It was possible Aa-kheper-ka-Ra chose Mutnofre's son for his very weakness, for with him Hatshepsut would be assured of a chance to use the skills he had taught her, whereas a stronger man might keep her in the background.

So here she was — at the side of Aa-kheper-en-Ra. One step behind him, in fact — and resenting it. Well, her great-great-grandmother, Aah-hetep, and her great-grandmother, Nefertari, had not been docile wives — and she would not be either.

She had not fully grasped her father's death yet. She had been so busy with matters of state and her own personal problems with her half-brother that she had hardly been alone. But now, for a moment, as the crowds and even the wailing women hushed, and the

great barge slid silently into the quayside, she looked into the eyes of grief and saw her own reflection there.

That night she had a dream.

She was standing on the very lip of the cliff that overlooked the ancient temple of Mentu-hotep which nestled in against the mountainside at Serui. Far below her she could see the neat pattern of the almost ruined temple and beyond it the narrow desert plain becoming suddenly and startlingly green in the irrigated fields bordering the river. Across the Nile she could see the faint outline of the great Temple of Amun at Ipet-Eset and the obelisks her father had raised. She felt that there was something she had to do. Something was expected of her. Something beyond duty.

She frowned, and forgetting where she was, took a step forward.

She began to fall. Now she was caught in the nightmare she had had the night her father died — she was falling off a precipice. And in her dream she had believed that if she reached the bottom she would not wake up. She would be dead.

“I want to live!” she cried. “Whatever I have to do — I’ll do it! Just let me live!”

Suddenly she was caught in strong and powerful arms. She was safe... she was soaring... she was lifted up beyond the desert and the mountains, beyond the city with its flags fluttering above the entrance pylons of so many mighty temples.

“You will live, my beloved,” she heard a deep voice say, though she could not turn her head to see who spoke. *“You will live and build me a temple more beautiful than any in the world. In that temple there will be a threshold between the realms. Your step will be light, my daughter, my wife. Your step will cross that threshold with ease. You will know all there is to know in the two worlds, and you will do my work upon the earth. As a sign of your commitment to me and me alone –”*

“I’ll sacrifice a hundred bulls,” she interrupted, “gazelles, cranes, snow-white kids.”

“Not those, my child. Not those. That would be too easy. I ask more than that.”

“What do you want?” she asked eagerly. “Tell me. I will sacrifice anything if I might freely cross the threshold between the realms and be with you, yet still be ‘in the flesh’. I will be your right arm upon the earth! I will make you honoured above all other gods in the Two Lands!”

Although she still could not see his face, she felt that he smiled as a fond parent might smile at a favourite child.

“Shut your eyes,” he said quietly.

She felt that she was now standing on firm ground and that the arms of the Great Being were no longer around her.

Tentatively she opened her eyes a crack, then completely.

She was standing in a shrine dedicated to Amun, not yet built, as far as she knew. In front of her was an altar of gleaming white alabaster.

She knew that it was on this altar she must make her sacrifice. But what? She had no priests with her, no animals to slaughter, no bowls or baskets of food. Nothing.

She was clad in a simple white sheath of linen, her feet bare, her hair unbound. On her arm she was wearing the bracelet her father had given her when she was a child as a secret pledge that she would one day rule the Two Lands. It was a fine piece of work — lapis lazuli, turquoise and carnelian set in silver, more precious than gold.

“Oh no!” she thought, as it dawned on her the mysterious god was demanding this of her. Why?

“He wants it because I don’t want to give it,” she thought. “He wants it because it is my promise of worldly power, my attachment to my ambition to rule the Two Lands. I have to choose between worldly power and true spiritual enlightenment.”

She knew that in these crucial moments her whole life was in the balance.

“I’m not ready,” she whispered. “I’m not ready.”

She fingered the jewelled silver on her arm, turning it round and round. The bracelet seemed heavier than before. She turned to go, still clutching it. Then she turned back — and with a sudden impulsive gesture she tore it off her arm and laid it on the white stone

altar. As she did so, a shaft of light came from above and illuminated it so vividly it seemed to dissolve...

Above her the winged shape of Nekhbet, the vulture, hovered, holding in her claws the circle of completion, the circle of infinity.

Hatshepsut did not look up, but turned and ran.

It seemed to her she ran down a thousand thousand white alabaster steps until... until...

She woke up, startled, in her own bed.

She knew this dream had not been like other dreams. She looked at her arm: the bracelet was not there. She leapt up and called her maids. Sleepily they came to her. They denied seeing the bracelet anywhere but on her arm. She shouted at them to search, and search they did.

"I must find it," she thought frantically. "If I don't, it means I am committed. I want more time to think. I'm not ready. Surely I've just mislaid it?"

All day the women searched, harried by an increasingly anxious and hysterical Queen.

That night it was found. One of her women who had not been at the palace that day had taken it to be repaired. The craftsman who brought it back to Hatshepsut was startled by her expression as she put it back on her arm. Was she not pleased with the workmanship?

Although she had been frightened and dismayed when she believed she had committed herself to Amun, now that she was not committed, she was disappointed.

Had the whole thing been no more than a dream, after all?

She determined then and there to build the temple Amun had asked her to build. The temple that would outshine all the temples in the Two Lands and carry her far beyond the dust and flies of this earth, beyond the Fiery Lake, beyond the Forty-Two Assessors, beyond the Seven Gates, beyond the Hall where her heart would be weighed against the feather of Maat before Osiris, beyond the stars in Ra's mystic boat.

She would record all her deeds in everlasting stone, checking and counting the processions of priests as they filled her storehouse for eternity with magical replicas of familiar things. She would carve images of her body and her soul upon the walls of his temple, so beautiful, so powerful, that, mirrored in eternity, she would live with him forever. She would write such things in stone that her name and the name of her god would never be forgotten by the thousands upon thousands of generations of people who lived after her.

Her temple would be celebrated by all who saw it.

Djeser Djeseru: Most splendid. The temple of Myriads of Years. It would be called the Great Seat of Amun, his horizon in the west. Its great door would be fashioned of black copper, inlaid with figures of electrum. All its doors would be real cedar, wrought with bronze. Its floor would be

wrought with gold and silver, its beauty like the horizon of heaven. There would be a great shrine of ebony from Nubia, the stairs beneath it, high and wide, of pure alabaster from Hatnub. It would indeed be the palace of the god, his enduring horizon of eternity, wrought with gold and silver to illuminate the faces of all with its brightness.

And when this was done, Amun her Father would see that she had been faithful to him though she had also been faithful to her calling as worldly ruler of the Two Lands.

CHAPTER 3

Hapuseneb

When Hatshepsut's husband Aa-kheper-en-Ra, died after an undistinguished rule, she — sole living representative of the pure royal bloodline through Aah-mes, her mother — was made Regent for her husband's son by a lesser wife.

At first she had not disputed the role, though it irked her that she who had been behind almost every decision her husband had made, and was now openly making decisions for the Two Lands, should always stand behind the small and arrogant figure of her stepson-nephew, Men-kheper-Ra, and suffer the smirks of his mother, named Ast, most inappropriately, after the goddess Isis.

It was not long before certain shrewd and ambitious men, noting her impatience at the subordinate role she was forced to play and aware of the proud blood that flowed in her veins from the powerful princes who had

seized Egypt back from the hated Hyksos after centuries of domination, began to gather at her side, waiting and watching for an opportunity of advancement.

Hapuseneb was one of these. He was Vizier of the South when she became Regent, a brilliant and reliable diplomat, an able administrator — but tired of his long sojourn in the provincial towns of uncivilised Nubia. Since her family had come to power, Waset had grown from a sleepy small town to a bustling city. Either here or Men-nefer would suit him well. But there were not many positions higher than the one he already had. He was not sure what he would ask for, or indeed that he would ask for anything at all. He knew only that with the instability caused by the death of Aa-kheper-en-Ra while his heir was still only an infant, it would be shrewd to be at the centre where decisions were being made. There would be changes — and he would be there when they happened, ready to take advantage.

A tall man with stern, aquiline features, he came upon her sitting by herself beside a lily pond in the gardens of the palace. She seemed very young and fragile as she sat on the alabaster pavement, her knees drawn up to her chin, staring thoughtfully into a blue water lily. What was she thinking? Was she afraid? She needed a strong man at her side at this time, he thought; but if she married again, all kinds of violent factions would leap into action. A woman by herself as Regent would not cause concern for the future, but

with a husband who might be after ultimate power, Men-kheper-Ra and his supporters would be instantly alerted to danger and compelled to secure their claim any way they could. But would she be able to handle by herself the jockeying for power that was bound to go on after a pharaoh's death? Would she be able to see through the hypocrisy and intrigue?

"Your Majesty," he said quietly, his reflection appearing beside her own in the water. She did not turn her head but her eyes met his on the still surface.

Hapuseneb, she thought. She knew who he was, though she had never been alone with him before. She remembered thinking when he was appointed that he was a man better to have as an ally than an enemy. A strong, intelligent, ambitious man. Impressive to look at; a shrewd observer of events; decisive and quick-witted.

"If you would rather be alone...?" he said quietly, bowing, but she noted that in doing so he lost nothing of his own dignity.

She turned slowly and looked up at him. She could do with strong, loyal men around her now. She had grown up at her father's right hand and had seen the ruthlessness of those who struggled for power. But could she trust him? What did she know about him? She could have him investigated, of course, but such investigations never revealed what was in a man's heart.

When she stood up at full height she did not reach

his shoulder, but what she lacked in height she more than compensated for in power of personality. She gazed so searchingly into his eyes, he knew he had been wrong to assume she would not be able to judge those around her shrewdly and wisely. He was surprised suddenly to feel at a disadvantage, but he did not lower his eyes. There were some things in his past he would rather keep hidden, and for a moment he wondered if she indeed had the royal cobra vision and could see into his soul. Momentarily he felt uneasy — but his long training in not showing his feelings in public served him well. He stared back into her eyes steadily with just the right degree of respect.

“I am alone, Hapuseneb,” she said. “No one shares the burden of Pharaoh.” He noticed she used the word for king and not for regent, and wondered if it was deliberate.

“Indeed, Majesty,” he replied carefully, “but others can ease the weight of the burden.”

“Could you do that, Hapuseneb?”

“Ay, your Majesty. If your Majesty would allow me.”

His humility was not overdone, and yet in a lesser man it would have been.

She smiled and relaxed her scrutiny.

“Come,” she said, “let us walk in the shade a while. Tell me about your life in the southern provinces. I don’t want an official report — I have enough of those. Tell me about your thoughts and feelings and how your days pass.”

There was something almost childish in the questions that followed, but he did not underestimate her. He knew his future depended on how he answered her, and suddenly he wanted very much to win her confidence.

She listened quietly, intently, to everything he said. There was not a word she did not hear and mark, yet her mind was busy with other thoughts. She had walked and talked with the Mysterious One, the Hidden and Magnificent One, Amun-Ra. He had come to her in the night. He had come to her in the day. She was his Chosen One; she felt it, she knew it. He had told her to stress the name "Amun-Ra": Amun united with Ra in his role of universal and eternal sun, source of light and life; and Ra united with Amun in his role of unseen mystery, of unanswerable question. She would build a temple in the world. It would be Djeser Djeseru — the beautiful home of the beautiful but unseen God — and it would rise from the great golden cliffs of the west; and from it she would gaze out across the desert and the green lands to the golden points of the obelisks she would erect in his honour in his temple over the river.

But this temple was not all she meant to do for him. He would be honoured above all gods by the people in every city in the Two Lands, in every village, in every outlying settlement. From the distant mountains of Nubia to the flat, rich lands of the delta, his name would be above all names.

In the old days the god Amun had been one among

many, and the priests who served him no more important than those who served the other gods. But Hatshepsut Khenemet-Amun (Hatshepsut “united with Amun”) had a love for him that she did not have for the other gods and a love for Waset that she did not have for other places. Her father had established his capital at Men-nefer, that great and sprawling metropolis in the north, but Hatshepsut spent as little time there as possible. Waset, the cult centre of her favourite god Amun — “the Hidden One”, “he who abides in all things” — was the place she most enjoyed, and it was here she spent a great deal of her time.

During the bad old days of the Hyksos rule many temples had fallen into disrepair and ruin. Her father and grandfather had been too busy winning back Egypt for the Egyptians to spend much time on restoration. But this was one of the vows she made to Amun very early in her life. She would restore the temples throughout the land and build new ones, not only for Amun-Ra himself, but for those other great beings who hovered over the world keeping the primeval Chaos at bay.

But to do this she needed strong and trustworthy priests and administrators — men who could plan and organise and make people obey them; men who would be loyal to her and to Amun-Ra and to no one else. Priests she had. Administrators she had. But one man who could combine the qualities needed for both was not so easy to find. She wanted someone who could

handle the power she would give him and yet would never turn against her. She wanted him to fear Amun-Ra. She remembered how one of the men who had been carrying her chair that morning had stumbled and the chair had tipped dangerously to one side. She had caught the look of terror in the clumsy man's eyes as she looked at him. That was fear! But it was not the kind she wanted.

Had her god sent her this man, Hapuseneb?

Gravely she studied his features — studied the way he moved his hands, his shoulders, his eyes. Everything about him was strong and sure. He respected her as woman and as a great power in the land — but he did not cringe before her.

“Ah, Holy One,” she whispered, though her lips did not move. “Give me a sign if this man would be pleasing to you.”

Hapuseneb stopped talking. He began to feel strange — as though everything around him was suddenly distant, as though every sound and movement in the world had stopped. He looked into her eyes and knew she felt it too.

As far as she was concerned, Amun-Ra had spoken. The sun's rays were coming from directly behind him, illuminating his head.

“Hapuseneb,” she said confidently. “I have a task for you.”

She told him about her vision, and he listened as quietly as she had listened to him. When he was a

young lad he had spent time in the temple. His father had intended that he should train for the priesthood, seeing that he did not enjoy farming. For several years he had served alternately three months behind the great mud-brick walls of the temple, and three months out in the fields. It was in the temple he had shown his aptitude for writing and for numbers, for organising, and for planning. But he had found the atmosphere claustrophobic, the daily routine boring. He had been glad to get out. Could he face it again? Could he sit poring over scripts in the Per Ankh, the House of Life? Could he face those hard-eyed examiners yet again? Did she know about that hot still day when he sat cross-legged before the three chief prophets and was questioned from the time the sun came up until the sun went down, answering every one of their questions so well that at the end it had seemed a foregone conclusion that he would stay with the priesthood forever. And yet the thought had filled him with dismay and revulsion. Why had he studied so hard? Why had he answered so brilliantly? Because he wanted to succeed. Because, at whatever he did, he wanted to excel.

He sighed. He had known even then, when he was arguing with his father all those years ago, that the Temple would get him in the end!

But her vision of what he would do as First Prophet of Amun-Ra was very different from what he remembered of the daily routine as a boy apprentice. His

would not be the duty to sweep the floor and spread fresh rushes, to chant the holy words from dawn to dusk, from dusk to dawn. Other men would be trusted with the routine purification rites, the supplications, the tedious ceremonies. The Temple priesthood acted as surrogates for the whole population. They held the dialogue with the god on behalf of the people. They alone interpreted the god's words to the people — even to the Pharaoh.

Hapuseneb's eyes narrowed as he thought what it would mean to be in a position to interpret the god's words to the Pharaoh.

Hatshepsut smiled, and he suddenly became aware of her eyes looking into his heart. She knew him. She knew what he was thinking. She would never be easily deceived. Nor, he thought, would he want to deceive her. If he became what she wanted him to be, he would surely have a status in the land that would satisfy even his ambitious nature.

He bowed his head slightly — but not too much.

She hesitated.

She had him — but was he what she wanted? She could sense that he was not as spiritual as she had hoped. Userhet was more spiritual — but he was getting old and had never had a stomach for administration. Under him the temples of Amun-Ra would quietly go about their business as they had under Aakheper-ka-Ra, her father. She wanted something more for her favourite god.

Amun-Ra had given her a sign. The Mysterious One no doubt knew things about Hapuseneb that she did not know. She appointed him High Priest, First Prophet of Amun-Ra, without further investigation.

CHAPTER 4

Senmut

Senmut and his brother Senmen had been introduced into the royal household by their uncle, one of the old Pharaoh's scribes, who had stayed on after his death to serve his successor, Aa-kheper-en-Ra.

Senmut's first professional appointment was as confidential scribe to the young King. He was young also and eager to advance. He worked long hours to please his master and he soon noticed the contempt Hatshepsut, the Queen, had for her husband, and the frustration the Pharaoh suffered in consequence of this. He was turning more and more to minor wives, and to Ast in particular, and the children born to them were soon occupying the royal nursery. Hatshepsut herself became pregnant, though Senmut wondered how the coupling had taken place with so much antipathy between them.

At first the Queen did not take any particular notice

of the young scribe, associating him with her husband's entourage — but he, from the start, was aware of her provocative sexuality and was fascinated by her. Intelligent and fast-thinking himself, he recognised the same qualities in her, and admired them.

It was at Ipet-Esut that their eyes first met. The King was with Ineni, his father's faithful architect, planning an extension to Per-Amun, the Temple of Amun. Senmut was present to record the decisions that were made, and the Queen wandered by almost casually on her way to consult the High Priest about the arrangements for the Opet festival. Their eyes met, and she was shocked. The dark intensity of his gaze, the admiration, the desire were unmistakable. She was used to admiration — and indeed expected it — but she was not used to such boldness. She continued on her way, annoyed.

But she could not forget him, and after this she noticed him often.

Hatshepsut had been inconsolable when her father died, and she mourned a long time, while her brother-husband gave her no support. He had always resented that she had so obviously been their father's favourite and that she had been taken on the royal progress through the Two Lands to be introduced to the priesthood, and not himself. Father and daughter had always been close, sharing jokes, enjoying time together, while he and the other children of the royal household were kept with their mothers, their nurses

and their tutors, hardly seeing the royal visage from one month's end to another.

The day she met Senmut was perhaps the first day Hatshepsut's sorrow and loss of her father began to ease. Their paths crossed frequently and her haughty disdain for his obvious attraction to her gave way to tolerance and eventually, because she was lonely and she noticed that his mind was one of the few at court that could match hers, to friendship. It was this friendship that perhaps more than anything else gave her back her zest for life.

At this time Senmut had several good friends, young men like himself with intelligence and ambition. They saw in Hatshepsut a stronger prospect for advancement than in the petulant and ailing King. She became the centre of a group of admiring— but not sycophantic — companions. They talked freely to her and she talked freely to them. Those were good times when everything seemed possible.

Later, when Aa-kheper-en-Ra died and Hatshepsut became Regent for her infant stepson-nephew, Menkheper-Ra, nearly all of the old companions were given positions of privilege and power. Senmut was made the tutor and guardian of her daughter Neferure, and Chief Steward of the royal household, in charge of all the formal occasions. Nehsi, with Nubian connections but educated at the Egyptian court, was put in charge of the household accounts. Thutiy became Chief Confidential Scribe.

When Senmut was a young man, before he came to the court, he had spent some years in the North in the House of Life at Men-nefer, the great building attached to the Temple of Ptah that housed the archives of ancient texts, where scholars and scribes studied, copied and memorised. Near the city of White Walls was the great funerary complex of King Djoser, one of the ancient kings who had ruled more than a thousand years before. It stood in the desert, and only priests were authorised to walk its silent corridors and gaze upon the great stepped pyramid that Imhotep had designed, the prototype for all the pyramids of the Two Lands. Hooded cobras, immortal in stone, guarded its sacred precincts.

For more than a thousand years the mortuary priests had chanted their prayers and spells for the dead king, and the place held his presence still. Deep underground in corridors tiled in turquoise, the king eternally paced out the boundaries of his kingdom as he had done at his jubilee. Through a spyhole in a small chamber attached to the side of the pyramid at ground level, a statue of the king enthroned gazed out impassively, watching the world go by, century after century, accepting the offerings of men born generations after he had first ruled the Two Lands.

Outside the high walls of the Djoser funerary monuments, other burials had taken place — later than

his, but still ancient to Senmut and his contemporaries. This place more than any other in the Two Lands fascinated Senmut.

Senmut, when he arrived at the archives of the Temple of Ptah, was the youngest of the scribe apprentices. He had a mind infinitely curious, always exploring new possibilities but never neglecting what he called the durable thread that held all things together.

He approached his studies with such fervour and understood the most obscure references so quickly that his mentors soon stood back and let him have his head. There were some texts that had so baffled generations of scribe masters that they no longer expected them to be deciphered. Senmut teased at them in his sleeping cell at night by the light of a small flickering bowl lamp. When the oil gave out he would lie awake in the dark, seeing the figures of the text still dancing before his eyes. Sometimes he woke with a feeling of euphoria; something had suddenly made sense. But more often than not he woke as frustrated as he had been the night before — the secret the ciphers held still tightly locked away.

It was here, in these great libraries of texts, that Senmut first began to admire Imhotep — architect, vizier, treasurer, seal-bearer to the great King Djoser. Later this admiration became almost an obsession. The wisdom book associated with him had been copied many times since Imhotep's day, and everyone knew that errors must inevitably have occurred. No one alive

had ever seen the original and no one knew even whether it still existed. As long as anyone could remember, the House of Life had only had the copies, some of them from a time that must have been very close to Imhotep's own lifetime, but none in the great man's own hand. Senmut wanted more than anything in the world to find this original text. He believed Imhotep had been buried near his pharaoh and friend, King Djoser — and that if he found the tomb he would find the original book of Imhotep buried with him.

One night, after a particularly frustrating time trying to unravel the scribal errors in the great man's text, Senmut went for a long walk in the desert. A full moon silvered the tops of the dunes and illumined the imposing and magnificent stone pyramid that reached in gigantic steps to the sky, echoing the first mound of earth that rose from the waters of Chaos. He looked back from the summit of a small hill at the orderly complex of stone buildings — the high and gleaming boundary walls and the cluster of smaller and later pyramids, of chapels and processional ways, that huddled as close as they could get to this extraordinary and sacred place. Ceaselessly the desert tried to bury the man-made structures in sand; ceaselessly man dug and pushed and swept the sand away.

“I will find your book, my Lord Imhotep,” he vowed. “And we will no longer be satisfied with half forgotten truths — but have your own words clear and unequivocal.”

CHAPTER 5

Journey to Suan

One of the first things Hatshepsut did when she became Pharaoh was to plan two obelisks to the sun at the Temple of Amun at Ipet-Esut. She wanted to reinforce the vow she had made to Amun that he would be glorified more than ever in his dual image of Amun-Ra. Later, much later, she was to erect two more obelisks in this temple, but the first two, slightly less tall and impressive than the later pair, were always closer to her heart because of the circumstances that surrounded their erection.

She decided to go herself to the great granite quarries of the South at Suan to choose the stone for them. The journey would serve to remind the southern towns of her position as Pharaoh. Northwards from Waset she was a more familiar figure, her journeys to Men-nefer and the delta being more frequent.

She chose to take Senmut with her, and it was during

this time that their relationship was at its most beautiful and tranquil. There were periods as the royal barge sailed slowly and majestically south that they felt that somehow they had slipped the tether of time and were free to run wild in an idyllic country, invisible to everyone else. Discretely the servants and the crew went about their business, and if they ever noticed or gossiped about what they saw and heard, they were careful that no hint of it would reach the lovers or the outside world.

The first important stop was at Iuny on the west bank. Hatshepsut would rather not have visited the cult centre of Montu, a war god, but she was too new in her role as Pharaoh to dare to antagonise any important faction in the land. The priests, bowing low, requested the bounty of the Pharaoh for the restoration and extension of their temple. She did not refuse, but her gifts were not generous, and it was not until the reign of the next Pharaoh that the temple was to be properly extended and restored.

From Iuny they crossed the river to Djerty, still under the hawk eye of Montu. Here Hatshepsut was prepared to spend a little more time and ingratiate herself with the priests of Montu's temple in order to get a glimpse of the famous treasure given to the god by Pharaoh Amenemhet the Second about four centuries earlier. She had always been particularly interested in this king, for it was said he had mounted an expedition to Punt, a fabled distant land beyond Nubia that she herself had yearned to visit.

The sanctuary of Montu had received two chests of priceless silver treasure. Though gold was plentiful from Nubia, silver was not readily available in Egypt, and had to be imported from distant lands, from the Keftiu on the Island of the Bulls in the Great Green Ocean, and from the North and East through the traders at Kepeh and the lands conquered by her father. Lapis lazuli was also very difficult to obtain and came from the wild mountain regions far to the east. These chests contained ingots and chains, necklaces and bowls of silver, and lapis lazuli in quantities she had never dreamed of.

The priests were obviously uneasy at unsealing the storeroom beneath the altar, but Pharaoh's command could not be disobeyed. Only after many wearisome rituals, during which Senmut wondered if their access to the treasure would be denied, did the High Priest finally start to break seal after seal and reveal the chests. When they were opened, Hatshepsut and Senmut gasped at the beauty and the variety of the objects inside, some inherited by the King from ancient times, some brought from countries almost inaccessible and almost unknown.

Hatshepsut reached out her hand to lift a necklace, tempted to try it on. The High Priest stepped forward at once and stretched out a warning hand.

"Your Majesty," he whispered urgently. "Do not touch. The treasure is guarded by a most fearsome spell."

Hatshepsut hesitated. It was so beautiful. More beautiful than anything she had ever seen. She looked up at the statue of the god standing guard over it. He was hawk-headed like Horus, but so very different in mien. She could feel his eyes on her — wary, cold, malevolent. In her plan for the Two Lands under her rule there was very little thought given to war and conquest. She wanted to stabilise the country within its borders and leave the outside world alone as much as she could. If she antagonised Montu now, would she be attacked, her country invaded and devastated as it had been by the hated Hyksos? Amun had helped her father and grandfather in their wars, but she never thought of him as a war god. All he was doing was helping to restore order and peace to the Two Lands by driving the barbarians out. Montu delighted in war for its own sake.

She withdrew her hand.

The priest, who had held his breath while she had her hand outstretched, gave an almost imperceptible sigh of relief.

She had brought a silver rhyton with fluted sides from the Island of the Bulls, and she handed it to the priest so that he could place it among the other objects. “Perhaps,” she thought, “a gift from a peaceful pharaoh, crafted by a peaceful people, will help to temper the blood lust of this god.” She made a silent prayer for peace in her time.

She stepped back and turned to go, Senmut close

behind her. She was glad to get back onto the royal barge and sip cool wine behind the curtains of her cabin, soon leaving the noisy crowds and the malevolent eyes of the war god well behind.

Their next stop was much more to her taste. Their pace was leisurely, but eventually they arrived at the Place of the Two Hills, a small, pleasant town on the west bank, known chiefly for the Per-Hathor, or House of Hathor, that had been there since very ancient times. There were temples to Hathor — the great mother goddess of love and fertility — throughout Khemet, but this one became Hatshepsut's favourite. It was built on top of the eastern hill, with the little town nestling at its foot. The rocky west hill was honeycombed with tombs from the very early dynasties. "The two hills," Hatshepsut thought, "life and death."

They chose to visit the temple in the cool of the early morning. Hatshepsut refused her golden carrying chair and the company of her attendants, to walk alone with Senmut up the winding path. The garden that had been planted around the Per-Hathor seemed neglected, and the first thing Hatshepsut did was to order that it should be restored and extended.

"Make a bower for her," she said. "She should be surrounded by lush green and colourful flowers." She was pleased to see that the tamarisk and sycamore trees that clustered close around the outer walls looked healthy enough.

The view from the doorway was breathtaking — the

little town, the green flood plain, the river, silver-blue, with an island like an emerald. Beyond that, as always in Khemet, was the tawny red desert.

In the first court there was a lily pond with lotus in bloom. Hatshepsut smiled and stooped down to trail her fingers in the cool water.

It was a little temple with only a few priestesses, each giving the impression of being there for love instead of for professional reasons. A very old woman who had been the High Priestess since her youth, her face a map of smiling wrinkles, took delight in performing the dawn ceremonies for the Pharaoh. Hatshepsut herself lifted the incense to the nose of the lovely goddess and said a fervent prayer or two. Senmut watched her, standing well back, his presence only tolerated because Pharaoh had requested it. She was so beautiful — as beautiful as the goddess herself — lifting her arms and her eyes to the serene and gentle face of the divine Lady. From Hathor's womb had come the teeming millions of the earth. At her breasts kings had sucked. Her temple was full of music and light. Hatshepsut lifted a golden sistrum and shook it. The young priestesses gathered behind her shook theirs too, and a slow and graceful dance followed to the soft sound of the sistrum, the sound that this day more than any other reminded him of seeds rattling in a seed pod.

He wished he could take Hatshepsut in his arms at this very moment and make love to her before the altar

of Hathor. It would not seem a sacrilege, but a dedication. But her face was so rapt, so intensely concentrating on the words of the hymns she was now chanting, he did not dare.

Later, when the sun was high and hot and they were back on the boat, their lovemaking was more passionate than it had ever been before, as though Hathor had given them her blessing, and any reservation they might have had about the propriety of their relationship was gone. It seemed to him, as they lay quietly afterwards, Hatshepsut's face had the same rapt expression it had had at the height of the ceremony in the temple. He did not speak about it, but he was sure she had felt then the same desire as he had, and their lovemaking now was a kind of sacrament, binding them together forever, performed for Hathor.

Softly he touched her body outside and in with his fingers and his mouth. They had not parted after the first lovemaking, and the second flowed out of the first, like nectar out of a flower. The third and the fourth followed as naturally. Never had either felt such pleasure so deeply and so easily.

When sleep came it seemed that even then there was no parting, but dreams that continued their union.

The next part of the journey passed without their noticing. The green plains of the west bank and the desert on the east slid by. Sometimes they emerged

from their cabin and stared up at the great dome of the sky ablaze with stars. Sometimes they listened to the singing from the banks as they passed small villages without stopping. Sometimes they heard and saw nothing but each other.

At Iunyt they had to stop. It was a big cult centre for Khnum, the god who was believed to fashion the bodies and the personal souls of the kings on his potter's wheel, and then breathe the life force into their nostrils. Here Khnum shared a temple with the goddess Neith of the shield and the crossed arrows, and Heka, the goddess of magical power. Hatshepsut was already beginning to plan the reliefs for her great temple at Serui and intended to include a sequence in which her divine birth would be depicted. Senmut spent time sketching some of the scenes from the temple of Khnum to use in his design, while she performed the rituals expected of Pharaoh. This place was not as magical for them as Per-Hathor had been, and the visit was short.

They had quite a long break from the river at the twin towns of Nekheb and Nekhen, the first on the east bank and the second on the west. "The Red Mound" as it was known, was a very important cult centre, the home of Nekhbet, "the White One of Nekhen", the vulture goddess, who had come to be the symbol for Upper Egypt. Wadjet, the cobra goddess, was the

symbol for Lower Egypt. These two goddesses were known as “the Two Ladies” and every pharaoh had to have one of his five major titles connected with them. Nekhbet assisted at all the royal births and was carved in relief, holding the circle of eternity, her wings spread out in protection over nearly every temple.

The town was surrounded by sagging mud-brick walls and the temple itself was in very bad repair. While she was there Hatshepsut arranged for its proper restoration, and Senmut drew up the plans and promised to return to supervise the more complicated parts of its construction.

They were told of a small ruined temple to Hathor and Nekhbet in the desert mountains to the east, and took a day’s ride on mules to visit it. They passed through silent valleys where the blank eyes of rock-cut tombs from the early dynasties stared down at them, and occasional shrines to Horus crumbled on high pinnacles of rock. Above them in the royal-blue sky, the god himself circled ceaselessly on golden wings.

The temple they sought was no more than a ruined chapel; most of the Hathor columns with the goddess’s woman face and soft cow ears were fallen, the combined shrine of Nekhbet and Hathor open to the sky, the ceiling slabs long since fallen and lying on the ground smashed to pieces and half-covered with sand.

Hatshepsut and Senmut sat close together on the warm stone of a fallen column and stared silently at the ruined reliefs, the magic symbols no longer magic, the

holy place no longer holy. Then Senmut drew in the sand how he would rebuild it, and Hatshepsut picked some dried grasses that had managed to take root in this rocky wilderness, and placed them on the cracked altar.

A shadow passed over them, and they both looked up. A vulture had come to rest on one of the rocky outcrops and was watching them. Hatshepsut gave a little shiver and took Senmut's hand.

"They're never far away, the gods," she whispered.

He kissed her forehead, but this time chastely. This was Hathor's place as well as Nekhbet's, but somehow the vulture's presence was stern and forbidding. Although they were alone here, unlike at the Per-Hathor, he did not feel like making love under her gaze.

At Djeba Mesen, Hathor's great love, Horus, was worshipped in a temple raised above the flood plain. Here again restoration work was planned. The temple was small, but it had two statues of Horus of smooth grey granite simply and exquisitely carved, crowned with the double crown of Khemet. Around the walls were reliefs depicting Horus sacrificing his eyes to save Osiris from the evil rages of Set. The Horus eyes, sun and moon, had become symbols of awareness in the deepest and most sacred sense, and his sacrifice had shown that evil can and will be defeated. The

resurrection of Osiris — like the green shoot growing from the buried grain — gave hope of regeneration and eternal life.

Not long after Mesen the river narrowed alarmingly and the desert marched beside it, often in the shape of huge and towering sandstone cliffs. The place was known as the Place of Rowing, and the crew had to work hard to get the boat through. The rock faces on both sides of the river were covered with prayers, commemorative pieces and names. It was a wonder that anyone could have reached those inaccessible places to make any kind of mark.

While they were in this area the royal party visited the sandstone quarries from which most of the stone for the temples of Khemet had been taken. They spent some days with the quarry master, while Senmut chose the stone he needed for the work Hatshepsut had set him, and she gave her approval. She did not know as much about stone as he, but there was an occasional piece she spotted that she particularly wanted for its colour and its striations. He explained to her that sandstone had to be laid down in a building in conformity with the bedding plane of the rock as it lay in the natural state, or it would weather badly. She was interested in everything, and sprang from rock to rock, enjoying every moment of it.

At last it was time to leave, and there was one more

major centre to visit before they approached their destination.

Nubt, on a promontory at a bend in the river, overlooked wide green plains and the curving silver waters of the Nile. Khnum had another temple here, shared this time with Sobek, the crocodile god, and Horus. The feature that interested Senmut most was an extraordinarily deep well, shown to him by a priest who claimed that what could be seen at the bottom of it was no ordinary water, but the original primeval liquid from which all life had sprung, pure as it was at the Beginning.

Hatshepsut performed her duties as usual, but seemed in a hurry to leave. She made the boatman pull in to the bank upstream from the town and the temple. There she and Senmut walked through fields of barley and lay beneath blossoming fruit trees to make love like two young peasants.

“How I wish this journey would never end,” she sighed. It was as though, having fretted all her life for power and pomp and ceremony, she was already tired of it and yearning for a simpler life away from the court and all her responsibilities. Senmut held her when she wanted to be held and let her go when she wanted to be let go. They were deeply in harmony with each other and with the rhythm of the ageless river and the land that cupped it between its two hands.

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Suan was a garrison and trade town, taking up most of the southern part of a large island in the Nile. Huge grey rocks looking remarkably like elephants stood around in the water, marked with the flood lines of the river. The red granite that was so sought after by all the pharaohs for their pyramids and temples and statues created a great hard ridge between Nubia and Khemet. The waters of the river foamed up to a frenzy over the rocky and uneven bed it created, giving the impression that the Nile itself was bubbling up from the underworld.

Khnum was the god in charge, this time accompanied by the goddesses Satet and Anuket. There were marked steps to measure the water level, dedicated to Hapi, the androgynous Nile god, which gave information of vital importance to the whole country. The height of the waters here could mean plenty or famine the whole length of the land.

The town itself was full of soldiers to guard the frontier between Nubia and Khemet, and others who came in with the columns of pack animals and traders from all over the region. The desert behind the granite quarries was rich in minerals — amethyst for jewellery, copper-malachite and lead-galena for eye cosmetic, granite, quartzite, diorite, steatite for statues and monuments, copper and tin for bronze. South of the town in the great mountainous regions of Nubia there was more gold than anyone could measure. Many languages were spoken, and even those known to

Senmut and Hatshepsut they found difficult to understand when spoken by the locals. This was rough country, and the isolated communities had developed some strange dialects.

Senmut went by himself to the quarries. He was well known there and was soon drinking beer with the quarrymen. It felt strange to be far away from Hatshepsut's side with a group of working men again. The journey began to feel like a beautiful dream, insubstantial and easily dismissed as unreal. Everywhere he heard the hard ring of chisel on stone, the cracking roar as big chunks were levered off, and the shouts and whistles of the men.

He enjoyed his work, but he was glad to get back to the island town, wash the quarry dust off his skin and climb into bed with his lover.

When Hatshepsut had attended to all the necessary civil and religious matters, and had chosen the ivory and gold and lion skins she wanted to take back with her, she went with him to the quarry.

Work was stopped at once so that there would be no stone dust to choke her or flying chippings to endanger her eyes. He took her to the area where the best granite was found and suggested which parts would yield suitable pieces for the obelisks. She walked among the giant blocks of stone silently, indicating that she wanted to be alone. She laid her hands on the cliff and meditated. These obelisks must be perfect. They must come virginal from the mountain, flawless, intact. They

would be her statement to her god. They would be the outward form of her vow.

She chose the exact pieces she wanted, and at sunset they returned to the river, in time to see the waters blood-red as Atum sank beneath the rim of the western desert. It was nightfall and the jackals were howling before they stepped once more onto the boat that was to ferry them across the river.

Those early years were very good for both Hatshepsut and Senmut. Stimulating discussion of ideas, plans for new building, lovemaking — all seemed perfect. Men-kheper-Ra was no threat, and the Two Lands were totally behind her. When she sat in the great hall, she sat alone and gave judgements and listened to petitions. She was wise and sensible, and earned everyone's respect.

But as Men-kheper-Ra grew older, some said she would have difficulty in keeping the double crown to herself. Some began to think their fortunes would rise higher if they supported the young prince.

Ast bided her time.

That's the end of the sampler. We hope you enjoyed it. If you would like to find out what happens next, you can buy the complete Mushroom eBook edition from the usual online bookshops or through www.mushroom-ebooks.com

ABOUT MOYRA CALDECOTT

Moyra Caldecott was born in Pretoria, South Africa in 1927, and moved to London in 1951. She married Oliver Caldecott and raised three children. She has degrees in English and Philosophy and an M.A. in English Literature.

Moyra Caldecott has earned a reputation as a novelist who writes as vividly about the adventures and experiences to be encountered in the inner realms of the human consciousness as she does about those in the outer physical world.

To Moyra, reality is multidimensional.



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