

# New Light in Ancient Egypt

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“We must conclude that the mental residue of those primeval times has become a heritage which, with each new generation, needs only to be awakened, not to be re-acquired.”

Sigmund Freud  
*Moses and Monotheism*

"If sailor tales to sailor tunes,  
Storm and adventure, heat and cold,  
If schooners, islands, and maroons  
And Buccaneers and buried Gold  
And all the old romance, retold,  
Exactly in the ancient way,  
Can please, as me they pleased of old,  
The wiser youngsters of to-day:

-So be it, and fall on! If not,  
If studious youth no longer crave,  
His ancient appetites forgot,  
Kingston, or Ballantyne the brave,  
Or Cooper of the wood and wave:  
So be it, also! And may I  
And all my pirates share the grave,  
Where these and their creations lie!”

Robert Louis Stevenson

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## 1. The Great Palace

Hapu arrives on the royal dock of the Malaka Palace early one morning just in time to see the sun come up over the mountains east of Thebes. The dock is full of the King's soldiers who are busy loading supplies aboard the silver and mahogany boat he will travel north on. At the first sight of the sun, all activity on the dock suddenly ceases and everyone drops to their knees facing the sun. Prayers are said to the new sun and then it is back to work for everyone.

His key assistant Heynu is supervising the work of loading the boat.

"Perhaps you can get more information from the King about the purpose of our trip,"

Heynu says.

"The purpose of our trip is to stake out a city," Hapu says.

"I know this," says Heynu. "But what is the purpose of the city?"

"The King's been quiet about this," Hapu says.

"It's not like him," Heynu says. "He's always told you everything."

"I talk to him less and less these days," Hapu says. "He ages quickly and forgets things.

His mind is full of things that don't make sense."

"Things like the crazy cult of his son," Heynu says.

“It’s an unfortunate situation,” Hapu says. “I wish they’d send him away like his older brother. It would be good for him to see what the outside world is like. Queen Tiye should be more forceful in all of this but she’s not.”

“The Crown Prince will soon be co-regent with his father,” says Heynu. “Then things will change.”

Heynu hands Hapu a papyrus list of supplies loaded onto the boat. Hapu looks at it and hands it back to Heynu.

“Everything’s loaded aboard,” Heynu says.

“We’ll leave this afternoon after I give my son a tour of the workshops. I promised him. It’s a special day for him. He just graduated from school and this is his first real exposure to the workshop.”

“Give my congratulations to Hapy,” Heynu says. “But also see what more you can find out about our trip. After all, we’re heading three hundred miles north to stake out a barren piece of land.”

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Hapu leaves the dock area and walks towards the Malaka Palace complex for his meeting with King Amenhotep. The sun has just risen over the eastern mountains beyond Thebes giving the white stone walls of the palace an orange sunburn. The palace is on the west bank of the Nile directly across from Thebes on the East bank. It is unusual for the royal family to reside on the West bank of the Nile since the West is associated with tombs and mortuary establishments. But King Amenhotep seldom does the usual things Kings do.

He walks along one of the canals that connect the palace complex to the Nile River. The waters of the canal are still on this windless morning. A few palace servants push long poles into the canal making sure the water is clean and pure. The canal runs under the walls of the temple complex and connects to the great Pleasure Lake the King has built for Queen Tiye.

Hapu arrives at the main entrance to the palace complex and waves at the guard who motions him into the palace complex. Inside, is the vast landscape of the Malaka Palace complex: the great Pleasure Lake, the groves of date trees, the grand workshop, the Malaka Palace itself and the royal quarters. It has been home for Hapu most of his life as he has been the King's key advisor and builder most of his life. In addition to the other buildings inside the palace complex is the great villa he has lived in for the past twenty years. It is part of the honor of being the King's most trusted advisor and great builder.

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The Malaka Palace is the largest royal residence in Egypt. Its construction has taken twenty years. Hapu has been responsible for most of this construction. The palace complex surrounding it resembles a city. Various officials of the King are in charge of different sections of this palace city. Hapu walks past the great gardens with the multi-colored plants that are almost supernaturally brilliant today in the early morning sun. Then he passes the date groves and next the Queen's Pleasure Lake. It is a great rectangular lake that is larger than a number of farm fields.

North of the great Pleasure Lake is the Temple of Amun-Ra the major god of Egypt. Hapu believes in and knows about Amun-Ra more than most as he is a high priest in the Karnak

Temple in Thebes, the largest Amun Ra Temple in Egypt. The God is the key god in Egypt at the time. A champion of the poor or troubled. Central to personal piety. The Amun's position as King of Gods has developed to the point where other gods are simply viewed as manifestations of him.

The God Ra, relating to the sun, has been a long time God for Egypt. But the Amun part rose to importance when the army of Ahmose I, the founder of Egypt's Eighteenth Dynasty, expelled the Hykos rulers from Egypt. The victor's city of origin was Thebes so Thebes became the most important city in Egypt and capital of the new dynasty. The local patron deity of Thebes was Amun and therefore Amun gained national importance. The Kings of the new dynasty attributed their successful enterprises to Amun-Ra and lavished much wealth and spoils of victory on the construction of temples to Amun-Ra.

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Hapu walks past the different apartments and quarters for officials who work in the complex. Next to the quarters are central areas for the employees in the complex like a great Temple for prayer and a hall for meetings. He finally arrives at the palace. The white marble stone is slick with the burning red of the morning sun. The guard at the door greets him and directs him inside the palace. He has built most of the palace and it seems like his own home in certain ways.

He walks past the various areas for the family living quarters and briefly thinks about this amazing family. Across from the King's rooms are apartments for his daughters and sons. The King has two sons and an adopted daughter. His oldest son is Thutmose who has gone north to

work as a Priest. Her eldest son Thutmose is the Crown Prince of Egypt and will become King one day. He is an outgoing person with a kind disposition who has become a priest. He has started a tradition in the town he lives in now of burying a mummified Apis bull symbolizing the incarnation of the god Ptah. Thutmose is the favorite of his father yet there is talk he is in poor health.

The King's youngest son is Amenhotep IV is his problem child. In his early twenties, he is always exploring new ideas and hanging around with the wrong crowd. He is a very different person from his brother possessing little of the kindness and compassion his brother has. Things center pretty much around Amenhotep IV as he has little sense the world was not created for him in some way. He has just completed his education and is ready to learn things about the empire from his father. And, with his brother becoming King, he has to decide what place in all of this he will play. Or what part he wants to play. He keeps pretty much to himself and has few friends except his key servant and advisor Nihi. His key advisor is his same age and grew up with Amenhotep IV after his family was all killed in an accident on the Nile.

Hapu walks past the area where the King's adopted daughter Sabra lives. She is also in her early twenties and many say she is the most beautiful young woman in Thebes. The King and Queen adopted her when she was only four years old. Like her mother, Sabra is a commoner but other than this, little is really known about her background. At least, little that is shared by the royal family Hapu thinks. His son Hapy and Sabra have been friends since their early years in school.

Queen Tiye has her own complex across from the King's. Perhaps the most interesting thing about Queen Tiye is that she is a commoner. But this is simply another thing that makes King Amenhotep III unusual and interesting. She has been active in the life of her oldest son

Thutmose but her youngest son Amenhotep IV she has never understood.

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The King's office is at the end of a grand hall that Hapu built and now walks down. He looks around at all the art he bought for the King to put on the walls. The walls are items to think about by themselves. The rarest minerals and stones were imported from distant places to create these walls. Each time Hapu walks down this hall he remembers all of this. He has walked down the hall too many times to recall.

Hapu walks into the King's office. The King sits at his desk which is cluttered as usual with papyrus documents waiting for the King's review. The cluttered desk is an appropriate metaphor for the King's mind these days.

When he sees Hapu he motions him to sit down.

Hapu observes the King looks tired and that he continues to lose weight. He is very different from the once vigorous King at the beginning of his reign.

"The boat is ready," Hapu says. "Heynu and I leave this afternoon."

"The project finally starts," the King says. "From the plan we developed."

"We mark off the boundaries of the city," says Hapu. "And then the streets and structures. If everything goes well, we start construction in a month. I wish I knew more about the purpose of the project."

"In time," the King says. "Everything in time. There are more immediate problems for now. The Karnak priests continue to grow in power. Amun Ra has never been more powerful. He challenges my authority."

“Things will change when the Crown Prince becomes co-regent,” Hapu says. “Thutmose is loved by the people of Egypt.”

“I worry about the health of Thutmose,” the King says.

“He is a strong young man,” Hapu says. “He will be fine.”

The King does not say anything.

“Has workshop production been changed?” the King asks.

“Icons and images of Amun Ra are no longer being produced,” Hapu says. “Images of many gods now come from the workshop and are distributed around Thebes and Egypt.”

“This should help distract people’s attention from Amun Ra,” the King says.

“Perhaps,” says Hapu. “But the real distraction from Amun Ra and his priests will be a return to a powerful and prosperous Egypt. The Egypt you ruled for so many years.”

“The world changes,” the King says. “Other nations challenge Egypt now like never before. People have lost faith in the King as the prosperity of the nation declines. They put their faith in gods during times like these.”

Hapu picks up a great gold medallion on the King’s desk. The medallion has the image of a sun on it with rays extending down from it. At the end of the rays are small hands. He holds it between his thumb and forefinger and waves it at the King.

“Gods like the Aten,” Hapu says.

“He might offer a way back to power,” says the King.

“Or a way for a crazy cult to gain power,” says Hapu. “Your son holds too much influence. He takes advantage of you.”

“That is not true,” the King says. “No one takes advantage of the King.”

“The Aten cult he’s involved with is not good for Egypt,” says Hapu.

“I’ll be the judge of what’s good for Egypt,” the King says.

Hapu leaves the palace and walks to his villa. He wonders what his role as an advisor to the King is these days with the King’s young son monopolizing his time. He has never liked Amenhotep IV but he always considered him harmless in his pursuit of weird beliefs and subjects. But now, with his older brother the Crown Prince in ill health, Amenhotep might no longer be harmless if a co-regency with his father is close.

## 2. Villa & Workshop

Hapu's villa is one of the grandest villas in all of Thebes. It has its own wall around it as well as gardens and date groves and a large pond with big white swans on it. The King let Hapu design and build it. Cost was no object. It is a reward from the King ten years ago for being his key advisor and builder.

As Hapu walks through the gardens of the villa, he thinks about his deceased wife Ahset and his two children. The garden was built for them but they all died in a boating accident on the Nile. Hapy is his only child now.

He walks up the wide steps to his patio. The villa is built on a hill so that one can see over the palace walls and see Thebes a half mile away. Hapu walks across the wide marble patio and enters the villa. The villa is luxurious, like a small palace itself with colorful walls and gold and silver statues of the god Amun-Ra all about. As usual, it is a busy place with servants caring for the massive villa and the various architects and builders who work out of it.

Hapu retires to his office and reads over reports from supervisors in the field about building projects of the empire. There is a report about work on the Great Temple of Ipet-Sut. There is a report about the progress on the Royal Mortuary Temple. There are reports about projects in other cities of the empire. Memphis. Hermopolis. Aswan.

\* \* \*

His son Hapy comes into his office. Hapy is in his early twenties. He has grown from a scrawny kid to a strapping, handsome young man. Hapu's plan is for Hapy to take over his position someday as builder for the King when Thutmose becomes king. Ever since he was a young boy, Hapy has taken him on various construction projects with him.

Usually, Hapy would be in school but he graduated a few days ago and is ready to make his place in the world. He has experienced the best education of an upper-class Egyptian of. Since he was five-years-old, his teachers have placed great emphasis on learning the arts of reading and writing. Most importantly he has learned about the sacred arts of Egypt connected to the energies beyond control of human activities, the divine realms and divinities of mythology and symbolism at the heart of the Egyptian spirit, inspiration and motivation.

Hapy's learning started when he was young with personal, family stories and myths his father and grandfather told him. The myths explained many things of the heavens and world such as the meaning of constellations and the yearly flooding of the Nile. His teachers and tutors were from the highest ranks of the priesthood at the major temples. As great as his education was, it has not given Hapy much idea as to what he wants to do in life. He enjoys going on projects with his father but does not seem excited about the prospect of building temples and mortuary tombs for the rest of his life.

\* \* \*

“I’m proud you’ve completed your schooling,” Hapu says. “Now your real education begins.”

“I look forward to it,” Hapy says.

Hapy means this as he was becoming increasingly bored with school and how it gave him no direction in life.

They leave the villa and walk across the palace complex. They walk past Queen Tiye’s great garden. In the mid-morning sun, the garden colors are so bright the garden is difficult to look at without squinting.

“Someday, you’ll have a relationship with the King like the one I’ve had,” Hapu says. “It’s a difficult relationship. One must balance many things. Ma’at and Amun-Ra will show you the way.”

It is what his father always says to him.

“Yes,” Hapy says. “The Ma’at and Amun-Ra.”

But he wonders why his father always thinks Ma’at or Amun-Ra will show him the way when he has not been able to show him the way? Hapu talks to Hapy about his relationship to Amun-Ra but never his relationship to him.

Perhaps, he thinks to himself, this is one of those things that will start when his *real education* starts as his father says it is about to do so. These thoughts quickly come and go from Hapy’s mind as he walks to the workshop area with his father. It is something he wants to talk to his father about but has not worked up the courage yet to do so.

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The great workshop area of the palace is a huge rectangular area shielded from the hot sun by a lattice-type overhang with date palm branches on it. The workshop has the feeling and activity of a great marketplace with hundreds of individual stalls. Overall, there is a division into craftsmen and artists working with various materials and processes. In one area is the fire and smoke of the great furnaces for smelting ores. In another area are carpenters and wood craftsmen. Next to them are stone craftsmen. Everywhere are statues of various Egyptian gods. There are huge statues and icons that will need many men and horses to move. There are small statues that be carried with one or worn. But there is no statues of Amun-Ra being made.

They walk around the vast workshop. The blank stone eyes of the statues seem to follow them around like silent centurions guarding a great secret. A number of workers approach Hapu and how him diagrams and plans for projects under construction. There are brief discussions and they are gone and then more people come. Hapy observes how his father is quick to answer questions or make corrections in the plans he is shown.

Hapy thinks it is good to be with his father and watch him work and see what he does each day. This seems the best indication of what his future career will be like. He has briefly visited the workshop before but today Hapu gives Hapu a detailed tour. He introduces Hapy to a number of his key supervisors. They have worked for Hapu for many years and Hapy has known them since he was a small boy. There are the stoneworkers and metal workers. There is the new group called alchemists who make new materials from old substances by mixing their strange concoctions and casting spells. Some priests are also craftsmen and some craftsmen are also magicians and alchemists. A few perform magic for them as they pass.

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After a few hours, they leave the workshop and walk back to the villa. The god Amun-Ra is right above them, at the height of his daily trip across the sky. His heat is like the great smelting furnaces of the workshop.

“Your first grand tour of the workshops,” Hapu says. “What do you think?”

“It’s very impressive,” Hapy says. “I had no idea there were so many gods in Egypt.”

“The King has commissioned the production of statues for many different deities,” Hapu says.

“Yet none for Amun-Ra,” says Hapy.

“The King fights the growing power of Amun-Ra,” Hapu says. “He makes statues of various gods to lessen the power of Amun-Ra.”

“The King’s god has always been Amun-Ra,” Hapy says. “Your god is Amun-Ra.”

“Yes,” Hapu says. “But this is changing quickly,” Hapy says.

“Is this why I hear about The Aten?” Hapy asks.

His father stops.

“Where did you hear of the Aten?” he asks.

“From Nihi,” Hapy says.

“You must not listen to Nihi,” Hapu says.

“But Nihi is my best friend,” Hapy says.

“It’s time for the friendship to end,” Hapu says.

Hapy does not say anything on the rest of their walk to the villa from the workshops. A sailboat is skirting around the Queen’s Pleasure Lake. People in the boat wear bright, sparkling outfits that flap alive with a sudden breeze. He is disturbed. Hapy has never heard his father so

adamant about something. Nihi and him have grown up together and Nihi has spent much time with Hapy's family. Why does his father order a friendship like this cut-off?

\* \* \*

As Hapu and Hapy enter the villa, Hapu's assistant Ipy approaches him. Ipy is an older man and the head servant of the household who has worked most of his life for Hapu.

"Your things are packed for the trip," Ipy says.

"Good," says Hapu. "We'll leave for the boat in a few minutes."

Hapy follows his father as he walks around the villa reading new messages which have come in the past few hours.

"Where are you going?" Hapy asks.

"North," Hapu says.

"Another project for the king?" Hapy asks.

"Yes," says Hapu.

"How long will you be gone?" Hapy asks.

"About a week," Hapu says.

"I wish you a successful trip," Hapy says. "I appreciate the tour of the workshop this morning."

"I'll get you started when I get back," Hapu says. "I want you to work in all areas of the workshop. There is much to learn."

Before he leaves, Hapu grabs Hapy's shoulders and looks at him in his most serious manner.

“One of the things you must learn is to listen to your father,” Hapu says. “You must stay away from Nihi. There is nothing good to come of your relationship with him now that he is associated with The Aten.”

Hapu hugs his son and is gone with Ipy to his waiting boat. Hapy watches his father and Ipy walk to the boat from the patio of the villa. He thinks about the type of man his father is. What kind of mentor will he be during this time the school has loosened its strangle hold on Hapy’s life.

What is the meaning of this word “Aten” he hears muttered and whispered more and more around Thebes in the cafes around town. And what is this strange order from his father to stay away from his best friend Nihi? All of this only serves to strengthen his feelings of friendship with Nihi and his desire to continue their regular meetings in Thebes.

### 3. The Secret Chapel

Early in the morning a few days later, Nihi wakes the King's youngest son Amenhotep IV up in his royal apartment across from the King's quarters. Nihi is the leading servant and advisor of for the young boy. The youngest son of the King is in his early twenties. He possesses an unusual physique and appearance with a somewhat oblong head and long neck and a stomach developing a paunch. He looks very different from his older brother Thutmose who is strong and handsome. Everyone waits expectantly for Thutmose to become the new King of Egypt.

Nihi helps Amenhotep IV get into his prayer robe. When he is dressed they walk through the halls of the great palace until they arrive at the newly created open court in an isolated corner of the palace.

There is a stark contrast from inside to outside the palace and one's eyes take a few seconds to adjust to the change. Nihi lays the special prayer rug on the stones of the open court for the King's young son. He places the prayer rug in front of a great circular disk with rays in the form of hands extending from it. The great disk is on the western wall of the courtyard to catch the light of the rising sun in the east. The young King's son makes gestures and exclamations as he enters the court and knells on the prayer rug. The word "Aten" is uttered many times as he begins prayers.

\* \* \*

As Nihi watches Amenhotep IV from the side of the courtyard, there is noise from the hall leading to the courtyard and the King slowly walks down the hall with Dedu his key servant. The King was once athletic and handsome but after almost thirty years in power, he is overweight and in poor health and walks with great effort helped by Dedu. Nihi bows as the King passes and proceeds into the court and then carefully knells onto a prayer rug Dedu has positioned next to his son.

Amenhotep IV leads the prayer ceremony, reciting a number of incantations and prayers in front of the great disk on the wall. The King is quiet as he has not been able to memorize things anymore.

After the prayer ceremony, the King and his son walk down the great hallway of the palace. The King holds onto Dedu and Nihi follows behind them.

“I offered a prayer to the Aten for your brother’s health,” says the King. “The royal Sed Festival is coming soon. I’m not sure he will make it to the festival. Perhaps the Aten god can help him. I’m willing to try anything. His condition continues to worsen. I’ve sent the best doctors to help him but they’ve all failed.”

The King and his son walk in silence for a few minutes. They pass grand, colorful rooms full of statues and glittering objects. Servants are busy in the rooms polishing the statues. The King turns from the main hall and the group walks down another hall and then into the King’s office. Nihi and Dedu follow them into the office and stand at attention next to the door.

\* \* \*

“I get little from these prayer sessions,” the King says. “The Aten disk has no effect on me. It is no more than an on a wall to me. I am sorry you convinced me to build the prayer courtyard.”

“It takes a while to experience the Aten,” Amenhotep IV says. “It does not all come at once.”

“I’m waiting,” the King says. “Waiting as the Karnak priests get more powerful each day.”

On one wall of the office is a large map of Egypt and the surrounding nations. The King motions his arm at it.

“Our empire was blessed for many years,” the King says. “Our ancestors conquered kingdoms in the north. The empire has brought great tributes from these kingdoms each year: gold, silver, precious stones, rare woods, ivory tusks, animal skins. Amun Ra has been good to us and I have repaid him with great wealth and power. But most of this wealth and power has gone to the priests of Amun Ra. Once I had a peaceful co-existence with them. Now, they challenge my power.”

“The Aten will take power from the priests and restore it to the King,” Amenhotep IV says.

“The Aten can also take power from the King,” the King says. “The power of one god is dangerous. The god becomes King.

Egypt needs many gods. Each has power but each power is less than the power of the King. Many gods are necessary to maintain the King’s power.”

“Many gods distract from the King’s power,” Amenhotep IV says. “One god can work with the King to restore power.”

“I don’t see this happening,” the King says.

“Your eyes are old. You see less with them each day,” Amenhotep IV says. “A new generation rises in Egypt. The Aten is the god of this generation.”

“When will I meet the old priest behind the Aten?” the King says. “The one you meet with him on a regular basis. The one who creates the prayers to the Aten. It is time I meet with him.”

“It is necessary he stay in hiding for now,” Amenhotep IV says. “The Karnak priests would kill him.”

“How can he be killed if his Aten is so powerful?” the King says.

“The old priest has power over the greatest things in the universe,” Amenhotep IV says. “Not the fate of individual men.”

“Perhaps he needs to concern himself with the fate of individual men,” the King says. “Like your brother Thutmose.”

“I’m prepared to assume co-regency with you,” Amenhotep IV says.

“And rule Egypt from the city in the north that Hapu builds,” the King says.

“It is the prophecy of the old priest,” Amenhotep IV says.

\* \* \*

The door to the office opens and an aid enters.

“The dignitaries from Memphis have arrived for the meeting,” the aid announces.

“Bring them in,” the King says.

Amenhotep IV rises and bows to his father and leaves with his advisor Nihi. They walk down the wide hall of the palace back to the room of Amenhotep IV.

“Things are happening faster than we could have anticipated,” Nihi says.

“Like the old priest predicted,” Amenhotep IV says.

#### 4.Friends in Thebes

Hapy waits at the dock area of the Malaka Palace with a number of officials from the palace. Soon, the boat at the quay will be loading to take them across the Nile to the capital city Thebes. He stands near the end of the quay and looks at the great city across the Nile and thinks how lucky he is to live near it.

Thebes is located on the alluvial plains of the Nile Valley on a great bend of the Nile. In the east behind the city are the mountains of the Eastern Desert with their valleys draining into the Nile Valley. It is now the world's largest city with a population of 80,000 residents covering 36 square miles. It has flourished more than any other city in Egypt during the long period of peace and prosperity under the reign of the King. The geography of Thebes has also helped with its close location to Nubia and the eastern desert with its valuable mineral resources and trade routes.

Hapy looks at the massive Karnak Temple in the northern part of Thebes. It is the key temple for Amun Ra and the King has poured much of the wealth from foreign tributes into it. The temple is the largest in Egypt and has been in development for hundreds of years. Hapy has heard from his father that thirty Kings contributed to its construction.

North of the temple is a great valley between the eastern mountains. The valley is called Wadi Hammamat and it is a major overland trade route to the Red Sea a hundred miles to the east. Hapy often wonders about the great sea to the east. He has travelled only up and down the Nile and never to the eastern deserts and the Red Sea. He hears that many metals and minerals used in the workshops come from the eastern deserts. Someday he hopes to travel to them.

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Hapy boards the boat and soon it is pushing over the blue-green water of the Nile, heading for the dock area of Thebes. The dock is busy with trade from other cities in the empire and foreign cities. Hapy stays at the dock area for a while and watches the activity. There is much bargaining and negotiating in the dock area. It seems like a marketplace with cargoes loaded on and off ships and constant negotiations in progress. Above everything, there is pungent smell of spices and exotic fruits in the hot summer air. Many statues of the various deities created in the palace workshop are being loaded onto the ships on their journey to distant regions of the empire.

Hapy looks at the big sundial in the dock area and realizes he is late meeting for his meeting with Nihi. He pushes through crowds of merchants in the dock area and then through crowds at the big food market next to the docks. The market gives way to the wide boulevard of Thebes where many of the government offices are located. Thebes is the center of the newly established professional civil service. The royal archives are beginning to fill with accounts and reports and there is a great demand for scribes and those who are literate. The favored few of nearby Nubia are reeducated in Thebes with Egyptian culture to serve as administrators back in

the colony.

He walks down the great boulevard of Thebes that connects the Karnak Temple on the northern part of the city with the Luxor Temple on the southern part. Chariots and wagons pass carrying people and goods. There is construction activity all about with the Royal Sed Festival coming soon.

The Egyptians are a culture of festivals and there are more than sixty festivals each year in Thebes. Of all the festivals, the Sed Festival will be the grandest one. It will be the greatest event of Hapy's young life. His father has told him much about it. It is the grand ritual which renews the King's right to rule as well as his royal powers. It usually occurs after a King has been on the throne for thirty years. The upcoming Sed Festival will mark the 30<sup>th</sup> year of the King's rule.

Hapy turns off the boulevard and walks down a street with shops featuring exotic products imported from distant lands. He turns onto another street and then goes into the little café bar to meet Nihi.

\* \* \*

It is dark inside, lit by torches on walls and oil lamps on tables. A man strums a lyre on a small stage. There are only a few people in the bar.

He sees Nihi at a table in the corner of the room. They have been meeting here for a number of months and it is becoming somewhat of a tradition. It is Nihi's regular day-off from his duties with AmenHotep IV and he has a pitcher of beer and two glasses on the table in front of him. He fills Hapy's glass as he sits down at the table.

“My father said something strange the other day after my big tour of the palace workshop,” Hapy says. “We were talking about the increased production of statues to various gods rather than Amun-Ra. He told me they are necessary to battle the power of Amun Ra. I then mentioned the Aten you’ve told me about that Amenhotep IV worships.”

“What did he say?” Nihi asks.

“He said I must not listen to you,” Hapy says. “That I must stay away from you. He knows we’re best friends. You’re almost family. Why would he say something like this?”

“There are great changes coming,” Nihi says. “Greater than you can imagine. Your father is in a dangerous position.”

“My father is the King’s key advisor,” Hapy says. “How can he possibly be in a dangerous position?”

“He’s the King’s advisor,” says Nihi, “But he’s also a high priest in the Karnak Temple.”

“The King worships Amun Ra,” says Hapy.

“He used to worship Aman-Ra but he doesn’t anymore,” Nihi says. “It’s a confusing situation for him. The Karmak Temple priest are now against him. They used to be on his side. Things change. Your father has mixed loyalties, to the King and the priests. It’s dangerous to be the King’s advisor and a Karnak Temple priest.”

“My father has many loyalties and plays many roles,” Hapy says. “He is an astrologer, a magician, an alchemist. Different roles balance life. It is the way of Ma’at.”

“The way of Ma’at is sometimes a dangerous way,” Nihi says.

Nihi rises from the table and puts tokens on the table to pay for the pitcher of beer.

“Let’s walk a little,” Nihi says.

\* \* \*

It is noon. The time of day when the Amun is at his highest and most powerful position in the sky. The two young men walk in silence along the great boulevard of Thebes. They walk towards the Karnak Temple at one end of the boulevard. Soon, they are surrounded by priests coming and going from the temple. Many carry scrolls and are adorned with jewelry and medals that show their rank in the priesthood.

At the end of the boulevard are the great walls of the Karnak Temple. Nihi stops near one the walls and they sit down under a large palm tree.

They watch priests come and go from the grand entrance to the temple. Before they go in, there is a purification ritual and different clothing must be worn. There is an area in front of the temple where this process takes place.

“I have seen much in the past few weeks,” Nihi says. “Much I haven’t told you. I hear many things in my role as Amenhotep’s friend and advisor. Unbelievable things.”

“What type of things?” Hapy asks.

Nihi picks up a stick and draws a great shape in the sand.

Hapy recognizes the shape.

“The palace,” Hapy says.

Nihi points to a square within a large rectangle at one of the corners of the palace shape in the sand.

“A few months ago, Amenhotep IV convinced the King to construct a secret interior court in the palace,” Nihi says.

“We used to play in this area when we were kids,” Hapy says.

“A month ago, the King constructed an open courtyard in this place,” Nihi says.

“My father said nothing about this,” Hapy says.

“That’s because he knows nothing about it,” Nihi says.

“That’s impossible,” says Hapy. “He knows about every project of the King.”

“Not this one,” Nihi says. “The King used others to build it. It is the best kept secret of the palace. I think your father suspects something is going. The Karnak priests hear talk of the Aten god and his prayer court.”

\* \* \*

They leave the area outside the Karnak Temple and walk through the market and to the dock area. They board the boat to take them back across the Nile to the royal dock of the Malaka Palace. When the boat pulls away from the public dock in Thebes, they make their way to the stern and lean on the railing looking back at Thebes in the late afternoon. The city’s white and gold colors contrast against the dirty rust-colored mountains beyond Thebes to the east and the blue-green waters of the Nile.

“At sunrise for the past month,” says Nihi, “I’ve watched the King and Amenhotep IV pray to the disk of the Aten in the courtyard. The image of the Aten is on a wall of the courtyard. It is a great circular disk shaped like the sun with hands emanated out from it. It is a symbol of the new Aten sun god. Amenhotep conducts the ceremony and the King joins in but he has little belief in the Aten.”

“This will change when Crown Prince Thutmose becomes co-regent at the upcoming Sed Festival,” Hapy says.

“Thutmose is very ill,” Nihi says. “It is a well-kept secret. The King does not think he will live much longer.”

“Amenhotep IV will become co-regent with his father,” Hapy says.

“Yes,” Nihi says. “And, with the declining condition of his father, most likely the ruling King.”

They are silent as the boat pushes across the Nile and docks at the quay of the Malaka Palace. In the late afternoon hours, it is less crowded than the morning hours when Hapy went to Thebes. Before they go their own ways, they embrace each other on the dock.

“No one knows what I’ve told you,” Nihi says. “Your father might suspect some of this. I hope you can understand why I think your father is in a dangerous position as a High Priest for Amun Ra when Amenhotep IV and the old priest are behind the Aten cult that challenges Amun Ra.”

“Who is the old priest?” Hapy says.

“He is a mentor for Amenhotep IV,” says Nihi. “A mentor and a teacher and a prophet. He is a messenger of God. He brought the Aten to Egypt and the royal house. He tells the King’s son that a great change is upon us. I see pieces of this change but only pieces. I try to put them together. It’s a great puzzle. A mystery. Perhaps you can help me understand all of this.”

Nihi hugs Hapy and then he is gone, walking towards the walls of the palace.

Hapy stands on the royal dock and watches Nihi go. Who is this old priest Nihi talks about? Then he looks north up the Nile. He wonders about the project in the north that has taken his father away for a week. Does this new Aten religion Nihi tells him about have anything to do with his father’s trip north? And, what story will his father tell him when he returns?

## 5. The Nile North

The boat made of ebony and silver slides through the down current of the Nile as it heads north. It is one of the royal boats used by high officials of the King. It is made from exotic materials and has a great white sail in its middle and cabins on the bow and stern. On each side of the boat, ten royal sailors row. But rowing is easy since the boat goes downstream with the northern current. The Nile Valley spreads out from the great river. Now, it is dry and white but it will be green and fertile in the winter of the year. The grand cycle of Egypt.

Hapu often uses the boat to make trips to the various projects he is working on for the King. This is another one of those projects. But it is different from the others in that he knows little about the ultimate purpose of the project. All he knows is that he is staking out an entire new city for the King. Yet it is a city that he has played a major part in designing. He has those mixed feelings of his again. He is proud of the city he has designed. Yet he knows little of the use of this design in the larger media ecology of things.

On the boat are some of Hapu's top supervisors including his key assistant Heynu. Hapu sits at a table in the large cabin at the back of the boat with his supervisors and Heynu. Drawings are spread on the table in front of them.

“That finishes our meeting,” says Hapu. “You each have your assignments.”

“We’ve never had a project of this size,” Heynu says.

“An entire city,” one supervisor says. “But why a city two hundred miles north of Thebes?”

“In the middle of nowhere with no trade routes nearby?” another supervisor says.

“The King’s been secretive on the whole thing,” Hapu says.

“Word is going around that his son AmenHotep IV is the real force behind the project,” another supervisor says.

“It’s not hard to believe with the Crown Prince very ill,” says another supervisor.

“There is even talk of a new religion in the palace,” a supervisor says.

“Much speculation is in the air today,” Hapu says. “Right now, we’ve got a job to do up here. Study your assignments so we can move efficiently when we arrive at the site.

Hapu rolls up the large drawing on the table.

The supervisors leave except for Heynu.

\* \* \*

Hapu goes to a cabinet and brings out a carafe of wine and puts two glasses on the table and fills the glasses. The two men sip the wine.

“There has been such a change in the King over the past few months,” Hapu says. “It is difficult to say what is really going on.”

“The young son takes a growing part in influencing the King,” Heynu says. “There is talk of a mysterious old priest who comes and goes from the palace and puts radical ideas into young AmenHotep’s head. There is talk of some new god called Aten who challenges Amun Ra.”

“All of this greatly concerns the priests at Karnak,” Hapu says. “Once the King gave great wealth to the temple. Once he was behind the Karnak priests. Now he is against us. Once the goals of the king and Amun Ra were in alignment. Now they are in opposition. Once I saw the King almost daily. Now, he hardly talks to me. When he does, it’s just like a few minutes he spent with me before this trip.”

“I fear this new project we stake out tomorrow, will only cause greater opposition between the priests and the King,” says Heynu.

\* \* \*

Early the next day, Hapu and Heynu watch as the boat nears the area on the east side of the Nile where the city is to be constructed. It is some of the most barren land Hapu has ever seen. The flat desert area is surrounded by cliffs on all sides. The cliffs rise to a high desert plateau. They are cut by dried valleys and torrent beds that lead into the eastern desert.

There is a “V” shaped break in the cliffs and light pours from this break. Hapu and the crew watch the growing light.

“This location was chosen where the sunrise conveys a symbolic meaning,” Hapu says. “The sun rises in the break of the eastern cliffs.”

“I have heard more about this site,” Heynu says. “Rumors circulate around Thebes. I have heard that AmenHotep IV calls this area the ‘horizon’ of the Aten.”

“Just rumors,” Hapu says.

Hapu says this as much to quiet his men down than refute what Heynu claims. The fact is, he has heard the same things. Yet it is unwise to let his men know this right now. Unwise to have any dialogue now in the story. Just internal voices now thinking about all of this.

\* \* \*

The boat crew watch as the great orange ball of the new sun rises over the cliffs on the eastern horizon. An old man with a robe and staff stands directly where the sun rises and watches them approach.

Hapu remembers this because his first view of the man was like one of those illusions or mirages where things appear and disappear in the desert. Anyone who has ever lived in the desert knows all about these illusions. Egypt was famous for them at this time.

He stands next to Heynu on the boat and wonders if Heynu sees the same thing that he does. It is almost a religious, mystical image. One that a person does not see that often in life.

“The image of the old man and the sun alternate between each other,” Hapu says.

“Yes,” says Heynu. “I see this too.”

“So that, for a moment, it’s impossible to tell them apart,” says Hapu. “To separate the old man from the sun. They are the same image.”

“Yes,” says Heynu. “I see this too so you’re not going crazy.”

Then, the old man was separate from the sun.

“An old priest with a staff in a tattered robe,” Hapu says.

“I see this too,” Heynu says. “It’s strange. An old man in the middle of nowhere without a horse or camel.”

“We’ll questions him when we dock,” Hapu says.

They pull into an indentation in the bank of the Nile. It is the best place to establish a dock. They begin to unload equipment and supplies. Hapu and Heynu immediately go looking for the old man. But he has disappeared. They look in all directions. There is nothing but sand until the mountains two miles to the east.

“We saw him minutes ago,” Hapu says. “It’s impossible for him to simply disappear.”

They search the area one more time and then walk back to the boat and direct the men in setting up a camp for the survey work. The first job is setting up a large tent office to shield them from the brutal heat of the Egyptian summer.

Hapy and Heynu begin walking around the area with the large master plan on papyrus noting where they will begin staking off various Stella and streets for the new city.

“What the hell has the King got us into,” Heynu says.

“Populated only by ghosts who disappear into the wind,” says Hapu. “Part of the new religion of the Aten god the nation might be in for.”

## 6.The Old Priest

Late at night, a special boat quietly docks at the palace dock. Royal servants carry a great gold box off the boat. The King, Queen Tiye and King AmenHotep III stand on the quay watching. The group proceeds inside the walls of the palace and places the gold box in a special room of the palace.

The royal family stand over the box for a few minutes. Prayers and invocations are said. The Queen then retires to her area of the palace and the King and AmenHotep IV walk through the palace to the King's office. They are alone. Even Nihi has not been informed of the event tonight.

“We will say nothing of the death of Crown Prince Thutmose,” the King says. “The Sed Festival is upon us and we will announce your brother's death at the festival and have a royal funeral procession through Thebes. You will become co-regent with me during the festival.”

“I am saddened by the death of my brother,” Amenhotep IV says. “At the same time, I look forward to the challenge of my new position.”

\* \* \*

Early the next morning, the King and AmenHotep IV say their prayers to the Aten disk in the courtyard chapel of the palace. Nihi and Dedu watch from the sides of the court as usual. After the prayers, AmenHotep IV sends Nihi on an errand into Thebes. When Nihi is gone, AmenHotep IV dresses in the disguise of a common worker in the palace workshop and leaves the palace secretly without anyone knowing it.

He walks north up the road along the west side of the Nile for a while until he comes to the road going west towards the small farming village and the mountains. It is a little used road. He walks down the road through rich Egyptian farmland until he reaches the village. The village is quiet and almost deserted with most of the residents in the fields around the village harvesting dates off the date palms.

Down one street of the village is a small clay hut with a red wooden door and brass knocker. AmenHotep walks to the door and bangs the door knocker in a type of code. The door slowly opens and an old man with a beard and a robe opens the door.

The inside of the stone hut has no furniture except a bed, table and small desk. A few windows bring a spot of morning sunlight into the hut. The flame of an oil lamp makes images of the two men dance on the whitewashed walls of the hut. Above the desk, the spot of sunlight falls on a circular disk with rays coming from it and small hands on the ends of the rays. It is a smaller version of the great circular disk in the secret courtyard chapel. The two men kneel on the dirt floor of the hut and say prayers to the disk on the wall. Then they sit down at the table.

“It has finally happened,” AmenHotep IV says to the old priest. “My brother has died and I will ascend to co-regent at the Sed Festival.”

“It all begins,” the old priest says.

“Just as you prophesized,” says Amenhotep IV.

“Just as God prophesized,” says the old priest. “I’m nothing more than God’s messenger.”

## 7.Karmak Meeting

Hapu has been home from his trip north for a few days and has had his meeting with the King about the trip. He is surprised at the declining health of the King and a new coldness of the King towards him. Hapu is certain the King's son influences the King's mind more than the King tells him. He does not trust Amenhotep IV and he knows Amenhotep IV does not like him. Hapu represents the old world of his father the King's son tries to get rid of.

This morning Hapu and Hapy walk through the palace workshop as Hapu continues the education of his son about manufacturing processes. Hapy wants to tell his father what Nihi told him at their meeting in Thebes. But he is worried his father will be upset at him for violating his orders by meeting with Nihi.

After the inspection of the workshop Hapu asks Hapy to go with him into Thebes for a meeting at the Karnak Temple to make sure it is ready for the upcoming Sed Festival.

Thebes is busy with preparation for the Sed Festival. The buildings along the great boulevard get new coats of whitewash and there are new statues of the King placed all over the city. Outside the Karnak Temple there is much activity as workers prune the date palm trees and vegetation around the walls of the temple. Inside the temple walls, the huge stone buildings are being cleaned and the gardens pruned.

\* \* \*

They enter the Precinct of Amun Ra in the temple and walk towards the Hyperstyle Hall. Hapu wears his special orange colored robe indicating he is a high priest in the temple. Other priests bow as he passes. Some stop to talk for a few moments.

The Hyperstyle Hall is a vast room with thick, tall columns. Most of the room is dark except for the center aisle which is lit by small windows cut into the roof.

Hapy looks at the room in amazement.

“I didn’t think rooms could be this large,” Hapy says.

“It is one of the most sacred parts of the temple,” Hapu says. “It is used for performing rituals. Only priests and Kings are allowed to enter during these ceremonies. You are old enough to see it.”

Hapu sweeps his arm around the hall.

“The hall represents a marsh at the beginning of time,” Hapu says. “The columns represent papyrus plants. In the dark corners, the columns represent papyrus plants with closed flowers. In the center, where the light shines in, the columns are papyrus plants blooming in the sun. Scenes of religious rituals are carved into the walls.”

Hapy walks around the Great Hall between the massive columns exploring the hall and the scenes on the walls. After a while, a priest dressed in an elaborate purple robe with gold trim comes up to Hapu. He is about Hapu’s age and has a beard. The two men embrace.

“This is Meriptah,” Hapu says. “He is the Senior Priest of the Amun Ra precinct.”

Hapy bows as he shakes hands with Meriptah.

“I have heard much about you,” Meriptah says. “You grow tall and straight like your

father.”

“My father has spoken of you,” Hapy says. “It is good to finally meet.”

The two men walk around the Great Hall as Hapy follows behind them within listening distance to their conversation.

“Your trip north was successful I take it,” Meriptah says.

“Successful in laying out a plan for the King’s project,” Hapu says. “But not successful in finding out what the King is up to. He has never been so secretive about a project with me.”

“You still think the northern site has religious significance?” Meriptah asks.

“There are plans for a huge new temple in the northern site,” Hapu says. “It could be the greatest building I’ve ever constructed.”

“It cannot be a temple for Amun Ra,” Meriptah says. “I would have heard something about this.”

“I think it could be a temple for this new Aten god the King’s son follows,” Hapu says.

“What do you think about this?” Meriptah says.

“For the first time in my life I have the freedom to design and build my dream structure,” Hapu says. “Price is no object. It is the dream of any builder.”

“Perhaps the real temple is the entire city you build,” says Meriptah. “This is disturbing. One of our key priests, building a new city for the Aten, the greatest threat to Amun-Ra.”

“If it’s true,” says Hapu. “We still don’t know the purpose of the city. But even if it’s true, I’m still building my city, a city that the King and I designed and a city I am building. The thing greater for a builder than building his ultimate building is building his ultimate city. No builder could pass up an opportunity like this.”

“The atmosphere in Thebes gets worse for the King each day,” Meriptah says. “Perhaps

the King intends to leave Thebes and live in the new city you build.”

“I’ve thought of this,” Hapu says. “It seems a possibility. “He is greatly worried about the growing power of the Karnak priests and Amun Ra.”

“He has reason for his concern,” Meriptah says. “My priests clamor for some type of action against the King.”

“The King grows weak and his mind slowly leaves him,” Hapu says.

“Perhaps it is the purpose of this Aten to our power when the King can no longer challenge it?” Meriptah says.

“It’s difficult to believe any god can challenge Amun Ra,” Hapu says. “But then it’s difficult to believe how much the new Aten cult infests the palace.”

\* \* \*

The two men leave the Great Hall and walk into a side room and stop at a large ebony table. Another priest stands at the table and bows to Hapu and Meriptah.

“My key assistant Ipuki is in charge of planning the events at the Karnak Temple for the Sed Festival,” Meriptah says.

“It is good to know someone is in charge of planning at Karnak,” says Hapu. “The King has told me little of the plans.”

Ipuki spreads a large diagram on papyrus across the table.

“The plans are different from past Sed Festivals,” Ipuki says. “Usually the entire event centers around the ceremony of the King’s renewal. But we will be preparing for other important ceremonies in these parts of the temple.”

Ipuki points to parts of the diagram.

“What ceremonies?” Hapu asks.

“We don’t know,” says Ipuki. “The King’s people have not said anything about these ceremonies to me or my staff. They have only told us to make preparations.”

“It is most unusual,” says Meriptah.

“Yes,” says Hapu. “Most unusual.”

\* \* \*

The men make markings on the papyrus diagram and on papyrus tablets and discuss various logistics for the great festival. When the meeting is over, Hapu and Hapy leave the temple and walk to the dock area of Thebes. They sit at a table outside a café having tea and watching activity on the docks.

“None of this makes sense to me,” Hapu says. “For years the King has discussed planning festivals with me. We have discussed intimate details of the festivals. And now, the largest festival in his whole reign and he says nothing to me about it.”

Hapy takes a sip of tea. He cannot hold back from telling his father about his meeting with Nihi.

“I disobeyed your orders when you were up north,” says Hapy.

“What do you mean?” Hapu asks.

“I met with Nihi in Thebes,” Hapy says.

“Why?” Hapu asks.

“It worried me when you said I couldn’t see him anymore when I told you he speaks of

the Aten,” Hapy says. “He has been like a member of our family for many years. It didn’t make sense to me. Now, I again hear the name of the Aten in your meeting with Meriptah today.”

“What did Nihi tell you?” Hapu asks.

“Things you need to know about,” Hapy says. “He says you are in a precarious position as both King’s advisor and priest in the Karnak Temple. He tells me about secret prayers the king and AmenHotep perform each day to an Aten disk in a secret chapel in the palace. It is a place even you do not know about. He tells me of the grave condition of the Crown Prince Thutmose and the plans for AmenHotep to become co-regent during the Sed Festival.”

\* \* \*

Hapu ponders what Hapy has just told him.

“This explains the unusual preparations at Karnak,” Hapu says.

“The Sed Festival will see the ascension of AmenHotep IV to co-regent,” Hapy says.

Hapu stares at the activity on the dock for a few moments without saying anything.

“It makes sense,” Hapu says. “A silent coup takes place in the place. Few suspect anything about it.”

“What is to be done?” Hapy asks.

“I need to talk to Meriptah,” Hapu says.

In half an hour, they are on the official palace boat pushing across the Nile to the palace quay. Hapy and his father are on the side of the boat looking north up the Nile. Both are quiet.

“There is one thing I can’t understand,” Hapy says. “One thing in all of this that doesn’t make sense.”

“What is that?” Hapu says.

“AmenHotep IV is young,” Hapy says. “Much too young to think of all these grand plans and schemes. The King no longer rules. If AmenHotep IV will rule the kingdom, someone must rule AmenHotep IV.”

“There are theories going around,” Hapu says. “Theories about an old priest Amenhotep IV meets with on a regular basis.”

“Nihi tells me about the old priest,” Hapy says. “But the old priest is not some god above other gods.”

“Sometimes the most powerful gods are not those above other gods,” Hapu says. “But rather those behind other gods. The gods above are visible. Those behind are invisible.”

## 8.The Sed Festival

The day of the Sed Festival arrives. Hapu and Hapy are seated in a special section for dignitaries inside the great hall of the Karnak Temple. In front of them, Meriptah and his priests perform special rituals revitalizing the spiritual-power of the statues, paintings and reliefs. All of this is meant to prepare the King for the great renewal of the King's powers of strength, fecundity, intelligence and wisdom for the benefit of the whole land and its people.

Music fills the hall and the royal procession enters. The King walks with Queen Tiye next to his side followed by AmenHotep IV and the rest of the royal family. Hapy particularly notices the King's adopted daughter Sabra who he's gone to school with since she first came to the palace when she was a child.

The first events involve the King receiving and sharing the highest and most powerful divine blessings from the great God Amun Ra. Although the King is in battle Amun Ra and his priests, Amun Ra is still the major god of Egypt and presides over important ceremonies like the Sed Festival.

The blessings are symbolized by the crowns, the crook & flail and the sacred vestments worn by the King: the royal kilt, the divine apron and the sacred bull's tail. This tail is the "Sed" of the Sed-Festival and symbolizes the King's ability to draw from and express the greatest

divine natural powers through transformation. These powers are those of the holy bull, the divine lion and the sacred falcon. The sacred falcon is identified as Horus, God of Kingship. It is the symbol for the King.

\* \* \*

The first event of the ceremony is the King's entrance into the Inner Sanctuary of the Temple and his blessing by the Great God Imun Ra, King of all the gods. Hapu and Hapy can hear some of the liturgy and prayers but can make little sense of it since it is in the highest and oldest form of the Egyptian language and difficult to understand.

Then, the King comes forth in what is called a "glorious appearance." He is wearing a spectacular new crown, vestments, scepters and jewelry. This is a very dramatic and breathtaking performance. Many people in the temple collapse or throw themselves down and prostrate themselves before the "Majesty" of the living god.

At the same time as the King makes his appearance, priests throw open a series of monumental wooden doors. Suddenly, intense beams of sun-light stream in upon the figure of the King in his pure white linen garments and dazzling gold crown and jewelry.

The King then mounts his carrying chair, a type of grand basket. On the basket is a magnificent gilded throne. The back support of the throne is a Horus Falcon with wings outstretched embracing the King's body. The carrying chair is lifted by sixteen men and carried in a slow procession through the great halls of the Temple to the large open courtyard and then outside the walls of the temple.

When the King appears outside the temple walls, there is a tremendous outpouring of

festive-spirit and a great outcry of “Long Live Our King!” The cheer is so great it sounds like the entire “Two-Lands” is crying forth its love and support for the King, his royal house and the land and people of Egypt.

“This event begins festivities that continue all over Egypt,” Hapu says. “There is be a great fair with feasting, markets, entertainments, athletic events and much food and drink. The Fair is dedicated to the protection of the deities Hathor, Bes and Ta-Weret. It is really a show of power in the King and his rule. Nothing demonstrates the power of the King like a Sed Festival.”

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After the King leaves the temple, Hapu, Hapy and other dignitaries leave and proceed to the special observation area along the boulevard in Thebes. Soon, a procession along the boulevard begins where the public again sees the King and royal family. The high officials and priests of the royal house are the privileged observers to the first part of the Sed Festival but now it is time for the citizens of Thebes to witness the great event.

There are a number of magicians at the beginning of the procession performing special feats of magic to ensure the renewed power of the King. The belief in magic is the belief in the power of magical names, spells, enchantments, formulae, pictures, figures, amulets and the performance of ceremonies accompanied by the utterance of words of power. The right combinations produce supernatural results and form a large and important part of Egyptian religion.

Then, many high priests in the Karnak temple pass by in the parade. Hapu knows many of them and nods his head in acknowledgement as they walk past.

“There is Meriptah,” Hapy says.

Meriptah walks at the head of the priests and looks at Hapu and Hapy as he passes and raises his hand towards them. The priests are followed by foreign dignitaries from various cities of the empire and beyond. And, at the end of this group, walking behind them, carrying statues of the various gods of the individual cities, a huge contingent of groups marching to the belief in particular gods under the grand God of Egypt, Amun Ra. The different groups have their own colors and styles and personalities. All of them either sing or play some song as they pass by. At the head of the group a person does magic with a stick they twirl in their hands and throw high into the air.

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Suddenly, there is a gasp in the crowd and along the boulevard people point to a great float leaving the temple walls and slowly proceeding down the street. Everyone knows it is the grand Funeral Float and it means there has been a death in the royal family.

As the float gets closer, the crowd can see the symbol of the Crown Prince Thutmose on the float. All about there is an outburst of wailing and crying. Thutmose was loved by many and the expected ruler of the empire after his father. No one knows about the death of the Crown Prince. The royal family has been able to keep the whole event quiet for the past few weeks. There is silence as the funeral pyre of the Crown Prince passes.

Hapu and Hapy bow their heads as the funeral float passes. They are among the few not surprised by this event. It is a confirmation of the rumors they have heard.

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The crowd is agitated after the funeral float passes and people along the procession route talk amongst themselves. What does all of this mean for the future of the empire? Their speculation is soon put to rest by another great float that comes from the walls of the temple and proceeds down the boulevard.

Proceeding the new float, there are trumpeters playing official music of the King. Following them is a colorful group of magicians and alchemists performing magic. Unlike the soberness surrounding the funeral float, the float coming down the boulevard is surrounded with bright colors, music and animation.

Hapu and Hapy recognize the float as the royal float of the King. The royal family rides on it. As the float approaches the crowd sees the royal family gathered at the bottom of two elevated thrones that rise from the float like they are on top of a miniature mountain. The King sits in one of the throne chairs. Amenhotep IV sits in the other throne chair. They both wear the bright red colored royal robe with the symbols of the King of Egypt on them. But Amenhotep IV wears an unusual piece of jewelry on his left chest, above his heart. It is a gold circular disk with rays coming from it. In the morning sunlight, it glitters with the brightness of a star on Amenhotep's chest.

Again, there is a great gasp from the crowd at seeing this unexpected event. Not only has the Crown Prince died but there has been the elevation of Amenhotep IV to Co-Regent of Egypt with his father. And, all of this mixed in with the renewal festival for the King. It is almost too much to take in at one time.

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After the official procession, the crowds along the boulevard walk to the area around the Karnak Temple where a great fair begins. There is feasting and entertainment. There are athletic events and much food and drink.

Hapu and Hapy walk around the fair.

There is a strange mood all about with the unexpected death of the Crown Prince and the elevation of AmenHotep IV to Co-Regent. People gather in small groups discussing the incredible events.

“Our first new King in thirty years,” Hapy says. “You’d think it would be announced in a more dignified manner than by his appearance on the royal float. With two Kings I think I’ll call one the Old King and the other the Young King.”

The two stop and listen to the music of some musicians.

“Maybe the Young King will make a good Co-Regent ruler with the Old King,” Hapy says.

“There is little good about the Young King and his strange Aten god that challenges all Amun Ra stands for,” Hapu says.

## 9. Burial of the Crown Prince

A few days after the start of the Sed Festival, thousands of citizens gather at the Amun Temple just north of Malaka Palace. They come to witness the trip of the Crown Prince to the western world. Hapy watches the event from a special position for high officials. Hapu is not with him. He was very fond of the Crown Prince and takes part in the ceremony.

A ritual is performed whereas the mummy of the deceased Crown Prince is transformed from a corpse into a “living-image” or sacred object connecting two dimensions: the world here and now is connected with the next world. This next world is called the “Duat” or Morning Land. It is the place where one’s spirit and soul join with the creator sun god. The joining of soul and sun allows the soul to return to the earth with the morning sun.

The ceremony is called “The Opening of the Mouth” and refers to the mouth, eyes, ears and nose of the deceased. It is one of the most important “Spells” invoked by Egyptians. During the ceremony, the Hapu and the other priests bring a small offering table and put it in front of a statue and painted scene. They place food and drink offerings on it. Then, they burn incense over it while sprinkling it with holy-water obtained from the first waters of the Nile flood season.

While the ceremony is performed, participants chant or sing the appropriate prayers. When they get to the right place in the chants, Hapu and the other priests gather together and

invoke a chorus response to the prayers. It is meant to create a communal sensation of the efficacy of the prayer.

One of his father's top supervisors sits next to Hapy and explains the ceremony to him.

"Now all of us begin our choral responses," he says to Hapy. "It is meant to show the benefit of the prayers that are shared."

\* \* \*

After the ceremony, Hapu and his key assistants gather at the Hapu's villa for a special dinner in memory of the Crown Prince.

"The ceremony was beautiful," Hapy says. "But I felt little from it. I heard about the benefits of shared prayers. Yet I received no benefit from them."

"Benefits of things are not always immediately apparent," Hapu says. "Like many things in life, the benefits come over time. You will see."

"All I see now is how unhappy everyone is with the death of the Crown Prince," Hapy says.

"He was loved by many," says Hapu. "I planned on working as an advisor to Thutmose when he became King in the same way I worked as an advisor to his father. I was looking forward to this."

"What will happen to your position now?" Hapy asks.

"I will play a smaller part in royal matters," Hapu says. "It is inevitable. Amenhotep IV does not like me and he listens to his own advisors like Nihi. This is alright with me. I could never work for Amenhotep IV."

“People know so little about him,” Hapy says. “I’ve known him since he was a child. Gone to many events with him. But still, I hardly know him. There’s always been something strange and distant about him. He doesn’t even resemble his father or brother in appearance. It’s almost like he is not an Egyptian, like he has come to Egypt from a distant land, a distant body in the heavens. He seems like an immigrant alien somehow inserted into the royal family.”

“I agree with your assessment,” Hapu says. “You see things clearer than most.”

## 10. Transformation

A month after the Sed Festival, the palace's PR machine is busy grinding out the message that things are back to normal and that the two Kings are ruling equally as true Co-Regents. Only a few like Hapu and Hapy know the truth of the matter.

There has been a drastic change in the production from the palace workshop Hapu manages. Instead of producing statues of diverse gods like before, the workshop now produces only the circular Aten discs with the hand rays. They are produced in all sizes, from massive disks for temples to small discs for homes and stores. Slowly, they begin to appear around Thebes and the nation as the old symbols of Amun Ra are quietly destroyed. It is a low-key process meant to cause the least amount of notice amongst the population.

The Old King's mind has already started its voyage to the Western world of death it seems to Hapu. As the silence of old age dementia takes greater hold of his life, Hapu still meets with him on a regular basis. But the Old King hardly recognizes Hapu and at times gets him mixed up with a stone craftsman he knew when he was a child. With his failing mind, he refers all matters of the kingdom to his son. Hapu feels an old friend has died. It makes him sad when he thinks about this but it is something that cannot be changed.

\* \* \*

For Hapu, AmenHotep IV has always been difficult to deal with. Now, in his early 20s, he has the brashness and arrogance that comes with youth. He has always been jealous of Hapu's relationship with his father and Hapu's position in the Amun Ra priesthood. Now, AmenHotep IV has his own team of advisors led by Nihi. They are young people of his generation. Few older people advise the Young King except for the mysterious old priest he meets on a regular basis.

The major intersection AmenHotep IV has with Hapu is the project up north. Hapu offers Amenhotep IV updates on the project and the Young King makes certain additions. It is the only thing that keeps Hapu in regular contact with Amenhotep IV. Hapu has a thousand men working on the project at the time of the Sed Festival. But after the festival, the Young King orders an additional 5,000 workers for the project.

Hapu has made a trip north to speak with his supervisors and plan living quarters for the additional workers. He can see the new city is taking shape with wide boulevards like Thebes and the foundation for a great temple and a palace on the banks of the Nile. A grid layout has been staked out for a farming village beyond the city.

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One evening, Hapu secretly goes into the Karnak Temple to meet with Meriptah. He takes a small boat over the Nile piloted by a few of his most trusted workers. With AmenHotep IV in power, Hapu wonders about his position in the Amun Ra temple and its inevitable confrontation with the Aten of the Young King.

It is late at night, and a full yellow moon is in the black sky over Thebes. The sun has gone into the horizon and is being regenerated for the next day. Few lights are on in the city. Under the moonlight, the Nile looks like shimmering streak of Mercury.

Hapu leaves his crew on the dock and walks quickly to the entrance of the Karnak Temple. He is expected. A priest takes him through the great Hyperstyle Hall to Meriptah's office on one side of the hall. At night, the hall is lit only by torches on the walls. The huge pillars of the hall seem like great trees in some magical forest.

Meriptah is glad to see Hapu. The two have not seen each other since the Sed Festival a month ago. He motions for Hapu to sit down at a table.

"I appreciate you coming tonight," Meriptah says. "It is not a good sign we have to meet in secret like this. But these are different times."

"The most different times I've ever seen," says Hapu.

"I hear the workshop only produces Aten icons," Meriptah says.

"A direct order from the Young King," Hapu says. "I've never seen such production."

Meriptah unrolls a papyrus map of Egypt on the table with marks on it.

"The Aten images are appearing all over the empire," Meriptah says. "Priests send reports from cities up and down the Nile. In Memphis thousands of Amun Ra symbols have been destroyed. The same thing is happening in other cities. Even Thebes is beginning to see Aten disks."

"The time is come, we can wait no longer," says Meriptah. "We need to formulate a plan of resistance to AmenHotep IV and the Aten god before it is too late."

"It is difficult to formulate a plan when so little is known about AmenHotep IV and his Aten cult," Hapu says. "We need more information."

“Your son has given you important information,” Meriptah says. “He knew about the ascension of the King’s son to Co-Regent before anyone else. He told you about the old priest. We need to get more information from him. Who is this old priest who counsels Amenhotep IV? And where can he be found? We need to know before a plan against the Aten can be implemented.”

## 11. Information Gathering

Since the Sed Festival and the elevation of Amenhotep IV to Co-Regent, Thebes has been in turmoil. Each day there are scimmages between royal soldiers and Karmak priests over images of Amun Ra the soldiers attempt to destroy and images of the Aten they attempt to place around the city. It is not unusual to see the image of the Aten in the homes of many young people in the city and there is talk of secret ceremonies to the Aten at secret locations around town.

Hapu and Hapy walk down the main boulevard of Thebes a few days after Hapu's late night meeting with Meriptah. The Aten disk appears on government buildings and shops along the boulevard. Some of the images have been defaced yet they continue to grow in number.

They come to a large, angry crowd gathered in front of one of the government buildings shouting "Death to the Aten!" Above them on the building, a great Aten disk looks down at the crowds. It's one of the largest Aten disks in Thebes. Royal soldiers guard the building from the crowd.

"Another one of the disks produced in our workshops," Hapu says. "It makes me sad to see the workshops cause so much anger."

"You can always quit," Hapy says.

“If I quit I lose control over building the city up north,” Hapu says. “And besides, it puts your career at risk.”

“I’m ready for more risk in my life,” Hapy says. “After all, what’s the value of a career that produces things that anger people?”

Hapu looks at his son.

He does not have an answer for this.

They move past the crowd and continue their walk down the main boulevard. They pass royal soldiers pulling images of Amun Ra off buildings and replacing them with Aten disks. The soldiers work quickly before protestors can gather.

“I’m not pleased about what we create in the workshops,” Hapu says. “Once we produced beautiful things that made life better for people. Now all we produce is more anger and hate. The Aten must be stopped.”

“It is dangerous to try and stop the Aten,” Hapy says. “The Kings still have much power.”

“Power must be taken back,” Hapu says. “Given back to Amun Ra and the priests where it’s existed through Egyptian history.”

“How do you propose to do this?” Hapy asks.

“We must first have information,” Hapy says. “Information is power.”

“What type of information?” Hapy asks.

“Information about the Aten,” Hapy says. “Information from the royal family.”

“You have access to this information,” Hapy says. “You’re still the most trusted advisor of the Old King.”

“The Old King has little information,” Hapu says. “He can hardly remember his own name anymore.”

“But you talk to his son,” Hapy says.

“Amenhotep IV is not about to give me any information on the Aten,” Hapu says. “He knows my position in the Karnak Temple. Information about the Aten is the last things he wants to give to me. Besides, I don’t talk to the Young King. He simply gives me orders. More Aten disks needed from the workshop. More workers needed for the city up north. Even when I’ve had the inkling of a discussion with him, I’ve found him impossible to understand. He’s always been like this since I’ve known him. You’ve seen the same thing. Trying to understand him is like trying to read a blank piece of granite.”

“What needs to be done?” Hapy says.

“The Young King has surrounded himself with advisors like Nihi,” Hapu says. “Nihi’s relationship with the Young King is like mine with the Old King. He tells Nihi everything like the Old King used to tell me everything.”

“I’ve told you what Nihi has told me,” Hapy says.

“I need more information,” Hapu says. “I need to know about the old man who counsels the Young King. He has appeared out of nowhere. Who is he? What part does he play in the Aten religion? What is the purpose of the city I build in the north.”

“I haven’t seen Nihi since the Sed Festival,” Hapy says. “He is very busy with AmenHotep IV’s ascension to Co-Regent. His job has greatly expanded. He plays the same role for the new co-regent as you played for the old King.”

“I know he does,” Hapu says. “That’s why I want you to talk to him. He knows everything going on with the Aten. Much more than he’s told you I’m sure. I need you to contact

Nihi. Schedule another meeting with him. Find out more about the prayer ceremonies and about the old man close to the Young King.”

“I hate using my best friend to spy on someone,” Hapy says.

“Simply call it information gathering,” Hapu says. “We need information before the Aten rules all of Egypt.”

“I’ll contact Nihi,” says Hapy. “I’m not sure what more I can find out.”

## 12.Eyes of Fire

Hapy has not seen Nihi since the events of the Sed Festival. As they say, a lot of water has flowed down the Nile since this event. With the elevation of AmenHotep IV to co-regent Nihi has taken on much more work and now manages his own staff. Although he is busy, he always has time for his best friend Hapy and agrees to a meeting at their usual café in Thebes when Hapy contacts him.

It is August and Thebes is busy preparing for the festival celebrating the annual flooding of the Nile. Hapy sees preparations for this big festival along the boulevard. The event has been an important one in Egypt through many dynasties. The annual holiday that goes with the festival is known as Wafaa El-Nil. Statues of the goddess Isis are placed along the boulevard among the growing number of Aten disks.

He stops in front of a statue of Isis and thinks about the upcoming festival. He knows the Nile floods each year because Isis sheds tears of sorrow for her dead husband Osiris. He thinks it is somewhat like the Sed Festival. As the Sed Festival renews life of the King, the flood festival renews life of Egypt and begins division of the Egyptian calendar into three seasons. There is the upcoming Akhet season meaning the season of inundation. There is the Peret season meaning the season of growth. And, there is Shemu season meaning the season of the harvest.

Off the boulevard, Hapy notices the shop owners preparing for the festival with small

statues of Isis outside their shops. But even on the side street, there are the circular Aten disks placed everywhere.

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The same musician is in the dark little café playing his lyre. A few people are at a table and the proprietor is behind the bar. This time, Hapy arrives before Nihi and orders a pitcher of beer and two glasses. It is always the beginning recipe for trouble when the two friends get together. The beer is refreshing at this hottest time of the year.

Suddenly, the door opens with an explosion of sunlight and Nihi appears and walks towards the table.

The two friends hug.

“I get so busy in my new position I forget to reach out to old friends,” Nihi says.

“I understand,” Hapy says. “You’re a busy person these days.”

The two make small talk for a few minutes as they drink their beer and listen to the lyre player. Hapy orders another pitcher of beer. Both begin to feel the effects of the beer.

“You were right about my father,” Hapy says to Nihi. “His position is dangerous with the line he walks between loyalties. Yet it is a declining position at the same time.”

“It’s unfortunate he chooses to link his fate to the old King,” Nihi says. “His health declines each day. His mind has almost left him altogether.”

“The Old King brought wealth and prosperity to Egypt,” Hapy says.

“These are different times,” Nihi says. “New challenges face the empire. He has lost his support of the priests. He lives in a past world.”

“And the Aten represents the present world,” Hapy says.

“The present and future world,” says Nihi.

As Nihi says this, he pulls a golden circular disk from his robe and places the disk on the table. It is the size of a medallion.

Hapy picks it up and examines it.

“The Aten symbol,” Hapy says.

“The Co-Regent prays to it every day,” Nihi says. “Soon, all Egypt will pray to it.”

There is little sign of doubt in Nihi’s eyes. Rather, a new fire rages within them. It is something Hapy has not seen before in Nihi. His glowing eyes can be seen even in the dim light of the bar.

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“I want to learn more about the Aten,” Hapy says. “I see the Aten’s growth image each day in the palace workshop and Thebes. I try to understand the great power behind the Aten. Maybe you can help me understand the Aten’s power.”

“Amun Ra is one god amongst many other gods,” Nihi says. “It is not like this with The Aten. The Aten is the only god. The other gods no longer exist.”

“It’s difficult to understand this,” says Hapy.

“Understanding the Aten is not possible,” says Nihi. “The Aten is based on feeling rather than understanding. It’s difficult to explain. One must experience the power of the Aten to feel what the Aten is. This is the path to the Aten.”

Hapy holds the Aten disk in his hand and rubs his thumb and forefinger over it.

“I want to experience the Aten’s power,” Hapy says. “Could I participate in the palace prayer ceremony?”

“The young King has known you for many years,” Nihi says.

“Perhaps I can arrange something.”

### 13. The Northern Project

When Hapu first came to the project area along the Nile, it was a barren wasteland in the middle of nowhere - two hundred miles north of Thebes and two hundred miles south of Memphis. Now, it is a bustling worksite with thousands of workers. Streets have been laid out. Structures are under construction. And, on the banks of the Nile, rising above all the other structures, is the beginning walls of a great temple and palace.

Hapu stands with Heynu surveying the work on the wide central street of the town. Horses carry materials in carts and pull leveling devices up the street. On both sides of the street, swarms of workers work on great buildings.

“The Young King has gone crazy,” Hapu says. “A thousand new men arriving in a few days to work on the temple and palace. He’s pulling workers from all over the empire.”

“I’ve never seen such a collection of workers,” Heynu says.

They walk down the wide stretch of sand which will become the central street in the new city. Stone masons are starting to lay stones in the smooth sand.

The north end of the main street is the temple and palace complex. On the south end of the street is a great image of the Aten held high above everything on a great piece of granite. The

image stares over the entire enterprise like a great all-seeing eye. In the late afternoon sunlight, the disk reflects the afternoon sunlight so it is difficult to look at it without shielding one's eyes.

"It has just appeared since our last visit," Hapu says. "I have no idea how it got here."

Hapu and Heynu shield their eyes as they look at the large burning image of the Aten.

"I wish I could understand the power the image possesses," Hapu says. "Of all people, I should know. Yet I know hardly anything about it."

"It's enough to know the Aten is against all Amun Ra represents," Heynu says. "Against the balance and connection of Ma'at. Against harmony and justice."

"Certainly the Aten is not about balance," Hapu says. "When there is only one god there is nothing to balance. Balance comes from working with the powers of other gods. It is the Egyptian way."

"And yet we work to build a great city for him," Nihi says.

"Yes," says Hapu. "One of the ironies of life. The Old King lets me build my dream city but it turns out to be a city for the Aten."

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The two men continue their walk around the city, surveying the workers and talking to their supervisors. Everywhere are images of the sun disk.

"Of course the city has been built for the Aten," Hapu says. "I should have been able to see this."

"You did see it," says Heynu. "But you put it out of your mind."

The two men walk to the busy dock. Boats are constantly arriving bringing men and materials. They watch the activity. Supervisors come up to Hapu or Heynu asking for them to sign various plans. They have discussion with a number of supervisors on the dock.

At the end of the day the workers return to their camps outside of town. Hapu and Heynu leave the dock and begin walking towards one of the camps.

“Let’s walk down the boulevard,” Hapu says. “I want to see the city without all the activity.”

They walk down the wide boulevard of the city. It is now deserted and quiet from all the hectic activity of the day. The sun has disappeared in the western sky and the fires from the workers’ camp glow like thousands of orange stars that have fallen to earth.

Mid-way down the boulevard is the massive cube of the new Aten Temple.

“My greatest building,” Hapu says. “Even if it for the Aten.”

They again walk towards the great Aten disk at the end of the boulevard. From a distance it looks like a great tower with a circle on top of it. Now, in the evening, it is just a dark shape. They stop in front of the shape and look at it in the evening twilight.

“Many mysteries are tangled in all of this,” Hapu says.

“There will always be mysteries,” says Heynu.

“One in particular keeps coming back to me,” Hapu says.

“What’s that?” Heynu asks.

“I find myself wondering about the power behind the Aten,” Hapu says. “It is certainly not the Young King.”

“Perhaps the Young King receives messages from the disk?” Heynu says.

“More than likely someone is behind the disk,” Hapu says.

Suddenly, as if to reinforce what Heynu has said, the great Aten disk glows like it is on fire and then goes quickly dark again.

“Did you see what just happened?” Hapu asks.

“Incredible,” says Heynu. “The disk was suddenly on fire.”

They run down the boulevard towards the great disk. As they get closer to it, they see a figure run from behind the great Aten tower and scurry off. They can make out the figure of an older man with a staff and a robe. They chase after him but he has disappeared.

Hapu and Heynu return to the Aten tower and stand at its base for a few minutes. They look around for activity but everything is still and quiet except for the sounds of the workers in the nearby camps.

After a while, they walk towards their camp outside the city.

“I got an answer tonight,” Hapu says. “I think the figure we saw is the old man we saw when we first came up here. The old man is behind the Aten.”

## 14.Solar Power

One morning, Nihi goes sailing with Amenhotep IV on the great Pleasure Lake of Queen Tiye in the palace complex and suggests the idea of Hapy attending the Aten prayer ceremony.

“I don’t think it’s a good idea,” AmenHotep IV says. “His father’s loyalty to the Karnak priests makes Hapy a risk to share secrets of the Aten with. His father has mixed loyalties. There is no reason to suspect that his son doesn’t also have mixed loyalties.”

“Hapy still searches for his own way in life,” Nihi says. “He is open to new ideas. He still searches for the right path in life. For his own god to believe in. Amun Ra is the god of his father. But it is not the god of Hapy, as much as his father wants to make Amun Ra his god.”

“What you say might be true,” says AmenHotep IV. “Yet what do we gain by showing your friend the secret ceremony to The Aten? His father is still his mentor. He appears each day in the palace workshops with his father. He listens to what his father and his father’s friends tell him. What is to prevent Hapy from telling his father about the ceremony?”

“Perhaps it is good thing if Hapy to tells his father about the ceremony,” says Nihi. “If Hapy has a good experience from the ceremony, he might tell his father about it. It could become an important way to reach the priests of the Karnak Temple and change their minds about the

Aten. It could be a good experience for Hapy. In fact, it could be a transformative experience. He seems stuck somewhere between the old god of Amun Ra and the Aten. He could become a powerful new ally to The Aten.”

The Young King ponders Nihi’s argument as the sailboat skims over the Pleasure Lake. On the large white sail is a huge image of the Aten that flutters alive in the morning breeze.

“You might be right,” says the Young King. “Hapy could become a powerful ally for us. Contact Hapy and extend an invitation for a prayer session to him.”

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Hapy sneaks out of the villa and walks to the palace before sunrise one morning. Nihi meets him at the entrance to the long hallway that goes to the Aten court. He gives Hapy a special robe to wear during the prayer ceremony and Hapy slips it on over his clothing.

“Any words of advice?” Hapy asks.

“Open yourself to the experience,” Nihi says. “Don’t let preconceptions cloud your thoughts.”

The courtyard is dark at this early hour of the morning but Hapy can see it is a beautiful structure with a strange new architecture different from the style of his father. Hapy can see the shapes of the Young and Old Kings and members of the royal family on the side of the courtyard.

“Everyone waits for the first light of the new Aten,” Nihi says. “We enter the courtyard when Aten first shows himself.”

The Young King welcomes Hapy to the ceremony.

“I’m glad you join us this morning to give praise to The Aten,” he says.

“I look forward to it,” Hapy says.

The Young King floats back into the shadow shapes around the courtyard. Somewhere, there is music from a lyre. The music of the lyre is mesmerizing and strangely beautiful. As he waits for the sun to rise, Hapy again looks at the architecture of the courtyard. It is uplifting and inspiring. On the western side of the courtyard is the great Aten disk.

There is a mumbling from the royal group in the Aten court. A ray of sunlight has fallen in the courtyard and onto the Aten disk. The group walks into the courtyard and knells on prayer mats. Nihi directs Hapy into the courtyard and onto a prayer mat. Nihi also has a prayer mat. The two of them drop onto the mats facing the Aten. The disk suddenly appears on fire with the reflected light of the morning sun.

Nihi holds a papyrus sheet and chants the hieroglyphics on it. The rest of the royal family also chant the same thing Nihi does. None of them need sheets of music. They have memorized the entire ceremony. AmenHotep IV rises and performs a type of ritual dance in front of the Aten.

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There are prayers and more chants and then a long hymn Hapy has never heard before. It was one of the most spellbinding things he has ever heard. The hymn is printed on the papyrus sheet he has. It is a Hymn to the Aten and one part of it goes like the below according to the words on his sheet.

“You rise with beauty in the horizon of the sky,  
O living Aten, creator of life.  
When you rise in the eastern horizon,  
You fill every land with your beauty.  
You are beautiful, great, gleaming, high above every land.  
Your rays, they embrace the lands  
To the limits of all that you have made.  
You are the sun-god (Ra) and conquer them all;  
You subdue them for your beloved son.  
You are distant, yet your rays are upon the land.  
You are in the faces, yet your ways are not known.  
All flocks gambol on their feet,  
The whole winged creation lives  
When you have risen for them.  
Boats sail downstream and upstream.  
Every path is opened at your shining.  
The fish in the river leap in your presence.  
Your rays are in the midst of the sea.”

Hapy feels a strange sensation when the words above are sung by the royal family and Nihi. The song has an ethereal quality to it. It is music (and sounds) Hapy has never heard before. Hypnotizing words, strung together to make certain sounds new sounds he has never heard before.

Perhaps it is this vibrating sound that relates to the state of Ma'at everyone in his life has talked about but few seem to have experienced. All my generation is seeking something Hapy tells himself. Something not provided by parents. The world seems to be changing so quickly Hapy thinks. Egyptian history seemed to Hapy like a history that was drifting in the waters of the Nile at a calm cycle for it. In no hurry to go anywhere in particular. The population, it seemed to Hapy, distracted by all the thousands of gods the culture moved by. He could feel this spirit within his own generation. It wasn't a question of hoping it was there. It simply was there. Hapy saw it with his friend Nihi and his other young friends. Although he didn't know him well, he saw it even in the spirit of the Young King. He saw it with his experience with the King's adopted daughter Sabra.

Hapy has never felt the battle between the young and old as much as this time in his life. The young people are so fed up with the plethora of gods that control all aspects of daily life. One lives through the goodness of the various gods. Who take a lot of feeding and watering, Hapy thinks. Who distract from the real world.

Few question all the rules. They are too busy distracted by all of these gods. Few even see there are rules. Even consider, in their wildest imagination, that they might possibly play by the rules of others, in the fields they have created. He remembers the statement his father has told him over and over: "We're not sure who discovered water. But we're sure it wasn't fish of the Nile."

This was the way Hapy felt. Existing in some new state of some type of suspended animation. Between the views and belief in his father and the views of his best friend Nihi and the new Aten cult. Yes, it was the rise of a new type of cult of a strange new King of Egypt. A

person he had known all his life. They both had grown up together inside the walls of the palace. Yet it was someone he never knew.

And all of this brought about by the death of an older brother Hapy knew well. In fact, they had been great friends as kids.

\* \* \*

Hapy was back in the present moment of the prayer ceremony. The *Hymn to the Aten* was still being sung by everyone. Hapy was the only one not singing it. The prayer is now over.

What is the feeling he has? It is difficult to define. It seems a new condition of weather has moved in over his life. The condition moves into one's life, silently, yet pervasively. It fills each part of his body and spirit like fog from the Nile. It fills like a volume of water.

It is more than an idea backed by the logic of philosophy or Amun Ra. Something important yet invisible at the same time. It possesses little of the Egyptian balance of Ma'at in the new feeling. Rather it is simply a force existing by itself. Independently of other existing forces.

It was such a change in the world for Hapy.

He felt a new sense of himself.

What is it? Hapy asked himself.

He has never experienced this feeling before. He senses a type of consolidation taking place inside himself. The many projects and concerns of his life suddenly seem like magnetized metal shavings drawn towards a new source of power and gravity. A source he never even suspected was present in the world.

When the sun makes the great disk glow like a miniature sun, the prayers and chants around Hapy begin. Hapy knows none of the prayers and chants and simply listens. They create some of the most beautiful music he has ever heard. It is almost music from a different time or dynasty in the great history of Egypt it seems to Hapy.

Not a music of this time.

\* \* \*

After it is over and the chants and prayers have stopped, the Aten sun has moved higher in the sky so that the courtyard disk no longer burns with the morning fire of reflection. The royal family slowly leaves the courtyard until there is only the Young King, Nihi and Hapy.

“What did you think?” asks Nihi.

“It is difficult to put into words,” says Hapy.

”Words have little meaning to The Aten,” the Young King says. “It is good you experienced the ceremony.”

\* \* \*

Fifteen minutes later, Hapy sits in Nihi’s office in the palace. It is next to the great office of AmenHotep IV. Nihi stands over him and offers him a glass of water. He seems to be in and out of consciousness since the beginning of *The Hymn to the Aten*.

“What happened to me?” Hapy asks.

“You experienced the Aten,” Nihi says. “You can better understand its power for me.”

“I’ve never experienced this before,” Hapy says. “It’s a unique power. Many things still mix in my head.”

“It is because your gods are in opposition,” Nihi says. “Your god Amun Ra is composed of many gods, many symbols. The Aten is composed of one god, one symbol. It is really a battle between many symbols and one symbol. You’re afraid to exchange the many symbols you now possess and hold onto, for one symbol.”

“Perhaps you’re right,” Hapy says.

“The many symbols of your father,” Nihi says. “For the one symbol of the New King. Maybe it would be good to try and change the symbols of your father from many to one.”

“What do you have in mind?” Hapy asks.

“Invite your father to attend a prayer ceremony with the royal family,” Nihi says. “To experience what you have experienced. I know I can get the King’s approval for him to attend a session.”

“Not a bad idea,” Hapy says. “In fact a great idea. I’ll ask him.”

## 15. The Banks of the Nile

Hapu arrives home from his visit to the northern project one evening. He is tired and worn out from all the traveling and sleeps late the next morning. Hapy goes over to the workshops and handles a few problems without his father. It makes him feel good about this. But all he can think about is what he will tell his father about the Aten prayer session. He wondered if he had gone too far? His father asked him for information on the Aten. He hadn't asked him to join the cult.

After an early dinner, Hapu and Hapy stand on the patio of the villa having one of the beers made in Thebes. It is early evening, before twilight. Hapy can tell his father has a new tiredness in his demeanor.

"I'm not sure how much longer I can put up with this BS," Hapu says. "I'm no longer my own man."

"I knew this was happening," Hapy says. "You've been working closer with the Karnak Temple. Meriptah and all."

"It's the only way I have now," Hapu says. "Working with the temple."

"And against the Aten?" Hapy says.

“Yes, against the Aten,” Hapu says. “It’s the only way for me to go. My time in the royal family dies with the Old King. Everyone knows this.”

“The old King whose is already dead,” Hapy says. “As you always say.”

“Let’s take a walk,” Hapu says. “It’s a good night for a walk.”

“A good night for a talk,” Hapy says.

They walk in silence for a while along the Nile River. It is a loud river tonight as the new currents of the flood season are coming to Egypt.

“No one expected this outcome for Egypt,” Hapu says. “This strange kid you and I have known for all the twenty years of his life. Your age. The two of you came up in the same schools. Events. Ceremonies. And now, he is the acting King of Egypt. Surrounded by young idiot friends and worshippers. Like Nihi. It has never made sense to me. His older brother would have made a great king and I would have been proud to serve under him. In the same way I was proud to serve under his father all these years.”

“Things went a little out of hand,” says Hapy. “I ended up going through the Aten prayer ceremony. It’s a strange ceremony. Something I’ve never experienced before. Something hypnotic about it. Like many pitchers of beer. Or perhaps indulgence in smoking plants from distant lands. I’ve experienced all of these. I might as well confess all of this to you now.”

“Nothing like any of your other experiences in life?” Hapu asks.

“It was different from all of them,” Hapy says. “Different altogether. It’s amazing my childhood playmate is running Egypt now.”

\* \* \*

“You’re perceptive about things,” Hapu says. “I’ve seen much of this coming.”

“Certainly not the sudden, unexpected death of the Crown Prince,” Hapy says.

“I’m not so sure how unexpected the death was,” says Hapu.

“What do you mean by that?” says Hapy.

“Just talk amongst the Karnak priests,” Hapu says. “They see the whole thing in the context of a planned takeover of Egypt.”

“The Crown Prince was murdered?” Hapy says.

“I have theories,” Hapu says. “They have theories. Just theories so far. But theories based on many facts.

The two walk in silence along the Nile.

“It’s funny to think that the Young King I grew up with,” Hapy says, “The same one I had at my birthday parties.”

“You knew him better than most,” Hapu says.

“But I never knew him,” Hapy says. “He always seemed different from the other boys. Non-Egyptian somehow. He always seemed alienated from the other boys in our class. He seemed to come from a distant place. Even a distant time. He never seemed a real member of the world.”

“What went on during the prayer session?” Hapy asks.

“How do I describe it?” Hapy says. “Lots of chanting and the singing of a long hymn to the Aten. It causes some state I’ve never experienced before. It is difficult to describe. A brilliant and stunning feeling. I listened as the entire royal family around me, including Nihi, sang the hymn to the Aten. Everyone faced the Aten disk in the courtyard of the palace as they sang the

hymn. They sang the hymn as the light from the new morning sun fell onto the great Aten disk and it became alive with fire and fury.”

\* \* \*

Hapu listens intently.

“That’s a good description,” Hapu says. “Now, let me ask you an important question. During the prayer ceremony did you see an old man in a robe with a staff participating in the ceremony? Or, see him anywhere around the ceremony?”

“No,” says Hapy. “It was a small ceremony. Only the royal family with Nihi and me. This is all. I’m sure of this. I didn’t see an old man at the ceremony.”

“Interesting,” Hapu says.

“What’s interesting?” Hapy asks.

“I have a theory,” Hapu says. “I think there is a person behind the Aten god. And, I think this person is an old man who appears and disappears in a robe. I’ve seen him two times. I think he is the old man they say who counsels the King. Both times the old man disappears.”

“Persons are not behind gods,” Hapy says.

“That’s the brainwashing the schools are teaching these days,” Hapu says.

“What are you suggesting?” Hapy asks.

“I’m suggesting that this whole cult of the Aten is not controlled by Amenhotep IV and all his crazy beliefs and antics,” Hapu says. “Rather, it is really controlled by this old man that I have seen two times. Who has disappeared into thin air two times. Heynu was with me both times so I’m not going crazy.”

\* \* \*

“Tell me about the experience,” Hapu says. “The experience of the Aten prayer ceremony.”

“Well, to speed up the story, things went from our meeting in Thebes to the prayer session at the palace,” Hapy says. “A jump of things I never really planned on but jumped on when I got the opportunity. It was so much more than the original meeting in Thebes I set up with Nihi. One thing led to another and I ended up going through the Aten prayer ceremony in the little courtyard of the palace. It was quite an experience and I won’t forget it soon.”

They walk in silence for a while.

“I asked you to find out about the Aten,” Hapu says. “Not join the Aten cult.”

“Finding out about a cult often involves joining the cult,” Hapy says.

“That’s hard to argue with,” Hapu says. “I’ve been a member of the royal cult and the priest cults all my life. As you know. As I’ve always told you, shared with you. But still, it upsets me that young AmenHotep had the courtyard built without letting me know a thing about it. Here I am, the leading builder for the royal family.”

“Nihi says it involves a new architecture,” says Hapy. “The new architecture of our generation he says.”

“A new architecture for this new god,” Hapu says. “A new god of architecture. The city and the Aten Temple are my 1st projects. My greatest achievement.”

“It’s a new generation,” Hapy says. “My generation. It’s inevitable. Things are about to change. I can feel it in the air.”

\* \* \*

They walk in silence for a few moments. Then Hapu stops and faces Hapy.

“Did you see an older man in a robe and a staff at the prayer ceremony for the Aten?”

Hapu asks. “Or have you seen him anywhere?”

“No, I didn’t see him at the prayer ceremony,” says Hapy. “And I haven’t seen him anywhere.”

“I’ve seen the old man two times,” Hapu says. “Both at important times in my life. The first time was when I first went north to lay out the city of Amarna. The second time was just a few days ago when I was just there.”

“You think the old man is part of the Aten cult?” Hapy asks.

“More than being part of this new Aten cult,” Hapu says, “I think he is the power behind the cult.”

“Nihi did extend an invitation to both of us,” Hapy says.

“Invitation?” Hapy says.

“An invitation to participate in the morning prayer session to The Aten,” Hapy says. “I found it to be a powerful experience.”

Hapu laughs.

“The Aten has many worshippers,” Hapu says. “You might be one of them. He doesn’t need one more.”

“Still, it’s an open invitation,” Hapy says.

“I’ll keep it in mind in case things go bad with the priests,” Hapy says.

“So, you’re really thinking of leaving your connection to the royal family and going with the priests?” Hapy says.

“Yes,” Hapu says. “I wanted you to be the first to know it. I trust you more than anyone.”

“It’s good to hear you say that,” Hapy says.

“I mean it,” Hapu says.

“I think the priests are your way forward and into the future,” Hapy says. “I think one always has to have a goal. Some particular battle (or battles) to fight. Some villain to fight against. Some friend or friends to fight by your side. (Or you to fight on the side of friends.) Otherwise, life is flat and worthless. One experience in life registering the same in the psyche as another experience in life until all experiences are simply the same. Flat and smooth like the polished stone of royal monuments.”

\* \* \*

“You’re wise beyond your age,” Hapu says. “I’m proud you’re my son. I’ve always been proud of you. Maybe I haven’t expressed as well as I could have. But I worry about you. I know what good friends you are with Nihi.”

“You worry about Nihi’s relationship to the Aten cult,” Hapy says.

“Of course I do,” Hapu says.

“But you want me to utilize my relationship with Nihi to get information for you,” Hapy says.

“I agree,” says Hapu. “It doesn’t sound all that good. There’s a certain irony to the whole thing. Maybe paradox is a better word for it. A first time for me. I’ve seen a lot of first times in

my life. Why not another one? There is a first time for everything. A first time for many gods in Egypt. A time for just one god of Egypt. Maybe it is time for the balance and harmony of Ma'at to be challenged. Balance is impossible when the world is ruled by one god. It only exists between two or more things. When there is only one thing in the universe, there is nothing to balance. Balance of power between gods is sacrificed when all power is given to one god."

"Such a wildly radical idea," Hapy says. "It's good to hear it from you. If this is so, the absence of Ma'at will have great impact."

"Of course it will," says Hapu. "The harmony of Ma'at makes community possible. It's essential for law. For security. For order. The failure to realize the interconnection of life leads to loneliness and death."

\* \* \*

They stop and sit on the banks of the Nile.

"The death of Egypt?" Hapy asks.

"The death of everything," Hapu says. "Other than that, prophets and seers at Karnak are attempting to answer these questions."

"Who do you think is behind the Aten?" Hapy asks.

"On my first trip north to stake out the city," Hapu says, "I saw this old man on shore watching us arrive. He was alone without a camel or horse and just watching us in the middle of nowhere. In a robe and holding a staff. When we pulled up to the bank of the river and left the boat, Heynu and I tried to find him. But he disappeared. Completely in the white sand of the area

that ran all the way to the eastern cliffs. Disappeared altogether like a mark off a stone. Heynu and I put things together. We think the same old man we saw is behind the Aten cult.”

“Yet the power of the prayer ceremony is so real and passionate,” says Hapy. “I can testify to this.”

“It’s hard to know what power is used in the prayer ceremony,” Hapu says. “Perhaps the music of the hymn to the Aten. The power of music. Perhaps the words supplied for the ceremony. From the old man? The songs and chants in front of the Aten disk that morning. The words for much of the prayer ceremony might be supplied by the old man who (I hear) counsels AmenHotep.”

“Why don’t you stop speculating about knowing stuff and actually try to own it from your own experience of it,” Hapy says.

\* \* \*

“If anyone knows about the old man it would be Nihi,” Hapu says. “It would be very valuable to have information about the old man for the Karnak Summit in a few weeks.”

“The Karnak Summit?” Hapy asks.

“The leading priests of Amun Ra are discussing a strategy against the Aten,” says Hapu.

“When is the summit?” Hapy asks.

“The evening of the first full moon,” says Hapu. “In the mountains, east of Thebes.

“The Funeral Mountains,” says Hapy.

“Yes, the Funeral Mountains,” says Hapu. “You are invited to attend. It is time you begin to understand my conflicting loyalties I live with each day. All of this makes it difficult to show the right path to you.”

“Don’t forget the other groups that compete for your loyalty,” Hapy says. “The alchemists. The magicians. The seers and prophets. The astronomers and astrologers. The stone masons.”

Hapu laughs.

“You know much about me,” Hapu says. “But there still is much more to learn.”

“Much more to question,” Hapy says.

“I’m proud you have questions,” Hapu says. “I’ve had many questions in life. I’m not concerned you have the same questions that I do. The fact you just have questions is enough.”

They walk towards the gates into the palace. The sun is dying, slipping under the western mountains. The Nile continues to rise as the flood season approaches.

## 16.Mixed Loyalties

The next few days, after the talk with his father along the banks of the Nile, are difficult ones for Hapy. His battle between different loyalties simmering in his psyche bubble to the surface. It depresses him. The mixture of loyalties seem the greatest conflict in his father's life.

Has his father's life become his own life? Does one want to break free from one's present life? If so, is there a way of freeing oneself – himself, Hapy - from his father's life? Freeing oneself from family fate and setting out (truly) on a great voyage in life.

His life does not seem free of his father's life in this respect. At least this is the way his friend Nihi figures things. Nihi wants him to get his father to a prayer ceremony in hopes of converting Hapu to the Aten religion. At the same time, Hapu wants Hapy to find out about the mysterious old man he has seen two times from Nihi.

Never has Hapy felt more diverse loyalties dwelling inside himself. They are like great flying insects constantly buzzing around his head. It drives him crazy after a while as it would drive anyone crazy. He can feel the different loyalties do battle inside his mind. In the same manner Hapy's sure that they've done battle in his father's mind.

What is the greater loyalty?

What should be the greater loyalty?

The loyalty to a father?

Or the loyalty to a best friend?

Various Gods in Hapy's mind argue over this question. Two scenarios have been laid out in the month since the Sed Festival. Two paths to pursue. Which one does he follow?

\* \* \*

Hapy thinks about this during his daily job as an apprentice supervisor in the workshop. It is a good job and he is meeting many different craftsmen and learning about many new processes such as smelting and alchemy.

The workshop has increased production of Aten disks to such an extent that now the disks are almost the only thing the workshop produces. Hapy wishes there was someone to discuss this with but he has no one. Most of his good friends from school have gone off to run various parts of the empire. He can't discuss this with his father or Nihi.

His father leaves to return north a few days after the river talk with Hapy. There is a growing urgency to complete the project in the north. In the evenings, after his day at the workshop, Hapy sits outside on the patio of the family villa and thinks about what he should do.

The grand walls of the Malaka Palace are only a few hundred yards away. He can see the light of lanterns burning in Nihi's office window in the palace. He can envision Nihi having another of one of his meetings to his assistant advisors to the King. Hapy wonders whether he might have fallen into the role of a dual agent in this unfolding event. He has heard of people who have little problem with mixed loyalties. Did this define his father? Hapy wondered about this. If it defined his father, did it also define him?

\* \* \*

He tries to organize the choices in his mind. Time is of the essence with the Karnak Summit coming soon. The story his father told him by the river seems feasible. It is a difficult story to dismiss even if it offers a radically, new vision of Egyptian gods.

A few days pass. Hapy thinks about this at the workshop during the day and again in the evenings. He finally decides to contact Nihi.

The day of the meeting is one of those rare days of rain and storm in Thebes when the sun is hidden from the world and the heavens are in a fury of activity. They meet at their usual café in Thebes.

“The flood season is upon us,” Nihi says.

“The Nile is reborn,” says Hapy. “Or something like that, as they say.”

“You’ve talked with your father?” Nihi asks.

“He’s not interested in your offer to attend the Aten prayer ceremony,” Hapy says. “I pushed it on him more than once. I think he’s crazy. I told him it’s an open invitation.”

“I didn’t think we could entice him into a prayer ceremony,” says Nihi. “Did he say anything else?”

“He keeps talking about a person behind the Aten,” says Hapy.

“Of course,” says Nihi. “King AmenHotep IV is the person behind the Aten.”

“He thinks a person is behind AmenHotep IV,” Hapy says. “He tells me he has seen this person a few times. He tells me it’s an old man in a robe with a staff. He first saw the old man

when he staked out the city up north. He saw him the last time he was in the city behind the Aten Monument.”

“It’s an interesting story,” Nihi says. “But you saw no old man as your father describes at the prayer session you attended?”

“No, it was a small ceremony and I recognized everyone there,” Hapy says. “The only people present were Nihi, me, the two Kings and the members of the King’s family. I was that all members of the royal family were present.”

“But not your old man,” Nihi says.

“The old man could have been there,” says Hapy. “Perhaps he provided the Hymn to the Aten? The words to the chants? The melody to the songs? The incantations of the prayers?”

Nihi rises from his chair and paces back-and-forth.

Outside there is that strange god of fire in the sky that cracks the heavens open with roars and flashes. All while the sun god hides behind the chaos in the heavens. Thebes is ruled by another god today. Nihi stops pacing and looks directly at Hapy.

\* \* \*

“Suppose such an old man existed,” Nihi asks. “Would you want to meet him?”

“Yes, of course,” says Hapy.

“Is there anything else your father told you?” Nihi asks.

Hapy could have told Nihi about the upcoming Summit meeting of the Karnak Temple on the next full moon. But he decides not to tell him. It seems best to keep this information from Nihi at the present time. It can wait until he is able to meet the mysterious old man. If, in fact, the

old man existed. This all relates to balance and Ma'at Hapy thinks this as he leaves Nihi's office and goes outside into the day. A day ruled by angry gods in the heavens.

## 17.Sirius Goes Dark

The stormy weather continues in Thebes as the Nile grows and becomes agitated. Farm fields north of Thebes become flooded. The water is close to the top of the royal quay. Hapy is still north on the project.

Hapy continues his training in the workshop under a supervisor. In the evenings, he sits in his father's office in the villa and listens to the storm outside. He respects his father. Yet he hardly knows him. He knows Nihi much better than his father in the way young boys know their best friend. How did he come to place his father and Nihi into this type of battle against each other?

In a few days, the storm stops and the sun rules the heavens again. The night sky is filled with sharp stars. After dinner, Hapy sits on the patio of the villa with a bottle of wine looking at the great star Sirius, messenger of the flood season of Egypt.

"Mind if I join you," Nihi says pulling up a chair beside Hapy.

"I didn't hear you come in," Hapy says.

"I make little noise," Nihi says.

Hapy offers him a glass of wine.

They sit in silence for a few moments looking at the night sky.

“Finally,” says Nihi. “The rain has stopped. All these twinkling gods who rule the night. Our first clear night in a long time. I think it’s a good night to take you to meet a friend of mine.”

\* \* \*

They leave the palace complex with two horses and supplies and ride north on the road along the banks of the Nile. A silver half-moon hangs over Thebes. Hapy looks at the reflection of the moon in the Nile as they ride north along the river.

In a few miles, they turn left into farmland that runs to western mountains of the Nile Valley five miles away. They travel down the road to a farming village that supplies food to Thebes. Nihi stops in front of a small stone hut and asks Hapy to wait.

He goes into the building and comes out and waves Hapy down from his horse. A person comes and takes Hapy’s horse. Another person directs him into the stone hut.

The inside of the stone building is not much larger than Hapy’s bedroom in the villa. It is dim inside, lit only by torches on the walls. As his eyes adjust to the light, he can see the Young King sitting in a chair next to an old man in a robe with a beard. Strangely, the chair of the old man is grander and higher than the chair of the Young King. Nihi and Hapy walk towards the Young King.

\* \* \*

“Back for more,” the Young King says.

“Why not,” says Hapy.

“I’d like to introduce you to Moses,” the Young King says.

Moses is a medium-sized man. He has a long beard and is dressed in a robe and holds a large staff. He looks to be in his 70s but his age is difficult to guess.

“I saw your father when he first came north,” Moses says.

“He told me you disappeared,” Hapy says.

“I had no choice,” Moses says.

“It’s difficult to believe you’re the power behind the Aten,” Hapy says. “People are not behind gods.”

“There are not gods,” Moses says. “Only God and God is behind the Aten. I’m merely a messenger of God.”

Hapy thinks it strange to hear the word God used as a singular word rather than plural.

“It is unfortunate your father refuses to attend the Aten prayer ceremony,” says Amenhotep IV.

“He just wants to meet Moses,” Hapy says.

“We will meet when we move to the northern city,” Moses says.

“When will this be?” Hapy asks.

“Soon,” says Amenhotep IV. “The priests become more powerful every day. Aten images in Thebes are destroyed each day.

“It provides a safe place for the Aten,” Nihi says.

“The new city is called Amarna,” the Young King says. “The Aten can flourish in Amarna without pressure from established temple communities. I’ve pushed your father to complete the city. We will move to Amarna soon.”

“What about Thebes?” Hapy asks.

“Thebes will remain a great city,” AmenHotep IV says. “Only it will not remain the capital city of Egypt anymore.”

\* \* \*

Hapy looks at the wavering image of Moses in the flickering light of the torches.

“I can see that you doubt what I’ve told you,” Moses says. “That I’m a messenger of God.”

Moses slowly gets up.

“A demonstration is called for,” Moses says. “Follow me.”

The group follows Moses outside the stone hut and into a small backyard area. They gather around Moses as he slowly lifts one arm to the stars in the evening sky and points to the brightest star in the sky, Sirius.

“The star of Egypt,” Moses says. “Let it give us a sign tonight.”

A moment after Moses says this, the light of Sirius suddenly goes out and there is only darkness where it has been.

Hapy gasps but it does not surprise the Young King and Nihi. Moses makes another motion with his hand and Sirius has its light back.

“A small demonstration,” Moses says.

He places his hand on Hapy’s shoulder.

Hapy feels a sudden jolt of energy enter his body. After the initial jolt, a sense of serenity comes over him.

\* \* \*

Nihi and Hapy ride their horses back to the palace complex.

“It doesn’t make sense to me,” Hapy says.

“What doesn’t make sense?” Nihi asks.

“If Moses can turn stars on and off,” Hapy says, “Why can’t he make the power of the Karnak priests go away so the King can stay in Thebes?”

“Moses possesses large powers from God,” Nihi says. “God is not concerned with small things in life like political disputes and battles. As God’s messenger, Moses has little power to change people. Only power to show them a new way of living under one god. He cannot force his religion on the people.”

“I’m not sure what my religion is anymore,” Hapy says. “If I even still have one.”

“I wasn’t either when I first met Moses,” Nihi says. “It’s a process one must go through. A process based on one’s faith in Moses and God.”

They ride their horses in silence for a while along the banks of the Nile. Even at night, there are royal boats heading north, taking men and supplies to the new city up north.

“What will you tell your father?” Nihi asks as they approach the Malaka Temple complex. “Will you tell him about Moses?”

“I don’t know,” Hapy says. “He’ll think I am crazy if I tell him I met a man who can turn stars on and off.”

## 18.Evening Escape

Hapu arrives back at the villa from up north the day after Hapy's meeting with Moses. He asks Hapy to go with him into Thebes for an important meeting with Meriptah. It is early afternoon and the storms have stopped but clouds are over Thebes.

The Nile has a raging new life and the trip across it is a difficult one and the boat rowers fight against the strong current. They stand on the side of the boat that faces north, holding tight to the boat rail.

"I've never seen so much activity up north," Hapu says. "Something big is about to happen. It is like the city is getting ready for an influx of thousands."

On the main street of Thebes there are scimmages between the king's soldiers and temple priests over disks of the Aten. The king's soldiers continue to destroy images of Amun Ra and replace them with the large Aten disks. There are protests against this and priests speak to gathered groups of people up-and-down the wide boulevard of Thebes.

"Did you find out anything about the old man from Nihi?" Hapu asks.

"Nihi tells me he is an old relative of the Young King," Hapy says. "He offers AmenHotep counsel in these difficult times."

Hapu looks at his son.

Hapy maintains a stone expression.

"I find that hard to believe," Hapu says. "It doesn't explain the old man who I saw on two trips to the project up north. The old man who disappeared into thin air right in front of Neyhu and me."

It is obvious he doesn't believe what his son has told him.

\* \* \*

The new Aten Temple is under construction on the eastern side of the Karnak Temple. A group of angry protestors have gathered around the construction site. The King's soldiers hold them back. But just barely.

Meriptah stands next to the window in his office and looks out at the crowds.

"I never thought I'd see the day when an Aten temple shares the same area with the Karnak Temple," Meriptah says. "Things get worse every day. We need to take action soon. The forces of the Aten continue to grow."

"There is still no information about the old man," Hapu says. "Hapy says Nihi tells him he is a relative of Amenhotep IV."

"Nihi is a liar," Meriptah says.

Meriptah unrolls a papyrus scroll on the table the three of them sit at. It is a map of the western side of the Nile, across from Thebes. The large square of the Malaka Palace complex dominates the map. His finger lands on the village where Nihi and Hapy travelled to see Moses.

"If he is a royal relative," Meriptah says, "Why is he living in a small stone hut in the farming village near the palace? No, he is more than an old relative. We believe he's the power behind the Aten."

Hapy tries to hide his surprise at seeing the map.

"You are sure this is where he is?" Hapu asks.

"Our contacts have seen AmenHotep IV travel to this stone building with Nihi," Meriptah says. "He has been making this trip for some time. The old priest is no relative of the royal

family. I've ordered Karnak soldiers to raid the stone hut late tonight and bring the old man to me."

"This will stir things up with the King and the royal family," Hapu says.

"Let it stir things up then," Meriptah says. "There is no other way. We will have the upper hand if we capture the old man before the Summit meeting next week."

\* \* \*

Hapu and Hapy leave the Karnak Temple. The angry crowds by the construction site of the Aten Temple have grown. More soldiers have arrived to hold back the crowds. It is obvious the Aten is not welcome in Thebes. Even away from the Karnak Temple, on the central boulevard of Thebes, angry protestors face off with soldiers of the King.

"I've never seen the city like this," Hapu says. "Things are close to revolution."

The dock area is busy with boats being loaded with construction supplies for the city up north. When they arrive back at the palace quay, Hapu is met by one of his supervisors.

"There are problems in reconstruction work on the Hathor Temple," the supervisor says. "AmenHotep IV wants you to take care of the problem. There is a boat waiting for you. Ipy has packed your things."

"How would you like to take a trip north with me to Dendara to see what the problem is?" Hapu asks Hapy. "We will only be gone a few days and it will be a good experience for you."

Hapy is caught off-guard by his father's sudden offer and thinks quickly.

“I need to get back to the workshops,” Hapy says. “I have an important meeting to discuss new production of Aten statues.”

“I’ll see you in a few days,” Hapu says. “By then, we should have the old man from the village in custody. I’m sure it is the same old man who has disappeared on me.”

\* \* \*

Hapy waves goodbye as his father’s boat pulls away from the palace quay. He then and runs to the villa and has Ipy send one of the villa servants to contact Nihi.

“It is extremely important,” he tells Ipy. “I need to meet with Nihi immediately.”

It is late afternoon and there is not much time to warn Moses of the raid tonight by Karnak priests. Hapy nervously waits in the villa for word back from Nihi. In early evening, word comes that Nihi has gone out of town for a few days with the Young King for a ceremony in Aswan.

Hapy paces in his father’s office thinking what to do.

He then goes to Ipy.

“Have the stables immediately saddle up two horses for me,” he says. “I will need food for a few days.”

\* \* \*

At twilight, he gallops north along the Nile road on his way to the farming village. There is a bag of food tied onto the saddle of his horse and he holds the reins of the other horse. He is dressed like a villager to disguise who he is.

He arrives in the farming village when it is beginning to get dark and yellow light of torches comes from the homes. He rides down the street where the stone hut is located and jumps off his horse when he arrives at it. He ties the horses to a small fence in front of the hut.

He is exhausted but his heart is beating so fast he can't feel the exhaustion. He knocks on the door but there is no answer. He tries the door. It creaks open. The room is empty and dark. The wall torches are not lit. Perhaps Moses has gone with the Young King and Nihi to Aswan?

Then, he hears something in the backyard area of the small home and walks behind it to see what it is. There he sees Moses on his knees in a prayer position quietly reciting a number of incantations. He walks up to Moses and puts his hand on his shoulder.

"We must leave immediately," Hapy says. "The priests of Karnak will be here soon."

The old man slowly stands up, using his staff to steady himself. Even in the growing darkness Hapy can see that his eyes glow like embers from a fire. The eyes look at Hapy for a few seconds.

"You speak the truth," Moses says.

He goes inside the stone hut and takes a scroll from the table and puts it in a small bag.

"You need to pack your things," Hapy says. "There is not much time."

"This is all I have," Moses says.

Hapy helps Moses into the saddle of the extra horse and gets on his own horse. He holds the reins of Moses' horse and they quickly ride out of town towards the western mountains. As

they leave, Hapy can see the dust cloud from the horses of the Karnak priests coming down the road towards the village. Like an angry mob.

## 19.Mountain Hideout

Night has fallen but there is still light from a half moon. They ride west on a small trail for half an hour through the western river valley of the Nile. Farms are on both sides of the trail. The farms and the trail disappear as they move into the foothills of the mountains. They climb higher and higher until they reach a small place made of baked mud with a roof of palm tree branches.

“My father owns this place,” Hapy says. “We used to come here when I was growing up. But we don’t come here anymore.”

They tie the horses up and take supplies into the little home. Hapy lights some torches attached to the wall and the single room is filled with flickering, orange light. It is a little larger than the village hut Moses lived in. It has two cots in it, a few chairs and a table.

“It’s not much but you can stay here until AmenHotep IV gets back and decides what to do,” Hapy says.

“Your help is appreciated,” Moses says.

Hapy places a loaf of bread on a table.

“I’ve brought enough food and water for a few days,” Hapy says.

They sit at the table and eat the bread.

“You risk much to help me,” Moses says.

“I couldn’t let you be captured by the Karnak priests,” Hapy says. “No telling what they will do with you.”

“My fate is in God’s hands,” Moses says.

“Egypt needs a new direction,” Hapy says.

“You think I offer this new direction?” Moses says.

“I’ve seen the power of the prayer ceremony,” Hapy says. “Heard the Hymn to the Aten.”

“The Aten brings freedom to Egypt,” Moses says. “Freedom from all the gods who hold so many in slavery.”

“I’m trying to become free,” Hapy says.

“I know you are,” Moses says. “This was obvious when I first met you. Becoming free is not a difficult task. One doesn’t need to obtain anything to become free. One simply has to realize that they are already free.”

“I’m not a slave to the gods of Egypt. I find it hard to believe in all of them. I’m mostly a slave to the beliefs of my father. His career of increasing mixed loyalties between the royal family and the Karnak priests. I’ve grown up with this feeling in my life. There were two great sides in constant battle in my father. I’m inheriting this battle.”

“I know much about your father,” Moses says. “I’ve been following him around. He is a good person. A faithful and loyal advisor to the old King. But also a person on a search for Ma’at in life. A balance between his two sides. It is your father’s battle, not your battle. No one needs to inherit the battles of others. Especially those of their mothers or fathers.”

Moses looks at Hapy. The young man is transfixed by the eyes of Moses in a similar way he was transfixed by the Aten prayer session.

“A battle wages inside you right now,” Moses says. “But you have a great battle ahead. You think you are free yet you are still a slave to Amun Ra. You have an interest in the Aten but are not willing to make a commitment to the Aten. Like so many young people of your generation.”

\* \* \*

Hapy wakes early the next morning and sees that Moses is not in the hut. He jumps off the cot and runs out the door. He sees Moses knelling on a large rock facing the rising sun. An image of the Aten is on a stick placed in the sand in front of the rock.

Hapy walks to the rock and knells next to Moses who recites incantations and then sings part of the hymn to the Aten he heard at the prayer ceremony.

After the morning prayer, the two sit on the large rock and watch the sun rise over the mountains east of Thebes. The capital city is ten miles away and is a mass of shimmering white in the dull green of the wet Nile River Valley.

“I’m leaving one of the horses with you,” Hapy tells Moses.

“I won’t be going anywhere,” Moses says.

“I’m off to see if Nihi and the Young King have returned from their trip. I know there will be much concern when they get back and find you gone from the village hut. If they have not returned yet, I’ll bring back more food for you.”

Hapy hugs Moses.

“You will become free someday,” Moses says.

“It’s lucky I have met you,” Hapy says.

“Luck had nothing to do with meeting me,” says Moses.

## 20.Migration North

When Hapy arrives back at the villa, he asks Ipy if AmenHotep IV is back from his trip to Aswan. Ipy says the Young King arrived back last night. He has Ipy send a messenger to Nihi that he wants to talk to Amenhotep IV. The messenger comes back and says Nihi and the Young King will meet him. He goes over to the palace in the late morning.

The Young King and Nihi have worried looks on their faces when Hapy enters the Young King's office. The disappearance of Moses has caused great concern to AmenHotep IV.

"A group of soldiers from the Temple rode out to the village last night and took Moses into custody," the Young King says. "It is doubtful they will spare his life."

"Moses is in a secure place in the mountains west of the palace," Hapy says.

"That's impossible," says Nihi. "Many saw the group of temple soldiers ride into the village where Moses was hiding."

"I got Moses out of the village before the priests came," Hapy says. "I went to the Karnack Temple yesterday with my father. We met Meriptah and heard of a plan to capture Moses last night. I tried to reach you but heard you were away. I took two horses and rode out to the village to get Moses before the priests got him. I took him to our old abandoned place in the

mountains. Nihi knows about the place. He used to go there with me when we were young boys. I left Moses with food and water. He waits to hear where he should go.”

“You risked much to rescue Moses,” Amenhotep IV says.

“Moses risks much for us,” Hapy says.

“Your father would not approve,” Nihi says.

“I’ve done too many things for my father’s approval,” Hapy says. “It’s time I do things for my own approval.”

Nihi smiles.

“Yes,” Nihi says. “About time.”

\* \* \*

The Young King is silent.

Thinking.

“It’s now too dangerous for Moses to be outside the palace walls,” the Young King says.

“From now on, he’ll live inside the palace complex with the royal family. No one is to know this.”

“But even the palace becomes a dangerous place with the priests of Karnak in revolt,” says Nihi.

“We continue to speed-up our movement to Amarna,” Amenhotep IV says. “Moses and the Aten have a dark fate in Thebes.”

“There is something else I heard,” Hapy says. “There will be a summit meeting of Karnak Temple priests in two weeks. When the moon is full. A strategy will be finalized to attack the Aten. The plan will be carried out soon after the summit.”

“I appreciate the information,” the Young King says.

“We need to move faster than we planned,” the Young King says to Nihi.

He looks at Hapy.

“Perhaps you are becoming a follower of the Aten,” the Young King says. “We will follow up on everything. I’ll order some soldiers to immediately pick up Moses and bring him to the palace.”

Hapy leaves the office.

\* \* \*

When Hapy is gone the Young King says “Start the relocation process to Amarna tomorrow.”

“I’ll call a meeting with all my assistants,” Nihi says. “We are ready to move on all of this. I’ve identified who in the administration we’ll take with us. Key followers of the Aten in Thebes.”

“They’ll be the core of a new Aten community,” Amenhotep IV says.

“I’ve established a network to reach them,” Nihi says. “I will start its operation tomorrow. We should be ready to make the migration to Amarna in a few weeks. A week before the summit meeting of the priests.”

“The battle lines are drawn,” says Amenhotep IV. “The older people in the villages around Thebes are the major supporters of the Karnak priests. Their belief in Amun Ra is too entrenched in history to shake from them from this belief. They have never experienced any other god in their life.”

“The network is full of the leading young people of Thebes,” Nihi says. “Just as we planned. They’re members of our generation who don’t want to live for the old gods. Young people who can’t live the same lives of their parents.”

“Like my father,” says Amenhotep IV. “He lives his life for his old gods. I live my life for the new Aten God. It is difficult for the young to live for the Aten in this city of the old gods and the Karnak priests. They live their parent’s lives over and over again. This is the real meaning of reincarnation. Our young Aten supporters will thrive in Amarna.”

“I’m excited to start the process,” Nihi says.

“It’ll be good to have old rotting wood cleared away,” Amenhotep IV says. “Replaced by new ideas, new passions, new beliefs.”

“And to have Moses safe inside the royal house,” Nihi says.

“Yes,” says Amenhotep. “Safe inside the palace. It is important his presence be kept a secret. Even from my father. Moses must remain hidden, his presence simply speculated on. The only thing citizens they will see is the Aten. The only thing they must believe is that I am behind the power of the Aten, that the Aten only speaks to me.”

“I’ll give orders for a team of soldiers to bring Moses to the palace,” says Nihi.

## 21.Father & Son Go North

Hapu arrives back at the docks in Thebes from Denara. He has been away for a week. The project has demanded more of his attention than he anticipated. Thebes is in a fury. He has never seen the city like this before. Aten and Amun Ra groups face off against each other. There is pushing and shoving and fists flying. Words are shouted between the groups.

There is a battle is between the people who are boarding the boats and those on the dock. Many young people and families are boarding the boats. The angry crowd at the docks has many old people from the villages in it. Hapu knows the great movement to the city up north has already begun.

When Hapu arrives at the villa, Ipy is busy directing the staff on loading the furniture of the villa into large transportation cases.

\* \* \*

The order from AmenHotep IV to move to Amarna is a forceful order, backed by all the boats in the King's fleet. Boats are gathered from all the great cities along the Nile and brought to Thebes to transport people to the new city. It is not only the movement of people but also the movement of the Egyptian capital.

For the next week, the docks of Thebes are busy. Boats jam into the harbor loading people and their various possessions onto them. The angry clashes of people on the docks continue. Royal soldiers attempt to keep order but they are outnumbered.

\* \* \*

The royal family, Nihi and Moses leave for Amarna and the palace is deserted except for a few servants who continue to pack royal artwork and treasures for the trip north. One evening a royal boat with Hapu and Hapy on it pushes away from the royal quay and heads north for Amarna. Many in Thebes have already gone north but Hapu and Hapy have stayed behind to close down the palace workshop.

They lean over the rail at the stern of the boat and look at the Malaka Palace and Thebes disappear into the darkness until there is just the Nile River and the outlines of the eastern and western mountains of the river valley under a night full of stars.

“It is difficult to leave a place you’ve called home all your life,” Hapu says. “I never thought this day would come.”

“One thing that puzzles me,” Hapy says. “For a long time you’ve known you were building the new capital for the Aten. Knew this better than anyone else. Why did you continue to build the city? Why didn’t you resign from your position as King’s architect? Become more involved with Meriptah and the Karnak Temple Priests?”

“I’ve often thought about this myself,” Hapu says. “Thought about it as the Old King’s condition declined while I was building the city and the power of his young son and his crazy cult grew.”

“Did you reach any conclusions?” Hapy asks.

“I think I stayed on because the city up north seemed my baby,” Hapu says. “I know this is difficult to understand. Someday, if you become an architect and builder of great things, perhaps you will understand. It is difficult to explain.”

“You are proud of the city,” says Hapy.

“Yes,” Hapu says. “Very proud in some strange way. Proud of a city I created even for a god I don’t believe in. It’s the kind of pride I have in my projects. The northern city is my greatest project.”

\* \* \*

The two are silent for a while, watching the Nile valley pass by in the moonlight. Both are exhausted from all the work they’ve done to close up the workshops but they are too excited about the trip north to go to bed.

“The Aten is something that must be constantly opposed in Amarna,” Hapu says.

“There’ll be few forces of opposition to the Aten in Amarna,” says Hapy.

“A few can possess great power,” Hapy says. “History proves this point.”

“Perhaps there are important things to learn from the Aten,” Hapy says.

“The only thing to learn from the Aten is that the Aten wants to destroy the religion of Egypt,” Hapy says. “This is all you need to know about the Aten.”

Hapy wants to tell his father again about the amazing experience he had at the prayer ceremony. He wants to tell him about this new person he has met called Moses. He wants to tell his father his generation is different from his father’s generation. He wants to tell his father all of

his gods mean little to him and other young people of his generation. Like Nihi and Amenhotep. The three are all the same age. They have grown up together within the confines, enslavement, of the walls of the palace complex. His father could never understand this.

He wants to tell his father that he feels only a bunch of dead symbols revolving around the religion of Amun Ra. Symbols everywhere. Looking at you. Observing your actions. Telling you what to do. Silently. Hapy wants to tell his father he feels this way about the old gods of Egypt. Perhaps he will tell his father this someday. But not tonight on their way to the new city.

\* \* \*

“I heard the Karnak Summit Meeting never happened,” Hapy asks his father after a while.

“It’s difficult to have the summit without Meriptah,” says Hapu. “AmenHotep IV sent him on a little expedition.”

“Expedition?” Hapy asks.

“East, beyond the mountains,” says Hapu.

“There’s only desert wilderness beyond the mountains,” Hapy says.

“Yes, only desert,” Hapu says. “It’s the Young King’s way of dealing with the power of the Karnak priests.”

“It’s a harsh way,” says Hapy.

“Yes,” says Hapu. “A harsh way.”

“Will you attempt to contact him?” Hapy says.

“I will if he is still alive,” Hapu says. “The wilderness of the eastern desert is a brutal land. There is a good chance that Meriptah will not make it.”

“Will you join him if he’s still alive?” Hapy asks.

“I don’t know,” Hapu says. “I can’t see this far into the future.”

## 22. Arrival

A few days later, the boat Hapu and Hapy travel on arrives in Amarna in early afternoon. Hapy can see his father is excited. In many ways, this is his city. There are few boats arriving as most of the migration north from Thebes is complete. Ipy and his staff unload their things and put them on a horse wagon.

The wagon heads north along the river bank road to the large new villa of Hapu. It is larger and more grand than the last one and it is not within the palace complex. Rather than follow the wagon to the villa, Hapu pulls Hapy off the dock and onto the wide new boulevard of Amarna.

“We can see our new home later,” Hapu says. “Now, I want to give you a quick tour of Amarna.”

Hapu talks about the city as they walk towards the wide boulevard of the city that parallels the Nile.

“The city is divided into a number of zones,” Hapy says. “The central city, where we are now, is home to the main palaces, temples and administrative buildings. South, is an area of houses. To the north is another area of housing. Further north is the northern palace and beyond this is the north city nestled on rising ground at the foot of the cliffs. East of the city is the village

of the workmen. Like Thebes the city contains government establishments, facilities like grain silos and bakeries, mudbrick homes, several necropolises and a number of zoos, gardens and other public buildings.”

They walk down the main boulevard of the new city.

Many of the structures are more like labyrinths without roofs than regular buildings.

There is a distinct lack of roofs in the new city as everything is open to the sun god Aten.

“Although the city has many of the same functions of Thebes,” Hapu says, “there is a new architecture in Amarna. It is an architecture that opens things up rather than encloses things. Buildings and homes and temples are open to the sun with outside altars and platforms instead of the dark traditional Egyptian temples of Thebes.”

When they approach a structure on the main boulevard, Hapu stops and points out the mud bricks of the outside of one of the new administrative offices for the city.

“I used smaller bricks in the project,” Hapu says. “Bricks small enough that they can be carried in just one hand by one man. It is a revolutionary idea in Egypt. The fact that individuals can carry materials for temples and palaces and tombs by themselves. A radical manufacturing concept. It greatly speeded up the time it took to build the city.”

They walk farther towards the great building dominating the skyline of Amarna. A giant block of a building. Its outside in black, polished marble from lands far away. In the afternoon sun, the building throws a great shadow over much of Thebes. But the western face of the great building is bathed in the afternoon sunlight.

Hapu walks up to the front face of the building and into a great hall. Hapy is astonished as he looks around inside the great cube at a building that is almost hollow on the inside. He is in a great atrium open at the top. Hapu leads Hapy to the back of the building which explodes in

size from the front with ceilings that seem to reach to the sky, ceilings higher than Hapy has ever seen before.

The two set out walking up an incline ramp within the great room that winds upward around the walls of the great room. It comes out onto a magnificent rooftop area that has its own trees and environment. The strong smell of honeysuckle flowers is in the warm air. The afternoon sun falls over the roof and gives the rooftop a dull gold color.

Hapu walks to the western edge of the rooftop and Hapy follows. They lean on the edge wall of the rooftop.

“The Aten Temple,” Hapu says. “The greatest building I’ve ever created inside the greatest city I’ve ever created.”

Hapy looks out over Amarna and is proud of what his father has created.

“It’s a beautiful building,” Hapy says. “I’ve never seen such a building or thought one could exist. I imagine the King will hold great events on this roof.”

“Prayer ceremonies in the morning and larger events in the evenings,” Hapu says. “At least this is what the Young King has told me.”

“I don’t think anyone’s ever created a greater building,” Hapy says.

“Or a greater piece of propaganda,” says Hapu. “It’s the King’s plan to make it an attraction for people all over Egypt. He wants it to bring more and more people to Amarna to see the great temple. They are talked into attending the Aten prayer ceremony on the roof. They end up taking the Aten message home with them. Maybe they even decide to move to Amarna. It’s ironic that my greatest building is also a great piece of propaganda for the Aten.”

\* \* \*

There is an incredible energy on the wide main boulevard of Amarna. Workers are still completing many of the government buildings on the street. Government officials are moving in. But unlike Thebes, there are no battles going on between various groups in the city. The inhabitants are all believers in the Aten. Hapu is a well-known face to many workers and they come over to shake his hand for creating such a magnificent city.

“Perhaps I’ll finally find my fame in Amarna,” Hapu jokes to Hapy.

“You deserve it,” Hapy says.

“Fame for building a city to a god I don’t believe in,” Hapu says.

“It’s still a magnificent city,” Hapy says.

They walk south on the main street until the government buildings stop and homes begin. The homes are large in this part of the city.

“The characteristic Amarna home is essentially a country home on large grounds,” says Hapu. “The home is surrounded by a courtyard comprising a garden, a kitchen, servants’ quarters, stables and silos all within an enclosure wall. The walls of the homes are made of brick supplemented by stone for the bases of columns and doorways. The supports for the columns, roofs and staircase are made of wood while floors are made of mud or brick that has been whitewashed and painted.”

People are moving into the homes. Animals are being led into the stable areas of the homes and servants work on adding final touches to the homes and the grounds.

After an hour, they turn around and walk north towards the new villa Hapu has created for them. Hapy is astounded by the beauty and grandeur of the city.

“The architecture is a type I’ve never seen before,” Hapy says. “A simplicity to the buildings. Gone are elaborate facades and intricacies of the buildings in Thebes. I had no idea you were creating this city all those years you were gone.”

“I’m pleased you recognize this,” Hapu says. “I think you’ll be a builder of great things in life.”

“I wish you would have told me about this project,” says Hapy.

“I was under an agreement with the Old King not to tell anyone,” Hapu says. “I made the agreement with my real boss not the pretending Co-Regent today. I could not betray the Old King’s trust. It was the Old King who really started the idea for this city. He and I designed it together. Originally, it was to be a city based around a tribute to Amun Ra. But the Young King changed it into a tribute to The Aten. The work I started for the Old King was taken over by the Young King.”

\* \* \*

The villa Hapy has created is the most magnificent home Hapy has ever seen in Amarna. It is much larger and more beautiful than their villa in Thebes and is situated on the banks of the Nile a few hundred yards south of the royal palace. It’s newly whitewashed and painted exterior looks supernatural in the light of the late afternoon sun. A wall surrounds the complex on three sides with an open side on the river. Inside is the main home with the servant’s quarters and stables behind the home. All around the home are lush gardens under the shade of large date palm trees.

Hapu walks Hapy around the various areas. The servants are busy moving possessions furniture and things into the home. Ipy is directing the operations. They walk through the large common area of the home and Hapu shows Hapy his new office and then takes Hapy into his own room. It is much larger than his room at the villa in Thebes and Hapy is excited by it.

\* \* \*

That afternoon, Hapu and Hapy gather for a meal on the wide patio overlooking the Nile. There is little river traffic on the Nile except for a few fishing boats. The hectic activity of transporting the thousands of new inhabitants of Amarna from Thebes has finally come to an end.

Hapy raises a glass of wine in a toast.

“Here’s to having us together more in this special place,” he says.

“Yes,” says Hapu. “Together more in this special place.”

Hapu looks north up the bank of the Nile to the walls of the royal palace.

“The most special thing about this place is that it’s outside the palace complex,” Hapu says. “I’ve finally escaped the walls of the King’s palace.”

Hapy looks at the walls of the palace complex. His view moves from the walls of the palace left out across the Nile and to the distant western hills. Then it moves back to a falcon’s view over Amarna. The city is bright and clean. A new simplicity in design. A town of passageways without roofs like a labyrinth puzzle structure.

“All you’ve done is escape the walls of the King’s palace into the walls of the King’s city,” Hapy says quietly under his breath.

“What did you say?” Hapu says.

“Nothing,” Hapy says. “Just how special everything is.”

## 23. The Chariot Ride

Within a few weeks of arriving, Hapu and Hapy have a new job. There is no palace workshop in Amarna and the most important construction project is building the royal mortuary tombs in the cliffs east of the city. Over a thousand men work building the royal tombs and Hapu becomes their new supervisor and Hapy one of his key assistants.

During the days when he is off work on the mortuary tombs, Hapy walk all over the new city by himself. Up and down the streets his father designed and built. It is an impressive city and he feels a new sense of pride in his father. Hapy thinks his father has given the Young King a powerful symbol in the city. Yet the truth is that the city represented a powerful symbol for Hapu also. It is something he wants Hapy to understand. A great symbol can be more than a god or a temple or objects within a temple. It can be an entire city.

The King has created a grand island state in the middle of the ocean of Egyptian culture up-and-down the Nile. This is a different thing for Hapy to consider. He has never lived in a place where everyone thinks so much the same way and are so similar to others.

Hapy also notices the Young King has established a closer relationship with his subjects in Amarna than in Thebes. In Thebes it became dangerous for him to go out into public with all the angry crowds protesting the Aten. But now, the angry crowds have disappeared and there is a

sense of peace and tranquility in the city. It is much like Thebes during the years of peace and prosperity when the Old King AmenHotep III ruled.

As a result, the Young King and his wife Queen Nefertiti are seen in public much more. Their biggest public event is the daily chariot ride down the main boulevard of the city. It has become a celebrated public event and crowds gather up and down the boulevard to see them ride their chariots down the street.

They begin at the royal palace on the north side of the city and ride through the wealthy suburbs on the south side of the city. The ride symbolizes the daily movement of the sun across the sky. But it has even more symbolism for the King. He has pointed out more than once that the new palace occupies exactly the same position as the Karnak Temple in Thebes. The movement of the palace across the river, has added to his new closeness to the citizens of his city, all passionate practitioners of the Aten religion.

\* \* \*

A few weeks after arriving in the new city, Hapy contacts Nihi to get together. He does not see his life as building the royal mortuary tombs in the eastern cliffs and wants to talk to Nihi about this.

Nihi responds and asks Hapy to watch the Chariot Ride of the King and Queen down the main boulevard of Amarna. Nihi meets Hapy in the special royal booth along the boulevard right before the Chariot Ride. Thousands crowd both sides of the boulevard eagerly waiting for the chariots to appear. The entire city seems to have turned out for the event.

They hug each other.

“I am glad you’re here,” Nihi says. “I think you’ll see a different King up here than the one you saw in Thebes.”

“I’m excited to be here,” Hapy says. “There is a spirit I’ve never seen before.”

People along the boulevard hold up small figures of the king and queen in enamel chariots. He has never experienced such devotion to a particular king before.

The crowd is comprised mainly of young people. They make up the largest part of the crowd by far.

“It’s such a young city,” Hapy says.

“Members of our generation,” says Nihi. “Not the generation of our parents. There’s few old people in Amarna.”

Along the chariot route across the boulevard, Hapy and Nihi can see various groups of people setting up stands and stalls along the street. Astronomers. Astrologers. Priests. Magicians. Alchemists. Prophets. Seers. Masons. Artists. Magic tricks are performed. Exotic oils and spices are sold. People push through the crowds selling clay images of the King and Queen frozen in heroic poses or riding their chariots down the boulevard.

A number of people recognize Hapy and come up and tell him to congratulate his father on the creation of Amarna.

“Your father is a celebrity,” Nihi says.

Nihi gets caught up in discussion with one of his assistants and leaves the royal booth.

\* \* \*

Hapy reflects on the excitement around him. The young people make it possible to believe in something new. It is getting harder and harder to believe this in Thebes. It is a city of reincarnation more than anything else, lives getting lived and relived over and over again, through eternity. Lives recycling, yet never starting anew again. It is so different from what Amarna promises.

What is it? What causes the feeling he has up here? What gives the place its special magic? Hapy wonders about this his first few weeks in Amarna. It is not something he can ask anyone else about. It is something he has to discover himself. What is it? A belief in the possibility of the world starting over again? Of being able to escape the hold of his father on his life and find his own way?

The Aten becomes increasingly popular. The words, incantations and hymns of the prayer sessions are learned and practiced mornings in homes around Amarna or in great gatherings at the Aten Temple or in front of the Aten Monument. The King and Queen are more accessible than they were in Thebes. They are often seen at some of the cafes in Amarna.

Amenhotep IV the Aten disc become more than the cult it was considered in Thebes. Rather the Young King and the disk become symbols for a feisty, new, defiant new religion. Youth is the most important part of the new religion. It is the youth and life given by the new sun each day. Death and darkness have little place in the Aten's world.

Hapy thinks about his discussions with friends in the cafes of Amarna. The young followers of the Aten do not believe in the propaganda from previous generations. Like their parents believed in this propaganda. Like his father Hapu believed in it. Rather, Hapy is the product of another generation, another time. Another god. This young generation seems to increasingly exert its power in the world.

\* \* \*

Nihi returns to the booth from his discussion with his assistant. The crowd is getting excited with the approaching chariot ride of the King and Queen.

“It is good the King mixes with his people,” Hapy says. “I think the King seeks to diminish his power and become part of his followers. Events like this chariot race for instance.”

“The King wants to mix with his followers,” Nihi says. “But his intention is not to diminish his power. He wants to present himself as the only one fitted for the true worship of the Aten. In the prayer, he is invoked as a god alongside the Aten. The Aten’s nature is not revealed. It is accessible only through the efforts and insight of the King and those he teaches.”

“That’s why my father has always had a difficult time with the young King,” Hapy says. “Even up here where my father is a celebrity.”

“We’d like you to keep an eye on your father for us,” Nihi says. “The King is concerned about him. He knows he’s still a powerful priest in the Karnak Temple. Knows his real allegiance is to his father and not to him. In many ways, it’s crazy Hapy’s up here at all.”

\* \* \*

There is a hush over the crowd and then the playing of the King’s presentation announcement from the royal trumpeter. The crowd strains to look north. In the morning sunlight, the King and Queen ride down the boulevard in gold chariots, both waiving to the

crowds. It reminds Hapy of scenes from mythology his father and grandfather have told him about.

The Young King rides by. He sees Hapy and waves to him. Then, Queen Nefertiti follows in her chariot. It is one of the few times Hapy has seen her. She holds the reins of the two horses in a commanding manner. She is wearing a sheer white outfit that waves in a morning breeze. Hapy is surprised by her beauty, so much greater than the simple look of her husband the Young King.

Hapy has heard Queen Nefertiti has taken on a new role of power in the city. She heads up more and more things in the city. Hapy hears talk that the images of the king and queen are merging. Whatever this means. Yet what might be her role, Hapy wonders. Perhaps to balance the sun god's light with darkness? Life with death? This is what some people say in the city. Some even suggest that she really serves as a type of co-regent with her husband the King. News has it the two are very much in love and inseparable. She is said to be a beloved wife and mother. They have seven daughters but no sons.

Hapy thinks about the oldest daughter Sabra as the Queen passes in her chariot. What will happen to Sabra? He has known her since they were children. They are almost like brother and sister. Some have speculated they would make a great couple if it was ever possible. But of course it is not possible and each has gone their own directions, away from each other, knowing a relationship between them is never possible. But always maintaining a closeness to each other.

\* \* \*

After the chariot event, Nihi and Hapy walk north through town towards home.

“It’s good to connect with you again,” Hapy says.

“Yes,” Nihi says. “We need to get together more.”

“I know it’s a high honor to work on the royal mortuary tombs,” says Hapy. “I am very pleased with appointment to the position by the King.”

“But you want to be considered for some new position?” says Nihi.

“I just can’t see myself building tombs,” Hapy says. “Especially building tombs with my father. No disrespect for the royal family.”

“You have some thoughts on what you want to do?” Nihi says.

“I’ve got an idea I’d like to discuss with the King,” Hapy says.

“Let me talk to him,” Nihi says. “I also can’t see you working at the mortuary temples.”

## 24.A New Direction

A few weeks after the resettlement, life for the inhabitants of the new city gets back to some sense of normalcy. The final work on buildings is complete and people are settled in their new structures. The lands on the edge of town are irrigated and crops planted. The wealthy in the large homes in the south part of the city are pleased with their new homes and take active part in the growing number of civic events in the city.

The workers' village east of town is complete. It is home to hundreds of men who work on the royal tombs and mortuary temple cut into the eastern cliffs. The village features a wall which is oriented close to the cardinal points. It encloses a uniformly planned settlement of small houses attached side-by-side in single rows along north-south running streets. The village is divided into two unequal sections by a wall running north-south through its whole width.

Hapu is the supervisor of the project and Hapy is his top assistant. It is a job that carries much honor and importance. Each day they ride horses out to the village to see that the workers get to the construction of the great mortuary tomb in the side of the cliffs. There is a large work area at the base of the cliffs where the workers cut stone and create various religious implements for the tomb. It is different from the workshop at Malaka with its various projects for different gods. Here the only project is work on the great mortuary temple and tomb.

Hapy follows his father around the work area as his father introduces him to various artisans. He is a good worker but his mind is not into the job. He feels that work should be more creative, building things for life rather than for death. He has not told his father about his frustration with the work. But he is sure he cannot continue to do it much longer. Life must be more than building tombs for others he thinks to himself.

\* \* \*

After work one evening, Hapy gets a note that the King wants to see him. He has not spoken with him since his rescue of Moses. A meeting is scheduled at the palace the next afternoon.

Hapy thinks it best he does not tell his father about the meeting. He feels his friendship with the King is something that needs to remain secret. Especially from his father. It is difficult to know how his father will react and it is better not to stir things up.

The next afternoon, Hapy tells his father he needs to leave work early and take care of some business in the city. He rides west into the late afternoon sun passing farms and the village of the mortuary workers. Soon he is in Amarna heading for the royal palace. He has not visited the royal palace since his arrival in the new city and is excited to see what it looks like. His father is proud of its design and feels it is one of his grandest projects.

In the late afternoon sun, the walls of the palace are in shadow. The palace gate keeper knows Hapy and opens the gate for him.

The king has requested they meet on the patio of the palace, outside under the sun, overlooking the Nile. A servant leads Hapy to the patio made of different stones. The patio of the

villa his father built is spectacular. But this patio is almost indescribable. Hapy stands looking west over the Nile at the scene in front of him. The sun is lowering over the mountains to the west. The same mountains west of Thebes two hundred miles to the south. He is offered a glass of wine and sips the wine waiting for the king to arrive.

\* \* \*

There is the sound of voices and the king and Nihi walk onto the patio.

The Young King embraces Hapy.

“Reports are excellent about your work on the royal tombs,” the Young King says.

“Thank you,” Hapy says.

“Nihi tells me you are interested in pursuing other career options within service of the royal family,” the King says.

“I need to break away from my father,” Hapy says. “And his type of work. People tell me I can be a great architect like my father. Yet I have little passion for it.”

“His philosophy is that of Amun Ra,” says Nihi. “It is not the philosophy of the Aten. You have all the training and requirements of your father. So much to offer the Aten.”

“Your father has become a famous man in the city,” the Young King says. “Even though he is one of the few who do not believe in the Aten, one must still be proud of his accomplishments. He is a great architect and builder. I could never have imagined a place so spectacular. He is a genius but I would say a confused genius. Caught between two worldviews. Not able to establish a beachhead in either one of them.”

“It’s no wonder you’re also confused,” Nihi says. “It is difficult to follow a father who answers to different gods.”

\* \* \*

“What is this idea you wanted to talk about,” the King asks. “Nihi told me you had some thoughts on a position for you.”

“I remember well the time I first met Moses and spent time with him in the mountains after I rescued him,” Hapy says. “It was like he was the father I’ve been searching for. I felt something different. A good feeling. Something I’ve seldom felt before.”

“Perhaps there could be work with Moses,” the Young King says. “I’ll talk with him when he returns from his pilgrimage.”

“Pilgrimage?” Hapy asks.

“Moses received a message from God,” the Young King says. “God ordered him to travel to a mountain in the east where God would give him instructions.”

“Perhaps this’ll be your destiny,” Nihi says. “To help Moses carry out his instructions from God.”

“Maybe it’s the destiny for all of us,” Hapy says. “To carry out the instructions from God.”

## 25. Sirius Sighting

The storms in Amarna mean the flood season is close. It is time for astronomers to set their telescopes on the star Sirius, the Nile Star - or Star of Isis - to Egyptians. Its annual appearance close to the Summer Solstice heralds the rise of the Nile, upon which Egyptian life and agriculture depends. It starts the beginning of the Egyptian New Year which coordinates with the cycles of the flood season. The season begins seventy days after the first sighting of the “Heliacal” rising of Sirius, the brightest star in the Northern Hemisphere, the only one that shimmers visibly.

One night, close to the Summer Solstice, many people gather on the roof of the huge new Aten Temple for the sighting ceremony of Sirius. The Young King has invited Hapy to the special sighting. The King has created a great reception of the movers and shakers of the city. A celebration of a past year and the welcoming in of a new year.

The reception on the roof is intended to be a thank you party for the King’s major supporters. Educators. Politicians. Priests. Soldiers. Wealthy civic leaders. The group of supporters one needs to have to maintain power. The leading astrologers, astronomers and alchemists circulate among the hundred or so people assembled on the roof of the Aten Temple in Amarna tonight.

Hapu has told Hapy the Young King did not command him to create anything in particular. His orders were simply to create a powerful experience for prayers to God. He didn't say prayers to gods. He said prayers to God. His father told Hapy that this is what he created from these orders.

In a sense, it was a prayer to his own god Amun Ra. But also to the Aten on the only roof within the royal complex. It is meant to be the best observatory for the sighting each year of the star Sirius and the prediction when the flood season would be upon Egypt. The star is directly over the great split in the eastern cliffs where the sun first appears each morning.

\* \* \*

Hapy wonders around the reception on the roof of the Aten Temple. Like the crowd at the chariot ride, a number of people stop and tell him to congratulate his father.

He is impressed by the guests at the reception. It has been a long time since he has seen so many young and beautiful Egyptian people all gathered together. The workshop and the projects of his father are filled with older artisans and craftsmen. But now, at the reception party on the roof of the new Aten Temple, the people of this old world are no longer present. Now, all about Hapy are astronomers, magicians and alchemists and young people who work in the civil government of the new capital city.

Many watch the night sky for the appearance of Sirius.

Soon, the King and Queen appear on the rooftop and the crowd opens to make way for them. Following the King and Queen, are all seven of the royal daughters. They march behind their parents from youngest to oldest.

Hapy has known most of them since they were little girls. He knows Sabra the best. She is the same age as the King and Hapy and was adopted by the Old King when she was only five years old. Her origins are a secret. Hapy and Sabra have grown up close as children, gone to the same schools, attended many events together. She grown into a beautiful young woman.

Sabra smiles at Hapy as she passes in the royal procession.

Then, they are gone, disappearing somewhere into the large crowd on the roof of the Aten Temple.

Hapy wonders around the reception searching for Sabra to say hello to her. But she is nowhere in sight. He meets some friends and they discuss life in the new city.

A crowd gathers around the leading astronomer in Thebes. Hapy pushes to the front of the crowd. The astronomer works with his telescope, looking into the eyepiece and adjusting the dials. It is getting close to dawn when Sirius will appear. Priests gather around the astronomer with stone tablets to mark the calendar date for the sighting.

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To the east, there is an orange glow behind the cliffs and the star Sirius appears before. There is great excitement on the roof as people point to the star.

The astronomer and priests gather together and recite incantations.

“The New Year has begun,” they sing. “The New Year has begun.”

The crowd joins in the chant.

“The New Year has begun,” they repeat over and over.

There is cheering and rejoicing.

Hapy sees Sabra.

He wants to talk to her but she is with another young man dressed in royal dress. Most likely a prince from some other city in Egypt Hapy thinks. Someone suitable for her to marry.

Soon, the royal party leaves and the crowd begins to move from the roof. The sun has risen and Sirius can no longer be seen in the light from the sun.

Nihi has been with the King during the event but now is by himself as he supervises closing down the rooftop after the sighting. He stops Hapy as he is leaving.

“We expected to see your father at the event tonight,” Nihi says. “He was an honored guest of the king.”

“He sends his regrets,” says Hapy. “He does not feel well and is sorry he missed the event.”

Nihi looks at Hapy. He does not believe this.

“There is no need to cover for your father,” Nihi says. “The King knows he is having a difficult time living under the Aten god. Even though he’s a celebrity.”

Hapy does not say anything to Nihi.

On his walk home he reflects over what Nihi has said.

## 26. The Fake Project

Not long after the Sirius sighting, Today, Hapu leaves work on the mortuary temple and travels to the southern part of the Amarna to visit his friend Heynu. Hapu's key supervisor has been placed in charge of construction of a new Aten temple on the south side of the city. The temple is much smaller than the grand Aten Temple in the central part of the city and allows access to Aten prayer sessions in the southern part of town.

Working as Hapu's key assistant has been good to Heynu and he has one of the grander villas in the city on a few acres of land. The villa is a congregation of white structures surrounded by date palms and a miniature lake that weaves between date palm trees.

The two are in a little area by the miniature lake under the shade of the date palm trees as Heynu's servants bring them fruit and wine.

"I'm amazed to hear Meriptah is alive and thriving in the eastern desert," Heynu says.

"His camp grows each day," Hapu says. "It has become a center of resistance to the Aten.

"Your plan to see Meriptah is risky," Heynu says.

"I know," Hapu says. "But I think it's the only way to make contact with him without creating suspicion with the King."

"So the King has approved the project," Heynu says.

“At least what I’ve told him about it,” Hapu says. “I met with him a few days ago and convinced him I needed to check on the construction progress of the Aten Temples in the south. He knows Hapy is a good supervisor in my absence. He’s done an excellent job during all the times I’ve been away. The King has much trust in him.”

“What does Hapy think about the project?” Heynu asks.

“I’ve told him the same thing I’ve told the King,” Hapu says. “I’ve said nothing to him about meeting with Meriptah.”

“Hapy must think the project is strange given your dislike of the Aten,” Heynu says.

“He’s suspicious,” Hapu says. “But then he’s always suspicious about many things I do. The King’s approval of the project is enough for him. Besides, I’ve told him the experience of supervising the mortuary project will be good for the advancement of his career.”

“What about the advancement of your career?” Heynu asks.

“I worry less and less about my career these days,” Hapu says. “At least not my career as an architect for the royal family and their Aten religion. This city is the capstone of my career. I have no interest in building anything more for the Aten religion.”

“You consider joining Meriptah in the desert?” Heynu says.

“It’s a possibility,” says Hapu.

“What about Hapy?” Heynu says.

“His career as King’s builder is secure,” Hapu says.

“If he wants to be a builder like you,” says Heynu. “He still seems to be searching for a career.”

“I know,” Hapu says. “But there is always is always the possibility of Hapy coming with me if I join Meriptah.”

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Heynu waives his arm in a broad sweep around his lush property. It is early afternoon and the sunlight gives the small lake in front of them thousands of sparkles.

“Life is good up here,” Heynu says. “I can’t understand why you want to leave Amarna.”

“You’ve been influenced by all the royal propaganda,” Hapu says. “The daily chariot rides of the King and Queen through the city. The big parties on the roof of the Aten Temple. The appearance of the King in public. All part of a huge propaganda campaign to make him into the ‘common’ King, one who mixes with his people. It’s all a bunch of BS.”

“Looks who’s talking,” Heynu says. “You’ve always said architecture is propaganda. Now, the creator of the King’s greatest piece of propaganda called Amarna tells me I’m influenced by the King’s propaganda.”

“It’s one thing to create propaganda for something you don’t believe in,” Hapu says. “It’s another thing to live inside the propaganda you’ve created.”

“Maybe you need to create propaganda for the Karnak priests and Amun Ra,” says Heynu. “After all, you’ve been a Karnak priest most of your life and done little for them. Seeing your design for the Aten Temple in Amarna, I’m sure that it seems to many that the temples of Amun Ra need updating or a new design. Perhaps even a new architectural style. Something that appeals more to the young generation.”

“The thought has been on my mind,” Hapu says. “I’m going to talk to Meriptah about this.”

Hapu rises to leave.

The two men hug.

“I’ll be back in a few weeks,” Hapu says. “Keep an eye on Hapy for me. I told him he can contact you if he has questions at work.”

“Of course,” Heynu says. “Watch yourself. The eastern desert can be an unforgiving place.”

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That evening, Hapu says goodbye to Hapy and sets out from his villa in a boat with a few of his most trusted servants as crew. They go south against the northern flowing Nile. The current is strong against them at the beginning of the flood season.

Their first stop is Badari to observe the construction of the Aten temple. The city still worships Amun Ra and Hapu is a celebrity in Badari. Many in the city have heard of the great Aten city to the north. The project is under the supervision of one of his protégées and he spends little time at the project, just enough time so the King will know he was there.

The next stop is Denara where Hapu built the Hathor Temple. Since then, construction of an Aten temple has started under the supervision of another one of his supervisors. Again, he is a celebrity in Denara but, like Badari, the people of the town are not friendly to the Aten and there are protestors surrounding the construction site of the Aten Temple.

“People protest the Aten in the villages all over the empire,” the supervisor in Denara tells him.

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On the third day, Hapu reach Thebes.

He is astounded at the condition of the city.

The Karnak Temple has fallen into disrepair. The great gardens surrounding the temple are overgrown with weeds and the branches of the large date trees around the temple have not been trimmed. Soldiers of the king surround the temple and keep people from going inside.

Behind the Karnak Temple is the Aten Temple. Its construction is complete and it is open to receive Aten worshippers yet there are no worshippers around it only a group of angry protestors. More of the king's soldiers surround the Aten Temple, protecting it from the protestors.

Hapu meets with the head priest of the Aten Temple and examines its construction. Then, he walks around Thebes.

Hapu is not popular in Thebes as people know he is responsible for creating the new city that caused the abandonment of Thebes as the capital. Many jobs have been lost and many of the grand government buildings along the boulevard are now empty. Unlike Amarna, it is a town of older citizens and they move about slowly like ghosts drifting aimlessly.

He goes across the river to see the Malaka Palace and his old villa. Like the Karnak Temple, the palace grounds have not been kept up and windswept sand covers much of the once beautiful gardens of the palace. The great Pleasure Lake is empty of water and is little more than a large oblong rectangle with weeds exploding out from it.

His villa is abandoned and locked so he cannot get inside. The last place he visits is the workshop area. Most of the tools and machines have been taken from it and carried up to the

mortuary workshop in Amarna. The workshop is abandoned except for a few children who play hide-and-seek behind some statues of old gods.

The next evening, Hapu rides in a wagon supplied by the priests to a home in the farmlands east of Thebes. An old Karnak priest he has known for many years meets him at the home. The priest has arranged a horse and has prepared supplies for Hapu's trip. He introduces two other priests at the home who will guide Hapu to Meriptah's camp in the eastern desert.

## 27. Commandment on the Mountain

Moses has spent little time in Amarna before he receives a commandment from God to travel to a mountain in the East called Mt. Sinai. The King is upset at his departure but nothing can convince Moses not to make the trip to Mt. Sinai. Moses leaves the palace early one morning after the prayer ceremonies and travels east across the desert with a few royal soldiers as guides.

After a week of travel, they reach the bottom of Mt. Sinai and Moses waits for further instructions from God. These instructions always come in strange ways from unusual places and Moses must be alert to hear them. They camp at the base of Mt. Sinai for a few days without any message from God. Each day, Moses goes through his prayers but there is no message.

Then, one day the sky fills with clouds and there is thunder and lightning and a sudden opening in the clouds. Through the opening comes a great beam. It falls directly on Moses who looks up at the light for a few moments. Then, it is gone and the storm clouds clear and the sky is blue with the burning heat of another Egyptian day.

“I received the message from God,” Moses tells his guides. “We must travel to the top of the mountain.”

Moses is an old man and the climb to the top of the mountain takes a few days. He camps with his guides half-way up the mountain. They start out for the top of the mountain at night and reach the top of it at the dawn of a new day when the sun is first rising in the east.

Moses waits on top of Mt. Sinai with his guides and watches the sun rise. He waits and wait. Moses knells on his prayer rug and prays to the morning sun. Yet there is no message. They continue to wait on top of the mountain as the sun rises higher and dawn becomes morning.

They wait until mid-day when the heat becomes unbearable and they are forced to start back down the mountain. This is when Moses hears words coming from a great boulder on top of the mountain. The boulder is speaks to him.

“Return to Egypt,” the voice says. “A great war is upon the country. Followers of the Aten will come to the new city from all over Egypt for refuge. Great plagues will cover the city. You must gather them together and lead them to a new land. The city of the Aten will be overrun by the old gods.”

Moses stands in front of the great boulder listening for more but the boulder is silent. The two guides wait behind Moses. They have not heard anything and wonder why Moses stands in front of the boulder.

“We need to go,” one of them says. “The sun becomes too hot on the mountain topo and we have little water left.”

They make it down the mountain to their camp at the base of the mountain and then mount their horses for the journey back to Amarna.

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Moses meets with the King and Nihi at the palace when he returns to Amarna. He tells the King what God told him on Mt. Sinai. The King is angry. He does not believe what Moses has just told him.

“The city of Amarna will *never* be overrun by the gods of the Karnak priests,” the King says. “What you say is heresy.”

“The word of God is not heresy,” Moses says.

“God’s word goes against my word,” the King says.

There is silence for a few moments.

“It is impossible to believe these prophecies of God,” the King says. “Look around you. Amarna is the powerful capital of the Aten who will rule Egypt for many dynasties. Refugees will not come to our city. Rather, we will send out emissaries to other cities to spread the religion of the Aten.”

“God punishes those who do not believe his words,” Moses says.

“Then he needs to develop new words,” the King says. “The discussion is over.”

The King motions for Moses to leave and he slowly leaves the King’s office.

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The King is angry. He paces back and forth thinking what to do.

“He does not need to be part of the royal household anymore,” the King says.

“What are we to do with him?” Nihi asks.

“I want him relocated into the desert beyond the eastern cliffs,” the King says. “Not into the deep wilderness like Meriptah. I want him close to the city so we can keep an eye on him.”

Have a small home built for him. There might be a time when his prophecies change and we have use for him. But we have little use for him now.”

## 28.Desert Resistance

The Egyptian desert east of Thebes is a rolling sandy highland that rises from the Nile Valley and merges with a rugged volcanic mountain chain seventy miles east of Thebes and ten miles west of the Red Sea. The eastern desert receives occasional rainfall and is dissected by wadis or the dry beds of seasonal streams.

While the eastern desert lacks water, it makes up for this with its abundant natural resources like phosphates, sulfurs and substances used in the growing science of alchemy. There are patches of mining activity in the desert but little else.

Except for a large tent camp close to the Red Sea Hills. Meriptah established the tent city after the King banished him into the wilderness. The King has heard nothing of the tent city and thinks Meriptah has died in the barren desert. But many followers of Meriptah left Thebes and came to his rescue. Few of them think of Meriptah as a vanquished foe of the King. To them, he is the true leader of Egypt forced into exile.

The tent city is a busy place. Rather than an isolated outpost in the desert, it has become a center of opposition to the Aten. Men on horses and camels constantly arrive at the camp. Many are refugees from the King's soldiers who clear Aten followers from various cities. Some bring supplies. Weapons have been taken from the Malaka palace and a sizeable arsenal has been

established. The refugees and priests get military training and conditioning from a young general who left the King's army to join Meriptah named General Horenheb.

In the middle of the tent city is a great white tent where Meriptah lives with his key assistant Ipuki and top priests. It serves as a makeshift Karnak Temple since the Karnak Temple in Thebes has been closed by order of the King.

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Hapu arrives in the tent city late one afternoon after traveling two days from Thebes. Meriptah is pleased to see him and gives him a tour of the camp. Hapu is exhausted from his travels and goes to bed immediately.

The next morning is the big meeting in the white tent. Meriptah and his top priests gather around a large table. Hapu is seated on one side of Meriptah and General Horenheb on the other side.

"I'm pleased my good friend Hapu is with us today," Meriptah says. "The city he built for the Aten is much talked about. I hope his talents will soon be used for Amun Ra."

There is applause from all present. Most have known Hapu for years as a senior priest and have heard Amarna is a magnificent city, the future of how Egyptian cities should be designed.

"Hapu is one of the few people who has seen things from both sides," Meriptah says. "Most know him as the old King's top advisor and builder. Yet he has also been a loyal priest in the Karnak Temple. I call on him to say a few things to us."

Hapu rises and looks around the table.

“Your desert camp is impressive,” Hapu says. “The King felt he was banishing Meriptah to the wilderness forever. Yet all he has done is provided the impetus for the renewed growth of the Karnak priests and Amun Ra.”

There is cheering around the table.

“Not long ago,” Hapu says, “Meriptah and I sat in the Karnak Temple and discussed a summit meeting to create a strategy to deal with the King and his crazy Aten cult. The strategy meeting never came about as the King banished Meriptah to the desert when he learned of the meeting. I went north with the royal family to Amarna but I never forgot Meriptah and wondered if he was still alive. I was relieved to hear he was not only alive but thriving in the desert.”

Hapu looks at Meriptah and claps. The rest of the group begins clapping until there is cheering all around the table.

“It’s amazing how fast the Aten cult has grown,” Hapu says. “Not long ago I traveled north on the Nile to a barren spot. Today, this spot is a magnificent new city called Amarna where there is no sign of Amun Ra and the disk of the Aten is everywhere. The city is filled with young people who have rejected our old gods in favor of a single new god. They consider our old gods little more than a mixed-up jumble of icons and images. But the old gods of Egypt are more than a chaotic jumble. Rather, they have a specific structure in the cosmos based around a system of kinship that relates their actions and destinies to each other. The organization of the state assigns the various gods divine rule in temples and cities. All of this represents various aspects of the divine on display. We all know that this is why Gods have names, genealogies and roles mythically revealed, why they have a portfolio of different cosmic, vegetative and cultural competencies and locations from where they exercise their earthly rule. As Egyptians, we come into contact with gods through myths, divine names, sacred formulas and recitations, through

cosmic, natural and cultural phenomena, in temples and cults.”

Hapu stops for a few moments.

“We all believe in these gods,” Hapu says. “But the young King and the people of Amarna have sweep our gods, our mythology, our history away in favor of the simple one god of the solar disk. Amun Ra must be restored.”

There is cheering around the table.

“Yes!” the priests chant. “Restore Amun Ra!”

\* \* \*

After the chanting has calmed down, Meriptah stands up and says, “I’d like to also recognize a new member of our group. One of the key people helping us fight the Aten, General Horenheb.”

The general acknowledges the group. He is a young, handsome man the same age as Hapy.

“As most of you know,” Meriptah says, “General Horenheb was on track to become the head of the King’s military before he left and joined us. He now leads our newly established military division. Young men from all over Egypt come to join our forces under the leadership of General Horenheb. Our group becomes a stronger military group each day.”

The assistants of Meriptah applaud General Horenheb who stands up and walks to a map and picks up a pointer.

“We move forward on our plan to attack Aten believers in cities around the empire,” General Horenheb says.

He points to cities along the Nile. His pointer moves north up the Nile until it stops on Amarna.

“Amarna is the final city we attack,” General Horenheb says. “Our troops will have gained experience by the time we attack the capital.”

“Then, we will return to Thebes and restore Amun Ra and the Karnak Temple,” Meriptah says. “The crazy new religion of the Aten will be just a passing phase of our history. The insanity of the young King will end.”

Another cheer erupts around the table.

For the next few hours, details of the plans to invade the Aten around Egypt are discussed. Hapu uses his extensive knowledge of the various Aten sites in the various cities to draw diagrams of the cities so Horenheb can better plan his attacks.

\* \* \*

That evening, Hapu and Meriptah sit in front of the great white tent looking at the stars.

“You will stay with us?” Meriptah says.

“For now, I have more value as your eyes and ears in Amarna,” Hapu says. “I can learn things from my son about the King and pass this information onto you. Information that could be helpful to General Horenheb.

“Our spy in the royal family,” Meriptah says.

“Since the royal family turned against Egypt,” says Hapu.

“What of the old priest?” Meriptah says.

“I’ve heard rumors he left Amarna to go East,” Hapu says. “That is all I know. I will let

you know if I hear more information about him.”

## 29.Cafe Warning

There is talk about the city in the cafes along the main boulevard of Amarna. Everyone is astounded at the simple beauty of the new city. For the first time, it seems, a city has been designed for citizens rather than Kings. It makes much more sense to Amarna citizens than the old designs and buildings of Thebes.

On his days off from work on the mortuary tombs, Hapy spends frequents the cafes discussing the new Aten religion with friends. Most are artists, magicians, astrologers or alchemists. They discuss a wide variety of topics.

Hapy has never experienced this degree of communication before. In Thebes, few were interested in reflection or discussion about the world. Things were what they were and that was it. One's destiny was carved into stone like hieroglyphic images on stone stelas. But in Amarna, nothing is written in stone and everything is open to discussion and interpretations.

\* \* \*

Nihi contacts Hapy and says they need to get together. They meet in the outside area one of the café's along the wide boulevard of Amarna where the King and Queen ride their chariots. They sit at a table drinking beer and watching the energized activity along the street.

“The possibility of you working with Moses is doubtful,” Nihi says.

“You’ve talked with the King?” Hapy asks.

“The King has temporarily severed connections with Moses,” Nihi says. “He came back from his pilgrimage east and told the King about his message from God. The King didn’t like what he told him.”

“What did God tell Moses?” Hapy asks.

“He told him there will be a great war between the followers of Amun-Ra and the Aten,” Nihi says. “Followers of the Aten will seek refuge in Amarna from all over Egypt. God wants Moses to gather the refugees together and lead them out of Egypt. God told Moses Amarna will no longer be safe from the forces of the Karnak priests. Amarna will be overrun by forces of the old gods of Amun Ra.”

“The King didn’t want to hear this,” Hapy says.

“He was angry,” Nihi says. “He cut off relations with Moses and banished him from the royal house into the desert beyond the eastern cliffs and the mortuary tombs. Perhaps he will play a part in future royal matters. Perhaps not. It’s difficult to predict the King’s thoughts these days. He once felt he needed Moses. Now, he feels he no longer needs him. Everything centers around the King. He needs no one else. It is not something he has discussed with me or the Queen.”

“The King changes quickly,” Hapy says.

“Each day,” says Nihi. “With the decline of his father. The Queen continues to play a greater role in things. She provides a balance the Aten does not provide.”

“The Queen brings back balance and Ma’at to Egypt,” Hapy says. “The Aten knows little about balance. There’s no balance in a world of one god. The Aten is light, day and life. It has little place for darkness, death and night.”

“It’s hard to disagree with this,” Nihi says.

\* \* \*

Hapy suggests they leave the café and walk for a while. Nihi follows Hapy. They walk to the wide boulevard and then down it past the giant Aten Temple and towards the Aten Monument at the southern end of the boulevard. They walk in silence observing activities on the boulevard.

As usual, there are a number of citizens gathered around the great Aten Monument offering prayers and gifts to the huge sun disk on top. Hapy and Nihi sit on a rock near the monument watching worshippers come and go.

“So, I am to continue my work building the royal mortuary temple?” Hapy asks.

“Working with my father.”

“This is what the King wants right now,” Nihi says. “He does not trust your father and does not want him out of his sight. He suspects he’s up to something. He wants you to keep an eye on him.”

“A glorified spy,” Hapy says.

“It’s important the King knows what your father is up to,” Nihi says. “After all he is still a high priest with the Karnak Temple. There is talk your father has joined the resistance. It’s only talk. But still, it’s a serious accusation.”

“My father left to review construction of Aten temples along the Nile,” Hapy says.

“I hope don’t believe this story,” Nihi says. “There is a report he was seen leaving Thebes with a few guides and traveling into the eastern desert where rumors say Meriptah has a camp.”

Hapy is silent for a moment thinking about what Nihi just told him.

“The report might have merit,” Hapy says. “My father hoped things would change once he left the confines of the palace complex in Thebes. But he came to realize he was only trapped in a larger complex called Amarna. There’s no home within someone else’s home. Maybe he does talk to Meriptah. Maybe he considers joining the resistance. Maybe it is the best thing for him. The only way for him. He seems to have little life up here anymore. His celebrity status wears away quickly. He is proud of Amarna. It is the city he has built. Yet, at the same time, he is not proud he built it for the Aten and the young King.”

“Your father has always remained faithful to the old King,” Nihi says.

“The old King might as well be dead,” Hapy says. “With the decline of the old King, he has no one to be faithful to anymore.”

“Except the Karnak priests,” says Nihi. “It is his fate but doesn’t have to be yours also. You have a growing reputation as a leading new builder in the nation. Your status continues to grow with the King. He has you in mind for his key builder. It is a role similar to the role of your father with the old King.”

“It’s not something I can see myself doing,” Hapy says. “I know I’ve had training for this most of my life but I still search for what I want to do in life. I envy you. Your star has always been hitched to the young King since you were boys together. You have had little doubt about your goals.”

“I’ve always envied your freedom to navigate between loyalties,” Nihi says.

“I’m tired of navigating between loyalties like my father,” Hapy says. “My father is a famous builder but I don’t want to repeat the life he lived.”

\* \* \*

Nihi points at the Aten Monument that rises above them.

“The Aten always awaits your loyalty,” Nihi says.

“It is difficult to give my loyalty to the Aten,” Hapy says. “Especially when I’m not sure I know what loyalty means.”

“Even after your experience in Aten the prayer sessions?” Nihi says.

“Yes, even after prayer sessions,” Hapy says. “The prayer sessions are impressive yet the more I think about them the more I see they need the balance of Ma’at to them. They become less important to me when I think of this missing element in them. In truth, the only thing about the Aten that impressed me was the fact I thought Moses was behind the Aten. I still remember the night I first met Moses in the village hut and the time I spent with him in the mountains. Now, his position with the King and the Aten is unclear.”

“Moses has been banished from Amarna,” Nihi says.

“I need to know where he has been banished to,” Hapy says.

“No one says I can’t continue working on tombs while spending my free time in the desert with him.”

Nihi looks around them to see if anyone is near.

“This must remain just between the two of us,” Nihi says. “It is dangerous for me to tell you this.”

“It’ll remain just between us,” Hapy says. “You have my word.”

“Five miles east of Amarna, in the desert beyond the mortuary tombs,” Nihi says, “there is a small stone structure where Moses now lives.”

“Thank you,” Hapy says.

“Let me know when you contact him,” Nihi says.

“I will,” Hapy says.

“Perhaps your work will be with Moses after all,” Nihi says.

### 30. Death in the Royal Family

Hapu returns to Amarna from his travels and continues his work on the royal mortuary tombs. Hapy asks him about the trip but he says little about it, only that it was a successful trip. A few days after his return, he goes to the palace to meet with the King to update him on his trip and tell him about the progress of the Aten Temples under construction in Egypt. Nihi is in the meeting along with a few of the King's top advisors. No one mentions the rumors circulating that Hapu was seen leaving Thebes and heading into the eastern desert. But it is on everyone's mind.

A few days after his meeting with the King, Hapu is awakened one night by his servant Ipy.

"The King wants you at the palace immediately," Ipy says. "His father is dying."

Hapu races to the palace.

In the open courtyard where prayers to the Aten are made each morning, the old King is stretched out on a type of altar. The light of torches gives the courtyard a wavering orange glow. The King and Queen Nefertiti stand near the altar.

The old King is still conscious; his eyes wide open as he looks at the stars in the sky. The young King motions for Hapu to move next to the old King.

Hapu walks towards the old King. He reaches down and takes the old King's hand. The old King slowly looks at Hapu. There is the suggestion of a smile on his face.

The old King mumbles something but Hapu cannot hear so he moves closer until he is only inches from the King's mouth.

"Your loyalty has never wavered," the old King says.

"No, it hasn't," Hapu says. "The city we envisioned has been created. It is a great tribute to you."

"I hope Egypt finds the way of the Ma'at between its battling gods," the old King says.

"It is my hope too," says Hapu. "Yet battles increase."

The old King lifts his hand and Hapu takes it and holds it for a few moments. His hand then falls and his eyes close. In the next few days there is a burial ceremony at the royal tomb in the eastern cliffs. There are a few hundred in attendance but it is not well attended as the young King has not made it into the grand ceremony the death of a King calls for in Egypt. Hapu presents a moving eulogy at the ceremony and discusses the life of the King. But he can see that few are interested in hearing about the old King. Except his son Hapy who is in the front row of those assembled and listens to his father's eulogy with much interest.

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An atmosphere of darkness hangs over the city after the death of the old King. In spite of his declining influence on the affairs of state, he still represented a symbol of the old Egypt and the years of peace and prosperity. His death symbolizes a final end to this period.

A week after the death of the King, Hapy meets Nihi at one of the cafes in the city.

"The King is shaken by the death of his father," Nihi says. "Death has little place in the Aten's world. Its' religion of light and life finds it difficult dealing with darkness and death."

“No one is shaken by his death as much as my father,” Hapy says. “Now that the old King has been buried in the royal mortuary tombs, his work has even less meaning for him than it did before.”

“It is a dangerous time for him,” Nihi says. “He needs to be watched carefully.”

“It is a dangerous time for the city,” Hapy says. “For the empire.”

“The Aten leads the way in dangerous times,” Nihi says.

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A month after the death of the old King, the King’s adopted daughter Sabra suddenly dies. There is no indication she is even sick and her sudden death is a mystery.

Unlike the quiet ceremony for the old King, Sabra’s death results in a grand procession down the main boulevard of Amarna. It is the most elaborate ceremony the city has seen. The burial ceremony next to the Old King in the royal mortuary temple attracts thousands of people. The King attempts to say something about Sabra but he chokes up and is not capable of speaking. At this point, Queen Nefertiti steps forward and gives a spontaneous, brief eulogy to Sabra.

The palace becomes a dark place and the inability of the Aten to deal with death only makes things worse. While the young King was shaken by the death of his father, he is almost inconsolable after the death of Sabra. The chariot rides cease and he and the queen are seldom seen in public. Small memorial statues of Sabra appear all around the city. The citizens of the city talk of little else but her sudden death. The King’s depression creates a strange new

atmosphere in Amarna different from the one of hope and life that has filled the city since the beginning.

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Few in the city are more shaken by Sabra's death than Hapy. He thinks of all the years he knew Sabra, of the times they were young and played together. Of that first time he met her right after she was adopted and came to live with the royal family. He has known little love in his life but he believes he was secretly in love with Sabra. However, he never let these thoughts enter his heart because love with a member of the royal family was forbidden.

In the weeks following Sabra's death, prayers to the Aten increase in the palace, the grand Aten Temple and other temples around the city. Yet the Aten provides little consolation for those who grieve for Sabra.

Hapu knows his son and Sabra were good friends and attempts to console his son the days after her death. One evening they sit on the patio of his villa. It has been another difficult day at the mortuary workshop in the eastern cliffs. Neither of them wants to continue work on the mortuary project.

"The Aten has no place for death," Hapu says. "It is a fatal problem that'll eventually lead to the downfall of the Aten."

"Death is not partial to religions," Hapy says.

"But religions treat death in different ways," Hapu says. "Some religions accept. Others do not. The Aten does not accept death. There is little place for death in the Aten religion."

"Maybe this will be the death of the Aten religion," Hapy says.

“It could be the start of it,” Hapu says.

### 31.Foreign Tribute

Besides the deaths in the family, there is growing bad news for the King. Reports from other parts of the country tell of a growing civil war between the followers of the old religion of Amun Ra and the new cult of the Aten. The outer realms of the empire are becoming restless with Amarna. Many see it as a kingdom in exile.

The traditional parts of Egypt have never endorsed the Aten cult. Amun Ra still holds power in villages and many of the smaller towns of Egypt. The new Aten holds power in the cities and continues to create great divisions in the nation. There are constant uprisings in the larger cities up and down the Nile.

News about the empire from the King become less reliable and turns into propaganda. One has to collect news from various sources and blend things together like substances of alchemy to find the truth in the news of the day.

It is time for distant parts of the empire and world to be reminded Egypt is still the ruler of the world. The King comes up with a plan to create a great event that will bring leaders from all over the nation and world to Amarna. It will have ceremonies like a Sed Festival but it's purpose will be not to just restore the power of the King but to renew the power of Egypt, to show the visitors Egypt is still the most powerful nation of the world.

Dignitaries from all over Egypt and nearby nations are invited to Amarna. The city is readied for the event and in its dazzling white beauty has never looked better. The citizens wear their finest clothing and the King's soldiers and administrators wear their most colorful uniforms. It is intended to be a showing of strength of the new Egypt ruled from the new capital. There are great hopes and goals for the tribute ceremony.

Hapy attends a number of planning sessions for the tribute but Hapu is not invited as the King is increasingly suspicious of Hapu.

The city docks become busy with ships arriving carrying foreign leaders and dignitaries to Amarna. There are great celebrations and ceremonies and many events on the rooftop of the large Aten Temple. Different languages are spoken in the cafes throughout the city. Meetings are held in the royal palace and there are many mass prayer ceremonies to the Aten. Images of the Aten disk appear all over the city and many foreigners wear Aten necklaces and bracelets.

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For a few weeks, the dark, somber mood of the city disappears and there are grand celebrations and ceremonies and colorful processions down the main boulevard of Thebes. The roof of the great Aten Temple becomes busy with prayer ceremonies when the sun first rises in the mornings and great receptions with food and drink in the evenings when the sun disappears. The citizens of Amarna mix with peoples from distant parts of the empire and from foreign nations and a collection of new ideas circulate around Amarna.

Yet, the results of the Tribute fall far short of the original goals and in fact have great adverse effects on the people of Amarna. Rather than show the rest of the world the

magnificence of their new city, the tribute has the opposite effect of making the Amarna citizens jealous of events and people from other parts of the world. Amarna citizens once felt they were the center of the universe and wanted to show the rest of the world the beauty of this center. But the Tribute shows them they are not the center of the world but rather a lonely place on its periphery.

A homesickness for the old Thebes sets in over the population, for relatives who were left behind in their move. It is something that develops on top of the growing depression of the King from the deaths in his family.

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In the end, the foreigners who come to Amarna bring something far more dangerous than new ideas and talk of other places.

They bring diseases.

After the Tribute, a series of plagues spread over the city. The plagues are said to be caused from foreign diseases brought to Amarna. The citizens of the city fight one plague after another. There are many deaths and administrative buildings in the city are turned into great hospitals for the sick and dying. A great burial ground south of the city is created for all the dead and there are mass burials almost each day for weeks.

Many of those still healthy leave the city and return to Thebes. Word spreads around the kingdom and surrounding nations of the plagues in Amarna and ships seldom stop at the city docks anymore.

\* \* \*

The King keeps to the palace almost all the time now and is seldom seen in the city anymore. The daily chariot rides are now little more than a distant memory. One day, the King calls Nihi into his office.

“Get me Moses,” the King says. “He predicted the plagues in our city. Maybe he can predict the best way forward for Amarna. He has great powers. It is time he uses these powers to end our plagues.”

“He has little power over some things,” Nihi says. “He has told us the plagues are messages from God. Moses has no influence over these messages.”

The King hears little of what Nihi says.

“Bring me Moses,” the King says.

## 32. The Camp of Moses

“You’ve lost much of the King’s trust by quitting your work on the royal tombs and moving to the desert camp with Moses,” Nihi says.

The two friends walk around Amarna. It is a different city than the vibrant city it once was. After the deaths in the royal family and the plague from the foreign tribute, many buildings have been deserted and only a few horse carts move up the wide boulevard. The city dock is quiet as most of the citizens have already left the city.

“It was inevitable when you told me the King had banished Moses to the desert,” Hapy says. “Inevitable I would contact him. I no longer seek the King’s trust. I no longer understand him.”

“I worry about his state of mind myself,” Nihi says. “Nothing has been the same since the deaths of his father and Sabra. He has lost faith in the Aten for its inability to prevent these deaths. The King increasingly escapes from the world through drink and fantasy. He disappears for hours each day. There is speculation he is unfaithful to the Queen. He is seen coming and going from the Royal Harem at all hours. Queen Nefertiti continues to take greater control over daily operations of the kingdom. She is becoming quite powerful in the royal family.”

“There is talk a big event is imminent and I want to be close to Moses,” Hapy says. “The camp continues to grow. There are now streets and even stores. It has become a desert town

itself. Aten followers from all over Egypt continue to come to the camp. Most are refugees from persecution of the Aten cult in the cities. Many are idealistic young people like the citizens of Amarna. The Karnak priests are brutally enforcing adherence to Amun Ra. Cities up and down the Nile are under attack.”

“It is not surprising you’ve become a trusted advisor of Moses,” Nihi says.

“I no longer have mixed loyalties,” Hapy says.

“The King wants to speak to Moses,” Nihi says.

“I’ll pass this information on,” Hapy says. “But it would be better if you came out to the camp and asked Moses yourself.”

“Maybe I’ll do this,” says Nihi. “It will be interesting to see the piece of sand you gave everything up for.”

\* \* \*

Hapy walks around the desert camp of Moses. People from all over Egypt continue to pour into the camp. There are now over ten thousand refugees in the camp. He has not told his father of his association with Moses and that he is living in this camp. Rather, he told his father he got his own place just outside town. He is vague when his father asks where it is. The work on the mortuary temples has slowed almost to a halt as workers are pulled from the workshops to work on problems in the city.

Moses often speaks in public or holds impromptu seminars and discussions. Today, Hapy stops at one of these discussions in what has become an unofficial town square of the desert

camp. The followers around him are a feisty group of young people with conflicting politics. Yet they all have a strong belief in Moses and the new land he talks about.

Most of the young people have lived lives as slaves to others, prisoners to the beliefs of someone else's world. Yet, Hapy wonders, who is the real villain in this? The old people and their old gods? Or age itself? It is not the kind of question that lends itself to an easy answer.

\* \* \*

Hapy has set up a meeting between Nihi and Moses. Nihi arrives in the desert one morning and Hapy shows him around the desert camp. A new group of refugees are being processed into the camp and Nihi is astounded at the number of people coming into the camp.

"It's incredible what Moses has created," Nihi says.

"Moses has created very little," Hapy says. "Rather his followers have created what you see."

Hapy takes Nihi to Moses. He is lecturing to a group just outside a large tent.

Hapy and Nihi walk up to Moses when his lecture is finished.

"It's been some time," Moses says to Nihi. "I hear of the plagues in Amarna."

"The King would like to talk to you," Nihi says.

"God has already spoken," Moses says. "It is too late to talk. The plagues are God's way of speaking to the people of Amarna. I warned the King. He has little belief in God."

"He is becoming a believer," Nihi says.

"The only god the King believes in is himself," Moses says. "If he wants to show his belief in God, he is welcome to join us in our camp."

“The King is moving to Memphis,” Nihi says. “He will create a new capital in Memphis.”

“There will be no more capitals,” Moses says. “No more capitols in Egypt. The new capital of the world is moving east. God has commanded me to lead my followers east.”

\* \* \*

Nihi walks to his horse for his ride back to the city to relay Moses’ answer to the King.

Hapy catches up with him.

“You are always welcome to join us,” Hapy says. “I’ve finally found that purpose I’ve been searching for. Maybe you can also find a purpose.”

Nihi hugs Hapy and gets on his horse.

“You’re going to Memphis with the King?” Hapy says.

Nihi looks at Hapy but does not say anything.

### 33. Invasion of Amarna

The King has stopped work on the mortuary temples. All workmen have been assigned duties in the city helping bury the dead from the great plagues. The ones not burying the dead are training as soldiers to defend the city. An invasion of Amarna by the Karnak army is imminent. It is only a matter of days. The rest of the large cities of Egypt are under attack by the Karnak priests and their military forces.

Hapu is pleased his work on the mortuary temples has come to an end. He spends most of his time in the office of his villa and ponders his future. It is difficult to leave the city yet he is sure Amarna will not last much longer.

Amarna has only a fraction of its original population. Those who remain have not escaped because they can't escape for one reason or another. Many are still too sick from the plague to travel. The town is full of people recovering from the plague or burying those who didn't recover from it.

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The forces of the Karnak priests continue to attack cities along the Nile. Word is that Amarna will soon be attacked. Hearing this, the King, Queen and royal family have left the city for Memphis in the north.

Finally, the attacking forces reach Amarna led by General Horenheb. Meriptah is one of the leaders of the invading party. They sweep through the city on horses with swords drawn behind the young general. The invaders destroy the buildings along the great boulevard.

Meriptah's invading group stops in front of Hapu's villa. Hapu is waiting by his front gate. Meriptah gets off his horse and hugs Hapu.

"The city is not defended," Meriptah says. "Just as you told us."

"It made no sense for there to be more bloodshed in Amarna when there's been so much bloodshed already in the empire," Hapu says. "I found out when they were leaving and sent the messenger to you. They left on time. Just the time I thought. The entire palace moved out in secret one night. Everyone pretty much left a week ago. The King and his soldiers left a week ago. Most of the population of the city left a week ago. I'm one of the last in the city."

"A builder goes down with his buildings," Meriptah says. "Or something like that."

"Walk with me for a while," Hapu says.

The two walk from Hapu's villa towards the main boulevard of Amarna. The wide street is emptied except for a few holdovers. They shout support to Hapu as he passes.

"You're respected up here," Meriptah says.

"I've become a celebrity," Hapu says.

A few of the people approach and Hapu pulls out medallions with his image on them and gives them to the people.

Every now and then, a type of cart driven by a stoic citizen goes by most likely trying to leave Amarna like everyone else but not able to.

The once vibrant city is like a ghost town. It is something Hapu feels almost like the death of a child. The great government buildings along the wide boulevard are now lifeless and the street empty.

About half way down the wide boulevard, there is the enormous structure of the Aten Temple on the right and banks of the Nile.

“My proudest creation,” Hapu says.

Hapu walks toward the entrance to the temple and Meriptah follows.

“It casts the greatest shadow in Amarna,” Hapu says. “For this reason some of the Aten worshippers are against it. Yet most feel that its roof allows the sun to be first seen and last seen each day. This is of great important to citizens of Amarna.”

\* \* \*

Immediately inside the Aten Temple is a great atrium room.

Hapu waves his arm around the great interior area the two are in. Meriptah looks at the room and is speechless as he turns around trying to gather his senses.

“I’ve never been in such a grand room,” Meriptah says.

“The largest ever created,” Hapu says. “The building is made from the finest stones in the kingdom,” Hapu says. “Price was no object for the King. Everything was done with the finest craftsmen and designers and architects of the empire.”

“All this was your original vision and design,” Meriptah says.

“Yes, always my own vision,” Hapu says. “But it’s funny how it all started. The old King’s mind was slowly failing and he remembered very little. The current King told him about this cult of a sun god named the Aten. He was learning about it through various secret sources. But it was having a great effect on him. He convinced his father to contact me and design a building around this Aten God of his son. The empire was incredibly prosperous and money was no object. He asked me to come up with an original design after taking a look at some of his son’s Aten literature, symbols, memorabilia and music. I did and took it to him but I could tell he was in very bad shape. One of the servants told me that there was a great mass of blood going into his head at one time. It had happened in the few days since I last talked with him. His mind was simply not there. I was given freedom to build the Aten Temple. And build Amarna around it. The greatest freedom I have ever had. Working for the great reformer of Egyptian religion.”

“It fits with the other ironies of your life,” Meriptah says. “Once, under the early years of the old King, the Karnak Priests were in alignment with the King and your life had little dynamics in it. But when the old King lost his mind, he also lost power to his son.”

“That’s true,” says Hapu. “But all the original plans for Amarna and this temple were my plans. And buildings I designed and even helped build. That’s why it is my city and this is my building.”

“You must have crossed paths with the young King,” Meriptah says.

“I had some angry meetings with him a few times,” Hapu says. “He wanted a whole new design of the Aten Temple after I had started building. There was a big argument. I told him it simply couldn’t be changed architecturally and still fit the original ideas of his father. This pushed him away as he got more interested in his Aten cult in Thebes. In the end, I simply created my type of building in the world. Kind of a final building.”

“I hope it’s not your final building,” Meriptah says. “Not until you build a new Karnak Temple for us.”

“That would be a great challenge,” Hapu says.

He walks to the side of the great room and stops at the wall which goes skyward at an angle like the wall of a pyramid.

“The stones are a polished light grey,” Hapu says. “Their color picked so that it perfectly matches that unusual color of the sky over Thebes in the flood season.”

\* \* \*

The walk up a few sets of stairs and they are on the widely-used roof of the Aten Temple. It is a beautiful lawn with palm trees and a small pond in the middle. Its size was always overwhelming to all who saw it for the first time.

Hapu points in one direction.

“The first sign of the sun each day in Amarna,” Hapu says. “Right through the crack in the eastern cliffs.”

Hapu then points the other way in the direction of the late afternoon sun.

“And the last sign of the sun each day in Amarna,” Hapu says. “Lined up with this in mind. It was a great challenge. It allowed me to build my great final building.”

Hapu directs Meriptah with him over towards one side of the roof of the Aten Temple. They walk over a wide lawn. It is a beautiful lawn yet it needs watering after being abandoned a few weeks ago under the hot sun.

Hapu stops at the short wall at the edge of the Aten Temple roof. It offers is a spectacular sight. The sun to the west was about to disappear under the western mountains. And directly south, is the continuation of the grand boulevard. At the end of it is the great Aten Monument. It stands almost as high as the Aten Temple.

Meriptah focuses on this grand monument. The Aten disk at the top of the giant monument is huge. It looks on fire in the reflected light of the afternoon sun. In a second, Meriptah appears to be transfixed by the disk.

Hapu grabs Meriptah to pull him out of a type of trance he is in from looking at the great, fiery Aten disk.

“I did the same thing when I first came up here,” Hapu says. “Until I learned better. It’s better not to stare at the Aten Monument disk.”

Meriptah shakes his head coming out of a type of trance.

“Thanks,” Meriptah says.

“The great Aten disk you were looking at is one of the few things in this town I didn’t design or build,” Hapu says. “I Simply found it here one time on one of my trips from Thebes. Now, there are great ceremonies and celebrations around the Aten Monument. It is a key part of the city.

\* \* \*

From the roof of the Aten Temple, the two men look around Amarna. Fires from the invading forces appear in various parts of the city.

“My troops haven’t been instructed to destroy the city,” Meriptah says. “But I can’t hold back their excitement for rushing the capital city of the Aten cult. Many of the soldiers are sons of Karnak priests and have great pride in their fathers.”

“I understand,” Hapu says looking out at the fires around the city. “After all, dreams are not meant to last long. I always knew this because I knew the bigger a dream is the shorter it lasts.”

Their attention is suddenly directed towards the great Aten Monument at the end of the wide boulevard of Amarna. The invading troops have somehow gotten ropes around it and it is starting to be pulled over. There is the sound of a number of invading troops as they attempt to pull the great Aten disk off the monument. The disk begins to slowly bend and then crashes to the boulevard below cracking the marble around the monument. The disk is maybe the size of three horses placed back-to-back. The invading troops stand around it in celebration. There is a great crack running through the center of it as if the fire from the sky during storms has split the great disk itself. The moment seems to symbolize a type of ending.

\* \* \*

Hapu stares at the fallen Aten image.

“That finalizes things for me,” Hapu says. “It’s time to leave Amarna.”

“The incredible city you created is even incredible in decline,” Meriptah says.

“And now it’s all ended,” Hapu says. “My monument to an old King. Even though he forgot who I was. He let me build what I wanted to build. It is much better than building grand

mortuary tombs. It's a hard thing to face when you create a monument for one King and it becomes the monument another King."

"That's why your loyalties have been so much in conflict these past few years," Meriptah says. "It is difficult, impossible even, to work in the Aten royal family and still be active in the Karnak priests like you are."

"It's given me a new perspective on things," Hapu says. "Yet I this new perspective was obtained at the loss of a particular point-of-view. I simply have no point-of-view these days. With the death of the Old King and the rise of the little tyrant son of his, I simply wanted to retire and live a peaceful carefree life in the big villa on the Nile here in Amarna."

"You need to come back to Thebes and help rebuild it for Amun Ra," Meriptah says. "There is still a challenge for you in Thebes. We will soon return to the city. Someone needs to create a new architecture for the city."

"Yes," Hapu says. "Thebes needs something new."

"And especially the Karnak Temple in Thebes," Meriptah says. "Perhaps the seat of a new government for Egypt? We need a new person to design this."

\* \* \*

Hapu looks at Meriptah in the sunlight of the late afternoon. The sun has slipped under the western mountains and the valley is in shadow.

"You're right," Hapu says. "It's time to return to Thebes."

The two hug.

"You'll be reunited with your friends in Thebes," Meriptah says.

“Everyone but Hapy,” Hapu says.

“He didn’t go back with the others?” Meriptah says.

“He joined the old priest in the desert,” Hapu says. “The one who was behind the Aten. His name is Moses. He has collected many refugee Aten followers around the kingdom. They are the ones who continue to believe there is one God rather than many gods. He’s the same old man I saw when I first came to build Amarna I told you about. He’s the same old man Hapy met through his friend Nihi.”

“We know about Moses,” Meriptah says.

“What are you going to do about him?” Hapu says.

“He needs to be eliminated, along with all his followers,” Meriptah says. “A new Egypt can’t afford any sign of the Aten,” Meriptah says.

“But Hapy is with Moses,” Hapu says.

“He made a choice,” Meriptah says.

### 34. Villa Celebration

Hapu and Meriptah leave the roof of the great Aten Temple and walk around Amarna for a while and then go back to Hapu's villa. Meriptah's group waiting outside the walls of the villa waiting for instructions from Meriptah.

"I imagine we will return to my desert camp and then back to Thebes," Meriptah says.

"You've convinced me to join you," Hapu says.

The men hug.

"But first, I think it is time for a celebration," Hapu says. "I've been attending ceremonies and celebrations for others all my life. It's time I threw a celebration for myself and my friends. Your men are guests for dinner and the night on at my villa."

There is a great cheer and a hundred men come into Hapu's villa. Hapu directs Ipy with a number of other servants that have stayed with Hapu. Hapu has planned on hosting this dinner along with Meriptah but Meriptah did not tell his fifty men. They were all his top officers.

The servants direct Meriptah's men in placing wood into his great outdoor fireplace and directs the beginning of a dinner being started.

There is a huge dinner of the finest foods in Egypt. Meriptah and Hapu sit at the head of the great long table, next to each other. The officers of Meriptah sitting at a long table.

“I’ve taken advantage the King leaving behind most of his food and fine wines and beers when he left,” Hapu says. “He left in a real hurry.”

“It is time we had a great dinner together,” Meriptah says.

“Yes,” Hapu says. “For once in my aging life, I think I’m pursuing my true calling in life. Toward the god I love and the Karnak priests and our friendship Meriptah.”

“Here’s to a new life and career for you,” Meriptah says. “For once you have no more mixed loyalties in life.”

“It’s been a long time,” says Hapu. “If ever.”

\* \* \*

Meriptah made some comment to Hapu when he first saw the zoo of animals Hapu kept inside the wide walls of his great villa. Now, The young officers relax on of the Karnak Priests mingle with the animals. Hapu pours the finest wine’s in the King’s collection of wines this evening.

A little after dinner, when everyone is feeling the wine pretty well, Hapu goes to the front of the group.

“I have an announcement to make,” Hapu says. “The King left more than food and wine behind when he left town in such a hurry. He also left the Royal Harem behind.”

Hapu waves his arm in the direction of Ipy who opens up a door from the great villa. From the door comes many beautiful women dressed in the most exotic outfits anyone had ever seen a woman wear.

“It’s impossible that women can look like this,” Meriptah says.

“What do you mean impossible?” Hapu says.

“Just impossible,” Meriptah says.

“Maybe this is the function of women,” Hapu says. “To be impossible.”

“Just like Sabra was for Hapy,” Meriptah. “You spoke so much to me about how Sabra was always Hapy’s love in life.”

“I hope he finds someone good to him,” Hapu says.

The beautiful women mingle with Meriptah’s officers. Hapu walks to the front of the group and stands behind a speaker’s podium that had seemed to come out of nowhere.

“Be gentle on this city I built,” Hapu says. “I know she’s going to die. But I ask you to let her die a natural death. She’s like a baby to me. But then, I understand there are many bitter feelings about this city as being the center of the Aten cult. I’ve been living in it and out of it. May I present you with some other elements of the King’s Aten cult. The King’s Royal Harem.”

\* \* \*

After dinner, Hapu and Meriptah sit on the patio of the villa while there is the sound of music and partying all around them. A few of the young soldiers in Meriptah’s group are romancing some of the women in the King’s Harem on the patio. A lyre player serenades a group. It is a beautiful place to romance someone and the soldiers are ready to party after all the cities they have been attacking and conquering in the past few weeks.

“These are some of the King’s finest wines,” Hapu says to Meriptah.

He holds up the bottle they have been drinking from.

“From the famous vineyards near the Red Sea,” Hapu says.

“A superb wine,” Meriptah says. “Is it possible to get a few more of these bottles?”

“I’m having the King’s entire Wine Cellar shipped backed to Thebes,” Hapu say. “Of course I need an address for it. And I want to give them the address of the Thebes Karnak Temple when you get it back and running.”

“That is a wonderful gift,” says Meriptah.

“I thought 25,000 bottles of wine was better than a few more bottles,” Hapu says.

\* \* \*

“Legends continue to swirl around about this mysterious old priest Moses,” Meriptah says. “I hear the King banished him to the desert. I also hear your son Hapy is now his key assistant.”

“He told me he was going with Moses,” Hapu says.

“The man behind the Aten,” Meriptah says.

“It was never proven this was so,” Hapu says. Behind the Aten,” Meriptah says.

“Many thought Moses was behind the Aten,” says Hapu. “But he was really behind nothing. Rather he has always been a messenger of God. He has never been under the employment of any King. The whole thing with Moses was part of a scheme cooked up by the young King. When he was young. From some dream he had I heard. He created his own cult and used Moses as part of it.”

“How did he accomplish this?” Meriptah says.

“It starts out with the proposition that there should simply be one god rather than many gods,” Hapu says. “This was the original idea. But, the idea goes, this idea (or god) is so far

removed from mankind that an intermediary is required to make it accessible to mankind. That intermediary, of course, is the King. During our time, intermediaries have been increasingly important to access the gods. But worshipers have been able to turn to a variety of intermediary gods: sacred animals, statues, tombs to the dead Kings and royal families. But with the Aten, the only intermediary can be the King. He becomes the sole intermediary of the gods. The faithful of all the faiths pray in front of different altars to different gods.”

\* \* \*

“It is in a way one could not expect,” says Meriptah.

“The God of Moses is similar to the Aten God,” Meriptah says. “Both Moses and the Aten are dangerous, destructive, Gods. They must be eliminated. There is no peaceful co-existence between the Aten and Amun Ra. The past few years have only served to prove this. Like the Aten, the world of Moses he rules a cosmos with no other Gods in it. In fact, we are investigating where this idea of just one God came from. It can be traced back right around the time that this old priest named Moses shows up in the life of the King’s young son who is now King. The God of Moses is different from Amun Ra and the many gods under Amun Ra. The God of Moses is the only God. It is a dangerous God. Not because of what is in the content but the thought that there could only be one content for one’s world. Think of so many Gods Moses wants to rid Egypt of. So many Gods the Karnak Priests work with.”

“It’s hard to understand how a disk with rays and tiny hands coming from it,” Hapu says. “How this becomes such a powerful symbol.”

“How a younger generation falls for it,” Hapy says.

\* \* \*

“I know that Hapy is with Moses in the desert,” Meriptah asks. “And I know where they are and the direction they move in. I have ordered my troops to eliminate all followers of Moses. No prisoners are to be taken. I know that they move east. Towards the Red Sea. My scouts track their movement as we speak. You know they all must be eliminated. Including Hapy.”

“I would not encourage pursuing Moses,” Hapu says.

“I respect your desire to save your son,” Meriptah says. “But followers of Moses are followers of Aten. In fact, there’s talk that Moses is the originator of the Aten idea. The King’s young son just picked up on his idea. Their group needs to be wiped out or they will continue to grow and spread heresy about Amun Ra through the empire.”

“Many of your priests will be killed,” Hapu says.

Meriptah shakes his head.

“That’s difficult to believe,” Meriptah says.

“This is the warning he gave me,” Hapu says. “His latest message to me. He told me to warn others not to chase the followers of Moses or face terrible consequences. This is the last thing he communicated to me through a messenger.”

“I appreciate the warning,” Meriptah says.

Meriptah gets up from his chair and looks at the Nile.

“What do you suspect led to such a quick downfall of this religion?” Meriptah says.

“A number of things,” Hapu says. “Partly arrogance of the kid I’ve known all my life. The King. He’s no King at all next to his father. The real King. But I think it was also that the

Aten so well represented the god of life no one suspected it was such a bad representative of the god of death. I know you heard about all the deaths in the royal family. These sudden deaths brought this particular defect of the Aten to the forefront. The deaths created a dark god that the Aten sun god did not know how to deal with. The Egyptian goddess of death was killed when the Aten was created. The Aten is a power based on singularity rather than duality. Masculinity alone it seems to me. One makes a choice between the numbers one and two as they represent the grand choices a person has in life. Gender and politics and symbols and it seems like so much more in life. And, there's one more possibility."

"What is that?" Meriptah says.

"The possibility that the entire religion comes from Moses," Hapu says. "In creating one God, the Aten cancels out the dualities of masculine and feminine. Birth and life. The idea of dualism and oppositions and alignments and correspondences. My son tells me much. The old man is the real thing. I have met him a few times. I think he is finally found his calling in life."

### 35.The Warning

The two old friends sit on the wide patio of Hapu's villa just south of the abandoned palace of the royal palace.

"There are rumors flying as to where the royal couple and family have gone," Meriptah says. "Most reports say they've been seen in Memphis."

"I hear they're up that way," Hapu says. "I can care less." "All I know is that Queen Nefertiti takes greater interest in working with the young general to control the direction of the new Egypt after the crazy interlude of the Aten sun god. She is more balanced and sane than her husband who was always. He has always lived someone else's life yet he doesn't know who this someone else is.

A large boat passes by them as they sit in the large chairs on the on wide patio with marble as sparkling and bright as it was the first day Hapu put it in. The large boat looks like some type of supply boat. A boat from some far-away land. It looks to be a boat from the far reaches of that land called Africa where the Nile is born. Of course it doesn't stop at the Amarna docks. No ships stop at the docks anymore.

"I'm excited there is a possibility to build a new Thebes," Meriptah says. "To revise the image of Amun Ra. Revise the image, the symbol of Karnak Temple."

“Build an entirely new Karnak Temple,” Hapu says. “Greater than the Aten Temple in Amarna. My greatest creation so far.”

Meriptah smiles and raises his glass of the King’s finest wine in a toast.

“Yes,” Meriptah says. “A new image for the Karnak priests.”

The large supply boat from the far away land passes by them and then another boat passes by.

“But I have to pursue Moses in the desert,” Meriptah says.

\* \* \*

One of Meriptah’s officers comes out onto the patio and stands at attention and recites the following.

“Moses leads perhaps twenty thousand followers of the Aten towards the Red Sea from their camp just east of Amarna,” the officer says. “They have been traveling for a few days. We estimate we can catch up with them in two days. They are heading for the Red Sea.”

“Send a division of troops to find them and attack them on the shores of the Red Sea,” Meriptah says. “There, on the beaches of the Red Sea we’ll have them surrounded and boxed in with no place to go.”

“What are the orders to do with the group?” the officer says.

“I want the entire group eliminated on the shores of the Red Sea,” says Meriptah. “It will be a lesson for other Aten believers like this.”

\* \* \*

When the officer is gone, carrying on the message of Meriptah to the division, Hapu and Meriptah look out at the Nile from the edge of the patio. Ipy pours them one of the King's rarest wines.

"I had no idea you could get wines like this in Egypt," Meriptah says.

"You've not listened to my warning to you," says Hapu. "A warning from Moses."

"The warning from someone fleeing the country with twenty thousand followers," says Hapy. "Throwing the entire nation off course for almost ten years. Now we can move back to normal in the empire. Who knows the true ruler of Egypt today? Now that the young King has escaped north."

"It's unlikely my troops will take many prisoners," Meriptah says. "They are expensive to bring home. Expensive to maintain. And for what reason really? They have already had their mind altered and they will alter the minds of others who they come into contact with.

They've been brainwashed. And they'll brainwash others," Meriptah says.

"Most of the followers of Moses are young idealists or government refugees from Amarna or other Aten cults around Egypt," Hapu says. "Hapy has taken me out to the camp. Introduced me to these people. It is quite a group of people."

"I'm sorry," Meriptah says. "But you heard my orders. The fate of your son Hapy cannot be avoided. He has betrayed the Karnak Priests by joining Moses. There is no excuse for this action."

Hapu does not seem concerned.

"I would pay heed to the warning Hapy relayed to me," Hapu says.

"Thank you for the warning," Meriptah says.

## 36.The Red Sea

Moses leads twenty thousand Aten refugees through the desert, east towards the Red Sea with a brisk walk. His pace is incredible for (some guess) an 80-year-old man. From time to time, he mounts his camel and rides on the camel for a while. The group knows this old man somehow. Knows him better than they know their parents or grandparents back home. Moses has this magnetism to him that attracts others to him like the metal clippings to the big pieces of metal in the workshops.

Hapu walks next to Moses holding his camel. Walking east over endless sands, east towards the Red Sea. Hapu thought on of many things as they marched towards the Red Sea. He had heard that the Karnak troops were coming after them. Still, he believed in this person next to him called Moses.

During some of his time walking east across the desert with Moses he often asked what made Moses such a magic and special person to him? The father he never had? The magic of Moses? When most fixate on the outside world, Moses lives his life within an inner world.

\* \* \*

Hapy lets his mind wander during their march east. For a few months he thought about the great congregation around Moses in this town just east of Amarna. Many have heard his talks, the parables from the experiences of his life. They gathered supplies for a few months for the great journey Moses told them they would take.

Now they follow Moses towards a new promised land on the other side of the Red Sea. Not as followers who have been sucked dry of their ethics and morality and their own life. Rather, as followers of some new God and their relationship to Moses. Grown so much to the point they could/should never be called followers of anyone else again. No longer were they simply the reflections of the light from Moses. Now, his followers possessed their own light. Radiating outward from an inner light and energy.”

\* \* \*

Perhaps twenty thousand people slowly move east across the eastern Egyptian desert. Two days out of the camp that Moses established east of Amarna. As the key advisor to Moses, Hapy is the chief organizer of the march of the group east towards the Red Sea. It is a different life for him. Yet, he still an advisor in life. Like his father was to the old King. Hapy thought about the similarity of the two situations more than a few times.

The third day of travel across the Egyptian desert, the Red Sea is in sight. Yet, all around the great group of Moses is the army of Karnak Priests and their military units. They watch the group from the sand hills above. They will force them into the Red Sea. They wait for a command to attack the group. These rebels against Amun Ra need be destroyed.

The fourth night, Moses and his group camp overlooking the waters of the Red Sea in front of them to the east. Tomorrow, Moses will march his group through the open waters of the Red Sea as God has told him. They will close on the Karnak Priests.

\* \* \*

The next morning is one of the most glorious days in the world. Moses gathers everyone together. All twenty thousand of his followers. Hapy stands next to him.

“You will follow me into the Red Sea,” Moses says. “Follow me. You will be safe. Protected by God. Everything will be alright. You need to give me your trust.”

A roar erupts.

“We give you our trust,” the crowd chants. “We give you our trust.”

The troops of the Karnak priests approach the group as down from the sand hills surrounding them. Undaunted, Moses continues to steadily march towards the Red Sea. He marches over the wide beach right before the breaking waves of the Red Sea. He does not slow his pace as he walks towards the Red Sea. The sound of the waves become louder and louder. The army of the Karnak priests have ridden out of the sand dunes surrounding the beach.

\* \* \*

The waters of the sea suddenly divide and form a great valley made of water walls a thousand feet high. The valley extends as far as you can see, over the horizon at the bottom of the Red Sea. Moses and his followers march through the valley on the floor of the Red Sea.

Behind the last members of the group Moses leads into the Red Sea, the priests of the Karnak Temple chase down with swords drawn. But a great mountain of water breaks over the priests as the floor of the Red Sea becomes the surface of the Red Sea again. The Karnak priests are drowned. All five thousand of them.

Moses and his group travels two days through the great water valley of the Red Sea. Food and water is for them through abundant fish in the Red Sea. Pure water falls as rain from above as they travel through the Red Sea.

When they reach the desert land on the eastern side of the Red Sea, Moses leads his followers up a sand hill where they gather around him and watch as the waters of the Red Sea move back together with a great roaring sound like thunder.

The great group rests on the sand dunes overlooking the eastern shores of the Red Sea. Hapy feels good about the world and his place within it. For the first time since he can remember, Hapy is relaxed and refreshed and full of passion and belief again. The same spirit and belief he possessed and lost so many years ago.

Moses rises with the help of his staff. He points it east.

“We move to the Promised Land,” Moses says.

“To the Promised Land,” roars the group over and over.

Hapy and Nihi rise to follow Moses to the east.

They walk for a while in silence.

“It’s hard to believe Moses can make stars wink and great seas open, but he can’t escape from a small hut or keep himself from getting booted out of the royal palace,” Hapy says.

“He’s only involved in great miracles,” Nihi says.

“We’re going to need some of them,” Hapy says.