

PHARAOH

The word "PHARAOH" is written in a stylized, hand-drawn font. The letter 'O' is a solid orange circle with a smaller white circle in the center. Below the text are three horizontal, wavy blue lines representing water.

EPISODE 1.01: "WILL OF THE GODS"

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. GEBAL - DAY

A CRASH OF THUNDER. RAIN pours down in sheets over the raging Mediterranean sea, LIGHTNING splitting the boiling sky. The distant sounds of CLASHING STEEL, SHOUTS and CRIES carry over the whitecaps from the ancient Canaanite harbor of Gebal. The architecture is a collision of various cultures, but dominated by the city's Egyptian occupiers

EXT. GEBAL - ALLEY - DAY

A fierce battle in the streets, a drenched, ANGRY mob fighting EGYPTIAN SOLDIERS.

SUPER: GEBAL, CANAAN, 1412 BCE

A young, itinerant Cretan scribe, HEKTOR, 19, a BUNDLE OF WAX-COATED TABLETS tucked under one arm, bolts around a corner, freezes when he sees the bloodshed, then turns on his heel, cutting a detour.

FOLLOW Hektor as he runs through narrow streets and alleys, up staircases, forced repeatedly to reroute when he comes upon VARIOUS INSURGENT ACTIONS.

INT. GEBAL - KABOSE'S CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

Spare furnishings, scrolls and maps scattered over every horizontal surface, leaning in the corners.

His back hunched with age, his EYES CLOUDED WITH MILKY WHITE CATARACTS, OLD KABOSE, 80s, stands at a small window, catching rain in his open palm. The door BURSTS OPEN and Hektor plunges inside, shivering and soaking wet.

OLD KABOSE
You're late.

HEKTOR
It could not be helped, master.
The Cult of Ba'alat has again risen
up against Rib-Batnoam--

Old Kabose testily dismisses Hektor's explanation with an impatient wave of his hand as he shuffles to his chair and takes a seat at a stout table.

OLD KABOSE
Bah. A clash of fools...
(takes a seat)
I expect you to be prompt from this
day forward, or I will seek the
services of another scribe.

HEKTOR
Yes, master Kabose. I will not
again be late, I promise...

Hektor hastily takes a seat and opens a fresh HINGED TABLET COATED WITH WAX.

OLD KABOSE
Are you ready, or shall we piss
away another hour?

HEKTOR
Yes, master--no. One moment...

Hektor pulls an IVORY STYLUS from a small purse, settles in, the point of the stylus poised over the virgin wax.

HEKTOR (CONT'D)
... ready.

Old Kabose sighs, collects his thoughts, and BEGINS:

OLD KABOSE
My name is Kabose. I have been
called Kabose the Thief, Kabose the
Peddler of Flesh, Kabose the
Butcher of Thebes, but I will be
remembered as Kabose, Royal Scribe
to the Exalted Pharaoh, Thutmose
the Third...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THEBES - DAWN

KABOSE, 12, is herded along with HALF-A-DOZEN OTHER CHILDREN by ROUGH-LOOKING MEN. They carry shovels, picks, pry-bars and other tools.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.)

I was a mere boy of twelve, orphaned and abandoned, made chattel to my dead father's brother... In those days, we served Tobu, the chief of the Necropolis Workers Guild...

At the head of the rag-tag group, TOBU, a towering Nubian, strides with the haught of a victorious general, chin high, his shovel resting on his shoulder.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.; CONT'D)

He was also the most ruthless and cunning gangster in all of Thebes. Through bribery, extortion and brute violence, Tobu spun a web of corruption that penetrated every level of society, from the lowest harbor ghettos to the private chambers of the King's palace...

Though in his 50s, Tobu is still strong and radiates a menacing charisma. PEOPLE instinctively clear his path.

EXT. THE VALLEY OF KINGS - CLIFF-SIDE - DAY

Tobu leads the group over a narrow trail up a sandstone cliff overlooking the valley. Kabose is prodded along by HASA THE LIAR, mid-40s, his features, ferret-like; his demeanor, furtive and oleaginous.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.; CONT'D)

My uncle, a man called Hasa, but known as Hasa the Liar, was the lowest of his gang, tolerated chiefly for his eager willingness to perform any task, regardless of how debasing or sordid...

Hasa grips Kabose's arm tightly, hisses in his ear.

HASA

This is your chance to earn your keep for a change, whelp. If you fail me, you will be punished.

KABOSE

What if I am not chosen?

Hasa gives him a hard shake.

HASA

See to it that you are.

Hasa shoves him forward. Kabose glances forlornly down at the valley below.

HIS POV - A LONG PROCESSION OF PRIESTS AND SERVANTS bear the king's coffin into an open tomb, its surface leaved with gold and semi-precious stones.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.; CONT'D)

We had come that day to bury the King, Thutmose the Second, though he was King in name only, spurning the rigors of his duties to idle away his brief reign at his winter palace in Aswan, hunting, fishing and debauching his harem wives...

EXT. THE VALLEY OF KINGS - TOMB ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

The stunningly beautiful Queen, HATSHEPSUT, late-20s, shielded from the sun's glare by a LINEN AWNING stretched between four posts borne by huge NUBIAN GUARDS, gazes stoically at the procession.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.; CONT'D)

In his stead, Egypt was ruled by his wife and half-sister, the Divine Queen Hatshepsut, who wielded by proxy all the power and authority of the King. But in so doing, she neglected the principal duty of a Queen: To produce an heir to the throne...

She looks up toward a wooden dais, where a COMPANY OF SOLDIERS stand guard before an OPEN-FACED TENT. Inside, seated on an ornately carved ebony and gold chair, surrounded by ATTENDANTS AND ADVISORS, is a soft-looking boy of 12, attired in the formal dress of a king.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.; CONT'D)

And so the crown was passed to a child she had not borne...

EXT. THE VALLEY OF KINGS - ROYAL TENT - CONTINUOUS

THUTMOSE THE THIRD, 12, appears petrified--a child acting the role of an adult in a play he doesn't understand. Arms crossed at his chest, he grasps a small crook and flail in a white-knuckled grip.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.; CONT'D)

Prince Thutmose the Third was the illegitimate product of a dalliance between the King and one of his harem-wives, a trollop of ignoble blood...

EXT. THE VALLEY OF KINGS - TOMB ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Seated on a small throne next to him is his child-bride, MERYTRE, 11, stately and poised, a Queen in miniature attired full regalia, including the vulture cap, modius with double plumes and a fly-whisk.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.; CONT'D)

Neglected by his father, spoiled by an army of servants and tutors, the boy was deemed by the High Priests too callow to rule...

The flail rattles as Thutmose trembles. An older man standing behind him, AHMOSE PEN-NEKHBET, mid-50s, reaches down and gently stills the boy-King's hand.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.; CONT'D)

Thus, he was assigned an able Regent, the King's cousin and most trusted Vizier, Ahmose Pen-Nekhet.

Thutmose leans toward Pen-Nekhet and asks in an URGENT WHISPER:

THUTMOSE

Ahmose, who is this girl seated next to me dressed in the manner of a Queen?

PEN-NEKHBET

(a gentle smile)

She is Merytre, Sire, he eldest daughter of the Divine Adoratrix Huy...

(adds, quietly)

She is to be your wife.

This is clearly news to the boy, who looks at Merytr in dazed shock. *My wife?!*

EXT. THE VALLEY OF KINGS - CLIFF TOP - CONTINUOUS

A THICK SLURRY OF WET SAND AND ROCKS pours down a WOODEN SLUICE, filling a LARGE OBLONG CAISSON fashioned from planks of lumber.

Standing on a scaffold overlooking the caisson, possessing the charismatic bearing and serene confidence of all great artists, SENENMUT, mid-40s, speaks softly to his assistant and protégé, BADRU, 20s:

SENENMUT

That's enough.

BADRU

(shouts the order)

Enough. Close the sluice-gate...

OLD KABOSE (V.O.; CONT'D)

It was on this day I first laid eyes on the Chief Architect to the Royal House, Senenmut...

As the order is RELAYED to WORKERS further up the hill, Kabose gazes at Senenmut, captivated by his aura of power.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.; CONT'D)

Commander of the Necropolis Police and bearer of a hundred lesser titles, he was the Queen's greatest advocate and most trusted confidante...

The FLOW OF SLURRY SLOWS to a trickle and STOPS, the CAISSON FILLED to the brim. Satisfied, Senenmut turns, looks down at Kabose and the other children. He MUTTERS a final order to Badru and starts down the path to the valley. Badru approaches Tobu.

BADRU

We need but three.

TOBU

Three? Surely, Master Badru, that will not be enough to--

BADRU

--it will be more than sufficient.
The Great Senenmut has devised a new
means to seal the tombs. I will
need the smallest.

He points at a thin boy, 12, disfigured with a HARELIP.

BADRU (CONT'D)

That one...
(another BOY)
... that one...

His eyes fall on a scrawny, malnourished girl, NYESS, 14.

BADRU

... and that one--she'll do. Give
them mallets and send them down the
shaft over there.

The three children start forward. As soon as Badru turns
away, Kabose ELBOWS the second Boy in the gut, snatches his
mallet and follows Nyess and Harelip toward the shaft
entrance.

EXT. THE VALLEY OF KINGS - TOMB ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

PRIESTS CHANT A FUNERIAL INCANTATION. Senenmut joins
Hatshepsut, standing slightly behind her. She speaks without
taking her eyes off the high priest.

HATSHEPSUT

My heart trembles for the future of
the kingdom.

Senenmut turns, gazes at the Thutmose, seated on the dais
above them.

SEENMUT

As does mine. As do the hearts of
all good men, loyal to their Queen.

HATSHEPSUT

How could I have been such a fool?

SEENMUT

The fault is not yours, Highness.
You were far too engaged in seeing
to the welfare of your subjects to
discern the treachery of a viper
like Ahmose.

Both hands stretched toward the heavens, HUY, the Divine Adoratrix of Amun-Ra, a handsome, stately woman in her late-30s with fervently intense eyes, LEADS THE INVOCATION CHANT, pausing occasionally as TWO DOZEN PRIESTS chant REFRAINS.

HATSHEPSUT

Had I but planted my nose in the ass
of the Adoratrix as firmly as did
he, it would be I appointed Regent,
and the land would not be ruled by a
craven proxy to a bastard imp.

A tear escapes the Queen's eye, rolling down her cheek. Senenmut discreetly takes her hand and squeezes.

SEENMUT

Shh. You'll be heard.

EXT. THE VALLEY OF KINGS - CLIFF TOP - CONTINUOUS

At the cliff's edge, Hasa the Liar stands with HALF-A-DOZEN WORKERS, leaning against his shovel and pointing down at the Queen and Senenmut below, a leering grin on his face.

HASA

Ho! The King is not yet cold, and
see how the architect holds her
hand! Did I not *tell* you they were
fucking?!

AAPEP, a thuggish fireplug, squats next a a tall, thin Nubian, PANHSJ. Pick between his legs, chin resting atop its handle, Aapep spits over the side of the precipice.

AAPEP

Of course he's fucking her.
Wouldn't you?

HASA

Not if it cost me my head.

PANHSJ

Which one?

The men LAUGH. Tobu approaches, gives Hasa a HARD SLAP on the side of his head.

TOBU

Stop lollygagging. We've got work
to do...

INT. TOMB - ANTECHAMBER - DAY

Priests and servants carry TREASURE through an opening into the BURIAL CHAMBER. TWO MASONS flank the opening, buckets of plaster and trowels at their feet.

Along the length of the antechamber, a HORIZONTAL SERIES OF FOUR SMALL SQUARE SHAFTS have been cut high on one wall, each about a foot below the ceiling. Three are sealed with wooden stoppers held in place by stout posts spanning diagonally to the floor, one end planted against the stopper; the other, wedged into a notch in the stone floor.

PALE SUNLIGHT streams down the FOURTH SHAFT. Kabose and Nyess wait with a third MASON, who helps Harelip as he emerges feet-first from the opening, clinging to a KNOTTED ROPE.

MASON

You have mallets? Yes...?

The children nod. He begins positioning them, one at the base of each post, Harelip closest to the shaft, then Nyess, then Kabose.

MASON

You, here. You two... right here and there. Now...
(holds up a finger)
... you must listen closely. If you do everything I say, *exactly* as I say, you will come to no harm...

Kabose gazes in awe at the precious, GOLDEN OBJECTS being carried past them. The Mason SNAPS HIS FINGERS in front of the boy's nose.

MASON

You. What did I just say?

KABOSE

You told us to do everything you say, *exactly* as you say, and we will come to no harm.

The Mason is a little disconcerted to hear his own words repeated back to him so precisely.

MASON

Yes... very well, then...
(collects himself)
After you are left alone and the exit has been sealed

EXT. THE VALLEY OF KINGS - CLIFF TOP - CONTINUOUS

Tobu and his crew gather around a table as Badru explains their task, pointing at a DIAGRAM OF A CROSS-SECTION OF THE TOMB, FOUR SHAFTS leading down to the antechamber from the top of the cliff.

BADRU

The children down in the tomb will be given a signal, upon which they will knock away the supports and open the seals. The slurry in the caisson will then pour down the first two shafts, filling the antechamber.

TOBU

(rubs his chin)

What about these other two?

Badru points at a RECTANGULAR ICON covering the THIRD SHAFT, which opens inside the edge of the caisson.

BADRU

On my second command, six of your strongest men on ropes will slide out this seal, here, and the slurry will drain into this third shaft. Once it is filled to this point...

He taps his finger on an intersection, where a wide duct TRAVERSES DIAGONALLY BETWEEN THE THIRD AND FOURTH SHAFT, forming an "H" shape with a slanted cross-stroke. He moves his finger along the duct

BADRU (CONT'D)

... the slurry will be diverted into the fourth shaft through this duct...

INT. TOMB - ANTECHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

The Mason continues giving instructions to the children as the last of the King's treasures are placed in the Burial Chamber. A THICK STONE DOOR is muscled into place by the two waiting Masons, who begin sealing it shut with plaster.

MASON

... as soon as you have opened the seals, the room will begin to fill. You must go to that last shaft and climb out as quickly as you are able, understand?

Nyess and Harelip nod solemnly, their eyes wide as saucers. Kabose, however, stares at a PRIEST setting a SMALL, EXQUISITE, GOLDEN TUBE crusted with jewels upon a carved stand before the door to the Burial Chamber.

MASON (CONT'D)

(annoyed)

Boy! Boy...! Are you listening?

Without taking his eyes off the jeweled tube, Kabose repeats the Mason's instructions in a DULL MONOTONE:

KABOSE

We must go to the last shaft and
climb out as quickly as we are
able...

The Mason sighs and, shaking his head, follows the priest and his two colleagues out the exit, pausing at the threshold.

MASON

May mother Mut watch over you on
this day.

He backs out and nods to the other Masons (O.S.), and a stone door who leaving the children alone.

As soon as the SECOND DOOR IS SEALED SHUT, Kabose darts from his post, picks up the jeweled tube and stuffs it in his garment. As he returns to his position:

HARELIP

We will all be cursed if you take
that.

KABOSE

Mind your own business, runt.

EXT. THE VALLEY OF KINGS - CLIFF TOP - CONTINUOUS

BADRU stands on the scaffolding overlooking the caisson, brimming with slurry. He holds up his hand, SHOUTS:

BADRU

Ready...

FOUR WORKERS stand on a CATWALK spanning the top of the caisson hold long, oar-like paddles. Tobu and FIVE OTHERS--two teams of three--shoulder ropes and brace themselves. A BLAST OF HORNS ECHOES up from the valley. Badru slices the air with his palm.

BADRU

GO...

SWING TO: THE CATWALK WORKERS - Plunge their paddles into the slurry begin stirring as we...

SWING TO: TOBU AND HIS MEN - digging in, bending their backs as they heave the ropes as we...

SWING TO: PANHSJ - as he relays the order forward...

PANHSJ

GO...

SWING TO: AAPEP - continuing the relay...

AAPEP

GO...

SWING TO: Hasa, standing over the opening of the shaft. He cups his hands around his mouth and SHOUTS:

HASA

GO...

EFX - as if carried at the speed of sound, we PLUNGE DOWN the perfectly square shaft carved in living rock, past A DUCT OPENING TO ONE SIDE, down, down, down into...

INT. TOMB - ANTECHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

Kabose, Nyess and the second boy swing their mallets, pounding the bases of their assigned posts. Kabose is the first to KNOCK HIS CLEAR. A THICK JET OF SLURRY gushes into the chamber from the unsealed shaft.

EXT. THE VALLEY OF KINGS - CLIFF TOP - CONTINUOUS

A THICK BUBBLE of displaced air breaks on the SURFACE OF THE SLURRY at one end of the caisson, the LEVEL DROPPING as it drains into the tomb. Badru's face lights up--*it's working!*

BADRU

Keep stirring...

INT. TOMB - ANTECHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

The SLURRY ROARS into the tomb, SPATTERING on the stone floor and swiftly SPREADING, SWIRLING around Nyess and Harelip as they frantically HAMMER THEIR POSTS. Kabose slogs past them; climbs up the knotted rope into the escape shaft.

Nyess KNOCKS HER POST FREE, and a SECOND JET OF SLURRY cascades into the room. As she wades toward the escape shaft, HIP-HIGH IN MUCK, Harelip knocks his post free and overtakes her, HURLING her down into the RISING SLURRY.

NYESS - tries to stand, falls, weighted down with a THICK COAT OF BLINDING MUCK.

A hand on the knotted rope, Harelip casts a final glance back, a cruel grin on his face as he watches Nyess struggle. He turns just in time to catch a CRUSHING BLOW in the side of his head from Kabose's mallet.

Kabose jumps down from the opening, helps Nyess up. Arms around his neck, she clings to his back as he wades through the slurry and climbs up into the escape shaft.

EXT. THE VALLEY OF KINGS - CLIFF TOP - CONTINUOUS

TOBU AND HIS CREW - strain forward, pulling on their ropes. Inch-by-inch, A STONE SLAB attached to the ropes slowly SLIDES OUT FROM UNDER THE BASE OF THE CAISSON.

UP ON THE SCAFFOLD - Badru sees THICK BUBBLES break the surface of the slurry on the far side of the caisson. His brows knit in consternation.

TOBU AND HIS CREW - With a final, mighty pull, THE SLAB JERKS FREE OF THE CAISSON, the men spilling to the ground. Badru charges up, looks at the slab, then Tobu in angry disbelief.

BADRU

You fool! What have you done?

TOBU

You said we were supposed to pull on your command--

BADRU

--my *second* command! You were supposed to pull on my *second* command! *After* the children were clear!

INT. SHAFT - CONTINUOUS

Nyess clings to Kabose as he pulls them slowly up the steep, shaft, his eyes on the TINY SQUARE OF SUNLIGHT far above them.

MUDDY WATER trickles down from the DUCT OPENING A FEW FEET ABOVE. They hear an ominous, ECHOING GURGLE. Kabose picks up his pace, laboring hand-over-hand up the knotted rope.

As they pull even with the duct, the two children are SLAMMED BY A THICK SURGE OF SLURRY.

EXT. THE VALLEY OF KINGS - CLIFF TOP - CONTINUOUS

Tobu and SIX OTHERS pull on the knotted rope, the other Workers gathered around the head of the shaft, peering down into the darkness as Badru SHOUTS:

BADRU

Pull...

Hasa scuttles up to him, averting his eyes in deference.

HASA

Master Badru, it is my--

BADRU

--can you not see I am busy!

(shouts)

Pull you motherless dogs...

HASA

My humble apologies, but my most beloved nephew is one of the children who was--

BADRU

--your nephew?

HASA

Yes, yes, and I fear he is--

BADRU

--you will be compensated if he is lost.

(shouts)

Pull...

The crew pulls on the rope. Peering down the shaft, Aatep makes something out.

AAPEP

There is one on the rope!

BADRU

Move. Give him room...

COATED WITH MUCK, still clutching the knotted rope against his chest with one hand, Kabose is pulled from the shaft.

BADRU

Just the one?

AAPEP

Yes. Wait... *no!*

Kabose drags Nyess out with his free hand. Both lie, COUGHING AND GASPING, on the ground. Hasa eagerly pushes his way through the crowd. He is crestfallen when he sees that Kabose has survived.

BADRU - turns toward A TEAM OF WORKERS near the edge of the cliff, signals them to proceed with a wave of his hand.

IN PERFECT UNISON, the Team raises their SLEDGEHAMMERS and drives THICK WOODEN WEDGES into a FISSURE ten feet behind the precipice.

EXT. THE VALLEY OF KINGS - TOMB ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

WITH A CRACKING ROAR, a TITANIC SLAB breaks away from the cliff and slides down like the blade of a guillotine, CRASHING TO THE VALLEY FLOOR and burying the tomb entrance behind TONS OF ROCK.

EXT. THE VALLEY OF KINGS - CONTINUOUS

Reclining in an ornate SEDAN CHAIR borne by FOUR GUARDS, Hatshepsut despondently gazes back at the HUGE CLOUD OF DUST rising further down the valley behind the LONG PROCESSION.

HATSHEPSUT

Yesterday, I ruled Egypt. Today, I am but a widow--a mere vassal, subject to the whims of a child.

Senenmut, eyes forward, walks in measured steps beside her sedan chair along with her RETINUE.

SEENMUT

You will rule again.

HATSHEPSUT

How? But by the authority of Thutmose the Second did I wield the crook and flail, and Thutmose the Second is no more...

(a bitter smile)

... I am a proxy to a corpse.

Senenmut's eyes glitter with dark determination.

SEENMUT

Amun-Ra will again smile upon you, my Queen.

(MORE)

SENENMUT (cont'd)

This grievous injustice will not stand. I will spare no sacrifice to see it undone.

Inflamed by his passionate loyalty, Hatshepsut leans down, SPEAKS SOFTLY into his ear:

HATSHEPSUT

Come to my chamber tonight. I cannot bear to be alone on this day...

SENENMUT

As you wish.

EXT. THE VALLEY OF KINGS - CLIFF TOP - DUSK

Face glowing orange, STREAKS OF DRIED MUD still crusting his skin and hair, Kabose crouches on the edge of the cliff. He watches the sun sink behind the opposite ridge, absently picking up pebbles and flicking them over the side. Nyess stands behind him.

NYESS

I am Nyess.

Kabose ignores her. In the DEEP B/G, TOBU'S CREW huddles around a fire, LAUGHING, roasting strips of meat and passing amphorae of beer.

NYESS

My mother is dead.

KABOSE

Who is your father?

NYESS

I did not know my father.

Kabose SIGHS, wishing she'd leave him alone. He tosses another pebble. She gazes at him for a long time

NYESS

Why did you come back for me?

Discomfited, Kabose winces. Though he was motivated by pity, to admit so would conflict with his desire to be perceived as tough and ruthless.

KABOSE

Because--

She tilts her head, curious.

NYESS
Because what?

An apt lie occurs to him.

KABOSE
I needed a slave.
(stands, turns to her)
You owe me your life, so you will
be my slave. That is the law.

NYESS
What law?

KABOSE
The law of Amun-Ra...
(for good measure)
... and Osiris.

NYESS
(dubious)
Amun-Ra and Osiris?

KABOSE
One or both, it matters not. It is
the law and from now on you must do
as I say.

With that, he BUMPS past her and walks toward the group huddled around the fire. Nyess hesitates, then follows.

AT THE SCAFFOLDING - As WORKERS dismantle the caisson, Badru distributes GOLD INGOTS to each of the CREW BOSSES. When he comes to TOBU, he hesitates.

BADRU
I should dock you a measure for
disregarding my order.

TOBU
(feigning offence)
Come now, Badru. You know that is
not true. Such was my enthusiasm
that I merely did so prematurely.

A few of the others CHUCKLE. Badru can't help but smile at Tobu's brazenness.

BADRU
You are a cheeky bastard.

TOBU
 (a rakish grin)
 Which is why our master, Senenmut,
 favors me so.

CHUCKLING, Badru hands Tobu a small sack of ingots.

THE FIRE - Kabose reaches for one of the strips of meat.
 Hasa SMACKS his hand and snatches it for himself.

HASA
 Nothing for you.

PANHSJ
 Have mercy on the pup, Hasa. He
 almost lost his life this day.

HASA
 If but he had, Badru promised me
 recompense.
 (again, STRIKES Kabose)
 Hear that, fool? You cost me a
 bundle and I am the poorer for it...

Tobu steps up.

TOBU
Up, dogs. Collect your wages.

The Gang gathers around him as he passes out GOLD INGOTS,
 each cast with a SMALL HOLE IN THE CENTER. The men draw rags
 through the holes, tuck them in their waistbands. Tobu looks
 at Kabose, who stands apart from the others.

TOBU
 You. Boy. Come. You're due a
 measure.

Hasa blocks Kabose's path, assuming an unctuous tone,
 averting his eyes, hands folded and half bowing as if
 expecting to be whipped like a dog.

HASA
 Great Tobu, the boy is my nephew,
 the unfortunate orphan of my brave
 brother, Hanif, who died in
 service to our exalted King.

TOBU
 Your brother died of crotch-rot
 from a tainted Hittite he-bitch.

HASA

A *foul* lie, master. A *foul* lie!
 (pulls his dagger)
 Show me the cur who uttered this
 slander that I may cut out his
 tongue!

TOBU

(chuckles)
 Sheath your dagger, fool. You will
 be cutting out half the tongues in
 Thebes.

The Gang LAUGHS. Huffily squaring his shoulders, throwing surly looks at the others, Hasa tucks his dagger in his waistband. Tobu hands him TWO INGOTS.

HASA

Thank you, Tobu. Bless you--

He bows and backs away. Tobu grabs his arm.

TOBU

See to it that the boy gets his
 measure, Liar, or I will make a
 eunuch of you.

HASA

Of *course*, Tobu. Did I not say he
 is my own blood? I would not *dream*
 of cheating the urchin out of his
 wages...

He scuttles away and Tobu continues distributing gold to the others. Hasa steps up to Kabose, hisses in a LOW VOICE:

HASA

If he asks, you will tell him that
 I gave you your measure. If you do
 not, I will cut your throat,
 understand?

Hasa turns away and starts down the path. Sensing he's being watched, Kabose turns, sees Nyess standing behind him, her dark eyes dancing with amusement.

NYESS

So. I am to be a slave to a slave
 to a slave.

Humiliated, Kabose SLAPS her. She takes it, brazenly meets his eyes, nonplussed.

KABOSE

You will not speak to me in such a way.

(shaken)

Now... follow me, slave--but not too closely.

He turns on his heel walks away. Nyess brushes a trickle of blood from her lip, looks at it, then Kabose, and follows.

EXT. TEMPLE CONSTRUCTION SITE - NIGHT

STONE CARVERS on high scaffolding work by TORCH LIGHT. Adjacent to the site stands a TENTED PAVILION, walls glowing from within with FLICKERING LAMP LIGHT.

INT. SENENMUT'S WORKSHOP - CONTINUOUS

A vast space furnished with tables and work-benches. Senenmut quietly confers with TWO ASSISTANTS over a detailed model of the new temple complex. Badru enters with BARUTI, 50s, a corpulent man wearing the fine garments of a Royal Scribe.

BADRU

Master...?

Senenmut looks up, sees the visitor and graces him with a warm smile, DISMISSING THE OTHERS:

SENENMUT

You may go. I have no more need of you this night...

As his assistants roll up their sketches and head out, Senenmut steps up to Baruti, who bows.

BADRU

This is Master Baruti, Chief Scribe to the Royal Surveyor's Office.

BARUTI

My Lord...

Senenmut places a hand on his shoulder.

SENENMUT

Please. Do not bow to me. I am but a humble craftsman. You will call me Senenmut...

Baruti is flattered to be treated as an equal by a man of such eminence.

BARUTI

Senenmut. I am--

SENENMUT

--Baruti. Yes, I know. Thank you for coming on such short notice. I have an issue with which I was hoping you might be of some assistance...

BARUTI

It would be my greatest honor to serve you in any maner I am able, my Lo--

SENENMUT

--Senenmut.

BARUTI

Yes, yes. *Senenmut.* Of course. How may I serve you?

With one hand on the Scribe's shoulder, he guides Baruti over to the model, Badru following at a respectful distance.

SENENMUT

I understand that every year, when the Nile overflows her banks, it is the responsibility of your office to conduct surveys to reestablish property lines lost to the deluge.

BARUTI

That is one of our duties, yes.

SENENMUT

Excellent. You see this. It is a model of the new temple of the Cult of Amun-Ra.

BARUTI

It is magnificent!

SENENMUT

You flatter me.

BARUTI

I would *never*--

Senenmut holds up a palm to silence him.

SENENMUT

Thank you. You are quite right. It is very impressive, *but*...

Senenmut pulls Baruti over to the side of the table

SENENMUT (CONT'D)

... you see this pavilion here on
the West side of the main temple?
Come. Look...

He pulls the scribe down, the two men crouching, their eyes level with the surface of a sinuous glazed cobalt representation of the Nile.

SENENMUT

The view from the river is quite
spectacular, yes?

BARUTI

Oh, yes. It is *sublime*.

SENENMUT

And here is where I need your
assistance. This property line...

He points at a chalked line down-river from the temple complex.

SENENMUT (CONT'D)

... needs to be moved ten cubits
North.

Baruti looks at him, puzzled.

BARUTI

Moved.

SENENMUT

Yes.

BARUTI

(stammers)

But... but such a thing cannot be
done without great effort.

Senenmut regards him as if puzzled. Baruti EXPLAINS:

BARUTI

An easement must be proposed and
the Cults of Amun-Ra and Mut must
agree on a measure of compensation--
and everyone knows their High
Priests are bitter enemies!

Senenmut dismisses Baruti's objections with a flick of his hand.

SENENMUT

Nonsense. It is a fiction--a mere line on a map.

BARUTI

(appalled)

Oh, no. It is *much more* than that, I assure you. *Blood* has been shed over disputes of such lines.

(looks at the model)

Besides...

He stands, points at the South section of the temple pavilion.

BARUTI (CONT'D)

... look! Here! If the boundary is moved as you propose, it would encroach upon the South wing of the grand pavilion you are constructing.

SENENMUT

Yes? And...?

BARUTI

And it would have to come down. Either that, or... or the High Priest of Mut would have to agree to an easement which, as I said, is--something he would never do.

Senenmut slowly rises, meets Baruti's eyes.

SENENMUT

So you do not wish to help me.

BARUTI

Lord Senenmut, it is not because I do not *wish* to help. I *do*--with all my heart, but...

SENENMUT

(disappointed)

You cannot.

Baruti lowers his eyes, despondent. Senenmut heaves a long-suffering sigh.

SENENMUT

Very well...

Baruti looks up, momentarily relieved, confident that he has successfully made his case, until Senenmut ADDS:

SENMENMUT

... I suppose I will have to rely on your replacement. I'm sure he will be *much* more accommodating.

BARUTI

(horrified)

My--my *replacement*?

Senenmut steps up, locks eyes with Baruti, his gaze as cold with lethal intent as a cobra's on a fat rodent.

SENMENMUT

Clearly, the demands of a position as critical as Royal Scribe to the Surveyor cannot be met by a man who is incapable of rendering but a single... simple... *line*.

Badru moves closer to Baruti, his hand clutching the hilt of his dagger. The Scribe clocks the threat and swallows nervously...

EXT. THEBES - SLUM DISTRICT - HASA'S HUT - NIGHT

A crudely fashioned mud hut within a sprawl of shanties. VIOLENT SHADOWS PLAY over the LAMP-LIGHT WITHIN, the sounds of BLOWS being struck.

HASA (O.S.)

You fool! Did you think you could deceive me?!

INT. THEBES - SLUM DISTRICT - HASA'S HUT - CONTINUOUS

Kabose is sprawled on the dirt floor. Drunk, wild-eyed and disheveled, Hasa stands over him, the jewelled tube clutched in one hand, a goatskin of beer in the other.

KABOSE

No, uncle, I swear it. I was going to give it to you--

HASA

--when? Tomorrow? The next day...?

He KICKS Kabose in the ribs. Taking a seat at the table, Hasa takes a gulp of beer and examines the bauble under his oil lamp.

HASA

What does it contain?

KABOSE

I know not.

MUTTERING, Hasa presses and probes, searching for a means of opening the tube. Finally, he draws his dagger, slips it into a seam near one end. A delicate CLASP SNAPS and a SCROLL tumbles out, UNFURLING as it falls to the floor.

Kabose snatches up the papyrus; gazes at it, the hieroglyphics a meaningless jumble to him. His eyes fill with rage.

HASA

Shit! You risk our necks for shit!

He hurls the strip of papyrus at Kabose, storms up and grabs him by the hair, shakes him.

HASA

Only a worthless cur such as you
would pilfer booty worth less than
the vessel that contains it!

He pulls the boy to his feet and drags him toward the door, HURLS him outside.

EXT. THEBES - SLUM DISTRICT - HASA'S HUT - CONTINUOUS

GEESE HONK and scatter as Kabose stumbles, sprawling in the mud. Hasa stands in the open door.

HASA

Tonight you sleep outside. No
supper for you!

He SLAMS the door shut.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.)

My uncle, of course, was a fool...

Kabose sits up, begins examining the marks on the crumpled, soiled papyrus, curious.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.; CONT'D)

Even then, I knew the value of the
written word...

EXT. THEBES - SLUM DISTRICT - HASA'S HUT - LATER

A FLAT ROCK - resting against the base of a LOW WALL near the hut is slid aside, revealing a hole excavated under the wall's foundation.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.; CONT'D)
 By that time, despite the fact that
 I could not read or write, I had
 amassed quite a library...

Kabose pulls a crudely fashioned wooden box from the hole,
 removes its lid. Inside is an odd collection of written
 materials.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.; CONT'D)
 I had made it my habit to slip out
 late at night and board the passing
 vessels of foreign traders, stealing
 anything I could find that bore
 written marks...

He examines a few of the items--SCRAPS OF PAPYRUS, FRAGMENTS
 OF CLAY TABLET, a SMALL CYLINDER SEAL--handling them with the
 care and reverence one would accord holy relics.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.; CONT'D)
 The form mattered not; only the fact
 that they conferred some measure of
 immortality on those who had written
 them. For there was but one way for
 a man to acquire wisdom beyond that
 gained in his paltry span of years,
 and that was by plundering the sum of
 another's as pressed into clay,
 carved into stone or written in ink
 on papyrus...

He alerts at the SNAP of a twig. Seeing nothing, he rolls up
 his latest prize, placing the small scroll in the box.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.; CONT'D)
 I knew that if I could but learn to
 read and write, as the asp sheds its
 skin, I could discard my past and
 emerge a man of substance...

NYESS - observes Kabose as he returns his odd treasure to its
 hiding place, then melts into the shadows, unseen.

INT. THEBES - PALACE - QUEEN'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

Richly appointed, but spare in the high-born manner. Naked,
 Hatshepsut stands silhouetted in the PULSING GLOW of an OIL
 LAMP. She pulls a pleated linen kilt tight around her waist.

HATSHEPSUT
 This is the King's syndwt...

She turns, facing us, eyes mischievous, a saucy grin playing over her lips.

HATSHEPSUT (CONT'D)
How does it look?

HEKTOR (V.O.)
Master...?

SLAM TO:

INT. GEBAL - KABOSE'S CHAMBER - DAY

Infuriated by the scribe's interruption, Old Kabose SNAPS:

OLD KABOSE
What...?

HEKTOR
Were you present in the Queen's chamber that night?

OLD KABOSE
Do not be absurd! Of course I was not!

HEKTOR
Then... if you were absent... how would you know what took place there?

The old man stares at Hektor as if appalled by his naïveté. He shakes his head, draws a deep, calming breath.

OLD KABOSE
It is not necessary for one to witness a thing in order to know it has occurred.

HEKTOR
But... you describe the room; her manner and attire...

OLD KABOSE
Were you in the Queen's chamber that night?

HEKTOR
(stammers)
No, but--

OLD KABOSE

--then you cannot say that what I
tell you is not true, can you?

Bewildered, Hektor shakes his head. Old Kabose holds up a
palm to silence him.

OLD KABOSE

Very well, then...
(collects his thoughts)
Queen Hatshepsut stood before
Senenmut, naked but for her dead
husband's syndwt...

BACK TO:

INT. THEBES - PALACE - QUEEN'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

Senenmut reclines on Hatshepsut's bed. He sips wine from a
PASTE CHALICE carved in the form of a blue lotus.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.)

His eyes feasted on her divine,
flawless form; her skin as smooth and
rich as finely ground cinnamon...

SEENMUT

You do not look like a King.

She holds a CEREMONIAL GOLD BEARD inlaid with Lapis Lazuli
against her chin, sways closer to him.

HATSHEPSUT

What do you think now...?

Senenmut curls his finger inside the waistband of the kilt,
slides it playfully under the curve of her belly.

SEENMUT

I think, soon, the Divine Adoratrix
Huy will profoundly regret her
choice for the King's Regent and...

He reaches up, takes the false beard from her hand, grips it
like a phallus.

SEENMUT

... I can devise a *much* more
interesting purpose for this.

He pulls the waistband, the kilt falling away, and draws
Hatshepsut to him, pressing his face against her pubis. She
places a hand behind his head and pulls him closer.

HATSHEPSUT

Clever, clever Senenmut, for all your painstaking designs and schemes, even now your most exquisite creation stirs within me. Do you not feel it?

Senenmut pulls away, looks up at her, astonished, and places his hand on her belly. She covers it with both her own. He GASPS, startled.

SEENMUT

You are with child?

She smiles. Yes. Senenmut sits up.

SEENMUT

How long...?

HATSHEPSUT

He will be born in but five months. Before the next midsummer harvest.

SEENMUT

Is he--

Hatshepsut kneels before him, placing both hands on his cheeks, kissing him deeply, passionately.

HATSHEPSUT

I have had but one man inside me since the last deluge. The child is yours, but the world will believe he is the son of Thutmose the Second, a legitimate heir twice-blessed with the blood of Amun-Ra.

SEENMUT

(realizes, astonished)

My son is going to be a King...

He kisses her passionately. After a beat, something occurs to him and he pulls away.

SEENMUT

But...

(hesitates)

... what if it is a--

She silences him with a finger to his lips.

HATSHEPSUT

Do not *think* such a thing. Every day, when Mandjet rises in the East we will offer up sacrifice to the Seven Hathors that I bear a masculine child.

Senenmut nods, considering her words.

SEENMUT

Yes... You are the daughter of Amun-Ra. Surely He will smile upon you. He *must*. And our son's claim to the throne will be...

HATSHEPSUT

... absolutely incontestable.

Again, they kiss passionately, sinking into the bed and making love.

EXT. THEBES - SLUM DISTRICT - HASA'S HUT - NIGHT

FROGS CROAK. Kabose sleeps fitfully, curled in a fetal position on the doorstep.

NYESS - gazes down at him, her face an expressionless, moonlit mask. She crouches and touches Kabose's shoulder. Startled awake, he recoils from her touch, GASPS:

KABOSE

What are you doing?

NYESS

My duty. I am your slave, am I not?

He stares at her a beat, bewildered--what started as a child's game has suddenly become very... *complicated*. She pulls a bundle wrapped in a rag from under her garment.

NYESS

I brought you a crust of bread and some dried fish.

Kabose takes the packet from her and claws it open, begins greedily devouring the bread.

KABOSE

(mouth full)

Where did you get these things?
Did you steal them?

NYESS
I bartered for them.

KABOSE
Bartered? Bartered what?

She averts her eyes.

NYESS
It matters not...
(she stands)
I will go now so you may sleep.

KABOSE
Where will you go?

NYESS
Close enough to know when I am
needed, but far away enough from
him not to be seen.

She jerks her head at the door, meaning Hasa. With a final, solemn bow of the head to Kabose, Nyess slips away into the inky darkness.

KABOSE - chews the stale bread, a bit disconcerted by this odd turn of events...

EXT. TEMPLE CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

Ropes tied around the top of a huge, ELABORATELY CARVED COLUMN supporting the corner of the UNFINISHED PAVILION'S ROOF have been hitched to TEAMS OF OXEN.

TOBU
Pull...!

Tobu and his crew WHIP the oxen, driving them forward, the top of the column SCRAPING OUT from under the entablature and the ENTIRE CORNER OF THE STRUCTURE COLLAPSING in a cloud of dust.

HUY - The Divine Adoratrix of Amun-Ra, turns to Senenmut and CRIES OUT:

HUY
This is *madness*.

SENMENMUT
(nonplussed)
I am sorry, my blessed sacredness,
but there is nothing else that can
be done.

HUY

It is just a line on a map!

SEENMUT

Oh, it is *much more* than that...

He glances at Badru, WHO ADDS:

BADRU

Blood has been shed due to disputes
over such lines.

A LOUD CRACK and a huge section of the ENTABLATURE FALLS
CRASHING. Workers scatter as MASSIVE CHUNKS OF SANDSTONE
tumble down the carved granite steps. One of the OXEN BLEATS
hideously as it is CRUSHED.

HUY

*Please, Senenmut. There must be
something you can do stop this!*

Senenmut sighs, exchanges a long-suffering look with Badru.
He knows he shouldn't do this, but...

SEENMUT

I... *could* call a halt to the
demolition--

HUY

--*yes!* Yes, make them stop--

The architect holds up his palm.

SEENMUT (CONT'D)

--a *temporary* halt only. Until you
and Amenemope sort things out with
the Prince--

HUY

(recoils at the name)
--*Amenemope*. That snake will
squeeze us like an overripe fig.

SEENMUT

Come now, Adoratrix. You and he
are *neighbors*. Surely you two can
resolve this matter equitably.
Besides...

(leans in, *sotto voce*)
... Pen-Nekhet is your man. You
are, after all, the one who
advocated his appointment as the
King's Regent.

HUY

(nodding, thoughts racing)
Yes... yes, that is true... and it
is my daughter who will be the
King's first Principal Wife...

SENENMUT

Then go. With great haste. Request
an audience with the Prince. In the
meantime, I will personally see to
it that not a single brick of your
glorious new temple is displaced.

HUY

Thank you, Exalted Builder. May
Amun-Ra's most excellent blessings
be on your house.

With that, she joins her RETINUE and hurries off. Senenmut
and Badru watch, amused.

BADRU

What shall you do if Pen-Nekhet
succeeds in arbitrating a
satisfactory compromise?

SENENMUT

A satisfactory compromise? Between
Huy and Amenemope...?
(a thin smile)
Such a thing does not exist.

INT. THEBES - PALACE - THRONE ROOM - DAY

TIGHT ON: Thutmose the Third, seated on the throne nervously
glancing left and right as if watching a tennis match as,
O.S., Huy and AMENEMOPE, High Priest of Mut, beseech him in
RAISED, IMPASSIONED VOICES:

HUY (O.S.)

It is but *ten cubits*, majesty--

ANENEMOPE (O.S.)

--ten cubits or a hundred, it
matters not. The land belongs to
the Mother Goddess Mut--

HUY (O.S.)

--and it lies *fallow*, Your
Highness, infested by vermin,
little more than a pestilent swamp--

ANENEMOPE

--a *swamp* you say!

Amenemope, 30s, eyes heavily lined, lips stained red with pomegranate juice and wearing an elaborate, CEREMONIAL WIG, lunges at Huy as if to claw her eyes out. His PRIESTS restrain him.

Pen-Nekhbet steps between the two, raising his hands and affecting a smooth, CONCILIATORY TONE:

PEN-NEKHBET

Noble priest, Divine Adoratrix,
please. Surely there is a way to
resolve this dispute without
resorting to physical violence...

HATSHEPSUT AND HER RETINUE - Seated among the NOBILITY in attendance, the Queen watches, bemused. Senenmut, standing behind her, leans forward and MURMURS in her ear:

SEENMUT

Does my nose deceive me, or has our
stalwart young Prince soiled his
royal kilt?

Hatshepsut suppresses a giggle.

HATSHEPSUT

Shh. Stop it...

PEN-NEKHBET

Though this is a grave and complex
issue, there are but two solutions.
One, the South Wing of Amun-Ra's
Temple Pavilion must be dismantled
and--

HUY

--*out of the question*. It is all
but complete and the cost would be--

PEN-NEKHBET

--*please*. You interrupt the Heir
to Egypt, for whom I speak.

Furious, Huy bites her tongue and bows to the Prince.

HUY

I beg your pardon, Exalted One.

Unsure what to say, Thutmose looks to Pen-Nekhbet, who raises his eyebrows and executes a measured nod. The boy does his best to emulate the gesture.

PEN-NEKHBET

As the *Prince* was saying, either the structure must be dismantled and redesigned so as not to encroach on the property of Mut, or fair compensation must be paid for said encroachment.

ANENEMOPE

I will not sell for any price!

PEN-NEKHBET

(sharply)

That is not reasonable. Either set a price, or The Prince will set one in your stead. It is your choice, Anenemope.

Sullen, Anenemope turns and QUIETLY CONFERS with SEVERAL PRIESTS. They nod, some accord being reached. Anenemope addresses the Prince:

ANENEMOPE

The Cult of Mut will accept two-hundred cattle--

HUY

Two-hundred--

ANENEMOPE

(raises a finger)

--and... the lands upon which they graze on the East bank.

HUY

(sputters)

That--that is an *outrageous* sum!

PEN-NEKHBET

It *is* quite high.

ANENEMOPE

The price is but a fraction of what the Cult of Amun-Ra has lavished on the structure that now stands on our property.

HATSHEPSUT AND SENENMUT - She squeezes his hand. Senenmut leans forward and she inquires in a SOFT VOICE:

HATSHEPSUT

How on Earth would he know such a thing?

SENENMUT
 (a knowing smile)
 I cannot imagine, Highness.

His back to the Priests, Pen-Nekhetbet confers discreetly with Thutmose the Third in a LOW VOICE:

PEN-NEKHBET
 Exalted one, before rendering a judgement, it is necessary to ascertain the facts, as I will do forthwith. Observe...

He turns and faces the priestess.

PEN-NEKHBET
 Is what he says true?

HUY
 (exasperated)
 My Prince, the cost of the structure has no bearing on--

PEN-NEKHBET
 (stern, measured)
 --is... this... true?

HUY
 Yes, but--

Pen-Nekhetbet silences her with a raised hand.

PEN-NEKHBET
 The Prince has rendered judgement. Let it be written that, in exchange for two-hundred cattle, the property in dispute will be granted to the Cult of Amun-Ra so they may complete their temple. So the exalted Thutmose--

ANENEMOPE
 --what about the land?

Pen-Nekhetbet sharply turns to Anenemope, narrows his eyes, slightly put out by the interruption.

PEN-NEKHBET
 So the exalted Thutmose wills it. So it shall be done.

EXT. THEBES - PALACE - COURTYARD - MOMENTS LATER

A BROAD PROMENADE surrounds a square, man-made SACRED LAKE, COLONNADES connecting the palace complex. OUT OF EARSHOT, at the foot of the broad stairway entrance to the Throne Room, Huy and Anenemope still bicker, gesticulating angrily as their RETINUES look on.

HATSHEPSUT AND SENENMUT - Amused as they watch the Priests quarrel from the colonnade accompanied by her RETINUE.

HATSHEPSUT

Poor Pen-Nekhet. In striving to be even-handed, he has only angered both...

SENENMUT

I suppose it is only a matter of time before they grow weary of fighting one another and direct their rage...

(a knowing smile)

... elsewhere?

HATSHEPSUT

Eventually, yes. But I assure you, only after they have given the matter considerable thought.

INT. THEBES - TEMPLE OF AMUN-RA - NIGHT

A vast, haunting space, ceiling supported by a forest of ornately carved pillars, sinuous shadows dancing and merging by TORCH LIGHT. Huy and Amenemope stand side-by-side surrounded by HIGH PRIESTS of all the major deities.

HUY

We have given this matter considerable thought.

ANENEMOPE

The decision is made. Her Highness, Queen Hatshepsut, will be the Regent forthwith.

Pen-Nekhet stands before them, looking from one to the other, stunned.

PEN-NEKHET

But... you deemed her unreliable...

(to Huy)

Adoratrix, you yourself stated she was too ambitious;

(MORE)

PEN-NEKHBET (cont'd)
 that her aspiration to rule was
 such as to compromise the Prince's
 very *safety*.

TROUBLED MUTTERING among the Priests. Huy glances at a
 SCRIBE taking notes behind a nearby podium.

HUY
 That is not in the written record.

PEN-NEKHBET
 (angry)
 Of *course* it is not in the written
 record. It was *expunged* from the
 written record, as I'm sure the
 very words I am now *speaking* will
 be expunged.

A few of the Priests OBJECT VOCIFEROUSLY. Huy holds a hand
 up for silence.

HUY
 Even had I voiced such concerns, in
 the four months past, since the
 death of Great Thutmose the Second,
 has there been a single attempt on
 the Prince's life?

PEN-NEKHBET
 No.

HUY
 And has not the Queen demonstrated
 the utmost respect and reverence
 toward him?

PEN-NEKHBET
 Yes...

Huy relaxes, her case made. He turns to the Scribe to issue
 a COMMAND, but is INTERRUPTED when Pen-Nekhbet ADDS:

PEN-NEKHBET
 ... *but only* because she carries in
 her womb a child. A child who may
 very well supercede Thutmose the
 Third as heir to the Royal House if--
and only if--he is a male.
 However...
 (holds up his finger)
 ... if the babe is a female, the
 Prince will be dead within a
 fortnight.

The Priests REACT WITH OUTRAGE. Pen-Nekhbet turns on his heel and walks out of the temple.

OUT TO BLACK

FADE IN:

EXT. THEBES - THE NILE RIVER - NIGHT

Merchant vessels slowly drift past with the current; a few against it, under sail. The opposite shore is a jet-black cut-out against the night sky, the sinuous braid of the Milky Way writhing across the heavens.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.)

The midsummer harvest arrived and the land surrendered its bounty. The river was teeming with merchant vessels, bearing spices, oils, incense and gold in exchange for the King's grain...

KABOSE - Stands on the shore, stripping down to his undergarment.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.; CONT'D)

I had chosen the first moonless night to pilfer booty and add to my collection...

He enters the water without a ripple, frog-strokes through the reeds out toward the shipping channel.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.; CONT'D)

My modus was to target vessels traveling upriver under sail...

EXT. THEBES - A MERCHANT BOAT - CONTINUOUS

GLIDING UP-RIVER UNDER SAIL, a crew of THREE MEN sleeps soundly, nestled among BULGING SACKS OF GRAIN. The SAIL above them FLAPS SOFTLY, the mast CREAKING.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.; CONT'D)

In this way, any sound I might make would be dampened by the snap and flutter of the canvas...

Kabose creeps from one to the next, relieving them of VALUABLES and rifling their bags.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.; CONT'D)
 Moving from vessel to vessel, I
 might travel many leagues, and when
 I had filched all that was to be
 had, I would slip back into the
 river and ride its current to where
 I started...

The boat sails past the NOW COMPLETED Temple of Amun-Ra.
 Though most of Thebes is dark, LAMPS GLOW within the complex.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.; CONT'D)
 In this way, I was able to burgle
 four, five... even *six* boats in a
 single night...

As Kabose withdraws a CHARM engraved with an ankh from one of the sailor's bags, a WOMAN'S ANGUISHED CRY ECHOES across the water. Kabose freezes. A moment passes and, hearing nothing more, he returns to his larcenous task.

INT. THEBES - TEMPLE OF AMUN-RA - MAMMISI - CONTINUOUS

Hatshepsut again CRIES OUT, wracked by labor-pains.

Seated on a smooth, STONE BIRTHING-CHAIR in the center of a CEREMONIAL BOWER decorated with GARLANDS OF CONVULVULUS VINES, she is attended by Anenemope and TWO PRIESTS OF MUT.

OUTSIDE THE BOWER - The chamber is spare, CARVED RELIEFS on the walls depicting scenes of fertility. Huy and SEVERAL HIGH PRIESTS fervently CHANT INCANTATIONS.

Hatshepsut relaxes as the contraction fades, chest heaving as she catches her breath.

HATSHEPSUT
 Is it... a King I pass... or a...
 hippopotamus?

Anenemope smiles gently as he cools her forehead with a damp linen cloth, replies in a SOOTHING TONE:

ANENEMOPE
 No, Highness. It is but a god in
 human form you bear. Now... *push*...

EXT. THEBES - PALACE - COLUNNADE - CONTINUOUS

A PALACE GUARD reacts to the DISTANT, ANGUISHED CRY of his Queen. He is startled by the Commander of the Guard, HAKOR, 40s, a formidable, battle-scarred veteran.

PALACE GUARD
Commander...

HAKOR
You are relieved.

PALACE GUARD
But, sir, I... I have been ordered
on this watch until dawn.

HAKOR
No matter. Return to the barracks.
I will assume your post. You are
dismissed.

Disconcerted, the Guard bows his head and starts quickly across the courtyard.

Hakor gives a LOW WHISTLE, and THREE LARGE MEN wearing the simple garb of fishermen slip out of the shadows. He pats each on the back as they move past him into the building.

INT. THEBES - PALACE - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

DAGGERS drawn, their tattered disguises belied by their military bearing and trained movements, the Three Men advance down the hallway, each covering the others' progress.

Their leader, RANEB, mid-20s, a brutish Syrian, pads up to a door at the end of the hall. He presses his ear against it, listens a beat, then HAND-SIGNALS the other two, who join him. His blade flashing, ready, Raneb gingerly opens the door and peers into the room.

PRINCE THUTMOSE - sleeps soundly on an ornately carved bed.

EXT. THEBES - TEMPLE OF AMUN-RA - COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

Under TORCH-LIGHT, NOBILITY gather in front of the mammisi, awaiting the Royal birth. Again, HATSHEPSUT CRIES OUT. Senenmut instinctively starts toward the sound of her distress. Badru halts him with a grip on his biceps.

BADRU
 (sotto voce)
 Master, you *must* wait until you are
 summoned.

SEENMUT
 Something has gone wrong--

BADRU
 --no. We would have been told.
 Now be still. It has been but an
 hour since her water broke...

A GUTTURAL CRY ECHOES across the courtyard. Senenmut winces,
 clutching his abdomen. Badru supports him.

SEENMUT
 Each of her cries is like the twist
 of a dagger in my guts.

Worried that his Master's distress may draw undue attention,
 Badru glances around, smiling apologetically at the few who
 notice.

BADRU
 Master, don't. You must be strong
 or others will notice...

INT. THEBES - PALACE - KING'S CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

Thutmose is awakened by RANEB'S HAND clamped over his mouth.
 His CRIES MUFFLED, the boy squirms and struggles as Raneb
 pins him with a forearm across his chest. The second
 intruder pins the Prince's kicking his feet while the third
 stands lookout at the door.

Brandishing his dagger, Raneb HISSES:

RANEB
 Be *silent*...

The Boy's eyes go wide with fear and he goes still. Raneb
 yanks a SACK down over the boy's head.

INT. THEBES - TEMPLE OF AMUN-RA - MAMMISI - CONTINUOUS

Hatshepsut THROWS BACK HER HEAD and unleashes a SHRIEKING
 ROAR, teeth bared, eyes sparkling with intensity.

EXT. THEBES - TEMPLE OF AMUN-RA - COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

As the Queen's BLOODCURDLING SCREAM FADES, all eyes are locked on the portal into the mammisi. Ashen-faced, Senenmut is devastated, certain that he has lost her. He buries his face against Badru's shoulder, bereft.

A BEAT then...

... the stillness is broken by the CRY OF A NEWBORN INFANT.

Senenmut raises his head, a spark of hope in his eyes as a RIPPLE OF EXCITEMENT moves through the crowd. He sighs and mutters with PROFOUND RELIEF:

SENENMUT
Praise be to Tawaret...

EXT. FISHING BOAT - CONTINUOUS

The SACK is whipped off Thutmose's head. He finds himself on the deck of a decrepit fishing boat moored to a sagging dock in the Harbor District. Pen-Nekhet crouches over him. Thutmose blinks, recognizes his old guardian.

THUTMOSE
Ahmose!

The boy immediately throws his arms around the old man. Disgusted by the womanish display of affection, Raneb turns away, busies himself hoisting the sail.

PEN-NEKHET
It's all right, my boy. You are quite safe. I'm sorry we had to frighten you so, but circumstances left us little choice...

THUTMOSE
What are we doing here? Why did the men take me from my bed?

PEN-NEKHET
To protect you, exalted one, from those who would see you harmed.

THUTMOSE
Who?

PEN-NEKHET
There is no time to discuss such things now.

(MORE)

PEN-NEKHBET (cont'd)
 You only need know that you will be
 going to Kerma-Mem, where you will
 be safe. Now...

He pushes a bundle of SOILED, THREADBARE CLOTHING into
 Thutmose's arms.

PEN-NEKHBET (CONT'D)
 ... remove your tunic and put these
 on.

THUTMOSE
 They stink.

PEN-NEKHBET
 Yes, but it is the honest stink of
 a boy who fishes. Now. Quickly...

Hakor, now ATTIRED AS A FISHERMAN, approaches ON THE DOCK.
 He addresses Raneb:

THUTMOSE
 You were unobserved?

RANEB
 Yessir.

Thutmose sees Hakor, turns to Pen-Nekhbet, bewildered

THUTMOSE
Hakor...?

PEN-NEKHBET
 Yes, Highness...
 (chuckles)
 ... it appears you've been abducted
 by the commander of your own Royal
 Guard.

INT. THEBES - TEMPLE OF AMUN-RA - MAMMISI - CONTINUOUS

Anenemope and his Priests MUTTER INCANTATIONS as they wrap
 the PLACENTA in linen marked with SACRED SYMBOLS. The bower
 drape is drawn and Senenmut is escorted into the chamber by
 Huy. Struggling to maintain protocol, he bows deeply.

SENMENMUT
 My Queen...

HATSHEPSUT - Exhausted, she nurses her newborn infant, gives
 her consort a weary smile. She turns to Huy:

HATSHEPSUT

You may go. And the others. I wish to be alone with my Vizier.

HUY

But Highness--

She silences her with raised eyebrows. She bows, shepherding the other Priests out of the bower. As soon as the chamber is empty, Senenmut rushes to Hatshepsut, embracing her and his firstborn, his eyes brimming with tears.

HATSHEPSUT

Senenmut... my precious Senenmut...

SEENMUT

You are well?

She nods, stroking his hair.

HATSHEPSUT

Yes... yes... but...

He gives her a puzzled look, which she answers by gently tugging down the infant's wrap, revealing its sex. He gazes in wonder at the child, then its mother.

HATSHEPSUT

Are you displeased?

He LAUGHS with pure, unadulterated delight.

SEENMUT

My beautiful, Hatshepsut. My love. How could I be displeased? My Queen has blessed me with a Princess!

Weeping and laughing with joy, they embrace.

EXT. THEBES - HARBOR DISTRICT - DOCK - CONTINUOUS

Pen-Nekhet and Hakor CONFER QUIETLY:

PEN-NEKHET

How fares the Queen?

HAKOR

She has given birth to a daughter.

Pen-Nekhet draws a HISSING BREATH through his teeth, glances back at the boy and SIGHS, despondent. Hakor awaits orders.

PEN-NEKHBET
You will travel only at night--

HAKOR
(well-versed)
--yes, yes, and we will conceal
ourselves by day...
(adds, muttering)
.. the boy will be old man by the
time we reach Kerma-Mem.

PEN-NEKHBET
If so, then so be it. Better your
journey lasts a thousand days than
risk discovery en route.

Hakor drops his eyes in silent acceptance of Pen-Nekhbets' wise counsel. He CONTINUES:

PEN-NEKHBET
As soon as you arrive, you will
request accommodation and sanctuary
from my nephew, Prince Atsutep.

HAKOR
Can he be trusted?

PEN-NEKHBET
He is my sister's son and the ward
of my only daughter. He will not
be pleased, but in the end, he will
agree.

HAKOR
How long?

PEN-NEKHBET
I know not. At least until the boy
is strong enough to command
authority--

Hakor rolls his eyes, a JADED CHUCKLE escaping his lips.

PEN-NEKHBET
Do not underestimate him. You will
discover that he is tougher than
you think...

The two turn and look at...

THEIR POV - Thutmose pinches the rough burlap fabric of his shirt, sniffs and wrinkles his nose in disgust.

Both harboring doubts, Hakor and Pen-Nekhetbet turn to one another and Pen-Nekhetbet CONTINUES:

PEN-NEKHBT

You will instruct him on the customs of his station--how a Ruler conducts himself at court, the formulation of judgements and decrees, and the administrative duties of a King. Raneb will teach him the arts of combat, command and tactics. I suspect you both will find him an apt pupil...

EXT. FISHING BOAT - CONTINUOUS

Thutmose watches as Pen-Nekhetbet gives a few final instructions (MOS) to Hakor. The Guard nods and, untying the mooring rope, pushes them off and leaps into the boat as it drifts away from the dock.

THUTMOSE

(panicked)

What about Ahmose?

HAKOR

He is staying behind.

Thutmose's eyes widen. He charges the gunwale, SHOUTING:

THUTMOSE

Ahmose...!

Hakor grabs him around the waist, hauling him back and covering his mouth with one hand. Teeth clenched, his voice THICK WITH EMOTION, s SNARLS:

HAKOR

There is no other way. If he does not, they will presume an abduction and we'll have the entire army of Egypt on us...

Thutmose struggles, angry tears flowing, SHOUTING as loudly as he can. Hakor gives him a VIOLENT SHAKE.

HAKOR

Silence! Would you have us all dead?! Is it not enough that noble Ahmose Pen-Nekhetbet must perish to cover your miserable flank...?

Thutmose collapses against Hakor, overwhelmed with sorrow,
 WEEPING PITEOUSLY. Stoic, Hakor struggles not to join him.

EXT. THEBES - HARBOR DISTRICT - DOCK - CONTINUOUS

Ahmose Pen-Nekhet watches as the wind fills the sail of the
 receding boat, pushing it South into the dark night. Face
 drawn, eyes sad, he silently prays for the King's deliverance.

OUT TO BLACK:

OLD KABOSE (V.O.)
 The gods had been generous that
 night...

FADE IN:

EXT. NILE - WATERLINE - PRE-DAWN

Dawn approaches, the river a slate-grey under a PALE SKY.
 Kabose drifts with the current.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.)
 The sky was quickening and I knew I
 must hasten to my Uncle's house and
 hide my takings before the drunken
 lout awoke to find me gone...

Something catches his attention on the river.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.; CONT'D)
 To continue would be to risk a
 beating or, worse, discovery...

A FISHING BOAT - moves slowly upriver toward him, wind
 bulging its sail. As it passes, a rope trails off its
 stern, passing only feet from Kabose's grasp.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.; CONT'D)
 Whether it was mere greed, the
 temptation of an errant rigging or
 the will of the Gods that compelled
 me, I will never know...

Conflicted, Kabose watches the rope slither past him. At the
 last possible moment, he snatches it and is dragged UPRIVER
 BY THE BOAT.

EXT. FISHING BOAT - MOMENTS LATER

The MORNING BREEZE fills the sail as the vessel glides North. Kabose pulls himself stealthily up a trailing rope, slides over the gunwale, careful not to awaken a SNORING figure slumped against the LASHED TILLER.

Focused on some SACKS of supplies and personal items stowed in an OPEN FORECABIN AT THE BOW. Kabose creeps past a SECOND SLEEPING MAN, curled up on BUNDLED FISHING NETS. The man STIRS. Kabose freezes until the man ROLLS OVER AND SETTLES, then makes his way up to the bow.

Nimble fingers untying pull-strings, Kabose begins rifling through the sacks stowed in the alcove. Suddenly, they SHIFT, MOVE and Prince Thutmose sits up, face puffy with sleep. Disoriented, he blinks, rubs his eyes.

THUTMOSE

What are--

With lightning speed, Kabose lunges, grabbing the Prince by the neck and pinning him hard against the rear of the forecabin, drawing back his fist, then pausing, recognition dawning...

THUTMOSE

(hisses)

Why do you hesitate? Kill me.

KABOSE

(stunned)

I know you.

THUTMOSE

(whispers, urgent)

No. I am *nothing* to you. I will alert the others if you do not kill me now. Quickly.

Thutmose screws his eyes shut, awaiting the blow. Kabose releases him and withdraws, gazing at him in wonder.

KABOSE

You are the King.

THUTMOSE

(stammers)

I most certainly am not. I--I am but a common fisherman.

KABOSE

You are the King. I saw you myself at the burial of your father...

(MORE)

KABOSE (cont'd)
 (grins)
 ... and even had I not, a common fisherman would never call himself a "common fisherman."

Thutmose slumps back, resigned and despondent. A question occurs to Kabose, furrowing his brows.

KABOSE
 Why do you want me to kill you?

Thutmose raises his eyes.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.)
 Before he spoke a word, I saw the answer in his eyes: The wretched anguish of a boy who had inherited a kingdom, yet had not a single friend...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FISHING BOAT - LATER

SILHOUETTED against the QUICKENING SKY, the two boys sit atop the forepeak, conversing MOS.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.)
 We spoke until dawn. I could not tell you what was said. I remember only that he had many more questions about my life than I did his...

Kabose gestures excitedly as he tells his tale. Thutmose covers his mouth to stifle his laughter.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.; CONT'D)
 I told him of my Uncle, Hasa the Liar, and about some of the other boys I knew. And *girls*--there was much talk about girls and women and their charms--*especially* those which reside between their thighs. And there was laughter. And many secrets were revealed, for we both knew it was unlikely our paths would ever again cross, but, in the unlikely event they did...

Thutmose pulls a pendant from around his neck, presses it into Kabose's palm. Solemn words are exchanged.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.; CONT'D)
 ... he presented me a token, and
 promised that by it, no matter how
 many years had passed since that
 night, he would know me...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NILE - WATERLINE - DAWN

POV - A STIFF MORNING WIND filling its sail, the fishing boat
 recedes toward the ROSE-HUED HORIZON.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.; CONT'D)
 As Amun-Ra breached the horizon, I
 slipped back into the river, and we
 drifted apart, the Prince, carried
 South by the breath of Shu; and I,
 North by the caressing embrace of
 Ancient Hapi...

REVERSE - Kabose treads water. He lifts his hand from the
 water and looks at the PENDANT--an exquisite, burnished GOLD
 SCARAB inlaid with cornelian and amazonite.

INT. THEBES - PALACE - CORRIDOR - DAY

Senenmut and Badru walk quickly down the corridor.

SENENMUT
 Who was on watch?

BADRU
 Itafé, but he was relieved early by
 Hakor.

SENENMUT
 Have you spoken to him?

BADRU
 He cannot be found. We fear he has
 been slain...

Senenmut stops, turns and looks at him, eyes glittering with
 suppressed rage.

SENENMUT
 Idiot. He was probably a *part* of
 it...

He turns on his heel and continues down the corridor. After
 a beat, Badru meekly follows.

INT. THEBES - PALACE - KING'S CHAMBER - MOMENTS LATER

Under watch by TWO PALACE GUARDS, Ahmose Pen-Nekhbet sits on the corner of the bed, calmly sipping from a paste chalice. The door flies open and Senenmut enters with Badru. The Guards snap to attention.

SENMENMUT

Where is the Prince?

Pen-Nekhbet regards him with aplomb. He SIGHS and tops off his chalice with WINE from a small amphora.

PEN-NEKHBET

I will be happy to answer all of your questions in private.

Eyes blazing, his lips compressed into a bloodless line, it's all Senenmut can do to keep himself from strangling the old bastard. He turns to Badru and the Guards.

SENMENMUT

Get out. All of you. And close the door. I will call if I have need for you.

Badru and the two Guards exit, close the door.

SENMENMUT

Well...

PEN-NEKHBET

The Prince is safe.

SENMENMUT

I did not ask you if he was safe. I asked you where he is?

PEN-NEKHBET

If I tell you that, then he will not be safe.

Senenmut takes a step forward, trembling with suppressed rage.

SENMENMUT

Are you implying that the Queen is a danger to her own son?

PEN-NEKHBET

He is not her son. And, no, that is not my implication. You, however, are a different kettle of fish...

SENENMUT

What do you mean?

PEN-NEKHBET

I *mean*, Senenmut, that you are an artist, and the artist is a slave--not to his mind, but to his heart. For example...

(savors a sip of wine)

... your love for the Queen--it is not motivated by her station, but in spite of it, is that not true?

SENENMUT

My love for the Queen is none of your business.

PEN-NEKHBET

Ahh, but it *is*, it *is* you see... Because your love is pure and true, you would move heaven and earth to give its object anything she desires. And more than anything, Hatshepsut desires the throne--

SENENMUT

--stop stalling. Where is Thutmose?

Pen-Nekhbet's expression hardens.

PEN-NEKHBET

Yes. Yes, you are quite right. Time is short, so I will speak plainly and to the point. The King is gone. I will not tell you where he is; only that he is safe and in capable hands. The Queen has but two courses of action: Announce he has been abducted and deploy the full might of Egypt to locate and return him to Thebes--

SENENMUT

--and why should she not?

PEN-NEKHBET

For one, it would foment panic among her subjects and cause much consternation among the High Priests. Even worse, such a catastrophe would doubtless call her competence into question--she is, after all, the boy's Regent and guardian.

(MORE)

PEN-NEKHBET (cont'd)
 It's possible she may even be
 suspected of *arranging* his
 abduction...

SEENMUT
 And the second path?

PEN-NEKHBET
 Let it be known that the Prince has
 been dispatched to the Southern
 Kingdoms on an extended trade mission
 and that, during his absence, she
 will rule in his stead, as she did
 for his father before him. In this
 way, the Prince will be safe--

SEENMUT
 (finishes his thought)
 --and the Queen will occupy the
 throne she so dearly covets.
 (considers)
 There is a third option--

PEN-NEKHBET
 (dismissive)
 Yes, yes I know, of course... she
 could order me arrested and
 tortured. I am old and frail, and
 no doubt it would take little
 effort to pry the information you
 seek from my lips. However...
 (winces)
 ... it *would* take time. And, as I
 said... time is short--

Pen-Nekhbeth violently DOUBLES OVER IN AGONY, his WINE
 SPILLING on the floor, followed by the chalice as it slips
 from nerveless fingers. Senenmut seizes him by his
 shoulders.

SEENMUT
*Ahmose, you fool! What have you
 done?*

The old man manages a trembling, cryptic smile. His eyes
 roll up and he SLUMPS FORWARD AGAINST SEENMUT, DEAD.
 Horrified, the architect picks up the chalice, sniffs its
 dregs and, detecting poison, ROARS:

SEENMUT
Guards...! GUARDS!

SLAM TO BLACK

