



EPISODE 1.02: THE PEN AND THE SWORD

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. MEDITERRANEAN SEA - MOVING (EFX) - DAY

RUSH AT HIGH SPEED over the deep blue, wind tossed sea toward the DISTANT COAST of Egyptian-occupied Canaan...

INSURGENT (V.O.)

The mad god, Yamm, rendered
judgement on the children of Amun-Ra
long ago, when the very sea rose to
obliterate their wanton decadence...

RAMP DOWN - as we pass A SMALL FLEET of EGYPTIAN MERCHANT SHIPS wind filling their broad, painted sails as they skim past a MASSIVE ROCK OUTCROPPING that marks the north end of the deepwater port, waves crashing, treacherous water swirling around the reef...

INSURGENT (V.O.; CONT'D)

And yet they *still* occupy our city,
defiant, as if they *alone* possess
righteous claim to this land...

RAMP UP - to a RUSHING, BANKING SWEEP through the DOZENS OF SHIPS at anchor in the fortified PORT OF GEBAL. Devastated a century ago by a tsunami, Egyptians have built upon the ruins of the ancient Phoenician harbor...

EXT. GEBAL - HARBOR - CONTINUOUS

SERIES OF RAMPS - BRIEFLY SPOTLIGHTING tableaus on the DOCKS: Workers loading cattle onto a waiting ship; a merchant haggling with a ship-captain over his manifest; a regiment of fresh EGYPTIAN RECRUITS arriving in-country...

INSURGENT (V.O.; CONT'D)

We *far* outnumber the usurpers, yet
their Pharaoh and his puppet, Rib-
Avel, will not allow us even *one*
voice on Council...

RAMP UP - ZIG-ZAGGING through a maze of shops and stands, through the main CITY GATE into...

EXT. GEBAL - STREETS

SPEEDING THROUGH narrow streets and alleys...

INSURGENT (V.O.; CONT'D)
 Nay, brothers and sisters! Nor may
 we set *foot* in their temples and
 palaces, for they call us *barbarians!*

... until we LAND and RAMP DOWN on the INSURGENT, standing on
 a crude bench IN MID-RANT before a MOB:

INSURGENT
 I say it is *they* who are the
 savages; it is *they* who are an evil
 blight upon this land...

INT. GEBAL - KABOSE'S CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

OLD KABOSE stands at his window, listening intently to the
 rabble-rouser.

INSURGENT
 Witness the shaking of the earth,
 the dying of the cattle, the rain
 that burns the skin and withers
 crops...

His young Mycenaean scribe, HEKTOR, enters, carrying his wax-
 coated tablets. Kabose beckons him to the window.

OLD KABOSE
 Where does he stand?

HEKTOR
 I am not certain, but I would guess
 with the Cult of Ba'alat.

OLD KABOSE
 (impatient)
 No no *no*, where does he *stand*?

Hektor realizes his master wants to know the Insurgent's
 physical location.

HEKTOR
 Directly below us. A little to the
 right...

Kabose smirks and dumps the contents of a clay CHAMBER-POT
 out the window, drenching the Insurgent with FECAL SLOP and
 abruptly silencing him. The Mob ROARS with LAUGHTER as
 Kabose SLAMS his shutters, grumbles:

OLD KABOSE
 There... now I can *think*.

Hektor takes a seat, readies his tablet and stylus as Old Kabose drags his stool up to the table, sets the chamber-pot next to him on the floor.

OLD KABOSE
Quickly. What did we cover
yesterday.

HEKTOR
You don't remember?

OLD KABOSE
(surly)
Of course I remember. I just want
to know if you got everything.

Hektor checks his notes, looks up and opens his mouth to speak and we...

SLAM TO:

EPISODE 1.01 RECAP, concluding with Thutmose's flight from Thebes and Pen-Nekhet's final moments with Senenmut.

BACK TO:

INT. GEBAL - KABOSE'S CHAMBER - MOMENTS LATER

Old Kabose nods.

OLD KABOSE
Did you mention that the wine was
poisoned?

HEKTOR
It seemed self-evident.

OLD KABOSE
To you and I, perhaps. Even so,
put it down. If there is one thing
I have learned, it is that each
generation is more thick-witted
than the last...

Hektor makes the revision.

OLD KABOSE
There, now, ready?

HEKTOR
Yes.

The old man settles, casts his mind to events long past.

OLD KABOSE

Though Hatshepsut detested Pen-
Nekhet, she dared not doubt the
wisdom of his final counsel...

EXT. THEBES - DAWN

The sun rises over the great city.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.)

And so the High Priests of all the
Temples were summoned to the palace
to hear the Queen's proclamation:
That Thutmose the Third had
embarked on a lengthy trade-mission
to the Southern Kingdoms...

INT. THEBES - PALACE - THRONE ROOM - DAY

The Divine Adoratrix, HUY, objects vociferously:

HUY

Why were we not consulted?

Huy, AMENEMOPE and the other HIGH PRIESTS are gathered before
QUEEN HATSHEPSUT, SENENMUT, BADRU as TWO SCRIBES record the
proceedings. Face ashen, still diminished from giving birth,
she replies in an even tone:

HATSHEPSUT

I saw no need. As His Majesty's
Regent, I decided it is vital that
he begin learning affairs of state
if he is to someday assume the
throne.

HUY

You say *if!* Is there any
circumstance you would wish to tell
us that would *preclude* the Prince
from assuming his rightful place as
King?

Flustered by her question and the brazen disrespect with
which it is asked, Hatshepsut falters. Sensing problems,
Senenmut smoothly intercedes on her behalf:

SENENMUT

Divine Huy, a figure of speech,
only...
(to the SCRIBES)

SENENMUT(cont'd)

Let it be recorded that the Her Highness meant "when he takes the throne."

(to Hatshepsut)

With your consent...

HATSHEPSUT

Yes, of course. *When* he takes the throne.

SENENMUT

As I'm sure you can see, our Beloved Queen is still fatigued from the blessing she bestowed upon the Kingdom only last night, so if there are no further questions...

Currying favor, Amenemope speaks for the others in a FAWNING TONE:

AMENEMOPE

Of course, Wise Senenmut. The Queen has been most patient. I see no reason to--

HUY

(interrupts)

--when shall we expect the King's return?

Hatshepsut regards the Adoratrix with cool disdain.

HATSHEPSUT

The *Prince* will return when the *Prince* wishes.

EXT. THEBES - PALACE - HAREM TERRACE - DUSK

A broad common terrace. A SMALL GROUP OF CHILDREN seated on the stone floor listens attentively to a MALE TUTOR; FAMILIES gossip, play *senet*, laugh; a group of NOBLE WOMEN try on ornate wigs, a MERCHANT, moving from one to the next so she might admire her reflection in a polished copper hand-mirror; two teens practice a song on HARP AND FLUTE.

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

If devoted to his love, the Queen, Senenmut was made only doubly so upon the birth of their daughter, the Princess Neferure...

Seated in the shade of a vine-wrapped pergola, a NURSEMAID breast-feeds PRINCESS NEFERURE. An utterly charmed Senenmut gazes rapturously at his daughter with unveiled pride.

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

Long had he sought immortality in stone, but now he had rendered it in flesh; a living dynasty through which would course his blood and that of Amun-Ra...

Hatshepsut paces restlessly, still QUIETLY FUMING over Huy's insolence in court.

HATSHEPSUT

Did you not hear the way that *cunt* spoke to me, as if I am an interloper--an *usurper*--when it is *she* who so artlessly seeks status!

She addresses Senenmut, livid.

HATSHEPSUT

In all those years my idiot husband hunted crocodiles and fucked his way through every temple harem, did I not prove myself a capable ruler...?

But Senenmut is captivated by his newborn daughter. He looks up at Hatshepsut, a delighted grin on his face.

SEENMUT

See how she gorges herself, the greedy little imp...

His feckless adoration for their newborn daughter instantly dissolves her fury. She SIGHS and steps up next to him, looks down at Nefrure.

SEENMUT

Is she not beautiful?

HATSHEPSUT

Yes... it is a shame she will rise to nothing save obscurity.

Senenmut looks at her in shock that she would say such a thing. With a gesture, Hatshepsut dismisses the Nursemaid, who takes the baby inside. *

SEENMUT

You must be patient, my love. All is not lost...

She takes a seat on the bench next to him. Rubbing her shoulders, he CONTINUES IN A LOW VOICE:

SENMENMUT

Now that the Prince is gone, there is only his Regent to rule in his stead, is that not what you wished for?

HATSHEPSUT

The boy is like his father. Soft. He will never be fit to rule.

SENMENMUT

All the better. Then you will rule as his proxy as you did your husband's.

Something in his words lights a flame in Hatshepsut's dark eyes. She tenses.

HATSHEPSUT

No. Not again.

She stands, steps away from him, thoughts racing. Suddenly, she turns.

HATSHEPSUT

I will not again consign Egypt to the whims of a fool. Who knows what ideas Pen-Nekhbet put in the boy's head? He might insist on assuming the throne upon his return. And that is assuming he does not choose *another* as his proxy!

SENMENMUT

(soothing)

Come, my love. Who else but his Regent?

HATSHEPSUT

The Adoratrix. Perhaps her idiot daughter? *Both* will have his ear and will no doubt turn him against me.

Senenmut's expression darkens.

SENMENMUT

That could be remedied.

HATSHEPSUT

Don't be absurd. Merytre is my ward. Even if she was to succumb to illness or some mishap, her mother would accord me blame and see me discharged as Regent.

SEENMUT

I was not speaking of Merytre.

She regards him, puzzled. He continues:

SEENMUT

What you say is true. When the Prince returns, you will no longer rule in his stead. *If* he returns--

HATSHEPSUT

(gasps)

--no! No, be silent--

SEENMUT

--everyone knows grave misfortune may easily befall a traveler-- especially one so young and with such scant protection--

Terrified, she rushes to him and covers his lips with her fingers.

HATSHEPSUT

Never say such things. Do you forget that my father is Amun-Ra? With my ears he can surely hear your words.

He clasps her wrists tightly in his hands and meets her eyes

SEENMUT

Then he knows they are *my* words, not yours, and I would sooner see my entrails forever gnawed upon by all the Demons of the Sekhmet than to ill-serve my love; my Queen...

They kiss deeply. After a long moment, they break, trembling with passion.

HATSHEPSUT

Swear to me, you will never again speak such thoughts in my presence.

SEENMUT

If they displease you, I will not.

HATSHEPSUT

Or see them done?

A long, charged beat as they lock eyes, reading intent. Senenmut says in a measured, loaded tone:

SENMENMUT

I shall never again speak them.

EXT. NILE - NIGHT

The gentle, lilting music of a REED FLUTE carries over the water from a fishing boat gliding South, a stiff wind filling its the patched sail, the glow of an oil-lamp at the bow.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.)

Meanwhile, Thutmose fled ever South, beyond the rapacious grasp of the Queen and her consort...

EXT. FISHING BOAT - CONTINUOUS

RANEBA mans the tiller as HAKOR plays a simple but beautiful song on a FLUTE.

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

Disguised as common fishermen, he and his faithful guardians, Hakor and Raneb, traveled by night, weighing anchor and concealing themselves among the reeds by day..

Curled up under the shelter of the forecabin, THUTMOSE watches Hakor play.

EXT. LAGOON - DAY

HONKING, a FLOCK OF GEESE fly overhead. Suddenly, one is STRUCK BY AN ARROW, plummets toward the ground.

OLD KABOSE

Though their progress was maddeningly slow, they dared not risk discovery until they had safely delivered the Prince to safe harbor in Kerma-Mem.

RANEBA - grips his bow, pleased with the shot. Knee-high in brackish water, he begins wading through thick reeds to retrieve his kill.

EXT. RIVERBANK - CONTINUED

Seated in the boat, Hakor PLAYS HIS FLUTE. Filthy and miserable, transcribing figures from an open scroll to a clay tablet, Thutmose pauses and stares intently at him, occasionally batting away the relentless MOSQUITOES.

HAKOR

Focus on your lesson.

Thutmose finally snaps, casting the tablet aside.

THUTMOSE

Enough! I demand you return me to Thebes.

Raneb wades up to the boat, drops the freshly killed goose over the gunwale.

RANEB

Problem?

HAKOR

Our Highness has just commanded we take him back to Thebes.

RANEB

(amused)

Ho! Commanded... that's good!

(to Thutmose)

And just what do you plan on doing when we get back?

THUTMOSE

First, I will order you two flogged for the way you speak to me...

Raneb raises his eyebrows and trades a crooked grin with Hakor.

RANEB

Then what?

THUTMOSE

I will command the Adoratrix Huy to restore Pen-Nekhet as my Regent. I will then order the slut, Hatshepsut, ejected from my palace and placed in the Temple harem where she belongs.

The two guards stare at him in stunned silence, and then BURST OUT LAUGHING. Infuriated, Thutmose stands.

THUTMOSE

Stop it! I am the King!

Hakor sets aside his flute and seizes the boy. Thutmose squirms and rages:

THUTMOSE

You cannot put hands on me! I will see you impaled for this blasphemy, you insolent dog!

Hakor bends him over his knee and administers a royal spanking. He then lifts Thutmose and roughly seats him on the forepeak. Admonishes him in a firm tone:

HAKOR

When you are ready, we will return to Thebes and you will take your rightful place on the throne where-- the gods willing--you will be the greatest monarch Egypt has ever known. But...

(holds up a finger)

... you are... not... ready.

Eyes brimming, Thutmose looks helplessly at Hakor, then Raneb, who takes a seat and begins plucking the goose.

THUTMOSE

(stammers)

But... we cannot let them punish Ahmose...

RANEB

There will be no punishment for Pen-Nekhet.

Hakor looks sharply at Raneb, who shrugs,

RANEB

A dead man cannot be punished.

THUTMOSE

Dead...?

Hakor sighs, sits down next to the distraught boy.

HAKOR

Pen-Nekhet was very wise. He knew he could not long remain silent if subjected to torture. To that end, he ordered Raneb to procure him a fatal dose of cerussite...

The Prince looks at him, not understanding. Raneb EXPLAINS as he continues plucking:

RANEB

A deadly poison--swift, painless.

HAKOR

And the sole means by which he might still his tongue forever to insure your safety.

Silent tears cut through the grime on the young Prince's cheeks. Raneb turns away in disgust at the womanly display. Hakor gently puts an arm around Thutmose.

HAKOR

We loved Pen-Nekhet, too. He was like a father to Raneb. But we must be strong, for if we falter and you do not live to reign, it will make a mockery of his sacrifice.

He picks up the clay tablet and offers it to Thutmose.

HAKOR

Now, your Highness. Please... return to your studies.

Reluctantly, the Prince takes the tablet, wipes his tears dry with the back of his forearm. Hakor returns to his seat, resumes PLAYING HIS FLUTE.

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

And even as one boy sought from life what he could not find in the written word...

Thutmose looks up from his scroll, gazes closely at Hakor, MENTALLY NOTING IN SPECIFIC DETAIL his finger-positioning on the flute.

`MATCH CUT TO:

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

TIGHT ON KABOSE staring down intently at something OS

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

... another sought in the written word what he could not find in life.

Kabose squats next to his open TREASURE-BOX, trying to decipher the glyphs on the scroll he burgled from the King's tomb. A shadow falls over him.

NYESS

Where did you get a thing of such beauty?

NYESS stares down at the open box with an expression of awe. Kabose FOLLOWS HER GAZE: Sunlight winks off the burnished gold of Thutmose's SCARAB PENDANT. Kabose closes the box, affects a jejune tone:

KABOSE

It is but a bauble, given to me by the Prince Thutmose the Third.

NYESS

What for?

KABOSE

For sparing his life, one I may not grant you if you keep spying on me.

She bows meekly.

NYESS

I am blood-bound never to betray my Master's secrets. My only wish is to serve you.

KABOSE

If you wish to serve me, you can begin by not blocking my light.

She steps aside and he resumes studying the scroll. After a moment:

NYESS

I know a man who could teach you to read.

KABOSE

What makes you think I can't?

She gives him a silent, level gaze, carefully rephrasing:

NYESS

I meant no offense, Master, only that this man could perhaps teach you to read... better.

He drops his eyes, considers then:

KABOSE

Take me to him.

EXT. THEBES - BUSY STREET - BORDELLO DISTRICT - DAY

Several scrolls tucked under one arm, BARUTI strolls down the street, his arrogance evident in the high tilt of his chin.

NYESS

There. That is him. His name is Baruti. He is the Chief Scribe of the Royal Surveyor's office.

Kabose and Nyess follow Baruti, weaving through the crowded street. PROSTITUTES visible in the porticos drink wine with JOHNS, PANDERERS greeting Baruti and extolling the beauty of their women.

KABOSE

How do you know this man?

Baratu begins negotiating with a Panderer.

NYESS

Everyone knows Baruti here. It is said his girth is only exceeded by his weakness for yielding flesh. Quickly now; before he goes inside!

As Baruti starts toward a doorway, Kabose cuts him off.

KABOSE

Esteemed and generous Baruti--

BARUTI

--out of my way, pup.

KABOSE

I seek not alms, Master Baruti. Only that you would teach a poor orphan to read and write.

BARUTI

I am not a teacher. I am a scribe. Go to a temple. The priests will instruct you...

(adds lasciviously)

... I understand they are fond of young boys like you.

He LAUGHS and pushes him aside. Kabose withdraws the SCROLL he purloined from the tomb.

KABOSE

Please, your Learned Excellence. I offer this in trade. It is valuable, is it not?

Baruti snatches the scroll, examines it.

BARUTI

This is The Book of the Dead!
 (grabs Kabose)
 You filthy little tomb-robber!
 Where did you pilfer this?!
 (looks around, SHOUTS)
Police...!

Nyess intercedes:

NYESS

Forgive my young Master. He did not know--

Suddenly, a BABOON bares its fangs at Kabose. A POLICEMAN restrains it on a leash.

POLICEMAN

What is the trouble here?

Captivated by Nyess' coltish beauty, Baruti doesn't answer.

NYESS

Please, noble Baruti, kind Baruti, my master is willing to give you all he has to learn what only you can teach him.

Baruti glances at the Policeman.

BARUTI

I am sorry. A slight misunderstanding only. I need no assistance, thank you.

POLICEMAN

You are certain?

BARUTI

Most certain, yes.

Annoyed, the Policeman snaps the Baboon to heel and continues on his beat. Baruti turns to Kabose.

BARUTI

Is it true? Is this girl your slave?

KABOSE

Yes, Master. She is young; ripe with vigor and passion. And she loves traveling the marshes with older men.

Trembling with desire, Baruti pulls Kabose aside, throwing covetous glances at Nyess.

BARUTI

If I were to accept you as an apprentice, would you be willing to leave her with me? Alone...?

Kabose hesitates, glancing at Nyess. She gives him an almost imperceptible nod.

KABOSE

Perhaps... in exchange for lessons, of course. To read and write.

BARUTI

At the end of each day, then.

KABOSE

Yes. For one half of an hour only.

BARUTI

Yes... yes, that will be *more* than sufficient.

He eyes Nyess as he would a roasted lamb-shank,

OLD KABOSE (V.O.)

And so it was that day, I entered the Royal Surveyor's office and commenced my apprenticeship under Baruti the Scribe...

EXT. ROYAL SURVEYORS OFFICE - YARD - DAY

Kabose looks around, fascinated, as he follows Baruti through a walled yard. WORKERS deliver bundles of papyrus reed to WOMEN, who strip off the rind and placing the stalks of pith on a table to be cut into strips.

BARUTI

Where is your friend?

KABOSE

(distracted)

She is not my friend. She is my slave.

BARUTI

Ahh, yes. Of course. Your *slave*...

On sheets of granite, the strips of pith are laid in a lattice pattern, pounded with wooden mallets, then covered with another slab of granite and the process repeated until six layers have been stacked,.

BARUTI

And just how, may I ask, would one of such meager circumstances as yourself come to own such an exquisite little flower?

Kabose watches burly WORKERS picks up the papyrus/granite sandwiches and deliver them to OPEN RACKS to be sun-dried.

KABOSE

What difference does it make?

BARUTI

None, I suppose. Only that I would be very disappointed if you cannot deliver her as promised.

Kabose turns to Baruti.

KABOSE

You will not be disappointed.

At long tables, CRAFTSMEN join dried, finished sheets of papyrus end-to-end with resin, attached dowels to each end rolled them up. Baruti and Kabose follow a worker, who delivers a bundle of freshly-made scrolls into...

INT. ROYAL SURVEYORS OFFICE - MAIN HALL - CONTINUOUS

Shafts of SUNLIGHT stream in through LARGE SKYLIGHTS, illuminating TWO DOZEN SCRIBES seated cross-legged on mats; working on documents and maps. CLERKS drop off notes and pick up completed projects.

KABOSE - gazes in wonder at the scene, excited that he will soon be a part of it.

BARUTI

This way...

Baruti leads him to an area where THREE BOYS, 12 to 14, grind PIGMENTS and MIX INKS. He addresses the eldest:

BARUTI

Ako...

AKO
Yes, Master?

BARUTI
This is Kabose. He is to be our
newest apprentice. You will start
him grinding kahl.

Ako bows and Baruti starts away. Kabose stops him, SPEAKS
QUIETLY:

KABOSE
I am not here to mix ink, but to
write with it.

BARUTI
(chuckles)
Of course, of course. But you must
understand: We often must practice
our craft in isolated places, where
ink is not readily available.

KABOSE
So?

BARUTI
So. A scribe must mix his own. It
is a critical skill, I assure you:
One cannot write if one has no ink.

KABOSE
(leery)
I suppose...

BARUTI
I have much work to do. I will be
in my office...
(lowers his voice)
Wait until the others have gone
before you bring our friend.

Baruti nods to Ako, who takes Kabose by the arm and leads him
back to his station.

EXT. THEBES - PALACE - NIGHT

Torch-lit and imposing, the edifice is heavily guarded. The
ECHOING BOOM of a heavy door closing takes us to...

INT. THEBES - PALACE - CORRIDOR - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

Senenmut and BADRU walk briskly down the hallway.

SENENMUT

I want every port, village and city searched, from the sea North to the jungles of Punt.

BADRU

What shall I say is offered in recompense?

SENENMUT

A measure of gold equal to four cubits of grain, trebled to he who brings me the head of the Prince.

They enter...

INT. THEBES - PALACE - SENENMUT'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

DRAWINGS AND SCHEMATICS of building projects are pasted to the walls, scrolls tucked in wooden racks. The room is dominated by a tall STANDING DESK, lit by TWO OIL-LAMPS. It's slanted surface littered with various DRAFTING TOOLS.

SENENMUT

Obviously, the search must be conducted with the utmost discretion...

He moves around to the other side of the desk, reviewing and jotting notes on a floor-plan, SPEAKING AS IF TO HIMSELF:

SENENMUT

It must never be suspected that the Prince's absence is due to but a trade mission, so we cannot risk soldiers or police blundering about.

BADRU

There is Tobu. He possesses the requisite manpower and has proven himself reliable...

SENENMUT

(ponder it aloud)
And his men will not draw attention, yes. Very well...

Returns his attention to the floor-plan, correcting the placement of a column.

SENENMUT

... Tobu, then.

INT. ROYAL SURVEYORS OFFICE - BARUTI'S OFFICE - NIGHT

By the light of an OIL-LAMP, Baruti alters a map. A KNOCK at the door and he looks up in eager anticipation. Kabose enters; his HANDS AND FOREARMS SMUDGED WITH INK. Baruti's smile fades.

BARUTI
Where is our friend?

KABOSE
(calls)
Nyess...

Nyess enters, eyes downcast. Baruti brightens.

KABOSE
Will I be learning to write tomorrow?

BARUTI
Write...?!
(chuckles)
Of course not. You have only begun your apprenticeship. You still have *much* to learn before you put pen to scroll.

Kabose considers this then, taking her by the elbow, turns Nyess toward the door.

BARUTI
(dismayed)
Wait. Where are you going? We have an arrangement--

KABOSE
--and its terms were quite clear. When you teach me to read and write, then I will bring Nyess.

Baruti is speechless. Kabose nods good night and begins to exit. Desperate, Baruti blurts out:

BARUTI
Tomorrow, then!

Kabose pauses; turns and looks at him, affecting mild puzzlement, forcing Baruti to spell it out:

BARUTI
Tomorrow. I will begin teaching you to write--

KABOSE
--and read.

BARUTI
Yes, yes, yes, of course. And
read.

Kabose locks eyes with him, gives him a measured nod.

KABOSE
Tomorrow, then.

With that, he turns and leaves with Nyess.

EXT. THEBES - HARBOR DISTRICT - DOCKS - DAY

POV - From a distance, we see TOBU give final orders (MOS) to HALF-A-DOZEN MEMBERS OF HIS GANG, among them, Kabose's uncle, HASA THE LIAR.

KABOSE - watches from the riverbank.

The group disperses, each moving toward various VESSELS on which they've booked passage. Tobu approaches Kabose, who appears slightly confused.

TOBU
Worry not, little man. Your Uncle
will soon return.

KABOSE
I care not if he ever returns. I
only wonder why you would choose
him for the task when there are so
many more able in your employ.

Tobu is startled, then throws back his head and LAUGHS.

TOBU
Oh, young Kabose... how can one so
callow have the eyes of an old man?

Kabose doesn't reply, patiently awaiting an answer. Tobu crouches down to meet his eyes.

TOBU
Since you are not a fool, I shall
answer forthrightly. The task
before me demanded the uttermost in
discretion, such that I did not have
at hand enough men of requisite
prudence. So I chose your uncle,
The Liar, because even if he talked--

KABOSE

--no one with of any consequence
would believe him.

TOBU

Very good.

(stands)

Ahh, pup... were but you a few
years older, it would be you I
would dispatch to Kerma-Mem...

(smiles)

There is a spark in you that
pleases me, boy. I understand you
have begun an apprenticeship with
Baruti the Scribe.

Kabose blinks. How could he know? Tobu CHUCKLES.

TOBU

There is not a bargain struck nor a
compact broken on these streets
that Tobu does not have wind of. I
would reckon such skills will serve
us both well in time.

KABOSE

Yes.

TOBU

Then do what you will. I will see
to your needs until Hasa returns.

With that, Tobu turns and swaggers over to his waiting CREW
OF WORKERS.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.)

And so, as my studies continued under
the patronage of the gangster, Tobu,
far to the South, Prince Thutmose and
his guardians at last arrived in the
City of Kerma-Mem...

SLAM TO:

EXT. NILE - KERMA-MEM - HARBOR - DAY

A BEATING OF DRUMS and we see for the first time the frontier
outpost of Kerma-Mem, a fortified city Egyptian character
constructed of RUSSET, RAMMED-EARTH BUILDINGS.

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

An ancient city built on a great mound of red earth at the confluence of the Blue and White Niles, Kerma marked the edge of civilization, beyond which men were not men, but hardly more than beasts...

A jumbled FLOTILLA OF VESSELS, large and small, canoes, rafts and barks, are lashed together near the bank--a FLOATING MARKETPLACE connected by a maze of NARROW GANGWAYS.

EXT. NILE - KERMA-MEM - FISHING BOAT - CONTINUOUS

Raneb lashes a plank between their boat and the next as Hakor straps on his sword.

THUTMOSE

Why must I stay on the boat.

HAKOR

I must first procure sanctuary from Prince Atsutep. If he is willing, then you will have more than enough time to see Kerma-Mem.

RANEB

(mutters)

Stinking hell-hole that it is...

Hakor glances at the boy, then pulls Raneb aside.

HAKOR

Still your tongue. We must make what we can of this.

Raneb drops his eyes, resigned. Nods.

HAKOR

Keep a sharp eye out and a weapon at hand until I return.

He turns and disembarks. Thutmose watches him, dispirited.

INT. KERMA-MEM - PALACE - ATRIUM OF THE HERONS - DAY

A game attempt at replicating the glory of Egypt, but falling well short; the PAINT on the bas-reliefs is FLAKING AND FADED; the stone floor in dire need of a good scouring.

ROTTING FRUIT lies under MATURE FRUIT-TREES gone to seed in large, crumbling sandstone planting boxes. BIRDS fly among the trees.

ATSUTEP absently feeds seeds from a ripe pomegranate to a monkey on his shoulder, scowling as he reviews a scroll.

ATSUTEP

This is the last thing I need...

Atsutep's obsequious Vizier, URSHÉ, a craven, failed diplomat under Thutmose the First, MURMURS into his master's ear:

URSHE

It could very well anger the Queen should she discover he is within our walls...

Hakor stands before them. Seated on mats, disgraced NOBILITY, SYCOPHANTS and career HANGERS-ON play board games, others QUIETLY GOSSIPING as SERVANTS ply them with platters of food and amphorae of beer.

HAKOR

Lord Atsutep, your exalted Uncle and my Master, Pen-Nekhbet, assured me that my charge could rely upon your hospitality...

He directs a hard glance at Urshe.

HAKOR

... and your discretion.

Atsutep SIGHS and, handing the monkey's leash to Urshé, stands.

ATSUTEP

Come. Walk with me.

INT. KERMA-MEM - PALACE - COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

Hakor and Atsutep stroll through a courtyard built around an ANCIENT GNARLED SYCAMORE TREE.

ATSUTEP

You are aware, I am sure, that this is a delicate matter.

HAKOR

And a grave imposition, I know.

ATSUTEP

Nevertheless, I have little choice but to comply with the wishes of my family's patriarch...

They pause and face each other. Atsutep SIGHS, resigned.

ATSUTEP

Though hardly fit for one of such exalted station, I will be honored to provide accommodations in my palace to the Royal Heir and his retinue.

HAKOR

Your generosity knows no bounds, my Lord, but that will be unnecessary. As my charge wishes to maintain his anonymity, we will live aboard our humble vessel, at port well outside your walls.

ATSUTEP

Yes. Yes, of course. That will greatly please my Vizier. Is there not anything I might provide? Perhaps a contingent of guard?

HAKOR

Again, though a most generous offer, their presence would only draw unwanted attention. The Prince requires only your blessing and discretion.

ATSUTEP

Then he shall have both. May I ask...

He trails off, as if unsure whether to continue. Hakor raises his eyebrows.

ATSUTEP

A small favor--not in *return*, mind you, as my hoapitality is not contingent upon its granting--but only for the his most Noble consideration...

HAKOR

Of course.

ATSUTEP

You say you are the boy's tutor?

HAKOR

I am.

ATSUTEP

Perhaps Pen-Nekhbet has mentioned his only daughter, my cousin, Satiah?

HAKOR

I understand she is your charge.

ATSUTEP

(nods)

Due to our isolation, as you can imagine, I have had *great* difficulty recruiting suitable instructors...

HAKOR

--and you wish to engage me as her tutor?

ATSUTEP

Yes. Hers as well as a small number of other children of noble parentage.

HAKOR

It would be my honor to instruct the progeny of your court.

ATSUTEP

Do not be too hasty now. They are a wild lot and have assumed many of the barbaric proclivities of the natives here.

HAKOR

I am quite certain I can instill a measure of discipline in the whelps.

ATSUTEP

(pats his shoulder)

Of course you can. Of *course*. Excellent. So... how fares my Uncle Pen-Nekhbet?

HAKOR

You have not heard.

Atsutep knits his brows, waits for Hakor to continue.

HAKOR

His Ka has passed from this earth.
 (off Atsutep's reaction)
 I am sorry...

ATSUTEP

You are certain?

HAKOR

All doubts were dispelled upon our arrival, for had he not fulfilled his intent, we would have surely been set upon by a regiment of the Queen's Army.

ATSUTEP

(shocked)
 He took his own life?

HAKOR

To protect the Dynasty, yes. A most august sacrifice...

Hidden behind a column, a lean, athletic girl, SATIAH, 12, eavesdrops on the conversation, her eyes glittering with scalding tears of fury.

EXT. KERMA-MEM - FISHING BOAT - DUSK

Raneb and Thutmose eat GRILLED FISH from a wooden platter. Raneb observes something OS

RANEB

Look at that fool...

Thutmose follows his gaze.

POV - Satiah GALLOPS PELL-MELL down the beach on horseback, JUMPING over beached canoes and SCATTERING FISHMONGERS.

RANEB - turns his attention to something else down the beach. Recognizes a threat. Cupping his hands around his mouth, he SHOUTS:

RANEB

Hakor...!

EXT. KERMA-MEM - HARBOR - CONTINUOUS

Hakor looks out on the flotilla, sees

HIS POV - Raneb standing in the distant boat, frantically pointing down the beach. Over the GENERAL DIN of the nearby market, we can't make out what he's SHOUTING.

HAKOR - Before he can react, a RAPIDLY APPROACHING THUNDER OF HOOVES. He turns, dodges, but not in time to avoid being BUTTED TO THE GROUND by Satiah's horse.

Dazed, the breath knocked out of him, Hakor gropes for his sword as Satiah leaps off her mount, straddles him and presses a SHORT DAGGER to his throat.

SATIAH

Show me the brat for whom my father
threw away his life!

She presses harder, the razor-honed blade DRAWING BLOOD.

SATIAH

Show me! Now! That I may slay
him!

Suddenly, she's LIFTED OFF HAKOR by Raneb, who twists the blade from her hand and HURLS HER TO THE GROUND, pinning her down under ONE FOOT ACROSS HER NECK.

A LOUD NICKERING. Raneb spins as SATIAH'S HORSE REARS UP behind him, loops of spittle flying from its GNASHING TEETH, its HOOVES pistoning up and down to strike a fatal blow.

RANEB - crouches, draws back the dagger, preparing to plunge it into the horse's chest.

SATIAH

Naboo! No!

She throws herself between man and beast, seizing the reins and taking expert control over the raging equine.

Hakor, shaken but uninjured save for bruises and a BLOODY NOSE, gently takes his wrist and, meeting Raneb's eyes, shakes his head, EXPLAINS:

HAKOR

She is Satiah.

THUTMOSE (O.S.)

Who is Satiah?

They turn, startled, and find Thutmose staring at them in confusion. With a FERAL GROWL, the girl charges him. Raneb intercepts her, easily lifting her off her feet.

SATIAH

*Let me go you son of a pig-fucker,
vile seducer of dogs...!*

Noticing the GROWING CROWD OF ONLOOKERS, Hakor pulls Thutmose aside and answers in a LOW VOICE:

HAKOR

She is the daughter of Pen-Nekhet.

His eyes widening in surprise, Thutmose looks at her.

SATIAH

*... unhand me, ball-licker, that I
may kill your idiot ki--*

THUTMOSE

--release her.

His command abruptly silences Satiah. Raneb hesitates until Hakor gives him a nod. He sets Satiah down. Her chest rises and falls as she glances around, squares her shoulders.

Thutmose approaches her, bows his head respectfully, then meets her eyes.

THUTMOSE

If you wish to take my life, it is yours. I ask only that you spare me until the day I avenge your father, that I may purge the stain of dishonor from my ka with the blood of his enemies.

The fury drains from Satiah. She stares at him, aghast.

HAKOR

Well...?

SATIAH

I will accept your conditions.

HAKOR

Good. That is settled.

(to Satiah)

Return here tomorrow morning with the other children from the court.

She nods, numb, then turns and starts back to her horse. Raneb holds Naboo's reins. She takes them but he doesn't immediately release them.

RANEB
 (quietly)
 Who is the boy?

SATIAH
 He is Thutmose.

RANEB
 No, he is Rami. That is how you
 will know him. Now say it.

She suppresses a smile (*rami* means "fish").

SATIAH
 Rami.

RANEB
 Very good. Call him by any other
 and I shall still your tongue with
 my blade. I care not whose
 daughter you are. Is that clear?

Satiah nods and he releases his grip on the bridle. She
 pulls herself up onto the horse, wheels it around and rides
 off. They watch her. Raneb shakes his head, disgusted.

RANEB
 Who but a savage rides upon a horse
 in such a manner?

THUTMOSE
 (captivated)
 She is magnificent.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THEBES - NILE FLOOD PLAIN - DAY

FISHERS punt SKIFFS across the SHALLOW WATER, casting NETS as
 WORK-GANGS dig IRRIGATION CANALS to transmit water and rich
 silt to higher ground, the swollen Nile virtually lapping at
 the steps of the temples along its shore.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.)
 Days turned to, weeks and weeks to
 months, and thus passed Akhet, the
 Season of the Inundation. And even
 as Mother Nile swelled with tears
 shed by Isis for her lost Osiris, so
 too did another weep...

EXT. THEBES - PALACE - HAREM TERRACE - DAY

Tears stream down Merytre's cheeks as she gazes at the sun reflect off the INUNDATED FLOOD-PLAIN BELOW. Her Mother, the Adoratrix Huy, struggles to keep her anger in check.

HUY

Why have you not spoken to me of this before?

MERYTRE

Because I wished not to upset you. Besides, he is far away--

HUY

--that is no excuse!

MERYTRE

Even before he left, he barely acknowledged me. What right do I have to expect him to do so now?

HUY

(incensed)

Every week, the Queen-Regent apprises us of every detail of the Prince's journey. He sends word of the places he's been, the wonders seen, notables with whom he holds palaver and the terms of trade agreements struck. And yet not one word to she he has been promised to wed...?

(shakes her head)

No. It is not acceptable.

MERYTRE

(panicked)

What are you going to do?

HUY

I will take the matter up with his Regent forthwith, that she may chide him for this insult.

Horrified, Merytre seizes Huy's wrist.

MERYTRE

No. Please, Mother... you *cannot*. To speak of this in court would only make my humiliation a matter of public discourse and ridicule!

Huy realizes that Merytre's right; worse, that she too would lose face if it became known that her daughter was rejected.

HUY

I suppose you are right. Tongues
would wag...

Merytre bows her head, shoulders jerking as she silently weeps. The Adoratrix goes to her, takes her in her arms

HUY

There there, daughter. It is no
fault of yours. What manner of
Prince would send not a single word
to his beloved...?

Huy strokes Merytre's hair, chin resting on the girl's shoulder, her eyes very, very cold.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.)

Neither dared lend voice to the
answer so evident--that the Prince
had given his heart to another...

EXT. KERMA-MEM - FISHING BOAT - DAY

Hakor patiently instructs (MOS) a DOZEN STUDENTS OF VARIOUS ETHNICITIES seated around the gunwale at the bow.

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

... and though they could not know
was there had been no word from
Thutmose to the Queen or anyone in
Thebes, their presumption was all
too correct...

All the children listen attentively save one, Thutmose, who gazes OS, mesmerized.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.)

... Thutmose had fallen under the
spell of another.

HIS POV - Biting the corner of her lip, Satiah works out a math problem on her tablet.

HAKOR (O.S.)

Rami!

Thutmose doesn't seem to hear. A young Egyptian scion, BITI, 13, HIS RIGHT EARLOBE PIERCED BY A THICK GOLD RING, elbows him. Bewildered, Thutmose looks up at Hakor.

HAKOR
How much is nine lots of six?

THUTMOSE
(quickly calculates)
Four and fifty.

As Hakor quizzes others, Biti quietly teases him.

BITI
She is a distraction. The fetching way she chews her lip--it is most endearing, is it not?

THUTMOSE
Shh. Be still.

BITI
I often wonder why the Charioteers call her *Emuishéré*... do you suppose she purrs when she is stroked?

Thutmose SNORTS, eliciting a sharp glance from Hakor. Biti gives him a crooked grin--mission accomplished.

HAKOR
Very well, then. That will be all for today--

The words have barely escaped his lips before the students are up and making their escape across the planks lashed to the starboard and port gunwales that connecting them to nearby vessels. Hakor calls after them:

HAKOR
And study your tables. I will expect you to know them by heart next time...

In seconds flat, he's left alone on the rocking boat. He shakes his head and SIGHS, amused.

EXT. KERMA-MEM - HARBOR - MOMENTS LATER

The students have broken up, some going their separate ways, others lingering to explore the marketplace. Thutmose and Biti trade copper rings for HOT FISH STEW served in clay bowls, eagerly devouring it and sopping up the broth with chunks of bread.

Thutmose notices Satiah, who walks down the beach engaged in a quiet conversation with MAANDEO, 14, a tall Nubian Prince garbed in the traditional scarlet robe of the Maasai. Biti backhands his shoulder.

BITI

Come on.

THUTMOSE

Biti--

But Biti is already up and approaching Satiah and Maandeo. Thutmose quickly wolfs down his stew, tosses the bowl and follows.

EXT. KERMA-MEM - BEACH - CONTINUOUS

Biti, Satiah and Maandeo are in mid-conversation when Thutmose catches up with them.

MAANDEO

--I wish you would.

BITI

My father would flay me.

THUTMOSE

For what?

Satiah gives him a look. It's clear they still have issues. She explains as if to a child:

SATIAH

Tomorrow is the day of Maandeo's birth --

MAANDEO

--my fourteenth! I will be a man!

BITI

Only if the lion does not kill you.

THUTMOSE

What lion?

SATIAH

Maandeo is Maasai. It is the way of their people to mark the event with a lion hunt--

MAANDEO

--not just a lion hunt! I alone will hunt the lion.

MAANDEO(cont'd)

The others will make noises and shout and drive him into me, so I may slay him.

THUTMOSE

By yourself?

MAANDEO

With a spear, yes!

Maandeo mimes thrusting a spear down into an imaginary lion.

MAANDEO

There will be much blood and jubilation! You will never see its like in this life.

Noting how impressed Satiah seems, jealous, Thutmose affects boredom and shrugs:

THUTMOSE

I have been on many lion hunts.

SATIAH

Is that so? I did not know fishermen hunted *lions*.

She smiles mischievously. He narrows his eyes, incensed by her teasing.

THUTMOSE

You are going?

SATIAH

To watch, yes. Not hunt.

THUTMOSE

Biti...?

BITI

It sounds hot and itchy, and even if I did not have chores to do, there will probably be no lion.

MAANDEO

Come, Rami! Join us in the grassy-lands beyond the Southern ridge at first light. All my people will be there!

SATIAH

Unless you're more comfortable casting nets than spears.

He gives her a resentful glance, then turns to Maandeo.

THUTMOSE

I will be there.

Satiah rolls her eyes and, taking Maandeo's arm, starts away down the beach with him. She says something they can't hear, and Mandeo LAUGHS. Fuming, Thutmose glares at them.

BITI

Have you lost your senses?

THUTMOSE

(shrugs)

I have never tasted lion.

BITI

And you *will* not! The Maasai do not hunt for meat, but manes, claws and tails from only the largest and most fierce of the bulls.

THUTMOSE

Sounds exciting.

He LAUGHS, turns and starts back toward the docks. Biti CALLS AFTER HIM:

BITI

You may be a fool, but Hakor is not! He will never allow it!

THUTMOSE

He can only say no if I ask permission!

POV - Biti catches up with Thutmose, the two walking together.

HASA (O.S.)

Which is the Prince?

ATSUTEP (O.S.)

The one closest to us.

REVERSE - In the shade of a market-stand, Kabose's Uncle, Hasa the Liar watches the boys with Prince Atsutep.

ATSUTEP

I trust you will inform Lord Senenmut of my cooperation in this matter?

HASA

I will.

ATSUTEP

If I can lend any assistance...

HASA

I will need two archers and a
spearman.

INT. LUXOR - TEMPLE OF MUT - CENTRAL HALL - DAY

The sunken central hall is FLOODED WITH A FOOT OF WATER. Standing on a scaffold, Badru oversees Tobu and his CREW as they drain it with *shadufs*, swinging the rudimentary cranes and pouring the water into wooden sluices that carry the water outside.

AMENEMOPE

The goddess's sorrow runs deep this
year. A good sign.

Senenmut peers through a *merchet*, makes notations a schematic unfurled on a trestle-worktable.

SENENMUT

For the harvest, yes, but not for
the Temple's foundation, I fear...
(to Badru, points)
*Drop a me plumb line from atop that
column.*

BADRU

Which one, Lord?

He dips his head to Amenemope, who stands with Hatshepsut and her RETINUE.

SENENMUT

Your pardon...

He turns and tarts nimbly over a catwalk to join Badru on the scaffold.

AMENEMOPE

Is he always so practical?

HATSHEPSUT

Were he not, I suspect he would not
be nearly as fascinating.

Amenemope CHUCKLES.

AMENEMOPE

Any word from the Prince?

HATSHEPSUT

Only today, he informed me by messenger that he has arrived in Kurgus.

AMENEMOPE

Kurgus... yes.

Detecting pensiveness in the Priest's tone:

HATSHEPSUT

This news troubles you?

AMENEMOPE

No. No, of course not. Only that there has been some idle gossip...

HATSHEPSUT

About...?

AMENEMOPE

I really should not say. I swore to my informant I would tell no one.

HATSHEPSUT

And so you uncork the amphora so I may smell the wine without tasting it. Even you cannot be so cruel to your Queen, Amenemope.

AMENEMOPE

He is a young priest in the Cult of Amon-Ra--a very *comely* young priest--and it would not do him good to raise the ire of the Adoratrix...

HATSHEPSUT

I understand. It is a shame, for I was thinking I would resume the celebration of *Tekh*...

AMENEMOPE

(beyond thrilled)
The Festival? No!

HATSHEPSUT

Perhaps long overdue. It has not been marked since the reign of Apepi the Second--

AMENEMOPE

--when Mut was last the principal deity of Thebes, yes!

HATSHEPSUT

But...

(shrugs, teasing)

... since you refuse to take me
into your confidence...

Amenemope GROWLS in frustration.

AMENEMOPE

You are *ruthless!*

She graces him with a playful smile. He relents, hastily taking her aside so the others will not hear:

AMENEMOPE

It seems a *certain party* has expressed persistent, *vociferous* concerns that her daughter has received not a *single word* from the Prince since his departure.

HATSHEPSUT

Implying what?

AMENEMOPE

That, *at best*, he is a swine--

HATSHEPSUT

--and at worst?

AMENEMOPE

That he has met with some terrible fate, and your Highness carries on as if all is well.

Hatshepsut considers the matter a beat.

SENMENMUT

She is quite right. The boy *is* a swine. This very day, I will dispatch my fleetest charioteer to bear him news of my displeasure, and demand he send word to Merytre forthwith.

AMENEMOPE

And *Tekh...*?

She gives Amenemope a saucy grin.

SENMENMUT

When next we meet, we will be celebrating its advent.

Off Amenemope, delighted.

HEKTOR (PRE-LAP)
Master...?

SLAM TO:

INT. GEBAL - KABOSE'S CHAMBER - EVENING

The boy pauses over his tablet, writing by the light of an OIL LAMP.

OLD KABOSE
Yes, yes, what now?

HEKTOR
What is *Tekh*?

Kabose heaves a LONG-SUFFERING SIGH.

OLD KABOSE
The Festival of Drunkenness. Held in honor of the warrior goddess, Sekhmet--a great orgy of drinking and depravity.

HEKTOR
Depravity?

Old Kabose gives him a leering grin.

OLD KABOSE
Oh, most *definitely*. Hundreds would fill the Temple and, once drunk on lotus-laced beer, lie with whoever was at hand and vigorously travel the marshes.

He slides his scrawny arm back and forth through his clasped hand to simulate coitus. Hektor is disgusted.

HEKTOR
(stammers)
I--I was always taught that...

OLD KABOSE
What...?

HEKTOR
That the Egyptians were a more... *reserved* and intellectual race, not prone to public displays of, well...

OLD KABOSE

Fucking?

The old man BURSTS OUT LAUGHING, soon falling into a FIT OF COUGHING. Finally, he hacks up a HUGE GOBBET OF PHLEGM and spits it into the CLAY CHAMBER-POT.

Wiping tears from his cataract-shrouded eyes, he catches his breath:

OLD KABOSE

Shall we continue?

Chastened, Hektor nods and puts stylus to tablet.

HEKTOR

Yes. Please.

OLD KABOSE

You're quite sure?

HEKTOR

Yes.

Old Kabose smiles, settles and CONTINUES:

OLD KABOSE

In my Uncle Hasa's absence, Tobu provided for my needs as I continued my studies. Of course, men such as Tobu act not out of charity, but commerce, and he knew it would well serve his ends to have a scribe among his gang of brutish miscreants...

PRE-LAP: Baruti's MUFFLED, ECHOING GRUNTS of passion, CONTINUING through to...

INT. ROYAL SURVEYORS OFFICE - MAIN HALL - NIGHT

Alone, in a flickering pool of light cast by an oil lamp, Kabose dips his brush in a small clay pot of ink, laboriously transcribing HIERATIC CHARACTERS from a scroll onto a scrap of papyrus.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.)

Free of Hasa's cruel yoke, I could devote the full measure of my time to my budding apprenticeship unmolested...

Baruti's office door swings open. Winded and disheveled, adjusting his robe, he glances around furtively, then PUSHES NYESS OUT.

OLD KABOSE (V.O.; CONT'D)
 ... the same could not be said for
 Nyess.

He glances at Nyess she passes, but she drops her eyes and moves quickly for the exit.

INT. ROYAL SURVEYORS OFFICE - BARUTI'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Still sweating from his sexual labor with Nyess, Baruti sits at his desk, composing a Hieratic message on a slate with a stick of charcoal.

BARUTI
 Shit...

He grabs a damp rag and wipes the slate clean, begins again:

BARUTI
 My... beloved...
 (corrects)
 Most... beloved...

He takes a swig of beer from a cup on his desk, rereads the few words he's managed to squeeze out and SNARLS:

BARUTI
Fuck.

Frustrated, Baruti HURLS the slate across the room and it shatters against the wall. Pours himself another cup of beer. A SOFT KNOCK at the door.

BARUTI
What.

Kabose opens the door and peers in.

KABOSE
 Master Baruti...? I have finished
 my exercises.

BARUTI
 Don't just stand there. Come in.
 Let me see them.

Kabose steps over the shards of slate, hands his practice sheet to Baruti, who gives it a cursory review, sipping his beer and MUTTERING:

BARUTI

Very impressive, yes... excellent progress...

He sets Kabose's work aside, picks a scroll at random up off his desk and proffers it to the boy.

BARUTI

Read.

Kabose unfurls the scroll and studies the hieratic script.

BARUTI

Go on...

KABOSE

There are words here whose meaning I do not understand.

BARUTI

It matters not. Read them anyway.

KABOSE

(reads, faltering)

"The property line by rope equals sixty and seven..."

(looks up)

Cubits?

BARUTI

Yes. Continue.

KABOSE

... *cubits* on a North-South line as oriented parallel to the Temple of--

Satisfied, Baruti takes the scroll.

BARUTI

That will do. Now be off with you. I have much work to do.

KABOSE

Yes, Master.

BARUTI

As if I don't bear a heavy enough yoke seeing to my own duties... do you have any idea how difficult it is to do what I do? Every day. And still, there is always another thing...

He searches his desk for a clean slate.

KABOSE
Perhaps I could help.

BARUTI
Bah--

Baruti suddenly stops, appraises Kabose a beat.

BARUTI
What do you know about love?

KABOSE
Love?

BARUTI
Yes. Romance. *Poetry*. Pretty words strung together like sparkling jewels to make the heart flutter. Have you ever written a love-letter?

KABOSE
Yes, master. Many times.

BARUTI
To our friend?

KABOSE
She is nothing to me. There are others. *Many others.*

Baruti takes a slug of beer, eying him suspiciously over the rim of his glass. Comes to some decision and turns, rifles through a cabinet and retrieves a scroll of virgin papyrus.

BARUTI
Listen closely, for I would have you complete a task that will be due when you return tomorrow. If you do well, I shall pay you four deben.

KABOSE
A week?

BARUTI
You *thief!* No, not every week. But if you do well, there will be more letters to write.

He hands the scroll to Kabose.

BARUTI

You shall compose a personal correspondence. It is to be as one written from a royal personage to his beloved, who is far away. You will tell her how lonely you are and how your heart longs for her. It should be...

He trails off.

KABOSE

Poetic.

BARUTI

Yes, precisely...

He jots down a few characters on a scrap.

BARUTI

You shall address her thus.

He hands over the note. Brows knit, Kabose deciphers the name written on it.

NYESS (PRE-LAP)

Merytre?

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

Hunched over his practice sheet as, by the flame of an oil-lamp, the blank page unfurled before him.

KABOSE

Yes. That is the name I am supposed to be addressing.

Across the table from him, Nyess nibbles on dried meat and dates, pondering:

NYESS

I once knew a girl who was named Merytre...

KABOSE

Silence! Can you not see I am trying to *think*?

He dips his pen in ink, sits for a moment, it's nib poised over the unmarked papyrus. A LONG BEAT, then:

KABOSE

Shit!

He angrily returns the pen to his inkwell, sits back, arms crossed, sullenly glaring at the blank sheet before him.

KABOSE

It is *stupid!* How does the pig expect me to profess my love to a person I do not know?

NYESS

You are being silly. It is not that difficult.

KABOSE

Oh yes? So maybe you should try. Oh, wait... I *forgot*--you are an illiterate slut!

She rolls her eyes, unaffected by his harsh words. She sets aside her plate, brushes the crumbs off her tunic and stands.

NYESS

Here...

She moves behind him.

NYESS

Slake your pen. I will speak the words, and you will write them down.

KABOSE

That will never work.

NYESS

So I am a mute as well as illiterate? Slake your pen...

He heaves an impatient sigh, plucks his pen from the well.

NYESS

(dictates)

My dearest Merytre... How I wish I could tell you how deeply I love thee...

She pauses as he writes, A SLOW PULL as she CONTINUES:

NYESS

Within my heart, thou art like a desert flower in bloom...

He looks at Nyess, startled to hear her speak such elegant prose. She notices him staring.

NYESS

Write.

The PULL carries us OUT THE WINDOW as Kabose bends to the task, MURMURING as he transcribes:

KABOSE

... flower... in bloom...

NYESS

... its scent all the sweeter for
the desolation that surrounds it...

HER VOICE FINALLY LOST under the WHITE NOISE of the Nile, the CHIRPING CICADAS and SUBDUED AMBIENCE OF SLUMS, the sound of a DISTANT REED-FLUTE until they are an intimate tableau

FRAMED BY THE WINDOW: A boy, seated and writing; a girl, standing behind him, one hand on the table, the other on the back of his chair; both, golden and warm in the FLICKER of the OIL-LAMP.

EXT. NILE - KERMA-MEM - HARBOR - DAWN

Hakor PLAYS HIS FLUTE. Raneb drops a string of FAT PERCH in the boat and hops aboard, setting down a loaf of fresh bread and a ration of beer.

RANEB

Where is Rami? Do not tell me he
still sleeps.

Hakor jerks his head at a figure lying curled under a blanket in the open FORECABIN. Raneb nudges the sleeping figure with one foot.

RANEB

Wake up, boy. I brought breakfast.

The figure doesn't move. Raneb reaches down and pulls aside the blanket, REVEALING:

HIS POV - SEVERAL BAGS and the BUNDLED SAIL carefully positioned to appear as a reclined figure.

RANEB - turns to Hakor, eyes wide. Hakor lowers the flute, his face ashen.

SLAM TO:

EXT. KERMA SAVANNAH - DAY

Spears POUNDING leaf-shaped shields.

A LINE - of tall, thin MASSAI WARRIORS ULULATE and CLICK their tongues as they move forward through an undulating sea of tall, brown grass. CLOSER - Their henna-dyed, tightly corn-rowed hair is bound by beaded headbands, faces SLATHERED WITH RED WAR-PAINT.

THE HUNTERS - Approach a thick copse of trees.

ON A SLIGHT RISE - Thutmose and Satiah watch the hunt, FACES SMEARED WITH RED OCHRE.

THUTMOSE

Why do they make such a cacophony?

SATIAH

To drive the lion into the trees.

THUTMOSE

What lion?

Excited, she points. He sees:

HIS POV - A HUGE SHAPE darts through the high grass ahead of the Maasai, its TAIL flicking up as it runs toward the small stand of trees.

THE HUNTING PARTY - The ends of the line move up into a HORSE-SHOE FORMATION.

SATIAH

See how they place themselves.
They will surround the stand on all sides but one, through which they will flush the lion.

THUTMOSE

Where?

"Where?" asks Thutmose. Satiah points.

HIS POV - Maandeo stands poised at one end of the thicket, muscles tense, his spear ready.

The HUNTING PARTY - enters the copse, STILL BEATING THEIR SHIELDS, and are swallowed by the THICK FOLIAGE.

Suddenly, a HIDEOUS, MORTAL CRY, an unseen commotion.

SATIAH
 Something is wrong!

Still hidden in the brush, The Maasai raise SHOUTS OF
 CONFUSION, THEN WARNING.

MAANDEO - glances left and right, unsure what to do.

THUTMOSE - watching, tense, his attention drawn by movement
 O.S. He alerts Satiah, points...

THUTMOSE
Look! Up there!

THEIR POV - THE LION, a large male, has escaped the thicket
 and transverses the face of the outcropping above Maandeo.

SATIAH - Realizes what's going to happen and breaks cover,
 SHOUTING and frantically pointing:

SATIAH
Maandeo! Above you! Ol-kurrukurr!
OL-KURRUKURR...!

Maandeo spins and looks up. Too late.

HIS POV - ROARING, teeth bared, its wrinkled muzzle
 GLISTENING WITH FRESH BLOOD, the LION springs from the ledge.

MAANDEO - Before he can bring his weapon to bear, he's
 OBLITERATED under the lion's full crushing weight, CLAWS
 RIPPING, TEETH SINKING into his flesh.

SATIAH - instinctively runs toward her friend, SCREAMS.

THE LION - jerks its head up from Maandeo's shattered,
 bleeding corpse and, spotting her, BOLTS INTO A FULL CHARGE.

SATIAH - Freezes. Unarmed, she doesn't have a chance.
 Suddenly...

... Thutmose GRABS HER and HURLS HER INTO COVER, preparing to
 take the full brunt of the attack.

THE LION - LEAPS toward him.

THUTMOSE - squeezes his eyes shut for the inevitable, fatal
 impact. There is the THUD of a HEAVY BODY HITTING THE GROUND
 with a GRUNT, then SILENCE. Thutmose looks down.

AT HIS FEET - The Lion lies on its side, the thick haft of an
 ARROW PROTRUDING SIX INCHES FROM ITS LEFT EYE, its huge, rear
 paws clawing the dry soil.

The animal takes a HITCHING, SPASMODIC BREATH and EXPIRES, its massive, tawny form SETTLING INTO STILLNESS, its final breath bending the dry grass before its gaping mouth

THUTMOSE - turns, looks behind him.

RANEB - stands in a CHARIOT behind him, slowly lowers his double-curved HYKSOSSIAN BOW. He glares at Thutmose, furious.

EXT. NILE - KERMA-MEM - FISHING BOAT - DAY

Hakor is beside himself with fury.

HAKOR

You would sacrifice Egypt for the sake of a girl? Worse yet, one of illegitimate birth?!

Thutmose bows his head, ashamed. Raneb stands at the tiller, a seething presence of quiet disgust.

HAKOR

It is clear you possess neither the judgment nor discipline to conduct yourself within the bounds of your station.

Hakor snatches up his sash and scabbard, straps on his sword.

THUTMOSE

Where are you going?

HAKOR

To the palace, so I may thank my Master's nephew for his hospitality and bid him farewell.

THUTMOSE

Who are leaving?!

Thutmose casts Raneb a pleading look. Shaking his head, Raneb pointedly turns away--no help here.

HAKOR

Since you insist on commiserating with savages, so they will remove themselves from civilization.

RANEB

(under his breath)
Such as it is...

Hakor turns and steps onto the plank bridging their boat to the next.

THUTMOSE

Hakor!

Hakor turns.

THUTMOSE (CONT'D)

Please... do not tell the Prince of Satiah's part in this.

His tutor barks a MIRTHLESS CHUCKLE, turns to Raneb.

HAKOR

And *still* he protects her!

Shaking his head, he turns and begins making his way toward the harbor. Thutmose watches, despondent. He turns to Raneb.

THUTMOSE

Where does he mean to take us?

Raneb spits overboard.

RANEB

Punt.

THUTMOSE

Punt!

He takes a moment to absorb the implications, then scrambles out of the boat in pursuit. Raneb scoffs, then begins gathering the sail to prepare their departure.

EXT. NILE - KERMA-MEM - NILE - HARBOR - CONTINUOUS

Thutmose pursues Hakor from boat to boat.

THUTMOSE

Please, Hakor! I am sorry! You are right! I was a fool...

Hakor ignores him.

THUTMOSE (CONT'D)

The girl means *nothing* to me! *Less* than nothing! I swear! I will never again deceive you as I did! Please! Please do not make me go to Punt...

Hakor stops short and turns.

HAKOR

Return to the boat. I have made my--

A SPEAR SHAFT SUDDENLY ERUPTS FROM HIS RIBS. He looks down, aghast, at its GORE-STREAKED BRONZE HEAD, and it is quickly withdrawn for a second strike.

Instinctively drawing his sword, Hakor spins and HALF DECAPITATES the SPEARMAN behind him with a POWERFUL SLASH TO THE NECK.

ON SHORE - HASA SHOUTS a command to his TWO ARCHERS:

HASA

Now!

They LOOSE THEIR ARROWS, the first striking Hakor IN THE THIGH; the second NARROWLY MISSING THUTMOSE.

HASA

The man, you fools! Kill the man!

HAKOR - clutching his chest wound, BLEEDING HEAVILY, shoves the boy ahead of him.

HAKOR

Move!

ARROWS STRIKE BYSTANDERS - as the two make their way from boat to boat across the BOBBING OBSTACLE COURSE. Hakor SHOUTS to Raneb:

HAKOR

Raise the sail!

RANEB - reluctantly casts aside his BOW AND QUIVER, quickly tends to setting the rigging.

HASA AND HIS ARCHERS - give chase with his Archers.

HASA

Shoot, you fools! Do not let them escape!

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. NILE - KERMA-MEM - FISHING BOAT - CONTINUOUS

Hakor shoves Thutmose into the boat, SLASHES THEM LOOSE OF THEIR MOORING. As they drift out into the channel, Raneb seizes his bow.

RANEB

Stay down! Set the tiller!

He nocks an arrow, lets it fly.

ONE OF THE ARCHERS - Raneb's arrow IMPALES HIS CHEST and he falls into the river. Hasa DIVES FOR COVER.

THUTMOSE - grabs the rigging and pulls it taut, the CANVAS SNAPPING as it's swollen by a STIFF BREEZE.

Raneb - draws back his bowstring, unfazed by an INCOMING ARROW that narrowly misses him, burying itself in the mast inches from his head. He loses another shot.

The second Archer is INSTANTLY KILLED by an ARROW THROUGH HIS OPEN MOUTH, severing his brain-stem.

HASA - Frustrated, he crab-crawls over to the dead Archer and pries the bow loose from the dead man's grip.

HASA

Useless piece of filth...

He grabs an arrow and, nocking it, SCURRIES across the gang-planks until he reaches the OUTERMOST BOAT in the harbor. One knee resting against the gunwale, he draws back the bowstring, MUTTERS through clenched teeth:

HASA

Exalted Set, I beseech thee; let
your hand guide my arrow into the
heart of mine enemy...

With a GRUNT, he loses the arrow, watches expectantly as...

HIS POV - the arrow flies in a HIGH, ARCHING TRAJECTORY, DIRECTLY AT THE RECEDING FISHING BOAT...

HASA

Yes! Yes...!

... only to fall A GOOD TEN METERS SHORT.

HASA

Fuck!

Suddenly, ONE OF RANEB'S ARROWS WHISTLES IN and BURIES ITSELF DEEP IN HIS HIP, shattering the ball-joint. Hasa GASPS and collapses in the hold.

EXT. KERMA-MEM - FISHING BOAT - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

Now out of range, Raneb takes the tiller. Thutmose kneels next to Hakor. The hold is AWASH IN BLOOD.

HAKOR

Fucking Atsutep... I served under
the dog in the Sinai... Should have
known he would betray us--

He shudders and BLOOD POURS FROM HIS MOUTH, the massive wound in his chest BUBBLING as he sucks air into his ruined lung. Tears flowing down his cheeks, Thutmose covers the wound with both hands, bears down. Hakor turns to Raneb:

HAKOR

It is all on you, now.

RANEB

No! I know *nothing* of politics.
Only how to fight.

HAKOR

Then... teach him... to *fight!*

He grabs Thutmose's wrist, clenching it in a vise-grip.

HAKOR

Closer...

Thutmose puts his ear to Hakor's lips. He MUTTERS a few, labored words to Thutmose that WE CANNOT HEAR, then BREATHES HIS LAST, his eyes going still. Weeping, Thutmose buries his face against the dead man's chest.

SLAM TO:

INT. THEBES - PALACE - CORRIDOR - MOVING - NIGHT

Tobu briskly follows Badru down the hallway, clutching a FOOTBALL-SIZED BURLAP BAG by its DRAWSTRING, their FOOTSTEPS ECHOING through the silent palace. They turn into...

INT. THEBES - PALACE - SENENMUT'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

By the oil-lamps illuminating his desk, Senenmut and Baruti leaning over a PAPYRUS SURVEYOR'S MAP, the architect marking a line with a piece of charcoal. They look up.

BADRU

A development of some urgency,
Master.

SEENMUT

(to Baruti)

I presume there will be no
objections?

BARUTI

None, my Lord.

Baruti rolls up the map and, taking it, nods brusquely to Badru as he EXITS.

SEENMUT

You found him?

TOBU

And his wards, yes, my Lord. In
Kerma-Mem, disguised as fishermen.

SEENMUT

His wards?

TOBU

Both slain, Lord.

SEENMUT

And the Prince?

Tobu sets the bag on the worktable in front of Senenmut. The architect looks at him, then gingerly loosens the drawstring, pulling the hem down to reveal the DESICCATED, SEVERED HEAD OF A BOY.

SEENMUT

How do I know this is he?

TOBU

It is he. Of that, there is no
question...

(a faint smile)

I have it on the word of my most
trusted man.

Gazing into the black, shrivelled eyes of the severed head, Senenmut slowly nods. Addresses Badru:

SEENMUT

See to the bounty.

BADRU

Yes, my Lord.

Badru and Tobu exit. Alone, Senenmut contemplates the head resting before him. DECOMPOSITION AND NATURAL MUMMIFICATION on the long journey have taken their toll, but the BLACKENED FEATURES are similar to those of the Prince.

IT'S RIGHT EAR - Only upon close examinations would one would notice that it bears THE DIMPLED PERFORATION OF A PIERCING.

MERYTRE (PRE-LAP)

"What little I know of joy is but
the joy you bring me..."

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

A SLOW PUSH as Merytre READS ALOUD to her mother, the Adoratrix Huy:

MERYTRE (CONT'D)

"What little I know of beauty is
but the beauty you possess. What
little I know of tenderness is but
the tenderness you inspire in me."

Merytre SIGHS DREAMILY and presses the scroll against her heart. Huy is moved to tears.

HUY

Oh, daughter. Surely you must know
that such words could only be
crafted by a palace-born son of
Amun-Ra!

They fall into each other's happy embrace.

KABOSE (PRE-LAP)

"Each day remains an eternity until
the day I am yours incarnate..."

INT. ROYAL SURVEYORS OFFICE - MAIN HALL - NIGHT

Alone in the vast hall, by the dim flicker of an OIL LAMP, Kabose, laboriously finishes yet another message to Merytre, MURMURING THE WORDS AS HE WRITES:

KABOSE (CONT'D)

"... as my Ka has always been, and
will always remain..."

TIGHT ON PAPYRUS - as he draws the CARTOUCHE OF THUTMOSE THE THIRD.

KABOSE (CONT'D)

"... eternally yours, Thutmose."

He raises his head as Baruti's MUFFLED, LABORED GROANS OF CLIMAX ECHO from behind the closed door of his office.

For an unguarded moment, a trace of intense emotion flickers in the boy's eyes--perhaps resentment, perhaps jealousy...

... perhaps both.

OUT