

# The Great Queen Hatshepsut

Amon-Re, the King of the Gods, sat upon his throne and looked out upon Egypt. Presently he spoke to the assembled council of the gods - to Thoth and Khonsu and Khnemu, to Isis and Osiris, Nephthys, Horus, Harmachis, Anubis and the rest - saying: 'There has been many a Pharaoh in the Land of Khem, in the Double Land of Egypt, and some of them have been great and have pleased me well. Khufu and Khafra and Menkaura long ago who raised the great pyramids of Giza; Amenhotep and Thutmose of today who have caused the peoples of the world to bow down at my feet. Now is the dawning of the golden age in Egypt, and it comes into my mind to create a great queen to rule over Khem: yes, I will unite the Two Lands in peace for her, I will give her rule over the whole world, over Syria and Nubia besides Egypt - yes, even to the far-distant land of Punt.'

Then said Isis in her silvery voice that sounded like the shaken bells on her sistrum, 'Father of Gods and Men, no queen has yet ruled in Egypt, in the holy land of Khem, save only one, when the good god Osiris had passed into the Duat, and the good god Horus was still but a child, while Seth the Evil, the terrible one, stalked unchained up and down the land. Father of Gods and Men, if you create such a queen, my blessing and wisdom shall be upon her.'

"She rests alone in the palace of Pharaoh. Come, let us go to her."

Then Thoth spoke, Thoth the thrice-wise from whom no secrets were hid: 'O Amon-Re, Lord of the Two Lands, King of the Gods, Maker of Men, harken to my words. In the royal palace at Thebes set in the Black Land, the rich country that Khnemu has made fertile with the dark mud of the Inundation, dwells a maiden. Ahmes is her name, and none in all the world is fairer than she nor more beautiful in all her limbs. She is the new-made bride of the good god Pharaoh Thutmose, who has but now returned to Thebes after his conquests beyond the Great Green Sea in the lands of the Syrians and the Apura. She alone can be the mother of the great queen whom you are about to create as ruler of the Two Lands. She rests alone in the palace of Pharaoh. Come, let us go to her.'

So Thoth took upon himself his favorite form, that of an ibis, in which he could fly swiftly through the air unrecognized by any. In this guise he flew into the palace of Thutmose at Thebes, to the great chamber with its painted walls where Queen Ahmes lay asleep.

Then Thoth cast a spell over the palace so that every living thing slumbered. Only the Pharaoh, King Thutmose himself, seemed to be awake and yet it seemed that it was only his body which did not sleep. For, as if he were already dead, his three spiritual parts: the Ba, or soul; the Ka, or double, and the Khou, or spirit, left his body and gathered about it where it lay on the royal bed as they would in days to come when the good god Pharaoh Thutmose would be left to lie in his deep tomb chamber beneath the Valley of Kings until the coming of Osiris.

Yet the body of Thutmose now rose up from the bed, and the Ka took its place, lying there in the likeness of the King himself, while the Ba, like a bird with a human head, and the Khou in a tongue of flame, hovered over it. Now for a space the body of Thutmose was the dwelling-place of Amon-Re, the greatest of the gods, the maker and father of gods and men, and of all the earth. Great was his majesty and splendid his adornments. On his neck was the glittering collar of precious stones that only Pharaoh might wear, and on his arms were Pharaoh's bracelets of pure gold and electrum; but on his head were two plumes and by these alone might it be known that here was Amon-Re. Yet it seemed as if light shone from him, for as he passed through the dark palace, hall and chamber and corridor gleamed and faded in turn as if the sun shone in them for a space and then was veiled behind a cloud. And as he passed and faded there lingered behind him a scent as of the richest perfumes that come from the land of Punt.

"Rejoice, most fortunate of women, for you shall bear a daughter who shall be the child of Amon-Re"

He came to the sleeping-place of Queen Ahmes, and the double doors of ebony bound with silver opened before him and closed when he had passed. He found the Queen lying like a jewel on a golden couch that was shaped like a lion; he seated himself upon the couch, and he held to her nostrils Amon-Re's divine symbol of life, and the breath of life passed into her as she breathed, and the couch rose and floated in the air. Then, waking or asleep, it seemed to Queen Ahmes that she was bathed in light so that she could see nothing above or below or round about her but the golden mist, save only the form of her husband the Pharaoh

Thutmose who spoke in a voice that seemed to echo away into the distance, saying: 'Rejoice, most fortunate of women, for you shall bear a daughter who shall be the child of Amon-Re, who shall reign over the Two Lands of Egypt and be sovereign of the whole world.'

Then Queen Ahmes sank into deep and dreamless sleep, while the form of Thutmose hastened back to where the Ba and the Khou hovered above the bed on which lay his Ka. A moment later Thutmose lay there sleeping -as if nothing had happened, while the Ba, the Ka and the Khou had faded from mortal sight.

But Amon-Re, Father of Gods and Men, summoned to him Khnemu the Fashioner and said, 'Mould clay upon your wheel, potter who forms the bodies of mankind, and make my daughter Hatshepsut who shall be born to Ahmes and Thutmose in the royal palace of Thebes.'

And when the time came Hatshepsut was born amid the rejoicing of all Egypt, and lay in her cradle beside the royal bed in the great room lit only by the moonlight.

Then once again the silence of deep sleep fell upon all the palace of Thebes. And presently the double doors opened of themselves and Amon-Re entered in his own likeness attended by Hathor the goddess of love and her seven daughters, the Hathors, who weave the web of life for all who are born on this earth.

Picture of Hatshepsut

Then Amon-Re blessed the baby Hatshepsut, taking her up in his arms and giving her the kiss of power so that she might indeed become a great queen, as his daughter should. And the Hathors wove the golden web of her life as Amon-Re directed; and as they wove it seemed to pass before the eyes of Queen Ahmes so that she saw her daughter's life laid out before her.

She saw Hatshepsut as a beautiful girl kneeling in the temple at Karnak or Eastern Thebes while Amon-Re and Horus poured the waters of purification upon her head, while the other

gods and goddesses gathered in the shadows between the great columns to bless her. Then she saw Hatshepsut beside her human father Pharaoh Thutmose journeying through all the land of Egypt from Tanis on the Delta to Elephantine in the south, hailed by all as the Great Queen to be. She saw Hatshepsut being crowned as Pharaoh of Egypt, the only woman ever to wear the Double Crown save for Cleopatra the Greek who was to bring about Egypt's fall fifteen hundred years later. Then she saw her seated in state while the kings of the earth bowed down before her, bringing her gifts from the ends of the earth. And she saw Hatshepsut's great expedition to distant Punt the ships sailing out of the Red Sea and far upon the waters-of the ocean beyond to reach it on the coasts of central Africa: she saw the beehive huts of the black dwellers in Punt built on piles in the water and overshadowed by palms and incense trees with ladders leading up to the entrances.

And then she saw the expedition returning to Egypt and bringing all the treasures from Punt to the Pharaoh Hatshepsut, and of how she dedicated them to her father Amon-Re - Horus weighing the gold in his scales and Thoth writing down the measures of incense; and 'the good god' Hatshepsut herself offering the best of all she had before the ceremonial Boat of Amon-Re that was carried by the priests of Thebes.

Last of all she saw the masons and the carvers and the artists fashioning the great mortuary temple of Hatshepsut, cutting out and painting on its walls all the pictures that she had seen in the Web of Fate the Hathors were weaving before her on this night of Hatshepsut's birth.

All things were fulfilled even as Queen Ahmes had seen, and Egypt reached its greatest glory under Hatshepsut and under her nephew Thutmose III who succeeded her. And all the tale is told in pictures and hieroglyphs in Deir-el-Bahri, the mortuary temple of Hatshepsut in Western Thebes which still stands for all to see.