

Two Excerpts from *The Marriage of Nefertiti – Book One*.

Yesterday morning, when she had walked out on the roof of her relations' villa, her eyes noted the special sheen on the broad Nile River—the characteristic light-toned silt of the first flood waters. She could see the great river was just starting to run higher and faster, too. It had begun—the swelling of the river with the tears of the Goddess Isis. The annual inundation was an event that gladdened all Egypt, from the poorest hovel to the richest palace.

Lady Ikaret's heart filled with pleasure, and secret relief, for with the flood came deliverance from want. If the flood rose adequately, and at the proper time, New Year's, the lands of Egypt always prospered, and for another year, the people would eat. Now, the only miseries would be of the domestic kind: the broken hearts of lovers, the overly demanding mother-in-law, the master scolding his apprentice, the beloved tomcat overdue from nocturnal wanderings, or the faithful donkey whose knees finally gave out after one too many heavy loads.

The first few days of flood could be unpredictable, and while she was an intrepid sailor on a calm Nile, rapid currents disquieted her. She preferred to remain squarely on her own side of the river until the logs,

the dead cows, and wrecked boats—the scour of the flood—had gone by and she approved of its pattern. But last night, a royal herald had appeared at her gate, conveying an “invitation” from the Great Royal Wife to come to the palace by royal barge early tomorrow. Such an invitation was, of course, a command, and by its urgent nature, likely not social. The Queen probably needed her help with something. So this morning, she had had no choice but to clamber into the barge, settle onto a seat amidships between the two ranks of rowers, and hold on tensely.

Midway across, she watched a log jouncing along on the swift current knock two young boys out of their rowboat. She jumped to her feet to point it out, forgetting, in her excitement, the well-known rule that everyone remained seated on these low-keeled boats. The nearest rower had reached out a great clammy hand, and with an oath, pulled hard on her arm to force her down onto her seat.

Immediately repentant, she was very chagrined, and could barely meet the captain’s eyes when she disembarked. Still, there had been even more excitement on the crossing, and she was eager to share with

the Queen the heroic scene she had witnessed—the mysterious man who dove into the churning waters to attempt a rescue . . .



2)

"Welcome to Khent-Min and the house of my husband, Lady Ikaret. You have seen him? He is well?"

"I have not, recently. I came from Waset."

Lady Tey turned away to pour two cups of wine, and asked over her shoulder. "Do you have letters for me?" She offered one to Ikaret.

"No, Madam, though the messengers were thick as bees at the scribal headquarters, so there might be."

Tey made a tight nod of acknowledgement. "How then may I help you, Lady? Your letter said you wished my advice."

Just then, a beautiful young girl dashed across the room from a door on the far side. "Mother, has father sent my present?"

"Slow down Nefertiti. It is not graceful to walk that fast."

*And don't interrupt your Mother when she has a guest.*

"Sorry mother."

An older, high-class servant came into sight now, limping slightly. "Sorry, my Lady. When this one takes it into her head to move like a gazelle, these old bones cannot keep up." A wrinkled hand whipped out and tugged a line of the girl's dress into shape.

Ikaret suppressed a smile; this one probably gave her old nurse quite a hard time.

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