

THE GOLDEN LOTUS

Seneferu, father of the Pharaoh Khufu who built the Great Pyramid of Giza, reigned long over a contented and peaceful Egypt. He had no foreign wars and few troubles at home, and with so little business of state he often found time hanging heavy on his hands.

One day he wandered wearily through his palace at Memphis, seeking for pleasures and finding none that would lighten his heart.

Then he bethought him of his Chief Magician, Zazamankh, and he said, 'If any man is able to entertain me and show me new marvels, surely it is the wise scribe of the rolls. Bring Zazamankh before me.'

Straightway his servants went to the House of Wisdom and brought Zazamankh to the presence of Pharaoh. And Seneferu said to him, 'I have sought throughout all my palace for some delight, and found none. Now of your wisdom devise something that will fill my heart with pleasure.' Then said Zazamankh to him, 'O Pharaoh life, health, strength be to you! - my counsel is that you go sailing upon the Nile, and upon the lake below Memphis. This will be no common voyage, if you will follow my advice in all things.'

'Believing that you will show me marvels, I will order out the Royal Boat,' said Seneferu. 'Yet I am weary of sailing upon the Nile and upon the lake.'

'This will be no common voyage,' Zazamankh assured him. 'For your rowers will be different from any you have seen at the oars before. They must be fair maidens from the Royal House of the King's Women: and as you watch them rowing, and see the birds upon the lake, the sweet fields and the green grass upon the banks, your heart will grow glad.'

'Indeed, this will be something new,' agreed Pharaoh, showing some interest at last. 'Therefore I give you charge of this expedition. Speak with my power, and command all that is necessary.'

Then said Zazamankh to the officers and attendants of Pharaoh Seneferu, 'Bring me twenty oars of ebony inlaid with gold, with blades of light wood inlaid with electrum. And choose for rowers the twenty fairest maidens in Pharaoh's household: twenty virgins slim and lovely, fair in their limbs, beautiful, and with flowing hair. And bring me twenty nets of golden thread, and give these nets to the fair maidens to be garments for them. And let them wear ornaments of gold and electrum and malachite.'

All was done according to the words of Zazamankh, and presently Pharaoh was seated in the Royal Boat while the maidens rowed him up and down the stream and upon the shining waters of the lake. And the heart of Seneferu was glad at the sight of the beautiful rowers at their unaccustomed task, and he seemed to be on a voyage in the golden days that were to be when Osiris returns to rule the earth.

But presently a mischance befell that gay and happy party upon the lake. In the raised stern of the Royal Boat two of the maidens were steering with great oars fastened to posts. Suddenly the handle of one of the oars brushed against the head of the girl who was using it and swept the golden lotus she wore on the fillet that held back her hair into the water, where it sank out of sight.

With a little cry she leant over and gazed after it. And as she ceased from her song, so did all the rowers on that side who were taking their time from her.

'Why have you ceased to row?' asked Pharaoh.

And they replied, 'Our little steerer has stopped, and leads us no longer.'

'And why have you ceased to steer and lead the rowers with your song?' asked Seneferu.

'Forgive me, Pharaoh - life, health, strength be to you!' she sobbed. 'But the oar struck my hair and brushed from it the beautiful golden lotus set with malachite which your majesty gave to me, and it has fallen into the water and is lost forever.'

'Row on as before, and I will give you another,' said Seneferu.

But the girl continued to weep, saying, 'I want my golden lotus back, and no other!'

Then said Pharaoh, 'There is only one who can find the golden lotus that has sunk to the bottom of the lake. Bring to me Zazamankh my magician, he who thought of this voyage. Bring him here on to the Royal Boat before me.'

So Zazamankh was brought to where Seneferu sat in his silken pavilion on the Royal Boat. And as he knelt, Pharaoh said to him: 'Zazamankh, my friend and brother, I have done as you advised. My royal heart is refreshed and my eyes are delighted at the sight of these lovely rowers bending to their task. As we pass up and down on the waters of the lake, and they sing to me, while on the shore I see the trees and the flowers and the birds, I seem to be sailing into the golden days either those of old when Re ruled on earth, or those to come when the good god Osiris shall return from the Duat. But now a golden lotus has fallen from the hair of one of these maidens fallen to the bottom of the lake. And she has ceased to sing and the rowers on her side cannot keep time with their oars. And she is not to be comforted with promises of other gifts, but weeps for her golden lotus. Zazamankh, I wish to give back the golden lotus to the little one here, and see the joy return to her eyes.'

'Pharaoh, my lord - life, health, strength be to you!' answered Zazamankh the magician, 'I will do what you ask - for to one with my knowledge it is not a great thing. Yet maybe it is an enchantment you have never seen, and it will fill you with wonder, even as I promised, and make your heart rejoice yet further in new things.'

Then Zazamankh stood at the stern of the Royal Boat and began to chant great spells and words of power. And presently he held out his wand over the water, and the lake parted as if a piece had been cut out of it with a great sword. The lake here was twenty feet deep, and the piece of water that the magician moved rose up and set itself upon the surface of the lake so that there was a cliff of water on that side forty feet high.

Now the Royal Boat slid gently down into the great cleft in the lake until it rested on the bottom. On the side towards the forty-foot cliff of water there was a great open space where the bottom of the lake lay uncovered, as firm and dry as the land itself.

And there, just below the stern of the Royal Boat, lay the golden lotus.

With a cry of joy the maiden who had lost it sprang over the side on to the firm ground, picked it up and set it once more in her hair. Then she climbed swiftly back into the Royal Boat and took the steering oar into her hands once more.

Zazamankh slowly lowered his rod, and the Royal Boat slid up the side of the water until it was level with the surface once more. Then at another word of power, and as if drawn by the magician's rod, the great piece of water slid back into place, and the evening breeze rippled the still surface of the lake as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened. But the heart of Pharaoh Seneferu rejoiced and was filled with wonder, and he cried: 'Zazamankh, my brother, you are the greatest and wisest of magicians! You have shown me wonders and delights this day, and your reward shall be all that you desire, and a place next to my own in Egypt.' Then the Royal Boat sailed gently on over the lake in the glow of the evening, while the twenty lovely maidens in their garments of golden net, and the jeweled lotus flowers in their hair dipped their ebony and silver oars in the shimmering waters and sang sweetly a love song of old Egypt:

'She stands upon the further side,
Between us flows the Nile;
And in those waters deep and wide
There lurks a crocodile.

'Yet is my love so true and sweet,
A word of power, a charm -
The stream is land beneath my feet
And bears me without harm.

'For I shall come to where she stands,
No more be held apart;
And I shall take my darling's hands
And draw her to my heart.'

THE GIRL WITH THE ROSE RED SLIPPERS

In the last days of Ancient Egypt, not many years before the country was conquered by the Persians, she was ruled by a Pharaoh called Amasis. So as to strengthen his country against the threat of invasion by Cyrus of Persia, who was conquering all the known world, he welcomed as many Greeks as wished to trade with or settle in Egypt, and gave them a city called Naucratis to be entirely their own.

In Naucratis, not far from the mouth of the Nile that flows into the sea at Canopus, there lived a wealthy Greek merchant called Charaxos. His true home was in the island of Lesbos, and the famous poetess Sappho was his sister; but he had spent most of his life trading with Egypt, and in his old age he settled at Naucratis.

One day when he was walking in the marketplace he saw a great crowd gathered round the place where the slaves were sold. Out of curiosity he pushed his way into their midst, and found that everyone was looking at a beautiful girl who had just been set up on the stone rostrum to be sold.

She was obviously a Greek with white skin and cheeks like blushing roses, and Charaxos caught his breath - for he had never seen anyone so lovely.

Consequently, when the bidding began, Charaxos determined to buy her and, being one of the wealthiest merchants in all Naucratis, he did so without much difficulty.

When he had bought the girl, he discovered that her name was Rhodopis and that she had been carried away by pirates from her home in the north of Greece when she was a child. They had sold her to a rich man who employed many slaves on the island of Samos, and she had grown up there, one of her fellow slaves being an ugly little man called Aesop who was always kind to her and told her the most entrancing stories and fables about animals and birds and human beings.

But when she was grown up, her master wished to make some money out of so beautiful a girl and had sent her to rich Naucratis to be sold.

Charaxos listened to her tale and pitied her deeply. Indeed very soon he became quite besotted about her. He gave her a lovely house to live in, with a garden in the middle of it, and slave girls to attend on her. He heaped her with presents of jewels and beautiful clothes, and spoiled her as if she had been his own daughter.

One day a strange thing happened as Rhodopis was bathing in the marble-edged pool in her secret garden. The slave-girls were holding her clothes and guarding her jeweled girdle and her rose-red slippers of which she was particularly proud, while she lazed in the cool water - for a summer's day even in the north of Egypt grows very hot about noon.

Suddenly when all seemed quiet and peaceful, an eagle came swooping down out of the clear blue sky - down, straight down as if to attack the little group by the pool. The slave-girls dropped everything they were holding and fled shrieking to hide among the trees and flowers of the garden; and Rhodopis rose from the water and stood with her back against the marble fountain at one end of it, gazing with wide, startled eyes.

But the eagle paid no attention to any of them. Instead, it swooped right down and picked up one of her rose-red slippers in its talons. Then it soared up into the air again on its great wings and, still carrying the slipper, flew away to the south over the valley of the Nile.

Rhodopis wept at the loss of her rose-red slipper, feeling sure that she would never see it again, and sorry also to have lost anything that Charaxos had given to her.

But the eagle seemed to have been sent by the gods - perhaps by Horus himself whose sacred bird he was. For he flew straight up the Nile to Memphis and then swooped, down towards the palace.

At that hour Pharaoh Amasis sat in the great courtyard doing justice to his people and hearing any complaints that they wished to bring.

Down over the courtyard swooped the eagle and dropped the rose-red slipper of Rhodopis into Pharaoh's lap.

The people cried out in surprise when they saw, this, and Amasis too was much taken aback. But, as he took up the little rose-red slipper and admired the delicate workmanship and the tiny size of it, he felt that the girl for whose foot it was made must indeed be one of the loveliest in the world.

Indeed Amasis the Pharaoh was so moved by what had happened that he issued a decree:

"Let my messengers go forth through all the cities of the Delta and, if need be, into Upper Egypt to the very borders of my kingdom. Let them take with them this rose-red slipper which the divine bird of Horus has brought to me, and let them declare that her from whose foot this slipper came shall be the bride of Pharaoh!"

Then the messengers prostrated themselves crying, 'Life, health, strength be to Pharaoh! Pharaoh has spoken and his command shall be obeyed!'

So they set forth from Memphis and went by way of Heliopolis and Tanis and Canopus until they came to Naucratis. Here they heard of the rich merchant Charaxos and of how he had bought the beautiful Greek girl in the slave market, and how he was lavishing all his wealth upon her as if she had been a princess put in his care by the gods.

So they went to the great house beside the Nile and found Rhodopis in the quiet garden beside the pool.

When they showed her the rose-red slipper she cried out in surprise that it was hers. She held out her foot so that they could see how well it fitted her; and she bade one of the slave girls fetch the pair to it which she had kept carefully in memory of her strange adventure with the eagle.

Then the messengers knew that this was the girl whom Pharaoh had sent them to find, and they knelt before her and said, 'The good god Pharaoh Amasis - life, health, strength be to him! - bids you come with all speed to his palace at Memphis. There you shall be treated with all honor and given a high place in his Royal House of Women: for he believes that Horus the son of Isis and Osiris sent that eagle to bring the rose-red slipper and cause him to search for you.'

Such a command could not be disobeyed. Rhodopis bade farewell to Charaxos, who was torn between joy at her good fortune and sorrow at his loss, and set out for Memphis.

And when Amasis saw her beauty, he was sure that the gods had sent her to him. He did not merely take her into his Royal House of Women, he made her his Queen and the Royal Lady of Egypt. And they lived happily together for the rest of their lives and died a year before the coming of Ambyes the Persian.

THE STORY OF OSIRIS ISIS AND HORUS

From Geb, the sky god, and Nut, the earth goddess came four children: Osiris, Isis, Set and Nephthys. Osiris was the oldest and so became king of Egypt, and he married his sister Isis. Osiris was a good king and commanded the respect of all who lived on the earth and the gods who dwelled in the netherworld.

However, Set was always jealous of Osiris, because he did not command the respect of those on earth or those in the netherworld. One day, Set transformed himself into a vicious monster and attacked Osiris, killing him. Set then cut Osiris into pieces and distributed them throughout the length and breadth of Egypt.

With Osiris dead, Set became king of Egypt, with his sister Nephthys as his wife. Nephthys, however, felt sorry for her sister Isis, who wept endlessly over her lost husband. Isis, who had great magical powers, decided to find her husband and bring him back to life long enough so that they could have a child. Together with Nephthys, Isis roamed the country, collecting the pieces of her husband's body and reassembling them. Once she completed this task, she breathed the breath of life into his body and resurrected him. They were together again, and Isis became pregnant soon after. Osiris was able to descend into the underworld, where he became the lord of that domain.

The child born to Isis was named Horus, the hawk-god. When he became an adult, Horus decided to make a case before the court of gods that he, not Set, was the rightful king of Egypt. A long period of argument followed, and Set challenged Horus to a contest. The winner would become king. Set, however, did not play fair. After several matches in which Set cheated and was the victor, Horus' mother, Isis, decided to help her son and set a trap for Set. She snared him, but Set begged for his life, and Isis let him go. When he found out that she had let his enemy live, Horus became angry with his mother, and rages against her, earning him the contempt of the other gods. They decided that there would be one more match, and Set would get to choose what it would be.

Set decided that the final round of the contest would be a boat race. However, in order to make the contest a challenge, Set decided that he and Horus should race boats made of stone. Horus was tricky and built a boat made of wood, covered with limestone plaster, which looked like stone. As the gods assembled for the race, Set cut the top off of a mountain to serve as his boat and set it in the

water. His boat sank right away, and all the other gods laughed at him. Angry, Set transformed himself into a hippopotamus and attacked Horus' boat. Horus fought off Set, but the other gods stopped him before he could kill Set. The other gods decided that the match was a tie. Many of the gods were sympathetic to Horus, but remembered his anger toward his mother for being lenient to Set, and were unwilling to support him completely.

The gods who formed the court decided to write a letter to Osiris and ask for his advice. Osiris responded with a definite answer: his son is the rightful king, and should be placed upon the throne. No one, said Osiris, should take the throne of Egypt through an act of murder, as Set had done. Set had killed Osiris, but Horus did not killed anyone, and was the better candidate. The sun and the stars, who were Osiris' allies, descended into the underworld, leaving the world in darkness. Finally, the gods agreed that Horus should claim his birthright as king of Egypt.

THE PEASANT AND THE WORKMAN

In the Salt Country there dwelt a sekhti (peasant) with his family. He made his living by trading with Henenseten in salt, natron, rushes, and the other products of his country, and as he journeyed thither he had to pass through the lands of the house of Fefa. Now there dwelt by the canal a man named Tehuti-nekht, the son of Asri, a serf to the High Steward Meruitensa. Tehuti-nekht had so far encroached on the path- for roads and paths were not protected by law in Egypt as in other countries- that there was but a narrow strip left, with the canal on one side and a cornfield on the other. When Tehuti-nekht saw the sekhti approaching with his burdened donkeys, his evil heart coveted the beasts and the goods they bore, and he called to the gods to open a way for him to steal the possessions of the sekhti.

This was the plan he conceived. "I will take," said he, "a shawl, and will spread it upon the path. If the sekhti drives his donkeys over it- and there is no other way- then I shall easily pick a quarrel with him." He had no sooner thought of the project than it was carried into effect. A servant, at Tehuti-nekht's bidding, fetched a shawl and spread it over the path so that one end was in the water, the other among the corn.

When the sekhti drew nigh he drove his donkeys over the shawl. He had no alternative.

"Hold!" cried Tehuti-nekht with well-simulated wrath, "surely you do not intend to drive your beasts over my clothes!"

"I will try to avoid them," responded the good-natured peasant, and he caused the rest of his donkeys to pass higher up, among the corn.

"Do you, then, drive your donkeys through my corn?," said Tehuti-nekht, more wrathfully than ever.

"There is no other way," said the harassed peasant. "You have blocked the path with your shawl, and I must leave the path."

While the two argued upon the matter one of the donkeys helped itself to a mouthful of corn, whereupon Tehuti-nekht's complaints broke out afresh.

"Behold!" he cried, "your donkey is eating my corn. I will take your donkey, and he shall pay for the theft."

"Shall I be robbed, cried the sekhti, "in the lands of the Lord Steward Meruitensa who treateth robbers so hardly? Behold, I will go to him. He will not suffer this misdeed of thine."

"Poor as thou art, who will concern himself with thy woes?"

"Thinkest thou he will hearken to thy plaint?" sneered Tehuti-nekht. "Poor as thou art, who will concern himself with thy woes? Lo, I am the Lord Steward Meruitensa," and so saying he beat the sekhti sorely, stole all his donkeys and drove them into pasture.

In vain the sekhti wept and implored him restore his property. Tehuti-nekht bade him hold his peace, threatening to send him to the Demon of Silence if he continued to complain. Nevertheless, the sekhti petitioned him for a whole day. At length, finding that he was wasting his breath, the peasant betook himself to Henen-ni-sut, there to lay his case before the Lord Steward Meruitensa. On his arrival he found the latter preparing to embark in his boat, which was to carry him to the judgment-hall. The sekhti bowed himself to the ground, and told the Lord Steward that he had a grievance to lay before him, praying him to send one of his followers to hear the tale. The Lord Steward granted the suppliant's request and sent to him one from among his train. To the messenger the sekhti revealed all that had befallen him on his journey, the manner in which Tehuti-nekht had closed the path so as to force him to trespass on the corn, and the cruelty with which he had beaten him and stolen his property. In due time these matters were told to the Lord Steward, who laid the case before the nobles who were with him in the judgment-hall.

"Let this sekhti bring a witness," they said, " and if he establish his case, it may be necessary to beat Tehuti-nekht, or perchance he will be made to pay a trifle for the salt and natron he has stolen."

The Lord Steward said nothing, and the sekhti himself came unto him and hailed him as the greatest of the great, the orphan's father, the widow's husband, the guide of the needy, and so on.

Very eloquent was the sekhti, and in his florid speech he skillfully combined eulogy with his plea for justice, so that the Lord Steward was interested and flattered in spite of himself.

Now at that time there sat upon the throne of Egypt the King Neb-ka-n-ra, and to him came the Lord Steward Meruitensa, saying:

"Behold my lord, I have been sought by a sekhti whose goods were stolen. Most eloquent of mortals is he. What would my lord that I do unto him?"

"Do not answer his speeches, said the king, "but put his words in writing and bring them to us. See that he and his wife and children are supplied with meat and drink, but do not let him know who provides it."

The Lord Steward did as the king had commanded him. He gave to the peasant a daily ration of bread and beer, and to his wife sufficient corn to feed herself and her children. But the sekhti knew not whence the provisions came.

A second time the peasant sought the judgment hall and poured forth his complaint to the Lord Steward; and yet a third time he came, and the Lord Steward commanded that he be beaten with staves, to see whether he would desist. But no, the sekhti came a fourth, a fifth, a sixth time, endeavoring with pleasant speeches to open the ear of the judge. Meruitensa hearkened to him not at all, yet the sekhti did not despair, but came again unto the ninth time. And at the ninth time the Lord Steward sent two of his followers to the sekhti, and the peasant trembled exceedingly, for he feared that he was about to be beaten once more because of his importunity. The message, however, was a reassuring one. Meruitensa declared that he had been greatly delighted by the peasant's eloquence and would see that he obtained satisfaction. He then caused the sekhti's petitions to be written on clean papyri and sent to the king, according as the monarch had commanded. Neb-ka-n-ra was also much pleased with the speeches, but the giving of judgment he left entirely in the hands of the Lord Steward.

Meruitensa therefore deprived Tehuti-nekht of all his offices and his property, and gave them to the sekhti, who thenceforth dwelt at the king's palace with all his family. And the sekhti became the chief overseer of Neb-ka-n-ra, and was greatly beloved by him.

THE PRINCE AND THE SPHINX

There was once a Prince in Egypt called Thutmose, who was a son of Pharaoh Amenhotep, and the grandson of Thutmose III who succeeded the great Queen Hatshepsut. He had many brothers and half-brothers, and because he was Pharaoh's favorite son they were forever plotting against him. Usually these plots were to make Pharaoh think that Thutmose was unworthy or unsuitable to succeed him; sometimes they were attempts to make the people or the priests believe that Thutmose was cruel or extravagant or did not honor the gods and so would make a bad ruler of Egypt; but once or twice the plots were aimed at his very life.

All this made Thutmose troubled and unhappy. He spent less and less of his time at Thebes or Memphis with Pharaoh's court, and more and more frequently rode on expeditions into Upper Egypt or across the desert to the seven great oases. And even when Pharaoh commanded his presence, or his position demanded that he must attend some great festival, he would slip away whenever he could with a few trusted followers, or even alone and in disguise, to hunt on the edge of the desert.

Thutmose was skilled in all manly exercises. He was a Bowman who could plant arrow after arrow in the center of the target; he was a skilled charioteer, and his horses were faster than the wind. Sometimes he would course antelopes for miles across the sandy stretches of desert; at others he would seek out the savage lions in their lairs among the rocks far up above the banks of the Nile.

One day, when the court was in residence at Memphis for the great festival of Re at Heliopolis a few miles further down the Nile, Thutmose escaped from all the pomp and pageantry to hunt on the edge of the desert. He took with him only two servants, and he drove his own chariot up the steep road past Saqqara where the great Step Pyramid of Djoser stands, and away through the scrub and stunted trees where the cultivated land by the Nile faded into the stony waste and the stretches of sand and rock of the great Libyan desert.

They set off at the first glimmer of dawn so that they might have as much time as possible before the great heat of midday, and they coursed the gazelle northwards over the desert for many miles, parallel to the Nile but some miles away from it.

By the time the sun grew too hot for hunting Thutmose and his two followers had reached a point not very far away from the great Pyramids of Giza which the Pharaohs of the Fourth Dynasty had built over twelve hundred years before.

They stopped to rest under some palm trees. But presently Thutmose, desiring to be alone and wishing to make his prayer to the great god Harmachis, entered his chariot and drove away over the desert, bidding his servants wait for him.

Away sped Thutmose, for the sand was firm and smooth, and at last he drew near to the three pyramids of Khufu, Khafra and Menkaura towering up towards the sky, the burning sun of midday flashing on their golden peaks and glittering down their polished sides like ladders of light leading up to the Boat of Re as it sailed across the sky.

Thutmose gazed in awe at these man-made mountains of stone. But most of all his attention was caught by a gigantic head and neck of stone that rose out of the sand between the greatest of the pyramids and a nearly-buried mortuary temple of huge squared stone blocks that stood on either side of the stone causeway leading from the distant Nile behind him right to the foot of the second pyramid - that of the Pharaoh Khafra.

This was a colossal carving of Harmachis the god of the rising sun, in the form of a lion with the head of a Pharaoh of Egypt - the form he had taken when he became the hunter of the followers of Set. Khafra had caused this 'sphinx' to be carved out of an outcrop of solid rock that happened to rise above the sand near the processional causeway leading from the Nile to his great pyramid. And he had bidden his sculptors shape the head and face of Harmachis in the likeness of his own.

During the long centuries since Khafra had been laid to rest in his pyramid the sands of the desert had blown against the Sphinx until it was almost buried. Thutmose could see no more than its head and shoulders, and a little ridge in the desert to mark the line of its back. For a long while he stood looking up into the majestic face of the Sphinx, crowned with the royal crown of Egypt that had the cobra's head on its brow and which held in place the folds of embroidered linen which kept the sun from head and neck - only here the folds were of stone and only the head of the serpent fitted onto the carved rock was of gold.

The noonday sun beat mercilessly down upon Thutmose as he gazed up at the Sphinx and prayed to Harmachis for help in all his troubles.

Suddenly it seemed to him that the great stone image began to stir. It heaved and struggled as if trying in vain to throw off the sand which buried its body and paws, and the eyes were no longer carved stone inlaid with lapis lazuli, but shone with life and vision as they looked down upon him. Then the Sphinx spoke to him in a great voice, and yet kindly as a father speaks to his son.

"Look upon me, Thutmose, Prince of Egypt, and know that I am Harmachis your father - the father of all Pharaohs of the Upper and Lower Lands. It rests with you to become Pharaoh indeed and wear upon your head the Double Crown of South and North; it rests with you whether or not you sit-upon the throne of Egypt, and whether the peoples of the world come and kneel before you in homage. If you indeed become Pharaoh whatever is produced by the Two Lands shall be yours, together with the tribute from all the countries of the world. Besides all this, long years of life, health and strength shall be yours.

"Thutmose, my face is turned towards you, my heart inclines to you to bring you good things, your spirit shall be wrapped in mine. But see how the sand has closed in round me on every side: it smothers me, it holds me down, it hides me from your eyes. Promise me that you will do all that a good son should do for his father; prove to me that you are indeed my son and will help me. Draw near to me, and I will be with you always, I will guide you and make you great."

Then, as Thutmose stepped forward the sun seemed to shine from the eyes of Harmachis the Sphinx so brightly that they dazzled him and the world went black and spun round him so that he fell insensible on the sand.

When he recovered the sun was sinking towards the summit of Khafra's pyramid and the shadow of the Sphinx lay over him.

Slowly he rose to his feet, and the vision he had seen came rushing back into his mind as he gazed at the great shape half-hidden in the sand which was already turning pink and purple in the evening light.

"Harmachis, my father!" he cried, "I call upon you and all the gods of Egypt to bear witness to my oath. If I become Pharaoh, the first act of my reign shall be to free this your image from the sand and build a shrine to you and set in it a stone telling in the sacred writing of Khem of your command and how I fulfilled it."

Then Thutmose turned to seek his chariot; and a moment later his servants, who had been anxiously searching for him, came riding up.

Thutmose rode back to Memphis, and from that day all went well with him. Very soon Amenhotep the Pharaoh proclaimed him publicly as heir to the throne; and not very long afterwards Thutmose did indeed become King of Egypt one of her greatest Kings.