



MESU ANDREWS

*“Poetic and fiercely compelling,
this is Mesu Andrews’s finest yet.”*

—TOSCA LEE,
best-selling author of
The Legend of Sheba and Iscariot

THE A TREASURES OF THE NILE NOVEL
PHAROAH'S
DAUGHTER

The Pharaoh's Daughter by Mesu Andrews

Prologue

[The angel of the Lord] replied, "Why do you ask my name? It is beyond understanding." — Judges 13:18

The royal linen closet is a dark hiding place, but I'm a big girl—almost five inundations old—so I'm trying not to be afraid.

I wonder . . . is it dark in the underworld? Was Ummi Kiya afraid when she and the baby inside her crossed over this morning?

The priest ordered me and my little sister to the birthing chamber. Ankhe is only three. She wouldn't go.

The priest was angry, so he came to our chamber and grabbed Ankhe's hand. "You must see the beauty of Tawaret—goddess of childbirth!"

Instead, we saw Ummi Kiya's blood poured out on the straw under her birthing stool. Her light-brown skin was white as milk. The midwives pulled out a baby boy, but he was as gray as granite.

The angry priest wasn't angry anymore. He knelt before Ankhe and me. "Anubis, god of the underworld, has stolen their breath. I'm sorry."

I ran from the birthing chamber, screaming, before Anubis could steal my breath too. I've been hiding a long time because Anubis might still be hunting. He knows my name, Meryetaten-tasherit. It's hard to understand, but I'm called a decoy—named after Queen Nefertiti's daughter Meryetaten to confuse Anubis should he prowl the palace grounds. If I stay in this linen wardrobe all day and night, perhaps the dark god will take the Great Wife's daughter instead.

Nefertiti, the Great Wife, hates me because Abbi Akhenaten loved my mother. Ummi Kiya was his Beloved Wife, and she gave him a son—my brother, Tutankhamun.

Pharaohs like sons, but Abbi Akhenaten doesn't like daughters. He frowns when my sister Ankhe and I enter the throne room. Maybe it's because of Ankhe's tantrums.

Ummi Kiya said Ankhe's ka is troubled like Abbi's. He throws tantrums too, but because he's pharaoh, he doesn't get in trouble.

My legs hurt, and my tummy's rumbling. I don't want to stay in this dark closet anymore. But the linen robes hanging around me smell like Ummi Kiya—lotus blossoms and honey. Who will love me now that she's gone?

My brother Tut will. He's only six, but he protects me. He checks my bed for scorpions at night and makes his tutors teach me the same lessons he's learning. We learn about Hittites and Nubia, and we try to write hieroglyphs.

Ankhe is too little for lessons, and she doesn't know about love either. Will she ever love? Or will she be like Abbi Akhenaten and live forever with a broken ka?

I hear footsteps. Someone is coming. My heart feels like horses racing in my chest.

"Mery?"

Someone's calling me. I think I know that voice.

"Mery, habiba, I know you're in there."

A little light shines in, and I peek through the robes at a kind woman's face. Her cheeks are plump and round, her smile warm like the setting sun.

"You know my ummi," I say.

"Yes, I was Kiya's friend. Do you remember my name, Mery?"

She offers her hand, but I scoot behind the robes into the corner of my wooden shelter. Her smile dies, and I wonder if she'll unleash Anubis now that I've been found. I hear a sound like a wounded dog—*it's me! I must stop crying!*

"Mery, I'm sure your ummi Kiya's heart measured lighter than a feather on Anubis's scale of justice. She is waiting for us both in the afterlife, but she would want you to trust me now."

I can't stop shaking, can't speak. I can only stare at this woman whose smile is gone and whose eyes are now filling with tears. Is she angry? I don't remember her name, but I know she's the big general's wife. Will she call the army to kill me?

"Your abbi Akhenaten has given you to General Horemheb and me. You are our daughter now."

She reaches for me again, but I slap her hand away. "No! I want Tut!" I bury my face in my hands and pray for Anubis to find me. *Take me to Ummi Kiya!*

"Mery. Mery!" The general's wife is kneeling and bent into the closet, shaking my shoulders. "Tut will stay with you. We're all staying here at the Memphis Palace together. Your brother, you, me, and General Horemheb. You will be with Tut as you've always been." She strokes my hair and doesn't seem angry that I yelled.

Slowly, I look at her. "Did Abbi give Tut away too?"

"No, little habiba. Tut is prince regent. He will always be Akhenaten's son, but all Kiya's children will remain under General Horemheb's protection in Memphis. Because the general and I have no children, Pharaoh gave you as a precious gift. You are now our daughter. I hope this pleases you."

She cups my cheek and looks at me the way Umami did. Maybe she could love me a little. "What is your name, lady?" I ask.

“I am Amenia. Would you like to know the new name General Horemheb has chosen for you?”

I suck in a quick breath and scoot to the edge of the wardrobe, surprising my new ummi. “I get a new name? Anubis will never find me if I have a new name!”

Chuckling, Amenia stands and helps me to my feet. “You will be called Anippe, daughter of the Nile. Do you like it?” Without waiting for a reply, she pulls me into her squishy, round tummy for a hug.

I’m trying not to cry. Pharaoh’s daughters don’t cry, but her soft, warm arms make me feel so safe. Maybe Amenia could be my new hiding place instead of the dark linen closet.

My tummy is growling again. “You must be hungry after being in that wardrobe all day.” Amenia kisses the top of my head and gives me a little squeeze before letting go. “We must present you to your abbi Horemheb before our evening meal.”

“What about Ankhe? Will she come with us to meet our new abbi?”

Amenia loses her smile. She holds my shoulders hard. “Anippe, do you trust Abbi Horemheb and me to do what’s best?” Her voice makes me shiver.

“Where is Ankhe?”

“Ankhe is safe, and she will always be your little sister, but she will not meet General Horemheb.”

After another kiss on my forehead, Amenia smiles, and we start walking through the tiled hallway to meet my new abbi. I try to stop at Ummy Kiya’s chamber, but Amenia pushes me past. So I keep walking and don’t look back. Like the waters of the Nile, I will flow.

Chapter 1

These are the names of the sons of Israel who went to Egypt with Jacob, each with his family: Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah; Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin; Dan and Naphtali; Gad and Asher. The descendants of Jacob numbered seventy in all; Joseph was already in Egypt. Now Joseph and all his brothers and all that generation died, but the Israelites were exceedingly fruitful; they multiplied greatly, increased in numbers and became so numerous that the land was filled with them. —Exodus 1:1–7

Then a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt. —Exodus 1:8

Four years later

Anippe dipped her sharpened reed in the small water jar and swirled it in the palette of black powder. Her scroll had only one stray drop of ink— one less drop than Tut’s—and she was determined to best her big brother. She drew a second water symbol, adding it to bread, water, basin, box, and owl, to finish her brother’s name: T-t-n-k-h-m-n. Leaning to her left, she peeked at Tut’s progress. Her letters were much clearer, and he now had three stray ink drops.

“Very good, Anippe.” The tutor peered over her shoulder, his breath reeking of garlic and onions. “Your writing is almost as precise as the divine son’s.”

Tut smirked, and Anippe rolled her eyes. “Thank you, revered and wise teacher.” Maybe his vision was blurred by the cloud of his stinky breath.

“My letters are just as good!” Ankhe shouted from across the cramped classroom. She slammed her reed on the small, square table and began tearing her scroll into pieces. “You spend all your time with Tut and Anippe.”

The tutor grabbed his willow switch, and Ankhe turned her back in time to save her face from the lashing. “If I spend more time with you, Ankhe-Senpaatentasherit, you will likely be whipped more often. Is that what you wish? You will show me respect in this classroom, and you will act like the daughter of a god.”

Tears stung Anippe’s eyes, but she blinked them away. Daughters of gods didn’t cry. The tutor had never used his switch on her, but she didn’t wish to test him. She reached for Tut’s hand under the table, silently begging him to intervene. The divine son was never punished.

“Oh wise and knowing teacher, let us resume our lesson.” Tut raised one eyebrow, seeming much older than his ten years. “If I am to rule Egypt someday, I must understand why some vassal nations have betrayed Pharaoh Akhenaten and pledged allegiance to Hittite dogs. Our eastern border is at risk if I can’t control buffer nations between us and our greatest threat.”

Anippe gaped at her brother. He remembered nations and territories as if they were written inside his eyelids.

The tutor issued a final glare at Ankhe before returning to a stool beside his favored pupil. “Very astute questions, son of the good god Akhenaten, who is king of Two Lands and lord of all. The Hittites are indeed our greatest eastern threat, a military machine with iron weapons, but we must also beware the Nubians in the south. They pose as loyal servants to Egypt’s king, his officials, and our military, but you must never trust a people not your own.”

Anippe slipped away from the table, certain the tutor was lost in his topic, and slid onto the bench beside Ankhe. Her little sister was still whimpering, head down. When Anippe tried to smooth her braided wig, Ankhe shoved her hand away.

Like always.

Ankhe hated discipline, but she didn’t like to be loved either. Soon after Ummi Kiya’s death, Tut told the grownups that all Pharaoh Akhenaten’s children should be tutored, and he tried to have Ankhe at the same table—between her older brother and sister. But as she grew, her tantrums became worse. Sometimes even the switch wouldn’t stop her. So the tutor moved her to a separate table.

Separate. That was what Ankhe would always be, no matter what her siblings tried. Anippe saw welts rising on Ankhe's back under her sheer linen sheath, marks from the tutor's switch. "I'll ask Ummi Amenia for some honey to put on your back."

"She's not my ummi." Ankhe picked up her reed and dipped it in water and pigment. "They didn't adopt me."

"But Amenia still cares for you, Ankhe." Anippe wanted to hug her, but she'd tried that before. Ankhe hated hugs. She hated to be touched at all.

The sound of soldiers came from the hallway, spears tapping the tiles as they marched. This sounded like more than the two guards who always stood at their doorway. This sounded like a full troop. Tut looked at Anippe, afraid, and Anippe grabbed Ankhe's hand. Her little sister didn't pull away this time.

General Horemheb appeared at the doorway, his big shoulders touching the sides and his head too tall to enter without ducking. He looked scary in his battle armor—until he saw Anippe and winked.

She wasn't afraid anymore. Her abbi would protect her against anything. He'd loved her and spoiled her since the day Amenia introduced them.

But when he saw Ankhe, his face turned as red as a pomegranate. He scowled at the tutor. "Why is my daughter seated with the little baboon? You have been told to keep them apart."

Before the tutor could answer, Abbi Horemheb grabbed Anippe's arm, lifted her from the bench, and landed her back on the stool beside Tut. Anippe's eyes filled with tears. Abbi was always rough with Ankhe but never Anippe— never his little habiba. She sat straight and tall beside Tut, blinking her eyes dry, trying to be the princess Abbi wanted her to be.

When her abbi returned to the doorway, Anippe noticed two other people standing with the soldiers—a beautiful lady and Vizier Ay. Abbi Horem hated the vizier. Maybe that was why he'd lost his temper.

Who is that pretty woman with them? The woman wore a long, pleated robe, fastened at her shoulder with a jeweled clasp. Her braided wig fell in layers with pretty stones woven through it on gold thread. Anippe studied her face. She looked familiar, but she wasn't one of Amenia's friends who visited the Memphis Palace.

Vizier Ay took three steps and stopped in front of Tut and Anippe's table. "Pharaoh Akhenaten has journeyed beyond the horizon. The priests have begun the customs of Osiris."

Tut straightened and hid his shaking hands under the table. He was quiet for a while, breathing as if he'd run a long race. When his breath came smoothly again, he said, "The good god Akhenaten will cross the night sky and warm us with the sun each day." His voice quaked. He was trying hard to be brave, but Anippe knew how much Tut loved Abbi Akhenaten. The weight of Egypt now rested on her brother's slim shoulders. "When do we sail for the burial ceremony?"

Vizier Ay tilted his head and smiled, as if Tut had seen only five inundations. “We have much to discuss with you, divine son, but first I would have you meet your new wife.”

“Wife?” Tut squeaked and then peered around the vizier at the woman. Anippe’s big brother withered into a shy boy. He motioned for General Horemheb’s approach and then beckoned him close for a whisper. “I have no need of a wife, Horemheb—not yet.”

Abbi Horem leaned down, eye to eye. “Divine son and beloved prince, a young king needs three things to rule well: a teachable ka, wise advisors, and a good wife.” He tilted his head toward the pretty lady at the door. “Senpa is your good wife. Ay and I are your advisors. And you have demonstrated teachability. You are both humble and powerful. I am honored to bask in your presence, most favored son of Aten.”

Tut’s throat bobbed up and down, perhaps swallowing many words before the right ones came to mind. A bead of sweat appeared on his upper lip while everyone waited for him to speak.

“How old is she?” Ankhe blurted out the question Anippe wanted to ask but didn’t. Tut’s eyebrows rose, clearly awaiting an answer.

Abbi Horem’s face turned red again, and he slammed his hand on Ankhe’s table. “You will be silent unless asked to speak.”

Ankhe raised her chin in defiance but didn’t say another word. Vizier Ay guided the pretty woman toward the table where Tut and Anippe sat. “Divine prince, meet your wife, Ankhe-Senpaaten. She is your half sister— daughter of Akhenaten and Nefertiti. You may call her *Senpa*.”

Anippe stared at Nefertiti’s daughter. All their lives, they’d been warned of Nefertiti’s evil. Now Tut must marry one of her daughters? How could they ask it of him? Senpa was beautiful, but she was ancient—at least twenty inundations, maybe twenty-five. How could a ten-year-old be a husband to a twentyyear-old queen?

Anippe shivered and earned a stern glance from Abbi Horem.

Vizier Ay cleared his throat and nudged Senpa aside. “Divine son and ruler of my heart, we have many details to discuss regarding the burial ceremony and your coronation. Perhaps you, in your great wisdom, could dismiss your sisters to Amenia’s chamber to plan the wedding festival?”

“Yes, you may go.” Tut’s voice sounded small.

Anippe wanted to stay, but Abbi Horem was already instructing a contingent of guards to escort them to Amenia’s chamber.

“Wait!” Anippe’s outburst quieted the room. “If it pleases my dear abbi, I would ask one question.” She stood and bowed to her abbi, using her best courtly manners to gain his pleasure before asking what burned in her belly.

“You may ask it, my daughter.”

Lifting her chin and squaring her shoulders, she tried to speak as a king's sister—not as sister to a crown prince. “Will Ankhe and I remain here at Memphis Palace with Tut and Senpa after their marriage?”

Vizier Ay laughed, startling Anippe from her composure. Abbi Horem turned her chin gently, regaining her attention. “No, little habiba. Tut will remain here at the Memphis Palace with me and Vizier Ay. However, Senpa, Amenia, you, and Ankhe will relocate to the Gurob Harem Palace with the other noblemen's wives and children. The king's officials visit Gurob several times a year. You'll enjoy helping in the linen shop and have many little girls to play with.”

Anippe worked hard to keep her smile in place, but her heart felt ripped in two parts. First Ummi Kiya and now Tut? Would the gods take away everyone she loved?

She bowed slightly to her abbi and then reached for the scroll on which she'd drawn Tut's name—a memento of their last class together.

The tutor blocked her path, hand outstretched. “I'm sorry, Princess. I can't let you keep that scroll.”

“But why? I—” Ankhe jumped to her side, grabbed the scroll, and hid it behind her back. Abbi Horem snatched it away, gave it to the tutor, and raised his hand to strike Ankhe. Anippe stepped between them, halting the general's hand.

Grabbing Anippe's shoulders, he shook his head. “You protect her too much, habiba. She must learn to behave as a princess.” He hugged her tight and kissed her cheek. When he stood, towering above Anippe and Ankhe, he addressed them both. “You can no longer write your brother's name in hieroglyph. He is now divine, and his name is sacred. Only royal scribes may write the six-part name of a king within an oval cartouche. Now, my guards will escort you to Amenia's chamber with Senpa.”

Anippe obeyed without argument. She looked over her shoulder as they left, wondering when Tut would become a god. This morning they'd laughed and teased and even raced from their chambers to the schoolroom. She'd almost beaten him. Surely a god could run faster than a girl.

Tut sat utterly still, expressionless, listening to his advisors. Perhaps that was what a god looked like—empty.

Anippe made sure Ankhe was behind her and then followed the beautiful daughter of Nefertiti down the open-air corridor to the women's chambers. Losing herself in the sound of chirping birds and sandals on tile, she breathed in the smell of lotus blossoms as they passed a garden pond.

Like the waters of the Nile, I will flow. I am Anippe, daughter of . . . Horemheb and Amenia.