

THE WEIGHT OF MY HEART

The Story Of Omm Sety

A Play By
Lee Gundersheimer

For Ruth Jaffe and Maggy Jacqmin
Two Dorothy's who dance with the ancients
And Cassey who was born an old soul

For performance rights please contact the author at lee.gunder@gmail.com.
In most cases, the rights will be waived as
an in kind donation to your theater.

Copyright 1985
Lenore Press

The Weight Of My Heart Cast Of Characters

The play is performed by eleven actors, 6 women and 5 men

Omm Sety

Omm Sety born Dorothy Eady, is played by three actresses:

Omm Sety a woman in her seventies

Dorothy Eady ages from sixteen to thirty-five

Young Dorothy the same woman during childhood (doubles as Young Sety)

Ancient Egypt

Sety I Pharaoh of Egypt, forty five.

Antef High priest, Temple Of Sety at Abydos, forties (doubles as Imam)

Bentreshyt a priestess of Isis in Ancient Egypt, sixteen

Sakarra her friend and another priestess, eighteen

London, England -early 1900's

Mrs. Eady Dorothy's mother, ages from 25- 55

Mr. Eady Dorothy's father, ages from 26-56

Aunt Helen matron Aunt of Eady family (same actress who plays Dorothy)

Doctor British family physician (played by same actor as Samir)

Sir Wallis Budge head of Department of Egyptian Studies, British Museum, sixties

Abydos, Modern Egypt

Samir district official, the Egyptian Department Of Antiquities, thirties

Young Sety Dorothy's son (same actress who plays Young Dorothy)

Imam Meguid Dorothy's husband, an Egyptian engineer, thirty (played by the actor that plays Antef)

ACT ONE

The play takes place in many locales, but the primary set is the garden of the Temple Of Sety I in Abydos, Egypt. The other settings may be suggested by lighting or projection and a single piece of furniture. The action of the play is continuous and the play should flow uninterrupted until the end of each act. Lights come up on an old women "covered" in a Middle Eastern fashion by a colorful piece of fabric. She walks barefoot to center stage.

OMM SETY. All right gather round. Step this way. You'll have to move in a little closer. Would someone please take hold of that child? Yes, the one who has been terrorizing the entire tour thus far. Please, these walls were built in the nineteenth dynasty, they have managed to survive for centuries, but they have not had to face your little- what was his name? Cecil. Yes, well. They never had to face the onslaught of Cecil before. *(She clears her throat.)* I must have swallowed a beetle. No, that's just an expression, my dear. For a scratchy throat. No need to look so faint. Now, then as I said before, it might have been easier to start our little visit to the Temple Of Sety The First, here, with the gardens. But we in "show business" like to save the best for last. A Finale, so to speak- Excuse me, but there may be no photographs in this part of the temple please, out of respect. Thank you. Now if you would all turn around and try to imagine where we are standing was the center of a luxurious garden. Pomegranate and fig trees all along those edges, oleander and jasmine throughout.

The lights begin to come up on a wall of The Temple Of Sety I in Abydos, Egypt. Omm Sety is standing on a granite cube in what was the center of a pond in a courtyard.

OMM SETY. And at the very center, where I am standing, a rectangular lotus pool. The lotus was the symbol of life and reincarnation. The sun god Ra- the father of Osiris and all the other Gods- his soul was said to live among its leaves. For each night the flower curls into itself and withdraws underwater-

The lights slowly begin to come up on the same place in another age and will then cross-fade to two young priestesses and a priest. The priestesses seem to be performing a dance and the priest is watching.

OMM SETY. Only to be reborn each dawn spreading its leaves to reach out to the sky. Now Osiris was an extremely powerful God. The god of the afterlife; the god who passed judgment on the soul after death. And elaborate ceremonies were given for his benefit, for if Osiris was pleased, he might judge less harshly. This courtyard was often the scene of sacred plays acted out by young priestess'-

BENTRESHYT. *(A line from a performance)* Oh, my lord....

OMM SETY. To celebrate the glory of the gods.

Lights have now cross-faded to ancient Egypt.

ANTEF. (*Directing*) No, Bentreshyt! No! This is a moment of great mourning. Remember the story: The demon god Seth has mutilated our lord Osiris, hacked his body into pieces, and scattered them throughout the land. And you, our lady Isis, have been searching desperately for the little pieces of your husband for years. So you are distraught. Now Sakarra here, is your sister Nephtys, who, because she is Seth's wife, you don't know whether to trust her or not. But- she has discovered along the edge of this river his foot. (*He motions for SAKARRA. to pick up the ornate "foot."*) You see? You have just found his foot.

BENTRESHYT. I see.

ANTEF. Good. So you find the foot, and you cry out, "Oh my lord!" Distraught. Much more grief!

BENTRESHYT. But this is how I grieve. Is not quiet grief powerful?

ANTEF. No. It is boring.

BENTRESHYT. But it feels true.

ANTEF. It feels true. Do you want them sleeping through the resurrection? It feels true. (*He beats her swiftly with a stick*) There, does that feel true? Now, do what I say. Anguish. (*He strikes her, again. She cries out.*) Good. Now try again.

BENTRESHYT. Oh, my lord!

ANTEF. Much better. Almost. My dear, you are one of the finest I have ever seen. Audiences love you. But you are a God's nightmare to teach. Remember, your mother was a vegetable seller, and your father? Who knows who your father was?

BENTRESHYT. He was a warrior.

ANTEF. A warrior... One of a thousand common soldiers on leave for a fortnight. Some warrior.

BENTRESHYT. He crossed the oceans and had seen other civilizations.

SAKKARA. Bentreshyt.

ANTEF. Quiet!

SAKKARA. (*Trying to distract Antef and sensing it might work.*) Couldn't we go over my dance, my lord? The dance of the elbow?

ANTEF. I said quiet! My little cat, you remember who took you from the mud near the riverbank and turned you into a Priestess Of Isis. You remember and you listen. Is that clear? (*Raises his staff*) Is that clear?

BENTRESHYT. Yes, my Lord.

ANTEF. Sakkara , go over your dance where you discover the elbow in the bulrushes. I need to check on the headdresses. We perform at the rise of tomorrow's sun. Why my dear Gods, why? I write you sacred chants, and you have sent me a pack of jackals to perform them.

Antef exits.

BENTRESHYT. The gods won't be pleased with this.

SAKKARA. Bentreshyt...

BENTRESHYT. Well, it's true. Only grief can come from this.

SAKKARA. Bentreshyt, we are performing this for Sety himself! You're just nervous. Everyone is. Even Antef.

BENTRESHYT. Especially Antef. Sakkara, I'm just not certain it's very good. Antef's plays are never very good.

SAKKARA. The people weep at his plays. They applaud us. We are showered in their gifts.

BENTRESHYT. That doesn't mean they are good.

SAKKARA. What about what Allergious the Wise said after the last play? Calling him "not just one of the God's own geese, but *the golden goose* himself, trumpeting truths that others can barely speak?" I suppose you know better than Allergious the Wise. Who can scribe books and make long speeches. Who has seen the edge of the Nile. Who himself constructed the forty postulates of Mathematics for obsolete triangles.

BENTRESHYT. And who has forced himself on you at least once for each postulate-

SAKKARA. Hush, you could be killed for saying these things.

BENTRESHYT. I know. But it's still true. Sakkara, I know Antef 's our master, and a devoted priest-

SAKKARA. He is our lord.

BENTRESHYT. No, Sety is our lord, and Osiris is his lord. Antef is a priest.

SAKKARA. Bentreshyt-

BENTRESHYT. And I serve him.

SAKKARA. We are to worship him.

BENTRESHYT. Even as he beats me? No, I worship our lady Isis, and our lord Osiris. Antef, I serve. And forgive me, I just don't think his words sing. "Now that I have found the foot I feel the will to move forward again?" *(Sakkara laughs.)*...Oh, don't listen to me, I haven't been myself at all today.

SAKARRA. True. Let's begin with my scream of sorrow. I'm having a lot of trouble with that. Bentreshyt, where are you going?

BENTRESHYT. *(Climbing the stairs to the top of the wall)* I had this dream last night, Sakkara-

SAKKARA. Come down from there. I love this song, "The Song Of the Elbow", but I'm having trouble with my scream-

BENTRESHYT. I had a dream that I was standing high on this ledge, overlooking this pool-

The lights come back up on Omm Sety and both scenes in two different times are now happening in the same space.

OMM SETY. This wall is perhaps the most stunning of all of the marvels of artistry found in the temple. The ledge here is covered with the story of Osiris' mutilation and resurrection, the centerpiece of all Egyptian mythology. According to the legend Osiris's own body had been pulled to pieces and scattered about the earth. After a great struggle the Goddess Isis, his wife, found each piece, each piece but one and she found a way to put him back together, piece by piece, one arm from this far away land, another leg from way over there. Thirteen of the fourteen pieces. So you see Cecil, even the God's struggle to become whole.

SAKARRA. It's very hard just to scream. Do you think if I just tried it without thinking...?

OMM SETY. It takes great effort to find who we are, where we belong. *(She pauses just a moment, a bit overcome. Repeating a question)* Which part was missing? I beg your pardon, dear boy? Oh that's right. Yes, yes, the legends do say one part of Osiris was never found. Well that I will tell you later. But this wall, this wall right

here is over twenty cubits high, and forty cubits long, and it is directly over the spot, right where I'm standing, Osiris' head which had been buried was found.

BENTRESHYT. And I fell off. I just let myself fall right off the edge-

She leans over the edge and almost falls and Sakkara screams. Blackout. Lights immediately up on the parlor of the Eady families sitting room, 1907.

AUNT HELEN. Now, Caroline, calm yourself, my dear.

MRS. EADY. Oh, sweet Christ, don't take my girl. Please, don't take my little girl. She's all I've got. I just turned my head for a moment.

Aunt Helen, a steely cold, matronly woman, is doing her level best to comfort just after what is clearly an accident that she believes was her nieces fault.

AUNT HELEN. I know dear.

MRS. EADY. Not more than a second and she'd made for the steps-

AUNT HELEN. We all know how Dorothy was-

MRS. EADY. Why?....

AUNT HELEN. Mind of her own she had. Always did.

MRS. EADY. Why, my little Doe....

Reuben Eady comes hurriedly through the front door.

EADY. Caroline?

MRS. EADY. Oh, Reuben, I'm so sorry. She wasn't anywhere near the steps-

AUNT HELEN. Of course she wasn't-

MRS. EADY. And I turned to put down the vase, and next thing I know, there she was lying at the bottom-

EADY. It's all right, love.

MRS. EADY. It happened so fast-

EADY. It's all right. *(To Helen)* Where's the doctor?

MRS. EADY. In the bedroom.

AUNT HELEN. He wanted to wait for you. (*Whispers*) He wanted to tell you himself.

EADY. Tell me what? (*Firmly*) Tell me what?

AUNT HELEN. She's gone, Reuben. Little Dorothy. She's dead. It was the fall-

DOCTOR. (*Coming in from upstairs*) Cerebral hemorrhage, I'm afraid. Result of the accident. Fell twenty two steps.... Sorry old boy. Not much I could do. I've got to go to the office- I was on my way for a game of pins, you see.

EADY. Yes, I see... So sorry-

DOCTOR. Nonsense. I think you ought to slip some of this powder in the Mrs.' tea. Calm her nerves a bit. I won't be long. Just have to change into my suit. and nurse and I will be back to take the necessary- I'll need a death certificate-

EADY. Yes, yes of course.

DOCTOR. Terribly sorry, again Mr. Eady. Tragic, just tragic. Good day, Mrs. Blankinshire.

AUNT HELEN. Good day Doctor.

EADY. Good day, sir. (*Notices Caroline picking up the pieces of the vase*) What are you doing Caroline?

MRS. EADY. This was Grand Ma-ma's vase.

AUNT HELEN. It's been a shock, Rueben.

MRS. EADY. She's the only one who ever cared for Doe. Out of all the family.

AUNT HELEN. Oh, now Caroline, honestly.

MRS. EADY. Where are you going?

EADY. To see her. I want to... see her.

MRS. EADY. Everyone else thought she was queer. You could always tell. A baby they'd say? Oh, how sweet. Then they'd look at her and try to be so- polite. Even you Helen.

AUNT HELEN. Maybe you ought to lie down, dear.

Eady has opened the door to the bedroom.

EADY. Caroline?

YOUNG DOROTHY. Morning, Father. Morning Ma-ma. *(Not as sweetly)* Auntie Helen, What are you doing here?

AUNT HELEN. Good lord!

BLACKOUT. In the darkness we hear the following dialogue:

A VOICE (SIR BUDGE). You see my bug, time is not like the face of a clock, numbers to be counted in sequence....

MRS. EADY. Dorothy? *(They are searching for their daughter)*

EADY. Dorothy? Honestly, Caroline. How could you loose a child?

MRS. EADY. Reuben...

A VOICE. No, time flows in many directions not just forward and backward...

EADY. She could be anywhere.

MRS. EADY. Dorothy?

EADY. This place is full of stairs. You know how she is. You can't take your eyes off of her. You, of all people-

MRS. EADY. Well, damn it. You had her hand.

EADY. Caroline. Please.

Lights up on Dorothy sitting in front of a large display case in the British Museum. She is mesmerized.

MRS. EADY. Well, you did. You had her hand. Dorothy?

EADY. *(They are now entering and see her)* There she is.

MRS. EADY. Oh, thank God.

A very old and eccentric man walks up to Dorothy from the other side.

SIR BUDGE. Hello there, my little flower.

MRS. EADY. Reuben!

YOUNG DOROTHY. Hello. Do you live here?

SIR BUDGE. Live here? No, I wish I could, but they won't let me.

YOUNG DOROTHY. Who won't let you?

SIR BUDGE. Well, my wife for one....

EADY. Dorothy!

YOUNG DOROTHY. Can I live here?

EADY. Good day, sir.

SIR BUDGE. Good day. Is this your little girl?

EADY. Yes sir. (*Offering his hand.*) Reuben Eady, sir.

SIR BUDGE. Sir Wallis Budge.

EADY. My wife, Caroline Eady, and this is our little girl-

YOUNG DOROTHY. (*Shaking his hand politely, but hating the sound of her name*) Dorothy.

SIR BUDGE. You aren't by any chance a relation of a Major Thornton Eady, heads a regiment in Northern Africa?

EADY. No, no, not that I'm aware of.

SIR BUDGE. Good, rather a pig of a man, if I might say so.

MRS. EADY. Dorothy, what are you doing ? (*She is taking off her shoes.*) Do put your shoes back on, right this minute.

EADY. Have the most dreadful time with the girl and shoes. Won't keep them on her feet at all at home-

MRS. EADY. Rueben-

EADY. Well, she won't. Don't know how many times I've tried to tell her. Given up trying, now, I have.

YOUNG DOROTHY. I want to stay here, Ma-ma.

MRS. EADY. Well, we can for a bit and look around-

YOUNG DOROTHY. No!

MRS. EADY. If you put your shoes back on.

YOUNG DOROTHY. No, I mean live here. I like it here.

MRS. EADY. Yes, well- (*notices Sir Budge taking off his shoes*) Reuben...

SIR BUDGE. I can't remember the last time I walked around barefoot...

YOUNG DOROTHY. Look!

MRS. EADY. Good Lord...

EADY. Caroline. (*notices Dorothy staring at the mummy case*) I believe that is what they call a mummy, Dorothy. Is it not, Sir-

SIR BUDGE. Budge. Wallis Budge. Yes, now that's more like it. Yes. A little cold perhaps.

MRS. EADY. Oh, Reuben that's horrible.

SIR BUDGE. Not at all, you should try it.

MRS. EADY. No, no. That.

YOUNG DOROTHY. No, he's not. He's beautiful. If you don't live here, who does? Does he?

SIR BUDGE. Well, yes...

EADY. I'm terribly sorry, sir. You see my child's a bit, well- queer.

MRS. EADY. Reuben. She's just awfully bright, that's all. Older than her years.

EADY. And a bit loony in the bargain. But a dearer child one will never meet.

SIR BUDGE. Is this your first visit to the Museum, Dorothy?

YOUNG DOROTHY. (*Amazed at his necklace, a Egyptian amulet*) Huh?

SIR BUDGE. I said "is this your first visit to the British Museum."

MRS. EADY. Yes, it is our first time with Dorothy. I've been here before, but ages ago now-

YOUNG DOROTHY. I've been here.

MRS. EADY. No, I'm very sure we've never been here. *(Dorothy kisses his amulet)* Dorothy.

YOUNG DOROTHY. I have.

SIR BUDGE. You like this? It's Nineteenth Dynasty. Authentic. Everything in this room is too. I should know. I brought most of it here. This is all part of the greatest civilization to have ever lived on this earth.

YOUNG DOROTHY. I know.

MRS. EADY. Dorothy.

SIR BUDGE. Do you.

YOUNG DOROTHY. Yes. These are my people.

SIR BUDGE. Are they.

YOUNG DOROTHY. Yes. And they want to go home. They do not belong here.

Lights begin to crossfade back to the tour at the temple.

OMM SETY. Any further questions?

YOUNG DOROTHY. And neither do I.

EADY. You see sir, "very bright."

SIR BUDGE. Or else older than her years.

The lights have completed the cross-fade and the tour is finishing with a question and answer session.

OMM SETY. Yes, Cecil? How old am I anyway? No, not at all. Nonsense. I'm not offended by the question. Mr. Cecil, who obviously labors under the misapprehension that precociousness might pass for preciousness, is merely expressing his curiosity. You don't by any chance work for the Department of Antiquities, do you Cecil? No, you obviously have just never seen anyone quite so old before? So ancient, so weathered, so wrinkled? Well, I was born Jan. 16th, 1904, so that makes me how old? Yes, well math is probably not one of your strong suits

either. Over seventy, Cecil. I'm over seventy now, and therefore if you ask the department of Antiquities- I'm too old to continue, a sort of "quantitative risk". I sound "pissed off?" Well, Cecil, I felt compelled to respond to your query, and you will have to forgive me, if after five tours today in the scorching sun, I am not as peaches and puddings as you dear boy. *(Before turning to leave.)* Now if there are no further insightful inquiries, if after having visited this most wondrous of places, there are no more pressing questions than where are the facilities located, and how old am I, than I will conclude our visit with "good day, thank you all for coming to this holy of holy places." *(She turns to go, but then decides not to.)* However today is a bit different, Cecil, yes. And you, my pint-size poet, were keen enough to actually sense it. After my over thirty five years of tours, four or five a day, sometimes seven days a week, for the first time that I can ever recall, yes! I feel rather "pissed off"!! And I feel I have the right to be. It took me over half my life to find my home here at Abydos, half my life. And now they want to take it from me. They want to try and replace me. Cecil, I hope you never live long enough to have to go endure this-- unspeakable injustice. You see, Cecil, I have to live with the unique distinction of having become too antique for the Department of Antiquities.

Drum roll cross-fades to Dorothy, now ten, on a stage performing a song. Her father announces her and then coaches her from the side.

EADY. And now ladies and gentleman as owner and manager of the New Palladium, the finest motion picture house in all of Great Briton, I am proud to present an interlude from our exciting picture "The Thief Of Baghdad". Here once again, the singing sensation Dorothy Lincoln! *(Young Dorothy reluctantly moves to the spotlight)* Go on love, just like we rehearsed it-

Young Dorothy sings "Somewhere In The Sahara" slowly at first and then gathering confidence in the lyrics meaning she begins to sound rather well, even adding a little dance step. As the song finishes to polite applause the lights crossfade to Sakkara drinking wine "backstage" after the festival in Ancient Egypt.

SAKARRA. Listen to that Bentreshyt. Listen to them applauding. Can you hear it? Oh, the Gods themselves couldn't possibly feel as good as I do. *(She drinks.)* Breathe in. *(She does)* Breathe out. Feel that? Life! Hear that applause. Are you as happy as I am?

BENTRESHYT. *(From behind a screen changing)* You mean as drunk as you are?

SAKARRA. That too. I thought you were marvelous- what are you doing?

BENTRESHYT. Changing.

SAKARRA. Well, hurry up. It's lonely being ecstatic all by yourself. I said you were wonderful tonight.

BENTRESHYT. Thank you. So were you. (*They kiss.*)

SAKARRA. I was, wasn't I? Even the scream went well. Where are you going?

BENTRESHYT. To finish changing.

SAKARRA. Not me. I don't ever want to change. I want to be a Goddess forever. Agran the Elder said, and I quote: In the sixty three years of mystery plays, it was the most beautiful I'd ever seen. End quote. Then he grabbed me under my tunic.

BENTRESHYT. Sakkara.

SAKARRA. Well, he did. The bastard. Forgive me, Isis, it's the wine talking. Nothing like the sight of a virgin priestess to get old Agran going. Or any of the rest of them for that matter. (*She sings a bit of her song:*) Here is the foot, the very foot that I found. Our Lord Sety is very beautiful, don't you think? I know we've all seen drawings of him, but they don't do him justice.

BENTRESHYT. I didn't really notice.

SAKARRA. Well, I did. And he seemed to take notice of me. In your death scene. When he should have been weeping, I could swear I saw him staring at me as I sang: "She is dead, very dead!"

BENTRESHYT. Sakkara, I don't think you should drink any more of this.

SAKARRA. Why not? It's true. He was looking right at me with those eyes-

BENTRESHYT. He does have kind eyes-

SAKARRA. Kind? Penetrating is more the word for them. Oh, ho! So you did notice him.

BENTRESHYT. Only for a moment. But I didn't dare look at him at first. I was too frightened. While I was lying there dead, I peered open my eyes-

SAKARRA. Bentreshyt!

BENTRESHYT. What? Do you think he notice me looking at him?

SAKARRA. You opened your eyes?

BENTRESHYT. I always open my eyes. Just a little. Like this, see? They look closed-

SAKARRA. During my dance of lamentation? My mourning over your death, you had your eyes open?

BENTRESHYT. Just a peek.

SAKARRA. Well, I hope no one could tell--

SETY. (*Who has entered quietly unnoticed*) No one did. I am quite sure of it.

SAKARRA. (*Dropping to her knees*) Oh, my lady Isis....

BENTRESHYT. My lord....

SETY. We were all too busy weeping. At such a regrettable loss. (*Pause, lost a bit at seeing her so closely, then remembering Sakarra*) And at the beauty of your grief.

SAKARRA. Thank you, my Lord.

BENTRESHYT. Yes...

SAKARRA. Yes, what?

BENTRESHYT. I was... going to say... "Yes, my thanks as well...My lord."

SETY. But?

BENTRESHYT. But my tongue is liquid.

SAKARRA. It's the wine, my Lord. She will be asleep soon. Always puts her to sleep. (*Bentreshyt moves away quietly*) But I--I'll be dancing till the sun kisses the dunes. We were feeling so joyous. And proud. Joyous and proud. Performing for your highness.

SETY. No prouder than I to have witnessed-

SAKARRA. You thought we did justice to it? Really? It's such a lovely play.

SETY. Yes-

SAKARRA. They will be performing it for centuries to come. I told our master Antef - they will be performing "The Mutilation and Resurrection Of Our Lord Osiris" for centuries. It's almost as lovely as "The Pharaoh who Consumed His Own Daughter" that we performed last harvest. Forgive me. I know it's not polite to go on like this. Please, forgive me-

SETY. Not at all, feel free to speak. (*Hoping*) Both of you. You have my permission to say whatever you wish. Candor is a rare jewel in a ruler's crown.

SAKARRA. Just as polite as people say, isn't he? Just as wise and polite as they say. Never a Pharaoh as great as Sety.

SETY. I am only as great as my people's imagination paints me to be. (*Looks again at Bentreshyt.*) It is... my people...who....Forgive me my tongue has also lost its will.

BENTRESHYT. My Lord must be very tired. From his journey.

Antef enters unnoticed only by Sety.

SETY. Yes. And the play. How long was that play? It did seem to wander a bit- (*Despite herself Bentreshyt laughs just a bit*) Ah, so you agree?

BENTRESHYT. You are my Lord, therefore I must agree.

SETY. Nonsense.

SAKARRA. But she loves this play, your Holiness, as we all do.

SETY. It had so little truth. Even in legend there is truth. And it suffered greatly by having your death so soon.

ANTEF. But that is how the story unfolds, your greatness. And certainly I would not feel it proper to rewrite history.

SETY. Neither do I. Though I am often asked to do so.

SAKARRA. His highness was telling us earlier what a marvelous play he thought it was.

SETY. Yes. (*Offers his hand to be kissed*) I must appear ungracious.

ANTEF. Not at all. I am sorry I did not announce myself, I had no idea that you were granting us audience.

SETY. Forgive my rudeness. You do not tell me how to rule our land-

ANTEF. Certainly not, my Lord-

SETY. I should not tell you how to write your plays.

ANTEF. The comparison seems most gracious-

SETY. Do you not build your plays just as I build my Temples? To be outlive the centuries?

ANTEF. I merely offer them as gifts to our Lord....

SETY. Now it is you who is being gracious.

SAKARRA. People will be performing the mystery plays of Antef -

BENTRESHYT. The Golden Goose-

SAKARRA. Thousands of years from now, just as they will travel from all over the world to walk these very gardens where your highness once stood.

Lights crossfade to the tour.

OMM SETY. And it was on these very steps that the mystery plays and ceremonies for the gods were performed, and where legend has it the great pharaoh himself, Sety I, often went for long walks. It was thought this garden was his favorite spot in all the world. "I have found nowhere, in all our great land, than right here among these flowers, in the shade of these juniper trees, sitting with my feet in this cool water- there are wonders in this place that cannot be named.

SETY. (*Appearing in a light sitting on the wall.*) This is where peace is at home, and where my soul shall live forever.

OMM SETY. (*She is visibly moved by her speech, and tears have started in her eyes*) And that concludes our little journey through eternity. I thank you all, or rather both of you, for expressing interest in a place almost forgotten to the centuries, but that at one time was, as I like to put it, the heart if not the head of one of the great civilizations of the ancient world. (*Again to a question.*) Which part? Which part was what? Oh yes, I did promise, you are right child. I will tell you mother and she- certainly there is not call for a you to make a scene- I had no intention in upsetting your child, M'am, I was merely...well alright if you insist. Somehow obstinance being the family calling card does not surprise me in the least. The only part of our Lord Osiris that was not found, after it had been hacked from his body, was his penis. The legends say that a great bronze phallus was fashioned and re-attached, molten, forged with fire- that's right--- run along dear boy....

SAMIR. Miss Sety, may I have a word with you please?

OMM SETY. I'm sorry, but it is customary for me to offer a prayer to our lady Isis just about now-

SAMIR. I'm from the Department of Antiquities, I've been sent-

OMM SETY. To dispose of me. I did not write the legend, sir. I merely teach what has been known for centuries.

SAMIR. I've been sent to meet with you to discuss relocation, possibly to a more central office.

OMM SETY. Relocation- why when they want to get rid of someone do they always use-

SAMIR. We sent you a memo, weeks ago- announcing my arrival so that we can discuss an equitable solution-

OMM SETY. Solution? Solution to what? A solution begs the existence of a problem-

SAMIR. Miss Sety- The department has already expressed their concern- (*sits to wipe his forehead*) that the desert in the middle of nowhere, alone, is no place for a woman of advanced years-where are you going?

OMM SETY. To pray. If you would like to discuss the matter after I'm finished, I'll be happy to listen to whatever decision I'm sure you have already reached. And if I were you, I'd watch where you sit. There's a scorpion about to kiss your bottom hello and welcome you to Amanti.

SAMIR. Good lord!!!

Lights crossfade to the British Museum. Young Dorothy is holding a jeweled scorpion.

YOUNG DOROTHY. It's beautiful.

SIR BUDGE. It's a scorpion. From the headdress of the goddess Selket- guardianess of coffins and whose anger, it was believed, caused the desert heat. The ancients believed in many different deities. And each had their assignation for which they were responsible.

YOUNG DOROTHY. My Aunt Helen causes it to sleet. But she's hardly a God. An aberration maybe- Oh, what's that?

SIR BUDGE. These are Hieroglyphs. The words or alphabet of the ancients. I'm translating.

YOUNG DOROTHY. Oh, please teach me. I'd much rather learn this than what they teach me at school.

SIR BUDGE. My bug. You mustn't talk like that.

YOUNG DOROTHY. But it's true. All the nuns hated me. I was expelled.

SIR BUDGE. Expelled?

YOUNG DOROTHY. Yes. Last week. Because I wouldn't sing. And because I threw a hymnal at Sister McPugh's head. They wanted me to sing that awful hymn, the one that beseeches God to "curse the Swart Egyptians." and I refused. So Sister McPugh asked me to step out from the chorus and sing it alone, and I told her I couldn't, and she asked why, so I told her I just couldn't. And all of the others started laughing at me, and she took out her ruler and ordered me to sing it or I would be singing a different hymn. And that made them laugh even louder, so I threw my hymnal at her head, but she ducked so it broke the picture of the Pope on the wall instead. And I walked out. They sent me straight to the director's. Apparently in the over two hundred years of the Blessed Sacrament School For Girls, no one had ever assaulted the Pope with a hymnal. So it was straight to the Director's - and he looked at my papers and tisked and said very disdainfully "You are not a Catholic are you?" And I said "no, Father, but I do like the sermons, and the rites, and the ceremonies. I find them somewhat satisfying. My parents are of the Protestant faith, sir." Unable to resist an opportunity to instruct, he jumped in with- "Well... then.... that makes you a Protestant, as well, child." "No, sir, I said *my parents* are Protestant." "Well, then, what are you?" "I myself follow the ancient Egyptian religion." Well, the poor man almost hit the floor of the rectory. My mother was called in to be scolded-

Caroline Eady appears down stage.

MRS. EADY. Well, I certainly hope Sister McPugh is alright. Her reflexes must be quite keen for someone her age- and weight. But, I must say, in all honesty Father, I'm not surprised. Dorothy has always been rather an unique child. Do you know when she was seven years old, one evening she was sitting on the floor looking at some magazines, and I was working on my crocheting- I crochet little doilies and things. Sometimes I get bold and try a sweater or a shawl- Anyway, I was at my doilies and all of a sudden she bolted up off the floor and thrust this picture in my face. A picture of this old temple with pillars, hieroglyphs, and sand. And her eyes were jutting out- open wide, like this, almost like she was choking to death. And I said "What's wrong, child?" and she didn't say a word, almost like she couldn't speak, and pointed down to the picture. The Temple Of Sety The First At Abydos, Upper Egypt, the caption underneath said. And I said "Dorothy, what is it, dear?" And with her eyes still wide-

YOUNG DOROTHY. *This* is my home. *This* is where I used to live.

MRS. EADY. Well, that is hardly the sort of thing one says to one's mother...

YOUNG DOROTHY. But why is it all broken? And where is the Garden?

MRS. EADY. Garden, I said, Listen, Dorothy, one should never tell lies! You know you have never been there. This is a photograph of an old building- thousands of years old. And it's broken because it is old. And there is no garden, because it's in the middle of the desert, and they do not have gardens in the middle of the desert. They have sand. So, no more lies, please." So, you see Father nothing would surprise me.

YOUNG DOROTHY. (*As priest*) Do you know what the child told *me*? "Since Egyptian religion was thousands of years older than Christianity, than it must be the true religion, and Christianity merely a copy."

MRS. EADY. Oh, Father, I'm so sorry--

SIR BUDGE. I don't know whether you should have said that to a priest, Dorothy-

YOUNG DOROTHY. Well, weren't Osiris and Jesus, both resurrected- didn't the Virgin Mary resemble the goddess Isis- and didn't Joseph, Mary and the infant Jesus, closely resemble Osiris, Isis, and their son, Horus. (*again, as the priest*) What kind of blasphemy is this? My dear lady- do you want your daughter to go to hell?"

MRS. EADY. No, Father, but I expect she will.

Lights crossfade to Abydos, and the official from the Department of Egyptian Antiquities, Samir, is still trapped by the scorpion.

SAMIR. I'll kill them. Send me all the way out here to the middle of nowhere. Please, Dear God, don't let me die here. Ah, ah! Hi, there little thing. Hey, there. I'm not moving, see. Not moving a muscle. So just go on your way, like a good little scorpion. That's it. Nice little scorpion. No, no, the other way, that's it. Go, play under that nice heavy rock. Crap! I don't believe this. Maybe I should just make a quick run for it- Okay... Okay-Ah!! (*He jumps onto the stone as the scorpion moves very close*) Now you've done it, Sammy- now you've pissed him off. Has his tail raised and everything. How did you die? In a three thousand year old tomb, scorpioned to death. Ah! Hi, there! Listen you stupid little bug, I didn't mean to upset you, so just leave me alone!

Lights crossfade to Bentreshyt being beaten by Antef.

ANTEF. Do you think I enjoy being upset with you. Having to discipline you?

BENTRESHYT. Obviously, yes. You do it enough.

Sety enters unseen.

ANTEF. That is because you never (*striking her again*) learn! Now what do I have to do to make you understand?

SETY. If I ever see or hear of you striking any priestess you will find yourself searching for your own head and limbs scattered along the banks of the river, do you understand?

ANTEF. Yes, your holiness.

SETY. (*Striking him*) How does it feel? Master Antef?

ANTEF. My lord, I only wish to instruct-

SETY. I have often witnessed our slave masters as they instruct their slaves, like oxen or dogs. But a dog will be twice as loyal if well treated, and will one day bite back if beaten.

ANTEF. Of course, my Lord.

SETY. Master Antef, it has been heard to be said, has it not, that I am a great leader?

ANTEF. Yes, my lord. All throughout the land. None greater.

SETY. Good. That point I will not argue with you. You knew my father did you not?

ANTEF. Of course, your Lordship.

SETY. I have also heard it said that some of my greatness, known throughout the land, is that I have a bit of my father's gift for judging the quality of a man's character.

ANTEF. I have known no equal. His wisdom was as long as the river Nile...

SETY. Long wisdom? Well no matter, for as well as my dear father could judge a vessel of wine, and of that he was unparalleled- he had a keen sense of knowing who to trust and who to hold in contempt.

ANTEF. As constant as the Sun-God Ra who sails the sun to rest each day-

SETY. Antef, my good father Ramses, held only those in contempt he didn't trust, and he trusted no one, not even himself, I'm afraid. And he had a particular dislike for priests. They were forever telling him how to die. Indeed, my father used to say "how can you trust any man who cares more about the next world than this one? If these good men are all in such a hurry to be in the next world, let them go. No one is keeping them from their journey." Oh, get up, Antef. Being prostrate would seem unhealthy for a high priest. It might teach him humility, and that would only lead to

confusion. No priest, or for that matter, no leader of any kind is ever humble. Except when their mothers visit. Or when they want something.

ANTEF. Thank you, my lord. Perhaps this would be an appropriate time to take my leave from you, my Lord.

SETY. I quite agree. I can think of no better time. (*Antef bows and begins to leave*) And in the future, think of how efficient it would be for you to take your leave before you even arrive.

BENTRESHYT. (*She bows to leave*) My lord.

SETY. Please, don't go.

BENTRESHYT. Perhaps this would be an appropriate time for *me* to-

SETY. (*Ignoring the tease*) You are not from Abydos?

BENTRESHYT. Yes, my Lord. As far as I've been told.

SETY. But your hair- I have only seen a few others. In Memphis, and Alexandria.

BENTRESHYT. My father had yellow hair. He was from the Sea Islands. He was a great warrior recruited for his strength and skill in navigating ships. Or so I'm told.

SETY. And this great navigator's name?

BENTRESHYT. May I please go, my lord?

SETY. Yes- But first tell me his name. I must know. I'd prefer not bothering with the formality, but I am your ruler. And am therefore accustomed to being answered.

BENTRESHYT. How can I tell you what I do not know myself? I would certainly like to know my "great" father's name, as would my mother, I'm sure. She was - (*struggles a moment for the word*)- an evening's entertainment- dessert- after a great victory celebration- for one of your campaigns. In the South, I believe. That much I do know.

SETY. I am told we are revered and respected, even feared as the greatest civilization the world has ever known. Then I hear stories like this, and I realize how far we have to go. Are you to perform for the next rise of the river?

BENTRESHYT. Oh, yes, I'm sure. Master Antef is already working on his latest masterpiece. It's a sequel to "The Mutilation and Resurrection of Our Lord Osiris."

SETY. A sequel?

BENTRESHYT. Yes, it's called "After the Mutilation and Resurrection Of Our Lord Osiris." It's all about Horus, the Son. He says the people love sequels, and the only way to fill the temple is to please the people. It's the second part of his mutilation and resurrection trilogy.

SETY. Well, I was going to say that I would be sure to return to witness it. I don't suppose it will be any shorter?

BENTRESHYT. I wouldn't think so-

SETY. No, probably not. The story of Horus does go on forever

BENTRESHYT. (*Sharing a moment of irreverence*) Yes, it does...

SETY. All those miracles....When I was little I remember sitting in the temple thinking it sure does take forever to save the world. And now that I'm Pharaoh, I know it would take longer than forever...Will you die so soon?

BENTRESHYT. I beg your pardon?

SETY. In the next play, I mean?

BENTRESHYT. Oh, I won't know that until it's finished. Antef never chooses the roles until he finishes. Though I'm sure Sakkara will play Horus. She plays all the lead men.

SETY. Well, then I must hurry. So much involved governing before I can return to this beautiful garden. But I will return for the sequel, I'm looking forward to it.

BENTRESHYT. So am I. (*She picks up Antef's staff*) I'm sure the rehearsals will be most "gratifying."

SETY. I will instruct one of my aides to remain here and report to me. On the "state of the arts". It seems the excesses carried out for the good of Mother Egypt warrant constant supervision.

BENTRESHYT. (*To protest*) You mustn't-

SETY. (*He lifts his shirt to show her a scar on his back. She is unsure of what he is doing*) It is not only vegetable seller's daughters who are beaten. My father loved his collection of staffs almost as much as his concubines. It won't happen again. Until then- (*offering his hand to be kissed.*)

BENTRESHYT. Thank you, my lord.

Lights crossfade to Dorothy, now eighteen, wearing a crown and Sir Budge kissing her hand.

SIR BUDGE. Now you are a queen. How does it feel?

DOROTHY. (*Seems suddenly fearful*) Wretched. Please, take it off.

SIR BUDGE. My bug, are you all right?

DOROTHY. All I could see was a beating. I felt someone whipping someone. Like my Aunt Helen does to her Schnauzer. I would never want to be queen. Ever.

SIR BUDGE. The spot is taken for the time being, little need to worry. Here, this is for you.

DOROTHY. What is this?

SIR BUDGE. Well, Hapi, the God of the Nile, keeper of the days, whispered to me that Saturday was a good day-

DOROTHY. A good day?

SIR BUDGE. Yes, the ancients believed there were three types of days. The good, the menacing, and the hostile.

DOROTHY. Those are the choices: good, menacing, and hostile? Sounds rather pessimistic. If it's not a good day, cheer up, there's always menacing or hostile-

SIR BUDGE. Anyway Hapi told me that Saturday was-

DOROTHY. My birthday-

SIR BUDGE. Eighteen, he said.

DOROTHY. Hardly a good day. Father was at the cinema all day. The weekend, busiest time for the picture business you know. So it was Mother and I, and Aunt Helen. But there was a surprise. Aunt Helen had invited some of my former classmates for tea. Can't have a birthday without a bit of a celebration, barbaric, you know-

SIR BUDGE. How nice-

DOROTHY. Yes, until about two o'clock when all the girls politely began to decline. Other engagements, feeling unwell, that sort of thing. There we were sitting in the parlor. With all the decorations- Surprise! So, we made butter candy and read

Tennyson. Not exactly a good day. I'd call it menacing, wouldn't you? Too ironic to be hostile- (*the present is opened, it is a small carving*) Oh, it's exquisite-

SIR BUDGE. Isn't it?

DOROTHY. Is it a monkey- No, it's a - is it a dwarf?

SIR BUDGE. No one knows for sure. Legend has it he was part baboon, part dwarf-

DOROTHY. And he has a little hunchback.

SIR BUDGE. But he was the court favorite. The King Tuthmosis III angered the gods by calling him Maat, after the goddess of truth. Maat was devoted to his master, and would often use his size hiding, spying secretly reporting back to the King. He was known to sit at his Masters feet, watching, and when all where gone, Tuthmosis would say "Now my little one, tell me what I don't want to hear but must know?" But Maat only lived a short time. He was found dead one night, drowned in his little bath. Some say killed by a wealthy landowner who the King had quarreled with, some say by the Gods themselves. Tuthmosis had a tomb built for him and his likeness cast in gold, and those that carried him were protected from falsehood and evil.

DOROTHY. And Aunt Helen?

SIR BUDGE. And Aunt Helen.

DOROTHY. He's exquisite- But I can't accept this. I can't keep him.

SIR BUDGE. You must-

DOROTHY. He must be worth a fortune-

SIR BUDGE. Hardly. That is a copy. The museum has craftsmen making them. For the souvenir shop. Little Maats everywhere, earrings, pendants, potholders. See, you've only had him five minutes, and the truth must be told. This is the original, but I can only take him out and play with him when no one knows. Maat must be kept under glass. Protected. Or he will come in contact with the elements- (*speaking directly to the likeness as if telling a secret*) with the moisture in the air- and he will deteriorate. We must keep the Truth locked away, or our world will destroy him. But these others are his babies. I wanted you to have the first.

DOROTHY. Thank you. He is beautiful.

SIR BUDGE. (*He is putting the dwarf around her neck*) Here is a ribbon. Wear him around your neck, just above your heart-

DOROTHY. Now then, my little friend, you tell me what I don't want to hear, but must know...

SIR BUDGE. Exactly.

DOROTHY. Do you think I'm insane?

SIR BUDGE. Oh, my good Lord why?

Dorothy begins to cry. This slowly causes Sir Wallis to cry. The effect of this sympathetic crying should be very real, and although it may be in fact funny to the audience, it is very real to Sir Wallis.

DOROTHY. Well...

SIR BUDGE. Oh, please, don't -

DOROTHY. I'm sorry, I don't mean to cry- It's just-

SIR BUDGE. You mustn't, my bug. *(He is crying now, more than her.)* You really mustn't.

DOROTHY. I'm sorry-

SIR BUDGE. You have no idea. You mustn't cry! Oh.....

DOROTHY. Sir Wallis?

SIR BUDGE. I'm sorry-

DOROTHY. Don't you cry-

SIR BUDGE. It's -I can't help it. This always happens. *(He is trying to control himself now.)* Whenever I see someone else cry it just-

DOROTHY. Sir Wallis?

SIR BUDGE. It's uncontrollable, I'm sorry. I can never go to the theater. *(Coming around)* There-

DOROTHY. I won't be seeing you for awhile-

SIR BUDGE. *(Not hearing her; blowing his nose)* I'm alright now. Now, what is it, Oh yes, I remember. *(Dorothy's eyes are tearing up again. He is trying not to cry again.)* You want to know if I think you are insane, well--my dear child---*(He is sobbing now)* Why would you even want to ask me that?

Lights crossfade to Eady and his wife speaking directly to "a doctor" (the audience.)

MRS. EADY. Why? Because your little girl comes to you one day and tells you- that she feels more at home at a museum-

EADY. Now, Caroline-

MRS. EADY. With mummies, and cadavers, surrounded by things that have been dead for centuries- and you see how you feel-

EADY. I'm sorry, Doctor. We've been through a lot lately. And my wife here-

MRS. EADY. Is at wits end. Say it. Lock me up, Doctor. I don't know what else to do.

EADY. No one is locking anyone up, dear. The doctor is just going to run some tests, ask our little girl some questions. And to do that he has to ask us some questions. It's done all the time now. Highly respected people, all over Germany and some such places. They say these nervous strains are quite the thing nowadays-

MRS. EADY. He thinks it's our fault, though, don't you ? The sleepwalking, the obsession with that odd man at the museum. Why ask us-

EADY. Caroline, we agreed to this-

MRS. EADY. If we remember what? The beginning? What ? Her birth? Yes, I remember, Doctor, I was there. Difficult birth they called it. Thirty two hours of labor, I'd call that difficult-

EADY. He's not asking that Caroline. He wants-

MRS. EADY. I know what he wants.

EADY. The first sign of trouble, the first thing we can recall, out of the ordinary-

MRS. EADY. And I know what you think-

EADY. Caroline-

MRS. EADY. You think it was all my fault. You always did. You weren't watching her, if only you had been watching her-

EADY. You see doctor, Little Doe fell. Down the stairs-

MRS. EADY. And died! Well, isn't that right? Isn't that what the Doctor said? Doctors know everything, don't they. This one said "I'm sorry, there is nothing we can do. I'm afraid she's dead." And not an hour later- poof! She's alive- Happens all the time, in Germany, nowadays.

EADY. It is not uncommon, with blows to the head, that the victim can lay in a state of near death, I'm right, aren't I, Doctor? And the victim might awaken with no apparent signs of damage-

MRS. EADY. Ask her if you want to know.

EADY. But it is possible-that the damage-

MRS. EADY. Don't expect us to tell you-

EADY. It is possible that the damage was already done.

MRS. EADY. You listen to her tell you, you listen to--what she says and tell me it's because she fell and hit her head!!

Dorothy appears center and begins to speak to "the Doctor".

DOROTHY. What do you expect me to say, yes Doctor, I'm daft? Well, I don't feel daft. And I don't feel normal. I don't know what to think. *(She takes out her amulet)* I can only tell you the truth and leave it up to you to decide. I wouldn't mind it so much if I thought you might be of some help. I'd like it if I had a broken arm, and I'd come to you to glue it back. But I don't feel my mind is broken at the moment, honest I don't. Not like the poor soul, down the hall- quoting Macbeth at the top of her lungs. Don't hear me raving - "Out, Out damn spot..." now do you? Oh, I suppose I ought to just start accepting the fact I'm daft and be done with it.

Lights crossfade to Samir, in the temple in Abydos, still trapped by the scorpion.

SAMIR. I must be out of my mind-

Omm Sety enters with tea and a white flag.

OMM SETY. All right you win. It takes too much effort to be hateful. *(She shoos the scorpion)* Back to Amanti, and say hello to that good for nothing Seth. It's not the best tea on the continent, but the herbs are fresh.

SAMIR. Why, the truce, calling off the dogs- no sugar please.

OMM SETY. Nonsense, good for the soul. As I was offering my prayers, I remembered that the ancients had a saying, which roughly translates: "Only when

the two people can't fit in the same room, should one of them leave.” So I thought, have tea with the man, hear his side of the story, if you can't fit in the same room with him, then let the scorpion bite. Biscuit?

SAMIR. No, thank you (*She hands him two anyway.*) I'm on a diet- (*sips the too sweet tea, quietly tries to spit some out*).

OMM SETY. Nonsense, do an honest days work, tend a garden, or go for a walk- the only diet I've ever known to work.

SAMIR. Yes, well, just don't tell me you can't fit in the same room with me, right now. It's a sensitive subject.

OMM SETY. It was a metaphor, you know.

SAMIR. Yes, well- you don't have a wife pinching your belly at home.

OMM SETY. If the only thing wrong at home is your belly, be thankful. I was married once. (*Samir starts to open his notebook to check information*) But I'm sure you've checked into all that. Read up on me-

SAMIR. Yes, I have. It was my job to do so.

OMM SETY. I hope it wasn't tedious. My file.

SAMIR. Hardly.

OMM SETY. Yes, well we try.

SAMIR. You were married for three years. Granted your husband a legal divorce-

OMM SETY. I prefer my donkey, Alice. Twice as stubborn but much more loyal.

SAMIR. He was not faithful to you?

OMM SETY. Imam? Oh, absolutely. Very strict Muslim - no, there were many other difficulties. No, Imam tried very hard to be a good husband. Poor man. How can you compete - with what is meant to be. I was meant to live here. Just as your life is meant to run its course. One does not tell the Nile where to flow, yet it knows where to go. They say I'm mad you know.

SAMIR. Mad?

OMM SETY. Daft. Loony. Cracked. Bonkers. Insane.

SAMIR. Yes, well-

OMM SETY. Touched. I like that one. Which do they use in your file? Which word to describe my affliction with proper British restraint and Departmental decorum?

SAMIR. Prone to fantasy.

OMM SETY. Ooh, that's nice.

SAMIR. Her reality possibly clouded by her advanced years. *(Omm Sety laughs)* I'm sorry- *(She laughs even harder)* But the Department does hear the stories. Of you and your visions.

OMM SETY. And you think it's because I'm senile? Oh, you just have to laugh-

SAMIR. Well, it is hardly a matter of levity. *(He is about to laugh, becoming infected by her enjoyment)* My dear Lady-

OMM SETY. At the risk of endangering my already tenuous situation, I must tell you that "my visions", as you call them, began over sixty years ago, and are documented by the rather primitive psychologists of the day. What have they told you? That I'm a decrepit old thing, babbling, stumbling into the walls of sacred Egyptian property.

SAMIR. No one told me anything. Listen, I've been with the Department Of Antiquities over fifteen years, and I know there are a lot of- interesting, shall we say, personalities. A healthy infatuation with the past is essential for our field. Please- allow me to finish. But your behavior has been often described as obsessive, delusions of past lives- of even having lived here on the Temple site. *(Bentreshyt appears on the wall above)* Practicing rituals and levying curses on visitors-

OMM SETY. I never cursed anyone-

SAMIR. *(Reading)* It is common knowledge in the village that "Omm Sety ", as Miss Eady demands to be called-

OMM SETY. I am called that out of respect, my good man. It means "Mother Of Sety." The name of my son, now grown.

SAMIR. Who was taken- was raised apart from you-

OMM SETY. And not by my choice, let me tell you- I fought that decision as well. Is my motherhood on trial here?

SAMIR. No one is on trial here. It is no secret that Omm Sety is a sort of local witch doctor-

OMM SETY. That is absurd- Burn her at the stake!!!

SAMIR. Who, for a small fee, will say an ancient prayer-

OMM SETY. Only as a cure for scorpion bites- oh, yes, and once to stop a sand storm.

SAMIR. The whole village knows the story of her pet goose. Snefra

OMM SETY. Snefru. His name was Snefru-

SAMIR. And how the man whom she accused of stealing Snefru, two days later was bitten by a water buffalo and died of rabies. (*Omm Sety takes another cookie.*) She refuses to conduct tours on what she considers the "Holy Days."

OMM SETY. Of course not. No one walks into the Vatican on Christmas taking pictures- this is a temple -

Bentreshyt is saying a prayer above. From here to the end of the act, all three scenes- three different times: Ancient Egypt, Modern Egypt, and Dorothy talking to a doctor a few decades ago, will begin to play together. A fugue, perhaps with music.

SAMIR. Of a religion that hasn't been practiced by anyone in over two thousand years- except by you.

OMM SETY. More tea?

SAMIR. Now I ask you, Miss Sety, what would you do? If you were in my position?

OMM SETY. I would say yes, thank you. And another biscuit too. Mr. Samir, all my life, since- well, as far back as I could remember- I've been the odd duck, as it were. My Aunt Helen used to say "the corset wasn't made that could hold that girl. She's just not normal." And then at fifteen, something happened to help me understand. You see- in a society, in a world that worships one God: The norm- I could never belong to such a world. It's so beautiful here at night. I was just fifteen when he visited me for the first time-

Sety appears above watching Bentreshyt.

DOROTHY. It was a warm night and I was sleeping, and I remember I woke up feeling a weight on my chest. And I saw this face bending over me with both hands on the neck of my nightdress.

BENTRESHYT. Oh, dear Isis, you startled me.

SETY. Forgive me, am I interrupting your prayers?

DOROTHY. I recognized the face from the a photo of a mummy I had seen before. It was Sety. I was astonished and shocked and cried out, and yet, was overjoyed.

BENTRESHYT. No, I was finished. I thought - they said in town that the royal barge left this afternoon.

SETY. I sent them on without me. I'm to follow, shortly. May I sit with you?

BENTRESHYT. A pharaoh asks for permission?

SETY. I have learned to always ask. It makes for an appearance of humility. But, with you I will relinquish my crown. (*He takes it off.*) There- a king no more.

BENTRESHYT. Another show of humility? (*He smiles*) A warm night, a young priestess, and look the Father of All Egypt is unthroned.

SETY. No, actually. It grows quite heavy sometimes. Do you know what my father, the great Ramses I, said to me on his deathbed? Our great king, the father of the Nile, ruler of the greatest civilization ever known to mankind, motioned to me to listen, and tried to speak, but he was almost ready for his journey, and his voice was very weak. That voice that used to bellow orders down hallways, past hundreds of marble pillars, across courtyards, but now I had to strain to hear, almost touching his lips with my ear, and he said: "I'm sorry." That's it. Just "I'm sorry." Then he kissed my ear and died. He ruled less than a year, you know. Poor man. It only took a year to grow too heavy for him.

DOROTHY. I can remember it as though it was only yesterday, but it's still difficult to explain. It was the feeling of something you have waited for that has come at last, and yet it gives you a shock-

SETY. I am forty five years old. And now I am the ruler of the greatest kingdom the Gods have ever created, been halfway around the world fighting bloody battles that even my generals cannot explain. I have sat - listening to state quarrels, mediating "justice" but the word was no where in the room-- only favors to be scattered to the court. My courtiers- like so many blind birds pecking for food. I have seen jewels the size of my fist. They say I have riches that even I have never seen, and keepers to polish them that I do not even know. I own land I have never walked on. I have wives given to me to bear me sons. Yesterday I looked at my boy, my beautiful son, whose good mother died twelve years ago today exhausted by the effort of so great a state task. I barely knew her, you know, was just learning to appreciate her smile. But there are the demands of Mother Egypt and those who arrange such things. And for them she performed admirably, she produced a healthy heir. And yesterday, I held him in my arms very tightly and I whispered "I'm sorry." And he looked at me,

as I must have looked to my father. For I know there will be those that want him to wear this crown- and to have more riches than can be counted. "I'm sorry." And so now all day today- I don't know why- I've just wanted to take it off and toss it into the Nile.

BENTRESHYT. Then do. Go on. (*He thinks about it. Then does.*) There. Any better.

SETY. Yes!

BENTRESHYT. Good!

SETY. Actually, no. I have a roomful of crowns. They will just give me another. It's not the crown-

BENTRESHYT. Exactly! May I speak?

SETY. Why ask permission? You have been free until now-

BENTRESHYT. And so have you, my Lord. So have you. For that moment, just then, when you tossed your crown high in the air-

SETY. Yes-

BENTRESHYT. How did that feel?

SETY. As good as I have felt in a long while. A long, long while.

BENTRESHYT. Then you see, it is not the crown. My mother was a vegetable seller- And I never knew my father. Not even long enough for him to say I'm sorry. I would have died or been sold into slavery, if not for Antef and his bringing me here to worship.

SETY. And now you are a priestess.

BENTRESHYT. And am beaten and told what to do under penalty of death, so I am Antef's slave- slave- priestess, it doesn't matter. For when I sit out here with my prayers and the cool night air, and the stars, then I feel as you did just now: free. And whenever his blows sting me, or I feel sick at heart, I count my jewels, up there you see, and I feel as rich-

SETY. As a king.

BENTRESHYT. I'll give you one. There, that one, right there. There is one you don't own, yet.

SETY. True. Up there, there are many.

BENTRESHYT. They really belong to our lady Isis. But she lets me borrow them. I'm one of her keepers that polish them - one of the ones she has never met- and that is why they shine. But I would like to give you that one, if I may.

SETY. Which?

BENTRESHYT. The bright one, there, apart from all the others.

SETY. Yes, I see-

BENTRESHYT. It's yours. Now you have something to wish on, no matter where you are.

SETY. I will cherish it forever. (*He is very close*)

BENTRESHYT. I hope she will not be angry- our Lady Isis. Who am I to be giving away her property.

SETY. If you are worried. Then take it back.

BENTRESHYT. Even a pharaoh, should consider the wrath (*He takes her hand*) of a God. And that (*touches her hair*) a priestess of-

SETY. I see no pharaoh. (*He kisses his finger and touches her forehead.*)

BENTRESHYT. (*Removing her amulet*) And I see no priestess.

DOROTHY. It was as if he was trying to stay with me and something was forcing him to leave. He held onto my nightdress, and it was being pulled away from me, and I could feel him struggling to stay with me. And then my nightdress ripped from neck to rim. And he was gone. And my mother was sleeping in the next room, and she heard me cry out. And after a minute, she came in and asked me "what was the matter"? And I replied matter of factly, "Nothing. I had a nightmare" And she said "then who tore your nightdress?" And I said, "I don't know, I must have done it myself." But I knew I was lying.

OMM SETY. You see the figure of Sety had appeared to me -though how could I have explained that to my mother?

DOROTHY. His face was the dead face of a mummy, the hands moved and the arms moved, but he couldn't talk. I could see him try, but he couldn't say a single word.

OMM SETY. And I will never forget the terrible look in his eyes. I don't know how to describe it. You can only say that the eyes had the look of somebody in hell who suddenly had found a way out.

Sety kisses Bentreshyt.

DOROTHY. And I knew at that moment what my life's journey was.

She slowly embraces him.

OMM SETY. You see, at the time I had no idea who he was, or why he had sought me out, but I knew it was my destiny to find out why...

After Sety and Bentryshyt part from a long passionate kiss:

OMM SETY. More tea, Mr. Samir?

BLACK OUT

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

Two scenes are happening simultaneously but in different time periods. Omm Sety praying alone at the Temple, and on the wall above her are Bentreshyt and Sety. First a single spot of light comes up on Omm Sety as she appears before an urn and offers a prayer:

OMM SETY. Dear Lady Isis, protector of Both Lands, mother to all that is holy, hear my prayers.

Then another spot of light as Bentreshyt speaks softly with Sety asleep in her lap:

BENTRESHYT. Oh, dear Lady Isis, protector of Both Lands, will you no longer hear my prayers?

The two speeches begin to happen on top of each other, dovetailing so that we hear bits of each.

OMM SETY.

Take this offering on this your day,
and let your wisdom be heard.

OMM SETY. Did you not give me the
desire to serve you all these years?

OMM SETY. Is it really your wish for
me to leave this land that I love? The
land I dreamed of as a child, that I
spent years journeying to find? For
just as you searched for our Lord, your
love Osiris, and would not settle until
he was found, and on this, the sacred
spot he was reborn and your dreams
became reality, I too wish to remain.
Do not ask me to leave...

OMM SETY. Was it not your will that
I travel the world
over great seas, and for many years, to
find this my home?

OMM SETY. For as you know the
journey was not an easy one...

BENTRESHYT. Did you not in your
wisdom, know that this King would
rule so completely?

BENTRESHYT. Have I, as we are
taught, broken your most sacred vow?

BENTRESHYT. My only wish was to
serve you, to be a messenger of your
devotion and though you know I have
been spoiled for years, but my Lady,
as you know, that was - always by
force. But this - Mother Isis, what was
this? So different and yet so it seemed
I had no will. I fear now my "ka" will
never rest peacefully, and yet, as I
look at my love's face, I would damn
myself again with a kiss. *(She does.)*

BENTRESHYT. How beautiful he
sleeps, like I did minutes ago, as he
held me so gently. Did he offer you a
prayer, as I slept?

Lights come up on Dorothy, now twenty-nine but no less of an awkward woman, seated with a sketch pad on her lap in some kind of waiting area. Sitting beside her is an Egyptian man snoring loudly. The man, still asleep, slowly slides his head onto Dorothy's shoulder, and begins to use her as a pillow. She wants to get up but thinks better of it, as long as she can continue her sketching. He suddenly wakes in a start causing Dorothy to ruin her sketch.

IMAM. Then let it be death! Oh... Begging your pardon. In my dreams... they put me to death.

DOROTHY. Yes, well. Better stay awake then.

IMAM. I try. I am too tired.

DOROTHY. *(Before he can fall asleep again)* Why?

IMAM. Begging your pardon?

DOROTHY. Why do they put you to death?

IMAM. For the beliefs....

DOROTHY. You too, huh?

IMAM. Did I stittle you?

DOROTHY. Begging your pardon-

IMAM. Did I scare you? Ruining your diddle?

DOROTHY. This?

IMAM. Yes. My sorry, doodle. Doodle, not diddle.

DOROTHY. Actually, yes. But this diddle, is what I do for a living. It's a cartoon, a political cartoon. I draw them.

IMAM. Cartoon. Like the Mickey Mouse?

DOROTHY. Sort of. Only different.

IMAM. I like the Mickey Mouse. He makes me to laugh.

DOROTHY. Well, I hope to make you to laugh and to think at the same time.

IMAM. A wonderful thing that you do then. *(Yawns)* Forgive it to me, I am too tired.

DOROTHY. Yes, you said that-

IMAM. My friend and I am here to interview with Lord Alfred. On the subject of the independence for my people.

DOROTHY. You are Egyptian, then?

IMAM. Yes, how did you know?

DOROTHY. Well, I knew it wasn't South Wales.

IMAM. This to make me to laugh, I get it. Yes, South of Wales, yes... *(yawns)* He would only see one of us, this Lord Alfred-

DOROTHY. I see. Why?

IMAM. Because it is a crime, no? That entire country should be slave. Not to be free to rule itself.

DOROTHY. Oh, yes, I quite agree. Your country should be free. No, I meant why are you so tired?

IMAM. You agree?

DOROTHY. Oh, yes, absolutely.

IMAM. And you are British? This is nice. But it makes it no sense. My name is Imam. Imam Abdel Meguid.

DOROTHY. Dorothy, Dorothy Eady.

IMAM. This is my pleasure.

DOROTHY. And mine. *(His eyes are closing)* You never did tell me why you are so tired?

IMAM. We are prepared to do..... *(yawns)* Sometimes we are until very... late....

He is asleep on her shoulder again.

DOROTHY. I may never find out- *(His head falls down onto her chest.)* Uh, begging your pardon- *(Now his head is in her lap.)*

Lights crossfade to Sety in BENTRESHYT's lap.

SETY. Tell me am I still asleep? (*Kissing her*) Yes, I am dreaming still... Never wake me, this must be Duat itself, and you the Goddess of Such Eyes that I'm told rules here...

BENTRESHYT. You mistake my Lord. Only the Goddess of Vegetable Sellers lives here. And as the sun begins its journey, so must you leave me now. My Lord...

SETY. Not yet-

BENTRESHYT. You must. If we- (*She returns his kisses.*)

SETY. For three weeks now, I have felt-. Have you?

BENTRESHYT. Yes-

SETY. Like the smell of flowers- as if I am covered in them- Oh, I don't know how to say it-

BENTRESHYT. Then don't-

SETY. But I want to-

BENTRESHYT. I know...

SETY. Tell you. Let you know how wonderful you make me feel-

BENTRESHYT. I know. I have tried too-

SETY. I was never good with words, when I needed to be. I have scribes you know. For when I speak to the council, or give great speeches. I have three, no four very serious men, who twist these words like magicians into sounding so - I don't know - thoughtful. But not at first. At first, as I begin to speak them, they seem false. But then the crowds cheer and applaud. And as they cheer, it is odd, but I begin to believe these words, and they begin to feel like mine. And I can't describe it, but they begin to take on a kind of meaning. And as I finish, I actually feel as if I have said the most important things.

BENTRESHYT. It is the same with Antef's plays.

SETY. Is it?

BENTRESHYT. Yes.

SETY. Intoxicating, isn't it? Very intoxicating. (*He kisses her again*)

BENTRESHYT. Just look at me---

SETY. Wait, I want-

BENTRESHYT. Just look- *(They exchange a long look.)* You see, no words....

SETY. Yes...

BENTRESHYT. Sometimes words are unnecessary-

SETY. Don't let ANTEF. know that...

They kiss again. Lights cross-fade to the Eady sitting room. Reuben Eady is doing a crossword and Dorothy sitting nearby drawing. Mrs. Eady enters and sits to needlepoint.

EADY. I need a seven letter word for love. Doe?

DOROTHY. Don't ask me. My man flew the coop.

MRS. EADY. He didn't fly the coop.

EADY. He just went back to his home. You knew that was going to be a problem when you started.

MRS. EADY. We tried to warn you.

DOROTHY. You didn't warn me, you ordered me. Tragedy, try that.

EADY. Romance, that's it. R-o-m-a-n-c-e, Romance. Oh, Doe, here's one for you- *(remembering a letter)* Oh, damn it all.

MRS. EADY. Rueben-

EADY. I forgot this came for you today, Doe. *(Holding a letter)* Wait! First-Egyptian God of Funerary Rites.

MRS. EADY. Rueben, honestly...

EADY. It's in the puzzle- Eight letters

DOROTHY. Wepwawet.

EADY. Perfect. Wep-a-wet. See, my dear, this fascination of our daughter's has paid off innumerably. Spell that.

MRS. EADY. I-n-

EADY. No, wep-er-a-wa-whatever...

DOROTHY. *(As she reads the letter)* W-e-p-w-a-w-e-t. Wepwawet.

EADY. Perfect. Who would have ever known that damn word.

MRS. EADY. Rueben-

DOROTHY. He wants me to marry him. Imam. This letter is from him. He begs your pardon for not being able to ask your permission in person, but "would most humbly like to ask you for your daughter's hand in marriage. I know this is a sudden and will take your daughter away far from you, but it is her wish I hope it to be yours also."

MRS. EADY. His English still leaves much to be desired. Well, is it your wish?

DOROTHY. Yes, Mother. I do believe so. *(reading)* "Enclosed is a schedule of ships for passage in the coming months. And I most anxious await to hear from you and your next letter."

Lights crossfade to the temple and OmmSety. holding a letter. She is upset but decides not to open it and as Samir enters, she puts it down and picks up her tea.

OMM SETY. *(Trying not to show she's upset)* Good morning.

SAMIR. *(Trying to hide the fact he got little sleep)* Morning... *(He now helps himself to tea almost as one of the family)* Not quite as hot today is it?

OMM SETY. No, Ra compassionately slowed his journey-

SAMIR. I'm sorry?

OMM SETY. Ra, the sun God-

SAMIR. Yes, I know-

OMM SETY. Aware this was a day of judgment was in no hurry to carry the sun high in the sky. He is merciful.

SAMIR. Not as strong. The tea.

OMM SETY. I thought you would prefer it that way.

SAMIR. And this? *(The letter placed before him)*

OMM SETY. Came for you early this morning. I had to sign for it. Must be very important.

SAMIR. Not really. It's nothing I don't already know.

OMM SETY. Or I.

SAMIR. Do you fear death?

OMM SETY. I'm sorry? Do I-

SAMIR. Fear death?

OMM SETY. I hardly think this is the time or place.

SAMIR. Why? Is this not a Temple For The Dead?

OMM SETY. Why? Look, I wasn't going to do this. I wasn't going to get upset. I was going to remember that none of this was your fault. You just have a job to do. Well, you've done it, (*referring to the letter*) and now it's time to leave-

SAMIR. Oh, I see.

OMM SETY. Well, aren't you the picture of perception. Oh, I'm never going to be able to keep my heart free of this.

SAMIR. This letter does not concern you. If that is what you're afraid of. And yes, I came here to do a job. A rather messy job, as it turns out. And isn't that funny? I thought, let me go to Abydos- let me go to the middle of nowhere. Maybe then I can get some peace and quiet and figure this out. You see you are not the only one with troubles, good lady. This letter does not tell you *your* services are no longer needed. No last night it all became clear to me. You see, my wife wanted me to take this trip. No, my dear- friend. This is a letter saying *my* services are no longer needed. At home. My marriage is over.

OMM SETY. I'm so sorry.

SAMIR. More tea?

OMM SETY. Yes, thank you.

SAMIR. That is why I asked you if you feared death. For the first time in my life- I actually thought about- killing myself last night. Why not just end it all.

OMM SETY. Here in the middle of nowhere?

SAMIR. I'm sorry.

OMM SETY. Quite all right. I like that it is "a little" off the beaten path. It wouldn't be right otherwise. I tried to once. Kill myself.

SAMIR. Did you.

OMM SETY. Oh yes. When I was about twenty. Also because of love, or rather the lack of it. Long before Imam, I was getting old, well- twenty. You understand. And the boys were not exactly knocking the door down to be with me. If the truth be told, they weren't even knocking. And I missed my one man who I had a tendency to, let's say, "pine away for." I tried to walk off a cliff near the Dover sea, while I was visiting dear Grandmama.

SAMIR. What stopped you?

OMM SETY. A voice.

Two scenes are happening. The cliff with Dorothy standing at the edge just like Omm Sety is describing and the temple.

SETY. Little One?

OMM SETY. It was the second time he visited me.

DOROTHY. Is it you.

SETY. Yes. I know you do not know who I am.

DOROTHY. But I do. You are Sety I, Mighty of Bows In All Lands, Bringer of Renaissance, Pharaoh in the eighteenth Dynasty-

SETY. Nineteenth, my rule was during the nineteenth-

DOROTHY. I meant nineteenth.

SETY. It is not important. It flatters me you know-

DOROTHY. I've read everything I could find about you. You were a great king.

SETY. I had my moments.

DOROTHY. Though there is much more about Tutankhamen. Much more.

SETY. Yes. Vain and pompous little man. And a wretched ruler.

DOROTHY. Didn't much care for him.

SETY. I never knew the man. But he did terrible things to my country.

DOROTHY. Why have you never returned? (*pause*) I feel you trying sometimes. And I hear your voice, but it is so far away I barely can make it out. Bentarsheet. That's what I hear. Bent-Tar-sheet

SETY. I come to you when I am allowed. There are those who wish me not to interfere.

DOROTHY. Who?

SETY. Those who judge in the Council. Little one, please listen, I may only stay a short while. You must promise me to never do what you were about to do. (*She starts to deny*) Please, do not even think of it. Ever again. Look at me. (*She does.*) Promise me.

DOROTHY. I promise.

SETY. There will be much for you to learn. You must be patient. As I have.

DOROTHY. You? I've waited six years.

SETY. Do you see these flowers?

DOROTHY. Yes, I see them. There's a whole field of them.

SETY. Pick one for every year that I have searched for you and there would still not be enough.

DOROTHY. But wait, I'm right here. You know where I am. The search is over.

SETY. Patience, My Little One.

Lights begin to crossfade back to Omm Sety.

OMM SETY. It was his voice that told me to be patient.

SETY. Be patient.

DOROTHY. Damn the man. No wonder I'm daft.

OMM SETY. I was twenty then, and very impatient. And though I knew whose voice it was, it wasn't until I was thirty five, and visited here for the first time,

fifteen years later, that I knew for sure why he had come. And why he had searched for me. My whole life had been a kind of puzzle.

SAMIR. (*Referring to the tea*) I'll drink to that. Everyone's life is a kind of puzzle. Some just never get solved. Missing a piece or two. Ha, I sound like you.

OMM SETY. On a bad day, maybe.

SAMIR. (*Sad again*) God, it's crazy to love someone that much, isn't it?

OMM SETY. It's crazy not to. But then you are asking the expert.

SAMIR. I thought you left your husband.

OMM SETY. According to the files?

SAMIR. Again, I'm sorry...

OMM SETY. Again, quite all right. I was talking about being crazy.

SAMIR. Oh. Yes. Lately I'm beginning to wonder.

OMM SETY. You know what they said about William Blake?

SAMIR. No.

OMM SETY. They used to say he was "cracked" you know. And it was Edith Sitwell, I think, who said if he was cracked then "that was where the light came through."

SAMIR. Why did you leave your husband?

OMM SETY. He left me. Got a transfer to Iraq. Of course I didn't complain, or ask to go with him. Why? I don't know, because I couldn't cook. No, quite honestly I sometimes think it was as simple as that. Because I couldn't make Dholma-

Lights cross fade to Dorothy now very pregnant in her kitchen in Cairo with her mother.

DOROTHY. (*At the same time as Omm Sety*) Dholma.

MRS. EADY. And you eat them?

DOROTHY. They are a delicacy. At least when other people make them...

MRS. EADY. I hate to tell you what they look like-

DOROTHY. Like something you'd find in the W.C.

MRS. EADY. Dorothy, honestly. Think of the child.

DOROTHY. They're vine leaves stuffed with rice and meat. But I can't seem to get them to stay put. Anyway, I've stumbled onto this marvelous idea. Here, help me. I'm going to sew them together.

MRS. EADY. Sew them?

DOROTHY. Yes.

MRS. EADY. But, good heavens Dorothy, we can't possibly eat them once you've-

DOROTHY. I'm not going to leave the thread in them, Mother. I'm not that bonkers. It's just to hold them together while they cook. Like you do with a turkey.

MRS. EADY. We offered to take you both out for a nice meal...

DOROTHY. I didn't have the both of you travel all this way to sit down and order roast beef in some overpriced restaurant. When in Cairo, as they say.

MRS. EADY. But all this work, it can't be good for you and-

DOROTHY. The child.

MRS. EADY. Think of the child

DOROTHY. It's going to be a boy. I just know it.

MRS. EADY. Really.

DOROTHY. Yes.

MRS. EADY. And you are still dead set on the name.

Sety appears in the kitchen and Dorothy, startled, pricks her hand with the needle.

DOROTHY. Ow! Dammit!

MRS. EADY. Well, honestly, Dorothy.

DOROTHY. Sorry.

MRS. EADY. What kind of name is that anyway, for a child? Sety.

SETY. (*Only seen and heard by Dorothy*) She's right. Ramses would be a much finer name.

DOROTHY. That's a matter of opinion. But maybe you're right. Maybe I'll call him Tutankhamen. Why are you here?

EADY. (*Entering*) I came in to tell your Mother the English news is on-

MRS. EADY. She's going to name our grandchild Tutawhatever-

DOROTHY. Tutankhamon.

EADY. Over my dead body!

SETY. My sentiments exactly...

EADY. Not going to have any grandson of mine called Tut. Going to have a nice proper name-

MRS. EADY. Like George, after my father-

EADY. He was a sod. Well, he was. No grandson of mine's gonna be named Tut. I suppose you'll want him calling you Mummy?

MRS. EADY. Rueben, please honestly. Dorothy, can you sew these things-

DOROTHY. Yes, Mother.

MRS. EADY. Without me.

EADY. Hate to tell you what those look like. (*As they exit*) Doesn't anyone eat proper food around here?

DOROTHY. What are you doing here?

SETY. I could ask the same question. You are in my country now.

DOROTHY. True. But now it is mine also.

SETY. It always was.

DOROTHY. And this is my kitchen, and I have a dinner to prepare-

IMAM. Belbub?

SETY. Belbub?

DOROTHY. His father gave the name to me.

SETY. Nightingale?

DOROTHY. Yes.

IMAM. My sweetestheart, we are all going downtown for dinner.

DOROTHY. But I'm making dholma.

IMAM. Is that what is taking so long. I see.

DOROTHY. It will be ready in just a few minutes.

IMAM. The kitchen is always your enemy, is it not? The last time it rolled off the plate.

DOROTHY. Because I used too much oil. And that was the first time.

IMAM. True, the last time it never made it to the plate. You couldn't find it in the pan.

DOROTHY. But this time- Imam, I want to please you, it means so much.

IMAM. Good. Then we are all dining out. That would please me. My sweetestheart, do not argue. My mind has made up. Do not argue with me once my mind has made up. This is not your country, where a man will let his wife argue. Here a man may ask for advice, yes, but when his mind has made up-

DOROTHY. His mind has made up. (*to Sety*) I think your culture is sod, did I ever tell you that?

IMAM. What did you say?

DOROTHY. Your culture. It is sod. Your food looks like something from a W.C. and I am not going to go anywhere. I'm staying here.

IMAM. I hope to not have this while your parents were here. It is disrespectful.

DOROTHY. Oh, so you do know that word. I was beginning to wonder if men in your country ever bothered to learn respect.

IMAM. *(Starting to remove his belt)* It is a very holy word. Respect. Keep singing my nightingale, keep singing. *(He cracks his belt.)* Sometimes respect must be a lesson to be taught. *(Dorothy backs away from him into Sety)*

SETY. Never fear the hand that strikes you. *(He kisses his hand then gently touches her forehead.)* Remember to be strong.

IMAM. Now, have you made up your mind?

DOROTHY. Yes, I'm staying here. Oh!!!!

IMAM. What is wrong?

DOROTHY. OH!!! I think your son has made up his mind....

IMAM. Are you sure?

DOROTHY. How can I be sure? Don't you have to tell me I'm sure. Oh!!!

IMAM. It is true!!!!

DOROTHY. Well, I didn't want to argue with you....

IMAM. Let me get your mother...

DOROTHY. *(After a beat)* I wasn't ready for this.

SETY. Soon, it will be over.

DOROTHY. I meant my marriage. Not the baby.

SETY. Yes, so did I.

DOROTHY. *(Trying to breathe)* Well, what is it this time? *(A small pain.)* Oh- I should have known the minute you appeared something was going to happen.

SETY. Remember I am always with you.

Lights crossfade to the temple with Omm Sety. and Samir.

OMM SETY. And we did manage a lovely son.

SAMIR. Sety.

OMM SETY. Yes. And as fond of Imam as I was at first, he could really be a dear man in his own mildly pompous way, but he simply was the wrong one for me. I

had a much greater love. But I served a need for Imam, bore him a wonderful son. And we did laugh... for a while. And he certainly served a need for me. Brought me to this wonderful land.

SAMIR. I don't know if I agree with you.

OMM SETY. About?

SAMIR. If I can look at it that way. That people serve a need. Sounds so, I don't know-

OMM SETY. Utilitarian. It does, doesn't it. But you are asking me to put into words what really should not be constrained by them.

SAMIR. Last night I was trying to decide the things, that if we did leave- split up, the things I would be grateful for. You know, the things about my wife I really don't like, and I could only come up with one- Frank Sinatra. She is a big fan of Frank Sinatra, you know, the American singer.

OMM SETY. Yes.

SAMIR. Has every album. Anyway I never much cared for him. And I'm not sure my wife ever cared much for me. So, that's two things, actually. If I have to be honest, there are two things. I'm not sure she ever really grew to love me. You see, our two families arranged our marriage. We agreed to it, of course, but as is the custom, it was their will. (*singing ala Frank*) "Witchcraft"... And you know it's funny but it worked for me. I grew to love her, and I can't see loving anyone else. But sometimes I'm not so sure she feels the same way.

OMM SETY. Do you talk about it?

SAMIR. I try. Sometimes. But, I must admit, even for me, it is difficult. And for Mali- she is so traditional. It is her duty to love me. And there is no need to discuss it.

OMM SETY. There are only a few things that make me happy to live in this age. Arranged marriage? It could destroy any civilization.

SAMIR. All I could hear last night was Frank Sinatra. "Witchcraft"... And "I've got you under my skin....(*like Frank*) "I've got you deep in the heart of me"

OMM SETY. No wonder you wanted to kill yourself.

SAMIR. May I tell you something? Something very odd?

OMM SETY. I can think of no better person...

SAMIR. Took the words right out of my mouth. Last night, I couldn't sleep. I was thinking of Mali, and I got up to try and take a walk, and I think I climbed this wall last night. And I stood on that ledge, and I looked down to see if it would be far enough - you understand, to do the job. *(She nods.)* And having decided it was, I closed my eyes, and that's when...

OMM SETY. When...?

SAMIR. I could swear I felt a hand pull me back almost as if-- And I turned to see. But then the next thing I remember, I woke up in my bed. It was obviously all just a dream. *(Omm Sety smiles)* I told you, I think *I'm* going mad. Do you know when I woke up this morning I had my boots on. Isn't that strange? I never sleep with my boots on. Now I sound like John Wayne.

OMM SETY. He would have never let that happen twice. Not here.

SAMIR. Who?

OMM SETY. Come here. I want to show you something. *(They cross to one of the walls of the temple.)* Do you see this relief?

SAMIR. Yes. I noticed it the other day when I was trapped by your "guard". It is exquisite.

OMM SETY. And quite rare. There aren't many known drawings of the ceremony depicted here. I was thirty-five when I first saw this. Thirty-five years old when it finally dawned on me why I had to come here, and why my "visions" were so important. I was visiting this temple, for the first time. Sety was almost six, and I had just started to work for the Department. And he was playing along this wall, and he called out to me, but I was looking at this section there.

Two realities begin, Omm Sety explaining, and Little Sety and Dorothy living the scene being explained.

LITTLE SETY. Mum.

DOROTHY. Be patient Beetle.

LITTLE SETY. Mum.

DOROTHY. I'm coming. What is it bug?

LITTLE SETY. Look at this one!

OMM SETY. He had stumbled onto this relief depicting the Weighing Of The Heart. Though at the time, I didn't know what it was. Not many scholars even knew of the ceremony.

LITTLE SETY. What does that one mean, Mum?

DOROTHY. Little bug, I'm not sure. I've never seen one like that. I think you may have stumbled onto something very important here.

Sety appears and Little Sety sees him right away.

LITTLE SETY. Hello! I just discovered something very important.

SETY. Yes, you did.

LITTLE SETY. My name is Sety.

SETY. A very noble name.

LITTLE SETY. I was named for a king. An old, old king. Sety the First. He lived tons of years ago. He's dead now. This is his temple. They built it for him. But now it's mine. Because my name's Sety too. What's yours?

DOROTHY. George. That's an old friend of mine, George-

SETY. Your mother teases. We are old friends, but my name is also Sety. So I am glad to know another with my name.

LITTLE SETY. Me too. Hey, my mum doesn't know what this picture means, and she's an expert. Maybe you do.

SETY. This one here? Why yes, I think I do know, though I'm not absolutely sure.

LITTLE SETY. (*Quoting his mother but getting stuck on the last word*) The study of the Ancients is not an absolute science. That is what makes it so---

DOROTHY. Annoying!

LITTLE SETY. No! Appealing. That is what makes it so appealing. What is wrong with you today?

DOROTHY. It's this place, Bug. I'm not happy here.

LITTLE SETY. But you were before.

DOROTHY. I know. Before, I was.

SETY. It has mixed feelings for me also.

LITTLE SETY. Then let's... get out of here, Buddyo. Wait, let him tell us what my discovery means first. (Sety *hesitates*) Come on, I'll give you a piece of Bazooka.

SETY. (*Puzzled by the gift, but ever grateful.*) Thank you.

LITTLE SETY. So pay up.

SETY. Well, there was according to the teachings of the Ancients, a room that one found oneself in, after death. A sort of Courtroom-

LITTLE SETY. I got it. A courtroom. Like my father just had us go to. To have the judge decide that I should live with him.

DOROTHY. Sety-

SETY. Exactly. And that was a very special room, and the rules discussed there were very powerful. Were they not?

LITTLE SETY. Yes. But he was sod.

DOROTHY. Sety-

LITTLE SETY. He was. I didn't like that judge. He had hair growing right out of his ears.

SETY. Well, this court was even more powerful, because it was there that the decision was made how you were going to spend all of eternity.

LITTLE SETY. Wow.

SETY. And Anubis-

LITTLE SETY. The jackal head!

SETY. Yes!

LITTLE SETY. God of the mummies!

SETY. Keeper of the dead, yes. You learn your lessons well. Anubis leads you into the chamber where, as you see, there is a big scale-

LITTLE SETY. Like at the vegetable seller's!

SETY. (*Touched*) Yes. And Osiris and Isis sit at the end of a long hall at one end, so long that all you can see of them is a bright light, and Maat-

LITTLE SETY. God of-

DOROTHY. Goddess.

LITTLE SETY. Goddess of Truth and Honesty!!!

SETY. Maat, whose symbol is a--

LITTLE SETY. I don't remember- wait- (*He whispers to his mother, who whispers back.*) Oh, yeah. A feather.

SETY. Again correct. Maat places her feather on one side of the scale, and the deceased places his or her heart on the other reciting the Negative Confession, denying all crimes and sins, and if the heart is judged to weigh less than the feather of truth and honesty, then the deceased may join the others in the nether world. You see?

LITTLE SETY. Your heart has to weigh less than a feather?

SETY. Free of all worry, pain. (*He looks at Dorothy*) And guilt. I know it sounds difficult-

LITTLE SETY. Impossible!

SETY. But the weight of the heart can be as light as a feather. If all is settled.

LITTLE SETY. And what happens if you fail? If you've got a fat heart?

SETY. That I do know. One of two things, according to the mercy of the judges. Either they are merciful allowing you to absolve your troubles walking the earth as an Akh-

LITTLE SETY. A what?

SETY. An Akh.

DOROTHY. It is a spirit.

LITTLE SETY. Like a ghost ?

DOROTHY. Yes, only not to scare you like in the modern stories.

SETY. No, never to bring fear, for that would only serve to weigh down the heart even more.

LITTLE SETY. Wow, or what else? What if they don't let you walk?

SETY. That is what this little gentleman is, "The Devourer Of Shades." He is waiting nearby to eat the hearts of those who fail.

LITTLE SETY. To eat the hearts of those who fail? Ewwwww!!! *(He makes eating noises)*

SETY. And they would "die a second time" only from this death there was no return, no afterlife. Just darkness. And it was this second death that was the most feared thing of all.

DOROTHY. I think we've had enough religion for one day. You know what I always say: too much religion makes men think they are Gods.

LITTLE SETY. The Devourer Of Shades, I like him. *(imitating the Devourer)* Come here, my pretty, I won't hurt you. *(He starts to climb the wall, remembers to be polite and returns)* It was a pleasure to meet you.

SETY. The pleasure was certainly mine. *(Little Sety runs off.)*

LITTLE SETY. I'm going to find more things like that.

DOROTHY. I can't wait for him to tell his father that one. About the demon that will eat your heart. They already think I'm making the boy mad.

SETY. I'm sorry. But, if they already have judged, then one more story can't hurt.

DOROTHY. I was ordered to turn him over to Imam by Friday.

SETY. I know. And I know why you've come here.

DOROTHY. I know it's wrong, to have come here like this. Just take him. But I can't just give up my child because some fat old judge has been bought off. Not even bought off- in this land who would ever side with a woman? In this country- I don't know if you can understand, my Lord- *(she pauses as the words seemed to come naturally, but now feel strange)* My Lord?

SETY. You used to call me that often- *(a tease)* Out of respect. I was your ruler you know.

DOROTHY. My ruler?

SETY. Yes. Sit here - My Harp Of Joy. For that was your name. You had the most lovely voice, *(If the actress playing BENTRESHYT. has a nice voice she should appear above and sing softly during the following)* and you performed often in this garden in sacred plays for our Lords Isis and Osiris. Bentreshyt- Harp of Joy.

DOROTHY. Bentreshyt...That was what you were calling out to me, all those years-

SETY. Yes, I knew you not by this name. Dor-o-ty. What does that mean?

DOROTHY. It means my parents had no taste. Let me get this straight. I was this woman-

SETY. Young woman. You were sixteen.

DOROTHY. And we were-- acquainted?

SETY. Oh, yes. Quite acquainted and controversial. A king and a virgin priestess. But I always was a bit of a rebel. *(The singing stops.)* And that is why I am here now. And why I understand what you are doing. But, my love, you must return home, and give Imam your child. *(She begins to protest)* There you go, wanting to argue with me. Go ahead, I do not wish to forbid it as your husband would.

DOROTHY. I can't do it, my Lord. I tried. I had even packed all of his things.

SETY. There are many reasons, my Little One. First, for him. He must not grow in fear, and they will come for him. Do not let him know that pain.

DOROTHY. I haven't. I told him this was a vacation, our last vacation for awhile.

SETY. Then let it be true. My love, I did not tell the story just now only for your son. I told it so that you too would understand.

DOROTHY. Why? So that "my heart won't be too heavy"?

SETY. It is a myth, but there is much truth in it. Do not underestimate the wonder of myths.

DOROTHY. Listen, if you are so concerned about the weight of my heart, where have you been all these years? Where were you last night? Dammit, my heart couldn't be any heavier than it is right now. Or the last few days- trying to make this decision.

SETY. All the more reason it must be made. My love, you were born again on this earth to learn just these lessons, as was I made to search all these years for you. The Gods wish for you to come back here and live where you belong. It will take time,

to earn their respect, but a position can be earned. It is your destiny. Look at me. It is your destiny. And you were mine. *(He kisses her softly.)*

DOROTHY. I didn't know spirits could kiss.

SETY. You'd be amazed at what spirits can do. It all has to do with will. Their will, and the will of those who can see them. And the weight of each of their hearts. *(They are about to kiss again--)*

LITTLE SETY. Mum, look at this one over here.

DOROTHY. What my sweet? *(Crossing to him)*

LITTLE SETY. This one here. Look at it! He is lying down and she is lying on top of him and there is only a big stick holding her up. How does that happen?

DOROTHY. I see.

LITTLE SETY. What does that one mean?

DOROTHY. Why don't you ask your friend Sety about that one too.

LITTLE SETY. Okay, where is he?

DOROTHY. Silly bug, he is right- *(turning around but Sety is gone)* He must have had to leave.

Lights quickly crossfade to Samir and Omm Sety at the temple.

SAMIR. I'll be leaving tomorrow.

OMM SETY. I know. And whatever happens, I want you to know I have prayed to free my heart.

SAMIR. Does it work?

OMM SETY. It will in time. It always takes time. I forgave Imam. And I made it here. Though it took me fifteen more years to persuade the Department. I was fifty two years old before they let me live here in peace and do my work. But I never gave up hope. The ancients used to say "If you journey onto a road made by your own hands each day, you will arrive at the place where you want to be."

SAMIR. And who am I to argue with the ancients. *(Hands her a letter.)*

OMM SETY. What is this?

SAMIR. A copy of my letter requesting that you be allowed to remain here- at this place where you want to be, even after the date you choose to retire, and to receive a modest pension as gratitude for service done to promote the beauty and culture of this your adopted country and home.

OMM SETY. Oh, my Lords above, can you do this?

SAMIR. I know how to get things done. Let's just say I know how late in the day to lay the paper down on the desk, and it will be signed.

OMM SETY. I don't know how to ever thank you enough.

SAMIR. My dear lady, I think it is I who should thank you. You have reminded me how rich our country's heritage is. How everlasting. And that shuffling papers in an office, or lecturing in fine cities, cannot compare with the discoveries made by those who actually dig into the earth, or wipe the dust from and restore the walls. And as long as they wish to dig and dust, then, by God, let them. Biscuit?

OMM SETY. Yes, sir.

SAMIR. Samir...

OMM SETY. (*Offering her hand*) Friend.

SAMIR. Friend.

OMM SETY. (*She has picked up the wrong letter to read*) Oh, I'm sorry this is your letter.

SAMIR. Give me another biscuit first. Listen once a fat heart, always a fat heart. (*He reads as she is reading hers. She stops to make sure he is not too upset.*) Did you rewrite this?

OMM SETY. No, of course not, why?

SAMIR. Don't lie to me now.

OMM SETY. What does it say?

SAMIR. She... It says that she- (*He hands her the letter.*)

OMM SETY. "My Dearest One. Please hurry back. I miss you more than I know how to say." Is this the same wife who wants a divorce?

SAMIR. She thinks the time apart only helped to clear things- well, you read it.

OMM SETY. "You must forgive me for all the times"....

Samir is eating cookie after cookie.

OMM SETY. "And now that you understand, I must also tell you though I tried to call you, but there is no phone even nearby. We are going to have a baby." Did you get this far?

SAMIR. (*Mouth full of cookie*) Yes... I read the whole thing....

OMM SETY. "The doctor thinks it has been four months now. Please hurry and return. I cannot wait to hug and kiss you. Your devoted Mali." May I please act on her behalf?

SAMIR. You may. (*They embrace.*)

OMM SETY. Congratulations.

SAMIR. Thank you. Ha! Ha! I'm going to have a baby!!!

Lights crossfade to Sakarra and Bentreshyt late at night.

SAKARRA. Are you sure?

BENTRESHYT. Yes, I went to see the healer. I wanted to be sure.

SAKARRA. You have been acting so strange lately. Was it someone you loved?

BENTRESHYT. Yes, more than I can possibly say.

SAKARRA. Oh, I'm so jealous of you!

BENTRESHYT. Sakarra, I'm a virgin priestess. I can't be expecting a child.

SAKARRA. No, that is going to be difficult to explain.

BENTRESHYT. No one else can know. I should never have even told you.

SAKARRA. Why?

BENTRESHYT. Trust me. No one must know.

SAKARRA. Give it a few moons and everyone except Neptus the blind butcher will know. What are you going to do?

Antefenters and the two girls part immediately.

ANTEF. *(To Sakarra)* There you are, you little insect. I have just come from the healer, or rather she just came from me. Terrified. Felt if she didn't confess to me what she had just found out, the Gods themselves might strike her dead.

SAKARRA. You cannot believe that sorceress, my Lord. They say she sleeps with wild animals. And drinks the milk of cobras.

ANTEF. Quiet. *(Striking her)* I trust your word as much as the wind.

BENTRESHYT. Do not strike her, my Lord. I am the one who angers you.

ANTEF. It was you she spoke of?

BENTRESHYT. I know not who or of what she spoke.

ANTEF. Do not tempt my anger. Or you will speak no more than her. For no longer has the good lady snake charmer a tongue to chant with. Yes, of course, cut from her mouth. And she will suffer worse if ever the matter is spoken of again.

SAKARRA. Though difficult to do without a tongue.

ANTEF. I said quiet. She is not the only one with a tongue that wags too freely. Do not look at me with such horror. You can imagine the difficulty I would have explaining how my virgin priestesses began to have families, and how little control or devotion was practiced in my temple. I did not work for forty years to be master of this House only to watch the amorous attentions of a vegetable seller's daughter destroy my life's work. Now is it true? Is it? Your tongue is already silent. Perhaps you no longer have need for it.

SAKARRA. She has a voice from the Gods, my Lord, you said so yourself. Do not make such a voice mute.

ANTEF. True, *(sensing more danger this way)* and it is you who can never sing a note without creaking. Perhaps it is your tongue that needs repair. *(He pulls her head back by the hair, knife in hand.)*

SAKARRA. My Lord, please. You are hurting me. I have obeyed your every wish.

ANTEF. Good, remember that well, those are the last words you will ever speak.

BENTRESHYT. What is it you want?

ANTEF. Tell me if it is true. Are you with child?

BENTRESHYT. You will know soon enough. Let her go first. I will tell you. You have my word.

ANTEF. Your word. Of what value is that. Mother Isis had your word. Did that stop you from spreading your legs. (*He throws Sakarra to the ground.*) You are lucky we perform too soon.

BENTRESHYT. Leave us, Sakarra. I said, leave!

SAKARRA. (*Bowing to ANTEF. and going*) My Lord.

ANTEF. My little cat.

BENTRESHYT. Yes, it is true. I am with child.

ANTEF. Do you know what you have done?

BENTRESHYT. My lord, this is not the first time in our history that a priestess has been fouled. Your good friends in the council often take liberties with us. Some even boast of having "tasted all" the fruits in this garden. And yet you stand there feigning surprise? We have all heard the stories of the chosen priestesses, who never wake from their sleep, called forth by our Lady Isis for an early journey. And you publicly lament, though we know the real song. And we know the dish of poison that helps them on their way. Well, now it is my turn, let me drink from it.

ANTEF. I know not of what you speak.

BENTRESHYT. Ever the actor, playing at innocence.

ANTEF. I am a priest. I am not an actor.

BENTRESHYT. You are a politician. Truth is rewritten as easily as the next speech. But the Gods see all.

ANTEF.

(*Striking her*) Enough! Listen to you, telling me what the Gods see? I am not the one breaking vows to Our Lords.

BENTRESHYT. And I know I will suffer for what I've done. And I am ready to be judged. Are you?

ANTEF. I said enough. (*She is hurt now and falls silent.*) Do you know what my father did? For a living? Raked sewage. And my mother? My mother was a concubine. And what am I now? A high priest! That is what comes of years, years of hard work-

BENTRESHYT. And devotion?

ANTEF. Why? Why you? My Harp Of Joy? You who could make my words sing like no other before you? I could have made us renown throughout both lands and wealthy beyond our dreams.

BENTRESHYT. I am already that my Lord, without your words.

ANTEF. Who else knows of this?

BENTRESHYT. No one, my Lord.

ANTEF. Don't play with me, I see no sport in this!

BENTRESHYT. No one.

ANTEF. There must be a father. Well?

BENTRESHYT. I know not, my Lord. *(He twists her arm behind her)* I was drunk. He filled me with drink.

ANTEF. You will be drinking your own blood soon enough. But it will not be from my hand. Not with you. I will leave you to my Holy Council. They will work the truth out of you. Remain here, if you leave from here my orders will be to have your head. *(He leaves.)*

BENTRESHYT. My dear Master and true Lord, even today was I happy and thinking of you. For it has been three moons exactly since you held me in your arms and I felt the world disappear into your eyes.

Sety appears down stage. It is three months earlier.

SETY. Don't be sad, little one.

BENTRESHYT. Who knows when I'll see you again?

SETY. I'll be back as soon as I can. Though it might be after the rains, or even longer...

BENTRESHYT. *(Starting to chant to herself)* Time is a shroud...woven with never-ending...

SETY. What?

BENTRESHYT. We have a prayer that we offer- It is my favorite prayer. *(She laughs)* It's a prayer of mourning, actually.

SETY. I find that rather inappropriate.

BENTRESHYT. It is offered to comfort loved ones when one of theirs has begun "the journey"-

SETY. I'm only going to Memphis.

BENTRESHYT. Stop. And in the prayer we say: "Time is a shroud, woven with threads never-ending. And each thread a life with countless chances to cross the path of another-

SETY. For the cloth has no end- is as wide as is long. It was the prayer my father chose for his shroud. And the one I've had woven into mine.

Lights crossfade to Sir Budge and Dorothy in the Museum.

SIR BUDGE. So when I die, my little bug, you see they wrap me in this.

DOROTHY. Please. Don't talk to me about death.

SIR BUDGE. Oh, you mustn't fear death, my bug. Our people never did. They called it the "Great Sleep" and wove special blankets or shrouds to be wrapped in. This is a replica of one that my wife embroidered for me. See, and on it is a prayer.

BENTRESHYT. And for each life a thread, woven into a shroud called time.

DOROTHY. I don't want you to go anywhere.

Lights crossfade back to Bentreshyt and Sety only.

BENTRESHYT. I don't want you to go.

SETY. I must.

Light dims on him leaving Bentreshyt alone.

BENTRESHYT. And now this most precious gift is one I will never be able to bear to you. It will have to be my secret, as I am yours.

SAKARRA. *(Entering)* Bentreshyt, come on we must go.

BENTRESHYT. Sakarra, what are you doing here?

SAKARRA. I've packed our things. We must leave.

BENTRESHYT. You? Why you?

SAKARRA. Because I know. And because even if I didn't, sooner or later it would be me. That has her tongue removed- or her head. It is only a matter of time.

BENTRESHYT. Yes. Time...

SAKARRA. We must go before Antef returns.

BENTRESHYT. Go where?

SAKARRA. Far away from here.

BENTRESHYT. Far away.

SAKARRA. I have a friend on a barge. Well, you aren't the only one with secrets. He is willing to hide us.

BENTRESHYT. Then go. Antef is calling his holy council. As long as I am with you .You will be in trouble.

SAKARRA. Trouble? I'm already in trouble. How can I be in any more trouble.

BENTRESHYT. Go. I know what I must do.

SAKARRA. What?

BENTRESHYT. Go, now. I have my own plan. Do not worry. I am at peace.

SAKARRA. That is what worries me. The boat sails at high sun.

BENTRESHYT. Then hurry, or you will not be on it. I will try to meet you there. But do not wait for me. Go!

SAKARRA. Hurry. *(She leaves)*

BENTRESHYT. Good-bye my friend. No more will you make me laugh like when we were little girls.

Bentreshyt starts to climb the wall as she did at the beginning of the play. Omm Sety appears huddled in a blanket in front of her urn to pray. She is very weak. It is a few years past the scenes with Samir.

OMM SETY. My dear Lady Isis. And you good King Osiris. I've finished my shroud and am ready for my journey. My lords, I've known for some time now why you brought me here. Why you've chosen this life for me, and I have only been thankful for it is your wisdom that brought me home. I wish nothing but for you to

smile on all that have helped me, and on my beautiful son, and my husband, who always meant well, even as he spoke harshly of the ancients-

BENTRESHYT. My Lord, please forgive me. I know of no other way.

Sety appears in spot stage right looking at Om Sety.

OMM SETY. And for my Lord whose heart has been full, who has worried for what happened so long ago, for him to finally be free. *(They exchange a long look.)* You see... no more words.

SETY. *(Crying out as Bentreshyt falls from the wall and the spot goes out on Omm Sety.)* BENTRESHYT. !!!!

BLACKOUT

Single spot on Samir center stage. He is giving an eulogy at a commemoration.

SAMIR. Dorothy Eady/Bulbul Abdel Meguid/Omm Sety died on April 21, 1981 in the holy city of Abydos. The local health department refused for her to be allowed to be buried in her garden tomb. Instead her body was placed in the desert northwest of the Temple. I visit her often, or at least as often as I can. I've even brought my wife and children to say hello. The burial site is marked only by a few limestone flakes on which offering prayers have been written in hieroglyphs. *(He takes a teacup out of his jacket)* And by a teacup that was placed there by unknown friends. And while I'm there, I always make a point of visiting the Temple. And I sit there in that great "garden" in the "middle of nowhere," and I think of my old friend and her guided tours-

Lights on Omm Sety on the platform Center.

OMM SETY. We in show business like to save the best for last-

SAMIR. And how sacred these walls were to her-

Lights on Bentreshyt and Sety sitting on the wall as earlier.

SAMIR. The very spot where a young priestess and a king first fell in love so many centuries ago-

BENTRESHYT. *(Pointing to her star)* You can have that one right there....

SAMIR. And I think of how this place touched my life, and what I learned here, and I look up at this sky in the cool desert night-

SETY. I will cherish it always.

SAMIR. And for a moment, at least, sitting here, my heart too, feels as light as a feather.

Light Fade To Black

END OF PLAY