

# **Nufereti-Iti**

## **Book One**



**William Altoft**

*“And you! When I say Beauty’s Come...  
Shall I compare to summer’s grace,  
or – p’rhaps – with winter’s wond’rous night,  
these features of thy face?  
Were Sekh-Met, at Iteru’s side,  
to see her reflection transform  
into your visage, child, she’d scarce  
see eyes less luminous; less fierce!  
She’d see, Sun Disk adorned,  
a matching pow’r ‘n equal might  
to stalk the black, African night!”*

A girl-child on the banks of the passing Nile, with  
Wa-Set at her back, sees the day chase night ‘cross the  
fertile earth as the Sun Disk crowns her figure...

Nfr .t .t

Nefertiti

Nafereti-Iti

From childhood to burial, via a plethora of poetic  
texts collected into books: this is the first volume of a  
prose-poetic song of Nefertiti’s life.

With her name here re-constructed, let now her story  
be re-told...

<https://williamaltoft.blog/>

# Nafereti-Iti

## Book One

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by

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## Thus Was The Girl-Child

In lands alit by th'Aten's flame,  
Osirid marsh, 'breast barren red,  
bears lush papyrus banks awash  
in life by th'river bled  
upon 'n o'er her floodplain fields –  
their soil suffused; the wet-sand womb  
gestates the formless seed, absorbed  
'mongst rushsome reeds, securely moored  
within the bed; subsumed.  
Ma'at, from Issfet's void, is birthed.  
The Sun Disk crowns the waking earth.

Two lands long joined 'neath falcon's flight  
between horizons – dusk 'n dawn –  
of eastern climb, western descent,  
and Nut's night-curtain drawn:  
the Mansion Of The Soul of Ptah!  
Iteru paints her deltas dark  
with riches vast, whilst valleys ring  
her riv'ring course, 'long which she brings  
her primordial spark  
to gift a jewel unto the world.  
Along the river, ran a girl.

On bount'yus banks in th'Upper Realm,  
south of Narmeric Abydos,  
the City of the Sceptre sings  
its gold 'n grand chorus!  
Since th'Foremost of Noble Ladies –  
Hat-Shep-Sut – had Wa-Set flourished  
to peaks of tow'ring monuments,  
voyages to the shores of Punt,  
and conquest accomplished!  
Amun-Hotep upon the throne;  
the girl stood 'mongst the reeds, alone.

Her back was t'ward the colossal  
pylons, pillars, 'n obelisks  
of Amun-Ra's greatest temple –  
Most Select Of Places!  
Her feet? Planted within the silt.  
Her legs, scaffolded either side  
by columns of papyrus, shone  
their sun-soaked brown. Her kilt, upon  
her hips, was linen-white.  
Her belly rose 'n fell. At rest,  
her arms crossed o'er her naked chest.

Thus was the girl-child. 'Midst the dawn's  
chill, she watched the night-time passing  
westward as she felt the tide of  
heat fall on her bare skin.  
It broke in 'lluminating throes  
'n crashed against the city's stone  
to flood the sphinx-lined alley through  
Ipet-Re-Shyt, Ipet-Isu,  
shrines, courtyards, paths, 'n homes –  
on o'er 'n t'ward the Nile 'n b'yond,  
in time to watch the past abscond.

She turned about. Her feet held firm.  
Her hands moved to her bony hips.  
Adorned with turquoise symmetry,  
a band slid down her wrist  
to settle half-way up her palm,  
its lapis-laden metal cold  
against her thumb. A tambourine  
of beads in carnelian, green,  
amber, ox-blood, 'n gold  
swayed – jingle-jangling – in the breeze  
that moved th'woven papyrus reed.

Tucked well behind her right-side ear  
in spiralled strands, her braid of youth  
spilled deep-brown locks through th'golden clasp –  
an unwritten cartouche  
that held the hair at origin –  
to cascade from her shaven head.  
She saw, in sun-backed silhouette,  
a cobra rearing – now erect;  
its uraeic-hood spread.  
Within the Aten's haze, it merged  
with fire that lit 'n fed 'n purged.

"Nafereti-Iti!" Silence  
rent – the voice ranged vicious, for to  
find those little ears adorned with  
fashion foreign 'n new.  
As sure as was the god-king's rule,  
her moth'ring wet-nurse, whom she'd known  
for seven years thus far – Her whole  
life's song! – in each 'n ev'ry role  
(it seemed) as she had grown,  
would know she'd snuck back in to fake  
that she'd just now begun to wake...

## Hymn To The City Of The Sceptre

The crown of Khemet's upper reaches! 'Breast  
Iteru's riv'ring course, 'pon th' eastern bank  
you stand in prosp'rous glory to Amun,  
who's hid beyond the tall papyrus reeds!  
The fertile mud makes abundant off'rings!  
Shu soothes your stone that's soaked in Ra's heat-grace!  
Your shrines 'n courtyards – life 'n health to all  
who walk your courtyards; who attend your shrines –  
adorn the alley where the ram-head sphinx  
is legion, either side, 'long th' city's length!  
Your wealth extends to awe all foreign lands!  
Your pious worship deeply pleases all  
our divine hosts, who bless our lives with Ma'at!  
Re-Shyt; Isu – you guard your city's ends!  
Strong Bull, the Majesty of Horus, Who  
Establishes the Laws of the Two Lands  
and Pacifies, Beloved of Amun,  
Neb-Ma'at-Ra, the Heir of Ra, the King:  
Amun-Hotep doth favour you o'er all!  
Khemet-Nesut-Weret, Great of Praises,  
Mistress 'n Lady of the Two Lands: Tiye –  
she honours you with her regal presence,  
presenting beauty by her husband's side!  
Wa-Set, eternal is your sceptred name!

## The Tale Of Two Sisters

T'was in another lifetime – when  
the Earth's unknown was vast;  
when held the land in sway the forms  
that took, as their repast,  
offerings of fear, obeisance, of  
terrawe, love, 'n hate  
from Pan's sapient descendants,  
placed 'pon the stone they'd shaped;  
when yet nature's omnis'yunt whole  
was split, personified,  
'n given anim'listic force  
by th'future deified;  
when th' east 'n west were seared with th'throes  
of Ra's unending river –  
that, between bloodied birthing blocks,  
two daughters were delivered...

“Bes protect her...”

“Pass the soiled linen!”

“The sharpened flint?”

“Make the heart of the deliverer strong...”

“We are with you!”

“Yes! With Hathor 'n Taweret at our backs!”

“The knife?!”

“Lay cloth upon the brick!”

“?where'sAh! Come...”

“She will not cry!”

“She will.”

Without th'one whom they'd grown within,  
they grew without. In slings  
around the necks of nurses they  
would rest 'tween wanderings  
upon all naked fours on floors  
of wealth, where felines lazed  
with ears at watch for th'sounds awash  
in tumultuous waves  
cresting with calls of primate bonds  
'n crashing down in cries.  
The daughters of Khemet – the Fertile  
Land – did set 'n rise  
rejuvenated, grown, growing,  
'n passing b'yond the west  
horizon of their ear'yest years;  
out b'yond the palace creche...

“Ben-Ben! Looooook!” She points toward the glist’ning gleam of the water rushing past the reeds, calling to her other half under the canvas shade.

With the skin of a date stuck to her lower lip, its colour on her thumbs ‘n fingers, Mut-Beneret turned ‘round to heed her yelling sister. Clad in kilt ‘n sidelock, soon she saw the reason she’d been summoned so: Nafereti-Iti stood before a hippo herd.

Gleefully approaching primal power – Bulls who bare their war-worn tusks! Young rivals with th’ambition cowed! – she didn’t wait for her sister, who, now, came – drawn to the dazzling brightness.

The waves of mass displacement...  
Ricochets of rolling, thund’rous  
momentum that mergereach;  
tumblecrash.  
Against her legs, they lapped.

“Naffy!”

Catching up, the girl in the date-debris dredged mud from the bed of the bank as she ran through the rushes ‘midst the guard’yun grass that marked the meeting of two worlds. Amphib’yusly they stood, not side-by-side but in the same space – sparse delineation spoke of the dis’prate forms, as-yet uncut.

The sun glistened off the dazzling son – heir to the herd, ‘n regent.

The great bull glared at the girls as one glared back.

Down to The Dazzling Aten’s sprawl,  
the zigzag of the mud-brick quarters  
ricocheting ‘round that Atenpolis,  
sojourned the rising daughters.  
The city’s seeds had germinated  
fast upon their sowing – now,  
late in the years of the Sun-God-King,  
it flourished! Th’canopic bough  
of artindustrolific life, led  
large between the palaces,  
spread – Reaching! – its urbanic claim, as if  
fed – Fertile! – on Iteru’s grace!  
The fierce, exploratorive itch –  
a restless flame – innate within  
the ba of the human ape, e’er led  
our sisters on, searching...

“Naffy, look:” (A pointed arm.) “that’s where it’s coming from.”

Jump – latch arms; legs. Wraparound – hands about their opposite wrist; ankle over ankle.

“Pfffaauh!”

With her face smushed fast against her sister’s cheek, hanging off her naked torso, gigguhling at her almost-toppled kin, th’other whispered best laid plans.

T’was dark in the mud-brick bayk’ry – baking dough that lay entombed/enkined, at rest, made missives with their spirit-scents to the world that waited for their spell-bound rise. In his kilt, unwigged, ‘n wiping brow, was he when he heard the sound – a querulous command with a trembling voice that tried to keep its birth-right strength.

“Baker! Help me!”

Turning from the burning heat-haze, hands at rest upon his fatless hips, the man stepped for to see her more through the light-lit door – a girl-child.

The grump of the pout on her face – a fleeting funniness until he registered the banged ankles, braceleted wrists, 'n the gilt kilt-skirt that dug into her belly folds. Her arms across her yet-androgynous chest, the child scowled, her eyes entitled.

“I don't know where I am. Tell me.”

A lowered gaze 'n a humbled pose.

“May Sehk-Met, Before Whom Evil Trembles, grant her fierce protection! You are not far from the palace, yet still you mus”

“Come out and speak to me beneath the Aten of Amun-Ra!”

Grov'ling forward; grovuhlingalong – the man, in his noon years, stepped beyond the entrance shade. Cowed 'n bowed, he didn't see the glint of the jew'll'ry pass behind him.

“Where. Should. I. Go. ?.”

“Down there, where the glassworks' sounds mingle with the salted-smell of meat made lasting. You'll see the racks that dry the freshly butchered.”

“Hey! You're here!”

He looked; she looked, grinning – yet another girl-child clad in status called from a distance down the street, her hands behind her upright back.

“You may return to your work.”

Dismissed, he missed the smirk – derisive – dancing 'bout her down-turned mouth.

Mut-Beneret was busy picking gravel from the loaf's insides. The moment that the man had skulked inside, she brought her hands around; holding the bread, they chose to not wait for the sister.

“Hey! Give!”

Snatching over; fighting; sharing – walking 'long the city's routes, they m'yandered. They coursed past the other 'n the wretched 'n the meek. Their bellies drooped, full with the food they'd stolen.

'Gainst the zigzag brick sat kids, their hip-bones stretching out the snare of their skin, pressed tauttight, telling of the sinew o'er their abdomen – made pow'rful with a desp'rate strength.

The girls gazed.

They threw the remaining bread upon a heap of waste.

Grooming the two for the harem – Hail,  
the fate of priv'leged girls! –  
took a sprawl of forms o'er years til blood-  
red light flowed through their world  
at the dawn of their destined duty  
t'bring the divine rays of Ra  
to soar, horaic, heralding  
th'royal infant's new-breathed ka.  
But children were they still, instilled  
with all which that entails.  
Consternatalation over-  
whelmed th'one who'd regaled  
them time, 'n time, 'n time again  
with prep'ratory speech  
which flooded o'er with teaching feminine,  
that did obedience beseech...

## Lived On The Woman Lost

“Menat! I’ve only just...” She trailed  
to silence as, through th’threshold, came  
the risen Tey – her rage unmasked;  
her ochre eyes untame.

“Again!” She yelled, sweeping her hand  
to d’rect the child’s avoidant gaze  
unto the proof of quick-paced feet  
in sand-soil tracks. Their eyes did meet;  
she fiddled with her braid.

Within Tey’s eyes? Th’lament well-versed:  
My child, your gifts gestate your curse.

Her pleated dress a sweep of blue  
‘mongst white, fringe-trimmed with yellow-gold;  
her unfinished eyeline blackened;  
her perfumed wig sat, bold –  
thus was the girl-child’s moth’ring guide,  
as th’sleeping sister woke (her braid  
was floating ‘pon her ear ‘n cheek,  
its damp end anchored ‘tween her teeth,  
where tass’ling-tips splayed frayed).  
Through haze, one girl watched ‘nother curse  
th’now distant back of their wet nurse.

Voices – awake ‘n waking – spoke:  
“Why’d you go out?” “Why do you stay?”  
“I go with you most times!” “Would you,  
without me, disobey?”  
“I can do both!” “I can’t...” “You can!  
Just hide it better; do it less.”  
She crawled ‘cross to her sister’s bed  
‘n shuffled t’where her sister’s head  
did shun the carved headrest –  
at the bed’s foot, as in the womb,  
they lay ‘n silently communed.

Within the hour – up; groomed; dressed.  
Proclaimed their tutor: “Good! Come sit,  
my dazzling rays of Amun-Ra,  
by whom my morning’s lit!  
My Sweet One Of The Mother, Mut –  
Thoth stakes, increasingly, in you  
his” “Seshat!” “Ah yes! Seshat! She,  
in you, stakes pride increasingly  
for th’wisdom you accrue!  
Palm-stem in hand, to futures far  
you write the sky’s eternal stars!

And you! When I say Beauty's Come...  
Shall I compare to summer's grace,  
or – p'rhaps – with winter's wond'rous night,  
these features of thy face?  
Were Sekh-Met, at Iteru's side,  
to see her reflection transform  
into your visage, child, she'd scarce  
see eyes less luminous; less fierce!  
She'd see, Sun Disk adorned,  
a matching pow'r 'n equal might  
to stalk the black, African night!"

Delighted thus by Tutor-Dad,  
the sister 'n the sister learnt  
their lessons. Ay felt blessed; adored  
those girls – though sons they weren't.  
Within their striking intellect  
lived on the woman lost, who now  
existed in their uttered thoughts  
'n in th' ways they agreed 'n fought.  
The long horns of the cow,  
atop the vulture headdress, loomed;  
Hathor 'n Isis bore their womb.

A voice heard – trace of syllables  
clearing the mistsome dawn – that calls  
the call of one yet guarded;  
of one still rapt, enthralled,  
'n taken with the dist' approach  
of adulthood, its freedom clear  
acrest the waves of mirage meant  
to lure 'n spur them on 'n tempt  
abandon rushed: *Come near...*  
*Now, look back at – e'er lost; far flung –*  
*that which to which you should have clung!*

"Yes, my lioness?" And, as he  
lived on within his daytime-dream,  
the future approached, pastward-bound,  
so charged; with envy, green.  
For soon, the dusk, with twilight grip,  
of lingering childhood would pass  
to Duat and the Atef crown.  
Adolescent night soon abounds.  
When th' chapt'ring morning asks,  
as dawn breaks – red – o'er th' east: *Who's come?*  
Sekh-Met 'n Seshat rise as one.

## The Dialogue Of Ay & Tey

My own Queen Consort;  
my own Great Wife;  
Mother-Muse where once was naught!

Quit quiet now your blasphemy –  
though favoured you are not a king!  
Your daughters might not speak so highly...

*Our* daughters do not need  
to speak it, f' they know that  
they are yours in full!

No. Not mine. Nor –  
Stay that objection! – are they yours.  
We are theirs.

*The smell of dates 'n figs  
in heaps decreasing o'er the eve –  
flitfitful flies dispersed.  
'Pon lengths of woven reed they lounged,  
propped up against the moon-led night.*

Nafereti-Iti...

she...

She does.  
Yet still she needs your words.  
The princes... They'll not be patient.

I fear that by  
the moment she see's sense  
her sister'll be lost!

Mut-Beneret does  
follow where she leads  
with whole-heart bounds...  
Though, as you say, we may  
be theirs, they are our future, too.  
They must be prosperous.

They will be.  
They'll soon profess their readiness  
in stains on reddened sheets...

That is not all th

Is it not?!

*A trembling tremolody turns  
upon the lyric breeze,  
breaking 'gainst th'apartment.  
O'er bass-lyre beatburst,  
th'treble dances sound.*

*Sweat pooled 'tween  
prosp'rous flab to fight  
their ailing perfume-scent.  
The music travelled, borne  
by th'wings of Isis.*

They may fashion king's sons  
out of the primal waters, but  
there is still more that they might gain.

Trained to fashion son's  
'n bear man's light...  
What more? For whom?

Influence!  
For us!  
For them!

Our station is high!  
We could not wish,  
no nor demand,

Your station is high!  
You might not wish for more!  
I can. I do.

But not without the means, yes?!  
Not without your daughters,  
or your "own Great Wife"...

*Terse-tension  
takes the space between them,  
newly lain –  
their skin unstuck;  
their hands left fumbling.*

I love them.  
I love you.  
You are not "means".

I know.  
They know.  
We know.

*B'yond the dist' southern horizon,  
a hyaena howls derisive.  
Forepaw upon the ruin  
of a termite mound,  
she bristles 'cross her bulk.*

*Th'lone lion,  
mane of deepest black,  
growls dominant pow'r.  
Standing on the heat-scarred earth,  
he burns prophetic.*

## Words Of The Wet Nurse

The beginning of the Teaching  
made by Tey, Nurse to the sisters  
Nafereti-Iti and Mut-Beneret,  
Wife of Ay, who is God's Father,  
Tutor to the sisters  
Nafereti-Iti and Mut-Beneret,  
Acting Scribe of the King, Beloved by Him,  
Fan-Bearer on the Right-Hand Side of the King,  
Overseer of the Horses,  
Troop Commander,  
in the time of Neb-Ma'at-Ra, the Heir of Ra,  
Amun-Hotep – Life! Prosperity! Health!

And thus she said,  
to the daughters of the elite:

“On the decorated stelae of my mind's eye memory –  
a waking dream, e'en as I see you as you are today –  
there dance the dazzling depths of eyes,  
the brown of the branches of the sycamore,  
set within your faces – black  
with the fertile soil; white  
with the fear of two young children  
who had strayed to play  
on the banks of the netcher lands,  
facing, ne'er too soon/too soon,  
the lessons of the winds 'n the wilds 'n the water...

You, the girl-children with Hathor's lust for life;  
with Sekh-Met's prowling pride that seeks unending dangers;  
with Wadj-Et's fierce, protective eyes e'er placed 'pon one another;  
with th'loyalty of Isis burning t'match the fire of Amun-Ra:  
you must become obedient!

Do not let fly your thousand questions!  
(Though I weep for your unanswered minds...)  
Do not follow the paths of impulse!  
(Though I wept with joy when you first walked...)  
Make obeisance! (As I unmake  
your essence with these teachings...)  
Become the ones desired for their def'rence!

Mut-Beneret – you must no longer take your sister's lead!  
(E'en though she is a beauty in her thoughts 'n words 'n deeds...)  
Nafereti-Iti – you must quell your cobric tongue!  
(Yet though it hides – a serpent charmed – may it remain fearsome...)

Within the palace harem, you must excel!  
Do so with compliant acts.

Do not seek elevation with your wilfulness!  
Khemet-Nesut-Weret, Great of Praises,  
Lady of the Two Lands, Tiye – Life! Prosperity! Health! –  
will know you:  
she will know that beautiful ones have come;  
she will know that, as Hathor bears the sun,  
your hips will bear the sons to maintain all that's good!  
You must make it such that she will know,  
as consort and as wife, that you will uphold all traditions,  
all your duties, sacred rites, 'n that you'll act  
to honour, manifest, 'n strengthen ev'ry word 'n deed  
of the Living Horus whom you live to honour!

Is there more?  
The Crown Prince – May he reign! –  
Thutmose will know you, too...  
With minds at rest,  
your bodies shall be his.”

## To Be A Woman

Of a forceful mind,  
suppressed in tutelage  
to rest in hidden chambers –  
painted o'er –  
behind subdued space, soon  
dedicated/  
decorated  
to her new obedience –  
in gilt adornment –  
Nafereti-Iti learnt  
to be a woman.

The deeper bedrock –  
undisturbed.  
There rests her wilful essence.  
The pride of a predecessor  
feeds her ba...

Her golden mask of decorum  
(Raise up, Uraeus – high!)  
lay placed upon  
her face – a song of  
gracef'ly hidden pride.

A virginescent river  
begins to shift its sediment...