

Ancient Lives Unveiled



AMP

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Ancient Lives Unveiled

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The Pharaoh's Scribe
藏书章

by Ioyce A. Barnes

illustrated by Michael Jaroszko

The Way of the Samurai

by Steven Otfinoski

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The Pharaoh's Scribe

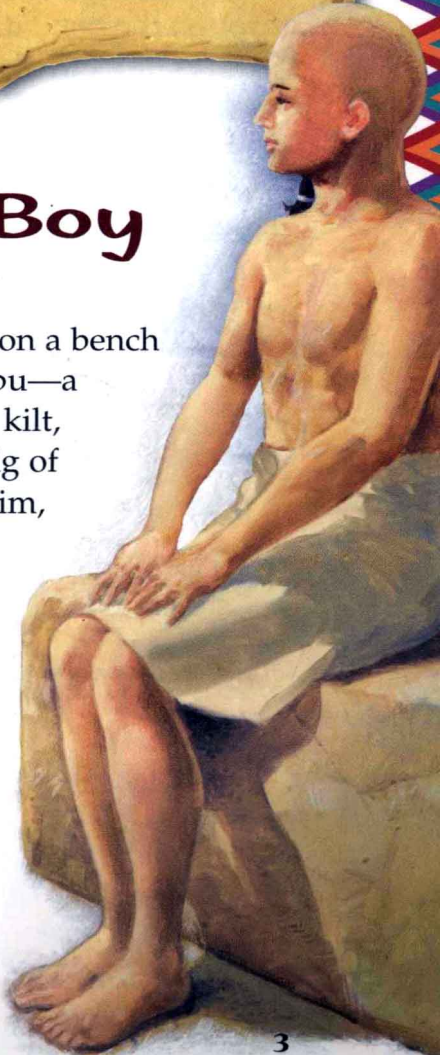
by Joyce A. Barnes
illustrated by
Michael Jaroszeko

Chapter 1

A Fortunate Boy

Ramose sat still as a stone cat on a bench in the center of town. His father, Hapu—a tall, bronzed man wearing the white kilt, **ornate** beaded collar, and braided wig of a town official—came to sit next to him, speaking emphatically.

“You are a fortunate boy, Ramose,” he said to his silent, sulky son, pointing to the various workers scurrying to their homes along the pebbly sand paths that led to the outskirts of the village. Their small town, along the Nile River, was 30 miles south of the capital at Thebes and was a very different place from that bustling city.

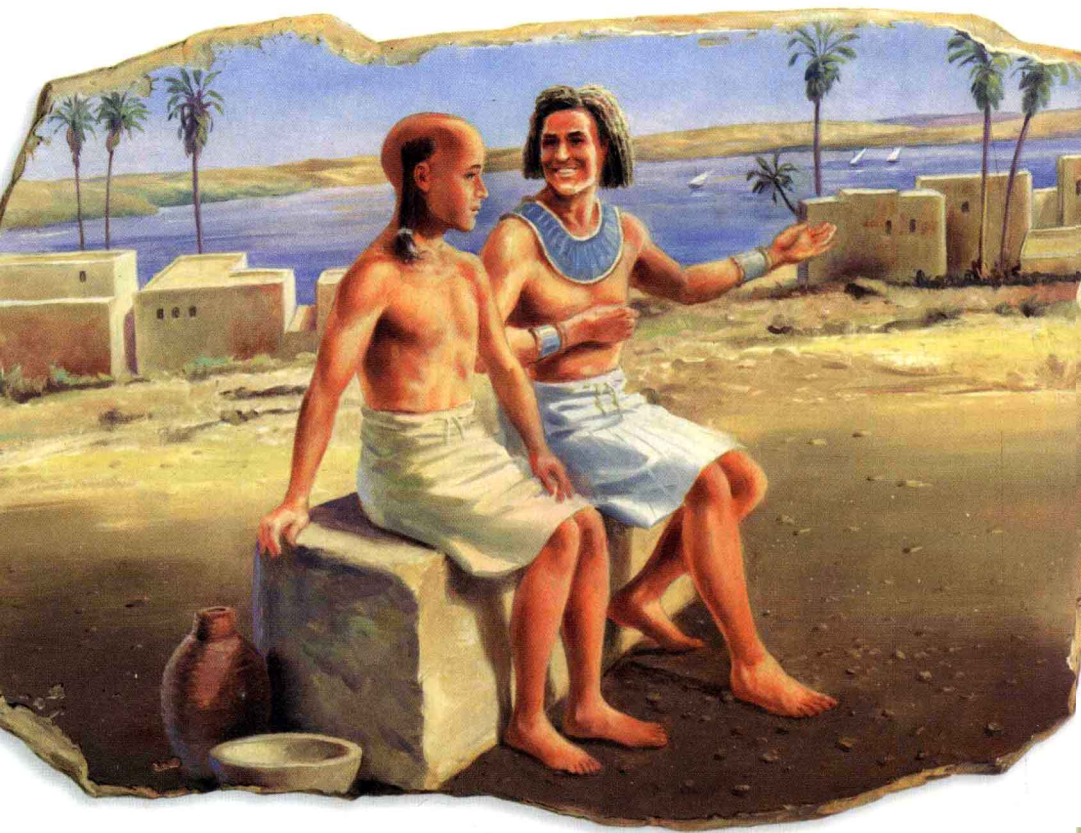


"Look at these people, Ramose. Only darkness rescues them from their labors. Not for you is the reed-cutter's job," Hapu continued, "plunging your hands into papyrus thickets where flies and ticks make a feast of your skin. Not for you is the life of the fisherman, casting heavy nets over and over, competing with the crocodiles for food, even becoming a meal yourself!

"Behold the carpenters emerging from their workplaces after a full day of toil, hot and tired, with sawdust and sweat clinging to their bodies," Hapu went on. "Think of the drudgery you have escaped through the benefit of your education."

"Yes, father," Ramose answered, amazed that he managed to sound respectful through his clenched teeth. Would this **everlasting** lecture ever end?

"You are a fortunate boy," his father repeated. "Not many boys from this little village could ever expect to



work for a pharaoh. We are too far away from the glory of Thebes, and the pharaoh barely gives a thought to us. Now, my brother Senenmut has arranged for you to become an apprentice scribe at the palace. You should be grateful."

Ramose remained silent, waiting to see if his father would say anything more, some hint about the very unusual circumstances surrounding the current pharaoh. What would it be like to work for this strange ruler?

Hapu, however, had set his mouth firmly. Apparently, the way that the pharaoh had seized power could not be discussed, even between a father and son. The boy felt more and more uneasy.

Ramose had enjoyed his last 5 years of study. He had learned astronomy, mathematics, history, and more than 700 **fundamental** signs and pictures of the sacred Egyptian written language, the hieroglyphics. He had learned the simpler, cursive form of the language, called hieratic, as well, but preferred the strokes of the formal script. He enjoyed the smell of the red and black inks and the feel of his reed brushes and pens moving across precious paper made of papyrus.

Only a week ago, he had completed his studies. His father gave him a scribe's palette as a prize for doing well and as a start for his future career. This beautiful palette, meant to hold a scribe's inks, was made of a solid block of magnificently carved ebony and had a sliding compartment for his brushes and pens. That same day Ramose learned he would be sent to work for the pharaoh.

"Why must I go away, Father?" Ramose had begged when a beaming Hapu announced this news. "I want to live here and work as your apprentice. I don't want to go to Thebes, even if it is the capital of Egypt."

"A scribe's position at the royal palace is one of honor, respect, and good fortune," Hapu had told him. Yet for all the prestige of being a royal scribe, Ramose did not want to go. He had heard stories about country boys who had gone to the city and then disappeared in the city's busy streets, probably set upon by thieves. He was not a boy who craved adventure in faraway places. He would rather sit on a familiar hillside, stretch out his long legs, and paint. He loved to paint the sun, the brilliant globe carried to its rest every evening by Amun-Re, the king of the gods, as it fell into the river from a fiery, yellow-orange sky. Ramose had never found a time or a way to explain his interests to his father.

The carpenters passed by in a jostling group, talking loudly. Years spent working among clanging axes and pounding stone hammers had damaged their hearing. To Ramose's eyes, the brawny, laughing men appeared happy and free.

"I should feel glad for my good fortune," he told his father, "yet I'd rather be one of those workmen."

"Yes, they smile and give thanks for the evening sun because they are leaving their work," his father said. "Perhaps we should sit here in the morning and watch their faces as they are going in. Then, they will be silent men, the smiles replaced by frowns."

The workmen moved on along the dusty road, and once again Ramose and Hapu sat in silence. After a while, Hapu stood. "We must return home, son, for your mother and sisters have prepared a banquet in your honor. You must give thanks to Thoth, the patron of scribes, and to your family for setting you on this pathway of learning."

Hastily, Ramose jumped to his feet. "I will come, Father, but please, may I first say good-bye to my friends?"

His father hesitated, for he did not much like Ramose's uneducated friends. However, when Hapu looked at his son, he must have read some of the fear in Ramose's eyes.

"You may say good-bye to them, Ramose, but please remember this: Everything we have done was for your benefit. Do not fear what you cannot change. If you serve the pharaoh well, your days as a scribe will be precious, not only to you but to your children and your children's children and all the generations to come." Hapu turned and walked toward home.

Ramose sighed. His children's children—what an **abstract** thought for a boy of his age! He watched his father for a while, then turned and ran in the other direction.

He found his friends along the riverbank, jumping and splashing over each other like tadpoles in the clear, shallow water. "Ramose," called Memphis, a round-faced boy, "come on; jump in."

"I can't," Ramose began hesitantly, tempted. This day was no more **oppressively** hot than all the other days, but somehow the water looked especially cool and inviting. His body twitched with the urge to run down the embankment, plunge into the river, and splash around carelessly with his friends.

Oh, what he would give to be a future reed cutter, fisherman, or carpenter—anything but a scribe at the court of the strange pharaoh. For the great king who ruled all of Egypt, Ramose knew, was not a man—but a woman. Who had ever heard of a woman king?

A Farewell Feast

"1t is too hot for thinking, Ramose," Memphis called again. "Jump in the water!"

Another boy, called Pepi, waved dismissively. "Ramose is too good now for a wild swim with river rats! He is to become a scribe and will never run and play again. He can't bear the sight of us, isn't that right?"

Ramose responded automatically to the taunt. "I can outswim you any day, Pepi."

"You! You've been sitting cross-legged on the ground for 5 years. You have no strength except in your fingers. Going to be a scribe for the 'king'—a woman!" Pepi snorted. "Are you sure you will be a scribe, Ramose? Maybe they will make you into a washerman, to clean her garments!"

A raucous laughter erupted, and Ramose felt a deep sense of shame. Though Pepi's insult went beyond **civility**, his words were partly true. Ramose *was* going to work for Pharaoh Hatshepsut—and some people believed that, as a woman, she should not be king.

Hatshepsut was of royal birth. She was the daughter, sister, and wife of past kings. Her husband, the pharaoh, had died, leaving a baby—Hatshepsut's nephew, Thutmose III—as the next ruler. It wasn't so unusual for a widowed queen to take the throne for a few years, while a young ruler grew up. Yet, Queen Hatshepsut had done more than just rule in young Thutmose's place. Some years ago, she had declared herself pharaoh, the ruler of all Egypt! Since then, all statues and pictures showed her dressed in men's clothing, even with the crown and false beard worn by a king.



That wasn't all Hatshepsut had done. To prove she was a true pharaoh, she began calling herself the **divine** child of Amun-Re!

"It's an **incivility**," the townspeople had whispered. "It's an insult to the goddess of truth and order. This bold act will create nothing but chaos: The Nile will run dry, the crops will all wither, and we will all starve." Some people still said this, even after years of Egypt's good fortune under Hatshepsut's rule. In fact, some Egyptians whispered that there was a **conspiracy** in the pharaoh's court to remove this king from the throne.

Respectable people said nothing at all. Yet they too believed a woman who called herself pharaoh was strange. Uncle Senenmut, however, who worked for Hatshepsut, assured his brother Hapu that she was a great leader. Ramose did not know whom to believe.

"Are you coming in or not?" Memphis called once again as Ramose stood looking at the river. The others urged him on, but duty pulled him in the other direction.

He waved to his friends. "Good-bye, my friends! My family is waiting. May you all grow and prosper."

Ramose walked from the river to the main road out of town. Even before he had reached his family's modest, two-story mud-brick house north of town, he could smell the feast that had been lovingly prepared in his honor. Grilled meat and fish, dates, pomegranates, figs, white bread, butter, and palm juice were laid out.

His family and friends all cheered when he walked into the courtyard: grandparents, aunts, uncles, and neighbors. Ramose's three sisters shouted his name. He felt he had somehow gained the **stature** of a royal son. The family all ate small portions until they were assured there was enough for everyone; then, they feasted.

As the evening wore on, though, he could not help but notice his mother's behavior. She had a solemn expression as she handed around platters of fruits and breads. Her sad face was unusual, for his mother loved company and feasting and **ornate** ceremonies as much as anyone.

After the meal, the men took up instruments and began to play while the women danced. Ramose's mother did not join in the dancing or clap on the side or sing with everyone else. None of the women's effortless twirls brought a smile to her face; nor did the acrobats who performed afterward. All through the night, but especially when Hapu raised his hand to begin his speech, Ramose's mother looked sad.

"Peace and blessings to all of you gathered here tonight," Hapu began, his face glowing with pride. "Thank you for honoring us with your presence." Hapu saw Ramose standing off to one side. "Come here, son."

Ramose knew he was expected to look grateful and eager. He wasn't sure he could pretend to be happy, but he couldn't refuse to join his father. As he slowly walked to the front of the room, the people began chanting his name and clapping their hands.

Ramose couldn't help feeling proud. By the time he *was standing at his father's side, he had started to smile.* Then, catching the profoundly sad look **imprinted** on his mother's face, his smile faded quickly.

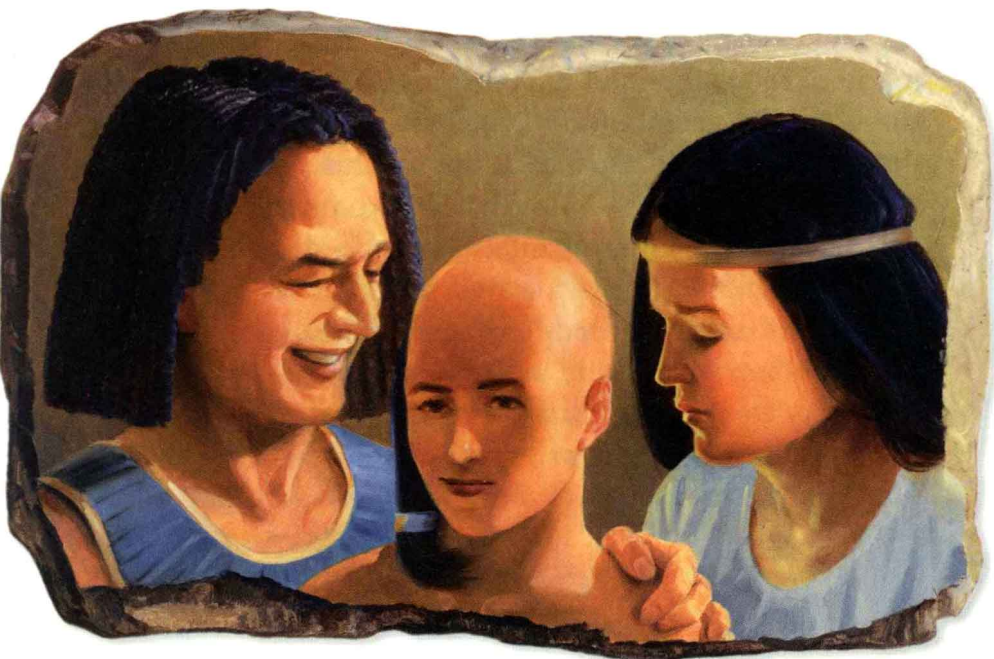
Hapu spoke: "We are all proud of Ramose, who will be a royal scribe. From his gifted hands will come beautiful writing. A scribe knows that if you describe a thing with enough beauty and elegance, that thing *becomes real.* Ramose's name will be **symbolic** of triumph and success."

Much later, after all the guests had gone and the girls had collapsed into their beds and a breeze cooled the house, Ramose lay listening to his parents quarrelling on their rooftop terrace.

"What will happen to him?" his mother demanded. She sounded tired and as if she had been crying.

Hapu replied, "You must not worry about our son. He is a man now and must do a man's work."

"You are sending our son into dangerous territory, Hapu," replied Ramose's mother. "You know what the people say about her." Fear ran through Ramose as he heard the dread in his mother's voice.



Chapter 3

A Trip on the Nile

Hapu gently reproached his wife. "It is not our place, it is not right for commoners to question the mighty Pharaoh Hatshepsut. She is our king, and she has declared that our son will work for her as an apprentice scribe."

Hissing like an angry snake, Ramose's mother replied, "She is not my king; she is a wicked woman. I know that my son will be drawn into some terrible **conspiracy** surrounding her. No good will come of this!"

"Be careful, my wife. **Innumerable** problems have come to those who speak against the pharaoh," Hapu warned.

"But what will become of our son? Oh, Hapu, my heart is greatly **oppressed**." Ramose heard his mother sobbing softly. He wished he could comfort her, but what would he say? He, too, was afraid of the pharaoh.

The next morning, Ramose boarded a light boat made of reeds to begin his journey to Thebes. He would travel to the capital on the Nile River. Ramose knew that the river was the source of all life for his people. Every year on schedule, the Nile River broke its boundaries and flooded the land for miles around. The rich black soil that remained after the river receded brought abundant harvests of fruit and grains. On special days, people honored the Nile as the provider of life, but most days it served a more practical purpose. A boat on the Nile River was the principal way to get from one place to another.

Though he had often splashed in the river's waters, Ramose had never sailed on the **epic** river, and he felt his heart lifting as he boarded the boat.

Besides Ramose, it held three other men: an oarsman, a pilot to steer from the back of the boat, and a navigator to keep the vessel on course. Though Ramose was the only passenger, the boat had another reason for traveling to Thebes. It held bundles of linen, spun by women in Ramose's village, and fine enough to be worn by the wealthy people of Thebes.

The sun slowly rose and brightened the sky. The men sang songs as they struggled against the waves and the **oppressive** heat. On one of their much-needed breaks, the oarsman questioned and teased Ramose.

"Where are you heading, boy, in Thebes?" asked the muscular oarsman, grinning and wiping his face.

"Traveling all by yourself? Don't you know Thebes is no place for a boy alone?"

"That's true," the navigator piped in. *"In Thebes, you have nothing to fear from the crocodile or the lion, but look out for the women, for they are as sly as foxes."* The men laughed when Ramose found he could not reply.

"Leave the boy alone," the pilot called from the back. "Can't you see he's already frightened?" To Ramose, he said kindly, "Pay no attention to them, young man." His smile revealed a **network** of lines on his face.

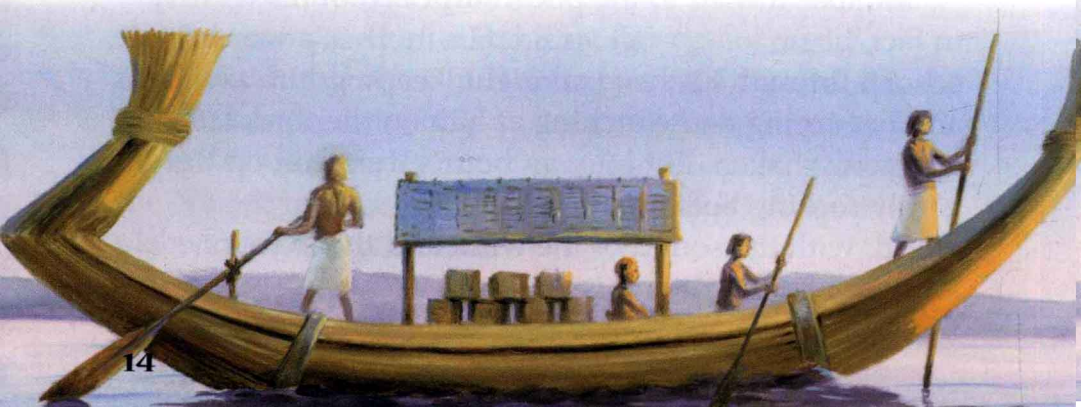
Ramose turned to the pilot, surprised at his **civility**. In fact, he no longer felt afraid. His mother's words had echoed through his head all night, keeping him awake, and her crying and clutching at him on the dock left everyone shaken. But after an hour's **duration** on the gently rocking boat, floating along the vein of the world, with the sound of the wind and the waves, Ramose had forgotten his fears.

"I am not afraid," Ramose objected. "I am going to work as a scribe for the Pharaoh Hatshepsut." He held his breath, waiting for some reaction to the mention of the king, but he detected none. Presently, the men returned to their work and singing. Ramose sat up for a time, watching the ducks and herons flying over the reeds. Then, he settled back and soon caught some of the sleep that had escaped him the night before.

The ride took several more hours than usual because the wind was blowing the surface current against the small boat. River traffic near Thebes slowed them down even more. When Ramose awoke, the shoreline had changed from wild, reed-filled marshland to cultivated fields. Although he was still some distance from land, Ramose could begin to see the outlines of square buildings on the eastern shore of the river. Thebes was coming into view.

The boat crept along now. The men called out to their friends on passing vessels. Ramose faced the east side of the river, his heartbeat increasing as they pulled closer to the metropolis. When the boat slowed to nearly a stop before reaching the shore, he turned to find out why. His sight was drawn to the west side of the river.

Against a wash of cloudless blue sky stood the peak of a mountain, rising above a range of valleys and cliffs for as far as the eye could see. Before this mountain lay a blue-water bay, lush, green fields, and fruit orchards



that seemed to lie like an offering at the great mountain's feet. Then, Ramose noticed the top of a bright white structure at the base of the mountain, a flat-topped building fronted by great square columns. The building's size, even from a distance, stunned the young country boy. It looked as if it were growing out of the mountain or that the mountain had risen from it.

"What is that place?" the astonished boy asked.

The oarsman followed Ramose's eyes. His face flushed with reverence. "That's the Valley of the Kings, where the tombs of the pharaohs and their royal families lie." His voiced became hushed. "And that is the temple of our king, Maatkare Hatshepsut. It is called the 'Sacred of Sacred.' The way the temple rises from the cliffs is **symbolic** of the pharaoh's greatness."

He had never heard the pharaoh's full name. He had never seen so impressive a building. It seemed to him to show not just the greatness of the pharaoh, but also the king's devotion to Egypt, to the **everlasting** gods, and to all who loved them. *What **conspiracies** could possibly succeed against the mighty one who built this temple?* Ramose wondered.

Hardly knowing what he was saying, he cried, "Oh! I cannot wait to work for this great king!"

The oarsman nodded. "You speak well, boy, for this king needs good and wise servants. I believe that you will be one of them." Ramose thrilled to hear the man's words.

