

Where the Desert Meets the Nile

"But this ancestor of yours—the man who ruled the Great Rameses—who was he?" he asked, presently.

"Men called him Ahtka-Rā, as I said. He was descended from the famous Queen Hatshepset, and his blood was pure. Indeed, my ancestor should have ruled Egypt as its king, had not the first Rameses overthrown the line of Mēnēs and established a dynasty of his own. But Ahtka-Rā, unable to rule in his own name, nevertheless ruled through the weak Rameses, under whom he bore the titles of High Priest of Āmen, Lord of the Harvests and Chief Treasurer. All of the kingdom he controlled and managed, sending Rameses to wars to keep him occupied, and then, when the king returned, setting him to build temples and palaces, and to erect monuments to himself, that he might have no excuse to interfere with the real business of the government. You, therefore, who read the inscriptions of the vain king wonder at his power and call him great; and, in your ignorance, you know not even the name of Ahtka-Rā, the most wonderful ruler that Egypt has ever known."

"It is true that we do not know him," returned Winston, scrutinizing the man before him with a puzzled expression. "You seem better informed than the Egyptologists!"

Kāra dipped his hands into the sand beside him and let the grains slip between his fingers, watching them thoughtfully.