

Where the Desert Meets the Nile

Hatatcha was a withered hag when first I remember her, and she is the same to-day. By the head of Osiris, my brother, she is likely to live until I am stiff in my tomb."

"It was she who taught you to speak English?"

"Yes. I knew it when I was a baby, for in our private converse she has always used the English tongue. Also I speak the ancient Egyptian language, which you call the Coptic, and I read correctly the hieroglyphics and picture-writings of my ancestors. The Arabic, of course, I know. Hatatcha has been a careful teacher."

"What of your mother?" asked Winston.

"Why, she ran away when I was a child, to enter the harem of an Arab in Cairo, so that she passed out of our lives, and I have lived with my grandmother always."

"I am impressed by the fact," said the Englishman, with a sneer, "that your royal blood is not so pure after all."

"And why not?" returned Kāra, composedly. "Is it not from the mother we descend? Who my grandfather may have been matters little, provided Hatatcha, the royal one, is my granddame. Perhaps my mother never considered who my father might be; it was unimportant. From her I drew the blood of the great Ahtka-Rā, who lives again in me. Robbed of your hollow ceremonial of marriage, you people of Europe can boast no true descent save through your mothers—no purer blood than I, ignoring my fathers, am sure