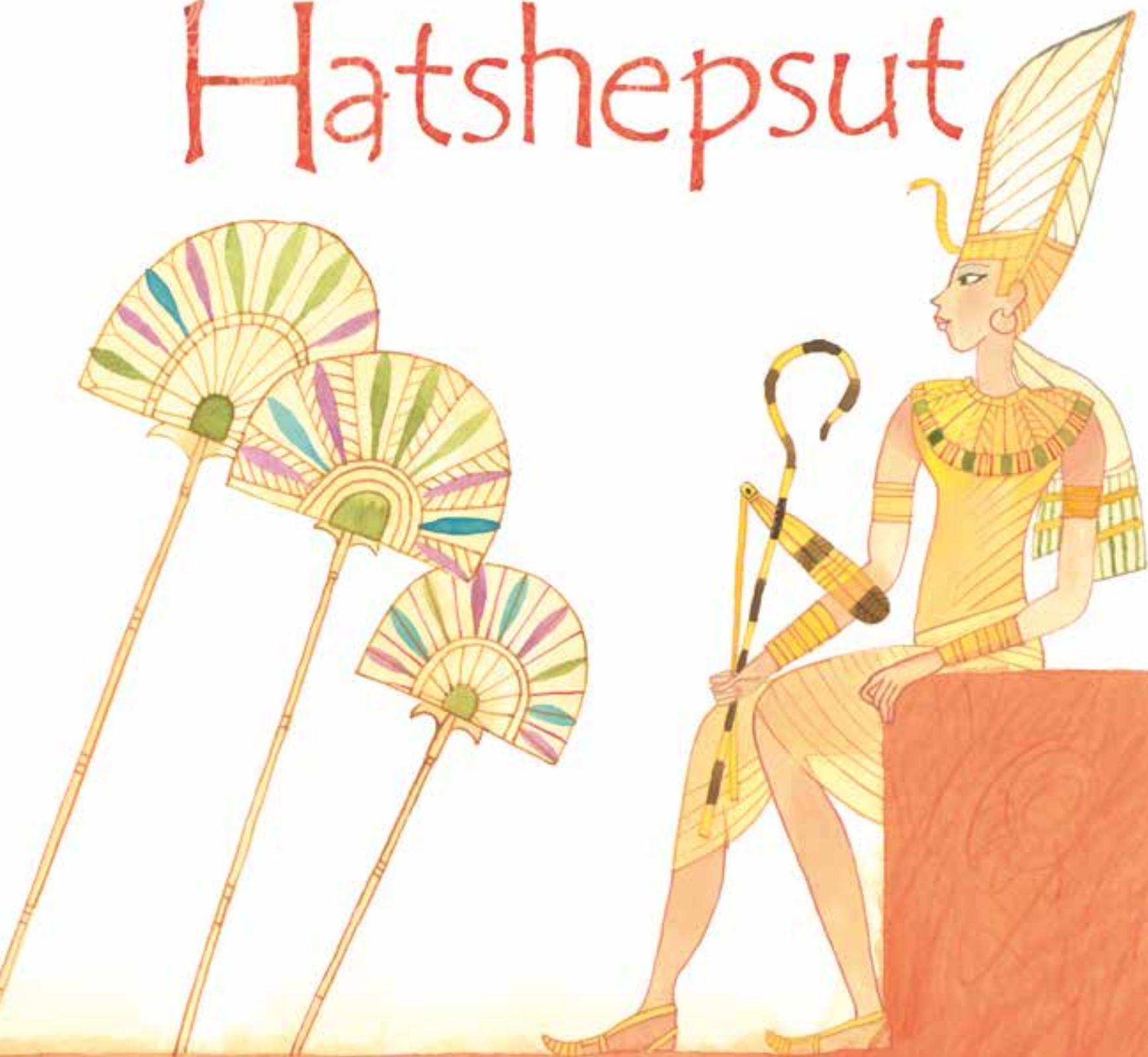


Helena Kraljič

Hatshepsut



Illustrated by Peter Škerl

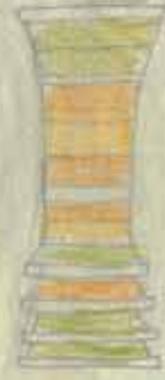
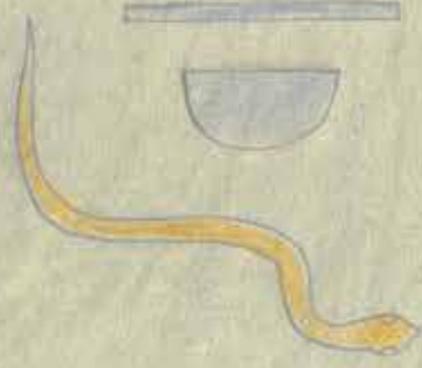
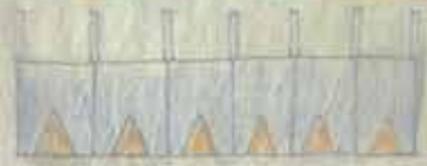
3000 B.C.

2000 B.C.

Hatshepsut 1479-1458 B.C.

1000 B.C.

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Queen Hatshepsut. Her temple Djeser Djeseru (Holy of Holiest), intended primarily to honour the deceased, is part of the Deir el Bahari complex. There, against the rocky cliffs, stand the remains of the temples of three Egyptian rulers, including the queen whose story is illustrated here.

The first temple belongs to the great Mentuhotep II, the king of the 11th Dynasty who at the beginning of the Middle Kingdom reunited Egypt and who therefore remains for all times as one of the most important rulers of the land by the Nile.

Many of his successors looked upon his glory, and they tried to confirm their position by at least building their funeral temple right next to his; Hatshepsut too did this. She knew that the legitimacy of her rule would always be called into question, as arguably she had gone against Maat, the order that advocates tradition. And having a woman on the throne was not part of Egyptian tradition, even if already in the 1st Dynasty – half a millennium before Hatshepsut – a queen Merneith can be found.

The temple of Thutmose III is less well preserved, “forced” as it is between the two larger temples, and thus symbolically indicating the view this king held of his predecessors and of his co-ruler Hatshepsut.

Her story is complicated and by no means straightforward, but when you stop in front of the relief images in her temple, when you gaze at the image of the ships that are returning from the mystical land of Punt – ships bearing a wealth of goods – the sculpted images come to life, taking you back thousands of years to the unforgettable time of Hatshepsut. And time has been a just judge in her case, for in spite of her successors’ desire to erase her from history, she is remembered as one of Ancient Egypt’s most successful rulers.

Matija Črešnar, Archaeologist Ph.D.



Illustrated by Peter Škerl
Translated by Jason Blake

The funeral procession wound along like a lengthy snake. “Look!” said **Hatshepsut**, pointing out to her husband and half-brother Thutmose II the rocky silhouette and backdrop of the Theban Mountains.

“The Eagle will protect all those who will be buried here.”



Thutmose II nodded thoughtfully, “Buried in the place where the sun sets. I believe I will soon be joining my father. May Anubis have mercy on our souls.”





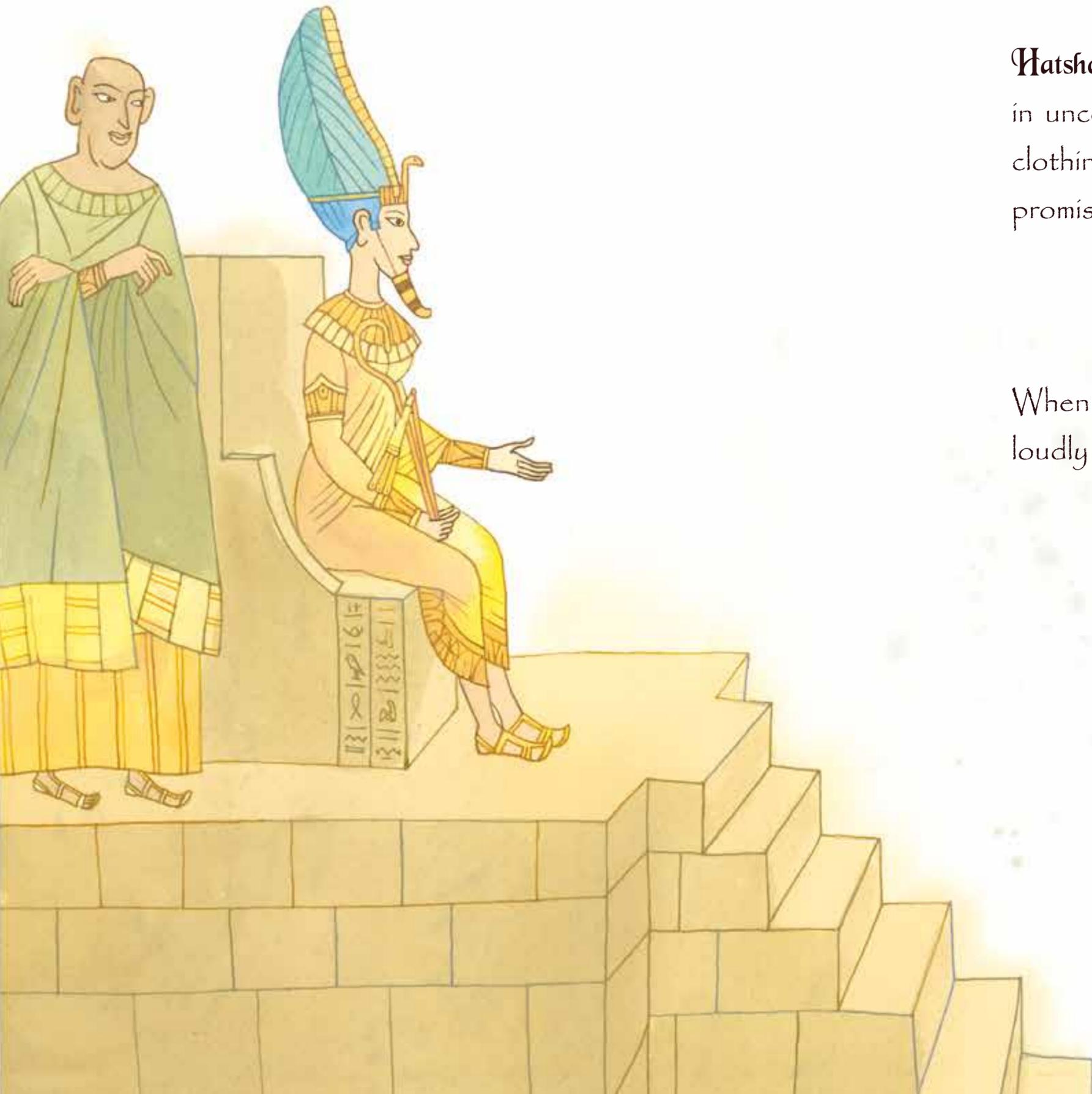
Pharaoh Thutmose I had been accompanied from Per Nefer, the house of beauty, where he had been mummified, on his path to eternity. Written on the coffin in which he lay were spells to protect against dangers that could reach the afterlife. They bore him in a tomb, over the 100-metre-long corridor deep in the rocky Valley of the Kings.

"You'll live on, you'll live forever"
– with these words, they took leave of the great pharaoh.

Thutmose II was right and soon after he joined his father in the afterlife.

The daughter Neferure was the fruit of their marriage.

"Thutmose III, the son and successor to the king, and born of, Iset, a woman of a lower class, was still very young, too young to take over his father's throne."



“He’s just a baby,” whispered the Egyptian people.
“He can’t rule us,” they shuddered.

Hatshepsut was aware that the people could not be left in uncertainty for long. One morning she donned men’s clothing, appeared before the Egyptians, and made this promise:

“The golden age of Egypt will continue!

The king’s successor will have a good deputy!”

When she placed her hand over her own chest, the people loudly applauded her fine decision.



Hatshepsut was a born leader:

“Write clearly! I want the next generations to talk about this!” she ordered the scribe who was standing before the great obelisk and carving her name into eternity.



Hatshepsut, the first among noblewomen, truly did do much during her great reign.

Architecture flourished! She restored and built temples and shrines from Sinai to Nubia. She had four granite obelisks built in the temple at Karnak. The mightiest that had ever stood. And the 30-meter temple Deir el Bahari!



Hatshepsut stood joyously before the temple, in the shade of the magnificent gardens.

“It’s divine! Splendour of splendours! Senemut! You are the finest architect who has ever lived!” she exclaimed. Senemut smiled subtly and bowed slightly, while **Hatshepsut** touched him every so lightly.

Hatshepsut was soon crowned pharaoh.

The people cheered her, and her nose was filled with the scent of incense and myrrh that burned during the ceremony.

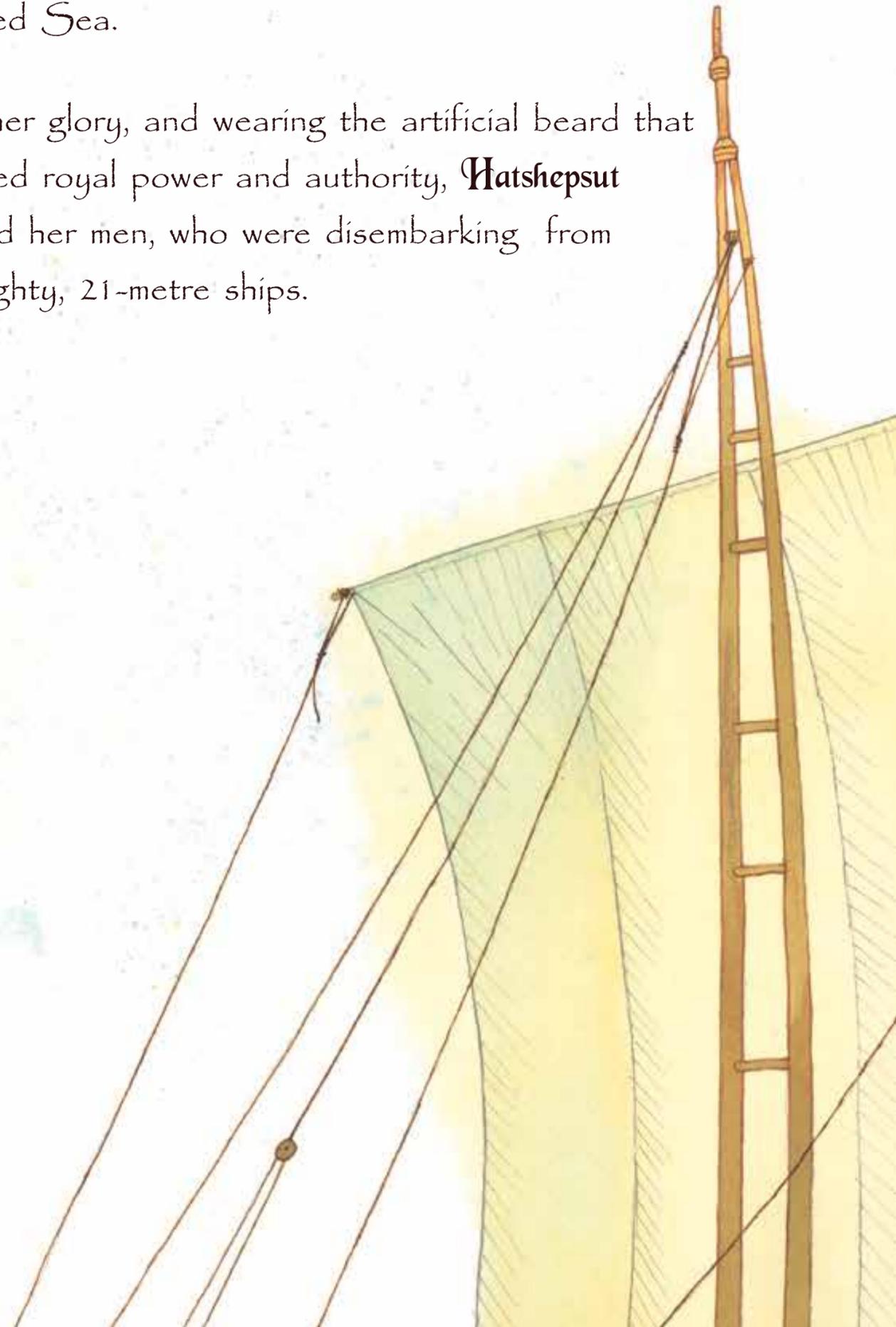
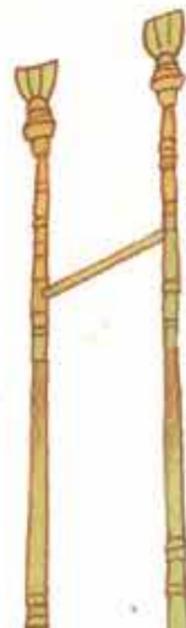
Shortly after her coronation, she sent a great expedition to Punt, the land of plenty whose riches she wanted to bring to Egypt.



Three years passed and masses of Egyptian people gathered in the port.

The five largest ships ever built were nearing the coast of the Red Sea.

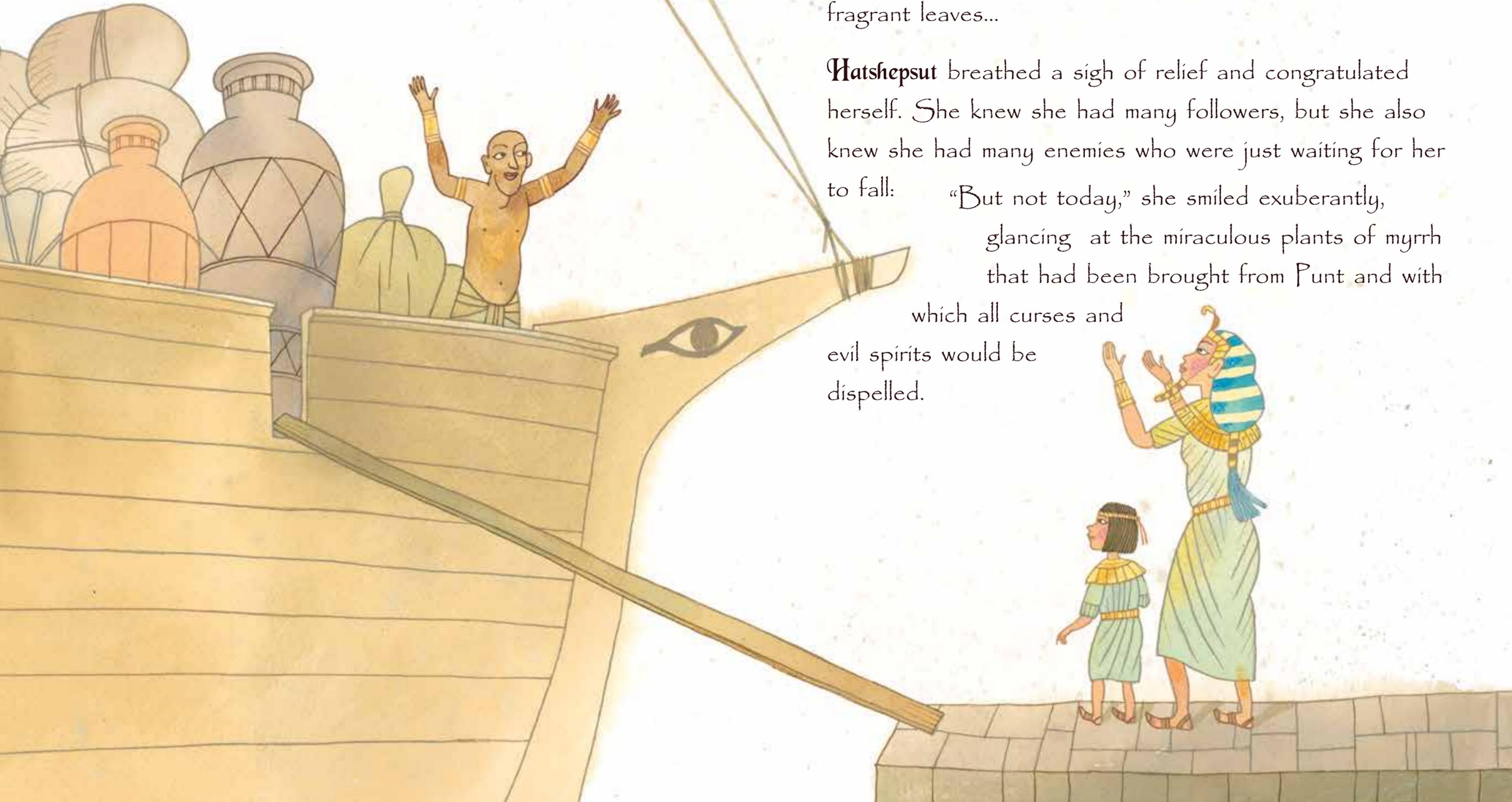
In all her glory, and wearing the artificial beard that signalled royal power and authority, **Hatshepsut** awaited her men, who were disembarking from the mighty, 21-metre ships.



With great anticipation she observed them bringing in chests and baskets of riches from the ships. They had returned from “god’s country” with unimaginable wealth.

With large stocks of gold bars. With piles of ivory and animal skins. With ebony. With amulets that were made of copper. With spices. With incense made from resin. With great numbers of small trees with white flowers and fragrant leaves...

Hatshepsut breathed a sigh of relief and congratulated herself. She knew she had many followers, but she also knew she had many enemies who were just waiting for her to fall: “But not today,” she smiled exuberantly, glancing at the miraculous plants of myrrh that had been brought from Punt and with which all curses and evil spirits would be dispelled.



Her gaze rested on Senemut, who was playing with her daughter Neferure, the gentle, smiling girl whom Senemut, the mother's architect and advisor, adored. "Not today," repeated **Hatshepsut**.

She was happy.

At that moment it seemed to her that nothing could go wrong. She was convinced that all the gods were standing by her, so she quietly thanked each of them in turn:

"Oh, Ra, god of the sun, creator of humans and gods, I pray to you, you preeminent power. Oh, Hathor, love and joy, I pray to you, goddess of the sky..."

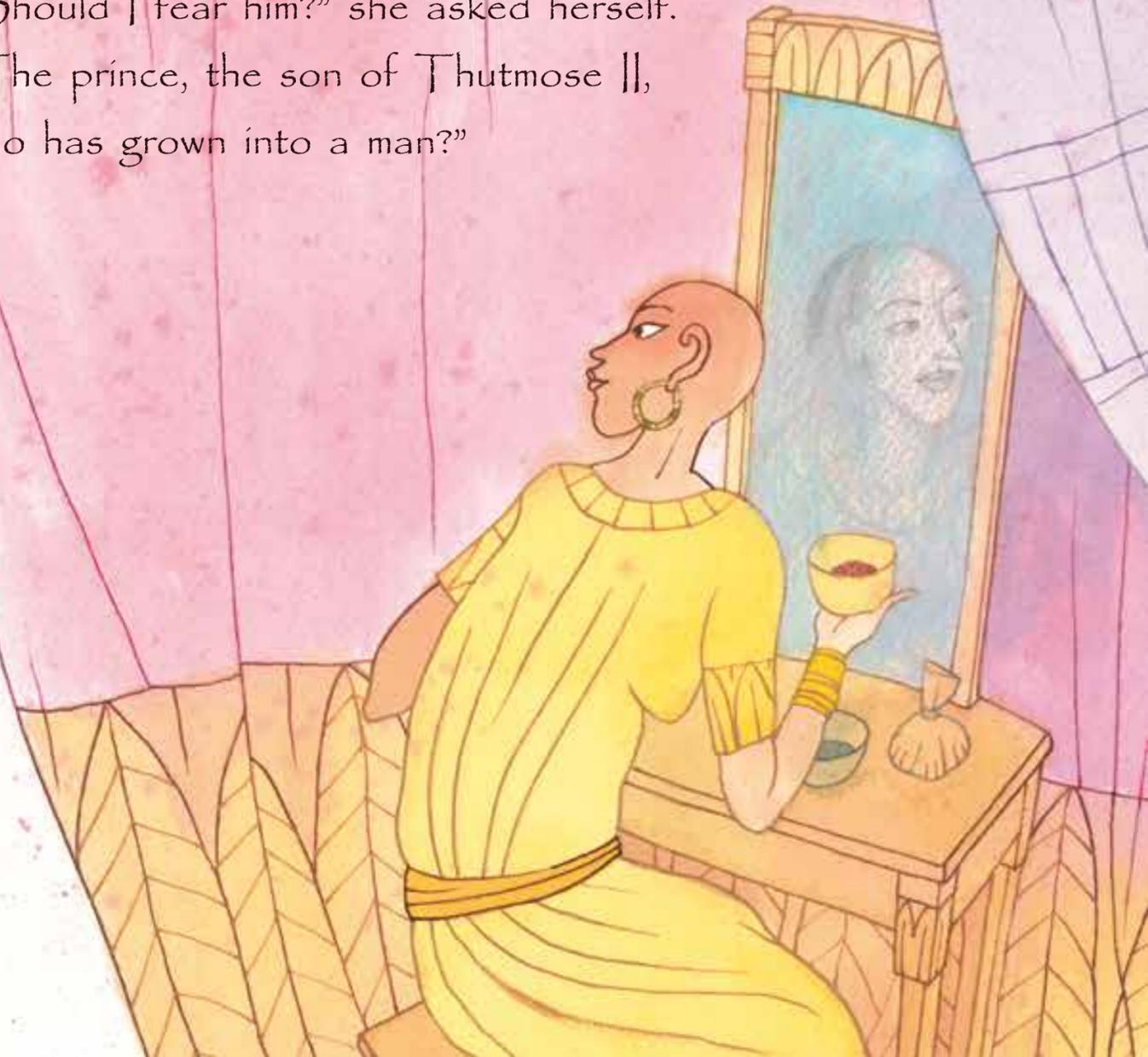


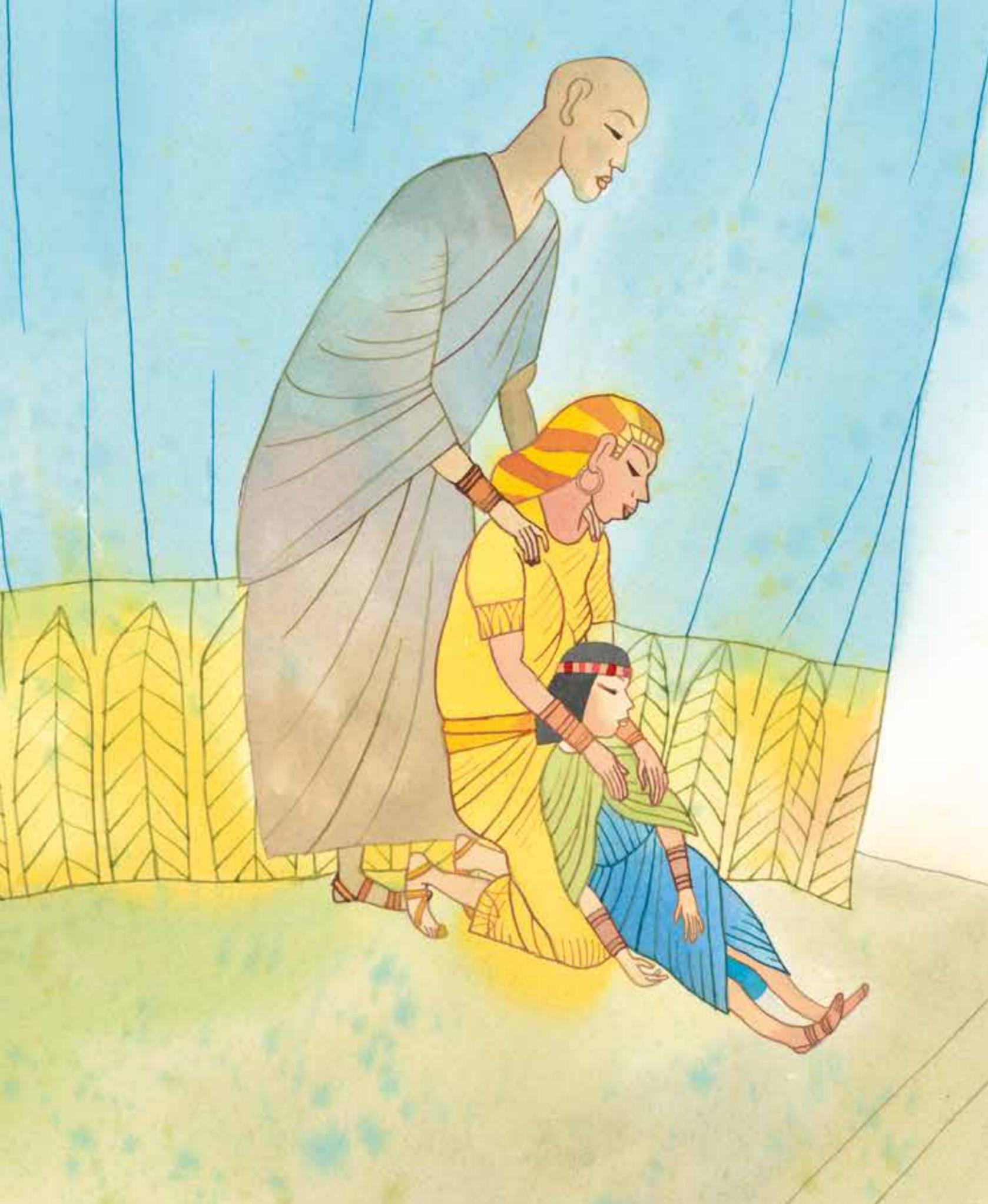
Hatshepsut was sitting in front of the mirror of polished copper. She was wearing gold earrings, which were decorated with two large purple amethysts. She took some eye-colour that was kept in a tube, mixed it with grease and water and applied it to her eyelids. A screech startled her. She looked and saw Thutmose III practicing archery.

He had become capable, skilled and strong.

"Should I fear him?" she asked herself.

"The prince, the son of Thutmose II, who has grown into a man?"





“Neferure!” a priest interrupted, just as she was applying antimony powder with a long brush to make her eyelashes stand out.

“She is dead!”

Hatshepsut looked incredulously at him and, as if moonstruck, followed him to where she saw her 13-year-old daughter lying dead.

Hatshepsut knelt down to her and said quietly,

“May you be happy in your journey to the afterlife,
my child.”

Thutmose III viewed **Hatshepsut** with contempt, and said to his senior priest: "Egypt's borders should expand!"

You do not approve of how your stepmother has governed?"

asked the priest.

Thutmose III looked down at him and said,

"The crown belongs to me!

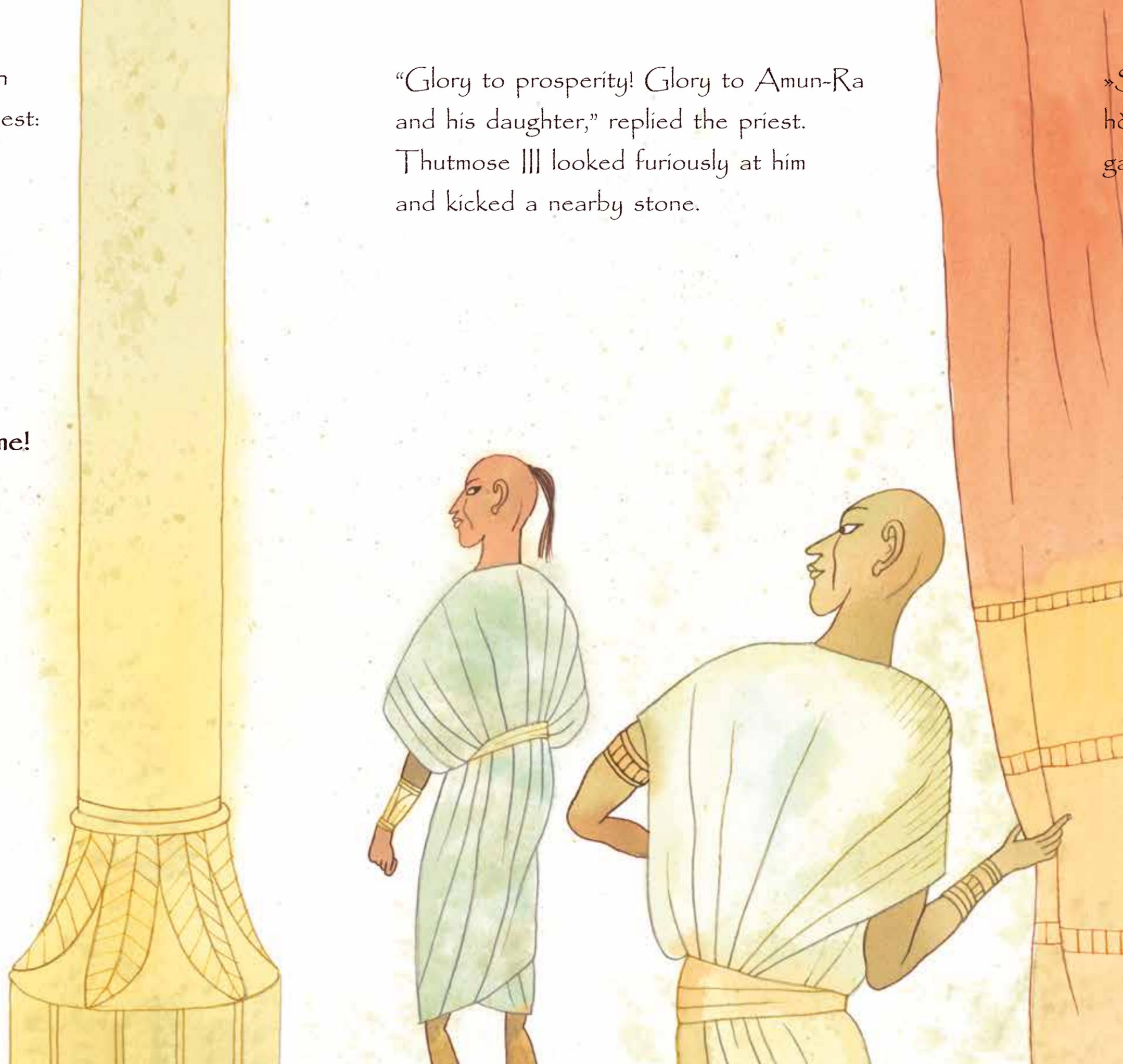
I should rule the Egyptian people!

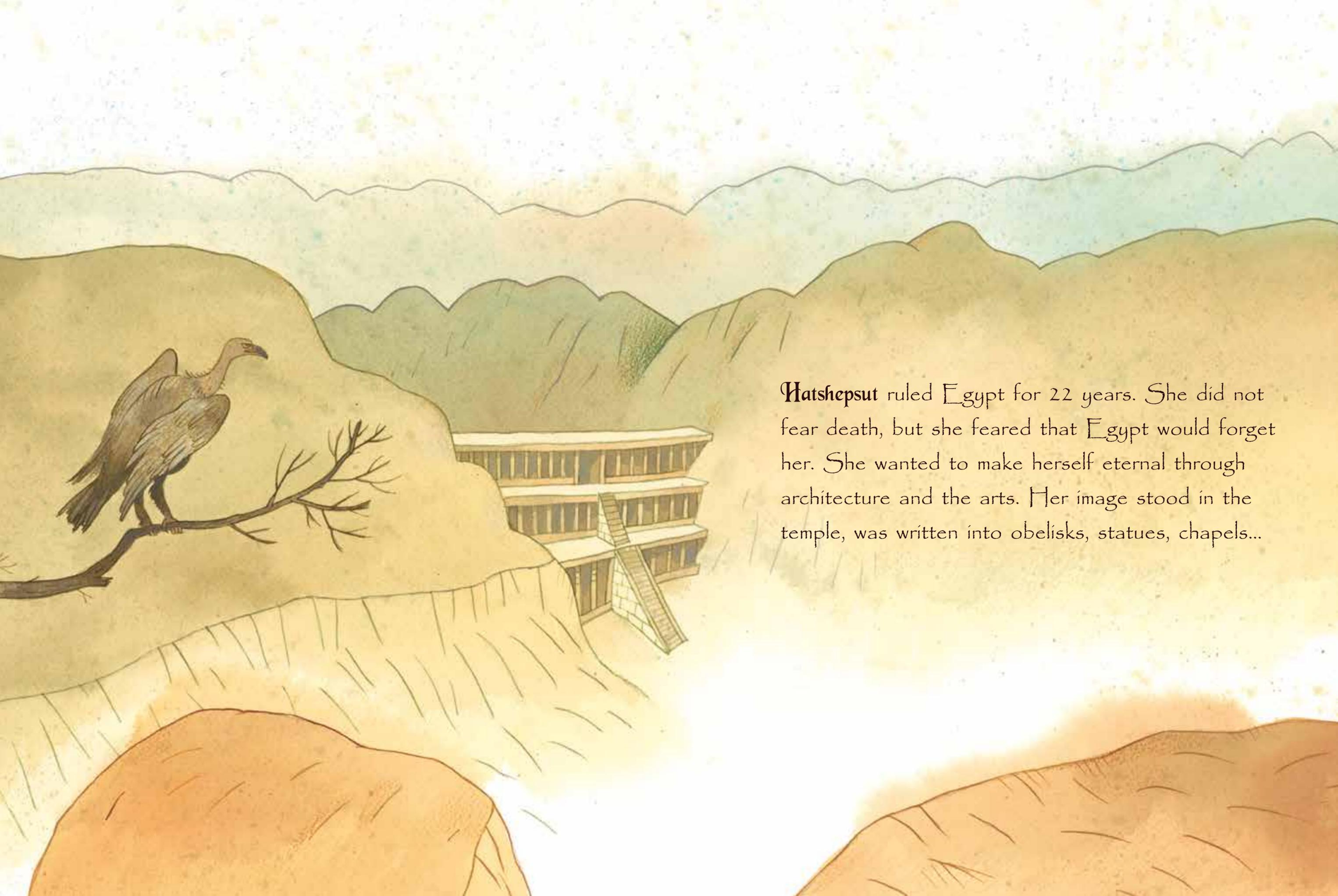
As it would seem the best to me.

So that all the glory may be mine."

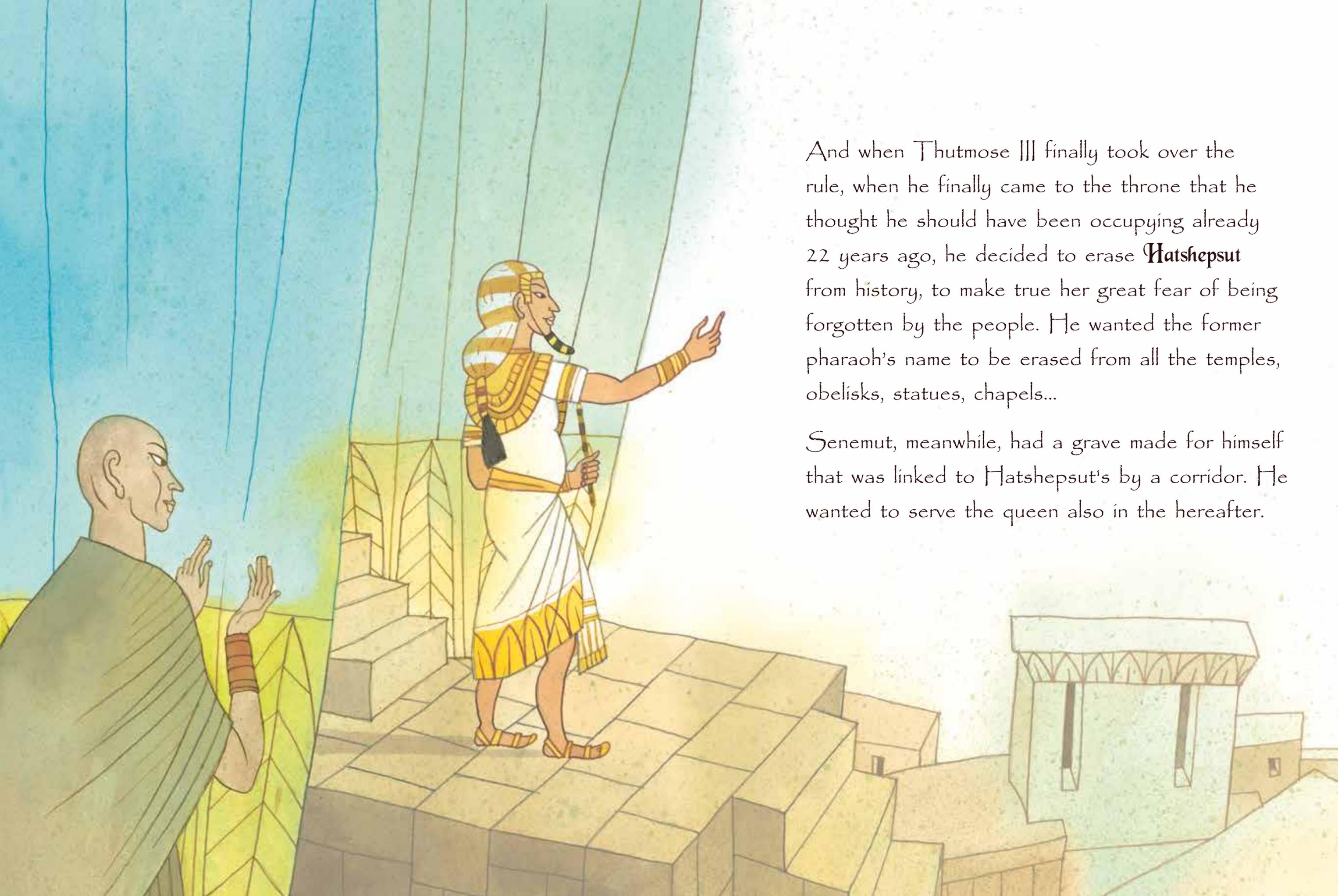
"Glory to prosperity! Glory to Amun-Ra and his daughter," replied the priest.

Thutmose III looked furiously at him and kicked a nearby stone.





Hatshepsut ruled Egypt for 22 years. She did not fear death, but she feared that Egypt would forget her. She wanted to make herself eternal through architecture and the arts. Her image stood in the temple, was written into obelisks, statues, chapels...



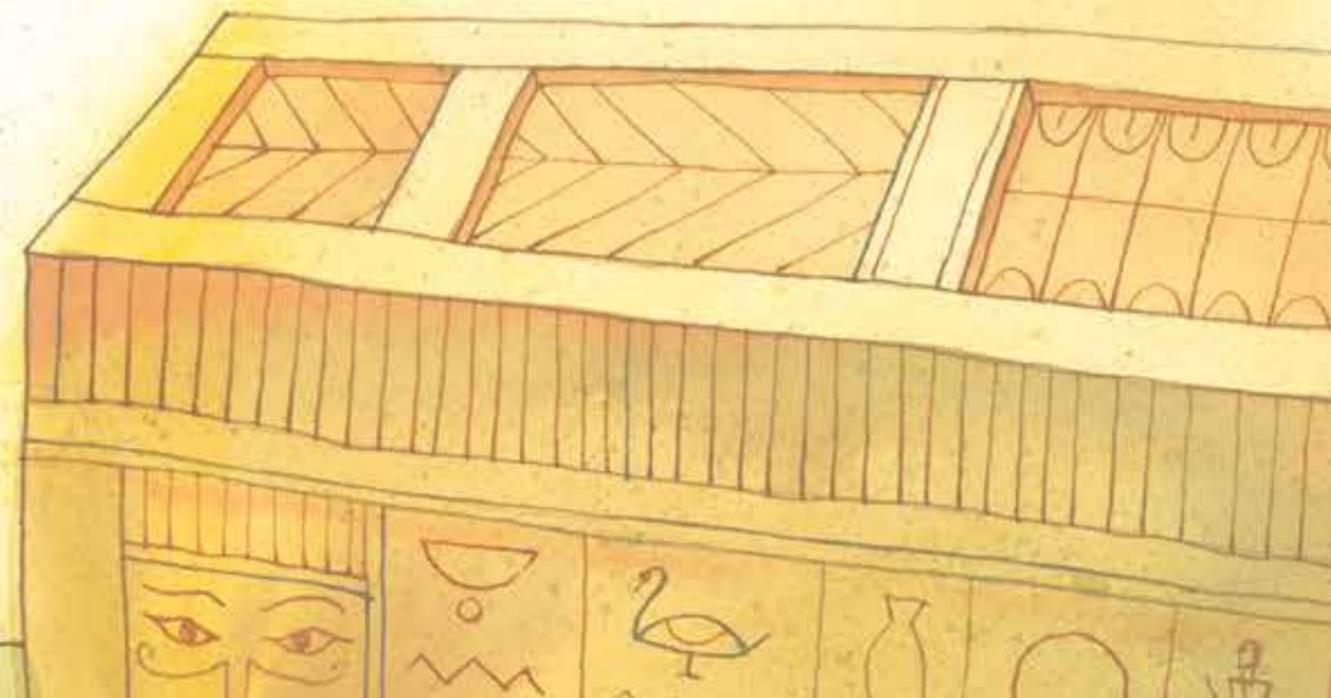
And when Thutmose III finally took over the rule, when he finally came to the throne that he thought he should have been occupying already 22 years ago, he decided to erase **Hatshepsut** from history, to make true her great fear of being forgotten by the people. He wanted the former pharaoh's name to be erased from all the temples, obelisks, statues, chapels...

Senemut, meanwhile, had a grave made for himself that was linked to Hatshepsut's by a corridor. He wanted to serve the queen also in the hereafter.



Thutmose III had many successes during his reign. He was a good leader and warrior. He added Palestine and Syria to Egypt, strengthened the northern and southern borders of Egypt, rebuilt the temples of Luxor and Karnak...

But he failed to erase **Hatshepsut** from Egyptian history. Despite his efforts, **Hatshepsut's** name remained part of Egyptian history. And many generations after her continued to talk about her.



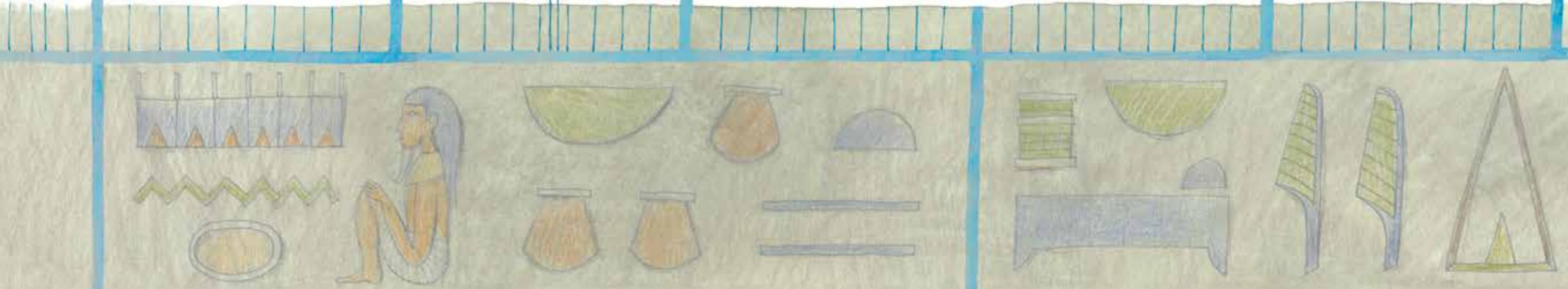
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Ancient Egypt, one of the first civilisations born in the fertile valley of the Nile, around 3000 B.C., still enchants us to this day with its greatness and power. The story of Queen Hatshepsut is a complex one. She knew that the legitimacy of her rule would always be put to the test, for she had gone against Maat, the supreme order that favoured tradition. And having a woman on the throne was not part of Egyptian tradition. In Hatshepsut's case, however, time was the judge. Despite the objections of those who followed her and wanted to erase her from Egyptian history, it is precisely Hatshepsut that has been remembered as being among Egypt's most successful rulers.

