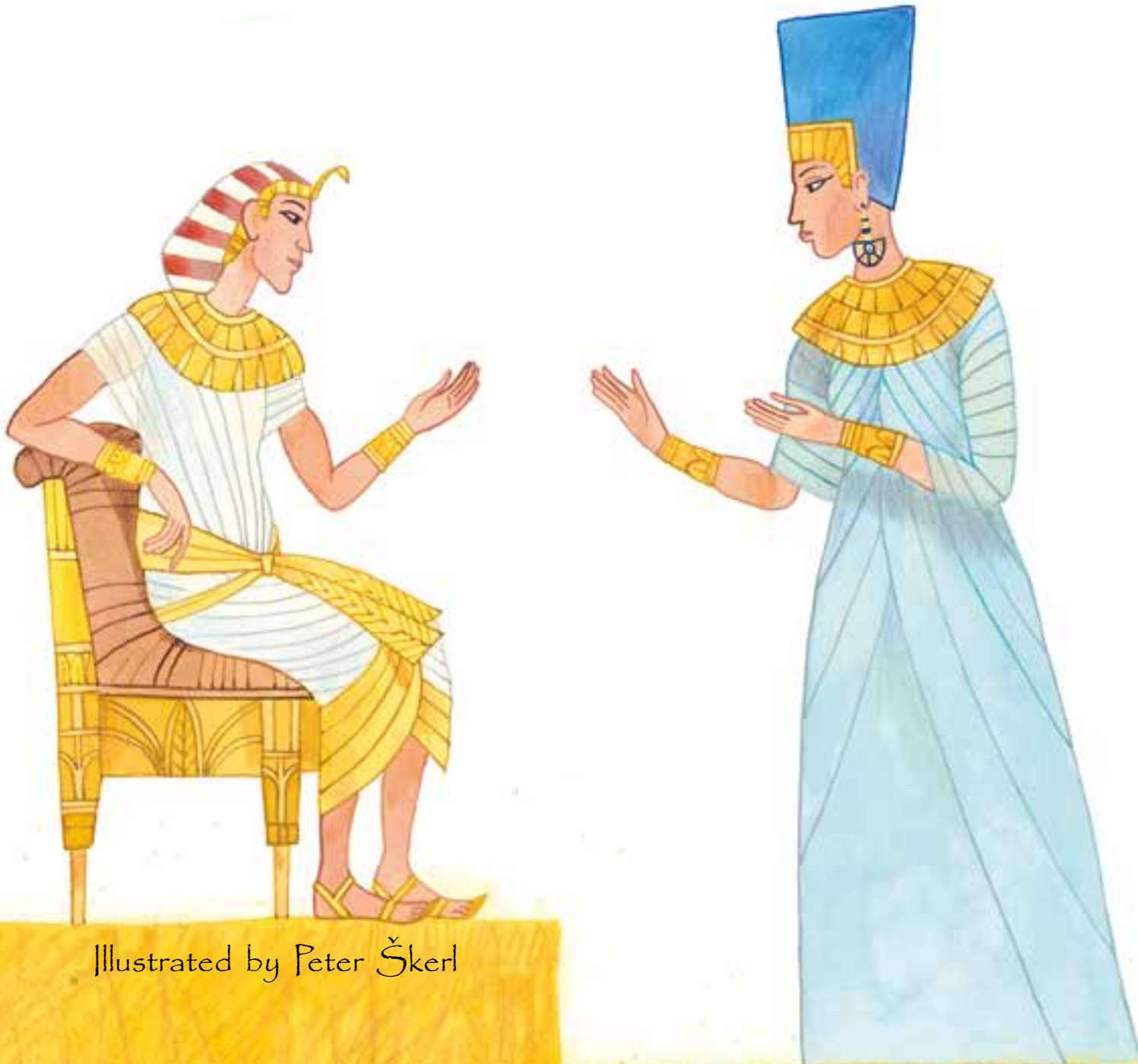


Helena Kraljič

Nefertiti



Illustrated by Peter Škerl

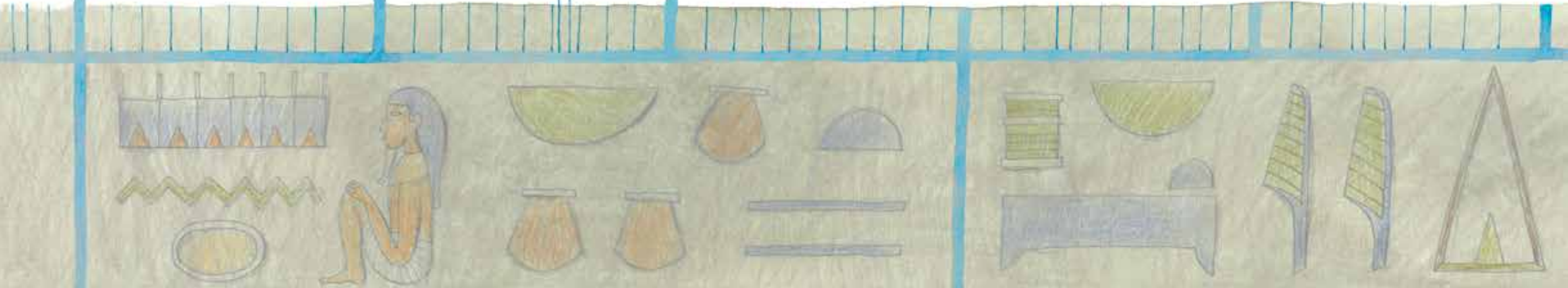
3000 B.C.

2000 B.C.

Nefertiti 1370 - 1330 B.C.

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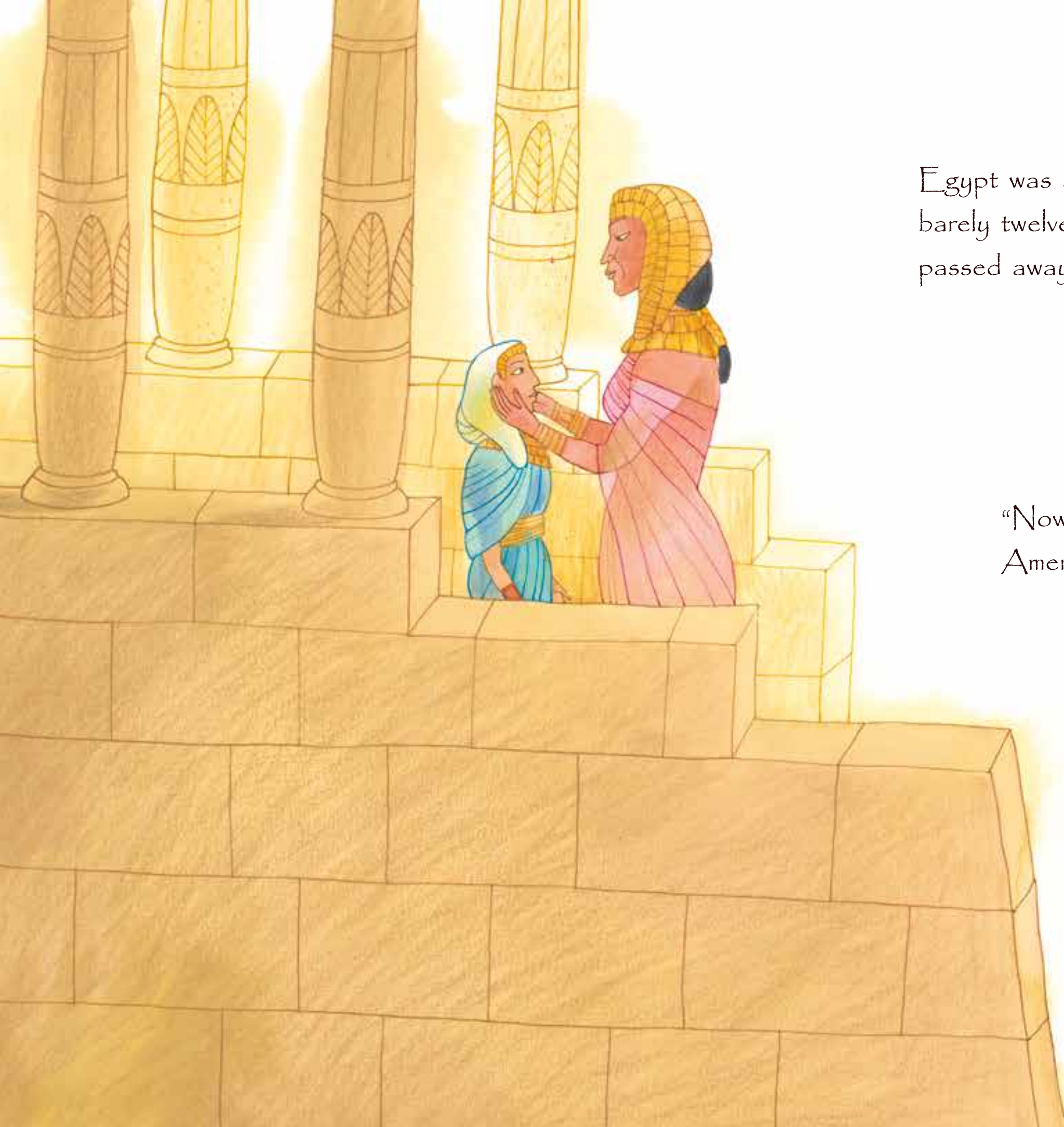
Nefertiti was the wife of one of the most controversial rulers of ancient Egypt: Amenhotep IV, the 18th dynasty ruler who, during his reign, ushered in great religious reforms and also renamed himself Akhenaten, or Echnaton. Today, the details of neither his nor Nefertiti's life are fully known, and every aspect of their personalities is shrouded in mystery. Because Nefertiti disappears from all records in the twelfth year of his reign, some believe she died suddenly. Others, however, are convinced that it was precisely in this period that she gained unprecedented power and became co-ruler. They believe she adopted the title "Neferneferuaten" and perhaps continued to rule even after the pharaoh's death. But this is not the place for an academic discourse...

The importance of the period in which Akhenaten and Nefertiti lived lies elsewhere. Their era is one of the greatest turning points in the history of ancient Egypt – and not only in the oft-mentioned religious sense. Indelibly linked to the new faith and beliefs was the founding of the new capital of Akhetaton (or Tell el-Amarna) which, because of the settlement and the many letters found there (the Amarna letters), is an extremely important and almost inexhaustible source of information for archaeologists. Also belonging to this time is a new artistic style, the Amarna style. Never before had we seen a ruling couple depicted in similar circumstances, hand in hand, cuddling and kissing their children; never before was such openness, such joy, to be seen... actual intimacy. And all warmed by the rays of the great Aton, who is depicted in the shape of the sun.

Above all, the ancient Egyptians revered Maat, the principle of balance, morality, order, justice and justice, but in the times of Akhenaten and Nefertiti it was felt that she should be erased from history. Those times represented the opposite: a break with the status quo. They succeeded in this through the physical removal of monuments and dismissal of many gods throughout Egypt, and yet the memory of Amarna times will undoubtedly remain... if only because the two rulers will always remind us of the eternal beauty and grace shining forth from Nefertiti's face, of a beauty that came... and remained. Stories such as the one in this book are not all-encompassing or complete. Rather, they are stones in a mosaic that gradually increases our knowledge about past civilizations such as that of the ancient Egyptians and that strengthens our awareness that we are but a tiny portion of the story known as humanity...

Matija Črešnar, Archaeologist Ph.D.





Egypt was at the peak of its power. Amenhotep IV. was barely twelve years old when his father Amenhotep III. passed away, making Amenhotep IV.

the new **king of Egypt.**

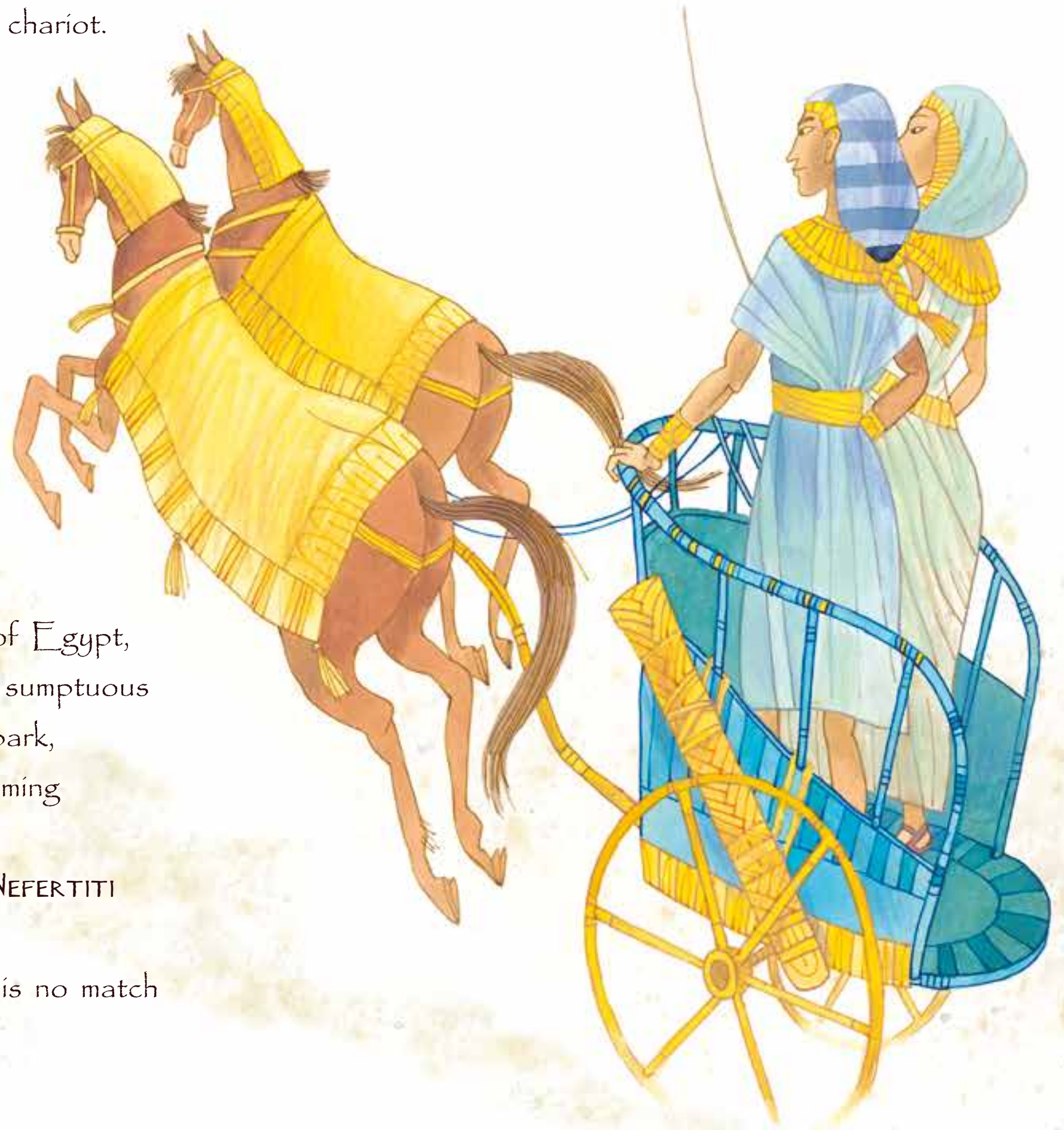
“Now, NEFERTITI will become the Great Royal Wife,” Amenhotep IV. said to his mother Tia.

“She has long been ready to become queen,” the queen mother replied.

NEFERTITI, which in Ancient Egyptian meant “the beauty has come,” and Amenhotep IV. held hands as they drove by the cheering crowds in their luxurious golden chariot. The crowds cheered:

“Long live the **king and queen!**”

“Long live!”



And, true to those words, in the Golden Age of Egypt, the king and queen did indeed live a happy and sumptuous life. They would spend many days in the royal park, where they would watch ducks and goldfish swimming in the artificial ponds.

“They are so beautiful, aren't they?!” observed NEFERTITI as she leaned on the king's shoulder.

“Beautiful, yes. But all the beauty in the world is no match for yours,” replied Amenhotep.

Amenhotep IV. was so overwhelmed by his wife's beauty that he forgot that Egypt also needed a king.

The queen mother reproached the royal son:

“Egypt's army needs you!

The inflow of taxes has ceased!

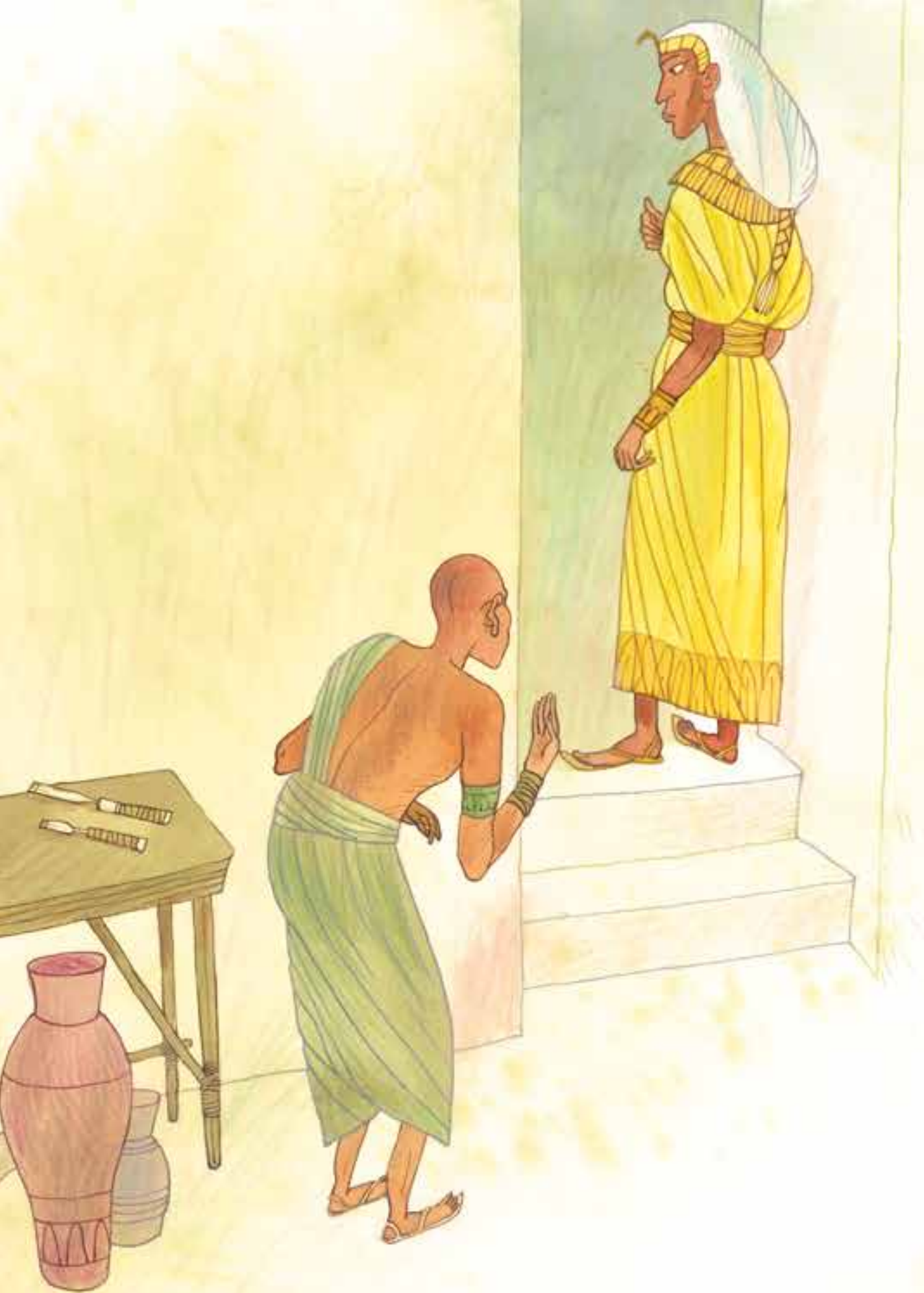
Trade routes need to be revived!”

“Let Horemheb take care of the army and taxes! And leave the trade to Intef!” suggested Amenhotep.

Tia knew that Horemheb and Intef would not save Egypt. But she also knew that her husband had failed to adequately prepare her son to rule.

“I want you to make a bust of the Great Royal Wife,” said Amenhotep one evening to the main sculptor Thutmosis. He bowed to the king and said: “It will be an honour to eternalise the beauty of my queen.”



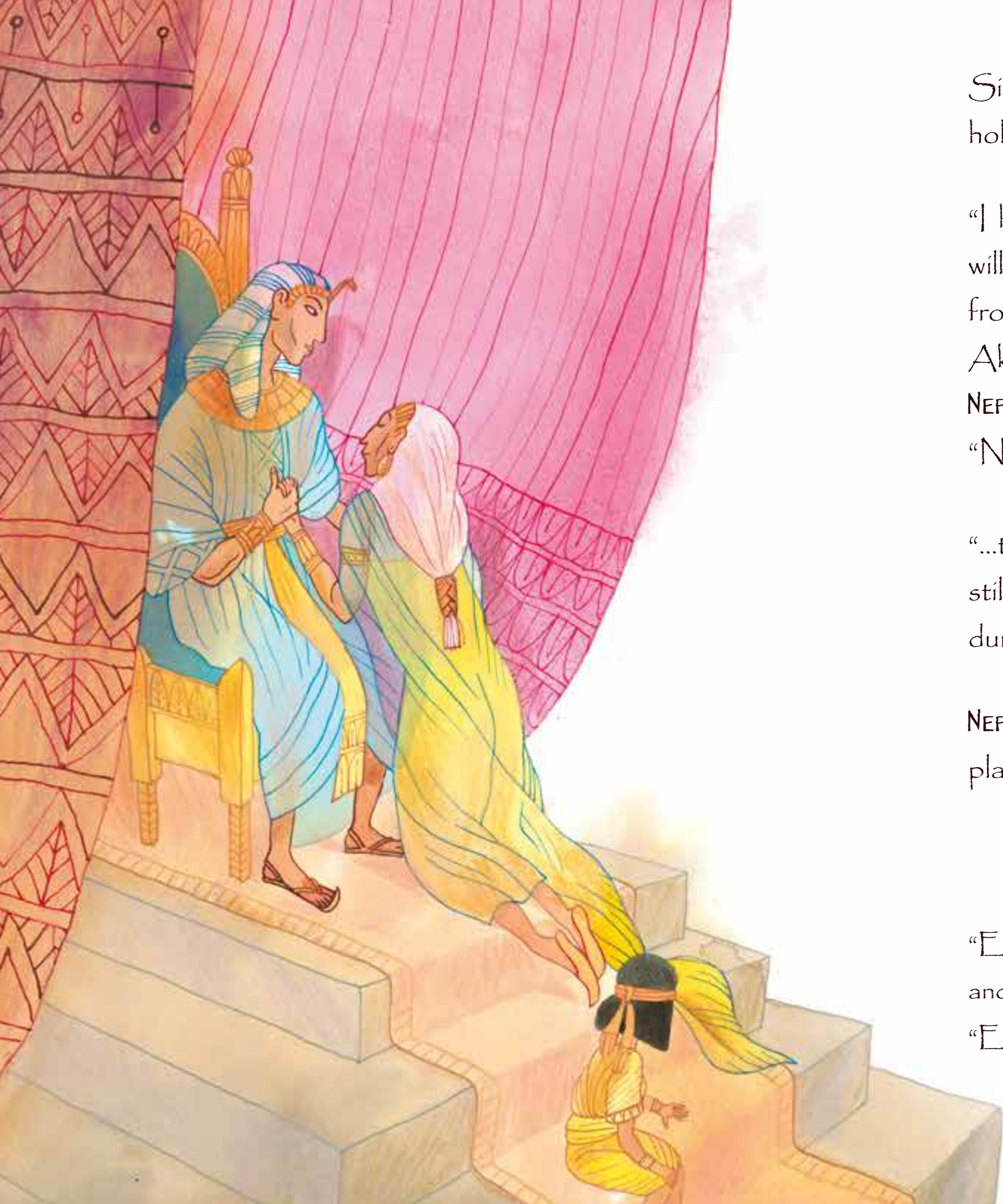


“Why do we have to worship so many gods?” NEFERTITI asked her husband one day during a game of Senet. “Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could worship only one god?”

Amenhotep hugged her and lovingly replied: “Perhaps, my queen. Perhaps now is the right time to raise
Aton above all the other gods.”

“Thutmosis,” called Amenhotep to his sculptor. “Why do you think we worship so many gods in Egypt?” Thutmosis bowed and said: “All these gods have been in my life since childhood. I never considered why that was the case. I know only that I always feel safe with them.”

The king thought it was a reasonable answer: “Only one god can assure us all safety.
Aton!” he haughtily exclaimed.



Since that day, Amenhotep began to abolish Egyptian holidays. And soon he renounced the old Egyptian gods.

"I have found the right place for the new capital, where we will worship the sun god **Aton**. We will move the capital from Thebes to a secluded place. We will name it Akhetaten, **Aton's City**," announced Amenhotep to **NEFERTITI** in the fifth year of his reign.

"Not everyone will want to come with us," realised **NEFERTITI**.

"Horemheb, Intef and the priests..."

"...think that they are gods! Well, let them stay! There are still many who trust us and refuse to suckle on their golden dummy," concluded Amenhotep.

NEFERTITI lovingly gazed upon her daughters, who were playing on the big, colourful rug, and nodded.

"We can do this!

Aton will stand by our side in the Holy City!"

"Echnaton! Liked by Aton!" conceitedly announced Amenhotep and put one hand over his chest. "Do you like it?"

"Echnaton!" repeated **NEFERTITI**. "The deity of the sun.

Golden, warm, bright... I like your new name."

“Ay, we will move the capitol of Egypt from Thebes.
From now on, there will be only one god!

The Sun God Aton!”

explained Echnaton to the priest he trusted the most.

Ay bit his lower lip and thought:

“I will go with you!

But revenge will be sweet, Echnaton!

Liked by Aton, indeed!”

He then said out loud:

“Many will refute this.

They will not want to lose their money,
status and power!”

“They think they are better than the pharaoh!
Better than the gods!” raged the king and slammed
the cup of wine he was cradling in his hands onto
the table.

“Money, status and power,”
thought Ay and nervously blinked his eyes.



“Those who will help build the new city and worship **Aton** will have a very prosperous life!” said Echnaton with feverish conviction. With that thought in mind, he led his queen and his accomplices towards the fulfillment of his beliefs and visions.

“He is a heretic!”

“We do not want such a king!”

“Long live **Hapi!**”

“Glory to **Osiris!**”

“And **Set!**”

“And **Set!** God of darkness and war!”

“War!” shouted the priests.

But many supported the idea of one god. They revelled at the thought of avenging the priest caste, which had been inciting fear in the people for centuries. It also held a special position in society and had exclusive privileges.

“Long live the god **Aton!**”

“Long live the king and queen!”

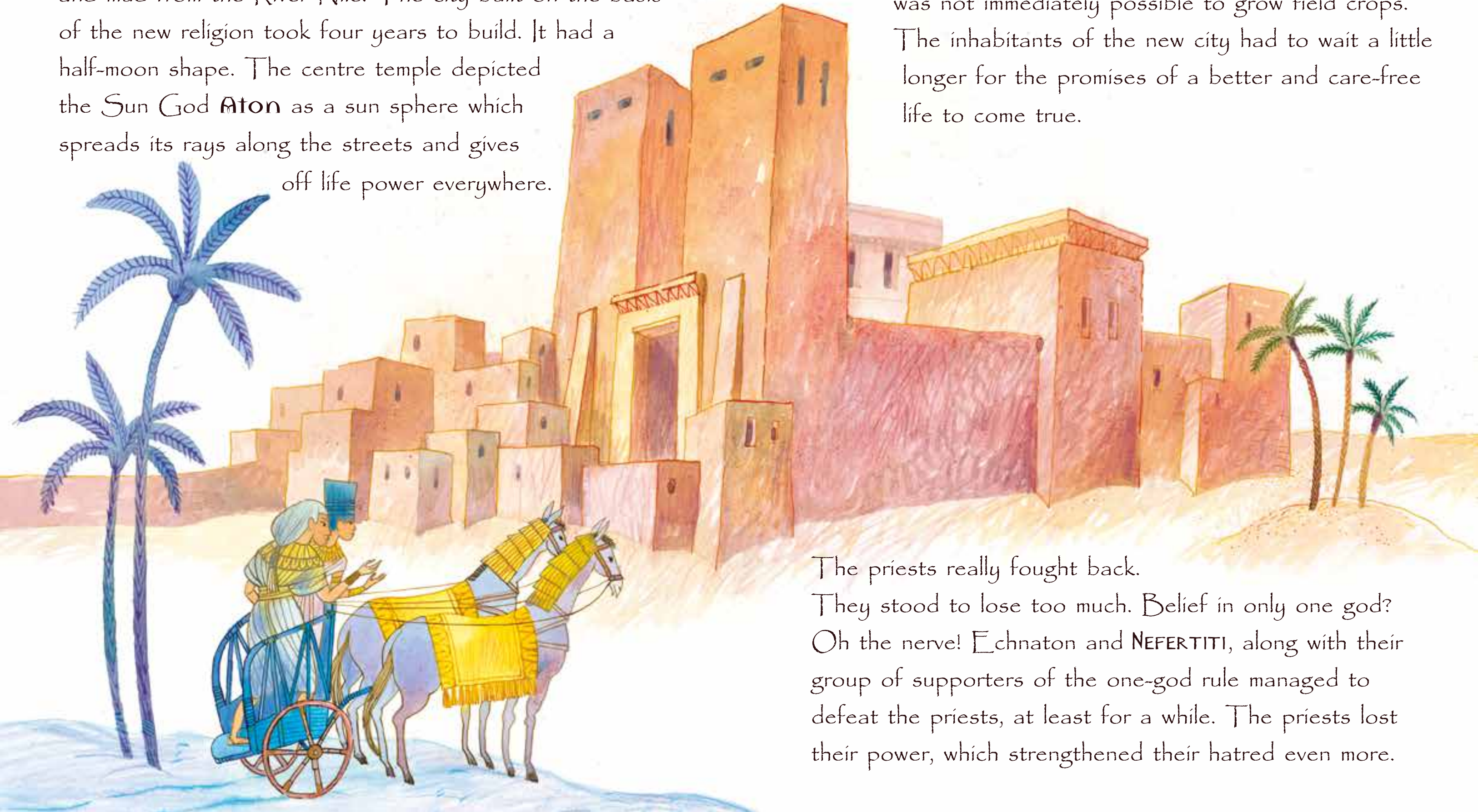
“Long live Echnaton!”



And so the construction of the Holy City of Akhetaten on the east bank of the River Nile. The temples were made of solid stone, while the houses were made of stone and mud from the River Nile. The city built on the basis of the new religion took four years to build. It had a half-moon shape. The centre temple depicted the Sun God **Aton** as a sun sphere which spreads its rays along the streets and gives off life power everywhere.

...but life was not easy during those first few years.

There were no irrigation systems in place yet and so it was not immediately possible to grow field crops. The inhabitants of the new city had to wait a little longer for the promises of a better and care-free life to come true.



The priests really fought back.

They stood to lose too much. Belief in only one god? Oh the nerve! Echnaton and NEFERTITI, along with their group of supporters of the one-god rule managed to defeat the priests, at least for a while. The priests lost their power, which strengthened their hatred even more.

“When my father dies,
I will become the great king!”
announced the boy and stood up.

Ay was sitting on the east bank of the River Nile and interacting with a sickly little boy: “**Hapi**, the god of the River Nile, is as precise as every year. The river is already flooding and will bring fertility to the soil!”

“**Set** is the god of war! And a murderer!”

“His brother, the god **Osiris** gives us eternal life!”

“Will the king and queen live forever?” asked the little boy.

“**Osiris** is waiting with a judgement for all of us in the underworld! He will judge us. But the body must not be damaged, otherwise, **Osiris** will not recognise us and the gates to eternal life are closed off for us forever!” replied Ay.

“That’s right!

You will be king and

I will help you with your reign,”

confirmed Ay and patted the boy on his shoulder.



“What are you doing?” NEFERTITI asked her husband when she saw him leaning over the table.

“I feel I will be parting from my life in the Holy City soon. I am writing. I am writing an ode to the sun-god Aton! Would you like to hear it?” Echnaton asked his wife. NEFERTITI nodded.

“It is beautiful when you shine on the edge of the sky,
you, the living Aton, who lived everywhere first.

When you rise on the east side of the sky,
you fill every nook and cranny with your beauty.

Because you are beautiful, great and bright,
you are high above the earth...

...you are in my heart,
no one else knows you
except for your son Echnaton.
You have revealed your plans to him
and given him your power...”

Echnaton read his praises to Aton.

NEFERTITI listened with sadness.

She knew that they would not be together for long.



When Echnaton died, NEFERTITI buried him and prepared him for the journey to eternal life. Three years later, she mysteriously disappeared, making eleven-year-old Tutenkaten the new pharaoh, with the priest Ay ruling on his behalf: "We will return to Thebes, destroy Akhetaten and wipe any signs of its existence off the face of the earth!

We must awaken the gods of old and worship them!"

"Why did my father die?" Tutenkaten asked Ay.

Ay waved his hand:

"He was a weakling who was incapable of leading a country!"

"And the queen? Did she die too? Did she go to the underworld to see **Osiris**?" the boy persisted.

"If her heart was lighter than the feather of **Maat**, the goddess of truth and justice, she will be able to join **Osiris** and travel to the Plains of Peace."

"And if not?" asked Tutenkaten.

"If her heart was not lighter than the feather, then it would be thrown to the Swallower of Hearts. The Swallower is an animal which is part hippopotamus and part leopard with a crocodile head," smiled Ay. "What will happen to them after death will be decided by the gods, while I will make sure that the living will not remember them.

We will eradicate all their images and names."

Tutenkaten, who had changed his name to Tutankhamun during the fourth year of his reign, knew that Ay was serious. He also knew that he would not be able to stop him.



And yet...

Thutmosis the sculptor fulfilled his promise and, aside from the missing left eye, finished the bust of NEFERTITI, which depicts the ideal beauty of the feminine face and which, in spite of everything, helped NEFERTITI remain a permanent part of Egyptian history.



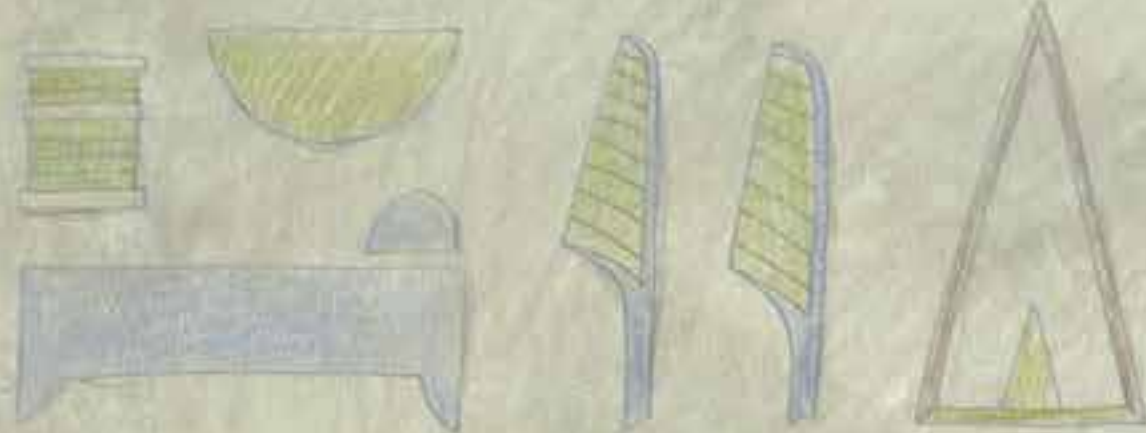
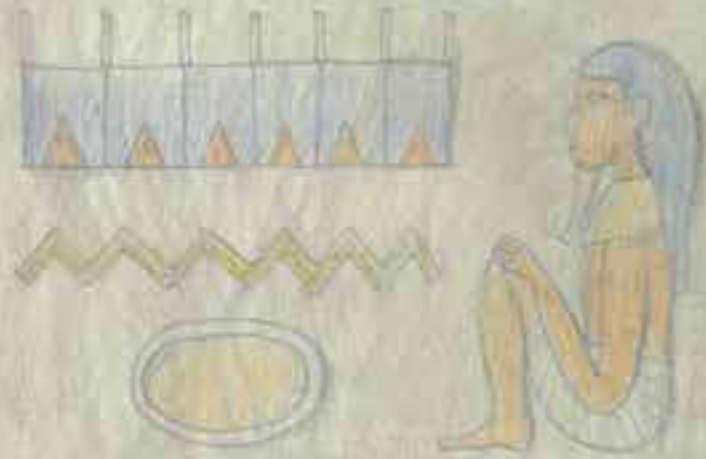
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Ancient Egypt, one of the first civilisations born in the fertile valley of the Nile, around 3000 B.C. still enchants us to this day with its greatness and power. This is the story

of one of the most secretive of all empresses, Nefertiti. It will take you on a journey to the era of her reign and unveil why she will always remain a significant part of Egyptian history.



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