

SON OF THE SUN

(EXCERPT)

by

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Based on historical events

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FADE IN

INT. PHARAOH'S PALACE - THEBES - NIGHT

Lanterns and torches shine brightly on the festivities below. MUSICIANS play their flutes and drums as beautiful DANCERS move in rhythm, their hair weighted with metal beads to sway with their bodies.

Members of the AUDIENCE clap and smile as they lounge on colorful rugs and pillows, enjoying the dinner and show. SERVANTS circulate the room, pouring wine and offering succulent meats and dishes from gold trays. These sounds dissolve as...

...soft FOOTSTEPS echo hollowly on the stone floor of the now empty chamber. Only a few torches shine dimly, lighting the way of the two PEOPLE dressed in servant garb, who carefully make their way through the colonnaded hall.

MALE SERVANT

(whispering)

This way!

The beautiful features of the young servant WOMAN express arrogance as she frowns deeply at her companion before replacing her slipped veil.

YOUNG SERVANT WOMAN

Shhh!

As they make their way towards the towering doors, strains of MUSIC follow them out into the dark and dangerous streets...

INT. SERVANT'S HUT - WORKER'S VILLAGE - LATER

HATTUSA-ZITI, mid-30's, tall and imposing, paces the small room. He speaks impatiently to INENI, the old servant man who lives in the humble home.

HATTUSA-ZITI

Where is the Queen?

The old man responds with quiet confidence.

INENI

She will be here.

The handsome young foreigner frowns.

HATTUSA-ZITI

This better not be a trap. My men are prepared to attack if it is.

INENI

Our Queen is not stupid. She knows you are the enemy. She is desperate or she would not have turned to your King.

Hattusa glowers and they fall silent, the only sound is the DRONE OF INSECTS.

Suddenly, there is a sharp KNOCK. The men tense, exchanging glances. Ineni unfolds his arthritic body and rises to answer the door.

The beautiful young servant girl and her companion file inside.

The girl removes the veil covering her exceptional face. Hattusa-ziti looks momentarily taken aback as her dark eyes shine furiously in his direction.

The old man gives him a triumphant look, presenting the girl to him.

INENI (CONT'D)

I present to you, Egypt's Queen Ankhesenamun, my lord.

Hattusa recovers his composure, taking her hand and bowing over it with a small kiss.

HATTUSA-ZITI

At your service, Madam. I am Hattusa-ziti, Chamberlain to Suppiluliuma, King of the Hittites.

Her eyes flash in annoyance.

ANKHESENAMUN

I know who you are. I wouldn't be here if I didn't, would I?

Hattusa smiles, admiration in his eyes.

HATTUSA-ZITI

Of course.

Ankhesenamun crosses the room and takes a seat before the fire. She gestures to the foreigner.

ANKHESENAMUN

Please. Sit.

The man waits impatiently as she carefully arranges her garment before speaking.

HATTUSA-ZITI

(sighing)

Can we get on with this, please?
I've come a long distance and need
to return to my country soon to
handle real crises.

The Queen fixes him with a cold stare.

ANKHESENAMUN

Curb your rudeness. I will explain
in due time.

Ineni steps forward.

INENI

Forgive me, your Highness, but I
fear the foreigner is right. We
might be in danger of discovery at
any moment...

Hattusa finally sees real fear in the woman's eyes.

ANKHESENAMUN

You're right. I will tell my story
now, as my country and I are in
grave danger.

HATTUSA-ZITI

Before you begin, I must remind you
if this is a trap, I will not spare
your life, nor those of your loyal
servants here.

ANKHESENAMUN

I'm well aware of your concerns,
foreigner, but believe me-- I have
more to fear than you.

She pauses, seeming to collect her thoughts and arrange them meticulously.

ANKHESENAMUN (CONT'D)

Now listen carefully. I can't
describe this story without telling
you of my father. He was Prince
Amenhotep IV, also known as
Akhenaten, the heretic pharaoh...

The flames flicker in her eyes as she begins to tell her story, lost in her thoughts, as the years roll back with her words and reveal the past.

EXT. GROUNDS OF THE ROYAL PALACE - SUNRISE

The SUN crests the horizon of the desert, rising magnificently in brilliant shades of purple, red, pink, orange and gold as it makes its ascent into the sky, its rays falling even on the SCARAB BEETLE slowly pushing her way through the desert sands.

A small boy of about six, PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV/AKHENATEN lies belly-down in the dirt, eye-level with the insect, watching in awe as it crawls relentlessly onward. The sun rises behind it, surrounding it like a halo.

A SHADOW falls over the scene, spoiling the child's vision.

VOICE (O.S.)

What's this, small Prince?

The child looks up. He sees AYE, 40's, a high-ranking dignitary in his father's court.

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV

Look at the sun, Aye! Look at the sky!

He points to the beetle.

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV (CONT'D)

See the beetle? She's pushing her young in the sand. She came to life when the sun came up.

AYE

What an imagination you have, child!

The man LAUGHS, shaking his head as he speaks as if to himself.

AYE (CONT'D)

Coming to life with the sun...

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV

She does! I've been watching her every morning.

AYE

Come along, your Highness. I'll
take you back into your chambers
before you're missed.

The boy stretches out his small hand and the man takes it.

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV

No one will miss me, Aye.

AYE

No matter, little one. Your father
expects you to join him at the
Temple of Amun.

EXT/INT. TEMPLE OF AMUN - KARNAK - LATER

The temple is immense, towering imposingly over everything
underfoot.

Prince Amenhotep IV holds the hand of his father, the rotund
PHARAOH, AMENHOTEP III, and together they enter the temple,
followed by his older brother, PRINCE THUTHMOSIS, 10.

Although cavernous, the temple is dark. The torch-light
illuminates only more shadows-- startling after the brilliant
morning sun, as they go deep into the long hallways until
reaching the chamber of worship.

The High Priest, MERYPTAH, lights some incense as Prince
Amenhotep IV, Thuthmosis and their father kneel before the
double-plumed statue of AMUN. The priest then purifies the
god with water and oils.

Prince Amenhotep IV trembles as the priest performs the
ritual, cowering into his father's garments. The Pharaoh
yanks on his arm, and the boy immediately straightens his
back before bowing to the god and kissing the ground at his
feet.

The priest then chants as he offers food to the statue.

MERYPTAH

We ask that you enter your temple,
Lord Amun. We ask that you enter
your body and let it be nourished
by this food that we are offering.

After kneeling and kissing the god's feet again, the food is
removed and the priest closes the doors to the shrine.

EXT. TEMPLE OF AMUN - LATER

Amenhotep and Thuthmosis watch as MEN unload caravans of elaborate GIFTS for the temple.

The pharaoh hands a large bag of gold coins to the priest.

PHARAOH AMENHOTEP III
For your loyal service, Meryptah.

The priest bows over the pharaoh's hand.

MERYPTAH
Thank you, my King.

EXT. PHARAOH'S PALACE - OUTER COURT - DAY

A feast is spread. CHILDREN race among the tables laughing and playing as the adults indulge in the food and festivities.

Servants lead a procession of exotic wild ANIMALS captured by the Pharaoh, his favorite son, Thuthmosis, and their ROYAL HUNTING PARTY.

Young Prince Amenhotep IV hangs back on the sidelines, listlessly scraping drawings in the dust with a stick.

The Pharaoh chats with a DIGNITARY, pride shining in his eyes as he watches Prince Thuthmosis show off his skills to the other children in the archery competition.

DIGNITARY
You have a fine boy there, your Highness. Look how often he strikes his target.

Thuthmosis draws back his arrow, aiming for the painted gazelle held by two anxious SLAVES. He lets fly, driving the arrow through the animal's chest.

The assembled guests cheer their admiration.

PHARAOH AMENHOTEP III
Yes. He does so many things to make us proud. He'll be a perfect king someday.

Thuthmosis once again takes aim, this time at a painted duck, before suddenly turning and shooting a live tame duck, swimming peacefully in the pond. The bird falls limp instantly, the still quivering arrow protruding from its eye.

The boy, Prince Amenhotep IV, shouts, running from his spot in the shadows and jumping into the water. He thrashes lamely, unable to swim.

The QUEEN, TIYE, rises in alarm.

QUEEN TIYE

Save him! Save my baby-- he can't swim!

The Pharaoh merely looks annoyed.

PHARAOH AMENHOTEP III

Amun, give me patience...

Thuthmosis, dashing young hero that he is, drops his bow and arrows and dives into the water, saving his younger brother and further thrilling his audience.

Prince Amenhotep IV sputters on the banks of the pond, choking, coughing, unable to breathe.

QUEEN TIYE

He stopped breathing again! Amun, someone help my baby!

The pharaoh gives a tense smile to his guests.

PHARAOH AMENHOTEP III

I'm sure he'll be fine.

He steps forward and gives the child a couple of hard smacks on the back.

Prince Amenhotep IV coughs again, this time spewing water from his lungs. He cries in his mother's arms as she gently rocks him.

QUEEN TIYE

Hush, Darling. Mother is here.

The party guests take in the scene in hushed silence. Even the other children have stopped playing to stare.

The Pharaoh narrows his eyes in disgust at this display of motherly devotion. He CLAPS his hands at one of the slaves.

PHARAOH AMENHOTEP III

Take the child away. I won't have him humiliating us any further.

Queen Tiye watches in helpless dismay as her sobbing child is carried away and into the palace.

The Pharaoh CLAPS his hands once more, gesturing to the MUSICIANS who instantly strike up their instruments.

INT. PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT

Queen Tiye sits by her son's bed, smoothing his hair away from his forehead as he coughs and wheezes.

She leans over and lights a cone of frankincense.

QUEEN TIYE

Here, my sweet. This will help you regain your breath.

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV

(gasping)
Mama?

QUEEN TIYE

Yes, darling?

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV

Why must the god Amun always be in the dark?

QUEEN TIYE

Because he is the hidden one, son. He is the air we breathe.

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV

Yes, I know, but how can I believe in him if I can't even see him?

The Queen looks taken aback.

QUEEN TIYE

I don't know. You just have to have faith. We all do.

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV

Yes, but--

Queen Tiye frowns suddenly.

QUEEN TIYE

Be careful, boy. Don't let your father hear you talking like this. Just believe.

Amenhotep looks hurt.

QUEEN TIYE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. It's not our place to question things. That's just the way it is.

She leans over and kisses his cheek.

QUEEN TIYE (CONT'D)

Now good night.

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV

Good night, Mama.

INT. TEMPLE OF AMUN - 9 YEARS LATER - DAY

Prince Amenhotep IV, now 15, awkward and thin, sits on the stone floor, practicing his hieratic and cuneiform with other male STUDENTS. The boys wear their heads shaved with only the small patch of hair visible, known as the sidelock, typical of Egyptian boys.

The SCRIBE PRIEST paces around them, chanting the names of the gods as the children make charcoal strokes onto clay ostraca.

SCRIBE PRIEST

Anubis, jackal-headed god of the dead; Geb, god of the earth; Bastet, cat-headed goddess; Thoth, ibis-headed god of writing, magic, geometry and wisdom...

The priest pauses in front of Prince Amenhotep.

SCRIBE PRIEST (CONT'D)

Why must the body and name of the dead be preserved?

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV

So that his spirit may live on and the Ka might have a home.

SCRIBE PRIEST

And who decides whether or not the soul survives?

The other boys watch on as the young prince remains silent, keeping his eyes on the wall and not on the priest.

The priest bends down, lifting the boy's chin and looking into his eyes.

SCRIBE PRIEST (CONT'D)

(demanding)

Who?

(beat)

By Amun, you will answer me, or I
will speak to your father.

The boy finally returns the man's glare as he responds.

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV

The soul is presented to Osiris in
the Underworld, where its sin is
weighed against the feather of
Ma'at. If the soul is lighter than
the feather, it gains entry to the
afterlife, if not, it is devoured
by the soul-eater.

The priest nods in satisfaction, dropping his hand from the
boy's chin. He resumes pacing.

EXT. PALACE ROAD - LATER

Amenhotep and his friend, MERYRE, 14, walk along the road
carrying their writing tools in satchels across their backs,
their sandals kicking up dust.

MERYRE

By the lord Amun, I hate priests!

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV

But you're going to be one.

Meryre shrugs.

MERYRE

What else would I do? I don't have
the mind for engineering or the
back for masonry. Nor do I want to
brew or make bread. The best I can
do is become a priest so I can
study astrology. I love the sky
and stars.

His friend smiles in approval.

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV

At least there's one thing you and
I have in common.

The boys are suddenly forced into a ditch as a CHARIOT comes
racing towards them, nearly plowing them down.

It pulls up sharply, stopping. The driver laughs--
Thuthmosis, now 20.

Amenhotep stands up, brushing himself off. He begins
COUGHING AND WHEEZING, GASPING FOR AIR, but Meryre barely
notices. He jumps up, lunging towards the grinning bully.

Amenhotep stands in the ditch, doubled-over, waiting for air
to enter his lungs. Finally coming to his senses, he joins
Meryre and has to hold him back.

MERYRE

You slithering tomb-rat! I should--

THUTHMOSIS

(laughing)

What? Scribble idiot drawings of
me? Call down the stars to strike
me from the Earth?

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV

That's enough, Thuthmosis. You had
no right to force us off the road.

THUTHMOSIS

I had every right and you know it.
There's nothing you can do about it
so move along you wheezing poet,
and carry on with your useless
prattling. No one pays attention
to you anyway.

Amenhotep clenches his jaw shut.

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV

They will. Someday they will.
You'll see.

Thuthmosis laughs again. Whipping up his horses, he moves on
with a clatter of hooves and wheels.

MERYRE

I know he's your brother, but I
hate Thuthmosis.

Amenhotep and Meryre continue walking, their clothing now
hanging in dirty tatters.

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV

So do I.

EXT. PHARAOH'S PALACE - THEBES - DAY

A row of carriages block the entrance to the palace as the boys arrive.

A group of WOMEN are gathered around an incredibly beautiful young girl, NEFERTITI, 15. Included in the entourage are Prince Amenhotep's mother Queen Tiye, the Vizier Aye, and his wife, TEY.

The Queen spots Amenhotep and calls him over.

QUEEN TIYE

Son, come and see Nefertiti. She has returned to us.

Seemingly unable to move, Amenhotep stands frozen, gazing shyly at the girl being embraced by her father, Aye. He wears an expression of pure joy.

Meryre gives him a small shove and he stumbles forward.

Nefertiti sees this and LAUGHS out loud, intelligence lighting her eyes. Smiling, she reaches out to him.

FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD NEFERTITI

Amenhotep! How are you?

Amenhotep gives her a genuine smile.

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV

It's an honor to see you again, Nefertiti.

Nefertiti LAUGHS again.

FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD NEFERTITI

Oh, my! How formal!

She looks up at her father and step-mother.

FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD NEFERTITI (CONT'D)

Father, can we go now?

Aye LAUGHS, waving his hand.

AYE

Go, child, and have fun. There will be time for more serious matters later.

EXT. PHARAOH'S PALACE - OUTER COURT - LATER

The children walk amongst statuary and stelae depicting the pharaohs and their gods.

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV
Did you get the poems I sent?

FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD NEFERTITI
Yes.

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV
Well?

FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD NEFERTITI
(smiling)
Well, what?

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV
(exasperated)
What did you think?

FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD NEFERTITI
I loved them. You get better every
year.

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV
Truly?

FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD NEFERTITI
Truly.

Amenhotep raises his hand vertically. Nefertiti puts her hand against it, matching it.

They walk again, pausing as they come upon a collection of STATUES of Prince Amenhotep's family.

Nefertiti studies them closely.

FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD NEFERTITI (CONT'D)
I see Thutmosis. Where are you?

The young prince frowns deeply, pain in his eyes.

FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD NEFERTITI (CONT'D)
They didn't include you?

She watches him carefully, seeing his jaw tighten in response.

INT. PHARAOH'S PALACE - THEBES - DINING HALL - NIGHT

Lanterns cast patterned, glowing light around the hall. MUSICIANS play and DANCERS perform for the crowd.

Members of the royal family mingle with their retinue, everyone dressed in their finest garments and jewels.

Prince Thuthmosis stands tall and proud, confidence on his handsome face. In contrast, young Amenhotep looks lost and alone, even among people he's known all his life.

A HUSH falls on the room. Amenhotep turns to see Nefertiti has entered, and stands elegant and woman-like, no longer the girl he played in the water with earlier. He lights up at the sight of her.

The Pharaoh steps forward and takes Nefertiti's hand, placing it in Thuthmosis' hand.

PHARAOH AMENHOTEP III

Please join us in celebrating the engagement of my son, Thuthmosis, and the beautiful Nefertiti-- the future Pharaoh and Queen of Egypt!

Amenhotep looks as if he's been punched in the stomach as the room erupts in applause. He turns away, as if to hide his anguish privately among the guests.

An AMUN PRIEST standing behind him places a hand on his shoulder. Amenhotep looks up at him. The man frowns, shaking his head. The boy reluctantly turns back to watch as the scene unfolds.

Thuthmosis smiles down at Nefertiti. The musicians strike up a NEW SONG and the couple begins to dance in the middle of the room, surrounded by the approving gaze of the royal party.

Amenhotep makes his escape as the priest enters the procession.

EXT. PHARAOH'S PALACE - OUTER COURT - LATER

Amenhotep sits on a bench staring at the moon's reflection in the water on the pond.

He looks up as Nefertiti rests her hand on his shoulder.

FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD NEFERTITI

I'm sorry.

She sits down next to him with a sigh.

He gazes back at the water, ignoring her.

FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD NEFERTITI (CONT'D)

It couldn't have been a shock.
You've known this would happen some
day.

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV

Yes. That doesn't make it any
easier.

FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD NEFERTITI

I have no choice, Amenhotep. I do
not get to choose who I'm supposed
to marry. Our fathers choose.

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV

(bitterly)

Yes. And they choose Thuthmosis.

He stands, turning his back on her and walks away.

Nefertiti remains, her eyes sad and lost.

EXT. PHARAOH'S PALACE - CENTRAL COURTYARD - DAY

Amenhotep and Meryre face each other over a game of senet.
Meryre's brow furrows as he contemplates his next move.

MERYRE

Hmmm....

Meryre throws the casting sticks, then moves his pawn.

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV

Ha! Back to the beginning my
friend.

Meryre groans as he moves his marker back to the starting
point.

All of a sudden a clamor of VOICES and CRIES rise up,
followed by running footsteps.

MERYRE

What's happening?

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV

I don't know. Let's go see.

EXT. PALACE ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

The Queen is surrounded by her retinue as she stands SOBBING, staring at something a few feet away. Aye's wife, Tey, puts a comforting arm around her shoulders.

TEY

Hush, now your Highness. There's nothing you can do.

QUEEN TIYE

But my son!

Amenhotep and Meryre push their way through the crowd, coming to a stop at the sight of the Pharaoh, grief lining his face.

In the king's arms lie the broken and beaten body of Thuthmosis, looking innocent and child-like in death.

AYE

It's Amun's will.

INT./EXT. CEREMONIAL HALL/HARBOR/VALLEY OF THE KINGS - DAY

The hall is void of all sound except for that of the PROFESSIONAL MOURNERS and the weeping of Queen Tiye. The King remains silent-- only his eyes show his deep pain and loss.

Thuthmosis is laid out upon a dais. The Pharaoh steps forward and tucks a small statue of AMUN into the young man's hand.

Nefertiti joins Prince Amenhotep as he glares at his dead brother from the back of the room.

He SPEAKS SOFTLY so only she can hear.

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV

If I could, I would destroy his body and erase his name so his soul would be lost forever.

Nefertiti takes his hand, squeezing it tightly.

Servants lift the platform bearing the weight of the body, and carry it out the door.

The royal family and other mourners file after, as the body is carried down to the harbor and placed on a barque where it will sail down the Nile to its tomb in the Valley of the Kings.

INTERCUT - HALLWAY/ROYAL CHAMBERS - LATER

Amenhotep is about to enter the room when he HEARS his father's voice. He waits-- listening instead.

PHARAOH AMENHOTEP III (O.S.)
There has to be someone else!

AYE (O.S.)
There isn't, your Highness. He is the only one.

PHARAOH AMENHOTEP III
But he's an imbecile! He has no social skills-- his head's always in the sky-- he can't run a country-- he can't even kill a fish!

Queen Tiye steps in.

QUEEN TIYE
Would you have Egypt go to the son of one of your minor wives? Am I not your Great Wife and worthy of having her offspring be Pharaoh?

The pharaoh falls silent, a thoughtful look on his face.

Prince Amenhotep listens on as the vizier speaks again.

AYE (O.S.)
He's bright. We may be able to train him. Here's what we can do--

EXT. PALACE - OUTER COURT - POND - DAY

Amenhotep sits in the grass sketching an ibis onto a slab of clay with a piece of charcoal.

His father appears before him, resentment etched in his features.

PHARAOH AMENHOTEP III
Here.

He throws something down on the ground.

A CROOK and FLAIL.

He turns and walks away.

Amenhotep, picks up the items and stands, running after his father.

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV
What is the meaning of this?

PHARAOH AMENHOTEP III
You are to be my co-regent--
(gritting his teeth)
--until I die. Then you will be
Pharaoh.

Amenhotep tries to return the crook and flail.

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV
No. I won't do it.

PHARAOH AMENHOTEP III
You will do it. Or I will put you
to death for treason.

Amenhotep stands speechless as his father coldly turns and
again, walks away.

INT. PHARAOH'S PALACE - RECEIVING HALL - DAY

Prince Amenhotep and his father are seated upon the dais,
facing their SUBJECTS in the great hall. A GUARD approaches
with the king's SCRIBE.

GUARD
Your scribe, Sire.

The king waves the man forward.

SCRIBE
You would like to correspond with
the Mittani King, your Highness?

PHARAOH AMENHOTEP III
Yes. Tell him I'm sending Colonel
Khanaia to fetch beautiful women
for my harem. I want silver and
gold pieces, ebony, other precious
stones and sundry valuable items.
But tell him not to send anymore
women with shrill voices. Lord
Amun, is that all they have in his
kingdom?

SCRIBE
Sir, I'd like to remind you of the
women the Mittani King requested of
you in his last letter.

The Pharaoh waves his hand in dismissal of the subject.

PHARAOH AMENHOTEP III
 Bah! I give him gold-- he wants
 women. I give him women, he wants
 gold. This is Egypt. He shall do
 as I say.

The scribe bows and takes his leave, just as the guard again
 approaches with an ARCHITECT and an ARTIST.

ARCHITECT
 Your Highness, we wish to show you
 the plans for the stelae you want
 to have erected in Nubia.

The pharaoh studies the plans.

PHARAOH AMENHOTEP III
 Fine, fine.

He waves the back of his hand, ushering the men away.

Again, the guard approaches, this time with GENERAL HOREMHEB,
 a short, but powerfully-built man.

GENERAL HOREMHEB
 You wanted to see me, your
 Highness?

PHARAOH AMENHOTEP III
 Yes. I want you teach my son about
 the scope of our empire. I want
 him to learn about the borders you
 protect and how we've become the
 greatest empire in the world.

The general smiles.

GENERAL HOREMHEB
 I see.

PHARAOH AMENHOTEP III
 Did you bring the map?

GENERAL HOREMHEB
 Yes.

The general pulls out a scroll of papyrus and begins to
 unravel it, stretching it out on the table before them.

The Pharaoh glances at Amenhotep, noticing the sullen look on
 the boy's face. He whips the back of Amenhotep's hand with
 his flail.

PHARAOH AMENHOTEP III
Pay attention!

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV
Yes, Father. I am.

INT. NEFERTITI'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Nefertiti, head shaven, stands patiently while her MAIDS dress her and apply kohl to her eyes.

Her step-mother, Tey, moves forward and places a long-haired wig on her scalp. She stands back, smoothing the curls along the girl's shoulders. Tears shine in her eyes as she takes in Nefertiti's appearance.

NEFERTITI
Come now, Tey. This is no time for tears.

Tey swipes at her eyes.

TEY
I'm sorry, darling, it's just that it's hard to believe you're too big to sit on my knee.

Nefertiti laughs, hugging the older woman.

NEFERTITI
Oh, hush, Tey! I'm a grown woman!

Tey gives a wistful sigh, pushing a strand of hair behind Nefertiti's ear.

TEY
I know. And about to be married...

NEFERTITI
(grinning)
Yes!

TEY
Are you sure about him? Your father is worried.

NEFERTITI
Why should he worry? Prince Amenhotep will be Pharaoh someday. And besides-- I love him!

EXT. PHARAOH'S PALACE - CENTRAL COURTYARD - DAY

Exotic flowers brighten the courtyard as SERVANTS bustle around carrying heavy platters of food to and fro among the WEDDING PARTY.

Amenhotep stands arm-in-arm with his new bride, Nefertiti, dressed in their finest garments, brilliant smiles on their faces.

Queen Tiye smiles graciously and the pharaoh glowers as the couple continues to greet their guests.

INT. PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT

Laughing, Amenhotep lifts Nefertiti and spins around with her in his arms. He stops, dropping her on the bed, and they kiss in a passionate embrace...

EXT. COLOSSI OF MEMNON - DAY

Amenhotep gazes at the massive twin images of his father, craning his neck in order to take in their full height.

The Pharaoh, shuffles slowly, his features clearly showing pain as he makes his way to his son on bones weakened by arthritis and obesity.

PHARAOH AMENHOTEP III

Do you know why I brought you here?

Amenhotep looks at his father-- hate in his eyes.

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV

So I can take in all your glory?

PHARAOH AMENHOTEP III

No. You need to know who you've come from. What you're made of. When I'm gone you need to remind Egypt of her strength.

Slowly they begin to walk among the structures guarded by the Colossi. Bas reliefs of former pharaohs, slaves, musicians, priests, architects, soldiers and farmers come to life in color and form on the walls.

They pause, stopping in front of the image of Amun.

PHARAOH AMENHOTEP III (CONT'D)

He's been good to us.

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV

How? How is he any different from
any of the other gods?

Amenhotep waves his hand, gesturing to Anubis, Osiris, Horus,
and a host of other gods that grace the walls.

PHARAOH AMENHOTEP III

He's the one who makes the kings of
other lands pay us tribute. He's
the one who gives faith to our
people and keeps them loyal to us.
Without him we are nothing.

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV

But is he the one who makes the
grass grow? Is he the one who
lights the day so that our people
can work and provides them food so
they may eat? Amun is strong
because you make him so. He has no
strength of his own.

The Pharaoh begins to shake in anger.

PHARAOH AMENHOTEP III

You've learned nothing! You're
useless. I always knew you
wouldn't amount to anything. If
you do not listen to me, you will
fail. My father taught me and it's
my responsibility to--

He stops, grasping at his chest.

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV

Father?

Amenhotep takes his father's arm, leading him to a bench to
rest.

He calls out to one of the slaves.

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV (CONT'D)

Bring the wagon! We must take my
father to the chief physician!

INT. PHARAOH'S CHAMBERS - LATER

The priest, Meryptah, chants an incantation as he waves
incense over the Pharaoh in his bed.

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS

Meryptah speaks with the Queen and Amenhotep in the hall.

QUEEN TIYE

What's wrong with him?

The priest shakes his head.

MERYPTAH

I'm uncertain. He's an old man.
He's weak.

QUEEN TIYE

Is there anything we can do?

MERYPTAH

Make sure he has rest. I've said
some prayers and performed the best
treatments for his symptoms. All
we can do is wait.

Amenhotep places his arm around his mother's shoulders,
comforting her as she weeps.

QUEEN TIYE

(tearfully)

Thank you, Meryptah.

The priest bows to her before taking his leave.

Amenhotep watches as his mother goes back to his father's
bedside and takes his hand, folding it lovingly in both of
her own.

LATER

Prince Amenhotep is on his knees at his father's side,
WHISPERING fervently.

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV

Forgive me, Father! I never meant
to disappoint you! All I ever
wanted was for you to be proud of
me!

The pharaoh's eyes suddenly snap open. Ignoring his son, he
calls to his wife.

PHARAOH AMENHOTEP III

Tiye!

Queen Tiye is sleeping nearby when she's wakened by the
Pharaoh's GASPING WHISPER.

The prince looks on in agony as his mother falls to her knees at his father's side.

QUEEN TIYE

Yes!

PHARAOH AMENHOTEP III

I love you.

And he's gone as his last breath leaves his lungs...

EXT. KARNAK - TEMPLE COMPLEX - SEVEN DAYS LATER - DAY

Towering images of the solar god, ATEN, are carved into the walls around the complex-- the sun disk with its rays of light ending in HANDS, some of them holding the sign of eternal life, the ANKH. Beneath the aten, are statues of Prince Amenhotep as Pharaoh...

Hundreds of PEOPLE line the streets to get a glimpse of Prince Amenhotep as he's carried upon a bier by SEVERAL SERVANTS during the Heb Sed festival. ACROBATS perform alongside the procession. FAN BEARERS follow, cooling the young prince with long bamboo fans, ostrich feathers attached to the ends.

He's carried over to a platform where the vizier, Aye, stands waiting for him with the CROOK AND FLAIL. The man's words are indistinguishable to all but the prince as he hands over the symbolic instruments.

AYE

This is a violation of tradition.
You're not supposed to perform this
festival until thirty years from--

Prince Amenhotep takes the crook and flail from the older man's hands with a small bow, interrupting the vizier smoothly.

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV

I am Pharaoh now, Aye, and we shall
do as I please.

He turns, raising his arms and shows the royal instruments to his people in victory.

Masses of people cheer as flowers are thrown into the sky.

The vizier presses his lips together and takes a step back into the shade of a colored awning.

EXT. KARNAK - TEMPLE COMPLEX - LATER

Queen Tiye stands to the side as Prince Amenhotep, Nefertiti next to him, addresses the people of Egypt in a public forum. A SECRETARY, holding a copper CONE-SHAPED APPARATUS, repeats Amenhotep's speech, as though through a megaphone.

The temple complex is hushed, as the audience awaits Prince Amenhotep's words.

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV

The Pharaoh, Amenhotep the Third,
has passed Ma'at's judgment and has
passed on to the kingdom of Osiris,
where he is joined by his god,
Amun.

(pause)

I speak to you now, not as his son,
Amenhotep the Fourth, but as your
new Pharaoh and representative of
the true god, Aten, here on earth,
Akhenaten!

The secretary's amplified voice echoes across the complex,
reaching even those furthest away...