

Hermapolis (Thoth and Ma'at Assist the Time Travellers)

(Image: Ruins of the Temple of Thoth at Hermapolis, Dominique Vivant Denon, late 18th-early-19th C?)



Part I

Foul smell of corruption - even among
the scribes of the feather. The organisms that
separate the worlds retch at the onslaught.
Anomalies - unexplained monsters in the sewers
of our confident metropolis - thrive like
summer insects.

Relief then, to meet with you here - among
the books and statutes, the palettes and
broad-leafed plants. Our once energetic
retinue exhausted after the long journey
(the river thick with watery reptiles). 'No
matter,' you say, 'your safe arrival
was foretold.'

We rest among hieroglyphs and inquisitive
scholars, we drink Mediterranean wine
and sample exquisite pastries. While he,
the beaked one, your companion - so
knowledgeable and amiable - addresses
then calms every ferocious scorpion
of doubt.

Her hooves! His wings! Such commotion
in the courtyard of the library gods - though
they bow as they enter. 'The boundless energy
of youth!' you say, smiling at the Europeans.
They smile back, and nod at the wise baboon,
devour delicacies then settle into cushions
either side of me.

Part II

'We've read your petition' he says, 'and grieve with you at an all too familiar story ... but history is no certain ally to the likes of us. No matter, we possess the means to stifle their chaotic mechanations. By weightless truth and subtle magics we will prevail - the cosmic pattern wills it so.'

Animate conversation as lanterns appear on tables stacked with maps, manuscripts, and ornaments made homely for foreign gods. Quiet meditations as the Great River slumbers and the afternoon heat gives way to evening cool. By midnight, on the mound of wonders a plan is hatched.

Part III

Strange dreams in the temple of alphabets - a hippo with mud-wet eyes, a gray lion with silvery mane - mummified water birds in dusty catacombs. Uneasy dreams as the water level rises and the chanting begins - 'The will', he says, 'to remake a cosmos'. I wake to the phoenix dawn.

We meet as equals in a break between acts. Your eyes request the old silence and I submit - enter the wordless trance that quickens true scholarship of soul. Such stillness as the evening cools and the Great River swells and recedes. Such stillness as the stars appear and the full moon resumes its reign.

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