

## Episode 4

Bex: Welcome back to the Nile Chronicles. You have made it to episode four and I'm very glad you are here still listening. Now this is where I get into some of the letters from ancient Egypt, these writings, and actually give voice to them as I will read them to you. This episode is probably going to be much, much more on the shorter side to give you a break from last episodes being so incredibly long. And this is really a transition episode into these letters. So I'm going to start with a book called Daughters of Africa and this is edited by Margaret Busby and the subtitle of this source Says, an international anthology of words and writings by women of African descent from the ancient Egyptian to the present. And I really think this is a very cool source and it was published in 1992. So when it says the present, it is up until 1992. And This source, if you ever get a chance, uh, to get your hands on it, I would highly recommend reading it. Uh, because as it says, it's an anthology of women's words. Um, of African descent from ancient Egypt and so on. So to start, I'm gonna read Ancient Egyptian, uh, the poem in here, or the love song, rather. Is going to be the main one that I focus on and I think I'm going to read parts of Queen Hatshepsut's speech since I did, um, since I did mention her in the last episode.

At least I think I did. That was a long episode. Anyway. So these are love songs. Um. It says there are four known manuscripts of love songs dating from the ancient, from the Egyptian new kingdom which spanned the 18th to 20th dynasties 1550 to 1080 BC. Um. So the following love song is from a, uh, contains... Three collections of such lyrics and the following are from the second collection of, uh, 2B from the Papyrus British Museum. And I, I believe it's called Papyrus Harris is the. Exhibit. So here we go. Love songs.

Beginning of the delightful, beautiful songs of your beloved sister as she comes from the fields. the voice of the wild goose shrills it is caught by its bait my love of you pervades me i cannot loosen it i shall retrieve my nets but what do i tell my mother to whom i go daily Laden with birdcatch, I have spread no snares today. I am caught in my love of you. The wild goose soars and swoops.

It aligns, alights on the net. Many birds swarm about. I have work to do. I am held fast by my love. Alone, my heart meets your heart. From your beauty, I'll not part. The voice of the dove is calling. It says, it's day. Where are you? Oh, bird, stop scolding me. I found my brother in his bed. My heart was overjoyed.

Each said, I shall not leave you. My hand is in your hand. You and I shall wander in all the places fair. He makes me the foremost of women. He does not aggravate. My heart, a grief, my heart. My gaze is fixed on the garden gate. My brother will come to me, eyes on the road, ears straining. I wait for him who neglects me. I made my brother's love my sole concern. About him my heart is not silent. It sends me a fleet footed messenger who

comes and goes to tell me he deceives you. In other words, he found another woman. She is dazzling to his eyes. Why vex another's heart to death? My heart thought of my love of you when half of my hair was braided.

I came at a run to find you and neglected my hairdo. Now, if you let me braid my hair. I shall be ready in a moment.

So, there's a lot happening in this poem, right? Um. Yeah, first off, it's a beautiful love song. I will say that. I have thoroughly enjoyed looking at this. Now to pull it apart. It says beautiful songs of your beloved sister as she comes from the fields. And I don't know who wrote this, what time period this is in. However, what I do know is that incest was a thing in ancient Egypt. But incest only existed really within the royal family because, you know, they wanted to keep it in the family. And we don't really see incest occurring outside of the royal family um, and maybe there's isolated incidences of it happening. So I don't know if this is a Brother and sister in love with each other in that case they probably would have been part of the royal, a part of the royal family or if this is just genuine love, sibling love for one another.

However, in stanza seven, where it says, my gaze is fixed on the garden gate, my brother will come to me, eyes on the road, ears straining. I made my brother's love my sole concern. It sends me a fleet-footed messenger who comes and goes to tell me he deceives you. In other words, he found another woman. She's dazzling to his eyes. So that stanza alone really makes me think that this is a brother and sister who are in love with each other. Now, to modern society, ew, yuck, gross, barf, whatever you want to call it, In ancient Egypt, this was this was a normal occurrence, like I said, and it was mostly normal in the elite family. So I don't know if this is the case here. But the line that What I truly do love is in stanza three when I suppose it's the brother talking, saying, alone my heart meets your heart, from your beauty I'll not part. Love that line. I do enjoy love songs and love poetry and all that good stuff. So, Alone My Heart Meets Your Heart is basically saying you are the one for me. My heart. Meets your heart and we are meant to be as one and from your beauty, I'll not part.

Like, come on. It's such a cheesy line and I love it. So in this, in this love song, there's a lot. Going on, but um, and talking about beauty, right? The beauty standards of women in ancient Egypt, which were presumably high, um, or I assume they are just because The cosmetics that come out of ancient Egypt and talking about Isis, how she gave them perfume and makeup and wanted, you know, this is how you smell good, this is how you look good, and you know, we look at Cases of Cleopatra VII who supposedly was so beautiful. Um, but even then you look at like statues or busts of ancient Egyptian women and they, they're gorgeous. Between their eyes, between their jewelry that they're wearing, whatever it is, beauty standards in Egypt in some part of society had to be relatively high. And... You know, when it says now, if you'll let me braid my hair, I shall

be ready in a moment. And I think this still exists in modern society today. In the sense of stereotypically women take longer to get ready because they have to do their hair, they have to do their makeup. Well, guess what? It existed in ancient Egypt according to this love song. Um. And even though ancient Egypt existed so long ago, these everyday occurrences still happened. And, you know, we think we're so far disconnected from the past. But in reality, we really aren't. And that's really what the next letters are about. Um, and it's great to get into them, truly.

But I did want to give voice to one of Queen Hatshepsut's speeches. And these speeches exist in temple walls and obelisks in Egypt. And This specific inscription is on an obelisk, I believe. On its side and base are hieroglyphic inscriptions honoring Hatshepsut's divine father, Amun, In memory of her earthly father, Tatmos I, which are in part translated here. So this says the speech of the queen. But I wanted to talk about, talk about beauty standards. Um, this is a longer, a longer speech. But there's, the second to last stanza says, as I wear the white crown, As I appear with the red crown. As the two lords have joined their portions for me. As I rule this land like the son of Isis. As I am mighty like the son of Nut. As Rey rests in the evening bark, as he prevails in the morning bark, as he joins his two mothers in the god's ship, as Skye endures as his creation lasts. As I shall be eternal like an undying star. As I shall rest in life like atom. So as regards to these two great obelisks, Wrought with electrum by my majesty for my father Amun in order that my name may endure in this temple for eternity and everlastingness. They are each of one block of hard granite. Without seem, without joining together.

Now I think this is really powerful. to say because she's saying that this is how I want to be remembered. I want to be remembered with the white crown and I want to be remembered with the red crown. And as a queen, Hatshepsut ruled as a pharaoh, which is not seen except for, I believe, the first ever queen of Egypt, Sobek Neferu. Who we know very little about. Um, we know of her existence and not much more. I think she also ruled as a pharaoh and I, Could be wrong, but my memory, if my memory serves correctly, Hatshepsut was a case where she wanted to rule as a pharaoh. She didn't want to rule as a woman, per se. And the reason for that is because Hatshepsut wanted to say, I am a pharaoh and I can look like a pharaoh, but that doesn't make me a man. That, I can rule as a pharaoh as a woman. And that's basically why she decided to depict herself as a pharaoh. But I think it's powerful, right? She's like, I, for eternity and everlastingness, In order that my name may endure in this temple. She wanted to be remembered and she did and she has been. And it's really great. And maybe this doesn't really necessarily talk about beauty standards, but it talks about ISIS. And she says, like, the son of Isis and the son of Nuts. Not the daughter, but the son. And that just goes back to gender roles. And I do question why Partially why she wanted to say, as I rule this land like the son of Isis, as I am mighty like the son of Nut. I, because she ruled as a pharaoh, that's my assumption

as to why she would want to be seen as a son of these goddesses in her role. But it's still interesting, right? We have a woman who... Is saying that she's a Farron, that she's a son of these goddesses, and she doesn't, she's one of the queens that doesn't really embrace her femininity per se, and even in the depictions of her, we don't really see any Feminine attributes of her so it's really interesting and I think in I don't know if we can say in modern day terms that she was a cross dresser or That she was gender non-conforming or that she was even transgender. I don't know if we can, we can say that. I mean, sure, when we read it with a modern lens, that's what it looks like, but in ancient Egypt, I'm not well versed in gender expression and there's that whole movement to queerify classics and everything and to look at classics through a modern lens. Um, And I don't know, I feel very fuzzy on that. I genuinely do because I don't know if ancient Egyptians would have had A sense of gender. Um, obviously with their gender roles, sure, but even then it's just based in sex. So, I don't know. It's very interesting. Queen Hutch episode is always a mystery to me, but I respect her for what she does. Or what she did, rather. Um, because she did die quite a while ago. Um, but that was, but that's, this is kind of the transition into What women wrote about, um, and maybe these are two examples from this book that are more about elite status women. I mean, Hatshepsut for sure and the love song type. I don't know the author of, um, and maybe I'll do some digging to find out and let you all know.

But the next letters that I'll be talking about We get into the private letters, the private lives of women and what they wrote about. And the importance of these letters, unlike what I just read, is that these letters are showing insights into their everyday life without Any bias or any alternative, like there's no other, there's no other voice. There's nothing else at play. These weren't legal documents by any means. Um, Except for the actual legal documents, but remember, there's the literary documents and then there's the documentary documents that Spatskoza points out. Um, actually, what did she say? Yeah, it was the... Yeah, literary and documentary with the different genres. So I think it's really interesting and very important to keep that in mind as the private letters that I will be getting into Depict both of those things, I believe. I think I pulled letters that reflect both of that, and if not, then I definitely will. Anyway, that's it for episode four of the Niall Chronicles. Like I said, it's a little bit shorter, but this was more of just a transition episode into starting to see a voice to some of those um. Pieces of literature. So that's it for this episode. I'll see you next time on The voiceless, Nile Chronicles.