

# The Beautiful One Is Here

In the attic where the rain touched the roof softly on spring days and where you could feel the mantle of snow outside, a few inches away, on December nights, A Thousand Times Great Grandmere existed. She did not live, nor was she eternally dead, she ... existed.

And now with the Great Event about to happen, the Great Night arriving, the Homecoming about to explode, she must be visited! "Ready? Here I come!" Timothy's voice cried faintly beneath a trapdoor that trembled. "Yes!?"  
Silence. The Egyptian mummy did not twitch.

She stood propped in a dark corner like an ancient dried plum tree, or an abandoned and scorched ironing board, her hands and wrists trussed across her dry riverbed bosom, a captive of time, her eyes slits of deep blue lapis lazuli behind thread-sewn lids, a glitter of remembrance as her mouth, with a shriveled tongue wormed in it, whistled and sighed and whispered to recall every hour of every lost night four thousand years back when she was a pharaoh's daughter dressed in spider linens and warm-breath silks with jewels burning her wrists as she ran in the marble gardens to watch the pyramids erupt in the fiery Egyptian air.

Now Timothy lifted the trapdoor lid of dust to call into that midnight attic world. "Oh, Beautiful One!"  
A faint pollen of dust fell from the ancient mummy's lips. "Beautiful no longer!"

"Grandma, then."

"Not Grandma merely," came the soft response.

"A Thousand Times Great Grandmere?"

"Better." The old voice dusted the silent air. "Wine?"

"Wine." Timothy rose, a small flagon in his hands.

"The vintage, child?" the voice murmured.

"B.C., Grandmere."

"How many years?"

"Two thousand, almost three, B.C."

"Excellent." Dust fell from the withered smile. "Come."

Picking his way through a litter of papyrus, Timothy reached the no-longer Beautiful One, whose voice was still incredibly lovely.

"Child?" said the withered smile. "Do you fear me?"

"Always, Grandmere."

"Wet my lips, child."

He reached to let the merest drop wet the lips that now trembled.

"More," she whispered.

Another drop of wine touched the dusty smile.

"Still afraid?"

"No, Grandmere."

"Sit."

He perched on the lid of a box with hieroglyphs of war-riors and doglike gods and gods with lions' heads painted on it.

"Why are you here?" husked the voice beneath the serene riverbed face.

"Tomorrow's the Great Night, Grandmere, I've waited for all my life! The Family, our Family, coming, flying in from all over the world! Tell me, Grandmere, how it all began, how this House was built and where we came from and"

"Enough!" the voice cried, softly. "Let me recall a thousand noons. Let me swim down the deep well. Stillness?"

"Stillness."

"Now," came the whisper across four thousand years, "here's how it was ... "