

Excerpts from
THE PHARAOH'S NEW ROBES
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SCENE TWO

After his grand processional entrance, the Pharaoh is frustrated when fireflies tickle him, because laughing is not what perfect people do. Pepi, the Pharaoh's banished brother in disguise, speaks up:

PEPI

Forgive me, your Perfection, for daring to speak in your presence, but my partner and I are by far the most perfect weavers in all of Egypt.

MOUTNOFRIT

So?

SALTI

Ha ha ha. "Sew." That's funny. Get it? Sew? We're weavers? Sew?

PEPI

(to Salti) Shhh, I'm working here. *(to Pharaoh)* Oh yes, Your Perfection. We have studied this ancient art from secret writings dating back to the first dynasty.

THUTMOSE II

So?

SALTI

(Snickers) Sew.

PEPI

They taught us how to weave a robe so magical, that only people who are perfect can see it.

HATSHEPSUT

But that's not poss-

MOUNTNOFRIT

Hush!

PHARAOH

Excellent! Mountnofrit, I must have this robe! That way I can find out who is perfect and who isn't. And if ONE, someone isn't perfect, then TWO, they can't attend the Festival.

PEPI

Forgive the intrusion Your Perfection, but what will be our reward? What would you give to be the envy of the world? What would you give to prove to everyone, once and for all, that you are perfect?

PHARAOH

Anything! Anything! (*Mountnofrit kicks him*) Um, I mean any ONE thing that you desire. Yes, any one thing that it is within my power to give. Like your very own pyramid or a year's supply of papyrus.

SALTI

Oh, I love papyrus!

PHARAOH

Just ask me tonight and I give you my pharaohly word that it will be yours.

PEPI

Your generosity is succeeded only by your perfection, Your Perfection.

PHARAOH

Yes, I know. Now tell me your names.

SCENE FOUR

After securing an agreement with the Pharaoh, Pepi and Salti are installed in the royal weaving room to begin working on the robes. The weaving loom is empty and surrounded by trays of fantastical looking food.

PEPI

(laughing) And then there was the time we painted moustaches on all the statues in the sculpture garden!

SALTI

(laughing) That was almost as good as when you tried to sell the Sphinx's nose!

PEPI

Oh, what about the time you bit the sacred-

Off stage

MOUTNOFRIT

Yoo hoo. Salti and Pepi. It is Royal Moutnofrit and her royal son, Prince Thutmose II.

Pepi puts on his fake beard while Salti hastily cleans the room and pretends to be weaving at an empty loom. Bas sneaks in after Moutnofrit and Tutti.

PEPI

Come in, come in Your Perfection. *(bows low and kisses her hand)* The radiance of your smile is equaled only by the sun sparkling over the Sahara.

MOUTNOFRIT

Yes, it is. *(sigh)* What is that filthy cat doing in here? You're so smelly!

BAS

Meow meow! *(Am not)*

MOUTNOFRIT

Are to!

BAS

Meow meow! (*Am not*)

MOUTNOFRIT

Are to!

BAS

Meow meow! (*Am not*)

MOUTNOFRIT

Stop that! (*to Pepi*) Now, my husband sent us to see how you are getting along.

PEPI

Well, you can see for yourself.

THUTMOSE II

Where?

PEPI

Why right here, of course. (*Mountnofrit and Thutmose II are speechless.*) I assure you it will look even finer when it is finished.

THUTMOSE II

I don't see any- (*Mountnofrit steps on Thutmose II's foot*)

MOUNTNOFRIT

-reason why the Pharaoh won't love these robes!

SALTI

I have been embroidering this sleeve all morning. Doesn't it look perfect?

MOUTNOFRIT

Oh, my, yes, yes it looks absolutely perfect. Don't you agree Little Tuttie?

THUTMOSE II

Uumm, yeah, totally perfect. Yeah. I like the, um -

MOUTNOFRIT

Color. Great color choice. And the fabric looks -

THUTMOSE II

Soft, but sturdy. Yes it looks soft but sturdy, ummm-hum.

MOUTNOFRIT

Is it sturdy enough to protect the Pharaoh from being tickled by fireflies?

PEPI

Most definitely, your majesty. Would you like to touch it? (*Thutmose reaches for the robe*) Be careful, you don't want to get it wrinkled.

THUTMOSE II

Really, mother, it is quite nice.

Looks at Pepi

Hey, don't I know you?

PEPI

No, no I've never been to Thebes before. I'm from the Lower Kingdom originally.

THUTMOSE II

You look so familiar. And mommy says I have a perfect memory for faces.

MOUTNOFRIT

That's right, I do say that.

SALTI

Oh, you know, I always told him that if he would just wear some lipstick and hot pink eyeshadow he would look just like that famous singer, Rosetta Stone.

(pause while Salti, Moutnofrit and Thutmose II consider this then all three speak at once)

MOUTNOFRIT

Yes, yes he would.

THUTMOSE II

Something about his eyes.

BAS

Meow meow meow meow. *(Maybe it's his gums.)*

SALTI

I think it's in his legs.

PEPI

Stop it! I will not put on your make-up and sing "Wrappin' with my mummy."

SALTI

But it's such a sandy song.

PEPI

Yes, it is a sandy song, but you've forgot one thing.

SALTI

What's that?

PEPI

I am not a girl!

(everyone pauses then speaks at once)

MOUTNOFRIT

Hmm, that's right.

THUTMOSE II

Who knew?

SALTI

Oh yeah, I forgot.

BAS

Meow meow meow meow. *(It's hard to keep track.)*

PEPI

Enough. This foolishness has made me hungry. I'm so famished I don't know if I'll be able to finish by tonight.

MOUTNOFRIT

Quickly Tuttie, lets leave the busy weavers alone. You go tell the cooks to send up more food and I will tell your father how perfect his new robes look and how perfectly they will protect him from fireflies.

SALTI

Maybe more of those honey dipped figs? They really help me work faster.

PEPI

And those chocolate covered beetles? Thank you.

Moutnofrit & Thutmose II exit. Bas exits opposite.

SALTI

Mmmmm. I love chocolate covered beetles.

PEPI

But you know what I love even more? The looks on their faces when they realized that they couldn't see anything! *Both laugh.*

SALTI

What mummy heads!

PEPI

(gets really wound up) My plan is going perfectly. I feel so- *(He steps in front of the loom)*

SALTI

Hey, you're messing up my weaving!

PEPI

You dung beetle, there is nothing there!

SALTI

Oh yeah, I forgot.

SCENE SEVEN

This is the opening of the final scene: The Firefly Festival. Fanfare music plays and Salti enters. Moutnofrit and Thutmose II enter when announced.

SALTI

Good people of Egypt. It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 10th Annual Firefly Festival, featuring young Prince Thutmose II – he'll be a heartbreaker ladies - with a special appearance by Her Perfection, the Royal Moutnofrit – Isn't she divine? How gracefully she saunters. And, wearing his new robes, our special guest star, the leader of the Upper and Lower Kingdoms, he who makes the Nile flow and takes the serpents' sting, he for whom the sands do blow and the birds do sing, the Son of Re, His Perfection, Pharaoh Thutmose II!

The musical procession begins with Thutmose II in silly clothes and Moutnofrit in gaudy robes with a long train that Bas is holding in his teeth. Moutnofrit is also carrying a huge staff or wand that has very large, soft "firefly wings" at the top. Last comes the Pharaoh, wearing extremely silly underwear. Pepi is pretending to hold the Pharaoh's nonexistent train. They parade around the stage and come to stand center just as Hatshepsut runs onstage.

HATSHEPSUT

Ready everyone? Now!

She makes the firefly signal and encourages the audience to make the signal too. Suddenly the room is full of fireflies, all of them converging on the Pharaoh.

PHARAOH

What's this? Hee. Hee! Fireflies tickling me? Hee. Hee! Someone make them stop. Hee. Hee!

BAS

Why are you asking a cat?

PHARAOH

Uncontrollably laughing

But this is undignified! And how is this happening? My new robes should protect me from fireflies. Why aren't they working? My robes? Nobody told me there was something wrong with my – robes. Hatshepsut, HATSHEPSUT! (*Hatshepsut gives the signal to stop while Bas flicks his tail and the fireflies back away from the Pharaoh.*) Finally! Thutmose II, go get your sister right now!

THUTMOSE II

Yes Father. (*to audience*) She's in trouble! (*he exits*)

HATSHEPSUT

Father, I'm right here. (*crosses down to Pharaoh*)

PHARAOH

(*barely containing his anger and embarrassment*) Hatshepsut, I am not wearing any new robes am I?

HATSHEPSUT

No father.

PHARAOH

In fact, I am just standing here in my royal underwear, aren't I?

HATSHEPSUT

Yes, father.

PHARAOH

And now everyone knows that I am not perfect, don't they?

HATSHEPSUT

Yes father.

PHARAOH

DO YOU KNOW HOW THIS MAKES ME FEEL?

HATSHEPSUT

Actually, yes.

PHARAOH

laughing

Good, 'cause I haven't felt this great in ages! Laughing feels wonderful! Everyone should laugh everyday!

SALTI

(to Pepi) Your plan is backfiring, he likes standing around in his underwear.

MOUTNOFRIT

Does this mean we don't have to be perfect anymore?

PHARAOH

Yes!

MOUTNOFRIT

And we can laugh and smile again?

PHARAOH

Yes, yes!

MOUTNOFRIT

Then Hatshepsut, I've got just one thing to say to you.

HATSHEPSUT

What?

MOUTNOFRIT

Tickle, tickle, tickle! She uses the wings on her staff to tickle Hatshepsut. A big tickle game begins and soon everyone takes a firefly wing from Moutnofrit's staff and tickles the kids in the audience.

SALTI

Whispers

This is wierd, lets go! Salti and Pepi sneak away.

PHARAOH

Everybody tickle!