

The People's King

by
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Based on
"The Soft Touch of Grass"

by
Luigi Pirandello

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INT. PALACE BEDROOM. DAY

PHARAOH KHENTIMENTIU, older and bone-thin, wakes in a pool of sweat on a large, purple, fully-adorned, bed.

PHARAOH
(whispers)
Neith.

The Pharaoh sits up in bed and looks long at his expansive yet completely empty bedchambers. He looks at the vacant spot next to him and runs his hands up and down the blanket. He leans closer and breathes in deeply through his nose.

PHARAOH (CONT'D)
Neith.

As he lays there, he begins to cry.

SETH (O.S.)
Father.

Pharaoh looks to the doorway to see his son, SETH, newly a man, confident, good-looking.

SETH (CONT'D)
Father, it is time.

PHARAOH
I want her back.

SETH
You are selfish.

Pharaoh falls back into the bed.

PHARAOH
I need her.

SETH
You are weak.

Pharaoh throws his son an angry look.

PHARAOH
You do not understand. You are still so young.

Seth looks away.

SETH
And you are old.

Seth turns and exits down the hallway.

Sadiki leads the Pharaoh toward the main door.

SADIKI
Your people will comfort you.

Just before they reach the door, Pharaoh stops.

PHARAOH
(at first to himself)
I wish to be among my people.
Sadiki?

SADIKI
Yes, sire?

PHARAOH
May I borrow your clothes?

EXT. BAZAAR. DAY

The Pharaoh, dressed as a servant with his face partially covered, walks through a small area outside the palace, where many of his subjects are talking, buying goods, etc.

A few children play with a ball, while the shopkeepers call out to potential buyers.

The ball rolls to his feet. Pharaoh kicks it back toward the small group as he continues walking.

He pauses where two camels have been tied to a post and strokes one's side.

Pharaoh crosses to a stand selling fish and slows to take a look.

PEASANT WOMAN (O.S.)
But please, sir.

MERCHANT (O.S.)
I said no.

Pharaoh turns toward a stand a little further down. A beautiful PEASANT WOMAN with intense and passionate eyes argues with a stalky MERCHANT over a loaf of bread. One of her arms hangs over a YOUNG BOY.

PEASANT WOMAN
Just a piece. So my son can eat.

Pharaoh stares at the woman. She glances over at him and their eyes lock momentarily.

PHARAOH
(to himself)
Neith.

Pharaoh starts toward the stand.

MERCHANT
I told you already. You must buy
the loaf, or --

Pharaoh reaches the stand.

PHARAOH
I will pay.

MERCHANT
(to Pharaoh)
The loaf. You must buy the loaf.

PHARAOH
I will pay.

The woman turns to Pharaoh and touches her neck.

PEASANT WOMAN
Thank you, sir.

Pharaoh pulls out a small change purse, from which he removes a gold piece and hands it to the merchant.

PHARAOH
The boy should eat.

PEASANT WOMAN
Yes, I know.

Pharaoh bends down toward the young boy.

PHARAOH
Be good to your mother.

YOUNG BOY
Yes, sir. Thank you.

The boy embraces Pharaoh, which accidentally causes his change purse to spill and his face-covering to come loose. The gold pieces CLINK against the stone.

Several faces in the crowd turn and look.

The Pharaoh stands and faces the woman, who is awestruck.

PEASANT WOMAN
(whispering)
Pharaoh.

She kneels and pulls the boy down to kneel beside her.

ONLOOKER (O.S.)
My king.

Pharaoh turns to the crowd as they gradually all kneel, bow, or even kiss the ground.

Pharaoh walks out towards them.

PHARAOH
My kingdom. I am with you in your
sadness on this dark day. And as
the Earth mourns, look to the
heavens. For tomorrow the sun will
rise again.

Pharaoh turns and heads back through the crowd.

INT. PALACE BEDROOM. DAY

Pharaoh sulks into his room almost the same way he left the crowded bazaar. He undresses and crawls into his bed.

Pharaoh softly runs his hands along the side of the bed where his wife once slept.

He leans down and kisses the bed.

PHARAOH
(whispering)
My queen.

FADE OUT.