

HERETIC

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EXT. KARNAK - TEMPLE COMPLEX - DAY

Towering images of the solar god, ATEN, are carved into the walls around the complex-- the sun disk with its rays of light ending in HANDS, some of them holding the sign of eternal life, the ANKH. Beneath the aten, are statues of Prince Amenhotep as Pharaoh...

Hundreds of PEOPLE line the streets to get a glimpse of Prince Amenhotep as he's carried upon a bier by SEVERAL SERVANTS during the Heb Sed festival. ACROBATS perform alongside the procession. FAN BEARERS follow, cooling the young prince with long bamboo fans, ostrich feathers attached to the ends.

He's carried over to a platform where the vizier, Aye, stands waiting for him with the CROOK AND FLAIL. The man's words are indistinguishable to all but the prince as he hands over the symbolic instruments.

AYE

This is a violation of tradition.
You're not supposed to perform this
festival until thirty years from--

Prince Amenhotep takes the crook and flail from the older man's hands with a small bow, interrupting the vizier smoothly.

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV

I am Pharaoh now, Aye, and we shall
do as I please.

He turns, raising his arms and shows the royal instruments to his people in victory.

Masses of people cheer as flowers are thrown into the sky.

The vizier presses his lips together and takes a step back into the shade of a colored awning.

EXT. KARNAK - TEMPLE COMPLEX - LATER

Queen Tiye stands to the side as Prince Amenhotep, Nefertiti next to him, addresses the people of Egypt in a public forum. A SECRETARY, holding a copper CONE-SHAPED APPARATUS, repeats Amenhotep's speech, as though through a megaphone.

The temple complex is hushed, as the audience awaits Prince Amenhotep's words.

PRINCE AMENHOTEP IV

The Pharaoh, Amenhotep the Third,
has passed Ma'at's judgment and has
passed on to the kingdom of Osiris,
where he is joined by his god,
Amun.

(pause)

I speak to you now, not as his son,
Amenhotep the Fourth, but as your
new Pharaoh and representative of
the true god, Aten, here on earth,
AKHENATEN!

The secretary's amplified voice echoes across the complex,
reaching even those furthest away.

A HUSH falls over the crowd as the people look around in
confusion.

The secretary waves his arms, urging the people to cheer--
--so they do, RAISING THEIR VOICES in feigned enthusiasm.

EXT. TEMPLE OF AMUN - DAY

A set of HANDS chisel away at a cartouche in the stone walls,
hacking it into oblivion.

Prince Amenhotep IV, now AKHENATEN, stands back, directing
WORKERS as they dismantle references to the god Amun.

AKHENATEN

Destroy it. Wherever it is. Remove
it completely.

One of the workers speaks up.

WORKER #1

But your Highness, it is in every
cartouche that bears your father's
name. And yours as well.

AKHENATEN

It does not matter. My name is no
longer Amenhotep. I am Akhenaten,
son of the Aten, and my father is
no more.

Meryptah, the priest, appears, his expression enraged.

MERYPTAH

What is the meaning of this?

Akhenaten ignores him, merely speaking to the worker as the priest listens.

AKHENATEN

From now on, there is no Amun.
There is only the sun god, Aten.

The pharaoh turns to walk away, but the priest follows him.

MERYPTAH

You can't do this!

Akhenaten pauses, raising a brow.

AKHENATEN

You attempt to tell me what I can
and cannot do?

He looks to Aye.

AKHENATEN (CONT'D)

I want a tax levied on all the
temples.

The vizier tightens his jaw.

AYE

How much your Highness?

AKHENATEN

Shall we say sixty percent?

Aye bows.

MERYPTAH

That's not how it works! Pharaoh
pays us--

AKHENATEN

Those days died with my father,
Priest.

Akhenaten turns to the vizier again.

AKHENATEN (CONT'D)

Oh-- and while you're at it, make a
proclamation that worship of any
god except Aten is outlawed.

The vizier exchanges a stricken glance with the priest, but covers it smoothly, before the pharaoh notices.

AYE

As you wish.

Akhenaten reaches Nefertiti and takes her arm.

AKHENATEN

Come, my love. It is time to look
at the architect's plans for the
Aten temple.