



## 27. WHAT WENT ON AT THE WHITE HOUSE?

WHEN the doors opened, I was greeted by a young man, a student named Tyler somebody. He sat me down, registered me, and wheeled me out quickly to the auditorium where readers were to perform "A Day at the White House."<sup>1</sup> It was an old skit in which I myself had played the clown more than fifty years before, and I prepared my tape recorder to catch every word. Except for the new building, I felt as if in fact I had returned to my old school. I used to tape the lectures I heard there, and play them back five or seven times for understanding. I must have been the slowest of my class.

A professor read the prologue, and acted as Father Khu. His students were his supporting cast. They all read well enough, I thought, but he held the show together, commencing with these words.

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<sup>1</sup>**The White House** was the funerary complex of the Saneferu (*good sons*) constructed c. 2600 BCE. In the dark ages, robbers stripped the white Tura limestone cover from the pyramid, exposing its underlying red granite blocks. The stolen limestones now appear on mosques in Cairo, the white house now is maliciously misnamed *the red pyramid*, and its location Dahshur, *the red land*. During the first empire, of course, the red land was the flood plain of the Red River across the Red Sea in Sumer.

*My sister was in her own pyramid now, she who had been for so many years the voice of our beloved father.<sup>2</sup> That honor now belonged to my daughter the kawab.<sup>3</sup> I instructed her that Ur could speak freely, but I would give gifts only to those who spoke the truth!<sup>4</sup> I will give gifts to those who speak truly, I said, fine gifts like those that I offer at Thinis.<sup>5</sup>*

*Djedef took his cue from me.<sup>6</sup> As he was first to drink, so he was first to speak. Your Majesty (he said it in a sarcastic voice), I'm inspired to report wonders that happened right here in this house! They pleased your father a lot.<sup>7</sup>*

### THE VOYAGE OF SANEFER inside the White House, from the Westcar Papyrus<sup>8</sup>

So, he was restless. He was pacing up and down! Nothing pleased him anymore, but someone finally got up the courage to ask him what was wrong. I think it was his scribe, the keeper of his accounting.

Your father answered the brave one and said, "I'm crazy with boredom! What can I do?"

The man consulted Djedyankh, and he got advice.<sup>9</sup> The old counselor told him, "since His Majesty is restless, carry him down to the lake. Have some people row him around where he

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<sup>2</sup> **The sister** was Merere ("Meritites I"), buried at pyramid G1-b at Giza. After her father's death, she had acted as the *ba* (voice) for his *ka* (image). It was customary for a favored wife or daughter to become the voice of a deceased ruler and, in that role, to pass instructions to the family. It was impious, and it could be dangerous, to deny her authority.

<sup>3</sup> **The kawab** (*ka caretaker*) here is the Khu's daughter who is learning to speak for the *ka*-image of Sanefer (*the good son*). The critical aspect of that job was maintenance of reputation. If the reputation of a *ka*-image or *ba*-speaker was harmed, the illusion of eternal life could fail. Such a "second death" put a kawab out of business.

<sup>4</sup> **Ur** was a gold image of a falcon, seen as the *ka* of the everlasting Sanefer. Sanefer's family members masked themselves as falcons to commune with Ur and share gifts.

<sup>5</sup> **At Thinis** in planting season, seed was exchanged for food, oils, cloth and necessities.

<sup>6</sup> **Djedef** (*he speaks*), a courtier, was misidentified as Khufu's heir, "King Djedefre" (*he speaks as Re*). This happened in the time of Osirkaf (*he is Osir's body*), at the beginning of the so-called 5<sup>th</sup> dynasty, c. 2500 BCE. The new rulers claimed descent from Djedefre, a supposed 4<sup>th</sup> dynasty king wrongfully disinherited when Khufu took the throne. Osirkaf faked monuments of Djedefre, including a sacred boat (a reburial of the boat of dAn or "Den" of the first dynasty) at Abu Roash, supposed site of the supposed king's supposed burial. These lies became notorious in later dynasties, though there are supposed historians deceived by them even now.

<sup>7</sup> **Pleasing to the Khu:** Djedef implies that thievery and false record keeping have occurred at the White House, but his accusations are told as if in jest. This ambiguity is useful as it allows the Khu to respond as he deems appropriate.

<sup>8</sup> **The Westcar Papyrus, Berlin Papyrus 3033**, has been claimed to date to around 1600 BCE, but it most probably belongs to the Iranian period c. 500 BCE, when Elamite pseudo-history was overwritten on native literature of the Nile. The source overwritten by Baufrä's tale in this papyrus was composed in the Middle Bronze Age during dynasty 12, c. 1950 BCE; it parodied a foundation myth of dynasty 5, written c. 2800 BCE, now lost. "The Voyage of Sanefer" simulates that lost parody of that lost myth.

<sup>9</sup> **Djedyankh** (*doublespeak forever*) is one of Sanefer's companion mummies.

can see the birds and trees, and the beautiful fields beyond the shore. Don't forget to take his heart."<sup>10</sup>

As soon as your father heard that plan, he adored it. He ordered twenty gold-plated oars of ebony, with shafts of sandalwood covered in electrum. He also ordered a crew, twelve beautiful girls, none who ever had given birth—all of them with the shapeliest hips and breasts and most luxurious braids! He ordered them some jewels but nothing else to wear!

*Tell the truth, Jeff.*

Only jewels appear in the record.

*You can't read!*

I am speaking now.

*By permission. What happened?*

Those girls took him out to the lake, and there they pulled the oars, and he had a lot of laughs with them before disaster struck. The pacemaker at the stroke oar raised her arm to fix her hair, and she noticed that her pendant had slipped from her chest. It wasn't in the boat! It must have fallen out somewhere! She dropped her oar. The other girls noticed, and they dropped theirs as in sympathy.

Your father asked his stroker, what was the matter?

She pouted as she pointed to her chest and said: "my turquoise fell overboard! Don't expect me to stroke for you again!"

Your father spoke wisely to her. "Sweetheart, forget it," he said. "Let's get going now, ok? I'll find another turquoise for you later."

Well, she wouldn't listen! I suspect that in a huff she had thrown the pendant overboard, but she wanted it back. Who could blame her?

They were going nowhere until, once again, the old councilor saved the day. Wise Djedyankh provided instruction in both the drying and flooding of lake beds, and that advice soon was taken. The correct magic words were spoken and, behold! In an instant, a path to the boat from shore was as dry as the surrounding desert! And beside the boat, beside the pacemaker, there was a shard, and on that shard lay a turquoise, and behold! It was the same turquoise that the pacemaker had lost! And it glistened in the sun like the eye of a fish that is not yet dead.

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<sup>10</sup> **The heart** was removed in mummification but kept nearby as it was the source of emotion and thought. As for Sanefer's water craft, compare the 140-foot wooden boat discovered in the sands beside the great pyramid in 1954 CE. It is sketched on the cover of this volume [volume 2 (ed)].

Well, the brave one picked up that turquoise and carefully fastened it on the girl's lovely neck, much to everyone's satisfaction. Then he spoke the magic words for flooding, and in another instant, behold! The lake resumed its usual appearance!

*Tell the truth.*

You doubt me? It's all in the record! At the end of that day, your father threw the most expensive party he ever saw. He honored his servants with many of his finest treasures! And in summary, Your Majesty, that is how your dad was relieved of boredom with wonders performed here. I will tell you more detail, if you like.

*I said to the kawal, how true was Jeff's account?<sup>11</sup>*

*She replied, if it pleases Your Majesty, I will order a thousand loaves, a thousand jars of beer, a thousand measures of incense, and an ox.*

*I said, make that order for my father only. I will give nothing to Djedy. He has had enough already.*

*Jeff complained at once. Sire, do you know how much the wise man consumes each day? A hundred loaves, a hundred cups, and a shoulder of beef!*

*Tell the truth, the kawal said.*

*It's written in the ledger!*

*You must be reading Urdedef!<sup>12</sup>*

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<sup>11</sup> **How true?** Sneferu's mummified body crossed "the lake" to his White House in a sacred boat (*wia*) on the shoulders of many mourners at the end of his funeral procession. That "water" symbolized the waters of heaven crossed in resurrection; the White House was seen as a star floating on them.

<sup>12</sup> **Urdedef** ("Hordedef," *he is the falcon with two hands*) was a famous clown.