

A Right Royal Spectacle

By Charlotte Booth



It was such an exciting day and the house seemed filled with energy from the Sun God himself. Everyone was bustling about, unable to sit still. Mutnodjmet was no different, she was restless and her nervous energy put her in a really ratty mood – she was snapping at everyone and was fraught with anxiety. She spent ages holding her see-face to adjust her eye make-up which today was a luscious blue; the colour of the sky at the twelfth hour. This made my heart sour. It indicated I was going to be chosen over the other earrings, as my blue pattern was exactly the same shade.

I tried not to be smug as she picked me up from the pottery plate and inserted me into the holes in her ears. As was expected, although much to my dismay, she put a huge dark curly wig onto her head obscuring my view of the room. As she examined herself again in the see-face I peaked between the curls at the final effect. You could just see me sparkling beneath the curls, the light bouncing off my varnished surface. The effect was stunning.

We left the house in a group; maybe twenty of us, and it was nice to see so many of my own contemporaries sparkling on the ears of both men and women of the household. We all arrived in the centre of the city after a short walk, to be greeted by hundreds of people, all in their best clothes, waiting patiently in the sun. There was a party atmosphere and a great deal of laughter and conversation. I could also see lots of beer being guzzled greedily.

Mutnodjmet was almost vibrating with nerves, although the reason was not apparent to me. She pushed her way to the front of the crowd amongst a tirade of grumbling from those around her. I was almost embarrassed for her rudeness and mumbled apologies under my breath on her behalf. Of course no one heard me, and they continued to stare daggers at her. I was glad to be obscured by the wig.

She reached the roadside of the “King’s Road” and I could just see the soldiers on either side of the road in their bright white kilts and leather slashed overskirts. I felt a little nervous at the sight of their swords and I think Mutnodjmet did too as she started twisting me in her right ear; a habit of hers when she was anxious. It wasn’t long before a murmur rose in the crowd, and the talking and laughter was replaced by cheering.

Now I know why we were here and why she was so nervous. I could hear whispers of “The king is coming!” and “He’s here!”. Mutnodjmet strained to see down the road and I glimpsed a cloud of glittering gold in the distance. By the time the royal chariot was in plain sight Mutnodjmet was in a frenzy of excitement. She was cheering and waving and at one point I feared her wig would fall off. As the king trundled past waving majestically she cried “Akhenaten, Life prosperity and Health!”. He glanced over and nodded regally at her before moving away. She was beside herself with happiness and I also like to think he saw me too as I sparkled prettily in the sun.

These earrings are from the Petrie Museum at UCL, London, and were discovered in Amarna.