

## Cat and Mouse

By Charlotte Booth MA

Life with Nebamun was a happy one. He was a lively child, always getting into scrapes and being scolded by his nurse. I was party to many of his adventures as he would take me everywhere with him, holding me by the string that kept my jaw together and running thorough the gardens or the marshes by the river.



I remember one particular day very well, as I'm sure Nebamun does too. He was sitting quietly in the garden with me, moving my jaw up and down and talking on my behalf. He enjoyed these imaginary conversations, although he never spoke for me in the way I would have spoken for myself. His nurse sat by the lake nearby and was dozing in the lunchtime sun. Nebamun saw his chance. He scooped me up, mid-sentence and ran down to the riverbank. He was always drawn to the water, the mighty Nile, whereas myself, I am not so enchanted by it. I assume some of the nature of my form entered into me at creation as like most of the live cats also occupying our house, I detested getting wet.

He ran as fast as his little four-year-old legs would carry him, so he could be hidden in the tall papyrus reeds where his nurse wouldn't see him should she wake. He set me down by the water's edge next to him as he kneeled to gaze into the swirling river, looking for fish. "Ooooh Miw! Look there's a HUGE red fish. And another, and another!" he exclaimed pointing at the vague shadows beneath the water. He pulled the jaw string "Miow miow, why don't you catch one Neby, miow?" he said for me. "Excellent idea Miw!" he answered. I could sense the impending disaster but was not able to tell him to stop.

He edged closer and closer to the edge of the river until "SPLASH" he was in the water. He stood up laughing and started to wade in deeper, before swimming out into the depths. He seemed intent on catching the fish he had seen although his frenetic thrashing which he labelled swimming had scared all but the bravest off.

However this same splashing attracted a totally different kind of river dweller. I saw the elegant creature glide through the water but was unable to articulate my jaw to call out to Nebamun. Luckily he spotted the crocodile gliding slowly towards him and started swimming frantically towards the shore with the crocodile gaining on him finger by finger, hand by hand. When the crocodile was but a single cubit away from my young companion, I couldn't bear to look. I didn't want to see the inevitable conclusion.

But at the last minute, a hail of arrows flew at the crocodile, imbedding in his back, allowing Nebamun to swim to safety. I could see his father in the marshes along the edge of the river, with his two brothers, holding their now empty bows. A man-servant waded into the shallows to grab the terrified Nebamun and carry him to safety.

His father was furious with him for going into the Nile unattended, and I remember with sinking heart. the betrayal as Nebamun stated between sobs, "Miw made me do it!". However, his father didn't believe him and whilst hugging him, scolded him soundly for his misbehaviour.

\* Discovered in the tomb chapel of Nebamun, eighteenth dynasty. Thebes.

## Secret Life of Objects

As they moved away from the river the adults' voices and Nebamun's sobs became fainter and fainter until I could hear them no more. I had been forgotten by the river's edge. I only hoped that Nebamun, or someone, would return for me soon, as not only did I not like the water, but I was not too keen on spending the night in the outdoors without my mischievous companion.

\* Discovered in the tomb chapel of Nebamun, eighteenth dynasty. Thebes.