

POEM

Moses

"Now a certain man of the house of Levi married a Levite woman, who conceived and bore a son. Seeing that he was a goodly child, she hid him for three months. When she could hide him no longer, she took a papyrus basket, daubed it with bitumen and pitch, and putting the child in it, placed it among the reeds on the river bank" (Ex 2: 1-3).

"An angel of the Lord appeared to him in fire flaming out of a bush. As he looked on, he was surprised to see that the bush, though on fire, was not consumed...the Lord said, 'Come, now! I will send you to Pharaoh to lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt'" (Ex 3:2, 10).

I was adopted from the river bank.
There's something to the way reeds sway in wind,
the way they bow down low— that makes me thank
whoever gave me life. I will rescind
the urge to make my home the water's edge—
though often in this desert all I see
are lotuses where sand should be, and sedge
instead of the occasional palm tree.
I tire of the desolation, miss
the fishing boats, the pyramids, the trees.
But all I hear are crying babies, hiss
of camels. All around me: fear, unease.
How can I ever guide my people home,
when my spirit is trapped beneath the foam—

when my spirit is trapped beneath the foam,
beneath the Nile's cool and trickling waves?
I miss the fertile banks, the rich, dark loam.
Out in this wasteland, all I see are graves.
The river is my lineage. And yet
there's something else that keeps me walking on.
I walk because I'm paying off a debt
that never can be paid in full. Each dawn,
and every sunset, I become a reed,
bowing in reverence. I am always led
to thank the mystery of my source. I need
to reach for God, the manna, desert bread—
the burning bush, the basket that held me
when I, an infant, floated helplessly.

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