

Mehi waited for his lover on the river shoreline. Overhead honked a gaggle of geese. He followed their retreat in clouds set aflame by the sunset's fiery fall. Two weeks after Snebtisi's funeral, Ankhi often came late to their meetings though perhaps not this late; when she arrived, the ground would warm and Mehi's spirit would lighten.

Sails knocked on a mast in the harbor, and he twisted from his sitting position toward it. Disappointed it wasn't something more, he straightened.

Ankhi would again tie knots in his hair or drum her fingers on his lips. He'd stroke her arm and breathe her clean perfume. They'd talk of stars, families, poetry, or nothing.

Mehi stood, telling himself he needed to stretch. Into the darkening, he scanned as far as he could in all directions. Four giggling children ran from the water and chased each other home.

He sat again, crossing his legs. He touched his ear lobe that Ankhi might tug before kissing his cheek. He imagined her warm breath and his body aching for it. He would give himself again. He picked up the cornflower he'd brought for her. Idly, he plucked its blue petals, "She loves me, she loves me not," counting each as the moment Ankhi would arrive.

He stripped the flower bare.

Mehi dropped his back to the ground and pinned his hands under his head to gaze at the birdless day. He waited for his lover on the river shoreline.