

”Thus I was an Egyptian”

”I was enthusiastic about everything Egyptian,
enthusiastic about the ancient mummies,
and their picturesque eeriness.

I became Egyptian, and I was fanatically enthusiastic.

I was in love with Egypt – this great, great beautiful woman
– Egypt itself.

I was Egyptian, I became a little girl,
way up the Nile in a small, old temple;

I was adored and worshipped,
the goddess Necty was worshipped,
and the great, powerful gods further up the Nile,
the great powerful gods that I worshipped,
they would surely rule over Egypt and protect Egypt,
these powerful gods.

I was a little girl, and the priest who came to me said,

’Yes, yes, it’s a terrible thunderstorm.’

– ’We Egyptians need not fear, our gods will protect us,’

I said to the priest.

’Well, maybe what you say is true”, he said

- ”maybe ”,”no, absolutely!’ I said.

I did not doubt the gods, the mighty sphinxes.

“Follow me, says Death”

”Then it happens that my soul rises.

I lie beneath a great mountain in Greenland

– a big, big iceberg or a real mountain

– I don’t know, it’s just covered in ice.

But suddenly one morning, as I lie there

– I am but a spirit lying at the foot of the mountain

– the figure of Death appears; it doesn’t appear as such,
but I hear the voice of Death:

“What, are you lying here? I didn’t know that.

I couldn’t quite see you, but now I can see you.”

I didn’t know that I was visible.

I thought I was just the morning mist, but Death can see,
even if you are only morning mist – the icy cold fog.

“Follow me,” says Death, “now I shall take you with me.”

And a wind swirls around me – Death’s wind;

it’s like me – an ice fog,

though I can see that it must be Death,

the clear fog over there.

The bones seem to appear to me – Death’s boney face

– Death’s bone,

but I only see it from behind, I see only his neck.

’I’m flying.’ – ’Yes, we’re flying,’ says Death.

’Now we’re flying to a place where you’ll have better luck
than you’ve had until now,

because I don’t think the luck you’ve had is very good.’

Death flies, we fly to America, we fly to New York,

beneath the snow falls, I see people, and I see some,

oh, who can hardly keep their coats on, oh, so cold,

so cold; and I see some who button up their coats and

– oh, how cold it is. “Yes, you’re not going down here, ”

says Death. ’Here I could otherwise have descended.

”There are people here, we can look down on them.”

– ”No, you’re not going down here.

Last time you weren’t lucky to descend to New York.

We’ll fly further south.”

So, I flew further south with Death to a country called

Guatemala, and in Guatemala, there he let me descend

like a bird, and I was a bird – a big bird in Guatemala.”

The Bird of Paradise

”Perhaps I was thinking of a bird of paradise.

I began as a paradise bird,

and during my flight, I was turned into a seagull

and came to Greenland;

but that is incredibly many years ago.

It’s about 3,000 years ago.

I was such a little bird. I have been a bird many times.

I have been a little birdy in China,

and there my career began with a teacher.

I lived high up in a tower; but the bird was shot,

and I became the teacher’s pupil.

It was in China, up in a Chinese tower, and I went to school

– a universal school – a cosmic school.

I have also been a bird in Egypt.

There I became a bird and was shot.

It was something like a common ibis.

The ibis is black, but this one was almost ochre-yellow.

I was shot when I sat on the church tower in Namu,

shot by a cabinet maker.

And I have been a bird elsewhere.

Zoser himself – the Egyptian pharaoh – shot me.

I was a swallow then, and he shot the whole flock

– the whole family.

I had just become ready to fly and had to learn to fly

and practice flying on a roof nearby the nest;

but then he cocked his crossbow as it was called back

then, a kind of bow mounted on a rifle.”