

Morning Star



Sir H Rider Haggard



MORNING STAR

A STORY OF EGYPT

SIR H. RIDER HAGGARD

Simplified by Michael West

Illustrated by Agnes Molnar

2300 word vocabulary

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INTRODUCTION

THIS is a story about magic in ancient Egypt. It was written by Sir Rider Haggard, who also wrote *She* (Stage 4), and *Alan Quatermain* and *King Solomon's Mines* (Stage 5).

Pharaoh was the King of Egypt. His daughter was Neter Tua. "Neter Tua" means "Morning Star". Pharaoh was old and had no son and Neter Tua would have to rule Egypt when he died. She was wise and very beautiful, but Pharaoh and Neter Tua had a great enemy, Prince Abi, who wanted to rule Egypt after Pharaoh's death. Prince Abi was helped by a magician named Kaku. Morning Star loved a young soldier named Rames, but Pharaoh wanted her to marry a prince.

This story tells how in the end, after many dangers and excitements, Morning Star managed to win her battle against Prince Abi and the magician.

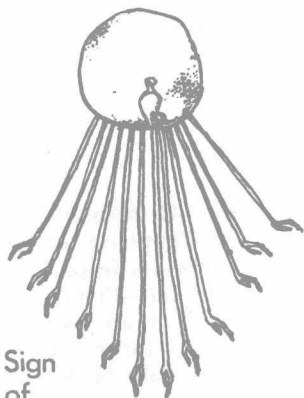
One of the strange ideas of the ancient Egyptians is the idea of a persons "Ka". You will read what a "Ka" is on page 16. It is a spirit just like the real person, so that the real person might go away and leave his "Ka" behind, and all men believed that this "Ka" was the person still with them. The "Ka" guards and protects the person and may take his place in time of danger.

LIST OF PEOPLE

- Abi*—Governor of Memphis, descendant of a King of Egypt on his father's side, his mother was a Nubian.
- Ahura*—wife of Pharaoh, mother of Neter Tua.
- Amathel*—Prince of Kesh, son of the King of Kesh, a Nubian, lived at Napata.
- Amen*—father of the gods.
- Asti*—wife of Mermes, mother of Rames; she has magic powers; nurse of Neter Tua.
- Hathor*—Goddess of Love.
- Hyksos*—people who at one time ruled Egypt; Prince Abi was descended from the Hyksos.
- Isis*—a goddess.
- Janees*.
- Ka*—the double or spirit image of a person.
- Kaku*—astrologer of Prince Abi, later vizier of Abi, husband of Merytra.
- Kepher*—a beggar; he is a spirit and has no shadow, and declares the will of Amen.
- Mena*—a former King of Egypt.
- Mermes*—descended from former Kings of Egypt, husband of Asti, father of Rames, captain of the King's guard.
- Merytra*—a female slave of Abi, told Abi's plot to Pharaoh, becomes slave of Pharaoh, and later wife of Kaku.
- Neferte*—a false name which Asti gives to Neter Tua.
- Neter Tua* or *Morning Star*—daughter of Pharaoh and Ahura.
- Osiris*—god of the dead.
- Pharoah*—King of Egypt, husband of Ahura, father of Morning Star.
- Rames*—son of Mermes and Asti; descended from former Kings of Egypt; born on the same day as Neter Tua and brought up with her.
- Sekhet*—the lion goddess.



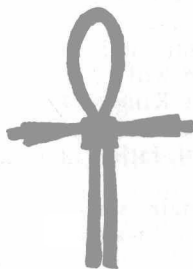
Throne



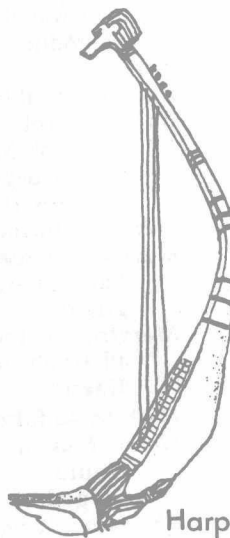
Sign
of
Amen



Bear



Sign of Life



Harp



Scarab



Crocodile

CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
1 WHAT THE STARS TOLD PRINCE ABI	1
2 A PLOT AGAINST PHARAOH	5
3 PRINCE ABI MEETS PHARAOH	8
4 THE PROMISE OF THE GOD	12
5 THE BIRTH OF NETER TUA	15
6 THE BIRTH OF RAMES	17
7 THE PRINCESS AND THE CROCODILE	19
8 THE CALLING OF AMEN	25
9 THE FEAST FOR PRINCE AMATHEL	30
10 HOW RAMES FOUGHT PRINCE AMATHEL	34
11 RAMES AND NETER TUA	40
12 RAMES DEPARTS	46
13 NETER TUA COMES TO MEMPHIS	50
14 DANGER!	54
15 THE WAX FIGURE	59
16 PRINCE ABI ASKS FOR NETER TUA	64
17 THE DEATH OF PHARAOH	69
18 THE BATTLE IN THE TEMPLE	72
19 THE COMING OF THE KA	75
20 THE DREAM OF ABI	80
21 THE MARRIAGE OF ABI	85
22 ABI LEARNS THE TRUTH	92
23 THE BOAT OF AMEN	96
24 THE BEGGAR	99
25 THE CITY OF TAT	103
26 NETER TUA AND THE KING OF TAT	106
27 THE BEGGAR AND THE KING	113
28 NETER TUA FINDS RAMES	118
29 NETER TUA SINGS	123
30 ASTI GIVES ORDERS TO THE KA	126
31 THE TWO DREAMS	128
32 AT THE GATE OF THE SOUTH	131
33 THE JUDGMENT OF THE GODS	134
QUESTIONS	137
PRONUNCIATION GUIDE	154

One

WHAT THE STARS TOLD PRINCE ABI

It was evening in Egypt thousands of years ago. Prince Abi, Governor of Memphis, arrived in his ship outside the walls of the great city of Thebes. He was a large, dark man. His mother was one of the Hyksos people, and one of his family had once been a Pharaoh. The Hyksos were a people who had come from outside Egypt and had become rulers of the country.

Prince Abi sat looking at the setting sun. On each side of him stood slave-women fanning him. He was angry. One of the slaves touched his head with the feathers of her fan. Prince Abi stood up and struck her so that the poor woman fell to the ground.

"Careless cat!" he cried. "Do that again and you shall be beaten."

"Pardon, great Lord!" she said, beginning to weep. "It was an accident. The wind caught my fan."

"Be more careful, Merytra," said Prince Abi to the slave-woman. "Stop weeping. Go and send Kaku, the astrologer,¹ here. Go, both of you."

"He called me a cat," said Merytra angrily to her companion as they went.

¹ Astrologer=one who studies the stars so as to learn the future.

"And he once said that I was ugly," said the other. "I wish a holy crocodile would eat him."

"Hush!" said Merytra. "There is that astrologer, and he looks angry."

Hand in hand they went before the learned man and bowed down.

"Master of the stars," said Merytra, "we have a message for you.—No, don't look at my cheek. Those marks are the marks of the hand of Prince Abi."

"You had better be careful what you are saying. Why did he hit you?"

She told him.

"Oh," he said. "It was very bad to hit such a pretty girl."

"Thank you, O master of learning," said Merytra. "Will you tell our fortunes for nothing?"

"Yes, yes.—I understand that he is angry."

"He is, Kaku. Listen!"

As Merytra spoke an angry roar reached them from above: "Where is the cursed astrologer?"

"There!" said Merytra. "I told you that he was angry. Do not trouble about the rest of the papers. Go at once."

"The question is," said Kaku, as he ran towards the place leading to the upper part of the ship, "the question is how Prince Abi will like what is written in the papers."

"Good luck to you," said the girl. "You will need it."

A minute later the astrologer was bowing down before Abi in the upper part of the ship. He bowed so low that his cap fell off his head.

"Why were you so long in coming?" said Abi.

"Because your slaves could not find me, Royal Son of the Sun. I was working in my room."

"But I thought I heard you laughing with them there. Why do you call me 'Royal Son of the Sun'? That is Pharaoh's name. What have the stars shown you? I am now at the turning point of my fortunes, not knowing whether I am to be Pharaoh of Upper and Lower Egypt, or only the Prince of a mere city."

"If your majesty¹ will tell his servant exactly what he wishes to know, perhaps I may be able to answer the question."

"Majesty? I wish to know for what reason you call me 'majesty'. I am only Prince of Memphis. Did the stars tell you something? Have you asked them about the future?"

"Certainly, certainly!" said Kaku. "I studied the stars all last night, and have been working out the results, but they are not finished. Question me, and I will answer."

"Look!" said Abi. "The sun is setting behind the tombs of the kings.² That is a sign of bad fortune for me. I wished to reach this city in the morning when the stars were more favourable, but the wind held me back. Tell me, shall I be buried in the Valley of the Kings?"

"I think so, Prince Abi. The stars seem to say that you will."

"You are keeping something back from me," said Abi, looking at Kaku's face. "Shall I be buried in the tomb of a Pharaoh?"

"I cannot say," said the astrologer. "There is a force which is working against you. Another star crosses your path."

¹ This is the way in which one speaks to a king.

² Tombs=graves. The graves of the kings of Egypt are in a valley near Luxor.

“What star?” said Abi.

“The star of Amen, father of the gods.”

“Amen!” said Abi. “How can a man fight against a god?”

“Against two gods,” said the astrologer. “For with the star of Amen is the star of Hathor, Queen of Love. Look!”

Kaku pointed to the east, where the sky was still red with the sunset.

As they watched the light faded, and there in the sky was a bright and beautiful star, and very close to it another star. For a few minutes only they were seen. Then they vanished.

“The star of Amen, and with it the star of Hathor,” said the astrologer.

“Well,” said Abi, “they are far from my star, and they have soon gone.”

“Yes, Prince; but in twenty years’ time they will be near your star and their power will be greater. They will conquer you there, above the Valley of the Kings. After twenty years! But during those twenty years you will shine alone.”

Abi seized the paper and threw it down.

“Fool!” said he. “Do you think that you will frighten me with this nonsense about stars? Here is my star.”

He drew out the sword at his side, and shook it over the head of Kaku:

“This is the star of Abi.”

“I have told you the truth as I see it,” said Kaku. “If you wish me to tell pleasant things, that is easy. But it seems to me that your future is not so evil. You will have twenty years of power. If after that trouble comes, what does it matter?”

"That is true," said Abi. "I am in a bad temper to-day. I will give you a gold cup as the price of your work. You must always tell me the truth."

Kaku bowed. He was pleased that things had gone so well. He picked up his papers and was just going to leave when some men were seen riding along the bank of the Nile towards the ship.

"That is the captain of my guard," said Abi. "He is bringing me the answer from Pharaoh. Don't go, Kaku. Stay and hear it and give me your advice."

Two

A PLOT¹ AGAINST PHARAOH

Soon the captain of the guard appeared before Prince Abi.

"What does Pharaoh say?" asked the Prince.

"He says that he will receive you, although he did not send for you. It is not necessary for you to come, as he has heard long ago of your victory over the people of the desert, and he does not want the heads of their officers which you were bringing to him."

"Pharaoh was always a woman in such matter," said Abi. "He should be thankful that he has soldiers who know how to make war. I will go to him tomorrow."

"My lord," said the captain, "that is not all the message. Pharaoh says that he has heard that you have with you a guard of three hundred soldiers: he will not allow

¹ Plot=secret plan, e.g. a plan to kill a person.

these men inside the gates. He says that you should come before him attended by five persons only."

"Oh," said Abi. "Does Pharaoh fear that I shall capture him and the armies and the great city with only three hundred men?"

"No, Prince," said the captain. "I think he fears that you may kill him and declare yourself Pharaoh, for you come next. Pharaoh has no children."

"Ah!" said Abi. He walked forward to the front of the ship. Night had fallen, and the moon was pouring her silver light over the desert, the mountains and the city. From the gardens and streets came the sound of music, and on the walls the watchmen called the hour. It was a wonderful scene, and the heart of Abi beat as he looked upon it. What wealth, what power lay there. There stood the house of Pharaoh, and Pharaoh had no child, and he was not strong. But it would be difficult, for Abi knew that Pharaoh was loved by the priests and people; but he, Abi, was feared and hated. Why should he wait? Why should he not try his fortune? He had three hundred soldiers with him, brave men. It was a feast day. The gates were not well guarded. He might break through them in the night and make his way to the palace, kill Pharaoh, and in the morning be seated on Pharaoh's throne. He turned and walked back to where his men were standing, and spoke to the officer.

"I am thinking of striking a blow," said Abi. "Would you and the soldiers follow me into the city and win a crown? If we win, you shall be chief of my army; and you, Kaku, shall be my chief minister. After Pharaoh, you will be the two greatest men in the land."

They looked at him astonished.

"It would be dangerous, Prince," said the captain. "But for such a prize I would dare it. As for the soldiers, I cannot speak. They must be told. Perhaps one or two may be afraid and may tell those in the city."

"Prince," said Kaku, "put such thoughts away from you. If you strike now you will have only a crown of shame and a nameless grave. The gods themselves would fight against us."

"So be it," answered Abi. "I accept your judgment. The thing is too dangerous. Let Pharaoh live on, while I make ready."

The astrologer sighed with relief, and the captain did not seem disappointed.

"Sleep well, Prince. There are times when wisdom is better than courage. Pharaoh will receive you two hours after sun-rise. May we go?"

"You must swear," said Abi, "that you will never speak a word of this."

They swore it.

"Captain," said Abi, "you have served me well. Your pay is doubled. If ever I rule there, you may be the chief of my army.—Kaku, take my golden cup. Is there anything else of mine that you desire?"

"Yes," said Kaku. "I would like your slave Merytra."

"Take her."

When they went to tell Merytra the news, they could not find her. Merytra had disappeared.

Three

PRINCE ABI MEETS PHARAOH

It was morning at Thebes. The great city was bright in the morning sun. In a large and beautiful boat stood Abi, the Prince, richly dressed, and with him Kaku the astrologer, the captain of his guard and three other officers. In a second boat there were soldiers who were bringing two chiefs and other persons taken in the war in the desert. These two boats moved forward up the Nile through a double line of ships of war, all of them crowded with soldiers.

Abi looked at these ships and said to himself, "Kaku was wise in telling me not to attempt an attack. It is clear that Pharaoh is well prepared against any such surprise." When he reached the bank he saw companies of foot soldiers and horsemen, and on the walls above there were hundreds of other men. At the steps he was met by captains and priests and led through the open gates up the street. Guards rolled back the brass gates of the palace and he walked between lines of beautiful trees until he came into the great hall.

After the brightness outside the hall seemed dark. A ray of light from the window in the roof fell upon Pharaoh and his Queen, Ahura. About him stood his advisers and captains, and beyond them there were servants. Between the pillars of the hall there stood the famous Nubian Guard of two hundred men, each one chosen for his faithfulness and courage.

Pharaoh was a small, thin man about forty years old. He had a kind but anxious face. His head seemed to sink beneath the weight of the crown. His hands were

thin, and his fingers played with the edge of his golden dress.

Abi was strong and he looked at this weak man. Yet, though Pharaoh was so weak, there was in him the proud spirit of a line of kings, before which his rough nature bowed. Abi came forward to the steps and knelt there.

"Welcome, Prince Abi," said Pharaoh. "We quarrelled long ago, but time heals all wounds."

"I greet you," said Abi in his deep voice. "Health and strength be with you."

"Thank you," said Pharaoh kindly. "I need health and strength. Tell me now, why have you left your government in Memphis without asking permission? Why have you come to visit me here?"

"Don't be angry with me," said Abi. "Sometime ago I attacked the people of the desert because they were threatening your kingdom. I took them by surprise and killed thousands of them. I captured their kings, and they are waiting outside so that you may kill them yourself. I have brought with me the heads of hundreds of captains. I have made the land to the north of your kingdom safe for many years."

"I don't wish to see those heads," said Pharaoh. "I hate the sight of death. What payment do you ask for this service, my brother?"

"Your majesty, I see here the Queen and the servants of your house, but I do not see the royal children. May they be brought here so that I may see their beauty and tell my children about them?"

At these words a look of anger came over the face of the beautiful Queen Ahura.

“Prince Abi,” said Pharaoh, “you know well that I have no children.”

“I had heard people say that,” answered the Prince, “but I did not believe it. I asked so as to be sure of it before I made my request. May I speak here in public?”

“Speak on,” said Pharaoh.

“Your majesty has told me,” said Abi, “that he has no children. If you had any children, even one daughter, I would say nothing. But, O Pharaoh, the gods have decided that you should shine alone like the full moon at night, not sharing your light with a single star.”

Ahura now spoke in a quick, angry voice: “How do you know that, Prince Abi? Pharaoh lives and I live, and a child may yet be born who will rule over Egypt.”

“That may be so,” said Abi, “indeed I pray that it will be so. If one girl is born to you and Pharaoh, I take back my words, and give you the title which you falsely bear, ‘Queen Mother’.”

Ahura would have answered, for she was very angry, but Pharaoh put his hand upon her knee, and said, “Continue, Prince Abi! You have told me what I know already,—that I am childless. Now tell us what we do not know—what you desire.”

“O Pharaoh,” said Abi, “you are growing weak, and your soul is nearer to heaven than to earth. In the north and south many dangers threaten Egypt. If you die suddenly, leaving no one to follow you, the great lords of the land will struggle for your place. I am a soldier. I am strong and have many children. The army trusts me and the people love me. I ask this: take me to rule with you; and say that I and my sons are to follow after you. If you do this you may end your days in peace.”

When the meaning of these bold words was understood