

Place of Death?
Dead?

𐤀𐤓𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕

Sealed
Tomb



𐤓𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕
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Empty
Tombs

𐤓𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕
𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕

Many Tombs

𐤓𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕
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Fort of
Snakes?

𐤀𐤓𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕
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To
Khalla
Wadi

𐤀𐤓𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕
𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕

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“We came down from the north, the hills to our right hand, raiding the lands of the mud-dwellers.

We took many captives and much treasure, which we sent back to our people with two hands of warriors as guards and to sing of our success. Most of our chief warriors were for riding on toward the sunrise, but then we discovered the fort in a gorge in the hills, not far from where we had camped. Everyone knew that the mud-dwellers hoard their wealth in these forts, so all were agreed that we should attack it instead of moving onward.

“There could not be many within, we knew, as the mud-dwellers did not ride out when we surrounded them. The ones who always stay close to water are great cowards, who hide behind walls and use dirty magic in battle because their arms are weak. We made camp and looked for a weak place to breach their walls. After two days, our scouts found that beyond the fort in the gorge were places where the mud-dwellers buried their dead. So that was what this fort guarded! The mud-dwellers are crazy people, for they pay more heed to their dead than to the living. They build fine dwelling places and squander precious things upon dried and useless corpses. Such a waste of wealth and treasure!

“So we abandoned the useless waiting. We left some warriors to keep the mud-dwellers in their fort, and the rest of us rode with eagerness into the ravine to plunder the tombs of their dead. But most were already broken, and what treasures within already taken. Mud-dwellers steal from the sacred burial places of their own. They have no shame! But some were still sealed, too fearsome for the thieves among the mud-dwellers. We showed them the courage of the desert peoples, and opened the places they feared, and we shared out much silver and gold. And we burned the withered corpses we found, for that is a great insult and brings tears to the eyes of the mud-dwellers. We feared no magic, for their meager tricks have no effect on those of stout heart. We also knew our courage and the humiliation of the mud-dwellers pleased the Lord of Warriors.

“Down one ravine, my cousin Jhunna discovered a long, narrow path that led back out of the ravine and into the Khalla Wadi that crosses the hills. We knew this meant luck was with us, for now we had a way to take our plunder and return to the clean sands of our homeland to the west.

“We were preparing to leave when, at the end of another ravine, I found a rich-looking tomb, still sealed. Its entrance was untouched, though why I do not know. It is obvious, if one just knows where to look. The mud-dwellers are stupid, so maybe their robbers are too. I shouted, and others came to join me. This was certainly a great tomb, for it had the full picture-writing of the mud-chiefs all around it, with two pillars of stone. But then the dung-gods of the land interfered.

"Before we could break open the stone door, there was a great shout, and clu-clu-cluta of the mud-dwellers' soldiers rode down upon us. I managed to fight so well, I escaped, as did Jhunna beside me. A few hands of our brothers likewise battled free. We used the path Jhunna had discovered and rode through the Khalla Wadi back to our clean lands. Even then, some of our brothers died as we went, some by falls, and others by snake or scorpion. It was the curse of the dung-gods, of that I am certain.

"But now we are home. Although we mourn the many brave warriors lost, we who survived are rich indeed. The fortunes we brought will make our families wealthy and our clan famous. I will certainly become chief. And Jhunna will have almost as many horses, camels, carpets, wives, goats, and servants as do I!

"My sons will certainly return to the place of the mud-dwellers one day to avenge the deaths of my brothers and to take wealth from useless places such as their houses and graves. And they shall take what they will from the great tomb, and they shall bring its wealth back to the desert, and they shall live as kings."

Translator's Notes

1. Lands of the mud-dwellers refer to the settled cities and towns of Khemit.
2. Two hands of warriors means 10 mounted warriors. The plunder taken must have been considerable to send off that many. Incidentally, the Blemmyish, their kindred clans, as well as most of the Yarban nomads now intermingled in the desert lands surrounding Khemit, use a quinary rather than a decimal system for counting. Numerals are used for 1 through 4, a glyph for 5, 25, 125, etc.
3. Fort is probably erroneous, given the location of the structure near the entrance to what appears to be a necropolis. Rather, it is likely the author of this tale discovered a fortified temple.
4. The ones who always stay close to water is an expression for the Khemitites in general.
5. Magic is, of course, anything magical and the use of spells. Most of the desert clans consider the use of magic as cowardly, as they have few if any spellcasters themselves.
6. Lord of Warriors is the chief deity of the Blemmyish pantheon. He is said to have as many names as there are different sorts of weapons, but no single one of them may be uttered by a member of the clan on pain of death!
7. Khalla Wadi is the pass through the Harh-Ahu-Ra Hills to the oasis of Dakla-Amun.
8. Picture writing means not only hieroglyphs but those contained in cartouches, for otherwise the reference to "chiefs" makes no sense.
9. Dung-gods could be an epithet of a derogatory sort for the Pharaonic pantheon in general, but this being related after the fact, it is possible that it actually refers to unclean or evil deities worshipped by the attacking force. Deital standards are sometimes carried by troops serving a temple.
10. Clu-clu-cluta literally means the number 525. However, it is also used in Blemmyish to refer generally to a large number. As a result, this figure is likely an exaggeration. It seems unlikely that a band of nomads the size of the one here could have escaped from a force of 525 Khemitian soldiers.
11. A few hands can mean from fewer than 15 to no more than 24 total escapees. If 25 had been able to flee, he would have used cluta after hands.
12. Clean lands refers to the deserts over which the Blemmyish rove.
13. My sons is probably a general term, as is "brothers" as used in the text. He likely means those of kindred spirit.