

Tales of the Magicians

By Unknown

One day, when King Khufu reigned over all the land, he said to his chancellor, who stood before him, "Go call me my sons and my councillors, that I may ask of them a thing." And his sons and his councillors came and stood before him, and he said to them, "Know ye a man who can tell me tales of the deeds of the magicians?"

Then the royal son Khafra stood forth and said, "I will tell thy Majesty a tale of the days of thy forefather Nebka, the blessed; of what came to pass when he went into the temple of Ptah of Ankhtai."

KHAFRA'S TALE

"His Majesty was walking unto the temple of Ptah, and went unto the house of the chief reciter Uba-aner, with his train. Now when the wife of Uba-aner saw a page, among those who stood behind the King, her heart longed after him; and she sent her servant unto him, with a present of a box full of garments.

"And he came then with the servant. Now there was a lodge in the garden of Uba-aner; and one day the page said to the wife of Uba-aner, 'In the garden of Uba-aner there is now a lodge; behold, let us therein take our pleasure.' So the wife of Uba-aner sent to the steward who had charge over the garden, saying, 'Let the lodge which is in the garden be made ready.' And she remained there, and rested and drank with the page until the sun went down.

"And when the even was now come the page went forth to bathe. And the steward said, 'I must go and tell Uba-aner of this matter.' Now when this day was past, and another day came, then went the steward to Uba-aner, and told him of all these things.

"Then said Uba-aner, 'Bring me my casket of ebony and electrum.' And they brought it; and he fashioned a crocodile of wax, seven fingers long; and he enchanted it, and said, 'When the page comes and bathes in my lake, seize on him.' And he gave it to the steward, and said to him, 'When the page shall go down into the lake to bathe, as he is daily wont to do, then throw in this crocodile behind him.' And the steward went forth bearing the crocodile.

"And the wife of Uba-aner sent to the steward who had charge over the garden, saying, 'Let the lodge which is in the garden be made ready, for I come to tarry there.'

"And the lodge was prepared with all good things; and she came and made merry therein with the page. And when the even was now come, the page went forth to bathe as he was wont to do. And the steward cast in the wax crocodile after him into the water; and, behold lit became a great crocodile seven cubits in length, and it seized on the page.

"And Uba-aner abode yet seven days with the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Nebka, the blessed, while the page was stifled in the crocodile. And after the seven days were passed, the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Nebka, the blessed, went forth, and Uba-aner went before him.

"And Uba-aner said unto his Majesty, 'Will your Majesty come and see this wonder that has come to pass in your days unto a page?' And the King went with Uba-aner. And Uba-aner called unto the crocodile and said, 'Bring forth the page.' And the crocodile came forth from the lake with the page. Uba-aner said unto the King, 'Behold, whatever I command this crocodile he will do it.' And his Majesty said, 'I pray you send back this crocodile.' And Uba-aner stooped and

took up the crocodile, and it became in his hand a crocodile of wax. And then Uba-aner told the King that which had passed in his house with the page and his wife. And his Majesty said unto the crocodile, 'Take to thee thy prey.' And the crocodile plunged into the lake with his prey, and no man knew whither he went.

"And his Majesty the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Nebka, the blessed, commanded, and they brought forth the wife of Uba-aner to the north side of the harem, and burned her with fire, and cast her ashes in the river.

"This is a wonder that came to pass in the days of thy forefather the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Nebka, of the acts of the chief reciter Uba-aner."

His Majesty the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Khufu, then said, "Let there be presented to the King Nebka, the blessed, 1,000 loaves, 100 draughts of beer, an ox, two jars of incense; and let there be presented a loaf, a jar of beer, a jar of incense and a piece of meat to the chief reciter Uba-aner; for I have seen the token of his learning." And they did all things as his Majesty commanded.

BAU-F-RA'S TALE

The royal son Bau-f-ra then stood forth and spake. He said, "I will tell thy Majesty of a wonder which came to pass in the days of thy father Seneferu, the blessed, of the deeds of the chief reciter Zazamankh. One day King Seneferu, being weary, went throughout his palace seeking for a pleasure to lighten his heart, but he found none. And he said, 'Haste, and bring before me the chief reciter and scribe of the rolls Zazamankh;' and they straightway brought him, And the King said, 'I have sought in my palace for some delight, but I have found none.' Then said Zazamankh to him, 'Let thy Majesty go upon the lake of the palace, and let there be made ready a boat, with all the fair maidens of the harem of thy palace; and the heart of thy Majesty shall be refreshed with the sight, in seeing their rowing up and down the water, and seeing the goodly pools of the birds upon the lake, and beholding its sweet fields and grassy shores; thus will thy heart be lightened. And I also will go with thee. Bring me twenty oars of ebony inlaid with gold, with blades of light wood inlaid with electrum; and bring me twenty maidens, fair in their limbs, their bosoms, and their hair, all virgins; and bring me twenty nets, and give these nets unto the maidens for their garments.' And they did according to all the commands of his Majesty.

"And they rowed down the stream and up the stream, and the heart of his Majesty was glad with the sight of their rowing. But one of them at the steering struck her hair, and her jewel of new malachite fell into the water. And she ceased her song, and rowed not; and her companions ceased, and rowed not. And his Majesty said, 'Row you not further?' And they replied, 'Our little steerer here stays and rows not.' His Majesty then said to her, 'Wherefore rowest thou not?' She replied, 'It is for my jewel of new malachite which is fallen in the water.' And he said to her, 'Row on, for behold I will replace it.' And she answered, 'But I want my own piece back in its setting.' And his Majesty said, 'Haste, bring me the chief reciter Zazamankh,' and they brought him. And his Majesty said, 'Zazamankh, my brother, I have done as thou sayedst, and the heart of his Majesty is refreshed with the sight of their rowing. But now a jewel of new malachite of one of the little ones is fallen in the water, and she ceases and rows not, and she has spoiled the rowing of her side. And I said to her, "Wherefore rowest thou not?" and she answered to me, "It is for my jewel of new malachite which is fallen in the water." I replied to her, "Row on, for behold I will replace it;" and she answered to me, "But I want my own piece again back in its setting." ' Then the chief reciter Zazamankh spake his magic speech. And he placed one part of

the waters of the lake upon the other, and discovered the jewel lying upon a shard; and he took it up and gave it unto its mistress. And the water, which was twelve cubits deep in the middle, reached now to twenty-four cubits after he turned it. And he spake, and used his magic speech; and he brought again the water of the lake to its place. And his Majesty spent a joyful day with the whole of the royal house. Then rewarded he the chief reciter Zazamankh with all good things. Behold, this is a wonder that came to pass in the days of thy father, the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Seneferu, of the deeds of the chief reciter, the scribe of the rolls, Zazamankh."

Then said the majesty of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Khufu, the blessed, "Let there be presented an offering of 1,000 cakes, 100 draughts of beer, an ox, and two jars of incense to the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Seneferu, the blessed; and let there be given a loaf, a jar of beer, and a jar of incense to the chief reciter, the scribe of the rolls, Zazamankh; for I have seen the token of his learning." And they did all things as his Majesty commanded.

HORDEDEF'S TALE

The royal son Hordedef then stood forth and spake. He said: "Hitherto hast thou only heard tokens of those who have gone before, and of which no man knoweth their truth. But I will show thy Majesty a man of thine own days." And his Majesty said, "Who is he, Hordedef?" And the royal son Hordedef answered, "It is a certain man named Dedi, who dwells at Dedsneferu. He is a man of 110 years old; and he eats 500 loaves of bread and a side of beef, and drinks 100 draughts of beer, unto this day. He knows how to restore the head that is smitten off; he knows how to cause the lion to follow him trailing his halter on the ground; he knows the designs of the dwelling of Tahuti. The majesty of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt' Khufu, the blessed, has long sought for the designs of the dwelling of Tahuti, that he may make the like of them in his pyramid."

And his Majesty said, "Thou, thyself, Hordedef, my son, bring him to me." Then were the ships made ready for the King's son Hordedef, and he went up the stream to Dedsneferu. And when the ships had moored at the hayen, he landed, and sat him in a litter of ebony, the poles of which were of cedar wood overlaid with gold. Now when he drew near to Dedi, they set down the litter. And he arose to greet Dedi, and found him lying on a palmstick couch at the door of his house; one servant held his head' and rubbed him, and another rubbed his feet.

And the King's son Hordedef said, "Thy state is that of one who lives to good old age; for old age is the end of our voyage, the time of embalming, the time of burial. Lie, then, in the sun, free of infirmities, without the babble of dotage: this is the salutation to worthy age. I come from far to call thee, with a message from my father Khufu, the blessed, for thou shalt eat of the best which the King gives, and of the food which those have who follow after him; that he may bring thee in good estate to thy fathers who are in the tomb."

And Dedi replied to him: "Peace to thee! Peace to thee! Hordedef, son of the King, beloved of his father. May thy father Khufu, the blessed, praise thee, may he advance thee among the elders, may thy *ka* prevail against the enemy, may thy soul know the right road to the gate of him who clothes the afflicted; this is the salutation to the King's son." Then the King's son, Hordedef, stretched forth his hands to him, and raised him up, and went with him to the haven, giving unto him his arm. Then said Dedi, "Let there be given me a boat, to bring me my youths and my books." And they made ready for him two boats with their rowers. And Dedi went down the river in the barge in which was the King's son, Hordedef, And when he had reached the palace, the King's son, Hordedef, entered in to give account unto his Majesty the King of Upper and

Lower Egypt, Khufu, the blessed. Then said the King's son Hordedef, "O King, life, wealth, and health! My lord, I have brought Dedi." His Majesty replied, "Bring him to me speedily." And his Majesty went into the hail of columns of Pharaoh (life, wealth, and health), and Dedi was led before him. And his Majesty said, "Wherefore is it, Dedi, that I have not yet seen thee?" And Dedi answered: "He who is called it is that comes; the King (life, wealth, and health) calls me, and behold I come." And his Majesty said, "Is it true, that which men say, that thou canst restore the head which is smitten off?" And Dedi replied, "Truly, I know that, O King (life, wealth, and health), my lord." And his Majesty said, "Let one bring me a prisoner who is in prison, that his punishment may be fulfilled." And Dedi said: "Let it not be a man, O King, my lord; behold we do not even thus to our cattle." And a duck was brought unto him, and its head was cut off. And the duck was laid on the west side of the hall, and its head on the east side of the hall. And Dedi spake his magic speech. And the duck fluttered along the ground, and its head came likewise; and when it had come part to part the duck stood and quacked. And they brought likewise a goose before him, and he did even so unto it. His Majesty caused an ox to be brought, and its head cast on the ground. And Dedi spake his magic speech. And the ox stood upright behind him, and followed him with his halter trailing on the ground.

And King Khufu said, "And is it true what is said, that thou knowest the number of the designs of the dwelling of Tahuti?" And Dedi replied, "Pardon me, I know not their number, O King (life, wealth, and health), but I know where they are." And his Majesty said, "Where is that?" And Dedi replied:

"There is a chest of whetstone in a chamber named the plan-room, in Heliopolis; they are in this chest." And Dedi said further unto him, "O King (life, wealth, and health), my lord, it is not I that is to bring them to thee." And his Majesty said, "Who, then, is it that shall bring them to me?" And Dedi answered to him, "It is the eldest of the three children who are in the body of Rud-didet who shall bring them to thee." And his Majesty said: "Would that it may be as thou sayest! And who is this Rud-didet?" And Dedi replied: "She is the wife of a priest of Ra, lord of Sakhebu. And she has conceived these three sons by Ra, lord of Sakhebu, and the god has promised her that they shall fulfil this noble office (of reigning) over all this land, and that the eldest of them shall be high-priest in Heliopolis." And his Majesty's heart became troubled for this; but Dedi spake unto him: "What is this that thou thinkest, O King (life, wealth, health), my lord? Is it because of these three children? I tell thee thy son shall reign, and thy son's son, and then one of them." His Majesty said, "And when shall Rud-didet bear these?" And he replied, "She shall bear them on the twenty-fifth of the month Tybi." And his Majesty said, "When the banks of the canal of Letopolis are cut, I will walk there that I may see the temple of Ra, lord of Sakhebu." And Dedi replied, "Then I will cause that there be four cubits of water by the banks of the canal of Letopolis." When his Majesty returned to his palace, his Majesty said: "Let them place Dedi in the house of the royal son Hordedef, that he may dwell with him, and let them give him a daily portion of 1,000 loaves, 100 draughts of beer, an ox, and 100 bunches of onions." And they did everything as his Majesty commanded.

And one day it came to pass that Rud-didet felt the pains of birth. And the majesty of Ra, Lord of Sakhebu, said unto Isis, to Nebhat, to Meskhent, to Hakt, and to Khnumu: "Go ye, and deliver Rud-didet of these three children that she shall bear, who are to fulfil this noble office over all this land; that they may build up your temples, furnish your altars with offerings, supply your tables of libation, and increase your endowments." Then went these deities; their fashion they made as that of dancing-girls, and Khnumu was with them as a porter. They drew near unto the house of Ra-user, and found him standing, with his girdle fallen. And they played before him

with their instruments of music. But he said unto them, "My ladies, behold, here is a woman who feels the pains of birth." They said to him, "Let us see her, for we know how to help her." And he replied, "Come, then." And they entered in straightway to Rud-didet, and they closed the door on her and on themselves. Then Isis stood before her, and Nebhat stood behind her, and Hakt helped her. And Isis said, "O child, by thy name of User-ref, do not do violence." And the child came upon her hands, as a child of a cubit; its bones were strong, the beauty of its limbs was like gold, and its hair was like true lapis-lazuli. They washed him, and prepared him, and placed him on a carpet on the brickwork. Then Meskhent approached him and said, "This is a king who shall reign over all the land." And Khnumu gave strength to his limbs. Then Isis stood before her, and Nebhat stood behind her, and Hakt helped her. And Isis said, "O child, by thy name of Sah-ra, stay not in her." Then the child came upon her hands, a child of a cubit; its bones were strong, the beauty of its limbs was like gold, and its hair was like true lapis-lazuli. They washed him, and prepared him, and laid him on a carpet on the brickwork. Then Meskhent approached him and said, "This is a king who shall reign over all the land." And Khnumu gave strength to his limbs. Then Isis stood before her, and Nebhat stood behind her, and Hakt helped her. And Isis said, "O child, by thy name of Kaku, remain not in darkness in her." And the child came upon her hands, a child of a cubit; its bones were strong, the beauty of its limbs was like gold, and its hair was like true lapis-lazuli. And Meskhent approached him and said, "This is a king who shall reign over all the land." And Khnumu gave strength to his limbs. And they washed him, and prepared him, and laid him on a carpet on the brickwork.

And the deities went out, having delivered Rud-didet of the three children. And they said, "Rejoice! O Ra-user, for behold three children are born unto thee." And he said unto them, "My ladies, and what shall I give unto ye? Behold, give this bushel of barley here unto your porter, that ye may take it as your reward to the brew-house." And Khnumu loaded himself with the bushel of barley. And they went away toward the place from which they came. And Isis spake unto these goddesses, and said, "Wherefore have we come without doing a marvel for these children, that we may tell it to their father who has sent us?" Then made they the divine diadems of the King (life, wealth, and health), and laid them in the bushel of barley. And they caused the clouds to come with wind and rain; and they turned back again unto the house. And they said, "Let us put this barley in a closed chamber, sealed up, until we return northward, dancing." And they placed the barley in a close chamber.

And Rud-didet purified herself, with a purification of fourteen days. And she said to her handmaid, "Is the house made ready?" And she replied, "All things are made ready, but the brewing barley is not yet brought." And Rud-didet said, "Wherefore is the brewing barley not yet brought?" And the servant answered, "It would all of it long since be ready if the barley had not been given to the dancing-girls, and lay in the chamber under their seal." Rud-didet said, "Go down, and bring of it, and Ra-user shall give them in its stead when he shall come." And the handmaid went, and opened the chamber. And she heard talking and singing, music and dancing, quavering, and all things which are performed for a king in his chamber. And she returned and told to Rud-didet all that she had heard. And she went through the chamber, but she found not the place where the sound was. And she laid her temple to the sack, and found that the sounds were in it. She placed it in a chest, and put that in another locker, and tied it fast with leather, and laid it in the storeroom, where the things were, and sealed it. And Ra-user came returning from the field; and Rud-didet repeated unto him these things; and his heart was glad above all things; and they sat down and made a joyful day.

And after these days it came to pass that Rud-didet was wroth with her servant, and beat her with stripes. And the servant said unto those that were in the house: "Shall it be done thus unto me? She has borne three kings, and I will go and tell this to his Majesty King Khufu the blessed." And she went, and found the eldest brother of her mother, who was binding his flax on the floor. And he said to her, "Whither goest thou, my little maid?" And she told him of all these things. And her brother said to her: "Wherefore comest thou thus to me? Shall I agree to treachery?" And he took a bunch of the flax to her, and laid on her a violent blow. And the servant went to fetch a handful of water, and a crocodile carried her away.

Her uncle went therefore to tell of this to Rud-didet; and he found Rud-didet sitting, her head on her knees, and her heart beyond measure sad. And he said to her, "My lady, why makest thou thy heart thus?" And she answered, "It is because of this little wretch that was in the house; behold she went out saying, 'I will go and tell it.'" And he bowed his head unto the ground, and said, "My lady, she came and told me of these things, and made her complaint unto me; and I laid on her a violent blow. And she went forth to draw water, and a crocodile carried her away."

(The rest of the tale is lost.)