

CHAPTER 10.

THE BLEMMYISH

TRIBESMAN'S ACCOUNT

TRANSLATED AND ANNOTATED BY TELEMOS CHIROS

"Too bad we never looted the Great Tomb! We came over from Khalla Wadi¹ along the wild game and camel trails and thus entered the lands of the mud-dwellers.² It was a good raid, for along the way we took slaves and much booty, all of which we sent back to our tribe with two hands³ of warriors as guards and to tell of our success. The shake and most of our chief warriors were for riding on toward the sunrise, but then I discovered the fort,⁴ and that changed everything. The enemy had built their strong place not far from where we had camped. Everyone knew that mud-dwellers stuff these forts with wealth, so all were agreed that we should attack it instead of moving onwards.

"The place was too strong for us to storm, for the ones who always stay close to water⁵ are great cowards who hide behind walls of bricks or stones and use their magic⁶ in battle because they can't fight at all. We knew that there could be only a few enemies in the fort, because otherwise the soldiers and wagon-fighters⁷ would have come forth to do battle when we rode in and surrounded their place. After we spent two days camped so as to surround the fort, our scouts found that the enemy had a rich burial place nearby. We abandoned the useless squatting,⁸ and all of us rode with eagerness into the ravine where there were many weak forts,⁹ mastabas,¹⁰ buildings, and tombs hewn into the rock. This sort of thing proves the mud-dwellers are crazy people, for they pay more heed to their dead than to the living. They build fine dwelling places for and squander precious things upon dried and useless corpses. This is known by all the warrior people tribes.¹¹

"It was sad, for most of the places we found and entered had already been plundered. Mud-dwellers steal from the sacred burial places of their own. They have no shame! Besides, there are heavy curses placed upon such tombs — mostly against their own kind.¹² The great ones of this land must have thought that real men would never come to where their dead bodies were placed. We showed them differently. After taking the small forts one by one, we shared out the silver and gold and other valuable stuff, too. We killed all prisoners, of course, as we now had too few warriors to guard slaves.

"My cousin, Jhunna, had discovered a long, narrow path that he thought led back out of the ravine and into the mountains.¹³ We wanted such a trail of course, for now it was nearing the time to take our plunder and return to the clean sands of our homeland to the west. However, along the narrow way were tombs not yet touched! This was indeed work for warriors.

"Because there was yet room for precious cargo, all of us sought out and broke into the burial caves¹⁴ here. We looked into all of the small ravines around, too, and found many, many more tombs. Too bad! It was as I have already said. Those jackals rob their own! The filthy thieves had left nothing for us. So all we managed to loot were a few miserable little tombs, taking care to burn the withered corpses we found, for that is a great insult and harm to the mud-dwellers. We feared no magic, for the puny stuff of these gutless folk have no effect on the brave.¹⁵ We also knew such acts pleased the Lord of Warriors.¹⁶

"It was I who found a rich-looking tomb, sealed, hidden on a ledge high above. It was at the end of a long ravine that had two forks.¹⁷ Why this one had been left unmolested for so long I cannot say. It was not very well hidden. The mud-dwellers are stupid, so their robbers must be likewise. That is my guess. Warriors can climb as well as they ride, and none ride so well as the brave. I shouted, and others came to join me there on a ledge before the sealed entrance. This was a Great Tomb, for it had the full picture-writing¹⁸ of the mud-chiefs all around it. Then the dung-gods¹⁹ of the land interfered.

"Before we were able to begin breaking the big stone door beyond the two pillars hewn from the rock face, we were set upon by clu-clu-cluta²⁰ (525, 5 times, 5 times 25) of the mud-dwellers' soldiers. I managed to fight so well, I escaped, as did Jhunna beside me. A few hands²¹ of our brothers likewise battled free. The path my cousin had found did, as we discovered then, lead us to our own clean lands.²² Although we paused for a moment of mourning for the many brave warriors lost, we who survived were rich indeed, so we moved fast. Enemies and poisonous creatures took their toll as we went, and on the return journey we lost half of our brothers. I was uneasy, for it was dung-god curses, not bad luck that caused that! It was the will of the Lord of Warriors, and we smiled, for the remainder of us were thus made richer still, and it was of much benefit.

"Now I am returning to the desert with Jhunna. He and I are the only ones left of the warrior braves²³ who returned from the east. The fortunes we each carry will make our families wealthy and the tribe famous. I will certainly be the Great Shake and my cousin will be a chief man, too. Jhunna will have almost as many horses, camels, carpets, wives, asses, goats, and slaves as do I then!

"My sons²⁴ 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. My sons will never deal with you²⁵ when they return laden with riches. You are all thieves. You cheat and steal shamelessly from a poor warrior. You give less than a tenth

of the value of the fine jewelry and other fine things I have brought to you to sell. I curse you never to enjoy the refreshment and health of camel urine! Your sons will be eunuchs and serve as girls —”

Here the text is abruptly cut off. The man who transcribed and retained this tale for a time made some observations of his own hereafter, but they pertained to the man with whom he dealt and the Blemmyish nomads in general, not the “Great Tomb.”

TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

1. *Khalla Wadi* is the pass to the oasis of Dakhla-Amun.
2. *Lands of the mud-dwellers* refer to civilized, non-desert Khemit.
3. *Two hands of warriors* means 10 mounted tribesmen. The plunder taken must have been considerable to send off that many of their men. Incidentally, the Blemmyish, their kindred tribes, 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.
4. *Fort* is probably erroneous, as there is no mention of great wealth inside, so it is likely that the author of this tale discovered a fortified temple.
5. *The ones who always stay close to water* is an expression for the Khemitians in general. The nomadic tribesmen call their cavalry “soldiers,” also a derisive name, for it is not “warriors,” but nonetheless the nomads avoid confrontation, save if they can manage an ambush.
6. *Magic* is of course anything magical and the use of spells. The tribes are virtually helpless in this account, having no spellcasters able to match a priest or wizard, albeit they have at times managed to develop some potent sorcerers and the like.
7. *Wagon-fighters* is a reference to the chariots and their warrior crews still used by the Khemitians until recently, albeit on rare occasions and usually only in mass formations where the terrain is flat and hard. I suspect the barbarian is embellishing his yarn.
8. *Useless squatting* means the tribesmen were getting nowhere with their siege and knew it. Any fighting not done from camel or horseback is deemed improper.
9. *Weak forts* certainly refers to small temples or shrines, if the “fort” proper was indeed a large temple.
10. *Mastabas* is the Yarban word for bench, of course, and by this the tribesman means a Khemitian tomb of rectangular sort with a flat roof and inward sloping supporting walls.
11. *Warrior people tribes* means the Blemmyish, of course, and by inference all like nomads.
12. *Curses . . . mostly against their own kind* seems ignorant. Magical wards and traps will function particularly well against anyone who happens to trip them. Perhaps these

tomb robbers found unguarded places or broke in through walls to avoid triggering the dwomers.

13. *Mountains* evidentially refers to the plateau, bluffs, hills, and ravines that form a barrier beyond the Khemitian western desert in the Middle Kingdom area. These savage nomads have probably never seen a real mountain.

14. *Burial caves* here must mean the usual Khemitian sort, which are either actual or artificially dug places on the faces of ravines and cliffs. A large area might contain one important tomb or a whole series of minor ones beginning at ground level and working up.

15. *The brave* refers to those warrior nomads who have, I recall, slain more than two foes and ridden on more than four raids.

16. *Lord of Warriors* is the chief deity of the strange little 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 tribesman, on pain of death!

17. *Two forks* is possibly misleading, and if so, purposefully done. In the patrols of the nomads, this might mean a single splitting of the ravine, a forking into two tines, but he might also mean two separate branches of the main defile. Such inexactness is typical of the Blemmyish.

18. *Picture writing* means not only hieroglyphs, but those contained in cartouches, for otherwise the reference to “chiefs” makes no sense.

19. *Dung-gods* could be an epithet of derogatory sort for the Khemitian 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.

20. *Chu-chu-chuta*, literally 525 as indicated, also means very, very many in Blemmyish. In any event, a force whose number was “too few . . . to guard even slaves” is unlikely to have needed such a number of troops to defeat, nor could this nomad have fought his way through such a number of soldiers.

21. *A few hands* can mean no fewer than 15 and no more than 24 total escapees. If 25 had been able to flee, he would have used *cluta* after hands.

22. *Clean lands* refers to the filthy deserts over which the Blemmyish rove.

23. *Warrior braves* combining, as it does, the two terms separately noted above, seems to indicate that this band of marauders was seasoned veterans.

24. *My sons* is probably a general term, as is “brothers” as used in the text. He likely means those of kindred spirit.

25. *Deal with you* is clearly aimed at and addressing the Cyrenaic merchant traders — the mean spirit and dishonest nature of whom I myself have been too frequently suffered to endure.

Note: The above text is available as a free download from the Necromancer Games website (www.necromancergames.com) on the Product Support page.

