

# The Doomed Prince

## The Preface

This story is to be found in the Harris Papyrus in the British Museum. It was complete when first discovered, but an unfortunate accident partly destroyed it, so that the end of the tale is lost. It is supposed to belong to the end of the Eighteenth Dynasty.

There was once a king who was sore in heart because no son had been born to him. He prayed the gods to grant his desire, and they decreed that as he had prayed, so it should be. And his wife brought forth a son. When the Hathors came to decide his destiny they said, "His death shall be by the crocodile, or by the serpent, or by the dog." And those who stood round, upon hearing this, hurried to tell the king, who was much grieved thereat and feared greatly.

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And because of what he had heard he caused a house to be built in the mountains and furnished richly and with all that could be desired, so that the child should not go abroad. When the boy was grown he went one day upon the roof, and from there he saw a dog following a man upon the road. Then he turned to his attendant and said, "What is that which follows the man coming along the road?" And he was told that it was a dog.

And the child at once wished to possess a dog, and when the king was told of his desire he might not deny him, lest his heart should be sad.

As time went on and the child became a man he grew restive, and, being told of the decree of the Hathors, at once sent a message to his father, saying, "Come, why and wherefore am I kept a prisoner? Though I am fated to three evil fates, let me follow my desires. Let God fulfill His will."

And after this he was free and did as other men. He was given weapons and his dog was allowed to follow him, and they took him to the east country and said to him, "Behold, thou art free to go wheresoever thou wilt."

He set his face to the north, his dog following, and his whim dictated his path. Then he lived on all the choicest of the game of the desert. And then he came to the chief of Nahairana. And this chief had but one child, a daughter. For her had been built a house with seventy windows seventy cubits from the ground. And here the chief had commanded all the sons of the chiefs of the country of Khalu to be brought, and he said to them "He who climbs and reaches my daughter's windows shall win her for wife."

And some time after this the prince arrived, and the people of the chief of Nahairana took the youth to the house and treated him with the greatest honor and kindness. And as he partook of their food they asked him whence he had come. He answered them, saying, "I come from Egypt; I am the son of an officer of that land. My mother died and my father has taken another wife, who, when she bore my father other children, grew to hate me. Therefore have I fled as a fugitive from her presence." And they were sorry for him and embraced him.

Then one day he asked the climbing youths what it was they did there. And when they told him that they climbed the height that they might win the chief's daughter for wife, he decided to make the attempt with them, for afar off he beheld the face of the chief's daughter looking forth from her window and turned toward them.

And he climbed the dizzy height and reached her window. So glad was she that she kissed and embraced him.

And thinking to make glad the heart of her father, a messenger went to him, saying, "One of the youths hath reached thy daughter's window." The chief inquired which of the chief's sons had accomplished this, and he was told that it was the fugitive from Egypt.

At this the chief of Nahairana was wroth and vowed that his daughter was not for an Egyptian fugitive. "Let him go back whence he came!" he cried.

"...if he is taken from me, I will neither eat nor drink and in that hour I shall die!"

An attendant hurried to warn the youth, but the maiden held him fast and, would not let him go. She swore by the gods, saying, "By the being of Ra-Harakhti, if he is taken from me, I will neither eat nor drink and in that hour I shall die!"

And her father was told of her vow, and hearing it he sent some to slay the youth while he should be in his house. But the daughter of the chief divined this and said again, "By the Great Lord Ra, if he be slain, then I shall die ere the set of sun. If I am parted from him, then I live no longer!"

Again her words were carried to the chief. He caused his daughter and the youth to be brought before him, and at first the young man was afraid, but the chief of Nahairana embraced him affectionately, saying "Tell me who thou art, for now thou art as a son to me." He answered him, "I come from Egypt; I am the son of an officer of that land. My mother died and my father has taken another wife, who, when she bore my father children, grew to hate me. Therefore have I fled as a fugitive from her presence!"

Then the chief gave him his daughter to wife; he gave him a house and slaves, he gave him lands and cattle and all manner of good gifts.

The time passed. One day the youth told his wife of his fate, saying to her, "I am doomed to three evil fates- to die by a crocodile, a serpent, or a dog." And her heart was filled with a great dread. She said to him, "Then let one kill the dog which follows thee." But he told her that could not be' for he had brought it up from the time it was small.

At last the youth desired to travel to the land of Egypt, and his wife, fearing for him; would not let him go alone, so one went with him. They came to a town, and the crocodile of the river was there. Now in that town was a great and mighty man, and he bound the crocodile and would not suffer it to escape. When it was bound the mighty man was at peace and walked abroad. When the sun rose the man went back to his house, and this he did every day for two months.

After this as the days passed the youth sat at ease in his house. When the night came he lay on his couch and sleep fell upon him. Then, his wife filled a bowl of milk and placed it by his side. Out from a hole came a serpent, and it tried to bite the sleeping man, but his wife sat beside him watching and unsleeping.

And the servants, beholding the serpent, gave it milk so that it drank and was drunk and lay helpless on its back. Seeing this, with her dagger the wife dispatched it. Upon this her husband woke and, understanding all, was astonished. "See," she said to him, "thy god hath given one of thy dooms into thy hand. Surely he shall also give thee the others!"

And then the youth made sacrifices to his god and praised him always.

One day after this the youth walked abroad in his fields, his dog following him. And his dog chased after the wild game, and he followed after the dog, who plunged into the river. He also went into the river, and then out came the crocodile, who took him to the place where the mighty man lived. And as he carried him the crocodile said to the youth, "Behold, I am thy doom, following after thee..."

### The Afterward

At this point the papyrus is so extensively mutilated that in all probability we shall never know what happened to the prince, Was he at last devoured by the crocodile? or perchance did his faithful dog lead him into still graver danger? Let everyone concoct his own ending to the tale!