

Penguin



Readers

TALES OF ANCIENT EGYPT



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CHAPTER ONE

Ra and his children

At the beginning of the world, there was only water. At this time, the **god** Ra was born. Ra was very **powerful**. Ra's **power** came from his secret name.

"I am Khepera in the morning. I am Ra at noon. And I am Turn in the evening," Ra said. And he became the sun at the different times of the day. He **rose** in the east, went across the sky, and went down in the west. This was the first day of the world.

Then, Ra said "Shu", and the god of wind was born. He said "Tefnut", and there was a **goddess** of rain. After this, he said "Geb", and land rose out of the sea. He cried "Nut!", and he made the goddess of the sky. These gods and goddesses were his children.

Ra said names for all the things on Earth. His last words were "Man" and "Woman", and soon there were people living in Egypt.

Then, Ra changed into a man, and he became the first king of Egypt.



In Egypt, kings were called Pharaohs. Ra **ruled** for thousands of years, and life was good for the people of Egypt. Every spring, the river Nile rose and **flooded** the fields for a while. After each **flood**, the **earth** in the fields became good for growing barley. The people of Egypt had enough food, there was **peace** and men did not fight.

But Ra's body on Earth became old, and he could not rule very well. He could not fight against the **evil spirit** Apophis. Because of Apophis, many people of Egypt became evil, too, and planned to fight against Ra. He saw this, and he spoke to the other gods.

"The people in the south of Egypt are planning to do evil against me," he said. "If I look at them with my powerful Eye, they will **burn** and die."

One of the gods said, "Ra, if you burn them with your Eye, all of Egypt will become a desert. You should make a power to kill men and women only and not burn the land."

"I will not use my powerful Eye. I will send Sekhmet to kill the evil people!" cried Ra.

And, because Ra said the word "Sekhmet", a goddess with a lioness's head was born. Sekhmet the lioness then ran to the south of Egypt and killed



the most evil people. The river Nile went red with all their **blood**. But Sekhmet liked killing, and she did not want to stop. She wanted to kill all people, but Ra did not want to rule a land with no one in it.

“I must **trick** Sekhmet,” thought Ra. “If I can trick her and save the people from her, I will give her another, better power.”

“Run to the island of Elephantinē on the river Nile,” Ra told his men. “The earth there is red. Bring me some of this red earth.”

So his men brought back the red earth to Heliopolis, the city of Ra.

“Make **beer** from barley and mix it with the red earth from the island of Elephantinē,” Ra said to the women at the **palace** of Heliopolis. “Make lots of it!”

That night, Ra’s men put this red beer all over the fields. It looked like blood. In the morning, Sekhmet woke up. She saw the red beer, and she laughed. She thought that it was blood. She drank and she drank until the beer made her very tired, and she could not kill any more. She walked slowly to Heliopolis. Ra was waiting for her there.

“I will give you a new name,” Ra said. “You are now called ‘Hathor’. You will become the

goddess of love, and love will be your new power. This power is stronger than your old evil powers. All people on Earth will now know love.”

So Ra saved the people of Egypt, and he also gave them the **gift** of love. Love could make them happy, but it could make them sad, too.

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