

You
Wouldn't
Want to...

BE AN

EGYPTIAN MUMMY

A mummy
mystery you
won't want
to miss!



Written by David Stewart • Illustrated by David Antram



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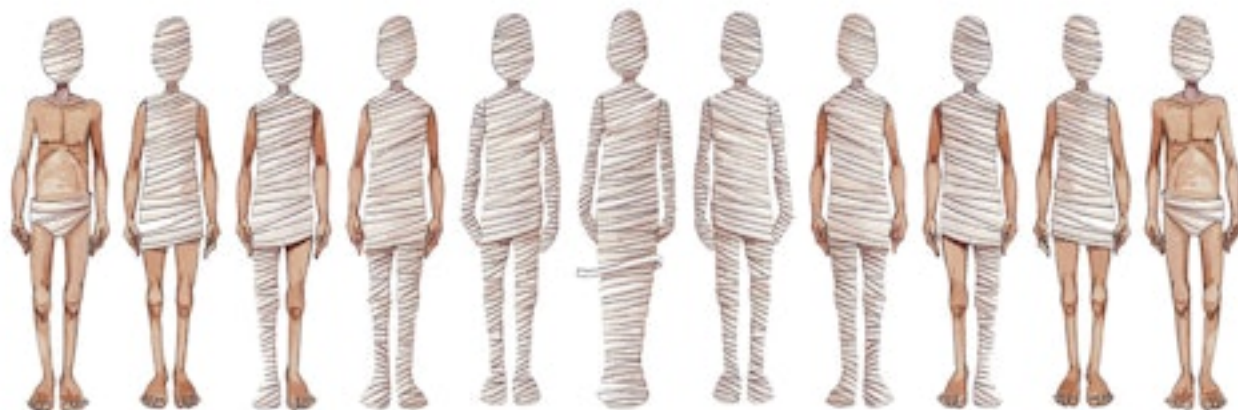
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Introduction

Ancient Egypt as we know it began about 5,000 years ago beside the river Nile in Northern Africa. The Nile floods made this land very fertile, although beyond it lay a vast area of blistering desert thought to be inhabited by demons.

Ancient Egyptian history spans thirty centuries and throughout this time the country was ruled by kings called pharaohs. The people believed that the pharaoh was a living god and so it was very important to keep them happy. The pharaohs had huge monuments built for them so that they would always be remembered. Ancient Egyptians believed in an afterlife and thought that by saying the name of a dead person, you could make them live forever. Another way to achieve immortality was to preserve the body of a person once they had died and to wrap them up in linen bandages. This process is called mummification.

Now cast yourself back 3,000 years. You are a wealthy ancient Egyptian on the cusp of death and you want to make yourself immortal. To achieve this, you will have to go through the expensive and complicated process of becoming a mummy. Get ready. You are about to... drop dead!



Dead? Off to the embalmers!

You will need:



YOUR DEAD BODY

When you die, the embalmers will take your body away as soon as possible. First it will be taken to a 'tent of purification', called an *ibu*.



LINEN

Like most ancient Egyptians, you will have saved linen throughout your life to use as mummification bandages.



OILS

Perfumes and oils will make your skin smooth and sweet-smelling.

A PRIEST

You will need a priest to act as chief embalmer. He should wear a mask of Anubis, god of embalming.



Ancient Egyptians take a lot of trouble preparing for the afterlife. They believe that every person has three spirits which survive after death, but only if the body is preserved. These are the *ka*, the person's life force, the *ba*, the spirit of the person's personality and the *akh*, the glorified soul.

The dead body is preserved by the complicated processes of embalming and mummification. Everyone who can afford it makes elaborate preparations for this.

What can you afford?



CHEAP

The body is injected with cedar oil, which makes its insides liquefy and drain out. It is then dried out in a natural salt called natron.



MID-RANGE

The organs are removed and embalmed. The body is dried out in natron and then completely wrapped up in strips of linen.



LUXURY

The same as mid-range, but with a portrait mask. This is made of cartonnage (a mixture of plaster, linen and resin), or even solid gold!

The men who practise the art of embalming are highly respected, as they are responsible for preparing you for eternal life.

Handy Hint

Your body should be labelled with a wooden tag to avoid any mix-ups later.



I'm sure he was taller...

Covering a dead body in natron salt makes it shrivelled and shrunk.

Removing the organs

You will need:



YOUR FRESHLY SCRUBBED BODY

Along with all necessary priests and assistants.



TOOLS

Various tools and surgical instruments will be needed to clean out your body and remove certain organs.



NATRON SALT

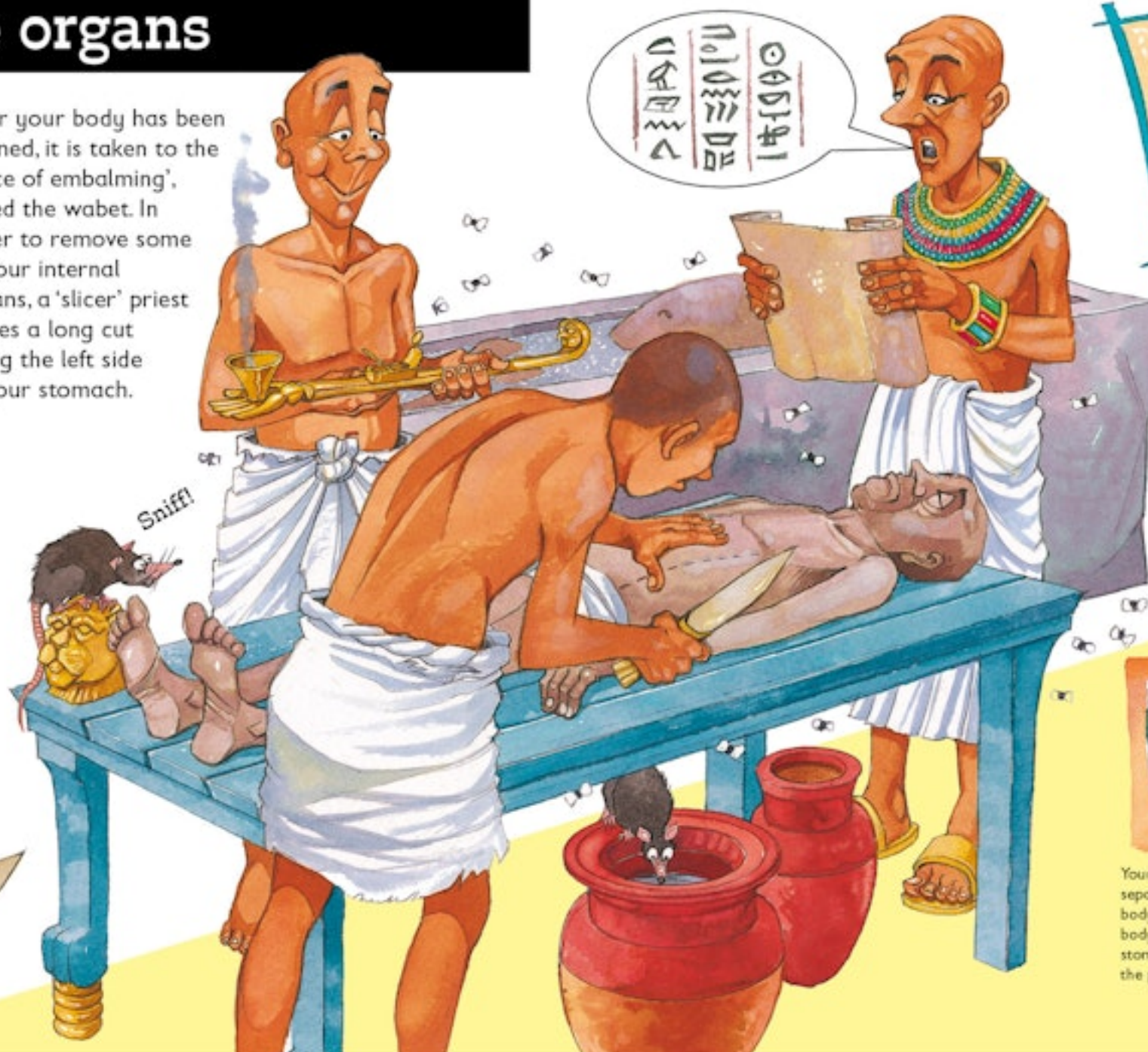
This will be used to dry out your body once the organs have been removed.

KNIFE

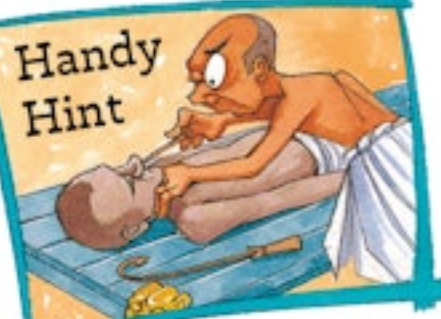
The 'slicer' will use a ceremonial flint knife to cut your body open.



After your body has been cleaned, it is taken to the 'place of embalming', called the wabet. In order to remove some of your internal organs, a 'slicer' priest makes a long cut along the left side of your stomach.



Handy Hint



A hooked instrument is used to pull the brain out of the head through the nose. (DO NOT TRY THIS AT HOME!)

The 'slicer' will pretend to run away after he has cut you open. He is useful, but his bloody work insults the gods, so the other embalmers throw stones after him.



Your organs are removed and will be embalmed separately, although your heart is left in your body – you will need this later on. Once the body cavity has been stuffed, the cut along your stomach is sewn up and covered with a carving of the protective eye of the sun god, Horus (above).

Storing the organs

You will need:

LIVER

Your liver will be stored in a jar with the human head of the god Imsety on it.



LUNGS

Your lungs are stored in the jar protected by the god Hapy, who has the head of a baboon.



STOMACH

Your stomach is placed in the jar with the jackal head of the god Duamutef on it.



INTESTINES

Your intestines are kept in the jar which has on it the falcon head of the god Qebehsenuef.



Your liver, lungs, stomach and intestines are removed through the incision in your stomach. Once the organs have been completely removed they are stored in canopic jars. Each jar is protected by one of the four sons of the god Horus and the lid of the jar is in the shape of its protector god's head. Your body is washed out with palm wine and will now be soaked in natron for forty days to dry it out.

Will this all fit in one jar?



A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO EMBALMING:

Intestines are a problem as they can be very long. Once removed, soak in natron. Turn occasionally.



The canopic jars are stored in a specially made box called a canopic chest. This will be stored in your tomb and should be placed as near to you as possible.



After forty days remove from the natron and check that there is no moisture left in them.



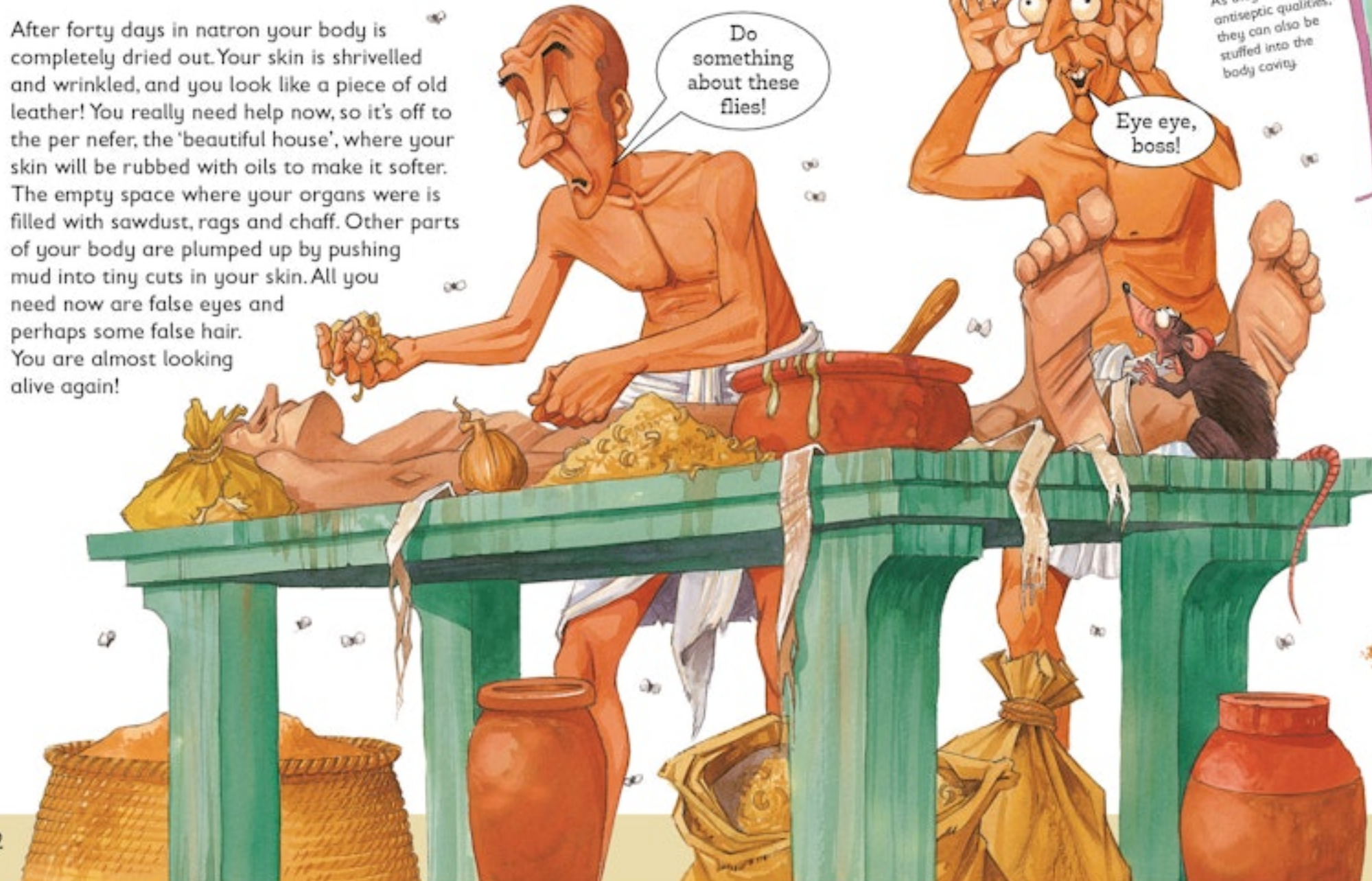
If the intestines are completely dried, they are ready to be wrapped in linen.



The organ can now be placed in its canopic jar. Ideally, the lid should fit tightly.

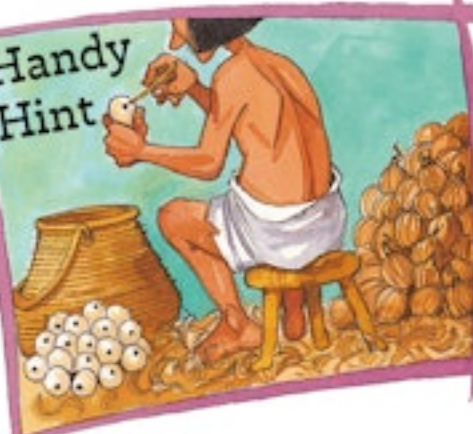
Get stuffed!

After forty days in natron your body is completely dried out. Your skin is shrivelled and wrinkled, and you look like a piece of old leather! You really need help now, so it's off to the per nefer, the 'beautiful house', where your skin will be rubbed with oils to make it softer. The empty space where your organs were is filled with sawdust, rags and chaff. Other parts of your body are plumped up by pushing mud into tiny cuts in your skin. All you need now are false eyes and perhaps some false hair. You are almost looking alive again!



False eyes can be made out of onions. As they have strong antiseptic qualities, they can also be stuffed into the body cavity.

Handy Hint



You will need:



PALM WINE

Sterilise the body with juniper oil and palm wine.



FRANKINCENSE

This highly valued fragrant gum resin will make the body smell sweet.



SAWDUST

Stuff the body cavity with sawdust, chaff, sand and rags.



MOLTEN RESIN

Once stuffed, cover the whole body in molten resin.

Bound for the tomb

You will need:



Amulets, small charms which will provide you with magical protection, should be tucked in your bandages.



Linen wrappings are essential as wool is thought to be unclean.



The scarab amulet has a special purpose (see page 19).

The embalmer's work is almost done – soon you will become a mummy! All you need now are your wrappings. It will take 15 days to wrap you up and you will need 20 layers of linen bandages. If you are sensible, you will have been saving linen for your whole life. Egyptian temples are full of statues which are dressed in new linen every day, so you could have bought plenty second-hand there.



Finger and toe stalls are only used in top-of-the-range mummifications. Can you afford these?

A Portrait Mask might be placed over your head once you are wrapped.

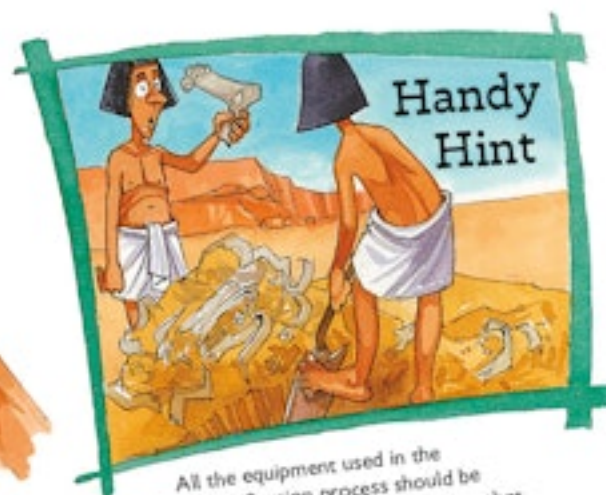


WRAPPING THE MUMMY

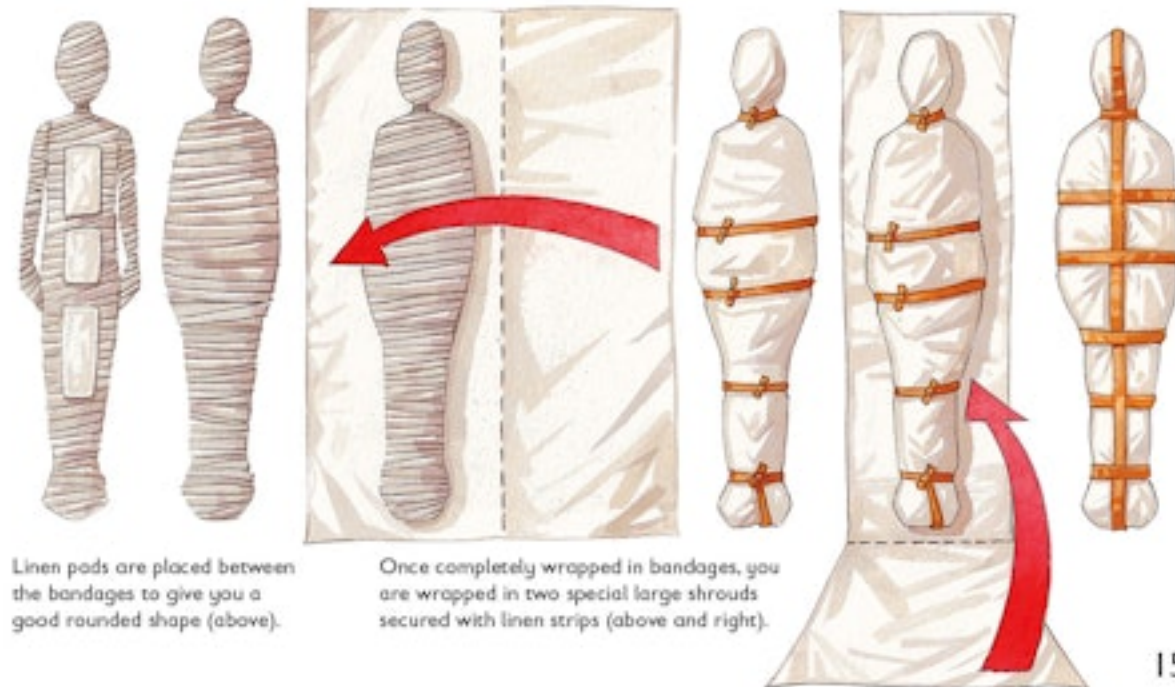
Different bandagers work in different ways – some prefer to start with the head and work their way down the body (above). Resin is used to glue the bandages together.



It is important that your portrait mask looks like you. Some of the pharaohs have solid gold masks, but a thin layer of gold leaf can look just as good.



All the equipment used in the mummification process should be gathered together and buried so that nobody else can use it.



Linen pods are placed between the bandages to give you a good rounded shape (above).

Once completely wrapped in bandages, you are wrapped in two special large shrouds secured with linen strips (above and right).

The coffins

You will need:

Skilled carpenters are always in demand in ancient Egypt. Make sure your works to a high standard and finishes on time.



Wood is very valuable since most of it has to be imported. The best wood, if you can afford it, is cedar from Lebanon.



Carpenter's tools are made of wood or stone and some have blades made of bronze.

Paint

Paints are made by grinding up semi-precious stones and mixing the powder with gum.

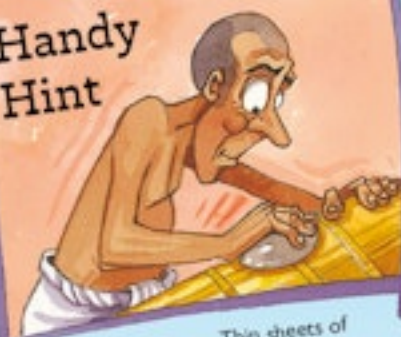
Palette

Brush

Once wrapped, you will need a good wooden coffin. If you are very wealthy you could have up to three coffins, all fitting snugly inside one another. Make sure that they have pictures of the gods and all the correct spells painted on them to protect you. Of course, they should also have plenty of hieroglyphs singing your praises written on them. This nest of coffins will finally be placed in your tomb inside a large stone coffin called a sarcophagus.



Handy Hint



Thin sheets of gold stuck onto wood are much cheaper than solid gold but look the same. Make the gold glitter by rubbing it with a stone.

Weepers and wailers

You will need:

Mourners should be hired professionals. They should sob and wail loudly, wear blue dresses (the colour of mourning) and throw ash on themselves.



Priests burn sweet-smelling incense, recite prayers and perform the opening of the mouth ceremony.



Sacred tools are needed for the opening of the mouth ceremony, which will restore the body's spirit to it.



Your tomb will be both a burial place and a place for your family to leave food for you and to commune with your ba.

You have now been dead for seventy days and today is the day of your funeral. You are finally about to enter the afterlife! You will be buried on the western side of the river, where the sun sets. Your coffin is taken there by boat and is then placed on a sledge and pulled to your tomb. A priest leads a procession of mourners, followed by bearers carrying food offerings and all the objects you will need in the afterlife.

OPENING OF THE MOUTH CEREMONY



This takes place in front of your tomb. A priest touches your 'lips' with symbolic tools to restore your senses and allow your departed soul to return.

Handy Hint



The scarab beetle amulet prevents your guilty secrets being found out at the weighing of the heart ceremony.

THE WEIGHING OF THE HEART

Your spirit is led to a pair of scales by Anubis, who weighs your heart against the feather of truth. The result is recorded by the ibis-headed god, Thoth. A monster, Ammut, waits to eat the heart if it has been made too heavy by its bad deeds.



What was his name again?

What a mummy needs

You will need:



THE BOOK OF THE DEAD

This is a guidebook of spells to help you through the horrors of the underworld.

YOUR BA

The spirit of your personality, is able to leave your tomb during the day, but will always return at night.

YOUR KA

Or spirit double, will remain with you in your tomb at all times.



TOMB OFFERINGS

It is the duty of your relatives to visit your tomb with gifts of food so that you don't go hungry. As long as people remember your name, you will enjoy everlasting life.

Have the walls of your tomb painted with pictures of you wearing your best clothes in the kind of afterlife you want to enjoy. Your tomb should be stocked with the things you needed when you were alive: food, clothes, furniture, weapons and tools.



Once your tomb has been sealed, your soul has battled its way through the underworld and your heart has been weighed against the feather of truth, you can at last begin to enjoy your afterlife! Now nothing can disturb you... or can it?



Handy Hint

Finding good servants in the next world might be difficult, so take plenty of shabtis to do your work for you.



Tomb robbers

You will need:



LINEN

Linen is very valuable because of the time it can take to weave even the smallest amount.

GLASS

Glass is scarce in ancient Egypt. Since it can be melted down and made into new objects, stolen glass cannot be traced.



GOLD JEWELLERY

The jewels can be prised out and the gold melted down and reused.



FRANKINCENSE AND MYRRH

These are highly prized because of their fragrance and their use in the art of mummification.

Once your tomb doors are firmly closed and sealed, you may think you are ready for eternal rest. No such luck! Even before the mourners at your funeral have had time to go home, unwanted visitors are on their way – tomb robbers have started tunnelling towards you. If they steal even one small piece of jewellery from you, it could make them very rich, so they feel it's worth taking the risk of torture and death if they are caught. Robbers rip mummies open looking for treasure, so that they often have to be re-wrapped, sometimes gaining extra heads or legs in the process!



Handy Hint

Remember – the penalty for tomb robbing is torture and then slow death by impalement.



Animal mummies

Four varieties of animal mummies:

FOOD

A cut of meat can be embalmed and put in a special box for you to enjoy in the afterlife.



PETS

Your pet can be mummified at the same time as you, whether it is ready to join the afterlife or not.



<CULT ANIMALS

Some animals, like this Apis bull, are mummified as they are believed to have special powers and are treated like gods.

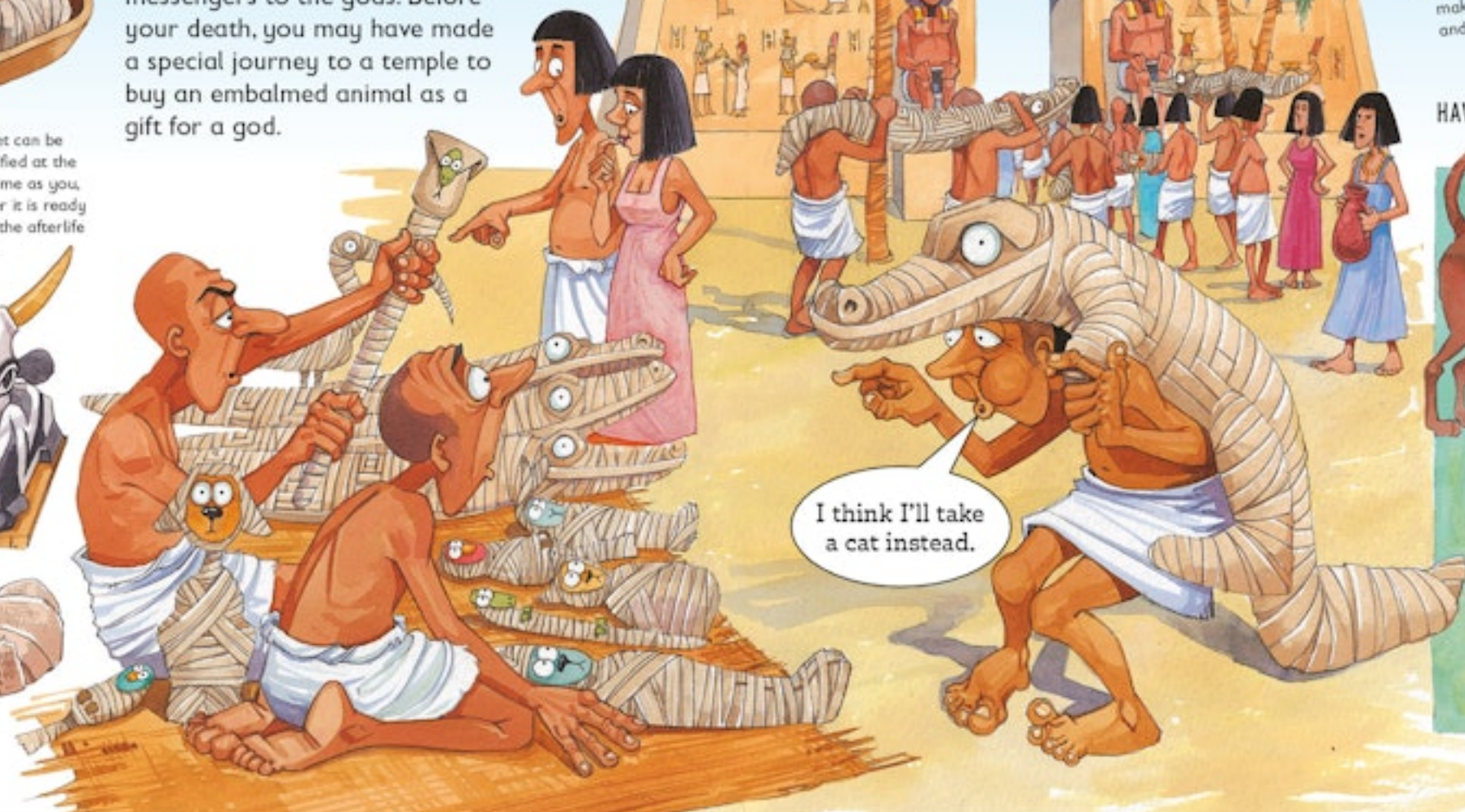


VOTIVE OFFERING

A gift of a specially embalmed animal can be given to please a god.



Ancient Egyptians worry that mummies might get peckish in the afterlife, so they leave a piece of meat in the tomb. An animal's leg can be embalmed for use as mummy food. Mummified Apis bulls are worshipped at sacred sites and are thought to be messengers to the gods. Before your death, you may have made a special journey to a temple to buy an embalmed animal as a gift for a god.



Handy Hint



Beware of forgeries! Traders sometimes make animal mummies out of sticks and feathers.

HAVE A PET PAL



Ancient Egyptians fear that the afterlife might get lonely. Unfortunate pets, like this dog and cat, might be killed and embalmed to keep you company.

Eternal rest?

Some odd uses for mummies:



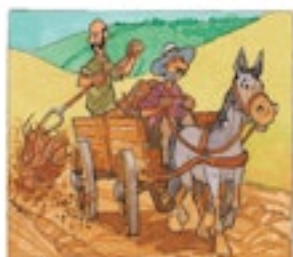
PAINT

A horrified artist, who found that the paint he was using was made from ground down human mummy remains, gave the tubes of paint a decent burial.



PAPER

An outbreak of cholera was allegedly caused when butchers used brown paper made from linen mummy wrappings to wrap their meat.



FERTILISER

Mummified cats shipped from Egypt to Europe were used as fertiliser until a public outcry stopped the practice.



FIREWOOD

Mummies' arms and legs were sometimes used as torches for exploring tombs.



An invitation to a mummy unwrapping



By the nineteenth century AD, 2,800 years after your death, you may think you have found eternal peace at last. Wrong! It becomes fashionable amongst the wealthy to travel to Egypt and tourists buy mummies as souvenirs. Unfortunately, it also becomes fashionable to publicly unwrap mummies. No one is interested in you, however – only the magic amulets tucked in your wrappings. If you're lucky, you may be re-wrapped and put in a museum.



Ground down mummies are used as an ointment for skin complaints, mixed with butter and rubbed onto the skin.



Strange afterlives

Well-travelled mummies:



BY PLANE

The mummy of the great pharaoh Ramesses II was flown to Paris for treatment of a fungal growth. The 3,300-year-old mummy had 'monarch (deceased)' stamped on his passport. The treatment was a success.



MUMMY OVERBOARD!

Tourists who had bought a mummy as a souvenir changed their minds about taking it home because of its terrible smell. They threw it in the River Nile.



FAR FROM HOME

A mummy purchased by a tourist in Aswan was later identified as the body of an English engineer who had recently died there.

Some mummies have become celebrities in more recent years. Horror stories about mummies coming back to life were popular in the nineteenth century and helped to create the legends associated with Tutankhamun, the most famous mummy in the world. His largely untouched tomb, full of treasure, was discovered by the archaeologist Howard Carter in 1922.

His sponsor was Lord Carnarvon, who died from an infected mosquito bite soon after the tomb was opened. His death gave rise to the myth of the 'pharaoh's curse', which would bring death to anyone who entered the tomb.

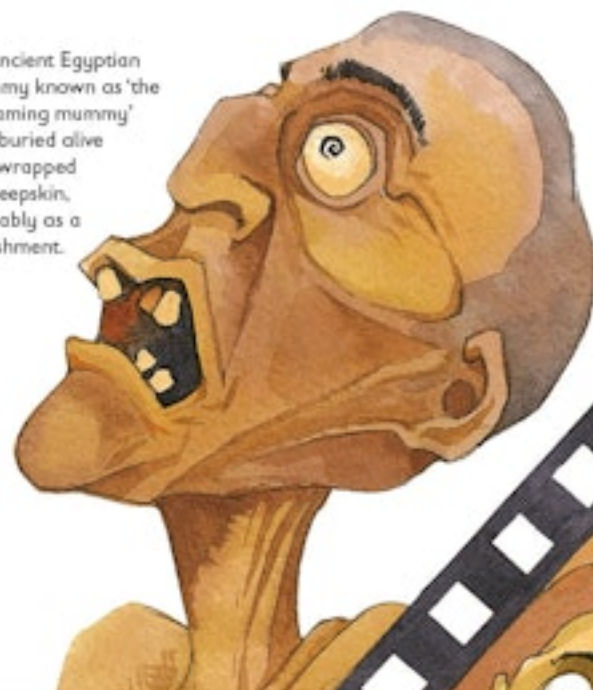


Famous Mummies



King Tutankhamun's mummy suffered badly from the amount of oils used in the mummification process. His flesh stuck to the inside of his coffin, meaning that his mummy had to be cut up to remove it. His ribs are still missing.

An ancient Egyptian mummy known as 'the screaming mummy' was buried alive and wrapped in sheepskin, probably as a punishment.



Handy Hint

I'm ready for my close-up!

A good way to attain immortality is to get into the movies – recently discovered mummies are always popular on television and in film.

The mummy of pharaoh Ramesses III was the model for many of the mummies featured in horror films (right).



Glossary

Adze An axe-like tool with the blade set in the handle at a right angle.

Akh According to ancient Egyptian belief, the akh was one of three spirits released at a person's death and it represented the higher soul.

Ammut A demon of the underworld who attended the 'weighing of the heart' test and ate the heart of anybody who failed it.

Amulet A small object, like a lucky charm, believed to provide magical protection to the person wearing it.

Anubis The jackal-headed god of embalming.

Ba One of the three spirits released when someone died. It represented the person's character or personality.

Book of the Dead A collection of spells and prayers left in tombs to help the dead in the underworld.



Canopic jars The set of four jars in which the embalmed lungs, stomach, liver and intestines were stored.

Cartonnage Material made from pulped linen and so on, often used to make the masks for Egyptian mummies.

Chaff Chopped up hay and straw, often used to stuff the body cavities of dead people once their organs had been removed.

Embalming The practice of preserving dead bodies.

Finger and toe stalls Metal sheaths, sometimes made of gold, placed over the ends of an embalmed body's fingers and toes.

Hieroglyphs The ancient Egyptian writing system which consists of pictures representing sounds. They were written both horizontally and vertically.

Horus The son of the gods Isis and Osiris. Horus had the head of a falcon and was the sun god.

Ibu 'Tent of purification'; the first place a body was taken to after death.

Ka The ka was a person's life force. When the person died, his ka lived on in his mummy.

Mummy An embalmed body wrapped in linen bandages. The word 'mummy' comes from the Persian word mummiya, meaning pitch or bitumen. Some Egyptian mummies blackened over time and gave rise to the incorrect belief that bitumen was the embalming agent used.

Natron A form of natural salt used for drying out the body during the mummification process.

Per nefer The place where embalmed bodies were rubbed with perfumed oils, stuffed and given false eyes and hair. It means 'beautiful house'.

Sarcophagus A large outer coffin, usually made of stone.

Shabtis Pottery figurines in human shape buried with a mummy. They were called upon to do manual labour for the dead person in the underworld.

Thoth The god of wisdom and writing. Sometimes he is shown as an ibis, sometimes a baboon.

Votive offerings Special gifts for the gods, usually left in temples or other holy places.

Wabet The place where a body is taken to have its organs removed and to be dried out in natron salt. It means 'the place of embalming'.



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