

*An Interesting Narrative
of the Land of King Tut*

An Egyptian Lotus

By MRS. CHETWOOD SMITH

WHEN Johnny Asher, reporter, amateur detective, good fellow and several other things besides, received the assignment for Egypt, to report on the discoveries at the tomb of King Tutankhamen, he went out into the aisle between the desks, and turned a somersault.

It was only a fluke of luck his getting the appointment from his *New England Daily*; Johnny fully realized that. If there had been any doubts in his mind on the matter, they would have been dispelled by his interview with the Chief.

"It's rotten luck having no one but you to send," declared that great man, glaring morosely at Johnny's eager young face.

"Yes, Sir," said Johnny meekly.

"But we're short handed as it is and if Steffanson will go and get his legs smashed in a fool motor accident, what can I do—"

Egypt! Johnny Asher could hardly believe that he was really there.

In the evening of his arrival at the big hotel in Luxor, he sat after dinner, watching the groups that swayed about

the lobby and terraces, or sat at little tables that were flower-heaped and softly lit. The color and motion and music in the setting of the perfumed glistening Egyptian night, were like a glamorous picture in a play. Distinguished men and beautiful women, mingled with the



crowd of tourists, for it was the eve of a great event.

Within a short time, a matter perhaps of only days, the tomb of King Tutankhamen was to be opened, by the allied committees on explorations, and vast were the hopes of scientific and antiquarian discoveries. With a thrill, Johnny told himself, that he was an actor, albeit a humble one, in the making of history. He gazed with awe upon the Orientals, high in Officialdom, who glided about, their aloof dignity lending impressiveness to the scene. Johnny Asher did not realize that his own, clean American good looks were noticeable, even in that throng, and that more than one head turned to glance again, at his broad shoulders, and merry blue eyes.

Seeing a group of pressmen, one of whom he knew slightly, smoking and drinking coffee in a corner, Johnny joined them, and was welcomed, with the freemasonry of their mutual craft.

"People are so excited, and interested in all these Egyptian superstitions," said one of the younger men, "that they will swallow any impossible tale."

"Impossible?" echoed Johnny's acquaintance, Gregory Brown. "Well, I've been in Egypt three times, and I know things are true out here, that I wouldn't believe for a moment, back home in Cincinnati."

"Of course," said Johnny earnestly. "Anyway, I came from Massachusetts, and it's in my blood to believe in witchcraft."

The others laughed.

"What about these rumors of poisons," said another man, "being hidden in the tombs and which are supposed to be just as powerful as when they were put there, thousands of years ago?"

"Anything is possible in Egypt," insisted Gregory Brown.

"And they say that the tombs are haunted by spirits, that are the guardians of the dead. I suppose Asher believes that too."

"Implicitly," declared Johnny, with a twinkle of his blue eyes.

"You must look out for yourselves," drawled a thin, cadaverous looking man. "Venus inhabits the hills to the west of us, across the Nile. I understand it is one of her original homes, and under her Egyptian name of Athor, she springs up every evening, ready for fresh conquests."

"And we see her as a star," sighed the youngest reporter sentimentally.

"She is also figuratively represented," murmured the thin one, "as a spotted cow!"

Laughing, the group broke up.

DECLINING an invitation to join in a trip to the native dance halls of Luxor, Johnny Asher wandered out by himself on to a terrace, and stood contemplating the foreign view before him. Near by, the native village, over the feathery tops of the palms, and date trees. Beyond, the Nile, pouring in drowsy majesty in its ages-old way, and hanging over it, a low silver netting woven of stars so brilliant and so close the constellations seemed, in the hot, breathless Egyptian night. The sound of stringed instruments vibrated through the thick, fragrant air, and soft singing, scored now and then with a long, melodious call from the river. Johnny, responsive to the magical beauty of it all, sniffed and listened delightedly.

Presently he became aware that one little minor refrain was being sung, over and over again, just beneath him, where a great mass of purple bougainvilleas flowed down against the yellow walls of the terrace. Only a lilting phrase or two, hauntingly sad and sweet. Lured by the reiteration of its rhythm, and by the glamour and mystery of the night, Johnny swung himself over the railing, and through its smothering foliage. He landed on an open esplanade, or walk.

In the brilliant starlight, stood the figure of a girl, slight and graceful, closely shrouded in the cloak and veil of Eastern womanhood. Against the neutral gray of her garments, gleamed at her breast one wide blossom, which seemed to have retained on its curving petals the blue of day's sky. Was it from that pearly flower, that stole the odor of white hands plashing in reedy streams? Came the few, plaintive notes again, merely breathed this time, from behind a filmy veil that the young American felt sure, hid lips of a more burning crimson than any he had ever known. He moved nearer the tantalizing form. Nearer—and nearer, until he could see in the balmy light, the girl's dark eyes above her veil. They were blazing at him, languishing at him; teasing, tempting, forbidding, until he felt his head swim.

If he only knew a few words of her language. Johnny could but sigh with rapture, which he felt to be fatuous—and move still closer to the object of his sudden infatuation. The girl, however, drew back coquettishly as he advanced and he stopped for fear of driving her away.

Her startled movement had loosened the flower at her bosom, and Johnny caught it up almost before it touched the ground. As he pressed it passionately to his mouth, there came an unmistakable giggle from behind that maddening

veil. With out-flung arms, Johnny sprang for her. But she eluded him, by bending lithely aside and vanished through the encircling greenery, and Johnny collided violently with a man, uprising under his very feet. He must have lain concealed, under the dense shadow of the hedge.

A beggar evidently, as his greasy rags and bare legs proclaimed. A sturdy and vigorous beggar, for he laid so fast hold of Johnny, whining out an importunate appeal for alms, that the American had much ado to fling him off. Indeed, the two staggered together through the hedge of oleanders, and out on to the brightly lighted steps of the hotel, greatly to the amusement of the tourists gathered there. Asher cursing angrily, and the beggar clinging like a burr to the tail of his dinner jacket.

One glance assured Asher that there was no sign of her he sought. Furiously embarrassed by the laughter directed at his plight, he turned upon his pursuer, but seeing the man's face for the first time in the clear light, he recoiled involuntarily. The beggar's swarthy countenance was seared with vicious lines, his right eye was gone, and he was indeed sufficiently ugly, to justify disgust. But what had startled Johnny was his appalling expression of hatred and malignancy. To end so unpleasant and silly a scene, Johnny crushed a silver coin into the beggar's hand, and escaped into the hotel.

Once in his own room, he examined devotedly the flower, which he had guarded. It was a Lotus, of the celestial blue, and its cool fragrance seemed like an emanation from the enchanting girl of the garden.

Johnny went to bed that night with his head in a whirl, and quite ready to believe in any amount of Egyptian sorcery.

THE next morning, Johnny Asher, with his confrères crossed the Nile, by the Luxor ferry. To their left and right the great, flat river swept away in sleepy reaches, the ripples on its edges, hissing against the sands as if they touched molten gold. Graceful dahabi-yehs, with pointed sails like bird's wings, veered and turned and dipped in the hot sun. Wonderful spaces of desert showed on the river's banks; sands of blazing primrose and amber, lanced here and there by clear edged, black shadows of rolling hills. The sky was of an exquisite turquoise, and high against it, on a billowy sand dune, Johnny saw a frieze of camels, moving in slow, quaint swaying.

"That's Clarence Langshaw's private dahabiyeh," remarked Gregory Brown, as he leaned by Johnny's side.

"Who's he?" asked Johnny.

"One of the richest newspaper men, in the middle west," replied Gregory. "His fad is buying small newspapers, and building up their circulation."

"Wish I knew him," sighed the youngest reporter.

"He's got his daughter with him—Ethelbert—or some such name," volunteered the man who had talked of Venus the evening before. "I've seen her—she's a peach."

"Is she?" said Johnny, his handsome young face quite indifferent.

He was not interested in any girl save one, whose spiritlike flower was carefully pressed and folded away in his pocketbook.

They landed, and on donkeys, took their way across the level area near the river, which was covered for more than a mile at high water. Now, camels were bringing full water jars, whose precious liquid was to be emptied into mud troughs, that were protected by woven mats. Soon the pressmen reached the barren waste of tawny foot hills, and beyond rose the rough mountainous cliffs, among which were hidden the treasures of old, that they had come to study.

Today was principally spent in waiting about in the terrific sunshine at the Tomb of the Kings. Hours were passed in watching important looking officials, Egyptian and English, bustle in and out of passages, and excavated openings, in the cliffs. They were followed by various attendants, and native bearers in white robes.

Johnny returned to his hotel at night with few notes, and a pounding headache. An hour's nap and a bath, however, restored him to all his accustomed enthusiasm.

After dinner, he spent some time strolling about the hotel, in the hopes of seeing the girl of the lotus flower—but his quest was unrewarded.

It was strange, he thought, how disappointed he felt. How could her personality have made so deep an impression upon him, in only one, and that a very mystifying, interview?

At last he hired a dragoman, from among those hanging about, outside the hotel, and signified his desire to go through the native village.

Narrow alleys of fathomless blackness, between mud walls; open doorways whence came sounds of music and streamlets of light, through which glided inky forms with water jars balanced upon their heads. A sudden flutter of a

scarlet robe, flashing by, and the glitter of a shiny headdress and a tinkling laugh, lingering behind like a bright reflection.

Turtle doves cooed, and running water rustled refreshingly. In a lighted courtyard a wandering magician had spread his cloth. He performed his marvels to astonished spectators, who leaned upon each other's shoulders, stripping sugar cane with their gleaming teeth, while gaunt dogs prowled hungrily on the outskirts.

Fascinated, Johnny loitered along, listening to his dragoman's droning explanations.

Suddenly he stopped short. He had caught the melody of that plaintive song, which had so intrigued him the evening before.

It came from an open doorway on his right, and without the slightest hesitation Johnny stepped into its archway. The interior was dimly lit, and at first he could make out only some flitting gray shapes. There was a shuffling and a whispering. The next instant a tiny light sprang up, and Johnny had a confused glimpse of a low divan, heaped with cushions, behind which hung a blue curtain.

He had no time—or—wish—to absorb other details. For rising from the divan was the girl of the lotus flower. The same cloak and veil, the same slight shape, the same great dark eyes, beaming shadows in the uncertain light. What potent spell came from her?

What floating, insidious perfume ravished his senses? What misty incense transported him to uncharted regions of elysian but strangely enervating bliss?

As in a trance, Johnny saw himself taking out his faded blossom to show her; saw her in an abandonment of responsive delight, tear a fresh blue lotus from her bosom, saw himself put both flowers carefully away over his heart.

He heard his dragoman calling him anxiously from without. But the door had unaccountably and most conveniently closed, and Johnny had no wish to open it. In fact, he never wished to move again.

Then all in a breath, everything seemed to happen at once. The girl of the lotus flower, illusive, witching, was on his breast; in the very second that his arms closed about the willowy, yielding body, she fell away from him; there was a cry of agony; and the hideous, one-eyed beggar sprang again from some concealing shadows, near the door and flung his loathsome rags, with mad fury upon Johnny. Taken unawares, bewildered and half hypnotized as he was,

Asher staggered back from the onslaught, and brought up against the wall with a crash. Before he could recover himself, he saw to his horror the beggar turn to the cowering girl, and bring both clenched fists down brutally upon her head. As Johnny sprang for him, the room was full of fighting forms—men poured through an inner door, and among them he was overcome.

By this time, his dragoman had succeeded in bursting open the outer door. But his entrance only completed Johnny's defeat, for the dragoman joined with the beggar's devils of friends in hustling the American from the house. In vain Johnny struck and twisted and raged. Before his very eyes, the girl of the lotus flower was being beaten and thrust into the inner recesses of the house, while he was ignominiously forced out into the street. Men were running up the alley ways, now, jabbering, excited and menacing, their feet padding through the dark.

"Come away, Sir, come away," gasped the dragoman, as Asher fairly danced with fury before the closed door. "I can do no more with them, and I am responsible for your safety."

"What do I care for you and your responsibility?" Johnny panted, half sobbing with despair. "But you're all too much for me, I can't fight a whole village, of course. But if I go now, I'll get help at the hotel and come back to— to rescue her."

"Yes, Sir, yes, if you will only come now," pleaded the dragoman.

When, however, he reached the hotel, Asher was sick and faint. Moreover, a deathly reaction had him in its numbing grasp.

WHETHER he had received rougher handling in the one-eyed beggar's house than he had realized, or whether it was the chilly recoil from the tearing emotions of some delicious incantation there cast upon him, Johnny could not determine.

Exhausted and puzzled, he sat by his open window, and tried to think through his problems.

Rescue—rescue for his lovely lotus blossom.

By all his quivering nerves, he felt assured that she returned his suddenly absorbing passion. If he did not move, to what ghastly fate was that innocent child reserved? Could the one-eyed old monster be her father? Could such exquisite youth have sprung from so shocking a wreck? Evidently, however, she was completely in his power for the present, and Johnny had only the vaguest notions of how far under Egyptian law,

he could interfere with parental or guardian authority.

Then, suppose that he succeeded against all obstacles, in rescuing her—which meant taking her away from her own home and people—what on earth could he do, with a beautiful Egyptian damsel of whose language even he did not speak one word, and of whose religion he had only the wildest ideas as to its being an idolatrous flummery? He could not conceivably marry her, and take her home to his own New England town. He had a momentary vision of her taking tea, Sunday night, with his Aunt Priscilla.

As to any other relationship—Johnny shook his head. Although he had knocked about, taking care of himself since he was thirteen, he was a gentleman, and quite simply, he decided now, that an entanglement was entirely out of the question.

He went to bed, feeling virtuous, and worried, and decidedly low in his mind.

The next day's work was a repetition of the preceding one's.

In the late afternoon, the crowd of pressmen had returned to the ferry crossing the Nile, and were about to embark on their homeward way. Johnny was chatting with Gregory Brown, when he noticed one of the donkey boys, loitering persistently near, in his picturesque dress of baggy white trousers, turban, and gay striped cotton jacket, Johnny had never seen the boy before, but he realized that he was making urgent signs, as if desirous of secretly attracting his attention.

With a casual word or two, Johnny strolled away from his companions. As he passed the Egyptian lad, the latter with sly cunning, slipped into Johnny's hand a small packet of coarse paper. Within it, lay in fragrant beauty, a blue lotus flower, and on the paper were written some Egyptian characters which Johnny could not read, and the English word: "help," thrice repeated.

The blood rushed to Johnny's head. His pathetic darling! In trouble, and appealing to him. Not the faintest hesitation clogged the spring of his whole being towards her, in chivalrous self-spending. Eagerly he looked about for the Egyptian lad. He had turned back now, leading an unusually large and fresh appearing donkey, and made vehement signs to Asher to mount.

NOT WISHING to encounter the ridicule of his fellow craftsmen, should they divine his errand, yet realizing that he could not go back over the level sands without their seeing him,

Asher called to them a hasty and purposely incoherent, explanation of having forgotten something, and being obliged to go back to the Tombs of the Kings. Then springing upon the donkey, he made off as fast as the creature could go, the boy in evident delight, running by his side.

He heard Gregory and the others, shouting vague remonstrances, but he only waved his hand, in reassurance and farewell.

"Crazy lad! What on earth is he up to now!" ejaculated Gregory. "It isn't safe to go off like that alone, with twilight coming on. The hills are full of robbers and every kind of devilment."

"Oh! he'll be right back," declared one of the men, who did not want his own dinner delayed.

"Besides," added another, "there are a lot of people still at the tombs. Asher will come down with some of them."

After all, it was really no body's business what Johnny Asher chose to do. So having cast an anxious glance or two after his fast retreating figure, Gregory Brown embarked with the others.

But his friends' anxiety would have been greatly augmented, had they known that it was not towards the Tombs of the Kings, that Johnny's youthful guide was leading him.

When the boy first urged the donkey out of the beaten path, and towards the more unfrequented part of the hills, lying to their left, Johnny had jerked the animal to a standstill. But the boy had used a potent method to overcome his doubts. He pointed to the pocket where he had seen Johnny place the lotus flower, and made heartrending signals of distress. It was sufficient. Johnny abandoned himself again to the guidance of the young Egyptian.

Before them now, the craggy range of the Western hills cropped up purple and darkly mysterious, against the fast fading sunset lights. Venus—Athor—blazed in startling radiance, and to her, Johnny consecrated his mission with a queer, superstitious certainty that she would see him through.

On they went, over the heaps and billows of pale sand, mouse color in the ashy light, and tempest and wind wrought into dreary, uneven hummocks. Sands gave place to arid, broken rocks, melancholy with the silence of barrenness. Rapidly they jogged towards the eminence of cliffs, towering high and ragged. Utter loneliness spread around them its eerie appealing charm.

A dozen excellent reasons presented themselves to Asher, for going back; only one for proceeding. But that one was

of such overwhelming importance, that it swallowed up all opposing arguments. His lotus flower called.

NIGHT came, with the quickness of desert climes. Myriads of stars hung in the sultry sky, heavily, as if almost ready to slide down on shafts of their own sparkles. They throbbed and hummed in well-nigh unbearable beauty and in colors unknown and unsung.

Why had he been such a fool leave his good American gun him? Why had he been such a double-dyed fool as to bring his money with him? Why had he not persuaded some of his acquaintances to share the adventure with him? At last, and at least, thought Asher grimly, as he gazed up at the cliff now looming directly over him, and then around at the darkness, tangible as curtaining velvet—why had he not given Gregory some inkling where to lead the search for his body?

Suddenly, the Egyptian laid a detaining hand on the bridle, and stopped the panting donkey. Then he gave a long, soaring call, repeating it at intervals three times. Before Johnny had time to do more than wonder what this new proceeding meant, a light gleamed, in the side of the cliff, to the foot of which they had closely approached. The light showed itself to be in a cave, and outlined the rugged entrance. The boy gurgled a phrase of satisfaction, and pulled suggestively at Johnny's arm.

But the young American needed no such prompting to dismount. For he saw drift into the haze of lemon and silver light, a graceful veiled form. In a frame of night he saw her—and on her breast a lotus flower.

Jumping from the donkey Asher flung himself at the rocks, calling upon his guide to assist him in finding a way up them. But the young rascal only sprang into the vacated saddle and made off into the night, the diminishing clatter of hoofs, rising through the hot air, to warn Johnny of his deserted state.

Scrambling madly to gain a footing, Johnny stumbled and almost fell over, what to his joy proved to be the beginning of a crude flight of steps, cut in the limestone. Up these he rushed, seeing to his dismay, as he did so, a brawny hand seize the girl and drag her back from the entrance of the cave. As he clambered within it, she was already at some little distance, being hurried away from him into a low, winding passage or ravine, that penetrated the rocks. The muffled form who compelled her forward, carried a torch, and the haste of their going caused its spluttering light to waver and sink.

Johnny dashed after them, shouting commands and prayers, and he thought he heard her voice, in faint, imploring answer. But he could not gain upon the fleeing couple, for so twisting and so rough was the path, as it led deeper and deeper among the hills, that he was constantly delayed by bringing up with a bang, against some projecting rock, masked by the uncertain light.

Then with a final flare, the torch was totally extinguished.

Darkness seemed to leap upon him like a creature of actuality, and cling, impeding his progress. Perforce, he had now to feel his way slowly forward. He still shouted from time to time; weird echoes tumbling back.

The ravine or chasm, spread out into wider spaces and here and there Johnny caught glimpses of the starry sky, through riven apertures. It was more by sensing, than by actual knowledge, that he knew subterranean sepulchers, excavated mummy-pits, honeycombed the rocks, and yawned treacherously for his lost and faltering footsteps.

Now began heavings and motions of the air, soft flutterings as unseen wings whimpered by him. Came now, a shrill, tiny shriek.

"The spirits, that guard these hell-holes of tombs, in ravening throes at my desecrating presence!" shuddered Johnny's imagination.

"Bats!" grunted Johnny's commonsense.

Then, all of a sudden, as he stumbled round a shelf of rock, he caught a gleam of light. With renewed hope, he pressed on. A couple more corners turned, and he was in a square room or cave. The torch relighted and stuck in a metal holder, showed the walls, crudely decorated with forbidding monstrosities, queer Egyptian delineations in black and scarlet. In the center—motionless—was the fair form he sought. Again the sweet, enervating incense filled the air, inundating his whole being.

But what is this! His longing arms, closing upon her, fell apart as if galvanized; his glad cry, was choked into a gasp of horror. For the veil, falling, had disclosed the shriveled, distorted features of an old hag. Wonderful Egyptian eyes—yes—but bald and toothless, with dried, and yellowing flesh.

HE HAD been deceived by devilish cunning. His lotus flower girl did not exist, had never existed, save in his own loving fancy. Vaporious fumes of a deadly deliciousness bewildered him. Was it really the emaciated, half-naked form of an impish, filthy crone, old, oh! so old, who danced before him, with

yelps of derision, or was it a demon, risen from the graves of these accursed hills, to torment and confound him?

With a last mocking shout, the old hag dashed the torch to the ground.

In the ensuing blackness, Johnny felt no surprise at being pounced upon by several men at once. It seemed he would never feel any emotion again. The mental shock, coming upon his overwrought state, the demoralizing relaxation of the perfume whose deathly fumes palsied his very thoughts, rendered him callous to what now became of him.

He struggled, however, with hopeless gallantry, again overwhelming odds, but was thrown to the ground; his feet bound together, and his hands tied behind his back. His captors, panting and chattering gruesomely in the dark, proceeded to search his pockets. Johnny could not bring himself to care greatly, when his watch and money and all his smaller valuables were rifled. So that was the meaning of it all, was it? Robbery!

Johnny wondered dully what was the price of dreams.

Suddenly he came to his full senses with an agonizing jolt. Twice before he had felt those awful slimy rags; those powerful hands. The one-eyed beggar was aiding the other men to force over his head a stifling bag. Now indeed, Johnny put forth all his strength, in a mad effort for freedom. But unavailingly. The bag was crushed close and its folds fastened tightly about his neck.

With an awful despair, Johnny heard retreating footsteps; knew that the men had gone; knew that he was abandoned. He was strangling, suffocating, dying—alone and betrayed.

But the healthy surge of his blood, bade him make one more effort for life—bare life, which had never seemed so sweet before. Beating down the panic dizziness which was assailing him, he heaved his strong young body, up against the rocks beside him, striving desperately to tear off the bag. His lungs were bursting, it could not last long. His totally unguided struggles, frantic and helpless, as he turned and wrenched, caused him to cover some little distance. Suddenly he realized with sickening terror, that he was on the edge of a precipice. Before he could stop himself, he was rolling over the verge.

It was in reality his salvation. For in falling, the bag caught on a sharp spear of rock, and ripped open. Badly gouged as his head was at the same time, the rush of air to his suffocating lungs—fresh as if with Heaven's dew—revived him. And the fall was not considerable,

merely a few feet to a bed of comparatively soft and crumbling shale.

Air—blessed air. Johnny lay taking great breaths, and hardly feeling the blood that dripped down from the cut on his head.

But what if the one-eyed ruffian should return, and with his companions, decide to torture him, in his abject helplessness? An unbalanced fear prodded Johnny to roll about in the darkness, until he located a sharp flint and succeeded in filing through the cords that bound his feet, a slow and painful process. Not daring to waste time in freeing his arms, but submitting to the misery of their cramped muscles, he staggered up and began an endeavor to find some way out of the graveyard of hills.

With the blood trickling down on to the torn bag dangling about his neck he moved cautiously forward. He was obliged to test each turning with outstretched foot, lest his sink into some mummy-hole, some frightful cavern of death. At intervals, his dazed glances saw stars, through rifts in the imprisoning crags and each one was Athor, beaming in serene unconcern. Ah! his lost love.

On and on he wandered, groping through endless, inter-communicating channels. It seemed as if he had been moving forever through these dark places of solitude. He was becoming exhausted. The loss of blood from the wound on his head; the hours of exertion in the sultry air; and the thirst which brought a burning fever, combined with the after effects of the vitiating perfume, to sap and drain away his strength.

Only a certain doggedness of courage, which remained when all hope had gone, kept him moving now. He knew if he let himself sit down to rest, he would never go on again. His arms had stopped hurting, they were lucky—they were already dead!

He saw all sorts of things, whirling in snapping splinters of light, about him. He heard all sorts of voices. He was conscious of replying to them politely, once or twice. This struck him as funny, and he laughed aloud, but the sound of his own laughter frightened him horribly. Was he going mad!

The fixed idea that he must keep on walking had become an obsession with him. When therefore, his progress was at last blocked by a smooth wall of metal, he inanely tried to walk through it. It did not seem to him at all peculiar that his pushing shoulder caused the metal wall to move. Nor was he surprised, when with a rumbling, it slid back, dis-

closing an incline, up which soared a flood of light.

Doltishly he stumbled down the sloping path, and found himself at its foot, in a large hall, full of the soft refulgence of reflected lights. The walls were splendidly decorated with Egyptian paintings of most elaborate execution and vivid coloring, group after group, among which writhed the endless coils and folds of enormous serpents. The roof was covered with golden stars, crowns and winged-globes. Was it Athor?

In his torn and blood-stained clothes Johnny stood, swaying unsteadily.

Then from the far end of the rocky chamber, there floated toward him, the well-known cloaked figure; willowy, erect, graceful. But the veil was gone, to reveal a girl's face, fair with youth. The same dark eyes, into which he had closely gazed, in a garden once, in the far distant past, by a bougainvillea vine.

Then a surprised, young voice cried out:

"Oh! Father look! Here's a man, and he's hurt."

"And you," remarked Johnny, quite casually, "are a girl."

Whereupon he pitched forward in a swoon at the feet of Ethelbert Langshaw.

When Johnny regained his senses, lying comfortably on a steamer rug; someone rubbing his numbed arms and someone else dropping chilled water between his lips; he still thought he was in some sort of Egyptian heaven. For over him leaned the lovely lotus flower girl, and she did not really exist, he knew.

IT WAS some little time before he could understand that his involuntary rescuers, were a party of Americans, from Mr. Langshaw's dahabiyeh, who had come in the cool of the dawn—for Asher's adventure had lasted a whole night long—to observe one of the electrically lighted tombs.

"Lucky for you, young man, that we came," declared Clarence Langshaw emphatically. "That you should have accidentally opened the panel above there, is not so strange, but how on earth did

you ever find your way to it, alone and in such a condition?"

Johnny, pulling himself together, told all his amazing story, adding his belief that he had been drugged, both in the one-eyed beggar's house, and in the robbers' den.

"Quite likely," commented Mr. Langshaw, "these people have almost uncanny knowledge of perfumes and poisons and potions of all kinds."

"I can explain some part of these mysteries," said Ethelbert Langshaw, as she sat by Johnny's side. "I was the girl in the garden, night before last."

"You were!" cried Johnny in ecstacy.

"Yes," said Ethelbert with a most becoming blush. "I was waiting for you, Father. I did not see the beggar. I was singing a little song, one of our boatmen taught me. I had noticed Mr. Asher sitting with Gregory Brown, so when he jumped over the terrace, I, Oh! I just thought I'd have a little fun. Of course," she added with a tilt of her pretty chin, "I never thought I'd be found out, and I have not seen Mr. Asher from then, until just now."

"This really explains everything," said Mr. Langshaw, who seemed to be trying to hide a smile of amused indulgence, as he shook his head at his embarrassed daughter. "The beggar was clever enough to notice that an Egyptian girl, as he may really have thought Ethelbert, who wears their costume for convenience, had attracted you, and he saw a chance of profit in developing your fancy for them."

"But how did he know I was going to the native village?" asked Johnny.

"Simply by having a spy in the grounds of the hotel to notify him when to set the stage for your benefit."

"How could I have been so incredibly stupid?" murmured Johnny, looking up at Ethelbert, who comforted him with a fugitive little smile of forgiveness.

"My knowledge of the Egyptian character," continued Mr. Langshaw, "leads me to believe that those men did not mean to leave you to die—they fear their own government too much. They

undoubtedly went back to try and force more money from you, like a ransom. But your fortunate fall cheated them."

"You will try to have them arrested, won't you?" asked one of the party.

"Not if he takes my advice," said Mr. Langshaw, and Johnny earnestly signified his willingness to do so. "It would be only a useless expense and trouble. The one-eyed beggar, the old hag, and the donkey boy will vanish, and every one else in the place will swear no such persons ever existed."

"I will most certainly be guided by you," said Johnny.

"Then you must allow me," said the older man gracefully, "since my advice precludes your recovering your valuables, and also because it was really my madcap daughter's prank that led you into all the trouble in the beginning, to offer you the opportunity of writing some articles on your impressions of Egypt, for one of the papers in which I am interested."

"I shall be most grateful, Sir," said Johnny simply.

An hour later, he sat by Ethelbert's side in the Langshaws' dahabiyeh.

Dreams sometimes come true.

The Nile, in broad tender blues, stretched away to the sea from the sunlight. Inevitable in its flowing, and inscrutable as of old, when in forgotten rites, there had mingled with its waters, wines of sacrifice, and mauve flowers and sweetest juices of fruits. It had carried lovers before.

Johnny took from his breast, the three lotus blossoms and showed them to Ethelbert.

"This is yours," he said, indicating the most faded, "the one you dropped in the garden." Then he threw the others into the Nile.

"I have something to confess," murmured Ethelbert.

Johnny glanced over his shoulder. No one was observing them. He moved close, very close to the graceful, shrouded form.

"Tell me," he whispered, "and then, I will confess something."

"I dropped it on purpose," she said.

Table of Contents

The contents of *Weird Tales* is fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced either wholly or in part without permission from the publishers. All communications should be addressed to the publishers' main office at 854 North Clark St., Chicago, Ill. Subscription, \$2.00 a year in the United States; \$2.50 in Canada. Single copies, 50c.

Why <i>Weird Tales</i> ?— <i>Editorial</i>	1
Imprisoned With the Pharaohs— <i>Houdini</i>	3
"Whoso Diggeth a Pit"— <i>Vida Taylor Adams</i>	13
Deep Calleth— <i>Gordon Burns</i>	16
The Malignant Entity— <i>Otis Adelbert Kline</i>	19
The Sixth Tree— <i>Edith Lichty Stewart</i>	27
The Haunted Mansion in the Pines— <i>Leonard F. Schumann</i>	29
Spirits— <i>J. M. Alvey</i>	32
Hypnos— <i>H. P. Lovecraft</i>	33
Ebenezer's Casket— <i>J. U. Giesy and Junius B. Smith</i>	36
Draconda— <i>John Martin Leahy</i>	41
The Hand— <i>H. Francis Caskey</i>	50
The Loved Dead— <i>C. M. Eddy, Jr.</i>	54
The Vow on Halloween— <i>Lyllian Huntley Harris</i>	58
Eyes— <i>Galen C. Colin</i>	59
The Man Who Thought He Was Dead— <i>Granville S. Hoss</i>	61
Called Back— <i>Dan W. Totheron</i>	65
The Sunken Land— <i>George W. Bayly</i>	69
The Dancing Partner— <i>Guy L. Helms</i>	74
The Last Entry— <i>Meredith Beyers</i>	76
The Purple Death— <i>Edith Lyle Ragsdale</i>	77
The Impostor— <i>Norman Springer</i>	82
Weird Crimes— <i>Seabury Quinn</i>	87
Just Bones— <i>Samuel Stewart Mims</i>	91
First Degree— <i>Robert Cosmo Harding</i>	96
The Latvian— <i>Herman Fetzer</i>	101
The Machine from Outside— <i>Don Howard</i>	106
Dr. Grant's Experiment— <i>H. A. Voureddin Addis</i>	111
Tea Leaves— <i>Henry S. Whitehead</i>	116
An Egyptian Lotus— <i>Mrs. Chetwood Smith</i>	121
Deep Sea Game— <i>Arthur J. Messier</i>	127
The Soul Mark— <i>H. C. Wire</i>	131
It— <i>E. M. Samson</i>	135
The Man Who Lived Next Door to Himself— <i>Frank Owen</i>	139
Mystery River— <i>Elwin J. Owens</i>	143
The God Ymano— <i>Marjorie Darter</i>	145
The Cellar— <i>Paul L. Anderson</i>	147
In the Weird Light— <i>Edward Everett Wright and Ralph Howard Wright</i>	152
A Glimpse Beyond— <i>H. M. Hamilton</i>	164
Ask Houdini.....	167