

*REX HALL'S Eerie Tale of
An Egyptian Mummy*

Down Through the Ages

AS Professor Darius signed the express receipt and saw the men carry in a mummy case he drew a deep sigh of relief.

His precious discovery was safe in his hands at last.

Perhaps, in that case, lay the mummy of some Egyptian King or Queen.

He had counted the days since he had left the ruins, and, his shipment placed in the hands of a shipping company, had hurried back to the United States to prepare his fellow members in the Society of Archaeology for the treat he had in that case for them. He had promised that they should share in the honor of any discoveries made during his last trip. Now the time was at hand. What mystery would the case reveal?

Professor Darius had discovered the case while exploring in parts of Egypt as yet untouched by searchers' hands. Digging into a dune far removed from the Pyramids he had uncovered a tomb. Removing the single mummy it had contained, he had hurried home.

The examination would be made before the society. Then, perhaps, a decision would be made for further expeditions. He, himself, would be the leader. They would carry on until they had uncovered all the ancient burial places of Egypt.

He noted, with satisfaction, that the seal he had placed on the case was unbroken.

Although his fingers fairly itched to open the case, he banished the idea and, dropping into an easy chair, gave himself up to pleasant reflections.

He had done fairly well in the fifteen years just past in the study of Egyptian Archaeology, for he had gathered one of the richest collections of antiquities outside a museum. Roughly figuring, his collection would run close to the million dollar mark if he should care to sell at the value he placed upon it.

The Professor was nearing the half century mark in years, but still his muscular frame throbbled with the warm blood of health and vigor. He was strikingly handsome, clean-cut and up-standing, and while there were many women who would have considered it an honor to marry him, he was still a bachelor.

His research work had started while he had been on a tour of Egypt. He had fallen in with Trenfold near the Sphinx some fifteen years before. Trenfold had asked him to join in a search for relics. As he had nothing else to do, he had taken the offer. Trenfold had been killed by a fall of rocks, but the fever had entered the Professor's blood. He had kept on searching. The work grew into a passion. Something seemed calling from the dark past, spurring him to continue his searches. On the brief trips he made back to the States he felt ill at ease. Felt a lost lonesome feeling and a sense of guilt as if he were neglecting some duty.

Now, at last, it seemed he had found his reward. He felt as if a tension had been let down somewhere, and that he was at peace with the whole universe. He felt that for the first time in his life, he would be glad to stay at home. In this pleasant frame of mind he locked up the office and went out for lunch.

"GENTLEMEN," said Professor Darius, as he noted the entrance of the last member and the expectant air prevailing, "I see you are all anxious, so I'll not keep you waiting. There is the case. You see it bears my seal. I have never examined the mummy."

The seal was examined with ceremony and the case opened.

There was nothing out of the ordinary upon first examination. There were the same musty swathings and the dust of ages, yet, after a few layers had been removed there stole into the room an odor of perfumery.

The Professor stopped in his work and looked from one face to the other.

"As I live, the odor of violets!"

"Remarkable!" exclaimed Professor Smith. "Nevertheless, its here."

The subject was fully exhausted before the society carried the examination on. Finally they came to the last winding and, with an exclamation, Professor Darius exposed to view a piece of papyrus.

Here was work for the society, and plenty of it. They worked that night and for many others, until at last they had it translated.

"This translation," remarked Darius, "claims that the mummy is one Attalia. She was a worker of magic through the power of a harp she played. She met her death, after selling her soul for more power, through disobedience to her master, the Evil One. A certain Haggai is mentioned here as her enemy, and the cause of her death. Her great love was Jabneel, a temple priest, who, for her sake, broke his vows. It is through this harp that she hopes to reclaim her lover and take revenge on Haggai, who seems to have been a rival magician of ill repute."

The Professor dropped the papyrus on the desk.

"Remarkable. Out of the ordinary, I should say. Most of these writings generally represent the wonders of the one they are written about, their kindnesses, their battles and how they were favored by their gods. I've never read a paper such as this.

"According to this papyrus, Attalia has been a wicked woman. She will place a curse on the unlucky devil disturbing her last resting place. I found no harp. It must have been with her, but in my excitement I evidently overlooked it."

A worried expression shadowed his face.

"I believe, gentlemen, I—er—I'm of the opinion that I should go back and find her harp."

"Why do that? Are you afraid of a mummy curse?" asked Professor Smith.

Professor Darius' face flushed. He snapped his fingers.

"That's what I care for her curse. She has been dead for thousands of years. Haven't I pulled through this far? Of course I disturbed her. It was against her wishes, but I had no way of knowing it until after we read the warning. I fear nothing."

"Ha! ha!" laughed the youngest member, called "the upstart" by the older men, "Attalia's got him worried, or I miss my guess. Scared by some gibberish on a piece of papyrus three thousand years old! Take my advice, Darius, and go back after that harp, if you want to save your neck."

The Professor bent a cold gaze upon the upstart.

"Young man, you still have much to learn, but you heard what I said. I am going back, not to save my neck, as you put it, but because something tells me to go. I can't say just what it is, that something. It is intangible, but I must go back."

"When are you going?" asked Jones.

"Just as soon as I can make arrangements. I'll promise you gentlemen one thing, however. I'll be back in six months."

"We'll hold you to that," cautioned Jones. "Make a definite date and time, so we can all be here together."

"I'll do that, too. This is June the first. Meet me here in the office at eight o'clock on the first day of November."

"You're on!" laughed Jones, "we'll be here, and if you bring back the old girl's harp, I'll show you how to play on it."

"What did you say you would do?" asked Professor Darius.

"Play the harp," laughed the upstart.

"I repeat, you have a lot to learn," declared the Professor.

"Perhaps I have," chuckled Jones, "but I'll play the harp if you bring it back."

The Professor drilled the upstart with a side glance out of cold blue eyes.

"If you would devote more of your time to the study of our society and spend less time in the art of parlor magic for the amusement of a bunch of your rattle-headed friends, you might, in the course of twenty or thirty years become a valuable member."

Jones granted.

"Do you wish me to think that you don't like me, Professor? Well, I'm not going to think that you do. In place of getting angry, I'd like to show you my latest magical trick. Do you care to see it?"

"Never mind. Good night, gentlemen. I'll let you know when I leave for Egypt."

IT was an expectant group of members that awaited the arrival of Professor Darius six months later.

Young Jones glanced at his watch and laughingly remarked:

"I packed Attalia's mummy back into the storeroom today while the janitor was cleaning up for the homecoming. Thought it would be a good thing to do. She might see her harp, and start something."

The distinguished body ignored this remark.

"Strange," droned Professor Smith, "that we have had no word from the Professor."

Jones was not so easily silenced.

"Oh, he'll be showing up presently. I'll bet ten dollars he has no harp."

Eight o'clock arrived, and, with it, the Professor.

As he staggered into the office, his friends gave a gasp of horror and astonishment. A terrible and unbelievable change had been wrought in the man's appearance. Instead of the hearty, good-natured man of six months previous, there now stood, leaning heavily against the desk, a mere wreck. Deep lines of suffering furrowed his chalky brow. His eyes burned with an unnatural light and were sunken in their sockets. His hair was snow white, and he trembled in every joint.

As he walked with faltering steps to the chair which Jones hastened to place for him, he said weakly:

"Gentlemen—the six—six months are up and I—I am here."

"What in heaven's name has happened to you?" asked the upstart, aghast.

"Find out—later. You remember, I laughed about the curse of a dead woman—Attalia."

"Yes."

"The tale I am going to tell will make you doubt my sanity. Perhaps I am crazy, for I've been through enough to drive a man insane. When I finish, draw your own conclusions. I have been sick with a terrible fever—should be in bed now—"

"You better rest now, Professor," suggested Jones. "We can wait."

"No. I must tell you. There isn't much time left."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Professor Smith.

"You'll know when I finish."

"Did you find the harp?" asked Jones.

"Yes. It is in the package."

"What package?"

The Professor half started to his feet and passed his shaky hand through his white locks in a bewildered manner. He seemed laboring under great excitement and apparently was trying to gather his scattered wits. In a moment he sank back into his chair, trembling and weak, saying:

"Oh, yes. The harp. Now I remember. It is outside in the hall. Get it quick!"

Jones went outside, and returned with a bulky package. He placed it at the Professor's feet.

Darius drew a sigh of relief.

After resting for a few minutes, he told his story.

HE had had no trouble in relocating the tomb. The only thing bothering him was a slow burning fever, overtaking him shortly after his expedition had started.

He had taken a small army of blacks with him to do the heavy work. Day after day the blacks searched for the harp, while the Professor lay tortured by the fever.

One day a black came to his tent and told him that they had found the harp.

"I went to the tomb and saw it. It was rather crude-looking and was made from some bronze metal covered with the thinnest beaten gold, and the workmanship was beautiful.

"I was feeling weak, so I ordered one of the blacks to pick up the harp and bring it to my tent. He started to obey. A terrible thing happened! The black gave a mortal cry of anguish and dropped dead before my very eyes!

"For a second or two I was speechless, and more so when I noticed the odor of violets float into the tomb.

"It was the same odor we noticed when we examined the mummy so many months ago.

"I wondered what could be the explanation for the black's death. Could it be possible that Attalia's curse was working? The odor in the tomb seemed to be the answer. The thought that this unhappy woman, who could hand down her black magic after so many years, was present in the very tomb gave me a creepy feeling.

"It may sound heartless, but I tried a cruel experiment. Perhaps the black had died from a natural cause. I would try another one, to make sure. I went outside the tomb to get a man still in ignorance of what had happened and brought him back with me. Poor devil. I shall never forgive myself. The moment he touched the harp he gave a scream of anguish, dropped the golden thing and threw out both arms as if trying to ward off some approaching evil. His eyes were terrible to look at. Then he, too, dropped stone dead beside the other.

"Once more the odor floated through the tomb, and then died away. Beyond a single doubt, it was the work of the sorceress, and in a frenzy of fear I cried aloud to the two dead men to the walls of the tomb in my fear and agony."

The Professor paused to rest. Great beads of sweat were standing on his furrowed brow. The members of the

society cast uneasy and apprehensive glances at the harp at his feet.

"I cried aloud, 'Attalia, if you are present, show me a sign. Will I be permitted to take the harp?'"

"I waited a second or two, then it seemed I had my answer. The tension let down and I felt easier, while through the tomb floated the delicate odor once more, but fresher and stronger. It seemed as if something had brushed past my face. I thought that someone stood beside me. Suddenly the tension tightened, and I felt called upon to exert my will to the utmost to combat something intangible trying to overcome me. Two or three times I felt as if I must go under the strain. The tension broke, and I felt myself growing calm and peaceful. With trepidation, I picked up the harp and stood shaking in my shoes. I expected death, but it did not come. I left the dismal place. Straight to my encampment I hurried, with the determination to leave at once for America.

"I placed the harp near my berth and went to bed. My fever was raging again, and I felt strangely weak.

"I could not sleep. My mind insisted on dwelling upon the events at the tomb.

"As I lay wide awake, the place was filled with a strange light. I glanced around in astonishment to learn the cause. When I saw the reason, I closed my eyes and sank back on the pillow, gasping for breath. I had looked upon one of the most radiant and beautiful women that man has ever gazed upon.

"She was an Egyptian, and she was dressed in the clothing worn thousands of years ago. Her hair was as black as the night and was bound over her ears with a band of gold. In her ears were long golden charms or rings. Her head was regal in its poise and her eyes were liquid wells of jet which seemed ever burning with changing lights. She smiled and pointed at the harp.

"Fear not. You have brought the harp. It is well. Now mark my words well. Take the harp to my body in the far land. Then will come Haggai to taunt. Then shall my revenge be complete and my soul find rest."

"Who are you?" I asked.

"Attalia, once high priestess to the master of darkness."

"Attalia is dead," I told her.

"In the flesh, only. There is no death to the spirit. I have wished for it, yea thousands of times, when I found that down through the ages I could not reclaim my lost love, Jabneel. I could obtain no such mercy. I must ever go as I am, a tortured soul, until I have

my revenge, and can be free to join him."

"I told her that she was flesh and blood. She bade me touch her and see. When I reached out to take her hand I found nothing but thin air. Then she stooped over, as if to kiss me, and I sensed the odor of violets.

"Now do you believe?" she asked.

"I asked her what I had done to displease her. She said that I had disturbed her body and had taken it to a far land. She said that she had willed it so. Her will had directed me to the spot. Now, if I would take the harp back and place it with the mummy her plans would be complete. She would get her revenge on Haggai. I asked her who Haggai was, and what revenge she craved.

"She told me that death was her revenge for Haggai. He was a handsome devil and powerful in the art of magic. He was so powerful that the master feared him. There was only one other bidding to equal the power of Haggai, and that was Attalia. She had made a bargain with the master to bring disgrace upon the high priest at the temple. Jabneel was the priest, and the master hated him. For this favor the master would give her the magic harp and she could win power over Haggai.

"When she went to the temple, she fell in love with the high priest. She refused to keep her part of the bargain. Jabneel was found in her arms and put to death, and for her failure to keep her bargain she had been cursed to go down through the ages, never being allowed to claim the soul of her lost lover, Jabneel. Then she said that I was Jabneel."

"I asked how that could be possible. She said that I had passed from one body to another, and, during that time, she had searched for me when my soul was free for a spell, but that I was kept from her by the power of Haggai. She said that Haggai was living in a body at the present time. His power was waning, for he had learned during the years of the evil he had wrought. The harp must be placed with her body; that was the only way to break the curse of the master.

"I told her that I would do my best, and then I asked her why she had killed the black servants.

"They were dogs," she replied.

"She lingered for a spell, and then, bending over, kissed me and faded away. I found myself bolt upright in bed and wet with a clammy sweat, and the tent was dark.

"Had it all been a terrible nightmare? Had it been the result of the fever?

These questions were coursing through my tortured brain. I could not answer them. Everything seemed too real.

"I called for a black to bring a light, for I was afraid.

"As soon as he entered, I looked for the harp. It was gone!"

"The harp had suddenly grown to be my dearest possession. It was necessary that I keep it to claim Attalia and help her get her revenge. I must confess that I was wildly in love with her. Now I had the solution of what had kept me digging in the ruins of Egypt. It was as plain as day. The love for my lost bride of three thousand years ago. During all this time she had lived in the spirit world, watching for me. Now the harp was gone. Two minutes before, the tent had been filled with her radiance and the harp in plain sight. Now it was gone, and with the full knowledge of what the loss meant to Attalia and myself, something snapped. That's the last I know until I came to myself in a coast hospital and saw an anxious doctor and nurse standing over me.

"He is coming out of his delirium," I heard the doctor say, as I opened my eyes.

"A look of quick disappointment spread over his face when I asked with my first breath for news of Attalia and the harp.

"He told the nurse that I was crazy, and while they talked about me Attalia came in and smiled at me. I called the doctor's attention to her, but he gave me a soothing powder and told me to try and go back to sleep.

"Attalia talked to me for hours and told me to go to the far land as soon as I was able to travel. The harp would be placed in my hands in some way. It all seemed hazy to me, then the nurse gave me some more medicine, and I went to sleep.

"I dreamed that I was with Attalia, far out on the burning sands of the desert. In the distance burned a tiny campfire and swarthy men were around it, playing with the harp.

"Attalia commanded me to go and demand it. I walked into their midst unarmed. When they saw my condition, they charged me with drawn knives. Came a tinkle of laughter, a clap like thunder, and the men were blasted and lay dead before me.

"As I stood in amazement I heard the laughter growing fainter and fainter, then a voice bidding me farewell for a space.

"When I awoke in the morning the harp was lying beside me on the bed.

The nurse said that a black had brought it in.

"As soon as I was able to travel I set sail for home. I feel that my time is very short. There was something in that farewell on the desert that told me so."

SILENCE reigned for several minutes, during which the members glanced at each other in amazement.

Young Jones broke the oppressive silence:

"Darius, you must have gone through hell to get that harp. I'm going to take a look at it."

The Professor assented, warning him to be careful.

Jones took out the harp.

"Who put the strings on it?" he asked.

"I did," admitted the Professor. "It was her order."

Jones swept his fingers over the strings. They gave out strange weird music. He smiled into the Professor's face.

"So this is the harp that our Attalia charmed them with, is it? I wonder how much of a hit she would make playing in one of our jazz bands!"

"Put that harp down!" exclaimed the Professor:

"Why? What harm can I do to it, Professor? I mean no disrespect to your Attalia, but I'm of the opinion that you have had trouble enough. You need cheering up. I'm the boy to do it, Darius. Watch me!"

Young Jones thumped wild sounds from the weirdly sounding harp and shocked the members of the society with his idea of an Egyptian dance.

"Take warning, Jones! Put down the harp! She told me something else. Stop! I'll tell you what it is."

"Wait until I finish—"

"No! Stop now, before it is too—"

But Jones was dancing and singing to the accompaniment of the harp, his noise drowning the feeble croaking of Professor Darius.

"Out of my way, men!" he shouted, dancing toward the storeroom. "Something is dragging me on! Wow! I can't stop! I'm going to dance for Attalia!"

With the Professor croaking for the other members to stop him, Jones danced gaily up to the hideous, shriveled mummy. Darius had just reached his side with repeated warnings, when Jones gave a scream, threw down the harp and staggered from the storeroom covering his eyes with his arms.

As he swept past Darius the mummy gave a lurch and fell with a crash face down. With a wild scream, Darius clutched his heart and fell sprawling across her. When the other members of the society came to his assistance, he was dead.

Jones was found trembling in an office chair.

Wheu told that Darius was dead he turned as white as a sheet. Then:

"No wonder he is dead! I am inclined to believe that story he told. When I danced in front of that thing, I'll swear to my dying day that she smiled at me! It was one of the wickedest smiles I ever want to see."

He shuddered:

"Who knows? I must have been Haggai."

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