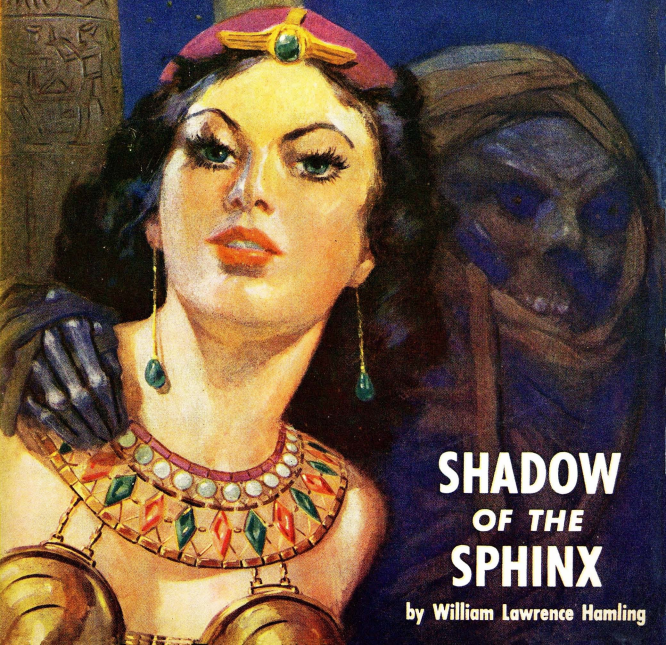


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ADVENTURES



SHADOW OF THE SPHINX

by William Lawrence Hamling

fantastic ADVENTURES



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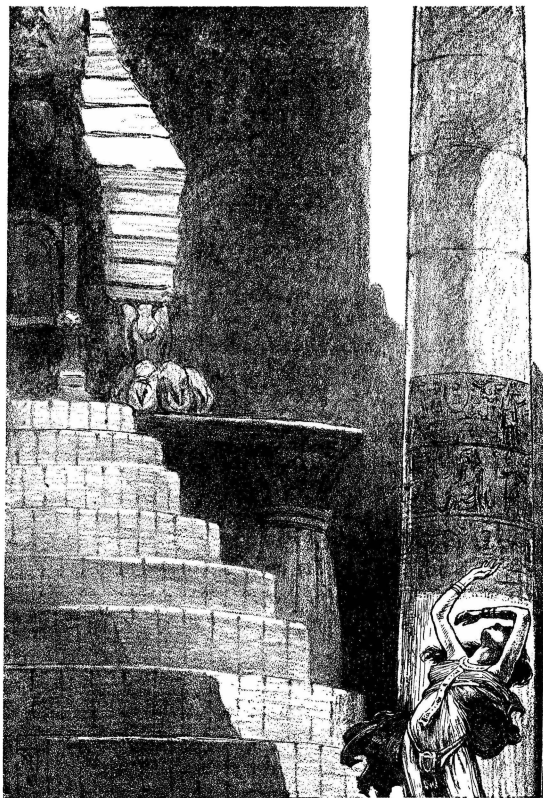
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The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

WE'RE leading off this issue with a short novel by William Lawrence Hamling, entitled: "Shadow of the Sphinx." The story starts off in the Field Museum in Chicago, and ends up on the sands of Egypt. You'll cover a lot of ground in this yarn, and you'll meet a very interesting woman named Zaleikka. The most interesting thing about her is her age. Most people can't guess a woman's age, and in Zaleikka's case, a safe guess would be in the thousands—of years. J. Allen St. John painted the cover around the story, and also did the interiors. We think he caught the mood of the story pretty well. See if you don't agree with us.



Barry dashed into the chamber to see Zaleikka swaying before the stone figure

SHADOW of the SPHINX

By WILLIAM LAWRENCE HAMLING

CHAPTER I

A Mummy Vanishes

BUSY day again, Mr. Randall." Barry Randall nodded to the head guard and paused to scan the influx of the afternoon crowd. "Looks like it, Mike," he said. "Tell the boys to keep their eyes peeled. With Doctor Slater retiring and the Curatorship open, I wouldn't want anything to happen. I've all but got the job cinched."

Mike looked surprised. "I've been

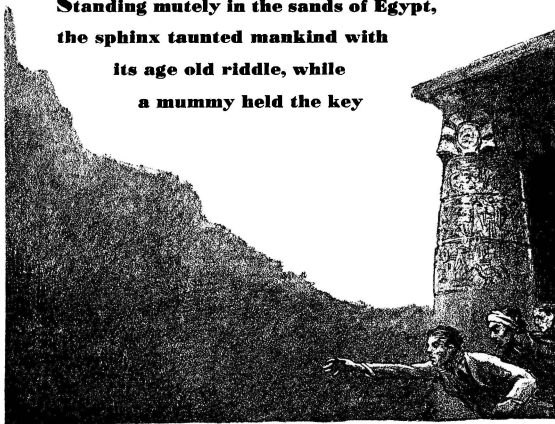
connected with the Field Museum for over fifteen years, Mr. Randall, and I've yet to see anything happen."

Barry shrugged. "You never know," he said and strode into the side aisle leading to the Curator's office. He had taken only about three steps when he heard Mike calling him back. He turned questioningly.

"What's the matter?"

Mike frowned. "Nothing, really, Mr. Randall. I just happened to remember those three geezers who have been coming in every afternoon—you know, the guys who go to the Egyptian

**Standing mutely in the sands of Egypt,
the sphinx taunted mankind with
its age old riddle, while
a mummy held the key**



wing and just stand for a couple of hours before that Priestess Zaleikka's mummy. Well they came in about five minutes ago. Suppose I better put a guard on that aisle just in case?"

Barry paused thoughtfully for a moment, and then shook his head. "No, don't bother. I'll take a look myself. Thanks, Mike."

He strode away, mixing himself with the crowd and unconsciously chewed the inside of his lower lip. So they were there again! It was getting to be an almost regular occurrence. Every afternoon, promptly at three they arrived and made a beeline for the Egyptian wing. Nothing else in the museum seemed to hold any attraction for them. And only one item in the Egyptian wing seemed worthy of their attention. It wasn't normal. Ordinary visitors didn't do that. And more than anything else, why did they pick on the mummy of an obscure Priestess of the Fourth Dynasty? There was nothing about her to excite undue interest that he knew. He had even traced back on her history in the past few days to make sure. All that was known about her was that she had lived in the time of King Khafre, the builder of the Sphinx. Her tomb had been opened in the ancient ruins of Gizeh near the great Pyramid. There was some connection between her and the Priests of the Temple of Karnak, but nothing definite. Why should anybody single her out for intensive study, day after day?

He rounded the facade of the Egyptian wing and strolled slowly down the fifth aisle. Only a few scattered visitors were in the wing.

At the end of the aisle he stopped. There was a large display case jutting out at right angles to the aisle. He slipped behind it and peered cautiously over the glass top.

They stood at the far end of the

aisle, huddled silently around the upright mummy case, like an expectant audience. Barry scrutinized the men. Two tall, hulking individuals, with a smaller, slighter one between them. It was almost as though the two were guarding the smaller one, protecting him against some threatened menace. They had short foreheads, flat noses of the prize ring, little, hard eyes almost hidden in gristle and scar tissue. One of them was obviously of foreign stock, his skin a dark swarthy baked tan. Barry thought of the Orient.

The man between them presented an entirely different picture. He was small, dapper, in a blue melton overcoat and gray homburg hat. His features were classic and pale, almost as if someone had chiseled them in a hard stone. He had a small waxed moustache which he fingered delicately with a finely gloved hand. His fingers were long and slender, and the expensive kid that covered them seemed in harmony with the alabaster face it touched. His left hand held a black leather traveling bag.

They just stood there, silently staring. And Barry Randall frowned. Why? Just as every day, they stood there before the mummy, as if transfixed.

THE swarthy faced man suddenly turned his head and Barry caught two black piercing eyes fixed on him. He felt himself growing embarrassed under that gaze—as if he had been a child caught stealing apples in somebody's yard. The man nudged the shorter man next to him. Slowly the pale features turned toward the aisle. Barry felt a pair of cold blue eyes. There was something almost hypnotic in them. And something else. Something *alien*.

Almost before he knew it he was

walking down the aisle toward them. He stopped a few feet away and managed a smile.

"I'm Barry Randall, Assistant Curator of the museum—is there any way I can help you?"

They stared at him, and it was the smaller man who finally answered in crisp decisive words:

"Thank you, no—Mr. Randall."

Nothing more. But the tone left Barry with the assurance that he was expected to leave. Questions rose to his lips but the coldness of the man's eyes stilled them. He shrugged and turned away.

He had taken only a few steps but the resolve was now firm in his mind that something was wrong. Nothing tangible that he could see, but he felt it. "Maybe Mike was right about putting a guard here," he muttered. And then he stopped short.

"Mr. Randall."

He turned to find the smaller man staring at him. He retraced his steps.

"Yes?"

"Mr. Randall, there is something you can tell me."

Barry inclined his head. "Yes?"

"This mummy, Mr. Randall—is it genuine?"

It was such a silly question that Barry could have laughed. His premonitions swept away as he nodded.

"Of course it is genuine. The priestess Zaleikka's tomb was excavated quite by accident two years ago during the war, at Gizeh, Egypt. Is there anything in particular you care to know about her? Her history is sketchy and obscure but I'd be glad—"

"Thank you, Mr. Randall." The man nodded his head imperceptibly and Barry felt the coldness return.

"May I ask just why you are so interested—"

"Thank you—no."

There was nothing else to do but walk away. He met Mike out in the central annex directing a group of people. Mike nodded to him.

"Did you see those guys, Mr. Randall?"

Barry grinned. "You can forget about them, Mike. They're a little queer, but harmless. The only thing they wanted to know was if the mummy was authentic!"

Mike laughed. "It takes all kinds," he said. "What did they think this was—Madame Toussard's?"

IT WAS five minutes to closing time.

Barry glanced at his wrist watch as he sat behind his desk in the Curator's office, thumbing through some late afternoon mail. He liked the feel of the padded leather chair. He also liked the little "Curator" on the glazed glass door facing him. In just another week, after the Board of Directors met, he'd have that title permanently. Why shouldn't he? The Museum affairs were running smoothly, there hadn't been any trouble since he took over in an acting capacity.

The door burst open and Mike rushed into the room.

"Mr. Randall!"

Barry glanced up, startled. "What the hell's got into you?"

Mike gripped the edges of the desk with nervous fingers. His eyes were wide and bulging. Sweat glistened on his forehead.

"The mummy—it's gone! It's disappeared!"

Barry stiffened in his chair. "Mummy? What mummy?"

Mike swallowed hard. "The mummy—Priestess Zaleikka—it's been stolen!"

Barry sat stunned. It took a few moments for the words to sink in, and when they did, his face grew pale. "If

this is some kind of a joke, Mike . . .”

“So help me God, Mr. Randall, it’s gone—vanished! Come and see for yourself!”

Barry shot out of the chair. Seconds later he was running through the deserted Egyptian wing with Mike at his heels. Even as he rounded the fifth aisle he knew what he was going to find.

The mummy case was empty.

He stood there staring in disbelief while behind him Mike was babbling.

“See—it’s gone! I just happened to be walking through the wing on a final checkup before closing — I was still thinking of those three geezers and how funny they acted . . .”

Barry whirled. “That’s it! Sound the alarm—lock the doors! They must still be inside—the guard at the entrance wouldn’t have let them get by!”

Mike nodded and hurried away. Moments later there was a loud clanging of bells and a rising shout of voices as the museum guards alerted. Barry was running down the fifth aisle toward the entrance even as Mike came running with the entrance guard beside him.

“They’ve gone!” Mike blurted out. “Slim says they left about fifteen minutes ago!”

Barry grabbed the startled guard by the arm. “Think hard, man! Are you *sure* they left? Were they carrying anything?”

The man shook his head. “Yes, sir—no, sir—I mean yes I’m sure they left, but they weren’t carrying anything—they only had the girl with them.”

Barry froze. “Girl? What girl?”

“I don’t know, Mr. Randall,” the guard replied. “I never saw her before. I don’t even remember seeing her come in this afternoon and I’ve been on duty since this morning. I would have remembered her face too . . .”

Mike was shaking his head perplexedly. “But if you’re sure they didn’t have anything with them—and I’ll be damned if they could carry a mummy past you without your knowing it—then where in blazes did it go?”

The guard shrugged. “I don’t know. All I can tell you is that I saw the three of them leave—and their hands were empty. And they had a girl with them.”

SOMETHING clicked in Barry Randall’s mind. He remembered when he had seen them last, the shorter man in the homburg hat had been carrying a black traveling bag!

“Look, Slim,” he said tensely. “Are you sure one of them wasn’t carrying a black bag?”

The guard screwed up his face in thought. “Now that you mention it I remember one of them *did* have a bag when they came in!”

Barry turned abruptly and retraced his steps back to the empty mummy case. Swiftly he searched around the case and his breath drew in sharply.

He pulled the bag, now open and empty, from behind the case.

“That’s it!” Slim announced.

Barry nodded grimly. Yes, that was it. But what did it mean? Three men walk into the museum, one of them carrying this leather bag. Three men walk out of the museum, without the bag, *but with a young woman in its place!* And at the same time a mummy over three thousand years old disappears!

“Mr. Randall! Look at this!”

Mike was over in the shadowed corner behind the mummy case. When he walked back into the light, his hands were holding a mass of cloth.

“Good Lord!” Barry muttered. “Those are linen mummy wrappings!”

Mike was swallowing hard. "Sir, I don't like the looks of this. If them guys stole the mummy, why should they bother to unwrap it—here? And besides, *they* couldn't have stolen it—Slim would have seen it!"

Barry felt himself growing cold inside. He was afraid to think of what had started to grow in his mind. He stared at the mass of yellowed and brittle linen in Mike's hands. There was no doubt but that the mummy had been unwrapped by somebody—and the black bag, what had it contained? Something to take the place of the wrappings? But why? And if it had, what had become of the mummy? The men hadn't carried it out—and it couldn't walk out of its own volition!

Or could it? . . . The chill inside him grew. It was fantastic, too incredible to think of. But he thought of it, he couldn't help it. *Who* was the girl that had walked out with them? And *where* had she come from? . . .

"Mr. Randall—look at this!"

Mike had dropped the tattered cloth strips on the floor and something had fallen out of the mass. Mike had it in his hand. It was a glove.

"One of them must have dropped this," he said.

Barry took the glove, his fingers trembling. Yes, one of them had dropped it! A vision sprang up in his mind of a gloved hand delicately fingering a small waxed moustache. The man who wore the homburg hat, of course!

"What do you make of it, Mr. Randall? Any way we can trace it?" Mike broke in on his thoughts.

Barry studied the glove without answering. It was a gray, sleek kid glove, obviously expensive. From the appearance of the leather it was practically new. He turned back the flap, and there it was. The label.

"Antoine's, Custom Made," he said aloud. Antoine's. The word echoed in his mind. Of course! Antoine's on Michigan Avenue—one of the most exclusive shops in the Loop area.

"Mr. Randall, what are we going to do—call the police?" Mike was fidgeting beside him.

"Police?" Barry echoed the word. Yes, he would like to call the police. But *could* he? What would he tell them? That a mummy had been stolen? *Had* it been stolen? You couldn't put a mummy in your back pocket and walk past an alert guard. The police would laugh at that. But where was the mummy then? Somewhere in the museum?

Footsteps pounded up the aisle. Barry turned swiftly as a group of guards ran up. One of them blurted out:

"We've searched everywhere, sir. It would have been impossible to leave the Egyptian wing with the mummy without somebody noticing it. It's not in the museum!"

Not in the museum. Barry stared down at the glove. Antoine's. Suddenly he stared at his watch. It was a quarter past five. There might be time yet! He turned to Mike determinedly.

"We won't call the police, Mike. We don't have any real evidence that the mummy was stolen. Hush the matter up for the time being—I'll be responsible."

"But the Directors!" Mike protested.

The chill grew inside Barry. Yes, the directors. They would be coming soon, and they wouldn't like this. Anger gripped him.

"I'll have it back before the Directors come!" he snapped.

Mike watched him stride away and sadly shook his head.

CHAPTER II

Dr. Anubis

"I'M SORRY, sir, we're closing for the day."

Barry Randall had one foot in the door and the clerk was staring at him politely, but coldly.

"I know it's late," Barry protested, "but it's very important that I see you tonight—"

The clerk was adamant as he tried to dislodge Barry's foot from the door. "I'm sorry, sir, but our sales have closed for the day."

"I don't want to buy anything!" Barry shouted. "I want to see the manager!"

The clerk stepped back almost fearfully and Barry wedged himself inside the door. He was just in time to see a tall, bristling man, dressed in flowing tails and pin-stripe trousers, come blustering up.

"What is the matter, Perkins?" he demanded haughtily.

"This man, sir, he insists on coming in," the clerk answered.

"Indeed!" Pencil pants fixed frosty eyes on Barry. Barry snorted distastefully.

"I want to see the manager. My name is Randall, here is my card." He handed pencil pants a card. The frosty eyes swept over the engraving and a miraculous change ensued. Finely kept eyebrows puckered up and an effusive smile transferred the ice into a welcome of warmth.

"Mr. Randall of the Museum! Come right in, sir—it is a bit late, true, but—" He took Barry's arm courteously and favored the astonished clerk with an icy glare. "You may lock the door, now, Perkins—and kindly watch your manners hereafter!"

Barry was swept up to an elaborate

display counter that fairly screamed dollars with a capital D.

"I am the manager, Mr. Randall, and now, how can I serve you?"

The manager rubbed his well-kept fingers together expectantly. Barry conceived that if he didn't reach for his check book he would be committing a sacrilege. He pulled the kid glove from his coat pocket.

"This is one of your products, isn't it?"

The manager took the glove and turned it with deft fingers. A wide smile covered his face. "But of course—the Cordovan kid! You wish another pair?"

Barry sighed. "No, I do not wish another pair. I rather expected that since this is an expensive glove, and obviously custom made, that you would have a record of the sale. To be exact, to whom you actually sold it."

The manager frowned. "But I don't understand—is this not your glove?"

Barry shook his head patiently. "No. It is not my glove. One of our visitors at the museum left it behind this afternoon, and for very good reasons I want to return it personally."

"Oh." Sadness erased the dollar-and-cents smile. "You wish me to trace the owner from our files—is that it?"

"Yes, if you don't mind," Barry replied wearily. "It is very urgent."

Pencil pants shrugged dolefully. "Very well, Mr. Randall. If you will just wait a few minutes."

"I'll wait."

The few minutes were close to half an hour. But finally the manager made his appearance. He had a beaming smile, the glove, and a slip of paper.

"I have it, Mr. Randall. This glove was made for a Doctor Anubis of one hundred East Wilton Place. I have the address written down."

"Dr. Anubis!" the words crossed

Barry Randall's lips. An odd chill seemed to grip him. He remembered an alabaster face. A strange, classic face, a face that now seemed to take on new significance. The mummy . . . Egypt . . . "Anubis!"

"Yes, it is an odd name, isn't it?" Pencil pants was still beaming. "Possibly you might be interested in a pair of gloves like this—they are the best, I can assure you—the last word in *chic!*"

Barry didn't seem to hear him. He mumbled a vague "Thank you," and headed for the door. Perkins had it open before he got there.

Pencil pants watched him stalk out, his mouth open. "A definitely peculiar fellow," he observed, clicking his teeth into place. "But he must have money! . . . Oh, well."

Outside, Barry Randall hailed a passing cab.

WILTON Place was a private one-way street running for three blocks West of Sheridan Road. The Drake Hotel loomed up into the night a few blocks south. Barry Randall discharged the cab and stood for a few moments on the silent street staring at the bronzed "100" set in a formidable masonry wall. An old fashioned iron gate was open on a cobblestone driveway, from which he could see the vague outline of a string of parked cars.

The inside of the wall was ringed with a tall hedge, and the grounds, going back for some fifty feet were spattered with tall cottonwoods. The house itself, as he approached it from the driveway, was an old brownstone mansion, a relic of the days of the Arnours, Wilsons and Fields. It was a huge sprawling affair, and the first thing Barry noted was the absence of lights in the countless windows. He

looked at the parked cars and frowned. "Visitors, and no lights!"

Three stone steps led up to the door. Off to the right and left ran another hedge, smaller than the one girding the wall.

His footsteps sounded eerily on the stone steps leading to the door. The door itself was a massive structure of oak. An ancient tarnished knocker was set square in the middle. Barry lifted the handle and knocked.

It was a strangely muffled sound. Unconsciously he stepped back once his hand had left the knocker.

A long moment passed, and then, silently, the door opened.

Barry caught a glimpse of a long shadowed hall with a single light fixture casting weak rays down it toward a double paneled sliding door. Probably the entrance to the living or dining room. Then before he could see more, a huge figure shoved into the opening.

Barry started involuntarily. The man was clad in a scarlet robe that hid his entire body! But not only the strange clothing he wore caught Barry's attention. He saw a swarthy scarred set of features—a face he suddenly knew. *This was one of the men he had seen in the Egyptian wing at the museum!*

"Yes? What do you want?" a gruff voice demanded.

Barry took a deep breath and stepped forward. He realized that this man must have recognized him also, but he was making no indication that he had. "Is this the residence of Doctor Anubis?"

The man in red nodded, and Barry caught a glimpse of dark baleful eyes.

"I'd like to see the Doctor. Tell him I have something to return to him."

The man stared at Barry for a long moment, and Barry had the uncom-

fortable feeling that he was trying to decide whether to kick him down the steps or just slam the door in his face.

"The Doctor is very busy. You'll have to make an appointment some other time. Good night."

"Wait!" Barry cried out. "I demand that you tell the Doctor I am here—"

The door slammed in his face. For a moment hot anger swept through Barry. He debated pounding loudly on the door, but the vision was fresh in his mind of that hulking brute in the red robe. The thought bothered him. Why, if the man were a butler, or even granting that he were not, should he be wearing a scarlet robe? For what purpose? And why had he refused to at least query the master of the house before slamming the door so abruptly?

BARRY turned angrily away from the door. There was only one thing left to do. And bitterly he realized that he had made a fool of himself by not doing it from the beginning. He would have to go to the police and have official action taken. Inspector Merton, an old friend of his father's, seemed the most likely. He wouldn't refuse to investigate even though the evidence was so pitifully small.

And as he walked slowly down the cobblestone drive toward the gate, the question again arose in his mind as to the girl Slim had seen. Had there actually been such a girl? And what *had* happened to the mummy?

"Oh!"

Barry jumped. A soft body had collided with him in the dark. His arm shot out protectively, and it collided with soft, yielding flesh. A short cry of pain followed.

"Say, what is this!"

It was a girl, there was no doubt of it. Her voice sounded angrily. Barry stepped back embarrassed.

"I beg your pardon, Miss—I didn't see you in the dark!"

"Do you lash out at every person you meet—in the dark?" she demanded painfully.

"I'm sorry," Barry stammered, "I was expecting something else . . ."

"Some *thing*?" the girl stormed, "Do I look like a thing?—"

"You don't understand—I said I was sorry." A sudden thought struck him. "Are you going to see Dr. Anubis?"

"Well, I must say you do manage to change the subject and wriggle out of things! What if I am—is there any law against it—and is that any reason why you should take a swing at me in his private grounds—and by the way, just *who* are you?"

Barry grinned in the dark. There was something pleasing about her voice, even the fire in it that licked out at him. He took her arm gently and led her off the driveway toward a shaft of light from an overhanging street light on the other side of the masonry wall.

"I was just going to ask you that same question," he replied.

"Let go of my arm, I don't trust you."

"Very well."

The rays of the street lamp fell suddenly around them and Barry whistled softly. "Well!"

"Well what?" she said icily.

Barry was looking at a pert upturned nose, flashing blue eyes, a wealth of copper-gold hair, and if the light evening wrap she was wearing wasn't lying, a smooth rounded figure.

"I trust I meet your satisfaction!" she snapped.

Barry grinned. "You do. I must bump into you more often after this."

She sniffed. "You don't look like a moron—but you talk like one!"

"I'm sorry I disappoint you," Barry answered.

THE girl studied him intently for a moment. She noted the lean tenseness of his features, handsome in a sudden cast of grimness. She saw strength and stubbornness there, and something else. . . .

"What newspaper are *you* working for?" she asked suddenly.

"Newspaper? What makes you think I'm a newspaperman?"

"Don't try to give me the run-around," she countered. "If you were a member of the cult you'd—act different. If you think you're going to scoop me on this story—"

"Did you say cult?" Barry's voice grew tense.

The girl noticed the change and stared up at him. "I suppose you're going to say you don't know anything about it! If you don't, just who are you and why are you prowling around outside this house?"

Barry gripped the girl's arm suddenly.

"You're a reporter—right?"

She nodded. "As if you didn't know. I'm with the *Blade*. And you're hurting my arm."

Barry relaxed his grip. "My name is Barry Randall, I'm connected with the Field Museum, Assistant Curator. . . ."

"The Field Museum? Curator?" The girl's voice was incredulous. "You don't look like a Curator!"

"What did you expect, a flowing beard and horn-rimmed glasses?" Barry felt a sudden anger. "Look, Miss—"

"Joan Forrest," she replied. "And I'm sorry if I said anything I shouldn't—I thought you were working on this story too."

Barry caught the sudden warmth in her eyes and she smiled. She had small, white, even teeth. He liked them.

"Thanks, Miss Forrest. I guess I'm the one who should apologize though—my nerves are on edge. . . ." He paused.

"Look, Miss Forrest, I'm in a rather peculiar position—this afternoon a mummy was stolen from the museum. While I have no definite evidence, I have reason to believe that Doctor Anubis is connected with the theft, if not actually responsible."

"Doctor Anubis?" the girl echoed. "Why, he's the man who owns this house. . . ."

"Exactly."

"But I don't understand—you say a mummy was stolen? How did anybody manage to take a mummy out of the museum unseen?"

Barry sighed. "That's just the point, nobody *was seen* taking the mummy out—and it would have been impossible to leave the museum without being observed by one or more guards. Now you can understand, perhaps, the position I'm in. While I suspect the Doctor, and with good reason, I still can't go to the police with my story. I can't really prove that the mummy *was stolen!*"

"Have you spoken to this Doctor Anubis yet?"

Barry grunted. "I couldn't get past his watchdog at the front door—which reminds me, you haven't explained your part in being here. I believe you mentioned something about a cult?"

The girl nodded. "Yes. But I'm afraid I can't tell you very much. You see, being a newspaper woman I get around quite a little, and I heard a rumor of a new secret society, having something to do with ancient Egypt—something of a specialized Rosicrucian Order. Well, to make a long story short, I decided it might be worth looking into. Since the war, news has been pretty scarce, and well, I was going to try and crash the gates tonight. . . ."

"Fat chance you would have," Barry replied. "If I know—"

He broke off suddenly and grabbed the girl's arm. "Quick! Down behind this hedge—there's a car turning in!"

A SET of headlights split the darkness at the head of the drive and a car hummed through the gateway. Behind the hedge, Barry and the girl crouched. Barry was unaware that he was still gripping her arm until she winced beside him.

"Sorry," he breathed, relaxing his fingers.

She didn't reply, but Barry could hear her breathing close beside him, and then, as if it were the most natural thing in the world to do, her fingers suddenly found his in the dark.

The car had entered the cobblestone driveway, and its lights threw back the shadows around the house. Under the artificial glare, the house seemed to take on a new added menace, like a slumbering monster discovered in its lair by a sudden flash of light. The car slowed and finally stopped behind another parked vehicle. Barry heard the car door slam.

"Come on!" he whispered.

"What? Where?—"

"I want to get closer to the house—see what happens!" he replied.

He tightened his grip on her fingers and drew her silently from behind the hedge. Swiftly they moved across the open grounds, dodging behind the cottonwood trees. By the time they had hidden themselves behind the hedge skirting the house, the occupants of the car had reached the door. Barry heard the hollow sound of the knocker.

Moments passed like interminable years. Barry and the girl huddled themselves closely against the wall behind the bushes and then, the door opened. They heard:

"Yes, what is it?"

"Zaleikka."

"Enter."

The door closed.

Silence once again. Behind the bushes, Joan Forrest breathed excitedly. "Did you hear that—Barry?"

"Yes, I heard," he answered in a muffled voice.

"What does it mean—Zaleikka?"

Yes, what *did* it mean! Obviously it was a password—known only to the members who entered this weird house of Doctor Anubis—but it was also the name of the vanished Egyptian Priestess! Barry's mind whirled.

"Barry, what's the matter?"

"That name," he muttered, "you remember I told you about the mummy that was stolen from the museum—well, that mummy was an ancient Priestess of the Temple of Karnak, named Zaleikka!"

"Oh!" her voice sounded small and terrified there in the darkness. "Barry—maybe we'd better go to the police after all . . ."

"Listen, Joan, would you take a chance with me—a big chance?"

She fidgeted in the dark. "I, I don't know—I only came to get a story . . ."

"You'll get a story, if we play our cards right!" he argued. "It will be one of the biggest stories you've ever handled if my hunch is correct—what do you say?"

She was silent for a moment. Then: "I *did* come after a story. What do you want to do?"

"Get in that house," he said.

"But how? You said before that you failed . . ."

"I didn't know what was going on inside—not that I do now for that matter—but most of all, I didn't know the right way to get inside. I do now—Zaleikka is the way!"

"But won't you be recognized at the

door?"

He smiled grimly. "That's where you come in. *I'm* not going to knock at the door—you are!"

"Oh . . . I begin to see," she said a little nervously. "I'm to give the password . . ."

"Exactly. I'll be right behind you. I'll have my collar turned up and my hat pulled low. If luck is with us, we'll get in."

"And after that?" A trace of fear tinged her words.

"We'll worry about that when the time comes," he replied. "Let's go."

CHAPTER III

Princess Zaleikka

THE knocker sounded dull and hollow. Barry Randall stood tensely waiting a few feet behind the girl, his hat pulled low over his forehead, his topcoat collar turned up. Not even the sounds of night traffic from Michigan Avenue could be heard. Nothing but their tense breathing.

Without prelude the door pulled open. Barry, standing behind the girl saw the same huge figure clad in the scarlet robe. The same swarthy, scarred features.

"Yes, what is it?"

"Zaleikka," the girl replied, without hesitation.

Barry felt his heart pounding. For a long moment the man stared through the door. Then he stepped aside. "Enter."

Joan brushed past him into the hallway. Barry hunched his shoulders and followed. He didn't dare look up, but felt the keen watchful eyes scanning him as he crossed the threshold.

A rough hand suddenly grabbed his shoulder. "You!"

Barry knew what that meant. He

had been recognized. Suddenly all the pent up emotion, the anger that had been gnawing at him like a raw sore, swelled and burst.

He twisted savagely and at the same instant smashed his right hand into the guard's stomach. The man gave a startled whoosh as the breath was driven from his body. Barry followed up his advantage with a lashing left hook to the man's jaw. Just as savagely he drove two more hard blows to the guard's face before he had time to recover. The man groaned and slumped forward. Barry caught his body and staggered under its weight. Out of the corner of his eye he saw the girl standing terrified, one hand pressed tightly against her lips.

"Hold the door open—quick!" he whispered.

She ran forward and pulled the door wide. Barry, his breath laboring, dragged the limp form of the guard out on the stone steps. Then he paused, listening.

The silence was complete. So far so good. He dragged the limp figure down the steps and off to the left of the door behind the sheltering hedge. He worked quickly, desperately. The scarlet robe, as he thought, was only a covering for street clothes. He ripped the guard's belt from his pants and trussed his legs with it. Then, pulling the sleeves of the robe free from the man's arms, he trussed the upper portion of his body in straight-jacket fashion. He finished the job with a handkerchief gag.

"That ought to hold him for awhile!" he grunted, straightening.

"I'm scared!" Joan whispered from the door entrance.

Barry joined her. He pushed her gently back inside the house and shut the door. They stood silently for a moment, listening.

Then gradually they heard it. A dull,

subdued hum of voices. Barry glanced down the long hall toward the double paneled sliding door. The voices were coming from there.

"What shall we do?" the girl whispered fearfully.

Barry pointed down the hall. "We're going to see what's behind that door."

They went silently along the hall, and Barry suffered a thousand agonies of thought. What would they find behind the door? A harmless evening party in progress?—Doctor Anubis?—The stolen mummy?

Barry paused with his hand on the panel door. Then slowly he parted them.

WHAT met his gaze caused him to stare in amazement. He was looking into a huge circular room. Comfortable lounge chairs were set in theater fashion leading up to a raised platform at the far end. Most of the chairs were occupied. People sat conversing in low tones. He couldn't make out their features distinctly in the murky light of a single cut glass chandelier set with small amber colored bulbs. A strange scent of sandalwood incense permeated the room, a sickeningly sweet odor with a hint of pungent age, of an era long forgotten.

But it wasn't the strange conformation of the room that held Barry's eyes. Nor was it the subtle aroma or the shadows created by the amber lights. It was a huge scarlet curtain that hung in draping folds from the ceiling. A curtain that rose behind the dais at the far end of the chamber—a curtain with a life-size portrait in oils of an Egyptian woman, a woman whose beauty was so exquisite and breath-taking that she seemed to have life! And on either side of the painting was a huge scrolled Z.

Barry felt the girl tremble beside

him. He could hear her startled intake of breath. He gripped her fingers tightly and drew her inside the room. With his free hand he slid the panel door shut.

Nobody seemed to notice them. There seemed to be at least two dozen people in the room. Barry decided, as his glance swept around the chairs. Most of them were occupied toward the front. Two rows at the rear were vacant. Barry removed his hat and coat, and holding them in one hand, led the girl to the farthest set of vacant chairs. Very quietly they settled themselves. Almost unconsciously, Barry slumped low in the chair, until only his head was in view over the top of the next row ahead.

For long tense moments they sat there, and Barry wondered just what they were waiting for. His eyes slipped from one person to another in the room. He could see them better now. Middle aged men and women of obvious means judging from their clothes, with a strange intensity about their features. From their subdued murmuring it was evident that they too were waiting.

Waiting for what?

The trembling clash of a gong split the air. Almost at once the murmuring of the guests ceased, and only the echoing vibration of that single gong stroke remained.

Beside him, the girl trembled. His hand tightened around her fingers. He wanted to speak but he couldn't. He wanted to look at her—reassuringly, but he couldn't tear his eyes from the scarlet curtain and the dais. Somehow he knew that her gaze too was riveted there—waiting.

It began slowly, almost as to be imperceptible. The shadows suddenly began to disperse from the dais and a roseate glow sprang up from some concealed source.

And then suddenly the curtain swept aside and a man appeared.

BARRY struggled to hold back the startled sound that rose in his throat. He stared at a figure clad from head to foot in a flowing scarlet robe—the same kind of robe the guard at the door had been wearing! But there was something else about this man—cold classic pale features, a small waxed moustache, and piercing eyes—black and magnetic even at a distance.

And Barry knew him—the man in the Homburg hat. Dr. Anubis!

He was like some character on a stage, playing a sinister role. He stood there on the dais, the curtain growing still again behind him, and his eyes focused intently on his audience. His hands were still at his side.

From somewhere behind him, it seemed almost to come from all directions as the sound grew, came the soft notes of a lute. It was a weird melody, without rhyme, a parody on the musical scale. And with the sound, the man on the dais raised his arms slowly until they were over his head. He began a weird chant then, his voice rising and falling in cadence to the lute.

Barry listened, stunned. He knew that language—it was that of the ancient *Copt!*

The chant rose and fell, and the sound of the lute accompanied it. Then with almost the same suddenness, it faded.

The silence that followed was intense. Barry couldn't tear his eyes from that magnetic figure on the dais. The cold, classic features of the man were immobile. It was almost as if the strange chant had cast a spell over the room.

"My friends," his voice broke the growing tenseness. "I am very happy this evening, even as you will be shortly. For the goal that we have been

striving for has at long last been achieved.

"If it had not been for all of you—your enduring patience and generous financing of our researches, our goal would still lie unaccomplished. But rest assured that now that success has been accorded us, the rewards will be great indeed."

He paused briefly, and the effect of his words registered on Barry. About him, an excited murmuring of voices rose, only to still when the scarlet robed figure spoke again.

"Ours has been a select task, and the final road to knowledge has not been an easy one. The Ancient Ones had so ordained it, so that their knowledge and powers would not be misused. There have been many who have delved into the past of Egypt—children all of them—and like children, they were led astray. The ancient rulers planned wisely for the future, and Khafre was the wisest of them all."

HE PAUSED again and Barry Randall's mind whirled. What was he talking about? The name of Khafre echoed in his mind. It was King Khafre who had built the Sphinx in the fourth dynasty! But what was all this hinting of planning, of power? . . .

"A key was left," the voice picked up again. "A key so hidden that only a true believer in the might and majesty of ancient Egypt would be able to discover it. The scientists of today have looked vainly for the key among the shattered debris of lost empires, among the dead themselves. And because they did not believe, they failed. For the key has been with us through the ages—with the dead—but the key is life itself!

"We are but a small group gathered in this room tonight, but because we have believed in our search for the an-

cient secrets, a new world opens before us, *a world of our own shaping!*

"Earlier today I visited the Field Museum. I stood before the mummy of one of the ancients, and knew that my search was ended. The Priestess Zaleikka was that key—waiting to be released from her long slumber . . . You will see her yourself, tonight—now!"

"Barry!" Beside him, the girl whispered urgently. "What is he talking about—what does it all mean?"

Barry shook his head. He couldn't answer. Not yet. Of one thing only he was sure. From Doctor Anubis' own words he had solved the mystery of the missing mummy—it was here! And the scarlet clad man on the dais was brazenly admitting it—about to show it. With this proof of theft he could go to the police . . .

His thoughts broke off abruptly. At the front of the room, on the dais, Doctor Anubis had turned his back and gripped the flowing curtain. With a single motion he whipped his arms wide, and the curtain swept open.

Barry Randall expected to see an elaborate sarcophagus with the stolen mummy placed on view.

What he saw was a fantastic throne against a background of incense burners on tripods. Gold trappings hung from the ceiling, wavering amid the sluggish fumes of the burners.

And on the throne, her arms and legs white alabaster against the background of gold, sat a strange exotically beautiful woman.

SHE wore a single garment of gossamer sheen, suspended from a marble smooth throat by a slender gold cord and split from the waist down. Her features were finely cut, small and oval shaped. They might have been hewn from some fragile stone of unbleached purity. Her hair was

long and black, gleaming softly in the roseate light. And her eyes . . .

Barry felt a chill run through him. Those eyes were not the eyes of a maid, they didn't belong with so exquisite and chaste a body. They were the eyes of countless ages, flashing green depths of smoldering flame, of knowledge, of things unseen, undreamed,—of purpose . . .

"The Priestess Zaleikka!"

The scarlet robed man bowed low before her. Then his voice spoke in crisp staccato Coptic: "You must greet them, Zaleikka. They have served us well with the money and influence of this age."

Barry could hardly believe his ears. His own knowledge of the ancient tongue had been gained through years of intensive research and study. And yet this strange man spoke it with an assurance and ease that Barry knew he himself could never attain. What did it mean? Was this some gigantic hoax—a confidence game of untold magnitude? Zaleikka? Zaleikka was a mummy—over three thousands years old . . .

With a barely imperceptible movement, she nodded her head. Then her eyes played out over the room. They were wide, bottomless depths, magnetic.

"I greet you from across the ages," the words were uttered without seeming movement of her lips. Her voice was soft, like the tinkle of warm waters against coral reefs. And Barry straightened in his chair. She spoke the ancient Copt with a fluency undreamed of by the most skilled linguist!

Almost at once she seemed to single him out. He felt her gaze fasten upon him, and it was like an unfeeling flame. He couldn't tear his eyes away from her. He felt himself unmasked, and knew suddenly that *she* knew him for

an intruder! And then her gaze suddenly left his.

Beside him, Joan Forrest stiffened. Barry glanced quickly at her. She was staring fixedly at the dais, and her features were pale. Barry knew at once that the woman called Zaleikka had fixed her gaze upon the girl. He gripped her arm and whispered.

"Joan! Come on, let's get out of here before—"

There was a loud noise from behind them. The sliding panel doors crashed open and a loud shout split the hushed silence of the room.

Barry twisted in alarm. It was the guard he had knocked out a short time before! The man rushed into the room, his clothes disheveled, his eyes wild with rage. Behind him came two other men clad in the strange robes. They held revolvers in anxious hands.

"Effendim!" the first man called out toward the dais in swift Arabic. "The Randall man has gained entrance!"

Barry swore and pulled the girl from the seat.

"We'll have to make a break for it!"

Even as the words left his lips and he piloted the girl in a dash for the door, they saw him.

A harsh sound left the guard's throat. He rushed down upon Barry. With a desperate move, Barry shoved the girl aside and met the man's attack. He ducked a savage blow and smashed his fist into the guard's stomach. The force of the blow and the man's weight, knocked him backward.

From somewhere in the room came a loud command. It was the voice of Doctor Anubis. "Take him, you fools!"

Something crashed into the back of Barry's skull. Flame seared through him in an agonizing wave. He sank groaning, his eyes turned on the dais. In his last fleeting moment of consciousness he saw bedlam break loose in the

room as the visitors rose fearfully. And then the scarlet curtain swished over the throne, blotting out green, flame filled eyes that sank into oblivion with him . . .

CHAPTER IV

Shadow Of The Sphinx

BARRY RANDALL opened his eyes with the feeling that somebody had opened the back of his head. A throb of pain brought a brief spasm of nausea before his sight cleared. He was aware of a groan slipping from his lips, and of something else—a soft sobbing sound.

He was sitting in a hard wood backed chair. He was facing a massive teak-wood desk—and Dr. Anubis.

He was still clad in the scarlet toga, but the classic pale features were no longer immobile, they were etched with a puzzled frown, and something else . . .

Barry heard the sobbing again. He glanced beside him. Joan Forrest sat in a chair opposite him, and behind her, his arms folded, and eyes glaring, stood the guard Barry had trussed in the hedge.

The pain throbbed deeply again and Barry turned his eyes away. He studied the room as he sought to collect his thoughts. It was obviously a library. In the corners, bridging floor to ceiling bookcases, stood two standard lamps, oddly converted candelabra. On the opposite wall hung an obviously priceless Corregio painting. The floor was covered with an exquisite Arab carpet, and in alcoves of the book shelves stood varied busts and statuettes that Barry knew instinctively had graced the chambers of Egyptian rulers long since turned to dust.

"I see you are admiring my small collection, Mr. Randall."

The words came as a sedative to the

throbbing pain in Barry's head. He centered his gaze upon the man behind the teakwood desk. The features were once again immobile, with the slightest hint of a smile.

"Yes, Mr. Randall, there are many items in this room fit for your worthy museum. Those converted candelabra for instance," he pointed. "They came originally from the workshop of Benvenuto Cellini. And I noticed you looking at my Corregio. It is valued at a quarter million dollars. My shelves too have their value. There is a Shakespeare First Folio, not to mention a Book of the Hours once owned and admired by Marguerite de Valois. I have also a bound authentic chapter from the Book of Thoth reposing there . . . You see Mr. Randall, my tastes run far afield."

Barry sucked in his breath. The utter calm of this man defeated him. There was no denying the art treasures that he so adequately described. And they, more than anything else, served to cloud his struggling senses.

"Just who and what are you—Doctor Anubis?" Barry found his voice cracked and strained.

"Ah. You know my name. But then, you are a singularly aggressive man, Mr. Randall. I must confess I under-estimate your capabilities." He turned his gaze to the guard standing behind Barry and the girl. "Hassan, we will have coffee," he spoke in rapid Arabic.

Barry shook his head. "Don't bother for me, Anubis, all I want is information."

"I see you have a knowledge of the Eastern tongue, Mr. Randall," Anubis returned his gaze to Barry as the guard hesitated. Without preamble he slid open a drawer of his desk and laid a revolver before him. "You may go now, Hassan, I will see that our guests re-

main."

BARRY was aware of a door closing behind him. Anger gnawed deep inside him as he looked at the gun. Anubis was taking no chances. He glanced quickly at the girl. She was sitting tense and rigid, her knuckles white against the chair arms. Her eyes were turned upon him, worriedly.

"I already have Miss Forrest's story—she is a newspaperwoman," Anubis said. "But you, Randall are another matter. You did not come here merely to return my glove?"

Barry saw the glove laying on one corner of the desk. "You know what I came here for!" he replied heatedly. "This afternoon the mummy of an obscure Priestess was stolen from the museum. All the evidence pointed to you. What I have seen and heard in this house tonight proves that I was right—the word Zaleikka is nothing new here—I advise you to turn the mummy over to me before—"

"Mr. Randall," Anubis interrupted him. "You may take my word for it that there is no mummy here. If you took this house apart brick by brick you would find nothing. I advise you to stop looking into things that do not concern you — while you still have time."

Barry laughed harshly. "You're threatening me! Very well, if that's the way you want it I'm very sure the police will be willing to follow up my charges!"

Besides Barry, the girl suddenly leaned forward. "I agree with Barry, and while I don't know exactly what is going on here, I've got enough of a story to expose you—it's apparent that you're operating some kind of racket trying to pass off that woman, whoever she is, for an Egyptian mummy!"

Dr. Anubis sat very still. His eyes

flashed from the girl back to Barry. His hand rested over the gun. Then he sighed.

"I regret your attitudes. It leaves me no recourse. I had sought to settle this matter amicably but I can see that I have failed. That woman, whom you accuse me of fostering as an imposter, is the Priestess Zaleikka."

Barry snorted. "Do you expect anyone to believe such a fantastic assertion? You forget that I have some more than ordinary knowledge of egyptology myself. Do you think you can fool anyone with an elaborate hoax—as you seem to be attempting to do with those people I saw tonight? It is a scientific impossibility to preserve life indefinitely!"

Dr. Anubis allowed a faint smile to pass over his features. "The words of the inevitable skeptic, Mr. Randall. I would have expected nothing else. But consider these facts: You say that a mummy was stolen from your museum. And yet, correct me if I am wrong, you cannot prove this. It would have been impossible for a curio the size of a mummy to be removed from the museum under the watchful eyes of your guards—and yet, the mummy is gone. Where then is it? Secondly, you yourself have seen the Priestess Zaleikka tonight—do you remember that she spoke?"

Barry sat back, visibly shaken. Yes, he had seen her, and he did remember that she had spoken.

Anubis followed his thoughts. "You begin to doubt, am I right, Mr. Randall? Did you by chance recognize the tongue she spoke?"

"Coptic," the word came hoarsely from Barry.

"Exactly. And how many people living today would have a knowledge of this, the most ancient of known tongues? Much less an obviously

youthful woman. Ah, I see you are moved."

BARRY shook his head. "But—but such a thought is—impossible!"

The classic features became immobile again. And the eyes, black and forceful, grew cold.

"Mr. Randall, I have in my possession a valuable papyrus. This papyrus came into my possession after many years of research. You asked me before who I was, and what. It must be apparent to you, as indeed it is true, that I am not of Anglo-Saxon heritage. My ancestors can be traced back directly to the ancients who once ruled over Egypt and most of the world. I am of that stock, fast disappearing from the face of the Earth, known as Copts. In my search for the truths I ran across an unknown crypt in the Temple of Wisdom, which you know as Karnak. Certain facts handed down to me through generations, led me to it.

"This papyrus contained a certain history that dates back to the fourth dynasty. It told of a trusted Priestess, high in the regard of Khafre and Ammon Tankh, the High Priest, who had been subjected to the living slumber for a purpose which I am not at liberty to divulge. This Priestess, known as Zaleikka, has slept through the ages—until now. The formula necessary to awaken her was inscribed in the papyrus. It but remained for me to perform the rite."

Barry sat stunned. There was no denying the utter sincerity of the man, the cold aloofness that denied disbelief. All of his scientific training and knowledge staggered under the impact of Anubis' words. If this were true—

"Barry!" the girl's voice was tremulous. "Can what he says be true?—Is that woman really the mummy—"

Barry didn't seem to hear her. His

eyes were riveted to the features of Anubis. When he spoke, his voice was hoarse. "If this is true, why have you kept this knowledge to yourself?"

"There are things for which the world is not yet ready, things which it does not deserve except as a token of power by rightful users. This is one of them."

The words did not make sense to Barry. Anubis spoke of power, of strange secrets, of rightful users. What were these secrets? Who were the users? For what purpose? And how did the woman known as Zaleikka fit in? And Anubis himself?

Barry felt a hand touch his arm. The girl's fingers were cold, trembling. Her voice was tense.

"What do you expect us to do?" she asked.

Anubis fixed his gaze upon her. "I do not expect you to do anything, Miss Forrest. It is beyond that now. It is what I shall do, what I must do."

BARRY watched him lift the gun from the table. A chill ran through him. "What do you mean?"

"I mean simply that my plans have reached a crucial point. I can brook no opposition. If I were to release you both you would endeavor to bring official action against me, with or without just proof. Had you waited a day or so, your deaths would not now be necessary. I have a key that must be used within a fortnight. I regret having to kill you."

"You're mad!" Barry half rose from his chair.

"Sit down," Anubis had the gun leveled.

"You'll never be able to kill us and escape—the police—"

"Long before your bodies are discovered I shall be gone from this country. I plan to be in Egypt within the week. Even were I to be apprehended before

that time, you forget that you are both trespassers. I believe your Western law provides for the defense of one's private property . . ."

It was the way he said it. The very manner about him—alien, sure, calculating. Barry knew he was going to shoot. He heard Joan Forrest's quick sob of fear. He saw the cold steadiness of Anubis' eyes, the whitening of his finger on the trigger.

Behind them a door suddenly slammed. A voice called out a sharp command. Barry didn't have to turn. He recognized that voice, even if he failed to grasp the words uttered in the Coptic tongue. It was the voice of Zaleikka!

Barry twisted around. She stood imperiously in the doorway, her head flung proudly back, her wide eyes smoldering with green fires. In her hands she carried a tray with cups and a steaming pot. Behind her Barry caught a glimpse of the guard whom Anubis had called Hassan.

It was an electric moment. Barry could feel the tension mount. His eyes flicked back to Anubis. A change had come over the man's features, there was sudden anger written there.

"What is the meaning of this, Zaleikka?" his voice was cold and brittle in the Coptic tongue. "I told you I would handle these intruders!"

She stared haughtily. "Do you treat them then with death?"

"I do what is necessary," he replied coldly. "You may hand that tray to Hassan—and leave . . ."

Barry sucked in his breath. He felt suddenly that this woman held a force over Anubis—that in her lay their only chance of remaining alive. He summoned all his knowledge of the ancient tongue and:

"I am told your name is Zaleikka. I am told you have slept through the

ages. It was I who controlled the mummy that bore your name. For this, Anubis threatens us with death."

Barry heard the startled gasp that left Anubis' lips. But he had eyes only for the woman. A strange expression crossed her face. She glanced swiftly from Barry to the girl. He noted the change in her eyes when she looked at Joan. They grew resentful . . . She suddenly faced Anubis, walking into the room and laying the tray upon the desk.

"He speaks the ancient tongue. Is what he says true?"

ANUBIS nodded reluctantly, his eyes filled with anger as he glared at Barry. "Yes, but he and this girl would attempt to hinder us. It was for this that I decided they must die!"

Zaleikka looked at Barry. For a long moment she studied his features, and Barry had the feeling that she was looking not at him, but into him.

"What Anubis says is not the truth. How can we hinder something of which we are ignorant?"

She continued to gaze at him, and Barry felt himself flushing. There was something about her that mystified him, something that he had never felt before in the presence of any man—or woman.

"I believe he speaks the truth," Zaleikka turned back to Anubis. "I will not permit his death—now."

Anubis rose slowly from his chair, his face white with wrath.

"It is I who will make decisions!" he snapped. "You will do as I say!"

Zaleikka stiffened. The rapid rise and fall of her bosom beneath the filmy garment she wore was the only indication of the emotion racing through her.

"You are forgetting to whom you speak," she replied. "Your decisions mean nothing, without me. I am the key. Without me you are powerless."

Barry watched the clash of wills. A clash over something he could not understand. Her words lingered in his mind—"I am the key,"—and he remembered something Anubis had said about a key, a key that must be used within two weeks. What did it mean?

There was a sudden clatter on the desk. Barry broke his thoughts and saw Anubis drop the gun. He saw him motion to Hassan standing just inside the door. The Egyptian's features were once again immobile, only his eyes showing the chagrin that smoldered deep within him.

"Take them upstairs, Hassan. See that they are locked securely in separate rooms. Upon your health and Allah's mercy see to it."

The guard saluted. "*Es-selâm 'aley-kûm, Effendi!*"

At the point of the gun, which Barry knew Hassan would be only too willing to use, he and the girl walked slowly from the room. Even as he went, Barry could feel those strange smoldering eyes burning into him. Zaleikka was watching him, and the knowledge stirred him strangely . . .

BARRY paced nervously up and down the small confines of his room. For the tenth time he had tried the door and window with no avail. The door was locked from the outside, a sturdy oaken panel, and the window, facing out on the court, had an efficient metal shutter that was bolted securely in place.

Wearily he lit a cigarette and surveyed the room. It was obviously intended to be a guest bedroom. There was a small bureau, a number of lounge chairs, a small settee, and the bedstead itself; a door off to the right of the bureau led onto an adjoining bath from which he had already made certain there was no other exit.

He found himself thinking of Joan, wondering if she were safe, and he suddenly realized that his concern for her ran deeply. Their rooms were spaced far apart, Hassan had seen to that. He had left the girl almost at the head of the second floor stairway. Barry could still feel the misty appeal of her eyes as he had left her.

"Damn!" he muttered, sinking on the edge of the bed and drawing deeply on his cigarette.

His thoughts grew moody as he passed over the rapid events of the past hours. What had started out to be a simple discovery of the stolen mummy, had turned into a weird drama of hidden and veiled menace. Barry pondered the questions that rose in his mind with a futile attempt at logical reasoning.

Who was this man called Anubis? Was the story he had sketched of himself the truth? Was he truly one of the ancient line of Egypt—had he actually found a papyrus at Karnak? Barry himself had walked through those stately marble ruins at Luxor. Was there such a crypt as Anubis alluded to? And Zaleikka . . .

The very thought of her name blotted any other thoughts from his mind. Was it possible that her slim youthful body had lain for ages as a mummy? Was she actually the mummy he had gazed on countless times in the museum? His mind rebelled. It was altogether fantastic—a woman over three thousand years old—alive!

And what was this strange cult over which Anubis presided? Was it all some mammoth hoax to get money from gullible wealthy patrons? Even granting that it were all true—what was the hidden purpose behind it all? Anubis spoke of a key, of time, of—

There was a soft sound behind him. It was the faint click of a latch. Barry

spun around.

Zaleikka stood inside the room, her fingers on the closed door at her back!

"You!" Barry spoke in English, his pulse pounding strangely.

She stood silently watching him for a long moment. And once again Barry was aware of those eyes which were so incongruous to the youthfully exquisite face they gazed from. They were deep swirling pools, rushing with ancient flames . . .

BARRY felt a sudden surge of anger. He was acting like a child! It suddenly occurred to him that these people were deliberately trying to make a fool out of him. He rose stiffly from the bed.

"All right, lady, just what is this all about—who are you and why all this pretense?"

He realized even as he spoke, that the words sounded cheap and naive, and more so, that he had again spoken in English and from the puzzled look that passed over her features it was evident that she had not understood a word.

"There is anger in your words," she replied lowly, and Barry was once again reminded of warm rushing waters.

All the doubts and questions rose once again in his mind. But he realized that if this *were* a game, he had to play it *her* way for the present.

"What do you want?" he asked her, his words phrased in the ancient Coptic. "Does Anubis know you are here?"

She continued to stare at him. And slowly a smile crossed her face. It was the smile of a playful cat, toying with a mouse held powerless in its grasp.

"I see you are in doubt about me. I see many questions in your mind. You are wondering if it is possible that I am really Zaleikka, and you are wondering about my destiny."

It was true. Even as she voiced the words, Barry realized it. He had been thinking just that. *But how had she known?* A chill ran through him.

"You are a strange man—Barry—I will show you the place of my destiny —and yours."

More than anything else, Barry noticed that she had used his name. But he failed to grasp the meaning of her words.

"Look into my eyes."

It was a command. But it wasn't necessary. Barry found his gaze riveted to hers. The green swirling depths of her eyes expanded, grew outward, until he seemed to be engulfed by them. He was lost in fiery whirlpools, his senses reeled, his vision blurred, and then—

His sight had suddenly cleared. But what he saw was no longer the room in the house of Doctor Anubis—he was gazing out over a vast sunlit plateau. The dazzling light of the sun for the moment blinded him. He seemed to be rushing through space toward the ground far below—to some pre-destined point. Vague looming shapes rose in his path. And then suddenly he knew what he was seeing!

It was the great plateau at Gizeh! And rising from the sand around him, it's shadow stretching far across the desert, it's eyes watching unseeing over the Valley of Life, stood what Barry had heard Bedouin tribesmen describe in hushed voices as the—"Father of Terror"—

It was the Sphinx!

CHAPTER V

I Am The Key

BARRY was unaware how long a time had passed before the vision faded. It might have been long minutes or a fleeting second. But when it

did, and his eyes once more saw the room about him, he was startled to find himself no longer standing.

He was sitting again on the edge of the bed, and Zaleikka, a look of triumph on her features, was seated close beside him. The scent of Lotus blossoms struck him at her nearness.

"You are convinced—now?"

Her words roused him. Almost fearfully he looked again into her eyes. Everything in him rebelled—this was fantastic! He had actually *seen* the Sphinx! Good Lord, had Anubis been right?

"Tell me, what did you see?"

Barry nervously lit a cigarette. "The Sphinx," he replied slowly. "How did you do it—hypnotism?"

Zaleikka shook her head. "No, it is one of the secrets that died with my ancestors. I simply transported your mind to Egypt to show you—"

"You mean that *I was actually there?*"

She smiled. "Not in a physical sense. But you were there mentally."

"It's fantastic! How did you do it?"

She folded her hands in her lap. Had the surroundings been different, and had she been clad in modern garments, Barry felt that he might have been looking at an exquisite young girl of the modern world. Looking at her now—her skin soft and appealing, her body youthful with life—Barry saw something else. It was in her eyes, a glimpse of ages long past.

"How I do it is unimportant; what is more important is that you understand."

Barry sighed. "If I said I understood I'd be lying. How can I be expected to understand how a mummy that I personally know to be over three thousand years old, suddenly becomes endowed with life! But even granting that my doubts are shaken—why all this secre-

cy? With your knowledge of ancient Egypt you could startle the world."

"Why bother to startle something you can rule."

"Rule?" The word slipped from Barry's lips as he stared at her. For a moment he failed to grasp the significance of her statement. But one look at her features, cold and imperious now, was eloquent answer without her reply.

"Yes—Barry—I said rule. For that is my destiny planned and carried out by the great Khafre and his Priests of Karnak. I am the key to the ancient science and might of Egypt. Through me the power of the Pharaohs will rise again!"

BARRY sat still, listening. The eyes of Zaleikka had drifted from him, seemed almost to be staring into some long forgotten memory. Even her voice carried a far off note, and Barry, watching her intently, felt his pulse leap. Was he going to learn at last something of the hidden meaning behind Anubis' words?

"I was born in the Temple of Karnak," she spoke again, almost as if she were reciting carefully chosen phrases from a history book. "My father was the High Priest Ammon Tankh, most powerful of all men but for the King himself. From childhood on I was reared and trained for the great mission, the experiment long planned by Khafre himself.

"The science of Egypt was great, and Khafre was a wise and powerful ruler. He and my father laid plans to preserve the might and power of the Pharaohs through the ages. It was unthinkable that Egypt, the Mother of Life should one day fall into obscurity. But such was the vision of the Priests of Karnak. They foresaw the fall of the dynasty and the rise of Western

civilization and culture.

"Long had our science been utilized and perfected. We had solved the secret of body decay, we knew and developed the power of the mind and thought travel. We had weapons whose source of power sprang from Ammon Ra, the God of Light himself. But we had no need of them because none lived to challenge the majesty of Egypt.

"The Priests of Karnak studied deeply. They looked into the future to foretell the fall of Egypt. And this had to be averted. For this reason I was chosen, an obscure woman, a priestess. No one would look for the key in me, it was unthinkable to even suspect that a woman could hold the secret of the Pharaohs. In that lay the wisdom of our plan. Men of the future would rob and desecrate our dead. They would break into our burial vaults hunting for the secrets of our science and civilization. But they would fail, for many were the tracks left to lead them astray. And yet, there would be evidences left to give a clue. The pyramids of Seti, and Khafre among them. How were these massive structures built? I have seen some of your modern theories in books which Anubis has explained to me. You think we had tens of thousands of slaves working over a period of years. And even with this theory in mind you still fail to understand how huge pieces of stone could be vaulted into place by mere physical labor.

"I saw the second pyramid—the Temple of Khafre—built. It took but a week's time. The stone blocks were cut with rays of heat flame. They were lifted into place by machines, tiny as the palm of my hand, that deprived them of weight so that the blocks were as bubbles floating in the air.

"Your scientists of this age are fools! They depict us struggling through the centuries, a barbaric people. It is your

modern age that is decadent! Our science, unlike yours, was not built on mechanical principles. Machines grow rusty, are cumbersome, fall apart. We studied and conquered the secrets of nature, of the Father of Life, the Sun. We drew our power from the primeval source, and it is indestructible.

“AND thus it but remained for the plan to be executed. Our science was great, our race the rightful rulers the weapons and power we had never of the World. The Priests of Karnak assembled the secrets of our science, used—weapons that can destroy entire cities in a moment's time! They were assembled in the Temple of Wisdom, and I was made ready for my role.

“A vault was to be built that would last through the ages. A vault so cleverly constructed that no man would suspect. It was to be a work of art for future people to ponder on, to examine, but yet fail to guess its purpose or discover its secret.

“Khafre built it wisely. Close to the great Pyramid at Ghizeh he erected a statue of a God-Man. He fashioned his own likeness on its face. Beneath it, deep within the sands at its feet, he built the vault.

“The power of our age was put in this vault, and the vault was then sealed. It was closed so securely that no man would ever discover it without the key. I was the key. I was taught the means of opening the vault, of releasing the hidden knowledge.

“And then I was sent into my long slumber. The fingers of time were to claim me, but not destroy me. I lived in my tomb, slumbering on, until the time for my awakening. But not even this was left to chance. A m m o n Tankh, my father, secretly inscribed structions on a specially prepared papyrus. This papyrus was imbedded

deep within Karnak, and clues were planted through the centuries to lead a descendant of the Temple Priests to it. Once the papyrus was found, it would lead the seeker to me, with the necessary means of awakening me.

“This has come about, as planned by Khafre and his Priests. I have been awakened, and my destiny is plain. I shall open the vault, and with true descendants of the ancient race, utilize the powers stored there to replace the might of the Pharaohs upon the world!”

IT had been a long discourse. Barry was hardly aware that her voice had trailed off into silence, so engrossed had he become. It was unbelievable, what she had said, utterly fantastic! But Barry suddenly realized with a cold grip of fear *that he believed her!* And if what he believed was true, the world, just painfully arising from the tangled debris of World War II, was about to be plunged into a third—more devastating, and worse, with no counter measures ready or conceivably possible to prevent it!

He was aware that her eyes were once again fixed upon him.

“You know now why I showed you the vault, Barry, in your vision.”

He started. The vision—of course! He remembered her reference now to a god-man statue built by Khafre, the Sphinx! The eternal riddle of Egypt—the only human made structure standing through the ages unexplained! But if what she had told him were true, it was no longer a riddle, it was clear, terribly so, and it stood looming over the Nile as a menace to modern civilization! And this woman—so innocent and sweet in appearance—held the key to an arsenal that once unleashed would destroy the heroic labors of the world's leaders in establishing a peace

that had been long fought for!

"There is fear on your face, Barry. Of what are you afraid?"

He looked at her and knew his face was pale. Of what was he afraid? Good Lord! She sat there, so demure and unconcerned, speaking of weapons that could destroy entire cities, of forces beyond modern comprehension, and she was unmoved!

"You can't do it, Zaleikka!" Barry found his voice strained.

Her delicate eyebrows arched. "What can't I do?"

"This—this whole mad scheme you've outlined to me—do you realize that the world is just getting over a major war? We're just now licking our wounds and you talk of plunging the world into another war!" He paused as a sudden thought struck him. "Or is this merely the plan of Anubis?"

Her lips smiled scornfully. "Anubis is but a tool I wield. I do not understand all these other words you say. I do not plan to throw the world into turmoil as you suggest. I am carrying out a destiny that was decided upon long centuries ago. Egypt must return to its place in the Sun. Nothing can stop this destiny. If the world chooses to resist . . ."

She shrugged her bared shoulders and Barry saw in the movement all the meaning her words tried to convey. She was cold, aloof, imperious to sympathy. She could not be swayed. She had been schooled well, reared in an age when life was cheap, when suffering was for those unfortunate enough to hinder the plans or progress of the ruling caste. And more than that, she was something alien, she didn't belong. Barry felt choked up inside. He knew now what Doctor Anubis had hinted at, why it had been important to get Joan Forrest and him out of the way. There was still time to wreck Anubis'

plans! Had he given in to Zaleikka just to humor her? Or was there something else? . . .

HE WAS aware that he was staring at her with a fixed intensity. And he was equally aware that an amused smile was crossing her features. With an effort he pulled his gaze away.

"Tell me, Zaleikka, just why have you confided all this information to me? What is to prevent me from escaping and—"

"You cannot escape. You will never escape—Barry."

What did she mean? Why was she so sure? How did he possibly fit into the picture? Barry realized that there was no existing bond between him and this strange woman. He had come seeking only a mummy . . .

"What about Anubis?" he asked her. "Why didn't you let him kill me, why—"

"Anubis," Barry was surprised to hear her utter the word with scorn. "Anubis is an impostor. True he is descended from the ancient line of Egypt, but he is not descended from the Temple. He is a very wise man, this Anubis. By some means he found the secret of my awakening. I know he has the papyrus that was secreted in Karnak. He knows of the plan set forth by Khafre. He knows I am the key. I will let him continue because I need him now. I am in a strange land. I do not speak any modern tongue. I need his aid to reach the Valley of Life. Once there I will no longer need Anubis . . ."

Her voice trailed off but Barry knew what she had meant. She would use Anubis as long as she needed him, and then kill him with no compunction! The utter coldness of her sickened him. To his eye she was breath-takingly beautiful. But inside she was hard,

grim, cruel.

"And what about me?" Barry asked icily, paused, and added: "And Miss Forrest."

Zaleikka's eyes grew thoughtful. "For you, Barry," her voice was low and vibrant. "I have personal plans. For the girl." she shrugged and Barry couldn't help but notice the emphasis she placed on the word *girl* as she paused, "she will be taken care of . . ."

"What are you getting at?" Barry asked frowning. "Just what plans do you have for me that Anubis hasn't?"

The Egyptian woman reached out a slender hand. Barry felt a warm tingling touch as her fingers brushed his. "Do you not find me—attractive, Barry?"

She was very close to him. Barry could feel the warm fragrance of her breath, and he was suddenly aware of a pounding in his throat. He thought of Joan Forrest, flashing blue eyes, copper gold hair, a pert upturned nose, and most of all, the simple honesty of her. Beside Joan, all the foreign exotic beauty of Zaleikka paled. But not when he looked into her eyes . . .

Her face was inches from his. Her lips were half parted, her small white even teeth twin rows of smooth ivory. And in her eyes, deep flickering pools of myrtle flame, he saw all the pent up emotions of three thousand years. He was suddenly engulfed by them, powerless to resist.

He wasn't aware his arms had tightened around her until her lips crushed against his. His senses swept away in a searing kiss of passionate flame. In that moment nothing mattered but Zaleikka—he wanted to hold her in his arms forever, closer, closer . . .

A cough sounded behind them.

Zaleikka broke away from Barry and whirled to her feet. She stood, eyes flashing, a red angry flush rushing to

her face. And Barry followed her gaze toward the door.

Doctor Anubis stood silently on the threshold, watching them.

CHAPTER VI

You Cannot Escape Me

"WHAT is the meaning of this?" Zaleikka demanded coldly. "By what right do you spy on me?"

Anubis fixed frosty eyes on her. Barry noted that he was clad in a conventional pearl gray worsted. He watched for some expression on Anubis' face. There was none there.

"It would seem that I come just in time," Anubis replied quietly.

"You knew I was here!" Zaleikka stormed.

Anubis nodded.

"It is that pig, Hassan! He ran straight to you!"

"Hassan is my most able assistant. He acts only in the best interests of our cause."

"He is a pig! If this were in the court of Khafre I would have him flayed!"

It was the first real show of emotion Barry had seen Zaleikka display. The flush had left her features, leaving them a pale ivory. Her whole body trembled in anger. Barry glanced quickly at Anubis. His back was to the open door. The hallway beckoned enticingly. If he could reach it . . .

Anubis put his right hand in his coat pocket. There was a significant bulge. Anubis flashed a warning glance at Barry. "Stay where you are, Mr. Randall." Then he looked back at the Egyptian woman. "I am sorry you feel angry with Hassan. I can assure you, Zaleikka, that he is one of your most devoted followers. Even now he is on an important errand for us that

will allow us to begin our journey."

His words seemed to have a soothing effect on Zaleikka. Barry guessed that it was not so much the words, as the absence of the anger she had expected. As Barry himself had experienced in the study earlier, the utter calm of this man defeated Zaleikka.

"And now, I would like a few words with Mr. Randall—alone."

Zaleikka lifted her head imperiously. She walked swiftly past Anubis and out the door. Once outside she turned swiftly and Barry caught the full impact of her eyes. There was a message written there, but before he could catch it, she was gone.

"And now, Mr. Randall."

Barry swung his gaze back to Anubis. He had shut the door with his free hand and stood with his back to it.

Barry got up slowly from the edge of the bed. He was aware suddenly that his hands were moist with sweat. Had Anubis been standing outside in the hall all along? How much had he heard?

"A very touching scene, Mr. Randall, I must compliment you. You sought to gain Zaleikka as an ally behind my back. But then, women have always been fools where men are concerned, even a woman three thousand years old." He took a silver cigarette case from his left coat pocket and proffered it. "Cigarette? They are of Egyptian tobacco, I prefer them."

Barry shook his head.

"You seem nervous, Mr. Randall," Anubis flicked the lighter on the cigarette case and then pocketed it. His eyes, cold and steady, never left Barry. Wisps of smoke streamed from his delicate nostrils.

BARRY took a step forward. "Just how long are you going to hold me here?" he demanded. "And what about

Miss Forrest?"

"Ah. But rest your fears, Mr. Randall, I will not detain you long—now."

Anger surged inside Barry. This man was so *sure* of himself. Had he really heard Zaleikka? He took another step.

"It would be best if you stood still, Mr. Randall. I have no desire to hasten your death. In the meantime, now that you understand my goal, we can talk intelligently."

Barry stopped. "So you *did* hear what Zaleikka told me!"

"Yes, Mr. Randall, I heard."

"I thought you wanted to keep this secret—why didn't you stop her before this?"

"You underestimate me, my friend. Before I had only personal reasons for wanting to kill you. Zaleikka, by her brief feminine whimsy has provided me with a necessity. I will now be able to place the blame on her hands."

Barry had met many men in his life. But he knew, as he stood facing Anubis, that he had never met a man so cunning, with such a cold disregard for anyone who stood in his way.

"Tell me, Mr. Randall, as an Egyptologist of no little repute, how does the solving of the world's most perplexing riddle strike you?"

Barry knew he was referring to the Sphinx, and he felt his blood chill. For the moment his own peril was swept away.

"Anubis, you can't go through with this—it's mad, insane!"

Anubis' eyebrows arched a fraction. "Mad? To the contrary, it is the most logical plan ever devised by man, and the Pharaohs were of the wisest. With the science of my ancestors at my disposal, I will place Egypt in her rightful place among the world's nations! And that gave birth to man should rule over him?"

Barry laughed. "Don't you mean that it's only right that *you* should gain power?"

"It is useless to taunt me, Mr. Randall, before the month is gone, the world will feel my presence."

"But don't you know what you're doing, man? You're planning to throw the world into war! If the Egyptians really had weapons of strange power, you'll cause millions of people to suffer! And don't forget in your smug confidence that another little man like you tried to conquer the world and failed!"

A TIGHTENING of his lips was the only show Anubis made of his emotions. But Barry saw the flame that leaped in his eyes. He was dangerous. More dangerous than Hitler and his Nazi hordes had ever been. Suddenly he remembered something.

"Maybe Zaleikka will have something to say about your plans!"

A smile crossed Anubis' pale features. "There are some things you do not know, Mr. Randall. Some things that even Zaleikka does not know. I believe she mentioned to you a certain papyrus written by Ammon Tankh?"

Barry nodded, frowning.

Anubis went on. "Ah, yes, you recall it. The wisdom of the Priests of Karnak took in all eventualities. Rest assured that I hold the whiphand—even over Zaleikka. I fear nobody, least of all, her."

Despair gripped Barry's heart. Was there no checkmate to Anubis? And what made him so sure he controlled Zaleikka? What was in the papyrus that the Egyptian woman didn't know?

"And now, Mr. Randall, I am afraid we must part. My time is very limited. It will be so for the next two weeks. I regret that you will have no part in it."

Barry watched as Anubis took his

right hand from his coat pocket. There was a gun in it.

"You wouldn't dare shoot me! Zaleikka will—"

"Zaleikka will forget you — soon. Goodbye, Mr. Randall."

"Wait!" Barry felt his heart pounding.

"Wait? For what? I believe everything has been said."

"You offered me a cigarette before—I'd like one now."

Anubis stared coldly at him. Then his features relaxed into a smile. "Asking for time will get you nothing. But," he shrugged, "I can see no harm in a last request—here." He stepped over to a side table next to the bed. He laid the silver cigarette case on it. Barry walked slowly over to the table. Anubis was careful to keep distance between them.

"Touch nothing but the cigarette case," he warned.

Barry picked up the case with a trembling hand. He opened it and took out one of the long Egyptian cigarettes. He flicked the lighter on, drew in sweet mild smoke.

"You have had your wish. I can delay no longer."

Barry blew out a cloud of smoke and tensed. Anubis was but a few feet away, the gun was pointed straight at Barry's heart. He could see the slender finger tightening on the trigger.

"Here's your cigarette case, Anubis."

Barry tried to make his voice casual. He started to hold out his hand. For the barest fraction of a second, Anubis' eyes flicked down to the proffered case. Barry had been waiting for that moment. With a single motion he jumped sideways and hurled the case at Anubis' head.

IT struck him in the forehead. He let out a sharp cry and his arms flew up

instinctively. Barry dove upon him in almost the same moment. His fists lashed out against the classic features in a smashing barrage. Anubis staggered back.

Barry felt a sudden pain in his head. Anubis had managed to free his arm and was lashing out with the butt of the gun. Barry ducked another blow and kicked up with his knee.

Anubis let out a groan and doubled up. The gun slipped from his fingers and skidded off across the floor under the bed. Then he had Barry around the knees and they crashed to the floor.

Somehow Anubis got his fingers around Barry's throat. Barry felt his head pound as he struggled to break the grip. But he couldn't. There was a grip of steel in those fingers. In desperation, Barry lashed out with every bit of strength he possessed. He felt his fist pound into Anubis' face, felt flesh and bone crack. And the fingers tightened.

Blood pounded in Barry Randall's head. His senses whirled, he felt his eyes bulging from their sockets. Then somehow his hands closed over Anubis' head. In a last frantic struggle as his consciousness whirled, Barry lifted the Egyptian's head off the floor and smashed it down. There was a dull thump, a groan, and Anubis grew limp beneath him.

Barry staggered blindly to his feet, his breath coming in tortured gasps. Blood was trickling down his temple from a gash on his head. He stared dumbly down at Anubis. The man lay, still and silent, his face swollen and bruised.

Only one thought pounded through Barry's mind. "*Got to get out—police—Joan . . .*"

He rushed over to the door, and then paused, listening. There was no sound other than his own labored breathing.

What about Hassan, the guard? Then he remembered, Anubis had said Hassan had been sent on an errand. Swiftly Barry opened the door, and then he was out in the hall. He closed and locked the door behind him, pocketing the key.

THE hall was deserted. Only a faint aroma of incense permeated the air about him. He paused to collect his thoughts. Joan. He *must* find Joan. A momentary fear crossed his mind. Good Lord—maybe Anubis had been to her room first!

He sped down the long hall. He remembered the room Hassan had locked the girl in at the head of the stairway. It was closed, the key turned in the lock.

His fingers trembling, Barry unlocked the door. He threw it open, almost afraid to look—

She was sitting on the edge of a chaise longue, staring straight ahead at the door. Her fingers were folded closely in her lap. Barry let out a sigh of relief.

"Joan! Thank God you're safe—Come on, we're getting out of here, I just—"

He came up alongside her, and stopped. His words broke off in mid-sentence. She was still staring at the door! She gave no indication of having seen or heard him.

"Joan!" Barry breathed hoarsely. He dropped to his knees beside her and turned her face toward him. Her wide blue eyes looked into this, unseeing. Slowly her lips moved.

"Who—are—you?"

"*Who am I?*" Barry hissed the words dumbfounded. "Joan, what's happened?"

"Happened? — I — don't — understand . . ."

Barry got slowly to his feet. Good

God! Anubis had been here! But what had he done to her? She wasn't aware of anything! Gently he took her hand.

"Come with me, Joan, we've got to get out of here."

She looked up at him slowly. "No—I—want—to—stay.—Zaleikka—needs—me..."

"Zaleikka!" Barry's mind reeled. Of course! Zaleikka was responsible for this. She had put the girl in some kind of a hypnotic trance! He tightened his grip on the girl's fingers and pulled her slowly to her feet. She didn't resist.

It was like guiding a walking automaton. The girl's fingers were limp in his grasp, her footsteps halting, unsure.

As he guided her slowly from the room and down the stairs, Barry kept a nervous eye on the vestibule below. There was bound to be one or more of Anubis' men down there. In the dim light from the shaded fixture in the hall ceiling, the massive door leading to freedom seemed a thousand miles away.

HIS eyes took in every shadow, every object in sight, as they reached the landing. There was a hat rack beside the door, and a cane stand with a number of heavy sticks. He suddenly wondered where their hats and coats were. It was so ludicrous that he nearly laughed. "At a time like this I worry about a hat!" he muttered.

The girl was beside him as he put his hand on the door knob. Suddenly a high pitched scream sounded behind them.

Barry whirled. He glanced up the staircase.

Zaleikka stood at the head of the landing staring down at them.

From somewhere close by Barry heard a door slam. He swore and twisted savagely on the knob. The door swung open. He pushed the girl

through it. Behind him he heard Zaleikka.

"Stop!"

A door off to the side of the hall opened. A man came running. Barry saw him coming and tensed. It was one of the men Anubis had had with him at the museum!

There was no time to think. The guard was tugging at a shoulder holster and a gun was sweeping into view. Barry's eye caught the cane rack.

In a single movement he swept one of the heavy sticks from the stand. He swung it over his head and threw it.

The guard saw it coming with a surprised look. He tried to dodge, but was too late. The stick struck him a glancing blow on the forehead. He continued running forward for a second, and then collapsed to the floor. Down the hall, Barry heard other feet running.

He whirled back to the door. Joan Forrest was standing on the threshold, her eyes staring up the staircase, her face a rapt mask of emotions. Barry followed her gaze.

Zaleikka blared down at him.

"She is lost to you—forever! Only I can release her! You cannot escape me, Barry—you cannot escape!"

And Barry Randall rushed from the house of Doctor Anubis, slamming the door behind him. He had Joan's hand gripped firmly in his as he led her, running along the driveway, to the open gates ahead—and freedom...

CHAPTER VII

The Vision

POLICE Inspector Gerald Merton sat wearily behind his desk in headquarters. The cold cheerless light of early dawn filtered in through the windows opposite him. Across the desk,

Barry Randall sat tensely forward in a chair, rapidly outlining his story.

Inspector Merton listened attentively, regretting the fate that had called him from a comfortable bed. If it had been anyone but John Randall's son, he would have told him to go to hell, but

the friendship he had had with John Randall dated back to school days many years back. He sighed wistfully to himself as he thought of this and listened at the same time.

"And that's about all I can tell you, Inspector," Barry finished. "I took

Joan,—Miss Forrest, over to Doctor Holland's home, and got in touch with you as soon as I could."

Merton leaned across his desk. He brushed a hand



Zoleikka had her eyes fastened on the still figure of the girl as she sat staring trance-like up at her

slowly across his well-kept, gray hair, and scowled.

"Do you mean you dragged me out of bed at five in the morning to tell me a fantastic story like this? Barry, I'm disappointed in you."

Barry got to his feet angrily. "I came to you because you're an old friend of the family. You should know me better than to think I'd waste your time with what you call a fantastic tale! I'm sorry I bothered you." He turned to go.

Merton stared at him for a long moment. Then he sighed. "All right, Barry, sit down and get off your high horse. I'll admit I'm skeptical, if it was anyone else but you I'd throw him out. Now let's see." He drummed his fingers lightly on the desk top. Barry sat down again, waiting.

"Now let's see if I've

got this business straight. You say that yesterday afternoon a mummy disappeared from the museum. You had noticed these particular people hanging around it for some time. You traced a glove that had been left, to a Doctor Anubis of Wilton Place. You went there, met this girl reporter, got inside, witnessed a strange rite, and saw a woman named Zaleikka who claimed to be the mummy that vanished from your museum. Right?"

Barry nodded.

"Then you were forcibly detained by this Anubis, and he threatened to kill you. Later you heard from the woman herself about this Egyptian business."

He sighed wearily.

"Barry, I'm afraid it's way over my head. You don't actually believe that nonsense, do you?"



BARRY forced himself to remain calm. "Gerald, I'm an Egyptologist. I've spent years in the study of Egypt. I've seen things that modern science has no answer for. Until last night I had to accept them at their face value. Now I can't do that. If all this is as fantastic as you say, then how do you explain the disappearance of the mummy? How do you explain that this woman Zaleikka spoke only *Coptic*? And most of all, how do you explain the fact that Joan,—Miss Forrest, has been put under some kind of spell? She is under a hypnotic influence! I myself experienced the same thing at the hands of Zaleikka, and I believe that I can truthfully say I have a strong will, not easily influenced!"

The inspector shrugged. "All right, granting that there is something screwy, what can I do?"

"I want you to investigate it. In fact, you've got to stop them from leaving. Just consider that what I've told you may be true! Can't you see what a danger would arise? The whole safety of the world might be at stake."

Merton was silent for a few moments. Then he pulled open a drawer and pushed a paper across the desk at Barry.

"All right, Barry, I'll see what I can do, but I'll have to have a signed complaint by you. I'll book him for abduction, suspicion of theft, and intent to kill with a deadly weapon. Sign here."

Barry took a proffered pen and scrawled his name on the sheet. Merton stood up. "Now if I were you I'd check with Doctor Holland on the condition of the girl. The evidence he submits will be valuable in case I need it."

Barry breathed a sigh of relief. He nodded and grasped Merton's hand. "Thanks, Inspector, I'm going over there right now. Don't waste any time

on this."

Merton grinned. "They're practically under arrest right now."

BARRY paid off the cab driver and strolled up the walk. Doctor Stephen Holland, Chicago's most successful psychiatrist, lived in a sedate mansion on North Sheridan Road. A grave faced butler opened the door a few moments after Barry rang...

"Oh, it's you, Mr. Randall. Come right in, sir."

Barry walked in. The butler closed the door behind him. "If you will follow me, sir, Doctor Holland is upstairs with the patient."

Barry followed him silently. Presently they came to a closed door on the second floor. The butler knocked.

The door opened and a tall, distinguished man in his early fifties, peered out.

"What is it, Reynolds?—Oh, it's you, Randall! Come in, please."

Barry walked into the room. It was a bedroom, simply but comfortably furnished. On the bed, staring vacantly at the ceiling, lay Joan Forrest. Barry sucked in his breath as he looked at her lying there. He turned anxiously.

"Doctor Holland, how is she?"

The doctor walked up to the bed. He stared down at the girl for a moment, then turned. His face had a frown.

"I don't know what to make of it, Randall. I've given her a thorough examination since you brought her here. I must confess I'm puzzled. The girl is perfectly normal, physically. Her Romberg reflexes are normal, her heart action, pulse, and general physical conditions. But her mind—from what you told me earlier, I immediately suspected hypnosis. She reacts more like a shock victim, but I have to rule that out.

"And if she is under a hypnotic spell,

it is one I have never come in contact with. She answers questions rationally when put to them, but doesn't remember who she is or anything prior to meeting someone she calls Zaleikka. The only diagnosis I can give is a cross between amnesia and hypnotic influence—something I have never seen before!"

Barry sat down on the bed and took one of the girl's hands in his. He looked desperately up at the doctor.

"Isn't there something you can do to snap her out of it?"

"I've tried everything from counter hypnosis to shock. It's useless. If what you told me is true about this woman whom Miss Forrest keeps mentioning, well, while I hesitate to say it, I believe that only she can break the trance."

BARRY groaned. He had told the doctor only the barest essentials. That a foreign woman, whom they had been investigating, had somehow put the girl in a trance. He didn't dare reveal more.

"Why—am—I—here?"

Barry stared down at the girl. She was looking at him, her features stoic, immobile. Her eyes seemed to be looking through him instead of at him.

"Joan, don't you remember anything?" Barry leaned over her.

"Remember? — What — should — I — remember?"

Doctor Holland sighed. "You see? It is just as I said."

Barry got up slowly from the bed. He paced the room nervously. "What can we do, doctor—it may be some time before the police arrest Zaleikka!"

"The police?" Doctor Holland's eyebrows arched.

"Yes, you may as well know, this girl and I were caught by members of a new cult. The police are on the trail

now."

"I see. Then there is nothing to do but wait."

"But will she be all right?"

Holland shrugged. "I see no reason for any change. At any rate, there is nothing more I can do here. I would suggest you take her home, keeping me posted of course should there be any change. I will see that a trained nurse is assigned to the case."

"Home?" Barry frowned. He didn't know where she lived! He could call her paper, the *Blade*, and find out, but he decided he wanted her as close as possible until Merton could contact him.

"I'll take her to my apartment," he announced. "I expect prompt action by the police, and it will be easier that way. You say you can send a trained nurse?"

Doctor Holland nodded. "Yes. Leave your address with me and I'll have one sent over immediately."

Barry gave it to him and moments later was leading the girl from the room. A lump rose in his throat as he felt her limp fingers inside his.

THE Field Museum was just opening for the day when Barry Randall arrived. As he walked up the steps his mind went back twenty-four hours. He had never thought yesterday morning when he walked up these same steps that within a day he would be involved in a weird plot of world threatening peril. He wouldn't have believed that a beautiful young girl's life and sanity hung in his hands. But that had been twenty-four hours ago. Barry's thoughts lingered with Joan. He had left her in his apartment under the watchful eye of the nurse Doctor Holland had sent over. There was nothing to do now but wait for Merton to act.

"Good morning, Mr. Randall."

Barry looked up. Slim was standing just inside the entrance.

"Morning, Slim," Barry started to pass him.

"Mr. Randall."

Barry turned. "Yes?"

Slim had a worried look on his face. "Doctor Slater came in this morning. He knows about the mummy disappearance. He asked to see you as soon as you came in."

Barry nodded glumly. "Thanks, Mike."

He approached the Curator's office slowly. A new worry clouded him. It was only a week until the Board of Directors met to choose a new Curator. Would this theft, occurring while he had been in charge, affect his selection? He opened the door.

Doctor Slater, Curator of the Museum, sat stiffly behind his desk, busily adjusting a pair of pinch glasses on his thin peaked nose. He was a slight, stoop-shouldered man in his late sixties. His hair, long and white, was an unkempt mass framing his head. He stopped fussing with the glasses as Barry walked into the room.

"Oh! It's you, Randall. I want to see you—what is all this mystery about that Egyptian mummy?"

Barry walked up to the desk and sank into a comfortable chair. He pulled out a cigarette, lit it, and began the same story he had told Merton. When he finished, he crushed out the cigarette butt. Then he watched the expression on the Curator's face.

"You mean to say she spoke *Coptic*?"

Barry nodded. Slater drummed his fingertips on the desk.

"You are absolutely certain about this?"

"As certain as I am of sitting here talking to you."

"Hmmm. This puts an entirely dif-

ferent complexion on the matter. Ah, I refer of course to the question of theft. If what you have told me is true, Randall, we here at Field's may be responsible for entirely revolutionizing Egyptology!"

BARRY grinned ruefully. "Doctor, it isn't so much what *we* may revolutionize, as what *they* might do if allowed to continue!"

The Curator paused. "Yes, I had quite forgotten for the moment. My boy, I can't get over it—a priestess of Karnak alive! My soul! We must demand that the police turn her over to us!"

Barry nodded absently. Yes, there would be plenty of time for that after—

The telephone on Slater's desk jangled.

The Curator picked up the receiver. "Yes? Who? Randall? Just a minute," he held out the receiver. "It's for you."

Barry took the phone. "Hello?"

Merton's voice came over the phone: "I've got bad news, Barry. I've just come from Wilton Place. Anubis is gone, and so is that woman, Zaleikka."

"What?" Barry straightened in his chair. "You know what this means? We've got to stop them—check the depots and airports—"

"I've already done that!" Merton snapped. "They took the three o'clock plane from the Municipal airport. I've already wired New York, and their plane took off for Egypt a half hour ago!"

"My God!" Barry breathed. Across from him Doctor Slater was listening attentively, his fingers fumbling with his glasses. Watching him, Barry felt his heart sink. "What can we do?"

Merton's voice was brisk. "The case is out of my hands now, but we got a

break. I checked with the New York Foreign office. The woman was registered under a passport issued to a Madame Zalon. It was obviously a forgery. The F.B.I. is working on it. I'll call you when I get any further news."

"Thanks," Barry said hollowly and replaced the phone. He sat still and stunned for long moments. Across from him, Doctor Slater fidgeted.

"What was that? Have they found them?"

"They're gone." Barry replied. "They left New York a half hour ago on the Egyptian Clipper."

Slater's mouth dropped open. "But they must be stopped! Once they get to Egypt it will be too late!"

"I know that!" Barry snapped. "But there's nothing we can do now! Unless . . ."

"Yes?"

"Look here, sir, this is something big, bigger than anything you or I can even imagine. It all started here in the museum, and technically we are responsible. I'd like to follow up on this—with your permission."

"Of course, of course! By all means, Randall. But what can *you* do?"

Barry set his lips grimly. "I don't know—yet."

"Hmmm. That girl, Randall, that Miss Forrest, do you suppose she is all right now that Zaleikka is gone?"

Barry's heart leaped. Joan! He had nearly forgotten about her. He got up swiftly. "That's one of the things I'm going to find out!" he said.

Slater was adjusting his glasses as Barry left.

SHE stared at him with a lost expression. "Why—am—I—here?"

Barry's shoulders sagged. Beside him, the nurse shook her head sadly.

"That's all she's been saying, sir, ever since you left. That and a strange

name, somebody called Zaleikka."

Barry nodded wearily. He had thought it might be different. He had hoped that with the going of the strange Egyptian woman, the spell would have been broken. But it wasn't. Though Zaleikka was now thousands of miles away, and getting further with each passing moment, her control over the girl reporter remained.

"Leave me for awhile with her," he told the nurse.

After the door had closed he sat down on the edge of the bed and took one of the girl's hands in his. Her fingers were soft and warm. Something rose inside him that was an ache. Looking down on her, her mind controlled by a woman endowed with the powers of a lost age, Barry felt suddenly helpless. What could *he* do?

Her eyes were on his. Barry leaned over her. For the barest moment it seemed as if her sight had cleared, as if she suddenly were able to see him!

"Barry. . ."

The word slipped slowly from her parted lips. Barry tensed.

"Joan! Joan!"

And then it was gone. The vacantness was in her stare, the hopeless yearning. But Barry felt his pulse leap. She had called his name! Zaleikka's influence had passed for the slightest moment! And there had been a message in the girl's eyes. A vibrant pleading, her soul calling out to him.

Emotion swept through him. He suddenly had her in his arms. Her lips were yielding and warm under his. Almost it seemed, as if she responded. He held her close to him in a fierce embrace. His heart called out to her, his kiss burning on her mouth.

And it happened.

IT HAD happened before. His senses reeled, his mind blurred,

and—

He was holding Zaleikka against him! Her lips were searing irons on his!

There was no space, no time, no reality. There was nothing but Zaleikka in his arms. Everything else was a whirl of motion, of sight and sound. He seemed to be drifting in an ether space of unreality. He fought, revulsion swept through him, but he could not defeat it. Nothing mattered but Zaleikka.

And then her lips tore away from his. Her eyes were swimming pools of myrtle flame from which he could not escape.

"Barry—you are mine! You cannot escape me! This girl does not matter—together, you and I will rule the world! Forget her—she is lost to you forever—come to me, I shall be waiting for you—come to me—Egypt calls us—you cannot escape!"

Her words rung in his mind. And then her face was close to his again, her lips parted, beckoning . . .

A loud jangling sound rose from somewhere. It grew louder.

Barry groaned. His mind suddenly cleared. He was holding Joan Forrest close against him.

The jangling grew louder.

The telephone!

Dazedly Barry released the girl. She lay back, still and quiet against the pillow. A deep color had transformed her features but her eyes were vacant. Barry shuddered and clenched his fists in agony.

The door opened slowly and the nurse came in.

"Shall I answer, sir?"

Barry got up from the bed. "Never mind, I'll take it," he said. His voice was strained. The nurse looked at him strangely for a moment, then closed the door.

Barry picked up the receiver. "Hello?"

"Merton. I called you at the museum, but Slater said you went home. How's the girl?"

"The same," Barry said.

"Too bad. Listen, I've got news. You remember I told you the F.B.I. had stepped in? Well, I've given them the whole story. Naturally they don't believe it, but they're taking no chances. A special agent is being assigned to work the case out of Chicago. He'll probably leave on the evening plane for New York and Egypt. This thing may have international complications. His name is Craig Dalton. Thought I'd let you know."

Barry clenched the phone in a grip of steel. His eyes were fastened on the still figure of Joan Forrest.

"Merton! Listen to me, I want you to get me two seats on that plane! I'm going with Dalton, and I'm taking Joan along with me!"

"What? Are you crazy? What the—"

"Don't argue with me, Gerald, I know what I'm doing! I've got to get to Egypt—I can't explain why, but I know more about this case than anyone else! You've got to help me!"

There was a long sustained pause. Then:

"I'll see what I can do, but I think you're making a mistake."

"Our mistake will come if we get there too late. Thanks, Gerald."

Barry replaced the phone with a trembling hand. He was suddenly aware that his clothes were wet with a cold sweat. A shiver swept through him. His feet were leaden weights as he moved over beside the bed.

He looked down at Joan. But he didn't see her. He saw Zaleikka. And he heard the words—*You cannot escape me—you cannot escape!*

CHAPTER VIII

Cairo

FROM the terrace balcony of Shephard's Hotel, Barry Randall sat at a table with a small pot of Arab coffee before him, waiting for Craig Dalton to come down from his room. He gazed moodily out over the ancient city and felt that strange thrill creep over him that only Cairo, City of the Caliphs, could produce.

Out amongst those spires and minarets he knew there was life going on that had changed little in the ensuing centuries. Many times before he had walked through narrow winding streets and overleaning houses reminiscent with the strange musky odors of the East. There would be vendors there, of fly whisks, of Birmingham wares, sellers of lemonade jangling their copper and tin cups, old men astride ancient donkeys, stacks of carpets and *mush-rabiyeh* furniture, and the whining vendors of aged scarabs and hand pounded silver and gold jewelry. And somewhere out there too, Doctor Anubis would be in hiding, preparing, waiting for the moment when Zaleikka would lead him to the secrets and power of the ancients. And with Zaleikka lay the fate of Joan Forrest.

Barry winced inwardly. The thought of Joan had freshened his memory of the past days. The hurried flight from Chicago with the Special Agent, Craig Dalton, and the girl. The time had sped swiftly enough. He had been kept busy explaining everything he knew to Dalton. That part had been easy enough, explaining. But Barry burned secretly when he recalled the cynical comments Dalton had made:

"Thanks for the story, Randall—mark me, no offense meant, but you must admit that's a little too much to

swallow. Understand, the only reason I've been sent on this mission is to check on this man Anubis. His passport, and that of the woman he took with him, were evident forgeries. Since the war we can't afford to take any chances on suspected aliens. The Egyptian government will cooperate with us. But that's as far as I go. Frankly, I think you've made a mistake in coming along."

Barry sipped slowly on his coffee as he remembered. Yes, Merton too had said the same things. But could either of them explain the condition of Joan Forrest? Could they solve the mystery of the missing mummy? It was too easy to scoff. But Barry knew it went deeper than that. And so did Joan. . . Or did she? Was she aware of what had happened to her? Was her will completely suppressed? Would she ever remember?

"Will there be anything else, sir?"

BARRY looked up abruptly. A white robed, red capped waiter stood expectantly by. Barry glanced briefly at his stoic eastern features and turned his gaze back to the street.

"No, nothing more," he replied.

"Does the coffee suit your taste, sir?"

Barry sighed and was about to offer the tip that had been subtly suggested when his eyes focused on the sidewalk below him.

A man was standing down there staring up at the hotel. A man with pale classic features, discernible even at a distance. Slowly his face turned toward the terrace and Barry felt, rather than saw, the piercing gaze that was fastened upon him.

"Is there anything wrong, sir?"

Barry twisted around and became aware that he had half risen from his seat. The waiter gazed at him questioningly.

Only a moment did Barry glance at the waiter, then his eyes fled back to the street below. "Anubis—it's Anubis!" he exclaimed.

"Who, sir? I don't—"

Barry kicked the chair back in his haste. He grabbed the waiter by the arm. "Quick, get the police—we've got to stop him!"

"Police?" The waiter stepped back uncertainly. His eyes stared incredulously at Barry.

In the street below, Barry saw Anubis turn away suddenly.

"Out of my way!" Barry said roughly, shoving the startled waiter aside. "I've got to catch him!"

He ran through the crowded tables, oblivious of the commotion he was causing behind him. He reached the stairway leading to the street. Huge ornamental vases lined the railings, obscuring his view of the sidewalk below.

Somebody got in his way. Barry sidestepped and felt his shoulder jostle the man. Startled oaths sounded behind him, and then he was on the sidewalk, racing around to the terrace side.

He stopped, breathing hard. Anubis was gone.

For long moments he stood there. And his eyes caught sight of a car disappearing down the street. Anubis was in it—he had to be!

"What's the trouble here?"

Barry turned slowly. A *tarbushed* Moslem police officer was hurrying up, the waiter and a disgruntled hotel guest beside him.

"He came running down the steps like a madman!" the guest blustered. "Damn near killed me!"

"He saw something down in the street and ordered me to get the police—to catch somebody!" the waiter added.

The police officer stared at Barry. "Well? What is this all about?"

Barry stifled his emotions. It was too late now, Anubis was gone. "I'm very sorry," he apologized. "I thought I recognized a man who tried to rob me a short while back. I was mistaken," he completed lamely.

"Oh?" The officer was skeptical.

"I'm sure I can repair any damage I've done," Barry added, glancing at the hotel guest. The man sniffed and shrugged his shoulders.

"Do you wish to make a report about—this man?" Barry caught the obvious suspicion in the officer's words.

He shook his head. "I'm afraid I wouldn't be able to give a very accurate description. As I said before, I'm sorry if I caused any trouble."

HE BREATHED easier when they turned and left him. It had been a close call. He had had Anubis practically in his hands. He cursed himself for the stupid way he had handled it. If he hadn't started that disturbance Anubis might not have been warned. Warily he turned back toward the hotel.

"What's been going on out here?"

Craig Dalton met Barry on the steps of the hotel. He was a tall man, suave, well poised, with crisp curling grayed hair and steely blue eyes. His light tan tropical worsted suit was neatly pressed.

Barry recounted what had happened in morose tones. Dalton listened quietly, only his eyes showing interest. They hardened.

"That was a foolish thing to do, Randall. You should have slipped away quietly and called me."

"I know," Barry spoke dismally, "but it happened so fast—at least we know he's here!"

"And he knows we're here," Dalton added. He frowned thoughtfully for a moment. "What did you do with the

girl?"

"She's up in her room, the hotel supplied a matron to take care of her. You don't suppose Anubis—"

"I'm not supposing anything. We've got to act fast. I've been ironing out diplomatic details through our Consulate. I've got an appointment with the Egyptian Home Minister, Abdul Ben Achmed. If we can get quick action we'll have this Anubis before nightfall. Come on."

Barry followed him hopefully into a cab. But his thoughts were not all pleasant. He was remembering the words of Zaleikka. And he was thinking of Joan Forrest, helpless. They *had* to get action. Anubis himself had said his time was short. Barry remembered this and wondered again what the Egyptian had meant.

Dalton was whistling confidently beside him . . .

BARRY SAT in the luxurious office, his nerves tense, and his emotions barely concealed. The discussion had been going on for over a half hour, in the typically Eastern method. There were innumerable Egyptian cigarettes smoked, and countless cups of aromatic Arab coffee, combined with the most inane of comments and discussions. Barry fretted secretly, but knew from his past experiences in the East that nothing could change it. Business was carried on in the guise of social entertainment. It would have been an insufferable breach of etiquette to barge into the Home Minister's office and state their case with no preamble of cigarettes, coffee, and small talk.

Seated across from him, Craig Dalton was finishing the last of his coffee. Across from them Barry watched Abdul Ben Achmed, a slight man with the barest hint of a moustache, and the customary red felt and black tasseled

fez settled firmly on his head, crush out the butt of a half smoked cigarette and immediately light another.

"And, gentlemen, as I understand it, you wish information of a certain man known as Anubis, and his party."

Barry breathed a sigh of relief, being careful to mask it by straightening in his chair. He listened while Dalton smoothly added details, as if it had been the matter under discussion all along.

"I see," the Minister replied. "And you wish us to help in apprehending this man."

Dalton nodded. For a moment silence fell. Then the Egyptian reached out to a call box on his desk and pressed a button.

Seconds later a door opened and a bespectacled clerk entered with a clipped report. He handed it to the Minister and silently left.

After the door had closed: "You see, gentlemen, that we are not idle. I have here the report from the airport, consisting of a list of every passenger on the plane, his or her point of origin, and business in Egypt. I took immediate action when your Consulate contacted me."

Barry automatically revised his opinion of eastern efficiency. He sat forward expectantly.

Achmed studied the sheets for a moment, and frowned. "I'm afraid I don't understand—there is no party on board named Anubis. There is a Doctor Ahmes and his niece and servants—but that is all. Here, see for yourself."

Barry rose from his chair and peered over Craig Dalton's shoulder. He scanned the entire passenger list. It was true! There was no listing of Anubis nor of Zaleikka under the forged passport of Madame Zalon!

Dalton slapped the report down on the Minister's desk. He looked up at Barry. "He's very cunning, didn't

leave a trace." He turned back to the Minister, but Abdul Ben Achmed was busy with a phone.

Barry listened to him speak rapidly in his native tongue. He was asking for an immediate checkup of Doctor Ahmes' movements from the airport. Moments later he replaced the phone.

"We will have to wait, gentlemen. I will have a complete record of this party's movements shortly."

DALTON gazed silently over at Barry. And Barry felt his spirits slipping. Something inside him told him that Anubis would have covered his trail completely.

It began again. The cigarettes and coffee. The minutes crept by. Barry's stomach rebelled against the aromatic liquid. The sweet cigarettes made his head swim. He noted that Dalton was beginning to show signs of tension. He was drumming the edge of his chair with nervous fingers.

The door opened suddenly and the same bespectacled clerk strode into the room. He handed Achmed another another clipped report, and again silently departed. Once more Barry leaned forward as the Minister read swiftly.

Moments later Achmed laid the report on his desk. His long slender fingers cupped under his chin. There was a frown on his face.

"I am sorry, gentlemen, I regret to say that I cannot aid you. My agents have checked this Ahmes and his party's movements as far as is possible. They gave their destination as Shephard's Hotel. The management cannot verify their arrival. It is obvious that these people have deliberately covered their activities. I will have my agents alerted with a full description and account. Possibly in a day or so we will have definite news. These mat-

ters take time."

Barry felt his hopes twist in agony. In a day or so! He looked across at Dalton. The American Agent had risen. He was bowing politely and murmuring thanks. Dazedly Barry followed suit.

Outside, they hailed a passing cab. Barry spoke urgently as they started back to the hotel.

"We've just been wasting our time! Anubis is too clever to leave any traces—if I hadn't see him outside the hotel I'd almost believe he never came to Cairo!"

Dalton shrugged. "There isn't anything else we can do but wait. You must understand that I can only act in accord with the Egyptian government. Achmed's police will find his hiding place if it can be found. Even if it were possible to act on our own hook, what leads do we have? Don't forget that we have time on our side. Every hour will draw the net tighter around the city. Anubis and this woman you speak of can't possibly escape. Every route is covered."

Barry writhed. It was easy enough for Dalton to sit smugly back and wait. But was time on their side? Barry recalled once again Anubis' words that time was short. Short for whom? For what? Barry feared that at any moment Anubis might act. Heaven only knew how much of an organization he had built up already in Egypt, and unless he were stopped it would be only a stepping stone.

He glanced out the window as the cab slowed. They were approaching the hotel. A large black sedan was just pulling away from the curbing.

DALTON paid off the cab driver and together they strode into the lobby. Even as they entered, Barry grabbed Craig Dalton's arm.

"Craig! That woman talking to the desk clerk—she's the matron assigned to Joan. What is she doing down here?"

"I don't know," Dalton replied slowly. "We can find out."

Barry led the way hurriedly over to the desk. The woman turned at that moment and saw Barry approaching. A startled expression came over her features.

"Mister Randall! I don't understand—I thought you were at the government building?"

Barry frowned. "How did you know that? And why aren't you upstairs with Miss Forrest? I gave definite instructions—"

"But, sir," the woman protested, "You just sent for Miss Forrest. A government man and his secretary just left with her—"

"What!" Barry paled.

Beside him, Craig Dalton stepped forward. "Did you say she just left?"

The woman nodded puzzledly. "Why yes, he gave his name as a Mister Anubis and—"

"Anubis!" Barry cried out, grabbing Dalton's arm desperately. "That car that just left! The one that pulled away when we drove up—Anubis and Zaleikka had Joan in it with them! Do you hear, man—they've kidnapped her!"

Seconds later a frantic Barry Randall rushed out onto the street. Dalton, breathing hard, followed close at his heels. Together they stared off in the direction the car had taken moments before.

"They're gone, Craig!" Barry groaned. "They must have turned off at the bend toward Esbekiyeh Gardens—we'll never be able to pick up their trail!"

Dalton took Barry's arm. Barry pulled away savagely. His eyes were

flaming, his whole body trembling.

"Easy, Barry, it was a trap and we walked right into it. But Anubis won't get very far this time. I'll contact Achmed immediately. He'll have every block checked in five minutes!"

Dalton rushed away. Barry stood gazing helplessly down the street. His fists were clenched, he could feel his nails biting into his flesh. But the pain was nothing to the agony that gnawed within him.

"I'll find you Joan," he murmured over and over. "I'll find you! . . ."

CHAPTER IX

The Seven Lamps

A SMOKY haze thickened the air of Barry Randall's room. Cigarette butts littered the ash trays on the desk beside his bed. His feet beat a steady tattoo on the Arab rug as he paced slowly back and forth. His hair was disheveled, his clothes rumpled. He had been waiting for hours, his eyes straying hungrily to the telephone on the desk.

"You wait here at the hotel, Barry," Craig Dalton had said shortly after the kidnapping. "There's just a chance that Anubis might get in touch with us, especially if he's holding the girl for ransom. I'll be down at Achmed's office in case anything breaks. I expect fast action now."

That had been hours ago. Hours in which Barry's nerves had gradually worn thin. The suspense, the waiting, the not knowing where Joan had been taken to, the uncertainty of what Anubis planned to do next. Ransom. Barry laughed inwardly. Dalton was so sure that it was Anubis who was behind the girl's capture. Barry knew differently. It was Zaleikka! She hated the girl, in some strange way she had

formed an infatuation for him, swift, born as the Eastern dawn and she knew that Joan Forrest stood in her way to holding him. Barry knew that Zaleikka wouldn't be content until the girl was put out of the way—destroyed. And to Zaleikka, it would be the logical thing to do. She was of an age when life was cheap, and that of a woman, the cheapest of all. He felt sure too, that Anubis was only playing her along until the Sphinx had been opened. But Zaleikka too had intimated plans of her own. Plans that concerned him.

The Sphinx. Barry's thoughts centered on the word. He stopped his pacing suddenly, stood riveted to the middle of the floor. Of course! Anubis had to reach the Sphinx—he *had* to reach the Sphinx! But what if he were prevented?

The telephone jangled on the desk.

Barry started nervously. He took a step forward and hesitated. What if it were Anubis? Or Zaleikka? Would he be able to trace the call through the switchboard of the hotel?

The telephone rung insistently.

Barry stepped slowly forward. His hand closed over the receiver. He lifted it.

"Yes?"

"It's me, Barry, Dalton."

"Oh," disappointment swept through him.

"I'm afraid I've got bad news, Barry," Dalton hesitated.

"You couldn't trace the car, is that it?"

"That's right. From the looks of things it vanished into thin air. Every patrol in the city was alerted but not a thing turned up. Achmed is pretty upset about it, this puts his government on the spot—having a foreign woman kidnapped right under his nose. We're going to comb the entire area of Esbekiyeh Gardens tonight. I have a

hunch Anubis is in that neighborhood."

"And what do you expect me to do?" Barry demanded hoarsely. "Stay cooped up in this room while Joan is in that devil's hands?"

"Take it easy!" Dalton snapped. "Of course I don't expect you to sit and twiddle your thumbs. I'll pick you up a little later this evening, maybe sooner. Incidentally, you should have seen the expression on Abdul Ben Achmed's face when I mentioned the Sphinx story to him!"

The Sphinx! Barry gripped the phone tighter. "Listen, Craig, you tell Achmed to put a guard around the Sphinx—tell him to cover every inch of it! Whether you believe it or not, Anubis has to get to the Sphinx and he has to have Zaleikka with him! If we have a guard posted we can stop him, maybe even catch him!"

Dalton whistled. "Say, that's not a bad idea. I should have thought of that before. I'll do it."

"When will you come by and pick me up?" Barry's voice lifted with a tense eagerness.

"I told you I wasn't sure. Maybe in an hour or so. Sit tight until then."

BARRY replaced the phone. He sat down at the desk and picked up a pencil. He began tracing nervous doodads on the desk pad. At least he had seen to it that a guard would be posted at the Sphinx. A small wave of triumph filled him. It was the first check he had been able to produce against the Egyptian. But would that stop him? And what about Joan? Would Anubis let Zaleikka have her way with the girl? What would Zaleikka do? And did she really have any power over him? What had she meant when she told him he couldn't escape her?

Barry pondered these questions, trying desperately to solve them. Finally

his thoughts centered on Zaleikka. He found it still hard to believe that she was a woman over three thousand years old. Her strange Oriental beauty clouded his mind, and her eyes—he could see them even now . . .

He was suddenly very tired. His limbs felt like leaden weights. His mind grew heavy with lethargy. He felt as if the strain of the past days had been too much for him. He wanted to sleep. The pencil scrawled limply in his hand. What was he thinking of? Oh yes, Zaleikka . . .

There was a buzzing in his head. A nest of bees maybe. No, that wasn't it. Silly. What was he thinking? Zaleikka . . .

Somebody was calling him. It came from far away.

"Barry—Barry—"

Why didn't they let him alone. He wanted to sleep. His head sank forward upon his chest. There it was again. But this time it was louder. Somebody calling—*"Barry—you must come to me. . . ."*

Visions whirled in his head. And out of them came two large myrtle orbs, closer, closer.

Suddenly Barry knew. Something deep inside his consciousness told him. For this had happened to him before. He struggled against it. He fought to rouse himself. He had been a fool to let his drowsiness weaken him! It was *her* again—*Zaleikka!*

The buzzing faded, kaleidoscopic colors smoothed out, the myrtle orbs grew smaller, smaller . . . He was looking into a room, a room of Oriental makeup. There were brilliant colored trappings hanging from the walls. There were brocaded silken pillows on the floor. And there was a low couch beside an incense brazier.

Zaleikka, clad in a filmy shimmering garment, lay dreamily on the couch, her

head propped up against a sloping back.

And at her feet, bathing them with an amber colored fluid, was Joan Forrest!

Barry struggled furiously to break the mental bond. But it was useless. Zaleikka smiled at him, her red lips parting, beckoning. At her feet, Joan Forrest continued her labors, an abject slave, her eyes, her face, emotionless, dully obeying.

"You have come to Egypt, Barry. Now you will come to me." Her words rang in his brain. Her face grew closer. *"I am waiting. You must come now, alone. Tonight we commune with the Gods of Egypt—tonight will the power of the ancients rise again!"*

Barry revolted against the fanaticism in her eyes. He saw there all the pent-up passions, jealousies and power quests of a lost age. *"I am waiting, Barry. You will come to me now—in the Mûski at the house of the Seven Lamps. You will find it at 17 Sankara—remember, do not forget."*

Barry stirred dully. His voice sounded hoarsely: "I will remember—Seven Lamps—17 Sankara—" His fingers scrawled with the pencil on the desk pad.

"I will guide you—you must hurry . . ."

She came closer until her vision filled his entire sight. He rebelled. He fought desperately. He called upon every ounce of will power he possessed. Sweat stood out on his face. His eyes bulged, his temples throbbed—

IT WAS like awakening from a nightmare. Barry's mind suddenly cleared. He was sitting at his desk in the hotel. The pencil was still clutched in his fingers.

But the spell of Zaleikka had been broken.

Relief spread over Barry's features. But then he remembered Joan Forrest,

helpless, a slave at the feet of Zaleikka. His eyes glanced at the desk pad. He saw the scrawled words: *House of Seven Lamps, 17 Sankara*. He remembered.

"The address! They're in the *Mûski*—the native quarter!"

He tried to remember everything Zaleikka had said. Tonight—commune with the Gods—Anubis was acting to-night!

Barry rose swiftly from the desk. He would have to get there before they left—he would have to stop them somehow. Dalton! Barry glanced swiftly at his watch. Dalton might come in any minute. But could he wait? No, there wasn't time. But Dalton must know . . .

Barry turned back to the desk. He pulled a sheet of paper from a drawer and hastily scrawled a message. He left it on the desk.

Then he was rushing from the room. The door slamming behind him.

BARRY paid off the cab driver and stood silently staring into the darkness around him. The *Mûski* was like a sealed grave, the cry of the vendor stilled, the call to prayer of the *muezzin* dormant until the morning sun from the East.

He stared curiously about him. The shops of Arab dealers were dark and silent. The street itself was narrow, the buildings leaning over like sleeping vultures. There were no street lights, nothing but gloom and shadow.

He had asked the driver for 17 Sankara. Was this the right place? There was nothing here but shops and—

He suddenly saw tiny globules of light a short distance away. He hurried along the street, his footsteps sounding eerily on the cobblestones.

The lights were coming from a dwarf-like *mosque* set back a half hun-

dred yards from the street. Tall bushes and lebbekh trees girded it from the front. And Barry breathed harder.

The lights were seven tiny lamps hanging over an arched portal!

It was the House of the Seven Lamps—just as Zaleikka had foretold!

Barry strode forward cautiously. Would Anubis have the house guarded? A sudden fear possessed him. He was deep in the native quarter—far from the protection of *continental* Cairo—was this whole section an ambush? Was this the headquarters of Anubis' forces?

He made his way slowly through the shrubbery and lebbekh trees. He was almost to the portal with the glowing lamps when—

"Good evening, Mister Randall, I have been expecting you."

Barry wheeled sharply. Two figures had suddenly materialized from behind a large shrub. One of them was holding a gun, pointed steadily at him. Even in the gloom he recognized them. Anubis and Hassan!

"I would advise you to remain quite still, Mister Randall. A revolver makes quite a loud report at night, and I have no desire to kill you—yet."

Barry felt like a trapped child. "How did you know I was coming?" he demanded hoarsely.

"It was very simple. Zaleikka came to me like the child she is. She told me she had been *en rapport* with you and that you had broken her control. She feared you might be bringing the police. But my judgment of you was right—you would not wish to endanger the life of Miss Forrest by such rash action—would you?"

Barry sensed the smile that was on Anubis' face. "What do you expect to do?" he asked. He realized that he must stall for time as much as possible. "You realize of course that the Egyptian government is tracing you even

now as a result of your kidnaping Miss Forrest!"

"After tonight the government will do as I command!" Anubis retorted, his voice rising. "But let us go inside. I am sure you are anxious to see your American woman."

HASSAN stepped forward. Barry caught a glimpse of his face in the light of the lamps. There was hatred there, a burning hatred that blazed from his eyes. Barry knew that Hassan would like nothing better than to pull the trigger.

The door opened as they mounted a trio of stone steps. A white robed servant bowed deeply as Anubis passed him. Barry followed, feeling the blunt snout of the gun at his back.

They walked along a long barren corridor flanked with curtained rooms. Soft amber lights were set in the high ceiling, and a fragrance of sandalwood incense thickened the air. Anubis suddenly stopped before a scarlet drape. He motioned Barry to enter as he swept the cloth aside.

Barry stopped short inside the room. He stared at brilliant trappings hanging from the walls, brocaded silken floor cushions—he had seen this room before!

The vision! It was exact in every detail—and there was the low couch and—

"So you have come, Barry."

Zaleikka reclined languorously on the couch. And at her feet, sitting abjectly and staring in a vacant devotion up at the Egyptian woman was Joan.

Barry rushed forward and knelt beside the girl, turned her gently toward him, looking into her eyes.

"Forget her! She is nothing but a slave girl!"

Barry heard Zaleikka speak in rapid angry tones. Gently he released Joan.

Then he heard a laugh from behind them.

"You see now, Zaleikka, just how much this man cares for you. You will see now that I was right. He and the girl stand only as a threat to us!" Anubis stood inside the scarlet drapery. Hassan was beside him, alertly watching, the gun held in readiness.

Zaleikka glared across the room at Anubis. She straightened haughtily, her green eyes flashing. "No man can resist a Priestess of Karnak!" she replied sharply.

Anubis only smiled. "And yet this man broke your control over him."

Zaleikka turned her gaze on Barry. He felt her eyes burning into him. For a moment he feared she would listen to Anubis. Then, as suddenly as the fire had leapt in her, she quieted.

"You are the only man who has ever spurned me, Barry, and there have been many." Her voice flowed like rippling waters. "I find that I am glad. After tonight we will rise in the glory of Egypt together!"

Barry forced his eyes away from her, and rose.

"Do not let your spirits rise prematurely, Mister Randall," Anubis spoke in English, Barry noted, so Zaleikka couldn't understand him. "It is true that after tonight the glory of Egypt will rise again. But it will rise with me! You are well aware of my plans, and you must be equally aware by now that the only reason I keep you alive is to satisfy the whims of Zaleikka. Too, you and the girl will act as admirable hostages in the event of any interference by the police."

Barry laughed. "Suppose I tell Zaleikka what you are planning to do. Do you think she will lead you to the Sphinx?"

Anubis continued to smile. "You have my permission to tell her anything

you wish. I am quite certain she will follow me. There are some things you do not know."

BARRY remained silent. He glanced at Zaleikka. She was watching them closely. Anubis spoke again, this time in Coptic:

"In a way I am sorry that you did not tell the police of my address. I would have been very happy to welcome them, now that we are about to move."

Barry glanced from Zaleikka back to Anubis. Both of them were smiling. "What do you mean?" Barry asked.

"Perhaps you noticed the seven lamps when you arrived?"

Barry nodded.

"What you did not notice was that they serve a dual purpose. Within the lamps are packets of high explosive. At a touch of a switch they will detonate. The switch is an electric eye that controls the entrance. When in operation, the slightest breaking of the beam will set off the explosive. You see that I am prepared for any eventuality."

Barry stood stunned. His face paled. Good Lord! If Dalton had received his message he would be on his way over even now with Achmed's agents! He would be walking straight into a trap! A trap that Barry knew he himself had baited.

"You seem pale, Mister Randall. Do my words frighten you? Have no fear, we will leave in time should the necessity arrive. Perhaps you *did* notify the police. Ah, I see the fear in your eyes. Or is it for yourself?"

"In any event, we are ready to proceed. We will leave shortly for Ghizeh!"

Barry relaxed slightly. Anubis was planning to leave at once! He was so sure of himself, he thought he had every step in his plans covered. But

Barry knew there would be a reception waiting for them at the Sphinx! The Egyptian police would be waiting.

There was a dull throbbing of sound from somewhere outside. Anubis turned suddenly. He listened. Then he left the room, calling a sharp command to Hassan. The Arab blocked the doorway, his gun held in readiness.

Barry glanced quickly at Zaleikka. She was staring at him with a strange expression. He looked down at Joan Forrest. The girl continued to gaze up at the Egyptian woman with a rapt attention.

The drapery swept aside and Anubis came hurriedly into the room. His eyes were cold, his face a pale mask.

"I see you did notify the police! They are pulling up outside now! But it is I who will surprise them! I have set the lamps—we leave at once. Quickly!"

He motioned to Hassan. The Arab stepped forward and shoved the gun in Barry's ribs. Barry moved forward. Behind him, Zaleikka rose swiftly from the couch. She swept from the room, Joan Forrest following mutely at her heels.

It was a whirl of motion. Barry was aware of rushing through the long corridor, he heard a door open ahead of them, and then he was out in the darkness of the night.

A black shape loomed ahead of them. Barry gathered his sense of direction. It was a large sedan! From somewhere out front he heard muffled pounding of footsteps approaching the house. That would be Dalton and the police! They were walking right into death!

Barry threw caution away. He twisted and shouted at the top of his lungs:

"Dalton! For God's sake keep away—it's a trap!"

Then something hit the back of his

head. He groaned and fell forward. He felt himself being picked up roughly. He was dumped into the rear of the car. The motor roared. Desperately he tried to maintain his consciousness. He had to warn Dalton. He struggled painfully erect. Hassan was sitting close beside him. He felt the Arab's rough hand over his mouth. He was aware of the car spurting suddenly ahead. He heard muffled shouts behind them.

And then a deafening explosion . . .

CHAPTER X

The Desert Temple

BARRY was unaware how much time had passed when his senses cleared. He became instantly aware of the jouncing of the car beneath him. It brought a sharp pain to the back of his head. A groan slipped from his lips as he felt gingerly at the lump.

Cool soft fingers brushed his aside and gently caressed his head.

"You feel better now, Barry."

Barry straightened himself in the darkness of the car. Zaleikka was sitting close against him in the back seat. Her face was close to his, her fingers soft against his hair.

Across from her, Barry saw the limp figure of Joan Forrest slumped against the back cushions. Ahead, in the front seat, Hassan was deftly toying the wheel of the car and Anubis, sitting beside him was holding a gun.

"You should not have tried to warn — your friends," Zaleikka spoke soothingly in his ear.

Barry shot upright. His friends! The explosion! He shoved the Egyptian woman away roughly and half began a dive for the front seat.

"You will sit quite still, Mr. Randall. This weapon I am holding discharges

easily. I would gladly kill you."

Barry relaxed. He couldn't see Anubis' face in the darkness, but he could imagine the cold steady stare, the hate in his eyes. He did see the gun pointed unerringly at him.

He glanced out the window of the car. His breath catching in his throat. They were out of the city! The desert stretched long and dismally around them, and overhead, the moon cast a silver light on the sands below.

He knew they were heading west. Ahead lay the plateau of Gizeh, a short eight miles from Cairo. How far had they come? Had Dalton been killed back in the *Múski*? His heart chilled for he knew that it had been his message that had brought Dalton and the police to a certain death.

Ahead lay death too. Once Zaleikka opened the Sphinx and Anubis got his hands on the secrets of the ancient Pharaohs, the whole peace of the world would be at stake. A new Hitler would arise from the sands of Egypt. With him would come a fanatical following empowered with weapons of devastating might.

Barry breathed deeply. But there was still a chance. If Achmed had acted there would be a cordon of police around the Sphinx that not even Anubis would dare to challenge! And if the surprise was complete there would be a chance to capture him before he knew of the trap.

BESIDE him, Barry heard a stifled gasp from Zaleikka. He turned his head. She was staring in fixed rapture through the windshield of the car. Barry followed her gaze.

The long plateau of Ghizeh was a scant mile away. And looming in the moonlight, its immobile features watching silently over the Valley of the Nile beyond it, was the Sphinx!

Close by it was the Great Pyramid, dwarfing the Sphinx in size, but for Barry, the Pyramid held no interest. He could only stare at the Sphinx, at its shadow reaching eagerly over the sands like the palm of a colossal evil hand.

He looked back at Zaleikka. Her eyes were wide, staring. Her lips were moving in unintelligible words. He could see the emotion that stirred her. He suddenly wondered what she was thinking. Her eyes had last seen the Sphinx thousands of years back. Did she remember?

"Father—Oh Father Of Light—I have returned—"

He heard the words in an ancient chant of Coptic from her lips. And a tense expectancy grew within him. They had only a half mile to go along the desert highway. A half mile and into the arms of Achmed's men.

Anubis gave a sudden sharp command to Hassan. The Arab slowed the car and peered intently through the windshield. The car's headlights were not lit, only the moonlight showed the road.

Barry frowned. Why were they suddenly slowing down? Had Anubis seen the police cordon around the Sphinx? No, that was impossible, he himself saw nothing at the distance. Besides, Achmed's men would have more sense than to show themselves. What else then? Had Anubis changed his mind?

Even as Barry wondered, Hassan suddenly swerved the car from the highway onto an ancient hard packed camel trail. The car jounced over ruts.

Barry's perplexity grew. Even as they left the road, he glanced out the window back toward Cairo. He could see the faint glimmer of the city miles back, and—

There were two tiny points of light far back on the highway!

A sharp exclamation from the front of the car brought Barry's head around. Anubis had seen the lights!

He spoke swiftly to Hassan in crisp Arabic: "Speed, man! There is little time!"

Hassan grunted and Barry felt the car leap.

"Barry . . ."

On the far side of the rear seat, Joan Forrest was stirring. Her head was turned toward him, and her eyes, caught in a silver lancelet of moonlight were staring at him an appeal, a prayer of help pouring out to him. She was conscious!

"Joan!" Barry called hoarsely.

Even as the word left his lips, Zaleikka stiffened. She turned swiftly toward the girl.

Barry swore deeply. His hand shot out and clutched Zaleikka's chin. He twisted her forcibly away from Joan. His other hand reached for her throat.

He stopped his movement in mid-air. Joan had slumped against the back of the seat. Her eyes were vacant again.

And then he was aware of Zaleikka. He still had her chin clutched firmly in his hand. Her eyes were glaring at him in a passionate rage. He let go of her, breathing through clenched teeth.

SHE didn't say a word. She continued to look at him. And Barry saw the mocking triumph in her eyes. She was taunting him in mute words to go ahead. He knew that he couldn't, not as long as Joan remained under her command. And Anubis would have intervened long before that.

His heart a sickening lump, Barry turned his eyes wearily ahead. Off to the left of the car was the plateau at Gizeh, a scant half mile distant. Would the guards hear the sound of the car and investigate? Barry felt that they wouldn't. To them it might be a ruse

to draw their attention from the Sphinx. What about the lights on the highway? He glanced swiftly out the back window, his lips brushing lightly against Zaleikka's hair.

He drew back involuntarily and faced the front again. He knew the movement had not escaped Zaleikka. But he didn't care. He had seen enough. The lights were closer. Was it merely a tourist party? But what would tourists be doing on the desert at this time of night?

Further thoughts abruptly left him. He heard Anubis talking rapidly to Hassan and pointing.

Barry followed his gaze. Ahead, rising forlorn amid the desert sands, like a dead thing vomited from its grave, stood the remains of a small temple. Barry remembered having seen it a number of years before, but little attention had ever been paid it. It stood amid a group of common graves, probably of the lower caste members of ancient Egyptian society. The temple seemed to be merely a site for the cemetery. It had never been given a formal name as there were many like it along the Nile.

It was in a pitiable state. Its roof had long since given way to the pressing weight of centuries. Its walls were cracked with great chinks of granite and limestone missing. Pieces of its stone littered the abandoned camel trail, and the car bumped dangerously.

Hassan suddenly stopped the car. The temple stood a short distance away. And off to the left, Barry judged the distance to be a good half mile, stood the Sphinx and its mightier companion the Great Pyramid.

Anubis had already left the car. Barry was suddenly aware that he had opened the door on his side of the car and was motioning him outside.

"If you please, Mister Randall, we

have reached our destination."

Barry got out of the car, testing his muscles. The pain throbbed madly for a moment in the back of his head, and then subsided to a dull ache. Outside of that he felt fit. If he could manage to get inside Anubis' gun hand . . .

Anubis stepped back as Zaleikka stepped on the sands, Joan Forrest followed mutely beside her.

Barry turned to Anubis. "What do you mean—destination? I thought the Sphinx was the goal—"

"And so it is," Anubis replied smoothly, motioning Barry forward with the gun. "But a straight line is not always the shortest distance between two points. Especially when there is a possibility of interference from, shall we say—other parties?"

BARRY caught the subtle sarcasm. He stared at Anubis in astonishment.

"You mean that there is another entrance to the Sphinx—here?"

Anubis kept Barry walking beside him. Ahead of them Hassan was guiding Zaleikka and Joan Forrest over a mass of crumbled rock.

"I mean there is an entrance, *one* entrance, and yes, it is here."

"But this is preposterous!" Barry exclaimed. "The Sphinx is a good half mile from here!"

"My dear Mister Randall, you disappoint me. As an archaeologist you must surely have heard of tunnels."

"Tunnels?"

"I believe I used the word. Zaleikka informed me of the temple guarding the entrance to the Sphinx, and naturally, it had to be this one—so insignificant in appearance, so neglected by the servants of our present age!"

Anubis' spirits were running high. Barry could tell by the easy way he bantered words. And he had reason

to be. Barry was still stunned. Good heavens! A tunnel! That was the last thing he would have thought of! *And the Egyptian police were a half mile away guarding the Sphinx—totally unaware of them!*

Inside the ruins of the temple, moonlight splashed around, revealing cracked marble pillars which at one time had supported the fallen roof. The floor was deep with piled debris, and the silence screamed out at them as they stood staring about.

Barry kept one eye on Anubis, hoping for a chance. But it was apparent that Anubis was taking no chances. He faced Barry continuously.

Zaleikka stepped forward alone. She had moved slowly, almost soundlessly, and Barry thought that she might have been floating instead of walking. She moved into what had apparently been the center of the temple and stood there with the moonlight washing over her. Barry felt a coldness run up and down his spine as he looked at her. She was suddenly something that didn't exist—something that couldn't exist, a phantasm, a desert mirage that had slipped up out of the Valley of the Dead.

He shook his head. She *was* real. He knew that. He knew it more than any man in the world. And he realized that soon he wouldn't be the only one.

She moved again. Barry followed her with his eyes. Beside him he could hear Anubis breathing rapidly.

Zaleikka walked up to what remained of an altar. It was a huge block of carved granite, nearly six feet long and fully five feet high. Above it a small remnant of the roof remained. As far as Barry could see, it was the only place in the Temple where debris had not piled up. Standing before the altar, Zaleikka looked like an ancient Goddess or,—Barry found the right word, *Priestess*—about to begin a ritual as old

as time itself.

She suddenly stooped and ran her fingers lightly over the carved figures on the front of the altar. Then she straightened, turning.

Even at the short distance away, Barry saw the flash of triumph in her eyes. Her voice rang out breaking the silence: "It is here! The ages have not concealed it—I am ready!"

Anubis let out a short sound. It was unintelligible. A wave of fanaticism swept across his pale features and his eyes burned like dark coals.

"You see! You see!"

Barry knew the words were directed at him. The final proof. The utter irony. Though the temple had succumbed to the ravages of time, the altar remained intact.

BARRY felt a sharp prodding in his back. Anubis urged him forward. Hassan had Joan Forrest roughly by the arm. He was half dragging her to the altar. Barry watched angrily, but helplessly.

They stood before it. Zaleikka stared once for a long moment at Anubis. Something passed between them. Whatever it was, Barry couldn't catch it. Then Zaleikka, her eyes catching his for the barest part of a second, turned and stooped before the altar.

Her fingers found a certain carving. Her hand seemed to caress it. There was a faint click.

She rose expectantly.

Nothing happened.

A fleeting frown crossed her face. She ran her fingers again over the stone figure. Again came a click.

Nothing happened.

Silence fell. And then suddenly Barry stiffened. Another sound suddenly grew in his ears. A purring sound—like a motor!

Hassan sprang into life. He jumped

back over the tumbled stone and rotted wood and disappeared. Seconds later he was racing back.

"*Effendi!* The police—a car approaches!"

Barry caught the rapid Arabic and his heart sang. The police! Dalton hadn't been killed after all! He had followed them—those lights far back on the highway . . .

"Quick—Zaleikka!" Anubis spoke nervously. "Open it!"

Zaleikka tried again. Still nothing happened. She straightened.

"Something has gone wrong with the weights beneath the altar. They release but do not move it!"

Anubis turned savagely to Barry. "You! Push on it—push!"

Barry stepped forward. There had been murder in Anubis' face. He didn't dare refuse. He put his shoulder to the huge stone and pushed with all his might. It refused to budge.

Anubis spoke rapidly in Arabic. Then Hassan was beside Barry, his massive shoulders bulging.

Sweat stood out on Barry's face. His hopes rose. The stone was stuck—the police were coming . . .

There was a grating sound. Barry felt himself moving forward.

Suddenly, as if a spring had been loosened, the altar swung wide.

He stared down at a black well of steps.

CHAPTER XI

Into The Sphinx

FROM outside the Temple came a screeching of brakes. Then the clatter of feet rushing over sand and stone.

Barry was about to yell when he saw Anubis swerve the gun upon him.

"Down those steps! Quick!"

He had no choice. Hassan shoved

him forward roughly. Zaleikka had already disappeared into the depths with Joan following behind her.

"Barry! Barry!"

Barry heard a voice call out. It was Dalton!

He twisted sharply on the steps. Hassan was following closely behind him. Through his legs he saw men rushing into the temple. It was Anubis who had fired. He stood at the edge of the open altar, carefully aiming his gun.

"Look out men—take cover!" Barry heard Dalton command.

It all happened fast, in the flashing instant he looked through the Arab's legs and before his own head disappeared beneath the stone opening. He saw Dalton rushing across the temple, aiming his gun. He heard Anubis fire again.

He saw Dalton pitch forward on his face.

Then blackness enveloped him.

He fumbled downward in the darkness. Behind him he felt Hassan close at his heels. Then he heard another clatter of footsteps. Anubis was following.

The darkness was stygian. Barry hesitated. Hassan bumped into him, swore deeply and shoved.

Barry lost his balance. He pitched forward down the steps. He flung his arms over his head to protect himself.

It seemed like it lasted forever. Then suddenly he stopped falling. He lay panting, gathering his senses.

The darkness closed in around him like a sodden blanket. He could hear Hassan and Anubis coming down the steps. A wild idea struck him—if he remained where he was they would fall over him! In the darkness he could take them by surprise.

Sudden light sprang up around him.

It happened so suddenly, so unexpectedly, that he scrambled to his feet.

Hassan reached the bottom of the steps at the same moment. He didn't stop. He shoved Barry roughly. Behind him, his face an evil mask, Anubis followed, the gun clutched desperately in his hand.

"You dirty devil!" Barry shouted at him. "You killed Dalton!"

Anubis didn't answer. He motioned to Hassan. The Arab caught Barry's arm and in a swift movement had a hammer-lock on him. Pain throbbled up his back. Hassan shoved him forward.

Behind them came a shouting of voices. The police had found the opening!

For the first time Barry became aware of his surroundings. Ahead of them, standing close together, were Zaleikka and Joan. Zaleikka was adjusting something on the side of the corridor. It was a small globular projection with a dim radiation swelling from it. All along the corridor, at intervals, similar projections were set in the stone walls. Each of them was emitting an amber light!

The corridor itself was made up of solid blocks of stone. It was five feet wide and over six feet in height, as nearly as he could determine.

Then they had reached Zaleikka.

"The police are following us!" Anubis spoke in rapid Coptic to the Egyptian woman. She nodded, a faint smile crossing her features.

"Follow me, quickly!" she answered.

SHE turned and began to run down the corridor. It seemed endless as far as Barry could see. Hassan was close beside him, holding his arm in the painful grip. He could hear Anubis' feet pounding close behind them.

A shout rang out.

They kept on running.

There was a deafening blast in the

tunnel. Something whizzed by Barry's head.

Ahead, Zaleikka suddenly stopped. Joan was beside her. Anubis came up breathlessly as another blast echoed.

Stone chipped over his head and he heard a bullet ricochet past him.

Barry knew that sooner or later one of the bullets would find him or the girl. Acting instinctively he dove forward, carrying her to the stone floor.

He was in time to see a group of men hurrying toward them from the altar steps. They were flourishing guns and shouting.

Then Anubis was firing. Before Barry had time to think, to stop him, reverberating blasts echoed from his gun. A man screamed far down the corridor. He fell, tripping another. Others came on.

Zaleikka's voice suddenly split through the noise.

"Fools! Do you think you can stop me now?"

Barry glanced hurriedly up at her as bullets whined around them.

She was gripping a metal ring in the wall. Savagely she twisted it.

Amidst the gun blasts there came another sound. It started deep and rose in a rumbling roar. And with it Barry saw a section of the ceiling falling downward!

Horror swept over Barry's face. Were they to be trapped in a cave in? Was this the fate Zaleikka had chosen for—

He waited for the crash of the stone. There was none. It slowed its mad plunge and touched the floor with a faint thump. Then it dawned on Barry that it was a stone door—the corridor was sealed off!

Zaleikka was laughing.

Barry crawled slowly to his feet, lifting the girl gently. He felt suddenly foolish. He had thrown himself to the

floor to protect himself and Joan from danger, and Zaleikka had stood in cool defiance. He read as much in her eyes as she stared at him.

Then Anubis had turned. For once his face was drawn in a sickly pallor. A nerve twitched over his left eye. He nodded gratefully to Zaleikka.

"The fools! They will learn soon whom they oppose!"

Zaleikka stared at him for a long moment. "Yes—they will . . ."

From behind the stone block sealing the passage, Barry heard a muffled pounding. The blows of the men on the other side were futile. Lifeless, as Barry's hopes suddenly became. At every turn Anubis had met them, and countered their every move. And now, within the last moment of triumph, Zaleikka had turned the tables. There was nothing to stop Anubis now. Nothing—except, maybe . . .

"We are safe now. They cannot get beyond the stone block." Zaleikka spoke confidently. "We may proceed with ease."

SHE turned to lead the way, and stopped. She was staring past Barry. He turned.

Hassan stood against the wall of the far side of the corridor. He was holding his right arm across his body. A thin stream of blood was running down his arm.

Anubis exclaimed: "Hassan—why did you not tell us!"

The Arab glared malevolently at Barry. "It is nothing, *Effendi*. But for the Randall dog it would have been he. When he pulled the white girl to the ground I was beside him. The bullet should have found him!"

Anubis muttered angrily. He pulled a handkerchief from his coat pocket and held it out to Barry.

"Bind his wound."

Barry took the handkerchief. He walked over to Hassan. The Arab sneered.

Barry bound the wound. Behind him, Barry heard Anubis talking rapidly to Zaleikka.

"These lights—where did they come from?"

"It is but one of the secrets of ancient Egypt. They are sun lamps using the power of Ammon Ra. They are indestructible and have lasted through the ages, as has the spirit of Egypt."

Hassan grunted as Barry tightened the knot of the handkerchief. A spasm of pain shot across his face, and with it a look of hate.

Barry ignored him, thinking hard at that moment that if these strange lights were a product of the ancient science of Egypt and had lasted through the centuries, then heaven only knew what awful powers there remained to be revealed yet. And he knew, that unless a miracle intervened, Anubis would have that power. With Zaleikka holding Jona in a hypnotic trance that modern medical science had failed to break, he also knew he was helpless against her. What could he do?

"You will begin to see now, Mister Randall, what the might of Egypt really is!"

Barry was suddenly aware that Anubis was talking to him. He looked at the Egyptian. Glowing triumph shone on his face. Anubis turned and bowed slightly to Zaleikka. "We will proceed."

Zaleikka let the trace of a smile cross her face. Her lips were parted and Barry could see sparkling white teeth.

ZALEIKKA led the way. They went slowly now, fear of the police gone. Barry could not help but think of poor Dalton, shot down in cold blood back in the temple. He vowed that Anubis

would pay for that.

They walked on. Barry was aware of Hassan following closely behind him. The Arab would be only too glad if he tried anything. Barry didn't. Ahead, Anubis was walking beside Zaleikka, and they were conversing in low tones.

For the first time Barry noted the air in the tunnel. It grew stale and musty as they progressed. The tunnel seemed to be slanting downward with a gentle slope. It ran straight in the murky light of the wall lamps as far as he could see.

Minutes passed.

The tunnel began to curve. It wound around an S curve, and Barry became aware of other, smaller tunnels, branching off to the right and left. Similar lamps illuminated them, but they were few in comparison to the main corridor.

The slope was pronounced now. Barry wondered just where they were going. To the Sphinx, of course, he knew. But why continuously down?

The further they went, the more of a labyrinth it became. Only the fact that the main corridor was larger than the branching off tunnels gave Barry a sense of direction.

Suddenly ahead a bright light shone. It was an identical lamp set in an identical manner in the stone wall of the tunnel, but the light it gave off both dazzled and blinded. It was a miniature sun in the bowels of the earth.

Zaleikka stopped before it. She turned and faced them for a single moment. It was a tense silence that greeted her.

"We are now below the Sphinx," she announced. "The desert lies heavily over our heads. The secret which Khafre and his Priests planned and safeguarded, is here."

Barry glanced quickly at Anubis. He stood close beside Zaleikka, the nerve

twitching over his eyes.

"But those other tunnels, Zaleikka—where do they lead?" Anubis asked her.

She smiled faintly. "They also were the plan of Khafre. They lead to—nowhere . . ."

Barry tried to understand that brief reply. But his attention was centered on Zaleikka. She had turned, facing the wall.

Her fingers rose to the dazzling light. Her hands were lost in the glare. She remained motionless for long seconds. Then suddenly she dropped her hands and stepped back.

There was a rising buzz of sound.

The dazzling light suddenly vanished.

They were staring at the blank stone wall.

And the wall began to move!

Barry watched spellbound as a six foot section of the seemingly solid stone slid downward. In seconds time it had dropped even with the floor of the tunnel.

Barry sucked in his breath sharply. He was staring into an immense chamber!

Silently they entered. Only the sound of feet on the stone floor broke the stillness.

It was huge. Its size reminded Barry of a cathedral. The ceiling rose nearly sixty feet overhead, curving in a dome of solid stone. Set in the ceiling were numerous tiny lamps spraying the chamber with an amber floor of light. Its breadth staggered him. The great hall of Field's Museum was a cubby-hole in comparison. But the object in the center of the chamber put everything else in the background of his mind.

A throne of colossal proportions rose to the center of the domed ceiling. *And*

but for the base it was a smaller, exact duplication of the Sphinx!

Zaleikka glided forward. She alone moved. They watched her advance upon the immense figure. At its base she turned toward them. Her face seemed to halo itself in the amber light.

Close to Barry, Anubis came to life. He broke his gaze away from Zaleikka and stared swiftly around the room. Barry followed his gaze, and instantly knew what Anubis was looking for.

Where was the science and weapons? But for the immense stone figure, the chamber was empty!

Across from them, Zaleikka suddenly laughed. Anubis strode toward her. Barry followed.

"But where—" Anubis began.

"Khafre himself hides the secret," Zaleikka replied, pointing up toward the statue. The features of King Khafre stared sightlessly down at them, carved into lifeless stone.

Anubis was frowning as Zaleikka continued:

"Such was the wisdom of Khafre and his Priests. For the final safeguard is here. For this purpose was I chosen and trained. Only I can open the vault."

It dawned on Barry. And from the look on Anubis' face, it was plain that he saw too. This mammoth figure, deep within the bowels of the Sphinx was the vault itself!

ZALEIKKA turned and faced a set of sloping steps leading up the front of the statue. She took one step, hesitated, and a short cry burst from her lips.

She turned toward them. Barry saw a look of fear cross her face. And the smooth white skin turned a dark gray pallor.

Anubis exclaimed hoarsely. He ran to her, held her upright with one arm,

and slipped a tiny silver flask from his coat pocket. He raised it to her lips nervously.

"Drink! Quickly!" he commanded her.

Barry watched spellbound. What had happened? Zaleikka gulped hungrily at the flask. Anubis held it at her mouth for a long moment, then pulled away.

The Egyptian woman staggered. Her hand brushed wearily across her brow. Close beside Barry, Joan Forrest sighed strangely. Barry glanced quickly at her. An expression of agony crossed her beautiful features, and then, just as suddenly was gone.

When he looked back at Zaleikka she was normal again. The pallor had left her face. She was looking at Anubis gratefully.

"I, I felt weak . . ."

Anubis slipped the flask back in his coat pocket. "You will be all right now," he told her.

She nodded, looking at him strangely. Then she turned and mounted the steps of the statue.

Moments later she was far over their heads. A massive chair had been fashioned from the stone. She reclined herself upon it.

Barry didn't see her move. She didn't press any button, move any stones. Her eyes were closed. Almost it seemed as if she had become a part of the stone.

And the statue moved.

Barry stepped back unconsciously. It happened so fast that he wasn't prepared. The entire front of the stone figure split outward, like a set of swinging doors on silent hinges!

And Barry stared into the vault.

It was a large square room with knee high stone slabs set a few feet apart in orderly fashion. They reminded Barry of picnic tables spread out row upon row. Upon the slabs rested gleaming

objects that defied description.

Anubis dove into the room. He ran from one slab to another, touching each object, and Barry could only stand rooted to the entrance.

Zaleikka swept by him, and out of the corner of his eye he saw Hassan standing behind him with Joan Forrest.

Anubis turned eagerly to Zaleikka.

"What are they? These—what can they do?" He pointed to a nearby slab. Row upon row of tiny metal objects lay upon it. As near as Barry could determine, they resembled a small charm box with an opaque lens in the middle and a tiny gold lever on the top. The front of it was covered with hieroglyphic symbols.

Zaleikka picked one of them up. She pointed it at Barry, her eyes fastened intently upon him.

"Were I to move this lever a certain degree, whoever or whatever stood before this lens, would cease to exist. It is the power of the sun, dissolving in an atomic stream once it is released."

She replaced the weapon on the slab. Barry shuddered. An atomic disintegrator! What chance would modern men—a modern army have against such a weapon? A few men equipped with such a devilish machine could destroy thousands!

Anubis laughed. "I see you are startled Mister Randall. And well you may be! With science like this in my hands I can mold the destiny of the world!"

Barry was too sick to notice. He dimly heard Zaleikka explaining the usage of other of the objects throughout the room. He heard her tell him of anti-gravity devices, of weapons that could create a field of force that no missile could penetrate it, and others.

He did not want to listen. His world was crashing down around him. Against these secrets of a lost age, modern sci-

ence would be helpless. Anubis had reached his goal.

And then Barry suddenly stiffened. There was a sound.

From behind them, echoing down the length of the corridor leading to the desert temple, came a dull muffled explosion . . .

CHAPTER XII

Time Catches Up

ANUBIS spun around as if he had been struck. He glanced wildly at the tunnel entrance. Then he turned swiftly to Zaleikka.

"It is the police—they must have blasted the barrier!"

Barry's elation fled when Anubis sneered at him. "You think your friends will aid you? You fool! They are coming straight to their death! They shall be the first to feel the might of Egypt!"

"You mean the power mad mania of Anubis—don't you?" Barry replied hoarsely.

Anubis stared at him with glittering eyes. He spoke suddenly in English.

"Mister Randall, this is the crossroads. I have put up with you only because I had to pacify Zaleikka. I no longer have to do this. She has served her usefulness to me. You will watch." He paused, drew the tiny flask from his pocket and spilled the contents on the floor. Barry saw Zaleikka watching and listening with a strange frown. Anubis went on. "It will take you friends some time to reach this point in the tunnel. Before they do so I shall go out to meet them. I will not go empty handed. And, when I return, I will settle my account with you."

Barry knew what Anubis was going to do. He watched him pick up one

of the strange metal boxes with the slender lever and lens opening. Then he handed his revolver to Hassan.

"You will see that they stay here until I return," he told him. "Let nobody, even Zaleikka, touch anything. Do you understand?"

Hassan's black eyes glinted with pleasure. He bowed slightly. "*Salaam, Effendi*. I will see to it."

Barry tensed himself. Did he dare make a break for the tunnel? He saw Hassan watching him closely, his fingers tight around the gun. He knew it was useless, he would be dead before he got three feet away.

Anubis had turned to Zaleikka. "You say depressing this lever is what operates the weapon?" he asked impatiently.

Zaleikka stared coldly at him. "What do you plan to do? Why did you speak in another tongue?"

Anubis stormed at her. "You will answer my question! It is I who will decide what is to be done!"

Fury burned in Zaleikka's eyes. Her lips clenched. But she suddenly calmed.

"Yes—it is as you wish. You depress—the lever."

Anubis whirled and sped to the tunnel entrance.

BARRY watched him go with the feeling that he was sinking slowly in quick lime. He saw Anubis disappear into the tunnel and seconds later heard Zaleikka laugh. It was a tinkling laughter, like the sound of rain drops on a metal plate.

"What's so damned funny?" Barry glared at her.

The smile left her face. She stared at him, her eyes wide, myrtle pools.

"The time has come for you to make a decision, Barry."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that you must choose quickly. If you join me, together we will rule the world! I will kill Anubis—for you."

She meant it. "And what about Joan?" Barry asked.

Anger flooded her face. "You will choose between us! She can give you nothing! I offer you power—and love!"

Love. Barry felt like laughing. Only it wasn't anything to laugh about. Across from them, Barry saw Hassan watching them closely, his gun ready. Behind the Arab, Joan Forrest stood mutely, her sweet face a vacant mask, her eyes staring only at Zaleikka.

And Barry thought he saw the way! He laughed suddenly. "I wouldn't choose you if you were the last woman on Earth!" Then he slipped into English. "I'm going to kill you if it's the last thing I do!"

He advanced on Zaleikka. "Stand still, white pig!"

Out of the corner of his eye Barry saw Hassan aiming at him. Barry steeled himself and continued to advance. Zaleikka began to back toward Hassan.

"Stop!" Hassan hissed the words out. Barry kept coming forward. It was a long chance, he knew. He was counting on Hassan not shooting. Anubis had told him only to watch them.

Barry was almost upon Zaleikka. He lifted his hands as if he were about to grab her throat. And it happened.

Out of the corner of his eye he saw Hassan come up behind him, his arm raised, the gun about to descend.

BARRY acted. He twisted savagely and dove to the floor. Hassan flew over him, tripping. A cry burst from his lips. His body slammed into Zaleikka's, knocking her hard against the floor. She lay still.

Barry scrambled to his feet. The

Arab was twisting around, bringing his gun into play. Barry dove on him, his hand catching the barrel of the gun.

Hassan's breath was hot on Barry's face. The Arab kicked up at him. Barry turned his body sideways and slammed his free fist into the Arab's stomach. A whoosh of air spilled from Hassan's mouth. He threshed savagely and twisted his gun hand down. Barry stared into the muzzle.

He was looking at death. Hassan's finger was tightening on the trigger. With every ounce of strength in his body he wrenched the Arab's wrist. The gun deflected. There was a blast from it. Barry felt his left arm go numb.

Dizziness swept over him. Beneath him the Arab was hissing desperately. He was trying to bring the gun up again. Barry felt his fingers slipping from Hassan's wrist.

The Arab twisted his body suddenly. Barry rolled over and pain lanced up his left side. Hassan grinned triumphantly at him and slowly began to force the gun down.

Barry knew his strength was going. He wouldn't last another minute. But he gave a last desperate twist of his body and wrenched Hassan's gun hand inward.

There was a muffled blast from the weapon. Hassan collapsed on top of him, a rattling sob in his throat.

Slowly Barry crawled to his feet. He stood swaying, dark spots dancing before his eyes. He glanced down at his left arm. Blood was slowly dripping from his hand.

He heard a groan. Zaleikka was stirring on the floor. She had been dazed by the fall. And then Barry heard something else.

It was a shrill twinkling whine from the tunnel. It was followed by distant screams and then a short blast.

Anubis! Anubis was using the dis-

integrator ray on Dalton's men!

Barry scooped up the gun from the floor beside Hassan's body. Then he was running for the tunnel.

THE odor of burned flesh reached his nostrils as he raced breathlessly through the narrow corridor. His left arm hung limply at his side, and the pain of the bullet wound bit into him.

He rounded the last part of the S curve.

He stopped in his tracks. A man was running wildly toward him, sobs of rage welling in his throat. Beyond him Barry saw a mass of charred figures and another moving slowly on the stone floor.

The man rushing toward him suddenly stopped. A wild cry burst from his lips. Barry stared at him, horror in his eyes.

It was Anubis—his face, clothes and hands burned and smoking!

"She tricked me! It exploded!" he screamed.

Barry came toward him. He raised the gun in his right hand. Anubis stared wildly at it, let out a cry of fear and darted into one of the branching tunnels.

Barry urged his body forward. His senses were swimming, but one thought pounded through him. He had to get Anubis! The smell of the charred bodies in the main tunnel was sickening. Anubis had done that!

He sped into the side tunnel. Light was very dim. The wall lamps were spaced far apart and shadows thickened around him.

He heard Anubis running somewhere ahead. As he passed one of the lamps, he saw him. He aimed the gun, but it was too late. Anubis was gone again.

Barry suddenly stopped. Anubis' footsteps had ceased.

He moved cautiously forward.

A hissing sound grew from somewhere ahead. Anubis!

And then Barry saw him. He was standing on the edge of thick shadows. There was terror on his face and his body was trembling. Barry raised the gun.

It clicked. It clicked again. Empty.

Savagely, Barry tossed it away. He went forward, the distance closing between him and the Egyptian. The hissing grew louder.

And suddenly Barry knew it was coming from behind Anubis!

Barry moved cautiously. Revulsion swept through him as he saw Anubis' face—horribly burned, his eyes two black scars smoldering in the charred flesh. Anubis let out a wild cry and flung himself forward, trying to dash around the side.

BARRY lashed out with his right hand. His knuckles crunched against Anubis' jaw. The Egyptian staggered back. Barry followed him up, his breath burning in his throat. He lashed out again. His fist caught the Egyptian square in the face. He fell back into the shadows.

Barry was about to follow him when he heard a wild scream. Then he heard a sickening thump, momentary silence, and then a loud angry hissing.

He edged forward cautiously, and then jumped swiftly back.

He was standing on the edge of a pit! And the hissing spat up at him out of the darkness. Nausea swept over him in a wave.

The pit was alive with writhing snakes!

He staggered against the side of the tunnel and was very sick. He remembered Anubis asking Zaleikka where the side tunnels led to. He remembered she had said to—nowhere . . . He could hear the deadly asps slithering in the

blackness. He was sick again.

"Barry . . . Barry . . ."

A voice called out in the distance.

Barry turned. He heard his name repeated again. He began running back up the tunnel. That voice—it couldn't be! Yes—it was!

"Craig!" Barry yelled hoarsely. "Craig!"

He saw him limping from the entrance to the main tunnel. Then he reached him.

They stood staring at each other for a long moment. Dalton's face was haggard and worn, his clothes were torn and disheveled. And there was blood caked on the front of his shirt.

"Craig! I thought you were dead! My God man!"

"Anubis—Barry, where's that devil?"

Barry set his jaw grimly. "He's dead. Back there. I knocked him into a pit of snakes . . ."

Dalton listened to the choppy words. His face blanched "Good Lord!" he breathed. Then he stared at Barry's arm. "Man! You've been hurt!"

"Just a scratch," Barry lied. He looked down the tunnel toward the charred mounds. "All of them?" he asked hoarsely.

Dalton nodded. "I escaped. I couldn't keep up with them. Lost a little blood from the bullet crease. God, it was horrible—they dissolved into smoking hulks before my eyes! . . . Barry—what happened to that Egyptian woman?"

Barry started. Zaleikka! He had nearly forgotten about her!

"Come on, Craig, we've got to get back there—she's got Joan alone with her!"

DALTON labored alongside him. He was panting and flecks of foam stood on his lips. Barry spurted out

in gasping words what had happened.

They reached the vault opening.

Barry staggered into the chamber with Dalton close at his heels. He pulled up short, almost knocking Dalton over.

"Joan!"

Barry screamed the word out. Zaleikka was standing over her, one of the disintegrating weapons in her hand. She was aiming it at the girl!

Barry rushed forward. Zaleikka looked up. She saw Barry coming toward her. A wild laugh flew from her lips. She screamed out at him.

"You are too late! I gave you your chance! Now it is I who will rule! I will wipe your race from the earth! You will die—now!"

Barry knew he could never reach her in time. Her words echoed through the vast chamber and he heard Dalton sobbing behind him. Zaleikka had the deadly box turned toward the girl. Her hand was reaching for the lever—

She suddenly straightened. She staggered backward, a sharp little cry bursting from her lips. Barry faltered in his mad rush. His steps slowed. He was watching Zaleikka's face.

A change was taking place! Her skin was turning gray, her hollows were forming in her cheeks, her hair was silvering and falling, and her body was shrinking and twisting!

A single cry fled from the gaping hole that had been her mouth. The disintegrator fell with a loud crash to the floor—and Zaleikka crumpled beside it, a growing puddle of grayish dust.

"God! God! God!" Dalton was murmuring. "She turned to dust! Barry—do you see it!"

Barry could see nothing else. He couldn't tear his eyes away from it. Moments before a beautiful woman had stood there. Now there was nothing,

nothing but a pile of dust upon the stone floor. It was like a floodgate opening in his mind. He suddenly knew everything—all those hints Anubis had made. The papyrus at Karnak. He had said there were things that Zaleikka herself didn't know. He had spoken of a time element. The silver flask. The liquid spilling on the floor.

Zaleikka had been sent into the future for only one purpose—to open the Sphinx for a Priest of the Pharaohs—she had been doomed to die immediately after! Khafre had left nothing to chance!

Barry heard a soft sobbing sound. He was suddenly aware again of his surroundings. He glanced around him.

Joan Forrest was swaying on her feet, her hands over her eyes, wracking sobs shaking her body.

"Joan!" Barry ran to her.

She threw herself into his arms. "Barry—Barry! It was horrible—I knew everything that was happening but I couldn't do anything. That woman . . ."

A lump was pounding in Barry Randall's throat. The world was in his arms. A soft clinging world.

"Barry—Joan!" Dalton gasped out behind them.

Barry turned his head. Dalton was pointing nervously to the floor. Barry glanced down. A shout rose to his lips. The disintegrating box! The lever had been snapped off when it hit the floor and—

A SHRILL whining sound grew in volume. Tiny heatless flames licked out from the box, spreading slowly. The stone floor began to dissolve around it. The flames spread, began touching the slabs, the walls, and reached out toward the dead body of Hassan.

A rumble grew. The floor shook be-

neath their feet. A tinkling whistle shrilled in their ears.

"We've got to get out of here!" Barry shouted. "That machine—something's happened to it!"

Joan screamed in terror. Barry grabbed her arm, and then they were running.

Into the tunnel. Through the labyrinth. And behind them the noise grew louder. The stone walls of the tunnel were trembling. Bits of stone fell at their flying feet. The amber lamps began flickering.

To Barry it seemed as if they were running forever. His legs were pieces of rubber, and beside him Joan Forrest was gasping. He could hear Dalton pounding from behind.

There was an explosion. Part of the tunnel collapsed behind, amidst a deafening thunder.

The roof sagged ahead of them. Barry prayed. He tried to form words with his lips but his tongue was stiff. Joan was staggering against him. She wouldn't be able to go much further.

They were under it. They felt the stone ceiling groan, crack, and crumble. There was another deafening explosion from behind.

They reached the steps to the temple. Behind them the lights flickered out, a howl of twisting forces crashed as the tunnel caved in.

They crawled up the steps. Barry dragged the girl beside him.

Then they were out.

THEY staggered through the debris of the temple and out onto the sand, a cool night wind moving about them. Overhead, the Moon hung full and bright in a star-flecked sky.

Barry looked across the moonlit scene, his arm supporting the exhausted form of Joan Forrest. Suddenly he stared. "Look!" he whispered.

Dalton and the girl followed his gaze. They gasped softly.

A half mile away loomed the bulking figure of the Sphinx. For thousands of years it had stood there, motionless. But now it was no longer still. It trembled visibly, shaking itself like some awakening monster.

A moaning sigh rose on the night wind. It grew louder, ever louder. And with it came a series of muffled subterranean blasts.

Barry, with Dalton and the girl rigid beside him, saw the Sphinx begin to settle like a tired giant, lower—lower until only its head was level with the sand around it. Its shadow across the sand grew shorter as the huge structure slowly faded from view.

Barry's arm tightened about Joan. The dwindling shadow of the Sphinx was somehow symbolic. It was like a veil of evil being lifted from the world.

Awe-struck, frozen, they watched. The moaning sound faded. The shadow of the sinking Sphinx grew shorter, ever shorter—

And finally was gone . . .

THE END