

Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U. S. PATENT OFFICE

Volume 33

CONTENTS FOR MAY, 1939

Number 5

Cover Design	Harold S. DeLay	
<i>Illustrating a scene in "The Hollow Moon"</i>		
The Hollow Moon	Everil Worrell	5
<i>A fascinating tale of a lunar vampire and strange icebergs in the Pacific Ocean</i>		
The Dark Isle	Robert Bloch	23
<i>An eldritch tale of the Romans and Druids and strange magic</i>		
Washington Nocturne	Seabury Quinn	39
<i>Who was the stranger that vanished before the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier?</i>		
The Thinking Machine	J. J. Connington	56
<i>Stevenson's uncanny invention had a weird, brute desire to slay</i>		
The Plumed Serpent	Howell Calhoun	65
<i>Verse</i>		
Almuric (Part 1)	Robert E. Howard	66
<i>An amazing 3-part novel of the demon-haunted world Almuric</i>		
The Dead Host's Welcome	John Fletcher	96
<i>Verse</i>		
The Face at Death Corner	Paul Ernst	97
<i>The old crone told the reporter he would die before the year was out</i>		
Witch's Hair	Mearle Prout	107
<i>An outré story of a gipsy curse, and the lustrous hair of a young gipsy mother</i>		
In a Dark Wood	Marion Doyle	114
<i>Verse</i>		
The Phantom Island	Arlton Eadie	115
<i>A posthumous ghost-story by a late English master</i>		
Cross of Fire	Lester del Rey	124
<i>A brief strange tale of the Undead</i>		
"Where Crafty Gnomes"	Virgil Finlay	129
<i>Picturization of a scene in George Sterling's "A Wine of Wizardry"</i>		
The Watcher at the Door	Henry Kuttner	130
<i>A weird and uncanny story</i>		
Harbor Whistles	H. P. Lovecraft	134
<i>Verse</i>		
"Not Both!"	Frances Garfield	135
<i>This spell had unexpected and disastrous results</i>		
Weird Story Reprint:		
The Dead Soul	Raoul Lenoir	140
<i>An engrossing story from an early issue of WEIRD TALES</i>		
Dust	Edgar Daniel Kramer	149
<i>Verse</i>		
The Eyrie		150
<i>The readers discuss the magazine</i>		

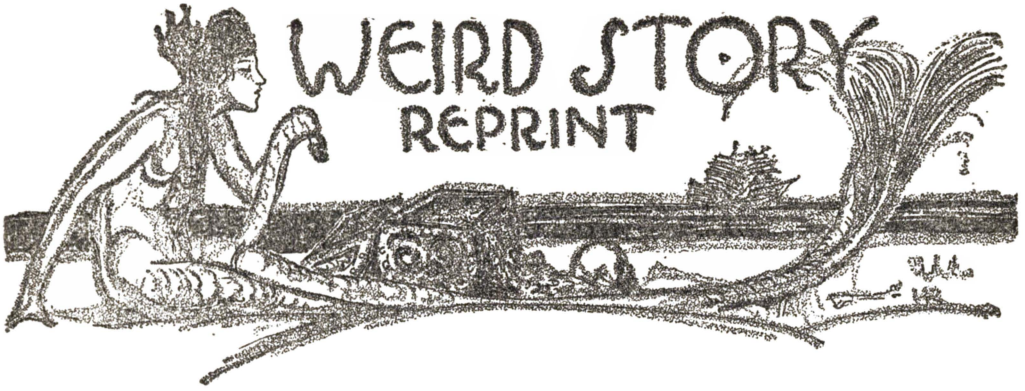
Published monthly by Weird Tales, 9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N. Y. Entered as second class matter September 24, 1938, at the post office at New York, N. Y. Single copies, 25 cents. Subscription rates: One year in the United States and possessions, Cuba, Mexico, South America, Spain, \$2.50; Canada, \$2.75; elsewhere, \$3.00. English Office: Charles Lavell, Limited, 4 Clements Inn, Strand, London W.C.2, England. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts, although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced either wholly or in part without permission from the publishers.

Copyright 1939 by Weird Tales
COPYRIGHTED IN GREAT BRITAIN.

FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.



WEIRD TALES ISSUED 1st OF EACH MONTH



The Dead Soul

By RAOUL LENOIR

SEATED in a steamer chair beneath the gloom of an awning which blotted its sharp shadow across a section of the deck of the river steamer *Amenobes II*, Sternberg, the Austrian, lit a fresh cigarette and repeated his question to the man who sat beside him: "What do you know of Von Schrimm?"

Overhead, the chill disk of the full moon rode high in the void of an unclouded sky, flooding the Egyptian landscape in the weird soft glow of its radiance, so that from the deck the eye roved restfully across a scene of milky whiteness and sharp shadows, the gleaming waters of the Nile, the dark loom of the shore, the delicate tracery of the palm tops and the deep blotches of darkness where their massed shadows fell heavily across the thirsty earth. Even the mud walls and miserable hovels of the fellahen stood transformed in the enchantment of the white light, freed for a space from the squalor and heat-blistered desolation which the blaze of day so pitilessly revealed.

George Lawson turned toward his questioner. The first interrogation coming

sudden and unexpected upon the heels of a long period of silence, had but served to shatter his moonlight reverie; its insistent repetition demanded an answer.

"Not much," he admitted. "We met him first on the excursion to the pyramids. We were staying at the Continental and so was he. Chance threw us together a good deal in the various jaunts around Cairo, and our acquaintance developed as a matter of course. He is a lonely man, I fancy. His mind seems so deeply saturated with archeology that he has missed everything else in life. I believe he found our society a pleasant relaxation. He was always a capital companion, even though his conversation is apt to run for ever on his favorite subject."

"Did you arrange to take this river trip together?"

"No, that was quite a coincidence. He left the Continental several days before we did. It was a mutual surprise when we met on board. For the rest, you know as much about him as I do. You have met him and talked to him frequently on this trip. You must admit at the least that he is a gentleman and remarkably well versed in the lore

* From WEIRD TALES for January, 1926.

of ancient Egypt. But why this questioning?"

Sternberg flicked the stub of his cigarette across the rail into the Nile.

"Mr. Lawson," he said, speaking slowly, as one who measures his words, "you are an American and I presume you are quite capable of managing your own business without outside interference. At the same time I am old enough in body to be your father and old enough in knowledge to be your long-forgotten ancestor, and I am thick-skinned enough to risk insulting you if thereby I may do you a service. There are several reasons for my curiosity, but one is sufficient for the moment. Frankly, it seems to me that this Von Schrimm is far more interested in your wife's society than should be good for your peace of mind."

Lawson flushed angrily.

"Indeed?" he said with frigid politeness.

"Oh, you are insulted, of course," continued Sternberg, calmly lighting a fresh cigarette, "yet if you will be fair, you will see that there is no cause for offense. What I say, I say in the greatest friendship. Were I less of a friend I should keep silent. I do not suggest that your wife is in the slightest degree a party to this situation. I do not believe she suspects it. I will say, however, that Von Schrimm does not beget my confidence. He is a man of powerful personality—of evil personality. If I were you I should view him with suspicion and distrust."

"Mrs. Lawson is quite capable of looking after herself," remarked Lawson, still with some annoyance.

"No woman is capable of looking after herself when dealing with a man of Von Schrimm's type," returned the Austrian calmly. "Have you ever looked into his eyes?"

"Well, his eyes, at least, don't fascinate Hetty. She has even said unkind things about them."

"What did she say?"

"She said that they looked like the eyes of a 'dead soul' and she hated them."

STERNBERG sat up in his chair so suddenly that his glowing cigarette fell from his lips and rolled across the deck.

"Did she say *that*?" he demanded

"Those were the very words she used. Rather original, don't you think—the eyes of a 'dead soul'?"

"Very," answered the Austrian with an emphasis that was lost upon Lawson.

He extracted and lit another cigarette. There was a silence.

"Did you ever meet a 'dead soul'?"

There was an intensesness in the question which caused Lawson to stare at his companion in surprise.

"Good God, no! Did *you*?"

"Once," said the Austrian, quietly. "It was a ghastly business."

"What on earth are you talking about?" cried Lawson in horrified amazement.

"Life is an awful mystery, whichever way you look at it," continued Sternberg imperturbably, speaking in a low voice, almost as though to himself. "We moderns are apt to forget that the ancients came closer to solving some of its mysteries than we with our boasted science have ever done. Even the ancients did not solve the mystery of the soul, but they did discover that man has still several bodily vehicles remaining to him after he has discarded his earth body in the change which we call death. Each of these finer bodies he discards in turn, but they, being possessed of a certain inherent life of their own, do not immediately disintegrate when the 'soul' abandons them. Instead, they drift around more or less aimlessly for indefinite periods. They form the foundation of most of the ghost stories. Sometimes through some tragic disaster a 'soul' is arrested in its evolution and is doomed to wander for vast spaces of time

imprisoned in one of these discarded vehicles. You might call it a 'dead soul'."

"What an awful idea!" said Lawson with a shiver. "Wherever did you unearth that ghastly belief? What conceivable thing could cause the death of a soul?"

Sternberg coolly hunted for another cigarette.

"Did you ever have a nightmare?" he asked grimly.

"Why, yes." Lawson's tone was puzzled.

"Then," pursued the Austrian deliberately, "you will remember that on occasions it has seemed to you that you were hunted through dark corridors and fathomless spaces by nameless horrors from which you strove frantically to escape. On these occasions you have been paralyzed with terror, but always you have awakened in time to save your soul from the clutch of the demons which were upon it, and you have never realized when you awoke how real had been your peril. Now, do you understand how a soul dies?"

"You mean——?"

"Yes, I mean just that. Some people never awaken from their nightmares. They are found dead in their beds. Their 'souls' while absent from their bodies in sleep have been overpowered by some malevolent power and their progress in the scheme of existence indefinitely arrested. These mysterious deaths are popularly ascribed to 'heart failure.' Oh well——"

He rose abruptly, and, crumpling his cigarette into a shapeless mass with nervous fingers, pitched it over the rail. "Let us go around to the other side and join the rest," he said.

They passed round the corner of the deck house and crossed over to the starboard side of the deck, where the majority of the passengers of the *Amenobes II* were clustered in little groups along the rail, chatting and gazing idly into the swirls and sparkles of the silver-splashed water outside.

A little apart from the rest Von Schrimm and Mrs. Lawson were engaged in an animated conversation. He was pointing out across the desert and describing something, evidently humorous, with his characteristic intensity, and as Lawson came into ear-shot the sound of his wife's laugh floated toward him through the stillness of the moonlight.

2

"OH THE devil!"

Lawson leaned across the rail and gazed disgustedly at the low march of sun-smitten thirsty earth that marked the confines of the shallow, turgid river.

The Nile was low, very low for the season, and the gaunt ribs of brown sand and mud which the receding waters were laying bare stretched here and there in full view in the channel, their low ridges crowned with the marshaled rows of river fowl, sleepily digesting their morning catch of fish.

Around these miniature sandy islets the shallow current of the river swept mudily, and in other places the ripple and quiver of the torrent revealed the presence of submerged shoals that formed a constant menace to navigation.

It was on one of these submerged bars that the *Amenobes II* lay stranded. Stranding had become the boat's habit. On her leisurely course up the Nile, since the night when Sternberg and Lawson had sat in the lee of the deck house and wandered in their conversation from Von Schrimm to mystery, stranding had followed stranding with monotonous regularity, and even the most vigilant use of the *medreh* in the hands of the Egyptian pilot seemed powerless to read the soundings in time to prevent disaster.

"Oh, the devil!" Lawson muttered again.

He glared savagely at the toiling efforts

of the native crew. The prospect of another long delay in the hot sun rankled upon him.

Truth to tell, Lawson was tiring of the Nile and of Egypt. The first novelty and interest had long since worn off, and the repeated gazing upon piles of half-obliterated ruins and alleged "wonderful" carvings which to his disenchanted eyes seemed to resemble the crude scrawlings of untaught children more than anything else, had begun to pall upon him.

There were other causes, too, which conspired to render him heartily sick of the trip.

One of these was Von Schrimm—polite, learned and irreproachable as ever, but clothed now, almost against Lawson's will, with the haunting suggestion which Sternberg's words had thrown upon him.

Once—only once—did he attempt to broach the matter to his wife, and the burst of amused laughter with which she met his blundering remarks banished his half-formed doubts and forbade a repetition of the matter.

"Why, George, you dear stupid old goose!" she laughed, playfully pulling his head toward her and planting a kiss upon the tip of his nose; "I believe you are jealous of poor old Von Schrimm. You are simply ridiculous. Why, the poor fellow's heart is as petrified and musty as his knowledge. You know perfectly well that he can talk of nothing but Egypt all the time. Honestly I don't like him—his eyes are creepy—but I feel sorry for him. He seems so lonesome, and no one else appears to take much interest in his stories. Besides, you must remember how good he was in Cairo. It would be awfully insulting to cut him now. Jealous of Von Schrimm? Why, you silly boy, you might as well be jealous of a mummy."

And thus the only attempt that Lawson ever made to put his disquieting doubts into words ended in laughs and kisses. He

and his wife had been married less than a year. They were both young and both very much in love with each other.

Nevertheless, it was hard to preserve the old friendly attitude toward Von Schrimm, and as Lawson leaned upon the rail watching the scurryings of the crew, who were putting out anchors in the attempt to haul the boat off, he found himself wishing fervently that they were to put about that very day and begin the return journey toward Cairo.

A hand laid upon his arm brought him suddenly to himself. He turned to find the figure of his wife beside him, her face shining with interest and excitement.

"Such luck!" she cried gleefully. "The best thing that this horrid old steamer has ever done! Selim says it is quite possible we may be aground here for two or three days. The captain is just going off to the next village to ask the *Omdah* for help and reinforcements, and in the meantime a party is being made up to go ashore and visit some awfully interesting old tombs and things that Von Schrimm knows of near here. Selim is going ashore with the captain and will arrange to get donkeys and everything from the village. The tombs lie quite a way out on the desert. Of course, we will go too—won't we?"

She squeezed his arm persuasively.

"Oh, I suppose so," he said, looking down on her with a smile. "I don't mind seeing a lot more badly done scrawls and a fresh batch of snub-nosed images if it pleases you. It will be better than rotting here in the mud anyway."

"But these are different," she protested. "Von Schrimm says that the place is very seldom visited. It lies out of the regular track of tourists, you see. And there aren't so very many things to see, either, only some partly explored tombs, but the great charm of it is that the place is more or less unknown yet. We might find all sorts of interesting things."

"We might even find some genuine old relics—made in Birmingham," he suggested sarcastically, "or a piece of 'genuine' mummy-cloth that your donkey boy has thoughtfully hidden in a hole—just where you are certain to find it. Never mind, we'll go anyhow."

And they went.

3

VON SCHRIMM and Selim, the dragoon, headed the little procession of riders and baggage animals that struck off into the desert.

Von Schrimm had become the man of the hour. The expedition had been of his suggestion, and besides, excepting for Selim, who had heard of the place, and Sternberg, the Austrian, who kept his counsel to himself and said nothing, none of the others in the party had the faintest idea as to where they were going.

They spent the night on the desert, in the shelter of two or three scraggly palms beside a half-forgotten native well, from which they hauled precious bucketfuls of the scanty, weird-smelling water for the thirsty donkeys.

Next day the march was resumed at an easy pace, and toward evening, passing over the edge of a dip in the desert, they came in sight of an outcropping ridge of tawny rock, the edge of a small, bare, low-lying plateau, rising above the sandy desolation that stretched around, the rocky face of it glowing cinnamon and dun in the slanting rays of the declining sun.

Von Schrimm raised his whip and pointed.

"Behold!" he cried; "the Hill of the Dead—one of the most ancient burial places in all Egypt and the only one that has managed to guard most of its secrets."

A murmur of curiosity and expectation from the dusty lips of his hearers followed his announcement. With renewed speed they pushed onward, and by nightfall had

pitched their camp among the broken ground at the foot of the cliff, in the very loom of the cavernous indentations which the wasting passage of unnumbered centuries had worn in the face of the age-scarred rock.

"Well, what do you think of it?" said Lawson speculatively. "I wonder will it prove worth the trouble of coming?"

Sternberg extracted and lit one of his eternal cigarettes before replying. He and Lawson had wandered out a little distance into the desert and stood for a moment surveying the camp and the cliff behind it, lit with the dancing glow of the several tiny fires.

"You will perhaps be disappointed," he answered presently. "There is comparatively little to be seen. A few commonplace tombs, a few mediocre hieroglyphics—that is all."

"You know that place?" questioned Lawson in surprise. "You never mentioned that before."

"Why should I? Is it necessary to parade one's knowledge before the rabble? Yes, I know this place only too well. It was here that Carl Metzger, of Berlin, a personal friend of mine, unaccountably disappeared twenty-five years ago. It was a mysterious affair and has always puzzled me. We were both members of a scientific expedition to this very spot. One night Metzger disappeared from the camp—vanished as it were into thin air. No trace of him has ever been found. It was in the forlorn hope that I might by chance stumble upon some clue to the mystery—even after all these years—that I took this opportunity to revisit the place."

"And you never found a trace of him?" asked Lawson with interest. "Was there no theory?"

"There were several, but none of them was ever proved. One idea was that some of our Arabs had murdered him and concealed the body. Another theory suggested

that he had become suddenly insane in the night and had wandered off into the desert and died somewhere in some hole or hollow. Still another had it that he had strolled into the desert and been carried off and murdered by a roving band of Arabs. Of course these were only theories. We never found the slightest trace of Metzger. All we know is that one night he went to his tent as usual, and in the morning he was gone. We searched everywhere, but the mystery has remained a mystery ever since."

"A strange affair," commented Lawson. "I don't wonder that you take an interest in the place. It is certainly a fit theater for a mystery. The place is dreary and ominous enough for anything."

"Is it not?" Sternberg agreed. "As ominous as its name. Strange, how inanimate objects and localities have a very real atmosphere and personality of their own—but they have. Well, let us return to camp. There is no wisdom in wandering too far."

"You surely don't suggest that there is any danger, do you?"

"Danger? Oh, I don't know," said the Austrian thoughtfully. "I was thinking of Metzger—and other things."

They retraced their steps in silence. Just before they came within earshot of the others Sternberg spoke.

"You will oblige me by saying nothing of what I have told you. I have reasons for not wanting the story to become public property. Good night."

He turned away and departed to the little tent that had been pitched for him on the far edge of the camp.

4

IT WAS late, and the night was already far advanced when Lawson awoke with that strange premonition of impending evil which will occasionally awaken even the heaviest sleepers.

The camp was silent as the grave: wrapped deep in slumber. Over all brooded the vast stillness of the desert night. But presently a faint air, stirring across the dry sands, began to rustle and scrape the tent flap with the warning of a coming night breeze.

It was this faint, desolate voicing of the tent flap that suddenly jarred Lawson into complete wakefulness with a chill sensation of alarm, sudden as a dash of icy water.

The tent flap was unlaced and stood swaying open.

Lawson sat up suddenly, and as he did so he was aware of another circumstance, which brought him to his feet with a spring.

The other cot, which his wife had occupied, was disordered and vacant. He was alone.

A creeping shiver, like a drafty blast of cold air, ran down his spine at the realization. For an instant his heart stood still; and in that instant, while he stood paralyzed and irresolute, a dark form blotted across the tent opening, and a voice that he recognized as Sternberg's came in a hoarse, tense whisper from without:

"Lawson! Quick, man, quick! Don't waste a second or it may be too late. Come!"

In the Austrian's voice there was a compelling intensity that called for instant, unquestioning compliance. Lawson tore on his boots, and, clad as he was in his sleeping-garments, stepped out into the starlight.

Sternberg caught his arm with iron grip. The Austrian was fully dressed and was laboring under some violent excitement.

"Come," he repeated, almost breathlessly. "Don't attempt to ask questions; follow me. And remember—whatever you see or hear, say nothing; do nothing, or *it* may kill her. Do you understand? Leave everything to me. Remember your

silence is the only hope of her safety. A false movement—a cry—may mean her instant death.”

He turned and led the way into the darkness, moving with long, noiseless, nervous strides.

They passed swiftly beyond the area of the camp and began to pick their way among the broken ground at the foot of the rocks, Sternberg leading among the rocks and shadows with the instinct and agility of a panther. Far out on the desert the quavering wail of a lone jackal broke the silence with a note that froze the blood in Lawson's veins. He followed, stumbling and breathless, in the footsteps of his guide.

Suddenly Sternberg paused.

“Ssst!” he breathed. “Look!”

Directly ahead, on a shoulder of rising ground that stretched from the base of the cliff, Lawson was aware of two figures emerging slowly from a band of shadow and making their way directly toward the base of the towering rocks.

It was his wife and Von Schrimm.

Lawson felt the hand of Sternberg close hard upon his wrist as a reminder of his warning. Silently, cautiously, they followed, hugging the deeper shadows and drawing closer with each step to the slowly moving pair ahead.

Von Schrimm was in the lead. He was moving with deliberate certainty, as of one who follows a well-known path. His head was half turned and his eyes were fixed, not upon the way of his feet, but upon the face of the woman who followed.

And she was following him stiffly, mechanically, with the dull lethargy of a sleep-walker. Her head was thrown back, and the masses of her unbound hair fell in a cloud about her shoulders, stirring and waving in the light desert wind that fluttered the folds of the long dark cloak which she had thrown over her night attire. Her hands were clasped upon her

breast, gathering and holding her cloak about her, and over the rough, rocky surface of the ground her bare feet moved steadily and apparently without sensation, gleaming palely beneath the fluttering hem of her long white gown.

Von Schrimm was bareheaded, but save for this he was fully dressed. He kept moving steadily forward, and from his lips came at intervals a low sound, an indescribable purring note that had something of a hiss in it.

And the girl followed him, involuntarily, apparently powerless. Only once did she appear to halt and hesitate, and in that moment, despite the hand that Sternberg clapped suddenly over his mouth, Lawson came near to emitting a shriek of terror.

For the instant she paused. Von Schrimm halted and drew himself to his full height. The purring note rose to an angry hiss. His right arm swept aloft, and, gripped in the upraised hand, gleamed a long, broad-bladed dagger, poised menacingly, the starlight glittering coldly upon the cruel savage length of steel. The girl shivered mechanically and once more moved forward.

The beads of cold sweat broke out in a rain over Lawson's body. Trembling in every limb he was conscious of the fierce whisper of Sternberg in his ear: “Fool! If *it* suspects your presence it will slay her on the instant. Silence, if you value her life.”

UPON a narrow platform-like space, where the shoulder of the ridge butted against the face of the cliff, Von Schrimm paused beside a gigantic boulder, a great fragment of stone that had apparently fallen from above and now lay wedged securely against the face of the parent rock behind it. He began to work with straining muscles upon the stone, and as he worked the girl stood beside him

motionless—a rigid, pale-faced statue, lifeless as marble.

Slowly, steadily, under Von Schrimm's pressure, the great fragment moved upon an invisible pivot. Inch by inch it swung and yawned away from the cliff, until finally, when the toiler desisted from his efforts, it stood open like some titanic door, the tremendous shutter of the narrow opening which loomed dark black against the living rock behind.

Von Schrimm turned and faced the motionless girl. Once more he raised the cold length of naked steel. Once more the angry hiss broke from his lips, and as she moved toward him he stepped backward. Together they vanished into the yawning mouth of the tomb.

Sternberg dragged Lawson swiftly forward. Trembling with the excitement and terror that was upon them both, they passed from the darkness of the night into the blacker darkness of the sepulcher.

The characteristic musty breath of a closed burial chamber smote upon their nostrils as they crossed the portal, but the air was not nearly so thick and choking as is usual in a first-opened tomb. There seemed to be a ventilation shaft somewhere, for as they noiselessly followed the sound of shuffling footsteps into the blackness, the faint air of the desert followed them, driving back and clearing the heavy atmosphere.

That there was such a shaft shortly became established. The floor of the passage was smooth and trended downward, and as they advanced the gloom began to lighten until at a point it thinned to the dim radiance of the outer light. In the roof of the rock-hewn gallery a great shaft led upward to the outer air. The light of stars fell into the passage, illuminating it with a pale twilight like that which reigns at the bottom of a deep well.

In the center of this dim patch of hazy darkness they were presently aware that

Von Schrimm and his companion had halted. The black blotch of their figures was just visible in the half-light.

Then came the sound of a voice. Von Schrimm was speaking, and the voice in which he spoke was his and yet not his—there was a terrible vibration in it which quivered upon the listeners' ears, awakening a sensation of insane fear.

"I have come back," rang that grim, compelling voice. "Through the length of the deathless ages of the past I have come back to thee, O thou from whom the dwellers of the shadows tore my soul. O radiant princess, royal mate of my throne, sharer of my destiny! O thou who wast the assigned partner of my spirit from that first hour when we were flung together from the flaming center of the birth of Time, I have come back!

"Dost thou not remember me, O my partner of eternity? Turn back, turn back thy memory upon itself. Rememberest thou those evenings when we rode together into the glow of bloody sunsets, the dust clouds of the desert rising beneath the feet of our victorious hosts, the shadows of the night ringing with the clanking fetters of our captives? Rememberest thou those evenings upon the Nile, those evenings of our burning, blinding love? Those evenings when the moon rose above the desert to silver the dark river and the frowning loom of our ramparts; when the silence was unbroken save for the murmur of the rowers and the splashing water of the blades? Rememberest thou not the whole glorious march of our twain destiny; of our eternal love? That destiny from which in a night I was flung headlong by the awful dwellers of the void? O mate of my living soul, dost thou not remember?"

And hollow and tense and fearful came the low-breathed answer: "I remember."

"Long have I sought thee," continued that terrible voice. "Long ages has my slain soul pursued thee through the track-

less mazes of the lightless dark of that dread region of the lost. But always thou fled from me in horror. Thy living soul shrank from the embraces of my dead spirit, and always thou fled safe from me protected by that great barrier which holds dead from living. Long have I yearned for thee in vain, but now I fail no longer. Into my hands has come the key of victory. Once more art thou within the pale of my power, O long-lost partner of my soul! Dead is my soul and dead shall thine accompany me, to the borders of that dark river which rolls its waters through the dying ages toward oblivion. Come!"

The awful voice rose to a shriek, and as the sound of its last word rang upon the rocky roof, a blaze of light sprang from the electric torch in Sternberg's hand, followed an instant later by two spurts of duller flame; the savage double report of the Austrian's Luger echoed through the tomb; the ejected shells from the automatic bounded from the wall and fell tinkling upon the passage floor.

In the flooding glare of the blinding light the form of Von Schrimm stood for an instant fully revealed, leaning forward with hungry, clutching arms toward the trembling figure before him, his face transfigured with an expression of devilish triumph such as never sat upon human features.

One instant only he stood thus, and then, as the powerful expanding bullets tore their way through that hideous leering countenance, he reeled and fell backward, headlong and alone, into the depths of a yawning chasm behind, which his devilish machinations had destined for both.

5

LAWSON rushed forward and caught the collapsing body of his wife in his arms. The strained tension that had held her so long in thrall had snapped. They

carried her, fainting, unnerved and sobbing, out beyond the entrance and laid her in the cool air beside the doorway.

The Austrian turned back.

"I have work to do in here which it will be too late to do tomorrow," he said. "Stay here and look after her. Wait until I come."

He re-entered the tomb, swinging the light of his pocket torch before him.

He was a long while gone, and when he returned he was dusty and grimy and hot with exertion. He was in no mood for talk, and Lawson, supporting his wife's head in his arms, watched him silently as he slowly swung back that titanic door of rock which for centuries unnumbered had closed and guarded the secret of the tomb behind it.

The girl had fallen into a strange deep slumber, and presently, when he had completed his task, the Austrian came and stood looking down at her.

"It is well," he said at length. "The strain has been terrific and she may remain asleep thus for hours, but she will be normal when she wakes, and I do not think she will have the slightest recollection of the whole affair."

"Are you sure?" queried Lawson anxiously.

"Almost. I have seen somewhat similar cases of great mental strain, and it has always left complete forgetfulness of the circumstance. Meanwhile, since I may not be able to talk to you afterward for some time, you had better know what is in there."

He indicated the closed tomb.

"What did you do with the body?"

"There was *no* body," said the Austrian steadily, "at least not the kind of body you are thinking of. There was a mummy there in an unopened sarcophagus. I smashed the mummy to bits," he added. "It was a choking, loathsome job."

"But the corpse of Von Schrimm?" cried

Lawson. "What did you do with *that*?"

"There was *no* corpse of Von Schrimm," repeated the Austrian. "There *never was* a Von Schrimm. There is nothing in there but the twenty-five-years-dead skeleton of Carl Metzger, dressed in a new suit of clothes, and with two Luger bullets through its skull."

"My God!" cried Lawson. "What do you mean?"

"I mean," said Sternberg solemnly, "that the mystery of Metzger's disappearance is a mystery no longer. He must have wandered in his sleep that night, twenty-five years ago, to the edge of the shaft where it opens upon the plateau above, and fallen in. The terrible being which haunted the tomb seized the opportunity of taking possession of Metzger's body, and for all these years it has occupied it, changing its very features with its own personality and holding the form together by the sheer strength of its own purpose. The moment it lost its grip the body vanished, nothing but the skeleton remaining, as would have been the case in the natural course of events."

"Oh, my God!" cried Lawson in horror. "I can't believe it! It's too ghastly!"

"There is not the slightest possibility of

doubt," returned Sternberg mercilessly. "Metzger once broke his leg and it was unskilfully set. The fracture shows quite plainly on the skeleton. Besides, I found this upon the *thing*. It's a wonder that I never noticed it before, because I have had a suspicion of this ghastly business from the beginning and I have watched what you called 'Von Schrimm' very closely."

He held out a gold watch and snapped open the case in the glare of the torch.

"Carl Metzger," ran the engraved inscription, surrounded by a wreath of laurel.

"You see there is no doubt," said the Austrian, snapping shut the case. "Come. It is time we were starting back. She will have to be carried quietly and gently, remember, and we must get back without observation some way or other. In the morning there will be a fine outcry over Von Schrimm's disappearance; and there will be official investigations and no end of red tape. But remember, keep your counsel and breathe no word. The wind is rising, our footprints in the sand will be obliterated in a few minutes. No trace of this night's business will remain. The fate of Von Schrimm and the secret of that dead *thing* in the tomb is hid for ever. Come, let us go."
