

Weird Tales

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The DOG-EARED GOD



The Egyptians' gods are shaped like beasts, but why they represent them in this way I had rather not mention.—*Herodotus.*

WHAT do you think of it?" asked Professor Dewey."

The colossal height of the mummy case accentuated my friend's littleness. Somehow (I don't know why the image should have presented itself) I thought of the opium-haunted De Quincey walking wearily about the streets of London, a grotesque little midget in carpet slippers who carried a world within his head. Professor Dewey bore an amazing resemblance to De Quincey. His forehead was high and shrunken, and covered with wrinkles, and the skin on his lean cheeks was stretched as taut as yellow parchment. His nose could scarcely be described as Roman: it was so excessively Hebraic that a strain of Jewish blood unquestionably formed a measure of his heritage. His smile, when he did smile, was grim and lifeless; and very few people would have been attracted to

him. But beneath his almost repulsive exterior the little chap had a good heart, and I found his companionship delightfully stimulating.

Professor Dewey's hobby was Egyptology, and he imported large quantities of mummies annually, and I am sorry to add, illegally. No prying customs officer ever laid his sternly official hand on one of Professor Dewey's acquisitions. No blue-eyed and impertinent government clerk ever questioned Professor Dewey as to the value of his queer and often repulsive property. The professor had made arrangements with a dozen sly and secretive skip-pers whose Levantine dealings were seldom above reproach, and as a result of his careful bargaining he never lost a mummy or scarab or precious stone. In the course of a single year eighty-three mummies had been successfully smuggled into his stately brownstone mansion on Riverside Drive.

We stood in Professor Dewey's mummy-room, a great hall carpeted

with red velvet and lined with rather sinister black curtains. It seemed ridiculous to me that the professor should furnish this repository with the trappings of occult melodrama, but I have always been singularly incapable of fathoming my friend's amusing whims. Beneath his whimsicality and eccentricity he was reasonably genuine, and it is unfair to expect common sense or restraint from a man of genius.

The mummy before us was unusually tall. It fairly towered in the yellowish gloom of the great room, and it bore unmistakable characteristics of great age. And it was oddly shaped—its breast swelled out curiously and its nose was gigantic. Indeed, the latter member almost protruded through the aromatic and evil-smelling wrappings. "An Egyptian Cyrano," I remarked, and permitted a grin to disturb my usually severe and solemn features (the professor often assured me that my features were severe, and being a very young man I took pardonable pride in the fact!). "How the ladies must have hated him!" I added, seeing my friend scowl.

"This is a serious matter," he said after a pause that seemed interminable. "Nothing like this has ever come out of Egypt. I—do—not—like—it!"

My friend's voice was distressingly hollow. It made me nervous, and I endeavored to quiet him. "There is nothing very unusual about this mummy," I replied. "Some very peculiar types undoubtedly existed among the Egyptians. I daresay they had their side-shows and circuses with the odd assortment of freaks that usually goes with such things. This poor fellow may have been a king's jester—it is really unfair to reproach him with his ugliness after all these years. I am sure his life was a very unhappy one."

The professor's scowl grew in vol-

ume. "You must be serious," he retorted. "This mummy is *very* unusual. I am not a sensationalist, my dear boy, but I may say that my enemies would give a great deal to use this thing to discredit me. We must be very wary about publishing the results of our experiments."

"Experiments?" I snatched at the word. I had a boyish and ridiculous eagerness for all varieties of research.

"I have some experiments in mind that will demand a great deal of courage. If you do not feel equal to them I shall want you to tell me so quite frankly. But first I must warn and prepare you, and describe what we have to deal with."

The professor lit an absurdly long panetela and puffed for several moments in silence. The smoke ascended spirally and formed a curious grayish nimbus above the mummy case. The mummy stood out in the depressing gloom like a sinister avenger of the eighty-three defenseless wretches that Professor Dewey had dissected and destroyed.

When my friend spoke again his voice had acquired a small measure of calm. He spoke slowly, punctuating his sentences with an occasional cough.

"There are few myths in the treasure-house of mankind that were not originally based upon solid objective facts. I do not believe that the imagination of primitive peoples is capable of creating bogies out of thin air. We are too easily deluded by modern science and altogether too apt to scoff at the legends of gods and goddesses that have come down to us. It is absurd to believe that the Egyptians created their monstrous bestial gods from mere observation of living animals. There is something so immense, so psychically terrible about the Egyptian gods that it is difficult to believe them simply the product of normal human imagination. They are either the imaginings of some

dreamer of wild and unheard-of powers, an Edgar Poe among the Egyptians, or——”

Professor Dewey paused without stating his alternative. I presume he wanted his heresy to sink in, for he waited several moments before continuing:

“These crocodile gods, these cat-headed and bat-eared divinities are really more debased than anything to be found anywhere in the modern world. Even your barbarous black fellow in Africa or Australia would be incapable of worshiping anything so vile. And yet if we are to believe historians the Egyptians had a high degree of ethical culture. They would not fashion such horrors willingly. I have often thought——”

Again my friend hesitated, as if ashamed to put his theory into words. My eagerness apparently reassured him.

“I have often thought that these monsters really existed. Why should we suppose that men are the only intelligent beings on this planet? There is so much evidence to the contrary, so very much evidence, that I feel justified in my theory. I do not think that I am a fool. My enemies” (I fear my friend suffered from a persecution complex) “would give years of their lives to overhear this conversation. But they shall only hear of the results—if the results are not too revolting.”

Professor Dewey sank down on a chair as if exhausted. Beads of sweat stood out horribly on his high yellow forehead. His lips quivered.

“George,” he stammered. “We must put it to the test. We must sleep here tonight. Unless, of course, you fear to sleep in the room with that.”

“But what is that, really?” I asked, pointing with horror to the colossal mummy.

My friend did not answer me di-

rectly, but his words were dreadfully disturbing.

“Twenty or thirty thousand years ago the Egyptians buried their first kings. *There were strange kings in the dawn world.*”

2

PROFESSOR DEWEY was sleeping soundly, but something made me sit up. I am not sure whether I dreamed a sound, or whether a sound had actually come from the corner of the room where the great mummy stood solemnly in its fifty wrappings. But whether the dismal noise had any basis in fact it was a profoundly disturbing thing to hear at 3 o'clock in the morning.

Perhaps you have listened to hounds baying at night across lonely moors, or perhaps you have heard in the tropics the horrid moans of small monkeys when they awake from their mindless sleep and see the stars watching them evilly. If you have heard such sounds you may have a remote idea of how vile these audibly sinister exhibitions of evil and fright seem to a normally constituted man.

The low whining that I heard (and it occasionally seemed to rise to an actual baying) did not frighten me. But had the chair that loomed unpleasantly before me out of the gloom suddenly entered into conversation with the sofa, or had the clock walked across the mantel, I should not have been more horrified.

I sat up and waited. For several moments nothing happened, but then I heard a low scratching and scraping as if something were trying to get out of the closet. Claws of some sort were indubitably at work somewhere.

“Rats!” I reflected, and I clung to the suggestion warmly. Of course there would be rats in a house given over to unhallowed and unsavory practises. “The professor is fortunate to have rats to do the really

dirty work," I mused. "They save him the bother of burning the odds and ends. It must be damnably difficult to get rid of fingernails and hair and such things, unless one burns them, and of course the rats would save him that task. The professor is really very fortunate. Dear, jolly rats!"

Then I realized the fatuousness of my reflections and passed my hand rapidly back and forth across my face. My forehead was infernally warm; I was excited, feverish. "It's probably a touch of influenza," I thought. "I should never have slept in this cold room." I recalled that I had been sneezing and coughing most of the previous afternoon. The slightest touch of fever makes me delirious—in that respect I am abnormally favored.

I pulled the blankets about my neck and turned over. I think then that I slept, but I am convinced that what I saw later had some external significance. The thing was more than a mere dream and certainly more than a hallucination. It was, I think, an actual *body of memories* projected across the room. When I saw it I was sitting up, and I heard the clock outside strike 4.

A white immensity spread before me, and for a moment its whiteness blinded me. It was like a series of projections on the silver screen. The white substance was continually changing, now thinning, now thickening, and horrid, distorted forms moved about in it. The forms were amorphous, and I could not at first distinguish them clearly. They were not altogether human. They seemed to have the bodies of men, but *the heads of animals*.

When the vision, or call it what you will, became clearer I saw that the unmentionable creatures had formed into a solid phalanx, and that they were marching solemnly before me. They carried between them some un-

speakable object which they made no effort to conceal.

If the forms of the marchers were revolting, the form of the long, distorted *thing* that they carried was infernal. It was covered with hair, but I never had seen anything like it under the stars. It had a sunken bat-like face, and great, dog-shaped ears, and its yellow teeth glittered ominously in the strange, unnatural light. The thing was obviously lifeless, and its cheeks were sunken and hollow.

The watchers carried torches which they waved exultantly as if almost glad that the thing had died. I had a curious sympathy for these others, but heaven knows they were vile enough. The torches gave off a weird blue light and even, I thought, a mephitic smell; and as I watched, new ones were lit and the swaying, blasphemous procession moved forward more rapidly.

And then the chanting and intoning commenced, and the dreadful hymns for the dead swelled and revibrated in the room until I put my hands before my ears to shut out the ancient and obscene chants.

"Our master out of the skies is dead!" they wailed. "Deep, deep in the earth shall we bury our king. Long has he ruled us, and horrible the evil he did to us, but he was our king out of the skies, and we revere his memory. Horrible his black tongue that shot out fire, horrible the maidens he devoured, horrible the blood he drank, but he was a king. In the book of the dead it is written that he shall be judged by gods, by his peers he shall be judged. He shall appear as a snake, as a reptile before his peers, but by his ears they shall know him."

Then the picture cleared terribly, and I saw that the procession trod hot reddish sands, and a great stone effigy loomed up behind them. It was a sphinx, but a more ancient

sphinx than the one we know, and its eyes glowed banefully. And in a deep and perfectly round hole dug in the sand at the statue's base they buried their king, and strewed gold dust upon him, and anointed his limbs with oil which they poured from jars of veined porphyry.

Unmentionable were the rites they performed above him, and the last words of their loathsome high priest, *who had the head of a lizard*, were lethal words, and I shivered when I realized at whom they were directed.

"For thirty centuries you shall sleep, but a little shameless creature with no hair to cover him shall drag you forth, because in his time he shall be as a god. But his evil day will not be long under the sun. He too shall return unto dust, and a very thin creature with neither legs nor eyes shall play havoc with his bones. It is written. Rest in peace, and remember us who worshiped you!"

The vision grew vaguer, and the forms seemed to converge and merge into each other. Then gradually the darkness closed in, and I found myself staring with frightened eyes at Professor Dewey's monstrous acquisition. It loomed vaguely out of the blackness, and it seemed to be stirring, and squirming about.

I watched fascinated while the ancient wrappings fell away, and *two long pink hands* fumbled hectically with mildewed cerements. The hands were abnormally emaciated, and covered with thin, reddish hair.

I endeavored to rise, but the eyes of the thing watched me evilly, and ordered me to be silent. It seemed angry that I should question its spiritual supremacy. It had uncovered its eyes, but the great loathsome nose remained mercifully concealed by several layers of disintegrating wrappings. It was frightful to watch the thing's efforts to free itself. It wriggled and squirmed, and in its villainess it resembled a great fleshy worm

endeavoring to escape from some deep sewer of earth.

What followed will always remain confused in my memory. I seem to recall Professor Dewey upon his back with closed eyes, and something standing above him in the dim light like an immemorial avenger. I seem to glimpse a supremely ghastly exterior—two great ears protruding from a narrow and greenish skull, and a great nose like an elephant's trunk showing briefly in profile.

Then fire—a deluge of colored fire, which shot out of the creature's nose and mouth, fire from hell, fire from beyond Arcturus. I saw the professor's eyes open, and I saw him stare at the thing for a moment in triumph. The exultation in his face was quickly replaced by agony and despair. He threw out his arms as if endeavoring to ward off an immediate doom, and while I watched, his face shriveled and blackened.

"I was right," he shrieked. "The Egyptians did not worship men. God pity my poor soul!"

I did not stay to comfort my stricken friend. I ran shrieking from the room, and out of the house into the street. I looked up to see thick black smoke pouring from an upper window, but I turned in no alarm. I ran wildly across deserted squares and through winding alleys and finally found my way to a leering subway entrance.

I fled insanely down the stairs, and climbed over the turnstile without depositing a fare. Luckily no one saw me. In a moment I was in a roaring train, my arms flung about a drunken beggar, and into his astonished ears I poured a tale that made him gasp and shake his head.

"You young 'uns allus get it somewhere," he grimaced. "I wish I had your luck."

I HAVE always found newspaper men exceedingly prosaic. The following cutting from a New York paper demonstrates my point:

A fire in the upper West Side caused a great deal of disturbance yesterday morning, when police reserves from three stations fought with firemen to keep excited passers-by from entering the burning building. For two hours thirty or forty hooded men endeavored to rescue the inmates, and caused a great deal of disturbance. The police were unable to explain why utter strangers should take such an interest in one poor perishing wretch, since it was later ascertained that the house was occupied by an eccentric professor and misanthrope who is suspected of bootlegging operations. Patrolman Henley, from the West 93rd Street Station, claims that one of the would-be rescuers removed his hood

for a brief moment, and that his face was covered with fur, *and eaten away at the corners*. Luckily for Patrolman Henley's reputation he is known to suffer from migraine, and it is probable that what he imagined he saw had no basis in fact.

The wildly excited attempts of strangers to enter the building completely frustrated operations, and the unfortunate inmate perished. For a moment he was seen at the window, and those who were standing on the sidewalk immediately underneath declare that his hair and beard were actually on fire.

The upper portion of the building was completely destroyed. A number of curious bones were found in the room, including the skeleton of a gigantic dog. During the past week three previous fires have been reported in the neighborhood, and the police are investigating rumors of a firebug.
