

fantastic

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DECEMBER
35¢



THE MUMMY TAKES A WIFE By Clyde Mitchell
A Mad Mixture of Mummies, Maids and Mayhem

fantastic

DECEMBER 1956

Volume 5 Number 6

REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.

ZIFF-DAVIS PUBLISHING COMPANY
William B. Ziff (1898-1953) Founder
Editorial and Executive Offices
366 Madison Avenue
New York 17, New York

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THE MUMMY TAKES A WIFE

By CLYDE MITCHELL

Luscious Linda was the kind of gal to make a mummy kick a hole in his sarcophagus. And there was the Belt of Osiris. It made old men young and young men—well anyhow, Linda spent all her time running until the mummy—oops! Don't want to give it away!

CAPTAIN HUMPHREY BOGGS, master of the luxury liner *Queen Victoria*, folded his hands over his paunch and looked at his two guests.

"I'm afraid I do not see the reason for all this—ah—secrecy, Dr. Armitage," he said to the older of the two men. "If the Egyptian government has given its permission for the—ah—relics to be taken out of Egypt, what is there to fear?"

Dr. Armitage fussily adjusted his *pince-nez* spectacles. "Well, Captain, the Egyptian government warned us that there is a group of fanat-



Suddenly there were



screams, flashing swords, and a fast-vanishing mummy.

ics who are very determined to keep the jewels and the mummy of Khama-Ptah-hor-Amen III in Egypt. We think, Dr. Bingham and I, that we have thus far safely eluded the fanatics, but we do not wish them to discover our whereabouts."

"Exactly," said Dr. Bingham. He was a much younger man than Armitage, with light, sandy hair, a rather solemn expression, and blue eyes that had a look of virgin innocence about them.

"I see." Captain Boggs rose to his feet, giving the impression of a weather balloon heading for the stratosphere. In spite of his rotundity, he towered a full six feet four inches above the deck.

"Very well, then, Dr. Armitage," the Captain continued, "we'll place the stuff in the strong room down in the hold. It will be quite safe there. Come along."

Three men stood at the rail on the main deck watching people climb the gangplank. They kept their hats pulled low over their eyes and their arms folded on the rail, which made them all look very much alike.

The big, broadshouldered one standing in the middle leaned a little to his left and

spoke to the smoothly dressed man standing next to him.

"What are we standing here in this fog for, Boss?" asked Pussyfoot O'Shaughnessy. "Already I'm having a chill and a thirst."

Big and muscular, but still agile, Pussyfoot O'Shaughnessy had once been known as the finest second-story man in Chicago until the rising popularity of ranch houses had put him out of business.

The man addressed as "Boss" was Larry Levine, whose reputation as a jewel thief was exceeded only by his reputation as a lady-killer—both actually and figuratively.

"O'Shaughnessy," said Mr. Levine, "how many times do I have to tell you not to call me "boss"? You have let Hollywood go to your head. Just because you acted the part of a gangster in a Grade B movie once is no reason why you have to talk like one."

"But I *am* a gangster," Mr. O'Shaughnessy pointed out with impeccable logic.

Mr. Levine sighed. "Hasn't it ever occurred to you that it is bad policy to advertise the fact? Now quit acting and keep your eyes open. If you spot anyone we know, speak up fast."

Mr. O'Shaughnessy lapsed

into silence and peered through a Southampton fog at the gangplank.

After a few moments, Mr. Levine whispered: "Who's that?"

"That" was a small, wiry-looking man wearing a black fez. His dark face, beady black eyes, and corvine nose conspired together to make a countenance far more sinister than that of any of the three men at the rail.

He was pushing a wheelchair up the gangplank, a wheelchair which contained a figure swathed in blankets from head to toe.

"Joe" said Mr. Levine, addressing the third man of the trio, "go check with the purser. That looks funny to me. Find out who's in the wheelchair."

Giuseppe (Little Joe) Manetti was a small, silent man who claimed to be a Sicilian, but his blond hair and blue eyes lent weight to the underworld rumor which held that his father had been an itinerant Swede.

Without a word, he stepped away from the rail and walked down the deck. The other two kept on watching.

"Hey!" whispered Mr. O'Shaughnessy, "there's another bunch!"

This consisted of four

bearded, turbaned men, all dressed in neat Western garb except for the headdresses.

Mr. Levine shook his head. "I saw those boys at the hotel. They're Sikhs—from India. They're going to New York on business."

The two gentlemen continued their watching, and within a few minutes, they were rejoined by Mr. Manetti.

"The little guy with the fez is an Egyptian named Ahnku," reported Manetti. "The bird in the chair is his boss, Muhammid ibn Abdul, a rich oil man from Alexandria. Seems like he's allergic to fog, so he's staying under wraps till we get away from England."

"Hmmm," said Mr. Levine. "Maybe. We'll keep an eye on him, just the same."

"You know," said Mr. O'Shaughnessy, "I think I'm going to like this trip." He was gazing speculatively at the gangplank. "That is about the seventh luscious female that has come aboard this boat."

Mr. Levine looked down at the lushly curvacious brunette ascending the gangway. He smiled. "That, my dear boy, happens to be Linda Armitage, the daughter of our

old pal, the Egyptologist. We may see a lot of her."

After checking with the purser, Linda Armitage went below immediately, searching for her father's cabin. She had spent the summer in England, studying at a small London school while her father and Bingham, his assistant, hunted tombs in Egypt. Now she was rejoining them for the voyage home, and would continue her studies at her father's university, Miskatonic.

She made her way through the narrow corridor, looking for Stateroom 101. It involved climbing down a spiralling metal ladder, crossing through a constricted passageway, and threading a course through a hall no more than a couple of feet wide. Luxury liners, she thought, are not as luxurious as one might think.

"Excuse me, please," said a small man dressed in Egyptian garments, who appeared at the other end of the corridor pushing a wheelchair delicately through the narrow passageway. "Sorry, but I must get past, Miss."

Linda glanced down involuntarily at the man in the wheelchair. He was sitting motionless, completely swath-

ed in deck-cloths and blankets. His face was bandaged, as if he had been hideously burnt. Linda repressed a little gasp and flattened herself against the side of the hallway while the small man and his charge went past.

"Excuse me," she said, timidly, as they went by.

The small man turned. "Yes?"

"I—I'm looking for Stateroom 101. Can you tell me where it is?"

The small man's swarthy brow furrowed. "Down to the end of the hall and turn left, Miss. Then up the first staircase. You will find it."

"Thanks," Linda said. But the small man had already turned and was moving on down the corridor with his wheelchair employer in tow. She shrugged and set out to follow his instructions, moving toward her cabin.

A few minutes later, she had reached Stateroom 101. She knocked.

"Dad?"

There was no answer—which surprised her, because her father had told her definitely to meet him there at that time. She knocked again.

This time, a thin, high male voice said, "Yes? Who's there?"

"Me. Linda."

"Oh—just a second, Miss Armitage."

There was the sound of hustling and bustling around inside, and then the door opened. The pale, vague face of Leslie Bingham peered out.

"Come on in, Miss Armitage," he said hesitantly. "That is—I mean—well, your father will be back any minute. He was expecting you."

"I know," Linda said. "He told me to meet him here." She stepped inside, edging past the unhappy-looking Bingham, and peered out the port at the busy harbor outside.

After a couple of moments she said, "Where is Dad, anyway?"

"He's up with the Captain. They're busy stowing our relics in the strong room in the hold. He'll be back soon." Bingham chewed at his lower lip nervously, and twined his fingers as if he was not quite sure what else to do with them.

"Oh," Linda said. "Mind if I wait?"

"Not at all, Lin—Miss Armitage." He paced uneasily up and down the small cabin. "I—I don't mind having you around, Miss Armitage."

She shot him a surprised glance. "Oh?"

He flushed bright crimson. "I didn't mean—oh, I'm getting all confused."

Linda smiled. "I'll say you are. But you're sort of fun when you're confused, Leslie."

Using his first name was a mistake, Linda realized. The young archaeologist glowed as proudly as if he'd just been knighted, and seemed to gain in self-confidence almost visibly. He took a deep breath.

"Linda?"

She turned away from the port. "Yes, Leslie?"

"I've been meaning to say this for a long time, Linda. I—"

Linda chuckled. "You haven't changed at all, Leslie. Are you still carrying that torch for me?"

Bingham turned beet-red. "I didn't mean to—that is—yes," he said, suddenly emboldened. "Yes. I am still—ah—carrying the torch." He moved closer to her, and, as if maddened by her nearness, moved even closer.

Linda stepped away from him gracefully, and his arms closed on empty air. His eyes opened and he glanced at her, somewhat dazed.

She smiled icily. "I don't mean to change the subject, Leslie, but I'm awfully cu-

rious about your discoveries in Egypt. Why don't you tell me what you and Dad found?"

There, she thought. That ought to get his mind off me. Sex is strictly second-fiddle to Egyptology in Leslie Bingham's alleged mind.

He lowered his gaze shamefacedly from her plunging, well-filled neckline. "What we found? In Egypt?"

"That's what I'm talking about."

"Well—it was a coffin, mostly. The sarcophagus of Khama-Ptah-hor-Amen III, and the mummy thereof. And some jewels that belonged to him."

"Seventeenth dynasty, isn't he?"

"Sixteenth," Bingham corrected fussily.

"And where are the mummy and jewels kept now? I'd love to see them!"

"They're in the hold," Bingham said. "Your father is supervising the job now. We're putting them away for safe keeping. If you'd like to go down there to take a look at them, I could—"

"I'll go later," Linda interrupted smoothly. "By myself."

Bingham began to reply, but stopped hurriedly when the door opened. Dr. Avery

Armitage of Miskatonic University stepped through into the cabin and paused, adjusting his *pince-nez*.

"Hello, dear. Good to see you found the cabin," he said. "Hello, Leslie." He smiled. "Well, the Captain and I have everything taken care of. The sarcophagus is stored below, and it's all safe as can be."

"Leslie's been telling me about it," Linda said. "I think it's wonderful, finding a mummy and all."

"Ah—yes," Armitage said. "It'll be quite an addition to our museum, back at Arkham. That is, if we can get it back safely," he added.

"What's that, Daddy?"

"Nothing," Armitage said. "Nothing at all, my dear." He drew forth a handkerchief and wiped the inside of his collar. "Nothing at all, my dear."

Suddenly the ship's horn blasted an earshattering trumpet-call. "I think we're leaving," Bingham said.

Linda glanced out the porthole again. The *Queen Victoria* was slowly and gracefully gliding from the dock.

Ali ul'Adah stood at the porthole of his cabin, gazing at the swiftly receding skyline of Southampton.

"We are at sea," he said softly. "Anything can happen now."

He turned around, facing the other three. "We must keep in mind that we are not Egyptians, my brothers. One slip and we are done."

Hassan scowled. "I do not like it, Ali; posing as one of the unbelieving Sikh sticks in my throat like sand." His rasping voice did indeed indicate the presence of some kind of abrasive.

Ali scowled back. "Hassan, may I remind you that the recovery of the treasures of the Tomb of Khama-Ptah-hor-Amen III is a mission so high as to allow any means of attack, no matter how distasteful."

Mustapha, who was sitting on the edge of the bunk honing a long knife, said: "We need not carry it on too long. Three thrusts—" He jabbed the knife into the air in front of him. "—and they are done."

Haroun, the fourth of the pretended Sikhs shook his head. "Mustapha will never learn. We must proceed quietly and without murder—at least insofar as we can. To kill the infidels who have desecrated the tomb would be disastrous. We would be imprisoned and the relics would

reach New York in spite of our efforts."

"Haroun is right," said Ali. Kindly restrain yourself, Mustapha. If you had been successful in Cairo, all would have been well; we could have killed the infidels with impunity. But your stupid blunder has cost us much time and effort—to say nothing of money."

"How was I to know?" Mustapha said defensively. "I thought you said they were in Room 203 of the hotel."

"I very plainly said 302," Ali snapped. "When you found you were in the wrong room, you could have called me."

"But—but—what could I do? Using my well-known technique, I picked the lock of the room, tiptoed in, and raised my knife above the bed. Suddenly, the lights came on, and I saw a girl in the bed. She was a lovely French girl, very frightened. I knew then that I had made a mistake."

Hassan snorted. "Certainly. But what, in the name of Allah, took you *three hours* to get out of there?"

Mustapha smiled feebly. "I was busy," he said.

Ali's habitual scowl grew deeper. "By the Grace of

Allah, we have one more chance. We must not fail this time."

Ahnku the Ancient sat in his stateroom, puffing reflectively at his pipe. He looked at the heavily swathed figure in the wheelchair.

"Are you warm enough, Lord and Master?" he asked. He chuckled throatily when there was no answer. "Fear not, sire; Ahnku the Ancient will not fail you. What good to be a sorcerer without being able to serve one's Master?"

He stood up, his black eyes glittering. "I will make my Master cooler within the hour. For now, I shall but remove the blankets."

He did so, and then sat down again, puffing slowly at his pipe. "I have waited long for this. My magic is not as great as some have thought—though I dared not admit it to my enemies." He chuckled again, caressing his beak of a nose with one finger. "Indeed, I dared not tell my friends. But I am sure you understand, O Lord and Master. I have served you faithfully for years—ay, more than years. And I have not failed you yet.

"Nor will I fail you tonight. The jewels that are

rightfully yours shall belong again to you. Had I known where they were hidden, I would have had them for you long ago. But—" A tear ran down the wizened, hawk-nosed face. "—alas, I did not know. But tonight, my Lord and Master, that which is rightfully yours shall be returned." He wiped away the tear with a bony finger.

Linda Armitage smiled at her father. "Daddy, I respect your learning and all that, but I don't think your choice of husbands for me is very good."

Dr. Armitage made a steeple of his fingers and tapped his fingertips together rhythmically. "Linda, my dear," he said mildly, "Dr. Bingham is a very nice young man. Very intelligent. Very industrious."

Linda sighed. "But Daddy! He's a nice boy, I'll admit, but he—he's so—so *dull!* All he has his mind on is ancient Egypt!" His smile became softer. "Daddy, darling, he's a very smart boy; he has a great deal of intelligence. And that's why I couldn't marry him."

Dr. Armitage blinked. "I don't think I follow you."

Linda stood up, walked over to the brandy decanter

on the sideboard, and poured herself a drink. "He's too much like you, Daddy."

The Egyptologist watched her down the brandy neat. "You drink too fast, my dear; it will upset you. What do you mean, he's too much like me?"

Linda poured another, and her smile became a devilish grin. "Daddy, much as I love you, I do *not* have an Electra complex."

Her father blinked for a moment, then reddened. "Really, my dear! I—I'm shocked! Being on the stage in England hasn't done well for your morals, I'm sure! Why, you talk as though you were a loose woman!"

Smiling softly, Linda finished her second brandy and then walked over to her father. She patted him gently on his cheek and said: "Daddy, you're very wrong. I'm not going to be indignant, but believe me, you're wrong. "I can give you all sorts of testimony—from very respectable men—that I am not at all loose."

Dr. Armitage smiled a little, and adjusted the glasses on the bridge of his nose. "I'm sure you can, my dear. I didn't mean it at all that way. But I still think—"

"Daddy," she interrupted, "let's don't talk about Leslie.

I want to know how you did in Egypt. What sort of things did you find?"

Dr. Armitage leaned back in his chair and smiled. "My dear, I think you'll be very proud of me—and Leslie. We've discovered something wonderful. It's really one of the greatest things since the unearthing of the tomb of Tutankhamen, back in the Twenties." His smile grew even broader as he leaned forward conspiratorially. "My dear, I think we have found the original Belt of Osiris."

The girl looked thoughtful. "As I recall, that's the belt which is supposed to confer immortality on its wearer. It would be nice to have such a belt."

Dr. Armitage smiled. "My dear, this is not, of course, the mythical Belt of Osiris. But, if you will recall, a belt was made—a girdle, really—of gold and diamonds, which was supposed to be the symbol of kingship among the ancient Egyptians. It was a replica of the supposed Belt of Osiris, much as a cross in a church is a replica of the Cross of Christ. We do not, of course, believe that this belt is really the original Belt of Osiris."

Linda grinned. "Too bad. That Belt was supposed to have granted a lot of power to the person who wore it."

"Yes," agreed the Egyptologist, "it was supposed to confer, not only immortality, but the ability to—well—have—uh—tremendous physical and—uh—amorous powers."

Linda said: "Give it to Leslie; he needs it."

"Linda!"

Her smile was impish. "I'm sorry Daddy. By the way—can I see the sarcophagus? Do you really have the mummy of the great Pharaoh, Khama-Ptah-hor-Amen III down in the hold?"

"I certainly do, my dear. Would you care to see it? I have the key to the strong room in the hold."

"Let's go, Daddy! I've always wanted to see an ancient Egyptian prince in a nice, warm box."

Ahnku the Ancient fingered the key in his hand and smiled conspiratorially to himself. Not everyone could get a key to the strong room in the hold, but, a sorcerer had resources greater than the average man.

He moved silently along the corridors of the ship, taking care not to make any more noise than necessary.

At last, he stood before the strong room, deep beneath the waterline of the *Queen Victoria*. He looked up and down the corridors, then inserted the key into the lock.

It turned easily, and the door clicked open. Ahnku stepped inside, flicked on the light, and closed the door behind him.

It was a huge room, protected on all sides by heavy steel bulkheads. It was filled with heavy wooden cases and boxes of all sorts, kinds, and descriptions.

Ahnku rubbed his dry, old hands together. "Tonight, my Lord and Master, you will regain your birthright." He cackled fiendishly in glee. Then he gazed around. The room was gloomily illuminated, and the piles of boxes cast long shadows over everything.

For the first time since he had boarded the ship, Ahnku the ancient spoke English, a habit which he had fallen into for voicing ejaculations.

"Cripes! Where the hell's the old man's casket?"

He began prowling around the vast room.

Eventually, he found what he was looking for. The sarcophagus of King Khama-Ptah - hor - Amen III was against one bulkhead in the

gloomiest part of the strong room. Nearby lay a large golden chest.

"Ahaa!" the little, weasel-like man said. "AHAAAAA! The Treasure of the King!"

Pulling a golden key from his pocket, he inserted it into the keyhole and turned it. Then he lifted the lid of the golden chest. "If it isn't here," he muttered softly, "I shall kill—"

But he didn't finish the sentence. Before him, glittering warmly in the dim light, lay the fabulous diamond Belt of Osiris.

"Praise be to the Gods!" the little magician said, lifting the belt reverently. "The Belt is safe!"

Then he heard a noise. He jerked his head around swiftly. The noise had come from beyond the packing cases that were piled around him. Someone was coming in the door!

His next actions were rapid, but unhurried. He scuttled over to the sarcophagus of the king—a King of Egypt who had died thousands of years before—and opened the casket.

Carefully, he clasped the Belt of Osiris around the waist of the mummy within.

"They'll never find it there," he chortled.

Then, moving quickly, he

scuttled off into the shadowy protection offered by the piles of cases in the room.

"Down this way," Dr. Armitage said. "Follow me."

"I'm following," said his daughter. "If I could only find my way through all these cobwebs!" She coughed and brushed dust away from her eyes.

"They're not cobwebs, my dear. They've just loaded the ship, you know. It's merely dust that has—"

"Yes, father." She coughed again. "Where is this sarcophagus of yours stored?"

"It's over here, Linda." They made their way toward the bulkhead where the sculptured sarcophagus and the jewel-casket lay. Armitage pointed ahead, his eyes, in the dark, bright with excitement. "There!"

Despite herself, Linda felt a little tingle of anticipation as she spied the casket and sarcophagus. "Can you open them, Daddy?"

Dr. Armitage drew a flat leather case from his pocket. "Yes," he said. "Yes—after the greatest effort, we, Leslie and I, succeeded in finding the secret to the mechanism that opens and closes the casket and the sarcophagus."

A sliver of metal glinted in

his hand. "Here's the key," he said. "The only key to the jewel-casket of Khama-Ptah-hor-Amen III. You have no idea how lovely these treasures are, my dear. Lovely! Lovely beyond dreams!"

"Does the same key open the sarcophagus?"

"Yes—but it's a slightly different technique. I'll show you. Here—let's open the sarcophagus first, shall we?"

He slid the key into an aperture at the side of the sarcophagus, and began to move his wrist. She glanced at him uneasily.

"Dad?"

"Yes, Linda?"

"I'd rather see the jewels," she said, moistening her dry lips. "I'm—not so terribly interested in the mummy after all."

Armitage looked at her, then chuckled. "But—but Linda, the mummy's perfectly harmless! Don't be foolish, my dear! Why—"

He caught a glimpse of her nervous face and chuckled again. "Very well." He drew the key out of the unopened sarcophagus and handed it to Linda. "Here—the pleasure is all yours, dear. You may open the jewel-casket, if you like."

She took the key from him and walked to the casket.

Armitage rubbed his hand lovingly along the rim of the sarcophagus, feeling a warm glow of pride. After years of work in the field, *this* was his great discovery; *this* was his crowning achievement.

"I'm having trouble with the key, Daddy," Linda said unhappily. "How do you work it?"

"I'll be right over," Armitage said dreamily, still lost in contemplation. As he started to walk toward her, he glanced down at his foot. A scarab-shaped amethyst lay there, sparkling brightly against the dull black of the deck.

Curious, he thought. *What's that doing there?*

Then he stooped and picked the jewel up, his heart beating faster. The amethyst *had* no business being there—none at all!

Hastily, he crossed the few feet that separated him from the jewel-box, snatched the key from Linda. "Great heavens! Something must have happened!"

With trembling fingers he fumbled the box open and peered down. He stared for a long moment.

"What's the matter, Daddy? Something wrong?"

"Yes," he said somberly.

"The Belt! The Belt of Osiris —it's gone!"

"How horrible! But you said yours was the only key!"

"I know," Armitage said. He looked around the strong-room frantically, staring at the scarab in his hand—the scarab that must have fallen from the Belt of Osiris.

"You wait here," he said. "I'll have to see the Captain about this. That Belt was priceless — simply priceless! I'll have to see the Captain!"

"But Daddy!"

Linda called a third time, but saw there was no point in calling again. Dr. Armitage had rushed out—leaving her alone in the dank, musty hold!

That was just like Daddy, she thought, once the surprise of being left alone had worn off. Leaving her alone like this, all because of some missing trinket. The hold was a nasty, unpleasant place, and there were strange creakings someplace near the back.

Rats, she thought, with a little shudder. Rats. Every ship had rats in the hold. Un- easily she glanced down at her trim ankles as if expecting to see a beady-eyed little rodent nibbling at her at that very instant.

The creaking continued. Linda didn't like it, not at all.

Nervously, she tiptoed back to the jewel-casket and lifted its lid. She peered in.

The jewels were lovely. There was a single immense ruby, carved in a multitude of facets and seeming to glow with a deep, warm inner light. There was a jewel-en- crusted coronet which she lifted out tenderly and placed around her head. After a mo- ment, she returned it to the box.

There were other gems there too. The casket was probably worth millions— and Daddy, she thought rue- fully, would give it all to the museum at the University, to be put behind glass for peo- ple to gape at.

Creak-k-k!

Linda glanced up in alarm. It seemed to her as if a crate at the bar corner of the hold had moved, somehow. For a moment, she thought she saw a faint, shadowy shape glid- ing between the packing- cartons.

Just my imagination, she decided firmly. The ship's probably rolling, that's all.

Creak-k-k-k!

This time it couldn't be imagination. She felt her heart pounding furiously. Dropping the diadem she was holding, back into the box, she closed the lid and spun on her

heel, making a complete 360-degree examination of the hold. It seemed to be empty. It *seemed* to be.

I wish Daddy would get back, she thought.

Creak-k-k-k-k-k!

She turned again—and glanced at the sarcophagus.

And gasped.

The massive lid of the ancient coffin was rising, slowly, unbelievably, beyond any shred of doubt.

She stood there, rooted to the deck, watching in terror as the lid moved upward. In the half-gloom, she could make out a figure within the sarcophagus—the white, bandage-swathed figure of—of—

In could only be the mummy. It was sitting up now, one arm clinging to the outside of the sarcophagus, pulling itself to a standing position.

Linda didn't wait. She screamed, once, sharply, and then turned and fled. Her heels clattered over the deck as she ran through the strong room and out into the dim corridor. Behind her, the creaking grew louder.

Lady Blessingame (of the Stratfordshire Blessingames) stepped out into the corridor beyond the door of her stateroom, smiling superciliously.

If Lord Blessingame was silly enough to allow her to travel to America, there was no reason why she should not take advantage of it.

The sun had dropped beyond the western horizon, and moonlight had fallen over the ship. It was really *terribly* romantic, Lady Blessingame thought.

The corridor, while not brightly lighted, was well filled with dim yellow-orange light, which permitted her to see easily the thing that approached her.

It was a tall, shambling figure, covered with rotting linen bandages, and smelling of the dust of an ancient tomb.

Lady Blessingame stared in shock at the horrifying figure, and suddenly collapsed to the deck.

Adelaide Dorensen closed the door of a stateroom. Just before the door closed, she pulled it open just a bit and said: "Orrie Vorre, shweety."

"You mean *au revoir*," said First Officer Pinkin, within the cabin.

"Thash Fr e c h — er — French," said the blonde-haired Adelaide. "Anyhow, thanksh for the champagne—and all."

She closed the door and walked carefully down the companionway. "Great stuff,

champagne," she said gleefully to herself. "Really great stuff."

She stopped, suddenly, as someone approached her down the companionway. She peered carefully at the figure.

"Watcha matter witchoo?" she asked. Then, realizing that her diction was hardly up to par, she restated the question. "Watsa matter with yew? Wats alla bandages for?"

Then the unmistakable odor of decaying cloth came to her, and Miss Adelaide Dorensen remembered the horror stories of her childhood.

She turned around quickly, jerked open the door of the First Officer's stateroom, and pushed herself inside.

"Migod!" she said blankly to the astonished Pinkin, "The Mummy Walks Again!"

First Officer Pinkin sat up in his bunk. "I beg your pardon, Miss Dorensen?"

Miss Dorensen looked absolutely stupid and slid to the floor. She was out colder than an Antarctic iceberg.

Lieutenant - Colonel Sir Stephen Lendrip, having spent a comfortable evening gazing at the sea and smoking his favorite briar, decided to go below. In his hand he car-

ried his walking-stick, a weapon which had stood him in good stead for many a year. It contained a long-bladed knife—almost the equivalent of a Roman short-sword.

Against an unarmed man, Sir Stephen would never use the stick sword, but many years as commanding officer of the Eleventh Hussars had made him aware of the fact that an armed man could easily be overwhelmed by a determined man. The stick was a comfort in crisis.

He stepped down the ladder toward the lower deck, and, swinging his stick joyfully, he headed toward his stateroom.

He turned a corner, and was suddenly confronted with a gentleman clad entirely in gauze bandages. He collided violently with the figure and then stepped back.

"I say, old man; you could at least whistle!"

The bandaged figure stepped back, too.

Then Sir Stephen whipped out his sword. He saw what it was that stood before him, and, in spite of his horror, he lunged forward with the blade.

The wrapped thing stepped back quickly, and, in doing so, almost collided with a dark figure behind it. The

point of the blade narrowly missed the figure's abdomen.

Sir Stephen stepped forward again, this time aiming his point at the thing's throat. The thing moved with lightning-like speed. Its hand came up, palm first, and deflected the blade. Then its fist lashed out, slamming against Sir Stephen's jaw with skull-shattering force.

Sir Stephen went down for the count.

Dr. Avery Armitage ran up the spiral ladder to the upper deck at top speed. He reached the deck and looked around. Where was he? He

could smell the faintly fishy odor of salt air—

In the moonlight he saw the deck around him, and, looking up, he saw the bridge deck.

Galloping across the main deck, he ran up the ladder.

Captain Humphrey Boggs stood on his bridge—monarch of all he surveyed. He thrust out his lower lip, patted his bulging abdomen and said: "A bit to starboard, young man. You're half a point off."

The helmsman was just complying with the order when a clopping sound was

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THE MUMMY TAKES A WIFE

(Continued from page 22)

heard on the stairway leading up to the bridge.

Captain Boggs swung around briskly and glared at the intruder. "No passengers allowed on the bridge!" he shouted. Then, in a quieter tone, "Oh, it's you, Dr. Armitage. What is it?"

Dr. Armitage took a deep gasp. "The jewels! They've been stolen! Come! Call the police!"

The Captain tried to tell the flustered Dr. Armitage that there were no police aboard, but he was drowned out by cries of: "Call the Army! Call the Marines!"

Captain Boggs drew a deep breath. "QUIET!" he bellowed, with a lung power that seemed to shake the ship. He took another deep breath, and this time his voice softened to a low roar. "I'll call out the British Merchant Marine, Dr. Armitage. Will that be quite enough?"

The Egyptologist nodded his head. "Certainly, Captain. But we must hurry quickly! The Belt of Osiris has been stolen! Someone has broken into the strong room!"

Captain Boggs opened his mouth, then snapped it shut. Then he reached for the ship's phone. "First Officer Pinkin! Report to the strong

room! I'll be there in half a minute, and by Gad, sir, you'd best be there before me!"

He turned to Dr. Armitage. "Come along, Doctor!" He started down the ladder toward the hold.

First Officer Pinkin was still buttoning his jacket as he rushed up to the strong room. He came to a full halt just as he finished the last button.

The Captain and Dr. Armitage were waiting for him.

"Mr. Pinkin was formerly with Scotland Yard," the Captain said brusquely. "Let's go in." He tried the door. It swung smoothly open. "By Gad! It is open!"

The three men stepped inside and walked around the mounds of packing cases to the place where the sarcophagus lay.

"Here's the jewel-casket," Armitage said. Pinkin and the Captain gathered around as Armitage lifted the lid.

"Shouldn't it be locked?" Captain Boggs asked.

"It should be," said Armitage. "I unlocked it to show the jewels to my daughter, and—" He paused, and looked around. "Hmm, that's funny. I'm sure I left my daughter down here someplace."

"There's no one down here but us," Captain Boggs pointed out impatiently. "About these jewels—"

"Linda!" Armitage called, ignoring the Captain. "Linda, are you down here?" There was no answer. The Egyptologist shrugged. "I guess she must have left. Well, now, the jewels."

He drew out a handful of the casket's treasures and let the two officers gaze at them. "You see, gentlemen, the most important thing of all is not here—the Belt of Osiris! It's of untold value, and it's—it's not here! It was missing when my daughter and I opened the casket, just a little while ago." He frowned and stroked his chin. "She could tell you more about it. Only—where *is* she?"

The Captain frowned. "Yes, a good question. What if your daughter made off with your precious belt? It must be a pretty bauble for a girl, you know!"

"Captain! I couldn't believe—that is—no. I had the only key."

"Someone took the belt," Pinkin reminded.

Captain Boggs coughed noisily and folded his arms. "Dr. Armitage, I wish to point out one important fact

to you. The chest and the sarcophagus were registered aboard this ship—but not their contents, Dr. Armitage."

"What?" Armitage's eyes widened in outrage. "But the casket contained jewels of incalculable value—and then there's the mummy! The mummy, gentlemen!"

Boggs smirked. "Look here, Doctor. Those jewels may be worth a king's ransom—but I still don't know a thing about them, officially. Why, for all I know there's no mummy in that coffin and there never *was* a Belt of Osiris in that casket!"

Armitage scowled. "You're being most unfair, Captain Boggs." He produced the key to the sarcophagus with an impressive flourish. "Before we go any further, let me demonstrate."

He strode to the sarcophagus and inserted the key. After a few moments of exploratory turning and twisting, he tried to lift the lid.

"Odd," he said, half to himself. "It doesn't lift. I must have locked it instead of unlocking it. Just a moment more, gentlemen."

He diddled with the key a second time, and now there was a sudden click and the lid loosened.

"Give me a hand with this, will you?" Armitage ordered in tones of surprising bluntness. "It's rather heavy."

Pinkin and the Captain fell to in spite of themselves and grasped the rim of the sarcophagus.

"Heave!" Armitage ordered.

They heaved. The lid swung back.

"Very interesting, Dr. Armitage," Captain Boggs said slowly. "Very interesting."

"Yes, very," echoed Pinkin.

With unbelieving eyes Armitage peered over the rim.

The sarcophagus was as empty as a church on Monday. The precious belt and mummy completely vanished.

Larry Levine was lying in bed the next morning, reflectively smoking a fine Turkish cigarette—he despised Egyptian tobacco—when the door flew open.

Instinctively his hand started to slide toward the .38 under the pillow, but he stopped when he saw it was only Pussyfoot O'Shaughnessy.

"You better knock the next time," Levine said. "Unless you want your head removed by accident."

"Sorry, boss."

Levine glared.

"Oh—sorry, Larry," O'Shaughnessy corrected.

"That's better. Now, what's the hurry about?"

"Crazy story, Larry. Thought I'd better tell you the pitch—and don't laugh, huh?"

"I'm not laughing," Levine said. "What goes?"

"The mummy," said O'Shaughnessy. "The mummy goes. All around the ship. It ain't in the coffin any more. It was creepin' around all last night, Larry!"

Levine smiled coldly. "I told you to stay off that stuff, Pussyfoot. Why don't you stick to dames instead? *That's* habit-forming too, and it doesn't make you half as hop-headed. Honest, Pussyfoot."

"I told you not to laugh at me, Larry. This thing is big." O'Shaughnessy wiped perspiration from his brow with a ham-like hand. "Seems some dame saw the mummy all wrapped in gauze, and some other guy, and—"

The door opened a second time, and Manetti entered.

"Guess what, Larry?"

"You just saw a mummy walking?"

"No, but—hey, how did you know?"

Levine sat up in bed. "Now look, you two. Are you going to sit here and tell me that

that mummy came to life and is strolling around the deck?"

Manetti nodded gravely. "That's what they're saying, Larry. It happened late last night."

"Any official comment?"

"Nobody's seen any of the brass all morning," Manetti said. "The thing *must* have gotten loose."

Levine climbed out of the bed and got into his lounging robe, scratching his chin reflectively. "Yeah," he said after a pause. "Something fishy must be happening, if the brass isn't around."

He turned to face the other two. "Have you been downstairs?"

"We couldn't get there, Larry. There's a guard in the corridor."

"Oh?" Levine lifted an eyebrow. "Something funny, I'll bet. And those jewels are sitting down there—or are *they* walking around too?"

"No word about them," O'Shaughnessy said. "Want me to try to get another peek?"

"No," Levine said. "No percentage in that." He nibbled at his lip for a moment. "I think I got a better idea. One that shows a little thinkin' at least."

"What's on the fire, boss?"

"You'll find out. Get me

that first-aid kit, Pussyfoot."

"Huh? You feeling all right, boss—Larry?"

"Get me the first-aid kit," Levine repeated. "And then get out of here and see how much extra gauze you can scrape up."

O'Shaughnessy nodded bewilderedly. Levine turned to Manetti, and smiled. "Little Joe, I have plans for you. Will you kindly remove your clothing? This is going to take a lot of time."

Dr. Avery Armitage awoke the next morning with an unusual glow running through his veins. There was excitement afoot! Heigh-ho!

He leaped out of bed, took a quick cold shower, dressed in his best, and strolled down the companionway that led toward the main deck ladder.

He was whistling joyfully as he walked by his daughter's cabin. The door opened.

"Oh, pardon me, sir," said Linda. "I thought—" Then her eyes opened widely. "Daddy! It *is* you!"

Dr. Armitage stopped and smiled widely. "Why, of course it's me! Who the hell did you expect? The Archbishop of Canterbury? Piphoo, my dear! Have a good breakfast!"

He did not notice his

daughter's astonished gaze, which followed him down the companionway.

He stuck his hands in his pockets and sang softly to himself as he neared the ladder.

"It seems there was a man
in love,
A man who was a
member of
The Royal High Dragoons.
In searching for his lady's
locket,
He put his hand within
his pocket,
And there he found some
pr—"

He came to stop halfway up the stair and looked at what he had found in his own pocket. Then he grinned.

"Well, well! The amethyst scarab from the Belt of Osiris!" He put it back where he had found it. "The hell with it!" he chortled.

Lady Blessingame blinked in amazement as the extraordinarily handsome man strode toward her. Without quite knowing what she did, she stepped toward him and said: "My dear sir! Are you dining at the Captain's table?"

The singularly handsome gentleman bowed. "I am, my

lady. How fortunate that we have already met!"

Somewhat taken aback, her ladyship said: "But—we have? I—I mean—have we?"

"Certainly, my dear," said the gentleman, winking slyly, "I am Dr. Armitage."

She looked at him and blinked. There was a definite resemblance to the little, washed-out man she had met briefly the day before, but—

"My dear lady!" said Dr. Armitage, "Are you sure you want breakfast? Wouldn't there be something else that you would prefer?"

Lady Blessingame, dazzled, smiled. "Why—why, yes. A—a bit of champagne, perhaps? I have some in my cabin."

"An excellent idea," said the Egyptologist.

Lady Blessingame had married Lord Blessingame when she was only seventeen. His lordship had been thirty-seven. And now that she had reached thirty, Lady Blessingame did not look upon a man of fifty as being in the prime of life. As a matter of fact, his lordship had never reached that happy state—he had never been in the prime of life.

And Lady Blessingame had been looking for a younger man for some years now. She

felt she had found him in Dr. Armitage.

As they entered the state-room, Lady Armitage smiled feebly. "Actually, my dear Doctor, I have no champagne. Perhaps we had better—"

"Perhaps we had," smiled Dr. Armitage, stepping forward.

Within a few moments, her ladyship had no doubts about the Egyptologist. His hands seemed to do unusual things, and his kisses were like hot wine against her mouth.

As though she had been struck by high-voltage electricity, her body went into frenzied motion.

"Avery!" she gasped some time later. "You're wonderful! Ah, my dear, youth is wonderful!"

"Youth, hell!" said the doctor gleefully. "I'm sixty-seven!"

The cool ocean breezes drifted in saltily as Linda stared over the rail. She was puzzled.

The diamond belt had disappeared. The mummy had disappeared. Her father was acting as if he'd just found the fountain of youth, and no one aboard ship was saying anything about anything.

"You look puzzled, Linda."

"Oh—it's you, Leslie."

Bingham joined her at the rail. "Yes. Me. Leslie. Hello, Linda."

"Hello, Leslie," she said abstractedly, without turning.

"What's the trouble, Linda?"

"Nothing," she said. "Really, nothing."

He stepped a little closer to her. "I've been meaning to talk to you about that scatter-brained conversation the other day. All I meant was—"

"There's no need to explain, Leslie. I've always felt very fond of you—like a brother, you might say."

"That's exactly it," he said glumly. "Now, why can't we—"

"The breeze is very pleasant this morning," said a deep, warm voice suddenly. Bingham looked up in irritation at the bronzed, powerful man who had abruptly appeared at Linda's left.

"Yes, it is," Linda said.

"I don't believe we've met," Bingham said coldly.

"Muhammid ibn Abdul, of Alexandria."

"Leslie Bingham, of Arkham. And this is Miss Linda Armitage."

"We've met," Muhammid said.

"Oh? I didn't know that," Linda said, surprised.

Muhammid grinned, show-

ing flashing white teeth. "We passed each other in the hallway, the first day. I was in a wheelchair, with my servant Ahnku attending me."

"I remember now."

"Yes. I was—suffering from an ailment. An allergy to fog—an ailment which I do not expect to be troubled with again. But I am happy to meet you under more pleasant circumstances, Miss Armitage. I've seen you from a distance several times, and—if you'll pardon my saying so—I have wished each time that the distance between us was less."

Linda reddened prettily, while Bingham scowled. He didn't care for the way this conversation was going, at all.

"We were just considering going for a swim," Bingham said. "Weren't we, Linda? Let's be on our way."

"Why, that's a wonderful idea! Would you care to join us, Mr. Abdul?"

"Call me M u h a m m i d , please. Why, yes, I'd be happy to join you. I understand the ship's pool is one of the wonders of the world. We shall get into our bathing suits now?"

"Fine," Linda said. Muhammad made a courtly bow and strode away toward the

companionway. Linda turned to Bingham.

"He's quite interesting, isn't he?"

"I didn't think so," Bingham said.

"You wouldn't. Well, why don't you go down to get your suit, Leslie?"

"I don't think I'll join you," Bingham said, in a strangled voice. "I wouldn't want to cut in on what looks like it's becoming a private party."

Bingham stood alone on the deck for a few moments, clenching and unclenching his fists in miserable frustration. Who was this Muhammad, anyway, that he could come along and turn Linda's head like that? He could see from the glow in her eyes that the girl was hooked.

Unless—

Unless he, Leslie Bingham, could do something to redeem himself, something to prove to Linda that he was more than just a mediocre Egyptologist. Hastily he dashed downstairs to his cabin.

A few minutes later he had wound himself completely in gauze. Stealthily, he made his way down through the dim recesses of the ship toward the strong room in the hold.

The sarcophagus was empty, its lid standing stiffly

upright. Near it, the jewel-casket lay, similarly available. The jewels had long since been taken to the Captain's safe for custody, at Bingham's suggestion — Dr. Armitage seemed more concerned with capering around with Lady Blessingame than with recovering the jeweled belt, and so Bingham had taken charge, to a small extent. Someone had to find it.

Well, now it would be to a greater extent, he thought determinedly. Wrapping his gauze swathings around him more securely, he hoisted one leg, then another, over the rim of the sarcophagus and climbed in.

He stretched out full length and made himself as comfortable as possible. The jewel thief would be back for another haul before long—and this time Leslie Bingham would be on the spot to nab him.

Five minutes passed. Ten. Then Bingham heard noises.

"Hey, Phil—didn't someone go into the hold?"

"How do I know? Fine guard you are."

Bingham smiled. It was the pair of guards who had been posted on the strong room but who had wandered off somewhere while Bingham had slipped in.

"Let's go inside and check," the first voice said.

"Okay," said the other.

Footsteps approached. Bingham, in the sarcophagus, lay very still, breathing as shallowly as possible. He heard the two men getting closer.

"There is no one in here, Phil."

"Naw. It's okay. How's the mummy-box?"

"Still empty, as far as I know. Unless he got tired of walking around, and—*awk!*"

The guard's statement ended in a high-pitched shriek, and then there was the sound of two men fleeing rapidly over the deck floor and out of the hold. Puzzled, Bingham forced himself to lie still, wondering what would happen next.

Joe Manetti was perspiring inside the sheath of gauze Larry Levine had wound around him. *I feel like a damned cocoon*, he thought bitterly, as he tiptoed toward the hold.

He paused at the entrance. There were voices coming from inside. The guards, no doubt. He fought back the impulse to flee, then smiled and walked on. Levine's plan was a good one. Even if the guards *were* there, the mum-

my outfit would send them packing. And then it would be a simple matter to walk in and scoop up the rest of those jewels.

Two men appeared to view as he stepped inside. And the expected happened. They goggled, screamed, and ran wildly past him up the stairs.

Manetti chuckled. It had worked beautifully—but he'd have to hurry now. Inside, scoop up the jewels, and beat it. He stepped in and looked around.

There was the sarcophagus, and near it the jewel-casket—both of them open. *This place gives me the creeps*, Manetti thought.

He crossed the deck to the jewel-casket in a couple of big bounds, and stuck his hands in.

Nothing.

The jewel - casket was empty.

Manetti cursed, vividly and explicitly. "Someone got here first, the crook!" he said loudly. "Who'd do a lousy thing like that?"

Angrily, he turned and started to leave. Then it was his turn to gasp. Standing in the doorway, advancing slowly toward him, moving with measured, even stride—was a figure in white gauze.

"Cripes, it's the real mum-

my!" Manetti mumbled. The gauze-clad figure started to move ominously toward the frightened crook. Without even thinking, Manetti grabbed the heavy jewel-casket and hurled it at the approaching figure. There was a sickening *crunch* as the casket collided with the mummy's skull.

"I guess I killed him," Manetti said. His legs started to quiver. It was one thing to plug a man in fair fight; it was another to crack a mummy's skull with a jewel-box. There was talk about curses, and such things. Manetti wasn't very happy.

Not quite knowing what to do next, he shifted his feet uncertainly, and found himself facing the sarcophagus—

From which another white-clad figure was in the process of rising.

"More mummies!" Manetti cried, in a shriek of despair. Screaming wildly, he bolted through the door and dashed madly back to the safety of his cabin.

Leslie Bingham climbed out of the sarcophagus and scratched his forehead. Something funny had evidently been going on, climaxed in a fight of some sort. There had definitely been the sound of a

heavy object striking someone, and—

Yes. Over there, in the corner. Bingham saw a figure clad much like himself, in the white gauze wrappings of a mummy. Only this mummy was lying in a pool of blood, its skull crushed under the weight of the heavy jewel-casket.

Quickly Bingham knelt at the figure's side and ripped away the gauze. A dark, beady-eyed face glared back at him, the eyes fierce even in death. It was an unmistakably Egyptian face.

P o o r Khama - Ptah - hor-

Amen III, Bingham thought wildly. That's what he gets for climbing out of his sarcophagus and wandering around. Now he's deader than he was before.

Then Bingham had another thought. *I've got to tell everybody about this.*

He let the corpse's head drop to the deck and raced through the door, yelling loudly for the Captain, Dr. Armitage, Linda, and almost everybody else on board.

Linda Armitage was in love. She stood before the mirror in her cabin for a long



Everybody wanted to pound lumps on the mummy
—or whoever else was handy.

moment, stretching her nude body luxuriously, watching with a critical eye the swell of her breasts and the lean, flat curve of her belly.

I'm beautiful, she thought suddenly, without any feeling of conceit. It was a simple fact. And she loved Muhammad, and Muhammad would love her.

Slowly she climbed into her bathing-suit, felt the plastic tighten around her body, and stepped out into the corridor. She decided to go to Muhammad's stateroom, to meet him there and accompany him up for their swim.

The walk was a short one, and she stood outside his room, ready to knock. Then she heard voices from within.

"—Master, I tell you there's no harm in it. You've been operating under your own steam for days now; the belt is no longer effective, or at least it's not necessary."

"Dammit, Ahnku, I'm afraid," said Muhammad's rich voice. "I don't want to take the thing off, even for a swim. Can't you understand me?"

"Yes, yes, Master," said a voice she recognized as Ahnku's. "But your fears are groundless. The Belt of Osiris is no longer necessary!"

The Belt of Osiris! Linda

caught her breath sharply. So Muhammad had it, and *he* was the thief.

Or was he? Linda hovered at the door, not knowing what she should do. Should she find her father and denounce Muhammad—

No.

She threw the door open instead. Muhammad was standing in the middle of the floor, wearing a pair of skintight swimming-trunks. Above the waistline, against his bronzed body, gleamed the jeweled brightness of the Belt of Osiris.

"Linda! What are you doing here?"

Her lower lip quivered. "I heard you talking about the Belt," she said. "That Belt belongs to my father. I want to know what you're doing with it—and why."

Muhammad grinned broadly. "That Belt does *not* belong to your father. It belongs to me."

"What?"

He chuckled. "Come. Close the door so no extra ears can hear us, and I'll explain everything."

Gasping for breath, Leslie Bingham dashed up the spiral staircase and out onto the main recreation deck. There was the Captain, and several

of the other guests, playing a relaxed game of shuffleboard as if nothing special at all had been happening aboard ship. As he ran frantically toward them, he noticed that there was no sign of Armitage and Lady Blessingame, or of Linda and Muhammid.

Someone screamed. Then another.

"Yikes!" shouted Sir Stephen Landrip. He reached for his sword cane, and then remembered what had happened to him the last time he had encountered the mummy, and precipitously galloped off down the deck without his stick shouting: "It's here! It's here! Run for your lives!"

"Wait!" Bingham yelled. But his voice was drowned out in the general confusion.

Then someone grabbed him by the shoulder. It was one of the Sikhs. "Mustapha! You fool! What happened? Have you bungled again? You were supposed to—"

At that point, two sailors, having decided that, supernatural or not, the mummy would have to be downed, leaped on Bingham's back.

"Fear not, Mustapha!" shouted Ali. "We shall save you! Haroun! Hassan!"

Two more phony Sikhs

came up the ladder from below. They took one look and charged in to Bingham's assistance.

Meanwhile, some of the other sailors, having seen that the mummy was rather easily overpowered, took heart and leaped into the fray themselves. Sir Stephen came to a dead halt and then ran back, cursing himself inwardly for being a fool.

Hassan had whipped out a long, wicked-looking scimitar, and, charging in, was about to decapitate one of the sailors.

"*Allah il'allah akbar!*" he shouted.

But Sir Stephen was there before him, sword in hand. The weapons clashed, and the duel was on. Here, Sir Stephen was in his element as he brandished the sword.

The scimitar, having been parried, slashed sideways across Bingham. Bingham screeched as the keen edge sliced through gauze and trousers, narrowly missing Bingham himself.

Sir Richard pressed his advantage, and Hassan soon found himself backing away from the Englishman's onslaught. He could scarcely move his own blade fast enough to defend himself. Back and back he went, amid

the vicious ring of steel on steel.

Suddenly, the Englishman's blade leaped out in a fast thrust. Hassan parried it and leaped back. Something hit him in the small of his back, and he felt his feet leave the deck as he toppled backwards.

Sir Stephen looked over the rail at the spot in the sea where Hassan had vanished. "Coward! he snapped. "Running off just as it was getting good."

Then he turned and headed back into the melee. But it was too late—the fight was over. Haroun and Ali had been clubbed down, and the mummy was hanging limply between two sailors.

Someone was pounding on Larry Levine's door.

"Larry! For Krissake, lemme in!" It was Little Joe.

Larry flung open the door and Joe, still swathed in gauze bandages, propelled himself through it. "Help! The place is full of mummies! Walking dead men all over the place!"

"What are you talking about?" Mr. Levine asked. "Did you get the jewels?"

"No," Joe confessed, "the box was empty. I threw it at a mummy, and then another one climbed out of the coffin.

It—it—" Recalling the horror of the moment, Little Joe Manetti rolled up his eyes and keeled over in a dead faint.

"There is definitely something screwy here, O'Shaughnessy," said Levine. "If the jewels aren't there, they must be in the Captain's safe."

"It figures," agreed the Irishman. "Yep, it figures."

He bent over the prostrate Manetti, grasped one arm in a hamlike hand and callously dragged the little man over to a bunk and heaved him in.

Larry Levine was checking the chambers in his .38 revolver. "Come, O'Shaughnessy; wake him up and get your Betsy. There is work to be done."

Dr. Armitage heard the rap at his door, but he did not immediately answer. His lips were effectively silenced by the hot, moist mouth of Lady Blessingame.

The knock came again, and Dr. Armitage disengaged himself. "Who is it?"

"Me. Leslie Bingham, Dr. Armitage," said a small, weak voice.

Armitage unlocked the door. "What is it, my boy? what gives, hey?" he said, beaming jovially. Then he took a closer look. "Good Gad,

boy! You look horrible! What happened to you?"

Bingham stepped inside, smiled feebly at Lady Blessingame, and told his story.

"—and now," he finished, "I don't have any pants to wear." He had been holding his hands behind him, trying to keep the trousers together where the sword of Hassan had split them.

"Of course they apologized when they found out who you were?" Lady Blessingame asked.

"Well, yes." Leslie Bingham felt a little embarrassed, but he could hardly keep his eyes off the lush figure of Lady Blessingame.

"No trousers?" said Dr. Armitage. "Where are your others?"

"Being cleaned," said Bingham, unhappily. "I can't get them for an hour yet. May I borrow yours?"

"Mine are in the cleaners, too. Hmmm. I'll tell you what; Muriel—" He gestured at Lady Blessingame. "—and I are going for a dip in the ship's pool. You can wear the pants I have on."

"For a swim?" Bingham looked astonished. "Dr. Armitage, don't you care *anything* about the jewels and the mummy?"

Dr. Armitage was busily

removing his trousers. "*Tush*, my dear boy; what do I care for such things when I have Muriel?"

Bingham groaned.

Five minutes later, Bingham, nattily clad in Armitage's trousers, stepped out on the deck. The trousers were a good fit—he and Armitage were about the same general build—but there was something uncomfortably banging against his thigh at every step.

He reached into his pocket to see what the strange object could be, and pulled out the scarab that had fallen from the Belt of Osiris.

He looked at it curiously for a moment, shrugged, and dropped it back in the pocket. Dr. Armitage was probably keeping it there for some fairly good reason, he thought. Or was he? Armitage was acting very peculiar—*very* peculiar.

The salt breeze hit him as he stepped outside. He paused for a moment, and smiled. He felt different, somehow. Was it the fresh air? No, that wasn't it. It was something else, some feeling of vitality and power that he had never known before.

New thoughts ran through his head. *Armitage has the*

right idea, letting everything go by like that. He's got a pretty woman, and isn't that all that really matters?

Bingham glanced around, new determination in his mild eyes. "Where's Linda?" he demanded out loud. "Has anyone seen Linda Armitage?"

"Not lately," said a voice behind him.

He turned and saw the blonde, curvaceous form of Adelaide Dorensen. She had been swimming too, apparently. Beads of water gleamed brightly on her tanned body.

"Hello," he said, staring at her as if he had never seen a woman before. At that moment, Adelaide Dorensen was the most desirable creature that walked the Earth, in Leslie Bingham's eyes.

"You're Dr. B i n g h a m , aren't you?"

"That's right."

"I almost didn't recognize you," she said, undulating toward him. "You look so—*different*, somehow. So *vibrant*."

Bingham stepped closer to her and felt her warm body against his. All thoughts of Linda vanished swiftly and permanently from his mind.

In his cabin, Captain Boggs was busily making entries in the log when a loud triple-

knock at the door interrupted him. He looked up, annoyed at having visitors while he was trying to get the details of the entire complicated mishmash of the past day down on paper. Mummies that wouldn't stay put, stolen jewels, dried-up archaeologists suddenly turning into lady-killers—Captain Boggs shook his head wearily and got up to answer the door.

He opened it and jumped back. A figure stood there, wrapped in the by-now familiar gauze vestments of a mummy. Only there was a coldly gleaming .38 revolver in the mummy's hand this time.

"Good morning, Captain," the mummy said, in the unmistakable accents of Larry Levine. "May we come in?"

Boggs backed away and allowed the mummy to enter. Behind him marched two other gauze-clad figures. Manetti and O'Shoughnessy, no doubt. They carried guns too. One of them turned to cover the doorway, and the other two faced the Captain.

"What do you want?" Boggs demanded.

"My treasure," the first mummy said in a sepulchral voice. "I demand my treasure."

"What kind of nonsense is

this, Levine?" Boggs said impatiently. "Why the masquerade? I can recognize your accent a knot away."

"All right, then, Captain. I won't play games. I know you've got that Egyptian treasure locked up here someplace, and I want you to hand it over—fast."

"Suppose I don't?"

"Suppose you do," Levine said, gesturing with the .38. He extended a hand, gauze-wrapped palm upward. "Hand it over."

Captain Boggs scowled. He didn't want to do it—it was robbery on the high seas—but there wasn't any way of arguing with a trio of .38s. He turned and began to fumble with the ship's safe.

A few moments of twisting and the tumblers fell into place. The safe door swung open, and Boggs reached down to haul out the jewels. Hesitatingly he complied.

"You needn't bother doing that, Captain," said a new voice. "Everything is quite under control."

Boggs glanced over his shoulder and saw Levine still standing with one hand outstretched, and behind him his two henchmen maintained their positions. A fourth figure was moving swiftly among them, collecting the

guns that hung from their nerveless fingers.

"What's this, Ahnku?"

The beady-eyed little man smiled apologetically. "A little well-timed sorcery, *mon capitain*. Under the circumstances I couldn't see what else to do. These jewels have been involved in enough sacrilege, without adding the ignominy of an armed robbery."

"What did you do to them?" Boggs asked.

"Merely persuaded them to stand still. They'll remain like statues until the time comes to hand them to the proper authorities."

"You mean—"

Boggs didn't get a chance to finish the sentence. The cabin door flew open and Avery Armitage came rushing in, nearly bowling over the unseeing figure of Lou Manetti as he did so.

Armitage looked like a man who had awakened after a long slumber and suddenly discovered that doomsday had come in the interval.

"What's been happening on this ship?" he demanded. "Where's the Belt of Osiris? Where's the mummy?"

He stopped, aghast, and looked at the three mute figures in various postures here

and there in the Captain's cabin.

"Who are these?" he asked in a subdued voice.

"A trio of cheap gangsters," Boggs explained. "They've been causing all the trouble around here, dressing up as mummies. They're the ones who kept frightening passengers, who murdered that other fake mummy in the hold, who stole your precious Belt—"

"Where's the Belt?" Armitage said. "Where is it?"

"We'll find it when we search their cabin, undoubtedly," said Boggs.

"Oh, no we won't. They don't have the Belt at all!"

Armitage turned and saw his daughter appear, leading the towering figure of Muhammad ibn Abdul by one hand.

"Linda! Where have you been all this time?"

"I've been around, Daddy. But I could ask *you* the same question!"

Armitage passed a hand wearily in front of his eyes. "I've—I've—it's hard to say, dear. But how do you know these three men don't have the Belt?"

"Because *I* do," Muhammad said, in his vibrant, deep voice. "I've had it all along."

"*You?*"

"Yes," Linda said proudly. "This gentleman, Daddy, happens to be King Khama-Ptah-hor-Amen the Third!"

Dr. Armitage blinked confusedly. "But that's ridiculous, my dear! Khama-Ptah-hor-Amen has been dead for thousands of years!"

Ahnku the Ancient stepped forward. "Not so, Dr. Armitage. He was put into suspended animation by his enemies. Only the Belt of Osiris could revive him, but that, too, was buried with him in the secret tomb. I have searched for my master for many centuries, and I am grateful that you found him, Dr. Armitage."

"Rubbish!" snorted Captain Boggs. "I saw you bring Muhammad ibn Abdul on board myself!"

"No, Captain," said the royal Egyptian himself. "My faithful Ahnku brought a dummy aboard in a wheelchair. Then he went below to revive me."

"How did he get in the strong room?"

"Ahnku has his ways," smiled the King.

"And the Belt of Osiris brought you back to life?" Dr. Armitage asked.

"Yes," said the King. "It is truly a marvelous talisman."

During the hundreds of decades of my entombment, it has faithfully recorded all the incidents of history and thus I know the languages of today; they were transmitted to me the instant I awoke, impressed indelibly on my brain."

Linda chuckled. "It was Khama who scared everyone last night. He was still a little groggy from sleep."

"I dare say," muttered the Captain.

"There is just one thing," said the King. He took the belt out of his pocket. "I don't need to wear this any more, Ahnku tells me. But look; there is a part of the belt missing. It isn't very important—to me, at least, but the amethyst scarab is gone. It is the talisman which grants eternal virility and desirability. It makes one quite a lover, in fact."

Dr. Armitage clapped his hand to his head. "Great Heavens! Then *that's* why I was so—I mean—all I could think about was—er—" He sputtered off in confusion.

"Then you aren't carrying it any more?" Linda asked.

"No. It was in my other trousers. And I—I gave them to Dr. Bingham!"

"That's true," said a voice

from the door. It was Leslie Bingham, standing there with his arm around the waist of the voluptuous Adelaide Dorensen.

"Well, give it to His Majesty, then; it's rightfully his!"

"It's down in my cabin," Bingham confessed.

"He really doesn't need it," Adelaide said. "All he needed was something to get him started and take away his shyness." She snickered. "That scarab sure did the trick."

"And all aboard my ship," mumbled Captain Boggs. "It's a good thing this is the *Queen Victoria*, and not the *Queen Elizabeth*; the Virgin Queen might have enjoyed it—Victoria is properly shocked." He turned to Dr. Armitage. "You needn't worry about that band of Egyptian fanatics, by the way. One of them, dressed up like a mummy, is dead; one fell overboard; the other two are locked up in the brig. And with these three brighters out of the picture, I think the rest of the trip will be uneventful."

"I don't," said Bingham. He winked at Adelaide. "I understand a captain can marry couples on the high seas."

"Well, yes," said Captain Boggs.

"Good!" Linda Armitage

said. "We'll make it a double ceremony!"

King Khama-Ptah-hor-Amen frowned. "That's all very well, but being an Egyptian king is not a very profitable occupation these days—in fact, kinging isn't at all what it used to be. Unfortunately, it's the only profession I know. I'll have to sell my jewels and learn a trade."

Dr. Armitage smiled. "Don't worry about that, my boy. Didn't you say the Belt had recorded all of history since your — ah — pseudo-death?"

"Yes," said the King.

"Very well, then; I can guarantee that all that knowl-

edge will not be allowed to go to waste. I think we can find a place for you at Miskatonic University. We may have to throw Dr. Weaver out of the history department, but that won't be much of a loss."

"Yes, dear," said Linda, "and you can go on lecture tours! Why, you'll make plenty of money!"

His Majesty beamed broadly. "In that case, Captain, I think we may as well proceed."

Linda chuckled softly. "I'll have to get used to being called Daddy, I guess."

"Why?" asked the King.

"The kids will call you Mummy, won't they?"

THE END