

## *We have with us:—*

### **KIRK SHAW**

“The Watcher Awakes” is Mr. Shaw's second story in WEIRD TALES. The first was “The Raft” the grim reality of which won some commendatory letters.

About himself Mr. Shaw tells us in a letter from his native Scotland: “I'm a seafarer and I started short story writing to pass the off watch periods while at sea. Although I write uncanny stories even my greatest enemy could never call me 'spooky'. I'm short, fair, stocky and Scottish (I gave up the kilt when I left school—too cold) and I have just started to slide past the thirty mark. I am married, and despite the fact that I am a sailor it was to the girl next door. We have two blonde little girls, one 3½, the other nine months.

“I left school and joined the merchant service on the outbreak of the war, had my share of bombs and torpedoes, then like the bad penny came through safely, and have sailed the world ever since.

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# Weird Tales

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1953

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D. McILWRAITH, Editor

# THE WATCHER AWAKES



JULY 3rd

AS THE longshoremen slipped the eye of the last mooring rope from off the bollard and let it fall with a splash into the murky waters of the Canal, the faint "TING" of the engine room telegraph came to our ears. Slowly the *Crown of Siam* separated herself from the quay wall and her siren roared out in the courteous three long blasts of farewell; a flutter of white handkerchiefs appeared over the heads of those who had seen her off, and the ship trembled like a wakening leviathan as her engines obeyed the bridge's orders.

Martin turned with a smile towards me and I realized with a start that it was the first time I had seen him smile since we had fled from the horror in the desert.

"We've made it, Donnie," he said quietly, his fingers tightening impulsively on my arm. "Even if it could follow us this far it's somewhere back there in Port Said. In three weeks more we'll be in New York with only the relics from the tomb to remind us of that nightmare. It's over, thank God it's over and we can sleep in peace once more."

Watching the statue of Lesseps pass slowly on the port side I had felt inclined at the time to agree with Martin, but now I'm not so sure. The Thing that killed the Professor and Morrison, drove Faulkberg insane, and has haunted us day and night ever since, won't give up so easily. If it could cross the desert after us it could quite as easily be on board this ship. Last night for instance the handle of my stateroom was tried and the steward denied all knowledge of it this morning. When I told Martin about it over the breakfast table he suggested it might have been a sneak thief, but I saw his face lose color and I knew that he believed that no more than I did myself.

For one thing, if it had been an ordinary thief, then I should have seen his shadow break the ray of light beneath the cabin door for I was lying smoking in the dark and there's a light burns in the alleyway all night. But there was nothing. Only the handle turning slowly back and forward with a horrible persistence, and then that devilish light tapping—like finger nails drumming on an empty packing case.

It was over the breakfast table

that we decided I should write an account of what had happened to our party, for if the Thing does get at us then there will be no one left alive to warn the unwary of the curse that follows the mummy of Princess Naratiffi.

So today I'm starting the journal as arranged, and I'll begin by introducing myself.

**M**Y NAME is Donaldson—Franklin Henry Donaldson, and I'm what I suppose is termed "one of the idle rich." My grandfather was old "Damn the Devil" Donaldson who founded the family millions with his oil empire. My father inherited his fortune and when he was killed by an exploding oil gusher, as his only heir I found myself with money to burn and no qualifications worth a tinker's cuss. I did learn to fly and drive racing cars, but the thrill of speed soon palled and I was forced to look further afield for adventure. My name became linked with anyone who wanted to explore the Amazon or bring gorillas back alive from the Congo. Providing the leader of such an expedition was sincere and would include me in his party, I would foot the bill and trust for repayment in adventure.

It was through this philanthropy (?) that I met Professor Anstruther.

He called at my home late one evening when I was feeling utterly bored with myself, and I was immediately struck by his appearance. Well above average height he walked with a slight scholarly stoop, but with a surprisingly agile step. Behind heavy bifocal glasses his eyes were alert and youthful and they betrayed the mane of silver gray hair that swept back from his high domed forehead. Later, when he had gone, I looked up his name in a scientific Who's Who and found that his research in archaeology had brought him wide acclaim in the scientific world, though his name was little known to the man in the street, more interested in political fossils than those of the desert.

His story interested me tremendously and moreover, it offered me the chance to explore a field completely unique in my experience—the search for a lost tomb in the desert.

For years Anstruther had searched for this tomb, working on a theory that for some unknown reason all reference to a certain Princess of the Blood Royal had been deliberately destroyed by succeeding generations of Pharaohs although he could produce no definite proof to substantiate his beliefs. According to the Professor a single mention had been discovered of an

unearthly beauty who had lived in the generation before Tutankh-amen, but nothing about her life or death had been found anywhere. This he was certain was the woman he was looking for—the mysterious Princess Naratiffi.

He had actually been leading a party in search of this tomb when a cable arrived to say that his backer had gone bankrupt and he would have to return immediately. The same day a stranger arrived in his camp with a story that had fired his enthusiasm anew.

This was a man called Faulkberg and he was a deserter from the Foreign Legion who had gone native. He wanted money to return to civilization, and in return for payment he offered to lead Anstruther to a hidden tomb known only to the Arabs. In proof of its existence he produced a small golden medallion with the head of a beautiful woman on it, and from the hieroglyphics round it, Anstruther was able to say it was the head of Princess Naratiffi. . . . Faulkberg told him how the nomadic tribe he had joined had a legend about a cave high in the mountains which led to the entrance of a tomb. Once three Arabs had gone in to loot it, but only one had come out alive, clutching the medallion in his hand—and he

was raving mad. The terrified tribe had rolled a boulder over the entrance completely blocking it, and then fled. To this day no one had ventured to even go near the cave, but Faulkberg had wheedled the instructions for finding it from the native woman he called his wife, and this was what he had to offer.

SO FIRED was I by this story that two months later saw me joggling over the desert sands in the first of two heavy trucks we had bought. These had been fitted with caterpillar tracks, and although not very fast, were ideal for crossing the sand, and later, the boulder strewn mountain sides.

With me was the Professor, balancing a book on his knees as he brought his notes up to date, and driving, was the Professor's ward, Rigby Martin. Martin was a cheery young chap whom I had liked right from the start, perhaps because we were both of an age, and in the short time we had been together a strong friendship had grown between us. Behind us in the second truck rode Faulkberg and Morrison, two complete opposites thrown together by chance. Faulkberg was big and brutish, his hair close cropped and his skin almost black from exposure to the sun. Morrison, our photographer,

was a slightly built anaemic looking man whose frail body seemed to wilt before Faulkberg's crude jests. Besides these, there were also two Arabs we had engaged, Mustapha who was our cook, and Ahmed who was a kind of personal servant. As there was to be no digging we had no workmen with us. Nor did we require the services of a guide while Faulkberg was with us, for he knew the trackless desert as well as any Arab. Each of the trucks also pulled a small trailer behind it loaded with petrol, equipment, and crates, for we hoped to bring back enough relics to prove there really was a lost tomb.

We stuck to the trucks until the slopes we were climbing grew too steep for them, but by then we were more than half way up the low range of bare mountains and could look back on the shimmering heat wave of the desert for as far as the eye could see. On a fairly flat plateau we set up our tents and formed the main camp, then we trudged on by foot to Faulkberg's directions. These were simple to follow as he seemed to be using certain peaks as landmarks, and well within a mile of where the trucks had stopped we came to the great boulder that the Arabs had used to block the cave.

When I saw it I felt my heart

sink for I knew that five of us could never muster enough strength to shift it; but again Faulkberg proved his usefulness. Using his experience of handling explosives in the Legion and the cordite from some of our cartridge cases, he laid a charge in a flaw of the boulder. From it he led a fuse to which he set light. Hurriedly we retired to a safe distance and took cover as the red spark danced across the stony ground and disappeared into the crack. For a second we thought the charge had failed, and then came a muffled explosion. As if hit by a massive invisible axe the boulder split cleanly in two and the halves fell apart to reveal the dark opening of a cave beyond.

Naturally we wanted to start exploring immediately, but this Anstruther forbade. He insisted that in our present tired condition we might damage some of the relics, and we would be far better to return to the camp, prepare the crates for carrying home our finds, and get turned in early for a good night's sleep.

### *JULY 4th*

**L**AST night the Thing visited my cabin again. This time it was at the windows which open on to A deck, and I sat shivering with fear as I clutched at my

loaded revolver. But it hadn't enough strength to smash the heavy glass and I had taken the added precaution of closing the monsoon ports, even if the steward did think I was crazy. Around 2 a.m. it gave up the attempt to force an entry and I heard it tap-tap-tapping away.

But to get back to my story.

On the morning after we had split the boulder we were up bright and early to find that both Mustapha and Ahmed had disappeared during the night. At first we thought they had run off with whatever they could lay their hands on, but a quick check of the stores showed nothing to be missing and their disappearance without waiting to be paid remained a mystery to us.

Finally we set off for the tomb, each of us carrying a powerful torch, and Morrison bowed down beneath the weight of his cameras, tripods, and flash lamps. It had been agreed that the Professor as leader and the expert on these matters should lead the way and the rest of us keep a fair distance behind him, until at least he was certain we should not destroy anything of value. So when we entered the cave and found it to be much wider than we expected, the Professor went on alone and the rest of us followed in pairs.

It was much deeper than we

anticipated too, and we had trooped down the long dark tunnel it formed for about a hundred yards when it came to an abrupt end. At least we amateurs thought it was a blank end but not so the Professor who examined the walls carefully.

"It's a door," he announced finally, "a door hewn out of the solid rock to make it look natural. But look for yourselves, you can follow the faint cracks round the edge where it doesn't quite meet flush. It's chipped a bit over here too; probably where the thieves Faulkberg told us about forced their entrance."

The Professor was so excited by his find that I'm quite sure he was hardly conscious that the rest of us had crowded round him as he searched for the pivot that would swing the heavy door.

"Isn't there something written above the door, Sir?" asked Martin who had been shining his torch all over the wall.

And sure enough there was some kind of picture writing cut into the stone.

Laboriously, being held up for a few minutes by each of us in turn, the Professor copied everything down in his notebook, then using a replica of the Rosetta stone translations he began to decipher the writing in the hope that it would yield some clue as to the occupant of the tomb.



Suddenly there came a blinding flash that scared me out of my wits and left me trembling like a jelly. It was only Morrison taking flash-light photographs of the door, but it showed me how keyed up I was in that eerie atmosphere.

**BY** THE time Morrison had finished the Professor had completed his translations.

"Here's a very rough translation as far as I can understand it," he said, "'WHO BREAK-ETH THE SLEEP OF THE WONDEROUS ONE, SHALL CALL THE WATCHER TO GUARD HER GLORY.' Probably the curse that most tombs have in the hope of protecting them from robbers, but nothing for us to worry about. Our only danger will come from the foul air there's likely to be inside. If it does get too bad make for the open air and we'll wait for it to clear. Now, hand me over that crowbar, Faulkberg."

Faulkberg passed him the heavy iron bar he had been carrying, and inserting the wedge end where the previous intruders had chipped the stone, the Professor lent his weight on it. At first nothing happened, but when Faulkberg began to heave as well there came a low groan from the door.

Slowly, and with a lot of

grinding, it began to swivel and I felt the strain on my eyes as I tried to peer into the darkness. With its opening there came a blast of hot musty air that set me coughing and gasping, but it wasn't too bad and forgetting our previous arrangement with the Professor we surged forward, our torches lighting but a little of the vast room we had entered.

The five beams bit into the darkness in slashing swathes as we swept them round the burial chamber, lighting first one, then another of the strange objects that lay within, each one more bizarre and unusual than its neighbor. Then the Professor's voice, though cracked with his suppressed excitement, recalled us to our surroundings.

"Pass out the torches and light them now, Martin," he said, and for a moment I wondered if the excitement had been too much for him as we all most obviously had our torches lit, until I saw he was referring to the tightly packed bundles of reeds and small twigs that Martin had been carrying.

"They'll give us far more light," he explained, "and besides, the naked flame will warm us if the air starts getting bad, but for Heaven's sake watch you don't set fire to anything, everything in here will be tinder dry."

The torches had been specially

prepared by Ahmed before he deserted and as soon as a match was applied to them they flared into a brilliant, if smoky, light. Instantly we saw the treasure house we had discovered.

Stacked everywhere ready for use in the next life, were all the household goods that had belonged to the dead occupant of the tomb. Caskets, vases, and miniature sarcophagi stood round the walls, jumbled with a beautiful golden bed, golden chairs, and numerous heavy wooden chests. Life sized models of servants bore canopies of beaten gold and behind them was a replica of a state barge. There was even a mummified gazelle, perhaps the favorite pet of the long dead Princess. But it was at the far end of the chamber we looked where, barely reached by the light of our torches, rose a solid granite altar, and on it rested the sarcophagus.

Silently, and holding our torches high, we moved towards it.

It was magnificent. Of masterly workmanship it was shaped to conform to the body it contained, and carved on the top in the semblance of a woman with the hands crossed over the breasts. But the face! Beautiful is quite inadequate to describe it, and no mere words could convey the cold loveliness of those per-

fect features. Never did I dream that such beauty existed and if the living woman bore any resemblance to the effigy, all Egypt must have worshipped where she trod.

Faulkberg broke the spell for us by shouting excitedly, "LOOK! LOOK! Professor!" He alone of our party was not with us but on his knees by a heavy wooden chest with his arms dug inside. As I watched he raised them slowly and a cascade of flashing colors flowed back into the chest. "Jewels! Beautiful, beautiful jewels!" he slobbered, digging his arms in again and again.

"Leave them alone, Faulkberg!" snapped the Professor curtly. "Nothing must be touched or moved until Morrison has photographed the tomb, and then a complete record must be made of its contents. You'll get your fair share, don't worry about that, but leave them alone just now."

**S**ULLENLY, Faulkberg obeyed the Professor and had closed the lid of the chest when I heard Martin whisper, "My God!"

He had walked curiously round the sarcophagus and when I joined him and saw what he was looking at I drew in my own breath sharply. On a raised

golden pedestal stood a life sized statue of a man, and it was the most perfect modeling I've ever seen in my life. Perfect is the only word to describe it, so much so that for a moment I thought it was real. It was a model of a warrior on guard over the sarcophagus, and every detail even to the corded muscles had been faithfully copied. It was well over six-foot in height and dressed in a short metal skirt like I'd seen in pictures of early Romans. The breast was protected by a metal breast-plate, and on the head was a tall plumed helmet. The face was hidden by a golden mask but through the eye pieces the closed eyes of the statue could be clearly seen. One hand rested on the hilt of a short stabbing sword it wore in a scabbard at its belt, but the other was raised above its head and held menacingly a wickedly sharp throwing spear with a broad blade.

"Professor," I called, "come here quickly!"

"What is it? What is it?" asked Anstruther crossly as he appeared beside me, "I want to copy the hieroglyphics round the mummy case. They're bound to hold the key of the mystery, and be—," his voice tailed off as he saw the statue.

"What the Devil is it made of?" I asked as he advanced

slowly and laid a tentative finger on its foot.

"Made of?" he replied in a whisper. "Made of? Man alive this was never made, it's real. It was a living breathing man. It's a mummy, a perfect mummy. Donaldson!" he swung round on me, ". . . don't you realize what we've found? Can't you see the significance? It's— Why it's the greatest discovery since they found the Valley of the Kings. It's the perfect mummy! No wrappings, no embalming, nothing. It's undreamed of. We must find out the secret of this tomb. Who is he? Why and how was he placed like this? Why is there no reference to a Princess who could be buried with so much wealth and in such a God forsaken spot. Tell me, Donaldson, tell me if you can?"

The other two had joined us in time to hear the Professor's last words, and we stared up in awe at this man who had lived and died a thousand years before we were born yet looked no different today than he had in his lifetime, and in that silence Faulkberg's whisper sounded crystal clear.

"The Watcher!"

The Professor turned on him in a flash.

"What's that Faulkberg? Just what do you mean by the Watcher. That phrase was writ-

ten on the inscription over the entrance and now you use it again. What else do you know about this tomb that you haven't told us?"

For some unaccountable reason I felt my flesh creep as I looked at Faulkberg's pale face staring up at the statue and realized our surroundings. The golden mummy case that held the mortal remains of a once beautiful woman, the treasures worth a king's ransom, and the statue that was not a statue but the flesh and bones of a man preserved by lost skill.

Faulkberg never once removed his eyes from the figure as he began to speak in a hoarse dry voice.

"All I know is a legend. A legend handed down through countless generations of a beautiful but wicked woman. A woman who was born a princess but whose lust for greater power led her to dabble in black magic until her name meant FEAR. According to the law of the land she should have married her brother who was a weak and sickly youth much younger than herself, but her one weakness was that she fell in love with a captain in the palace guards. This man was proof against her blandishments and remained loyal to his master, and spurning all her advances he was instru-

mental in uncovering a plot to poison the young pharaoh. The girl was seized and tortured until she had confessed to the crime and was then condemned to death, but before she could be executed she managed to escape from her guards. Hunted like a wild beast she sought sanctuary in the home of the man she loved, but he coldly handed her back to her pursuers. As the guards dragged her struggling to her death she screamed and spat curses at the captain. 'You spurned me in life—' she cried, '—but in death you will guard my dust until eternity.' Then on the day that she was put to death the captain who had been in the prime of life, collapsed and died for no apparent reason. The superstitious people remembered the curse she had laid on him, and so they buried him in her tomb—to guard her dust until eternity.

"And that I swear is all I know."

A SILENCE followed Faulkberg's words, and I felt cold shivers running up and down my spine as I looked at the soldier who had died so strangely, until the Professor's cold voice cut in dryly.

"A typical story started by the priests to protect the tomb from robbers but nothing more than

that I assure you. The dead stay dead and can't worry the living. Now shake yourselves and stop gawking like credulous school-girls; we've lots to do. Morrison, you get started and take photographs of the tomb from every angle, the rest of you can help me by sorting out the smaller relics we'll be taking back with us. Meantime we'll remove nothing, but by tomorrow Morrison should be finished and he can photograph the individual exhibits outside."

The Professor was right in keeping us occupied, for work proved the antidote to our fears, and we toiled assiduously while Morrison's flash flared at intervals. Before I realized it the Professor was telling us to call it a day and ordering us out. Only Morrison pleaded that he wanted to take some more shots and promised to join us in half an hour.

Outside, we decided to shift our tents right up to the cave entrance so that we would have less distance to travel to and from the tomb, and we had pitched the new camp and were thinking about supper when Martin remarked that Morrison still hadn't joined us.

I volunteered to go into the tomb and remind him of the time and Martin said he would accompany me. So leaving Faulk-

berg to prepare the supper and the Professor studying his notes, we lit two of the torches and returned to the cave.

"What did you think of Faulkberg's story, Donnie?" asked Martin seriously as we walked cautiously down the long tunnel. So seriously for him that I glanced sideways at his face before replying, but he was keeping his eyes studiously in front.

"Rather a horrible story," I replied, "but I should think the Professor's theory was the right one. Why?"

But before Martin could answer we were at the open door of the tomb and inside all was in darkness. Thinking that the little photographer had tripped over something and laid himself out we hurried in, anxiously calling his name.

"Morrison! Where are you! Morrison!"

But there was no reply.

"He was taking shots of the statue when I last saw him," said Martin worriedly, and we made our way towards it.

Suddenly Martin stopped dead and I cannoned into him. Looking over his shoulder I felt my stomach heave—we had found Morrison.

He lay sprawled on his face with his shattered camera lying by his head, but he would never again be able to use it. Driven

down between his shoulder blades and pinning him to the ground like a bug-hunter's specimen was the massive spear I had last seen in the man-statue's hand. He was quite dead and already the blood was congealing round the rent in his white linen jacket.

Fearfully I raised my torch until its light struck the statue, but apart from the spear there was no change in its appearance.

"Could it have slipped, Donnie?" croaked Martin.

I shook my head in puzzlement. It must have, though how it gained enough momentum in that short drop to drive right through him I couldn't understand.

"Help me pull it out, Martin." I said, "There's nothing we can do for him, but we can't leave the poor devil lying here."

It was easier said than done for it took our combined strength to pull the spear clear. Then Martin took the feet and I the head as we started on our sad journey back to the camp.

*JULY 6th*

I MISSED writing up this journal last night because I was so badly shaken that I couldn't concentrate.

The Thing has got Martin! That means it's on board and

I'm the only one left and I'm quite certain it will never allow me to leave this ship alive. There's no use in appealing for help to the Captain either for he would only think I was mad. At least I'm safe here as long as I stick to my stateroom and remember to lock the door and keep the windows tight shut.

Oh God, it's horrible! Martin! Why Martin? He never harmed a soul in his life yet he had to die the same as the rest. Martin! Martin!

But I must concentrate. I must write the full story before it gets me.

Martin was foolish. I warned him repeatedly against leaving his cabin after dark, but it seems he met some girl on board he had known back home, and he took her to the ship's dance.

The rest of the story can best be told as the girl sobbed it out to the Captain when they came to inform me of his death.

She said they had danced until about 10 o'clock, after which they had gone for a stroll in the moonlight round the promenade deck. For a time they had leant over the rail watching the phosphorus swirl past the ship's side, and then Martin had left the girl, Mary Coolridge was her name, to bring back two highballs. Mary had walked slowly towards the after end of the

prom deck and had turned to come back again when she saw Martin approaching with the drinks. Suddenly, as he passed in the shadow of a lifeboat, he let both glasses drop with a crash to the deck and staggered back clawing at his throat. The girl could see his face clearly in the moonlight as she ran towards him and it was twisted in agony as he coughed chokingly, then the safety chain between the boats caught him in the small of the back and he toppled overboard.

The girl's screams had brought members of the crew rushing to her aid and the ship was turned immediately. But though a motor boat was lowered and flares and searchlights turned night into day, there was no sign of poor Martin.

I don't want to sound callous or unfeeling for I genuinely liked Martin, but I pray the Thing went overboard with him—it's my only chance!

The Captain questioned me closely to see if Martin had been subject to heart attacks, but I could truthfully say that he hadn't. Never the less, the conclusion agreed upon with the ship's M.O., was that he had an attack, and temporary off balance fell overboard and was drowned.

Martin drowned! An interstates swimming champion

drowned in a sea like a millpond? But what's the use of arguing, it's better to let it go at that.

There's nothing I can do to help Martin now and it has become all the more urgent that I complete our history for I have a feeling that my time is growing short.

THE morning after Morrison's death, Martin and I dug a fairly deep grave on the little plateau, and there we laid the little photographer. The Professor repeated what he could remember of the burial service, and we stuck a little cross—Martin made it from parts of a packing case—over his head with the few details we knew about him. Then in an effort to forget the gloom and despondency his death had thrown over us, we threw ourselves heart and soul into the job of clearing the tomb.

The Professor rigged up a camp table and stool at the entrance to the cave, and when the rest of us carried out the contents he made a note and rough description of the article. This way we hoped to compile a complete inventory of everything we brought out. The smaller articles we carried direct to the trucks where we crated and packed them straight away, but to make room for the larger pieces we would bring later, we had to

carry our spare petrol back up the mountainside, and this we stacked just inside the cave entrance to be out of the direct rays of the sun.

By noon a fair proportion of the lighter relics had been removed by this method, and after a scratch meal we started to discuss the best method of bringing out the mummy case and the man-statue. All except Faulkberg that is, for he had made an excuse about wrapping some of the relics and gone back into the cave alone. Looking back now, I've a feeling he was actually trying to hide some of the jewels to collect them at his leisure. Whatever his reasons he paid dearly for them when scream after scream brought us white faced to our feet.

Again and again the screams rang out, growing louder and louder until the ex-legionnaire burst into the sunlight and at first I could hardly recognize him. Gone was his florid coloring and deep tan, and foam flecked in dirty patches across his quivering lips. His eyes bulged hideously from their sockets and rolled horribly in his wagging head. Right across his cropped dark hair had appeared a broad strip of white—completely new since we had seen him last.

When he saw us he stopped

abruptly, looking stupidly from one to the other, and then he started to laugh. To laugh and laugh with a hysterical quality that chilled our very blood while between his sobs of mirth he babbled.

"You! You're next! Ho-Ho-Ho! You wakened him—you wakened the Watcher! Ho-Ho-Ho! And now he's coming! Coming to get you—one at a time! Ho-Ho-Ho! One at a time he'll get you! Thieves! Robbers! Despoilers of the dead! The Watcher—The Watcher's coming!"

Still babbling and laughing he backed slowly away from us, then turning sharply on his heels he began running down the slope in great bounding leaps until we had completely lost sight of him.

"What happened to him, Professor?" I whispered, "What could drive an ex-legionnaire completely mad?"

Anstruther shook his head slowly, his brow furrowed in deep thought, then bracing his shoulders he looked defiantly at us. "I don't know. I don't pretend to know, but God or Devil I'm going to find out."

Both Martin and I pleaded that it would be foolhardy for him to venture into the cave again, and argued that we had enough relics to prove his case and to organize a proper expedi-



tion. But his mind was made up. He had met something beyond his comprehension and was determined to force an issue. Grabbing up one of the reed torches that lay by the entrance, he lit it and ran into the cave.

Our own hesitation was for a second, then as Martin grabbed the crowbar, I picked up a packing case hammer and we ran after the older man.

Ahead of us we could see his torch bobbing and flitting in the cold draft through the tunnel, but we were younger and fitter men than he was and by the time he reached the tomb we were right behind him.

Once inside he held his torch aloft so that its rays lit the whole chamber and we peered around.

"The statue!" cried Martin urgently, and I looked quickly in that direction. The statue was gone.

"What the—" began the Professor, but he got no further before the torch was dashed from his hand and spluttered out. In the split second before we were plunged into total darkness I saw something. I saw the tall brown figure by the Professor's side. I saw the long reaching arm and clawed fingers. I saw the dark piercing eyes and shining breast-plate.

In the darkness the Professor choked gaspingly and I pulled

desperately at the electric torch I wore clipped to my belt. Martin was shouting for me to show a light and I was knocked to my knees by scuffing figures before I finally freed my torch and pressed the button.

The sight that met my eyes aged me twenty years in as many seconds.

The great tall man-statue held the Professor by the throat at arms length in vise-like fingers, and already the old man's tongue was protruding from blackening lips. With a curse I scrambled to my feet, but with a sickening crack the monster snapped Anstruther's neck and tossed him aside like a rag doll.

Slowly it swung towards us. its eyes mere pin points in the glare from the torch, and its clawing hands reached out for us.

"Run, Donnie!" screamed Martin tugging at my arm, "For God's sake, run!"

I hurled my torch at the advancing figure, and panting and gasping we rushed back through the tunnel. Again and again I tripped and fell on the uneven ground until I could taste the salt blood trickling from my bruised mouth. But stark fear of the long dead shambling after us lent me added strength and I spurted for the daylight as Martin tugged at his gun holster.

ONCE out in the blessed sunlight he dropped to one knee and I had time to admire his courage as he sighted on the cave mouth.

Suddenly it was there!

With arms outstretched it staggered ponderously towards us and I was aware of Martin's gun cracking again and again as the monster walked unheedingly into the hail of lead. One of the bullets either wider than the others or deflected from his breast-plate, smacked into the stored petrol tins and with a thunderous roar and blinding burst of light the whole store exploded.

Sand and boulders flew into the air as the solid rock cracked and started to slide in a miniature avalanche that rumbled down over the swaying Watcher. Dust rose in a great cloud and small pebbles hammered around us as the blast knocked us sprawling, but apart from small rivulets of fire the falling stone prevented any great blaze by smothering the flames.

Dazedly I rose to my feet and staggered towards the heaped rubble that blocked the Professor's tomb and from under a heavy boulder I saw an arm projecting grotesquely. Even as I looked the tenacious fingers coiled and stretched and in my mind's eye I saw them curled

round the throat of the old Professor.

Wild flames of hate licked at my heart, and my dry lips cracked and choked me as I watched its writhings silently. Then stooping I picked up a heavy flint.

Slowly I raised it above my head to hurl down and crush the life forever from that loathsome thing, when Martin yelled at me. Instead of crushing it the sharp stone bit in at the wrist, and I became violently sick as I severed the hand from the arm.

Horror stricken I stared at what I had done—and saw the hand start to move!

With white bone and torn ligaments protruding from the severed wrist, it was raising itself on long finger tips and crawling towards me.

Screaming, I kicked at it, sending it hurtling back among the debris, then with Martin by my side we fled for the trucks.

"Hurry, Donnie! Hurry!" yelled Martin as I slammed in the gears, "I can see it, Donnie! I can see it like a great hairless spider. Oh, hurry! Hurry!"

And so we fled from the hill of the tomb, leaving two dead and one raving lunatic to haunt its lonely dreadfulness. Nor did we rest in peace until the trucks rumbled in to the outskirts of Cairo.

Once there we thought we were safe as we had driven ourselves hard, but the third night of our stay in the hotel I was wakened by something tapping on the window pane. Thinking it was a frond from one of the many palm trees that grew in the garden and irritated by its persistence, I rose to see if I could stop it. But when I got to the window the moonlight was playing strongly down and immediately I saw it—the hand squatting maliciously on the window ledge.

Next day we paid our account and traveled by fast train to Port Said where we joined the *Crown of Siam* two hours before she sailed.

Now Martin has gone as well, and there can be no doubt it was the steely fingers from the tomb that were choking the life out of him. But whether it is still on board or went overboard with Martin I have no means of knowing.

What strange occult power gave the hand the—

**E**XTRACT From The Log Of The M. V. *Crown of Siam*, signed by the Master, Captain Bently-Whyte.

7th July. Time: 10.00 hrs.

On being informed by my purser, Robert Larkins, that the

steward on duty at A deck could neither receive a reply nor enter stateroom 16, I proceeded to same accompanied by William Steele, the Chief Officer.

After again knocking and trying the stateroom door which was locked, I gave orders for it to be opened with the purser's duplicate key.

Inside we found the occupier, Mr. Franklin Henry Donaldson, lying sprawled across the enclosed journal. From the Medical Officer's report, the man had died from manual strangulation, and following the reading of the journal I carried out a thorough search of the accommodation.

As previously stated the outer door was locked, and all windows were closed with the monsoon ports battened down. But in the bedroom we found that the mushroom ventilator on the deckhead had been screwed fully open leaving a gap of some six inches in diameter and down this was hanging the end of a boat guy from the deck above.

Nothing else was out of place though a curious musty smell permeated the whole apartment.

Signed, A. Bently-Whyte,  
Master.

Witnessed, W. Steele,  
Chief Officer.

Witnessed, R. Larkins,  
Chief Purser.