

Manuscript

The Mummy and the Hidden Tomb

A Novel of Ancient Egypt

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First Draft

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England

Chapter 1

Large black eyes loom from the golden face of the Boy-King. Tutankhamun's timeless expression floats in a framed wall-picture, while the bulbous eyes of a large man are reflecting from the glass.

He squints to see the faint strokes of ancient pigment forming delicate blood-vessels in the whites of the eyes.

Chef Cannonelli has been passing time in the book-lined office of Professor James Pearson, head of Egyptian Archaeology at University College, London. England's greatest Egyptologists headed the Department all through the Victorian era and on through the 20th Century.

Cannonelli has a cardboard-box of old photos, papers and charts and has enlisted the school to help translate the ingredients and recipes he's found from Ancient Egypt.

University College is a vibrant and active city bustle occupying several blocks just down from the British Museum. The Neoclassical North and South Wings proudly wrap its colonnaded central portico like the arms of a Sphinx. More apt for Londoners perhaps, the British Lion.

The magnificent 10 columned portico holds the spacious and quiet UCL Quad before it and looks across Gower Street to the 'Cruciform', a harshly austere Edwardian-era red brick hospital, sometimes called 'Dracula's Castle' by freshmen, but presently housing the more benign Bio-med Research Center.

The constantly crawling campus has the present Archaeology building, already a '60s relic, a block off and looking down on Gordon Park. London is studded with green parks; block after block, like a sprawling jeweled candy box.

The energetic college professor enters, a man in his late 30s with sandy hair, and the Chef becomes ebullient, "Ah, Dr Pearson I presume?"

Pearson is smiling, "Yes! Chef Cannonelli." They shake as the Chef responds, "Bruno, please."

Dr Pearson is handsome with set features and takes pride in chairing such a prestigious department.

The Chef's thick fingers drum the box, "I have all my

photos and clippings here. As we discussed, I need all the information on these foods and brews and especially the spices." He leans in with bright eyes, "You know I am very big on the spices."

Pearson, "Yes, I've seen your 'Spices of the Levant'."

"More famous for my Rome book. But this, I hope, will be my best! The full cuisine of Ancient Egypt!"

They gather at the desk to focus on Cannonelli's collection. Pearson thumbs through the photos, slowing on one or two, "All these pictures, I'm amazed. This is a great deal of translating."

The Chef fains, "Yes, I know, I know, but you said you have the staff." Pearson looks up to reassure, "Yes, it will be good for them."

As the afternoon stretches, they huddle the paper strewn desk. Pearson finds himself puzzling over an old photo from a 1930s newspaper clipping. It is the image of a leaf, carved into an ancient wall. "It's not for beer-making. I've never seen this." Pointing, "This is some kind of sacrament; and these are Glyphs of the Priesthood—" tapping the photo, "and this, is the cartouche of a king... "

Cannonelli's bulging eyes look down on the barely discernible, little photo.

The next morning finds Paul, a tall, groomed student-assistant with slicked hair and colorful suspenders, chases titles while Pearson stares down onto his desk. "It's called: TAH-NA" Pearson's finger moves across the old photo, "and has something to do with the Cult of Amun-Ra. I can't find it anywhere. It must be extinct."

Paul turns around, "Is that the eternal life plant you saw?"

Pearson taps the photo, "Yes. The fan-leaf on the broken Ramesses wall." He pulls the photo up on his finger and continues talking while checking other notations, "Might be something like the old cinnabar-mercury recipes, the Chinese alchemists used to preserve their Emperors."

Paul approaches, "How come we've never heard of it?"

Pearson is pointing at an open book, "This says there was an inner or secret cult inside the Amun Priesthood, but here, the Tan-na is a plant brewed for the Pharaoh. If this is the same, it could be a whole new preservative for the mummification process." He looks up, "New!"

Pearson has sat the whole afternoon pouring over his

desk. Paul looks in before closing to see the stack of books has grown next to the familiar sight of Pearson staring out his window.

Hours pass when the night custodian notices an eerie light from the Office. He finds Pearson staring into his monitor. "Oh, sorry Hadley, late night." The old janitor has seen this before, "Not to worry, Professor, I'll just make my noise down in the other lab." He turns and heads toward the dark staircase.

The morning has Paul skipping up the staircase and is thankful to find Pearson in different clothes and a new book arrangement. Pearson is on the phone and breaks into a full smile as he puts it down, "This is fantastic! I'm out to see the Dean." He jumps up and heads straight past the surprised Paul.

The familiar thick door is open when Pearson strides past its long-honored sign, 'OFFICE of the DEAN'. Trudy waves him in.

The Dean looks up, "So. You've found something new!" Pearson, "Yes, this is quite something. The Tanna Cult was at the center of the Amun." Looks at the Dean, "This is a new preservative, unknown." He pops his eyebrows with a smile and puts his notes out, "They used it for the Priests and some Royalty. It was special. This is a whole new direction for Egyptology."

The Dean sits forward, "What do you need?"

Pearson pulls the chair up as he sits, "I know you're acquainted with the Earl at Highclere, there's a mummy, one of the Tanna mummies. I am very sure Lord Carnarvon had this specimen."

The Dean frowns, "There's nothing left at Highclere, you know that." Pearson is smiling intently, "This was a gift that was lost and there might be records... "

The Dean knows this is big. It's new. Pearson would never have used that word. The word reverberates in the Dean's ear. The kind of 'new' that University College pursued when Flinders Petrie chaired the Department through the turn of the 19th century. When his student, Howard Carter worked with Maspero, the great French Egyptologist and the very Lord Carnarvon, whose grandson, Pearson is now asking to meet. These men pursued the new finds in Egyptology for science, and it was their dogged efforts that uncovered the Tomb of Tutankhamun in the 1920s. The greatest find in history.

The Dean walks daily through the Petrie Museum, housed in the College and has spent many a quiet hour there. His eyes are solidly open as he reaches for the phone.

A day later has the Dean's black town-car arriving into the famous Highclere Castle drive. Pearson looks through the window, "You can almost see the Downton Abby cast." The Dean glances over, "They have put up with every mummy nut since his grandfather found Tutankhamun's tomb. Please keep that in the forefront."

The present Lord Carnarvon and owners of Highclere, George and Lady Fiona Herbert are greeting at the door.

The group proceeds through the hall into a grand room where long shafts of sun cascade in streams. Pearson is thinking 'it really is like Downton'. They walk through to find comfortable spots in Highclere's richly appointed reading study.

George Herbert and Lady Carnarvon are an energetic couple, well used to conducting the long schedule of social endeavors and maintenance necessary to conserve their vast family house and grounds as the fixture of English tradition for which it has become so famous.

He is casually dressed with wavy dark hair and ready smile and Lady Fiona is an elegant blond who is clear and welcoming. Both give every impression of being equal to any of the myriad and always present tasks.

Soon, they have all settled over tea to discuss Pearson's mummy quest. Pearson gets to the heart of things, "It was one of a cache brought to Paris in the 19th century. We traced it to a donated college collection. It was loaned, gifted actually, to Lord Carnarvon by Maspero in 1907 when he introduced him to Cater. It was here," motions to surroundings, "and apparently helped intrigue his Lordship's interests in Egypt."

Lady Fiona smiles, "All of the original collection, as you know, is gone now. Just a few mementos. The only things we found were these papers in a hidden drawer under the old shaving closet."

She hands the papers to the Dean, who passes them over to Pearson. Lady Fiona motions with her hand, "We can go up and look if you like." The four rise to go exploring.

In an upper bedroom bath, they and a docent squeeze through the narrow basin nook. Pearson is looking at the papers, "Look here, what is this little Hawk?" He points to a small Egyptian Hawk-symbol centered below the ink-pen writing.

Lady Carnarvon looks, "Well, I have no idea", when the Docent pipes up, "I've seen that in the attic. I'm sure I've seen that, inlaid in a panel."

Soon, George Herbert, the Dean, the Docent and Pearson

appear at the long neglected single-wide stairhead into the attic. There's a slightly stale, old furniture smell.

The Docent heads to a paneled seating area built into the wall, "Just here", she points. Pearson heads over and rubs his thumb into the dust. The inlaid symbol appears and the Dean marvels, "Blast(!) Now we're cracking!"

Pearson leans close. His torch ignites the light brown-grained marquetry Horus-hawk inlay contrasting in the dark wood. He blinks with wonder and delight.

The next day's enterprise began at 6:00am. The school videographer and his small crew packed and loaded their van within the hour and followed the Dean's town car through the green country-side from London. They have set up before the attic panel and are ready by 9:30. George and Lady Fiona Herbert, the Dean, Pearson and assistants have observed their cabinet-maker prep the woodwork.

The hardwood framing has been removed and the workman is prying the panel. Lady Fiona is excited, "I think this is the first we've had cameras since the Downton filming."

The workman carefully pressures his bar and the old nails give a squeak. The panel falls free and a mummy lies revealed. The whole group exclaims in awe.

Pearson and an assistant are immediately shining lights inside and everyone is talking excitedly. Pearson stands back and joins the Dean and the Herberts to discuss the situation. People are taking turns approaching the niche for a look.

Lady Fiona, "This is just amazing!" Pearson, smiling, "Yes, there were two notes, one in Maspero's Journal and another, very vague notation in the margin of one of Howard Carter's field notes." George, "Oh, I'm very struck." Waves his hand toward the workers. "I played here when I was boy, a little boy."

Dean reaches out for Pearson's arm, "I'll need to discuss this with the Earl." Looking him in the eyes. Pearson whispers back, "That's fine." He gives them all a sweeping, kind smile excusing himself, "I need to get video." Motions behind him.

After some more back and forth, poking around in the niche, he rejoins their discussion and a decision is made. Pearson helps herd everyone to the stairs so the assistants can have working space to begin bringing the specimen out. Unabated excitement and delight follows the people down.

By noon their caravan is loaded and heading away. Pearson and the Dean ride triumphantly in the town-car. The Dean leans to confer details, "I explained the importance of un-

derstanding this new cult and he has given permission for whatever we need to do to understand this new preservation technique." He looks over with a confident smile, "You have a free hand."

Pearson smiles, "We need to test for these plant alkaloids and the organic process." The Dean smiles proudly, "Well, try to leave it intact as much as possible, old boy."

Pearson leans back into the seat, looking at the green farm fields passing and knowing, that just behind him in the tech van, is an actual, verifiable Tanna specimen. Something genuinely 'new'.

Chapter 2

The rear lab entrance-doors swing jarringly open as Pearson and several assistants enter with the mummy.

Everyone is excited as they trundle in, and Pearson looks over the mummy to lab assistant Sarah with a pleasant smile. She is a spunky, gentle blond who takes her career seriously and is straight-faced as he beams, "It's fully wrapped and undisturbed." She acknowledges with a pleasant smile.

The mummy is set on an exam table and everyone is peeping like birds. Some make notes. The energy begins settling and Pearson studies the sight before him with his fingers against his lips.

It is plainly wrapped, dusty brown but surprisingly uncorrupted. A single piece of aged linen masks the face, the features starkly discernible. The wrappings are taut, with a band tied tightly around the neck and under the arms, and drawn around and into an 'X' across the chest. A rectangular, discolored patch of what had been white gesso seals the intersection of the 'X' and shows Hieratic writing scribbled haphazardly.

Pearson is absorbed looking at it when Sarah adds, "I'll start translating after the x-rays." She signals assistants, waiting by the door, to bring the gurney.

As the mummy is moved, Pearson concludes, "Ok, it's already late. We'll have the preliminary x-rays and translations readied up for the morning. Everyone should be bright and early."

The mummy is wheeled out as clip-boards are clipped and quiet conversations follow the students away.

The next morning is indeed bright and sunny when everyone gathers in the anteroom.

Dr Pearson presides and Sarah begins with a laptop photo presentation, "There's a single, left-facing Hawk" she points to the screen, "above his name, 'Kharis' and this," pointing, "means accursed, an accursed soul. And this, something about 'sleeps in death with his Princess'".

Someone clears their throat but the joke goes unappreciated. Pearson is cross, "This is a pauper's burial if anything."

Sarah continues, "Here are the Tanna glyphs, which say he is trapped or a prisoner of the Tanna, -you see that?" Pearson points, "What's this line?" She puts her finger on her notes, "That's a spell to call to the soul in the afterlife or from the afterlife. Or to keep it there. The rest are typical funerary passages."

Pearson looks at the screen, then stands to address the group, "The x-rays show an undisturbed mummy. Everything in place, nothing inside. No jewelry, no pins. A skirt clasp. There is a batting of some sort under the armpit." Paul is surprised, "Outside the body?"

Pearson, "Yes. Well-" smiling, "are we ready to see what our friend looks like?"

The energy picks up and everyone funnels into the lab where surgical masks and gloves are donned.

The Mummy rests on the exam table, bathed in lights. People file around, wearing gloves but the unaffixed masks lay on their chests. The young assistants realize they are about to do something unique and important. Something that has happened rarely and something they may certainly never see again.

Dr Pearson takes a moment to describe the night Maspero unwrapped the mummy of Ramesses the Great and how the guests and observers reported feeling such reverence and being so moved by the experience. He adds, "In 1974, Egypt issued Ramesses' mummy a passport as 'King of Egypt'; and the French received the mummy, for their conservation treatments, as the Egyptian Head of State with Drum and Signal Corp and Full Military Honors at the airport."

With that preparation, Dr Pearson signals and everyone ties up their masks. The bright examination lamps are rolled into position while he and Sarah lean over with scalpels. They carefully cut the bindings surrounding the gesso patch, Pearson talking aloud for the recorder, "The bindings are knotted inside the plaster, which acts as a seal." Pearson

gently cuts underneath until it frees. They lift the patch away and place it on the specimens cart.

Having been severed, the strapping across what had been the 'X' is lifted away to either side and tugged from under the arms. This loosens the face mask. Everyone looks at each other as the mask is lifted.

A partially exposed face is revealed. The jaw and forehead are tightly wrapped but the dried out eyes stare up and everyone leans to look. There's a momentary murmur that gives way quickly as people begin moving around, reducing the bandages in stages.

The face is carefully unwrapped. Attention goes to a discolored linen bundle under the arm-pit. An assistant pulls at it and it breaks open. He reaches quickly to support it and blurts out, "It's full of leaves."

Paul's eyes pop open, "Look!" Pointing, "Is this Tanna? It's Tanna!"

The dark leaves fill the assistant's hands.

Pearson is smiling, "Must be." Paul is unrestrained, "It's Tanna!" He puts his hand on Pearson's shoulder, looking at him excitedly, "Tanna!" Pearson is smiling, his head bobbing.

The bundle is gathered and placed on the table next to the hip while the bandages are slowly removed.

Finally, Pearson and the rest of the group just slow down and stand; transfixed before the now fully exposed figure.

The skin appears like twisted leathery, dark-red tree bark. The hair has strands of braids tied together at the neck and the eyes stare up as if seeing a far away galaxy. A hush comes over observers as they converse.

Pearson stands, talking to the video, "There's part of a clasp, the skirt is long gone." His interest starts overtaking, "This is not a normal burial. The state of preservation is just fantastic."

They all move in closer. Pearson is hovering over the head with a magnifier. "You can see the eyelashes! This is just--"

Paul is examining the hand, "Look, the finger-prints are perfect!"

Pearson rises erect, "Yes, this body is perfectly intact." Shakes his head, "The preservation -Like a big piece of jerky." He reaches over and pinches the flesh, "It's dense." He stands back, then taps his finger next to the bundle, "This is an astounding discovery. Major discovery."

Paul leans over the face, "Do you think he could have been buried alive? Look at those eyes." Everyone strains to

look. Paul, "What crime could he have committed?"

Sarah stands solemnly looking at the destroyed life before her.

After a long pause, Pearson caps it, "Ok, lets call it for today." The videographer starts to pack up and people move into the next room.

The old night-janitor walks down the empty, upper floor hall near the Office and looks in. Pearson has worked all night and fallen asleep, exhausted at his desk.

Up early, Pearson and assistant Paul sit in Pearson's private study, a more cozy affair adjoining the office just beyond the desk. A photo of the Gesso inscription appears on the laptop.

Pearson discusses his previous night's discoveries, "These incantations were 'sung' in a monotone." Paul, "Like chants."

Pearson, "Yes, I think they hypnotized their victims with these Mantras and magic spells when they drank the Tanna. I've uncovered --" reaches for photos, "what I think are some of the ingredients."

Both men look over photos on the desk while Pearson points, "There's all these plants and bird images here." Paul, "Oh, look. Yes... "

Pearson straightens and proudly delivers a professorial recitation, "Magic spells, essentially hypnotized the person for his eternal stasis, which would then supposedly be made possible by the Tanna brew."

Dr Pearson greets his assistants in the afternoon, who are gathering to hear his plan. Some find seats.

He stands and announces simply, "I've decided not to dissect. We'll want to wash the salts and preservatives out intravenously for testing. The state of preservation is exceptional. All the vascular system should be intact, we'll leave him that way. So I think the hydration chamber. About three weeks, on low barometric. Sterile filter."

The students immediately ready the gurney for the mummy's ride into the Lab.

Three uneventful weeks later, the lab wall-calendar finally shows all three RED Xs and a line to a small mummy drawn with a smile. A date, several of the assistants are excited has arrived.

The hatch on the barometric chamber is opened and the mummy pulled onto the gurney. Male Assistant, "Smells like a locker room." Female Assistant laughs, "An old locker room!" The male smiles as they transport it into the hall. Male Assistant is searching his olfactory, "Kind of like compost." They swing the gurney around to the anteroom door and the Male Assistant follows up, "More like fresh cut weeds." They arrive in the anteroom and transfer it to the exam table. Sarah and Dr Pearson are waiting. Everyone stands back.

The modestly hydrated, gummy figure lays prone. The others leave while Sarah and Pearson talk. His surgical mask lays on his chest.

She looks at the remains, "It's so sad, he was just buried alive and left. Just taken completely out of his life." Pearson, "Yes, but if they hadn't, we'd never have him." Sarah, "What's that smell? Is that the Tanna?" Pearson, "It's the preservatives. It's organic, musty." Sarah looks at the body laid out, "It's depressing. So sad." Shakes her head, "It's like he's the ultimate discarded man."

Pearson pulls on his gloves, "We'll take our samples and desiccate him out again. This will get moldy pretty quick on us." He signals to a gloved assistant at the door to begin their sampling draw. Looks at Sarah, "We can't have that!" The assistant wheels in a cart with vials, syringes and a pan of surgical tools.

Sarah, "I've got translating to do." She goes back to the office she has joked is her 'burial niche': a converted closet off the hall just big enough for a shelf desk and her work. The chair tucks under it at night. The door has to be open in order to have room to sit. Her laptop awaits.

It is nighttime.

Sarah bangs around in the empty lab, putting items away. She returns to the anteroom and looks from the door. An IV-bag and infusion lines droop to a chest-plug in the upper thorax. She walks over. Hair and tissue samples were taken. She sees there are little pocks removed from an arm. She shakes her head, "Violated again."

She gets her laptop and returns. Standing before him, she stares down onto his face, "You were beautiful."

The building is empty and dark and she is alone. A tear fills her eye and a great sadness comes over her. She sits and brings the laptop onto her knees and begins to play at the reading of the ancient Hieratic. "Maybe you'll find some comfort in this."

She begins reading from her screen. She tries to pro-

nounce the ancient syllables.

The mummy's empty eyes sit vacant as her words push at the inflections in the sound. They echo slightly from the bare walls.

While she busies herself with her words, something indistinct happens in the pupils. The sound and her emotion stretches into an aural massage that fills the air. She hears it echoing from the walls. The returning sound seems to sing inside the words, creating a kind of eerie beauty, which she plays with. It's almost a separate song, reaching from within the words, reaching like a feather; and she can see to sing it. Like she might any little tune. Any little lullaby.

She is staring into her laptop, unaware of the moisture flooding the mummy's eyes. The eyes turn suddenly black and the darkness swirls in the eye-sockets. The swirling seems to match her words, amid the droning insistence of her echoing voice.

She comes to the end of her text and breaks into tears, grasping his arm. The black drains from his eyes; and the neck muscles twitch. The Irises pin.

Sarah looks up, when the arm in her hand jerks against her fingers, causing her own reflexes to kick her arms uncontrollably. She sees his face twitch and notices she can't breathe. The whole impossible truth hits like a thunderbolt and she falls violently from the chair in wide-eyed terror, banging against the wall. Her body tells her to run and she jerkily scrambles from the room.

She is screaming in the empty darkness. Her legs won't work and she sprawls onto the slick floor.

Whimpering with shock, she crawls in fear toward the door. The Mummy is making stiff attempts to move in the emblazed anteroom behind her.

Somewhere along the south coast of Spain, six days later, a rust-streaked salvage scow rocks against slimy pier-poles. Frank Keilding, a strong-framed, older white guy, lies on a bench-pad in the Sea-cabin, a sort of private office with a bunk right off the Bridge. The phone buzzes and his hired mate picks up, "Hey Frank, your Ex-"

Frank winces remembering the cheap perfume that only got worse. He reaches for the phone.

An older sedan, its back-seat packed with old laundry sits in an LA liquor-store parking lot. Frank's Ex, with cake make-up, bangles and ratty hair, is throwing her fingers across a tabloid headline: 'Missing Mummies at UCL'. Ex, "Hey Frank, you remember that mummy you said was missing from the

King Tut story?"

Frank sits straight up, his eyes opening wide.

Chapter 3

Three Years Later

Sarah sits in a sunny garden alcove surrounded with hedges. She never renounced her story, no matter the several offers tendered. Tendered on three separate occasions.

A nurse approaches. "Sarah, a family friend, who is not on the visitor's list, says you know him, Mr Kharis, do you know him?"

Sarah replies without expression, "Yes."

She watches the small green leaves of the hedge as a little white butterfly flits from here to there in the afternoon warmth.

Sarah stares forward, "I've been waiting for you."

Kharis, "I would not have revived without you."

She turns to look into his face. He is handsome, with textured skin. She looks closely, "You are beautiful, I was right." She pauses, looking at him, "I have no idea where the Tanna leaves are."

Kharis's dark eyes are kind, "Help me- "

A Grounds-keeper, clipping the greenery some distance away, watches Sarah and Kharis pick up and leave. The name-tag on his monogrammed work-shirt reads: 'Mace'. Alarmed, he yanks out his cell.

Two and half hours later, Sarah and Kharis are being pulled and yanked on the noisy London Underground. Kharis tries to talk over the sound, "I stayed under a bridge for the first two weeks. I just laid there. I couldn't move. Some homeless fed me. Then they took me in at the refugee center."

Sarah calls back, "They had me in hospital and then charged me with theft." Kharis, "I read. And not long ago. They thought you stole me! Your parents had you committed?"

Sarah, "With Pearson's help."

Kharis continues, "I work at the library." Sarah is stunned, "The Library!, the British Library?" Kharis, "Yes, right there." Sarah, "It's almost next door!" Kharis, "Yes, I had no idea where I stumbled away from. I was shocked when I found out. It was right there, a couple blocks off. I have a friend who is a head janitor. He brought me with him. They

all think I'm just another intern." Looks over, "The secret to getting by in London is very clean shirts." They both smile. "I have learned so much there, languages, history. I just live for study. Then in the tabloids section I found, 'Missing Mummy at UCL'!" He looks to her eyes, then smiles gently, "I knew what it was." Sarah, "So here you are." Kharis, "Yes, here I am."

They arrive in the evening to a long flight of stairs leading up between two, large corrugated industrial buildings. It's the gray part of the city and particularly dreary in the very last of the light. Kharis reassures, "It's the attic of a converted warehouse. Cheap, but warm." They climb up and he unlocks the dilapidated wooden service doors at the top.

Dark gables surround them under an old pitched roof. A bed hugs the wall, a dining table and two chairs sit under a single-bulb lamp. She stands by the door while he makes coffee. She notices several half-burned candles in a tray on the table and one by the sink. Kharis waves his hand at an ironing board, "See, clean shirts." She smiles. A rumbly space-heater starts up.

Sarah, "He did think I was insane, but he covered up his missing Highclere mummy. I was so angry, so bitter even, for so long; but I've had time to think this all through. I knew you'd come, at some point. I don't know how, but I knew it."

Kharis looks over, "You saved me. I would have come;" he walks over with the cup, "but I also need your help."

She takes the cup, looking questioningly. Kharis, "I must find Anankhkah. Princess Anankhkah."

Sarah is surprised, "Princess An-ankh-kah?"

Kharis, "I was attached to their House. My family are Royal Guards. My father-" His eyes fog.

She is excited, "You were a guard and she was a Princess?" His reply is bitter, "I was a kid. And she was a kid. And we ran away together. And they murdered her for it."

Sarah is shocked but continues as she sits, "A Princess? Of whom?"

Kharis takes a breath, his eyes swing around. He sits, "It was the 21st Year of the Great King-" he sees her questioning eyes. "Ramesses."

Sarah's mouth drops open, "Ramesses!"

Kharis, "I was apprentice to my father, Senkhare, a high palace guard." Pauses, "He loved me." She can see his dark eyes thinking. He continues, "I was raised in the Royal compound in Waset, you call Thebes, a place of servants. Everyone, everyone was happy."

Kharis becomes lost in thought. Sarah is wide-eyed.

He looks to her, "I haven't talked about this with anyone!" Then continues, "Anankhkah's family lived in the Palace, where my father worked. Her mother was sister of IsetNfret, Great Wife of the King."

They sit opposite each other. Kharis starts looking misty and Sarah thinks to change the subject, "The Tanna, do you dream? I mean -?"

He looks up, "There is no sleep. No dream. The mind stretches, into a long, - single strand."

Sarah stares. Kharis looks at her, "For me, time hasn't passed at all. I am trapped in this foreign land." Motions with his hand.

Sarah studies his expression, then warmly, "How did you meet her?"

Kharis' eyes brighten and his whole, living world simply tumbles forth, "When I first saw her... "

Kharis and his friend burst excitedly through their kitchen, past helpers, off the porch and out through the corridor into the small stabling court where his father awaits in his chariot.

A groomer holds the energetic animal. Senkhare is smiling brightly, "Hurry if you want to get there." The boys jump in and they pull briskly into the street.

The single-horse chariot rides under a mosaic of roofs and raised gardens that crowd into the jumbling palms and tree-tops, pushing from every house and manor. The residential blocks are filled with people, animals and busy domestic clamor, all taking advantage of the brief morning cool.

Stretching away, a verdant carpet hugs the widening Nile where hundreds of colorful barges, sails, banners and bobbing skiffs dot the water. Many channels knife into the opposite bank where wharfs and docking provide harbor and access for the web of inland waterways.

Shimmering in the distance, the Karnak complex shines like a necklace.

Their chariot rides out along the Nile. Crowds are building along the way and soon becomes packed on either side before the Temple. Senkhare points ahead, "His Majesty has arrived."

Ramesses' great Pleasure Barge is tied at the Quay amid an explosion of intricate patterns and color wrapping the bows and sterns on dozens of Nobles' ships and bobbing river-craft. All snuggled together in a huge tie-up around the debarked Royal Barge. Only the crews are left on decks under their flags and banners.

Kharis looks over to the sweeping polished-gold Stern-post that curves high above the crowd. Its vividly carved Papyri stem-cap is a pale yellow-gold and green. The ship is so large, it moves in the current like a backdrop before the hundreds of straining onlookers. The broad sail-spar is tied around smartly, its support lines reaching from the mast like an upside down fan.

The oarsmen stand at attention along the bow, their gold trimmed and black ebony oars held straight in the air. The smell of foods reach from its galley somewhere beneath the delightfully curved deck cabins, all festively inlaid with precious woods and lacquer. The polished lounging decks lay over its sides and the stern-box has six, huge rudder-paddles faced in white Ivory that are pulled up from the water. Kharis notices the proud expressions of the Ruddermen and Pilot. The prow sweeps forward in banded and vivid colors and its Papyri Stem-post stands like a crown against the slippery river.

The arriving chariots are converging on the Quay and Senkhare turns into the Avenue of the Sphinxes. Kharis and his friend are surprised and glance to each other as horses are forbidden on the Avenue of the Sphinxes, let alone such a spectacular procession of chariots. It is a major reception and people crush in to gawk at the long parade. Mothers point out interests for their children's excited eyes.

Kharis looks around. Usually, only high officials and the rich can afford chariots. And this is more chariots than anyone has seen. Every notable in Waset, and many visitors are here and Kharis wonders if there's even room on the Temple grounds.

He leans to his friend, "They saw the Pharaoh himself just moments ago." His friend points to the dung-piles, "He didn't have to ride back of all these horses!" Kharis cups his mouth, "How's he gonna get back?" Both smile but Senkhare gives them look and their faces straighten. Then Senkhare leans, "Maybe two boys will have to sweep." They all smile.

Each perfectly carved Ram Sphinx along the Avenue is an endowment and Kharis and his friend compete reading the important names held under each monument's jaw. They turn right just before the fabulously adorned facade with its eight furling flags. Kharis looks back down the lines of Sphinxes, drowning in people, to the glut of masts and banners hugging the bank. They pass around through the wall-gate into the concourse line. The whole Precinct grounds of Amun-Ra is a spangled sea of people and horses. Kharis finds the sudden waft of manure a pleasant addition, reminding him of the Pharaoh's vast stabling complex. They ride between rows of char-

lots drawn in careful order of rank. Their principles gingerly filling the busy walk behind the parked vehicles. Horses are nervously settling. The air is alive with excitement.

Rounding the gaggle of empty chariots parked to either side, the expected genesis for this grand event confronts Kharis' eyes.

Many Hittite Chariots are lined up against the building under the high South wall. The whole magnificent Hypostyle addition was built by Ramesses' father, Seti the Great and it's north wall spills forth his many victories over the peoples of foreign lands. Ramesses' aggrandizement on his South Wall brashly boasted the defeat of the very Hittites now standing just below its extravagant carvings, but workmen have erased the Hittite scenes. Kharis sees the satisfaction across their faces and knows this is exactly Ramesses' plan. He had insulted them on this very spot when the wall displayed Hittite warriors under foot.

This day is different. After 70 years of war and stalemate, Ramesses signed the world's first Peace Treaty at Kadesh in Syria, the long bloodied ground of so many battles, and its text is newly carved, here into the proud stone of Ramesses' sacred South Wall. It will be unveiled, for all the world to see, before the sun is high this day.

White flaxen sheathing billows from scaffolding across the face of the new carving and colorful banners and pullropes await the ceremony.

Their chariots are the expected broad, three-man Hittite style but these are extra fancy, parade chariots. For the Hittites, the great Peace Treaty is proof of their equality with Egypt and they plan to make a show of it.

Starkly carved bronze panels sweep over the fronts with garish, pointy Hittite Sun images and high-antlered deer. They are hung with ornamental noise-makers and black and red plumes stick up from the carriages. Carved Lion Faces stud everything. Kharis' eyes catch the Hittite Lion insignia on every Stem-cap; and notices the horses are stocky and more muscular than Egypt's own desert runners. The colorfully dressed handlers are standing sternly in their long tunics, cone-shaped Hittite helmets and banded skirts.

Kharis thinks to keep a clear expression. Their dark, brutal Hittite colors are no match for the shining joy of Waset all around them, and his father pulls along the front of their line. Their horses chafe and snort against the proximity and simmering social tension. Kharis looks into their faces.

This is the enemy. The long time enemy, here for peace. The Pharaoh has opened his arms to them and this is the third

group of Hittites to visit Waset, the true Capitol and ancient religious center of Egypt.

Ramesses has already entertained them at the Summer Palace in the far north. The Summer Palace is a natural imposition between the vast Hittite Empire of Anatolia and the Aegean, and Ramesses' new, expanded Egypt sweeping it's arms along the whole of the Mediterranean seaboard to Syria.

The people have begun calling the Summer Palace, 'the House of Ramesses', or PiRamesses, and is becoming the new Capitol for this new Egypt; and is where he has allowed the Hittites a permanent Embassy. The luxury city being built there is seated in the center of a whole new Egyptian world that spreads to new lands and new peoples, far away from the ancient Valley of the Nile and her ancient Cities.

Waset, the old Capitol, the City of Joy, the 'City of the Scepter' with Karnak and all its wealth, is suddenly in the out-of-the-way south. But the old Egypt has been plagued with endless Hittite wars and the world aches for peace. Everyone wants peace. And this new Treaty stabilizes Ramesses' northern border.

Egyptian and Hittite Warriors stand casually on either side of the South Entrance and Kharis counts their number as exactly even. No one is heavily armed on this 'Peace Mission' but their dress and showy affectations are strongly apparent.

Senkhare pulls the chariot in to their normal place nearest the Hall. The gathering Officials are finely and ostentatiously dressed. Gold necklaces and pectorals contrast white Flaxen with sharply tasteful reds and greens cutting through belts and sashes. Skirts and robes have embroidered gold or colored flashing. There's a gentle, sunny breeze.

Leaving his father to greet and weave the carefully distinct social fabric respecting the other arriving adults, Kharis and his friend find their way though the thickening crowds toward the South Door.

There's a commotion around two huge Hittite war horses, twice as big as any in Egypt, being shown just to the side of the Gate. Many people stand arguing sharp interests. They were developed for heavy war-wagons, and are black, muscular with very long hair flowing near the ground from their tiger-striped ankles. They are haltered by four handlers with red-silk bridles. No one has ever seen anything like it. Kharis, "I've heard of this." His friend just stands with an open mouth. The horses are energetic, one rears. There are many small iron animal effigies tied in rows in their manes, stags and bulls. More noise-makers. Kharis sees they are there to show off an abundance of metals, and elbows his friend to leave. They turn into the Gate.

Singing birds fly excitedly in and out from their many nests in the roofing above, and Kharis whispers as they enter, "The Great Hall is the largest single room in all the world!" He was impressing his friend but they are quickly swept along into the always euphoric heights of the yawning interior. Hushed voices echo in the dark reaches.

The huge and brilliantly colored Hypostyle columns tower above as hundreds of excited visitors and foreign luminaries, in strange and colorful dress, push through from all directions. They find themselves suddenly engulfed in a gigantic magical garden of carved and painted Palms and Papyri. Awed people turn in circles under a forest of endlessly descending Hieroglyphs pouring the history and greatness of Egypt down upon them.

The rustle of fine fabrics and odd mix of perfumes add new sensations for Kharis and his friend, who make their way to the front, along the giant Entrance Pylons at the head of the Central Nave. They nearly bump into two snobby Noble boys walking together in splendid dress, and each holding a single Lotus fashionably low to affect their most masculine, stylish posture. Kharis half-smiles as he passes around them, "I'll not live in flowers." They wrinkle their mouths in disapproval as if smelling the very air, the flowers are designed to subvert.

As they turn through the Pylon, Kharis' eyes swing back to his friend, whispering, "Save me from such 'High Birth'!" His friend's gleaming eyes smile back. The Pylon is a stream of color and flaxen, and awe-struck eyes.

They push past the Entrance where the Great Colossus of Ramesses faces the Nile and into the fore-court, just as the long Court Procession is moving through the Blue Tiled Hall. The Procession moves in a paced formality, along the packed and bejeweled gallery that ignites the Hall in reflections, glimmering along the dark blue tiles like swimming golden fish.

Onlookers bow in reverence as the Royal Procession passes. A beaming Kharis stares intently for her eyes, hidden under the sweeping Black and Blue-Lazuline liner that shades her gaze like a fan.

He reemerges down the line by his parents, daring her to notice. Her radiating beauty is a mask, but he stood out like a jewel.

A glimmer crosses her eye as she finds him in the line. His father pokes him in the ribs.

Envoys, in sparkling dress, line the Throne Room as Ramesses and his glittering entourage reach their station. Queens Nefertari and IsetNfret stand next to the young Mery-

tamun and BintAnath. Nebettawy stands with brothers, Khaemwaset and the younger Merenptah. Queen-Mother Tuya stands behind Ramesses, next to Vizier Paser.

The Priests, with their shaved heads and leopard skins, stand in ranks to the side. Musicians and songstresses align on the opposite in troves of flowers.

A singularly dignified figure, among the foreign embassies, pays special notice to the young Anankhkah and calls attention to an aid. The aid's colluding eye moves to focus.

As surly if an unknown plan brings day from night, Kharis and his friend run crouched along the low white-washed wall surrounding the Women's Garden. Music and relaxed conversations mix with scattered laughter.

Anankhkah and two friends notice the bobbing heads moving toward the Gate. One of the girls runs to look over, and excitedly beckons the others.

They pop over, looking down. The boys are creeping to the gate for a look.

All three girls call sternly down on them. "What are you doing there!" Kharis slips forward off his feet, chest first onto the embankment. The girls laugh.

Pretending not to be a Princess and he, pretending she is but a servant, Anankhkah scolds, "If they catch you, -you'll be beaten!"

Kharis is Peacock proud, "They'll never catch me!"

Someone calls for her and Kharis scampers back along the wall looking like a knock-kneed toad. Anankhkah hardly contains her laugh.

Anankhkah spends evenings by the Gate and her mother regularly squints from her porch. The night is always the same. Two dark silhouettes move and converse under stars and moonlight.

Kharis and Anankhkah rest their arms on the wall, looking out over the black Nile, sliding along in the dark. An even moonlight rests on everything. Kharis, "The Cities of the Dead own the West, half the land!" Anankhkah smiles, "We have our half-" Kharis looks along the bank, "Yes, but we spend half our lives busied with the dead." Looks at her, "I haven't time for that." Her mother calls her in. Anankhkah looks then glances with a laugh, "You will at some point." She scampers off.

Anankhkah comes onto the porch and her mother chides, "You'll wear out the moon, you and your young friend." Anan-

khkah, "Mother!" Her mother throws her fingers toward the hallway.

The girls collude excitedly in the sunny garden when her mother walks by. She turns quickly, "What are you talking about?!" The girls laugh. Her mother walks away smiling, and the girls immediately dive into secrets and titter as she leaves. Anankhkah is smiling but knows her mother is disapproving.

Of course, at night, Anankhkah is found by the Gate. Her mother just has to look.

Their elbows on the wall, they twirl Lotus flowers looking through the dancing petals at a moving boat on the river. It jogs intermittently. Without a word, both watch a donkey on the opposite bank. Kharis, "Look at the legs!" She laughs, as the donkey legs flit and flicker like broken sticks. He is spinning it faster, "Oh, look!" She starts spinning it and the petals suddenly seem to hang motionless from the fast-spinning blossom. She lights up, "Like a necklace!" Kharis, "Like the wheels of a chariot."

Her mother looks out and calls into the dark.

Anankhkah squishes her lip and Kharis looks around. "My father said something." Anankhkah looks, "What?" Kharis, "Nothing really, but your father must have said something." Anankhkah looks him, squishes her lip again and heads toward the house.

Anankhkah is up early and steals away in the cool morning. Her girl friend leads her down to the river where Kharis and his friend are waiting. Anankhkah looks back to see if they are seen.

Anankhkah's Mother knows she snuck off. She's looking at the Gate, "He used to sneak in, now he just walks up, pretty as you please." Anankhkah's father looks up from the table.

The two couples walk near each other along the river path. Beckoning date-palms lean over, framing the flat, glistening expanse of the Nile beyond. The air is crisp.

A tall heron starts to lift from the papyri. Kharis's friend runs to grab for it. Both boys chase but miss. The girls run too, but chastise them.

Laughing, they walk down and look across the river. The wind is but a breath, so the morning traffic has subsided leaving just two down-stream barges, with their several sail-ors, moving with the current in the bright sun. They see a kid hanging off the side, letting his silly smile ride just above the surface. He is smiling at his wiggly reflection. Kharis and Anankhkah start smiling and watch as the Barge

Pilot steps over the cross-beams, behind the kid, and yanks him up. Kharis' friend points and laughs. They all watch the barges move off. The kid is looking back.

The noon heat is dreamy and the couples find spots.

Anankhkah and Kharis recline on the bank. He sits closely, searching her face.

The water casts colorful reflections which ripple across her skin and contrast the blue sky and white clouds. Her eyes are modestly colored and gold and lapis beads are strung in her hair.

Kharis marvels at her beauty and reaches to caress. His finger slowly traces the line of her cheek. The Nile reflects in her eyes as she looks to Kharis, who whispers, "Time could stop, right here. Forever."

She is touched and smiles, "My parents think we should stay in our little bowl."

Kharis, "Your golden bowl." She glances, "-golden prison. They were hoping to make me a Great Wife like my aunt." Kharis is smiling, "A Queen -"

She looks out, "After they realized I would not be another of his ducklings they started pushing my brother."

Kharis laughs excitedly, "He doesn't like girls!" Anankhkah, "My father thinks girls are trade things, like goats."

Kharis is smiling, "a beautiful goat." She stares at the water, "He's like a merchant."

She gazes across to the flock of geese silently landing on the mirror in the distance. A King-fisher skims along and disappears. "I wish I could fly. Fly away."

Kharis, "To the Land of Punt!?"

Anankhkah looks, "The Land of Spices." She starts smiling, "Where people eat too much!"

Kharis smiles excitedly, "We'll go to the Min Festival-" makes grabbing motions toward his crotch, "and sneak away on camels, to the Eastern Sea."

She frowns, "I want to fly!" Kharis, "So do I!" He jumps up with his arms out. Anankhkah jumps up and they run along the bank weaving in and out with their wings outstretched until Kharis trips and falls head-over into the water.

Anankhkah doubles up laughing. Her feet sink into the cold mud and she starts sliding. She tries pulling a foot up and sees Kharis, who is chest deep with green muck on his head.

Anankhkah lays on her belly at the window looking up at the Moon. Her sister approaches, "Oh, she has it bad." The girl is smiling and Anankhkah smiles, then turns back and

looks across the sky, "The night is filled with nectar-" Her sister lights up, "Ewoo-" Anankhkah rolls back, and the two of them explode together, "Ewoooo-o-o-o-o!!"

Anankhkah sits beading. Her mother is knotting. Once again she hears the singing beads make that sound on their delicate threads. Like faraway birds. It's her familiar song when the beads go well. Then the silky strapping of her mother's knots cuts through.

Her mother is tying and twisting her knots, "You're too selfish with your affections, love can steal your mind - along with your heart."

Anankhkah minds her beads. Her mother casts a glance, "And you have a different path than this boy."

Anankhkah continues her beads against the silky annoyance of her mother's knots.

Her parents are away to Temple and the morning is left at peace. Anankhkah leads Kharis into the shining pool.

Splashing water falls through the rich fragrance of hanging vines and flowers, casting constant ripples over the glistening surface.

She feels the transparent pleats of her bodice pull across her skin.

They giggle as they turn against each other in slow circles, she sings under her breath. Birdsong drifts from the blossoming branches.

He leans over, letting the bridge of his nose caress the skin of her cheek. Barely touching. He sees the water-lilies reflect in her eyes.

Their motion slows, and slows further until, finally, the garden reaches out, and they disappear, into the rapturous color and embracing vines...

Chapter 4

Her mother calls Anankhkah into the dining hall where her father awaits. He motions her to sit and reaches for her hand, "You are my feather, my sweetest one." She is surprised, this is serious.

He smiles gently, then speaks, "There are times-", his eyes open, shining, "when life has it's way with us." She re-

leases his hand and he follows sternly, "We have committed your marriage to the Hittites."

Anankhkah, "No!"

Father, "You will be Queen of the Hittite Sun and bring peace." She starts to shake, "I will not do this!"

Her mother, "You will do this- "

Anankhkah, "Mother, -" Her mother stands, "It will bring peace; and we have pledged it."

Anankhkah is shocked and filling with tears. She tries to gain her bearing, "I cannot go."

Her Father is loud, "You will go to Piram where Ramesses, himself, will ward you."

Anankhkah throws herself to her mother's waist. "Mother, this is Ramesses spite!" Her mother, "We have pledged it." Anankhkah is pleading, "Mother!"

Her father is tapping the table. His face angers, "This is peace with the Hittites!" Anankhkah, "Father, I cannot do this, I have given my heart to Kharis." Father, "Kharis!! - that is over!"

Anankhkah, "Father- "

His eyes are glaring, "that is child play."

She sees his rising anger, "Father -"

His face reddens, "You are no longer a child. You will proceed from Piram to Amuru. I have sworn it!"

Anankhkah, "I will not do this fath- "

He jumps up exploding, "You must do this! The Kings are exchanging girls. Ramesses is taking a Hittite and you are going to Hattusili! The Black Sand demands it!" He slams his hand down, echoing off the walls.

Her face drains, "Father- "

He stares down on her, "You have no choice! You have no choice my daughter," his voices softens, "you have no choice in this."

She swings her head, seeing a thousand empty paths to nowhere.

At just two hours, her clandestine message is answered. Kharis drives up on his father's one-horse chariot. Anankhkah runs from the Gate with two bundles and jumps on board. He cracks the whip and they ride away as servants run out to stop them.

The horse full gallops straight through the streets, dogs bark and people yell.

He reels out into the main road, slowing only to dodge and bully slow carts and shocked pedestrians. Panicked goats run against the wall to escape.

They hit the outer blocks. Fleeting curses disappear as they roll through a thinning congestion and out past the last of the buildings. Just sparse corrals and the dark eyes of penned animals pass along behind.

She holds on as they ride, free in the wind.

He picks it up and the air begins blowing. Anankhkah yells over, "Where are we going?!" Kharis yells back, "The Land of Punt!" She laughs and hugs in knowing they are heading for the Eastern Sea via the camel trains from Gebtu.

She leans up, "You didn't wait for the Festival!"

He brings the horse to a canter, and she pulls her dark-blue wrap around her. Kharis yells softer, "That's ok, I'll be your Min." She is tender, "And I'll be your Isis- "

Both are smiling. The chariot races past the last gate marker, her blue wrap blowing in the wind and they disappear into the swirling dust.

A Two-horse Chariot rides hard out along the Nile. Senkhare pulls to a stop and looks to his left. Teams of cattle and their driver drag a ship up along the edge of the Nile.

He looks to the right across to the empty inland fork. The horses pull against his reins. He twists his mouth and pulls the team around to head back.

Kharis and Anankhkah have been alternatively trotting and cantering for the last hour and finally see the black shadow of Gebtu rising from the horizon. They have come on the famous outpost late, and ride in on the south approach.

A jagged line of eerie green outlines main-street in a sea of black rooftops. Muffled bar-songs compete in the bustling disquiet.

He leans to her, "We'll keep out of their eyes."

Kharis takes the chariot around the secondary separating town buildings from a sprawling granite storage yard. The backs of domiciles, with their sleeping flocks, tuck into palm trees on their left and hundreds of massive blocks, stacked in rows, disappear into the darkness on their right.

Kharis arrives to a livery at the far end. They pull in the back and when the liveryman sees a Chariot, with its two well-dressed occupants, he bows low.

Liveryman, "Welcome to Gebtu, young Lord." They dismount and lash the reins. Kharis instructs gingerly, "I'll just brush him out."

The horse is lathered and the man bows his head while showing the way. Thinking they're exactly what they are, two runaways, he glances around in wide-eyed worry.

They emerge onto the street. Gebtu's still air lays heavy from the river, approaching less than a league away; and laden branches sag from every wall.

The night is alive with strange characters. Traders, dealers, thieves and henchmen watch the young couple make their way down the opposite side. White eyes glimmer from every face. People stumble in and out of warmly lit doorways. Squeaky reeds ring along under exploding laughter and thumps.

Kharis and Anankhkah, she under her Blue Wrap, cross around a slow string of camels toward a side street. He points, "The Temple of Min is here."

A beggar with no legs mans the corner. His eyes stare from a weathered face. Kharis leans to whisper, "He probably runs the whole town." Anankhkah's eyes glance and Kharis sees her smile under the blue material.

Down the street, squarish, tall Pylon Gates come into view. High walls extend to either side, enclosing a vast property. High relief carvings adorn the doorway.

As they cross under, Anankhkah looks up at the extended vulture wings and solar-disk stretching across the lintel.

The interior is a Temple town. Dark abodes crowd together forming side streets of uneven passageways. A straight processional leads down to the Temple.

The massive limestone facade before them is a jungle of colored reliefs. Two giant bull's horns reside over the Entrance and two braziers burn by the walk. Two lonely Priests sit their station to tend them.

Kharis and Anankhkah walk deliberately. The Priests don't question their entry.

Two torches light the dark silence within. They are confronted with the imposing 20 foot, gleaming gilt and bejeweled statue of the God Min and his terse expression.

Only the gentle slapping of torch flames breaks the still.

Min wears a Sun-Disk Flat Crown with two high plumes, lightning-bolt patterned Warrior's Skirt and powerful, long Flail, held high overhead. Behind is a pole from which a tent drapes to the floor. The ceiling is a field of stars.

His left hand holds his starkly pronounced and thick, six-and-half foot phallus.

Next to him is a large Ark Chest with three vertical, five foot carved-stone lettuce bunches standing from the lid. Kharis notices the fruit and grain offerings sitting on a stone bench.

The whole left wall displays two gigantic Horus falcons

that face each other in painted relief.

A white bull extends across the back corner, from left to half the rear wall, its horns sweep across the back. Motifs of Wheat, Reeds and Lettuces fill the surfaces under descending Hieroglyphs and Cartouches.

The opposing wall displays Isis, as the Queen, facing Min and the Pharaoh with offerings.

Kharis looks up at the statue with a beckoning smile, motioning his finger back and forth between himself and the God. Anankhkah laughs as they head around toward a rear door.

She points with a smile, "This is my home." He peers in, "The Sanctuary of Isis."

Anankhkah is smiling as they enter the inner sanctum. A waist-high wall in the center of the room has an open entrance. It encloses a plinth-like Alter before the statue of Isis, who holds a suckling child. Isis seems to glow in the torch-light.

Flowers, grains and little cups of seeds rest on the offerings table. Anankhkah kneels before the Alter.

She raises her up-turned palms forward, "Gracious Mother- " She bows her head and mouths private words.

A bed of blankets soon finds them exhausted on a partially covered terrace. Settling in the comfort of his arms, Anankhkah whispers, "They were gone all day to Temple." Kharis whispers back, "Making their 'deal'." Her eyes are heavy, "I didn't want their life..." Her voice trails away.

The starry night stretches above, tucking them into its syrupy sleep.

Anankhkah opens her eyes in the clear morning air. A simple dull-purple sun-cover waves gently against the blue sky. Kharis is resting on his elbow watching her.

She smiles, "It's late." She casts her gaze to Kharis - who whispers, "I've been watching you sleep."

She begins thinking of their situation, "We're free." Kharis smiles brightly, "Yes, we're free."

He sits up, "And I've got to get passage." Anankhkah, "To the eastern sea- "

Kharis, "To Punt!" She purses her smile, "On camels."

Kharis, "Can't fly!" He gets up and takes a big, full breath with a big, shining smile. Anankhkah is smiling at the sight of him, "I'll be here."

He cinches his clasp and smiles into her bright eyes before bouncing down the stairs. Anankhkah rolls with her blanket, smiling at the sweet morning that embraces her.

Kharis strides up the Processional toward the exit. Seven Nuns scurry past in a line through sporadic groups of pious pilgrims making their slow progress. The side passageways are filled with priests and women tending work.

He pops from the Entrance Pylons turning left.

Busy shops, busy people, delivery carts and oxen, colorful rugs and flying banners weave through trees and the mercantile discourse lining the streets and stretching for blocks.

Kharis is immediately inundated by children and hawkers.

A hawker begs loudly, "We have amethysts and emeralds, cheapest price." His competitor frowns, "We have every color. Deep greens, light greens, blues, purples. Onyx! Red from the east."

Kharis, "No, no- " He moves to avoid them. A man in dark clothing sees him and starts following. He watches Kharis weave in and out through the crowd.

Kharis comes to an open workshop where a brilliant sheet of electrum is being applied on the face of a grand chariot. It rests chest high on the open floor and the master chases his pattern with quick strokes in a staid pace. Two guards watch along with the several street observers transfixed by his mastery.

The man next to Kharis points, "The metal is butter in his hands." Looks at Kharis, "We supplied the Ebony." Kharis smiles, "From Punt?" The man is all business, "From the south. Do you need ebony? We- "

Kharis, "No" and then moves on into the street when the dark-dressed man steps up, "You'll be pestered without mercy. I am Menemhab. I can find what you want."

Kharis walks across and past a shop with caged panthers outside. The man follows with him. Kharis, "I am not looking to buy." Two panthers pace nervously back and forth. One screeches loudly. Menemhab is exuberant, "I can get best prices on everything. Prices cheaper than the makers themselves. Jewels, stone, silver, gold, -Ivory, Ebony, -spices. -Myrrh, Kapet."

Kharis stops. "I - am not looking to buy!"

Menemhab opens his eyes, "Why are you here?! This is the crossroads of the world." Sweeping gesture, "This is- "

Kharis interrupts, "Where are the captains of the trains? To the east. (?)"

Menemhab, "Oh, I know the greatest. I know the safe passage. South or north. I can help. I live in the yards." Puts his hand up, "I swear to it."

Kharis is judging him. Menemhab, "No one knows better.

If you want cities, north, goods and trade, south." Menemhab opens his face for an answer. Kharis is still judging. Menemhab's eyes beg brightly, "Have you eaten?" He sees Kharis is halfway to yes and smiles excitedly, "We can eat and then go to the yards. Yes?" Nodding, "Yes?"

Kharis, "Y-yes. But only a little." Menemhab breaks into a full smile, "Good, good- "

They step across toward a food stall. Kharis, "South." Menemhab, "South is best."

A black vulture looks down from an empty sky. Two men walk like ants on the parched white road.

As they come over the rise, the road forks away into the flat wastes beyond and thousands of camels, troops and people are milling slowly in the camel-yards below. Camel dung and baying assault the senses.

Kharis is shocked, "It's bigger than I imagined-." Menemhab smiles. They walk down into the sea of animals spreading out around the dry, rolling slopes to either side.

Kharis and Menemhab walk past several camel-yards and arrive to an individual train-master. Scores of camels stand in the sun. Some rest on their legs and fat bellies, chewing. Nubian Troops and camel-drivers sit under open tents.

Menemhab calls out, "Sef! This man needs passage, for two."

Sef is a big man with a red bandana that almost covers the curly hair on his big head. He has thick silver rings hanging from thick ears and an easy broad smile from his thick lips. Menemhab, "With wife."

Sef booms, "Does that mean three?" Kharis steps up, "Just two." They shake to talk.

Kharis, "Hers will be covered." Sef issues a commanding response, "Of course."

Kharis smiles and motions, "We are down at the Temple."

Sef booms, "Min is God of the East, of the desert. The God of travelers and of the riches of east. We go the Southern Door and avoid the Cave Peoples. We have 60 Nubians and travel by night, three and half days." Splays hand, "The stars will laugh!" Leans forward to look into Kharis' eyes, "You will be safe."

Kharis, "Menemhab says you leave tonight." Sef smiles broadly, waving his hand, "We bring the Nile to the Sea."

Kharis is nodding and looks at him, "Sef, -what's your real name?" Sef looks back, "Pabasa." Both smile.

Pabasa leans in, "The Eastern Sea is huge," looks at Kharis in the eyes, "it will take you anywhere." Kharis

tilts a smile, "Bigger than the Nile?" Pabasa is expansive, "It takes a full day to cross under sail! It goes from the Green Sea" sweeps widely with his big arm, "to the end of the world!"

Kharis feeds him, "To Punt?!"

Pabasa shakes both hands in the air, "To lands and peoples beyond count." Waves hand, "Beyond measure! You'll need five life-times to see a Tear of Wadjet." Pointing to his eye.

Kharis has a solid smile, "Good. Make ready." They shake, eye to eye. Menemhab is nodding and smiling.

Kharis makes his way back to town and arrives through the Pylon, noticing the three ancient limestone colossal Min statues facing the Temple from inside the far wall. They are smooth and abstract, and almost appear not Egyptian they are so old. The sight slows him.

He races through the Temple and bounds the stairs, emerging onto the terrace. Anankhkah is sitting with a woman, a Priestess.

Kharis, "We leave at dark." Anankhkah smiles, "I have everything packed." Kharis, "We'll need desert robes."

She motions to her companion with a smile, "We've seen to that." Her friend smiles. Kharis nods to her and sits.

Anankhkah, "We were just looking at that cloud."

The sky is empty but for a single, long arcing white streak with a slight golden hue. "We think it's the Crescent Moon of Khonsu the Traveler promising good fortune."

Kharis smiles, "I thought a knife, cutting old ties."

A fat barge in vivid colors sits on a slip off the wharf at Waset. Workers climb like monkeys on its high mast, lashing lines. Six head-shaved young Priests line the gangway. Three shaved Priests stand in the boat guarding two colorfully painted chests and a long strapped bundle.

Anankhkah's father paces the gangway and turns anxiously as Senkhare arrives.

He strides up quickly, "Lord, Paser awaits an Amaunet Officiate."

The Father snaps his gaze to the side, "We could miss them."

A bright green emerald fills Anankhkah's eye as they look at gems in a shop. She looks at Kharis through the green

stone and smiles, "I've turned you into an emerald." He sees she's being silly, "The great magician." She smiles brightly, then looks outside at a donkey, "I've changed you," pointing. Kharis looks around to the donkey. "Oh! My true nature!" She looks up with a smile.

The variety of delicate color provides needed divergence. There are dozens of stones arranged by color and shade. They pick through racks and giggle with the owner who puts two quail-egg sized Rubies over his eyes and bats his big eye-brows.

They soon bid the man farewell and begin heading slowly back where they stop before another shop. Kharis looks into the fading sun, stabbing through branches, "Last light. I'll have to get the things to Pabasa."

Anankhkah's father is squinting into the last rays, which die away in glimmers. He blinks, looking across the river. It's a field of slippery, undulating gold under the blazing Western sky.

He motions with his fingers to a young Priest who runs up to look down the loading dock for signs of a chariot.

Time stretches and people are tying up. The young priest stands looking while boat-owners and deck-hands pass around him to leave. Soon he is alone.

Twilight descends and the oarsmen, dock-workers and Priests wait silently. The river laps. Only the slight eddies slapping the sides of the barge are heard.

Everyone comes to sharp attention as the expected Chariot arrives. Two very-well dressed Priests disembark.

The Amun, Vizier Paser and his Amaunet Officiate stride down the dock. Only the Amaunet have the remaining Tanna and even the Pharaoh has to pull strings to obtain it.

All but her father bow low. An obvious deference is accorded the revered Paser, a man of 40 in his prime. He is life-long best friend and main adviser to the Pharaoh himself, and treasurer and tax collector for the whole nation. He sees to trade and foreign tribute, has steered the negotiations with the Hittites and is a main architect of the grand plan. His fame is unrivaled.

Delicate braiding in Paser's hair forms a design of Papyrus-sheaves that follow along the sharply defined cut to his shoulders. He is tastefully dressed with a confident air and shows an easy comfort with command. Only curt acknowledgements proceed. They gain the plank and a simple wave of the hand begins their mission.

The oars stand with a drumming thump. The Dockmen loose

lines and the barge is set adrift. It draws into the current and the oars spread like unfolding wings.

A Temple donkey has made a convenient porter for Kharis as he arrives to the Caravan in the darkening twilight. Pabasa is busy at the line of camels, setting up a woman's canopy. It is a wicker skeleton that will be covered in airy sheaths. Kharis starts unloading and Pabasa's white eyes look from his shoulder, "We leave in the hour." Kharis sets down his things, "She's taking Solace with Isis."

Pabasa is adjusting the strapping and turns around, "Everyone is ready, we need to leave, young friend." He motions, "The camels are up." Kharis glances. The camels move nervously in the dark like stalky gray trees.

Kharis, "She's ready, I'll bring her."

Pabasa pulls at the rigging and the camel bleats. He looks over while pulling the strap, "Women run on different time. They will tell the Gods to wait." Glances, "You will learn this."

Kharis pulls the donkey and leaves out toward town. Pabasa calls after, "We're all packed. Tell her, quick, quick!"

Kharis can only hear the words echo as he trots his donkey over the dry ruts in the chilling air.

The river disappeared while the Priests make their way in the night. Billowing braziers chisel bronze torchlight across determined expressions as the intense party oars strongly through the black water.

Kharis enters the Temple and almost misses seeing her in the expanse of the Sanctuary. A small, dark figure invisible in her blue shawl.

He is bright, "In four days we'll be sailors! Last chance to go back." Anankhkah turns, smiling serenely, "I'm not going back." Her eyes fill his mind, "I've never been happier."

He whispers gently, "We need to leave, they're ready." Anankhkah smiles, "Just a moment. Come." She offers her hand and they kneel at the altar.

Fire drips from torches as the Priests pace quickly along their cart. Horns and heads of trudging oxen flicker

and dance in their steamy breath.

Kharis and Anankhkah are kneeling before the Alter. Only the soft slap of torch flames lift the silence.

She finishes prayers and they stand. Her beautiful smile floats in his eyes as she takes his hands, "We start our life together-" He is looking into her eyes and up along her brow, when she tilts her head with twinkle. Kharis smiles brightly.

Senkhare and her father appear at the door. Small noises echo as Priests enter from the back and side.

Both Kharis and Anankhkah are shocked, but mostly saddened for their pursuers. They have decided on a different path and these people can't even guess it.

The Priests advance rather quickly, as does her father, surrounding them. Sensing something odd, Kharis becomes alarmed. The Priests grab Kharis who starts to fight but he is clubbed from behind. Anankhkah's screams echo into darkness.

When he comes to, his arms are tied behind him at the elbow and he is held tightly by four priests. The Alter plinth has been pulled around and a deep hole has been dug beneath it. Priests are lining it with bricks. Dazed, he tries to fight against them.

Her distraught father washes his hands in a fancy hand-basin and yells at her, "These were kings, -you went against, Kings!"

He throws the water violently off his hands in tears and wild-eyed anger and leaves. The Amun and Amaunet Overseers are standing off by a tall tripod holding a burner and brass cup.

Anankhkah is in shock, perhaps drugged as the Priests intone incantations. Kharis struggles. Her father is yelling back in anguish, "I have other daughters!"

He sees her eyes roll as she receives the Tanna brew. The sight streaks across his horror-stricken eyes.

Sarah's aghast expression shimmers in the candle-light.

"The next thing I remember,-" Kharis raises his eyes, "is you."

They sit opposite each other, their forearms rest loosely on the table.

Chapter 5

Sarah wakes in his covers and looks to see Kharis looking back from his place on the couch. They both smile.

Soon the bustle of breakfast and coffee matches the excited sunny stream pouring through the window.

Sarah pokes a sizzling pan, "You want Anankhkah, I want revenge." Kharis looks up, "I'm concerned about what your Dr Pearson will do."

She sets her plan, "I'll contact my sister, you and I are going to need a real flat." Bringing over plates, "Then we'll deal with Dr Pearson."

Across town, Pearson is sitting in his office. Paul has the chair, "You ever think about Sarah? What she did with that mummy?"

Pearson looks up, "Too much. I went through all those court appearances with her family. I still can't believe it."

Paul is looking, "She had to have sold it, scheming the whole time." Pearson, "No, I think she was just horribly broken, a broken mind. She wasn't devious."

Paul smiles, "What if it came alive like she said!" Pearson smiles, "Oh yeah. You saw it." Paul, "I saw it, and it was dead!"

The phone rings.

Smiling, Pearson picks up, "What!? Yes, when? (pause) Yes, of course." Paul looks questioning, Pearson holds his fingers up, "I definitely will and you will let me know as well, please. Yes, of course, thank you for ringing me."

Paul is bug-eyed as Pearson hangs up, "Speak of the Devil. Sarah walked away from Brookingslane, yesterday afternoon."

Kharis and Sarah lunch at an out-door eatery. His coffee is sitting on the spread-out rental ads.

Sarah, "He was getting a little sweet on me." Kharis looks across, "You didn't care for him?" Sarah sips her coffee, "I thought I might have to change jobs."

Kharis, "Then this happened."

Sarah looks at him, "Then this happened." She puts the phone out, "Time to ring him up." She taps in the number.

Paul swings open the office door to find Pearson staring

at his pen. "That was Sarah. She says Kharis wants to meet."

Paul's eyes pop, "What!?" Pearson laughs, "Yes! She says he wants me to find" puts his finger on note, "'Ananka'," he looks up, "his Princess."

Paul sits in disbelief, "What are you going to do?"

Pearson puckers his chin, "I'm going to meet her!" Paul looks. Both laugh.

Pearson shakes his head gently and sighs, "I've got to get her back to hospital without destroying her little mind."

They both look at each other.

Pearson, "Oh, and the mummy wants the Tanna. I'm supposed to bring it."

Paul's eyes bug and both break out laughing.

Paul tries to rein his laugh, "You could just have her picked up." Pearson, "No. She'd just keep this delusion going. This might actually help her."

Paul, "Well, I'm bloody-well coming with you!"

The Grounds-Keeper, Mace stands at the slough ditch of Deptford Creek, off the Thames River, as the Salvage Boat is tying up. Frank looks up from setting lines and motions an acknowledgement. Mace nods.

That night, Pearson's monitor illuminates his face in the dark. He stares at the Cairo Museum Holdings DATA-base. His finger sits on his scratch-pad where he wrote:

Ananka

He looks back up while scrolling. His other finger passes down the lines of listed names and stops. Pearson focuses, "Hold on, AN - ANKH - KAH - AMUN"

He looks down and intones surprise while noting, "Anankhkah-Amun... "

The next morning is a bright and sunny Piccadilly day. Pearson waits at an outside table. People and tourists crush past. Paul is collecting goodies when Sarah arrives and sits. Paul stops at the door with cups.

Pearson keeps a clear bearing, "Where's Kharis?" Sarah, "Coming. Did you bring the Tanna?"

Pearson is ready, "No, Sarah. I thought we could talk about that- " His eye's glance up as Kharis approaches.

Kharis strides up, getting bigger by degrees.

Pearson's mouth drops as he tries to stand. Paul is backing away into customers. The color leaves Pearson's face,

he becomes wobbly. Sarah reaches for him, but he stumbles back off his feet scattering chairs against the table behind. A shocked woman stands with coffee spilled on her blouse. Disapproval erupts all round. Paul backs into the shop doors.

Pearson is tensely on his butt and elbows with his mouth open. Chides ring out. Paul stands gawking. People are righting chairs. One huffy patron stands over Pearson, motioning with his hands, "Come on, man. This is disgraceful--"

It's delicious for Sarah. For Kharis too, who calmly sits waiting for Pearson to compose himself. Pearson looks, blinking, unsure. Kharis pulls his sleeve and points to the five pock-sample scars on his arm.

Pearson's eyes dance quickly from Kharis' arm. His mouth drops solidly open as he suddenly now knows this is, in fact, the Mummy. The Mummy, here before him, here is the flesh. He tries to move, which is no more than a reflex; and then shakily tries to rise. He can't quite seem to begin.

Paul, with his cakes and cups and mouth still open, has been pushed from the door. Looking perfectly pitiful, Sarah gets up to help Pearson.

An hour and a half later, Pearson arrives back to his empty office and sits. Staring, he suddenly gets a desperate expression, "Here we have the greatest discovery in history and have to sit on it! What do I say, 'Oh, just ask him, Kharis, are you a mummy?'" His face settles, "I'm ruddy struck here."

While Pearson and Paul spend a confused afternoon, Sarah sits in the sunny grass with plastic plates and crumpled napkins. Kharis is animated, "We practiced spear, sword and dagger, but mostly grappling."

Sarah, "Sword?" Kharis, "Khpush" He draws a picture on a plate. Then taps the drawing, "Ax, sword, chopper, brush-cutter, shovel, paddle, club."

He jumps up and gets a branch laying near. Sarah brightly smiles, "An all purpose tool!"

Kharis, "It can be used like this- " He holds it low in his right hand and makes slapping motions on the back with his left. Then makes some quick moves.

Sarah, "I'm impressed!"

Smiling, Kharis returns to sit, "We have to know what we're doing." He leans back on his elbows looking at the trees. Sarah looks across at the green tree-tops waving gently. Kharis is smiling, "It's a beautiful day." Sarah smiles.

Across the field, a man sits on the park bench, reading a newspaper. Frank's eyes glance over the page.

The evening finds Paul sitting at the desk and watching Pearson stare out the window. Paul, "I still can't believe it. If I hadn't shaken his hand -."

Pearson turns around, "This is the most fantastic-" He stops, thinking, "I told Kent, he can't believe it." Looks at Paul, "We can't tell anyone, about any of this. Not anyone. They'll throw us all in the booby. Just like Sarah." He looks blankly into space, "This is just, -beyond comprehension."

Paul is looking up at Pearson.

Pearson, "He wants the other mummy- (pause) The Cairo has the x-rays online. She seems intact, like Kharis. I couldn't see a bundle, or anything like Tanna."

Paul, "What about the patents?" Pearson, "We haven't begun to understand the alkaloids. Kent says it's all new. We don't even have a full compositions list. And now with Kharis, who knows where this could go?"

Paul is staring.

The bright morning is spilling through the window and Sarah is making breakfast. She comes over, "Try this." Kharis smiles, "You don't like Couscous?" Sarah, "Couscous, good," she brings up the pan, "this is Matzah and Eggs." He smiles taking the plate, "We're taking the bus?" Sarah, "No! The Tube drops us right there." Kharis, "Oh, I've been taking the bus and studying. That's all I know. All I know is the library."

As they walk up from the Tube to street level, Kharis peeks out, "I don't see the Bobbies!" Sarah smiles, "Where'd you hear that?" Kharis smiles, "I'm an educated man!"

Early sun is falling through park trees on the leafy street. Kharis walks to the curb and turns to look up at the six-story brick and concrete facade. "I don't remember it." Sarah, "Well, I do." They head over to the entrance.

Entering the foyer, they climb the stairs, pass through the drab and school-frugal Egyptian Dept working office and into Dr Pearson's small leather-chaired study. Bookcases and award plaques line the wall.

Still shocked seeing Kharis, Pearson timidly shakes hands. Everyone sits as Pearson begins, "I'll help you with Anankhkah but I'll jolly-well need to document everything we

do. This is the biggest thing I'll ever be involved with and not a soul will believe any of it." She cuts in, "Unless we confirm it." Kharis finishes, "Unless I am here to confirm it."

Pearson is perplexed, his eyes dart between them, "I'll need blood work-ups and-" Kharis cuts him off, "There'll be no testing, Dr Pearson."

Pearson is stumped, "Y-you're the most important thing that's happened, in my lifetime, let alone my career!"

Kharis motions fingers toward Sarah, "We've discussed this. I'll not be the center of a circus. I'll disappear on you and no one would believe you. Not a soul, as you say."

Pearson's mouth is open. Sarah, "Where is the Tanna?" He tries to field the question, "It's in the Chem-Lab. I knew you'd ask about that. We've been testing it to-" Kharis floods with alarm, "What have you done?"

Pearson extends his fingers, reassuring, "The Tanna is fine. Just a few leaves were used. We're lucky it was there! We had a break-in three years ago, just after all this became public. Your wrapping and funerary was stolen!"

Kharis, "You had no right."

Pearson is quick, "Well we did, Kharis. It's the property of the Earl of Carnarvon. He has given the school all rights. The Tanna is a fully registered, documented specimen. An importan-"

Her brows farrowing, "What are you doing with it?" Pearson picks up the phone. Kharis is staring intensely. Pearson nods, "I can show you. Kent's expecting us." He holds fingers up, "Kent, Kharis and Sarah are here."

They enter a glassed-in office under a small plastic sign: 'Chem-Lab'.

Kent Hamleson rises to shake hands. He is a large man with thick wavy, combed hair and thick lips. Sarah notices his bobble eyes smearing around in his thick glasses. He shakes her hand while talking to Kharis, "You'll have to forgive me, this is fairly shocking seeing you, even though I've had all night to think about it."

Pearson is ever polite, "Kent, Kharis and Sarah are concerned for the Tanna, how much was used." Kent is looking through his thick lenses, "Only two of the leaves were used. The rest is in the fire-safe just as it was. It's perfectly protected."

Pearson, "Yes, Kharis, the Tanna is perfectly safe." Kharis, "How much is there?" Pearson is precise, "Two were examined. There is 123 intact specimens remaining and four

and half grams of leaf residue." He looks at Kharis, who is thoughtful. Pearson, "I ask that you consider allowing it to stay. It could not be safer anywhere else. And if you're going to get access to Anankhkah, you will need our help. The school's help."

Sarah looks to Kharis, who is beady-eyed and thinking. Pearson's brows are raised, fairly sure he controls the conversation. Kharis, "You are right, Dr Pearson, I will need your help, but you will need mine." Pearson's brows drop. "You need to understand everything about my ancient land, about the whole ancient world you have made your life to pursue."

Pearson's eyes narrow, "You are bargaining with me?!"

Kharis, "And neither of us wants attention. You certainly don't need anyone knowing what happened to Carnarvon's prize toy."

Pearson gets red, "Well, I'm not at all sure of that!" Kharis continues, "They'd think you should be, -put away; like you did to Sarah." Kent freezes, shrinking down puffy-faced, waiting to see Pearson explode.

Pearson parses, "You will disappear-" Kharis interrupts, "The whole past, Dr Pear-."

Pearson, "unless we bring Anankhkah here, to revive, I suppose?" Kharis, "Yes Professor. Exactly. I will give you Egypt, all of Egypt, but you must bring Anankhkah here and perform," waves fingers, "-your trick."

Kent interjects, "I do need to ask you, -"

Kharis looks to Kent, who becomes sheepish while Pearson stands back mumbling, "It'd be some trick bringing her here(!)"

Kent, "Uhh, do you know the recipe, the actual recipe for the Tanna?" Kharis, "No. I've only seen it poured into someone."

Kent blinks, "We found Ergotamines in the blood and there was Ergot in the leaves." Kharis, "Er-got?"

Kent, "It's a parasitic mold. Invades Rye, mostly. A chemical warehouse." Pearson, "A vasoconstrictor. Probably helped close down your vascular system." Kent, "But also, it may have psychotropic properties, did you -or what, if anything, did you experience?"

Kent's eyes smear, Pearson is staring. Kharis looks from one to the other, "I was... never asleep, never awake." His eyes stare forward, "Like a strand of silk."

Kent keeps his eyes on Kharis as he rolls out a chart. There are colored images and Pearson starts pointing, "They boiled up the Tanna with Bindweeds and thrushes, the Nile Lotus, poppy seeds and opium, and carob husks, with some beak

shavings, Ibis beak. The leaves had Ergot and since the fungus grows on living plants, we thought it must have been an aspect of the original pharmacon."

Kent pipes in, "Yes, but we need the exact recipe."

Sarah looks to him, "You've done quite a bit." Kent, "We think the alkaloids bond on an acetyl-morphine bridge-" Her brow darts, "What is that?"

Kent sits back throwing his fingers up, "The Tanna is an extremely strong preservative; this brew amplified it. It all boiled up into a kind of organic solvent- " nods to Pearson while talking, "that saturates into every cell. Absolutely stopped oxidation."

Kharis, "There was nothing on Tanna in the library." Pearson looks at him, "It's extinct. Those leaves are precious. Maybe we'll find more but as far as I know, that bundle is everything. It's a chemical treasure. Kent's been analyzing it, but it's a-." Kharis' cuts in, eyes opening, "You've been thinking it'll make you rich!"

Pearson, "That's the least of it. There'll be benefits for the world" glances to Kent, "this may be one of the great discoveries. In medicine, organic compounding, preservatives. Industry. I mean," throws fingers toward Kharis, "life extension. One of the great discoveries."

Kharis simply stares.

Sarah and Kharis are pulled from side to side with the jerking of the inter-city bus. She calls over, "Kent." Kharis calls back, "Yes. Something wrong!"

Sarah looks at him. He looks back.

Kent is sitting in the bustling college cafeteria with two phones. He mumbles while texting, "Open encrypt code, enter number, and 'Dear Colonel Bahng, I will be in possession of -said material -this week -and am ready to meet your representatives.' A-n-d, send."

He picks up the second phone and leans his lips onto the cell, waiting for an answer, "Hey- (pause) Yeah, you gotta bring those leaves back here. (pause) No-h, something's come up; and I can't synthesize it without more study anyway." He shakes his face irreverently, "I know, you have a lot of money invested. Yeah, yeah. You're not gonna get anything back if we blow this wide open either. -Just bring it back, I gotta show it's in the safe. -Just do it!"

He clicks off and tosses the cell on the table.

Frank sits with three others around the Bridge-cabin

on the Salvage Boat, "The boy-friend was flipping a stick around, Gungfooy." Looks at Mace, "Who's this? You ever see him there before?" Mace shakes his head, "Just the once." Frank talks to himself from under his intense eyes, "Where's he from?"

A barge is sliding by and he turns to Tony and Mace, "Unpack that gear and get everything stowed." They troop out. The wake from the barge rolls the ship gently on a swell.

Frank's partner, Armando, is tall, dark, good-looking with dark-wavy hair. He sits with his feet up wearing black pants and a leather belt with tooled-silver buckle. He is looking at Frank and careful with his words, "I know how much this means to you, but this is the biggest job anyone's ever done." Frank is glib, "We built that sub—"

Armando, "No, it was brilliant. We got in and got out; but this won't be loose gold laying on the sea-floor. Egypt has an Army."

Frank, "This is the biggest treasure in history. I've dreamt of it all my life. I got every detail. We're gonna find it, and we're gonna fly it straight out of there. Melt it down just like the Central America wreck. We're in the gold business, buddy."

Armando looks at him, "We'll need more guys."

Kharis is cooking dinner while she sits with a beer. He calls over, "It's barley beer." Sarah gently taps the mug on the tabletop, "A little heavy, I must say."

He brings the dish, "Lentils and Italian old-style wheat. It's most like our Egyptian bread, and sweet-potatoes and scallions." Sarah digs in, "What's this sauce?"

Kharis stands waiting, "Good? Yes?" Sarah, "Restaurant tomorrow."

He smiles brightly, "Oh-h!"

Next day, Paul, Pearson and Sarah finish a pleasant lunch at an out-door. He has been arranging restitution back pay and she gets an office. A real office, with a real window. Pearson brightly adds, "A genuine perk!" Sarah, "I am only concerned for Kharis. For his well-being and for the knowledge he represents." Pearson assures her, "Yes, this is the most important, most profound discovery of my life." Looks at her, "I promise you, we will not violate his trust." Sarah, "Kharis will not stand for outside attention. He would leave. And with my blessing."

As she finishes her cup, Pearson asks about his life.

Sarah looks across at them, "He saw the Pyramids, when he was young, with his father. He said there were many Pyramids." Pearson and Paul are transfixed. "He said the whole West bank was like a garden for the dead. That they are the Eternal Ones and people are only here to prepare and maintain their cities of the West. Sunrise for the living, Sunset for the Eternals." Their expressions are frozen. "He saw Ramesses. And Ramesses' boat! And the Hittites. He saw them."

Sarah starts up from her seat, "I've got to run. Please remember about Kent, we really don't have good feelings about him."

Pearson watches her pack her purse and blurts an idea, "Anankhkah— You know, the 'Brit' has a Ramesses that doesn't fit their floor but they need an important Stelae for the Amarna section." he smiles, "Maybe they'd trade!"

Sarah is standing, "That's Brilliant! I'm meeting Kharis, I'll tell him!"

Pearson is smiling a toothy smile as she leaves, then grimaces and thumps himself on the forehead with his fingertips, "Now, I got to deal with the both of them!"

Paul, "Are you gonna give it up with her?" Pearson looks, "Yeah, well, it's hard to compete with a mummy."

Both start smiling.

Kharis enters the Office unannounced, "You're going to trade for Anankhkah?"

Pearson looks up thinking, 'Me and my big mouth'. "I'm working on it, Kharis, I'm working on it. But also, Kent needs blood work on you, to see—"

Kharis cuts him off, "I want to see work on Anankhkah, Dr Pearson, I made that perfectly clear." Pearson answers, "And I'm the one who can help with that. At the same time, we're trying, every day, to understand the Tanna."

Kharis, "Yes, I'd feel better if the Tanna were under your care. I understand you have a safe in this department?"

Pearson sits back, "Sarah mentioned your misgivings about Kent. We can have it moved up here, Kharis."

Kharis nods, "Good, thank you." Pearson acknowledges.

Kharis, "You study these things, Dr Pearson. You catalogue them yet you don't even understand them. What they are."

Pearson, "I know the Tanna is a unique preservative. Unique to science." Kharis is looking at him, "But you don't understand it. There can be great evil in the Tanna, pursuing the Tanna. It steals men's minds."

Pearson raises his brow, nodding, "It's been stealing

mine."

Kharis gets up to leave, murmuring, "It's more than you think." His words seem to walk into Pearson's mind, "What do you mean, 'more than I think'?"

Kharis turns around and looks. "It is taught, there are plants -and animals- that know themselves, better than we know ourselves. Some have their own plans and try to control us." He leans in, "They can talk to us at night." Stands back, "Priests too. With them, we have to be on guard."

Pearson smiles, "Plants that think and priests in the night?"

Kharis's tone sharpens, "The Amun had more power than the Pharaohs, how do you think that was?" Pearson, "They-"

Kharis talks right over him, "You think the modern world knows so much, but in many ways, you know less. Just look, the Tanna, is new to you. Something so old but you know nothing of it."

Kharis leaves Pearson's stare and heads out. Pearson's mind is awakened. He is sharply concentrating, his eyes dancing.

Kent is barking on his phone in the Chem-Lab, "I don't give a damn. I told you before, that hodge-podge of proteins, keratins and gum-spirits produce vastly different cross-link points. The permutations are astronomical! -depending on the recipe. The recipe. There may be a way to get that now, we're closer -What? Why? (pause) God damn it."

Kent arrives in the night to a noisy London Pub. He squeezes past the busy conversations and even busier baristas to a rear booth, where two men sit. Gregory Marshton sports fashion tailoring and a dignified air. Tommy Pearl is a thin, street-wise gangster.

Kent looks at them, "Gregory Marshton with Tommy Pearl." Tommy Pearl stretches a toothy smile, "Just offering my assistance, Kent."

Kent looks to Marshton, "Is this what you have working for you?" Marshton has no apology, "I've had use of Tommy's services now and again." Tommy smiles.

Kent squeezes into the booth across from them, "I need those leaves. Pearson has to make a show of them." Marshton glibly puckers his lip, "Our American friends want to clone it. They're getting antsy."

Kent pulls his head back, "How much do you owe them?"

Marshton, "We owe. More than we have. This is the big-

gest genetics firm in the world and they have military contractors behind them." Kent squishes his lips in disgust, "Well, that's just great."

Marshton, "If I give it to them, we're both out. So I'm not giving it to anyone. As long as I have those leaves, I have control."

Kent leans at him, "Listen, Pearson found this guy who knows the ancient recipe. If we get that recipe, we get the Patents. It's that simple." Sticks his face forward, "The Patents."

Marshton pushes his back into the booth, pursing his lips, "I'll let you take the Tanna... -for a week." He picks up a thick manila envelope from the seat and runs his thumb over it, "But you get that recipe." His eyes flash, "And Kent-boy, find a way to deal with Pearson."

Tommy stretches a Cheshire grin across his wrinkly face.

Working into the night, Paul faces shelves while Pearson calls titles. Open books crowd the desk.

Paul, "We're really boiling on this again."

Pearson is pointing between the photo and his books, "Each leaf of the Tanna is labeled with a different 'prophet' glyph. And over here, the adept remains in the Gate of the Afterlife and" points to glyph, "'Communes' with the Hidden One. But here," taps photo, "the stem of the Tanna has the Netjer Tepy, 'First Prophet' of the High Priest."

Pearson is staring down while tapping his finger on the desktop. Paul looks from the bookcase, "Starting to make sense?"

Suddenly Pearson's eyes open wide, jamming his finger down, "The Tanna is a metaphor! For these unnamed prophets, who are in the Gate of the Afterlife" his fingers following along the image, "but attached to the High Priest, at the stem, here. The leaves represent the Priests in the after-life!" He looks up.

Paul walks to the desk.

Pearson, "This is saying the Tanna mummies are in communion with the High Priest from the afterlife! The 'Hidden One' is actually the Hidden Ones of the Amun. They are the Priests of the Tanna Cult in suspended animation. They talk with the High Priest, from the afterlife! This is fantastic! This is the essence of Egypt. Of Egyptian religion! The very heart of it!" Pearson stands up, marveling.

Paul tries to understand, "They're supposedly still alive?"

Pearson, "Yes. That's what they thought! These mummies

were still alive and thought to be intermediaries to the afterlife. They talk together! This is fantastic." He points to the fan-leaf splaying above a horizontal line, "Yes, you see this line, the frond-leaves are in the afterlife, each is a different Priest, and the stem is in Karnak, the square" tapping the image, "the High-Priest."

Paul looks down at the picture and Pearson stands back.

Paul is suddenly astounded, "That's it!"

Pearson, "This is the secret of Karnak, the Hidden Ones. -The sleeping ones. And that's why the title here" leans to tap the glyph, "'Communion' -the Communion of the Amun! Fantastic. Just fantastic!"

Paul sits down in awe.

Pearson, "This is a breakthrough! The true breakthrough moment." He looks at Paul, "How does it feel?" Looks past Paul, "This is the time of my career. This time, right here."

Paul sits in the morning doing document prep when Kent enters with the Manila Envelope. Paul waves him in.

Kent walks into the study, "Hope this makes your paranoid mummy happy." Pearson looks up, "Oh the leaves. Thanks Kent." Kent replies, "Kind-of dumb, they're all school safes." Pearson just continues, "I've had some real insight on the Tanna Cult."

Kent, "You sound excited-" He sits while Pearson talks.

Kent's curiosity for the priests seems new for Paul, listening from the Office, but Pearson is excited and Paul takes it as a good excuse for the break room. He hears Pearson's muffled enthusiasm pointing out all the details as he tiptoes away.

It is late afternoon and Pearson gets off the phone after wrapping the last and most important item of the day. Maybe of his career, if he still has a career when this is all over. An item, he knows his 'big mouth' pushed him into. He is alone and sits back with a sigh, "The British Museum." Casting his eyes to the shelves, "I've made a deal with the devil, now." He gently kicks his desk. Then notices the millions of dust particles cascading in the warm afternoon sun, streaming in the window. He stares as they dance and twinkle in the golden light.

The next morning, Pearson finds Sarah in the Archaeology foyer and takes her to the side. He gives a sparkle and looks

her right in the eyes, "Dr Zahi Hawass has been scheduled to visit The Brit. He'll be here tomorrow and I talked the Director in on a trade with the Cairo Museum. The Ramesses for the Amarna Stelae and some funerary items; and, for the college, the trifling matter of the mummy of," his eyes pop, "Anankhkah-amun."

Sarah lights up, "What!"

He beams, "I'm trading the Celtic Chalice for the mummy and he almost fell out of his chair. It's been in contention for decades. He's pretending it isn't the reason to do it. That putting the mummies together is good because it completes the Highclere collection. What a crock!"

He cautions her beaming smile, "We still have to put the deal together!"

She marvels, "It's almost like it was meant to happen." Swings her eyes around, "The whole thing. Just, falling together," His smile drops slightly, watching her. "-like it can't be stopped."

Kharis and Sarah sit in the kitchen, swimming in this, the best of news. Kharis jumps up, "Casserole to celebrate!" Her eyes pop and she flips on the stove. Kharis mans the fridge, "What have we got-" He's fumbling around and putting things out. Sarah swings the cupboard and slaps the pasta down. "We need the long pan." She's looking at Kharis and pointing up. Kharis glances up and gets the stool.

He slides it with his foot and stands up to retrieve the glass-pan. Sarah's looking up, "The top one."

He hands it down and she reaches up, and they stop as their hands meet. He looks into her expression; and steps down as she trembles into their kiss.

Their passion throws them around and into the counter. She opens her mouth deeply as she pulls at her top. They turn around and around and then look into each other; before moving into the dark of the front room.

Chapter 6

Pearson, Kharis and Sarah walk into the Egyptian Collection of the British Museum. The bright morning ignites the grandeur of the cavernous hall.

A jovial Director approaches, "Ah, hello, Dr Pearson! Dr Hawass will arrive any moment." He gestures a direction and they proceed toward the Director's office.

While walking, Pearson talks softly to Kharis, "I want to thank you for our conversation the other day. It helped me re-visit my Tanna studies. Opened a whole new path." Kharis smiles over to him, "Is the Tanna taking you away again?" Pearson smiles, "Perhaps. But thank you."

There is not a long wait, Dr Hawass' familiar greeting and convivial exchanges are heard in the hall. Sarah, "Remember, you're my assistant." Kharis smiles. The door bursts open and the Director's Office fills with the energy of Dr Hawass' resounding voice.

After a flurry of introductions, Kharis is presented as her assistant and reaches to shake, "Kharis-" Hawass looks surprised, "You're Egyptian?" Kharis, "Yes." Hawass, "Where are you from?" Kharis, "Around Luxor." Hawass, "I can tell from your accent. I can tell where anyone is from. Where were you educated?"

The British Library, his Alma Mater, Kharis hears his mouth say, "London." Hawass looks perplexed, "Oh, good, good."

A tall, dark-complected man pops in the door.

Hawass is instantly smiling, "Ardeth! Hello, Hello!" they are shaking hands, "You're just the man. This is Dr Pearson" with a full sweeping gesture, "from University College. He is curious about the Karnak and the priests."

Pearson rises to shake hands. The man gives an affirming shake, "Ardeth Bey". Pearson is smiling, "Yes, everyone knows your work. How do you do-" Kharis's eyes sharpen.

Bey, "Yes, my area is the Priesthood. Everyone is always talking about the Pharaohs, but the Priests were just as powerful. More so. Far richer, over time. They outlasted the dynasties. It is a far more rich field for study."

Dr Hawass leans to Pearson, "Dr Bey only sees the priests, the priests." Dr Bey to Pearson, "You're over in the Archaeology Building. By Gordon Park." Pearson smiles, "Yes, the brick file cabinet leaning against Anthropology." Everyone chuckles. Pearson quips, "I have a view though."

Dr Bey smiles to Hawass, "You're getting the Ramesses-" Hawass, "Yes! And cheaply! The Amarna Stelae and a mummy."

Bey's smile falls slightly as his eyes slowly glance to Kharis. Hawass is continuing, "And some Funerary-" Kharis is deep in thought, their voices echo around him. They seem like actors in a play speaking a language he has never heard. He is stuck watching Pearson talk.

Though head of Egyptology for UCL, Pearson is relatively young and still a minor figure next to the world famous Dr Hawass and Dr Bey, meeting them here for the first time. And while so genuinely collegiate, Pearson has a secret. He is

sitting on the biggest discovery in history. While they are thinking this professor needs a very minor mummy to augment a very minor collection, Dr Pearson is thinking he is about to turn the world on its head.

Dr Bey artfully bowed out before the monument and mummy-swap discussion, which promised only mundane detail. A promise competently forged by Dr Hawass and the Director's long experience, and waded through by all. An hour and 15 minutes later, however, the trade is solidly on.

Having left Dr Hawass and the Director to their day, Pearson turns around in the hall, "Actually, I can't believe we did it!" They all smile and head toward the stairs. Exuberant, Pearson turns into the exit of the Museum's Mummy Exhibition Room. "Have you seen these?" He's walking in and Kharis sees he'll have to put up with Pearson trying to impress. He and Sarah follow along. Kharis is somber, "Yes, I came here, once." Pearson is almost gleeful, "These are late," throwing his fingers to the first of the glass cases with wrapped cats and Greek period coffins. They pass by a Roman era intact mummy displaying the life-like painted face of a young man. His youthful, open-eyed gaze peers out as if looking from a window.

Pearson sees Kharis is uncomfortable and turns to apologize, "I'm sorry." Kharis smiles back, "Yes, I've spent enough time with mummies." Pearson is embarrassed but smiles, "Yes, I rather suppose."

Sarah has her favorite, "Up here is Henutmehyt." They walk forward. Pearson, "These are very famous." Three golden coffins of a woman stand upright in a glass case. They are each slightly smaller, having once fit inside each other. Kharis looks up. She has the tightly woven braids he recognizes. "A Priestess. From the House of Amun." He nods, "She is violated." Sarah looks at him, then up at the golden figures, "I think she's magnificent!" He points to the slender inner cover, "Swht, the first spirit. Like an embryo." Waves hand, "All must go together for her afterlife." Sarah looks at the glass. Kharis points at the separated coffins, "The first one, she is young. That sits inside the next, where she is old. You see? The girl within. Both sit inside the outer, Neb coffin that is her eternal spirit. Together, they form a blossoming flower in the other world." Looks at Sarah, "For her spirit to find. Even if her body is destroyed, these remain. That's why they made them." He points to her golden face, "That is her flesh, if she chooses." He is nodding, "They go together."

Sarah is digesting it all when they turn to leave. Kharis points back, "She is from my time." The thought sinks in as they walk and Sarah feels light headed.

They all just head out and down the stairs. Sarah is a little shaken and looks over at him skipping down the steps. The whole thought makes her head swim. They appear into the bright main hall of the Egyptian Collection.

Pearson, Sarah and Kharis walk on down and stop before the large Ramesses bust, dominating the room. They stand looking across the majestic face of the great Pharaoh. Sarah speaks, "Ramesses." Kharis is looking up, "The Great King- "

Pearson offers, "They have his mummy in the Cairo." Kharis, "I think I'd strangle it."

They laugh and are relieved to laugh, and turn to make their way through the busy floor. Little children escape their mother and run laughing up the hall.

Outside, the sun has hidden behind the London overcast and the gay crowds suddenly seem anonymous, as if everyone were late for dinner. Pearson bids them farewell and heads around the massive South Colonnade toward the south exit, walking back to school. The British Museum is as stately and well-appointed as Buckingham Palace and Kharis and Sarah head out the front gates and over to the bus stop. Kharis is concerned, "Dr Bey. Something is strange." Sarah, "He's the top specialist on the Priesthood. From Cambridge."

Kharis stares in thought as the arriving bus reflects in his eyes.

Ardeth Bey has appeared under the 16 columned entrance portico, just outside the front doors. His dark eyes watch Kharis and Sarah on the other side of the tall, gold-topped Spears and Pikes perimeter fence. Their figures, merely intermittent splashes of color through the iron fencing.

Chapter 7

Kent sits in a glassy, open front restaurant just off Talfalgar Square with a double-decker sandwich and large pitcher of beer. Two Asian men make their way slowly through the busy crowd. Mr Lieu is slender and calculating. Mr Guo has a thick frame and seems somewhat brutish. Kent's eyes watch them approach.

Kent, "Mr Lieu?" Mr Lieu gives a slight smile, "Yes, Mr Hamleson(?) This is Mr Guo." They shake and sit.

Kent, "You work for Colonel Bahng?" He picks up his

sandwich while Lieu pulls a sly smile, "Let us say, we have an international clientele. You have the material?" Kent lowers the sandwich, "It's in a school safe. A Professor has to show it so we can get the ancient recipe."

Mr Lieu looks at Kent with his sandwich, thick glasses and puffy lips. Lieu, "The material will be sufficient."

Kent, "It's poison without that recipe. Something about the bonding points. I've worked on it a year." He looks at them, "You Chinese appreciate a good puzzle."

Their expressions tighten. Kent continues, "Only the very precise combination works. We'll have the recipe in a week. It adheres right into the molecular chains. Just think of it, proteins, microbes, viruses made into a simple dried out dust, totally portable, inert and only becoming active when used. The perfect biological delivery system."

The eyes of both men wince into focus.

Kent is without expression, "£50Million." He looks at them and takes a big bite of his sandwich.

Kharis and Sarah play together in the sunny white sheets. She squiggles her nose and grabs his mouth, "You were so ugly!" Kharis is smiling, "Oh, it took so long for my skin to tighten up. I hid under my pull-over. Skulked around everywhere- "

The phone rings and Kharis leans around to pick up. His smile tightens, "I'll stop by."

Pearson sits in his study as Kharis enters. "Ah, Kharis, I've got to get over to the Brit and catch Dr Hawass before he leaves. But I thought I should mention they haven't found Anankhkah right away."

Kharis starts to react. Pearson quickly throws his fingers up, "Don't worry, this happens all the time with the Cairo. It's huge and things ge- "

Kharis, "We should go over. I can go- " Pearson cuts in, "It's fine Kharis. Dr Hawass phoned them. They'll find her. She's in the Catalogue," gesturing to the desk.

Miffed, Kharis starts up from his chair when Pearson entreats, "Sarah tells me Anankhkah's father did this to you, the both of you."

Kharis turns back, "Her father murdered his own daughter."

Pearson's brows pinch, "Why?" Kharis is bitter, "Because he was weak. Because people value their possessions more than their own children." Pearson looks mystified, "I don't under-

stand."

Kharis, "You may know of this. Egypt was at war, many years of war. Ramesses made a deal to swap gold and Princesses."

Pearson, "The Kadesh accord, when Ramesses took a Hittite bride?" Kharis nods, "Yes, but Anankhkah was to go to the Hittites; and the reason it would be Anankhkah is because she had turned Ramesses down. She was a girl, he couldn't have. She wanted her own life. That's why she's wrapped in that bundle."

Pearson offers, "He was the first globalist. He tried to unify the world."

Kharis, "She was a pawn! Ramesses would throw her and a few bobbles to entertain Hattusili while he built up the Army. Her father thought she would be 'Queen of the Hittites' -what a fool!"

Pearson, "She may have been just that, Kharis." Shakes his head and marvels, "When you think of it, you two running off together, changed history." Kharis' eyes swing around, and then looks at him, "You wouldn't be here."

Pearson, "Neither would you." They look at each other. Pearson starts up from his chair, "I've got to run-"

Dr Hawass strides from the entrance of the British Museum, and sees Pearson catching up, "Oh, Dr Pearson!"

Pearson, almost breathless, "Hello Dr Hawass, I almost missed you! I wanted to ask you, about the Communion of the Amun? Have you heard of this?"

Hawass stops, "Where have you found this?" Pearson, "I've been doing a study of the Tanna Cult and- "

Hawass, "Let's go in. We'll talk, we'll talk." He tugs cordially at Pearson's sleeve. "We'll get out of this noise."

They enter a side hall off the entrance when Dr Hawass turns abruptly, "Yes. I know of the sleeping priests. The Mind of Amun. The Hidden Ones of Karnak." He tips his expression, "Like the board of directors. But you said 'Tanna', where did you see this?"

Pearson, "A Ramesses carving." Hawass furrows brow, "The broken wall carving?"

Pearson, "Yes. It- " Hawass, "There's a picture of it?"

Pearson, "Yes (?)" Hawass, "It is under water now. How did you know it was about the Tanna?"

Person, "I did some cross checking in a search an- "

Hawass, "Yes, supposedly, the Priests of Amun would take it and become, what you say, catatonic. From this sleeping state they would communicate through magic spells with the

Head Priest."

Pearson struggles, "Could that be possible?" Hawass, "No! Of course not. But this, what we are talking about, is the secret of Karnak. This is what they believed."

Both sit.

Hawass, "The Tanna is not proven. It's just fantasy now. We can't even talk about such things, scholarship, you see - this kind of things cannot be discussed. Foolish."

Pearson, "What if we found some (?)"

Hawass pauses slightly, "When I was young, there was a German, we used to talk about this. But you'd still have to prove it. You see? How would you prove it?"

Pearson, "The carving says they talked together."

Hawass squishes lips, "Who can know? They were dreaming, they were not dreaming? The High-Priest said he was talking with them. Who can know this?"

Pearson looks questioning. Hawass answers back, "The Tanna is not proven, we can't talk about it. Sleeping mummies and spirits running around, not at all, no one could take us seriously after that. You see?"

Pearson, "Yes. I do. But I'd like to take this up."

Dr Hawass purses his lips, "You should talk with Dr Bey, he's the expert. But don't get carried away, Dr Pearson. This is not a good area. Magic spells and demon spirits, controlling people from the distance-" shakes his head, "This is not good."

Pearson is blank-faced as Hawass becomes energized and rises to shake hands. Smiling, "I've got to go now, we'll be late for the plane."

They go out into breezy front where a smiling Dr Hawass turns to shake again, "Talk to Dr Bey." Gets hawk-eyed, "You be careful now." He smiles and turns to head away. Pearson has a lost expression as he watches him walk off.

Chapter 8

The Chem-Lab phone rings. Distracted, Kent picks up. Marshton's voice cuts through, "Hey, Buddy-boy," Kent squishes up his mouth. Marshton, "bring those leaves back."

Kent, "Gregory, think about it, all you're going to do is give it to the Americans. That's what will happen."

Marshton, "They gotta come back, Kent."

Kent pleads the case, "We have to have those leaves. I can get the recipe and then we get the patents." Marsh-

ton, "It's too late, Buddy-boy. The Yanks are already coming. Bring 'em back, Kent, or I'll send Tommy(!) I'll send Tommy."

Kent is trying to get the phone off his ear, "Yeah, yeah, all right." Then loudly, "I said yes!" He slaps it down.

Later, the monitor reflects across Kent's glasses. His eyes smear, his lip quivers as he talks under his breath, "Oh, this looks like Tanna."

A leafy plant is pictured on an internet site. Kent moves the curser along the words as he reads, "Balloon Cotton-bush -poisonous." He moves the curser to the 'Buy' tab. The shipping page flashes and he mumbles to his last click, "Royal - Special Delivery - Guar-an-teed."

The lamp is on and Sarah and Kharis lie in their pillows. Kharis is on his side, "We had a good life. Personal guards are a high station. The most important, the best trained. We lived in the same world really. My father was headman. He was her father's friend, maybe his best friend. They were close." Glances, "A noble can't talk with people of their own station, it's very formal."

He rolls to look up, "Maybe it was my fault. I've thought, maybe it was my fault. Running off with her. What happened to her."

Sarah, "How can it be your fault?" Kharis, "I just mean, we were their guards. If you're a guard in the Tower, you're not supposed to run off with the Jewels."

Sarah rolls over smiling and ruffles his head, "Oh-h, no, it wouldn't be good to pinch the jewels. But you were in love. Young love!"

Ardeth Bey looks down from his landing. He sees Pearson through the sunny fan-style overhead window above the front-door. He buzzes him in. Pearson timidly looks in and up.

Pearson comes up the narrow, glossy-white staircase onto the landing. They shake hands. Ardeth Bey appears gaunt with strangely textured skin.

Entering the flat, Pearson notices a tall, twiny hand-drum behind the hutch, "Oh, -African." Nodding, "Old. -Nubian?" Bey, "I wouldn't know. I pick things up down at Camden Passage."

They settle into chairs and Pearson is formal, "Dr Hawass said I might prevail on you to help me understand the Amun and their relationship to the Tanna Cult."

Bey seems a little uncomfortable, "Of course, he tele-

phoned me. This is a complicated subject, especially as none of these theories about Tanna can be proved out." Pearson, "I understand, Dr Hawass covered this with me." Smiles, "Rather sternly."

Bey returns a slight smile, "Yes, Magic ruled Egypt since the ancient battles between Sa-Panehse and the Nubian, Sa-NehDjet."

Pearson can't restrain a near laugh, "Those are fantasy stories!" Bey, "Yes, from the 4th century BC," slowly moves finger, "-but from much earlier legends. Everything in Egypt is based on magic." Splays fingers, "Everything."

Bey looks at him, "The Temple of Ptah in Memphis was the University of Magic." Pearson, "I thought Memphis was the trade schools-" Bey, "Memphis was the greatest school of magic in history. Think like this: A carpenter makes some trickery with his hands and you have a table!" Bey smiles, "Magic! If you want to live forever, you make a colossus." Pearson, "Well, your image lives forever." Bey, "What is living? Who do you know that they are not simply in your mind? When you think of them, they live. A colossus lives for millennia. How many people know Ramesses? You see? He lives. World trade, banking, city building, all magic. All taught at Memphis."

He sees Pearson is attentive, "But you're asking about Karnak and Tanna." Pearson's brows pop. Bey, "The Amun Priests had two methods. One was called 'sight', where they were said to see things far away, even in different lands. Sight also could be used to see the past or into the future. They could travel in the mind."

Pearson, "Travel in the mind?"

Bey, "Yes. It has to do with the Night Magic. Which really refers to a belief that the mind can travel by controlling dreams. That the night is a land, a real land, as real as the waking world we know but where the souls of the living and the dead can meet."

Pearson, "You mean a world of-"

Bey, "The Dreamtime is a feature of many cultures, all through history. It lies between the waking world and the afterlife. I'm not saying this is real, but it is what they believed." A smile creeps across his face.

Pearson, "And the Tanna Priests would talk from this sleep?"

"Yes, the High Priest supposedly would consult with them for making the important decisions." Bey grins slightly. "The Amun oversaw the expansions under Ramesses that returned the wealth and glory of Karnak." His voice becomes stern, "-After the Heretic."

Pearson, "You mean Akhenaten-" Smiling, "They almost

stole the show!"

Bey, "No! They weren't even Egyptian." Pearson is surprised. Bey shows slight irritation, "This was a Hyksos, house religion. A fad. His mother's religion. One God. Not of the Dream."

Pearson steers the conversation back, "Yes, this dream aspect. Is this- "

Bey leans forward with his description, "In the Night Magic, you have your essence, we call 'Ka' that reaches out with long arms," makes reaching motion, "to your personality, which is 'Ba'. Most magic deals with this."

Pearson is stretching to understand, "-Y-es- I know the Ka glyph. The two arms."

Bey, "The two parts of the mind, the 'Ba' and the 'Ka', can be pulled apart," motions with hands, "played with. Priests controlled this in dreams. They connected with the afterlife through the tomb portals. You know tombs were portals to the afterlife, do you not?"

Pearson, "Of course."

Bey, "It means they 'reached out' from their Tombs" Bey thrusts his arms, wiggling his hands into Pearson's face, "into the afterlife."

Pearson recoils slightly.

Bey settles back, "Many cultures used dream travel. The old Egyptians thought they could enter the minds of their enemies at night, and-" voice deepens, "...drive them insane."

A smile stretches across Bey's face.

Chapter 9

Frank is wide-eyed, "He's Egyptian!" Tony, "The landlady says, (mimicking) 'they're just adorable'."

Frank is sharp-eyed and nodding, "They're going for the gold."

Tony, "She's the mastermind. She's got that mummy and screwin' everyone!" Mace, "No way!! That dumb cluck thinks the mummy came alive! I worked there, remember? The chick is coo-coo-" circling his finger around his ear.

Frank, "Or her and her Egyptian boy-friend already know where the Tomb is."

Armando, "They're waiting for something. Is the professor in on it?" Mace pops in, "Of course, he got her out, didn't he?"

Frank stares forward, "The bottom line is, we need that mummy. That's the missing mummy of Gebtu." He looks over at

Mace and Tony, "No dumb stuff. Just the mummy." They get up and head off the Bridge. Armando turns to Frank, "We could just beat it out of her. Shoot the boy-friend, if he gets in the way."

Frank is thinking, "Maybe they need the one in the Cairo Museum. -The Two Hawks..."

Armando picks up his brows, "Maybe we need that mummy."

Kharis and Sarah have finished breakfast when the phone rings. Kharis picks up. His face fills with shock, "What about the Tanna?" Sarah stands alarmed. Kharis, "What else? -We're coming over." He hangs up, "The Lab and storage rooms were ransacked!" Sarah is getting her things. Kharis, "The safes 're untouched, the Tanna is fine." They run out the door.

They have taken the Tube and enter the foyer anxiously. Everyone is in the lab. Pearson and a group of officers are bent over the table, going over photographs. Kent is standing by the door, looking genuinely shocked, and shrinks away to leave as Kharis and Sarah enter past him.

The Inspector is looking at his smart-phone and talking to Pearson, "Here's the Interpol sheet. Armando Castile and Frank Keilding. You never heard of them?"

Pearson shakes his head. Inspector, "They're salvagers. Keilding owns several companies, apparently the brains. He did time when he was young. Armando Castile runs things for him. Probably Hispanic. We don't know the country. Castile has Latin connections and got them into drug running." He looks between Pearson, Kharis and Sarah's rapt expressions, and continues, "They had land on the Mexican coast where they made fast-boats and semi-submersibles. They were all over the Caribbean before they got raided." Reads from his phone, "Central and South America, Cuba, Florida, the south coast of the U.S. mainland. There's FBI and Interpol warrants for stealing gold from an 1850s paddle-wheeler," rolls his thumb across the phone text, "the SS Central America -off the coast of Carolina." The Inspector looks up, "Supposed to be the biggest gold wreck. They're suspected in running stolen art from Middle East conflict zones, dealing with terrorists. Perhaps gun running. All together, an unsavory lot."

Pearson is astounded. The Inspector looks at him, "These people are professional thieves and treasure hunters. What are they after you for?"

Kharis gets a call and is shocked again, "Mrs Jenkins," Looks to the Inspector, "our landlady," looks back to Sarah, "We were ransacked! There's officers there now."

The Inspector steps back, tapping into his smart-phone. Kharis looks to Sarah, "It's a mess." He hears the Landlady talking and he presses the phone to his ear. Sarah walks to the table, looking down on the photos.

The Inspector gets off his call, "She told our men there was 'bumping'. The burglars were gone as soon as they heard the blues and twos. The reports will go together."

He looks at Kharis and Pearson, "Well, they seem to find an interest in you. They ignored small things, took nothing of value." Looks between them, "What are they looking for?" Pearson is blank. The Inspector leans in, "There's no missing mummies again?" Pearson's back goes straight, "No missing mummies."

Police-Assistant, "Right, this happened before. Did they take that one, too?" Pearson is strained, "No. That was mis-identification of inventory." Looks toward Sarah who is looking through surveillance pics, "That was unfortunate." Looks back to the Inspector, "That's all straightened out now." The Inspector's eyes glance to Sarah who suddenly recognizes something in a photo, "That's the gardener -at Brookingslane!"

They all walk over to look at the gray still-shot of the burglar crew sneaking through a hall, one is Mace.

The frozen face of Mahatma Gandhi looks down on an alarmed Kent, pacing under the famous sculpture in Tavistock Square Park, the mirror of Gordon Park, one block off. He turns to see Lieu and Guo approach.

Mr Lieu, "The material is safe?" Kent's face is stressed, "Yes. But if your people didn't break in, who did?"

Mr Lieu, "You tell us, Mr Hamleson. You're the Dark Web player." A smile creeps across his expression, "It must be a puzzle."

Kent, "You're the only contacts I made." Guo is stern, "You have more fish, circling about." Kent looks at him. Mr Lieu, "Obviously, your 'Tanna Leaves' are not secure. The Colonel wishes you provide them, immediately if you would."

Kent, "We need the recipe. The Tan(na)-"

Mr Lieu, "We have also found your Tanna was recovered from one of a set of mummies. Originally found together."

Kent, "The other one is in the Cairo Museum." Mr Lieu, "Yes, we've looked into it. X-rays from 1978 don't seem to show much, the quality is poor."

Kent, "The Professor didn't see Tanna either."

Mr Lieu, "There could be more with that Mummy, and our employer instructs that we go to any lengths to acquire all

of the available material. Any lengths, Mr Hamleson."

Kent looks flushed. Mr Lieu, "Our scientists will continue from here. They can do whatever some ancient persons did. There is no recipe. You will receive £70,000 not 50 Million."

Guo pushes a belligerent face forward, "You have two days."

Kent has a choked expression and walks off. They watch him leave. Guo (Chinese), "He'd sell his mother for money." Lieu glances up to Guo (Chinese), "So would you."

Both smile.

Frank's glaring eyes stare from his farrowed face, "The secret lies 'with the Two Hawks.' These are the Biku, the Little Hawks of Gebtu; and this is the missing mummy. The missing key." They're on the Bridge of the Salvage Boat.

Armando, "But they're still trying to get the Cairo mummy." Frank is staring in thought, "We have the writing from the chest of this mummy. They must go together, to make two halves of a message." His eyes squint, " -Or- the missing mummy was never actually missing."

Armando is intensely looking. Frank's eyes swing over, "We need that other mummy." His head nodding, "Anankhkah. Anankhkah-Amun."

Armando, "We need both mummies."

Kharis and Sarah return to the college after straightening their flat and find Pearson in the Office.

He looks up from his computer, "I looked them up online." Swings his chair around, "They had a tract of land where they built drug-running boats and a special submarine dredge that they used to steal gold from a protected site. They're quite the pirates. They had a whole jungle enclave hidden behind a sandbar that couldn't be approached from the sea. The Mexican government finally had to go over-land; and that was a whole story."

Sarah, "What do they want?"

Pearson, "Obviously, they think we're hiding a mummy. They don't guess it's Kharis."

Kharis, "I have no money."

Pearson, "We think they broke in before and stole your bindings. They had their man at Brookingslane watching Sarah."

Kharis, "But I have nothing, what could they possibly want?"

A square stone window-frame floats on a black field. Through the window, the twinkling galaxy shines serenely.

Kharis is looking up from an underground shaft. He turns from the sight to look down a dark square passage. He is dressed in Egyptian Skirt with his Egyptian Braids and starts down into the darkness.

The surfaces of the walls are barely discernible in the faint light. The passage angles down and as he descends, the floor of the continuing passage comes into view.

Kharis enters a high hallway where three Portcullises feature solemn funerary statues. The candle-light dances on the smoothly dappled walls. He walks through to a stairwell beyond and descends.

He finds a domed Transectional Hall of very dark-blue with White Stars covering surfaces like long-armed starfish. Several arched doorways lead away into darkness. There is flickering light angling from the main passage ahead. Kharis follows.

A doorway and steps open into a glittering ante-chamber of dark Blue and Gold. Contrasting reds and whites cover the walls with Gods and Goddesses and decorate against the pristine ocher Hieroglyphs of the Books of the Netherworld which wrap the walls. A staircase descends on the far side.

Kharis walks over and steps down into darkness.

A large, majestic Egyptian face hovers before him. Kharis blinks and steps back. The face has a braided beard and Red Crown.

Kharis looks up to see the Sun-disk resting on the Crown from which two, large segmented White Plumes rise high. Each feathered segment shivers like a fan-dancer.

It is the God Amun, with Was-Scepter and Ankh. The God turns to his left and gestures as two doors behind him open before Kharis.

The Falcon-Headed God, Ra-Horakhty ushers on the right. His Red Sun-Disk Crown has a Golden Serpent with Golden Scales surrounding it.

Kharis' face is illuminated as light from the opening doors ignites his open expression.

He strides forth into the Hidden Tomb. He notices a sliver of light glimmering from both the eye of Ra-Horakhty and the little black Eye of the Serpent on his Crown. They watch as Kharis passes.

He stands in a room where long rows of Golden Ram-Headed Lion Sphinxes recline on plinths to either side and extend far into the distance. It reminds him of the Avenue of the

Sphinxes but closer. The ceiling and walls are gold, which glints and shines in the torch-light.

Mushrooming from each Sphinx are the expanding, transparent Golden Radiations of the faces of the High Priests that billow into the walk and the ceiling.

Kharis walks forward, into their billowing Golden images and bursts into Flaming Golden Radiations.

He jolts awake in fright, "I felt them-" Gasping, "I felt them." Sarah is barely understanding, "What?"

Kharis sits up in bed, staring forward wide-eyed, and blinks.

Kharis and Sarah arrive into Pearsons' sunny Office. He sits back from his desk. Kharis, "I think I know what the thieves want. I had a dream last night. It woke me. The Amun had a Treasure Vault." Pearson cuts in, "That's a fantasy."

Kharis, "No! It was called the White Vault. It was their treasury."

Pearson, "Kharis, none of that exists. Long gone." Kharis, "It may be gone, but these men believe it."

Pearson, "The Amun may have had a vault but today we have treasure stories and comic books. Aliens built the pyramids." Pops his eyes at Kharis.

Kharis, "Whether it still exists, I cannot say. But it did once and last night I realized, the Pharaohs came and went, and buried their gold; but the Priests stayed in power. They kept their gold. In one place." Leans toward Pearson, his eyes glistening, "And they were entombed together. In that same place."

Pearson has sharp surprise, "How do you know this? I've never heard this!" Kharis, "Everyone knows. They're buried in their Treasury. The Amun Treasury."

Pearson, "The Vault is an old story but an Amun Tomb?"

Kharis leans forward, "One and the same. They're buried with the Amun gold. Countless generations of the Priesthood's wealth. The wealth of Egypt."

Pearson is shocked and wide-eyed, his mind sees open vaults of glinting gold. He stands stunned, "W-where was it?"

Kharis, "That's the big secret. But I realized, Anankh-kah would know. Only Royals and High Priests knew. The Temples were their world. She would know."

Sarah is looking back and forth between them. Pearson turns to the window, mumbling, "There are missing mummies-"

Kharis, "This is what the thieves want. A vast tomb; and if Alexander couldn't find it, no one has."

Pearson pulls his hand across his mouth, thinking. Then

spins around, "This is taboo. The whole thing. It's taboo until it can be proved."

He looks at them. Sarah is staring in thought. Kharis turns to the picture, casting his eyes across Tutankhamun's golden face. Its golden forehead with the prominent Uraeus and Nekhbet, Cobra of Lower Egypt and White Vulture of Upper Egypt. He hears Pearson's voice, "The real problem is these nuts who do believe it." Pearson is looking at Kharis, "But why are they after you?"

Kharis turns back around, "The gold of this vault would equal the wealth of all the dynasties, put together."

Pearson snaps, "If it still existed."

Kharis talks to Sarah, "I don't know where, but Anankhkah would know. She's a Royal and she will know where to find the Amun."

Pearson glances to the Tut picture. Then starts writing. Kharis looks again to the Golden Mask, imagining Uraeus and Nekhbet looking back at him. He hears Pearson talking to himself, "I've got to get more from Dr Bey." His fingers nervously tapping the desk, "Maybe we can build up a case for Dr Hawass..."

Kent enters Pearson's empty office in the late afternoon and obliges himself to the desk. He looks to make sure he's alone and starts pushing through papers.

Notes describing the 'Golden Tomb of the Amun', fall across his thumb. He pushes his protruding lower lip outward and leans back against the desk, his mouth dropping open as he reads. He sits down at the desk, holding the notes and stares up. Then glances at the Tutankhamun picture. His eyes smearing around and blinking in his pop-bottle lenses.

Chapter 10

Pearson gets out of his car before Ardeth Bey's flat. It's dusk and he terrifies the moment, feeling the deep enveloping blue of twilight.

Bey buzzes him in with a welcoming smile, "Tell me, what is the important thing you need to see me about. The Tanna again?"

Pearson is coming up the stairs, "Yes, the Tanna, but I need to know more about the Amun." They shake. Bey, "More?"

Pearson is asking as they enter the room, "Were they buried together? In one place?"

Bey's eyes pick up, "Oh-h, where have you read this?" Pearson turns around, "It's become important. I've been told they had a Treasury"

Bey, "So! You've heard about the gold(!?)" Pearson is a little wide-eyed, "Yes. I've heard about the gold."

Bey, "There were two tombs of the Amun; two golden tombs." Pearson, "Two?"

Bey, "Yes, the first was the Amun Treasury that was hidden from the Heretic."

They sit to talk. Pearson is focused, "During Akhenaten's purge?" Bey nods, "He was destroying Karnak. Some say he was just after gold and Tanna. But the Priests gathered their Tanna and sealed themselves in their treasury box."

His description brings the ancient night to life:

Several Priests move quickly, squeezing past each other up and down a narrow stone staircase, lit with torches.

The High-Priest stands in the night sky, painted in torch-light above the entrance. Raging fires outline rooftops of the chaotic city and echoing screams are heard.

Bey, "The High Priest was MAYA."

The dancing light of small torches blow in the wind to reveal a gigantic cap-stone that sits ready to seal the entrance. A wooden ladder is being withdrawn. Priest-workers are looking out and around in apprehension and concern.

Pearson's eyes pop, "The Hidden Tomb." Bey, "The Heretic never found them. After he was gone, the new Priests rebuilt Karnak."

Pearson, "There were two tombs?"

Bey, "Yes, the new Priesthood from the times of Seti and Ramesses built up enormous wealth, bigger than ever, which they kept in a vault complex,"

Pearson imagines a White Hall: Scribes and Priests milling the walk. Bey's voice cuts through, "like a bank."

Pearson sees evenly spaced doorways of gleaming treasure. Treasure stacked in the walk. The gleam of gold.

Bey, "They were rich, but only administrators now. Most knew nothing of the Dream or of the Tanna. It was just a business for them." Pearson, "And the Tanna was lost in the Hidden Tomb?"

Bey's eyes swing toward him, "Mostly. The Heretic destroyed the real Egypt. After him, few could commune with the old Priests. Only if they were truly accomplished." Bey pauses reflecting, "But Paser, Ramesses' friend, attained Weret-Hekau, 'One of Great Magic.' He could do the Time Magic."

Pearson is piqued, "Time Magic?"

Ardeth stops and looks at him. Then takes a deep breath, "The Djnet and Neheh. The Djnet is all of eternity," sweeps hand broadly, "like the water of the oceans, where the Neheh is like the waves. The things that happen. Ticks of the clock. The greatest magicians could manipulate time by joining in the Djnet and Neheh. Allowing more ocean-" spreads hands apart, "-or less ocean-" closes hands slowly, "between the waves." His hands move slowly like a snake-charmer, "Slow time down," hands slowly spreading, "or speed-it-up!" Claps. Pearson jolts.

Ardeth leans back, "Borrowing between them, from one to the other." Looks at Pearson's blank expression. "Or so they say." Bey smiles.

Pearson straightens his back, "You know so much- "

Bey stands and walks to the mantle. Then turns toward Pearson, "Your friend, Kharis, seems to know so much; and I know why, Dr Pearson."

Pearson is taken aback.

Bey, "I heard about the Highclere find and those mummy stories at UCL. It was Kharis. You revived him somehow."

Pearson is rattled, "Yes. Yes, it's true. It's astounding but true. How- "

Bey, "I know well. There's been others" Bey leans in close, smiling, "but no one will believe you." Pearson, "That's it! No one will believe us; we'd all be in the loony."

Bey straightens, "Yes, I know. Too well. No one would believe. It's the same for Dr Hawass. You can't engage him until this is proved out completely first. Our careers would be lost. Over."

Pearson, "We had a break-in at the college. Salvagers. Chasing the Amun gold." Bey, "Oh-"

Pearson, "Yes, but we have a plan that could bring this all out. All of it. Kharis was buried with a Princess. They ran away when she was to be part of the Kadesh trade."

Bey, "Ah, the missing Princess." Pearson, "Yes. Anankh-kah-amun. They both received the Tanna."

Bey, "This is quite interesting. That little affair almost ended the Treaty of Kadesh. It could have brought down the whole country. The Hittites were sending their Princess but Ramesses failed to provide his." Tilts face, "It took years to fix."

Pearson, "We are thinking she will know the location of the Amun tombs." Bey is dubious, "Hm, she could know the location of the Vault; but perhaps in that Vault, the secret location of the Hidden Tomb will be found." His expression tightens, "The greatest secret in all of Egypt. But first

you'd have to find her, and then revive her."

Pearson is cocky, "We've already found her."

Kharis and Sarah sit on the divan in the foyer of the Archaeology building. Pearson is heading for the staircase and has just told them the details of his visit with Dr Bey. She looks at Kharis, "Two tombs!" Kharis is watching Pearson disappear up the stairs, "He knows too much, Dr Bey."

Sarah, "Well if Dr Bey can help, I-" Kharis, "This man," he turns toward her, "he's like me."

She's incredulous, "Oh-h." Kharis, "I can sense it. I know it." Sarah, "He is Egyptian; but Cambridge, I looked him up." Kharis, "I just know." She shakes her head, "He grew up in Surrey. 10 years in Cairo and Phd., Cambridge."

Kharis, "There's more to him." She counters, "He emigrated at eight with his parents. I looked at the dossier."

Kharis stares, his eyes are black marbles.

Pearson enters the upstairs Office. Paul is manning the computer. Pearson sits in his chair and leans back, clasping his hands behind his head. Staring up, "We're going to uncover the greatest tombs in history." His eyes run across the ceiling.

Paul looks up. Pearson glances to the Tutankhamun wall-picture. Next to the picture is a small framed photo of Akhenaten's Bust. He goes to the Akhenaten picture and taps his pencil on the glass, "The Heretic. Dr Bey calls him 'The Heretic'"

Paul, "He doesn't like Akhenaten?" Pearson pushes the pencil-eraser against the surface, "Not much."

Paul, "The ancients didn't like him either. They erased him from history."

Kharis spent an altogether fitful afternoon doing a deep-dive on Bey's story of the Two Tombs at his Alma Mater, searching the unsearchable and sorting the endless mistakes and misnomers of enthusiastic scholars. Kharis thinks to himself, 'They don't even know about the one tomb!' He goes to search for Sarah who took respite perusing old Codices and finally coffee outside, feeling the welcome cool against her skin and closed eyes.

The afternoon is cloudy and they have time to go shopping. Kharis lifts the mood with a touch of silly on the way out, balancing a zucchini on his finger. Sarah, "You're easy to feed." Kharis, "Yes. 'Mediterranean', how easy is that?" They step onto the street. It's an even light-gray London

overcast. Sarah, "Balance this," sticking him with both bags. As they walk, his voice settles, "I'm going to Cambridge tomorrow." Sarah looks at him, "Did you ring him up?" They come to the corner. Kharis, "No. I'm going to surprise him."

They cross the street and up to the next block.

After a bustle and Sarah's quasi Mediterranean fry-up, Kharis hit the laptop again before coming up empty online. Sarah knew there would be no sense talking about tomorrow.

They finally find sleep in the warm comfort of their bedroom. The bed seems the only place that is truly their own, and Kharis sinks away. Away, into his liquid slumber.

Out of the darkness, Anankhkah's father yells strongly, "You're wrong! I did not kill my daughter! You brought her this fate!"

Kharis stirs. The echo stings the silence in his ears. He turns to stare up, his blinking eyes open wide.

Chapter 11

Ardeth Bey walks through the echoey, dark Main Hall of Cambridge University and stops to see Kharis standing alone. His reflection stretches across the slick floor. Students scurry in the background.

Kharis challenges in Ancient Egyptian, "You are a Priest of the Kemet!"

Bey faces him and answers in Ancient Egyptian, "Yes. I am an adept of Amaunet."

The two stare. After a long moment, Bey approaches, "Come, we'll talk."

They arrive in Bey's office. Busy desk, paned windows, stacks of papers. Ardeth turns and talks in Egyptian, "The spirit of Anankhkah-amun is floating."

Kharis, in Egyptian, "I know. I can feel it."

Bey continues in English, "She has drifted into the Caverns." Kharis, "Is she lost?" Bey takes a long pause, staring. "Possibly. She must find a Way, a Way-path."

Kharis, "Her spirit still clings. I can feel it."

Bey, "Yes, I have felt it; but she's lost, floating, in the Caverns of the Underworld and I cannot go there in the Dream. The Dreams are of the night, of this world."

Kharis, "And you are a night dreamer(?" Bey, "Of course. I am a Priest of Amaunet."

Kharis, "Why can't she be found in the dream?" Bey, "She's drifted into the Caverns. The Six Caverns of the Underworld, West to East, the opposite of our world."

Kharis, "But-" Bey talks over him, "I'd need the Tanna-" Kharis cuts in, "I have Tanna."

Bey's eyes open wide, "You have Tanna??" Kharis, "There is a bundle, in Pearson's safe."

Bey stands wide-eyed, "Tanna is the key. With Tanna, it's possible. -Maybe possible." Kharis, "Maybe?"

Bey, "It's dangerous. Dangerous risk to even try. You and I are lucky to have survived it, and worse, to venture into the Six Caverns, it's perilous. The greatest peril. No greater peril."

Both look at each other. The silence numbs. Kharis is searching his eyes. Then finally: "But I will do it."

Kharis and Sarah sit at their dining table. She's listened wide-eyed, stunned by the whole story, "It's unbelievable. What will we do?" Kharis is staring, "I only know... -that I don't know, what he hasn't said." Sarah's eyes intensely examine his expression.

The next afternoon finds Kharis and Sarah surrounding Pearson's desk. Pearson is answering, "He was very interested in the procedure." Waves hand, "We went over the notes-" Kharis cuts in, "When? When did he see the notes?" Pearson is surprised at Kharis' alarm, "W-when he came to the college."

Kharis' eyes go black. He angrily starts for the door and talks toward Sarah, "Tell him about Ardeth - Bey."

He stalks out, slamming the door.

Kharis grasps the grip of the bumpy rail-car from Kings Cross Station to Cambridge. His intense glare reflecting in the black windows of the waning 'Rush-hour' train.

It is early evening when Bey opens the door. Kharis streams in, demanding, "You knew about the Tanna before."

Bey, "I suspected." Kharis, "You lied!" Bey, "Let us say I broached the subject."

Kharis, "You lied. Why?" Bey, "I -" Kharis gets in his face, "You want the Tanna, -for what? What are your plans, - 'Doctor Bey'?"

Ardeth glares back, "My plan is to return Anankhkah-amun to this life. To find the Amun, both Treasuries and return the glory of Egypt; the REAL Egypt."

Kharis tries to react but Ardeth steps around into the room, "These people, now, think only the daytime is real," gesturing with open palms, "that dreams are just funny things at night." He turns, glaring, "Once they see the old Gods, they will know the whole other half of their world, that they

have never known. Like Newton's apple. Before—" gestures with hand, "no one thought of it. After, everyone knows gravity."

Kharis is incredulous, "How could you do this?"

Bey steps powerfully forward, "The Amun have a gold dump," swings face close, "trinkets. I will unite the spirits of the Amun with the Amaunet Priesthoods in one Golden Portal that will open a Billion sleeping minds to the Dream. I will show them the Gods of Egypt, all of them, all at once—" leans in with steely eyes, "in vivid color. And it will consume them. Their governments and churches will fall, all in one night. People will wander about." Sneering, "They won't know day from night."

Kharis is stunned, his mind whirling. "You've had this planned! For how long!?"

Bey straightens calmly, "Since I revived."

Kharis stands back, surprised. Jabs his finger at Ardeth: "But there was no Tanna - "

Bey, "That's right. There was no Tanna."

Kharis blinks, "How did you know about me?" Ardeth looks intensely at him, pausing. "I was there, the night you received the Tanna."

Kharis' eyes open wide, "You?!"

His mind reels to the ancient Amun and Amaunet Overseers by their brass tripod. The Amaunet Priest is Ardeth!

Bey's thunderclap: "Yes."

Kharis starts shaking, "Why!? Why was this done to us?"

Bey, "It was the doing of Paser, the Vizier. I never knew him before that night."

Kharis is glaring and trembling, trying to think. Bey stares into him, "The darkest magician of all time was hiding in Paser's body. I didn't know why he did what he did."

Kharis, trying to think, takes two steps but spins back, "You've known all along where Anankhkah was, but not me!"

Bey, "Yes. You were buried with Tanna but I couldn't find you. You were missing."

Kharis' face goes slack, then intensifies, "What are your plans for Anankhkah? What—"

"She will lead us to the gold. In that Vault is the Nubian Sorcerer, NehDjet, worst of all spirits, masquerading as Paser. We not revive him. For surely, my young friend—," Bey stares intensely, "he has other plans for her."

Kharis' glaring eyes are black pools.

Kharis runs out on Bey's front porch, shaking, "I am powerless. Powerless. I can do nothing - "

He looks up, his mouth loosely open, his eyes swing

across the cold sky.

Sarah is waiting in the flat when Kharis arrives. She stands, "What happened?" He hesitates, "He was there, the night I received the Tanna."

Sarah's mouth drops open.

Kharis, "He's been planning this. To return Anankhkah and take the gold." Sarah, "We have to stop him!"

Kharis, "No. We don't stop him. We let him bring Anankhkah back." Sarah is shocked.

Kharis, "We let him bring her back. I owe it to her—" He sits at the dining table as she sits and takes her hand. Staring forward, his voice tugs with gritty resolve, "and he owes it to her."

Sarah is holding his hand, her mouth still open, staring into his black eyes. They do not hear the echoing hand drum snapping into the night in the streets below. It drifts through neighborhoods on foggy fingers.

Black shadows outline the back of a strongly energetic Ardeth on his Cambridge roof-top playing the ancient drum. The starkly cutting rhythms are dark and eerie.

Ardeth's hands are a blur over the Nubian drum.

The sound cuts into the night-life street-scene, some distance away where an older musician with long Dreadlocks stops in the middle of conversation, holding his hand up. "Oh, there it is again! That's some strange drum, mon - that's talk. That's somedin deep. That's some strange drum."

The staccato clicking and sharp accents slap along the street, echoing in the store-fronts. It reaches across the world, over the rippling desert and through the ancient structures onto the broad, black, silent Upper-Nile River, where the black current moves slowly like a giant glistening snake.

The sound echoes across the toothy black ridge of the Mountain of the Snake, high above, overlooking the Nile under starry black skies. Jackals run through the sound and along the ridge, howling into the night.

The drum finds Pearson's wide-eyed, crazed expression reflecting in the dark glass of his Office window. Paul stands behind him. Pearson, "This is so much bigger than we are." Pausing, "It's like some vast, puzzle we're caught up in... "

Paul is looking and wide-eyed over his shoulder, "What's Dr Hawass going to say?" Pearson's face freezes, his eyes darting.

Paul stares.

Chapter 12

Sarah unlashes the curtains on the kitchen window, letting them drape against the morning sun, "There's only so much James will be able to take before he bolts." Kharis, "This is a big test, for us all." He has the vague non-memory of an insistent drum echoing behind the veil of interrupted non-sleep cloaking their morning and Sarah too, and without a word spoken.

They finish gathering things to leave for Dr Hawass' visit at the College. All packed, they head out.

An hour and a Tube ride later, Kharis and Sarah glare at an unaffected Ardeth sitting casually between them, when the jubilant voice of Dr Hawass is heard in the hall. The door swings open.

Dr Hawass, "You better not say Nefertiti to me!"

Everyone laughs. "I don't want anyone to say Nefertiti."

Pearson presents his 'good face' over his own fuzzy non-morning but soldiers on holding both Hawass' arms with a clear smiling forbearance, "This is better."

Dr Hawass is surprised and recoiling, "W-hat?"

Kharis and Bey rise to stand with Pearson, who offers Kharis' lab photo files. Hawass sees their odd expressions as he reaches for the files, "What?"

Twenty-seven and a half strained minutes later, Dr Hawass sits stunned at the computer desk on his elbow, his legs stretched out to the side. He is reeling from the whole, fantastic reality of Kharis and Ardeth's exposure.

He jerks around, "You can say nothing - nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing!" His eyes dance, "After we have the tomb! Only after we have the tomb. Even then they won't believe it." His hand drums the table, "I don't even believe it. We have to have the tomb. The golden tomb."

Pearson, "In that tomb, all the secrets of Egypt shall be revealed." Staring forward, Hawass blinks, then glances at up him. Then scolds Ardeth, "And you! You and I, will have a long talk" waves hand, "when this is over." Hawass looks at the others, then away, then blinks, "I can't believe it," his eyes swing around in thought. Seeing the impending future he raises the fingers of both hands and drops them on the desk, "And here I am being pushed along by a plane schedule. Again." He looks.

Dr Hawass opens his car at the curb and looks up at the building briefly. He throws his fingers up, "Just your every day in London." The trunk-lid is up and Paul is loading bags.

Hawass gets in and talks from the window, "I'll be in Cairo tomorrow and check on her. I might need a few days to get the rest of the paperwork in order."

Pearson looks through into his eyes, "That's wonderful."

Hawass purses his lips, "I don't know what you're talking about-" Pearson laughs. Hawass, "And you don't know what you're talking about. Right?! -Right?"

Pearson holds both hands up, "I know nothing."

Hawass is exasperated, "I certainly know nothing." He stares forward, "What good is it to know?"

He starts to drive, then suddenly swings his wildly open eyes at Pearson, who acknowledges with his own wild eyes and nodding smile. Hawass, "Oh!" Shakes his head, "I can't believe it." Stares forward, and blinks, "Ok, ok."

His car leaves off with him talking to himself and the group heads in.

Paul and Pearson arrive back in their Office. Pearson heads for his chair, "We're actually going forward with this. Anankhkah is coming here." He reaches for the phone, "I've got to tell Kent. He wanted to know if this was really happening."

Paul, "I was thinking, if they cloned Ramesses, would he have the legal right to rule Egypt?"

Pearson smiles, "Wha-t? -I doubt i-" Paul continues, "Because she isn't a clone, she really is Royalty. How does that work?"

Pearson tries, "Well, when they've been out of power - when- " Paul, "Yes but she's Royalty! Royal blood. Doesn't she have a legal claim to the Egyptian Royal House?"

Pearson smiles, "Well, you can just make it for her." Paul, "Well, thank very much, I think I will!"

While Dr Hawass drives to the airport and Kharis and Bey search up a corner to discuss things, Kent is conducting a hastily arranged meeting with Lieu, at the corner college Cafe on Gower at Gower.

Students mill about. They pull up stools and sit with coffee. Kent signals to listen and Lieu reluctantly leans forward. "I have valuable information. They are flying the second mummy in from Cairo." Lieu's eyes swing over. Kent is sitting there with a shiny face of bloated expectation; and Lieu knows he must fulfill his part and ask, "When?"

Kent's smeary eyes shift in his glasses, "It's worth

50,000 more."

Kharis and Bey have found an empty lower office in the UCL Archaeology Lab. Kharis, "Where is she?" Bey, "The Middle Cavern. Somewhere in the Middle Cavern. The place of greatest danger."

Kharis has curious alarm, "What is there?" They both sit. Bey, "The abode of Apaypi, -the Destroyer."

Kharis, "The great snake- (?)"

Bey, "He is as strong as the Sun. Apaypi tries to kill the Sun every night. I must arrive before that battle takes place and confront him in the sea."

Kharis, "You plan to fight Apaypi?" Bey, "Of course not, but we must not disturb the balance between the Sun-God and Apaypi."

Kharis sharpens, "Or what?"

Bey half-smiles, "...Or the Sun will die."

Chapter 13

The landing gear of a private jet screeches onto the sunny Heathrow runway.

The jet pulls into a private hanger where a man awaits. The engines are whining and the hatch opens. A strong, handsome, squared away, Corporate Goon in black shades and open shirt, throws down the stairs and stands up in the doorway. His left hand holds a black garment bag over his shoulder.

The waiting man signals with a wave and the Goon and two others disembark. They have black duffles for luggage. The four of them load up and head away in a shiny black SUV limo.

Marshton greets the tight and tucked Corporate Goons in his long windowed, upper-floor Office. They are strictly business.

He goes to get the leaves. As he returns, Marshton becomes suspicious, "Wait a minute." He brings the envelope over to the window, "There's green in these veins here." His face explodes with anger, "Whoa, Kent!"

Estranged expressions fall over the Goons. They take the envelope and start looking at the leaves. Marshton grabs his phone and hits buttons, "I'll straighten this out."

Goon #1 looks over with a dour expression.

Marshton is looking at him and then gets an answer,

"Tommy! Get over here. Right now."

He hangs up, "This is the slug I've been dealing with. He's not grasping the situation."

Goon #1, "Are you grasping the situation?" Marshton, "He's left the real Tanna in the school safe, hoping he won't have to give it up." Looks at Goon #1, "I'll have my guys go get it. If you go, you'll be in the middle of the college. It'll get messy."

Goon #1, "We didn't fly out here for fun." Marshton, "I know that."

Sarah is driving in traffic, "Apaypi? You mean Apophis?" Kharis, "That's Greek. Yes, the Great Snake. But Ardeth will never reach him without the Chants. The Chants are his anchor in the Afterlife."

Sarah looks over with a questioning face. Kharis, "The spells have many sounds at once. The low sound opens the lower realms, the middle tones set where you are, and the high sounds talk to all worlds."

She looks over. Kharis, "It's hard to do! Here, listen--"

She glances at his mouth as he intones a strange, multi-voiced hum, "HMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM--"

Marshton, "Shove these right up his fat butt!" His flushed, buggy-eyed face stares at Tommy and slams the phony leaf-envelope into his hand. Tommy gets up, "I told you about Kent."

Marshton, "Leave him breathing." Tommy heads for the door.

Marshton, "Get those leaves, the right leaves; and make sure Kent doesn't forget it." Tommy looks back, then heads out the door.

Marshton watches the door shut and then throws his pen off the desk, bouncing it across the room.

Kharis is buried in his pillow. Anankhkah's echoing laughter splashes over him as she swings her bright smile and energized turn across his eyes.

Blue sky through the window behind, frames her beauty as she pushes her nose through a Lotus Blossom toward Kharis. Her scent floods around him and time stretches into a slowing echo as her eyes emerge through the petals. Her opening lash slowly unveils her gaze as the echo resolves into a single ringing clap.

Kharis' eyes open. He has awakened on his side in the dark bedroom. Every detail of her eye fills the room before

him.

Kharis is helping workmen clear out the Post-room. They are pushing tables and cabinets. Ardeth arrives and takes him into the hall.

Kharis, "Dr Pearson has the ok to move the big sarcophagus." Bey, "It will be my portal. We have the Tanna, the body of Anankhkah and now, the Portal." Kharis's eyes open in realization, "That's why you needed Pearson and Hawass! You need the Sarcophagus here in the British Museum!" The workmen are leaving and Kharis lowers his voice. Bey, "Yes. -And the Tanna. -And you." He pauses, "And this is a way to make up for your loss. To atone."

The workmen leave out and they enter the now empty Post-room. Ardeth closes the door, "There's a reason we need this room." He gently slaps the painted concrete surface while looking at Kharis.

Kharis, "I've been practicing the spells."

Both sit and face each other. Ardeth leans in, "Here is the special secret: the room must have solid, plain walls," gestures toward wall, "like a tomb, so the meditations will be in-tune with those walls."

They are face to face, "When you chant, you must listen to the sound-" Kharis is concentrating and Bey lifts both hands, opening his fingers, "it is like ripples in a pond and will fill the air." He is flitting his fingers before Kharis' eyes. "You will hear it return from the wall." He leans in, his eyes glimmering, "You must make the ripples from the wall and the ripples in the air, become one sound. You'll hear it in your skull and down your spine."

Bey dead-pans, "It must talk to the dead."

The grotesque face of a disintegrated mummy stares up. Tony stares down. The Salvage Crew is standing in the 'Mummy Room' of the Cairo Museum in Egypt. There are glass cases all around. Mace walks over. Tony, "Man, how many mummies are there?" Mace throws his thumb over his shoulder, "Did you see that King and Queen sculpture coming in? Goes up to the roof!" Tony's looking around, "They got the new Mummy Room and the old Mummy Room-," motions his hand around.

Frank approaches with his computer-tablet. Everyone gathers. "They moved her to 'Security' this morning." Armando, "Now what?"

Frank herds them away from visitors' ears. Frank whispers, "They're taking her to London; and we're going with

her."

Alarm fills their faces. Armando is shocked, "What!?"

A shabby BMW moves out of London traffic. Tommy is in the passenger side. Two of his boys are in back on either side of Kent who is pleading, "I'm tellin' ya, those leaves are the big pay-day. Ya can't give 'em away."

Tommy reaches around and backhands him. Then smiles. The guy next to Kent holds him in a headlock and the other guy smacks him. Tommy looks around again, "Hold off, it looks funny."

A long, boring ride later, except for that brief moment they had to cuff him around again, the BMW has rolled out along the coast and now pulls to a cabin. They force Kent out and march him into the house.

Kent is tied to a chair in front of a table, on which Tommy sits. He pushes a laptop at him, "Just get into the school and get that combination. It's a school safe so don't play games with me, you won't like what happens."

They stick his thick glasses on his head, which reflect the laptop screen.

Kharis and Sarah are pushed into their pillows against the bed-board. Kharis stares over his knees, "He's a magician from the Temple of Amaunet," looks at her, "he knows what's coming." Sarah is spent, "Maybe so. The whole thing feels planned. Like a plan. Everything is just," throws her fingers out, "happening." Kharis stares out, "He's a bag of secrets. Sometimes, I trust him completely." Sarah, "And sometimes not." Kharis, "He was so cold talking about his 'Golden Portal'. Like a completely different man."

Sarah is looking at him, "What is Amaunet?" Kharis, "Amun-et, wife of Amun." Sarah, "I thought Mut was the wife of the God Amun." Kharis glances, "I guess it's an argument. Waset is the City of Amun. When it became the Capitol, the new Pharaohs wanted a deeper connection with the creation Gods." Sarah, "So they married him up with Mut, the Mother Goddess." Kharis smiles, "Forced marriage!" Sarah smirks, "That didn't make his wife happy." Kharis is smiling, "No." Sarah, "'Divorced wife syndrome'!" Kharis, "Probably. Her temple is right next to His in Karnak." Glances over, "There's many women. They're devout. Mut's temple is down the causeway." Sarah, "The new wife next door." The phone vibrates. Kharis picks it up, "Yes."

Sarah watches him. His eyes swing over while listening.

Kharis, "Thank you." He clicks it off, looking her in the eyes, "They should be in the air by dawn. Five and half hour flight."

Her thoughts sit behind her staring eyes. "We'd better get some sleep, I have to be at the Museum early." She rolls over. Kharis looks at her and reaches around for the lamp switch.

Kent is bloodied, glasses half off and he's tied to the chair. It is late and the coastal cabin is dark. He is thankful to hear the car start outside. The engine is steady and Kent holds his breath. The gears grind and they drive away. Kent starts struggling with his binding.

The BMW crew has taken the long drive into town and rolled through Bloomsbury to the College. It isn't long before the ghostly apparition of a floating lamp shakes around Pearson's dark Office, casting jagged shadows. Tommy finds his way into the Study and sets the lamp on the desk. He pulls the chair around to the safe, sits down and plays with the dial. He throws the latch-handle, pulls open the safe door and rifles contents. Finding the Tanna, Tommy hums mischievously, "Hmm-Hmm-Hmm-Hmm-Hmmmm," as he switches the Balloon Cotton-bush leaves into the Manila Envelope and whispers through a smile, "There you go!"

Chapter 14

Sarah is drifting in sleepy darkness. She stands before Tutankhamun's sarcophagus. The face seems strangely transparent and she looks down into the Golden Face of the coffin within, but then notices the Third Face of the next inner coffin, and then sees the next Golden Face below that.

Each feature of each face are actually concentrically expanding Golden Radiations; which she sees to be the expanding levels of Egyptian Spiritual Ascendancy.

Her mind sails gently around and through the Nine Expanding Golden Radiating Faces as she slowly moves toward the inner Golden Mask, from where the suddenly distorted expression of the mummified King bursts forth.

She wakes in fright, "H-ahh-" Kharis is immediate, "It's ok, you're awake."

The sleek White Cargo Plane stands in the still Cairo night, bathed in flood-lights. Piercing halogens shine from every hatch while service vehicles and personnel are readying it for flight. Beeping loaders back around in quick circles and blazing white light pours from the large, open cargo hanger.

A windowed office sits above a long, raised steel loading-platform that runs the interior wall of the large hanger, over which cargo is being moved from the street. At either end of the platform, busily traversed access ramps and stairs drop to the concrete floor. Workers have electronic scanners, and there is an involved security kiosk and Customs-check on the platform, processing all through-moving traffic. The tarmac and its plane wait in the cold dark just beyond.

The floor is filled with inbound and outbound cargo storage. Small fork-lifts are darting madly between rows of stacked boxes, constantly tooting their little horns so they don't run into each other.

Strangely, there's not a lot of talk, the noisy din being quite enough. Frank and crew, in security uniforms are signing in on the busy Loading Dock. They have paper-work and a sealed crate, stenciled 'British Museum' that holds a supposed Rembrandt. Their paper-work will check out on the computer. Anankhkah's Large Crate is under guard just behind them.

Suddenly, a huge, Ancient Stone Chinese Horse slowly passes on a motorized scissor-lift cargo mover across the open floor. It is held within strong wood-beam braces. All four of Frank's group, along with the rest of the hanger-personnel, watch as it passes toward the plane.

The flight crew walks past and a noticeably gay Co-Pilot is having light fun flirting with one of the handlers.

Their play echoes from outside. The Handler has fun laughter, "I'm married!" Co-Pilot, "Oh, darn!"

'First Shift' wakes the morning at the British Museum. The night people are rotating out.

Ardeth arrives into the as yet, empty Offices to find Sarah waiting in the hall. "How is our Princess?"

Sarah looks with weary discretion, "In the air." Then pointedly, "How could you just stop their lives the way you did?"

Bey, "Paser ordered it. He said it was 'necessary'. Her refusal to marry stopped the peace accords. The Hittites thought Ramesses was cheating."

Sarah searches his face as he talks, "Paser was possessed, by the evil one. The Nubian. Why he used Tanna, ? no one could know." They walk further down the hallway.

A withering stress overtakes her, "And you think you'll find her?" Bey stops, his eyes dance, "Tanna opens the curtain, to the hidden world. With the minds and souls, of those who are there. The Princess is there."

Sarah, "Maybe it's just a preservative, maybe all your 'dream' is simply brain function. Maybe--"

Bey, "It's not just a preservative, it's a key. Tanna was the greatest power in Egypt. The whole religion is based upon it; all the buildings, the Temples, the pyramids, the necropolises, the writings on every wall, all because of Tanna. When you take it, the door opens, and the other world is revealed," flitting his fingers, "just on the other side of that veil."

Sarah's eyes tighten, "Why didn't Kharis see it?" Bey shrugs, "He had no tomb, no Portal. He just floated."

She nods with disgust, "For 3300 years"

Bey leans to whisper, "But for the blink of an eye."

Four Hours and Fifty Minutes into the flight: The four of them sit inside the noisy round fuselage, facing their phony "Rembrandt". There's a single guard riding along with Anankhkah's Crate. Both Tony and Mace have already made their way around him twice on their way to the head, through the nylon mesh safety-net hung across the rear of the cargo bay.

Frank looks at his watch and signals with a glance, the sign they've been waiting for.

Tony casually rises and makes his way down along the large mummy-crate toward the head. Clear Air Turbulence gives the wings a shake. As he passes, the guard again looks up. There isn't time for him to wonder what might be amiss. Tony puts him in a headlock and Mace holds a gun to his head. Armando sticks tape across his frightened mouth. They zip-tie his hands and tie his arms up to the fuselage rail.

Frank has broken the crate open and the group pulls weapons out of its liner. They get suited and start up toward the Cock-pit. The frightened eyes of the guard watch as they make their way forward.

Suddenly, the belly of the horse gets perforated from within, dust expelling. The guard gets fearfully big-eyed with sweat beading up. His skin pulls against the tape.

The saw cuts along one line and then along another as more dust falls. The guard is twisting against his bindings, watching the falling dust. He blinks as the lines connect and

a square patch gets kicked free, landing on the deck with a thump.

Four Chinese men drop, one after the other, onto the decking. The guard is bug-eyed. The men are armed and the guard watches them head forward, toward the Cockpit. The guard squirms around in squeamish fright.

The Pilot is flying the plane and the gay Co-Pilot sits against cabin next to several bails of cargo strapping. The door busts open and our four hijackers rush in with pistols. Armando has his gun to the Pilot and Mace yanks the Co-Pilot to the deck, who squeals in fear.

Armando sits gently in the control seat next to the pilot holding the gun on him, his eyes are shining. "Very careful, my friend."

The Pilot is shocked, glancing and tense and slowly puts his coffee down. Frank walks up and talks clearly, "Drop to 300 feet and then we'll change heading."

The plane starts diving. The Co-Pilot is looking up in fear. Frank is turning off the transponders. Armando is flipping switches while his gun remains on the Pilot and Mace is zip-tying the Co-Pilot when they hear the other men approaching up the flight-deck walkway.

Tony and Mace push themselves up against the bulkhead on either side of the door.

The slits of Ardeth's meditating eyes lay on his cheeks like sleeping eels. He sits erect on his folded feet in the side room off the British Museum hallway. His eyes suddenly jack open with a shining, steely glare. His face trusses up and his body shakes. A Dark Shadow moves out from his back and his body droops over. His face has fallen into an angelic peace.

The Chinese burst through into the Cockpit with guns drawn. Armando holds his gun to the Pilot's head and Lieu sees the threat. Tony and Mace draw down from behind them and all eight pull around quickly.

The tension skyrockets as Eight Black Barrels poke from tense and frightened faces. Frank looks across at Lieu, "You aren't gettin' the gold, buddy."

An air-bump sends the Pilot's coffee-cup flying.

The Cockpit bows quickly into a liquid Fish-eye Lensing that stretches the cabin like a balloon. Time slows down and the engine-sound drops below hearing.

The jet engines outside rotate in a slow pulsing.

The splashing coffee moves slowly in the air before stilled expressions.

A dark Reddish Brown Shadow, vaguely resembling a man, moves eerily through the cabin and drops into the gay Co-Pilot. He jumps up in very speeded and perfectly executed martial art moves, violently slamming each of the Hijackers down and binding them with the strapping at the elbows and around their necks.

He ties them together like a zipper, forcing the two groups of four to their knees, Egyptian style.

The Fish-eye lensing balloons out slightly and collapses to normal. Sound returns and the coffee splats across the floor.

The Pilot can't believe it, super excited, "Oh my God!"

The Co-Pilot leans over him, pointing at the Yoke and in a super deep growl, "Correct to London." The pilot is explosively smiling and the plane swings around.

The Co-Pilot stares at the Hijackers who can barely move their eyes but strain to look. He then turns to sit and looks forward.

His head leans and his eyes shut.

The Fish-eye Lensing swells for a second and the Shadow darts away. The Pilot is jabbering on the radio and the jet-engines whine for the landing.

The pilot swings his bright, wide smile around and does a double-take. The Co-Pilot's head is slumped over, fast asleep.

Ardeth appears in the hall, smiling. He sits Kharis down on the hall bench, "Do you have the Blue Lotus?"

Kharis, "Everything as you instructed. Egyptian Carob and white poppies, pinched from the Queen's garden."

Bey becomes intense, "We must start early, before sunset. All must be accomplished before the Sun rises. Nothing can go wrong, or we could become Akhu and lost forever. Forever! Do you understand?"

The elevator opens and Sarah runs out, "They tried hijacking the plane! But they got them! It was the thieves! They're caught!"

On the Heathrow Air-Cargo tarmac, the Pilot and Co-Pilot face reporters. The Inspector stands with them. The Pilot is bursting with earnest pride, "The most heroic thing I have ever seen! Like Superman!"

Reporters turn all mics toward the Co-Pilot, 'How did

you do it??' 'Yes, tell us, how did you face down eight hijackers!?' The Co-pilot is flushed and embarrassed, "I can't say. It just happened so fast, I-I really don't remember."

A short distance away, a small, barred Patty-Wagon window frames the frustrated faces of Frank and Lieu. Lieu frowns at Frank, "What gold?"

The window and faces suddenly get rapidly smaller as the Patty-Wagon leaves away.

Some short time later, the Museum people are gathering in the Acquisitions Room around the large shipping box. They pry up the top, and remove the inner cover.

The mummy of Anankhkah-amun sits in golden packing straw. Awe and murmuring ensue.

Its smooth white surface is cracked with age. Two lines of color border Hieroglyphs that disappear at a missing surface-patch. Part of a right-facing Hawk symbol is seen.

Everyone discusses and looks for the moment, and then becomes quiet. They look at each other and file away, leaving Kharis alone at the foot of the table. A blaze of colorless light from the tall window buffets his eyes and reflects from the surface of the mummy.

Sarah approaches, "You've worked hard for this."

Kharis, "Things go so fast sometimes. It's hard to hold even to a moment. Things go so fast." She takes his hand. Kharis glances down, "It's so hard," looking at her, "it's so hard for me."

She gently lets go of his hand and backs away, out of the room.

Paul and Pearson are walking from the Acquisitions Room. Their thoughtful movements are nearly in sync.

Paul whispers. "What if Anankhkah decides the gold is all hers?" Pearson's brow twists.

Chapter 15

Anankhkah's Crate is being brought into the Post-room to be set-up by workmen. Four men jostle the crate above two small saw-horses. Pearson and Sarah are banging around in the attached cloakroom, setting up scientific apparatus. They've cleaned off the bench and she looks around. "There's no lights." He throws his finger toward the one socket, "At least there's power." He heads for the hall. She turns and follows, looking at Anankhkah's Crate as she walks. She can

just see the shiny dull-white head and chest above the lip.

Pearson pops his head through the door to look down the hallway. On the open floor beyond, workmen are noisily pulling the roped-off granite sarcophagus from its display onto a roller-sled. Their voices and efforts echo in the large room.

Pearson took his now familiar walk down to the College and after a quick bite in the cafeteria, has returned to his Office in the Archaeology building. He is removing the Manila Envelope from his Study safe. Paul stands behind him. "This is the big day." Pearson turns, "Yes. This is the big day." Their brief eye contact acknowledges the momentous event unfolding down the block in the Post-room of the British Museum.

The phone rings in Marshton's Office. He picks up, "Tommy! Where are you?"

Tommy Pearl talks from his phone, "At the club." He hears Marshton's voice complaining in the ear-piece, "At the club! W-" He cuts him off, "Gregory, you tell your Yank-friends we need a little consideration for these leaves."

He smiles, waiting for Marshton to explode on the other end. Sure enough, Marshton's face blossoms shiny red, "What?!! You don't get it-"

Tommy, "No, I got it Gregory, I got it completely. I got the leaves! You tell your American friends to produce 200k, today." Smiles wide, "And that's it. You got that?"

Pearson has driven his car into the rear Parking Lot at the British Museum. He gets out with paperwork and the Manila Envelope and walks toward the loading area.

He climbs the steps onto the loading dock and heads down through the swing doors into the lower hall.

The elevator opens and Kharis emerges to meet him. Smiling, "You brought the Tanna." Pearson smiles, "We're all a part of history now." Kharis smiles brightly and they turn together into the elevator.

Kent is beat-up, broken glasses and torn shirt. He talks from a pay phone in a Coastal Pub lavatory hallway, "Tommy took it! Serves you right."

Marshton sits at his desk, "Yeah, well, the Americans are going over there right now." Kent, "Listen to me, there's a huge tomb Pearson is after. It's full of gold, bigger than

Tut's. You know the golden mask. That King Tut."

Marshton is more than worn. "No one wants to hear your stories, Kent."

Kent, "Listen! There's a professor who's gonna drink that Tanna brew. He thinks he'll find the location of this new tomb."

Marshton cuts him off, "I don't want to hear this stuff. What in the hell am I listening to?!"

Kent barks, "Well listen to this: Those bogus leaves are poison and if that professor somehow drinks it, it'll blow this whole thing up-" Annoyed customers are pushing past as Kent holds his busted glasses yelling in the hall, "I mean blow it up! Have us all in the docker. Do you hear that?!"

Pearson and Kharis stand in the Cloak-room. A series of plant cuttings sit on the bench next to the boiling apparatus. Kharis' eyes follow over the set-up. It's a large, awkward affair consisting of a round glass boiling flask with a long neck and nestled into a white heating sock, sticking straight up from what looks like the lower half of a crock-pot.

Pearson places the Manila Envelope next to last cutting, "About two hours to sunset." Kharis nods, "Getting close. I can't see in here."

Pearson, "Yes, it's dark." Gives a dismissive wave, "It's a closet." Motions to the apparatus, "We can't put any more on that service anyway." He turns for the door, "I've got to head home and get ready." Kharis walks out with him. They stop before the crate, with its White Mummy. On the other side is the giant stone sarcophagus. The two open boxes are about the same size and stretch across the room.

They leave out through the hallway.

Kharis has walked all the way with Pearson to his car. Pearson, "My phone's been on the blinkers since this morning but I'll be here in time." He looks up smiling, "Nothing could stop me." Kharis, "I'm meeting Sarah. We'll see you in an hour."

They both nod, then smile excitedly.

Kent stands in the lavatory hallway, counting out his few coins. A starkly inebriated female has been bumping into the call-box while arguing on the phone. She keeps slapping the wall. Finally the waitress forces her away and Kent grabs the hand-piece. He phones Pearson's number and stares forward, his eyes smearing around in his broken glasses. The

sound of ringing cuts to the paced recording, "The Inbox, of the subscriber you have reached, is full. Please check your numb- " He hangs up and goes to the bartender.

Kent yells across, holding his glasses, "I need to use the phone, it's an emergency." The bartender looks him over, then calls back in a settled tone, "If you haven't got the change, you best move along."

Someone is asking for a tap and the bartender pays attention to him. Kent shuffles outside.

He stands by cars along the pub parking strip and sees someone drive up. A couple gets out. He asks for change and she rebuffs him. The male has disgust in his eyes.

Kent looks at the road as they head past and then turns to follow them in, keeping them between himself and the bar.

He walks quickly into the lavatory hall, next to the phone. Noisy people are walking back and forth around him.

He pushes himself against the wall. The smell of sea-food and chips pervades against clinking dishes and banging from the wash-basins. Steam blows in through the open back-door. Kent hasn't eaten.

Kharis sits in the flat finishing a sandwich. Sarah is in the bathroom. He calls out, "Where's the phone?" Sarah stops the eyeliner and stretches her lower lip. "I forgot to charge it!"

Kharis flexes his brow. "We got to get going." She's finishing her eyeliner, "Just two seconds--"

Kent is peeping out from the hall at the busy Pub. Coins are left on a table. The waitress is elsewhere and he looks up to see if the bartender is looking.

Their phone sits in the kitchen and Sarah and Kharis head out in the background. The door closes behind them. The apartment is quiet. The phone rings. It sits there. It rings again, the sound echoing slightly. The phone rings again. The door swings open and Sarah runs back.

Kent's eyes open wide, "Sarah! Thank God--"

Sarah, "? Kent?" She looks at Kharis who is coming back looking.

Kent, "This is an emergency! You've got to hear me out." He stretches the corners of his mouth, "I've--" bites his lower lip, "I've been monitoring the Tanna for Gregory Marston -of Lydon." Crinkles his face, listening. "Please, hear me out, hear me out. They kidnapped me. I've been tied to a chair all night. They forced me to--" looks down, pressing his lips together, "give Pearson's safe combination."

Sarah, "What in the hell are you telling me Kent?"

Kent, "They stole the Tanna last night. If you people found leaves in that safe, it's not Tanna, it's poison."

Sarah, "Poison!?" Kharis is alarmed, "What?"

Sarah, "Americans!" She looks at Kharis, "Wait. You tell that to Kharis." She sticks the phone at Kharis.

They arrive quickly outside. An Uber driver rolls up. Kharis waves to it and tells Sarah as he walks around, "Make sure Ardeth does not drink that brew. I'll get the Tanna." Kharis yanks open the door, "LHR mate but wait," holding his finger up for the driver. He pokes up yelling over as she starts for their car, "It was so dark in there, even I thought it was Tanna." He jumps in and they accelerate away. Sarah is unlocking the car.

Chapter 16

Kharis sits alone on the bottom step of the corporate jet. He has a hard cane and watches the last rays of sun creep slowly up the wall.

Sarah is standing outside her stalled car on a city bridge. Noisy traffic is passing. Honking is heard.

In the depths of the Museum, Ardeth is submerged in his meditations. The busy sounds of the day have tapered with the falling tide of visitors and the descending silence disturbed only with the occasional creaks in the old timberwork.

Kharis sits in the quiet hanger and sees the last line of fading rays extinguish into dusky shadow. His hand twists gently against the wood. Reflections dance from the jet's surface and across the slick floor.

The Museum is quiet. Ardeth's meditating eyes crack open. He looks to the clock. He stares forward and carefully rises. He walks slowly to the door and then out into the hall. He moves slowly, toward the Post-room.

The Manila Envelope waits on the dark Cloak-room bench.

Ardeth approaches the Post-room and stands before the door. He reaches up and enters.

Sarah waves in desperation to passing cars on the bridge.

Kharis sits calmly on the Corporate Jet stair. The hanger is dark. He can hear little noises in the metal roofing from the temperature change.

Finally, the SUV arrives outside. The muffled sounds of luggage and hatch lids precede the door opening. Kharis sits calmly. The four men enter.

Surprised, one of them pulls the electric box and the lights come on.

Goon #1, "What's this?" They are putting their bags down. Kharis stands and walks toward them. They start to spread around him, readying up their energy. Kharis, "I've come for the Tanna."

Before they can react, Kharis strides in powerful motions through them. Two are knocked unconscious, Goon #2 is holding his obviously broken wrist. Bone and blood are seen.

Goon #1 is on one knee, his gun knocked away. He tries for his ankle-holster when Kharis strikes him on the elbow and across his ear, which bleeds and welts up strongly. His hand is quivering spasmodically.

Kharis picks up Goon #1's leather folder and removes the envelope. He quickly tests it across his nose and turns to leave. Then stops and turns around, "Gentlemen, your guns have made you lazy. None of you are trained for battle. You'd have a hard time in the old days." He leaves out the door.

Chapter 17

Kharis is in the British Museum, handing the Tanna Envelope to Ardeth. He stops with a curious look, "Why didn't you just take the leaves when you first heard the school had them?"

With an outreached hand on the Tanna, Ardeth looks him in the eyes, "The Tanna is sacred. It must be freely given. And you are the only one who can freely give it."

Kharis' mouth drops open but he regains his expression. This Priest of Amaunet, before him, arranged his life into Cambridge, for years, until Kharis turned up; and watched everyone dance on his carefully set puppet-strings to bring Anankhkah from Egypt. All marionettes on his stage; and all for this single moment.

Both men hold the Tanna, looking into each other's eyes.

Kharis lets go.

Ardeth smiles, still holding the envelope, and leans to him, "I'm glad you handled this."

Kharis' eyes open, "You've had this whole thing planned. The whole time!" Ardeth, "No. Sarah's love is pure. Hers alone." Whispers, "Freely given."

Ardeth soon stands before the scientific boiling apparatus. The cut plants lay on the table as he sets the Tanna Envelope carefully down. He reverently places his hand over it and mouths a secret prayer.

Across town, a brilliantly lit, long Hospital Emergency Room is lined with white curtains around bed-stations. With a broken arm and glum expressions, Tommy and two of his friends sit bandaged at the foot of three beds.

A nurse walks by pulling the curtain from the opposite row of beds, exposing the four Goons, equally bandaged and equally glum. The tension rises immediately, but they all just glare.

A wide Cheshire grin creeps across Tommy Pearl's wrinkly face.

Ardeth manipulates tongs in the Cloakroom. Nine boiled poppy pods and dripping sprigs are pulled from the liquid. He places three Tanna leaves into the murky froth, and re-closes the flask.

He turns and walks past Anankhkah's crate and the granite sarcophagus that sit chest high and fill half the room.

Ardeth starts drawing large, bold charcoal line-drawings on the shiny walls.

Chapter 18

Pearson mans the front doors of the British Museum and is showing the last of the public out. The interior lights go down as Sarah approaches. Pearson closes and locks down the glass-doors. He looks up over his shoulder, "All the guards gone?" Sarah, "Just as we planned. Everyone is gone for this night."

Pearson stands up thinking. His reflection is all he can see in the black door-glass. "We will need them on perimeter." His eyes turn to her, "Then check systems security; and pop on over to commissary. Sit this through."

They start heading through the sweeping marble Museum Foyer toward the back, their footsteps echoing. Sarah worries as they walk, "They should have started hours ago." Pearson, "Yes. I'm worried too. But he said he can handle things with the Time Magic. Something about taking a 'sneaky route'."

Sarah looks up questioning. Pearson can only shrug.

A sensuous sliver drifts in the staircase and down through the galleries. The strange smell of Tanna reaches across the patient countenances of Ramesses and Amenhotep, in their polished granite, and the Priest, Rama-Rui still offering counsel. The serene gaze of the Priestess, shining in her gilded vessel, still awaiting her first fresh breath. Still offering her confident pride.

And the warm lights of the hall, reflecting from the hardwood flooring.

In pleated gowns and Priestly robes with Red Crown, Ardeth enters the hallway. His hands are up-turned and he mouths prayers as he proceeds toward the Postroom.

Flickering flames illuminate the richly colored mural of Egyptian Gods and Hieroglyphs that span the walls. Kharis stands between Anankhkah's Open Crate and the granite sarcophagus with braziers on either side.

Ardeth removes his robes and nimbly swings up onto his hands above the granite sarcophagus, holding himself in a sitting posture. The crackling Braziers keep an intrusive excitement. He lowers himself down and reaches for the brass cup with the Tanna preparation.

His eyes are gently closed. He brings the bowl around to his lips and pauses, then drinks it down.

He throws the empty pot to the wall and lays back. Kharis watches the bowl bang around to a stop. A stream of white fluid creeps to the lip, and drips to the floor.

Kharis turns to start his vocal meditations which quickly ring into a droning hum.

The face of Ardeth reacts as a familiar feeling begins to grip over him. Kharis' multi-voiced hum stretches into a Faceted Harmonic Ribbon.

A strange shadow floods from Ardeth's head as his eyes flicker open and he tries to focus.

A white fog is disturbed by a yellow nicotine turbulence that keeps insisting itself. Ardeth shakes and twitches his face to avoid it. He looks over.

The flames smear into twisting billows and dance with the Goddesses on the bent and heat-shimmering, transparent walls. The Hieroglyphs ooze into musical notes flowing from their mouths, and weave their way through the brocade fabric of Kharis' Harmonic Ribbon undulating through the air.

Ardeth's large grinning, pop-eyed glistening Pearly Alabaster Head expands to fill the room. Cupped, milky hands deliver him up from liquidly slippery string arms looping to

his body in the Sarcophagus and heat-drenched walls just below; its living images are singing with Kharis while the walls begin furling into silky satin.

The transparent walls become part of the outlines of a transparent building schematic, which turns around and becomes flat wall-paper behind him. His slippery arms, twine around themselves into a wiggly cord reaching from that little room, which now appears no larger than a postage stamp that shrinks further away from sight.

Out of the mist, an electric Green and Orange-Crested Macaque with a big, toothy smile runs up. Ardeth suddenly appears normal and is surprised, "Gahbo!"

Gahbo, "You're back, where have you been?" Gahbo is flapping his long hand across his eyes and down his face in disbelief. They're alone in a flat, syrupy landscape.

Ardeth, "In the other world, Gahbo."

Gahbo, "What will we do?" Ardeth gives a kind smile, "I must enter the Caverns."

Gahbo is wiping his face and looking down and up in his always expressing tick, "Caverns?" Ardeth, "Yes, Gahbo. It's good to see you."

Gahbo, "You have your tail." Ardeth, "Yes."

Gahbo looks up excitedly, "Caverns? Let's run." Ardeth, "I must enter the Caverns to re-balance the Ma'at, Gahbo."

Gahbo is swiping his face and moving quickly from one spot to another. Always looking back and swiping, "We should run."

Gahbo is trying to lead him out left-ward; Bey turns right-ward toward the starry Horizon.

Gahbo is swiping his smiley face and dipping his head - down and up; and scampers off.

Ardeth turns and walks into the vast expanse of the starry heavens. He crosses onto the broad lip of the Horizon, which descends precipitously. He hears a rumbling and notices the starscape above, pouring over like syrup.

Softly Slumbering Spirits begin stretching out in suddenly large number, like fishes beyond count and pour in a deluge around his mind.

Half his face is holding against the current but half is being pulled and distorted sideways, rippling and slapping, it is stretched into long silky ribbons, further and further until finally he is taken; lost into the swirling openness of the First Cavern.

A billion Spirits whirlpool around him in vast streaks of differentiating color. He gathers himself to reach out.

His hand clasps to find a Was Scepter meeting his palm and his arm is restored. He pulls himself up and has become

the Jackal-headed Wepwawet.

He stands erect above the swirling jewel-like maelstrom, "I am Wepwawet, Opener of the Ways."

Blue Baboons see him from their perch on an overlook and run away frightened.

Wepwawet proceeds into a huge, gaping hole in the wall where a long cavern-like tunnel has hundreds of cave-openings, archways, broken pillars and dilapidated Temple entrances. The floor is mounds of soft dust that cling to the walls. White bones and skull-caps lay exposed everywhere he looks.

He jumps across dusty blocks and pillars to a dark arch and steps into a glittering Ruby-pink Cupola where a stone walkway crosses an endless drop.

He walks toward the far side and twists into a curly-que. Something about the Cupola is skewing time and space. Each intersection of the eight-sided dome knifes transparent seams through the air that reflect like liquid mirrors.

He starts again as a Bold Young Pharaoh and turns in the curl.

He starts again in Sparkling Blue Crown and Armor.

He starts again as Amaunet High Priest.

He is Wepwawet with White-Maned Wolf-Head and starts across but his nose begins to curl.

It is a long beak and his eyes are sliding liquidly up and back. One eye is in front of his bird nostril and he notices a plesiosaur swimming across above him.

He steps back and proceeds again. His snout stretches into the long beak and the plesiosaur counters to bite.

Wepwawet moves his Scepter and turns the plesiosaur away by turning the giant liquid page of the folding mirrors.

He starts again and simply goes forth through the door, which quickly closes over him.

He is in a black bubble. The pervasive light is the glimmering orange of the dying Sun. Only his tail protrudes from the wall, where the door had been.

He begins walking and another door appears which leads into a hallway that itself has many doors. He grabs the stile of the first door on his left, "The Hall of Niches." He blinks. Frames of Time are falling from his mind like panes of glass and Wepwawet grips strongly, concentrating to remember. He has the lower realms and Osiris' Throne of Judgement yet to pass in order that he arrive at the burial mounds of Ra before the exact moment the Sun-God is at his weakest.

The door he holds is now above him. He looks up across the Hall and makes his decision, "Here we go." He walks through the door and stands normally in the quiet Hall. The

walls before him are lined like a library with long rows of oval niches where 216 colorful sarcophagi lay head-to-toe on biers, 12 to a niche.

A long, wide Grand Barque, with high Stem and Post, spans the whole length of the hall. It stretches under the girth of the Giant Scarab, spreading over the deck. Its feet and mouth-parts make clacking sounds as it turns to watch Wepwawet pass.

Wepwawet walks along the huge boat on his left, with its broad, black timbers; passing the shelves of mummy Niches, three high on the right. Each Mummy is gloriously appointed in intricately painted patterns with lacquer, colored stone and gilt. One has gold netting. He sees the far door ahead. The Scarab makes rustling noises just above him as he walks.

The far-door is solid red-granite. The top and sides show disintegrating gold-leaf and the face of the door has rows of deeply carved Hieroglyphs that change meanings as soon as his eye finds them.

Through the door is a Flaming Square Pool tended by four Blue Baboons with furry Green shoulder-capes. They all look at once. The flames are high and slapping loudly in the small room. As he enters, a multitude of standing mummies with unwrapped heads crowd to the walls. The heads have contorted expressions and turn and twist rapidly. The mummies move away, avoiding his gaze.

Swimming like sharks, between the Baboons, are spirit-swords with wiggly blades and eyeballs on their hafts. The eyes watch Wepwawet as they swim.

The Baboons glance back and forth, one screams. The wiggly swords explode in overly excited violence, jamming fast up to his eyes and retreating. The Baboons chase in arcs across the walls but then run protectively to the pool-edge as Wepwawet walks through.

The Baboons, looking back and forth at the pool-edge, seem like reflections of themselves, as if either side of the pool was only a reflection of itself. The Wiggly swords start slapping all over his head like crazed eels. As he crosses around back, he glimpses hundreds of Flaming Pools in an endless line of reflections. The mummies are constantly pushing against themselves to shrink into the darkness.

He shakes off the slapping eels and steps down through a door into the black-lit, Hall of Uraeus where Nine surprised Cobras, with garishly colorful neck-flares, stand in a basin on the right. The colors seem fuzzy in the purplish light. There's a gold-hued Crocodile standing at the door. The Co-

bras look with benign curiosity, their mouths opening and closing. One signals with downward glances and Wepwawet takes the bait, looking down.

It's a mirrored room where their reflecting images descend away into a bottomless vertical shaft. But he sees grandly dressed Nekhbet White Vultures of Upper Egypt occupying seats on the left wall. Each holds the Oracle Feather and Shen Ring and wears the splendorous Crown of Osiris.

Looking downward, he is in the Hall of Nekhbet, with Vultures reflecting endlessly in shining blue light on his left. Wepwawet calls out, "Nekhbet!" Nearby Vultures turn to look from their long, animated row of descending reflections. His feet are sideways with the purple Cobras, but his body is bent at the waist and stands next to a vast blue wall of reflecting White Vultures, all on shafts leading down; and all converging to a single place far below. Wepwawet points down, "The Road to Nekheb, the City of the Dead." He turns his head quickly to look up. Endless Vultures line a gleaming greenish wall heading up. "Nekhen, The City of Life!"

The purplish Cobras and vividly blue Nekhbet White Vultures reflect endlessly sideways from each other along their glimmering opalescent vertical shaft-walls. Either direction begs an almost irresistible pull and Wepwawet stands against it. A shifting vibration pulls at his legs. He straightens his body and walks toward the Crocodile into a mirrored vortex where a ringing wind turns around him.

Infinite mirrored shafts leave away forever in all directions leading through infinite mirrored rooms where he sees Gods and Spirits slipping between dimensions. Thankfully, the giant smiling Crocodile stands directly before him. His glimmering multi-colored eyes watch Wepwawet closely. He snarfs.

Wepwawet, "Bad breath." The Crocodile frowns and snarfs all over Wepwawet, who just pushes past the objecting Croc, out through the door to the Mountain of Headless Black Corpses beyond. He has left the mirrored dimensions and emerged from a wide, curved dark-stone wall with many doors. The giant pile of black bodies extends up right off the doorsteps. He is in a cold, dark cavern at the bottom of a giant pyramid of death. He talks to himself looking up, "I knew I had to come this way when it got late."

Black heads lay littered, which he kicks out of the way.

Wepwawet's feet make slushing and crumpling sounds as he advances up the steep pile. He looks around. Huge angular fangs of dark rock twist down from above, creating the Nave and Apse for a Stone Cathedral surrounding Osiris' massive Golden Throne, standing just above.

Moans and screams amid screeching and hissing echo down. He sashes his way to the top and moves to the right of Osiris's gigantic toes, which are four times taller than Wepwawet.

Osiris's Massive Chair rises above into the mists, on fluted Golden Columns extending from two giant, solid Gold Lion-Head chair-feet. Each as big as a Palace. Little rodents scurry from perches.

Twelve Snarling Vipers reach out from under the giant Throne to his left. They constantly peck at things, testing. Several blow fire. Wepwawet stands strongly, "Sons of the Earth!"

The gaping mouth of a gigantic cobra covers over him. Its fangs slide up and back on either side of his shoulders. The textured white tongue recedes as its hiss sucks Wepwawet's hair forward.

The snake shrinks away and snaps its jaws shut, nose to nose with Wepwawet, blowing his hair back. It immediately joins the other snake-heads to rip apart some poor soul at the foot of the giant Golden Throne. The body and severed parts are tossed up and fall down the pile.

The Cathedral wall before him is a lacy brier of snarling white stone and Wepwawet simply strides forth following the limp thread of Anankhkah's lost spirit. He disappears into the wall of white latticework.

Wepwawet comes through frosty mist into a forest of snarling brier and toothy spires; and finds an ancient stone Pylon-Gate jutting high up and disappearing in the low fog. It stands alone in icy brambles. Only little crystals grow on its yellow surface, its carvings have long since disintegrated in the eons of time.

Wepwawet walks around it and finds a dead Possum on its back, with its legs in the air. Wepwawet takes one look and turns into Ardeth, shaking his head in disgust, "Oh no. Ig. What do you want?"

Ig lies there. Then moves its head to speak, "I need to get past Darkhead." Ardeth squishes his lips, "So do I." Ig jumps up excitedly, "Lets go!"

Ardeth shakes his head and turns toward the Pylon, "Right. You still can't find your thread?" He turns back into Wepwawet. Ig follows along, "A tiger can't change his stripes."

Wepwawet walks through the Pylon and into a room where a huge Dark Headed Snake coils ominously. Ig falls over dead. Four chattering fish-head mummies argue from wall-ovals

on the right against eight shrew-head mummies on the opposite side.

Wepwawet walks under Dark-Head who coils around over him, judging his movements. Darkhead glances quickly at Ig.

Dark-Head's deep voice, "You are out of place."

The Mummies bicker incessantly. Wepwawet, "I am in place."

Dark-Head jerks around, taking several looks. He doesn't like it. Deep anger, "You are out of place!"

Wepwawet holds his back-hand up to Dark-Head's attack and the snake is wiggling violently behind an unseen barrier. Muted thumps are heard.

Wepwawet walks out through the adjoining Pylon, passing a putrefying corpse which stares back like a beggar. Wepwawet leans back in, "Come on." Ig jumps up and scrabbles along.

They are in a dark, straight stone hallway leading to the bright outside at the far end. Wepwawet takes a right, disappearing down dark stairs. Ig throws his hand toward the light, "Where you going?" He does a double-take. Then, "Oh-h!" Ig scrabbles down the stairs. Wepwawet is already halfway down a dark stone square hallway. The walls are wet. Their steps echo along the slick surface.

Wepwawet, "Playing dead is what got you here in the first place." Ig, "It wasn't my fault. I woke up and my thread was gone. I couldn't get back. I looked everywhere." Wepwawet glances, "Is that your story for Mrs Ig?" Ig scrambles along, "Very funny."

Wepwawet emerges through a small, square window onto a walkway surrounded with lush green foliage, vibrant flowers and thick pungent air.

Ig runs over the sill and stands looking about. Green branches drape the walls with languid blossoms and a carpet of grass hugs under flowering bushes planted evenly along the stones. Wepwawet, "Did it ever occur to you that no one plays dead in the Underworld?" Ig looks.

The facing wall has an adjoining Pylon about 50 feet away. Perfectly cleaved earth fills the entrance of the Pylon but for a strip of grass-covered ground up near the top, from which light is spilling forth. The Pylon is otherwise lone-standing and appears perfectly normal along the garden wall with its thick branches and greenery.

Wepwawet looks at the one, small lighted space at the top of the Pylon and casually walks toward it. He moves the Was Scepter whereupon the Pylon, walk, walls, greenery and trees shrink around him so he simply crouches down to step

through the opening. He calls back at Ig, "I've got to get ahead of Ra." Ig looks up.

The whole Pylon and gardens expand back again with Wepwawet on the other side.

He is standing in an empty field, just the top of the lonely, sun-baked Pylon sticks up through parched weeds. The air above is a rippling orange.

There's a path, which he takes around a slight rise.

As he comes around, dry stubble wiggles in the lensing heat between two large reddish burial mounds bordered by rope-like Golden Snakes. Their mouths clasp their tails. Their eyes are closed. The sky is rippling Orange and streams through the air in lazy sheets.

The mounds become redder as he approaches. Above each mound stands an expressionless mummiform Rams-head God with a shimmering orange Sun-disk above their Horns.

Two Catfish-Head Warriors run in from a side Gate. One points his finger, yelling, "Hey, You!"

Wepwawet simply approaches the Gods into an over-whelming red-orange glare from the Disks. He strides strongly through, as his image almost disappears in the liquid shimmering blaze of heat and light and thundering sound between the mounds.

He leaves out through the lone-standing Pylon. Catfish-Head is standing on tiptoes trying to see.

He transforms into Ardeth while walking down a grassy slope, heat disappearing from his body. Orange radiations are stabbing the air behind him.

The sky clears as he walks into the blues and greens of marshy farmland. The air becomes brisk.

He sloshes through flooded fields to find a Cobra-headed Barque sitting serenely in a colorful wash.

A tree stands from the berm where a cow grazes. Slender horns with a Carnelian Disk grow from her head as she transforms into a human-form Goddess.

Two Benu-heron birds appear from the reeds on the left and another walks into the water on the right. Yellow Wag-tails alight in the branches above.

Ardeth's knee-deep strides throw inky undulations across the bracken pond where dragon-flies and water-skeeters flee to the edge. Up on the bank, the Goddess becomes Hathor.

A fat dwarf with a puffy, smiling, peeked-white alligator head, as wide as he is tall, in a wild-flower necklace

walks down and flops its fat-butt into the water-line.

Ardeth looks to the Goddess. Blue sky contrasts Hathor's Golden-Falcon Headdress and Eye-of-Horus Crown. Golden emanations radiate in the pink air around her. She wears a Menat Necklace and a simple boteek of dark-blue and white stars.

Hathor steps through the intervening Papyri and Lotus flowers, which crackle in the clear air.

Hathor looks at Ardeth, "She has been under my protection. And now you rescue her?"

Ardeth, "I would return her to her life."

A Red and Gold Phoenix bird with two heads and necks lands on the nearby Barque to observe. One head is Red, the other, Blue. Leaning forward, he extends his necks out below his body, swinging his heads back and forth.

Hathor, "You must purify." She pauses looking at him.

Fat-lipped Fish-head breaks the surface, "He made it past Ra!" It disappears with a 'blip'.

Stately Benu is earnest, "She's drifted into the Cave of Lost Souls." Hathor adding, "And on through the Hidden Room, where only pure spirits may pass."

Puffy's scraggly bark, "That means, not you." Ardeth snaps a look. Puffy sneers back.

Hathor, "You must find another way." She removes a small Turquoise Flute from around her neck and hands it to Ardeth, "Give her this."

Ardeth double wraps the chain around his wrist. Hathor looks at him, "She will remain in my gaze, priest." Glancing up, "You are already late."

Ardeth sees the light changing and moves away rapidly.

The skies darken as he climbs dark boulders in a buffeting wind.

He comes through the crags and falls seated in the gravel at the mouth of a Jagged Cave. The howling of a million souls whistles through the rock. He reaches behind his head and disconnects his tail.

Looking down, Ardeth twists the long silvery fiber between his fingers, "This is the moment, of no return."

He mouths a spell as he twists it around Anankhkah's thread; and lets go. It runs up forward, into the cave like a ferret. He watches as they scurry away together.

Ardeth looks out, the wind blows against his face, his hair is whipping. He gets up.

The Double-headed Phoenix lands in the rocks above. Its claws cut into the pumice with a scratching snap. Blue-Head has round eyes and a gold collar-ring. His left eye constant-

ly swings in circles and his looping head tries to catch it. The head and its eye constantly chase each other which causes the links of its broken collar chain to constantly tingle.

The two heads sing-song in different pitches. Sharp-eyed Red has paced tones and stretches low, "There is a path, through the Canyon of Darkness." Blue-Head is looping around and talks in ringing bubble-words. "But it passes the Reflecting Pool!"

Ardeth, "Of the 12 Constellation Goddesses of the Night Sky." He turns and starts down. The Phoenix heads are looking back and forth and fearfully call after him: Red, "Do not let them seduce you!" Blue is bobbing up and down, the chain tinkling.

Ardeth looks forward, whispering to himself, "It is the time of the great magic." His words slur into Ancient Egyptian and the Phoenix takes flight in a flurry of unfolding wings from the rocks behind him.

His feet grind gravel as he strides down a mountain of black shale that leads into the Canyon of Darkness...

He finds his way through red rock pillars, that appear like praying pilgrims, twisting to move, into a flat, rocky opening and comes before the Reflecting Pool with its simple stone bench.

His steps echo gently and a sound of women's woe murmurs and shimmies like a garment of silk, following every movement.

He sees the 12 Constellation Goddesses of the Night Sky beckoning from within. Their Starry Crowns twinkle a bluish hue. The Universe stretches out beyond them.

The surface seems to swell and puddle up, and Ardeth casts his protection, "When is where "

His words are answered from the full, beautiful Lips of a Goddess, whose Face materializes from the rocky ground and the air on his left, "and where is when." Her words slur into Ancient Egyptian.

Ardeth continues, "I am Yesterday-" Easily, another Goddess answers on his right. Their voices curl together, "and the Morrow,"

Both Goddesses speak with Ardeth in echoing unison, their beautiful, wide eyes on either side, "the Before and the After." Their voices slur and curl away as Ardeth and his body become part of a seamless liquid fabric from which surrounding Goddesses are tugging.

The Beautiful Face and full lips of the Goddess fill his eyes as she expands up and away into her Constellation Crown,

the arrangement of its stars joining her flesh to give her features a geometric pattern.

The others expand into their Constellation Crowns and their Geometric features seem to mesh and interlock. The interlocking geometry starts rocking and inter-changing around him. Far stars change places with near and Ardeth is stretched and pulled between them in all directions.

The whole world buckles and he and the Goddesses are suddenly swept high and tumbling in a gigantic, roiling sea-wall; which tosses and boils them into a galloping molten, riling silvery mass of undulating waves.

The wild reaching, faceted glob of glimmering mercury forms angry mounds of high-rise squarish pinnacles, jutting violently up, eaten down, melting and reforming.

Ardeth's face has become a glimmering, blubbery pinnacle of layered, shimmering silver and black mercury cubes exchanging places. Eyes pop in and out of rising and disintegrating cubist pinnacles.

The whole mass crawls liquidly around in an odd sloshing, vast rumble. His hand appears and disappears from the other side. Goddesses' laughter appears then drowns in the churning, creeping metallic liquid which moves in uncomfortable, jagged waves that seems an endless eternity but finally begins to slow. The Goddess reaches down for his hand, her full lips and glimmering eyes floating in the waves above him.

His finger-tips grab into rock just below the bench which is now a Greek building of constantly animated and falling columns.

His cubist face, eyes, arms and the Goddesses all solidify into shear walls of strong, bulbous individual mercury cubes of surging, shiny liquid. They swell and recede. Little lights blink and pop. There's a twisting, creaking, retching sound as the mass slows. Little cracks expel powdery vapor.

Goddesses are slipping away from the edges of the slow-motion mercury cubist mass to take their place in the Starry Sky.

Ardeth struggles and Goddesses reach and caress for every movement. Ardeth looks up. The bench is a perfect White Marble sculpture of sweeping ionic scroll-work; where each line, plane and fluting are individually dis-connected pieces floating together on their own.

His world has become two perfect shining white columns holding an Architrave next to the perfect Marble Bench. They sit on the rocky floor with its Reflecting Pool, suspended in an endless Universe that stretches away forever.

Husky whispers beg him to join but he pulls himself from

the pool while their woeful silky voices tug at his sleeves.

He pulls free and leaves quickly out through a gorge between steeply rising cliff-sides. Faces seem to appear and disappear in the rock as he moves. Their whispers hang in the air.

Ardeth moves away from the singing, moaning Reflecting Pool behind him.

He comes before the Lake of Darkness. It is a lake of White Sand in the black of night, and lays before him in soft, vast pillows. He calls out firmly into the darkness, "Brethren of the Lake, come forth!"

He transforms into Wepwawet.

Four Onyx Snakes arrive in the sand. They are 30 cubits long by two wide. They curl around and over themselves to stay afloat. Wepwawet warmly intones, "Onyx Sons -"

Their smiling heads move joyfully. He jumps to their backs, "To the Far Gate!"

The jet-black snakes loop up strongly, then slither and undulate rapidly through the darkness, fluting and singing over the mounding white sand. Their onyx plates and striking outlines are glimpsed from the shaky light in the far skies before them.

Below his striding legs, the sparkling sand pours around the snakes in streaming white wakes. The pattern behind weaves like macrame. Muscular Black Clouds hang and wrestle through the sky above and far away lightening snaps in the distance.

Suddenly lightening cracks all around, arcing in huge bolts. Black clouds reach jagged black fingers trying to stab him.

Wepwawet dodges to the right and left. The stabbing fingers drive into the sand, which curls up into dust-devils, ferociously fighting the angry clouds. A war rages all around. White Dust-Devils yank at Black Fingers which suddenly can't pull away.

The Snakes arrive through the tempest at the edge of a Marsh. The sulking Thunder sounds petulant for having missed him. The snakes are twisting in the billowing Pillows to stay in their element.

Wepwawet jumps to the shore and becomes Ardeth in flaxen robes. The happy snakes are making excited little peeping noises as he leaves.

He makes his way through scrubble, while the pinkening sky becomes light and arrives onto an open field where 30 baboons are startled. They look at each other wondering what

should happen.

Ardeth jiggles the Was Scepter and moves 75 yards further. The Baboons start running after.

More Baboons join, pouring from the brush. A mob of hundreds become thousands.

Ardeth stands erect and watches.

The Baboons are howling and chasing. Saliva whipping in strings from their teeth. They bite at each other in the mad rush.

Ardeth moves further and the horde streams over the hillocks and down upon him in a huge, grinding collision of teeth and claws, flying water and choking dust.

Ardeth stretches an egg-shaped Fish-eye Bubble around himself against which, the Baboons are bumping and thumping.

Suddenly, beautiful jet-black female legs appear against the stark pale earth and surging Baboon horde beyond.

Anupu walks upright in the form of a slender, sensual black female wearing a 3" gold choker with a small golden bell that jingles sweetly.

The Baboons smash into themselves to stop and scatter. The seething pile of bumping bodies scrambles away in all directions and Ardeth stands up.

Anupu looks at him for a long moment. "I know your game, Priest." Ardeth looks at her, "And I know yours."

Anupu pauses, "You must purify-" Her voice echoes into a deep, octave-faceted slur, "to reach your goal."

She pauses for another long moment then falls back on her haunches, in Jackal-form, looking at him with a tilt to her head.

Ardeth returns her stare, then leaves away.

He travels over rolling Grassland dotted with low Trees. An Akh Bird, as clear as glass with over-sized eye-balls, pops its head up. It shoots its head down with 'foop' sound. Three others shoot up. 'Fip; fip, fip!' Their glass heads jog back and forth, then shoot back down, 'Foop. Foop, foop.'

Ardeth finds a small bronzy path forming under his feet. He looks down to see the path comes from behind and heads forward. The ground below him is made of endless paths which look like a carpet of glimmering reddish-bronze ropey strings forming a network of stringy bronze cordage that lays over the top of itself and radiates in all directions.

He places his foot on another ropey path and the strings glow to a new direction heading away from a different past. As he rotates his foot, the glimmering paths swing like a compass.

A rustling in the grass, brings his attention to look up. A single eye-ball on a slinky tail crosses in front and stops. Surprised, it squeaks and runs off. A green tracer dissolves from its tail.

Several rustlings disturb the grass-stalks running along following.

He continues through the fields of rolling chaff. Occasional Akh Birds jet up. 'Fip, fip. Fip. Foop.' The fields shift in quilt-like diamond patterns of iridescent hues. Quiet fips and foops follow him along.

The diamond patterns are a miniature forest canopy of grass-chaff over the fabric of Bronze paths below. The multitude of fippings and foopings ring like a field of crickets from far behind. It all stops at once, then starts back up again.

Ardeth sees an ancient White Wall cutting across the landscape in the distance. His eyes follow it along, "Finally."

Glowing radiations of sparkling bronze spread from each step as he approaches the huge wall. An hardly noticeable mass of bronzy ringlets reflect from thousands of Akh eyes in the rolling fields of iridescent diamond patterns all around. Occasional green tracers dissolve here and there.

The massive edifice has huge black streaks staining its Ancient White Walls. It seems endless, disappearing in both directions. There is one Gate. Ardeth is reverent, "The Great City of Osiris-"

He approaches humbly, like a pilgrim.

Over-grown grasses and weathered cracking decorate the facade. Worn paths make their way to the entrance.

Inside, two long snakes stand waist high off the ground on front and rear sets of human legs. They have human faces with braided beards and Nemes Headdresses. They both look at Ardeth. They stand like guard-rails on a cross-bridge over a moat. The moat is filled with slimy eels, slithering in a slow, twisting current. The bodies and faces of the guard-rail snakes move but the legs remain stoic.

Their quickly darting eyes watch as he passes along between them. His flaxen robes become a dark smock and close-fitting turban.

Through the doorway, he finds a long rectangular pool that stretches a half-league to a far Vulture Winged Pylon. There are ten, long flat-bottom Barques floating in pairs next to each other on the glistening blue surface. The pool appears made of glass rolling-pins moving and shifting in

herringbone patterns.

The walls are long oval niches stacked three high and filled with white-wrapped mummies laying head to toe, three to a niche on gleaming Glossy-White Biers of perfectly polished Golden Lion heads and feet.

Nemes-wearing heads sit twelve feet apart along the pool-side while ribbon-like Spirit-Tails wave in looping patterns from their heads. Reflections from the shifting rolling-pins cast ripples across their faces. Their eyes stretch to see Ardeth as he passes. The rippling Spirit-Tails look like long, skinny colorful flags of reds and blues, greens and purples, almost touching the boats all the way down the pool edge.

As he walks, Ardeth notices paper-thin, Ocher Fish with expressionless rust-colored eyes rolling through the pins here and there. The Stems and Stern-posts of each of the Barques have a variety of intricately carved Lotuses, Crowns and Bearded Heads. The boats are empty but for a long Snake, wearing an Ankh-of-Life necklace, and a fat Crocodile occupying the last two Barques. They float next to the last five waving Spirit-Tails that lick the air wildly.

The Barque with the Snake seems made of two forearms for a hull. Ardeth sees the forearms reach up into a bow-stem where its two, three finger hands are holding a head with a coiffed Nemes hair-style that lays back across the wrists. The three fingers seem to wrap across its face.

As he passes, he sneaks a double-glance. Each hand is connected together with the same three fingers, wrapping across the face. The little finger is the jaw, the middle-finger wraps the nose and the index is the forehead. The slits are the eyes and mouth. Its thumbs are the ears and the wrists are its neck. The Head-hand is trying to talk but can't.

No one is supposed to be there, certainly not Ardeth who has stopped to look at the head, and the Snake and Croc on the Barques look back and forth with alarm and suspicion.

Ardeth keeps walking. White shrouded mummiforms with raised knees and colorful head-cloths, sit along the wall to either side of the Winged Vulture Pylon. Seeing him approach, all start talking furiously in strange tongues. The vividly carved Vulture Wings extend across the top and down the sides of the Pylon where giant Talons grip into the ground. One of the claws is gone. Knowing exactly where he is going, Ardeth walks on through and looks up.

The brutal face of a Giant Double Sphinx greets him,

filling the long, narrow alley and rising to the top of its three-story, white-washed walls.

The giant placid expression above him emerges from a Nemes Headdress of white and blue. The eyes are pale blue, the brows and lips are gold. The polished lapis beard has gleaming gold braids.

Three deity-guards stand before each paw. They are skirted Warriors with tied-over shirts, carefully coiffed Nemes-style hair and colorful sashes. They have spears, two have bows and they look confounded to see Ardeth. They motion between themselves, arguing with their hands but don't know whether to confront him.

Ardeth simply walks past them along the outstretched Sphinx arms, passing under the Four Divine Goddesses standing with raised hands of homage and devotion atop the arms. Their ethereal garments waving gracefully.

Ardeth avoids the rats running along his feet.

Above the giant back, between the Heads, a large Golden Oval holds a giant blue-gray stone Scarab with Gold Strap-ping.

Next to the Scarab, suspended in-air and hanging face-down from his backbone, is what appears to be an old drunk. His arms dangle, his tongue dangles. It is the exhausted body of Atum, the primeval God from which all has arisen. Suddenly a deep intonation erupts from the body and starts vibrating the air, vibrating Ardeth's eyes and his mind, the teeth in his head and the sand under his feet.

Ardeth keeps a straight face and leaves the vibrating aura, like sliding off the ringing blade of a saw. He proceeds past the Second Sphinx-Head with its contrasting sharp expression and gold and black Nemes, red-braided black beard on black skin with black lips and red brows, both outlined in gold wire. There is dust on every feature. A shadow cuts across above but is filled with the Red flurry of the Phoenix landing on the top of the wall. Blue, "You made it past Atum!" Red, motioning his head toward the Sphinxes, "And through the Tunnel of Akur!"

Ardeth glances up to the Phoenix while he starts past the giant Black Sphinx Paws. Two of its Deity-guards are Africans in contrasting colors and long spears. They're looking at him. One has an animal skin and strange horns that seem to move in and out from his hair. They're disturbed by the chatter.

The Phoenix takes three hard steps to its right, watching Ardeth move out past the guards to the far Pylon with its extra-large Solar-Disk at the top. He looks up and calls to them, "And shall pass Osiris before the Great Sea beyond."

Red and Blue glance at each other.

Four White-wrapped Gods with beards and Hedjet Crowns of Upper Egypt line either side of the exit, inside the Pylon. They begin gesturing and arguing in strange tongues about the meaning of Ardeth's presence. The walls change hue with their words.

Red calls out, "Hathor will rejoice!" The Phoenix takes off in its Red winged flurry.

Through the Pylon is a ramp which Ardeth ascends to a platform where a massive one hundred yard, three-headed snake is draped over the walls. It protects ramps at the opposite end that lead down and up.

The ramps are the only way forward and all three Snake-heads snap around to look. The necks take changing positions, competing for the best view. Little glimmers reflect from their eyes.

Ardeth enters the platform and looks up to the gigantic shimmering Chevron-wings sweeping from the snake's loins, high above. They fluoresce a shimmering green with the slightest movements.

Muscular human legs support its front and rear and it crouches down to offer advice as Ardeth walks up.

SnakeHead 1, "Go up, above Osiris."

Individual Eyes start popping out of the wall like floating ping-pong balls, looking to see who is talking.

SnakeHead 3, "No, no. Go down and around." SnakeHead 2 quickly chides, "If you go down, you'll go up."

The bobbing Eyes, swim around on the wall and look from one snake to another, waiting on each word.

SnakeHead 1 objects, "No, if he goes up, he'll be down."

SnakeHead 2 reprimands, "No, if he's down, he'll be down."

SnakeHead 3 gets excited, "Or around, he could go round!"

SnakeHead 2 snaps back, "Only if down goes round."

The Snake-heads move wildly, each curious for Ardeth's response. Eyes and snakes, all look anxiously to Ardeth, who smiles with a stepping motion, "Then down?" The Bobbing Eyes look to the Snakes, who are quick, "No, no, No. No. Oh no."

The SnakeHeads dart around, then back to Ardeth in anticipation. The Eyes look. Ardeth teases another stepping motion, "Then up?"

Snakes, "Oh no. No, no, No. No. Oh no." SnakeHead 2, "Definitely no."

All look to Ardeth; who smiles and heads up.

The Snake Heads start chattering, its legs start stomping. The Eyes run away squeaking.

Ardeth strides up the ramp and vaults the wall near the top. He slides through a divide between two blocks and enters the rear of a dimly-lit hall, around the back of a tall latticework Throne on a raised Dais. The Throne is actually a high-standing Coffin-box formed entirely of swimming snakes. They are surprised.

Objecting Snake, "This is the Court of Osiris!" Another hisses, "Yeouour're lucky the Throne is unoccupied."

Ardeth glances as he crosses the Dais, "No luck involved..." The snakes start wriggling and twisting. Their bodies seen interlocked and they can't break free.

Liquid-framed Niches hang like portraits across the walls from which the inanimate faces of frozen Gods stare. As Ardeth approaches, the liquid-frames become luminescent slithering snakes of brightly swimming colors. A multitude of voices whisper from the walls. The surface seems fuzzy with the sound but Ardeth can see it is actually millions of lines of Hieroglyphs as fine as hair.

Ardeth entreats, "Osiri-Khentamuntiu Great Nobles--"

The Nobles of Osiris's Court are grandly dressed in their colorful Niches and watch as Ardeth passes; a couple sets of eyes follow intently. He makes his way through the open door at the far side and into the congested, White-washed Street beyond.

A milieu of soulless walkers push aimlessly; and a constant droning recitation of the Books of Netherworld in Ancient Egyptian bubbles and gurgles from their slack and open mouths. He hears the Book of Caverns, Books of the Gates, the Book of Night, the Book of the Day Passing and thinks to himself, 'These people don't know day from night!'. The sound hangs in the air providing a constant dreary pall.

Jabbing white light stabs at his eyes from the Open Gates on the wall before him. The walkers are black apparitions moving in the scintillating blaze. He squints his eyes and pushes through to look down upon a three-block long reclining God Osiris with a huge tree-sized phallus. Several flocks of small birds fly around it. Osiris has ancient craggy scars and crevices floating inside his translucent Spirit Body of Blazing Light.

Writhing around Osiris, the surface of a gigantic patched and speckled snake squeezes in a slow and constant movement against the retaining walls. Its skin is passing like a slow river just under the doors. Rumbling is heard which Ardeth

feels in his feet. He looks down.

The bright light flooding through the open gates reveals the floor under his feet to double as another floor for an upside-down world just below; where he sees the black feet of headless people tread.

Above Osiris, upside down devotees walk on the ceiling in White Sheathes praising with outstretched arms and empty, all-seeing expressions. Above them, below their feet, appearing like a huge Gong, a gigantic Sun Disk hovers.

He walks through the crowd to pass the last Gate on his left. The imposing head of a huge round-head snake appears from the door-stile, surprised and curious. He pokes back and forth, taking timid peeks.

The huge Sun Disk hangs above the walls as he heads away. The walls open into ramps dropping to lower levels. The street continues as a raised processional leading to an open door on the stone wall directly ahead. There is a walled corridor within.

Ardeth makes his way over the Processional toward the massive wall and its door. The ancient blocks have dead foliage and black vines corrupting the crevices. Black birds guard raggedy roosts and red-eyed rats run between haunts.

Pushing through the door, the long corridor is lined with green-framed oval niches. Each has three wrapped mummies whose unwrapped heads stare with morbid, lost expressions. Odd black symbols hang on the walls to ward off evil spirits. Ardeth thinks, 'It's long past protection for you'.

Emerging onto a long street with open sky above, Ardeth transforms into flaxen robes. There are evenly spaced Gates along the walls, on the right and the left, all the way to a Far Pylon.

A crocodilian monster guards the Pylon. He pensively swings his weight from leg to leg while swinging his muscular arms, snuffing and grunting.

Colorful owls with human faces fly like paper kites above the street, drifting through the air like blown leaves, to land atop the wall. Their eyes swing in different directions. Ardeth hears screams as he passes the first door. The second is filled with laughing children playing on a field of green grass and trees.

Through a door on his left, the magnificent, multi-columned Mansion of Sobek is crowned with Winged Sun-disk and Papyri lintel stones. Rows of granite Crocodile Warriors guard the long Processional that is jammed with sleeping Crocodiles. One looks and an explosion of hissing erupts from the hundreds of Crocs filling the grounds. They wriggle and slap over each other to see.

Ardeth becomes nearly transparent, disappearing into his robes which disappear into the air.

Hearing the hissing echo down from the Sobek Temple, the Crocodilian creature at the Far Pylon is alarmed. His giant muscles flex, his lips grimace; his glimmering eyes scanning the street. Ardeth's shadow weaves toward him. The Monster jerks his head around, looking down and under himself as the shadow passes, zigzagging through. Monster is turning around and around in the doorway, looking.

Ardeth walks through Bay-Laurel and weeds on a rolling landscape with just a gentle, fresh breeze. He comes through green scrub to find the Great Barque of Ra, sitting on its bow in the sand. The vast Ocean stretches before him.

Ardeth looks out, "Here we are."

He grabs the rail and notices Hathor's miniature Blue Flute dangling from his wrist on its gold chain. Its little tinkling chimes like bells. He vaults over and pushes off.

He oars the rudders in an easy looping motion, pushing further into the unknown until the shore fades from sight. The surface is smooth and glassy under creamy-red skies. He stands on the deck, looking out over the water. The boat bobs lazily. He becomes Wepwawet.

The Sea swells for a league in all directions, smoothing out and slippery as the great head of Apaypi allows the pupil of its Giant Red Eye to break the surface and rise above him.

Wepwawet stands strongly on the deck.

He sees his reflection grow as the eye comes close, forcing the current to swell and run. The boat tips back and his reflection recedes as the Barque rides the spilling outward runoff. The Great Snake rises to speak, pitching the Barque in chaotic circles far below.

Huge splashing waterfalls cascade from Apaypi's mouth, and his voice vibrates the surface, "You arrive without retinue."

Water rains down all over the deck. Wepwawet puts forth the Scepter, "I am here for the soul of an innocent."

The Great Snake is jolted, considering the proposition. He looks about in the seas around him. The skies become rippling waves of red and cream as Apaypi stares down. His Red eyes squeeze into focus, the Irises expanding like fans.

Suddenly, easily, Apaypi's giant head moves back and the whole mile-wide body rises straight up like an elevator. The gigantic wall of ancient scales begins to blur and waterfalls rain down through the wind in far-flung splashing.

Wepwawet becomes Ardeth and leans back to see the huge

head, through the tumult of raining water, turn in a slow loop high above and drop slowly back down to the ocean, two leagues off.

The gigantic loop of his body submerges back into the surface creating a wide depression that the sea rushes to fill.

Apaypi swims toward the distant shore, catching the Barque up into its gnarly hide. Sparkling blue ocean splashes over them, the wind blowing Ardeth's hair.

As they come to the shore, the giant snake reels in a circle, casting the barque off through the water and into the sand. Ardeth jumps as the barque comes to rest. The boat rocks back on its keel and a hush falls.

Ardeth walks up the yellowed beach through an eerie, hollow breeze while small waves lap. The giant head of Apaypi, with his glowing red eyes, floats quietly off-shore.

Gaping caverns yawn from the cliffs and dried out psychic cords lay like seaweed. The one bright silver thread runs wrapped along another and disappears into the black darkness before him.

Ardeth stops and turns left, raising his arms. The Was Scepter held far out in his right.

Looming far above the cliffs, stars and galaxies can be made out against a deep-blue sky, which can be seen to be the body of the Sky Goddess, extending high beyond sight.

The stars and galaxy-clusters slowly cascade down her belly, blinking and glimmering against the contours of her skin.

Her upraised palms are drawn to her shoulders, her gigantic hands and fingers spread out across the heavens disappearing from sight to the left and right. Her gigantic milky smile slips across the sky.

Two giant twisting vines reach like bean-stalks from beyond the cliffs up to the arms of the Sky-Goddess, high above. They are huge Snake bodies, where thousands of souls are crawling up like ants on the left and back down on the right. Ardeth can see people, cows and crocodiles; birds of the field, pigs and hippos in a slow-moving parade.

He stretches his arms fully out and strongly calls into the wind. His voice echoes from the cliffs, "Nu-ut - Goddess of Mysterious Forms"

Huge clouds start moving. They quickly begin racing and twisting in chaotic swirls.

As Ardeth turns, the wind changes and his blowing hair reverses direction. He follows the Threads into the cave.

He enters a cavernous columbarium of endless rows of two and three foot, disintegrating upright oval coffins with crushed-up moldy mummies and decaying skeletons. The vast high walls extend up and disappear into the hanging mists.

Three small Pterodactyls sail lazily high, high above.

The backs of whale-size black serpents churn through a floor of ground-up bodies and shiny black detritus.

The hollow wind whistles from outside as he follows the cords. Irritated, hissing serpents jerk and roll to avoid his strides. Their flopping and slapping, echoes in the cold air.

The threads lead through a short corridor to a decrepit niche. His silver cord is excited by his approach. There on a disintegrated shelf, a small alabaster vessel has come to rest.

Ardeth picks her up. Her inert alabaster expression stares from the body of a Water-bird.

Ardeth transforms to Wepwawet and drapes the Flute Necklace about her, "I have traveled through the eternal Djet from the future. We will walk forward," knifing the air with his out-stretched hand, "back through the Time of Unfolding to the Horn of the Western Horizon. And we must arrive before the Sun rises in the East."

He sweeps her up and they fast-frame out of the cave and across the beach to the Barque. He climbs in under the gaze of the gigantic snake, its mile-wide head now raised fully above them.

Apaypi's breath is a sauna that blows the sea from the sand.

He holds her Alabaster-vessel under his left arm and looks up. Apaypi is looming over them.

Wepwawet makes a motion with the Scepter. The whole air-sheet becomes a lensed distortion and the boat fast-frames through time-staggered see-sawing seas, under the slow snout of a perplexed Apaypi who barely follows their staggered departure.

Wepwawet becomes Ardeth helming the Barque into the fresh, splashing ocean. Far behind, Apaypi rises up. Anger grips over his face. A huge roaring screech shakes the shore and cliffs as he whips his head around throwing cascades of water in high arcing curls. His gigantic body swings into a full, raging turn, his wall of scales blurring in a loop, as he dives forth after them.

His back sinks into the depths, expelling two gigantic waves nearly a mile high into the air. The whole shoreline is cut by the rip-tide. The great ocean slaps around and

settles. Ardeth is racing on the waves but a silence suddenly drains all sound. Only the wind in his hair. He looks back. A huge undulating ripple begins moving across the sea from below.

Ardeth turns and the Barque shoots forward.

Apaypi comes up through the surface like a bullet-train, water streaming over his face. A great rumbling arises and Ardeth sees the giant rolling wave billow over the surface to the sandy shore.

The raging Apaypi wriggles and jumps into the air, lensing a shock-wave that blasts out across the water.

Ardeth looks up. Apaypi is arcing down, stretched mouth, fangs bared, "WR-E-E-E-E-E-E-Rkhhk-" ear-splitting sound-wash; Ardeth jiggles the Scepter. Instantly, the attacking Apaypi recedes, fast-framing back away. His hateful Red Eyes in shock.

Apaypi shakes his head in disbelief and screams. The radiating air-burst whisks wave-tops. He lurches forth, cutting straight through the water line, which blasts into the air.

Ardeth sees his raging Red eyes behind the exploding sheet of white water. He jiggles the Scepter. The attacking Apaypi recedes again, disappearing to the horizon. His angry screams echoing on the water.

Ardeth swings his head from the broad, empty horizon into the wind and sees the Sun God Ra at the shore ahead. The giant shimmering red-orange Eye-of-Ra with the Ram's-Head figure below it, bangs along in the Coffin-carriage and arrives with his entourage into the sand. Many helpers struggle coils of large rope onto the white beach, coming through the scrub in large number. A glittering procession of laborers, warriors and court officials.

Ardeth looks back. The screeching Apaypi is shooting through the sea. The helpers of Ra see the raging Apaypi and falter in panic.

Ardeth's skin tightens. He jiggles the Scepter.

Instantly Apaypi recedes again, his shocked expression exploding with anger; while the Sun God and His entourage also recede, fast-framing back before they arrived at the beach.

The Barque pushes into the empty sand. Ardeth jumps out and heads away. He hears Apaypi's screeching echo from far off.

The Sun God Ra and his entourage are pulling through the scrub and arrive again to the beach and again see Apaypi jumping from the sea. Again, they falter in panic but this time start readying for battle.

Ra's helper Serpents are coiling up across the deck and

the blissful countenance of the giant Mehen Snake, Ra's long-time main protector, breaks its meditations and looks out from disturbed eyes. It ripples its huge, thick body out over the top of the Coffin-carriage. All Ra's helpers look across to Apaypi, charging through the ocean. Their huge, sonorous hissing roar rolls out across the surface.

The gigantic screaming Apaypi coils up and snaps side-winder-style, leaping from the surface and blasting the water completely out of the sea-basin.

Ra's helpers look up at the water arcing into the heavens.

The expelling Ocean drowns the surrounding terrain. Confused snakes and crocodiles bounce through forest trees in the flooding surge; when suddenly flopping fish rain from the sky, slapping in a hail through tree tops, across the beach and resoundingly down on the empty sea-floor.

Apaypi's full body is shooting through the air like a missile, clouds flying apart as he high arcs down into a full nose dive onto Ra. Ra's Helper Snakes grimace and a chorus of snake fangs present at once. Apaypi's shadow covers over them.

Ardeth is running through the high green brush. Glimmering orange light is streaking through the bushes when a gigantic explosion and grinding crash, erases the landscape. Its huge radiating shock-wave expands out across the forests and shores sending Ardeth five miles off and rolling to his feet.

The clouds are pushed away from the Cavern Roof above as the booming cataclysm Reverberates and re-echoes across the canyons.

The light sputters and everything goes dark. Ardeth sees the light fail against the Cavern Roof. He grits his teeth and jiggles the Scepter. A whirling time-reversal unwraps him back to the beach where he stops Apaypi with the Scepter in mid-air. The scene is jerking to re-start but Ardeth holds the gigantic 20 mile-long snake aloft.

The Helper Snakes are looking around in shock.

Ardeth stares up and pushes the Scepter against the vast Serpent above. Its mouth scales are rippling, the air is lensing and pulsing while the Scepter shakes violently to counter the monstrous mile-wide head. It's howling and screeching buffets the air and shore. Water rains down and whips in a ripping gale that rakes across Ardeth, who looks up into the insanely angry Red Eyes glaring down in seething hatred. It is a full-power, gritting eye-to-eye contest of wills. The whole beach starts waffling.

Ra and all His wiggly Helper Snakes, simply climb into

His Solar Barque, which is bobbing in the quickly returning seas under the giant, angry, insane Apaypi, wreathing and twisting wildly overhead.

The vibrating Scepter blurs into hundreds of jabbing ends, creating a loud humming drone. Waves of banded air cascade down in sheets.

The howling gale is whipping his cloths and hair as Ardeth moves his hand on the Scepter. He flicks it.

Apaypi crashes into a gigantic grinding explosion, blasting the whole coastline into the air and blowing Ardeth off in the radiating shock-wave.

Ardeth jumps to his feet five miles off and sees the giant snake twisting in a gigantic three mile-high, mountainous pile behind him. Expurgated dust, rocks and mud begins showering down but flickering daylight reigns and Ardeth turns with the Scepter. Apaypi's shattering cries become an echo as the whole scene disappears behind them.

Staggered fast-framing takes them across ground. The diminishing light gets brighter as they move but darker when they slow.

Ardeth, with his Alabaster vessel tucked under his arm, glides across an endless plaza with long rows of thousands of bound and kneeling condemned. The executioners are snakes and minions with gaping mouths and colorful head-cloths, hissing and brandishing long knives.

Piles of heads stand before platoons of oval coffins. Long rows of cauldrons boil people over fires, their screams cut the air as Ardeth passes through the smelly smoke.

A torrent of thrown food, obscene gestures and Egyptian expletives chase from below.

Ardeth fast-frames through a Pylon Gate and stops in a grassy walkway. The eerie screech of Apaypi echoes from far off.

Ardeth transforms into Wepwawet and looks up. The light is dimming. "We must beat the Sun rising."

He shakes the Alabaster Vessel like a towel and she unfolds into a full-form Anankhkah-amun in the alabaster robes of a Princess and her placid Alabaster expression. He transforms back into Ardeth and takes her by the wrist.

They fast-frame through a Pylon-Gate, exiting the Third Cavern into the Temple of Osiris. The wide Court Processional before them is lined with eight Solar-Disk poles topped with Ram-Heads and Jackal-Heads. Behind the poles stand squads of helpers and their Guardian Snakes:

Shrieking Two-Locks	Cloth-head	Wide-Mouth	Double Flame
Elder Brother	Hairy One	Face-Mask	Mourner
Poisonous One	Dark-head	Shrouded One	Underworld

Lines of supplicants face the center of the processional, praising the low-standing, paneled and polished Coffin of Osiris with its White Circle insignias.

The opposing temple walls have the Niches of the Seven Goddesses and guarding the Far Gate, are mummiform protectors: Great Pectoral, Joyful One and the 12 Serpents of the Hidden Room. All splendidly dressed.

The Guardian Snakes and Protectors turn from watching the Far Gate, surprised by Ardeth towing an Alabaster Princess the wrong way and watch them pass quickly, fast-framing through. They start arguing and griping about such an affront.

One of the Protectors stops talking and looks over. Insane baboons are running madly through the Pylon. The Sky starts rippling and hordes of black-birds and Ba-Souls fly over the walls. Frightened Akh Birds are hopping through and a great sound arises. The walls start shaking.

The griping Snakes and Protectors look to see what's coming. Apaypi blasts through like a freight-train, wall-stones and pillars explode.

Apaypi grinds the panicked inhabitants to mush and smashes through the Far Gate.

The 'Gate of the Fourth Hour' is blown apart. The Procession of Thoth dives right, Goddesses leap left from the Apaypi freight-train, who drives straight across the intervening field of submissive penitents and explodes through the 'Gate of the Third Hour' on the left. Panicked and squealing Fire-Breathing Serpents jump wildly over the top of each other to escape on the right.

Fast-framing, Ardeth hears the irritating squeal of a mosquito while court-yards pass below. Faint spells are calling and Ardeth sees their cords are shimmering with sound.

The droning vibrations emanate from the dark Post-Room with its singing images, sarcophagi and diminutive meditator. Ardeth's mind hears Kharis' droning, multi-toned song suddenly become ear-shatteringly loud. "H-Mn-Mn-Mn-Mn-Mn-Mn-Mn-Mn-Mn"

The 'Gate of the Second Hour' blasts apart, stones explode into the air and the Giant Scarab scurries for cover. Wide-mouth and howling, Apaypi's gigantic wall of scaly plates blur as the rushing side-winder grinds the floor of First Cavern into flying dirt.

Ardeth sees the spew of far off blocks and dust rise

into the deep blue sapphire sky, and stops to judge the light. The tremor of the exploded Gate is rolling over the land. Screeching and rumbles churn in the echoing air. Ardeth turns, "It's late, the Dawn is at hand."

Apaypi's scowling mouth and jarring screech lenses the air. The ground shakes and Ardeth sees dust rising from just beyond the trees.

Grasping her by the arm, Ardeth breaks into a full sprint. Her expression is vacant wonder, her alabaster eyes, colorfully glistening.

Apaypi breaks through the tree-line in the background. Hundreds of Blue Baboons scatter.

The Horn of the Horizon stretches in a smile before him. Time is jaggging, the scene is jerking. Ardeth's face is shaking as he yells out, "I cleave Heaven and" he throws the Scepter forward, end-over-end, "Open the Horizon- "

A vertical seam knifes open the air. Apaypi jumps. Ardeth has her wrist and jumps.

They are in slow-motion free-fall, gowns moving slowly, their cords slowly looping around them.

Ardeth and Anankhkah, with crazed Apaypi, shoot forward. They are falling faster and faster just ahead of the gaping mouth Apaypi, advancing up upon them.

Blazing forward, Apaypi reaches his open mouth wide. His red eyes glaring. Ardeth's face is smearing and woppling from acceleration as he tries to glance back. Apaypi's insane eyes become larger and larger.

Ardeth pulls his head around to look forward, his face is whipping and shaking. Anankhkah is banging violently from his shaking arm as Apaypi's huge mouth comes over the top and around their sides. The giant shadow surrounds them like a tent. Ardeth looks up.

Apaypi's quivering lips are rippling wildly in the blazing wind-stream. He stretches all the way out. Ardeth looks. Time stops. Apaypi snaps down. PHUM-MP!! Missed!

Screaming Apaypi falls away, turning and twisting and shrieking into the background.

Ardeth and the Princess fall into blinding speed, constellations rip past. Up along their cords, Gods and Goddesses, spirits and creatures, and Cavern walls blur together.

Apaypi is falling and twisting and crashes down onto the lip of the horizon, bouncing high and writhing into the air. The Oceans splashing up with him.

A bright streaking silvery-white Alabaster line jets up into the starry Heavens, and slows into the sweeping serenity of Nut's smiling grace. Their bodies and gowns and cords slowing to a sublime moment of perfect still; before falling

back into a collapsing universe of rushing stars and twisting currents that pull and spin until the very grip of their hands is yanked away and their bodies disintegrate into a billion points of exploding light that spreads out across the whole sky, boiling and congealing into a gigantic shining liquid teardrop from which,

the reflection of braziers find the eyes of Ardeth, struggling to wake.

An obviously grateful group is easing an exhausted Ardeth into a chair and blanket. Ardeth leans up, "Her spirit is restored, you should awaken her today."

Pearson squeezes his arm with genuine tenderness, "All has been readied for days. The full team. They're taking her over at 10. -avoid traffic."

Ardeth gives a communicative nod and an emotional Kharis is swept with profound admiration.

Workers have arrived and stand ready in the hall with a crate-dolly.

The open back of a Museum Secure Services Delivery Van butts against the loading dock under the British Museum. Anankhkah's crate sits within.

Pearson, Kharis and Dr Hawass finish paperwork. Kharis calls over to security, "Don't get lost- "

The Security Officer has a kind smile, "Don't worry sir, it's just round the corner..." The officers close the back, sign the paperwork and climb in. The engine starts and they pull away toward the gate.

The trio heads back through the Museum loading area. The Director approaches, "So! All done!" Pearson, "Yes, we'll walk on over." They head through the swinging doors into the lower hall near the elevator.

They emerge a floor up and Kharis feels pensive as they make their way through the offices hallway. Sarah is joining them. Kharis, "Where's Ardeth?" She sees the tired stress and reassures, "Dead to the world."

As the Security Van heads through the parking area, the Museum buildings swing around in the rear window.

Kharis and the group walk into the Egyptian Collection. Dr Hawass is bubbly, "This is one of the great days, of our lives. You have everything ready?" Pearson is smiling, "The whole team is standing by. They've been excited for days."

They head out toward the main doors.

The Security Van pulls from the rear gate into the road. The two security men are looking into the flow of traffic.

Suddenly a shadow in the interior becomes a uniformed Kent who bangs their heads together and drags them rudely into the rear. The van rolls slowly in the street. He climbs over and takes the wheel.

A car is forced to stop behind and a red-flushed Londoner honks. Kent sees the driver angrily motioning in the rear-view.

Kent bangs the gears and breaks into giddy laughter, his whole face lighting up.

The van jolts and moves away, taking a left to disappear around the corner.

Ardeth's eyes suddenly jack open, with a steely glare.

Sometime in the later afternoon, Kent's swollen crazy eyes look up through his steamy glasses.

He is tied to a chair and a long goose-feeding tube is pulled violently from his mouth. Ardeth talks nonchalantly, "I have you 'hooked up', on a date. She's a beautiful girl."

Kent is gasping, his eyes rolling. The Tanna brew is slurping from his mouth.

Ardeth, "Her name is-" leans in to whisper, "Ammut."

Ammut is coiling in the mist. Her crocodilian skin and Lion locks are bejeweled and twisting braids of glassy tiles, glimmering and winking. Her golden mane swims like eels. She swings around, and ATTACKS!

Snarling, grinding flesh and Kents' shrieks echo.

Egypt

Sanctuary of Isis - Gebtu 1864.

An empty Blue Sky has a single white wisp hovering the flat, rubble-strewn, sun-baked yard where one, bony camel bleats loudly, "Erawh-h-ha," disturbed by an invasion of donkeys and men. A Turk in gray and black striped pantaloons shoos him, "Yah, go on, get!" The disgruntled beast jumps and trots off and the man turns, beaming his prominently missing front tooth.

A comrade calls over, "The camel is prettier!" The others laugh and the Turk wide-jogs back smiling.

Grave robbers stand over a hole in what was once the Sanctuary of Isis. They are a party of five and five donkeys. Three of the men are lackeys with white tunics and turbans. The Head Tomb-Robber's kit is a Huddersfield frock and three weeks' dust. They all look down.

Rotted timbers lay exposed and a pry-bar cracks down with a thump. The Head-Robber snaps, "Careful." The Turk has the bar and stands back. He wears faded purple and brown over his striped pantaloons and is always smiling. Head-Robber eases his tone, "Roma, Gypsy blood." The Turk nods his toothless smile.

The planks are pried up and thrown off. There are two barely discernible shapes on the surface of a sand-filled, mud-brick well. The Turk is throwing handfuls of sand away, revealing mummies. He looks up and gets out. One is white with Hieroglyphs, the other, simple wrapping with Hieratics. A sliver of gold glints from the wrapped mummy.

The Head Robber jumps in and pulls a Gold Pectoral from the sand. A small, hairy root falls from its back. He looks at the Pectoral. The Turk points at the root, "What is that?" The Head Robber sticks the Pectoral in his pocket and reaches for the root, "Goat's Tail." The Turk has a squished up nose for a question. Head Robber, "A fancy perfume." He sticks his hand out motioning with his fingers, "Give me the broom." The Turk swings it over.

The Head Robber carefully sweeps sand from both chests. The Turk is excited, "What does it say?" The others are huddled to see. Head Robber, "I can read the scribble but the formal stuff, -?." Shakes his head. The Turk points, "Look, there's a little hawk on each one."

Head Robber, "The Two Hawks. Its part of the old name for this place."

He looks at the Pectoral again, "This is royal. Must 've been an offering. Someone must have thrown it in." He sniffs at it, "Still smell the old root."

He takes a wide step over the two mummies to look down on Anankhkah. "We can sell this one. But this-" points to Kharris, "this is nothing. Cheap wrappings, he was poor." Points at the chest, "'Sleeps with his Princess' Probably a servant. No one will pay for that." He returns the pectoral to his pocket while motioning to take her.

Sarah is excited, "The Two Hawks. The two Falcons of Gebtu, Min and Isis." They're in Sarah's sunny new office

facing Gordon Park.

Kharis, "But they are two Horuses, Gods, not hawks."

Sarah, "Yes, but in local folklore they called you the two Biks, the little Hawks, Min and Isis. Like Romeo and Juliet. You were the fabled couple at Gebtu, that people prayed to."

Kharis, "Prayed to?" Sarah, "It's so sweet. Imagine how many thousands of couples prayed for your help and guidance--"

Kharis looks at her, "If only they knew what they were praying to..." He tells her his memory.

Kharis struggles with an arched back against the Priests and his bindings as others are pouring Tanna down his throat. A colorful 'Opening-of-the-Mouth' Sstp stick is pulled out and he writhes his trunk around in circles. Tanna spilling from his lips.

The Amun Overseer, Vizier Paser stands before him with his palms upturned. Anankhkah lays at his feet, staring straight up with an empty, lifeless expression.

Sarah blinks. Kharis, "There's your two Biks."

Chapter 1

The wind howls steadily against a cliff top Rookery, its harried grasses gripping the gray rock. An orchestra of dull white-caps dot the vast Atlantic and a small sign swings back and forth on the road: "A. Baysford".

Candlelight illuminates a dark figure bent over a white mummy on a table. Ardeth works to unwrap the face of Anankhkah. Her blue wrap shrouds her face.

The blue fabric is brittle. He cuts it away from her eyes, which stare up like dried apricots.

Ardeth stares down. The slippery outlines of a Barometric Chamber can be seen hugging the wall in the low light behind him. He hooks garden shears under her white gesso covering and cuts a jagged crevasse straight down the front, breaking it open with plaster chunks bouncing across the floor. He blows the dust away.

Enclosed in her shroud, the Blue Wrap is slowly torn open above her nose and lips. There's a slight tearing sound as the material parts further down her neck. The twisted skin is black. The Blue Flute and gold chain lay on her collarbone.

Ardeth straightens up as he looks down upon her...

A running, stumbling ecstatic Anankhkah bursts laughing uncontrollably, pushing at Kharis who is chasing her through the papyri. Anankhkah's voice echoes, "No - no! - ah-o, no!"

Her excited face disappears in a swath of beaded hair as they crash into the lush reeds and sunny blue sky. Their echoing laughter lifts away into a ringing silence.

Ardeth's dark eyes stare down.

The group gathers in the center of the Pearson's Office. Sarah sits against the desk. Kharis, "Ardeth could have been planning this for years."

Pearson, "His accounts are inactive and the flat is let; he had to take her somewhere." Paul pipes in, "His affairs are in a bank trust."

Sarah, "If he revives her, she'll need months of rehabilitation. After 3000 years, of suspended animation--"

Everyone's eyes swing toward her. Pearson breaks in, "Forgive me, if he needs her beyond finding the Golden Tombs."

Sarah watches Kharis, looking over to Pearson; who looks back to the rest, "Either the Hidden Tomb or the Vault."

Paul, "Well ok, where do we find him?" Sarah looks questioning, "Such a strange, man." Pearson, "We're archaeologists, right? What is the evidence?"

Sarah, "He wants the gold."

Pearson mumbles, "...The greatest treasure in history." He sees treasure rooms of glittering bullion, Jewelry, statues and Funerary. Treasure stacked against doors.

Kharis, "Yes, he wants to make a kind of super tomb out of it." Pearson looks at him, "You mean he wants to steal the gold to build another tomb?"

Kharis looks back, "Ardeth wants what he calls a 'Golden Portal' where he'll have the Priests of both the Amun and the Amaunet use the Night Magic to enter everyone's dreams. All over the world."

Sarah talks to Pearson, "He wants to bring the ancient Gods back." Kharis adds, "He thinks all the Priests, Dreaming from his Golden Portal, could force everyone in the world to experience the ancient Gods, all at once."

Pearson, "Sounds like the greatest nightmare of all time." Paul, "Is that possible?" Pearson glances, "Tombs are portals to the afterlife."

Paul, "So if you have a tomb, you have access?" Brightens, "Like with the internet!" Kharis smiles, "Yeah. Only the Amun gold makes it a super server." Looks at Pearson, "It's why he went into the Six Caverns of the Underworld to get Anankhkah, she knows where the Amun's Golden Vault is."

Sarah is concentrating, "Could we get there before Ardeth? Can we beat him to it? Is there any other way to find

that Tomb??"

Pearson, "Dr Hawass' people could help. But the last time I went there... " He describes the visit:

Hawass looks up, "Whatever you want, I don't want it!"

He yanks a newspaper out of the desk, waving it in the air, "This is what you brought!"

Tabloid headline: More
Missing
Mummies at UCL!!!

Kharris, "-It was bad." Pearson nods, "It was bad."

Chapter 2

Ardeth rips the Blue Shroud open and off her body. A cloud of dust cascades. He unfastens her garments which are stuck into wrinkles of skin.

He focuses trying to tease it free, then rises up with a thoughtful twist to his expression. He wraps the dress back over her and turns to the Barometric Chamber. It's a clunky metal and glass holdover from the 1960s. He flicks the metal throw-switch to 'On' with a loud click.

After sealing the hatch, he walks around and looks through the observation window, "Soon you'll be a living Princess, once again- "

He saunters over and falls into his chair. He looks across at the condensation steaming up the glass. "And it's going to be hell."

Ardeth leans his head back, his eyes are heavy. Muddy sleep soon drags him from the chamber's steamy hiss, into silence...

A sound becomes perceptible, hovering like an insect. A rippling string of dancing golden light appears, vibrating with the sound. Dancing like a snake.

The sound slowly gets louder and the vibrating golden snake gets wider. It begins to look like a snake and snap like snake, as the sound gets louder.

The sound becomes many vibrations, tinkling like far-off Flutes and Bells. The golden vibrations are bristling and moving and drape through the air, and then expand to get brighter as the bells and flutes get louder.

They become a hugely raging chaos of banging and clanging. Bright light flashes and strobes.

Ardeth expels himself from a burial niche and falls

stiffly into a smelly run-off in the middle of a cave floor.

The jarring sound lowers into hundreds of excited tambourines, flutes and bells, cymbals and drums that blend into a pulsing hum. Holding his ears, he begins a hoarse moan as he rolls out of the water.

The roof is fallen in and dripping. Massive black roots reach down through a giant break in the wall. Blue sky is seen through over-growth corrupting the gaping crevice.

He teeters to his feet but falls to the side, trying to maintain balance.

He stumbles awkwardly and confused out onto the sand. The air is filled with music, tambourines and yelling. He crushes his eyes against the angry brightness of the sun.

People are running past.

He walks out onto the beach into the sight of thousands of crafts, barges and boats of every size and every description packed with people clapping and dancing in all directions.

A hail of whistling reed-flutes and enthusiastic drumming, bells and rattles sting into his ears.

The jamming crush is sheathed in colorful cloths, tied draping, palms and papyri and chokes the Nile from bank to bank.

Ardeth's legs are shaking. His condition shocks passers but as he approaches the water, a vessel of laughing drunks bid him on. His movements are spastic as he wades into the cold. His arms fail but they pull him onboard.

A fat, grizzled man grabs him by the shoulders. Ardeth coughs out, "I need water." The man opens his surprised eyes, "It's the Festival of Bast. The Cat Goddess. We got wine!" He holds a gourd up to Ardeth's mouth who drinks in gulps, wine splashing across his face.

The man pulls the gourd back with a frown, "Don't kill yourself."

Ardeth starts choking and belching at the rail.

Soon, the two men are holding each other by the shoulders, singing. The man pulls him a little, then stares down upon him, "You look like shit!" Ardeth looks out. They're in a moving forest of masts and rigging, all strung with flowers and singing people.

He looks back, excusing his poor appearance, "It's my Asiatic blood." The man frowns, "Hyksos?" Ardeth, "No, almost all Egyptian."

The man is holding him and wobbly. Ardeth, "But my mother, was a wh-o-r-e- "

Both men explode in laughter, falling into each other. They push themselves back up. The man steadies himself, holding Ardeth by the shoulders and pulls a serious countenance across his face, "So was mi-n-ne!"

They both bust out again, flopping over each other.

The music gets louder and louder, the boats close in and start rubbing and banging into each other and stop into a full jam.

Hugging each other, both men turn around teetering. The hulls are making grinding noises as the boatmen are lashing up.

Ardeth's new friend hangs off his shoulder, pointing, "Another village. They've been working all year and the crops are sowed."

Ardeth turns and falls his butt onto a bale, "Hey, what's your name?" The man stakes a prideful bearing, "Wahka."

Women are bounding from deck to deck and jumping to the sand. The music thunders. Ardeth looks over "Young lionesses." Wahka, "Searching for their Hunter."

Ardeth, "-Searching for more women..." Ardeth is too drunk and Wahka yells over to someone in a strange tongue.

Children run yelling through the village street. Two scantily dressed women pull at a wife's arm, outside a hut. Her husband is pulling on the other. Three kids are wide-eyed in the door. The wife is pleading to the women, "I cannot go." They throw her dress over her head, making teasing remarks. The husband hugs her to him, throwing his arm up and yelling, "Go! You go. Others want this. Go."

The women make cat and animal sounds and yell back, "It's spring, it's spring."

One runs to catch another girl who is swung around, blushing and embarrassed but willingly gets tugged away. Others are skipping to the boats. People are leaving.

The wife breaks away to join them. Her husband is tear-streaked, the kids holding to him. The music fills the air.

People run to the landing. Smiling, laughing faces are pulling newcomers on board.

The crafts are un-lashed and Ardeth sees the boats around them, drifting. Someone brings a jug, "Water!" Wahka motions it forward with his fingers.

The jug is handed over. Wahka grabs Ardeth around the shoulders, "Here, my friend. It's clean. Get some down."

Ardeth drinks. Then drinks more. Then gets sick.

He is bent over the rail and Wahka calls at him, "Does the Asiatic have a name?" Ardeth's eyes swing around, "Bay." Wahka, "Bay. You still look like shit."

The sun has left and the twilight teases. Ardeth pulls himself up against the mast, and then up on a beam, looking out. His mouth drops open in gratitude for life.

A single black bird flies in the darkening sky above. Ardeth's little figure disappears into the neighboring boats, which disappear into the thousands. Shifting color, people, banners and music fill the Nile as far as can be seen. It is an unending snake of jammed craft; with dotting lanterns and braziers. Echoing music and revelry drift up through the enshrouding darkness.

Ardeth looks from his bale, across the jam of boats keeping their careful course from colliding in the night. His face contorts. An oared barge with braziers appears as if from a long ago dream. "I remember."

Wahka looks over, "What?" Ardeth stares across the black water, "Paser." Wahka, "Paser?"

Ardeth's memory glimmers from his shining eyes: Paser, in his refined regalia, rides the deck from years before. Torches ablaze. Oarsmen pull hardily to the vast docks complex at Gebtu. Boats are dry-docked in ramps. Black facades huddle the bank. There is a brazier and two Priests on the slip. A cart and team wait on the shore.

The drunken Wahka squints, listening and Ardeth has a far-off look. Ardeth, "The evening was cool." Wahka's eyes swing over.

Ardeth remembers Anankhkah's Father disembarking, "Are they there?" A Priest bows low, "Lord, they were at the Temple of Min, but leaving with the Moon."

The Amun Overseer, Vizier Paser and Ardeth, in their Priestly Regalia, join Anankhkah's Father heading for the cart. The group of head-shaved Priests pass around them on the dock.

Wahka is staring at Ardeth, who is staring across the water, "We got delayed."

He is remembering the long-ago cart and oxen wading to a stop in a sea of ducks. Thousands of waddlers blocking the road while Priests ran up for the flockman.

Wahka's frowning face cuts sharply, "Paser who?"

Ardeth looks up from his memory, "Who is Pharaoh?" Wah-

ka, "What!?" Ardeth, "What year is it?" Wahka is disgusted, "66th Year of the Great King." Ardeth's mouth drops and Wahka's eyes open wide, "You better stop with the wine, boy."

Ardeth looks over at the barge, oaring past with its well-dressed retinue. Ardeth blinks, "It's Rui!"

Wahka is looking at him with a stern expression.

Ardeth wakes to a sunny commotion. Deckhands are pulling lines. He looks up.

The masts of adjacent boats are maneuvering closer. There are less boats than in the night, many having left into the Southern Arm.

Wahka points ahead, "The mouth of the Northern arm, to Per Bastet." Ardeth jumps up. The fresh morning floods over him. He thinks to restrain his suddenly exploding excitement.

Boats are funneling into the broad canal forking to the right. Wahka is exuberant, "We're the first boats, so we get all the way to the Temple! The Left Hand of the Offering." Wahka is motioning high, as if holding up a melon with both hands.

Ardeth looks over the rail, shakes his head with a smile, then bounds over the bale and climbs straight up the mast, arm over arm.

As he rises, the sails sink below and he sees the long canal reaching further into the distance. Ardeth's smile dances with excitement in the clear breeze. He feels the full 40 years of black enshrouding peeling like old skin.

The ribbon of another canal comes into view on his right. Both form glistening arms that reach over the land to channels and docking that border the sparkling, jewel-like Palace-Temple of Bastet, rising on an island from the Sacred Lake.

Ardeth points, "Mother Nile reaches for Isheru! With Arms of Purification." Wahka looks up and opens his eyes wide in joyful surprise at Ardeth's understanding. He shakes his cupped hands, smiling brightly, "The Womb of Creation!"

Ardeth returns Wahka's ear-to-ear bright smile. A skiff is pulling along-side and Wahka runs to look over. "It's Tymat! Every year Tymat!"

Ardeth climbs down as two girls and a young male are pulling a wide tray of fruit aboard. Everyone is joyful. Ardeth reaches for a melon being offered, "And what's your name?"

The smiling girl hands the melon, "Meket." Ardeth takes a huge bite. Sweet melon juice rolls across his face. Meket smiles bright.

Ardeth whoops, "E-e-woo!!" People yell back, smiling and waving from other boats.

The Temple complex comes into view and everyone bends at the rails. The city rises on hillsides hugging the channeled marina, which is edged by leafy trees. The channels are 100 long paces wide and stretch to a richly carved and colored wall, wrapping the island at water's edge.

Ardeth jumps onto the stern. Thousands and thousands of boats jam the waterways. Garlanded rafts festooned to the water-line float like islands of flowers. Wahka points to the Temple, "1000 Goddesses."

Scores of stone Goddesses stand together under the shading canopies of tall trees.

Music fills the air and everyone is subdued watching the exquisitely carved red-granite figures pass before them. Each Goddess has different features and stands between fat columns of wildly colored Papyri capitals. The songs of women drift along the walls and birds fly excitedly.

The Temple runs an imposing 220 yards when the 60 foot Pylon Gates, at the head of the Entrance, are slowly revealed. Hundreds of Palms held by worshipers sway and glisten in the air along the entrance-way.

Ardeth, "I can smell the fruit." Wahka, "That's the wine!"

Ardeth leans over the railing. The surface is littered with bobbing blossoms and the glinting sun starts stabbing into his eyes. A buzz gets louder and louder.

Ardeth opens his eyes. A harsh alarm is buzzing from the Rookery stove.

Chapter 3

Sarah is sitting in Pearson's study and focuses down, "We have to convince Dr Hawass."

Paul pipes, "Go to Egypt?" Sarah, "Exactly. We have to beat Ardeth to the Tombs." Kharis has doubt, "Anankhkah is here. In England somewhere." Pearson agrees, "Yes, that's true. Someone needs to stay here. It doesn't take all of us to talk to Dr Hawass."

Sarah, "Kharis and I shall stay."

Paul gets excited and starts at Pearson, "We're going? We're going to Egypt?" He stands up, "Yes? Say yes!"

Pearson smiles at him, "Yes,-" Paul explodes, "Oh, yes!" Pearson is nodding, "we're going to Egypt."

Kharis smiles at Pearson, "You had your budget planned."

Pearson smiles, "All yesterday."

Pearson and Paul appear at the Arrival Gate of the Cairo International Airport where an obviously annoyed Dr Hawass paces, "Here we are chasing the Golden Tombs. I hate it!"

Pearson joins him onto the concourse, "Yes, here we are." They both shake and break into sheepish smiles. Hawass and Paul shake. Hawass, "Actually, I love it."

They pick up and start for the terminal. Pearson, "We won't love it if Ardeth gets to the Amun Vault before we do." Dr Hawass, "I have some ideas." Motioning toward the baggage ramp, "But come, come, we'll get started."

Soon, they are banging their luggage through the hall into Dr Hawass' home office. Pearson, "You have ideas about the Hidden Tomb?" The home has a sunny, warm feel with hardwood flooring. There are several full detail maps of Karnak spread over his desk.

Pearson is putting down his bags and Dr Hawass leans over his table, "I've been thinking-" taps his index on the tabletop, "the Amun Priests knew the mind of this new Pharaoh. They knew what was coming. And then he built his Temple to the Aten right there in Karnak. A total affront."

Pearson, "They probably called him 'The Heretic' even then, before he changed his name to Akhenaten." Hawass nods, "Probably. Yes."

Pearson, "So you think the Amun moved their money off-campus?" Hawass, "And the Tanna; and in absolute secrecy."

Paul looks up to Dr Hawass, "How could we find that?"

Hawass, "Not possible. But you see, I think the new Vault from the times of Seti and Ramesses must be there. In Karnak."

Pearson, "Wasn't there a vast work-force though? I've heard, some 81,000?" Hawass straightens, "Even with all the personnel, the Amun Sanctuary was the most controlled space in all of Egypt. No one was allowed."

Pearson, "You think they built their Gold Vault in the Sanctuary?" Dr Hawass looks at him, "Under it. The inner Precincts had greatest anonymity. Right there." His finger lands on the grounds-plan with a THUMP.

Pearson is thinking. "Perhaps. It was a totally controlled environment." Looks at Paul, "The Priests had to wash before even going near it."

Hawass, "Yes, you see, regular closed shipments could be taken in and out almost daily. Through the Ramesses Temple at

the Eastern Gate." Hawass taps plan.

Paul, "Regular shipping."

Dr Hawass, "Yes, directly into the private Precincts. No one was allowed there. It was silent and dark."

Hawass pushes himself over his table on extended arms while pursing his lips, "Which leads me to another aspect. Any inspection, anywhere in the country, especially at Karnak, must be reviewed and permitted, by the government."

Pearson carefully avoids the fact that the whole mummy debacle has caused a serious rift in Egyptian academia from which Dr Hawass must still be smarting. The one immutable law for all Archaeologists is: 'You must have proof'.

Pearson looks at him, "If we submit an excavation plan, Ardeth will surely find out." Hawass straightens back up, "Yes, but quietly looking won't hurt(!)" smiles at Paul, "Right!?"

Paul smiles brightly back.

The morning plane from Cairo lands with a screech at the Luxor Airport.

The three of them walk out into the terminal. Pearson, "Luxor. How do we get to the Museum?" Hawass, "We have to take a taxi. The Museum has a van, though. I guess I'll have to handle any other rentals." Pearson, "We have a budget." Hawass looks over, "I hope so."

Paul is excited, "Is there a chance to pop off to the Temple of Luxor?" Pearson, "This trip isn't sight-seeing." They head out to the line of Taxis.

The driver tries to help but Dr Hawass waves him off. They bundle into the back. Dr Hawass to cabbie, "Luxor Museum." Then something in Arabic. He leans back, "We have to drop off the luggage first."

They ride in across the fields, stretching to either side of the highway, and over the three canals. Paul is looking out, "It feels like Egypt."

Pearson looks over to Hawass, "I guess it was pretty rough." Dr Hawass' voice is kind, "We all have had it rough. I realize it caused you problems as well." His eyes shoot open, "But those headlines!" Shakes his head. Pearson smiles, "Ah, yes, those headlines!" Looks, "It must have caused such pressure." Hawass, "Yes, we lost the Princess. Some demanded to know what we were doing." Pearson, "I couldn't tell anyone either." Hawass, "Oh, if I had told them we were going to wake the mummy(!), they wouldn't even allow me back in the country!" Points across to the right for Paul, "Look, you can see Karnak. If you look right up here, you can just see the

Lake of Mut, here, right here," pointing.

After dropping their bags and a quick last lap in their Taxi, they walk down into the Avenue of the Sphinxes, before the famous facade.

Paul looks up in awe, "Karnak." The immense complex spreads out around them. Flocks of tourists pour around every corner.

They make their way through the Pylons and into the towering Hypostyle Hall. The red stone stands vividly above them against the pale sky. Birds dart and children yell; voices echoing constantly. Paul is looking up, like all the thousands before him, and bumps into a line of running kids. Dr Hawass ushers the way toward the back, "Come, come." Paul, "They ran into me!" Hawass keeps a pace walking down into the inner Precincts toward the Side Apartments of the Sanctuary of Amun. Pearson and Paul tag along after, looking around before him through the gush of oncoming visitors.

Dr Hawass keeps his arms low and signals with his fingers as they enter the corridor. The worn tops of its broken walls rise on either side for a long-missing roof. People are crowding through in a stream, and someone is lecturing her small tour group.

A beaming Dr Hawass stands confidently over a large flag-stone sitting in the walk. He hikes his brows and throws his twinkling eyes down. Pearson and Paul approach and look. Pearson, "It does look conspicuous. Now that you look at it."

The Flagstone occupies the center of what was a connecting hallway off the inner Shrine and is noticeably larger than the others surrounding it.

Dawdling tourists and busy feet traipse across and Dr Hawass makes a motion with his eyes to leave.

They are entering their new command-center in the empty back-rooms of the Luxor Museum Storage Offices where Dr Hawass dictates his vision, "Yes, you notice how the corridor was the same width as the stone."

They congregate around the desk where he has rolled out his floor-plan. Pearson, "The cap-stone sat in the corridor before the vault was sealed?" Hawass, "Yes, of course. If there's a ramp underneath, it simply slid into place."

Paul, "Now what?"

Hawass bites his lip and sits down, exasperated, pushing his forehead onto his palm. Then looks up, "I don't know. I've put my whole life to preserving the heritage of my great land. All of the monuments and mummies and Pharaohs have been removed from their places and brought to museums, where the

wet air destroys them."

Pearson, "Yes, the mold almost destroyed Ramesses' mummy."

Dr Hawass, "Yes. It happens with everything. This is why I made a plan to return everything to the Tombs and have observation and study, and tourism go there."

Paul, "Build a tomb park?" Hawass, "Kind of. Return the Pharaohs to their tombs and control and manage our modern curiosity better."

Pearson, "That would be a huge investment." Hawass, "Yes. But they moved Abu Simbel. This is kind of the same thing only we move them back to their true place."

Paul, "Yes, but what do we do now, about the Vault?"

Hawass grimaces, pulling air through his teeth, "I don't know. There's not just gold down there."

Everyone looks at each other.

Dr Hawass tightens his lips, staring forward, "I knew I shouldn't have agreed to this."

He looks, and blinks. Then, "We'll get a permit to clean and photograph the walls. We can have curtains, you know, construction curtains."

Pearson, "Through the Antiquities Ministry?" Hawass, "No. I cannot be involved. You will apply. UCL." He looks with brows up, "But I can still get it done quickly." Pretends to whisper, "I have to be sneaky."

Paul, "Oh, yeah, we're not being sneaky! Only you!"

Chapter 4

Three loud knocks are heard from a dark wooden door. Ardeth opens to the blaze of sunny daylight, framing Kharis and Sarah's vivid figures. Ardeth, "So, you found us!"

Kharis just walks in past him. Ardeth calls after, "She's still percolating." He follows him in.

Kharis is looking on Anankhkah when Ardeth heads to the table. "The chemist stole her. I had to chase him down." He sits.

Unconvinced, Kharis seats himself across from Ardeth as Sarah walks to the chamber. Kharis glances up as she slides her hand along the observation window and looks through the glass.

He looks back at Ardeth, "Dr Pearson and Dr Hawass are going to search at Karnak for the Vault."

Ardeth leans back and takes a breath, "Have you ever heard the story of Sa Pa-nehse and the Nubian, Sa NehDjet -

practitioner of the Dark Sorcery?"

Sarah, "You mean the story of Si-Osire? Those are just children's stories. Scary bedtime stories."

Kharis looks at her. She looks back, "The ancient world's Marvel Comics."

Kharis, "Who is Si-Osire?"

Ardeth, "It's like the story of Robin Hood and the Golden Arrow. The great Egyptian magician, Panehse had been re-incarnated as a young boy, Si-Osire, who had no idea of his true identity. The Nubian, Sa-NehDjet devised a way to flush him out by insulting the open Court, challenging Nubian magic against Egyptian magic."

Kharis, "NehDjet! You said Paser was NehDjet."

Ardeth, "Yes. But let's finish the story. The bet was Nubian independence. The magic was the reading of a sealed scroll. No one could do it." The very Court of Thutmose III unfolds in Ardeth's words:

The Nubian stands smiling on the open floor as the young boy enters. The gallery is filled on all sides and the King sits with serious acuity.

The boy's father addresses the King, "Your majesty, My son is precocious and has mastered this magic."

Si-Osire rises with an innocent, bright smile. The Nubian smiles and holds forth the scroll, dangling in the air from its tassel.

Si-Osire, "Sire-" He turns toward NehDjet and tilts his head slightly to read, "It reads, 'I am Sa NehDjet of Mut Tabo-ubu and search for my enemy'"

Si-Osire begins grinning, "And Sire, I see I am indeed his enemy, Sa Panehse," his voice becomes strong, "the Ancient One resurrected."

Before his words are spoken, both raise their arms while the air lenses and three-foot thick lightning writhes through the court in the form of snapping Cobras. Clouds twist up along the ceiling like stretched intestines. People fall backwards.

NehDjet's hissing, biting Snakes turn glimmering Red to Panehse's Golden Cobras when NehDjet jabs his left palm downward, freezing Panehse in an icy glacial block, from which Panehse's Tiger-Palms melt through the sides and throw blazing hot fireballs onto NehDjet.

Ardeth's words are casual: "Panehse won." Puckers lip, "After some hours."

Kharis is alarmed, "Are you saying this was real?"

Ardeth, "It's just a story. But I can tell you NehDjet is real, because I met him," eyes glance to Sarah, "a thousand years before those stories were written. NehDjet devel-

oped the 'Taking of the Ka' dark magic, where he takes someone's Ka and gains control of their body. He goes from body to body, escaping death. He runs one out and takes another. He took Paser, my best friend. My only friend; who then turned on me and left me in the Tanna without a Portal."

Sarah, "So NehDjet possessed Paser. When did you meet him?"

Ardeth looks at Kharis, "I met him the night he put you under the Tanna." Sits back, "We were the same age. He was Paser, 'the Great Man' and I was the poor kid. But we were equals in the magic and we both knew it; and we became fastest friends."

Kharis, "What happened to Paser?"

Ardeth, "Rama-Rui trapped him. He is in that Vault and must never be awakened. Keeping him trapped keeps NehDjet trapped and keeping that scourge from the world is the real reason I want that Vault."

Sarah, "How do you know Rama trapped him?" Ardeth, "He told me. At the Festival of Bast, in the 66th year of the King..."

Chapter 5

Birds sail in the open blue sky. The face of a flying bird flies near, it's glimmering eyes pass close as they follow along down onto the tree-lined Temple of Ba'ast, the Cat Goddess. Guardian of the East. The most finely crafted and beautiful of all the Temples of Egypt. Row upon row of 40 foot painted and vividly carved Lotus, Palms and Papyri columns appear as freshly-tied bunches. All strung with spirals of scented blossoms spilling perfumed euphoria into the air.

Boats jam the docks, and stone Goddesses line the Temple wall under cooling tree-tops. Bird chatter is heard against the echoing cacophony of musical sounds while the birds sail along the wall. Excited eyes fly in and out from under the branches and along the Goddesses. Smiling Goddess by smiling Goddess until the wall drops away as the swirling surge flies up to peer into the vast 600 x 600 foot Temple Courtyard. Flowering columns surround hundreds of palm-waving and flower bedecked worshipers in flaxen robes.

Two Ramesses Colossi stand looking down from inside the Entrance Pylons on the twelve-foot Palace of Ba'ast, Inner Shrine at the center of the Processional. Carved from a single stone and walled on three-sides.

The echoing calls of Priestesses fade behind as the

birds fly high out over the city into a sea of 700,000 people, stretching away in the spring sun. They drown city-streets, the Island of the Goddesses and out into the far fields.

The long boulevard of the Great Processional heads east from the massive Temple Gate and is so packed, the paving cannot be seen under the slowly moving horde. They appear like a vast, spangled soup. Smoke drifts up through the tall trees.

Near the pavilions, women are running through the moving crowds like cats through wheat. Everyone is playfully dressed, clapping in joyful homage and playing flutes and tambourines. There is singing and laughter.

Along the docks, open carousing and crazy dance studs the landscape. Sleds park streets and walls with giant 10 foot wine jars, roped together. People hold each other. Everyone has a cup. The din of laughter against the constant background of pulsing music, fills the air.

Ardeth makes his way along the tree-lined boat ramps. People run past in both directions. There are drinking porches lining a long dock where drunken people are tended and cleaned.

Ardeth, "Oh-h that smell!" Wahka, "The Lotuses are already gone from the channels, but more are coming."

Ardeth is walking and Wahka hears his words, "This happens every year." Wahka yells up to him, "Have wine-" Ardeth, "Soon, soon. First I have someone to see."

Wahka frowns as Ardeth heads away but he follows along after. Wahka, "Slow down!"

Heading up toward town, they are confronted with a wall of people. Ardeth tries to look over up the street but it's useless and he finally settles to the fate of the Festival. Smiling, Wahka grabs him by the shoulder and gives him a shake while handing a cup, "It's Bast! The Celebration of Women-" with sweeping gesture, "The Greatest Festival in the World!"

Ardeth grabs the cup. A beautiful young female bumps into him on purpose as she runs past. She turns and giggles and runs off. Ardeth looks to Wahka who opens his eyes wide and grins. Ardeth drinks a huge gulp.

The sun has climbed the sky and Wahka is lost. Ardeth stands with two women in the Court of a Pillared Shrine. People are walking and stumbling through.

The three of them are bent forward staring at the ground when Ardeth looks to see that same girl who first bumped into

him, standing in the pillars, looking.

She walks straight up and sweeps her breasts slowly across Ardeth's chest. He looks into her smile, "Oh, the young Lioness." She pushes up against him until he smiles. She speaks abruptly, "You're old." Her eyes start shining, "-B-u-t young-" A sharp smile slips across her face and she backs away subtly. Ardeth's gaze remains fixed. She looks again and leans closely into him, almost a caress.

Ardeth is smiling, he glances to her eyes, "I'll not be devoured by a-" leans to whisper, "young Royal."

She pulls a petulant turn, but looks back quickly, "How did you know?"

Ardeth just smiles.

She darts off to the pillar and looks back. Another lioness is crawling onto Ardeth's left but his smile remains fixed and their eyes hold together.

She looks to him, "I am Tau." He returns, "I am Bay."

They stare briefly, before the call of moments steals them both and she darts away.

The crowds move along in ebbing waves when finally the smell of food starts drawing people toward town. Lioness2, "I smell food-"

Someone is running by, "It's time for the meal!" Everyone starts walking. Lioness1 puckers her lip, "The taming of the kitty." Lioness2 leans in low, "Gr-r-r-r" with a wicked laugh.

Ardeth and his two lionesses emerge under the soaring shade-trees that edge the 400 foot wide, half-mile long Great Processional.

Endless lines of joyful women dance and move in their shining sheaths and glittering headdresses. Each holds wands of flowering fragrant branches, and Lotus Blossoms adorn every head.

Ardeth stands up on an already crowded bench and looks down the Processional.

The massive and moving numbers undulate in the heat before the high Temple Pylons and Four Colossi of Hathor, rising from the Island on the water below.

Only the tops of the Pylons and the Four Faces of Hathor can be seen floating above the waves of Lotus Blossoms riding the moving seas of the dancing throng. The sounds of singing, cymbals and tambourines blend with flutes and harps. Excited birds sing and swirl. The women sway.

Stone cooking stations line the Great Way under the high reaching trees, along which the town markets have grown.

There are fat jars of beer and wine on sleds and carts behind the busy food-prep. The air is rich with flavors and smoke.

The numbers swell and the Procession slows. Stalled people are simply looking around. Long rows are forming.

Lioness1 looks out with a broad, confident smile, "The Feast of Ba'ast."

Alluding to more than the reed-filled waterways, Lioness2 amorously slides against Ardeth with a sly smile, "The Festival of Marshes." He stares out with mild sarcasm, "The field of battle--"

Lioness2 judges the Procession and gets pouty, "We missed the Temple." Ardeth, "I've seen it. This is more fun..." They cross over into the rows and find seats.

Women run up and back searching out people. They are skipping across rows to change places. There's giggling and laughter.

Trains of servers trundling large trays, bring soup and bread which floods faces with delight.

The gaggle of surrounding strangers tote tambourines, pipes, sistrums and crotals but only one keeps jangling her sistrum while her drunk friend makes nonsense on his flute.

One woman starts to slump when Ardeth glances. She straightens with a slight smile to proclaim she's still afloat. He notices another, obviously impoverished young female gushing at the rare extravagance of having her own small Lotus Blossom.

People down their wine to avail the cup for soup. A crabby-face motions toward the Temple, "They have bowls in the Adoration"

Soup is poured, bread is broken, people dig in. The festive energy settles as food goes down but soon raucous conversations feed a heightening atmosphere. Flirtations and new interests are forming couples and groups.

Women servers in red and red-smearred sheaths pass through, leaving large decanters of Red Beer and wine, which they ladle from barrels. Everyone fills their cup. The music gins up and women rise to dance.

Then a hush falls while faraway Priestesses call prayers, but from their trailing last words, a roaring excitement rolls across the crowds as Ram-headed actors jut out into the rows. Small groups of actors chase after them to begin the ancient play.

A strutting Ram runs along our backs and swings around with wild eyes. Everyone exclaims "Ra!" and "Ra, look out!" and "The Humans are coming!" A posse of actors run up.

Ra yells out, "The Humans are rebelling!"

They are chasing each other up and back and people are

yelling pro and con in a chaos of joyous and laughter-ridden responses. Ra pretends he can't fend them.

Suddenly a garishly helmeted Lion-Headed, red-soaked Goddess runs out, beating down 'the Humans' and the crowd roars, "Sekhmet!! Sekhmet!"

She is running back and forth throwing Humans down.

Ra marches up and back, yelling, "The Protectoress won't stop!"

The fretting Ra throws his arms wildly and begs her to stop. Spontaneous laughter breaks out as Ra reels into crowds. The women dance and gyrate as Sekhmet passes, but she is unquenchable and continues tossing 'The Humans' around and dragging giddy audience members. They can't get away. Everyone is laughing and yelling and dancing and drinking.

A smiling Ardeth dissolves into the swaying, moving wall of dancers. His white eyes fixed on Sekhmet.

Finally Ra strides up with a huge carafe of red wine which she drinks while he yells loudly, "Only the wine slacks her thirst for blood! Only the wine slacks her thirst!"

Red wine rolls down her face and saturates her already red dress. All the throng drinks with her.

Servers run and drinkers drink. The actresses don crowns of Hathor's Cow-Ears and join in. Sekhmet finally gives in to Ra with a sensuous embrace; and they dissolve into the swaying crowd.

Drunken figures cavort, fall around and pour beer on themselves. People are crawling around over each other. The scene jerks into a slow-motion mosaic of drunken ecstasy as the rows melt into non-definition and the music, laughter and yelling fall away for abject drunkenness.

People droop where they sat. Only prayers and pointless utterances are heard.

They roll around, some with each other; the pious and profane, in twisting groups. Some pass out, some stumble away.

People lounge in the late afternoon on the crest of a grassy knoll. Trees line the field beyond. Ardeth wanders toward a group of revelers. He recognizes one and calls out, "Rama!"

Rama, "Bay! - So you revived--"

Rama-Rui has high cheek-bones, a square chin and seems to look out over others. He has Palm-sheave braids and tufted layers in his Amun hair-style.

Ardeth, "Yes, back. You look older." Rama smiles, "So they say."

Ardeth sits and the two look at each other. Ardeth, "It's good to see you." Rama offers humor, "Which of us looks better?" Ardeth, "You, of course!" Both smile.

Ardeth looks at him, "Rama, where is Paser?" Rama, "In the Vault, without a Portal." Ardeth, "How?" Rama, "Bakenhonsu ordered it. He said it was necessary."

Ardeth, "You Amun, always so practical." Rama, "Necessary. Necessary, necessary. Tanna is the last resort of necessary. But the Tanna is gone now. When things get scarce, people use it up as fast as they can."

Ardeth, "You're First Prophet now!" Rama, "After Baken. They said there was an Asiatic named Bay; how did I know it was you-?" They both smile.

Ardeth, "What of Crown Prince Khaemweset?" Rama, "Crossed the river some 12 years. Governor Merenptah is Crown Prince now. The Great King is long lived." Ardeth, "Outlived his sons. Khaemweset did much good works, while I slept."

Tau graces the grassy knoll, with wine jars in each hand. Ardeth casts his finger toward her, "Tau."

Rama looks over, "Tauosret. The young bird, of Merenptah."

Ardeth looks, "Strong."

He swings around to Rama, "Bring me to the Palace. Asiatics count good coin." Rama is surprised, "You want a job?" Then smiles, "And you aren't Asiatic(!)"

Tauosret approaches. She looks at them, "You know this one- (?)"

Rama looks up, "I know him." She plops down between them and they hoist jars.

Birds swarm in the twilight and after a moment Ardeth raises his hand, looking through his out-stretched fingers. Tauosret looks up. He moves his hand with the birds.

Looking through his fingers, the swarming direction changes from a mid-point orchestrated between each finger where birds eyes glimmer amidst waves of fluttering black wings.

The swarm swirls to the left, down and under and over to the right as Ardeth's hand moves. He is smiling and the birds are calling. Tauosret watches intently.

Ardeth, "The mind looks through corridors to individuals who see me and dance and turn with me. Each new friend pivots for others to follow." Tauosret's sparkling eyes move over toward the swarm and she feels the intensity of the magic and the warmth in the air. "They can take you with them, if you ask. Bring your Ba into their eyes." She looks up to his open smile. His hands and mind move with the streaking flights of the swarm.

Rama reaches up and starts moving the swarm on the left. The two magicians sit with Tauosret between them. The swarm moves over and around. Both magicians rise at once, and Tauosret rises. The swarm swoops around them and they are engulfed in a whipping gale of chasing birds and calling chatter. Waves of glimmering eyes and rustling wings surge past from different directions. The magician's hands are stretched, their hair blows and the birds drown them in a swirling black hail. The intensely excited, robust common conversation envelops them in the rustling and joyous, darkening sky.

Sarah and Kharis listen rapturously. Ardeth, "They called me an Asiatic. I rose quickly. They relied on me for all the decisions. I controlled the treasury. Everything Paser used to do, I did and more."

Sarah is spell-bound when suddenly realizes, pointing, "You were Chancellor Bay!" Kharis looks shocked. Ardeth looks, "Yes. I came under Merenptah and when His Majesty passed, I saw to it Seti received the Throne. I gave him his wife, Tauosret. They were happy, for a time."

Sarah, "But you were involved with her, is that true?" He looks into her eyes, "Queen Tauosret - and I, were always one person."

Sarah's mouth drops open slightly. He continues, "She knew my true soul, and I knew hers. I taught her, and she taught me."

Kharis, "You were Chancellor Bay, the King Maker?" Ardeth looks at him, "For a time, I controlled the very breath of Egypt."

Kharis and Sarah are astounded. He looks at them, "When I revived, I found the 'B-e-y' spelling is a Turk-Ottoman Prince." He smiles, "It sounds the same."

Chapter 6

Shiny orange construction curtains hang on portable fencing around the side corridors of the Sanctuary of Amun.

The floor and its Flag-stone are covered with tarps, allowing the exposed inner-walls to appear as if readied for cleaning. A heavy-duty fork-lift sits with camera gear on the tines but holding strange pods on the bottom. Pearson is looking at the pods.

Paul, "I got the idea plunging the loo! Then I remembered the suction pods for moving big glass into high-rises.

-On the tele." Pearson stands up, "Did this revelation all happen on the loo?"

Hawass is looking at the machine, "It's better than using spikes and pry-bars." Pearson pushes at a pod, "But will it work?"

Cars are arriving and Hawass looks through the sheeting. "O-oh, The Inspector!" He runs out the back just as the Antiquities people pull open the drop-sheet and enter.

Hawass is sliding around walls and looking to see if he's caught.

The Antiquities Inspector shakes hands with Dr Pearson and walks through, "So, you're all set up. How-" steps around the imposing machine, "are things coming?" The Inspector is looking at the Camera setup on the lifting tines as his steps make crinkling sounds on the plastic floor-tarps under his feet. Pointing, "Is this necessary?" Pearson, "Oh, yes. We can take perfectly aligned documentation."

Hawass is outside looking around a corner, trying to hear.

Paul continues with the Inspector, "The computer draws quadrant lines. It's the newest method." Paul is nodding with an almost clownish smile. Pearson flicks his eyes in sharp reprimand. The Inspector is looking at the permit details on his clip-board and looks up. They both quickly open their eyes in a seeming ready response. The slight looks funny. The Inspector squints trying to make sense of them. They both smile.

Outside, Hawass stands against a corner, poking his head around to observe. He hears the bidding of farewells and peeks to see the Inspectors leaving toward their run-about. Hawass pulls his head back.

The Inspectors drive off and Hawass enters the drop-sheet, "That was close." Looks at Paul, "How many times did you oil the crevices?"

Paul, "Almost both the 5 gallon tins are gone." Hawass nervously looks through the sheeting, "I guess we're about ready then?"

Paul looks at them, "Is anyone nervous? I'm nervous."

Hawass lifts both hands, signaling with his fingers, "Well, come, come."

They pull back the floor-tarp and start a power-washer, blasting the rock and blowing the air. Mist swirls up.

Hawass is looking back and forth from the sheet. Pearson is swabbing the pods from a soapy bucket.

The washer goes off and Hawass looks again through the sheet. Pearson squats to look at the surface, "It's clean." Paul has jumped into the seat and starts the Fork-lift, which

coughs into a loud rumble. Hawass, "It's so loud!" Paul moves the machine through loud fits and starts into position. Hawass is yanking his face back and forth in alarmed fright. It's too loud to hear their voices yelling. Paul puts the tines with the pods down onto the flag-stone and jerks the whole machine slightly, squishing the pods into the surface.

Hawass' face compresses, "This is madness."

They all look to each other as Paul guns the engine to try the lift. The machine bogs for an instant and the flag-stone unseats with a crunch.

Everybody tries to restrain their exploding wide-eyed expressions.

The flag-stone is four inches up. Its edges are oily and dark. The engine guns again and Paul pulls the giant stone up into the air. Six feet. It swings against the balance of the wheeled machine. Hawass runs to tie the flapping curtain.

Paul backs it up and lowers the block down leaving the open, gaping dark hole before them. Hawass is pacing briskly, "Oh, my God!"

Kharis, Sarah and Ardeth are eating breakfast in the Rookery. Ardeth, "When do you think they'll start looking around Karnak?" Kharis looks up with surprise, "They think they have it. They're trying to make entry today."

Ardeth is shocked and gets wide-eyed. He drops his fork, "If Paser is awakened, the greatest evil in all of the world shall be unleashed." Gets louder, "In the modern world?! He could do more evil than anything, any of us could ever dream of!"

Kharis grabs the phone and starts tapping.

Ardeth jumps up, "He can do the Lightning Magic, the Cloud Magic, he can enter a person and drop them right where they stand. He could enter the minds of world leaders, control them-"

Pearson's blinking cell phone sticks out of his folded jacket on the fork-lift seat.

Kharis is listening and glances up, "He's not answering."

Chapter 7

They have entered the Amun Vault. Their black silhouettes move like ghostly apparitions in the peaked beams of casting torchlights as they make their way through rubble in

the dark. Their shadows ripple around as their lights move, making it difficult to see.

Passageways and rooms lead off the main walk. Pearson's voice echoes, "Over here!"

They appear at the head of a long passage. Dank chambers are evenly spaced down a long hallway. The wall is streaked with dark water-lines at the mid-point. The roof is black from ancient torches and the floor is covered with broken shards and moldy bindings.

Hawass starts flashing from his digital camera. Pearson, "I forgot my phone." Without a further word, they just start checking chambers.

A grotesque face fills the beam of Pearson's light. He pokes the light around, revealing several disintegrated specimens discarded in a stack. The mummies are in an obviously degraded state. Nothing more than a pile of bones and wrappings. Behind them, his light finds an old sack, stuck into layers of filth the floor, with dirt-encrusted beads spilled out.

He looks back out. The others are moving down the hall, shining lights in rooms. Their footsteps always echoing. Hawass shoots more flashes which throw eerie monochrome spots onto Pearson's vision.

A long puddle of black water creeps along the floor at the last few doorways. Hawass calls back, "Mostly empty."

Their movements echo in the dark.

Paul, "Look here." The other two come to his door. There are several mummies. Gaping holes show their chests had been broken into by ancient robbers. Leg bones stick up. Pearson takes a long exhale, "Oh God." Hawass purses his lower lip, "Empty. No gold."

Paul walks to the end through the puddle, making little slapping noises in the water. His figure is outlined at a door, his light illuminating the interior. Hawass shoots another flash.

Paul stands at the doorway. The others come up. There's a plastered wall in an empty room with a barely visible mark.

Pearson reads, "'Forbidden'"

They all look at each other. Paul just heads over and strikes in with his hammer. Hawass, "No!"

They look at Hawass, who has a lost expression. But then the three of them just proceed. Paul pounds in and plaster falls. There are bricks that give way easily to open a hole. Paul sticks his light in and looks, then steps back.

Hawass steps up and looks through. Hawass's eyes open, "Mummies." He looks at Pearson, "Untouched."

Both smile.

After a pause, Paul just starts beating down the wall.

In the dark Rookery, Ardeth talks to Kharis and Sarah, "NehDjet steals bodies to avoid death. He is pure evil. He took Paser and put me in the Tanna. He was finally trapped by the Amun High Priest. Which saved the world."

Sarah, "Is there any way to end him?" Ardeth looks at her, "His Ba takes over a body by attaching to their Ka-spirit. The only way to destroy him is destroy his body, in his tomb; but it is guarded by his mother, Tabo-ubu, who robs men's minds."

Sarah is incredulous, "More magic stories?"

Ardeth looks at her, "NehDjet's mummy is somewhere in Nubia. No one knows where. He's been robbing bodies since before Thutmose. The Nubian Sorceress Tabo-ubu protects it. She unravels men's wits with her Mind Mirror."

Kharis, "Mind Mirror?" Ardeth, "The trick of women."

Sarah looks disapproving.

Ardeth, "She forces the mind to disengage, stealing the Ba through hypnotic suggestion." Looks at Sarah, "Woman's wiles. She taught the Sirens of Anthemia." Sarah fills with incredulity. Ardeth, "It's another aspect of the Taking of the Ka black magic that she and her son invented."

She tightens her lip, "Women's wiles?" Ardeth leans in and deadpans, "Did you ever see a man get stupid?" Sarah smiles, "Well, yeah!"

Ardeth explains, "The Ba and the Ka change places," his wrist swings a switching motion. "It's the Spirit Mirror, where you think you see yourself in her. She has worked as a henchman for the Gods. She can make women stop. She can make the Gods stop. To destroy NehDjet, we will have to get around Tabo-ubu." Sarah and Kharis both glance to each other.

Pearson, Paul and Hawass stand in the Plastered Room. The wall is down and there are racks of wrapped mummies. On top are several biers with other mummies that had been haphazardly stacked; and which have fallen into each other.

Dr Hawass takes pictures of the jumble. Pearson reaches toward Paul, "My light's going, hand me a torch, would you—"

Paul pulls new lights from his ruck and hands them out. Pearson has his notes and a pen light in his mouth. He is looking between the racks of mummies. Paul hands him an elastic strapped head-lamp. "Ah yes, thank you." Pearson pulls it over his head without leaving his attention on his notes.

He points to a white plastered Mummy with images of

large horns painted around the sides of its head, "Huy! Ram's horns." Pointing vigorously, "This is Huy!"

He throws his torchlight on the chest below, "Here we are, Paser." Paul is on tip-toes looking at the mummy on top, "Paraemheb up here!"

Hawass talks to Pearson, "Which Paser?" Pearson looks up, "Vizier and Netjer Tepy"

Hawass, "Impossible! He had a tomb! We have his Canopic jars." Pearson looks down again, then backs away, pointing, "?No(?) Look for yourself-"

Hawass sticks his head in, but pulls back to remove his hat. Pearson, "We have three of his Shabti, but here he is."

Hawass pulls back, "Oh-h, yes." He stands up, "If this is him -"

Pearson is pointing to his notes. Then looks in to the mummy, "The Tanna Glyphs-" pointing between mummy and notes, "and the Tanna-list has a Paser." His eyes look to Hawass.

Exasperated, Hawass puffs air out, "Pu-hh-" nodding, "Ok." He stands back, looking at the stacked mummies, "Ah, it's unbelievable, there's so many here. This is the greatest find in a hundred years!"

Pearson continues at him, "Paser will know the location of the Hidden Tomb."

Hawass fires back, "Maybe there is no Hidden Tomb!"

Paul is looking at them.

Pearson points to the notes, "He's listed. Tanna. He might be revived." Hawass stammers, "This is so crazy! We shouldn't be here! How did I get myself involved, in all this? Crazy stuff!?"

Pearson, "We should bring him out."

Hawass starts walking briskly in circles. Paul is looking back and forth.

Hawass' eyes are popping, "We should not be here!"

Sometime later, Paul pokes his head above the Vault lip into the night air. Everything is quiet. The fencing and equipment are all as they were. Hawass is echoing up from below, "This is crazy." Paul looks back, then starts up out of the hole.

Hawass's voice is still echoing from below, "Well, come on. Come, come."

It is evening and Kharis has the phone, "Battery's dead." Tapping phone, "I texted him. He's got texts."

Sarah stretches her lip, "I forgot the adapter. It's back home." Ardeth, "Maybe Padstow. Not far but twisty."

Kharis gets up to leave, "I don't have a bloody license, but there you are."

The rear access-door of the Luxor Museum Storage Offices is open. Hawass is making way as Pearson and Paul carry Paser's mummy through.

Paul looks ahead, "These wrappings are damp." Hawass, "Wait, wait, I'll get a drop-cloth." He runs around, shuts the access-door and goes into a side-room. Pearson and Paul look at each other and raise their brows at the silliness.

Hawass returns and puts a cloth over a large crate sitting on the office floor. They edge around and place the mummy down. Pearson wiggles his hands, "We need to wash."

They head to the sink and Hawass sits on the office couch looking at the mummy. Pearson returns, "I've got texts from Kharis saying not to waken Paser. Ardeth says he's evil."

Hawass, "He stole the Princess. He can't be trusted, not about anything. Nothing!" Swings his head around, "Do they have her back?"

Pearson, "Funny, it just goes to voice-mail."

Paul sits down and everyone looks at the mummy.

Paul, "Now what?"

Pearson is looking at the mummy, "Tanna's not just the strongest preservative, Sarah said it's probably the strongest psycho-active in existence. Ardeth told her every aspect of Egyptian culture is based on experiences from the Tanna. But they need to be grounded in a tomb, a Portal." Hawass snaps, "That's ridiculous."

Pearson, "He said Tanna allows actual contact with the Afterlife and the ancient Gods. That that's where they are actually from. He said most of the Hieroglyphs are derived from Tanna. The whole culture is from Tanna."

Hawass stares down at the mummy, then blinks.

Pearson, "Apparently, if you have no tomb, you have no experiences. That's why Ardeth needed the Sarcophagus, to ground himself."

The three stare down on the mummy. Suddenly both Pearson and Hawass chime in unison, "Lets put him in the sarcophagus!"

Soon, three dark figures are stumbling up the circular inside-ramp of the modern Museum with the mummy. A strip of

wrapping keeps tripping Paul, even with Dr Hawass trying to catch it.

They make a stark contrast in the quiet, well-lit modern surroundings, with their stumbles and admonishments all the way to an imposing stone Sarcophagus showcased in lights.

Hawass, "Here, let me get the cloth down."

Paul and Pearson hold the mummy, looking at each other while Hawass tamps down the cloth. They then try to bring it over but Paul is standing on the wrap which jerks them back.

Pearson, "Watch it!" Paul, "I am, I am."

Finally, up and over. They stand back. Paul is a little breathy, "Shouldn't we cut away his bandages, a little?"

Pearson is judging, "Let's figure out what we're doing first." Paul pops, "Oh, that'd be good!" All three start laughing but stop themselves. Paul continues the gag, nodding, "-Yes, breath of fresh air -"

Pearson, "I have those incantations from Kharis' wrappings on my computer. Kharis knows how, you should have heard him. It was other worldly. Sounds like those throat-singers from the Mongolian steppes."

Paul, "I'll go get it." He runs off to retrieve Dr Pearson's laptop, thumping down the ramp.

Chapter 9

The Rookery is dark and the Barometric Chamber is struggling its faint hiss. Sarah is illuminated by candles, "You gave Taosret to Seti?"

Ardeth, "His wife and son had rebelled." Sarah's brow furrows, "Why?"

Ardeth is nonchalant, "It's the Black Spider. Seti would make more children and women have their sons to inherit. They don't want new heirs. It's an old story."

Sarah's not sure how that sounds but then she thinks, maybe it's true. Ardeth continues for her, "So they rebelled with Waset and took the southern Cataracts. They defaced His Majesty's Tomb. We were at war and Seti needed a new wife. A legitimate Queen."

Sarah looks at him, "Did you love her?"

He glances. "Of course. Taosret was strong. She was-" he casts eyes outward...

Taosret appears from a palace door. Her expression is managed stress, "He's gone." She stares forward, "The Pharaoh

is dead."

Ardeth is Chancellor Bay, in tightly braided shoulder-length hair, Chancellor's robes and regalia, approaching in the hall. Crying and wailing is heard from the room. Looking to her eyes, Bay bows with propriety, "All is prepared."

Guards stand stiffly and aids bow at Bay's motion and rush away in a quick-step. Bay looks to her and they both head into the room.

The bedchamber is bathed in soft torch-light. Moaning women restrain grief, and guards and servants have empty expressions. The fevered King lays with limpid eyes and an open mouth.

Sarah listens in the candlelight. Ardeth, "It had taken several months. I installed 10 year old Siptah to placate the upper Nile."

Sarah looks questioning.

Ardeth explains, "When Seti's son rebelled, the country was split in half. PiRamesses was the shining new Capitol in the North, with the Hittites. Waset was the old Capitol. They wanted the old Egypt. Karnak didn't want new. Rui exploited Seti's wife and her son--"

Sarah is earnest, "But Rama was your friend(?)"

Ardeth remembers Rama's clear, confident smile at the Festival of Bast, while the Birds swirled about them on the grassy knoll, "This was Rama's son. I remember him as a boy. He became High Priest in Waset under the rebels. A traitor. I stabilized the Throne with Taosret's marriage, and financed the war. I made deals in Nubia. This allied them with Pi-Ram and broke the rebellion. Their support had been stripped; they were outspent." Looks over, "A death of many cuts. Finally, we brought them down; and Seti entered Waset in glory."

Sarah, "But things weren't perfect." Ardeth shrugs, "War is never perfect. Many Asiatics settled in Waset and the wounds were deep." He stretches his brow, "So, after Seti died, raising the son of the defeated rebel promised the South, the whole South, a new beginning. A unified country under a Southern heir. Siptah was a Harem child with a bad foot." Smiles, "That's almost Royal!" His smile becomes sly under glistening eyes, "What could go wrong?"

Sarah, "What did go wrong?"

Ardeth, "Nothing, for a while. I placed Taosret as Regent and we ruled Egypt; all of Egypt, together. She and I-." His eyes shine, "Everything the Great Pharaoh had accomplished. It was wonderful."

Pearson, Paul and Hawass are pressed over the ancient coffin in the darkened Luxor Museum upper level.

Pearson is awkwardly humming, when he raises his brow, "P-hh. Not so hot." Hawass, "Lets all try." Pearson just shakes his head with a hopeless expression. Hawass, "We went this far!"

The three start humming the incantations while looking at each other and trying to keep straight faces, "Hm-m-m-m-m-m"

From a short distance, they appear like bedside carollers, "Hm-m-m-m-m-m"

From inside the front doors, their echoing hum rolls over the Mezzanine rails, "Hm-m-m-m-m-m"

Hawass' echoing voice cuts through, "You're out of key." Paul echoes, "I am?"

Waiting in the candlelight while Kharis drives the coastal road for a phone adaptor, Ardeth offers his past, "PiRamesses was Ramesses' new throne for his new world. Egypt stretching from his left arm," gesturing with arm, "the whole Middle East stretching on his right." His eyes become limpid and large as his mind sails over the living City through the eyes of birds, "It lay in the center like a brand new Jewel..."

The sweep of a glittering PiRamesses passes below. Joyously colored Pylons anchor the Palace of the Pharaoh in the midst of rich villas and walled mansions arranged in a state-ly yet festive, leafy grid.

His spirit flies down along the main avenue of shops and business when the sprawling Royal Horse Stables come into view. The large yard has dozens of horses, chariots and attendants and stretches from the long stabling quarters with its busy workshops and outfitting smithies.

The groomers still do their pre-dawn grounds preparation, but a far cry from the days of Ramesses when the morning mists saw hundreds tossing gold leaf from baskets.

The Royal Stabling grounds at Pi-Ramesses housed the largest armaments manufacturing in Egypt, turning out the Pharaoh's machined Chariotry in the thousands. 6000 primped and manicured horses trained and pranced on its vast field and their stables were paved in gold.

Ramesses marched his four divisions of Amun, Ra, Set and Ptah north to Kadesh from this very golden paddock. His horses tracked gold into the roads and all the peoples thought the Pharaoh's Army was made from the golden blood of the Gods.

Taosret's father, Merenptah rebuilt the stables, covering the grounds with loam. Now its smithies make Hittite arms and carriages, and Lion-faced insignia caps.

Stock-yards, corrals and cattle-bins hug the outskirts of the city, before expanding fields of grape and corn. Cooling trees dot the landscape. Boats, ships, barges and skiffs pack the docks and waterways.

The dominating Palace Pylons sit in a garden of city-planning, that stretches to the water like a jewelry-box.

Rich green canopies shade the river-bank where giggling, pop-eyed 3 & 4 year-olds peer through the lush reeds. Below them, their parents are bent over, sloughing in the mud. Dragonflies jog between plants, and insect wings drum the air.

Their two sets of legs jut up, sheathed in slimy mud, knee-deep harvesting green water-shoots as they move.

Older kids are running along, calling through the trees in excitement, "It's the Chancellor! It's the Chancellor!"

The two parents stand to look.

The huge Royal Barge slides through the water, a glittering vision of chased-gold and bronze with richly carved ebonies and red-orange and dark woods rising at the Stem.

The sail spars are tied and 30 oarsmen pull along the hull.

Six ruddermen course the wide, dual paddles below the massive Papyri-shaped Stern-post blossoming over the rear deck in vivid definition. The center-cabin is festooned with carved Goddesses and Papyri and the canopy-posts are capped in ivory and gold.

The Royal Barge oars through the channel and people run up to the bank. Hundreds of craft are lashed about the shore as the giant Barge pulls into the northern marina toward the Palace docking where scores of dockmen await. Horns blare. Crowds are gathering.

The Oarsmen stand their leaf-paddle oars and lean them at angle to appear like folded duck wings. Stern tow-lines pull against a series of submerged planks, strung like a kite to act as a sea-anchor.

A Dockman stands up proudly, taking a deep breath, "The Great Swan returns!" His co-worker, "You mean the fat duck." The Dockman frowns but both turn to look at the approaching spectacle.

Taught lines to front and rear tow-boats maneuver the vessel to birth. Ropes are tossed to the landing, drums and horns stop and workers pull the craft over. Long banners flutter from the rigging. Dockmen are setting lines and preparing the gangway.

The splendorous Royal Barge has been tied at the dock when finally the Chancellor's entourage disembarks. The wait has not dampened the crowd's excitement. A priest leads the way holding forth the Staff of Office bearing his Necklace of the Seal. Retainers and porters bow at the sides. People and children watch. The Royal Marina is a sheltered landing, in from the river. Trees dot its access which enters the boulevard of the Processional at the half-way point.

It's been well over two months but he's none-the-less surprised at the genuine delight shining from the faces of the processional guards lining the Great Way. It is usually a formal fawning he's always found burdensome.

He passes into the Palace and ascends the Grand Staircase toward the Royal apartments and court gardens, which occupy the sunny upper floors. Coming on the landing, the thick scent of flowers greets his nose.

Women scurry excitedly past Taosret, their eyes and smiles signal Bay's approach. Taosret turns to sit and looks into his eyes as he appears into the sun-drenched Lounging Court. Flaxen sheathing drapes multiple colors across the open pillars to the outside veranda.

Ardeth smiles, "My Queen--"

Taosret smiles, "How was your trip?" Ardeth, "Productive. His Majesty's tomb remains unmolested and is secure. Work is fully resumed on your expansion."

Taosret is excited, "How is it?" Ardeth's generous smile spills forth, "Wonderful. And your Temple of Millions of Years is marked out next to the Temple of Merenptah."

They both walk to the model of the Temple on a wide table. All the Royal Temples are modeled on the table in their place on the West Bank. Ardeth motions with his hand, "They stand in perfect regard. It will be magnificent!"

Taosret's expression tightens, "How are things?" Ardeth, "The whole South is pacified."

Siptah, "Is it!"

The 15 year-old Pharaoh has appeared at the door. He limps into the room. Only the toes of his left foot touch the floor.

Ardeth, "Yes, Your Majesty. The country is at peace, under your Lordship's--" sweeps open palms, "Pervasive Unifying Radiance." Ardeth has leaned forward in a subservient bow with his out-stretched hands.

Siptah, "And how is my Tomb, Chancellor?" Ardeth straightens, "Grand, and befitting of the Great Pharaoh."

A stocky-statured Priest has followed in behind the Pha-

raoh. Ardeth offers a greeting, "Vizier Hori --"

Hori holds a quietly disguised contempt, "Khaementre Bay, Holder of the Seal--" Ardeth adding quickly, "And a careful hand to the Treasury."

Hori, "Steady, I would hope. Waset is unhappy." Ardeth, "Karnak is happy, your father's Temple, in Memphis, is happy."

Siptah, "Some complain, Lord Bay."

Taosret interjects, "The country is strong; and will remain so."

Hori bows toward Taosret, and everyone is relieved the exchange is ended.

Taosret and a young maiden face each other on the veranda as the Queen instructs with the bow.

They look to another maiden beyond, who is shooting practice arrows from a toy bow.

Taosret motions her bow forward like throwing a left punch, "Draw your shaft and push the other arrow in one motion. Block, aim and loose." The practice-shaft deflects off Taosret's bow while she draws her arrow to then aim forward. Taosret, "One motion." Motioning with bow, "Over and down on the left, under and up on the right." She steps into it and skips another practice-shaft away to the right. The girl is surprised at the Queen's fully drawn arrow. Taosret looks directly to her, "One motion." Pulls the arrow while motioning a block, "Always draw when blocking. Then loose. War is constant offense. Always shooting." The girl is sharply attentive, the Queen looked directly at her.

Ardeth enters in his Chancellor's Regalia and Taosret motions the girls away with a flit of her fingers, "Go now."

The maidens scamper off and Taosret steps around and rapidly shoots arrows from the balcony. Five arrows in five targets in the garden below.

Ardeth smiles, "Still excellent. But can you do it from a chariot?" Taosret, "I could hit a bird flying," glances up, "if it offended."

Ardeth smiles warmly, "My Princess --" Taosret smiles, "Your Queen."

They turn to look out over the garden. Its long, tree-lined rectangular pool is a carpet of curling Lotus leaves; and its many scented flowers assuage the constant city air. There are many invisible attendants and gardeners busying and primping the foliage below.

Ardeth's expression changes slightly, "Hori is colluding with the south against you. I'm trying to gain proof. Set-

nakhte is seeking favor in Karnak and his wife--"

Taosret is quick, "Is my sister. One of Merenptah's." She turns toward him, "Is there danger?" Ardeth, "Not yet, no. But Siptah is thinking he can do without us and it's playing right into their hands. He's a weak boy. He's been told he's Pharaoh too much."

She puts her bow-tip to the floor, "Siptah is their pawn. We need time." Ardeth, "Yes. Things need their proper order. I must keep Siptah alive. If he dies, they'll blame you and move against us."

Taosret, "If he lives, they'll move against us."

Ardeth, "Waset's been selling food-stores and blaming shortages on the Asiatics. They're stirring people up." Paus-es, then smiles at her, "I'm not even Asiatic!"

Taosret is angered, "It's already started. The people must be fed. I'll send shipments and troops."

Ardeth smiles gently, "It's already allocated."

Sarah stares in awe, "It must have been fabulous; your life." Ardeth, "Yes--" then thinking, "But all things end." He pauses. "I was in my quarters, -that fall..."

Ardeth sits in evening torch-light before his long table in the Chancellor's Quarters. A large noise echoes from the docks. Some muffled sounds swirl about. He looks up. Then looks at his hands and waits.

An hour or so passes and Taosret appears at the door. She has been crying. She has a bundle. She comes and sits next to him.

Ardeth looks at her, and then at the bundle. He knows what has happened and looks back into her eyes.

Taosret, "There were riots, in Waset and Memphis. The army put it down but they're listening to Setnakhte, and Hori." Ardeth, "Memphis, too?"

Taosret looks him in the eyes, "They're acting against you; with Siptah's blessing."

Ardeth gives a kind smile, "Of course."

Taosret looks at him, then pleads, "I have to be seen as supporting them." Ardeth takes her hand and with the kindest warmth, "Of course."

Then he smiles, "At least I can be Egyptian again!"

She holds his hand tightly, intensely looking him in the eyes, "I will take revenge."

His smile is gentle, "Of course. And you will rule; and you will be a great ruler."

Ardeth reaches over and pulls the bundle toward him. She begins to tear up. Ardeth looks her straight in the eyes,

and taps slowly on the bundle, "You will keep the rest." He stares in the candle-light.

Sarah sees his same stare in their candlelight. Then he pops, "And I don't know how I came to wake up in Surrey. I'll tell you that!"

Sarah half-smiles but then stares back, "What happened to her?"

Ardeth's smile slowly collapses. Sarah listens:

An ancient attendant runs up in panic, "My Queen, His majesty is poisoned!"

Siptah is wreathing in agony, arching his back. Attendants try to hold him. Froth expels from his mouth and runs down his face.

Taosret and advisers are running down the Hall to his room. They find the boy fallowed and green with viscus fluid running from his eyes. An adviser runs in, "We caught Hori with his poison jars, trying to escape."

She strides out into the Hall where Hori is being brought up. The Hittite Guards hold Hori who squirms and spits with hatred, "Pi-Ramesses, Capitol of the North. It has more Hittites than their own Capitol. Ramesses went crazy with the foreigners; look at all the Asiatics everywhere. This is not Egypt. It's as bad as Akhetaten, and the Heretic!"

Taosret, "Take him."

As the Guards pull him away, Hori's voice echoes from down the Hall, "She poisoned the Pharaoh!" The Guards knock him around as they drag him off.

Adviser, "Setnakhte is behind this."

She stares down the Hall. "Guard Hori well."

PiRameses stretches out in the bright sunny day. Taosret sits under a draped canopy atop the high Coronation Throne, which stands atop a Barque-shaped, skin-draped Dais with stairs in the middle of the Palace entrance way. The high Palace Pylons loom as a backdrop overhead, and the tall poled flags are furling behind the four giant Colossi of Ramesses, standing to either side. Along the stairs are the 16 emissaries of the Four Races of the Four Directions, Egyptians, Nubians, Libyans and the Asiatics. All showing the predominance of the Throne, and of Egypt, over all things.

Musicians and singers play along side and Hittite Guards stand between lines of tall robe-topped poles affixing effigies of birds, Cobra and Jackals and Sun-Disks with panther-tails.

Thousands of joyous people sit for the Celebration Meal along the flag and bannered processional path forming a feast that stretches out to the docks. Servants dart back and forth, through wafting smoke, from catering stations.

She wears the White and Red Double Crown of Upper and Lower Egypt. A large necklace of Papyrus and Lotus Haulms is clasped with a large Djed Pillar and draped over her Throne. Her pet leopards roll and play next to her.

Taosret glances down on the Libyans, Berbers of Libu. Fickle friends. Their land is the long shadow of desert stretching west of the Nile from the Delta to the Siwa Oasis in Libu Minor; whose Kings marry beautiful men, and the women serve tea. Cattle herders and meat exporters. They stood too, just as now, with their intricate tattoos, slippery feathers and fine frocks, fawning and fawning at her father's coronation, yet invaded with the Boat People of the Green Sea. The constantly cunning rat's nest boiling along their coast.

Her Adviser steps up to whisper, "My Queen, Hori has been in Waset since his escape. Setnakhte flouts him, 'Vizier' and proclaims Siptah's death, our doing. He will bring war against PiRamesses."

Her expression is unchanged, "Send this to the garrisons: 'Setnakhte has conspired with the criminal Hori to kill our Pharaoh Siptah. We will move against Waset and punish the criminals. Prepare for war'."

She looks out over the crowds. A throng of a hundred thousand jamming city streets and out along the docks and channels. Boats and banners bob and wave. Great cheering and joy drifts through the air.

Ardeth, "They fought for a year," trying to shrug off what he knows is coming next.

Sarah has a farrowed questioning, "How did it end-(-?)"

Ardeth pinches his lips, "This war ended the Asiatics and Hittite culture in Egypt. It was the fall of PiRamesses and the end of Ramesses' internationalism. It had gone too far, for some." Raises his eyes, "Setnakhte had learned who controlled the purse, controlled the country." A certain bitter irony crosses his face, "That was my legacy."

He looks at her, "Taosret had a lot to live up to. Ramesses' blood ran in her veins." His eyes glaze, "She was strong..."

Taosret stands in an electrum and gold, light Chariot with a Nubian pilot. She wears the Golden Lotus Leaf and Cobra Crown of the Queen and flaxen gowns, tied tight but flowing. The Chariot has a rack of quivers with 100s of white

feathered arrows. Her horses are adorned with high-standing bloomed bonnets and woven, multi-colored blankets tied across their chests and under their long brushed tails. The reins and bridles are gold-strung leather. Her phalanx are thirty Hittite War Chariots and five Egyptian. The faster two-man Egyptian Chariots have an even mix of Egyptian and Hittite warriors. Many broad feathered and banded fans stand starkly about from long poles.

The field she faces is 50,000 strong and stretches before them. Infantry stands between rows of Chariots. Thousands of glistening reflections shimmer across the armies.

Taosret leans up and throws her arm toward the Nubian bowmen whose red bandoliers and Ostrich feathers contrast the enemy lines, "Amunemheb, they think you'll lose!" Amunemheb is a tall youth in leopard-skin and Flaxen, and rides a gold-trimmed chariot to her right. He is the proud and heralded son of the Viceroy of Kush and throws his arm at the droves of Nubian Bows behind him, "Kush stands with you!" A great howl and beating of shields arises to echo across the field. He leans toward her, "When this is done, when will Her Majesty visit Buhen!?" The horde of Nubian bows shake wildly in the air with energy and cheering.

She rides out to look down her line of 40,000. Several Generals, dotting along, have ridden out with her. There are many dark-iron Hittite three-man chariots speckled through the line next to chariots of bald Priests and pilots with Feathers of Ma'at and staffs. Sections of spearmen have flaxen shirts tied at their breasts and white leather phallus aprons. There's short spears, ax and sword. Hundreds of sleek dogs are held by handlers, and energetically watch her every motion. Callers are running up and back stoking spirits. The Generals are yelling about killing the traitors. The horses chafe and rear.

Setnakhte stands in his chariot, watching through his stern eyes. The din of yelling rolls across the field and his side starts calling back. The horses are bucking up with anxiety. He sees her Chariot pull around.

Setnakhte grimaces and jams his arm up; and the drone of jingling accoutrements is drowned by yelling and the thunder of rushing feet. The Infantry and Chariots of Waset charge forth into the field.

Taosret yanks her reins with a guttural, "Crush them!" She throws her arm forward. The chariots jump, the dogs race out and the Army of the Pharaoh pours forward. Behind them, row upon row of Archers advance to loose arrows and the insane braying of Shenub trumpets wash the field.

The sky fills with showers of shafts and white feathers.

Taosret and her five Chariots ride to stifle archers by punching holes in enemy lines. They leave away from the spreading Army behind. Arrows are falling. The five chariots gain to ride up protectively around her.

Their six chariots ride hard toward the wide enemy. Arrows zing past. Five enemy chariots appear in the field before them.

Setnakhte rides ahead of four and gallops straight for the Queen. Arrows start coming in.

Taosret is hard riding. Arrows come past in a blur from the Setnakhte group charging directly at them. The scene is pounding with hoof-beat. Taosret is shooting. Arrows are singing while she dodges and diverts incoming with the flick of her bow. She sees Setnakhte's glaring eyes as the thundering chariots pass.

Taosret's six chariots ride straight across the field as the Queen's Infantry confronts the Setnakhte chariots behind. They ride up through the line of Waset archers on the far side. Dogs are running with them.

Her five chariots vanguard before her, shooting arrows, one wields a Mace. Arrows whir past as she rapid fires hitting enemies to the side and back, a first, a second, a third, a fourth, she slaps an incoming off her bow, and shoots a fifth and sixth. They charge forward. The enemy lines break before them, as they grind over panicked and running archers. The dogs rip faces and scalps from the screaming warriors behind.

The Queen and her Guard carve up the Waset line as dust rises from the melee in the center of the field where her top General has driven his army into the brutal collision.

His mace vanquishes enemies and crushes skulls as the ear shattering roar around him drowns their screams. Spear-men are stomping over and around his chariot to take the fight forward. Spears, yelling and dust choke senses as blood splatters into the air.

Mace, spear and sword clash as men battle over the top of each other. Blood, dust and screams. Horses twist and fall. A warrior beats through people with an ax. The crush of warriors fall over each other in a churning cloud of dirt.

The field dissolves into a gigantic spiral of dust. The Taosret Archers charge forward from their line in a surging wave. Trumpeters draw swords and run screaming with them.

The huge dust cloud swirls in the wind above the grinding chaos. Dust is moving across trees. Confused birds fly aimlessly.

Taosret sees Setnakhte alone and gallops to him. White arrows arc and stab past her. She shoots, hitting his horse in the eye, which falls around to the ground. Setnakhte keeps

shooting while his remaining horse pulls the stalled chariot around against the dead animal.

She is shooting, placing arrows down onto him as he yanks his body and head side to side, dodging. His compatriots ride up, hooves thunder. She plants an arrow in one's throat; blocks an incoming, then another. Sounds of clicking wood echo as she shoots and blocks to the left and right. She slaps one off Setnakhte's helmet.

The air fills with white feathers and zinging sounds, clashing horses and hoof. Another of his compatriots falls while the Queen's Infantry runs up. The Waset Infantry is running in.

A chaos of shafts and spears, death-cries and dust as the full field of raging battle engulfs them. She shoots at changing targets, over and over and over. Showering feathers rain in. The Nubian is hit.

The whole scene blanks out in snowy white fluttering of falling arrows. Everything seems to slow.

Sarah stares at Ardeth's frowning, tear streaked face: "I know - how she died."

Chapter 10

The car is heard returning outside. Sarah goes to the door as Kharis enters. "I've been charging it on the way back. There was no texts or messages."

Kharis taps in Pearson's number.

Pearson is on the Mezzanine deck of the Luxor Museum dealing with the soggy, smelly career-killing mummy he has already decided his big mouth got him way too far into when his phone vibrates. He grabs it from his rear pocket, "Kharis! Wha-"

Kharis calls into the phone, "Dr Pearson! Did you find the Tomb?" Pause, "What?" Kharis' mouth drops open, "Did you find Paser?" Pause, "He must not be awakened. You must not wake him."

Ardeth simply walks to the center of the room and raises his hand with two fingers out.

On the Mezzanine, Paul suddenly looks forward. Pearson is in the background talking on the phone.

Paul's head is tilted slightly by an unseen force. Pearson and Kharis exchange talk and information while Paul walks past.

He arrives at the wall fire-locker, opens the glass and removes the ax.

Ardeth stands in the Rookery with his intense expression and outstretched fingers.

Pearson talks on the phone from the Mezzanine while Paul walks up from behind, holding the ax. With a twisted expression, Paul advances toward the sarcophagus, raising the ax.

Pearson sees him in the middle of his call. Hawass looks over his shoulder, "Oh, my God!"

Paul raises for a full swing onto the mummy. Pearson and Hawass grab Paul stopping his arms with the ax, which swings around awkwardly. Hawass, "Are you mad?!" The three of them are jockeying about when Paul starts coming to and relaxing the tension.

Paul, "Wh-hat?"

They are holding each other when a guttural sound comes from the mummy. All three heads turn with all six wide bobble-eyes to the wrapped Mummy making sounds. "Aw-w-h-h-h - "

Suddenly a metallic 'clank' echoes up from the front door. It's dawn and the guards are arriving.

Pearson starts pushing the confused, panicked group toward the back.

The Guards are re-locking the doors and starting into the building. They see the lights and open rear storage doors and head toward them.

All three run to the upper-level lavatory. The second guard hears something and stops, looking up behind him.

They freeze, shooshing each other; and retreat on tiptoes to the lav. Paul sees the wrap hanging from the lip of the sarcophagus and starts pointing, "Hold on!"

He sticks Pearson with the ax and runs in a high-knee tiptoe toward the sarcophagus but the guard is advancing up the ramp.

Pearson and Hawass are excitedly motioning him back. Paul can't make it to the wrap-flap and slips off his feet to turn, but regains and runs just out of sight from the advancing guard around the slope of the wall. They disappear into the lav.

The guard comes up into the center of the hall looking suspiciously around. The sarcophagus with its hanging flap is just to his left. The fire-locker door sits open on the wall.

Inside the lav, the door is cracked and the three of them are crushed over the top of each other trying to see. Pearson carefully sets the ax carefully against the tiles.

Through the door-crack they watch the guard walk over to the sarcophagus. The wrap hangs over the edge, three feet from the guard, who is looking back and forth.

Paul whispers, "What if he sees it?" The guard hears and swings around.

"Shh, shh," Hawass has his finger forcefully to his lips and his eyes bugged out at Paul.

They watch though the door-crack while the guard turns back around listening. He starts turning further, around toward the wrap.

Pearson whispers, "Oh no."

Suddenly, the wrap disappears into the sarcophagus just as the guard faces it. They look at each other, their mouths open in disbelief.

The Guard tilts his head questioning. He knows something isn't right.

Pearson is crouched on his toes, Hawass looks over his shoulder and Paul is stacked on top, all looking out when Paul's hand falls down across Hawass' neck and shoulder. Hawass winces, batting his hand away, whispering, "Watch it!"

Pearson's looking through the crack, "Shoosh!"
Hawass, "You shoosh!"

Paul whispers tensely, "Shh!" The guard turns fast around, looking toward the lav. Pearson's eyes open, "Oh oh." Paul breathlessly whispers, "Shh-"

They push to look out. The Guard tilts his head as he starts toward the lavatory. Suddenly the mummy starts frothing about making an almost inaudible 'thump'. The guard turns back; tilts his head and starts for the sarcophagus.

Pearson's phone goes off on loud vibration. He clicks it off. The guard stops and straightens. He turns his head slowly around, frowning. He definitely heard something now. He starts directly for the lav. Pearson's eyes pop; but the guard's mate calls up from below in Arabic and he runs down the ramp.

The timid group slowly advances from the bathroom. The morning light is pouring in. Paul slides up toward the mezzanine railing and peeks over. Pearson and Hawass, in trepidation, tip-toe to look over the sarcophagus lip.

Hawass and Pearson's face appear together over the edge of the Sarcophagus, looking in. Paul joins them.

The mummy is struggling inside the bindings. Pearson snaps open his pocket knife and cuts free the arms. Immediately a hand grabs Pearson by the neck almost yanking him off his feet. Pearson's hand 'whaps' the sarcophagus.

The mummy lurches forth, pushing Pearson aside, "Aw-w-h-h-h-!" It's reaching and crawling over the sarcophagus lip. It falls out and onto the floor. The guards are calling up from below.

The Mummy is on one knee and pulling at its face-covering, which breaks open.

Paul grimaces.

The mummy reels against the railing, ripping further at his face and spins around. Pearson and Hawass brace at Paser's horribly wrinkled face and blackened skin. He falls right for them and they jump out of the way in fright, "Wh-o-o-o-e!".

Paser reels toward the down-ramp, his arm slamming into the railing with an echoing 'BANG', and stalks down the ramp in awkward spasmodic gyrations. The guards run up. Hawass yells down, "It's only a movie!" Then in Arabic, "Movie disguise! Movie!" The guards both have open mouths.

Paul is running down the ramp behind Paser smiling stupidly, waving his cell-phone, "Yes, it's a movie!"

The mummy lurches into the Guards. Their faces cringe. Falling forward, he heads past them toward the doors.

Paser bangs through the front doors into shocked people and reels toward the street. People scream.

Pearson and Hawass chase after and a shocked Hawass calls over, "I know some Coptic!"

Stiff-legged, Paser shields his eyes against the blinding swatches of sun igniting buildings and the early-birds heading to work. Paser makes it across the walk and into traffic which is braking. Honking cars are snarling up and Hawass is running after trying his Coptic-mix for the ancient tongue.

Hawass (Coptic mix), "Lord Paser, you're-" Paser reels around to him and Hawass clams.

A car stops in a screech. The woman driving screams, her passenger laughs, "Oh-oh! Guy in a mummy suit!"

She is confused, looking. Hawass focuses. Paser is covering his eyes from the light.

Hawass (Coptic mix), "Lord Paser, This is the long time, future. Please-" He gestures to the building. Other cars are stopping. A truck honks. Paser holds his ears in pain and squints his eyes to see. Hawass implores his Coptic mix, "Lord Paser, Please-"

Paser looks around, comprehending the strange surroundings and the strangely dressed people. Hawass is facing him, gesturing. Hawass (Coptic mix), "Please- Please Sir."

Paser looks at Hawass and then starts back, Hawass following carefully with him. Paser throws his left arm around looking to his right. His arm stops into Dr Hawass' chest stopping them both. A huge plane drifts silently through buildings toward its landing, disappearing behind the Museum.

Hawass gestures with his hand (Coptic mix), "Please Sir."

In Ancient Egyptian, Paser speaks hoarsely, "Water-"

Hawass (Coptic mix), "This way, we have water." Looking

at him, nodding, "Water-"

Hawass gestures and Paser shakily follows. The guards and people stand in the Museum walk, looking as they approach. The far-off rumble of the landing jet echoes.

Chapter 11

Kharis looks shocked as he listens into the phone. He looks to the others, "Paser is revived."

Ardeth stands up, "Then NehDjet is awakened. I will protect you as best as I am able." Ardeth shows rising anger, "I will end this at its source!" He raises his arm and backhands the air-sheet, which lenses into a billow, knocking Sarah and Kharis out and breaking the windows.

He grabs a bag, stalks over and slaps the back of the Chamber. The door bangs open and Ardeth pulls Anankhkah out and into his arms. He heads out through the door which squeaks back and forth allowing a barely conscious Kharis, pulling himself around on the floor, to see him get into the car outside.

A carpet of white clouds reach across the world before them. Inside the plane, Kharis and Sarah have the window. Kharis clicks off the phone, "They're driving him up to Cairo. Ardeth said High Priest Bakenkhonsu trapped Paser in the Tanna. That's not what Paser says. He says he went into the Tanna voluntarily, that Ardeth has NehDjet hiding inside him and doesn't know it."

Sarah's mouth is open. "But we thought he took Anankhkah to protect her from NehDjet."

Kharis, "Yes that's the only possible reason. But if he doesn't know he has NehDjet inside him, he's really two different people."

Sarah's face stops, "Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde." Kharis, "What is that?"

Sarah, "An old story. The good Doctor Jekyll has the evil Mr Hyde hiding inside him and has no idea at all."

Kharis focuses, "One of them is lying. Either Paser is NehDjet or Ardeth is NehDjet."

Sarah, "Aren't magicians liars anyway?"

Kharis is thinking. "Ardeth has Anankhkah and he's made sure none of us can know where he is, but he said he's going to kill NehDjet 'at the source'. That means he's going to Nubia." Sarah, "And that would be Ardeth?" Kharis nods, "May-

be." She stitches her eyes, "Well, he could have left us some way to get back from Cornwall!"

Their plane drops down, bumping in the heat, onto the tarmac of the Cairo International Airport.

Soon, Pearson, Kharis and Sarah bundle bags heading toward the escalators. Kharis, "Ardeth says The Nubian Sorcerer has taken Paser. That he's evil, an ancient evil." Pearson replies casually, "He doesn't seem evil."

They are going down the escalator. Kharis calls to Pearson, "One of them is bad."

A showered and cleaned up Paser is watching television in Dr Hawass' living room while dinner is cooked.

Hawass (Coptic-mix), "What do you think?"

Paser rises and heads into the kitchen (Ancient Egyptian), "It's ghastly. Our culture defined the natural energies: The Lioness, the Hunter, the Slayer, the King. Your culture is confused, like this soup," pointing, "all mixed up."

There's a knock and entrance commotion as the party arrives from the airport. Paser takes a commanding position in the front room at the wall. Kharis walks slowly in. The others are hesitating behind him. Paser's strong expression displays a kindness in his eyes.

Paser, "Kharis--"

Kharis is glaring (Ancient Egyptian), "You violated me. --Destroyed my life."

Paser's clear expression is un-fazed (Ancient Egyptian), "I saved you." Pause, "The Nubian was after you--"

Kharis is objecting (Ancient Egyptian), "Ardeth was there that night. He brought the Tanna."

Paser (Ancient Egyptian), "NehDjet didn't have him yet. NehDjet only discovered him after he and I became close. That attracted the Nubian who used the Ka Magic on him."

Kharis objects (Ancient Egyptian), "Ardeth is a great man. He --"

Paser (Ancient Egyptian), "Yes. He is a great man. I loved him. But NehDjet used a special trick, Shadow Magic. NehDjet is hiding behind Bay's mind, where he can't be seen."

Kharis (Ancient Egyptian), "You mean the Amun 'Sight'?"

Paser (Ancient Egyptian), "Like someone hiding behind your back, wherever you look, you can't see them. No matter how you turn, you can't see them. They're hiding."

Hawass interrupts (Coptic-mix), "Uh-h You are speak too

fast -me, I - not understand."

He starts pointing toward the kitchen and speaking in English, "We cannot understand, we'll go in and eat." His arms are making gathering motions for the others to follow. Paser speaks to both Hawass and Kharis and motions with his hand, (Ancient Egyptian), "Good. And I have something to tell Kharis."

Kharis is looking alarmed as Paser motions him to sit. The others leave.

The dinner is eaten and everyone sits in the kitchen around a table of empty plates and bowls.

Pearson, "They've been in there almost an hour now." Hawass calls out (Coptic-mix), "You should eat. Soup!"

They both enter and Sarah looks up to Kharis. He has a serious expression and there seems to be a harmony between them. Paul, at the stove, motions a bowl toward Paser who acknowledges and heads over.

Sarah, "What did you talk about?" Kharis has a far-off look, "He told me about my mother, and my family. I never knew my mother."

He heads over for food. Sarah looks to Pearson who just purses his lip slightly in acceptance.

After food has gone down, Kharis is talking, "Ardeth, not NehDjet, is trying to protect Anankhkah." Pearson, "From NehDjet." Kharis, "Yes, but you see, NehDjet's not after her; and as long as Ardeth has her, NehDjet has a bargaining chip."

Paul, "This is nuts!! Is Ardeth NehDjet or not?"

Kharis looks at him, "They are two different men in Ardeth's body." Shaking his head, "And he does not know." Paul squishes up his face.

Paser and Kharis start rattling Ancient Egyptian from which Kharis then translates, "The Lord Paser agrees with me, that Ardeth is going to try to destroy NehDjet's mummy in his Tomb in Nubia."

Paul exaggerates, "'The Lord Paser'?" Kharis points with his finger, "That guy."

Pearson, "What happens if he gets there?" Kharis, "To the Nubian Tomb? NehDjet will kill him. Move on to someone more agreeable." Paul, "Like Anankhkah-?" Kharis glances over to him.

Sarah, "Why is this NehDjet, the way he is?"

More Ancient Egyptian with Paser. Kharis tries to tell his story, "He says, no one knows when all this started, how the great foes, Sa-Panehse and Sa-NehDjet first became en-

twined but it was after NehDjet came to the evil. NehDjet was a slave in the Nubian gold mines and dark magic, is his revenge. The mines were hell on Earth..."

He describes the vivid horror: Blazing fires burn the craggy cliffs and harrowing smoke rages in black skies. Kharis, "with starving slaves being worked and beaten to death."

Glistening bodies brake huge fiery chunks that roll down into sparking brimstone and explode onto the ground. Drivers crack whips. Black bodies are smashing rock with spear-like pestles. Starving children and women labor large baskets of smoking rocks. Howling screams echo.

A skinny woman stumbles under the weight of grainy ore and is beaten bloody on the ground.

Kharis, "It was those smelting pits that forged his unending evil and hatred." Paser breaks in with more Ancient Egyptian.

Kharis continues, "Yes, then Sa-Panehse appeared to oppose him. They have chased each other since the beginning of time."

Paul, "Where's Sa-Pa-nehse when you need him?"

Kharis talks with Paser, then back, "He's disappeared hundreds of years before the time of Ramesses. No Ka-magic I guess." More exchange in Egyptian, then Kharis underlines, "Paser said there is no one to oppose NehDjet. No one strong enough."

Everyone is silent.

Finally, Pearson talks to their host, "Dr Hawass, do you have extensive maps of Nubia?" Hawass is alarmed, "Oh-h, what do you expect to do?"

Pearson, "Well, Save Ardeth, save Anankhkah. Maybe kill NehDjet. Find the Nubian Tomb-" looks at Kharis, "What else?"

Paul is smiling. Kharis starts smiling, "That sounds right."

Paul is smiling, then, "Hey, wait a minute. Are you kidding?!"

Chapter 12

Everyone is sound asleep and the guest room is dark. The phone vibrates on the night-stand. Kharis looks, the light is blinking. He grabs it, "Hel-lo-"

He hears Ardeth's voice in the Ancient tongue, "Where are you?" Kharis is pulling himself up. Sarah is stirred. Kharis, in Ancient Egyptian, "Where are you?"

Ardeth replies (Ancient Egyptian), "I am with Anankhkah." A revived but badly macerated and blotchy Anankhkah is reclined in the background. She tries to focus through watery eyes. Her breathing is starkly labored.

Within Anankhkah's hallucinatory comprehension, the air and walls are fuzzy and vibrating. She sees Ardeth is sitting at a room-desk, his voice is echoing. Ardeth (Ancient Egyptian), "She is not well-enough to speak."

Kharis (Ancient Egyptian), "Tell her I am here." Sarah sits up with him.

Anankhkah watches the lighted device Ardeth is talking over. Ardeth (Ancient Egyptian), "You must not listen to Paser, he is NehDjet."

Kharis switches to English, "He says you are NehDjet."

Ardeth, "He is a peerless liar. Lying is the oldest magic and he's its oldest master. But do not let him think you are unconvinced. He could put an end to you in an instant." Deeper voice, "And those around you."

Kharis, "You're heading to Nubia to destroy NehDjet's body." Ardeth, "Yes. And he will want to go. You must keep him there at all costs. I will destroy NehDjet and in that moment, you will see the real Paser return. I will meet you after."

Anankhkah watches shakily. She can't raise her head. Her watery eyes glimmer and run as she sees Ardeth speak. Her throat and lungs are dried out leather. She tries to pull air in.

Kharis, "They believe it is you who are in danger." He hears Ardeth's voice, "You keep him in Cairo. And I will destroy NehDjet."

Kharis, "Come here. Face Paser."

The phone goes off. Kharis looks at it, Sarah has swung around, sitting next to him. They look at each other and get up.

Kharis knocks gently on Pearson's bedroom door. Pearson opens while tying his robe. They talk in low tones. Kharis, "Ardeth just called." Pearson, "Wha-" Kharis, "Anankhkah is revived. She's ill."

Pearson stops, and blinks, "Where are they?" Kharis, "Unlisted from UK." Sarah's tone is hushed, "If she survives, she'll need rehabilitation. She won't be able to travel." Kharis looks at her.

Pearson, "That could give us a little time, perhaps."

Paul comes to the door and Hawass appears from down the hall. Paser is coming from the living room.

Hawass walks up, "What's this?" Pearson, "Anankhkah is awake and not doing well." Hawass purses his lips in thought. Kharis starts talking in Ancient Egyptian with Paser.

Anankhkah's eyes open to look through slits. Ardeth sleeps deeply.

Her ears are ringing and the room is trembling when a fluttering shadow suddenly expands and leaves from behind Ardeth's head and back.

Her watery eyes open a little wider. She blinks.

In her ringing hallucinatory comprehension, she's sees Ardeth's dark silhouette rise and walk toward her. His figure sways in the swaying room. His steps echo, the swaying curtains echo. He reaches down and removes her Blue Flute. Its tinkling chain echoes as he heads back. She blinks. Her dried out breathing echoes.

Chapter 13

Breakfast and coffee are serving in the bright, sunny kitchen.

A freshly showered Paser enters from the bathroom, "Good morning everyone!" Forks drop, the table bangs. Paul jumps back, "Whoa!"

Kharis is glaring at Paser.

Paser is smiling, "You can learn a language quickly in the Night Magic. You just enter their dreams and you can become them," looks at Paul, "think with their thoughts -" smiles, "-and talk with their talk!"

Paul booms, "I don't like that!" Paser just bows his head with his easy smile and sits.

Paul, "Don't do that to me. That gives me the creeps!" Pearson is marveling, "That's just fantastic."

Everyone is unsettled but hesitantly starts back to eat. Paser is beaming.

Anankhkah wakes in the Hotel and is alone. She sees the phone laying on the table. She pulls herself out of the covers and along the bed. Then over to the chair.

It lays there. She cautiously pushes at it. She picks it up, shakes it a little and slaps the surface. Then puts it down like bad fruit.

The cell-phone in the Hawass guest room starts vibrating

on the bed-stand. Kharis is shaving. Kharis bends his back from the bathroom mirror to look out. The light is blinking, then goes off.

Kharis is wiping his face as he walks back to the bed-stand and picks up the cell.

Ardeth's phone sits on the hotel table and starts its little hum. Anankhkah stares at it, hesitating. Then picks it up. She taps at it but nothing seems to happen. Suddenly Kharis' voice comes over the speaker (Ancient Egyptian), "Ardeth, Did you call?" There's a silence. Then: Kharis in Ancient Egyptian, "Anankhkah- Anankhkah? - Push your finger on the green button. Look at the buttons, in your hand, the green button!"

Suddenly it connects.

Anankhkah is very hoarse, "Kharis? Khari -" Anankhkah's hand comes to her mouth and tears roll down her cheek.

Streaking pain cuts across Kharis' eyes and he breaks down, (Ancient Egyptian), "Anankhkah, Anankhkah I am here. I am alive."

Anankhkah squeezes her hand over her chest and hugs herself. In hoarse Egyptian, "I am alive. I'm alive."

Tears roll again, swelling the glistening warm river on her cheek. She starts to wipe at it but her skin-condition is poor and she can't touch herself.

Anankhkah is shaking (hoarse Egyptian), "Where are you?" She's coughing to talk. Kharis is yelling in Ancient Egyptian, "Near Giza. You are in a different country. I was there a day ago. Ardeth will take care of you. Is he there?"

Ardeth is entering.

Anankhkah (hoarse Egyptian), "Can you come? Can you-"

Ardeth reaches with his open hand. Anankhkah looks at him and at the device, and hands it to him.

Kharis pleads into the phone, "Anankhkah!"

Ardeth has the phone, "Kharis? (pause) Yes. Paser will destroy you both. I will protect you, and Anankhkah. But I must dispose this phone, until things are settled."

He looks down to Anankhkah, and hands the phone back.

Kharis hears her take the phone, "Anankhkah-." Her voice fills his ear. ~Her voice~ He listens and his eyes tear. Sarah is entering behind him.

Kharis talks into the phone (Ancient Egyptian), "Ardeth will care for you for right now. Try to remember these letters: U - C - L. You need to say them to yourself. If we get separated, it is a school where I may be found. U-C-L. You will get better, you will become healthy again. I will be a few days before I can see you. I will come."

Anankhkah is shaking with glassy eyes as she puts the

phone away from her ear.

Chapter 14

Everyone has gathered in Dr Hawass' the kitchen to talk. Kharis, "He said he was destroying his phone."

Paul, "Give me the number, in fact give your phone. I have a gamer-friend in computer-science." Kharis looks questioning as he hands Paul his phone. Paul, "A nerd. More of a Geek."

Paul has his own phone out and taps a number. He listens, then, "Andrew! I need your help. We need your help."

Andrew stares through black-framed glasses in the noisy college computer lab. He has pimples and dark curly hair, "Who's 'we'? (pause) Your Dr Pearson? (pause) In Egypt!"

Paul's ear is pressed to his cell, "That's right and he probably destroyed the phone. (pause) We need you to get his account, track the towers transferring signal from our phone, during these Egypt calls, and try to track this guy. What hotel he's in. Where he went."

Andrew, "That's nuts. That's impossible." Eyes look up, "Well, almost impossible."

Paul, "We'll pay you."

Andrew's face lights up, "Pay!" Face squiggles, "What happens if we can't find this guy?" He hears Paul's voice, "The world will end." Andrew, "Oh! Since you put it that way, how much pay?"

There's a commotion at the front door. Paul, "Gotta go. Andy, this an emergency, life and death. Stop everything. Find that guy."

Dr Hawass and Pearson enter with rolled up maps under their arms. They bang around spreading them out on the kitchen table.

Hawass rolls out the largest vellum. "The Second Cataract." Paser is joining them and points down, "Oh, these are good. It's different now."

Hawass damps his brow, "The Wadis are ancient. They-" Paser, "Yes, but a little different." He pushes his finger over the topography, dragging his nail slowly along the river and talks under his breath, "The Nine Bows."

Paul bends his head to look up into Paser's face, "What are the 'Nine Bows'?"

Paser is looking down, finger on map, "Ta Nehese - Nubia, the tribes of Nubia." Glances over, "Tabo is a Bow of Nubia. You see? Tabo-ubu is woman of that tribe. Archers of

the Nile."

Paul stands back, "Oh- Tribes." Paser, "Tribes or men. It's the same."

Paser concentrates on the drawing, "There was much mining along here." Pearson is intent on each word. Paser is drawing his finger across the map, "Much is gone now."

Ardeth sits in the London Library looking at Google Earth. Egypt is zoomed. The Second Cataract is zoomed. The image of the Nile is dragged. The image of an ancient Wadi is rotated. The tangent is toggled and the starkly imposing Black Mountain swings into 3 dimensional view.

Pearson leans on his arms over the map in the kitchen. Paser is seated nearby. Sarah, "I was thinking, NehDjet could be a play on words. You know, 'sounds like'. The Ne-he-se are Nubians."

Pearson is staring at the map, "Ardeth talked about the Time Magic," looks up, "that is made of Djet, eternity and Neheh, the passing of events."

Paser, staring forward, "Events unfolding."

Sarah, "Neh - Djet ? It could also mean 'black snake' or perhaps Nubian Snake. Sa-NehDjet, the Man of the Nubian Snake?"

Paser's eyes are closed in contemplation. He offers, "There is a Khpesh, a twist, just above Semna."

Pearson is tracing the Nile map with his finger, "The dog-leg here? Above the ancient forts at Semna, where the Wadi dumps out."

Pearson is pointing on map; Paul is looking with him and points, "That Wadi looks like a snake!"

Paser, "Wrapping around the Black Mountain." He opens his eyes, "He's there."

Hawass objects, "How could you be so sure!?"

Paser, "The Black Snake above the Khpesh. The 'Sword of the Nile'. He looks down on Semna." He pushes back from the table and stares outward, "I don't want to think it, that Bay might know." Sarah blinks. He gently smiles, "It is the way it always was with us, we could have the same thought at the same time. We couldn't dare think of placing our powers against each other, so horrid the thought. We feared to even think it, might make it real."

In his London hotel, Ardeth's eyes suddenly open. He is staring through shining steely marbles.

Pearson is in the kitchen, "We'll have to go. This is on UCL budget?" Hawass frowns, "It's not on my budget!"

Paul's phone chimes and he clicks on. Andrew, in black-rimmed glasses is on the other end, "I found the Hotel but they checked out. I talked to the maid. She thought a man was caring for his sick daughter."

Paul, "Where did they go?"

Andrew, "I don't know. Do you want me to put them on the Terror-Watch List?"

Kharis, Sarah and Paul sit in the kitchen with Paser who asks, "What were his words exactly?"

Sarah, "He said NehDjet could do the Lightning Magic and the Cloud Magic. What are those?"

Paser looks with a shrug, "Iron falls from the Sky and lives in the earth. Iron & Clouds bring Earth & Sky together. Lightning forms from this."

Paul does a sour-face, "Excuse me?"

Paser turns toward Paul, "There is iron below us in the earth. Every point below our feet creates lightning magic as it moves. A great magician can call to it and it will answer."

Kharis, "How could anyone have such power?" Paser glances, "We have no power. It has power. We simply welcome it. Offer a place for it. Like welcoming guests. It's something like the Bird Magic, but bigger."

Paul starts nodding, "Oh. Yeah, I see. Bigger than Bird Magic." He looks at Pearson, "What's with the birds?" Paser smiles to him, "The birds taught us to sing. You've never heard Egyptian, it's the song of birds. The song of the Nile." Paul is blank-faced. Paser, "Your Ba-soul is a bird waiting to fly. You can talk with Birds and fly with them. If they'll let you." Paul's brows go taut and Paser leans in, "You can be a 'bird on the wall'," smiles. Paul, "Oh no. I don't want to think about that!"

Paser turns to Sarah, "Bay is sending two messages. He demands I be kept away from the Nubian's Tomb, but at the same time, lets us know he will be there. NehDjet knows I am sworn to kill him and expects me to come."

Paul, "I don't understand." Paser, "Bay tells us he is going to kill NehDjet, but of course, he will not and NehDjet knows I know this. This is NehDjet's plan to ensnare me. To entice me to the Tomb, where he can kill me."

Paul is intensely thinking when his phone chimes. He clicks on, "Hello-" Andrew, "You've been hacked, buddy. Dr

Pearson's files have been gone through."

Paul, "By who?" Andrew, "Some American group, not the government."

Paul signals the group to pay attention while he talks, "Corporate? Just a moment-" looks at Pearson, "Your files were hacked."

Pearson sticks his hand out, motions for phone.

Pearson, "Andrew, this is Dr Pearson." Andrew, "Hello Dr Pearson. Your record-log was sniped. They have information on your 'Hidden Tomb' and 'Tanna'. They know you're in Egypt."

Pearson, "Can you hack back? I mean can you find out who they are and what they are doing?"

Andrew is thinking, "W(ell), I can try."

The sun streams in and the engines of the Corporate Jet are whining. GOON #1's ear is no longer bandaged but still blooms the smarting fresh cauliflower, as he straps in for take-off. GOON #2 wears a smart black arm-sling to match his suit.

GOON #2, "Here we go." GOON #1, "I only hope we run into that kid again."

Hawass and Kharis are banging around in the kitchen while the others talk at the table. Paser has cut a piece of ivory into a Boomerang-shaped wand. Sarah is watching intently.

Paser, "I'll need the milk from a black cow." He is whittling secret spells across the back of the boomerang, "and the blood of a black dog." Sarah, "The blood of a black dog!"

Paser smiles. Then looks at her, "My Pectoral, was left with Kharis in the Sanctuary of Isis."

Even though she has no way of knowing it was the Golden Pectoral in the palm of an 1860s Gebtu grave-robber, she somehow knows exactly which one. "I think it's in the Louvre."

Paser looks questioning. Sarah, "A museum. There's a Pectoral there, with your name. It's famous. You're famous."

Paser, "The Blue Scarab?" Sarah doesn't know.

Paser, "It is a Talisman that must be present to open the Hidden Tomb of the Amun. The engraving is a code that weaves the Meditations into the call that retrieves the Spirits of the Afterlife. It's the highest magic."

Pearson, "Kharis knows those meditations, I heard it!" Kharis calls from the kitchen, "I heard you over there."

Paser continues, "It's the secret spell that allows an Egyptian Pharaoh, not the Heretic, to untwine the misdirection protecting the Tomb. It's a key, we will need it."

Pearson, "But it's in the Louvre!"

Paser, Hawass and Kharis are returning in the evening through the front door with groceries. Paul and Sarah are still bivouacked in the kitchen. She talks over to Paser, "You went to the Nile, how was it?"

Paser, "It is life." Sarah, "It must look so different."

Paser sets a bag down and walks to the table, "Old Egypt was simple, the cities of life on the east bank, the cities of the dead on the west. Now it is all mixed up." he sits.

Paul's phone chimes and he clicks on, "Hell-" listening, "Kharis already took care them. Security!" Paul starts gyrating his hand at Kharis.

Andrew, "This is a subsidiary of the biggest genetics corporation in the world! That security company has Ex-Military, this is no joke!"

Paul, "Wait, wait," looks at Kharis, "Sounds like the same thugs-." Kharis motions for the phone which Paul hands over. "Hello, Andrew - yes," pausing, "yes, I've met them. How did you know they are coming?"

Andrew, "They are following an 'A. Amunetta and his daughter Annie' to the Sudan. Is this Annie Amun, your Annie Amun?"

Kharis calls a pow-wow. Everyone assembles.

"They're already ahead of us. Ardeth's in Egypt."

Pearson, "I thought they were on a no-fly list!"

Kharis, "The Corporate people found they changed their names and they are following them in." Pearson, "The same corporation?"

Hawass is alarmed, "We will have to leave immediately!"

Chapter 15

The rolling, still desert of the early dawn passes slowly below.

A jarring 'bang' jolts their packed Range-Rover as it bumps over the rutty road at first-light. Everyone is jerked around and yelling to be heard.

Kharis is yelling, "Ardeth said he wants to build a

Golden Tomb that would harness the Amun and the Priests of the Amaunet into a kind of super mind of the Night Magic. Enter everyone's dreams in one night." The car slams to the left. "Bring the Ancient Gods back."

Paser is yelling back, "That's ridiculous. That's NehDjet talk. I want to free the Priests. Open the Tomb and free their Spirits, but it cannot be done until NehDjet is defeated."

Sarah yells, "Ardeth said NehDjet could take over the minds of world leaders." The car hits a bump.

Paser, yelling back, "NehDjet is after the Hidden Tomb. That's what this is all about. Whatever evil plan he has, the Amun Priests will stop him. They have stopped him. The Priests of the Hidden Tomb have kept us safe and they must remain in their Tomb until we have vanquished NehDjet."

Paul yells over, "So he wants to destroy the Priests, in order to start his evil campaign?"

Paser yells, "Yes. And if we fail to stop him, he will. He'll bring an endless age of darkness upon the world."

The van hits a huge bump.

Hawass barks out, "Oh-h! How'd I get myself into this!?"

The Rover screeches around to a stop. Dust swirls.

Paser is looking up. "The Black Mountain, the Mountain of the Snake."

Angry black teeth jut from the cliff-face below the long, gnarly ridge standing starkly in the morning light. Hawass, "We'll go around through the Wadi to the other side."

The Rover puts it in drive and heads forward, swinging through the turning sand around the mountain. Sarah looks out at the ominous black wall twisting straight up above them on the right.

They come around and drive into the waist of the Mountain on other side. Another car comes into view. Hawass, "Someone is here."

Paser, "It's Bay. I can feel him."

They roll up and park. The doors open and everyone gets out. There's an eerie quiet. The smooth black undulations of the mountain-side loom above.

Kharis goes over and looks into the other vehicle. Then looks with the others, at the waiting climb, "Lets go." They all just start marching up.

As they scale the side of the mountain, their footsteps echo against the black rock. Paser, "Tabo-ubu is a master of the Ka and spirit magic. She steals the Spirits of others, that's what she does."

Sarah, "If we're after her son, no woman's going to go for that." Hawass is breathing heavy, "And Egyptian women are partial to their sons."

Paser, "This is no normal woman. There'll be no greater fury." Sarah, "We're here to save Ardeth." She looks over to Paser, walking in steady strides.

Paser, "Bay has NehDjet hiding in his Blind-Spot. I am here, to destroy NehDjet."

Sarah's breathing is picking up, "If NehDjet dies, will Ardeth die?" She looks again. Paser's pace is unwavering.

Kharis, "I am here, to set things right."

Everyone is breathing heavily. Pearson looks up the mountain. A family of Jackals stare down from above. They leave off before he has a chance to say anything.

Anankhkah walks with Ardeth. They are in a deep labyrinthine passage in the interior of the Mountain. They come to a square doorway. The interior is lit by torch. Anankhkah hesitates (Ancient Egyptian), "It is the place of NehDjet."

Ardeth (Ancient Egyptian), "It's an empty room. NehDjet possesses Paser, and he will be here soon," Deep voice in English, "and I will kill Paser where he stands."

The two enter the Burial Chamber. Flickering torchlight shines in her face as she turns to look inside.

Kharis, Sarah and Paser arrive at the summit, followed by Dr Hawass. The rock is smooth and dark. The crook of the Nile forks along below them, still lying in the purple shadow of the great mountain. The first rays of the sun warm their backs. Paul and Pearson walk to look over.

Paul, "No way over here." Pearson, "Not here."

They both start to the right, looking down. Paser takes a breath and simply walks along past them. "Here."

Everyone gathers around looking. Paul, "For a goat maybe." Paser, "It is here." Paser starts down. Everyone follows.

The path is simply stepping on rounded black rocks and pinnacles. Paul is hopping from one footing to another, "Worse than goats."

There's a slide down and a climb up. Only then do they see a black opening in the rock-face above. The group climbs up to gather at the small entrance.

Hawass, breathing hard, "You'd never see this."

He is looking down in, "You have to be here. Right here, to see it."

They squeeze through the skinny opening and quickly find themselves descending a steep escarpment. Their stumbles echo in the caverns. Flickering light from distant torches illuminates their features. Five torches glimmer from a far wall.

At the bottom, their dark outlines stand before a large cavern. Several staircases lead up and down. A main stair rises before them to an upper level that now hides the torches burning above.

They look up and start forward.

As they ascend the staircase, more and more of the far wall comes into view. The burning wall-torches come into view over the stair-head and finally a tall dark-green Wadjet-Bast Solar-disk Throne where a woman in green is seated. The torches behind shroud her in darkness but the slapping flames constantly chase shadows, out from her skin.

They walk onto the platform. Crocodiles hiss at her side on a skin-draped Dais. Her throne is sparkling green stone with an Alabaster seat and ebony arms on Alabaster Cat pilasters. Her Yellow eyes shine.

Hawass sees a bow and quiver looping over the back, and notices the Lion-head clasp on its sling. An Alabaster palette of many small cups holding fragrant oils sits at her hand.

Pearson's eyes walk the wall. Shields and spears lean under the torches where a large carriage of bows and arrows gather dust. He sees Egyptian Bast carvings and statues from the Greek period. There are few Roman weapons. A large collection of belts, from differing peoples are slung over a rail.

Tabo-ubu wears a transparent, iridescent green blouse with tied-over green scarf of yellow, red and black piping on her waist. Her hair glistens, her eyes glisten.

A gentle smile opens across her clear expression. Sarah's mouth drops slightly to whisper, "She's rather well turned out-" Paser whispers back, "She will allow us to pass."

Tabo-Ubu booms, "I am not your Nubian Cat."

Paser, "You're the daughter of a Priest of Bast."

Tabo-ubu smiles. "No, Priest, I am Ba'ast." Her head turns into a black-leopard with pinned ears. "K-hs-hs-hs-hs-s-s-s" returning human, "Goddess of the East."

Paser's face tightens.

The SUV of the Goons parks next to the other cars. Goon #1 and Goon #2 get out in the brisk morning sun. Two others get out and start unloading gear. Goon #1 walks forward,

looking up, "Now, we're gettin' somewhere."

Another Goon sets a bag down, "We're going up there?"
Goon #1, "That's right twinkle toes."

Tabo-ubu watches Paser leave down the side staircase. Sarah follows. She looks at Pearson who stands looking at her.

She is beautiful, soft-featured, in the colorful blush of youth. Her luminescent eyes are as golden river-stones. Green sparkles stab glimmering light from her hair. Like long colorful blades.

Pearson is seduced and fills with empathy. Hawass slaps him up the back of his head, snapping him out of it. Tabo-ubu looks at Hawass with dreamy wonder. Hawass, "I'm too old for that!"

They start after Paser and Sarah. Paul is transfixed and Hawass leans back and yanks him by his sleeve.

Paul, "Oh. Coming!"

Paul looks back. The crocs hiss as he follows away; her yellow eyes watching intently. He sees hers and the crocs' glimmering golden eyes glowing brighter as he descends.

Tabo-Ubu makes a deep leopard purr as they disappear down the stair. Her eyes glance up across the cavern roof.

The Goons arrive at the rolling black top of the mountain. They have changed into outdoor gear with hiking boots, mil-spec strapping and backpacks. Two carry light automatic weapons.

They start looking over for an entrance. One calls out, "Down here!"

Anankhkah's face fills with rippling color that reflects in her eyes. Ardeth is dumping Tanna leaves from his pouch into an Offering Basin.

Paser and group are heading through stone passageways. They come to a trans-section of several corridors leading in different directions. There's a ramp leading up. Paser, "This way."

The Goons are sliding down and arriving at bottom of the entrance escarpment. They start forward and soon arrive before the ascending and descending staircases. Goon #1 and Goon #2 double-stride up, and walk onto the landing. The other two ascend more cautiously and hang back.

Goon #2 stops as Tabo-Ubu walks in. She the sexist creature he has ever seen. Sleek, black, sensual, sleazy, sultry, her movements are sexual, her attitude is sexual, with topaz

eyes and sensuous lips. His mouth drops open, his eyes widen as he beholds her.

Goon #1 looks over. Tabo-ubu is sweet and virtuous, vulnerable, winsome and kind.

Goon #2 watches every part of her strong, shining body. The slope of her back, her sides, her thighs. Her mouth. His eyes follow her, he feels her heat. Goon #2, "You are fine."

Goon #1 steps between them, "Hey! Don't get out of line."

Goon #2 pulls his head back. Tabo-ubu is a sexy, interested female being assaulted by Goon #1.

Goon #1 looks. Tabo-Ubu is a frightened girl being harassed by Goon #2.

Goon #2 looks into Tabo-Ubu's glimmering, beckoning eyes. His heart races.

Goon #1 looks at Goon #2 and then back at her and sees Tabo-Ubu's perfectly innocent wonder, that his partner is taking advantage of.

She walks them to the stair and gestures down. Faint voices are echoing from below. The Goons descend. The other two, with their automatic rifles, run over and descend.

Tabo-Ubu makes a deep leopard purr.

The Goons are soon sneaking through dark passageways, listening to the voices echoing ahead of them.

Kharis and the group arrive at the door, and enter the burial chamber. Kharis and Anankhkah's eyes meet. They are transfixed while the others file in past them.

Anankhkah smiles gently (Ancient Egyptian), "It fills my heart to see you."

Kharis answers (Ancient Egyptian), "It fills my heart to see you." Nothing else exists but this moment of grace.

Paser comes to the door and stands face to face with Ardeth across the room. The two stare as the others look around. The carved Sarcophagus sits open with a dark shroud tied carefully over the mummy within. The walls have paleolithic cave art and ancient skulls sit along the far wall.

Many colorful chests sit on the opposite wall, stacked behind weapons and offerings racks.

The Goons run up and nearly stop as they enter. They are open-mouthed. Goon #2's eyes glimmer with reflecting color as he looks around. He walks slowly in past the strongly standing Paser.

There are troughs of huge, baseball-sized colored gemstones. Gold is stacked in bins. Slabs of precious woods, African Masks and rocks line the wall. Elephant tusks, tied

in stacks sit behind piled animal skins, spears and shields, bows and arrows. Colorful Kerma bowls with sparkling chunks of precious resin push into disintegrated baskets of Amulets and Obsidian tools of extreme antiquity.

The Goons stare in stupefied wonder. Color reflecting on their faces.

They venture further, all four passing around the intensely focused Paser. Low corridors come into view on the right. A Goon squats to look, "Whoa-ah". His mouth falls open and he instinctively rushes along through.

He is ducking low and running up an old mining tube along four and five tiers of dilapidated storage racks lining one side. His large lantern bounces the light chaotically over beds filled with huge stones of dazzling color.

Goon #2 stoops to look and sees the moving silhouette of his comrade against the black ribbons of racking. He yells, "What do you see?" He puts his hand on the wall, looking up the shaft. The racks disappear as the man's light ignites a large room beyond.

Paser begins moving slowly to his left across the chamber. Ardeth's glaring eyes follow.

The exploring Goon emerges from the tube into the large black stillness of a high cavern. His torch swings garish shadows across jagged, layered shapes mounding above him. His mouth drops open as he looks up.

Troughs of gemstones rise above in row upon row of collapsed shelving that had fallen into themselves centuries before. The vast spectacle fills to the roof. Staggering on his feet, his back falls against the entrance and he gasps through his slack mouth, "King Solomon's Mines..." Goon #2's voice echoes from the tunnel, "What?"

The Goon's torch illuminates more passageways, extending further from sight. Raw shafts tunnel away in all directions.

He wanders back, passing the racks in a daze. Re-entering the chamber, he meets the questioning faces, "There's rooms of it."

The moving green, red and black form of Tabo-ubu strides in, her sweeping yellow eyes command all attentions. She stations herself before the Sarcophagus and smiles wickedly.

Paser steps up, "We are here to destroy the Nubian Sorcerer." The Goons are wild-eyed and look from him to her.

Tabo-ubu, "You'll destroy no one."

She looks at Ardeth, pointing at Paser. Then slowly brings her large eyes to Paser and smiles, growling harshly, "Destroy him!"

Ardeth strides forth, pulling out a large Egyptian long-knife, but suddenly dives for the Sarcophagus. Tabo-ubu

smears to the side, throwing her claw up to Ardeth's throat. Tabo-ubu's yellow eyes light his face, "K-h-h-h-h-sss"

Ardeth looks confused and steps back. Tabo-ubu glares intensely when Paser pulls an Egyptian Ax off a weapons rack and runs at the Sarcophagus in full swing.

Tabo-ubu smears over, seemingly in two places at once. Her Panther-Claw lenses the air as she rakes down Paser's chest. The Goons are shocked; grasping their guns.

Paser drops to a knee and Ardeth's back suddenly arches up deeply. His body shakes violently. A huge fluttering shadow rises from Ardeth's back, and throws his body to the floor.

The fluttering shadow churns in the air, rippling the light throughout the cavern and floods over to engulf the dark mummy, disappearing inside like smoke. The shroud blows off in a cloud of dust.

Paser grabs his chest as blood spurts down across his front, throwing a hand to the ground to keep from falling.

Tabo-ubu is hissing with her claws up-turned in ready defense before the Sarcophagus.

The Mummy's twisted, stiff flesh starts crawling. The face looks like rung-out moldy towels. It's back arches. The hands grab the Sarcophagus. It yanks itself violently. An aching, twisting sound is heard.

It puffs up and rises straight in the air from the coffin. The eyes and mouth are twisting and the flesh is filling out in sections. The Goons are shocked and grimacing.

NehDjet takes a long, deep breath. His body fills out to complete, leathery masculine health. Nehdjet looks around and smiles broadly.

Tabo-ubu is crouched low with hands out ready to claw anyone who moves.

Ardeth is crumpled down. His expression changes. He looks up to the wall, "I am purified!"

NehDjet laughs loud, and disparagingly. Its booming echo returns from down the many shafts.

Ardeth turns toward Kharis, grinning broadly. Kharis looks back shocked. Ardeth, "Si-Osire means the Son of Osiris, the one who is reborn." His voice deepens, "And I am reborn."

Paser's mouth drops open. Tears well up as he takes in a breath. His eyes fill with awe, "Sa-Panehse!"

NehDjet walks into the center of the chamber, laughing, "All along, I've hidden inside you. You, the Great Panehse! I have made of you, a fool and shall kill your wards" gesturing to the group, "while you watch."

His outstretched hand throws instantly forward and a

single wall of lensing hits the Goons with a shrill ring. Their rifle-barrels fall in crystallized dust from the gunstocks in their hands. The Goons' mouths fall open. One freaks and bolts for his life, skidding off his feet as he runs from the door.

Panehse, "But I'm afraid," grinning, "it is I, who have entertained you. You've been all taken up. And now you are delivered, here in the flesh."

NehDjet's glee leaves his face.

Panehse, "And I have another surprise."

Paser's awe-filled expression opens wide. NehDjet fills with alarm as Panehse gestures to Anankhkah, "I brought the Princess, from the Six Caverns, for a reason."

NehDjet looks down to her.

Panehse, "The protection of Sekhmet, Guardian of the West, can only be brought for the true Pharaoh." Motions to Kharis, "I give you, Kharis, brother of Ramesses, son of Tuya and Paser," loudly vibrating voice, "the True Pharaoh of Egypt."

A deep rumbling cracks the floor, the Cavern shutters, dust and rocks fall. Everyone's eyes find the Majestic countenance of Kharis standing strongly. An echo resolves back through the caverns.

NehDjet's face fills with shock.

The frightened, petite little Anankhkah transforms into the huge, ferocious Red-Lion Goddess Sekhmet, her eyes are Blazing Suns which light the cave.

Giant fangs jump from her Red-Lion grimace and deep growl, "GR-R-R-A-W-W"

With rippling forearms and powerful claws, she tears into NehDjet, to which Tabo-ubu transforms into the Black Panther Ba'ast and attacks Red-Lion Sekhmet, "R-R-R-A-A-W-H-R," flashing teeth and claws pulse air. They pull back, turning slowly, their coats quivering. Red-Lion has Fiery Red-Sun Eyes that move with tracers, Black-Panther's eyes are glimmering Topaz-Gold.

Panther-morphing Tabo-ubu, "So sister-r-r "

The eyes of Red-Lioness become Fiery Blazing Suns. They go at it. "GR-R-R-A-W-W-AH-AH-AH-AH" Ripping each other against the walls and pillars, the cavern shakes; furnishings blow apart, shattered skulls blast across the room. The humans dive for cover.

The Magicians move slowly like gunslingers, as the Cats blur around them. NehDjet reaches carefully to the left when the roaring frenzy hits the wall. Dust falls, humans bounce and the weapons splay violently, cracking an ax off the roof. The humans grip for the floor. NehDjet's eyes are unquiver-

ing.

Panehse is slowly turning, gauging every movement, every tendon, every sinewy muscle as NehDjet's hand pushes slowly to the Offering Basin. The fighting, screeching, wrestling Cats bust through racks and chests, tossing beads and powders. Weapons bang to the walls. The table end-over-ends against the door. Splinters fly.

NehDjet's eyes glaring, he reaches slowly into the Tanna bowl, they both freeze. The Cats rip through the gem troughs, scattering spears and tusks; bowls and resins explode, pebbles zing off walls.

NehDjet slowly closes his fingers into a tuft of Tanna and backs away, stuffing it like Chaw.

The Cats smash the Sarcophagus, which explodes in all directions. Panehse takes a pinch of leaves to complete his turn. They come face to face.

"I am Sa-Panehse!" He stuffs Tanna. "The Ancient One - Resurrected!"

Their instantly raised claws throw taut tensing into the vibrating and lensing air, the cave walls are rippling. The room bends and they become NehDjet's giant seething, wide-mouthed Green and Red-streaked Crocodile with red fangs and red eyes against Panehse's menacing Golden Cobra of shimmering scales, platinum fangs and black eyes.

Paul, "Run for it!" Everyone runs for their lives.

The air and walls start waffling. Panehse and NehDjet's howling mouths pull back and blast blazing fire, filling the room.

The humans jump down staircases, running through caverns, Pearson has Paser by the scruff, fire blowing after them. Paul helps drag Paser to the entrance.

The Cavern roof blows off.

Lensing shock-waves blast through the staircases and everyone is blown forward, tumbling over themselves outside.

The huge explosion has blasted the entire mountain-top high into the air above. The expanding, fire-spitting Crocodile and Cobra are billowing and growing with giant grimacing smiles into the sky above.

Pearson and Kharis jump up to look but fall against themselves in fright.

The gigantic grimacing figures, filling the sky overhead, morph into the Two Magicians with their outstretched claws. Dark clouds are swirling. Lightning flashes. Thunder claps. The wind is blowing. Sarah is lifted off her feet.

Pearson and Kharis dodge rocks and debris falling all around. Paser is yelling, "They're in both worlds!"

The Magicians back away from each other. The Nile

stretches behind them, the tundra expands to the horizon.

Panehse stretches his arms out with his fingers skyward. Huge black clouds are forming. NehDjet raises his arms and orchestrates another swirling black funnel above. Fingers of lightening crack between the colliding funnels, whose massive black rotations expand out across the whole sky.

Panehse swings his arms around and huge magnetic flux lines fall down through the atmosphere in a vortex before him, lensing the air in slippery, glimmering ribbons.

Another flux bowl drops before NehDjet. Lightening runs up the Vortices, sliding and arcing. Bolts stabbing.

Panehse's outstretched claws beg the lines to converge into a tightly spinning vortex where the lightening becomes wildly concentrated, making white balls and super-pressure micro-bolts that spin off. The air is cracking, the wind driving.

The Goons dive for the ground. The others are spread-eagled, on palms and tip-toes, looking and dodging in the driven, ripping gale. Their hair blown flat in the howling wind-stream.

Paser pushes up on his elbow. He throws his claw up toward the 600 foot-tall Magicians but crumples inward holding his bloody chest. Riding the heaving ground, Pearson and Paul can't help their wounded friend, their inaudible yelling blown away from their mouths, when a crunching is heard. They all look to see the hugely expanded, 300 foot Cats run up. The surface is pounding and bucking.

Black-Panther does a forward roll into her human form with a bow, loosing an arrow at Panehse before Red-Lioness jumps over the top of her. The little people below scurry for cover as the 300 foot Cats roll bouncing over them and down the mountain, growling and hissing, biting and clawing only to catch themselves to attack again.

Panehse spins off plasma balls which NehDjet moves his vortex like a hanging rope to catch in an orbit and spin back.

They both are whipping their elastic hanging and twisting vortex ropes, catching and throwing plasma balls which run ever faster in a slippery figure 8 around their vortices and start exploding in the middle. Plasma explosions and ricocheted balls fill the space and roar over humans. Two Goons run for their lives but bounce into sprawling rolls. Giant thunder-claps and huge bolts of lightening arc from the angry black clouds circling above.

Black-Panther runs up full claws onto Panehse, knocking him off his feet. NehDjet attacks immediately and Black-Panther runs at Kharis, her giant 20 foot claw raking the ground

onto him, when Red Lioness tackles her down. Kharis looks up as their huge bodies turn through the air directly over him.

NehDjet strides in long paced steps onto Panehse, while pulling two rope vortexes down and whipping lightening balls onto Panehse from each. Panehse is on his back, deflecting bolts. NehDjet's vortice-ropes swing into a blur popping out streams of falling white plasma-balls. Some land with huge snapping hisses.

Black-Panther is pinned. Red-Lioness' powerfully violent, fire-eyed grimacing roar and giant teeth bite down into Black-Panther ripping her head back and forth. Red, "GR-R-R-A-A-W-W" The ground shakes.

NehDjet throws cascades of lightening balls onto the prone Panehse, which splash into glimmering white-hot liquid splatter.

NehDjet pushes forward until his lightening vortices converge to engulf Panehse like the eye of a hurricane. He's wriggling in a slippery glimmering circle. Arms of jagged lightening stab down from above, Panehse is reeling and twisting to block.

He sees NehDjet's wide-eyed, evil laughter as he drives his lightening down.

Red-Lioness stands in Red human-form and throws her claw-arms in powerful swipes, unleashing Eight Magical Genies, which run up and launch onto NehDjet, tearing into his flanks. The two rope-vortices disappear as NehDjet is knocked backward.

Panehse jumps up and dives over NehDjet. The two falling backward, claws to claws, in a near slow-motion as Genies jump on.

Black-panther becomes Tabo-ubu, shooting arrows, which fly past the Genies and one turns to look.

He sees Tabo-ubu's glimmering Topaz eyes staring from either side of her bow, arrows arcing toward him. Three or four a second.

His Genie sister gets hit and falls onto her fists and knees. The other Genies and Panehse are deflecting arrows while rolling over and over in their claw to claw struggle with NehDjet, nearly disappearing in the rising dust.

Human-form Red-Lioness with trancing Red Eyes rolls up folding her right leg under her to slap her left foot forward, shooting Fire-arrows.

The twisting Fire-arrows make pulsing sounds as they shoot past Tabo-ubu in dark-gray smoke-trails. Two strike in and she turns her Black Arrows onto Red-Lioness.

Several hit as Red-Lioness yanks them out and full gallops down the slope onto Tabo-ubu. She grabs her over the

top, the arrows get broken off as they roll.

Tabo-ubu transforms into Black-Panther, raking the ground and full-sprints for NehDjet.

Panehse rips open Nehdjet's chest with his claw as NehDjet opens a seam to the Netherworld.

NehDjet runs through the open-seam with full sprint Black-Panther following. Panehse swipes his claw to open a seam just as Red-Lioness jumps with him and both disappear together. The seam closes with a 'snap' and the chasing wind washes into a confused stop.

Wild-eyed Goons are grasping the ground. Goon #2 yells, "What happened!? Where'd they go?" Kharis calls back, "To the Netherworld!"

Weeds and debris are falling. Paser pulls at himself, then asks Paul, "Help me." Paul grabs him but has no idea where they're going. Paul helps him six feet or so. Paser, "That's enough." Paul stands back with a questioning face.

Paser pulls out his Ivory-Wand and shakes it into a Bat-Scepter, which he juggles. His body zigzags in staggered time, from place to place up to the top of the hill. Kharis calls up to him, "What are you doing up there?"

Paser is outlined in dust and debris blowing over him and yells back, "Waiting for the past to catch up."

The unhinged Goons are grasping onto themselves.

Red-Lioness bounds through the Netherworld, throwing her arm out over Black-Panther and does a roll over her back. They do several fast spins into a cloud of dust, then violently rip into each other. "R-R-R-OW-R-R-R" The churning dust covers them.

NehDjet runs down, jumping over them and Black-Panther picks up to run with him.

Red Lioness and Panehse are running up onto the fleeing NehDjet and Black Panther into the cloud of dust and rocks from their feet. The muscles in their back are rippling.

They run down and into the Valley of Slithering Snakes. Several Cobras rise up hissing. They're tramped. Wriggling snakes are thrown in the air and a hissing snake gets stomped and accordions sideways with limp tongue.

Red-Lion grabs Black-Panther's legs and swings her around and into the snakes on the right. Panehse rolls over NehDjet further on the left. Snakes are thrown wildly from the swirling, violent, battling tangles. Dust and Snake-bodies fly. Black-Panther escapes up the hillock and NehDjet full-sprints to follow.

They run out on the plain, down and across the mirrored

flatness of a shallow Glassine Lake. Wide-throwing splashes echo in metallic sounds.

Far away, the peaceful sound of a ringing prayer cymbal cuts the pristine silence surrounding a long procession of knife-bearing, skirted Warriors with Ostrich Heads. They are slowly towing the Three Divine Provisioners, each God in one of three smoothly gliding bowl-shaped boats.

The Carnelian-Crowned Sacred-Cow, Ram-headed Ra and High-Plumes Osiris float serenely in their Mirroring Dream of long, perfect reflections under creamy translucent skies. Each echoing ring of the Prayer Cymbal shivers the metallic surface around them.

NehDjet and Black-Panther violently slap across the surface in a full sprint from the advancing Panehse and Red-Lion just behind. Sprays splash across the surface. Full galloping Fire-eyed, Red-Lion spits blood off, "Ptewh-h" to her left. Her huge clawed paws rising and falling before her. The stinging spray reverberating around them.

Flocks of thousands of standing Akhu and Ba-Spirit birds, casting long reflections, start to scatter in panic at the chasing frenzy crashing through their midst.

The panicked Ostrich Heads see what's coming and start a cacophony of clucking while trying to make their warrior-bodies run; but the warrior-bodies start bumping into each other and flopping around.

Hundreds of observing Ba-spirits, standing like Flamingos, turn to run.

The Gods cock the heads to see what's happening.

The chasing Magicians and Cats run right over them, exploding the liquid mirroring like splashing mercury and dumping the Gods who jump up cussing.

NehDjet and Black-Panther run out from the Lake and up the high hill to turn and jump down upon Panehse and Red-Lion.

Teeth and clawing, growling and hissing, dust flies, shaking muscle and claws rake into the ground as the violent tangle lowers slowly down. Black-Panther's hind-claw rakes Red's belly, Red crushes her teeth into Black-Panther's shoulder. "GR-R-R-R." Black-Panther screams and twists under Panehse, who's claw grips NehDjet by the face. NehDjet is yanking Panehse's throat.

Panehse is stomping Black-Panther while raising his arm to the rocky mountain-side which breaks up and rolls down upon Nehdjet; who takes off with Black-Panther, Red-Lioness ripping at his heels.

Gahbo runs up, bounding along Panehse. The Electric Green and Orange Macaque looks up with his exaggerated, over-

ly excited, bright-eyed toothy smile.

Panehse, "Gahbo!"

Gahbo is smiling, "You're back!"

They are in a mad chase across the mountain, down and up a ravine, and down the cliff-side.

Red-Lioness, Gahbo and Panehse are running on all fours in long-reaching strides, their bodies in perfect sync through a blaze of dust. Red streams streak from Red-Lioness' Eyes, in long, sustaining tracers. Gahbo's electric orange head and shoulder-hairs are bristling.

NehDjet and Black-Panther are just ahead, grinding their exhausting dust and gravel. They shoot down a ravine.

The three scamper over dark logs and jump the vast chasm. Their bodies in slow-motion, Gahbo's bristling orange hair blowing slowly.

Gahbo is laughing and glancing with his dancing, excited eyes. They hit the other side together when NehDjet and Black-Panther turn to attack. Panehse and Gahbo swing around and under them. Red is above. Boulders are crashing. Claws, teeth and ripping flesh.

NehDjet throws lightening which explodes off Gahbo and blows him cartwheeling off the cliff.

They chase up across the rock-faces and out to the long vista. Gahbo and several Blue and Green-caped Baboons run in from the side and jump. Gahbo is yelling, "Don't wake Set!" as they dive over the top of NehDjet. Baboon big teeth and violent screeching tear into NehDjet as they all launch from the hill.

Hair and fur fly in wildly swinging circles at every point from the slowly cartwheeling figures of NehDjet and the Baboons.

Red-Lioness tears over the top of Black-Panther and they roll violently down the smooth slope, and off an outcropping that is the rocky outlines of a gigantic slumbering eye. Panehse stops, looking down. The long vista is the huge sloping snout of the God of Chaos, Set. Panehse, "Yikes!" He tip-toes out and jumps.

NehDjet and the Baboons land in wild violence. Panehse is running up, tossing lightening. NehDjet slides on the ground as he breaks open a seam and escapes from the Nether-world where Paser is waiting to greet him.

The seam closes and the monkeys drop to their hands as Panehse breaks right past them, opening another seam before him.

NehDjet lands next to Paser and turns to attack the flying Panehse, he knows is coming through a newly opening seam but he is hit from the side by Paser's huge bolts of lightening,

ing, arcing from his arms like giant trees of plasma.

Red-Lion Sekhmet jumps through a suddenly opening seam behind Panehse and launches past his shoulder, grabbing NehDjet by the top of the head. Her Red Lion body swings over his back as she rips open parts of NehDjet's head, rending the flesh from his spine.

Gahbo and the Baboons watched Panehse and Red-Lion disappear, and turn slowly to confront the Black-Panther, cautiously trying to get past. They all start approaching, their mouths start grimacing.

Suddenly the gigantic Snout of Set cracks the ground behind them. The whole landscape breaks open and they are bounced on the quaking earth. Black-Panther jumps with a screech to defend from either side.

The Giant God pulls itself up with huge blocks of tundra falling and crashing. Dirt cascades from its gigantic blinking eyes. Huge fissures crack open. Black-Panther runs for the Baboons and they rip into each other in a tangling, snarling, screeching violence.

Panehse's outstretched arms reach to the sky and pull down the swirling vortex with huge lightening arcing and sliding up the center. A loud, banging report is heard as he crashes it to the ground.

Paser throws blinding, jagged plasma bolts that erase shadow and tear up NehDjet's side, blowing burnt flesh off his ribs; which expels in flames.

NehDjet starts slapping strikes away and bending their lightening back around at them, which follows his side sweeping claws in huge roping currents.

Panehse yanks his Vortex into a sharp funnel, raining white lightening-balls onto NehDjet who tries to deflect but Paser's lightening is hitting him from the side. They land like hail against NehDjet with a snapping and hissing.

Nehdjet full attacks, "R-R-R-R-Ah-Ah-Ah-"

The clawing, arcing, brilliant plasma streaming figures become a cloud of whipping tracers. Lightening, purple auras and flux-clouds envelop the mountain-top. Gigantic greenish flux donuts expand away in giant air bursts.

NehDjet spins in circles, whipping Panehse's White Plasma Balls back and shooting Red Fire-balls with them. Panehse slaps his Vortex into a giant vibrating catch-band, throwing plasma back. The air becomes White and Red explosions and molten splatter. Sun-balls fly off and bounce. The air crack-

les.

Red-Lion Sekhmet leans back on her haunches to watch. Her trancing Sun-eyes glaring.

Kharis and Sarah's hair blows wildly in electrified static. White popping strobes their eyes.

Paser jabs his claw, driving brilliant streams straight up into NehDjet. Panehse throws white fire-balls in colorfully-sustained tracers that lenses the fuzzy air blue.

NehDjet is whipping his claws, gyrating and swinging back and forth to defend. White splatter falls like snow.

A white fire-ball hits NehDjet in the side, one blasts a splashing explosion off his back as Paser throws his Boomerang-Wand, underhand, splitting NehDjet's knee-cap with a crack, while Panehse's third white plasma-ball hits NehDjet in his painfully opened mouth, catching in like a bowling-ball and lighting up his whole head.

Fire blows down NehDjet's chest, his eyes go white, his head shakes back and forth and explodes into a giant lensing shock-wave that knocks everybody back off their feet in a staggering slow-motion.

Sarah and Kharis see the ground leave beneath them then slap back up like a punching bag.

The rolling triple shock-wave expands out, flattening the country-side and spilling the Nile out of its banks.

NehDjet's burned out and blown apart body falls slowly back through the air toward the earth.

KA-BOOM! Another shock-wave lifts everybody off the ground.

As they fall, Panehse and Red-Lion shrink to normal size.

Black-Panther comes through a seam, clawing at the air and becomes Tabo-ubu, shrinking to her normal size and making grabbing motions with her hand. Her growl becomes human. Her eyes sharpen. She stares, closes her eyes, lifting her head and transforms into Black Leopard. She simply turns and bounds away in sleek, long easy strides.

Pearson watches her run off.

Weeds, dust and debris slowly descend over the plain in a gigantic slowing swirl. Pearson looks out and remembers the dust in his study.

Red-Lion Sekhmet is angrily and energetically pacing back and forth with fiery eyes, and a bad look.

Ardeth-Panehse stretches out his arms and looks down the hill. His car is dragged around and pulled straight up, plowing the top-soil around it to the group.

He motions to Paul, who jumps up not knowing why and goes to the car. He opens the door and finds a cooler. He

pulls out a tankard. There are drinking jars.

He brings it and two jars up to Ardeth who pours the jars full of Red-Beer. He offers one toward the Red-Lioness, Sekhmet.

He is reciting Ancient Egyptian and Red-Lion becomes Anankhkah with Fiery Red, burning Eyes as she takes a beer. Hawass points, "Those are the Litanies for Sekhmet!"

She and Ardeth-Panehse both drink it down. Anankhkah throws back her head looking up and her eyes and color return. Ardeth hands her a dress.

She is back, beautiful and falls onto her butt, looking up with a bright but exhausted ease. She wipes a slight blood streak from her lip.

Ardeth pulls out the Blue Flute which drapes from his fingers on its Golden Chain. He smiles, "Hathor's Flute."

She smiles and takes it with delight. She puts it around her neck.

Sarah looks at her. Anankhkah smiles gently in return. Paser approaches. Sarah talks to her side at Kharis, "Surprise, you're Pharaoh." Kharis, "I just found out." Paser talks to Sarah, "His mother and I wanted to protect him. A new heir could be compromised, manipulated. Kidnapped. Senkhare was my Sef, my retainer. He raised him as his own." Kharis, "He was wonderful. A truly great man." Paser, "Then NehDjet found out. He didn't know who, but he knew there was a son. Kharis was in danger, the Throne was in danger. There was only one way." Looks at Kharis, "It broke Tuya's heart."

The beer is getting poured for everyone. Sarah takes a cup.

Goon #2 elbows Goon #1, "We got our ass kicked by the Pharaoh of Egypt!" Surprised, Goon #1 looks over and rubs his cauliflower, nodding agreeably, "Yeah-" They both smile.

A couple Goons are searching the mountain for bobbles.

Drifting debris slowly descends and everyone looks off the mountain. The jagged Khpesh of the Nile cuts through the river-basin below.

Chapter 16

Waset - Bright Sunny Morning. A car rolls up to where Pearson awaits. He waves his hand to a smiling Dr Hawass who stops his car and opens the door.

Pearson, "The Hidden Tomb-," Hawass is smiling warmly, "Yes, today's the day. The biggest day!" He gets out and smiles, "I can finally get Paser out of my front room!"

Both laugh. Pearson shines with tenderness, "Yes, finally!" squeezing his arm.

They turn and walk together. Pearson, "The Nubian site is secure?" Hawass purses lips slightly, "As much as you trust men. The Army is there, but also the press." Glances with a smile, "They can watch each other."

The placid smile of Kharis stands against a blue sky. He has a light Crown of Egypt over a simple white head-cover. He wears Paser's Blue Scarab Pectoral, the colorful skirt of the Pharaoh, with an unpretentious trim and tooled sandals.

He stands with his up-turned hands before the cleared ancient Cap-stone sealing the entrance of the Hidden Tomb of the Amun Priesthood.

Paser and the whole group stands near. Sarah and Anankhkah. Paul, with Dr Hawass and Dr Pearson, stand before a relatively small group of dignitaries and their security personnel, the President of Egypt, the Head of the Egyptian Army and the several Antiquities Ministers. There is a hush. The cool morning has an imperceptible breeze.

Ardeth speaks softly, "How 'bout Chancellor. I could be Chancellor again." Paser softly, "Chancellor Panehse."

Paser looks down. A smile creeps across his face.

Kharis intones the suddenly jarring, vibrating meditations which quickly find many interlacing harmonies.

Paser raises his head, looking into the wide, Blue Sky. His eyes close over his broad smile; he is swept into the Nirvana of the special tones.

A stick in a faraway muddy bank starts vibrating. The vibration pattern expands, liquefying the mud.

Dust vibrates on an ancient stone jutting from weeds. The ground is vibrating around it, dust is rising.

A spot in the far-off sand starts vibrating. Several vibrating spots on a sandy plain show small sand-funnels expanding.

Several spots on an ancient cliff-side get dusty and start falling open.

Kharis' loud, vibrating meditations seem to saturate the air which lenses like shadowy curtains.

A farmer is pushing his plow when the ground starts opening in several places. He looks around. The plow goes down. He stands up, astonished. Watery spray puffs and a mummy rises from the ground. The farmer falls back in fear. Three more mummies start pulling themselves from the ground.

Dozens of murky figures are rising around the farmer. He jumps up and runs away. Hundreds of dust swirls in the neigh-

boring fields show Mummies stirring. Hundreds of birds leave the ground at once. The whole air is filling with birds.

Stone tomb-covers in a vast graveyard are being pushed open from within.

Millions of birds fill the sky and the Nile extends below where thousands upon thousands of figures are moving out from long forgotten graves.

Young boys play soccer with a ball of rags on a dry, dusty field. The youngest is pushed to the ground and the others run off laughing. He stands brushing himself.

His back straightens as he suddenly becomes aware of something behind and turns quickly.

A large Black Leopard is rising slowly up. Her yellow Topaz eyes blink and she gives a slow Leopard purrrr.

The boy's head and upper body contort as he is lifted harshly up from within his chest. His body shakes and the tension releases. He and Tabo-ubu are face to face, eyes to eyes. The boy is now strangely long and lean.

They turn and run off in wide, long easy strides.

The End - of the Beginning