

Cursed

Bill Carver

May 18, 1898

I met with my fellow travelers tonight and it ended in the most extraordinary way. We were in my room at the inn or what passes for an inn in this forsaken country. There is not much to choose from in Luxor, Egypt. So we had finished our meal of goat meat and cheese and some local type of ale. I didn't ask what it was and neither did the others. I was with Reggie Washburn, Holland Smith-Keeler and Hadley Rippon. Calvin Dayss had left us to get back to Cairo to meet with his father then continue on to Tripoli.

We were sitting around and Reggie was telling about the encounter he had with the local chief of a group of Bedouins. They apparently had picked up a mummy in their travels and were willing to sell it. He said they told him it was in perfect shape. Sarcophagus and mummy were included in the price. Holly told him he was being scammed, but Reggie said it seemed a good deal to him. If we wanted to see it, he had set a meeting with the chief the next day. The mummy was some type of priestess who they had taken out of a vault here in Luxor.

Hadley just shrugged about the whole thing and asked what they wanted.

Reggie replied that a couple of thousand pounds would do it. We all groaned at that and laughed at him. He insisted it would be the purchase of a lifetime. We kidded him and he said we should consider purchasing it together and I shrugged that off. Why fight over the mummy in the future? The idea of researching this mummy appealed to me more than actually owning it.

We gave him a tough time about it, but in the end we agreed to go with him to see his mummy.

After that decision, we all kind of got quiet and some type of gloom settled over us. It's hard to put in down in writing, but it was there. We broke up early that night and even now all I can think about while writing this down is the mummy. The rest of the day yesterday doesn't even seem worth writing down here in my journal.

May 19, 1898

I find it hard to write this down. It's late and I just got back in from our unsuccessful search.

We met with the chief at noon in Luxor and he showed up the mummy. It was a decorated coffin, I would call it, rather than a sarcophagus. Mean looking face drawn on the coffin top and when we looked at the mummy it looked mad. The lady had been dead thousands of years. Holly deciphered some of the hieroglyphics that the chief,

named Aballah if I heard it right, had brought with him. Everything was in good shape. The name of the lady was Amon-Ra. Holly couldn't decide if she was a priestess or a princess or some combination of the two. But we were all drawn to her, even though I felt a hesitation at the whole situation. We negotiated and came up with a final price for Amon-Ra. Now we had to decide how to pay for her.

The four of us went to one side away from the Egyptians and discussed what we wanted to do. We were all well off and decided, mainly because of arguments between Holly and Reggie, that only one of us would buy it. We decided to draw lots for it. Holly got four straws and shortened one of them. I chose long, then Hadley drew long and Reggie drew long from Holly's hand and he was left with the short straw. He then paid the chief for Amon-Ra and had it delivered to his room.

They delivered Amon-Ra after dinner and Holly left us early that night to spend time with Amon-Ra.

After ten, Reggie came pounding at my door. He said he stopped at Holly's room and found the room in pieces. Things were broken and the furniture was all a jumble. He found some blood spots on the floor and couldn't find Holly in the inn. After asking around he found a servant who saw Holly leave the inn and go out the back door. Reggie said that Hadley was already outside looking around and he wanted me to help him look.

That was five hours ago and the only person we saw was a couple of men coming home from a party. They did see Holly and he was heading out for the desert that surrounded Luxor. We stopped searching and planned tomorrow to get the local authorities to help us find him.

June 26, 1898

This is my first chance to write in my journal since the night that Holly went into the desert. He has not been seen since that night. Most of the time since then and now, I have no memory of those days. This is my first day out of the hospital. I don't want to think about what happened over those weeks.

The day after Holly went into the desert, we went to the authorities, even went to the local British counsel, the three of us returned to the inn. After we returned to the inn, we had a quiet meal and I retired to my room. When I got to my room, a servant was in there fussing about. I ignored his presence, lost in my own thoughts about Holly, when out of the corner of my eye I saw the fool pick up my pistol from the chair where I left it and carry it toward a table. I turned around face him and that saved my life. The gun went off and he shot me in the left arm. If I hadn't turned, he would have shot me in the chest.

At that point everything is a blur.

There were doctors talking in a language I couldn't understand, Reggie and

Hadley trying to work things out.

There were infections and as I am writing this down I'm missing my left arm.
They had to amputate it save my life.

June 27, 1898

Reggie and Hadley came by today to help pack to get back home to England. They gave me some more information about what had happened over the past few weeks. The chief, Abdullah, and his small tribe were wiped out last week by a tribe of bandits. Holly has not been found and no one expects to see him alive again, maybe they'll find his body in the sand one day. Reggie had wired Holly's family about the situation and they acknowledged his wire, but gave him no directions on what to do with Holly's stuff.

They sold his belongings, but Amon-Ra was still with us. They had packed her up and shipped her up to Cairo. When there, she'll be sent up to Alexandria where they had reserved space on a ship heading for England next month.

They asked me my plans and I said I was going home. I left enough in this area and I needed to recover. They expected that and had booked me on a ship heading out in two weeks back to England. They were going to travel to Jerusalem and look over that area for a couple of months.

They requested that I meet Amon-Ra when she arrives in England and to store it until they returned. Then the three of us could decide what to do with Amon-Ra.

I wished them good travels and made my plans to leave Luxor.

October 25, 1898

Amon-Ra is now in England. I met the cargo ship at Liverpool and a more sorry ship I have never seen. I talked with the first mate as I waited in customs and he said that was the worst trip he ever had in fourteen years of being at sea. They were in bad weather all the way from Alexandria to Liverpool. They couldn't make two stops for cargo pickup because of weather and scheduling so the owner lost a lot of money on this trip. Two men were swept out to sea in the Atlantic off the coast of Portugal. One man was caught in the anchor chain and it severed off his foot, they barely kept him alive. An outbreak of some disease hit all the crew and almost left the ship adrift because there were not enough men to man the ship. And to top it off a crate from Egypt slipped off the crane in port and knocked out two men.

After hearing his tale, I met with the local crew I hired to move Amon-Ra up to a warehouse in London. I hope this ship's bad luck wasn't catching.

December 13, 1898

Hadley and Reggie are back in England. They wired me that they had arrived

and asked to meet with me after the new year to discuss Amon-Ra. Although, I haven't seen her since she left Liverpool, I've thought about Amon-Ra every day.

January 7, 1899

I met with Hadley and Reggie at the club. It was not a joyous occasion.

Reggie came back to find that his bank had failed and he was wiped out. He was scrambling to set things right, but he thought that his days of traveling and leisure were over. His uncle owned a grocery store and he was going to work with him until he could sort things out. The uncle lived in Southampton, so he said that he couldn't do anything with Amon-Ra. I had to remind him of her name. He had forgotten it.

Hadley looked deathly ill. He said he's been ill since he got on the ship to come back to England and was too sick to do anything with Amon-Ra. He was hoping to get well enough to get back to teaching next term. So they left it to me what to do with Amon-Ra. A one-armed man who preferred the world of books and research doesn't have much use in his house for a coffin of an Egyptian princess. I had found that she was a princess from my research not a priestess, so I told them I would try to sell her to a museum or a collector and use it to repay the expenses that we incurred getting Amon-Ra to England. They agreed and we said that we would keep in touch.

June 25, 1899

Got a note from Reggie. He's still with his uncle but the business is in trouble and he doesn't know what'll happen with the store. There was a bitterness to the letter that I've never associated before with Reggie.

I have heard nothing from Hadley since the meeting last January. Two notes that I sent him were never answered.

Found a buyer for Amon-Ra. A Mr. Jude Hertanna, a businessman who lives in Euston. He's in the business of selling paper to newspapers. I met him today in London. He was cruising through the British museum and came across me researching some stuff on Roman roads for an article I'm writing. He thought I was a veteran of one of our numerous British wars. I told him about my Egypt trip and the purchase of Amon-Ra. He decided then and there that he wanted her. He asked me for her story and I told him I would collect my notes on her and let him have them when he takes her.

July 22, 1899

Hertanna took possession of Amon-Ra today. I met him at the warehouse and his movers took her out. One of the movers was putting the straps around Amon-Ra's crate when he screamed out. We had to take him to the hospital to remove a four-inch splinter that went through his left hand. It was strange, but I could feel that pain in what I can only describe as my missing left hand. It spooked me but good.

October 14, 1899

Saw an article in the newspaper today about Hertanna. It seems that three members of his family were in an automobile accident yesterday. It was said to be one of the first of this kind of accident in that area. I hope that they can get these automobiles built so that they don't get in many accidents and God forbid that they kill anyone.

January 29, 1900

I saw another newspaper article about Hertanna. Seems that his home caught on fire in Euston. It did say that no one was hurt, but lots of damage.

August 13, 1900

I talked with Dr. Bryd at the British museum today. He said that Amon-Ra was coming to the museum. He asked me if I wanted to be there when it arrived. I told him that I would come, but what happened with Hertanna. Bryd laughed and said that the man was convinced that the mummy was cursed. Bryd mentioned the automobile accident, the house fire but he also told me about business troubles and lots of small injuries that had happened to servants and family members after Amon-Ra was brought into his house. Hertanna even told Bryd about strange noises in the house at all hours. Bryd laughed and said that Hertanna even donated money to the museum to get them to take it.

September 30, 1900

Saw two disasters today.

The first concerned the arrival of Amon-Ra to the British museum. As she was being unloaded from the truck that brought her from Hertanna's house the truck slipped gear, as I was told by the policeman afterwards, and went into reverse. It came right at me but the tires hit a curb and it was diverted from me. It hit a man who was passing by the museum. It trapped him against the wall of the museum and they said he was lucky that the truck was moving so slowly, but I'm sure that he got some broken ribs out the incident.

Then they finally got the truck in position and took Amon-Ra's coffin into the museum. No crate, just the coffin. When they were taking her up the stairs into the museum, one of the men carrying it fell and I could hear the leg snap from where I was standing in the sidewalk. The other workingman was uninjured. The man with the broken leg was yelling in pain and at his partner. He said his partner had jiggled the coffin and caused him to lose his grip and balance, and that's why he fell. The other denied it. So a ten minute job with two movers took three hours and two men to a hospital.

The second disaster I saw was when I was walking home. I saw Hadley on the street, two blocks from the museum. He looked terrible, in fact, I don't know how I was able to recognize him. He was selling matches on the street corner. I caught his eye but there was nothing there. He didn't recognize me and my attempts at conversation were blunted by him trying to sell me matches. I left him there on the street. I wasn't sure that he knew who he was himself.

But I did buy 2 pounds worth of matches from him. A lifetime supply for me.

December 11, 1901

After a year long absence in Italy it was my first visit to Amon-Ra since she was exhibited in the British Museum. I met Dr. Byrd there. After I filled him in on my travels, he filled me in on Amon-Ra. He asked if I remember the day she arrived and the troubles that we had that day. I told him yes. He said that the moving man who didn't break his leg, died two days after the delivery. A young man, he was alive one day and dead the next. No one knows what killed him.

I remarked on how sparsely decorated the room Amon-Ra was in looked. He said that it had more but all the vases and pottery that were part of the exhibit had gotten broken over the past year. They could never catch anyone doing it, but all that stuff was found strewn all over the room. So they kept the breakables out of the room.

I asked why the night watchmen couldn't account for it. He told me that this room was avoided by all the men. They go on about moaning and hammering coming from the coffin, so they avoid this room. In fact, he told me, all the watchmen threatened to quit if they had to deal with Amon-Ra anymore. It seems that one man was found in the morning dead by the coffin. I know that I looked at him and he blustered at me about the man being old and having a heart attack and that the situation was ridiculous if anyone thought that Amon-Ra was responsible.

I asked if any customers had a problem with Amon-Ra, but he said no. But he told me that the museum cleaners were also avoiding the coffin. Bunch of poppycock he said.

Later, after I left him, I've gone through my journal and I can see that people have had their share of trouble after being with Amon-Ra. Starting with Holly and myself.

February 6, 1903

I finally got a job with the British Museum. My first day on the job. Doing research of all the artifacts coming from Italy. We are taking them out as fast as our teams can dig them out. Someday, the countries we dig it may make it hard for us to bring the artifacts to England. But we are the British Empire and that will never change where we rule the world. So they should remain honored for us to take these items to

our museums and our staffs to research all this information.

Princess Amon-Ra is still in her room, nearly empty of items because so much has been damage. Dr. Bryd came to me, the poor man looked a lot older in the time since I saw him last. My 15 months in Rome have seen some changes in the museum. Bryd was upset about man who claimed that Amon-Ra killed his child. He was in a few weeks ago and had brushed a cloth again the top of Amon-Ra's coffin. His child died of measles a few days later. When he had flicked the cloth against the coffin, he was seen by one of the cleaners who refused to work in Amon-Ra's room and told him he could expect some bad experience to happen to him. He came back, obviously, out of his mind with grief and created a scene in Amon-Ra's room. Bryd had to pull him out and tell him about how ridiculous he sounded.

April 15, 1904

Amon-Ra was removed from her room today. It all began two weeks ago with a reporter nosing around the museum asking about Amon-Ra. He even tried to talk to me but I refused to talk to someone like that, just a troublemaker. And yesterday, I was proven right when he wrote a story about the curse of Amon-Ra. Actually, thinking about it, the story was sensational, but very measured. Everything that he wrote was factually true, all the incidents and deaths described. But there are no such things as curses. Bryd was upset, and afraid of crowds looking for the cursed mummy and lawyers telling him that he can expect to be sued if anything happens to anyone who came through the doors. He gave it up and moved Amon-Ra to the basement figuring that she can't cause any problems down there.

April 30, 1904

Dr. Bryd was found today dead at his desk. Everyone's sad and upset about that. Bryd could be a fussy man, but I liked the dealings that I had with him. Also, found out that John Sawring, a man who helped moved Amon-Ra to the basement, has taken seriously ill and not expected to live out the week. I hope that the reporter doesn't get wind of both of these men.

May 9, 1904

The reporter tied the last two deaths, Bryd and Sawring, to Amon-Ra. Another article and more publicity for the museum.

May 31, 1904

Amon-Ra had a visit today from a photographer. He convinced the new man in charge of Amon-Ra, Dr. Fontan, that putting her picture in the paper would help battle the story of Amon-Ra that was being published. If people could see what the fuss was

about, they would not need to come into the museum and try and find out about her. It was a very convoluted story to me, but Fontan is a little naive, and the photographer was a quick and agile speaker. So the man was able to talk himself down to the basement and took pictures of the face drawn on the coffin.

June 1, 1904

The photographer committed suicide last night. His wife said that he developed the photographs. Then he screamed at the photographs he had taken. Then he ran into the main room, threw all the photographs into the fire, locked himself into his bedroom and shot himself.

July 6, 1906

Amon-Ra is going to a new home. A private collector of Egyptian artworks, very well known to us at the museum, purchased her. He laughed about the story of the curse and said it would be a nice centerpiece for a new room he had put into his castle. Dr. Fontan was so relieved to get her out that he actually brought in some wine to toast her goodbye. Fontan is not a drinker at all and choked on the wine when he drank it. Said it went down the wrong pipe.

August 9, 1909

Strange events tonight, my hand is still shaking.

I was invited to the castle to see Amon-Ra. Dr. Fontan wanted nothing to do with it, but management wanted someone with a clear head there. Fontan said I've already been cursed and lived through meeting Amon-Ra before. So I should go. I didn't make a big deal of it, but took the train up here after deciding to help out the museum. But Amon-Ra still comes to my mind every day.

The owner looked 10 years older than what I remember and he had the shakes. He invited me in and we sat in his study and told me a little of what's happened to him and his family since Amon-Ra arrived in his house. Two servants were in a car accident. One lost his life and the other lost his legs. Numerous dogs and cats had died over the past two years, many of them prized pedigree animals. The house was robbed. The robber took only one piece of jewelry, but it was the most expensive piece in his wife's collection. Lots of glassware and crockery broken throughout the house.

And the most disturbing was the death of his son in the army. Fell off a horse that was standing still. His son had been a horseman all his life and had fallen from galloping horses and had gotten up with no injuries. I offered my condolences, but he shook those off. Too late for him, but he tried to donate Amon-Ra back to a museum, but not a single institution in the United Kingdom would accept Amon-Ra. They all turned him down. He showed me some of the rejection letters.

He moved Amon-Ra up to the attic of his castle. It was dark and dusty there, maybe she would like it better up there.

But he decided on a course of treatment for Amon-Ra. He introduced me to the famous occultist Madame Blavatsky who had arrived at that point. She was quite a sight. More gypsy than Englishwoman, so when I looked into her eyes I could see her cunning. We had met outside where her carriage had left her off. The three of us entered into his castle. After she passed through the doorway she began shivering and let out a scream. After the scream, she forgot about us. The poor butler dropped his tray of tea and teacups in the front hallway, after being startled by the scream.

Madame frantically searched the ground floor of the castle. She kept muttering to herself. Her hand shook as she reached for the bannister that led to the second floor. She went around the second floor with the three of us following her like puppies; the butler, myself and the owner. She ran up the next set of stairs, her muttering louder and she raced through the third floor. The three of us waited by the stairs that led up to the next level, which was the attic. She pushed past us, went up and entered the attic. We followed and she led out a yell in the attic when she found the coffin of Amon-Ra. She calmed down at that point. I asked the owner if she had ever before been here. He told me no.

She said the word that she had been muttering, to us. I shrugged at her and she said the word translated as "evil". Then I felt a chill.

The owner asked about an exorcism. Madame told him no. Evil cannot be exorcized. She told him if he wanted peace then Amon-Ra had to be removed from his home. He must not possess it.

We left the attic and went to the front hall. Madame Blavatsky refused his payment and again implored him to get rid of Amon-Ra as soon as possible. Then she left.

He begged me to have the British Museum take possession of Amon-Ra. I told him no. He said a massive donation to the museum would be made with her.

I told him no and walked away.

August 10, 1909

I told Dr. Fontan about last night. He said I did the right thing in refusing him and that Amon-Ra's owner was stuck. No one wanted her. The word was out from the press and the museums' network that she hands off. He would say a prayer for the owner and that was all he could do about it.

February 16, 1912

Amon-Ra is back in my life after still being in my mind for all these years. I have climbed up the ladder of success at the museum and now I'm with worldwide contacts

in the business. I was able to arrange for the sale of Amon-Ra to an American archaeologist. He was looking for something special and felt that the more danger to his life the more he lived. But he's getting older and fighting natives and wars was not physically possible for him anymore. But he liked the idea of an artifact with a dangerous history.

I had met him at convention in Paris and offhandedly mentioned Amon-Ra as dangerous in the course of a couple of drinks at the bar. He called with me when he was in London. I again mentioned the curse, but he laughed and said that all those incidents were just "quirks of circumstance". I knew that the current owner had moved Amon-Ra to a storage shed located way back in his property, away from his house. Didn't help the butler, who was badly burned in a cooking fire.

When I contacted the owner about the American's interest, he cried. After he was done, he said that he had visited Amon-Ra last week. She looked the same which surprised him because she was in a cold, damp location and he was expecting to find rotting wood and her as just dust on the floor. But the coffin looked as good as when he placed it in there. He didn't stay long there.

The American bought her today and is arranging transport to get her to America.

April 9, 1912

We got Amon-Ra into the ship today that's going to take her to America. My American friend asked me to go along with her. I wasn't going to go, but an opportunity came for me to visit 3 museums in New York City and make some deals to trade some of our excess stock for some American Native Indian clothing and jewelry. So I'll combine my trip and go with my friend. Should be a good time.

The crew loaded her into the hold of the ship and there were no accidents or injuries or deaths. I feel silly talking about a curse but too much has happened to too many people. May she find her peace.

A few co-workers at the museum who knew about the arrangements kidded me about traveling across the Atlantic Ocean with Amon-Ra. But I told them not to worry about me. The owners of the ship boast that the *Titanic* is unsinkable.

The End

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