



## BOOK EXTRACT

Title: Tutankhamun Uncovered: The Adventure Behind the Curse  
Author: Michael J. Marfleet  
Publication Date: 31 October 2009  
Page Extent: 504  
ISBN: 1-906358-73-7  
ISBN 13: 978-1-906358-73-0  
Book Type: Hardback  
Classification: Fiction  
Price: £15.99

---

### Chapter Ten Lordship

---

Emma Andrews took her time inspecting the watercolour. Carter, a Scotch and soda in his hand, made himself comfortable while he awaited the verdict. They sat in the main room of Davis's temporary house which sat close to the entrance of The West Valley. Although it was early afternoon, all the windows and all the doors were open, allowing a refreshing breeze to flow freely through the room.

"Magnificent - as always! Howard, bless you, you always excel. Is the usual okay?"

"Oh, of course, Miss Andrews. Whatever."

"A trifle more on this occasion, perhaps? It is, after all, slightly larger than the last one you painted for us."

"You are too kind. But, to tell the truth, my bank balance is looking somewhat lean this month."

"Twenty pounds, then. And we'll hear no more of it. Theo won't mind a bit!"

"You are too kind." Secretly he'd hoped for more. This winter there were fewer tourists than usual and very few of these were inclined towards his artwork. But beggars can't be choosers and he should be content with the appreciative market he held so secure.

As he took another mouthful of his Scotch, the houseboy came into the room with a note. Mrs Andrews opened it.

"It's from Theo, Howard. He has reached the inner sanctum and would like to show it to us."

"The 'inner sanctum', Miss Andrews? Of Horemheb's tomb which Edward found just a few days ago?"

"The very one, Howard. But Maspero calls it 'the tomb of Harmhabi'. I cannot for the life of me fathom why it is that you archaeologists cannot agree on a common spelling. "Horemheb, Harmhabi, Humbabumba - I do declare! Well, enough of that. We should go up there directly. His automobile is waiting."

Carter resisted the temptation to lecture Davis's companion. He quickly downed the remainder of his drink, put on his Homburg and followed the woman outside. It took them no time at all to drive to the site.

Theodore Davis and Edward Ayrton, both covered in dust, were there to greet them.

"My dear!" exclaimed Davis. "We have such delights to show you! And it is so fortunate you were visiting us, Howard. You can perhaps help us decipher the texts. The place is full of graffiti of the most excellent workmanship! It's a big one, this one. Unfinished, but big all the same. Totally robbed, of course. Hardly a thing worth salvaging but for the sarcophagus. Never mind that. Plenty to write home about, that's for sure! (*In the event, Davis' publication, prolifically and precisely illustrated with photographs by his good friend Harry Burton, was journalistic in its text. Ironically it acknowledged the contributions of all his collaborators except that of Burton himself; See Davis, 1912.*) Let us go in."

Carter looked at the entrance to the excavation. A pit dug by Davis's men into the accumulated rubble had revealed a man-made rectangular hole cut into the very floor of the valley itself. It descended steeply via a rock-cut staircase which penetrated the limestone as far as the eye could see.

Davis was eager to show off his discovery. Despite his age, he ran down the steps almost two at a time. Ayrton extended his hand to Emma and, going ahead down the staircase, led her carefully into the depths. Carter followed.

After the first cleared stairway there was nothing but rock refuse to walk on - rubble from ancient floods; debris from the collapse of the ceilings. With little to see but plain walls, the party hastily scrambled over the slabs of rock and piles of rubble, descending along three inclines of varying slope, until Davis stopped them at the first decorated room. Here there was no debris. There was no floor. This was the well room. Ayrton had bridged it with a double ladder which they all had to negotiate.

Immediately beyond the well was a double-pillared room with a staircase let into the floor. After three more inclines of varying angles of descent, they reached a small room which clearly led into a much larger hall beyond. The debris of earlier flooding appeared to have penetrated this far and fanned out into the room at the base of the incline. A great chunk of the small room's ceiling had fallen away. Limestone shards of considerable size littered the floor. Like the well room, the walls were brilliantly decorated with life-size figures of Horemheb paired with various deities.

Davis waved his arms about the room as if wishing his guests to relish the sight.

He led the party onward. They picked their way carefully from boulder to boulder across the decorated room into the larger, pillared hall beyond. The chamber was huge. It appeared all the larger because it opened directly into the room holding the sarcophagus. There were six pillars in the room, all undecorated. One had broken from the ceiling and lay at a crazy angle within a pile of ceiling debris. Centuries of earthquakes were responsible for the structural damage and cracks were everywhere - in the plaster, the pillars, the ceiling and the walls. The place looked like it was about to fall in on itself at any moment.

It was clear that the decorating of this holy place had been cut short. In places the original draughtsman's grids were in evidence. On one wall, the first rough but elaborately sketched drawings were in red, over-drawn more precisely in black. Along one or two registers these were partially sculpted. But none was painted.

Davis proudly pointed out the only painted effigy in this area. It stood solitary in the centre of an otherwise blank wall in one of the flanking storerooms. It was a large, colourfully but not brightly painted figure of Osiris standing on a plinth in front of a large djed pillar, the whole contained within a representation of a multicoloured shrine. The face was green, the body was white, the remainder painted variously in yellow, shades of grey, blue, green and red ochre. Carter had not set eyes on its like before. He was captivated by the painting and stared at it for some time.

The floor of this little room was littered with tomb debris cast aside by the robbers in antiquity - everything disassembled, stripped of its gold. Most had been removed altogether.

The excited Davis tugged at Carter's shoulder. "Howard, my old friend, come and examine the magnificent sarcophagus!"

The carved, red granite box stood in its original place near the rear wall of the lower of the two large rooms - the burial chamber proper. It was indeed magnificent. Carter looked inside. It was empty - just a few fragments of bone scattered about the base.

"This place has been very well cleansed, Mr Davis," he said. "Doubt you'll find much beneath all this rubble."

There was a small doorway in the left rear wall of the burial chamber. Davis led his party through into another relatively large room. In the back wall of this room another opening led to a small chamber, but the doorway was almost filled with a pile of mason's cuttings.

"This place really has a story to tell," observed Carter. "These fellahs walked off the job before it was completed, did not bother to clean anything up, moved his lordship in, stacked his wares, sealed him up, broke in, took everything of value, busted up everything else, including his mummy, and left what remained of him in pieces." he chuckled.

"What's so funny?" asked Emma Andrews.

"Oh, nothing, Miss Andrews"... "Wonderful, wonderful find, Mr Davis. Congratulations, Ayrton. I wish you luck in completing the excavations."

Although the exploration had been brief, it had felt good to be back, if only for a moment.

The sun now directly overhead, Howard Carter sat in the shade of a palm tree sketching the bustling composition in the entrance to the long corridor of the bazaar that stretched before him. He had painted the scene several times before albeit from slightly different angles and in differing lights. For over two years now Carter had been painting watercolours of Egyptian life and artefacts for profit, and through this and the odd trip to the sites acting as an authoritative guide, he had made sufficient in commissions to keep himself from starving, but little more than that. Had Gaston Maspero, his earlier boss, not helped by latterly loaning him the use of his previous quarters on the west bank, he might not even have achieved this much. Since it had come from Maspero, it was not below Carter to accept this charitable gesture. He rationalised it as a clearly well-earned response to ensure his continued support and well-being; a gesture demonstrating appreciation for his talents and efforts during the execution of his earlier duties as Chief Inspector. With no rent to pay, he managed to survive and still had time to study the antiquities about him and visit the excavations of others. But he wasn't doing what he wanted. The lack of a steady salary brought with it a sense of insecurity and loneliness. A feeling of almost total solitude consumed him at times. He hadn't seen Dorothy since he'd resigned. Some evenings he had felt compelled to relate his personal anguish to his diary. There was no one else to talk to. Bereft of funds, he had no prospect of re-establishing himself in the field.

But that was yesterday.

As the quick, deliberate strokes of his pencil continued, he glanced up from the sketchpad momentarily to pick out another character from the busily trading crowd. What took his eye in the indifferently lit shade of the market was the sight of two Europeans, one short and plump, the other tall and lanky, both properly suited and hatted, talking vigorously to each other as they advanced from the shadows within the bazaar and out into the bright sunlight. When the light caught them, he could clearly see that the shorter man was none other than Gaston Maspero. He did not

recognise his companion. The other, despite walking with a pronounced limp, exhibited the carriage and dress of a man of some breeding.

The two were making their way purposefully towards where Carter was sitting. There was no doubt he was their target. As they neared, Carter examined the taller man more closely. He was dressed in a grey, finely checked three-piece suit open at the jacket. He had a shooting stick for support, and from the same hand he swung a feather fly-whisk. In his breast pocket flopped a large white handkerchief and, between the two pockets in his waistcoat, a long, gold pocket-watch chain bounced in tune with his uneven step. His white shirt was roll-necked so he wore no tie. On his head perched a large-brimmed panama sporting a wide white headband. His fair moustache was bushier than Carter's, his face leaner and longer, and his eyelids had that slightly half-closed downward look - that which comes with years of looking down on lesser mortals.

'I am not going to enjoy this,' thought Howard, breathing in deeply. As the pair of them neared he pulled himself up to a standing position and dusted off his pants.

"Knew we'd find you here," Maspero began and then with a wave of each hand added, "Mr Howard Carter. His lordship, George Edward Stanhope Molyneux Herbert, Lord Porchester, the fifth Earl of Carnarvon of Highclere."

'Mother went overboard naming this one,' thought Carter uncharitably. 'If the number of characters in his name and title are anything to go by, he must be very well-heeled indeed!'

"Mr. Carter! Delighted to meet you," pronounced Carnarvon as he shook him vigorously by the hand. "I fear I have been delinquent to this point in not ensuring I made your acquaintance much earlier during my stay in Egypt. The growth of your reputation in recent years seemingly approaches eclipsing that of the great Flinders Petrie!"

"Your lordship, the honour is all mine. I have heard much of your keen archaeological efforts in these parts."

"Will you be good enough to take some coffee with us, Howard?" asked Maspero, hastily. "His lordship has a proposition he wishes to put before you."

Maspero led them quickly back to the entrance of the suk. On the corner stood a small outdoor bar boasting five or six tables with crimson-chequered tablecloths, all shaded by a canopy extended between four tethered poles. Each of them drew up a chair and sat down. Maspero gestured to the owner of the rude establishment to bring three coffees.

As he exchanged pleasantries with Carnarvon, Carter looked almost disinterested. He fully expected the proposition, when Carnarvon was ready to make it, would be some form of commission for paintings of artefacts or wall decorations; work he might be glad of, nonetheless, but not likely to get his heart pounding. The arrival of the coffees was the signal to switch gears from introductory small talk to the business at hand.

"Mr Carter," Carnarvon began directly. "You have been kind in your comments about the results of my recent excavations. The truth of the matter is, however, that my proudest possession from these digs has been the full mummy case of a cat. Of interest, of course, and most gratifying, but it goes only a small way towards fulfilling my ambitions - and compensating my costs. I have come to Egypt primarily on my doctor's orders. My health, you see, is sufficiently fragile that I am greatly vulnerable to the ill humours of the British winter..."

"Aren't we all, sir?"

"Hmm. Perhaps some more so than others, Mr Carter..." The earl quickly returned to the subject of his forthcoming proposition. "...So I come to Egypt for its health-giving sunshine, warmth and clean air. While I am here I do not wish to be idle. I have maintained an interest in Egyptology since I was a child and have been a modest collector to this point, but this is my first opportunity to touch provenance, so to speak. Touch it is all I can do, I fear. I am not knowledgeable in the craft of excavation, nor where to look. The concessions I have held to this point have been bestowed on the advice of Mr Weigall, your successor in the Antiquities Service. I am sure he has advised as wisely as he could, but equally I am sure that being sensitive to my inexperience he has tempered his choice of site to that likely to be of lesser importance, lest I do some irreparable harm. Kept me out of harm's way, so to speak, with grace!"

As Carnarvon continued this monologue, Maspero regarded Carter's expression. It was clear that the Egyptologist's attention was growing stronger by the minute. Carter had realised that this man was not leading up to a commissioned painting or two. The director's face broke to a wry smile, discreetly concealed under the herbage of his matted moustache.