

# THE EGYPTOLOGIST

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**Arthur Phillips**



R A N D O M   H O U S E

**THE EGYPTOLOGIST**

*a novel*

**ARTHUR PHILLIPS**



**RANDOM HOUSE**

*New York*

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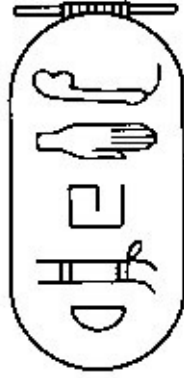
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**FOR JAN, OF COURSE**



Royal cartouche of King Atum-hadu  
(King “Atum-Is-Aroused”), final (?) king (?) of Egypt’s XIIIth Dynasty,  
1660 (?)–1630 (?) B.C.



## HOTEL OF THE SPHINX

TELEGRAPH: hotspinxcairo



Tuesday, 10 October, 1922

*Hotel of the Sphinx, Cairo.*

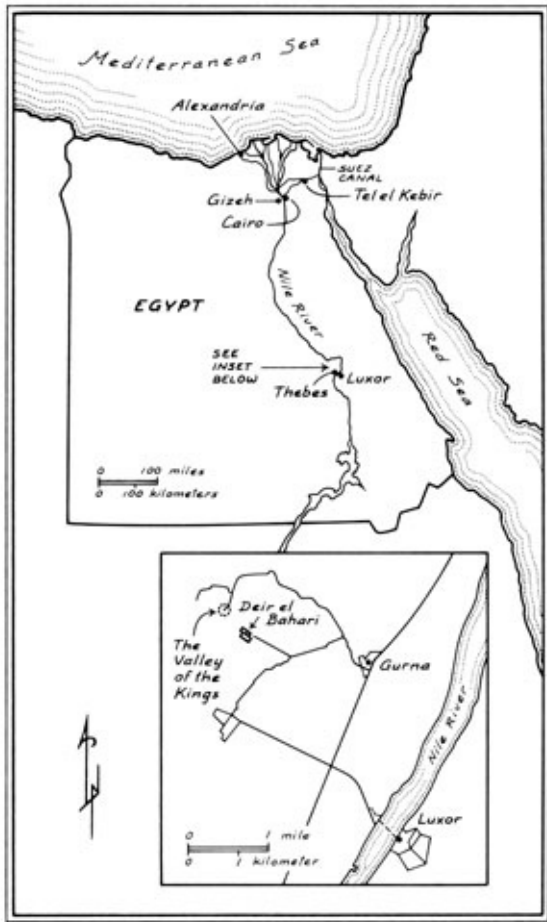
Journal: *Arrival in Cairo via rail from Alexandria. Set to work immediately. Have scheduled five days in Cairo for logistics and background writing prior to heading south to site.*

Book Notes: *To begin at its proper beginning, the completed book must have a frontispiece, protected by a transparent onion-skin overlay.*

Frontispiece: *"The Royal Cartouches of King Atum-hadu, final king of Egypt's Middle Kingdom, XIII<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, 1660-1630 B.C."*  
*Assume only scholarly readership? No - clarify for general readers that a cartouche is the royal seal, one of the king's five names (the Son of Ra name) written in hieroglyphs and enclosed in an oval.*

Epigraph after the frontispiece:

*"It is the intelligence and resolution of man in overcoming physical difficulty which are to be the source of our*



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31 Dec. Sunset. Outside the tomb of Atum-hadu. On the Victrola 50: "I'm Sitting on the Back Porch Swing (Won't You Come Sit by Me, Dear?)."

My darling Margaret, my eternal Queen whose beauty astonishes the sun,

Your father and I are heading home tomorrow, back to you—the luxurious riverboat north to Cairo a night at that city's Hotel of the Sphinx, then by rail to Alexandria, and from there we have booked a victorious passage on the Italian steamer *Cristoforo Colombo*, ports of call Malta, London, New York from where we shall catch the very first train to you in Boston. You shall embrace your fiancé and your father by 20 January.

Upon my return, our wedding will, of course, be our most pressing business. Then, after refreshed preparations, I shall lead a second expedition back here to Deir el Bahari to conduct a photographic survey of the wall paintings and clear the artefacts and treasures from the tomb. All that remains this evening is to seal up the tomb's front, leaving my find exactly as I discovered it. And then posting you this package. My messenger is due here presently.

Nothing stands in our way now, my darling. My success here, your father's reinstated blessing—all is precisely as I promised. You will be relieved to know that your father and I are again fast friends. (Thank you for your "warning" cable, but your father's misplaced anger back in Boston could never have survived his time here in my company!) No, he congratulates me on my find ("*our* find, Trilipush!" he corrects me), sleepily sends you his love, and sheepishly begs you to disregard those foolish things he told you of me. He was under terrible strain, surrounded by jealousy and intriguers, and now he is simply delighted that I have forgiven him for succumbing, even for an instant, to such corrosive lies. And now we are returning to you, just as you will return to me.

Of course, if you are reading this letter, then I have not, for reasons I can only speculate, made it safely back to Boston and your embrace. I did not arrive trailing clouds of immortal glory, did not drape around your white throat this strand of whitest gold I am bringing you from Atum-hadu's tomb. And I did not, taking you gently aside, under the double-height arched windows of your father's parlour, brush away your tears of joy at my safe return, and quietly ask you to give me as soon as it arrives a package (this package), that you would be receiving from me shortly, stamped with the alluring postage of far-off Egypt, addressed to me in your care, to be opened by you only in case of my extended and inexplicable absence.

No, events will proceed just as I have foretold, and you will not read this letter. I shall arrive before it, shall gently take it from you before you open it, and all of this will be unread, unnecessary, a precaution known to no one but me.

But. But, Margaret. But. You have seen as clearly as anyone the malevolence of those who would have us fail, and one never knows when fatal accidents or worse might befall one. And so I am taking the liberty of sending to you the enclosed journals. Dear God, may it all arrive safely.

Margaret, you are now holding, if the besuckered tentacles of my enemies have not yet slithered into the Egyptian postal system, three packets, arranged chronologically in order of composition. The



open 10 October, with my arrival in Cairo at the Hotel of the Sphinx, thoughts of you and our engagement party still effervescent in my head. Journal entries never meant for publication are intermingled with those that were, and with elements of the finished work. Much of the journal is a letter to you, the letter I never found the right moment to send until now. I intend to untangle all that back in Boston. The second packet begins when I exhausted my supply of the hotel's stationery and in its place relied on the generosity of colleagues at the Egyptian Government's Antiquities Service; several score pages are on the letterhead of the Service's Director-General. Finally, I have nearly filled one very handsome Lett's #46 Indian and Colonial Rough Diary, the preferred journals of British explorers whilst working in faraway heat and sand, advancing knowledge at the risk of their very hides. Do not worry: the pages torn from its back are none other than the pages of this letter. Together the three documents compose the rough draft of my indisputable masterwork, *Ralph M. Trilipush and the Discovery of the Tomb of Atum-hadu*.

Also, I am enclosing the letters you have sent me here, your words, kind and cruel intermingled. Seven letters, two cables, and the cable I sent you that was thrown in my face yesterday. And your father's cables to me.

I just replaced the stylus, my last but one. This is a lovely song.

I am trusting a boy to serve as my messenger to the post.

Over time, Margaret, there is erosion. Sands abrade, rubble obscures, papyri crumble, paints decay. Some of this is, of course, destructive. But some erosion is clarifying, as it scours away false resemblances, uncharacteristic lapses, confusing and inessential details. If, in the course of writing my notes, I have made here and there a wrong turn, misunderstood or badly described something I saw or thought I saw, well, at the time one thinks, No matter, I shall edit when I return home. And I shall. But, of course, should I be beaten to death and shoved inside a gangly Earl's travelling trunk and then hacked to pieces and my shreds lazily flipped overboard to peckish sharks, well, then, a pity indeed that I did not edit my work when I had the chance. I shall then need a brilliant and courageous redactor who can puff away dusty speculation to reveal stark, cold, obsidian and alabaster truth. You will provide that clarifying erosion.

We come to the crucial task I am entrusting to you, my muse-become-executrix. You are now the guardian-goddess of all that I have accomplished. These writings are the story of my discovery, my trouncing of doubters and self-doubt. I am entrusting to you nothing less than my *immortality*. I am relying on you, despite everything, for whom else do I have? If something should happen to my body then you are now responsible—by opening this package, by reading these words—to ensure that my name and the name of Atum-hadu never perish. It is the least you can do for me, Margaret.

You will oversee the publication of this, my last work. Insist on a large printing from a prestigious university press. Stamp your pretty foot and demand shelf space in all major university libraries, as well as with the major Egyptological museums in the USA, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and in Cairo. And the general public! Cover your ears, Maggie! For there will be a clamour like no one has ever heard when the news escapes. But hold them all at bay until you are ready. Do the work as I am telling you, insist that the book be printed exactly as I say, and give the vultures nothing else.

I do not have time to edit just at the moment; events are moving too fast here. And we leave tomorrow. So I shall do it myself when I arrive safely home, but, allow me to provide contingent guidance if events should unwind otherwise.

For example, as I look at them now, certainly some of the early sketches seem not to have been entirely complete. The eye plays tricks in dim light, when one is hurried, but the final drawings are unquestionably precise, so those first efforts can go. And you will extract my ongoing letter to you,

my private or overly candid diary entries here and there. What is only for you and what is for all the world fall away from each other; the division is an easy one to see, if you are careful. I was overeager as a diarist and as your correspondent at the beginning. There is no need to publish anything about you and me, the parties and the partnerships. I was excited, and for good reason, Margaret, as history will attest. And I see now also some stray meditation, releasing a little scholarly steam here and there, my second guesses allowed some room to stumble about only to suffocate in the open air. A careful reading, I beg of you, a careful reading in private, careful editing, and then find a typist (call Vernon Collins), use my illustrations from the notebooks, just the last group of them, when Atum-hadu's paradoxes were all clear, and I at last understood what I was seeing.

If you must be my widow, M., then you will also be my wind. You will gently erode away the inessential. I started crossing bits out just now, but I do not have time, and I might cut into bone, so look here: I shall make your work as simple as I can: the relevant material in order: Kent, Oxford, the discovery of Fragment C with my friend, his tragic end, you and I falling in love, your father's investment, Atum-hadu's tomb in all its splendour, the insightful solution to his Tomb Paradox, sealing up our find for a later return, your father and I heading home, our unfortunate murder. Or not of course. It could not be clearer. Burn the rest as the marginalia of a scholar's early drafts.

The sunset here is unlike anything I have ever seen. The colour as the sun melts into the changing desert cliffs—such colours do not exist in Boston or Kent. These are the hills and cliffs where my life's story is indelibly etched.

Last stylus. I do love this song.

If, Margaret, you are reading this letter, sobbing, horrified at your double loss but girding yourself and your pen for the vital tasks ahead of you, then I do not hesitate to accuse from here, before the commission of the dreadful crime itself, the maniacal Howard Carter, whose name you may perhaps have heard in recent weeks, the half-mad, congenitally lucky bumbler who tripped over a stair and fell into the suspiciously well-preserved tomb of some minor XVIIIth-Dynasty boy-kinglet named Trite-and-Common and who, in his crippling jealousy, has several times threatened my person in the past months, both whilst sober and whilst intoxicated on a variety of local narcotic inhalants. If I have neglected to note in my professional journals Carter's unceasing attitude of hostility and barely contained violence towards me, such delicacy is only a pained professional courtesy to a once-great explorer, and is, moreover, an example of that certain bravura I have always displayed and you have always admired. Thus I have ignored his repeated threats to make me and my "noble patron, Mr. Chester Crawford Finneran, disappear inexplicably." Obviously, should your father and I not step off the *Cristoforo Colombo* in the port of New York, you may be quite certain that we were done in by Carter or one of his thugs, like his money-man, a lanky English Earl, whose mild manner frays and scarcely covers a vicious character, stretch it though he does, or by their hideous orange-haired confederate, whom you know only too well.

Most beautiful Margaret, these months have not lacked in misunderstanding between us. But for all the harsh letters and harsher silence you sent me, I know that your love for me remains just as my love for you; there is nothing in this life that I value more highly than your embrace. The gramophone recording has come to an end again and now only wheezes in exhaustion.

That was my last stylus from the hundreds I brought with me. The thought that I have seen you for the last time, that I shall never again hold you, trembling in the breezes that dance through your ballroom when the windows swing open to the garden, that the pallor of your throat and the colour of your limbs will never again be revealed to me seizes me so roughly that I can scarcely write now. I cannot bear the thought that I shall never see you again. I cannot bear it. I cannot bear that you will

think of me as your father described me, not as I really am, as I know you saw me, at the start. Please think of me at our happiest, when you were most proud of me, when you found the hero you had so long been seeking, the only man you could imagine, when we talked of the world at our feet. Please think of me like that, my darling darling. I love you more than you can know, in ways you will never imagine.

I will see you soon, my love.

Your Ralph

Sunset on the Bayview Nursing Home

Sydney, Australia

December 3, 1954

Dear Mr. Macy,

I am in receipt of your letter of the 13th November and I'm delighted to make your acquaintance, if only by post. I'm sickened to hear of your lovely aunt Margaret's passing. It's my dearest wish that she thought of me fondly now and again. We met in times of crisis, high drama. You never forget those, I can tell you. She was a beautiful, vibrant woman when I saved her back in '22. I never saw her again after I brought to justice the man who caused her suffering.

I'm certainly most intrigued by your "small request to tap into [my] no doubt excellent memory." True enough, sir, it is still excellent, and I'll make an extra effort to prove it to you. In my day, I was known for having perfect recall.

I might also add that you're no insignificant sleuth yourself to have tracked me here to this hellhole of a pensioners' house, this human wastebin, thirty years after the facts, young Mr. Macy. Should the investigative field ever interest you professionally, I think you well-suited, and that's high praise, that is, coming from me. Of course, maybe you're the sort of fellow who doesn't have to work at all, eh?

To answer your first question, which maybe was only politeness showing off your breeding, even in a letter to a stranger, but nevertheless, the answer is: bored. Bored nearly to death, thanks, which I suspect is the idea behind these places. Drink up the last of our savings and then bore us to death to open up the narrow, sagging bed and one of the few stinking pots to piss in, 'cause the next old fellow's crossing his legs for it.

I can't tell you how pleased I am at your request to hear about my greatest case, to help fill the blank spaces of your "private Macy family history." And you're in luck: see, I brought very little with me to this damnable place, not one for fine clothes or possessions, me, a simple man, always ready to move fast if circumstances demanded, but when I saw for certain that I was heading here, I said to myself, "Ferrell, you'll be a royal fool if you don't haul your files along and write down your case histories in your many spare hours. It'll be a bright, shining warning to the criminal types out there, a fine teaching tool for other detectives, and a gripping yarn for the general reader." Which is why your letter pleases me so very much.

You want clear recollections? Well, I'm historical truth on two legs, I am, but I need a fellow just like you if I'm going to stop sitting on these dynamite tales and pop them into the public eye. I'm satisfied.

in assuming you know people in New York publishing, yes? True-crime magazines maybe? Let's give that some thinking. I know you said you're only asking for "personal family history," but I'm too close to the finish line to play fancy-dress games, Mr. Macy. I see where we can go on this, and I think we've a winner. See, I kept notes, wrote everything out verbatim, as they say, just as soon as I could after interviews. We didn't have the machines they have now to make a taped recording, so we compensated. Young detectives today with their magnetic recorders don't even know what they don't know how to do anymore, but in our day, we had good memories and we wrote fast. If I don't have every last word right here in front of me, well, I have a fine memory of the sort of thing people said or meant to say, so I can reconstruct just fine. It just needs colour, quotation marks, literary frills, typewriting. I'll provide the heroics, you do the rest, eh?

Even if, at the end, some of it wasn't crystal clear to me, still I think this case is my finest, so if you're ready to be my Mr. Watson, let's begin here, and after this one, let's figure I've another dozen at least for us to pull together.

Now, you say you have documents which "may shed light on lingering questions" I might have, and that's a rich piece of bait to dangle in front of a bloke like me. I am who I am, and even thirty years on, I'm curious to hear anything you'd care to disclose. When you refer to finding Margaret's private papers after her death, what does that include, I wonder. What did she say about me? She wasn't above stretching the truth for a story, that one.

When I knew your family back in '22, you weren't even born yet, I don't suppose. When did your aunt meet your uncle? You know, she was a little keen on me, your aunt. She ever tell you this? I suppose not, and I'm sure your uncle was an excellent fellow. But when I met her, she was engaged to that devilish toff poofter explorer, and I think I seemed like just the thing to her—a man of unimpeachable honour, always after the truth, putting the truth first always.

What even to call this case? Think about it: it started as an odd-duck inheritance task, then it was a missing-person case with a dozen different clients, then a double murder, a prenuptial background investigation, then a debt-collection case, and suddenly quite a different double murder. With the imprisonment of the damned Arab (I can't remember his name, oddly), we settled at least the final crime, but much inside this coconut don't slosh when I shake it, even now. You should track down the Arab; he's probably still rotting in some Gippo jail. Maybe he's finally ready to reveal where he stashed the bodies and the treasure.

All right, off we go: the case opens in Mayfair, London, May 1922, according to the notes in my dossier here. There, a very rich man named Barnabas Davies, the proprietor of Davies Brewery, learned from his sawbones that he hadn't but a few weeks or months to live. Tragic. This Davies, he's an old bloke, but he has a lovely young wife and a couple of little children. Death on its way, Davies settles his affairs with his solicitors. Spick and span, sign on the line, the widow and kids are filthy rich and some junior partner's going to run the brewery show. But then a week later, Davies, still alive, calls his solicitors back and says he's decided to do a few more things he hadn't thought of before.

This is June 7th now. The solicitors come back to Davies's house, sip more of his brandy, and take their notes as the old man bashes their ears: the family and the business are one thing, but now he realises more should be done. He wants the world to know the Davies name for its permanent power and to do good. He wants his money to go to a professor's chair in his name at a university, he wants his money to build a hospital, he wants his name on a museum wing filled with paintings by artists receiving Davies Foundation Modern Art Stipends, he's going to fund a monument to some regiment that lost near every damn man in it in the War, and Davies wants the block stuck in the new Davies Gardens, and a football club out in some little town is going to be the Davies FC, and he has an

architect called in to start drawing up plans for a zoo shaped like a big D, even as he's on the verge of taking to his bed, perhaps for the last time. Davies, Davies, Davies everywhere.

And then he instructs the solicitors in something very odd, indeed. Apparently, Mr. Davies has risen quite far in this world. He was in the merchant navy as a younger fellow, before he'd had his bit of luck here and there and built the empire that kept the pommies in not-bad amber fluid. You've probably not heard of Davies Ale, son. I think it was bought by another brewer after the Second War, and the name was changed. I recall a bottle with a boat on it, maybe a pirate. Either way, old dying Davies, he presents the solicitors with a list—a rather long list, see—of *women* all over the world. Women from Canada, the USA, Ecuador and Peru, Australia, even Russia, and the dates he *thinks* he was last in these places, the last time he'd seen these women. The dates go back to the start of his merchant navy days, a good forty years in some cases, fifteen in the most recent. And here we go: Mr. Davies tells the solicitors that some or many or maybe all of these women might very likely have had children by Mr. Davies.

Find the birds, he says, and find out for certain if they *have* had his brats. If they have, don't say another word, just thank the mothers and go find the children. Talk to the children and present them with this offer: Davies will leave them each some money—good money, when you consider all they had to do for it was get themselves born out of matrimony, which isn't that hard a trick—if they agree to two things: (a) don't pester the Davies family back in England for one more penny, seeing as legal family is still a cut above, even to this maniac, and (b) agree to take the name Davies as their own. That's right, Mr. Macy, change their names. The oldest will be forty years old, right? But if a bastard wants his cash, he'll change his name. How much cash? The amount's negotiable, Davies tells the lawyers as he presents them with a chart he's made: ideally the children take the bottom figure, but the lawyers can go up to the higher sums, depending on nationality, and whether the children have accomplished something noteworthy, or seem like they might. There's equations on his chart, I was told. A Frenchie in a profession is worth 3.5× as much as an Argentine sailor, for example.

Not surprisingly, the solicitors put up a bit of a fuss. They point out that if nobody's come for old Davies so far, and he is—no use dancing around it—about to meet St. Pete anyway, there's no need to go scraping around for old problems to dig up. Besides, says one sane solicitor, it puts Davies at a disadvantage to have these illegitimates suddenly taking his good name. “Not at all,” says Davies, “you're quite missing the point, chappies. These children are mine, and everything they accomplish in this world is mine, too, and should bear my name, because I'm proud of them. I want the Davies name to live on in them and in what they do. We're all Davieses,” says the old fellow, getting himself into quite a sweat about it, “my dynasty.” “Well, we're just solicitors,” say the solicitors, “and tracking down your abandoned brats in the four corners of the earth isn't our affair,” although they don't put it quite so hard to their wealthy client as that, I shouldn't think. But he won't listen: “Get detectives to do it, I don't care how you do it, just do it, make it legal, put it in a document, and I'll sign the thing, but do it fast, 'cause time's at stake here, isn't it just? If I have to, I'll sign blank ones and you can fill in the children's names later” is more or less how Mr. Davies puts it.

And I hear you ask: “Just how many possible mothers were there?” Well, Davies's first list turned out to be rather preliminary. The final tally kept swelling over the next few days, as the fat brewer calls back the solicitors to add names when he recollects them, or when he finds another lady's signature at the bottom of some old love note he's burning before signing off for his lunch date with the almighty. When HQ contacted me in Sydney Branch, the 21st of June, 1922, the tally of potential Davies spawn was at thirty-eight and still climbing.

Now “Sydney Branch” and “London HQ”: I should clarify those. I'd run my own proprietorship, Ferrell Detection, until March 1922, just a few months before this case, *The Case of the Promiscuous*

*Brewer and the Murders in the Desert*, eh? Catches you? It wasn't a particularly lucrative venture, Ferrell Detection, but I'd a knack for disguise and getting people to tell the truth or at least show it when they were lying. I was a brave little bastard and that's a fact. I knew my Sydney, top and bottom and I had no time for criminals who thought they were geniuses, because not a one of them ever is, Mr. Macy. There ain't more than three types of people in this world, I can tell you after my years of dealing with them, and maybe not even three.

Then, March '22, I received an offer to become part and parcel of Tailor Enquiries Worldwide, a growing concern in London and ready to put some truth in that "Worldwide." I did a little looking into their business. They were run by a Nicholas Tailor, who was really a Hungarian named Miklos Szabo who'd done well in England, making of himself the gentleman's confidential enquirer sort of bloke, with a vague continental accent and an air of worldly know-how. Good enough for me, and like that, for an exchange of monetary units and a discussion with their representative as to who paid what to whom and when, I took down my Ferrell Detection sign and had a bloke I knew pop round with one saying Tailor Enquiries Worldwide, Sydney Branch.

And not long after our transaction, I had my orders on the Davies case. I received the same letter that Tailor's men received all over the wide world, explaining our assignment from the London solicitors who'd engaged Mr. Tailor's agency. For, sure enough, one of good Mr. Davies's ports of call had been Sydney, and I was to track a lady named Eulalie Caldwell, who as of 1890 or '91 or 1892 or maybe '93 (as best as Davies could remember) had been a nice-looking young woman with no attachments, living on her own in Kent Street (a very rough part of Sydney), making a temporary living doing some washing up. End of information.

Mr. Macy, sir, it is not every day a detective begins to look for a lost heir and instead solves two double murder cases, one a full four years old. But that is precisely what I accomplished. If I savour the details of this triumph from a long and difficult career, I trust you'll understand.

Kent Street was a dismal hole in the 1890s, and it wasn't much improved by '22. But I wasn't unfamiliar with slums like it, could hardly avoid such things in my chosen field of endeavour. And, with that knowledge, I certainly didn't share Mr. Davies's illusion that his lovely young lass had been stopping there temporarily on her way to better things. If she was alive, she wouldn't be far. This would take no time at all, and I was only curious to see how I could bill London HQ for the maximum time and expense, since it all went back to the solicitors and Mr. Davies in the end.

Public records, asking around, not too hard to get the drum on something like this. Two days later, June 24th, and I'm in a nasty tenement not in Kent Street proper, but two streets over. What a sight, the way these poor bastards lived. I almost felt a bit of a saint—these folks needed Davies's money and I was there to help at least one of them say the right things to get some. You know what people like that want? A little space just to be alone, get some quiet sleep, get clean in. A little privacy. You've no idea, Mr. Macy, in your great big mansion in New York. Compassion, you see, I don't lack for it.

So there I am in a crowded room, trying like hell to shake sense out of a woman who looks about sixty-five or seventy, toothless and ghastly, nose like a rotted cabbage, no shape to the rest of her at all. Mr. Davies must have been one lonely merchant sailor, even thirty years earlier, because she says she's Eulalie Caldwell. (Although she gives me a birth date that would make her forty-nine. Women are like that.)

The place looks and smells like rodents come and go as the mood hits them, and the noise from the other families in the courtyard and upstairs makes your teeth rattle. If Davies has a brat in this crowd it would be about thirty, and there are a few who might fit that bill, but who can say, because there are

people everywhere, barging in and out, yelling, bringing in or hauling off this or that piece of rubbish. There are kids no older than thirteen, others are strapping angry fellows who claim they do standover work, but my nose says they're into something underhand. A couple of young women, filthy things, who I recognised as practitioners of a discreet profession. There's no way to tell who's related to who or who even lives there. My notes from the day read "Dirty animals," but I don't know if I meant vermin or house pets or these people.

I stand there trying to get Eulalie to listen to me. Plainly she isn't suited to do any work anymore, she ever was. She's useless, and I'm just praying to squeeze some of the last brain activity out of her when in comes a short, skinny, sickly looking black-haired fellow in shirtsleeves who takes a piece of brown bread out of his tucker bag, pulls the hard crust off it, and drops it in the old lady's lap. She looks down at it and nods, like at an old friend. The fellow stands behind her and watches me. He seems a likely candidate for my heir. I ask my question: "Do either of you know a Mr. Barnabas Davies?"

Eulalie goggles at me, but then just gnaws at her bread and looks at her feet. The bloke opens the negotiations with "What if we do?" and I counter with the industry-standard "Well, then I have another question for you." He has to pose a bit more, so we get a "Who are you anyway?" which always earns a "That depends, don't it?" Finally, we arrive at "She might know of Davies. But if he wants her now, it's a little late, isn't it?"

"You never know, son, I work for very powerful men," and he chews on that for a bit, and away we go: yeah, yeah, Davies is a name the young fellow knows, but still Eulalie don't say a word, just take a bottle of beer from her young man.

The fellow starts coughing up pieces of the story, here and there, for me to gather up and fit together. This one, Tommy, is one of Eulalie Caldwell's brats, one of eleven that saw the light of day and cleared their first year. Tommy knows the name Barnabas Davies only because Eulalie used to "babble on and on" about Barnabas when Tommy was a boy. "Barnabas: the one true love of her life, the man who would've made her a happy woman in London, but it wasn't meant to be. Christ, what a song." I'm thinking, That was an easy case, I have my boy and now we get on to changing his name, job done. But no: her *next* man was Tommy's father, and he stayed around longer than Davies had, living with her and the kids for a few months of Tommy's life, even returning later on to father child number four, but he was never of the "quality" of the mysterious Davies, come and gone like the wind promising, as he set off to sea, to return for the lovely nineteen-year-old he'd spent a weekend with (on). No, it turns out Tommy is child number two. He has a full sister (child four), and there's a flock of half siblings, tragic stories he now wants to share with me since I'm there and he thinks I asked, and to which I listened with no interest as they had no bearing on my business: a long and tedious recital of stillborns, hunger, broken promises of advancement from this or that lying toff, here an unwilling but profitable prostitute, there a nasty marriage, one boy killed at Gallipoli, another working at a station in the north, all the way down to the thirteen-year-old girl standing right there in front of me (no name in my records).

Of course, how damned dull this all was, like poverty always is, and when Tommy was done singing all this, we worked back to the main question. Where was Tommy's older sibling, sired by Davies, Eulalie's child number one? And only then does Eulalie look up at me, and she starts to make an odd noise and then she's crying, by which I mean her nose is dripping like a tap and her lips are shaking, but no tears are coming. "Oh, Paul," she says, and you can't even imagine how angry Tommy looks—not at me, but at the drunk hag sitting in front of him who only now has managed to put two words together. "Shut your mouth, why don't you? Get off your date and clean something, you bloody bitch" and the crying woman manages to shuffle out of the room, with the youngest girl following her out,

calling Tommy nasty names.

Back to the raging, wheezing little man's tale: Paul Barnabas Caldwell was a "year or two older" than Tommy, so that meant born in 1892 or 1893, which fit my bill. Tommy hated Paul. He grew up loving him, of course—he's your older brother, you love him, and you feel sorry for him when he gets smacked by Mum or by the man of the house (a rotating title, apparently) or by Bowlex (Dowlex? I think I'm reading that right)—but Paul grew up fast and started throwing his weight around too: he started to hit Eulalie back, before he ran away for the last time. And Paul was good at school, surprising thing, even when he was a little fellow. Tommy don't like that, though: Paul was the only one who'd had a chance at school, a real chance, since Eulalie could still work a bit back then, could make a little money, and so Paul got to go to school "regular, not just now and again," while the others were in and out, helping their mum with work, quitting the books as soon as the state said they were through. Worse though, Eulalie always told Tommy and the other kids that Paul was special because Paul's dad was something special, and she'd throw that at Tommy's dad too: "You aren't Barnabas Davies." Tommy told me with a quiet, angry amazement, "But Paul wasn't even grateful for that," he used to call Eulalie a whore and a disgrace, would say she wasn't his mother, wasn't a proper woman at all, and he'd be off out the door to visit his other friends, "and he never took me," says Tommy, "never once took me, never showed me his books and pictures, looked at me like I was dirt because my dad wasn't your Mr. Davies, but was just poor old Tom from down the pub. But I got him once"—Tommy laughs, showing his few teeth—"I got him good. I once snatched one of his library books, a real nasty one, took it and showed it to Rowler (Bowlex?). Paul had the devil whipped out of him that day. That was something to see."

Well, Mr. Macy, you can imagine that this was quite a tiresome spectacle—vengeful lies, self-pitying misunderstood memories—but it was something I could understand and put up with as long as I got my job done. Had to listen to a heap of this before I could get young Tom calm enough to answer me: where was Paul Davies *now*? My mistake triggered another storm: "He isn't Paul *Davies*, he's Paul *Caldwell*, you hear? The Caldwell name is good enough for him, he's lucky to have it." "Fine, Paul Caldwell then, Tom—where is he?" Turns out Paul's been gone since Tommy was thirteen or fourteen. Not one word when he left. "That broke Eulalie," says Tommy. "She needed him. He was going to be the man of this house, and now I still have to bloody well hear how I'm not Barnabas Davies's son."

"And since then, since, let's say, 1907?"

"Yeah, that Bolshie, what's her name, the crazy library lady, she came by one day, in '18 or '19, prim and proper and disgusted by us, and shows us the letter from the Army saying Paul was missing a corporal he was, and 'no further information' known. We didn't even know he went off to the War. Him missing and Mick dead on that Turkish beach, God damn, Eulalie cried for a bleeding month. Now what in Christ's name do you *want* with us?"

My notes say, "Two and a half hours with those animals. Bill London for ten hours." No crime that Macy, since London turns around and bills the solicitors for twenty and they bill Davies for forty, and that's about right for this bastard, leaving women in distress like he did. Can you imagine, Macy? All over the world, detectives like me were prying around in the open sores of unhappy families and abandoned women. There must have been a whole city's worth of pathetic, screaming scenes like this one going on all over the world right then, at that very moment, because old Mr. Davies had been a wolf as a young man and wanted to be loved for it as an old man.

My notes also say, "Engaged by Tommy Caldwell to bring back any word of Paul Caldwell's address or grave, payable on contingency." I had my second client on what was now the Paul



Mr. Macy, I slept like a baby last night, not the old nightmare, nor a toss or a turn. For this alone I thank you. Just knowing that you and I are working together on this memoir, opening up the old case, explaining its logic and structure, letting the world know what we've achieved. I feel a new man. I even ate a full breakfast this morning, choked down all this poison and it tasted just fine. Last night before I nodded off, I pulled out my other boxes of files from under the iron bed, and I read through a couple of the finest, though the rotter next to me whinged about the light and even called in one of the toughs to force me to douse the glim—it hardly matters. After you and I do this one, I think the one I call *The Beautiful Dead Girl* would do well with our readers. ("Don't miss another Ferrell and Macy adventure, coming next month!")

So, the Barnabas Davies case was closed, eh? We had the name of Davies's Sydney child: Paul Caldwell, born 1893. We had a personality sketch of him up to the age of fourteen: possibly above-average intelligence, but with the anger of the abandoned child trapped in poverty. Beyond that, we don't know what kind of son Mr. Davies left behind when he tripped onto his boat and buttoned up his trousers. We know the boy went off to fight in the War and he didn't come home. *Missing*, Mr. Macy meant they couldn't sort out the pulped-up bodies in the French mud or on the Turkish beach or in the Suez Canal. And Melbourne just called you dead after a while being missing. I think it was in '19 or '20 they said *no one* was missing anymore—all the *missing* files got relabelled as *killed*. So as far as official records had it, Paul was dead, though for some reason no one had got around to telling Eulalia and Tommy yet. Either way, case closed, I reckoned.

But then, I reckoned again, Mr. Macy, and a canny and dramatic moment it was, as you and our readers shall see. *Why* close this case? I could spin away heaps of hours trying to get details of Paul Caldwell's life and military service to send back to his proud papa. True, no heir to give money to, probably, but "missing" isn't *quite* "dead," so why not see what I could find? And if he was dead, maybe he was a war hero, and he could be renamed posthumously, become brave Paul *Davies*, gallant martyr of the Ardennes, so the fat, dying brewer would buy himself a nice dead hero-son, and what was *that* worth on his chart, and who picked up the cash legacy for it? My mind was moving fast, the old game was afoot, and the final tab in London was going to pay for a nice holiday.

Now I had to pull strings to get a squiz at Caldwell's military dossier. It was locked up tight in Melbourne, not even families were allowed to see the files. Still can't today. Even Davies in London as next of kin would be allowed only a short letter declaring death and final rank. But if it's detection you want, Mr. Macy, you need a network of helpful individuals. With that, simplest thing in the world, a bloke owes me a favour, knows another bloke who manages some girls in Melbourne, and one of them worked for a man who knew a bloke working in the office of the historian at Defence and that bloke owed the first man a favour, or the first man would mention to Defence that the second bloke had been spending intimate time with this or that inappropriate (not to say outright Aboriginal) girl, and a little money (billable as a Barnabas Davies expense, no question) moved (shrinking as it went) down along this long line of nameless but helpful individuals, and some scribbled notes made their way back along it, and now it's the 7th of July, when I copy the notes neatly into my file and add my own first questions, all of which reads, verbatim:

Paul Caldwell. Born 1890 (Tommy said 1893). Volunteered for infantry (why?) October 1916, with determination made (by whom?) that his service be limited entirely to Egypt for as long as AIF has presence there, due to special knowledge and circumstances (which?). Entered as private (if he had special knowledge, why only private?). Dispatched to infantry at Tel el Kebir, Egypt. Promoted twice and cited for distinctive service twice with commendatory letter included in file from Brit. Capt. H. S. Marlowe. (Why a British captain bothering with an Aussie digger?) Missing while on leave, 12 November 1918. Natives far south at Deir el Bahari (500 miles away from his camp), subsequently discover Caldwell's rifle, identity disks of Caldwell and aforementioned Marlowe. (A pommy officer and a digger on leave together?) Rank at end of service: corporal. Missing status

Because he was a British officer, Captain Marlowe's file was conveniently located in London, so we have to be satisfied with this for now, my good Watson. Now, the questions I jotted down in my notes that day are only a few of what should occur to a clear-eyed investigator presented with this synopsis. I'll leave it to you to try to count up the puzzles hidden in those hundred and eight words, because they breed fast, the little rabbits. Here's a gift, though, in case your history's not too strong: the War ended on the 11th of November, 1918, the day *before* Paul vanished.

One more item from the boy's file: "Next of kin: Mrs. Emma Hoyt, in care of Flipping Hoyt Brothers Entertainment, Ltd., Sydney." So much for Eulalie Caldwell and brother Tommy; no wonder they'd had to hear the news from a third party: they weren't mentioned when Paul enlisted. Kin seemed to have been a complicated question for our boy. I'd have to ask the lawyers: might his Davies inheritance belong to this new next of kin, if Paul Caldwell was dead and somehow retroactively rechristened Paul Davies?

Good morning, Mr. Macy! Shall we continue? Good.

Of course I remembered the Flipping Hoyt Brothers Circus—but first, I hear impatient Mr. Macy whingeing, "What's this ripping yarn got to do with my poor mistreated auntie and vanished great-uncle?" Everything, Mr. Macy, everything. Patience. Have some faith in your storyteller, eh?

Now then, of course I remembered the Flipping Hoyt Brothers Circus, but I was surprised to find it still in existence when I went enquiring after Emma Hoyt at the circus's ticket booth, the 8th of July, 1922.

"She's about to go on," says the bald, shirtless, moustached man at the booth. "She's available for admirers after the performance, but here's a tip, mate: she'll be more likely to talk to you if she knows you saw her show."

"It's on *now*?" I asked, looking around the field surrounding us and the sagging yellow tent, three or four people milling about some caravans.

"Starts in five minutes. You're a lucky man." I paid for a front-row seat, and the bald man emerged to tear the ticket he'd just sold me, then showed me to my place, pulling the canvas shut behind us. I counted the audience: I was one of eight, though there were empty benches and risers and a row of large divans with tables, seats for 300 or some. My usher sat me, then continued down the empty aisle, stepped over the flaking red wooden wall in front of me, opened a gate in the high metal fence circling the sandy pit, locked the gate behind him, and picked up a megaphone. His red velvet trousers were white at the seat. "Ladies and gentlemen," he yelled, walking in circles, looking high over my head at long-ago crowds.

His opening remarks finished, he unwound his whip and lifted a hatch at the back of the cage. Three monstrous tigers slunk in. Our bald man lazily attended to making them leap over each other, roll on their backs, spring through a metal ring, all of which they performed sluggishly but with sudden bursts of snarling rebellion, which the whip didn't shut up too quickly. For his finale, he had the tigers lie down, not without resistance, and he opened the hatch at the back of the cage again. There, dramatically lit from behind, was a strange little profile, and then it waddled a penguin. The bird circled the prone tigers once, promenaded up and down their backs, and then "logrolled" them, walking in place on their bellies as the tigers rolled underneath him. Finally, the penguin stepped off.

took a turn of the ring for applause, and approached the three tigers to kiss each of them on the nose (previously sprayed with herring scent, no doubt). The children gasped and laughed. It was a neat display, I'd imagine. When it worked.

Today, though, the third cat had had enough: as the fish-stinking kiss brushed his twitching, whiskered muzzle, there was a blur of orange-and-black paw and the penguin looked down at the three red stripes on his white breast with the surprise of a rich man who's spilled claret on his evening shirt. He raised his beaked head, astonished. He looked to the lazy tiger keeper who'd trained him, talked him into this twice-daily escapade, and was himself stunned at the tiger's break in discipline, and now was raising his whip and shouting at the cat, but too late. The paw flashed again, and the suddenly headless penguin rocked in place but didn't tip over, because the cat's other paw was pinning the flipper feet to the sand. The tiger was about to enjoy the snack he'd just uncorked when he felt the last bite his back, and he turned with a roar on the man who'd both whipped and fed him since his tiger-cub days. "You don't snarl at me, boy-o!" shouted my ticket vendor, flogging with a fury. Only now did the two children in the audience realise the penguin whose antics they'd just been admiring wasn't well, as its head, beady-eyed and baffled, had come to rest on the red wooden wall a few rows in front of them.

For reasons Mrs. Hoyt later explained to me as a matter of discipline for the beasts and safety to their master, the cats were required to perform their entire routine again, without fail, before they could be allowed out of the cage for their meat reward. While the two children sobbed and their parents told them, "Now, now, it's all just a trick," the tigers, growling and irritable, reviewed their tasks and swatted at their man. Again the leaping, the rolling, the springing through rings. Again they all lay down facing forward. Again the back hatch lifted. Again a dramatic silhouette of a plump, banana-nosed fellow. And again a trained penguin waddled in, expecting to win applause and a fresh fish. What this second penguin thought as it passed the decapitated, dusty football of its colleague I cannot say. "No! No! Fly away!" called the little boy to my left.

I only mention this scene, Mr. Macy, to illustrate the state of the circus by 1922, for I then watched two middle-aged Chinese contortionists twist themselves into the most peculiar shapes, to audience discomfort. I watched a single, spangled trapeze man swing listlessly for a spell before just dropping onto his net and from there to the ground, taking off his costume even as he was walking away. All through it, a visibly disheartened man of sixty played an out-of-tune upright piano. From time to time he murmured with a pained seriousness at the frightened children, "Ah, the circus! It's magical, just magical."

"He is classically trained, you know. He used to conduct our ten-piece orchestra, in Paul's day," Paul Caldwell's chosen next of kin, Emma Hoyt, later told me, her face drooping. Her business was at its very end, of course. I think she held on to it another week, but I'd witnessed the death throes of the Flipping Hoyt Brothers Circus. "In better days," she started most of her sentences, or "When my husband, Boyd, was alive," or most interesting, "Paul would have hated to see things end like this."

A woman of forty-five or so, and not without her charms, she was still dressed like a major in some brightly coloured army, her hair blond and compressed under her red, cylindrical hat. She lit cigarette after cigarette, but didn't smoke them. Her private caravan smelled of perfume, her performing dogs, wild animal dung.

She was eager to talk about Paul Caldwell. I told her she might have inherited some money from him, but she scolded me: "That's impossible. He's only missing." My notes are easily enough compiled for you, more or less as they must've been said. (Do you think we should present polished stories with long speeches, or just the fragments of my notes? The latter is more "real," I suppose, but

the reader wants to feel it's happening to him, if you see what I mean, Macy.)

“So many difficult memories are stirred to life by your visit, Mr. Ferrell. Paul was the most wonderful thing ever to happen to this circus, his love of what we did here. I thought of him every day far away at war, fighting for just this, for the magic of our circus. Oh, don't misunderstand me, I know the Germans have fine circuses, too, but I'm sure the Kaiser was no enthusiast. We free people appreciate things his kind could never tolerate.

“I wrote Paul when Boyd was called to his reward, told him I would do everything to keep his circus ready for him. It was his for the taking, if he wanted, after the War. He could have turned it around. Such devotion.

“Of course, you'll want to be hearing about the beginning. Paul came to us when he was nineteen or twenty. Boyd discovered him, said he had extraordinary natural talent. He had spotted Paul down in the market and followed him a bit, clandestinely, watched him doing it. Then he pretended to walk in front of Paul, unaware, pretended to bend over and tie his shoe, and when he stood up again, he just grabbed Paul's wrist and took back his wallet. Of course, for a while, Boyd pretended to be a copper, you understand, to put a scare up Paul. But then Boyd sat off to the side, pointed to people to see if Paul could do it on demand. Boyd was excited when he brought him back to our camp that day. And what a beautiful boy he was, and intelligent as anyone I had ever known. He had been a librarian, as I am sure you know.

“And that instant when Boyd led him to us! You see a face light up sometimes in surroundings like ours, Mr. Ferrell. Something quite intoxicating washes over certain people. Paul was like a little boy. He wanted to touch all the animals, even the tigers. That was the thing about him that charmed one, you see. He knew so very much about a few things, smart as anything, but he also did not know the simplest things. He wandered around the camp. He walked inside the tent, and I followed him. He gazed up at the tied-back trapezes, at all the seats. ‘Haven't you ever seen a circus, Paul Caldwell? Would you like a job with us?’ You've never seen such a happy face, and so handsome. ‘The circus?’ He asked me if I knew of some Italian strongman, some performer he had heard of once. ‘The circus,’ he kept whispering, like he had landed on the moon. I knew just how he felt.”

“And when did he become your lover, Mrs. Hoyt?”

“I was married to Boyd, Mr. Ferrell.”

“But I've the impression Mr. Hoyt was much older.”

“Boyd was a clown, you know. I mean, professionally, by trade. He could make you laugh so. He would do his ‘shame face,’ when, for example, he was caught trying to steal a man's necktie, and he would close his eyes in this long blink and shrug like he was a bad, bad, naughty clown, and people just loved it. People loved him. Off the sawdust he was rather colder.

“Boyd had Paul clean out the cages, sell tickets, seat people. That was necessary, of course, seating people. That let him put those who carried their wallets in their trousers on the elevated seats so he could reach up from below during the show. He performed a few times, a shocking magic and drama act for the evening performances. Boyd thought we should try more sophisticated fare, so to open the show after the entr'acte, Paul would come out dressed as a jungle explorer and do a sort of pantomime where he pretended to fight off attackers, five of the bigger fellows done up as jungle blacks. They'd get the better of him, tie him down, and then one of them brought out a snake. Nothing dangerous, just one of the bigger pythons, and they circled round him and danced a bit and waved the snake about and they bent over him, so the audience couldn't see what was happening, but we'd released the power of their imaginations! Then off ran the black villains, one of them hiding the snake in his gown, so the

audience couldn't see it, they just saw Paul tied down, writhing in torment, you understand, and he struggles and pulls one of his arms free, and then tears at his chest, he opens his shirt and . . . and his chest bursts open and out comes the head of the snake! Oh, it was a horrible sight, and women would faint, and the lights went out, and when they came up, Paul took his bow. He had to do it then, before the call at the end, so people would know he was alive and well. We used to play for such crowds, before Boyd's stupidity. And Paul brought in so much money. He could put purses back, after they'd been half-emptied, you see, so we rarely had complaints.

"Boyd thought like you, though. He was so certain this little boy was my lover. And so he just spent his days down with the tigers, tossing them their meat with a nasty face. But what did he think would happen? That the police would take Paul away from me on Boyd's word but not tell the public that, a Flipping Hoyt, thieves prowl under the seats?"

"They arrested him during the show, without a fuss, I didn't even know it happened. The first sign was when the native snake-men had to make up some dance with each other, and then just wandered off with the snake while the crowd looked confused and checked their watches, and then Wang and Songchuck were up the pole, twisting on top of each other. 'What do you reckon has become of Paul?' I asked Boyd after the show, and he just smoked and looked at me strangely. And I knew. 'What did you do to him?' I was afraid he had done something horrible with the tigers. 'You vile old man, what did you do?' He wouldn't speak to me, and it was days before I found Paul, but then the police wouldn't let me see him. I kept at them for weeks, knocking every day on the door of this brutish inspector. But they wouldn't let me see him. And then, one day, weeks had passed, they told me he was gone, off to the War to avoid prison."

"You wrote to him when your husband died."

"That was 1917. Also to say I hadn't betrayed him, that it wasn't me who'd turned him in. I was so afraid he blamed me. I didn't know where to send the letter. I just sent it to the Department of Defence. I never heard a thing, until I had the notification he was missing. He put me down as next of kin, you see. At that moment, finally, I knew he was not angry with me, that he loved me still. And at that same moment, I was told I'd lost him.

"Still, I thought I should find his real family. I went to that horrid librarian, Paul had told me all about her. They had been, oh, *intimate*, you see, not his first *love*, more the case of an older woman taking advantage of a poor boy in need. But she at least would know where to find his blood relations. Later, I had a second letter from Defence saying they changed him from Missing to Dead, but they didn't have a body or anything, it seemed just for filing. I so want him to find the circus just as he left it . . . that poor penguin . . ."

Mr. Macy, our story today ends with a circus lady sobbing for her dead lover and her dead circus and a dead bird. I waited for a bit to see if she'd pull herself together, but after a few minutes, the end was nowhere in sight, so I went on my way.

Two or three days later, I had a letter:

Mr. Ferrell. Your visit yesterday was a tonic for a tired woman. You would set my mind at ease with any definitive information you unearth as to Paul's Destiny. I should like to engage you, if that is how these matters are handled. If you should find him alive and if he is staying away from us, amidst the Missing, for reasons of his own, please assure him that I did not Betray him, would never, and that I love him. If he is gone forever, please let me know what became of him. There is little left for me here. I will go anywhere for him—please tell him that. I am soon to become a tiger vendor, at least temporarily, and after that, I cannot say.

With that, Mr. Macy, I had a third client on this same case!

But what did I have of Paul (Caldwell) Davies to present to London? Well, unfortunately, crime. That would probably affect Davies's final settlement negatively. And his volunteer enthusiasm for the War, it now seemed, may have been a product of circumstance, the Australian Imperial Force being more inviting than penal labour.

But I also had two new leads: Inspector Dahlquist, who'd arrested Paul Caldwell and sent him off to die in Egypt rather than rot in prison, and Miss Catherine Barry, the librarian who'd turned up in our tale twice so far, Paul's first lover. The Davies Case was fast becoming a lucrative use of my time.

Which reminds me. I'll send you what I've written so far, so as not to delay your progress speaking to publishers. I will, while awaiting your reply by Air Mail, continue to transcribe my notes and letters.

I am your humble correspondent,  
Harold Ferrell,  
Private enquiries (retired)

**Tuesday, 10 October, 1922. Hotel of the Sphinx, Cairo**

**Journal:** Arrival in Cairo via rail from Alexandria. Set to work immediately. Have scheduled five days in Cairo for logistics and background writing prior to heading south to site.

**Book notes:** To begin at its proper beginning, the completed book must have a frontispiece, protected by a transparent onion-skin overlay. **Frontispiece:** "The Royal Cartouche of King Atum-hadu, final king of Egypt's Middle Kingdom, XIIIth Dynasty, 1660–1630 B.C." Assume only scholarly readership? No—clarify for general readers that a cartouche is the royal seal, one of the king's five names (the Son of Ra name) written in hieroglyphs and enclosed in an oval.

**Epigraph** after the frontispiece:

"It is the intelligence and resolution of man in overcoming physical difficulty which are to be the source of our pleasure and subject of our praise." John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*

Or: "Although we have not yet discovered the tomb of Atum-hadu, we can be fairly certain it is within our reach." Ralph M. Trilipush, *Desire and Deceit in Ancient Egypt* (Collins Amorous Literature, 1920; new edition from Harvard University Press projected for 1923)

Or: "Ralph Trilipush will never convince anyone with a brain that King Atum-hadu ever existed, let alone wrote the so-called Atum-haduan Admonitions." Prof. Lars-Philip Thürm, in the *Journal of Egyptological Studies*, 1921. This epigraph would have an amusing effect when placed next to a photograph of me standing in front of the tomb of King Atum-hadu, holding a complete papyrus of his Admonitions.

Or: perhaps an excerpt from the Admonitions, from the profound mind and naughty reed brush of King Atum-hadu himself. For example, the first line of Quatrain 30 (found in Fragments B & C only) "Atum-hadu smiles upon his brother." Actually, a bit misleading as to its original context, as the complete Quatrain 30 describes the discovery of an impostor claiming kinship to the king:

*Atum-hadu smiles upon his brother,*

*Overjoyed to meet another fallen from the same mother!*

*Until he learns the claim is but a lie,*

---

*And now with fire and asps the liar will die.*

—(From *Desire and Deceit in Ancient Egypt*, Collins Amorous Literature, 1920; new edition by Harvard University Press projected for 1923)

No, better still, to begin this adventure at its proper beginning, let us open the book with a tantalising glimpse of the discovery to come, and offer as epigraph a thrilling episode not too far off in the future, an excerpt of events described in the book itself. We shall extract a triumphant moment and place it at the front, a shocking jewel in the crown, a zesty appetiser to tickle the reader's tongue for the vast feast to come and to prepare his digestion, lining his stomach for riches for which his dull daily fare has not prepared him. We shall tentatively use the events of—to make a conservative guess—and present myself on that date with a nice birthday gift—24 November, six and a half weeks from now, neither too optimistic nor too stodgy, something like: “page ii: *24 November, 1922. At the Deir Bahari site. I cleared away the loose rocks and descended to my knees, and began slowly—painstakingly slowly, despite my pounding heart—to widen the hole in the millennia-old heaped rubble. The light shook in the hands of the irrationally frightened Abdullah. ‘It’s all right, man. Just give me the torch,’ I whispered, and held my eye to the narrow aperture. ‘Yes, yes . . .’ ‘Please, what does His Lordship see?’ ‘Immortality, Abdullah, I see immortality.’”*

**Cover design:** photo of RMT standing alongside Atum-hadu's golden (one safely projects) sarcophagus. Native labourers in work robes standing off to the side. *Ralph M. Trilipush and the Discovery of the Tomb of King Atum-hadu by Ralph M. Trilipush*. Subtitle: *Including the archaeologist's private diary, notes, and sketches*. Harvard University Press, 1923. **Dedication page.** A discovery of this magnitude simply cannot be achieved without the tireless help and inspirational example of several other contributors. To my team of nearly 500 Egyptian workers, whose diligence was matched only by their devotion to me and our common effort, who suspended what for them must have been an excruciating disbelief and instead displayed a simple faith that the objects I unearthed had significance beyond their shiny lustre, I offer my sincerest gratitude. And, in particular, to my headman, Abdullah, who knew how to dispense to the men discipline and *baksheesh* in just the right proportions, and whose fierce loyalty to me and quaint efforts to wrestle with the complexities of English touched and amused me in equal measure during our weeks of great toil and peril, I offer a hearty *salaam!* Mr. Chester Crawford Finneran, of Finneran's Finer Finery, is a gentleman of magnificent depth and parts, a discerning collector of ancient art, a man of force but also of finesse, not at all what one would have expected to find in an American, let alone a vaunted 'captain of commerce.' But our 'CCF' has proven himself worthy of the noble, ancient Egyptian title of Master of Largesse, that generous and trusted dispenser of wisdom and wealth in times of need, and the title that Atum-hadu himself used in his poetic Admonitions to refer to his own trusted prime minister. The tomb of Atum-hadu is known to us thanks to CCF, my Master of Largesse, as well as my other partners in Hand-of-Atum Explorations, Limited. To my beloved fiancée, Margaret Finneran, words are insufficient to express my love, admiration, and gratitude. To my fellow explorers, who labour in the hot sands of our beloved adopted mother, I offer you my thanks for your collective example, your tireless and too often unrewarded dedication. In particular, I wish to mention that paragon of Egyptological exploration, my dear friend, Mr. Howard Carter, who as I set pen to paper here, is deep into his sixth season in an apparently fruitless quest for a chimerical tomb, that of a minor XVIIIth-Dynasty king called Tut-ankh-Amen. I now state publicly in these pages, that—fail or succeed—Mr. Carter's nearly senseless dedication (six years!) is a model to us all, and that for it I have admired him, even before I knew him and called him friend. I salute my elder comrade in dust, my mentor and

the dominant figure of the passing generation, reluctantly yielding us the torch. Finally, this book must certainly be dedicated to that great king Atum-hadu, and to his patron-god, the first Creator, Atum. The existence of Atum-hadu's tomb (and of Atum-hadu himself) was long doubted by many, but Atum-hadu's genius, his reign, his poetry: all of these I honour as I greet him across more than 3500 years, I, who never doubted him. Majesty, the world gazes upon you now, in your golden tomb, amidst your vast treasures, in your cracking brown mummy wraps. The world marvels at your life, your words, your brilliance. The world in respectful awe gazes upon your noble organs in their canop jars. This is the very immortality you pursued and deserved, eternal glory and celebrity.

**About the Author:** Professor Ralph M. Trilipush was born 24 November, 1892, the only child of the renowned soldier and explorer Ecgbert Trilipush, and was raised a well-adored, if not positively spoilt, only child in the green, idyllic comfort of Trilipush Hall in Kent, England. Educated at home by tutors, he displayed at a precocious age a staggering aptitude for language and an uncanny absorption in ancient Egypt. By the age of ten, he had mastered the three written forms of ancient Egyptian, and had begun translating ancient documents into English. By twelve, he had recalculated the accepted dates of the Egyptian dynasties and kingly reigns, pinpointing with greater accuracy than any acknowledged scholar the gaps in modern Egyptological understanding. Admired by his peers, remarked upon by his elders, he went early up to Balliol, Oxford, where he was widely viewed as Egyptology's greatest hope, along with his dear friend, Hugo St. John Marlowe. At Oxford, the two students worked under the guidance of the late Professor Clement Wexler, participating in his efforts to prove or disprove definitively the existence of the then-apocryphal XIIIth-Dynasty king and erotic poet Atum-hadu. His master's work complete, Trilipush's doctoral studies were cut short by the Great War, during which both he and Marlowe were stationed in Egypt as officers in counterintelligence. There, under enemy fire, the two explorers managed to unearth Fragment C of Atum-hadu's *Admonitions* from a cliff-side path near Deir el Bahari, taking a giant's step towards proving that king's existence and identity as the poet of the previously translated Fragments A and B. Shortly after this discovery, Trilipush was sent along to advise Australian forces invading Gallipoli, in which combat he was wounded and for some time missing and believed dead. Entirely alone, he trekked back to Egypt, arriving after the Armistice, only to learn that his great friend Marlowe had been killed while on expedition in an unsecured part of the Egyptian desert. After demobilisation, Trilipush secured Fragment C, bringing it to the United States of America, where he launched a brilliant academic career. He produced the definitive, if controversial, translation and analysis of all three Atum-haduan fragments, published under the title *Desire and Deceit in Ancient Egypt* (Collins Amorous Literature, 1920). The extraordinary sales of this short masterwork confirmed Trilipush's unique position as both an impeccable scholar and a popular interpreter of Egyptian studies.

His full professorship and subsequent quick ascension to Chair of the Egyptology Department at Harvard University followed his discovery on his thirtieth birthday, 24 November, 1922, of the tomb of Atum-hadu himself, and the publication of the gripping but academically flawless work you now hold in your perspiring hands. The discovery of Atum-hadu's tomb was quickly hailed as unprecedented, the most financially and scientifically rewarding discovery in the history of Egyptian excavation.

Professor Trilipush was knighted in 1923 and has been honoured by governments and universities throughout the civilised world.

He is married to the former Margaret Finneran of Boston, Massachusetts, USA, the fantastically wealthy department store heiress.



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