

Tomb Of The Golden Bird

Original Screenplay

by

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Property Of:
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TOMB OF THE GOLDEN BIRD

FADE IN:

EXT VALLEY OF THE TOMBS OF THE KINGS NIGHT

A landscape of harsh stone and sand. Awesome and terrifying in its desolation, illuminated only by moonlight. SUPERIMPOSE: EGYPT, VALLEY OF THE TOMBS OF THE KINGS, 1922.

A dozen Egyptian, gallabiya-clad workmen tread towards the crest of a precipice, their lanterns throwing macabre shadows.

The workmen are led by Englishman HOWARD CARTER, a dashing figure, early forties; an adventurer and self-taught Egyptologist. Carter is obsessed and driven by the mysteries of archeology. His tweed jacket and dusty Homburg are somewhat out of place in this uncivilized setting.

Walking closely behind Carter are his assistant A.R. "PECKY" CALLENDER and turbaned foreman AHMED GURGAR. Callender is in his twenties, prim, proper and never without his notepad and pencil. Gurgar is in his forties, hardened by a lifetime in the desert and experienced by countless digging expeditions.

EXT VALLEY PRECIPICE

Carter stops at the edge of the cliff, his eyes searching the darkness. Anger flashes across his face.

A worn rope tied to an outcropping of rock and disappearing over the edge of the cliff.

Carter, Callender and Gurgar cautiously peer over the ledge.

The rope dangles down to a cave 130 feet from the top of the cliff but still over 200 feet to the valley floor. Lantern light flickers faintly from the cave's opening. Unintelligible VOICES drift softly up to the ledge.

Carter, Callender and Gurgar back up from the precipice.

GURGAR
(whispering)
Tomb robbers.

Carter points towards a large, firmly planted outcropping of rock.

CONTINUED:

CARTER
(whispering, intense)
A rope, quickly. Right there.

One of the men passes a coil of rope to Gurgar who expertly secures it to the rocks. Carter cuts the tomb robbers' rope and it falls away into the darkness. His men watch with amazement as Carter secures himself to his rope, hands Callender his hat, then disappears over the ledge.

Carter repels down the face of the cliff, slowing as he approaches the mouth of the cave.

INT CAVE

Eight TOMB ROBBERS, all hard men, work to clear rubble in the cave's outer passageway. They turn at the sound of FALLING ROCKS.

Carter suddenly appears, dangling parallel to the tomb's opening.

Some of the robbers drop their tools in shock.

CARTER
(in Arabic, with authority)
You, there! All of you. You can put down your tools and climb back up on my rope now. Or you can stay down here until the vultures eat the last scrap of your livers.

The robbers exchange hasty, helpless glances. Carter's angry, determined expression tells them he isn't bluffing.

EXT VALLEY PRECIPICE

Only minutes later, a tomb robber is pulled up onto the cliff ledge under Callender and Gurgar's supervision. He joins his humbled companions who are guarded by Carter's crew.

INT CAVE

Carter watches as the last tomb robber begins his climb up the cliff face. Alone in the cave, Carter takes the lantern and examines the tunnel. The lateral passageway, filled with rubble, bores several feet into the cliff, then opens to a stairway that ends at a sealed door. Carter peers closely at the door, unable to conceal the electric excitement that sparks from every pore of his body.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT VALLEY PRECIPICE DAY

The same precipice but now with a campsite of ragged tents, work tables and scattered tools. The entire area shimmers in the heat, appearing even more inhospitable in the burning rays of the sun. The rope has been replaced by a jury-rigged elevator operating on pulleys.

MORCOS BEY HANNA, the Egyptian government's minister of public works, approaches on horseback. Hanna is in his thirties, a clever politician dedicated to preserving his country's heritage. He is accompanied by the bearded Frenchman PIERRE LACAU, about the same age, an ambitious manipulator and director of the antiquities service. They dismount and make their way through the workers, inspecting the work site as they go.

INT CAVE

Carter working in shirtsleeves, his enthusiasm at a peak, watches with Gurgar as his men use wicker baskets to clear the last of the rubble away from a tomb door.

CARTER
Alright, stand clear.

Carter steps forward with a sledge hammer and begins to swing zealously at the door.

EXT VALLEY PRECIPICE DAY

Hanna and Lacau approach the elevator.

Callender steps from a tent, sees Hanna and Lacau, and approaches them.

CALLENDER
Gentlemen...

HANNA
Carter. Where is Mr. Carter?

CALLENDER
Just down there.

Callender points, attempting to hide his amusement. Hanna and Lacau peer cautiously over the ledge but hastily back away.

LACAU
I suppose we can wait.

INT CAVE

Carter's anticipation is almost uncontrollable as he and Gurgar clear the remains of the doorway from the tomb entrance. A worker passes forward a lantern. Carter takes it and enters the tomb.

INT TOMB

Carter is followed in by Gurgar and a few of the men. The chamber is littered with valueless broken pottery. Bitter disappointment floods over Carter.

CARTER

Damn it. Damn every last motherless tomb robber.

Gurgar shrugs knowingly as Carter exits the tomb.

EXT VALLEY PRECIPICE

The elevator barely reaches the top of the ledge before Carter steps out of it, followed by Gurgar. He is not pleased to see Hanna and Lacau walking towards him with condescending attitudes. Callender is a few paces behind them.

HANNA

Mr. Carter.

Carter keeps walking towards the center of the camp with Gurgar behind him. Hanna and Lacau fall in beside him, Callender just behind.

HANNA (CONT'D)

Mr. Carter. A word, please.

CARTER

Mr. Hanna... Monsieur Lacau. To what do I owe this unexpected visit? Decided to take some afternoon sun?

HANNA

(unamused)

Official business, if you please.

CARTER

Monsieur Lacau already knows I reported this tomb to the antiquities service. And I know Lord Carnarvon's excavation contract is in order, so...

CONTINUED:

LACAU

It is something else.

HANNA

We're following up on a report that you released a group of tomb robbers without reporting them to the authorities.

Carter stops near a group of his workers, takes a look at Hanna and Lacau, then LAUGHS.

LACAU

This is a serious matter, monsieur.

CARTER

Oh, I'm certain it is. But if I've turned anyone loose it doesn't make one bloody bit of difference. There's nothing left to steal down there. Not one damn thing.

Carter's disappointment is obvious. Hanna and Lacau notice.

LACAU

So, you've uncovered another empty tomb. When will you learn the English have already taken anything left to be taken?

HANNA

The tombs are all the same, plundered countless years ago by thieves long dead.

The other workers are paying attention, now. Gurgar shrugs timidly.

GURGAR

I believe it to be true. I've said it many times.

CARTER

There's at least one left. One still untouched.

HANNA

(with contempt)

Tutankhamen again.

Lacau LAUGHS openly and the workers join him.

CARTER

The evidence points to it. Artifacts uncovered by other expeditions point to it.

CONTINUED:

LACAU
A fantasy at best.

HANNA
At best.

CARTER
If that's what you believe, why do you
pay such close attention to the dig sites?

Hanna is momentarily flustered, then gathers himself.

HANNA
It hardly matters what my personal views
might be. I've a responsibility to Egypt.
To safeguard government treasures, no
matter how remote the possibility might
be of finding them.

CARTER
Yes, no matter how remote.

Carter strides away, Callender and Gurgar hurrying behind him.

EXT CASTLE CARTER DUSK

A small, two-story, domed adobe house boasting a small, thorny acacia and a couple of tamarisk trees. A MESSENGER riding a donkey approaches the house.

EXT 2ND FLOOR VERANDA

Carter, lost in thought, slumps in a wicker chair, contemplatively watching the sun set over the Nile. Maps, charts and other papers are piled on a small table next to him. Callender enters holding a telegram.

CALENDER
Telegram. Just arrived.

Carter takes the telegram, opens it. As he reads, his spirits rise.

CALENDER (CONT'D)
Good news?

CARTER
(reading)
Lord Carnarvon. Calling me to England.
As soon as possible.

CONTINUED:

Carter gets up, paces with growing enthusiasm.

CARTER (CONT'D)
This is excellent timing. Really.

CALLENDER
Sir?

CARTER
The timing. We'll have the opportunity to plan out next season's digging. It's perfect, really. See about the earliest possible passage, Pecky?

Callender nods and exits as Carter begins gathering his papers.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT HIGHCLERE CASTLE DAY

A massive, regal structure with immaculately landscaped grounds. SUPERIMPOSE: HIGHCLERE CASTLE, ENGLAND. A taxi makes its way up the long, gravel drive and pulls to a stop at the front entrance. Carter climbs out of the taxi and pays the DRIVER.

INT EVELYN'S BEDROOM

LADY EVELYN CARNARVON, beautiful, age twenty-one, adventurous and in love with adventure, possessing the energy and interests of a tomboy but unmistakably feminine. She looks through her bedroom window.

Seen through the window, Carter, his Homburg firmly in place, pulls his travel bag from the back of the cab, then reaches inside and emerges with a bird cage containing a yellow canary.

Trying to contain her excitement, Evelyn quickly checks her appearance in the mirror, then races out of her room.

INT HIGHCLERE ENTRY HALL

The CLANG of a massive door knocker echoes through the entry hall. ETHRIDGE, the butler, heads for the door. Evelyn rushes down the stairs and across the hall.

EVELYN
(anxiously)
No, Ethridge, wait!

CONTINUED:

ETHRIDGE
(shocked)
Lady Evelyn.

EVELYN
Let me.

She barely beats Ethridge to the door and waves him back.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
I'll answer it.

Ethridge steps back, offering a surrendering gesture towards the door. Evelyn gathers her composure, then pulls open the door to reveal Carter holding his bag in one hand, the canary cage in the other, a rolled up map tucked under an arm.

He is surprised to see her, momentarily stunned by her beauty.

CARTER
Lady Evelyn. Hello.

EVELYN
Mr. Carter. We've been expecting you.

Carter enters the hall, gradually recovering from Evelyn's influence. Ethridge steps forward to close the door.

CARTER
Hello, Ethridge.

ETHRIDGE
Sir. Good to see you again.

Ethridge takes the bag and the cage from Carter. Carter gives Ethridge his hat. Determined to make an impact, Evelyn gives Carter a hug.

EVELYN
Oh, it is good to see you again.

Evelyn lets her cheek linger against his. The allure of her closeness is not lost on Carter but...

CARNARVON (O.S.)
Carter. There you are.

Evelyn reluctantly releases Carter. They turn to see...

LORD CARNARVON approaching down the hall with an air of English aplomb. He is fifty-three, wears a trim mustache, carries himself aristocratically and exudes a forceful energy.

CONTINUED:

Carnarvon is normally a friendly and extroverted free spirit but at the moment he is preoccupied, a man with an unpleasant task. He offers his daughter a brief, disapproving glance.

Carter eagerly turns away from Evelyn, to her chagrin, and shakes Carnarvon's hand.

CARTER

Lord Carnarvon.

CARNARVON

Howard! Welcome.

(noticing the canary)

I say, what's this?

CARTER

Oh, I came across him before I came up from London. Just had to have him. Need a bit of company, I guess.

CARNARVON

Ethridge'll see to it. Come along. We've quite a bit to catch up on.

Carnarvon leads Carter down the hall, into the study. Ethridge leaves Evelyn with a glance laced with amusement. She is seething.

INT CARNARVON'S STUDY

A large, mahogany paneled room, floor to ceiling books and Egyptian artifacts placed in prominent locations. Carnarvon makes his way to his desk and a cigar box while Carter drops the rolled map on a sofa and paces with stored up energy.

CARNARVON

Cigar?

CARTER

No... thanks. So, we've pretty much exhausted the western section of the valley. I admit it's been a year of rather barren labor but we've kept—

CARNARVON

(interrupting)

A drink, then?

CARTER

Whiskey, if you have it.

Carnarvon takes a bottle from a nearby tray, pours two glasses.

CONTINUED:

CARTER (CONT'D)

Anyway, we've covered the most promising areas all the way to the valley's east wall.

Carnarvon, troubled, comes around his desk, hands a whiskey to Carter and sinks into a chair.

CARNARVON

Please, sit down.

Carter finds a chair, sips his drink.

CARTER

We should probably work on a budget for the next dig. And I can show you where I think we—

CARNARVON

(interrupting, gently)

I've decided not to pursue any further digging.

Carter is stunned and remains silent a few moments.

CARTER

What? Why?

Carnarvon shifts uncomfortably in his chair.

CARNARVON

Economic conditions... since the war. Been very unfavorable, you know. I simply can't invest any more searching for something no one even believes is really there.

CARTER

But there is. There's at least one more royal tomb.

CARNARVON

If there is, it's looted like all the rest.

CARTER

No. You can't stop now. Lacau's made it clear in more than one conversation how he'd love to see your excavation contract lapse.

CONTINUED:

CARNARVON

Dear God, man. The Amherst Papyrus even documents sacred scribes and high priests looting royal tombs during the time of Rameses IX. There's no tomb that's left untouched.

Carter fights to hold on to his composure but can't stop from rising from his chair.

CARTER

But I'm certain of Tutankhamen's.

CARNARVON

I'm well aware—

CARTER

(interrupting)

But the evidence. Davis's expedition, before World War I. He thought he'd actually found the tomb, looted. He didn't of course but the hieroglyphics on the pottery fragments point to an intact tomb.

CARNARVON

You've been heading up these expeditions for me for what, eighteen years? I've already invested over 50,000 pounds, and you, eighteen years of digging with damn little to show for it.

CARTER

Here. Just look, here.

Carter unrolls the map, spreading it across the table in front of Carnarvon. The map is smudged and frayed, crisscrossed with grid lines. Most of the grid squares have a line drawn through their centers.

CARTER (CONT'D)

I've divided the valley into sectors. We've dug in these... all these. There's only one area we haven't touched. Here, just below the hypogeum of Rameses VI.

CARNARVON

More of a triangle than a square.

CARTER

Because of the cliff's configuration. See how it extends out, here.

CONTINUED:

CARNARVON

And why was this area left alone?

CARTER

The Rameses tomb's always been a tourist attraction. The Egyptian guides bring them through during the winter season. We'd have to close them down. And the ruins of stone huts and rubbish from the laborers who worked on it cover the place.

CARNARVON

Well, there. They wouldn't build their huts across the opening of a pharaoh's tomb.

CARTER

Unless they never knew it was there. Centuries of earthquakes, rock slides... even flooding could have covered it.

Carnarvon stares into his whiskey glass, shaking his head. Carter is desperate. He draws himself upright, taking on an air of formality.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Alright, then. I ask your permission to work the concession one more season... at my expense.

It is Carnarvon's turn to be surprised and he is out of his chair.

CARNARVON

Your expense?

CARTER

If I find nothing, then I'll concede the valley's exhausted. If I do find the tomb, credit for the discovery goes to you.

CARNARVON

I can't allow that.

CARTER

And why not?

CARNARVON

(awkwardly)

You can't possibly have that kind of money, for one thing.

CONTINUED:

CARTER

I'd have to... make arrangements.

CARNARVON

You've put me in quite a position.

Carter holds Carnarvon's gaze.

CARNARVON (CONT'D)

Well, you... you work for me.

Resentment flashes across Carter's face.

CARTER

(painfully)

Ah, of course. I've forgotten myself. How could a mere employee of one of England's oldest families dare to make such a proposition?

CARNARVON

That's uncalled for. We've been friends for years.

CARTER

At least I always thought so.

CARNARVON

But this kind of thing just isn't done.

Carter remains silent. Carnarvon is really struggling now, his sense of propriety, class distinction and fair-play challenged.

CARNARVON (CONT'D)

Alright. I'll amend my decision to putting you on notice. One more season. One more dig in the valley... at my expense.

CARTER

Excellent!

CARNARVON

But if nothing's found, that's the end of it.

CARTER

Agreed!

Carter enthusiastically grasps his friend's hand. Carnarvon is gradually won over and allows himself a warm, excited smile.

EXT HIGHCLERE CASTLE NIGHT

The castle radiates light. Expensive cars attended by CHAUFFEURS line the driveway. MUSIC drifts out from behind the stone walls.

INT HIGHCLERE BALLROOM

The room is crowded with English ARISTOCRACY and upper-crust SOCIALITES dressed in their most expensive finery. SERVANTS roam the crowd offering drinks and appetizers while a small ORCHESTRA provides DANCE MUSIC. EVELYN, devastatingly beautiful in her ball gown, moves through the crowd, searching. She pauses, spotting her prey several yards away.

Carter, Lord Carnarvon and two GENTLEMEN are engaged in conversation.

Evelyn approaches Carter.

GENTLEMAN 1

But you say the use of these, what is it, three coffins is unconfirmed?

CARTER

Some ancient papyrus describe the funerary rights of Egyptian royals but no one's ever seen first-hand evidence.

GENTLEMAN 2

But, why?

Carter hesitates as Carnarvon levels a meaningful gaze on him.

CARTER

Because no one's ever uncovered a royal tomb completely intact.

GENTLEMAN 2

Never?

CARNARVON

Not so far. Coffins are either destroyed or missing altogether if they're made of gold. And the wrappings are always pulled from the mummies.

GENTLEMAN 1

Ghastly! What on earth for?

CONTINUED:

CARTER

To get to the gold jewelry and precious stones dressing the mummy.

Evelyn daintily elbows her way into the group.

EVELYN

The Egyptians believed in sending their pharaohs to the after life quite well dressed. Are you gentlemen talking business again? Even in the middle of such a beautiful party?

CARNARVON

Ah, Evelyn. It is a fine party. And an excellent orchestra, this time 'round., don't you think?

EVELYN

I'd enjoy it more if I had a dance partner. Mr. Carter?

Carter is a bit surprised and a bit on the spot.

GENTLEMAN 2

You can't pass up an invitation like that, old man. Not from such a lovely woman.

Carter hesitantly offers his arm and Evelyn smugly takes it.

CARTER

Lady Evelyn.

Carter leads her onto the dance floor and they fall into step with the music. Evelyn pulls Carter in closer as they dance. He's trying not to enjoy her closeness but she makes it difficult.

EVELYN

You're lucky I'll dance with you at all after how you ignored me yesterday.

CARTER

I hardly ignored you.

EVELYN

Really?

CARTER

I did come on business and your father was expecting me.

CONTINUED:

EVELYN
(mischievously)
So, you were more interested in talking
to my father than me?

CARTER
Well... yes.

Evelyn stiffens indignantly. She pulls away from him, makes her way through the dancing couples and exits through the open terrace doors. Amused and mildly exasperated, Carter follows her.

EXT HIGHCLERE TERRACE

Carter walks onto the terrace as a COUPLE heads back inside. The orchestra begins playing a slow, ROMANTIC TUNE. Evelyn, her back to Carter, stands in a shadowy corner of the moonlit terrace.

CARTER
I'm sorry if my answer offended you.

EVELYN
What you're sorry about hardly concerns
me.

CARTER
You really shouldn't have gotten so upset.

Evelyn turns to face him, smiling wickedly, moving closer.

EVELYN
It got you to follow me out here, didn't
it?

CARTER
(laughing)
And I thought you were enjoying the dance.

EVELYN
Since you managed to ruin our first dance,
perhaps you'd like the chance to make it
up to me.

CARTER
I ruined...?

Carter stops himself, seeing the mischief in her eyes. He surrenders, holding out his arms to her. Evelyn steps in and they begin to dance. She gradually moves closer to him. In spite of himself, Carter is beginning to enjoy the sensation.

CONTINUED:

EVELYN
(softly)
You know... I've wanted it to be like
this with us since I was fourteen.

He is surprised and searches for the right response.

CARTER
Fourteen?

EVELYN
Mmm...

CARTER
A long time to have a... a crush.

EVELYN
Well, it might have started as just a
crush, but now...

Evelyn moves in closer, raises her mouth to him. Carter hesitates but he can't resist, gently kissing her. She rests her head on his shoulder as they continue their dance. Carter is troubled.

CARTER
(gently)
Your father and I've been friends for
years, now.

EVELYN
(facetiously)
I think that's lovely.

CARTER
I wouldn't want anything to jeopardize
that.

Evelyn moves in even closer.

EVELYN
One of the things I like best about you
is that you stand up to my father.

Carter is succumbing to her warmth.

CARTER
He's also a benefactor.

Carter summons all his strength and manages to gently hold Evelyn away from him, stopping the dance. She doesn't like it.

CONTINUED:

CARTER (CONT'D)

Both financially and by enabling me to pursue work that I'm totally committed to.

EVELYN

(frustrated)

Overly committed to.

CARTER

It's a friendship I can't afford to risk.

Too frustrated for words, growing angry; Evelyn leaves Carter and hurries inside. Carter gathers his thoughts a moment, then goes back inside. Reveal Lord Carnarvon, watching disapprovingly from an adjoining terrace.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT HIGHCLERE TERRACE DAY

Evelyn sits at a table laid out for breakfast. Lord Carnarvon joins her. He serves himself from covered trays.

CARNARVON

So, Carter's already left for his boat.

EVELYN

Quite early. I certainly wasn't up.

CARNARVON

(carefully)

Interesting man.

Evelyn looks questioningly at her father.

CARNARVON (CONT'D)

I mean, self-taught Egyptologist. Totally caught up in his work. Always has been.

EVELYN

Are you trying to say something, father?

CARNARVON

Just that... well, it seems you're rather taken with him somehow. And I must say, it baffles me.

EVELYN

I think he's wonderful. Terribly exciting.

CONTINUED:

CARNARVON

Howard Carter?

EVELYN

He lives such an, an adventurous life. The dangerous places he goes. The exotic people he meets, works with.

CARNARVON

My life's been quite the same.

Evelyn gently, understandingly places her hand over her father's.

EVELYN

Certainly true, especially when you were younger. But the main reason you ever traveled to Egypt at all was doctor's orders. Advice of a dry climate for your health.

CARNARVON

He's an employee, Evey.

EVELYN

Not good enough for the Carnarvon line?

CARNARVON

The man works for me. And his people are... he comes from common people, his background is—

EVELYN

(interrupting)

He's been your friend and practically a partner for years.

CARNARVON

And worthy of those positions, but we still can't ignore centuries of English tradition. Some things simply aren't done.

Evelyn has heard enough, rises from the table.

EVELYN

Well, father, there's really no reason for concern. It appears your Mr. Carter couldn't be less interested in me. And he's gone back to his precious Egypt.

Evelyn exits leaving her father somewhat doubtful.

DISSOLVE TO:

CONTINUED:

CARTER
What are they looking at?

GURGAR
The golden bird.

CALLENDER
The canary?

GURGAR
We do not see many birds in Egypt.
Certainly not beautiful and gold as this
one is. A good omen.

CARTER
I hope so. Now, see to those men, won't
you?

GURGAR
Right away.

Gurgar hurries away, quickly swallowed up in the crowd.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT VALLEY OF THE TOMBS OF THE KINGS DAY

The air is absolutely still, the silence absolute and the desolate loneliness all-consuming. The sun creates a burning furnace of jagged rock and sand.

EXT TOMB SITE DAY

Gurgar supervises his WORKERS using wicker baskets to excavate the shale and limestone chips from an area near the cliff face. The remnants of a few stone huts protrude from the sand. Carter and Callender stand nearby, consulting Carter's grid map and making notes. A few donkeys are tethered in the shade of the cliff.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT CASTLE CARTER DAY

Early morning. A donkey is tethered at one of the trees. A few LOCALS group at a corner of the house, straining to see inside.

Seen through a window, the yellow canary hops around the cage.

INT CASTLE CARTER

Carter descends the stairs pulling on his coat and taking a bite out of a biscuit. A pot of tea is sitting on a small dining table littered with books and papers. Carter prepares a cup, then sips it while feeding the last of the biscuit to the canary through the cage bars. He glances through the window.

Seen through the window, the locals stare at the canary.

Amused, Carter grabs his hat.

EXT CASTLE CARTER

Carter exits the house, unties the donkey and climbs aboard.

EXT VALLEY OF THE TOMBS OF THE KINGS

Carter ambles up the harsh valley floor on his donkey. It is unsettlingly quiet. Looking ahead, his face registers concern.

Seen over the donkey's head, Gurgar waits impatiently with a group of workers. No work is being done. Gurgar hurries forward.

Carter jumps from the donkey as Gurgar approaches.

CARTER

What? What is it?

GURGAR

Come. Please, just come.

Carter follows close behind Gurgar.

CARTER

Why aren't they working? I made it clear that...

Carter stops short, stunned to silence as the group of workers make way for him. He slowly kneels down, fascinated.

A pile of limestone chips are piled around a shallow, freshly dug hole that reveals a step cut directly into the limestone bedrock.

Carter straightens up and looks questioningly at Gurgar.

GURGAR

Work started maybe an hour ago.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

GURGAR (CONT'D)

We cleared the first hut for about two feet when we came on this.

CARTER

Let's keep going, then. Carefully.

Gurgar gestures to his men.

GURGAR

(in Arabic)

Back to work. No shovels near the step.

The workers resume clearing the limestone chips away from the first step. Callender approaches on a donkey, dismounts and hurries forward. He immediately sees the step and his mouth drops open in amazement.

CALLENDER

My God...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT TOMB SITE

Later, the same morning, the sun beating down. Carter and Callender supervise Gurgar and his workers. The piles of limestone chips are higher and five steps are uncovered.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT TOMB SITE

Early afternoon, the same day. Carter paces, sweat beading on his face. Callender stands over the hole now revealing twelve steps as Gurgar and his men painstakingly dig.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT TOMB SITE

Late afternoon, the same day. The sun is blistering. Carter sits in the small area of shade beneath the cliff face jotting notes.

CALLENDER (O.S.)

Mr. Carter.

Carter quickly gets to his feet and joins Callender at the mouth of the excavation.

CONTINUED:

Gurgar is at the bottom of the steps carefully pulling limestone chips away from a wooden door, still partially buried. Carter joins Gurgar at the bottom of the steps and helps him, passing buckets of rubble up to the other workers until the door three-quarters uncovered. The door bears clay seals. Carter examines them closely, his excitement building.

The clay seals bear impressions of a couchant jackal with nine prostrate prisoners.

GURGAR

It is good, yes?

CARTER

The seal of the high priests of the royal necropolis.

Carter stares at the door, fighting every instinct to smash the seals and tear it down. He gestures to Gurgar to follow and climbs the steps.

His men watch anxiously as Carter paces at the top of the excavation, wrestling with an internal struggle of giant proportions. He pauses to stare down at the door, his face strained with tension, then more pacing. He finally stops.

CARTER (CONT'D)

(to Gurgar)

Fill it in.

Gurgar doesn't think he heard correctly.

GURGAR

Fill it in?

CALLENDER

(astounded)

What?

CARTER

Use most of your men to fill it in. Right to the top. Have the others build a guard hut...

(pointing)

There should do.

GURGAR

(to the workers, in Arabic)

Fill the hole. All the way to the top.

The workers hesitate, looking at Carter as if he is insane.

CONTINUED:

GURGAR (CONT'D)
 (in Arabic)
 You heard me. Go on, fill it in, you
 lazy jackals.

The men shrug and get to work.

CARTER
 You usually keep a rifle...

GURGAR
 Yes. Over here.

Gurgar hurries to a stand of rocks against the cliff, retrieves an old carbine and gives it to Carter. Carter checks to make certain the gun is loaded, then passes the rifle to Callender.

CARTER
 Stand guard, here, until I get back with
 a relief.

Carter heads for his donkey.

CALENDER
 Where are you going?

CARTER
 Luxor. I'll speak with the authorities
 about providing guards.

Carter climbs up on his donkey and heads it back down the valley.

CARTER (CONT'D)
 And I've got to get a wire off to Lord
 Carnarvon.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT STEAMSHIP DECK DAY

A telegram FILLS SCREEN. It reads: AT LAST HAVE MADE A WONDERFUL
 DISCOVERY IN VALLEY. MAGNIFICENT TOMB WITH SEALS INTACT.
 RECOVERED SAME FOR YOUR ARRIVAL. CONGRATULATIONS.

Reveal the telegram in the hand of Lord Carnarvon leaning on the
 deck rail of the ship. He reads the wire again with great
 anticipation and excitement.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT ALEXANDRIA DOCKS DAY

Carter, tired and anxious, paces as PASSENGERS begin coming down the gangway from the ship tied up at the dock. Callender stands by with a couple of the men from Gurgar's digging crew.

Lord Carnarvon appears at the ship rail and waves.

Carter waves back, then stops suddenly, surprised.

Evelyn appears beside her father, her devilish smile on display.

Carnarvon and Evelyn make their way down the gangway to the dock, followed by PORTERS carrying their trunks. Carter meets them, shaking Carnarvon's hand with vigorous enthusiasm.

CARTER

Thank God you're finally here.

CARNARVON

Know exactly what you mean. Seemed like the longest damn trip I've ever been on. Congratulations. Wonderful work!

CARTER

Thank you.

EVELYN

Congratulations.

CARTER

Lady Evelyn.

Evelyn embraces Carter, lingering longer than she should. Preoccupied, he quickly pulls away, turning to Carnarvon. Evelyn isn't happy about being dismissed.

CARTER (CONT'D)

I've brought men to see to your luggage, so we can go straight on to the tomb. If that's acceptable.

CARNARVON

Where else would I possibly want to go?

Carter leads Carnarvon away.

CARTER

I had Gurgar re-excavate the entrance yesterday. To avoid further delay.

CONTINUED:

CARNARVON

Very good.

Evelyn hangs back where Callender is supervising the luggage.

EVELYN

Hello, Pecky.

CALENDER

Lady Evelyn. A pleasure to see you back in Egypt again.

EVELYN

He looks frightful.

CALENDER

Longest two weeks of his life, waiting for your father. Hasn't slept a night since he uncovered the steps. And I doubt he's bothered with much food. Don't know how he managed it, really. Most men would've broken down that door without a second thought.

EVELYN

Indeed.

CALENDER

I've watched him spend a good deal of time in the valley. Just pacing around the excavation site.

Callender notices her concern as they begin to walk.

CALENDER (CONT'D)

No need to worry, though. His nerves have eased considerably just since your ship tied up.

EVELYN

Well, there's hope then.

EXT TOMB SITE

Carter, leads Carnarvon and Evelyn from their donkeys with Callender bringing up the rear. Gurgar and his men are waiting next to the freshly excavated tomb entrance. Armed SOLDIERS from the Sudanese Camel Coast Guard are posted strategically in the area, one of them in the new guard hut near the tomb steps. Evelyn remains at the top of the steps with Gurgar and Callender.

CONTINUED:

Carnarvon follows Carter down the steps. They both examine the door and clay seals.

CARTER
Ahmed. A brush.

Gurgar drops a brush down to Carter. Carter gently brushes dirt and sand from the door. His face is suddenly anguished.

CARTER (CONT'D)
Bloody hell!

CARNARVON
What is it?

Carter points.

The bottom section of the door does not match the wood of the top.

CARTER
This bottom half's been rebuilt.

CARNARVON
(disappointed)
Someone's been inside?

CARTER
(bitterly)
Looks like it.

GURGAR
Perhaps the golden bird has guided you
falsely.

Carter is a bit annoyed.

EVELYN
Golden bird?

CALLENDER
The fellahin credit Mr. Carter's canary
with leading him to the tomb. The golden
bird, they call it. A very good omen.

CARTER
They call it Tomb of the Golden Bird.

CARNARVON
Rather colorful, name, don't you think?

Carter manages a sideways glance at Carnarvon.

CONTINUED:

CARTER

Let's see what we've got here.

Carter begins to carefully remove the clay seals.