Prologue

Approximately l,537 BC - Gizeh, Egypt

The High Priest, Manek Malemar, followed closely by the stone mason, entered the Great Pyramid and followed the dimly lit passageway into what would be the tomb of the boy king, Tutankeman. Although Tutankeman reigned still, his final resting place was being prepared so it would be ready when it came time for him to pass into the next world. The stone mason followed the High Priest into the mummy's chamber, where the boy king's body would be prepared and the sacred rituals observed, before it was placed in its golden coffin elsewhere under the Great Pyramid.

The aged stone mason carried a sharp, long-handled object similar to an axe, a jar containing a mixture which would solidify into a paste not unlike cement, and a trowel. Although the temperature in the pyramid was cool, the stone mason was sweating, for he did not like what he had been tasked to do. Manek Malemar halted when he entered the empty mummy's chamber and turned towards the stone mason. In the dim light the High Priest's eyes appeared blood red to the stone mason.

“Come here,” the High Priest commanded.

The stone mason slowly did as he was told.

“Now do what I have commanded you,” he said.

“I cannot, “he said.” Falling prostrate at the High Priest’s feet, his filthy robe mingling with the dust on the stone floor.

“You will do it,” he said, grabbing his robes with an inhuman strength and lifting him bodily from the floor of the tomb onto his feet.

“I will be condemned to death if I defile the tomb of the Great One,” he whined.

“You will die now if you do not,” The High Priest threatened.

The stone mason picked up the axe-shaped object and raised it high, but did not swing it down.

“Do it, I say!” the High Priest commanded.

“May the Gods spare me,” he cried. The axe made a swishing sound as he swung it through its arc and struck where he had aimed. Blood splattered and ran on the floor.

The High Priest picked up the finger which had been cut from his own right hand. The finger jerked slightly as blood continued to flow from it. “You do your work well, stone-cutter. Perhaps you should have been a butcher instead.”

The stone mason looked at the High Priest's right hand, than turned quickly away, afraid of what he saw. The blood was spurting from where the finger had been lopped off. The High Priest did not seem to notice or care. “Continue, stone-mason, and I will give you your reward.”

Using the axe as a prying bar, he pried and wedged until a small fitted stone became loose in the socket over the entrance where it had been placed. It made a slight sucking sound as it was removed. The High Priest wrapped the finger in a filmy cloth, placed it into a small clay container and gave it to the stone mason. With a chisel-like object he hollowed out a hole from where the

block had been removed and inserted the container into the hole. When he reached for the block to replace it, he glanced at the High Priest.

His eyes opened wide and he paled when he saw that the High Priest was drinking the blood where as it spurted from his hand. He moaned involuntarily and redoubled his efforts to complete his task. Quickly he spread mortar on the edges of the stone he had removed and replaced it. He stood back and examined his work. It looked as it had before.

The High Priest noticed the job was finished and led the way out of the pyramid. When they exited into the moonlight he turned right and led the way around the pyramid to the far side, away from the palace.

"Please, my reward, High Priest. I wish to leave this place." His hands touched the vestments of the High Priest and the High Priest stopped as if he had been slapped.

"Yes, your reward. You did your work well. I promised you wealth which would last you till the day you should die and so it shall be."

With his uninjured left hand the High Priest removed a small leather purse from his robes. He showed it to the stone mason. "See... It is as I told you," he said, pouring out emeralds and rubies into his hands.

The stone mason's eyes grew large as he saw the wealth there.

"Is this enough to keep you rich for as long as you shall live, stone mason?" The High Priest asked, "Or do you require more?"

"It is enough, my Lord," he said, his eyes wide. He stuffed the jewels into his tattered robe and turned away, dropping his tools, knowing that he would never need them again.

He had taken three steps when he heard the sound of the axe as it swished through the air. He began to turn around. The blade made a soft thunking sound as it cut through his spinal cord and severed his head from his body. The head fell onto the sand upright, facing the High Priest, the scream frozen on the silent lips. The High Priest grabbed the body as it jerked and stuck his mouth over the fountain of blood which was gushing from the severed veins and arteries in his neck. He held the body in the air as the legs and arms jerked crazily, and continued to suck the blood long after the spasms had stopped.

When the body was dry he dropped it and left it where it lay with the jewels in the stone mason's pockets. "See stone mason. I promised you wealth to last you until the day you died. The jewels are yours to keep."

He turned away after wiping his mouth on the hem of his robe and walked away in the direction of the palace.

The next morning, armed guards awakened the High Priest an hour after dawn. He was strangely quiet, and accompanied them without question to the boy King's chamber. Tutankeman lay in his bed. He was weak and pale, and could not rise to sit up.

"I heard, but did not believe the stories about you, High Priest. But now my physician is dead, his throat ripped open and the blood drained from his body. He tried to tell me that the marks on my neck were caused by you, but I did not heed his truth. Now I understand. You wished to make me one of your own." His hand rubbed the bites on his neck as he spoke.

“But you are wrong, High Priest. I will die before I drink the blood of others and create sacrilege before the Gods. The physician's aide will give me a potion to help speed my way to join the Gods. I will do this before the next moon rises, and your unholy curse affects me.”

He raised himself slightly from his bed. “Guards, take the High Priest far away to the middle of the desert and set up camp there. When he cries for food, feed him his own bodily parts. He can drink his own blood and eat his own flesh. As you remove each part, seal the wound with a burning iron, so he will not bleed to death. When there is nothing but a trunk and a head left, let him starve. Guard him night and day until such time as he is dead.”

He turned back to the High Priest. “May you live a long life, High Priest,” he said.

Weakened, he fell backwards upon his bed, his eyes closed. He spoke in a whisper. “Guard, once he is dead pour oils upon him and burn him until nothing but ashes remain.

Are my instructions clear?”

“They are, my Lord,” the chief guard replied.

“Obey them, then.”

“It will be done, my Lord.”

The guards seized the High Priest and began escorting him out of the chamber, but the High Priest shrugged off their hands from his arm.

“Just a moment, boy King... This is not the end. My curse will live long after my body has become dust, l have seen to that. I will live again in the body of others.”

“Take him away, Guards. If he speaks again, remove his tongue,” Tutankeman said. “His words offend me.” The guards grabbed the High Priest and led him away. He spoke no more.