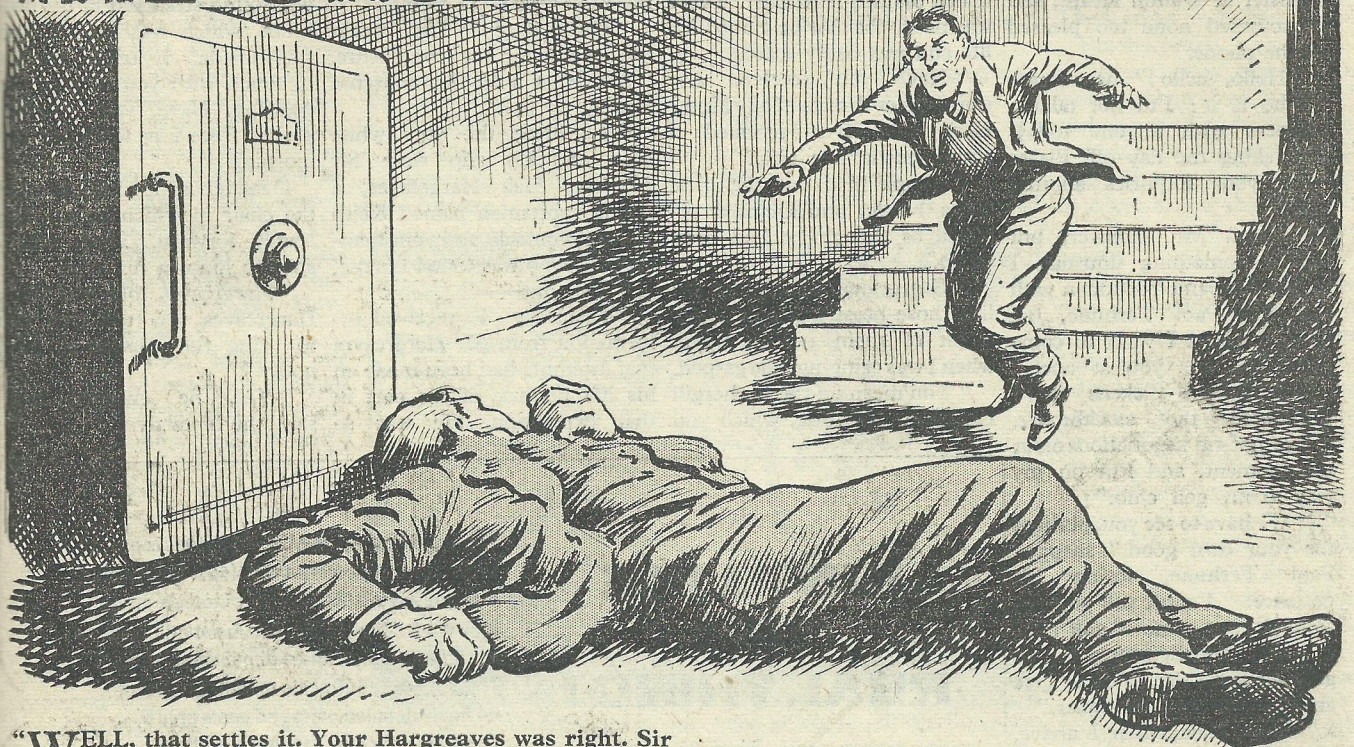


Warren Demster scoffed at Paul Terhune's warning about the mystery killer—and paid the penalty!

# THE UNSEEN STRANGLER



"WELL, that settles it. Your Hargreaves was right. Sir Andrew is the first victim of these priests of the Temple of Mempho," growled Detective-Sergeant Woods, glaring at the little object which he held in his hand, a scarab-beetle made of china, and having four legs more than an ordinary beetle. "If the killers are Egyptians, it shouldn't be too hard to locate them in London."

His companion, Paul Terhune, a private detective, nodded.

The room in which they stood was a luxuriously-furnished bedroom, and on the bed behind them lay Sir Andrew Fothergill, the distinguished archæologist, who had been strangled.

The previous night, Paul Terhune had received a mysterious summons to a lonely house in Surrey.

There he met for the first time Max Hargreaves, the Egyptian authority and the author of several books on the subject.

Hargreaves had begged Terhune to act as his personal bodyguard, as he was in fear of his life.

Hargreaves' explanation was that he had been a member of the Fothergill Expedition to the Sudanese Desert in 1962, when the Temple of Mempho had been discovered.

After the expedition had broken up, he had received a warning from the descendants of the ancient priests of Mempho that they meant to murder him, so he had fled to England.

Now, after three years, an

attempt had been made to kill him, and he had received a little china scarab such as Woods now held in his hand.

Paul Terhune had at first wondered whether he could believe the man or not, and as he had obviously been terrified, the detective had removed him to a lonely little hotel hidden in the Sussex hills, where he was now living.

Terhune had then decided to interview Sir Andrew Fothergill about the matter, for Fothergill had been the head of the expedition to Mempho, and Terhune had expected him to be receiving similar threats.

When he had reached Sir Andrew's house in the West End of London, he had discovered the police already in possession. Sir Andrew had been strangled by unknown means in a locked bedroom that morning.

A china scarab had just come by post, and had been posted in the vicinity of the house about the time of the murder.

"Yes, we've got to look for Egyptians," said the Yard man. "I don't suppose Hargreaves could give us a description of any of them?"

"Hargreaves has never seen them, though his man, also an Egyptian, claims to have glimpsed one after an unsuccessful attempt to strangle his master."

"Huh, they seem fond of strangling!" Detective-Sergeant Woods ran a finger round the inside of his collar. "I'd like to know how they did it without leaving finger or rope marks on his neck. Such tremendous pressure was used that some of the bones were crushed. You noticed that?"

"Yes, also that every means of entry to the room was locked or barred, unless the killer was a dwarf only two inches high."

So far the only clue Terhune had discovered was a faint, slightly musty smell on the window-sill of the room and on the bed near the dead man.

The window had been fastened with steel pins so that it was not more than two inches open at the bottom.

"Well, I understand there's still one more man who was on that expedition in London," Terhune said suddenly.

"That's Warren Demster, the wealthy broker. It might be worth while my interviewing him—unless he's already dead."

The Scotland Yard man paled with excitement.

"Come on, let's phone him up at once. He's bound to be in the phone book."

They hurried down to what was evidently the library, and soon discovered the number of Warren Demster's Park Lane office.

A secretary informed them Mr Demster would not be in the office that day as he had gone to his house at Walton Heath the previous night and planned to take a day off for golf.

She gave the phone number of the house at Walton Heath and, just before ringing off, said—"You're the second gentleman who has asked for him this morning and seemed surprised to hear he was out of town."

Paul Terhune stiffened with interest.

"I'm on official business. Who was the other gentleman?" he asked as casually as possible.

"I cannot say. He sounded