

The scarab beetle and death go hand in hand—and it is the turn of Paul Terhune to receive the dread symbol!

# THE UNSEEN STRANGLER



**PAUL TERHUNE** came up the ladderway cautiously and looked along the deck of the cutter. In his hand he held a small automatic, and his eyes were almost slits. He was expecting trouble.

There was no moon, but some stars were visible between breaks in the clouds. It was possible to see not only the whole length of the deck, but the banks of the creek on either side.

Terhune hardly knew what he expected to find. His nostrils twitched as he tried to follow a smell.

It was a whiff of this strange smell through a porthole which had brought him on deck. This faint odour was the only clue he had picked up so far after two murders had been committed.

A few nights previously he had received a mysterious summons to a lonely house in Surrey, where he had met for the first time Max Hargreaves, the authority on Egypt, and the author of several books on the subject.

Hargreaves had begged for protection, declaring that within the past month attempts had been made on his life.

He explained that he had been a member of the Fothergill expedition to the Nubian Desert in 1962 which had discovered the Temple of Mempho.

When the expedition had returned he had remained in Egypt to classify certain objects which had been removed from the tomb.

It was then he had received the first warning that the descendants of the ancient priests of Mempho meant to murder him, so he had fled to Britain.

Now, after three years, these attempts had been made on his life, and on each occasion he had received a warning—a scarab made of china.

When Terhune had reached Sir Andrew Fothergill's house in the West End of London he had found that Sir Andrew had been strangled to death at eight o'clock that very morning, although he had slept in a locked room with no opening in it more than two inches wide.

Neither Terhune nor his friend, Detective-Sergeant Woods, of Scotland Yard, had been able to find any clue.

Terhune had then hurried to Walton Heath to see Warren Demster, the wealthy stockbroker who had financed the expedition to Egypt.

However, Demster had been strangled in the same mysterious fashion while Paul Terhune had been in another

part of the house.

Again no clues had been left, except a faint musty smell which the detective had also noticed in the room when Sir Andrew had been murdered.

Now, once again, on this small yacht in a creek off Beaulieu, Terhune had caught a whiff of that smell while he had been with Hargreaves in the cabin below.

Max Hargreaves had almost lost his nerve completely after the deaths of his two former colleagues, and had insisted upon hiding aboard his cutter in this remote spot.

The only servant retained by Hargreaves, a faithful Egyptian named Mamoud, had been sent to find some doctor or chemist who would make up a sleeping-draught for the nerve-shattered man.

Paul Terhune stepped from the ladderway on to the deck. Up there, in the fresh air, he could not detect the smell.

"Maybe it was just my fancy," he told himself. "I must be letting my imagination run away with me."

Yet he knew his senses did not usually play him false. He walked to the starboard of the yacht and counted along the portholes until he found the porthole which he had been sitting near when he had first noticed the smell.

It was the third one from the bow, the only porthole open on that side. Kneeling on the deck, Paul Terhune sniffed intently. An onlooker would have thought he had gone crazy.

"Ah!" A grunt of satisfaction escaped him.

The smell came from a certain part of the deck close to the low bulwarks. Now he came to look at it, there was a dry patch on the deck at that point, almost as though a box had stood there recently.

The patch showed up clearly, as the rest of the deck was damp because of the evening air.

He said nothing about the smell, not wishing to alarm his companion, but he thought it over when they went below to their game of two-handed patience.

It was midnight before the Egyptian returned, looking weary and gaunt, a package gripped in his long, slender fingers.

It was the sleeping-draught for his master, and he explained he had been compelled to take a bus all the way into Southampton before he could find a night chemist open.

Hargreaves took his customary dose and went off to his cabin.

A gentle shaking from Mamoud aroused Terhune as