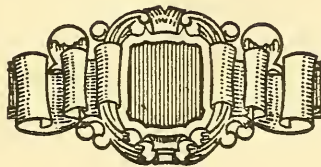


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ZENOBIA

A DREAM OF ANCIENT
EGYPT



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ZENOBIA

(A Dream of Ancient Egypt)

A Psychic Drama in Seven Scenes

By HERWARD CARRINGTON

(Joint Author of "The Mysteries of Myra," etc.)

Devised, Staged and with Scenic Effects by Harry Squires

CAST OF CHARACTERS

JACQUES DUPONT.....*An Artist*

DR. ROBERT MORTON.....*Occult Investigator*

PRINCESS ~~NEFTARI RA~~ *Zenobia*.....*The Mummy*

Attendants, etc.

Time: Present.

Place: Egypt, near the Pyramids.

SCENE 1

(Full set, showing sands of desert, sphinx and pyramids in distance. Mummy-chamber in center. Faint blue light on stage, and illuminating mummy. Faint, weird music is in progress. Stage is empty for about thirty seconds at opening. Then voices are heard coming from a distance; they get louder and louder; finally, Dupont and Dr. Morton enter, R., talking:)

DUPONT

I tell you, my dear fellow, it's all rubbish; there's no such thing! I'm a complete materialist, and all this talk about souls, and spirits, and reincarnation, and all that, is so much trash! Why——

MORTON

Don't display your ignorance any further, my dear boy; you are speaking of phenomena you know nothing about. I have seen these things, and I know. You know I'm not a lunatic, or unbalanced, don't you?

DUPONT

Yes! But——

MORTON

My dear boy, there's no "but" about it! I assure you solemnly that these things are true—they really happen, and science is doing more and more to

prove them every day. Spirits exist—and they can continue to influence those still living! Out here in this gorgeous desert, with the influences and traditions of the pyramids behind us (indicates them by a sweep of the arm), I don't see how you can doubt—

DUPONT

(Who has been moving about a little during this talk, and ascended the steps, so that he can see the mummy in the room asleep):

Good God! Rob, come here, old man, quick, and see what we've found! How on earth did this get here, do you think! What a beautiful creature she must have been, too! (He advances a step or two nearer). An Egyptian Goddess! Cut in the whitest marble. And what exquisite lines—those features—those arms—the curves of the bust—the throat—oh, Robert, what a find! My God, if she were only alive!

MORTON

Well, your artistic interest is no more aroused than my scientific sense. (He ascends the steps, and looks at the figure.) If we only knew the secret of life—how to restore it—some elixir—

DUPONT

Why not try? You say you know all about these occult things; why not try some evocation to bring her back; some—

MORTON

No, no; with one so long dead, the consequences might be other than we suspect—we cannot tell! Take my advice—do not press me further!

DUPONT

Why not? What can happen? I'll take the risk! Come; in the name of our old friendship, and by promise you once made me, I conjure you to do what you can—perform any ceremony—and we will see the effects. Of course, nothing *will* happen; but—

MORTON

It shall be as you say—though, remember. I have warned you against it! Blame me not for anything that may befall! Come, stand here by me, and step not out of this magic circle until I give the word—otherwise your life may pay the price!

(Morton, while saying the last words, has drawn a sword from his sword-stick, and traced a circle on the sand, and the sacred pentagram ★ within it. He then lights a small jar of incense, and, taking the sword in his

right hand, performs certain passes and figures with the point, at the same time muttering a spell or evocation. As he does so, the stage slightly darkens, the light in the mummy-room becomes brighter; Morton and Dupont kneel and fall to the ground, on their faces (Dupont at the silent command of Morton). The slow transformation from the statue to the living woman is accomplished. She thereupon moves, gets up, stretches, smiles, and finally speaks. During all this time the stage has been getting gradually brighter, but is never fully bright.)

~~RA~~ *Zenobia (all through).*

Ah! the bliss! To feel once more, after all these years, the spark of life—the touch of moist, warm flesh—the thrill of living, and of loving! To return to earth once more—yes, it is sweet! And sweet, too, is revenge! My return is for a purpose! (She catches sight of D. and M. in the circle, on the sand.) That head; that form—Oh, Holy Mother Isis! Oh, Osiris—give me strength aright—to live just long enough to justify my animation of this fair body—to use its fascination and its power to the great aim and end in view. So give me strength and steadfastness of purpose!

(She crosses the floor of the mummy-room, descends the stairs and walks onto the sands, approaching the figures in the magic circle. As she does so, Morton gradually raises his head, and catches sight of her. He gazes a moment and then clutches Dupont by the arm and brings him up, so that he, too, can see the figure.)

My God! A miracle! Or is it a vision? (He leans closer to assure himself, and she draws herself up in a haughty attitude as he does so. This assures him that she is a woman of flesh and blood. He proceeds:)

No—she lives! Rob—look—look—she breathes and glances fire from her eyes! Our invocation has succeeded! No more a sceptic I! (He advances toward her.) Fair maid; not long ago we saw you, sleeping marble—white and pure as the sands of yonder desert (indicates them). And now you stand before us in all the beauty of your womanhood—brought to life by our magical invocation. Speak, fair wanderer from another sphere, and tell us of yourself—your name and whence you came!

RA

Many, many years have I lain asleep, encased in marble, a brain and heart of stone—waiting, waiting for the day of my reincarnation. Four thousand years ago, in ancient Egypt, I was a Princess of the Royal House—Nefertari-Ra. All Egypt bowed to do my bidding. I loved—I gave my love—my all—to a man—fair to look upon—of grace of mind and strength of body—and for

a time we two were happy! (She clasps her hands ecstatically and looks up at the audience; pauses.) And then my lover wearied of me—betrayed me—and one night (just such a night as this) he stabbed me with this very dagger (takes it from her belt and shows it)—here, into my fair breast did he plunge it (bares her breast, as far as the censors allow, and shows scar). To the hilt he drove it, and drank of my heart's blood. (She pauses, and droops her head.) I died. . . . For thousands of years have I lain asleep, waiting for the magic touch to restore me—and now I know that I am alive! I know also that my former lover still lives! For my life and his will cross again—so it was prophesied by the Temple Prophetess—in the days of ancient Egypt.

DUPONT

Princess, I am overwhelmed by what you tell me! So horrible a crime must needs be expiated by the heart's blood of him who was your murderer! If I can do aught to serve you—you have but to command me.

RA

You are right, indeed, as to the expiation of this crime. When his reincarnated soul meets mine, and realizes that 'twas *he* who so foully murdered me, *then*—then his death-knell shall have sounded! Ha! You say you would serve me? Then come tonight to my Palace—three earthly miles from here (points); see—on the Nile—at eight. I shall expect you—Come! (Exits).

DUPONT

Wondrous vision! Come! I shall be there. . . . Rob, Rob, my friend, did you see and hear as I did just now? What can it all mean? (Strokes his forehead.) That Palace—we have just visited it but yesterday. And it was dead—a pile of ruins! Yet now she says she lives there! Mystery of mysteries! Come, Rob, my friend, let us rest, and then, to the Palace—and the Princess! (Exeunt.)

(Lights out; Drop Curtain for)

SCENE 2

(Exterior of ruined Egyptian Temple. Faint blue lights. Blue sky showing between the columns. Weird, far-away music (*music cue*) resounds from within the Temple. Enter Dupont and Morton, L., and stand in front of the Temple. Look up at it.)

MORTON

This is the place—the very place—yet it is dark and ruined! No signs of

life about. Can it be that she was tricking you—playing upon your youthful credulity?

DUPONT

No, no—not that! The very soul shone out of her eyes, and when she spoke of meeting once again her lover, I felt a thrill of envy sweep through me. . . . Stay—what was that? (He grasps Morton by the arm, and they both listen, as the music (*music cue*) becomes louder, then softer again, and finally dies away.)

MORTON

Music, and from within the Temple! There must be someone inside it, then! But stay, my friend, a moment before so rashly venturing in. You do not altogether realize the danger that you run! She is more than mere earthly woman—there is something of the supernatural about her! Be persuaded by me. Leave this place before it is too late—before you have gone too far—

DUPONT

Cease, cease your croakings! How can I think of aught else when *She* is present, and awaits me? If you fear for yourself, stay here, but I will enter. (Does so.)

MORTON

Aye—I will stay, and watch!

SCENE 3

(Interior of Egyptian Palace. Huge columns of stone at back, and on both wings. R. a dais; upon it a throne. To left of throne, a table containing wine, fruit, etc. Cushions about. Egyptian details, as far as possible. Faint blue light, which gradually becomes brighter on throne, in which is discovered, seated, the Princess. Soft music (*music cue*) is heard, then dies away as Dupont enters.

RA

Hail! and welcome, honored guest! After your journey, you must be weary and need rest! Sit you down—drink—here is wine. (She fills two goblets and hands him one.) Will I dance for your entertainment, as I did of old—yes, before my lover, four thousand years ago?

DUPONT

Ah, yes, most beautiful Princess; and come to my arms when weary!

(Ra then throws off a veil, and begins to dance in a circle, constantly coming back to Dupont, and each time she does, she strips off a veil and throws it at his feet until she has as little on as the censor will permit. Dupont

has been getting more and more enthralled all this time, and finally puts down his wine cup and stretches out his arms to her. She falls at his feet and throws herself into his arms. They kiss passionately.)

DUPONT

Fairest of women! Dearest Princess! My very heart and soul are yours—my life's blood pulsates but for you! Give me your love—as I have given you life! To hold you in my arms—to feel the warmth of your kiss upon my lips—yes, for this would I sacrifice all—body, heart, and soul—for you! (Looks at her again. Picks up a wine cup and holds aloft, as a toast. He goes on:)

Give me dancing,
Give me wine—
Bright eyes glancing
Into mine!
Kisses, sucking up my breath!
Give me passion—give me death!

RA

You mean that? (Leaning forward and speaking slowly.) If you have my love, will you, too, promise to give me yourself—body, heart and soul—for this life and all lives to come?

DUPONT

(Drinking another goblet of wine.) I do! I do! Let me but love you, and all I have or am, or ever will be is yours. (He leans forward to take her more closely in his arms.)

RA

Wait! Wait! Not now! This palace is enchanted! (A low burst of music (*music cue*) is heard. He starts back. Come to me tonight at twelve (she picks up a veil and gathers it around herself), in the room where first you saw me, and all I have to give in love will I give—at twelve—tonight! (She passes behind a pillar, or something of the kind, and is gone.)

DUPONT

(Runs, and looks behind the pillar; finds her gone.) Oh, God! To hold her in my arms! To feel her kiss—her passionate embrace! At twelve tonight! What can the time be now? (Looks at wrist watch.) Already ten! I must be gone! Oh, being—natural or supernatural—I am yours! (Exits.)

SCENE 4

(Drop; desert scene; a sandstorm is in progress; faint light; storm clouds; general storm effects. Enter Dupont, R., staggering along more or less blinded by the sand and wind, and he holds up one arm over his face and eyes, then stops and falls to his knees.)

DUPONT

This cursed wind and sand! It fills my eyes and ears and nearly strangles me! Ah! I must be nearly there. Were it not for her I would turn back; but *She* the prize! I must on—struggle on—and pray the God Osiris (stops) —How came I to name that heathen god? It came to my lips without my bidding! Strange, strange! Ah! I must begone! 'Tis nearly twelve— (He struggles up, and out L.)

SCENE 5

(Same as Scene 1. No storm. Stage is nearly dark; no figures visible anywhere. Dupont enters R., wiping his face with his handkerchief. . . . He looks about.)

DUPONT

Thank all the gods, the storm has ceased! This quiet spot seems magically sheltered. And here she awaits me! Oh, Love! my divine one, I come to you! (He runs up the steps and into mummy-room. Pauses a moment, looking about in the dark, seeing no one. At that instant he is grabbed by two Arabs, dressed in conventional garb, thrown to the ground, gagged, bound hand and foot; a trap is opened in the floor from which a faint blue light enters. One man descends; his body is passed to him, and the two men start to carry him through the trap-door, and down a steep flight of stairs, when the lights go out. Stage is in complete darkness; gradually faint blue light is seen, indicating—

SCENE 6

(Rock-lined tomb, faintly lighted in blue. Princess Ra is seen standing, wrapped in winding white trappings, half resembling a mummy. The two assistants are seen carrying Dupont's body down a steep flight of stairs. They deposit him on the floor, fold their arms, and look at her for instructions.

RA

Go! (Pointing to steps. They exeunt. She then takes the gag out of

Dupont's mouth, and unties his feet, leaving his hands tied. He staggers to his feet. She confronts him.)

DUPONT

What can this mean? So late I held you in my arms and pressed my lips to yours! And now I am bound—a prisoner in a dungeon—a damp, cold, vaulted chamber—with the very atmosphere of death! (He shudders.) My love, loose me; unbind me; give me your love—yourself—as late you promised me! For you I crossed the blinding, sandy desert! Is that not proof of my devotion? Come, fairy Princess, do not play with me! What means this rough reception at your hands?

RA

Oh, Jacques Dupont, when first you undertook the quickening of my soul to life, you brought into your life more than you ever dreamed of! A supernatural being, your friend called me! Well, that I am! (Dupont starts back.) You know the secret of my life and birth—my birth into this life—my present incarnation! But do you know that I have lived apart, and longed and waited all these years for this supreme moment? Centuries and centuries have I slept the sleep of death—awaiting incarnation! I told you once before I was a Princess in the days of Egypt! Yes—that I was foully murdered by my best beloved—to him whom I had given soul and body—yes, stabbed with this very dagger (takes it out) in this my once fair breast! And did I tell you, too, of HIM who thus betrayed me—that demon—fiend incarnate—who, in his hour of triumph, cast me aside for another—a Priestess of the Temple of Isis? *Do you remember* (points at him) in those days of long ago, how I loved and longed for *you*—in your last incarnation?

DUPONT

Oh, God! Am I mad? Do I remember? Can I be he—?

RA

(Screams with laughter. Ah, he remembers! Holy Mother Isis, he remembers! Yes, I am the reincarnation of that Princess, and you—you, the living, breathing image of my former lover. Long, long, have I waited for revenge! And at last it has come! This dagger, which once you plunged in my fair bosom, shall now find rest and lodgment in your heart! You gave yourself to me, body and soul, you said—yes, body and soul—and your heart's blood you gave to me! Well, not I take it—Isis; Osiris—to you I give him, to you I offer him a living sacrifice. (She stabs him. Dupont falls to the

floor. She stands gazing at him for a moment; then turns and mounts the stairs to the upper room.)

SCENE 7

(Upper mummy-room; stage almost dark. A faint light (blue) gives, as she ascends, a soft glow. She places herself on the couch, and is gradually re-transformed to the marble image. The rest of the stage is in more or less darkness. It becomes gradually lighter, and Dupont and Morton are discovered on the floor, in the center of their magic circle, faces to the ground, as they were left in the first scene, before the mummy came to life. As it gets brighter, Morton lifts his head. He shakes Dupont by the arm. Dupont sits up, putting his hand to his head, and passing his fingers through his hair, etc. He looks wild, his eyes staring. He gasps and clutches his throat.)

DUPONT

Oh, God! She stabbed me, she stabbed me!

MORTON

Quiet, old man, quiet! If you *will* go in for magical seances, you must expect disturbing visions. All of them are not pleasant! Come, tell me what it was you saw—under the spell of the ceremony—what did you dream? (Shakes him.) Come—tell me!

DUPONT

A vision! A dream! Yes, I'll tell you! (They seat themselves. As Dupont is about to begin his story, the curtain slowly descends.)

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