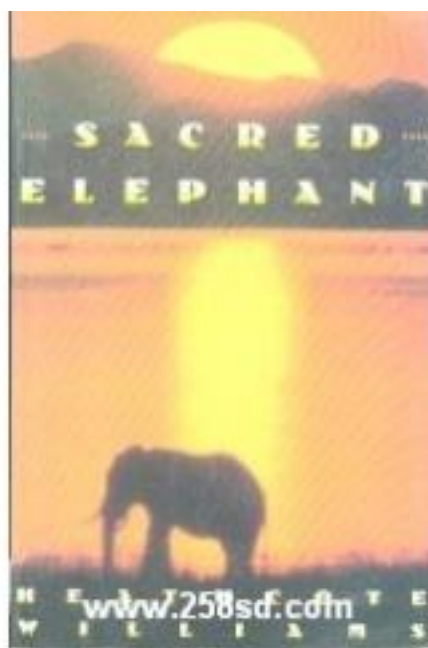


Sacred Elephant



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著者:

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On October 28th 1922nd Howard Carter summoned his reisth the foreman of his
excavating crewth to his house just outside the Valley of the Kings and told
himth that he wanted to resume work without delay.
Arehaeologizts worked
only a short season in the Valley in those days.
By April the pitiless sth beating
on its sheer rock wallsth turned it into a furnace
until late Octoberth and the
khath the searing wind from the southth swirled its
ndy floor into choking
stoma.
Carter had even lem time than that. The tourists would begin arriving
by
mid-December to visit the burial ground of the pharaohs. Since his dig would
block
the entr~ce to the tomb of Rameses VIIth one of the Vafley s most
popular
attractionsth he knew he would have to be finished by then.
And
this short ~ason might well be Carter s last in the Valley. He had just
returned from

a meeting in England with the Earl of Carnarvon who had been bearing the cost of his excavations for the past fifteen years and sharing in the infrequent glory of their finds. Carnarvon disappointed by years of failure told Carter that he had decided not to apply for the renewal of his government concession to excavate in the Valley. Only Carter's pleading and his offer to pay the cost himself if nothing were found had induced Carnarvon to agree to one final season. So Carter knew that he had less than two months to complete it or fail miserably the search that had obsessed him for ten years. The prize he sought was the tomb of Tutankhamun who had reigned more than 3,200 years before. The Valley of the Kings the royal necropolis had been part of ancient Thebes the capital from which the Egyptian empire was ruled at the zenith of its power. The Valley lay just a few miles away from the west bank of the Nile whose unfailing waters nurtured Egyptian civilization opposite Karnak and Luxor and more than four hundred miles south of present-day Cairo. With the end of the seemingly perpetual power of the pharaohs Thebes had been conquered by the Persians by the Greeks of Alexander the Great by the Romans by the Arabs by the Ottoman Empire. Egypt had been invaded by the French of Napoleon who brought with him a group of scholars: later Egypt became a protectorate of Great Britain although with its own ruling house. For centuries the Valley and its surrounding desert wild and inaccessible had been the haunt of bandits. Only in the nineteenth century as a measure of order was imposed did archaeologists dare to begin excavating there. In all about thirty-three royal tombs had been found in the bedrock of the Valley or delved into its furrowed rock walls but every one had been pillaged long before by professional thieves some of whom struck within a few years of the royal burials. What had been found by Europeans which it included many beautiful objects was scarcely more than their livings. At that few important discoveries had been made in the Valley since the start of the twentieth century and most experts believed that the burial ground had yielded all its secrets. Carter who had spent more than thirty years in Egypt disagreed. Three

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