

## **Author's Note**

From the BBC:

On the evening of the 1921 census, the Earl of Carnarvon was at home in Highclere Castle. Joining him upstairs was his wife, their 19-year-old daughter Lady Evelyn Herbert, the archaeologist Howard Carter, and a female visitor.

## Disquiet at Highclere

by Sumi Watters

As he strode confidently into the drawing room, Lord Carnarvon tugged at the velvet lapel of his worsted jacket.

‘Sorry to keep you waiting, old chap. Had I known you’d be gracing us, I ....’ Seeing he had two guests, not one, he stopped, and the colour drained from his face.

Howard Carter rose to his feet, but did not extend his hand. ‘Lord Carnarvon. May I call you George? Wonderful to see you. It’s been far too long, my friend.’

‘What brings you to Highclere, Carter?’

‘I believe you’ve met my companion, Miss Schreiber?’ Howard said. Elsa Schreiber sat on a wing-backed chair with her ankles crossed and greeted George with a faint nod and coquettish smile.

‘Um, yes. I ... made her acquaintance in the Thebes. Welcome to Highclere, Miss Schreiber. Lovely to see you again.’ /

Howard scoffed. ‘George. Come. Sit with me. We have much to discuss.’

George glanced over his shoulder at the open door.

‘Is your Ladyship in? And your darling daughter, Evelyn?’ Howard asked.

‘They are somewhere about,’ George replied, quickly closing the door to the drawing room and taking a seat facing Howard.

‘Then I shall waste no time,’ Howard said. ‘I was, shall we say, distressed to hear that you are considering a withdrawal from the Tutankhamen expedition. Why, may I ask, would you doom our mission now, so close as we are to solving one of mankind’s most intriguing mysteries?’

‘Your ... endless search in the Valley of the Kings—at enormous cost to me—has turned up nothing of interest,’ George replied. ‘The existence of Tutankhamen’s tomb could be and most likely is mere legend ... an unattainable chimera. Surely, even you can understand my reluctance to continue funding such a ... questionable undertaking.’

‘I suspected you might say something like that, George, which is why I asked Miss Schreiber to accompany me. If anyone can get you to reconsider, it is Elsa.’

‘Miss Schreiber? How could she possibly influence me?’

‘Let’s just put it like this: It would be most unfortunate, George, if Lady Carnarvon were to learn of your ... relations with Miss Schreiber while you were in Luxor.’

Lord Canarvon glared at his guests. ‘What is the meaning of this, Carter? Have you come all this way to blackmail me?’

‘Blackmail, extortion. Call it what you like, George. But I will not leave Highclere without your guarantee that we may continue our search for another eighteen months.’

‘Eighteen months! This is despicable, insane, even for you, Carter.’ Just then, the drawing room door swung open and in swept Lady Carnarvon.

‘My dear Mr Carter! What an absolute pleasure!’ she exclaimed, exuding high spirits and good humour. ‘You and your lady friend *must* dine with us this evening. Of course, you are most welcome to stay at Highclere tonight and for as long as you like. I shan’t take no for an answer, Mr Carter.’