

Jack Brady's Statement

"I'm Jack Brady. I hear you've been looking for me. I got a minute, and you got some questions. I gather you never got to talk to Jackson Elias. If it's all the same, I'll talk now, and you can ask your questions later.

"As far as I can make out, we're all in a lot of trouble. The more I learn about the situation, the scarer I get. When I spilled the beans to Jackson Elias, I figured people would read his book and do something about this cult. Sorry he ended up that way—you guys his friends? All the same, I did warn him, and I didn't hold nothing back. I'm warning you guys, too: the cult plays for keeps. Or maybe mugs like you already know that. (He laughs.)

"Well, right from the start I knew that Roger's nigger-girl was trouble. She was as tough as they come, and she had him around her finger. He must have known she was trouble, too, because the more he saw her, the more crazy dreams he had. I thought it was great when he wanted to go to Egypt—that'd be the end of her, see, and things would get back to normal. I lived the guy, and I owed him a lot.

"It seemed for a while that everything would work out. London was a lot of fun, but once we got to Cairo, Roger started having dreams again about meeting a god, and crap like that. But now he wasn't drinking, and the girl wasn't around, and the gentlemen Roger had asked along started acting nuttier than Roger did, and so I said to myself, trouble is somewhere up the road.'

"After I paid Faraz Najir for his junk, Roger spent some time with it. He went off the deep end. There was a black kind of head-and-shoulder statue that he'd stare at for hours. And there was a map that he'd study and study, like a normal guy would check out a beautiful dame. He started telling me that we could meet the god as soon as he destroyed the eye and opened the Path.

"That hotshot Dr. Huston should have talked Roger down, but he only encouraged him. So the first night that we were up the Nile at Dhashur, Roger snuck out and climbed up the Red Pyramid. Any of you guys ever climbed a pyramid? They're steep! Roger started up that pile like a monkey. Never looked back or hesitated once, which proved to me that the poor

bugger was absolutely crazy. But I followed him up' (He laughs again.) "I was crazy, too.

"For about two thirds of the way up the Red Pyramid, you just climb up and over big blocks, sort of like something some dumb kid could make by piling up a million great big construction blocks. The pyramid builders filled in all the gaps with nice smooth stone, but then later people stole that nice stone from around the bottom of the pyramid—the high stuff was too hard to grab, and they couldn't finish the job. Well, Roger zipped right up this part, too, with me still behind, my eyes bulging out 'cause I could barely find handholds to keep from bouncing down the whole damn pyramid.

'There's a little flat place at the tip of the pyramid. When Roger reached the flat place, he put on some kind of robe and started making weird sounds, as though he had flipped for good. But then there was a hell of an explosion with all kinds of funny echoes and screams with it and a big red flash of light. Well, I lay there for a minute until it seemed safe to go on. He looked at me and said, 'The eye is gone, Jack. Now we can be gods.'

"Well, that was just Roger talk, you know, but beside him there was a big patch ripped right out of the stone, and it looked fresh. When I went back the next day, the patch had been filled in, as though the pyramid had repaired itself. But near the base of the pyramid, I found part of a rock which looked like it could have been in that patch originally, and it had this sign on it" (Brady sketches a mysterious-looking sign)



'Now I know what it was its strong magic kept evil things away from us, and Roger deliberately broke its power.

'Two days later, the whole gang - Penhew, Roger, Huston, and Patty gave me the slip and disappeared in the Bent Pyramid. Some of the messenger boys went to find them, and they came out shrieking that the pyramid had eaten the respected scientists, woe, woe, woe. Bingo, the workers run to all directions! The whole dig was deserted. In five minutes the only person left in the whole area was me. Well, I went in. Sure enough, nobody was inside. I was worried.

'But, a long time later, out come all the missing people from the pyramid. Roger says they'd been to Egypt, to the real Egypt. And that was about the most sensible thing he said. Penhew looked like he had lost about five years. And Patty and Huston both seemed somehow changed. Nobody would explain where they'd been, and nobody cared that after that it was hard to hire workmen.

"After that, when I'd wake up in the nights, the rest of the gang would be talking creepy lingo like I'd never heard before. Then one evening Roger said that he was going to show me the power of what they'd learned. We went out into the desert with a passel of Arabs. Everybody started screaming weird words and songs, and Penhew beat the drum that we got from Najir. When creatures started coming out of the ground and eating the Arabs, and Roger and the others started laughing, why I took my leave, as they say, and went on a real toot Roger found me the next day, and warned me that I'd better change my attitude. Well, I owed the kid, and I wouldn't desert him, but after that I started thinking real good.

"Then we went to Kenya, and Roger filled me in during the trip. We had found a true god, he said, who would rule the Earth, and we would rule with that god, for we were the chosen of the god. The god had picked us to open the way for his return. And there was enough in what they said—and in what I saw—to make me listen. Every week, Penhew seemed a little younger and a little livelier. Patty was sick a lot. We were going to leave Nairobi from some place in the mountains where there was no river, no railway, no telegraph, no police, and nobody who looked friendly. I figured that Jack Brady wouldn't live very long there, so I made some arrangements. On the last night, in Nairobi, I drugged

Roger, kyped the cash box (it was all Roger's money, anyway), and got me and them aboard an unscheduled deadhead freight to Mombasa.

"Later I read that my guess was right. The newspapers said a lot of people died, but Penhew, Huston and Patty Masters weren't among them.

"Anyway, my arrangements went off without a hitch—that happens when you think small and carry a lot of cash. When we got to Mombasa, we got off before the causeway and found a fisherman who was willing to go to Zanzibar for a few dollars. From there we hopped a coastal trader to Durban, and in Durban we dyed our hair, got some decent clothes, and sailed for Perth.

"Now, on the train to Mombasa, Roger got some sleep, and he seemed to wake up a different person. I guess that being away from the influence of those other people let him return to his old self. I told him we were in a lot of trouble, and that we needed to hide out and reminded him about the Arabs being killed in Egypt, and the god stuff, and so on, and he could remember it all right, although it didn't seem very important, somehow. But he understood the logic of the situation. After a week or so, though, his nightmares started, and he began to go off the deep end. He was beginning to realize some of the things he had done.

"I was in Shanghai while I was in the Marines, and I had a fair number of friends here. By the time our ship put into Hong Kong, Roger could go no farther. He began shrieking at shadows and everything that moved. So I put him in a sanitarium there—I had to use up most of the remaining money to get him settled. Then I went on to Shanghai, believing that I'd never again see any member but Roger of that damned expedition.

"So I thought, until I looked through naval glasses at a certain yacht and saw Sir Aubrey Penhew preening on the deck of the Dark Mistress."