

Steve Moore introduces one of his unused stories from *The New Avengers* annuals of the late 1970s

BACK IN THE late 1970s, I was midway through a 20-year stint as a comic-strip writer, working mostly for British publications, and one of my main sources of work each year was writing annuals for Brown Watson Ltd (later known as Grandreams).

In all, I wrote about 60 books for them, either in whole or in part, and most of the titles were TV tie-ins in various fields. Among the books I was asked to contribute to were the two *New Avengers* annuals.

The original *Avengers* (particularly the Diana Rigg episodes) having been my favourite TV series as a teenager, I was delighted to do so... but for some reason I no longer remember, some of the comic-strips and text-stories I contributed were never used (though I was, at least, paid for them).

My ancient carbon copies of these collected dust in my loft for another 20 years or so, until a phone-call from Dave Rogers reminded me to dig them out.

My editor at Brown Watson was John Barraclough who (I like to think) had a charming confidence in my abilities and would frequently phone me up and say 'I'm doing such-and-such an annual... I don't know anything about it... can you fill up 64 pages for me with whatever you like...' Of course, with hindsight, he could just have been lazy.

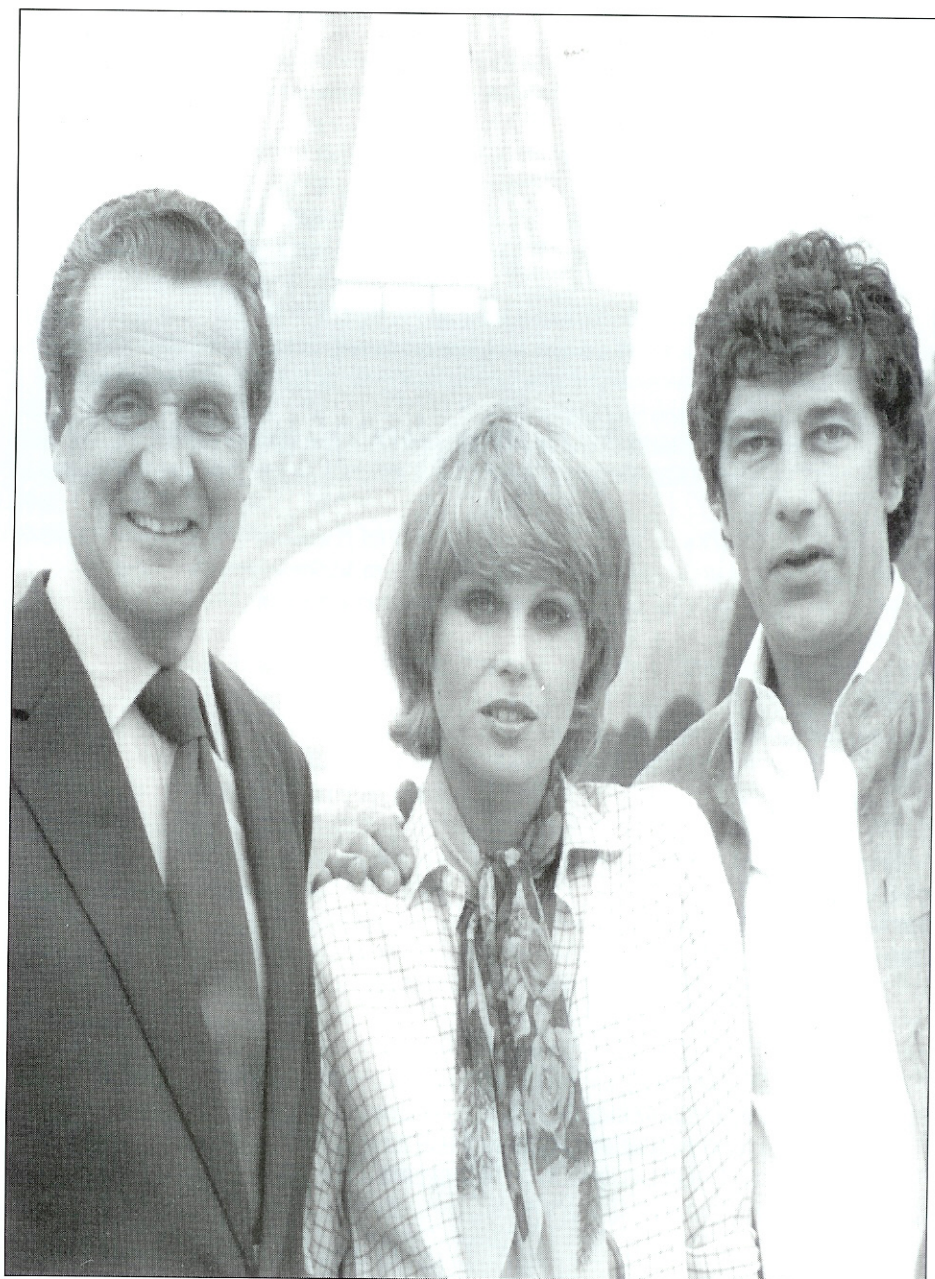
Minimal Wage

One thing I didn't need hindsight to know, though, was that Brown Watson's rates of pay were comparatively low, if not very low, and the only way to make a living working for them was to churn out the stuff as rapidly as possible. Twenty-four hours a story was my usual time-span, for either an 8-page strip or a 2,500 word text-story, doing the preliminary work (plot, frame breakdowns, etc.) after lunch on the first day, then typing the whole thing up in one first-and-last draft before lunch the following day, then plotting the next story after lunch, and so on.

So, I don't make any claims that the stories to be printed in *Stay Tuned* have any great literary quality, or even any at all. But they were accepted by the publisher and would, in the normal run of things, have seen publication in one of the annuals. And they're original *New Avengers* stories which have never before been in print. So they may have a certain curiosity value and, if for nothing else except that, I hope you enjoy them.



DIAMONDS ARE FOR EVIL



1.

Big opening picture, set in the Egyptian gallery of a large museum, like the British Museum. All round the walls in background (bg) are wall-paintings from tombs... dog and hawk-headed gods, hieroglyphics, etc., a couple of large, ornate mummy-cases... as much bg detail as you want to throw in. In foreground (fg) is a small showcase, on a pedestal, with ropes round it so people can't get too close. In the case is a large diamond, glinting in the light; a beautifully cut stone. Steed, dressed in his usual suit and bowler, is pointing toward the stone with his umbrella, talking about it to Gambit and Purdey, who are by his side. Gambit wears his usual suit; Purdey can be wearing anything you like...

There is no one else around.

BOX: A LARGE LONDON MUSEUM, JUST BEFORE OPENING TIME: STEED AND CO. HAD JUST ARRIVED FOR A SPECIAL PREVIEW...

STEED: THERE IT IS... THE KHAFFRA DIAMOND! FASCINATING LITTLE BAUBLE! IT'S CURSED, YOU KNOW...

PURDEY: CURSED?

GAMBIT: YOU'RE KIDDING, STEED!

2.

In close fg is the showcase, with the diamond glistening within... and through the glass case we can see Steed's smiling face as he tells the jewel's history.

STEED: BELONGED TO CLEOPATRA... AN UNFORTUNATE 'POISON'... 'ASP' ANYONE! LATER ON IT TURNED UP IN RUSSIA. FINISHED OFF THE RUBELOV FAMILY, AND THE KAZAKZ... AND POOR IVAN HAD A TERRIBLE TIME OF IT...!

3.

Steed and Co are now leaving the museum, coming down the steps from the main door and starting to walk across the car-park. We might see Steed's big Jaguar somewhere in bg Museum frontage has many large stone columns,

BOX: AS THEY LEFT THE MUSEUM...

PURDEY: CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHY YOU'RE INTERESTED IN IT THOUGH, STEED... UNLESS THE RUSSIANS WANT IT BACK...

STEED: SOMEONE WANTS IT, I KNOW THAT! HAVE YOU NOTICED THE MAN BEHIND THE COLUMN? NO, DON'T LOOK ROUND...

4.

In fg is a dark, rat-faced little man, wearing a raincoat and holding up a newspaper, trying to look as if he is reading it, while leaning against the large stone column, but actually looking round toward the bg, where, small in the distance, we can see Steed and Co walking towards Steed's Jaguar.

STEED: HE'S JUST A LITTLE MINNOW... IT'S THE BIG FISH I'M AFTER! COME TO THINK OF IT, AN AFTERNOON WITH ROD AND LINE MIGHT GIVE ME A NEW ANGLE ON THIS CASE...

5.

Next morning, at Steed's country house, in the lounge. Purdey is rushing into the room (wearing different clothes) brandishing a newspaper, looking flustered. Steed is quite calm, with his back to her, pouring himself a drink from a crystal decanter.

BOX: STEED REMAINED MYSTERIOUS FOR THE REST OF THE DAY, BUT NEXT MORNING...

PURDEY: STEED! HAVE YOU HEARD? THE KHAFFRA DIAMOND'S BEEN STOLEN! IT'S IN ALL THE PAPERS!

STEED: OH, I SHOULDN'T WORRY TOO MUCH ABOUT THAT, PURDEY. IT'S QUITE SAFE!

6.

Steed turns with a big grin, casually tossing the diamond up in the air with one hand. Purdey stares at him, looking absolutely shocked.

PURDEY: YOU DIDN'T...!

STEED: OF COURSE NOT! THE ONE IN THE MUSEUM WAS A FAKE... SO'S THIS ONE, COME TO THAT! HEAVEN KNOWS WHAT HAPPENED TO THE ORIGINAL...

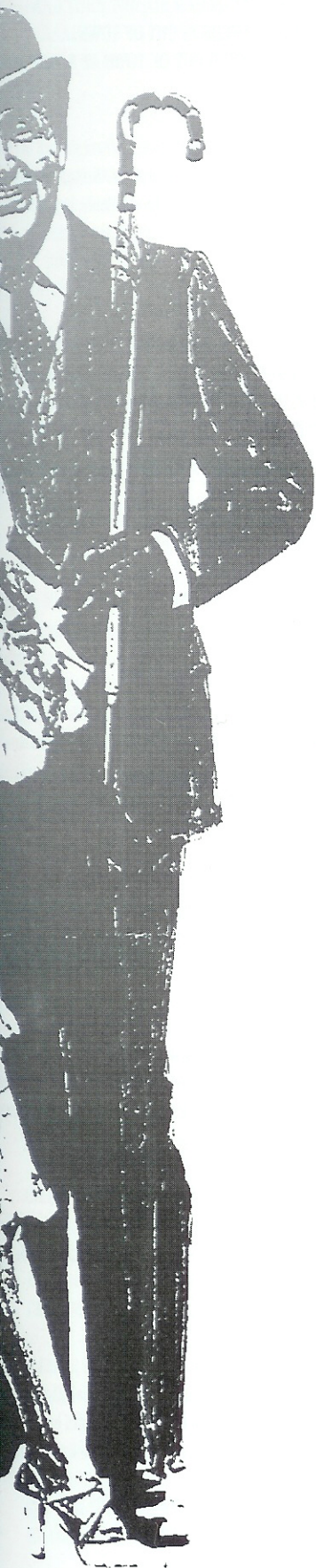
7.

Purdey is now sitting on a couch, looking more relaxed, as Steed hands her a wine glass, explaining.

STEED: THIS ONE TURNED UP IN THE EFFECTS OF AN EXILED RUSSIAN PRINCE... IT WAS ABOUT TO GO BACK BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN, BUT THEY HAD A LITTLE TROUBLE WITH THE EXPORT LICENCE... THREE MEN GOT KILLED TRYING TO SMUGGLE IT OUT...

PURDEY: BUT WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT IT...?





8.

Close up of Steed, looking thoughtful.

STEED: I DON'T KNOW YET, BUT THE PRINCE WAS ONE OF THEIR BEST UNDERCOVER AGENTS. YOU SEE, HE WAS SO OBVIOUSLY RUSSIAN, NO ONE BELIEVED HE COULD BE A SPY...

9.

Steed and Purdey are now coming out of the front door of his palatial country house, walking toward his Jaguar.

STEED: WE'LL MEET GAMBIT AT THE LAB... HE'S BEEN ARRANGING FOR SOME SPECIAL EQUIPMENT WHICH MIGHT HELP US FIND OUT WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT...

10.

At the laboratory, a sparkingly clean room full of optical equipment and computers.

In fg is a complicated rig of laser equipment... a long, gun-like tube with various appendages and wires, shining a thin red beam at the diamond, which stands on a small platform in front of it. There is a large screen off to one side (not directly in line with the laser), though nothing shows on this yet. A white coated technician stands by the laser, making adjustments. Steed, Purdey and Gambit stand in bg, watching.

BOX: SHORTLY AFTERWARDS, AT A SECRET GOVERNMENT OPTICAL LABORATORY...

GAMBIT: YOU THINK THERE'S SOME KIND OF INFORMATION IN THE CRYSTAL...

PURDEY: IMPRINTED ON THE ON THE CRYSTAL LATTICES BY LASER BEAM...

STEED: AND ONLY VISIBLE WHEN ANOTHER LASER IS SHONE THROUGH IT... NOW, LET'S SEE IF WE'VE GOT ANYTHING...

11.

Steed and Purdey, in fg, looking away from us toward the screen in the bg, where, defracted from the crystal, we can see several photographs of men and women, and a great deal of writing... there is no need to see any of this great detail.

BOX: THEN, AS THE TECHNICIAN THREW THE SWITCH...

PURDEY: A COMPLETE RUN-DOWN ON ALL OUR AGENTS IN MOSCOW!
NO WONDER THEY WANTED TO GET IT BACK! BUT... WHO GATHERED THE
INFORMAT ION?

STEED: THAT'S WHAT I WANT TO FIND OUT. OBVIOUSLY SOMEONE WITH TOP SECURITY CLEARANCE...

12.

Steed, looking toward the Technician in bg, is drawing another diamond from his pocket. Gambit looks at him in surprise.

BOX: SOON...

STEED (1) GET EVERYTHING FROM IT YOU CAN, ROGERS, THEN DESTROY IT! WE'LL LET THEM COME AFTER THIS ONE INSTEAD...

GAMBIT: HOW MANY OF THOSE HAVE YOU GOT, STEED?

STEED (2) HUNDREDS... I LIKE TO BE PREPARED...

13.

Back out in the street. Steed is opening his car door, looking in to see a large, metallic scarab has been placed on the driving seat... a model of a great fat beetle, about 6 inches long. Steed looks at it in surprise.

BOX: BUT AS THEY RETURNED TO STEED'S CAR...

STEED: HELLO, WHAT HAVE WE HERE? AN EGYPTIAN BEETLE? AN ARAB SCARAB?

14.

Steed now leans forward into the car, holding his bowler at the edge of the seat, and using his umbrella handle to scoop the scarab off the seat into the hat.

STEED: NASTY THING... NEVER DID LIKE INSECTS IN MY CAR. NOT CRICKET... INTO THE BOWLER YOU GO...

15.

Steed, using an over-arm action like a cricket bowler, has hurled the scarab high into the air (holding onto his bowler). Speed-lines show the course of the thing through the air, until it explodes, high up in the air, like a shell-burst. Purdey and Gambit are both ducking, hands raised to their heads.

STEED: DON'T LIKE BOMBS MUCH, EITHER...!

16.

Later that afternoon, back at Steed's, in the lounge. Steed sits in a large armchair, by a small table with a phone on it. Gambit and Purdey sit on the couch opposite him, and Purdey is looking round toward the doorway, which leads out to the entrance hall.

BOX: LATER, ON A COLD, WET AFTERNOON...

STEED: WELL, I'VE INFORMED CROWLEY, BUT IT SEEMS MATHERS IS OUT OF TOWN...

PURDEY: WHAT'S THE HEAD OF THE RUSSIAN DEPARTMENT DOING OUT OF TOWN AT A TIME LIKE THIS? HOLD ON, THERE'S SOMEONE AT THE DOOR...

17.

Steed, in fg, facing away from us, has opened the door, and stands slightly to one side, to show, through the doorway, that a large, ornate mummy-case has been left on the doorstep. We can see that it is raining outside, but there is no sign of anyone around.

STEED: WELL NOW, WHOSE MUMMY ARE YOU?

18.

Steed and Gambit are now manhandling the heavy mummy-case into the house, while Purdey looks at them with disbelief.

PURDEY: I DON'T BELIEVE IT! SOMEONE DUMPS A MUMMY-CASE ON YOUR DOORSTEP AND DISAPPEARS... AND YOU'RE ACTUALLY BRINGING IT INTO THE HOUSE!

STEED: CAN'T LEAVE IT OUT IN THE RAIN, CAN WE? IT MIGHT CATCH COLD!

19.

Close up of Purdey, looking worried.

PURDEY: I WOULDN'T LEAVE MY MUMMY OUT IN THE RAIN EITHER, STEED... BUT (Linked) SHE DOESN'T TRAVEL ROUND IN A BOX...!

PURDEY: YOU DON'T THINK IT'S THE CURSE, DO YOU? SOMEONE TRYING TO PUT THE FRIGHTENERS ON US...?

20.

The mummy case is now in the lounge, and Gambit is trying to wrench it open (the Mummy is standing upright) without success. Steed is coming toward him from an open cupboard, but we do not see what he has in his hands.

BOX: WHEN THEY HAD THE THING INSIDE...

GAMBIT: CAN'T GET IT OPEN, STEED! I DON'T LIKE IT... ITS SUCH AN OBVIOUS PLANT

STEED: NATURALLY...

21.

Steed is now slipping a chain round the mummy's shoulders, with a large padlock on it, and is locking it, smiling.

STEED: SO WE'LL JUST HAVE TO MAKE SURE THE 'FLOWER' DOESN'T OPEN, WON'T WE? THERE! WE CAN'T GET AT MUMMY, MUMMY CAN'T GET AT US...!

22.

The house is suddenly attacked. A bomb has exploded just outside the window, shattering it, spraying broken glass, debris and smoke into the room... but not doing too much damage. Through other windows comes a hail of bullets (shown by lines). Steed and the others are hurling themselves to the ground, dodging the bullets. Gambit already has his revolver in his hand.

BOX: THEN, SUDDENLY...

GAMBIT: DOWN! WE'VE GOT MORE CALLERS... AND THEY DON'T JUST WANT TO SAY HELLO...

STEED: OUTSIDE... WE CAN'T SEE ANYTHING FROM IN HERE...

Bomb: THA-WHAAAAM!

Machine-gun: RAKKA-RAKKA-RAKKA!

23.

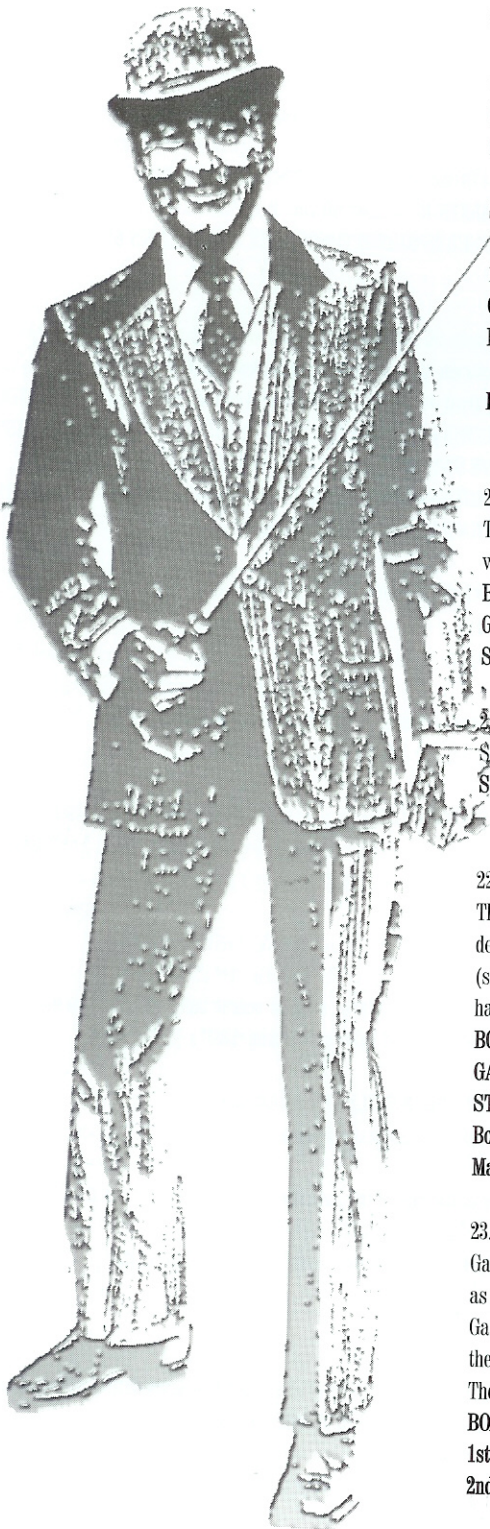
Gambit leads the way out of the house, taking on two gunmen. One, standing just outside the door, is yelling in agony as Gambit hurls himself low through the air, shoulder-charging the man in the stomach without really looking at him. Gambit holds his gun in front of him, in a two handed grip, and as he shoulder-charges the first man, he is shooting, the bullet taking out a second gunman nearby, who clutches at his head, screaming, and falling backwards.

The men are dressed in black.

BOX: MIKE GAMBIT LED THE COUNTER-ATTACK WITH DEADLY SPEED AND SKILL...

1st Man: UUUURFF!

2nd Man: AAAAUGH!



24.

In fg, Gambit kneels on one knee, firing his pistol with both hands at someone off picture. In bg, we see Steed has flung his steel-lined bowler through the air; speed-lines showing its course, to hit another attacker on the head. This man is also going down, dropping his gun, yelling. Purdey is running out of the door behind Steed.

BOX: AND THEN THE AIR WAS FILLED WITH BULLETS AND STEEL RIMMED BOWLERS...

MAN: AAAAHHH!

Gambit's gun: BLAM! BLAM!

25.

In fg, Gambit is aiming another shot away toward a car which is speeding off down the driveway into the bg. Steed stands by his side, looking at the car. If room we might show Purdey kneeling over a prone man, punching him in the back of the neck as he tries to rise... but this isn't too important.

BOX: THEN, AS SWIFTLY AS THEY HAD ARRIVED, THE ATTACKERS FLED...

GAMBIT: A DIVERSION...?

STEED: OBVIOUSLY...

26.

Back in the lounge, close on the mummy case, which we see has now opened about an inch, though further movement is impeded by the chain. Through the gap, a fair-sized hack-saw blade protrudes, sawing at the links of the chain, and is already half-way through.

BOX: AND BACK IN THE HOUSE...

From Case (Thinks)...

BLAST YOU AND YOUR CHAIN, STEED! GOOD THING I WAS PREPARED...

27.

Just showing the Mummy, now out of his case, ransacking Steed's desk, throwing things around, searching for the diamond. He is swathed from head to foot in bandages, with a couple of little holes cut for his eyes... the bandages making him look totally unrecognisable. No one else in view.

BOX: AND THEN THE MUMMY WAS FREE TO START HIS SEARCH. BUT...

From off pic (1):

THAT'S THE WORSE MAKEUP JOB I'VE EVER SEEN...

From off pic (2):

'DISGUISE' OBVIOUSLY LOOKING FOR SOMETHING...

28.

Looking toward the door, where we can see Steed, Gambit and Purdey looking toward us. Steed holds up the fake diamond, smiling. If you want to put the Mummy's head in fg looking toward them, okay, but it really doesn't matter.

STEED: IS THIS WHAT YOU'RE AFTER?

29.

The Mummy now hurls himself toward Steed, who is side-stepping, dodging aside, and tossing the diamond to Gambit. Gambit and Purdey have moved away from Steed, spreading out to the sides. We also see that the Mummy has a loose bandage hanging from his back.

BOX: THE INTRUDER HURLED HIMSELF FORWARD...

STEED: DON'T TAKE YOUR EYES OFF THE 'ICE', FRIEND! HERE, GAMBIT... CATCH!

30.

The Mummy turns away from Steed, about to go toward Gambit. As he does so, Steed is reaching out to grab the loose end of bandage.

BOX: AND AS THE MAN TURNED TOWARD GAMBIT...

STEED: I'M GLAD YOU'VE COME... IT GIVES ME A CHANCE TO TIE UP A LOOSE END...

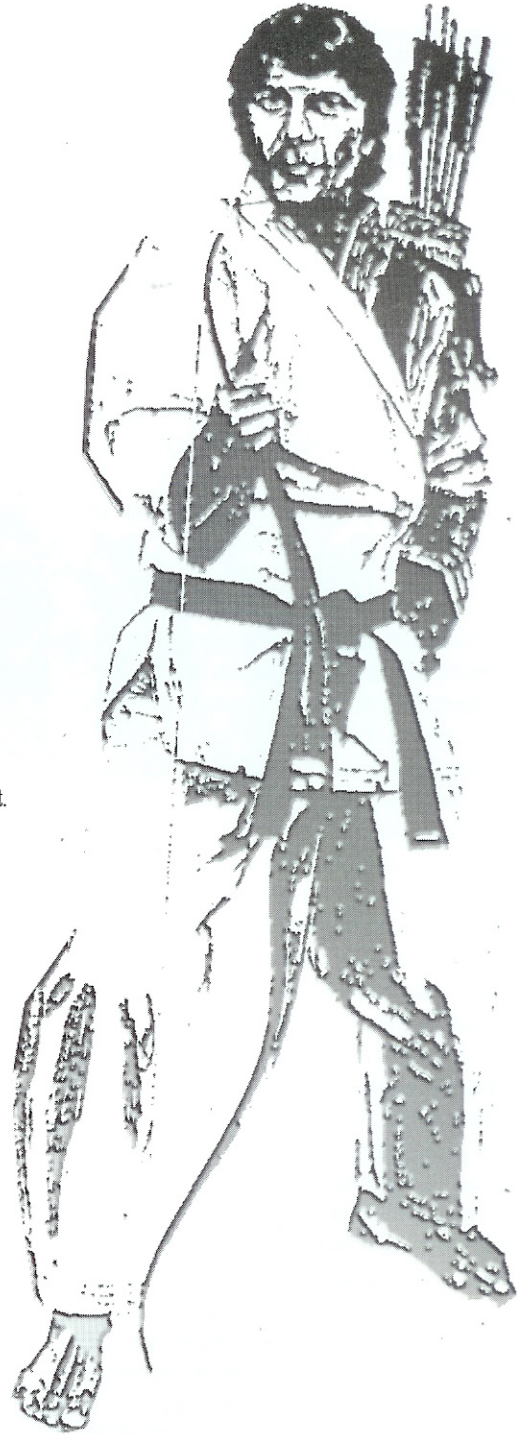
31.

Steed, still holding the end of bandage, is leaning back and pulling hard, sending the Mummy spinning across the room, rotating as his bandages are unravelled, spinning across the room toward Purdey, who stands ready and waiting for him, poised for a kick.

BOX: A FIERCE TUG, AND...

STEED: TOP HOLE, WHAT? YOU REALLY SHOULD UNWIND MORE, OLD BOY!

PURDEY: REALLY, STEED... THE YARNS YOU SPIN...



32.

Purdey is now rotating, her leg coming up in a high arc, kicking the staggering, half-unwrapped Mummy in the head with her instep... a whirling graceful, balletic kick. The Mummy's knees are going... he is about to collapse to the floor, unconscious.

PURDEY: THAT QUITE MAKE MY HEAD WHIRL... HIS TOO!

MUMMY: AAAARGH!

33.

Steed and Co now gather round to look down at the Mummy, unconscious on the floor, unwrapped to the waist, wearing only a T-shirt under his bandages. He is middle-aged. This is Mathers.

STEED: STEED AND CO. GATHERED ROUND THEIR FALLEN VICTIM...

GAMBIT: IT'S MATHERS... HEAD OF THE RUSSIAN DEPARTMENT! NO WONDER THEY SAID HE WAS OUT OF TOWN!

PURDEY: HE'S OUT LIKE A LIGHT NOW...

34.

Steed, in fg, smiles as he goes toward the telephone. Purdey and Gambit remain in bg, looking down at Mathers.

STEED: HE'S OUT OF A JOB TOO! I'D BETTER RING FOR SOMEONE TO TAKE HIM AWAY! CAN'T TRUST ANYONE THESE DAYS...

PURDEY: NOT EVEN YOUR OWN MUMMY...!

END



STEVE MOORE WROTE many of the comic and text story scripts for The New Avengers annuals published by Brown and Watson – “Diamonds Are for Evil” being one of three unpublished works.

For the record: in the first annual he wrote the features “Introducing the Avenging New Avengers,” the three “Meet the Stars” features, and the comic-strip “Fangs for the Memory”. In the second, the feature “Lights... Camera... Action!” and the two text stories “The Gambit Gambit” and “A Fluid Situation” (the features being written from news-clips and other publicity reference material.)

Two further stories remain unpublished (one text story, one comic script). Let me know if you’ve enjoyed reading this and I’ll publish these in forthcoming issues of the mag. (As if you wouldn’t enjoy them. They are, after all, official unpublished works.)