

Beth and the Nile

Chapter 4

King Tut tutted. "Well, that's just what I need: bad news."

"The hieroglyphs are written at about the same height as a small man with a scarf on his face," said Scarab, jumping out from behind his hoop and racing over to join his sister, who was studying the symbols.

"They're a bit scratchy," said Tut. "As though someone were laughing when he wrote them."

"It must have been your Uncle Aye," said Beth.

"Let's see," said Scarab. "There's a picture of a cow, then three men holding their bellies and grinning."

"Easy," said Beth. "Moohahaha."

"He's mocking us," groaned Tut.

"Next to them there's a sheep," observed Scarab. "Then your stepmum, Mr. Tut; ooh, and that's William-you know, the guy who sells spices in the market; then there's an ear and the outside of an orange, a finger on some lips, then your throne."

"The finger on the lips has to be 'secret', doesn't it?" said Tut. "What's another word for 'sheep'? Lamb? Ram?"

"Ewe!" shouted Scarab. "You!"

"Your stepmum's name is Nefer'say'nefer, isn't it?" said Beth.

Tut nodded. "We just call her Nefer."

"Never!" exclaimed Beth. "You never William... You never will!"

"And the ear means 'sounds like'," said Tut.

"Orange rind... sounds like 'find'!" said Beth. "You will never find... the secret... throne."

"What do you do with a throne?" Scarab mused.

"You sit on it," said Tut.

"Brilliant! Only he doesn't any more," said Beth.

"So, it's a former sit," said Scarab.

"An ex-sit?" said Tut.

"That's it!" shouted Beth. "You will never find the secret exit!"

"And there's an arrow pointing over to that chink of light coming through the wall!" said Scarab.



Beth, Scarab and King Tut grinned like people who were very, very pleased with themselves.

"My Uncle Aye thought he was being clever by mocking us and writing these hieroglyphs that he thought we wouldn't understand!" shouted Tut. "Well thanks, Uncle Aye: you've freed us!"

Seconds later, the three new friends were clawing at the highlighted section of the wall to make it large enough to clamber through. Scarab was too scared to go first, second or third, but then he was too scared to stay on his own, so he crawled out anyway.

In a few moments, they were all outside.

"Phew!" said King Tutenkhamun, in a very unregal manner. "Am I glad to be out of there!"

Scarab was about to agree but he remained silent when he saw they were faced by 180 camels, one for every degree of the semicircle that now surrounded them. But it wasn't the camels that kept his mouth shut. It was the 180 mounted soldiers on the camels' backs. And, even more specifically, the 180 curved swords that were being held by the 180 soldiers, each sword pointing at the three children's faces.

"Tomb robbers, eh?" said the captain of the camel army in an extremely unfriendly manner. "You've just made my day. It's the crocodiles for you!"