



Revvvel's Tomb

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“I do not go in there!” a tourguide yelled down the staircase going down into the tomb. His eyes darted round, as if something would float up the staircase to attack him. His deep, accented voice sounded strained both with fear and the unfamiliar English words he spoke. “Strange, strange things we heard. We had to close down all the trucks bring tourists—until you finish checking here.”

Standing idly in the middle of the staircase was 25-year-old archeologist Anna Purgitt. The tomb’s interior felt stale, while the stairs ran a rigid, cramped path, heading down to a dark, pit-like tunnel descending farther into the tomb. Metal railings ran downward along each wall, following alongside the steps, the stair tunnel closing in towards the bottom. At the ceiling, the trapdoor gaped re-opened after the popular tourist spot had remained closed for one day. A beam of sunlight broke into the tomb’s brief isolation, and Anna’s short brown hair stayed still as she raised her head, her keen eyes staring up at the open trapdoor as she creased her forehead. She looked up past her associate, who stood on the stairway halfway between Anna and the ceiling. Anna’s associate, David, his brown hair settling lightly on his face, glanced down at Anna and smiled, amused.

David, the pyramidologist, then looked up at the tour guide. “What exactly have you been hearing?”

The tour guide's head started to shake. "First time, in Prince's Chamber, I was with tour group. We heard things...things knocking on the walls. Second time, again in Prince's Chamber, another group heard same thing. Must be haunted by mummy. Then, the mummy will curse us!" He paused and swallowed. "Then, last time, in Queen's Chamber, heard strange things again, like whipping noises. That's why we called Arche-o-gee Society: you experts on pyramids. Maybe you can help us with tomb."

David glanced up at the tourguide reassuringly. "We'll check it out," he said, nodding.

"Yes!" the tourguide said, nodding eagerly. "Call me on your phone when ready to leave! You have it?"

Anna patted her backpack strap, her bag their only link to the present world within the ancient tomb's confines; in her pack, she carried her phone and a back-up battery, gloves, chips, boxed drinks, and small books on archeology and pyramids—hopefully everything necessary for this small expedition. David had a bag on his shoulder, as well, carrying their laptop.

"Better to hurry!" the tourguide said. "Boss wants open today if safe. Lost money closed one day and business already no good." Holding onto the side of the trapdoor, he glanced aside at his wrist. "Still early. Electric start each day at 8:00. If still here, call me. I turn on lights. Normal open at 9:00, but I think not safe. Boss stupid." He peered down past Anna and towards the staircase's dark bottom, his head starting to shake. "Not safe."

Suddenly, the tourguide screamed "good luck, no die," and slammed the trapdoor, a low boom reverberating through the stone. Anna shot her hand into her pocket and whisked out a mini-flashlight, switching it on at the last minute.

Gazing up with a look of disbelief, David shook his head. "He was right about that 'boss stupid' part: You'd think they'd actually want to give us enough time here!"

While David focused on pyramid construction theories, Anna studied the pyramids' relics. Anna normally felt perfectly at home confined in ancient tombs and pyramids; today, however, her nerves clumped up and her heart curled into a ball, Anna anticipating what they would—or would not—find. She shined the flashlight's tiny beam down the stair tunnel, the only light for their path into the tomb's depths. She turned around just as David stepped down beside her.

“This ought to be right up your alley, Anna,” he said, gently patting her shoulder; for, the immortal mummy’s curse idea had always captivated her, the belief that a disturbed mummy would hex anyone trespassing in its tomb.

“They probably heard about all your research,” David went on. “No one knows more about this than you. So, help me out here a little. I’m just the pyramid guy,” said David. “We’re looking for any signs of...” He looked expectantly at Anna to fill in his sentence.

“For signs of haunting or supernatural discontent,” Anna finished, “which could be just about anything. We just have to start looking around.”

Anna peered down the stairs, seeing each step leading further into the darkest tomb she had ever visited. The darkness at the bottom seemed like an abyss, her mind nagging that this chaos held the answers to immortality.

Without waiting for David, she began hastening towards the abyss. “We should probably start in the Prince’s Chamber: that’s where the most incidents were.”

Watching their steps, they proceeded down into the tomb, Anna’s flashlight beam invading the abyss. Anna and David walked quickly down, though they could see only a few feet ahead, stepping from one section of darkness into another. Anna’s anxiety impelled her to feel entrapped in this particular tomb; but, she felt pacified by David behind her, her partner for the last half-year.

At last, they reached a break in the stairs: the steps leveled out, another dark tunnel leading to their left. As David came up beside her, Anna shined her light to the side, seeing a dulled, gold door, shut.

“Must be the Queen’s Chamber,” David said.

They journeyed down one more level until the stairs ran right down into the Prince’s Chamber, the lowest spot of the tomb. A huge room with more sandy interior, its walls were strong, the sand still solidly packed and not disintegrating to the floor.

Anna and David quickly stepped down, Anna feeling the hard floor beneath her. She instantly started looking around, quickly turning her head round almost like an owl. Painted along the walls like a modern wall border were strips of Egyptian funeral scenes and passages to immortality. Jars with animal head tops were scattered on the floor near the back. Some jars still stood and some were toppled over, their lids strewn several feet away. Sitting in

separate corners, the only gold pieces in the room were two huge statues of sphinx-like creatures with jackal heads. Clay pots sat in tidy rows along the ground against the walls. And in the center lay a sarcophagus of worn black stone, its top painted with a dissolving picture of an elegant masked figure.

David walked alongside the walls, looking back at the scattered jars. “The prince that never became king: that in itself is a reason for spiritual discontent,” he said, referring to the fact that Prince Revvel’s tomb was built before he died of a virus, before he even took the throne.

Bent down to examine a pot, Anna turned to him. “Maybe!” she said, her voice suddenly light.

David wandered between the broken jars, stepping around the misplaced lids: one lid had the sleek jackal head, one a petite bird’s face, and the other a snubby cat face. David pointed at the mess. “I heard they left the canopic jars like this after tomb robbers, but I never believed it.”

Anna looked down intensely at the jars’ wreckage, waving her finger at the floor. “Those jars have been broken, but their contents are nowhere around,” she mused. “And if the robbery scene was left intact, that doesn’t make any sense: there should be a huge mess.”

A strange smile formed on David’s face. “I’m sure they cleaned it up,” he said; for, they both knew what the canopic jars held: the corpse’s internal organs, separately embalmed and kept in their own little resting places.

Frustrated, Anna put her hands to her face. “You’re right,” she said. “That would have been a good reason for supernatural discontent, though.” She sighed heavily, then immediately turned back to probe her surroundings.

David looked at her steadily. “Unless there was nothing in there to begin with. Misplaced bodily organs would make me pretty irate!”

Anna’s eyes widened. “You’re right!” She bent down and picked up one of the standing jars, lifting it a few times to test its weight. David wandered over to sit along one wall. He took out the computer, watching Anna and typing while she searched.

Anna could not tell if the heavy clay jar held anything by lifting it. She carefully laid it back on the ground, lifting up the beast lid and finding the appropriate contents: a ball of

wrappings, probably containing stomach inside.

“It’s full,” she said, seeing David typing faster as she began reporting. Beginning to pace, she stared keenly at each nuance, each artifact in the chamber. “These should be gold,” she said, pointing at the pots. “Any royalty with more clay pots must not have been too popular. Maybe that’s the cause of the hauntings.” Feelings like a hunting predator, she roved her eyes around intently. Her heart began to beat stronger, and she clenched one fist.

Anna heard a tap. She whirled round to see David setting the computer down and heading towards the sarcophagus. He casually lifted the lid and peered inside. Anna stood in place, but shined her flashlight towards the coffin.

David shook his head. “Nothing,” he said. “That could mean there’s a secret chamber where the body’s hid.”

Anna raised her eyebrows, looking at him hopefully. “Could that be a reason for a... spirit to come back? If it was placed out of its sarcophagus?”

Anna saw a look of doubt glaze over David’s face. “We’ve seen plenty of empty sarcophagi,” he answered. Realizing he was right, Anna sighed and looked at the ground. “Are you okay?” David asked. “You seem kind of stressed out about something.”

Anna lifted her head abruptly. “No—I mean, yes, I’m fine. I’m just looking around... that’s all. I don’t see anything here,” she said, her tone suddenly harsh. “Let’s try the Queen’s Chamber.”

They gathered their bags and tromped back up the stairs, this time walking upwards into the darkness. They reached the flat area in the staircase’s center and turned sideways into the narrow and short tunnel leading to the shut door.

Anna put her hand on the knob, turning it with all her strength. The hinges creaked and the door opened, choking the tomb with a blaring grating noise; then, complete silence swallowed the air again.

Anna walked straight into the arid Queen’s Chamber, shining her flashlight all over to get an overview of the room. She stuck her flashlight straight up, its beam rising to light a small florescent light, one of many imposed on the ancient tomb for the tourists’ benefit.

Anna waved her flashlight back and forth so violently that she almost flung it away. Her head darted around towards each spot, yet she saw only empty space: no statues, idols,

pottery, or relics, possibly because the prince died before claiming a queen. The barren room held no sign of life, death, or the Egyptians' sacred immortality—then, Anna flashed her light on one of the dense walls, seeing more of the painted strips running along its center.

Anna advanced to the nearest wall, centering her light beam on the picture and staring at the faded painting. In the painting, a bald Egyptian towed a flat stone sled with a trunk, which supposedly held the canopic jars on their trip into the tomb. Behind the sled was a group of women lifting their arms and heads in mourning. A cluster of servants carried chairs and food to make the soul comfortable in the tomb, and a wooden boat to take the soul to the other world.

Anna gazed at the painted humans along the white background, remembering the ancient Egyptians' belief in honoring the finest parts of the human form: the healthy chests displayed as the torso was painted facing forward, the faces showed their sleek profiles, and their legs were shown sideways as the figures advanced in a line during their funerary rites. Anna suddenly stiffened, her eyes feeling stuck to the painting, and she instantly resented the health of the painted characters. Suddenly, sobs clogged Anna's throat, tears collecting her eyes. She clasped her hand to her mouth.

At that moment, David came up beside her and motioned at the picture. "These are the only...." He paused, looking down at Anna. She turned away; however, David took hold of her shoulder, gently pulling her around. Anna pressed her hand against her eye, trying to soak up the tears.

David's eyes turned concerned. "Come on." He then took her arm and pulled her aside. Grasping her light, Anna sat down on the compact ground. She put the flashlight down and laid her face in her hands.

"I'm sorry," Anna said.

David sat down beside her. "What's wrong? And don't tell me nothing: something's been bothering you since we got this assignment."

Sick with grief, Anna took a deep, shaky breath, feeling as if the tears formed again in her throat. "I'm just not finding what I'm looking for," she said, forcing the words out one by one.

David gazed at her, unsure. "Proof of the mummy's curse?"

Anna breathed deep again, preparing to answer. “Yeah,” she said, “but....” She turned aside, not wanting to face David—or the horrible facts—as she continued; then, she turned to David, her eyes more lucid as she started to explain. She stared at the ground, speaking slower and softer. “My brother was in an accident,” she said. “It happened about a month ago when you had to go to that conference in Italy.”

“Oh, no,” said David. Then, he looked at her sympathetically. “And how many times have we gone on expeditions since then?” he said, softly. “Not to mention the times we were at dinner together.”

Anna sighed and gave David a direct look, expecting him to understand. “I didn’t want to burden you with it,” she said. “Anyway, I stayed with him at the hospital the first week, but after that, it was just too difficult. The accident was pretty bad.” Anna paused to deal with the terrifying words as she spoke them. “He had a really bad head injury, and his ribcage fractured and pierced his lungs—and his heart. He’s been in a coma ever since. The doctors did all they could, but they say at this point, if he hasn’t waken up....” She trailed off her sentence, looking at David, frightened out of uttering the words.

David nodded. “And that’s why it’s been so important to you to find something immortal in here.”

Anna smiled a little. “I know that’s ridiculous,” she said, “but at least if he...doesn’t make it, I’d know then that he’d find peace...somewhere, somehow. Anyway, I’m sorry if I have been really intense about this trip, but at least now you know why.”

David gazed at her, Anna feeling as if he tried to probe her thoughts. Then, he said, “Would that really prove peace for him—or just that spirits exist at all?” He glanced around the chamber. “After all, we are looking for a discontented spirit even now.”

Anna stared ahead, shaking her head slowly. “I know,” she said. “But I just need to know there might be a peaceful afterlife somewhere. I don’t know: maybe I just need some comfort myself.”

David smiled kindly. “Well, we could always go see if we missed anything in the Prince’s Chamber.” Anna smiled gratefully, picking up her light and standing up.

Suddenly, a blinding light flashed through the chamber. The florescent ceiling lights glimmered on, then faded out a little so that they burned at a comfortable intensity. Anna

turned to David, who stood staring at her looking totally shocked. Light now hit every corner of the formerly dark chamber. Anna's muscles went rigid, half-expecting some supernatural being to appear.

Then, an ear-splitting grinding noise resonated through the walls. In one corner, a square piece of stone towards the bottom of the wall started sliding away. Inch by inch, the gliding four-foot square revealed some kind of gray rock tunnel behind the wall. Anna dropped to her knees, staring from a distance into the opening. She saw that the tunnel appeared short, like a kind of cave. Then, just as suddenly as it opened, the hatch began to close.

Anna gasped. "No!" She sprang up and darted towards the hatchway, just as it was half-closed.

Anna heard David call for her to wait, his voice reverberating off the walls but disappearing as the door's scouring sound attacked her ears. Anna dashed faster to the sealing door. Suddenly, the last few open inches disappeared as the door secured into place.

"No!" Anna called. She swung around, distress tightening her face. "What if there was something in there?"

At that moment, another odd noise echoed in. It sounded like a voice, floating through the Queen's Chamber door from the main stairway. It was a small, yet superficially deep voice, lacking the depth of a man's voice.

"Oh, I'm Mr. Pharaoh," the out-of-tone voice crouched, "Mr. Pharaoh...going through my mummy's tomb..." Anna and David turned to each other slowly. Anna's heart beat in anticipation, but her mind twisted with questions.

A lighter voice then spoke up from behind. "Hi, guys! Like my singing?"

David turned around slowly. Anna gasped and whirled around, seeing a little boy about 7 years old, standing in faded and ripped jeans, his long blond bangs falling into his eyes. Anna could not believe it, for the tourguide said that only she and David had entered the tomb since its closure.

The boy grinned at them playfully. He walked right up to Anna and extended his hand. "Hi! I'm Mark," he said. Anna wondered if she were dreaming, for she had never encountered a child wandering alone in an ancient corpse's tomb. However, she took the boy's hand,

that his sweaty palm was definitely real.

David looked at the boy cynically. “How did you get in here?” he asked.

“Oh,” said Mark, tilting his head to the side and speaking casually, “I’ve been here a few days. I stayed behind with my uncle one night before it was all closed up. I made him come down with me alone to take pictures of the Prince’s Chamber, and they closed the tomb up and didn’t know we were here.” Anna listened to him explain this easily, as if he described a typical day at school. Mark shrugged and smiled. “So, here I am! And here you are! I knew you’d be coming sometime soon. Sorry I didn’t turn the lights for you guys a little sooner,” he said, with an even bigger grin.

Anna glanced at her watch, seeing that it was now 8:30. She then gazed at the boy’s clear, candid eyes. She asked, slowly, “Were you the one behind the walls making the noises to scare tourists away?”

Mark chuckled. “Yeah,” he said. “Funny, huh? I been staying in the secret chamber when the tourists were here, and I hit the mummy strips on the wall, just on the other side of there.” He pointed at the wall with the secret door. “Then, I heard people screaming on the other side. The tourguide starting saying all this stuff about a curse, but it was just me havin’ fun.” His mouth dropped like an open flap and he laughed. “Mummy’s curse! That’s funny!”

Hearing this, Anna turned away. Only a haunted tomb would prove immortality—and now, Anna discovered that the only thing haunting the tomb was some weird youngster sneaking around behind the walls.

Meanwhile, David began his questioning. “How did you know there was a secret chamber? And how did you know how to open it?” he asked.

Mark shrugged again. “I knew,” he said, as if it were common knowledge. “I knew you guys were coming, too, like I said—even though you’re a lot taller in real life.” Anna looked down at him, wondering what this remark meant.

David kept up his interrogation. “Why did you stay behind with your uncle—and where is he?”

Mark walked to the corner opposite the secret door. “Come on,” he said, motioning for them to follow. “I’ll show you.”

He bent down and pushed his finger on what appeared as a tiny black stain on the

ground; then, the grinding resounded again, and the hidden door began to creep open. Anna grimaced, for the door opened not by an awakened pharaoh, but by a button.

The secret door now gaped open. Anna and David slowly stepped to it and looked in cautiously, seeing ceiling lights shining inside. The doorway led to a square cave with gray stone walls. Anna tread in steadily, seeing a steep stairway plunging down. She noticed an open panel of lightswitches on the right-hand wall.

Anna glanced behind David. “What if he traps us down here?” she asked, barely whispering.

Suddenly, Mark’s voice called from the Queen’s Chamber. “Don’t worry! You’ll see a big square at the bottom you can push to open it up. Anyways, I’m not gonna lock you guys in!” Anna wondered how Mark could have heard her when she had been so quiet. She hastened down the well-lit stairs. The steps dove down steeply, then turned sharply to the right. Anna walked briskly down and passed the curve—then stopped abruptly.

The next steps were smeared with a long line of blood, thin in some places, thick and gluey in others. The blood streak continued around the rest of the stairway’s curve.

“Oh, my God,” David muttered. “We’d better get back up there before that kid traps us and makes us a permanent part of the tomb.”

Anna stepped down farther, following the blood’s path. She heard David call her back, but then heard his footsteps coming after her. Rounding the corner, Anna saw the oddest sight of her life.

The stairs continued 20 feet to a bottom chamber, what Anna figured to be the lower lair. Standing in the middle of the stairway, Anna gazed down to the lair’s dead center and saw one object: a golden sarcophagus, painted elaborately with a pharaoh’s figure. Its mummy was removed and unwrapped, lying stiffly across the bottom steps. It was a dead, shriveling prune in a human shape, nothing but wrinkled and dehydrated skin stretched out and covering a human skeleton. It had caves for eyes, its arms folded across its chest in typical mummy style. The blood trailed under and smeared past the mummy, its stain going all the way up to the sarcophagus’ lid. A neat pile of thin linen wrappings sat in a corner, except for one stray strip lying by the wall.

David walked past Anna and bent down, eyeing the corpse from head to toe. “It looks

like the prince,” he announced.

Anna pointed down at the blood smear. “Why is there blood?” she said, for a 3,000 year-old corpse could never have leaked new blood.

David looked up with an anxiety Anna had never before seen. He went over to the sarcophagus, putting his hands on the lid. Anna rushed to his side. David lifted the lid only a few inches—and inside lay a gray-haired man, lying like a corpse in a narrow coffin that barely fit his body. His shoulders soaked with blood—the same deep red blood on the stairway. Wounds exploded on his shoulders and along his leg. At least three bloody holes had been ruptured in his thigh, small gaping holes with blood curdling on their sides. A 3-inch blood pool sat in the sarcophagus, staining its golden walls. Anna’s stomach reversed, seeing the man submerged in his own blood.

The man appeared alive. His wide eyes were glazed, and his mouth gaped open like a cadaver’s. Anna heard a groan hiss out like a whisper.

And lying on his unwounded chest was a small handgun.

David reached in and pulled out the gun. Anna’s nerves squeezed, as he pushed the cylinder open.

“No bullets,” he said, a note of relief in his voice.

Suddenly, Mark’s voice came from behind. “I had to do it,” he said. Anna and David turned to see Mark standing on the bottom step. Mark’s face was now a somber visage, his eyes regretful, Anna hearing a bit of mourning in his voice. Mark continued, “I just shot him a few hours ago, like right before you guys came. I tried to shoot his heart, but my hands shook, and I kept missing. He knew about me...and he was gonna use me.” He stepped down into the lair, looking up earnestly. “Member when I told you I knew you were coming?” Anna nodded, staring at the boy with intrigue. “I did. I see pictures: pictures in my head.”

“Those are dreams,” David said, flatly.

“No, ‘cause I’m awake,” Mark continued. “Pictures just pop in my mind, you know? I know it’s weird, but they do. When I was littler, I saw pictures of what’d happen in school next month. Then I saw more and more stuff, and now, I see lots of things: I saw pictures of that plane crashing before it happened last week. And then...I saw pictures of that cult guy taking those people to that house.” Anna paused, remembering the plane that recently crashed

in South America, as well as the cult leader who led his followers to a cabin, locked them up, and gassed them to death.

Mark continued. “My uncle told me to think harder, so he could write a book about my pictures: you know, like those books about what Nostradamus saw. My uncle wanted a lot of money. Then, he beat me when I couldn’t see that far, ‘cause I only see things a few months before they happen—and he says it takes longer to get a book done, so I have to see further ahead.” Mark lowered his head. “Then, he hit me over and over. Then, he said instead of a book, he’d do speeches where he’d tell people what I saw, but say they were predictions—and that I couldn’t get no pay, except more hitting.” Mark’s head remained lowered, but Anna saw it shaking as he gently sobbed. “So, I had to shoot him. I know he won’t make it: He’s gonna die at the hospital.”

Mark made a fist and wiped his eyes with it, keeping his head lowered. David looked at Anna, gesturing to make a phone call. Anna nodded, heading quickly to the stairway.

Anna and David sped up the staircase, through the tunnel, and back into the Queen’s Chamber. Anna rushed to her backpack on the floor, took out the cel phone, dialed the tourguide, and told him what they had found. She flipped the receiver closed and set the phone back into her bag.

“Can you believe it, though, that kid thinking he can see the future?” David asked. “Some excuse for killing your own uncle!”

Anna thought for a moment about Mark’s clear eyes and straightforward face. “I don’t know. It almost seems like—“

Mark’s voice interrupted her. “I know you called the tour people, and they called the police,” he said. He stood by the secret door, calmly looking at them, not a glimpse of craziness in his eyes.

“Of course we called,” David said. “You tried to murder someone.”

“I knew you’d think that,” Mark said. “He used to be a nice man, then he got mean, but only after knew about my pictures. I know what’ll happen to me: the police’ll make me live with special people that are s’posed to take care of troubled kids. They’ll be nice to me, though. They won’t hit me anymore.” He looked up at Anna with direct eyes. “And I know you guys won’t tell about the pictures I see, and I’m not gonna tell anymore. So, from now

on, no one else will know.”

Ten minutes passed before the tourguide arrived with his boss and the police, the tourguide screaming about how horrible it was for Mark to dare to kill someone in Revvel’s Tomb.

Afterwards, Anna and David walked behind as a policeman attached handcuffs to Mark’s small wrists and led him up the main stairway that David and Anna had first encountered in the darkness; yet, now the stairs were fully lit. The policeman towed Mark up to the trapdoor at the top, once again open to reveal a gray sky outside, a tiny beam of sunlight nudging itself out from behind the clouds. Anna and David stood behind on the stairs, Anna looking behind at the mysterious abyss she had hoped would prove an afterlife; and instead, she had found a man bleeding to death in a sarcophagus. She turned back around, seeing Mark’s back as the policeman dragged him out of the tomb.

“Oh, yeah,” Mark said, suddenly stopping on the steps and turning backwards to Anna. His face was mild and sincere, like a teacher imparting knowledge to a student. “You don’t have to worry about your brother anymore. What’s his name? Robert?” Anna’s heart almost stopped. She stared up at Mark in disbelief and nodded slowly. “I saw pictures of him, too,” Mark continued. “He’s gonna wake up soon.”

Anna stood still in amazement. She watched the policeman take Mark to the top, and they climbed out the trapdoor. They seemed to disappear in an instant, leaving Anna and David alone on the steps.

Anna turned to David, her face blank. “He couldn’t have known that unless he was telling the truth about his predicting,” she said. “I didn’t even mention Robert’s name to you.” She smiled then, for she may not have found proof of immortality—yet, she had found an unusual boy who gave her hope for her brother’s life, and hope in the future.