

# Beth and the Nile

## Chapter 2

"I'm scared," said 'Scaredy' Scarab.

"Scared of what?" asked his sister, Beth.

Leyton-Nefer had done what the small, strange man had asked him: he'd made the gold, bejewelled sarcophagus for King Tutenkhamun and delivered it to the tomb of the last pyramid on the left at sunset on Monday.

It was now midnight on Thursday and Beth and Scarab were inside the tomb waiting for the strange man to come and pay them. They assumed that between Monday at sunset and tonight, the Boy Pharaoh had died and been placed inside this sarcophagus. They were sitting on the sarcophagus, not because they were disrespecting the memory of the Boy King but because it was the only comfortable place to perch in the spooky tomb.

"Scared of everything," answered Scarab.

"Everything?" asked Beth.

Scarab nodded anxiously.

"OK," said Beth. "What are you *more* scared of: sand or being in this dark tomb at midnight, sitting on the sarcophagus of a dead pharaoh?"

Scaredy Scarab pursed his lips, swung his feet and kicked his heels against the magnificent sarcophagus of King Tutenkhamun. "Umm... I suppose it is quite spooky down here in the dark, sitting on the sarcophagus of a dead king, waiting for a strange little man... but then the way sand gets into your sandals and in between your toes, that's just freaky. I think I'd have to say sand."

Just then, the entrance to the tomb slammed shut and, as it did, a small, muffled voice could be heard saying, "Moohahaha! Now the door is sealed, you shall stay as playmates with the Boy King FOREVER!"

"Actually," said Scarab, "I've just changed my mind. This tomb thing is way more scary."

"We're now locked in a pyramid tomb at midnight with no way of getting out," observed Beth.

The two of them sat in silence in the darkness for what could have been hours but was probably more like half a minute.

(To be fair, neither of them had a sundial, and even if they had had a sundial it wouldn't have been much use inside a darkened pyramid tomb at midnight.)

Beth racked her brains. It hurt. So she started thinking instead.

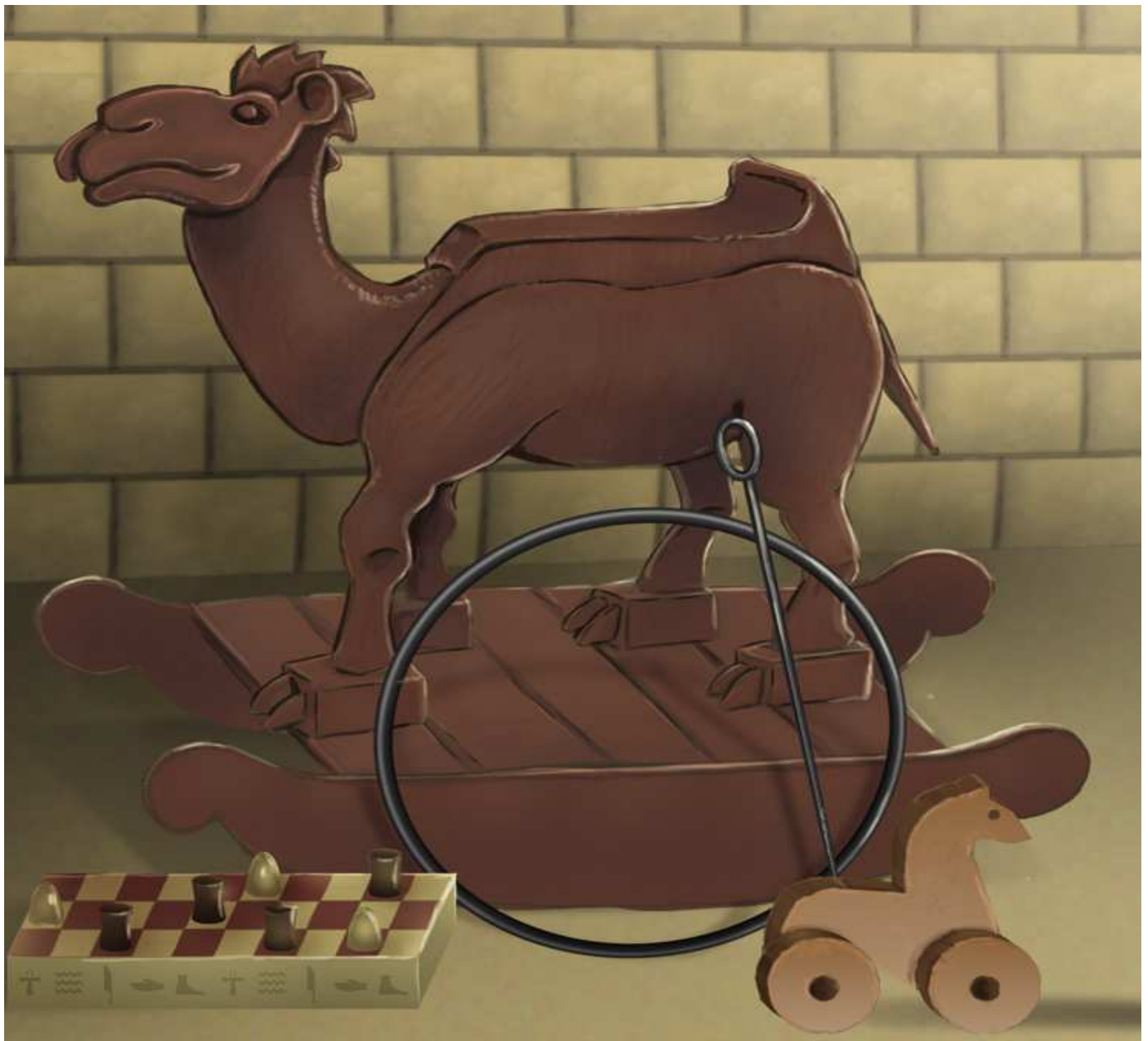
Scarab decided he might as well take a look around, which proved to be harder than he thought. "Ow... what's that? Ow..." he said as he stumbled around in the pitch-blackness. "Beth... ow... where are you? I think I found... aghh!"

Beth turned on the light. I say "turned on the light", but what I really mean is that she stumbled across a workman's lamp which, fortunately for her, her brother, this story and you, the reader, was full of oil. Probably sesame oil, though it could have been sunflower oil. And lying next to the lamp was a box of matches, but Ancient Egyptian matches, which in this case meant two stones that you banged together till you got sparks. Making sparks, Beth lit the wick, which was handily poking out of the sesame (or sunflower) oil.

Slowly, the whole room was illuminated. Scarab was lying face down in a pile of armour.

Beth ignored him and her eyes grew wide as she gazed around the tomb. "Wow! Look at all these toys!"

And, true enough, surrounding them on all sides were piles of the fanciest toys you could buy four and a half thousand years ago. There were hoops, rocking camels, board games, more hoops and sticks with which to hit hoops. Beth and Scarab launched into the pile, but within 20 minutes they were completely bored.



"Is that all there is for the Afterlife?" said Scarab.

"There are some gold and jewels lying about on the far side of the chamber," offered Beth.

"Can you play with them?"

"No."

"Can you eat them?"

"No."

"So what's the point of them?"

Beth had no answer. She was starting to feel a little concerned. This wasn't how she'd planned to spend her Thursday night. She'd thought they'd pocket the cash and be home in no time. "At least you're not scared any more," she said to her brother.

Just then, they heard a knocking coming from the sarcophagus they were sitting on.

Scarab dived head first back into the pile of armour and screamed as loudly as he could. Beth jumped down off the sarcophagus.

"Monster in the tomb!" shouted Scarab.

"It came from inside the coffin!" exclaimed Beth.

"There must be a dead monster in there!" screamed Scarab.

"It can't be dead if it's knocking."

"Then it's an undead monster!"

Things were getting slightly out of control for Beth and 'Scaredy' Scarab, but now I want you to turn your attention to the sarcophagus itself, and the hand that was slowly pushing the lid to one side.

And the face that followed the hand.

And the small voice that came out of the mouth that lived in that face and said, "Greetings to whoever you may be. I am the one and only King Tutenkhamun!"