

DRAMATIZATION
a story based on true
events from the past

THE CURSE OF KING TUT

THE (POSSIBLY)
TRUE STORY OF A
MUMMY'S WRATH

BY SPENCER KAYDEN
ILLUSTRATION BY LISA K. WEBER

CHARACTERS

Circle the character you will play.

***NARRATORS 1, 2, 3** (N1, N2, N3)

LORD CARNARVON: a wealthy Englishman

LADY EVELYN HERBERT: Lord Carnarvon's daughter

DOCTOR: Lord Carnarvon's physician

***HOWARD CARTER:** an English archaeologist

REIS AHMED: an Egyptian worker on Carter's team

TARIK: another Egyptian worker

ALAN GARDINER: a hieroglyphics specialist

ARTHUR MACE: a member of Carter's team

GEORGES BÉNÉDITE: an Egyptologist from France

TONY: a truck driver

JAKE: a truck driver

* Starred characters are major roles.



TURN THE PAGE to read this
supernatural tale. →



AS YOU READ, THINK ABOUT:
THE CURSE

This play is about one of the most famous mysteries of the 20th century: a curse supposedly unleashed by the opening of an ancient king's tomb. As you read, decide whether you think the curse is real.

SCENE 1

N1: Cairo, Egypt, April 1923.

N2: Lady Evelyn Herbert sits at her father's bedside.

LORD CARNARVON: I'll be fine, my dear.

LADY EVELYN HERBERT: But Father, your skin has turned so pale. And that red mark on your cheek looks like it's on fire!

CARNARVON: It is nothing. Just an infected mosquito bite.

HERBERT: Are you sure? You look like you're having trouble breathing.

CARNARVON: I'm **euphoric**! My archaeology team just made one of the biggest discoveries in history.

N3: Lord Carnarvon starts to cough violently. A doctor arrives.

HERBERT (quietly): Doctor, what's wrong with him?

DOCTOR: I can't say. This is a very mysterious illness.

HERBERT: My father must get well. He and his partner, Howard Carter, recently discovered the tomb of an ancient pharaoh named Tutankhamen (toot-ahn-KAH-men). The tomb has rooms full of gold and untold riches!

DOCTOR: Yes, all of Egypt has been speaking of it.

HERBERT: The treasures inside have not been seen for more than 3,000 years.

DOCTOR: Forgive me, my lady, but perhaps they should not be seen.

HERBERT: What do you mean?

DOCTOR: Many believe that the final resting place of a pharaoh is sacred, and that those who enter an ancient tomb will be cursed.

HERBERT: Could it be true? Father fell ill soon after he entered Tutankhamen's tomb.

N1: Lord Carnarvon's body begins to tremble. He reaches for his daughter's hand.

CARNARVON: Dearest Evelyn, tell Carter he must continue to **excavate** the tomb no matter what happens. I . . . I . . .

N2: Lord Carnarvon gasps for breath. He dies.



1. Outside the tomb of King Tut in the Valley of the Kings, Egypt. **2.** Howard Carter examines the sarcophagus. **3.** Artifacts from Tut's tomb being removed. Though Carter stated that they should remain in Egypt, many relics ended up in museums and private collections around the world. Today, most have been returned to the Egyptian Museum in Egypt's capital, Cairo.

N3: Just then, the lights flicker and go out. The room is completely dark.

DOCTOR: Perhaps the curse has claimed its first victim.

SCENE 2

N1: Flashback to five months earlier, in Luxor, Egypt.

N2: Archaeologist Howard Carter believes an undiscovered tomb lies in the Valley of the Kings.

N3: It is a desolate place full of sand

and rock. Temperatures there can exceed 120°F.

N1: Carter and his team have spent years in this scorching valley, searching for the tomb of Tutankhamen.

N2: Tutankhamen became pharaoh around 1333 B.C., when he was only 9 years old. He died mysteriously at age 19.

N3: His tomb has never been found.

HOWARD CARTER: Gentlemen, this



is the one place in the valley I haven't looked. Let's clear away all this **debris**.

N1: One of the workers, Reis Ahmed, finds a smooth stone surface under the sand. He keeps digging and uncovers another stone below it.

REIS AHMED: Mr. Carter, I think I've found something unusual.

N2: Carter brushes off the stones. Then he gently probes the sand around the stones.

CARTER: It seems to be part of a structure.

N3: The crew keeps working and uncovers a staircase that leads down to a door.

CARTER: This door has royal symbols! I must summon Lord Carnarvon before we go any further. We should make this discovery together.

N1: Carter goes to his tent. Tarik is waiting for him.

CARTER: What is wrong? You look as if you've seen a ghost!

TARIK: I just came from your house. A cobra crept inside and killed your beloved canary.

CARTER: I'm sad to hear that.

Are you all right?

TARIK: The cobra is a symbol of protection for the pharaoh. This is a warning: You must not disturb the pharaoh's tomb!

CARTER: My good man, that's nonsense. If we have found Tutankhamen's tomb, just imagine the immense treasure inside!

TARIK: But, Sir . . .

CARTER: We may be able to show the world a perfectly preserved piece of ancient Egypt. And, we'll be famous for doing it! What could be bad about that?

SCENE 3

N2: A few weeks later, Lord Carnarvon arrives at the site from England. Carter's crew finishes digging out the staircase and breaks through the door.

N3: The team makes its way down a dark passageway filled with stone and rubble. At the end, they find another sealed door.

CARNARVON: This door has **hieroglyphics** on it! What does it say?

GARDINER: Let me have a look . . . Tut . . . ankh . . . amen!

CARNARVON: By Jove, Carter, we've found it!

N1: With trembling hands, Carter makes a small breach in the door. Holding a candle in front of him, he sticks his head through the opening.

N2: A sudden blast of hot air escapes from the chamber, causing the candle to flicker.

N3: As Carter's eyes grow accustomed to the light,



PHARAOH'S CURSE CLINGS TO HIS

By P. W. WILSON
IN the Valley of the Kings, where
have rested the Pharaohs of
Egypt, men today are digging.
And of those who dig, six have
died—mysteriously, some say. And
so there has come once more talk
that these men have died because
there has been laid upon them a

Ancient Superstition of Valley of Kings Is Revived by
The Death of Another Egyptian Archaeologist

progress still shine in hues as fresh, urea. What happened subsequently | name powers of which we possess
as four thousand years ago. And | --- that a mosquito bit him; he | very incomplete notions."

SCENE 4

details of the room within slowly emerge—strange animals, statues, and gold, everywhere the glint of gold.

CARNARVON: Can you see anything?

CARTER: Yes . . . wonderful things!

N1: The crew widens the hole, and the men slip through.

N2: The room is packed with glittering treasures: statues, chariots, ornate chests, furniture, urns, and jewelry—everything the ancient Egyptians believed Tut would need in the afterlife.

N3: Gardiner picks up a **gilded** wooden cobra.

GARDINER: Carter, I can't help but wonder if these serpents have real power. People have warned me that a curse will be unleashed if we enter this tomb.

CARTER (*whispering*): Keep your superstitions to yourself, Gardiner. If the workers believe there is a curse, they won't help us excavate. We can't do it ourselves.

GARDINER: You have studied ancient Egypt most of your life. You don't believe the curse could be real?

CARTER: I think it is a load of hogwash.

GARDINER: Carter, I do hope you're right. I would hate to **incur** the wrath of the Egyptian gods and goddesses.

N1: After Lord Carnarvon's death, Carter and his crew continue the **laborious** task of identifying and cataloguing everything in Tutankhamen's tomb.

N2: More than 5,000 artifacts are found inside. The workers take great care with each one.

N3: Inside the burial chamber, they use pulleys to lift a gold coffin out of a stone **sarcophagus**.

CARTER: Careful now. Keep it steady. Let's not jostle the mummy.

MACE: Why is it so heavy?

CARTER: The coffin seems to be solid gold! Just

think—soon we will be looking into the face of an ancient king.

MACE: Can someone take this rope? My body feels weak.

GARDINER: I'll get it.

N1: Gardiner takes the rope just as Mace collapses.

CARTER: What happened?

GARDINER: I'm not sure. One moment he was fine, the next, he fainted.

N2: Museum curators from all over the

world travel to Egypt to see the tomb.

GEORGES BÉNÉDITE: Carter, what are the chances we can bring some of these marvelous treasures to France?

CARTER: I do want to share this extraordinary discovery with the world, but it does not belong to me.

BÉNÉDITE: Would it really matter if one or two artifacts were missing?

CARTER: The contents of the tomb must stay in Egypt. Say, are you OK? You look flushed.

N3: Bénédite collapses and dies.



TOP: THE NEW YORK TIMES; BOTTOM: THE GRANGER COLLECTION

SCENE 5

N1: Ahmed sees Tarik in the market.

AHMED: Tarik, why haven't you been working at the tomb?

TARIK: I will not go back there. I heard that a tablet was found in the tomb that says, "Death will come to those who disturb the sleep of the Pharaoh."

AHMED: That is a rumor. And if it were true, it was probably written to scare away tomb robbers.

TARIK: Didn't you hear about Sheik Abdul Haman?

AHMED: No.

TARIK: He went to visit Tutankhamen's tomb. The next day, he became

tired with a very high fever. Now he is dead. We have not seen the end of this curse.

AHMED: But Mr. Carter works in the tomb every day. He is healthy and **robust**.

TARIK: Others are paying for his greed with their lives. Entering the tomb was bad enough, but now he is removing every last item.

AHMED: Mr. Carter is taking them to the museum in Cairo. Is that wrong?

TARIK: If Mr. Carter is willing to **desecrate** Tutankhamen's tomb, he does not truly

respect the pharaoh or our people.

AHMED: But, Tarik, our ancestors believed that their souls were kept alive when their names were remembered. You must admit, because of Howard Carter, Tutankhamen will live forever.

SCENE 6

N2: Texas, 2011.

N3: Two men travel down a dark highway in an 18-wheeler.

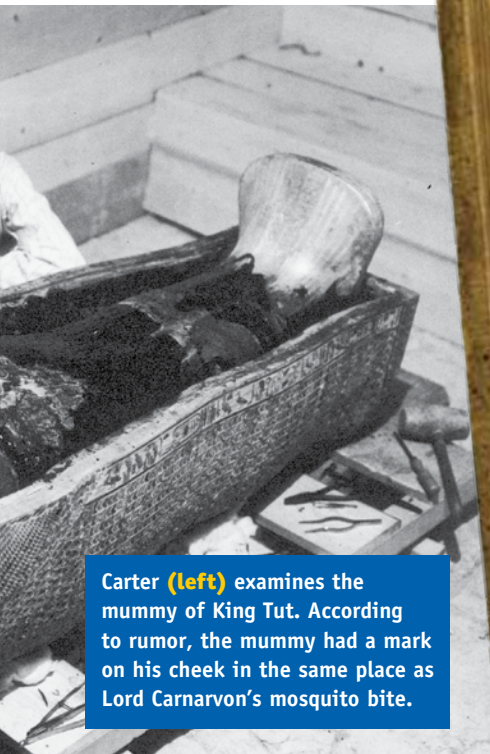
TONY: Thanks for giving me



TOMBS

ral caves. Let us examine
ese causes may be.
xavator in Egypt is not a
ournalist, intent upon pleasure
h. He is a hard worker.
his work he often selects the
omfortable season, because life

WWW.ISTOCKPHOTO.COM (BOOK):
UNDERWOOD & UNDERWOOD/CORBIS (CARTER)



Carter (**left**) examines the mummy of King Tut. According to rumor, the mummy had a mark on his cheek in the same place as Lord Carnarvon's mosquito bite.

DIARY

From the Journal of Howard Carter

November 27, 1922

The sight that met us was beyond anything one could conceive. The heterogeneous mass of material crowded into the chamber without particular order, so crowded that you were obliged to move with anxious caution, was very bewildering. Beneath one of the couches, we perceived an aperture in the rockwall, which proved to be nothing less than another doorway. With care Ld. C. and I crept under this strange gilded couch, and we peered into the opening. There we saw that it led into yet another chamber.

In neither of these two chambers could we see any traces of a mummy or mummies—the one reason for making a cache. The mystery gradually dawned upon us. We were but in the anterior portion of a tomb. Behind that closed doorway was the tomb chamber, and Tutankhamen probably lay there in all his magnificent panoply of death.

It was a sight we never dreamed of seeing. We were astonished by the beauty and refinement of the objects, surpassing all we could have imagined—the impression was overwhelming.





This coffin found inside King Tut's tomb held his mummified liver!

that. When I took this job, they told me that a bunch of other drivers had already turned it down.

TONY: Why?

JAKE: People say there's a curse on anyone who disturbs King Tut or anything that was buried with him. They believe that what's in the back of this truck should never have been taken out of his tomb.

TONY: What do you think?

JAKE: I think it's getting late and we should stop for some coffee.

N1: Jake changes lanes and steers the truck onto the exit ramp.

N2: In the middle of the ramp, the truck's headlights catch something long and thick, with a flash of yellow eyes.

TONY: Watch out!

N3: Jake slams on the brakes.

JAKE AND TONY: Aaaaaah!!!

N1: The truck skids into a ditch.

JAKE: What was that thing?

N2: They look out the window and see an enormous cobra slithering across the road. It turns its head and flicks its tongue at them.

TONY: So, now do you think the mummy's curse is real?

JAKE: I don't know. Do you? ●

Experts have been studying Tutankhamen for decades. They've figured out what he may have looked like (**rendering, above**) by studying his mummy (**below**). They've also found several possible explanations for the "curse." One of the most accepted theories is toxic mold spores inside Tut's tomb. These can be deadly for someone with a weak immune system—someone like Lord Carnarvon, who had an infected mosquito bite. Today, Tut exhibits around the world continue to attract millions of tourists every year.



a ride to Houston, Jake. What are you hauling tonight?

JAKE (laughing): Just a bunch of ancient treasure. I'm bringing it to a museum.

TONY: Are you kidding me?

JAKE: Nope. It's stuff from the tomb of that Egyptian mummy guy, King Tut.

TONY: Doesn't that give you

the creeps?

JAKE: What do you mean?

TONY: Well, would you want someone digging you out of the ground thousands of years after you died? Whatever happened to "Rest in peace"?

JAKE: It's funny you should say

CONTEST

Write About the Curse

Do you think the curse of King Tut is real? Why or why not? Include details from the play to write a paragraph supporting your opinion. Send it to **KING TUT CONTEST**. Five winners will each get a copy of Rick Riordan's adventure novel *The Red Pyramid*. See page 2 for details.



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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: KENNETH GARRETT/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC STOCK IMAGES; ANDREAS F., VOEGELIN/ANTIKEMUSEUM/THE FIELD MUSEUM; MIKE NELSON/EPA/CORBIS