

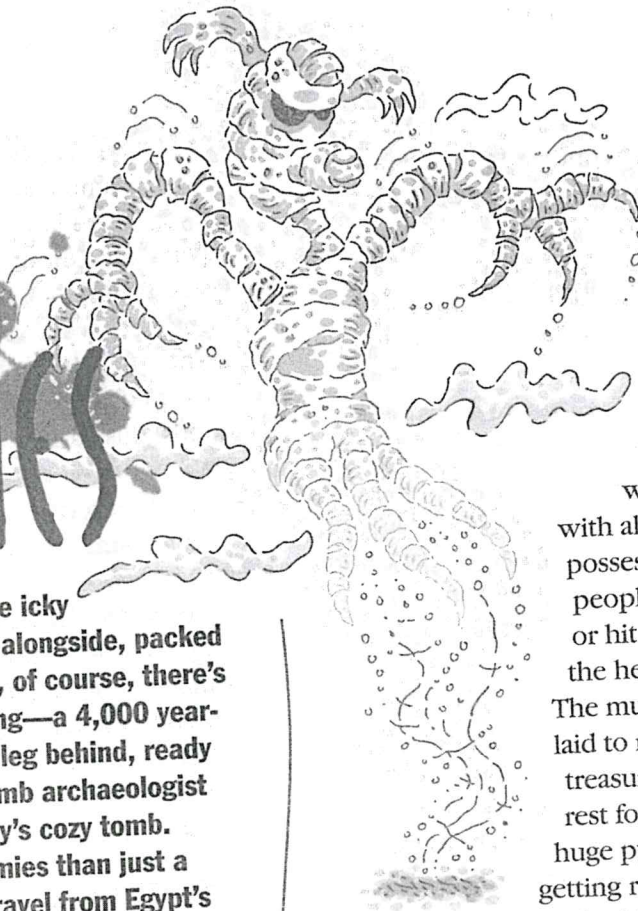
MUSTY MUMMIES

Mummies are so cool. All those icky bandages and those little jars alongside, packed with lungs and guts. And then, of course, there's the whole Mummy's Curse thing—a 4,000 year-old body, dragging one moldy leg behind, ready to crush the life out of the dumb archaeologist who has disturbed the mummy's cozy tomb.

But there's more to mummies than just a bunch of bandaged bodies. Travel from Egypt's Valley of the Kings to the icy peaks of South America's Andes mountains to a creepy carnival in California, and unwrap true tales of murder, mystery . . . and wacked-out twists of fate.

HAPPY MUMMY'S DAY

Life is full of pesky things to deal with: bad luck, stomach flu, and—especially annoying—death. The ancient Egyptians came up with all sorts of rituals that helped them deal with these issues, especially death. The Egyptians believed that when you died, you went to another world, but you still needed a lot of your stuff, including your body. And the best way to keep a body from ending up as an all-you-can-eat buffet for worms and maggots was to mummify it and place it in a big box, called a *sarcophagus*. If you were rich and powerful, your mummy, its box, and *all* your goodies got placed in a very special tomb—a chamber located deep within the Earth, down many long narrow tunnels, sealed shut for all eternity. Dying in Egypt was a very big deal. (Get the poop on pyramids in **CRUEL CONSTRUCTION** on page 42.)

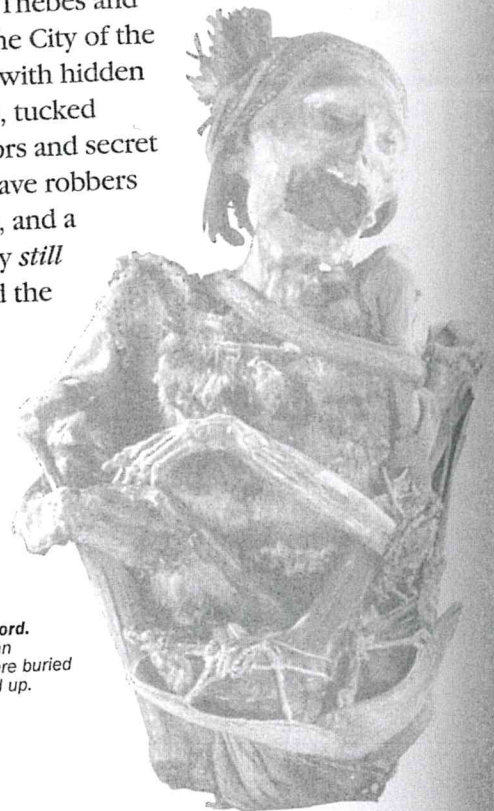


NOT R.I.P.—ING

For a thousand years, wealthy Egyptians ended their lives as mummies, tucked into their tombs with all their favorite goodies. But the problem with getting buried with all your most precious possessions is this: Dead people cannot yell, shove, or hit a grave robber over the head with a frying pan. The mummies that were being laid to rest along with all their treasures were not laying at rest for very long. Egypt's huge pyramids were always getting robbed.

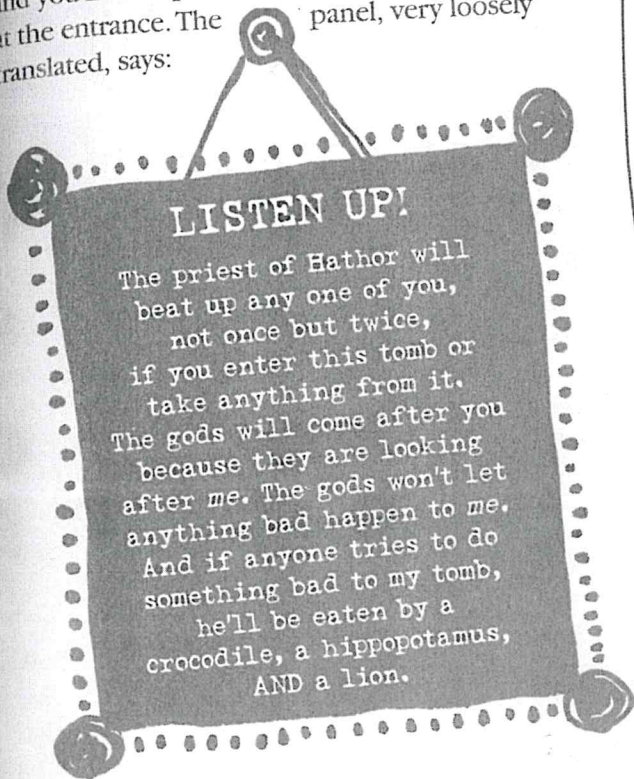
The kings of the Middle Kingdom (2100 B.C.E. to 1650 B.C.E.) realized that pyramids weren't the smartest of ideas. Hidden burial sites were better, so the thieves wouldn't know where to look. So they moved up the river to a place called Thebes and began to build the City of the Dead—temples with hidden burial chambers, tucked behind false doors and secret passages. But grave robbers are tricky devils, and a job is a job. They *still* managed to find the tombs and rob them. So the pharaohs started leaving warning notes all over their tombs.

Mum's the word.
Many Peruvian mummies were buried all scrunched up.



AND THE MUMMIES CURSED . . .

Walk into the tomb of a guy named Petety in Giza and you'll see a panel with hieroglyphics hanging at the entrance. The panel, very loosely translated, says:



Do you think the tomb robbers read that sign and went running out into the night with nothing in their sacks? *Nope!* They just walked right on in and cleaned the place out. That was the fate of most of the tombs of Egypt's kings, queens, and princes. Which finally brings us to a long-forgotten, very unimportant Egyptian pharaoh named Tutankhamen, who, centuries after his death, became one of the most famous people in the world—the man who gave us the tale of the Mummy's Curse.

TUT, TUT, TUT

So just who was King Tut? Well, he ruled in 1362 B.C.E. and became king when he was a whopping eight years old. Tut was then forced to marry his half-sister (now *there's* a major ick), since pharaohs were allowed to have as many wives as they wanted. Little Tut was pharaoh

mostly for show. His "advisors" really ran things. When he died at the age of 18, he was shoved into a tomb, the tomb was sealed shut, and everyone forgot about him.

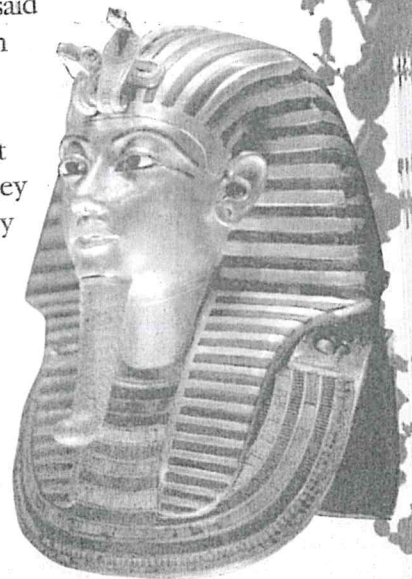
Fast-forward thousands of years to October 1922. An Egyptologist named Howard Carter had been digging, digging, digging for more than ten years, looking for pharaoh leftovers. He had found absolutely nothing and was close to calling it quits, but decided to try one last time. So one day, over in the Valley of the Kings, digging around an already robbed tomb, he found an odd set of steps, covered with trash, leading downward.

Carter was stoked! He sent a telegraph (the way people wrote to each other when they were in a hurry before the days of e-mail) to Lord Carnarvon, the person who was paying him to dig. "Come quickly!" the telegraph said (you had to pay by the word). In late November of 1922, when Carter and Carnarvon finally cleared away all the rubble that blocked the tomb entrance, they were dumbstruck by what they found: an honest-to-goodness, unrobbed Egyptian pharaoh's grave!

CURSES!

Mystery soon began to swirl up, along with the dust from the tomb, launching tales of a curse. The day the steps to the tomb were found, Carter's pet canary was devoured by a cobra—nothing left but a handful of yellow feathers. And cobras were a symbol of the pharaoh. *Hmmm!* Then, a few months after the tomb was opened, Lord Carnarvon got a mosquito bite on his cheek, which became infected. Within a matter of days, he was dead! *Hmmmm again!* At the moment of his death, the lights went out in the city of Cairo and back home in England, Carnarvon's dog howled wildly and then supposedly dropped dead as well!

Sounds like a curse to me.



But things got weirder still. Not only was Tut's tomb a scary place for the Egyptologists—they found out that poor Tut hadn't been too lucky in life either! After his sarcophagus was opened and his mummy removed for further

examination, a mark was found on Tut's cheek in the exact same place that Carnarvon's deadly insect bite had been. There was a chip of bone in his skull and his spine was deformed. There were also two baby mummies wrapped up in his

MUMMY-MAKING MADE EASY

Egyptians were always experimenting with the best way to make a mummy. This method was one of the most popular.

1. Take the dead body to the "place of purification" for a quickie bath in palm wine. Rinse with Nile water.

2. Cut out the internal organs—liver, lungs, stomach, and intestines. Pack them in salt. Scoop out the brain through the nose with a little spoon and toss it to the cats.

3. Pour salt into all the empty body cavities, then cover the entire body with more salt and wait 40 days.

4. After 40 days, wash the salt off and rub oil all over the corpse.

5. Stuff the body with sawdust, leaves, and bits of balled-up linen so it looks plump and lifelike.

6. Rub some more fragrant oils on it. You can never be too greasy if you are a mummy.

7. Either stick the lungs, stomach, intestines, and liver back in the body or tuck each in a special jar, called a *canopic jar*.

8. Start wrapping the mummy—head and neck first, then fingers, then arms and legs. Add lucky charms to protect the mummy on its journey.

9. Let a high priest read spells and incantations over the body as it is wrapped to ward away bad spirits. Tie arms and legs together and place a scroll from the *Book of the Dead* in the mummy's hands.

10. Wrap the mummy some more. Paint the bandages with special glue that will hold them all together.

11. Wrap a big piece of fabric around the corpse and paint the chief god, Osiris, on the mummy's chest.

12. Place another big cloth on top and tie it to the mummy with strips of linen. Drop a painted wooden board on top of the mummy and pop the corpse in a coffin.

13. Put that coffin in another coffin . . .

14. . . . And a third, a fourth, and sometimes even a fifth coffin, depending on how rich the deceased is.

15. Now it's off to the tomb to begin the journey to the underworld, where the dead person's heart will be weighed and judged. A good, clean heart will get a guy or gal a ticket to the "Fields of Reeds." A black heart? Ugh! You don't want to know!

