

CHAPTER THREE

I couldn't risk truanting one more day. So, I became a zombie student and went on my way to school. On the bus I decided to read more of 'the book.' I decided to just call '*An adventure covered with dust, myst and time*' 'the book' as it was easier to say. The book just rolled off my tongue much better. And my friends and family all now knew what I meant when I said, 'the book' as they all now knew I was reading some interesting book for my English class.

On the bus I took the book out of my bag and then began reading it.

'Amunblisk read the scroll once more and went and surveyed the site where the tree stumps and roots were jutting out of the sand. He found out that there was once water and a small lake there. An oasis in the desert. Today, with Amunblisk's grand city, he wasn't so lucky. He had to build his own water tunnels and desalinate sea water from miles away. So, he was surprised to find an old dried up lakebed and tree stumps. What had happened that was so bad to make such a big impact on the land and environment in his city?'

Amunblisk rallied a team to excavate the tree stumps and see what else he could uncover from the depths of the hot sand. His team dug and dug until one day one of his young and excitable workers yelled:

***I found it. I found it.** He found a jar and, in that jar, came another papyrus scroll and some old looking trinkets of various sizes. Amunblisk examined the papyrus to read about the long dried up oasis. The scroll spoke of a vizier named Baln who was overseer of the government's records. The papyrus was his account of the tragic events that occurred.*

I Baln, found that our water is slowly drying up at the hands of the desert. We are at the will of nature and nature is taking our beloved water. We have seen another tragedy today with more lives lost as they could not drink from our dry wells and even drier lake. It will be only a

short time before we have no water to drink and we are forced to leave this place for greener pastures.

Amunblisk was in great shock and great pain reading such an account. What had happened to Baln? Did he leave the land? Did the water return?

I had a small amount of time read a little in between Jinn, my only friend I travelled to school with on the bus, poking me with a ruler she found in her backpack. She got bored easily and instead of doing something useful with her time she found it fun to annoy me, either throwing paper at me, poking me with something or just playing with my shirt or hair. It was so annoying, and it made me realise why her boyfriend 'Tommie' hated her. Was she like that with him? Did she annoy him the way she was making me angry on this bus ride?

Anyway, I managed to read a little of 'the book'. I was seriously not seeing any correlation between a lost oasis and something my biddy English teacher would be worried about or preoccupied with. I made a mental note to do a trip to her office to discuss the books latest findings as I wanted to gauge what I should be learning from it.

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At recess I made my way to Mrs Ds office. It was a generic staff room for all the teachers. I knocked on the door to hear that Mrs D was away sick. That notification shocked me. As like me I had never seen her take but a single day off. I was worried about her now.

I asked Mrs Quincy for her contact details as I thought I would do a trip to her house like she did for me when I was 'sick' yesterday. I found out she lives not too far away, around the corner, down the street and up a small hill. A distance I can cover in a single lunch break quite easily.

And that is exactly what I did. I snuck through the front school gates, power walked around the corner and hid in some bushes as I saw another student walking past trying not to be seen. Then when the coast was clear I walked down that street and up the small hill to reach the address given to me at recess. The house was a white and green colour,

covered in wooden slats. A small set of stairs led to a front porch where I knocked on the white wooden door in front of me.

About 2 minutes had passed before Mrs D finally opened the door. She had redness under her eyes as if she had been crying all morning. I was shocked at her sorry state.

‘Are you Ok Mrs D, I mean Mrs Davis-bell-green?’

‘Um yes yes. I am fine dear. I just was sick this morning with a cough and minor cold.’ I knew she was lying. ‘Would you like to come in for some tea?’

‘Tea? Um well actually I am only passing and...’

‘Please I will make you some to take away! Please come inside,’ I followed Mrs D in and through to her dining room where I sat down while she prepared the tea.

‘I have read more of the book you gave me,’ I pulled it out and put it on the table.

‘Oh yes and what do you make of it?’ she asked pouring the tea into a nice mug with a picture of mountains on it.

‘Make of it?’ I had no answer.

‘Well do you think you have solved the riddle?’

‘Riddle? I thought the book would solve the riddle at the end. Like I will read it and then Amunblisk finds the answers he is seeking and it’s all happily ever after! Isn’t that what will happen?’ I shrugged.

‘No that doesn’t happen I am afraid. The book is rather lacking in a conclusion. I can clearly see you are not that far into the book just yet Miss Stivellton.’ Mrs D gave me the tea and I was quick to notice it wasn’t in a takeaway cup either!

‘No not really a few pages!’

‘Only a few pages and you thought you would come and tell me?’ Mrs D was shocked, almost as shocked as I when she appeared at my front door yesterday.

‘Well no. I came to see if you are okay.’

‘I am fine. Thank you for your concern. I tell you what? How about you read the book tonight, or more of it and we can discuss it tomorrow at lunch? Does that sound fair?’

‘Yes, it sure does. I will do my best to read some more tonight.’ I said as I tried to drink my tea very quickly not wanting to be late back to school. ‘I have another final question. Why were you crying?’ I wanted an answer to the redness under her eyes and it wasn’t the common cold.

‘Crying? Oh its, it’s just nothing....’ Mrs D looked down at her lap and then back up again. ‘No, it was something dear. My husband called me, and it made me upset.’ Husband? That was the first time the biddy mentioned any partner in her life. But then I suppose teachers aren’t there to tell their students about their private lives.

‘Your husband?’ I enquired.

‘Yes, um, he, Bart, is away in the Middle East working for a finance firm and he was supposed to come back home this week, but now he can’t!’ Then it hit me. The book’s link to the desert and then her husband is in the Middle East. Is there a connection?

‘Really? Where in the Middle East is he exactly?’ I asked while my heart skipped a beat.

‘He is in Egypt actually, well he was in Qatar for a few months, then the UAE and now Egypt. He’s job is very mobile, and he gets sent where his services are needed.’

‘Right.....’ that answered my question.

‘Yes, he loves it over there. The problem is I think he has found someone and so.....’ Mrs D’s eyes began to redden, and tears began to fall. I wanted to offer her a tissue but couldn’t find one or even see one in the room anywhere to give to her. My heart sank in deep sadness at hearing her news. I saw my English teacher in a new light as a person and not

some old miserable woman who gave us horrible questions to answer. She was human and had feelings too. I felt bad.

‘Are you okay?’ I asked feeling sad for her.

‘Yes, I will be fine! It’s just one of my friends told me he was living with this young lady over there now and’ She started crying heavily. I got up and went over to comfort her. I wrapped my arms around her as she sobbed. Then after around a minute she stopped.

‘You better get back to school.’ I nodded in agreement.

‘Please Mrs Davis-green-bell you will be okay. I am sure nothing is happening overseas. Please keep the faith.’ I gave her one last reassuring smile as I got up and left her house. She was still looking so sad and despondent, but there was nothing more I could do. I had exactly 8 minutes to get back to school.

I left Mrs D’s house with a heavy heart. I ran down the hill, around the corner and back into the big school gates just in time for my final class not having achieved anything much!