

Extract from: "Uninvited Spirits"

"OK Sebastian. Tell me what you know!" "Well, actually, it's quite a lot, but I still don't know whether it's all true. We've got to try and get to the bottom of it. It could turn into a pretty long story..." "Well, we're going to be in the air for a while. We've got to pass the time somehow. So fire away!" In anticipation, Anita leaned over towards Sebastian. Perhaps just a little bit too far. But it was OK, to make sure that no one could eavesdrop on their conversation. And this position also ensured that Sebastian had a good view of Anita's attractive cleavage, so he wasn't about to object.

"Anyway", started Sebastian at last, in a conspiratorial tone, "I'm working on the basis that everything I'm about to tell you is true. I was given the story by someone who doesn't want to be identified. He supplied me with secret information from a scientist who had been working for most of the time on a research project in Egypt. He was meant to be looking for artefacts from the time of Thutmose III and declaring them. It wasn't exactly a very exciting project as he had to look for the objects among a whole load of other stuff in the cellar of the Egyptian Museum. Things that no one had bothered to catalogue and which had never been out on exhibition. He spent most of the time under the watchful eyes of two members of staff who helped him and two guards, who were there to make sure he didn't take anything away with him."

Anita listened with interest. Ancient objects in the depths of a museum. That certainly was a good start. She could well imagine that there would be all sorts of interesting scientific finds to be made there. And that was sure to be at the heart of the matter when it came to the story. She nodded encouragingly to Sebastian who, after another quick glance into the depths of her cleavage, carried on. "Needless to say, the scientist had studied ancient languages and could read hieroglyphics. If he hadn't been an expert in this area, he certainly wouldn't have been given the project in the first place. Of course it was all top secret and keeping it a secret wasn't a problem.

Each morning, he entered the museum among a group of tourists. He was collected personally by the director of the museum and lead down to the cellar where he worked well into the night. Then under the cover of darkness, he exited through a back door. Nobody knew what he was doing there and nobody knew where he was staying. His family had been told he was taking part in some comparative studies about the ancient pyramids of Mexico and China, to keep them off the scent of what he was actually doing."

"But why go to all this effort?", interrupted Anita, as she tried to get her head round what she was hearing. Sebastian looked briefly into her eyes and then whispered dramatically "Because they were pretty sure he was going to find something and there was no way they wanted anyone else to find out about it!" "Sounds logical. And what were they hoping to find?" Anita was getting a bit annoyed. Why was Sebastian making it so damned mysterious?

"The scientist had to look for ancient records and objects from a high priest of Seth, which were concerned with black magic. According to legend, this priest had found out the secret of how the goddess Iris had brought her dead husband Osiris back to life. It was known that she had collected up the parts of his body after Seth had dismembered him and had put them back together. But in order to make the magic work, she had to recite some secret chants and use some ritual objects, which had not been included in the original legend.

But the priest of Seth had been told about it by someone in the know and had recorded everything on parchment or in stone. Knowing the secret of eternal life, which until then had only been passed down from priest to priest by word of mouth, made him into a powerful man and gave the Pharaoh the edge in every battle. If he should actually fall during a military campaign, the priest would simply revive him again. And now just imagine what would happen if someone got their hands on this information? Some corrupt scientist or dictator somewhere, in possession of the formula that promised eternal life!?"

Anita was gobsmacked. That really WAS a story! Clearly, it would be hellishly dangerous if such knowledge were to fall into the wrong hands. But now it was starting to get exciting. "Did he find anything then?", she asked, curious to know the answer but nervous at the same time. Her eyes glowed. Sebastian nodded slowly and Anita let herself fall back into her seat. "Awesome!", she exclaimed, just a bit louder than she had meant to and apologised immediately to two Indians who had broken off their conversation in surprise. Then she turned back to Sebastian. "And what did he find?"

Translated from the original German by Nicholas Freakes

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