

Darcy's Unauthorized Search

An unlikely trio dodge Egyptian authorities as they escape from an ancient Egyptian tomb with the key to the secret location of the burial site of a notorious king.

“Darcy, pick it up!” Buster’s deep voice echoed through the cavernous hallway, bouncing off the limestone walls. I’m not going to an Egyptian prison for you.”

“You’d be going to an Egyptian prison for Alexander the Great, not for me,” Darcy sputtered through labored breathing, clutching the tube that held the papyrus scroll with sweaty palms. “But point taken. Left here!”

The two rounded the corner, kicking up a cloud of sand as they went. The only light guiding them danced around in the darkness, creating dizzying shadows as Buster held the flashlight and picked up the pace.

“There!” Darcy shouted, gesturing down the hall to a sliver of sunlight peeking through a crack in the wall. “That’s gotta be it.”

The two sprinted down the hallway before skidding to a stop a few feet before the wall. Buster passed the flashlight to Darcy, and braced himself against the stone to push.

Grunting, Buster nudged the stone door forward, letting sunlight flood into the tomb’s darkness. The ancient hinges creaked and spurted dust and cobwebs into the stagnant air.

Buster emitted a guttural noise as the door groaned open, painting the ground in a triangle of harsh light. When the opening was wide enough, Darcy turned to the side and shimmied through.

Once outside, she tucked the tube and flashlight under her arm and helped Buster open it wide enough for the nearly seven foot behemoth to pass through. She ignored the distant shouting from Egypt’s Supreme Court of Antiquities as Buster pulled himself out. The two quickly started making their way down.

As for how the SCA agents tracked them down to the middle of the Libyan desert, Darcy wasn’t sure. But she was pretty sure they didn’t approve of their unauthorized dig. And she was *really* sure that if they were caught, the SCA agents wouldn’t let them leave with what potentially held the key to one of the longest-running mysteries.

The tomb of Ptolemy I peered out over the desert atop a sand dune. Though the first few inches of the hill were coated in coarse sand, the foundation underneath was a conglomerate of rocks, dirt, and quarried stone provided by the Ancient Egyptians.

Ptolemy I had been a general to Alexander the Great. According to history, Alexander was buried in Memphis, before getting raided by Cleopatra, rooted by Caligula, and mistaken for the remains of Saint Mark the Evangelist. It’s since been lost to time despite over 140 authorized searches, although Darcy suspected they weren’t the first unauthorized search. She did suspect, however, that they were the first to theorize that Alexander was actually never buried in Memphis - that his trusted general had buried the king in a secret location to protect his remains. Darcy had bet her PhD thesis, reputation, potential career, and now her impending imprisonment on the idea that Ptolemy I had disclosed that secret location in this very scroll.

About half way down the slope, Darcy locked eyes with Khalil, their driver, as he hung his head out of a battered Jeep window and waved frantically. The SCA agents were nowhere in sight, and Darcy couldn't tell if that eased the knot in her stomach, or tightened it.

Sand seeped into Darcy's sneakers and singed her ankles as her feet. Buster raced ahead of her, the tree stumps he called arms pumping back and forth as he sprinted.

A PhD student at a university outside of London, Darcy had been a teacher's assistant for an Archaeology intro class when she crossed paths with undergraduate student and rugby player, Buster. The big lug's sweet disposition was, unfortunately, tainted by his lack of brain cells. When he had approached Darcy and asked for help studying because he had signed up thinking it was an Astrology course, she began tutoring him, and a close kinship soon followed.

When he passed the course with flying colors, Buster had sprinted up to Darcy beaming, and saying that he "owed her big time". Darcy knew that he had never imagined that that could mean breaking into an ancient tomb in the Libyan desert and being chased by Egyptian authorities, but here he was.

Khalil ducked into the rusty car as the duo approached and the engine sputtered to life, spewing billowing black smoke into the air. Darcy dove into the back seat, clutching the tube to her chest as Buster pulled himself into the passenger side.

"Where are the agents?" Darcy's heart thundered in her chest as she tried to catch her breath. She wasted no time unscrewing the lid of the tube and pouring out the scroll, relying on sunlight to read the faded hieroglyphs.

"On the other side of the tomb," Khalil answered distractedly as he fiddled with the Jeep's handbrake. "They'll be here any minute."

"Then we need to go," Buster urged.

"I know, I know. It's just, it's the handbrake, it's stuck. I can't--"

"Let me try." Buster jiggled the handbrake, rocking the Jeep back and forth but not disabling the brake.

"You're gonna break it!" Khalil protested as Buster screwed up his face and tugged harder.

"Why did you have the handbrake on anyway?"

"Have you seen the slope of this hill?" Khalil gave him a pointed look. "I wasn't taking any chances."

"We're stranded here either way, I don't see..." Buster began, but he trailed off as his eyes drifted past Khalil.

A brigade of SCA agents on horseback was encircling the base of the dune. Horses whinnied and kicked up dirt as the circumference of the dune became ringed with agents.

Though they made no attempt to scale the slope of the dune, there was no way out for Darcy, Khalil, and Buster without crossing paths with the agents.

Buster turned an apprehensive gaze towards Darcy, who had been silently examining the scroll.

“Well, Darce? What do we do?”

Darcy didn’t say anything, but she slowly met Buster’s gaze. Tears pooled in her eyes, but an expression of astonishment lit up her face.

“Fight,” she answered, almost breathlessly.

Buster sighed again. “It better be worth it.”

Darcy let out a watery laugh. “Oh, it’s worth it.”

With one last forceful yank, Buster ripped the handbrake out from its socket and tapped the hard plastic against the palm of his other hand. “Fine. Let’s do this.”