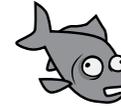


THE CURSE OF THE CAT OF KINGS



CHAPTER 1

THE LEGEND BEGINS



‘So . . .’ said the museum guide, holding his torch under his chin so it gave his face a creepy glow and showed us way too much of what was up his nose. ‘Who wants to hear about the Curse of the Cat of Kings?’

The hand of every kid in the room shot up, including mine and Pradeep’s. This History Museum sleepover was turning out to be way cooler than I’d expected.

‘Legend has it,’ said the guide, ‘that two grave robbers set off into the Egyptian desert to find the tomb of the Cat of Kings. Their goal: to steal the mummified cat’s treasure! No one knows



exactly what happened, but days later the robbers were found wandering through the desert with layers of scarab beetles clinging to their backs!

‘Urrrgh!’ I shuddered. I *really* hate bugs.

‘The robbers had lost the ability to speak – so could tell no one what had befallen them.’ He paused and looked around at our faces. ‘They were the first victims of the Curse of the Cat of Kings. Thus the tomb remained undiscovered and intact . . . until earlier this year when builders unearthed it while digging the foundations for a new MoonBucks coffee shop.’

‘The museum arranged for the whole tomb to be transported here,’ Pradeep whispered. ‘It’s still sealed – so the museum scientists can excavate it and do loads of tests and stuff!’

‘According to the legend, anyone not “pure of heart” who tries to enter the tomb will suffer the same fate as the Egyptian grave robbers,’ the guide continued.

I blurted out, ‘So the robbers couldn’t make a single sound?’

‘The robbers weren’t mute,’ the guide replied. ‘Instead, the only sound they could make was *Miaooooooooowwww!*’

The guide made a loud miaowing noise that suddenly turned into an ‘Aaarrrraaagh!’ His voice shot up to a squeal. He jumped up and the torch clattered to the floor. ‘Something wet just bit me!’

Pradeep and I shot each other a look that said, ‘FRANKIE?’

Frankie, my pet zombie goldfish, *really* doesn’t like cats. Especially one particularly evil little kitten that belongs to my Evil Scientist big brother, Mark. I guess Frankie was thinking that



if a cat's miaowing at you, you bite it first and ask questions later! I glanced down at the mug of water that Frankie had been sitting in while we listened to the scary History Museum stories. Yep, he was definitely gone. This was bad for three reasons:

Firstly, even though he's a zombie, Frankie is also a goldfish, so he can't stay flopping around out of water for long.

Secondly, being a zombie goldfish, Frankie has the ability to zombify anyone that looks into his eyes, and we didn't want to end up with a lot of zombified kids in pyjamas mumbling, 'Swishy little fishy.'

Thirdly, when the museum guide squealed, all the kids jumped up from their sleeping bags and started to panic. So there were lots of feet stomping around on the same ground that Frankie was flopping about on.

'I can see Frankie!' Pradeep said. 'By the skirting board at twelve o'clock.'

I looked at him blankly.

Pradeep sighed. 'Twelve o'clock means straight ahead!' He pointed to the orange flash that was Frankie, who was slowly flopping towards us. 'I'll block – you take the mug and grab him!'

We threw ourselves into the mosh of screaming kids and sleeping bags, dodging flapping arms and stomping feet. Frankie made a dive over one particularly flappy kid's head, bounced off a Spider-Man pillowcase and landed with a splash back in the mug!

'You couldn't just sit and listen, could you, Frankie?' I whispered.

'My mum would say that you have a "low boredom threshold",' Pradeep added as he crawled over to join us. 'Come on – we've got to



find you better hiding place or we'll be thrown out of the museum and you'll be flushed down the loo.'

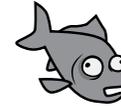
'The loo,' I said. 'That's it!'

'When in doubt,' we said at the same time, 'hide in the loos and figure it out!'



CHAPTER 2

NIGHT IN THE MUSEUM



Now, you might think hiding in the loos is a weird plan. But you would be amazed at how many times it has saved Pradeep and me.

1. When my Great-Aunt Celia (with the pointy prickly chin hairs) came round to visit – hiding in the loo meant successfully avoiding getting kissed.
2. When Miss Murdock was looking for volunteers to demonstrate country dancing in PE class, Pradeep and I hid in the loos for *so long* that Mrs Murdock thought we had bladder problems and



didn't make us dance for a *whole* term.

3. When Mark and Sanj (our Evil Scientist and Evil Computer Genius big brothers) invented a game called 'Moron Bowling', we hid in the loo at Pradeep's house for most of the day, until Sami, Pradeep's little sister, had to go and accidentally blow our cover.



out of the activity room, through the main hall and towards the loos.

'We've got to get Frankie into something where he's safe, but he can't be seen,' Pradeep said, as soon as we had made it through the toilet doors. 'What have we got?'

Both of us emptied our pyjama pockets on to the floor. I had two pencils, a long piece of string from the inside sleeve of my jacket that I'd been pulling out bit by bit for months and only came loose this morning, a folded and paper-clipped fact sheet about ancient Egypt and my lucky-horseshoe-magnet key ring.

Pradeep had a pouch of kiwi juice left over from the museum packed lunch, a sheet of Egyptian stickers they gave us when we first got here, a laminated card from his mum with an alphabetical list of all his allergies and who to call in an emergency, and his super-waterproof submersible camping torch.

'The torch!' I said. 'It's perfect.'





back on. Then we each filled our pyjama pockets again with our stuff.

‘It sounds like it’s quiet out there,’ said Pradeep, listening at the toilet door. ‘Now Frankie’s safe, we should probably go back.’

We pushed the door open a crack and peered out. The shadow of the enormous diplodocus in the main hall filled the corridor. Light reflected off the swords of the knights at the entrance to the medieval exhibition and the flicker of the fake fire in the caveman’s cave seemed to be saying, ‘Why go back to the group and do worksheets . . . when you could explore?’



Pradeep pulled out the batteries and bulb and stuff from inside. Then he filled it with water from the sink.

‘What do you think, Frankie?’ I asked, holding up his mug.

Frankie jumped straight into the water-filled torch and Pradeep screwed the clear plastic cover

