

Night Terrors in Cairo

The night hung like a curtain. The hot and sticky air was almost impossible to force into your lungs. There were no lights, everything was black, deathly black. The gritty sand swept across black mambas. Scorpions lurked in the night shadows.

The darkness was unbearable, the night seeping in through the cacti and submerging the desert in its pity. There was no sound, nothing dared to move. If fear looked like anything, it would be this.

The petrifying tranquillity was suddenly shattered as a jeep came ploughing over the sand dunes, headlights flickering like fireflies. Two men sat bolt upright in its tattered seats. The driver was extremely tall and wiry. His face was a horrible sight, red scars etching his thin face all over. The man next to him was quite the perfect criminal, a bristly crew-cut skimming his shiny head. He wore a pair of designer sunglasses, even though it was pitch black, which rested on his repulsive nose - a large chunk of flesh, bone and cartilage had been lost during an earlier run in. A grim and steely expression showed that nothing would stop him raiding the Pyramids on this sweltering night.

On the back seat lay a dazed museum curator, his crinkled face covered in plum coloured bruises. This unfortunate man had been kidnapped at exactly midday whilst busily filing papers at his museum. He was grabbed by the scruff of his veiny neck and bundled into the jeep. Before any passers-by could take note, his screams were hastily muffled by a chloroform-soaked gag. He was the only man who knew the secret entrance to the Pyramids of Cairo.

Hours later, he came to his senses to find two grimacing men watching his every move in the back of a stuffy jeep. A thousand thoughts were rushing through the man's tortured mind. How could he stop these brutal men from raiding his beloved Pyramids? His musings were abruptly interrupted by the lanky man's grating voice accompanied by a sharp prod of his skeletal finger, "Get out of the car and show us the entrance. Move!"

The curator stumbled out, petrified by what was happening and distraughtly staggered across the rough sand, his sandals sinking with every step he took. "THUD!" the entrance boulder, concealed in the face of the pyramid, caved in with a heave. "Take us to the King's Chamber, NOW!" Without warning the curator shuffled on, winding his way down a particularly twisted passage with the horror that he was allowing them to make their way to the King's resting place. To rip open the sarcophagi and plunder a mighty pharaoh's history. He had to stop this. Now.

Swiftly he broke free of the crew-cut man, snarling like a lion. He had no time to see their faces, just to sprint exhaustedly along passages, twisting through this maze using memory alone. Breaking through the entrance he didn't hesitate, just heaved the boulder over the entrance and disappeared into the black curtain of the night..



Words to focus on:

First read the words in context in order to figure out what they mean. Then use a dictionary to find out the meanings.

Curator Submerging petrifying tranquillity repulsive
muffled Grimacing musings distraughtly sarcophagi



Write a short summary of the story.



Retrieval of information questions:

1. According to the first paragraph, why was it hard to breathe?
2. Who have the two criminals kidnapped?
3. What are the raiders trying to do?
4. Where and when is the story set?



Inference questions (Remember to support you answer with evidence from the text)

1. What conclusion can you draw about the two men in the jeep?
2. The fourth paragraph says the curators face was *covered in plum coloured bruises*. Explain what this description tells the reader.
3. “a large chunk of flesh, bone and cartilage had been lost during an earlier run-in” What is the author suggesting here?