

The Mummy

“Come on, Kombo”, said Eric, “we will be late for the bus.” Kombo mumbled and turned on his side. I shall give him another two minutes and then I’ll have to shake him out of his reverie, thought Eric. Kombo, a native Kenyan and Eric, the third generation son of a Dutch immigrant, were friends and at sixteen were both very matured and hulky for their ages. As if Kombo had gotten the message, he stood up abruptly and rubbed the sleep out of his eyes. With a noisy yawn, he looked at Eric and pointed to the clock on the mantelpiece. “Yes, and if you’re not in the showers soon, I’ll have to look for another guide,” said Eric. It was a break in the school term. The two friends had vowed not to waste time twiddling their thumbs at their one-room flat but to go out each day and do something way-out or extraordinary.

They had just reached the corner of the street when the red double-decker bus came rumbling down the road. It was quite crowded today. As it was Friday, it was full of market vendors and hawkers with their merchandise and wares scattered in the aisle of the bus. Sweat mingled with the smell of fruits and vegetables and not to mention the exhaust fumes was quite intolerable. Eric was seated by the window and was savouring the sights and luckily a bit of fresh air. Kombo was sandwiched between two fat loquacious women in a not too big three-seater.

“Oh, man, just give me a minute to get my breath back”, rasped Kombo as they watched the back of the bus turn the corner. On reaching the caves, Kombo beckoned to Eric to be very quiet and to follow his instructions. Giant cobwebs were strung throughout the cave passage and enormous spiders were scurrying around here and there. After walking down two passages, the third one looked weird and Eric had already got goosebumps. Kombo knocked on the wall with a silver spatula. It gave way, quite easily and there on a slab table was a mummy. The atmosphere was eerie and Kombo pointed to the slab table. It was covered with Egyptian hieroglyphics and looked quite picturesque. Kombo looked down on the mummy and again motioned to Eric to be very quiet. Kombo took out a small chisel from the black leather pouch tied around his waist and slowly worked it on the mummy’s left foot. Eric was dumfounded and motioned to Kombo that that could be dangerous. Kombo replaced the chisel for a small hacksaw and started to saw on the left tibia. In an instant a foul smell emanated the cave and the sound of gargoyle laughter rang through the passages. Eric tugged on Kombo’s shirt. With a methodical and expert touch, Kombo brought out a tissue of herbs and salts and scattered it around the slab and into the air. The atmosphere was still again so still that the breathing of the two boys was almost too loud. Kombo beckoned Eric to follow him around the slab-table while he slowly whispered the incantation. After four rounds Kombo walked out of the cave with Eric at his heels. “What was that all about?”, inquired Eric.

“I’ll tell you when we’re back in our one-room sanctuary”, said Kombo. “At least, I’ll know you’ll be more at ease there, laughed Kombo.