

THE DISCOVERIES OF
ARTHUR GREY
THE MINOTAUR RIDDLE

THE DISCOVERIES OF ARTHUR GREY SERIES

Book 1 The Society's Traitor

Book 2 The Minotaur Riddle

Book 3 The Eye of Amun



THE DISCOVERIES OF
ARTHUR GREY
THE MINOTAUR RIDDLE



BY
V.K. FINNISH



PANAMA HAT PUBLISHING
GREEN MOUNTAIN FALLS, COLORADO

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Published by Panama Hat Publishing
Edited by Kellie M. Hultgren

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www.panamahatpublishing.com



Publisher's Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Finnish, V. K.

The minotaur riddle / by V.K. Finnish. — 2nd ed.

p. cm. — (The discoveries of Arthur Grey ; 2)

SUMMARY: Twelve-year-old Arthur Grey gets more than he bargained for when he discovers the truth about the legendary Labyrinth and what it holds.

ISBN 978-1-943317-03-5 (hardcover)

ISBN 978-1-943317-04-2 (paperback)

ISBN 978-1-913317-05-9 (library binding)

ISBN 978-0-9852202-5-9 (ebook)

1. Secret societies—Greece—Juvenile fiction. 2. Minotaur (Greek mythology)—Juvenile fiction. 3. Labyrinths—Juvenile fiction.
[1. Secret societies—Fiction. 2. Minotaur (Greek mythology)—Fiction.
3. Animals, Mythical—Fiction. 4. Labyrinths—Fiction. 5. Greece—Fiction.
6. Adventure and adventurers—Fiction. 7. Fantasy.] I. Title. II. Series:
Finnish, V. K. Discoveries of Arthur Grey ; 2.

PZ7.F49843Min 2015

[Fic]—dc23

2015907014

Second Edition: June 2015

*Here's to my dad,
who believed that I could,
and told me his stories so I'd write a book.
And here's to my Eeyore dad whom I will miss,
who gave me the chance
to make my books live.*

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THE DISCOVERIES OF
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1

TIME TO GO



The night was cool and deep, not a speck of sun left in the sky. On the ground, however, so many lights twinkled from houses and offices and stores that you might have thought the stars had fallen to the earth. At the Regal Garden Inn, lights still peeked through many curtained windows, and from room number two-twenty-six, the sound of laughing voices drifted into the night.

“Okay, okay. You’ll like this one, kiddo. What gets up in the morning, goes to bed at night, and can force you to take off your coat?”

“Take off my coat?”

“That’s right.”

“Uhhh . . . a troll?”

“A troll? Trolls don’t get up in the morning, dopey.”

“Oh, right. Um, then, I dunno. A genie?”

“No way.”

“I give up.”

“It’s the sun. Get it? When it shines hot, it makes you take off your coat.”

“Ohh, the sun! I knew that, I really did.”

“No you didn’t. And you know what that means.”

“No, no. Come on, that’s not fair, Dad.”

“Yes, sir, you lost fair and square. It’s the rule. Now, take the fizz!”

A sudden *pop!* pierced the room, followed by a sharp hiss and then a confused eruption of spraying and laughter and barking.

Arthur Grey fell over the couch, drenched in foaming soda pop from his tousled brown hair to his striped socks and clutching his sides as he laughed.

“You, sir, have been fizzed.” Etson Grey laughed as he tossed aside the now-empty glass bottle labeled “Fizzy-Winks Fizzy Soda.” But he suddenly stopped laughing and looked around the room.

Arthur looked too. The walls, the television, the couch, the tan-and-green carpet, the desk and everything on it were bubbling with sticky, fizzy brown liquid. The rest of the room was covered with crumpled papers, popcorn, candy wrappers, used amusement park tickets, drinking straws and little orange cocktail umbrellas, suitcases, and random piles of balled-up clothes. “Uh-oh,” Arthur groaned. “The hotel cleaning people aren’t going to like this.” He looked at his dad, who looked back at him.

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They both fell onto the couch laughing again.

“Oh, brother,” snorted Griffin. He rolled his eyes, tucked his tail beneath him, and began licking soda out of his fur.

The last week had been one of the best of Arthur’s entire life. He and Etson had spent the Christmas holidays roaming the United States, staying in nice hotels with pools, playing arcades, seeing hockey games, and sneaking the dog into all of those places. For Arthur’s birthday, Etson had taken him to Disney World in Florida. Between events, Etson had told funny stories about things that had happened at work, like people accidentally turning themselves orange or getting their neighbor stuck in freezing goo or causing their hair to disappear. It had definitely been a week Arthur would never forget.

In fact, the whole last year had been the most awesome in all his previous eleven years combined. It had all started with being kidnapped by his own dad, Etson Grey, whom he hadn’t seen for five years, and then finding out the reason was that Etson worked for a secret society.

Well, actually it started right before that. When Arthur found Griffin.

Griffin was Arthur’s Siberian husky. But Griffin was no ordinary dog. He was Arthur’s Fetch, the animal companion with whom he had a special link. They had been separated for years without knowing about each other and had only met again last year. And Arthur was different than other twelve-year-olds: he was a Guardian. He could hide things so no one else could see them, an ability he had inherited from his mom, though he

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didn't understand it much. He had only found out about that secret last year too. There was only one other person who knew the whole truth about Arthur. . . .

"Well," Etson said at last, rubbing his neck and surveying the room again. "I guess we should clean up a little, huh? At least so we don't stick to the walls when we walk by?" He leaned on the wall and pretended to be stuck to it.

Arthur laughed.

Etson flipped open the nearest suitcase. He paused to take out a yellow piece of paper crinkled at the bottom of the suitcase. The paper turned bright red at his touch. "Yow!" He dropped it and stuck his fingers in his mouth. "Stupid Tricky Note—remind me not to get the ones that burn anymore." He slapped the suitcase closed and glared at the note, which had "Mom" written on it. "Oh yeah, I almost forgot. Hey, do me a favor, kiddo. Write a letter to your grandma. She's been pestering me about you."

"Gree?" Arthur asked in surprise. "Have you talked to her?"

"Yeah, well, I've gotta see her every now and again, right? I went over there before Winter Solstice. She wanted to see you and make sure you were eating well and all that. I told her you'd write a letter." He snickered as if at an inside joke.

Arthur pushed away any guilty feelings about his sudden departure from home over a year ago. "Yeah, okay. How is she?"

"Oh, you know my mother. Same as always. But don't worry about her. She says a neighborhood girl keeps her company. Heidi or Patricia or something."

"Penelope," Arthur said, and his stomach gave a turn.

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Penelope Riffert had been Arthur's best friend back in Wisconsin. He left without saying good-bye to her.

"Yeah, Penelope. That was it."

"Okay. And do we have to pack? Tomorrow's New Year's Eve, right?" Arthur glanced at the clock above the television. It showed 10:52 p.m.

"Right." Etson also glanced at the clock. Then his eyes widened. "Oh, Pharos Lighthouse, I forgot!" He scrambled back to the suitcase, flung it open, and began stuffing clothes into it. "We're going to have to hurry. I can't believe I forgot how many time zones behind we are here!"

"Huh? But we have till tomorrow, don't we?"

"Where did I put my *Telecator*? Good grief, no. Time zones, you see. It's already almost eleven at night here, which means it's nearly six tomorrow morning there. Wait. No, we're in the Pacific time zone, so it's . . . great Holy Grails . . . *eight* in the morning there! That only gives us one hour to pack, get there, sail to the island, and find where the Initiates are meeting." Etson slammed the suitcase shut and yanked on the zipper. Then he paused. "Oh, wait a second. Don't they all sail together? Now that I think about it, I'm pretty sure they do. Phew! We don't have to worry about that part. We only have to pack, get there, and meet them at the landing shore. In that case, we've got time. I think I'll go shave."

Arthur and Griffin watched Etson mosey off into the bathroom. Griffin shook his head. "There's no such thing as *normal* with him, is there?"

Arthur grinned. "There's nothing normal about *any* of my

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life, so I guess it's all right." And Griffin couldn't argue with that. After all, there weren't many people who could talk with their dogs, whose dads worked for the Historia Society, and who had spent a year learning about goblins and gnomes and magical birds, how to feed a cockatrice and milk a glowing cow, and then finished it all by finding a place no one believed in: Paititi, the lost city of gold.

Arthur reached into a pile of clothes to toss them in his bag. "Ouch!" he yelped, jerking his hand back. A small streak of blood now decorated his finger where something sharp had cut it. He squeezed his eyes shut as a stinging pain shot through his left eye for a few seconds. With a wince, he glanced over his shoulder to make sure Etson wasn't there to see what had happened. Then he frowned back at his finger. It now showed no sign of a cut.

From the floor, Griffin gave a grunt. "Did you just hurt your paw?" he demanded. "Because I thought I felt something in my front right."

Arthur waved him off. "Yeah. Nevermind. It healed up as usual. I just wish it wouldn't make my eye hurt." He returned to gathering his stuff. He didn't have too much to pack, though his bag and his trusty adventure belt pouches were definitely fuller than they had ever been. When he first left the old manor in Wisconsin where he used to live with his grandmother, he had only the clothes on his body, his belt, and Griffin. Now he had added so many things.

He twirled a feather—from the alicanto bird he had helped save in Peru. The feather was fiery red and glittering gold on

one side, but the other side was sky blue with flecks of silver. He could hardly believe his adventures at the Conservatorium had been less than two weeks ago.

Next were the gifts Etson had given him last year. He dropped a fat book, *Muppledeim's Nearly Complete Encyclopedia of Non-Mythical Creatures and Plants*, into a large box. For a moment, Arthur considered his Walrus's Navigational Pocket Knife. With its mapping feature, it had helped him find his way out of maddening underground tunnels not long ago. He knew it was a dependable tool. Confidently, he slid it into his belt pouch.

On top of the *Muppledeim's* book, he tossed this year's twelfth-birthday gifts from Etson: a remote-controlled camera collar for Griffin and a set of invisible-ink pens.

Carefully, Arthur opened an ornately decorated cloth-bound book to the first page, where the words *Secrets of the Andes* and a dazzling painting of a golden sun face peered up at him. The book was handwritten and decorated throughout with the most amazing, lifelike drawings, made by his mother Helena, who had died when Arthur was only two years old. His adventurer friend Nicholas Hobbs had given the book to him. Arthur grinned, remembering the first time he met Hobbs. It was back in Wisconsin, and the Australian had stood out like a Christmas tree in July in his long, weather-stained traveling coat, well-used Panama hat, and twinkling grin. Arthur gently placed the book in with his other things.

Lastly, he tossed in his award. It was a medal in the shape of an exotic green and purple flower with the words, *Initiate*

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of Conservation embossed on it. It meant he had completed his year at the Conservatorium.

After packing these into his box, Arthur closed the lid. Then he began folding the box smaller and smaller until it fit nicely into his bag.

“How does it do that?” Griffin asked for the hundredth time in the last week, sniffing at the now-small box.

Arthur shrugged. “It’s the box Penelope gave me,” he said. Penelope had found it in a bin of donations from Arthur’s old house. But he didn’t think she knew it had this magical way of folding up small, even with things inside it. Penelope had always missed noticing things like that—she didn’t like adventure.

Griffin cocked his head. “I remember her. She was nice and smelled like toothpaste. Don’t you miss her?”

Arthur’s brain immediately clouded over with a vivid picture of Penelope’s round brown eyes behind her glasses, her two brown braids hanging over her shoulders—but most of all, her skeptical frown, which Arthur had turned away from last Christmas Eve and hadn’t seen since. “Whatever,” he grunted. “She didn’t care about the stuff I do, like finding treasures or traveling around the world. Why would I miss her?”

The truth was, sometimes Arthur did think of Penelope. She’d been his best friend for four years, after all. She had followed him through plenty of goofy Robin Hood acts and searches for stories in her dad’s bookstore and snooping away from Gree’s nosy housekeeper. But that was before Penelope went all grown-up on him. Before she decided to stay behind.

“Aren’t you going to put the locket in the box?” asked Griffin, interrupting Arthur’s brooding.

“No, you know I won’t.” From around his neck Arthur lifted up a moon-silver locket decorated with very fine markings. He had found it at Ivor Manor and supposed it had belonged to his mother, Helena Grey. He hadn’t shown it to anyone—not even his dad—not since the Peruvian wise woman had warned him to keep it safe. Arthur had tried offhandedly several times to ask Etson if his mom had owned any special jewelry. Etson, however, couldn’t think of anything, and that ended the conversation. The locket was strangely linked to the dreams Arthur had begun having on his eleventh birthday.

“I had another dream on my birthday, you know,” he told Griffin as he studied the locket.

Griffin’s ears twitched. “Did you? You never mentioned it. Was it the same as the first dream?”

Arthur shook his head. “No. It was different. But it had the same people. The boy with the wolf and the green-cloaked lady. There were bandits and a battle and a lizard.” He shuddered. It had been a very vivid dream, like the first one.

“What was the battle for?”

“For treasures, I think. No, wait.” He paused. “Actually, I feel like it had something to do with the locket. This exact locket.”

“And still no luck finding a way to open that thing, huh?”

Arthur glanced at the locket again. “No. It doesn’t open. At least, not that I could ever figure out.”

“Well, what was the dream about?”

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“That boy with the wolf.” For some reason, Arthur couldn’t remember the names, but the images were very clear. “He’s a Guardian, like me, and so is the green-cloaked lady.” He cocked his head. “I wonder if it could be real.”

Griffin snorted. “Real? From what you’ve told me, it doesn’t sound like the way things are in modern times. High kings and daggers and castles. Are you sure it’s not from a story?”

Arthur raised an eyebrow. “A story?”

“Yeah. Maybe your mom or somebody told you a story when you were a little baby and now you’re dreaming about it.”

A little shiver tingled through Arthur. He cleared his throat. “I guess it’s possible . . .”

At that moment, the bathroom door opened. Arthur quickly dropped the locket beneath his shirt as Etson stepped out, patting his clean-shaven face with a hand towel. Etson stopped. “You packed already?” he asked, surveying the room.

“Um, mostly.”

“Excellent. Well, I put in a request for a HistoriTaxi. We’re in a bit of a rush, so I’m not going to risk a Transportal today.”

Arthur felt his ears grow warm. He knew Etson was remembering the last time they tried to take a long-distance Transportal. Instead of dropping them near the Inka Palace Hotel in Peru, the transporting doorway had left them lost in the middle of a jungle. And since Etson couldn’t find anything wrong with the device, it must have somehow been Arthur’s fault. Although, afterward, Arthur had a strong suspicion that his mysterious locket had something to do with it.

At ten minutes till midnight, Arthur stood shivering outside the hotel with his bag and Griffin, waiting for Etson to pay and check out of the hotel.

“Okay,” Etson said as he strode through the automatic doors, glancing at his Telecator watch. “Let’s go to the back of the parking lot. It should be here any minute.” He pulled his wheeled suitcase behind him as he hurried away from the well-lit hotel entrance.

Arthur and Griffin exchanged puzzled looks. “Uh, what should be here?”

“Why, the Borak Express, of course,” Etson answered, glaring from the night sky back to his Telecator.

Arthur opened his mouth to ask what on earth a Borak was, but stopped when a glimmering light suddenly appeared in the dark sky. He watched it curiously. As it came closer he could hear what sounded like a very low airplane.

Etson blew out a breath. “Thank goodness. Here it comes.”

What flew toward them could have been part of a magical circus. It was the strangest donkey Arthur had ever seen, and it was almost as big as an elephant. Arthur and Griffin jumped out of the way of the creature’s wide, leathery wings as it clopped to a stop, its wings folding and its enormous, colorful tail fanning upward. Arthur stared open-mouthed. The creature had a bristly mane that was braided down its neck and glittered with Christmas ornaments. On the animal’s back was a square, shimmering purple tent with gold tassels and embroidery. Hanging at its side was a sign that read:

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THE BORAK EXPRESS (A HISTORITAXI)

FROM HERE TO THERE IN TWO SHAKES OF A BORAK'S TAIL

Arthur and Griffin jumped when the tent wall split open and a small, plump man with a droopy black mustache and a tall red hat hopped out. They could hear awful elevator-jazz music coming from inside, the kind that reminded Arthur of the dentist's office. But he got a peek of purple and green cushions and a yellow lava lamp inside.

"Who rang for the Borak Express?" the man demanded, waving a clipboard as if it were a threatening sword. He looked sharply at the three before him. "You?" He aimed the clipboard at them.

"Yes," said Etson, eyeing the clipboard warily.

"Ah, good, sir." The man grinned and twitched his mustache. "Then climb aboard. We are heading for . . ." He looked down at his clipboard. "Ah, the Main Hall, then."

Etson hefted up his suitcase. "How long will it take?"

The man straightened his hat. "Ah then. Not more than ten minutes."

"Ten minutes?" Etson frowned. "Hey, I need to be there at nine o'clock their time. My Initiate's got his orientation. Can't you cut a few corners to speed things up?"

The man raised his eyebrows till they were hidden by his hat. "Look then, sir. It is over ten thousand kilometers to Greece. You want take airplanes and see how long that takes? Much more than ten minutes! And do you know how difficult it is made that Chuki here is always wanting to stop for snacking

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on peanuts every time we pass airplanes? I tell you, we'll go as fast as we can, but I can't make promises, especially if you're having a dog along. The dogs are a distraction, you know. And they cost extra." He pointed the clipboard at Etson's chest.

"Okay, okay," sighed Etson. "Come on, kiddo. Let's go."

Arthur settled on a green cushion squashed between Etson and Griffin. The tent smelled of hay and too much perfume, and the awful tinny music (which Arthur was sure came out of a potted plant behind him) made him want to bang his head on a wall. He was just thinking that the driver was lucky to be outside the tent and wondering how exactly he would get the strange Borak creature to take off when the driver yanked back the curtains and hopped inside. He swooshed off his tall hat, smoothed his hair over the shiny bald patch at the top of his head, and sat cross-legged on top of several red pillows before pulling out a book called *From Cab Driver to Rich Ruler in Seven Easy Steps*.

"Uh, aren't you going to drive?" Arthur asked.

The man looked up with a *pf* sound that made his big mustache quiver. "Drive? Nobody drives Chuki here. She knows the way. I tell her where we go, and she takes us." He smiled and wiggled his eyebrows. "Very fast."

With a sudden jolt, they took off. Arthur was thrown to one side, all the loose cushions toppling over on top of him. The lava lamp bubbled happily.

Arthur could tell they were going fast. Out of the small plastic window in the front of the tent he could see the sun

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rising before them. The dark ground disappeared and was suddenly dark water turning orange as the sun rose.

“Can I see that?” Etson asked suddenly. He pointed to a magazine next to the driver.

“The *Historia Today*? Sure. But give it back when finished. I paid five *arrowheads* for it.”

“Arrowheads?” asked Arthur.

The driver frowned at him suspiciously. “Yes, five—I don’t look down on money, no matter how little!”

Etson handed Arthur a spade-shaped coin that seemed to be made of rock. It looked like the head of an arrow. “We use those for little things that cost less than an hour’s worth of work,” Etson murmured as he scanned the magazine article.

Griffin snorted at the coin. “Who uses rocks for money? Squirrels?”

Arthur rolled his eyes, then noticed Etson shaking his head at the magazine. “What’s wrong?” asked Arthur.

“Just an article on finances. The Society had some money in a risky project investment that went bad a couple of months ago. Quite a few Members lost money on it.”

“Did you?”

“No, thank Zeus. But *Historia* is going to have to find someone else who will be willing to invest now.”

Arthur tipped his head sideways to see the cover of the magazine. It contained an old black-and-white photograph of a middle-aged man patting a winged horse. Over part of it, in bright purple letters, was a note.

“Historia celebrates eighty years with traditional daring fun,” Arthur read aloud. He raised his brows at Etson.

“Ah, I’d nearly forgotten,” Etson smiled. “This is the Society’s eightieth anniversary. It’s going to be a spectacular year. Every month will bring new contests and games and booths.”

Arthur blinked. “Like a fair?”

“Yeah, kinda like that. They’ve done it once every ten years for the last forty years or so. I’ve only been to one, but I remember it being a blast. I still have the trophy I won for Alchemy—that’s the art of using chemicals to transform matter, you know.”

“Contests and games sound like fun,” Griffin said, scratching his ear.

With a grin, Arthur leaned back into his cushions. “Sounds like this year is gonna be exciting.”

“You bet.” Etson winked.

It wasn’t long before Arthur’s ears began to feel like they were full of bubbles that needed to pop—he yawned, and his ears crackled and cleared. They were slowing down, the shining water below dotted with islands and shores of European countries. They landed with a clobbering clatter.

The driver snapped his book shut. “Ah then. One *presto*, please.”

“What?” exclaimed Etson. “That’s an hour’s worth of work. This trip took ten minutes!”

“Ah, but it was worth one hour. More than! I am giving you a great deal!”

While Etson argued with the driver about fair pay, Arthur

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grabbed his bag and slid out of the tent, Griffin jumping down behind him. A chill wind blew at his hair and brought in a salty smell and the sound of waves and seagulls. For the second time in his life, he had landed from an unusual sort of transportation, with no idea where he was.

