

THE DISCOVERIES OF
ARTHUR GREY
The Eye of Amun

THE DISCOVERIES OF ARTHUR GREY SERIES

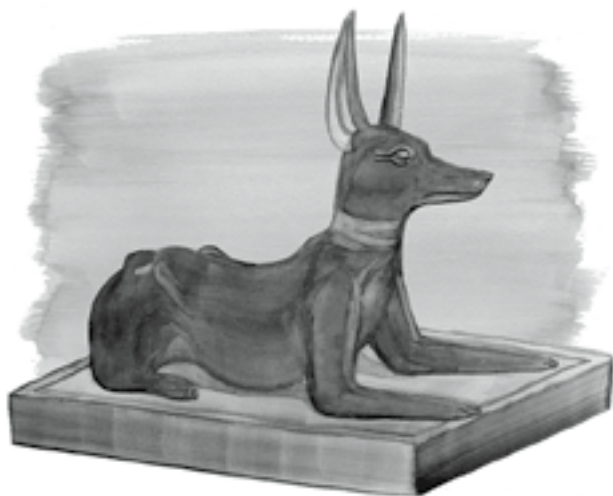
Book 1 The Society's Traitor

Book 2 The Minotaur Riddle

Book 3 The Eye of Amun



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ARTHUR GREY
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BY

V.K. FINNISH



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*For my early readers, especially
Duncan, who grinned and shook my hand,
and Liz M, who made me feel famous right from the start.*

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1

A Lousy Break



Arthur Grey had never been to Switzerland before. And after five days of cold, snow, and early lights-out because “nighttime here is no time for kids to be out,” he was pretty sure he wouldn’t be coming back any time soon, if he had any say in the matter.

It wasn’t that Zermatt was a bad place. It was a nice village with lots of snow-capped hotels and lodges, nestled beneath the highest mountain peak in all of Switzerland, the Matterhorn—which Arthur could see from his hotel window and thought looked like a pointy wizard’s hat. So far, he had gone bowling, swum in four different pools, seen two movies at the cinema, and beat three arcade games. He even got to try out skiing on the first day (which had involved more falling than he preferred to admit).

In the evenings, however—and not even evening, because it was never later than five o’ clock—it was dark, and Etson Grey would finish styling his hair, smack on some aftershave, say, “Okay,

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stay in the room, remember this is a party town and not kid style, don't stay up too late," and leave Arthur and his dog with nothing to do but play solitaire for the thousandth time.

Now Arthur had his nose pressed against the cold glass of the window as he watched his dad get swallowed into the shadow of a laughing group of people heading toward one of the town's busy bars. Finally, he pushed himself off the window with a sigh. "I don't see why I can't go," he grumbled. "I'm not a little kid—I'm twelve."

Griffin, the Siberian husky, lifted his head from the grey tile floor where he lay near the fireplace and opened one bright blue eye. "You're thirteen," he corrected.

"Oh yeah." Arthur had nearly forgotten—he'd just had a birthday earlier that week. Technically it had been a birthday for both of them, since Griffin was Arthur's Fetch. They shared everything from a birthday to emotions to physical pain. This was because Arthur was a Guardian—which meant he had special powers, including the ability to hide things so other people couldn't see them. Though he'd only done that by accident so far. Having a Fetch and being a Guardian were secrets that hardly anyone else knew about him—not even his dad.

Griffin opened his other eye, which was a muddy greenish brown. He stretched generously and opened his mouth wide in a tongue-curling yawn. "Well," he sighed, "should I get the solitaire cards?"

Arthur flopped onto the couch. "Forget it." He gazed around the modern lodge room with its spaceship-looking fireplace, its one misshapen fuzzy rug, the nearly invisible curtains, the swivel moon chairs, the wiry shelves with funky-shaped empty jars, the glass-topped tables. He'd wanted to stay in one of the cozier hotels

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where everything was wooden, but Etson thought log-cabin-style rooms were old-fashioned. So instead they got a stark one with a space-age bathroom. At first, it was kind of cool that Arthur could just walk into it and stuff started turning on. But now that was boring. And it was pointlessly huge—he felt like he could almost get lost walking from the sink to the toilet. Even though the tub was still fascinating—it was like the biggest rectangular sink he'd ever seen—it was hard to climb in and out of it without slipping and killing himself. And everything was square—even the toilet, which turned out not to be as funny as it looked.

“Last year my dad took us all over the place,” Arthur said wistfully. “Why does he want to stay in just one place this time?”

“And he sure leaves us alone a lot. It's like he doesn't want us around.”

“Don't be a Cyclops. You're just still mad at him for leaving you at that farm years and years ago.” But even as he said it, Arthur felt cold doubt plunge into the pit of his stomach. *Etson left you at your grandma's house without visiting for five years*, a tiny voice reminded him. He shook the unpleasant memory away. “I'm sure we'll do something tomorrow,” he continued. “It'll be Christmas, remember. Dad doesn't forget holidays. Just give him a while. Last year we had a lot of fun. And he visited during the rest of the year while we were at Origins, too.”

“Only because he was on the same island,” Griffin growled.

It was true. Arthur had spent the last two years with a student team at the Historia Society, where Etson worked. Arthur's first year was at the Peru campus, and he'd passed last year on an island in the Mediterranean Sea.

Arthur rolled off the couch and went back to the large window.

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From the shelf beside him he picked up the Retro-Spectaculars he'd just gotten for his birthday from Etson. They weren't the best binoculars, but they were funny. When he looked through them, he could change his view to simulate a different era. At first, it'd been hilarious to make the cleaning people look like hippies, or snowboarders like Roman senators. But with no one else to share the fun, he'd gotten bored. Now he flipped the earpieces in and out and tapped the side button repeatedly so it cycled through "1980s," "1970s," "1850s," and "Ancient Rome". The cold from the window made him shiver.

What's the point of staying in here? he thought. He shoved the Retro-Spectaculars back and turned away. "Let's go," he said as he grabbed his adventure belt and began buckling it on.

Griffin's ears twitched. "What? Where?"

"I dunno." Arthur checked that all his belt pouches were securely shut. "But I'm tired of being stuck in here. Let's go down to the lobby."

With a half wag of his tail, Griffin scrambled up to sniff the door while Arthur pulled on his still-tied sneakers.

In the hallway, the lamps gave a dreamlike glow to the black and silver walls and threw bizarre shadows from the quirky-shaped picture frames hanging there. As Arthur slipped the room key into his pouch and closed the door, he heard the *ding* of the elevator around the corner. When the doors opened, he glanced up and saw a woman with heavily lidded eyes step out, a paper in hand. She looked at the paper and then over at Arthur.

"Come on," woofed Griffin.

For a moment, Arthur didn't move. He didn't like the way the woman was looking at him. *Like she's thinking about stopping me,*

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he thought. He shook himself. *Don't be stupid. It's not like she knows my dad's not here.* Still, he hurried past the elevators without making eye contact and led Griffin to the stairwell instead. "What was that lady doing?" he asked as soon as they were out of her sight, the stairwell door shut behind them.

Griffin paused at the next landing. "Looking for her room, probably. Why?"

"Did you notice she was dressed all dark—not like the normal tourists on vacation? And she looked at me funny."

"Aw, it's all in your head. It's your conscience tattling on you."

Arthur rolled his eyes. "Whatever. I'm not doing anything illegal." He shoved open the door to the ground floor and stepped into the lobby.

They were in a large, windowed room lined with stone pillars and crackling fireplaces and dotted with chairs, couches, shaggy stools, and the occasional table. The curved check-in desk stood near the doors at one end, and at the other end was a bar with so many different colored glasses and bottles, it made Arthur feel like he was staring through a kaleidoscope. At the counter, a number of visitors in ski jackets lingered, laughing over steaming drinks. Everywhere were sparkling holiday lights and ice sculptures of angels with French horns or of reindeer pulling sleighs.

"Hey," said Griffin, "let's go sit by the fireplace. I wanna see those funny Santa Claus statues. And we can make fun of all the weird hats people are wearing."

"Fine, but I want a hot chocolate first."

After Arthur had ordered his drink from the bar (and gotten a raised eyebrow from the bartender), he and Griffin found an empty table near the Santa-decorated fireplace.

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“Ha-ha, look at that guy’s hat,” Griffin woofed happily. “He looks like he’s wearing a toilet plunger on his head!”

Arthur blew on his drink, and steam rushed into his face. He took a sip and ended up burning his tongue.

“Ouch,” growled Griffin, wincing. “What are you drinking it for when it’s boiling hot?”

Setting the mug down, Arthur opened his mouth to retort, but he stopped. “Hey,” he blurted. “It’s that lady!”

Griffin sat up. “What lady?”

“The one from the elevator.” Arthur narrowed his eyes as the woman in black slacks and a business blazer stepped out of the elevator and scanned the room. “Why is she down here already? She only just went up.”

“How would I know?” Griffin scratched his ear. “Maybe she just works here.”

But the other employees wore white shirts with name badges, not solid black jackets.

Arthur blew again and took another sip, watching the lady over the top of his cup through the steam. She looked like she meant business. But she wasn’t anyone he knew. “You don’t think she’s following us, do you?” he said slowly. But before Griffin could reply, Arthur saw the lady look directly at him and start walking. Right toward them.

“Let’s go,” Arthur blurted. He thumped down his cup, hot chocolate sloshing over the rim and puddling on the table. Heart pounding, he pushed through a crowd of visitors and made for the front door. A blast of cold air reminded him that he didn’t have his coat. Too late now.

“Watch out!” shouted Griffin, and he sank his teeth into Arthur’s

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shirt, jerking him back just before a huge hoof could clobber him. Arthur stumbled and gasped as a horse and its clattering buggy rolled past so close that his hair gusted back.

Arthur backed away and veered down the sidewalk, stuffing his hands as far as they could go in his pockets and watching his white breath poof away. He and Griffin moved aside as a bus stopped in front of them and loud people began pouring out.

“I see her,” Griffin muttered.

Quickly, they left the front of the hotel, aiming for the main walkway.

Arthur glanced over his shoulder. In the doorway, watching the people disembark from the bus, stood the woman. She waited for a moment, then turned up her collar and headed in their direction.

“Keep moving,” Arthur grunted. He’d followed a few people over the last two years and discovered that some of them were up to no good. But he’d never been followed himself. Was he being paranoid, or was that woman really after them? She didn’t look at all familiar. Was it just a coincidence that she needed to come this way? They walked along the main street, shivering. Arthur’s nose hairs were frozen stiff, and he tried to rub the numbness away. “This way,” he said. They turned abruptly down another narrow street lined with shops and clubs.

Griffin’s ears were back. “Here she comes.”

She was definitely following them. Arthur looked up at the neon-lit building beside them. Heavy-beat music pumped out the open door. A tall blond man wearing a wired security earpiece and looking hazardous in a tightly zipped fluorescent blue jacket stood right inside the doorway, frowning skeptically at a fast-talking

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pimply teenager. Without wasting another second, Arthur bolted past the two, Griffin right behind him.

“Hey, hey!” exclaimed the tall bouncer. But they didn’t stop.

The room was full of flashing strobe lights, dancing people, loud music, and endless talking. Surely that lady wouldn’t find them in here.

“Giant angry grunting guy right behind us,” Griffin warned.

Arthur pushed on toward the back of the room, hoping to get lost in the crowd before they were thrown out. But as he tried to squeeze past the counter, he was shocked to hear a familiar voice.

“Nah, I’d never do that. I’m a nice guy. So, what do you say?”

Arthur stopped. “Dad!”

Etson Grey sloshed his drink, and the waitress next to him giggled and darted away. Etson snatched a napkin and dabbed at the wet spot now darkening the front of his shirt. “What in the world, Arthur?” he hissed. “What are you doing here? You’re supposed to be eighteen to get in—”

As if on cue, the tall blond bouncer appeared beside Arthur. “No kids,” he snarled, jerking his thumb toward the door. “And definitely no dogs.”

“But, Dad,” blurted Arthur.

“Yes, yes,” Etson sputtered. He glared at Arthur. “You’re going to get me in trouble. You just follow this . . . um . . .” he cast a nervous glance at the towering man, “nice doorman back out and go straight to the lodge.”

“But there’s somebody tailing us,” Arthur exclaimed, shoving the man’s hand off his shoulder. “At the hotel, she kept sneaking around and following us. I don’t know who she is, but she was after us and—”

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Etson looked past Arthur, and his eyebrows jerked upward. “Oh, hey, Dorothy.”

Arthur spun around—and leaped back. The sneaking woman was right behind him. The doorman threw his hands up. “All of you get out!” he shouted. “If you’re not out in one minute, I throw you out!” Without another word, he stomped back to guard the door.

The shady woman stepped forward. “Etson. Thank goodness I found you.” She had a deep voice for a woman and spoke slowly, as if thinking out each word before letting it slide past her lips.

Arthur frowned. “You know her?”

“Yes, of course,” Etson groaned, rubbing his hand over his face. “This is Member Dorothy Snow. She works with me at the Department of Experiments.” Then he lowered his hands and narrowed an eye. “But how she found me here is a different question.”

The Snow lady nodded, and her uninterested eyes looked straight over Arthur’s head. “I got your room number and saw this boy leaving it. I assumed he either belonged to you . . . or he was robbing your room.”

Arthur decided he really didn’t like her.

“So I followed him to see where he was going. Is he yours?”

“Ah, yeah.” Etson shrugged and reached over to ruffle Arthur’s hair. “So what’s so important that needs to interrupt my little vacation with my kiddo?”

As he watched her, Arthur decided that Member Dorothy Snow didn’t blink. And that was really weird, because her eyelids looked so heavy, he was positive she should be blinking twice a second trying to keep them up. He crossed his arms. *I bet she’s not really human.*

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“The project,” Member Snow said slowly. “*The . . . project . . .* You need to come right away.”

Arthur and Griffin looked from the woman’s earnest face to Etson’s suddenly wide eyes.

Etson swore under his breath. “Not again. This thing’s never going to get an award at this rate!” He slammed some money onto the counter and snatched up his jacket. “Come on.”

Arthur tried to ask what was happening, but the two adults were already swerving past the tall doorman and ducking out the door. Arthur had to jog to keep up with them. What in the world was going on? What project was she talking about? His dad worked for the Department of Experiments—had something exploded?

“How long ago?” demanded Etson, his breath rising like smoke signals in the night air.

Dorothy Snow glanced down at the complicated watch gadget on her wrist. “An hour, maybe. I tried to contact you. There was no answer.”

“Yeah, yeah. I turned off my Telecator for a bit. I’m supposed to be on vacation. Apparently I need to send out memos that nothing’s supposed to go wrong when I’m on vacation.”

As Arthur ran and jogged after them, he felt a sharp pang beginning in his side. He clutched at it, and his left eye twinged with pain. Then, all at once, both pains disappeared. This process was so normal for him he almost didn’t notice it. Two years ago, he’d figured out his body could heal itself, and the eye throbbing was part of the action. It all had to do with his puzzling silver locket. “Dad,” he began.

“Is anyone watching it?” Etson asked above him.

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“Of course.” Member Snow sniffed. “I wouldn’t simply abandon it.”

Warm air shot at Arthur, welcoming him into the hotel lobby. He paused, then decided to grab his forsaken mug of hot cocoa from the table. When he took a sip, he found that it wasn’t very warm anymore. He sighed and hurried to the opening elevator doors.

Griffin skidded into the elevator behind him, his tail barely whooshing inside before the doors almost closed on it.

“Dad,” Arthur tried again.

“I brought a Transportal disc,” Dorothy Snow interrupted. “I wasn’t sure if you’d have one on you. I knew you’d want to get back right away.”

“Yeah, well that’s an understatement for sure.”

The elevator moved up, but Arthur felt his stomach sink. Transportal? So they were leaving already? Vacation was over? But he still had six more days of Solstice holiday. *And tomorrow is Christmas*, he reminded himself. *Well, maybe there’ll be something fun to do at Experiments. I haven’t been to that department yet.* “What—” he started to ask.

But Etson was out of the elevator and striding down the hall, Member Snow right behind him.

Griffin shook his head. “Maybe he has flies in his ears,” he offered.

Arthur sighed and trudged after the adults, sipping his cocoa as he went. In the extra fifteen seconds it took him to get to the room and open the door, Etson had nearly finished packing a bag and was dictating instructions to Member Snow. Arthur stood for a

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few seconds before realizing that none of his own things were being packed. He let the door slam behind him. “Hey!”

The two grown-ups stopped their writing, talking, and pacing, and looked at Arthur in surprise.

“What about me?” he demanded. He could tell by the glances they exchanged that they had actually forgotten he even existed.

Etson slapped himself in the head. “Great pyramids!” His eyes darted around the room as if searching for a suitcase to stuff Arthur into. “Um . . . well . . . I, uh . . .”

“Let me guess.” Arthur narrowed his eyes and banged his cocoa mug onto the table. “I can’t come with you.”

Etson hesitated, but Member Snow stepped forward, crossing her arms with a loud *swish* of her jacket sleeves. “Of course not,” she said matter-of-factly. “This is a top secret project. No one else may know the details.”

Arthur made a sour face at her before turning to his dad.

“Well . . . uh, it’s true,” Etson said, rubbing the back of his neck. He cleared his throat. “Shoot. Listen, kiddo. I’ll make it up to you, okay? I promise. But this is really important. You understand, right?”

Griffin let out a low growl.

“Where am I supposed to go then?” Arthur protested. Was he just going to stay here all by himself? Somehow, he didn’t see the hotel management being okay with that. Then another thought struck him. “And how am I gonna get to Initiate training in six days?”

Etson squinted. “Uh, well . . . uh . . . what’s your next Initiate training again?”

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Arthur rolled his eyes. Why couldn't his dad remember these things? "It's Investigations."

"Investigations," Etson murmured. "Okay. That's going to be in Egypt. All right, let me see what I can do." He dug out his Telecator from the suitcase and began strapping it around his wrist and pushing buttons on it as he wandered out of the room.

Griffin's ears were still pressed back against his head. "Have I mentioned that I'm beginning to wonder if your dad has mashed potatoes for brains?" he growled.

"Not helping," Arthur snapped.

"What did you say?" asked Member Snow.

Arthur shoved his hands into his pockets and glared at the dog. "Never mind."

After several awkwardly silent minutes, Etson wandered back into the room and looked up from his Telecator. "Okay," he said. "It's all arranged. You'll have somewhere to stay and will get to your next training in time, okay? See, I wouldn't just leave you." He ruffled Arthur's hair and turned to Dorothy before Arthur could even peep in protest. "I've gotta leave right away. Would you mind taking him? I've sent for a HistoriTaxi. Should be twenty minutes tops." And before she could open her mouth (to agree or disagree—Arthur didn't know which), Etson patted her shoulder and grinned, "Thanks a ton, Dorothy." Then he grabbed his suitcase and pulled what appeared to be a small, round mirror out of his coat pocket. He placed a little glass disc in it and snapped it shut. "All right, kiddo. I'll see you later. I'll try to stop by Investigations and visit you when I get a chance."

"Yeah, right," snorted Griffin.

Etson tossed the pocket mirror onto the floor, and it immediately

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rose back up, expanding into an oval doorframe. Through it Arthur could see a sandy beach and a tall white building standing against the dark sky.

With his suitcase in tow, Etson gave a little wave and stepped through the doorway. Arthur saw him for half a second longer, and then he was gone in a zooming blur of light. The Transportal collapsed in on itself as if being pulled inside out, and, with a *whoosh*, it too disappeared.

For a moment, Arthur and Griffin only stared at the empty spot where Etson had just stood, then at the chair that the portal had knocked over. Then they looked at the stiff lady behind them.

Her heeled shoe gave one sharp tap. “You heard him,” she said. “Twenty minutes. Tops.”

Arthur sighed and began the hunt for his duffle bag.

