**Rags to Riches: Howard Carter’s discovery**

High above the never-ending vista of gold, the sun burned brightly in the azure blue sky-it stretched on for miles with no hint of cloud to break up the glorious streak of sapphire. The heat, which was furiously intense, smothered the people who were unfortunate to be out. Many people had retreated to the sanctuary of the shade to try and ease their discomfort but even in the depth of shadow the heat still made its presence known. The desert was an unforgiving and desolate place yet it still had the power to bewitch and ensnare people with its beauty. On the horizon were peaks of yellow which represented a great pyramid: the final resting places for the Pharaoh’s of Egypt.

Howard Carter stood staring at this magnificent panorama, he had always been fascinated with Ancient Egypt ever since he had seen a mummy at the British museum. This exotic and mysterious civilisation had captured his imagination and had driven him to become an Egyptologist. Now here he was in the heartland of Egypt, he could see the life blood of Egypt (the mighty River Nile) winding its way towards Cairo: the capital of Egypt. Taking a deep breath, he let the magic of Egypt fill him; it tingled in his veins and glimmered in his eyes.

Carter had studied for years to fulfil his desire of finding a Pharaoh’s tomb. He had spent many hours pouring over lost and forgotten texts, hoping that they would reveal their secrets. Carter had painstakingly decoded ancient hieroglyphics, spending many nights alone surrounded by bits of paper and his copious notes. Every day he would leave his tent and pick a new location in which to dig. Gathering his workforce to toil in the blazing sun and suffocating heat. Every day he would discover nothing, his efforts coming up empty.

As Carter stood peering into a large, open trench, which his workers had recently dug, a shadow fell upon him. Turning around, his eyes opened in wonder; standing in front of him was the head curator of the British Museum: Sir William Sawyer. “Welcome Sir William,” Carter stammered, his voice trembling with nerves and excitement. “What brings you here to Egypt and to my dig?”

Sir William had turned to face Carter and was sneering with contempt, “I had come to see the infamous Howard Carter, the only man in Egypt who is incapable of discovering anything. You have been here for 6 months and all you have achieved is to pockmark the desert with your unsuccessful holes and to bring shame on the British Museum. You have made us into a laughing stock. You are a failure. You either need to start finding things of value or you can leave Egypt and archaeology to the people who actually know what they are doing.”

Turning on his heels, Sir William marched away from Carter, leaving Carter perplexed and stunned. A single word ran through his mind over and over again: failure. Misery filled Carter-a lone tear ran from his eye and evaporated before it had even trickled down his cheek.

That evening Carter sat alone and despondent in his tent, all he had ever wanted to be was an Egyptologist and discover secrets and treasures which would illuminate the world. In a moment of frustration, Carter stood and toppled over his desk, tumbling the many pieces of paper onto the floor; they cascaded down until they were scattered over the ground like shreds of confetti. Bending down to pick them up, his eye was caught by an unfamiliar map. It been pressed between the pages of an ancient book. Lifting it to the light, Carter closely examined the detailed map. It seemed to show an unknown tomb hidden within the Valley of the Kings; the grand burial place for the kings of Egypt. Anticipation coursed through Carter. Excitement filled him. Could this be his salvation? Could this be his moment to prove all the doubters wrong?

Quickly assembling his supplies he hurried out into the night to gather his workers. “Come quick, we must be off. I have discovered a secret tomb of a King. We must leave now!”

However, his workers refused to join him. They had had enough of his failure to find anything. “Why should we join you? You who have discovered nothing? 6 months and nothing to show for our hard work but blisters on our hands. If you want to go and dig, go and dig by yourself. We are done.”

Taking a deep breath, Carter turned away from the group of men and headed off into the desert. Carefully following the map, Carter wound his way around boulders and twisted his way through the narrow Valley of the Kings. He walked all night using only the moon and small light to guide him. His feet hurt and he was weary with fatigue but he refused to give up- this was his only hope of proving he could be an Egyptologist. Slowly the night faded away and the sun rose, it bathed to valley in a beautiful golden light, which shimmered off the white rocks which surrounded Carter. He walked until he saw a small break in the rock face up ahead. Picking up his pace, he hurried towards it. As he stood in front of the tiny crack he could see a corridor. Grabbing his axe he began to furiously attack the stone door which barricaded the entrance. He toiled away tirelessly until he could step inside. Breathing deeply, Carter crossed the threshold and walked into the darkness.

With his small light held out in front of him, Carter made his way along the corridor. It went deep into the mountain. A shiver ran down his spine, a bead of sweat dripped from his head. Suddenly, the light in Carter’s hand illuminated an object in the distance which glinted brightly. Rushing forward Carter couldn’t believe his eyes. Wherever he shined his light gold sparkled back at him. The entire room was filled with golden treasure and precious jewels, they bounced the meagre light around reflecting off each gleaming object.

As if in a trance, Carter walked into the centre of the room and looked down upon the most glorious sight he had ever witnessed. Lying in an ornately carved sarcophagus laid a man with a face of gold!

News of Carter’s discovery soon got out and people rushed to meet and congratulate him. Standing amongst the vast amounts of treasure, Carter smiled to himself. He had done it, he had proved his worth and shown the world that was a true Egyptologist. The world would never forget his name or that of the lost king which he had discovered: Howard Carter the man who had found King Tutankhamun.

 

  