



## CHAPTER 1

Frankie stood in front of the marble statue. He checked the question on his sheet.

“Who ruled the Roman Empire in 60 AD?”

He read the little card on the wall.

The Emperor Nero (ruled 54–68 AD).

*Wow!* he thought. *That's nearly two thousand years ago!*

He wrote the answer: 'Nero.'

Frankie heard the shuffle of footsteps and turned to see Charlie dragging his feet along the ground. He was carrying his clipboard in his hands.

"The museum is the most boring place in the universe," said Frankie's friend.

"More boring than Maths lessons with Ms Brown?" asked Frankie, grinning.

"OK, the *second* most boring place," said Charlie. "I can't believe they cancelled football practice for

this." He flopped onto the bottom step of a set of stairs, tossed the clipboard aside, and rested his chin in his gloved hands. Frankie saw Charlie had filled in some of the answers, but not many.

"Ahem!" said a voice. Mr Donald strode out from behind another statue. "Charles, I don't see how you're going to complete your answer-sheet unless you take those goalkeeping gloves off."

Frankie saw his friend quickly hide his clipboard. "I've done all the answers, sir," said Charlie.

"Really?" said Mr Donald, narrowing his eyes. "I don't see

how that's possible. You haven't even visited the Egyptian gallery yet and we have to leave in fifteen minutes."

Charlie blushed. "Just going now, sir," he said. With a sigh he stood up and began to climb the stairs.

"Wait for me," said Frankie. "I'm finished with the Roman questions."

"Good, good," said Mr Donald. "Your friend Louise is already up there. Almost done, I believe."

"She would be!" grumbled Charlie.

As they followed the sign to the

Egyptian gallery, they passed the café. Loud shouts and laughter came from inside. A moment later, Frankie's brother Kevin and his friends spilled out. When his eyes landed on Frankie, he stopped laughing and sneered.

"It's the Geek Squad!" he said. "Have you answered all Donaldo's questions yet?"

"Just keep walking," Frankie whispered to Charlie. He'd hoped he wouldn't bump into his brother's class. They were at the museum too, researching their history projects.

Frankie and Charlie found Louise

in the Egyptian room inspecting a green jar on a glass shelf. "This belonged to a Pharaoh," she said, when she spotted them.

"A Fair-what?" asked Charlie.

Louise rolled her eyes. "The Pharaoh was the name ancient Egyptians gave their king," she said.

"Yeah, I knew that," mumbled Charlie.

"This jar was used to put their heart in after they were mummified," said Louise.

"Yuck!" said Frankie. He checked his question sheet. "We have to find the name of five Egyptian

Gods," he added. "Apparently the Egyptians worshipped more than sixty!"

"I've got four already," said Louise. She grinned and hid her answer sheet as Charlie peered over her shoulder. "Find your own!"

Frankie wasn't interested in Louise's answers. He was looking at something in the centre of the room, cordoned off with a red rope. It was like an open coffin, standing on its end. The lid was decorated with the face and body of a man. He wore a colourful head-dress, painted gold and red, and he had

a strange, thin beard. Across his clothes were hundreds of tiny symbols.

“Check that out,” he said.

“That’s the mummy’s sarcophagus,” said Louise.

“Sark-Off-A-What?” asked Charlie.

“Like a coffin,” said Louise.

“When a pharaoh died, his body was preserved as a mummy, then the mummy was put in a pyramid, inside a sarcophagus.”

Frankie marvelled at the amazing painted details.

The card next to the exhibit read:

SARCOPHAGUS OF UNKNOWN PHARAOH.





I wonder what all the little pictures mean," said Charlie.

"They're called hieroglyphs," said Louise.

"Hire-Oh-What?" said Charlie, smiling. "Only kidding."

Frankie peered even closer, right into the golden eyes of the unknown king. Then he felt his bag strap snag on his shoulder, almost pulling him off his feet. He spun round to see Kevin holding his bag.

"Hey! I'm not finished with you, little brother."

"Give that back," said Frankie, deadly serious.

"Ooh . . . scary!" said his brother.

He undid the zip on Frankie's bag and tipped it upside down. Out fell Frankie's pencil case, his lunchbox, his books. And, last of all, his battered football. He dropped the bag at Frankie's feet.

"Pass it here!" said Kev's friend, Liam.

Before Frankie could react, Kev back-heeled the ball to Liam.

"Don't be idiots!" said Louise. "You'll break something!"

"What are you scared of?" asked Kev's friend, Matt. "The mummy's curse?"

Charlie went to get the ball, but Liam chipped it over his shoulder

to Rob. All Kevin's friends were laughing. Frankie stuffed his things in his bag and sprang to his feet.

"Come and get your rubbish ball," said Rob, stepping over it.

Frankie ran at him, his blood pumping. Rob tried to go around him, but Frankie kept his eye on the ball and tackled him. The ball spun up into the air, straight towards the ancient green jar.

Frankie, and everyone else, sucked in a breath.

The ball just missed the jar and rolled under the rope towards the mummy's sarcophagus.

"What are you lot up to?" said a



voice over the silence. It was Mrs Murray, Kevin's history teacher. She might only be five feet tall and about a hundred years old, but Frankie knew they were terrified of her. "Haven't you got work to be doing?" she said.

Kevin and his mates all scarpered

quickly, muttering "Yes, Miss" and "Sorry, Miss".

Mrs Murray glared at Frankie, then followed them out of the room.

"Phew!" said Louise. "That jar is priceless!"

Frankie blew out a long breath and went to get his ball. He stopped right in his tracks when he saw the ball had somehow rolled *inside* the sarcophagus. "Weird," he said.

"What?" asked Charlie.

Frankie pointed at the sarcophagus. "Did you put it in there?"

Both Louise and Charlie shook their heads.

Frankie edged closer. He was going to have to step over the rope to get the ball. He looked up, checking for cameras. *If Mr Donald sees me, I'm going to be in deep trouble.*

As he lifted a leg over the rope, the painted gold eyes of the pharaoh watched him intently. Frankie didn't believe in a mummy's curse, but he couldn't help but shudder.

He reached out for the ball, heart thumping.

Then, with no one touching it, the sarcophagus lid snapped shut.

