

The man in black



This is a photo of Cate and me in Egypt. I'm Maddy. I'm in the red dress. I'm standing beside Mr Johnson, our teacher. Cate is the girl with the brown bag.

We are in Egypt with our class from school. We are standing beside a pyramid. A camel with a big nose is behind us. The camel wants to be in the photo.

'Smile,' says Paul Hand.

We smile and Paul takes the photo. We take photos of the pyramids too. They are big in the blue sky.

The sun is hot in Egypt. My face and arms are red. I have a drink of water. I look at Cate. She is hot too.

Mr Johnson is speaking about the pyramid.

‘This is the pyramid of King Cheops, a pharaoh, or king of Egypt...’

I sit beside the pyramid. My feet are hot. Mr Johnson is speaking about King Cheops and his pyramid. I shut my eyes.

‘Maddy,’ says Cate in my ear. ‘Open your eyes!’

‘No,’ I say. ‘I’m sleeping.’

‘Maddy!’ says Cate again.

I open one eye.

‘A man is looking at us,’ she says.

‘Who?’ I ask.

‘That man over there,’ she says. ‘The man in the black suit.’

I see the man. He *is* looking at us. He is standing beside the pyramid.

‘He’s a bad man,’ says Cate. ‘I know it.’

Cate wants to be a detective. She reads detective books. She writes detective stories. In her stories the bad men are always in black suits.

‘No, he isn’t,’ I say. ‘He’s looking at the pyramids.’ I am hot. I want to be in our hotel. I want to sleep.

‘But...’ says Cate.

Mr Johnson looks at her. ‘What is it, Cate?’

Cate doesn’t answer.

‘She’s writing stories in her head again,’ says Paul Hand.

Mr Johnson smiles at Cate. ‘You and your stories,’ he says. Cate’s face is red. ‘Okay,’ he says. ‘The bus is going to take us to the hotel now.’

Paul Hand takes a photo of the bus. He is always taking photos.

We get on the bus. I sit beside the window. Cate sits beside me. I look at the hot, yellow land. Soon the pyramids are behind us. They look small now.

The bus stops at our hotel in Cairo. The afternoon sun is hot like the morning sun. Cate takes her bag and gets up.

I look out of the window and I see the man in the black suit. He is standing across the street. A brown bag is on the ground beside him. He is looking at our bus.

‘What’s he doing here?’ I ask.

‘Who?’ says Cate.

‘Look. The man in black is across the street.’

She looks at him. ‘Yes, what *is* he doing here?’ she says. ‘I don’t like that man.’

We get off the bus. I look across the street again. Now I can’t see the man in black.

‘I have one photo to take,’ says Paul Hand. ‘I’m going to take a photo of the hotel. Cate, Maddy – can you stand there, please?’

Cate puts her bag on the ground behind her. We stand in front of the hotel and smile. Paul takes the photo.

‘Thanks,’ he says. ‘Now I’m going to take these to the photo shop.’

‘It’s four o’clock now. Dinner is at six o’clock,’ says Mr Johnson.

‘Yes, Mr Johnson,’ we say.

Cate takes her bag and we walk into the hotel. We go to our room and shut the door. The room is nice and cold. I sit on the bed and drink water. Cate puts her bag on the table. I am tired. I lie down and go to sleep.


I open my eyes. Cate is talking. 'Now, where is my book on Egypt?' she is saying. 'It's in my bag. I want to read about the temple of Ramses the Great.' She opens the bag. 'We are going to go there tomorrow. It's in Abu Simbel, near Aswan. The temple of Ramses the Great is...'

She stops speaking.

'Maddy,' she says. 'This is not my bag!'

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Land of Gold

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