

Tut slowly removed the glowing ruby from the top of the pyramid with the help of his scepter. While he waited for his eyes to adjust to the pitch darkness, he turned back toward the view of Thebes behind him. At the top of the hill was the magnificent palace, surrounded by the walls of the world's most advanced capital. He missed feeling at home. In the east, the light of millions of stars was reflected on the Nile while the sounds of insects mingled with the night as if heralding some news.

Thirty centimeters tall, the pyramid-shaped stone was the largest ruby in the world. Tut had a bad feeling, even though his soldiers were standing guard below. He tried to focus. Whatever the cost, he would abide by his great-grandfather's will and he wouldn't let the stone fall into their hands.

"Too heavy," he thought, limping down the stairs. He gave a nod to his guards and they all fell to the ground for him to climb onto the elephant's seat. When Tut sat down, his driver nudged the elephant up and drove it forward. The footsteps of four soldiers, two in the front and two in the back, echoed through the night.

As they passed the Sphinx, Tut stopped the driver. He touched the hawk-shaped key around his neck and, with the feeling of ease that the key gave him, he issued orders to the soldiers nearing the ladder propped against the Sphinx. As he descended from the elephant, leaning against his limp leg, he experienced the pleasant sensation of his feet sinking into the cool desert sand. With the ruby in hand, he slowly began to climb the ladder.

When the key fell into place, the soldiers couldn't believe their eyes. The great Sphinx had split in the darkness of the night, revealing a secret passage at the end of a staircase. Tut staggered through the gate, putting the ruby into the special box inside. He then went outside, replaced the key, and closed the passage.

He mounted the elephant again and they resumed advancing further as they had come. When they reached the walls of Thebes, fifty gatemens bowed low as the guards announced the arrival of the pharaoh. Tut stopped the driver again and dismounted from the elephant. As he passed the gatemens, he whispered into the commander's ear: "Kill them all."

Seeing the determined expression on the pharaoh's face, the commander nodded, sure of what he had heard. Tut was already on his way to the palace in the chariot that was waiting for him when

he heard the snarls and cries issuing from the throats of the elephant's driver and the four bodyguards.

Tut paused in front of his large bed and took a deep breath, entering through the doors that opened to either side of the palace's high-ceilinged bedroom. He had succeeded. No one living, including Ay, knew where the ruby was. He looked down at the striped bedspread, the frill of which touched the floor, loving it because it was a memento from his great-grandfather Khufu. Feather pillows, also adorned with frill, were piled at the head of the bed. At the foot of the bed was a chest, the same as the one in the Sphinx, covered in velvet. He thought he could relax and sleep now. As he touched the hawk-shaped key around his neck, his eyes fell on a piece of papyrus at his feet. His face turned white as he read the Sumerian inscription on it: "Die." Just then, a shadow descended upon him from the darkness. His heart beat like crazy; he thought he might piss himself. He wanted to shout, but the only sound to emerge between the large fingers that gripped his mouth and jaw was a dreadful low groan.

He was only nineteen years old. When he tried to enter the mind of his attacker, he encountered an icy wall. He tried to escape, but the giant behind him had him immobilized. Tut turned his head, hoping to catch the attacker's face, and he saw a glow in the darkness. Then he suddenly felt pain in his neck. At the same time, the stranger removed his hand from his mouth. Tut wanted to scream, but his breath came out in a terrible wheeze from the cut in his neck, spraying the blood that had rushed into, not over, his vocal cords because of his sliced trachea. Even more panicked by the effect of that sound, he wanted to hold his neck and breathe, but blood filled his lungs. He strained to cough, but there was no air in his lungs. He knelt down as his diaphragm tightened, beginning to spasm, and his ears rang; he was starting to black out. The young pharaoh's final thought was the key that he was clutching in his palm.