

ARE YOU MY MUMMY?

By Jeff Dunne

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CHARACTERS

FLAVIA JANEK	A dedicated but rather incompetent archaeologist
ILLIAN SMITH	A hired hand, brought along to keep Dr. Janek safe
EDNA TUTMAN	An old Jewish woman in Brooklyn who never wanted anything more than a few grandchildren because is that so much to ask?

SETTING

An ancient structure, long abandoned after the post-COVID apocolypse that transpired ten thousand years ago.

SCENE

(Dr. Janek and Illian Smith enter what appears to be an ancient burial site. Everything is covered in cobwebs. Illian wipes the sweat from her forehead, looks around, and then takes a swig from a flask. Janek has continued rummaging and has stopped to study some kind of large cylinder.)

ILLIAN

This place is a disaster.

JANEK

What?

ILLIAN

I said—

JANEK

Oh, yes. A disaster. Well, it's very old.

ILLIAN

No kidding. How can you be sure it's even a tomb? For all we know, it could have been a storage closet, or a—

JANEK

I've been studying the ancient writings my whole life, Illian. This is definitely a tomb. Before the Great Collapse, they used to enshrine their most beloved ancestors in—

ILLIAN

Hey! None of that. We had a deal. I'm just here to keep you safe and haul crap. You start giving me exposition, and I'm outta here.

(Janek has been clearing stuff off the cylinder, and has uncovered an array of small, pulsing LEDs on the side of it. Janek gasps, and Illian spins around, drawing an old flintlock pistol. Illians sees that there's no immediate threat, and...)

Holy hell. You almost gave me a heart attack.

(Illian takes another swig from the flask.)

JANEK

Do you mind? You've been hitting that flask like it's a nipple. You can't afford to get smashed right now.

ILLIAN

I know what I'm doing. So what is that?

JANEK

It's some kind of sarcophagus. This... this is an ancient puzzle lock.

ILLIAN

A sarcophagus? Are you saying there could be a mummy in there?

JANEK

You're not scared, are you?

ILLIAN

Of course I'm not. I just want to be prepared, that's all. So do you know how to open it?

JANEK

Of course. The ancients were very focused on the celestial bodies. You see these lights? They represent the stars. Since this is a sarcophagus, all we need to do is press the ones in the constellation of Merzem.

ILLIAN

Merzem.

JANEK

Right. Merzem was the celestial representation of Anubis, the Egyptian god who oversaw the embalming process and—

ILLIAN

What did I tell you about exposition? You start exposing yourself like that again, and there's gonna be trouble.

JANEK

Sorry.

(Illian motions to the cylinder.)

Right.

(Janek presses a bunch of lights, and then steps back. Nothing happens. She gives a little smile, then tries it again. Nothing. Then again, and then again. She's obviously getting flustered.)

ILLIAN

I thought you said—

(Janek holds up a scolding finger with a “be silent” grunk. She turns back to the cylinder, and in a panic starts hitting the little lights in bursts, each separated by growing frustration. Illian, mockingly...)

No, no, Illian. It's simple. See these lights? They're *stars*, and all you need to do—

JANEK

I can do this!

ILLIAN

I can see that.

JANEK

The stars must have been aligned differently back then. That's all.

ILLIAN

(Still mocking...)

The stars must have been aligned—

JANEK

Differently. Now shut up. I can get this.

(Janek tries a few more times, but nothing works. While she's struggling with it, Illian goes over and just lifts up the top half of the cylinder a little. There's an awkward moment.)

There's an extra thousand in it for you if this never happened.

ILLIAN

What never happened?

JANEK

Right. *(Taking a deep breath.)* Okay, are you ready?

Wait.
ILLIAN

(Illian takes another swig from the flask. While putting it away, Janek asks...)

JANEK
What's in there, anyway? Bourbon? Whiskey?

ILLIAN
Milk.

JANEK
No, seriously. What is it?

ILLIAN
Milk. Seriously. Calms the nerves, gives you a boost in calcium. Good stuff.

JANEK
This whole time I thought you were this rugged adventurer, and now I find out you're drinking *milk*?

ILLIAN
What were you saying about how the stars were aligned?

(They stare at each other, Janek eventually turning away.)

JANEK
Right. So. You ready?

(They open the cylinder, and inside is Edna, covered with a diaphanous veil.)

Oh my...

ILLIAN
Is that a mummy? An actual...

JANEK
I think it is! Oh my... let me just...

(Janek takes out a high-end camera, takes aim, and snaps a shot. The flash goes off and suddenly Edna sits bolt upright.)

EDNA

Mmmmaaaarrrrgggghhhhh!!!!

(Janek and Illian scream. Edna makes a series of guttural sounds.)

Mmlllaaagghhhhh.... Mmllagh.... Mmlllaaaahhh, mllegh.

(Edna makes a guttural hissing noise, then slowly reaches out toward Illian, who jumps back. Edna makes a grasping motion. Illian and Janek stare at each other, then back to Edna. Edna makes a “drinking” motion, then reaches out toward Illian again.)

JANEK

For god’s sake, Illian. Give it to the thing before it kills us!

ILLIAN

This was my aunt Judy’s flask—

JANEK

Illian Smith! Give. It. The damn. Flask!

(Illian begrudgingly hands over the flask. Edna lifts the veil and drinks. Then drinks again. Finally, she clears her throat and says in a Jewish/Brooklyn voice...)

EDNA

What is this, milk?? Are you kidding me? After all this time you couldn’t even spring for a nice Chianti?

(Janek and Illian stare at each other in shock. Edna thrusts the flask back into Illian’s hands.)

Well, I guess I should just be thankful that you remembered to stop by at all. It’s more than your brother ever did.

JANEK

Excuse m—

EDNA

Of course, he's dead. What's your excuse?

JANEK

Excuse m—

EDNA

Oy, what I wouldn't give for a little hummus. I don't suppose you'd be willing to run out to the corner store and get your mother a little something to nosh?

(Janek and Illian just stare at each other again.)

What? Am I talking to myself now? Can anyone hear me? Why are you so blurry? Oh, what's this schmatte?

(Edna pulls the veil off, revealing a pair of glasses on her forehead.)

Sarah? Look how you've grown! You're so much older, I hardly recognize you. And who is this? Is this that gentile you started seeing? Come here.

(Janek and Illian continue to stare at each other and Edna in total confusion.)

What? Suddenly you're too old for a little kiss on the keppie? Come here. Help me out of this thing.

(Illian goes over and helps her out of the cylinder. Edna pats her cheek in thanks.)

Well, aren't you're a keeper. And that punim. When are you two going to get married, huh? Heaven forbid I should have a few grandchildren before the apocalypse comes.

ILLIAN

Actually, I think that train already left the station.

EDNA

What? What are you talking about? Sarah, what is she talking about?

I'm not Sarah.

JANEK

What?

EDNA

I'm not S—

JANEK

Wait a minute. You're still so blurry. Let me get my glasses.

EDNA

(She starts looking for them in the cylinder.)

You're glasses are—

JANEK

Just a minute, honey. Let me get my glasses. I could've sworn I had them with me when I laid down for a nap.

EDNA

(She continues to scrounge.)

Ms.? Your glasses are—

ILLIAN

So polite. Please, just call me Edna. Now where were they...

EDNA

(Illian steps over and carefully plucks the glasses from her head, and holds them out.)

Here they are.

ILLIAN

Aren't you a mensch. So helpful. This one's a keeper, Sarah. Not like the last one—

EDNA

(Taking the glasses...)

(She finally gets the glasses on her face and looks over at Janek.)

You're not Sarah.

JANEK

No. I'm Doctor Flavia Janek. And this is Illian Smith. We—

EDNA

What are you doing in my apartment? Did Sarah let you in?

JANEK

No. Sarah is... No.

EDNA

Are you selling something? Because ever since that terrible man sold me those subscriptions that never came, Sarah told me I shouldn't—

JANEK

Please, Ms... Edna.

EDNA

Tutman. *Mrs.* Tutman.

JANEK

Mrs. Tutman. I think... um... I think there's something...

ILLIAN

Edna, do you have any idea what year it is?

EDNA

Of course I do. I'm not meshuggeneh. It's 2022. Now if Sarah didn't let you in, then I think you should leave.

JANEK

Mrs. Tutman, if you could just... Did you say 2022?

(During this next line, Janek tries to interrupt with a "ma'am" several times, but to no avail.)

EDNA

That's right. Because little Irving was born in 2016, and then David passed from the virus just before his fifth birthday. Then his wife moved out of the city, and that was just six months ago, which I remember because it was just before I turned eighty seven, which is really an accomplishment. Not that you'd know it from the lack of birthday cards from my own flesh and blood—

EDNA!!

ILLIAN

EDNA

What's with the shouting?

JANEK

So this isn't Egypt?

EDNA

Egypt? Is that near Newark? I never go into New Jersey unless—

JANEK

In Africa. Egypt in Africa. By the Nile.

EDNA

Oh, no, honey. This is Brooklyn. By the Upper East Side.

JANEK

I see.

EDNA

Oh, poor honey. You really got lost, didn't you? That's okay. Here. Have a seat. Let me get you a little Ovaltine.

(Edna starts shuffling around the room, looking for a cabinet and a refrigerator.)

JANEK

I could have sworn this was Egypt. I could have sworn...

ILLIAN

This really isn't your day, doc.

JANEK

I was so careful. So thorough.

ILLIAN

Kind of puts that whole 'stars' thing into perspective though, doesn't it?

(Edna opens a box and lifts out a container.)

EDNA

I think I found the Ovaltine. Now... where did Sarah move the fridge?

JANEK

My whole life's work. A total bust.

ILLIAN

Look on the bright side.

JANEK

What bright side? Decades of exhausting research, and I couldn't even get to the right continent!

EDNA

(Shouting back...)

Did you say you're feeling incontinent? Trust me, honey, that's nothing to be embarrassed about.

JANEK

I invested my family's whole estate, and all for nothing.

(Edna returns.)

EDNA

I'm so embarrassed. I can't seem to find the fridge, and you can't make Ovaltine with water. It says you can on the container, but I tried it once and all you get is schmutz. It needs milk.

JANEK

All I wanted was to make a name for myself. What am I going to do?

(Illian looks at Janek, then silently hands the flask to Edna, who pours in some Ovaltine and shakes it up during the next few lines.)

How am I going to explain this to the rest of the faculty?

ILLIAN

There, there.

EDNA

I'm sure if you bring them a nice upside down cake...

JANEK

Was it really that much to ask...

EDNA

What's that, honey?

JANEK

All I ever wanted was to find a mummy.

(The scene fades to black during the following line – note that the line should fade to silence without actually reaching the end.)

EDNA

Oh, sweetheart. I can be that for you. It's not like my own children ever stop by. I did everything for those two, and I never asked for a single thing in return. Not a single thing. But is it too much to hope that Sarah would come by more than once a year? You'd think that after thirty-two hours of pushing her out of my womb, she'd remember to stop by now and then to see if her mother was still breathing. And don't get me started on David. Now there was a boy you could be proud of, but then he had to grow up and marry a shiksa and rip his mother's heart out. But what can you do? They don't care.

(Lights out.)