

# **JEREMY BROWN AND THE MUMMY'S CURSE**

# CHAPTER ONE

In which Jeremy Brown shakes with fear and a mummy comes to life.

Jeremy Brown's secret was safe. Everyone at Grotside School thought of him as that weedy kid with the glasses. Only his best friend Patsy Spudd knew that underneath this clever disguise, he was an MI7 agent. And a rather brilliant one at that, he always thought.

Of course, if he'd paid the same attention to his school work as he did to catching crooks and saving the world, he'd have already got twelve A-levels, and a degree from the University Of Brains. As it was, he came bottom in everything, unless Patsy beat him to it.

It was Friday afternoon, double Maths with Mr Algebra, and everyone was fed up.

"I'm fed up," mumbled Patsy, too fed up to say anything more original.

She kept wrapping her ginger hair around her fingers.

Mr Algebra wrote a set of formulas on the blackboard. If Jeremy had been paying attention, he'd have realised that they were perfect for helping to decode electronic locking systems. But he wasn't. Instead, he was thinking about his last mission, and how very clever he'd been in proving that diamonds were being smuggled out of the country by a little old lady from Swanage.

"Who'd have thought it," said Jeremy. "Hollow teeth."

"It was me who extracted them," said Patsy. "She might have been ninety-seven, but she still kicked like a mule," she added, rubbing her left leg.

The class stared vacantly at the blackboard with droopy eyes and ever droopier mouths. Some of them were bored to tears (and were wringing out their hankies), some of them were bored stupid (and had forgotten their names). Luckily none of them had been bored to death yet.

“I wish MI7 would call me with a case,” muttered Jeremy. Very soon, he’d be wishing he hadn’t said that. And to find out why, we must first go to Cairo...

The Egyptian museum was dark, silent and smelt of old socks. It was the smell of thousands of years of ancient history. Mummy cases lined the walls, and huge stone statues of gods and animals stood in every corner.

The last visitor of the day had left hours ago. Agent Spanner of MI7 wandered along the upper gallery of the main hall, keeping a sharp eye out for something he knew was there, somewhere. His footsteps echoed around the walls. He was wearing a smart white suit, which is probably the silliest thing you can wear in a hot climate like Egypt’s, but he’d seen people wear them in films on TV, so he reckoned he looked cool.

He dabbed the sweat off his forehead with his sleeve. It left a grubby stain. At last, he stopped in front of a

particularly large, coffin-like and scary-looking wooden sarcophagus. It was covered in ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics, and a large, noble face was painted near its top in black and gold. Agent Spanner gulped quietly. "The casket of Psidesalad II," he whispered.

With both hands gripping one edge of the lid, he heaved the mummy case open. It creaked and groaned. A scattering of dust puffed out and settled nervously around his feet, glad to be out of there.

The mummy, its arms folded across its chest, stood tall and terrifying before him. It was wrapped tightly in bandages, and the bandages were wrapped tightly in dirt.

"Eurgh, it's a bit mucky," he mumbled to himself.

A thin beam of blue light ran from one side of the case to the other, level with the mummy's knees. Carefully, Agent Spanner reached out and broke the beam with his fingers.

His scream of fright was, just at that moment, the loudest noise in Cairo. The mummy's tightly encased hands had jerked into life. With sudden, sharp movements it grabbed the sides of the case and hauled itself forward.

Agent Spanner jumped back. The mummy's feet landed with twin thuds on the stone floor. He jumped back some more. The mummy stood up straight, towering over him. Agent Spanner would have liked to jump back roughly as far as France, but he was now pressed tightly against an exhibit of primitive farming tools.

The mummy closed in. Agent Spanner's eyes bulged out of his face like golf balls sitting on a pizza...

Jeremy's eyes were also bulging. He'd fixed his lids open with sticky tape in an effort to look alert, but all it was doing was making his eyes water.

"Did I tell you about the time I had to glue my knees together to prop a bank vault door open?"

“Many times,” sighed Patsy.

Suddenly, Jeremy’s tie began to make a tiny beeping noise. He sat up straight, wide awake. The rest of the class turned to peer sleepily at him. Mr Algebra craned his neck and shuffled from side to side. “Brown? Are you emitting a peculiar noise?”

Jeremy thought quickly. “Err, yes sir. It’s my lower intestine. Very embarrassing personal problem, sir. Could erupt any minute.”

Mr Algebra shuffled in horror at the thought of his lovely classroom awash with... “Quick! Get out! Find the school nurse! Or a toilet!”

“Thank you, sir,” said Jeremy. All but one member of the class giggled cruelly as he dashed for the door. The odd one out was, of course, Patsy. She knew very well what that beeping meant.

Outside, in the chalky corridor, Jeremy quickly checked that nobody could see him. He stuck one end of his tie into his ear (the end with the

miniature speaker in it), and held the other close to his mouth (the end with the miniature microphone.)

“The fairy cakes are made of sponge,” said the deep voice of his boss at MI7.

“With big red cherries on the top,” responded Jeremy correctly. “Morning, boss.”

“Good morning, Agent Brown. Pay attention. A week ago, we lost contact with one of our overseas operatives, Agent Wrench. He’d been sent to Egypt, to guard an exhibition of relics on loan from the British Museum. After several days of silence, we sent a second operative, Agent Spanner, to track him down. Spanner discovered local reports of an ancient curse, which Agent Wrench had apparently fallen victim to.”

Jeremy was starting to get a sinking feeling. “And what happened then?”

“No idea. Spanner vanished too. Swallowed up by the curse of the pharaoh Psidesalad II, by all accounts.”

“Oh.” It was at this point that Jeremy began shaking with fear, as mentioned at the start of the chapter.

“Your mission,” continued the boss, “is to go to Egypt, find out what’s going on, and stop it.”

“I see... Err, wouldn’t this be better tackled by... someone... a bit... taller, maybe?”

“Sorry, Brown. Every other agent is off on a training exercise, How To Confuse Your Enemies With A Garden Hose. You’re the only one left. Operation Exit will be launched, as normal.”

Jeremy’s secret radio beeped, spluttered, and switched off. Moments later, the bell for the end of the lesson shattered the silence, not to mention his nerves. Patsy appeared at his side.

“I take it we’re off?” she said eagerly.

His everyday disguise was pointless once more. Time for Jeremy to stop looking weedy and scruffy and start looking all heroic and smart. He straightened his tie, pulled up his socks

and put on his special eagle-eyed look. Then he gave Patsy a quick summary of the situation. “MI7 chose me specially,” he said. “The others all wanted the job, but there’s only me brilliant enough to tackle it, of course.”

“We’re off, then!” grinned Patsy.

Operation Exit, meanwhile, involved MI7 telephoning the Headmaster of Grotside School. He was told that he should sign a letter allowing both of them to be out of lessons for as long as they wanted, otherwise the world would get to hear about his visits to the Peter Pixie Dressing Up Club.

Jeremy and Patsy collected their letter from his trembling hands on the way out of the school gates, and hurried to the airport. They flew to Cairo in the time it takes to start a new chapter.