

## Detective Dilbert & Pyramid Pitfalls

### Chapter 13

Sand, sand, and more sand—it's everywhere I look. My camel bats his long, curly eyelashes to keep the sand out of his eyes. I've been trekking across the desert for just a few hours, but I can already feel the sun's fiery attempt to suck all the moisture out of my body. My camel sweats like a human, but I have to let my tongue hang out of my mouth and pant. It's the only downside to being a dog. A gust of wind blasts my tongue with sand. Yuck! It's totally covered; it looks like a banana covered in chopped nuts. Using my scarf, I wipe my tongue. Huhuhuhuhu... I'm panting steadily to keep cool. But my camel has a unique strategy; he just opens and closes his fat nostrils to cool the air before it enters his lungs. Holding tightly to my saddle's front horn, I sway back and forth and side to side, slogging my way through the sandy Egyptian desert toward the ancient pyramids and great Sphinx. This heat reminds me of Mrs. Fieldjoy's chili pepper salsa. And that makes me think about the fridge where it's kept. Do you know how many times I looked at that refrigerator and thought nothing of it? Boy, what I would give for just ten seconds in front of that fridge's open door. I'd stick my face deep into its interior. One blast of cold air on this nearly-barbecued skin of mine sounds unreal. And that icy smoothie she always keeps beside the salsa in the fridge... Man, that would taste so good. I'd guzzle that baby down... I'd save some to pour over my head... I'd let the cool cream run over my ears and face. I close my eyes and try to think myself cool, but memories of icy treats only make me hotter. The sun might be hammering my head, but it's my job to nail down the next clue. Better focus. Dreamily, I use my scarf to wipe the sand from my face as I scrutinize my surroundings.

Whoooooshslaaash... The wind whips up the sand and laughs at my raw, stinging skin. It pushes the sand in waves across the terrain.

"Oh... my stomach... Please walk straight," I groan huge gulps of green gag. My camel is jostling me side to side; I sway like a metronome; my digestive juices slosh to the rhythm.

"Oh..." I can't help but moan.

"Like to dismantle that camel amble of yours," I clench my teeth together as the beast sways me further left, "you hoofed camel mammal." I didn't mean for the camel to actually hear this. But I think he did. He turns his head, stares me in the eye, and shoots a spitball. Luckily, he misses. I begin dreaming of a new invention: the Camel-Cancel: press the button and his spitballs backfire, splat into his eye. But I let it go. Let the camel do his camel thing. Bump-thud right. Bump-thud left. Oh, the stomach... I'm awful seasick in the midst of all this dry. My sand-encrusted schnozzola can't smell a thing. The heat is wilting my body and my muscles loosen, causing my skin folds to open slightly. My magnifying lens slides out and plunges itself into the sand. Great. Leave it; I'm too weary to care. Next, my finger-dusting kit crashes onto the desert floor. Fabulous. I'm falling apart—crumbling like a coffee cake—collapsing like a rotten pumpkin—deteriorating like an old barn. Stick with me here—I'm just getting warmed up: chipping like paint—dangling like an autumn leaf—caving in like a plastic bottle that's been in the freezer. Pfft. Why'd I have to go and think of the freezer?... the cold,

cold freezer... the cold, cold freezer with lots of ice... the fridge with that icy smoothie... next to that cold, creamy coconut cake...

A gust of wind blows another cloud of dusty sand in my face. Quickly, I grab the end of my head scarf to cover my eyes. But as I do, my claw gets caught on the capital D sewn to my shirt. Super, I've ripped out a few stitches. Now the D is flapping in the wind, threatening to escape. If I were anybody but me, I'd probably cry. But I don't. Not gonna. No sirree. These aren't tears; my eyes are watering from the wind. I don't cry 'cause... you know why... 'cause I'm... I'm shrewd... yeah, that's right... I'm a shrewd and adept hot—I mean hound—dog. So, you guys can head back home if you need to. But I'm gonna stick to it; I'm gonna persevere. I might melt like an ice cream held over a volcano; I might fry like an egg in the pan; I might pop like a corn kernel in oil—but I won't give up this sandy ship. Although... I wouldn't mind a little nap—a couple of Z's—not even 40 winks, maybe 20–30 at the most. I'm just sayin'. It'll revive me; I'll really be motivated, ready to fight the foe and derail the danger. Gazing down at the rippling sand; I am reminded of the billowy whipped cream in Mrs. Fieldjoy's mixer. So soft on the tongue... sand looks pretty soft too. Ooh I'm tired. Think I'll just climb off this lumpy camel for a while and...

Hey, who's that? There's somebody behind me... A couple of miles back... (See, you were thinking I shouldn't take a nap. You thought that was a bad idea, but had I not turned to climb off my camel, I wouldn't know I was being followed. So, chew on that for a while.) Can't quite see who... Darn watery eyes... I wipe my eyes several times with my headscarf. The wind, sand, and glare of the sun compel my eyelids to nearly close. I use my paws to pry them open. Ha! It's him! That toilet-licking, sand-sucking sleazebag. I can see that stupid detective hat of his. He's wearing it over his headscarf. His rumpled trench coat is flapping in the wind, hitting his camel in the face. His camel is angrily biting at the coat. Every now and then he gets the material between his teeth and yanks, trying to pull this Detective Dimwit off his back. What a bozo. At the speed he's going, it could take him an hour to reach me. I could lie here on the sand and twiddle my paws. Why, I could take a nice long nap, and he still wouldn't catch me. But just in case...

"Yaw! Yaw!" I shout urgently. The camel halts all movement and digs his front hooves into the sand.

"Giddy-up!" I holler. The camel plops down on the sand; I nearly fall off. I'm starting to get antsy now—and mad too. What if the detective-in-disguise guy catches up to me?

"Heehaw!" I yell, digging my heels into the camel's sides, telling him to go. Reckon the camel doesn't know cowboy language 'cause he turns his head and hurls a loogie at me. Again, he misses—mostly, just a little slime. It's disgusting, nonetheless.

"OK, Mr. Camel. If you don't mind, I would really like to get going." He doesn't budge.

"What's wrong; are ya yella?" (Side Note: The word *yella* is cowboy lingo for yellow. And asking if someone's yellow is like asking "Are you chicken?") This seems to do the trick; the camel lurches forward and up. We're moving, slowly, but we're going. Perhaps I'll forgo cowboy talk while in Egypt. My slime-spitting camel thinks he's too sophisticated for such slang. (Another Side Note: In Egypt, one way to say the word hurry is by saying "Yallah." Notice how similar in sound this is to "yella." And by the way, anyone who hurls a loogie or even spits on the sidewalk does not fit the description of "sophisticated." But then I ain't never claimed I's sophistecated.)

There they are—the pyramids and the Sphinx. I've arrived. I'm dumbfounded, stupefied, flabbergasted. The massive Sphinx towers 65 feet above my head. It has the body of a lion that stretches 200 feet in length and the face of a powerful king that seems to watch my every move, guarding the ancient pyramids. I stare into the Sphinx's eyes as my camel lumbers past him. Are his eyes following me? Creepy. I turn to look behind me. Yep, that demented diamond thief's still in my tracks. Maybe the lowlife's hidden the diamond here. Why else would that slime-sucking thief follow me all the way across the desert?

Suddenly, AAAAAAAHHHHHH!!!!!!! The sandy earth below my feet gives way. I'm falling, falling, falling. I whirl 'round and 'round in a funnel of sand and gravel as I'm sucked in. I'll never use the vacuum to suck up an ant ever again; I promise. Bang! I've hit the bottom—of—of what? Where am I? It's so dark. I cough and cough, trying to get the dust out of my lungs. My shaky paw reaches into a deep skin pocket below my jaw. I'm looking for my old baby blanket. No, peabrain. I only want it to wipe the dust out of my eyes; my headscarf is too dirty now for that. But feeling around in my pocket, my paw lands on something odd. It's my flashlight! Finding my flashlight ignites the ambition within. I don't even need my baby blanket anymore. I'm tough. A little grit in the eye? Who cares? I shine the light. No way. Can't be. You're not gonna believe it. Uh, know what? I've just realized that I'm being totally selfish—dragging you into this mystery. This is a dodgy place. Maybe you've had enough of this mission. You should go home where it's safe. I'll take it from here. OK. Fine. Look for yourself. Do I really need to say it? It's gold. Golden statues, a golden throne, a golden coffin... Shimmering jewels are embedded in every golden artifact—rubies, emeralds, sapphires—but no diamonds. Think I might be rich. Do you know how many dog food factories I could buy with all this gold? Spare me. I was only testing your character. Of course I know that a detective isn't supposed to touch any of the evidence, let alone take it. Good thing you didn't fall for my little quiz. Such a bummer. Hey, what on earth is that? Moving my flashlight to the right, I see a peculiar contraption—more than one. It's a fleet of ancient ships. Egyptians once thought that the ships could transport a pharaoh to the afterlife. This must be an ancient tomb. Suddenly, more gravel and sand pour into the room. I hear some shuffling sounds. My heart races. Where is that gun of mine? Not my right ear pocket. Not my jaw pocket.

"Nehehehehee..."A bizarre, bubbly laugh echoes in the chamber.

Somebody's above me. I peer upward and see movement about 20 giant sphinx feet away. Suddenly, an avalanche of dusty debris falls from above.

Kuh Kuh Kuh Aaaakk...My throat chops at the dust particles.

I tuck my face into my neck folds, trying not to choke on the dust. When the rocks stop falling, I look up through the dust that's powdering the air and see a long bulky garment hovering from the rockwall above. What am I seeing? Could be a long dress. Could be a coat. But who wears a coat on a hot day in Egypt? Not sure what I see in all this dust. But what I do know is—he's coming to get me.

Huhuhuhu..."You sphinx jinks! Pyramid pirate!" I holler, my voice echoing, making the underground rock crumble more.

The diamond thief doesn't answer. He's too busy eyeballing the wall. I bet he's planning to scale its jagged edges and climb down here after me. Unsure. Everything's blurred in a dust cloud, but one thing is clear: he's up to no good.

OUCH! Chunks of rock bang onto my head. It's the thief's fault. He wants to shish kabob me like a hotdog. Thester will be pleased when they write "Oscar Meyer" on my tombstone.

I look up and see him—the diamond-thief scoundrel. My insides punch-sway backward and forward; I'm overcome with the sensation of vile wickedness. Egads, he's so evil. He's leaning into the hole where I fell just to laugh at me. He's spidered himself to the edge of my fall. He's noodle-stooped his neck downward. And now he's giving me a look at his dagger-toothed smile. His fangy teeth glint like silvery swords. I hide my eyes and try to wash the image from my brain; I can't bear to look at the slime bucket anymore. Can't make out his face. His headscarf and fake beard cover most of it. But I did see his monstrous smile. Wish I hadn't.

And then... he's gone. Where'd he go? I don't trust this. Suddenly, a rope drops into the tomb. Oh my gosh! Is he coming in after me?

"Stay away, you Lizard Licker!" I yell.

"Nehehehehee..." he answers.

Oh my gosh! WHERE'S MY GUN? My slingshot? Anything! I'm gonna die... I'm gonna die... There it is. I whip out my gun and shoot. Nothing. Not a sound. I scrutinize the barrel. Yikes—water hits me right in the eye. A water gun? YOU HAVE GOT TO BE KIDDING! A tumble of rocks falls from above. I've got to get out of here: if the diamond thief doesn't get me, the debris will. I'll be buried alive. I look around for an answer. Do you think...could it be true? Could I ride an ancient Egyptian ship to safety?