

SAMPLE



THE JERICHO RIVER

David W. Tollen

WINNER
Next Generation
Indie Book Awards
and London Book Festival
BRONZE MEDALIST
Readers' Favorite Book
Reviews & Awards

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PRAISE FOR *THE JERICHO RIVER*



★ **WINNER** ★
OF FOUR DISTINGUISHED AWARDS

“[T]his epic follows young Jason Gallo on a quest to rescue his historian father – and the journey leads him through chronological epochs of Western history ... The genesis of myths, legends, and cultural relics flow through this adventure that is as educational as it is entertaining! Highly recommended.”

— **Midwest Book Review**

“This is a clever, well-written first book that’s hard to put down. Jason’s journey down the *Jericho River* is a story about growing up, understanding life and death and finding a sense of wonder for the mystery of human life. It has something for everyone — interesting historical notes about western history and religion, a narrative that probes the meaning of personal maturity and change, and one hero’s unexpected discovery of the power of older myths, traditions and symbols that modernity had abandoned. *The Jericho River* is an exciting retelling of the history of western civilization, one that makes us question how that history unfolded and wonder what might have been.”

— **Christopher White, Ph.D.**, Associate Professor of Religion in America, Vassar College; author of *Unsettled Minds: Psychology and the American Search for Spiritual Assurance*

"*The Jericho River* is meaty – it features a lot of reliable information and a large effort was made to bring context and visual understanding to the reader, something not many historical fiction novels do. ... The reader is effectively experiencing the inability to comprehend ... because they are immersed into the mindset of a teenager processing the information for the very first time. ... The creation of strange creatures and mythical environments is extremely creative and portrays a talented David Tollen with an imagination worthy of the silver screen. The book is also fast-paced and action-packed from start to finish ... [A] must read for history buffs everywhere who will receive great joy in coming across contextual adventures they'll surely be familiar with."

— C.J. Leger

"It's a grand adventure! The action never stops. What a fabulous vehicle for the memes of history *The Jericho River* provides a genuine service and benefit — in a package that is wholly entertaining...."

— A. A. Attanasio, Nebula-nominated author of the *Radix Tetrad* novels

"*The Jericho River* is a delightful, mystical romp through World History. Beginning with ancient Sumer and progressing rapidly to modern times, it is a useful gateway book which will appeal to younger readers and should encourage them to look deeper into the past and ultimately to assume the challenges of more traditional sources. The regular inclusions of excerpts from the lectures of William Gallo add to this appeal and are stimulating and thought provoking. Through historical fiction, David [Tollen] has provided a valuable tool for teachers and students in their continuing quest to study the past."

— Philip Bigler, 1998 National Teacher of the Year

"*The Jericho River* is an intriguing and fun way to learn history. Historical novels have often been a vehicle for this, but often they distort history. On the other hand, *The Jericho River* is a carefully researched and very accurate journey through Western Civilization that will appeal not only to the teenage audience but to adults as well. You can trust the accuracy of detail and depth of interpretation, and at the same time you learn history in an exciting manner and with an entertaining read."

— Robert J. Littman, M.Litt., Ph.D., Professor of Classics, University of Hawaii; author of *The Greek Experiment: Imperialism and Social Conflict: 800-400 B.C.*, *A Concise History of the Jewish People*, and other works

“In my opinion, David [Tollen] is a pioneer in educational evolution, a man who has found a way to ... teach us by supplanting and supporting historical education with entertainment. ... This book smashes the molds of cookie cutter education, then uses the fragments remaining to create a mosaic of myth and magic that follows the fabric of time. ... I hope to soon see this book as required reading material in literature and/or history classes in schools, and more books like it, written on other subject matters.”

— **The Northern Star**

“I was learning new information and being thoroughly entertained with the action all at the same time. ... The historical situations were so engaging and action-packed, I would have enjoyed even more of this book; it was very well written and enjoyable.”

— **ZoeDessoye1**, teen blogger at LitPick.com

“Utilizing the past and history throughout it’s a wonderful mythical and epic tale of danger and excitement, and [Tollen] finds a way to introduce both myth and history in order to keep the reader fascinated. ... It is also intriguing for anyone who enjoys a great romp into the past, with myths, history and adventures of worth. Tollen does a great job of making history fun.”

— **Leslie Wright** at BlogCritics.org

“The adventure and the quest are so well done that we forget that this is a history lesson.”

— **Amos Lassen**

“The cast of characters in *The Jericho River* is huge, the canvas of history is enormous and the tale telling is ambitious. Many young people and adults would gain a great deal from reading *The Jericho River*. The lecture notes interspersed throughout the text are very enjoyable and hold many nuggets of really entertaining and thought-provoking facts and opinions. Discourses range from thoughts on cherubs and bare back riding in the Bronze Age to the conversion of the Khazars to Judaism in the Dark Ages. It all seems to hang together and the wide range of ideas seem to sit happily side by side in this erudite and entertaining work.”

— **Graham Peacock**, M.Ed, Principal Lecturer in Education, Sheffield Hallam University; author of *The Oxford Primary Science Dictionary*, *Primary Science: Teaching Theory and Practice*, and other works

“This was an amazing book that ... makes history come alive and jump out. As I was reading this book I came to find that I did not want to put it down as on every page there seemed to be something new that I was learning! What was best about this book was that the author placed all of this fact into a novel and made history fun to read and experience. So hold on to your hat and be ready for a fun ride as this book will take you on an adventure that you will not forget!”

— **Dad of Divas Reviews**

“**The Jericho River** is a fast moving quest romance that follows its young hero down the river of time from early Mesopotamia to the present day. Lots of action and lots of history are cleverly woven together in a light-hearted narrative that ultimately insists on the values of magic and wonder as opposed to the mere calculus of utilitarian science.”

— **Mark Rose, Ph.D.**, Emeritus Professor of English, U.C. Santa Barbara; author of *Alien Encounters: Anatomy of Science Fiction*, and other books; editor of *The Norton Shakespeare Workshop*; former Director of the University of California Humanities Research Institute

“Tollen has a unique flare for adding pageantry, magic, and mysticism to historical fact, with a fast moving plot, and vivid characterizations. This is an introduction to history for a new generation of teenagers, with a fascinating twist for adult fantasy enthusiasts.”

— **Richard Blake Book Reviews**

“Against his will Jason Gallo is thrust into the land of Fore on a quest to find his missing father. Jason follows a rollercoaster ride of an adventure through a number of ancient civilizations, including Ancient Sumer, Egypt, Greece, and even ... Medieval Europe. He meets up with mythical creatures, barbarians, and an Egyptian priestess. Jason learns about courage, betrayal, love and friendship, but most importantly, he begins healing the resentment he has towards his father and discovers he may have more in common with his father than he thought. ... [Tollen] weaves historical information into this fast paced adventure, making learning about history fun for any reader. As an educator, I recommend *The Jericho River* for anyone looking to enhance an ancient civilization curriculum.”

— **Pamela Pizzimenti**, teacher and author of *The River Whispers*

“In *The Jericho River*, a relatively short novel, David [Tollen] manages to chart the course of human history – and with countless refreshing takes on it. It is historically illuminating to be sure, for young and old alike, but it is first and foremost a wonderful story about a boy and his relationship to his father, told with plenty of adventure, magic, and humor.”

— **Larry Townsend**, author of *Secrets of the Wholly Grill*

“*The Jericho River* fascinated me. With historical excerpts woven throughout this story of myths and fantasy, I was intrigued from the beginning to the end. I wanted to go trekking along with Jason Gallo on his marvelous adventures as he met interesting characters along the way while also learning more about his father and himself. Hence, not only was this book wonderfully entertaining it was also a fabulous way to interest young people to learn more about the past, present, and possibly the future.”

— **Merwyden Suluai**, 2010 American Samoa Teacher of the Year;
M.Ed. Elementary Teacher, American Samoa Department of
Education; Master Teacher Trainer, University of Hawaii

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Death in Egypt

AS I WAS SAYING, Egypt was a river valley society, like Sumer, but it wasn't a bunch of city-states and shifting kingdoms. By 3000 BC, it was a nation—history's first. The Nile Valley's two-dimensional geography made that pretty much inevitable. You've got barren deserts to the east and west, so the only convenient travel is north and south on the river. That means a single king could control the whole country through a few riverbank outposts. The king owned all the land, and he could focus almost all the spare labor on a single project, like building a giant pyramid. Most cultural and scientific growth happened in the royal court, particularly in the early days. The court was Washington DC, Hollywood, Broadway, Vatican City, the Silicon Valley, and MIT, all in one.

The Nile's floods were predictable, the soil was rich, the king kept order, and the deserts kept pushy foreigners away—most of the time. So life was good. Why change anything? The result: a conservative, cheerful, incredibly long-lasting society. The kingdom of Egypt and its fundamental culture lasted for thirty centuries. And *what* a culture! The Egyptians built a society with such unique pizzazz that now, five thousand years later, any one of you can instantly recognize an Egyptian royal headdress or coffin.

~ William Gallo, Lectures, History 56.

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The sword blow dug into the earth an inch from Jason's leg. He rolled aside, away from the barbarian. Somehow he managed to hurl himself up and forward, stumbling into a sprint across the moonlit plain. The wind whistled in his ears, though not loud enough to drown another cry of rage from behind.

He seemed to be sprinting forever—until his legs burned and he thought his heart would burst. Then one foot caught a rock and he tumbled down a low hill. Bruised and dizzy, he rolled onto his back and looked around. Where was the barbarian? Jason squatted, trying to quiet his panting so he could listen to the night.

"Jason Gallo!" called a voice from over the hill. "My friend, are you there? Are you hurt?" It was Rim-Hadad.

"Over here!" Jason cried, rising to his feet. Soon Rim-Hadad crested the hill, running and carrying his club.

"They kidnapped me!" Jason blurted. "They tried to take me away. Then there was a fight, and I ran!"

Rim-Hadad approached slowly and put a hand on Jason's shoulder. "I know. But they no longer follow you." He hefted the massive club, his face fierce. "No one harms the guest of Rim-Hadad, son of Nablanum." Then he shook Jason's shoulder. "Calm yourself, my friend."

Jason realized he was shaking. Embarrassed, he drew a deep breath and then another. He looked over the moonlit grasslands, then back up at Rim-Hadad. "They might have friends. They said something about 'one of ours' following us."

"Then we must get you far from here."

They jogged back. Halfway to camp, Jason tripped over a dark bundle and fell on something warm and wet. "Oh, God!" he cried, rolling aside and gagging. It was the second barbarian, his right eye staring up at the stars. The left side of his skull had been crushed, exposing his brain.

Rim-Hadad hauled Jason to his feet. "This one I killed easily," he said, "but his fellow fought like a rhino, and I only wounded him. Come."

Soon they approached the camp, and Jason saw what looked like two hazy stars twinkling in the grass. They resolved into Zidu's eyes. "Boy, am I glad to see you!" Jason gasped. "We've

gotta leave right away!"

"But why, my friend?" Zidu asked. "What has happened?"

"You were right! I was an idiot. We shouldn't have come here. It's those guys from the desert—the barbarians." Jason's voice shook. "They're here. They tried to kidnap me again. I don't want to wait around and give them another chance. You were right!"

"But what about Sheikh Zimri?"

"I think you should not visit him," said Rim-Hadad. "I'm sure those men came from the southern tribe, friends to my people. Zimri would give you to them if they ask, or maybe sell you."

"Okay, that's that," Jason exclaimed. "We'll go to Egypt and find my dad there, and forget about Zimri."

"To Egypt," the barbarian echoed in a whisper. He looked back and forth between Jason and Zidu.

"I hope you will not be offended, Rim-Hadad," said Zidu, his forehead creasing beneath the dark dome of his head. "You have been a worthy host."

"I am not offended, lumin of Sumer. It is partly my fault, because I didn't warn you that strangers skulked about. I worried only for my goats, not my guests."

Rim-Hadad looked at the ground. Then he turned to Jason. "Take me with you, my friend."

Jason looked up, surprised. Rim-Hadad met his eyes, his face still. "I have nothing here. My nephew can watch the herd. The sheikh owns it. I only work for him. I should have been a great patriarch, if my fool brother hadn't lost our inheritance. I want to travel downriver and win my fortune—to Egypt, or wherever the river takes me.

"I'll help you find your father and seek my own path at the same time. Then someday I'll come back here with enough gold for my own herds and many wives, or even set myself up as a lord in Sumer." He held Jason in a wide-eyed gaze. It was strange to see a man with such broad shoulders pleading. "The river is dangerous. You could use a fighting man. You've seen that tonight. Will you let me come?"

Jason looked at Zidu, who nodded and smiled. "Can you leave right away?" Jason asked.

Rim-Hadad grinned. "I need only a moment to gather my weapons and my other tunic."

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They did not really discuss the evening's events until the next morning, after a night of drifting down the Jericho River, ever alert for rocks and rapids hidden by the darkness. Finally, the sun rose, casting long shadows across the plains by the shore. Jason raised the *Dead Valencia's* sail, and the three sat down to talk.

"All I can tell you," said Rim-Hadad, "is that strangers have skulked around our territory for three days. At first, I thought they were goat thieves. Ha! They'd have paid in blood if they'd stolen from the son of Nablanum." He flexed his muscles. "But they paid no attention to the herds. It seemed they were watching the river."

"They must have had a boat in First Lagash," said Zidu. "They must have come ahead of us."

Rim-Hadad shifted on the hard planks of the deck. "If I planned an ambush, I'd do it in a land like this, near my own people—not in Sumer, where soldiers swarm like flies."

"And we walked right into their backyard," said Jason. "I'm an idiot, Zidu. I'm sorry I didn't listen to you."

"There is no need to apologize."

"But wait a second," Jason said. "How could they possibly know we'd come here?"

"That is one mystery," said Zidu, shaking his bald head. "And this Rector is another. Who can he be?" He stared at the river. "Rector' is not a Sumerian or Akkadian name, or title," he finally said, sitting back on his lion haunches. "Nor is it Amorite, nor from any barbarian nation I know." Rim-Hadad nodded.

"I guess I've heard it before," said Jason. "At least it sounds familiar, from my world. But I don't know what it is."

"Do you have enemies in your world, Jason?" Rim-Hadad asked. They'd told the barbarian that Jason came from another world. "Does your family fight the blood feud?"

"No. I mean, I guess there's people I've pissed off once in a while, you know, saying the wrong thing." Obnoxious sarcasm

was rarely the right thing. “But I don’t think I’ve got any real enemies. And almost no one at home knows I’m here.” No one but Doctor Valencia—whoever or whatever she was.

They pondered in silence, which was broken only by morning birdsong and the sound of waves splashing the hull.

“If the Rector’s barbarians chased me all the way from Sumer,” Jason finally said, “how do we know they won’t keep on chasing me, wherever I go?”



They saw no signs of human life on the right bank, except an occasional village. But as the days marched on, substantial towns returned to the left bank. They occupied a narrow strip of green-brown cultivated land separating the river from the desert.

One morning, Jason sat by the bow, lost in thought. Fore’s mud-brick settlements weren’t the first cities he’d seen by the edge of the desert. The summer *after*—after a drunk driver had taken his mother’s life—Jason and his father and sister had taken a road trip across the American Southwest. They’d seen the Grand Canyon, Anasazi cliff dwellings, artists’ colonies, the Hoover Dam, coyotes, and Indian reservations. But the best was the metropolis on the desert: Las Vegas.

Late one afternoon, Jason’s father woke him from a front-seat snooze. Jason blinked and found the car had stopped at a deserted turnout. Beyond the windshield, a rocky slope rolled down to the plain, and an impossible city shone beneath the orange of a Nevada sunset.

“Let her sleep,” said his father, cocking his head at Athena, who still snoozed in the back seat. “Let’s have a look.” They got out into the cool air, stretching their stiff joints.

Even from this distance, Jason could see the startling green of trees on city blocks in the middle of the desert, as well as the colored lights. Then his father handed him a little telescope and directed his gaze to the palaces of the Strip.

“Cool,” Jason whispered as he caught sight of the great black

pyramid, its tip aglow with electric light. The Luxor Hotel and Casino looked futuristic and ancient at the same time.

Jason's father put an arm around his shoulders. "You know," he said, "commercialism has made this world a dry and lonely place." Smile lines radiated from his gray eyes. "But once in a while, we make something cool. I don't care what it costs, we're staying there." Jason grinned. He knew his dad meant the pyramid.

He felt a pang of guilt as he relived the memory.

"Gods of rock and sand!" Rim-Hadad interrupted Jason's reverie. He pointed to the left bank. Beyond the strip of cultivated land, a pyramid rose over the desert. It was a mountain of smooth, white stone, culminating in a cap of sunlit gold. Its four-sided base covered acres, and its shadow stretched far along the riverside.

"Wondrous," Zidu said in a hushed voice. "It makes the temples of Sumer look like anthills. But look there!"

Jason and Rim-Hadad gasped as a titanic beast emerged from behind the pyramid. The creature had a lion's tawny body, the length of a football field, and a human head—or perhaps a giant's head. Its dark eyes shimmered, and it wore a King Tut headdress. Palm trees at the edge of the desert shook as its feet struck the ground.

"Remind me never to steal anything from a pyramid," Jason whispered. Rim-Hadad nodded vigorously.

"The Great Sphinx." Zidu sighed. "It is wondrous to see one so large and yet so like me. We must have reached the Old Kingdom of Egypt."*

* "Old Kingdom," "Middle Kingdom," and "New Kingdom" aren't countries. They're periods of Egyptian history, named by modern historians. The Old Kingdom ran from the 2600s BC to the 2100s, and it was the most creative period, when they laid down the basics of Egyptian culture. Two thousand years later, the Egyptians were still going back to Old Kingdom art and architecture and religion for inspiration.

All the big pyramids come from the Old Kingdom. The largest is the Great Pyramid of Giza, which has more than two million stone blocks averaging over two tons each. Many fit together so well that, to this day, you can't slide a knife-blade between them. Unfortunately, the pyramids weren't too effective as security systems for the kings' tombs. A big pyramid was like a gargantuan neon sign that said, "Attention treasure thieves! Gold and silver here!"

~ William Gallo, Lectures, History 56.



The band of farmland grew broader as a wide, dark ribbon separated the river's blue from the desert's dusty yellow. Tiny huts stood among the irrigation canals there, and occasionally the *Dead Valencia* passed bustling cities, as well as great stone temples fronted by painted statues. The companions saw many lumins, too, though none quite so striking as the Great Sphinx. These included a falcon with a ram's head, a woman with wide cow's horns, and a talking hippo. All had a distinctively Egyptian style, very different from the creatures Jason had seen in Sumer. He guessed lumins matched the look of their country. He wondered if Fore included a modern, twenty-first century country. What kind of lumins would live there?

For several days, the travelers marveled at temples and palaces from the *Dead Valencia's* deck. Then for two days, they sailed past a borderland—a poorer country with fewer monuments. But finally the sun rose over an Egypt that was prosperous once again. The cities spread out across the left bank in even greater splendor.

"This must be the Middle Kingdom," said Jason, and Zidu agreed. So they stopped at a town crowded with mud-brick blockhouses and dark, friendly people, to ask where they might find Senusret.

A man selling good luck charms knew the name at once. "Yes, of course," said the merchant, who went clean-shaven and wore only a white linen skirt. "His temple lies just past Niwt-Wase. It's only a day's journey downstream. Go and ask. You will find him. Now, will you buy a lovely amulet?"

Jason almost hugged the merchant. Whatever had happened that night on the Sumerian temple platform, the priestess hadn't hallucinated. Senusret was real. He might know—*had* to know—where in this bizarre world Jason's father had gone.



Late the next morning, Jason and Zidu stood before what the locals had called “Senusret’s temple.” They’d left Rim-Hadad to watch the *Dead Valencia*, then hiked more than two miles inland.

The temple was a collection of courtyards and columned buildings in front of a small, white pyramid. Most of the local traffic came in and out of a gate in a low wall, so Jason and Zidu chose that entrance. They found themselves in a long courtyard, lined with trees. People talked, laughed, and hurried back and forth, carrying food and baskets of goods. Some passed in and out of narrow openings in the mud-brick wall to their left. But the more formal-looking entrance was straight ahead, where a stone ramp led up to a large building.

Not knowing what else to do, Jason and Zidu walked up the ramp. Two spear-wielding guards in white skirts stood on the platform at the top. Behind them, a row of massive columns supported a stone roof. The columns were painted with colorful hieroglyphic writing, like holy graffiti.[†]

“Excuse me,” said Jason to one of the guards. “I’m here to see Senusret. I was told this is his temple. Is he here?”

Dark eyebrows rose over eyes rimmed with black liner. “The Great Senusret?” the guard said. “You’ve come to see the Great Senusret?”

“Uh, yes. I ... My father’s a friend of his.”

The guard and his companion exchanged glances.

“Wait here,” the first man said. Then he disappeared

† Hieroglyphic writing relied heavily on pictures, like ancient comic books. Up on the screen, we’ve got hieroglyphs from a cup found in King Tut’s tomb. They read, “May he live, Horus, strong bull fair of births, the two goddesses, beautiful of ordinances, quelling the two lands, Horus of gold, wearing the diadems and propitiating the gods, the king of Upper and Lower Egypt, lord of the two lands, Neb Kheperu Re, granted life.”



Hieroglyphs could read from left to right, right to left, or top to bottom. So how do you know where to start? It’s easy. Look at the birds’ beaks. They always point toward the beginning of the sentence.

~ William Gallo, Lectures, History 56.

between the columns and into the shadowy hall behind them. Soon he returned and stiffly proclaimed that someone would be with them shortly.

They waited ten or fifteen minutes, sitting at the edge of the stone ramp. Then a young woman in a white, sleeveless dress walked out of the columned hall. "Who asked for the Great Senusret?" she demanded.

Jason raised his hand meekly as he and Zidu rose to their feet. "I did."

The woman appraised them critically. She looked about Jason's age, really more girl than woman. She was slim, with long, black hair and wide brown eyes, rimmed in thick eyeliner. A turquoise beetle amulet hung from a cord around her neck.

"I am Tia, priestess of the temple," said the girl evenly. As she approached, Jason caught a faint scent, like cinnamon. "What is your name, please, and what's your business with the Great Senusret?"

"I'm Jason Gallo, and this is Zidu. We're looking for my father, Professor William Gallo. I think Senusret—the Great Senusret—might know where he is. I'd like to see him and ask."

Tia's expression grew disdainful. "You want to see the Great Senusret ... about finding a lost family member?" Her brow crinkled. "Do you have a scroll of credentials?"

"Well, no." Jason looked at Zidu, who shrugged.

"Well, I can't just let you *in*," she exclaimed. "Do you have any idea what you're asking? I'm sure you're some kind of tribal prince in your own country, but this is Egypt, the heart of the world. You can't just ask to see someone like the Great Senusret. And I can't interrupt him for every foreigner who comes looking for his father."

"But we don't need a lot of time! I just need to ask him—"

The priestess interrupted. "I'm sorry, there are a lot of very important people who want to see the Great Senusret and don't get to."

Jason had not come all this way to be turned back by a stuck-up, snotty girl, even if she did smell good. "Look, I'm *Lord* Jason Gallo, ruler of ... uh ... the humongous province

of Oregon ... in the mighty kingdom of America. I'm here to see the Great Senusret on a quest of cosmic importance to all the people of Oregon. Are you going to tell him that the son of Lord William Gallo wants to see him or not?"

The guards shuffled their feet and glanced at Jason's T-shirt and shorts. But Tia did not seem impressed. She tapped a bare foot on the flagstones and regarded him through narrowed eyes.

"Very well," she finally said. "If it will set you on your way any sooner, I'll tell the Great Senusret your name and your request. Wait here, I may be a while."

"I thought you weren't a lord," Zidu whispered once she'd gone.

"I'll tell her I'm king of England if she gets any snottier."

"King of where?"

They waited for over an hour on the hot platform. Finally Tia returned, with a look of irritation on her face. "The Great Senusret will see you," she snapped. "Follow me." She turned on her heel in a swirl of black hair and stormed into the columned hall.

"I guess the Great Senusret wasn't that busy after all," Jason said to Zidu in a stage whisper.

The towering hall behind the guards was lined with thick pillars painted in bright colors. Illustrations of reeds and flowers decorated the columns, along with hieroglyphs. Even the stone ceiling had been painted. It was blue and dotted with stars and suns. At the far end stood an engraved door covered in shining bronze. Tia opened it, taking a burning torch from one of the four guards posted around the doorway.

Passing through was like stepping into a dark otherworld. Beyond the bronze door was a narrow tunnel of stone. Jason realized they must be inside the little pyramid, or beneath it. Tia led them down stairs and around sharp turns, veering into one narrow side-passage and then skipping another. Jason guessed the odds of ever getting back without a guide were one in fifty. The air grew cold, and only the wavering flame of Tia's torch lit their way.

Finally, after several minutes, a yellow glow appeared at the end of the tunnel. This gave little comfort because it came with an awful odor. The hall smelled of chemicals and rot, and it reminded Jason of the funeral home where they'd taken his mother. He bit his lip.

The light came from a small chamber full of handsome furniture and works of art, including painted statues and figurines of shining metals. Hieroglyphs and color illustrations decorated the stone walls. At the far end, a lean man in white sat in a high-backed chair, and an elderly woman stood next to him. The man wore a tall Egyptian crown, like a bowling pin in a red basket. His skin was pea-soup green. Jason's stomach turned as he realized the man wasn't exactly *dressed* in white. Rather, he was wrapped in white strips, from neck to wrist to toe, like a mummy. His eyes gleamed with lumin fire.

"O great and eternal Osiris Senusret!" said Tia, falling to her knees before the mummy, "Ruler in life over all the Middle Kingdom, beloved son of Osiris, and regent, in his name, over the dead, I present to you Lord Jason Gallo, ruler of Oregon, and his lumin companion, Zidu." Tia touched her forehead to the floor and then stood aside, leaving Jason facing Senusret.

"Greetings, Lord Jason and lumin Zidu," said the mummy. Jason cringed as he executed an awkward bow, wondering if he'd heard a hint of sarcasm around the word Lord. "You are both welcome in the tomb of Senusret." The dead king's voice was deep and even. "I knew your father long ago, Jason Gallo: an affable and interesting man. I granted him several interviews. I am sorry to hear he is lost, and I hope no harm has come to him."

"Thank you ... Your Majesty." Jason choked back a wave of disappointment. Obviously Senusret did not know where his father was. "I came because I'm trying to find my father. There was this priestess, in Sumer, and she said you'd know where he is. At least, she said I should come ask you." He caught a sympathetic nod from the white-haired woman next to Senusret. "My dad and I, we're not from your world, Fore. We're from another world, and that's where he's supposed to be. But he's somewhere here, and he may be in trouble. And you're the

only lead I have. Do you have *any* idea where he might be?" He blinked away tears of frustration.

"Come closer, Jason Gallo," said Senusret.

Jason approached, hoping the dead king wouldn't touch him but also filled with morbid curiosity. Was he really talking to a corpse? Senusret sat stiff and still, arms crossed over his mummy-wrapped chest. He held a golden crook in one green hand, and in the other some kind of wand, with short rods dangling from its top, like tiny nunchucks. A rope-like, black beard hung from the center of his chin, and he looked neither young nor old.

"Yes, I can see the resemblance," he said. Gleaming eyes rimmed in black liner gazed at Jason. "It is not strong, but I think it runs deep." The dead king nodded, still stiff. "I know of your Sumerian priestess. I sensed her mind and her goddess weeks ago, and I felt that she searched for your father. But I do not know where he is. It is nearly thirteen years since William Gallo visited me, and I never learned where he went after."

Jason stared at the white wrappings covering Senusret's feet, biting his lip. "Well, um, do you ... do you know where he came *from*—where he was before he came here?"

The dead king turned to the old woman. "Nebetit, you spoke with William Gallo many times. From what land did he come to us?"

"He came from Crete, oh great and eternal king," said the old woman. "He brought tokens of introduction from the king there, from the palace of Red Knossos."

The dead king nodded, and Jason sighed. The Egyptians' information was thirteen years old—at least, thirteen Fore years.

"Do you know—Your Majesty—do you know how long it takes to get to this Crete place?"

"Perhaps two weeks by sail, down the Jericho River, and much longer by land."

Jason glanced at Zidu, who nodded, looking uncomfortable. A trip to Crete would waste time if it was a dead end, but what else did they have?

He turned back to find the smallest of smiles on Senusret's lips. He gulped as it occurred to him that visitors didn't usually

ask the dead king for travel tips, or even glance away during an interview.

"Uh, thank you very much for seeing us, Your Majesty. I'm sorry if I did anything wrong."

"I wish I could counsel you more," said Senusret. "But whatever you choose to do, I see that you need rest and comfort before you set out again. You and your companion will be guests of my temple." This was not so much an invitation as a command. "Perhaps some guidance will come with prayer. My master, the great god Osiris, protects lost fathers and their sons. After all, he was killed but then redeemed by his son, mighty Horus. As Osiris was redeemed by Horus, may your father be redeemed, Jason Gallo, and returned to you."[‡]



The priestess Nebetit was called the high chantress, and she seemed to be in charge. She assigned Tia to look after the travelers, to the young priestess's obvious dismay. "Foreigners and barbarians," she muttered, "just what I need."

Rim-Hadad, for his part, was very impressed with Tia. "Quite a little lioness, isn't she?" he kept saying.

They stayed in a complex of mud-brick villas just outside the temple. Nebetit and the other senior priests and priestesses lived there, as did Tia.

[‡] As a young god, Osiris marries his sister, Isis, and rules Egypt. His evil brother, Set, wants the throne and kills Osiris. Isis, however, resurrects her husband and lies with him, becoming pregnant. Soon Set discovers the resurrection, and he kills Osiris again. This time, he chops the body into little pieces. But even this seemingly foolproof strategy fails. Perhaps Set should have killed Isis, because she collects the pieces—except the genitals, which have been eaten by fish—reassembles them, and wraps them in linen, making Osiris the first mummy. Even worse for Set, Isis gives birth to Osiris's son, the hawk-headed god Horus. Horus grows up and fights his evil uncle. Neither wins, but Horus does manage to crush Set's genitals. Eventually, the council of gods decides that Horus is Osiris's rightful heir, not Set. So Horus becomes king of the living, while mummified Osiris rules as king of the dead.

~ William Gallo, *Palace of the Sphinx*, 59.

“Tia is the orphan daughter of our departed second prophet,” Nebetit explained to Jason, “She lives with us, and we have raised her as a dedicated priestess and our own daughter. She is a dear child, though not always an easy one.” Jason agreed with that last part.

After weeks in the world of Fore, the complex felt like a luxury hotel. Each traveler had a whitewashed room and a bed made of reeds and wood. Best of all, the villas had *bathrooms*. Jason’s toilet was just a box with a hole in it, but pipes beneath carried the waste away, which was all that mattered. He also had a bronze hand mirror, and though his black hair was a rat’s nest, he was delighted to see that sun and fresh air had driven the acne from his face.

The day after they arrived, Jason went to ask Nebetit about his father’s visit. He and Zidu found the high chantress sitting by a small stone pond in her private garden. Birds chattered from the trees, and a very large cat stalked the undergrowth.[§]

“Your father came here to study,” Nebetit recalled. “He wanted to learn about lumins, of all things. He spent his time talking with them, especially the dead master, the Great Senusret. And he watched as the lumins lent power to the priests, to cure the sick and bring forth healthy crops. He asked many questions, in the manner of one who’s never seen the rites.” She looked over the surface of the pond and shook her head. “He said people in your world have forgotten lumins. I could not imagine such a thing.”

Unfortunately, Nebetit did not know why Jason’s father had been studying lumins.

“I don’t think he learned what he’d hoped to,” she said. “I think he found his time in Crete more helpful. The Minos

§ Around 8500 BC, wild felines started living near Stone Age villages, because the farmers’ grain attracted rodents. We don’t really know when cats switched from semi-tame neighbors to domestic pets, bred by humans. The earliest records of breeding come from Egypt around 1500 BC, so it’s possible the Egyptians led the way. In any case, today’s domestic cats are smaller, calmer, and wimpier than their main wild ancestor, *Felis silvestris libyca*. Cat-breeders apparently chose the runts of the litter over and over. That’s why the average modern cat can kill a mouse but not a rat, though both make easy prey for *Felis silvestris libyca*.

~ William Gallo, *Historical Factoids*, 13.

kings were great lovers of lore in their day, so perhaps your father found some treasure house of knowledge there."

The Minos kings? Jason knew the name King Minos.

Nebetit could shed no light on Jason's other mystery either. "I have never heard of this Rector," she said. "And I cannot guess why anyone would want to harm you. I will pray for you—and for your father." She cast Jason a sympathetic look. "You must love him and miss him terribly."

"Yeah, I must."

"I liked your father very much. Such an unusual scholar ... I convinced him to tell me some of his ideas. He had strange beliefs. Many must be wrong, but I enjoyed hearing them."

"Strange beliefs?" Like, *all work and no play makes Will a fun guy*? "What kind?"

"It was so long ago, I'm afraid I remember very little." She looked up at Jason. "I do remember one though, because I found it so lovely. He said that our world is made up of dreams—dreams from *your* world."

"What?"

She nodded vigorously, setting her bronze earrings jingling. "I know, it's odd. But that's what he said. He said your people's dreams never fade, so when someone in your world awakens, his dream remains on the ether. For countless years, your people's dreams have collected and formed themselves into a world—the world of Fore. Your father said our world is literally made of dreams—of all your people's dreams." Her brow crinkled. "I can't remember what role he said the gods play, but I thought it a beautiful story. A world made of dreams!"

"Fascinating," said Zidu.



Later that day, Tia came to fetch Jason. "The dead master has summoned you. You're to come to the tomb, immediately."

Tia was all dressed up. A white linen dress hugged her slender figure, and she wore a beaded headband over her shining

black hair, as well as bronze bracelets on bare upper arms and wrists. Jason had to admit she looked very pretty.

"Is something going on?" he asked as he followed her through the temple's great hall. Priests and servants were rushing around there.

"A high counselor has come from the dead master's grandson." Tia looked back at Jason. "That's the king—the *living* one—in case you didn't know. We're just getting ready for the visit. The king wants the Great Senusret's advice, and the Great Senusret wanted to see you before he gets too busy."

Jason grew uneasy as he followed Tia into the pyramid's stone tunnels, this time without Zidu's reassuring company. The stale whiff of embalming chemicals soon masked the cinnamon scent of the young priestess's perfume. He thought again of his mother and the funeral home.

All remained quiet in Senusret's underground apartment. Nebetit stood by the throne, and a young scribe knelt nearby. "Welcome, Jason Gallo," said Senusret as Jason bowed. "I hope you have found your stay at my temple restful."

"Yes, I have, Your Majesty. Thank you."

The dead king sat crowned and stiff as usual, but he'd laid his crook and wand aside. Both green hands were cupped around a ceramic jar with a stopper shaped like a dog's head.

"I called you here to share some surprising news," he said. "I have spent much of today in meditation." He held up the jar. "Often I meditate on this. It is my stomach, which was removed during my mummification."[¶] Jason managed not to gag. "Some days, when I hold this in my hands and quiet my mind, I hear the winds of the ether. Today was such a day,

[¶] Egyptian mummification started with removal of the stomach, intestines, lungs, and liver. These were preserved in special containers, called canopic jars, and entombed with the mummy. Next came the brain, taken out through the nostrils with metal hooks. The process must have torn the brain apart, but it wasn't considered important. The heart stayed in the body; the Egyptians considered it the home of the mind. Next, the embalmers treated the body with salt and chemicals and dried it. Then, the empty cavities were filled with linen. Finally, the body was wrapped in linen and laid in a coffin. The process took seventy days.

~ William Gallo, *Historical Factoids*, 18.

and today I heard a voice on the wind.” His glowing eyes were bright in the lamp-lit tomb. “Today a great mind reached out from far away, Jason Gallo—looking for you. I have promised to send you down the river, to meet this mighty shaman.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



David W. Tollen is an award-winning and best-selling author writing books about history as well as technology law. He's also a member of the Board of Advisors for World History Encyclopedia, which publishes the world's most-read history encyclopedia. David earned a B.A. in history from U.C. Berkeley and has law degrees from Harvard Law School and Cambridge University.

David is an accomplished and sought-after public speaker and teacher. He has a unique ability to distill history and pre-history into fun and engaging content, and he brings it to groups of all ages as a speaker. Sample topics include the historic battle between ideology and human rights, the history of nationalism, prehistoric man-made climate change, and hunter-gatherer life, including what it does and doesn't tell us about our nature.

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