

CURSE OF THE MUMMY'S TOMB

By Craig Sodaro

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SYNOPSIS: Archaeologist Tommy Tweedum gets a lot more excitement when he unearths the tomb of King Rottentot than he bargained for. His nasty nephew Neville and Neville's wife, Nelda, have been lying in wait to cash in by inheriting all the treasures in the tomb. They pay a shady soothsayer to announce a curse on anyone who touches the tomb. That way when Tweedum and his daughter Tillie turn up dead, the mummy can take the blame. But they don't count on Tillie's beau Willy Wright coming all the way from Nebraska to be with his girl. Nor Willy's mother following him to protect her boy. Nor the arrival of Mr. Calisse, a government agent who protects antiquities. Nor Tommy's lovelorn assistant Della, who will do anything for him. Nor the sudden appearance of King Rottentot himself! Mistaken identities, corny lines, and a host of pratfalls keep the audience laughing until the inevitable happy ending.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4 male, 5 female, 5 either, 14 total.)

PROFESSOR TOMMY TWEEDUM (m).... A crusty old archaeologist
(84 lines)
DR. DELLA DEVRIES (f) His faithful assistant (45 lines)
TILLIE TWEEDUM (f)..... His daughter (69 lines)
NEVILLE NURDFORD (m)..... His nephew (85 lines)
NELDA NURDFORD (f) Neville's wife (47 lines)
WILLY WRIGHT (m)..... Tillie's sweetheart (17 lines)
MRS. WRIGHT (f)..... Willy's mother (23 lines)
MR. CALLISE (m)..... A government agent (30 lines)
MADAME SOOTHSISTER (f)..... A soothsayer (19 lines)
NALOO (m/f)..... A bearer (5 lines)
BALOO (m/f)..... A bearer (6 lines)
WESTERN UNION DELIVERY PERSON (m/f) (2 lines)

NON SPEAKING:

TIMBU (m/f) A guard
THE MUMMY (m/f)

PRODUCTION NOTES

SET

The Tweedum Archaeological Expedition Camp located near the Nile River in the country of Upper Sudistan, spring, 1925. Two tents (or tent facades.), one right, a larger one left. Between the tents are crates and boxes labeled “Picks,” “Shovels,” “Sunscreen,” and so on. Down center is a fire pit, around which sit cooking pans, a coffee pot, and other camping gear. Entrances right, left, and into and out of the tents. The action of the play is continuous.

SOUND

Sound effects can add a lot of humor to a melodrama. It’s a good idea to experiment with various sounds in order to get the most humorous effects. Here are a couple of ways to achieve a “striking” effect:

1. Two boards slapped together
2. A hammer striking an overturned or hand-held metal pail or bucket
3. An audio tape “Boing”
4. A board or hammer hitting a hollow wooden object such as an overturned crate

Thunder is required in one spot. To achieve this sound, shake a large piece of thin metal or use an audio tape of thunder.

A slide whistle is also a very useful sound effect maker for a melodrama. If you have one, it can add dimension to moments when characters fall or hide behind objects on stage.

LIGHTING EFFECTS

If possible, lights should flicker when thunder is heard as indicated in the script.

COSTUMES

Since the play is set in 1925, most of the characters can wear clothes similar to those worn today. Here are suggested costumes for each of the characters, but feel free to use your own imagination to come up with costumes that suit your own actors and budget (if you're lucky enough to have one!).

TWEEDUM—Wrinkled long-sleeve shirt; open vest; old, wrinkled dark pants; dark shoes; bow tie.

TILLIE—A mid-calf plain skirt with a frilly, very feminine blouse and small scarf around her neck; large bow in her hair.

DELLA—Plain skirt with a blouse or jacket that has multiple pockets; a jungle-jacket would be perfect along with a pith helmet (available online or at a costume shop.)

NURDFORD—Black shirt, black pants, black shoes, red vest and bow tie.

NELDA—Black skirt, red, frilly blouse, black scarf around her neck.

MR. CALLISE—If possible a white or pastel suit. If not, a suit or sport coat over a white shirt with a necktie.

WILLY—Flannel shirt, jeans or overalls, work boots.

MRS. WRIGHT—Loud print dress, work boots, parasol.

SOOTHSAYER—Peasant blouse, long skirt, lots of clunky jewelry, scarf on head.

NALOO, BALOO—Tunics and sandals.

TIMBU—Long tunic or robe tied at waist; sword kept in belt.

WESTERN UNION—Jumpsuit with “Western Union” on back, ball cap.

MUMMY--Costumes are relatively easy to make. Start with white sweatpants and a long sleeve sweatshirt. Glue strips of white fabric to the pants and shirt. It's not necessary to cover the entire costume with strips—attach them here and there, allowing ends to dangle. Using a marker, draw faint lines where other strips overlap. Spray paint lightly with brown or gray to create an antique appearance. Buy a mummy mask for the head along with white socks for the feet and white gloves for the hands. These should also be sprayed lightly so they don't look new.

PROPERTIES

- Old fashioned toys (such as jacks or paddle balls.) (NALOO and BALOO.)
- Handkerchief (TWEEDUM.)
- Parasol and fan (MRS. WRIGHT.)
- Golden artifact (plastic or metal vase or statue sprayed gold.) (TIMBU.)
- Sword (TIMBU.)
- Large plastic hammer (NURDFORD.)
- Two large canvas, burlap, or other fabric bags large enough for an actor to get into (NURDFORD.)
- Official papers (MR. CALLISE.)
- Plate of cookies (NELDA.)
- Small bottle labeled “Poison” (NURDFORD.)
- Package containing snake
- Large sticks (DELLA, TWEEDUM, TILLIE.)
- Sign reading “The End” (MUMMY.)

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AT RISE: *NALOO and BALOO sit near right tent playing with old fashioned toys, such as paddle balls, jacks, etc. DELLA enters left followed by TWEEDUM, who is wiping his forehead with handkerchief.*

DELLA: Tillie! Tillie! Wonderful news! Tillie, where are you?

TILLIE enters from left tent. NALOO and BALOO stand.

TILLIE: *(Yawning.)* Gosh, can't a girl take a little nap around here?

DELLA: But I'm so excited, Tillie! Your father, why he's—

TILLIE: Oh, daddy! Are you all right? You look a bit flushed.

NURDFORD enters from right tent.

NEVILLE: Did I hear someone say flushed? Did that port-a-potty back up again?

TWEEDUM: No, you idiot!

DELLA: It's good news this time!

NEVILLE: What's happened, Uncle?

TILLIE: Oh, Daddy, have you found it?

TWEEDUM: Yes, I've found it, and high time it is! After three months of digging in this miserable sand, I've unearthed the entrance to King Rottentot's tomb.

TILLIE: *(Awed.)* No!

TWEEDUM: Aren't you listening, Tillie? I've done it! Dr. DeVries and I have entered the anti-chamber.

TILLIE: Oh, Daddy... all these boring weeks have finally paid off.

TWEEDUM: You bet your locks they have!

NEVILLE: *(Wringing his hands.)* Couldn't have said it better myself! *(NELDA enters from right tent.)* Wonderful news, Nelda, my sweet... Uncle Tommy has found the tomb!

TWEEDUM: Stop calling me Uncle Tommy.

NELDA: That's right, Neville... Uncle Tommy will soon be so famous everyone will call him Professor Tweedum. The very famous and rich Professor Tweedum.

DELLA: I'm so proud of you, Professor. (*To the OTHERS.*) I've never seen a finer archaeologist at work! You should have seen how deftly he uncovered the main door, photographed and drew the seal across the entrance, broke the seal, and then cast his light into the glittering chamber!

TWEEDUM: Quit trying to butter me up, Della. I'm not a cinnamon roll!

DELLA: But I'm so excited!

TILLIE: And we're so proud of you.

NELDA: Yes, Uncle... I mean, Professor. I'm sure you've found a few nice artifacts.

NEVILLE: You did find some nice artifacts, didn't you?

TWEEDUM: (*Suspiciously, covering.*) A couple of things.

DELLA: Don't be so modest, Professor Tweedum. The anti-chamber is filled with golden artifacts! And who knows what lies beyond in the burial chamber?

NEVILLE: Gold, gold, and more gold!

DELLA: Probably the richest tomb in all Upper Sudistan.

TILLIE: Oh, daddy, how splendid! Now we can pay off all your loans and I can marry Willy.

TWEEDUM: Willy?

TILLIE: Willy Wright, my own true love.

TWEEDUM: That boy's an idiot! The only way you'll marry him is over my mummified corpus delecti!

NEVILLE: A wise decision, Uncle... I mean, Professor. This Willy is probably after your newly amassed fortune. It *is* all yours, isn't it?

TWEEDUM: Well, I didn't dig to the center of the earth for my health! And I'm not about to hand it all over to Save the Whales. Of course it's mine!

NEVILLE: Just asking, Uncle... I mean, Professor. Just asking.

TWEEDUM: And I want everybody to know I'm posting guards at the entrance to the tomb. Naloo and Baloo, you'll stand guard at the tomb entrance with Timbu the Terrible. Anybody other than me or Dr. DeVries here tries to get past you... do something terrible to them. Come on, Della, I don't want to let any sand blow under my feet.

DELLA: Yes, Tommy... I mean Professor.

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TILLIE: Can I come, too, daddy? I've never seen a real, live tomb before.

TWEEDUM: Just keep your mouth shut!

TWEEDUM, DELLA, NALOO, BALOO, and TILLIE exit left.

NEVILLE: So, Nelda, our chance has finally arrived to snatch up our fortune.

NELDA: You mean Uncle Tommy's fortune.

NEVILLE: A mere technicality, my sweet! What's his will soon be ours.

NELDA: Oh, darling, isn't it wonderful? And once we've got the gold, we can get out of here, right, darling? Please?

NEVILLE: Our exit strategy will be simple: Get out quick! Especially after we have...knocked off a few prominent members of this expedition. After all, if something were to happen to poor Uncle Tommy, why everything would go to Tillie.

NELDA: Hey! We gotta share the gold with her?

NEVILLE: Let me finish, my pet. If anything should happen to Tillie... I'm the only family left. Every golden bauble will be mine!

NELDA: Ours, darling. Ours.

NEVILLE: Of course, my sweet! What's yours is mine and what's mine is mine.

NELDA: That's better. But what could possibly happen to Uncle Tommy and Tillie out here in the middle of nowhere?

NEVILLE: How about a fatal fall?

NELDA: How thrilling!

NEVILLE: A sinister snakebite?

NELDA: Positively scintillating!

NEVILLE: A suffocating sandstorm?

NELDA: Simply scrumptious!

NEVILLE: A fabulously fatal fatality will befall our unfortunate family.

NELDA: Fantastic! But, Neville, darling... won't two deaths look somewhat suspicious?

NEVILLE: I thought of that and I have come up with a brilliant plan to throw suspicion to the wind.

NELDA: You're so clever!

NEVILLE: I have paid a fortuneteller to come here to camp in a few minutes to reveal a curse... the curse of Rottentot's Tomb!

NELDA: A fatal curse! How spellbinding!

NEVILLE: It's not a real curse, of course. We'll just make them think it's real.

NELDA: That way they'll blame the mummy.

NEVILLE: Precisely! Now... there's only one problem, my dear. And that's the first victim. We need a guinea pig to convince them that the curse is real. And it's got to be someone close to me so that suspicion is deflected from yours truly. Does that make sense, my sweet? (*NURDFORD looks devilishly at NELDA, who steps back.*)

NELDA: But, darling... why are you looking like that? Surely you don't expect me to be a... a... victim!

NEVILLE: Please, sugarplum?

NELDA: (*To Audience.*) A fatal sugarplum!

NEVILLE: Come into our tent and I'll give you the scoop.

NELDA: About six feet under, I fear! (*NURDFORD leads NELDA into right tent. WILLY WRIGHT enters right, cautiously.*)

WILLY: (*To Audience.*) Gollygeewillikers! There appears to be serious wickedness afoot! That heel is planning to do Professor Tweedum and my darling Tillie in for their cash! I must think of some way to derail this impending train wreck!

MRS. WRIGHT: (*Off right.*) Willy! Willy Wright! Are you here?

WILLY: (*Terrified.*) Gosh, it's Ma! I'd better hide or she'll shanghai me back to the farm! (*WILLY hides behind boxes as MRS. WRIGHT enters carrying a parasol and fanning herself vigorously.*)

MRS. WRIGHT: Willy! Are you around here somewhere?

TILLIE skips on left. MRS. WRIGHT is checking behind right tent.

TILLIE: Funny, I thought I heard someone call for Willy!

MRS. WRIGHT: (*Moving to center.*) It was me, Tillie Tweedum! Where's my boy?

TILLIE: Why, Mrs. Wright, what a pleasant surprise to find you here.

MRS. WRIGHT: Pleasant? It's hotter than the inside of a blast furnace and there's enough sand to fill the Sahara Desert!

TILLIE: This *is* the Sahara Desert, Mrs. Wright.

MRS. WRIGHT: And that's no place for my Willy!

TILLIE: He must be at home on the farm harvesting corn.

MRS. WRIGHT: A husky lie if I've ever heard one! He left me a note two weeks ago saying he was off to search for you so that you two can e... e... e... elope! (*MRS. WRIGHT dissolves into loud sobbing.*)

TILLIE: How romantic! But, I'm afraid I haven't seen Willy, Mrs. Wright.

MRS. WRIGHT: Well, he never could find his way across the street let alone to Upper Sudistan.

TILLIE: Oh, dear! Possibly misfortune has befallen him.

MRS. WRIGHT: If it did, it happened here in Africa! The steamship line said he sailed from New York on the *S.S. Dimstrap* bound for Djibouti!

TWEEDUM enters left.

TWEEDUM: Well, well, well! I didn't know we were on a wild boar hunt, but we've sure got a big bore right here!

MRS. WRIGHT: If it isn't Professor Tiddly Winks Tweedum. Where's my son, you bone snatcher?

TWEEDUM: He's not around here, thank goodness! He's probably back in Queasy Corners, Nebraska, sleeping under a haystack.

MRS. WRIGHT: He came to Africa to find your daughter!

TILLIE: Willy wants to elope with me! Isn't that the most romantic thing you've ever heard, Daddy?

TWEEDUM: He does, does he? Well, if he tries it, he'll end up in King Rottentot's tomb!

TILLIE: Daddy!

TWEEDUM: It'll be a cold day in Upper Sudistan before I let that no account marry my little girl!

MRS. WRIGHT: That's my boy you're talking about, Professor! Watch what you say or I'll personally wrap you up like a mummy and stuff *you* in a sarcophagus!

TWEEDUM: Look, lady, your kid knows better than to set foot in this camp, so look under a few rocks at somebody else's camp.

MRS. WRIGHT: For once I agree with you! There's nothing worthwhile here.

TILLIE: Hey! I'm here.

DELLA enters left with TIMBU, who carries a golden artifact.

DELLA: Oh, Tommy, I mean, Professor... where should Timbu put the artifact?

TWEEDUM: Just drop it anywhere. (*TIMBU drops the artifact.*) I didn't mean that literally!

DELLA: It's okay, Professor... there's another one just like it in the tomb.

MRS. WRIGHT: Made by artisans, survived three thousand years... and five minutes in your hands and it's ruined!

TWEEDUM: Look, lady--!

DELLA: And who is this?

TILLIE: This is Mrs. Wright from Queasy Corners, Nebraska.

DELLA: And what does she want?

MRS. WRIGHT: I want my son!

DELLA: Oh, dear... I don't think we have a spare.

MRS. WRIGHT: You know what? I think Willy *is* here... and you're all hiding him from me. I'm going to fetch the authorities and they'll find out what you've done to my boy!

TWEEDUM: (*To TIMBU.*) Nobby hobby scoo!

TIMBU menacingly draws his sword and moves towards MRS. WRIGHT who backs right.

MRS. WRIGHT: What are you doing? Stop it!

TWEEDUM: Timbu's our authority.

MRS. WRIGHT: Tell him to stop! I command you to stop!

TWEEDUM: Skibbible! (*TIMBU growls, chases a screaming MRS. WRIGHT off right.*) He'll chase her all the way back to Nebraska!

DELLA: That wasn't very hospitable, Tommy... I mean Professor.

TWEEDUM: What do I care? She thinks she can barge in here, disrupt my research, and accuse us of hiding a nincompoop? That boy isn't going to get far with my daughter!

TILLIE: (*Smiling, coyly.*) Oh, I don't know.

TWEEDUM: You're not eloping with him and that's final!

TILLIE: Then I'm holding my breath 'til I turn blue. (*TILLIE holds her breath dramatically.*)

TWEEDUM: I don't care if you hold it 'til Halloween! You're too young to get married!

MR. CALLISE enters right.

MR. CALLISE: Ah, you must be Professor Tweedum.

TWEEDUM: So? How'd you know my name?

MR. CALLISE: I have been told you bellow like a rhino with a bellyache.

TWEEDUM: That so? Well, no idiot's going to elope with my daughter in the middle of the desert and she's not going to elope with you, either!

TILLIE: (*Exhaling loudly.*) Daddy!

MR. CALLISE: Relax, Professor, or you'll find yourself too short for this world.

TWEEDUM: Now he's making fun of how tall I am! What's your business in my camp?

MR. CALLISE: My name is Mr. Calisse. I am head of the Upper Sudan Police, here on official business.

TILLIE: (*Terrified.*) Oh, dear, Daddy, they've heard of your discovery already!

TWEEDUM: Tillie! Anybody tell you you got a big mouth?

TILLIE: Oh, please, Mr. Calisse, don't harm Daddy. He'll give you a share of the wealth and treasures he found in King Rottentot's tomb located just over yonder! (*TILLIE points left.*)

TWEEDUM: (*Nervously, trying to cover.*) The girl's daft, Calisse. She's delirious. She's been seeing things for days. She thought a mirage was a swimming pool, jumped in, and hit her head on the hard sand.

TILLIE: Oh, Mr. Calisse, take what you want, but leave enough for Daddy to pay off his loans... and then I'll be free to marry... Willy.

MR. CALLISE: Who's Willy?

TILLIE: Willy Wright.

TWEEDUM: Who's all wrong for my Tillie.

MR. CALLISE: Odd... I only came here looking for a Mrs. Wright who double parked in a no parking zone.

TILLIE: That's all you came for?

MR. CALLISE: Yes, but since you have apparently uncovered a fortune, all artifacts must be cataloged, photographed, inspected. You must then apply for a permit to take up to fifteen percent of the items found out of the country.

TWEEDUM: What? Only fifteen percent? I've worked for years researching and digging and all I get is fifteen percent?

MR. CALLISE: And your name is added to the Archaeological Hall of Fame.

TWEEDUM: Hall of Fools, you mean!

MR. CALLISE: Oh, come, come. You retain the book rights, the film rights, and think of all the fun you had. Now, lead on. I should like to see your findings.

TWEEDUM: (*Circling around TILLIE.*) Tillie, I'll get you for this! Your mouth's bigger than the Grand Canyon!

TILLIE: Oh, Daddy, I only wanted to do what's right. After all, soon I'll be... (*Dreamily.*) Mrs. Wright.

TWEEDUM: Over my dead mummy! (*TWEEDUM charges off left.*)

DELLA: Don't worry, Mr. Calisse... his bark is worse than his bite.

MR. CALLISE: You could fool me! (*DELLA and MR. CALLISE exit left. TILLIE, crying, exits into left tent. NURDFORD and NELDA enter from right tent.*)

NEVILLE: Well, well, well, Nelda, this Mr. Calisse has thrown a wrench in the works.

NELDA: What can we do, Darling?

NEVILLE: We'll have to locate an extra snake!

NELDA: You're so clever!

NEVILLE: (*Looking off right.*) Ah! Here's Madame Soothsister now. Madame Soothsister! Over here!

MADAME enters right.

MADAME: Ah... it's Mr... Mr... (*SHE holds up her hand.*) No... let the spirits tell me. Mr. Jones.

NEVILLE: No!

MADAME: Smith?

NEVILLE: Wrong again!

MADAME: I've got it! Belchingam, right?

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NEVILLE: You'd better do a better job tuning your antenna, Madame Soothsister. It's Nurdurd! Neville Nurdurd.

MADAME: That was my next guess.

NELDA: And I'm—

MADAME: Let me guess! Sally? Jane? No, wait, I've got it! Elsibetha.

NELDA: Nelda. Plain old Nelda.

MADAME: Charmed!

NEVILLE: I hope you've got a few charms! We're ready for a nice, juicy curse.

MADAME: Terrific! Now, let me get this straight, Mr. Jones—

NEVILLE: *(Yelling.)* Nurdurd! Nurdurd! Nurdurd!

MADAME: *(Offended.)* No need to yell. You only want a basic, no frills curse. Magical words and a simple spell. Can I talk you into Plan B? That includes magical words, the basic spell, but you also get lightning. It's only five repitas more.

NELDA: Splurge, Neville, splurge!

NEVILLE: All right, all right. Plan B.

MADAME: What about Plan C? You get the curse, the lighting, plus a two-headed dragon singing "Come on Baby, Light My Fire."

NEVILLE: We don't want to get carried away.

MADAME: *(Shrugging.)* Customer's always right. Ten repitas in advance. *(SHE holds out her hand. NURDFORD pays her.)*

NEVILLE: Now, you hide in the tent, Madame Soothsister. I'll let you know when to do your thing. *(NURDFORD directs MADAME into right tent.)* C'mon, Nelda, let's go sabotage the jeeps. *(NURDFORD and NELDA exit right. TILLIE enters from left tent.)*

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