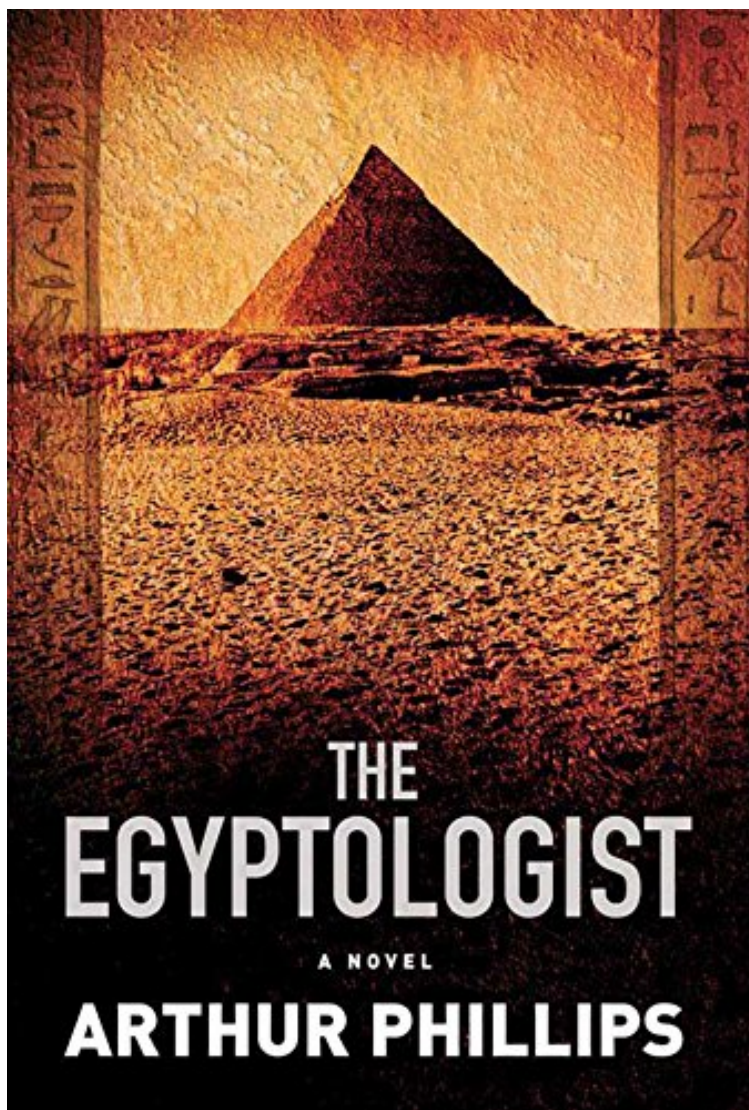


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# The Egyptologist



*Par Arthur Phillips*  
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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurThe New York Times Bestseller Arrives In the UK; The Egyptologist is a witty, inventive, brilliantly constructed novel about an archaeologist obsessed with finding the tomb of an apocryphal king. This darkly comic labyrinth of a story opens on the desert plains of Egypt in 1922, then winds its way from the slums of Australia to the ballrooms of Boston by way of Oxford, the battlefields of the First World War, and a royal court in turmoil. Exploring issues of class, greed, ambition, and the very human hunger for eternal life, The Egyptologist is a triumph of narrative bravado.Extrait31 Dec. Sunset. Outside the tomb of Atum-hadu. On the Victrola 50: Im Sitting on the Back Porch Swing (Wont You Come Sit by Me, Dear?).My darling Margaret, my eternal Queen whose beauty astonishes the sun,Your father and I are heading home tomorrow, back to youthe luxurious riverboat north to Cairo, a night at that citys Hotel

of the Sphinx, then by rail to Alexandria, and from there we have booked victorious passage on the Italian steamer Cristoforo Colombo, ports of call Malta, London, New York, from where we shall catch the very first train to you in Boston. You shall embrace your fianc and your father by 20 January. Upon my return, our wedding will, of course, be our most pressing business. Then, after refreshed preparations, I shall lead a second expedition back here to Deir el Bahari to conduct a photographic survey of the wall paintings and clear the artefacts and treasures from the tomb. All that remains this evening is to seal up the tombs front, leaving my find exactly as I discovered it. And then posting you this package. My messenger is due here presently. Nothing stands in our way now, my darling. My success here, your fathers reinstated blessing all is precisely as I promised. You will be relieved to know that your father and I are again fast friends. (Thank you for your warning cable, but your fathers misplaced anger back in Boston could never have survived his time here in my company!) No, he congratulates me on my find (our find, Trilipush! he corrects me), sleepily sends you his love, and sheepishly begs you to disregard those foolish things he told you of me. He was under terrible strain, surrounded by jealousy and intriguers, and now he is simply delighted that I have forgiven him for succumbing, even for an instant, to such corrosive lies. And now we are returning to you, just as you will return to me. Of course, if you are reading this letter, then I have not, for reasons I can only speculate, made it safely back to Boston and your embrace. I did not arrive trailing clouds of immortal glory, did not drape around your white throat this strand of whitest gold I am bringing you from Atum-hadus tomb.

And I did not, taking you gently aside, under the double-height arched windows of your fathers parlour, brush away your tears of joy at my safe return, and quietly ask you to give me as soon as it arrives a package (this package), that you would be receiving from me shortly, stamped with the alluring postage of far-off Egypt, addressed to me in your care, to be opened by you only in case of my extended and inexplicable absence. No, events will proceed just as I have foretold, and you will not read this letter. I shall arrive before it, shall gently take it from you before you open it, and all of this will be unread, unnecessary, a precaution known to no one but me. But. But, Margaret. But. You have seen as clearly as anyone the malevolence of those who would have us fail, and one never knows when fatal accidents or worse might befall one. And so I am taking the liberty of sending to you the enclosed journals. Dear God, may it all arrive safely. Margaret, you are now holding, if the besuckered tentacles of my enemies have not yet slithered into the Egyptian postal system, three packets, arranged chronologically in order of composition. They open 10 October, with my arrival in Cairo at the Hotel of the Sphinx, thoughts of you and our engagement party still effervescent in my head. Journal entries never meant for publication are intermingled with those that were, and with elements of the finished work. Much of the journal is a letter to you, the letter I never found the right moment to send until now. I intend to untangle all that back in Boston. The second packet begins when I exhausted my supply of the hotels stationery and in its place relied on the generosity of colleagues at the Egyptian Governments Antiquities Service; several score pages are on the letterhead of the Services Director-General. Finally, I have nearly filled one very handsome Letts #46 Indian and Colonial Rough Diary, the preferred journals of British explorers whilst working in faraway heat and sand, advancing knowledge at the risk of their very hides. Do not worry: the pages torn from its back are none other than the pages of this letter. Together the three documents compose the rough draft of my indisputable masterwork, Ralph M. Trilipush and the Discovery of the Tomb of Atum-hadu. Also, I am enclosing the letters you have sent me here, your words, kind and cruel intermingled. Seven letters, two cables, and the cable I sent you that was thrown in my face yesterday. And your fathers cables to me. I just replaced the stylus, my last but one. This is a lovely song. I am trusting a boy to serve as my messenger to the post. Over time, Margaret, there is erosion. Sands abrade, rubble obscures, papyri crumble, paints decay. Some of this is, of course, destructive. But some erosion is clarifying, as it scours away false resemblances, uncharacteristic lapses, confusing and inessential details. If, in the course of writing my notes, I have made here and there a wrong turn, misunderstood or badly described something I saw or thought I saw, well, at the time one thinks, No matter, I shall edit when I return home. And I shall. But, of course, should I be beaten to death and shoved inside a gangly Earls travelling trunk and then hacked to pieces and my shreds lazily flipped overboard to peckish sharks, well, then, a pity indeed that I did not edit my work when I had the chance. I shall then need a brilliant and courageous redactor who can puff away dusty speculation to reveal stark, cold, obsidian and alabaster truth. You will provide that clarifying erosion. We come to the crucial task I am entrusting to you, my muse-become-executrix. You are now the guardian-goddess of all that I have accomplished. These writings are the story of my discovery, my trouncing of doubters and self-doubt. I am entrusting to you nothing less than my immortality. I am relying on you, despite everything, for whom else do I have? If

something should happen to my body, then you are now responsible by opening this package, by reading these words to ensure that my name and the name of Atum-hadu never perish. It is the least you can do for me, Margaret. You will oversee the publication of this, my last work. Insist on a large printing from a prestigious university press. Stamp your pretty foot and demand shelf space in all major university libraries, as well as with the major Egyptological museums in the USA, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and in Cairo.

And the general public! Cover your ears, Maggie! For there will be a clamour like no one has ever heard when the news escapes. But hold them all at bay until you are ready. Do the work as I am telling you, insist that the book be printed exactly as I say, and give the vultures nothing else. I do not have time to edit just at the moment; events are moving too fast here. And we leave tomorrow. So I shall do it myself when I arrive safely home, but, allow me to provide contingent guidance if events should unwind otherwise. For example, as

I look at them now, certainly some of the early sketches seem not to have been entirely complete. The eye plays tricks in dim light, when one is hurried, but the final drawings are unquestionably precise, so those first efforts can go. And you will extract my ongoing letter to you, my private or overly candid diary entries here and there. What is only for you and what is for all the world fall away from each other; the division is an easy one to see, if you are careful. I was overeager as a diarist and as your correspondent at the beginning.

There is no need to publish anything about you and me, the parties and the partnerships. I was excited, and for good reason, Margaret, as history will attest. And I see now also some stray meditation, releasing a little scholarly steam here and there, my second guesses allowed some room to stumble about only to suffocate in

the open air. A careful reading, I beg of you, a careful reading in private, careful editing, and then find a typist (call Vernon Collins), use my illustrations from the notebooks, just the last group of them, when Atum-hadus paradoxes were all clear, and I at last understood what I was seeing. If you must be my widow, M., then you will also be my wind. You will gently erode away the inessential. I started crossing bits out just

now, but I do not have time, and I might cut into bone, so look here: I shall make your work as simple as I can: the relevant material in order: Kent, Oxford, the discovery of Fragment C with my friend, his tragic end, you and I falling in love, your father's investment, Atum-hadus tomb in all its splendour, the insightful

solution to his Tomb Paradox, sealing up our find for a later return, your father and I heading home, our unfortunate murder. Or not, of course. It could not be clearer. Burn the rest as the marginalia of a scholar's early drafts. The sunset here is unlike anything I have ever seen. The colour as the sun melts into the

changing desert cliffs such colours do not exist in Boston or Kent. These are the hills and cliffs where my life's story is indelibly etched. Last stylus. I do love this song. If, Margaret, you are reading this letter, sobbing, horrified at your double loss but girding yourself and your pen for the vital tasks ahead of you, then

I do not hesitate to accuse from here, before the commission of the dreadful crime itself, the maniacal Howard Carter, whose name you may perhaps have heard in recent weeks, the half-mad, congenitally lucky bumbler who tripped over a stair and fell into the suspiciously well-preserved tomb of some minor

XVIII... From Publishers Weekly How was Phillips to follow up a debut as startlingly brilliant as Prague? By doing something completely different. His story, set mostly in Egypt in the early 1920s, stars Ralph Trilipush, an obsessive Egyptologist. Trilipush is more than a little odd. He is pinning his hopes on

purported king Atum-hadu, whose erotic verses he has discovered and translated; now he must locate his tomb and its expected riches. Meanwhile, an Australian detective, for reasons too complicated to go into, is seeking to unmask Trilipush, who may have had some relationship with a young Australian Egyptologist

who died mysteriously. Trilipush and the detective are two quite unreliable narrators, and the effect is that of a hall of mirrors. Where does fact end and imagination, illusion and wishful thinking begin? Phillips is a

master manipulator, able to assume a dozen convincingly different voices at will, and his book is vastly entertaining. It's apparent that something dire is afoot, but the reader, while apprehensive, can never quite figure out what. The ending, which cannot be revealed, is shocking and cleverly contrived. Copyright Reed

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