Clarion Review

Juvenile Fiction

The Secret of the Sacred Scarab
Fiona Ingram
iUniverse
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Four Stars (out of Five)

Twelve-year-old Adam and his older cousin Justin are in for some unbelievable adventure in this debut young adult novel by Fiona Ingram. As the boys embark on a trip to Egypt with their grandmother and aunt the adults are determined that the boys have a safe and educational trip with their tour group but Adam and Justin are more intent on finding some of the ancient Egyptian treasure they have learned about in school.

Aunt Isabel tells the boys about James Kinnaird a famous archaeologist who has gone missing in Egypt while looking for the treasure of the ancient—and possibly fictitious—Scarab King. Kinnaird's name comes up often as the tour group learns about the Antiques Police and the difference between archaeology and the ongoing looting that has resulted in the loss many priceless Egyptian artifacts. Early in their trip Adam and Justin are approached by a scruffy peddler who shoves at them a scarab beetle made of stones and gems before running off. Later they encounter the shady Dr. Khalid head of the Ancient Egyptian Archaeological Research Program. His comments cause Isabel and the boys to suspect that Khalid may have had something to do with Kinnaird's disappearance.

Throughout the trip the tour group visits ancient sites such as the Great Pyramid and the Sphinx. At every turn the boys encounter danger of some sort: someone is out to get them—or something they have. The boys soon realize that the scarab from the old peddler must be valuable. When their hotel room is ransacked they are forced to tell Isabel and Gran about the dangerous adventure they are involved in. At the Valley of the Kings the tour's last stop the action comes to a head when Justin Adam Isabel and their tour leader are kidnapped; only Gran escapes. They are taken to the tomb of the Scarab King where Khalid and his goons are holding James Kinnaird and a man whose duty is to protect the treasure of the Scarab King.

The legendary Scarab King was actually real and the stone scarab that Adam has

protected is the key to opening his tomb and discovering the wealth and mysteries concealed within. The boys and their new friends have to use their smarts to solve the tomb's mysteries and escape Khalid's clutches.

Ingram has crafted a fascinating story of adventure. Ancient Egypt is a topic that captivates most young adults and Ingram incorporates information about Egypt's modern culture as well as ancient legend. The story's many twists and turns may be too complex for younger readers but teens and tweens who can keep straight the many characters and navigate the long and detailed story will appreciate this well-researched adventure. *The Secret of the Scarab King* is the first book in a series that will feature Adam and Justin. In future books Ingram might consider adding a glossary of unfamiliar terms.

Whitney Hallberg