

Backpack Adventures Series

Tut's Revenge

by

Marguerite Swilling

*Produced through the Partnership for
Environmental Education and Rural Health,
Texas A&M University*



Marguerite Swilling, author of the Backpack Adventure Series, has loved reading, writing and science all her life. From writing and directing an original play in sixth grade, she advanced to essay competitions in high school and published poetry at Texas A & M where she majored in English and minored in Earth Science. Although she is a certified secondary teacher, Mrs. Swilling has spent the past twenty-three years in the business world and has written and presented training seminars on a variety of topics. Mrs. Swilling lives in Georgetown, Texas with her husband and two daughters.

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1 revenge. His was the only treasure left by the
2 twentieth century.”

3 “Maybe we’ll even see the kitten’s picture on a
4 tomb wall some day,” mused K.T.

5 “Who knows? Maybe we’ll even see that cat in
6 one of her other lives,” laughed Connie, patting her
7 backpack.

1 inferior. She would have to let him think that he'd
2 discovered the answers by himself.

3 K.T. worked hard to help the overseer
4 understand the three most important hygiene
5 problems that she and her friends had observed at
6 the work camp. Despite her efforts, the overseer
7 became increasingly irritated. "What nonsense!
8 Why should I believe what you say about our
9 working conditions?" asked the overseer.

10 "You do not have to believe us, but we can
11 demonstrate our power right now by disappearing,"
12 answered K.T.

13 "Now!" she exclaimed and they all three hit the
14 "Control," "Alt," "Delete," and "Home" buttons
15 together.

16
17 A swirl of colors was all K.T. could see in the
18 instant she returned home. Even keeping her eyes
19 wide opened had not helped. She was aware all at
20 once that Connie and Travis were beside her and
21 that her own back yard surrounded her.

22 "Yahoo!" shouted Summer, as she watched her
23 three companions reappear. Then they were all
24 hugging and talking and laughing at once. K.T.
25 pulled Connie aside.

26 "Did you notice how tiny the door to Tut's
27 tomb looked compared to all the other tombs?" she
28 asked.

29 "Yeah, it's no wonder it stayed hidden for so
30 long," Connie agreed. "Maybe that was Tut's real

An Introduction to Backpack Adventures:

Welcome to the coolest club in middle school! Of course,
no one outside the club can know just what makes this group
so different. The secret is in the backpack.

Roman Castillo, a young teenage technology whiz,
developed a powerful mini-computer that can transport
people through space and time. He controls the computer
with a wireless keypad complete with a screen that displays
the co-ordinates for the time and space travel destination. He
shared his invention with his best friend, Travis, as well as
four others.

Travis Allen, Roman's best friend since kindergarten, is the
son of a veterinarian and loves animals, the outdoors and
math. He wears western jeans and boots that highlight his
long, lanky profile. He has a short temper except with his
stepsister, Summer. He's very protective of Summer and
doesn't like having her travel with the BPC as the group has
nicknamed their awesome device.

Summer Martin, Travis' stepsister, is two years younger
than Travis and Roman. Her bright blue eyes are as merry as
her laugh and her blonde hair is cut short and sassy. She
loves to read and has a great memory for history and
geography. She uses a wheelchair due to a terrible, traffic
accident when she was five. Travis and his aunt built a
motorized chair for Summer, and she can participate in just
about everything with her two best friends, Connie and K.T.

Connie Castillo, Roman's sister and Summer's best friend,
has long, silky black hair and her dark brown eyes are framed
by thick, black lashes. She loves her brother, but sometimes
questions the use of the BPC. Quiet and reserved, she is a
serious student. Science is her favorite subject and dance is

her favorite pastime. She and Summer have a mutual best friend named K.T.

K.T. Watson, is an only child who loves her best friends, Summer and Connie, like sisters. She wears her curly, jet-black hair in dozens of tiny, tight braids so she'll look more like her favorite athlete, Venus Williams. K.T. is full of energy and courageous. A natural leader, she often instigates the adventures with the BPC. She loves soccer and cheerleading. She helped form the Backpack Club and brought in its newest member: her neighbor, Jace.

Jace Long, classmate and neighbor to K.T., grew up in China and moved first to California and finally to Texas. He loves soccer like K.T., is a whiz at math like Travis, and is especially close to Summer. As the newest member to the Backpack Club, Jace is the most reluctant to use the BPC for travel, but he thinks it's a great tool for communicating between the members and is the first to try the device for help with homework.

1 wrinkle her nose as Travis gasped and Connie
2 coughed.

3 "Talk about your need for an Air Quality
4 Control Board!" Travis joked.

5 Their conversation was cut short as they arrived
6 at the overseer's office. A heavysset, older man
7 holding a long, thin staff sat at a long table upon a
8 platform. Scrolls with drawings littered the table
9 and the floor. Servants stood in line waiting to ask
10 him questions. He answered them swiftly and then
11 sent them off at a run. Now he looked up at the
12 three travelers.

13 "Come in, guests from afar, come in. We have
14 heard through the incessant gossip of that mud hole,
15 Kaefa, that a young girl had invited foreigners into
16 our midst. Surely, you know the dangers of this
17 illness that affects our workers more each day, yet
18 you brave a visit. Tell me, what is the purpose of
19 your journey?" the overseer's oily voice sizzled
20 through the hot air like grease on a griddle.

21 Before Travis and Connie could stop her, K.T.
22 replied, "We think we can be of service in curing
23 your people of this illness. May we offer the
24 wisdom of our faraway land, please sir?"

25 "Get ready to go in case he blows his top at that
26 last idea," mumbled K.T. to her friends. They took
27 out their boxtoks and keyed in their home
28 coordinates.

29 "By all means, share your knowledge at once,"
30 sputtered the overseer with contempt. It was clear to
31 K.T. that he liked for no one to make him feel

1 Travis warned, “We really need to leave before
2 we cause any more trouble. We did what we set out
3 to do and even got to ride in a chariot. It’s time to
4 go back.”

5 “I still want to see the tombs. Look how close
6 we are!” Connie said pointing to the massive cliff
7 walls covered with statues and grand openings to
8 underground tombs.

9 “And we can’t just disappear and leave Nefah
10 to face the overseer alone. He sounds dangerous.
11 Don’t you want to find out more about this illness?”
12 argued K.T.

13 “All right already! The tombs *are* awesome
14 and I *am* interested in this illness. I wish we knew
15 what kinds of tools and technologies they have for
16 medicine,” Travis whispered. “And I’d like to see
17 this powerful overseer dude for myself.”

18 K.T. began to observe her surroundings with a
19 detective’s eye. Nefah walked directly behind the
20 overseer’s servant and was visibly trembling.
21 People were everywhere around them, working
22 furiously to complete the tomb. Near a muddy canal
23 that reached eastward to the Nile were hundreds of
24 small canopies that served as protection for the
25 artisans who fashioned all the beautiful objects that
26 one day would end up in museums. Thousands of
27 small tents dotted the plain to the south of the canal.
28 Trenches and privies lined the edge of the canal
29 farthest from the tomb. A southerly breeze picked
30 up the stench from the encampment, causing K.T. to

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1 K.T. surveyed the friends gathered around her
2 in their “clubhouse” behind her home. The three of
3 them had been best friends and neighbors since
4 kindergarten. She knew they would help her.

5 “I have a problem,” K.T. said as she pulled a
6 tiny orange fluff ball from her backpack. “I found
7 her by the side of the road. We have to find her a
8 home. Isn’t she precious?” K.T. rubbed the white
9 patch between the kitty’s ears, allowing the kitten to
10 lick her palm. “I can’t keep her, but I want to find
11 the best home for her. What do you think, Connie?”
12 K.T. asked her best friend as she handed the kitten to
13 her.

14 Connie pushed her long brown hair behind her
15 right ear and cradled the kitty against her chin.
16 “Pobrecita, poor little one,” she cooed. “I know we
17 can’t keep her. Our two dogs would eat her up.
18 What about you, Summer?” Connie set the tiny
19 bundle on her friend’s head.

20 Summer’s short blonde curls made a soft bed,
21 but she pulled the kitten to her lap and stroked its
22 silky fur. “No way. Mom and Doc said no more
23 strays after the last cat. Just because my stepdad is a
24 veterinarian doesn’t mean we can rescue every
25 animal. But I do know the perfect place for her. I’ll
26 give you a hint: It’s home to the world’s most
27 famous teenage monarch.”

28 “Who’s that? Prince William?” asked Travis,
29 Summer’s stepbrother, walking up behind the three

1 friends. K.T. quickly hid the kitten behind her.
2 Travis, an eighth-grader, liked to play tricks on her.

3 “Of course not!” laughed Summer. “Ancient
4 Egypt and King Tutankhamun.”

5 K.T. raised her eyebrows. “Do you mean
6 actually using Professor Castillo’s new microchip?”
7 she asked with excitement. Professor Castillo was
8 Connie’s dad.

9 “That’s a perfect idea! Roman and I were
10 looking for a way to test it,” interjected Connie.
11 Connie’s thirteen-year-old brother, Roman, had used
12 their father’s invention to build microcomputers for
13 each of them to carry in their backpacks. They
14 could now communicate by using a wireless,
15 handheld device disguised as a key chain. They
16 were known around their small middle school as the
17 Backpack Club, but no one knew about the powerful
18 computers in their normal looking packs.

19 K.T. was a daredevil who liked a challenge.
20 Her dark eyes flashed and a big smile spread across
21 her face as she flipped open her “boxtok” (as they
22 called the handheld device) and pressed a button.
23 Instantly, it connected to Roman’s computer.

24 “Hey, K.T., what are you doing in the
25 clubhouse?” asked Roman, reading her coordinates
26 from the transmission.

27 “Roman, the new chip you installed in our
28 backpacks is your father’s time/matter/relator
29 device, right? So we can program our backpack
30 computers to take us anywhere, anytime. Is that
31 right?” asked K.T.

1 fall. The illness is his revenge. He is trying to keep
2 them from burying him so fast.”

3 “What are the symptoms of the illness?” asked
4 K.T.

5 “None of our people have taken ill, but we have
6 heard that it starts with cramps in the stomach and
7 then vomiting. Finally, diarrhea weakens the worker
8 and he must go to bed. He can eat nothing without
9 getting sick again. Even water does not seem to
10 help.”

11 “The workers are not dying yet, but if it is a
12 curse, how could they ever recover? And what will
13 keep us safe?” Nefah’s crying grew louder but
14 stopped abruptly when a shadow fell across the
15 floor. A tall man dressed in a loincloth stood in the
16 doorway.

17 “My Master, the Overseer of the Tomb, asks
18 that Nefah bring her guests to him. He is most
19 curious to learn from where these strangers travel.
20 You are all to come with me to the Valley of the
21 Kings. The chariots await. You must hurry!” he
22 commanded, escorting them from the safe, dark,
23 quiet coolness of the home, back into the brilliant
24 desert sunlight, dust and noise.

25 During the wild and rapid chariot ride across
26 the desert, there was no time for the three friends to
27 talk. Only Travis seemed to enjoy any part of the
28 journey. As they walked toward the canopy that
29 shaded the office of the overseer, they stayed close
30 together and whispered a plan.

1 remaining to be done on the king's tomb, the peasant
2 farmers were brought in to help. But this is their
3 busy harvest and threshing time. So my mother and
4 other villagers were sent to help with the harvest.
5 And when the temporary housing was built here for
6 the peasant farmers, it was done so quickly that only
7 one canal was dug to carry water both to and from
8 their encampment. Now suddenly, so many workers
9 are getting ill that the overseer announced today that
10 he is going to require that the artists and artisans
11 move to the workers' camp to help excavate the rest
12 of the tomb. That is dangerous work for my family
13 to do—they are not made for hauling rock! And
14 what will keep them from getting the illness? And if
15 they move and my mother has to help with the
16 threshing, I will be left alone!"

17 Connie put her arms around Nefah as she began
18 to sob again. Travis looked at K.T. as if to ask,
19 "What do you want to do?" With all this turmoil
20 and danger, how would they see a chariot or a
21 pyramid, a temple or a tomb? wondered K.T.

22 "You said King Tutankhamun died suddenly.
23 Did he have this 'illness' too? Are all the workers
24 dying?" asked Travis with the natural curiosity of a
25 scientist.

26 "No, the pharaoh died suddenly by falling off
27 his chariot. He hit his head. At least that is what we
28 were told. King Tutankhamun was known as the
29 best charioteer. He always drove himself." Nefah
30 lowered her voice to a whisper. "Some say the
31 workers are getting sick because the pharaoh did *not*

1 "Actually, K.T., it's better than Dad's device
2 for two reasons: number one, I added a language
3 database that does instantaneous translations so you
4 can communicate anywhere, anytime; and number
5 two, we can all travel together," Roman responded
6 with a laugh.

7 Travis, who was six inches taller than any of
8 the others and the oldest of all of them, spoke up,
9 "Why go back to ancient Egypt?" Travis was
10 Summer's step-brother, but he felt very protective of
11 her, especially when K.T. was involved. K.T. was
12 always getting her into adventures despite the fact
13 that Summer was partially paralyzed and used a
14 motorized wheel chair.

15 "I found this kitten and Summer thought of the
16 best home for her: Egypt during King Tut's reign.
17 The ancient Egyptians worshipped cats; they had a
18 cat *goddess*. Wouldn't this be a great way to test the
19 new chip? Just a quick little trip?" K.T. pleaded.

20 Travis frowned. It was just like brave, spunky,
21 crazy K.T. Watson. She was always the first in line
22 for adventure.

23 "I want to go," exclaimed Connie. "I've always
24 wanted to see a pyramid and find out how they built
25 those incredible tombs. It was an engineering
26 marvel!"

27 "I don't think I can maneuver very well in the
28 sand, so I'll stay here and provide research support,"
29 Summer said. "For example, the climate was hot
30 and dry so you'd better take some water bottles
31 along."

1 K.T. turned to Summer. “When and where
2 exactly do we need to go?”

3 If Roman was the computer whiz, then Summer
4 was the geography genius and an insatiable reader.
5 Egyptology was one of her favorite studies. She
6 typed a search into her BPC (backpack computer)
7 and confirmed the King Tut information.

8 “King Tutankhamun died in 1323 B.C. at
9 Thebes near present day Luxor and was buried in the
10 Valley of the Kings. The Great Pyramid at Giza is
11 far from Thebes, but you could see the Temples of
12 Karnak and the row of ram-headed sphinxes King
13 Tut built there. To see King Tut’s tomb, set the
14 coordinates for Thebes, the tenth year of King
15 Tutankhamun’s reign, 18th Dynasty, Egypt.

16 “Well, I’m not letting you two sixth graders
17 have all the fun,” said Travis. “I just might like to
18 drive a chariot. Tell us again how to do this,
19 Roman.” Now it was K.T.’s turn to frown. The last
20 thing she wanted was Travis going along.

21 While Summer went to get fresh bottles of
22 water, Roman reviewed how to initiate time travel.
23 “Each of you types in the coordinates exactly the
24 same and then together press “Control”, “Alt”,
25 “Delete” and “Backspace.” To return, type in
26 today’s date and time, and press “Control”, “Alt”,
27 “Delete” and “Home.” Everyone understand? I’ll
28 stay on-line with Summer in case you need technical
29 support.”

30 The three travelers looked at each other, smiled,
31 and nodded their understanding. K.T. checked her

1 K.T. drank from her water bottle. “Nefah, tell
2 us now, what made you cry?”

3 “Many things. But let me start from the
4 beginning. I know those from the ancient cities in
5 Lower Egypt have knowledge that we have not
6 learned yet. You must try to help me if you can.”
7 Nefah glanced out the open doorway to be sure no
8 one was near and then continued in a low voice.

9 “You know our good, young king,
10 Tutankhamun, died just two months ago. He was
11 not even twenty cycles of Amun-Re. Even though
12 he has built many fine temples and monuments in
13 Karnak, his tomb was not yet begun when he died so
14 suddenly. Near here is the Valley of the Kings
15 where his parents were buried. That is where my
16 artist family is working now – my father, uncle, and
17 two brothers. My ancestors have worked as artists
18 for centuries in those magnificent tombs. Now, that
19 all may change.” Nefah’s eyes filled with tears, but
20 she kept talking.

21 “During the rainy season when the Nile floods,
22 the peasant farmers pay their taxes to the pharaoh by
23 working on the tombs and temples. They cut the
24 rock, haul it, and construct the buildings. Then my
25 family and artists and artisans like them decorate the
26 tombs and temples to add beauty and preserve the
27 memories. It is our way.” Nefah paused to see if
28 the doorway was still clear.

29 “The new pharaoh is Ay, the former high priest.
30 He has commanded that Tutankhamun’s funeral take
31 place within seventy days. With so much work

1 ground, it was scooped up with the same tool and
2 put back into the barrel – dirt and all. Sand, it
3 seemed, was a main ingredient in bread.

4 The three travelers couldn't keep up with all the
5 sounds, sights and smells as they ran through the
6 alleyways to Nefah's home. In the center of the
7 town was a small water well with a rusty metal bowl
8 that served as a bucket. The well was surrounded by
9 a low wall and was shaded by tall palms and several
10 shorter bushes that K.T. did not recognize. The
11 plants were the only vegetation in the village. K.T.
12 could make out a narrow gully leading from the
13 well's pool through the town and out under the wall.
14 I wonder if that comes from the Nile, she thought.

15 When they reached Nefah's house, she asked
16 them to sit on the floor on brightly painted grass
17 mats around a low clay table with designs of
18 crocodiles, cranes, fish and frogs etched around the
19 edges.

20 "Here are refreshments," she said, offering
21 them a platter of grapes, dates, figs and cone shaped
22 loaves of bread. K.T. noted that the foods were
23 similar to those from home.

24 "I wonder if this is like when my family
25 traveled to Mexico last summer? We had to be
26 careful not to eat anything washed by water. Maybe
27 we'd better use our water to wash the food first,"
28 Connie whispered to K.T. They both noticed too
29 late to warn Travis, who had devoured grapes and a
30 fig the moment the platter arrived.

1 watch and said, "We'll return in ten minutes current
2 time." Summer handed the kitten to K.T. who put it
3 in her backpack and zipped the pack closed.

4 Travis, Connie and K.T. typed in the data and
5 triple-checked each other.

6 Travis started the countdown: "Mark—set—
7 go!" as they pressed the four buttons.

8 All four closed their eyes.

9 Then three were gone.

11 Slowly opening one eye, K.T. saw a rush of
12 color that flickered and disappeared. She opened
13 both eyes to find herself standing between Connie
14 Castillo, her best friend, and Travis Allen, her next
15 door neighbor, in a place unlike any she had ever
16 seen or imagined – desert, sun, vaporizing heat and
17 smells so strong she felt nauseous for a moment.
18 From the looks on Connie and Travis's faces, they
19 felt the same way.

20 "Let's take cover," recommended Travis. "Safe
21 arrival," he spoke into his boxtok.

22 K.T., Connie and Travis crouched below a clay
23 wall that surrounded a small village. It was late
24 afternoon and the sun beat down on the red sand.
25 K.T.'s boxtok crackled and K.T. jumped like a
26 scared rabbit.

27 "If they ask about your clothes, tell them you
28 came from Lower Egypt – you're in Upper Egypt
29 now," Summer's voice wavered through the air.

30 "Let's figure out exactly where we are," said
31 Travis, looking east away from the sun. "I see a

1 shimmer there on the other side of the black dirt.
2 That must be the Nile River! Wow, you can really
3 see where the desert begins and the Nile Basin
4 ends.”

5 There below their feet was the red sand of the
6 Sahara and only a few hundred yards away was
7 black, fertile Nile River soil.

8 Suddenly, a young girl ran around the corner of
9 the wall and stumbled into them. Tears streaked her
10 face and she cried out in terror at the sight of the
11 three strangers. It was K.T. who first recovered
12 from the shock of the collision.

13 “Hello, my name is K.T. and this is Connie and
14 Travis,” she began. “Could you tell us what town
15 we’ve reached?”

16 The girl stared at her for a moment, but the
17 translator program must have worked because she
18 stopped crying and let her curiosity overtake her
19 fear.

20 “My name is Nefah and this town is Kaefa. It
21 is the village of the artists and artisans who work on
22 the tombs in the Valley of the Kings. Don’t you
23 know where you are?” she asked, wiping the tears
24 from her face. Her shoulder-length hair was straight
25 and jet black.

26 “Yes, of course. We were just making sure.
27 Why were you crying and running away? Is there
28 something wrong?” K.T. questioned the girl.

29 “Everything is wrong – the pharaoh’s death, the
30 workers’ illness, the overseer’s stupid plan! But
31 perhaps you are with the new pharaoh’s government

1 or with the new high priest’s religion of Amun-Re.
2 Perhaps I should not speak with you at all.” Nefah
3 began to back away.

4 “Wait, please, we’re young like you. We mean
5 no harm. We even bring you a gift,” K.T. said,
6 opening her backpack. Nefah looked with
7 amazement at the zipper and then squealed with
8 delight when she saw the kitten. “We are looking
9 for a home for this kitten. We understand your
10 culture appreciates cats.”

11 “Yes, we love them, even if my family does not
12 worship them as some do. They are part of an
13 Egyptian’s family, much more than a pet. They are
14 like sisters, brothers, or children. This one is
15 precious. Is it really for me?” Nefah held the kitten
16 tenderly and rubbed her cheek against its orange fur.
17 Her olive skin was tanned by the sun and contrasted
18 sharply with her linen tunic.

19 Connie suggested that they sit under a palm tree
20 to get relief from the midday sun. Nefah instead
21 offered to take them to her home for some food.
22 There she would explain about all the terrible things
23 that had happened. Perhaps the travelers would help
24 her family and the others. Travis, K.T. and Connie
25 held tightly to their backpacks and followed Nefah
26 through the gates of the walled town.

27 Nefah hurriedly led them through narrow, dirt
28 streets and past an open-air market where most of
29 the “meat” was still alive. Huge papyrus barrels
30 held barley grain that women scooped out and
31 poured into smaller vessels. If some fell to the