

Sue, the towering T-Rex was the first thing I saw as I walked through the front doors of the Chicago Field Museum. I had been here a hundred times, but I was always amazed by the dinosaur skeletons and the flying pterodactyl that dominated the main hall. The sheer size of those magnificent creatures was awe inspiring. I spent time walking around and stopped to stare up at the head of the Titanosaur, the largest of the dinosaurs.

There was a new exhibit on Egypt and King Tut at the museum, and I was early for my timed ticket, so I strolled through the gems exhibit and then the animal dioramas. Around me, children squealed with excitement as they tried to look at everything at once.

History was a part of my life, and it was not just because I lived so much of it. Much more than the ordinary person. My last stop was the Ancient Egypt exhibit to get myself in the mindset for the special exhibition. I walked over to look at one of the mummies when an unfamiliar but very pleasant scent caught my attention. I turned and saw an incredibly beautiful woman. She was tall and slender. She wore a navy skirt, a museum tee-shirt, and white sneakers. Her silky hair was secured in a high ponytail and still her hair went past her mid-back. She walked backwards and spoke to a group of children.

“And here are the mummies,” she said with exuberance as she opened her arms wide. She turned and our eyes connected. She smiled and turned back to the children who now peered into the case.

I stared at her for much longer than was prudent. I was captivated and could not move my feet. Her scent filled me and seemed to call to me.

A loud squeal by one of the children snapped me out of my haze, and I moved back to the edge of the room. I sat on a bench, but I continued to watch as she explained about mummies and how they were made to the children who hung on her every word. And who could blame them. She was enthusiastic and charismatic. She led them to the dioramas depicting mummification and then into the chamber room.

Only when she was out of sight was I finally able to walk away. I went back to the main desk and asked a question about my timed ticket as a way to inquire about the woman I saw. “There was a very enthusiastic guide with a group of children in the Ancient Egypt Exhibit,” I said as casually as possible to the older woman at the information desk.

“Yes, Arianna. She is an intern with us for the Summer. Her knowledge of ancient cultures is quite extensive.”

“Well, you are fortunate to have her.”

“Thank you,” the older woman said. I locked eyes with her and asked her a few more questions.

“Did you say I could get in line now?” I asked after she gave me more information.

“What?” she stuttered. “Oh, yes, your ticket will allow you to enter the special exhibit in about five minutes.”

“Thank you.”

I walked away thinking about Arianna.

“James, where have you been,” Sam asked. “I thought you would be here a couple of days ago.”

“I was caught up in a project,” I answered in a sharp tone.

He scrutinized me. “You ok? You look ragged.”

I ran my fingers through my hair. “Yeah, I’m ok. I was caught up in a project. Is there game around?”

“A herd of deer maybe two miles from here.” He pointed East. “Come back when you finish, so we can talk.”

I nodded and took off in the direction he indicated. I knew I would have to go back and talk to Sam. When the local clan leader said to come talk, you really did not have a choice. I quickly found the herd of deer, selected one, and then leapt on the unsuspecting animal.

When I finished feeding, I felt better, and the idea of talking to Sam was more appealing. I made my way back to the meeting place. Sam sat on the ground and leaned against a tree. His legs were stretched out, and he held a beer in his right hand. He sat up and reached into the cooler beside him and handed me a beer. “Take a seat.” He took a long drink. “Better?”

“Yes.”

“So, what’s got you so holed up that you forget to hunt? You know that is not healthy.”

“There’s this woman,” I began.

Sam coughed out a loud laugh. “Should have known. Who is she?”

“An intern at the Field Museum.”

“Human?”

“Definitely human.”

He raised his eyebrows and shook his head.

I continued, “she is here for the Summer. She’s beautiful and intelligent.”

“Sounds like someone you would be interested in.” He took another long swig of beer.

“She’s a Classics major getting her PhD. She likes to shop, makes friends easily, and spends a lot of time working at the library.”

“Wow. That’s quite a resume. How often have you been out with her?”

“I haven’t actually met her yet.”

Sam narrowed his eyes. “Well, what are you waiting for? Go up to her, say hello, and see if she’s interested.”

“I want to meet her under the right conditions.” I paused, and Sam stared up at me waiting for further explanation. “In the Fall, she is teaching at Weymouth University in upstate New York.”

He lowered his beer. “You went to school there, right?”

“A couple of times, yes.”

“And.”

“And, I am thinking of going back there.”

“I thought you had a thing in California for the Fall.”

“A post doc, yes.”

Sam sat up straight. “Let me get this straight. You are thinking of changing your plans. Plans I will remind you that you have been working on for months. You are going to abandon those plans to follow some woman you have never met to New York where you what? Hope you will run into her on campus?”

“It’s a small town. It should be easy to meet her.”

Sam did not say anything for a few moments. I waited patiently.

Finally, he shook his head. “Let me give you some advice, relationships between vampires and humans never work. You’ll either violate the treaty and kill her, or you’ll bite her and scare her off. My advice is to go to California and forget about her.” He stood up. “Think about it, James. There is a lot at stake.”

I nodded and stood up. “Thanks for the advice.” I started to head back to my apartment.

“James,” he called, and I turned to look at him. “Let me know when you decide on the date you will leave for New York.” I nodded and left.

I pulled up in front of my apartment just before 8:00 pm. It was late August. The sun was beginning to set, and it cast an orange glow throughout the sky. On the sidewalk, a woman in her mid-fifties dressed in an off white suit jacket and skirt waited. When I opened my door and stepped out of the car, she approached me.

“James Merden?”

“Yes. Mary Rosen from the leasing office?”

“Yes.”

I reached out and shook her hand, but she quickly withdrew it.

“Nice to meet you,” she stuttered and looked down. She was clearly uncomfortable touching me, but I took no offense. My touch is colder than normal, and people often have an instinctive uneasiness around me and my kind.

“Shall we go inside? I want to make certain the apartment is to your liking.” She pointed to the stairs that led up to a dark green front door. “I have others, but this close to the beginning of the semester, the only apartments still available are further out of town. You said you preferred to be closer to the university.”

“Yes, I prefer to be closer.”

“You are lucky. The graduate student who originally rented this apartment decided not to come to the university. Are you a new professor?” she asked.

“No. I studied here for my Bachelor’s degree, and when I decided against a post-doctoral program in California, I decided to return. I’m thinking of writing a novel.”

“Oh, that sounds wonderful.” She unlocked the front door and opened it to let me in. “This is a two bedroom apartment. It has a small galley kitchen.”

I looked around to appease her. I already decided that I would take the apartment. “I don’t do much cooking,” I commented. I looked in the bedrooms. “I’ll take it.”

“Fantastic.” She put her briefcase on the kitchen counter and took out the lease. “It is a standard lease. There is an early release option. This landlord is generally fine with an end of June departure. As you can see, the rooms are freshly painted, and the carpet has been cleaned.”

“It is perfect for me. I am certain I will be very comfortable here.”

She went out to her car to allow me time to read the lease. “Any questions?” she asked when she returned.

“No.” I signed the document, and she gave me the keys and a welcome basket containing assorted snacks, two bottles of water, and coupons for local restaurants.

I walked her to the door. “Thank you, Mrs. Rosen.”

“Give me a call if you need anything. The rental office handles any mechanical problems that you might have at the apartment.” I nodded. “You don’t have any furniture for tonight?” she inquired eyeing up my small, sleek, black sports car.

“I’ll camp in the living room tonight. My furniture is on its way,” I assured her.

“Good luck, and welcome back to Weymouth.”

I closed the door behind her and let out a sigh. There was no turning back now. Soon, I would find out if all this effort was worth it.

[Find out if James meets Arianna.](#)

[Inheritance Revealed is available on Amazon and at local book sellers.](#)