

**JOY DOLO:** OK, Hania, hand me the red wire.

**HANIA:** Red wire incoming.

**JOY DOLO:** All right. Now the yellow wire.

**HANIA:** Yellow wire incoming.

**JOY DOLO:** OK, now the juice box.

**HANIA:** Juice box incoming.

[SLURPING]

**JOY DOLO:** Ah, delicious. OK, Hania, all the wires for this old gaming system are hooked up to the TV. We should be ready to turn it on.

**HANIA:** So you just found this old game box at a garage sale?

**JOY DOLO:** Yeah. It even came with an old game. Let's play.

**KARA KROPP:** Welcome to *Kara Kropp-- Temple Breaker Inner*.

**HANIA:** Temple Breaker Inner?

**JOY DOLO:** Oh, yeah. This was a super popular video game series when I was young.

**KARA KROPP:** Hey, cadets. It's me, Kara Kropp, famous adventurer and Temple Breaker Inner. Glad you could join me on my latest quest.

**HANIA:** Wow, she's wearing the shiniest shorts I've ever seen.

**KARA KROPP:** These are my adventure shorts. They're flexible, breathable, fireproof, waterproof, tiger proof, and stain resistant.

**JOY DOLO:** Do they have pockets?

**KARA KROPP:** No. Why don't they have pockets? That seems really useful to have. Who designed my outfit anyway?

**SUBJECT:** Level 1-- The Queen's Temple.

**KARA KROPP:** OK, cadets. There's precious artifacts in this ancient temple. To get them, we're going to break in. Follow me.

**JOY DOLO:** But what about all the signs that say do not enter and the rope that is clearly trying to keep us out?

**KARA KROPP:** Use your machete.

**HANIA:** Whoa. Look at all that cool ancient writing on that temple wall.

**KARA KROPP:** First up, blow up the wall. Now we've broken in.

**JOY DOLO:** There was literally a door right there.

**KARA KROPP:** Watch out for guards. Kick them if you see them.

**HANIA:** Those aren't guards. They're ornamental vases.

**JOY DOLO:** Ah! I can't catch them fast enough. Stop kicking, Kara.

**KARA KROPP:** At last, we've reached the Queen's crypt. The more artifacts meant to be left undisturbed that you can shove into your bag, the better. That one wasn't important.

**JOY DOLO:** Something seems really off about this game.

**KARA KROPP:** Oh, no. The walls are caving in. Must be the Queen's curse.

**HANIA:** Or, you know, structural damage from the dynamite you used to blow a hole in that wall.

**KARA KROPP:** Good call. Let's dynamite the temple to stop the curse. 1, 2--

**JOY DOLO:** OK, pause. You need a timeout, Kara Kropp-top.

**KARA KROPP:** What do you mean? We were about to beat the level.

**JOY DOLO:** It seems like you were just stealing and breaking.

**KARA KROPP:** No, you misunderstood. I am excavating. These artifacts should be in a museum or at a university so people can study them.

**HANIA:** But why do you get to decide this? Those aren't your artifacts.

**KARA KROPP:** Look, I know my game is a little extra. There's more action than in real life. But I'm based on actual explorers. They would daringly travel far and wide to enter old temples and pyramids or do massive digs. They'd find amazing treasure to put in museums back in their homelands. That's how it's always been.

**JOY DOLO:** Maybe it's time to change that. Look, we're about to do a whole episode on what happened to treasures from ancient Egypt. Why don't you come along? You might learn something.

**KARA KROPP:** What? Like a bonus level?

**JOY DOLO:** Sure.

**KARA KROPP:** I'm in. Um, but do you mind if I change first? My adventure shorts are giving me a massive wedgie. Ooh.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**JOY DOLO:** This is *Forever Ago* from APM Studios. I'm Joy Dolo, and my co-host today is Hania from Lake Forest, California. Hey, Hania.

**HANIA:** Hi, Joy.

**JOY DOLO:** Today, we're talking about Ancient Egypt, a period that started about 5,000 years ago, way before electric lights, pirate ships, or even printed books. This civilization lasted for more than 3,000 years-- so a long time. And in that span, the Egyptian people did a ton of amazing things. They invented a system of mathematics.

**HANIA:** They planted and grew crops to feed lots of people.

**JOY DOLO:** They built huge temples and pyramids without any of the cranes or diggers or bulldozers we use today.

**HANIA:** They wrote in hieroglyphics and made lots of art.

**JOY DOLO:** Hania, when I say Ancient Egypt, what comes to your mind?

**HANIA:** Well, I've been to the pyramids, and I like learning about it. And I'm from there, so--

**JOY DOLO:** Oh, very cool. So you've seen those big pyramids in real life. Are they just as big as they seem like they are?

**HANIA:** They're way bigger.

**JOY DOLO:** [LAUGHS] Are they really? What's, like, one cool memory you have from that trip?

**HANIA:** I went when I was a baby to see the pyramids, so I don't really remember. But my mom has lots of pictures. And it's with my brothers and them. And I was-- like, my dad was holding me. I go every summer because all of my family lives there.

**JOY DOLO:** Oh, cool. When I think of Ancient Egypt, I think of pharaohs and pyramids and that famous golden mask of King Tutankhamen. But one cool thing about Egypt is that it's one of the oldest countries in the world. Unlike lots of other ancient civilizations we learn about, it's still around today. Instead of starting our story way back in ancient times, let's talk about something that happened in Egypt recently-- a parade.

**HANIA:** Ooh, I love a parade. Were there floats? Marching bands? Some important person doing that weird wave where only the hand moves, and the arm is stiff as a statue?

**JOY DOLO:** No, this parade was a little different. This was a really big story in the news. It happened in 2021 in Cairo. That's the capital of Egypt. Lots of people were interested in this parade, in large part because the guest of honor at this parade were old-- like, really old-- like, thousands of years old.

**[? NOOR TARABIA:** ?] There was this celebration of a new museum that was opening, right? The mummies parade, where they were moving the old mummies from the old museum and moving it to the new museum.

**JOY DOLO:** That's [? Noor ?] [? Tarabia. ?] She's a university student who was living in Cairo at the time. She says the parade was celebrating the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization, a new museum of Egyptian history. It would house lots of important artifacts from Ancient Egypt and 22 mummified people, right in the heart of the land where these people once lived.

**[? NOOR TARABIA:** ?] And it was a huge parade, and there was a lot of celebrations and fanfare. And I began thinking about, well, why doesn't this museum have everything? Why doesn't it have so much of the actual iconic findings from Ancient Egyptian history?

**JOY DOLO:** She was thinking of things like the bust of Nefertiti. It's a super-famous statue of Queen Nefertiti's head, neck, and chest, carved more than 3,000 years ago. Or the Rosetta Stone, which is this big slab of rock with writings that helped language experts learn to translate hieroglyphs. They're both in museums in Europe instead of in Egypt.

**[? NOOR TARABIA:** ?] And then I started reading more about it, about the role of Egyptians, and finding these things, and how they were snubbed by the English or foreign archaeologists, and how these archaeologists were credited with it. And I don't know. It got to me.

**JOY DOLO:** [? Noor ?] says it made her upset that Egyptians helped unearthed these precious treasures, but Europeans got all the credit and often kept the artifacts for themselves.

**HANIA:** I'd be mad too. So how did this happen?

**KARA KROPP:** Finally, I found a way into the studio. It's like a fortress.

**JOY DOLO:** Do you not understand how doors work? Wait, are you wearing my sweats and bathrobe?

**KARA KROPP:** These are yours?

**JOY DOLO:** It literally sets Joy on the pocket.

**KARA KROPP:** Oh, I guess I am. I used my breaking-in skills to excavate this outfit from a closet back there. Check it out. These sweats have pockets.

**JOY DOLO:** I know. They're my sweats.

**KARA KROPP:** I stuffed my pockets with pens, paper, and more pens. So I'm ready to learn. By the way, do you mind if I power up with this turkey leg I found in the ground?

**HANIA:** Ugh, you're eating a turkey leg from the ground?

**JOY DOLO:** It's how old-timey video game characters powered up. Don't think too hard about it.

**KARA KROPP:** So, what'd I miss?

**HANIA:** We were just talking about how all these important artifacts from Ancient Egypt ended up in the museums in other countries.

**KARA KROPP:** Thanks to fearless explorers like me?

**JOY DOLO:** Sometimes, it was actually the military. Let's start with one of the earliest examples, that Rosetta Stone we were just talking about.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**HANIA:** The French army found it in 1799 when they were invading Egypt. They quickly realized it was a big deal.

**JOY DOLO:** (IN FRENCH ACCENT) Hey, this rock has ancient writing on it. That is a big deal.

See? The stone had writing in three different languages, Ancient Egyptian, Ancient Greek, and hieroglyphs.

**HANIA:** At this point, people had no idea how to read hieroglyphs because the language was forgotten long ago.

**JOY DOLO:** Just like my Etsy password.

**HANIA:** But since the message was pretty much the same in all three languages, they could use the other languages to figure out the hieroglyphs.

**JOY DOLO:** Unlike my Etsy password, which no one will ever figure out. Why didn't I write it down?

**HANIA:** It was like they broke the code. It meant that eventually, scholars were able to read lots of writings from Ancient Egypt and learn more about what life was like back then.

**KARA KROPP:** Cool, they leveled up their language skills. I bet that came in handy on future temple breaking-in missions, right?

**JOY DOLO:** Wait, you're good at breaking in. Could you break into my Etsy account? There's a knitted Dumbledore doll that I really need for somebody's gift. And that somebody is me.

**HANIA:** Not long after this, the British beat the French army and took the Rosetta Stone. Eventually, they shipped it to London, where it still is today.

**KARA KROPP:** Safe and sound in a museum, so people can keep learning from it. Mission accomplished, cadets. Let's all eat some candy from my pockets to celebrate. Pocket mint, anyone? Hm?

**JOY DOLO:** Well, another way to look at it is that a super cool and important piece of history was taken from the place and people it came from. But this was just one example. Lots of stuff eventually left Egypt, in large part because of archaeologists.

**HANIA:** One of the most famous was a British guy named Flinders Petrie.

**FLINDERS PETRIE:** Hello, I'm so glad you could meet me. Flinders is the name. Archaeology is the game. Finding cool stuff is my claim to Fame.

**JOY DOLO:** Flinders was very good at what he did. He helped develop super accurate ways to document ancient findings.

**FLINDERS PETRIE:** Not to brag, but I'm sort of the Harry Styles of archaeological note taking.

**HANIA:** And he changed how people dug up stuff. Instead of using big shovels to find really big things, they started digging small amounts very slowly, so they wouldn't miss smaller artifacts too.

**FLINDERS PETRIE:** Slow and steady wins the race, I say. I'm like the tortoise in that story, if the tortoise was also a super famous archaeologist with a really cool beard.

**HANIA:** It is a pretty cool beard.

**JOY DOLO:** Right? Flinders started working in Egypt in the late 1800s, a time before planes or phones or cars, when you traveled by ship and wrote letters and read them by oil lamplight.

**HANIA:** And Petrie had a unique interest in Egypt. Here's Alice Stevenson. She's a professor at University College of London.

**ALICE** He's not interested in the big, fancy stuff. He's interested in the small and the everyday.

**STEVENSON:**

**JOY DOLO:** She says, instead of just looking for big statues or jewelry, he wanted to find cups or tools and other items used by everyday people.

**ALICE** And we often say that-- we have talked about Flinders Petrie as a hero in archaeology because it means you can  
**STEVENSON:** look at everyday lives. You can do much more interpretation about how everyday people lived on the basis of pottery and unassuming, unimpressive-looking things.

**HANIA:** But Alice says there was another reason Flinders might have gone after smaller, everyday artifacts.

**ALICE** Because it's just easier to get that sort of material out of Egypt than it is the big, fancy stuff.  
**STEVENSON:**

**JOY DOLO:** You see, the thing was, even in Flinders' day, you weren't supposed to just dig up and take stuff from other countries. There were rules against it.

**FLINDERS** It's true. It wasn't a game of Flinders Keepers. [LAUGHS] Get it? Because my name, Flinders, like Finders.  
**PETRIE:** [LAUGHS]

**HANIA:** Oh, we got it.

**FLINDERS** Great. Just making sure.  
**PETRIE:**

**JOY DOLO:** So Flinders came up with a plan. He made a deal with the person in charge of ancient artifacts in Egypt, who happened to be another foreigner, a French guy named Gaston Maspero.

**FLINDERS** Say, Gaston, I have an idea.  
**PETRIE:**

**GASTON** Oh, me too-- invisible baguettes. You could take them anywhere.  
**MASPERO:**

**FLINDERS** What? No. Definitely not that. My idea is, you know how you have so many cool things buried in Egypt?  
**PETRIE:**

**GASTON** Yep.  
**MASPERO:**

**FLINDERS** Man you know how you don't have all the time or money or expertise to take them all up?  
**PETRIE:**

**GASTON** Also yep.  
**MASPERO:**

**FLINDERS** What if-- just hear me out here-- what if I dig them up, and we split the findings? Of course, the really big, cool

**PETRIE:** stuff would stay in Egypt. But, you know, if there are doubles of anything, or, like, if there's stuff you don't want, then I could just take it and send it back to England. What do you say, Gaston?

**GASTON** Hmm. It's no invisible baguette, but I like it.

**MASPERO:**

**HANIA:** The idea was called partage, from the French word to share. It meant the British would help excavate stuff, but they only keep some of it.

**KARA KROPP:** Wait, pause here. Why were a French guy and a British guy making up rules for Egypt?

**JOY DOLO:** Great question, Kara Kropp, drop, and roll. During this time, Britain and France were both colonialist empires. That means they were busy trying to conquer other lands so they could control the resources and the people there.

**HANIA:** Often, these countries would force those people to speak their language and adopt their way of life. Egyptians fought back, but it would take nearly 100 years for many of these countries to become free again.

**JOY DOLO:** In the 1800s, France and England had both been fighting over Egypt. So at the time, they both felt it was their right to make decisions for the people there. Egyptians themselves didn't get much say in things.

**KARA KROPP:** That doesn't seem fair.

**HANIA:** Yeah. The more you think about it, the less sense it makes.

**JOY DOLO:** Just like invisible baguettes. I mean, if you put a tomato on one, would it just look like a floating tomato?

**HANIA:** Other countries ended up with rules like partage too, so people like Flinders had a legal way to take artifacts. But even so, not everyone followed the rules.

**JOY DOLO:** We'll tell you all about that in a minute. Right now, let's take a break and play--

**SUBJECT:** First Things First.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**JOY DOLO:** Today, we're looking at first system of writing, first evidence of cheese, and first depiction of juggling. [LAUGHS] Which do you think came first, which came second, and which came most recently? So, Hania, which one is oldest in your mind?

**HANIA:** The first system of writing.

**JOY DOLO:** Pencils must have been one of the first things created, I imagine, huh?

**HANIA:** Yeah, but they used the ink back then to write stuff. So--

**JOY DOLO:** Oh, yeah.

**HANIA:** --maybe since hieroglyphics was made back then, a long time ago, they used that.

**JOY DOLO:** So I agree. I think writing was probably one of the first ones. So now we have left is the first evidence of cheese and first depiction of juggling. So which one do you think came second, and which one is most recent in history?

**HANIA:** I think the one that came second was the first depiction of juggling.

**JOY DOLO:** Ah.

**HANIA:** And then the first evidence of cheese.

**JOY DOLO:** Oh, OK. So we have writing, juggling, and then cheese. So why juggling in second, and third is cheese?

**HANIA:** Well, cheese is like there's multiple flavors. And they couldn't have thought of all of those back then.

**JOY DOLO:** Right.

**HANIA:** You could think about new types of cheeses any time.

**JOY DOLO:** And what about juggling? Why do you think that's right in the middle?

**HANIA:** Because back then, in shows, like in circuses, they would do that. And maybe it was a tradition of it.

**JOY DOLO:** Yeah, that's right. There were circuses and traveling groups that would do juggling.

**HANIA:** Yeah.

**JOY DOLO:** Yeah, yeah. Just to recap, first, we have the first system of writing, and then depiction of juggling. And then the most recent, we think, is the first evidence of cheese.

**HANIA:** We'll get to the answers in just a bit.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**JOY DOLO:** If you have ideas for First Things First or topics you'd like to hear us cover on the show, please send them to us. Go to [ForeverAgo.org/contact](https://ForeverAgo.org/contact). History is everywhere. What do you want to explore? Tell us. Again, that's [ForeverAgo.org/contact](https://ForeverAgo.org/contact).

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**INTERVIEWER:** Did you know that Ancient Egyptians invented the first toothpaste? Ancient Egyptians cared a lot about dental hygiene. Toothpicks have been found next to mummified people in their tombs. And they even made hard candies out of frankincense, myrrh, cinnamon, and honey to cover up bad breath.

**KARA KROPP:** [HUFFS] Mm, mm. "Frankincense-y."

**INTERVIEWER:** Early ingredients of Egyptian toothpaste included powdered ox hooves, eggshells, and bits of stone.

**KARA KROPP:** Mm, mm, gritty. These ox hooves really make my smile shine.

**INTERVIEWER:** Archeologists found a detailed Egyptian toothpaste recipe from the fourth century that calls for rock salt, mint, dried iris flowers, and 20 grains of pepper. When this recipe was found about 20 years ago, Dr. [? Heinz ?] Newman, a dentist, tried the recipe. He told the newspaper *The Telegraph* that it was painful and made his gums bleed. But--

**KARA KROPP:** Afterwards, my mouth felt fresh and clean.

**INTERVIEWER:** Now, that's some historically fresh breath.

**JOY DOLO:** Thanks so much to all our listeners for sending in suggestions.

**HANIA:** We'll be right back.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**JOY DOLO:** All right, Hania. Let's reveal which of our First Things First is actually the oldest. [GASPS] Oh, my gosh. You are right, Hania.

**HANIA:** Really?

**JOY DOLO:** Yeah. You got them all right. You got them all right. So earliest system of writing-- that's the first one. That was the oldest in history. The earliest writing is found on clay tablets from Mesopotamia, dating to around 3200 BC, or more than 5,000 years ago. This system of writing was called cuneiform, and it wasn't a language. It was more like a multipurpose alphabet, a system of recording words and word sounds that was used by multiple ancient cultures at different times.

**HANIA:** Actually, in sixth grade, we learned about it, and we got to make clay artifacts and make up sentences.

**JOY DOLO:** Really? Oh, that's so neat. So you already know about cuneiform. The writing was made by pressing a wedge-shaped wooden stylus into small tablets made of clay. The tablets were dried in the sun and were sometimes wrapped in a little clay envelope if the message was private. There are hundreds of these little tablets preserved from archaeological sites. And if you were thinking these might be full of ancient secrets, well, they're mostly business receipts, letters back and forth between merchants, and tax documents.

So we got the first one right. And guess what? We got the second one right as well. Second up in most in history, second up in history, was earliest depiction of juggling. An ancient Egyptian tomb from around 1994 to 1781 BCE, around 4,000 years ago, contains wall paintings that depict female acrobats dancing and tossing multiple balls in the air. Jugglers and acrobats were a popular entertainers in the royal court of Ancient Egypt.

The pharaohs and their guests enjoyed having dinner and a show, much like moi. The tomb paintings are a way to show off that the person buried there was rich and fancy during his lifetime but were also there to provide entertainment in the afterlife. See, you were talking about circus stuff, too, so you were right on that one as well.

**HANIA:** I'm surprised.

**JOY DOLO:** You're surprised? I'm not. It sounds like your stuff. You know your Mesopotamia. You know your juggling. And apparently, you know your cheese as well. The world's oldest cheese was found at an archaeological site in China, and it dates to around 1500 BCE. That means the cheese is around 3,600 years old. Talk about aged.

The cheese was buried in a grave along with mummified people who were sent to the afterlife with a boat and some cheese for the journey. The extremely aged version of the cheese is hard and crumbly. But when it was fresh, it would have been soft like ricotta or fresh goat cheese.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

You're listening to *Forever Ago*. I'm Joy Dolo.

**HANIA:** I'm Hania.

**KARA KROPP:** And I'm Cara Kropp, sentient video game avatar who is currently rethinking her profession as the world's greatest temple breaker inner.

**JOY DOLO:** So, Hania, what stood out to you so far?

**HANIA:** Well, I'm happy to be on the podcast, and I'm very surprised I got all the questions right.

**JOY DOLO:** Yeah, yeah. You know what stood out to me, is I didn't know that you have a background already with some archaeological writings. How about you, Kara? What have you learned?

**KARA KROPP:** Well, starting out a few hundred years back, the British and the French fought over control of Egypt.

**JOY DOLO:** Yep.

**KARA KROPP:** And during that time, they started taking stuff from that place.

**HANIA:** Right.

**KARA KROPP:** And this one guy, Flinders Petrie, he came up with a deal that let foreigners take even more stuff.

**JOY DOLO:** Uh-huh.

**KARA KROPP:** And Joy's sweats are super cozy. You don't mind if I keep these, right?

**JOY DOLO:** Oh, I mind. I very much mind.

**HANIA:** What are you eating now, Kara?

**KARA KROPP:** A baguette. All that talk of invisible bread made me crave some.

**HANIA:** But that's not invisible.

**KARA KROPP:** It will be soon. Am I right? Ta-da. It disappeared. You'd be surprised how many calories it takes to be a famous breaker inner.

**JOY DOLO:** Anywho, when we left off, that deal partage made it easier for archaeologists to take stuff from Egypt. But not everyone was there to follow the rules.

**HANIA:** Lots of people started digging up and taking stuff illegally, too, without leaving anything for the Egyptian museums.

**JOY DOLO:** And often, people would have Egyptians who knew the land really well helped them find stuff. But they wouldn't give those people any of the credit.

**KARA KROPP:** So it would be like beating a tough level on two-player mode. But then player one doesn't share any of the points or power ups with player two? So devious.

**HANIA:** Super devious.

[CRASH]

**JOY DOLO:** Ah! What was that?

**KARA KROPP:** Oh, just breaking into a nut. These peanut shells are so tough. Please continue.

**JOY DOLO:** Part of the reason Europeans were so gaga for all things Egypt was that so much of that ancient civilization was still intact. It was just buried in sand. As people heard reports of explorers finding beautiful vases and elaborate jewelry and impressive sculptures, more people wanted some of their own.

**HANIA:** Yeah, it is really amazing stuff. It helps people imagine a time of wonders and wealth and kings and queens, even though that was only a small piece of what Ancient Egypt was really like.

**KARA KROPP:** Jeez, it makes me want to go back and stop these Europeans from taking all this stuff.

**JOY DOLO:** Well, Egyptians did push back. For example, they argued with the British over the discovery of King Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922. And the findings ended up staying in Egypt.

**HANIA:** And Egyptian scholars argued more treasures should stay in the country.

**JOY DOLO:** But it was hard when these powerful, rich foreigners kept coming to dig things up. And one thing the British were very interested in digging up was mummified human remains.

**HANIA:** You've probably seen pictures or drawings or cartoons of these. Mummified people were wrapped in these white bandages as part of an important religious ceremony.

**JOY DOLO:** When Ancient Egyptians did this ceremony, the people's bodies would dry out. So instead of rotting away and breaking down and becoming part of the Earth again like most bodies, these mummified bodies would stay in one piece and last hundreds of years.

**KARA KROPP:** Oh, you're talking about mummies. I've seen those.

**JOY DOLO:** Yeah, but calling them mummies makes it seem like they were always these wrapped things. And the word mummy is associated with monsters or villains. It's important to remember these were actual people, like your great, great, great, triple dipple, super duper long ago grandparent. That's why we like to call them mummified people instead of just mummies.

**HANIA:** Right. And in the 1800s, a lot of Europeans were obsessed with mummified people. They would write ghost stories about them, make up myths about them. They would even take them from their graves and have unwrapping parties.

**KARA KROPP:** What's an unwrapping party?

**HANIA:** It's pretty much what it sounds like.

**JOY DOLO:** Europeans would bring a mummified person to their country, then invite a bunch of people to come watch them unwrap the bandages from the body. They said it was for science, but the bodies would often get damaged in the process. Sometimes, they would even give guests pieces of the cloth wrappings as souvenirs.

**HANIA:** It's really upsetting when you think about it.

**KARA KROPP:** I'll say. Aren't they worried about an ancient curse? Where's my dynamite? I feel safer with it nearby. You can explode a curse, right?

**HANIA:** No. No more blowing up things, Kara.

**KARA KROPP:** But for real, aren't there books and movies and all that about these curses? Gives me the chilly willies just thinking about it.

**JOY DOLO:** Some historians think a lot of that stuff actually started with these unwrapping parties. It's believed that a writer went to one of these parties, then decided to write a story about a mummified person getting revenge. Then someone else picked up the idea, and someone else wrote about it. And on and on. Even Louisa May Alcott wrote a curse story.

**KARA KROPP:** Hold up. Louisa May Alcott, the author of *Little Women*, a.k.a. My favorite book?

**JOY DOLO:** Hold up. *Little Women* is your favorite book?

**KARA KROPP:** Hold up. Can't you tell I'm a Louisa May stan? I'm totally a Jo.

**HANIA:** Hold up. Video game characters read books?

**KARA KROPP:** You'd be surprised. I have a lot of time to read between breaking in and more breaking in. So people must have really been into these curse stories.

**JOY DOLO:** Yeah, there's drama, suspense, thrills, and chills. But it might have also been a way for these European writers to work through hard feelings they had about what they'd done. Here's professor Alice Stevenson again.

**ALICE STEVENSON:** It's a way of expressing fear of the unknown, fear of the other, about retribution, and I suspect guilt. I think there is guilt that you're desecrating graves. And it's not otherwise talked about in any other way. It goes into fiction in this sort of way.

**JOY DOLO:** Some people back then were talking about how white Europeans treated these ancient people's bodies. There's an article from 1827 in the *Freedmen's Journal* written by one of its founders, a Black writer and activist named John Brown Russwurm. After seeing one of these mummified bodies, he wrote, "I could not but mourn her present degradation. Have they not been torn from the vaulted supple curves and exhibited to a gazing world? Have not they, too, been bought and sold?" Russwurm saw a connection between how these dead bodies were stolen and put on display and how Black people were kidnapped from Africa and forced into slavery.

**KARA KROPP:** So maybe the curse stories were popular because white Europeans were feeling guilty about how they treated these people from Ancient Egypt?

**JOY DOLO:** That's one idea, yeah.

**KARA KROPP:** And so maybe my fear of curses has to do with all the temple breaking innings I've done.

**HANIA:** Could be.

**KARA KROPP:** Note to self-- bring this up with Dr. Mario.

**JOY DOLO:** Dr. Mario?

**KARA KROPP:** My therapist.

**HANIA:** You do therapy too? I'm impressed. For a two-dimensional character, you've got a lot of depth.

**KARA KROPP:** Thanks. So I'm getting the sense that the history of studying Egypt is pretty grim.

**JOY DOLO:** Well, not totally. Like my favorite kind of nuts, it's mixed. A lot of stuff was taken from Egypt disrespectfully and without permission. But historians also used these ancient treasures to do some amazing research. And they help spread a love of ancient Egypt far and wide. Now lots of people know about the art and culture of this amazing civilization. So, Hania, I know your family is Egyptian. And I just wonder, do you feel any connection to the people that created these artifacts?

**HANIA:** Yeah, because some of them are our ancient ancestors. So I feel like I know them when they made all of that artifacts.

**JOY DOLO:** Yeah, it's like having somebody in your family making something that you can look at and relate to. So you must feel connected to the things you see in the museums in a way.

**HANIA:** Yeah.

**JOY DOLO:** So we know that a lot of the artifacts were taken from Egypt and put in other museums around the world. How do you feel about that, having something of the culture, of your culture, taken and placed in other places?

**HANIA:** It's kind of, like, bad. Like, you're taking something from a country that it's part of, and it was made in Egypt. So why would you take it to somewhere else?

**JOY DOLO:** Yeah, so the thing is, when you see stuff in a museum, it's important to think about what you're seeing but also where it came from and how it got there. Who's telling the story of this object, and who didn't get to tell their own story? [? Noor ?] [? Tarabia, ?] the Egyptian student we heard from earlier, says she really wants people to think about this when they see an Egyptian artifact in a museum.

**[? NOOR TARABIA:]** [?] I think it would be nice if they knew that this isn't necessarily belonging here. This is actually from a real country that exists. It's not just something that existed out of nowhere a long time ago, and it's over. Like, this comes from a real country called Egypt, that has real people.

**JOY DOLO:** In fact, [? Noor ?] would love to see these objects returned to Egypt and put into that new museum where those mummified people from the parade are. Some countries like France are already giving some stuff back. What do you think about that idea, Hania?

**HANIA:** Yeah, I agree with her because they shouldn't be in places like France when France is not even close to Egypt.

**JOY DOLO:** Yeah, yeah, so taking the stuff that actually belongs to that country and bringing it back to the country. How would they feel if someone did that to them, you know?

**HANIA:** Yeah.

**KARA KROPP:** Wow. You've all given me a ton to think about. I need to go to some side quests to learn more.

**JOY DOLO:** Good luck, Kara Kropp. And please use the--

[EXPLOSION]

Ugh. Never mind.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

[TIMER DINGS]

**HANIA:** Finally, I'm starving.

**JOY DOLO:** Me too. Let's open the oven and-- I don't see anything.

**HANIA:** Perfect. We did it. Invisible baguettes. And they taste great.

**JOY DOLO:** So chewy. So invisible. So Ancient Egypt left us with a lot of amazing objects to study and learn from.

**HANIA:** Yeah, but lots of people took advantage of Egypt. And now those objects are spread around the world.

**JOY DOLO:** So remember, when you see an Ancient Egyptian tomb or vase in a museum, it's not just telling you a story about an old civilization from thousands of years ago. It's also telling a story about more recent history, too.

**HANIA:** Yup. Like an invisible baguette, there's way more than meets the eye. Kara, you're back.

**JOY DOLO:** And you used the door.

**KARA KROPP:** Hey, I know I just left, but I've been thinking about everything we just learned about the history of ancient artifacts. And I think people should know more about how things end up in museums. So I decided to hang up my adventure shorts for good. My new video game is *Kara Kropp-- Museum Docent*. And I get to wear these super cool cargo pants in my new job-- so many pockets.

**JOY DOLO:** That's great, Kerry Kropp. And look. You have a little name tag and everything.

**KARA KROPP:** Oh, and, Joy? I have a surprise for you. I used my temple breaking-inning skills one last time to break into Etsy and get your password.

**JOY DOLO:** You did? What is it?

**KARA KROPP:** joyspassword, all one word, lowercase.

**JOY DOLO:** Uh, genius. No wonder I couldn't remember. Knitted Dumbledore doll, here I come.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

[LISTING HONOR ROLL]

Do you have a topic that you really want to know the history of? Send it to us [foreverago.org/contact](https://foreverago.org/contact). History is all around us. We'll be back next week with a super cool episode on the history of pens. See you next time, and thanks for listening.

[MUSIC PLAYING]