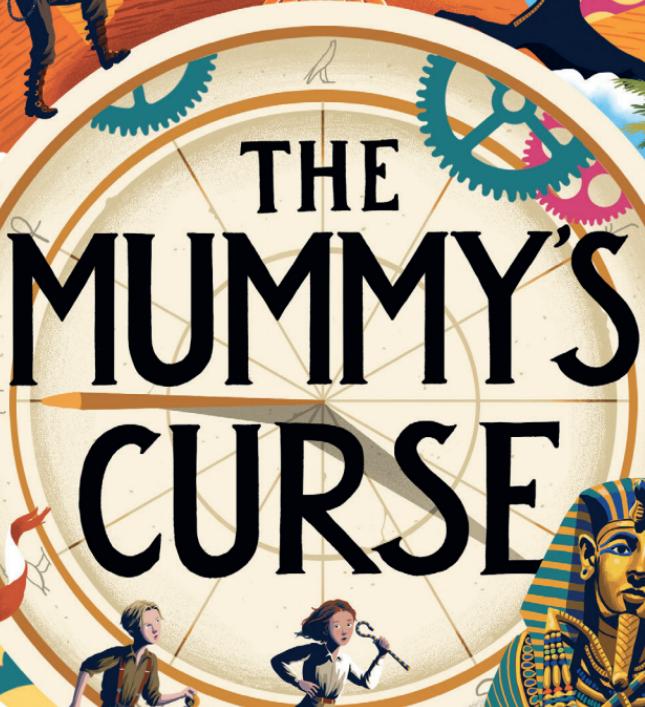




THE
BUTTERFLY
CLUB



THE MUMMY'S CURSE



M.A. BENNETT

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‘A hugely entertaining mystery’ – *The Bookseller*

‘An exciting and intriguing adventure’
– *The Week Junior*

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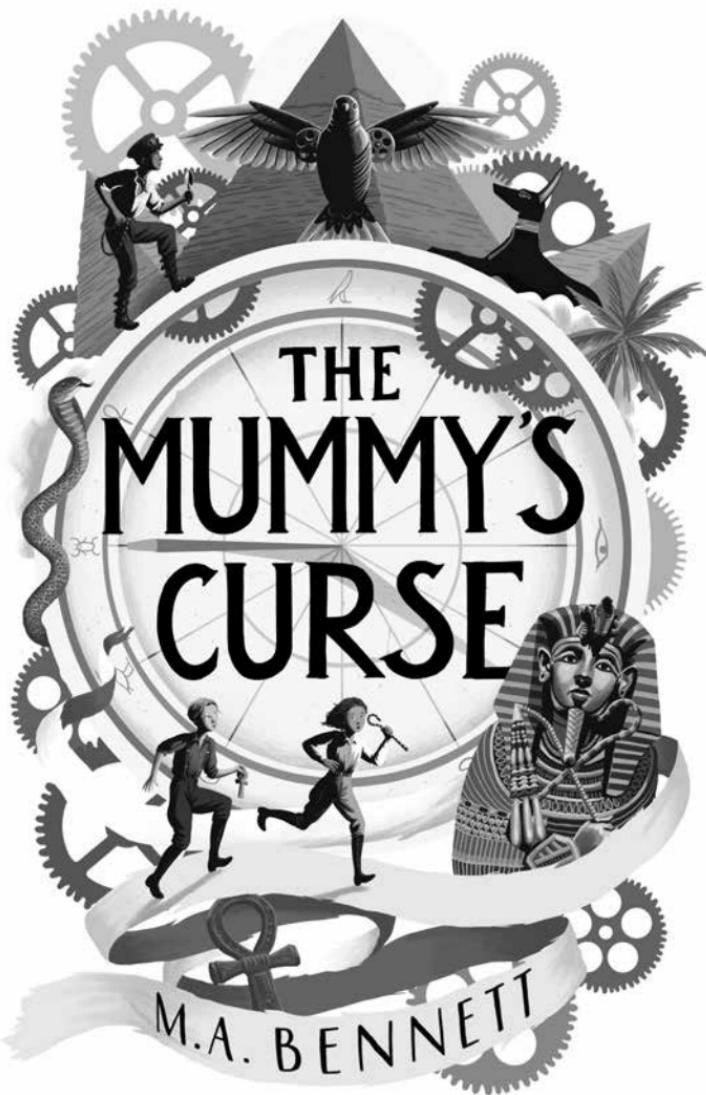
‘The end is just the beginning and I for one look forward to joining the Butterfly Club and travelling with them to different times and places. This is a series to devour!’

– *My Shelves Are Full*

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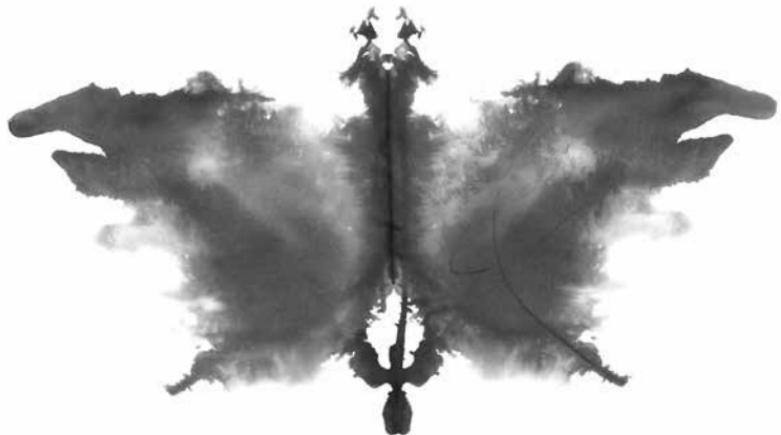
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Dear Reader,

If you are reading this you are already a time traveller, because this is the year 1894 and Queen Victoria is on the throne.

And if you are reading this you must be a friend, so I feel all right about sharing with you the secrets of The Butterfly Club.

Let me begin at the beginning. My name is Luna and I suppose you would call me a time-thief. I live in a rather smart part of London with my Aunt Grace, who's been looking after me ever since my father disappeared. One Thursday Aunt Grace took me with her to her secret society, The Butterfly Club.

The Butterfly Club meets every Thursday afternoon in Greenwich, at the famous Royal Observatory, which is the Home of Time. It's called that because there is a long brass line running through the courtyard of the observatory called the Prime Meridian, the point from which all time is measured.

Deep in the belly of the observatory is the Butterfly Room, a twelve-sided secret chamber where the Butterfly Club meet. It's called the Butterfly Room because there are butterflies on the walls - those dead ones pinned to little cards - in all the colours of the rainbow. The members of the Butterfly Club are the finest minds of Victorian society - people you might have heard of even in your time, people like Charles Dickens, Charles Darwin and Florence Nightingale.

And that's where I met my fellow time thieves. You see, there are three of us.

Konstantin is from Prussia, he has loads of brothers who are all soldiers, and his father, Dr Tanius Kass, is a very clever inventor. Konstantin loves everything military, but because he was so ill when he was little, he couldn't be a soldier himself. But Konstantin is

special in his own way, because he has a mechanical heart. His own heart didn't work so his father replaced it with a clockwork one.

The third time-thief is Aidan. Aidan is Irish, and he is a navigational engineer (or 'navvy') who's been working on the railways ever since he was ten. Aidan knows everything there is to know about machines, and sometimes I think he loves them better than people. And, like Konstantin, Aidan has a secret too; which he also keeps his very close to his chest.

The three of us are called time-thieves because we've been travelling in time, carrying out missions for the Butterfly Club. We use a contraption called the Time Train, which was designed by HG Wells, one of the club's members. We travel forward in time to collect inventions and treasures from the future. We never go backwards. The whole point is to bring back things which our age doesn't have yet, to speed up progress. Aunt Grace says our thieving is for 'the betterment of society'. I hope she's right. The Butterfly Club certainly seem to get a lot of money and prizes out of it.

Well, dear reader, Aidan, Konstantin and me have had quite a few journeys through the decades since the day we met, and faced many dangers, and you can read all about them.

I hope you enjoy our adventures!

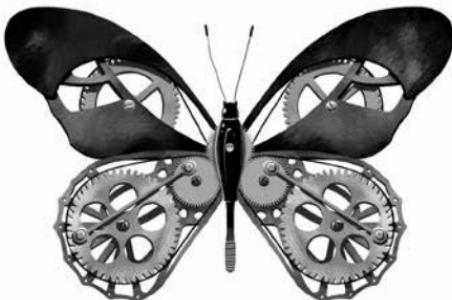
Yours until the end of time,
Luna Goodhart x

PS: I'll write again, but always look out for the ink butterfly (above) when I do. It's called a Rorschach blot, every one is different, and that's how you'll know the letter is from me.

LONDON

25 JANUARY 1894





25 JANUARY 1894

11.55 a.m.

Thursday found Luna Goodhart curled up in a window seat, staring out at the snowy London street.

She couldn't wait for the hansom cab to come to take them to the Butterfly Club, and this time she was ready well before her aunt. She'd chosen her dress carefully – it was the vivid indigo of the Great Purple Emperor butterfly, a specimen of which was pinned to the hallway wall in the midst of all its brightly coloured brothers and sisters. She'd also put on a warm carriage cloak and a fur muff in readiness. It was important that she dressed in her best, for that afternoon, she fervently hoped, she would be seeing her fellow time-thieves again.

It was odd, after spending every waking minute with Konstantin and Aidan, to adjust to not seeing them at all.

Konstantin, so far as she knew, was living with his father in Whitehall, somewhere near Horse Guards Parade, which seemed a fittingly military place for him to be. Aidan was living with his father in lodgings in Kilburn – nice and handy for working on the railway tracks for a brand-new line at King's Cross.

It had only been ten days, but she missed them terribly. She missed Konstantin's Prussian accent, his old-world courtesy and his tin-soldier bravery. She missed Aidan's machine-mad passion and his crazy clothes cobbled together with cogs. She even missed his insolent grin. Being back in the tall, skinny house in Kensington, with nothing but the butterflies on the wall for company, was a poor substitute for the two brothers she had found.

She had wondered too, in the past week, if she could expect the return of her father. So convinced was she that he'd been the enterprising fellow who'd managed to post himself off the *Titanic* in a mail bag, that she'd almost expected him to walk back into her life. At the very least she'd expected a letter, and she'd shaken out the pages of every boring book in the library, hoping to find a letter with a Rorschach blot, but there was nothing in them but long scientific words affixed firmly to the pages. Life seemed to pick up where she'd left it off, and however many times

she thought she'd seen a lock of auburn hair in a crowd, peeping from a stovepipe hat or a bowler, it wasn't Papa.

The casement clock in the hall chimed noon, and Aunt Grace came to stand behind her, laying a pale hand on her purple shoulder. Aunt Grace had also dressed in her best – the acid orange of a Banded Orange Tiger butterfly, a hue which clashed beautifully with her auburn hair. Aunt Grace had been an angel all week – much kinder than she'd ever been, so delighted was she with Luna's success aboard the *Titanic*. It had taken the Butterfly Club a matter of days to make Guglielmo Marconi's continuous spark wireless radio from the notes Luna had taken from the physicist's dictation, and now the secret society was on course to win the Gabriel Medal and the thousand gold sovereigns that were in the gift of Queen Victoria. So Aunt Grace had spent the week practically purring.

Taking advantage of this good mood, Luna felt she could be a little more forthright than she had been before. 'Hurry up, Aunt! The hansom cab will be here any moment.'

Aunt Grace smiled, the way she'd been smiling all week – like the cat who'd got the cream. 'Actually, my dear, you are going on a little expedition first. I will meet you at the Butterfly Club later.'

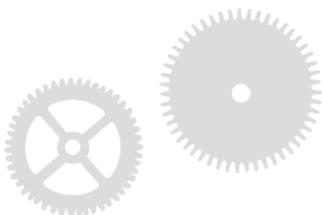
‘On my own?’ Luna, who had been to the future and back, still didn’t relish the thought of a solo cab ride around London.

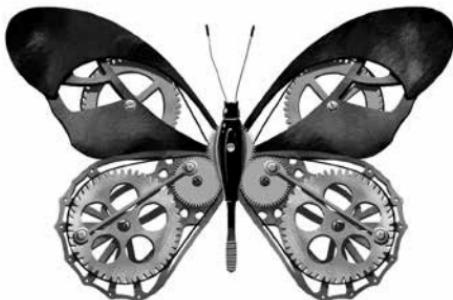
‘No, no,’ said her aunt. ‘You will have a very special chaperone.’

At that moment there was the clamour of horseshoes on the street. A very grand carriage, pulled by four black horses instead of the single nag which usually pulled a hansom cab, stopped in front of the house in a flurry of snow and a spark of hooves. The four were perfectly matched and stood tossing their heads, as if they knew how handsome they were. Their coats were so shiny they looked like they were made of patent leather. The black coach was just as shiny, and through the falling snow Luna could just make out the golden monogram on the carriage door. It read:

A C D

A gloved hand opened the door from the inside and a gentleman in a top hat leant forward. Luna recognised the moustaches first. They belonged to the famous author, Mr Arthur Conan Doyle.





25 JANUARY 1894

Noon

‘Well,’ said Aunt Grace fondly, ‘go on then.’

‘I am to go with Mr Conan Doyle?’ said Luna, wide-eyed.

‘Yes. He is taking you for a treat. By way of a thank you for your successful mission.’

Luna got up and smoothed down her purple skirts. ‘What manner of treat?’

Aunt Grace’s smile widened. ‘You’ll see.’

Luna trod carefully through the falling snow, pulling her carriage cloak close over her purple dress.

As she approached the coach a gloved hand reached out to help her up. On the pale inches of skin between glove and sleeve she could clearly see the black stamp of a butterfly tattoo. As she took the proffered hand she recalled

that this whole thing had started with Aunt Grace's hand in a glove – when her aunt had come to collect her from Papa's house in Greenwich. What manner of adventure was she embarking on this time?

Luna clambered into the carriage and settled herself across from the author. She had experienced some strange things in the past days and this was certainly one of them. But she needn't have worried. She found herself on the receiving end of the most sincere and heartfelt thank-you speech she had ever heard, all delivered in Conan Doyle's soft Scottish accent.

'Really,' finished Mr Conan Doyle, 'I and the other members of the Butterfly Club are most indebted to you, and your fellow time travellers. With your mission to the *Titanic*, and your recruitment of Signor Guglielmo Marconi, you have done an incalculable service and certainly secured our funding for our next venture.'

Luna felt emboldened to ask, 'Which is what?'

Conan Doyle's answer was the very same as the one Aunt Grace had given that first day at the Royal Observatory. 'All in good time.' He rapped his cane on the roof of the carriage and, with a jolt, it pulled away.

The carriage was beautifully warm and the wheels well sprung, not at all like the tooth-rattling hansom cabs. She

enjoyed looking from the window at the snowy scenes of London; the snowbones made by the carriage wheels on the roads; the white expanses of Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park, their trees and fountains now blunted and lumpy with snow. Since it was the dead of winter the lamplighters were already placing their ladders on the lanterns, climbing up with bright tapers to light the wicks.

Luna could only gaze from the window for so long – the silence stretched and soon there must be conversation. But, as it turned out, she didn't have to worry about what to say. People began to shout at the carriage, recognising the gilded monogram as it went by.

‘Why d’you kill ’im off, Mr Doyle?’

‘It’s a bleedin’ crime, sir!’

‘How could you do it to ’im?’

Some were friendly, some were plaintive, but some shook their fists.

Luna pulled her head in and sat back in her seat, staring at Mr Conan Doyle in surprise. ‘Who are they talking about?’

His mouth twisted. ‘Sherlock Holmes, naturally.’

Of course. It was the talk of London. Mr Conan Doyle’s enormously popular Sherlock Holmes stories, in which the Great Detective solved crimes with his sidekick

Dr Watson, were published weekly in *The Strand Magazine* to great acclaim. But in the most recent instalment, Sherlock Holmes had been killed when his nemesis Moriarty had thrown him from a waterfall, and the nation was in shock. Mr Conan Doyle smiled ruefully. 'Anyone would think I murdered the blighter.'

'Well,' said Luna, encouraged by his friendliness. 'In a way, you did.'

'Don't they understand?' cried Mr Conan Doyle. 'I just want to be a historical novelist. The present holds no joy for me. My new passion is the past. And sometimes to reach the past, one has to travel by way of the future.'

Luna didn't even attempt to understand this. 'Where are we going?'

'We are going to see someone who is dead.'

This sounded like a very odd treat to Luna, but she was slightly reassured when the carriage pulled up at the vast and noble frontage of the British Museum. She loved the British Museum and Papa had taken her there many times as a little girl. To her it was a treasure box and a treat indeed.

But as the driver handed her down from the carriage, the shouted remarks addressed to Mr Conan Doyle began again. Luna began to appreciate just how hard it must be

for that gentleman to go about town at the moment. Even the coachman had to add his tuppenny-worth. 'When you bringing 'im back, mister?'

'I'm not,' said Conan Doyle shortly as he slammed the carriage door. 'I promise you: Sherlock Holmes is dead and gone. And I always keep my promises.'

The British Museum had never looked more impressive. In the low winter sun the wide stone steps, the mighty pillars and the triangular portico were turned to rose gold – the very building was a treasure in itself. Mr Conan Doyle gave Luna his arm and they began to mount the stone stairs, and it was then a curious thing happened.

A lone black dog trotted across the museum steps. His muzzle was long, his coat was short and sleek and two long ears stood straight up from his head like a jackal's. He turned to look directly at them with almond eyes, then slunk away. 'He's a long way from home,' said Mr Conan Doyle. 'Some stray, doubtless.'

Mr Conan Doyle led her through the crowds of people in the public halls, enduring yet more shouted enquiries about his deceased character, this time a bit more genteel than the cries on the street.

'Oh, Mr Doyle, why did you do it?'

'Mr Doyle, we are *quite* devastated.'

'We are positively in *mourning*, Mr Doyle.'

The object of their disapproval lowered his head and ploughed on. 'I swear, I will shave these moustaches off if this continues,' he said bitterly.

They passed huge stone lions from Assyria, golden sarcophagi from Egypt and winged marble horses from ancient Greece. Mr Conan Doyle spared them not a glance. He hurried up the grand staircase and then took Luna through a little door all but hidden in the shadows. The crowds, abruptly, disappeared.

They walked along a passageway lined with blank-eyed statues, and into an intimate lecture theatre. The auditorium, with dark wood seats steeply raked down to a little stage in the middle, was like an old operating theatre in the great medical hospitals like St Bart's. There was no natural light, no reassuring evidence that it was still daylight outside. This was a gathering of the night. The place was lit by thousands of candles, set upon the wooden pews, which gave the whole proceeding the air of an ancient ritual.

The theatre was packed with people, but they seemed to be a more learned crowd than the general public in the rest of the museum. There were very many distinguished-looking ladies and gentlemen, and lots of them had

notepads or sketchbooks with them. In the buzz of learned chatter Luna was reminded of the Butterfly Club.

We're going to see someone who is dead. From all the comments and catcalls on the way there, she had a dark fantasy that Mr Sherlock Holmes himself would be appearing on the little stage. But for one thing, Mr Sherlock Holmes was a fictional character and for another, this was a lecture, not a séance. Luna gave up trying to guess, and shuffled along the row to two empty seats set in a prime position to see the stage. Two familiar figures were already seated in their row. Luna turned to Mr Conan Doyle, beaming with delight.

He smiled below the impressive moustaches. 'I neglected to say,' he said, 'when I said we were going to see someone who is dead, that we would also be seeing two someones who are very much alive.'

Both of the boys leapt to their feet. 'It is very good to see you, *Fräulein*,' said Konstantin, kissing her hand in a courtly way.

Aidan took the same hand and pumped it up and down like a piston. 'Jesus, Mary and Joseph, you're a sight for sore eyes, Duch,' he said, grinning all over his face.

So were they. Konstantin was wearing a suit of Prussian Blue cloth, and although it wasn't strictly a uniform, the brass buttons gave it a military air. His blonde hair and

grey eyes shone – the clockwork heart must be doing its work well. Aidan looked as outlandish as ever, in a way that entirely suited him. His clothes, as iron grey and steam white as his beloved engines, were embellished with cogs and chains and buckles. His black hair, crammed under a cap and goggles, had still not seen a comb, and his startling blue eyes shone out from his tanned face.

‘How’ve you been, me old duch?’ he enquired, with his usual disregard for manners.

‘Bored,’ she said honestly.

‘Same here,’ said Konstantin. ‘How about you, Aidan?’

‘No time for that,’ he said. ‘I’ve been building a little thing called the Great Northern Railway. You’re welcome, by the way.’ The trademark grin widened. ‘What are we all doing here, do we know?’

‘No idea,’ whispered Luna.

Mr Conan Doyle leant across to them. ‘It’s something called an Unwrapping.’

‘An Unwrapping?’ repeated Luna. ‘An Unwrapping of what?’

‘Shhh,’ said Mr Conan Doyle, placing his forefinger below his moustaches and over his mouth. ‘It begins.’



WOULD YOU RISK THE FUTURE
TO CHANGE THE PAST?

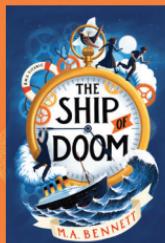
LUNA, KONSTANTIN and AIDAN are time-travelling thieves, stealing artefacts from the future to bring progress forward. And they are about to venture on their most treacherous mission.

For THE BUTTERFLY CLUB have their eyes on a shiny new prize. In Egypt's Valley of the Kings a man named Howard Carter will stumble upon an unimaginable treasure – Tutankhamun's mummy: the greatest archaeological discovery of all time.

The three children are given an impossible task: travel to 1922 and uncover the mummy first.

But when the time-thieves disturb Tutankhamun's long sleep they wake something else too – a deadly and ancient curse.

And now they must face the terrifying consequences of their actions...



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