THERE WAS A TIME

 He worked in the Foreign Service for the United States Government, and was stationed in Cairo, Egypt. His specialty was perusing purloined classified documents written in Arabic and translating anything of importance into English for the U.S. Ambassador, Franklin Riggs.

 His name was Vincent Fyad, age thirty-three and single. His mother was Albanian and his father was Lebanese. He had been recruited directly upon finishing his degree in Middle Eastern languages at Georgetown University, and had been on the job in his State Department section for eight years.

 His duties were routine enough, and his salary and perks were generous, but what Vincent really longed for was to be more like Howard Carter, the famed discoverer of King Tut's untouched tomb, in 1922, which was found quite by accident in the Valley of the Kings, across the Nile River from Luxor. If I could only find just one undiscovered tomb from the glory days of the Pharaohs! Fyad wished.

 Of course, he knew the harsh laws -- especially against foreigners -- regarding unauthorized, illegal digging for any historic artifacts in the country. If he was caught doing something forbidden, he could wind up in prison, lose his job, and later be deported. Still, his expertise in Arabic tempted him to hang around the poorer areas of Cairo where there were regular rumors and gossip about potential grave-robbing and treasure hunting. Sales on the black market in Egypt of specific genuine artifacts were rife. Smuggling such items out of the country was a lucrative business, and had been for centuries.

 But Fyad had a better idea. He was privy to the occasional examination of high-altitude Egyptian satellite reconnaissance photos as part of his security rating relating to his classified translations.

 His last view of such photos revealed three small mound areas in the remote Western Desert, in a place formally referred to as the Quattara Depression. The mounds were in the rough shape of a triangle, with perhaps three meters of space between the mounds at their angle points. Department experts he casually talked with claimed that such areas were unimportant, and were most likely mere limestone outcrops covered by the eternally drifting sands of the Sahara.

 Located about 650 kilometers west of Cairo, Vincent knew that virtually nobody ever ventured out into the Western Desert, such was its stark emptiness and fearful remoteness. Plus, the nearest water in this hellish region was at Siwa Oasis, some 325 kilometers further west, close to the Libyan border.

 Still, Fyad was intrigued with his imaginings.

 He recalled, for example, how detailed aerial photos of the Yucatan peninsula in Mexico indicated hundreds of unearthed Mayan structures -- possibly even some entire lost cities -- buried for centuries under the relentless advance of the wild tropical jungle. Archeologists from abroad, and the Mexican government itself, could not afford much funding to undertake such vast, yet important, excavations.

 So, on his next fortnight vacation, when March came around, Vincent equipped himself and his beige Land Rover for a personal exploration of his theory. He loaded a tent, a light down sleeping bag, a pick and shovel, food, water, fuel, and, lastly, a high-tech satellite telephone borrowed from work -- in case of emergency, there being no cell phone signals or wi-fi capability this far from civilization.

 He would just miss the start of the blazing season of desert heat, if he was lucky. He would drive the flat dirt/sand track used by truckers, going southwest from Cairo to the Bahariya Oasis, rest there for the night, then go totally off-road north -- before first light, hence being unnoticed -- to the site of the three mounds, using the precise GPS coordinates he had earlier compiled of the unique triangle area. Would he ultimately be disappointed, like those who claimed they saw a carved 'face' on the surface of Mars in certain NASA photographs -- only to find that it was nothing more than a peculiar play of shadow and light on a raised natural rock outcrop? Vincent fervently hoped not.

 When Fyad arrived at his remote destination the following morning around 10 a.m., he set up his tent, and then went right to work. Each of the three mounds was about twelve meters long and five meters wide. He began digging.

 Vincent discovered, after three hours of sweaty physical labor, that two of the three mounds were indeed nothing but hard limestone outcrops that had been buried by drifting sands over the years. It looked at this point like his lost tomb quest was going to be futile.

 But when Fyad commenced to dig into the third mound -- after a lunch break of cold tinned tuna, fruit, and pita bread, with plenty of water -- he was encouraged when he kept going down and down again with his shovel. A few moments later, he hit some kind of flat stone chamber. Scooping the remaining sand away with both hands, he was overjoyed when he suddenly spied a sealed door! This had to be a tomb! he was convinced. Using the camera on his iPad, Vincent took some quick photos and made a brief video of his progress along with some descriptive commentary.

 The clay seal on the door appeared to have been untouched since it was first attached thousands of years earlier. But, oddly, there was no cartouche or hieroglyphic symbols upon it.

 Photographing each step, Vincent Fyad broke the ancient seal and lifted the doorway panel and propped it open with his shovel. Quickly grabbing a battery-powered lantern from his Land Rover, the eager explorer returned to the tomb. The lantern's light revealed stone steps leading downward into cooler, pitch darkness. Vincent crept slowly down and inside.

 When the level floor of the chamber was reached, Fyad held his lantern high and swept it slowly around the room. The air was fetid, its odor musty, like the rot of a dead animal. The strange atmosphere smelled of time -- as of ages long past.

 But what startled Vincent most was that the four walls of the chamber were completely unadorned -- he saw no hieroglyphics, no descriptive colored murals featuring people, animals or gods, no decorations, nothing. Only a raised stone bier in the center of the room, with a large, stained, once ivory-white shroud covering something on top of it.

 Fyad approached the mysterious setting.

 Carefully drawing back the disintegrating and dust-choked cloth, Vincent found himself staring at the remains of a male corpse.

 Surprisingly, it was not formally mummified, in that it had not apparently been embalmed and then wrapped in the usual manner -- with sacred, anointed, linen bandages. Instead, the skin of the corpse had turned blackish-brown over the millennia. The eyes of the deceased were closed in eternal repose, but the mouth was opened wide, revealing a full set of surprisingly good, white teeth. The tongue, meanwhile, had shriveled to one-third of its normal size. Beard stubble was visible on the cheeks and chin, and some tuffs of light brown hair remained on the scalp. The eyelashes and eyebrows, however, had long ago disintegrated.

 His curiosity increasing as he continued to document his find by taking still more iPad photos, Vincent pulled the deteriorating sheet completely up and gently peeked underneath. The naked body resembled nothing more than a large slab of dried beef jerky, with the addition of four human limbs and a head.

 That was when Fyad's eye caught a flash of gold on the left wrist of the deceased. But it wasn't an Egyptian bracelet or amulet, as one might of expected.

 Instead -- incredibly -- it was a wristwatch!

 The letters BULOVA were clearly marked at the top of the timepiece, under the still intact crystal face. The time, in modern Arabic numerals, was stopped at 3:46, and the seconds time arrow on a tiny inset gauge at the bottom of the watch face had ceased at the number 3. The leather strap attaching the watch to the man's wrist had understandably almost completely rotted away.

 Vincent's first thought was that this was some kind of prank or hoax. Someone had obviously sneaked into the tomb at some unknown time and placed it here, then carefully resealed the underground grave's entranceway.

 But why would anyone go through such unusual trouble?

 Fyad then realized another theory, improbable and fantastic as anyone could imagine: Could he now be staring at the remains of a time traveler from a more modern age who had somehow traveled back here, thousands of years ago?

 Unable to restrain himself, Vincent slowly removed the wristwatch from the silent corpse. The wrist strap mostly crumbled into dusty remnants. He touched the protruding watch winding stem and moved it back and forth, but the timepiece gave no response. No real surprise there, given its centuries of not working, Fyad realized. Next, he turned the gold-cased wristwatch over.

 Some letters in fancy English script had been inscribed on the back of the case. They spelled out two words: *Horace Trek*.

 The owners name? Vincent wondered.

 Taking out a clean white handkerchief from his cargo pants pocket, he placed the watch -- with a few shreds of its rotting leather strap -- upon it and wrapped it up. This, and his many photos and videos, would be his only tangible proof of what he had discovered.

 Next, he was drawn to the striking set of excellent teeth of the long dead body. Although his mother had already passed away and he only had one living sibling -- a sister, Dana -- Vincent's father was still a practicing dentist back in Virginia. He would want to see close-up photos of this remarkable ancient set of teeth! So Vincent brought his lantern closer to the mouth of the corpse for better lighting and clicked away.

 That was when he noticed the silver cavity fillings in two of the lower molars.

 Formally called dental amalgam, Fyad knew that these were commonly used in dentistry, until the advent of more modern white cavity fillings made from composite resin. Dental amalgam was a blended mixture of silver, copper, tin, zinc, and mercury -- but such a technique was obviously never available to the ancient Egyptians. From perusing his father's dentistry textbooks as a curious teenager, Vincent recalled learning that this dental method became widespread in Europe and America only beginning in the early 1830s.

 Eager to also photograph the upper set of teeth for his father, Fyad moved his battery lantern into yet another better lighting position, then gently further pried open the dead man's jaw with his fingers. But when he did, an upper molar was unexpectedly dislodged, and it dropped out into Vincent's hand. Upon quick examination, he noticed that it, too, had a silver filling. Not knowing what else to do, the explorer placed the lost tooth into a different pocket of his pants. Another piece of evidence of this baffling puzzle! he mused. Plus, his father would certainly want to examine such an historic tooth at length.

 For now, Fyad's work was done. He replaced the shroud as best he could over the corpse out of respect, took some final photographs, and climbed out of the burial chamber back into the bright desert sunshine. It had warmed up considerably since he had been underground, but the heat was not too bad. Removing his propped up shovel, he carefully closed the entrance door, then scooped sand back over the area to cover his tracks. Looking around in every direction, he saw no one. He and he alone had accomplished what others had missed! Now, Vincent had to decide his next move. Hungry and thirsty, he first took another cold, quick meal and water break, and then retired into his tent for a brief, welcomed nap.

 He woke up a half- hour later. It was just past five in the waning afternoon -- too late to pack up and drive back to Bahariya Oasis, let alone all the way back to Cairo. So Vincent simply waited until sunset to run out the evening. He marveled at the incredible display of stars in the crystal-clear night sky. He summarized in his mind what he would tell his long-time girlfriend, Kathryn, about his discovery, when the right time came. A campfire would have been nice, too, he realized, to help thwart the night chill, but obviously there was no wood to be found. He thought some more, and snacked some more, and drank still more water. But eventually, the amateur explorer went to sleep, exhausted, in his light down blue sleeping bag.

 At dawn, Fyad organized himself and started back south and east, and headed home to Cairo. He had decided to tell no one about his unique discovery. He needed to do more research first on his two rare and unusual artifacts.

 Fully aware back at his apartment that he had nine more remaining days of vacation, Fyad decided to book a flight to Washington, DC. There, he would seek out at the Smithsonian Institution one of their top antique experts -- someone who might reveal more detailed information about the mysterious wristwatch. Afterwards, he would visit his father at his dental office in nearby Alexandria, Virginia, to share the ancient found molar and get his Dad's input on its age and condition. Lastly, Vincent needed to find out exactly who this 'Horace Trek' person was, and determine why his Bulova wristwatch was on the arm of a decaying, unknown corpse, lying in an ancient Egyptian tomb.

 At the Smithsonian two days later, using his official State Department Foreign Service credentials, Fyad was introduced to Milford Branaugh, the Institution's foremost expert in antique American jewelry, including time pieces. Vincent outright lied to the man, saying that he had found the watch in the sands near the ruins of Memphis, one of Egypt's former capital cities.

 Branaugh made exact measurements with his careful examination of the wristwatch in question. He wore a black professional jeweler's loupe in his right eye. He was mindful of preserving the slight shreds of leather strap still attached to the top and bottom of the watch.

 "Yes, I know this model, Mr. Fyad...This is a classic Bulova from the early 1930s, favored at that time by those living in New York City. Not many were produced or purchased, given their expense, and given that the world was in the grips of the Great Depression. Its casing is made from 10-carat gold. Its serial/registry number is inside the back panel. This fine watch is 6 mm. thick, 21 mm. wide, and 32 mm. tall -- hence, nicely rectangular in shape and relatively flat. The strap was made of crocodile leather, with brown thread used in the stitching. At auction today, a working model of this watch, in pristine condition, would be worth about $6000. Considering where you found it -- somewhere in the Egyptian desert, you say? -- it could be dissembled and cleaned and probably be made to keep time again, if you so desired. As for the inscribed name on the back, I'm afraid I cannot help you there. I hope my information was useful to you, however."

 Vincent heartily thanked Milford for his expertise, and then made his way directly out to his rental car, for the short drive to his father's dental office in Alexandria, VA. He had earlier phoned him to arrange a visit.

 Arriving minutes before the closing office hour of 4:00 p.m., father and son warmly embraced. Vincent noticed that his father's neatly trimmed beard was more flecked with grey since the last time they saw each other eight months earlier, but his Dad still looked fit and robust for his fifty-five years. The office manager, appointment secretary and three dental assistants soon left, so the pair was given their privacy.

 After inquiring about his sister, Dana, and her growing family, Vincent unveiled his ancient prized molar from a small, folded square of clean, red cloth. He told his father the entire true story of what he had discovered, including the Bulova wristwatch, which he also produced for his father's inspection.

 His father -- Dr. Aziz Fyad, D.D.S. -- was very impressed. Attaching a small, bendable magnifying lens to the side of his eyeglasses, he slowly inspected the tooth.

 "Yes, my son, this amalgam blend is only about a century old, and certainly not thousands of years ago from the days of the Pharaohs! The dental bone itself is in good condition too. Its owner was probably around fifty years old when he died. You say you were told that the Bulova was from the 1930s in New York? My best guess is that the owner of this tooth also had his dental work done there during that time. By the way, I also noticed this molar still has some microscopic tissue remnants where its root, nerves, and blood vessel were once attached at the jaw."

 Vincent next showed his father his iPad video and still photos of the corpse's full upper and lower jaw -- with all the teeth intact, showing the other silver molar fillings too.

 "Incredible!" Aziz exclaimed "The man's body appears thousands of years old, yet his teeth are barely affected by either time or age!"

 Father and son both needed to eat by now, however, so they went to his father's favorite Lebanese restaurant down the street to continue their visit and discussion.

 "Dad, how can I find out more about this mystery man Horace Trek?" Vincent wanted to know, over their satisfying meal of hummus, lamb kafta, and kibbeh. They enjoyed kanafeh for dessert, with coffee.

 "Well, the obvious place to start is on the Internet, by searching for his name during the 1930s era in New York City. See if you can locate an address, or family records, to determine if there are any living relatives of his still around today. And one other thing: Fortunately, you have detailed dental photos of his dental work. There is a National Database of American Dental Records that has been compiled using computer scans over the last decade or so. Lucky for you, it is headquartered nearby, right in downtown DC. Beginning with our current era, it has been proceeding backward in time, collecting all available data from dental files across the country. I don't know if it includes information back as far as the 1930s yet, but check into it. Teeth and their dental work are similar to specific fingerprints. That's how, for example, they definitively matched up the mutilated 1918 remains of Russian Czar Nicholas II and his massacred family when they were rediscovered in 1998, or how they identified the bodies of infamous escaped Nazis after World War II. The Database registry would have the names and addresses of every dental patient, Vincent, so maybe your mystery man, Horace Trek, can be traced that way."

 Father and son parted ways after finishing their welcomed and useful visit.

 Vincent then had a new idea: Why not try carbon-dating the tooth? His father admitted that some tiny tissue particles still remained inside the base of the molar. Those could be tested! And we could then know approximately how old the tooth --and its owner -- were, and how long they had been buried.

 So it was back to the Smithsonian in Washington. Fyad went to a different department, and concocted another false story as to why the State Department needed to know the age probability of this particular 'mummy's' molar.

 Mercifully, the ruse worked. The scientist in charge was agreeable. He went right to work in his laboratory, with the latest high-tech equipment.

 The results took six hours, while Vincent patiently waited back at his DC hotel.

 The official determination, when Fyad returned to reclaim his dental artifact: The tooth was 4600 years old -- in other words, it came from around 2600 B.C., plus or minus a hundred years.

 Now, Fyad had to track down the identity of Horace Trek. The puzzle pieces were gradually falling into place!

 Vincent found the National Database of American Dental Records headquarters building, and went in and asked for help. The friendly young female clerk, Cindy, he spoke with was pleased that Fyad had detailed dental imagery of the person he wanted to research.

 "We just started using Artificial Intelligence last month to speed up the use of our growing database. All AI needs to do is be given a date range, or a patient's name, maybe a city, or a dentist's name, then scan the photographs of the teeth. It will quickly match anything up, " she explained.

 "Did you cover the records from the 1930s yet?" Vincent nervously hoped.

 "Hmmm, let me check..." Cindy replied, checking her computer console. "Yes, we can take you back nearly to the beginning of that decade, but not to 1930 itself. We are currently imputing that year. It should be ready and available in another month. But we have completed all the years 1931-1939."

 Cindy led Fyad into a special scanning room hooked up to a large, interconnected bank of computers.

 "Meet FRED, our AI Master!" she teased. "That's what we nicknamed him. Simply place your dental photocopies or your iPad photos face down on the scanner's glass. On the keypad, type in: Horace Trek, New York City, 1930s, then press the green SEARCH button. FRED will do the rest. He'll give you a printout of the results in just a few minutes. Come get me if you have any other questions or problems."

 Cindy smiled and made contact with her bright blue eyes in a way that signaled to Vincent that she was interested in him. But he quickly thought of his girlfriend, Kathryn, instead, and so dismissed the rather promising opportunity.

 FRED did his work in under four minutes. He shared the following information in his printout:

 Patient: Horace Trek

 Occupation: Scientist and Inventor

 Appointments: June, 1932; May, 1934; July, 1935

 D.O.B. -- April 14, 1897

 Address -- 160 E. 23rd Street, NYC

 Dr. Philo Kellian, D.D.S.

 Dental Office: #15 Washington Square, NYC

 Amazed, Vincent Fyad now had both a date of birth and an address for Horace Trek. Although Trek was last noted living there almost 90 years ago, Fyad knew he had to absolutely visit that neighborhood and explore further. So, after thanking Cindy, the helpful (and very cute) clerk, Vincent left and checked out of his hotel the following morning. After returning his rental car, he took Amtrak's high-speed Acela train from DCs Union Station to NYCs Pennsylvania Station, just under a three-hour trip. Fyad realized that he had only six days left on his vacation, so he might be racing against the clock at some point if his luck ran out.

 On the train using its wi-fi, Vincent put his iPad to work researching the name Horace Trek in every uploaded telephone directory scan for New York City for each year covering 1930-1939. The address 160 E. 23rd Street for that name came up four times, but stopped after 1935. Also, Fyad gladly learned that there was only one person during that time period named Horace Trek living in Manhattan, Brooklyn, the Bronx, or Queens.

 Next, Vincent began looking for any relatives or living descendants of the phantom Mr. Trek. He had no idea if Horace ever married or had any children. He soon found, however, seven persons with the last name of Trek still living in the immediate NYC metro area, so he copied down their contact information, and would call them once he had settled into a convenient midtown Air BnB.

 The first stop the next day was 160 E. 23rd Street, Trek's last known address. It was a cold, rainy day, but the wet weather and damp chill didn't deter Fyad. He found himself close to the Gramercy Park neighborhood of the city, after exiting his convenient Uber ride.

 Sadly -- but perhaps not surprisingly -- what was probably once a beautiful, turn-of-the-last-century, classic brownstone building had been modernized and refurbished as an urban hipster restaurant called Awesum Dimsum. Through the large front windows, Vincent observed several young customers glued to their laptops, robotically clicking at their keyboards, while plucking away -- in between typing spurts -- at their meal with chopsticks.

 Oh, well!

 Fyad turned next to his list of seven Trek contacts and began 'cold' calling, asking (after politely introducing himself): "Do you happen to have a relative named Horace Trek? He was known to have lived in the city in the 1930s. I am doing some historical research, and I was wondering if you might possibly help me."

 Three of the Trek contacts rudely hung up without saying a word, while three more admitted they had no family relative by that name. But the seventh call was mercifully successful.

 "Why, yes! I haven't heard his name for years. Our family knows a few strange stories about Horace. He was some kind of eccentric inventor. He was the twin brother of Cornelius Trek -- my grandfather. If you want to come over for a little visit and talk some more, I can give you my address. Do you have a pen? By the way, my name is Cecelia."

 Vincent copied her Brooklyn address and phone number into his iPad's contact list. "Sure, I'll be right over, and thank you!" he replied. Fyad hailed an Uber on his cell phone, and was at Cecelia's door within twenty-five minutes. It was almost 1:30 p.m. on a Thursday afternoon.

 The woman was in her mid-sixties, and neat in her flowered cotton housedress. She was grey-haired and wore eyeglasses, which made her eyes look larger than they were. Cecelia was somewhat portly, but she exuded warmth and friendliness. She explained that her husband, Burt, would be home from work a little after 5 o'clock. Cecelia offered her guest some hot tea and homemade Tollhouse cookies, then began talking.

 "He was always called 'Uncle Horace.' He never married. He was kind of a loner, but supposedly brilliant. Some said he was a genius, and that he either met with or worked with Nikola Tesla right here in New York for a time. Horace knew a lot about physics and mathematics. He also enjoyed tinkering with mechanical devices, and was fond of engineering and architecture. He rented a warehouse down by the docks of the East River and supposedly used it as some kind of laboratory."

 "Did he ever attend a college or university? What was his formal education?"

 "All I heard was that he spent hours most days at the New York Public Library, in their Reading Room. To the best of my knowledge, Uncle Horace was said to have basically educated himself. He was supposed to be some kind of polymath...whatever that was. He was also a teetotaler -- never drank -- and he never smoked."

 "How did he earn his living?" Vincent asked.

 Cecelia laughed, then shyly covered her mouth. "That's the funny part...believe it or not, he lived off playing the ponies at Belmont Park...you know, on Long Island! Uncle Horace wagered 'scientifically' on horse racing, he claimed, and he apparently made enough money from his gambling winnings to live quite comfortably. He never trusted the stock market, so luckily he was unaffected by the Crash of '29. And he never asked his twin brother -- or anyone, for that matter -- for any money."

 "So...whatever happened to him?"

 "Well, the old family story goes that he simply vanished sometime during the mid-1930s. Cornelius claimed that his twin brother secretly built some kind of time machine, and used it just once after destroying its construction plans. That's probably a bunch of baloney, but that's what we were told as kids growing up. Meanwhile, Cornelius had a regular, successful life with his wife, Thelma. They raised a family of five children, my father being one of three boys. Cornelius worked as an executive manager for an insurance company for forty-three years. He died in 1975."

 "Lastly, I was curious about the rather unusual family surname, 'Trek.' Do you happen to know of its ethnic origin?" Vincent asked.

 "Yes, I do. I've been asked that same question before. Our paternal family line came from the former Yugoslavia, so its either of Bosnian or Serbian heritage. Our name was legally shortened from Trekanovic, to sound less foreign, when our ancestors first emigrated to America."

 Vincent soon finished his tea, had a final cookie, and made to get up from Cecelia's living room couch.

 "You have been extremely helpful to me in my research into your distant relative, Cecelia, and I want to thank you very much for your time and your hospitality. Now, I must go, but before I do, I have something amazing to show you -- something I found in the Sahara Desert in Egypt, where I work for the Foreign Service of the U.S. State Department." He removed the classic Bulova watch from his pocket and handed it to his host. "This belonged to your Uncle Horace. His name is inscribed on the back. Here, take a look."

 Cecelia gasped. "How can this be? How did he ever wind up in Egypt? Wait...I have a photograph somewhere that I forgot to share with you. It is the only image with the twin brothers together. Give me a minute. I have to run up and poke around in the attic."

 Several moments later, she returned, somewhat out of breath, holding a rather aged 8x12" sepia-tinted picture of Cornelius and Horace Trek. It was undated. Both men looked almost identical -- tall, regal, and serene in their neat, double-breasted pinstripe suits. The photo had been taken formally in a studio, given its fanciful backdrop of a Roman villa with marble columns and Italian cypress trees. Fyad immediately flashed back instead to visualizing Horace Trek decomposing in his dusty Egyptian tomb. He certainly looked much better alive, Vincent thought ruefully -- handsome and intelligent, with an interesting gleam in his eye...

 But wait!

 On Horace's left wrist, there appeared to be the exact Bulova timepiece Fyad had just shared with his kind hostess. Vincent and Cecelia looked at each other, similarly amazed. He took the photo closer to the light of the nearest room lamp to verify his assessment. Holding the actual watch up next to the photo, there was no longer any doubt. An identical match!

 Cecelia, however, had a final surprise.

 "There is one last thing you might be interested in, Mr. Fyad. Let me run back up into the attic before you have to go. You see, Cornelius kept only one thing from his brother before Horace vanished from his rented warehouse laboratory sometime back in the mid-1930s. Wait...I'll be right back."

 She promptly returned and produced a long cardboard mailing tube, one-meter-long x 12 cm. in diameter. It had the printed initials ***HT*** inscribed on it in blue fountain pen ink, and the address 160 E. 23rd Street, NYC.

 "As you can tell, the tube is still sealed. I never thought to open it," Cecelia confessed, handing it to Vincent. "Sorry for the dustiness." She brushed it off a little with her hand. "I suppose now is as good a time as any to crack it open."

 Fyad carefully inspected the tube, then slowly opened it. He slid out a large, rolled-up paper and unfurled it on the brown carpeted floor of Cecelia's living room. The thick, durable paper looked like a detailed architectural blueprint.

 In the lower right corner were the expertly printed words:

 *Horace Trek - Copy #2 - Design for a Great Egyptian Pyramid - 1935.*

 Vincent was, in fact, looking at the exact specifications and engineering technique plans for constructing the 2.3 million limestone blocks of the massive Great Pyramid of Cheops -- a structure built in 2600 B.C. on the Giza plateau in Egypt, and still there today for all to marvel.

 Had Horace Trek somehow invented a time machine, and traveled back sometime in 1935 with Copy #1 of this construction blueprint, and instructed the ancient Egyptians precisely how to build this initial pyramid? Horace's upper molar from his corpse was carbon-dated at 4600 years ago. That scientific fact was beyond refute. He had been back alive then!

 The theoretical concept and physical evidence Vincent Fyad had unearthed understandably rocked the world's scientific community to its core, once he returned to Cairo and released his findings to his State Department superiors and eventually to the international media.

 Some called it a fabrication, a ridiculous hoax. Others were skeptical, and needed more proof. Those favoring the popular extraterrestrial explanation claiming that the pyramids were built by unknown space aliens were stubbornly unconvinced. Some Egyptian officials were outraged at the suggestion that their revered ancestors needed any outside assistance to construct their own buildings!

 But many others eventually believed. Fyad's discovery could help explain how a primitive society with no prior engineering or mathematic skills were suddenly able to build such amazing and sophisticated structures. The Egyptians may well had been aided from a mysterious visitor from the future...

 The Bulova watch -- with the name Horace Trek clearly inscribed on its back -- is now in a special glass display case in the new Egyptian Museum in Cairo.

 The corpse of Horace Trek was also respectfully transferred from its former resting place in the Western Desert. A special viewing annex for him was constructed next to the Royal Mummy Room in the same world-renowned museum. There, the public could gaze at the remains of the enigmatic 'time traveler' -- the potential original designer and architect of one of history's most iconic structural forms.

 Needless to say -- even after he finally married his fiance, Kathryn -- Vincent Fyad's life was never the same again...

 THE END

 by Jack Karolewski

 February 9, 2024