THE MUMMY IN THE FREEPORT ART MUSEUM

Amongst the masterpieces of the small-town Picassos and Van Goghs and photographs of the rural poor and busts of dead Greeks or the molds of busts donated by the Art Institute of Chicago to this dying town’s little museum, there was a mummy, a real mummy, laid out in a dim-lit room by himself. I used to go to the museum just to visit him, a pharaoh who, expecting an afterlife of beautiful virgins and infinite food and all the riches and jewels he’d enjoyed in earthly life, must have wondered how the hell he’d ended up in Freeport, Illinois. And I used to go alone into that room and stand beside his sarcophagus and say, “My friend, I’ve asked myself the same thing.”