

Movie: *The Mummy* (1932, 1999)

Synopsis

The 1999 film, *The Mummy*, a remake of the 1932 film of the same name, tells the story of Imhotep, a high priest of Pharaoh Seti I, who witnesses his love and Pharaoh's mistress, Anck-su-Namun, commit suicide to protect him after they are caught having an affair. Imhotep, while trying to revive her, an act considered heinous by the high priests, is sentenced to being mummified alive. In addition to this death, a curse was placed on him, stating that if anyone finds and opens the chest containing the Book of the Dead, death will come quickly to them by the hand of the undead after he regenerates his body from parts obtained from those who brought upon the curse. After two teams of adventurers find both the chest and the coffin of Imhotep, Imhotep is awakened and journeys to fulfill the curse. Meanwhile, he believes that one of the adventurers, Evelyn, is a possible reincarnation of his love and tries to sacrifice her to finally revive Anck-su-Namun. The adventurers must then find a way to defeat Imhotep before he not only kills Evelyn but also destroys the world.

How the movie relates to the field of psychiatry

The concept of the mummy, first introduced in the novel *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, provides an interesting perspective of psychotic disorders, which is on full display in the 1999 version of the film. Guarding the tomb where the chest and Imhotep's coffin lay is a group called the Medjai. This group exemplifies the concept of the culture-bound syndrome, as they not only believe wholeheartedly in the curse but also in their role in preventing Imhotep's revival. The psychosis extends to the group of adventurers who, although the curse never names Imhotep as the "undead" who will enact the curse, strongly believe he is. Reading from the Book of the Dead, the adventurers begin to hallucinate that Imhotep has awakened and is attacking Egypt with the 10 plagues, beginning with turning the fountain water into blood. This type of shared psychosis is called folie à deux. Throughout the film, their hallucination that Imhotep is taking the body parts of others to regenerate himself, such as the eyes and tongue from one adventurer, is called Cotard syndrome.

The 1932 version of the film also manifests dissociative disorders, particularly Dissociative Identity Disorder. Both the characters of Evelyn in the 1999 film version and Helen in the 1932 version are believed to be, by Imhotep, the current reincarnation of Anck-su-Namun. Despite Evelyn maintaining her identity, Helen (1932) manifests an altered, distinct personality state when she exclaims that Anck-su-Namun's life is inside her and "is fighting for life." While taking on the personality of Anck-su-Namun, Helen is unable to remember aspects of her life as Helen (e.g. taking care of her dog or how she is unaware of how she returned home). While this may be attributed to delirium (her physician claims she is suffering from exhaustion), Helen is seen awakening and taking on the personality and regalia of Anck-su-Namun despite having been treated for exhaustion, thus suggesting a primary mental disorder.

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