

THE FIRMA SISTERS AND THE STAKE-A-TINE OF DEATH

By Denise Harlow Timpko

CHAPTER 1

A Warning

My twin sister is a rat. Literally. I don't call her a rat because I'm mad at her. I say it because it's true. She's a walking, squawking, wrinkly nosed, 5-foot 10-inch rat with red fur that has a streak of white down the center of its—I mean, her—head and back. And she smells. Just like a rat. Because she is a rat.

I know about rats, you see. I'm writing a story—a school play actually—about rats, hundreds of rats, and my research is very thorough. That's the way I do things—carefully, thoroughly, logically.

But this story—the one I'm telling here, now—is going all wrong. It should have started when we were at the Institute of Ancient Egyptian Stuff in DC with our friends and my sister was still in her pre-rat state. My attention was held by the naked 3,200-year-old mummy who sat up, stretched like a cat, and pointed at me. “It is your time to act, Isis Firma,” it said. “The Vympyrym have arisen. The Squrlon are in danger unless you uphold the Firma honor. You are the Chosen One. You must be ready to lead the battle.”

Right. Just right.

