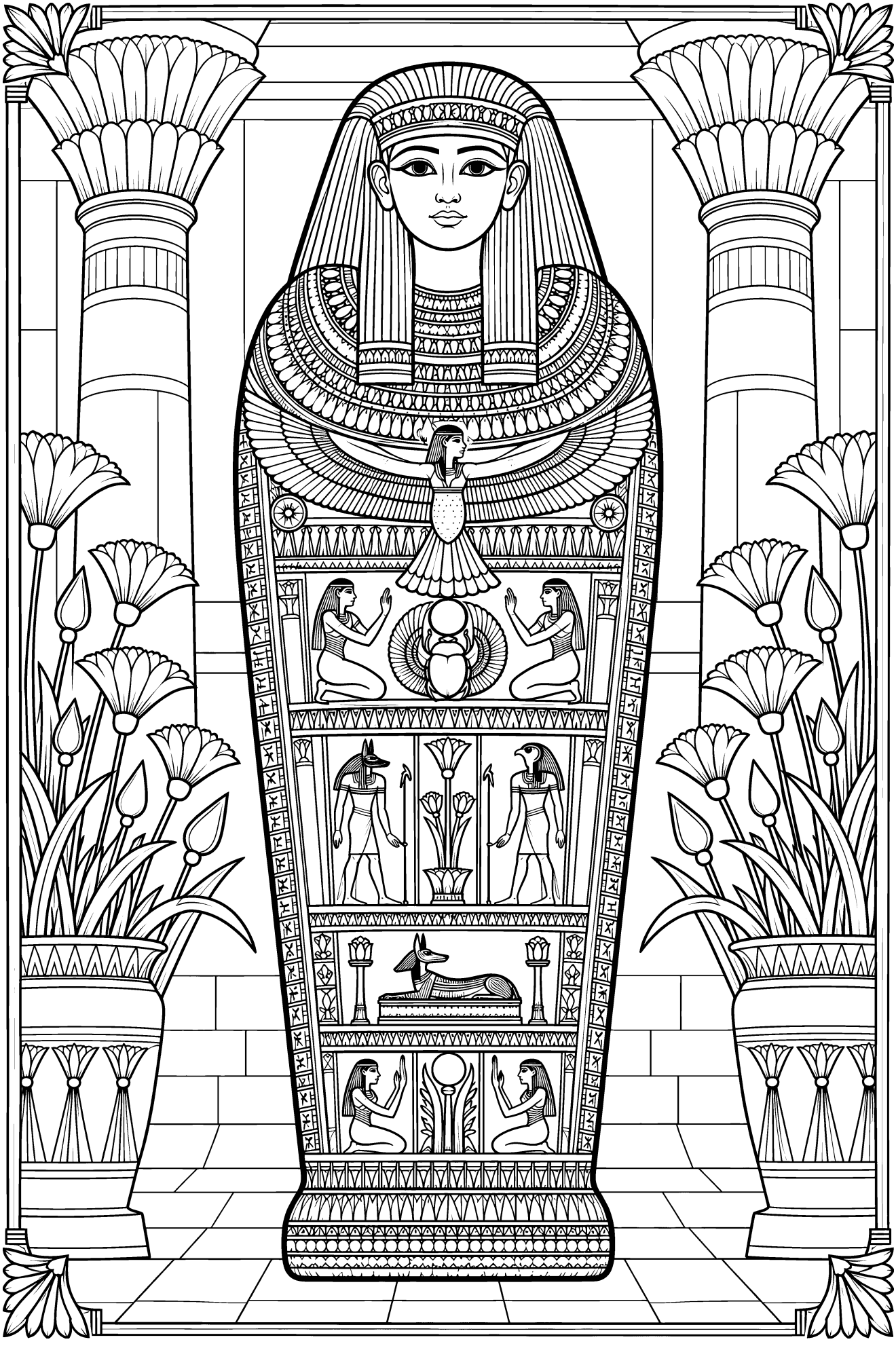
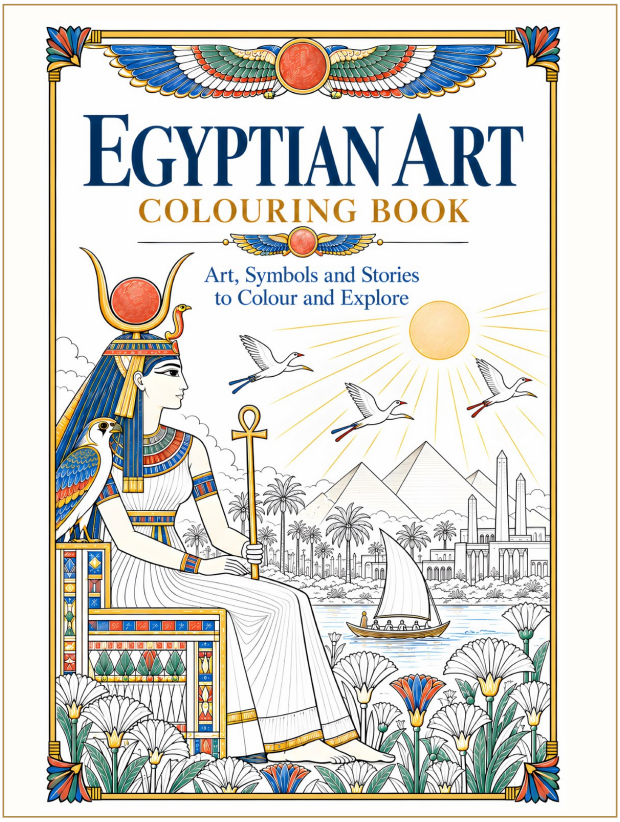


THE PAINTED COFFIN

Around 3,000 years ago, Egypt was poorer than it had been, and many royal tombs had already been robbed. Instead of covering coffins in gold, craftsmen painted them, filling every surface with gods and protective spells so that the coffin itself became a shrine around the body. They recycled, too, scraping old coffins clean and repainting them with a new owner's name. In 1891, a single hidden tomb near Luxor was found to contain more than 150 burials of priests and their families, in coffins just like this one. Across the chest a goddess spreads her wings to protect the dead; beneath her, a winged beetle lifts the sun between two kneeling goddesses; and lower down, the jackal Anubis lies on top of a shrine. These coffins usually had a yellow background, varnished to make it glow like gold, with strong red, blue and green details.

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