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Ring Around the Cobra

by Linda Ruth Pfonner

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Part 1

"How do you like steak, Indy?" Marion's voice floated out of the kitchen where she was reveling in the gas stove and the other advantages of a modern kitchen as opposed to the primitive conditions she had always before had to make the best of.

"On the rocks," Indy muttered. He was in his book-cluttered study, making up a syllabus for his graduate seminar on the ethics of archeological research. The semester started in only four days, and he had three other course descriptions to write that night. He had not really heard Marion's question.

"Indy!

"What?" he snarled, irritated at the interruption. "Steak on the rocks?!" she demanded incredulously.

He looked up at the girl standing in the doorway with a freshly-washed head of lettuce in her hand and frowned. "What are you talking about?" he asked, confused.

Marion raised her eyes to heaven in exasperation. "I give up!"

Indy had gone back to work. "Later, Marion--I'm busy."

She froze in complete amazement. Then she threw the head of lettuce at him and stalked furiously out.

Indy almost fell out of his chair as the still very wet vegetable smacked into his chest. He leapt to his feet, cursing in two modern and three dead languages, brushing away stray leaves and trying to rescue his notes from the water already spattered on them.

"What the hell was that for?!" he shouted angrily.

"Just answer the goddamned door!" she snarled back at him from the kitchen. He was about to demand to know why he should when the doorbell rang again, insistently. Muttering imprecations, he headed for the door, brushing away the lettuce leaves that clung damply to his shirt.

"Yes? Can I help you?" The formula was uttered with the barest civility at the trio of somber-looking men who stood on his porch. Indy frowned--he did not know them--and pushed his glasses back up where they belonged.

"You are Doctor of Archeology Indiana Jones?" the one in the middle asked, his voice betraying the slightest hint of an Austrian accent.

"Yes. What do you want?"

Suddenly there was a gun in the man's hand, a nasty-looking Luger. The end of the barrel was only inches from Indy's stomach, and his first thought was a Sumerian curse that he had been so unsuspecting. _But, dammit, this is Connecticut._

"You will accompany us, Doctor Jones."

Marion chose that moment to colorfully curse the stove in three dialects of Sherpa, and Indy stiffened, ready to try something (he didn't know what--probably die, he realized with a chill) if they went after Marion.

"We have our orders," the spokesman hissed menacingly, moving the pistol a little closer, "to take only you alive, Doctor Jones. Only you."

Deliberately, knowing he might be signing his own death warrant, Indiana Jones stepped out onto the porch, closing the door behind him. "You know," he said conversationally, "a Luger's not a very practically designed gun. The mechanism has to go around about forty-seven corners before it finally gets around to firing the round. Try a single-action Colt--they're much more efficient."

In the kitchen, Marion was tiring of playing with kitchen gadgetry.

"Indy," she called, "if you don't like your steak as rare as I do, that's just too bad. I'm tired of cooking, and I declare it officially dinner time."

There was no answer, but she hardly noticed, being busy setting the table, pouring the wine, and pretending that she was very domesticated.

"Indy! Dinner!"

No answer. Irritated, she went to get him. He was not in his study, where she had last seen him, and it occurred to her that he might still be at the door. "Maybe some traveling salesman's got him cornered," she grinned maliciously.

But the door was closed. The porch light was on, she could see that through the stained glass window, but there was no one out there. His jacket was hanging on its usual hook by the door, but Indiana Jones was nowhere to be found.

"Damn him to hell, anyway. He went back to the goddamned office for something!" she exploded. Much as she had developed an initially grudging respect for Indy's abilities to handle himself in high-stress situations, here, in this peaceful little college town, as Doctor of Archeology I. Jones, he showed a marked tendency toward absentmindedness.

Swearing volubly in Nepalese hill cant, Marion grabbed her sweater and stormed out. Indy's office was only three blocks away--the little house was just off campus--and he often made spur-of-the-moment trips. But his timing had never been worse!

She stormed into the Antiquities Building and slammed open the door of his office. "Damn you, Indy..." Her voice trailed away. The office was empty. "Indy?" she whispered, now too worried to swear.

"Why, hello, Miss Ravenwood," a cheerful voice came from behind her and she whirled. "May I help you?"

She was unaccountably relieved to see Marcus Brody. "Have you seen Indy?" she asked hurriedly, not bothering to waste time by saying hello.

Brody's smile faded. "I had lunch with him, but I haven't seen him since. Why? Where is he?"

"If I knew that, I wouldn't be asking you!" she snapped. "I was fixing dinner for the two of us, and he was working in his study. The doorbell rang and he went to answer it, and he's gone!" There was a momentary flash

of fear in her eyes, but it was swiftly replaced by anger. "Damn them! DAMN Musgrove!" She did not give Brody a chance to respond, but continued her tirade. "Damn him, he SAID they had 'top men' working on the Ark, and since my idiot father died, the top man is indy! We all know that! So they kidnapped him! I'm going to tear his building down around his ears, I'm going to..." Her voice trailed off into obscure Nepalese obscenities, as it often did in times of stress and Brody took her shoulders firmly and shook her.

"Marion, stop it! You're overreacting! You don't know Indy's been kidnapped! You know how preoccupied he can get--he's probably wandering around lost someplace!"

"Oh, yeah?" Marion challenged him. "Then find him!"

Several hours later Brody gave up and called the police.

The police sergeant was businesslike and, Marion decided, holding her temper in check with difficulty, rather scornful of their distress.

"Look," she growled, barely preventing herself from cursing, "he was here in his study. The doorbell rang, and he got up to answer it. A few minutes later when I called him to dinner, he was gone. That was just at sunset--the door faces west. No one's seen him since. He's nowhere on campus, he's nowhere in the neighborhood, and he's not in the coffee shop on Playter Street. He's gone!"

It was nearly midnight as they sat in Indy's living room-cum-study, the sergeant in a chair and Marion pacing while Brody watched from the couch, idly fingering indy's well-loved and well-used bullwhip. That, more than anything else, had convinced him that Indy had not been expecting any trouble, nor any company. The whip had been lying in plain sight across the coffee table, freshly oiled, with some meticulous and delicate repair work visible as new leather bright against the dark and battered appearance of the whip.

_Indy doesn't exactly hide the whip, _ Brody knew, _but it tends to make the old biddies think of beating animals, or perversion, not defense. So it's not usually out in plain sight. Indy is two different people, and his adventurer self is never in evidence here. The college has no idea what he's like in dusty khaki with that whip and pistol strapped on. The Board of Directors would have a coronary._ Brody shuddered. From the evidence available, Indy had gone without a struggle of any kind, taken in his

shirt sleeves. His wallet and passport were still in the desk drawer, his pistol still in its oiled cloth wrap beside them.

It's for all the world like he's just stepped out for a walk around the yard! But he's gone. Ice was forming around his heart; Indiana was his best friend, his colleague and partner on several expeditions to South America, where Indy had saved Marcus' life on several occasions.

I paid him one back, - Brody remembered with a faint grin. -Indy doesn't cope too well with snakes. Indy had been cornered in a trench by a coiled and angry fer-de-lance and been too frightened to move or speak, even to call for help. _That probably saved his life,_ Brody remembered. _At least, if he had moved, it would've struck at him. But he had his gun--he could've shot it, except his hands were shaking too hard._ He remembered teasing Indy about it after he had killed the snake with a shovel, and how, still shaking, Indy had taken the ribbing in silence, gulping desperately at his flask.

Indy is very resourceful, Brody told himself firmly. He can cope with anything except snakes. He'll be all right. He tried to convince himself of that, but it was hard. He knew that Marion believed that the federal government had spirited Indy away to work on the Ark of the Covenant in some top secret laboratory, but he did not believe it himself. It seemed far more likely that the Third Reich, under the orders of Reichschancellor Hitler, commanded Indy's fate.

Question is, do they want him because of his training under Ravenwood and such, or because they know it was Indy who foiled them at every turn? Does Hitler know it was Indy who found the Ark? And Indy who survived its wrath? From all reports, Hitler's crazy enough to believe that Indy himself is some kind of a good luck charm. But he'll use any means that might work to find out what Indy did with the Ark, and where it is now. Brody shuddered. _And Indy doesn't know where it is! He couldn't tell them if he wanted to!_

"Dammit, you don't believe me!" Marion's shrill fury cut through Brody's preoccupation. He looked up in time to see her slam angrily out of the room. The police sergeant looked after her in amazement.

"What's got into her?" he asked, bewilderment dominating his tone of voice.

Brody sighed patiently. "If you had just survived the Wrath of God with a man you'd been in love with for ten years, wouldn't you be a little upset when he disappeared so suddenly?"

"Wrath of God?" the sergeant asked.

Brody shrugged. "Sure. He went to Nepal and brought her down off the side of a mountain and took her to a friend's house in Cairo. They were arrested by the Germans in Egypt and managed to escape to London and thence back home. They've had exactly nine days of peace and quiet, and I've been expecting the announcement of their engagement any day now."

Brody sighed wearily. He made the entire adventure sound like a love-quest on purpose. He and Marion had both been warned, as had Indiana, not to speak the truth of their adventure, for it had been classified top secret by the government. It had hurt Indy to be prohibited from publishing--the finding of the Ark was the archeological story of the century.

He had been thinking about how to get around it--Osiris alone knows if he thought up a way to get that tale into print. I hope he has the opportunity... Brody shivered. He's all right. He has to be all right._

"Well, Doctor Brody, there isn't a lot we can do. We can't file a missing person report on Doctor Jones until he's been missing for twenty-four hours." The sergeant sounded apologetic, but his voice grated on Marcus' awareness.

"Marion, I think, will be half-mad by then. And Indiana may be dead!"

The sergeant shrugged again. "If the alleged kidnappers wanted Doctor Jones dead, they wouldn't have bothered to kidnap him. You should probably stay more or less put, in case there is some kind of ransom demand. He is a figure of some prominence, is he not?"

Brody nodded. "Yes, but not like that. He is the most gifted student of the late Professor Ravenwood, and now, upon the Professor's death, Indiana is his scholarly heir--the foremost expert on worldwide Biblical Era archeology."

"Does he have any money?"

"Of his own? No," Brody chuckled. "Not enough to fly to Marrakesh, which was the last thing he needed money for. I'm still processing that request through the Board of Directors of the Museum."

"Would the Museum pay a ransom?"

Brody nodded. "If we could. But if they had wanted just money, they should have kidnapped Marion. She'd be easier to keep captive, and Indiana would move heaven and earth for her."

The sergeant closed his notebook with a snap. "If Doctor Jones hasn't got any money, how did he manage that Nepal-Cairo-London escapade you mentioned? That's expensive."

"He was financed," Brody said flatly, remembering how enthusiastic Indy had been as he had packed for Nepal. He had come back to America so tired and so happy...

"By whom?"

"I'm not at liberty to speculate."

"What kind of an answer is that?!" the sergeant barked.

"The best I can do for you, I'm afraid, sergeant," Brody said quietly. "It's been classified as a matter of national security."

"National security!"

Brody spread his hands wide. "I'm sorry. Indiana was not even permitted to tell me. You know as much as I do."

"Who was he working for?"

"He couldn't say."

The sergeant left reluctantly, his curiosity unsatisfied. Marcus Brody went home, to wait for a phone call that would at least offer some hope that his friend lived.

At approximately that moment, the friend in question, one Indiana Jones, was being hustled along a dock. He was more than a little ruffled and his glasses were crooked, but he could do nothing to remedy the condition, since his hands were firmly cuffed behind his back.

Indy thought about running, and decided that, if he was going to, it had best be done before they loaded him onto a boat. Never one to think too much about remote possibilities or calculate odds to fractions, the

decision was enough. The moment his two guards shoved him forward, and their touch was gone, he spun on his heel, tripping one into the water. He grinned crookedly as he ran--he could hear the man drowning.

Indiana made it back onto solid ground and heard his captors hard on his heels. He could not turn to look, since his balance was iffy enough with his hands bound behind him. But he could hear thundering footsteps and he knew that he was not going to get away--they were simply too close.

Indiana was roughly tackled and, with his arms bound, he could do nothing to break his fall. Breathless and dizzy from the impact, he kicked viciously back and heard a soul-satisfying scream. Then he gasped as a boot caught him in the ribs, and he tried to cover up as three more guards landed on him. He wiggled and squirmed, using his feet to good advantage until someone clubbed at the base of the skull with a rifle butt. Indy sagged, almost unconscious, and felt himself lifted. He was half-dragged and half-carried back out onto the dock, and lowered into a small boat. He was dropped to the deck and that was the last he knew for a while.

He woke in predawn greyness in an open launch. He could hear the boat's motor roaring, wide-open, and he could feel the sea waves tossing the frail little craft. His head felt like a half-full cask of wine after he had drunk the first half, and the wave-action did nothing to make them feel any better. He knew a certain amount of gratitude when he felt himself falling back to sleep.

Indy was awakened by hands hauling him upright. He tried to stand on legs made of India rubber. He was barely conscious as he was pulled up and out of the launch to stand on something made of steel, with a curved surface wet with seaspray.

Submarine, he knew, but the word meant nothing. His head hurt, and thinking was too much effort.

U-boat ... German... Now he was too busy to think, for they expected him to climb down a steel-runged ladder. They had freed his hands, and he knew he should try to escape. But he could not move, nor do anything except cling dazedly to the ladder, his eyes closed. He heard a stentorian voice begin to curse, and since he understood the words without effort, it was several minutes before he realized that the voice was speaking German.

"Idiot! All idiots! Who hit him so hard?! Lower him down to me!" Indy felt hands on his waist and collapsed, unable to stand any longer. "He is no good to us dead or so sick! You are all fools!"

Way off in the distance, Indy could hear someone protesting, apologizing, but it was all too much, and he gratefully let go his weak hold on consciousness.

MARSHALL COLLEGE PROFESSOR KIDNAPPED!

Professox Indiana Jones, 38, famed worldwide for his research into the Bible Era, was kidnapped from his home three blocks from the Marshall College campus last night. Police have no leads as to why anyone would want to kidnap the Professor, who had just returned from an expedition to Egypt. At press time no ransom...

"Just what the hell is going on here!" Colonel Musgrove snarled at Marcus Brody, who sat impassively behind his desk in the National Museum and steepled his fingers. The Army Intelligence Colonel threw the newspaper down onto the desk and Marcus glanced at it briefly.

"I've seen the article," he said evenly.

"Who authorized you to talk to the press?!" the Colonel demanded, patently furious.

"No one," Marcus said equably. "I saw no need."

"You 'saw no need?!'" Musgrave exploded. "After all that happened in Egypt, you 'saw no need?!' Why wasn't I at least informed?!"

"I would have been perfectly willing to, Colonel," Brody said with quiet malice. "Next time, leave your phone number with my secretary."

Musgrove froze for just a moment, and then relaxed. "All right," he admitted in a quieter tone. "I guess I deserve that."

"The article really doesn't have any news in it," Marcus said gently. "However, it has, undoubtedly, broken the hearts of half the girls on campus. The fact that Indy is missing could not be kept secret. Indiana is Chairman of Archeology and Classical Studies at Marshall--a very visible presence on campus. His return last week was announced through MARSHALL'S STAR, the student paper, with an interview that the paper's editor did with him. In the interview he stated that he did not have any plans for another expedition for at least several months--he wanted to rest up from this one. He hinted, but did not state, that his malaria had been kicking him around."

"Malaria?!" Musgrove was horrified as a picture of Indiana Jones raving in a delirium of fever and spilling all he knew about the Ark to his captors crashed through his skull. "Has he been having acute attacks? When was his last one?"

Marcus regarded him mildly. "Indy hasn't got malaria," he said sweetly. "Any bug with the audacity to bite him dies a horrible death."

Musgrove just goggled at him for a moment, then sagged back in his chair in utter relief. "God, don't do that to me!"

"Which god and why shouldn't I?" Marcus inquired. "You don't seem terribly concerned about Indy! All you seem to really give a damn about is whether the secret of the Ark is safe. I'm beginning to think that maybe Marion's right. She thinks you engineered the kidnapping."

"Wha--? Why would I want Dr. Jones?"

"To work on the Ark. We all know there are no 'top men,' Musgrove. Indy's the expert. Without him, you may as well just crate the Ark and bury it in a warehouse somewhere."

Musgrove shuddered--Brody could not possibly know just how correct he was. "It was not an Army Intelligence operation," he said soberly. "I don't believe we would have had to kidnap Dr. Jones."

"You're right about that--Indy'd've jumped at the chance."

"Our best information to date leads me to believe he was kidnapped by the Germans. More than that we don't know yet."

Brody sighed. "That's what I was afraid of, and, I think, deep down, Marion knows that that is the most likely answer. That's probably why she's trying to avoid acknowledging it."

"Well, we are investigating. We will keep you posted, Doctor Brody, as we learn more."

"Thank you, Colonel Musgrove. Have yourself as miserable a day as I expect."

"Thanks," Musgrove said dryly. "Please reassure Miss Ravenwood that we are not responsible for Doctor Jones' disappearance."

"I'll believe you--at least until better information comes along."

"I can't ask for more than that. Good day."

"...Doktor Jones? Doktor Jones?"

Slowly, Indiana fought his way back to full awareness. "Wha..."

He heard a sigh of relief. "I am pleased, Doktor Jones. Please, can you see me?"

Indy blinked his eyes open and focused them with effort. A wavering picture of a smiling blond youth in a black turtleneck shirt slowly came clear. "Jesus, my head hurts," he whispered as he closed his eyes again--the light was too bright.

"That is to be expected, Doktor Jones. Most who are struck with rifle butts by angry soldiers suffer some pain. Why did you try to run away?"

"I'll be damned if I'll submit passively to being kidnapped!" Indy flared.

For a moment, the boy had the grace to look ashamed. Then he forced another smile. "Please try and sit up?"

The boy helped him, and Indy found that it was not really impossible, just uncomfortable.

"Are you hungry, Doktor Jones?"

Indy shuddered theatrically. "Have some respect for your elders, son. Who's in charge around here?"

"Our captain is Erick Pfiel, Herr Doktor."

"I'd like to talk to someone who knows what the hell's going on. I would really like to know why someone went to all this trouble to get me on board a U-boat." He felt his pockets and wrinkled his nose at the boy. "And where are my glasses?"

The boy's smile faded. "I'm afraid, sir, that your glasses went, uh, hors de combat? When you fell off the boarding ladder."

Indy sighed. "Oh, well. I don't remember that, but I suppose it doesn't really matter. Can I see your captain?"

"I will ask, sir. Please relax. At least here on board the Tigershark you are an honored, if not entirely voluntary, guest."

Indiana leaned back against the bulkhead and closed his eyes. He was in the foggy greyness of almost-asleep when his chief captor entered hesitantly.

"Doctor Jones?"

Indy looked up and smiled wanly. "Captain Pfiel?"

"Jawohl. Uh--yes."

Indy's smile became one of genuine amusement. "Ich spreucht deutsche Herr Kapitan."

Captain Pfiel just stared for a moment, then grinned. "Would you mind, Herr Doktor, if we spoke English? I relish the opportunity to practice."

"Sokay with me," Indy shrugged. "I'm not up to practicing German. And if I get too idiomatic for you, just say so. I tend to."

"Most Americans do."

"Most Americans do anything they can get away with." Captain Pfiel chuckled appreciatively. "Now that we've gotten that out of the way..." Indy's voice hardened suddenly, "what the hell am I doing here?!"

The submarine commander blinked at the heretofore agreeable captive's sudden harshness. "I was not told why your presence was required, Doctor."

"Where are you taking me?"

"Cairo."

Indy's heart leapt in him, but he managed to keep any expression from his face. _Cairo! To Tanis?! They shouldn't know it was me that found the Ark--everyone of any importance went with Belloq to the island, and died there. Do they want Doctor Indiana Jones for his expertise? Then I'll give them a docile little college professor!_ He barely suppressed a wolfish grin. _And maybe I'll get to publish the discovery of Tanis, after all!_

Indiana's trip was uneventful--spelled B-0-R-I-N-G. There were few books on board the U-238 Tigershark, and Indy read them all the first three

days. There was, of course, the requisite copy of Mein Kampf, but that he declined until he reached a pinnacle of boredom that he would have previously deemed impossible. When he did surrender and read it, he justified it to himself on the grounds of knowing his enemy.

He read the book with a pencil, writing comments, suggested references, and refutations in the margins, underlining significant passages and then, deliberately, passing the book on to his cabin steward rather than return it to the ship's library himself. He grinned then, wolfishly, in the solitude of his cell.

The trip took a week, and even Indiana was glad to see it end. He was handcuffed again for debarking, but this time they were polite about it--the cuff chain was slipped under his belt in front and then his wrists were locked into the cuffs.

He was assisted up the ladder, and escorted, rather deferentially, by several members of the crew who had been friendly. Once on dry land, they formally turned their prisoner over to a tall blond man in the uniform of an SS Oberst. Indy shivered--the oberst reminded him of Dietrich, and, while he had not seen Dietrich die, he had heard the screams. They still haunted his sleep. In his own way Dietrich had not been irretrievably evil--certainly Belloq and Toht had deserved their fates.

His reflections were interrupted when the oberst spoke. "You are Doctor Indiana Jones of the Department of Archeology at Marshall College, Connecticut?"

"Yes... I don't think we've been introduced." Indy squared his shoulders and squinted at the German. His eyes ached from reading without his glasses, and the desert sun of Egypt was no help.

The German clicked his heels together with Old Junker precision. "Certainly, Herr Doktor." His German accent thickened noticeably. "I am Oberst Karl Kruger of the SS. I am military commandant of the Tanis operation."

"TANIS?!" Indy exclaimed. "You've found Shishak the First's capital?! Where? Where is it?" He tried to see around the oberst, as if the city might be hidden behind the slim officer.

"Please, Doctor Jones!" the oberst exclaimed, nearly choking on his laughter. "We did not bring you all the way from the United States not to let you see it!"

"If you've found Tanis and I ... well, if you'd just told me, I'd've come running! You didn't have to kidnap me!"

"It was a security measure, Doctor Jones," the oberst said soothingly. "We meant no insult, and certainly no disrespect to a scholar of your standing!"

"Well, of course not," Indy pretended to be mollified. "When can I see the dig?"

"Tanis is approximately one hundred kilometers outside Cairo, directly Southwest, Herr Doktor. It will take us about four hours by car and truck--the roads are atrocious."

"Since when are there roads southwest of Cairo, Herr Oberst?" Indy's grin was infectious, and the oberst nearly laughed.

"They hold the name by courtesy only, Herr Doktor. I think that neither German nor English contains a single word that does them justice."

"How about 'boneshaker?'"

Kruger considered and nodded almost grudgingly. "Accurate. my English vocabulary must be in need of replenishing."

Indy chuckled as he was assisted into the oberst's staff car. "No one is ever up-to-date completely on English. The language breeds new words faster than rabbits."

The trip was worse than Kruger had promised. They freed Indiana from his cuffs and he indulged in a back breaking stretch of every muscle. Kruger just watched him, and when he relaxed again, waved a pair of guards over. Much to Indiana's dismay, they cuffed him again, and locked his chain to the car door.

"Hey ... if you guys roll this car..."

"We are expert drivers, Herr Doktor." There was no amusement in Kruger's tone now, and Indy swallowed his pride and was silent.

He tried to sleep a little, but the trip was far too rough. When they finally arrived, the sun was setting behind the ridge, and Indy could see the last rays of light fading behind the Well of Souls. He shivered,

thinking about looking up out of the well and watching his lifeline fall, snakelike, and of Belloq's mocking words.

But the Germans did not approach that rim of the dig. Instead, Indy was hustled roughly toward the Map Room. He had time to wonder why only for a moment. Then two soldiers climbed down a rope ladder into the Map Room. Indy was shoved to the rim and freed, and then, at gunpoint, forced to descend. As soon as he touched the floor, the two waiting soldiers grabbed him and threw him to the floor on the steps to the left of the city map. There, by chains newly-anchored in the rock wall beneath the carving of Anubis the Jackal, Indy was fastened to the wall by his wrists.

"Hey! What the hell's going on?!"

"I am afraid, Herr Doktor," Kruger's voice echoed unpleasantly from the skylight, "that your little, shall we say, 'masquerade?' is over."

"What are you talking about?" Indy demanded, tugging helplessly on his chains.

"Did you think that all Germans were such fools as Dietrich, Herr Doktor? We had agents following you even before you were contacted by your Army Intelligence. Colonel Musgrove is not a very pleasant man, is he? We trailed you to Nepal, knowing that Ravenwood's star pupil would be able to find him--and the headpiece. We then followed you to Cairo."

"Lotta good it did you!" Indy yelled. The two soldiers were leaving, and the Map Room was nearly black. The last vestiges of sunlight faded behind Kruger as he continued.

"It is undeniable, of course, that you managed to find the Well of Souls first, Herr Doktor. We of the SS were not surprised; the Americans, at least, make respectable enemies--unlike the French. But the Ark of the Covenant is gone. We want to know what you did with it and what happened to Hauptman Dietrich and the Frenchman."

"They're dead..." The soldiers were pulling up the rope ladder, and Indy glanced nervously around.

"You killed them!"

"No. Not from any lacking of trying, you understand..."

There was a long moment of silence, and then a quiet, "Good evening, Doktor Jones."

"Sonuvabitch," Indy muttered. Alone, in the impenetrable blackness of the Map Room, he fidgeted, trying to find some way to be comfortable. There seemed to be no way he could lie that he did not pull uncomfortably on the manacles, and the stair was agony under his back. The only position that was at all tolerable was on his side along the wall, with his back to the room, and that made him edgy. He hated not being able to back the solid wall.

I think, he decided bleakly, that _I'm in trouble..._

Marion was frantic. Indiana had been missing for a week, and now Colonel Musgrove had also vanished. She and Marcus Brody met in Indy's empty office to plan.

"Marcus, he's in one of two places," Marion's voice was even and cold.

"Either he's in Germany, and we won't be able to do anything without more information, or they took him back to Tanis. You stay here. Light a fire under Musgrove, and Eaton, and the goddamned Secretary of State, if you have to! I'm going back to Tanis."

"Marion--" She glared at him, and he stopped. She held his gaze for a long moment, then looked away. "All right. I suppose you must. But be careful? Please?"

"I'm always careful."

In Cairo, Egypt, Sallah was just settling down for a nap in the shade when the same telegram messenger who had delivered Indy's "ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL" message two weeks before scurried up.

"Another telegram?" He was puzzled and fumbled finding the boy a coin. When he opened the message, he turned pale beneath his desert tan.

"INDY MISSING, STOP. ARRIVING CAIRO AIRPORT THURSDAY, STOP. DO SOME DIGGING, STOP. MARION. ENDIT." Sallah stared at the paper as though it might bite.

Indy's missing?! She must mean kidnapped--by the Germans! I must find out if they are holding Indy at Tanis! He leapt to his feet and ran to find his digger clothes.

Just as before, Sallah blended in perfectly with the fellahin who were doing most of the physical labor. He, however, was a water carrier, and wonder freely all over the dig.

It was not until late in the afternoon that he made his way to the eastern edge of the camp, where one of the obelisks lay fallen and broken, half-buried in sand. A squad of fellahin were doing the basic work, shoveling away at the massive drifts of sand that obscured the engraving. He paid little attention until he saw a dusty figure in black broadcloth kneeling at the base. The man had no hat, and his sandy brown hair was matted against his skull--not from dampness, for it was too hot for that--but from dust and dried perspiration. He was so intent on his work that Sallah did not immediately notice that the man was handcuffed and hobbled. It became evident when one of the German guards deliberately kicked sand over the carving the man was studying. The man in black leapt at the soldier with a wild curse and was clubbed down by the other's rifle butt when he hit the end of his chains. It was Indiana Jones.

Sallah snarled, and almost ran to Indy's aid. But he was too far away, and could only watch helplessly as an obviously groggy Indy was hauled back to his feet and thrown roughly up against the obelisk. He slid down until he could brace himself on his knees, and Sallah fought down a grin. Indy was cursing them volubly in four... five ... six languages, none of which were German--he could not be badly hurt. The soldiers did not understand the words, but his meaning was apparent. One of the soldiers raised his rifle to smash Indy in the face, and Sallah began to run again.

But before the rifle could descend, a sharp command rang out. The soldier lowered his rifle and they both snapped to rigid attention. Sallah skidded to a halt, hoping no one had noticed him. He knew Indiana had not; his friend was slumped against the obelisk now, panting from the heat and the exertion.

Kruger came up and stood over Indy. "Really, Doctor Jones. If you would only cooperate, you would be a guest here."

Indy pulled himself off the obelisk and, by a major effort of will, looked up at Kruger, even though the German was standing with his back to the sun.

"You go to hell," he said distinctly.

Kruger's expression was one of mock sadness. He waved the guards over.

"Chain him here."

The guards obeyed swiftly, and in moments Indiana's handcuffs were firmly fastened to a carved boulder, far from any shade. He watched Kruger leave, swore quietly to himself, and lay down. If he could do nothing else, he could at least sleep.

Sallah frowned worriedly, glancing up at the sun. There were at least three hours of light left, and Indy was dressed in black, and did not have a hat. Newcomers might dismiss the dangers inherent in Egypt's summer sun, but the Children of Ra knew better.

Moving in a seemingly random pattern, Sallah moved around the east end of camp. He was trying to just happen to pass by Indy's rock. But when he tried to approach the prisoner, the guards stopped him. In labored, pidgen German, Sallah begged submissively to be told why the poor, sick man could not be given a drink.

"Because," one of the guards replied in awkward Arabic--a concession that shocked Sallah--"he is a thief and is being punished. Go away."

Sallah wanted to know what anyone could steal that would warrant a death in the sun. The soldiers just growled and shoed him away.

Indiana thought he heard Sallah's voice, and tried to look up. The figures danced in the sun, and he could not focus his eyes well-enough to trust his sight. "Oh, well," he muttered. He was groggy enough not to really care much about anything. He relaxed in the soft, hot sand and swiftly fell asleep.

Sallah watched, circumspectly. Indy was left there until dusk. He was sitting up, albeit leaning heavily against the rock, when his guards came for him. They half-dragged, half-carried him back to the Map Room, while Sallah watched from hiding.

Indy was too groggy to climb down the rope, and, impatient to get to their own dinners, the soldiers just shoved him into the Map Room and left.

Sallah almost cried out in horror; it was a twenty-foot drop to a hard sandstone floor! Indy could be killed! But he did not dare approach the Room until full darkness.

He scuttled toward the Map Room, keeping low and trying not to silhouette himself against the skyline. Lying on his belly, he peered down into the thick darkness.

"Indy!" he hissed. "Indy! Are you living?" There was no answer. "Indy! Please, don't be dead! Indy!"

Nothing. Sallah lowered his head briefly in mourning. Then a slightly reassuring thought occurred to him. Indy might not be dead--perhaps he was only unconscious. Either way, there was no way to rescue Indy alone. So Sallah sneaked away and went back to Cairo.

Marion was waiting for him. She looked cold and pale, like a slender shaft of new ivory. "Have you found him, Sallah?" was the first thing she said.

"Yes. They have him at Tanis, Marion. He's in the Map Room."

"Is he all right?"

Sallah could not meet her eyes, and she grabbed him by the shoulders to shake him. "Sallah."

"I don't know!" He explained what he had seen, and Marion turned even paler. Then she grinned, albeit shakily.

"Well, he's hard to kill. How much darkness is there left? Could we get there in time to rescue him tonight?" She was suddenly all eagerness, and did not even notice Payah's deft hostessing.

Sallah picked up the glass of wine his wife had poured and shook his head even as he tasted it. "No. And he couldn't climb out of the Map Room without help--he was staggering and they had to help him walk."

"We've got to do something!"

"We will. They will not kill Indy--they want to know what he did with the Ark. We will be sure that he is all right tomorrow--I will try and let him know he has been found. He is fighting--but they are not giving him any water."

Marion had spent most of her life in the Near East, and the very concept of depriving someone of water horrified her. Sallah had to force her to eat and go to bed, promising to be back from the dig early enough to mount the rescue operation that night.

Thirst is just a state of mind, Indiana told himself. _Stop thinking about it._ He lay where he had recovered consciousness: on the sandy floor of the Map Room. He had not yet tried to move. When he did, he felt the

unmistakable grating of broken bone in his left arm. He sat up with some difficulty and swore as his head began to swim. He waited, and the dizziness went away. He grinned then, and the pale moonlight from the skylight glinted wanly off his teeth.

He knew exactly what he was going to do; he had planned it meticulously in the several long nights he had spent chained to the far wall.

Damn fools, he chuckled as he tucked his left hand into his shirt. _They don't know anything about Egypt in 1000 B.C. This arm isn't even going to stop me--it'll just slow me down._

He stood up and walked, carefully on the sandy, slippery stone floor, to the massive pile of fallen rock at the north edge of the room. Moving rocks was hard with only one hand, but he only moved a few--just enough to make a space wide enough for him to slither through. He rested for a while in the darkness of the passage he had known would be there, and then, grinning, piled rocks back to fill up the opening.

Belloq would have known ... but Belloq's dead. Their man, Blucher, didn't even know who Shishak really was! I'm sure I'm safe from him!

It's a strange feeling, but I don't even hate Bellog. Not any more. He got what he wanted, and what he deserved. I know I don't envy him his sight of God! Indy shuddered; Belloq's scream had been barely audible, through all the turmoil and tumult, but that, somehow, made it all the more soul-chilling. _Such things we were not meant to see._

The passage before him was dark, but he had found the pieces of his Staff of Ra. They were a little short, but they would keep him from bumping into things in the dark. He tucked one half into his belt for a spare and started walking.

Indy had memorized the city map, and he knew exactly where he was going. His goal, as it had been before, was the Well of Souls. He firmly ignored his memories of the snakes and focused on the opening through the charnal house. That was what Marion called the shadowy cavern filled with mummies when she was not using obscene language. He could get out that way.

Strange, he mused as he felt his way down the dusty, silent corridor. _I still slip into obscenity now and then, but I hardly ever curse anymore. Maybe it's because I know, a little, of what 'damned' really means._ Indy shuddered and deliberately turned his thoughts away from The Night on the Island.

_This is the normal access route to the Map Room. It leads to the central throne room; Tanis was Shishak's capital city until the desert swallowed

it. Then a thrill of excitement went through him. Belloq was looking for the Ark to the exclusion of all else. He didn't find Shishak's throne room! And all the legends agree; the people fled with just what they could carry. It would be the greatest treasure in the history of Egyptology ... maybe of all history, period! Shishak had to abandon his treasury. This would make Caernarvon's dig look like a kid's sandbox!

Indy kept himself pleasurably occupied with thoughts of how fantastic a discovery the throne room would be, and he hardly noticed the passing of time. He was hungry, thirsty, tired, and in a good deal of pain from his broken arm, but he just kept walking, wishing, primarily, that he could read the engravings that he knew lined the walls he was walking past. He kept his right hand, with the piece of staff, extended forward, with his right shoulder brushing the wall.

Eventually he took a break. He had forgotten to count paces, and he had no idea how far he had come. But he did not care. He lay down against the wall and went to sleep.

When Sallah reported for work the next morning, the entire camp was in an uproar. It took him a while to overhear enough to figure out why the Germans were so upset.

The prisoner has escaped! Elated, Sallah barely restrained himself from simply running back to Cairo and telling Marion. I knew they could not keep Indy! He is a lion among jackals; an elephant among scurrying rats! Beaming, Sallah worked his shift with a vim and vigor he had never before displayed, watching everything so he would know if Indy was recaptured.

By dusk there had been no evidence of Indy anywhere in camp, and Sallah headed for home as fast as he could. He was still smiling fit to crack his face when he got home. He grabbed Marion and hugged her. She was completely nonplussed.

"Sallah! What's wrong!"

"Nothing! Nothing! Indy escaped in the night! He's free--they searched all day and they can't even figure out how he got out of the Map Room! He's free!"

Marion laughed delightedly and hugged Sallah back. They were both deliriously happy for a few moments. Then a new thought occurred to Marion.

"But you don't know where he is, do you?"

Sallah sobered. "No. But he's safer in the desert than in camp as Kruger's prisoner."

"That's true, but we've still got to find him."

"He'll come here..."

"Sallah!" she exclaimed, surprised. "He's hurt! You know that! It'd take him days to walk here from Tanis!"

Sallah chuckled. "Why should he walk? He can always steal a car or a truck or a horse ... he's had enough experience!"

"Sallah--you don't know how badly he's hurt. We've got to try and find him. Unless he can steal supplies from the Germans, he'll be dead in a day or two."

Sallah nodded thoughtfully. She was right--and she should not have had to remind him. "All right. We'll take my truck out and I'll scout around the edges of the dig. Maybe I'll be able to find him."

Marion leaned forward and kissed him. "Thank you, Sallah. But if you think you're going alone, you've got another think coming."

He knew better than argue with her.

When Indiana woke up in the tunnels, it was as completely dark as it had been when he fell asleep. At first he was not sure he had slept at all--there was no sense of time having passed. Then he shrugged. "What difference does it make?" he wondered aloud. "I feel like I slept, so I can walk some more."

His voice echoed eerily, and he resolved--silently--not to speak aloud anymore. He struggled to his feet and started walking again. He was wobbly on his feet and his arm throbbed to match the pulse-pounding beat in his head. He was so thirsty that he had difficulty remembering what water tasted like, and his hunger was nothing only in comparison to the raging thirst.

Indy knew he was walking slower than before, and he knew that he could not walk indefinitely, but there was nothing else he could do, so he just kept

walking, determined to keep on until he was physically incapable of walking any further, and perhaps a step or two farther.

Hours later he was leaning against a wall, panting so hard his whole body was shaking. The floor had started to slope upward, and the effort of climbing it was taking every ounce of willpower he had left. Then he thought he heard something, and looked up, his eyes a little glazed from weakness.

Light! All Indy could think of was that he had finally reached the Well of Souls, and his halting walk changed to a hesitant, stumbling run.

Marion and Sallah drove out to Tanis after dark. Marion remembered, with a twisted grin, Belloq's casual lie about how far it was from Cairo. Sallah parked the truck behind some dunes beyond the Well of Souls.

"Now, you skirt the camp to the north and I'll go south," Sallah suggested. "We'll meet back here. Try and be back before first light--I want to be halfway to Cairo by dawn."

Marion smiled quickly. "Yeah, I know. But if one of us is late, it may mean we've found Indy. So wait for a while?"

Sallah nodded. "of course."

She lifted a hand to him in salute, and set off stealthily. She was dressed for walking in the desert, this time, in a pair of khaki pants, a chambray shirt and hiking boots. She had pinned her plaited hair up and tucked it under a shapeless gray flannel hat.

She tried to walk quietly, but the sand scrunched under her boots and it sounded loud in her ears. She wanted to call, so Indy might possibly hear her voice and know he was being sought by friends as well as foes. She was all too painfully aware that she could not search every clump of brush or behind every dune. But her voice would be more likely to attract Nazis, so she confined herself to whispers.

Sallah was faced with the same difficulty. His only advantage was that he spoke Arabic and might be able to pass himself off as one of the diggers if he was stopped. Marion did not have that alternative.

Sallah walked slowly, intentionally calling out in a low voice, hoping that he found Indy rather than Marion, especially if he was hurt. Gallant

as she was, mere determination would not make her strong enough to half-carry a man Indiana's size for any distance.

"Achtung!" The voice cracked out of the darkness. Sallah froze. Then, in liquid Arabic, he began to protest timidly as three young privates came out of the darkness to his right, their rifles ready. At a gesture from their leader, Sallah raised his hands and clasped them over his head. The soldiers ignored his protests of innocence and used hand signals that were unmistakable in their meaning. He did not fight, but let his voice trail off into a frightened whimper.

They conducted him back to their campfire, where their sergeant was delighted to welcome them. Sallah did not understand the rapid-fire German as the privates reported, and did his best to look bewildered and innocent.

He suspected he might be succeeding until another trio of guards dragged in Marion, kicking, biting, screaming and swearing. They threw her roughly at the sergeant's feet, and she attacked him because he was the nearest. Sallah took advantage of the soldiers' preoccupation with the furious girl, and grabbed away the nearest soldier's rifle, clubbing him with the butt and leveling it at the rest of the squad. Sallah opened fire, aiming carefully around Marion and her sergeant.

He managed to fell almost half the platoon before three of them jumped on Marion--who had been giving the sergeant the fight of his life--and swiftly subdued her. Using her as a shield, the sergeant held her still while the man beside her aimed his rifle at her head.

"Drop the rifle," the soldier snapped. "or I will kill the fraulein."

Sallah made no move to obey. "If you kill her," he said in perfect, accentless English, "you will have no shield, and I will kill you all."

Marion could not move; her arms and legs were being firmly held, and one of the sergeant's hands was buried in her hair, while another soldier tied a cloth gag in her mouth. She just stared at Sallah, her eyes wide.

"We might stand here forever, but..." the sergeant spoke slowly. Sallah saw Marion's eyes widen even farther and dodged to one side. But he was too slow. Four soldiers jumped on him and wrested his rifle away. In moments they had him disarmed and down on the ground. They swiftly and efficiently bound and gagged Sallah, and then frog-marched both of their prisoners to their commander's tent.

Kruger was less than ecstatic to find strange people scouting his camp. Now that Hitler's Occult Troops, the SS, had taken over from the incompetent Wehrmacht, they were at last making some progress! It was probable that Dietrich was dead, and it was probably a good thing for him. He had totally fouled up this operation; only swift intervention by the SS had managed to salvage anything at all out of Tanis.

But they had gotten their suspect, who was also the expert on the site. Even though he was missing now, they had gotten a good deal of work out of Doctor Jones first. He put down the written summary he had been reading and glared at the prisoners.

With the arrogance typical of his branch of service, he dismissed the Egyptian immediately as an ignorant native, undoubtedly hired by the girl to bring her out there.

The girl, he reflected, was probably Marion Ravenwood, who had been an important part of the briefings on Doctor Jones. Dietrich's reports were complete up to a point; the last thing he had reported to Berlin had been the recovery of the Ark from Doctor Jones and the sealing into the Well of Souls both the American archeologist and Miss Ravenwood. After that the Reich had had no word, and would have been even more disturbed if they had not learned, from a Bundt member in a small college town in Connecticut, that Doctor Jones had returned, unharmed, in the company of Miss Ravenwood. The Ark was nowhere in evidence, but American Intelligence was at least as irritated at Doctor Jones as the Reich was. It seemed obvious to the Reich that Doctor Jones had simply secreted the Ark somewhere, probably in England, to be retrieved at his leisure for his own purposes.

Kruger had been ordered to find the Ark, or, failing that, anything of sufficient power to placate the Reichschancellor. He was, personally, of the opinion that the Ark was again lost, probably for another three thousand years. But Doctor Jones' findings here had been fascinating. He might have something for the Reichschancellor, after all.

He blinked at the defiant woman before him, and reflected that, if she was emotionally attached to Doctor Jones, she would certainly make a useful hostage, and he might even decide that he envied Doctor Jones.

"You are, of course, Marion Ravenwood," he stated, knowing it was so. She did not deign to reply, unless the fact that she spat at him could be considered a reply. Kruger did not; he simply wiped off his cheek and studied her angry expression and taut body. Even in slacks and a man's shirt she was beautiful. He unquestioningly envied Doctor Jones.

"You may assure yourself of civilized treatment, Miss Ravenwood, by answering two simple questions. First, where is the Ark of the Covenant?"

She twisted in her captors' grasp until one managed to find a pressure point on her wrist. She gasped in pain and kicked backward viciously. She caught her captor in the groin with the heel of her boot. He let go of her to double over in agony, and she darted for the door.

The guards there caught her--she really had had no real chance of escaping. Firmly pinioned now, she was turned and faced back toward Kruger. "Where is the Ark?" he asked again, as calmly as if nothing had happened.

"I don't know, you bastard!"

"Where did you last see it?"

"I never saw it!" she lied, furious. "All I ever saw was the crate it was in."

"Where is Doctor Jones, then?"

She stopped struggling to stare at him. "That's a damned stupid question, even from a lousy Kraut! He's your prisoner!" Kruger did not respond immediately and Marion's expression turned crafty and triumphant. "So, Indy got away from you, did he? Oh, I knew it! I knew you couldn't hold him! It'd take more than you to hold Indiana Jones!"

Kruger slapped her thoughtfully and waved negligently at her guards. "Take her and tie her in my tent," were the orders. They were promptly obeyed.

end part 1

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