

The background of the cover is a photograph of the interior of an ancient temple. It features several tall, intricately carved stone columns with fluted shafts and decorative capitals. The ceiling is also highly detailed with carvings. A warm, golden light filters through an opening in the distance, creating a dramatic atmosphere. The overall color palette is dominated by dark browns, golds, and blacks.

**INDIANA JONES**

*and the* **TEMPLES**  
*of* **TAMIL NADU**

**BRIAN THOMAS**



W.

N.

E.

S.

Wohltun ist die Kunst

die Kunst ist die Kunst

If you live in the river, make friends with the crocodile.

INDIAN PROVERB

This is free! If you like it enough to keep it for yourself, give it to someone else.

– Brian

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**INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLES OF TAMIL  
NADU**

**BRIAN THOMAS**

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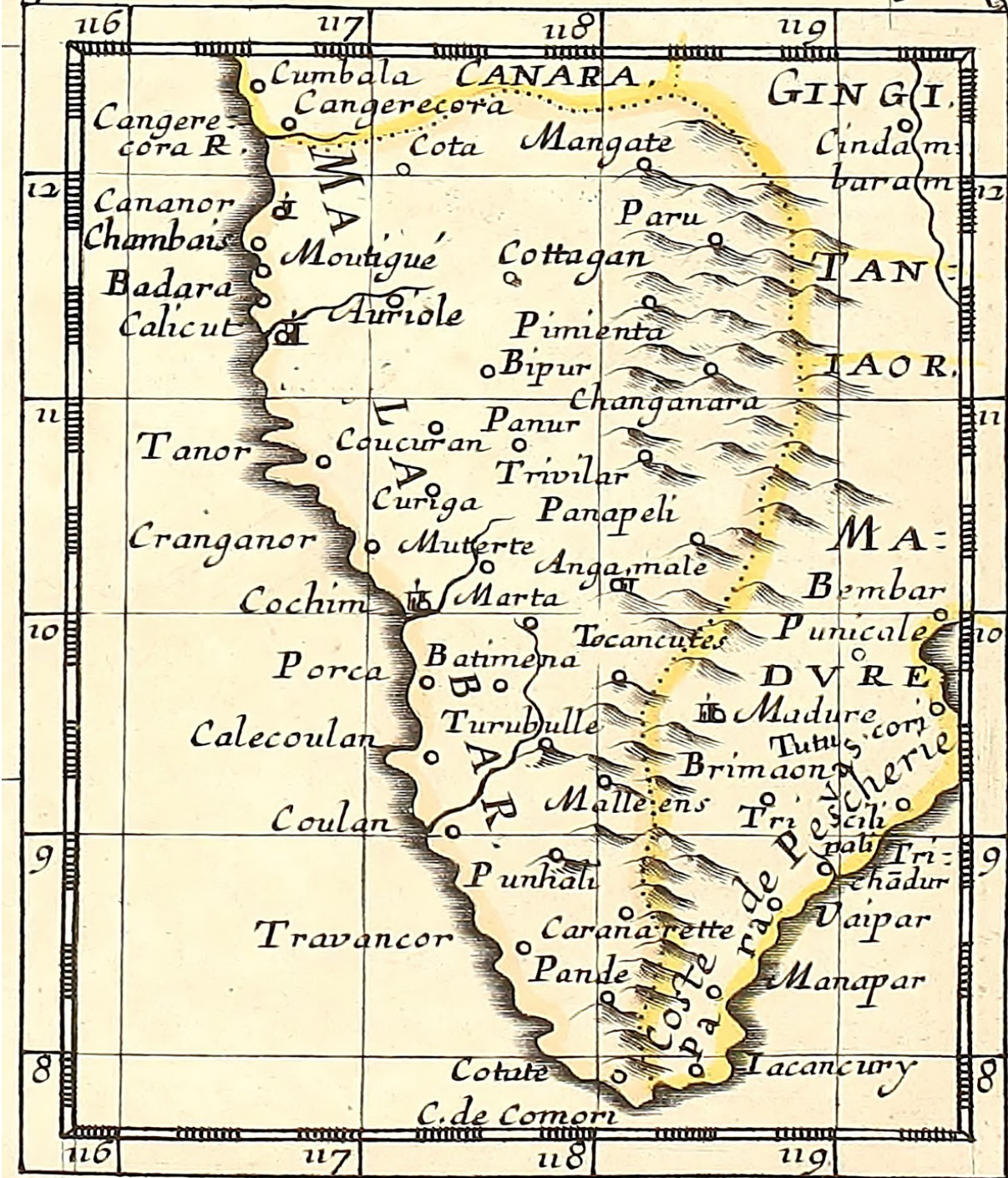
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# LE MALABAR

Avec tous les Royaumes, qui sont sur sa Coste, dans la Terre, et dans les Montag<sup>nes</sup>



# CHAPTER ONE

## MANHATTAN, SPRING OF 1939

Two blocks after his stroll through Central Park, Indiana Jones stopped at 46 East Seventieth St., opened one of its double doors, and stepped inside.

A gentleman chatting with the receptionist at the front desk said, "Professor Jones, we meet again. And the Ark of the Covenant and the Holy Grail, still articles of faith, not treasure?"

"Still counting medieval chamber-pots in Saxony, Dr. Rogers?" said Indiana Jones.

"Dr. Jones, William Taylor is waiting for you in the Trophy Room," said the man behind the counter.

"William Taylor? First Century Christianity?" said Rogers. "Nothing there, Dr. Jones. No treasure. Not even any churches. How could there be churches? There weren't any Christians, just clumps of Jews who couldn't stop talking about a dead carpenter..." Jones had climbed the stairs before Rogers finished his spiel.

Indiana passed beneath a finely carved wooden ceiling from an Italian monastery and a sleigh from the first expedition to the North Pole. In the Hall of Fame he glanced up at the storied Explorers Club flags that adorned the walls. Each flag was on one of the century's most daring expeditions.

William Taylor was sitting beside the Trophy Room's fireplace beneath the tusk of a woolly mammoth. His trimmed white beard

and strong-nosed willful face looked frail and worn. Indiana greeted his friend and moved the chair opposite him a little farther from the fire and closer to William before he sat down.

"There are a few of us who know you held it in your hands, the Holy Grail," said William.

"Fortune and glory," said Indiana Jones.

"At last, I can begin my own quest! Come with me, Indy."

"Give me the short story."

"Never. In 1498, when Vasco da Gama reached India, he realized, to his dismay, that it had already been discovered and 1,450 years earlier..."

Indiana interrupted his friend to say, "In 1502, when Vasco da Gama's fleet looted and lit afire a ship taking 400 pilgrims to Mecca, da Gama peered in through a porthole to watch the Muslims burn to death."

William said, "India was discovered not by da Gama, but by Didymus Judas Thomas, whom we know as the Apostle Thomas..."

"Doubting Thomas."

"Who wore around his neck, until his martyrdom in Tamil Nadu, the nail that held our Lord's wrist to the cross," said William.

"But it wasn't penance, because the iron nail had been miraculously transformed. It was now like no metal known to man: It was as light as a feather, as sharp as a knife," said Indiana.

"Vasco da Gama died in 1524. Fifteen years later, that shining nail was re-discovered at the re-opening of his crypt."

"Next to some terribly misshapen thing that resembled a dried rat. They put a drunkard's bones in the explorer's gold- and jewel-encrusted casket. Yes, we've both read Colonel Richards' diary and the reports of the Portuguese Inquiry," said Indiana.

"Father John has been digging in the Vatican archives..."

"For a decade," said Indiana.

"He has found it at last. A map that shows the temple in Tamil Nadu where the nail is hidden."

"But which temple? There are 40,000 temples in Tamil Nadu."

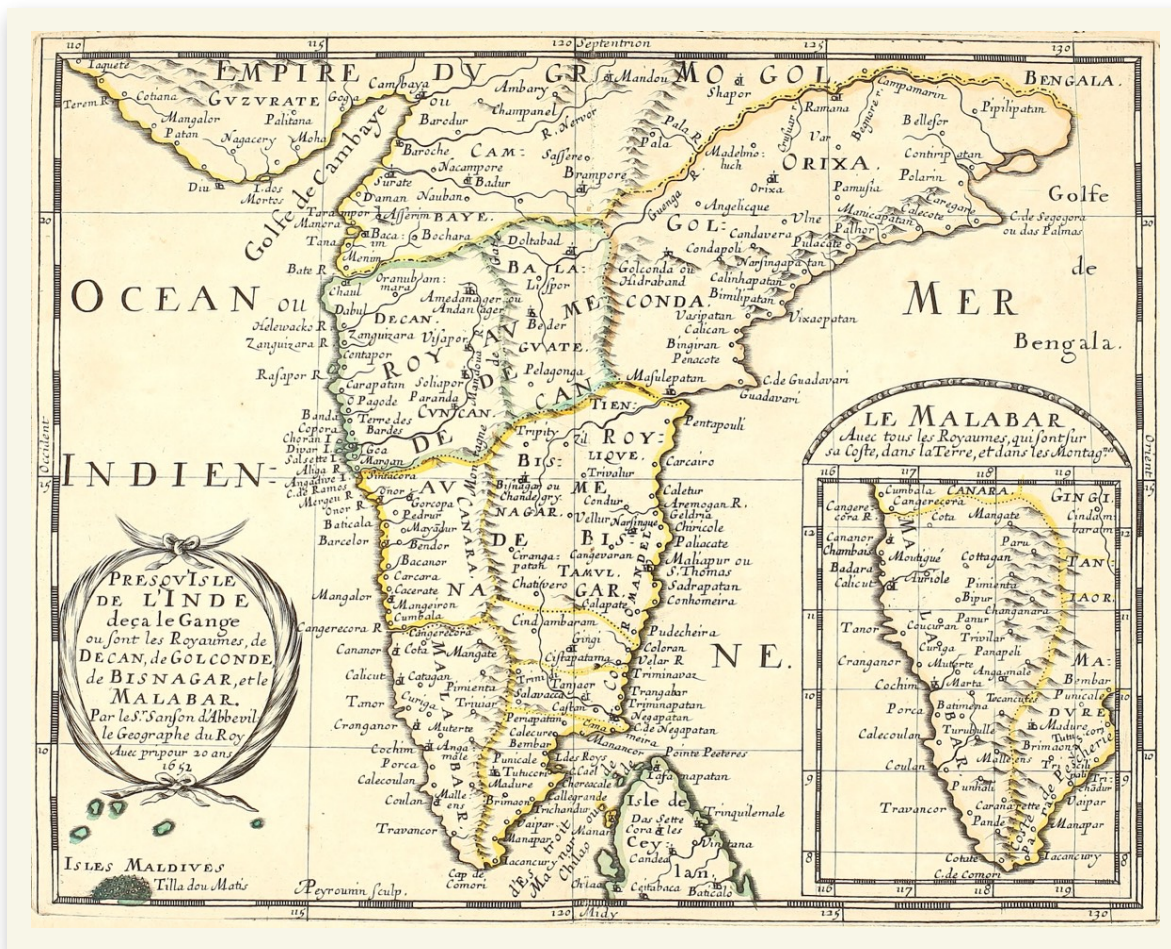
"He says there's a sketch of it on the map."

"And they all look alike."

"I know a fortune teller in Madurai [Madure on the map] who knows every temple in the state. We leave for India next month."

"William, I've got a lot to do in May."

"The *Conte Grande*, finest ship afloat. All expenses paid. The ship takes us straight to Kerala, God's own country. Let's look at the southern tip of the subcontinent in the map room," William said as he grabbed his cane and stood up.



"We land in Cochin [Cochim] and take a houseboat to the bus station, although we could almost walk," said William.

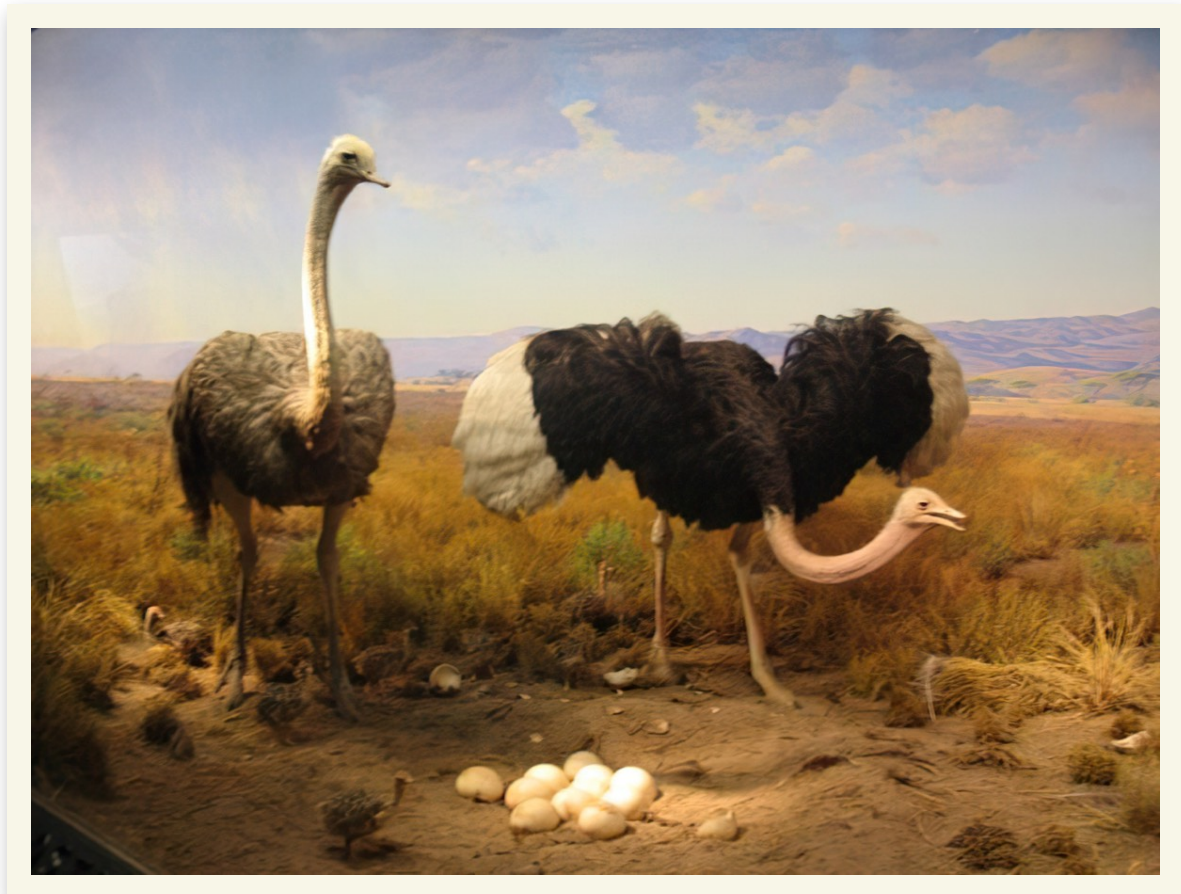
"And we'll want to, after a month at sea."

"No, the backwaters are the best way to meet India. Then we'll hire a car to take us into the foothills and the tea plantations. There, the murals in a pleasure palace will show us the way to the nail's

location. It's over the mountains that, on the map, run down the subcontinent like the ridges on a crocodile's tail."

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Indiana Jones' fedora was silhouetted by the blazing light of an African savanna. Two ostriches stood over their eggs. Indy knew that with one kick they could split a man's skull wide open.



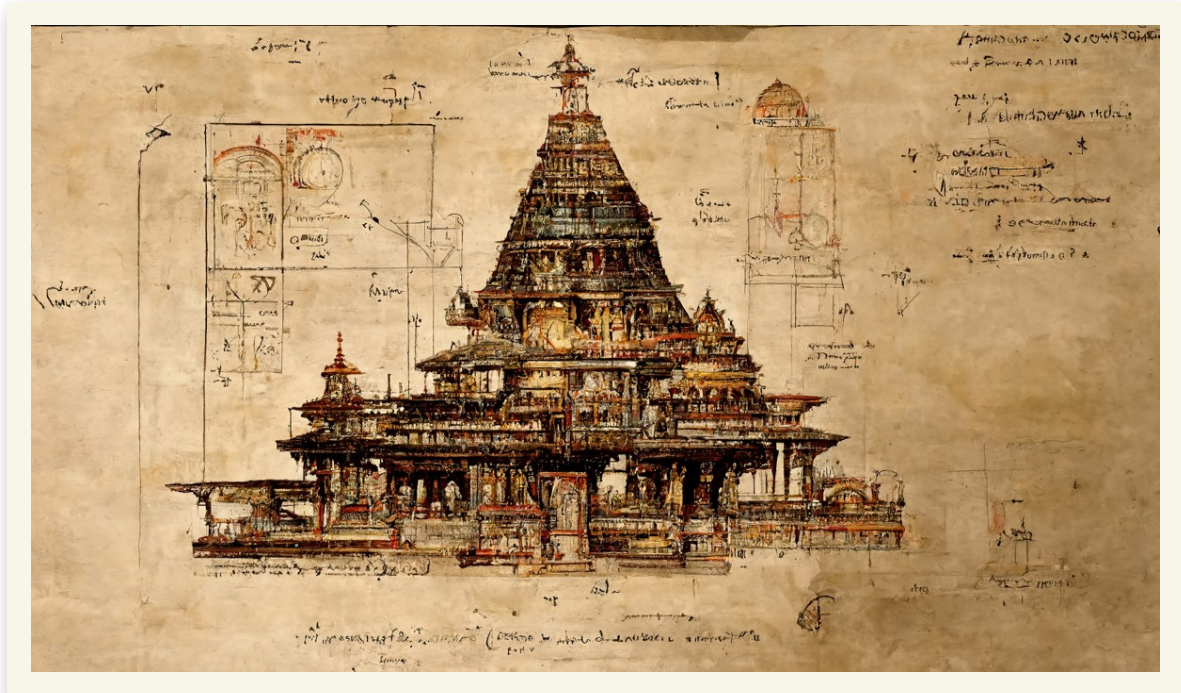
A gaggle of school children squealed in front of the distant lion diorama — footsteps echoed throughout the American Museum's Hall of African Mammals. As he stepped out of the darkness surrounding this pool of light, a stout middle-aged priest with a youthful manner said, "Nice hat."

"A new fedora from JJ's. Father John, how long has it been?"

“Too long.”

Indiana asked, “Did you bring the map?”

Father John nodded and reached into his satchel to pull out a worn leather folder that he handed to Indy, who flipped it open to reveal a weathered document that looked more like an architectural diagram than a map.



In an instant, a dark figure emerging from the shadows behind them, snatched the folder.

Indiana Jones' hand shot out, too, but not quickly enough. The intruder clutched the folder and sprinted into the shadows of the hall. Jones' boots pounded the polished floor as he gave chase past gazelles and giraffes glowing under soft spotlights. A foot emerged from the darkness to trip him. Dr. Jones saw it in time to shift directions just enough to knock the foot's owner off his feet, but the thief was now farther ahead.

A large group of elementary students was gathered in front of the lion display, their excited chatter filling the air. The map-stealer barreled toward them without concern. Indiana's stomach groaned

as he realized what was about to happen. The man plowed through the crowd of children, sending several of them tumbling to the floor. Cries of pain and fear filled the air. Indiana skidded to a halt, his fists clenched as he watched the thief disappear into the shadows.

He knelt beside a little girl who was holding her knee, tears streaming down her face. "Are you all right?" he asked softly. The girl nodded, sniffing.

They'd get the guy, but not today.

Approaching Indiana and the classroom of crying kids, the priest said, "Italian shoes."

"One of yours?" asked Indy.

"No collar. But who else knows I removed and kept the map from Richards' journal. And Indy, only I know the journal by heart and most of what's on the map. Now I'm your blessed partner," said Father John.

"I've been offered better deals," said Indiana Jones.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### AT SEA

Indiana Jones and William Taylor, in their tuxedos, sat with Father John in the two-story first-class smoking room. It featured French gargoyles, knights in shining armor, and a gold framed ceiling mural.

“It’s a floating opera house,” said William.

“A madhouse,” said Indy.

Father John said, “Let’s add to this madness a dig in the Egyptian desert...”



“No, you’re not going to bring the Valley of the Kings in here.”

Father John heeded not their pleading. He said, “I like to imagine Colonel Richards there, sweating amidst the artifacts and the pith helmets. Canvas stretched over the make-shift sorting shelves was his only shade as he wrote about how a nail from the cross that crucified our Lord came to be hidden in Tamil Nadu.”

“The Romans crucified not just Jesus and the thief on either side of him, but 30,000 men in Palestine. At 3 nails a cross, that’s 90,000

nails," Indy said, as he puffed on his cigar.

"As you know, it's no ordinary nail — as light as a leaf, as strong as steel. If the Nazis get their hands on this, their rockets could reach New England," said William.

"Excusa me," said the waiter, "What are the gentleman drinking?"

"An Old Fashioned," said William.

"A Salty Dog, thank you," said the priest.

"Blood and Sand," said Indy.

"And we think that feeling nothing is the opposite of pain. Rest that nail in the palm of your hand and pain will not be pain, but not nothing, either," said William.

"And we have the map."

"No, an Italian took it," said Indy.

William said, "What, this is the *Conte Grande*, there are..."

"1,000 Italians on this ocean liner and 90,000 nails in Palestine — I like these odds," said Indiana Jones.

The Italian waiter approached and placed their drinks on the black and gold smoking room table.

"But in my pocket, I have the key to the tomb that holds the nail," said Indy.

"*Chin chin*," said the priest.

The waiter left.

"What tomb?" said William.

"I have no idea. But with so many Italians, we need something to make the fascists come to us," said Indiana Jones.

---

On a peaceful summer evening, Indiana and Father John strolled upon the upper deck. Indiana's confidence was expressed by the careless angle at which he held his unlit cigar.

"Jesus spoke as no one before him had, and no one after," said Father John.

"Confucius was inscrutable, too," said Indy.

A shadow moved along the deck behind them.

“People aren’t put to death for being unclear, but for changing the rules.” said Father John.

“The poor will inherit the earth?” asked Indy.

“And what you think pure, is vile — what disgusts you is often your path to the divine. It takes a pack of priests, Indy, to cover that up.”

Just then a familiar Italian waiter approached, holding a gun this time instead of a drink.

“Jones, give me the key or the priest dies,” the waiter said.

“No! Indy, I’m ready to die,” said the priest.

Two more fascist waiters grabbed Jones from behind. The one on the right released one hand to feel for the key. Indiana lurched downwards to that side hard enough to topple both thugs.

Father John dropped down to disappear into the shadows.

Indiana shoved one thug onto the crouching form of Father John. The priest straightened up and knocked the fascist up and over the side. His companion ran off shouting “Man overboard!” in Italian.

Jones sucker punched the gun-wielding Italian waiter, who reeled, dropped the pistol, and ran off in the direction of the beach chairs and umbrellas on the main deck. The waiter glanced back once, panic etched across his sharp features. He grabbed an empty deck chair and flung it into Jones’ path. Indy leapt over it without breaking stride.

Up ahead, a server emerged from the bar carrying a tray laden with clinking glasses of champagne and seaside cocktails. The waiter barreled towards him, intent on putting another obstacle between himself and his pursuer.

“Watch out!” Jones shouted, but it was too late.

The waiter collided with the server, sending glasses and liquor flying in a spectacular crash. The server stumbled and fell, his tray clattering to the deck. Jones hurdled over him and kept running, closing the gap.

Desperate, the waiter veered towards a staircase leading down to the lower deck. He leapt onto the bannister and slid down, coattails flapping. Jones reached the landing a second later. Dr. Jones took the stairs three at a time.

Real sand was scattered amidst the umbrellas and sun chairs on the upper decks to give the illusion of a Mediterranean Beach. The waiter hit the sand and immediately lost his footing, arms pinwheeling as he fought for balance. Indiana was close behind when a beach ball rolled under his feet. He windmilled his arms but couldn't stop from crashing into the waiter.



Together they careened over a railing in a tangle of flailing limbs, Indiana caught a glimpse of blue-green water below as they crashed through a skylight and plummeted into the ship's indoor swimming pool. They hit the water with an enormous splash, sending waves cascading over the sides. Bathers screamed. A woman in a fine silk dress shrieked as water sloshed over her legs staining her golden gown with dark splotches.

Jones grabbed the waiter, swam him to the edge of the narrow pool, and asked him a question.. When he didn't get the answer he wanted, Indiana held the waiter's head under water.

"Now," Indiana Jones said. "Let's try this again. Where's the map?"

The waiter groaned and covered his face with his hands, defeated. Indy allowed himself a small, grim smile. Leaving the coughing Italian lying along the edge of the pool, Indiana Jones headed back to his first-class cabin with the map.

Passengers from the sandy deck could now see into the world's largest floating indoor swimming pool through a new hole in its ceiling. Two Italians picked up the waiter lying coughing at the edge of the pool and carried him away. In the mural that wrapped this Japanese-themed swimming hole, Mount Fuji looked on with her usual serenity.

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The Italians carried their leader deep into the bowels of the ship, past exposed rivets and dank cubicles that vibrated with the ceaseless whirring of machinery. The air grew thick and fetid. When they couldn't descend any farther they laid the Italian waiter down in the dark vibrations of an engine room. At last, amidst the beating of the ship's cylinders he could ground himself again in their sacred chant:

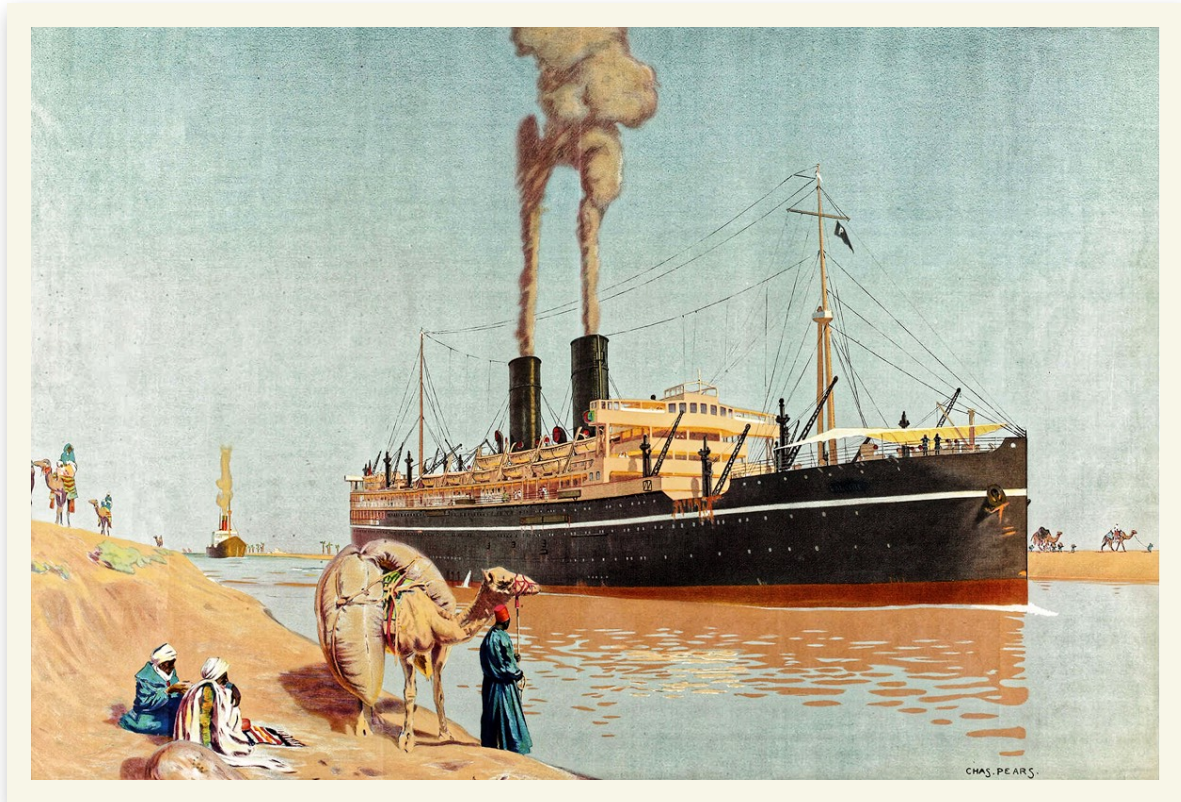
*Knights of the Holy Sepulcher –  
We protect the true mysteries  
and annihilate the rest.*

---

Mr. Taylor, Father John, and Dr. Jones lounged in beach chairs in one of the shaded upper decks on the port side of the *Conte Grande* as it traversed the Suez Canal.

"We've got the map back — that's the good news. The bad news is that he had the map with him and the dunking in the pool has

washed off some of Colonel Richards' handwritten notes," said Indiana.



"Our only hope is that clue from Richards' journal, 'in the palace of Bundi many-trunked Ganesh points the way,'" said William.

"Our only hope of getting through the Suez desert with only an Old Fashioned, a Salty Dog, and a Blood and Sand, is to convince Father John to open up the Vatican vault," said Indy.

"Not without papal authorization," said Father John.

"Just a story...," said Indy.

"Stories, not treasures, are what we keep locked in that vault," said Father John.

"Am I the only secret still walking the streets?" William asked.

"Your story, if you choose to tell it, will be loose, but not the stone. And that isn't kept there, but in a place for which I do not even know the name," said Father John.

"In 40 years, Indiana, I have told no one but Father John, in confession, and a papal delegation during the inquisition. However, it will take all afternoon to reach the Red Sea. And my life's nightmare is why we're here.

"The story, as I know it, started in 1342. No doubt Father John could set the rock's provenance back much farther, but he'll remain silent," said William.

Father John nodded.

William said, "We're in Mayfield, an ideal English village. An old gypsy wagon pulled by two nearly dead horses rolls down the road, its wheels rattling and creaking. Just past the peaceful stream, where the village begins, a jagged black rock no bigger than a cantaloupe tumbles off the back of the wagon. An elderly woman grabs her cane and hobbles over to investigate. The village priest is walking up the road towards her. While she pokes the rock with her cane the priest approaches, bends over, and picks up the heavy stone with both hands. For no reason at all, with one swing of the stone, the priest knocks his parishioner off her feet. Mad delight sparkles in his eyes.

"The miller stops the priest's killing spree, but when the stone rests in his hands he kills a woman washing clothes in the stream. He is stopped by another woman who then begins her killing spree.

"The slaughter continued for three days. Thirty-eight people were dead when the monks finally secured the stone in an ancient monastery.



"For forty years not a night has passed that I haven't awakened from seeing myself in Rembrandt's etching of the Martyrdom of St. Stephen. I'm the thoughtful one who swings a stone in one hand.

"Father, is it not the stone that martyred St. Stephen, even the one Cain used to kill his brother?" asked William.

Father John said, "You are not responsible."

“Not responsible? In 1899, Indy, when the monastery was torn down I thought that as a scholar I could be trusted to guard the device that held the stone. How could I have been so stupid? All my smug certainty that murder was a choice I’d never make.... Yes, I chose to harbor that ancient curse, but I did not choose to kill my wife!

“One small betrayal and you are on the path to waking up in the middle of the night, each and every night, discovering once again that you’re a monster. And at seventy I think holding the nail that crucified our Lord can change that. God have mercy... .”

As the *Conte Grande* cruised through the Suez Canal, on one of its upper decks, three men wept.



# CHAPTER THREE

## KERALA

The ocean liner gangway led from the quiet attention of the ship's attendants to a rude British sergeant's examination of their passports, the frantic sales pitches of rickshaw pullers, and the horns of taxi cab drivers. Soon, they were delighted by green palms and blue sky, but dripping wet from the late afternoon heat and humidity.

"Ah, the backwaters of Kerala — God's own country," said William.

Porters helped carry their bags four blocks down the street to a much older pier with houseboats that looked like they were made of reeds and leaves. They boarded one of them and chugged slowly out into a narrow channel, passing two alligators sunbathing on the opposite bank.

As they settled into their journey, Indy said, "Before we had that encounter with the gun-wielding Italian waiter, you were telling me that Jesus said, 'what disgusts you is your path to the divine.' Please continue."

Father John said:

Matthew 13:33-5: Jesus says, 'I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world,' just as he says, 'The kingdom of heaven is like leaven.'

Exodus 12:15: 'Whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day shall be cut off from Israel.'

"For Hebrews, unleavened bread is a symbol of purity. That's the only bread they ate at Passover. Now, it's a tradition. Then leavened bread reminded the Jews of the swelling up of corpses left by the side of the road."<sup>1</sup>

Indy, realizing that Father John was just going to let things end in such an unsatisfactory way, asked, "What does it mean?"

"For me, it means we must love what we do not like, which is usually ourselves. It is priests afraid of their own secret desires who preach against homosexuality. Clerics without a clue to who they really are say Jesus spent so much time in the company of outcasts, of badly broken people, to make them hate themselves. Nothing could be farther from the truth. We must love ourselves as we love our neighbors, not just the other way around. Only if we accept ourselves can we love one another."

A boat roaring into view, its engine screaming as it raced towards them, disrupted Indiana's thoughts about the Kingdom of Heaven. Two gunmen stood in the bow, their weapons trained on the houseboat. The driver, a wiry man with a scar across his cheek, grinned malevolently.

Jones' hand sprang for the revolver at his hip. The gunmen opened fire; bullets whizzed past Indiana's head. Father John and William hit the deck, their hands covering their heads as splinters of wood flew around them. Indiana's first shot ricocheted off the powerboat's hull.

The motorboat circled around. Indiana grabbed Father John and William, hauling them astern. With a sickening crunch, the sleek metal boat plowed through the center of the houseboat's fragile reed and leaf construction. Indiana, Father John, and William were flung into the water, the debris of the houseboat swirling around them. They surfaced, gasping for air, as the powerboat sped away.

An alligator's ridged tail swayed side to side, propelling its armored body through the dark water. Indy saw only its unblinking eyes.

Indiana swam first to William to set him up on a still floating section of the boat. Looking back he saw Father John standing shoulder deep in darkness. He didn't see the monster, just an alarming ripple disrupting the surface of black water.

Indy said, "Hug the 'gator if you can, John. Hug it!"

The water thrashed and churned violently. The priest's head jerked back. Indy, arriving just as his friend was dragged under without a scream, seized the creature, wrestled it back to the surface, and squeezed it tight.

Caught in Indiana's fierce grip, the reptile, concluding that its victim was much stronger than anticipated, opened its jaws to release the priest's arm and retreated.

---

Indiana pulled an alligator tooth out of Father John's elbow and flicked it back into the lagoon. The priest let out a breath and said, "Yes, Indy, we must learn to hug what we hate."

William compensated the houseboat owner for the loss of his boat and the man returned with lunch and bandages. As Indy finished dressing Father John's wounds he asked to hear the parable about leaven from beginning to end. Father John said:

Matthew 13:33

Jesus asks, 'What does the Kingdom of Heaven remind me of?'

'It is like leaven that a woman took and concealed in three measures of flour until it was all leavened.'

Indiana said, "So, the part you left out was that the leaven that is like God's Kingdom, and the effects of which reminded the Hebrews of a swelling corpse, was taken— stolen no doubt — and then concealed in enough flour to bake bread for a wedding to which the whole village is invited. This heavenly feast is being prepared not by

a holy man, but by a thieving woman. What would the priests have made of that?"

"A crucifixion?" asked William Taylor.

After lunch, Indy helped them both make the short walk back to town, find a doctor, and rooms for a few nights of rest.

---

With the bus drivers and the British believing they're not responsible for your death if they honk before they kill you, the blaring of horns was constant. The garish colors of the shops, softened by a year of dust, were waiting for the monsoon to restore them to madness. It was an ordinary Indian Main Street, but everywhere the answer was the same: "No car. Take bus."

"William, we took so many buses in Syria, has old age so changed you?" asked Indiana.

William said nothing.

The bus had a truck-like front hood, and the seats were stacked almost to the ceiling with sacks of rice and beans that the passengers were expected to help unload. Since they were lying on the sacks, the three had little choice but to cooperate. After two hours of intermittent work they'd uncovered a couple of seats. William and the priest sat talking about their most memorable archaeological digs.

Still lying on sacks of rice piled to within a few feet of the roof of the bus, Indy only pretended to sleep.

Father John said, "Last year I found, lying like bookmarks in a medieval breviary, fragments of pages from the banned and, it was thought, annihilated, *Gospel of St. Thomas*.<sup>2</sup> They contain two previously unknown parables of Jesus, "The Empty Jar" and "The Assassin." Which one do you want to hear, Indy?"

From his upper bunk, Indiana said, "The Assassin."

Father John said:

The Kingdom of Heaven is like the man who wanted to kill a man of power. First, he unsheathed his sword at home and thrust it into the wall to test his strength. Then he was able to kill the man of power.<sup>3</sup>

In the silence that followed the parable they all noticed that they had entered the alternate reality of the tea plantations.<sup>4</sup> Everywhere else crops grow in rows and nature grows in a pattern only God can see. Here there is something in between. From the roadside to the farthest hill a deep green struggle between rows of crops and the randomness of nature, between order and chaos, was sweeping over the land.



"What does it mean?"

"I have no idea," said Father John. "The apostles couldn't understand many of the parables and they were living in the world in

which the stories were set. Nearly 2,000 years later, explaining them is more, not less, difficult."

"But, wasn't it fine to discover a lost parable?"

"It was momentous. Which of your discoveries in Syria meant the most to you, William, the earliest Christian altarpiece or communion chalice?" asked Father John.

"Neither of those, and nothing Christian meant as much as Sita's Veil."

"You found the Veil and kept it secret?" asked Indiana.

"As with the Ark of the Covenant, archaeologists do the finding, governments do the hiding. This one, however, isn't lost in that endless American warehouse, locked in a Vatican vault, or forgotten in the basement of the British Museum. The Brits obliterated it."

Father John put his hand on William's and asked, "What is Sita's Veil?"

"Mankind's only encounter with the advanced machinery of another world. For Hindus and Buddhists, it was a divine instrument. For Christians, it was alien technology. It transferred awareness from one organism to another. Legend has it that Sita took it back to India with her when Rama freed her from the demon Ravana's stronghold in Lanka.

"After the British destroyed the device, they paid me off, and burned all my documentation. Even if I wasn't so ready to move on, I knew that if I talked, they'd shut me up in a lunatic asylum."

"Why didn't you tell me about your great discovery on that 12-hour bus ride through Syria?" asked Indiana.

"For the same reason I didn't tell you I murdered my wife."

"You wore the Veil?"

"Yes. Once you start using divine artifacts, it's difficult to stop," said William.

Wanting to hear William's tale uninterrupted by having to haul sacks of grain, they piled out at the next village and found a tea worker happy to sell them a meal and a place to sleep.

The cool mountain air and the sight of the tea fields rolling out from their host's porch to the farthest hills delighted them, but didn't make anyone less eager to know what lay behind the Veil. Indy

pulled out a flask, took a swig without the bottle touching his lips, as Indians do, and passed it to Father John who did the same, and passed it on as well. The sun dipped behind a mountain.

William said, "Psychic archaeology, who hasn't tried it?"

Reaching for the flask, Indy said, "You know I have. How about you, Father John? Do you ever pray before deciding which book to search for lost parables?"

"Always."

William said, "Then we're all in the club. My first dig in a spirit-directed expedition was just north of Tamil Nadu, in Orissa. I asked a village witch-doctor if he could find a legendary tantric temple of human sacrifice.<sup>5</sup> I discovered, buried under eight feet of mud, right where he'd led me, a shrine with 64 dancing idols. My favorite dancer was the one depicted drinking blood out of a bowl made from a man's skull."



"What did *they* hope to gain from drinking blood?" asked Indy.

"Immortality. Which was within reach because they defined it as about 120 years of active life," William said. "I'm sure they lied about their age, but wouldn't you, if it made you immortal?"

"My psychic adviser stopped by a couple of times a week. Before I finished excavating the site we had located Sita's Veil because it was not underground, but under guard."

“Still in use? How is that possible?” asked Indy.

“Their tribal ancestors had teachers who taught them how to build their lives around the Veil. The ancient apparatus, once orange and green, now brown and black, twirling at the base and then stretching out like the branches of a tree. Metal tubes rose up around a stone chair that didn’t have a cloth veil, but a metallic visor. The device was activated by salt water. As the ocean had been retreating over the centuries they had been extending a canal that brought the sea inland so that the Veil could remain at the center of their community.

“My attendant, like all men in Jagernat, had been a woman, a wood-cutter, a cripple, and a chief. Every other year he’d been led, as he was leading me, into the jungle blindfolded, not knowing if he’d return male or female, rich or poor, smart or dumb, athletic or disabled.

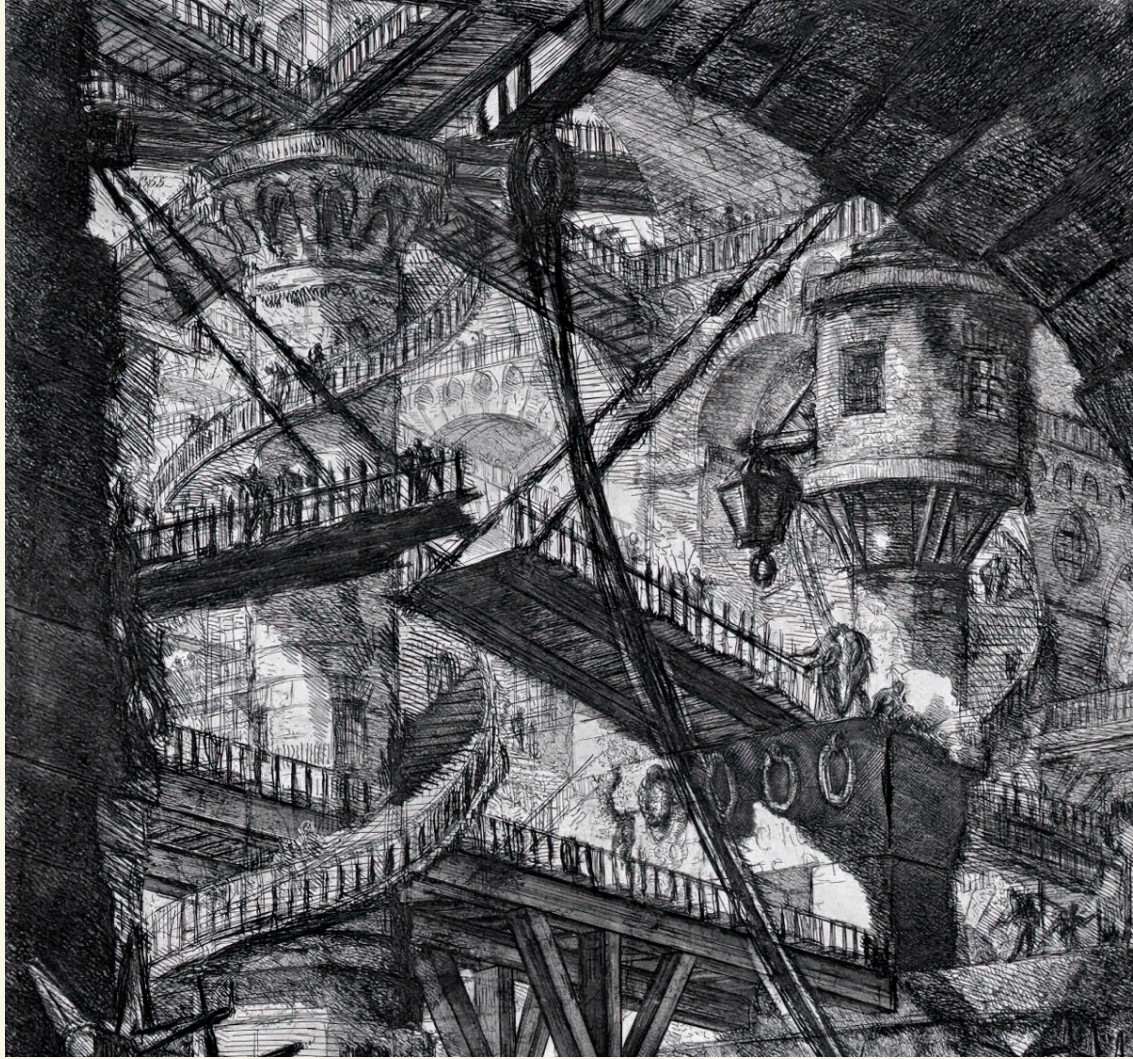
“They promised me, however, that if the procedure was repeated within an hour, the transfer wouldn’t hold, and I’d return back in my own body. What they hadn’t told me was that, not wanting my foreign consciousness to contaminate their just society, they had thrown some hidden switch so my soul would be tossed outside their world.

“It was 1904, five years after I killed Clara. I wasn’t looking for a vacation, but a new life. I wasn’t worrying about not returning, but I still trembled. The chanting grew louder, more fervent. After my encounter with the Veil would I be surrounded by a loving family or sleeping in the alley?

“That rhythmic village song pulsed through the humid jungle air as I stumbled blindly forward, my hand gripping the shoulder of the man leading me. Sweat trickled down my back. The blindfold pressed against my face, shutting out all light, all sense of direction.

“The chanting ended the instant I was turned around, with my eyes still covered, to face the villagers. Hands then were pressed gently on my head to guide it under and behind the Veil.

“An icy wave surprised and pulled me under as it had once in my childhood. I broke the surface shivering in a strange, sleeping city.



“Staircases swirl upward only to trail off in mid-air. Paths head out in all directions, but is there a single one that doesn't double back on itself? Why are all the bridges up? Then I stop shivering and get more comfortable with my new surroundings. A pointless architectural exercise starts to look like the grandest staircase ever imagined. I realized that I was beginning to see this cityscape with the delusions of grandeur it expected. I was getting acclimated to its arrogance and somehow I knew that I was trapped in the consciousness of a British officer — the kind who believes that it is by dressing for dinner in the jungle, by doing things properly, they rule India. The knife-edge crease in the khaki shorts mattered, but

not the stench of his unwashed body. The true horror set in as I realized that foul odor was smelling sweeter with each passing second. My hour as a modern Major-General seemed to last an endless night. I survived by launching an imaginary insurrection — rallying myself with slogans like:

*Put their heads in the Veil!  
Empathy is the end of empire."*

Both Indiana and Father John wanted to drink to that, but the empty bottle lay at their feet. As the sun had set and the moon not yet risen, all they could see of the tea plantation now was their lamp-lit porch. Their host handed each of his guests a dinner of curry, rice, and dal.

Father John said, "What if an emperor had donned the Veil! How might our history have changed?"

William said, "An emperor did: 2,200 years ago the Emperor Ashoka became the first to unite almost the entire Indian subcontinent into one kingdom by conquering the Kalingas of Orissa, the people of the Veil. By the time he won that war, 300,000 lives had been lost. The British claim that unlike so many before and after him, Ashoka was transformed by the horror of what he had done, studied war no more, and converted to Buddhism. If he had stopped there, the British explanation of these historical events wouldn't be so hard to believe.

"But Ashoka went on to write the first declaration of human rights — not just those of free citizens, but those of prisoners as well. He banned animal cruelty and guaranteed affordable healthcare for all. He declared freedom of religion.

"Three hundred years before Jesus of Nazareth said, 'Turn the other cheek,' Emperor Ashoka's sculptors inscribed on the stone monuments that marked the borders of his kingdom a declaration that moral force was greater than physical force. He sent unarmed Buddhist apostles out in every direction, not only establishing Buddhism to the East as the major religion of Asia, but sending

missionaries to the West as well — to Palestine, Egypt and Greece — which some scholars believe helped form the world of ideas that shaped Jesus of Nazareth.”

Indy said, “In other words, after he conquered the area of India where Sita’s Veil was, Ashoka did what no emperor who hadn’t worn the Veil would ever do.”<sup>6</sup>

Father John’s mouth was open, but he wasn’t saying anything. Indy and William, noticing this, just looked at him and waited.

When he noticed their stares, the priest shook his head and said, “William, you alone among us have inhabited two consciousnesses. Your awareness entered another person’s consciousness. Does that mean awareness and consciousness are not two words for the same thing?”

As the priest waited for a response, their host handed each of them a steaming cup of unsweetened tea.

William said, “Not something I thought about until the night I watched dead bodies burn alongside the Ganges and an Aghori. Do you know any Aghoris, Father John?”

“No.”

“They are the last surviving sect of that thousand-year-old transgressive tantric tradition. They don’t sacrifice humans, but they do have their culinary and sexual post-mortem rituals.”

“They eat the dead and...?”

“Yes to both. But Father, the tantric practice as a whole had much more in common with Jesus and his followers than any of this seeming perversity.”

“Seeming?” said the priest.

“They joined a spiritual community that didn’t recognize caste and gender divisions. You do know that before Roman Catholicism, women led many churches?”

“It was before churches were built that they led communities of believers.”

“As with those early followers of Jesus, they held community-affirming tantric ceremonies in which untouchables ate with Brahmans and women were not excluded from leadership. They

transcended Hindu purity codes as Jesus did those of the Pharisees. The Aghoris take this much further. They believe this lets them see past the illusory nature of conventional reality to enlightenment. Baba Keenaram, their immortal founder, was said to have been 170 years old when he died.

"I'd heard that Rola-Cola, an Aghori then living by the burning ghats in Benares, knew more than anyone else about a legendary skull from Kali's necklace. All I had to do was bring several rolls of 'solid cola,' the candy that gave him his nickname.

"Whenever I recall my hour as a British officer, I remember an Aghori who had the presence of the Taj Mahal and the stink of a cesspool. After an unimaginably dark night of the soul, through unmatched natural abilities, prayer, and renunciation he had carved out a consciousness that lifted all who approached. When Rola-Cola recited the *Ramayana* you entered his cathedral and your awareness soared. He had renounced every comfort a man could have, but one. His taut high cheek-boned visage looked like Shiva's until he smiled and you saw those decaying teeth. The Aghori believe that enlightenment comes when an ego leaves its shrine to Shiva. Rola-Cola's ego was exiting his temple for the final time, he had given up all pleasures, when he realized there was one thing he hadn't renounced — his life-long thirst for enlightenment. He chose candy, instead."

"Did he tell you about the skull?" asked Indy.

"When I asked, he got up, grabbed a charred arm that had fallen beneath a woman's burning remains, took a bite from it, and offered it to me. When I declined, he let me know with a big rotten-teeth revealing grin that I wasn't ready to hear anything about Kali's necklace."

Father John was ready to call it a night. He thanked William for his story, God for this day, lay down on sacks of rice piled in one corner of the porch, and fell fast asleep. Indy and William retired to their corners as well.

Just after he was awakened by his usual nightmare, William saw men and women hurrying up the hill toward him with their torches blazing. Their fires cast an eerie glow on tea fields already illuminated by a full moon. Forty years later was he still the monster pursued by an angry village? As his head cleared, however, he realized that the villagers were just picking tea leaves by torchlight in the middle of the night. Rumors circulated that champagne and moonlit-picked tea were all some royal families drank. Right now, he'd settle for a bottle of gin.

---

After a chai and puri breakfast, the three men caught a bus only half full of grain. There were several available seats.

William, too anxious to quietly enjoy the view with the others said, "In Tamil Nadu you'll meet, Raj, my fortune-telling friend. He loves proverbs more than our priest likes parables. His favorite:

*It is better to be blind than to see things from only one point of view.*

There was no response. Everyone just gazed out at tea fields that swirled as madly in real life as they might in a Van Gogh painting.

The palace, like the tea plantations that surround it, had just enough order to make its lack of restraint more alarming. As Rudyard Kipling wrote:

The Palace of Bundi, even in broad daylight, is such a palace as men build for themselves in uneasy dreams — the work of goblins rather than of men.<sup>7</sup>

From perches on either side of the palace gates stone elephants lean in so far to rub their trunks together that neither would remain

standing without the other. Below them a man rents out sticks to fight off the monkeys that guard the palace.

In the palace's central courtyard there arose a five-story square tower. Indy led them through an arched door to an atrium. From the landing on which he stood, a staircase soared upwards like a cherished dream, even as it plunged downward in despair.



They hadn't encountered any monkeys yet, but the sticks felt good in their hands.

Indiana took from his pocket one of the stones he collected when expecting apes and cautioned his companions to stand back. He said, "a step-well<sup>8</sup> from hell" as he tossed in his stone. Its banging ended without a splash.

"Wait here," he said.

After tapping the steps a few times with the rented stick, Indiana Jones began to climb the staircase. Six steps up, long after it had seen him, Indy saw an ape-shaped silhouette crouched in the archway at the top of the stairs.

He edged up the stairs, bullwhip in one hand and stick in the other. The silhouette remained still, watching his slow ascent. At the tenth step, it let out a piercing shriek and leapt down toward him. Indy cracked his whip at the monkey but it dodged nimbly, landing on the step above him. Baring its fangs, it swiped at Indy's face. He jerked back, barely avoiding the claws.

Heart pounding, Indy swung the stick, connecting with the monkey's side. It howled in rage, launching itself at him again. They grappled, a tangle of flailing limbs and gnashing teeth. The stick clattered from Indy's grip and tumbled into the pit. The monkey's weight slammed into his chest, sending him reeling. His boots scrabbled against crumbling stone. He teetered on the edge of the abyss. The monkey clawed at his shirt, shredding fabric. Indy swung his bullwhip out and cracked it over the beast's back.

With an earsplitting shriek, the monkey released its hold. Indy flung it off him and into the darkness below. Then he leaned against the wall and stared into the void with his chest heaving and the whip dangling from his trembling hand. A black paw rising out of the well, grasping a step and pulling itself back up, interrupted Indy's reverie.

The whip sprang back to life. The end wrapped around the monkey's wrist. With a fierce tug, Indiana's whip broke the animal's grip on the stairs. Screeching horribly, the monkey plunged into the darkness below. Indiana Jones wiped sweat from his brow and continued up the stairs.

When he reached the top, he entered another courtyard. Three monkeys glared at him, but out here they wouldn't be a problem. A

life-size portrait of a woman wearing a diaphanous gown stood beside him. Next to her, a deep blue Krishna led one of his cowmaids into the forest for a tryst.

In the central mural on this wall an apocalyptic night sparkled. Black clouds dumped down rain, snow, and stars. The couples' flying carpets were kept dry by the umbrellas that hovered just above them. In the center, many-trunked Ganesh's left foot pointed to a temple's domed tower — right where Indiana believed he could see traces of an obscured mark on the old temple map.



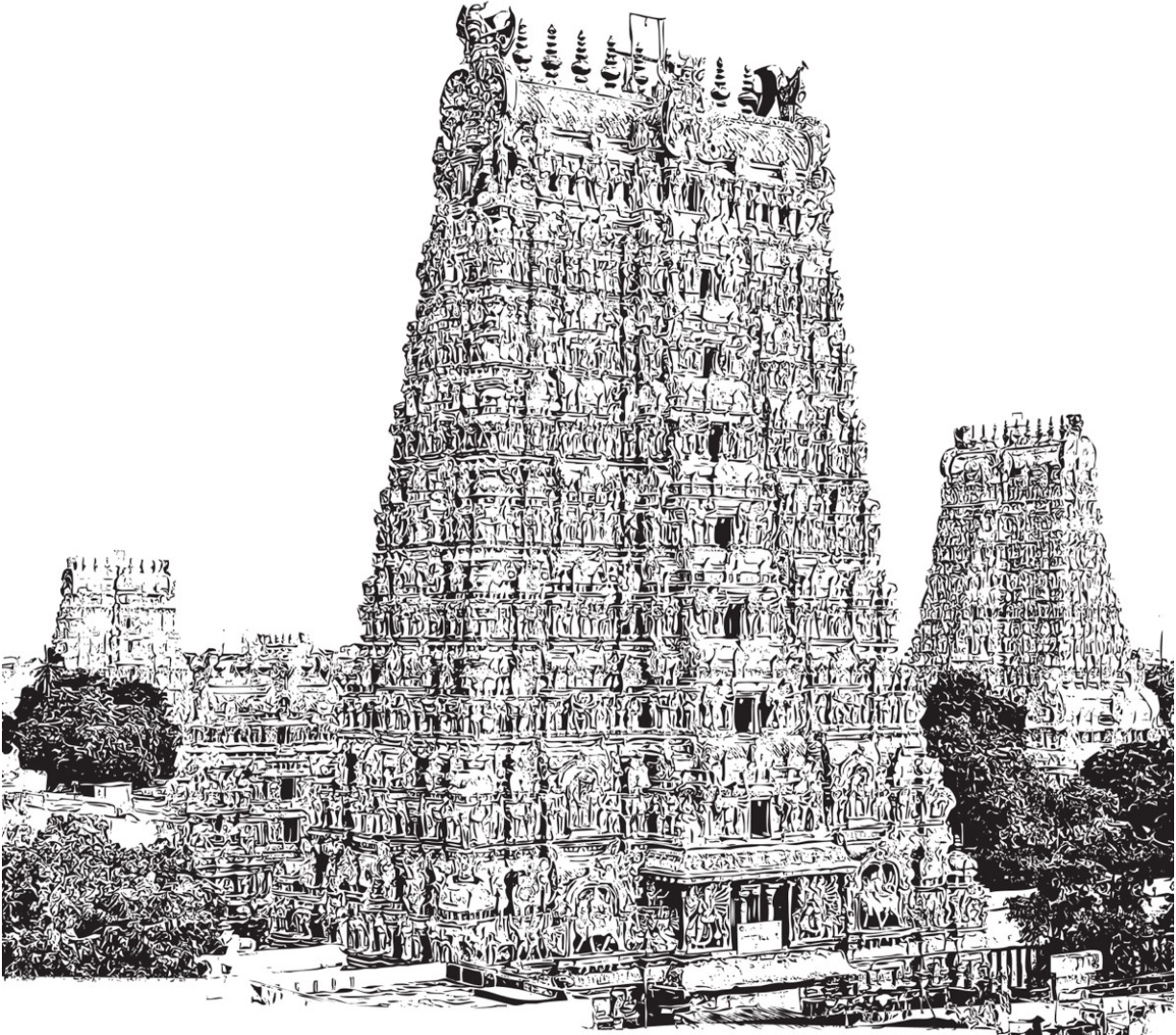
Father John and William Taylor found an alternate and much safer way into the pleasure room before Indy finished his sketch of the temple.

As they left this vintage man cave, William said, "What would the Apostle Thomas say about that?"

"That there were no elephants or flying carpets at the apocalypse," said Father John.

“You’re assuming it depicts the end of the world: Maybe it just shows Saturday night in the play room,” said Indiana Jones.

William’s anxiety returned the moment they left the palace. Then the three archaeologists hitched a ride on a truck hauling tea. The earthy scent of the tea leaves they lay upon mixed with the cool mountain air. From his bed of tea William looked up to see a hawk gliding overhead, remembered he was headed to Tamil Nadu, and forgot his troubles by asking himself, “Does a nickel still buy a sadyal — eight scintillating tastes on a banana leaf?”



# CHAPTER FOUR

## TAMIL NADU

“To enter Tamil Nadu is to travel back in time to cathedral towns like Chartres,” said William Taylor. “All other buildings are one to three stories. The House of Prayer alone still soars upwards at the center of a civilization.”

“If the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel is ever cleaned, we’ll be as shocked by it as we are now by this,” said Father John.

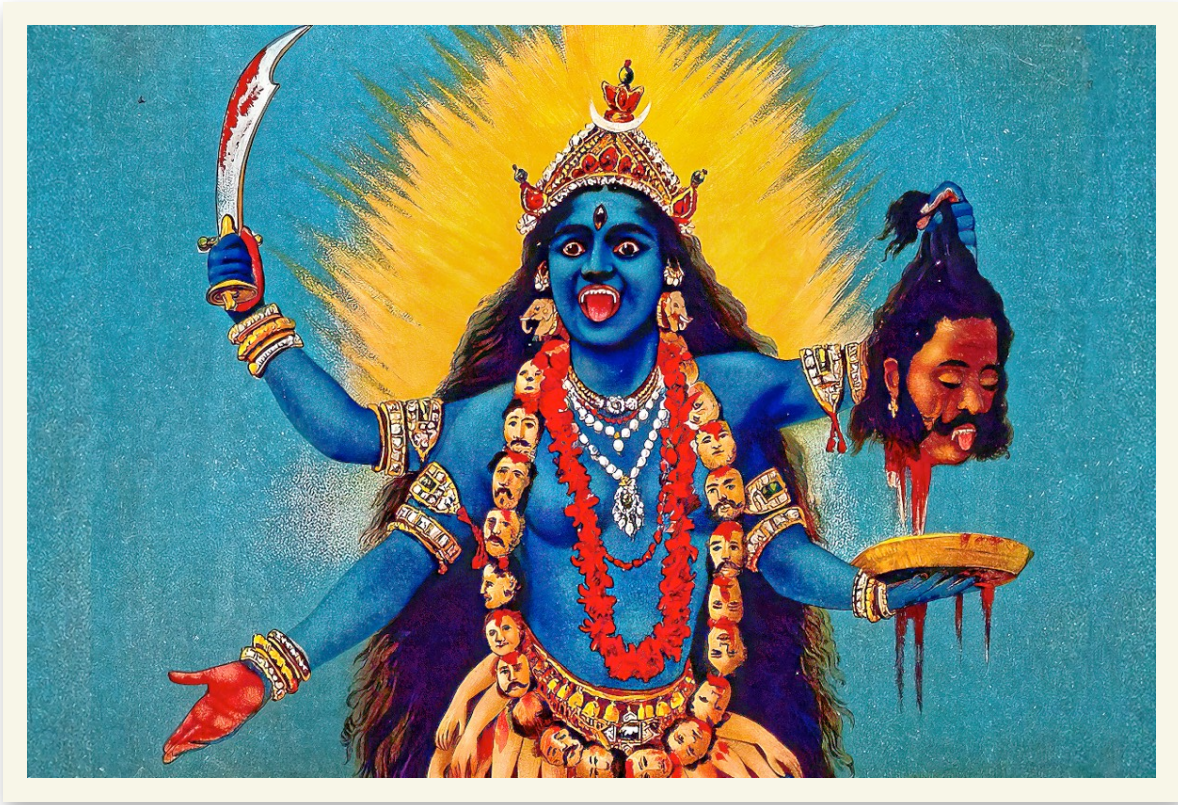
“There are 330 million gods in India, but only half that number embellish the temples of Tamil Nadu,” said Indiana Jones.

At twilight the streets near the central temples bustled with pilgrims bringing gifts for the gods and priests bearing fire. Tamed by the dimming light, the towers’ wild colors seemed spiritual, even to American eyes. Incense and cinnamon filled the air, but they could not relieve the tension of a town longing for the monsoon — aching to have washed away, in an instant, a year of excuses and regrets.

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Four knights of the Order of the Holy Sepulcher were following their field commander, an Italian waiter, as he circled the temple

compound. Their boss was almost as fed up with the crowd in the streets as with the gods swarming over the sacred buildings. Dirty pilgrims and grimy priests grated on his nerves. But the gaudy idols leering down from every temple and shrine — they were worse. Bulging eyes and twisting limbs assaulted him — Krishna, playing his flute with a lecherous smile; Ganesh, his elephant head and rotund belly bouncing with laughter; and Kali, sticking out her tongue as blood dripped from a just severed head. Lurid colors screamed, but nowhere was there the comfort of a crucifixion, a scourging, or a crowning with thorns.



Kali, goddess of Time, Death, and Decay

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Two blocks from the temple compound, Raj's fortune telling shop had a red and black drawing of a hand with lines radiating inwards

on one side of its windowless facade. An eye with lines radiating outwards decorated the other.

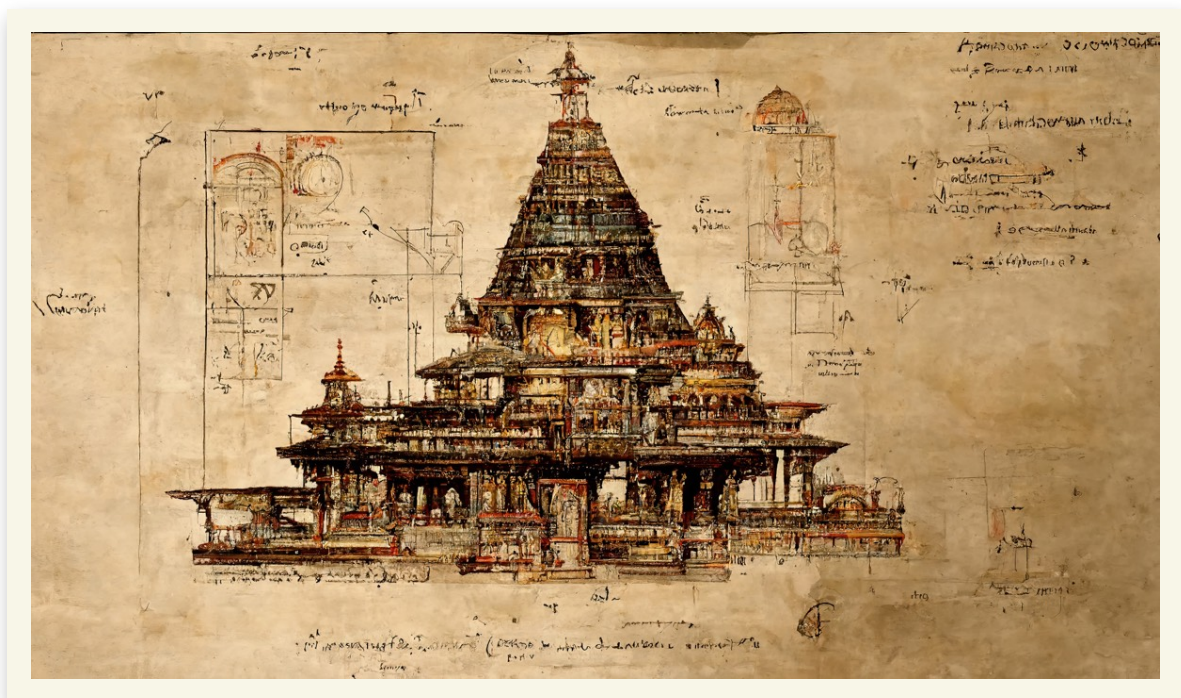
William knocked an odd beat on the door that stood between the eye and the hand. The door opened. William and Raj embraced.

Inside, cushions were arranged around a massive red stone table that seemed to be set deep into the floor. Suspended above it was a light in a red lamp shade.

After they were seated and introduced, William said to Raj, "Do you ever think about that run from Changanara with the thugs on our tail and the idols on our backs?"

Raj said, "We have a proverb about that:

*What was hard to bear is sweet to remember."*



"Now, can you tell us where this temple is? We have an old map and a sketch Indy just made..."

"At Bundi Palace."

"... which of your 40,000 temples is that?"

“Yes, well ... Brihadeeshwara temple in Tanjaor [Thanjavur], not far,” said Raj.

“We seek a nail pounded into its dome,” said William.

Raj stared at him for longer than he’d considered the diagram. Then he said, “You’ll have to ascend the outside of a temple that towers over a town without being seen climbing on any gods, and the temple facade is nothing but a seven-story stack of dancing gods.”

“Indy could wear all black.”

“He’d stand out like a tarantula on a wedding cake,” said Raj.

Raj’s and William’s eyes met in the same thought. William said it, “An insane colors camouflage suit.”

“And we build a bamboo ladder.”

“Not seven stories high — it must be both scaffold and ladder. I will hire a team of builders. In three evenings we meet again, in my courtyard,” said Raj. Then he dimmed the lights, shuffled, and laid out the tarot cards<sup>1</sup> face down as he said:

*Among the blind, the one-eyed man is king.  
Among the sighted, the third-eyed man is Raj.*

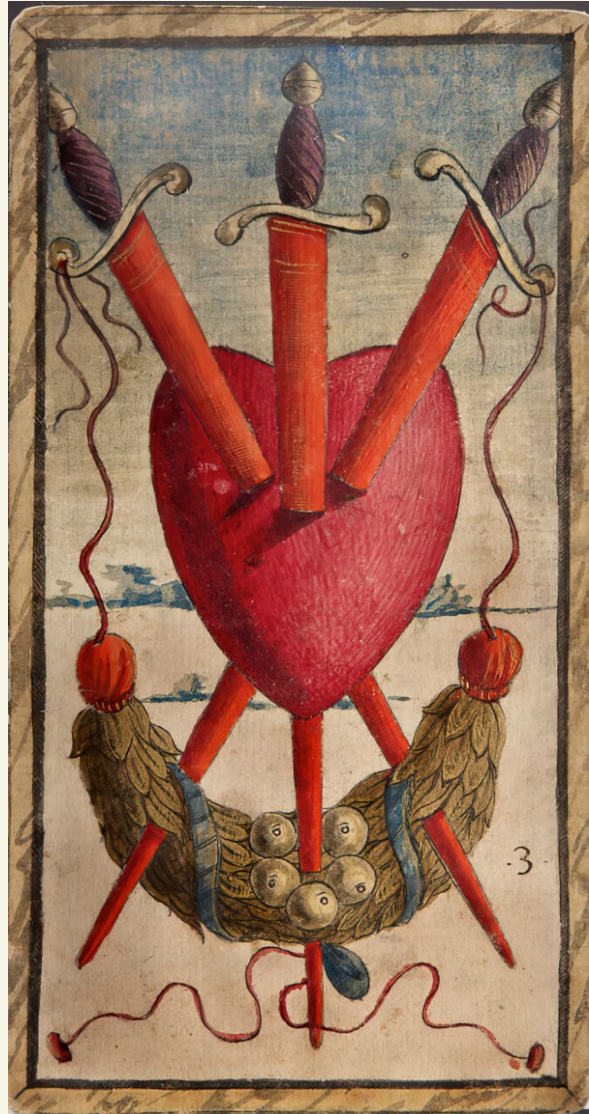
“William, ask and select,” said Raj.

“No, I don’t want this ... ”

“Do you want your nail?”

“Will my nightmare never end?” asked William.

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Three Swords through a Heart

“Disruption in matters of the heart. We know this card, William. And how we want to see it reversed. It’s hatred like this,” said Raj.

“It is upside down,” said Father John.

“Not to William; you’ll have your turn next.”

“Not without papal authorization.”

William said, “But I loved Clara!”

“Perhaps love clenched in a fist for forty years reverses itself,” said Father John.



Nembroto — The Last Judgement

Raj said:

*Don't wait for the Last Judgment, it takes place every day.*

“Upright, as it is for William, Father John, the Apocalypse card means that the dead shall rise — renewal, results. Just the card and

position we wanted!"



Deotauro - The Chariot, Reversed!

In a low, sad tone Raj said, "The card you wanted, but not the position. It is a victory parade denied." Then his spirit quickened and his voice lifted, "I see it, I see what the two-eyed cannot. William's heart will be soothed, but the chariot reversed here means his triumph will go unnoticed."

“But that doesn’t matter, since he is already a member of the Explorers Club,” said Indy.

“Yes, and there will always be a Blood and Sand in the Trophy Room for obscure, but promising, archaeologists like you,” said William Taylor.

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Three evenings later Indiana Jones stood in the courtyard of Raj's home looking like a circus clown. His white suit was blotched with the brightest colors available in Tamil Nadu.

The courtyard was connected to the street by a gate. Outside, barefoot rickshaw pullers ferried passengers through dusty streets. Children and lovers longed for the crack of thunder that heralded a monsoon. William just stared out at the sky not knowing why.

With a snap of Raj’s fingers, four men wearing only loincloths marched in with the bamboo. Raj kept one eye on his watch and one on his workmen as they constructed next to a seven-story palm tree a tall skyscraper like rectangle of bamboo. Less than fifteen minutes later they had completed their contraption.

Raj said, “Ascend.”

Indy started to explain how the camouflage would not conceal him here, but decided against it.

Wearing the ridiculous motley suit, he looked up at the contraption doubtfully. “Are you sure this thing will hold me?”

Raj waved a dismissive hand. “My men build with only the best bamboo.”

Thunder rumbled in the distance as the wind picked up. Indy pressed his foot down on the bottom rung of the ladder. It held firm. Taking a deep breath, he started climbing. The scaffold swayed slightly under his weight but remained upright.

About halfway up, the first fat raindrops started to fall. Indy paused, wiping water from his eyes. The drops became a downpour. Thunder roared. The clouds let loose the waterfall of a monsoon.



A stream sluicing down the street outside Raj's home forced open the gate and carried in the trash. Dirty water swirled around the base of the scaffolding. A pig squealed as it was swept by the current into Raj's courtyard. With a loud crack one of the bamboo poles splintered as the pig crashed into it. The scaffold tilted. More poles snapped in quick succession.

"Look out!" Raj said to Indiana.

The bamboo structure collapsed. Indy fell into the stream swirling through the courtyard. He came up spluttering, pieces of broken scaffolding all around him.

Raj and William rushed to help Indy get up from the waist-deep pool. Raj said, "Look, not a smear on your suit. We use only the best oil paint."

Indiana Jones spat out a mouthful of water.

William, relieved that Indy was unhurt, tightened his grip on the cane he needed to keep his balance in the surging current, while the other was held palm up to embrace the rain.

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Neither William Taylor, Father John, nor Indiana Jones enjoyed smearing on the brown shoe polish and donning the loincloths, but they were all committed archaeologists. Indy and his friends helped carry the new and improved scaffolding because they were more self-conscious walking empty-handed. The temple corridors were wide enough for two elephants to walk abreast and high enough that no giraffe would need to bow its head. Shoe-polished men carrying scaffolding were as noticeable as a centipede scuttling across a darkened floor. Behind them five knights of the Holy Sepulcher had entered the temple undisguised. They dashed from one pool of darkness to another.

The mind of the knights' field commander circled endlessly around the outrage of it. A man who had, in the past, mishandled a sacred relic having the opportunity to lay his hands upon another one. Mishandled a relic? He'd used one to murder his wife! ... Because the knight's thoughts cartwheeled on and on like this he didn't notice that behind him there darted ten more dark shapes.

Once the archaeologists passed through the corridors they were again outside the temple, but on the back side this time, below the domed tower. Raj pulled out a stop watch and Indy put on that brightly colored camouflage suit.

Moonlight filtered through the palm trees, casting flickering shadows across the temple grounds. Indiana Jones watched from the shadows as Raj directed his workmen in hurried whispers, their dark silhouettes scurrying about in the silver light. The bamboo didn't creak. The men lashed it together without making a sound. Tall bamboo poles linked by crossbeams led upwards past ornate pillars and statues of half the gods of India. The ladder rose as each section of it was fastened into place.

Indiana shifted. This rickety construction of bamboo and vine seemed so fragile, so impermanent next to the timeless swirl of stone it leaned against. He just hoped that somehow the moonlight would be bright enough to show the nail, but not the clown costume.

In the darkness behind him, fifteen figures looked on. Five were Knights of the Holy Sepulcher uncertain whether the lost nail should

be locked up in the vault without a name, or sold to the Nazis.

As Indiana left the shadows he blended in like a polka dotted suit at a funeral, but ten steps up the ladder he disappeared into a sea of god-like color. When he re-emerged above the swirling divine figures he looked for the head of a shiny nail without success. Quickly he descended the scaffolding so that it could be moved around as far as possible to the other side of the dome.

Having climbed to the top again, Indiana was surprised to see, just a few inches out of reach and shining like the night's first star, a nail so strikingly placed that it had to be the one they sought.

Knowing that William, Father John, Raj, and their men were sitting on bamboo supports at the base of the scaffolding, Indy climbed to the penultimate step of the ladder, the wild colors of the upper half of his body now standing out against the copper dome. He pulled out a bowie knife and his bullwhip. With a practiced snap of the whip he wrapped it securely round the dome's finial. The bamboo creaked as Indy reached, but the knife blade was still inches from the head of the glistening nail. Indy stepped to the top of the ladder. He slowly edged the nail up with the knife blade. But he couldn't reach it with just his fingers.

With a desperate lunge, Indy managed to brush the nail with his fingertips. Triumph surged through him as his hand closed around it, but the feeling was short-lived. His feet reconnected with the bamboo. A deafening crack rent the air, and the scaffolding buckled beneath his feet. Jones wrapped the bullwhip tightly around his wrist just as the ladder gave way completely. The bullwhip creaking as it strained to hold his weight, Indiana watched the scaffolding collapse into the darkness below.

Shouts rose up from the ground as the temple guards caught sight of him in his multicolored clown suit flailing in the breeze.

With a grunt of effort, Indiana swung his body, gaining momentum. At the height of each swing, he reached up with his free hand, grabbing another few inches up the whip and wrapping that portion around his wrist. He continued this painstaking process, inching his way towards safety. The leather cut into his wrist, but he didn't let go.

After what seemed an eternity, Jones pulled himself onto a narrow ledge, collapsing against the dome to catch his breath. With shaking hands, he pulled the nail out and slipped it into his bag. Peering over the ledge into the blackness below, Jones saw no sign of his companions, but he could see the temple guards jumping up and down. On the long climb down the temple's side he wondered what the penalty was for stepping on a thousand gods. Four-armed Vishnu, the sustainer; three-eyed Shiva, with the Ganges River flowing from his hair; red-tongued Kali, wearing nothing but a necklace of human skulls; elephant-headed Ganesh, remover of obstacles: Indiana stepped on them and at least 996 other gods only to find himself apprehended by five Knights of the Holy Sepulcher. Three of the knights had pistols pointed at his brightly colored chest, two of them grabbed him from behind.

A commanding voice said, "Do not touch the god!"

The knights were seized by the temple guards. The lead guard, who had just seen Indiana above the temple soaring in divine colors bowed low before him. As if summoned by some unseen force, many more guards poured forth from the temple, falling prostrate before him in a wave of adulation.

Indiana Jones was the god that broke an Italian waiter's mind: 330 million and one brightly colored gods was one god too many. With a snap, the lead knight's mental framework collapsed and lay in splinters around his screaming face. The temple guards led him away, probably to a vault without a name.

Indiana asked the guards to free his companions, whom he had just spotted tied up and lying like rag dolls tossed against a wall.

After handing William the nail, Indiana disappeared into the shadows to remove the god costume. Now he didn't feel at all self-conscious, dressed once again in just a loin cloth and shoe polish. When he returned, William Taylor was still standing in a shaft of morning light gazing at the swirling lines engraved into the ancient nail. Father John looked on lost in thought. Raj's workmen had scattered, only Raj remained.

Ten American men in black suits approached. Their leader said, "Dr. Jones, you look good in brown."

"Hello, Director Wright," said Indiana Jones.

"William Taylor, America needs your nail," said Director Wright.

"Pounded into its forehead," said William Taylor.

One of the Director's deputies seized the nail, another brought out a device that looked like a combination Geiger counter and can opener. When the nail was placed against the opener, all the lights on the device flashed, a hidden compartment opened, and the priceless relic disappeared.

Dr. Jones said, "The Director of the Bureau of Paranormal Paraphernalia has nothing better to do at 8 o'clock on Sunday morning than steal used nails?"

"Dr. Jones, you know very well that we're not a governmental agency. We're a fraternal organization dedicated to making America a Christian nation. And we will, after we've eliminated all traces of those damned first century Jewish followers of Jesus."



The morning sun slipped between upper windows and the columns to light narrow patches of the darkness. One naturally tinted and three shoe-polished faces were alternately illuminated and obscured by shadows as they walked back down the ancient hall without the nail.

Indy asked, "Feel any different?"

"I feel a great emptiness," said William Taylor.

Father John said, "That is the best we could have hoped for. In "The Empty Jar," the other parable, from the banned *Gospel of St. Thomas*, Jesus said:

The Kingdom of Heaven is like the woman who carried a jar of flour. After she walked a long way, the handle of the jar broke and the flour began to spill behind her along the road. Heedless, she noticed nothing. When she arrived, she set down the jar and found it empty."<sup>2</sup>

Everyone continued to fade in and out of view as they slowly walked the giant hallway. William looked as though he understood; Indiana did not.

"Things kept secret from the foundation of the world, Indy ... for me, it means: Those without emptiness are full of themselves. An inner void is the only door to the Kingdom of Heaven."

William Taylor, one hand raised to his chest, was taking deep slow breaths.

Raj's delight in thinking about how they would celebrate once they got the shoe-polish off was so apparent that even William noticed. The two old friends embraced.

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Some hot, sticky summer afternoons the air is too thick to breathe, unless stirred by a ceiling fan.

Raj led them toward a crowded, low-ceilinged, side-street cafe. Indy mentioned that, to a man of his height, the ceiling fans here

were rotary guillotines.

Raj said, "The man who will not bend for the best sadyal in town does not deserve to enjoy it."

Three archaeologists and a fortune teller sat just beneath a ceiling fan, banana leaves laid out before them. Servers brought out steaming bowls of rice, rasam, sambar, vegetable curries, chutneys, papadams, and more, ladling them at intervals along the leaf.

The effervescent fermented palm juice was served chilled. No one missed the mixed drinks of the *Conte Grande*.

"Rasam is meant to whet your appetite," Raj explained. "It balances the sweet, sour, salt, and bitter."

"I love that their tastes are as untamed as their temples," said Father John.

Soon their fingers glistened with oils and spices. Their cups of toddy had been refilled as often as their banana leaves. They leaned back quite relaxed.

"What's the next quest, William?" asked Indy.

"I'm done."

"No, we take treasure until the end, we're archaeologists," said Indiana Jones.

They would return so empty-handed and so fine with it that William lifted his glass of toddy. They all raised theirs in a toast as he said, "To treasure."

"To treasure!"

"And to friendship," said Father John.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to thank an AI named Claude for co-writing this book's action scenes.

Bernard Brandon Scott's *Re-Imagine the World, An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus* and other Westar Institute books about that liminal time after Jesus, but before Christianity inspired me to begin this journey.

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- :: Cover\* Meenakshi temple in Madurai AI & Amith
- :: End paper Vintage Adventure Doodles\* by vgorbash
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- :: The American Museum of Natural History, New York City
- :: *Conte Grande* flyer, vintage advertisement
- :: *Conte Grande*, vintage publicity photo & sketch
- :: Suez canal print by Charles Pears, 1928
- :: Stoning of St. Stephen, Rembrandt, 1635
- :: Bundi Palace, Rajasthan -2 murals, photos by author
- :: Tea Plantation, Munnar, Kerala — photo by author
- :: Chausath Yogini, Bhubaneswar, Orissa – photo by author
- :: Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Imaginary Prisons, etchings, 1750
- :: Step-well\* AI image by Елена Дзюба
- :: Central Temple Complex\* Madurai by Vi design & AI
- :: Kali, Painting by Ravi Varma, 1910
- :: Sola Busca Tarot cards, Italy, c. 1491.
- :: Monsoon flood cartoon from British Raj.

\* Licensed image from Adobe Stock

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Adventure isn't optional.** It is experienced first-hand with traveling companions, in shared stories, or alone in daydreams.

Due to the ravages of ALS, telling stories is the only way the author of this novella can share his adventures. He thanks the reader for traveling with Indiana Jones and his friends on this one.



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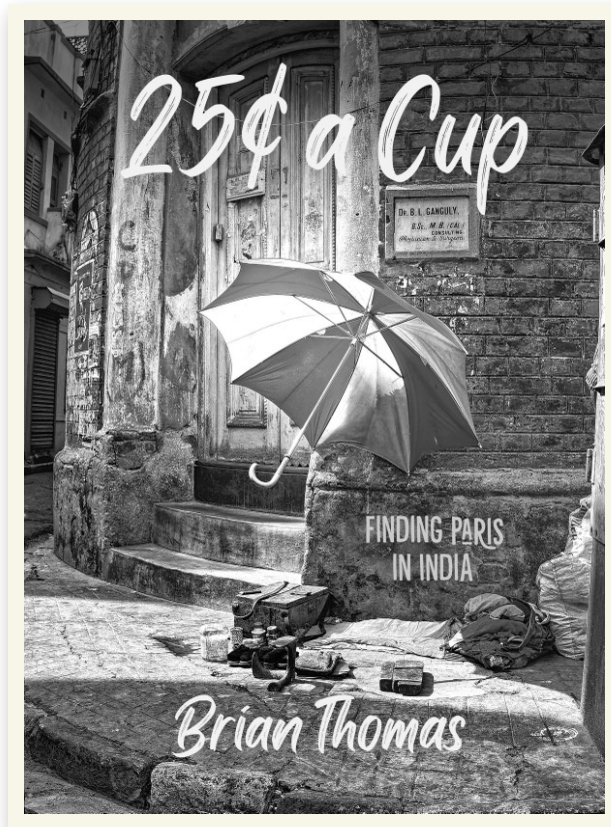
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***Indiana Jones and the Temples of Tamil Nadu*** is beautifully illustrated, quick, and deep.

Indy's mentor, William Taylor, has ruined his life by misusing sacred relics, but he believes there is still one lost divine artifact that can save him. Indiana knows nothing of this secret till they're halfway to India and it's too late to turn back. Ancient curse, divine instrument, or alien technology – Indiana Jones will be there to help his friend confront things kept secret from the foundation of the world.

*Indiana Jones and the Temples of Tamil Nadu* is 11,000 words, 25 illustrations, and a mad quest for redemption.

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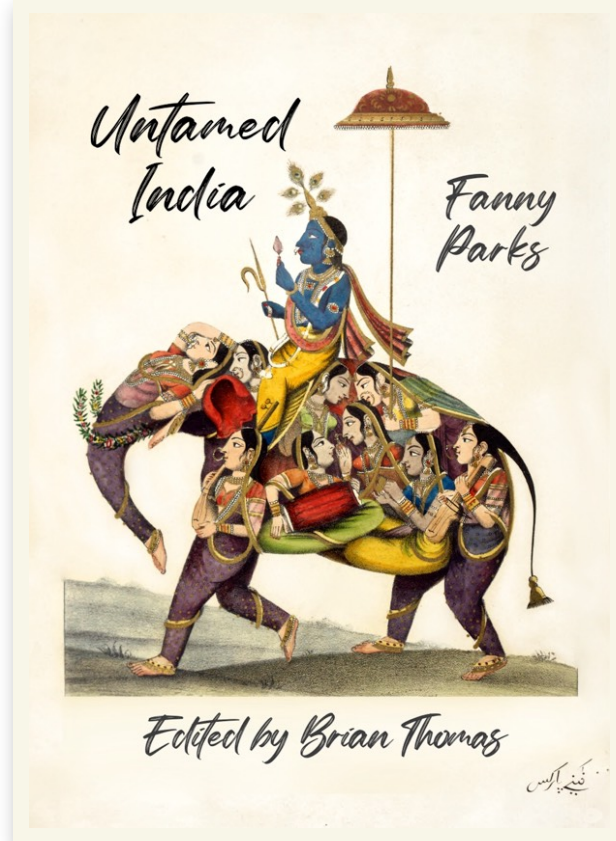


**25¢ a Cup**, an exquisitely illustrated account of a year in Calcutta, shows that travel in India is still a life-changing adventure.

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***Everything's Got Soul***, In Victorian London, teenagers and scientists join forces to keep the leading tycoon of the industrial age from poisoning the planet.



**Untamed India — A Victorian Woman's Travel Adventure,** Fanny Parks' sensational, illustrated 1,000 page journal edited down to a novel-length entertainment. (Available from Apple Books and Smashwords.)

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***If Monks had Macs...***, a seminal work in the history of multimedia, can be experienced now only on the internet's various Hypercard simulators or on antique computers running obsolete operating systems.

# NOTES

## CHAPTER 3

**1** The analysis of the leaven parable presented here is based on *Re-Imagine the World, An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus*:

Scott, Bernard Brandon. *Re-Imagine the World, An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus*. Polebridge Press. Kindle Edition. (p. 21).

**2** The complete text of the *Gospel of Thomas* was discovered in 1945 in Upper Egypt, near the desert village of Nag Hammadi. However, fragments of the gospel were discovered earlier in places such as the Vatican Library.

**3** Leloup, Jean-Yves. *The Gospel of Thomas: The Gnostic Wisdom of Jesus* (p. 253). Inner Traditions/Bear & Company. Kindle Edition

The complete text of the *Gospel of Thomas* was discovered in 1945 near the desert village of Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt. However, fragments of the gospel were discovered earlier in places such as the Vatican Library.

**4** Below is a photo by the author of a tea plantation in Kerala.

**5** Chausath Yogini: A 9th-century open-roofed temple dedicated to female tantric mystics. It is worshipped at today, but no longer with human sacrifice. In reality, it was uncovered in the 1950s 10 miles south of Bhubaneswar, Orissa. Photo by author.

**6** The facts about Ashoka presented here are not disputed, and the anomaly of Ashoka's transformation is widely recognized. Only the change agent – Sita's Veil – argued for here is novel.

**7** Kipling's Bundi palace is the real one in Rajasthan that has been moved a thousand miles or so to Kerala so that it could be featured in this narrative. It remains, to this day, just as described here (except for the step-well). If you visit, rent a monkey stick.

Citation: [www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/journalism/letters-of-marque-17.htm](http://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/journalism/letters-of-marque-17.htm).

**8** Cisterns with steps that descend to the water level are a much-photographed feature of Indian architecture. There is a very famous step-well in Bundi, but it's outside the palace and it is huge. Here, I just shrunk, simplified, and moved it indoors.

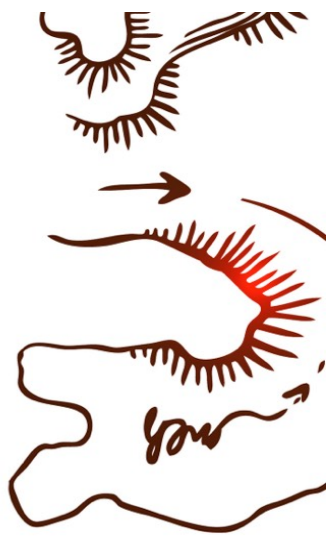
## CHAPTER 4

**1** Sola Busca Tarot cards, the oldest complete tarot deck in existence. Italy, c. 1491.

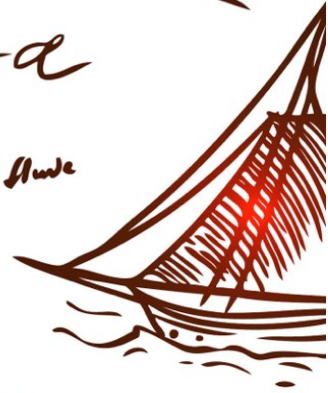
Interpretations based on divination tips at:

"Sola Busca Tarot Deck," *Queen of Tarot*, [www.queenoftarot.com/tarot\\_decks/18](http://www.queenoftarot.com/tarot_decks/18). Accessed 25 Apr. 2024.

**2** Leloup, Jean-Yves. *The Gospel of Thomas: The Gnostic Wisdom of Jesus*, (p. 253). Inner Traditions/Bear & Company. Kindle Edition



*vies viefes  
Wohltun est blude*



*vies viefes  
est blude*

