

"THE SCROLL OF LIFE: A SERIAL ADVENTURE"

by  
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FADE IN:

INT. CELL

A concrete room lit only by a single naked bulb suspended from the ceiling. Stains of coagulated blood smear the walls. The incessant BUZZING of flies over scattered bits of necrotic flesh on the floor sounds like the hum of a dozen electrical lines concentrated in a single area.

Against a side wall is a table covered with a black satin cloth on which has been arranged an assortment of particularly nasty looking surgical instruments.

In the center of the cell, secured to a chair at the wrists and ankles with thick rope, is JACOB "JAKE" TRENT, 39. At the moment he's unconscious, probably from the injury that caused the gash above his right eye.

The sound of a HEAVY BOLT-LOCK being thrown echoes inside the cell. The large wooden planked door swings open. Entering the cell are two ARAB GUARDS, both of them in traditional white galabiyas and faded blue turbans. Also, each guard wears a gunbelt and carries a sub-machine gun.

They glare at Jake with contempt.

The two guards step aside as a strikingly beautiful woman wearing tan riding breeches, tall black riding boots, and a loose fitting white blouse steps into the cell. In her hand is a riding crop. She's ATHENA ZEPHYR (more info will be given on her as the serial unfolds). She considers the unconscious form bound to the chair, then grins seductively.

She nods to one of the guards. He goes to Jake and gives him a good SMACK. He doesn't respond. The guard repeats his action, and this time Jake stirs. The guard backs away as he comes to.

Jake's eyes flutter as he lifts his head. Through glazed eyes, he tries to focus on his surroundings.

JAKE'S P.O.V.

His peripheral vision's blurred, but he can make out the two armed guards and Athena.

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Athena steps towards him and points the tip of the riding crop at him.

ATHENA

You and I have something  
important to discuss, Mr. Trent.

BACK TO SCENE

Jake's disoriented and doesn't reply.

ATHENA (CONT'D)

I see. That blow to the head  
must have rattled things up a  
bit. You're confused. Let me  
help you.

(to the guard, this  
time speaking in Arabic)  
Get him some water.

The guard quickly exits.

Athena puts the tip of the riding crop beneath his chin  
and lifts his head.

ATHENA

What were you thinking? You were  
outnumbered. Surely you didn't  
think you could win, did you?

The guard returns with a bucket of water. Athena backs  
away as the guard splashes the entire bucket in Jakes  
face. Some of it finds its way down his throat and he  
COUGHS as he fights for air.

A BEAT, then...

JAKE

That was invigorating.

ATHENA

Excellent. You're alert enough  
to talk.

JAKE

Lady, I've heard everything  
(MORE)

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JAKE (cont'd)  
you've said, I just wanted to  
make you wait.

ATHENA  
You're a brave man, that much is  
evident considering the fight  
you put up at the dig site, but  
I don't take you for a foolish  
man, so remarks like that aren't  
very becoming of someone of your  
character.

JAKE  
That almost sounds like  
something my mother would say.

Athena angrily WHACKS him one with the riding crop. Jake  
shakes it off. The two guards grip their weapons,  
emphasizing the seriousness of his situation.

ATHENA  
I told you, Mr. Trent, choose  
your words wisely.

JAKE  
Okay, I'll play along for now.

ATHENA  
I want the scroll.

JAKE  
What scroll would that be?

ATHENA  
The scroll found on the mummy.  
Where is it?

JAKE  
There wasn't any significant  
artifacts found at the site  
other than the mummy. Besides,  
your goons came in with guns  
blazing and really made a mess  
of the place, which is a good  
thing there really wasn't

(MORE)

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JAKE (cont'd)  
anything historically  
signifacant there. If there had  
been, they would've destroyed it.

ATHENA  
Are we going to have to play  
games, Mr. Trent? My men were  
very thorough when they searched  
the tomb. I think the scroll was  
spirited away and you know where  
it went being that you were in  
charge of the security detail.

JAKE  
You seem to know a lot about me  
and what I do. Suppose you tell  
me who you are. I'd like to know  
who I'm talking to.

ATHENA  
It doesn't matter who I am. What  
does matter is you telling me  
what I want to know. Things will  
go so much better for you if you  
cooperate.

JAKE  
I told you, there wasn't  
anything found inside the tomb.

ATHENA  
Why are you lying? It will gain  
you nothing.

JAKE  
I'm not lying, you're just  
refusing to believe the truth of  
the matter. But to play devil's  
advocate, if there was an  
artifact...

ATHENA  
Scroll.

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JAKE

Fine, scroll. If there was one, then there would be no way of you knowing it unless you had a plant at the dig site, and if I were you, I'd be pissed. Whoever he is has given you bad information.

ATHENA

There's a scroll, Mr. Trent, that's the 'truth of the matter.'

JAKE

Did your man say he saw this scroll?

Athena makes no reply.

JAKE (CONT'D)

I thought so.

Athena SIGHS and makes her way to the door.

ATHENA

(over her shoulder)

I thought you'd be a hard nut to crack. It was foolish of me to think I could intimidate you into telling me what I wanted to know, so now we'll do it a bit differently.

JAKE

By the way, those were local volunteers and students your men cut down at the dig site. You think that's going to go unpunished?

ATHENA

(turning to face him)

The authorities and I have an understanding, Mr. Trent. I won't even get a slap on the wrist.

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JAKE

Then let me make something very clear to you, Sunshine. Punishment is coming, and I'll be the one serving it up.

ATHENA

(grinning wickedly)  
I think not.

She exits, as do the gaurds. The BOLT is rammed back into place. He immediately begins attempting to loosen the ropes around his wrists.

He struggles a moment, but he hasn't loosened the ropes. He tries again, but his wrists barely move beneath the thick ropes.

Jake then wrenches his arms upwards against the ropes. This action creates a CRACKING sound. He has nearly broken the arms off the chair. He's going to pull the arms completely free but the BOLT being thrown stops him.

A tall, thin man, 52, standing ramrod straight like a proper British majordomo, wearing black khakis and an off-white shirt, sleeves rolled up past his elbows, comes into the cell. This is THE SURGEON. He slides his glasses up the bridge of his nose. He shuts the door and the lock is put back into place.

JAKE

What do you want?

THE SURGEON

The same thing the lady wanted.

JAKE

Then you're going to be awfully disappointed. You're only going to get the same answer. There is no scroll.

THE SURGEON

Oh, you'll tell me, Mr. Trent, because my methods are vastly different than hers.

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Jake glances sideways at the table containing the surgical tools.

JAKE

Those aren't going to work either.

THE SURGEON

My method is effective one hundred percent of the time. You'll divulge the location of the scroll.

JAKE

You're that confident in your abilities?

THE SURGEON

I'm a professional, with years of experience. Those who employ my talents know they are getting the very best. I have a reputation, Mr. Trent.

JAKE

You do? Who the hell are you?

THE SURGEON

Those who utilize my services know me as The Surgeon.

JAKE

You say you're one hundred percent successful every time?

The Surgeon goes to the table and picks up a tool and examines it.

THE SURGEON

Always.

JAKE

I think I'll have to put an end to your run of success.

The Surgeon LAUGHS. He selects a pair of SNIPS.

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THE SURGEON

You're not going any where, Mr.  
Trent. I tied those ropes myself.

He approaches Jake with the snips.

THE SURGEON

Let us begin.

As the Surgeon reaches for one of Jakes fingers, Jake pulls upwards as hard as he can on the arms of the chair. Both of them break away from the body of the chair.

He slaps the snips away and delivers a solid right cross to the Surgeons jaw. He staggers away, dazed. Jake stands but can't go anywhere because he's still tied to the legs of the chair.

The Surgeon tosses the snips and reaches for a Scalpel. He charges Jake, but jake stops him with a combination of straight jabs. The Surgeon drops in a heap, nose broken and bleeding.

He MOANS in pain on the floor of the cell.

Jake leans down and takes the scalpel from him and cuts through the ankle ropes. As he completes this task, The Surgeon is beginning to come to his senses. Now free from the legs of the chair, he goes to The Surgeon and stomp kicks him in the head, putting him out completely.

JAKE

You did do a good job with the  
ropes, but you should've tied me  
to a metal chair.

As he cuts through the ropes on one of his wrists, he hears the Guards TALKING on the other side of the door. He hurries with the ropes on his other wrist. The ropes fall away and he drops the wooden arm to the floor just as the door comes open and the fist guard steps in.

Jake punches him in the temple, taking him by surprise, then he kicks the barrel of the machine gun he carries aside. The second guard, SHOUTING IN ARABIC Rushes in. Jake Smacks the barrel away as the guard pulls the

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trigger, the bullets tearing a bloody line straight across the other guards belly. THE RAPID FIRE of the weapon is deafening in the cell.

In a flurry of Martial Arts skill, Jake has the guard disarmed and rendered unconscious in a matter of seconds.

He takes the dead guards weapon as well, and cautiously exits the cell.

INT. HALL

Dim lights hanging from the ceiling light the hall. There aren't any doors, but there is a window, boarded over, at the end of the hall. Behind him is another hall that crosses the one he's in.

SHOUTS come from the hall behind him.

He runs for the boarded window, FIRING the machine guns as he does so. Tiny pin pricks of light beam through the holes. By the time he reaches the window, there's a sizable hole in the center of it.

Behind him, four ARAB GUARDS, dressed identically to the ones he felled in the cell, round the corner just as he leaps through what remains of the wooden window. It splinters the rest of the way as CRASHES through it.

The guards charge for the window.

EXT. ABANDONED INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX - DAY

Jake free falls from the second storey window and lands on top of a Humvee. He rolls with the impact off the Humvee as two guards appear in the window and FIRE down at him. Bullets bounce off the vehicles armored shell.

Jake returns fire. One of them SCREAMS and then slumps and hangs halfway out of the window. The other retreats back into the safety of the building.

Jake quickly climbs into the Humvee.

INT. HUMVEE - DAY

Jake looks for the keys, and then he glances out of the passenger window and sees GUARDS running out of a side building towards him. So he does the only thing he knows to do; hotwire it.

He pulls the wires down and after two tries, the ENGINE ROARS to life.

Jake throws it in reverse and stomps on the accelerator. Bullets TING off of the Humvee as he makes his escape.

Two guards foolishly attempt to stop him by getting in his way, shooting at the vehicle. He rams them, throwing them both to the side.

Putting it in drive, he steers away from the complex.

Jake glances into the sideview mirror.

JAKES P.O.V.

He sees three pick-up trucks pursuing him. One has a mounted heavy machine gun, and another a mounted rocket launcher.

JAKE

This's going to be fun.

BACK TO SCENE

More TINGS and BINGS sounding inside the Humvee as the guard manning the heavy machine gun opens fire.

EXT. ABANDONED INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX - ROOF - DAY

Athena, fuming mad, watches from the roof of the complex as Jake makes his escape. Behind her, a helicopter equipped with rockets, awaits. Beside her is the PILOT, a young ex-military type.

ATHENA

Those idiots down there are going to kill him before we get the location of the scroll.

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PILOT

Don't worry. I'll stop him.

He turns and runs for the helicopter. He climbs in, puts his seat belt on, and fires up the engine. The Surgeon exits onto the roof from the maintenance stairwell just as the WHINE of the rotors fills the air.

As he approaches Athena with his blood stained face, The helicopter lifts off, both of them shielding themselves from the dust being kicked up from the roof.

Athena looks at The Surgeon with disgust.

ATHENA

Tell me why I shouldn't have you killed right now?!

THE SURGEON

I'm sorry Athena. I underestimated him. I won't make that mistake again.

ATHENA

You're damn right! I don't accept failure.

Athena marches off towards the maintenance stairwell. The Surgeon stares after her.

EXT. SAHARAH DESERT - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: SAHARAH DESERT

Jake steers the Humvee through the desert, the undulating heat rising up from the sands like the heat in an oven. Behind him, the three pick-ups continue their pursuit. The guard manning the heavy machine gun is blazing away, the lead missiles chewing up the desert around the Humvee.

Then the three pick-ups fan out, allowing the guard on the rocket launcher to get a clean shot. A projectile rockets ahead, but misses Jake and explodes well away from him.

The heavy machine gun lets loose again as the guard

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reloads the rocket launcher.

INT. HUMVEE - DAY

The rounds from the heavy machine gun slam into the rear of the Humvee and the back windshield spiderwebs. Jake instinctively ducks.

JAKE

Damn!

More PINGS and TINGS as lead smacks the Humvee. Now, the rear windshield SHATTERS completely. Jake reaches back with one of the sub-machine guns he took from the guards back in the cell and returns fire through the now open rear windshield.

EXT. SAHARAH DESERT - DAY

Bullets tear into the pick-up with the heavy machine gun. A HEADLIGHT EXPLODES and the front driver's side tire instantly deflates. The truck comes to rest as the wheel digs itself deep into the ground.

The DRIVER SHOUTS EXPLETIVES in Arabic.

The pick-up with the rocket launcher passes the now useless truck.

The third pick-up whizes past them.

A second rocket flies towards Jake in the Humvee and this one is closer, but not close enough to do any damage.

The guard quickly reloads the launcher. As he lines up the Humvee in his sites, the helicopter swoops down in front of them.

INSIDE THE TRUCK

The driver turns the wheel, hard.

THE GUARD MANNING THE ROCKET LAUNCHER

Is thrown from from the bed of the pick-up truck and he tumbles through the hot sand.

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THE DRIVER

Slides out from behind the wheel, SHOUTING OBSCENITIES,  
and fires at the helicopter.

THE HELICOPTER

Swings wide and changes directions. A rocket shoots away  
from the helicopter.

THE DRIVER

Eyes wide with fear, turns to run, but the rocket is  
much faster and it detonates instantly upon impact,  
blowing the truck, and him into thousands of pieces.

THE THIRD PICK-UP

Suddenly turns and heads back to the safety of the  
industrial complex.

INT. HUMVEE - DAY

Jake looks glum as he peers into the rearview mirror.

JAKES P.O.V.

The helicopter is coming for him.

BACK TO SCENE

Jake presses his foot down onto the accelerator and it's  
already to the floor.

JAKE

Uh oh. Not good. Not good at all.

EXT. SAHARAH DESERT - DAY

The helicopter flies over him and after it has gained  
enough distance, turns and faces him, hovering above the  
desert sands.

INT. HUMVEE - DAY

Jake slams on the brakes. He sits behind the wheel for a  
moment, contemplating on what to do. Then...

EXT. SAHARAH DESERT - DAY

Jake gets out of the Humvee, takes the two sub-machine guns and starts walking towards the hovering helicopter.

INSIDE THE HELICOPTER

The pilot LAUGHS.

PILOT

You're the bravest man I've ever seen, or the craziest. Let's see which one.

The pilot pushes the stick forward.

EXT. SAHARAH DESERT - DAY

The helicopter slowly advances towards Jake. Jake drops to one knee and opens fire with both sub-machine guns.

INT. HELICOPTER - DAY

The pilot jerks as bullets slam through the windshield of the helicopter and enter his chest. He stares down in disbelief as he sees the front of his uniform turning crimson. Then he slumps against the stick.

EXT. SAHARAH DESERT - DAY

The helicopter pitches sideways and then plummets to the ground. The rotors dig into the sand, churning it up. METAL SNAPS and then...BOOM. The helicopter explodes. Jake throws himself down as debris falls around him.

EXT. SAHARAH DESERT - EVENING

Jake still cuts a path across the desert, which is now painted in the glorious colors of the setting sun.

INT. HUMVEE - NIGHT

The sound of the ENGINE GOING QUIET alerts Jake that he must have run out of fuel. He looks at the fuel gauge and SIGHS.

JAKE

Could this day get any worse?

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He stops the Humvee and throws it in park. Then he gets out.

EXT. HUMVEE - NIGHT

Beneath a starry sky, Jake checks the fuel can secured to the back of the vehicle. He runs his fingers over it and finds several bullet holes in it.

JAKE

That figures.

He gazes heavenwards and watches a shooting star zip across the sky.

JAKE (CONT'D)

I hope that means good luck is coming my way.

He crosses his arms acrossed his chest and leans against the Humvee.

SUPERIMPOSE: TO BE CONTINUED

FADE OUT:

THE END