

The Lost Scroll and the Secret of Life

**Buy The Complete Version of This Book at
Booklocker.com:**

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/2562.html?s=pdf>

The Lost Scroll and the Secret of Life

Copyright © 2006 Tom Jankovic

ISBN-10 1-60145-006-0

ISBN-13 978-1-60145-006-7

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Printed in the United States of America.

The characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

Booklocker.com, Inc.

2006

1

† † † † † † †

The train pulled away from the station, slowly picking up speed. Steam coming from the locomotive's engine caught John's eye. He hadn't been on a steam train since he was a young boy. Looking back at the small village, he felt as though he must have overlooked something. Could it be that he hadn't looked hard enough? After all, the old man who started this whole search had told him the ancient scroll would be there.

Maybe the trip across Asia was well worth it even if the scroll is never found. *No, it can't be lost forever*, thought John. Looking across the fields, he could see the foothills of a great mountain. The peak of the mountain was out of view high up in the clouds; it vaguely reminded him of something.

He figured he had plenty of time to think; the train ride was scheduled to last fourteen hours. Rather than sleeping right away, he decided to go to the dining car to see what was on the menu. It was evening, and the Sun was setting. As he walked through the corridor, a young woman with long, dark brown hair approached his way. He found her to be attractive, but there was no time for flirting; he had to get some dinner before the dining car closed.

Tom Jankovic

The woman glanced at him with a slight smile as she squeezed past him in the narrow corridor. He noticed she was carrying a map. Having a map was not unusual on a long train ride, but for some reason, he felt there was some significance to it. *Oh well*, he thought as he arrived at the dining car. He sat down at one of the tables, and after ordering his meal, he gazed out the window as the train chugged along through the lush, green valley. Thoughts of why he was there began to run through his mind.

The old man who had given him instructions for finding the scroll had passed away a few weeks prior. For John, all that remained of him was the memory of their conversation. But who would have thought that a chance meeting in a small café in San Francisco would lead to a global search? He could clearly remember the last thing the old man had said to him before they parted—*“There will be others along your path. They will not be searching for the same things as you, but they will cross your path. You must not let their issues interfere with your search ... even if it seems they are willing to get to their ends at any cost!”*

He wasn't sure what the old man had meant by his last remarks, but then again, he wasn't really sure why he accepted this odd assignment of searching for a lost scroll in the first place. The fact that the old man had shown up just as John was reading an article about ancient artifacts made him feel as if there was some destiny involved.

There has to be a reason why the old guy just sat down at my table that day. Just then, the train's whistle brought his attention back to the present. The waiter brought his dinner and cautioned him that the plate was hot. John immediately reached out and touched the plate. It was indeed very hot. “Story of my life,” he said to the waiter as he tried to cool his burned finger by grabbing a glass of iced water. “I guess that's why I'm here.

The Lost Scroll and the Secret of Life

I can't let anything get past me without figuring it out for myself." The waiter didn't have a clue what John was talking about, but he smiled politely and left the table.

The Sun had set, and the sky above Nepal was a medium-dark blue. John loved that time of day. The twilight setting always seemed full of energy as nightfall came. As he ate his dinner, he looked out at the last he would see of Nepal.

There was no reason to come back anytime soon. He'd spent two weeks traveling through all the small villages described to him by the mysterious old man in San Francisco. Although there had been people in a few of the villages who seemed somewhat familiar with a lost scroll, there was no one who could give him information that would lead to its finding.

It doesn't matter now anyway. He knew he had to get back to Malaysia. There was a small trinket shop in Kuala Lumpur he needed to go to; he'd stopped there to ask for directions to his hotel when he first arrived several weeks prior. The woman behind the counter had pointed him in the right direction, but she did more than that; she'd handed him a piece of paper with the word "Bidur" written on it.

Bidur turned out to be the town where John had switched trains to get to Nepal. It was also the same town he was headed for again as he made his way back to Kuala Lumpur. He planned to visit the woman in the trinket shop to ask her why she'd handed him the paper. For some reason, he hadn't found it odd when she first gave it to him, but his curiosity was growing. After dinner, he returned to his cabin. He was exhausted and slept for the rest of the trip.

Tom Jankovic

The train's whistle blew loudly as it pulled into the station in Bidur. John woke up and quickly gathered his backpack and maps. As he hurried off the train, he saw the woman who had passed him in the corridor the previous night. She was walking into the station carrying what looked like a soft leather briefcase—the type used to transport large documents or photos. Again, he thought about saying something to her, but nothing specific came to mind. After all, he was on a crazy quest for some ancient scroll; there was no time for meeting new people.

The next train arrived at the station. The words “Kuala Lumpur” were hand-written in chalk on a sign hanging from the train's boarding platform. This train was much newer than the one John had just been on. As the crowd of people boarded, he looked around to see who was getting on. The woman he'd seen on the last train was more intriguing to him than he first thought. This time she was nowhere to be seen. He got on the train and found a seat. This trip would be much shorter; he expected to be in Kuala Lumpur in a couple of hours.

† † † † † † †

Once there, he made his way to the small shop where he hoped to find the woman who had given him the strange piece of paper. After all, when she'd handed him the note, even he didn't know he would be going to Bidur. Unfortunately, the woman was not there. John only spoke English and the elderly man behind the counter did not. He began to realize how little he knew about the world he lived in. There he was on the other side of the world, and he knew nothing about the culture. He began to wonder about all the places he'd never been and how many languages there were. It all made him feel somewhat ignorant, but he figured he would learn as he continued his trip.

The Lost Scroll and the Secret of Life

He'd booked a flight from Malaysia to London in advance—before he'd gone to Nepal. As he rode in a taxi toward the airport, the driver pulled over to pick up another fare. That seemed strange to him. He was not accustomed to sharing taxicabs without prior agreement. The man who got in seemed to be in a hurry. He sat in the back next to John without hesitation. "Are you going to the airport?" John asked the man. "Yes, I am," he replied with an accent that John could only guess was from India.

"Well, I guess that's fine then. My name is John."

"I am Arun," was the man's reply.

John knew that Arun means "sun" or "dawn" from an article he'd read. He felt good about possibly knowing something outside of his regular area of expertise. He was born in Northern California, and although he traveled a bit, he'd never taken much interest in other cultures in the past. He was still young—only thirty two years of age—so he figured he had plenty of time to expand his experiences. He thought he would see if his taxi companion would engage in a bit of personal conversation.

"Where are you from?" John asked.

"I was born in India, but now I live in the United States."

"I'm from the U.S. too!" exclaimed John. He felt silly about his outburst once he realized it was pretty obvious to Arun that he was an American.

"What part of the States do you live in?" asked Arun.

John was a bit surprised that he would ask him such a personal question, but he quickly realized it was probably the most likely thing a person would ask.

"In San Francisco," he answered.

"Ah," said Arun. "I live in St. Helena."

St. Helena is only about an hour north of San Francisco. What a coincidence! This man who just happened to flag down

Tom Jankovic

the same taxi in Malaysia was practically a neighbor! It was too odd; it made John feel really funny about the whole incident. He remembered the piece of paper the woman in the trinket shop had given him—the one with the town of Bidur written on it. He reached into his pocket and pulled out the paper. Once he looked at it more closely, he breathed a sigh of relief; he saw that it was actually a very faded coupon from a local food market. It was probably owned by the woman's family, and she was simply giving him the opportunity to buy something at a discount. The word "Bidur" had probably just been written on it by a traveler who had the coupon prior to him.

As he realized there was no strange coincidence with the piece of paper, he felt better about the chance meeting with Arun. After all, why shouldn't a person born in India who had moved to the U.S. decide to visit Malaysia? *Silly*, thought John as he reflected upon how the strange feeling of fear had come across him just a minute earlier.

"Are you going back home today?" asked Arun.

"No, London. I'm going to London."

"Ah, I see. Sounds like you travel much."

"No. I never really get beyond California ... except maybe once a year for a visit to another state."

"Well, at least London is an exception to that rule," Arun replied with a smile.

Rule? What does he mean by rule? John figured that was just the way Arun saw it.

† † † † † † †

At the airport, the two men exchanged goodbyes, and John headed for the ticket counter. Once he boarded the plane, he took a window seat as it appeared the flight was not fully booked. He wasn't even sure exactly which seat was his, but he

The Lost Scroll and the Secret of Life

didn't think anyone would mind if he took an empty one next to the window. It was time for take-off, and as he looked outside, he thought of the old man he'd met a few months prior in San Francisco. There he was just sitting in a café reading when the old man had asked if he could join him. After some small talk, the man began telling him about a lost scroll. He talked about how important the information contained in the scroll was. At first, John had just let the old man talk, but then something caught his attention. The old man had said—*"It contains the secret of life itself."*

How could this old man have known the secret of life? What did he mean by "the secret of life" anyway? John was a bit skeptical—but very interested. The old man died just a few weeks after their meeting in the café. John found out about it one day when he went to the address the man had given him. He had hoped to get more information from him before he left on his search for the scroll. The landlady told him about the old man's passing. John felt rather sad for a bit—even though he'd hardly known the man. He figured it was probably just his time, and that was good enough to make him feel better again.

It looked as if he would just have to work with what he had. The old man had given him instructions to go to Nepal and seek the scroll, but he didn't say how to go about actually finding it. He also said one thing that didn't make sense to John—*"The scroll was written for you."* If the scroll was in Nepal, and if it was written for him, why could he not find it? He was right there. He'd gone to every village that even remotely resembled the description given by the old man—but still nothing.

Tom Jankovic

The flight to London was rather uncomfortable. John flew coach since he wasn't independently wealthy; although, he did have a little over ten thousand dollars, which he'd saved up ever since he began to work in his younger years. It seemed that at least some of that money was going to get dwindled away with all of the trips he was taking.

Uncomfortable seating seemed to be the trend in those brand new planes; after all, it was 1949 and the world was much too modern to be concerned with old fashioned things like comfort.

London is where he was supposed to go after he found the scroll. He was supposed to take it to a man who would explain to him why it was "written for him." The man's name was Brendan. Although John hadn't found the scroll, he decided to go to the address given to him anyway.

When he arrived, he saw that it was a jewelry shop located just across a city square. As he made his way across, he was shocked to see who was walking out of the shop; it was the woman from the train!

What could this mean? How could such a coincidence take place amidst all the other unlikely events? All of a sudden, John snapped to attention. He believed he knew what was going on. The woman was also after the scroll! That's the only reason she would be there. And the maps—that explains the maps she was carrying on the train from Nepal. *Maybe she already found it. Of course! That's why she was in the jewelry shop just now. She's got my scroll.* He believed it was his, and he was ready to go take it!

He watched her for a moment as she made her way across the square. There were dozens of tourists shopping in the area, and he began walking after her to make sure she didn't disappear into the crowd. He wasn't sure whether he should confront her right then or follow her in case she went to a hiding

spot with the scroll. The woman walked to a small coffee shop and ordered a drink. Once she was seated at a table outside, John decided he would make his move.

As he approached, he could see she had her briefcase with her; it was lying on the seat to her right. He thought about just running past her and grabbing it. *What am I doing?* A few weeks prior, he was a common young man running a small computer research business out of his apartment in San Francisco, and now here he was considering stealing a woman's briefcase in London and making a run for it back to the U.S.!

Once he realized how silly he'd been acting, he decided to simply ask the woman if she knew anything about the scroll. He walked right up to her table.

"Excuse me, may I ask you a question?"

"You just did," she said with a genuine smile.

He somehow felt that she wouldn't mind if he sat down. He grabbed the chair to her left and pulled it to himself. Once he was seated across from her, he continued.

"You were on the train from Nepal with me. I passed you in the corridor on the way to the dining car."

"Was that you?" she remarked—surprised. "What a coincidence. Do you live in London?"

"No. I'm here to ..."

He paused. "I'm sorry, my name is John." He held out his hand to introduce himself.

"I'm Marianne," she said as she shook his hand.

Marianne was in her late twenties. John found her to be very pretty. He decided he should take it slowly with questions about the scroll.

"Are you visiting London?" he asked.

"Yes, I am."

"I saw you come out of the jewelry shop and I thought you were ..."

He paused again being cautious not to divulge too much just yet, but Marianne didn't notice.

Tom Jankovic

“Oh, that’s my father’s shop. I drop by now and then to see if he could have coffee with me. He was a bit too busy today.”

“Your father’s shop? But what about the ...” John paused a third time—Marianne noticed.

“What about the what?” she asked.

John figured he’d better come clean and tell her what he was up to. After all, what could it hurt? If she knew something, maybe she could help him.

“Do you know anything about a lost scroll?”

“A scroll?”

“Yeah, I was in Nepal because I was supposed to look for some ancient scroll, but I didn’t find much information about it.”

Marianne thought for a moment. “I don’t know about a scroll, but my father has been looking for a special vase for the past couple of years. I’ve been helping him search. There was supposed to be a man in Tibet who would help me find it, but he didn’t show up.”

“Sounds kind of like what happened to me,” replied John, “but in my case, I didn’t even know whether I was supposed to meet anyone. I went—”

“Look, I have to be somewhere soon,” Marianne interjected, “but I’d love to meet with you again and talk more about this. How about lunch tomorrow? That is, of course, if you’re still going to be in London.”

John agreed, and Marianne wrote down the name of a restaurant and directions to its location. She handed him the directions, and they both gestured a polite goodbye. He watched as she walked across the city square and past the boutique shops. As soon as she was out of view, he headed straight for her father’s jewelry shop.

As he walked toward the shop, he noticed a car stopped in front. It didn’t seem unusual for a car to be near the shops, but

The Lost Scroll and the Secret of Life

this one was stopped on the wrong side of a roped-off walkway designated for tourists. Another thing that caught John's attention was the man in the driver's seat; he kept looking over his shoulder toward the front door of the shop. The car's rear door was wide open.

As he got closer, he saw three men coming out of the shop. Two of them were big and intimidating, and they were wearing black overcoats. They were grasping the shoulders of the third man; he appeared to be in his mid-fifties and was wearing eyeglasses and a sweater. He looked as if he could be someone's father. *Marianne's dad! What's going on?* The two bigger men were shoving the third man toward the open door of the car!

John got close enough that he could hear the conversation between the men. His heart began to race as he quickly figured out that something was wrong. He stood in front of a bread shop's window two doors down. He made sure not to appear obvious about his interest in what they were doing as he watched what was happening in the window's reflection.

The man in the sweater was looking back at the jewelry shop as the two bigger men pushed him into the back seat of the car. "That shop is my life," he pleaded. "Please, just let me lock it up." The men seemed to ignore his plea, and one of them got into the back seat next to him. The other one sat in front next to the driver. After the car made its way around the roped off area, it sped away down the main street leading out of the city square.

What just happened? Could that have been Marianne's dad? John was beginning to feel afraid, but he was also very curious—intrigued is what he was.

The shop! The shop wasn't locked. He remembered that the man had wanted to lock it before they took him. He quickly walked over to the front door and peeked in;

The Lost Scroll and the Secret of Life

**Buy The Complete Version of This Book at
Booklocker.com:**

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/2562.html?s=pdf>