

THE CURSE OF THE JACKAL

Egypt, May 1908

Medium: televised episode

Collection: *The Adventures of Young Indiana Jones*

Original title: "Young Indiana Jones and the Curse of the Jackal – Part 1"

Year of release: 1992

Author: George Lucas

Runtime: 45 min



After introducing the various protagonists, the episode takes us into an adventure in archaeology in Egypt at the start of the 20th century.

In 1908, Indy's father, Henry Jones Sr., is called upon to spend the next two years giving lectures all over the world. He takes his whole family with him: his wife Anna, his son Henry – who much prefers to be called Indiana or Indy – and Miss Seymour, who will serve as the boy's tutor. The Joneses' first stop is in Egypt.

Once in Cairo, Indy discovers the idiosyncrasies of the country in the company of Miss Seymour. They meet Thomas Edward Lawrence, a.k.a. Ned – who would later come to be known as Lawrence of Arabia – at the foot of the pyramids. He explains the profession of archaeology to the boy, as well as the importance of knowing the language of the country being visited.

After his father gives him the diary in which he would keep a record of his adventures, Indy, Miss Seymour and Ned make their way to the Valley of the Kings. Once there, he attends the opening of a tomb overseen by Howard Carter – a tomb over which a dread curse is said to hang and kill anyone who enters. The little group is forced to leave due to toxic gases created by the decomposition of the mummies. One man is

assigned to stand guard at the entrance to the tomb overnight. The following morning, he is found dead inside, and the mummy is nowhere to be found... Ned, Indy and Miss Seymour lead the investigation.

Soon, Ned discovers that a jewel is missing from inside the tomb: an effigy of a jackal decorated with precious stones. Whoever stole the artefact is certainly also responsible for the death of the guard. The only clue that Ned discovers is a small amount of silvery powder on the dead watchman's trousers: magnesium. With this element being used to create the flash of a camera, their suspicions are immediately shifted to the photographer at the dig, Pierre. The man is confronted, but he is innocent. A new clue is found: part of the detonator used by Demetrios, the chief blaster at the excavation. Unfortunately, he has already fled, and Ned is unable to catch up to him.

British Egypt

In the 19th century, Egypt was an administrative division of the Ottoman Empire, with a Khedive (viceroy) intended to govern in the name of the Ottoman Sultan. In reality, Egypt was already a semi-independent nation. The French had been present in the region ever since Napoleon Bonaparte's campaign in Egypt in 1798 and assisted the Khedive in military, economic and cultural matters.

From the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, and the subsequent facilitated trade route with India, the British became more intimately interested in Egypt. The Canal was a Franco-Egyptian endeavor developed by the retired French diplomat Ferdinand de Lesseps. In 1875, British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli availed himself of Egypt's financial troubles to purchase the Egyptian share of the Universal Company of the Maritime Canal of Suez. Gradually, both France and Great Britain imposed administrative supervision on the country's finances, and then on the viceroy himself. Fighting broke out in Alexandria in 1882, and the British took the opportunity in putting down the revolt to take control of the country, thus ousting the French. This event marked the beginning of a Franco-English rivalry that would sweep across the African continent.



Satellite view of the Suez Canal

Officially, the Khedive remained the sovereign and Egypt was still a region of the Ottoman Empire. In reality, however, the leader of the country was the British Consul-General, Lord Cromer. The British worked their way into the Egyptian administration in every area (financial, internal, judicial, and military) and at every level (as councilors to the Viceroy and ministers, as functionaries and “technicians.”)



Evelyn Baring, Earl of Cromer

The British protectorate of Egypt was officially recognized with the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, and the khedivate was transformed into a sultanate. In 1922, the independence movement got the better of the British dominion and Sultan Fuad I proclaimed himself King of Egypt.

Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon

Howard Carter (1874–1939) was a British archaeologist and Egyptologist. The young Howard received only a very limited education, but nevertheless showed undeniable talent as an artist, which caused him to attract the attention of Percy Newberry, who hired him to record the scenes at an excavation. Howard discovered Egyptology and fostered a passion for Egypt. He was soon appointed Inspector of Monuments for Upper Egypt, a post which he left following a dispute with his superiors. He returned to his first love, painting, at the same time working as an antiques dealer. This work as a “gentleman trader” secured him only very meagre resources. Then he met Lord Carnarvon, with whom he was once again able to carry out excavations.

Carnarvon’s presence in Egypt was due to health reasons: after a serious motoring accident, he began to suffer from chills and find the

British climate abrasive, and so he left the country in search of warmer climes. He became interested in archaeological digs to stave off ennui, which caused him to become acquainted with Howard Carter. Cooperation between the two men turned out to be passionate and fruitful. By 1908 (the year in which the episode takes place), Howard Carter had already been working for Lord Carnarvon for a year. Over the course of five years, they excavated the Theban Necropolis, exhumed numerous royal tombs and uncovered two temples. After an unproductive detour along the Nile delta between 1912 and 1915, they returned to the Valley of the Kings in Thebes and discovered the seals bearing the name of Tutankhamun and then, in 1922, the famous pharaoh's tomb itself.



Highclere Castle, the residence of Lord Carnarvon in Great Britain

The numerous deaths which stalked Carter's team after the excavation of the tomb became the topic of various theories surrounding a "curse of the pharaohs". The first victim of the "curse" was the head of the excavation, Lord Carnarvon himself. After suffering a severe mosquito bite on his cheek, the spot became infected when it was cut as he shaved. Fever and pneumonia followed, and he died several weeks later.

"The direst punishment follows any rash intruder into a sealed tomb." This was the prediction made by English novelist Marie Corelli two weeks before Carnarvon's death. The link between the death of the Earl of Carnarvon and the "curse" was similarly addressed by both

journalists and the general public. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, author of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, also believed in the veracity of the curse, which he attributed to magic cast by the priests of Ancient Egypt. Next, several people close to Carter and Carnarvon died in more or less mysterious circumstances. In 1934, the American Egyptologist Herbert E. Winlock presented statistics disproving the existence of the “curse”. Of the 26 people present at the opening of the tomb, only 6 had died over the course of the following 10 years. Carter himself died in 1939, at the age of 64. Lady Evelyn Herbet, Lord Carnarvon’s daughter and one of the first people to step into the open tomb, died in 1980 at the age of 79.

This “curse” nevertheless gave rise to a whole gamut of literary and cinematic productions. Several authors addressed the subject in their works, including Agatha Christie (*The Adventure of the Egyptian Tomb*, 1922) and later Hergé, creator of the adventures of Tintin, (*The Cigares of the Pharaoh*, 1934; *The Seven Crystal Balls*, 1948). A saga of “mummy” films was also produced in 1932, and another in 1999.

The Arabian beginnings of T. E. Lawrence



T. E. Lawrence in spring 1913

Thomas Edward (“Ned”) Lawrence (1888–1935), better known as Lawrence of Arabia, was, at the time that concerns us, still a student. Lawrence showed an interest in history and archaeology from a very early age, and the young man would often head out on his bicycle in search of England’s historical and archaeological treasures. In the summer of 1906, he went to Brittany, where he had grown up, to visit his friends and family. By now he was cycling 150–200km every day. In March 1907, he renewed his exploits in Wales in search of castles, then

returned to France in the summer before beginning his studies at university in October that same year. It was there that he began to prepare a thesis on military history and strategy and on medieval military architecture. He spent the summer of 1908 touring the medieval castles of France, covering 4,000km alone, and armed only with his camera. It was only in the summer of the following year, 1909, that he left for the Middle East (Syria and Libya) in order to do the same – by foot this time – with the Crusaders' castles. Returning to England, he completed his thesis *The Influence of the Crusades on European Military Architecture—to the End of the 12th century*, which he successfully defended with distinction in July 1910.

The television series is in error regarding the presence of T. E. Lawrence in the Orient: in 1908, he was preparing to go to France, and did not arrive in Greater Syria until the following year. Furthermore, there is no indication that he travelled through Egypt on his return to England.



Krak des Chevaliers, Syria