

A PAULA PERIL ILLUSTRATED NOVEL

# The CASE of the JADE EYE



Based on the Series by  
Atlantis Studios

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All Paula could taste was the cloth in her mouth.

The thick, oily rag was knotted and pulled tight between her lips, holding in a mouth-filling ball of cloth that reduced her speech to a pitiful muffled whimper.

She angrily shook her head, trying to loosen the brutal knot that held the gag in place. Her jaw had begun to ache, and she needed relief from the dull waves of pain. It was no use. These men were professionals. They knew how to keep their victims quiet.

A lock of long, brown hair fell across her eyes. Paula instinctively raised her hands to brush it away, but her arms would not move. She glanced backwards with muffled grunt, turning her shapely torso to catch a glimpse of the ropes holding them down. Her wrists were brutally bound somewhere behind her. Steel-like coils of rope, tied above and below her breasts, held her to the metal chair which moved only a few inches as she struggled. The chair creaked and scraped against the cement floor.

Paula shifted her hips, looking for leverage, but once again found herself disappointed. Her attackers knew their business. They had crossed her booted ankles, tied them tightly together, and attached the rope to her bound wrists. She was permanently off-balance, in a seated hog-tie. If she tried to extend her boots, it further tightened the knots on her wrists. If she

pulled on her wrists, the rope bit deeper into her ankles.

She turned her attention to the dark tenement basement around her. Her eyes had adapted to the darkness, and she could see the thick wooden flooring above her. Water dripped off the pipes overhead. A thin trickle splashed into a small puddle on the floor nearby. Electrical wires ran across the walls and ceiling to a single light bulb five feet above her head. The cement walls cracked and flaked – no sound seeped through from the busy side street she knew was only a few feet away. The walls were thick and damp.

A muffled scream from a bound and gagged reporter would never be heard – even if those living on this side of town were inclined to stop. She'd have to find her own way out.

THUMP. THUMP. THUMP.

Paula looked up anxiously at the footsteps on the floor above her. One – no, two – men were walking the floor above her, their heavy tread causing dust to fall from the ceiling. Occasionally they would stop, followed by muffled voices and crude laughter that Paula recognized all too well. It was *them*.

Six days ago, she had received a call from Ming Nguyen, a Vietnamese shopkeeper who had received threats from men that she believed worked for Carleoni. Paula followed up on the tip, interviewing other business owners in the district, and confirmed

their identity as Butch Hanson and Trevor Hung, two local toughs who often did dirty work for the mob. Many would not talk, claiming need for their “protection” of their businesses. Some warned Paula to forget the story.

But ‘forgetting’ was not something Paula could do. She knew the identity of the thugs, and now she could link their protection racket to her nemesis, mob boss Antonio Carleoni. Paula could not forget the night her mother was killed. That night she vowed Carleoni would see justice.

THUMP. THUMP.

What were they doing? Paula wondered to herself, staring back up at the ceiling, then tugging again at the ropes, looking for a weakness. Her hands were going numb from the struggle, and with each shift of her body, her mini-skirt rode higher on her hips. She relaxed her boots, and felt the blood rush back to her arms. *I’ve got to pace myself*, she thought, *keep my strength for the moment when I really need it.*

She should have been more careful, she realized now. For several days, she followed Butch and Hung, and took notes on the people they met. Someone must have alerted the men they were being followed by the attractive reporter in the red sweater and set up a rendezvous in the old Gifford tenement building, a city-owned property used for cheap rent offices. Paula suspected it was a meeting with Carleoni’s men. Instead it was a trap intended for her.



*Paula felt the muscular arms of Butch grab her from behind*

Paula had slipped into the building through a back alley an hour before the meeting and hid in an upstairs room.

There was a big crack in the flooring, allowing Paula to hear and record every detail of the mobsters' meeting. Hung arrived first, taking time to unload his satchel, grab a cigarette, and wait in a chair by the door. What was he waiting for? She wondered as she watched him smoke.

Suddenly, a thick hand covered her mouth, and Paula felt the muscular arms of Butch grab her from behind. Paula struggled, screaming into his mammoth hand, her legs kicking, and arms pulling on the iron grip. Butch laughed as she fought against him, pinning her second arm painfully behind her. Paula heard footsteps coming up the stairs, and she realized she'd been set-up.

“Keep her quiet.” Hung yelled. “Shut her up!”

Hung arrived in the room with a bottle of chloroform in his hand. Paula's eyes went wide when she saw this, and she kicked harder. The heel of her boot caught Butch in the crotch, and he groaned, his grip weakening enough that she could almost wriggle free. But it was too late. Hung grabbed her, forcing the sweet-smelling cloth over her mouth, pushing her to the ground.

Paula struggled, her legs kicking, but suddenly the room was spinning. The two men were on top of her, one holding her arms, the other straddling her legs,



holding the cloth against her mouth. Butch grinned, enjoying himself. Her eyes rolled, and Paula grew weaker until she could no longer fight. She felt her muscles fail her, and the men released her momentarily.

They rolled Paula over like a rag doll, crossed her wrists, binding them tightly with rope. Butch tied her ankles, then paused for a moment to run a hand up one smooth, toned thigh. Pushing him aside, Hung put the cloth over her mouth, and scolded him for his childishness. As she faded to black, their shadows grew heavy and she heard:

“We’ve got orders from Carleoni – no time for that!”

THUMP. THUMP. THUMP

Somewhere above her, a door opened.

Paula was jerked back to the present. Looking up, she listened intently at the sound. The two men were coming. They stopped, and once again, she heard a brief muffled conversation – then the footsteps moved towards the basement door.

Paula’s heart stopped. *They’re coming down. She thought as her fingers tugged frantically at the ropes. They’re going to kill me.*

“Did you miss us, doll?”

The voice was husky, mocking, and Paula immediately recognized it as Butch.



*Paula could only flinch defiantly as his unwelcome hands roamed slowly over her tight sweater top.*



Paula felt them descend the stairs behind her, but the ropes tightened around her upper body as she tried to turn towards them. She resolved not to show fear. They were just sleazy two-bit thugs who had gotten the better of her – for now.

Hung was the first to step out of the shadows. He approached to Paula, coldly inspecting the ropes, tightening the knots, and adjusting her gag. *A real efficiency expert*, Paula thought to herself, glaring at him angrily. When he stepped back, the hulking form and leering smile of Butch moved into view.

“You don’t know how much I’ve enjoyed meeting you in person, *Paula Perillo*” Butch grinned, his eyes locked on her full, firmly bound chest. In one hand was Paula’s press ID. He held up the photo, then flung it to the ground with a grin. “But we can’t have the press following our every move. It’s bad for business.”

Paula could manage nothing but a muffled snort beneath the thick cloth gag as he approached her. His breath was hot and heavy, and Paula could only flinch defiantly as his unwelcome hands roamed slowly over her tight sweater top. She tugged angrily against the ropes that pushed her soft curves unwillingly towards his thick, exploring fingers.

“Our problem is: how to send a message to other interfering snoops who might want to investigate our operations?”

As Butch toyed with Paula, Hong moved over to the pipes by the far wall, where a steady drip of water had developed into a puddle since she had regained consciousness. He reached for the valve above it and opened it full wide.

Water splashed onto the cement floor. Paula watched – puzzled – as Hung broke open two other valves with a pipe wrench. Water poured from all of the open pipes. Reaching up with a grunt, he slammed the pipe wrench down hard against the metal, destroying the stop valve. The trickle had become a flood.

Paula glanced quickly around the basement, taking in all the details. There were no drains anywhere. She ignored Butch’s groping hands, and instead kept her eyes fixed on Hung. *Was he trying to drown her?*

“Then we remembered, this old building has always had a problem with flooding” Butch snarled ominously, enjoying Paula’s defiant reaction as his massive hands moved slowly up her well-toned thighs. She squirmed as he reached the hem of her fashionable skirt. “We asked ourselves – how high could we go?”

The water was now several inches deep. Reluctantly, Butch stepped away from Paula, and glanced around in the darkness. After a moment, he pulled a large axe from behind a crate and held it up. Paula froze, her eyes widening with fear.

“You’re tied to a metal chair in a room filled with water...” Butch grinned sadistically, “... how ‘bout we make this more interesting?”

At that, Butch swung with all his force at the giant electrical cables above his head. Several of the largest cables fell loose, sparks flying from their severed ends. They dangled just a few inches above the rising water.

“Over ten thousand volts...” Butch smirked, lifting Paula’s defiant eyes to meet his. “...within ten minutes, you’ll be Kentucky-fried!”

Butch threw the axe in the corner with a laugh, and he and Hung turned towards the stairs. Paula glanced back at them, squirming defiantly against the ropes, her protests muffled and caught in a cloth-stuffed mouth.

“Good-bye, Paula Peril.”

The men laughed and walked up the stairs, closing and locking the basement door loudly behind them. Paula screamed defiantly into her gag as the door closed, but the pitiful whimper was swallowed up by the dark cement room that was about to become her tomb.

The cold rushing water echoed in the darkness, and she hung her head, helpless, feeling the air grow chill around her. She was betrayed, alone, a helpless victim in a dark basement. No one would come to her rescue. No one would hear her die...