

1 - The Sphere

“Mythology is a dictionary of living hieroglyphics.”
- Charles Baudelaire, *Théophile Gautier* (1859).

Oxford, United Kingdom, April 2006.

James Parker looked thoughtfully out of the train window. Confused, he scratched his head, stroked his chin, and adjusted his glasses with his finger.

The fog was slowly lifting. He could now make out an endless string of red-brick facades along the railroad line.

At forty-seven, the academic looked younger than his age. Recently on sabbatical, he was full of energy and enthusiasm.

He sported long, ashen-brown hair and a three-day beard. Tall, elegant, and smiling, he looked like a stylish, playful guy. Little did he know that what he was about to experience that day would completely change the course of his life.

The day before, a telephone conversation with his former assistant, Margaret Thomson, had troubled him.

At her request, he took the next morning's train from London Paddington Station to Oxford University.

Margaret had been in the archaeology position there since she

took a leave of absence.

The ambitious scientist had redirected the department's focus toward her specialty: Chaldean and Mesopotamian civilizations. He recalled the end of the conversation vividly: she had insisted, her shaky voice showing clear anxiety.

“Please stop asking me so many questions. I can't tell you any more over the phone,” she had whispered until she was barely audible.

“Please come to Oxford, and I'll tell you more on the spot. In the shadow of our old stones, we'll be able to talk more freely.”

Just then, a noise echoed in the background like something falling, and Margaret let out a soft, muffled gasp.

“Is everything all right?” asked James, worried.

“I... I don't know. Above all, be careful...” She paused, despite her rapid, jerky breathing. “Trust me! And... be careful coming here.”

Her tone, a mix of fear and urgency, had left him feeling confused and pensive.

What was really going on in Oxford? he thought.

“Okay,” he said, nodding, trying to control the tremor in his voice as a dull anxiety began to knot his stomach.

“See you tomorrow, Maggy, take care.”

He hung up, heart racing, with the unpleasant feeling that something serious was afoot.

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On the train, Parker shook his head, took a deep breath, and glanced up at the ceiling.

How could I be of use to her, a professor like me, in the background? he pondered. *What do I have to do with Sumer¹ and Mesopotamia?*

The teacher was perplexed, as his archaeological expertise was limited to the Aztec, Toltec and Mayan civilizations.

¹ Region located in the south of ancient Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq), comprising a wide plain traversed by the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, bordered to the southeast by the Persian Gulf.

With a Ph.D. in Quantum Mathematics,² he thought that perhaps his colleague had asked him to solve a complex computational problem.

As for him, it had been a year since he had given any lessons or conducted any research.

Will I still be able to meet her expectations after this period of inactivity? I'm feeling a bit... rusty.

Since he'd gone on leave, he seemed to have dedicated himself to beekeeping. He tended his hives with the utmost care and sold his honey online via a website. However, behind this façade of a passionate beekeeper lay another reality. The professor didn't devote all his energy to the study of bees. At times, the fleeting gleam in his pupils betrayed thoughts far more complex than the simple production of honey; concerns that went far beyond this bucolic setting.

Moreover, his occasional absences and furtive phone calls hinted at another, more enigmatic facet of his life.

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At first, this impromptu phone call had disrupted his routine, and he found himself grumbling. Then, annoyance soon gave way to excitement. He hadn't returned to the university since his send-off party, and he had to admit that this return to the past whetted his curiosity.

As he got closer to his destination, he folded up *The Times* and shoved it into his old brown leather bag before standing up. Just as he was about to leave his seat, he noticed a man with a shifty gaze, who seemed to be watching him from the doorway of the next car. The stranger quickly averted his eyes when James stared at him, but he felt a certain unease.

Come on, pull yourself together, he mused, shaking his head. *You're being paranoid. It's just your nervousness about seeing Margaret again playing tricks on you.*

He promptly jumped off the train at Oxford Station, sped along

² Branch of physics describing the behavior of microscopic objects: molecules, atoms or particles.

the platform to the exit, and hurried down the steps to the station entrance.

Grandpa has still been waxing stronger for forty-seven years, hasn't he? he exclaimed, trying to mask his anxiety with a layer of humor.

Feeling energetic and nervous, he took advantage of the sunny weather and walked to the Institute of Archaeology.

After crossing the bridge over Castle Mill Stream, he walked along Worcester Street, passing the students' office. Suddenly, the roar of an engine made him turn around, and he watched in fright as a black car with tinted windows sped toward him, slowing down for a few seconds before accelerating abruptly. A long shiver suddenly ran through him, and he felt every hair on his body stand on end.

Calm down, he scolded himself inwardly. *You're stressing too much about this meeting—no need to see plots everywhere.*

Assuring himself that all was well, he proceeded toward Beaumont Street and the Ashmolean Museum,³ his footsteps echoing on the cobblestones. However, despite his best efforts at self-control, he couldn't help glancing around, convinced he was being watched.

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A quarter of an hour later, he was in the company of Margaret Thomson. She was just as he remembered her: fifteen years younger than himself, almost as tall, with a serious air that contrasted with her modern hairstyle, giving her a distinctly British elegance. Her well-groomed appearance and lively eyes reflected sharp intelligence. Her long blond hair, pulled back into a bun, left her forehead clear and highlighted the fine bone structure of her cheeks. She was pretty without being conventionally beautiful. And when she smiled, a subtle distribution of light and shadow transformed her into a splendid creature, whom James admired as much for her appearance as for her sharp intelligence. After a few quick pleasantries, she offered him a seat and politely presented a tea bag. However, true to form, he kindly declined and pulled out

³ The world's oldest university museum in Oxford

a few surprising items from his satchel. Grinning broadly, he revealed his prized Harrods Royal Blend, accompanied by some unexpected measuring instruments. Under the amused yet intrigued gaze of his hostess, he began his ritual with near-scientific precision. First, he monitored the water temperature, waiting patiently for it to reach exactly 88 °C. Then, with meticulous delicacy, he poured the liquid over the precious leaves before expertly flipping his handcrafted hourglass.

“My dear,” he called, relaxed yet serious, “you do understand, don’t you? Three minutes and forty-five seconds is the time it takes to release the full subtlety of this unique blend.”

Margaret burst into affectionate laughter at this extravagant spectacle.

“Good Lord, James!” she exclaimed. “With all those instruments, you really are the king of tea snobs.”

Unperturbed, he didn’t so much as raise an eyebrow, pretending not to hear. He skillfully deflected the conversation, while the delicate aroma of his *perfect* preparation wafted through the air.

“Well, nothing’s changed here,” he said, sweeping his desk with a glance. “My word, you’ve turned this place into a shrine to Professor Parker.”

“No!” she replied, bursting into laughter. “I simply didn’t have a second to think about my personal layout.”

“So now, tell me, how can I help you?”

Margaret opened the left-hand drawer of her desk and, without a word, took out a mauve cardboard folder and handed it to him. Parker picked it up and read the label affixed on it.

**EXTRACT FROM THE REVELATION TABLETS
D’ALULIM D’ERIDU
Legendary First King of Sumer (3000 BC)**

Pottery and Documents Found in London, in the Excavations Carried Out During the Construction of Bloomberg’s European Headquarters in Victoria Street.

He pushed back the black rubber bands in the corners of the file, folded back the dust jacket, opened the folder, readjusted his glasses, cleared his throat, and continued reading. The discovery had stunned the team. Enclosed in a sphere were manuscripts on clay supports, over five thousand years old. The text began by introducing a monarch who reigned around 3000 BC. According to the story engraved on the tablets, the king had composed these writings with his own hand, under the control of a divine entity called “the Source.” He read:

One summer’s night, as I meditated alone on the terrace of my palace, a chariot of light appeared in the sky. A crystalline voice spoke to me, and a bluish flame took possession of my body. My fingers began to write on their own, guided by the will of “the Source.”

With his eyes fixed on the words, James felt his hands trembling uncontrollably. An indescribable sensation followed—a latent current of excitement ran up his spine, igniting a new spark of curiosity.

The story continued, describing three mysterious objects and unveiling an enigmatic prophecy:

Three spheres for one kingdom, one sphere for each Moon, and one revelation for each sphere.

The instructions were precise—and disturbing: *throw them into the Tigris at specific times, because the fate of mankind would rest on these acts.*

He raised his head in astonishment.

“Margaret, this is... incredible, isn’t it?”

His rational mind wrestled with the wonder of this discovery. Nevertheless, he knew that ancient writings, without tangible archaeological evidence, were of limited value. He ran a hand through his hair, looking puzzled.

“It’s interesting, but... it’s a bit short, don’t you think? For a piece of such historical significance, I would have expected more detail.” An enigmatic smile spread across Margaret’s carmine lips.

“You should have read on, Parker.”

“The suite?” he repeated in surprise. “What sequel?” She pointed to a sub-sleeve inside the document.

“Look in the green,” he let out an embarrassed chuckle as he followed her finger.

“Oh yes, sorry! I was so taken aback by that first piece of writing that I didn’t consult the rest.”

He bent down to pick up the file, opened it carefully, and began to peruse its contents, his eyes widening in amazement as he read.

I am the Source, the alpha and the omega.

This was followed by a description of the creation of the cosmos in three phases: first, angelic beings, endowed with the three divine essences of energy, wisdom, and emotion. Then, after millennia of meditation, the second phase, the material universe, culminating in the third phase, with the creation of the earth and mankind.

“Fascinating,” he murmured. “This vision of the birth of galaxies resembles both Genesis⁴ and the Rig Veda.”⁵

But he felt confused as he tried to comprehend the rest of the text. Inwardly, a storm was raging between the scientist and the archaeologist. *A celestial rebellion... A recurring theme in mythology, but here, I wonder. Would a creator really accept rebellion as a consequence of free will? My God, this text confuses and entralls me! In any case, it raises many questions about good, evil and divine responsibility...*

His brow furrowed as he continued his silent reading. The words seemed to come alive, evoking celestial conflicts and choices with eternal impact.

He continued to stare at the document, as if hypnotized, his mind tossed back and forth by a whirlwind of questions.

Three mysterious spheres... Mé, Gestug, Lipis... each containing a supernatural essence...these writings... so strange, but so real, he wondered.

He felt himself being carried away by his thoughts—writings he’d come across and read in his past as an archaeology teacher, but he resisted.

No! Pull yourself together. It’s just an old legend, nothing more.

⁴ First book of the Bible

⁵ One of the oldest sacred texts in Hinduism

He looked up at his colleague, his face reflecting a mixture of curiosity and apprehension.

Then, the rest of the text announced a kind of prophecy: in five thousand years, the spheres would reveal themselves, and their power could either defeat a kind of celestial rebellion or, if they fell into the wrong hands, destroy mankind.

He frowned, and his skepticism grew as he quickly calculated.

“Five thousand years... So, if these writings really date from Sumerian times, I deduce that... but no, no, that’s absurd,” he murmured, letting out a short, sarcastic laugh, shaking his head slightly.

The teacher, sensing his hesitation, intervened in a barely audible voice:

“So, maybe we’re living in this final decade? James, I know it sounds crazy, but think about it.”

He arched an eyebrow, caught between incredulity and fascination, then smiled at Margaret.

Resuming his examination of the text, his gaze fell on names he knew all too well, such as Asmodeus⁶ and Nahaash.⁷ It was then that he felt his blood run cold. Indeed, these names sounded like an ominous echo in his mind. He didn’t appear disturbed, but his eyes gleamed with astonishment and apprehension.

How can these evil entities be included in this document? I’ll mention it to the organization tomorrow, he promised himself inwardly.

Although troubled, he continued reading. The appearance of new names, such as Ahcanabe, Mehenilan, and Yéyals, aroused his curiosity. He was intrigued, as they were supposed to represent forces fighting evil. He reread and repeated these passages several times in a low voice. He had a vague feeling that these enigmatic names seemed to play a vital role in the story. Still, their exact nature remained obscure, adding another layer of secrecy to the already bewildering text.

“It’s both bewitching and completely eccentric,” he wondered aloud, trying to calm himself.

When he raised his head, he noted the palpable anguish on Margaret’s face. He tried to smile to reassure her, despite his

⁶ A fascinating figure in demonology, whose history and representations have evolved over the centuries and through religious traditions.

⁷ Order of the snake

unease. Then, after a moment's silence, he spoke, albeit with a slight hesitation in his voice:

“An exceptional English translation of a document originally written in cuneiform, likely dating back to around 3000 BC.”⁸ He paused for a moment before continuing, “I’d say it’s the work of a madman, perhaps inspired by the Gilgamesh epic,”⁹ he added with a slightly forced laugh.

Then, in a tone intended to be reassuring but which, in reality, betrayed doubt, he concluded, “Don’t lose sleep for that old tale. It’s probably just a legend.”

But as he closed the file, Parker remembered a disturbing detail. He reread the final part of the publication, which showed another piece of writing to be deciphered.

“The text speaks of a code: *‘He will decipher the code engraved within me.’* What is this code mentioned here? And where is it?”

Margaret didn’t blink and stared at him for a few moments. Then, she took out a pair of latex gloves, slipped them on, and turned to open a small wooden chest. She took out a hollow ceramic sphere, covered in a sort of metallic coating.

“Chaahc thunder!”¹⁰ It’s incredible! It really does exist!” he exclaimed in amazement.

He couldn’t believe his eyes... He remained speechless, but his mind began to race. *Could this prophecy be real?* Then he changed his mind. *No, I must remain rational. There has to be a logical explanation for this. And yet... what if... I can’t help feeling that we’re against something strange, perhaps even dangerous.*

Seeing Margaret’s worried expression, he again sought to reassure her when she clarified:

“It’s sixteen centimeters in diameter. And look, there...”

To illustrate her point, she pointed to a spot with her gloved little finger. “It’s pierced at the top by a hole the size of a fifty-penny coin.”

⁸ One of the oldest known writing systems developed in Mesopotamia. Appeared around 3500-3000 BC in Mesopotamia.

⁹ The Epic of Gilgamesh recounts the adventures of a Mesopotamian king who, faced with death, seeks eternal life before accepting his human condition.

¹⁰ Lockwood’s usual swearword, Chaahc is the Mayan and Toltec god of rain. Armed with his lightning axe, he strikes the clouds, triggering thunder and precipitation.

Then, delicately, she extracted some fifty tiny, irregularly shaped tablets from the sphere, which she laid out on the small red velvet mat spread across the desk.

Parker watched her motionless, as if suspended between dream and reality. His mind, usually so analytical, seemed to float in amazement. He couldn't reconcile his observations with his beliefs. Finally, with order and method, Margaret assembled the pieces like a jigsaw puzzle, and suddenly James's smile froze. He stood there, his face fixed and both hands spread, waiting for further explanation.

Without saying a word, simply observing her colleague and friend, she opened the drawer to her right, grabbed an enormous magnifying glass, and handed it to him.

"Here, look," she whispered with a sardonic tone. "Here's the origin of the text you read."

The professor grumbled, lowered his eyes, puckered his lips, and began to scrutinize what was inscribed. Then, suddenly, his face lit up.

"Ah, of course!" he exclaimed, a note of relief and laughter in his voice. Looking at Margaret, reassured, he continued. "A puzzle of Sumerian tablets, five thousand years old, with a manuscript written in English, when England and English didn't yet exist."

He shook his head, sighed, and rolled his eyes before continuing, visibly relieved by this discovery that dispelled his fears.

"It's fake! It's well executed, but it's a fake! And where's the famous code to decrypt?"

"It's here. We spotted it inside the sphere. It was written in two parts on its inner surface... I used a mini-camera to explore it." Then she handed him a transcript of her research on a sheaf of several sheets.

He grasped the documents, and his eyes widened as he tried to decipher their contents:

Part 1

41° 55′ 04.3"N 87° 38′ 49.1"W —

0;for each moon, one revelation for each sphere.

Part 2

Ahcanabe, wake up, James Parker! The day has come for you to become aware of your past, to open the way and to accompllish your mon.

“Impossible, delirious, anachronistic,” he murmured, staring at the sphere. “How could all this have been engraved inside a hollow object, and at such a time?” he quickly recovered himself, masking his astonishment. “I’m convinced we’re talking about an imposture here.”

“Do you really think so?” Margaret insisted hesitantly.

“I assure you!” he declaimed with feigned assurance.

“Well,” continued Margaret, “in any case, I’ve transcribed all the texts and the code onto this USB drive. You can analyze them with your linguistic decoding software.”

Torn between curiosity and skepticism, he picked up the computer support handed to him by his colleague. Trying to hide

his confusion, he shook his head from left to right, pursing his lips.

“It’s a waste of time, Maggie,” he said, hoping to convince her.

He masked his amazement at the code engraved in the sphere, while trying to explain calmly.

“Think about it, English dates back to the 11th century, but these tablets, said to be five thousand years old, are written in modern English.” He smiled reassuringly. “It’s a scam! It’s fake!”

“That’s what I thought at first, too,” she replied. “To tell you the truth, I almost put the whole thing into the back of our cellar. But...”

“I don’t know, something, some intuition, made me change my mind...” she snapped. “So, I sent them to the university laboratory for carbon dating.”¹¹

Sighing, she picked up a large white envelope and handed it to him.

“It appears these tablets date back more than five thousand years. The quality of the clay and the oxides used in the pottery elements all match the materials found in remains from the same period.”

James reached into the envelope and pulled out the document with a frown. He then began to verify its source. The address read:

**Oxford Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit
Research Laboratory for Archaeology
and the History of Art
School of Archaeology
1 South Parks Road
Oxford OX1 3TG-UK**

Next, he unfolded the expert report and read it, dissecting it carefully. When he had read to the end, his hands began to tremble with excitement without realizing it. He raised his head and looked dazedly at his assistant, then he said, “How is this possible? How

¹¹ Carbon-14 dating measures the residual radioactivity of organic samples to estimate their age up to 50,000 years.

can you imagine such a thing?”

“Listen to me,” she said, “because I haven’t yet touched on the important points. You’ll be surprised.”

“Come on!” he huffed, scratching the back of his neck nervously.

She stood up, walked around his desk, and approached the first paper document he had read. With a red line, she highlighted the three words: Ahcanabe, Mehenilan, and Yéyals.

“Does that mean anything to you?” she asked.

“Well, let’s just say that I know these names and that they remind me of forces fighting evil, but I can’t say any more than that.”

“So, let me enlighten you,” she said with a smile. “You see, I’m working with a Mexican intern as part of a university exchange year, and she seems to know a bit more. She’s recognized the words phonetically, and they remind her of a form of Mayan dialect used by her grandparents.” She smiled again and teased, “Maya is your specialty, isn’t it?”

Without warning, James leapt from his chair and headed for the large wall-mounted bookcase, which took up an entire section of the partition in his old office.

“Good thing you didn’t throw anything away! So, let’s see... I need a reference on the phonetic pronunciation of words,” he mumbled, moving the books around. Seconds later, he pulled an old French-language book from one of the shelves, adorned with a marble-colored cover and red binding.

**MAYAN FRENCH VOCABULARY
COMTE DE CHARENCEY
ALENÇON
E. RENAUT DE BROISE, IMPRIMEUR ET
LITHOG.
PLACE D’ARMES
1884**

After several minutes of consultation, he smiled and exclaimed, "I've found the terms we're looking for on pages sixteen, thirty-seven, and forty. Yéyals means 'those who are chosen'; Mehenilan can be translated as 'the son of the unknown father'; and finally, Ahcanabe means 'the guardian of the roads.'"

Then, he placed the imposing book on his desk and, displaying a doubtful pout, continued, punctuating each of his sentences with an affirmative finger on the leather blotter.

"Think about it: we're talking about a tablet from the third millennium BC, in English, with Mayan references. It's totally anachronistic and geographically incoherent!"

Still, Margaret's eyes remained bright.

"Exactly, James, what if it was intentional? The Alulim Eridu's texts could explain this."

"Are you suggesting that this... 'Source' has purposely mixed eras and cultures?" he asked skeptically.

"Exactly!" she asserted with conviction. "Everything seems to have been designed to conceal the true meaning of the prophecy. The Mayan words, for example, could prove to be a crucial clue."

"And what do I have to do with it?" he replied, puzzled.

She smiled indulgently, as if addressing a child whose abilities are well known.

"These documents came to us. They're written in English and contain Mayan texts. It's no coincidence, and you could even be the key to deciphering them."

"Me?" he exclaimed, incredulous. "How can I," he placed one hand on his chest, "be the key to this mystery? How absurd!"

"No," she insisted, "these are too precise coincidences. Why us? Why English? Why Mayan? Statistics contradict our reluctance, James. There must be a reason for this phenomenon."

The professor heaved a deep sigh before fixing her with an exasperated stare.

"All right, then. What am I supposed to understand in this

archaeological labyrinth?” he asked, resigned but intrigued nonetheless.

The young teacher’s face darkened. She took a deep breath, her hands beginning to tremble as her eyes filled with tears.

“*They* threatened me, my friend, demanding that I give them the sphere and the tablets. In fact, that’s why I contacted you in the first place.”

“But who are you referring to when you say *they*? Have you identified these people? Do we know their motivations?”

“I don’t know, *they* phone me at all hours of the day and night—at my place of work, and even in the evening at home. When I’m alone, I receive up to ten anonymous calls a day on my private mobile. Their intimidation terrorizes me, and I admit, I’m scared.”

“Have you contacted the police?”

“Of course, I have! From the very first day, but the commissioner simply dismissed it as a student joke.”

“How can I help you? How can I support you?”

“I’d like to entrust you with the sphere and the original tablets, so that you can take them with you,” she said. “I’ve had copies made to keep in the safe.”

“Why me? What do I have to do with it? Do you really think these objects would be better preserved in my home?”

“I don’t know, but I sensed something, and your name came to me as a matter of course.” She heaved a sigh and continued, “it was the Mayan terms that convinced me to call on you. I’m firmly convinced that these tablets didn’t contain this information by chance. Please, don’t let me keep you, Please! Keep these relics, just for a few weeks, until this whole affair is cleared up.”

Parker, feeling trapped, was about to refuse, but observing his colleague’s drawn features, he read fatigue and despair. So, he agreed, albeit reluctantly, and only to reassure her.

“Okay, you’ve won, but I still think you’re worrying about this damn sphere for nothing. While it’s true that I’m a little confused about certain points, I’m quite certain that no incongruous fact will stand up to a rigorous scientific approach.”

She slowly calmed down and, as she regained a semblance of a

smile, her gaze fell on the clock.

“I’m starving,” she said with a burst of laughter that sounded forced.

Without waiting for a response, she grabbed Parker by the arm and invited him to enjoy a beer and a plate of fish and chips.

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As they shared a meal at *the Whitehorse* restaurant on Broad Street, Parker recalled how, on the way, Margaret had warmly chatted with the students they’d passed. In all simplicity and kindness, she had stopped to chat with those who had approached them, and had given each one personal encouragement, despite her apparent fatigue.

Now that they were seated and awaiting their order, he huffed admiringly, “You have a real gift for putting people at ease.”

“You taught me that,” she said, smiling back. “Do you remember my first year as your assistant?”

Then the conversation drifted to other, lighter subjects. Lunch passed peacefully; she seemed to have regained her composure and British reserve, and spoke of her plans for the department with passionate animation. He realized just how far she’d progressed from a timid trainee to an accomplished, spirited woman. After swallowing her umpteenth mouthful, she looked up at him, stars in her eyes.

“Well, you see, despite everything that’s happening, I’m looking forward to enjoying your company,” she enthused.

“You’ve always supported me, James, and I miss you very much.”

These words warmed the professor’s heart, reminding him why he liked this bright, generous young woman so much. It’s true that, at times, he had even considered courting her. But every time the thought crossed his mind, memories came flooding back...

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Paris, fifteen years earlier. Images flashed through his mind. In his memory, Garance, his teenage sweetheart, was smiling. Her auburn hair, her crystalline laugh, her jasmine perfume—

everything still vibrated within him with boundless energy.

Their meeting at the Sorbonne, their plans for the future, their intense, all-consuming passion: everything had been perfect. Until that fateful weekend, when Garance had left, promising him a surprise on her return. James still remembered their final kiss on the station platform, unaware that it would be their last.

Garance had never returned. Despite police searches and inquiries, and even the private investigators he'd hired had been unable to find her. She'd vanished into thin air. This unexplained disappearance had left him devastated, unable to move on.

The sound of cutlery on a plate brought him back to the present. Margaret was watching him from a corner of her eye. He knew she had feelings for him, but his heart remained trapped in the past.

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On the train back to London, Parker stared at his satchel containing the sphere and the tablets. A growing anxiety tormented his thoughts. The shadows of Asmodeus and Nahaash seemed to hover over him, their names still echoing in his head like a sinister warning.

He closed his eyes, trying to banish these thoughts, but Margaret's anxious face continued to haunt him.

Is she really safe? he asked himself as an icy sensation crept through his veins. The fear he felt for his colleague and friend disturbed him far more than his own apprehension.

Bringing his thoughts back to the events that had unfolded, his fingers brushed against his satchel, feeling the shape of the trunk through the leather.

If this text is true... what a terrible power in his hands! he mused.