

MATTER OF DAYS

RETURN TO COHERENCE



The Guardian

*Who gouged out the eys of artists who slipped messages into paint?
Who bathed in blood of children, drank the light of Libertines and Saints?
Once sacred turf, now barren Earth, reveals the cult of Saturns' curse.
Your children's feet, stamped paper sheets, become money in their purse.
Their scarlet priests, wolves dressed as sheep, cast spells to blind your eyes.
Turned freedom into slavery, when lust taught love it was despised.*

MATTER OF DAYS

Return To Coherence

INDEX

Poem – The Guardian

Prologue – Under the Sphinx

Chapter One - Preface

Chapter Two - The Delivery

Chapter Three - The Vision

Chapter Four - The Debrief

Chapter Five - Night at the Clinic

Chapter Six - The Departure Gate

Chapter Seven - The Long Road to Eden

Chapter Eight - The Bay of Tranquility

Chapter Nine - Dawn at the Lake

Chapter Ten - The Broadcast

Chapter Eleven - Pwah~Mageddon

Chapter Twelve - The Butterfly Effect

Chapter Thirteen - The Extraction

Chapter Fourteen – The Interrogation

Chapter Fifteen – The Final Debrief

Interlude – The Aftermath

Epilogue - The Knife Edge

Author's Note - The Nine Bells Saga

Closing Poem – Matter of Days

Prologue — Beneath the Sphinx

At the turn of the twentieth century, a circle of powerful men confronted an unspoken truth: the Earth's resonance field was failing.

No one in their ranks could say precisely when the collapse would reach its tipping point, but the instruments whispered it — a fractional drop here, a harmonic distortion there, like the foundations of a great bridge shifting by millimetres before the span gives way.

This “Circle” was composed of rival bloodlines, adversaries who rarely agreed on anything. Yet survival forced their hand. For the first time in history, enemies set aside vendettas to conspire toward a single cause: **survival**.

They scoured archives for patterns overlooked, myths recast as allegory. Flood legends, petrification events, whispered accounts of previous ages when the field had faltered. Again and again, the trail led them to Egypt — and to the Sphinx.

Beneath its paws, rumours spoke of sealed chambers, of tablets untouched by time. Among them, one reference surfaced like a splinter in the dark: a green tablet said to contain the secret of restoring what had once been broken.

Permission to excavate was denied at every official level. But the Circle had other tools: bribery, seduction, blackmail. Ministers who resisted soon found themselves compromised, their objections dissolved in smoke-filled rooms. At last, the dig began.

The Descent

The first nights were tense with anticipation. Alexandria's sky glittered like spilled diamonds as the team slipped through the narrow passage between the Sphinx's paws.

At first — disappointment. A bare chamber. Empty stone. Murmurs of mutiny began to stir until a hidden seam was found. A slab shifted, a shaft opened, and men descended on ropes into the dark.

The hiss of oil lamps revealed walls unlike any they had seen. Not stories of kings or gods — but diagrams: spirals collapsing inward, constellations shattering, waves locked into stasis. Repeated over and over, a single refrain:

What is lost may yet be restored.

At the chamber's heart stood a plinth bearing three objects.

The Stone Record

The first was sandstone, unornamented, geometric, its lines cut with precision. It spoke of collapse: the dimming of a great harmonic, the unraveling of coherence itself. No date, no cause — only inevitability. Its final line offered a flicker of hope:

What is broken may one day be restored.

The Scroll

Beside it lay a scroll — Its surface bore markings that shifted under the lamplight, refusing to hold still long enough to resolve into meaning. Every attempt to read it collapsed into nonsense. It was a

seal, not yet a voice.

The Emerald Tablet

And above them, cradled in limestone, lay the third object: a flawless slab of green, impossibly smooth, alive with an inner glow. Even in the dim chamber it seemed to radiate its own light, a heart beating just beyond perception.

The men whispered: “*The Emerald Tablet...*”

One of their robed leaders pressed his palm to its surface. For a breath, nothing. Then — a flicker. Glyphs spiralled across the emerald in quicksilver fire before vanishing again into blankness.

“It lives,” he gasped.

The Obsession

What followed was obsession.

Rituals of incense and blood. Chants half-remembered from Babylon and Ur. Later, when the Tablet was moved to their laboratory, they unleashed every tool at their disposal: x-ray lamps, high-frequency coils, vacuum chambers, lasers.

The Scroll never stirred.

The Tablet teased them — a pulse here, a flicker there — enough to keep them enslaved to its silence.

Decades passed. One generation of seekers gave way to another. Their robes grew ragged, their machines more sophisticated, their offerings more desperate. Still, the Tablet gave them nothing.

Their laboratories became cathedrals of futility. Filing cabinets groaned with failed translations and equations. The smell of ozone and resin clung to the walls. All the while, their instruments confirmed what the Stone Record had warned: the resonance was slipping. Slowly at first, then faster. The tone that underpinned the world was faltering.

The Turning

Panic consumed them. Rites were repeated, graphs spiked, machines rebuilt. Still, nothing.

At last, their leader confessed what none wished to hear:

“Nothing we have tried works.”

Another voice, gaunt with exhaustion, whispered the thought they all feared:

“If it will not open for us... perhaps it waits for someone else.”

A silence fell heavier than stone. Everyone knew the name unspoken: Stihl Pwah, the resonance specialist whose integrity had kept him beyond their reach.

That night, the Emerald Tablet was sealed in a lead-lined case. No guards, no ceremony — only the quiet recognition that it was not theirs to command.

It was waiting.

Not for blood, not for power.

Not for them.

For someone else.

Chapter One — The Train North

The carriage swayed gently, the low hum of steel on steel filling the night. Pwah sat by the window, head tilted as though listening beyond the rhythm of the tracks. To him, even a train in motion carried a signature — a field, a tone, a hidden order singing through the noise.

Across from him, Merri scribbled furiously in her notebook, pages spilling over with diagrams, annotations, and half-formed equations.

“You don’t have to write it all down,” Pwah said at last, his voice calm, eyes still on the dark countryside rushing past.

Merri looked up, brows drawn. “If I don’t, I lose the thread. You talk about coherence like it’s something you can touch. But when I try to map it, it slips. One moment I think I’ve pinned it, the next it’s—” She gestured, frustrated. “—like trying to nail fog.”

Pwah’s smile was faint, almost invisible. “That’s because you’re chasing it with your mind. Coherence isn’t something you catch. It’s something you become.”

He paused, his gaze meeting hers. “You can know and not be. But you cannot be, and not know.”

Her pen stilled. She frowned. “You always say things like that. I grasp part of it — but I know there’s more beneath the words. If I can’t explain it, if I can’t prove it... how do I know I’m not just imagining it?”

“You don’t need to imagine coherence,” he said, steady as stone. “You need to stop imagining long enough to become it. When the parts fall into harmony, you’ll know. The knowing doesn’t come from the head — it comes from your whole being.”

Merri let out a slow breath, leaning back against the seat. She trusted him — had trusted him for years — but still yearned for proof, for neat definitions, for evidence that would stand in a laboratory as well as in her heart.

“So you’re telling me,” she said, half-smiling, tapping her temple, “that my greatest asset is also my greatest obstacle.”

Pwah inclined his head. “The mind is an excellent servant, but a dangerous master. It’s an instrument. If you wanted to master the violin, you’d dedicate your life to practice until you could draw music from it. So it is with coherence. It must be birthed through you. It cannot be memorised.”

Her eyes widened. “Birthed? You mean like it’s my child?”

“In a way, yes,” he said simply.

The words hit harder than she expected. She fell silent, stunned, as though all her study of resonance had finally clicked into place.

The train rattled over a junction, the wheels thundering briefly before settling back into rhythm. Merri closed her notebook, her hand resting on the cover.

“If I’m an instrument,” she said quietly, “then tune me, maestro.”

Pwah’s smile was almost imperceptible, but it carried warmth. “That’s what the work will do. If you let it.”

The night rolled on, the train carrying them north toward the clinic — and toward the moment when theory, patience, and persistence would be tested by something far older, and far greater, than either of them could yet name.

Chapter One — The Archive

The clinic was hushed when they returned, the night pressing at the windows. The corridors breathed of herbs, polished wood, and the faint residue of extinguished lamps. Merri hung her coat on its usual hook, expecting Pwah to turn toward the treatment rooms. But he kept walking, his stride carrying him down a back corridor she had passed a hundred times without pause.

At its end stood a heavy oak door, half-lost in shadow. She had always known it was locked. She had never asked why.

Pwah drew a small brass key from his pocket. It turned with a muted click, and the hinges gave a low groan as he pushed the door open.

Merri hesitated at the threshold. The air inside was cooler, tinged with varnish and machine oil. Shelves sagged under the weight of ledgers and coils of copper. Instruments lay under glass domes, polished, waiting. This wasn't a storeroom. It felt alive — like a cave whose silence was charged with presence.

Pwah moved with calm certainty. From a wrapped bundle he lifted a bell of bronze and set it on the bench. Its crown was etched with a single marking: $A = 432$.

"When they moved the world to 440 Hz," he said, his voice even but edged with gravity, "they didn't just retune music. They shifted the frame of reference for everything."

Merri's gaze sharpened, her eyes catching on the etching.

"When you change the pitch of the foundation," he continued, brushing his finger across the rim, "you change every note relative to it. Even a fraction — less than two percent — is enough to break alignment. It stopped the 11th harmonic from locking naturally. Without that lock, coherence drifts. Distortion fills the vacuum."

He struck the bell lightly. The tone that rang out was not loud, but exact, pure, almost surgical.

The sound passed through Merri like a filament of light pulled taut in her chest. She gasped, her hand tightening on her notebook.

"This," Pwah said, "is the true tone of Earth. The one they moved us away from."

The silence that followed pressed hard against the walls.

On the workbench lay three objects: a weathered Bible, its first page stamped with the square-and-compass emblem; the glowing overlay of the Scroll's projection alive on the monitor; and the bell itself, humming faintly into stillness.

Merri leaned in, her eyes flicking from scripture to geometry.

"You've been circling this all night," she said quietly. "What is it that bothers you?"

Pwah tapped the hinge point of the compass. "This."

"The pivot?"

“The hinge. The seal. Everything depends on it. Look: the square is matter — the resonant plate. The compass is spirit — the arcs of frequency. But neither mean anything without the hinge that locks them together. And that hinge...” His voice dropped. “...is the Ninth Bell.”

He opened the Bible, letting the thin pages fall flat against the table. The emblem glared up at them: square, compass, and the letter G.

“They printed it in every Bible,” he said. “They signed the Word of God with their own brand. People thought it was decoration. But this—” he pressed a finger to the hinge “—is the true seal. They placed the key in plain sight, then inverted its meaning so no one would see it.”

Merri frowned, tracing the emblem with her fingertip. “So this is what unlocks it? The Bible?”

“Yes. Without the hinge, it reads like dogma. With the hinge, it opens as field mechanics.”

He pulled up the Scroll’s projection. The harmonic grid unfurled — eight golden nodes glowing at their intersections. Above them, the crown overtone shimmered faintly. When he overlaid the compass emblem, the hinge aligned perfectly with the crown.

Merri’s breath caught. “It’s the same point.”

“Exactly. The seal of coherence. Revelation spoke of it — the scroll sealed with seven seals. The priests thought it was prophecy. The cult thought it was ownership. But it was always harmonic law. Seven seals are seven octaves. The scroll remains locked until the crown — the ninth overtone — opens it.”

His hand rested on the Bible as he turned it toward her. His voice was quiet, but fierce with conviction.

“The Lamb opening the seals isn’t allegory. It’s mechanics. Only coherence can break the seal. Only the crown overtone can unlock the book. That’s why they placed their hinge here — to claim the power for themselves. But coherence isn’t theirs to own. The hinge belongs to truth.”

Merri’s mind raced. Verses rearranged themselves in her memory: In the beginning was the Word... By Him all things consist... The sound of trumpets... Walls falling by vibration. Her eyes widened. “It’s all resonance. It’s been resonance all along.”

Pwah gave a slow nod, not with triumph but with recognition. “Now you see why they buried it under religion. A field manual disguised as theology. A book of harmonic law disguised as morality tales. And yet — the hinge never left. They branded it openly. And now the seal is broken.”

The Scroll pulsed, a low hum swelling from the projection. The Bible’s thin pages trembled against the table as though remembering their true purpose.

Merri’s voice was a whisper. “So the Bible isn’t just scripture. It’s quantum mechanics. Resonance physics. The operating system of the field, written in code.”

“Yes,” Pwah said softly. “And the hinge is what unlocks it. Without it, confusion. With it, coherence.”

Neither spoke. The lamp flickered once. The hum deepened into a tone that resonated through their chests.

Merri pressed her palms to the bench, her eyes wide. “They thought no one would ever see it.”

Pwah’s hand rested firm on the emblem burned into the page. His voice was steady, final.

“And now it cannot be unseen.”

The hum rose, striking clear on the note of G.

Pwah opened another case: a tower of brass and glass, gleaming under the lamplight.

“Rife’s Universal Microscope,” he said. “Built in 1931. It could see life without killing it — viruses alive, moving, dividing. He found their tones. He found how to correct the drift.”

Merri leaned closer, her breath fogging the glass. “And they buried it.”

“Yes.” His voice was steady, but the weight behind it was unmistakable. He set a faded clipping on the table — The Cancer Act, 1939. Clauses forbidding mention of any cures not under state control. He laid another beside it: headlines mocking Rife’s name, calling him a fraud, his devices confiscated and destroyed.

“He found the 11th harmonic,” Pwah said, eyes fixed on the print. “The one that destroys distortion without harming the structure it inhabits. He used it on cells, but the principle is the same for the field. Distortion is a kind of cancer — in the body, in the auric grid, in the entire system.”

Merri’s hand trembled on the edge of the table. Her eyes locked on the paper, the black type growing heavier as she stared.

“My mother...” Her voice broke thin, fragile. She tried again. “She died of cancer.”

Pwah met her gaze. His expression didn’t change, but his words cut like a blade.

“Yes. And she didn’t have to.”

The air went out of Merri’s lungs. “You mean—”

“She was murdered,” Pwah said, calm and terrible in his certainty. “Not by a man with a weapon. By a system that buried the cure and sold her poison instead. They knew. And they let her die.”

The words struck like an axe. Merri staggered back, the smell of varnish suddenly sharp in her throat. She pressed her hand to the bench, her knees weakening.

The cry rose from deeper than her voice — from the child who had watched her mother fade, who had swallowed grief in silence, who had never allowed herself to name it.

It erupted unbidden, fierce and undeniable:

The Departed

No fond farewell, no kiss goodbye

His parting gift, her tear-filled eyes...

A woman’s love, a sacred vessel.

A recoiling spring, the stinging nettle...

The cruelest words, his hollow smile.

The broken plates, her stomach bile...

A thread worn bare, the weeping willow.

The begging bowl, her tear-stained pillow...

The withered land, the hunter’s axe.

The snow-filled sky, his footprint tracks.

The last line fell like an executioner’s stroke. Merri folded forward, sobbing, her arms braced

against the bench. The dam had broken.

Pwah did not move. He did not hush her, did not reach to comfort. He simply stood — unshaken, steady as stone.

Her sobs tore through the Archive until they ebbed into ragged silence. When at last she lifted her head, her face was raw, her eyes red. But something else flickered beneath the grief.

Something had died in her in that moment. The shell she had carried all her life lay in pieces on the archive floor.

And yet, in the ashes, something faint stirred. Fragile. Unfinished. But alive.

She met Pwah's gaze. He gave no speech, no consolation. He was simply there. And in his stillness, she felt the ground that did not give way.

The old Merri was gone.

The phoenix was stirring from the ashes.

The room was silent.

INTERLUDE: DEAD AND BURIED

They called it progress.

But for over a century, every breakthrough that could have given humanity true freedom has been buried, bought, or bled out.

Tesla dreamed of a world where power flowed freely, drawn from the field itself, broadcast without wires or meters. His Wardenclyffe Tower could have ended the age of coal before it began. But decentralise energy, and you decentralise control. That, they could not allow. The tower was torn down, the patents seized, the man painted as eccentric, unstable, dangerous.

The pattern didn't end with Tesla.

From hydrogen resonance to zero-point experiments, inventors across the world tapped the most abundant resource on Earth: water. They discovered hydrogen could be split cleanly, cheaply, without vast industrial plants — a fuel so abundant it could never be owned. But hydrogen breaks the control grid. It removes the tap.

And control only works if you can turn the tap on and off.

Those who tried to open it paid with their lives. Some died in “accidents.” Others were ruined, discredited, disappeared. Their names survive only in footnotes and conspiracy forums, their work dismissed as fringe, their vision ridiculed into silence. Yet they all carried the same threat: a technology that could not be monopolised.

They made the ultimate sacrifice, and their story was never told.

Now, in the light of the Scroll, the pattern becomes clear. These were not isolated sparks of genius. They were fragments of something older, something hidden in plain sight for millennia.

Walter Russell saw the universe not as a jumble of elements but as a wave — a periodic table written in octaves, each element a note in creation's score. In his model, hydrogen resonates in the key of E. And it is in this same E-series that the Nine Bells will be tuned.

The connection is not coincidence.

Hydrogen is the ocean's language. The oceans are the great resonator, holding the majority of Earth's hydrogen. Strike the right tone — the true, coherent E — and the water itself begins to sing back. At certain amplitudes, it does more than sing. It yields its bond. The hydrogen parts from the oxygen, cleanly, instantly. Fire from water.

This is what the Scroll reveals, and why it has been hidden.

The implications are simple enough to terrify: energy without fuel, without grids, without pipelines. Every village, every home, a power station unto itself. The end of oil wars. The collapse of the meter. The fall of the gatekeepers.

The pattern is older than Tesla. It stretches back through every suppression, every silenced voice, every “impossible” invention. And now, for the first time, the whole pattern can be seen at once.

This time is different.

When the Bells ring, there will be no patents to seize, no prototypes to destroy, no inventors to vanish. The sound will be everywhere at once — in every city, every ocean, every drop of rain. It will pull the rug from under the control grid in a single note.

Chapter Two — The Delivery

The silence in the archive was fragile, like glass stretched too thin. Merri sat hollowed out, cheeks damp, her breath still catching. Pwah had said nothing, only stood steady while she broke. For a few minutes she felt safe in that stillness.

Then the sound came.

A chime, sharp and deliberate, cut through the quiet.

Merri jolted. For a split second she thought the bronze bell itself had rung — the A=432 that had split her chest open earlier. Her pulse spiked. The room spun.

She turned her head, voice raw.

“It's gone nine... did you order takeout?”

But Pwah was already turning toward the hall. “No.”

The bell rang again. Louder this time. It echoed down the corridor like a call that knew exactly where to find her. Adrenaline surged through her veins. The collapse, the sobs, her mother's absence — all of it crashed into the present moment, sharp as broken glass.

She rose too quickly, knees shaking. “Are you expecting anyone this late?”

“No.” His tone was calm, but alert.

Merri followed him into the hall, her heartbeat a drum in her ears. The oak door of the archive swung shut behind them with a sigh. For a moment she felt as though they were leaving one cave only to walk into another.

At the front door, Pwah unlatched the chain. The hinges groaned.

A courier stood in the drizzle, cap low, face half in shadow. He said nothing, only thrust a clipboard forward.

“Delivery for Pwah,” the man muttered.

Pwah signed without hesitation. Merri hovered at his shoulder, her eyes flicking to the stranger’s hands, his shoes, the mist curling at his back. Her whole body was on edge.

The courier shoved a crate into Pwah’s arms — dark wood, rain-soaked, heavier than it looked. By the time Pwah looked up, the man was gone, swallowed by the fog.

He set the crate down on the foyer floor. The sound it made was too deep for its size — a hollow thud that seemed to vibrate in Merri’s chest.

Her voice came sharp, almost shrill. “Don’t. Don’t touch it.”

Pwah rested his palm on the lid. Calm. “It’s here now.”

Merri’s eyes caught on a folded sheet of paper taped to the top. She snatched it before he could, her hands trembling as she unfolded it. The handwriting was neat, deliberate.

This is what you have been waiting for.

It does not answer to us. Perhaps it will to you.

Time is short. Do not delay.

— The Circle

The paper slipped from her fingers.

Her stomach turned cold. “So it’s from them.”

Pwah tucked the letter into his pocket. His expression did not change. “Yes.”

She backed away a step. “Then it’s dangerous. Everything tonight — my God, Pwah, what if it’s wired? What if it’s poisoned? What if it’s—”

“A bomb?” he said, looking up at her, voice steady as stone. “Then truth is the only thing it will destroy.”

He left and returned with a hammer and a pry-bar. The tools looked wrong in his hands. Merri hugged herself, trembling.

“You’re not going to x-ray it first?” she asked hurriedly.

Pwah looked at her and, for the first time, she felt coherence steadying her.

“Merri,” he said curtly. “Every great invention began with someone taking a risk. No risk, no reward. If you want, I can call you a taxi to take you home.”

The offer was genuine. She felt it. That was enough.

“I trust you,” she whispered.

The crate was well made. Too well made. Either what it held was priceless, or dangerous. Either way, Merri’s blood ran faster.

The hammer struck the pry-bar. Nails squealed in protest as they pulled free, each blow echoing like a heartbeat.

With a groan, the crate gave way. Straw crackled, damp and yellowed. At first it looked empty — only packing.

Merri almost laughed in relief. “It’s nothing. It’s—”

Then she saw it.

An attaché. Dark leather, brass corners dulled by age.

Her breath caught.

The attaché lay nestled in the straw like some buried relic dredged from the deep. Its leather was darkened by time, its brass corners tarnished but intact.

Merri took a step back. “That’s not what I was expecting.”

Pwah lifted it out carefully. It was heavier than it looked. He set it on the table under the lamplight. The brass clasps caught the glow, dull but watchful, like old eyes.

He let the silence hang. The only sound was Merri’s breathing and the faint creak of the floorboards beneath them.

Then he pressed the first clasp.

Click.

Merri flinched. Nothing happened.

The second clasp.

Click.

Her heart raced so fast she thought it might split her ribs.

Pwah lifted the lid.

The attaché creaked open like a throat clearing after years of silence. Inside, wrapped in muslin, lay two slabs side by side.

The first was deep green, its surface faintly luminous even beneath the cloth. Emerald. It seemed to glow from within, as if light itself swam just beneath the stone.

The second was darker, heavier, etched with fine glyphs that shifted as the lamplight struck them — unreadable, refusing to hold still long enough to be known.

Pwah drew a long breath. “The Tablet... and the Scroll.”

Merri’s voice cracked. “Oh my God.”

They both stared down at the artefacts, the air between them thick with awe and dread.

The emerald slab shimmered faintly, as though aware of being seen.

Pwah’s hand hovered above it, then rested gently on the muslin. “This one sees,” he said softly.

Merri’s gaze fixed on the glyphs carved into the darker stone. “And this? It looks like instructions. A code...” She leaned closer, pulse quickening. The symbols seemed to shift the longer she stared, rearranging into fragments she almost understood — then dissolving again into nonsense.

Her voice broke. “It won’t stay still. It won’t... it won’t let me.”

Pwah shook his head. “That’s because it was never meant for the mind. The Scroll bears witness. Nothing more. Its words prove the Tablet’s voice is true.”

Merri’s eyes drifted back to the emerald. She felt stripped bare, still raw from her collapse in the Archive, her mother’s absence burning in her chest. And now this — alive, luminous, watching her as much as she watched it.

It was not just a relic.

It was presence.

And she knew, as the faintest pulse of light throbbed once from its centre, that it had not come to be studied.

It had come to instruct her.

Merri leaned over the green slab, her breath fogging the lamplight. The surface shimmered faintly, as if light lived just beneath the emerald skin. Her heart raced.

“It looks alive,” she whispered. “If I can just...”

She fixed her gaze, willing the flickering glyphs to hold. For a heartbeat they formed patterns — words she could almost name. Return... cure... field... But the harder she tried, the faster they scattered, dissolving into chaos like writing on water.

Her lips tightened. “I can’t hold it. If it would just stay still—”

Pwah’s voice cut across her frustration, calm but unyielding. “You’re forcing it.”

She whipped her head toward him, stung. “What else am I meant to do? It won’t make sense.”

“Because it isn’t speaking to your mind.”

“Then what?” Her voice cracked, caught between anger and despair.

“To your heart.” His gaze held hers, steady as bedrock. “You survived by willpower, Merri. By control. By holding everything tight. But coherence is wholeness. It comes when you let go.”

Her chest tightened. “Let go of what?”

“Of trying to write the words yourself.” He nodded toward the Tablet. “It doesn’t need your story. It carries its own. Stop painting on it. Listen to it.”

The thought terrified her. If she stopped forcing it, what would come through? What if she disappeared into it the way she had into grief?

Her hands trembled on the edge of the table. The emerald pulsed faintly, as though aware of her hesitation.

She closed her eyes. For once she didn’t reach for her notebook, didn’t shape words with her pen. She let the silence hold.

The glow brightened.

Chapter Three — The Vision

When she opened her eyes, the glyphs had stilled.

Slowly, deliberately, three words unfolded in steady green fire across the stone:

RETURN...

Merri’s breath caught. “Return? Return what?” She turned to Pwah, expecting an answer, but he only nodded toward the Tablet.

TO...

Her voice faltered. “Return to? Return to sender?” She tried to laugh, but her throat was tight.

And then the last letters formed, each one rotating through the alphabet before locking into place:

C – O – H – E – R – E – N – C – E

Together, they whispered it.

“Return to Coherence.”

The words burned steady in green flame, impossible to look away from.

Merri’s hand hovered near her notebook, but stopped short. Her fingers trembled. “That’s a command, not a request.”

“Precisely,” Pwah said. “The Tablet hasn’t come to negotiate. It has come to deliver a message — one none of us can ignore.”

She swallowed hard, unable to tear her gaze from the letters. “But what does it mean?”

“Exactly what it says.”

“That’s not enough—”

Before she could finish, the light flickered. The words dissolved.

“Wait—” she gasped.

The emerald surface rippled like water struck by a stone. Then it exploded into light.

They were no longer in the room.

Around them unfolded a lattice of diagrams alive with motion — spirals folding into bell curves, waveforms cascading across invisible grids. Cymatic rings danced across oceans. Harmonics arced into the stars.

Merri clutched at the edge of the table, but her hand found nothing solid. The vision wasn’t in her eyes — it was inside her bones. She heard Tesla’s towers hum, felt Walter Russell’s spiral periodic table breathing like a great organism, saw Rife’s microscope reveal constellations of living light before collapsing into darkness.

She tried to cry out, stop, but her voice was gone. The Tablet wasn’t speaking to her mind anymore. It was engraving itself into her marrow.

Fragments hammered through her in relentless sequence:

- Hydrogen in E.
- The Bell alloy: 66, 33, 1.
- Coherence withheld. Distortion enthroned.

Her mother’s face appeared — not gaunt, not dying, but radiant, whole, laughing as she had once been. The sight broke her.

“Don’t fight it,” Pwah’s voice came faint but steady, threading through the torrent. “Let it come.”

Her resistance cracked. The flood rolled over her, no longer an assault but a song.

Visions spiralled faster:

- The shift from A=432 to A=440, severing the lock.
 - The Cancer Act, 1939, banning cures that worked.
 - Coups notes stamped with royal seals.
 - The black flights of the Island protocol.
- Every fracture. Every deception.

And then — the Bells.

Nine vast forms, their bronze and gold profiles shimmering, one crowned with a halo of light. A map, a sequence, a blueprint of return.

The voice that had written words now spoke without language. Pure tone. Resonance threaded through her heartbeat until her own pulse aligned with it.

Merri collapsed to her knees, clutching her chest, tears spilling freely. It was too much. It was everything.

When the light faded, she was still kneeling, palms pressed to the floorboards, breath ragged.

The Tablet lay inert on the table, silent again, as though nothing had happened.

She lifted her head slowly, hair clinging to her wet cheeks. Her voice was hoarse.

“It showed me... everything.”

Pwah’s hands trembled, though his gaze was calm. “Yes.”

The silence that followed was not the stillness of the archive. It was alive, charged, as if the air itself now carried memory.

Merri pressed a hand to her chest, where the tone still lingered. She knew she could never un-hear it. Never un-know it.

And she understood — with terror and wonder spiralling through her veins — that nothing in her life, nothing in the world, would ever be the same.

Merri sat by the window, fists clenched, her jaw tight. The glow from the Scroll painted shifting glyphs across her face, but her eyes burned elsewhere — with anger.

Her voice was low, almost shaking.

“How can you speak of restoration after what they’ve done? They poisoned the field, shattered the truth, stamped their seal into every Bible. They’ve starved children, enslaved nations. And we... we’re supposed to build a bridge for them?”

She rose abruptly, pacing the room, her voice climbing.

“They deserve collapse. They deserve silence. Nothing left but the ruins they created. Isn’t that what justice means?”

Pwah did not move. He watched her storm the room as though she were the storm itself — necessary, inevitable. When he finally spoke, his voice was calm, steady, like a bell struck low.

“If coherence destroyed its enemies, it would become them. Justice without mercy is only another form of control.”

Merri turned sharply, eyes blazing.

“Then what — we let them walk away? After centuries of lies?”

Pwah shook his head slowly.

“No. We don’t let them walk away. We give them a bridge. A golden bridge. One path back to coherence. They can take it or refuse it — that is their choice. But if we close it off, coherence itself becomes distortion. And the test is lost.”

Her voice cracked, almost a whisper.

“You’d forgive them?”

Pwah’s gaze deepened, vast rather than soft.

“Forgiveness is not forgetting. It is not pretending they did no harm. Forgiveness is building the bridge so the field itself remains pure. Coherence must remain unbroken — even here, at the end. Especially here.”

The Scroll pulsed once, its hum filling the space — neither sharp nor soft, but weighty, settling into their bones.

“Understand this,” Pwah said, his tone carrying the weight of stone. “The greater the distortion, the greater the test. And the greater the test, the greater the glory — not in vengeance, but in restoration. That is why the bridge must be built. So even the architects of distortion cannot say they were left without a way home.”

Merri’s anger wavered, faltered, and dissolved into silence. She sank back into the chair, tears streaking her cheeks — not from weakness, but from the unbearable weight of what had just been spoken.

Her voice came low, trembling.

“Then coherence... leaves no one without hope.”

“Exactly,” Pwah said, his eyes on the Scroll’s shifting glyphs. “That is what makes it coherence. And that is why it cannot be defeated.”

The hum deepened again, reverberating through the walls. Merri closed her eyes, letting the resonance settle the storm within her. For the first time, she understood: victory was not in crushing the enemy. Victory was in building the bridge that left them no excuse, no foothold, no place to hide. Only the choice to return.

Chapter Four — The Debrief

Merri sat hunched on the edge of the bench, her notebook unopened beside her. Her hands still trembled, though the light from the Tablet had faded. The clinic looked ordinary again — the lamplight steady, the shadows familiar. But she knew nothing was ordinary anymore.

A laugh cracked through her lips, brittle and thin.

“What a night I’m having.” She pressed her palms over her face, the sound half-sob, half-disbelieving chuckle. “I think I’ve lived a lifetime in three hours.”

Pwah said nothing. He poured water into a glass and set it in front of her. His calm steadiness was

infuriating and comforting all at once.

She lowered her hands and stared at him, eyes wide, voice urgent.

“Pwah... what if this isn’t just for us? What if the world found out about this?”

He glanced at her, then at the Tablet lying inert on its muslin, as though it had never stirred.

“The world will,” he said quietly.

Her breath caught. “No. You don’t understand.” She leaned forward, voice rising. “If people saw what we just saw... everything would collapse. Governments, banks, churches — the whole world would come down in a single night.”

Pwah’s expression did not change. “Yes.”

“Yes?” Her laugh was sharp, almost broken. “You say that like it’s good news.”

“Collapse isn’t the end,” he said softly. “It’s the clearing.”

Merri shook her head, biting her lip hard. “No one is ready for that. Not me. Not anyone.”

“You weren’t ready tonight either,” Pwah said, his eyes steady on hers. “But it came anyway. And you survived it.”

Merri sat back, heart racing. Her mother’s face flickered in her mind, the flood of images still echoing in her chest. The words appeared again, burning across her memory in green fire: Return to Coherence.

She whispered it now, barely audible.

“If the world saw this...”

Her voice trailed off, but the thought rooted deep.

Pwah poured another glass of water, his hands steady, his eyes calm.

She lowered her palms and looked at him, voice trembling but fierce.

“Then tell me — why coherence? Why not say truth, or love, or God? Why that word?”

“Because coherence is all of those without distortion,” Pwah said, his voice clear. “Truth without coherence fractures into dogma. Love without coherence becomes a chain. Even faith without coherence turns to control. Coherence is wholeness — every part moving in harmony with every other.”

Her breath caught in her throat. “Why us? Why me? Why now?”

“Because the field is collapsing,” Pwah answered. “And because you were listening, even when you didn’t know you were.”

She gave a shaky laugh, wiping her eyes with the heel of her hand. “Listening? I’ve been fighting. Clawing my way through my own head, through grief, through... everything. That’s not listening.”

“It was survival,” Pwah said gently. “But tonight you learned the difference. You tried to paint words onto the Tablet with your will. When you let go, it spoke to you. That was coherence.”

Her voice broke into a whisper. “Then what am I now?”

He met her gaze. “You are not separate from it anymore.”

The silence that followed was heavy, alive. For the first time, Merri felt her heart and his beat in the same rhythm. The fear, the grief, the awe — all of it folded into a single pulse.

She exhaled, slow and trembling.

“So this is it. No going back.”

Pwah nodded once. “No going back.”

Chapter Five — Night at the Clinic

They didn’t leave right away. The city outside felt too close, its silence too watchful. In the end, they agreed to stay at the clinic until morning, when they could move unseen.

Pwah spread a blanket on the old couch in his office. He moved with the same unhurried calm he always carried, as though nothing the world could throw at him could shift his centre. Within minutes, he was asleep — his breathing deep and even.

Merri sat by the lamp with her notebook open. Sleep never came easy for her, and tonight it felt impossible. Her body still trembled from the cascade of visions; her mind replayed the flood of images over and over.

She bent over the page, letting her hand move the way it always did when words had nowhere else to go. The lines came raw, unpolished — but true:

State of Her Heart

*A shoulder to cry on,
an understanding ear,
I play my part.
Nobody bothers to ask how i feel,
the state of my heart.
In a world full of billions of people,
I stand isolated and alone.
Surrounded by friends and family,
I am here, but nobody’s home.
Sitting in quiet desperation,
staring into the bud of an open rose.
The sweet aroma of a more perfect existence,
slips silently into my nose.
Looking for answers,
praying for chances,
to change the course of my life.
Defiantly resisting my inevitable destiny,
of becoming a frustrated wife.
The weight of the world upon my shoulders,
While I contemplate my navel.
Rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic,
as the plates slide from my table
In a world of confusion it’s too hard to think,
about making any definite plans.
This is my personal Leningrad
Facing the enemy alone, I make my stand.*

She closed the notebook and pressed it against her chest. The poem didn’t ease the ache, but it gave it shape. It made the silence inside her visible. Almost bearable.

On the couch, Pwah shifted slightly, but his sleep was undisturbed. Merri studied him in the half-light, her envy sharp. How could he rest so easily after everything they had just seen? She envied that steadiness — that trust in silence, instead of fighting it.

She turned down the lamp and lay awake in the dark, listening to the slow cadence of his breath.

Night had always been the hardest hour for her — the hour when grief pressed against her ribs, when the absence of her mother was loudest. But now there was something else in the room.

The Tablet lay silent under its muslin covering, yet she could still feel it. A low hum, not in her ears but in her bones.

It terrified her.

And though she could not admit it yet, it steadied her too.

Chapter Six — The Departure Gate

Morning broke grey and brittle, strips of pale light pressing through the blinds.

Pwah was already awake, sitting at the desk. He looked as though he had been there for hours, though Merri suspected he had only just risen — and somehow, he looked rested.

By contrast, she felt like her skin was two sizes too small. Sleep had come in fragments, twitching with half-dreams of green light and broken memories. Her eyes burned. Her head throbbed. She was nothing but frayed nerves.

“You slept,” she said sharply.

Pwah glanced up. “Enough.”

“Of course you did.” She snapped her notebook shut harder than necessary. “You could probably sleep through Armageddon.”

“If coherence is disturbed by everything,” he replied simply, “then it isn’t coherence.”

The calmness in his tone needled her. Part of her bristled; part of her was grateful.

“You really don’t get rattled by anything, do you?”

He tilted his head as if weighing the thought. “It serves nothing.”

Merri let out a breath that was half laugh, half growl. “Well, I’m rattled, Pwah. We’re sitting on this —” she gestured toward the muslin-covered Tablet, its shape stark on the table. “You can’t expect me to just breathe and shrug while the most dangerous secret in history hums in the corner.”

“I expect you to be human,” he said gently.

Her anger collapsed as quickly as it had flared. She dropped into the chair opposite him and buried her face in her hands.

After a pause, he spoke. “Then we should go. The city is no longer safe for this.”

She lifted her head, eyes red. “Go where?”

“To the family cabin.”

Her eyebrows shot up. “You never talked about that. Where is it located?”

“On the shore of Lake Superior ”

“What. That's a six hour drive, minimum.”

“More, like seven” He retorted.

He leaned back, gaze distant. “It's my grandparents. I spent summers there as a boy. Before I understood what coherence was, I was learning it anyway. The lake, the woods — they carry their own resonance. The cabin is right on the lakeside surrounded by dense pine forests.

His voice softened. Merri found herself caught in the picture he painted.

“I remember lying awake in that cabin,” he said. “The roof creaked in the wind, the lake breathed against the shore. She told me the water sang differently at night. I thought it was imagination — until I heard it. Every ripple was a lesson. I didn't know then that the field was teaching me.”

Merri rubbed her temples, half-smiling despite her exhaustion. “So we're trading one haunted house for another?”

“Not haunted,” he said. “forgotten is more accurate.”

She sighed, glancing once more at the covered Tablet. “Fine. Let's move before I lose what's left of my nerves.”

Pwah rose, unhurried as ever. “Gather what you need. The rest doesn't matter.”

Merri muttered under her breath as she shoved things into her bag — venting about the madness of the night, the absurdity of running to a cabin in the woods. But even as she complained, she felt her heart steady a little.

Pwah's calmness wasn't an answer. It was an anchor.

And with the stakes so high, she knew she would need it.

Chapter Seven — The Long Road to Eden

The city thinned into countryside, fields rolling out under a washed grey sky. Pwah drove with both hands loose on the wheel, his eyes steady. Looking at him, you would never guess that he was transporting the most dangerous artefact on Earth in the back of the car.

Beside him, Merri sat stiff and silent, every turn of the tyres loud in her chest. Her body still hummed with exhaustion, her nerves stretched to wire. The attaché lay across the back seat, strapped in with her scarf as though a seatbelt could hold what pulsed inside it.

She kept glancing over her shoulder.

“I hate leaving it back there,” she muttered.

“It isn't ours,” Pwah said calmly.

“That doesn't make me feel better.”

He didn't reply. He didn't need to. His calm pressed against her nerves like a steadying hand, though she refused to admit it aloud.

They stopped in a small town. The grocery store smelled of fruit and cardboard packaging, the aisles humming under strip lights. Ordinary life moved around them: mothers choosing cereal,

teenagers scrolling on their phones, pensioners counting coins.

Merri clutched her basket tightly, her heart pounding.

At the checkout, the cashier bagged their supplies without looking twice. No flicker of suspicion. No second glance. Still, Merri's pulse didn't slow until they were back on the road, the store shrinking in the rearview mirror.

The city was gone now, replaced by hedgerows and long, pale fields. The road unfurled ahead like a ribbon into the trees. Afternoon light lay in bars across the tarmac; the fields on either side were the colour of tired straw.

Merri sat high-backed, resisting the pull she knew would come. After a night like the one they had survived, she wanted to stay sharp — eyes on every mirror, mind ready for the next move.

"I'm not sleeping," she muttered to no one in particular.

Pwah said nothing. His silence was the answer. Hands easy on the wheel. Eyes steady on the grey wash of tarmac and the white lines converging on the horizon.

Behind them, the attaché case sat buckled in like a child — leather dark, brass corners dull, the faint sense of a pulse in its casing.

The road hummed beneath the tyres. A sound that had rocked a thousand infants to sleep. It worked on grown-ups too, whether they admitted it or not.

The trees drew closer, folding into a green corridor. Sunlight punched through the branches in strobes of light and shadow across the windscreen — like a thousand flashbulbs firing all at once. Merri's eyes fought to keep pace, her mind resisting the relentless swing of the pendulum, but the rhythm was irresistible.

Her eyelids sagged. Her head tipped toward the window.

She lasted another minute, maybe two. Then her body surrendered.

For the first time in days, she let go.

Inside Merri's Dream

*Inside the wild frontier of dreams
the candle of her imagination burns.
Iridescent images come alive
as the hands of darkness slowly turn.*

The sea rose around her. Black water, endless, alive with teeth. The small boat pitched and groaned under her, timbers splintering. Salt stung her eyes; her throat tore with screams that vanished into the gale.

Figures loomed across the swells — doctors in white coats, faces blank as plaster, their eyes nothing but shadow. Syringes dripped black ink, not medicine. Tubes fed into her mother's arm. The body sagged in the chair, veins running tar-dark.

"Stop! Stop!" Merri cried, and the storm answered, crashing harder, as though the sea itself conspired against her.

The boat lurched, oars gone, compass snapped and hidden beneath a board years ago. She clung to the rim, knuckles white, as the storm closed in.

Pwah — Stones on Water

Beside her in the car, Pwah drove on, gaze fixed ahead, but the hum of the tyres unspooled something deep in his chest. His mind drifted into memory.

He was already back there, standing barefoot on the bank of the lake. The air smelled of pinecones and wet grass; dragonflies skimmed like flecks of living glass.

Flat stones lay scattered along the shore. He picked one, weighed it in his hand, cool and smooth, then twisted his body like a bowman and sent it skimming across the mirrored surface of the water.

The first bounced twice before sinking with a loud gulp. The second danced twelve times. When he t it just right, the stone skipped faster than he could count.

“Thirty-three!” he shouted.

His grandfather’s hand came to rest on his shoulder.

“How many skips this time?”

“Thirty-three!”

His grandfather smiled wide. “You sure do have a talent for that.”

But Pwah’s gaze stayed on the water. The surface held one truth, the depths another. Even as a boy, he sensed the danger of stopping at reflections. Harmony wasn’t luck — it was resonance finding the right rhythm. The right force, at the right angle, in the right time.

The rings widened across the lake, folding into each other, rippling outward without end.

Back in the car, Merri twitched against the glass, caught in her own storm. Where Pwah’s memory carried coherence, hers tore her apart.

Merri — The Storm

In her dream the sea rose black around her, endless and alive with teeth. The little boat pitched violently, its timbers groaning with every swell. She clung to the splintered rim, salt stinging her eyes, her throat raw from screams the storm swallowed whole.

Figures loomed across the waves — doctors in white coats, faces blank as plaster, eyes nothing but shadow. Syringes dripped thick black ink, not medicine. The lines ran into her mother’s arm. Her body sagged in the chair, veins running tar-dark.

“Stop! Stop!” Merri screamed. The storm answered, crashing harder, as though the sea itself conspired against her.

The storm was merciless. Every wave roared with the weight of what she had carried for years: grief, rage, abandonment.

And still she screamed into the dark.

Pwah — The vegetable patch

He could still smell the cabin as if no years had passed: woodsmoke baked into the beams, pine needles crushed underfoot, bread cooling on the sill. His grandparents grew almost everything they ate — rows of beans and potatoes, cabbages heavy in the soil, apple trees bending under their own weight. To him it had felt ordinary at the time, but later he realised it was the foundation of

everything.

Every day in that garden was a kind of lesson, though no one called it that. His grandparents didn't preach; they showed him how to live in rhythm with the land. The soil was alive, and they treated it with reverence — as though it, too, carried memory.

One afternoon he had found his grandmother crouched low over a row of struggling flowers. Their stems were thin, their leaves curled in on themselves as if ashamed to face the sun. He frowned, his bare toes pressing into the earth.

"They're not growing," he said, his small voice edged with disappointment. "Maybe they're just weak ones."

She looked up, eyes creased in sunlight, dirt on her hands. "If the flower doesn't grow," she said gently, "you don't throw it away. You mend the garden."

He tilted his head. "Mend the garden, how?"

"The soil. The water. The light. Everything around it." She patted the earth between them. "A flower will always do well if it has what it needs. If it doesn't, the fault isn't in the flower — it's in its surroundings."

She dug her hands into the soil, breaking up a clump, mixing in compost with her fingers. "People are the same, Pwah. We blame ourselves, or each other, when really the soil is wrong. Put someone in the right environment and watch them flourish. Starve them of light, and even the strongest will fade."

She placed the watering can in his hands. "Try again. Give them what they've been missing."

He poured carefully, watching the water soak the ground. The leaves trembled, almost gratefully. Something shifted in him then — the sense that he wasn't just tending plants, but learning the hidden rules of life itself.

Later, over tea and bread still warm from the oven, she repeated it across the kitchen table.

"Remember, Pwah. If the flower doesn't grow, you fix the garden, not the flower."

The words planted themselves in him as surely as any seed. Looking back, he realised his grandparents had been cultivating him in the same way — tending him like soil, giving him light, water, rhythm, so that coherence would take root. They never said it aloud, but they grew him as carefully as their beans and apples, as if they knew the world would one day need the fruit.

Pwah — The Hive

The hum of the tyres steadied on the road, and Pwah's mind wandered further back. Beyond the vegetable rows, at the edge of the clearing, his grandparents kept bees.

To him, the hive was a kind of altar. His grandfather approached it with veil, hat, and gloves — not as armour, but as vestments. Protection, Pwah would learn later, was not what you wore on the outside. It was the calm you carried inside.

He crouched low in the grass, knees damp with morning dew, as his grandfather lifted the frames with slow reverence. Honey glistened in the sun, thick and golden, dripping between the combs. His grandmother called from the porch, laughter in her voice:

"Honey is condensed sunlight. Once tasted, you never forget."

She was right. The sweetness seared itself into his memory as if every cell had been etched with amber. It was sunlight made edible, sweetness forged by countless small wings.

Curious, he pressed the open mouth of his grandmother's old radio speaker against the hive's entrance. What poured out stunned him. It wasn't a single drone, but a polyphony — chatter, quarrels, laughter — thousands of voices woven into one.

He looked up, eyes wide. His grandmother, drying her hands on her apron, was watching him with a knowing smile.

"You didn't expect to hear a conversation, did you?" she said. "Harmony is many voices, each one playing its part. That conversation makes the only food that never spoils."

"You mean it lasts forever" he asked. "Forever-ever?"

"Yes," she replied with a smile. "The things we make fade. But the bees hold the secret of eternity."

Pwah was silent, stunned. He could feel the vibration not only in his ears but in his bones. He didn't know it then, but that hum would never leave him. It was coherence alive, etched into him by sunlight, soil, and wings.

Every day was a school day, though no one called it that. His grandmother never wrote a book, but her life was one. She carried wisdom the way bees carried pollen — passing it gently, invisibly, until it bloomed in him.

At the kitchen table she would speak her truths while slicing bread or pouring tea, and he, wide-eyed and listening, absorbed them drop by drop, like sunlight thickening into honeycomb.

The hive's hum stayed with him. Many voices, one harmony.

Convergence

The road hummed steady under the tyres. Pwah's mind lingered on the garden and the hive, the lessons of soil and sunlight, the hum of many voices woven into one. Those summers had planted coherence in him the way seeds are planted in good earth — tended, watered, allowed to grow.

Beside him, Merri was trapped in a storm of her own.

In the dream the sea still raged black, waves colliding like the fury of a thousand fists. The little boat spun in helpless circles. Her screams tore against the gale, her knuckles split white against the rim. Syringes dripped ink, her mother's veins ran dark, and the storm howled louder with every plea.

She was drowning in chaos.

He was remembering harmony.

The contrast could not have been sharper. For Merri, every wave tore her further apart. For Pwah, every memory of his grandparents bound him more firmly to the centre. The hive, the soil, the lake — they had cultivated coherence in him as carefully as they cultivated their beans and flowers. They had raised him like fertile ground, teaching him that harmony wasn't luck but intention — the right rhythm, at the right angle, at the right time.

The car moved steady through the trees. In one seat, Merri twisted in torment, her body caught in rings of storm. In the other, Pwah breathed easy, his chest filled with the echo of the hive's eternal hum.

Two currents moving side by side: one breaking, one holding.

Merri - The Eye of The Storm

Merri whimpered in her sleep, her body jerking as though each wave in the dream crashed through her bones. Her lips formed words that never reached sound.

In her storm, the boat was splintering. The horizon was black. No compass, no oars, no bearings — only the rising roar.

The Sirens' Call

*Amidst mighty swells and angry seas
She is fighting hard to stay afloat
Locked inside her battered soul
The stalwart bastion, her bitter moat
The little boat whom life abandoned
Spinning in circles no direction
Sparks a flare which lights the sky
Trust's in love's merciful discretion
A shining beacon a rock of safety
God hears the distressed siren's call
A ray of hope in darkness beckons
Bequeathed by love's sweet waterfall.*

The storm stilled. The sea held its breath. On the horizon, a pulse of green light appeared — slow, exact, alive. The emerald glow of the Tablet.

Her sobs eased into silence. She was still adrift, but no longer sinking.

In the driver's seat, Pwah kept his gaze on the road. His breathing matched the rhythm of the tyres, steady as the hum of the hive, steady as the rings across the lake. To him, coherence was not an idea but a way of being — cultivated in soil, sunlight, and silence since childhood.

The trees thinned, the road stretching forward.

And for the first time, Merri's storm and Pwah's hum began to converge — not in words, not yet, but in the quiet pulse that underpinned them both.

The Pit Stop

After four hours on the road, the fuel gauge dipped low. Pwah eased the car into a service station on the edge of Duluth, neon light flickering against the damp night.

Merri woke with a jolt as the car climbed the kerb of the petrol station forecourt. The storm was gone, but large puddles decorated the uneven surface of the concrete. The world hummed with neon light and the smell of petrol. For a moment she didn't know where she was. Her cheeks were wet. Her chest was lighter.

"You dreamed," Pwah said, stepping out to refuel.

Merri pressed her palms to her eyes. Her voice came hoarse. "I saw her. My mother. And the Tablet. And the cabin..."

He nodded once, as though he had expected it.

Merri wrapped her coat tight around her shoulders as she stepped out. The cold air cut into her lungs. Her voice came out sharp, instinctive.

“Where are we?”

“Duluth,” Pwah said simply, sliding the nozzle back into its cradle.

She turned toward the dark horizon, chest tightening. “It feels endless.”

“That’s because it is,” he replied. “Superior holds more water than all the other Great Lakes combined. A resonator on a scale few can grasp.”

The thought unsettled her further.

Inside the shop, strip lights hummed overhead, the smell of fried food and floor cleaner pressing in. Merri grabbed a bottle of water and stood frozen at the counter, her hands trembling. The cashier didn’t notice — scanned, bagged, and recited the total as if nothing about the night was unusual. Just another customer. Just another transaction.

Back at the car, Pwah folded the receipt neatly into the glovebox. Calm. Ordinary.

Merri slid back into her seat, her pulse still racing. She glanced over her shoulder at the attaché strapped in with her scarf. In the neon glow it looked less like a case than a living thing — heart beating under leather skin.

The engine started. The road stretched on.

Merri pressed her forehead against the glass, her whisper barely audible.

“If they knew what we carried, the whole world would come down.”

The hum of the tyres swallowed her words.

The Descent

The car nosed back onto the highway, the city lights falling behind. Ahead, the road stretched into forest and dark water, hemmed by the weight of Superior at their side.

Merri sat rigid at first, her pulse still thudding from the gas stop. Every flicker of light felt too bright, every shadow too deep. She kept glancing at the attaché strapped in with her scarf, half-convinced it was breathing.

The hum of the tyres pressed in. Steady. Relentless. The same sound that had rocked infants to sleep since wheels first turned on roads.

She fought it. Forced her eyes open. Stared hard into the darkness as if vigilance alone could hold back collapse.

But the rhythm was merciless.

Her eyelids sagged.

Her head tipped to the window.

The last thing she saw before surrendering was the faint green glow of the dashboard reflected in the glass — like an echo of the Tablet itself.

And then the road took her under.

Sleeping Beauty

The trees swallowed them again. Merri slumped, her breath finally settling. Soon she was asleep.

Pwah drove in silence, letting his thoughts drift. The hum of the road became the hum of the lake he had known as a boy. His grandmother's voice echoed: Even water sings if you listen. He remembered the kettle's note, the porch step that always creaked, the night the lake revealed its silver map. He had been learning coherence long before he knew the word.

Merri stirred against the glass. Her dream was different this time — no storm, no screaming.

Sleeping Beauty

The valley between consciousness

and the vivid images of painted light;

A horizontal pirouette,

the ballerina's silhouette,

dancing alone into the night.

The undisturbed peacefulness,

that beckons under every moonlit sky;

Dreams, a chance to restore life's injustices,

for the price of her closing eyes.

In a waking life that offers little respite,

from regulation, responsibility, and duty.

For several hours it can all be forgotten,

she is free at last, this sleeping beauty.

Moonlight rippled across the floor of water. The ballerina spun one final time, arms open, light flowing through her. Merri felt the weight fall away — grief, guilt, fear — dissolving into silver. Her mother watched from the edge of the dream, not to pull her back but to witness her moving forward.

The Tablet's hum lingered beneath it all, a steady tone holding her balance.

She spun once more. Then stillness.

In the car, her head rested against the glass, breath steady now, the storm behind her. The road hummed on, carrying them north.

Chapter Eight — The Bay of Tranquility

Dawn broke pale over the horizon, the road bending north into the forest of the Great lakes. The air was colder this far North, touched with the breath of Lake Superior stretching vast and unseen. The world felt quieter, stripped back to essentials.

Merri stirred awake, her cheek pressed to the glass, the ghost of a dream still on her skin. She remembered spinning, moonlight, her mother's silent witness. For a moment she thought she could still hear the hum beneath it — the Tablet's tone steadying her even in sleep.

She rubbed her eyes, disoriented, then whispered:

“Where are we now?”

“North Shore,” Pwah answered. His voice carried the same calm as the road itself. He glanced sideways at her. “They call this stretch the Bay of Tranquility.”

She followed his gaze. Between the breaks in the trees, the lake opened — vast, silver-grey, as still as breath held in the chest of the world. No waves, no chop, only a wide expanse of glass reflecting the sky.

Her throat tightened. After storms — real and dreamt — the sight was almost unbearable in its peace.

Pwah slowed the car, pulling into a lay-by overlooking the water. The two of them sat in silence, watching the lake’s surface blur into horizon.

“It doesn’t look real,” Merri murmured.

“It’s real enough,” he said. “Sometimes stillness is the truest thing there is.”

They sat without speaking, the engine ticking as it cooled. Below them the lake stretched silver to the horizon, a sheet of glass unbroken by wind. It was as though the storm of the world had paused here, leaving only stillness in its wake.

Merri hugged her knees to her chest, eyes never leaving the water. “I don’t trust it,” she whispered. “It’s too quiet. Like it’s holding its breath.”

She lowered her head onto her arms. “I wish I could believe that stillness would last.”

Pwah rested his hand lightly on the wheel, his voice steady. “Stillness is never permanent. But it leaves its imprint. Once you’ve felt it, you know where to return.”

The Tablet lay silent in the back seat. Yet Merri swore she felt its hum echoing through the stillness, like a tuning fork pressed against the bones of the world.

The Bay lived up to its name. For a moment, even she believed in tranquility.

A gull wheeled overhead, its cry thin against the silence. Ripples spread where it touched the surface, then vanished as though swallowed by glass.

“Is it much further?” she asked finally.

Pwah’s gaze remained on the horizon. “Only a couple of miles to the track. He turned the key and the engine burst into life.

They turned down a narrow dirt track lined with ancient pines.

The car rolled to a stop at the edge of the lake.

Merri pressed her palm to the window. For the first time in days, her chest felt quiet.

“It’s stunning,” she whispered.

Pwah’s mouth curved faintly. “It hasn’t changed a bit.”

The door creaked as he pushed it open. Dust, pine, old smoke, bread long since baked into the beams — the air carried every memory at once.

Merri set her bag down on the kitchen table and tugged at her damp shirt. Sweat from her nightmare ordeal still clung to her. She grimaced. “I need a shower.”

Pwah nodded, already stacking kindling at the hearth. “The water heater should still work. Towels are under the faucet.”

The bathroom steamed quickly. Merri unlatched the small window and let the vapour drift into the cool evening air. She peeled away her sweat-soaked clothes and stepped under the rush of warm water. Slowly her body loosened; the fragrant suds carried the invisible traces of salt and fear down the drain.

When she stepped out, the fire was alive in the next room, its crackle warming the boards. She wrapped a towel around herself, another over her shoulders, and padded barefoot into the cabin's glow.

Pwah looked up from the kettle. His eyes were steady, calm. "How was it?"

"Like paradise," Merri said, smiling faintly. "I could get used to living here."

Merri walked over to the kitchen table, tugging the towel tighter. "Where did you put the bottle of wine?"

"In the cupboard by the fridge," Pwah replied, slicing lemon into his cup. "You may want to let it breathe a little first."

The pop of the cork brought a smile to her lips. The wine released a rich, earthy aroma as it cascaded into the glass. She lifted it, inhaling deeply. "This smells like a good vintage. You want a glass?"

Pwah hesitated, then gave a small nod. "Usually, no. But tonight I will make an exception. Pour me a dribble in a juice glass. And we'll have a toast."

Merri laughed softly as she reached for a small tumbler from the shelf. She poured him just enough to stain the bottom. They raised their mismatched glasses in the firelight — hers a deep bowl, his plain and utilitarian.

"To what?" she asked.

Pwah's eyes reflected the flames. "To coherence," he said simply.

They touched rims, the soft chime of glass against glass ringing into the cabin air.

Merri lifted the bottle and her glass from the table. "I'm taking these to the fire," she said, grinning.

Pwah only nodded, stirring his tea.

She padded across the boards barefoot, firelight flickering against her damp skin. Halfway to the hearth, her towel slipped loose and fell in a soft heap at her feet. With both hands full — glass in one, bottle in the other — she could only look over at Pwah and laugh.

"Well," she said dryly, "now you know what my birthday suit looks like."

She bent carefully, set the bottle and glass down by the chair, and wrapped herself again without haste.

Pwah's expression hadn't changed. He poured the hot water over his lemon, steam rising between them as if nothing at all had happened.

"You didn't even blink," Merri teased, tying the towel firm this time. "You really are impossible."

"Or immovable," he said, carrying his tea to the fire.

She laughed, softer now, and settled into the armchair with her glass of wine. He passed her a blanket, and together they sat in the glow of the hearth.

The attaché case sat on the small table near the wall, silent. Neither of them spoke of it, but its weight filled the room as surely as the firelight.

Merri cradled her wineglass, staring into the fire. “We can’t stay here forever, can we?”

“No,” Pwah said. “But we can rest tonight.”

“It feels almost... normal.” She tipped her glass, smiling faintly. “Like paradise.”

“Paradise never lasts,” he said. “That’s why it matters when it comes.”

She leaned back, warmth soaking into her bones. For the first time since the archive, she didn’t feel hunted. She felt human.

The fire crackled. The lake whispered. Merri’s eyes grew heavy; her wineglass slipped to the side table as she curled beneath the blanket.

Pwah sat steady, tea cooling at his elbow, watching the flames collapse into embers. The cabin hummed with stillness, brief as a held breath.

Eden never lasts. But for this night, it was enough.

Chapter Nine — Dawn at the Lake

The cabin woke with the light. Sun spilled through the shutters in soft bars, carrying the scent of pine and lakewater. Merri pulled on a sweater and wandered into the kitchen, her bare feet creaking on the old boards.

Pwah moved with quiet efficiency, setting out mugs, slicing bread. A coffee pot warmed on the old stove, its aroma filling the room.

“You made coffee?” Merri chirped, surprised. “You don’t drink coffee.”

“No,” Pwah said matter-of-factly. “But you do.”

He didn’t look up straight away; his presence filled the room without needing to.

Merri leaned on the doorway, watching him. Her mind wandered back — to the first lecture she attended in Seattle, the moment she fell in love with his mind. And now she realised there was so much more to learn.

There was no performance in what he did, no haste. Each motion was simple, deliberate, as though even breakfast carried its own rhythm of coherence.

“Do you ever stop working?” she asked softly.

Pwah glanced up, the ghost of a smile in his eyes. “If you love what you do, how can it be called work?”

He poured a mug of coffee for Merri and watched the steam rise between them.

Merri smiled. “You make everything look so easy. I love that about you.”

“Love is easy, Merri. It’s people who make it complicated.”

She slid into the chair at the table, pulling the mug toward her. His words echoed in her mind.

Was it really that simple? Could love truly be the answer to everything?

The aroma of coffee pulled her back to the kitchen table of her childhood home.

Her father had been a heavy smoker and drank in the mornings on an empty stomach. Breakfast was the time she dreaded most, it was the time when his voice became louder than the traffic outside.

Now the cabin smelled of pine and cedar, two of her favourite scents, and there was no traffic to

disturb the peace. The wood in the walls, the faint resin in the air, even the smoke of the stove — all of it wrapped around her like a reminder that she was no longer there.

They ate in silence at first — bread, fruit, the bitter-smooth taste of coffee. Outside, the lake was still as glass, mist curling from its surface.

It struck Merri how ordinary it all seemed. Ordinary — yet not. This was no café, no hurried city breakfast. This was something else. A kind of intimacy without need for words.

She caught herself watching him again as he tore bread with his hands. No bravado, no pretense, only a steadiness that unsettled her in its unfamiliarity.

The silence between them was not empty. It was full.

Merri set her empty mug down and leaned back in her chair, restless.

“Do you mind if I go and explore?”

Pwah stacked the plates without looking up. “Go and explore. But stay on the tracks.” He paused, the faintest smile tugging at his mouth. “You may run into bears.”

Her eyes widened. “Bears?”

“This is their home too. Respect their space and they’ll respect yours.”

She wasn’t sure if he was joking. Half laughing, half unnerved, she tugged her sweater tighter and stepped out onto the porch.

The path led her past cedar posts darkened with age. Dew clung to the grass, soaking her ankles. High above, the trees stood quiet and tall, their crowns shifting gently in the breeze.

The track sloped down to the water’s edge. Mist curled off the surface in ribbons, the lake as still as glass. She crouched and dipped her fingers in. The cold bit sharply, but she didn’t pull away. She lingered, watching the ripples spread.

The ground was littered with pine cones. She had been walking over them without really noticing. On impulse, she bent and picked one up.

The spirals revealed themselves — folding, repeating, perfect. A pattern hidden in plain sight. Her chest tightened. It had always been here. She had just never stopped long enough to see it.

She lifted it to her nose. The cedar-sweet aroma filled her lungs — sharp, clean, alive. Nothing like the acrid haze of her father’s early mornings. This was different. This felt like safety. A place where she didn’t need any armour.

An ant emerged from between the scales and hurried down her fingers, followed by several more. It was as though the world had slid under a microscope. Each movement of their tiny legs was magnified — precise, deliberate, antennae testing the air like finely tuned instruments. She had seen ants all her life, background noise scurrying on sidewalks. But now — every detail was magnified.

One by one, she brushed them gently onto the path.

She closed her hand around the pine cone, pressed it to her chest, then slowly let it fall to the ground at the edge of the track.

The lake shimmered before her, light striking the surface until it burned silver.

Merri lingered at the lake a moment longer, the silver light playing across the water, then turned

back toward the path. The pine cone lay where she had dropped it, resin glistening in the sun, ants busily reclaiming their hidden chambers. She smiled faintly and left it there, stepping lightly through the dew-wet grass.

When she reached the cabin, she heard the rhythmic thud of a hammer before she saw him. Pwah was on the porch, sleeves rolled, tightening loose boards and oiling the hinges. His movements were steady, economical, each one carrying the same precision she had seen at breakfast.

Merri leaned against the rail, watching him. There was something mesmerizing about it — the way his hands worked with wood and metal, strong but never harsh, coaxing order back into the bones of the place. Her father had broken things; Pwah restored them. That difference struck her now with an ache she could hardly name.

Pwah looked up. His eyes softened.

“How was your exploration?”

“Different,” she said, the corners of her mouth curving. “I saw things I’d never noticed before.”

“Did you see any bears?” he asked, deadpan.

She laughed, shaking her head. “Not today.”

Pwah smiled faintly and went back to his work, the hammer striking with a steady rhythm.

Merri tilted her head, studying him. The lake shimmered behind her, cool and inviting. A wildness stirred in her chest, sudden and certain. She straightened.

She went inside and reappeared on the porch, towels tucked under one arm. Setting them on the rail, she stretched, eyes glinting with mischief.

“I’m going for a swim,” she announced.

Pwah glanced up from tightening the hinge, his expression unreadable but his tone light.

“Did you bring a costume?”

She laughed. “Of course not. You’ve already seen my birthday suit. I don’t think there’s anything left you haven’t seen.”

For the first time all morning, his composure cracked into a low chuckle. He shook his head slightly, returning to his work as though nothing could disturb his rhythm.

“The water will be cold this time of year. Do you want me to light a fire for after?”

“That is thoughtful,” Merri replied, her voice sincere. “Yes, I would like that.”

Without looking up, Pwah’s mouth curved into that half-smile.

“Consider it done.”

Midday — The Swim

Merri dropped the towels at the shoreline and stepped forward. The bank was littered with round pebbles with no way around them. She winced with every step.

The lake water felt alive — nothing like the dead stillness of the swimming pools she had known. Chlorine and tiles had only ever masked water’s truth, sterilised it into silence. But here, the lake pushed against her skin with memory, with presence. This was not a place to play. It was a place

that demanded surrender.

A shiver ran through her legs as her toes broke the surface, her muscles tightening in protest.

She took another step. The water climbed up to her calves. Another. bit at her thighs. Her whole body shuddered; she clenched her jaw tightly.

It's too late to turn back now, she thought, pressing forward until the water gripped her ribs and her chest convulsed with the shock.

Then came the agonising choice. She stood there shivering, breath ragged, heart racing, teeth chattering.

She closed her eyes, took a deep breath — and everything went serenely quiet.

The cold engulfed her so completely it was like stepping into another world. Her lungs seized, her heart hammered against her ribs. But it was not just shock. It was like a cleansing. The lake coursed through her veins, alive, stripping away every residue of fear.

She broke the surface with a cry that spilled into laughter, hair streaming across her face. Water cascaded from her shoulders as she spun slowly, catching her breath.

Above the trees the cabin loomed, smoke curling from its chimney. On the roof, Pwah was working — sleeves rolled, hammer in hand, his movements steady and sure.

Merri knew: this had been an initiation, the fire of revelation, followed by the re-birth. The fragments of the last few days settled into place. For the first time, in a long time, she felt whole.

She hugged the towel tighter, trembling, her legs unsteady on the stones. She was not the woman who had walked into the lake — that much was certain.

A monarch butterfly fluttered past, its wings catching the light — A quote came from somewhere deep in her subconscious.

“There is a stage in metamorphosis when neither the caterpillar nor the butterfly can be said to exist. The dissolution of the former self is so thorough, that not one single stone remains standing in its original place. And yet, death could not touch the Caterpillar, even when it was broken in pieces.”

She was beginning to see that metamorphoses is not often pleasant, but what emerges is always better than what came before. The wind cut sharp against her wet skin. Merri clutched the towel tighter and hurried up the slope, feet slipping on the pebbles, her body shaking uncontrollably.

The warmth hit her at once. Pwah had the fire going strong, flames leaping behind the glass. He looked up from the hearth as she stumbled in, dripping, hair plastered to her face.

“Cold?” he asked, his voice calm but carrying a trace of amusement.

“Freezing,” she admitted, teeth chattering as she crouched close to the stove.

Merri held her hands out to the heat, feeling the sting of her skin give way to tingling warmth. She glanced back at him. “Thank you... for the fire.”

“You are welcome,” he replied simply, settling back on his heels.

They sat in companionable silence for a few moments, watching the flames. The tension of the last few days — the storm, the visions, the collapse inside her — felt a little less jagged now.

Merri broke the quiet first. “We should take advantage of the sun while it lasts. Maybe have a picnic by the lake?”

Pwah’s eyes softened, the faintest smile curving his lips. “That sounds like a great plan.”

Evening — Sunset by the Lake

By noon the sun was warm, scattering the morning mist and laying soft light across the lake. Merri spread the blanket on the grass while Pwah carried down a basket with bread, fruit, and cheese.

They ate slowly, watching the water.

A kingfisher darted low across the surface, its wings catching the sun, and came to rest on a branch just in front of them.

“Look,” Merri whispered.

“I see it,” Pwah replied.

“I’ve never seen one this close before,” she said excitedly. “The colours are so vivid, they don’t even look real.”

Pwah nodded. “That’s because they aren’t — not in the way you think. It isn’t pigment. The blue comes from structure — the way the feathers bend light. It’s the same with the Blue Morpho butterfly. The molecular structure of the wing subtracts yellow frequencies from the visible light spectrum.

Merri tilted her head, watching as the bird shifted, its feathers flashing electric, then dull, then blazing again.

“So the colour isn’t really there,” she murmured. “It’s an illusion.”

“In a way, yes, maybe revelation is a better word,” Pwah corrected gently. “Nature shows you what it wants you to see. If you want to know more, you must train yourself to look below the surface. It is the nature of sight, that the eye sees only what it wants to see, and disregards the rest.”

Merri’s breath caught. She thought of the pine cone spirals, the ants moving like clockwork, the shock of the living lake against her skin. Her eyes softened, fixed on the kingfisher’s impossible shimmer.

“Then maybe it’s the same with people,” she said quietly. “Most of what matters... isn’t on the surface.”

Pwah’s smile was faint, but it reached his eyes. “Exactly.”

They sat together on the blanket, the basket open between them, the lake gleaming silver in the sun. Her life had taught her one thing about love: that it was a battlefield. Every relationship had been a clash of wills, a contest of needs, a war that left her armour thicker each time. A wounded woman never removes her armour in the middle of battle. And because battle was all she had ever known, she could not recall ever having taken it off.

But watching Pwah now, she saw something she had never seen before. He did not fight to prove himself. He did not need to impress to win or claim or conquer. He simply sat in the being and his presence took care of the rest — steady, certain, unthreatened.

And somehow, in that stillness, the battle ended without a fight.

She studied the way he broke bread, the way he ate slowly, deliberately, as if even this was part of the rhythm.

She looked out over the water, whispering almost to herself: "Love is not a battlefield. The absence of it is."

Pwah glanced at her, his eyes calm, and nodded once. Nothing more. He didn't need to.

And that silence carried more weight than words ever could.

She looked out over the lake again, her voice quieter now.

"I think I'm starting to understand. Love isn't... something you get from someone. It's what holds everything together when nothing else can."

Pwah didn't answer at once. He tore another piece of bread and offered it to her. Only when she took it did he speak.

"Exactly. Love doesn't own. It simply is."

The words settled into her like the warmth of the sun, steady and sure.

For a long time they sat together in silence, the picnic spread between them, the lake shimmering in front of them, the world remaking itself inside her chest.

By late afternoon the light had turned honey-gold. Forest shadows stretched long across the clearing. They carried a blanket down to the rocks at the shoreline, bread and fruit left from lunch.

The lake mirrored the sky, the surface painted in copper and rose. Even the air seemed to hold its breath.

Merri drew her knees to her chest, chin resting on her arms.

"It doesn't feel fair," she said quietly. "The world's coming apart, and here we are... sitting in a painting."

Pwah leaned back on his elbows, gaze fixed on the horizon.

"It is a work of art," he said, "but so few appreciate the true artist."

She drew in a shaky breath. "It's strange," she said softly, not sure if she was speaking to herself or to Pwah. "I've been fighting so hard to hold on to things — to memories, to pain, even to the anger. Last night... it felt like I let it all go."

"Coherence doesn't mean nothing touches you," he said finally. "It means when the storm comes, it won't drown you."

Back in the cabin, the attaché waited on the table inside. The hum of the Tablet was absent, yet Merri swore the tone lingered, carried somehow in the night air.

By the time they left the shoreline, the lake was a sheet of silver under the stars. The path wound through darkening trees, the cabin lantern glowing faintly ahead.

Merri wrapped her arms around herself, the warmth of the day still clinging to her skin, but underneath it a prickle of unease had returned. She whispered, half to herself:

"I wish it could stay like this."

"It won't," Pwah said quietly. His voice was not unkind. Just certain.

The porch creaked under their weight. Pwah unlocked the door, pushing it open. The air inside smelled the same as always — woodsmoke, old varnish, herbs hanging from the rafters. But something in the air was different.

The moment they stepped inside, the air shifted.

“Can you feel that?” Merri whispered.

“Yes.” Pwah’s eyes swept the room. “Turn on the TV. I’ll get a fire going.”

He moved with quiet purpose, scrunching old paper into balls, laying kindling across them in a small teepee — a task he had done countless times as a boy, hands remembering what his mind didn’t need to.

Merri rummaged for the remote, her fingers clumsy with nerves.

Pwah struck a match. The sulphur flared sharp in his nose. A second later the flames licked upward, eager, the fire leaping to life as though it had been waiting. He shut the glass door, slid the air vent closed, and the glow steadied into a controlled burn.

Behind him, the television flickered.

The screen lit the room in cold blue.

Merri gasped. “Oh my God...”

Chapter Ten – The Broadcast

The fire glowed steady behind its glass. The television flickered and then locked into a single channel. No remote could change it. No hand could turn it off.

A voice filled the cabin — deep, resonant, impossible to ignore.

“People of the earth. The veil has been lifted. Tonight you will see what has been hidden from you for centuries.”

The screen blazed white, then filled with images — ledgers, treaties, contracts older than any living generation. Each stamped with seals of monarchies, banks, churches, secret councils.

“For centuries they told you debt was natural. That scarcity was real. That suffering was proof of your weakness. But every ledger tells a different story. Your names, your families, your lands — signed away as collateral to a bloodline of thieves.”

Grainy footage played of men in robes shaking hands, of oil magnates beside generals, of priests blessing cannons before they fired.

“They inverted every law of life. They called control order. They called theft progress. They called slavery freedom. And you believed them — because the field was bent, and your resonance broken.”

The images changed — Nikola Tesla at Wardenclyffe, Walter Russell with his spiral charts, Royal Rife peering into his microscope.

“They silenced every voice that offered coherence. Tesla’s towers — dismantled. Russell’s spiral table — erased. Rife’s cure — outlawed. They didn’t fear madness. They feared clarity.”

Merri gripped the arm of the chair, her breath sharp. “They’re showing everything...”

The voice rose, fierce with momentum:

“They poisoned the oceans, not because they had to, but because hydrogen cannot be owned. They poisoned the food, not because it failed, but because living seed cannot be owned. They poisoned your faith, stamping their hinge into every Bible, branding the Word of God as their property. And

you prayed to them as though they were holy.”

The screen cut to famine lines, bombed villages, children in sweatshops stitching flags.

“They wrote contracts with ink, but enforced them with blood. Your wars, your recessions, your plagues — not accidents, but orchestration. Every collapse a harvest. Every death a dividend. Every lie a leash.”

The fire flared, its reflection dancing across the muslin-wrapped attaché on the table.

The voice thundered:

“The empire is finished. All its contracts are void. The final seal is broken.

The screen pulsed green — the same emerald fire Merri had seen in her vision. Glyphs flashed across the broadcast:

RETURN TO COHERENCE.

Merri staggered back, her hands trembling. “It’s the Tablet. It’s speaking to the whole world.”

“Yes,” Pwah said, his eyes never leaving the screen. His voice was calm, but his chest rose with the weight of the moment. “This is the end of distortion, and the beginning - of the reckoning.”

The broadcast shifted again, showing faces — presidents, popes, bankers, media moguls. Each one overlaid with their crimes: false wars, fabricated debts, silenced cures, stolen generations.

“For every empire there is an end,” the voice said, now quiet but unstoppable. “This one ends tonight. Not by blood. Not by bombs. But by truth. And once truth is spoken, it cannot be extracted from the field.”

The fire roared as if in agreement.

The television’s glow filled the cabin, green and gold, as though the signal itself was alive.

Merri pressed her hands to her face, tears slipping between her fingers. The old world was falling apart in real-time, and she was watching it burn.

Chapter Eleven — Pwah~Mageddon

The fire breathed steady behind its glass, but Merri’s eyes kept drifting to the attaché on the table. The muslin wrap shifted faintly with each pulse, as though the thing inside was alive, breathing.

“They are going to come looking for us,” she whispered, her voice tight.

Pwah’s gaze followed hers, his face unreadable. “The Tablet is the reason we are here. And when they come, they will take us with it. We are only the witnesses.”

“Who will come?”

“Military, probably,” Pwah said, not the least concerned by the prospect.

The television blazed with contracts and ledgers, the words Return to Coherence shimmering across the bottom of the screen. Merri’s stomach turned. She had seen those glyphs before — not on glass, but on emerald, burning green across the Tablet’s surface. Now the whole world was seeing what had once been hers alone.

Her voice shook. “How long before they trace this?”

“They already have,” Pwah said calmly. “Every broadcast leaves a footprint. They’ll have triangulated the epicentre within seconds — three towers, three points, and they’ll have a fix on this cabin. A team will already be on their way.”

Merri hugged the towel tighter around her shoulders, suddenly cold again. “So what do we do when they get here?”

Pwah’s expression didn’t change. “Nothing.”

She stared at him. “You’re saying... we just hand it over?”

“The Tablet cannot be owned, by anyone,” he replied. “But they do not know this yet.”

Merri looked back at the attaché. The muslin glowed faintly now, pulsing like a heartbeat. She remembered the lake swallowing her, the cold undoing her until nothing of her old self remained. If the Tablet could do that to her, what would it do to them and the world at large? She dreaded to think.

The hum deepened, filling the room until it seemed the walls themselves were resonating. On the television, documents scrolled, seals and ledgers unraveling across every screen in the world.

And far beyond the cabin, people everywhere were beginning to listen.

Chapter Twelve: The Butterfly Effect

“When a complex system is far from equilibrium, a single island of coherence can shift the entire world into a higher octave.”

In physics, the butterfly effect is idea that in a nonlinear system, the smallest of changes in the starting conditions can lead to vast and unpredictable differences in outcome.

Edward Lorenz, working with weather simulations in the 1960s, was the first to notice it. A single rounding error in his calculations— produced forecasts that diverged so completely, it was as though they came from an entirely different world model.

The metaphor followed quickly: a butterfly flapping its wings in Brazil could, in principle, shift the air currents in such a way that it altered the trajectory of a tornado in Texas. A wingbeat on one side of the world could redirect storms on the other.

The lesson was simple: in sensitive systems, nothing is too small. Every vibration matters.

But there is a deeper truth — one Lorenz glimpsed but never spoke aloud. In living systems, the butterfly effect is not only sensitivity to chaos; it is sensitivity to coherence. A single tone maintained at the right frequency, for an extended period of time, can bring an entire field back into a state of harmony.

What Merri had once witnessed in private was now being seen by the entire world. Every screen, every channel, every device carried the same message: **Return to Coherence.**

It looked like a command, but to Merri it felt different — not a general ordering troops to charge into no man’s land, but a parent drawing a child gently away from the fire.

And, as with Lorenz’s equations, the divergence began immediately.

The Ripple-Effect

In **Manila**, a grandmother froze the broadcast on a page authorising the seizure of a monastery bell “to prevent public agitation.” She traced the seal with her finger, remembering the vibration of that bell in her chest when she was a child. She whispered to her grandchildren: “They silenced it because it spoke the truth.”

In **Warsaw**, a police archivist pinned a transfer ledger to the break-room wall. Columns of numbers marched across it like soldiers. Beneath, someone scrawled: Gold never disappears. It moves. His colleagues stood in silence, each one knowing what those numbers meant.

In **Accra**, engineering students huddled around a laptop, replaying a frame of bell schematics that had flickered by too fast. On the chalkboard they traced overtone ladders and resonance curves, chalk dust clinging to their sleeves. “The true frequency is A432Hz and it resolves in G,” one whispered. The others nodded. They weren’t just looking at geometry anymore — they were looking at a scale that could tune the world.

In **Buenos Aires**, a violin maker adjusted his strings and struck A=432. The note rang clear, and the room seemed to breathe with it. He tuned the instrument down step by step until the open string sat in G, then plucked again. This time the air shimmered. “It was always here,” he murmured. “We just forgot what it sounded like.” On the wall, he wrote 666 Hz in chalk, and beneath it, 999 Hz — the crown interval, the perfect fifth.

In **Kyoto**, monks rang a temple bell at dusk. Its overtone ladder settled naturally into G. The tone rolled down the streets, pulling breath and heartbeat into rhythm. Pedestrians stopped, eyes wide, some with tears, though none could say why.

In **Detroit**, a retired machinist unrolled blueprints stamped classified. Plans he had drafted for a hydrogen powered car. Date stamped November 1961. They didn't want to know about sonolysis back then. “I knew it was all built on G,” but they didn't want to know he whispered. “Every ladder, every chamber. I had the key to unlimited clean energy, and they buried it.”

In **Nairobi**, a schoolteacher pinned a photocopied sentence to her classroom wall: **They lied about everything**. Her students had seen the broadcast. Most already knew that the system could not be trusted,

In **Cairo**, priests and imams sat together under the hinge now projected on their walls. “We were all deceived,” one admitted. Another simply nodded, tears in his beard.

In **Berlin**, a government minister resigned live on television. Behind him, the words **Return to Coherence** pulsed on every channel.

In **London**, a soldier laid his rifle on the floor. “I'm not fighting to protect these scumbags” he said. Around him, the barracks fell quiet.

The word conspiracy evaporated. Evidence pinned itself across the world — taped to kitchen fridges, nailed to church doors, pasted onto billboards.

Markets convulsed. Governments called emergency sessions. But in the streets, in temples and workshops, something deeper stirred. Bells rang again. Strings were retuned. Contracts burned.

The false A=440 world had been an empire of distortion. Now the resonance of G and A=432 re-emerged as the true foundation — not just of music, but of life itself.

The butterfly's wingbeat was not chaos. It was coherence — a single tone rippling outward, drawing everything back into key.

The connection was unmistakable.

The First War silenced the bells.

The Second burned the archives.

And when the ashes settled, the world was retuned.

A false frequency imposed, coherence replaced with distortion. Humanity itself detuned.

Every war had been a reset. Not to free nations, but to bury the truth.

Chapter Thirteen – The Extraction Squad

The fire breathed steady. The television still pulsed with fragments of documents, seals, and ledgers, but Merri barely saw them anymore. The sound of the world collapsing outside their walls had become almost abstract.

Her eyes were fixed on the attaché, the hum filling the cabin like a second heartbeat.

“Do you hear that?” she whispered.

The low drone of a Chinook rumbled through the valley, growing heavier with each passing second.

“They’re coming.”

Pwah didn't look away from the flames. “Yes. But we knew they would.”

“Are you not even a little bit scared?” Merri's chest tightened, her voice trembling.

“No.” It wasn't bravado. It was self-assurance — the kind you couldn't buy, and you couldn't manipulate.

Panic At The Pentagon

The operations floor hummed with restrained urgency. Screens glowed, lines of telemetry converging on a single point in the forest: a small cabin buried in the trees.

General Marcus Ellery stood at the head of the room, five stars gleaming beneath the fluorescents. His eyes were locked on the situation board, where every feed still burned with the words: **Return to Coherence**.

“Target confirmed,” an officer reported. “Extraction team inbound. ETA five minutes.”

Ellery's jaw tightened. “The priority is the artifact,” he said flatly. “Interrogate whoever is on site. If there is resistance, you are authorised to use lethal force. Is that clear, Captain?”

A silence hung across the room. No one moved.

“Yes, sir,” came the reply.

Ellery clasped his hands behind his back, his gaze never leaving the screens.

“Retrieve it intact,” he said coldly. “At any cost.”

At The Cabin

The fire breathed steady, but the hum of the attaché had grown heavier, filling the cabin like a heartbeat that belonged to neither of them.

Merri froze. The drone of rotor blades was no longer faint — it pressed against the valley, rattling

the glass in the windowpanes.

“They’re almost here,” she whispered, clutching the towel tighter around her shoulders.

“You’d better get dressed,” Pwah said. His gaze never left the flames, as though the fire itself steadied him.

““Yes,” Merri breathed. She moved quickly, pulling on her clothes with trembling hands, the floor vibrating beneath her feet as the Chinook swept lower.

Merri’s voice cracked. “What are you supposed to do in these circumstances, just sit here by the fire?” Merri asked exasperated by Pwah’s complete calm.

Through the trees, the first glint of light swept across the cabin wall — the search beam of the approaching chopper.

The hum from the attaché deepened, pulsing in time with the rotors.

And outside, the forest began to shake.

Cutaway — Inside the Chinook

The cabin of the Chinook was deafeningly loud, Red lights washed over the soldiers strapped along the benches, their helmets gleaming, weapons braced between their knees.

No one spoke. Each man’s eyes stayed fixed forward.

At the front, the team leader leaned toward the crew chief, voice cutting through the comms.

“ETA ninety seconds. Orders are clear — secure the site, retrieve the asset intact. If anyone resists, shoot them” Copy?”

“Copy that,” the crew chief replied, tightening the harness straps across his chest.

One of the younger soldiers glanced toward the open ramp at the rear. Through it, he could see the lake below — silver-black under the moon, now fractured into shards by the downdraft of the rotors. The Chinook’s reflection split and scattered across the water, a machine painted in broken light.

The team leader caught the boy’s gaze, then barked over the comm:

“Eyes in. The only thing that matters tonight is retrieving whatever is in that cabin.”

The men clipped magazines into place, and flicked the night vision goggles into active mode.

The Chinook dropped lower, the trees rushing up to meet them.

The roar outside became unbearable. Dust fell from between the rafters, the floorboards trembling under Merri’s feet.

The Chinook hovered by the shore sending clouds of debris into the air. Then came the thud of boots on earth. Shouted commands. The crunch of branches snapping under heavy gear.

“They’re here,” she breathed.

Pwah’s gaze never left the fire.

The first blow shook the door on its hinges. A second splintered the frame.

The door burst inward with a crash of wood and metal. Armed men flooded the room, night-vision

goggles glowing, rifles raised, shouting over each other.

Merri's whole body shook. She stumbled toward Pwah and wrapped her arms around him, clinging as though the stillness in him might shield her from the storm.

Pwah did not move. His gaze stayed steady on the fire, his hands open and empty at his sides.

The soldiers fanned out, sweeping each room with rifles raised, searching for something threatening.

The cabin was bare — except for an attaché case on a cabinet, wrapped in muslin.

“Command, this is Raven One,” the team leader spoke into his headset, his voice clipped, uneasy. “We have secured the location, but there is nothing here. Just a man and a woman. No military equipment. No weapons. Nothing.”

Static hissed. Then General Ellery's voice came through, low and hard.

“Whatever caused this has to be there. Tear the place apart until you find it. And bring whoever is there back for interrogation.”

The team leader's jaw tightened. He gestured sharply. Two soldiers closed in and seized Merri by the arm. She cried out, clinging tighter to Pwah.

Pwah didn't resist. He didn't move at all. His eyes stayed calm, his voice level.

“What you're looking for,” he said, nodding toward the table, “is over there.”

Every rifle swung toward the attaché. The muslin wrap glowed faintly, the hum deepening, vibrating through the floorboards.

For a long moment, no one spoke.

The soldiers froze, rifles trained on the muslin-wrapped case.

“Open it,” the team leader barked at the soldier nearest to it.

The soldiers' gloves brushed the edge of the fabric. The hum intensified, rattling the glass in the stove, shaking dust from the rafters. The soldier swore under his breath and snatched his hand back as though he had touched a high voltage cable.

“What the hell?”

“Again,” the leader ordered.

“But sir, there is some kind of energetic field around it, it won't let me.”

Another soldier reached for the case, but as his fingers came within inches of it, the air seemed to thicken. His body seized. The hum rose into his chest, into his skull, until his knees buckled. He staggered back, ripping off his gloves, gasping.

“What is in there?” the officer demanded to know.

Pwah finally turned from the fire. His eyes were calm, his voice steady. “Coherence” He replied curtly.

Co her ants , what is that? The soldier demanded a response

“You cannot own it. It will not yield to force.”

The soldiers stood frozen, rifles wavering between the attaché and the man by the fire.

The leader's jaw tightened. "Cut it open," he barked.

A soldier dropped his pack, fumbling for a knife. He pressed forward, blade raised, but the air thickened again. The hum rose into a shrill vibration, driving straight through his skull. He cried out, clutching his head, and collapsed against the wall.

The others stepped back instinctively. Fear flickered in their eyes.

The officer rounded on Pwah, fury in his voice. "What is this? What's in that case?"

Pwah rose slowly from his chair. Merri clung to his arm, her breath sharp in her throat.

He stepped toward the table. The hum shifted instantly, no longer resisting but softening, as though recognising him. Each pulse slowed into a rhythm that matched his pace.

The soldiers stared, transfixed, their rifles forgotten at their sides.

Pwah unfolded the muslin slowly, until the attaches case was visible.

"Open it" The Officer barked

The soldiers tensed themselves as if expecting an explosion, but all they heard was the clicking of twocatches, First left, then right.

The lid squeaked open and there it was. A perfectly machined slab of what appeared to be Emerald.

"That's it" the Officer shouted, "you better start coming up with some answers and fast. What is your name?"

"Pwah" he said simply.

Light burst upward — not harsh, but alive. Green fire licked the air, glyphs unfolding in fluid patterns, spilling across the walls and the soldiers' faces. The cabin trembled with a resonance that sank into bone and marrow.

The green light danced across the soldiers' faces, painting every line of fear and awe. No one moved. The resonance pressed into their bones, sinking deeper with every pulse.

All eyes turned back to Pwah — the only one standing calm in the glow.

"Command, this is Raven One. We've found the source. It's... an Emerald tablet. No one can get near it except the male subject. Requesting immediate guidance."

"Are there any engravings on the tablet" The General demanded

"Nothing sir" the officer replied, "its completely smooth, no obvious signs of any type of interface. It seems to be communicating directly by telepathic means.

Static hissed, then General Ellery's voice came back, cold and clipped.

The soldiers surrounded Pwah and Merri, rifles lowered now but still taut in their hands. None dared touch the attaché. Only Pwah carried it, the muslin folded neatly back in place, the hum subdued but never gone.

"Move out," the officer barked.

Merri clung to Pwah's arm as they were ushered out into the night. The Chinook's rotors thundered overhead, its searchlights tearing across the lake. The same waters that had once held her in baptism now fractured under the storm of rotating chopper blades and moonlight.

They were hustled up the ramp, the soldiers taking their seats in silence. The red cabin lights washed across their faces, every one of them studiously avoiding Pwah's gaze. He sat calm, the case at his feet, Merri pressed beside him.

No one spoke the entire flight back.

Chapter Fourteen – The Interrogation

The operations room at Langley was a hive of controlled tension. Screens tracked the Chinook's approach. Security details lined the corridors. The atmosphere smelled of ozone, coffee, and fear.

General Ellery waited in the debrief chamber, hands clasped behind his back.

The doors opened. Soldiers filed in with Pwah and Merri between them. The attaché hung at Pwah's side as though it belonged there.

Ellery's eyes narrowed. He had seen powerful men brought low, but never seen soldiers so visibly unsettled. He dismissed them with a curt gesture.

"Sit," he ordered.

Merri sank into the chair opposite him, her hands trembling. Pwah remained standing, steady as a rock, the case still in his grip.

Ellery's jaw tightened. "You have a lot of explaining to do, whoever you are. What is your name?" The general demanded to know who he was dealing with.

"Pwah"

"Stihl - Pwah."

"What is your connection to this tablet?. How did it come to be in your possession, and who or what is controlling this thing?" The general was unusually vexed at not being able to instil fear into someone or something, he wasn't quite sure who, or what he was up against. But in battle, the General had never been defeated. This may be turn out to be his Alamo.

Ellery's knuckles whitened on the table. "We have terabytes of data pouring in from this broadcast. Every ledger, every contract, every hidden vault. But none of it explains this." He jabbed a finger toward the humming attaché. "What is its purpose? What is the endgame? What are we supposed to do with a world collapsing around us?"

Pwah set the case gently on the table, the hum steady beneath his hand. His voice was calm, almost quiet, yet it carried across the room.

"You cannot understand coherence by dissecting distortion. The field is collapsing because it was built on lies. What you have seen — the archives, the gold, the stolen seeds, the false tuning — these are the symptoms. But the cause lay much deeper."

Ellery scowled, his fist slamming the table. "Speak plainly, dammit. No more riddles."

Pwah's eyes lifted to meet his, steady and unblinking.

"The Earth's field is collapsing. All your scientific data confirms it — you've seen the geomagnetic drift, the weakening poles, the rising incoherence. But you have no plan to restore the field, do you?"

Ellery's silence was answer enough.

"The Tablet carries the solution," Pwah continued, his voice even. "But it will not bow to you. It requires something you cannot command — international cooperation at the highest level. Without it, the collapse will continue accelerating. With it, there is a chance to recover."

Merri felt her throat tighten. She had heard fragments of this in visions, but never so plain, never so stark.

Ellery leaned forward, eyes narrowing. "And what exactly is this 'solution'?"

Pwah placed his hand gently on the case. The hum answered, low and resonant, filling the chamber like a heartbeat.

"Nine Bells," he said. His voice carried steady, unflinching. "But only eight are physical. The ninth bell is born of the other eight. Nine resonances that draw the field back into coherence. When you strike them in sequence, they will induce a harmonic stabilising field — self-perpetuating, once set in motion."

Ellery snapped upright, his voice sharp. "You mean it never shuts off?"

"Yes," Pwah replied simply.

Ellery's face darkened. His jaw worked, the muscles tight. "Self-perpetuating?" he repeated, the word like acid in his mouth.

"Yes," Pwah said again, his tone even, absolute.

For a long moment, the only sound was the steady hum from the case.

Ellery sat back slowly. He had never lost a battlefield, never faced an enemy he could not break with force or fear. But this — this was different. A solution that could not be switched off. A field that would not bow to any commander or king.

"This is no longer a debrief," he said finally, his voice cold as steel. He turned to his aide.

"Tomorrow. Convene a full council. I want the Joint Chiefs, the science directors, political heads — everyone with skin in the game. If this... plan exists, I want to hear it laid out in full."

His gaze cut back to Pwah. "And understand this: tomorrow you will give us everything. Frequencies. Sequence. Locations. No mysticism. No riddles. If the fate of the world rests on these bells, then the people who run this world will decide how they're used."

The hum from the case pulsed once, deeper than before, vibrating through the table.

Pwah did not flinch. "The bells cannot be used, General. They can only be struck."

Ellery's eyes hardened, but he said nothing.

The session was over. Tomorrow would decide everything.

Chapter Fifteen – The Debrief

It's not often that a debrief chamber was as full as this, but word of the Emerald tablet had spread quickly. Brass sat lined up on one side, lab coats on the other, a ragged line of elected faces between them—their eyes all bloodshot, The hum from the case on the table threaded the room together like a second current. Ellery's palm pressed the tabletop once, twice.

"You have the floor," General Ellery said.

Pwah rested his hand lightly on the attaché. The tone settled. He did not pace. He did not raise his voice. When he spoke, it was the cadence of someone reading a record already written.

“Let us start with what no one here can dispute,” he said. “Your instruments already show the field is decaying. Geomagnetic drift is accelerating. Regional anomalies are increasing. Animal migration patterns are collapsing. You have modelled all of it. But you don't have a solution, do you?”

Murmuring erupted. Many scientists stared down at their shoes, some of them knew they had been part of a cover-up.

“You have seen the broadcast,” Pwah continued. “The archives, the ledgers, the orders. The detuning of music to A=440. The silencing of bells. The patenting of seed. These were not accidents; they were agendas—For too long the world has been dominated by a tribe that has drifted far away from the truth.”

“Coherence is the column that everything rotates around. The further you drift from the centre the worse life gets. The closer you get to the column, the better life gets. The only way to stabilise the field that is this far from the centre is by letting eight bells speak their truth. The field will respond to it. This is not belief, its physics.”

“You want plain words,” he said softly. “I will give them to you.

Every lie you were raised on — every inversion — was by design. They inverted natural law to weaken the field, to keep you dependent on distortion, and to keep the resonance of life under their control. They flipped clockwise into counterclockwise, coherence into incoherence, abundance into scarcity. Freedom into slavery.

The truth is simple: The field is failing because it has been forced to spin backwards. You see it in your own data: atomic drift, climate anomalies, misfolded proteins, erratic geomagnetic bands. Lies cannot stabilize that field. Only truth can.”

A scientist in the front row shifted uneasily. “You speak of truth as if it were measurable.”

“It is measurable,” Pwah said. “Look at your own quantum data. Electron tunnelling: a particle passes through a barrier without force. You say it is a curiosity. When in truth it is harmonic resonance. When vibration aligns with the field, barriers dissolve. The particle does not smash through. It dances through. That is coherence revealed at the smallest scale.”

He let the words sink in, then raised his hand toward the projection screen. “It is the same with this world. The Earth is not held together by some invisible hand of gravity, but by coherence in density. Matter arranges, vibration flows, coherence holds. That is the law. Break coherence, and your bridges crack, your medicines fail, your history collapses into war. Restore coherence, and even the oceans will sing back to you.”

The hall was utterly still.

“Every war you fought was staged to bury truth,” he went on. “The First war silenced the old bells. The Second burned the archives. And when the smoke cleared, the world was tuned to a false scale of A=440.

“Why would anyone purposefully try and distort the field, if there was a risk of it collapsing?” The General enquired.

“Why did you invent rockets, or submarines? Humans are naturally inquisitive. But when your ambition exceeds your intelligence, then in this system things can go spectacularly wrong, and very quickly”

The General had nothing to add.

Pwah continued. “The Nine Bells are not myth. They are physics. Eight cast from gold, bronze, and CoHerium, placed at the harmonic nodes you marked on your UN map. Their tones — crown at 999 Hz, carrier at 666 Hz — lock into the same 3:2 ratio that carbon itself carries in its electron symmetry. When struck in sequence, they restore the 9–6 cycle that has been broken since the inversion began. And when those eight ring together, the Ninth — the overtone, the crown of coherence — appears. And once it appears, you cannot switch it off.”

Ellery leaned forward, his jaw hard. “You’re telling us the world can be saved by ringing some bells.” Chuckles rippled through the audience.

Pwah’s gaze was steady. “Yes, but its not the bells that save the world, it is the combined resonance that them all, that does. The Bells are the instruments. But coherence is the law. It is the same law that lets an electron tunnel through stone. The same law that lets hydrogen split in sonolysis. The same law that will rebuild the field when all else collapses.

“Coherence cannot be bargained with, because it is the pillar around which everything rotates.”

Silence fell. Not the silence of disbelief — the silence of men and women who knew they were standing on the edge of a new world.

“You want a plan,” he said, his voice steady.

The field is failing. That is beyond dispute. Your satellites show the geomagnetic drift. You have blamed the sun, blamed carbon, blamed chance. But the truth is simpler.

You inverted resonance.

You silenced bells that anchored the field. You detuned music away from its natural register. You buried the maps that showed the lattice of nodes beneath the firmament. The field cannot hold itself in distortion. It collapses. That collapse is what you can now measure.”

He tapped the map he had unrolled across the table — the UN projection, ringed with markers.

“These nodes are harmonic anchors. The ancients placed bells there to stabilise the lattice. You melted them, hid them, called it requisition for war. The physics has not changed. Strike the bells, and the field listens. Leave them silent, and the drift accelerates.”

A physicist spoke up, voice trembling. “But bells are bronze. Even if the schematics in the broadcast are real, how could sound stabilise a geomagnetic field?”

Pwah inclined his head, patient. “Because you still imagine bells as instruments of air alone. A true bell, cast correctly, is not only heard but felt. Its overtones couple into the lattice itself. That is why every culture once hung bells at the centre of life. Not for ceremony. For coherence.”

“The casting of the bells will require Bronze and Gold in substantial volumes, yes. But most of all, it will require CoHerium. A lattice-stabilising alloy that your own labs stumbled across and locked away as classified.

You called it an ‘unworkable curiosity.’ I call it the spine of the Nine.”

Gasps rippled across the scientific benches. One of the metallurgists muttered, “He knows...”

Pwah’s eyes swept the room. “Eight bells must be forged: tuned to whole-number overtone ratios, each one anchored at the correct node. You will know the bell is ready when its overtone ladder locks without drift.

Eight struck in sequence — the ninth will be born from the womb of creation itself.”

Ellery leaned forward, his fists clenched. “The ninth bell is the one we control?”

Pwah shook his head. “No, General. The ninth is not cast by hands. It is born of harmony, a self-perpetuating stabilising field. Once present, it does not decay. Once sounded, it cannot be silenced. You saw the proof in your own tunnelling data. Electrons pass through barriers when resonance aligns. So too will the world itself pass through collapse — if the tones are struck true.”

The Tablet pulsed. Glyphs shimmered and dissolved into a single phrase: Return to Coherence.

Pwah’s gaze held the room. “This is the Nine Bells plan. Not myth. Not mysticism. Physics. Bronze, gold, CoHerium. Eight voices, one crown. Strike them into sequence, and the field will retune itself.

Fail — and you can watch it all unravel - while you and your children are trapped inside.”

Interlude: The Aftermath

At first, it sounded like the world was holding its breath.

The noise had gone — not just the martial bark of orders and engines, but the deeper hum that had been woven into every moment of life. The one most people couldn’t name but always felt, pressing against their skin.

In a café in Jakarta, a single ceiling fan ticked in the still air. The radio on the counter was tuned to the state channel, but no voices came. Just a faint hiss, like the sea in a shell.

In Warsaw, a sergeant sat behind the front desk of a precinct, pen frozen over a form. Somewhere beyond the wall, the phone was ringing. No one moved to answer it.

In São Paulo, the street outside the market was open. No checkpoint. No patrol. The shopkeepers didn’t speak of it aloud, but every few minutes one would step to the doorway, look up and down the road, and then go back to weighing onions.

The change was so complete, it felt unreal. People kept expecting the old world to slam back into place, for the noise to return, for the command to bark from somewhere above. But nothing came.

The control networks were still there — the concrete, the cameras, the uniforms. But without the orders coming from above, they were inert. Hollow.

In a New Delhi newsroom, the last order to “resume standard programming” still sat in the teleprinter, the ink smudged by an idle hand. The screen above the editor’s desk showed the Bells’ blueprint, still looping from the broadcast days ago. Nobody had turned it off.

In Nairobi, a group of teenagers gathered under a streetlight, passing a tablet between them. Each froze the broadcast at different moments — the harmonic grid, the carbon overlay, the gold alloy formula — committing them to memory like a map to a hidden treasure.

The moment of realisation came differently for everyone, but it came.

The old world was gone.

Not collapsing — gone.

In its place was a space so wide, it was hard to stand in without feeling dizzy.

It was into that space that the first calls began.

local conversations of people deciding, without permission, what came next.

And always, somewhere in the distance, the hum of the Bells — faint, patient, waiting for the rest of the sequence.

Epilogue — The Knife Edge

The chamber emptied slowly, as though no one quite trusted their legs. Papers were left behind, pens uncapped, chairs pushed back at angles. The flags on the wall hung limp, their meaning hollow.

Only the hum remained. Not loud, not insistent — just present. The field itself, reminding them all that silence was no longer possible.

Merri and Pwah were escorted out, not as prisoners, not as honoured guests, but as witnesses. The Tablet moved with them, quiet under its cloth, but every soldier’s eyes flicked toward it as if it might ignite again at any moment.

Outside the bunker, the air was different. Not calmer — never that — but wider, as if the collapse had left more space in the world than before.

Merri walked in silence, her notebook pressed tight against her chest. She could still feel her mother’s voice echoing in her ribs.

Pwah’s gaze never left the horizon. He knew what came next. The broadcast had torn the veil. The debrief had confirmed the wound. But the cure — the bells — had not yet been cast.

Eight nodes. One crown.

Nine in all.

Gold waiting in vaults. Bronze ready in furnaces. A trace of CoHerium, not yet called into being.

The pattern was there. The field was waiting. The price had been named.

But no hands had yet struck metal. No foundry had rung with the sound of the first bell.

The old world was gone. The new one had not yet begun.

For the first time in human history, the future did not belong to kings or generals or bankers. It belonged to the sound that would come when the bells were forged and set into place.

And as the convoy carried them into the uncertain dawn, the Tablet lay silent between them. Waiting. Patient. Alive.

It was only a matter of days.

Author's Note — The Nine Bells Saga

Matter of Days has told the story of collapse.

The death of the old world, the revelation of distortion enthroned, the first cry of coherence breaking into the silence.

But collapse is not the end. It is the clearing.

What comes next is the work of building.

The Tablet has spoken of the Bells — nine resonant anchors to restore the field, eight foundations crowned by a ninth above them.

Each one must be cast. Each one must be placed. Each one will demand its own sacrifice.

This is the work of the next saga: The Nine Bells.

Each book in that series will tell the story of a single Bell.

One mission. One challenge. One step closer to coherence restored.

For Merri, this will not be a passage of survival alone. It will be the forging of her life.

The broken poet of Matter of Days will rise through fire, water, mirror, and crown — tested at every step — until she stands as a leader of New Earth, a voice for the voiceless, a role model for all who carry silence and longing in their hearts.

Eight anchors. One crown.

Nine in all.

The wound has been revealed. The cure has been named.

Now begins the forging of the new.

MATTER OF DAYS

*There is no declaration of righteousness
for such tortuous acts of providence.*

*No consolation for a reticent child
suffering in the abstract world of consequence
I can relate to your pain, but in reality
suffering is beyond my comprehension.*

*Where life is concerned, in simple rhyming words
lay trivial compensation.*

*When you read this poem, think of what you lost
and do not give me praise.*

*For I come to remind you of a love
that changed forever, in just a matter of days.*

COPYRIGHT

© 2025 Taun Richards. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, without prior written permission of the author, except in the case of brief quotations used in reviews or scholarly works. First Edition 2025