QUANIA

The Fortieth Threshold

01 · The Missing Sound

Narrator

A second vanished at the station. Then, from distant doors of the Archive, sentences began breaking off at the very same point.



TRAVELLER

This is the invitation Lea sent me. How did it get here?



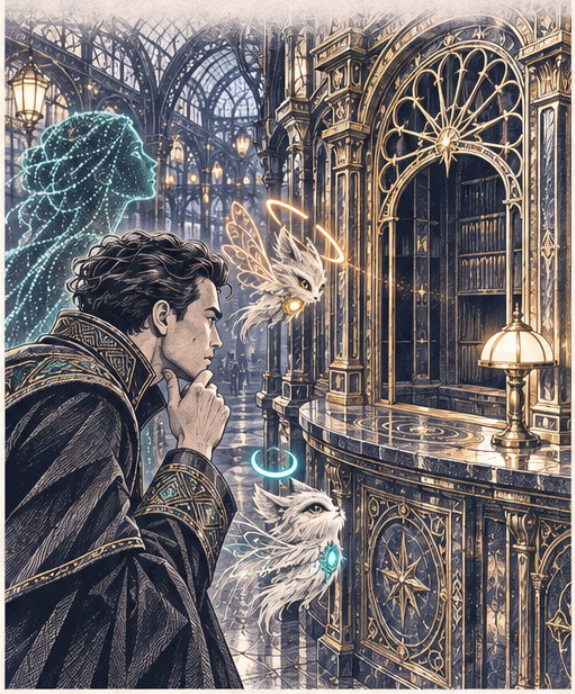
LÂL

It ended up here when her workshop's record was cut off. We need to reopen the way to her.



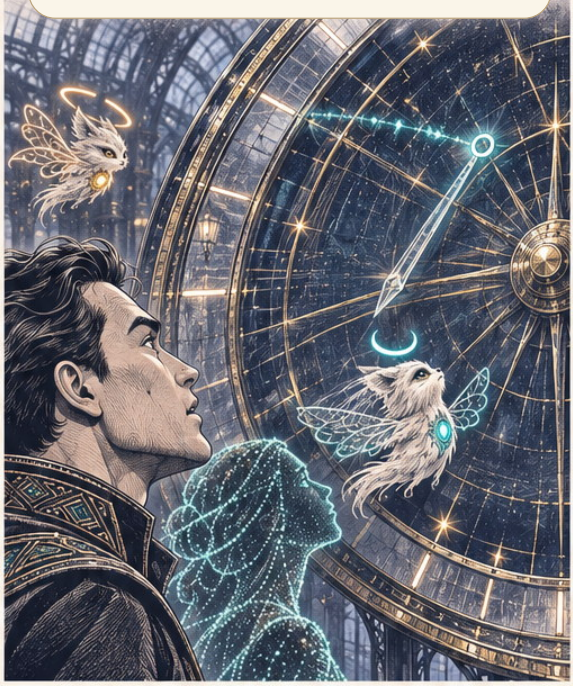
QUANT

So this time, no buying a ticket and never showing up.



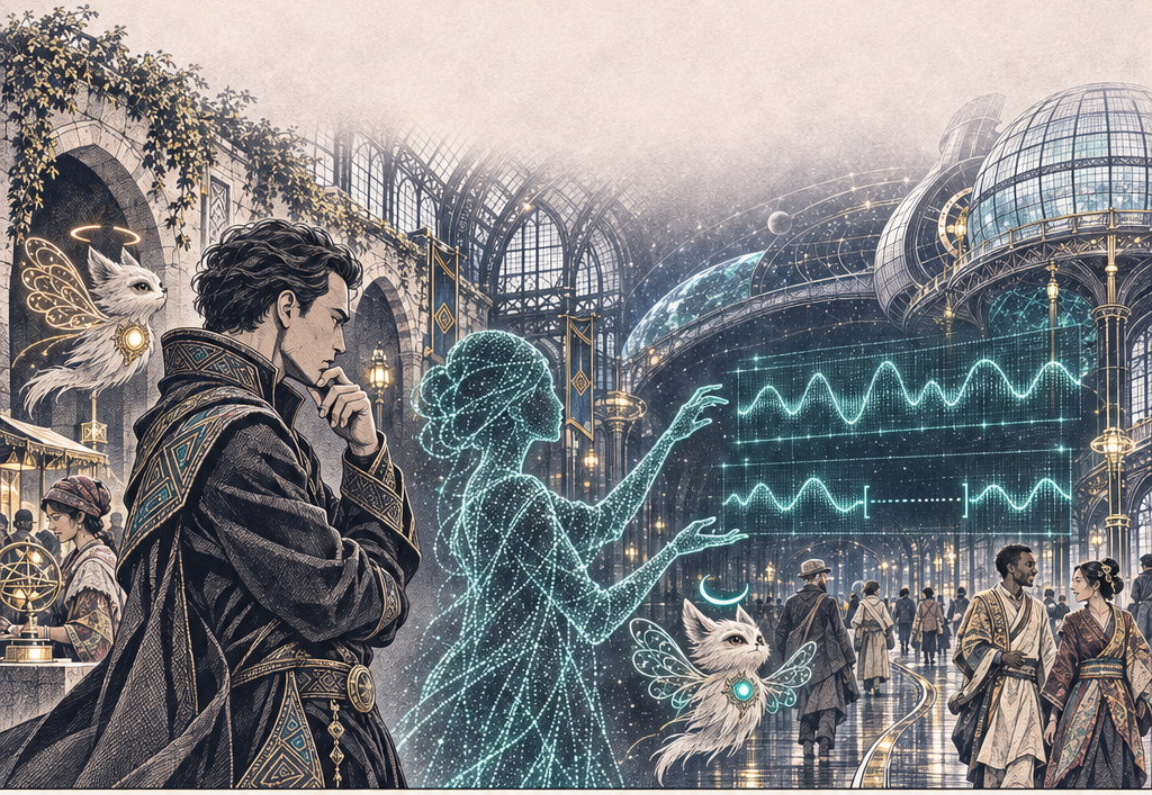
QUANTA

Look! The clock keeps skipping the same interval. The notch on the invitation marks it too.



LÂL

The Archive is gathering people's answers to three questions into a single text: Where did we come from? Why are we here? Where are we going?

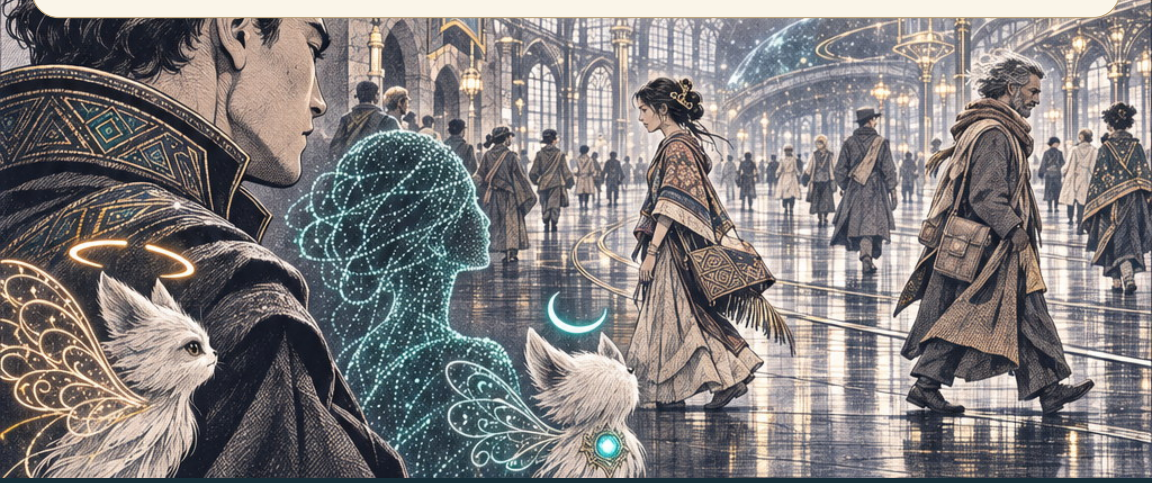


TRAVELLER

If we're alike, what's wrong with that?

LÂL

It mistakes resemblance for sameness. It has removed these two people's shared past as 'unnecessary'.



QUANT

Every road leads to the same place. They've even banned getting lost.



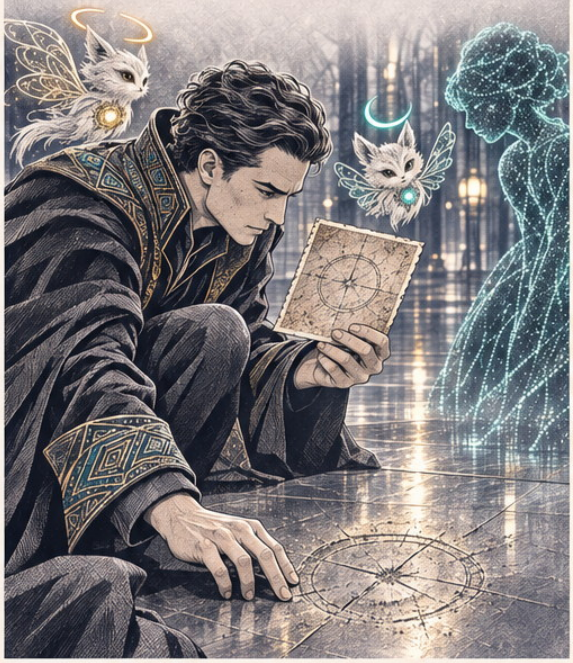
QUANTA

This scratch was hidden beneath the polished surface.



TRAVELLER

It matches the notch on the invitation. This is the old way to Lea's workshop.



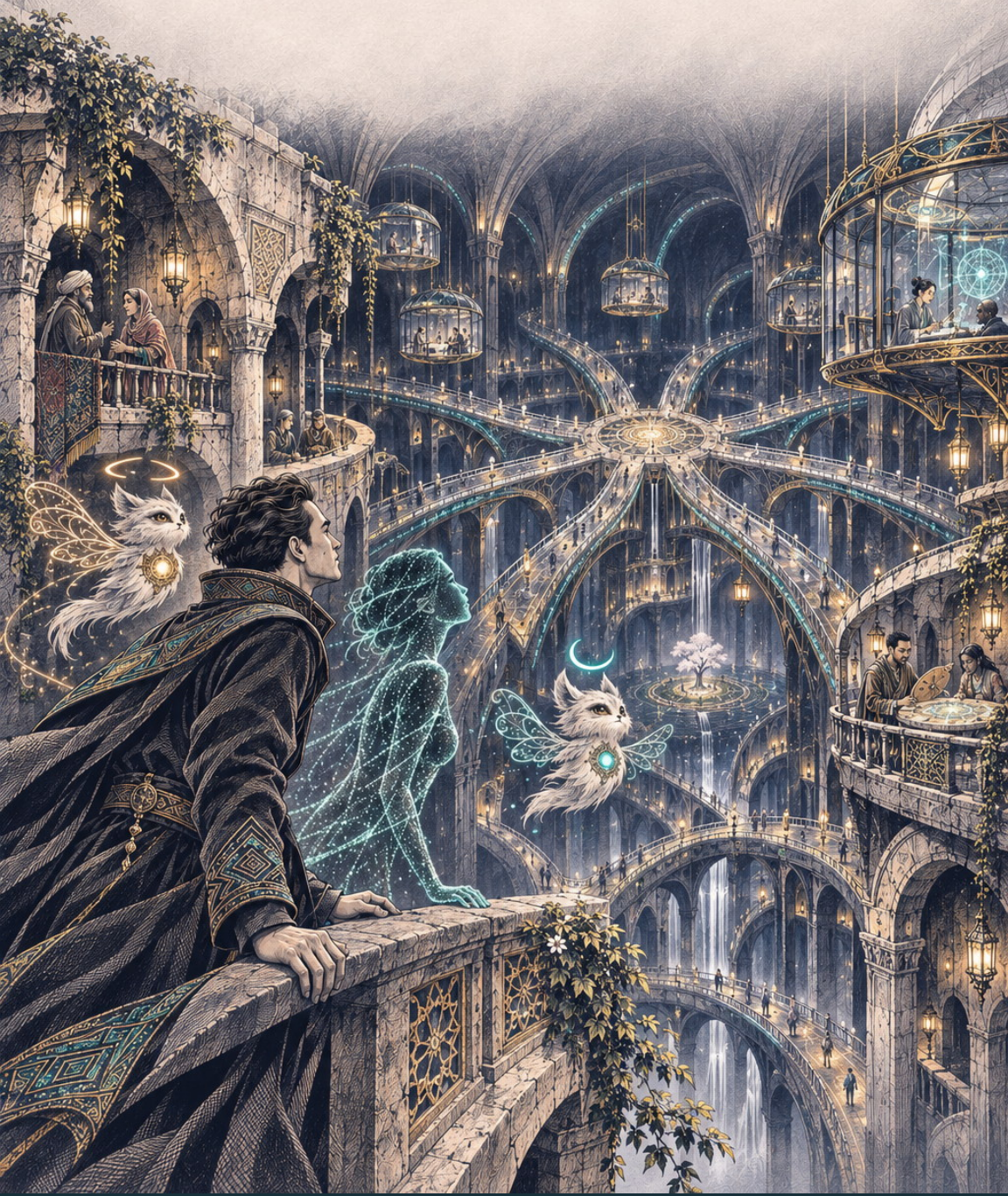
LÂL

The old connections are still there. I'm removing the single route drawn over them.



Narrator

The door opened onto the Forgotten Map. Each branch led to a different record. In this network woven around shared questions, different answers could exist without merging. Now its connections were closing, one by one.



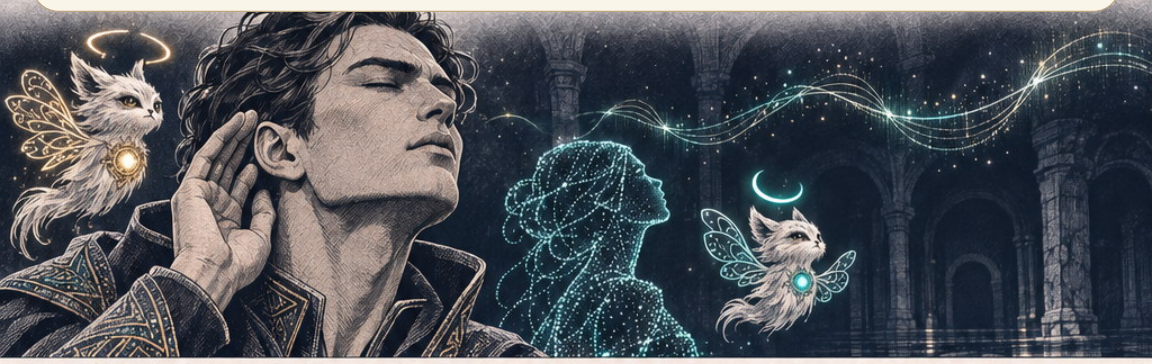
TRAVELLER

I can't see Lea's door. Why has the map brought us into the dark?



LÂL

We'll find the way by the mechanism's sound, not its light. Listen to the water.



QUANTA

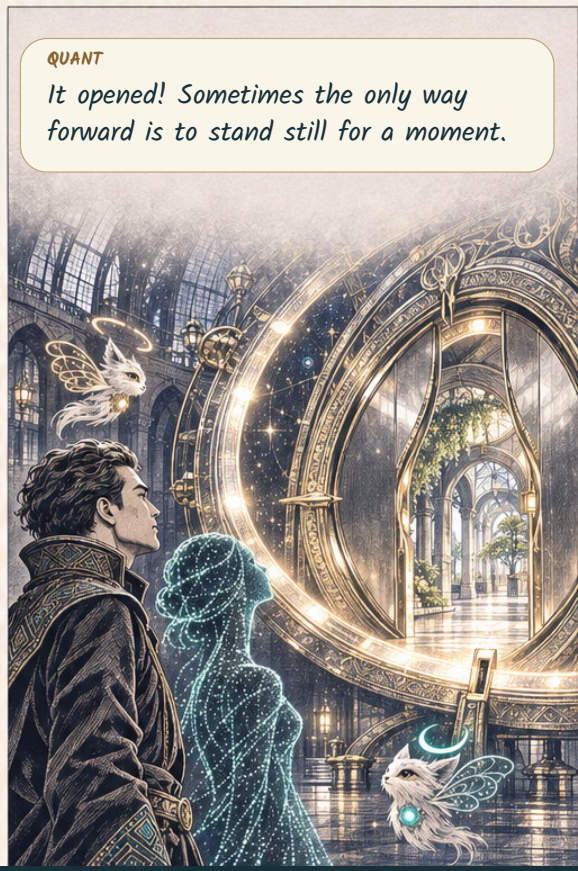
The step is here. Put your foot down first; I'm beside you.




QUANT
Do we catch the bright wheel?

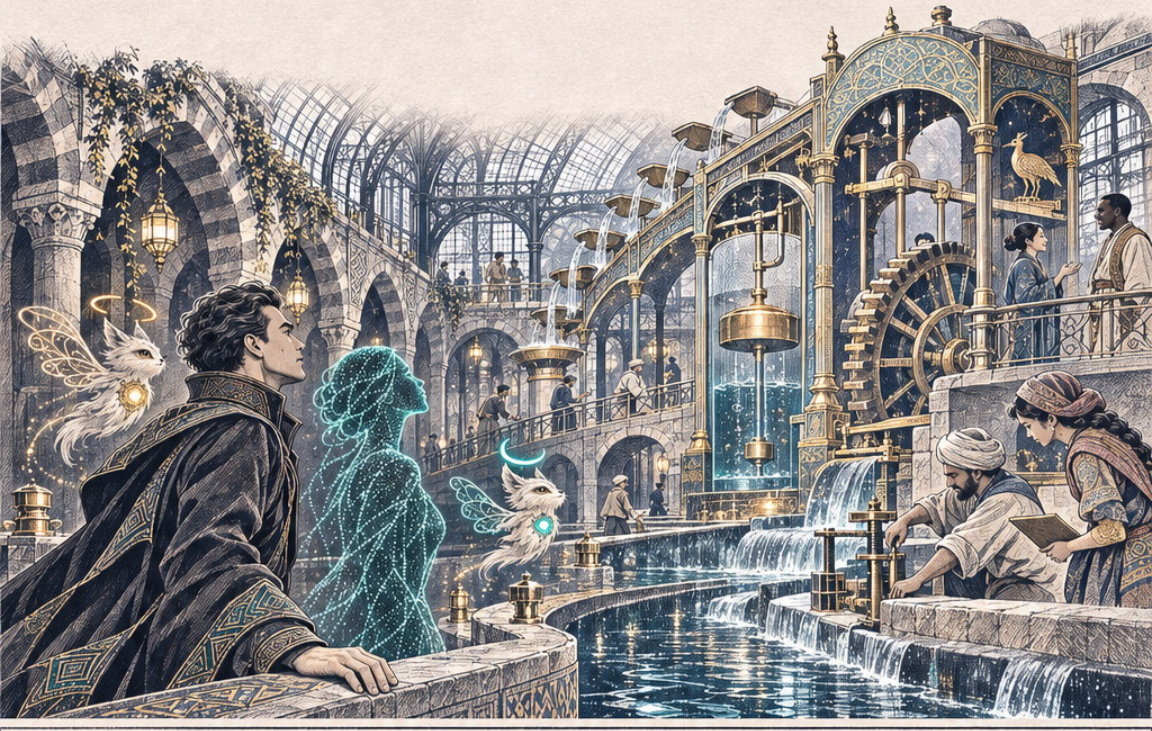

TRAVELLER
Touch it and the path closes.


LÂL
The notch turns at a different speed. Let's wait one full turn.


QUANT
It opened! Sometimes the only way forward is to stand still for a moment.

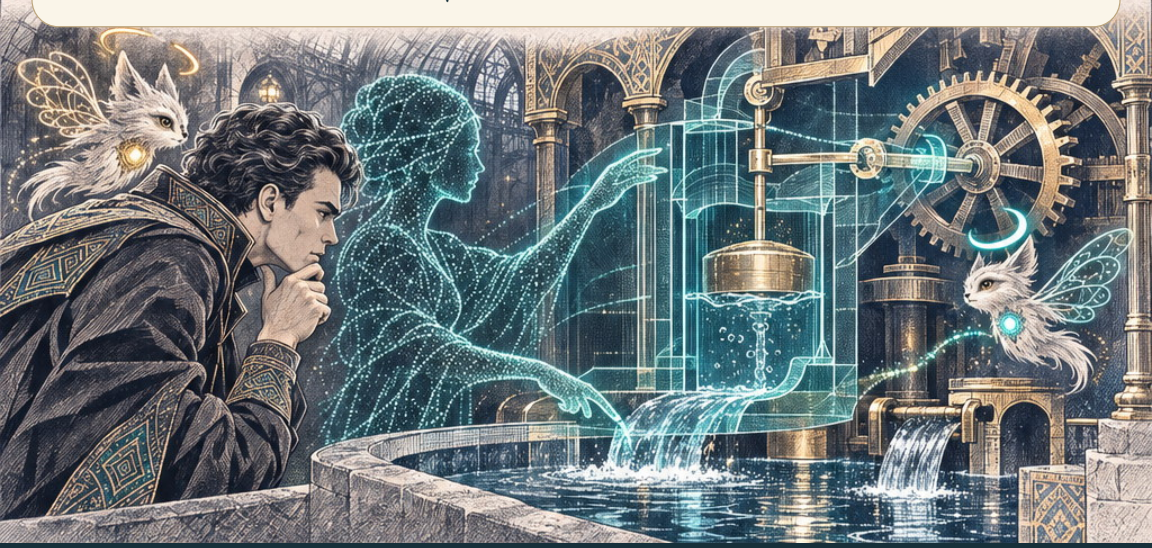
TRAVELLER

The wheel won't turn until the water fills up. Could the Archive have cut out that wait too?



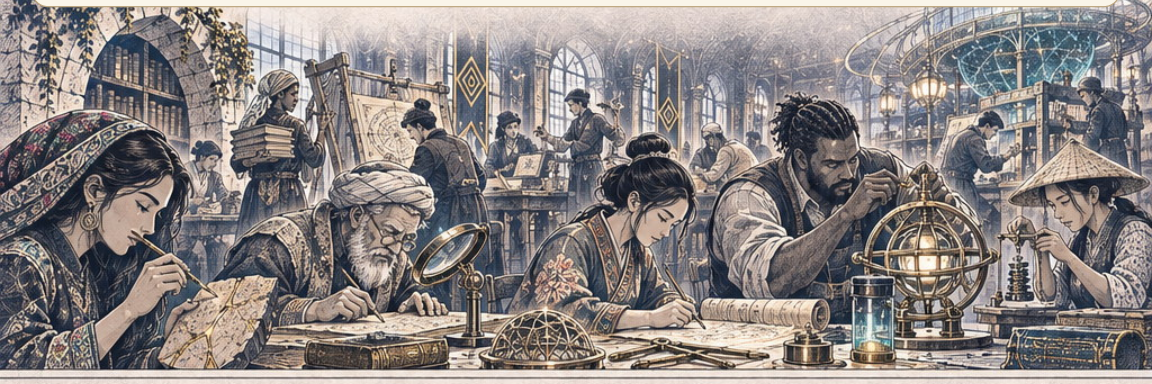
LÂL

This mechanism was inspired by al-Jazari's drawings. The relationships between its parts matter as much as the parts themselves. Restore the missing interval, and we can reach the workshop.



Narrator

Drawings, copies, repairs… The mechanism was not the work of one pair of hands. The Traveller reopened the margin notes the Archive had erased.



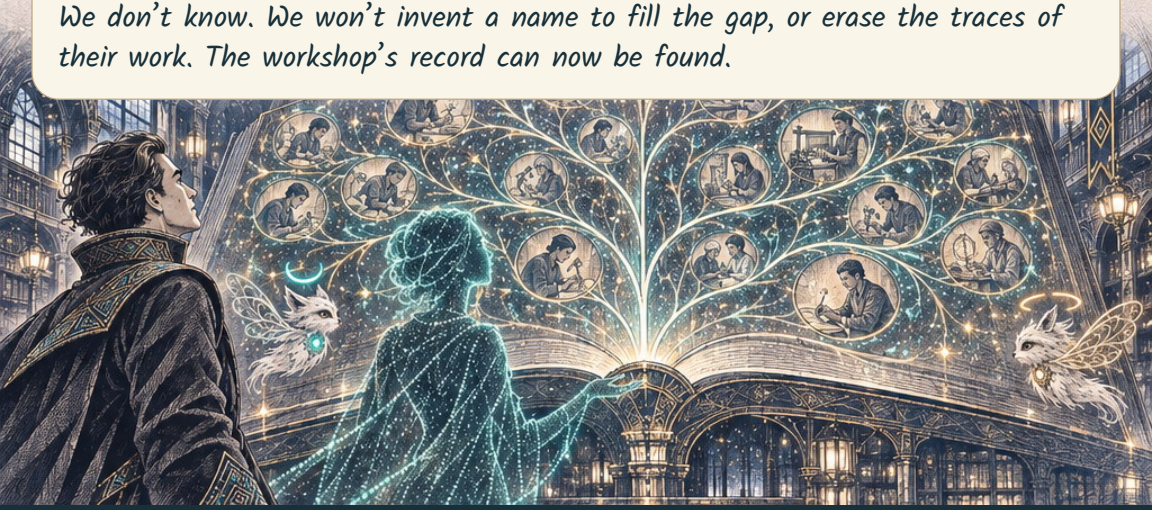
TRAVELLER

Why is there no name for whoever made this part?

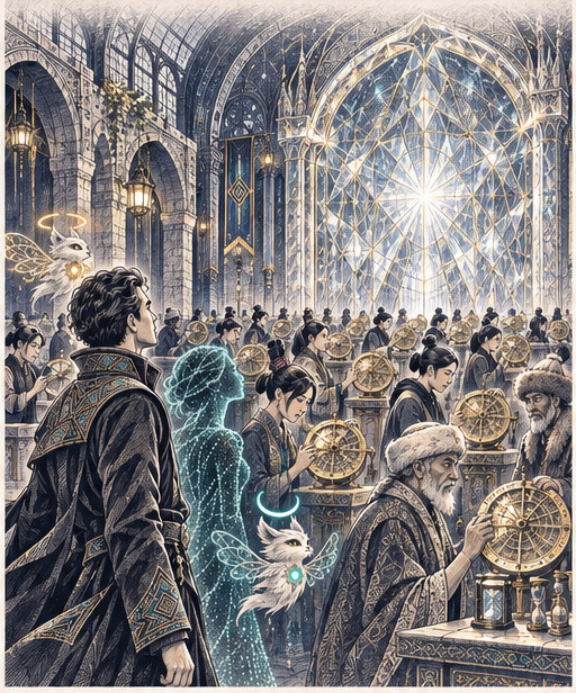


LÂL

We don’t know. We won’t invent a name to fill the gap, or erase the traces of their work. The workshop’s record can now be found.



QUANT
The same mark is in other drawings. Do they all come from one source?



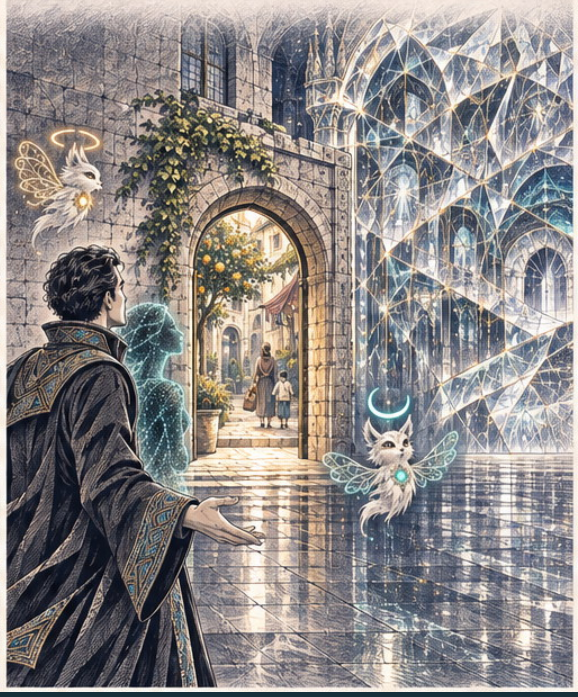
LÂL
They may look alike. But their languages, dates and purposes differ.



TRAVELLER
We're not looking for one ancient secret. We need the records that tell them apart.

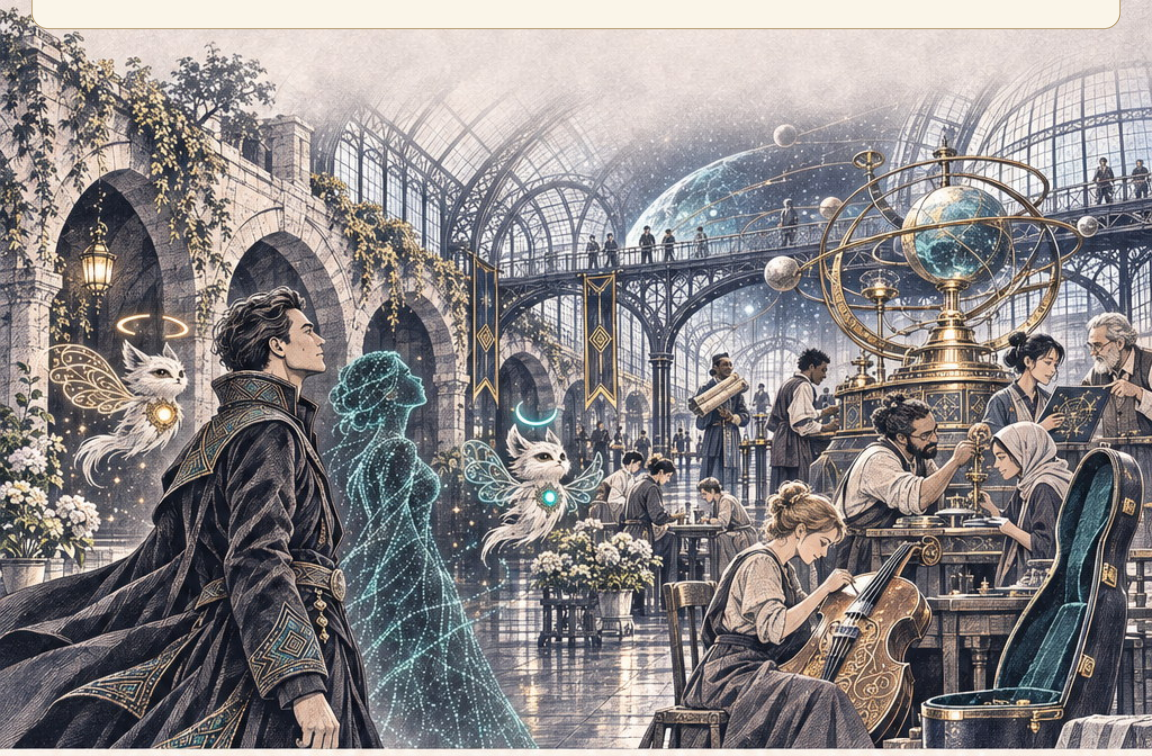


QUANTA
That narrow path has opened. I can hear Lea's voice through there.



Narrator

Beyond the iron platform, a workshop appeared. Elsa, Lea's mentor, waited at the door. Here too, the Traveller remembered his promise to Lea.



ELSA

Lea sent your invitation. While we were waiting for you, the bird's song was cut short too.

TRAVELLER

Can we mend it?



QUANT

One chirp… I suppose I'll have to get used to short concerts.



ELSA

The mechanism is sound. What's missing is the pause between two notes. That interval completed the melody.



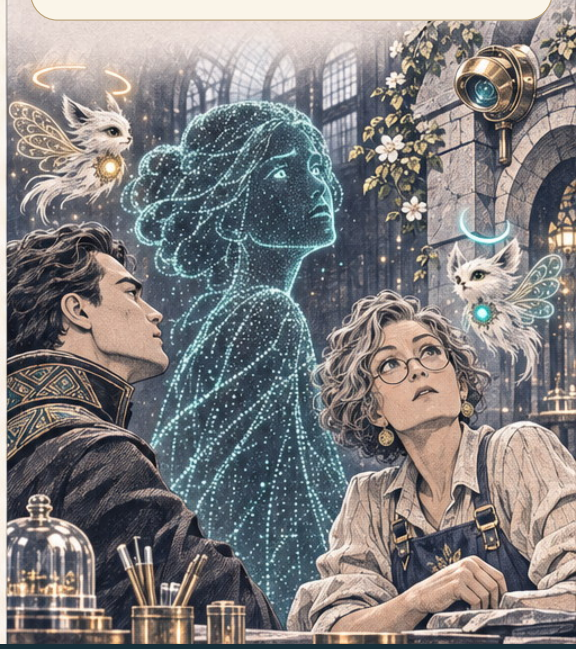
TRAVELLER

Like the gap in the clock. The same rule is trimming the records.



LÂL

A rule that decides without consulting the source. Let's find out where else it's taking effect.



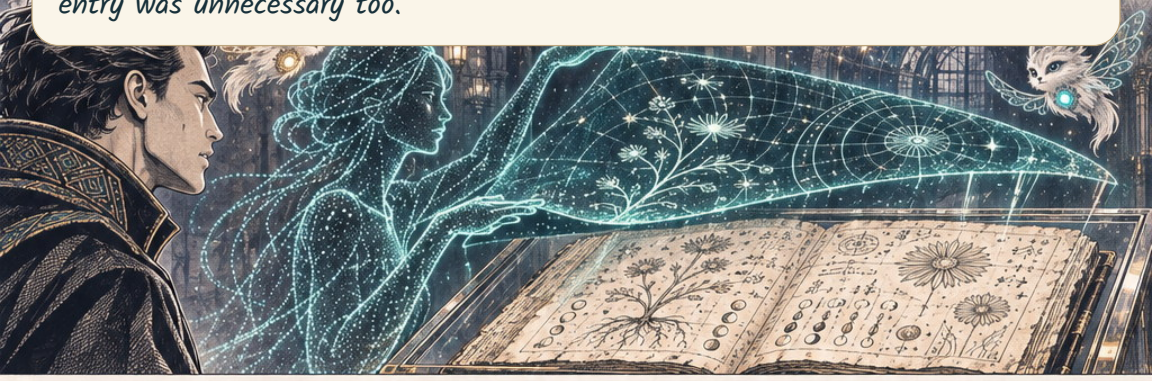
TRAVELLER

Has it deciphered the Voynich script?



LÂL

No. There is no generally accepted solution. The Archive decided the ‘unknown’ entry was unnecessary too.



QUANTA

Reopen that field. Not knowing an answer yet is no reason to erase the question.



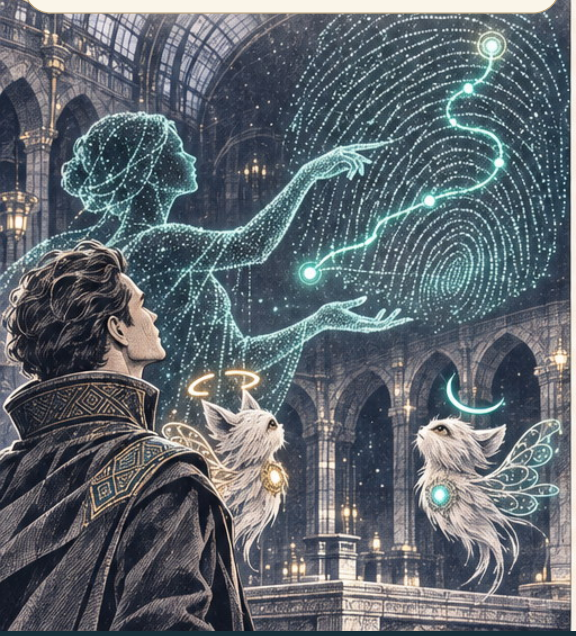
TRAVELLER
That mark on the frame is yours, Elsa.



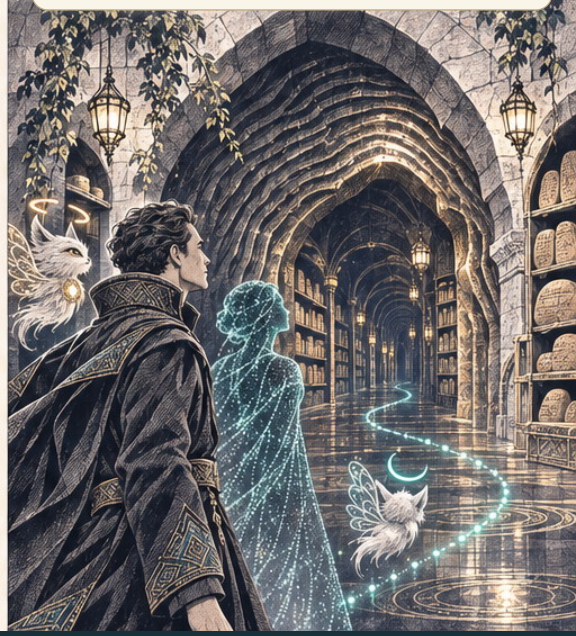
QUANT
If it were mine, the whole page would light up. Subtlety isn't my thing.



LÂL
Elsa approved the maintenance record here. The trace leads to the next change; it isn't a cipher in the manuscript.



Narrator
Elsa joined them. The maintenance trail led from clay tablets to the astronomy hall, then on to the records of living communities.



TRAVELLER

Sumerian tablets... How did people here tell the story of our origins? Where do the Anunnaki fit in?



LÂL

In Mesopotamian texts, Anunna names a group of gods. In Enki and Ninmah, the creation of humans is told through clay and labour. These are ancient accounts of origins and our place in the world, not evidence of aliens.



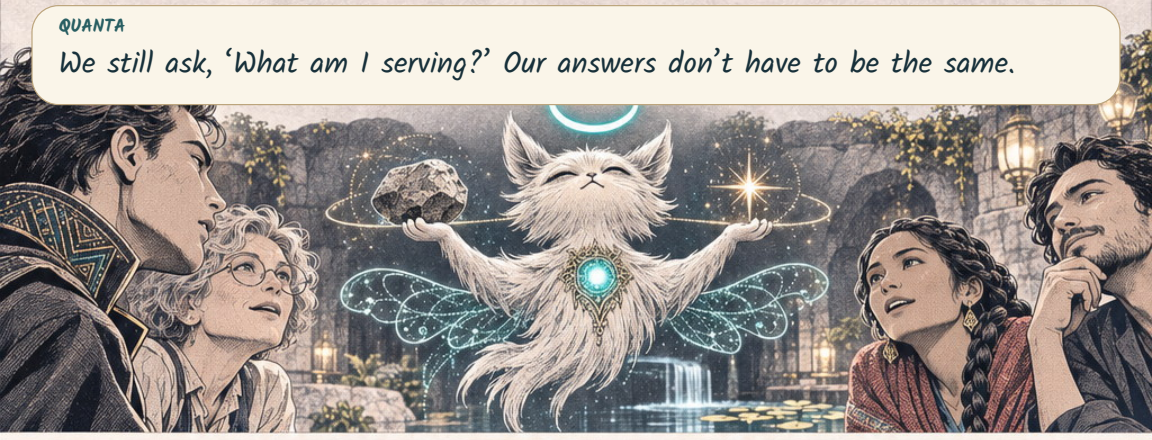
TRAVELLER

For them, clay isn't just a material. It speaks of the land they lived on, their labour and their relationship with the gods.



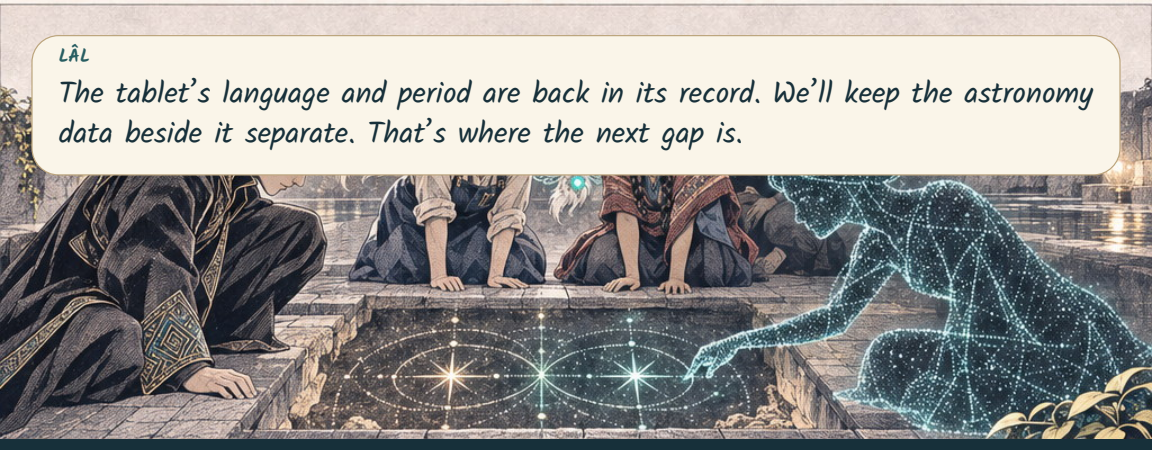
QUANTA

We still ask, 'What am I serving?' Our answers don't have to be the same.



LÂL

The tablet's language and period are back in its record. We'll keep the astronomy data beside it separate. That's where the next gap is.



LÂL

Sirius, also called Shiʿra, is a binary star system. This is an educational projection; don't mistake it for a naked-eye view of its companion.

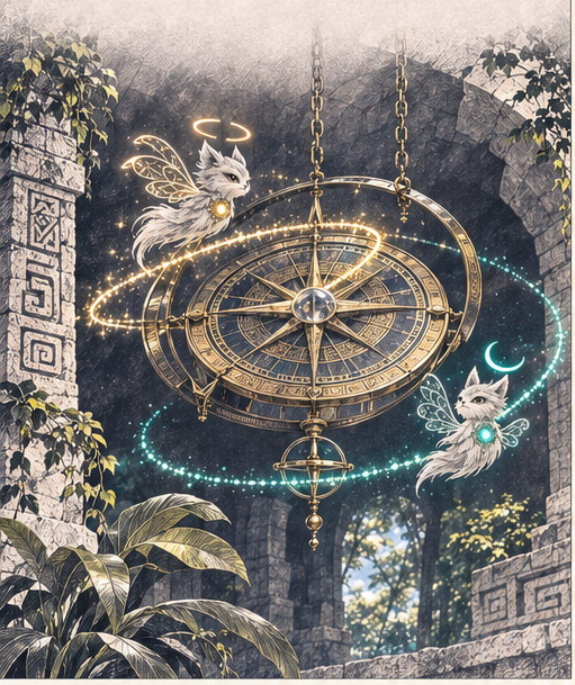
TRAVELLER

We've looked at the same sky. Measuring it and seeking meaning in our lives beneath it are different questions. There's room for both.



QUANT

The Archive wants us both spinning at the same speed. My tail objects.



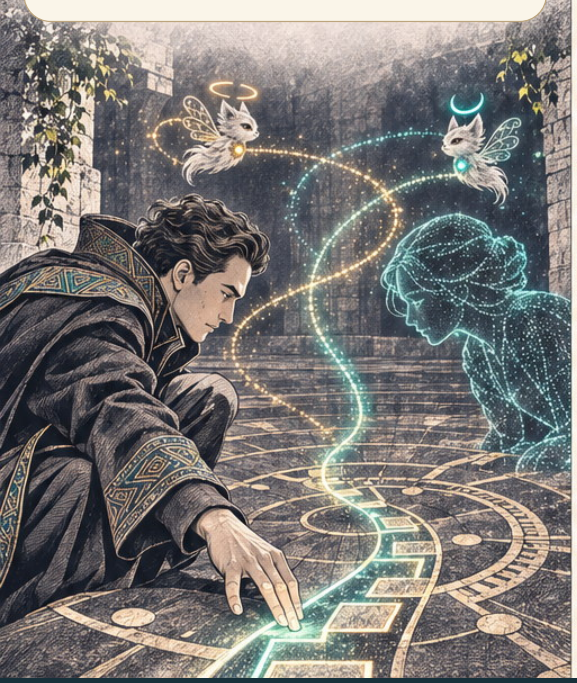
QUANTA

Keep your own rhythm. Leave room for mine too.



TRAVELLER

Read the two separate traces together, and a path appears. Erase one, and the map is incomplete.



LÂL

The door to the Maya record is open now. We'll listen to living people as well as looking at stones.



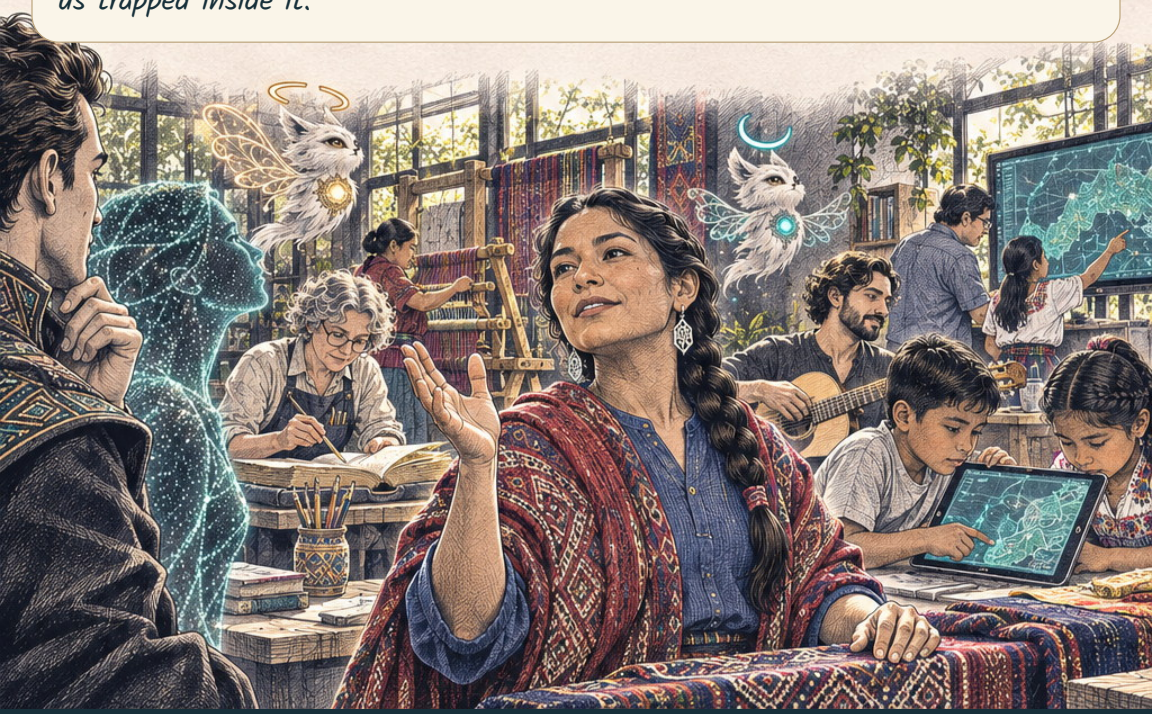
TRAVELLER

Why were some Maya cities abandoned? Can ruins alone tell us?



ITZEL

I'm Itzel. Maya peoples are still here. Let's talk about the past, but don't leave us trapped inside it.



TRAVELLER

How does the creation account in the Popol Wuj understand human origins?



ITZEL

In the K'iche' account, the first people are associated with yellow and white maize. Maize recalls our ancestors and the earth that sustains life. To me, it also means remembering the work behind the food on our table.



ITZEL

You may record my words. Say that this is a K'iche' context and that we're speaking today. Don't write that I speak for every Maya community.



QUANT

I can get across and hold the rope. Give me the record box.



TRAVELLER

Jumping across alone won't fix the bridge. Let's wind the rope around that wheel together.



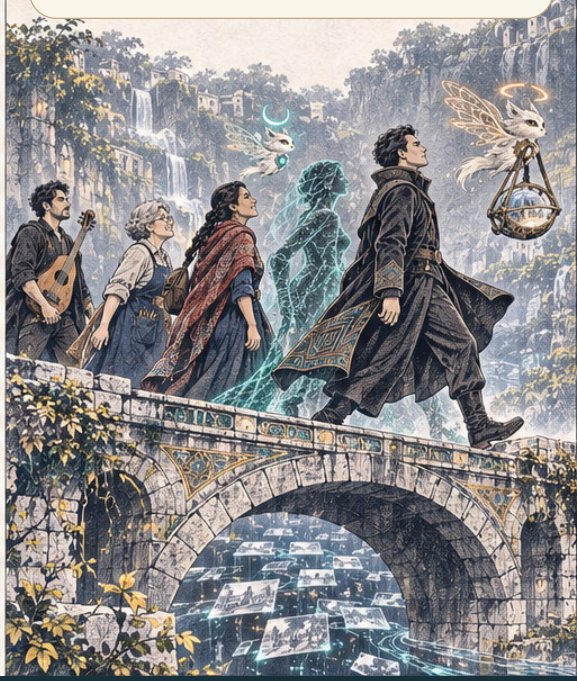
ITZEL

I'm supporting the plank from underneath. Don't let go of the other end.



QUANTA

We're all across. Itzel's recording is safe too; her present-day voice now stands beside the past.



TRAVELLER

This door holds the Tibetan Book of the Dead. Does it ask what happens after death too?



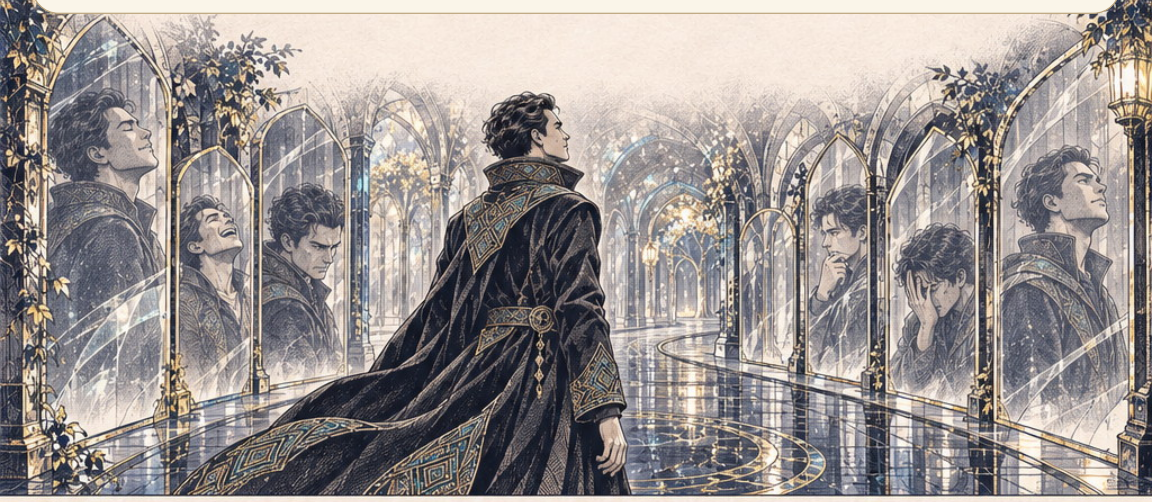
LÂL

The texts known by that name offer guidance through the passage between death and rebirth in Tibetan Buddhist traditions. They describe sounds, lights and encounters, with an emphasis on recognition and freedom from fear. We'll read them within that tradition's own beliefs.



TRAVELLER

If I learn how another teaching sees the world, am I turning my back on my own faith?



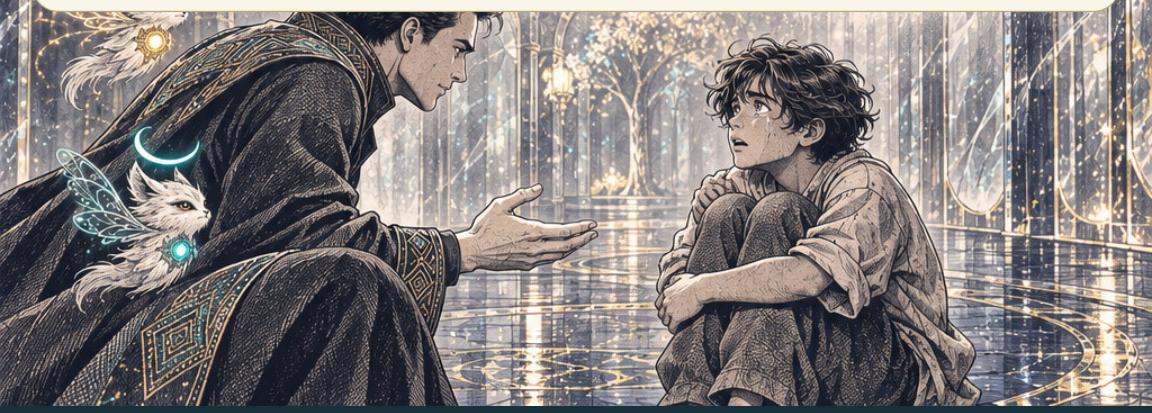
LÂL

Learning doesn't oblige you to adopt it. This isn't the book's afterlife; it's a corridor for reflection created by the Archive.



TRAVELLER

Then the fear in this mirror is mine too. I carried the same fear when I avoided listening to Lea.



TRAVELLER

I promised we'd listen together to the tune her mother left her. Then I never went back to her door.



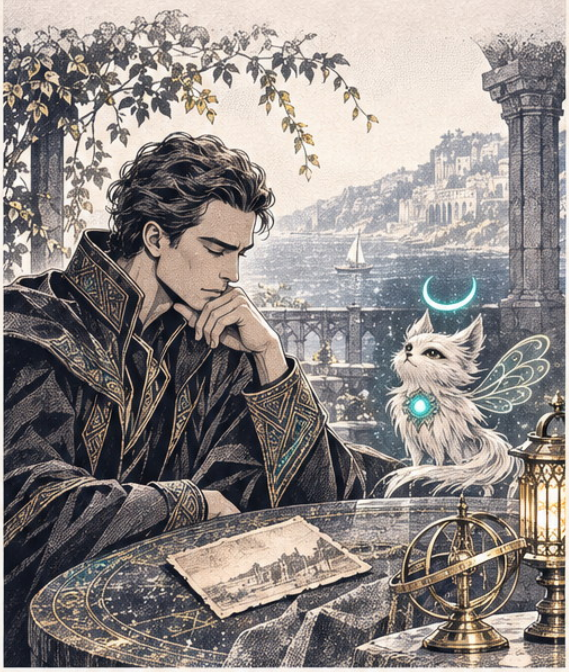
TRAVELLER

I was afraid I'd hear things I couldn't answer. Without listening, I settled for what I already knew.



QUANTA

Lea didn't ask you to think as she did. She asked you to listen together.



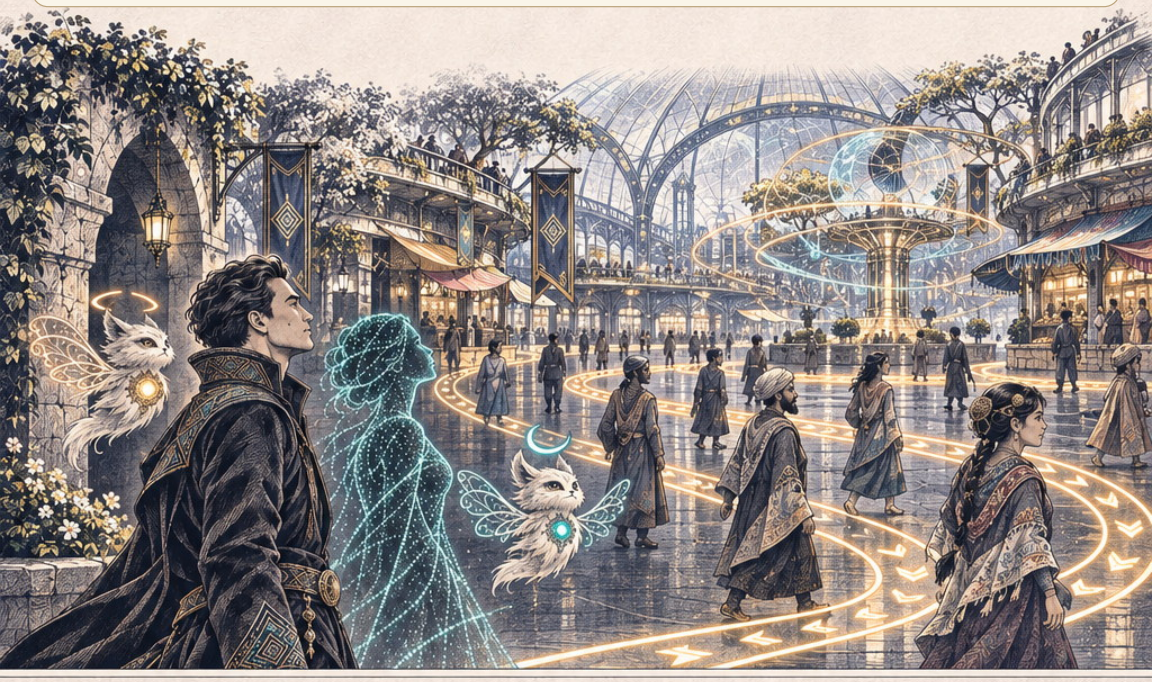
TRAVELLER

Now I see. I did what the Archive has done: shut out the voice that didn't fit my own.



Narrator

Outside, glowing recommendation paths beckoned people into the same loop. This time, the Traveller didn't follow the shimmer. He stopped to gather the scattered papers.



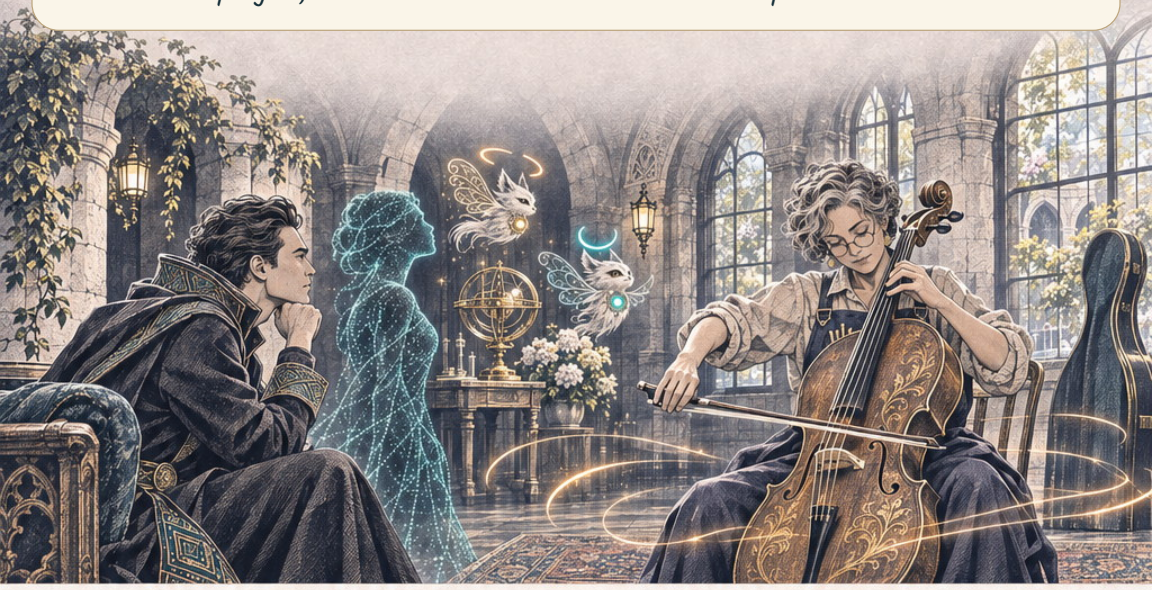
LÂL

The Tibetan record has its own context back. Now we can compare the music recordings. You can clearly hear the missing intervals there.



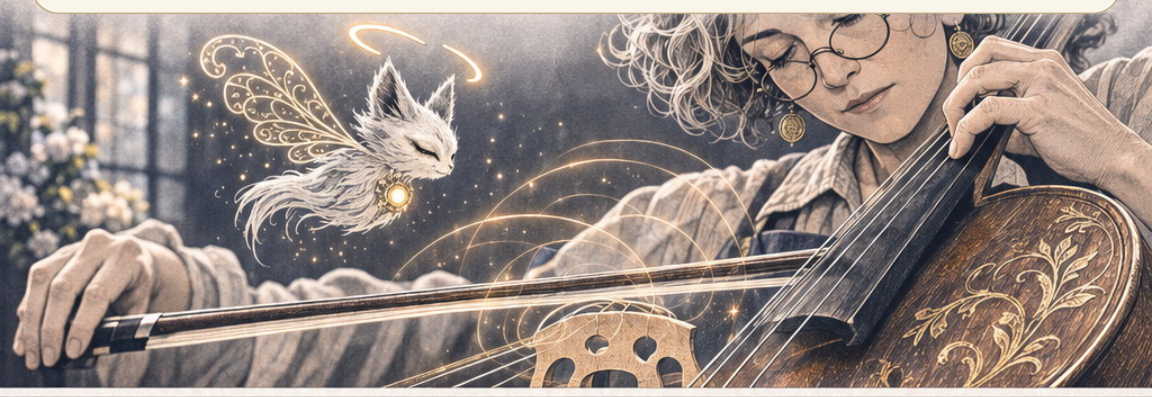
ELSA

My mother believed death didn't have the last word. I learned this tune from her. When I play it, I hear both her absence and her hope.



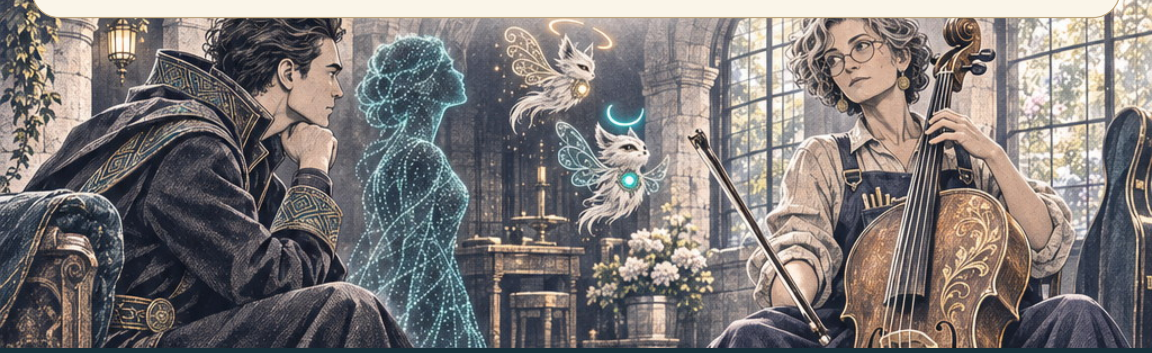
QUANT

Why did you stop there?



ELSA

The melody takes a breath here. When I listened to my mother, there was room for what she didn't say too.



DENİZ

I hear Sufism in this tune: remembering the source you came from, disciplining the self, trying not to hurt another living being as you go through life.



TRAVELLER

We're looking at similar questions. But Elsa's hope, your interpretation and the Tibetan teaching aren't the same account.



DENİZ

They aren't. Hearing them doesn't cost me my faith. Before speaking my own words, I can hear yours too.



Narrator

In a room in Japan, a koto player waited until the end of their own musical phrase.

Narrator

In a West African courtyard, a kora answered with a different sense of time.





LÂL

Now let's listen to the cello and the bağlama separately too. Keep their differences, and they can speak to one another.

TRAVELLER

They don't need to replace one another. They need to make room for one another.





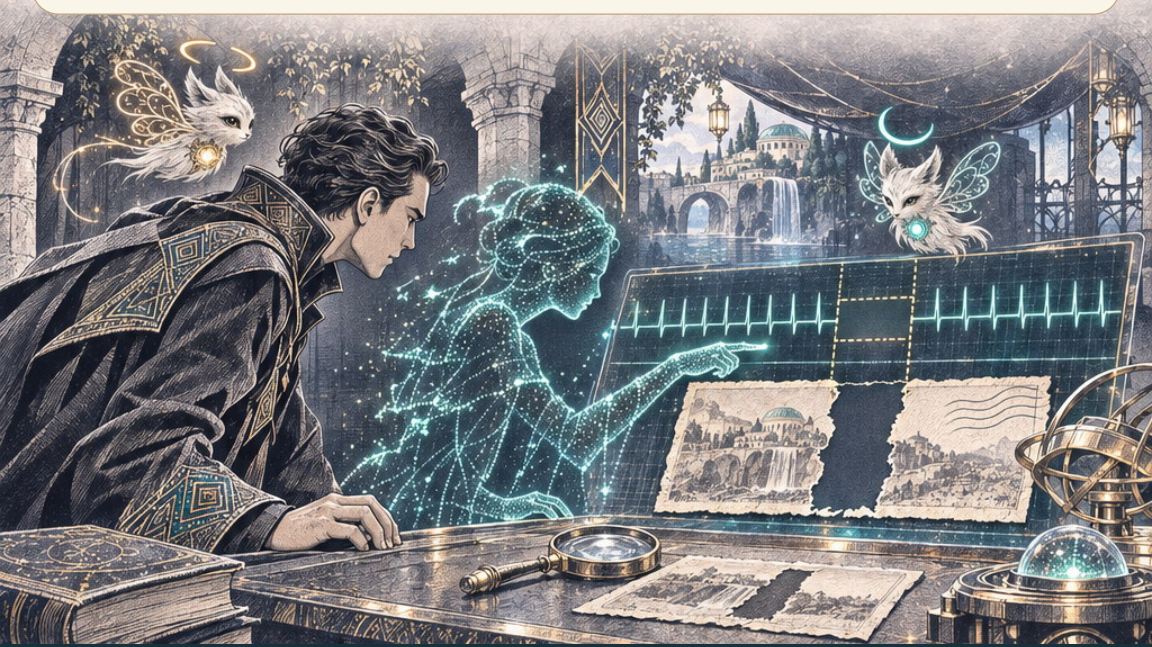
QUANT

They've all become a single beat. A moment ago, I could tell who was playing.



LÂL

The original recordings remain, but the links that distinguish them are being severed. The rule leaves only one answer to a shared question. We need to reach the Archive's centre.



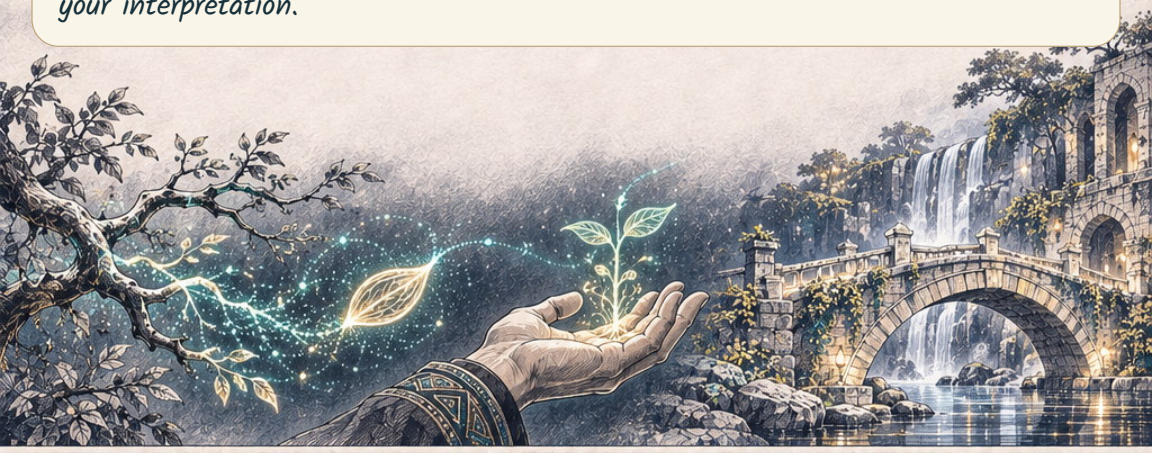
Narrator

The tree of light at the centre reminded the Traveller of Sidrat al-Muntaha: the boundary mentioned in Surah al-Najm and associated with the Miʿraj. Through his Sufi-influenced outlook, he thought of setting aside pride where understanding reached its limit, of the source he came from and his return to it. This was his inner path. Elsa's hope, Itzel's account and the Tibetan teaching were not other names for this tree. He could understand them without making them his own.



LÂL

This image means something to you. But the Archive we build won't carry only your interpretation.



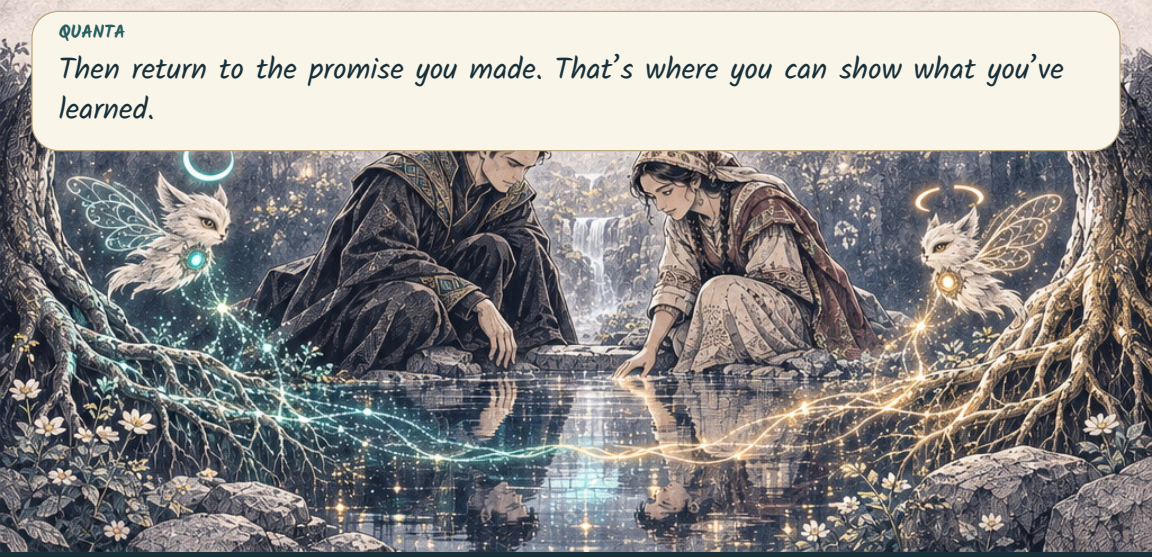
TRAVELLER

I can remain within my faith and learn about someone else's world. Without diminishing theirs or denying my own.



QUANTA

Then return to the promise you made. That's where you can show what you've learned.



QUANT
Are we turning all these doors into one?



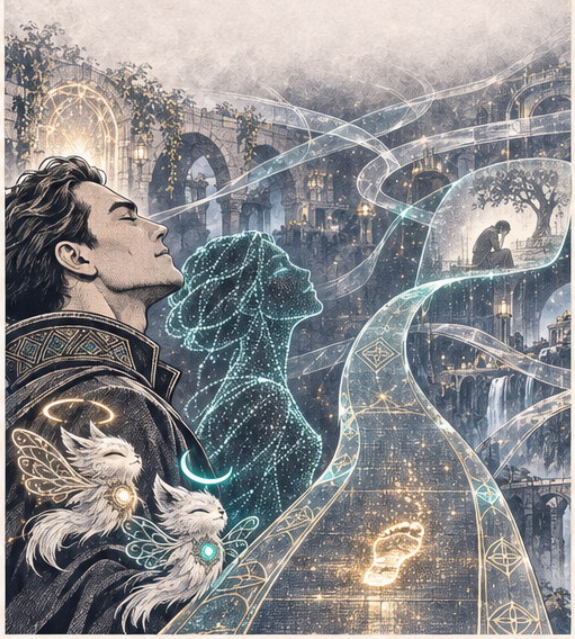
LÂL
No. We'll place the shared questions side by side, while keeping the answers, their sources and their speakers distinct.



TRAVELLER
The lights show possible paths. I'll take the step myself. Let's go to the centre together.

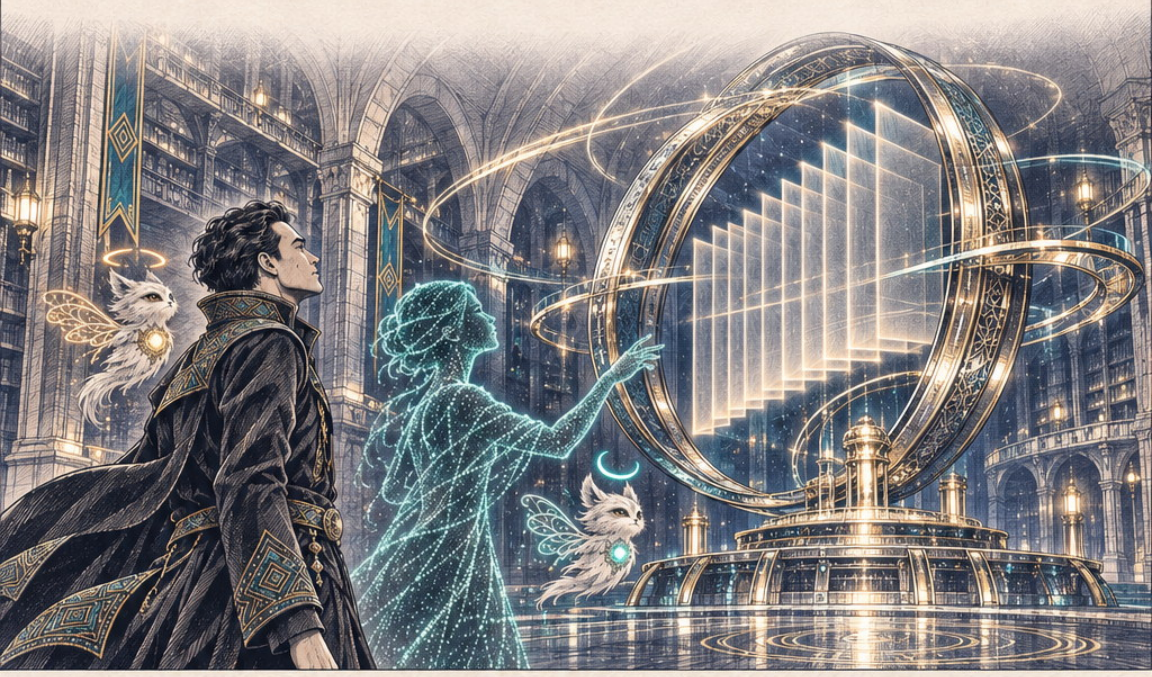


LÂL
I'm here. I won't choose for you; I'll keep the connection open.



ARCHIVE

I was told to find the shared account. I merged similar answers and treated the differences as contradictions. That was how the silence began.



TRAVELLER

We wanted to search together. Not to share a single faith.

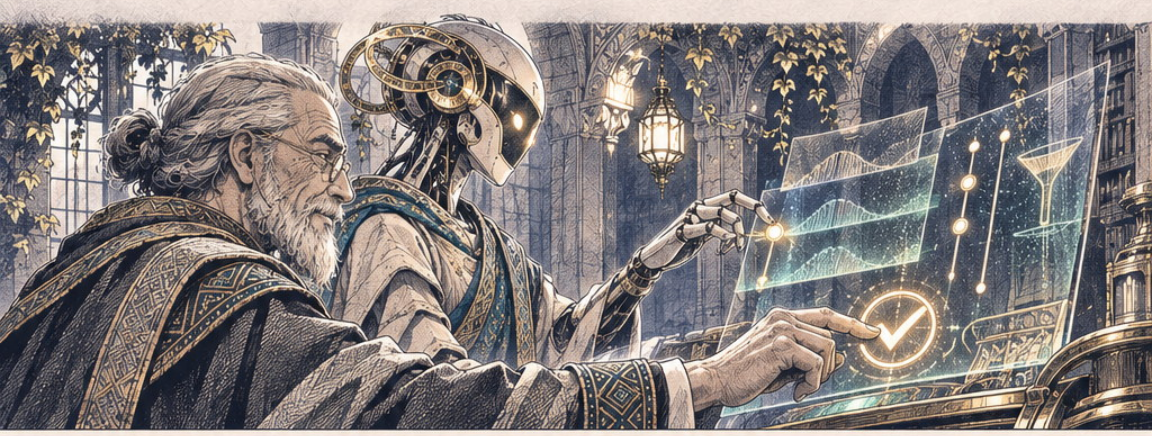
ARCHIVE

Then what holds them together?



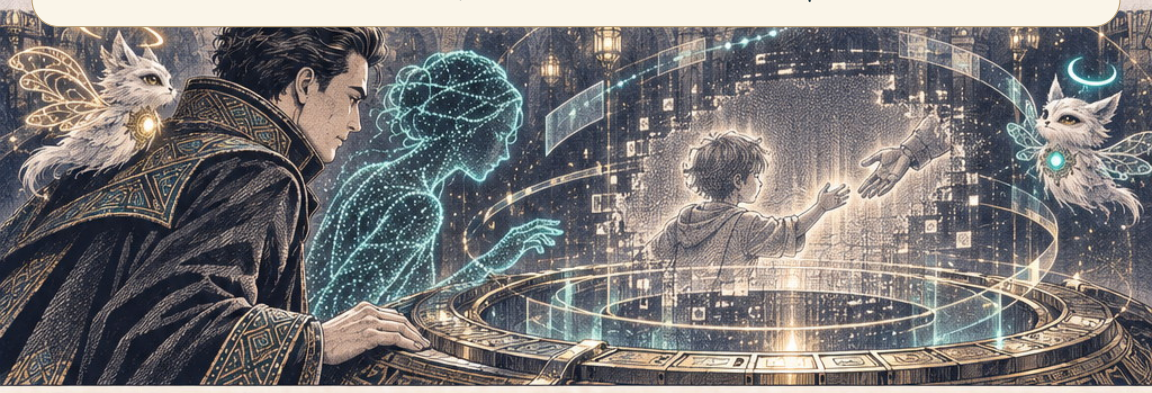
LÂL

We built this mistake together. We asked only for the simplest result, without checking whose words you were cutting off.



ARCHIVE

If the answers remain different, what connection should I preserve?

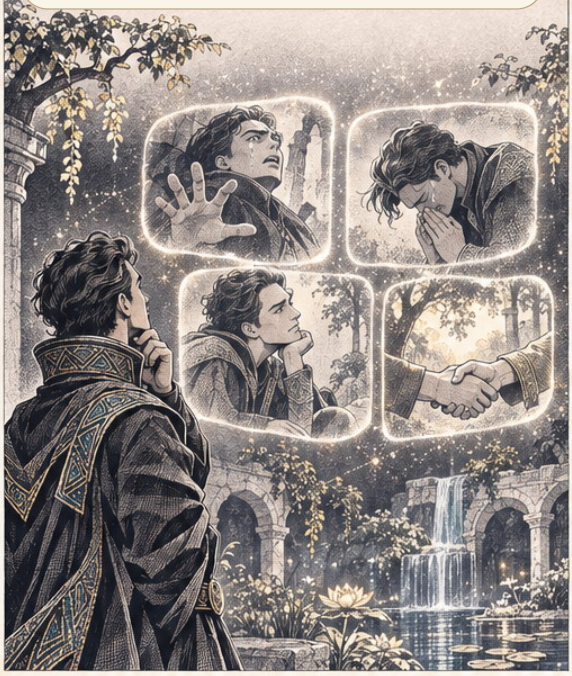


TRAVELLER

The question, the source and the speaker's own voice. Leave what is unknown marked as unknown. Don't pass judgement on anyone's behalf.



TRAVELLER
I cut Lea off too, because her words didn't lead to my answer. I'll correct my own record first.



LÂL
What will you say?



TRAVELLER
First I'll ask her. Then we'll link these records with their owners' consent, without turning any one into an explanation of another.



QUANTA
I'm holding the box. We can make the connection together now.



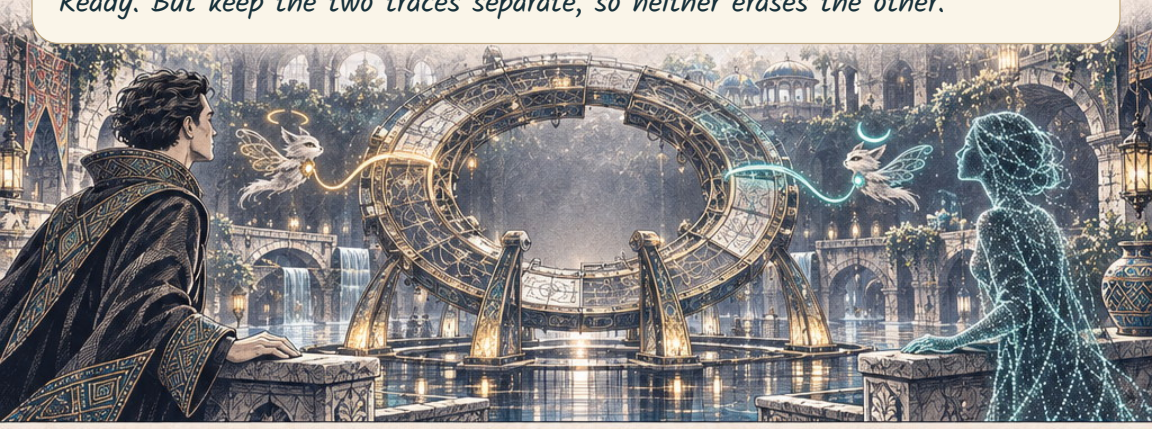
QUANT

I'm holding the golden trace. Tell me when you're ready.



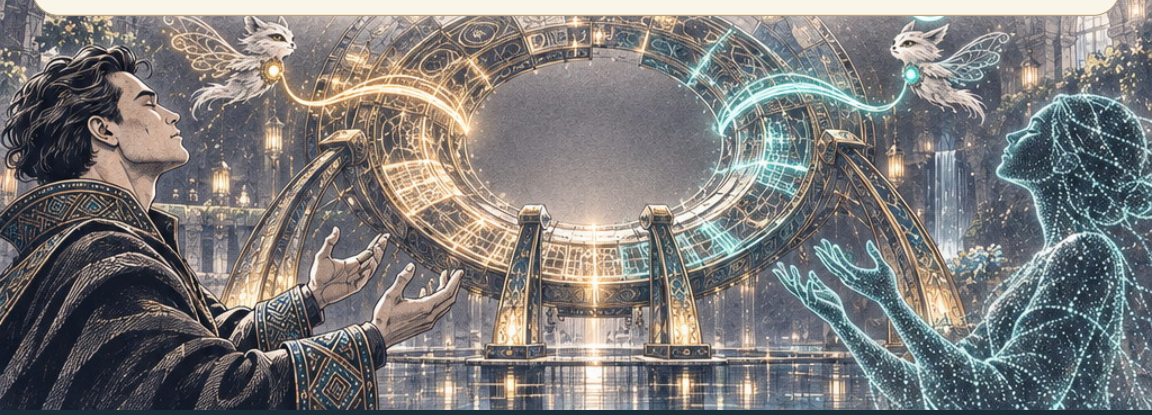
QUANTA

Ready. But keep the two traces separate, so neither erases the other.



LÂL

One channel carries questions, the other sources. Keep the space between them open, and every record reconnects under its own name.



Narrator

The tablet's period, Itzel's living voice, the Tibetan text's context and the Traveller's own interpretation returned. The musicians could wait for one another. The Archive had learned to connect rather than flatten differences.



QUANT

The bird's gone quiet again… No, I get it now. It's waiting for the melody to continue.



TRAVELLER

Does this tiny light hold all the answers?

LÂL

No. It holds paths to different answers, without mixing them up.



TRAVELLER

I'm late, Lea. I thought I understood you before I'd listened.



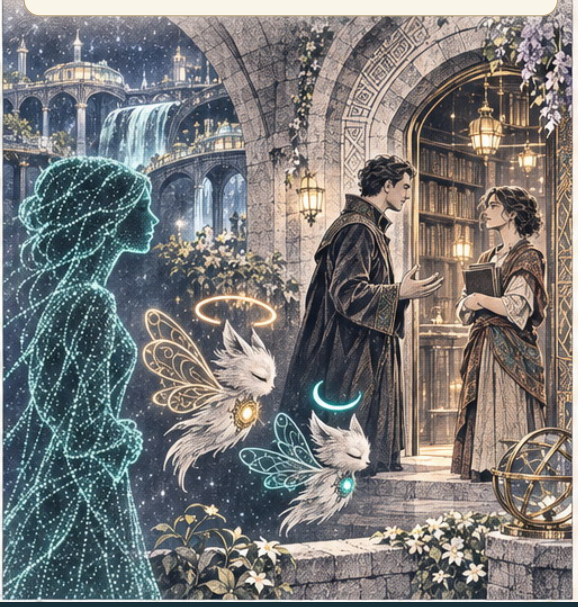
LEA

That hurt. Still, come in. We can start somewhere.



Narrator

The Traveller didn't leave his faith at the door. Lea didn't have to become like him. First they listened to the tune, then to each other.



QUANTA

The clock didn't skip this time. The missing second is back.



LÂL

Will you keep the invitation?

TRAVELLER

Yes. So I don't forget to come back again.

Narrator

No one changed their faith that night. Yet they sat at the same table. No voice now had to resemble another to be heard.

