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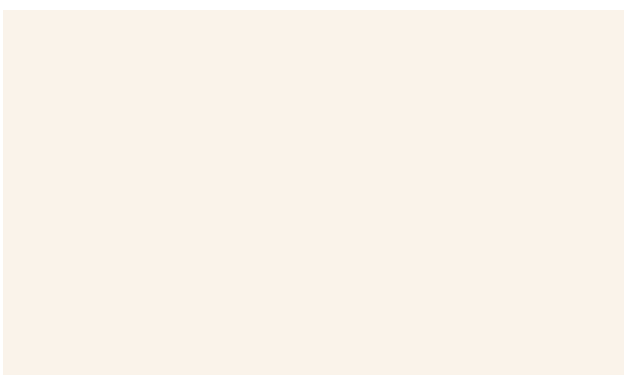
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Acknowledgments

I'd like to express my gratitude to my brother, Ed Cortes, who was under my care at home and gave me the space I needed to work on my book despite suffering from terminal brain and lung cancer, from which he died during the writing of this book. Rest in peace, my beloved brother. Special thanks to my son, Brannon Cortes, who inspired me to persist and to finish my book. Of course, a very special thanks to my wife, Yolanda Cortes. Without her love and support throughout my life, I wouldn't have developed the motivation to write.

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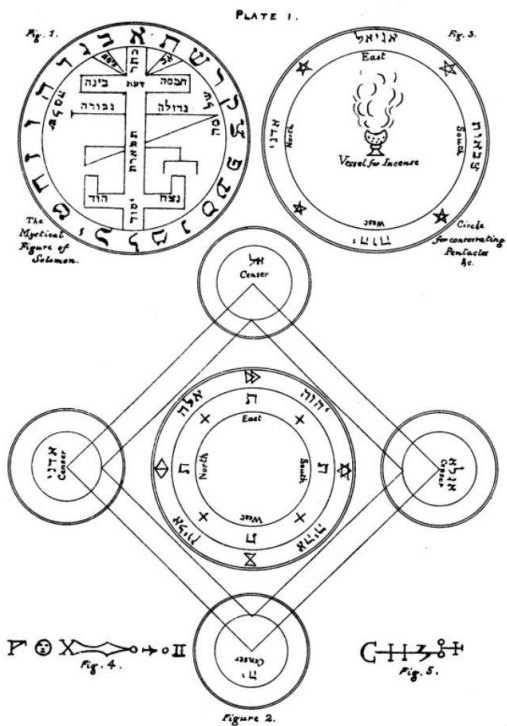


Image from: The key of Solomon (Circa 1888)

FACT

After the allocation by many countries of massive amounts of their budgets to War and Defense spending in 2024, many regional conflicts ensued, but none of them rose to the level of a World War as of the publication of these works.

However, this enormous diversion of funds did not go unnoticed by the masses. Soon thereafter, populations began to protest and revolt. The needs of the many were discarded in exchange for the needs of the few, the need to Wage War.

Humanity could no longer hold hope for a better future when, at the back of their minds there was the constant fear of war coming to their country.

It is this level of unpredictability and emotional unrest that opens the door for acts of evil and the concept of *every man for himself*.

Survival becomes the predominant priority in everyone's mind, and although what you are about to read is considered *fiction*, keep in mind that when the moral compass of mankind is turned off, there are no limits to the chaos that can ensue.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

References to all buildings, streets, and documents are factual (as are their exact locations). They still exist today. The time differences presented are deemed accurate. All references to technology are actual technology in existence today or experimental. Also, please forgive me for my religious license in writing this work of fiction. I never intended to offend anyone or any religious faith. Finally, several chapters will include dialog in the Italian language for authenticity. The English translation immediately follows the Italian dialogue.

For Yolanda, Brannon & Jay
Beloved Wife and sons.

***DORMANT
ANGELS***

A NOVEL
FRED OLIVER

EPIGRAPH

"Evil exerts a magnetic attraction which has only one goal: to destroy, in whatever way and at whatever cost. And it takes the form of violence, injustices, and abuses in the attempt to erase the image of God imprinted on the faces of the weakest, of the poorest, and of the least, to demean them and make them slaves, to exploit them. Or it takes the form of the deceitful seduction of power and money, which would make people believe that they are the builders of their own destiny, masters of the world, which would make them forget grace and mercy."

POPE FRANCIS, December 2019

Prologue

In the depths of the Vatican Necropolis's underworld, a sinister gathering takes place. It is February 15, 2025, the day of Lupercaria. Shadows were seen across the cavernous walls as a host of evil entities converged, their eyes shining with malevolent intent. At the center of the throng stood the Unholy One himself, his presence commanding the attention of all those present.

"The time has come," the Unholy One hissed, his voice reverberating through the chamber. "Our plans are in place, and the Dormant Angels shall awaken, as they have been asleep since their times as giants.

The assembled demons exchanged knowing glances, their twisted features contorting into cruel smiles. They had been waiting for this moment, biding their time until the perfect opportunity arose.

"The humans will not suspect a thing," one demon cackled, its voice resembling nails on a chalkboard. "We will infiltrate their minds and bodies, slowly gaining control until it is too late."

The Unholy One nodded, his gaze sweeping over the sea of eager faces. "Yes, my children. Our influence will spread like a plague, infecting governments and causing chaos on a global scale."

The air in the chamber crackled with dark energy as the demons prepared for their impending revolution. With a final, guttural command from the Unholy One, they were ready to disperse, ready to unleash hell on Earth.

Granted special powers, the demons wasted no time in implementing their malevolent plans. They spread out across the globe; their presence, invisible to the human eye, but their influence palpable.

In the halls of power, politicians and world leaders began to make increasingly erratic decisions, driven by a newfound lust for chaos and destruction. Laws

were passed that sowed discord and division, leading to riots and civil unrest.

In police departments and law enforcement agencies, officers became more aggressive and brutal, their actions fueled by a disregard for human life and a desire for control. Communities were torn apart as trust in law enforcement eroded.

In schools and universities, teachers began to subtly manipulate their students, inducing an environment of fear and intolerance. Children who once played together turned on each other, and bullying became rampant.

Even average citizens were not immune to the demonic influence. Neighbors turned against neighbors, and acts of violence became commonplace. People who were once kind and compassionate became cruel and selfish, driven by a sinister force they couldn't explain.

As the demons' power grew, the world became a darker and more dangerous place. Thus, the battle for humanity's soul had begun.

Look around you, it is already happening. The Dormant Angels are among us!

What follows, was the beginning of the end.

Chapter 1

Friday, August 22, 2025

Shielding his eyes against the relentless August sun, its heat intensifying the humidity that clung to his body, Professor Whitfield meticulously excavates the ancient site behind the Temple Mount in an area believed to be the remains of ancient sectarian ruins. In this exact location, curiously, the professor had found an upside-down silver crucifix five months ago. His focus was unwavering despite the city's cacophony, the distant buzz of commerce, and the melodic call to prayer.

Suddenly, a tiny glint in the earth caught his trained eye. With a delicate touch, he started brushing the dirt away. He took numerous photos at each stage of the unearthing. After taking precise measurements and making a few drawings of the object's location, Whitfield, with meticulous precision, proceeded to unearth the rest of the object. It was truly a treasure, an age-old thin copper tablet etched with enigmatic symbols, perhaps a language lost to time.

His pulse quickened as he grasped the relic, an electrifying realization coursing through him. Could this discovery be the linchpin to a web of ancient secrets? Or, could the tablet be a key to unraveling long-forgotten historical mysteries? He carefully laid the object on a clean cloth and took more photos, front, back, and at different angles of illumination.

"Ralph, come quickly!" Professor Whitfield's voice echoed across the excavation site his tone urgent.

Dust billowed around Ralph's feet as he hurried through the trenches, his eagerness to reach Professor Whitfield evident in his every step.

"Hey, Dr. Whitfield? What have you found?"

Whitfield's eyes glimmered with excitement as he held the ancient copper tablet in his hands. "I've uncovered an extraordinary artifact, Ralph. Look at these symbols! I've never seen anything like it."

The inscriptions, appearing to be etched with an enigmatic and unfamiliar script, drew his gaze like a magnet. "Professor, this is amazing! It looks almost like hieroglyphics to me.

What do you think they mean, professor?"

Whitfield smiles, a sense of wonder in his voice. "That's what we're going to find out, Ralph. But first, we need to preserve this relic. Please fetch the preservation box from my tent."

"And be careful, copper tablets are a very rare find. Do not tell anyone else about them, and I will so advise the rest of the team at a later time." *The fewer people who knew, the safer the tablets would be.* This need for secrecy was a new sensation for Albert Whitfield. His previous vocation as a Catholic priest had been defined by faith shared openly with his congregation. His faith has always guided his moral duty to save each person he encountered from themselves. He believed that each person frequently sabotages their own progress and well-being. However, a series of personal tragedies and crises of faith led him to question his beliefs and to leave the Church ultimately.

Seeking a new purpose, Whitfield threw himself into his love of history and archaeology. His exceptional knowledge and talent earned him a position as a part-time professor at Columbia University and

a spot on a prestigious dig in Jerusalem.

Now in his late thirties, Whitfield has rebuilt his life in New York City. His British roots are still strong, and he visits his family in the UK whenever he can. His girlfriend, a fellow academic, shares his passion for archaeology.

Despite his turbulent past, Whitfield has retained his sharp wit and no-nonsense attitude. His sarcasm often masks a deep-seated passion for his work, especially as he uncovers ancient mysteries in Jerusalem. The copper tablet, etched with symbols entirely foreign to him, felt jarringly out of place amidst the familiar ruins of Jerusalem. Whitfield, barely able to control his excitement, thought that whatever language this was, it was undoubtedly ancient." *But why a crucifix portraying Jesus's feet by the top beam?*

Whitfield decided to take an early break. It's 4:35 PM as he proceeds to his hotel to secure the artifact. Amidst Jerusalem streets' bustling noises and smells, Whitfield felt dizzy, and a sudden mild headache promptly ensued. Strange, as he never gets headaches. Attempting to cross the busy street, he

almost got hit by a passing Metronit bus.

Professor Whitfield, who is of British-Jewish ancestry, is of average height and weight. His dark brown hair is starting to show a few silver streaks. A strong angular face and a prominent jawline, wrinkled forehead, and penetrating brown eyes reveal his intelligence and curiosity; together with his glasses, a medium-thick mustache, and a slightly hooked nose, complete the picture of a well-groomed man who carries himself with confidence and professionalism.

Ralph Almhud has returned home after a short day with Whitfield and wastes no time to take a shower and gets set to enjoy a traditional Shawarma; thinly sliced lamb cooked on a rotating spit and served in pita bread, which he bought on the way home. He lives in a tiny room that he rents from a local family. He's got everything he needs in his little room: a TV, a small fridge, a comfortable twin-sized bed, and a small microwave, which he recently acquired from a used appliance shop.

He is a single young man in his late twenties, currently attending school at Jerusalem Preparatory Design, Art and Architecture Sto'tz. Ralph hopes to become an architect

one day, but for now, he is content with helping Professor Whitfield sketch and organize his dig sites.

As he sat down to eat, he suddenly felt dizzy and nauseous. It's been a while since he'd felt so sick. After sitting down for a few minutes, he managed to eat.

Shortly after, Ralph excitedly calls his best friend at school and tells him about the discovery. Outside, sitting in a black sedan, a shadowy figure, a man wearing a fake goatee with dark sunglasses, listens in on Ralph's conversation using a Stingray device.

This man has followed Professor Whitfield and his team on many of his digs since the professor discovered a chalice that purportedly displayed the name of Jesus, "Joshua," as he was known back then. It was a media sensation, and religious leaders around the world rushed to debunk the idea that such a chalice was not from Jesus's times.

"I tell you this tablet is unique, the professor hasn't seen anything like it before in Jerusalem, and the mysterious writings are..." Said Ralph to his classmate on the

phone. He was interrupted by another call.

“Hello,” said Ralph. “Hey Ralph, take the day off tomorrow. I’ll be doing a little research on our findings today.” Exclaimed Whitfield.

“Sure thing, professor. When do I report back to the dig?” *I really wouldn’t mind taking the weekend off.*

“Oh, it’s ok. You can report back on Monday and take the weekend off. I need some rest too,” explained Whitfield.

Yes! I can party a little! Thought Ralph, excited to have some time off. “Hey man, I’ll talk to you later. I just got the whole weekend off!” Said Ralph to his classmate. He heard a strange *click* on the phone just before he hung up.

Back at The Sephardic House Hotel, Whitfield’s headache persists. *Why a headache now! I never get headaches!* After taking a couple of aspirins, he immediately set out to hide the artifact in the room safe. But before he put the tablet safely away, he admired how well preserved the writing or symbols were, grey-colored and distinctly visible against the brownish-copper background. *Why Cooper?* He

thought. The writing looked almost like Coptic writing, but with a cuneiform twist to it.

As he finished putting the tablet away, the hotel's phone rang. "Hello?" He said in a tired but excited tone. "Hey, Al, it's Jen. Did I catch you at a bad time?" Jennifer, Whitfield's New York City girlfriend. Jennifer Conley is a history student with a minor in Archaeology, which she added after meeting Whitfield in a class two years ago at Columbia University, where she is currently a senior Ph.D. student.

Jennifer Conley was a woman who embodied both beauty and intellect. Standing at 5 feet 6 inches, she carried herself with a confidence and grace that drew others to her. Her dark brown hair, cascading in soft waves past her shoulders, framed her striking blue eyes that sparkled with curiosity and passion. Her love for yoga kept her physically fit, and her toned form is proof of her dedication to maintaining a healthy and balanced lifestyle. It was through this shared passion that she met Professor Whitfield, her mentor and, eventually, her boyfriend. Their relationship was built on a mutual respect for the pursuit of knowledge, a bond strengthened by their many

adventures uncovering the secrets hidden within the artifacts they studied.

“Oh, Hi, Jen. No, I’m just a little tired and just got a headache.” Whitfield hesitates to reveal anything about his discovery. *You never know who may be listening through the hotel’s phone system.*

“Oh, really? Did you take something for it?

“Yes, I took some aspirin.”
I’m a grown man!

“Aspirin? You do know that this is the 21st Century, right?”

“Oh, Jen, you know how I am...”

“Old-fashioned? It sounds like I’ve heard that before.”

“Anything new on your dig?” Says Jennifer.

I wish I could tell her more.
“Not really, just too hot today, so I took an early leave from the site. How’s your dissertation going along?” Inquired Whitfield.

“Well, just peachy... I think I’m doing ok with it; we still have ‘til the end of the semester.” Replied Jennifer.

A knock was heard at Whitfield’s door. “Room Service.” Said the server.

“One moment please,” Snapped Whitfield. “Ok, Jen, I’ll let you go now, my dinner is here, and I’m truly hungry.” They said their goodbyes, and Whitfield had a wonderful Mezze, a selection of small dishes, including hummus, baba ghanoush, falafel, tabbouleh, and stuffed grape leaves. After three years in Jerusalem, Whitfield learned to love some of those traditional local dishes.

That evening, Professor Whitfield, seeking the familiar rhythm of his after-dinner walk, stepped out of his second-floor room. Strolling through the interior corridor, Whitfield observed room doors shaped like medieval-style arches. The squared interior corridors featured a decorative black fence-like barrier, offering views of the well-appointed lobby below.

Leaving the hotel, Whitfield travels North along Derech Hashiloah Street and stops to rest at the Beit Shalom Garden, where he sits on a stone bench at the edge of the park, bathing in the warm golden light of the setting sun.

While watching the people go by, an unassuming stranger, dressed in a grey sports jacket and wearing dark sunglasses, sits next to

him. *Ok, I hope I'm safe here, there are a lot of people around here.* Thought Whitfield.

“Good evening. Such a nice spot to take a rest, isn't it?” Proclaims the stranger.

The shadowy figure known as "The Collector" was a wealthy and mysterious individual with an insatiable appetite for rare and powerful artifacts. For years, The Collector has been following Professor Whitfield's career, taking great interest in his discoveries. He had learned to employ sophisticated surveillance techniques in effect, spying on prominent archaeologists and Art buyers around the world.

He had tracked Ralph to his home and, using a device that scanned cell phone frequencies, eavesdropped on his conversation with a classmate. Through this, he discovered the existence of an ancient copper tablet adorned with mysterious inscriptions. The Collector quickly realized that this discovery might be the key to unlocking a greater treasure, perhaps an ancient temple rumored to contain unimaginable power.

He seems to be nice. Whitfield replies, “Yes, not bad considering how hot it was earlier today.”

“Yes, so it was.” Says the Collector. “Say, you look familiar...” Says the Collector in a foreign tone to Whitfield. “You are Professor Whitfield, right?” he asks, offering a handshake.

Adnan Sunil, the Collector, exuded an air of sophistication and intrigue. He stood tall and lean, with chiseled features and a round but angular jawline. His dark hair was meticulously styled, and even though baldness was quickly taking over, a hint of grey at the temples lent him a distinguished appearance.

His piercing grey eyes held a keen intelligence and an inscrutable quality that made it difficult to discern his true intentions. His dress was always impeccable, favoring tailored suits in shades of charcoal and gray that emphasized his commanding presence.

Despite his refined appearance, The Collector possessed a subtle strength that, even at the age of 72, was evident in his firm handshake and confident gait. Born in India, his parents migrated to the U.K. from India when he was a teenager, but he never forgot his land and the love he had for it. A thin, jagged scar ran along his left cheekbone, hinting at a past filled with danger and secrets.

Recently remarried to a British lady, he was the Don Juan of the 1970s. An Italian woman had captured his heart during that time, and they had a son whom he never saw again. Despite his disapproval of the boy's chosen career path, he kept tabs on him throughout his life.

Overall, Adnan Sunil was a man who seemed at home in boardrooms and ancient ruins alike. His enigmatic aura and imposing demeanor made him a force to be reckoned with—a person one could never fully trust, yet whose charm and charisma were difficult to resist.

"I'm sorry to bother you, I couldn't help but recognize you from your lectures. My name is Adnan Sunil." In conversation with The Collector, who expresses admiration for the professor's work, Adnan mentions his interest in ancient artifacts. The Collector continues, "I couldn't help but overhear some rumors about an intriguing discovery you and your team made recently. Something about an ancient tablet with mysterious inscriptions? It sounds utterly fascinating."

How could he know about that?! I asked everyone to keep it quiet. Trying to contain his surprise, Whitfield sits up straight on the bench

and says, "Mr..." "Call me Adnan," says the Collector. "Ok, Adnan, I don't know where you heard such a thing. I do come up with interesting artifacts almost every day, and there is nothing unusual about anything I have found there." Assured Whitfield.

Undeterred, the Collector adopts a calm, persistent approach. He tries to build rapport by expressing his admiration for Whitfield's work and engaging in casual conversation about ancient history and archaeology. Meanwhile, he also drops subtle hints about his vast resources and connections, implying that he could be a valuable asset to Whitfield's work.

"You know, Professor Whitfield, I have a keen interest in funding historical research and archaeology," The Collector says. "I'd be honored to offer my support to your work if there's a way I can contribute."

"Sir, I appreciate your offer, however, at this stage, my team and I are making good progress." Said Whitfield. *I have never been fond of salesmen.*

But the Collector remains persistent, gently probing for more details about the excavation site and its findings. "I understand your

position, professor, but I'm sure you can appreciate that my interest is sincere. I respect your dedication to preserving historical artifacts for future generations, and I'd love to find a way to assist in your efforts."

My God! He is really insistent! "Thanks again, Mr.?"

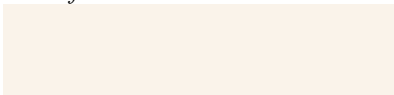
"Adnan Sunil. Here is my card, just in case I can be of any assistance, don't hesitate to call me, please." Ushers The Collector as he hastily snaps a card out of his grey jacket.

As Whitfield accepts the card, he stands up and excuses himself from The Collector's company. "Thanks. If you excuse me, I have a prior engagement to attend." Says Whitfield as he starts to head back in the direction of the hotel. He took a quick look back at the Collector, but he had simply disappeared. *I can't believe this! Who leaked the information about the artifact?"*

After going around the corner, the Collector places a call, "Okay, he seems vulnerable enough, do it tomorrow morning."

That night, Whitfield had trouble falling asleep as he thought about who could have broken their silence about the artifact. Through the night, as he tossed back and

forth, his mind was infused with a sense of dread and darkness. *He had never felt so threatened.*



Chapter 2

Saturday, 23 August, 2025

This morning, he woke up fervently wanting to find out who disclosed the discovery, but first, he took a shower, as he had been sweating the night before. He started calling all members of his team, a close group of about six. He asked everyone until he got to Ralph. “Hey Ralph, do you remember what we discussed about the tablet yesterday?” *I only want to hear the truth.*

“Professor, yes, I remember you said to keep it to ourselves, but...” *Oh no, here we go...* “But I may have mentioned something to Joey.” “I’m sorry, prof, I thought it wouldn’t be a problem.” Said Ralph in a distraught tone. “I promise it won’t happen again, I swear.”

“Ralph,” said Whitfield, “Once is all it took; someone must

have listened to your phone call or your friend told someone else.” Whitfield was fuming. “I just had a man approach me yesterday evening who already knew that I had come into a tablet.” Ralph was starting to feel sick to his stomach... “Well, the damage is done, at least he doesn’t really know if I still have it. I’ll see you Monday morning at the dig.”

“Sure thing, professor. Again, I’m really sorry.” Whitfield just hung up.

A few moments later, he heard a loud knocking. Opening the door, he was faced with a tall obese man. "Dr. Whitfield, my name is Saraz Wazei, I’m with the Israeli Antiquities Protection Bureau. We have reason to believe that the artifact you have recently uncovered is of significant value to our research team in Tel Aviv. You are to report any future findings and turn over the artifact to us." The man handed Whitfield an official-looking document.

Whitfield's heart raced. "But this is my discovery. I can't just hand it over without knowing more about it." Said Whitfield, handing the document back.

Wazei's gaze hardened. "I'm afraid you don't have a choice, Professor.

The artifact is similar to an object discovered a few miles from here and has been linked to a series of recent events that have placed several lives at risk. It is, after all, the property of the State of Israel. Your compliance is not optional."

"Look, I understand what you are saying. But, please, as a professional archaeologist, my duty is to study and research these artifacts. Besides, I am working under the authority of Tel Aviv University. Can I have at least a couple of days to record my findings?

"Dr. Whitfield, you will have 48 hours to comply and turn in the artifact. In addition, you will immediately turn in any other similar artifact to us." The man handed Whitfield a card with the Bureau's contact information and left. *What am I supposed to do now? I've never encountered anything like this!*

Sunday, 24 August, 2025

Sunday morning, bright and early, Whitfield was desperately digging in the same area where he found the original tablet. He couldn't wait until Monday to

resume digging. If he were to find any more artifacts, it would have to be sooner rather than later. His mind was racing with the implications of what had happened yesterday. It simply didn't make sense to him. *They commissioned me to work on this dig, but now I have to turn in whatever I find immediately?* Incredibly, he hit upon another object... *Yes! Another tablet!* He quickly looked around to make sure no one saw him. he was alone at the dig this Sunday; however, at this point, he did not trust even his long-time assistant!

After taking pictures and meticulous notes, he swiftly put away the new tablet and quietly continued digging. Before he knew it, three more copper tablets were found, along with a slender clay vase that contained a well-preserved piece of papyrus. Suddenly, he felt a strange, cold breeze swirling around him, raising a cloud of dust that got into his eyes and nose. He covered his face with his cloth satchel until the wind subsided. He vehemently tried to continue digging, but his eyes were burning from the dust. He eventually realized that he probably wouldn't find any more copper tablets or vases.

Besides, it was almost nightfall. So, at 6:35 pm he called it quits and headed back to the hotel. At his desk, he observed that the tablets were virtually identical to each other in size, shape, and thickness. Some had missing corners, and another was bent in the middle with a small part of the middle cracked.

Shortly afterward, Whitfield called the team to tell them not to report to work on Monday as he had forgotten that it was a holiday (Thanks to Sir John Lubbock, who authored the Bank Holidays Act of 1871) and that they would get together again on Tuesday. He really wished he had more time to examine the artifacts. He also did not disclose the problem with the Bureau to the team.

Monday, August 25th, 2025

Monday morning at 10:00 am sharp, Whitfield called one of his friends at the Oxford Radiocarbon Lab in the U.K. as it was 8:00 am over there. *They don't take holidays at the lab.* Dyson Perrins was a lad whom he

befriended in his long summer stays at his grandfather's farm in Berkshire. From age eleven to before he finished high school, Whitfield would spend most of his summers enjoying fresh eggs and milk.

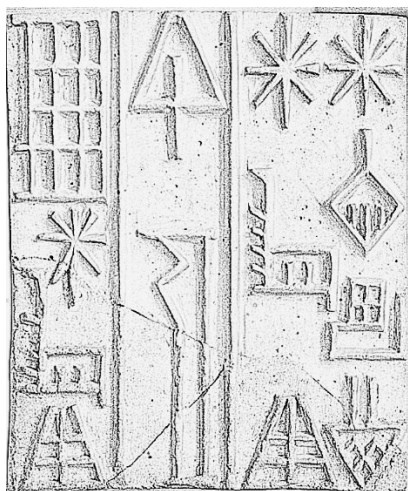
"Dyson, how are you? Listen, I have come across something that may be very old, and I'd like you to test its age for me," Whitfield said.

After some conversation, Dyson said, "No problem, Albert. I'll have to do it after hours to keep it between us. When can you send it?"

"I'll drop it at the post today." *If I can make it before noon, I forgot that the post closes early today, the last Monday in August.*

That day, Whitfield hurriedly took a small snippet of the first copper tablet, and after carefully placing it in a bubble envelope, he dropped it off at the post as a Next Day Delivery Parcel. *18 pounds well spent.* He thought. (The Post was open half a day on this special Sunday)

Using his British Library card online, Whitfield started researching the symbols found on the copper tablets.



Whitfield had thought of spending another week at the dig, but he realized that he needed to protect from the Bureau what he had found so far. So he decided to close the dig for at least another week while he reassessed what to do. The pressure imposed by the *Bureau* was simply too much to bear. It went against his professional and personal principles. Even so, he was surprised that Mr. Wazei had not paid him a visit. So, on a whim, he decided to take a short holiday tomorrow, Tuesday, to clear his mind. Whitfield had told the team

not to report back to the dig the night before. He decided to take a break from work and visit a site close to the dig, the Dome of the Rock. Exhausted from research, he went to bed.

Tuesday, August 26, 2025

It was a beautiful, sunny day in Jerusalem when Professor Albert Whitfield decided to join a guided tour of the Dome of the Rock. As he made his way through the crowd, he noticed a young man wearing a priest's collar. The man, Father Armando Robles, was deep in thought, studying the intricate architecture of the historic site.

Whitfield approached him and struck up a conversation. "So, what do you think of this place?" Asked Father Robles with a Spanish-Italian accent.

"It's magnificent and mysterious at the same time," Replied Whitfield. "You know, I was once a priest." Said Whitfield in a kind of sarcastic tone.

"Oh, and what happened?"

"Well, for one thing, my dad was murdered by a vengeful father who blamed my dad for

losing his son at the operation table.”

“Your father was a surgeon then?”

“Yes. So, after going through more setbacks, I eventually dropped from the clergy and ended up getting a degree in Archaeology, and here I am, working on a dig in Jerusalem.”

“Sometimes God has other plans for us.” Remarked Father Robles.

“Just like *The Road Not Taken*, a famous poem by Robert Frost. I met my girlfriend at the English Literature class.”

“Ah, I’d say you already won two out of three!” Father Robles was feeling upbeat today.

Whitfield thought for a second, “Yes, you could say that.”

Father Armando Robles was born to Mexican-Italian parents in Bergamo, Italy. When he was 12 years old, tragedy struck: both of his parents died in a car accident, leaving him and his sister orphaned. His sister Alicia, four years older, did not handle the loss of their parents well. Their aunt, being sick, could not handle both children, so she sent Armando to live with his maternal grandmother in New York

City, while Alicia wanted to stay in Italy to attend to her sick aunt. Growing up in the bustling city, he found solace and comfort in the Catholic Church.

As a teenager, Armando became heavily involved in his local parish, volunteering for community events and attending Mass regularly. He developed a close relationship with the parish priest, Father Anton, who became a mentor and father figure.

After graduating from high school, Armando decided to pursue his calling and entered the seminary to become a Jesuit priest. He returned to his birthplace of Bergamo, Italy, to serve at the Church of Santo Sepolcro.

At 32 years old, Father Robles is a dedicated priest who strives to help others, especially those who have experienced loss and trauma. His own experiences have given him a unique perspective on grief and healing, which he draws upon in his ministry. However, Father Robles never fully recovered emotionally from the sudden loss of both his parents; he struggles daily with intense bouts of grief. He prays daily, asking God for relief.

And so, the professor and Father Robles quickly discovered their shared interest in ancient history and religion and found themselves debating the significance of the Dome of the Rock. Despite their different perspectives, they felt a connection and exchanged contact information before parting ways. Whitfield sensed a strong spiritual connection between himself and Father Robles. That sensation was so strong that he had no doubt in his mind that they would see each other again soon.

Chapter 3

Tuesday, August 26, 2025
- Evening

Back at the hotel, Whitfield continues his examination of the five copper tablets and the papyrus found with them as he listens to the radio. Based on his limited knowledge of languages-archaeologists don't get enough training on them- Whitfield concedes that the symbols and inscriptions on the tablets may be of some kind of Sumerian origin, but when he looks at the writing in the

papyrus, it looks like some sort of Aramaic language.

As Whitfield continues to analyze the artifacts, the radio crackles with some disturbing, albeit unbelievable, news:

"Breaking news! This just in: Reports that Russia has launched an all-out invasion of Poland in a shocking move that has caught the world off guard are pouring in. Polish authorities have confirmed that Russian fighter jets and bombers have been sighted in Polish airspace, dropping conventional bombs on key strategic locations across the country.

The Polish military is scrambling to defend against the attack, and the nation's leaders are urging citizens to remain calm and seek shelter. The United Nations Security Council is convening an emergency meeting to address this unprecedented aggression, while world leaders are calling for an immediate halt to the hostilities.

This is a rapidly developing situation, and we'll bring you more updates as they become available. Stay tuned to this station for the latest news on the unfolding crisis between Russia and Poland."

Whitfield could not believe his ears... Things in Jerusalem seemed calm at the moment. *At least the US is not involved yet.* Rationalizes Whitfield. At the same time, he realizes that Poland is part of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), and as such, the invasion will likely invoke Article 5.

Article 5 provides that if a NATO Ally is the victim of an armed attack, every other member of the Alliance will consider this act of violence as an armed attack against all members and will take the actions it deems necessary to assist the Ally attacked.

The phone rings. "Hello?" Says Whitfield. "Hey, Albert, it's Dyson. I got those results for you."

Just in time; I was getting frustrated here. "So, how old are these copper tablets, Dyson?"

"Well, based on *the inductively-coupled plasma atomic-emission spectrometry*, the metal is at least 2,500 years old, give or take a couple hundred years." Said Dyson.

"Wow, I didn't expect them to be *that* old." Exclaimed Whitfield. Due to the possible

significance of the discovery, Whitfield asked, "Dyson, would you mind faxing the test results to me?"

"Sure thing, Albert, but I have to do it from home to keep this between us." Clarified Dyson.

"Ok, thanks, Dyson. We'll talk later."

"No problem, Albert, Goodbye."

Whitfield was excited because a couple of miles away, while working on a new pre-school in Jerusalem, a construction crew discovered a mikveh, or ritual bathhouse, dating back to the first century C.E. The copper tablets, with the Sumerian-Italian-looking markings, seemed to belong to a region much farther away. *Someone must have brought them here to Jerusalem*, thought Whitfield.

As Whitfield confirmed the ancient origin of the copper tablets, the Collector's pulse quickened. Leaning closer to the monitor, he watched the digital trace of Whitfield's conversation unfold, a predatory gleam in his eyes. *Twenty-five hundred years old? The tablets must be brimming with secrets and power.* He thought. At this very

moment, he knew that he would stop at nothing to make them his.

The Collector's mind raced as he considered their potential value. Perhaps these tablets contained long-lost knowledge, forgotten rituals, or even spells. Whatever they held, he knew one thing for sure: acquiring them would solidify his reputation as a collector of the world's rarest and precious artifacts and perhaps even grant him a taste of the enigmatic power they might possess.

A sly smile spread across his scarred face as he disconnected the Stingray device, the sound of Whitfield's voice fading into silence. The Collector had a new prize to claim, and he would not rest until those copper tablets were in his possession.

Chapter 4

Later that Tuesday night, Whitfield ponders the enigmatic symbols and markings yet to be deciphered when he notices an eerie glow coming from the window. He walks over to see what it may be. He sees this reddish-purple glow covering the entire visible sky, and it is strangely glowing in and out of intensity. Everyone is out on the streets watching it. *I hope this is not a harbinger of bad things to come.* A shiver ran down his spine, the fine hairs on his neck bristling at the mere thought of it.

The phone rings. “Professor, have you seen the sky? It looks weird. Any idea why this is happening, Professor? A scared Ralph asked.

“Ralph, I don’t know; it may be an atmospheric or magnetic phenomenon. Stay calm, ok?”

“Alright, professor, I’ll be at home then.”

“Ok, Ralph, I’ll talk to you later.”

Unbeknownst to Whitfield, the entire world was witness to this glow in the heavens. This was the beginning of what people around the world will

experience. Something incredibly evil, something that is a warning of an approaching level of disruption and chaos like never seen before.

Just a few hours later...

In the Vatican, the Dormant Angels, the awoken spirits of old, infiltrate the Catholic Church, twisting and influencing the cardinals' and bishops' minds. During mass, these conflicted clergymen had begun to preach convoluted, dark sermons, urging their followers to embrace the darkness and forsake the light. *“Dare to follow your inner being, don’t trust anyone or any single religious guidance.”* *“There is only one light to follow, and no one should dictate what to believe.”* These and other teachings incite the masses to do their own bidding. Inside churches, people had begun looking to their left and their right with an increasing sense of distrust.

In their minds, faith is no longer the ruling sentiment, but doubt and suspicion have become predominant. In St. Patrick’s Cathedral, church members were stealing items from the altar itself. Chapels in Jerusalem, which normally would be lighted with candles all

around, did not have a single candle burning.

Whispers and rumors among churchgoers centered on rumors and criticism of each other's appearance. The smell of unkept humanity permeated throughout. Indeed, many congregations witnessed fist fights, defiant screams at priests, and even food consumption within the sacred buildings. At the Vatican, of the 239 Cardinals usually active, only a couple of dozen, plus the Pope, remain uncompromised.

Meanwhile, in mosques around the world, Imams are taken over by the Dormant Angels, their Saturday khutbahs now filled with malevolent messages and instructions for their congregations to carry out jihad against all known Christians and Jews wherever and whenever they are encountered.

Even Hindu priests, Buddhist monks, and Jewish rabbis are not spared from the Dormant Angels' influence. Temples, monasteries, and synagogues became breeding grounds for dark teachings and rituals, as possessed clergy led their followers to become enemies of each other.

The phone rang, Whitfield sprang from his chair,

“Helloo!” He almost dropped a tablet to answer, “Albert, it’s Jen.” Jennifer’s panicked voice pierced through the phone, “What’s happening, Al? Why does the sky look so weird, plus the sudden cold wind, and why are people losing their minds on the streets? I saw a professor at Columbia preaching some twisted version of history in the quad. It’s like everyone’s gone crazy! I don’t feel safe. Albert, what should I do?”

Whitfield’s mind raced as he tried to process Jennifer’s words. The chaos caused by the awakening Dormant Angels was spreading quickly. *My God, what is going on?*

“Jennifer, listen to me,” he said, his voice tense but steady. “Don’t worry about the sky, stay calm, and stay home. Avoid any large gatherings or areas where people seem to be behaving strangely. If you have to go somewhere, go with a friend. Flights are tight right now, as so many pilots aren’t even showing up for work. I’ll do my best to get to you as soon as possible.”

“But Albert, I don’t know if I can, and...” Jennifer’s voice was suddenly cut off by a blood-curdling scream in the background, followed by a loud crash. The line went dead. Whitfield’s heart pounded in his chest

as he frantically tried to call her back, fearing the worst. "I'm sorry," said Jennifer, her voice trembling, "I dropped the phone, there was this woman screaming outside... Looks like someone was trying to steal her car and then crashed it."

No, this is too much; she has to get out of there. "Jen, change of plans, get to your sister's in upstate, and I'll do my best to meet you there." Offered Whitfield in a worried tone.

"Ok, it's just an hour's drive, and Albert, please be careful."

"You too, take your time, don't go too fast, stay alert, and lock all the car's doors." Said Whitfield in a fatherly manner.

"I will, love you."

"Love you too."

Not a minute after saying their goodbyes, the phone rang again. It was Ralph. "Professor, I just passed by the dig on my way home and there's nobody there, not even the guard!" What's happening to people? Everyone has gone mad, and the sky still looks weird, Professor?"

"Ok, listen, Ralph, I do not know what's going on, but something is happening everywhere, people are not acting normal, and they are doing crazy things. I am suspending the dig work for the time being. I have to go to New York

to be with Jen, and I'm taking the copper tablets and papyrus with me. Don't worry, I'll continue paying you for the remainder of your contract."

"Ok, professor, I'll keep an eye on the site...It's been awesome working for you, good luck, professor," Said Ralph in a grateful but nervous voice.

"Thank you, Ralph, please be careful." *I didn't expect to have to suspend my dig work so soon.*

Whitfield was *not* looking forward to a long flight. He had never enjoyed travel, especially flying. The thought of being enclosed in a large aluminum tube flying at thirty-eight thousand feet dislocated any sense of safety for him. He kept thinking, as he lay in bed, what would happen to Jennifer and what would happen to the world if whatever was causing it was not stopped.

The day seemed dark. Entering the airplane, loads of people were putting away their stuff into the upper compartments. Whitfield finds his seat, which is at the very tail-end of the plane. His seat is right by the window. The flight attendants have finished their routine pre-flight instructions. Soon, Whitfield's flight is roaring down the runway. Wheels up, he's on his way. As he feels momentarily pressured against his seat, he makes the sign of the cross. Thirty-eight thousand feet is reached

within a few minutes. As he always does on flights, Whitfield tries to get some sleep or at least keep his eyes closed to the reality of being so high up in a metal tube.

Suddenly, the aircraft starts to shake violently, and the lights go out, but there is still light coming in from the windows. Looking up, Whitfield sees black, very black shadows advancing through the cabin. The shadows seem to divide themselves and disappear on top of each passenger. As this happens, each passenger turns their head unnaturally 180 degrees and stares at Whitfield, each displaying a horrific demonic face. Whitfield shouts, "What's happening, stop it, stop it!" Whitfield closes his eyes hard, but he can still see the unholy event before him. The plane continues to shake severely and parts of the cabin are starting to tear apart. With a thunderous boom, the tail section comes apart from the rest of the aircraft...Whitfield is screaming his head off as he and other passengers of the tail section free-fall while their breath is sucked out of them.

He awoke in a stupor, thanking God that it was all a dream. Never before had he had nightmares like this. It was 6:45 am, and a shower before his flight had *never* felt so good.