

# O: ARTHUR: By the River Thames,

## 1872

Arthur's return to England in 1872 marked a pivotal moment in his life. After experiencing the triumph of discovering the Flood Tablet, his excitement quickly gave way to the disappointment of being called back home by his employers. Despite his repeated attempts to extend his stay by the River Tigris and continue his work, he found himself bound by duty to return to London. The night before his departure, Arthur had a bittersweet moment with Leila, a local villager, who, with a gesture of kindness, spilled water for good luck. Her words encouraged him to return to this land of rich history and culture when the time was right. Arthur, deeply moved, marked a pomegranate tree as a symbol of his promise to return, carrying the memory of the land and its people with him.

Upon arriving in London, Arthur was met with praise and admiration for his discovery. The media quickly turned him into a celebrated hero, and invitations from scholars and dignitaries poured in. Though the accolades were overwhelming, Arthur struggled internally with the public recognition. He had always been more at ease in the quiet of his scholarly pursuits, where his discoveries spoke for themselves. Now, with his newfound fame, Arthur faced the weight of high expectations and criticism alike. The accusations from some of his critics, claiming that he had falsified some of the artifacts, only served to intensify his feelings of isolation. He began to feel out of place in this world of socialites and academics, where every move seemed scrutinized, and every word judged.

Mabel, his fiancée, was eager to use Arthur's new fame to elevate their social standing. She became fixated on planning their wedding and acquiring the luxurious items that came with being associated with someone of Arthur's stature. However,

Arthur found himself uneasy with this materialistic aspect of their life. Shopping sprees for elegant attire, once exciting, now felt suffocating as he realized the cost of this new lifestyle. At a grand party thrown by a wealthy countess, Arthur was struck by the way his archaeological work had been commodified. The precious artifacts, which once held deep cultural significance, were now on display as mere curios for the amusement of the elite, their true value overlooked. This encounter solidified his disillusionment with the way his discoveries were being treated by the very society that had once celebrated them.

During the dinner at the countess's party, the conversation turned to the people of the lands Arthur had studied. As those around him casually discussed the inhabitants of the regions he had visited, Arthur felt compelled to defend the dignity and humanity of the Yazidis, a people whose struggles he had witnessed firsthand. The conversation highlighted the stark contrast between Arthur's view of these cultures and that of his dinner companions, further isolating him. It became clear to him that while he had a deep, personal connection to the places he studied, most people around him saw these lands and their people as little more than curiosities to be discussed over dinner. Arthur felt the weight of this disconnection, as it underscored the internal conflict he was experiencing—his desire to honor these cultures clashing with the reality of his role in Western academia.

After Arthur and Mabel married, the strains of their relationship became increasingly apparent. Mabel's desire for a life of luxury and the financial pressures that came with it began to clash with Arthur's priorities. While Arthur remained deeply absorbed in his work at the British Museum, Mabel urged him to seek a promotion, pointing out the financial demands of their growing family. This conflict between them reflected deeper tensions: Arthur's intellectual pursuits versus Mabel's material ambitions. Arthur continued to immerse himself in his research, but the memories of his time in Mesopotamia, and the woman he had left behind there, haunted him. He felt a sense of incompleteness, as if his life was not truly his own. Despite all his success and recognition, he longed for the simplicity and authenticity of the past, the connections he had made with people and places that felt more real to him than the world he now

inhabited.



Summaryer