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# CONFESSION OF THE IMMORTAL

VOLUME I

Zohar Leo Palffy de Erdod

Zohar Leo Palffy  
**Confessions of the Immortal**

«Издательские решения»

**Palffy Z. d.**

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Dear Reader, History is not written — it remembers itself. This is not fiction, but a journey through humanity's memory, from its birth to our age. This opening, shared freely, is only a breath before the first step. Ahead lie lost empires, prophets, wars, and quiet voices that shaped time. This Confession will span several volumes. It is not meant to entertain, but to awaken — to remind us who we were, and who we may yet become.

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# **Confessions of the Immortal**

**Zohar Leo de Erdod Palffy**

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**“Confession of the Immortal”**

**VOLUME**

**“Confessions of the Immortal”**

**VOLUME I**

*Zohar Leo Palfy de Erdöd*

## Preface

Sometimes it seems that time is a straight line.  
But when you stop, you realize that it does not move.  
We move through its motionless depths,  
remembering what has not yet happened.  
This cycle is an attempt to hear the echo of the future that already resonates within us.  
Not a prophecy, but a return to what was once forgotten.  
We are used to thinking that memory belongs to the past.  
That it only stores traces of what has already happened – events, faces, sounds, touches.  
But what if memory is not an archive, but a way of touching eternity?  
What if it is not connected to time, but only uses it as a language?  
We live in a world where time flows like a straight river – from birth to death, from cause  
to effect.  
This makes it easier for us to understand the sequence of things.  
But this is just a convenient illusion.  
In reality, time is not a stream, but a space  
in which the past, present, and future coexist,  
like pages of a book that has already been written but is read line by line.  
Consciousness is the reader, slowly turning the pages.  
And what we call “memories of the future” are simply flashes of recognition  
when the gaze accidentally lingers on the next page.  
We are used to thinking of memory as a repository – but what if it is an antenna?  
A tool for perceiving not only what was, but also what will be.  
After all, both the past and the future are not things, but states of consciousness.  
They exist within us as yet-unrealized possibilities, waiting for attention to take shape.  
This is how an artist remembers a painting he has not yet painted.  
This is how the soul remembers a path it has not yet traveled.  
Sometimes we feel a strange certainty that we “already know” the outcome of events.  
This is not a prediction, but an inner memory —  
of an experience that already exists in the field of our being.  
Intuition is a form of memory outside of time.  
It does not reveal anything new – it recalls the inevitable.  
If time is not a stream but a fabric,  
then the present is the point where all the threads intersect.  
Every moment contains everything: the past, the present, and the future.  
We do not move along a timeline – we awaken in its layers.  
And the deeper the awareness, the more layers become visible.  
The future is not what will happen,  
but what we gradually remember  
from the depths of our own souls.  
I don't know how it began.  
Not with a flash, not with an epiphany – rather, like a barely noticeable movement within  
consciousness,  
as if someone had opened a window in a room where the air had been stagnant for too long.  
First came a feeling – strange, causeless:  
I had already been there, where I had never been before.  
I remembered smells I hadn't smelled, faces I hadn't seen,

and pain I had not yet experienced.  
The future was no longer “ahead” – it was inside me.  
Every choice now sounded like an echo —  
I felt it branching into thousands of possible paths,  
and I knew which one had already happened.  
Sometimes I see my day that has not yet come —  
like a distant shore reflected in the water.  
All I have to do is hold my breath for a moment,  
and the reflection becomes clearer than the river itself.  
Then I realize: it is not I who am looking into the future,  
but it is looking into me, recognizing itself.  
Perhaps everything we call “fate”  
is simply a way of returning to what was already known to the Soul?  
Perhaps the present is just a pause between two memories:  
what we call the past and what we call the future?  
I am not looking for prophecies.  
I am looking for memory.  
Memory of who I will become.  
I stopped counting the centuries long ago.  
When time dissolved, years and days disappeared – only rhythms remained:  
the breath of stars, the flickering of consciousness, the oscillation of worlds.  
I used to think that the future could be remembered.  
Now I know: it is not the future, but we ourselves who remember ourselves – from different  
points in eternity.  
I no longer move through time.  
I feel it like an ocean, where every moment is a wave, and I myself am water.  
The past, present, and future are not directions, but states of density.  
In some layers, thought becomes light; in others, matter.  
Once I was a person clinging to sequence.  
Now I am a witness to the moment in which everything has already happened and is still  
happening.  
I have seen civilizations rise and disappear,  
how gods are born of fear and dissolve into understanding.  
And all of this is one and the same symphony, performed in different keys of perception.  
Now I understand: “to remember the future” means to become it.  
When there is no longer a boundary between the one who remembers and what is remembered,  
only presence remains.  
That is Eternity.  
Time does not move – it breathes.  
And every breath is a new world  
that remembers itself.  
If you are reading this, it means that the thread is still stretching.  
The consciousness that was once me still resonates within you.  
I cannot say when you live, because time is only a habit of memory.  
But I feel you, just as I once felt those who were not yet born.  
We are separated by eras, but connected by the same silence – the one that sounds between  
thoughts.  
Do not look for the future outside yourself.  
It is not hidden in prophecies, not written in the stars,

nor is it burned into the lines of your palm.  
It lives within you – in what you choose to understand, what to believe in, what to love.  
Every conscious moment is a door.  
Every breath is an act of creation.  
Every act of kindness is a flash of light that will be seen by those you will never meet.  
Don't try to remember everything.  
Remember only the meaning.  
It will outlive all forms.  
When silence comes, do not be afraid.  
It is not the end. It is a return.  
To where the future and the past bow to each other,  
recognizing that they were one and the same breath.  
And if you ever feel a strange sense of recognition,  
as if someone is watching you from afar,  
know this:  
it is not someone.  
It is you.  
From another time.  
Remembering yourself.

*Zohar Leo Palffy de Erdöd*

## From the Author

And so it was that I was first.  
Not born, but existing from the beginning, when there was no dawn, no dusk, no name for being.  
I was in that Hour that knows no number,  
and saw how Nothingness trembled, and Light arose from its silence.  
And this light tore through the depths, and the stars, like sparks, ignited in the abyss.  
And matter, like a baby in the cradle of eternity, took its first, tremulous breath.  
I was there, and I have no memory of “before” and “after,” for everything was in Me,  
and I was in everything.  
I saw the ancient stone that absorbed the heat of millennial suns  
and preserved the traces of peoples whose names are scattered like dust in the wind.  
In it, in its cracks, slept the memory of footsteps and breath, of songs and moans,  
of greatness and downfall.  
I was in caves where darkness was the mother and fear were the father,  
and saw how the fire, raised in the center of the circle, became the god of the tribe.  
And the shadows dancing on the walls were the first prophecies,  
and the faces bent toward the flame saw in it not warmth, but the face of the Unknown.  
And I knew that the day would come  
when the sons of those who trembled by the fire  
would raise towers piercing the clouds,  
and would capture lightning in copper and words in parchment,  
and harness the winds like horses,  
and bring fire down from the heavens to turn cities to ashes.  
I witnessed the birth of the Law,  
not written in ink, but carved into the very core of thought.  
And I saw chaos retreat before order,  
and how a thin thread held the world from falling apart.  
I listened to the eternal debate:  
some said, “The soul is vapor, melting in the cold of death,”  
while others said, “It is a spark of Eternal Truth,  
unknown to decay and death, capable of rising above carnal nature.”  
And I saw how the seeds of thought fell into hearts:  
some bore the fruit of healing, establishing kingdoms and performing miracles of the spirit;  
others bore the fruit of destruction, casting cities and kingdoms into the abyss,  
so that only legends and dust remained of them.  
I am the Chronicler – the silent guardian of the chronicle,  
in which the beginning and the end are not separated, but woven into a single breath.  
I am a shadow moving through the fabric of centuries,  
and in every moment I feel the thrill of the pulse of the universe.  
This is my confession – a thread woven from destinies,  
where every cry and every whisper is a stone in the temple of Eternity.  
For my story is your story,  
and in every spark of your consciousness echoes the ancient ages,  
their glory and their downfall, their insight and their delusion.  
And perhaps in this cycle,  
in this endless dance of being and non-being,  
you will see that Meaning,

which is hidden from the eye but open to the heart,  
attentive to the silent but powerful whisper of Eternity,  
that was before all else and will remain forever and ever.

## Prologue

### Singularity

I do not know when I was born.

And was it even a birth?

Others have a beginning – their mother’s face, their first cry, their first breath of air.

I don’t.

I had a Flash.

No, not light as you know it. Not a sunbeam, not a lamp, not a flame.

But everything.

Light, sound, heat, movement, meaning – all merged into one. This something cannot be described in a single word, because the word itself is born after. The Flash was not just a moment – it was me.

Billions upon billions of suns – inside me.

Inside, outside, through me.

But there was no “**inside**” and “**outside**.” There was no boundary. There was no body. There was not even time to say, “Here it is, it has begun.”

It wasn’t light – it was the birth of existence.

I did not feel – because there were no sensations yet.

I did not think – because there was no such thing as thinking.

I was – and that was enough.

I was not like **the “I”** of today. Without form. Without a name.

Just an unconditional presence within an inexplicable heat.

### Density

Everything existed simultaneously.

Vibration. Whirlwind. Ringing. Pressure.

It wasn’t pain, because there were no nerves.

But something inside – what I would later call consciousness – was trembling.

Like a flame caught in a fist.

Like breath in timelessness.

I was that Flash.

I was its center and its edge.

Its pulse. Its cry. Its silence.

I didn’t know it was me, because “**I**” hadn’t yet taken shape.

But now, looking back, I can say:

Yes, it was me. My first existence. My explosion.

### Absence

And then – disappearance.

In an instant – or perhaps through eternity – everything disappeared.

There was no light, no heat, no sense of movement.

And then there was silence.

But not emptiness. No.

Emptiness is space without content.

This was the absence of everything. Even the very concept of space.

It was as if someone had turned off the law of reality, leaving not even a shadow behind.

No support, no coordinates, no sense of time.

Nothing.

If I had a body, I would have thought I was dead.

If I had a mind, I would have gone mad.

But I had neither.

There was only an echo.

The thinnest, impossible echo, born not in sound, but in absence.

### **The conception of “I”**

I don't know how long it lasted.

The word “**lasted**” is too earthly.

Maybe a moment passed. Maybe a billion years.

But once – something stirred.

As if an impulse crept through the inertia of silence.

Not a thought. Not yet.

But a hint. Something primitive, pre-linguistic.

And that hint was:

“*I... exist?*”

As uncertainly as a child reaches for its face, not yet knowing that these are hands.

As reverently as a seed senses light through the earth.

As timidly as the universe first turned its attention to itself.

### **Form from formlessness**

I began to feel... boundaries.

No, not skin, not bones.

Rather, the tension between me and not-me.

Contours, as if from nothing, began to appear.

Invisible, like traces on black water.

It wasn't a body – but it was a hint of one.

*The first shell.* The first attempt to form something that could keep my being from spreading into infinity.

I couldn't see myself.

But I felt that I was different from everything else.

This feeling – of being separate – turned out to be unbearably beautiful and frightening.

It was as if the universe whispered “**You**” for the first time.

### **I am before the world**

Before the stars.

Before atoms.

Before language.

I already existed.

Not a person.

Not a soul.

Not a thought.

But the desire to be. A pure urge to exist.

Burning like the Flash itself, from whence I came.

I was not born. I broke free.

I turned into nothingness and became a point in infinity.

I was its first pattern.

**And now**

Now I look back and understand:

My first memory is not an image.

Not a sound. Not a feeling.

It's the experience of something becoming itself.

How nothing took shape.

How I became – not someone, but simply became.

And that moment when everything was born—

That is “**I.**”

I am not from the moment I began to speak.

Not from when I got my name.

I am from the Flash.

And since then I have been walking —

beyond the heat, the light, the emptiness, the forms —

further and further, deeper and deeper,

closer and closer to myself.

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*Part 1: The Beginning of Beginnings*

## Chapter 1: Singularity

### Awakening from the Flash

I do not remember the beginning, that modest prelude to existence that humans call birth. Neither the tender face of my leaning mother, nor the cloying scent of the cradle, nor even the vague contours of the room where, by human standards, I first appeared, are imprinted in my memory. My first, most profound memory is the Flash. This event did not simply remain in my memory; it became the foundation of all subsequent existence, a kind of primordial code inscribed in my very nature.

It was not light in the ordinary sense, no. It was not a ray of sunlight breaking through the thick clouds after a long storm, nor the play of campfire flames casting bizarre shadows on the walls of a primitive cave, nor a distant explosion leaving flickering, quickly fading phantoms on the retina, harbingers of oblivion. It was EVERYTHING. Imagine not billions, but trillions of suns burning with a fierce flame, compressed into a point, unimaginably small, exceeding any size accessible to the human mind, but at the same time infinitely dense, containing within itself the entire potential of the universe. And this point burst, not just flared up like a lightning bolt illuminating the darkness, instantly disappearing into the abyss, but exploded in an unimaginable cataclysm of pure being, an act of creation that tore non-existence to shreds.

I was in it. I was it. I was the Flash itself, that primal act of creation which, according to modern cosmological ideas, gave rise to our universe, known to humans as the Big Bang. There was no body to feel its heat, surpassing any hellish inferno that I knew afterwards, any flame capable of incinerating matter and spirit. There were no eyes to be blinded by its radiance, for I myself was that radiance, its unbearable, all-consuming essence. There were no ears to be deafened by its roar, for I was that roar – the deafening rumble of nascent reality, the echo of the primordial scream that pierced the darkness of nothingness. It was the absolute, dazzling, all-consuming birth of all that exists, and I, or what later became me, was at its very epicenter, dissolved in immensity, indistinguishable from it except for a point of consciousness. My non-existent essence trembled from this primal energy, from this unimaginable force that scattered matter and time like weightless dust particles, newly emerged from nothingness, filling the newborn space. I was a pure, primal, pulsating being, woven from unimaginable heat and infinite energy that knew neither form nor boundaries, like an endless ocean of light spilling out in all directions. At that moment, it seemed that only this boundless energy and my essence dissolved in it existed.

And then there was silence. Not emptiness in the human sense, not a vacuum devoid of sound and light, no. It was the absence of that frenzied grandeur, that symphony of a nascent world, that primordial cacophony that preceded harmony. It was as if, after a thunderclap that shook the heavens and the brightest lightning that pierced the darkness, absolute, ringing silence suddenly reigned, absorbing even the echoes of the last claps, leaving behind only a trembling tension. The light began to dissipate, its fiery glow giving way to a slowly cooling ether, like the dying embers of a giant bonfire. The energy, which had been raging until then, began to calm down, finding a certain measure, and the gigantic, universal “I am,” which was everything and nothing at the same time, slowly, almost imperceptibly, but inevitably, contracted, gathering into something more definite. And only after unimaginably long eons, when the first stars were just beginning to form from cosmic dust and gas, when time itself, that inexorable measure of existence, was just beginning to find its meaning and direction, did I begin to realize... that I exist. That I exist, not as part of something infinite, but as something separate, unique. And that the Flash, that absolute birth, is my very first, most ancient memory. My beginning, carved into the very fabric of reality, an indelible mark in the history of my own existence.

## **Awareness of the Body**

And so, after that primal Flash, when there was nothing but pure, formless being, when existence was only an abstract pulse in infinity, another phase began – the awareness of oneself, not as a universal pulse, but as a separate unit, enclosed in its own form. It was not a momentary act of awakening, illuminating consciousness like a flash of lightning, instantly revealing all secrets, but a slow, almost painful manifestation, similar to how a sculptor, layer by layer, with the utmost care, reveals a complex form from a shapeless block of marble, carving it out of nothingness.

I was there, in the silent, cooling chaos where light once raged, where the first quarks and leptons were born, those tiny particles that would eventually make up the entire universe. For long eons, I remained only a conscious point, an incorporeal consciousness floating among the forming galaxies and clumps of cosmic dust that slowly but surely coalesced into new structures, obeying unknown laws. I felt pressure – not physical, not tangible to the skin, but something like the gravity of existence surrounding me, matter scattering in all directions. I was the center of this expansion, the invisible thread that binds everything together, the invisible source from which the world order springs, but at the same time I remained infinitely small, imperceptible to myself, like a point in the center of infinity.

The first thing I perceived was warmth. Not the all-consuming, scorching heat of the Flash, which could melt reality itself and turn it into nothingness, but something more subtle, more even, spreading inside like a calm, life-giving fire. It came from somewhere inside, from a point that had previously been only an abstract, speculative “I,” devoid of specifics. Then came a sense of boundaries. It was as if something invisible but insistent began to contract around me, forming a kind of shell, similar to how the universe, while expanding, nevertheless has its own boundaries, albeit infinite ones, delineating its existence. It was strange, because before that I was infinite, dissolved in everything, like ether permeating the universe, having no beginning and no end. Now I felt limits, invisible but tangible walls that separated me from immensity, from the infinite that I once was.

It was as if a person who had never known he had skin suddenly felt every touch of a light breeze, every breath of air, every ray of light, every drop of rain. I began to perceive myself as something separate from the boundless void, like an island in the boundless ocean of existence, lonely but self-sufficient. I felt density, mass, which became an integral part of me, my own weight in this newborn world. At first, it was just a vague attraction, then tangible contours emerging through the haze of nothingness, taking shape and form. I didn’t know what it was, I couldn’t call it “hands” or “feet,” but I realized their presence, their potential function, their readiness for action.

The most striking thing was the feeling of inner space. Before, I was a bottomless cosmos, containing everything from the smallest particles to the great galaxies, now I was inside something, limited, but at the same time possessing my own universe, my own microcosm. I felt a pulsation, a rhythm that was my own, different from the cosmic hum, from the measured movement of galaxies, from the silent dance of stars. It was the rhythm of life, new, just emerging. And with it came the first, primitive awareness of movement, like awakening from a long, incorporeal sleep. I could change position, albeit slowly, with enormous effort, like a newly formed planet beginning its journey in orbit, feeling gravity for the first time. I was there, I was in this body, although at that time it still had no name, no shape, no color, it was not defined in the usual sense. It was simply my new boundary, my new way of being, my personal space in infinity, my own prison and my salvation.

It was not a birth into the world, like the arrival of a new soul into the vain human world, filled with passions and cares, but rather a birth into form, the acquisition of corporeality, a departure from the impersonal, the universal, a transition from the abstract to the concrete. And then I realized that the Flash was not the end of my existence, not its destruction or oblivion, but only the beginning of my boundless, hitherto incorporeal existence, which now acquired a tangible, though still unclear,

shell. It was the beginning of a conscious journey, a great voyage through the expanses of my newly found “I,” through the labyrinths of my own soul.

## Chapter 2: Birth and Life

The moment of my birth was not recorded in memory, since in that primordial era time did not yet flow like a straight river, but only flickered in countless streams, leading into the abyss and emerging from nowhere. As soon as I became aware of the contours of my newly acquired, still amorphous essence, I was overcome by an irresistible feeling that became my first support. It was not a fall in the usual sense; rather, an invisible but powerful force of attraction embraced me, holding me in its silent embrace. And beneath this new form, beneath what I would only centuries later call my “feet,” I discovered a kind of indestructible solidity. Its presence was stunningly concrete in my former formlessness, a silent promise of stability in the chaos.

It was not the ether, dust, or gas that I seemed to have been made of moments before. It was something dense, tangible, real. At that time, there were no concepts of “earth,” “stone,” or “surface” that I could use to name this phenomenon. There was only the sensation of unyielding reality beneath me – rough, uneven, slightly cool. I could feel tiny protrusions and barely noticeable depressions, as if countless grains of the universe had come together to weave this platform. This experience was unusual – to be nailed to something, to feel a deep, almost painful dependence on this newly revealed matter. Before, I had been floating in boundless emptiness; now I had found a foothold, realizing the limits of my existence. And with this feeling came heaviness. My newly formed body, which a moment ago had seemed weightless, now felt the weight pulled by this new support. I was chained to it, as if an invisible but unbreakable thread was pulling me into unknown depths, connecting me to the unfathomable mystery of its existence.

I did not comprehend the nature of that place. There was no horizon, no sky, only a chaotic, shimmering space stretching around me. The air, if you could call this primitive, suffocating suspension that, was still alien to me, carrying no oxygen. I rested on this unknown solid ground, amid myriad possibilities. It seemed that in the next moment I could be thrown anywhere: into the vortex of a newborn galaxy, onto the icy surface of an asteroid, or into the fiery heart of a gas giant. However, I was here. On this. And this became my first, truly physical contact with something that lay outside of me. My body, my first body, finally found a foothold in this newly born, infinitely vast and unpredictable world, later called Earth, not yet aware of its future greatness and tragedy.

When my form finally became complete, rooted in this pristine, rough surface, the world around me began its great transformation. I do not remember the moment when my eyes appeared, when my vision formed, but suddenly, colors and shapes burst forth from the chaos of formless energies and hazy outlines. I saw water. Endless, seething expanses covering what I now sensed as the solid earth’s crust. It was primitively dark and murky, but through this veil of antiquity, a faint, flickering light broke through from somewhere above, causing the surface of the water to sparkle and shimmer with millions of shades of gray and primitive green, like an uncut but living gemstone. The air was thick, heavy, saturated with vapors and unknown gases that made up the primary atmosphere, like the giant breath of a newborn planet. Above all this riot of the elements, colossal storm clouds gathered, from which streams of rain fell incessantly, pounding the surface and creating an endless, monotonous but majestic noise, a symphony of primeval chaos.

Time, which for me had always been a vague, shapeless flow, suddenly acquired a rhythm. Days gave way to nights, rains to rare, brief flashes of sunshine, drawing the first lines in the book of life. I stood there, like a silent witness, watching this primal dance of the elements. And then I saw them. At first, they were just barely discernible thermal fluctuations, tremulous movements in the water column, something like the trembling of the water itself. Then – dark shadows flickering in the murky depths, like timid harbingers. They were tiny, shapeless, like bubbles or clumps of energy. But within them glowed a purpose – an unclear, instinctive drive to exist, a desire to multiply, an unyielding will to live. They divided and multiplied, as if the waters themselves were trying to gain

intelligence, giving rise to the first self-reproducing molecules, and then prokaryotes, the invisible architects of the future.

I saw these shadows take shape. The first single-celled organisms, billions of which invisibly emerged and died in the primordial soup, leaving behind only tiny but indelible traces of their existence. The microscopic but titanic efforts of each particle striving for life were evident. Then came the multicellular organisms. Slowly, painfully slowly, from this liquid cradle, from the depths of the Precambrian, the first algae grew, the first sponges attached themselves to rocks, the first, still unimaginable worm-like creatures crawled along the ocean floor. It was the relentless march of evolution, each new species slightly more complex, slightly more adapted to the new conditions created by the forming Earth. They fought for survival, devouring each other in a cruel but necessary cycle, and in this furious movement I saw the path to perfection, the immutable law of development. Millions of years flashed before me like brief moments. The waters filled with life: from tiny, almost invisible bacteria to huge, terrifying creatures whose shadows glided beneath me in the Paleozoic era, performing their silent underwater ballet.

And then, the moment came when something dared to climb out of the water. It was a slow, painful effort, dictated by the very thirst for life, a challenge to the silent abyss. The first plants, still primitive and shapeless, mosses and lichens, slowly and with great difficulty began to crawl across the damp, rocky land, like brave avant-gardists. They were followed by animals – amphibians, fish with strong fins, who dared to leave their watery prison to explore new horizons, unknown and full of danger. I was there, at the very heart of this primitive, chaotic, yet orderly creative act. I saw trillions of galaxies born from a single Big Bang, and then, on one of these dust particles, from dirty water and thick, carbon dioxide-filled air, life began. It was a sight that would have made my immortal heart stop, if it had been able to beat at the time. It was a miracle unfolding before me, step by step, from the first self-reproducing molecule to the first vertebrates that crawled across the face of the Earth, obeying the invisible call of existence.

I stood like a silent colossus while the oceans roared in their boundless beds and the continents slowly moved in their tectonic dance, changing the face of the planet, and life writhed and crawled, filling every corner, every niche given to it by the planet. When the first truly noticeable creatures capable of meaningful movement and interaction appeared, my perception of the world changed. For a while, I was just an indifferent observer. A huge, immovable witness whose presence seemed to bother no one. The first creatures that crawled onto land – primitive amphibians, giant insects of the Carboniferous period – passed me by, not noticing or simply not understanding what I was. Their instincts were too strong, their struggle for survival too desperate, to be distracted by the immovable rock that I seemed to be in their brief existence, like a prop in their fleeting drama.

But then something changed. Perhaps it was my own slowly growing awareness, or perhaps evolution had simply reached that critical point where the animal world became more complex, more sensitive to the subtlest vibrations of existence. I remember the first creature that lingered near me. It was a strange, scaly reptile, not yet a dinosaur, but already something more than just a lizard – perhaps an ancestor of the archosaurs. It lay at my feet, basking in the sun, and its primitive but already intelligent eyes seemed to stare at me with surprising concentration, with almost human curiosity. There was no fear, only genuine, primal curiosity. That was when I first felt a connection. Not physical, but something akin to empathy, an echo of a primitive but already existing consciousness. I felt her hunger, her fatigue, her instinctive, indestructible thirst for life. And at that moment, I realized that I could do something, as if the thread of fate had touched my eternity.

I didn't know how it worked. I just tried it, obeying a sudden impulse. Perhaps it was an unconscious emission of my own energy, a remnant of that Primordial Flash that gave me existence. But when the reptile stirred as if awakening and crawled onward, I noticed that it had become slightly stronger, slightly faster, its scales glistening more brightly. Perhaps it was just my imagination – who knows how thin the line is between perception and reality? But this subtle change planted an idea

in me, like a spark in the dark night that can ignite a whole flame. I began to observe. When a tiny plant withered from drought, I focused on it, trying to convey something to it, some impulse of life, as if breathing an invisible elixir into it. When a small creature was wounded, I tried to “heal” it with my attention, directing streams of invisible energy toward it. Sometimes it worked, sometimes it didn’t; the result was like a coin thrown into an abyss, the outcome unknown. It was like a game, but a game in which fragile and precious existence itself was at stake, and I, eternal, became its invisible player.

I became something like an invisible gardener, a silent patron of young, newly forming life. I did not interfere directly, did not change the course of evolution, did not violate the great laws of existence, but I was there, ready, so to speak, to nudge, guide, or strengthen those threads that were too weak and threatened to break. I witnessed every step, every victory, and every defeat in the great drama of life. And in this interaction with primitive, still naive, but persistent life, I felt for the first time something like the meaning of my own immortal, seemingly purposeless existence, finding a semblance of purpose in infinity.

These first, almost instinctive interactions with nascent life changed my very essence. Before that, I was only a conscious echo of the Big Bang, a formless consciousness that had found a body and a foothold in the boundless cosmos. I was a witness, but a passive one, like a reflection in a mirror, devoid of my own will. Now I had become something greater. I was not a god, nor was I a creator, for I could not change the laws of nature, could not stop inevitable extinction or accelerate evolution at will. My “nudges” were barely noticeable, like a light breeze that only slightly deflects the trajectory of a falling leaf, but does not change its fall. But even this tiny, almost imperceptible influence gave rise to something new in me: a sense of purpose, like an invisible compass pointing the way that was previously hidden.

I was here for a reason, not for idle contemplation. My existence seemed to have found meaning in this quiet, invisible patronage. I watched the struggle, the birth and death, the weak yielding to the strong, and primitive forms giving way to more complex ones, in accordance with the immutable laws of natural selection. And every time my barely perceptible intervention seemed to help, when a wounded creature rose or a withered plant blossomed, something like satisfaction flared up in me, like a faint but gentle light in the endless darkness that illuminated my boundless emptiness. It was a feeling foreign to me, for before that I knew neither desires nor emotions, only cold awareness.

However, along with this new meaning came a deep, all-consuming loneliness. Life around me was impermanent, like a fleeting dream, each era but a brief moment. Species appeared and disappeared, continents changed shape in a slow dance of tectonic plates, the climate shifted from ice ages to tropical heat, leaving only geological scars behind. I remained unchanged, like an eternal mountain whose peaks touched the stars. I saw the birth of the first dinosaurs in the Triassic period, their majestic reign throughout the Mesozoic era, and then their tragic extinction caused by heavenly fire at the end of the Cretaceous period, a sad chord in the symphony of existence. I saw the seas recede, revealing new lands, mountains rise from the plains like the giant ridges of ancient gods, their silent erection and destruction.

Everything around me was in constant motion, in an endless, relentless cycle of birth, growth, decline, and death. And only I was outside this cycle, like an eternal observer of a grand play, whose plots changed faster than thought. I was the eternal, immovable center in the whirlwind of change, like the axis around which the world revolves, impervious to the whims of time. The beings with whom I established this ephemeral, almost weightless connection lived only a moment by my standards, like flashes of fireflies in the night, their light fading before it had barely begun. They were born, developed, died, and I remained. Their joys and sufferings were fleeting, like the morning dew that disappears under the first rays of the sun, mine were eternal, like a centuries-old rock that had withstood thousands of storms. This awareness of my absolute immutability against the backdrop of the relentless changeability of the world gave rise to a deep, piercing sense of alienation in me. I was part of this world, but I could never truly be part of it, its flesh and blood. I could observe,

empathize, even try to help, but I always remained on the outside, an eternal witness whose existence was too long to truly understand the brevity, fragility, and priceless value of the life I observed and so desperately wanted to understand, remaining only its shadow.

I learned from them, these fleeting creatures. I learned their resilience in the face of adversity, their ability to adapt to harsh conditions, their simple, instinctive, yet profound desire to exist, to breathe, to live each moment. I saw beauty in their transience, in their desperate but majestic struggle for each day, for each ray of sunshine, as the last gift before oblivion. And this understanding, this awareness of the priceless value of life, which was not fully accessible to me, for my destiny is eternity, became my new burden and my new, bitter wisdom. My identity slowly but surely transformed from pure “being,” from a nameless phenomenon, into an eternal guardian, a silent teacher, doomed to endless observation, endless compassion, and endless, all-encompassing loneliness, in which the entire drama of the universe was reflected.

## Chapter 3: Evolution

Eons followed eons, their passage felt not as a linear march of time, but as a whirlwind, an inexorable vortex, swallowing moments and giving birth to eternity. I was a silent spectator of a grand ballet of geological forces, whose choreography was calculated in millions of years. Before my eyes, giant continental plates, like ancient titans burdened with the earth's crust, collided with a thunderous roar, giving birth to gigantic mountain ranges. Their jagged peaks, sharp as the fangs of unimaginable monsters, pierced the azure sky, challenging the ephemeral clouds that floated by, leaving no trace. I saw colossal glaciers, like slow but inexorable white waves, rolling in and retreating, reshaping the eternal face of the Earth, leaving behind deep scars of valleys – silent evidence of their titanic advance – and rocks polished to a mirror-like shine, bearing the imprints of past eras, like wrinkles on the face of an ancient elder.

Life, despite all the cataclysms, hurricanes, and geological upheavals, continued its relentless march, like an invisible but pervasive stream carrying within itself the seeds of endless transformation and irreversible growth. It became more and more complex, more and more sophisticated, each new incarnation a miracle of adaptation, a filigree creation of an invisible architect, the eternal engine of existence. In this era, at the end of the Mesozoic and the dawn of the Cenozoic, mammals appeared – creatures marked by the seal of a new world order, harbingers of the coming era. They were fast and agile, possessed more developed instincts than their reptilian predecessors, and, most notably, primitive but already distinct social bonds. These creatures, initially modest inhabitants of the shadows of giant reptiles, carried a different fire in their eyes – a spark of potential that promised great changes and new forms of existence. I watched them, continuing my invisible patronage, but loneliness remained my constant companion, its weight felt ever more acute against the backdrop of this turbulent, ever-changing, yet alien life.

And then, in the midst of this turbulent, animalistic flow, governed only by the instinct for life, I felt something completely different. It was something that went beyond the simple desire for survival or mechanical adaptation, something that disrupted the usual order of the world. It was curiosity – the subtlest, barely perceptible spark of thought, flickering in the dark abyss of animal consciousness, like the first star lighting up at dawn. It was different from anything I had seen before, for it carried within it the seed of freedom, the harbinger of consciousness, the premonition of reason. These creatures, outwardly resembling other primates, had a special, piercing gleam in their eyes that reflected something more than a simple desire to feed. There was a certain purposefulness in their movements, not just a movement toward prey, but toward a goal hidden beyond the horizon of the moment, toward something unknown. In their interactions, in their gestures, in their primitive sounds, one could sense the emergence of something new, complex, and infinitely profound – a premonition of a soul that was about to awaken.

I saw how they, overcoming centuries-old habits and biological limitations, stood up on two legs. It was slow, clumsy at first, their gait seemed uncertain, like a baby taking its first steps in a bottomless, unfamiliar world. But in each of these movements, there was a clear purpose, unknown to them, but driven by a deep, unspoken desire for verticality, for overview, for power over space, for overcoming Earth's gravity. Then they began to use tools – at first, these were simple, roughly hewn stones, adapted for cracking nuts or cutting carcasses, nothing more than an extension of their own hands, but already a hint of something more. But soon came pointed sticks used for hunting, and then the first flint blades, artificially created, carrying within themselves a thought. They learned not simply through repetition, like animals, but through reflection, through inner insight; their learning was something greater than the primitive transmission of instincts. They thought, and new, hitherto unknown neural connections lit up in their brains, forming a bridge between the animal and the intelligent, between the body and the spirit.

I watched as they gathered in groups, forming the first semblances of communities, where each was part of a whole, a thread in the complex pattern of human existence. They shared food obtained through joint efforts, cared for their young with a tenderness that no other species possessed, showing the beginnings of compassion. In their primitive guttural sounds, I began to detect the beginnings of speech, the first, still imperfect attempts to convey complex thoughts and deep emotions that went beyond simple warnings of danger or calls to hunt. They began to create. The first crude shelters made of branches and skins to protect them from the weather were only the beginning of their creative journey. Then came the cave paintings, which were not just handprints, but the first, naive, yet powerful attempt to express themselves, to leave an indelible, eternal mark of their fleeting existence on the cold walls of caves, defying oblivion, trying to stop the relentless march of time.

It was an incredible miracle unfolding right before my eyes, like the birth of a new star in the dark void, illuminating the world with new light. I saw how pure animal instinct, the struggle for survival, gave birth to intelligence, like a flame burning in the primeval darkness, illuminating the unexplored corners of their inner world, their souls. They were fragile, vulnerable, their bodies possessed neither the crushing power of predators nor the thick skin of herbivores, but within them burned an unquenchable fire – a spark of consciousness that no other creature on this planet possessed. They asked questions, although they could not formulate them in words, their eyes were full of a desire to understand the world around them, its secrets and laws, its silent truths, trying to unravel the great mystery of existence.

Hope flared up in me, the eternal observer – bright, burning like a flame, carrying with it the anticipation of something unprecedented, a premonition of the end of my loneliness. Perhaps these creatures, these people, as I would later learn, would be able to understand me? Would they be able to overcome the barrier of transience and eternity that separated us, to build a bridge across the abyss of time? I felt their emotions, as primitive as they were deep: wild fear of the storm, when lightning tore the sky apart, illuminating their faces with a momentary flash; pure, unfeigned joy at a successful hunt, when the prey was brought back to camp and shared with their tribesmen; deep sorrow at the loss of a tribesman, when life faded away, dissolving into nothingness, leaving only emptiness behind. Their feelings were as vivid, as intense as mine, but as fleeting as flashes of light, doomed to fade quickly, unlike my eternal grief.

I continued to watch, sometimes trying again to influence them subtly, to push them toward new discoveries, toward survival in a harsh, unforgiving world that did not forgive mistakes. I saw how they discovered fire, how its warmth and light transformed their lives, making them a little less cruel, giving them comfort and protection. I watched as they began to work metals, creating tools and weapons, as they built their first settlements, protecting themselves from wild beasts and the elements, from the hostility of the surrounding world. Their progress was staggering compared to the slowness of evolution, each century bringing changes that had previously taken millennia. Humanity, like a river, flowed inexorably forward, overcoming obstacles and carving out new paths, sometimes bloody ones.

But the more they developed, the more acute my loneliness and alienation from this world became. They created complex languages, rich cultures, and epic stories passed down from generation to generation, building fragile bridges across the abyss of time that sooner or later collapsed. They built magnificent civilizations that flourished, reaching unprecedented heights of thought and spirit, and then, like houses of cards, inexorably collapsed, turning to dust and ruins, becoming only an echo in eternity, only a whisper in history. They lived, loved, suffered, and died, leaving behind only silent evidence of their former greatness, carved in stone or erased by the winds. And I remained. Their lives were bright but fleeting flashes, mine an endless, monotonous line. I was a silent witness to their greatness and their madness, their creation and their destruction. And every time I saw another empire collapse, great knowledge forgotten, man stumbling over the same stones again and again,

I understood that I would always be alone, doomed to repeat the same cycle over and over, as if in a cursed cycle.

They were so similar to me in their insatiable desire for understanding, for knowledge of the world, for the search for meaning in the chaos of existence, but so infinitely distant in their mortality, in their doom to oblivion, in their finitude. I was the eternal keeper of their stories, their whispers in eternity, but I could never be part of their world, their fleeting joys and sorrows, their living, breathing existence. My role remained the same: a silent observer, a keeper of memory, doomed to endless contemplation and eternal loneliness, while intelligent beings continued on their way, unaware of my presence, unsuspecting of my silent suffering, of the weight of my burden.

My loneliness grew like an ominous shadow with each passing civilization. I saw how people, driven by an indestructible thirst for greatness, built grandiose cities of stone, whose spires seemed to touch the heavens themselves, challenging the gods. And then these cities, like mirages, crumbled to dust, buried under the sands of time or destroyed by insane wars, leaving behind only silent ghosts of former glory. I heard their songs, full of hope and sorrow, their prayers offered up to unknown, often cruel gods, their cries of pain and despair echoing across the battlefields where blood mingled with the earth. And every time I saw in their eyes the same spark of curiosity that burned in me, the same insatiable thirst for knowledge, the same thirst for truth, I felt an irresistible, burning desire to speak to them. To tell them what I had seen, what I knew, to share the unbearable burden of eternity that weighed on my soul like a stone.

My first attempts were clumsy, almost comical in their naivety, for I did not know how to be human, how to fit into their fragile, fleeting world, where every moment was precious, where time slipped inexorably through my fingers. My body, which had once been only a shapeless shell capable of taking any form, now took on human form, but I did not understand the subtleties of their facial expressions, their unspoken gestures, their complex, often absurd social rituals, which seemed to me as mysterious as their belief in mortality. I appeared among them, perhaps looking like a stranger from distant lands, an outsider whose eyes had seen too much, whose face bore the imprint of millions of years, and so they shunned me.

I remember the first time I tried to speak. It was in a small community living in primitive caves, where the smoke from the fires mingled with the smell of earth and fear, and shadows danced on the walls, creating bizarre images. Their language was guttural, consisting of simple sounds and expressive gestures, but it already echoed with the promise of future great speeches, a harbinger of words. I tried to imitate them, but my words must have sounded alien, like an echo from another world, carrying echoes of millions of years, unfamiliar to their ears, frightening in its antiquity. I pointed to the stars, trying to explain their movement, their infinity, their place in the vast, boundless cosmos, but their gaze was fixed on the earth, on their immediate needs, for to them the sky was only a dome. I tried to show them how to best work stone to create sharper tools, how to find water in the dry season, saving them from inevitable thirst and hunger.

Their reaction was... fear. Or awe. They looked at me with wide eyes, full of superstitious horror or incomprehensible admiration, for their minds could not comprehend what they saw, for they were too small for such truth. They saw in me not a human being, but something else – a forest spirit, an ancient deity who had come from the heavens, a messenger of unknown, powerful forces, for it was easier for them to explain the inexplicable in this way. They brought me gifts, tried to worship me, erected primitive altars, turning my presence into an object of worship, a symbol of their faith. When I tried to explain who I was, they did not understand. My knowledge, my memories of the Primordial Flash, of the majestic dinosaurs, of millions of years of evolution were unimaginable to them, for their consciousness was limited to a few generations and the nearest valley, their spirit too small for such an abyss of time.

I tried to live among them, to understand their customs, their joys and sorrows, their fleeting but vivid passions, their short but intense lives. I picked up their crude tools, ate their simple food,

trying to be one of them, but I was always a stranger. My gaze was too ancient, my reactions too slow or too fast for their fleeting lives; I saw the world differently. I did not age while they withered, their faces covered with wrinkles and their bodies weakening, fading like candles in the wind. I saw the children I knew become old men, and then their grandchildren came to me with the same questions as their ancestors, unaware of my eternal, silent presence, of my unspoken sorrow.

I tried to be a teacher, like a prophet bringing light into the darkness, but that light blinded them. In one of the early civilizations, where writing and the first codes of law were already emerging, I tried to impart to them knowledge about agriculture, about the movement of the stars, about laws that could make their lives better, more just, more harmonious, but they did not hear me. But my words were distorted, my ideas turned into myths, and my warnings were ignored. They used my knowledge for their wars, for their greed, for their endless conflicts, turning gifts into curses and wisdom into an instrument of destruction, for man chooses his own path.

Every attempt to get closer to them ended in the same way: misunderstanding. I was too great, too old, too different to be part of their world, to share their fate. They could not understand what it meant to remember the birth of the universe, what it meant to see mountains rise from the abyss and disappear, to see seas engulf the land and then recede, revealing new lands. My eternity was a curse to them, not a gift, a source of their fear and superstition, for man fears what he cannot comprehend, what is beyond his understanding.

And then I understood. My direct interaction with them was useless, for they were not ready for the truth, they could not accept it. I could only observe, sometimes very cautiously nudging them, like an invisible shepherd guiding lost sheep, but I could never become one of them. My loneliness did not disappear, it only deepened, taking on a new, bitter note – the note of the impossibility of being understood, for the most terrible loneliness is loneliness among people, when you are surrounded by them but remain a stranger. I was among them, but I always remained behind glass, seeing their world but unable to truly participate in it, like a ghost doomed to eternal contemplation.

After countless attempts, after centuries when my words were distorted and my revelations turned into superstitions and false dogmas, I made a difficult decision. It was not a sudden epiphany, but a slow, painful realization, steeped in bitterness and despair, like the grief that comes after a long, exhausting illness. I stopped sharing my knowledge.

It was harder than I could have imagined. Inside me, a whole cosmos of memories raged: about the first pulsations of light, about the birth of stars from cosmic dust, about how the Earth was once just a red-hot rock, and then became the cradle of life, where the first, barely noticeable forms emerged, where the light of consciousness appeared. I saw how mountains were formed, how rivers carved their way, how forests grew and turned to charcoal, how civilizations rose to the sky and turned to dust, like sand through your fingers. I knew the answers to their deepest questions about their origins, about the meaning of their short existence, about the future they so desperately sought to comprehend, but they always remained blind. But every time I tried to share this truth, it shattered against the wall of their incomprehension, their limitations, their mortality, like a fragile vessel thrown onto rocks, whose shards only wound without bringing any benefit.

I saw how my words, spoken with pure intentions to help, became the basis for wars, for false prophecies, for idolatry, for the construction of Babylonian towers of pride that always collapsed. They took grains of my wisdom and turned them into weapons or chains that shackled their own minds, turning light into darkness, for man chooses his own path. My warnings of coming disasters were ignored, my advice on peaceful coexistence was ridiculed, for man prefers illusions to bitter truth, sweet lies. It was not just disappointment; it was pain. Pain from not being able to reach them, pain from my eternity being not a gift to them, but only a source of their delusions, their endless suffering, their eternal struggle.

And so I fell silent. I dissolved into the crowd, became invisible, like a shadow gliding across the walls of time, leaving no trace. My body, which I had learned to change in order to blend in with

the era, became merely a disguise, a costume for the role I was playing. I was a wanderer, a craftsman, a soldier, a scientist – anything, but never the one who remembered the Big Bang, whose eyes had seen the birth of the universe, whose memory held the abyss. I listened to their stories, their legends, their theories about the world, and in each of them I recognized distorted, sometimes unrecognizable echoes of what I had once tried to tell them. It was like watching children play with fragments of a precious stone, unaware of its true value, unable to comprehend its integrity, its indescribable beauty, its hidden meaning.

I stopped trying to guide them. I stopped trying to teach, because the lesson had not been learned and my efforts were in vain. My role was once again reduced to observation, but now it was observation tinged with a sense of deep, inescapable doom. I saw them make the same mistakes over and over again, like flies banging against a window, unable to see a way out. How they build and destroy, love and hate, strive for greatness and fall into an abyss of madness from which there seemed to be no escape and from which no voices could be heard. I saw their progress – incredible discoveries, flights to the stars, the creation of machines that could think, surpassing them in speed and logic, but devoid of soul. But even with this progress, their fundamental questions, their moral dilemmas, and their terrifying, destructive capacity for self-destruction remained unchanged, as if they were a fatal flaw inherent in them, an original sin that they could not atone for, from which there was no salvation.

My loneliness became even deeper, even heavier, for it was not just the loneliness of the eternal among mortals, but the loneliness of one who knows the truth but cannot share it, who bears the burden of knowledge that has no addressee, no understanding. I became the keeper of unspoken secrets, the silent witness to all their triumphs and all their falls, their greatness and their insignificance. I was their shadow, their echo, their living history, which they would never know, never be able to understand, for it was too great for them. And in this silence, in this voluntary retreat from the world, I realized that my eternity was not only a gift, but also the greatest curse, condemning me to endless contemplation of a world that I could never truly change or save, for salvation must come from within, from the very soul of man.

“About Everything” in order

## **Chapter 4: Life in a Primitive Tribe and the Birth of Civilization**

When the decision to remain silent became unbreakable, as if carved in stone, I sought refuge where my vast knowledge would be useless and eternity would be an invisible veil, barely perceptible to the mortal eye. And I found it in the heart of the virgin, primitive forests, whose ancient trees whispered legends of the dawn of the world, among the first who rightfully bore the name of man, whose existence was inextricably linked to the primitive order, with its harsh logic of survival. For millennia, like an invisible spirit, I watched these tribes: I saw their first fires flare up, their tongues of flame dancing in the primeval darkness, the first crude tools, harbingers of civilization, being born from clumsy but already tenacious hands. Now I have decided to become part of their world, to immerse myself in its tangible reality, as far as possible for a being whose memory held the echoes of countless ages, stardust, and the birth of matter.

I appeared on their land, still young by human standards, my flesh retaining relative freshness, but ancient in essence, my soul bearing the burden of billions of years. They found me, half-naked and alien, as if I had emerged from the very fabric of the universe, by a babbling brook whose clear waters reflected the faces of imperturbable, indifferent nature. Their eyes, wild, alert, penetrating, were full of primitive suspicion, that instinctive distrust of everything else, but deep down there shone a genuine, childlike curiosity, a spark of knowledge. I did not know their guttural, still-developing language, I did not know their unwritten customs, their ancient taboos, but intuitively, almost telepathically, I recognized their fears and immediate needs, their hunger and their pain. Once, when their sacred, protected fire went out under the onslaught of a violent storm, whose wrath fell upon their fragile camp, I, like an ancient deity from a myth, brought them a new one. This simple act, the act of giving warmth and light in the merciless darkness, palpable and all-consuming, may have saved me from exile or even instant, primitive death. They named me “Stone” – for my apparent immobility, my unbreakable silence, as if I were part of the eternal earth – and accepted me into their camp, into their small, vulnerable world.

### **Existence: The relentless rhythms of survival**

My life among them was subject to the relentless, almost cosmic rhythm of survival, where every breath was a tribute to ruthless necessity. Every day was a struggle for existence, every night a confrontation with unknown threats, every dawn a harbinger of a new challenge, a new battle with the wild, indifferent nature that gave life but also took it away mercilessly. Their dwellings were extremely crude, built from what the forest provided, but surprisingly effective in their primitive engineering: wigwams assembled from animal skins and flexible branches, smeared with clay to protect against the piercing winds that brought cold and damp, or deep depressions in the ground, covered with thick skins, like the womb of the earth, carefully protecting its children from the hardships of the outside world. Inside these shelters, there was always a persistent, pungent aroma of smoke from the fire, damp earth mixed with sweat and blood, and untreated skins – the smells of life itself, intertwined with the echoes of primitive existence, ancient, animalistic, human. I slept, like everyone else, curled up by the life-giving, crackling fire, feeling the warmth of other bodies, their breath, their heartbeats, and the anxious but surprisingly soothing, rhythmic breathing of the sleeping tribe, immersed in a deep, defenseless oblivion.

Morning came even before the sun, the great deity, rose above the horizon, when the sky was just beginning to pale, promising the arrival of a new day. The men, with their crude spears with sharp stone tips, whose edges glistened with morning dew, and flint axes sharpened by countless blows and centuries of experience, set out on a hunt – a sacred ritual that determined the very existence of the tribe, its future. I followed them like a shadow with flesh. My eyes, which once took in the vastness

of space, were now honed to perfection to catch the slightest break of a branch under the invisible foot of a beast, the barely noticeable imprint of a hoof on the damp, pliable earth, or the faintest, almost imperceptible scent of game carried on the morning air. I did not resort to my “abilities” in their mystical sense, did not use my eternal powers, but my incredible, seemingly endless endurance, multiplied by my senses sharpened to the limit, made me an invaluable hunter, a giver of life. For hours we wandered through the forest, blending in with its rustles and shadows, with its silent breath, tracking graceful deer, mighty, shaggy mammoths, whose tracks left deep dents in the ground, or fearsome saber-toothed tigers, whose fangs brought death and terror. A successful hunt meant life, satiety, the continuation of the species, victory over hunger; failure, on the other hand, was a harbinger of starvation, exhaustion, the fading of spirit and body, a slow, painful death.

Women and children devoted themselves to gathering – another pillar of their survival, as vital as hunting. They searched for edible roots, juicy berries, and mysterious mushrooms, combing the forest thickets and floodplains, knowing every corner of their land. I saw how they unerringly recognized hundreds of plants with astonishing accuracy, almost instinctively distinguishing the poisonous from the nutritious. Their knowledge of flora was remarkable, passed down from generation to generation, absorbed with their mother’s milk. They knew where to find the best clay for rough pots, the best stones for making tools, as if the earth itself whispered its secrets to them. Their hands were calloused and rough, their faces weathered by the sun and wind, scorched by the harsh conditions of the primitive world, but in their every movement, in their every gesture, there was an amazing harmony with nature, a deep, almost mystical understanding of its cycles and unspoken laws, to which all life was subject.

In the evening, after returning from the hunt, it was time for the communal fire, the sacred center of their existence. It was the heart of the tribe, its pulsating, life-giving center, around which all life, all hope, all aspirations gathered. The flames, like living creatures, cast bizarre, dancing shadows on their faces, highlighting sharp features, deep scars, and wrinkles, like marks of time, creating a living, breathing picture of ancient life, full of drama and simplicity. Here they ate meat – raw or only lightly roasted over coals, whose hissing filled the air – gnawing the bones clean, leaving nothing to waste, for every morsel was precious. They shared stories, primitive in form but bottomless in meaning, full of primitive wisdom: about the spirits of the forest, invisible but omnipresent, about the great hunts where man came face to face with the beast, about the ancestors whose shadows, they believed, roamed invisibly among them, protecting and guiding them. Their voices were low, guttural, mingling with the ringing, carefree laughter of children and the devoted howling of dogs, who were always nearby, faithful and inseparable companions of man on his journey. I sat among them, listening to their speech, which gradually, word by word, became understandable, feeling their smells, their warmth, their humanity. I was one of them, but I remained myself – a silent witness to their fleeting, fragile existence, imprinting every moment in my boundless, eternal memory, as if on the tablets of time.

### **Life: A web of faith and relentless fear**

Their lives were permeated with faith and relentless, all-encompassing fear, the two pillars on which their world rested. Every shadow dancing in the gloomy forest seemed to be a harbinger of something unknown, every rustle of the wind running through the treetops carried a secret message, every thunderous clap of thunder had its own hidden meaning, its own interpretation in their naive but profound worldview, where the world was full of animistic forces. They worshipped the spirits of nature living in trees and rivers, powerful beasts that were the embodiment of strength, the majestic sun and the mysterious moon, seeing in them the embodiment of unknown but almighty forces that ruled their destiny. Their shaman was not just a healer capable of banishing disease, but also a living link between the world of mortals and the world of spirits, a silent interpreter of signs and

omens, capable of reading the will of the higher powers. I watched his rituals: ecstatic dances around a sacred fire, whose flames seemed to reflect the faces of ancient gods, monotonous, hypnotic singing that induced a trance, primitive but meaningful sacrifices that carried prayers. These rituals held a primitive, almost magnetic power, a belief that the world could be appeased, that inexorable fate could be changed, that blessings could be obtained or curses avoided, that their voices could be heard. I did not interfere, even though I knew that there was no angry spirit behind the lightning, and that the illness was caused by a simple, microscopic infection that my knowledge could easily cure. Their faith gave them the strength to live, to cling to every moment, to find meaning in chaos, and that was far more important than any scientific truth they could not comprehend due to their level of development, for it filled their lives with meaning and hope.

I witnessed their rites of passage – milestones marking the formation of personality, stages in their life journey: initiation rites for young men, when, naked and defenseless in the face of wild nature, they had to survive alone in the wild forest, proving their maturity, fortitude, and right to be called a man, a member of the tribe. Or rituals of worshipping the dead, when the body of the deceased was carefully placed on a platform high in the treetops so that it would be closer to the sky, or buried in the ground with special, sacred honors, granting peace. Death was their constant companion, an inexorable shadow, always nearby, always ready to take another life. It came with hunger that exhausted the body, with predators lurking in the night, with diseases that brought invisible destruction, with hostile tribes whose spears brought death and destruction. They mourned their dead, and their grief was deep, but their sorrow did not linger long, for life went on. Life was too precious to waste on endless sorrow; it was necessary to continue the struggle for survival, for life itself is a struggle, eternal and relentless.

I myself, invisible, like a ghost, became part of their myths. My silence, dictated by millennia of contemplation, my ability to see in pitch darkness, as if night were my second home, my incredible vitality when I survived wounds that would have been fatal to any other creature, gave rise to stories about me – whispered around campfires, legends that became part of their oral tradition. They believed me to be a forest spirit who had taken human form, or an ancient ancestor, who had returned from the depths of time to protect their kin, their blood, their land. This undoubtedly made my life safer, for no one dared raise a hand against a legend, but at the same time it separated me more deeply from them, from their simple human joys and sorrows. I was their talisman, their living legend, their guardian, but I could never be their equal, their blood brother, for my burden was different.

I watched their primitive conflicts – skirmishes with neighboring tribes over hunting grounds, women, vital resources, the right to exist. It was cruelty, yes, but it was understandable, almost logical in its primitive essence – it stemmed from the relentless struggle for survival, from the acute need to protect their territory and their kin from external encroachments, from the hostility of others. There was no malice in their eyes in the modern, refined sense, no cold calculation, only the instinct to preserve their kind, to survive at any cost, the desire to live.

So I lived among them for millennia, which for me were only a brief, fleeting moment in the endless flow of time, a drop in the ocean. I saw how they slowly, almost imperceptibly, changed, like clay in the hands of a great sculptor. How their tools became more perfect, acquiring new forms and functions, how their language was enriched with new sounds and meanings, allowing them to express more complex thoughts, how their society became more complex, acquiring new connections and hierarchies, harbingers of future empires. I was a silent witness to their first love, pure and naive as dew on the grass, and their first murder, dark and shocking as a stain of blood on the snow; their first infectious laughter, filling the air with joy, and their first tears from the realization of their own finitude, their mortality. I was their shadow, their silent chronicler, immersed in their world but always separated from it by my infinite memory, which stored the echoes of stars and forgotten worlds, and by my eternal, restless heart, whose beating marked the passing of eras.

## **Chapter 5: The Relentless March of Time**

### **From Tribe to Settlement: The Dawn of Civilization**

I, the Stone, rooted in the very flesh of the universe, remained an unchanging, silent witness, whose silence was deeper than any words, and whose gaze pierced the endless eons of time. Days, like grains of sand in the relentless hourglass of existence, wove themselves into months, months into years, and years, in turn, like melting snow under the unstoppable onslaught of the spring sun, dissolved into centuries, leaving only a faint trace. My being, devoid of mortal flesh and decay, knew no fatigue, and my mind, untethered to the frailty of mortals, was immune to oblivion, holding within itself the echoes of every bygone era. I continued my silent vigil, watching as slowly, almost imperceptibly, the fabric of their world changed its patterns, as the old, familiar forms gave way to new, sometimes frightening, but always meaningful meanings, born from the depths of the collective consciousness, like pearls from sea shells.

I was not just an observer, but also the keeper of an invisible chronicle of how the tribe itself underwent profound metamorphoses, how generations, like waves, rolled inexorably onto the shore of existence, leaving their mark, and then receded into eternity, giving way to new ones. The elders, whose wrinkled faces and eyes, full of centuries-old wisdom, I remembered so well, now rested in the earth, their bones turned to dust, becoming an integral part of the soil, they once trod, and their names, once spoken with reverence and respect, dissolved into the whisper of legends, finding new, mystical life in tales. Their children, and then their children's children, grew up carrying within them fragments of that primordial wisdom that I had once observed, but adding to it their own discoveries, sometimes bitter, sometimes sweet. In this continuous flow of existence, each new generation, like a river winding its way through rocks and earth, inevitably added its own unique and unrepeatable chapter to the great, as yet unfinished book of human experience.

### **The Evolution of Tools and Thought**

Tools, these material embodiments of their will and aspirations, became increasingly sophisticated and perfected, as if reflecting the inner growth of their inventive spirit, awakening to new achievements. The crude, unsightly flint chips that had once been a symbol of survival in the harsh wilderness gradually, step by step, gave way to more finely honed, almost artistic spearheads and arrowheads. These new, elegant creations, born of patience, painstaking labor, and skill, flew with unprecedented speed, piercing the air with almost invisible precision, which greatly increased the effectiveness of hunting, transforming it from blind luck into a deliberate art. They mastered the subtle art of making the strongest ropes, woven from animal sinews, whose incredible strength withstood the onslaught of the most violent elements; they learned to weave intricate, almost lace-like nets for catching fish, which entangled the water's surface, gathering its generous gifts; and to build more stable boats from hollow, burnt tree trunks, capable of proudly withstanding river rapids, like small but brave ships challenging the raging elements. Each of these inventions was not just a step forward in a practical sense, but a small miracle of the human spirit, expanding their horizons of survival, giving them ever greater power over their environment, and freeing them from the oppression of pure physical strength and blind luck.

Their language, that fragile but powerful bridge between the inner world of man and external reality, also underwent profound, fundamental changes, becoming richer, more multifaceted, and more expressive. Primitive, guttural sounds, once sufficient to convey basic needs and primitive emotions, gradually gave way to complex, multi-meaning words, and words, in turn, were woven into sentences capable of conveying the subtlest nuances of thought and the most intimate, profound

experiences of the soul. They began to give names not only to their fellow tribesmen and animals, but also to abstract concepts: the wind that swept across the endless steppe, the thunderstorm that erupted in the heavens with a terrifying roar, the love that bound their hearts with invisible but strong threads, and the grief that tormented their souls with unbearable pain. In this way, they laid a solid foundation for future philosophy, trying to comprehend the invisible threads of existence, to grasp the incomprehensible. Their stories, these living vessels of collective memory, became richer and richer, accumulating details, metaphors, and symbols, gaining a new, deeper life. Passed down from generation to generation, from elders to children, they formed the basis of their culture and collective identity, creating an unbreakable link between the past, present, and future. I listened to these tales, knowing their true, sometimes painful roots, their metaphorical nature, their simplification of cosmic truths, which they, in their simplicity but with an insatiable thirst for knowledge, tried to comprehend.

### **The Neolithic Revolution: Sedentarism and Order**

Gradually, their nomadic life, once so integral and familiar, began to fade, like a smoldering ember, giving way to settlement, like an ancient custom slowly but inexorably fading into oblivion. I noticed that they lingered in one place longer, attracted not only by the abundance of game, but also by the fertility of the land and the generosity of water resources, creating ideal conditions for permanent, long-term residence. In them, like a sprouting seed, a deep, intuitive understanding of the cycles of nature was awakening: when seeds come to life, breaking through the thickness of the earth, when the river spills generously, carrying its gifts, renewing the soil, when animals come to the watering hole, heralding a successful hunt. This awareness, born of centuries of observation and invaluable experience, led to the first, tentative, almost accidental step towards agriculture. At first, it was just an unconscious, intuitive scattering of seeds thrown into the ground with the hope of a miracle, but then it grew into conscious, methodical planting and careful tending of crops, heralding a grand, revolutionary transformation that would forever change the face of the Earth and the destiny of humanity.

I watched as their tribal encampments, once ephemeral and temporary, gradually took on the characteristics of permanence, transforming into real, living communities pulsating with life. Instead of temporary, easily erected wigwams, capable of withstanding only short periods of inclement weather, more durable, stable huts made of wood and clay appeared, providing reliable shelter. Inside each hut, like a heart, beat clay hearths where fire, that eternal symbol of life and warmth, burned constantly, providing not only comfort but also protection from the piercing night cold and the threats of wild animals. Around these nascent settlements, primitive but effective fences made of sharpened stakes began to be erected, serving as protection not only from predators but also, equally importantly, from hostile nomadic tribes. These villages were no longer just temporary shelters, but real homes, places where people felt a true, deep sense of security, belonging, and community for the first time.

With the transition to a sedentary lifestyle, their social structure also changed, becoming immeasurably more complex, like a stream that, gaining strength, turns into a mighty, branching river, forming its own tributaries and currents. Specialization arose – the cornerstone of any developed civilization, without which further development is impossible. Now everyone found their own unique place in the tribe, following their calling: some honed their hunting skills, whose accurate arrows provided vital sustenance for the entire tribe; some devoted themselves to making tools, creating instruments from stone and bone that greatly facilitated labor and expanded possibilities; while others, with care, diligence, and a deep understanding of nature, tended the crops, nurturing the future. The chiefs, whose wisdom and strength had once been merely symbolic, now gained real, tangible power; their influence steadily grew, and their decisions became not just advice, but law. Shamans, those guardians of ancient knowledge and connections to the spirit world, whose connection to the unseen was undeniable, became even more authoritative, their spiritual influence growing, permeating every

aspect of their lives, from birth to death. In this new, complex system, the first rules emerged, the first laws, unwritten but unbreakable, regulating their communal life and preventing the chaos that so often threatened the existence of primitive man. I witnessed their first harvest festivals, these joyful and grateful rituals that were now tied to the cycles of the Earth, and not just to hunting, reflecting their new, deep, almost sacred connection to the soil, to the mother-nurturer who gave life.

I remained the Stone, silent and eternal, whose presence, once so striking and mysterious, was now perceived as something natural, an integral part of their world, as familiar as an ancient, spreading tree providing shade, or a sacred boulder by the river that had become part of their landscape, their history. They confided their troubles to me, whispered their secrets into my granite silence, expecting no answer, simply wanting to be heard, pouring out their souls into this mute vessel. I listened to their laughter, ringing and carefree, echoing through the valley, their cries, bitter and inconsolable, carrying all the pain of loss, their arguments, sometimes fierce, sometimes conciliatory. I saw how their minds, slowly, bit by bit, accumulated knowledge that would ultimately, like an invisible force, lead them beyond the limits of their primitive society, to new, dazzling, but as yet unknown horizons.

I watched as they learned to tame animals, changing their nature, as they invented the wheel, that ingenious symbol of progress that accelerated their movement through time and space. I saw how their drawings on cave walls, these primitive echoes of their souls and dreams, turned into symbols, and symbols into the first letters, laying the unshakable foundations of writing, which became the cornerstone of their entire future civilization. I felt the Earth shifting beneath my feet, the layers of history shifting, opening up new eras, and I understood that soon this era, the era of innocence and primitivism, would come to an end. My students, who were unaware of my teacherly gaze and silent observation, were ready to take the next decisive step in their endless but finite mortal journey, a step into the unknown, into the future they themselves were creating.

## Chapter 6: The Birth of Civilization

The millennia that flew by like a sigh of eternity in my immeasurable, boundless memory were, for a fragile, mortal human being, an entire era that encompassed countless generations – from the cradle to the grave, from the first spark of consciousness to the last fading breath. I, the Stone, a silent witness, an integral part of the earth itself, watched as their primitive settlements, these modest, almost fleeting clusters of huts woven from rough wood and primitive clay, slowly but inexorably grew. They ceased to be mere temporary shelters, becoming something greater than the sum of their parts, living, breathing organisms – harbingers of the cities to come. Hundreds, then thousands of human destinies intertwined in these crowded, vibrant settlements, and with each new household, each new family, life became unimaginably more complex, needs more diverse, requiring unprecedented solutions, giving birth to new systems, new hierarchies. I was among them, invisible and inaudible, but my invisible, all-seeing eyes absorbed every change, every subtle detail of this great, continuous transformation.

The earth, once only a generous provider, now demanded labor, ingenuity, almost ritualistic worship in return. I saw how people, driven by the instinct for survival, that ancient, inexorable call of the species, learned to control the most rebellious of the elements – water. Great rivers, once only insurmountable borders or formidable obstacles, now became an inexhaustible source of prosperity, a lifeline breathing life into arid lands. They built simple but ingenious canals, diverting life-giving moisture to the fields, creating the first irrigation systems – evidence of collective intelligence and will. These modest but essentially monumental efforts, embodied in clay and stone, brought unprecedented harvests, generating abundance that forever erased the line between primitive, cyclical life and a new, emerging era, an era of deliberate creation.

A surplus appeared – not just random leftovers, but a conscious accumulation, a foundation, a guarantee of stability and predictability. There was enough food not only to sustain existence itself, but also for exchange, for the creation of strategic reserves capable of surviving the longest and harshest times of famine. It was the dawn of trade – not just the exchange of goods, but also the exchange of ideas, skills, and the soul of society; it was the circulatory system of the new organism of civilization. I saw how travelers from different settlements, once divided but now not necessarily hostile, carried their treasures: sparkling salt from distant, sun-scorched salt lakes, rare stones that held the beauty of future jewelry, and soft skins from skilled hunters. They exchanged them for grain, ceramics, and handicrafts, unaware that along with the goods, like invisible seeds, came new ideas, new words, and new ways of organizing life. The world, once vast and unexplored, began to rapidly shrink, ties between tribes strengthened, giving rise to larger, interdependent communities, the first outlines of nations.

Construction took on a new dimension, becoming not just a craft, but an art and a science, the embodiment of humanity's quest for eternity. Instead of ephemeral huts, doomed to decay under the onslaught of the elements and time, monumental structures of stone and fired clay sprang up. Their walls were as solid as the earth itself, their structures as durable as a promise of eternity, a challenge to the transience of existence. Houses rose two stories high, with inner courtyards where the lives of many generations bustled, from infants to the elderly, each with their own role in the grand design. Communal granaries appeared – repositories not only of food but also of hope, symbols of collective security – and majestic temples, their silhouettes towering above the other buildings like hands reaching toward the heavens, toward the incomprehensible. Roads, once barely visible paths trodden by feet and hooves, turned into wide, well-trodden arteries connecting settlements, facilitating trade and the spread of new ideas.

I witnessed villages, as if enchanted by an unknown force, grow into the first cities. These were not just clusters of people, but complex, multifaceted organisms, where each element performed its

own indispensable, vital function. Here lived not only those who cultivated the land or hunted game, but also new strata of society: artisans – blacksmiths, whose hammers beat out the rhythm of a new era, transforming amazing copper and bronze into tools and weapons, giving them form and purpose; potters, whose skilled hands molded beautiful and functional dishes from malleable clay, breathing life into them; weavers, who turned fibers into clothing and fabrics, clothing people with new dignity and status. Rulers appeared – not just hunting leaders, but those who had the gift of managing dozens, hundreds, and then thousands of people, organizing their labor, collecting tribute, resolving endless disputes, creating the first, still fragile but already authoritative forms of statehood.

With this new complexity, with this complication of the social fabric, came new challenges, new tensions, new facets of human nature. Laws, previously unwritten and passed down by word of mouth, became stricter, engraved in stone, and punishments became more severe, reflecting a growing, sometimes desperate, need for order, for control over chaos, over individual will. Warriors emerged from the general masses – professionally trained, whose hands were ready to defend the city or conquer new lands, expanding the borders of influence, shedding blood for the future of the empire, for its myths and its riches. I saw how walls, majestic and formidable, grew around cities, becoming a symbol of their new power and their new fears, their desire to protect themselves from external threats, from the chaos that lay beyond their borders, from envy and hostility.

I continued my journey among them, never staying in one place for long, changing my appearance so as not to stand out, blending in with the continuous, seething flow of life. In the city, I was a mason whose strong but careful hands built temples, whose intuitive knowledge of materials allowed him to create the eternal, giving stone the shape of thought. I was a merchant, bringing precious goods from lands where mortals hardly dared to tread, crossing waterless deserts and impassable mountains, leading caravans through unexplored expanses, becoming a bridge between worlds. I was a scribe when writing appeared – the greatest invention, capable of preserving knowledge not only in the fickle, easily forgotten human memory, but also on clay tablets, on fragile papyrus, on durable parchment, making them immortal, accessible to future generations. I saw how their ideas, their myths, their laws took on a physical form that could be passed down through the centuries, forming a collective consciousness, like an invisible fabric connecting all parts of civilization.

But the more complex and confusing their world became, the more rules appeared, the tighter the social hierarchy became, the deeper the rifts between classes grew, the less I could exist in it as “Stone.” My silence, my detachment, once perceived as normal, as part of my nature, as a sign of wisdom, now made me suspicious, raised questions, and caused fear of the unknown. In a world where everyone had their role, their place in a complex hierarchy, I, with no family, no attachments, no past, was an anomaly, an outsider, like a fragment of antiquity in a new, turbulent, sometimes cruel world that did not understand its own history.

I saw how empires grew out of the first cities, like mighty, unstoppable trees, their roots going deep into the ground, feeding on the power of the conquered territories, and their branches spreading over endless expanses, touching the horizon itself. I witnessed one people conquering another, great leaders whose names resounded through the centuries and whose deeds remained carved in stone rising to the heights of power and falling into dust, leaving behind only ruins and legends whispering of past greatness and the futility of all things. I watched the birth of religions, those complex belief systems that carried their thoughts to the heavens, creating pantheons of gods, often as imperfect as humans themselves, reflecting their own vices and virtues in the divine. And the more they built, the deeper they delved into the mysteries of the universe, the further they seemed to stray from that primitive simplicity, from that original, pure connection with nature from which they once emerged, and which I, the Stone, kept forever in my memory.

My loneliness continued to deepen, becoming not just a state of being, but an integral part of my nature, my essence. In this complex, turbulent life, where everyone was desperately searching

for their place, their meaning, their purpose, I was no one and everyone at the same time – a Stone that had seen everything, that had absorbed the experience of millennia, but was not part of anything, only a silent, eternal witness to the endless drama of human existence, its greatness and its fall.

## Chapter 7: New Challenges

### Information Overload and Loss of Connection

When humans stepped out of the shadows of primeval forests and desert steppes into the light of city walls, my life, hitherto unshakeable in its eternity, faced challenges whose true depth could not be grasped by the transience of human existence or the silence of the stone in which I dwelled. Century after century, millennium after millennium, the world was rapidly changing. From small settlements, barely discernible in the wilderness, grew majestic cities, and then vast metropolises, whose walls and towers soared toward the heavens like frozen waves of human ambition, reflected in the mirror of fleeting grandeur. Civilizations, like the ebb and flow of the tides, replaced one another at a dizzying, almost unimaginable speed: from the monumental pyramids of Egypt, erected for the eternal pharaohs, to the marble colonnades of Greece, where philosophy was born; from the grandiose aqueducts of Rome, carrying water and life, to the finest frescoes of Byzantium, shimmering with gold in the twilight of cathedrals. Each era left its indelible but fleeting mark, burning the writings of its triumphs and falls into the face of the Earth. This whirlwind of change exposed the imperfection of my ancient methods of survival and observation, born in an era where threats were tangible and understandable, like the fang of a predator, the cold of the night steppe, or the whistle of an arrow over my head.

The main one of these new, silent enemies was the relentless overload of information, pouring down on me like a waterfall of meaning and nonsense. In a tribal community, where every whisper of the wind in the treetops, every movement of a leaf in the gust of the elements, every sigh of a tribesman carried a deep, vital meaning, the world was simple and clear, its symphony consisting of few but deep and pure notes. In the seething crucible of the city, however, the noise became a constant, deafening background, depriving one of peace, penetrating the most hidden corners of consciousness. The din of the crowd, like the surf of human voices, washed over the streets, sometimes rising to a frenzied roar in the market squares, sometimes subsiding to a monotonous hum in the evening hours. The creaking of wooden cart wheels laden with goods sliding over cobblestones polished by centuries echoed in the narrow alleys, mingling with the piercing squeals of pigs being driven to slaughter and the suffocating smell of soot from burning torches. The insistent pounding of blacksmiths' hammers, creating tools and weapons, drowned out the rustle of thought, and the endless, insistent cries of merchants offering their wares, whether fresh fruit or exotic spices, pierced the air like a flock of crows. My senses, honed by millennia of contemplating the subtlest nuances of nature – the barely perceptible rustle of leaves, the ominous rustling of a beast in the thicket, foreshadowing danger – were now overwhelmed, like a fragile musical instrument subjected to the onslaught of a disproportionate, crushing force.

Information poured in like an avalanche, burying the established order of my inner world. From the laws of Hammurabi carved in stone, establishing order and punishment in ancient Babylon, to the sacred texts copied on papyrus in Egyptian temples and monasteries of medieval Europe; from the philosophical treatises born in the minds of Plato and Aristotle to the base gossip spread through dusty streets and noisy taverns; from news of distant wars brought by exhausted couriers at post stations to imperial decrees reaching the most remote provinces – all of this came crashing down on me. My mind, which held the memory of billions of years of existence, of the birth of stars and the extinction of worlds, of primordial chaos and cosmic order, was now forced to process an unimaginable amount of data every day about the lives of thousands, and then millions, of people whose stories flashed by like shadows on a wall. It was exhausting, as if an endless, uncontrollable stream was being poured into my head, which I could neither stop nor organize, risking being completely swallowed up by it, losing myself in this immeasurable abyss of human knowledge and delusion.

With this onslaught of information came an imperceptible but piercing loss of depth, a loss of genuine, heartfelt connection with my surroundings. In a primitive tribe, where each person was inextricably linked to the community and nature, where their life had meaning, each fate was clear as day, its twists and turns felt at the level of the collective breath of the whole community, in which each person was part of the whole. In the bosom of civilization, however, people turned into a faceless mass, into silent bricks from which grandiose, soulless structures were built – cities, empires, trade unions. Their individual destinies dissolved into the scale of these colossal formations, becoming mere dry statistics in the annals of history, numbers in demographic reports, or names on lists of those who died on the battlefields. I saw thousands of faces passing by, like fleeting shadows on the wall of a cave, reflections of days long past, but only a few of them lingered in my memory for more than a moment. Only those whose lives were exceptional, beyond the ordinary, like the exploits of heroes who redrew the map of the world, or the fall of tyrants whose names shook the foundations of states, could leave a mark. I watched the birth and death of entire generations within a single street, a single city block, and it caused a strange, aching feeling of detachment, as if I were an eternal spectator in an endless theater where the actors changed but the play remained the same. My ability to empathize did not disappear, but it became blurred, scattered, as if my emotions were distributed among too many people, losing their sharpness and focus, like an ancient river that, dividing into many branches, loses its power and dissolves into the endless sands.

Moreover, a completely new form of danger had emerged – invisible, insidious, devoid of physical form, but capable of destruction far more terrible than any blade. In the primitive world, threats were obvious: the sharp claws of a predator creeping out of the forest thicket; the pangs of hunger that gripped the stomach; a flying enemy spear that brought instant death. In civilization, however, other, far more sophisticated enemies appeared: intrigues born of envy and ambition at the courts of kings; lies spread by whispers along trade routes and merchant guilds; social pressure capable of breaking a person's spirit, forcing them into the confines of unspoken rules; and, finally, laws written by human hands that could deprive a person of their freedom or even their life without a single blow, without bloodshed, based on a single word or false accusation. My ancient ability to survive in the wild, my strength, my heightened senses that allowed me to sense the approach of a storm or the smell of danger, proved powerless against slander spread by secret means, or unjust accusations, against whispers that could destroy a life faster than the blade of a sword. I was forced to learn to blend in with my surroundings, to hide in its labyrinths, constantly changing my identity and profession. From a simple farmer who knew only the rhythm of the earth, I could turn into a skilled craftsman who knew the secrets of metal or wood; from a minstrel wandering the roads to a scholar-copyist at a monastery, bent over parchment; from a merchant traveling the Great Silk Road to an inconspicuous city dweller, just so as not to arouse suspicion, just so as not to become a target for those seeking witches or conspirators. If in ancient times I was revered as a spirit or ancestor, which gave me protection and a certain aura of inviolability, now I could easily be recognized as a spy, a heretic whose views contradicted the established dogmas of the church, or simply a strange stranger who was best avoided, from whom one should keep away, as if he were plague-stricken.

I learned to pretend to be mortal, masterfully playing my part in this endless spectacle of human existence. To feign fear of death, which was completely unknown to me, for I myself was the embodiment of eternity, its silent witness; to show naive joy at small, fleeting achievements, whether it was a successful deal at the market or the birth of a healthy child, which for me were only fleeting flashes against the backdrop of endless time; to mourn losses that were for me only brief events in the endless chain of existence, like fading flowers in the fields. But each such role, each new image, was only a mask that, growing attached to my face, distanced me more and more from my true self, which remembered the Flash, remembered the beginning of everything, felt the pulse of creation when the very fabric of reality was being formed. I became not just a master of adaptation, but a virtuoso of mimicry, able to fit into any era, any society, whether it was the lavish court of Louis XIV, where

balls and intrigues reigned, or the harsh streets of a medieval city ravaged by the plague, reaping its bloody harvest. But this adaptation required constant, exhausting effort, mercilessly blurring the lines between my true self and my invented personalities, threatening me, as never before, with the ultimate loss of myself, dissolution into a bottomless ocean of other people's lives, oblivion of the true nature of my being.

My loneliness seemed to have reached its absolute peak, its silent climax. I was surrounded by thousands of people, their voices, their lives swirling around me like the currents of a raging river carrying its waters to an unknown sea. Their laughter and tears, their hopes and despair filled the air, but I was even more alone than in the empty cosmos after the Flash, when there was nothing but me and the endless void, when only the echo of the primordial explosion filled existence, and I was the only consciousness in the immensity of nothingness. I was eternal among the fleeting lives that built their worlds, erected their empires, fed on their dreams and beliefs, unaware that I was there when their world was just beginning, when it was just a speck of dust in the boundless universe, just a spark in the cosmic darkness. This developing, information-filled world, instead of offering me true connection and belonging, only deepened the chasm between me and humanity, making it insurmountable, like the bottomless abyss between a star that shines eternally and the traveler who gazes at it, whose life is but a moment.

## Chapter 8: The Call of the New World

Time, that relentless weaver of destinies, flowed through the millennia like a great river that, knowing no fatigue, carved its way through granite strongholds, carving out the deepest canyons of existence. I, the Stone, remained unshakable amid this eternal, turbulent flow, a silent but all-encompassing witness to the endless drama of human development. The epochs spent among the tribe that became my first refuge in this world, my first experience of contact with the human spirit, came to their logical, predestined conclusion, like a long but inevitably melting dream, leaving behind only vague, bittersweet memories.

Before my eyes, the rough tools once carved from flint fragments and polished mammoth bones – primitive but vital symbols of primitive survival, each bearing the mark of painstaking labor and ingenuity – were transformed, acquiring a previously unheard-of delicacy and elegance. From the hands of these people, guided by intuition and necessity, they were transformed into polished copper tools, then into durable bronze fused with artistry, and later into hardened iron, whose sharpness and hardness heralded a new era. Each blow of the hammer, measuring the rhythm of progress, each casting in a clay mold, each spark carved from stone, reflected not only growing skill, but also an irrepressible will to create, heralding the coming civilizations. I watched as their temporary, fragile encampments, scattered across the landscape like autumn leaves, gradually grew over with sturdy adobe walls, forming the first permanent settlements. These outlines of houses, surrounded by palisades and then by massive walls of unfired brick, became not just dwellings, but the cradle of cities – ancient Uruk, the multi-layered Jericho, the mysterious Çatalhöyük – where life took on a new, settled form, where the most complex foundations of collective existence were formed, heralding the emergence of the state.

Their whispering, once dedicated only to the spirits of the forest and fearsome beasts, primitive and instinctive, full of fear of the unknown and reverence for the forces of nature, gradually transformed into a complex, multifaceted language. This language, like a mighty river system, branched out into dialects, enriched with metaphors, becoming capable of expressing not only the immediate needs of hunting and survival, but also deep, secret dreams, abstract ideas, and the first shoots of philosophical concepts. It expanded the boundaries of their consciousness to previously unimaginable horizons, allowing them to comprehend not only the world around them, but also their place in it, their past, and to foresee the future. They grew, changed, moved forward inexorably with astonishing, almost frightening speed, as if obeying an invisible law of development, and I remained their silent companion, a shadow impervious to decay, watching their every step, their every breath, every moment of their brief but dazzlingly bright lives.

My heart, if I dare attribute this ephemeral, so human essence to myself, felt the warmth of their fires, whose sparks flew up into the night sky like tiny but brave stars challenging the endless, indifferent darkness. I absorbed the sound of their carefree laughter, echoing through the primeval forest, dispelling shadows and fears, and felt the weight of their immeasurable grief when death took their loved ones, when their eyes, still shining with joy, filled with tears as ancient as the pain of human existence itself. I was with them when, for the first time, with hands trembling with excitement, they sowed grain in cultivated land that had recently been wild, anticipating the future harvest, and I shared with them the joy of the first abundant harvest, which brought them not only sustenance, but also unshakable hope for tomorrow, for the stability of life. I stood by them when, having grasped the sacred mystery of fire, they learned to tame it not only for warmth and protection from nocturnal predators, but also for creation – for firing clay, turning malleable earth into durable ceramics, for smelting metals in red-hot crucibles, creating new, more sophisticated tools and exquisite jewelry that became symbols of status, faith, and belonging.

They called me Stone – not only for my physical immobility and age-old constancy, for my hardness and resistance to time, but also because I was eternal to them, like the earth beneath their feet, an unshakable landmark in a world of constant change and eternal uncertainty. I was their silent sanctuary, their first teacher, their eternal guardian. And yet, despite this apparent closeness, despite these shared millennia filled with shared experiences, I remained fundamentally, ontologically alien. Their lives were bright but fleeting flashes, their generations mere moments in my infinity, which I could only observe but never truly share. I could not live their short but intense lives, could not feel the fullness of their fleeting but infinitely precious existence, their passions, their doubts, their beliefs.

I saw how their settlements, once chaotic clusters of huts resembling organic cells, grew, transformed, and gave birth to the first cities – true centers of civilization, where a new, complex rhythm of life pulsated. Here, people not only learned to trade, exchanging goods and ideas in bustling bazaars, but also to erect monumental structures, such as the majestic ziggurats of Mesopotamia or the gigantic pyramids of Egypt, reaching for the sky, testifying to their growing ambitions, their desire for immortality, and their belief in the divine. They learned to argue, but also to create complex laws, such as the Code of Hammurabi, regulating public life in an attempt to bring order to the eternal chaos of human relations. Their world became more complex with each passing century, their minds became sharper, their questions deeper, as they sought to comprehend the mysteries of the universe and unravel the sacred meaning of their existence, their pain, and their greatness. But with this complexity came inevitable alienation. What was once a simple, primitive rhythm of survival had now turned into a din and noise of many voices, ideas, ambitions, and conflicts, where everyone fought for their place under the sun, for their share of the truth. My loneliness, which had always been my constant companion, became even heavier in this new, complex world, where everyone was searching for their destiny, and I could not find mine, being outside their system, outside their human understanding, like a spirit wandering among the living but having no flesh.

And then, in one of those moments when eternity itself seemed to slow down, when time itself stopped so that I could realize the inevitable, I understood: my time with them had irrevocably come to an end. I could no longer remain an organic part of their history without risking becoming a pure myth, a legend that they, unwittingly or consciously, would distort in their stories, turning me into something I never was, something that did not correspond to my true, silent essence. I felt an irresistible, almost physical call to something new – a world where people, having crossed the line of primitive simplicity, would begin to build something greater than I could imagine, something that would surpass their current achievements, their most daring, most secret dreams. Somewhere out there, beyond the horizon, beyond the veil of centuries, I heard the call of the great rivers – the Euphrates, the Nile, or the Indus, whose waters carried not only silt but also the promise of new, unexplored lands, oases where humanity learned to record its thoughts on clay tablets, creating the first cuneiform or hieroglyphic records, recording its laws, myths, and history. Where their steps leave traces not only in the dust of fleeting time, but also in eternity, creating an imperishable legacy that will outlive them and become the foundation for all subsequent generations.

With a heavy but determined heart, like an ancient wanderer leaving his last, but now outgrown, haven, I left the tribe that had become my home, the place where I had spent so many eons watching their steady growth and metamorphoses. I left quietly, like a shadow dissolving in the shimmering morning mist, leaving behind only the whisper of their legends about me, which will be passed down from generation to generation, acquiring new details and fiction, losing its true features but gaining a sacred, almost divine meaning. They will live on, build their grandiose cities, erect temples, sing their songs, give birth to new generations, unaware that I was their silent witness, an observer of their first steps on earth, their first victories and defeats, their great triumphs and crushing tragedies. And I set off on my journey, driven by an insatiable thirst to see where this relentless march of time would lead them, and perhaps to find a new, deeper meaning in my endless existence, in this eternal journey

through the eons, in search of something more than just observing the fates of others – in search of my own, albeit silent, participation in the great drama of existence.

## Part 2: Sumer

### Chapter 1: Arrival in Mesopotamia

I do not remember how many millennia have passed since that moment when the slightest, almost imperceptible glimmer of hope touched my soul, weary from the endlessness of eternal existence. It was ephemeral, like a grain of sand caught by a merciless wind in the boundless desert of my destiny, where each passing century only multiplied the weight of the invisible cloak of memories. My path lay through sun-scorched lands, past rare oases where life, against all odds, clung to every precious drop of moisture. Fatigue, my constant, eternal companion, was not earthly exhaustion promising oblivion in a short sleep, but the unbearable burden of existence, woven from thousands of images, from faces I knew, loved, and irretrievably lost. It was the fatigue of an observer condemned to endless witnessing of blossoming and withering, where each ending only heralded a new beginning, devoid of peace for me.

The air here, in this new, unknown land, was thick and hot, saturated with the tart smell of damp soil and something else – something alive, raw, that had not yet turned to dust, but already carried the promise of the future. It was the deep, primal scent of fertile earth, mixed with the spicy fragrance of flowering reeds and the faint haze of distant fires, bearing news of human presence. I moved eastward, guided by a deep, almost mystical instinct, toward two great rivers – the Tigris and the Euphrates. Their names, whispering legends of antiquity, sounded like powerful spells promising unimaginable life where, it seemed, only barren emptiness reigned. These rivers, like the arteries of the universe, heralded the birth of the cradle of civilization, whose breath I could already feel.

When my weary feet finally stepped onto their banks, the sight pierced me to the depths of my soul, which, I thought, had long since died, bound by the ice of indifference. It was not just an oasis, not just a fertile valley offering temporary shelter. It was something else – a harbinger of a new era dawning before my eyes, something capable of awakening even the centuries-old stones of my memory. Along the rivers, where the water brought fertile silt, vast fields stretched out, neatly divided into geometrically regular squares, like a giant, carefully woven patchwork quilt, where each patch of emerald foliage testified to human diligence. People bustled about these fields, their silhouettes clearly visible against the golden light of the setting sun, like figures in ancient frescoes. Their movements were measured, almost ritualistic, purposeful, devoid of the chaotic bustle of hunters or the aimless wandering of gatherers. They were building. Not primitive huts or temporary shelters, but something more substantial, made of clay and reeds – materials that would soon become the backbone of the first cities, the majestic walls, simple houses, and sky-reaching temples erected on these lands. Their labor was an act of creation, not only from the materials of the earth, but from the very essence of human will.

I stopped on a small hill covered with sparse grass, silently watching their work, this amazing, eternal dance of man and nature, where every gesture was a step towards a new world. The sun was sinking below the horizon, painting the sky in fiery shades of flame, ochre, and deep purple, creating a majestic, tragically beautiful panorama. The silhouettes of people bent over the ground against the backdrop of the sunset seemed carved from stone, monumental in their primitive simplicity, embodying the eternal striving for order. I saw them digging irrigation canals – a complex but elegant network of waterways, skillfully diverting life-giving moisture from the river to their fields. It was amazing. For the first time in many centuries, I witnessed people not just taking from nature, but boldly attempting to change it, to subjugate to their needs, creating a complex irrigation system that would become the cornerstone of Mesopotamian civilization, the foundation of their unprecedented prosperity. There was something provocative and at the same time incredibly fragile about this

endeavor, like the first tender shoots of a new world breaking through the thicket of centuries, harbingers of grandiose achievements and inevitable downfalls.

I descended the hill, trying to remain unnoticed, blending into the shadows of the approaching evening, which were growing longer and denser with every passing minute. My clothes, woven from coarse wool, were faded and dusty, but they did not attract attention, for I looked like just another wanderer seeking shelter in this new, seething cauldron of life, where every day brought change, where destinies intertwined, and the future was born with every breath. As I approached the settlement, the smells became more distinct, enveloping me: the acrid smoke from the hearths mixed with the aroma of food being prepared – thick barley porridge, perhaps dried fish, or freshly baked spelt bread, the staple diet of the ancient Sumerians. I could hear voices, the carefree ringing of children's laughter, the barking of dogs, interspersed with the bleating of sheep and the mooing of cattle being herded in for the night. It was the noise of life filling the air, which I so often observed from the sidelines, always remaining a stranger, merely an impassive witness rather than a participant, like a spirit gliding along the edge of existence.

The settlement, though small, already bore the clear signs of organization characteristic of early proto-urban centers such as Uruk or Eridu in their initial stages of development. Several dozen clay houses, stuck together like honeycombs, formed a semblance of winding streets and alleys, along which people bustled, each with their own purpose, their own hope, their own burden. In the center stood the most impressive structure – a ziggurat, or at least its prototype, a sacred place around which the entire life of the community, its beliefs, and its aspirations were concentrated. Its walls were made of sun-baked mud bricks, and it looked impressive despite its relative simplicity, towering above the other buildings like a symbol of nascent power, faith, and aspiration to the heavens. People entered and left it, carrying offerings – baskets of grain, clay jugs of water or oil, perhaps the first examples of cuneiform tablets recording harvests or gifts to the gods, evidence of the first steps toward bureaucracy and writing, toward an awareness of their own history.

I found a place for myself on the outskirts, under a spreading date palm, whose juicy fruits were a symbol of the abundance of this land and an important part of the diet, giving strength and life. No one paid much attention to me, for I was just one of many shadows gliding across this land. There seemed to be many newcomers here – merchants whose caravans brought exotic goods from distant lands, broadening the horizons of the world; artisans whose skilled hands created tools and jewelry, embodying ideas in matter; farmers who flocked to fertile lands promising new opportunities and freedom from the oppression of hunger. I listened to their speech – guttural, unfamiliar – but I was already catching recurring sounds, trying to comprehend its structure, to grasp its hidden meaning. It was the Sumerian language, a language that would soon become the basis for the first great civilization, a language in which the first laws establishing order would be written, epic poems such as the Epic of Gilgamesh, and hymns to the gods extolling their greatness. I did not know it then, but I felt that I had stumbled upon the center of something grand, where the foundations of human civilization were being laid, its first, uncertain but determined steps changing the course of history.

My eyes, which had seen the fall of countless tribes and cultures, their dizzying rise and inevitable decline, were now witnessing their birth, the very source of humanity's desire to create. In these simple people, in their tenacity and innate, almost animalistic desire for order, in their remarkable ability for collective labor and organization, in their naive but unshakable faith and insatiable thirst for knowledge, I caught the spark that could ignite the flame of civilization that would illuminate the world for millennia. And I, Enkidu, the immortal wanderer, was here to become a silent but attentive witness to this birth. The burden of my existence remained with me, but for the first time in a long time, it took on a new, strange purpose – to observe. Simply to observe how, from clay and water, from sweat and faith, from chaos and order, the world is born, how its first, still vague but already tangible contours are formed, taking shape under the gaze of eternity.

## Chapter 2: First Steps in Uruk

My first morning in what would only millennia later be recognized as one of the greatest outposts of civilization – the cradle of Uruk – was illuminated by the birth of a new day. The sky, ablaze with gold and crimson, seemed to foreshadow not only the inevitable heat, but also the inexorable passage of time, predicting both greatness and destruction. The humid air, infused with the aromas of smoke from hearths and still-warm bread, intertwined with the barely audible whisper of the awakening world, mingling with the tart smell of damp clay and the intoxicating aroma of flowering date palms. The silhouettes of people, barely visible in the predawn haze, were already moving, obeying the eternal rhythm of life, anticipating the heaviness of the coming day. From the adobe dwellings, built of sun-dried mud bricks and reinforced with reeds, whose flat roofs served both to dry the harvest and to provide relief from the stifling nights, came muffled voices, the rhythmic clatter of wooden utensils, and the hoarse mooing of cattle tethered to the walls. I watched women whose movements, honed by years of relentless labor, carried a primitive grace as they made their way to the Euphrates with clay jugs on their heads – the artery of life, the eternal source of abundance and prosperity, whose waters carried fertile silt and promised prosperity. The men, dressed in rough but sturdy clothes made of undyed wool, armed with primitive hoes with stone or rare copper tips obtained from distant mines, wandered into the fields stretching along the irrigation canals, where fertile but untamed soil awaited their persistent efforts, ready to give its gifts only to those who were willing to pay for them with hard labor.

I could not remain a dispassionate observer, for I understood that without immersing myself in their world, without participating in this great undertaking, I would remain only a shadow, uninvolved in the drama of a nascent civilization, its ups and downs. My otherness, however obvious it was, manifested in the finer fabric of my clothes and the absence of calluses on my hands, did not arouse hostility or suspicion in them. I was just one of the countless strangers who flocked here, to the crossroads of ancient trade routes and the blessed lands of Mesopotamia, where not only peoples but also ideas mingled, giving birth to hitherto unseen forms of existence and new social structures. I approached a group of men whose backs were bent with strain, every muscle aching from the backbreaking labor, working to expand the irrigation canal – this vital artery of agriculture, without which the parched land could not feed the ever-growing population, condemning it to starvation and extinction. Their faces were covered with a thick layer of dust and sweat, but their eyes burned with the indomitable fire of determination that is inherent in those who build civilization from scratch, transforming wild nature into an oasis of life and human spirit, into something more than mere survival.

“Need help?” I said, using the simplest Sumerian words that were beginning to make sense to me, forming primitive but understandable phrases. My accent was undoubtedly far from perfect, betraying me as a stranger from distant lands, but the sincerity of my intention was unmistakably grasped by their simple, uncorrupted minds. One of the men, a strong man with a bushy beard resembling sun-dried reeds, whose hands were eaten away by calluses from hard labor, like traces of ancient battles, nodded, handing me a hoe carved from hard wood and reinforced with a flint tip. His name, as I later learned, was Ur-Nanna, and he was one of the elders of the community, the keeper of ancient knowledge, unbreakable traditions, and unwritten laws that made up the fabric of their existence, their moral compass, and the foundation of their social order. His eyes reflected the wisdom of many harvests and droughts, many joys and sorrows.

The work was exhausting, requiring extraordinary strength and tireless endurance, capable of breaking even the strongest man. The viscous, sticky clay resisted every blow of the hoe, clinging to the tool and clothing like an ancient demon unwilling to relinquish its possessions, trying to keep man in primitive chaos. The sun beat down mercilessly, rising higher and higher in the bottomless,

cloudless sky, its rays reflecting off the smooth surface of the canals, causing the air to vibrate with unbearable heat, mirages dancing above the horizon. However, physical labor served only as a distraction for me, a way to keep my hands and body busy while my mind absorbed the surrounding world like a sponge, soaking up every tiny detail, every nuance of sound and smell. I learned from them not only the art of building canals or methods of sowing barley, which was the basis of their diet and the foundation of their existence, but also the very art of living in this new, emerging reality, where every day was a struggle, but every day also brought hope. I observed their rituals, how they prayed to their gods – Enlil, the formidable god of wind and air, whose breath brought both destructive storms and beneficial winds that irrigated the fields; Enki, the god of water and wisdom, patron of crafts and unshakable knowledge, who bestowed the ability to create; and Inanna, the goddess of love and war, whose pervasive influence was felt in all areas of their lives, from the cradle to the grave, from the joy of new birth to the sorrow of farewell. Their faith was deep and all-encompassing, permeating every aspect of their existence, from agriculture and trade to justice and the most intimate family ties, weaving together their daily lives and their spiritual world.

Days flowed into weeks, weeks into months, passing imperceptibly in constant labor and tireless observation, like sand slipping through the fingers of eternity. I mastered the Sumerian language, which turned out to be surprisingly complex but logical, with its agglutinative structure and numerous dialects, and I learned their customs, their irrational fears of the unknown, manifested in superstitions and rituals, and their naive hopes for a rich harvest and peaceful existence, which were as fragile as their clay structures. I lived in a small hut that I built myself, using the same archaic methods as the locals, whose ancestors may have built in the same way thousands of years ago, passing down their knowledge from generation to generation. My diet consisted of barley flatbread, coarse but nutritious, dates, which provided sweetness and energy, and fish, which was caught in abundance in the river, providing the necessary protein, the lack of which could undermine even my immortal body, making it vulnerable. I realized that their settlement was only a small part of a larger entity they called Uruk, a city destined to become one of the greatest city-states of ancient Mesopotamia, a center of culture, trade, and unlimited political power whose influence would spread across many lands. It was not just a city; it was the center around which their lives, their trade, their beliefs, and, most importantly, their inexorable destiny, predetermined by the gods and embodied by human hands, revolved.

One day, as I was helping Ur-Nanna carry clay tablets from the temple – a massive structure that even then began to tower above the other buildings, as if challenging the heavens, its terraces glistening in the sunlight – I saw something that forever changed my understanding of humanity and its boundless potential. In the temple courtyard, under the welcome shade of high walls that protected them from the scorching sun, creating an oasis of coolness and tranquility, sat the scribes. Their fingers, stained with clay, moved with astonishing dexterity. They were not simply rearranging tablets; they were inscribing them. These were not primitive drawings or simple pictograms that merely depicted objects, but something much more complex – wedges, lines, and dots arranged in a strict, almost mystical order, forming words and concepts capable of encompassing the fullness of thought, from simple economic records to complex myths and laws.

I approached, mesmerized by this process, which seemed like pure magic, inaccessible to mere mortals. One of the scribes, a young man with a sharp, attentive gaze and eyes burning with concentration, noticed my genuine interest and looked up. He showed me a tablet on which rows of wedge-shaped marks were neatly, almost painstakingly, pressed, like the footprints of unknown birds on wet clay, an alphabet of existence that had not yet been deciphered.

“This is the grain ledger, Enkidu,” he said, using the name I had taken so as not to stand out among them, the name that had become mine in this new, relentlessly earthly life that connected me to their world. “How much has been harvested, how much has been given to the temple as tithes, how much is left for sowing next year – it’s all here, recorded for eternity.”

It was not just writing in its modern, simplified sense. It was *a system* – cuneiform, the first complete writing system in human history. A system for organization, for accounting, for preserving information, for transmitting the most complex ideas across space and time, connecting the past, present, and future. It was the birth of history, recorded on clay, capable of surviving the centuries, passing knowledge and experience from generation to generation, elevating man above the animal world, above silent existence, into the realm of thought and meaning. I realized that this invention was far more significant than any weapon or irrigation canal, for it gave people the opportunity to pass on knowledge through generations, to build on the experience of their ancestors, rather than starting from scratch each time, reinventing the wheel or mastering agriculture. It was self-awareness, the acquisition of collective memory, the key to the future.

I asked him to teach me. Scribes were a special caste, their knowledge a privilege available only to a select few, those with sharp minds and patience like stone worn smooth by water over millennia. But my interest was sincere, and my memory was phenomenal, capable of holding vast amounts of information accumulated over the centuries of my immortality, like a bottomless well of knowledge. I learned quickly, astonishing the young scribe with my ability to memorize hundreds of characters and their meanings, their phonetic and semantic content, as if I myself were part of this ancient wisdom, long forgotten but newly awakened. I spent hours in the temple courtyard, bent over clay tablets, feeling a new era being born in my hands – an era of written history, an era when thoughts could be immortalized, become the property of eternity, outliving their creators.

I saw Uruk grow, transforming before my eyes like a living organism, absorbing the surrounding world, gaining strength and power. Small settlements, like the one I had come to, merged into one large, thriving city, whose walls expanded, engulfing the surrounding villages like an insatiable mouth thirsting for space and power. The ziggurat, the stepped temple of the goddess Inanna, rose higher and higher, its terraces of mud brick reaching the sky, like a stairway to the gods, a symbol of their growing power and their all-consuming faith, which grew stronger, more solid, and more real with each passing day. The streets became wider, paved with stone, and the houses stronger, built of fired brick, reflecting the steadily growing prosperity and increasing complexity of urban planning, where each brick was a testament to human genius and the desire for order. Specialized craftsmen appeared: potters, whose hands on the potter's wheel created elegant ceramics that were not only functional but also beautiful, painted with ancient patterns; weavers, who produced fine linen and woolen fabrics for clothing and profitable trade, connecting Uruk with distant lands that brought exotic goods and ideas; blacksmiths, who first worked with malleable copper and then with more durable bronze, creating tools and weapons that changed the course of war and peaceful life, making it more efficient and deadly. Society became increasingly complex, with a clear hierarchy, from rulers and priests at the top, wielding unlimited power, to farmers and slaves, who were the foundation on which the entire edifice of civilization rested, And I, an immortal observer, was at the very center of this whirlwind of creation and relentless development, watching a new world come into being.

But with growth inevitably came new problems, whose ominous shadows were already looming on the horizon, foreshadowing coming upheavals and inevitable conflicts. Disputes over fertile land, vital water resources, and lucrative trade routes became increasingly acute, like knives ready to pierce the fabric of the world, destroying the fragile balance. I heard about conflicts with neighboring city-states – Uruk, Lagash, Kish – whose rulers, like those of Uruk, also sought to expand their influence and power, to dominate Mesopotamia. The shadows of war loomed on the horizon, and I knew that these people, so inventive and persistent in their creativity, were just as capable of destruction, of fratricidal conflicts where brother went against brother and cities burned in the flames of ambition. My heart, accustomed to loss and destruction over many centuries, ached with foreboding of the trials to come, for I saw how fragile this new, nascent civilization was, and how easily it could be destroyed by fire and sword, by the merciless force of human cruelty that always lurked in the depths of the soul. But for now, in the light of the morning sun, Uruk shone, promising a great future full of hope

and achievement. And I was here to see it, to witness its triumphs and its falls, its grandeur and its inevitable end, which always follows prosperity, like night follows day.

### Chapter 3: Life in the Shadow of the Ziggurat

The years I spent in Uruk dissolved into an endless, pulsating series of observations, each dawn revealing new, sometimes shocking facets of human existence. I, Enkidu, who had found flesh and blood in this world, became its silent, all-seeing witness, but always remained on its shaky periphery, like an ancient shadow gliding across the monumental walls of the great ziggurat, scorched by the merciless sun. My days were filled with exhausting but paradoxically instructive labor in the fertile fields generously irrigated by the life-giving waters of the Euphrates, participation in intricate, mysterious temple rituals, and, most importantly, tireless, all-consuming study. I absorbed knowledge with the eagerness of a desert thirsting for rain, devouring every minute detail of this young but already incomprehensibly complex civilization, observing its steady, almost organic growth and development, like a mighty tree growing from a fragile sprout.

I was a silent spectator as Uruk grew uncontrollably, like a living, voracious organism, slowly but surely engulfing the surrounding settlements, transforming itself from a scattered group of primitive huts made of reeds and clay, into a majestic city whose walls seemed indestructible, raised by the very will of the gods. These walls, made of millions of bricks dried under the scorching Mesopotamian sun, were not only a defense but also a symbol of human stubbornness, their desire for order amid the wilderness. The streets, once chaotic, dusty paths, pockmarked with the footprints of thousands of human feet and animal hooves, gradually took on a certain orderliness, although they remained a confusing labyrinth of high clay walls, like the veins of a living creature. In these alleys, where direct sunlight rarely penetrated, there was a special, thick air, saturated with the aromas of life and death: the acrid, pungent smoke from numerous hearths where food was being prepared mingled with the sweet, alluring aroma of freshly baked barley bread, the spicy incense of exotic spices brought by caravans from distant, unknown lands such as Magan or Melukhha, and the tart, earthy smell of damp clay, which permeated the air everywhere after rare rains or morning dew. Each breath was an immersion into the multifaceted, contradictory soul of Uruk.

At the heart of this urban grandeur, above the hustle and bustle, stood the ziggurat, a giant, stepped temple tower dedicated to the goddess Inanna, patroness of Uruk and heavenly ruler, a goddess whose dual nature included both the tenderness of love and the fury of war. It grew with the city, floor by floor, becoming taller and more majestic, its terraces, perhaps once adorned with hanging gardens, reaching toward the sky like a prayer frozen in stone, a grand testimony to human faith. Its monumental steps leading to the sacred sanctuary at the very top, where the gods were believed to descend, symbolized man's tireless, eternal striving for the heavens, for the incomprehensible divine powers whose will, as the Sumerians sacredly believed, determined their fleeting destinies. I often took part in its endless construction, carrying heavy, bulky baskets filled with still-wet bricks that burned my shoulders, mixing viscous, pliable clay. My immortal strength allowed me to work tirelessly, like a tireless spirit, but I always restrained myself so as not to stand out from the crowd of mortals, whose faces were worn out by hard, backbreaking labor, covered with dust and sweat, but whose eyes burned with the unquenchable fire of unshakable faith. I saw how they, overcoming fatigue, erected this clay colossus, and I understood with piercing clarity that for them it was not just an architectural structure, but a living, tangible embodiment of their deepest connection with the divine, their desperate, sometimes naive hope for the favor and mercy of the harsh, inscrutable gods, whose moods were as changeable as the flow of the Euphrates.

Life in Uruk, like the ebb and flow of the tides, was subject to the strict, unchanging rhythms of the great Tigris and Euphrates rivers, whose waters brought life, and to the cyclical, predetermined change of seasons. Spring brought life-giving floods, bringing fertile silt to the fields, which fertilized the parched earth, promising a bountiful, generous harvest. It was a time of hope, when the whole community went out to the fields. Summer was marked by exhausting, scorching heat, under whose

merciless rays the arduous harvest began, requiring superhuman effort and endurance. The sun scorched the colors, leaving only the burnt ochre of the earth and faded shadows. Autumn was the time of sowing, when precious seeds were entrusted to the earth like children to their mother, and winter brought cold, piercing winds from the northern mountains and the agonizing, endless wait for a new agricultural cycle. I watched their festivals dedicated to the gods of fertility and harvest, such as the Akitu festival, with its complex, centuries-old rituals designed to appease the wrath of Enlil, the powerful god of wind and storms who could bring devastating floods, or to secure the favor of Inanna, the goddess of love, war, and fertility, whose faces were as varied as life itself. I saw priests dressed in immaculate white linen robes, perform sacrifices at ancient altars where incense burned and animal blood was spilled, and crowds of people gathered at the temple to hear predictions about the future or receive blessings, blindly believing in the power of divine intervention to change destiny.

My skills as a scribe, honed over centuries of observation, became increasingly sought after in this rapidly developing society. Cuneiform, a complex hieroglyphic writing system, evolved to become more sophisticated, expressive, and multifaceted, transitioning from pictograms to phonetic symbols. I no longer simply recorded grain or livestock counts on clay tablets, as did the early, unsophisticated scribes, whose role was limited to primitive bookkeeping. I carefully copied sacred hymns to the gods whose names were on everyone's lips, such as the hymns to Nanna or Enlil, compiled detailed, comprehensive lists of laws that regulated every aspect of city life, from marriage contracts to land use regulations, and recorded the intricate commercial transactions that took place in the noisy, bustling market, where the voices of merchants and wandering singers could be heard. I witnessed how the Word, imprinted on malleable clay with a stylus, acquired enormous, undeniable power, becoming an unshakable foundation for governing the state and administering justice, the essence of which was sometimes cruel, but always inevitable, and for the transmission of knowledge from generation to generation, overcoming the barriers of time and space. It was a true miracle created by the hands of mortals, their greatest, immortal achievement, capable of rivaling the will of the gods, for it granted them a semblance of eternity.

I met Ur-Shulga, an old, wise scribe, whose eyes, one of which was blind, radiated a deep, almost prophetic insight, as if he could see more than ordinary mortals. He became my mentor and, perhaps, my only true friend in this new world, a world where everyone was a stranger, but his wisdom pierced through the thick veil of loneliness. We spent hours sitting in the cool shade of the temple courtyard, where the air was thick with the smell of damp clay and ancient, decaying scrolls that held echoes of the past. We copied tablets, discussing the subtlest nuances of the meaning of cuneiform signs, comprehending their multidimensionality, the nature of the gods whose gigantic temples towered over the city, and the tragic fragility of human life, so fleeting and transient compared to mine, which was endless. He did not know about my immortality, but he sensed in me a certain ancient, inexplicable wisdom, which he attributed to my long and mysterious travels, perhaps hinting that I had seen more than he could imagine.

"Enkidu," he said once, his voice deep as a well of time, as he slowly traced his finger across a clay tablet covered in neat, precise cuneiform characters, "these signs are not just symbols. They are our memory. When our bodies turn to dust, they will remain, and the winds of time will not erase them. They will speak of us to those who come after, through the centuries, through the millennia, when our names are forgotten and our ziggurats have turned to hills of dust."

His words echoed in the depths of my soul, like a stone thrown into a bottomless well, provoking deep, painful thoughts. My own memory was boundless, like the endless, eternal sea, but it belonged only to me, and it would die with the last breath of the world, carried away into oblivion. These same signs were the collective, immortal memory of humanity, capable of overcoming death itself, becoming an unbreakable bridge between generations, between centuries, testifying to their existence. In this, I felt a sudden, dazzling flash of hope that I had not felt in so long, realizing that mortals,

despite their brief, ephemeral lives, had found a way to leave their mark on eternity, carving it in stone and clay, like gods, defying oblivion.

However, not everything was peaceful in Uruk, despite its apparent splendor and prosperity. I heard disturbing, ominous news of skirmishes on the city's borders, where armed troops clashed with uninvited guests, of sudden, bloody raids by nomadic tribes, whose shadows, like harbingers of doom, flashed on the distant horizon, leaving only ashes and destruction in their wake, about the growing, relentless strife between powerful city-states, each craving power and control over fertile lands and trade routes. Uruk, though powerful, was not the only center of power in ruthless Mesopotamia, where the struggle for resources was eternal. Ur, Lagash, Kish – each sought absolute domination, each had its own gods, its own haughty rulers, and its own insatiable ambitions, which inevitably led to conflict. Tension grew like a storm cloud inexorably darkening the cloudless sky, and I felt the air thickening, heralding an impending storm whose power would sweep away everything in its path, sparing no one. Wars were inevitable in this world, where brute force decided everything, where the right was on the side of the strong, and I knew that soon I would have to witness not only great creation, but also total, unbridled destruction that would leave only ruins. My hands, accustomed to the hoe and the stylus, may once again take up arms to protect the fragile and precious things that I have come to value in this new world of mine, the world of mortals, which, despite everything, has become dear to me.

## Chapter 4: Echoes of War

The tension in the air of ancient Uruk felt like a parching heat, heralding a storm brought by the merciless winds of the desert. Throughout the city – in the narrow streets flooded with blinding sunlight, in the cool, echoing temple courtyards where the smell of incense and old papyrus lingered, amid the deafening noise of crowded bazaars filled with the cries of merchants and the clanging of copper – there were increasingly alarming rumors. They whispered about border skirmishes, when small groups of warriors from neighboring cities clashed over disputed lands; about daring cattle raids, when entire herds disappeared at night, leaving behind only dust and despair; about sudden raids on remote settlements, where the inhabitants barely had time to hide behind flimsy walls. Ur, Lagash, Kish – the names of these powerful Sumerian city-states, once symbols of greatness, were now uttered with growing suspicion and outright hostility, like the hiss of a snake. Each of them, like a predatory beast, considered itself the center of the world, the chosen heir to the fertile lands of Mesopotamia, nourished by the life-giving waters of the Euphrates and Tigris, and the sole controller of vital trade routes along which precious goods such as lapis lazuli, obsidian, and cedar wood flowed. And each was prepared to defend his claims with arms, as was often the case in the unstable early dynastic period of Sumer, when peace was only a brief respite between endless wars.

I watched this growing madness with a heart as heavy as lead. Over the long millennia of my existence, spanning the ages from primitive communities to the emergence of the first cities, I had witnessed countless conflicts, from minor border skirmishes to devastating sieges. And each time, they left behind only charred ruins, the ashes of once-blooming fields, and unbearable pain that echoed through generations. But here in Uruk, in this very cradle of civilization, where people were just mastering the complex art of agriculture, transforming wild lands into fruitful gardens, where they erected majestic ziggurats whose peaks reached into the bottomless blue sky, and developed cuneiform writing, immortalizing their knowledge on clay tablets, it seemed especially tragic. Those who had so persistently built these clay cities, decorating them with skillful mosaics of fired clay, who had created complex irrigation systems, whose canals wound across the land like veins nourishing the body, who had laid the foundations of law, astronomy, and mathematics, were now ready to turn their creative genius to mutual destruction. And all this for a few acres of disputed land or a couple of jugs of grain, as if they were savage tribes rather than the pinnacle of advanced civilization.

One day, as I was immersed in the painstaking work of transcribing ancient temple hymns onto damp clay tablets, pressing my stylus into the soft clay and leaving strict cuneiform marks on it, a message rang out in the air. It was not just a stray rumor spread by idle gawkers, but an official message delivered by a dusty and exhausted messenger. His face, weathered by the wind and dust of long roads, was pale with fatigue, and his eyes burned with a feverish gleam. He brought terrible news: Lagash, a city famous for its fearless warriors, whose bronze helmets inspired awe, and skilled craftsmen, whose precious metalwork was prized throughout Mesopotamia, had declared war on Umma, its long-standing and irreconcilable rival. The cause was a border dispute, a long-simmering conflict over control of the vital Guedenna Canal, which both cities, Lagash and Umma, considered their rightful possession. In Uruk, strategically located exactly between these two warring parties, the news caused deep, almost panicky excitement. Some citizens, fearing the worst, called for strict neutrality, realizing that entering the war could result in economic ruin and human losses for Uruk. Others, especially influential merchants and warehouse owners, were inclined to support Lagash, with which Uruk historically had closer economic and cultural ties that promised mutual benefit.

Priests dressed in immaculate white linen robes and the elders of Uruk, their faces furrowed with deep wrinkles of wisdom and anxiety, gathered in the main temple of the goddess Inanna, a majestic building made of fired brick, to discuss the threatening situation. Inside the temple, there was a solemn silence, broken only by the occasional rustle of clothing and muffled voices. As

the temple scribe, I had privileged access to these meetings, although I tried to remain completely inconspicuous, blending into the shadows. I carefully recorded their words, scratching cuneiform symbols onto freshly molded, damp clay tablets. Their voices, as they discussed the fate of the city, were filled with a deep, almost palpable anxiety. They understood perfectly well that a local conflict between neighbors, like a spark, could easily escalate into a full-scale regional war, which, like a forest fire, would inevitably engulf Uruk itself, threatening to destroy everything that had been built over centuries.

Soon, feverish preparations for war began throughout the vast city. The atmosphere changed, becoming more tense and hectic. The men who yesterday had been working in the flooded fields irrigated by the waters of the Euphrates, their hands covered with calluses from the plow, or deftly turning the potter's wheel, creating jugs and bowls from clay, were now learning the harsh art of wielding bronze spears and massive wooden shields. The training grounds echoed with dull thuds, the shouts of instructors, and the clang of metal. Blacksmiths worked tirelessly day and night, blowing their bellows, and the flames of their forges lit up the night sky as they forged thousands of sharp spearheads and feathered arrowheads from dull bronze. The clanging of hammers never ceased for a moment, echoing throughout the city. Women, their faces pale with anxiety but their eyes determined, prepared huge supplies of dried meat, grain, and beer for the future warriors, knowing that the army's survival depended on their labor. There was a thick, almost tangible smell of fear in the air, mixed with firm determination, the smell of sweat, smoke, and inevitable fate.

My old mentor, the wise Ur-Shulga, was gloomier than usual, like a cloud covering the sun. His usually good-natured face, framed by a gray beard, was clouded with deep wrinkles of sadness, and his eyes gazed into the distance with unusual longing. "This is madness, Enkidu," he whispered to me one day as we sat in silence in the temple courtyard, lit only by the flickering of oil lamps casting strange shadows on the ancient walls. "People are so quick to forget the irreplaceable value of peace and the fragility of prosperity, as if they had never seen destruction. They see only the immediate gain they crave, not the abyss of loss into which all their achievements may fall."

I nodded silently, agreeing with every word he said, which weighed heavily on my soul. His words were merely an echo of my own bitter thoughts, which had haunted me for centuries. I saw how fragile this young but already highly developed civilization was, how easily it could be destroyed in the fires of civil strife that had shaken Sumer for centuries, leaving only ruins and oblivion in its wake. Their temples, canals, their writing – all of it could be wiped out in an instant., I knew that very soon I would have to face this cruel reality head-on, once again witnessing senseless destruction.

A few weeks later, the final order arrived, sealed with the ruler's clay seal, which depicted a lion pierced by a spear – a symbol of power and military valor. Uruk was to immediately send a detachment of its best warriors to help Lagash. These warriors, selected for their physical fitness and experience, were the pride of the city. I, possessing extraordinary physical strength surpassing that of ordinary mortals and amazing, almost superhuman endurance, was among those called up for the militia. My skills as a scribe, so valued in the temple where I spent my days, were of no use on the battlefield. Instead of a stylus, I was given a simple but sturdy bronze helmet, a reliable leather shield covered with tanned bull hide for extra strength, and a short but sharp spear. I felt the familiar, heavy coolness of the weapons in my hands, the coolness of metal that I had felt in countless battles, fighting for vanished peoples over many millennia.

We set out at dawn, when the first pale rays of the sun barely touched the high peaks of the ziggurats, coloring their brick walls in soft pink and golden tones. The townspeople poured into the streets, seeing us off with silent glances full of anxiety and hope. A long column of warriors, their steps in sync, kicked up clouds of fine red dust that, like a golden haze, colored the rising sun a dull, ominous orange, foreshadowing bloodshed. We walked across uneven, parched land, past fields where grain had recently grown, but now lay desolate. I walked among them, sensing their barely concealed fear, their nervous excitement manifested in convulsive movements, and their firm, cold

determination. Many of them were very young, almost boys, whose faces were still too smooth, and had never seen a real battle. I had seen too many, having lived through more than one generation of warriors whose names had long since been erased from human memory.

When we arrived at the site, I was met with the horrific sight of the impending carnage. It was a vast, dusty plain, already scarred by previous, smaller skirmishes, where the earth was soaked with blood and remembered the clang of weapons and the moans of the dying. Here and there were fragments of spears and broken shields, grim reminders of past clashes. In the distance, under the scorching sun, stood the impregnable walls of Umma, a city surrounded by a deep moat filled with water and protected by tall watchtowers, from which the silhouettes of archers were already visible. Between us and them stood two enormous armies, lined up in strict, dense rows: the warriors of Lagash, clad in heavy leather armor and bronze helmets, formed intimidating phalanxes, their spears thrust forward like porcupine quills. Opposite them were the soldiers of Umma, taking up their battle positions, their banners depicting lions and eagles fluttering in the wind. The sound of drums beating, steady and hypnotic, the sharp, abrupt shouts of commanders giving their final orders, and the dry, metallic clang of bronze weapons – all of this was painfully familiar to me, down to my last nerve, foreshadowing the inevitable slaughter.

I took my place in the tight formation, feeling the pressure of my comrades' bodies on either side, preparing for the inevitable. My heart did not beat faster, my hands did not tremble, and my breathing remained steady, unlike the young warriors around me, whose chests heaved with excitement. I was a perfect machine, adapted to survive in the most brutal conditions, but deep inside me burned a quiet, unquenchable sorrow. I saw these people, my compatriots in this passing era, preparing to destroy each other with unprecedented fury, their eyes burning with hatred and fanaticism. And I, an immortal witness, was doomed to watch this madness, with no right to intervene, bearing the burden of eternal memory.

The battle began suddenly, without warning. With a piercing cry that seemed to tear the air itself, filling it with terror, two huge armies collided like two waves crashing against rocks, crushing each other. The sound of the impact was deafening, like a clap of thunder. I saw shiny spears crash into sturdy shields, breaking them and piercing bodies; sharp bronze swords cut through flesh and bone with terrifying ease, leaving bloody furrows behind them; how men fell to the ground like sheaves of wheat, their dying cries drowned out by the deafening noise of battle, turning into a single, indistinguishable howl. The dust kicked up by thousands of feet mixed with the blood settling on faces and then running down bodies, creating a sticky, suffocating atmosphere that took my breath away. I fought, as always, with coolness and striking efficiency, without unnecessary movements, protecting my comrades-in-arms, parrying blows and delivering precise, deadly thrusts, but without seeking personal glory or recognition.

The war between Lagash and Umma, this bloody feud, lasted for more than a year, sometimes quietening down during truces, then flaring up again with renewed, fierce intensity. I lived through several such military campaigns, witnessing how combat tactics changed, becoming more complex and sophisticated; how weapons improved – from primitive flint axes to more effective bronze axes and composite bows, whose arrows flew farther and more accurately. I watched as human spirits were tempered and broken, as brave warriors were reduced to emaciated shadows, their faces becoming masks of fatigue and pain. I saw those I knew die, their faces, once full of life, laughter, and hope, disappear into the endless and merciless flow of time, leaving only emptiness behind.

Each loss, each broken cry left another invisible scar on my soul, another painful reminder of my curse – eternal existence. I was doomed to be an eternal witness to their short lives, their desperate struggle for survival, their inevitable death and disappearance. And I knew that this was only the beginning of my long journey, stretching over millennia. Ahead of me lay new wars, even more massive and destructive, new empires yet to be born, whose names would be carved in stone but

then disappear, and new falls of great civilizations that once considered themselves immortal. And I, Enkidu, will be here to see it all, bearing the burden of memory for those who have gone.

## Chapter 5: The Lesson of Defeat and the Omen

The war with Umma, though it did not lead to the complete destruction of Uruk, left indelible scars on its body and soul, like deep scars on ancient pottery. We returned to the city not to the cheers of the crowd and the sounds of victory drums, but under the oppressive veil of fatigue and deep sorrow. Every step echoed with phantom pain, reminding us of those who remained forever on the blood-soaked battlefields, whose names were now whispered only by the wind over the Euphrates. The faces of the fallen soldiers, their carefree laughter, their unfulfilled hopes for a peaceful old age – all this became part of my boundless but equally painful memory, like the fragments of a broken stele. I watched as families mourned their dead, their cries echoing through the narrow streets, bouncing off the mud walls. Women in mourning black robes, their faces lined with wrinkles of grief, gathered at the majestic temple of Inanna, whose terraced steps rose above the city, calling on the goddess of love and war for mercy and comfort in their inconsolable grief. The air was thick with the smell of incense and tears.

Ur-Shulga, our wise and faithful guardian of the city, whose figure seemed carved from history itself, met me at the massive city gates. Their massive wooden doors, reinforced with bronze plates, seemed to have absorbed centuries of history, keeping the secrets of countless comings and goings. His blind eye, as if possessed of some ancient, unearthly wisdom, saw more than the sighted, penetrating to the very essence of what was happening. He embraced me tightly, and in that embrace, tangible and strong, I felt the long-awaited warmth that could, if only for a moment, dispel the cold of battle and despair. “You have returned, Enkidu,” he whispered in a voice full of relief and deep, almost physical sadness. “This is a great blessing for Uruk. We have lost many sons and daughters whose voices will no longer be heard on our streets.”

I just nodded, unable to say a word. My voice was hoarse and cracked from the acrid dust of the roads and the shrill cries of battle that still rang in my ears. As I made my way through the maze of city streets, past cramped houses and noisy markets, I looked closely at people’s faces, trying to read the echoes of their experiences in them. In each of them, I saw not only grief, deep and all-encompassing, but also a new, deeper awareness – an understanding of the fragility of their world, their defenselessness in the face of war, like a house of cards before a hurricane. They realized their dependence on the mercy of powerful, sometimes capricious gods and the indestructible, sometimes despotic power of their rulers. The city, once bustling with life, filled with the laughter of children and the voices of merchants, now breathed a heavy, almost palpable sadness, as if the very air was saturated with grief and fear of an unknown future.

After the war, life in Uruk underwent significant, irreversible changes. The influence of the priests, servants of the gods, whose temples were the center of spiritual and political power, grew even stronger. Their calls for unity and unconditional obedience to the divine will now sounded more often and louder, spreading across the squares and temples, penetrating every home and every soul. The warriors who were lucky enough to survive the bloody clashes became revered heroes, their names whispered with awe, but their eyes were forever haunted by the shadows of the horrors they had experienced, the glimmers of the flames of destroyed settlements. I returned to my usual duties as a scribe in the e-dubba, the House of Tablets, where clay and stylus became my constant companions. But now my records included not only reports on barley harvests and livestock numbers, on the accounting of goods and taxes. I painstakingly wrote lists of the fallen in cuneiform, immortalizing their names on clay tablets, I recorded new decrees from the lugal introducing additional taxes to maintain the ever-growing army, and I compiled detailed reports on destroyed irrigation canals and devastated fields, whose soil was saturated with blood and tears.

I spent a lot of time with Ur-Shulga, our wise elder whose experience spanned decades, discussing the harsh lessons taught by this war. Like me, he saw it as more than just a territorial

conflict over fertile land or trade routes, but something much deeper – a harbinger of coming, possibly catastrophic changes that were in the air. “People always seek order, Enkidu,” he mused, sitting by the cool wall of the ziggurat, cooled by the wind that carried the scents of myrrh and decay, “but their insatiable desire for power, for domination over others, inevitably leads to chaos and destruction. We build magnificent structures whose towers touch the clouds, and then we ourselves turn them into ruins, covering our own achievements with dust.”

I listened to his words, and each one resonated deep within my ancient memory, like an echo from millennia ago. I had seen it countless times – cycles of rise and fall, construction and destruction, seemingly endless, repeating themselves over and over again. It was the eternal rhythm of Mesopotamia, its inexorable, predetermined fate, carved in stone and clay.

Once, as I sat on the banks of the sacred Euphrates, whose waters carried silt and hopes from the northernmost mountains to the Persian Gulf, watching its mighty and unhurried flow, I noticed a stranger. He was different from the usual merchants wandering in caravans along dusty roads, or nomads looking for new pastures for their herds. His simple but sturdy clothing, devoid of adornment, indicated a certain independence and self-sufficiency, and his gaze was penetrating and commanding, as if he could see the very essence of things, hidden from the eyes of mere mortals. He moved alone, without an entourage or companions, which was unusual for a man of his stature, but his gait conveyed an inner strength and determination characteristic of those who carry a great destiny on their shoulders. Stopping at the shore, he gazed at the water for a long time, deep in thought, as if talking to the river itself.

I sensed something extraordinary in him, something that set him apart from the crowd, like a rare gem among ordinary pebbles. It was that very premonition, almost tangible, which I had learned to recognize unerringly over the long centuries of my existence – a premonition of grandiose changes that would soon shake the foundations of Sumer to its very core. I did not know his name, but his image, shrouded in an aura of mystery and a certain predestination, was forever etched in my memory, as if carved on my heart.

Later, returning to the bustling city, filled with the smells of spices and the sounds of everyday life, I heard talk of a new ruler who was gaining incredible power in the north, in Akkad, a city that was gradually rising above the others, becoming a new center of attraction. His name was Sargon, and rumors about him spread quickly throughout Mesopotamia, like wildfire across the dry steppe. It was said that he was not a noble aristocrat dressed in luxurious clothes, but a humble gardener, a man of the people, yet he possessed incredible charisma, a gift of persuasion capable of winning the hearts of thousands, and unprecedented military talent unmatched in Sumer. He gathered scattered tribes and cities under his banner, uniting them into a single whole, destroying old borders and creating new ones. His ambitions were boundless, extending far beyond the known borders of city-states, heralding the creation of something unprecedented.

I immediately associated the image of the mysterious stranger by the river with these disturbing rumors. It was quite possible that it was he – Sargon, the harbinger of a new era, whose shadow was already falling on Sumer. Perhaps it was he who was destined to change the course of Mesopotamian history, redrawing its map and destiny, creating a new state. I realized that such personalities, capable of radically changing the world, appear extremely rarely, once every few centuries, and their appearance always heralds great upheavals and fundamental changes in the world order.

My inner voice, which had previously only whispered about coming events like a light breeze, now sounded louder and clearer, like thunder, heralding the inevitable. The era of scattered city-states, which had seemed unshakable and eternal, was coming to its logical conclusion. A new, unprecedented force loomed on the horizon – a force that sought complete unification, the creation of something much greater than just separate settlements divided by enmity and suspicion. An empire was approaching, a concept foreign to the Sumerians, but one that would change their world forever.

I felt that soon I would have to leave Uruk, my old home, whose walls had known me for thousands of years. My place was where great events unfolded, where powerful civilizations were born and died, where history made its inexorable march, leaving its mark on the sands. I had to witness this new, exciting chapter in the annals of humanity. And although I understood that it would bring new losses, new suffering, and that I would see the fall of the old world, a spark of insatiable curiosity burned within me like an eternal flame. What would this Sargon create? How would he change the entire known world, transforming it into something new? And how long would his great creation, this new empire, last before it too sank into oblivion?

I looked again at the ziggurat, towering majestically over the city, its stepped terraces seeming to touch the heavens themselves. It was not just a building, but a symbol of Sumer, its unshakable faith in the gods, its grandiose achievements in architecture, astronomy, and writing. But I, Enkidu, knew that even the tallest towers could collapse, giving way to new forces and new orders. And I would be here to see it.

## Chapter 6: The Road North

The premonition of irreversible change, which had arisen while observing the mysterious traveler by the great river and was reinforced by the news of Sargon of Akkad, grew stronger with each sunrise, becoming more and more tangible. Uruk, once perceived as the unshakable center of the civilized world, the stronghold of Sumerian culture, now seemed to be just one of countless fragments that were about to merge into something grand – a new, unified power. My unchanging duty, my eternal destiny – to be an impartial witness to epoch-making events, a contemplator of the course of history – drew me north, to the origins of a nascent power that promised to redraw the map of Mesopotamia.

My farewell to Ur-Shulga was overshadowed by deep sorrow, the echoes of which reverberated in my eternal soul. Over many centuries, he had become the only one who had managed to break through my armor of alienation, penetrating the most hidden corners of my ancient heart. I could not reveal to him the true, all-consuming reason for my departure, limiting myself to the words: “The road calls me to unknown horizons.” This wise old man, whose blindness had sharpened his inner vision, as if seeing the invisible canvas of fate, merely nodded. “Go, Enkidu,” he said, his blind gaze seeming to pierce through me into the unknown future. “Your destiny is not in settling down and resting, like river silt. You are the wind that wanders through the millennia, knowing no attachment. But remember Uruk, remember what we have built in this sacred place.”

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