

# O: ARTHUR: By the River Thames, 1854

In the sweltering afternoon of August 1854, London exudes a fetid atmosphere as noxious odors from tanneries, factories, and cesspools permeate the air. The Thames, once a vibrant river, now sluggishly carries flotsam and reflects the city's decay, severely affecting the health of its inhabitants. Arthur, a concerned individual, takes measures to protect himself and his family from the miasma. He walks briskly to his office and home, covering his mouth with a damp cloth, and desperately opens windows to allow fresh air into their poorly ventilated basement flat.

On a particularly hot Thursday, after an early stoppage at the printing press, Arthur navigates through the muck of the streets, noting the overwhelming number of horses and the waste they leave behind. Despite the adversity and dangers, Arthur is determined to provide little treats for his family. He buys his mother a pair of gloves, rationalizing he might forgo treats for his brothers. After picking up water from a reliable pump, he returns home to find joy in a new book he has acquired, *\*The Poetical Works of John Keats\**.

However, the next day, Arthur's world crumbles when one of his younger brothers falls ill, suffering from vomiting and diarrhoea. Despite efforts to combat the sickness, it becomes evident that cholera has invaded their home. Arthur takes on the responsibility of caring for his family while harboring a growing dread stemming from the water he had brought home. As the cholera epidemic unfolds, Arthur learns of its source and suspects that the water he provided was tainted, leading to his brother's tragic condition.

As authorities attempt to resolve the crisis through misguided actions focused on addressing miasma, a doctor named John Snow uncovers that the cholera epidemic is waterborne, primarily stemming from the contaminated pump on Broad Street. Despite his attempts to warn city officials, they dismiss his findings. As the death toll soars, Arthur grapples with the harrowing realization that he may have inadvertently caused the illness of his brother, highlighting the grim connection between human actions and the health crisis brought forth by the polluted Thames. Ultimately, the narrative underscores the need for significant reforms in how London manages waste and water, recognizing that humans are at fault in poisoning their own source of life .