

O: ARTHUR: By the River Tigris, 1876

In a dilapidated shepherd's hut by the River Tigris, Arthur lies dying, his senses struggling to comprehend his surroundings filled with poverty. Surrounded by rags and cold tea, he discovers his journal on the floor. Breathing labored, he manages to write, reflecting on life's inclinations that shape our destinies. Arthur recognizes that his own life has revolved around an ardent love for poetry and words, dedicating years to collecting, interpreting, and translating literary works, particularly an ancient epic that provides him with immense joy.

Throughout his life, others perceived his talent—his mother unquestioningly celebrated it, his father acknowledged it at times, and his colleagues agreed, though his wife's belief remains uncertain. He grapples with the idea that talent may be outshone by passion, which embodies a restless heart seeking to push boundaries. Echoes of Gilgamesh and Ashurbanipal fill his mind, both kings who endured tribulations and losses, leaving Arthur reflecting on his own identity as “King of the Sewers and Slums,” far removed from his origin.

As tears fill his eyes, Arthur laments missed opportunities as a father and husband. He feels loneliness where intimacy should thrive, harboring unvoiced desires and unshared secrets. Unlike the scholarly pursuit of ancient texts that brought him solace, he recognizes love as a complex puzzle he has yet to decipher. He acknowledges the collective ownership of epic narratives, contemplating their significance to history and culture while holding tightly to a blue tablet from his explorations—a gift to Leila, embodying both connection and disconnection.

Arthur dreams of the Epic of Gilgamesh transcending time and borders, enchanting admirers of ancient poetry with its complexity and flawed beauty, mirroring an imperfect world. He believes art serves as a testament to human emotion, a legacy for future generations to recognize their ancestors' humanity and fragility. In his final moments, he embraces mortality, finding peace as he recalls teachings about death as a new beginning.

As King Arthur takes his last breath on August 1876, he embodies a multifaceted identity—a son of the Thames, a scholar, an explorer, and a man entangled in love and secrets. Mahmoud arrives, bearing news of his demise, and Leila, now marked by Arthur's memories, awaits, embodying the profound connection they shared. Arthur is to be buried at the Castle of the Rock, forever remembered as King Arthur of the Sewers and Slums, an enduring reflection of both his triumphs and struggles.