

Babel - R.F. Kuang

BOOK I

Chapter one

The boy was the only one left, when the professor Richard Lovell reached the house. Her mother and everyone in his family had succumbed to the plague, known as the Asiatic cholera, which was carried by the sailors from the Calcutta to the England. The boy was too weak to answer any questions asked by the professor. So, the professor put a metal bar on his chest and spoke some words. The boy felt better after that. He took the boys with him, along with his books. The professor had a library with all the books he had collected. The boy recovered day by day, and one day when the boy came into the library, the professor asked him to read a page from "The Wealth of Nation". The boy stumbled while reading the paragraph. Then the professor showed him the metal bar again and asked him to hold and read the Chinese letter attached to the side: it was 'accepting without thinking'. After reading the words, the boys felt the gripping in his throat and dropped the bar. Then the professor told him that he had a proposal to adopt him if he agrees to put him his mind on the study. Then the professor thought how to name the boy. He was called 'Robin Swift'. The professor gave him a paper to sign before he goes to bed.

They left from Canton, the mouth of China, to London, where the professor resides. On the ship, the Countess of Harcourt, Robin learnt that the professor had paid all the wages for Miss Betty, a woman in his household who usually took care of the chores. Then he had known Robin's mother since she was well-off merchant. However, her brother was a gambler, and it led them to live in riverside. Robin used to be furious at those kinds of words, but he learnt the gratitude towards the professor. All the days were the same to him, and he spoke with the passengers with his near perfect accent, and nobody could recognize him as a Chinese. One morning, the professor woke him up, they saw London from the mouth of river Thame.

Chapter Two

London was like Canton, but more mechanical. It was extremely wealthy and poor at the same time. The city was beaming with sliver and trade. After clearing the custom, they reached the professor's Lowell four-stories house. Robin's room was at the top of the house. It has a desk and books. It seemed to him that someone had lived here before him.

In the evening, they signed a guardianship contract. Robin looked at the enormous painting of Oxford, hanged at the wall. The professor told him that it was where he taught and the scholars do their research. The lessons began with Mr. Felton on Latin and Mr. Chester on Ancient Greek. Robin had vocabularies to study. Professor told him not to forget how to think and speak in Chinese as well. Robin was grateful to have a place and meals for him and did not try to ask questions like why the professor did not claim him as a son or so. When the semester starts, professor had to leave for eight weeks to Oxford. Robin used this period to learn more about London by riding carriages and walking across the roads. He missed his unremarkable and poor Canton's meals. British who are influencing the trade of spices had only two flavors - salty and not salty. Robin learnt about the different types of foods from Ms. Piper. Robin and Professor shared the same love of Scone. One day professor took him to a bookshop and bought a book of Robin's choice, A King's Own. Robin saved the book for the weekends, but he could not wait. So, after Mr. Felton's study and eating his lunch, he read the books. The book took his interest and when the professor entered his rooms, three hours had been passed, and Mr. Chester had been waiting for him for one hour. The professor beat him with fire-poker and knuckles for reading the petty book. Robin froze at the violence of the professor. He beat Robin for twelfth times but did so carefully to avoid any injuries or scars. Then he said that he would send him back if he found him lazy like this. Robin went down to Mr. Chester and went on with their lessons. The professor acted like nothing had happening in the morning. Robin studied hard for six years. After the first year of study, Latin and Greek came natural to him. He found that he was good at languages. One day he learnt that he was to go to Oxford and everything had been arranged for him.

Chapter Three

Professor Lowell and Robin travelled on the stagecoach for nine hours from Hamstead to Oxford. Robin read a book about Oxford and her colleges on the coach. The professor gave him the keys of his lodgings and directions. Both the professor and Robin could not express what they are feeling at that situation. The professor left him at the room 4, Magpie Lane. Then Robin heard the keys juggling near his room and found a boy like him. His name was Ramy and from Calcutta. The two hit off after some talks. Ramy was taken to Yorkshire like Robin to educate in Institute of Translation. Ramy was frank and bolder than Robin, and he could deduce from the talks that Professor Lovell is Robin's father. They got three days before the school starts. So, they went out to explore the city and spend their money on pastries and foods. Ramy was bolder than Robin, he told Robin that he was royalty. He can

talk smoothly and change from one topic to another. Then other members of the Magpie Lane arrived, but they are not for translation institute. There are twin brothers who talked about the dress code, and joked about the origin of Robin and Ramy, and other ones who are studying to be a surgeon and solicitor. From their talk, they learnt that it was going to be just the two of us. Oxford was beautiful at that time, with new buildings, each with their own British name. They wondered around those halls and libraries. One of the librarians showed them around the books, and it was clear that he loved those books. They were given a reading list and told that they can stay late as they were the students at the Translation institute. When they left the library, it was getting dark. They walked in silence, then they were seen by a group of drunk students. One of them found Ramy, a Hindu, with a gown, so he told him to take it off. Ramy wanted to fight, but Robin run. So Ramy run along after him in the streets. Then he realized that he had left his book in the library, so Robin decided to go back alone. He found the book, but when he went outside, he heard some Chinese words. So, he wandered towards the source of the sound, and found his doppelgänger, holding the silver bar. Robin did not know what got hold off him, he was assisting them in loading bars. They were shapeless, and formless. Robin could not sleep well that night.

Chapter Four

Ramy woke him up, and they arrived just in time for the class. They were greeted by two girls who were in the same class as them. One is black, and another one is white. They are called Letty, and Victoire. For Robin and Ramy, it was strange to meet the girls of their age as they had been living in sterile and isolated environments. The whole group was introduced by the postgraduate student - Anothy, who showed them the main building of translation institute, named 'Babel'. It is a high building that looks magnificent from both outside and inside. Translation is a big part of the empire to understand and control their colonies. The building has many floors: including floors for literature, silver working, laws, novels, dictionaries, and grammar. The postgraduate students greeted them with the name of the languages they are proficient, some speak German, Tamil, and some speak French, and other languages. Anothony explained that the professor Playfair and Lovell contributed a lot to the translation research. Robin opened the Chinese grammatica volume and saw the name and handwriting of Professor Lovell. These books were protected by the mysterious silver bars. They were then taken to the eighth floor, that looks more like a hidden world than a research library. They were met by professor Playfair. The professor explained them the importance of translators for the peace, and trade by giving an example

from Egyptians, who were sent to learn their allies' languages. Robin felt that it was the kindest thing he had ever heard about being a foreigner. Translational institute was the only place in the Oxford that allows people outside of Europe to study. Then he explained them about the magic of silver by writing a word on the bar. Their blood was also taken so that the doors of Babel can know them. After that, they sat around one of the corners. They chatted about their background and how the Oxford is. They shared their stories and none were off limits. They were all funded by the wealthy people whose motive they did not understand. The girls were not allowed to stay in the college, so they were placed in a place two miles away. Robin and Ramy accompanied them to their lodging. On the way back, Robin told Ramy that he had an early appointment with Mrs. Piper and went to the lane.

Book II

Chapter Five

He met his doppelgänger, and he told Robin about everything he knew about Robin's childhood. The name of the doppelgänger was Griffin Lovell. Griffin took Robin inside of a pub. Griffin told him that Professor Lovell has a wife and children, but he only met his wife twice a year, and she does not care about his other children if it does not affect the reputation. She was rich, and his voyages abroad were supported by her. Griffin told him that he stole silver from the wealthy and needed Robin to take silver from the babel, as his blood was in the tower. Robin said that he had many questions to ask, and Griffin explained that they are the Hermes society and redistributed silver bars from Babel to the communities who need them. He went on saying that most income from Babel came from the Military, and the translation was used to expand the British empire. Robin wanted to know more about them, but Griffin refused to disclose more information. Then he asked Robin if he wanted to assist them. Robin said that he needed more time to think about it. Griffin told Robin that in five days, he can mark his decision on a tree by drawing a cross if he wants to be a part of them. Robin learnt that Professor Lovell may not know about them and Griffin used to live in his room in the Magpie Lane.

Chapter Six

Professor Playfair started his lecture on the translation. Letty seemed to have a perfect recall memory and Robin started to feel intimidated by his cohort. Professor Playfair told

them that translation is not just about converting one word into another, it is to convert word for word and sense for sense. He then told that there may have been a holy ancient language that everyone understands before humans were cast out of the tower of Babel. He explained that the Babel's task is to translate languages. They all had to take Latin regardless of their specialties, and it was taught by a woman professor named Craft. Robin had to take the Chinese class, and it was delivered by a professor named Chakravarti. Those lectures were more like a discourse and guesswork to understand which words are like characters. There had been a Chinese student like him in the past, his name was Griffin Harley, the professor believed that he had died in the fourth year. Robin went to meet Mrs. Piper and Professor Lovell at his estate in Oxford. Mrs. Piper noticed that Robin got thinner due to the bad food at the University. Robin and Professor Lovell discussed about his courses and contributions to the Chinese grammatica. The discussion had become more like a causal conversation between two scholars, and Robin had taken quite a few drinks of wine. Then Robin started asking about the silver bars and why the British are the only people who controls them. Professor Lovell explained that China had quite a few silver reserves and many scholars, but they did not pursue it. Robin was not quite satisfied with this answer and pressed the professor on why he did not save his mother. The conversation reached standstill, then Sterling came in. Professor Lovell and Sterling discussed about a book, completely forgetting about the Robin. Robin took the leave and wandered into the garden. After some time, he realized that he did not know what a birch looks like. He tried to draw a line with his fingers on a tree, but his nails are not sharp and strong enough. So, he took out his pen and drew a cross.

Chapter Seven

Robin received a note with Chinese characters, but it is not meant to be read in Chinese. He romanticized the characters and found its meaning; he had to open the door of babel on the next rainy day. The clouds started to form next day, and Robin believed that it would rain. The rain poured, and Ramy saw Robin leaving and asked him. Robin told him that he had left his notes in the tower again. Robin opened the door and two men from Hermes operation emerged from the darkness; they are quick and silent. The whole operation took only a few minutes, and they disappeared. Robin could not sleep well that night. He had thought of the mission was a righteous one, but then he believed it as a stupid one. Robin received a note that says to wait for further contact from Griffin. Meanwhile the group of four became more attached to each other, even though Ramy and Letty usually argued about the British and their colonies, and they all fit the edges of the puzzles together. After

the term, their bond became so thick that they trust each other with their life. Robin tried to disclose about Hermes operation once but could not.

Chapter Eight

Robin assisted three more robberies and got nearly caught in the third one. He was seen by a third-year student named Cathy, who was chatty and asked him about professor Playfair. But Cathy left him before the others came down from the stairs. Robin assisted other more robberies by simply opening the doors for the Hermes people. He did not feel guilt or dangerous about it anymore. Griffin met him after those robberies. He said that Robin was doing a great job. Robin asked more questions related to Hermes, but Griffin did not give any answers. Griffin said that he faked his death so that he could live underground and join the Hermes. He said that Robin could go on being a fellow at the Babel or could do the same as him. Robin liked being a member of the Babel, they were provided with things they might need and given access to many places. During their second term, they understood how things are at the Babel. One day Robin got an invitation letter from one of the wealthiest boys who entered the Oxford with high tuition fee to get exempted from the entrance exam. His name was Elton Pendennis, and the letter was for the wine party. Ramy, Victoire, and Letty argued against Robin's decision to go there. Being a babbler was an attracting thing for all, and so inviting a babbler to a wine party must have some purpose from those boys. When Robin arrived at the party, those wealthy boys tried to impress him with various things, but Robin understood about them after some time at the party. So, he mentioned about how busy he was at the Babel with learning about silverworks and left early. He recounted all of these with laughter to his cohorts. Letty was angry at Robin for joining the party because her brother had died of alcohol related accidents. And she got into Oxford in her brother's place by passing the entrance exam. She did not want Robin and Ramy to be associated with those boys. The anger did not last, things got back to the same at the professor Playfair's lecture, where he discussed that translation is an act of betrayal to the original text for the foreign readers. Robin felt pain in his gut.

Chapter Nine

The first year passed by, and they did not have to take the qualifying exams till third year. During the summer, they were sent to abroad to immerse themselves in their languages.

When they came back, they started their second year with a lecture from Professor Playfair on how silver bar works. He explained that there is always something lost in the translation and it is manifested into being by the silver. For example, the word idiot in one language means the lack of education and in another it might be similar but different sense. So, when the silver bar is inscribed with these words, they can be used to make foreign spies to forget what they had seen. But these bars had also limited, they cannot bring life back, and a fluent speaker is needed to wield the bars. Then Professor Playfair demonstrated a silver-working that the cohort must never try, which is to inscribe the word 'translate' on one side of the bar and similar meanings on the other sides. It created a paradox, resulting in breaking the silver into pieces and making them unusable, and if the pieces touch other silver bars, they became impotent as well. After the lecture, they met Anothny, who told them that the Classic languages had been studied extensively and hardly a few things left to be milked. But Robin and Ramy and others had fluent native languages that only a handful of people can learn. Then Professor Lovell's lecture began, he explained how words transformed, diverged and converged giving out examples. Letty asked how they research words, and he answered that they studied through reading. They all took an extra language, not for fluency, but just to assist them understand more on the languages. The group became into a weary veteran, from the scared first year. The new cohort came, and it was four boys. Then a Frenchman came with a device called camera and asked Babel to assist him cracking his problems. One of the students, Anothny, solved it, and was given the patent, and some shares of the profits. Letty and Victoire called Robin and Ramy to take a portrait to preserve the moment in that year, 1837. So, they took the portrait, and they got the picture after some time. They felt that it does not look like them, they realized that photography is like translation, something is lost while being photographed.

Chapter Ten

They finished their term, and Robin met Griffin quite often. He felt that Griffin did not trust him yet. One day when they were walking together, Robin asked him about Hermes again, and Griffin was, as usual, cautious about it when answering. Then they discussed about how silver flows from one empire to another, and Griffin told him that British empire is about to collapse as the silver is flowing to China. After the talk, Robin felt that Griffin started to trust him more as the assigned tasks became more frequent and involves other works like copying a page from the Grammatica. One day Robin saw two policemen at the front door of the Babel as they were a theft, and the other officers were taking out the thief who were shot with five bullets by the wards of Babel. Robin recounted it to Griffin when

they met again as they met quite often those days. Griffin brought a Christmas present, *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens, and Robin wanted to invite him to the Babel Hall for the Christmas. Robin was worried about the wards, so Griffin gave him a silver-bar that has a Chinese word 'Wuxying', which will make him invisible. Then Robin asked why Griffin was not doing those works, and Griffin replied that he was taken out of China too soon, unlike Robin, that he could not dream in Chinese, and so these silver-bars do not work for him most of the time. After the lecture, Robin found a note under his door saying eleven. So, he went to the Babel and opened the door as usual, and when the Hermes left the doors and dashed into the greens, the alarm went off and the bullets started to fly and one of them grazed Robin's arm. Professor Playfair arrived and explained that he needed to change the ward as they might be a bit stuck after the last week's theft. Robin went back to Magpie Lane and sew himself.

Chapter Eleven

Robin did not hear anything from Griffin the whole term. The cohort started their third year, and the course list made them busy. Additionally, each was given a research project, Robin and Letty were making good progress, while Ramy and Victoire were struggling. Even though they stuck together as there were nobody else, Robin could feel some friction among the group. And they were given an apprentice for silver-making, and it was the donkey work. Robin and Professor Chakravarti went doors to doors to upkeep the silver bars. Some only needed a little bit of brushing while others needed to be taken back to the eighth floor to make them resonate again. These upkeep works were the ones that made the Babel rich. Then they heard the news that Anthony was assumed to be dead as he went missing after his trip abroad. Some students wore black gowns and that was all the Babel did for his former students. Letty who was close to him did not like the way the Babel treated him.

Chapter Twelve

It was a long time before he got a note from Griffin saying to meet him. Griffin looked haggard and seemed to take a lot of efforts to even walk with Robin. Griffin asked Robin to collect some text from the Babel, and Robin was angry because Griffin did not ask him

about getting shot. Griffin said that he just came back to Oxford a while ago after being away for months, and explained about a safe house, and asked more questions about Babel. It was a slump year for the cohorts; the coursework was burdensome and there were more break-ins. And one day, there was a furious mob at the front of the Babel, who were shouting as they had been laid off by a new match-pair by Professor Playfair, Victoire got thrown with an egg. Professor Playfair told the cohorts that he did not concern about them because he believes in scientific progress and mentioned that the wards could protect them. The crowds did not go away in a day, they kept coming back to protest, and one day an explosive was placed on the Professor Playfair's table. After that, more police guard the Babel, and more silver match-pairs were placed in the tower. Besides, there were calls for reforms and changes in the whole of England and Babel were the target of all. They believed that Babel was the center of all these sufferings. While all these things were going on outside, their final exams for the third year were drawing closer. Before the exam, the results came out and one of the students got expelled. Robin also received a letter from Griffin. Griffin got bandages and some open wounds, and asked Robin to plant some explosives. Robin refused and asked for the reason why he should do it, as Griffin got messy lately. Griffin told him that the British were going to invade Afghan with the troops from other colonies. Robin was not satisfied with the answer and said that he wanted not to be a part of it anymore.

Book III

Chapter Thirteen

There were some changes in the exam structure and instead of viva with the public attendance, they had to take three-hour essay exam, and if they fail in any of those, they are not to work at the eighth floor. The exam also involved a practical test where they are to produce some effect from the match-pair, but it does not need to be perfect. They toiled their themselves for the study period and were allowed to use some silver-bars to produce some effects of anxiety when they made errors while studying. They crammed themselves and spent most of their time at their study place. They found someone from the same class as Anothny and Griffin got the 12 match-pairs, but her place was always empty and left as the same. Then the exam came, Robin did well on the papers, viva, and silver-working exam. He wrote the word a Chinese word that has the meaning of both understand and light, and an English word 'understand', and the bar glows. Letty did well as Robin. Victoire took the longest, and she emerged after one hour. She said that her silverwork had some

effects but could not put it on the ledger. But she also learnt from the professor that they all had passed.

Chapter Fourteen

It was Summer ahead for them before they got themselves into the labors of the fourth term. Oxford holds a commemoration ball for every three years, and Letty persuaded all to join it to indulge themselves. Robin and Ramy worked as a staff to check whether the bars work for the event. The ball was where the students flaunt their excess. Robin and Ramy had finished their shift when Letty and Victoire arrived with their dazzling outfits and they could not believe how beautiful both Letty and Victoire looks. Letty and Victoire were invited to dance by two guys. Robin and Ramy tried to stay in the background to tolerate. Then one of the Pendennis boys made jokes about Letty and Victoire, and she smashed him on the cheek, and Robin saved them from a fight. The girls wanted to go home, but it was a night for celebration, so they decided to enjoy themselves on the Babel's roof. But when they turned the corner on the first floor, there were other scholars from the Babel having a party, it was a fun night, and they all got pretty drunk. After the party, they wandered around the cemetery, and found a tombstone of Eveline, it was the same name of the desk where they are not allowed to touch the things.

Chapter Fifteen

Around June, they received their marks, Robin got merit and distinction, and they all passed. It was the time of the coronation, so most students went to London, and Oxford was also having a light show. Those were the last days of delight. Then their summer ended and the new semester started. Around that time in New York, a guy named 'Morse' invented a machine that can relay messages to a faraway place instantaneously. The Congress was not sure to fund it, so Oxford invited him to visit them for a month and connected a communication line between Oxford and the foreign office. The news spread and the whole of England wanted to connect with Morse's communication line. All the students in Babel were to learn Morse, but it was not difficult for them, and they were required to take their shift in relaying and receiving messages. One day when Robin was at his shift to wait for messages, he saw two figures trying to enter the Babel, it was Victoire and Ramy. He was sure that they were recruited by Griffin, after they were fallen out. He heard the footsteps

coming down, and then a shrieking sound soared and sliver nets entwined the two of them. Robin assisted them to cut the sliver nets, but he was entangled in the process, so he asked them to run away and leave him. He learnt that it was Anothny who recruited them, not Griffin. Robin was taken by the police and handcuffed and placed at the professor's room. He waited and thought of being expelled from the Babel. Then professor Lovell came in and uncuffed the handcuffs and took him to his room. He said that Robin was lucky that it was him who was called by the police first. Then Professor Lovell scolded him for being ungrateful and tricked by Griffin and showed him a silver bar that has written a word 'cruelty' on one side and told him that it was the bar that Griffin used when he killed Evie, the best scholar that the Babel had ever had. Then he told Robin to choose between Hermes and Babel. Professor Lovell also mentioned that he won't be expelled, and pressed Robin to give any information related to Hermes operations. Robin disclosed that Griffin was the only contacts he had, and one house location that Griffin told him in one of his encounters. When Robin left the room, Professor Lovell gave him the silver bar that Griffin had allegedly used on Evin.

Interlude

Ramy was educated by his father in Persian, Arabic, and Latin, and was famous around the white men, especially Sir Horace. His father knew it was dangerous to be impressed by a white man. One day Sir Horace told his family that he will be taking a chair in Oxford and bring Ramy with him. His father did not try to protest as it would be dangerous, so they told Ramy to write to them and send presents. Ramy said that he will do so. Ramy thought that he was brought to be a lackey to the empire, so when Anthony asked if he wanted to join, he said 'Yes'.

Chapter Sixteen

Robin entered the Professor Craft's lecture room, and saw Ramy, Victoire, and Letty were there. They received a letter that their trip abroad was moved ahead, and they had to spend two weeks at Canton, and one week at Maca, and some days at Martius as translators are in dire need at there. So, they all prepared for the trip, but Letty was the one who was excited. Professor Lovell will be their trip supervisor. They boarded the clipper named 'Merope' at London, and Robin wanted to speak to Victoire and Ramy, but Letty was always

with them. Letty suspected that there might be something going on between them, but they never tell anything. One day when they had alone time without Letty, Robin asked Ramy and Victoire about Hermes, and when Ramy learnt that Robin was with Hermes since the start, he lashed out at him for not telling him to join, as it was the type of organization he always wanted to join. Robin said that Hermes were messy and ignored his warnings and knew that it would be too risky for Ramy. Then Ramy learnt that Robin told one of the safe houses locations and was mad at him for that. The rest of the days on the ship was miserable for Robin as he had to endure silence in the room with Ramy. Bringing the whole cohorts had its purpose, as they are used to translate languages they specialized and knew. The reason Professor Lovell needed Robin was that he does not speak Cantonese. Things were getting out of hand in Canton, as there was miscommunication between the Chinese emperor and the trading companies. They tried to resolve it for three times, but still not resolved. So, they were asking Bablers to communicate for them. After six weeks, they saw the docks of Canton, and Robin gazed the dawn. Ramy asked him how he felt. Robin said that he was thinking about the Chinese character of the dawn.

Chapter Seventeen

Robin went to London alone to see a Cantonese woman named May Afong, who were brought there to be a show woman. Her legs were twisted by her family and served as attractions for the European. When they arrived in the Canton, they could not arrive at a better time. The new Chinese commissioner put the trading companies under siege and ordered them to surrender the drugs. Mr. Baylis who were the liaison for them came to fetch them and show them their rooms. Mr. Baylis was annoying as he was berating about the Chinese people and the new commissioner. Robin was to accompany him for the meeting with the commissioner, who seized the twenty thousand chests of opium from the British. Mr. Baylis said that the Chinese people will pay for anything for the opium. Robin and Professor Lovell were much needed here for their translation among the traders, while other cohorts spent most of their time in silver maintenance. In the afternoon, Robin left the meeting and went to wander around the city. Mr. Baylis warned that foreigners are not allowed, and Robin replied that he is a Chinaman. So, Robin went back to his old house with Ramy. His house disappeared and new shops emerged from the place. These shops were where the opium were sold, and the places her mother spoken of why his uncle squandered his belongings. So, Robin grabbed a pipe and took his first draught. It feels awful and elated at the same time. Ramy led the way back, and Robin said that he was sorry that he did not tell him about Hermes. Ramy told him the opium investments of the

Sir Wilson. Robin was taken as an interpreter for Mr. Baylis in the meeting with the commissioner Lin. The commissioner Lin was a middle-tempered man and known to be impervious to bribes. Mr. Baylis outlined the lists of demands such as free trade and the release of confiscated opium chests. Commissioner Lin replied whether opium is allowed to use in England. Mr. Baylis evaded the answers and kept saying on free trade. The meeting ended in silence. After the meeting, the commissioner Lin called Robin for a causal talk and asked whether there is a space to negotiate with the British. Robin answered frankly that they were only interested in their economy. When Robin went back to their quarter, they saw a controlled fire with a sweet smell of opium. Professor Lovell grabbed Robin by the collar and asked him what he told the commissioner. Then he realized his action and told the whole cohort to board the Hellas.

Chapter Eighteen

The ship was not for the civilians, and the sailors did not like that they had to board five additional people in the last notice. Robin and Ramy had to share the room with the sailors, and Letty and Victoire had a private cabin with a missionary named Sythe. Professor Lovell came back after talking with the captain and called Robin to have a chat. Professor Lovell pressed Robin to tell him what he had told to the commissioner. Robin told him that the commissioner had already made up his mind before meeting them. Professor Lovell was not satisfied and so he pressed on to tell him the truth. Robin said that he believed that opium was doing harm to the people of China and did not agree with Mr. Baylis. Professor Lovell told him not to be childish. Robin then asked why he did not save his mother even though he knew that there was a plague when he was in Macca. Professor Lovell told him that she was just a Chink. Then he told him to go back to his room, and he will think about his position at the Babel. Robin stayed firm and pressed on to tell him the name of his mother. At that time, all would be forgiven if he would go back, but Robin pressed on. Robin said, "Father, tell me her name". Professor Lovell stopped up, Robin did the same thing, and put his hand on his pocket, and touched the match-pair given by the Professor Lovell that Griffin allegedly used to kill Evie. Professor Lovell collapsed with blood oozing out of his chest. The romanization of the father contains the characters in the death word. Robin shouted and his cohorts came in.

Book IV

Chapter Nineteen

Ramy, Victoire, and Letty thought of ways to assist him hiding the body as they did not want Robin to go to prison nor they did not want themselves to be implicated. It was easier than Robin thought to dispose of the body. They cleaned the floor with the mop and soaked the blood with their clothes. Then when one looked out for the sailors, the three lifted the body overboard, tied him with some weight, and threw the body into the water. Then they stick with the story that Professor Lovell was sick, and the sailors did not care. Robin had guilt building up in him, but Ramy tried to quench it. Letty was the one who sometimes questioned if the killing was an accident. Robin made it sure when he told them that when he holds the bar for that moment, he felt satisfied. The two months passed by and they reached the London. They thought of running away to the new world, but they all agreed that Babel was the only home they knew. When they lighted at the harbor, they told the captain that the professor went ahead. Then they boarded the omnibus to Hampstead to go to the house of Professor Lovell.

Chapter Twenty

When they reached the house, a woman shouted at them what they are looking for. They answered that they were looking for Professor Lovell, and she told them gently that he usually was home a few times in a year. Then Robin took a wild guess and asked if she was Mrs. Clemen. It was Mrs. Clemen, and Robin told her that they were staying for one day. Then they looked around the house and found the managed chaos of the things by Professor Lovell. Then Mrs. Clemen knocked and brought them some foods. They took turns that night to look out if anyone came. Robin took the first turn, and he pored over the letters over Professor Lovell's desk. He wanted to know what his father was. He found the correspondence between the professor and the companies in China, discussing the war plan. Robin learnt that the negotiation was never meant to be in good faith, it was just the pretext for the war. Ramy and Victoire woke up, and Robin showed them the letters. They then thought of where to go and decided to go to Oxford and then Hermes. Then they saw that Letty was up and heard everything they just said. Letty was asking what the Hermes is. They explained everything to Letty, but Letty could not still understand why they need to involve a secret ring of thieves, and why they do not just go to the public or the parliament. Victoire explained that it took them decades to abolish slavery even when many are publishing how inhumane it is, and Babel still sold bars for the slaves to become docile.

Then they said that it was ok if Letty was not with them. Letty said she was with them and broke down into tears. It created a paradox of emotion.

Chapter Twenty-one

They rode a carriage to the Oxford. Letty was hysterics but Ramy made her silent. Then they arrived back to Oxford, and everything felt the same but wrong. In the morning, they planned, to sort out with Mrs. Piper, to gather enough information for the Hermes society, and to get in touch with the Hermes by dropping encrypted messages at the usual meeting places with Anothy. Robin talked to Mrs. Piper, and went to Professor Lovell's office, to gather the letters. Then he eavesdropped a conversation between Mrs. Lovell and Professor Fairplay as Professor Lovell was missing the payment for the estate and she came to find her. Ramy could not believe that Professor Lovell had a family, then they remembered that there was a faculty party. Ramy wanted them to go to the party, but Robin, Letty, and Victoire did not want to go. They had no counter argument, and Ramy said that it would buy them more time. So, they went to the party. Ramy was blending in with laughter, and Robin was greeted by two professors, Playfair and De Vos. Professor De Vos asked a few questions about the trip and left. Then Professor Playfair told Robin that he knew that Professor Lovell was not home, nor sick, and told Robin to disclose the information as he himself was working with Hermes. Robin told him that he would take him to the usual meet-up with Griffin and would tell him about Canton ploy. Then Robin grabbed others and run straight. Robin baited Professor Playfair as he was lying about his association with Hermes. They do not know where they were walking towards. Then they heard a sound, it was Anothy, who was looking for them.

Chapter Twenty-Two

Anothy led them where to go, and they entered the Chapel. Then Anothy pushed certain buttons, and a door opened into a tunnel. These tunnels had been here for a long time, but some were added by the Hermes. They arrived their destination, the Old Library. Robin told everything to the Anothy, and Hermes was following the Canton issue as well. Anothy will ask someone to fetch those letters inside Robin's room. The old library was meticulous, and Robin realized some of the books he had taken out of Babel. Then they saw other scholars from the Babel, and some of them are still working at the Babel. So, Hermes was

also conducting research in their own directions. And the old library also had a match-pair to let them when people whom they did not know came in. They were having a dinner when Griffin came in and told Robin that it was brave of him to kill Professor Lovell. Then he laid out the plans with Anothy and Cathy to sway votes against the war in Canton, as it would lead to indefinite assets to silver. Griffin will go to Glasgow where the warships were stationed, and Anothy and Cathy along with Robin and his cohorts will think of ways to sway the votes. They brainstormed ideas such as seducing the parliament and kidnapping the queen and so on. Some of the ideas made laughter. The voting would start in a day. They thought of seizing the Babel tower as suggested by Griffin, but Anothy and others did not like the idea that involves harming innocent people. The meeting was adjourned. Anothy showed them where to wash themselves. Griffin called Robin outside and gave him the gun to shoot. The whole area is protected so that people who do not know them cannot hear their voices. Robin asked why he called Evie, and Griffin answered that Evie was about to join the Hermes, but she tricked the whole thing, and it was a set up to catch him. She showed her smile when the siren rang, and Griffin killed her the same way Robin did to Professor Lovell. Robin accepted the gun and shoot it aimlessly into the dark, it felt good like Griffin said.

Chapter Twenty-Three

They all were woken up by a loud bird song at seven. Robin and other joined the girls. The shadow under their eyes suggest that they did not get sleep. They made up plans to sway the votes, and previous mad ideas became materialized. They made a match-pair that could fly the pamphlets across London to sway the common British men about the war. Robin, Ramy, and Victoire were posted in the newspapers for the murder of Professor Lovell. Letty was not there, so she mentioned that she could write to his father to arrange a meeting to sway the war motion. Then Anthnoy and other graduates showed Robin and Ramy how to eat and clean themselves while there were away. Then Letty went outside to breath some air. Then a shrieking voice was heard, and the Oxford policemen came in. Letty was holding a gun calmly and aimed at the group. Victoire tried to grab the envelopes, and a shot was fired and it broke the world. Ramy lied motionless on the floor. Robin was holding Ramy, when he was kicked by an unknown men and put a hook on his head.

Chapter Twenty-Four

Robin was consumed by the grief. He could not realize that he was in the cells, and he could not find others. He was thinking about Ramy. Then he saw a silver bar that was making him to think more about Ramy and others. Then a man came in, he was Sterling Jones, one of the best translators of the Babel. He tortured Robin physically and mentally but could not break Robin. After that, he left him in the cell. Victoire was in the same floor as him, and they were torturing her as well. Robin then heard Griffin calling him, as Griffin had put the whole tower on fire. Griffin cut the cuffs and they searched for Victoire and found her in a cell. Griffin had also made the guards trapped in the tower. There was also Sterling Jones who was trying to stop them. Both Sterling and Griffin fired the shots, and Griffin was hit in his shoulder. Robin tried to save him, but the bullet was too deep in the wound. They used a silver bar to patch the wound, it worked for a while, but the blood kept spilling due to the bullet. Then they heard the constables coming, Griffin told Robin and Victoire to leave him and run. Robin waited till the last minute, and they disappeared using a magic pair that made them invisible. The constables shot Griffin and he laid still, along with the body of Professor Sterling Jones.

Chapter Twenty-Five

Robin and Victoire run, and she thought of the places they could go to. They were being chased by the dogs. But they could use the magic pair to disappear. Then they saw the Babel under the moonlight, they wanted to burn the tower down.

Book V

Interlude

Letty

Letty was put aside by his father, Admiral Price, and her brother Lincon were favored. Her father did not want to see her as she reminded him of her mother, who died during the birth. Letty had the ability to absorb the languages, while her brother did not want to study. When Lincon was sent to Oxford, he became more morose, and Letty told him not to squander her father's favor. One day he was trampled by the cart while he laid drunk under the cart. When she became an Oxford scholar, nobody told her seriously, when Ramy interrupted a professor, it was bold of him, but when she does something, she was put

aside. When they started talking about swaying the votes, she only wanted in a civilized manner, but in a brute way Griffin was planning. She did not like her best friend, Ramy, nodding along with him. So, she thought that she could not save them and did not want to end up like others.

Chapter Twenty-Six

Robin and Victoire entered a dark tunnel behind Garden and Supply, it used to be a hide-out for Griffin, as the setting was like that in Magpie Lane's. Robin remembered Griffin telling him to find contacts with Victoire, so she searched the desks, and found a bar that could message towards the contacts. Robin wrote a message in Morse code and sent it through the bar. They also found another bar that could be used for explosion. They went back to the old library, and found the heavy police presence, and the bodies of Anothny, Vimal, and Ramy were still lying. Then they went inside the Babel tower and rung the bells that used to announce the exam results. Robin and Victoire explained the debate on war on Canton in the Parliament, and the involvement of Babel in those acts. Some professors and students believed it. But Professor Playfair tried to pull the trigger, but Victoire shot him first. When Professor De Vreese tried to grab the gun, Professor Chakravarti took hold of him, as he got the message from Robin. Robin shot at the Chandeliers and told them that they were taking over the tower. Then Robin announced that they can stay if they want to join the strike or leave. Six scholars including Professor Chakravarti and Professor Craft remained, and others left. Victoire did not want to talk about the shooting.

Chapter Twenty-Seven

Robin and Victoire did not think of anything for the seize, so problems arose. There is no shower, no food supply inside the Babel. They thought of ways to secure some foods but only sent a strike message via pamphlets using a match-pair. They thought that there will be commotion in the city and the parliament, but Oxford seems quiet. At night, they got a message from the Foreign Office to open the babel for regular businesses, nothing else. Then the Maghen Tower fell, as the tower had been maintained by Professor Playfair. It was just the beginning, the group decided to take out some dozens of silvers on the eighth floor that works as the center to the regular businesses. The clock towers stopped working, the wagons got into more accidents, and the water stopped running. Then the bells started to

produce in a shrieking sound instead of serenading one. Some students came to set the tower ablaze, but Professor Chakravarti used a match-pair to put the fire down. The city would bring more riots. However, there were other protests in London and other cities, against the silver industry. Anoth's plan had worked. Then they received a message saying that if they resume the services, they would be given clemency even for Swift. Another message came, stating that an army was marching towards the tower. They took the night watch in turn. When they woke up, they found barricades on the way towards the tower, the work was messy to notice that they were not step up by the army.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

Professor Chakravarti told Robin that there was a man outside waiting for him to talk. He was a protestor who had thrown an egg towards Victoire. He and other protestors had set up the barricades as they were also protesting the silver industry. Robin invited him inside the lobby and discussed the plan. The army arrived and talked to the protestor and said that they need to clear the barricades within forty-eight hours. Robin got two days, and the barricades made them possible to get fresh foods and information through the protestors. Things were getting out of place, roads became more prone to accidents, and consequently, the residents across the England suffered. But the foreign office did not accept the two conditions by the Babel. Robin wanted the war in Canton stop and the amnesty for them. The foreign office responded with a message to stop the protest. Exile scholars tried to fill the gap, but without Babel, they cannot do much. The debate in the House of the Lords became intensified, but neither side was willing to call for a vote. The papers were writing about the siege of the Babel by the foreigners while some radical ones depicted the horrific nature of working conditions in silver factories. Robin and Victoire searched through the ledgers that contains the maintenance records and found that the Westminster Bridge was about to fall unless the strike stopped. Victoire did not want it, so they voted, and more were in favor of Robin. Professor Chakravarti was against it, and Robin and Professor Chakravarti had a heated conversation, and Robin asked him to leave if he believed that it would free his conscious. He left leaving his notebooks from his pocket.

Chapter Twenty-Nine

Robin and others sent a message and pamphlets telling the public of the imminent collapse of the bridge. Robin and Victoire talked about their student days, and Victoire showed him their group photo with Letty and Ramy. The soldiers started shooting their rifles at them, if they came out near the window, but the tower protected them. Additionally, they reinforced the barricades built by the laborers with a match-pair, and those barricades hold most cannon shots.

Chapter Thirty

Westminster Bridge Fell.

Chapter Thirty-one

The armies had shot one of the towns girls who were not part of the protestors. Robin and others thought that the empire would do anything to protect themselves. There was only one barricade left between the soldiers and them.

Chapter Thirty-two

A group of soldiers approached the barricade, and Letty was there waving a white flag. Robin asked Abel to let her through. Robin wanted to kill her, but both Robin and Victoire saw that Letty was terribly pale and not sleeping. She was there to negotiate with Robin and Victoire and the army did not want her to be there; she wrote to her father. Letty and Robin and Victoire exchanged words, but Letty did not flinch her position that what Robin and Victoire were doing did not matter and did not affect the wealthy as they can rest on their open estate elsewhere. And they can learn from this and continue the project with a few setbacks. She said that the army was storming the tower if she came back with the answer 'no'. Before Letty left, Robin asked why she killed Ramy, and Letty told him that she panicked. Robin told Victoire that he could destroy the silver bars by making them useless using a match-pair as shown in the lecture by Playfair. So, they announced the plan to the others. Except Victoire and Yusuf, others would stay till the silvers and the babel were destroyed. Robin gave the Abel and the protestors the record of what happened inside the

Babel with a copy and asked them to run as the Army would be storming. Robin told Victoire to have a safe travel.

Chapter Thirty-three

They put the silver bars as pyramid in the lobby. When the clock stroke, Robin read the word 'Fanyi'. The silver bars trembled and the Babel started shaking. Then the tiles collapsed, Robin closed his eyes and saw his mother smiling.

Epilogue

Victoire wanted to survive, so she did not look back into the past. She was born in Haiti in 1820. She was brought to Paris by her mother and a professor. Her mother died of illness, and she was adopted by the professor. The professor's daughters made fun of her and home place, and when she heard that the Royal Institute of Translation offered her place and pay, she got to be away from all this. It was when she learnt how to love her home country and her mother language, when she learnt about Hermes from the Anothy. She knew that Letty would chase her if Letty knew she was alive. She was boarding a ship to the America with the envelopes that contained the contacts of the Hermes.

Summary

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12 Feb 2026