

An Eternal Problem

By Mohammad Khan

## SCENE 1: The Scientist

In a crowded study of a scientist, Zeke. One curtain is open behind him letting in the heavenly sunlight in his room. Books cover the ground and his desk as he's buried in his notes working. Panning his bookshelf contain books from *Principles of Thermodynamics and Statistical Mechanics* to *Xenolinguistics: Psychedelics, Language, and the Evolution of Consciousness*. His wall is sparsely decorated. There's one picture frame sitting on his desk. It's blank photo.

There's a knock on the door.

Zeke (without looking up)  
"Come in"

The door opens. Simon, a colleague a few doors down.

Simon  
"We've got something."

Zeke (looks up)  
"Ok. I'm on my way."

Simon leaves Zeke. Zeke stands up from his work. He closes the curtains behind him.

His picture frame starts to glow. He lifts the picture frame up to his face. We see him smile in the glow. He places the frame down and walks to the door of his office.

We stay with him as he walks around his desk and exits his office.

## SCENE 2: The Picture (flashback)

INT: College lecture hall. Zeke is teaching a class.

Zeke  
"Science can be a dangerous field. The pursuit of knowledge drives people to the edge of insanity in the search of the answer. H.P Lovecraft, an author known for his imaginative horror stories that influence many stories we see today. He preyed on our insignificance in the world with his god-like beings that exceed our comprehension."

A door opens while Zeke is speaking and a woman enters. She stands by the entrance listening. The students took no notice of her.

Zeke (contin)  
"Lovecraft once said, '*The sciences, each straining in its own direction, have hitherto harmed us little; but some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the deadly light into the peace and safety of a new dark age*'.....what new discovery stands ahead of us and how will that effect what we know now? Where will we be at the next

discovery. Will it propel us into a new age or will we cower in the new dark age?.....That's all for today."

The students gather their items and stand to leave. The woman walks down to Zeke. His smile is hard to conceal as he packs up his stuff.

Zeke

"What are you doing here Aubrey?"

Aubrey

"Come with me. I need to show you something."

They walk down the hallway. They stop at Zeke's office.

Zeke (to Aubrey)

"It's in here?"

She nods. Zeke unlocks the door and they walk in. Aubrey closes the door behind him. Zeke's office is still cluttered with books.

Aubrey hands him a picture frame. It's blank.

Zeke

"What's this?"

Aubrey kisses him on the lips.

Aubrey

"Happy anniversary. I know how much you love puzzles."

Zeke

"Thank you."

Zeke places the picture frame on his desk. He walks to the drawer and takes out a gift wrapped box. He hands the box to her.

Zeke (contin)

"And I know how much you love machines."

Aubrey opens the box. It's a Sterling Engine. Zeke had a warm cup of coffee on his desk, he hands her the cup. She places the engine on the cup of coffee. The engine starts moving.

Aubrey

"I love it. Thank you."

They embrace.

### **SCENE 3: Discovery**

INT: Simon's Office. Zeke enters to find Simon with another colleague analyzing a document. A table is lighted with documents. The table is only source of light in the dark room. Simon is standing at the

Simon

"We think we've found it."

Zeke  
"Any descriptions?"

Simon  
"A cloaked being."

Zeke  
"Were the sightings at -"

Simon  
"Yes. All near the desert. Most in the Sahara. Everyone who reported seeing a cloaked being was a Bedouin on verge of collapsing from dehydration. They also reported seeing a structure in the desert referring to it as 'The Library'."

Zeke  
"Same as before."

Simon  
"This isn't worth the risk. You can't search in the desert for some imaginary figure and library. We barely survived last time."

#### **SCENE 4: Addictive Tendencies (flashback)**

INT: Zeke and Aubrey are at home. Their house is modestly decorated from historical figures to contraptions to books on a variety of topics. We find Aubrey reading alone on the couch. Zeke walks to her with his coat half on.

Zeke  
"Simon's called me back. I'm sorry. I need to go to a meeting."

Aubrey (slightly annoyed)  
"Don't they give you any breaks...When will you be back?"

Zeke  
"I don't know, but you know how he is. He said he's on the verge of discovering a being that's been living among us since the beginning of time."

Aubrey  
"..wow.."

Zeke  
"yeah. You understand why I can't skip this."

Aubrey  
"You do love a good puzzle."

Zeke leans closer to kiss on her on the head.

Zeke

"You know me too well."

Zeke walks to his door and grabs his keys. He opens the door.

Zeke

"Goodbye I love you--"

Aubrey

"WAIT!....have you figured out the puzzle?"

Zeke

"The picture frame? No. I haven't looked at it yet."

Aubrey

"You'll enjoy it."

Zeke leaves his house.

INT: Simon's lab. The same illuminating table in a dark room. Zeke enters the room.

Simon (sees Zeke enters)

"Oh good you're here. Look at this."

Simon hands Zeke a photocopy of drawings from ancient civilizations of a cloaked being. Other photocopies show a similar figure on cave paintings.

Simon

"There are more drawings of the same figure. There aren't many things consistent of multiple civilizations except for the cloaked figure."

Zeke

"Simon, what are you going to do?"

Simon

"We're going to find it."

Zeke

"We're? I can't--"

Simon

"Don't worry. I have plan. Most of the sightings happen in the dessert. Witnesses also report seeing a library in the distance."

Zeke (interested)

"A library?"

Simon

"When the great library of Alexandria burned, we lost thousands of stories. Now we have a chance of finding those stories."

Zeke

"Not all of the scrolls burned."

Simon

"But we don't know how much of it was lost or where the remaining scrolls are."

Zeke

"That doesn't mean we'll find them here."

Simon

"you said it yourself. What new discovery lies ahead of us? Think of what could be discovered in those scrolls. We know the ancients were more advanced than we give them credit for. Building the first steam engine, robot, indoor plumbing. What else did they have? I know you can't resist a good mystery. I'll be leaving at the end of the week."

Zeke considers the idea. It's enticing. Possibility of discovery and expanding nearly all fields of knowledge. The adventure.

Zeke

"Alright I'll think about it."

INT: Home

Zeke returns home. It's nearly midnight. The meeting didn't take as long as he thought it would. He found Aubrey in the same place as he left her. Sitting on the couch reading.

Aubrey (without looking up from her book)

"You're back early. How was the meeting?"

Zeke walks over and sits beside her.

Aubrey(turning towards Zeke)

"Find any ancient beings that can tell you the answer to the universe?"

Zeke

"I'm pretty sure it's 42."

Aubrey

"Touché."

Zeke

"Simon is going to go to a vanishing library in the desert to find the being. He--"

Aubrey

"He asked you to go with him didn't he?"

Zeke

"yeah"

Aubrey

"And you want to."

Zeke

"It's difficult to turn it down. We have a chance to discover new things about ancient human lives and about science. We can help people."

Aubrey

"I get that. But where does it stop?"

Zeke

"What do you mean?"

Aubrey

"There will always be something new to discover. Something new to understand. You'll be consumed by this addiction. When do you say this is enough. Where do you draw the line in discovery?"

Zeke doesn't reply. They both stay quiet.

Zeke

"After this, I'm done."

Aubrey

"And I'm coming with you. "

## **SCENE 5: The Desert**

EXT: Simon and Zeke are walking through the desert with two camels. The sun burns the landscape turning the sand into burning rock. They carry satchels with them.

Zeke

"This looks familiar."

Simon (tired from the heat)

"Oh yeah. Cause that sand dune looks familiar."

A sandstorm is on the horizon.

Simon (seeing the sandstorm)

"We need to find shelter."

There's a large rock in the distance.

Simon

"C'mon we can take shelter there."

The rock juts out of the sand casting a small shadow.

Zeke and Simon go there to weather the incoming storm. Their camels won't go further. They refuse. Seeing the incoming storm, Zeke & Simon leave the camels and rush for cover in the rock.

The sandstorm roars going through them. The sand blurs their vision. Zeke makes out a blurry structure in the distance.

Zeke (pointing in the distance)  
"There!"

Simon squints but can't see. Zeke sprints off leaving Simon.

Simon  
"Wait! Zeke!"

But Zeke doesn't hear. He runs into the storm towards the structure.

## **SCENE 6: The Library (Flashback)**

EXT: Simon, Zeke, and Aubrey trek through the desert with 3 camels.

Zeke (seeing a structure in the distance)  
"There!"

The three try to walk faster to the structure, but their camels wouldn't budge.

Simon  
"We'll have to leave them."

They walk to the large structure. The doors are large but easy to move. The inside is fortified by wood and rock similar to ancient castles of Europe. Books line the shelves. And the shelves line the expanse. Miles long. Knowledge as far the as eye can see.

Simon  
"We've found it."

They start parsing the books. *Ptolemy, Socrates, Hypatia*. And thousands of more.

Zeke  
"Thousands of years of knowledge."

Aubrey found a book on ancient engineering. Simon a book on life of ancient egypt. Zeke continued being fascinated by the titles on the shelves. The three read peacefully.

Until they felt a presence. A slient presence. Zeke sees in the corner of the a figure. They look to see a cloaked figure standing at the end of the shelves. It did not speak. It was of short stature and slightly hunched over. A human figure perhaps but its head had the roundness of an owl.

Simon (whispers)  
"run"

The three grabbed a few books and dashed for the exit. Their chase knocked a few books off of the shelves in the process. Simon looked behind to see where the figure is. It's quickly following behind them but it makes no sound. The exit is in view.



Zeke  
"we're almost there."

The walls begin to crack. The library is sinking.  
Zeke and Simon are racing to the door with Aubrey behind.  
They no longer see the figure behind them.

The three are close to the exit. They all hear a voice emanating from  
the walls and the space around them. The calm reverberating nature of  
the voice hastened their running pace.

Cloaked Figure  
"Knowledge comes at a price."

They all dived through the exit and crawled away from the sinking  
library.

Simon (laughing)  
"we did it. We-we-we made it."

Simon finds the books in the sand.

Simon (joyful)  
"and we still have the books."

Zeke around.

Zeke  
"wait where's Aubrey?"

FADE TO:

Zeke returns to his empty home. Her books still remain. The sterling  
engine sits on a cup of coffee. The room is dark. She's gone.

Zeke walked to her study and found the picture frame. He turned on the  
lamp. The lamp shined dark blue.

Zeke (to self)  
"a black light?"

The picture frame glows slightly. He takes out the picture. A message  
glows.

'This is enough for me'. He flips the picture and to reveal a picture  
from their wedding years ago. The two of them. Happy.

## **SCENE 7: The Return**

INT: Zeke enters the library. The books are still scattered on the  
floor. Zeke calmly enters the library. It's quiet. He searched for  
Aubrey but didn't find any skeleton. He reached an open foyer where he  
could see the shelves around him and the multiple levels of the library.  
He sees out of the corner of his eye. The figure.  
It stands in the distance and doesn't speak.

Zeke

"I'm looking for my wife."

No response.

Zeke

"I know she's here. And that you took her."

No response. It stands without moving. Completely still.

Zeke (begging)

"I want- I need her back....please"

No response.

Zeke

"what will it take? I brought the books back."

Zeke takes out his books from his satchel.

No response.

Cloaked Being

"You seek to know the answer to the eternal problem?"

Zeke

"I do."

The cloaked being approaches Zeke. It grows taller as it approaches him. A bright light radiates from the being nearly blinding Zeke. The light overtakes him and fills our vision. We are blind as well.

EXT:

The library is sinking and Simon is running toward it. Trying to find his friend. He finds Zeke standing in the ruins of the Library.

Simon

"Zeke?"

No response. Zeke stands silent. He's silently twitching.

Simon

"Zeke. Zeke are you ok?"

Zeke doesn't respond. He collapses in Simon's arms.

INT: Hospital.

Zeke lies in a hospital bed. Simon is with a doctor.

Doctor

"He's been like this for a few days. Only muttering a couple of times."

Simon

"Is there anything wrong with him?"

Doctor

"No. He's perfectly healthy. He just keeps repeating the same phrase."

Simon  
"What phrase?"

Doctor  
"This is enough."

**THE END**