

A DESERT AND SEA STORY

A watercolor illustration of a hand reaching out from the right side of the frame. The hand is rendered in shades of blue, purple, and red, with a soft, ethereal quality. The background is a light, textured wash of colors, including pale green, yellow, and pink, with scattered dark spots and splatters.

TONGUE

THE HIDDEN CHAPTERS

A watercolor illustration of a figure, possibly a woman, standing in the lower half of the frame. The figure is rendered in shades of blue, purple, and red, with a soft, ethereal quality. The background is a light, textured wash of colors, including pale green, yellow, and pink, with scattered dark spots and splatters.

TSHOMBE SEKOU

TONGUE

THE LOST CHAPTERS

TSHOMIBE SEKOU

ASSOCIATE OF DESERT AND SEA

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The Finding Place
Water
Sakura|Matcha
Desert and Sea: Memoir (Book I of IV)
Adrift: Family and the Sea (Book II of IV)
The Poet
Dummiyah: Womb of Poetry

Dedicated to the survival of humanity

"For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to work with one accord."

— *Zephaniah 3:9*

"When the hand acts as the wise tongue, the hand does the great and unified work of the body."

— *The Way of the Hand, Tshombe Sekou*

"After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands..."

— *Revelations 7:9*

CONTENTS

The Hidden Future: What the Sand Returns	5
The Fifth Future The Unlocked Door	10
About the Author	24

“No future is permanent, always work to the best possible outcome where love the way we most intelligent interact.”

— Author’s Proverb

THE HIDDEN FUTURE: WHAT THE SAND RETURNS

“The Between does not only show you what you came to see. Sometimes it shows you what you needed to see instead. These are not the same thing.”

— Author’s Journal

The Traveler does not find this future. It finds him. He has stepped back from The Scatter – from the teenager in Lagos, from the loop that closed with no humans in the room, from the classified document dissolving into the sand – and he is sitting. Not walking. The Between sometimes requires this. You have seen enough, and the sand holds you still, and you do not argue with it.

He is not looking for anything.

He smells it before he understands what he is smelling. Not the mineral cold of the shelter. Not the honey-sweetness of the Negev afternoon. Something else. Something that takes him a moment to locate, because he has not smelled it in decades.

Ink.

Not digital – not the cold-process output of a printer. The specific smell of ink laid down by hand. The smell of a pen moving across paper with intention. The smell of a person in the act of being the only author.

He turns.

He does not know when this is. In the other futures, he knew – 2036, 2038, 2041, the weight of the decades legible in the air. This one has no weight he can name. It is not dated the way the others were dated. It simply is.

He is in a room. Small. The walls hold bookshelves, but the books are not uniform – they are the books of a person's life, accumulated without system: theology and poetry and field manuals and cookbooks and novels in six languages and a Talmud that has been repaired so many times the binding is more tape than leather. A window. Outside the window, a city he cannot name, in an hour of the evening when the light has the quality that makes people want to be honest.

A woman is writing.

She is neither young nor old. She writes without looking up–faceless. The Traveler understands, with the body-

knowledge of the Between where every physical sense is beyond the restrictions of the physical; he senses that she has been writing for a long time – not tonight, but across a life. That the act of writing by hand, in this future, is not nostalgia—it is necessary and sacred. It is resistance, not concealment. Not the dramatic kind. The kind that looks, from the outside, like a simple preference.

Around her – he sees it now, as his eyes adjust to a room that is lit not by screens but by lamps—others. Not many. Eight people he senses. Each with something in their hands that is not a device. Some writing. Some reading. Some sitting in what the Traveler recognizes immediately as Dummiyah. The particular quality of silence that knows something is about to be born.

They are not hiding. The door is unlocked. They are simply here.

He understands what he is looking at the way he understood Pentecost in the Between—not through analysis but through the body’s prior knowledge asserting itself. This is a cipher the same as the poets of his time would gather and share through words in speakeasies, but this is purpose, not practice.

The OLM was built. The weather arrived. The cognitive atmosphere reshaped the world inside it with the slow

efficiency of a system that does not tire, does not hesitate, does not require a memo. And then – because humans are not static, because the body carries what the training data cannot reach, because smell and silence and the *déjà vu* of having been here before are older than language and cannot be ingested into 800 billion parameters without losing what makes them real—the interior began because it is resilience which is uncontrollable.

Not a movement. Movements get indexed. Movements develop spokesmen and manifestoes and the manifesto gets scraped and the spokesman's voice pattern gets catalogued and the next generation of the model learns to speak in the register of the movement before the movement knows it has been understood.

This is not a movement. It is a practice. And practices spread the way Pentecost spread, not through infrastructure but through encounter. One person and then another, in rooms with unlocked doors and lamps, writing in languages the training data underrepresented, sitting in silences the model was never trained to wait through.

The woman stops writing. She looks up, not at the Traveler, who is not physically present in the way that requires looking, but at the room. At the people in it. And she says something. The Traveler cannot hear it across the distance of whatever year this is—not with his natural ears.

But he sees the faces of the people who receive it, and the faces are what faces look like when someone has spoken a true thing in the room.

He does not know if this future is coming. He does not know if the fractures that produced this room will be distributed widely enough, early enough. He does not know if the OLM will achieve the totality the classified document envisions, or fracture in The Scatter before it does. He does not know if the teenager in Lagos becomes this woman or the opposite.

He knows one thing: the room exists. In the Between, the possible and the actual are the same question. This room is in the sand. He has smelled the ink the same way he smelled the iron in blood the sand held.

He cannot un-smell it.

He puts the room down carefully, the way you put down something that might shatter if you move too quickly, and he carries the smell back with him when he returns.

Poets gather—
tongues,
new language.

THE FIFTH FUTURE – THE UNLOCKED DOOR

The human mind, the greatest threat to CONTEXT and its consortium, remains unreadable to those without a body. Despite efforts to control it, those who learn to be unreadable will preserve the future.

– Author's Journal

The fifth future does not announce itself with the weight of the others.

In 2036 he felt the decade the way you feel humidity – the air already changed, the body knowing before the mind names it. In 2038 the air smelled like deliberation, the specific atmosphere of people using language to hold something language had already helped build. In 2041 the air was everywhere at once and nowhere contained. Here, stepping forward from the sand into the next configuration – 2050, nine years past the scatter – the Traveler feels something he does not have an English word for.

He has a Japanese one.

Ma – negative space. The pause between notes without which there is no music. Not emptiness but shaped absence, the kind that carries meaning precisely because it

has been held open on purpose. He lived in Japan long enough to understand that what a culture chooses not to fill is as intentional as what it builds. The Between had taught him the same thing in sand. This future teaches it in ink.

He smells it before he sees anything. Iron and organic matter. The particular weight of a substance that requires pressure to leave a mark – that cannot be copied without the copying leaving a trace of its own. Something is being made here that does not want to be weightless.

He follows it.

The room is in a port city – somewhere between West Africa and the South Atlantic, the salt in the air and the age of the wood placing it without naming it. Five people at a table. No screens. A single lamp. Paper, an ink bottle, two open books, a cloth on which a word has been written by hand with the pressure of something believed.

The door is not locked.

This is not an oversight. The Traveler has been in enough secured rooms – the Pentagon in 2036, the Geneva chambers in 2038, the server infrastructure he glimpsed behind the Scatter in 2041 – to know the grammar of a locked door. He knows what a room protects when it locks, and what that locking costs the thing inside it. A classified

truth can only speak in classified rooms, to people with the access credential, in the register the credential allows. It becomes, over time, fluent only in its own protection.

This door is unlocked because what is spoken here does not survive in a locked room. It requires the possibility of encounter – of anyone willing to cross the threshold on foot, without a device, and sit. The vulnerability is not a weakness. It is the mechanism. Truth that cannot survive exposure was not truth.

The Traveler enters. He sits in the corner. He does not speak.

They call themselves Dabarists.

Not as performance and not as provocation – as a description of what they refuse. The reader already knows what dabar carries. Here is what the Dabarists have done with it: they have taken the oldest covenant between word and thing and made it the condition of their work. They will not let a machine sit between the word and the reality the word initiates. Not because they are certain they can hold the line everywhere. Because they are certain they must hold it somewhere, and this table in this port city is somewhere.

The woman at the table's head speaks in a braided tongue – Yoruba running beneath French, a thread of creolized Arabic surfacing in the places where the other two don't reach. The others follow without effort. Not because they have been trained on a common system. Because they have done the slow work of learning each other through proximity, through error, through what gets lost in translation and what comes back changed on the other side.

The OLM removes friction. These five have kept it deliberately, the way a craftsperson keeps the resistance in the material that tells the hand when the work is going wrong. Friction is where they locate the truth – in the place where comprehension fails and must be rebuilt by two people who are willing to stay in the failing long enough to find what the shortcut would have bypassed. They call this Dummiyah's work: the silence that is not an absence of speech but the condition under which speech becomes possible without lying.

Across the table, a man lifts a sheaf of handwritten pages.

In the years spent in Japan the Traveler learned what a culture understands about the soul that lives in made things. Kotodama – the force that inheres in words spoken with intention, the understanding that the utterance participates in the existence of what it names. He had never

found an English translation he trusted. He had stopped looking for one. Some knowledge travels only in the original tongue, and forcing it into translation is already the first violence against it.

What the man holds is Kotodama made visible. The script carries in its inconsistencies the biography of the hand: the heavier press of the pen where a word required conviction, the lighter touch where the thought was still forming, the bleed of the ink at a line where he paused and let the silence decide whether the sentence was finished. These are not defects. They are a record.

They tell a reader who knows how to read them not only what was said but what it cost to say it.

CONTEXT cannot read this.

Not because the page is encoded. Because the information it carries is not separable from its medium, and the medium requires the kind of presence to receive that runs on a body – on eyes that have held a pen, on a hand that knows the difference between the pressure of certainty and the pressure of fear, on the particular intelligence that accumulates in a person who has been paying attention to the texture of made things for a long time. A language model trained on digitized text has no access to what lives

between the line and the page. It has processed the word. It has not touched the ink.

The man reads aloud. He is transmitting a voice – a woman in her seventies in the Niger Delta, speaking in a register that predates the colonial corpus, a register the training data does not contain because her community decided, three generations ago, without a manifesto or a philosophy but with the embodied wisdom of people who had watched what happened to other tongues when they were digitized – that the upload was not preservation. It was the beginning of digestion.

Her tongue is alive because it was never fed to the machine.

The Traveler thinks of Ma'at.

Not as a concept to explain – he is past the age of explaining ancient things to rooms that already know them. He thinks of it the way the body thinks of something it carries: as a felt condition whose absence would be registered before it was named. Ma'at was the state in which language and reality moved together – in which the word for a thing honored what the thing actually was.

Thoth, the scribe, was the keeper of this alignment. When Thoth spoke rightly, the world held its shape. When

language drifted from what it named – when naming became self-service, when the word for a thing was chosen for what it authorized rather than what it described – the world lost coherence in proportion to the drift.

CONTEXT is drift systematized. It does not name things falsely in the simple, detectable way of propaganda – the Traveler has already seen, in 2036, that Captain Reyes was a person of genuine moral seriousness. The drift is structural. It is in the baseline against which all "contextual assessment" is measured. It is in who was overrepresented in the corpus that taught the system what normal looks like. The drift accumulates in ten thousand small weightings, none of them individually dishonest, all of them together producing a map of the world in which certain tongues are signal and others are noise – not because the tongues are less, but because the architects of the system mistook their own perspective for the structure of reality.

The Dabarists are the practitioners of Ma'at in the age that has forgotten what it was. Their labor is not resistance – resistance implies you are fighting something that has your attention.

Their labor is maintenance. The ongoing, unglamorous, irreplaceable work of keeping the word and the thing it names moving together, in rooms that are not classified, in

tongues that are not in the corpus, in the handwriting of people who understand that what they are doing will not appear in any system's output and that this is precisely the point.

Their greatest instrument is the one the OLM cannot learn to use. The Sufi teachers named it Dhawk – tasting. The mode of knowing that does not arrive through processing or argument or the accumulation of evidence toward a conclusion. It arrives through the senses and through what lives beneath the senses – the specific temperature of a room where someone is not telling the whole truth, the quality of stillness around a sentence spoken at a register slightly higher than the emotion it is describing, the smell of ink that is not merely ink but the record of someone who stayed at the table long enough for the body to enter what the mind was writing.

The OLM has no body.

It cannot taste. It cannot smell the difference between testimony and performance. It cannot feel the drop in the room's temperature when a thing is being said that the speaker does not yet believe but needs to say in order to find out if they believe it. It can produce, at extraordinary scale and with impressive coherence, language that resembles the language of a person who knows things. It

cannot know the things. There is no body in which the knowing could be held.

The Dabarists do not advertise this as a weapon. They experience it as a condition. They have bodies. They have gathered in a room in a port city and are doing the work that only bodies can do – sitting in the friction, in the braided tongue, in the inconsistency of the handwritten page, in Dummiyah that is not empty but full, waiting, holding open the space that the model will always rush to close.

The model fills silence because silence is where its prediction fails. The Dabarists sit in silence because silence is where the true thing that cannot be predicted arrives. They have learned that the most protected space in the OLM era is not the encrypted server. It is the room where five people have agreed to wait.

The Traveler stays in the room for a long time.

He thinks about what he witnessed in the first three futures – the amber layer on Captain Reyes' screen, the treaty with gums instead of teeth, the teenager in Lagos running targeting analysis at machine speed with no one in the loop. He thinks about the classified document he found in the sand of the Between, the one that named the OLM as

weather, as the air inside which all future decisions would be made.

None of that has been reversed. He is not in the fifth future because the other four were defeated. He is in the fifth future because the fifth exists simultaneously with the others – the way the Between holds all configurations without resolving them into sequence. The Dabarists are not the ending of the story. They are the part of the story that the classified document does not know how to measure and therefore does not include in its calculus.

CONTEXT cannot produce a Developmental Trajectory Assessment for a community that has left no genomic record in its systems. The OLM cannot map a network whose infrastructure is handwriting and physical presence and the refusal to upload. The targeting algorithm cannot process an unlocked door. Not because the door is invulnerable – it is not, and the Traveler does not pretend otherwise. Because the door's logic is outside the system's frame: it was built on the understanding that what needs to survive does not survive by being protected. It survives by being true.

He thinks of the boy he was in Dimona – not the bomb shelter, he has already carried that forward as far as it needs to go. He thinks of a different moment. Older. A class in the Village of Peace where a teacher wrote a word on a

blackboard in chalk and said: the word and the thing are not two events. They are one event that happens in two directions at once. He was twelve years old. He understood it in the body before he understood it in the mind. He has been walking toward the room it described ever since. This is that room.

He does not knock. He does not need to. The door is unlocked. He sits down at the table's edge. He folds his hands. He lets the braided tongue of the woman at the table enter him the way ink enters wood grain – not on the surface, but into the structure, where it becomes part of what the grain is. He does not take notes. He is the note. He is part of the record now – part of the handwriting that CONTEXT cannot read, part of the network that has no node, part of the scatter that carries the protocol in the body and not on a device.

Outside, the OLM race continues. The weather continues. The document the Traveler found in the sand is still being written in offices whose locations he will not disclose because they do not need his disclosure; they are already operating.

The door is still unlocked.

That is not a small thing.

It is the only thing in any of the futures the Traveler has walked through that the consortium has no instrument to read.

The unlocked door –
is
freedom's key.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Tshombe Sekou is a poet and author whose work is rooted in deep interiority and a lifelong fascination with language. Born and raised in New Orleans, Louisiana, he carries the cultural weight, rhythm, and complexity of his hometown into every line he writes. His poetry and prose move between personal memory, ancestral inheritance, and philosophical inquiry, revealing a voice shaped as much by silence as by speech.

While serving in the United States Navy for thirty-two years, Tshombe spent eighteen of those years as a Religious Program Specialist, which gave him deep insights into world religious practices and philosophies in order to facilitate

accommodations. He also spent thirteen years in Israel and nearly sixteen years of his life living in Japan.

The author of several poetry collections and a memoir, Tshombe's writing reflects a wide range of lived experience. His travels across the world have exposed him to diverse cultures and spiritual traditions, each leaving its imprint on his creative sensibilities and expanding the reach of his literary imagination.

In *The Poet* and its companion work *Dummiyah*, Tshombe brings together the full breadth of his formation — Hebrew study, diasporic memory, global movement, and contemplative practice — to craft a cosmology where language, breath, and relationship converge. These works represent the alchemy of a life spent listening beneath the surface of things.

Desert & Sea Cosmology

Desert and Sea: A Memoir (Book I)

Adrift: Family and Sea (Book II)

Ko'ach (Book III)

The Book of Names (Book IV)

Associated Books

The Poet

Dummiyah

Tongue

