

Iskandar's Oracle

© Chinmoy Mukherjee 2026-2046. No part of this document may be used without explicit written permission from the author.

This is a work of fiction. All characters, events, and places are entirely fictional, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

Iskandar's Oracle

Chapter 1: The Digital Deception

Chapter 2: The Tent of Titans

Chapter 3: The Magic Box Unveiled

Chapter 4: Crossing the Abyss

Chapter 5: Echoes of Eternity

Chapter 6: The Loop Unveiled

Chapter 7: Hacking the Horizon

Chapter 8: Persuasion and Peace

Chapter 9: The Blueprint of Babylon

Chapter 10: The Chronos Protocol

Chapter 11: The River of Stars

Chapter 12: Conclusion

Chapter 1: The Digital Deception

The humid air of Mumbai hung heavy over Andheri, a thick, invisible blanket smelling of frying *vada pav*, exhaust fumes, and the briny, decaying scent of the Arabian Sea. Outside, the city was a kaleidoscope of chaotic light: neon signs in garish pinks and electric blues reflected off rain-slicked pavement, warring with the amber glow of streetlamps and the piercing white beams of erratic traffic. The soundscape was a relentless assault—a cacophony of frantic honking, the rhythmic thud of distant construction pile-drivers, and the shrill cries of vendors hawking their wares before the monsoon unleashed its fury.

But inside apartment 4B, the world was hermetically sealed, cool, and bathed in an artificial twilight. Chunmun Singh sat ensconced in his ergonomic throne, the air conditioner humming a low, steady B-flat that masked the city's roar. His sanctuary smelled of ground Arabica beans, ozone from overheating electronics, and the faint, sterile scent of anti-static wipes. At 32, Chunmun was a digital knight errant, a master of penetration testing whose weapon of choice was a custom-built, high-end laptop that served as his mobile command center. It was currently docked to dual monitors that cast a pale, spectral light on his face, flickering with the cascading green and amber text of Python scripts. To his left, a server rack hummed with the aggressive whir of cooling fans, sounding like a hive of angry hornets. To his right, his "faithful sidekick"—a high-end espresso machine—gurgled and hissed, releasing a plume of steam that carried the rich, bitter aroma of fresh coffee into the cool air.

"Alright, CyberShield architecture, let's see where you're leaking," Chunmun muttered, his fingers dancing across a mechanical keyboard that clicked and clacked like a rapid-fire telegraph. He wasn't breaking in to steal; he was breaking in to build. "Hacking isn't about breaking in—it's about building trust," he often told his team, his voice carrying the warm, rhythmic lilt of his Punjabi heritage. But tonight, the trust he sought to protect was about to be violated by a force beyond his understanding.

The incident began not with a bang, but with a notification ping—a sharp, digital chime that cut through the low-fi beats playing softly from his speakers. An email. The sender was masked, the header data scrambled. The subject line pulsed in urgent red pixels: "Urgent: Potential Breach Detected – Immediate Action Required."

Chunmun leaned in, the blue light of the screen reflecting in his dark eyes. He didn't panic; he analyzed. He ran the header through a sandboxed analyzer. No malware signatures. No phishing flags. The scent of mystery piqued his interest, sharper than the coffee. He opened it. Inside lay a link to a "diagnostic tool."

"Just a quick heuristic scan," he whispered, hovering the cursor.
Click.

The reaction was instantaneous and violent. The screen didn't just change; it convulsed. A progress bar appeared, not in the standard sterile grey, but in a shifting, iridescent shimmer that looked like oil on water. The fan speed of his laptop spiked, screaming like a jet engine preparing for takeoff. The smell of hot plastic and singing circuits filled the room, acrid and alarming.

"What in the..." Chunmun's fingers flew to the escape keys, but the keyboard was dead.

The code on his screen began to mutate. The standard ASCII characters twisted and warped, bleeding colors—violent violets, searing crimsons, and blinding golds. They weren't forming lines of code anymore; they were forming shapes. Fractals. Spirals. Geometric patterns that looked less like software and more like ancient mosaics. He saw swirling hoplites, the wheels of chariots turning in golden fire, and timelines twisting like snakes.

"Trojan horse," he hissed, sweat beading on his forehead, cold and clammy despite the AC. "It's rewriting the BIOS... no, it's rewriting the GPU output."

But it was more than that. The room began to warp. The neon lights from the Mumbai street outside smeared into long, glowing streaks, like a long-exposure photograph. The sound of the city—the horns,

the shouts—slowed down, dropping in pitch until they became a deep, terrifying groan. A new sound emerged: a high-pitched electrical whine, rising in frequency until it vibrated in his teeth. The air pressure dropped so sharply his ears popped. The smell of ozone became overpowering, tasting metallic on his tongue, like licking a 9-volt battery.

A dialog box, rendered in a font that looked like chiseled marble, floated in the center of the distortion:

"Temporal Bridge Activated. Destination: 326 BCE. Hydaspes River."

"326 BCE? Hydaspes?" Chunmun laughed, a frantic, jagged sound. "Hallucination. Burnout. I need sleep." He snatched the laptop from its dock and reached for the power cord to yank it, but his hand passed through a ripple in the air.

Vertigo hit him like a physical blow. The floor dissolved. The blue glow of the monitors expanded, swallowing the room in blinding white light. He felt a sensation of being stretched, pulled through a tube too small for his body. The scent of coffee vanished, replaced by the crushing smell of a thunderstorm—pure electricity and rain.

Then, darkness.

When sensation returned, it wasn't the soft give of his ergonomic chair. It was rough, scratchy texture against his cheek. Coarse wool. The ground was hard and uneven. The silence of the apartment was gone, replaced by a deafening, rhythmic roar—not traffic, but water. Massive, churning water. And beneath that, the primal, terrifying sound of a trumpet—not an instrument, but a beast. An elephant.

Chunmun gasped, his lungs filling with air that was thick, humid, and smelling of wet earth, horse manure, and woodsmoke. He

scrambled up, his hands sinking into mud. He blinked, his eyes adjusting from the blue light of screens to the warm, flickering orange glow of oil lamps.

He was in a tent. A massive pavilion of heavy canvas that snapped in the wind. Shadows danced wildly on the walls, cast by iron braziers burning aromatic wood—cedar, perhaps? Maps were spread across tables, drawn on parchment, held down by bronze daggers.

And there, standing before him, was a shadow that blocked the light.

A man. Not a holographic avatar, but a man of flesh and blood, smelling of sweat, leather, and iron. He wore a chiton and a bronze breastplate that gleamed dully in the firelight. His beard was unruly, his eyes two burning coals of intelligence and ferocity.

"Who are you, stranger?" The voice was a gravelly baritone, commanding and dangerous. "And what sorcery is this glowing oracle you carry?"

The man pointed a spear at Chunmun's chest. The tip shone with a lethal, polished edge.

Chunmun looked down. His laptop was open in his hand, the screen glowing with the familiar desktop wallpaper of a nebula. The battery icon showed 100%. The fan hummed softly, a tiny, mechanical sound in this world of organic noise.

"I... I'm Chunmun Singh," he stammered, the vibration of the Greek words resonating in his skull. He realized with a jolt that he *understood* the language. The virus. It was translating in real-time, overlaying meaning directly onto his auditory cortex. "From... far away. This is no oracle. It is a computer."

The man stepped closer, the scent of wine and aggression rolling off him. This was him. The historical texts, the statues... the mismatched eyes. Alexander. Alexander the Great.

"Prove it," Alexander growled, "or die as an Indian spy."

Adrenaline, sharp and chemical, flooded Chunmun's system. He had no weapon but data. He dropped to his knees, not in supplication, but to type. The keys clacked loudly in the tent—a plastic, alien sound. He accessed the cached map data from the virus's payload.

"Look," Chunmun breathed, turning the screen.

A 3D topographical map of the Hydaspes River materialized in high definition, the water simulated in blue, the terrain in green and brown. It glowed with an unearthly luminescence, lighting up Alexander's rugged face.

"By Zeus..." Alexander whispered, the spear lowering. The firelight caught the reflection in his eyes—a mix of fear and ravenous hunger for the unknown. "You hold the world in a box of light."

The rain hammered against the tent roof, a relentless drumbeat marking the beginning of an odyssey that no code could have predicted.
