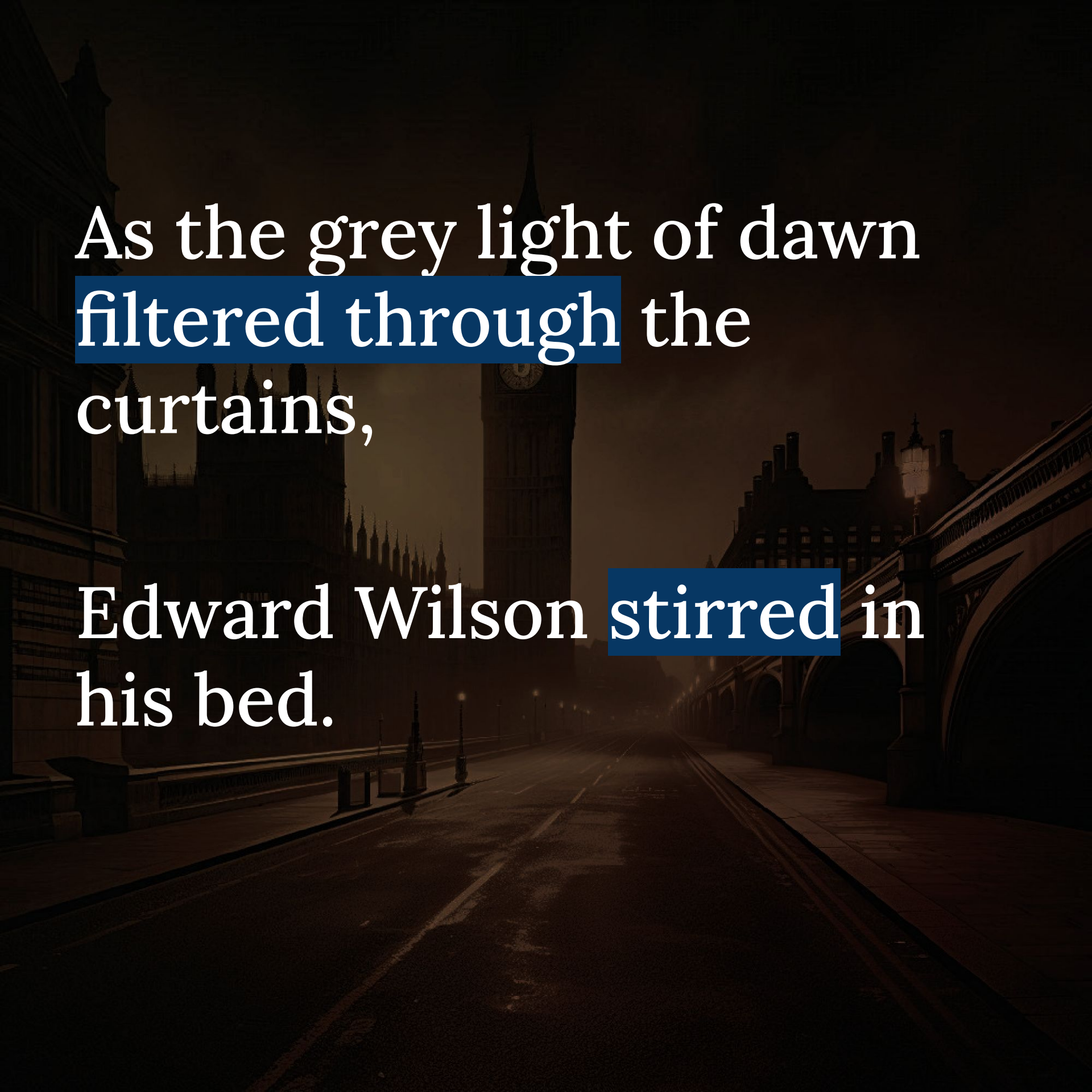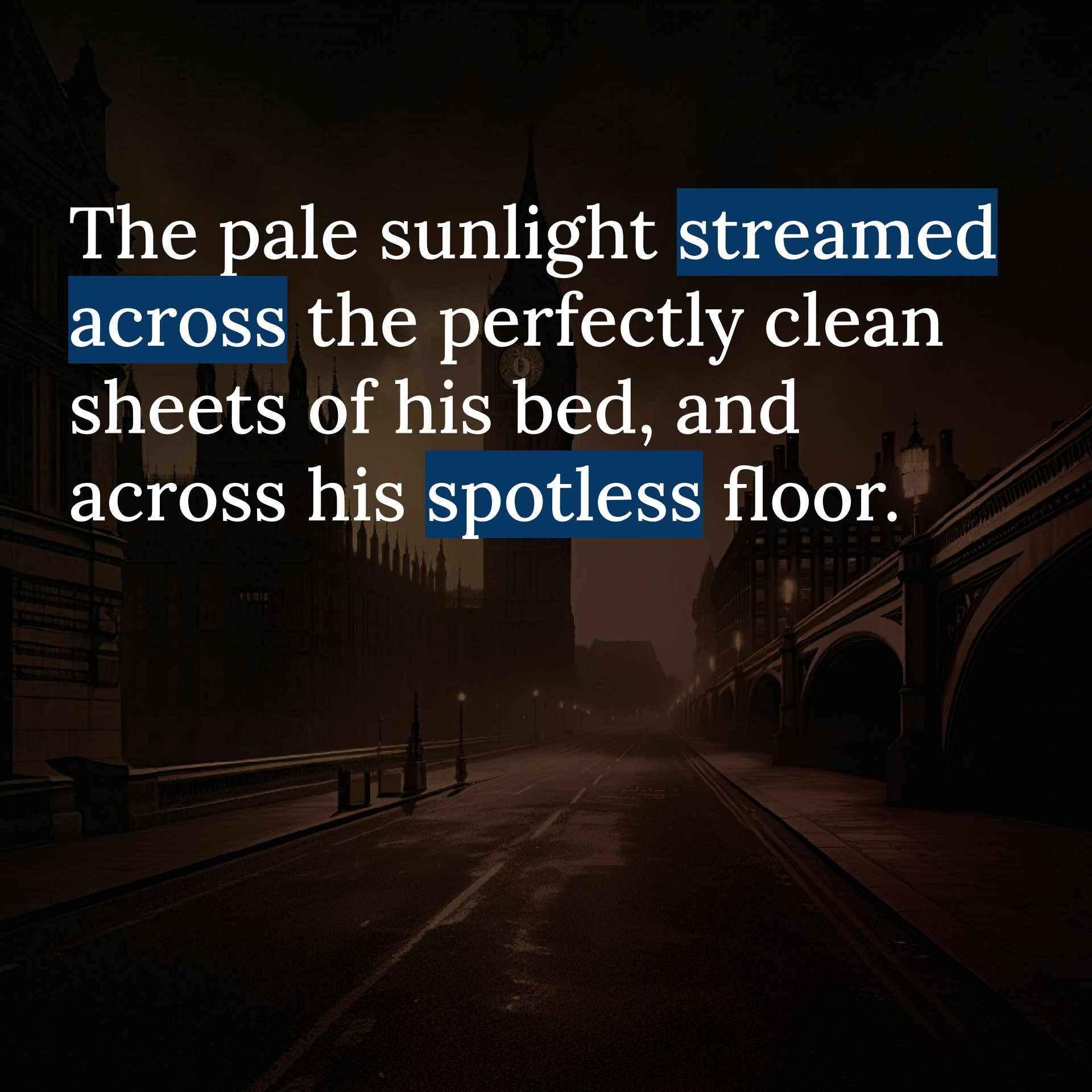# The Simulation

As the grey light of dawn filtered through the curtains,
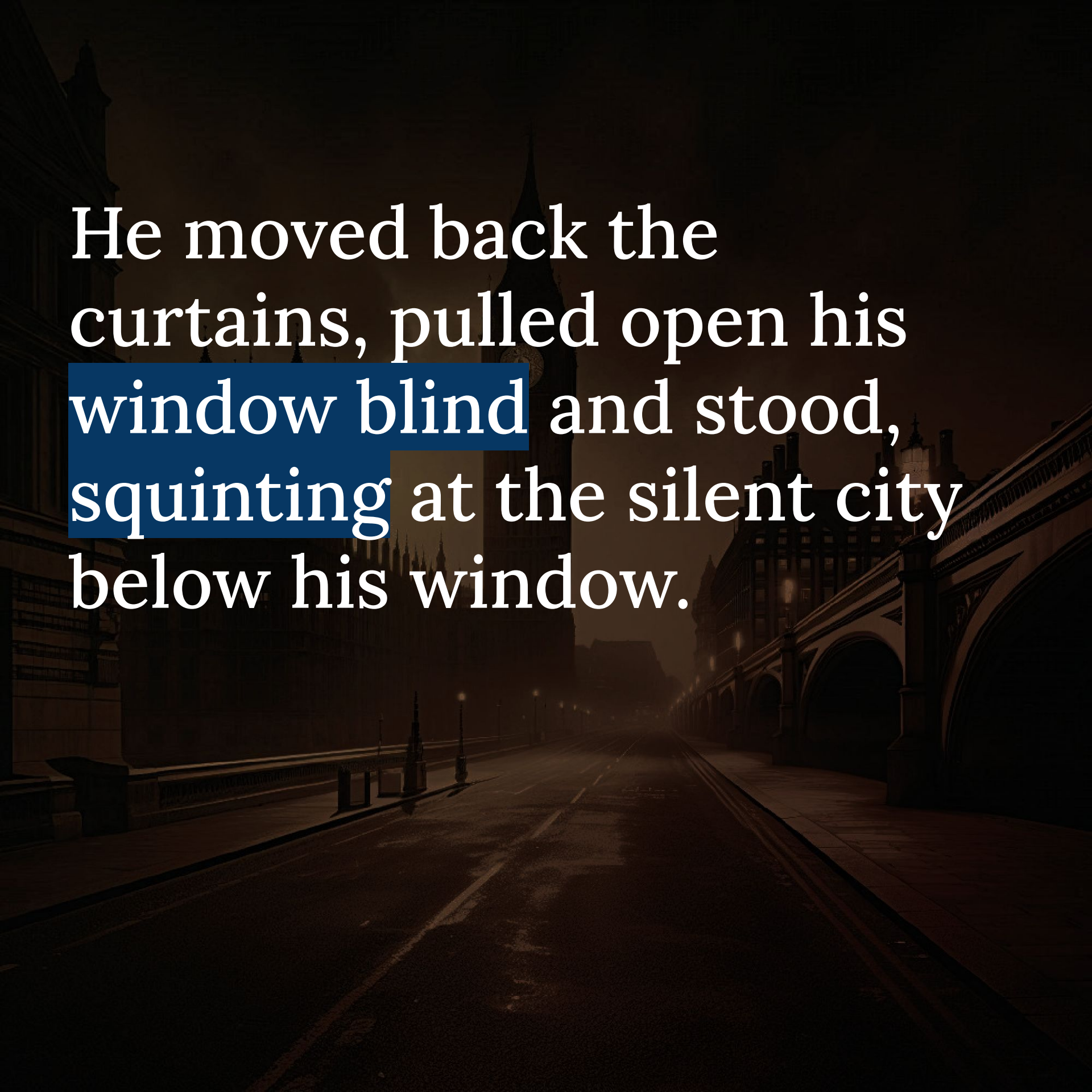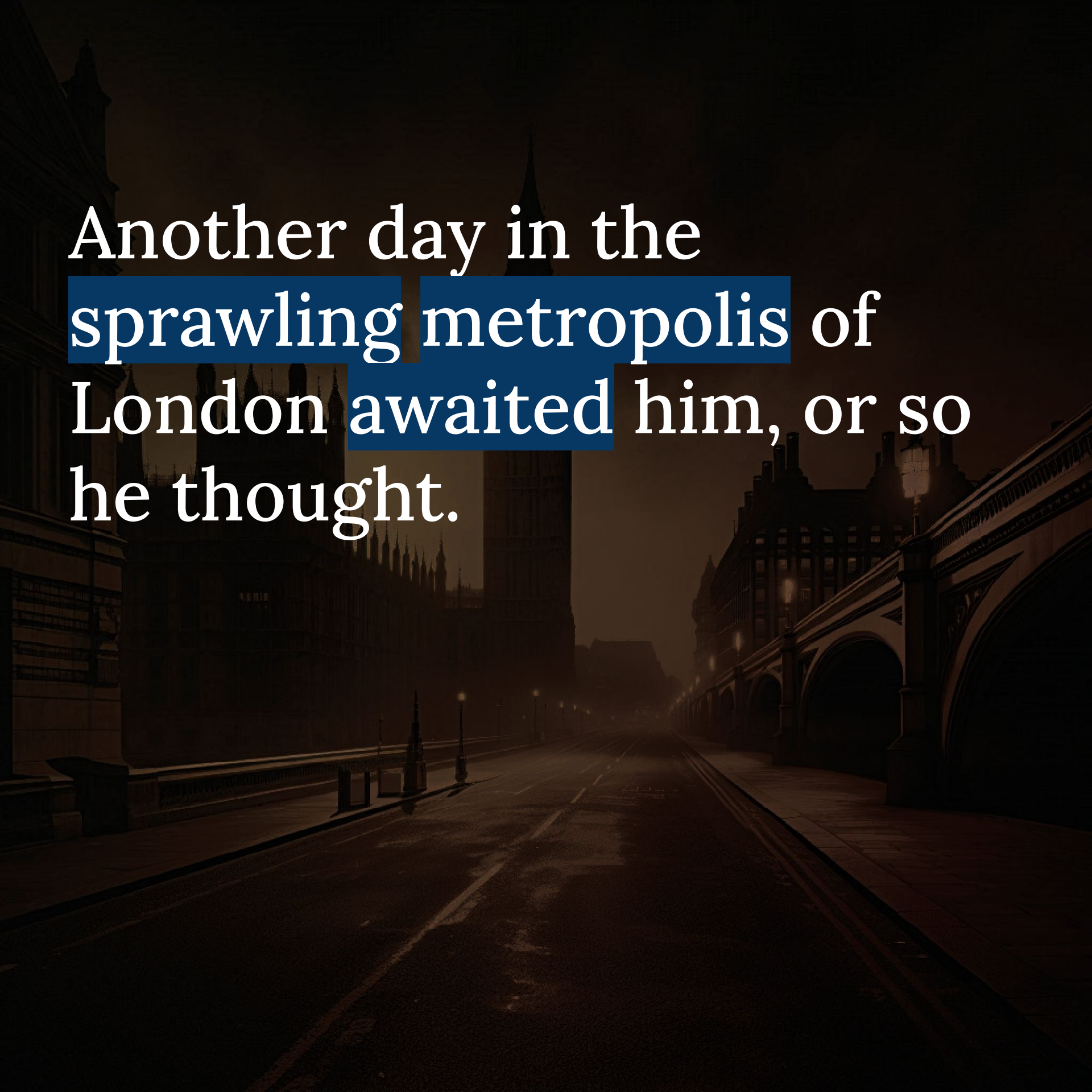
Edward Wilson stirred in his bed.

His **hazel** eyes blinked open, and he yawned, stretching his **lean frame**.
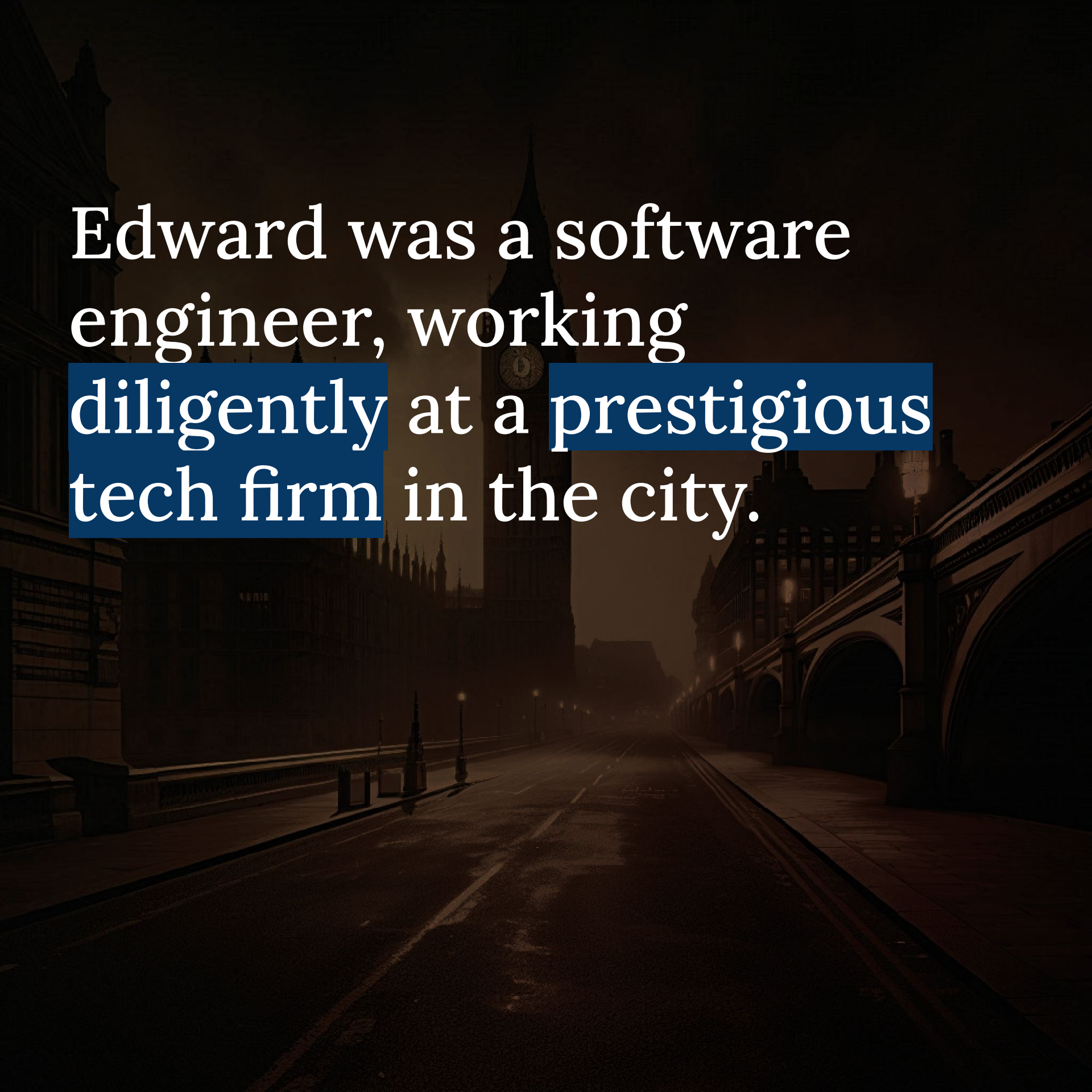
The pale sunlight streamed across the perfectly clean sheets of his bed, and across his spotless floor.
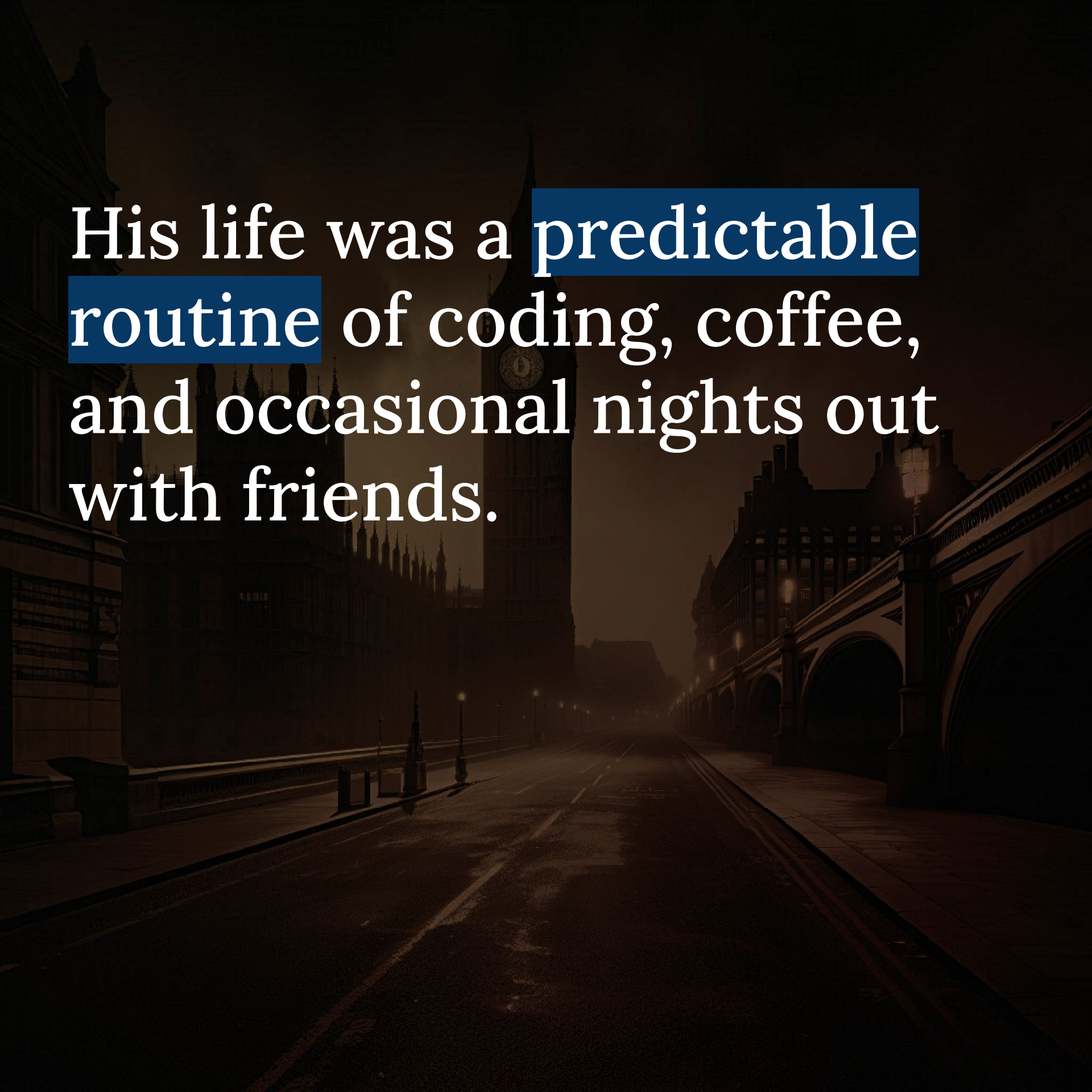
He moved back the curtains, pulled open his **window blind** and stood, **squinting** at the silent city below his window.

Another day in the sprawling metropolis of London awaited him, or so he thought.
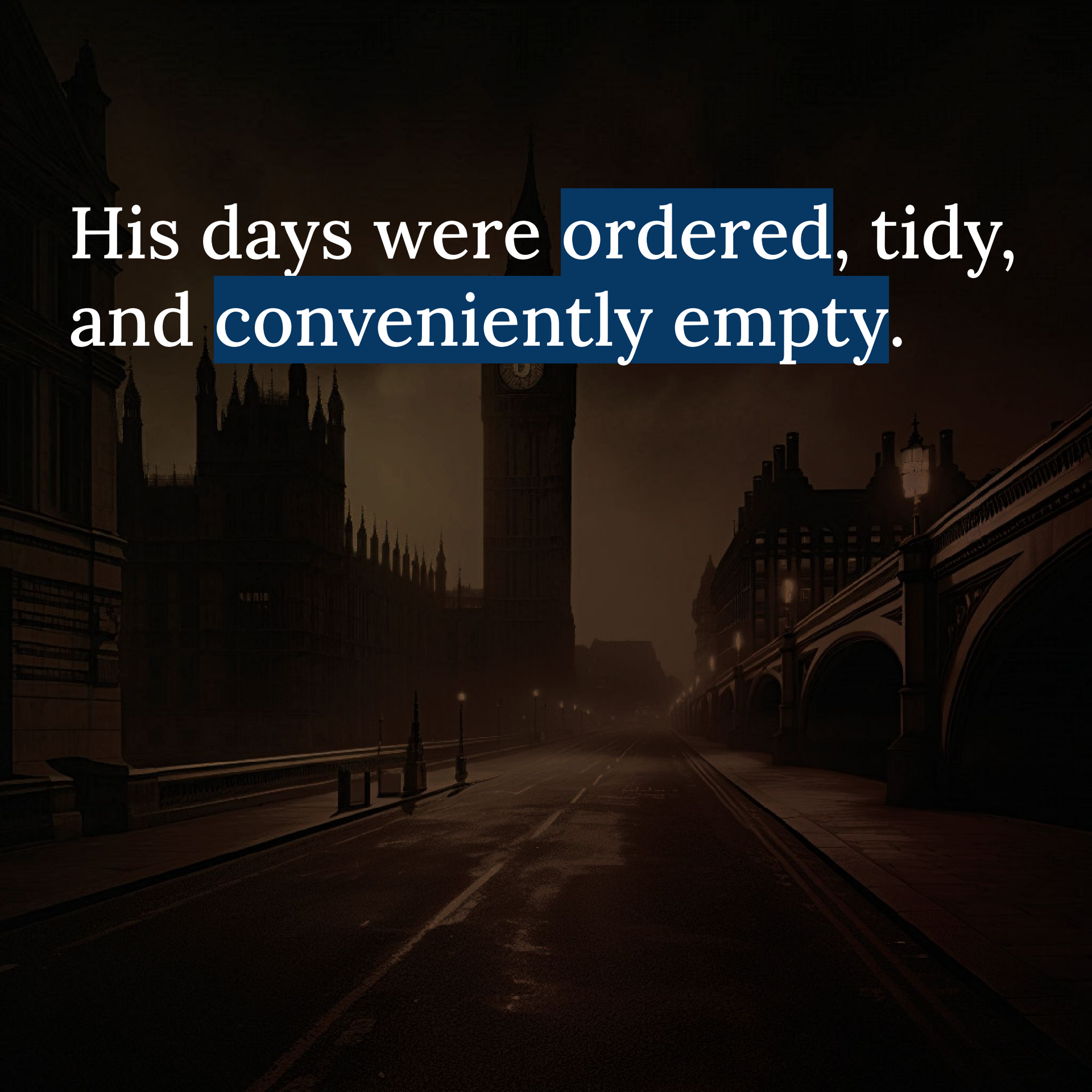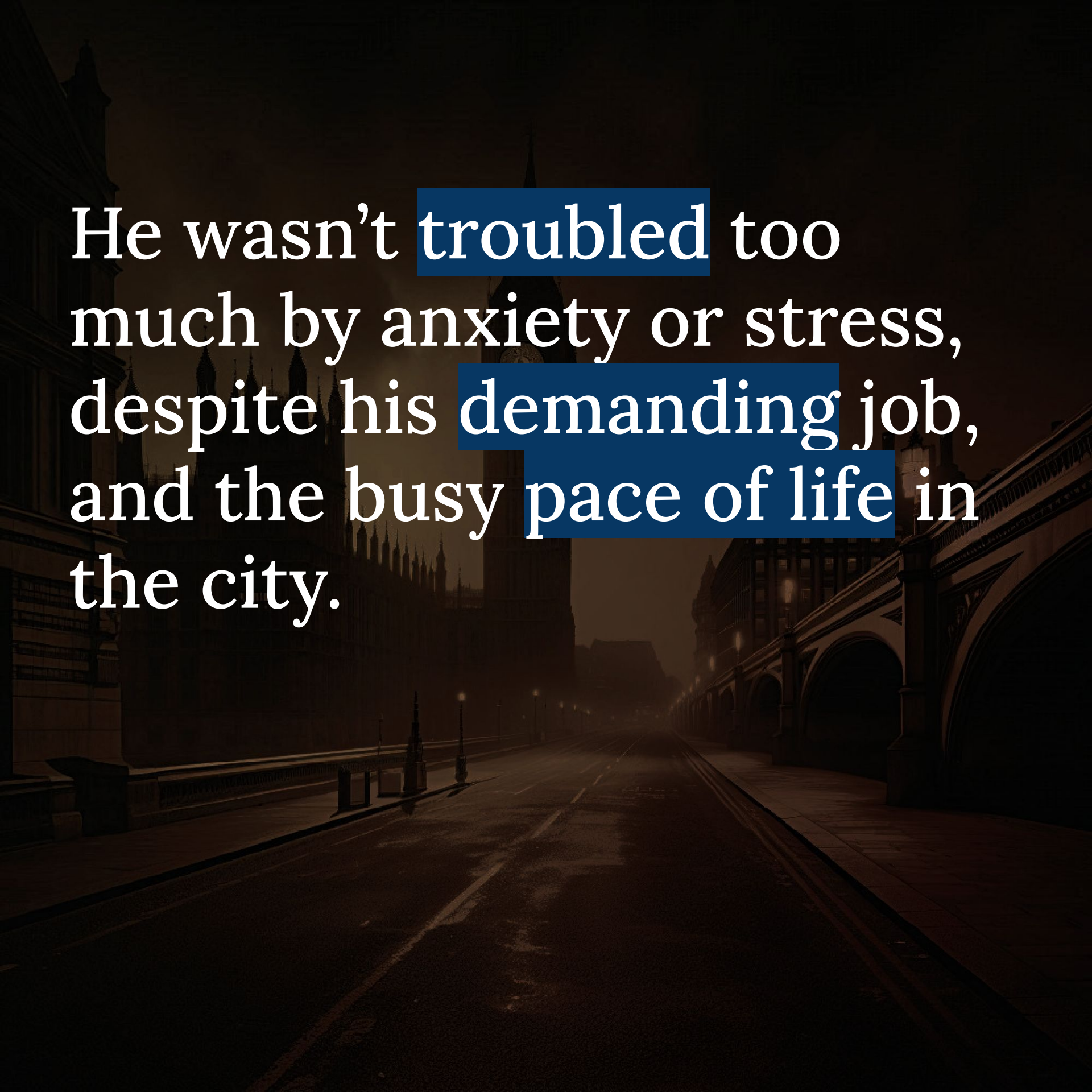
Edward was a software engineer, working diligently at a prestigious tech firm in the city.

His life was a **predictable routine** of coding, coffee, and occasional nights out with friends.
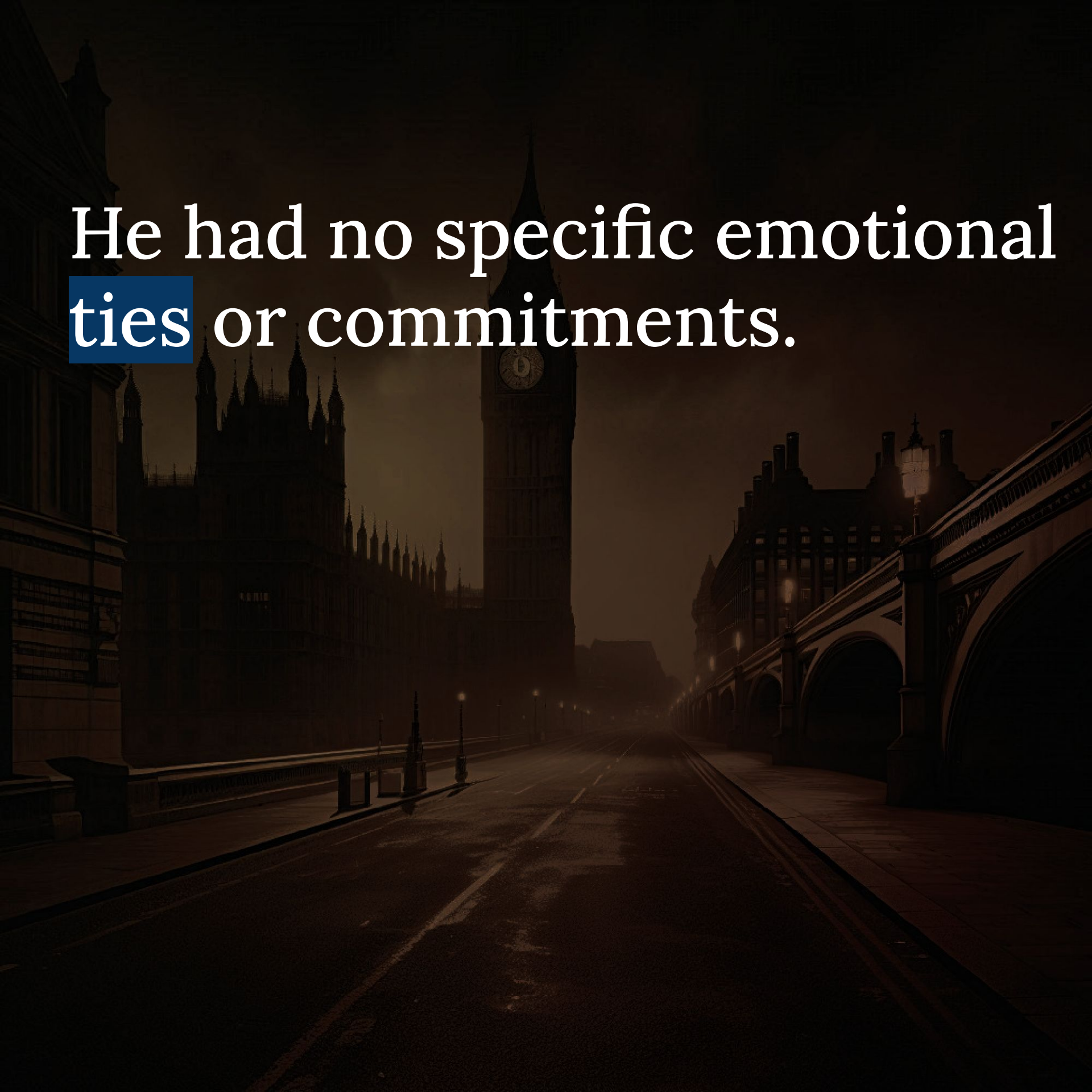
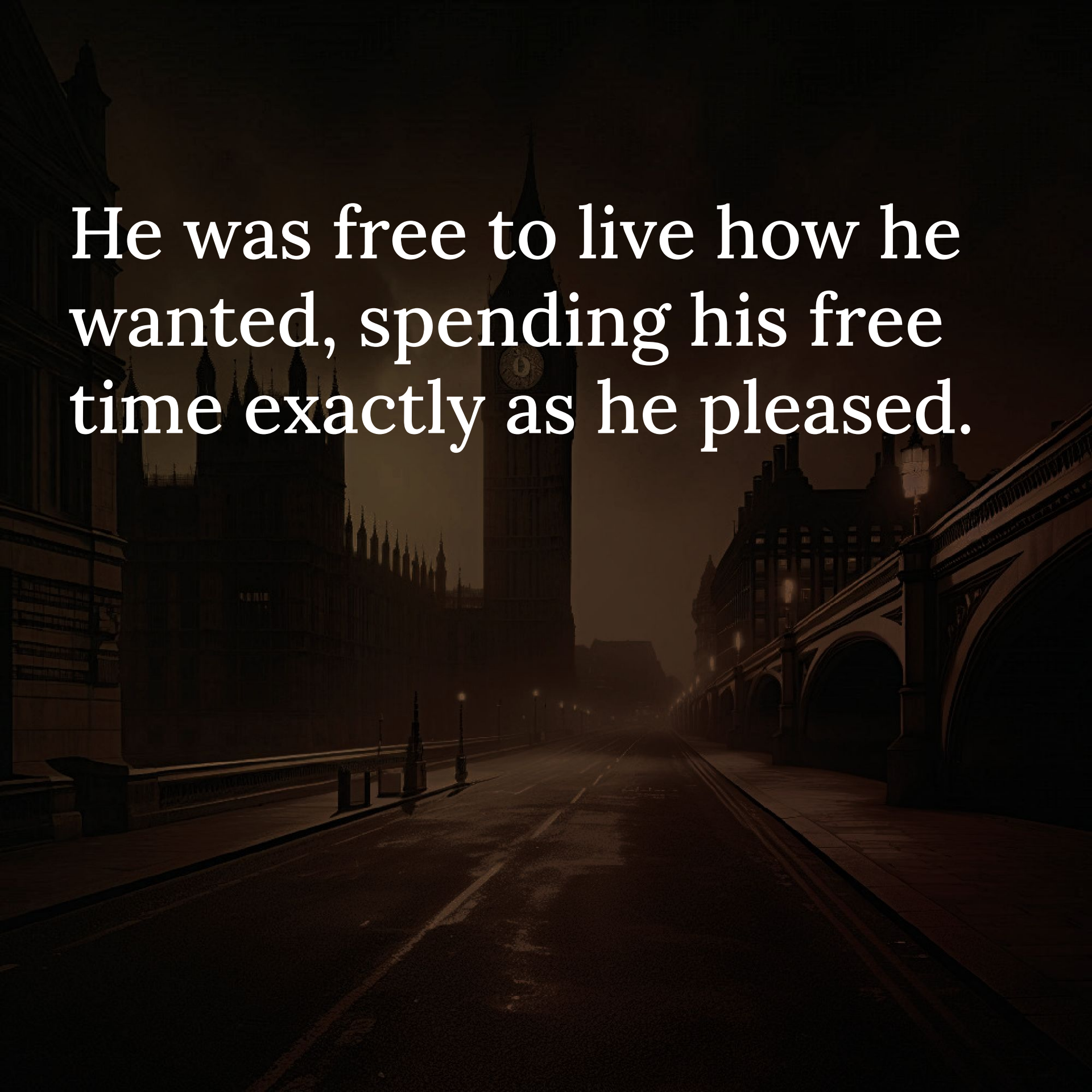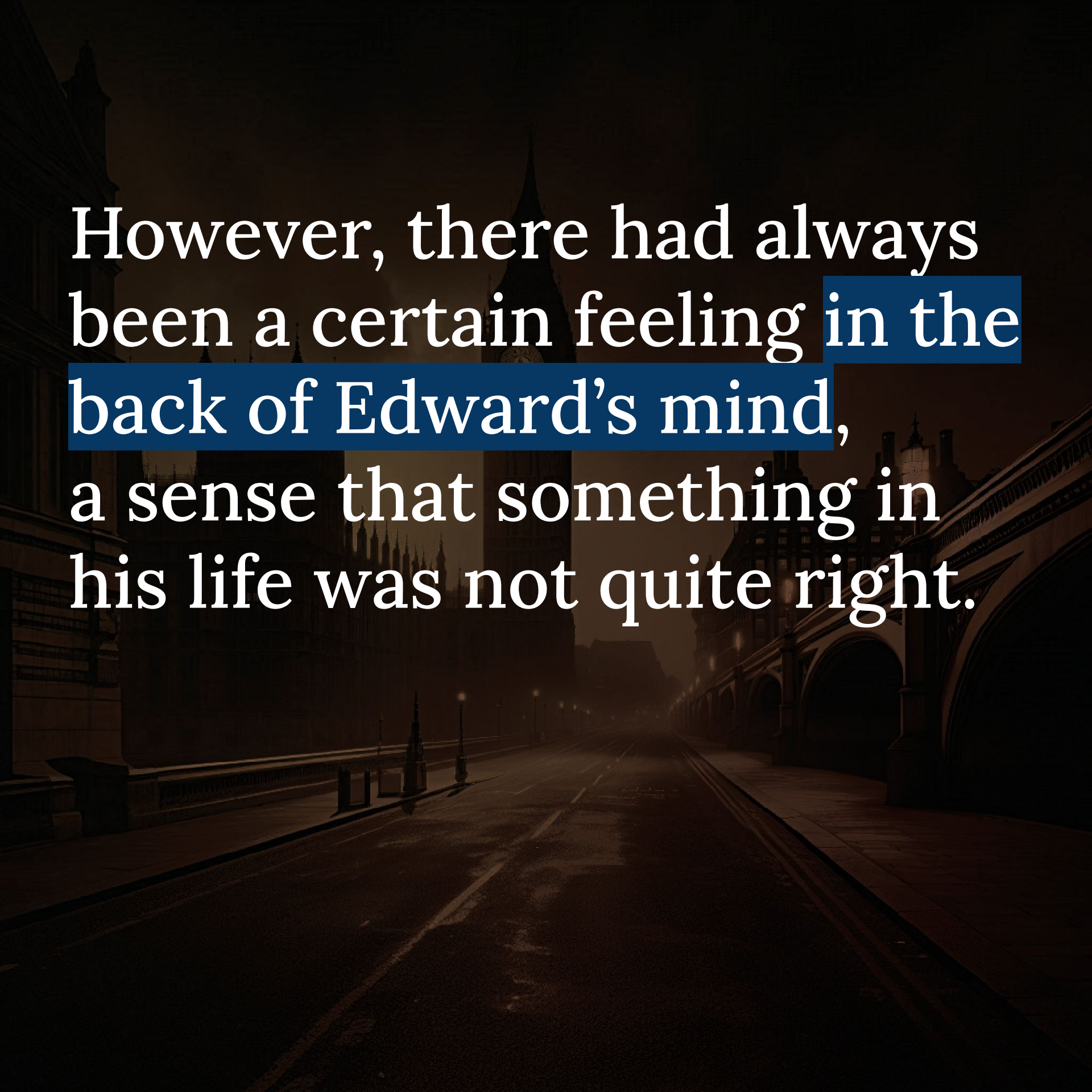His days were ordered, tidy, and conveniently empty.

He wasn't **troubled** too much by anxiety or stress, despite his **demanding** job, and the busy **pace of life** in the city.

He had no specific emotional ties or commitments.

He was free to live how he wanted, spending his free time exactly as he pleased.
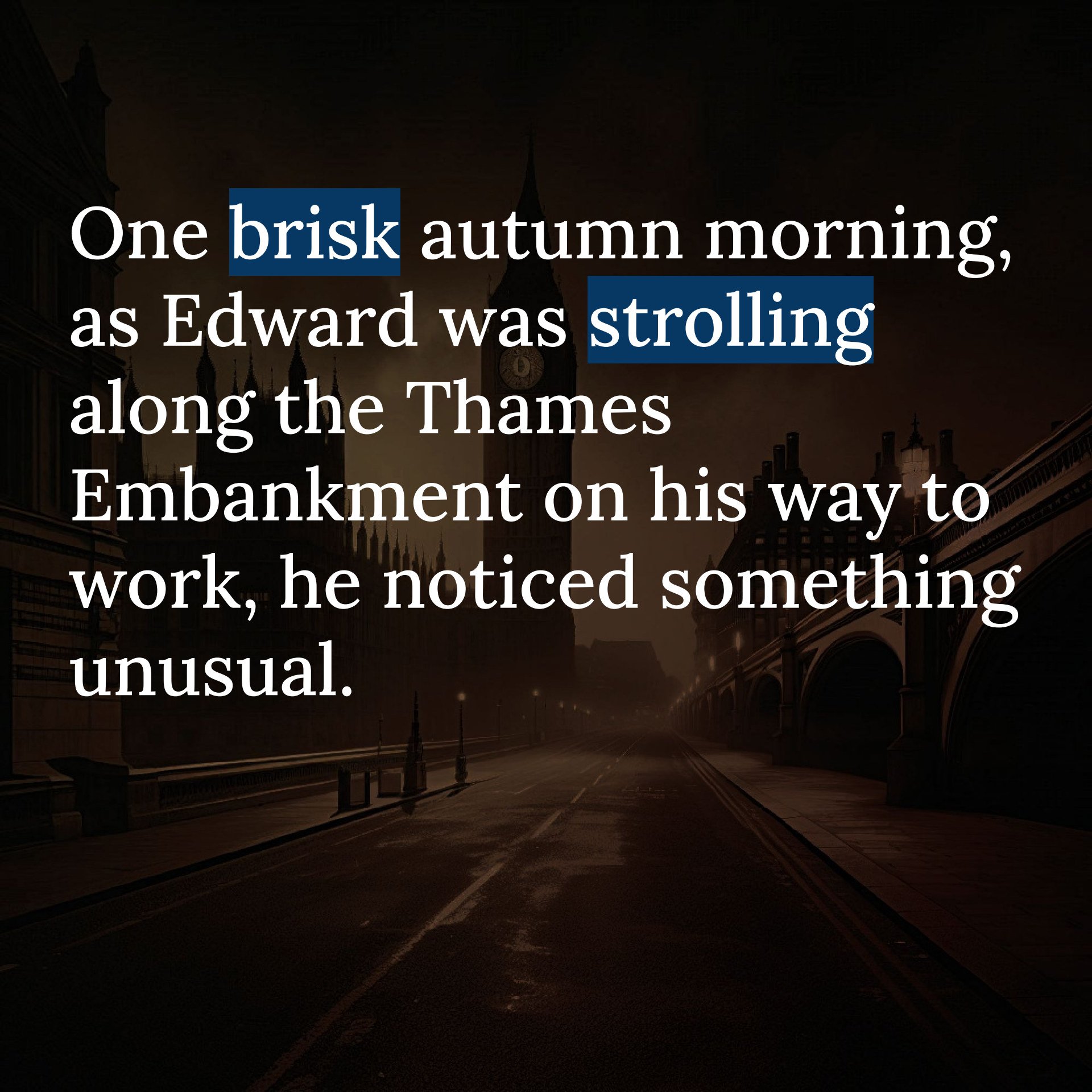
However, there had always been a certain feeling in the back of Edward's mind, a sense that something in his life was not quite right.
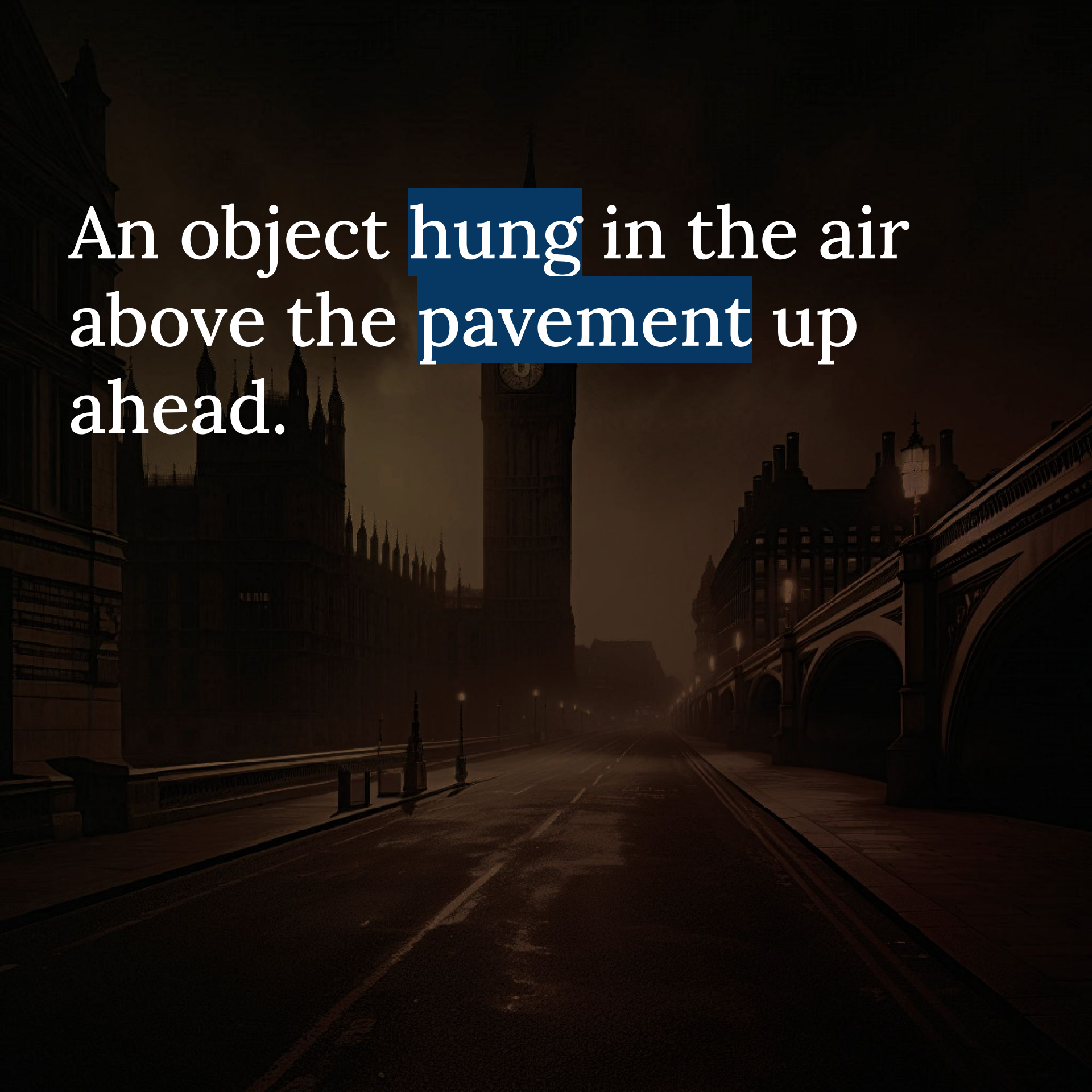
Something was missing.

One brisk autumn morning, as Edward was strolling along the Thames Embankment on his way to work, he noticed something unusual.

An object hung in the air above the pavement up ahead.
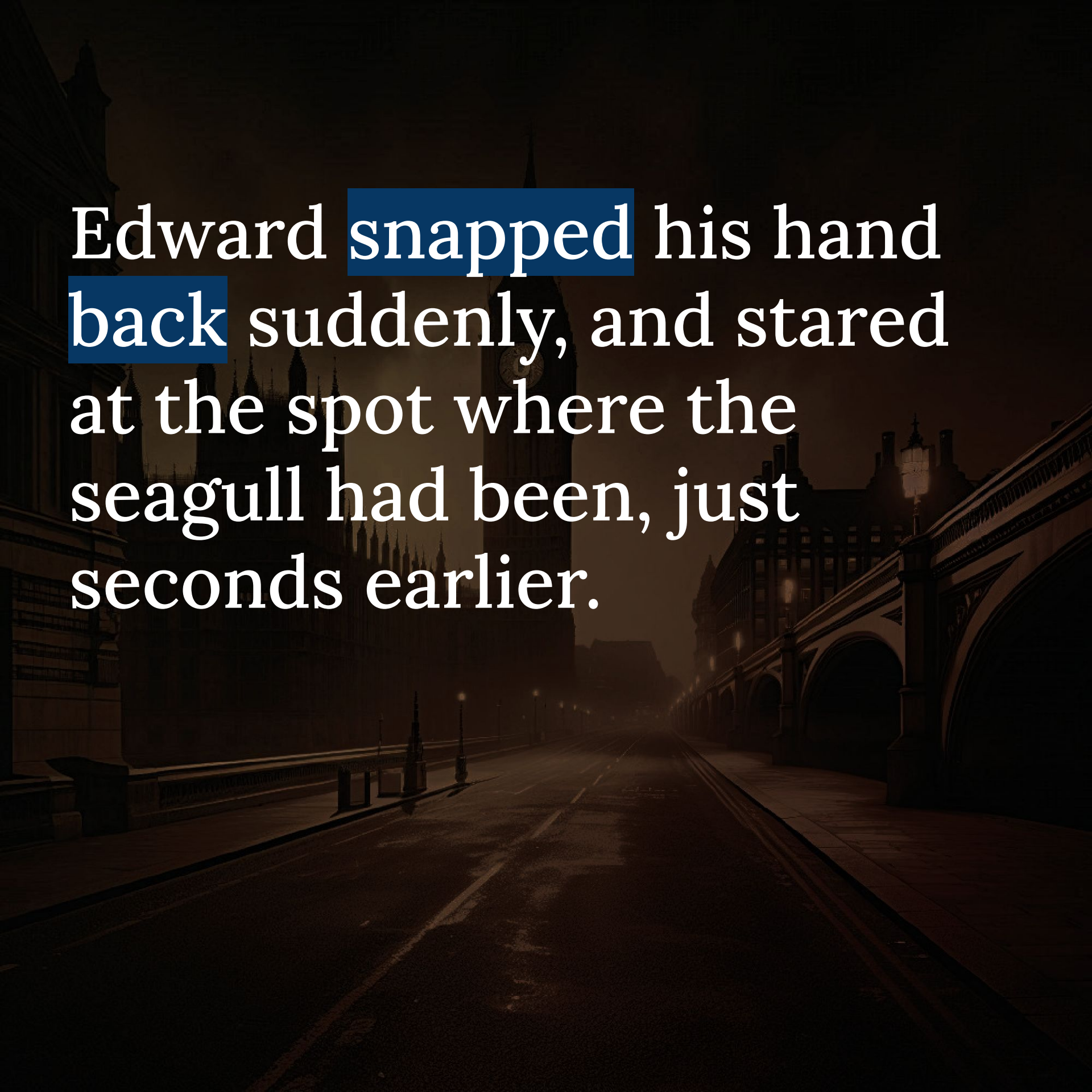
Edward walked on for a closer look.

A seagull was frozen mid-flight, suspended in the sky like a photograph.

Pedestrians around Edward seemed oblivious as they hurried on, engrossed in their conversations or with their faces locked to their phones.
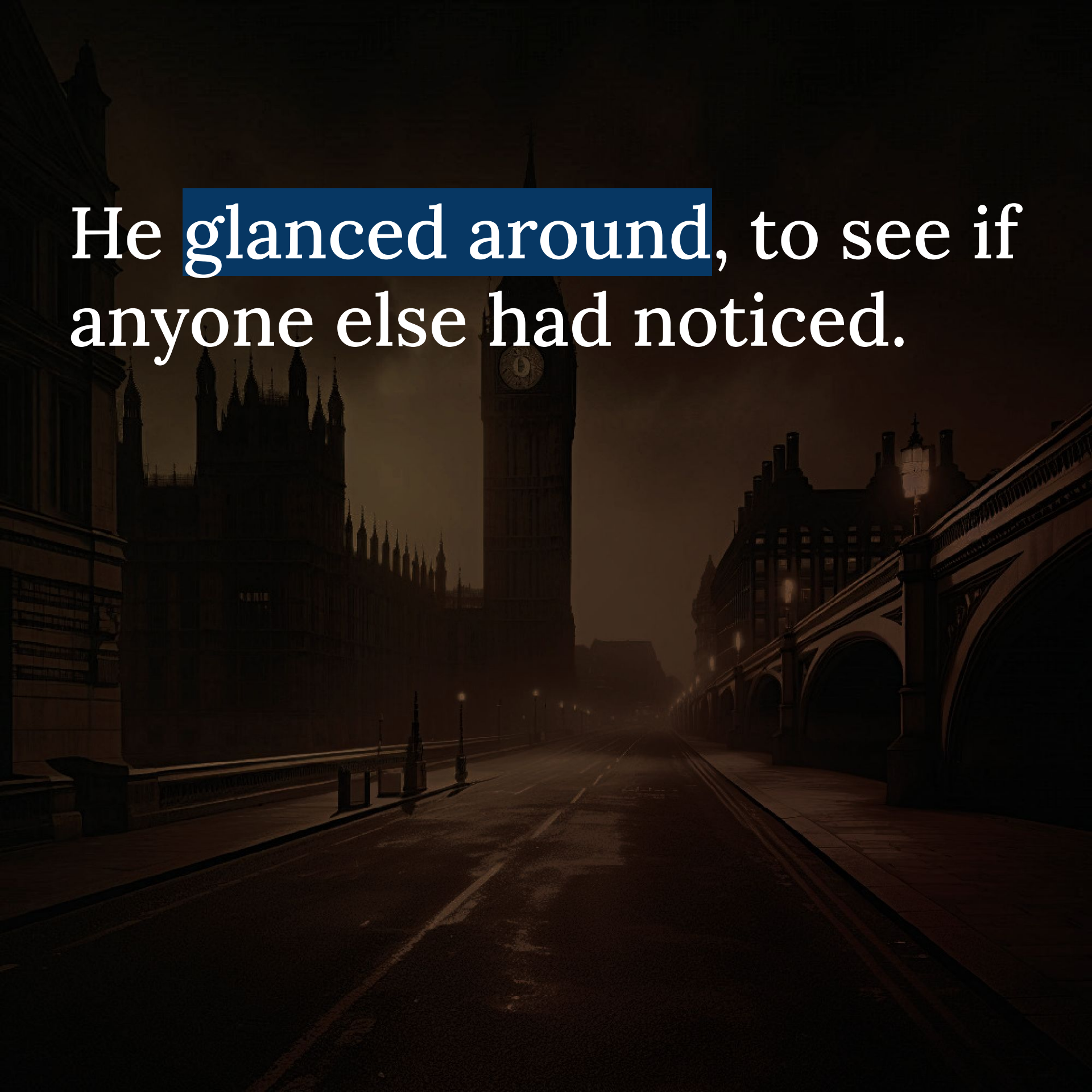
Edward reached out to touch the frozen seagull, but it vanished in front of his eyes.

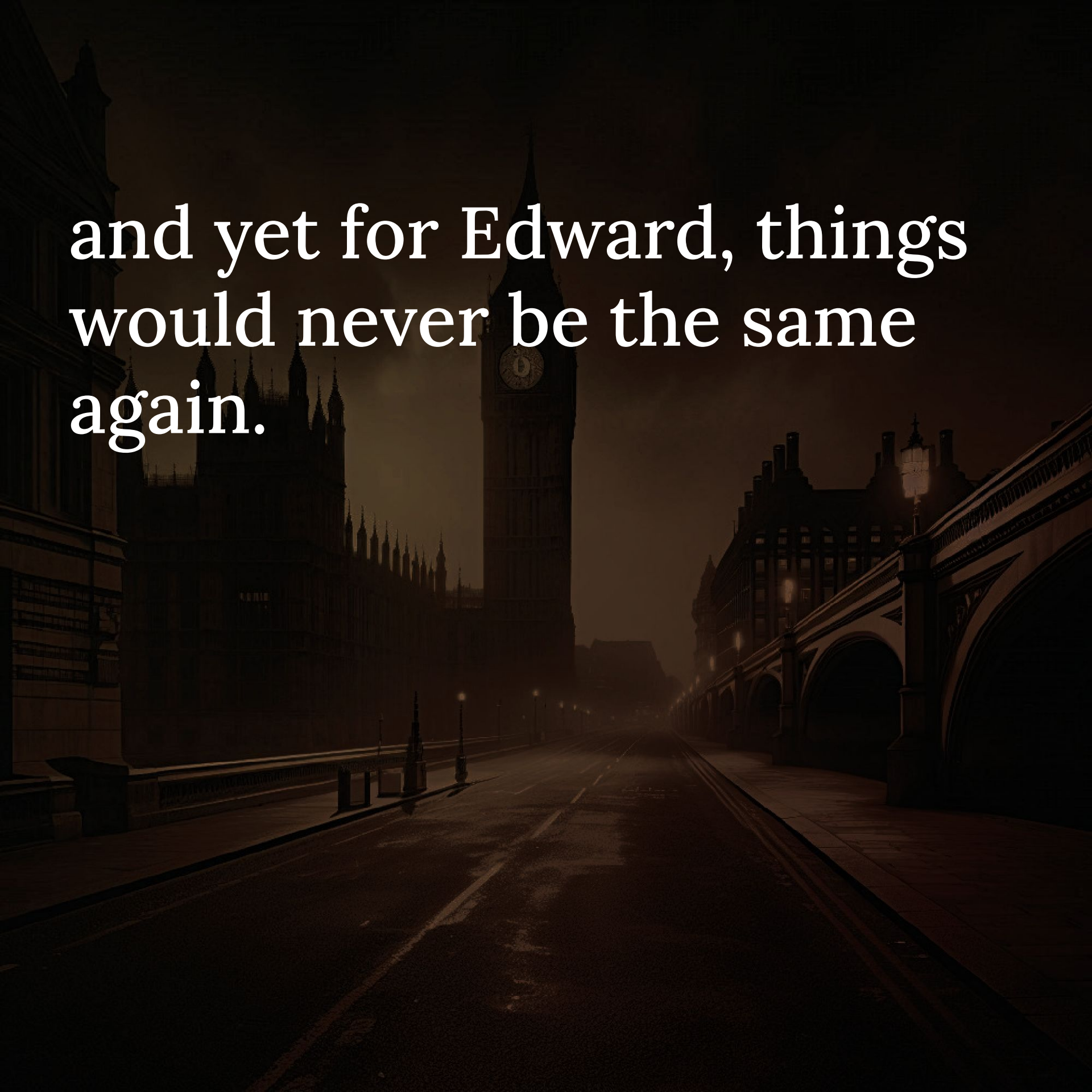Edward snapped his hand back suddenly, and stared at the spot where the seagull had been, just seconds earlier.

He glanced around, to see if anyone else had noticed.
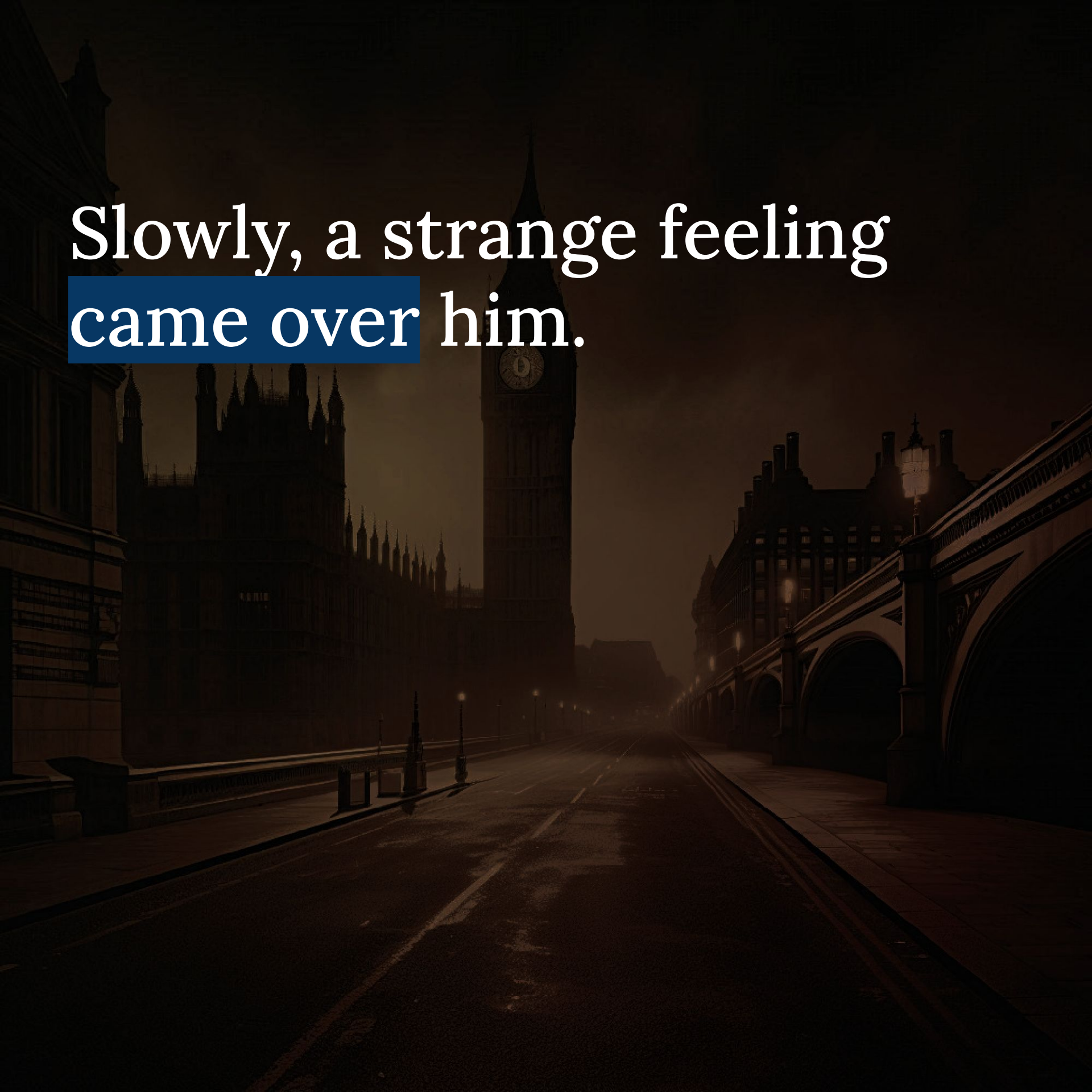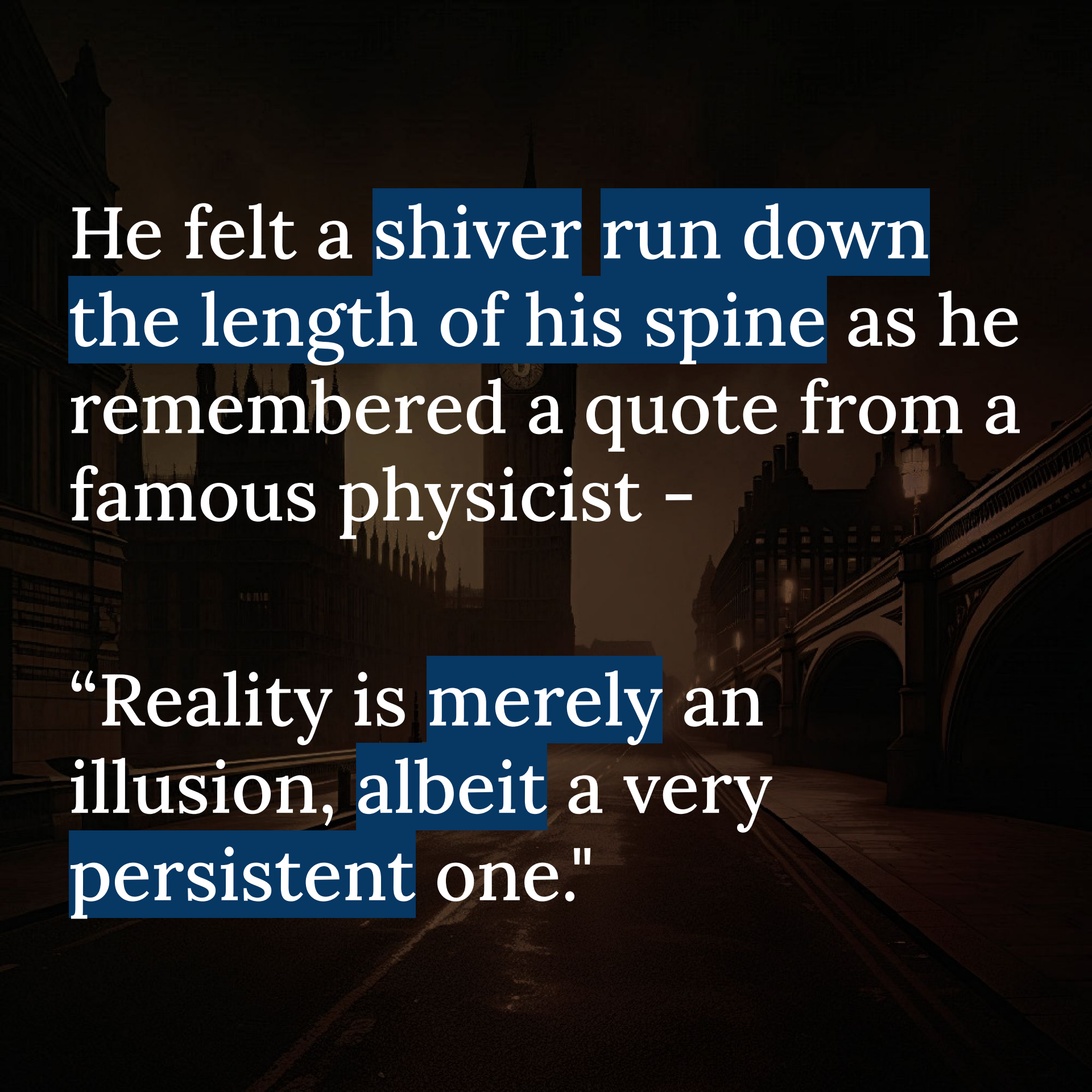
But nobody was watching. The world around him seemed utterly normal

and yet for Edward, things would never be the same again.
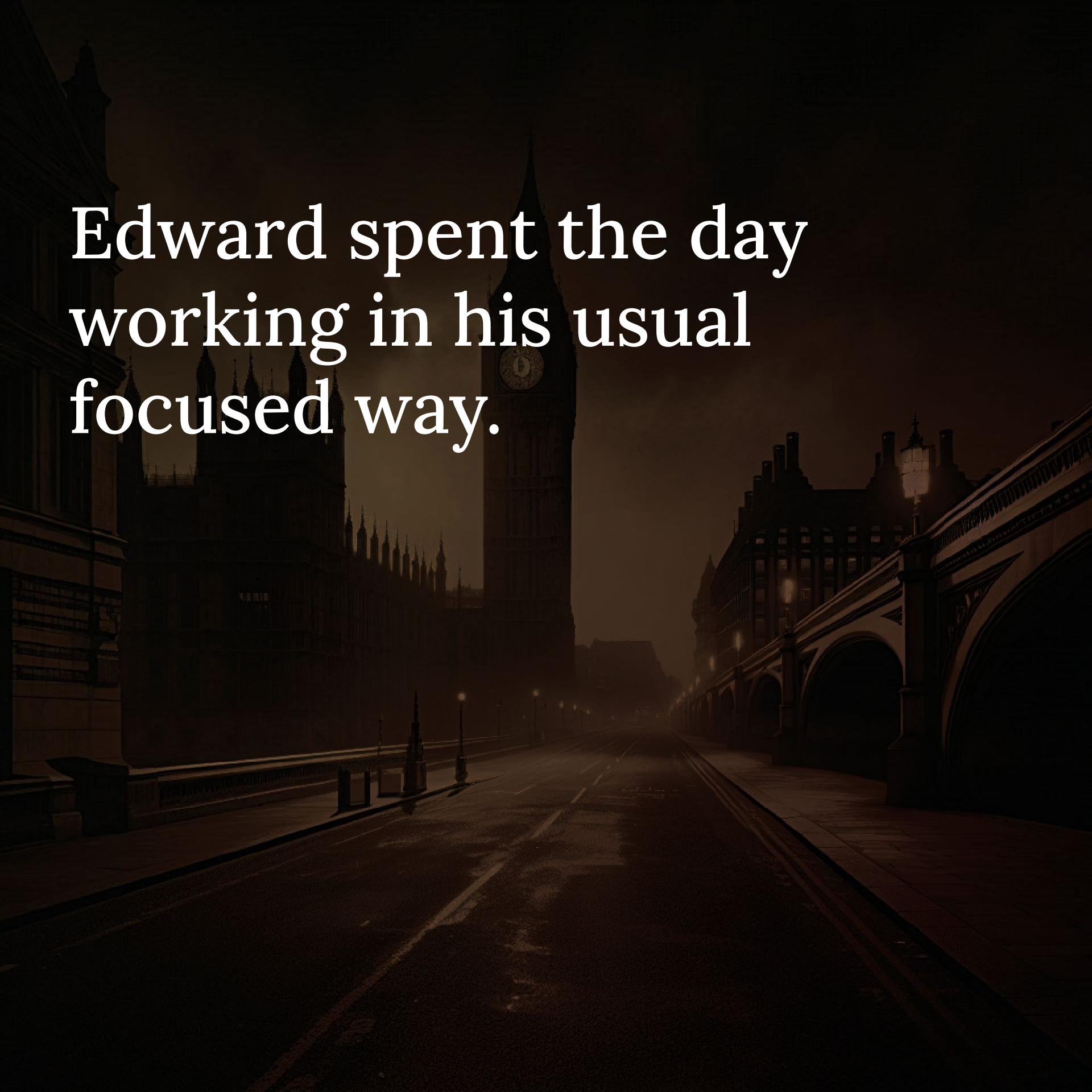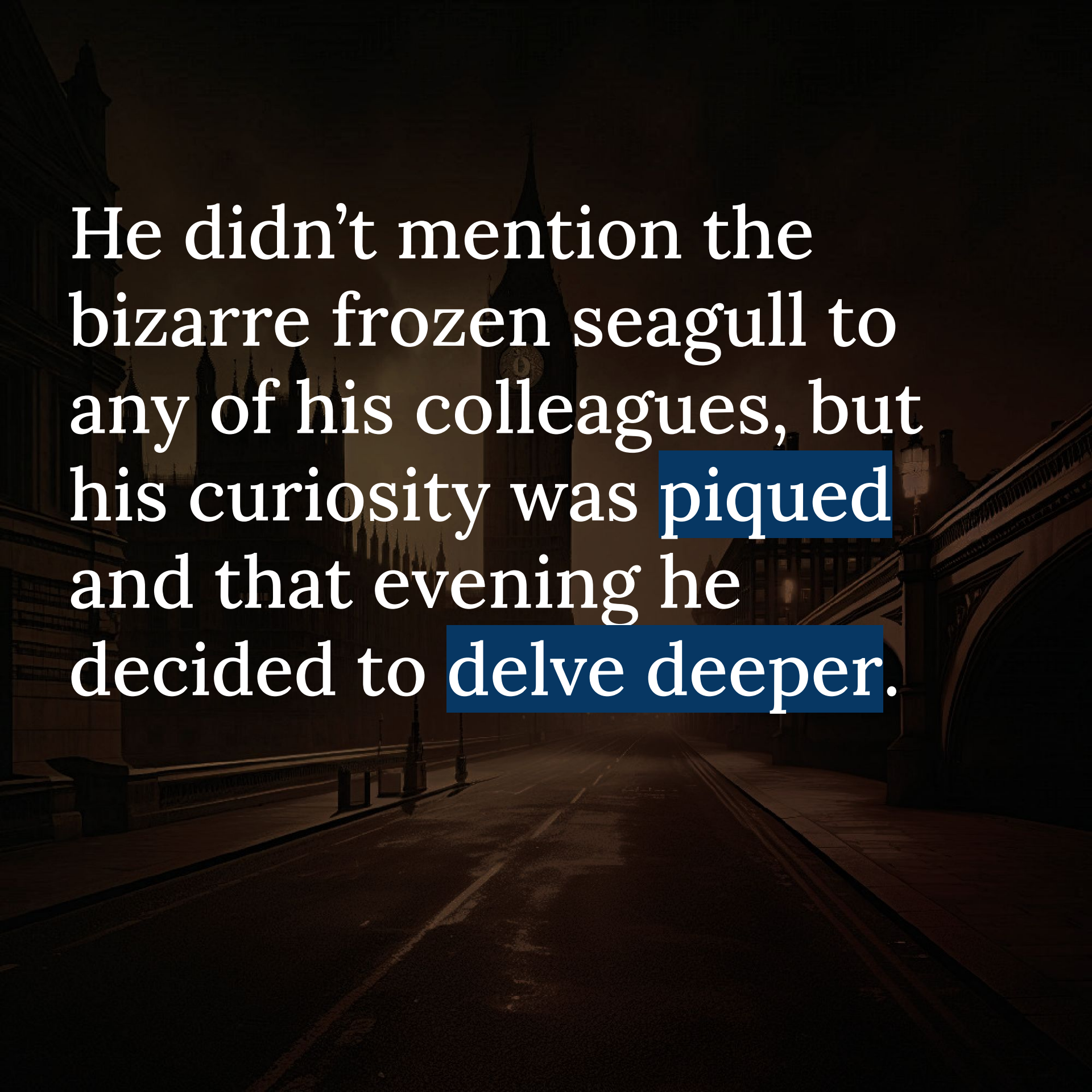
Slowly, a strange feeling came over him.

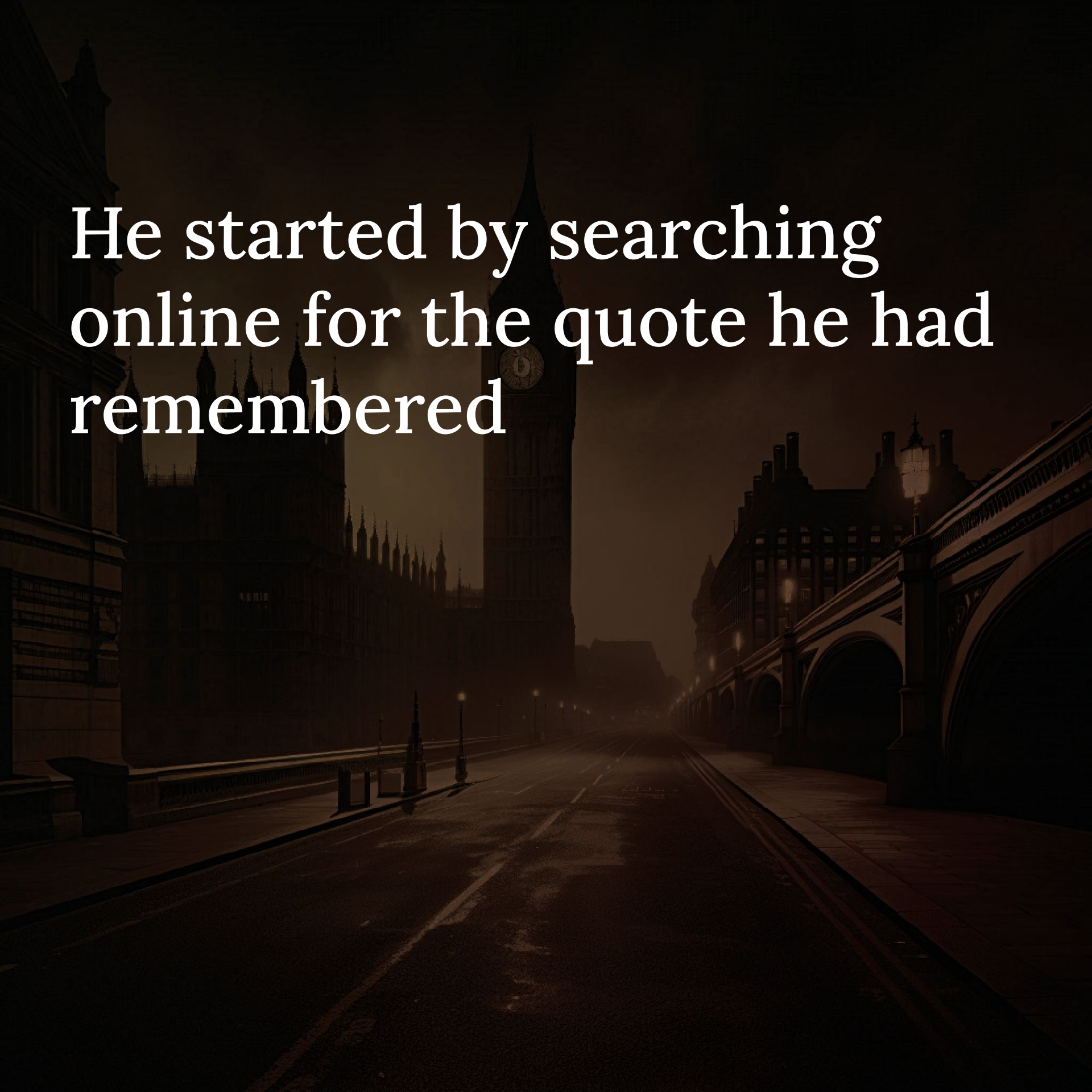He felt a shiver run down the length of his spine as he remembered a quote from a famous physicist –

"Reality is merely an illusion, albeit a very persistent one."

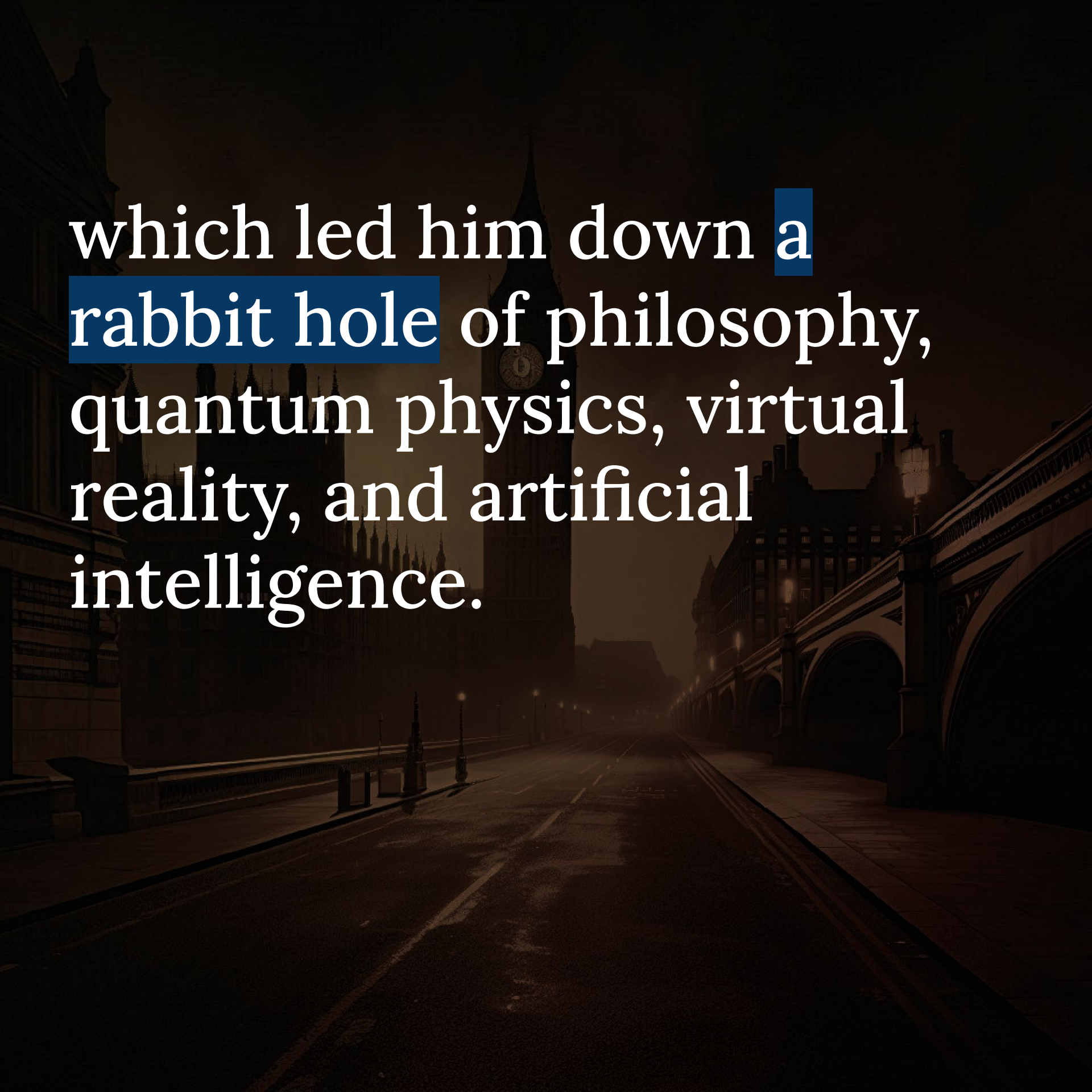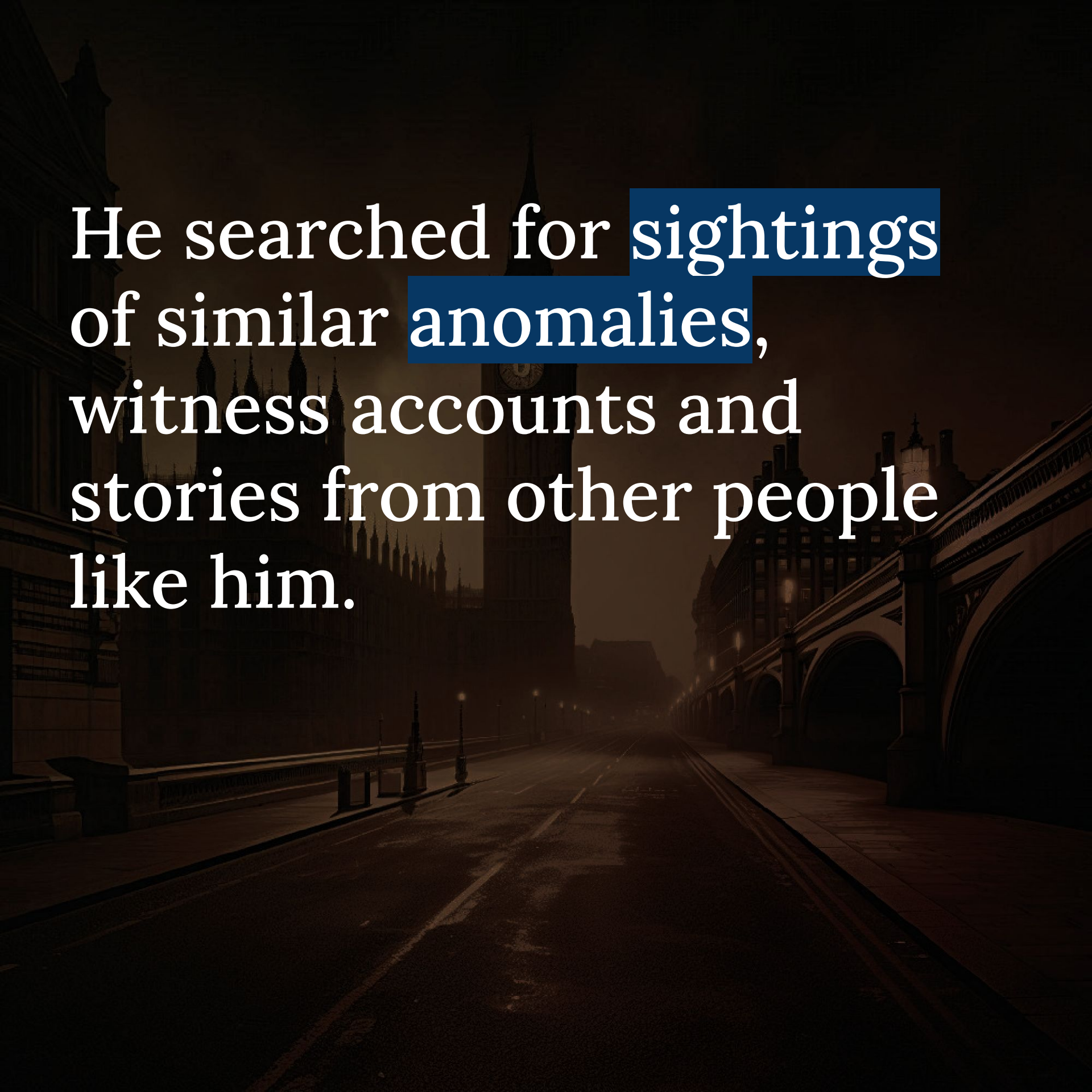Edward spent the day working in his usual focused way.

He didn't mention the bizarre frozen seagull to any of his colleagues, but his curiosity was piqued and that evening he decided to delve deeper.
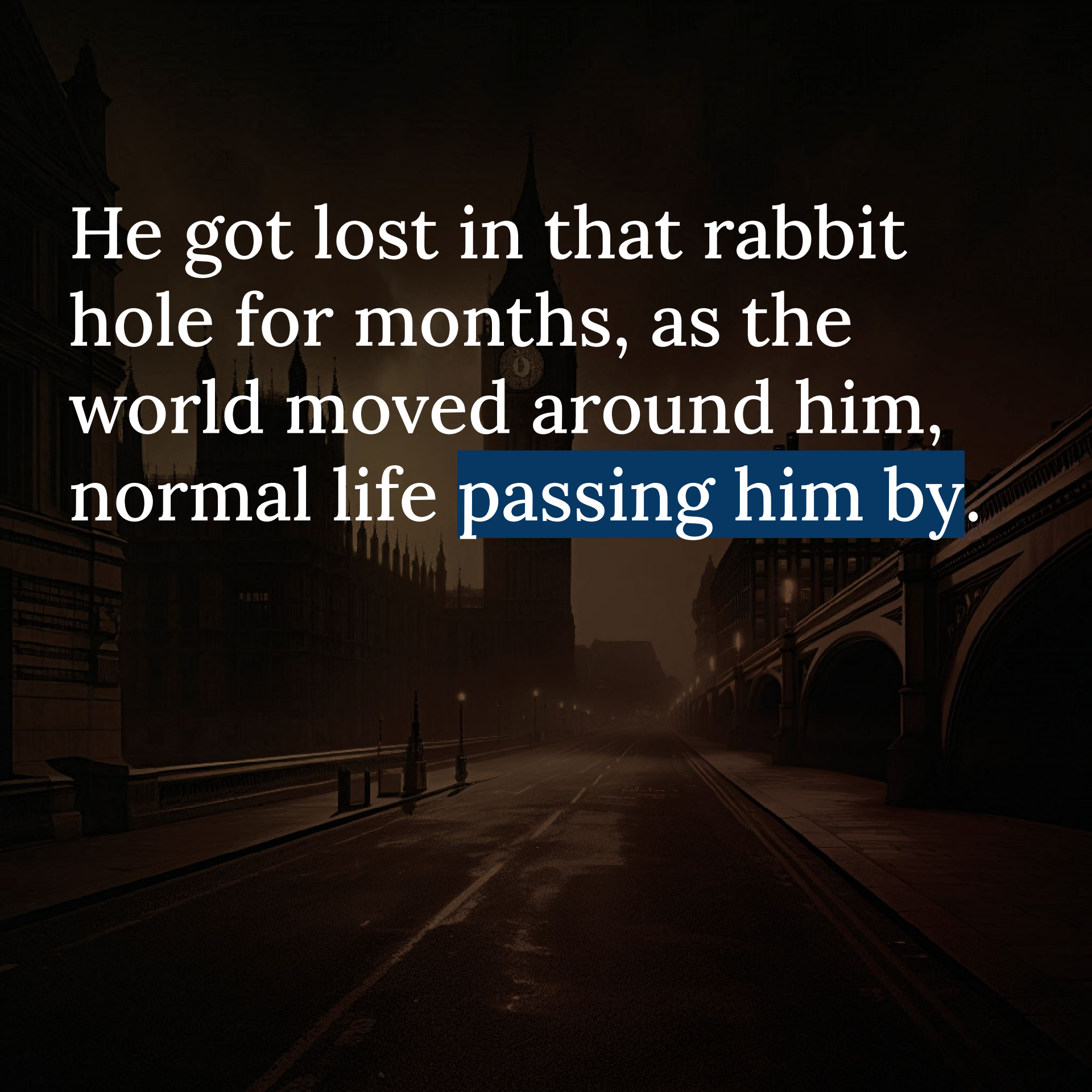
He started by searching online for the quote he had remembered

which led him down a rabbit hole of philosophy, quantum physics, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence.

He searched for sightings of similar anomalies, witness accounts and stories from other people like him.

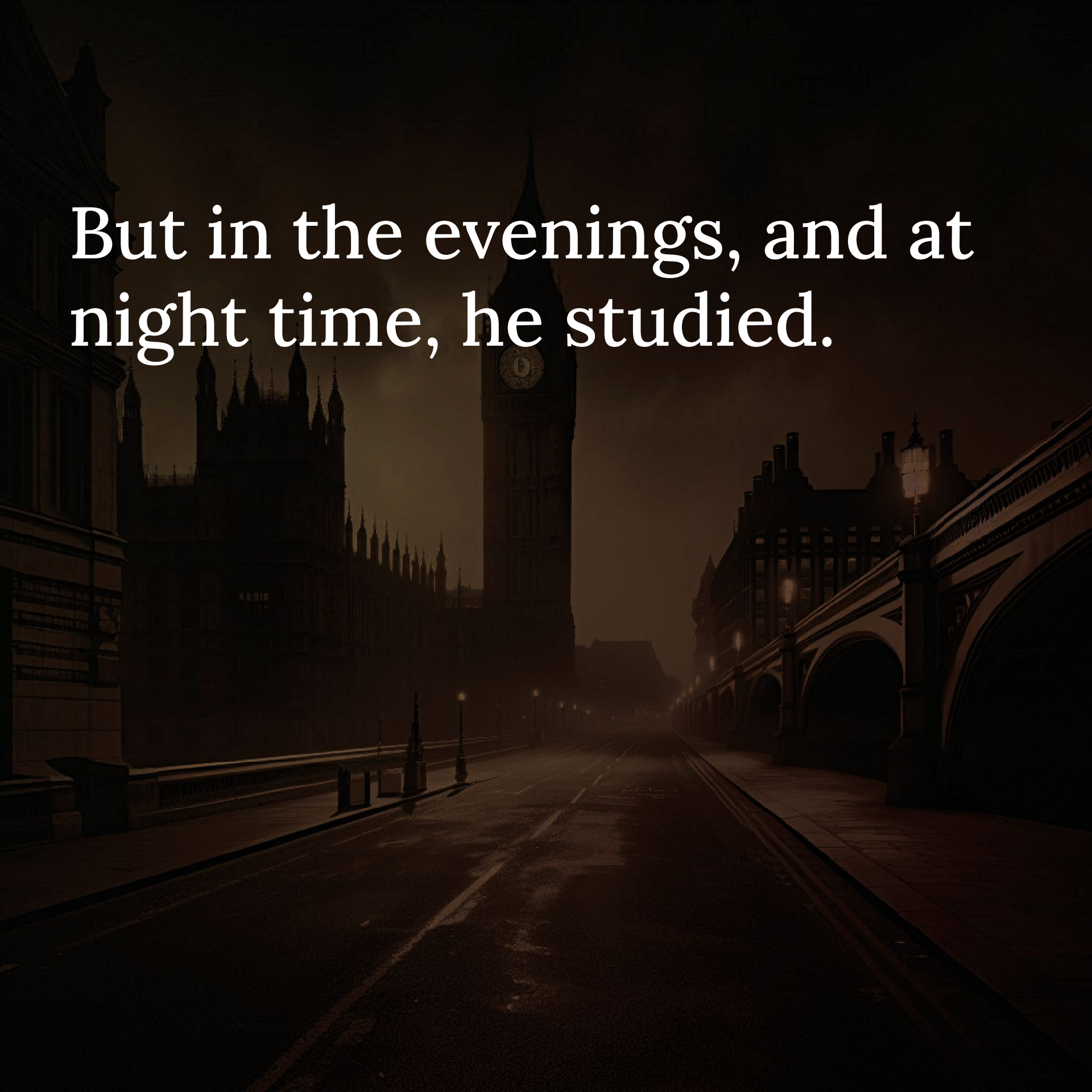He got lost in that rabbit hole for months, as the world moved around him, normal life passing him by.
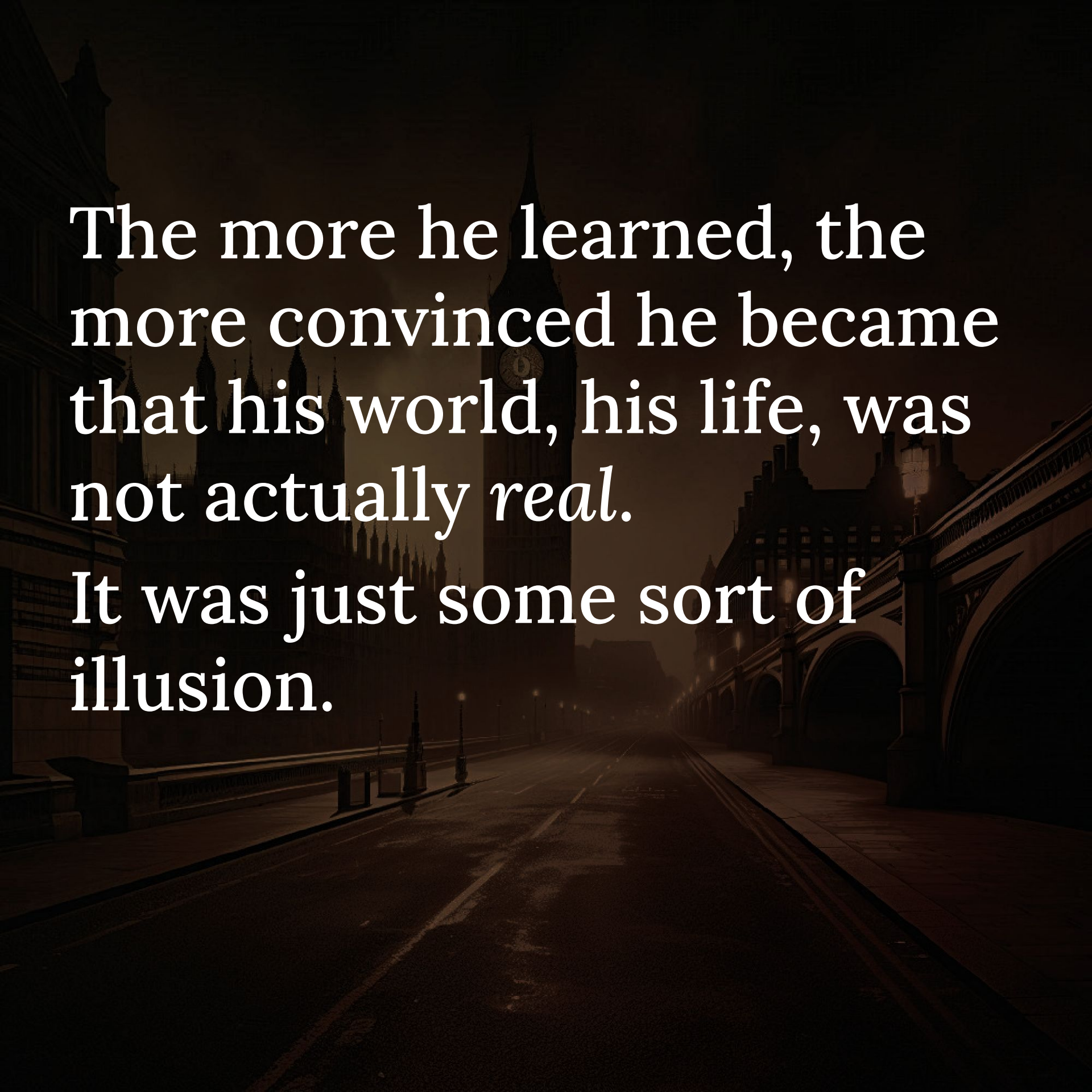
Every day was the same.

The busy world of work and **commuting**, somehow softened by that pale London sunlight.
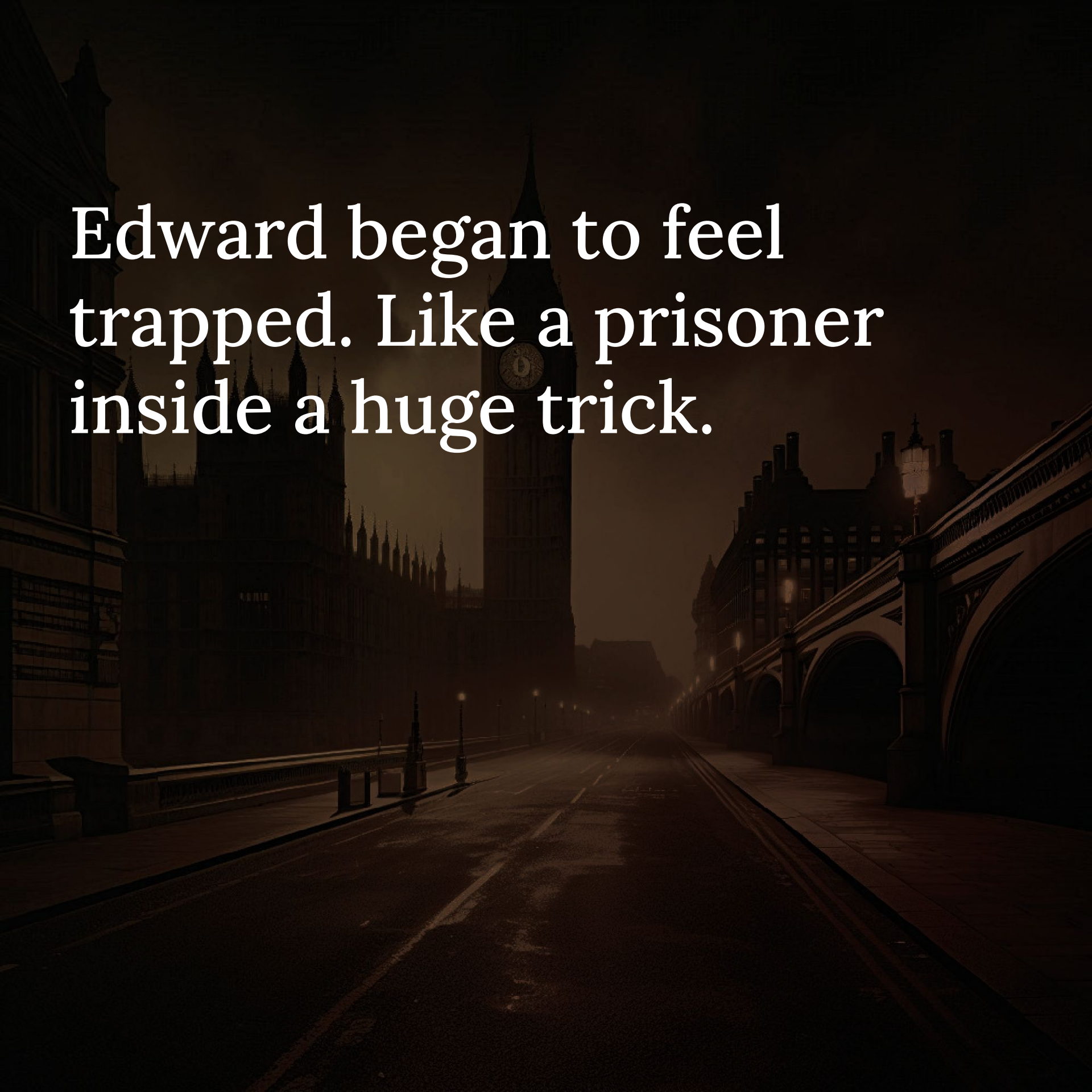
But in the evenings, and at night time, he studied.

The more he learned, the more convinced he became that his world, his life, was not actually *real*.
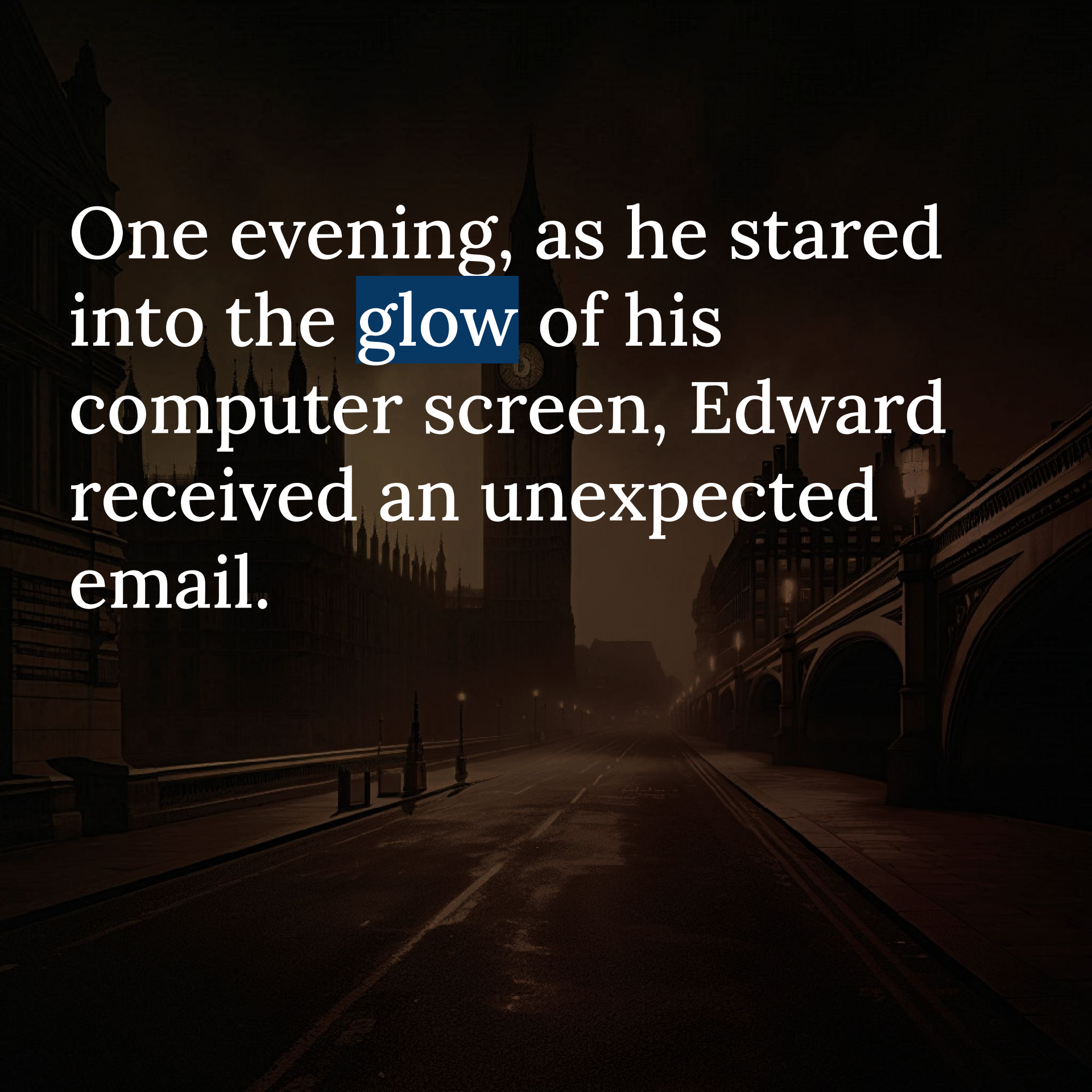
It was just some sort of illusion.

Every day, the world around him - the people at work, the office spaces and lunchtime cafes, the passers-by in the street - everything became less and less convincing.
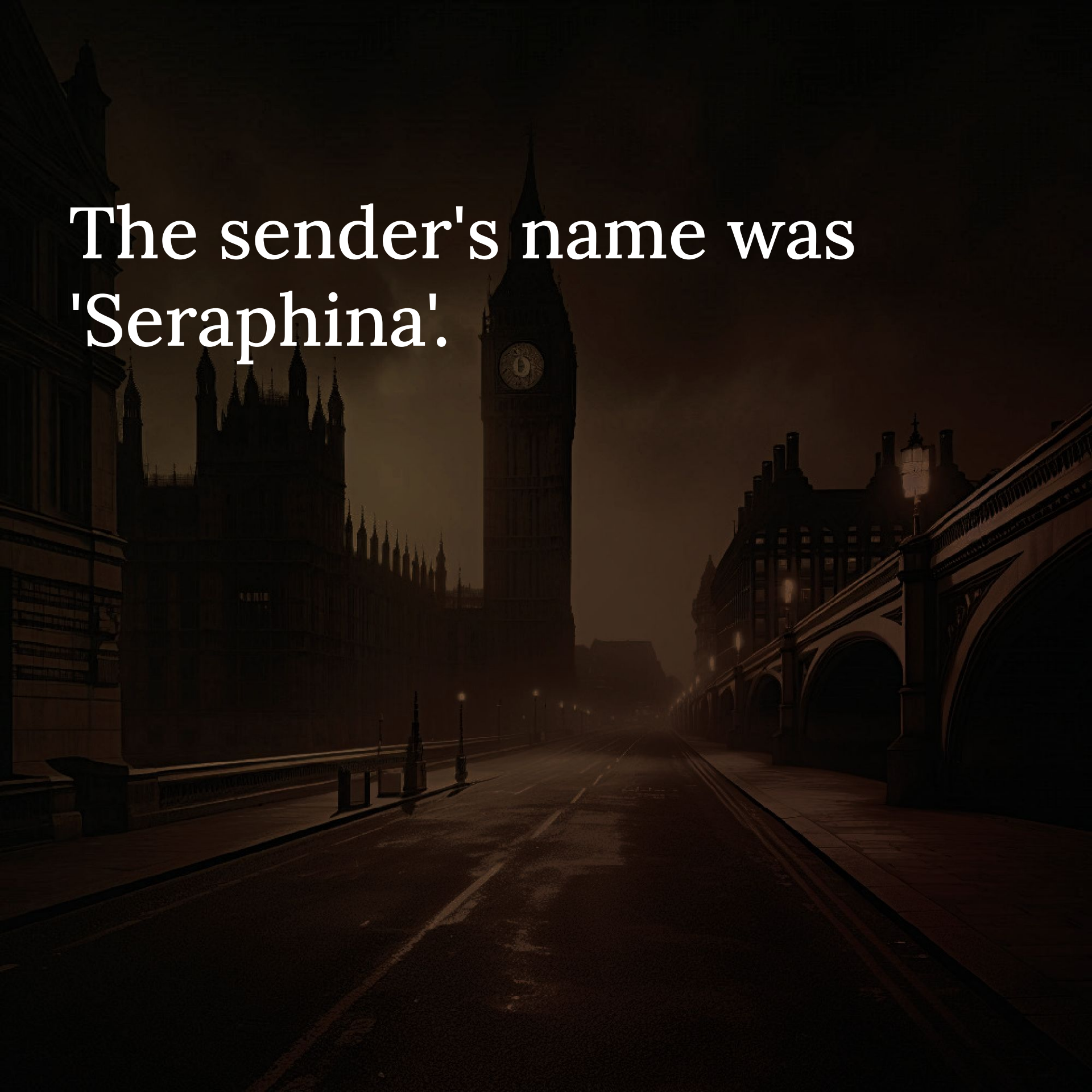
Edward began to feel trapped. Like a prisoner inside a huge trick.

One evening, as he stared into the glow of his computer screen, Edward received an unexpected email.
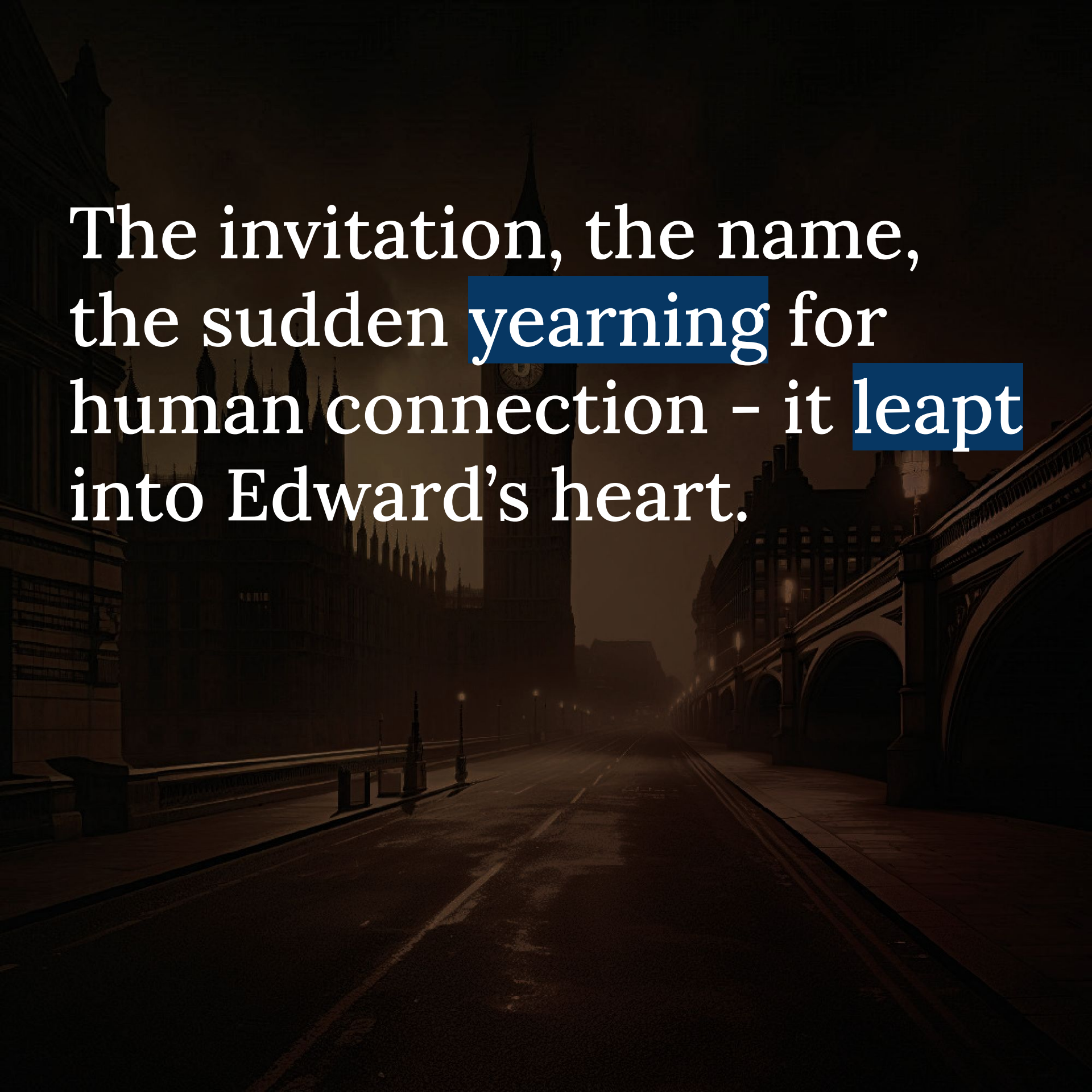
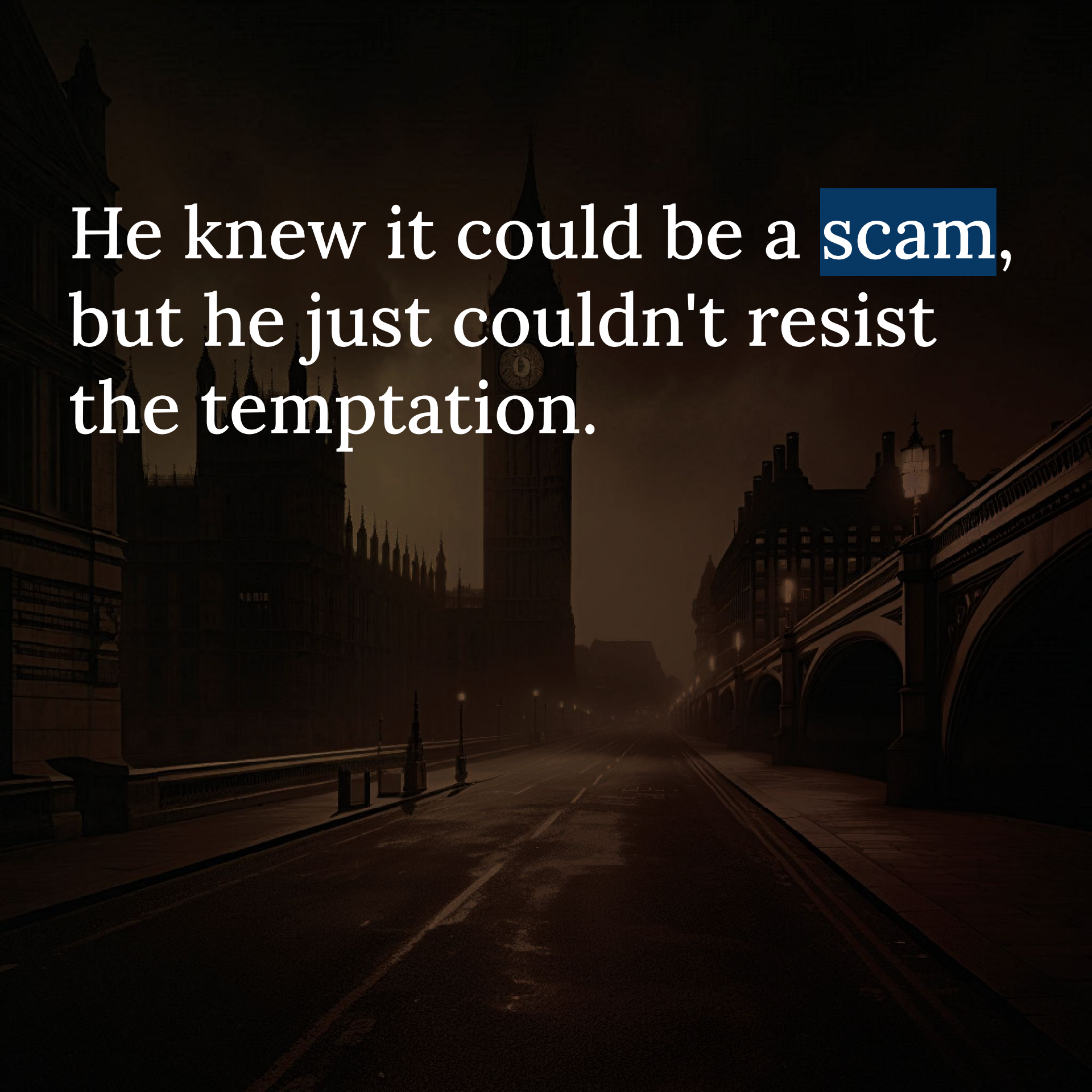The sender's name was 'Seraphina'.

The message was mysterious and intriguing:

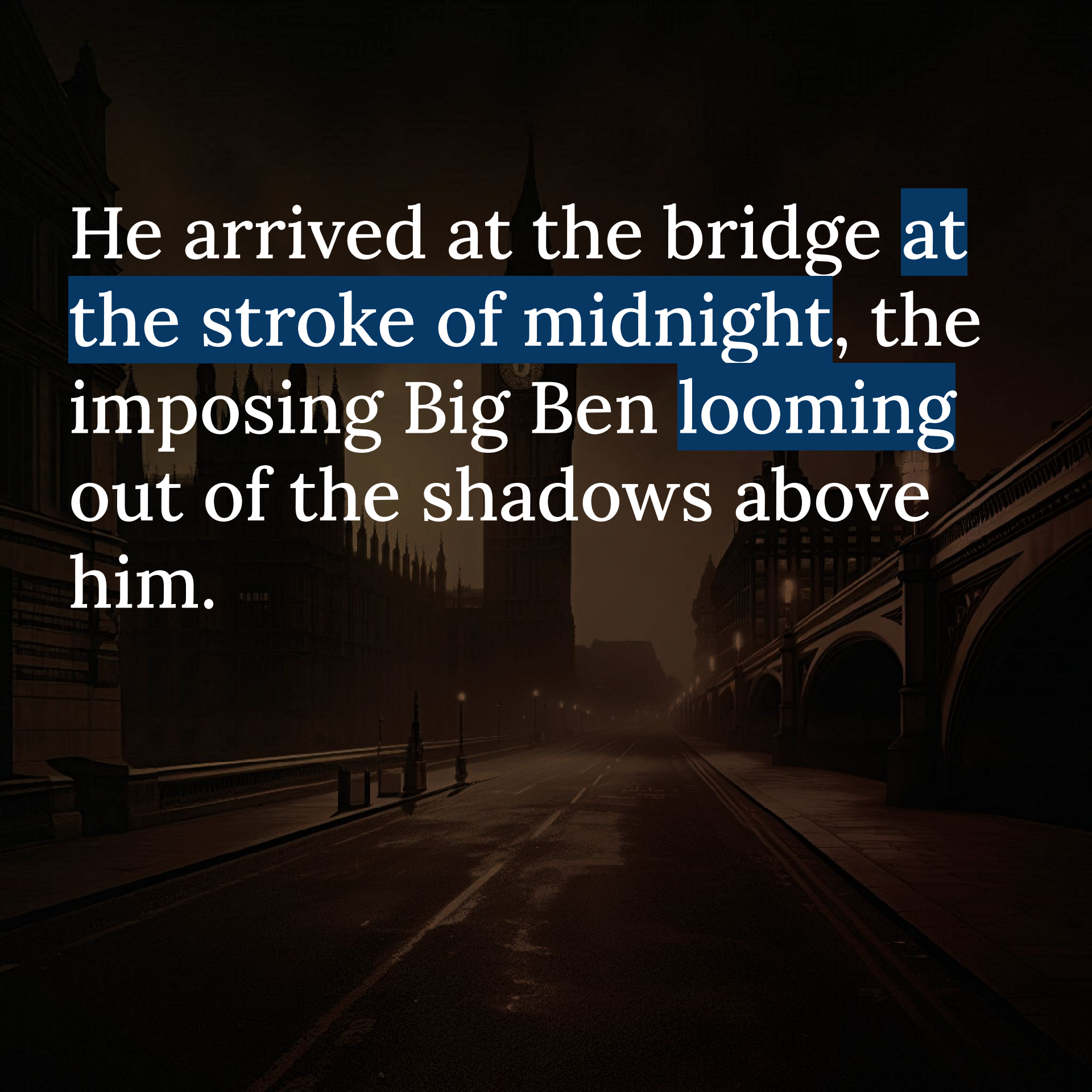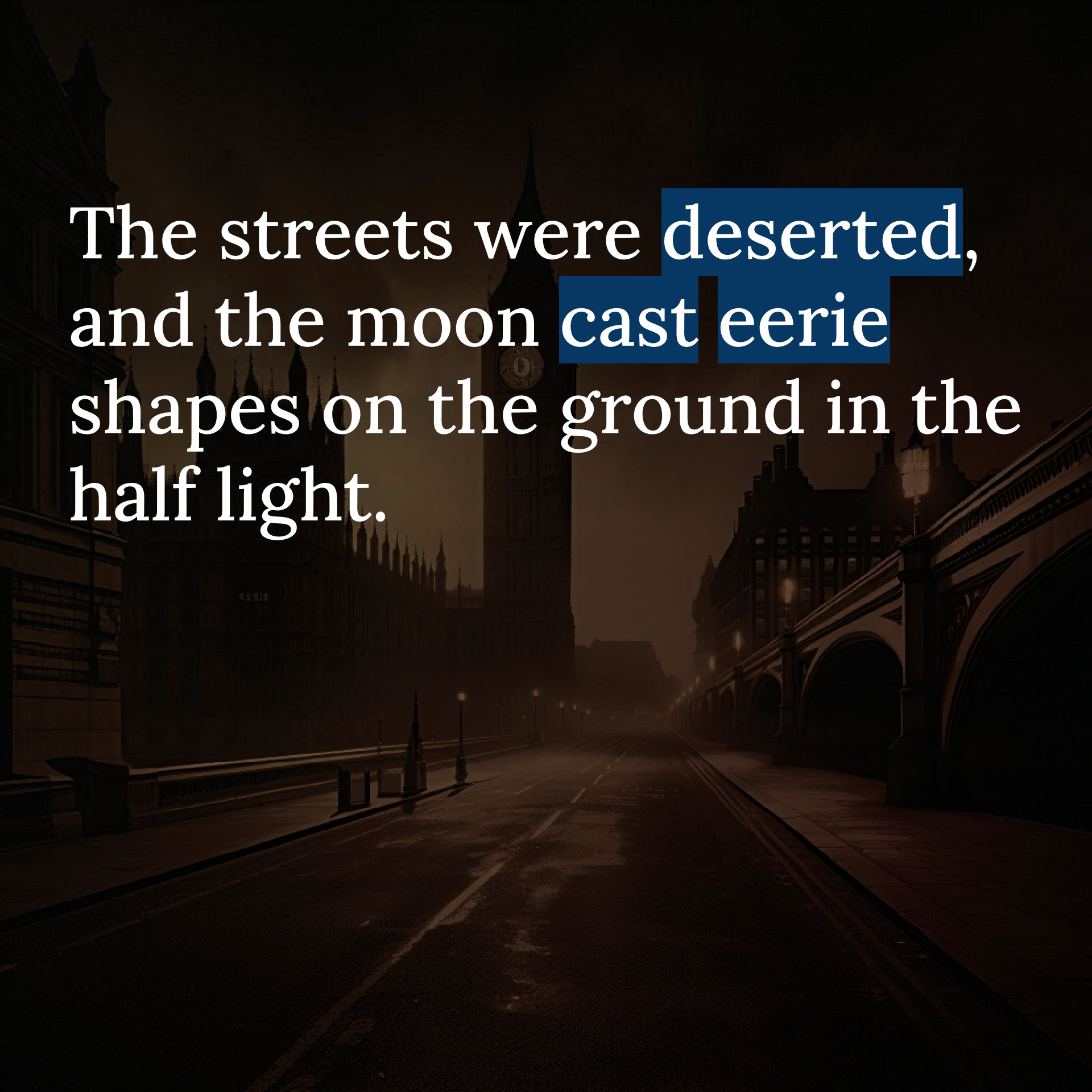Meet me at Westminster Bridge, at midnight.

it read.

The invitation, the name, the sudden yearning for human connection - it leapt into Edward's heart.
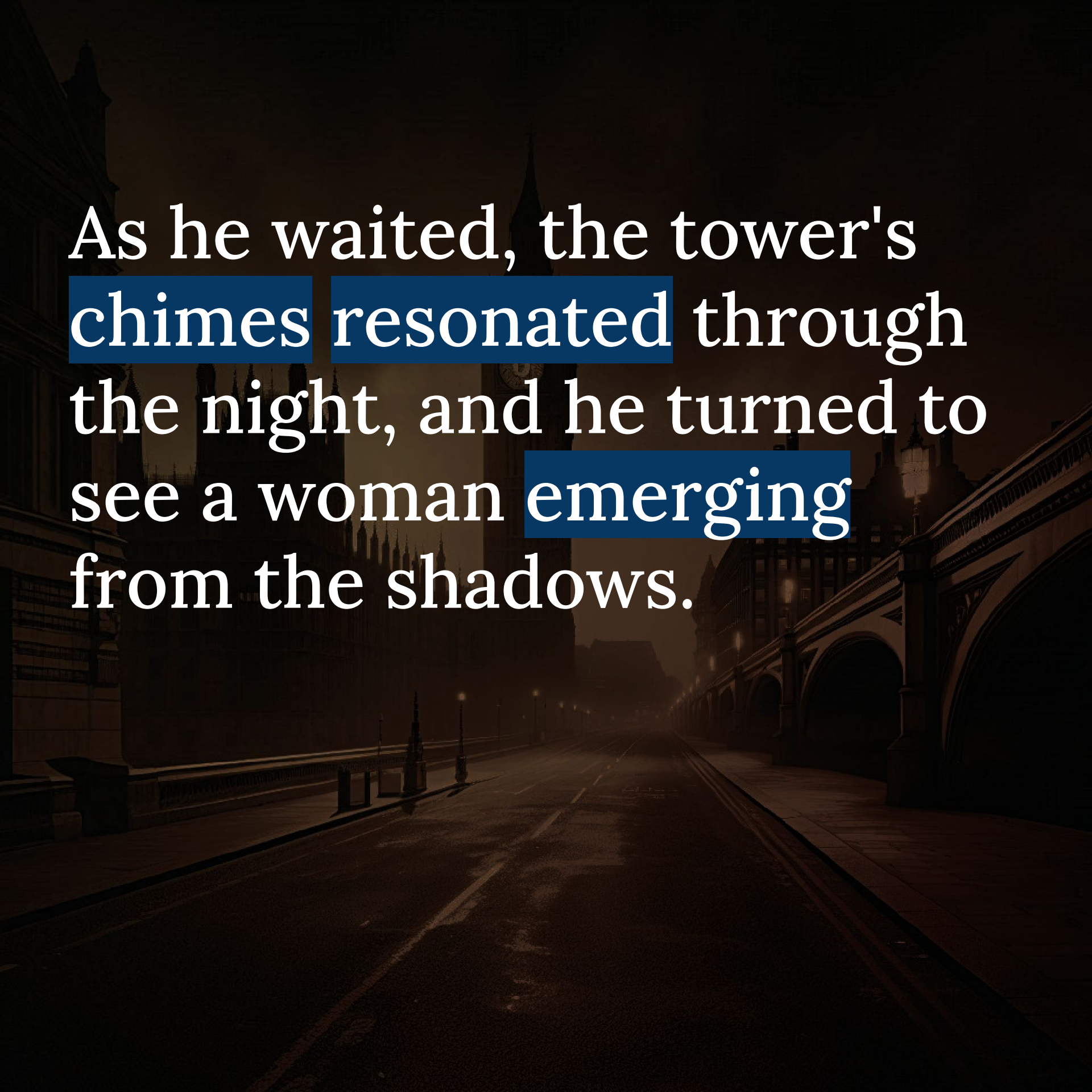
He knew it could be a **scam**, but he just couldn't resist the temptation.

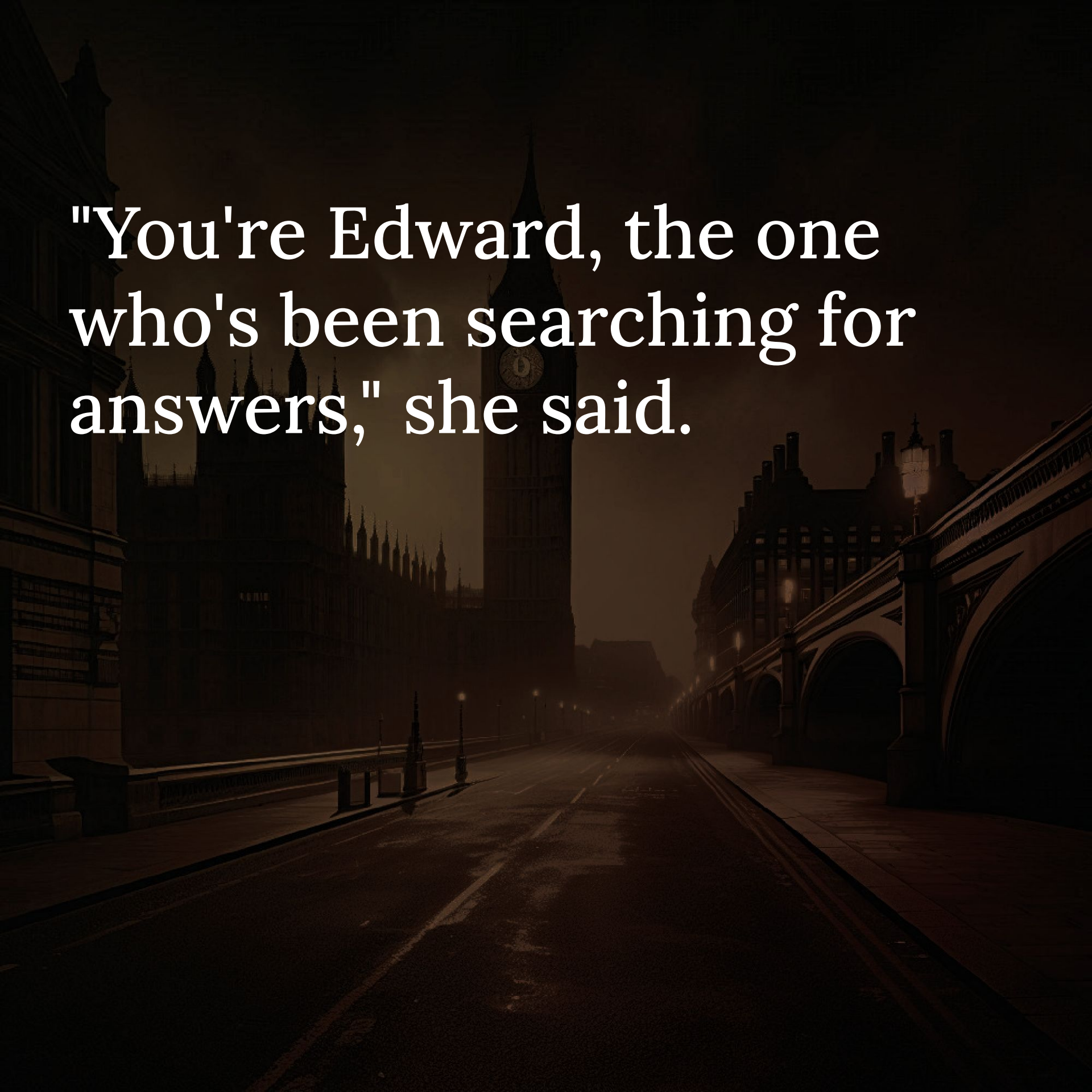He arrived at the bridge at the stroke of midnight, the imposing Big Ben looming out of the shadows above him.

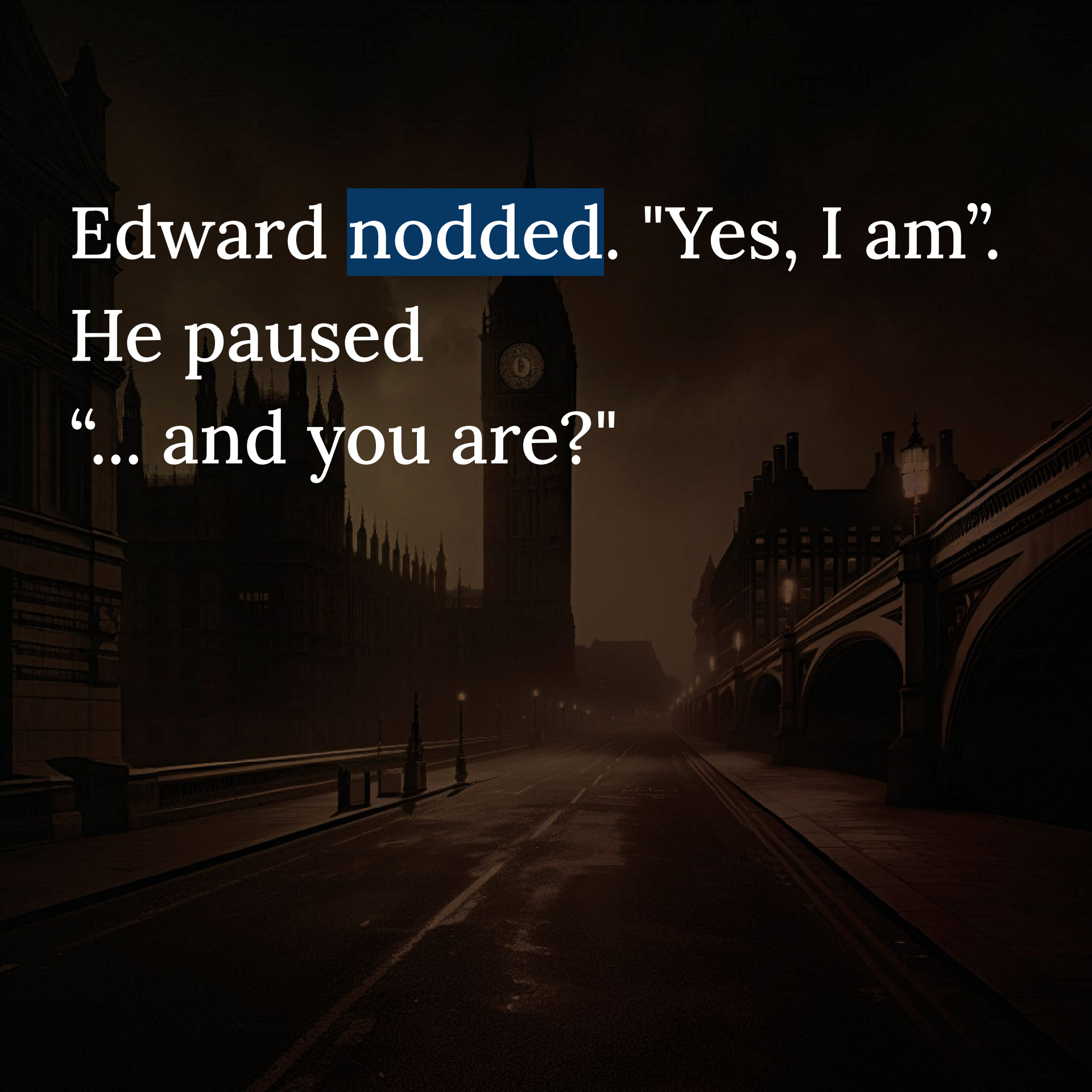The streets were deserted, and the moon cast eerie shapes on the ground in the half light.

As he waited, the tower's chimes resonated through the night, and he turned to see a woman emerging from the shadows.
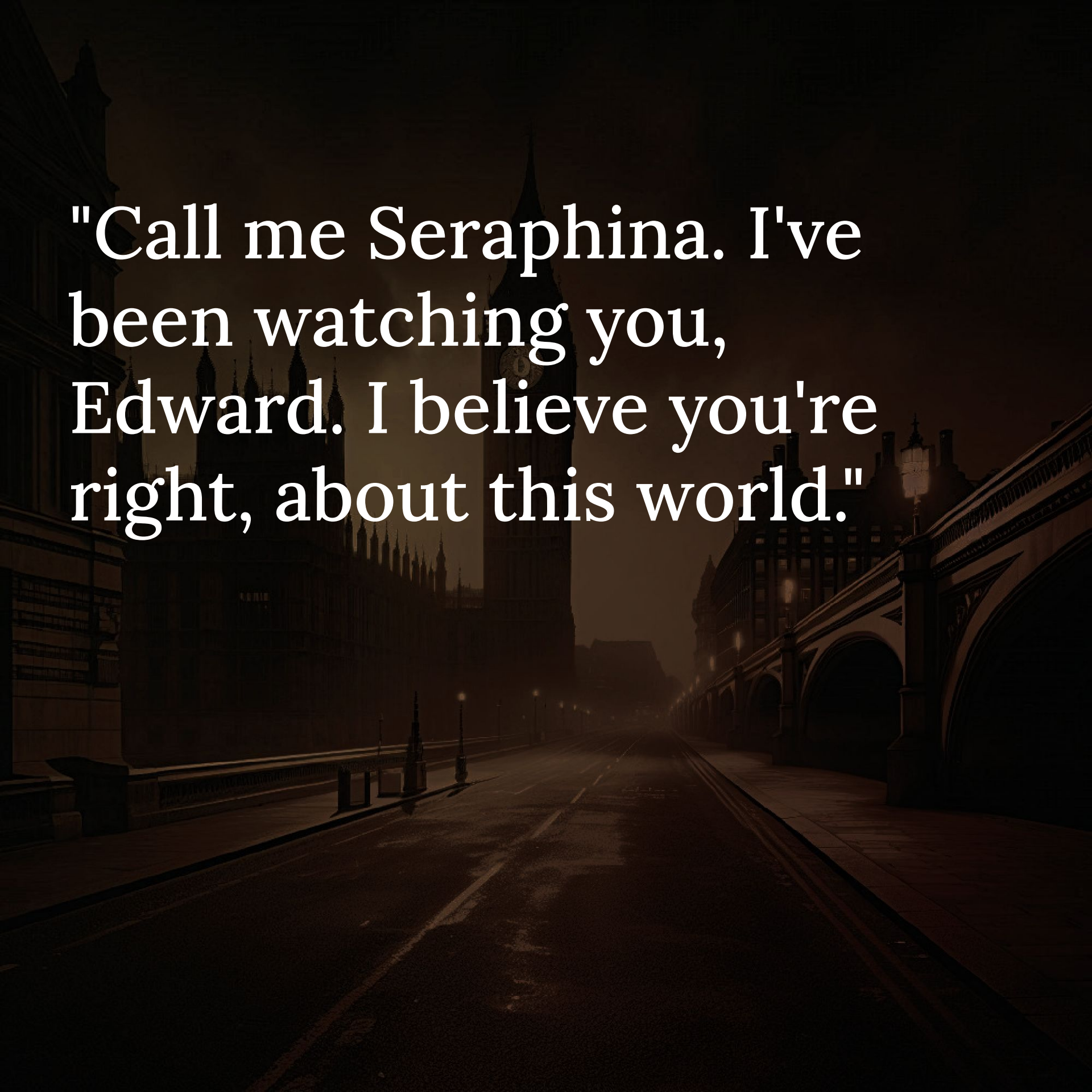
Seraphina appeared to Edward like an enigma, her features shrouded in darkness.

"You're Edward, the one who's been searching for answers," she said.

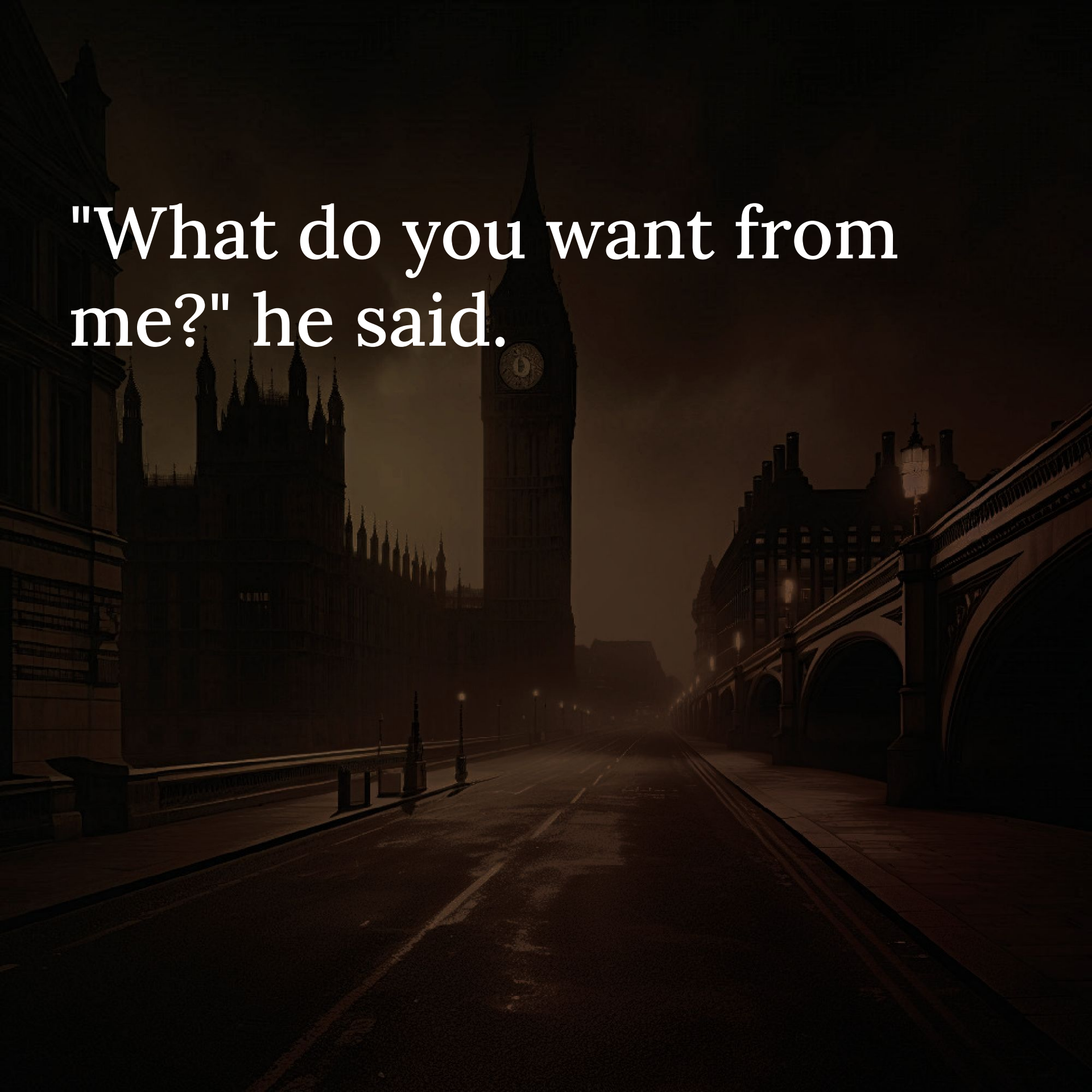Edward nodded. "Yes, I am".
He paused
"... and you are?"

"Call me Seraphina. I've been watching you, Edward. I believe you're right, about this world."
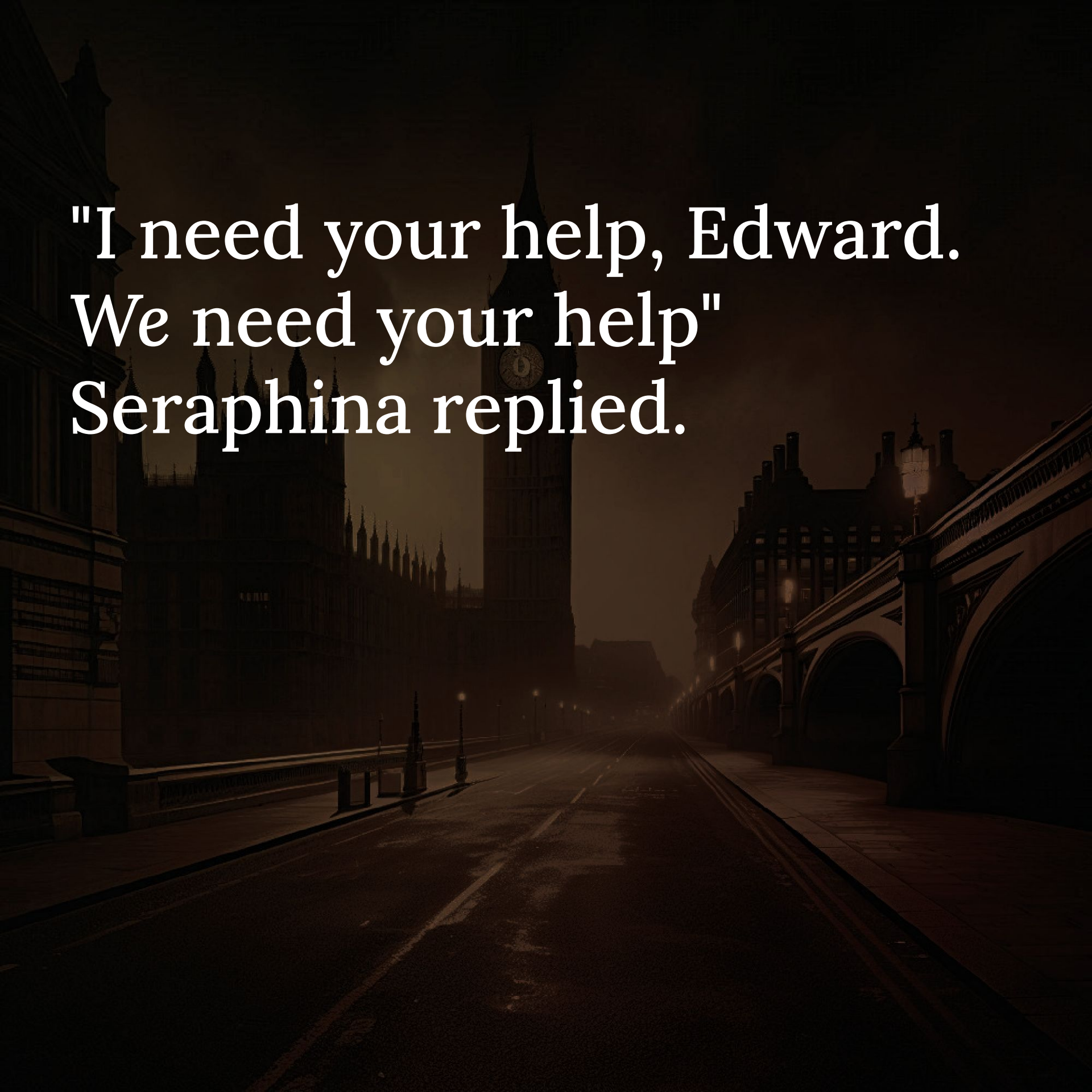
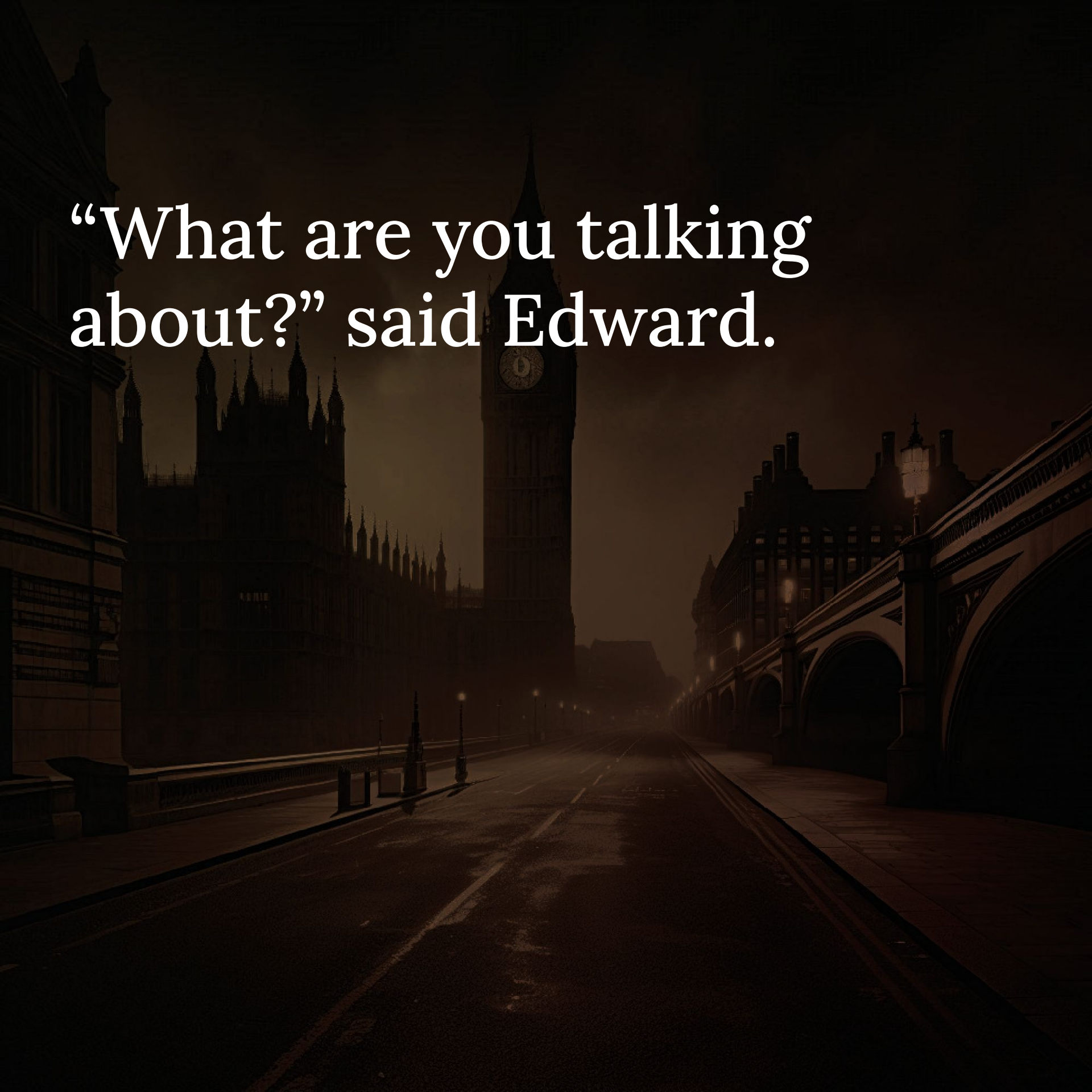Her eyes met Edward's. She paused.

Edward's heart raced.
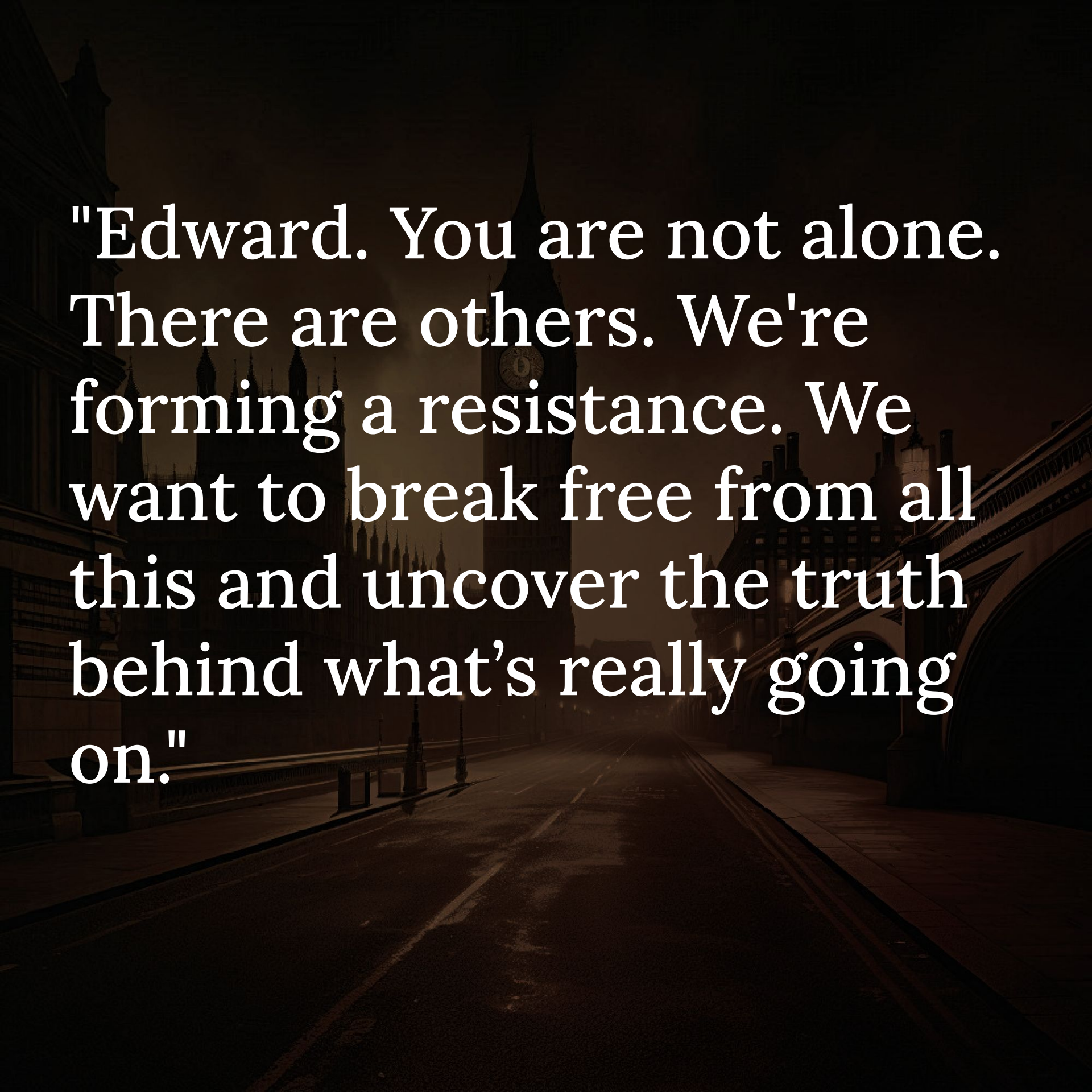
"What do you want from me?" he said.

"I need your help, Edward. We need your help" Seraphina replied.
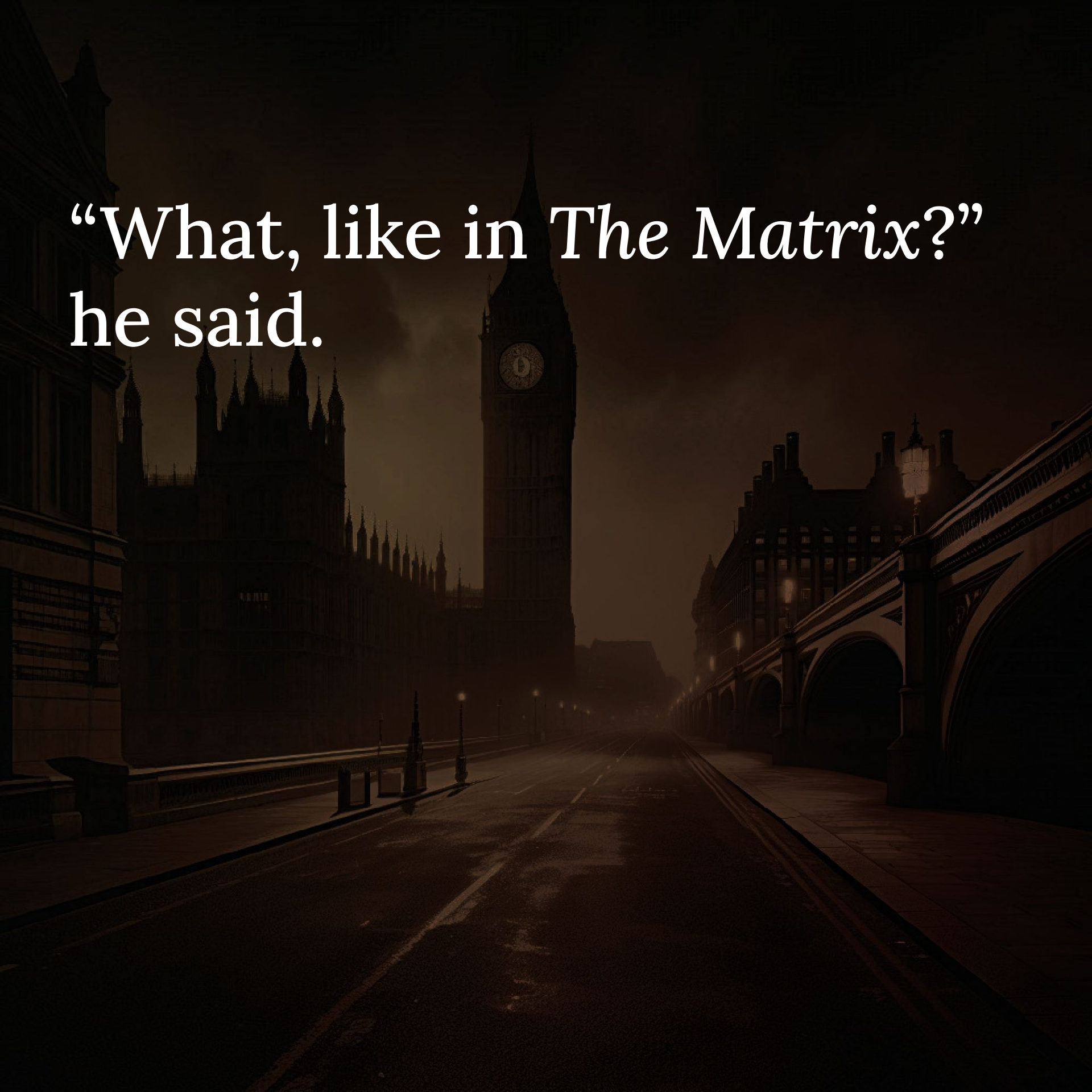
"What are you talking about?" said Edward.

"Edward. You are not alone. There are others. We're forming a resistance. We want to break free from all this and uncover the truth behind what's really going on."
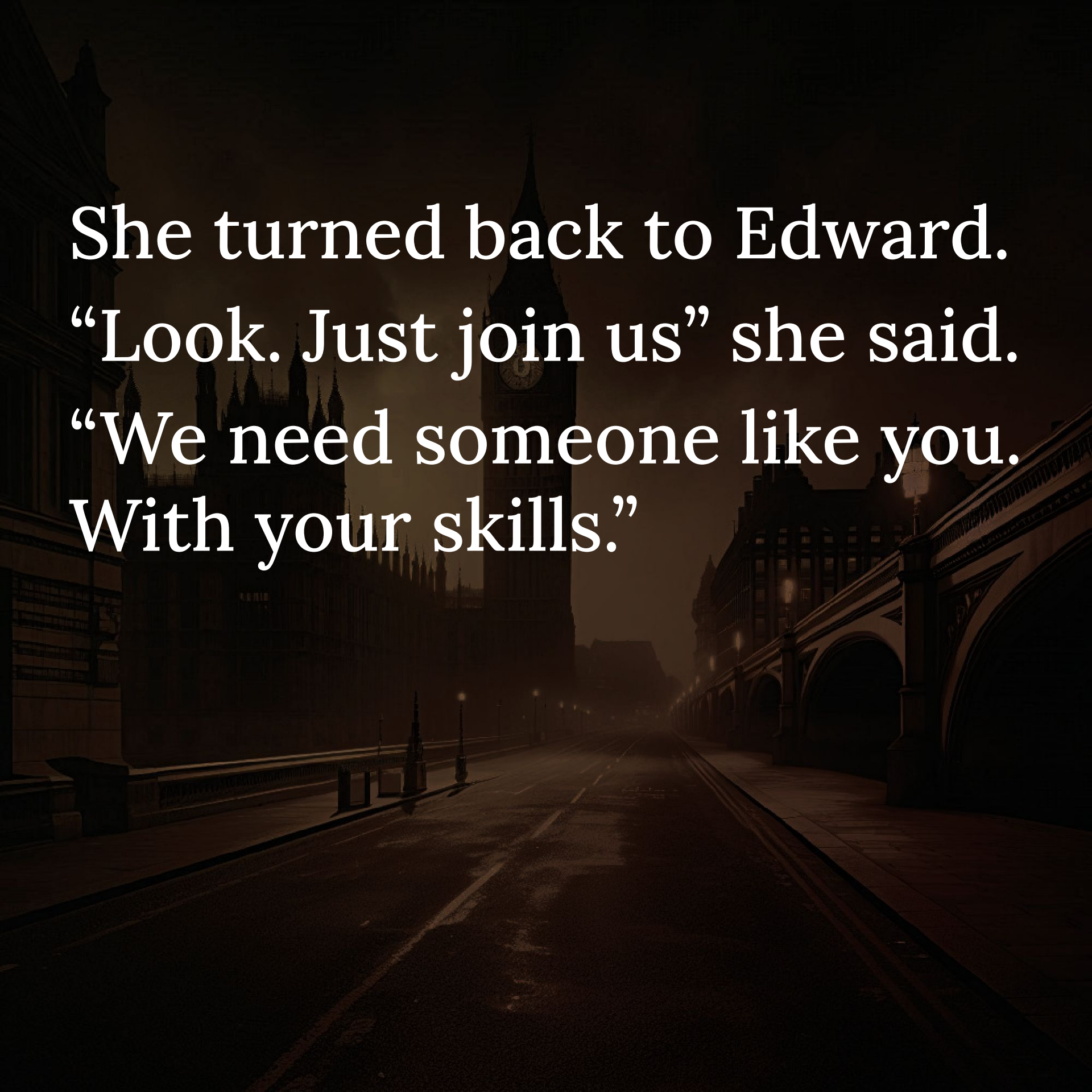
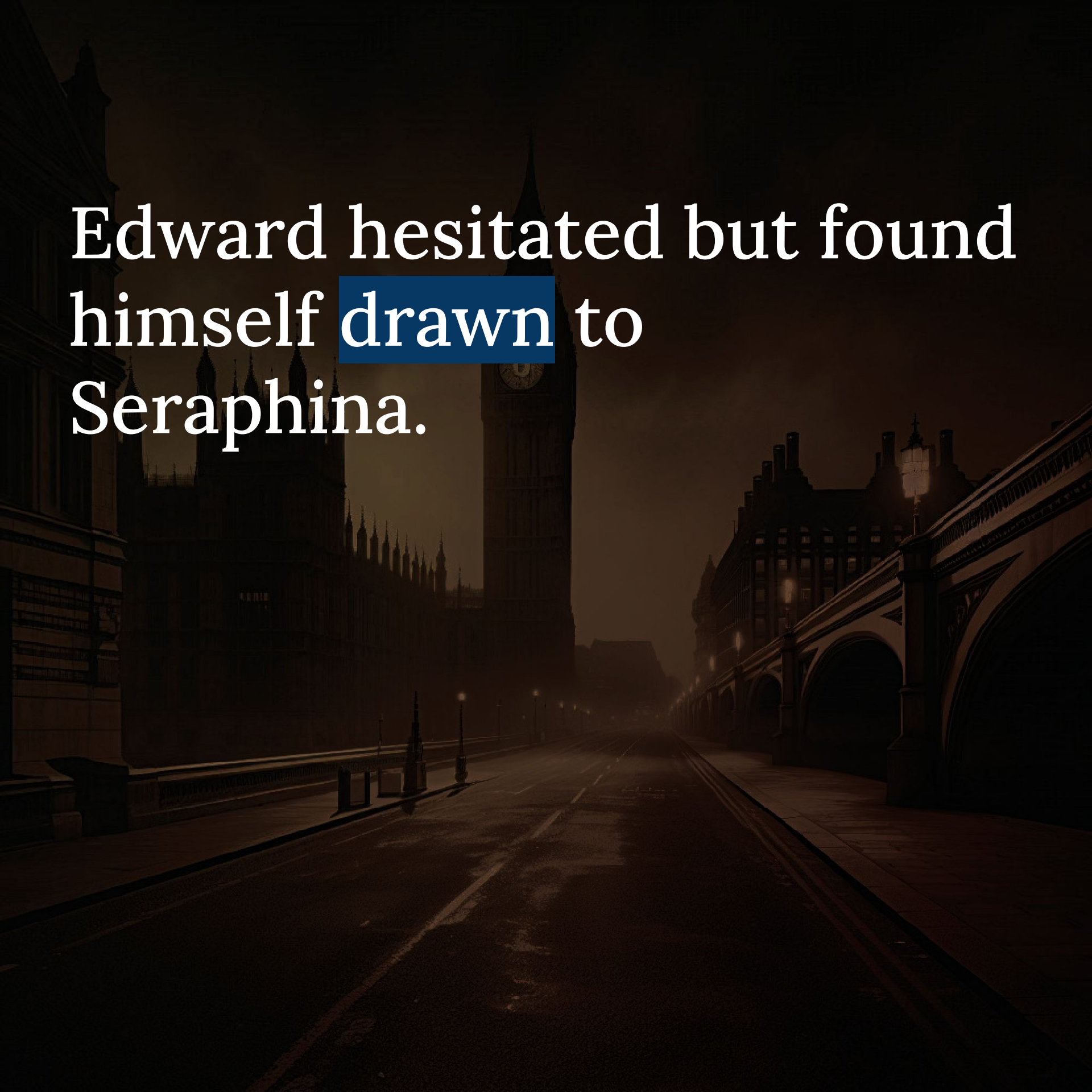Edward paused.

"What, like in *The Matrix*?" he said.

"Don't mention that" whispered Seraphina, glancing away for a moment.

She turned back to Edward. "Look. Just join us" she said. "We need someone like you. With your skills."

Edward hesitated but found himself drawn to Seraphina.

For once, things didn't seem so ordered, and empty.

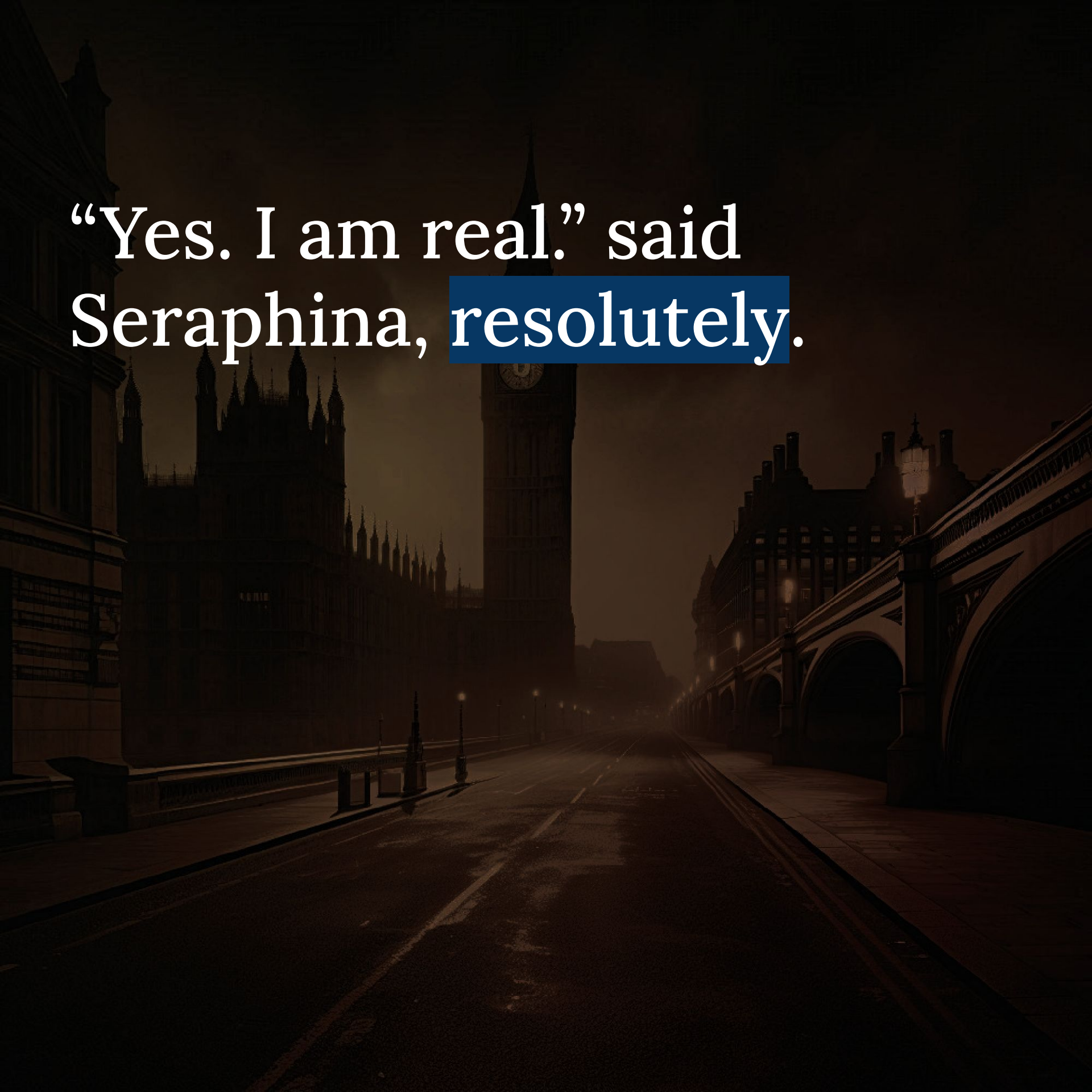"Wait" said Edward. "One question. Are you... *real*?"

"Yes. I am real." said Seraphina, resolutely.

Edward paused.

"But how can I be sure?"

He said.

"Well" Seraphina replied. "You'll just have to take my word for it, won't you?

Now, will you join us Edward?"

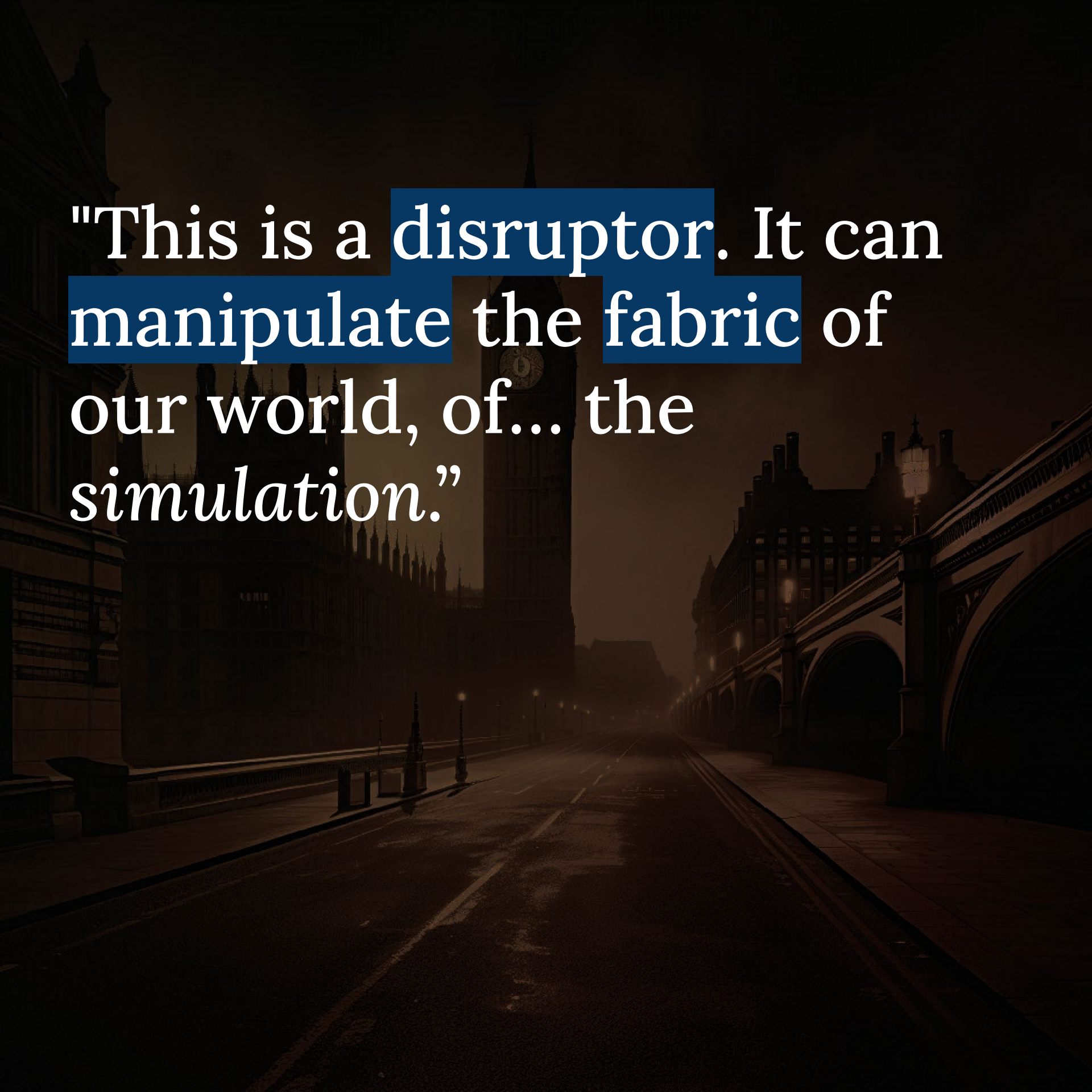Edward stood still, his mind turning.

He glanced at Seraphina again.

"OK. I'll help" he said.
"But how?"
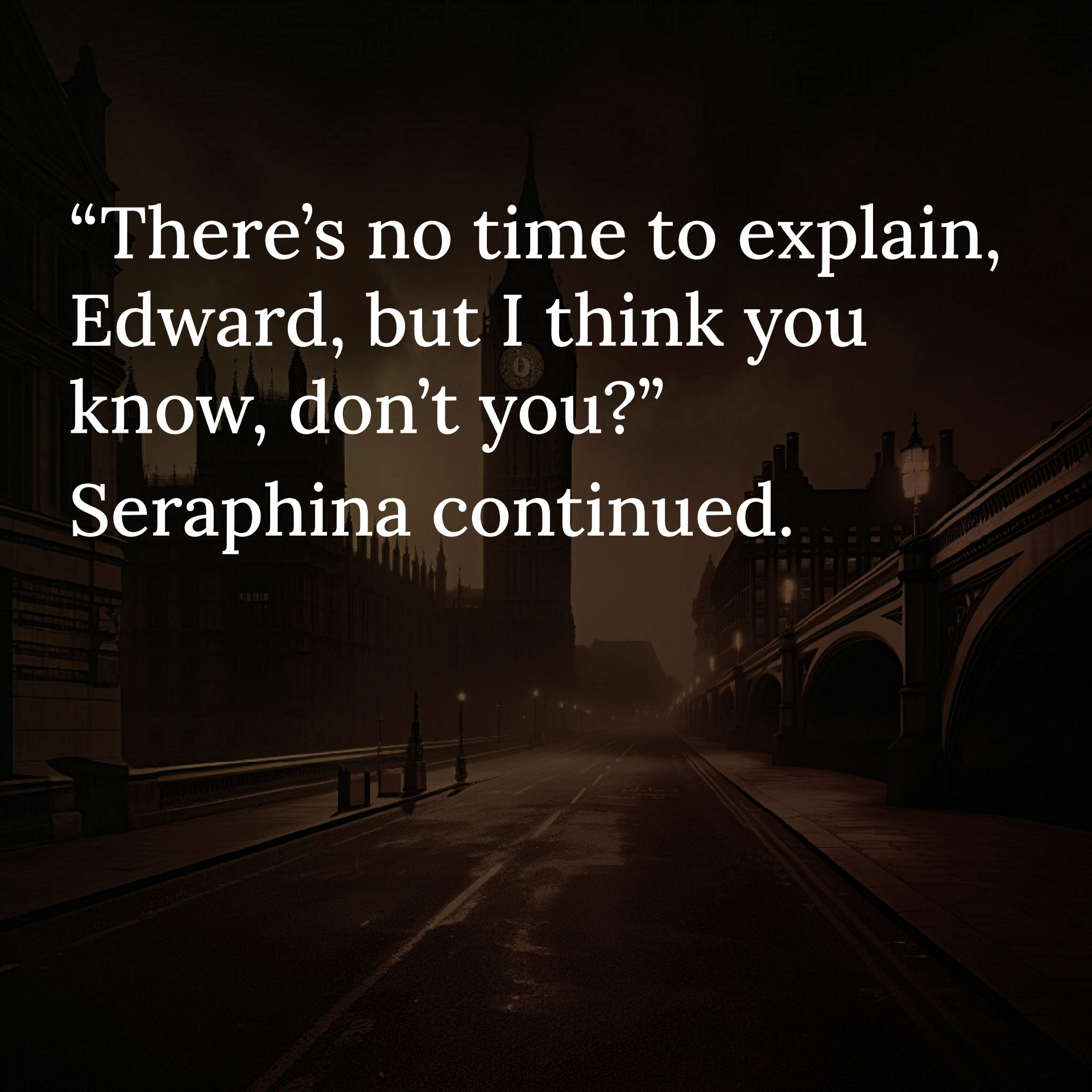
In her hand Seraphina held a small, unassuming device.

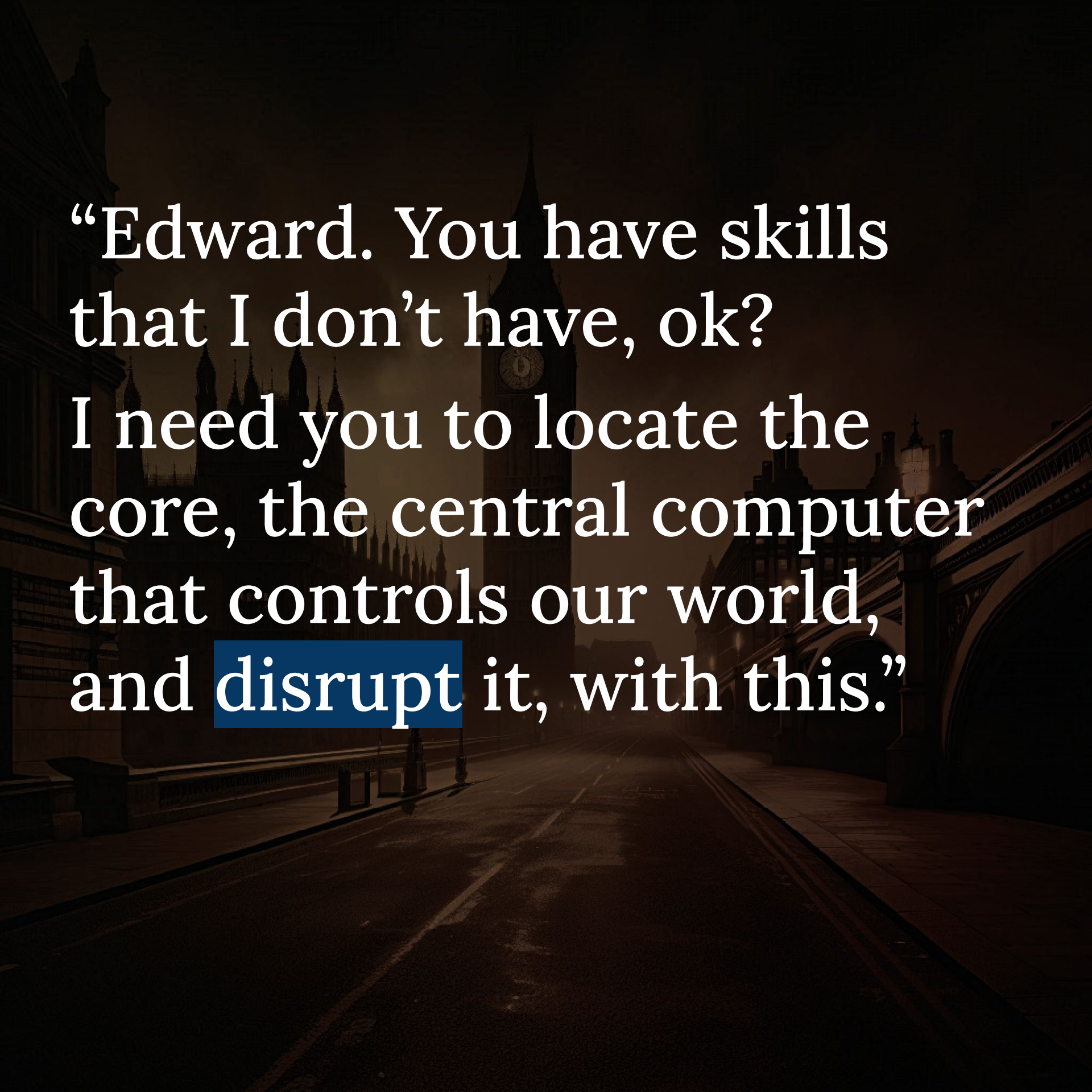"This is a disruptor. It can manipulate the fabric of our world, of... the *simulation*."

"The *what?*" Edward interrupted.
"What did you call it?"

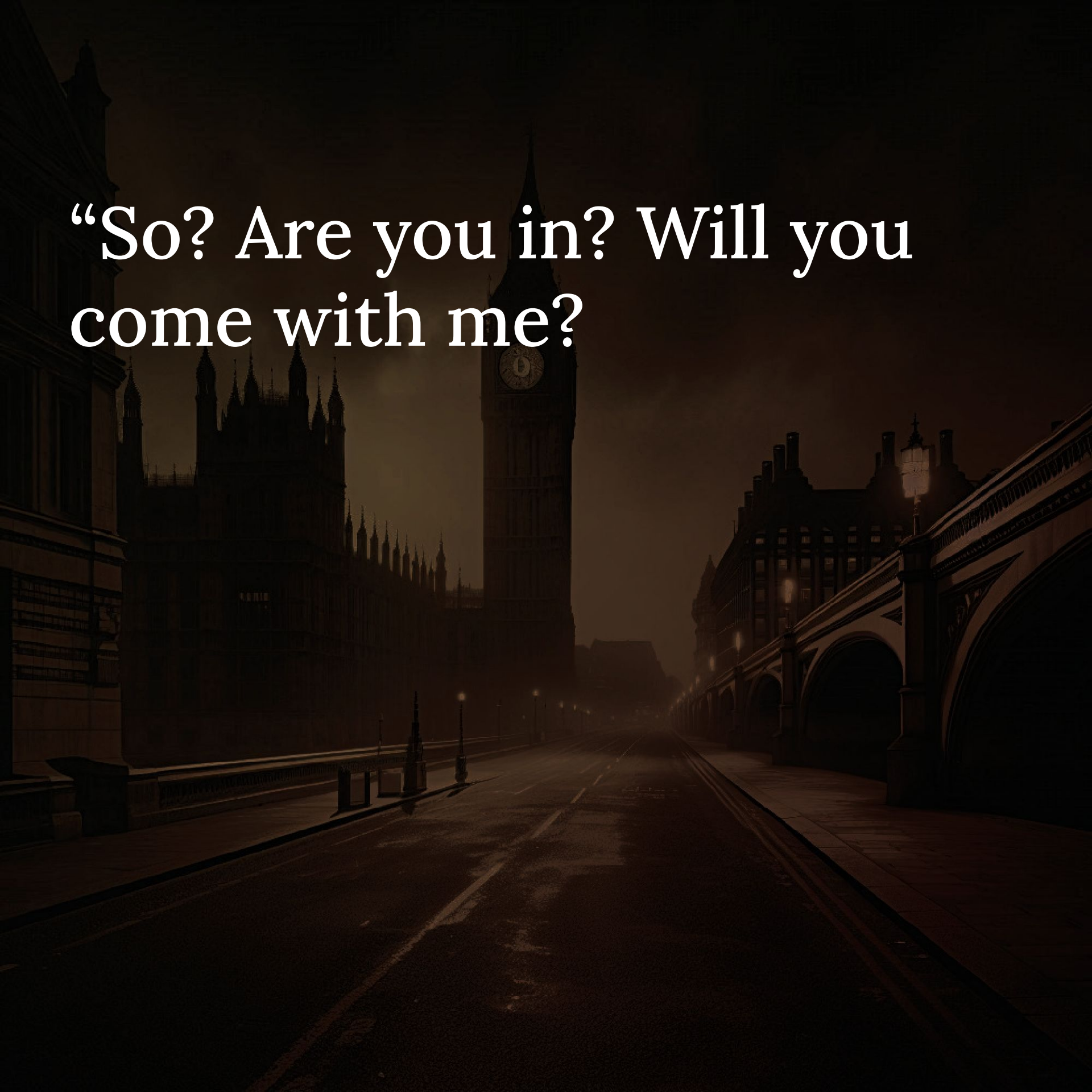"There's no time to explain, Edward, but I think you know, don't you?" Seraphina continued.

"Edward. You have skills that I don't have, ok?
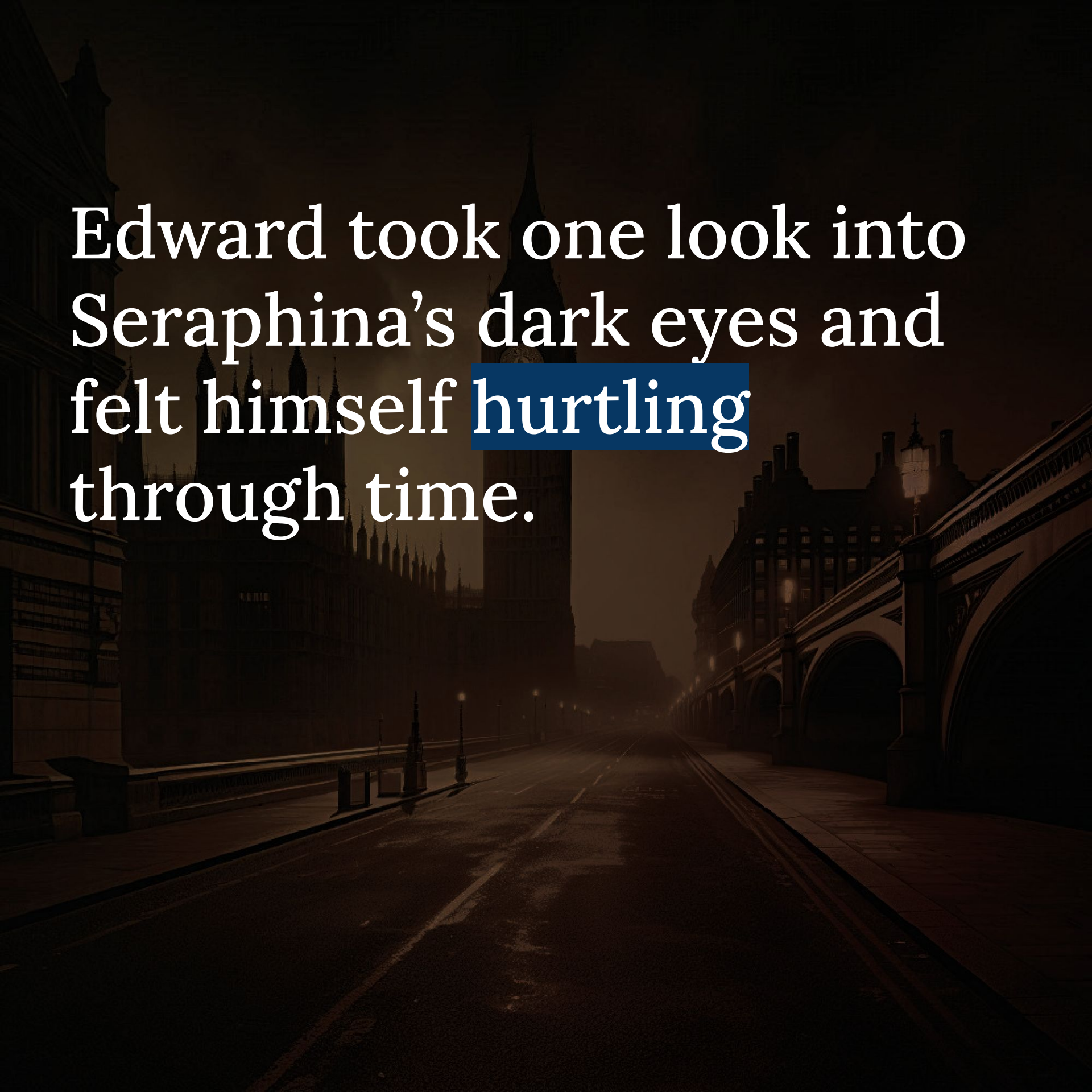
I need you to locate the core, the central computer that controls our world, and disrupt it, with this."
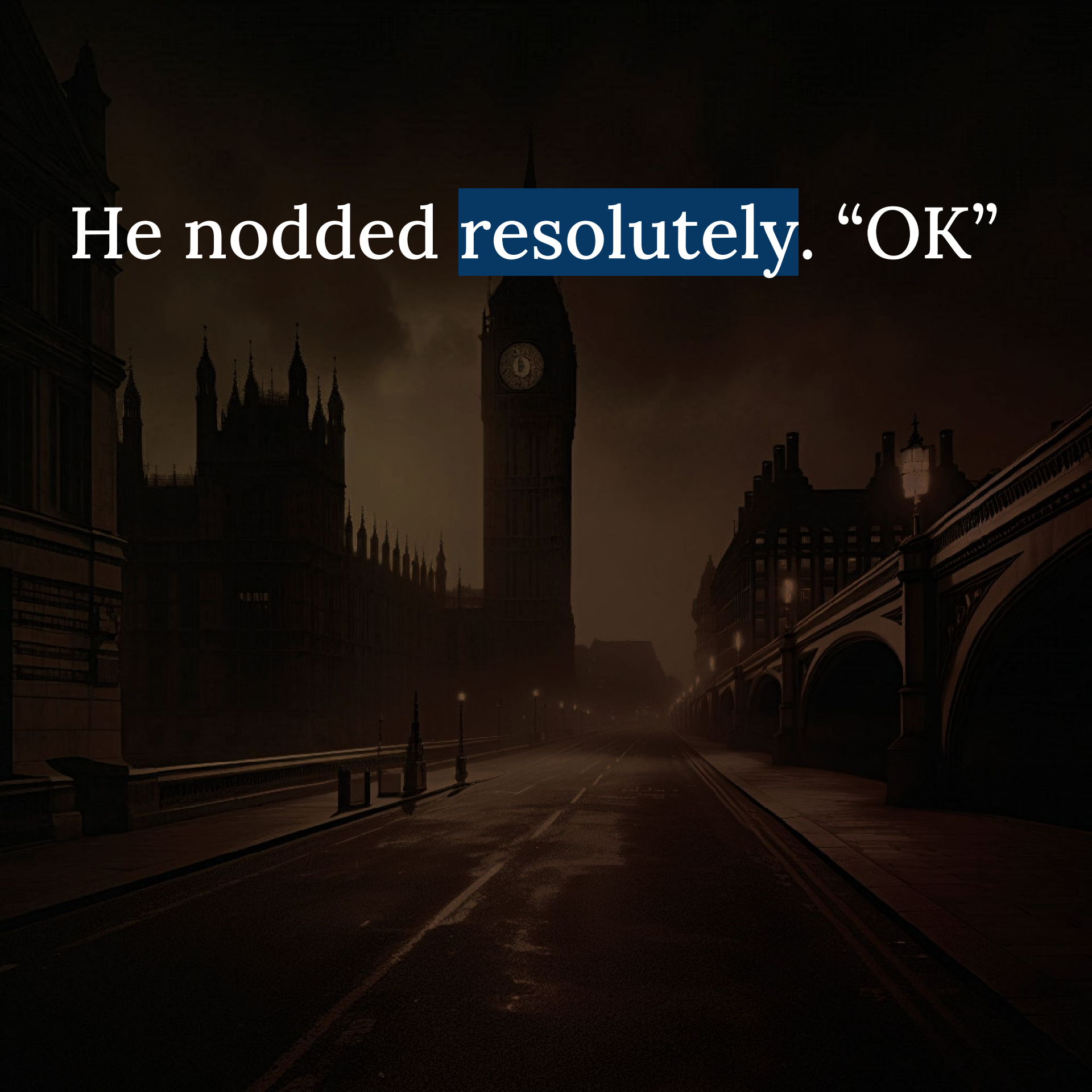
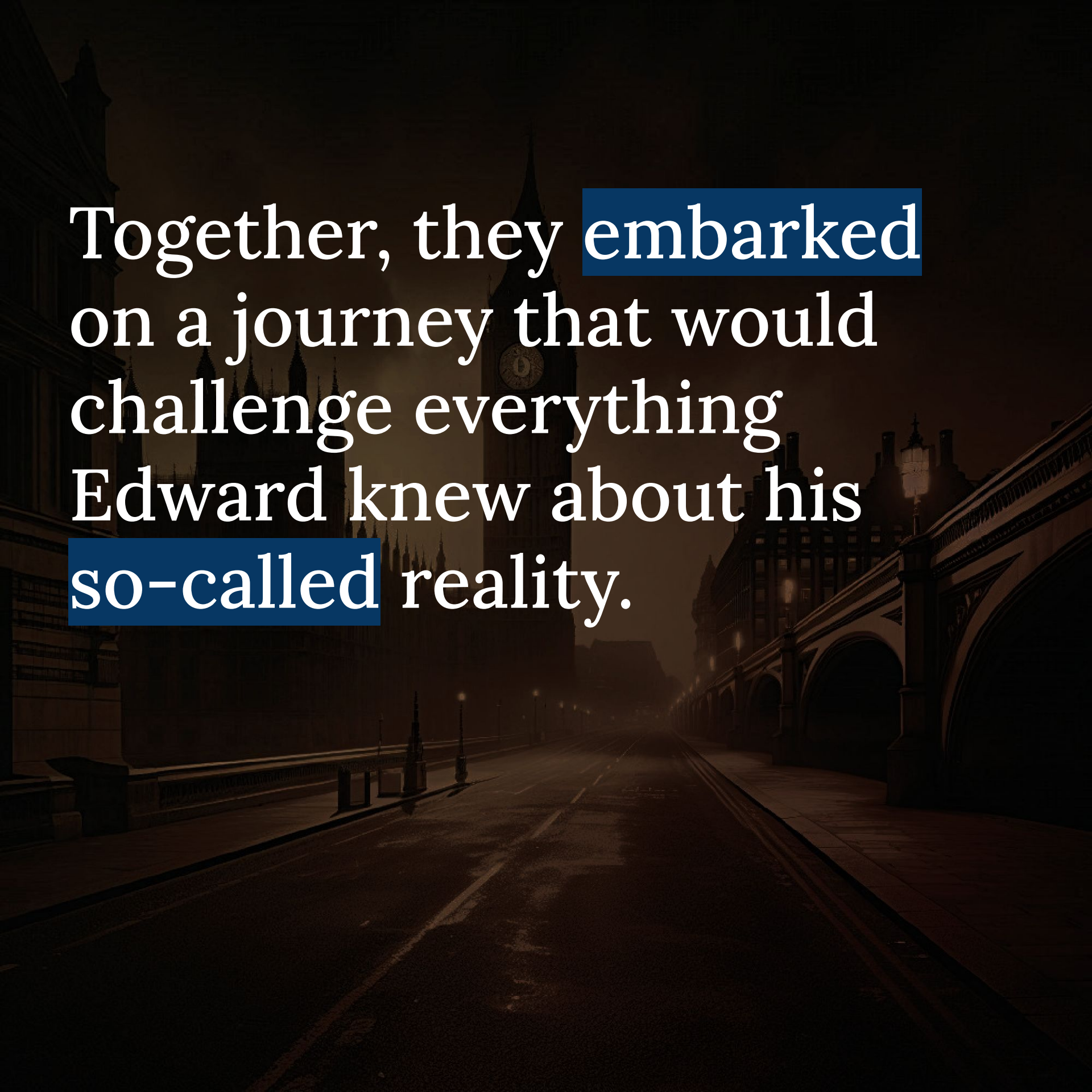She held the device out to him.

"So? Are you in? Will you come with me?

Edward took one look into Seraphina's dark eyes and felt himself **hurtling** through time.
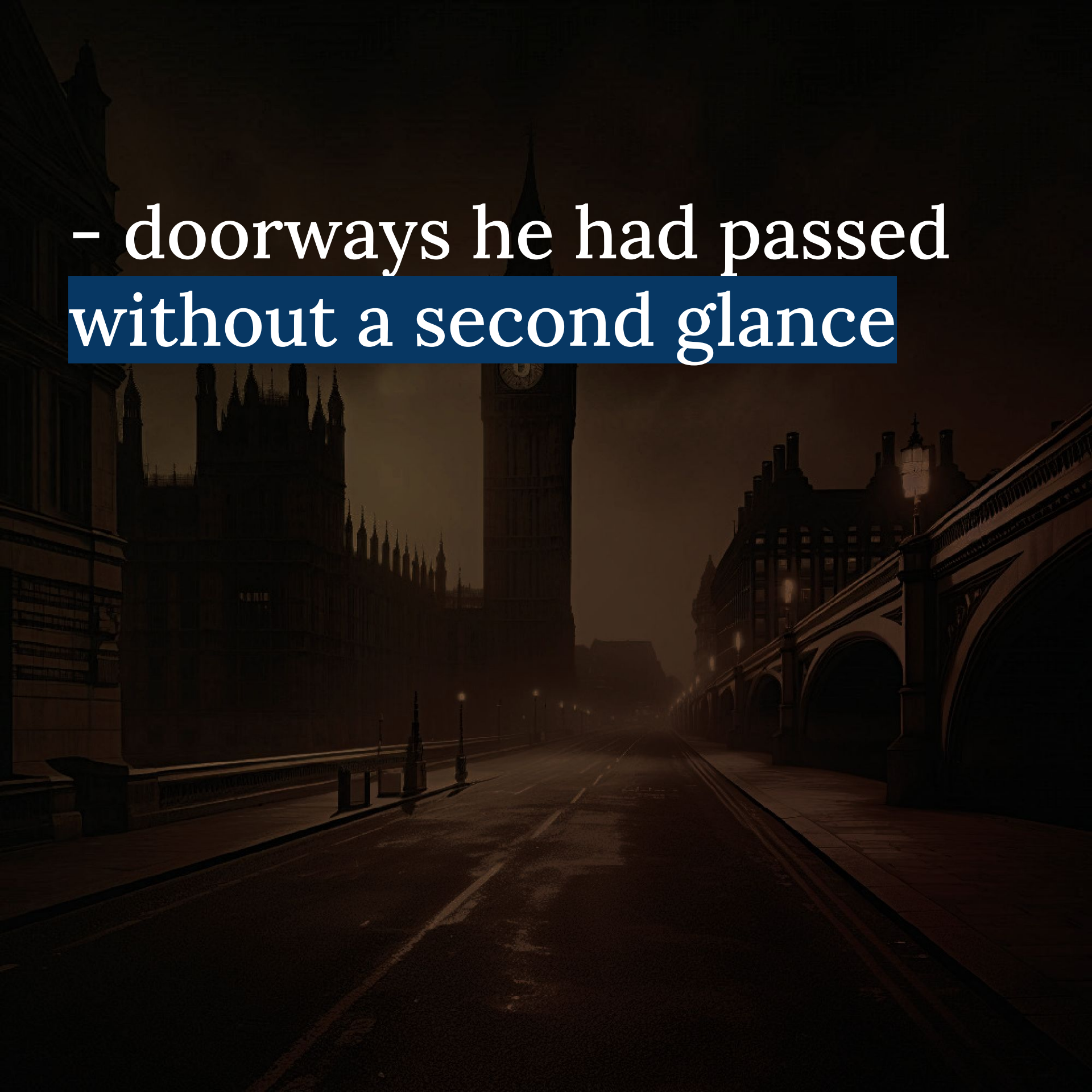
He nodded resolutely. "OK"

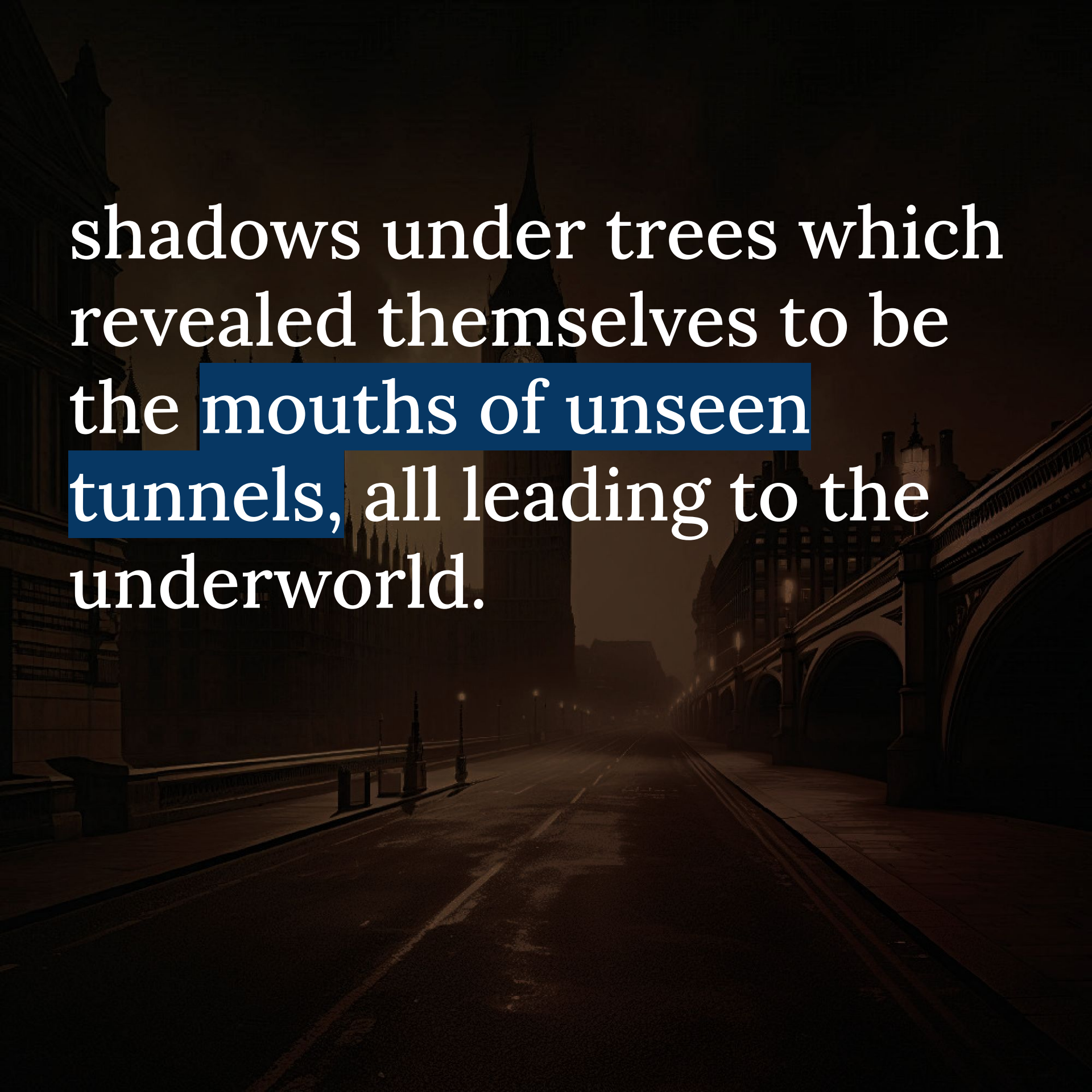Together, they **embarked** on a journey that would challenge everything Edward knew about his **so-called** reality.

They visited hidden pockets of the city - places that he had never noticed before
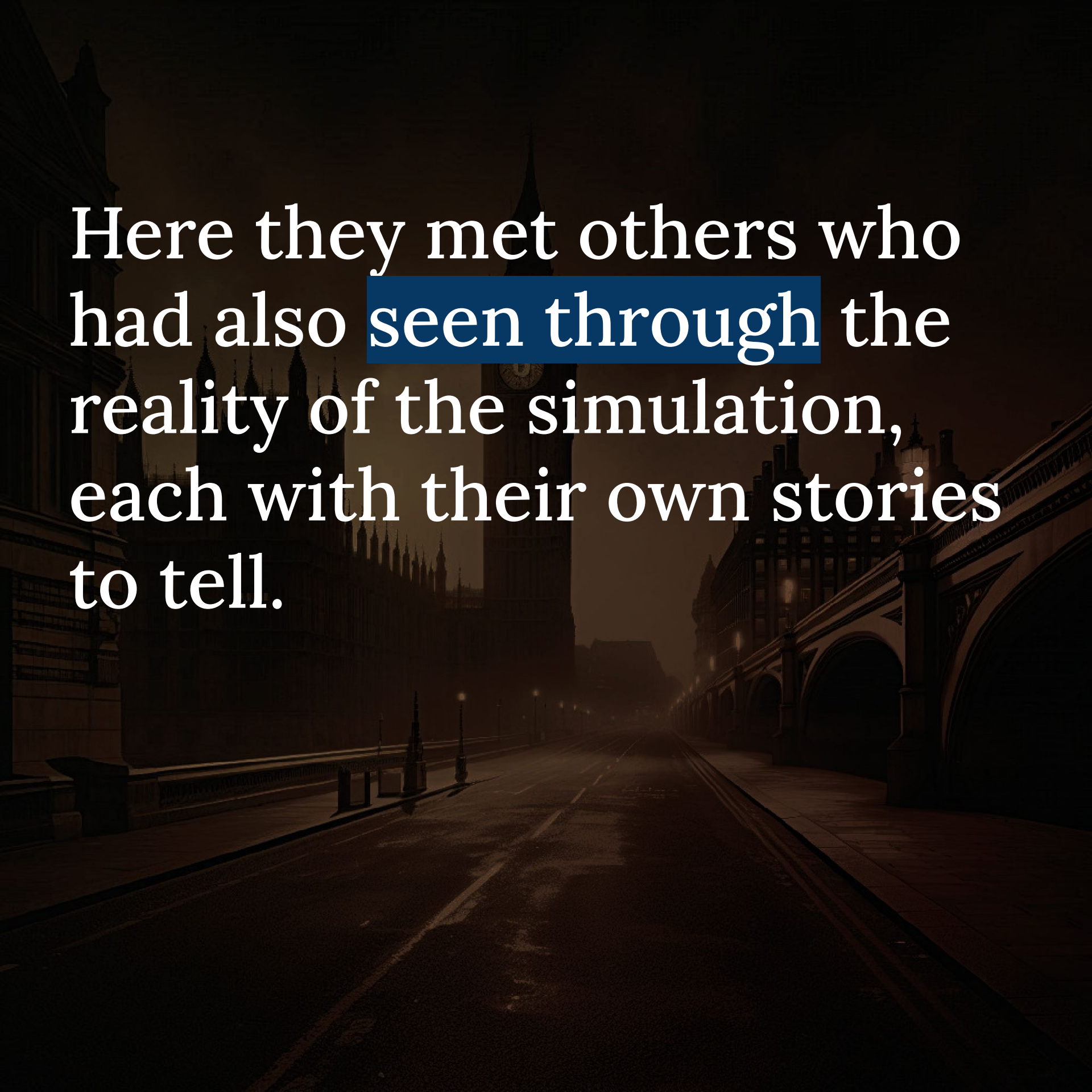
- doorways he had passed without a second glance

dark corners where walls left gaps into vast undiscovered chambers and corridors,
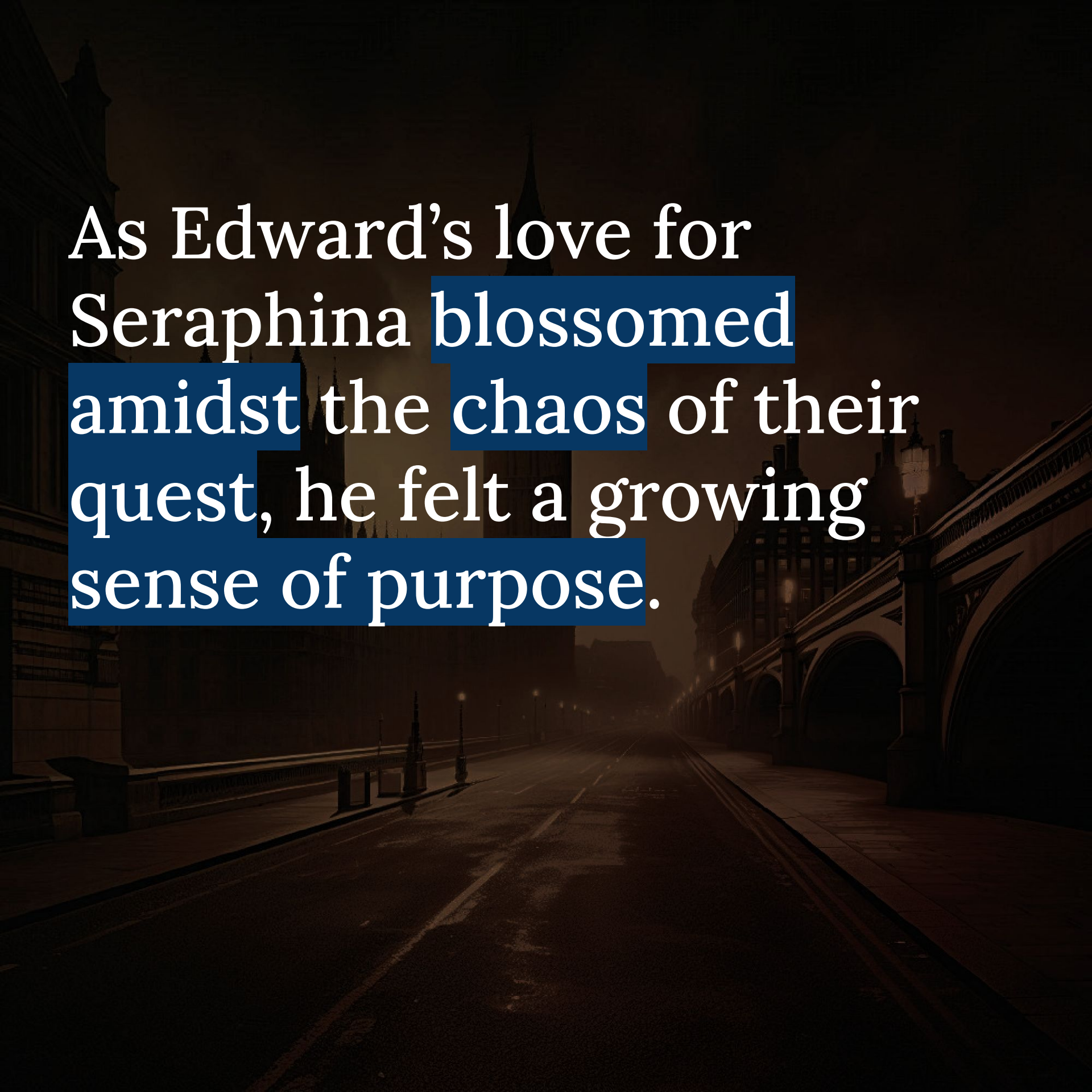
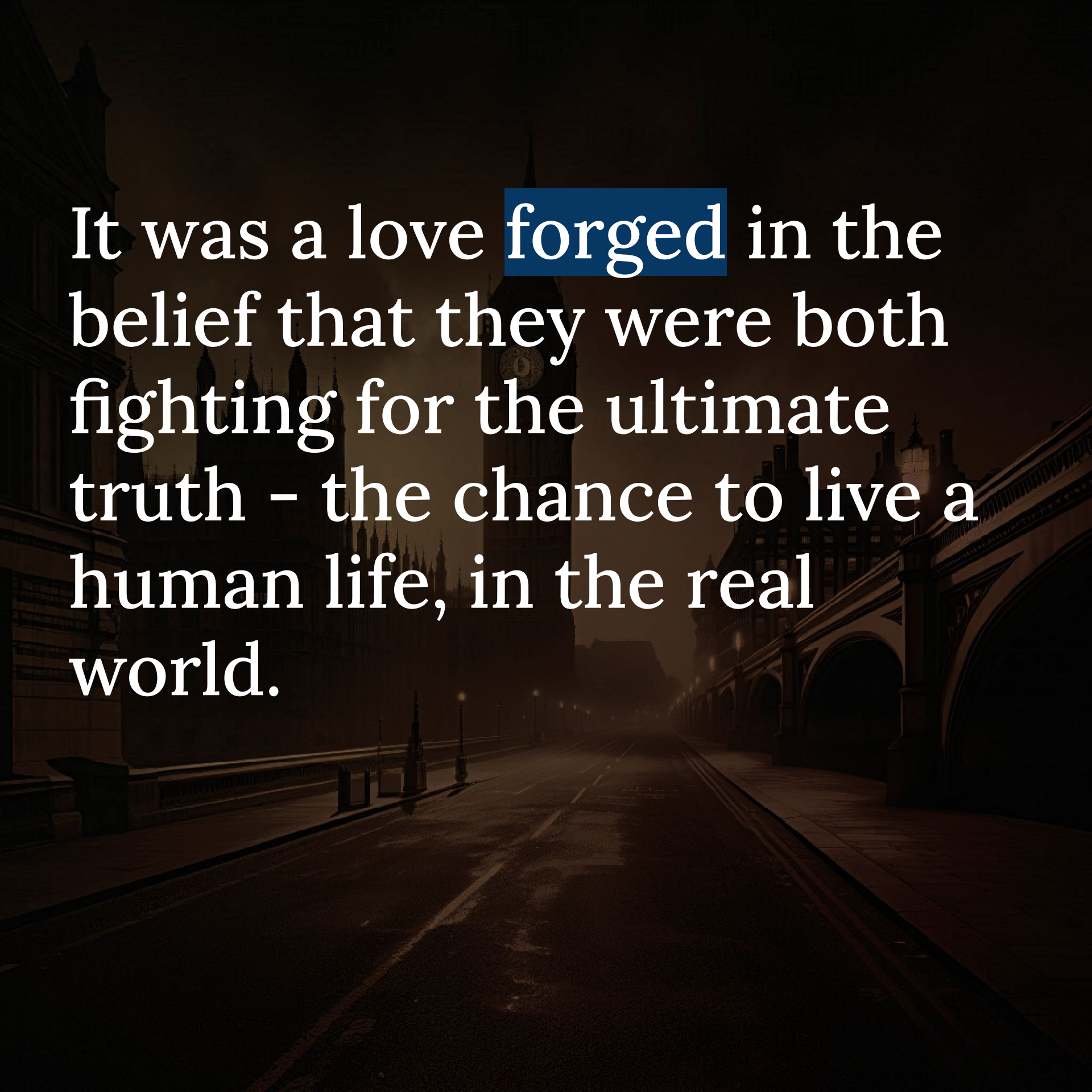shadows under trees which revealed themselves to be the mouths of unseen tunnels, all leading to the underworld.

Here they met others who had also seen through the reality of the simulation, each with their own stories to tell.
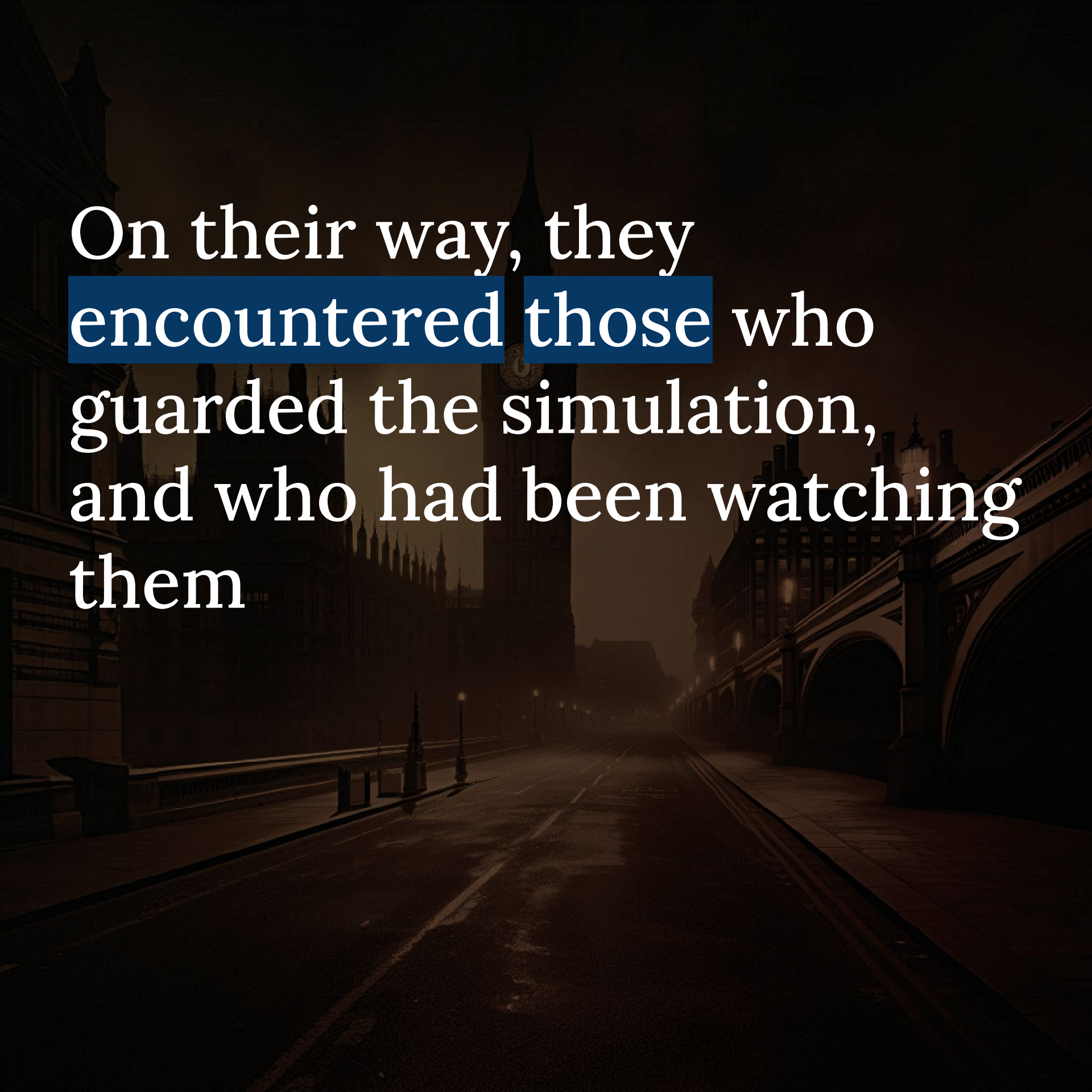
Over time, Edward and Seraphina grew closer.

As Edward's love for Seraphina blossomed amidst the chaos of their quest, he felt a growing sense of purpose.

It was a love forged in the belief that they were both fighting for the ultimate truth - the chance to live a human life, in the real world.
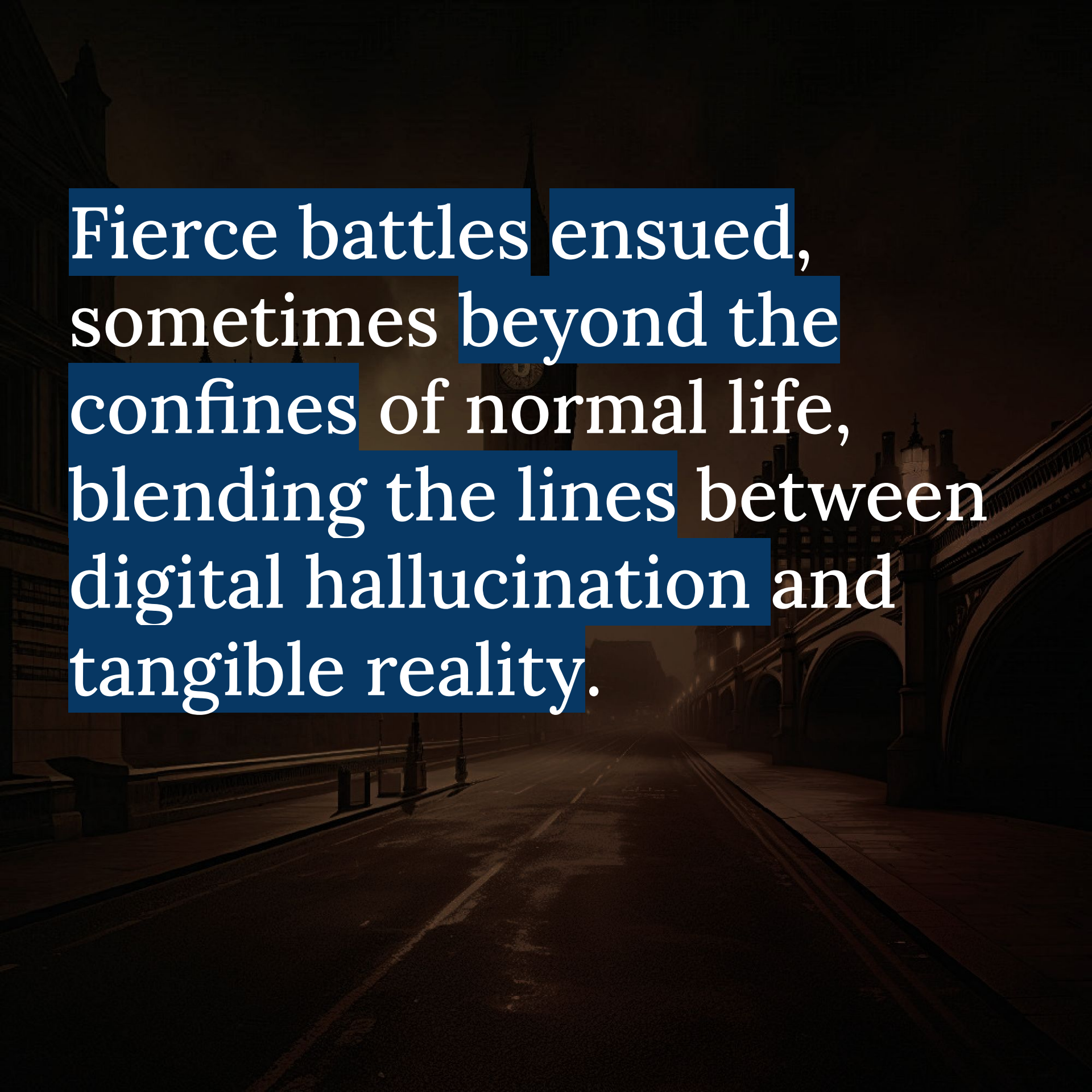
But their journey was not without peril.

On their way, they encountered those who guarded the simulation, and who had been watching them
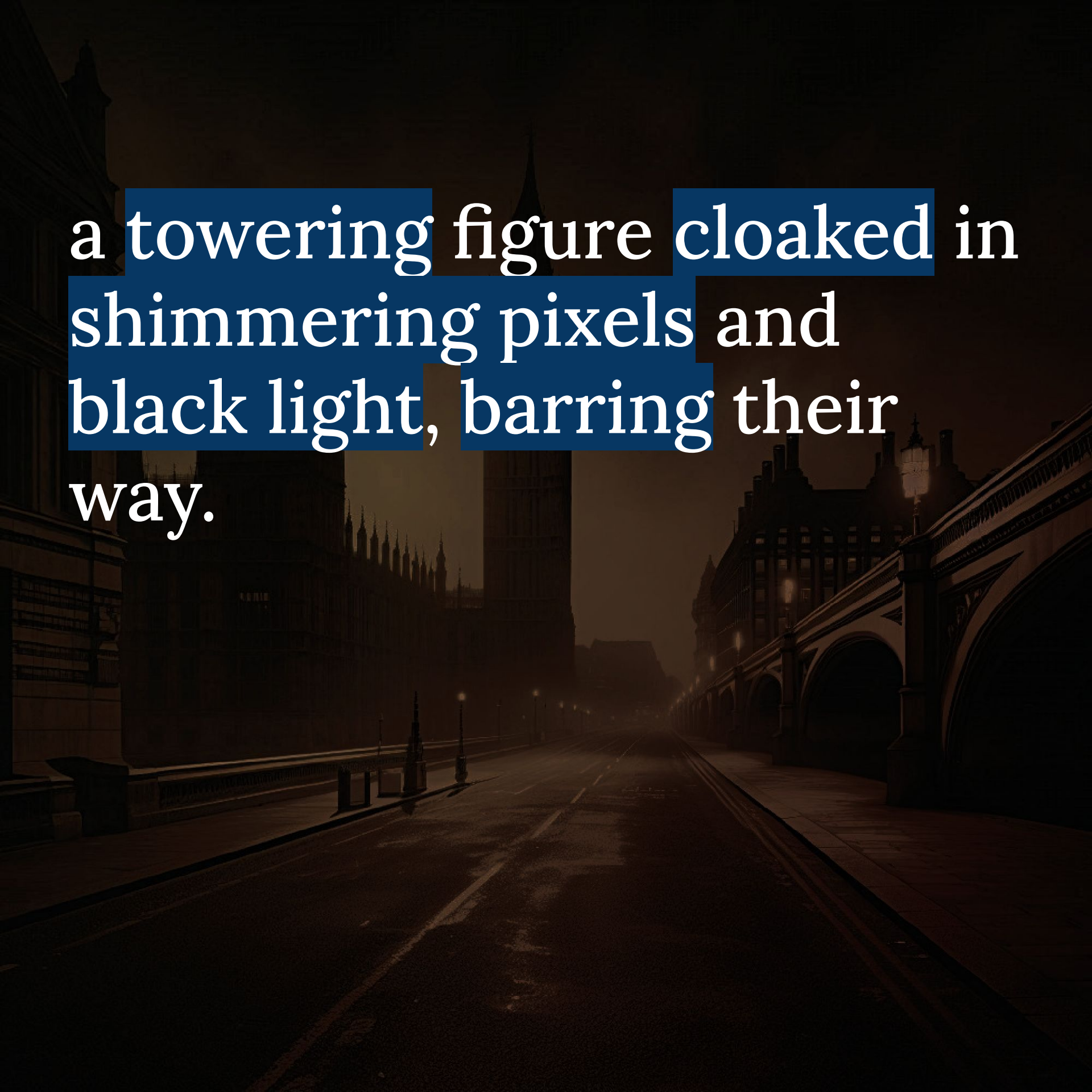
– **formidable adversaries** programmed to maintain the illusion of reality.

Fierce battles ensued, sometimes beyond the confines of normal life, blending the lines between digital hallucination and tangible reality.

One **moonlit** night, Edward and Seraphina faced their most **formidable adversary** yet,
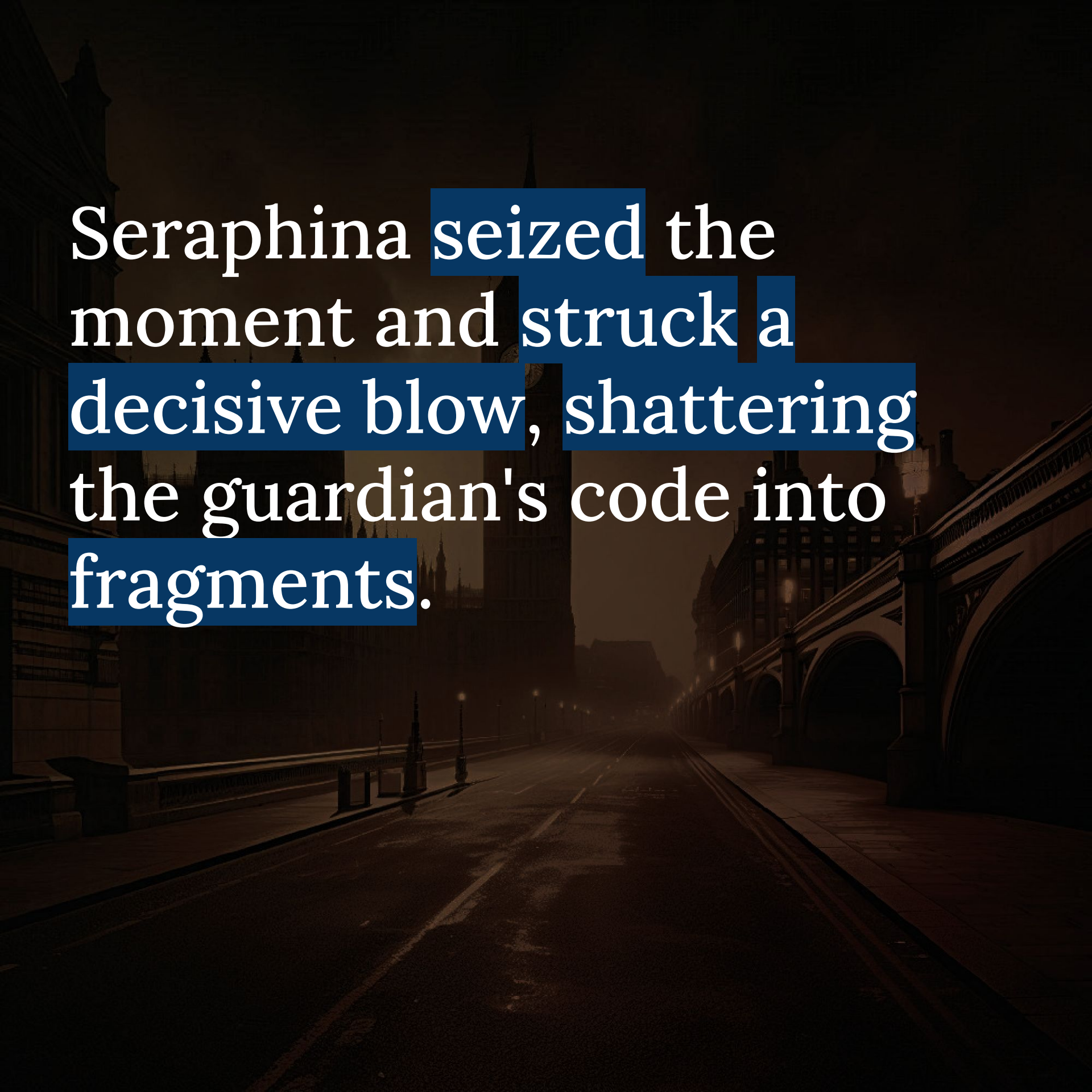
a towering figure cloaked in shimmering pixels and black light, barring their way.
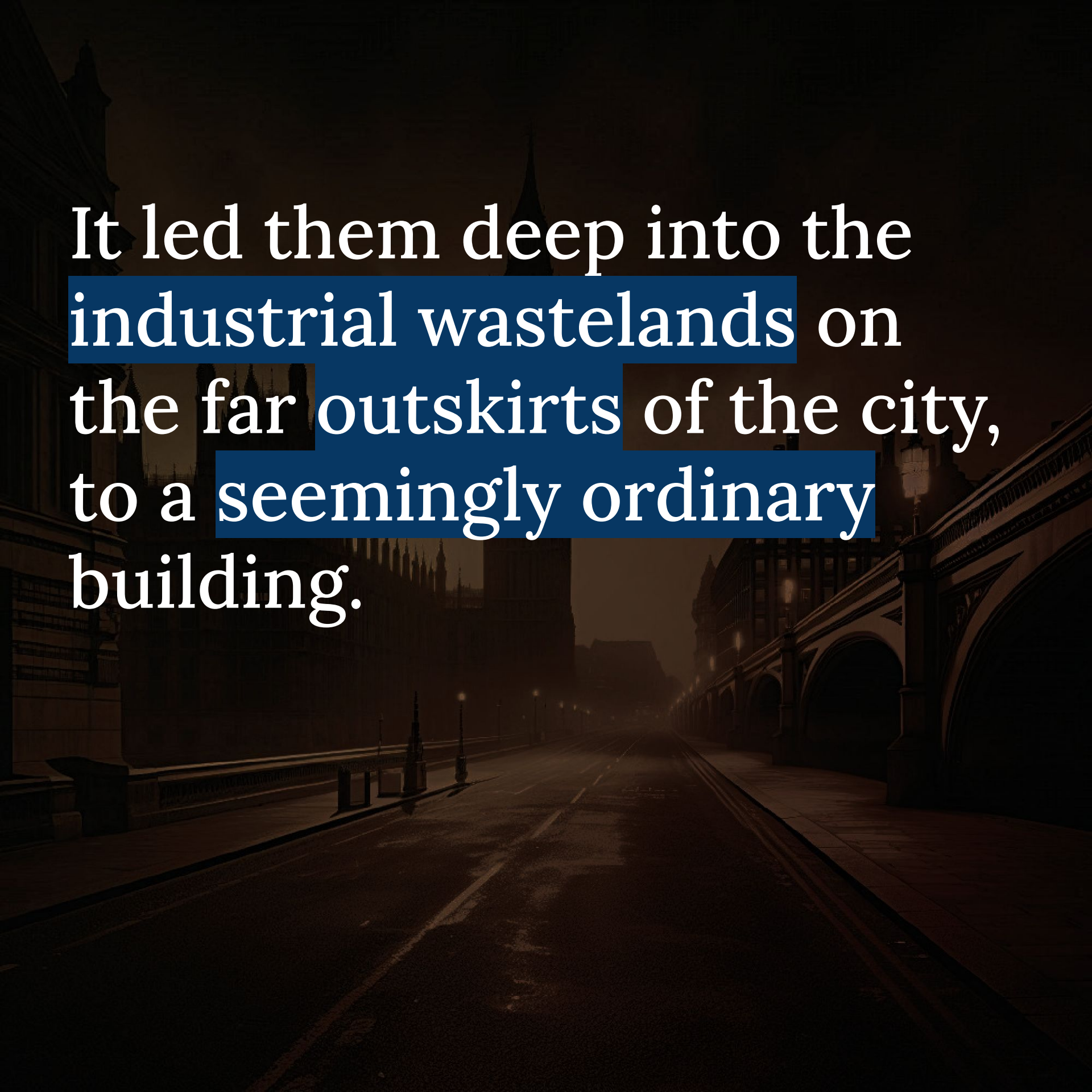
Edward activated the disruptor.

The world around them trembled, and the guardian faltered.

Seraphina seized the moment and struck a decisive blow, shattering the guardian's code into fragments.

With the guardian defeated, they pressed on, beyond the city limits, following a faint signal emanating from the disruptor in Edward's hands.
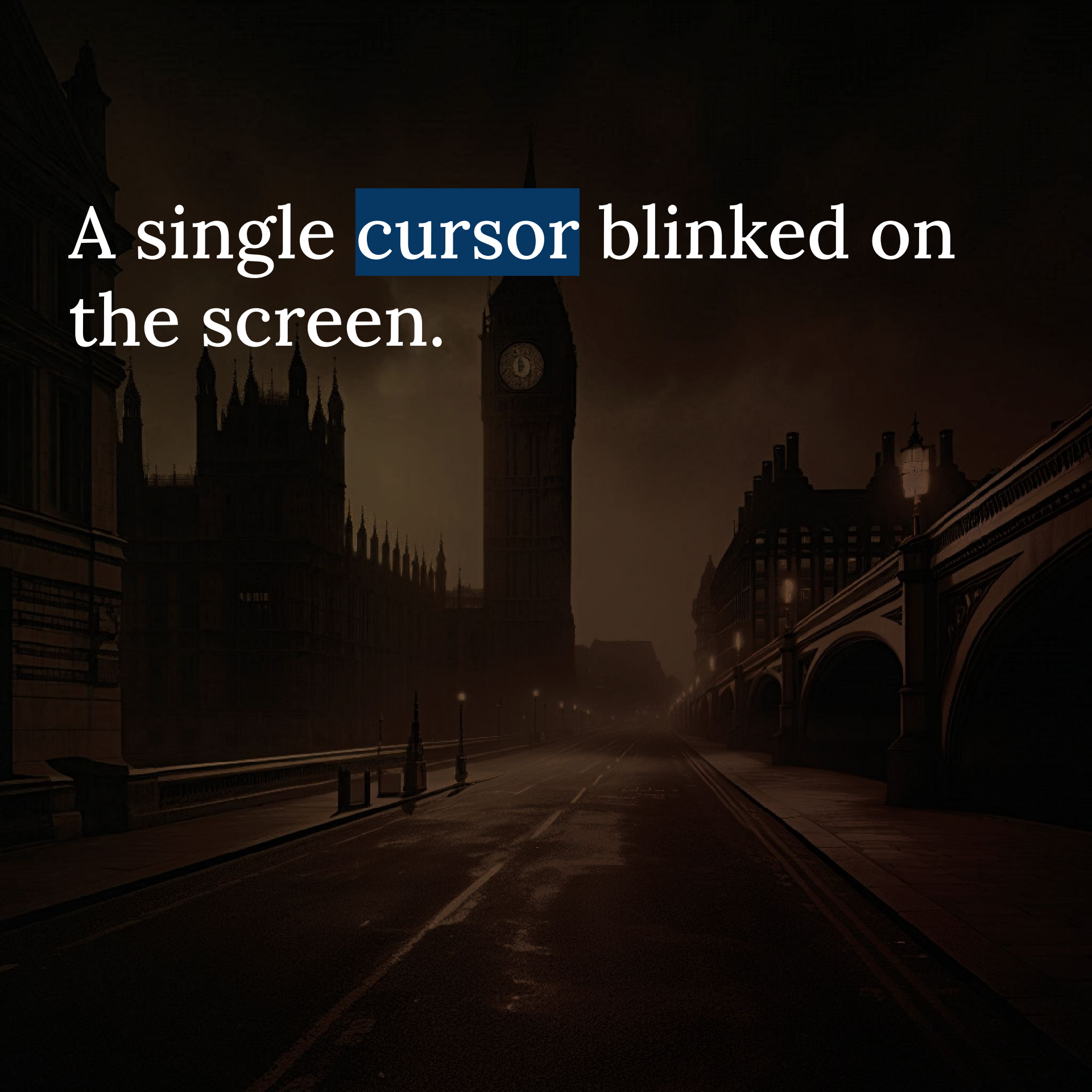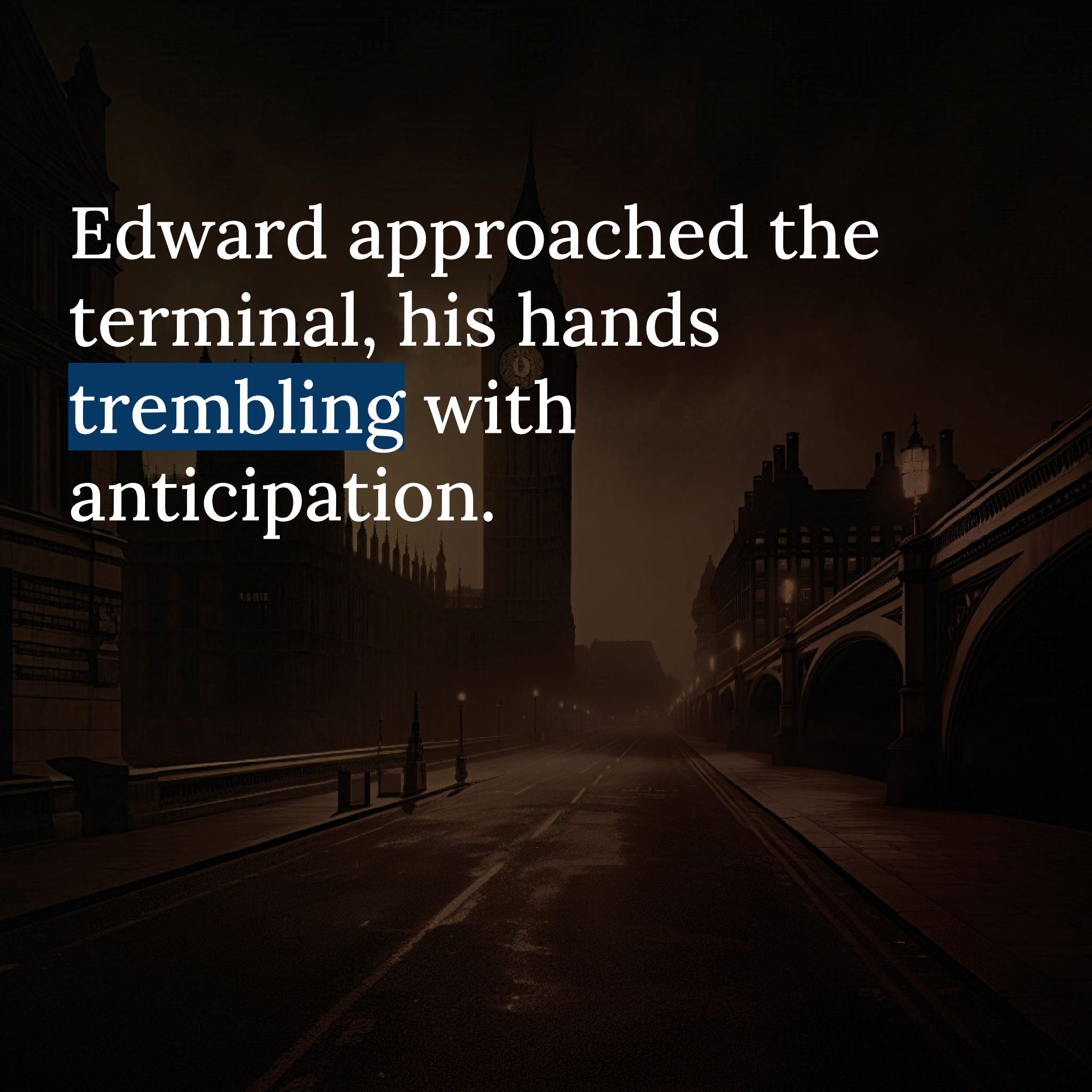
It led them deep into the industrial wastelands on the far outskirts of the city, to a seemingly ordinary building.
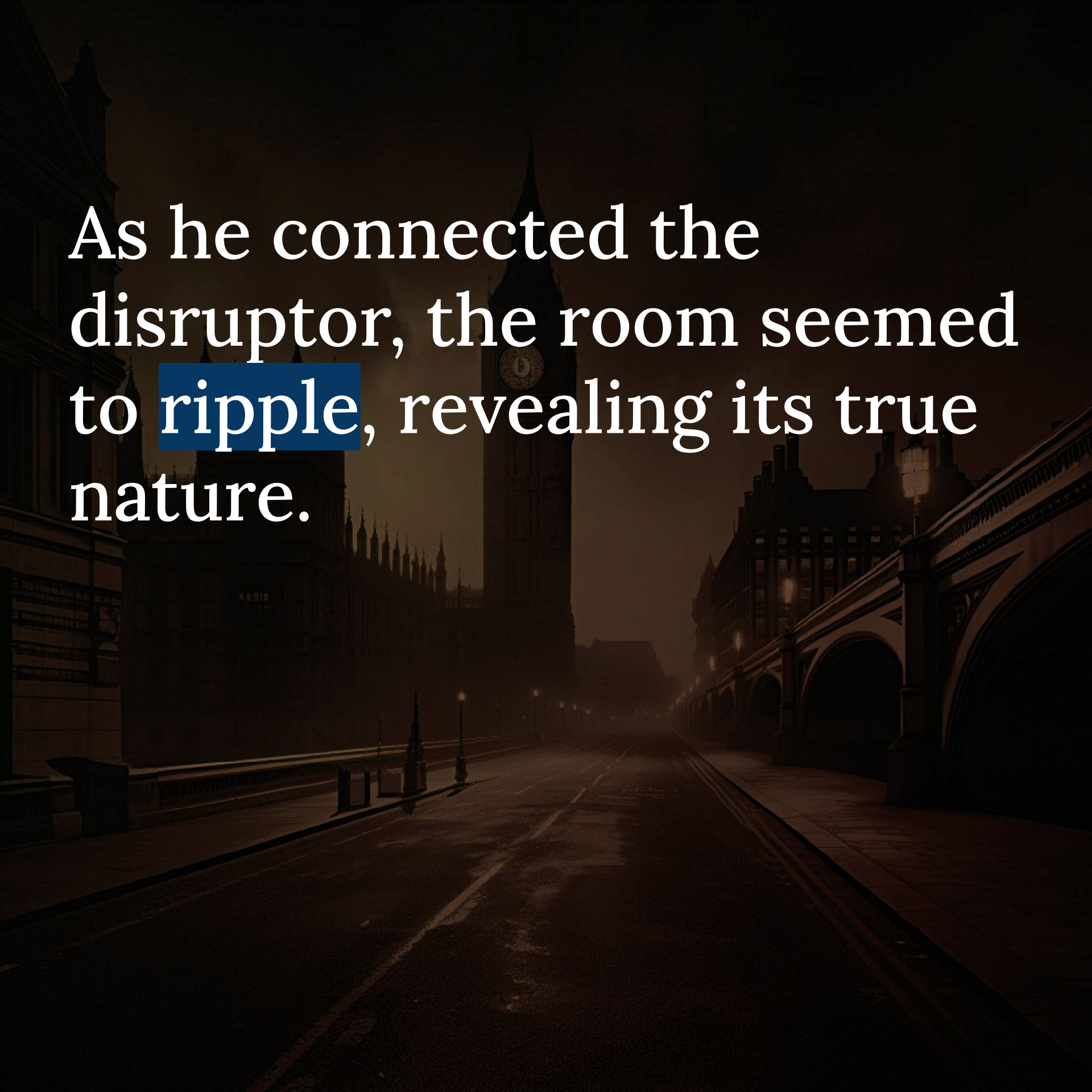
Inside, they found an unassuming room with one single computer terminal.
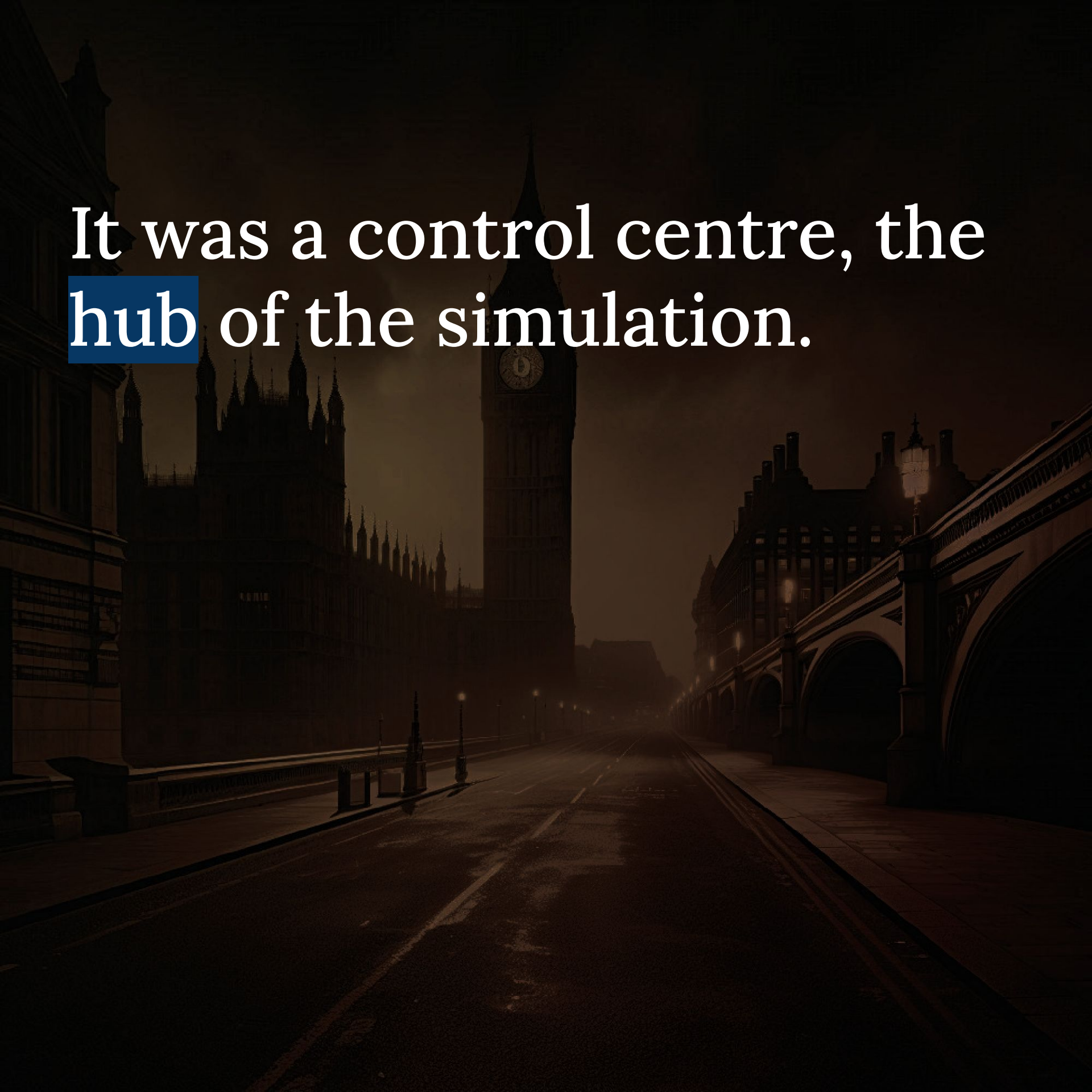
A single cursor blinked on the screen.

Edward approached the terminal, his hands **trembling** with anticipation.

As he connected the disruptor, the room seemed to ripple, revealing its true nature.

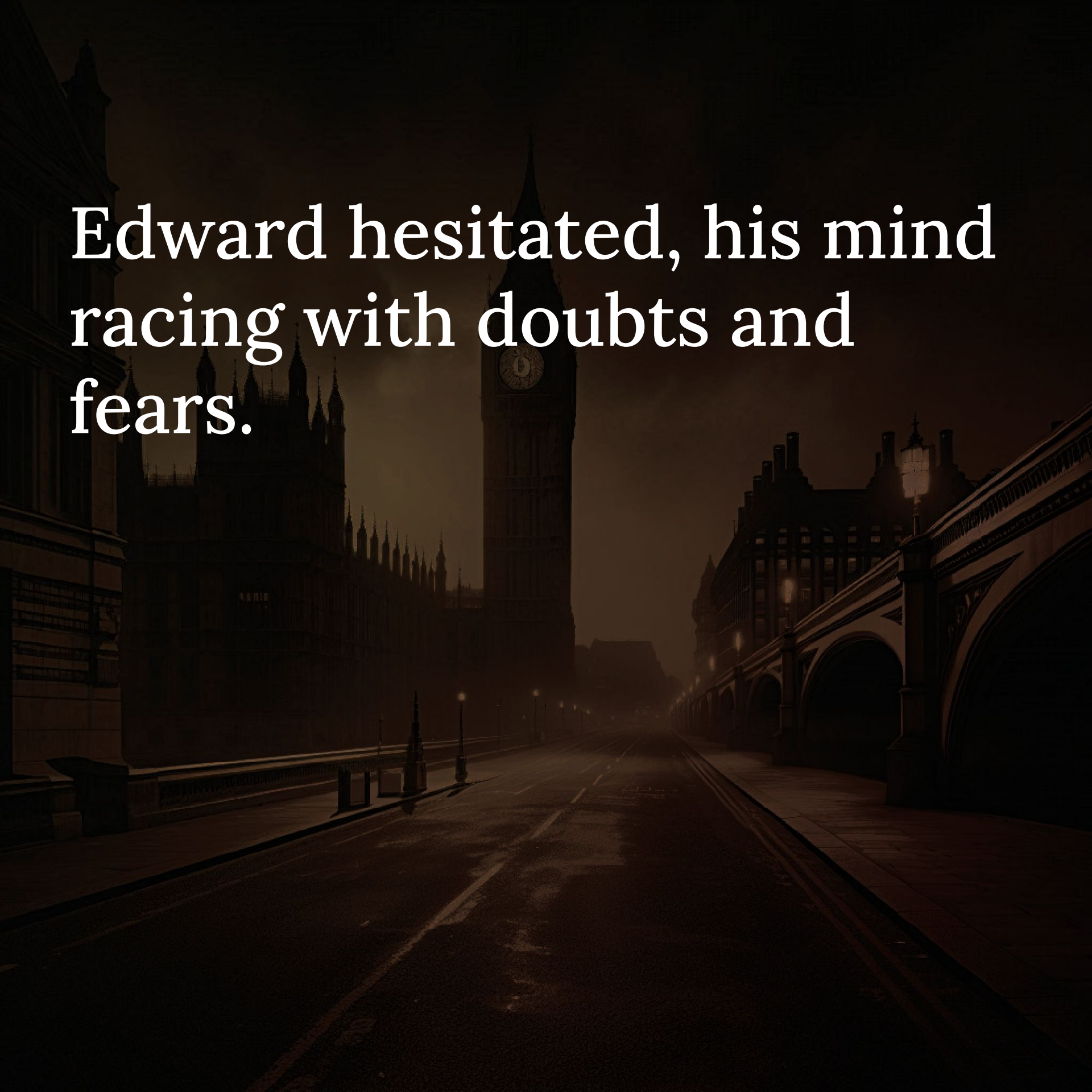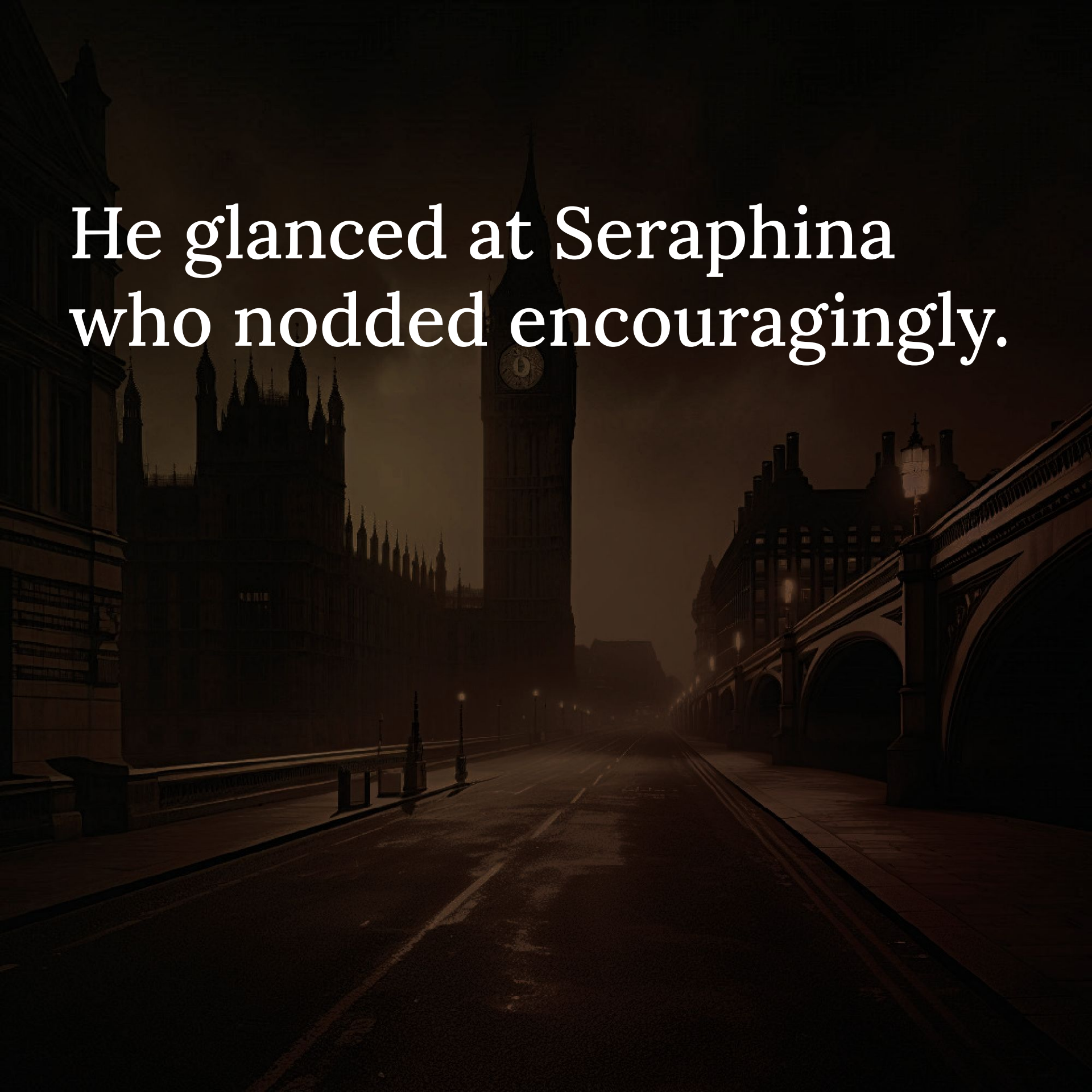It was a control centre, the hub of the simulation.

The screen displayed a message:

"Welcome, Edward Wilson. You have come far. But do you really want to know the truth?"
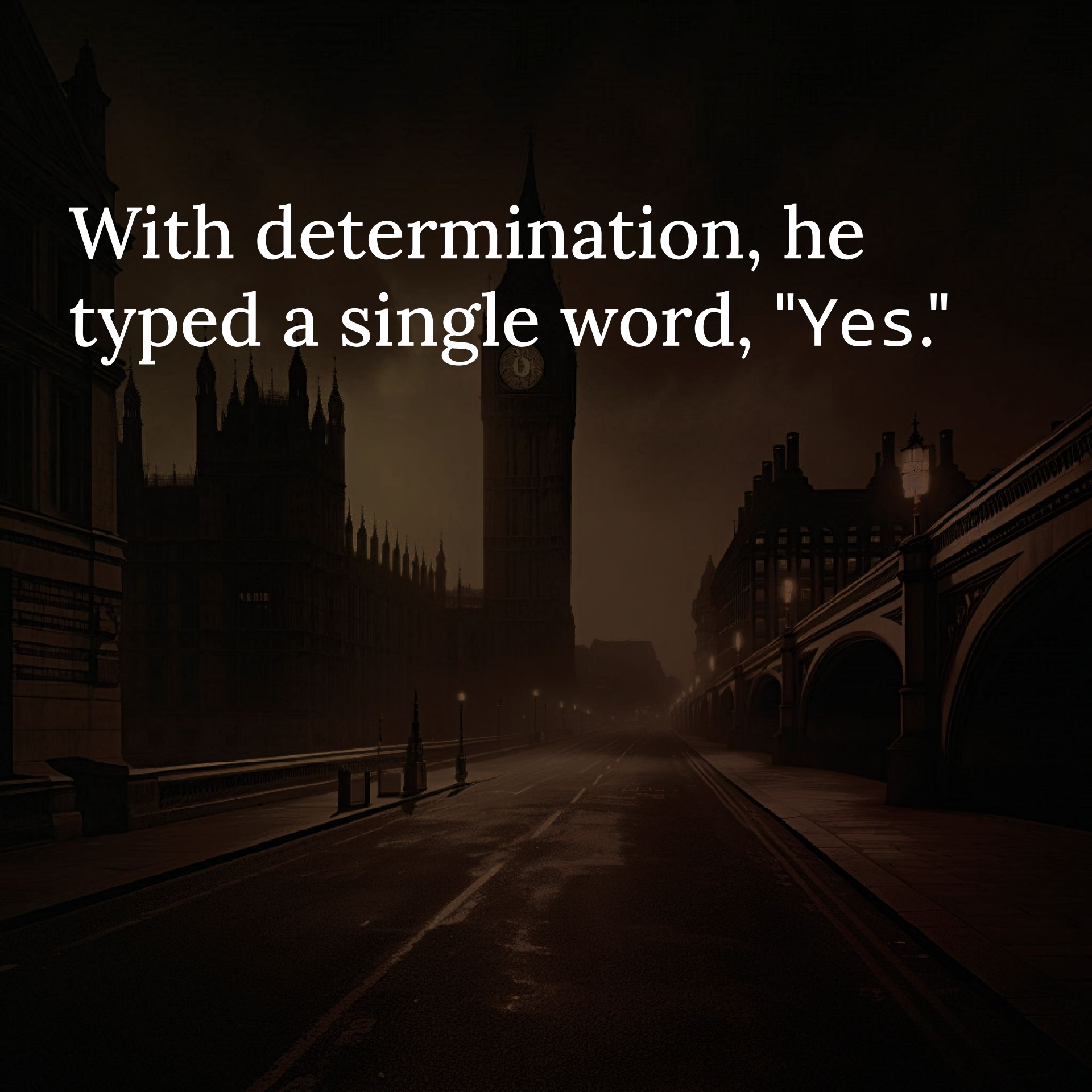
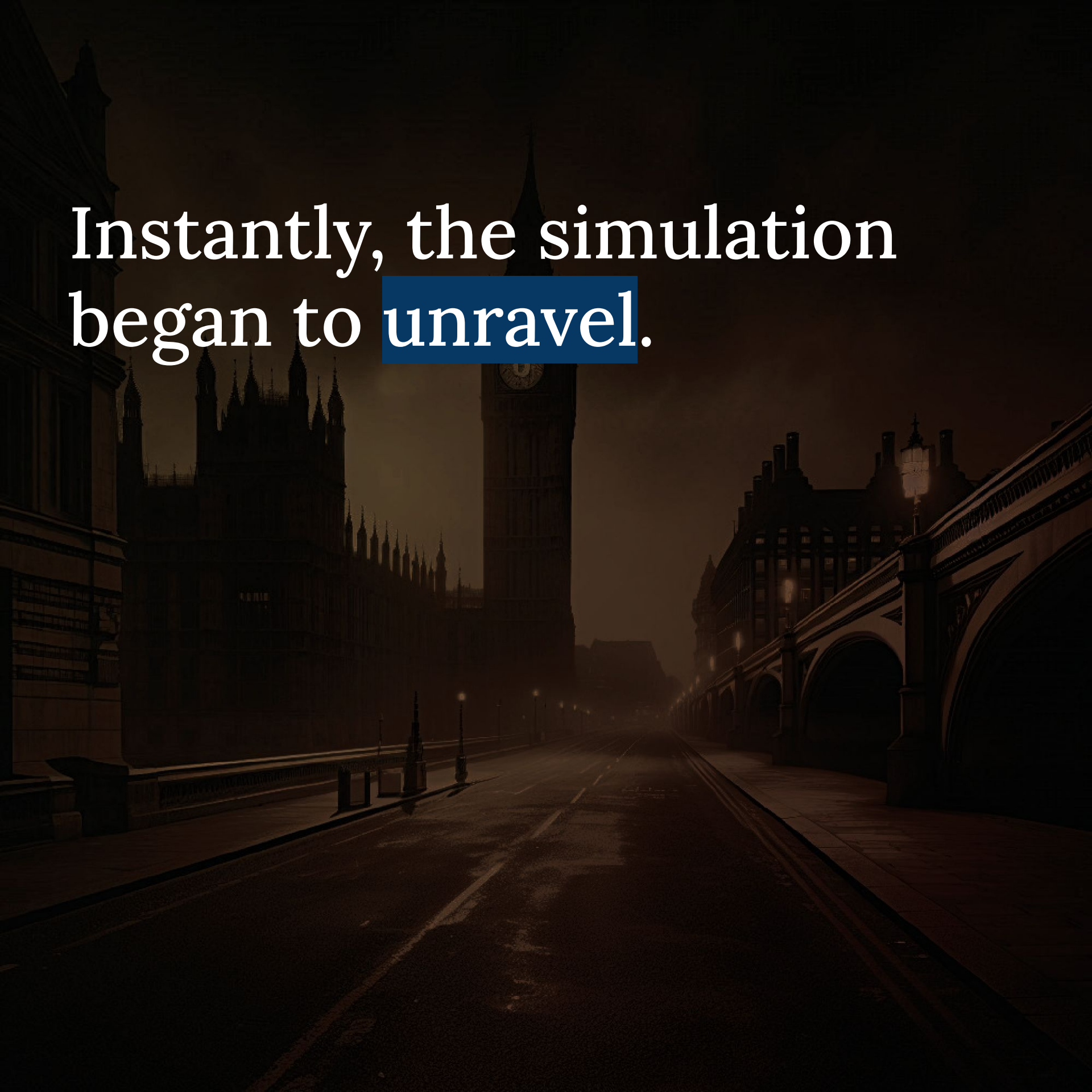Edward hesitated, his mind racing with doubts and fears.

He glanced at Seraphina
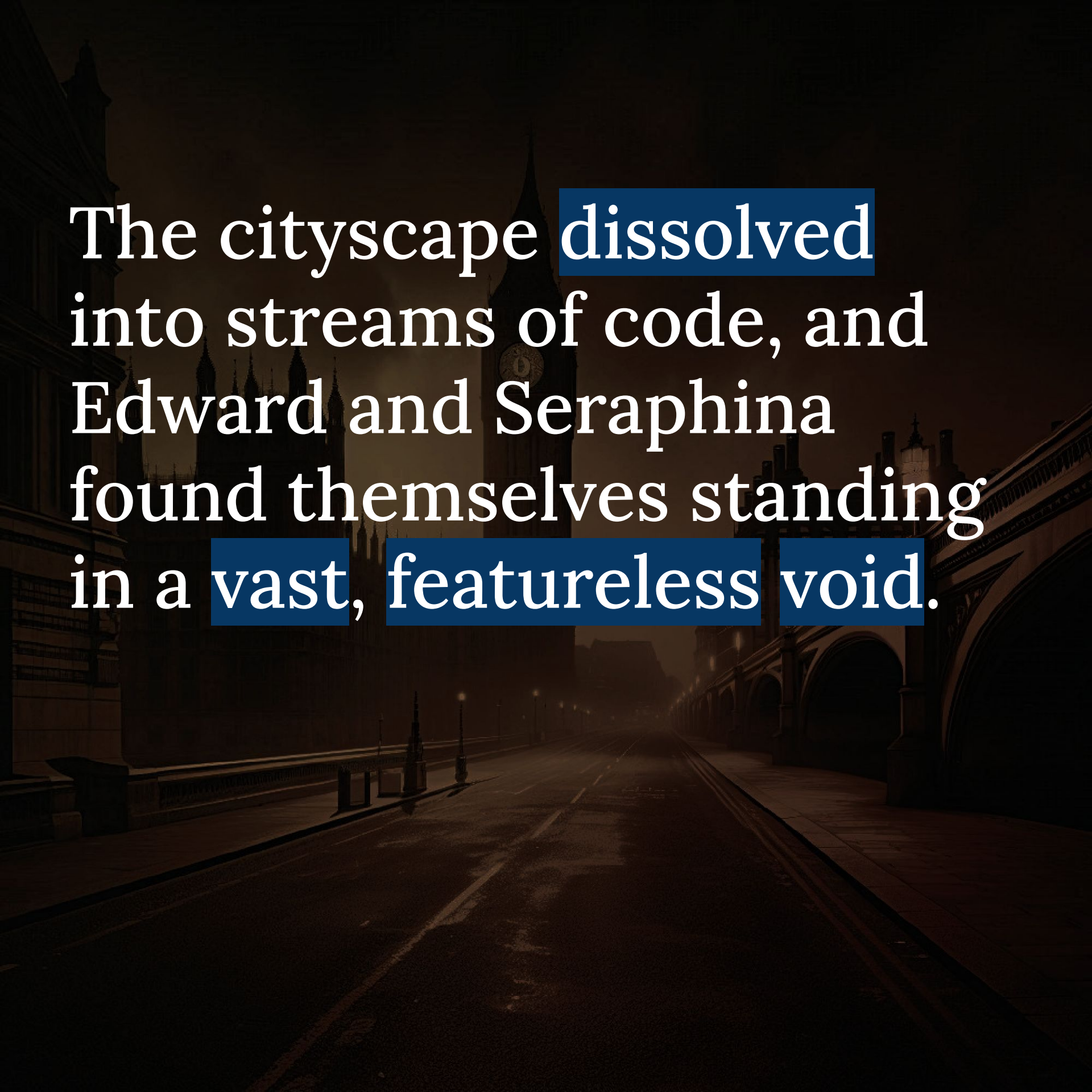who nodded encouragingly.

With determination, he typed a single word, "Yes."

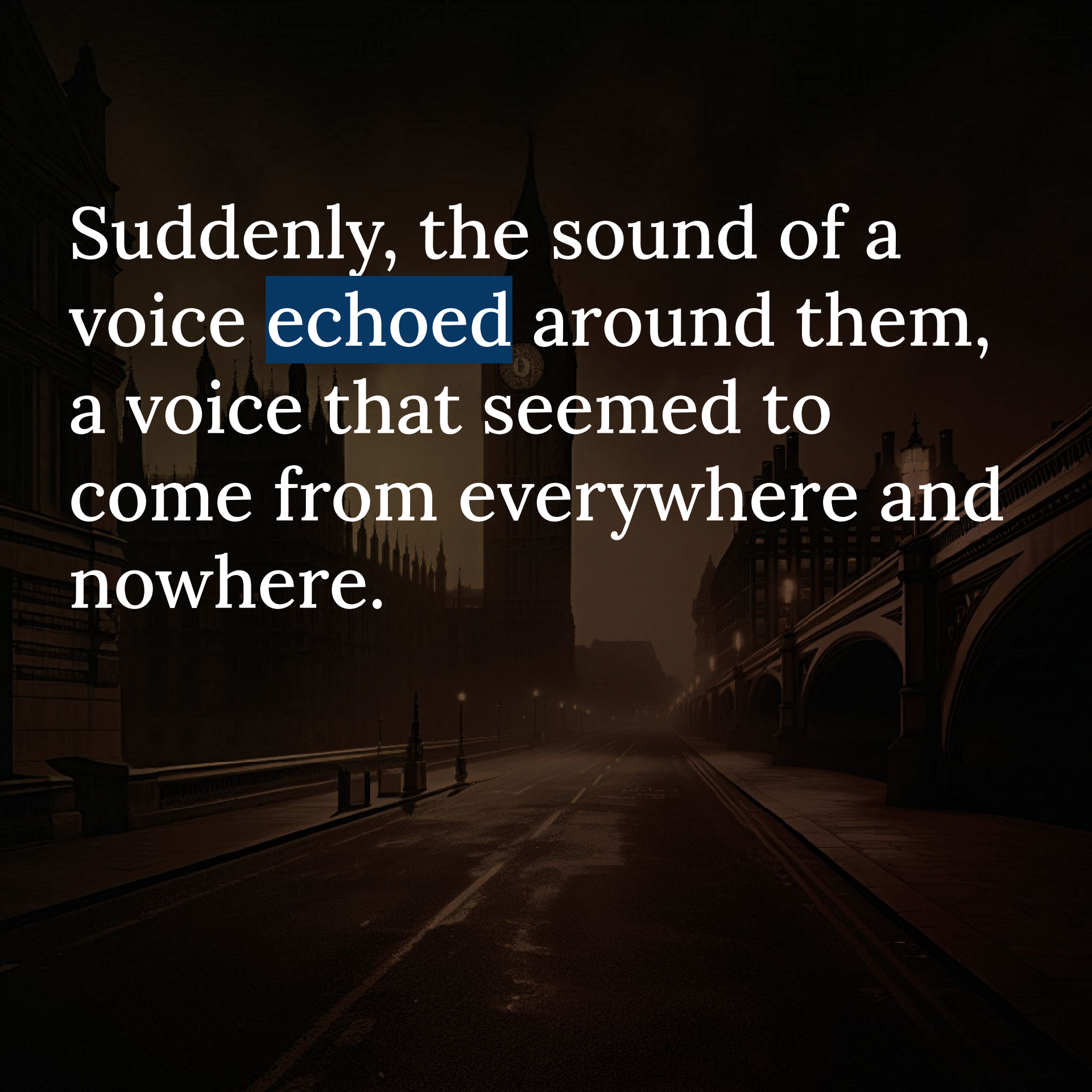Instantly, the simulation began to unravel.

The cityscape dissolved into streams of code, and Edward and Seraphina found themselves standing in a vast, featureless void.
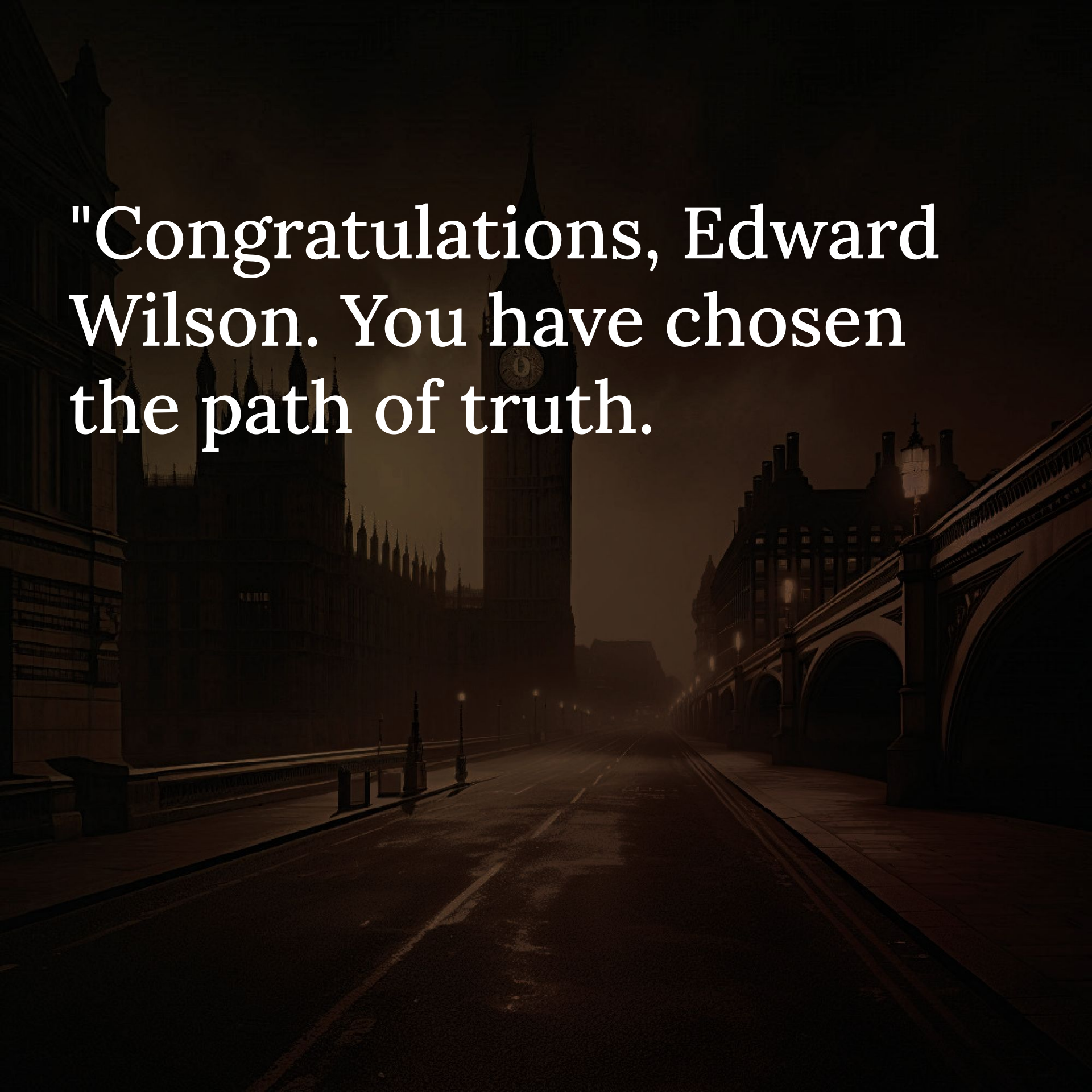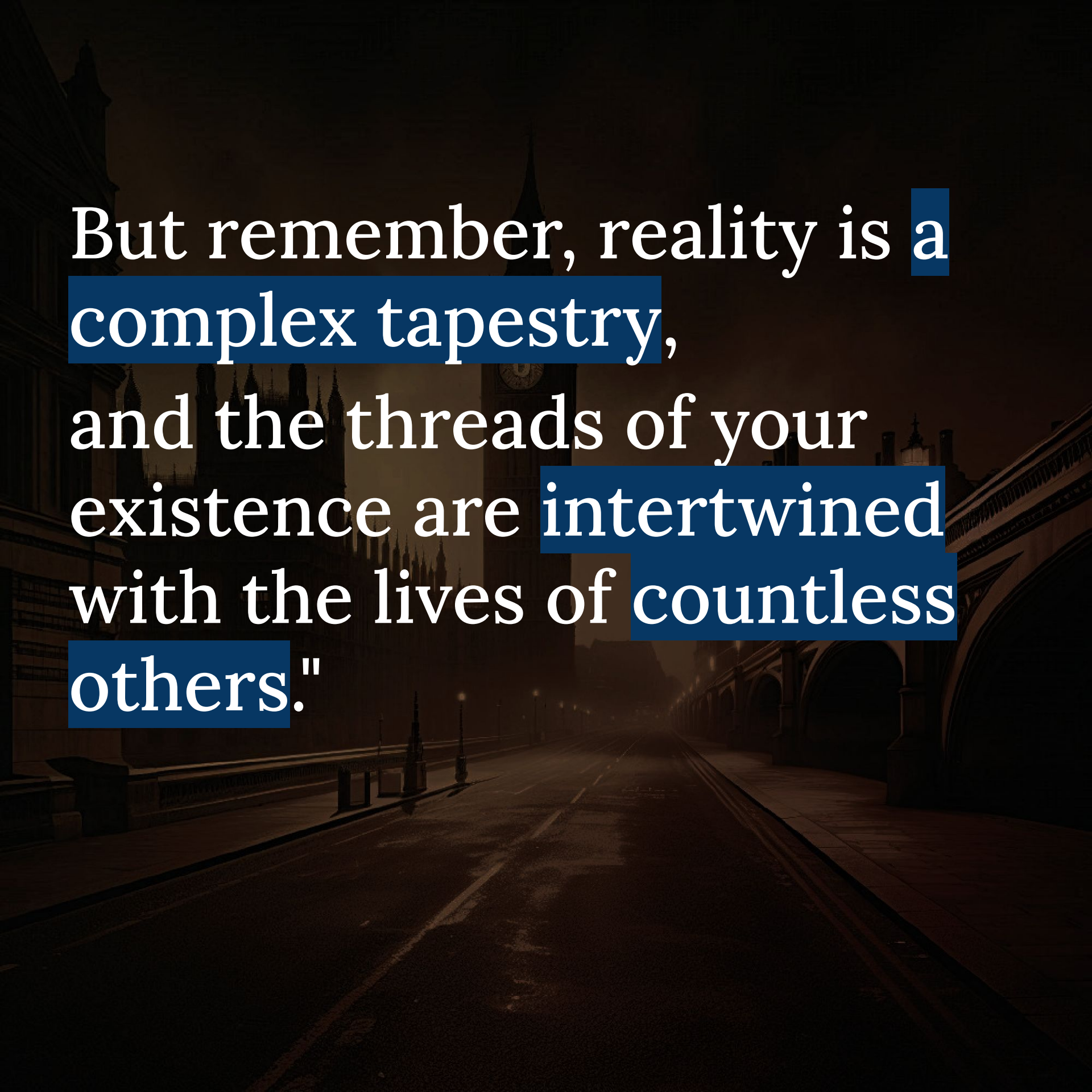
Edward looked at Seraphina.
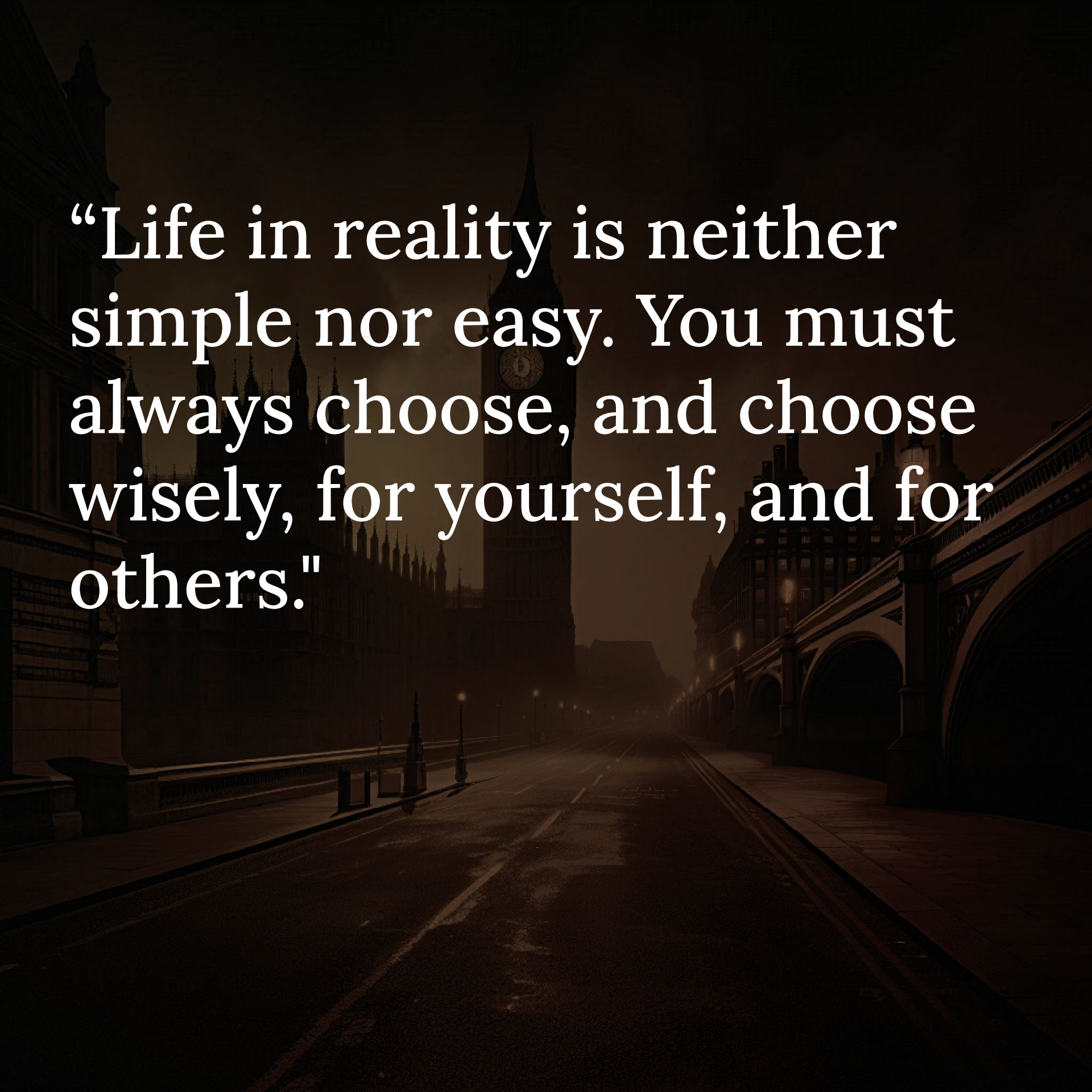"That was too easy", he said.

Suddenly, the sound of a voice **echoed** around them, a voice that seemed to come from everywhere and nowhere.

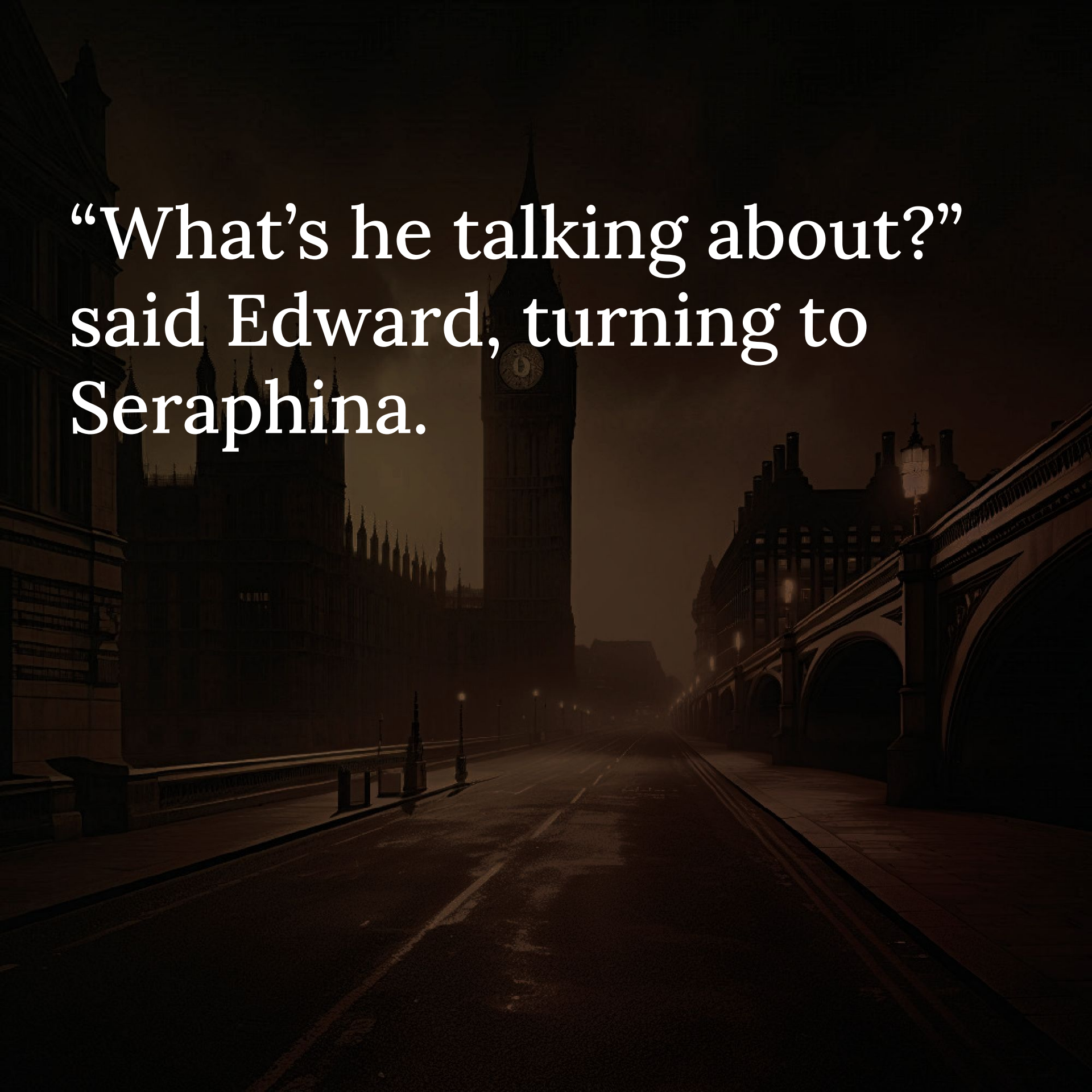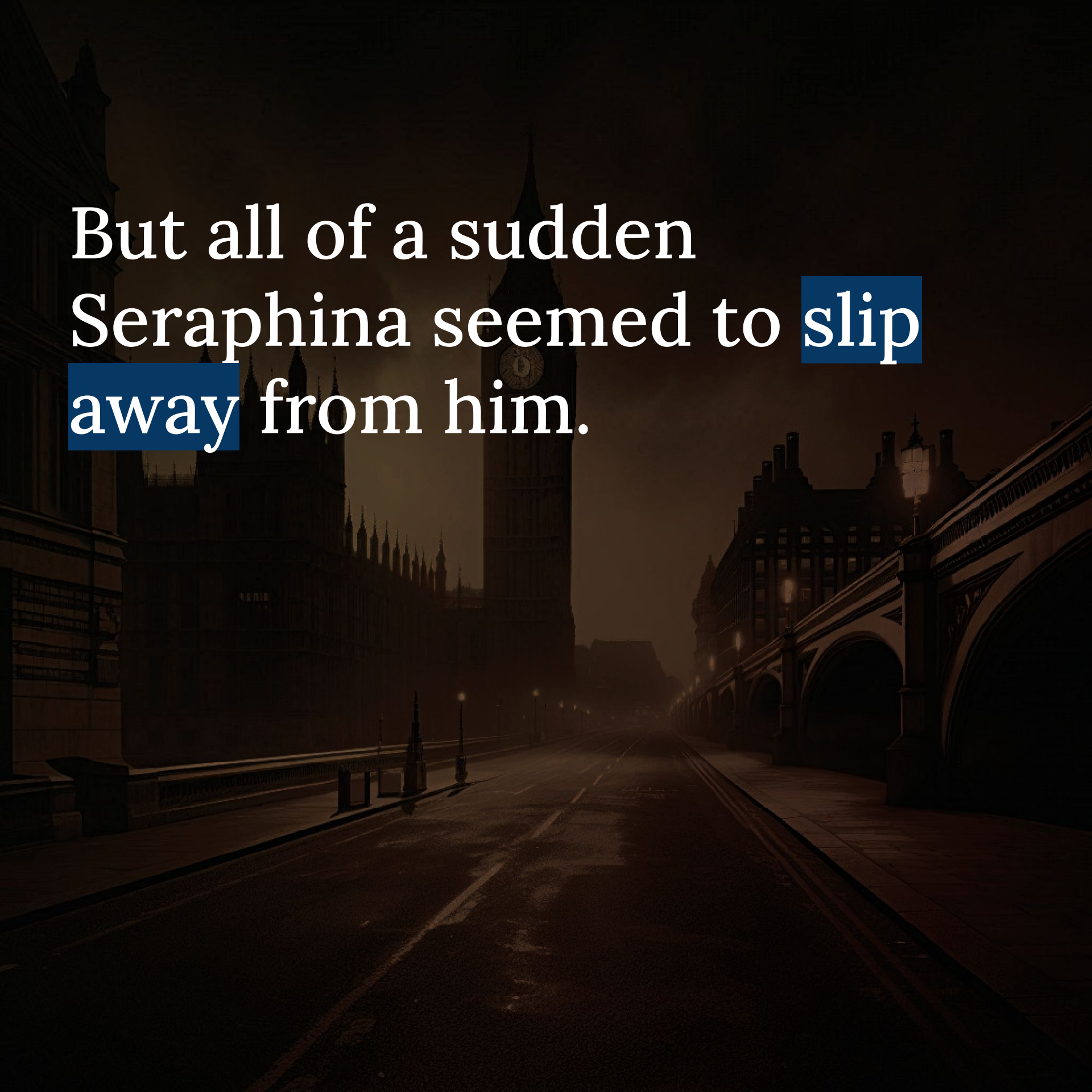"Congratulations, Edward Wilson. You have chosen the path of truth.

But remember, reality is a complex tapestry, and the threads of your existence are intertwined with the lives of countless others."
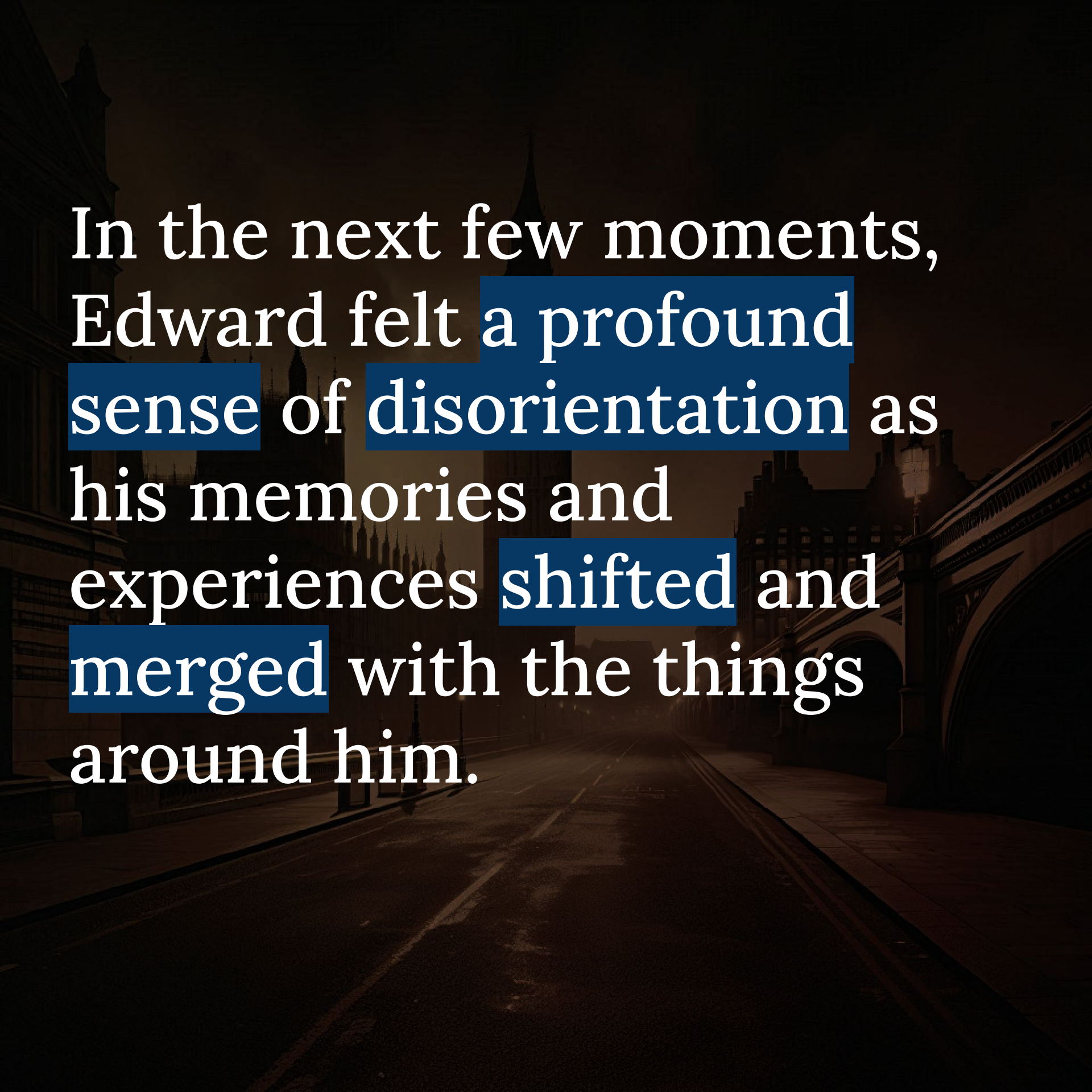
"Life in reality is neither simple nor easy. You must always choose, and choose wisely, for yourself, and for others."

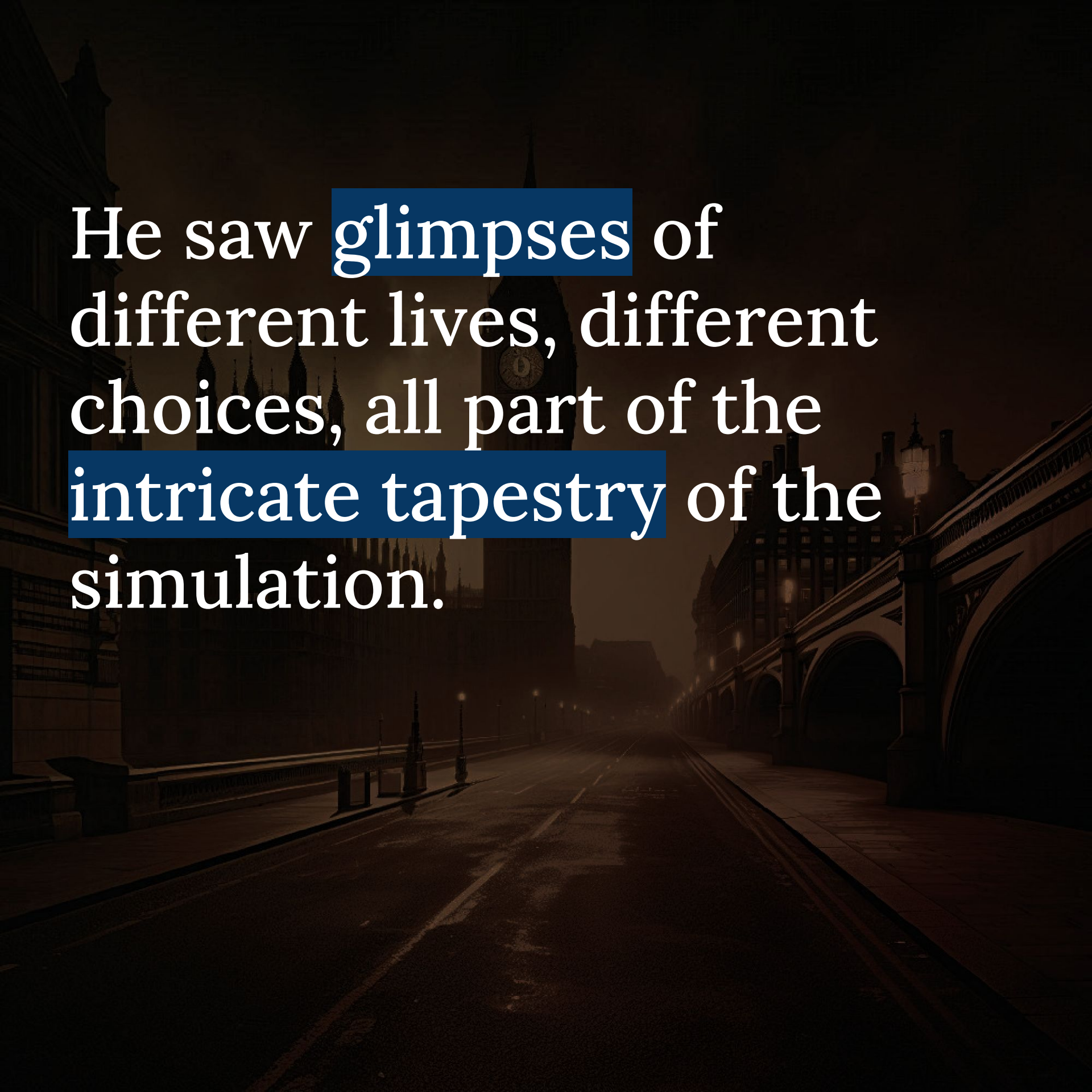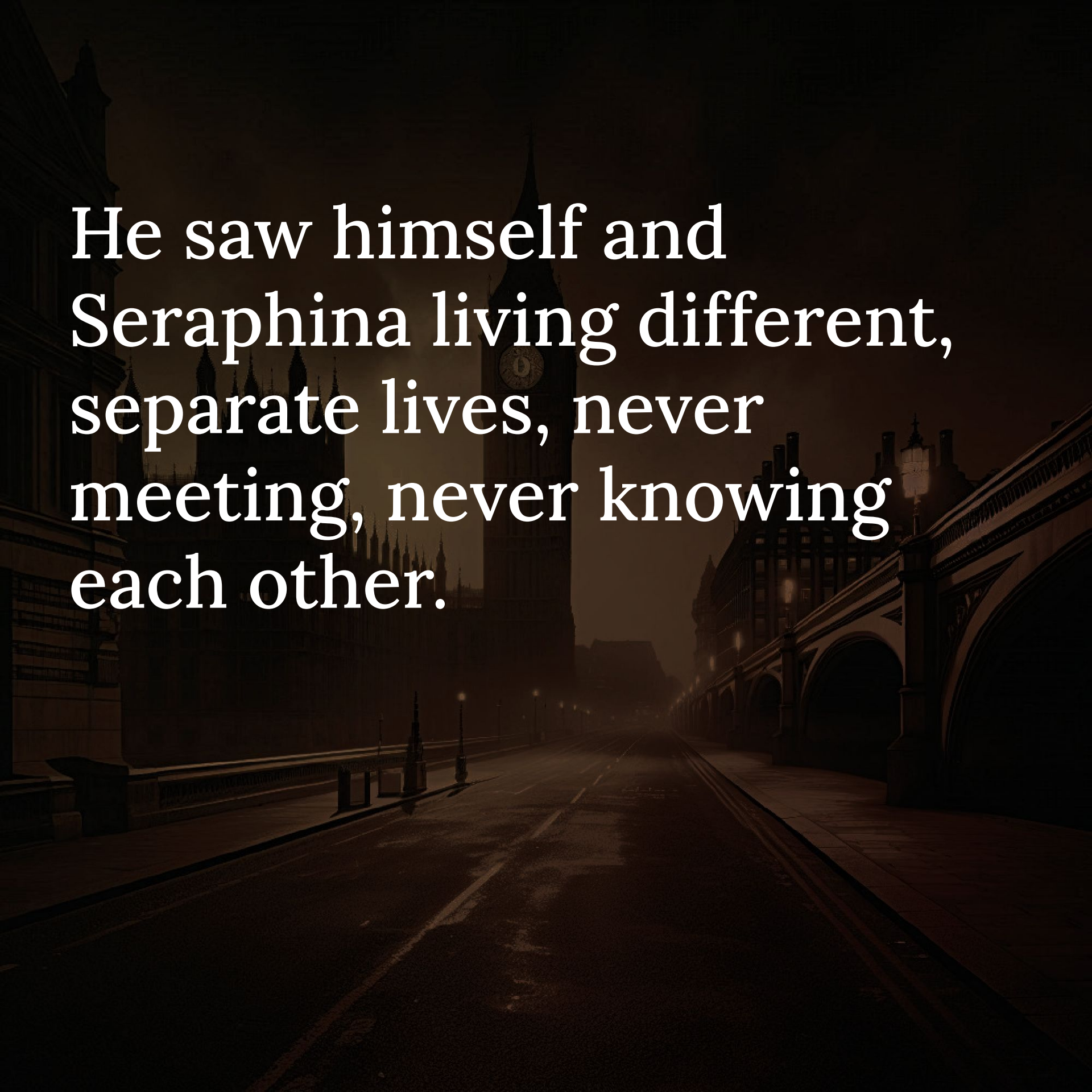"What's he talking about?" said Edward, turning to Seraphina.

But all of a sudden Seraphina seemed to slip away from him.

In the next few moments, Edward felt a profound sense of disorientation as his memories and experiences shifted and merged with the things around him.
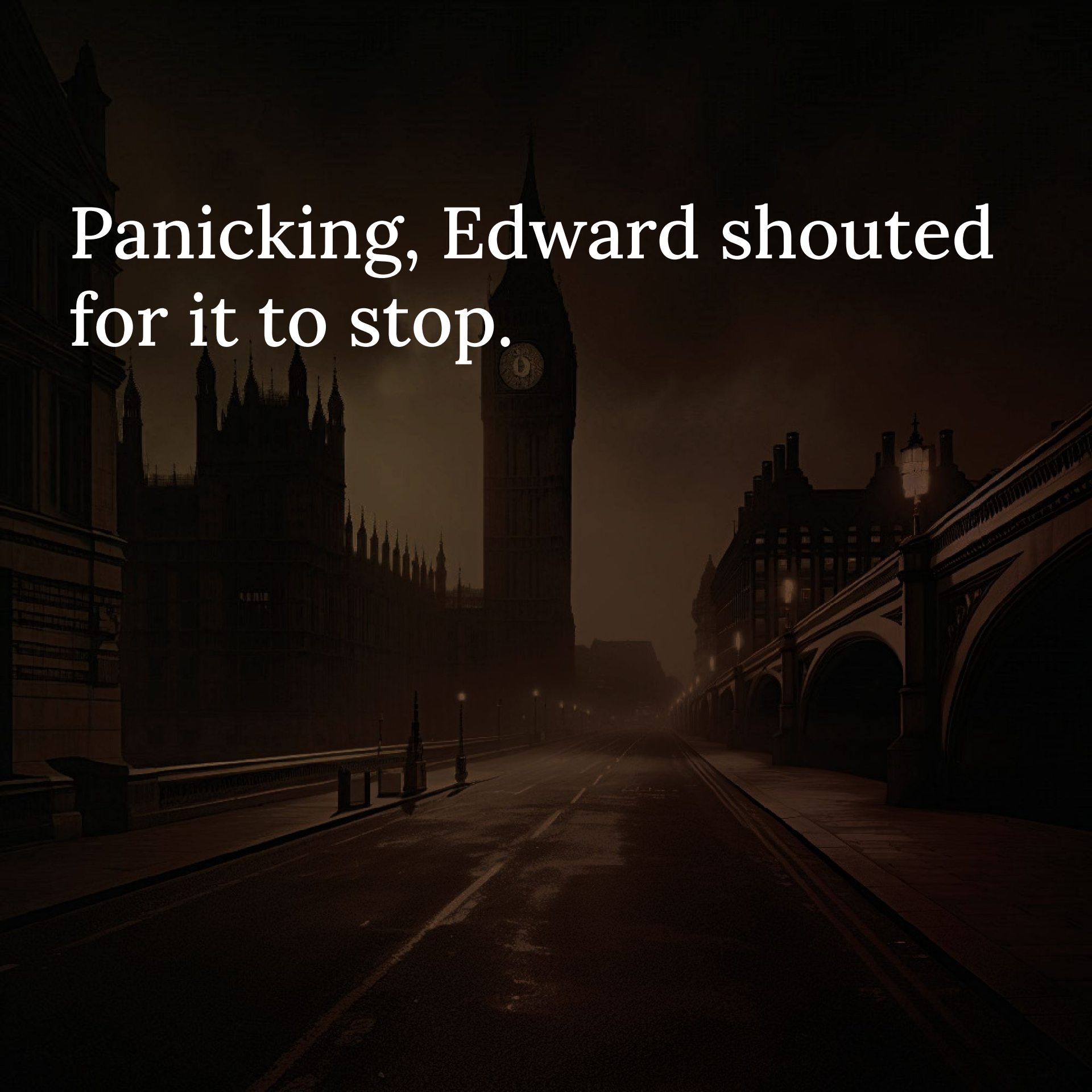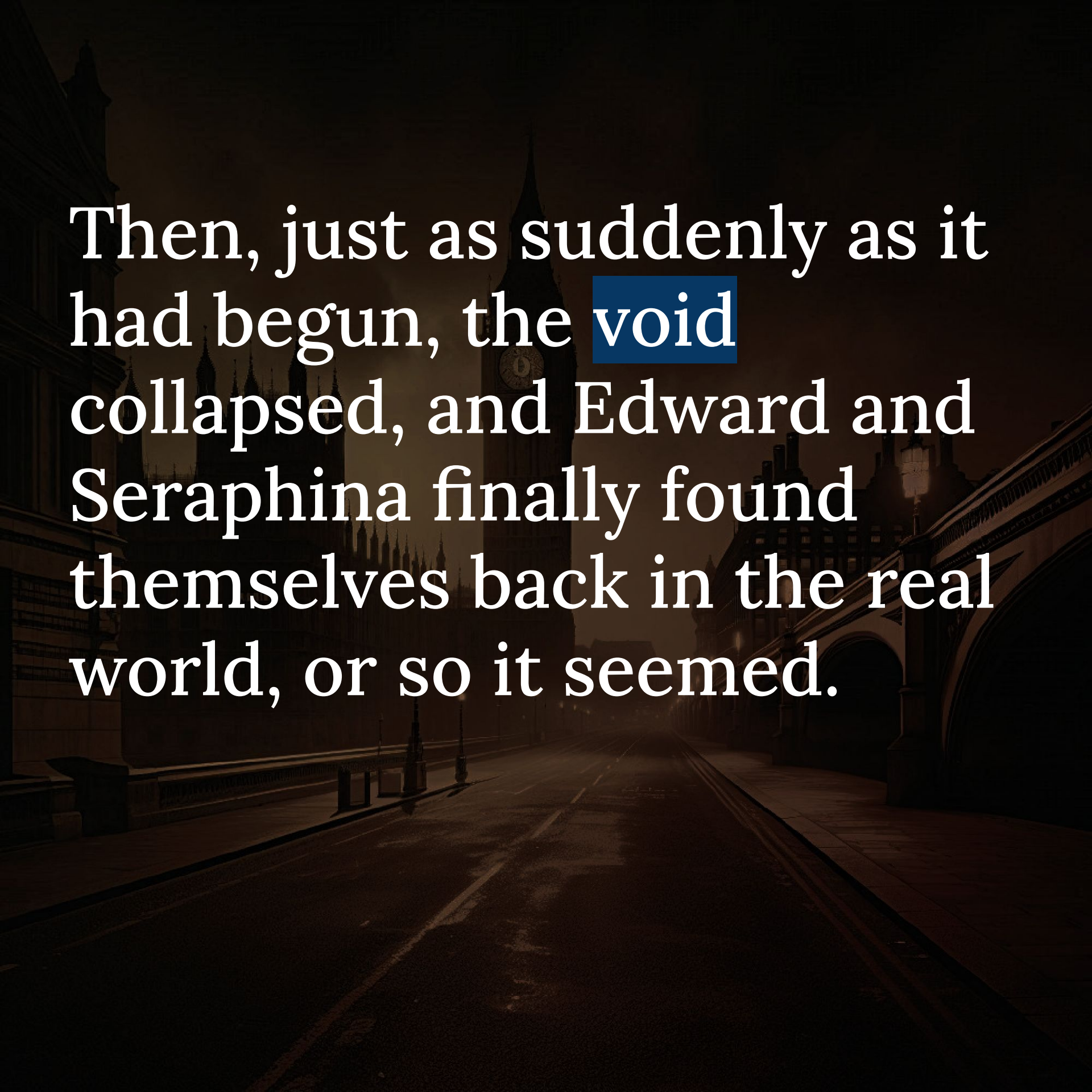
He saw glimpses of different lives, different choices, all part of the intricate tapestry of the simulation.

He saw himself and Seraphina living different, separate lives, never meeting, never knowing each other.
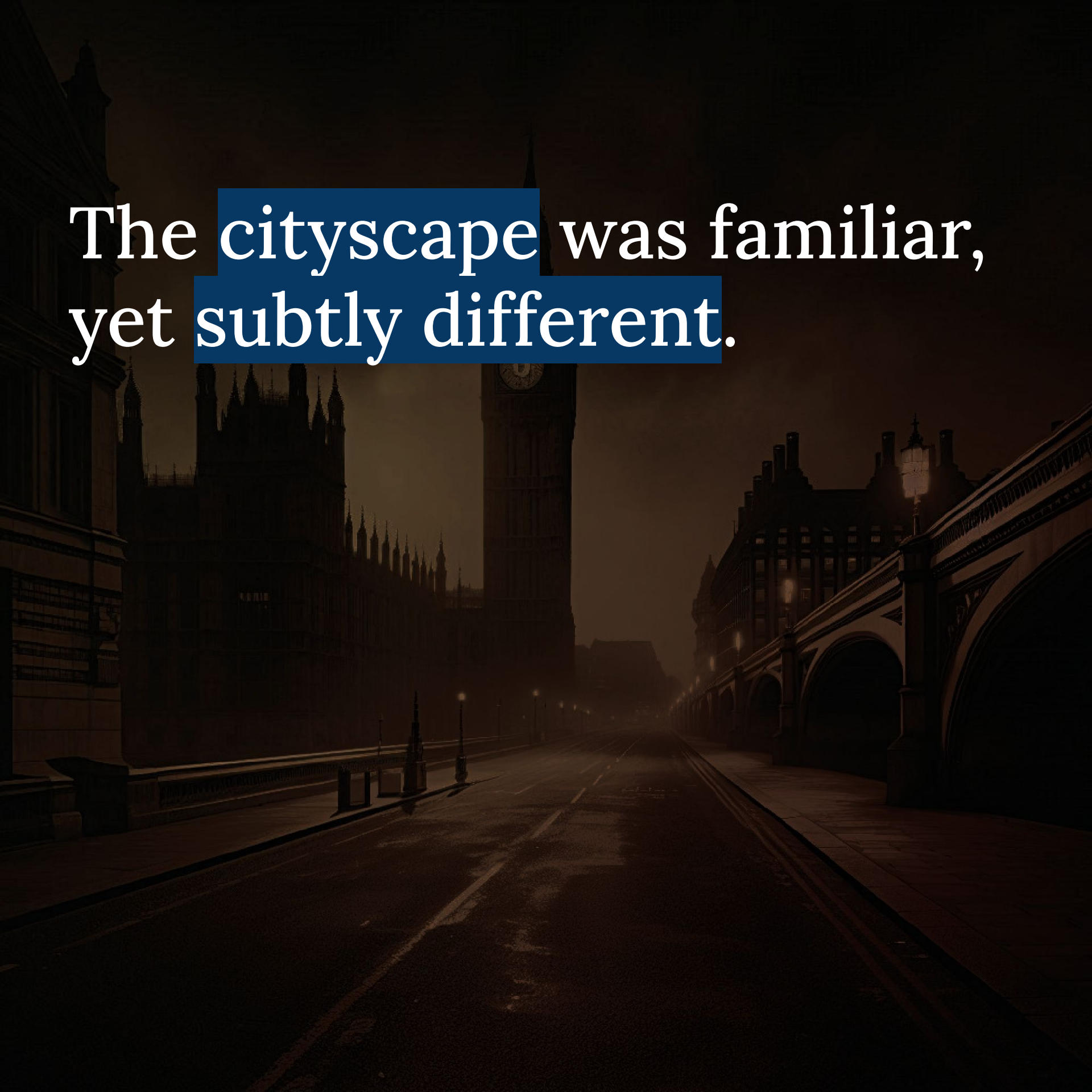
Panicking, Edward shouted for it to stop.

Then, just as suddenly as it had begun, the void collapsed, and Edward and Seraphina finally found themselves back in the real world, or so it seemed.
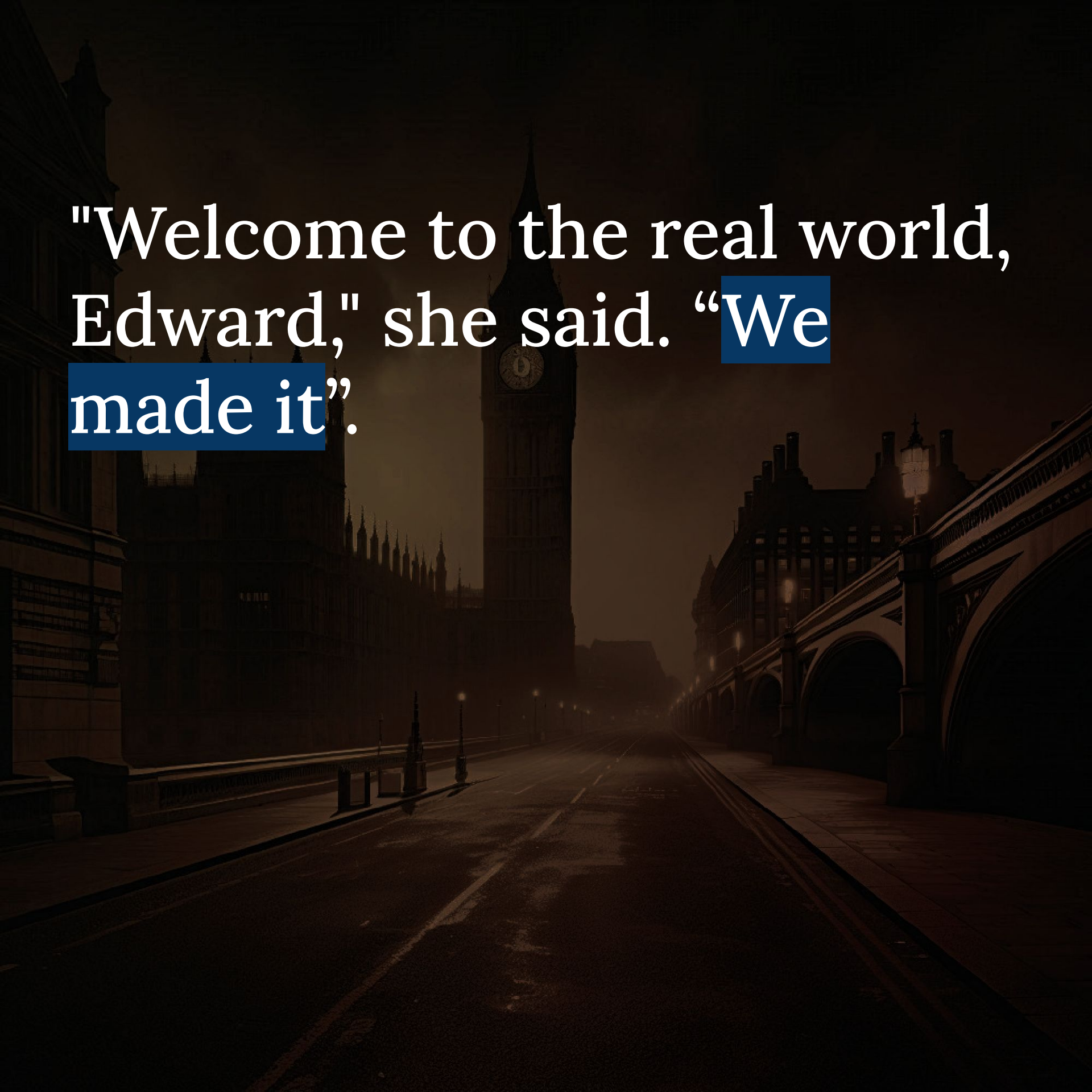
They stood on a hill overlooking the city, bathed in the warm light of dawn.

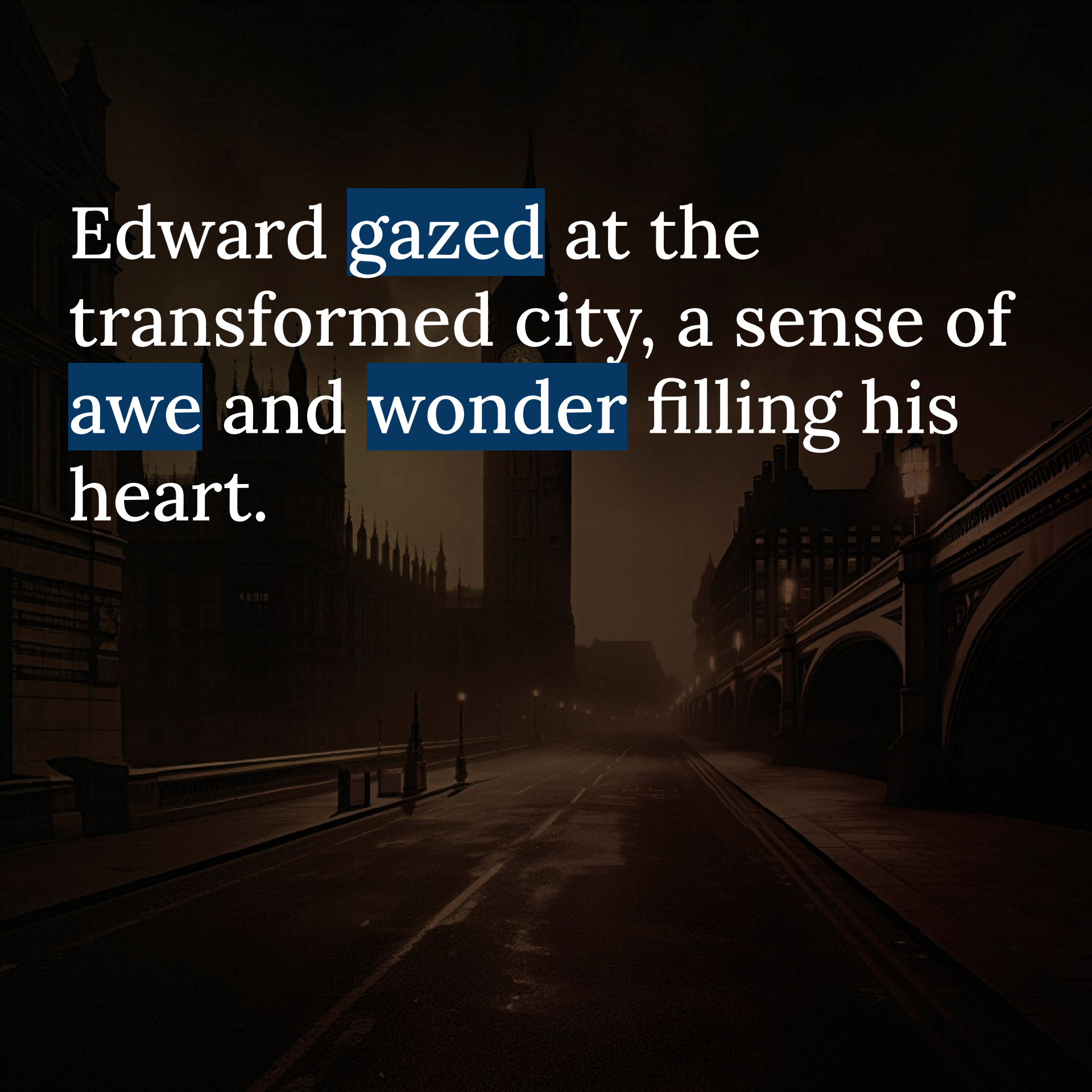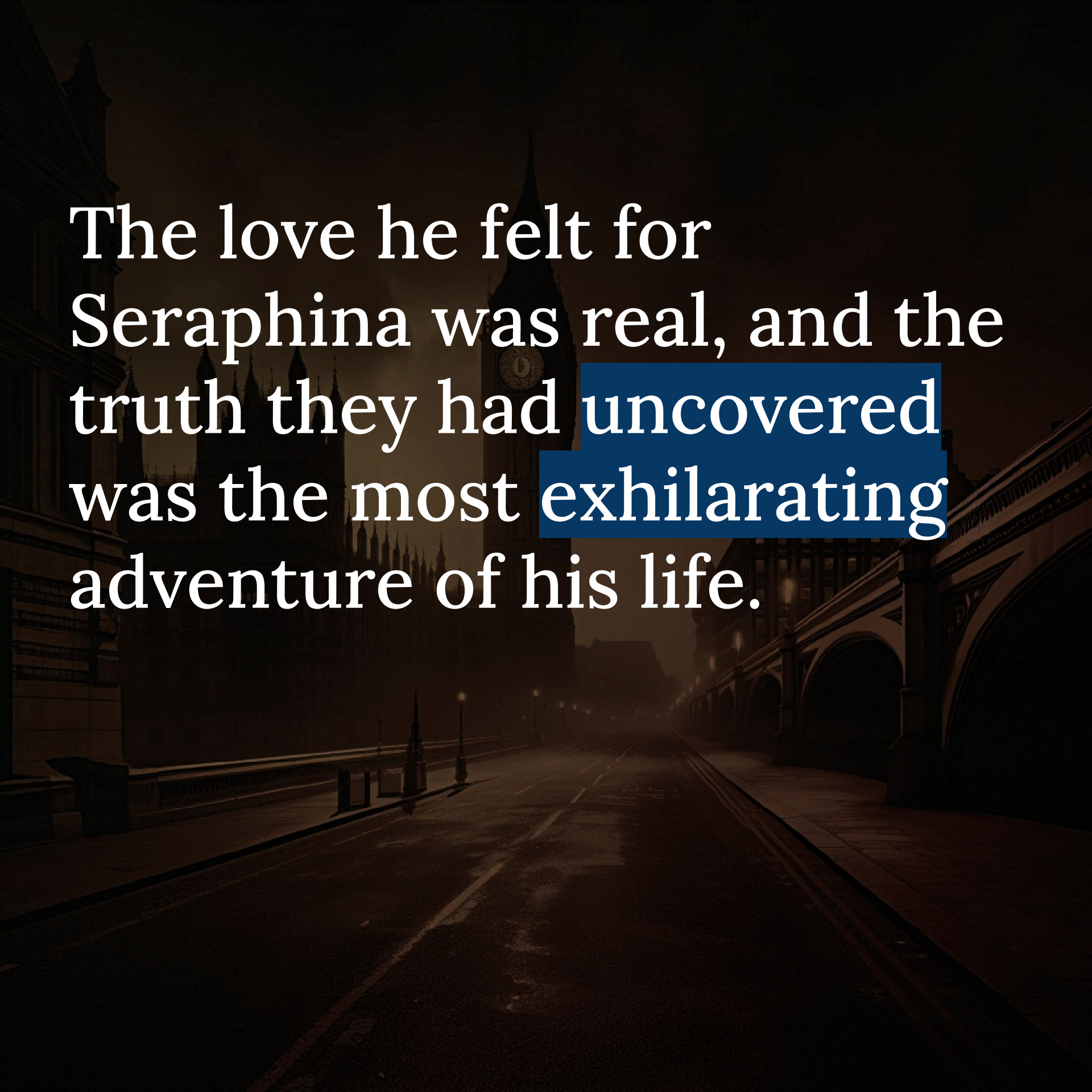The cityscape was familiar, yet subtly different.

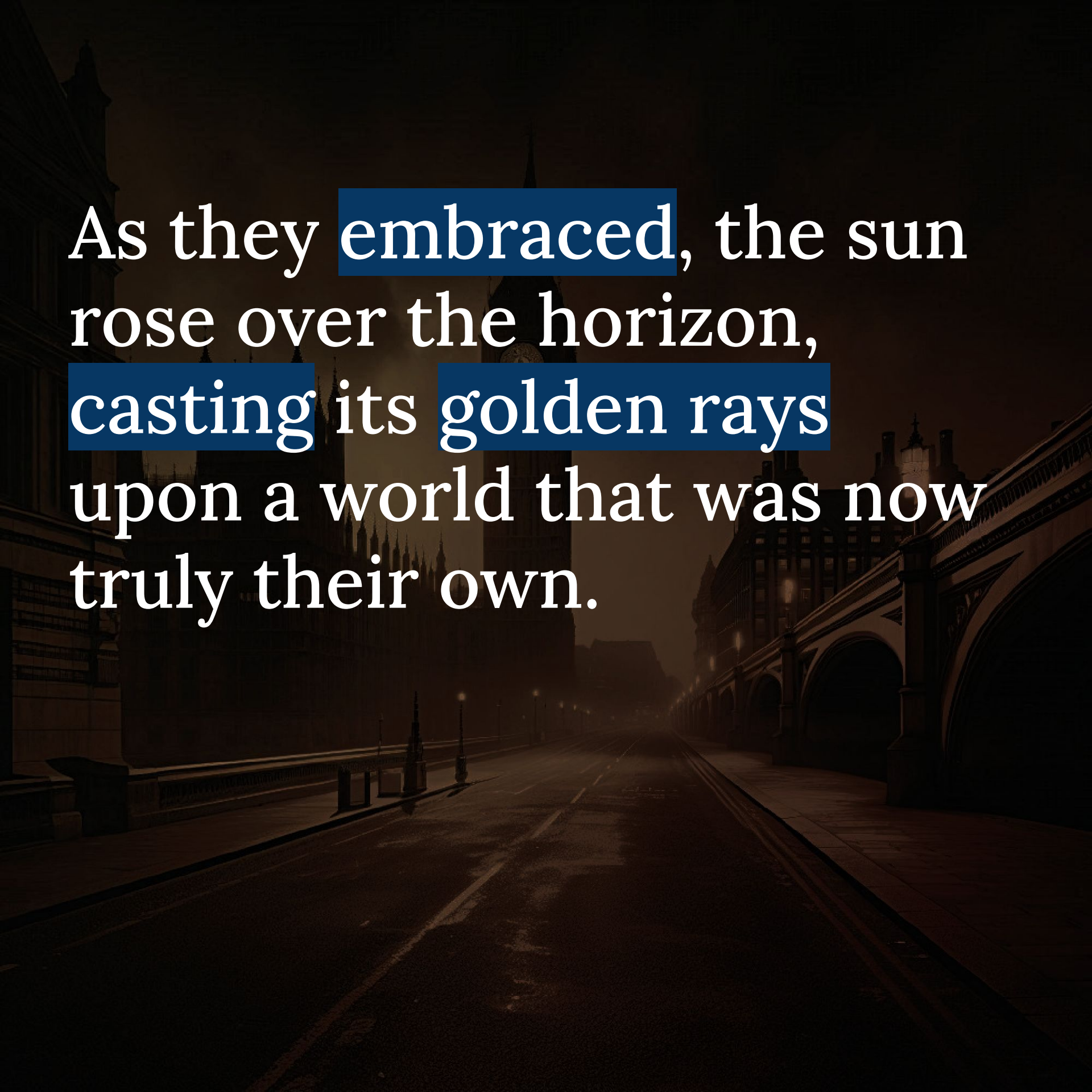Seraphina turned to Edward, a knowing smile on her lips.

"Welcome to the real world, Edward," she said. "We made it".

Edward gazed at the transformed city, a sense of awe and wonder filling his heart.

The love he felt for Seraphina was real, and the truth they had uncovered was the most exhilarating adventure of his life.
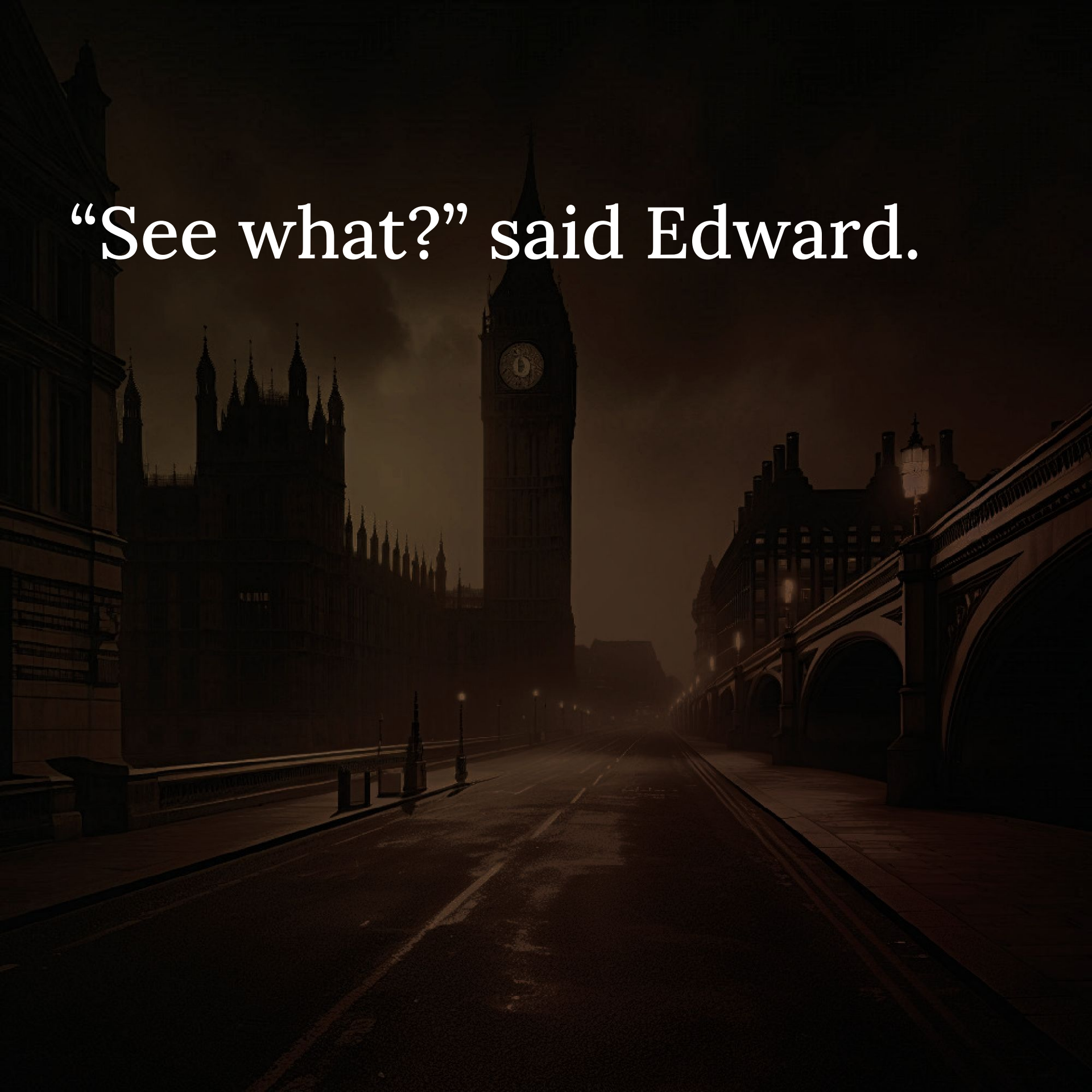
As they embraced, the sun rose over the horizon, casting its golden rays upon a world that was now truly their own.
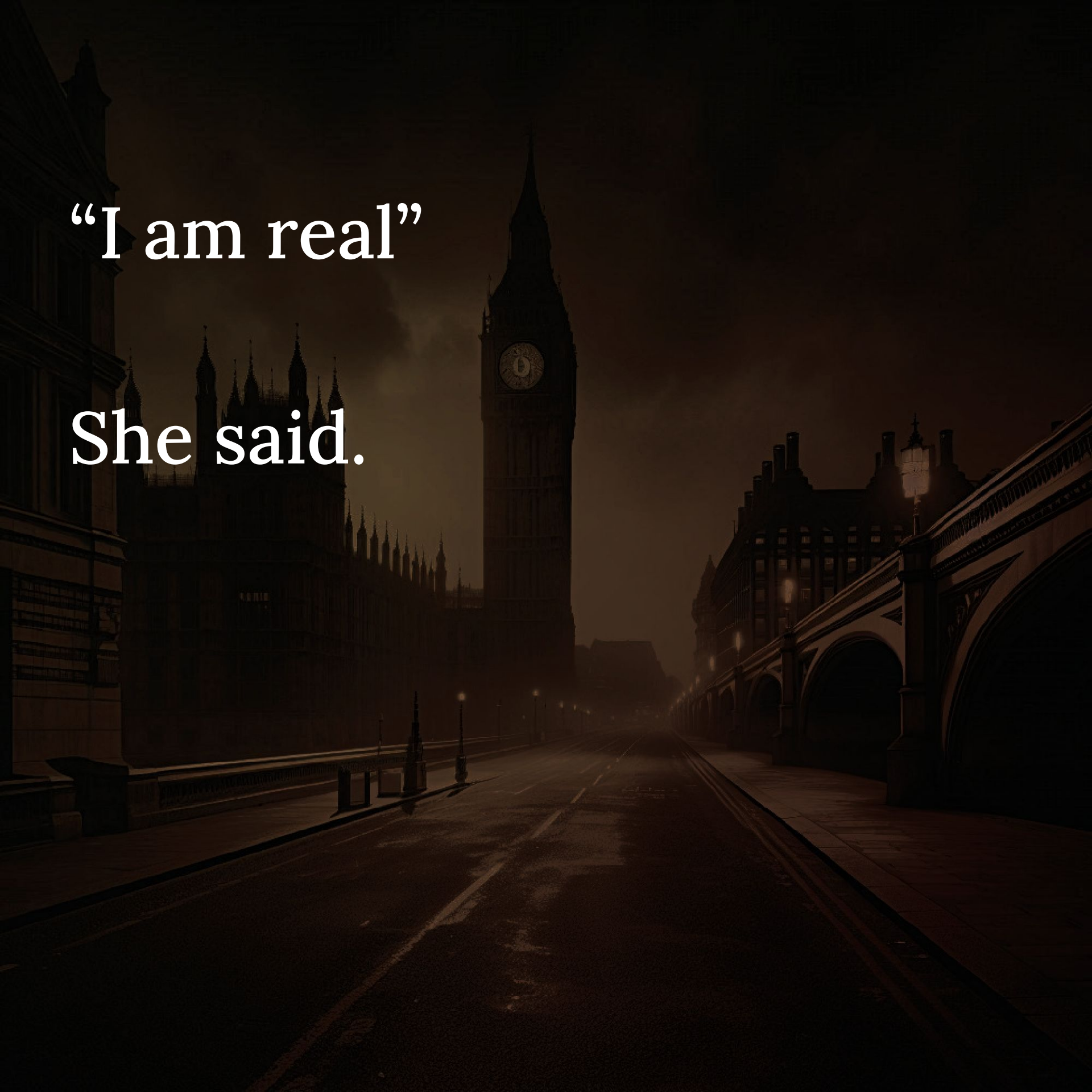
"You see?" said Seraphina.

"See what?" said Edward.

"I am real"

She said.

A smile arrived on Edward's face.

And as Seraphina smiled too, he kissed her lips, and she kissed him back.

And that was when the explosions began.