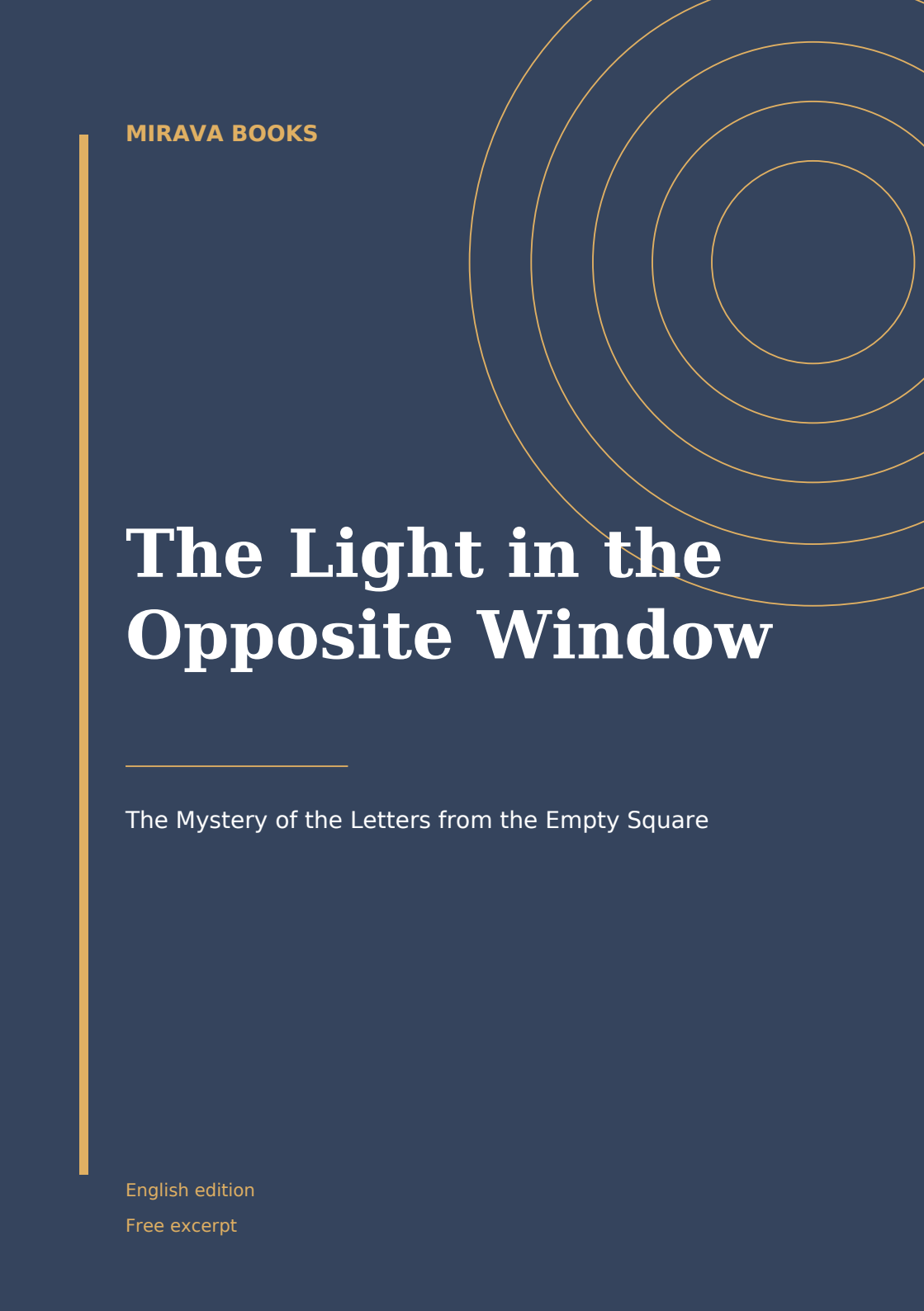




MIRAVA BOOKS

The Light in the Opposite Window

The Mystery of the Letters from the Empty Square

English edition

Free excerpt

The Light in the Opposite Window

The Mystery of the Letters from the Empty Square

English edition · Revised edition · October 2026

A city mystery about a light at night, an old clock, and letters connecting a present-day square to its forgotten past. The ten chapters form one story and are intended to be read in order. All characters and events are fictional; any resemblance is coincidental. The text and translations were prepared with assistance from artificial intelligence.

MIRAVA · Text and translation prepared with AI assistance.

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The Window at Two

Lada Chernenko was working on a bakery sign when a window lit up in the building opposite. Her phone showed exactly two in the morning. The old building had been empty since winter, and at first Lada thought its residents had returned. But the light went out seven minutes later. The next night it happened again, and then once more.

In the morning, an envelope without a stamp or address lay beneath her door. Inside was a short instruction: “Don't let them remove the old clock.” The paper bore a circular impression of a toothed wheel. One tooth was missing from the mark. Lada placed the letter between two clean sheets to avoid rubbing it away.

A sign announcing a future shopping pavilion already stood in the square. The tower clock was to be dismantled on Friday to make room for a new entrance. Lada was designing wayfinding signs for the project and knew that the documents called the old tower “a separate decorative feature.” She liked the square, but affection alone was not enough grounds for an objection.

Rita Berezhnaya's café smelled of cinnamon. Rita had seen the window too: after cleaning up late, she had waited for a taxi beside the glass door. “A caretaker, perhaps?” Lada showed her the letter. Rita stopped stirring her sugar. Her café faced the tower directly; the new plan would put a blank wall in front of its windows.

They agreed to ask Timur Savchuk, a clockmaker. Lada did not yet know whether someone was asking her to save the square or drawing her into somebody else's dispute. But someone had chosen her door, and an hour when the town scarcely spoke.

The Clock That Runs Fast

Timur opened the tower's clock housing with a municipal technician present. The clock was exactly seven minutes fast: at noon, it showed 12:07. Fresh, pale scratches marked the winding shaft. Someone had wound it recently, although no servicing was planned before dismantling.

The technician pointed downwards. An old cable led out of the housing; a diagram showing a fan remained on the inside of its door. Timur photographed it. "The clock once sent a signal somewhere else. We need to check that before taking it apart." For the first time, Lada noticed that the tower's lower section continued beneath the paving stones.

The municipal key was held by Pavel Nevsky, the archivist. He showed it to them in a drawer, along with the usage register. The previous Thursday, the key had been issued to Pavel himself for an inspection ahead of an exhibition about the square's history. "I looked at the mountings. I didn't touch the mechanism," he said. Perhaps a technician had used another key, he added. Timur asked for that to be checked against the work records.

On the archivist's desk lay a heavy bronze wheel serving as a paperweight. One tooth had broken off. Pavel used it to hold a sheet flat and wrote the date in the archive's customary order: year, month, day. Lada remembered it because she always put the day first on her designs.

"Seven minutes of light and seven minutes ahead," she said as they left. Timur did not smile. "Anyone can arrange a coincidence. But the scratches on the shaft are real." For now, they would measure time by a phone, rather than by a clock someone had already helped to tell a different story.

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