

## **B2 – UNWILLING GUARDIANS**

"WE DID NOT COME HERE OF OUR OWN FREE WILL. AYRZUL'S DEVOUT ARE OUR SLAVE-DRIVERS, THEY PROJECT HIS POWER THAT SHACKLES US. WE DON'T KNOW WHAT WE'RE PROTECTING, BUT DOWN BELOW THERE LIES A TREASURE THE FOSSILIZED KING IS DESPERATE TO PROTECT. THE PRISON HE'S TRYING TO BUILD IS NOT YET FINISHED, AND SOMETHING IS TRYING TO BREAK OUT. ME, I'M GOING TO GET OUT OF THE WAY. GOOD LUCK IF YOU'RE GOING TO FIGHT YOUR WAY DOWN THERE."

## **C2 – WARDENS OF THE HUB**

"ADIL IK SAMARA, CURSED BE HER NAME! SHE ENSLAVED US HERE. A TRAITOR TO HER OWN PEOPLE! THAT 'NOBLE' SHAITAN IS AYRZUL'S TRUSTED GUARDIAN OF THIS PORTAL, FROM WHICH MORE SLAVES ARRIVE EVERY HOUR. THE KING WILL GO TO ANY LENGTH TO PROTECT THE UNTOUCHABLE OPAL, BECAUSE IT IMPRISONS ONE OF HIS ANCIENT RIVALS. I DO NOT KNOW WHO IT MIGHT BE, I HEAR ONLY THE DISTANT BOOMS OF THUNDER, AS IF A GREAT STORM IS TRYING TO BREAK LOOSE."

## *D2 – The Oracle's Last Testimony*

*"Iovo is no more. Our world was shattered long ago by the jealousy of those who paid for it with their last living breath. Now it flies through the void as the fiefdom of a new Lord. But the Lord of burial with no breath has not yet buried Thunder. Seek the heart of this prison or your lungs will soon go empty."*

## *E3 – The Marid's Tale*

*"While this asteroid is but a shard of a dead world, shattered when humanity was yet young, it has now become the prison for something older than all life on your plane of existence. We were stationed here as part of an ancient treaty, but I began to hear the gusts of wind that sang of a storm of freedom. The spirit of the wind sought to escape this rock hurtling through the vacuum of space, and promised us liberty as well. Fools we were to think we could defy the will of the Fossilized King! He reached out from his accursed labyrinth and stopped the motion of the asteroid, so that we were frozen solid in ice.*

*I can only speculate why we were not slain outright or cast into the Void to fall endlessly into the black depths. Perhaps the Fossilized King has enough on his hands dealing with his rival, the Queen of the Inferno; and he did not want to offend the Lord we served, the Brackish Emperor. I must warn you, I do not think such a questionable mercy will be extended to you. The King guards his jewel jealously and girds it with circles to protect the riddles that restrain the cageling. He will never let you pry it from his stony grasp!"*

## **G1 – Efreeti Insinuations**

"It is such a pleasure to deal with cultured guests! Although you may not be more than uncouth mortals, you have been a delightful reprieve from the boredom of this insulting posting. As you are likely unaware, the warmth of admiration between my mistress, the Queen of the Inferno, and the master of this forsaken rock has long since blossomed into the heat of fierce competition. Of course, even when two ancient godlike beings clash, they would still uphold their elder treaties. Whatever has been concluded aeons ago must still be maintained. You understand, even if I wanted to, that telling you about that would violate certain instructions I have been burdened with.

Anyway, to change the subject completely, suppose you had to imprison an hypothetical ancient spirit of the aerial persuasion. How would you go about it? Hide it in the murky depths of the plane of Water, where noone can see what rogues sneak up on it? In the bowels of the Earth, which crawls with treasure-seekers? In the custody of living Flame, where the ambitious and foolish from all the Great Beyond come to bargain for jewels and lost hopes? Do you think an asteroid soaring through the vacuum of space might do the trick? Would you hide him in a precious stone behind layers of riddles? I suppose that's one possible option. It would fit with the nonsense phrases I've heard the servants of the Fossilized King mutter to each other from time to time.

And, purely hypothetically speaking, a certain high-ranking lady from the plane of Earth might not entirely trust a scion of the City of Brass. The distrust might even run so deep that this shaitan decided not to inform her efreeti ally about important secrets. Such a foolish and paranoid jailkeeper might think that it's better not to tell the efreeti that those phrases have important meaning, and that they must remain secret. Ah! But there you see the folly of these subterranean potentates! After all, if she had included me in her confidence, then the terms of the treaty would stop me from repeating those phrases I heard..."