

"Who could have built it?" Arel asked, scanning the scene for any distinctive features which could serve as clues to its history. "The Yans first set foot into this country hundreds of generations ago, yet their oldest legends say to shun this place. Surely this could not have been built by their ancestors."

"No," I agreed. "It must be far older than the Yanish advent in these lands."

*... worlds haunted by shades of death ...*

A dolorous wailing cried out from the empty air, as though a host of tortured spirits were cast down into the very Pit of Hell, and some three dozen or more wavering, indistinct forms—vaguely-recognizable as human in shape—rose up from the ground about the chamber like a flowing mist. Their hazy features were warped in extremes of sorrow and agony, their incessant keening maddening to the ears, and each seemed armed with some shape which was suggestive of a weapon.

The unearthly sendings swarmed around us, gliding over the timeworn floor rather than treading upon it, and pressing in, struck out for us with their cloudy blades. Though we saw this nightmare of surreal insanity through a veil of stark unbelief, we were not unnerved, and gritting our teeth we received their onslaught with screaming steel and vicious resistance. Shouting defiantly, we clashed with the spectral multitude in a fury of violence.

But no two mortals, no matter how great their prowess, could have stood untouched against that tide indefinitely, and at length we began to feel the bites of their weapons. I was the first to receive a blow, a slashing stroke upon my arm. The skin was undamaged, yet the sensation was like fire and ice running through my veins; the muscle spasmed from the jolt and my hand numbed such that it fell limp.

*... and things even darker and more ancient*

It was what I took to be a devil or spirit of some long forgotten religion. It stood perhaps nine feet in total height, with lean, slender limbs, for the most part like those of a normal man excepting that the