

THE BOOK OF THE DARK EYE

This small tome is bound in black leather with a engraved frontispiece made of silver bearing the title. The book is divided into three separate sections by sheets of blood-red velvet.

The first section of the book consists of worm-eaten pages, about a dozen in number, filled with a dense, crabbed script which occasionally becomes spidery and sprawling without apparent reason... extended readings prove nauseating and disorienting. The language is a corrupted form of ancient Elvish, and marginal notes suggest that the pages are a translation from an older tongue. The author or translator displays an obsession with capitalization and interjections. Most of the text is a meandering prayer, both groveling and gruesome, to something variously called the Dark Eye, the One and the None, the Overlord of the Four, and the Elder Elemental Eye. There are also disgusting supplications, dedications, and vows from the author to the entity.

The next section is badly scorched and stained. The text appears to be a disjointed collection of notes relating to relics of the Elder Elemental Eye. One of the more coherent passages details the eyewitness account of a ritual called "The Blessing of the Eye":

"...with four-score flames in attendance and Drelleth the Blind beating out the sacred cadence, Sahfarn knelt before the black altar and touched the stone with the supplicant's kiss. And lo, the power of the Eye coursed forth from his bare lips, purifying the altar in waves of amethyst light until naught a sliver of black remained but The Seed at the Center. And thus heads bowed did we enjoin the Verse of Beckoning. The Seed undulated as swollen veins of brightest purple shot through the altar and Sahfarn called for a quickening of the chant. His wisdom was rewarded as the Seed began to beat as a living heart and a searing wave of heat rolled across our down-turned faces as the fiery orange glory of the Eye burst forth to bathe us in its glory!! Three brothers on my left fell faint on the cold black stone and Brother Themachelus shrieked a whinnying scream and began clawing at his face. I felt my heart swell with the glory of the Dark Eye as I knew I had not been found lacking like my weak brethren. Sahfarn bowed low before the piercing Eye of Truth and held aloft the sacred Staff of Worms, touching it to the forehead of our sacrificial charge. The girl, still swaying in the sweet dreams of the Thavar Root, stumbled forth before the Eye and -- with naught but a whispered murmur -- was taken as if by a massive viper strike. As we finished the final chorus of the Verse of Entreaty, the Eye pulsed yellow -- our offering had been accepted! Sahfarn humbly touched the Staff of Worms to the Eye in a gesture of gratitude and supplication. My eyes were stabbed with shooting pains as a nimbus of black energy enveloped him. And then the Eye began to disintegrate in a halo of heliotrope smoke. But there upon the altar lay a black pearl on a simple silver chain. And from that day forward the acts of Sahfarn were both beautiful and fearsome to behold."

The final section is titled "Rising of the Eye, Being A Definitive History of The Temple of Elemental Evil". The text is exceedingly neat and the fine vellum paper is in excellent condition. Although H.M. Thaque is credited as the author, it's clear from the carefully detailed footnotes that much of the material is taken from a series of interviews with an elven wizard named Falrinth. The Temple, it is said, was built upon an ancient unholy site at the behest of the demoness Tsuggtmoy, with the aid of another infernal power called Iuz. Tsuggtmoy, the Lady of Fungi, conceived of the plan as a way to lure the devotion of duped surface dwellers and draw to herself through the worship of the "Elder Elemental Eye" and the evil aspects of elemental forces. In essence, those worshippers among draw and evil men who thought they were serving "Elemental Evil" were in fact funneling their devotional power to Tsuggtmoy. The story details the subsequent fall and rebirth of the Temple of Elemental Evil, the manifestation and escape of Iuz, the imprisonment of Tsuggtmoy in the Temple's dungeons, and her eventual defeat at the hand of Jadoc Silversis and his band of elvish warriors. A somewhat

negatively-biased analysis of Silversis' hit-and-run tactics is given, along with some speculation that the Temple may have met a different fate if it hadn't attracted such a large army of followers and if a celestial named Vholshir hadn't been coaxed to intervene by the elvish hero Gelvanris, who was lost during the final few assaults on the Temple's deepest dungeons.

Gelvanris' death is somewhat of a mystery and Thaque takes an almost cruel delight in devoting an entire chapter to the various reports of how Gelvanris died. Some reports indicate he was the victim of a particularly potent fireball. Others interviews suggest he was crushed beneath an ambling mass of animated stone or that he drowned in a pool of acid. Perhaps the most bizarre theory is that he was strangled to death by a cursed necklace which he tried on in an uncharacteristic moment of greed. In any case, Gelvanris' body was never recovered, so the truth is left to the gods and balladeers.

The author also presents the following piece of prophetic doggerel, which he claims to have recovered from the Temple dungeons themselves after the sack of that bastion of evil:

The Two united, in the past,
a Place to build, and spells to cast.
Their power grew, and took the land
and people round, as they had planned.

A key without a lock they made
of gold and gems, and overlaid
with spells, a tool for men to wield
to force the powers of Good to yield.
But armies came, their weapons bared,
while Evil was yet unprepared.
The Hart was followed by the Crowns
and Moon, and people of the towns.

The Two were split - He got away
but She, when came the judgment day,
did break the key, and sent the rocks
to boxes four, with magic locks.

In doing so, She fell behind
as He escaped. She was confined
among Her own; Her very lair
became Her prison and despair.

The Place was ruined, torn apart
and left with chains around the heart
of Evil power - but the key
was never found in the debris.

He knows not where She dwells today.
She set the minions' path, the way
To lift her Temple high again
With tools of flesh, with mortal men.

Many now have gone to die
in water, flame, in earth, or sky.
They did not bear the key of old
that must be found - the orb of gold.

Beware, my friend, for you shall fall
unless you have the wherewithal
to find and search the boxes four
and then escape forevermore.

But with the key, you might succeed
in throwing down Her power and greed.
Destroy the key when you are done
and then rejoice, the battle won.

According to the author's notes, "The Two" refer to Iuz and Tsuggtmoy; "The key" and "the orb of gold" refer to the Orb of Golden Death, a now-destroyed artifact thought to have been used to defeat Tsuggtmoy. The remaining details are sketchy at best, but the prophecy in the poem has clearly run its course.