

The Oldurai range was located in the most desolate region of the planet Shalimar. It was a place where the wind always blew, whispering across the complex maze formed by the red sandstone cliffs, brushing them with loose sand and making a soft, sighing noise as it passed.

Near the top of one of the twisted ridges of the range, the pale figure of a hunted thief paused in his flight. Peering back over his trail, he tried to catch a glimpse of the men pursuing him. He had not expected them to pursue him this far and certainly not into the Oldurai. Few entered the cold, waterless maze, and fewer left.

Slipping over the top of the ridge the thief began the difficult climb down. He was surprised when his foot found solid purchase. Looking down, he could see the faint outline of a stairway cut across the face of the cliff. Following it, he soon entered a cavern hollowed out of the solid rock. Thin light gave a pale radiance to the chamber, allowing him to see eroded stone figures arranged along the walls.

Sitting on a square block set into the center of the chamber, he rested for a few minutes. As he sat, he idly ran his hand across the stone, stopping when his trained fingers felt an imperceptible joint. His curiosity aroused, he bent over and examined it. There appeared to be a small triangle embossed on the side of the stone, with several faint depressions in its face.

Setting his fingers into the hollows he pushed. Nothing happened. He then tried different combinations, one, two and three fingers at a time. Nothing.

Sitting up, he froze in shock. A dark figure stood before him.

"Wh.. who are you?" he asked.

There was no answer. The figure stood silent, its only motion a wavering like a shadow cast across a great distance.

"What do you want?" he demanded more boldly. Standing, he walked over to look more closely. Perhaps it was just a shadow. Hesitantly, he reached out to touch its face.

Outside, the wind whipped across the cliffs, gathering speed and force as it twisted through the empty canyons, carrying his scream away into the dusk, adding it to hundreds of others collected through the ages. Somewhere in the twilight, a deeper darkness stirred.