

The Trelvoth Document

The following is an edited version of the somewhat notorious Trelvoth Document. This text, reportedly purchased from a traveling merchant in 739, has become the center of no small amount of controversy here at the Hall of Records. Purportedly, the document is the account of a human merchant, Trelvoth, and his experiences after the exploration of a half-buried ruin exposed by contemporary seismic activity.

The initial translation of this document is also of great interest to linguistic scholars, for it veers seemingly at random between three languages: the common human tongue, traditional dwarvish, and another as yet unidentified. The noted historical linguist Eldern Dhesto studied the document intensely between 814 and 815 in an attempt to identify this unknown script. Dhesto could not come to a conclusion regarding the weird letters of the language though.

When several of Dhesto's apprentices were implicated in the so-called "Copper Dagger Murders" of 815, Empress Soliana elected to suppress the Trelvoth Document, identifying it as the cause of their madness. And so, with special dispensation of the Imperial Seat, do we present a translation of document, under the provision that the passages in the unknown language be stricken from it. We hope it will cause would-be adventurers to take care when delving into forgotten ruins, and act as a warning to anyone who would approach such an endeavor flippantly.

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It had been many years since I had seen my brother. Perhaps this wasn't surprising, though. He had chosen to become a warrior of some renown, having gained a reputation as both a soldier and freelance swordsman in the aftermath of his service. News had even reached me, a simple merchant in Ortenau, of his exploits, having rescued a village from a vicious creature which had been raiding outlying farms and eating entire families.

It came as some surprise to me, then, that he had met his demise. Not in some grand and glorious battle, but in the taproom of an inn, the King's Head, in the town of Lokerden. When his effects had been delivered to me, the courier also supplied a short account of what had befallen my brother, but its lack of detail was concerning, stating only the time and location of his death. Surely there was more to it than this, I had thought. So, after a period of contemplation, I arranged my affairs and set off for Lokerden.

The owner of the King's Head seemed less than pleased to see me and was decidedly quiet about my brother's demise. Though, after several rounds of house lager, and the generous "donation" to the wellbeing of his family purchased me what I was looking for.

My brother had frequented the tavern several times before his death, seeking to recruit adventurers to explore an ancient ruin, recently uncovered due to seismic activity in the area. Unfortunately for him, he had little success, as it was well known that his previous companions had been killed in the ruin, he had little money with which to hire anyone, beyond promises of riches found, and it was known to be bad luck to venture to the underworld, or so they called places like this.

He said my brother's behavior became more and more erratic over the next few weeks, until one night, he flew into a rage, smashing the tavern's mirror behind the bar and hurling himself at the other customers, swinging his sword wildly and screaming accusations of them spying upon him in his rage. Evidently, he killed seven people before the guards could be sent to subdue him and was finally killed whilst resisting their efforts. The blank spot on the wall behind the bar now stood out as stark reminder of his presence.

After his revelation, I quietly paid for a room and retired for the night. Alone with my thoughts, I could not help but wonder what had happened to him, and that I could not leave the memory of his storied career to be ended in such an ignominious manner. The next morning, I decided to use my resources and hire a group of adventurers to investigate the ruins, hopefully to shed some light on the nature of my brother's sudden change in demeanor. It was not long before I had assembled a group and we set out.

I had never been much of an explorer, having stayed closer to home to manage my business, but by the time we reached the ruins, the mystery of what had transpired there had become a consuming curiosity.

As we entered the place, a foul stench had me grasping a cloth to my mouth. As we rounded a corner, the source of the rancid stink was discovered. Strewn about on the ground, some half exposed under crumbling buildings, were the previous inhabitants, mysteriously mummified. The expressions of terror on each of their wasted faces remains with me though, burned into my memory. At the time I felt repulsed by the casual, joking manner in the others displayed at this sight, but I know now it was a hardened, necessary reaction to such sights. This angered me, and I rushed ahead, where I first saw it.

At first, I thought it an old shield, hanging on a wall, corroded and forgotten. But then the lid appeared, sweeping open languidly to reveal the eye. A horrible, round, liquid eye. I staggered backward shaken, as the eye suddenly withered and became an open socket, weeping infected blood and pus, but still gazing at me from its empty depths. I turned to run and ran straight into one of my hired companions. They looked at me quizzically, as I frantically told them of what I had seen. They calmed me, and when I turned around, there was no weeping socket and no eye. Just a battered shield easily knocked off the wall.

That night, I returned to the King's Head, faced with an inexplicable urge to retrace my brother's footsteps; to understand what had gone on in his mind. Already I had grown certain that he had seen it as well, and like me, he had been unable to purge the image from his mind. I sat alone in the tavern, and after I was quite deep in my cups, I staggered to my room.

I remember emptying my pockets, haphazardly tossing my coins on to the cheaply made table. Suddenly, fourteen eyes stared back at me, boring into me before one by one, they withered into disgusting empty sockets. In abject fear, I fell backwards, and the everything went dark.

I awoke to warm sunlight upon my face and held my pounding head. I thought of what I had seen in the coins and suppressed a slight chuckle. Surely it was the imagination of an intoxicated mind. I staggered to my feet and moved to the table.

The coins still looked at me. The withered eyes shot their gaze directly into my spirit, for the smallest of instants. Then they were simply coins. I blinked and shook my head, last night's wine still feeling like it was sloshing around in my skull. The coins were normal. Solid, silver coins. I roughly grabbed them up and threw them at the wall, collapsing into the bed. Whatever had driven my brother to madness now sought to do the same to me.

For weeks this went on. Coins, buttons, even the cheap lager in my mugs opened their eyes to me. Their staring accusing, and eventually withered eyes. It happened everywhere. In my room, in the tavern, at shops, passing people in the street. I developed an uncontrollable tremble as sleep was now nigh impossible, for whenever I drifted off, it was there. Nowhere could I escape it.

Eventually I found myself speaking to an Oathsworn shaman. One who other had claimed, had experiences with such things that seek to break the mind. He told me that legends spoke of such creatures, old and slumbering within Hiraeth. That they had somehow been locked away, but on rare occasions, some are able to escape their confinement. Escaping the grip of such a creature was another matter. He told me it was possible to blind myself, but also confided that this method may not be effective as I already saw the being in my waking hours. He nodded and sighed, grimly stating there was always another alternative, tilting his head toward a wicked looking dagger and fixing me with a piercing gaze. The meaning was clear, but I could not bring myself to do it.

As I made my way back to the tavern at Lokerden everyone I passed seemed to stare with the same awful empty sockets, as if accusing me of their condition. When I finally entered the taproom, seeking to perhaps drown this creature under an obscene amount of alcohol, I noticed a new mirror had been installed in my absence. By the time I had seen it, the mirror had already changed to the eye, already rotting away.

Suddenly, mug in hand, I leapt at the bar, smashing the new mirror to pieces, and then crushing each of the new pieces to smaller shards still. The bartender reached under the bar and moved towards me with a club, and I knew what must happen. I seized one of the mirror's broken shards and plunged it, again and again into my eyes. Sharp agony erupted as I stabbed wildly at myself, leaving both nothing but bleeding wounds in my head. The bartender dropped the club, shocked by my actions, and moved to a nearby bucket, clearly nauseated by what he had witnessed.

A terrible feeling grew in my stomach though, for I had realized escape was not to be had. For even though I had destroyed my eyes... I could still see!