the captain. "No sir," he answered. "He's named Sturlinies, and comes from the east—Falotiya, I believe."

He looked to be a young man, slightly short perhaps—certainly so when compared to the tall, lean frames of the Iyahmites—but strongly built with thick-muscled arms. His only discernible weapons were a curved dagger and a gold-hilted sword, the latter resting in a stiff leather scabbard. The blade of the weapon was straight, to judge by the shape, unlike the curved scimitars carried by the Iyahmish warriors. Both of these were secured to a belt which he had slung over his shoulder for the moment.

The doorway into the earth that beckoned like a voiceless maw . . .

There was a twinkling in the stone, shining like a little candle flame. Brushing more of the debris away, the two uncovered what appeared to be the top of some kind of an arch carved from the very stone of the cliff side itself, with gold and lapis inlaid around it in swirling patterns.

"Ah-yala spoke the truth indeed," Kahf-rel muttered.

"What is that you two've found?" asked Skelnik, approaching them. His breath caught in his throat as he looked upon their discovery. "I'll go fetch the captain."

In a few minutes Rassdia was standing with his arms folded across his chest, watching impatiently as five soldiers heaved and toiled to remove the rest of the stone and soil that concealed the unexpected discovery. It was indeed an arch, tall enough for a man to walk through if he crouched a little, opening on a tunnel that led into the dark heart of the cliff from which it was carved. No door was there, nor any evidence that there had ever been one. The ground quickly dropped away beyond the threshold, as the tunnel sloped downward at a steep angle, descending into a fathomless gloom.

"Well," the captain began as the rest of the rocks were cleared aside, "it would seem we've come upon some building of a long dead people."

"Block it up again," said Sturlinies as if in order.

"What?" the captain cast an astonished glance around, too taken with surprise to even take offense at being addressed as though he were the underling.

"Perhaps Sturlinies is right," Kahf-rel interrupted, "we don't know what manner of evils might lie beyond that doorway."

Now Rassdia scoffed audibly, glaring at Sturlinies through narrowed eyes. "I've never heard such nonsense! This could be an ancient tomb with rich offerings. If so, I

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