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## **Foundations**

He was different; he knew all that had happened. He studied the ancient foundations, our glass temples and amphitheaters that reached millions, with one key to success, a code lost to time and buried deep underground. Thousands of pounds of soil all the way down, blocking out even the most meddlesome.

Yet he had cracked it, or so he said. Shivers rippled through the council that day, a shower of frost fell upon us. Our chambers froze over, our mighty architecture entrapped in a mist of blistering cold.

"A shaman, a demon, hellspawn, a bloodthirsty wolf among the timid sheep we've sworn to protect!"

It was impossible that he dug that hole. Even at the very bottom was a layer of the most solid diamond, stretching below the earth for miles and miles. Nowhere to get in but from below. And after entering, there was certainly no escape, not for a common man. A maze was down there, one that had millions of false paths that only we knew how to traverse.

We watched and listened, analyzing his every move. We trembled as they shaved the ice off of our chambers, flake by flake that fell down onto the surface. Oftentimes a piece of glass would break off too. Our foundations crumbled at the touch; they had been robbed of their purity.

Finally, we dragged him up out of his slumber, Tears streamed from his face, freezing in midair.

"What is it?" we asked. "What did you find?" His body lay on our council floor and slowly melted the ice around it.

"A demon! His body is heated from the pits of hell!"

Not one of us councilmen could understand. For years, we had studied just to catch a mere glimpse of the code, and yet he knew it all. We let our anger flow loose. One after another we screamed and shouted and pleaded for him to please give in.

Slowly our heads turned to each other, and our aged bodies rustled and wrapped, pushing and pulling and tearing at whatever we could touch, while the glass cracked beneath us.

And we fell.

Down we fell from our foundations, tumbling into the ground like rag dolls, forming bruises and cracks in our antique skin. Our bones were the strongest they could be, yet it stung like no pain we had ever felt.

We spotted a hole dug in the dry soil. It led down about 15 feet and broke through a thin layer of sparkling white sapphire. Some cultish lair, we presumed. However, down there was a maze, the one we'd known how to solve since birth. Entranced, we traveled in a long row, our bodies aching in pain.

We reached the door, preceded by a pool of thousands of small rocks. We breathlessly searched for the one we had spent so long studying for. A piece of granite with thirty-four gray dots, and twenty-one dark gray, and seventy-eight black, on a side vaguely shaped like the head of a dog, with 4 sharp edges and 2 soft, which contained a key to the

exit.

When we had narrowed it down with one hundred percent certainty, and we bashed the rock upon the head of our weakest link, our trembling hands held the key up to the doorknob, which had no slot for a key.