



# **The Epistle of Forgiveness: Volume One: A Vision of Heaven and Hell: 1 (Library of Arabic Literature)**

*Abu l-Ala al-Maarri*

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One of the most unusual books in classical Arabic literature, *The Epistle of Forgiveness* is the lengthy reply by the prolific Syrian poet and prose writer Abu l-ʿAlaʾ al-Maʿarri (d. 449 H/1057 AD), to a letter written by an obscure grammarian, Ibn al-Qarih. With biting irony, *The Epistle of Forgiveness* mocks Ibn al-Qarih's hypocrisy and sycophancy by imagining he has died and arrived with some difficulty in Heaven, where he meets famous poets and philologists from the past. He also glimpses Hell, and converses with the Devil and various heretics. Al-Maʿarri—a maverick, a vegan, and often branded a heretic himself—seems to mock popular ideas about the Hereafter. This book, the first of two volumes, includes Ibn al-Qarih's initial letter to al-Maʿarri, as well as the first half of *The Epistle of Forgiveness*.

This translation is the first complete translation in any language and retains the many digressions, difficult passages, and convoluted grammatical discussions of the original typically omitted in other translations. It is accompanied by a comprehensive introduction and detailed annotation. Replete with erudite commentary, amusing anecdotes, and sardonic wit, *The Epistle of Forgiveness* is an imaginative tour-de-force by one of the most pre-eminent figures in classical Arabic literature.

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