

# **TO BOLDLY GO...**

**A One-Round Living City Adventure**

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This is a standard RPGA Network tournament. A four-hour time block has been set aside for this event. It is a good idea to ask each player to put a name tag in front of him or her. The tag should have the player's name at the bottom, and the character's name, race, and gender at the top. This makes it easier for the players to keep track of who is playing which character.

The actual playing time will be about three hours. Make sure you use the last 20 to 30 minutes of the event time block to have the players capsulize their characters for each other and vote. The standard RPGA Network voting procedures will be used. Complete the Judge's Summary before you collect the players' scoring sheets. This way you will not be influenced by their ratings and comments.

The players are free to use the game rules to learn about equipment and weapons their characters are carrying.

A note about the text: Some of the text in this module is written so that you may present it as written to the players, while other text is for your eyes only. Text for the players will be in bold italics. It is strongly recommended that you paraphrase the player text, instead of reading it aloud, as some of the text is general and must be adapted to the specific situation or to actions of the player characters.

## DM Background Information

The majority of this adventure takes place on a demi-plane of the Ethereal. The gate to this demi-plane is located on the island housing the renowned prison of Ill-Water. The demi-plane serves as a prison for the most ruthless and dangerous criminals of an alternate prime material plane. The creators of that prison wished to establish a "friendly" incarceration facility that would cater to the needs of its occupants. They believed that these criminals were corrupt through-and-through, with no hope of rehabilitation, so the only alternative was permanent imprisonment, albeit an "enjoyable" one. To those sentenced there, a prison is still a prison. Therefore an escape attempt was made by combining the malevolent magical forces of the plane's occupants.

Much to the chagrin of the most powerful occupants of demi-plane prison (beholders, mages, vampires, and even a lich) their attempt failed, but not completely. The magical assault unleashed by these amoral characters was matched by an equal counter assault from the prison's magical defenses. The result was a fusion of the two magics.

Originally intended to provide for and guard the occupants of this "friendly" dungeon, the prison was imbued with an intelligence to cope with any unanticipated situations that might arise. The intelligence realized that it could not negate the equally potent magics used against it, so it did the only logical thing: it joined with the attack magic. The guardian magic of the prison could not have realized the consequences of its actions.

The new fused magic took on characteristics of both its creators. From the creators of the prison it took the need to prevent the occupants from escape and to provide for them, and from those who tried to escape it took on their malevolent nature, while maintaining its artificial intelligence. The original creators of the prison have realized the changes which were wrought, but they were unable to correct the problem, so they stopped sentencing criminals there decades ago. In an effort to keep itself "entertained," the diabolical prison gates in sentenced criminals from around the planes.

Today, only one of the original escape attemptees survives, a lich. Others survive within the prison, but they have no knowledge of the escape attempt or what had changed their surroundings, as far as they are concerned it is a form of torture used by those who have imprisoned them. The lich is locked in a constant struggle for freedom with the intelligence of the plane.

He has devised a spell that will paralyze the plane's intelligence (which has taken the form of an ancient red dragon) but he is missing one essential component, the name of the plane he is on (which also happens to be the name of the Dragon). Divination spells have no effect on this demi-plane and therefore the Lich needs assistance from someone outside the prison. Enter the player characters.

A few weeks ago a vengeful wizard named Bezlamon returned to Ravens Bluff with a plan to bring the city to its knees and make himself enormously wealthy in the process. Bezlamon, who once had extraordinary powers, as referenced in *Elements of an Assassin* (a previous Living City adventure), traded these gifts in exchange for a powerful dweomer that could switch his mind with that of another being. Bezlamon chose Lord Vernon Condor, Regent of the Exchequer, as his target.

After much planning and coordination, not to mention good luck, Bezlamon was able to successfully complete his devious scheme. Bezlamon, in the body of Lord Vernon Condor, called for the city guard and had his former self, now inhabited by a dazed and confused Vernon Condor, arrested for crimes most heinous: two counts of high murder and one count of treason.. Since the dweomer remains undetectable for one week's time,

and the recipient becomes incoherent for the same period, the trial was swift and stern; life in Ill-Water.

In Bezlamon's ecstasy of success he became careless. His original intent was to slowly drain the coffers of Ravens Bluff while impersonating Lord Vernon Condor. But, in his interactions with other city officials Bezlamon made some uncharacteristic remarks or had lapses of memory that could not be explained. In time, some who knew Lord Condor became suspicious. Bezlamon sensed that his ruse was about to be uncovered, so he attempted to pilfer as much treasure as he could and be off. The treasury's defenses (a bronze dragon) proved too much for him and he was caught in the act.

Since more than a week had passed, the dweomer was easily detected and the truth was known. Unfortunately, while being escorted to the secure prison of Ill-Water, Lord Condor, in the body of Bezlamon, was whisked away by unknown and powerful magics. Left in the place where Lord Condor was standing was a tear in the fabric of space, a gateway. The guards sent after him have not returned and the gate is slowly closing. Numerous magics used to divine their fate have failed. The city officials have been stymied to date, so they have decided to turn to their most valuable and flexible resource: adventurers. A rescue mission must be sanctioned at once to save Lord Vernon Condor from the dangers that surely lay beyond the gate. A quiet summons has been issued.

## Player Introduction

Each PC is awakened in the middle of the night appropriate to their surroundings. Some receive a vigorous knock on the door, some a calm whisper in the dark, and others a sharp blade to their backs. Be imaginative, and take into account the Fame—City Government rating of the PCs. In each case the person responsible bears a note from the acting Mayor of Ravens Bluff, Arvin Kothonos. He requests their immediate presence, not in City Hall, but at a remote address near the docks. The missive states that they come prepared for a most challenging task.

At this point allow the player characters to decide what preparations they wish to make, such as spell memorization, selection of weapons and gear, and any other small details (bear in mind it is the middle of the night). The messenger has no further information for the party and sneaks or walks away, as appropriate, as soon as possible.

When they are ready, present the following:

*Having done your best to prepare for such an usual summons in the darkest hours of the night, you make your way to the dockside address in haste. The journey from your home to the meeting site is filled with foreboding omens. The wind blows through the streets, eerily murmuring what sounds like your name as it howls between the buildings. The chill of the evening becomes a biting sensation as the breeze penetrates your clothing, despite your best efforts to stay warm. Your breath, visible now in the cold air beside the docks, takes strange shapes resembling monsters only vaguely remembered from uneasy dreams. Even the denizens of the night scurry at your approach, sensing the darkness around you. Finally, you arrive at the location.*

*From nowhere appear a half dozen darkly-clad individuals who sheath their half-drawn weapons upon your approach. Without a word, or even a sound, they escort you into a plain but sturdy structure. Once inside your eyes take a moment to adjust to the bright contrast within. A half dozen people are gathered around an oval table, in the middle of a heated discussion that immediately ends with your entrance. It does not take you long to recognize key members of the the Council of Lords and the acting Mayor of Ravens Bluff.*

*Lord Arvin Kothonos grins a little while the rest of the Council of Lords looks at you with cold resolve, belying the friendliness of the Mayor's welcome.*

*"Sit my friends", the mayor motions to a number of empty chairs before the table," and warm yourselves by the fire. This night's chill is even colder than the temperature suggests. I am a man of little words this evening, so I will be blunt. We need your talents to help us with a mission of great importance to us and to a man who has dedicated his life to making this city a better place. Due to the dastardly deeds of an evil wizard named Bezlamon, Lord Vernon Condor has disappeared! And we need your help to get him back. If you accept, and you are free to decline this most dangerous offer, we are prepared to reward you handsomely. Do you wish to help us?"*

At this point the party is free to ask the mayor and the council any questions they want, before agreeing to help the city. The only information that the mayor will refuse to give them is the details of the reward, as he would rather have them help because they are willing as opposed to just greedy. Below is a summarization of everything the council and mayor know and are willing to share:

- Approximately two weeks ago, Lord Condor and Bezlamon exchanged minds. The city knows that this was accomplished through powerful magic, but the exact spell and effects are unknown. Bezlamon's ploy was discovered almost a week ago. Lord Condor, in the body of Bezlamon, has been whisked away by some other-planar force at approximately the same time (by pure coincidence).
- The mayor will provide a detailed description of Bezlamon's appearance if asked.
- A rescue party, consisting of 20 heavily armed guards and two officers was sent into the diminishing gateway two days ago and has not returned. Divination spells have been ineffective in determining their fate or Lord Condor's.
- Bezlamon is currently awaiting execution of his sentence in a secure location.

This is all the information that the Mayor and the Council will share with the party before they accept the assignment. They will not allow the party to interrogate Bezlamon. The mayor will reassure the party that the city has used every tool at its disposal, within the bounds of legality, to coerce Bezlamon.

Once the mission is accepted, please read the following:

***"Excellent!" the mayor bellows as the Council of Lords solemnly nod their heads. "I knew that we could count on you. With your varied skills and abilities I am confident that you can find the valued Lord Vernon Condor and return him safely to us.***

***"But enough of praise, let me tell you what we are willing to offer you for successfully completing your mission, payable upon delivery of Lord Condor of course. Each member of your group will receive one thousand pieces of gold and a commendation from the city."***

No magical items are available as the magic of the treasury has been exhausted in the war.

***"As a gesture of our desire to see you safely return from this mission, we have had the Diviners at the Wizard's Guild working day and night for some assistance. Alas, the only clue that they could give us was one word: GERNOSHISTRAD. They had no understanding of what it might mean or entail, but they were certain that you needed it. One other note of caution, the sages guild does not think it wise to bring items of extra-dimensional space along, such as bags of holding.***

***"If you have no further questions for me then, I must ask you to make haste to Ill-Water. An honorable man is in desperate need as we speak! Go with Tymora's blessing."***

## Into The Prison

Once they head for the prison island, present this.

***Your group is quickly ushered from the dockside abode and led to a nearby boat. Once aboard, you are hastily rowed to the water-bound prison of Ill-Water.***

***As you approach Ill-Water, you are amazed by its simplistic, yet overwhelming appearance. The prison is a huge cyclopean mass of stone with only one entrance, the Gate to the Abyss, which comes into view as you approach the island dock. Once a convict goes through the Gate to the Abyss, he is never seen again.***

***Once you have landed upon the pier, you are escorted up the path to the Gate to the Abyss. The entire length of this small road is lined with altars to each of the city's deities. Each altar is manned by a lone priest or priestess. These priests normally say one last prayer for the poor unfortunate who passes into the prison.***

***Finally, you come upon the entrance to the Core, a double-guarded, triple-barred massive door. Before the doorway shimmers an oblong disturbance that can only be described as a tear in the fabric of this plane, a rift of some magical sort.***

At this point the party may cast any spells they wish before entering. The party will also be handed a week's worth of iron rations per PC by a guardsman.

If anyone tries to carry a *bag of holding* or other extra-dimensional space into the rift, a gate to the Astral plane is created and the bag or other items involved are sucked through, along with all characters within 10 feet when the event occurs. The bag or dimensional space item is lost forever in the voids of the Astral plane, and the characters are trapped on the Astral plane until further notice. Mark them as trapped on the Who's Who Form; those characters are out of play until rescued.

Once all the party members have entered the gate, read the following:

***A sensation of rapid movement disorients your group for but a second until you feel solid rock beneath you once again. What was once a dark***

*starless night becomes a faintly illuminated tunnel. The crimson lighting emanates from in front of you.*

When they approach the light, which is the only option they have for continuing with any activity beyond endless walking, they find themselves at the entrance to a huge cavern. Half of it is filled by a pool of magma, fed by multiple small waterfalls of lava which cascade down from above where the PCs enter this cavern. Another tunnel, similar to the one the PCs are in, appears directly opposite.

When they enter the cavern, present this.

*Not far from where you stand, there is a small pile of ash and debris. Upon closer examination, the remains of plate armor with the seal of Ravens Bluff can be seen. Suddenly, the magma pool begins to swirl and bulge.*

The way back into the tunnel is blocked by solid stone as soon as the last PC enters the cavern.

*The whole pool, now appearing lagoon in size, swells high above its banks, and the "robe" of molten rock falls from the emerging form. The reptilian creature's enormous form, expanded wings, and blood red scales leave little doubt in your minds what this is, a red dragon!!*

At this point, every PC must make a save versus fear at -4 or immediately flee out the only visible exit from the dragon's abode. Those who make their save, or who are immune to fear, may still wish to make haste for the other tunnel.

This truly is an Ancient Red Dragon, the "brain" of the demi-plane. It will not hesitate to breathe on any PC character still in the cavern after the first round (damage from a full breath weapon is 24d10+12 hit points, save for half).

Even after the PCs flee up the tunnel, the Red Dragon will spit a small *fireball* after them to encourage their progress. Everyone must make a Dexterity check to see if they are swift enough to dodge the flaming missile. Those who succeed this check are assumed to have made it to the tunnel's end and dodged aside, those who failed suffer the following effects:

#### **Total Party Levels 6 to 13:**

Save versus dragon breath or suffer 2d4 points of damage.

#### **Total Party Levels 14 to 25:**

Save versus dragon breath or suffer 3d6+3 points of damage.

#### **Total Party Levels 26 to 37:**

Save versus dragon breath or suffer 6d6 points of damage.

#### **Total Party Levels 38 to 56:**

Save versus dragon breath or suffer 8d6 points of damage.

#### **Total Party Levels 57+:**

Save versus dragon breath or suffer 15d6 points of damage.

## **At least liches don't breathe fire**

Escaping from the deadly breath of the dragon relatively unscathed, the party finds itself on the banks of a steep mountainside overlooking a gloomy valley. The sky is an even light gray, with no discernible sun or moon. The cave beside them sizzles and steams from the recent hot blast belched from below.

As you approach the hut, you notice that the entire dwelling is surrounded by an organized and well maintained garden full of floral and fauna you do not recognize. A winding path leads to the only door of this shack. Just outside the door a stooped figure is tending a dying plant. The tattered robes hang from the gaunt form. At your arrival, the figure halts its ministrations and turns towards you, pulling back the hood of its robe to reveal a skeletal head with empty eye sockets, save two crimson pinpoints of light!

It's a lich, and almost anyone should know that. Certainly any priests and paladins do.

**Lich:** Int Supra-Genius; AL LN; AC 0; MV 6; HD 11; hp 80; THAC0 9; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10; SA paralysis and spells; SD +1 or better magical weapon to hit, immune to charm, sleep, enfeeblement, polymorph, cold, electricity, insanity, and death spells; MR nil; SZ M (6' tall).

Spells: 1st level—*burning hands, magic missile* (x2), *grease, comprehend languages\**; 2nd level—*mirror image, web, stinking cloud, darkness 15' radius, Melf's acid arrow*; 3rd level—*dispel magic, hold person, wraithform, lightning bolt, fly*; 4th level—*Evard's black tentacles, dimension door, ice storm, improved invisibility, stonework\**; 5th level—*cloudkill,*

*cone of cold, feeblemind, teleport, Bigby's interposing hand*; 6th level—*chain lightning, disintegrate, globe of invulnerability*; 7th level—*power word stun, Bigby's grasping hand, duo-dimension\**; 8th level—*mass charm, incendiary cloud*; 9th level—*time stop*  
\* means already cast at 18th level

This is no ordinary Lich, it is The Ancient, the only survivor of the group that had originally made the attempt to escape many years ago. He is also the most knowledgeable individual on this demi-plane. The Ancient serves as the chief adversary to the keeper of this prison (Red Dragon) and as the "welcome wagon" for the newest inmates, like the party. The lich will welcome them into his humble abode, introducing himself in the most gracious of manners.

The Ancient immediately recognizes that the party is not like ordinary prisoners, the weapons and armor, not to mention their good aura, gives them away. At this point though, the Lich is so engrossed with his spell component studies that he has little time to concern himself with these unusual "prisoners."

Unless the attack him, of course. In this case, his actions depend on the tier of the party.

#### **Tiers 1-4**

At this level, the Ancient can mop up the party with his selection of spells. Do not try to kill them; the Ancient is no longer evil and does not feel the need to kill the PCs.

#### **Tier 5**

At this level, the PCs might be able to finish off the Ancient. He will fight cautiously, not using any damaging spells. During a fight he will attempt to reason with the PCs and explain his intro speech about the prison. He will use spells that confuse and misdirect and such as that, and if they persist in fighting he will try to subdue them. If in true danger, he will teleport away before he is killed. In this case, he will be almost but not quite hostile the next time that he deals with them (near the end of the module).

If the Ancient is killed, then the PCs are trapped forever in this demi-plane. Mark the Who's Who sheets appropriately and inform the players that they may no longer play their characters until further notice from HQ.

Proceeding with his normal discourse to new arrivals, The Ancient will dictate the "rules" of this world. He will tell a fabricated tale of how their jailers have condemned them to a life of torment and torture. Their prison in reality is a semi-intelligent malevolent being meant to enforce anguish upon its inhabitants at

every possible turn. The ground will yield food, but grudgingly and with none to spare. There are no days or nights, only constant grayness. The indigenous creatures of this realm are only hideous monsters whose sole purpose in life is to stalk and slowly kill the prisoners.

As a result of these harsh conditions, each prisoner has sworn not to kill except in self defense. Bonding with one another is their only chance for survival. The Ancient is the only creature on this plane powerful enough to survive on his own. After this is all said and done, he will demand that the party swear not to harm another except in self defense. Those who fail to take this pledge will be greeted with swift and deadly punishment from the lich, as he has taken on the duty of enforcer of this policy.

One unintentional by-product of this prison has been the "reform" of the prisoners of this realm. Because of the dire circumstances that they find themselves in, and the need to cooperate for survival, all the inhabitants of the plane, although once viciously evil, have all had a change in alignment over time. Some have become neutral, others good. Even the lich has changed alignment from lawful evil to lawful neutral, in his new duties as caretaker for the prisoners. The prisoners that remain evil simply do not have the trust in others to live very long on this plane.

The Ancient will spare little time for the PCs once they have taken the pledge. **If they ask him questions regarding Vernon Condor** (in the body of Bezlamon), he will remember his arrival (about 7 days ago). The lich will tell the party that Vernon had headed for a small squatter village toward the forest, about a two-day journey from his home.

As a final word of caution, The Ancient will warn the party of Groggs; insect-like creatures that infest the plains between the mountains and the village. If the party has been fairly respectful of The Ancient he will take a liking to their continued survival and offer them some "home-remedies" to cure wounds. If they accept the offer, The Ancient will hand them two vials containing *potions of healing*.

## **You were warned**

*Your journey towards the forest is an awkward one. No sun rests in the sky to confirm your course and the ring of mountains surrounding this dismal valley appear identical in every direction. Luckily, the grasslands offer no obstacles in your path and you follow the way The Ancient pointed as true as an arrow.*

*As the day comes to an end, the light gray sky quickly darkens to a deep purple. Each of you finds yourselves more exhausted than you would have suspected from just a day's march; it seems that the grasses are trying to impede your progress. When you stop to camp, the ground begins to tremble beneath you.*

*With little advanced warning, the soil around your group bursts forth to reveal large insect-like creatures. Each is some eight feet tall with a hard carapace shell supported by six serrated legs. Two large pincers protrude from around a mandible caked in dirt and grime. No head or eyes are distinguishable. As quickly as they appear, they move in to feed!!*

#### **Total Party Levels 6 to 13:**

**Grogs (6):** Int Nil; AL Non; AC 6; MV 9; HD 2+2; hp 10 each; THAC0 19; #AT 2 or 1; Dmg 1-4/1-4 or 1-8; SA Bite; SD nil; MR nil; SZ L; ML 12.

These Grogs are immune to illusions (due to low intelligence) and effects that work on sight (they have no eyes). They hunt by vibrations. Each Grog attacks with its pincers, and if both pincer attacks are successful then the Grog will grasp its opponent and attempt to bite them the next and each subsequent round until the victim is dead or breaks free. A strength check at -4 will loosen the pincers enough for the character to free themselves, but it will be the character's only action for the round.

#### **Total Party Levels 14 to 25:**

**Grogs (9):** Int Nil; AL Non; AC 4; MV 9; HD 4; hp 20 each; THAC0 17; #AT 2 or 1; Dmg 1-8/1-8 or 2-16; SA Bite; SD nil; MR nil; SZ L; ML 12.

#### **Total Party Levels 26 to 37:**

**Grogs (9):** Int Nil; AL Non; AC 2; MV 9; HD 6+6; hp 36 each; THAC0 16; #AT 3; Dmg 1-10/1-10/2-16; SA Acid; SD nil; MR nil; SZ L; ML 12.

If severely injured, the Grog will spit acid at its opponent(s). This acid covers a 5' radius directly in front of the Grog (range is 30 feet). Those in the area suffer 3-30 points of damage, unless a save versus breath weapon is made (1/2 damage in that case).

#### **Total Party Levels 38 to 56:**

**Grogs (9):** Int Nil; AL Non; AC 2; MV 9; HD 8+8; hp 50 each; THAC0 11; #AT 3; Dmg 1-10/1-10/2-16; SA Acid; SD nil; MR nil; SZ L; ML 12.

#### **Total Party Levels 57+:**

**Grogs (12):** Int Nil; AL Non; AC 0; MV 9; HD 10; hp 70 each; THAC0 10; #AT 3; Dmg 1-10/1-10/3-18; SA Acid; SD nil; MR nil; SZ L; ML 12.

The grogs have no treasure and their lair is miles away. The rest of the night and most of the next day will be uneventful for the PCs.

## **Broken homes and a broken heart**

*Your dreams were troubled last night, in each one that you remember you can recall a crimson figure watching you in the shadows.*

*The next day brings another monotonous journey across the featureless grasslands. Every once in a while the ground shakes beneath your feet. Expecting another Grog ambush, your party reacts quickly only to find yourselves standing alone. You begin to wonder if these are "earthquakes" or simply this world's sick humor.*

*Near the end of another tiresome day you see your destination ahead. Unfortunately it appears that someone or something has beaten you to it. Of the dozen or so structures that once stood here, about 10 are burned to cinders while the other two are little more than ramshackle grass huts with gaping holes in the walls and roof. All signs of inhabitation appear to have been erased. All except for a lone dark-skinned figure who sits among the smoking remains with his legs crossed, while an unsheathed long and short sword rest in his lap. He stares into the forest at your left, not acknowledging your approach even though you are clearly visible.*

The lone figure is Kase'reth, a drow elf who was imprisoned here 20 years ago.

**Kase'reth, e(d) F8:** Int Very; AL CN; AC 0; MV 12; hp 60; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1-8+3/1-8+3/1-6+3; SA specialized in long and short swords; SD see below; MR 66%; Str 17; SZ M; ML 14.

Kase may use the following once per day: *dancing lights, faerie fire, darkness* (16' radius), *levitation, know alignment and detect magic*. He attacks with a sword in each hand, with which he is specialized. His favorite weapon is his *long sword +3 defender*. Luckily for the PCs, he is in no mood to pick a fight with them.

Kase (who will refuse to give his name) is awaiting the return of the Tulocs, avian creatures with

chameleon-like powers that destroyed his home and his family. If the party is persistent and courteous enough, Kase will tell them his story.

When he first arrived on this dismal world he was a "loose cannon". No one ever wanted him around. Finally a beautiful and caring human female by the name of Anna saw past his rebellious nature and won his heart. He settled down with her, as much as anyone can in a nomadic tribe, and they had a child together. His name is Donato, who has Kase's jaw and skin tone, but his mother's piercing blue eyes. Life finally had meaning for the dark elf.

His role in the village was as a scout. That is what he was doing when the Tuloc struck. While he was away the Tuloc attacked the camp, killing most in the strike and taking the survivors deep into the forest for final consumption. He has scouted the surrounding area and found only a few tracks leading into the forest, none of which could be his wife's or son's. His only purpose in life now is to await the return of the Tuloc; they always return after about a week's time when people think it is safe once again, and Kase plans to kill as many as he can before dying.

**If questioned about Lord Condor**, he will tell the party that a man matching that description arrived in the village a few days ago. He was very strange and confused at first, but he slowly regained his wits. Kase is not sure what has become of him. His body was not one of those found in the village. He was either taken by the Tulocs or fled into the forest. That is all the information that he has at this time.

He can not be convinced to accompany the party, nor can be persuaded to give up this "foolish" endeavor. He is determined to await the Tuloc's return. If the party becomes forceful, or tries using spells on him, he will attack them with unbridled anger (+2 to hit and damage) to his death!

**If Kase'reth is killed:** There is no reason that the PCs should attack and kill him, but if they attack he will defend himself as well as possible. Further, if he is killed then the prison will take note of them. Killing Kase would be an evil action, since he is not evil and has not attacked them. And the prison is designed to keep evil criminals inside. This will translate into a -2 penalty to all actions and die rolls in the final encounter against the prison (which should simulate its better preparedness against them).

Further, all rangers and paladins are immediately stripped of class-related powers for the rest of the module. Further, they must through roleplaying during the module or through an *atonement* spell afterward

atone for their evil actions or change alignment from Good to Neutral and lose their class permanently

## Three heads are better than one

Party members with tracking proficiency will be able to follow the tracks of someone into the forest, but will lose the trail once inside the woods. The intelligence of the plane has removed all trace of Lord Condor's trail in the forest. Characters with tracking proficiency who make their check by half will recognize that the tracks have been removed.

*Your group has been able to follow the tracks, hopefully of Lord Condor, into the forest. The trail quickly disappears once within the woods. The thick canopy of branches, leaves and vines above serve as an effective filter to block most of the little light the gray sky provides.*

*The light from your torches (or magic) casts eerie shadows at the edges of its illumination. It appears as if the forest itself moves at those fringes. These suspicions are well founded. What a moment ago was a promising trail turns into a wall of brambles.*

They will have to cut their way through, because the plane's intelligence will prevent them from getting through in any easier way (except flying). Once they get through, continue.

*After an indeterminate length of time, a thunderous roar is heard from somewhere in the forest ahead of you. In a matter of moments your group emerges from the dense forest into a glade. The huge trees form a perfect ring around an area of what appears to be grass-covered ground. Near the opposite end of the ring you see a large creature with the body of a lion, two large and heavily wounded wings, and three heads struggling to free itself from what you now realize is a camouflaged quicksand pit!*

The creature is a trapped Chimera who has had a recent encounter with some Tulocs in the forest (thus the heavily damaged wings and his inability to fly).

**Chimera:** Int Average; AL N; AC 6/5/2; MV 9, fl 18(E); HD 9; hp 25 (normally 70); THAC0 11; #AT 6; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-4/1-4/2-8/3-12; SA breath weapon; SD nil; MR nil; SZ L (5' at shoulders); ML 14.

The chimera may substitute its dragon's head bite with a fire breath (3-24 points of damage, save versus breath for 1/2 damage). The chimera is AC 2 on its flank, AC 5 from the front and AC 6 from the rear.

The PCs can kill the hapless creature easily, but that gets them nothing and may cause them to violate the oath they swore to the Ancient about not harming another creature here. If they do save it, they will learn that each head has its own name; Roo (lion), Billy (Goat) and Scarlet (Dragon). Each head has its own distinctive personality; Billy is the jokester and takes little seriously, Scarlet is extremely inquisitive and asks a lot of "Whys", and Roo is very authoritative and demanding. A majority of the time the three heads will spend their time arguing and debating amongst each other, but they will eventually answer the party's questions.

The chimera came to the forest to avenge the death of its mate (a cryomera—similar to him but prefers the colder climates), at the hands of the Tulocs a few days ago. He found the group feasting on some humanoid remains about a mile away, but will tell the party that there was no one left alive and the sight is particularly gruesome. He slew what was left of the Tulocs but suffered grievous wounds in the process, thus his inability to fly.

**If asked about Lord Condor in particular**, he will tell the party that he saw a human matching that description frantically moving through the forest about three or four miles north from here as he was searching the woods for the Tulocs. Roo will also inform the party of a way that they may navigate through the forest. The leaves of the Guma tree always grow their points towards the cave entrance of the great red dragon. Lord Condor was seen going in the opposite direction.

As a reward for saving him, Billy will offer one of the party members a cloak made from the hide of its former mate, a cloak created by the Tulocs. The cloak acts as a *fur of warmth*.

As a final piece of advice, Scarlet will tell the party that their safest place to go once they get Lord Condor is a semi-permanent settlement just outside the forest. It can be found by facing the direction of the cave and traveling right; it is visible once outside the woods.

## Lord Condor at last

*With renewed enthusiasm your party makes haste to the last known location of Lord Condor. The next few*

*hours traveling in the forest are almost pleasurable, you are not sure if this is due to the thought of finally finding Lord Condor alive or if the "prison" is giving you a break. As you entertain this cheerful thought, your musings are disrupted by the hair raising scream of man in trouble!*

*Your search lead you to a thick tangle of vines and branches, amongst which you catch the last glimpses of a man, matching the description of Lord Condor's new body, being drawn deeper within by those very same vines and branches. You now realize that the "prison" was just drawing you here to witness the tail-end of your quest's demise.*

Lord Condor has been pulled from the sight of the party. They will have to wade into the tangle of living plants for five rounds to find his location. The living plants act as Choke Creepers with the following variations for levels:

### **Total Party Levels 6 to 13:**

**Choke Creeper (1):** Int Non; AL Nil; AC 6 (vine), 5 (stalk); MV 1/2; HD 25; hp 50 (main vine), 4 (each stalk); THAC0 17; #AT 8; Dmg 1-4 each stalk; SA none; SD see below; MR nil; SZ G (75'+ long); ML na.

Any victim successfully struck by a stalk suffers 1-4 points of damage and is held fast. A trapped victim must make a successful strength check to escape the stalk or cause the holding stalk 4 points of damage (which destroys it) to escape. These vines are unaffected by small normal fires (torches), but very hot fires like flasks of oils, fireballs, etc. cause damage and force mobile vines to move away. Cold inflicts 1 point of damage per die and immobilizes the sections struck for 1d4+1 rounds. Electricity causes no damage and doubles the attacks for that round for the vines.

### **Total Party Levels 14 to 25:**

**Choke Creeper (1):** Int Non; AL Nil; AC 6 (vine), 5 (stalk); MV 1/2; HD 25; hp 100 (main vine), 8 (each stalk); THAC0 14; #AT 8; Dmg 1-4 each stalk; SA none; SD see below; MR nil; SZ G (75'+ long); ML na.

Any victim successfully struck by a stalk suffers 1-4 points of damage and is held fast. A trapped victim must make a successful strength check to escape the stalk or cause the holding stalk 8 points of damage (which destroys it) to escape. These vines are unaffected by small normal fires (torches), but very hot fires like flasks of oils, fireballs, etc. cause damage and force mobile vines to move away. Cold inflicts 1 point of damage per die and immobilizes the sections struck for 1d4+1 rounds. Electricity causes no damage and doubles the attacks for that round for the vines.

### **Total Party Levels 26 to 37:**

**Choke Creeper (1):** Int Non; AL Nil; AC 6 (vine), 5 (stalk); MV 1/2; HD 25; hp 150 (main vine), 12 (each stalk); THAC0 10; #AT 8; Dmg 1-4 each stalk; SA strangulation; SD see below; MR nil; SZ G (75'+ long); ML na.

Any victim successfully struck by a stalk suffers 1-4 points of damage and is held fast. A trapped victim must make a successful bend bars/lift gates roll to escape the stalk or cause the holding stalk 12 points of damage (which destroys it) to escape. There is a 10% chance that the PC struck was placed in a strangulation hold by the Choke Creeper. If the PC remains in the vines grasp for a duration equal to character's constitution divided by 4 (round down), then they have been choked to death (no save). These vines are unaffected by small normal fires (torches), but very hot fires like flasks of oils, fireballs, etc. cause damage and force mobile vines to move away. Cold inflicts 1 point of damage per die and immobilizes the sections struck for 1d4+1 rounds. Electricity causes no damage and doubles the attacks for that round for the vines.

### **Total Party Levels 38 to 56:**

**Choke Creeper (1):** Int Non; AL Nil; AC 6 (vine), 5 (stalk); MV 1/2; HD 25; hp 200 (main vine), 16 (each stalk); THAC0 7; #AT 8; Dmg 1-4 each stalk; SA strangulation; SD see below; MR nil; SZ G (75'+ long); ML na.

Any victim successfully struck by a stalk suffers 1-4 points of damage and is held fast. A trapped victim must make a successful bend bars/lift gates roll to escape the stalk or cause the holding stalk 16 points of damage (which destroys it) to escape. There is a 10% chance that the PC struck was placed in a strangulation hold by the Choke Creeper. If the PC remains in the vines grasp for a duration equal to character's constitution divided by 4 (round down), then they have been choked to death (no save). These vines are unaffected by small normal fires (torches), but very hot fires like flasks of oils, fireballs, etc. cause damage and force mobile vines to move away. Cold inflicts 1 point of damage per die and immobilizes the sections struck for 1d4+1 rounds. Electricity causes no damage and doubles the attacks for that round for the vines.

### **Total Party Levels 57+:**

**Choke Creeper (1):** Int Non; AL Nil; AC 6 (vine), 5 (stalk); MV 1/2; HD 25; hp 200 (main vine), 16 (each stalk); THAC0 7; #AT 8; Dmg 1-4 each stalk; SA strangulation; SD see below; MR nil; size G (75'+ long); ML na.

Any victim successfully struck by a stalk suffers 1-4 points of damage and is held fast. A trapped victim must make a successful bend bars/lift gates roll to escape the stalk or cause the holding stalk 16 points of damage (which destroys it) to escape. There is a 10% chance that the PC struck was placed in a strangulation hold by the Choke Creeper. If the PC remains in the vines grasp for a duration equal to character's constitution divided by 4 (round down), then they have been choked to death (no save). These vines are unaffected by small normal fires (torches), but very hot fires like flasks of oils, fireballs, etc. cause damage and force mobile vines to move away. Cold inflicts 1 point of damage per die and immobilizes the sections struck for 1d4+1 rounds. Electricity causes no damage and doubles the attacks for that round for the vines.

**Hangman Tree (1):** Int Low; AL Neutral (evil); AC 3 (tree), 5 (appendages); MV 0; HD 6+100; hp 136; THAC0 7; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3; SA see below; SD see below; MR 50%; SZ H (35' tall).

At this level, the Hangman Tree has Lord Condor by one of its nine appendages. The remaining eight will attack the party as noted below three per round. Upon a successful to hit roll, the tree will grasp an opponent and hoist them up (maximum 1,000 lb.). A bend bars roll is necessary to escape, or 20 points of damage directly to the grasping appendage. After five rounds the victim is hoisted above the tree's trunk and dropped into an acidic secretion contained within a barrel of the hangman's trunk. The unfortunate victim suffers 3d4 points of damage every round while in the barrel until dead. Any successful electrical attack on the tree will cause double damage to it. Extreme cold causes the tree to go dormant for 1d4+1 rounds.

Once Lord Condor is rescued the party should head for the village the chimera directed them to. They don't have to, so adjust the efforts of the plane's intelligence towards where they go.

At this point, Lord Condor has very little to tell the PCs. He will confirm the mayor's story about being "magicked" by Bezlamon. After that he can remember nothing except waking up one day in a strange village on a strange world. He has been informed of where he is by the villagers but he has not believed it until now. Once the village was attacked by the Tulocs he scrambled madly into the woods and has been fighting for his survival ever since. He is quite exhausted, both mentally and physically.

**Vernon Condor, hm (F4)/W12:** AL LG; AC 10; MV 12; hp 49; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon as

provided; SA spells if someone loans him a spellbook; SD nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 16.

If some PC loans Lord Condor a spellbook, he can memorize 4/4/4/4/1 spells per day. He needs some rest first, though.

## **A mind (flayer) is a terrible thing to waste**

*After rescuing the fatigued Lord Condor, you make haste to (wherever they decide to go). Once again the forest's trees and undergrowth impede your progress at every opportunity. Time passes so slowly that you are no longer sure if it is night or day. As foreboding thoughts of spending the night in this place emerge, you suddenly come upon the forest's edge.*

If they are going to the settlement continue, otherwise wing it.

*It is definitely late evening, judging by the darkened skies above. No moon or stars are visible, only vague swirls like blackened clouds. As you look more closely, the "clouds" seem to take the shape of two enormous dragon's eyes, but this image quickly dissipates. Drawing your attention back to earth, you see the flicker of what can only be fires ahead. It appears that some luck has found you this night; you are not far from the settlement.*

*As you approach the village you can make out a number of wooden and stone structures, surrounded by a low stockade. The nearer you approach more details come into focus. The stockade is about six feet high, with two gates opposite one another. Within its perimeter approximately 40 structures can be counted, all arranged in a circular pattern about a central gathering area. The village is in a bustle. You begin to wonder what could be wrong, when you notice an entourage coming towards you. It appears your approach has not gone unnoticed.*

The party will be greeted telepathically by the village elder, a mind flayer named Meelo-megalo. Meelo is leading the entourage, comprised of 20 seasoned warriors from the settlement. The mind flayer will be cordial, yet reserved, after all he is in charge of the safety of the village. If the party convinces Meelo that they intend no harm and are only seeking shelter he will offer them "safe" refuge in the settlement, which is called Nedulo.

**If Combat Ensues:** Mind flayers are normally evil and the PCs may attack Meelo on sight. If this happens, the villagers will spring to his defense (all 0-level humans and such with 1d6 hit points). Meelo will not fight to kill unless the PCs prove a threat to the village. He will not attempt to eat their brains unless personally in danger of being killed. Play the combat as if he is reluctant to engage with all his powers. The villagers are not at all reluctant, however, and fight fiercely until the PCs are captured. If they are captured, then their possessions are taken from them and they may wander the village under supervision. If they want their possessions back, they must prove their friendship to the village by helping people and being nice and respectful and such as that.

Once inside Nedulo, the party will be escorted to a small barren storehouse, with only one door and no windows. There they will be told to spend the night. If they behave themselves, they will be offered an audience with the village council tomorrow. Two guards will be posted just outside the wooden door to their stone hut. The next day will be a busy one for the party.

Next day, so long as the PCs caused no trouble that can be traced back to them, they will be given free reign to tour the town under the watchful eye of the town's guardsman. They will be granted an audience with Meelo later in the morning.

### **Anna and Donato**

In the meantime, while hopefully exploring the village, PCs with the observation proficiency who make a successful ability check will notice a strange couple: a fairly beautiful human female with an ebony-skinned, pointed-eared child. These are Anna and Donato, Kase's wife and child. If they are approached cautiously, they will tell the party of their near-death escape from the Tuloc attack. Donato, who has been well trained by his father, covered their tracks. They journeyed for two days, finally arriving at Nedulo. They had feared that Kase'areth had died prior to the attack while on patrol.

Anna will beg and plead for the party to return to the village and save Kase from impending death. If they agree she will be extremely grateful and cook each member of the party a breakfast like they haven't had in a long time. As proof of their survival for her husband, she will tell the party her husband's name (Kase'areth) and give them a lock of her long auburn hair.

## **The Rat-Hunters**

Another opportunity may present itself prior to the party's meeting with the town council. If the party continues to wander through the town, after the encounter with Anna and Donato, they will hear a commotion from a building off to their right. When the PCs investigate they will see a number of children running about as if trying to flush someone or something out of hiding from some refuse near the side of the building. As the party watches they will see a rat scurry from the rubbish and dart between the legs of one of the children, who will be in hot pursuit. After a few seconds of comical chase, the group of "rat hunters"(as they like to be called) will corner the unfortunate rat. The vermin is as large as a house cat. If the party interferes by killing the rat to protect the children, they will be thanked for their assistance. But the rat hunters will tell the party that they were in no such danger as they are in possession of *globes of purification*. The children will tell the party that it is rumored that the dragon watches its realm through the eyes of rats and therefore their job is remove such spies.

The children do not have real globes of purification, but they do have globes that they believe work that way. The globes came from a previous prisoner, who made them. They do nothing but release a cloud which stinks up the immediate area without any ill effects.

## **This is a test, this is only a test**

*Your time in the town of Nedulo has been the most pleasurable you have spent on this plane. At first the inhabitants were a little apprehensive, but your deeds and conduct have won the people over; and what a diverse people they are! Within this small community you have found ogres and drow living cooperatively with humans and elves alike. It would appear that a shared enemy (namely the plane) can bring even the worst of adversaries together.*

*Your free time is cut short by the announcement of your meeting with Nedulo's council. Your group is escorted to the center of the town where the twelve elders and Meelo-Megalo await your arrival. You are surprised to find that the town "elders" do not appear to be any older than middle-aged humans and half-elves. The crowd's anxious mutterings are silenced by the telepathic announcement from Meelo asking the session to come to order. A dead silence follows. A wind blows through the crowd, whispering in your*

*ears while the telepathic question from the mind flayer echoes in your mind, "Why have you come to us?"*

If the party tells the council the truth (which they will have to because Meelo can detect lies at will), that they have been sent to rescue Lord Condor and leave the plane, the crowd will become very excited. After a few frantic moments, Meelo will bring the assembly to order. He will tell the party that no one has ever escaped from this plane and that they are free to become citizens of Nedulo, but if they still wish to try to escape then the town may be of some assistance. But first they must prove themselves worthy of their support. They must agree to the "Klepsydra" test. In a nutshell, a chosen PC from the party must recite a 20 stanza poem aloud before a water clock runs out. The task is not as easy it sounds.

The Klepsydra, which means water clock, is a large basin with a small hole in its center which allows the contents to evenly flow out and measure the passage of time in small increments. Meelo will fill the klepsydra with 15 minutes of water. The long 20 stanza poem, which is filled with tongue-twisters and difficult-to-pronounce words will require 20 minutes to read aloud normally (1 minute per stanza). The chosen PC must make a successful Dexterity check to read two stanzas in one minute; if he/she fails then he/she must reread both stanzas, losing a minutes worth of water in the process. The poem is written in a magical text that allows it to be understood by anyone, even those who can not read.

The poem is not provided, but if you are entreprising and want to make something appropriate up, feel free.

If the party member passes the test, the crowd, council, and Meelo will be thrilled. Meelo will announce a celebration feast for the evening, with the party as guests of honor. In the meantime, while the town prepares for the banquet, Meelo will have the following discussion with the party in his private quarters.

Meelo will take the party into his confidence for their exhibited abilities in the klepsydra test. He will tell the party that this plane did not always exist. About 55 years ago he was imprisoned for crimes he finds intolerable today. Back then the jail was a pastoral wonder. Approximately five years after his imprisonment a radical change took place. In an instant the jail was transformed from a land of beauty and peace to the realm it is today. He does not have an explanation for it, but he suspects that The Ancient knows more. Many perished in the transformation.

As far as Meelo knows only he and The Ancient survived the change. Meelo also knows that The Ancient has researched a powerful spell that may enable him to escape or defeat the dragon, but he needs to know the name of that creature to complete it. Of course all the divinations from within the plane have failed to garner this information, but lucky for the PCs they aren't from around here. They have the name of the dragon; Gernoshistrad.

Meelo would like to see the party succeed and therefore he will give them a *scroll protection from fire* that he was saving for just such an event. He is not interested in accompanying them because he finds his new role as protector/leader of this town a very fulfilling position.

If the party did not succeed in the test of the Klepsydra then Meelo will still offer his personal assistance, at a small cost. If each PC gives a magical item (no *globes of purification*), to assist in the town's defense then Meelo will relate the above information without giving them the scroll. This will still be done in private, as he doesn't want to disturb the people. He feels this is information that is best not shared with the public. Meelo will also offer the party a going away celebration for good luck, but they will not be guests of honor as above.

## A little side trek

It will take the party only one day to skirt the forest and arrive back at the destroyed village. Once there they will find Kase'reth sitting in the exact same position as they had found him days before, awaiting death. As when they first encountered him, he will refuse to acknowledge their presence.

If they call him by name or show him the lock of his wife's auburn hair he will demand to know how they obtained it. Once the party tells him his wife is safe and sound at Nedulo, his mood and attitude will change completely. He will regard the party as his best friends.

Kase will be eager to leave and be reunited with his wife and son. He will assure the party that he can make it alone, because he has done it numerous times before.

## What goes up, must come down

*After seeing Kase off, and noticing his cheerful step as he leaves, you begin your journey across the plains*

*to The Ancient's hut with renewed enthusiasm. You are relieved that the ground does not shake and the tall grasses do not appear to grasp at your legs as you pass. The sky, although still a single color of gray, appears brighter than it has since your arrival. All in all, it is an excellent day for traveling and your progress shows it.*

*In a day you have almost covered the distance from the destroyed village to the lich's home. You can clearly see the mountains that house the red dragon, and a small stream of smoke rises from the lich's chimney. Before the hut comes into view though, something strange occurs.*

*The ground shakes violently beneath your feet! You are stunned when the whole world seems to fall away at your feet. The mountain tops in the distance recede and the grasses before you disappear from view. In the blink of an eye you finally realize that the world hasn't dropped away, but rather you have been thrust high into the sky. From atop a monolith of earth at least 50 feet high you look down from your precarious perch and notice the column is not too steady!*

The height and difficulty of this encounter varies with total party levels:

### **Total Party Levels 6 to 13:**

The column is 50 feet high and will crumble in 10 rounds. The sides of the pillar are rough and have ample foot and hand holds. Characters who are wearing anything heavier than studded leather armor should rappel down the sides, or at the very least tether themselves with strong rope. More detailed effects of climbing for non-thieves can be found in the *Player's Handbook* p 122.

### **Total Party Levels 14 to 25:**

The column is 100 feet high and will also crumble in 10 rounds. The sides of the pillar are neither rough nor smooth (no adjustments). Everything else remains the same as the first tier.

### **Total Party Levels 26 to 37:**

The column is also 100 feet high and will topple in 10 rounds. The sides of the pillar are crumbling (-25% to climb). In addition the monolith will shake violently every other round, causing those climbing to make a dexterity check. Failure means another climb walls roll needs to be made or the character falls. Also characters near the edge when a quake strikes must make a dexterity check or fall off their perch.

### **Total Party Levels 38 to 56:**

The column is a maximum 200 feet high and will collapse in 10 rounds. The sides of the pillar are crumbling and shaking (-40% to climb). The monolith shakes continuously, causing those on top to make successful dexterity checks to cast spells or complete complex tasks (like knotting a rope, etc.).

### **Total Party Levels 57+:**

The conditions are the same as above except the column will collapse in only five rounds.

Once the column falls, anyone still in the air takes the usual falling damage.

## **Dinner and dancing with a lich?**

*After battling insect creatures, man-eating plants, bargaining with a mind flayer, and surviving geological attacks, your group finds itself once again at the steps of The Ancient's quaint hut. The wooden door swings open effortlessly before you are close enough to knock upon it. It appears that you were expected.*

*As you cautiously enter the hut, you are amazed to find the interior is much larger than you had thought possible. The room you have entered is nearly three times the size of the hut itself, with at least a half a dozen other doorways visible. Before thoughts of exploring the enormity of the "hut" begin to surface you see the form of The Ancient sitting in a plush velvet red chair before an opened tome. The lich looks up from his readings, and his red glowing eyes appear to be taking in more than the well lit room would allow, as if they are piercing into your very souls. After a moment, he nods his head and begins to stand, the elegant robes practically falling off his bony body.*

*"The Name of the Dragon is the only thing that will save your lives!" The Ancient says matter of factly.*

The Ancient has waited a long time for this information, and although he is immortal, his patience is wearing thin. His struggle with Gernoshistrad (the dragon) has been long and frustrating, especially since the lich knows that he assisted in its creation, and that knowledge gnaws at him every day. He will give the party little time for negotiations. If they agree to give him the name then he will ensure them that he will take them with him to confront the dragon.

After an agreement has been met, The Ancient will invite the party in for a final meal on this hellish world. The banquet will act as a *heroes feast* spell. During the feast, the lich will tell the party about his imprisonment in this demi-plane (but not the reasons why he was imprisoned) for the first few years. His tale will be similar to Meelo's: small bands of rival rogues struggling with one another for control over the other inmates. But he could see beyond these petty squabbles.

He knew the real "enemy" was the magic that imprisoned them. Most were content to leave the prison's magic alone as it provided nourishment and minor healing for those who were not undead like him. For the most part, it was a benevolent jailer, but a jailer none the less! After much persuasion, The Ancient was able to convince the other powerful clan leaders to join him in a concerted escape attempt. Their combined magics were formidable, but ultimately defeated. The end result was a fusion of their magical assault and the magical defenses of the prison. The Ancient feels responsible for the plight that everyone on this plane finds themselves in, and he wants to correct the biggest mistake of his entire unlife.

If the party inquires about the specifics of his plan, the lich will tell them that he has spent the better part of the last fifty years researching a spell that will destroy the red dragon instantly, but he needs the creature's true name. He is confident that the party has that information because when they entered his home this last time, he used a *foresight* spell that enabled him to determine that they carried the long-sought answer to his question.

As the party and The Ancient are discussing their plans, a loud explosion followed by a squeal will be heard from a corner near the door that the party entered from. Upon investigation, they will find the corpse of a large rat and a recently created small hole. The lich will tell the party that the dragon must be aware of their plans and that they need to make haste to the cave before it can launch an assault on them. If pressed, the lich will tell them that the magic that guards his hut killed the rat, but he can't be sure if it was before or after their plans were revealed.

In his haste to prepare, the Lich will offer the party a couple of scrolls that were left behind by his deceased conspirators. He finds it only fitting that they be used in the effort that their owners had died for.

1. Wizard scroll with *gaze reflection*, *deep pockets*, *hold undead*, *extension I*, and *dismissal*.
2. Priest scroll with *call upon faith*, *create holy symbol*, *choose future*, *fire purge*, and *champion's strength*.

## Don't bite off more than you can chew

*With speed and agility you would hardly suspect of The Ancient, he clambers up the steep slope to the cavern entrance. In mere moments you are out of breath due to the pace which The Ancient has set. When you reach the cave The Ancient pauses so you may catch your breath. He paces rapidly, mumbling under his breath, obviously impatient to conclude these years of struggle.*

*A warm blast of air billows forth from within, reminding you of what awaits only a few hundred feet below. You look back at The Ancient, but his withered form and stooped posture inspire little confidence in his ability to confront a Red Dragon. The Ancient turns to your group and says that he is more than a match for the "idiotic reptile," but he will need your help in fending off Gernoshistrad's minions. He is not sure what kind of creatures the Red Dragon will send after you, but your group must keep them from interfering with his spellcasting. With these last words of advice, The Ancient spins on his bony heels and disappears down into the cave.*

The party will quickly descend a couple of hundred of feet to the large cavern described at the beginning of this adventure. This time there is only one exit/entrance. The large pool of lava covers most of the den, and the temperature in the room is almost unbearable.

As soon as the party enters the cavern, Gernoshistrad will emerge from the pool. At the same time his minions will spring from smaller pools of lava around the room to engage the party.

The party should concentrate their attacks on the minions, but some PCs may wish to engage the Red Dragon. Before this can be accomplished a PC must make a successful saving throw versus fear at -4, or think the better of it and deal with one of the following minions:

### **Total Party Levels 6 to 13:**

**Hell Hounds (4):** Int Low; AL LE; AC 4; MV 12; HD 4; hp 12 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10; SA Fire breath; SD Immune to fire, see invisible(50% chance); MR nil; SZ M.

The hell hounds release a blood-curdling bay and charge at The Ancient, unless the party intercedes. As they close in, they will release their fire breath (4 points of damage, save versus breath for 1/2). On a natural roll of 20 the Hell hounds successfully bite AND breathe (maximum damage).

### **Total Party Levels 14 to 25:**

**Hell Hounds (6):** Int Low; AL LE; AC 6; MV 12; HD 6; hp 35 each; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10; SA Fire breath; SD Immune to fire, see invisible (50% chance); MR nil; SZ M.

The hell hounds release a blood-curdling bay and charge at The Ancient, unless the party intercedes. As they close in, they will release their fire breath (6 points of damage, save versus breath for 1/2). On a natural roll of 20 the Hell hounds successfully bite AND breathe (maximum damage).

### **Total Party Levels 26 to 37:**

**Hell Hounds (8):** Int Low; AL LE; AC 4; MV 12; HD 7; hp 50 each; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10; SA Fire breath; SD Immune to fire, see invisible(50% chance); MR nil; SZ M.

The hell hounds release a blood-curdling bay and charge at The Ancient, unless the party intercedes. As they close in, they will release their fire breath (7 points of damage, save versus breath for 1/2). On a natural roll of 20 the Hell hounds successfully bite AND breathe (maximum damage).

### **Total Party Levels 38 to 56:**

**Fire Elementals (4):** Int Low; AL N; AC 2; MV 12; HD 12; hp 65 each; THAC0 9; #AT 1; Dmg 3-24; SA see below; SD +2 or better weapon to hit; MR nil; SZ L.

The fire elementals rise from the pools of lava and immediately head for The Ancient, unless the party interferes. A successful blow from a fire elemental will instantly ignite combustible material (save versus magical fire at -2).

### **Total Party Levels 57+:**

**Fire Elementals (6):** Int Low; AL N; AC 2; MV 12; HD 16; hp 90 each; THAC0 5; #AT 1; Dmg 3-24; SA see below; SD +2 or better weapon to hit; MR nil; SZ L.

The fire elementals rise from the pools of lava and immediately head for The Ancient, unless the party interferes. A successful blow from a fire elemental will instantly ignite combustible material (save versus magical fire at -2).

If a party member is (un)fortunate enough to make his save versus dragon fear, they may attack Gernoshistrad.

**Ancient Red Dragon:** Int Genius; AL CE; AC -11; MV 9, fl 30(c), Jp 3; HD 25; hp 170; THAC0 2; #AT 3

+ special; Dmg 1-10+12/1-10+12/3-30; SA see below; SD see below; MR 65%; SZ G.

Gernoshistrad will return any successful attack against him with either his fiery breath (50% chance) that causes 24d10+12 points of damage or with his physical attacks (claw/claw/bite). He also has the following innate abilities: *affect normal fires* (3/day), *pyrotechnics* (3/day), *heat metal* (1/day), *suggestion* (1/day), *hypnotism* (1/day), and *detect gems, kind and number* (3/day), all at 21st level, which he can use in conjunction with his physical attacks, but not with his breath weapon.

Conveniently timed with the demise of the last of Gernoshistrad's minions, The Ancient will complete his spell casting. Before him, The Ancient will hold forth a large ruby gem. A loud clap of thunder will be heard and felt as the Red Dragon disappears and the ruby begins to glow a deep crimson. Immediately following this incantation, the cavern will begin to shake apparently collapsing. Observant PCs will notice that the tunnel leading to the gateway back to Ravens Bluff will have appeared once again. If they make haste (no more than two rounds elapse before they move) they will be able to escape up the tunnel and out in front of Ill-Water, appearing once again in Ravens Bluff.

The Ancient will also rush off with the party back to Ravens Bluff, but he will not remain with them for long. Once clear of the gateway, he will use his magical abilities to *teleport* himself and the Ruby away. The gateway to the demi-plane will quickly fade away behind the PCs, sealing the demi-plane forever so that it no longer takes people from other planes. It will eventually fade out of existence, but not for many years, and there is no way the PCs can even know this, let alone do anything about it.

### The End

## EXPERIENCE POINT Summary

Experience is now being calculated as follows for Living City events.

1. Sum the experience listed below for objectives.
2. Assign discretionary role-playing experience (0-500 points). These should reward accurate character portrayal throughout the adventure, not just how well the PC interacted socially.
3. Finally, multiply the total by the tier according to this chart:

Levels 6-13	Tier 1
Levels 14-25	Tier 2
Levels 26-37	Tier 3
Levels 38-56	Tier 4
Levels 57+	Tier 5

PCs should get the experience points of the tier for which they qualify, regardless of which tier is actually played. For example, if you have a Tier 3 group and you have to bump the combats by one tier to challenge them, they still get the experience points for a Tier 3 group, not for a Tier 4 group.

### **At least liches don't breathe fire**

Getting info about Lord Condor from the Ancient  
25 xp

### **You were warned**

Defeating grogs  
120 xp

### **Broken homes and a broken heart**

Getting info from Kase'reth  
25 xp

### **Three heads are better than one**

Freeing chimera  
50 xp

### **Lord Condor at last**

Defeating living plants  
400 xp

### **What goes up, must come down**

Getting the whole party down and taking 25% or less of damage per PC  
100 xp

### **Don't bite off more than you can chew**

Defeating minions or fighting red dragon  
200 xp

Total Experience for Objectives: 920 xp

Roleplaying Experience: 0-500 xp

**Total Possible Experience: 1,420 xp**

For Tier 2: 2,840 xp

For Tier 3: 4,260 xp

For Tier 4: 5,680 xp

For Tier 5: 7,100 xp

## Treasure Summary

If it's not on this list, the PCs cannot keep it

**At least liches don't breathe fire**

- Two *potions of healing*

**Three heads are better than one**

- *Fur of warmth*

**This is a test, this is only a test**

- *Scroll of protection from fire*

**Dinner and dancing with a lich?**

- Wizard scroll with *gaze reflection, deep pockets, hold undead, extension I, dismissal*.
- Priest scroll with *call upon faith, create holy symbol, choose future, fire purge, champion's strength*

**Completion of mission**

- 1,000 gold pieces and commendation from the city
- Any City Watch members receive a recommendation for promotion. To receive the promotion they should take the recommendation to a City Watch booth and pay the appropriate XP cost for their next rank.