



I From the Notebooks
of Fallendor the Mage:

It has happened again.
No peace this night
or for a fortnight past. I have been cursed,
robbed of my rest by a maddening vision—
the *Codex of infinite Planes*! It has been lost
since before my time, the time of my father
the time of all my known ancestors.

Yet every night in my dreams, I see the
cursed book. It hovers beyond the veil of
reality, a dream that has more substance
than reality. I try to touch the pages, but
every motion forward propels the book
away. Frustration fills me and I begin to
run. Every night I run faster toward it,
but every night I am no nearer to my goal.
In the morning, I awaken with new visions
filling my mind.

I began recording these visions in my
notebook as I remember them. They are
not the random scenes of dreams but
messages, encrypted in a code of images. I
am certain they are passages from the
Codex of Infinite Planes.

I have a theory about the *Codex*. I do not
think it exists yet, at least not as a material
thing. It exists only in the world of sleep.
There it reveals itself, a page each night, and
every morning I dutifully transcribe its
pages into the world of flesh. I am no more
than another of the great books scribes, like
the Archmage Tzunk before me.

At first the passages seemed random and
meaningless, but now I sense a pattern.
The *Codex's* magic is the magic of words.
As the dreamer reads the entries in the
book, he creates the destination where the
Codex will send him. When the image is
complete, the traveler arrives. Perhaps if
someone could find all the fragments
recorded by the book's scribes, the *Codex*
would become real in this world.

If there is a link in all the messages I
record, it is a city called Sigil, the Heart
and the Cage. This city exists, I know, at
the very center of the Outer Planes. It is
the place through which all things pass.
For now, my image of it is only fragmen-
tary. Perhaps if I review the entries relat-
ing to Sigil, tonight I will dream of the city
itself.



THE PLANE TRUTH PART I: CODIFYING SIGIL

by David "Zeb" Cook
Artwork by Dana Knutson & Tony DiTerlizzi

Aleax of Sigil, The: An engine of discipline, the aleax is the formless spawn of divinity. The creature has no thought or no will, only the raw clay of its shell and the spark of life. The creature becomes whole only by an act of mortal denial to the gods. Then the aleax wakes each morning in a new land, its hands and feet clumsy strangers. Its face is the face of one who rejects it. With each day, its memories are new; the smile of a grandchild, the taste of sweat, the cold slash of winter wind, and the shrill of the teakettle in the morning. Perhaps wanting to cling to its borrowed memories, the aleax seeks out and kills its mortal father. This seems like the sting of an ungrateful child, but the aleax has no choice. Its family is a ring of traps. The mortal parent gives it form but denies the child; the divine parent accepts the child but refuses it form. Unable to accept this, the aleax chooses to return itself each day to oblivion.

In the great city of Sigil, there is an aleax cut off from its god. It is an idiot and a

great threat to the Faction of the Athar. Helplessly the creature wanders the streets searching for a form. It hears the denials and renunciations of all gods and cannot choose one from the lot. Its hand is one man's, its face another. In this block it remembers the taste of oranges from Elysium, in the next the scouring fires of Gehenna. It talks in all voices, it speaks all words. In its ramblings are concealed the great secrets and hidden thoughts of all it has become. Driven mad by its too-full existence, the aleax seeks only oblivion.

The inhabitants of Sigil are as singular as the city itself.

Dictionaries of Pain, The: This tome is not the only dictionary found on the planes, and not all dictionaries classify words. There are dictionaries of smells where a scent evokes the memories of other scents. There is Tbron's dictionary of memory, whose pages hold nothing beyond what the reader brings.

In Sigil, the baatezu Ganeesh holds another type of dictionary, one of the Dictio-

naries of Pain. In its pages are listed all the shadings of anguish, categorized by the play of the nerves under the skin, and defined the music of their cries. Ganeesh composes poems from the entries therein. Some of the poems are meant to be read, since reading them is enough to cause anguish. Others are performed in secret conclaves of Sigil's Lower Ward.

Just as there is an entry in the *Codex* for the Dictionaries of Pain, there is an entry in the Dictionaries of Pain for this book, the *Codex of the Infinite Planes*. In the alphabet of nerves, the entry for the *Codex* can be found between the sharp sting of discovery and the salted wounds of failure.

Doomguard, The: The Doomguard is one of the *factions* of Sigil. It exists only to bring the end, the oblivion that overwhelms everything. Their goal of destruction applies to themselves, too, for the entropy of the multiverse that they desire must include themselves. Nonetheless, they actively recruit and expand, swelling their ranks while striving to destroy all else. It is said that entropy comes when everything is reduced to a single state, so perhaps this applies to the community of Sigil, too.

The Doomguard has heard of the *aleax* of Sigil and are frustrated by it. They would dearly grant it oblivion, but its life force is sheltered by the gods. All the Doomguard can do is stalk it helplessly, hurling themselves at it like the goat that charges the tiger.

Factions: Life without belonging is not life. Every being must have a position to compare itself to all other beings. In the core city of Sigil, to be is to belong to a faction. In a lesser city, these factions would squabble for the control of water, light, or gold, but Sigil is the heart of all cities. It cannot strive for commodities, its factions struggle for the only real property—belief. What is believed is what creates the reality of the planes.

There are many realities in Sigil for there are many factions. There is the Athar over whom the aleax have no power. They forswear the might of the gods. The Godsmen, who hold that all

beings could become divine, build their proofs in the Great Foundry. Using words like these, the Fated take their reality from others, wearing the dreams of their enemies as their own. The Sensates shape reality in eye and hand, fashioning the world according to their experiences.

The Bleak Cabal denies its philosophy has any meaning, for cause and meaning are pointless to them. *The Doomguard* constantly tears down the houses of its own thought, searching for path to entropy. There are the Mercykillers whose justice is like ice to fire. In the alleys of the Hive are the Xaositects and the Revolutionary League, who live their lives in content disorder.

On the far side of Sigil's ring, the Harmonium hunts the realities that are not its own. In its wake are splintered worlds, never to be whole again. The Guvners probe the machineries of reality. The Ciphers watch them without comment. Their truth is hidden in the deep mines of the soul. The Dustmen merge the reality of life and death. They have abandoned belief in the line between these two things.

Of all these factions, the Free League are the saddest in their claims. They delude themselves with the vision of independence, never accepting that they are bound to each other in their belief of free will.

Only the *Lady of Pain* stands free of the factions, bound in by cages of her own.

Geography of Sigil: These were the dreams of the Guvners' factol:

"Come to learn about the planes, berk? Well, if that's true, then this is the right place. There ain't nobody who knows more about the planes than the folks who live here. So it might be wise to sit down and listen to what a bloods got to say.

"First off, welcome to the real world—more real than most know. It pays to have a geography lesson before getting to far into this, so pay attention. The dark of it's simple—there's three realms in all the multiverse: the Prime Material Plane, the Inner Planes, and the Outer Planes. The Prime Material's got a lot of little worlds floating in it, bubbled inside their crystal spheres. The Inner's a place of raw surging elements and no place for most cutters to live. It's here—the Outer Planes—where the real secret of the planes is going to be found.

"Of course, for a clueless sod, the Great Roads an overwhelming place. There's too much of the planes for a berk to absorb. That's why it's best to learn the way to Sigil, the City of Doors.

"Sigil floats over the great spike at the center of the Outlands, the plane that itself is the center of the ring of Outer Planes. A basher can't get to it by walking. There ain't no roads or gates to her, at least not in the sense most primes understand. Sigil's doors are *portals* that can lead from anywhere to the Cage's streets and maybe back again. Even beyond that, Sigil's no ordinary place. It curves and arches 'round itself 'til the sky is filled

with roofed houses on other streets. Devas and tanar'ri build side by side, each according to its taste.

"So let a clueless basher take some advice from a planar—get to Sigil and get a kip there. Sigil's the heart of it all!"

PLANESCAPE™ campaign setting: In another reality, there exists a game and for that game there are imagined worlds. One of these is the PLANESCAPE campaign set. In it are three books that describe worlds that never were. Some of the players of this game imagine themselves as people who never were—humans, dwarves, half-elves, goat-centaur bariaur, githzerai, and tieflings, the smoke-tinged children of corrupted creatures. They pretend strange philosophies and invest their creations with powers beyond in their own prosaic lives. They explore their imaginary worlds with the maps that come with the box, maps that chart landscapes created for their pleasure.

In this game world there is a city called Sigil, impossible in their own reality. The city is a ring that floats over a spire whose height is beyond measuring. Sigil is the home for their imaginary people, their heroes. From it, their characters travel by magical doorways to distant towns and strange lands. Back to Sigil their heroes return to celebrate their imagined victories. In their journeys they meet other creatures no less fantastic than themselves. They create races to fill the spaces they have imagined—modrons, servants of Set, marrenoloth, and vortexes—and write descriptions of them into the box.

The easy question would be, of course, who dreams who? Is this world the creation of those who imagine it in play, or are they mere fictions of this realm? But the hard question is this. Of the two worlds, one is truthful, while the other one lies, so who created the honest world?

Portals: "I, Prespos, citizen of Iriaebor the Overland City, explorer-mage, occasional ambassador from the court of Bron, son of the former alderman Teramgot and his legal wife Elysa—may the gods guard their souls—have journeyed to planes beyond our own; all true are my words, from my departure from this plane to my journeys into the other dimensions of the planes and my return again. May Oghma curse me if my words are untrue!"

"I have always been a scholarly wizard, though I admit to an uncontrollable wanderlust that lures me to far reaches of our globe. Although some consider my scholarly journeys reckless, I am not a foolish man. On my explorations I have every desire to return to Iriaebor alive and not as ashes in some jar.

"On the day of departure I prepared for the worst. My will was complete and the servants paid through the end of the year. A scroll gave the means for departure—I had invested a small fortune to make the sheet. I uttered the words and sure enough, a shimmering gate appeared. Bravely, wand in hand, I stepped through.

"Straight into the center of an open market! There I stood, like a gaping farmboy, in a doorway between the mounded fruits of a melon-dealer and the battered brass of a tinker. I first thought the spell erred, teleporting me to a market fair somewhere in Calimsham. A quick glance to the sky corrected that belief. There was no sky. Overhead I looked at the jagged tops of buildings. The city was both above and below us and strung out like an arc from north to south and east to west.

"I have since learned this city was Sigil, the city of doors. And well named it is. Where I had spent my fortune and time preparing a single scroll, the citizens here can travel throughout the planes simply by stepping through a door. If the right item is held, even the most harmless-seeming arch crackles with the flame of magical power to reveal the vista of a distant land. The citizens call these *portals* and make regular use of them. In my time there I did too, passing through to other planes. But I will leave those stories for another day!"

The Lady of Pain: She is the guardian of Sigil surrounded by her silent staff, the dabus. One sees her as she floats above the ground, too rare a thing to touch common earth. Voiceless, she drifts past him and into the Maze of the city, dispensing her blessings on no one. All that is left in her passing is the aura of serene fear.

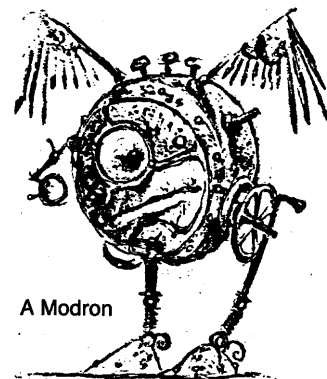
This is my dream, Fallendor's dream, recorded in the pages of the *Codex*. This is the part where a mage's life intersects the life of his dreams. He falls in love with a single glimpse of the Lady of Pain but he cannot acknowledge that love. Her warmth would bring destruction. Still, he is unable to forget her. He researches the *Codex* more and more, searching for the clues to a *portal* that will lead him to Sigil. He records his dreams, compiles them, and draws maps of their routes. From these he searches for the final entry that will lead him to his goal.

At last he dreams the magistrate standing in an empty house, reading the papers Fallendor has left behind.

The document ends here. To date, no sign of Fallendor has been found.

Magistrate Lach-Verger

Ω





TFrom the unpublished journals of Ambran the Seeker, half-elven paladin of Oghma's temple at the court of Azoun IV; king of Cormyr.

Ten days in Sigil: As fascinating as this city is, I fear I have tarried too long. My charge was to explore the realms beyond the barriers of Toril and I must not lose sight of this goal. My friends back at court cannot wait forever for my report.

It is with reluctance and fear that I have prepared to leave this city. I have heard much of the lands beyond the doors of Sigil. Much of what I hear worries me, though I am not sure how much of what I hear is exaggeration or truth. That, I guess, is part of my duties. I have become particularly concerned about the Blood War. There is always a chance that such endless warfare will present a threat to Cormyr. Certainly the fiendish travelers I have seen pass through Sigil's gates show little concern for the lives of others, even here where peace gilds the surface of life.

This morning I hired a guide, named Glin. He is a bariaur, one of a race of goat-centaur men. It was curious dealing with him—though he was quite polite, he had all the appearance of a tattooed savage. Even after spending time in the city, I barely understood him. People here speak Common but fill it with odd expressions. My guide said he was a *Free Leaguer* and a *blood* when it came to the planes and kept calling me a *clueless* or a *prime*. I can't say that I liked either and he makes me suspicious—*peery*, as they say here. Still, he was the only guide who claims to know the Outlands that I could find on my limited funds. (Sage Trandleer's maps of the planes note this as the Concordant Opposition. Glin laughed when I used the name, saying it pegged me as one of the clueless for certain. I must be more cautious in relying on the sage's works.)

Glin is ready to leave tomorrow. He has expressed no problem with my aimless itinerary. I have learned the bariaur are a race quite given to wanderlust. He suggests I get new clothes, so I won't stand out so much as "a hopeless prime." Insulting as it sounds, I'll take his advice even though it stretches my funds dearly.

One day out of Sigil: What an extraordinary means of travel! Having arrived in Sigil by spell, I had never seen a portal in operation. From their description I had no idea what to expect, certainly nothing as simple as this.

The day began when I met Glin at the Great Bazaar. Though he said nothing, I think he approved of my new traveling gear, since it is much more in fashion with this world. He brought virtually nothing at all, save a small saddle-bag and a stem of what I gathered was horse-tail reed. The goat-man led me down several side streets,



past the hordes of beggars so prevalent in this city, until we reached an open arch that spanned the small street we were on. To my amazement, he said this was our portal. The whole thing seemed patently ridiculous—I could see the street continue, I even walked under the arch and nothing happened. Glin gave a bleating laugh and said, "Poor sod, of course it won't work without the key." Then he pulled me by the arm as he stepped through. The arch crackedled with sparks that tingled my skin and before my very eyes the landscape changed as we stepped through to stand

before the walls of a great building—the Palace of Judgment. (Even though it was as large as a city, there is no note of it on Trandleer's maps. Neither was I able to find any note of Sigil where I began my travels. I suspect the accuracy of the sage more and more.)

This, Glin explained to me, was the domain of a power venerated in the Prime Material Plane as the judge of the dead, part of a great bureaucracy of powers. It reminded me of faiths I had heard of from Kara-Tur. Indeed, the building had the look of those found in far eastern lands. What

THE PLANE TRUTH PART II: A JOURNEY TO THE OUTLANDS

by David "Zeb" Cook

Artwork by Dana Knutson & Tony DiTerlizzi

made this building singular was the line of bodies filing patiently through the gate. Humans, half-elves, and creatures I could not identify, dressed in colors and ranks of clothes, waited in a queue that stretched beyond my sight.

"Petitioners, them that's died on the prime," was how Glin explained it. "Inside the proxies of the power'll send each one to his proper plane—least that's how it works for the cutters who follow this pantheon." Petitioners and proxies—two things new to me. I must learn more about them.

Two days out of Sigil: Ignoring the protests of Glin, I joined the petitioners on line for the palace. It seems the best means to obtain an audience with the beings within. I have been waiting the entire day, slowly shuffling forward. Glin has gone off to one of the many taverns that line the way.

Though the wait was (and is) tedious, it gave me the chance to learn more of the petitioners. My first curiosity was where did these travelers come from? Not one could answer this simple question. They had no knowledge of where they once

lived or even how they came here, only an unquenchable desire to file through the palace gates. Unable to get an answer that way, I watched for where they came from, yet this too was impossible to tell. When I watched the road behind us, not one petitioner did I see. I lowered my gaze for an instant and when I looked back, there stood two or three new travelers, not 10' from me! I could believe only that they had appeared from the very thinnest of air.

At first, when they are fresh to the line, these petitioners are like unformed clay. Their features are sharp but their minds dull. Their words are slow and halting and their passions flat. With the passing hours this mental haze lifts and they become more natural and animated until one would mistake them for a normal mortal. Still, as much as I questioned them of their previous lives, not one could dredge up even the slightest memory of a moment prior to this one.

Three days out of Sigil: Still waiting on line. The wonder of the petitioners has grown weary. Glin is impatient to take me elsewhere, but I think tomorrow I will reach the gate. Oghma grant me the patience to endure that long.

Four days out of Sigil: Today I reached the gate and had my ambitions crushed. After waiting half the day, it was finally my turn to stand before the entrance. There I was confronted by a singular creature. It was taller than a man and had the head of an oxen, like a minotaur and yet not. It was dressed in splendid robes and gleaming armor and barred the way with a massive halberd. These details are clear because I had ample time to study it as it blocked my path.

At first it spoke in a language I could not fathom. Seeing my ignorance, it shifted to another and then another, all similar in tone yet different in inflection. Only when it had failed in all this did it resort to Common. "You are not awaiting judgement," it said with some puzzlement.

I explained my nature—a prime, not a petitioner—and that my purpose here was to gain knowledge and understanding. Unfortunately, the answer was discouraging. I was welcome to apply for an audience in two to three weeks. It was clear I could not immediately get in and I have no desire to wait around here for weeks it will take to gain audience.

When I found Glin at a stable-like inn and told him, he was quite pleased to be on our way. Perhaps sensing my disappointment, he offered to take me to Ribcage, the gate-town to Baator, the plane Trandleer notes as the Nine Hells. Again there are more name changes I must learn.

Here is the end of Vol. 7 of Ambran's journals. The next diary in the sequence, Vol. 8, has never been found. From what can be inferred from other notes in Ambran's diaries, the volume was probably lost in the flight from Ribcage or the fight that followed shortly after.

Nineteen days out of Sigil: Praise Oghma for escaping Ribcage! Looking on it now, I marvel at my mad desire to view the portal to Baator or the terrible consequences it would have. I saw, yes, as I have already described and for my own peace of mind, I will write no more of it. It is effort enough for me not to dwell on it still. Sage Trandleer prepared me for nothing like what I saw.

Glin has been driving us both at a brutal pace ever since we escaped Ribcage. I cannot blame him for I too fear the town's Blackguards are still pursuing us.

Even in our flight, I cannot help but notice the mountainous landscape we are passing through. Glin says it is the Vale of the Spine and it is aptly named. The barren valley floor is almost perfectly curved and the mountain peaks arch overhead, though not quite as skeletal as they were in Ribcage.

I have not seen any game—deer, rabbits, or birds—since our descent into the Vale on the way to Ribcage. Before, even at the worst points of our journey, near Semuanya's Bog, there were at least some natural animals.

Twenty Days out of Sigil: My guide continues his driving pace, even though there are no signs of pursuit. When I challenged him on it, the haughty bariaur claimed speed was urgent if I wished to see the wonders of the Outlands and then asked if I wanted to end his employment, leaving me abandoned out here. If he presses me on it too much, I will. I refuse to be held hostage by a guide. Oghma will guide me.

We have cleared the Vale and the land has changed. Gate-ward—the local way of saying you're moving toward the edge of the Outlands disk—the plain grows rough. (The other direction is "spike-ward," toward the spire at the center of the plane.) I can see in the distance that it is fractured along near crystalline lines, so that the hills tilt and angle like great blocks. Glin, who is at least not completely secretive, explains (in his own colorful words), "There's no dark to it, cutter. Every plane around the rim gets mirrored on the Outlands. Know it and you can fix where you stand. Them blocks are toward Acheron. Head that way and you'll find Rigus."

Twenty-three days out of Sigil: Glin says we're somewhere upland of Automata, the gate-town to the plane of Nirvana or Mechanus as it is known to the natives of the planes. (With all his errors, how did Trandleer ever earn the title sage?) I was told in Sigil that near Mechanus, rigid order prevailed. Then I didn't believe it—it seemed too fantastic to be real—but here

the fields are squared, the forests almost straight rows of trees. Perfect, logical order.

I do not know what I shall do if my guide does not relent. He seems to lead me with some purpose of his own, perhaps fulfilling desires I have not yet realized.

Twenty-four Days out of Sigil: How can I describe it, the most extraordinary thing that has happened yet? Purposes have been revealed and yet I still do not understand. This morning Glin waited impatiently, as he always has, while I broke camp. I've become used to the fact that he will not assist. We set out at his thundering pace once again, and I resigned myself to the struggle of keeping up.

At noon, we reached the crest of a ridge overlooking a walled town. From its perfectly square blocks (described to me in Sigil), I knew it was Automata. I assumed it was our goal, the cause of Glin's haste but instead of descending to town, he insisted we stop in the center of a field. There he laid out a blanket, curled his legs beneath himself, and waited. I didn't bother asking why, now accustomed to his stubborn refusals.

"You're a long-suffering cutter, Jon," Glin said suddenly without my asking, "and you're right to be peery of me. I should've said more earlier, but I'm not much of a basher to rattle his bonebox. It's bad business, you see, to linger in the Vale of the Spine too long, especially after that dust-up in Ribcage, and the ground 'round Acheron ain't much better. So that's why I pressed us at first. Then, once we were free of that case, I figured you'd want to see this." With that he pointed toward a thin line of figures that was snaking its way from the gates of Automata.

"It's the modron parade. Every seventeenth cycle, a whole troop of modrons, those strange little berks, tumble out through the portal of Mechanus and begin a march round the whole length of the Great Road. Nobody knows why they do it, but they're modrons, so it's got to be something to do with the order of the universe."

As the line marched through the neat fields outside Automata, I could estimate there were over a thousand or more of the strange creatures. They marched in perfect files, organized by rank with each led by a banner marked in symbols that only had meaning to them. "What happens to them?"

My guide shrugged at this question. "Most of the little sods wind up in the dead book, I guess. The road takes 'em right along the gates to Baator, Gehenna, the Gray Waste, Carceri, and the Abyss. At each gate they pass, raiding parties of baatezu, yugoloths, geherleths, and tanar'ri come boiling out and make a few more of 'em lost. The chant goes that maybe two or three ever make the full journey, coming home a couple of cycles later."

I was and still am stunned by this. What would possess a thousand or more intelli-



gent creatures to blindly march to almost certain death? Perhaps they march to observe the state of order along the Great Road. Perhaps their march ensures the survival of that road. Perhaps they march just to die. What would Sage Trandleer make of this?

My meditations on the whole spectacle were interrupted by the arrival of a woman, clearly a warrior, though her armor was to my mind scant. At first she kept some distance from us and surveyed the scene just as we were. At last, against Glin's well-meant advice, I hailed her. He recognized her as Doomguard by the device she wore.

Though wary, she was not hostile and we eventually fell to conversation. Her name was Rialiva and she'd traveled to Automata from one of the Doomguard citadels on the Inner Planes.

"I've come to see the modrons march,"

she explained. "We Doomguard always watch the progress of their parade to learn what our role in it should be."

"Your role?" I had to ask.

"Our universe exists but to end, and it's our purpose to see that entropy is fulfilled."

"So then the modrons are your enemies, because they seek order in everything," I guessed. "You're here to see if they fail."

"Not necessarily. Entropy is only another form of order. The modrons may serve our purpose."

"Then you're here to protect them from the fiends?" I pondered. This was becoming stranger than I anticipated.

"Not all order's entropy. We're here to decide what cause the modrons serve. If they seek the absolute rigidity of the universe, then it's no different from your kind of entropy, is it? The stopping of all things. Here's the chant, if the modrons

see order as progress to something greater, then it's the fiends we'll side with—"

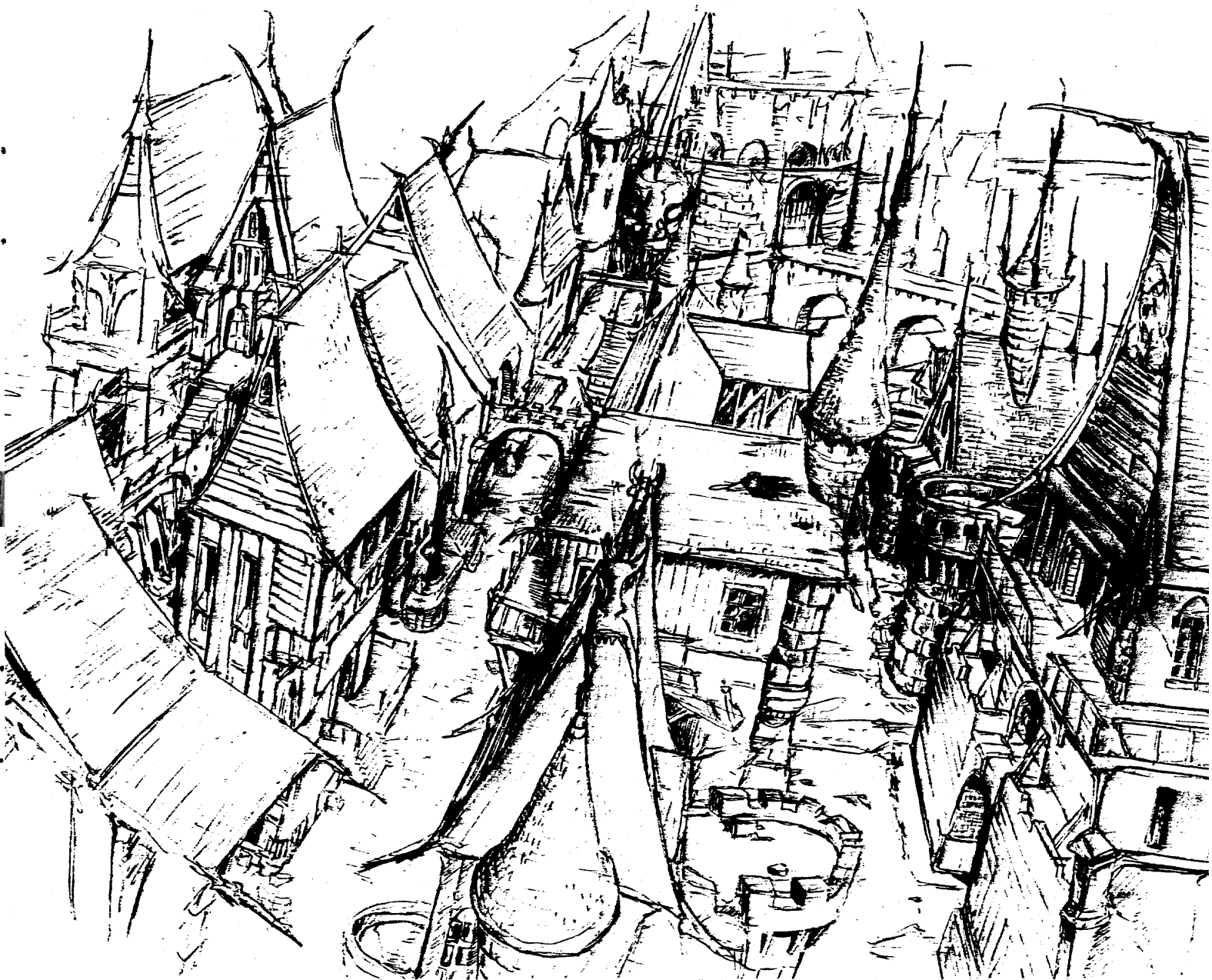
"And let the fiends rule the universe?" I blurted in horror.

Rialiva laughed, though I hope not at my simplicity. "For a handsome cutter, you must be a prime. The fiends, particularly the baatezu, are only another type of order. We don't want to be ruled by them any more than you do."

I must confess I surrendered the argument at this point. Her philosophies, like so many others in this strange realm, are deeper than I ever imagined. I have much yet to learn and see.

To Glin's raised brow, I have invited Rialiva along for the rest of my wanderings. Tomorrow Glin has promised to continue to the River Ma'at. What new mysteries will I see there?

Ω







PLANE SCAPE

THE PLANE TRUTH PART III

by David “Zeb” Cook

Artwork by Tony DiTerlizzi & Dana Knutson

From the final journal of Ambran the Seeker, former paladin, who forsook his god, name, and country to remain on the Outer Planes. May Oghma forgive him of his errors; may King Azoun not judge him too hastily

Third day in the Mausoleum: I have lost all track of days and nights. The march sun across the sky, the falling grains of the hourglass—what is the use of these things in Chronopsis’ realm? The span of days is his to rule, within the Mausoleum’s shattered boundaries. Perhaps I have aged here, perhaps I have not. Glin greeted me this morning, his face unlined and horns just budding. By afternoon he was aged again. Could the same be happening to me? Sometimes my hands

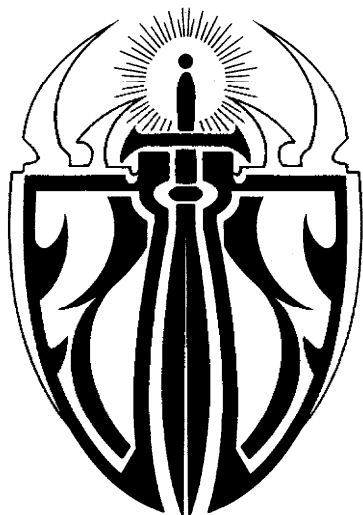
are hard and worn with care, then fresh with youth. There is no way to tell. Chronopsis banishes all reflections, so that even the smoothest water does not share what it sees.

Glin is impatient to leave. He worries that Chronopsis, sole inhabitant of this realm, will change his humor. I am reluctant to leave. I have never been in the presence of a god before, even a scaled one like Chronopsis. Still I have become used to the presence of petitioners throughout the land, so it is strange to find none here. What becomes of those destined for Chronopsis’ land? Perhaps they are the grains within his hourglasses.

Glin is right. It is time (if there is time here) to leave.

First day outside the Mausoleum: Glin’s fears seemed unfounded. Indeed I wonder if Chronopsis truly knew we were there. Perhaps we are still there in the shuffled randomness of the dragon lords

THE
TRANSFORMATION



hours, arriving with our heads bowed during its breakfast, leaving quietly again at lunch, only to reappear during dinner counting the hourglasses in their niches.

Outside the limits of the Mausoleum, the land has changed. It is no longer green, but has the sere look of fall. It reminds me of Cormyr. Since the Mausoleum I can no longer count the days from Sigil.

Five days after the Mausoleum: The land grows worse—more rugged than I expected. This morning Glin asked his first question of me, beyond the usual queries of every day. He was curious about my dreams, if I had any recently. I have not and told him so.

Seven days after the Mausoleum: Glin asked again about my dreams. His interest is more than curiosity.

Glin says we should pass over Ilsensine's realm soon. Although he did not add any more to that statement, he clearly does not want to linger there like we did at the Mausoleum.

Eleven days after the Mausoleum: I understand now why the bariaur wishes to hurry. The air here is filled with a subtle pain that, were it stronger, would drive me mad. It began this morning with a buzzing burn at the back of my thoughts, a verminous fly lodged behind my eyes. All day the drone has grown stronger. By this afternoon there was the distinct sensation of thoughts—images and whisperings that were not mine. Hands without skin, whimpers from the room of a darkened inn, the ranting of a fevered fiend, and scraps of other thoughts I could not identify—these things have filled my mind. Even focusing on my writing is hard.

Glin solicitously asked about my dreams. I think he only pretends concern—there is more in his eyes than care. It is like he expects an answer, casting his net to collect my dreams. Perhaps he's not a Free Leaguer as he claimed. Is he a follower of the Fated, those who seek to understand the planes by taking it from others? If I tell him what I dreamt, do I lose my visions so that they can become his?

Thirteen days after the Mausoleum: Glin's question persists and this morning I lied. I can no longer trust his motives.

I told him no, but I did dream. It was a persistent buzzing that skirled behind my eyes. It was not my dream, but the dream of another that slipped away in the tangle of other preoccupations. I can even imagine a man, a shadow at the back of the burn. Perhaps because of Glin's curiosity I feel compelled to write down these thoughts, or is this some effect of the illithid-lord's realm? Glin says Ilsensine's domain is in caverns beneath our feet, tunnels lined with the pulsing veins of Ilsensine's mind. Perhaps the mind-flayer gods knowledge is too great for it to contain. Whose dream is this—mine, another's, or the secrets gathered by the thing beneath the ground?

Dream One: I dream about the book. I curse it in my dreams. Each night pages come to me and press themselves against my flesh, carving their images into my skin. The chapters construct places that I will go. They build themselves word by word, slowly tattooing their knowledge onto me. When they are finished they will take me to these places, these places I do not want to go.

There is a man I see who travels toward me, sometimes straight, but more often with the path of the lost. There is a page in the book my dreams are writing for him. When it is done he will stand before me.

When I awoke, my arm stung and itched. Rolling back my sleeve, I was horrified to find a band of writing freshly tattooed there. A single word girdled my forearm— *Fallendor*.

For the first time since I left Faerun, I am truly afraid. The terrors of Baator I glimpsed in Ribcage cannot compare to this. They were real, at least. I could have fought them if it had come to that. Grotesque as they were, they at least had flesh and substance.

What have I done in leaving the safety of Toril? What a fool I was to feel safe in a world where my dreams turn against me.

Seventeen days after the Mausoleum: Glin has stopped asking, although I still think he covets the images in my mind. I know what he is after now, and will not fall for his traps. I'm not a fool—if he can't trick me into giving him what he wants, he may try violence. Let the basher try—I'll be ready for him.

Worse still, the dreams have not stopped and we have left Ilsensine's realm. Each night they become stronger and more insistent. My left arm is almost completely covered by tattoos. Why does this no longer concern me?

Dream Two: Slowly moves the tattooing hand, carefully inking the script on skin like the whorls of a finger. With each touch of the needle, another syllable is whispered. I shape the sounds carefully adding a little more of myself to the ink. Carefully I inject the memories into the flesh, layering a new skin over the old. Ambran becomes no more. He is the canvas, the escape from the prison the Codex has built for me.

Nineteen days after the Mausoleum: This morning the tattoos advanced beyond the collar of my jacket to coil around my neck. Glin has seen them for the first time and I can see his fear. He no longer hungers for my dreams. Perhaps now he knows what they are. The bariaur can no longer be trusted.

Twenty-three days after the Mausoleum: We have reached Bedlam, gate-town to Pandemonium. After all my wandering through the Outlands, now I travel with a purpose—to reach Pandemonium. I have forced my journey upon my

guide. I lead and he follows, increasingly apprehensive over the paths I choose. Pike it, I tell him when whines.

Dream Three: By day I serve as a slave to the Codex of the Infinite Planes, copying the pages. Today's entry was on the Grotto of Bones at the heart of Hruggekollohh's realm. With fearful patience, I described the cluster of skulls that ring his throne, how those heads whisper of their lives when the winds of Pandemonium blow through their moldering sockets.

I know that when the words are done I will go there, but I cannot stop the dreams from flowing out of me. The best I can manage is to tarry over the arch of a letter, the flourish at the end of a line. The pages of Tzunk's work that I have found show the same touches, the same devotion to artistry, as he too came to understand his fate.

At night the Codex visits me, filling me as its receptacle. Even as it does so, I shape my dreams and send them to Ambran. Each night I tattoo a little more, painting him while he sleeps. Each night I sense that he is a little closer to me. I am amazed that the Codex does not suspect me, even as my escape nears its finish!

Twenty-seven days: Where I have been is meaningless. Where I am going is the only thing that matters. Today I dismissed Glin and he was glad for it. He is useless as a guide. I know where my journey will end.

Still, I fight my fate. I have tarried now for four days in Bedlam, staying to the high ground of the Citadel. The inhabitants are saner here than on the lower slopes, so close to Pandemonium's gate. Every moment I struggle to resist the urge to descend and pass through the iron arch to Pandemonium.

The tattoos continue to appear. The memory of a past love is written in the curve behind my ear. I cannot see it, but I already know what feelings the words carry. I am less of myself and more of someone else.

What is happening to me?

Twenty-nine: Today I almost succumbed. I was searching for a sage, a member of a group called the Sarex. I had a hope he would explain these tattoos (what would Trandleer say?) when I realized my steps were carrying me from the safe haven of the Citadel and into the tangle of the lower slopes. I could barely remember the prayers to Oghma to strengthen me!

My distress did not go unnoticed. Even as I fought for strength, a voice addressed me from the shadows. At first I thought it was another part of the madness that has taken me.

"You are in great danger," it whispered. "The Slave of the Codex has written upon you."

I was dumb-founded. Until this point, no one in Bedlam had even noticed the tattoos

that now covered nearly all my face. "You know about this?"

"I am Hrava—leader of the Sarex. Come into the shadows if you want to hear the chant."

It was foolish, but I followed the voice. I needed to know. "What is happening to me?"

There was a soft caress of shadow across the bridge of my nose, tracing the patterns of words etched in tiny lettering there. "You're being replaced. Word by word, memory by memory. Each sentence on your skin's the thought of another, every syllable a moment of their life."

"Impossible!" That was ridiculous to say, but I did.

"And yet it happens."

"Who—"

"Who is doing it? A prisoner and a slave. There is an ancient book—the *Codex of the Infinite Planes*. Perhaps you have heard of it?"

I nodded to the eyes I could dimly see.

"To exist and to grow, the book becomes the dreams of a prime. The slave writes what he dreams and goes where the pages take him, until eventually the slave is a useless husk. When he finally writes his own page in the dead book, the book waits for another and continues its pages."

"I've been captured by the book?"

"No, you berk, you've been snagged by the slave." The darkness gave a dry, throaty chuckle to my plight. "Sometimes the slave learns from the *Codex* even as it's using him. He learns how to ball up his dreams and send them to some poor sod like you."

"And?"

"And you become him. And he escapes the *Codex's* grip—even if he does have wear his memories on his skin for the rest of his life—makes for an interesting life."

I started to shiver. "What happens to me?"

The shadows swirled around me and the voice whispered in my ear. "Maybe you're destroyed. Maybe you're trapped inside your own body. What does it matter?"

I was sick with fear then. "Why are you telling me this? What do I owe you?"

The laughter came again, fading into the darkness, "Owe? Nothing. I'm Hrava, the shadow-fiend, what you'd call a thing from the pits of the Abyss. I told you because it amuses me. But I'm a fiend—am I lying or telling the truth?" With that he left me in the darkness.

I have given up looking for answers in Bedlam.

Pandemonium: Now I have even given up counting days. My body carries me forward as if it knows where to go. The wind cuts and screeches in my ears, trying to drive me insane. It can't—what more can madness do to me now? I (or someone else?) still harbors the hope that I can escape this fate.

Dream Four: He is here! My needles have pricked the last letters. My hands

have wiped away the blood and ink. When I wake he will be before me. He nears the door to my cave. I when I wake, I, Fallendor, will reach out my hand and pull. I will draw him out, trap him within this shell. I will be free!

I feel his footsteps through the earth. My eyelids tremble . . .

Procampur: I still struggle with the transformation. There are parts of Ambran left behind that press me to act against my will. I wonder how his incomplete spirit feels in that cave in Pandemonium? I wonder if he too is a slave of the *Codex*?

I thought I was free of the *Codex*, but even now I realize this too was a lie. I no longer see it in my dreams, but its words still bind me. These notes, for one. I cannot resist the urge to write my experiences, even though I always burn them later. My passions are printed on this face; these hands describe the childhood of another body. All the things that Fallendor was are written for everyone to see—his hopes and his final treachery. People see this tattooed face and shun me. Words still enslave me.

Ω

