



BRAVE NEW PLANES

Variant Planes in Your Campaigns:
A Manual of the Planes Web Enhancement
by Jeff Grubb



The new *Manual of the Planes* book isn't just a toolbox filled with cool completed toys. It's also a toolbox you can use to create your own planes. Like the earlier edition, this one goes into great detail on the core cosmology of the D&D game universe. Unlike the previous version, however, this book also includes a number of variant planes that you can use in addition to (or instead of) the Core Planes. In this way, you can create a unique fantasy universe of your own, molded to fit the needs of your campaign. Your universe need not be the same as another DM's, any more than two dungeons in your campaign world need to be the same, though they may use the same components.

The various planes are categorized into five general groups. The Material Planes are the various campaign worlds in which characters may adventure. The Outer

Planes are the homes of gods and other great powers, as well as the "final resting places" for spirits of the dead. The Inner Planes are wellsprings of elemental forces and pure energy—the building blocks of the cosmology. Demiplanes are finite planes with limited access, often created by magical force and mortal endeavors. Stitching all these together are the Transitive Planes, which allow movement along and often between other planes. In the core cosmology, the Astral Plane, the Ethereal Plane, and the Plane of Shadow are all Transitive Planes. The World Serpent Inn (described in detail below) is also a Transitive Plane. You can use it in addition to the core Transitive Planes, or as a replacement for one of them.

WORLD SERPENT INN: A VARIANT TRANSITIVE PLANE

The World Serpent Inn is both a place and a non-place, existing in multiple planes simultaneously and nowhere at all. It is a gathering place for dead races, unborn gods, forgotten heroes, restless ghosts, and the engineers of worlds as yet uncreated. Almost all the inhabitants of the Inn are travelers, either by design or by chance. Many have simply stopped here during journeys to other places, while others came to the Inn accidentally, then realized they could not get home.

The central chamber of the World Serpent Inn resembles nothing so much as an ancient tavern, with plank floors underfoot and venerable wooden beams overhead. This "common room" is a large, rectangular chamber dominated by a pair of flagstone fireplaces, one at each end. Great tables and heavy oak chairs fill the space in between, and patrons gather around these tables in groups of twos and threes to chat. A balcony with more tables, accessible via a spiral staircase in one corner, forms a partial second floor for the chamber. There are no windows, either on the ground floor or along the balcony. Corridors lead off from both floors

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| Editing | Penny Williams |
| Typesetting: | Sue Cook |
| Web Production: | Julia Martin |
| Web Development: | Mark Jindra |
| Graphic Design: | Sean Glenn, Cynthia Fliege |

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of the common room into other parts of the World Serpent Inn (see World Serpent Inn Features, below).

The World Serpent Inn is a Transitive Plane that can replace the Astral Plane in D&D core cosmology, or in cosmologies that eschew the Astral Plane. While the Astral Plane is generally accessible from any point on other planes, the World Serpent Inn is coterminous with (connected to) a given other plane at only one particular point at a time, and sometimes not at all (see World Serpent Inn Links, below).

World Serpent Inn Traits

Each plane has attributes known as traits, which define the basic laws operating within that particular part of the universe. These traits include the nature of gravity and time, the size and sometimes the shape of the plane, and how stable it is. (That is, are its features relatively fixed, or can they be moved around by magic, mental powers, godly decrees, or just plain brute force?) Elemental or energy traits, normally the province of the Inner Planes, represent affinities with particular elemental or energy forces. Alignment traits, which often define the Outer Planes, indicate a disposition of the plane and its inhabitants toward one or more of the standard alignments. A plane may also have magical traits, which affect the way magic works there. For example, some magical traits enhance spells and spell-like abilities, causing them to function as if affected by one or more metamagic feats (such as Quicken Spell, Extend Spell, or the like). Others impede magic, typically making spells more difficult to cast and spell-like abilities more difficult to use, but not negating them entirely. Finally, a plane may have its own unique traits. One such trait might cause a particular spell or spell-like effect to work in a certain way, while another might grant special abilities to inhabitants and transients alike while they are within the planar boundaries.

The World Serpent Inn has the following traits.

- **Normal Gravity:** Gravity is the same as it is for your regular campaign.
- **Timeless:** In the World Serpent Inn, creatures do not age. They do hunger and thirst, however, so food is provided from a kitchen alongside the common room. This kitchen, in turn, connects with vast catacombs and warehouses.
- **Infinite Size:** Though the World Serpent Inn is limited by walls, floors, and ceilings, it extends forever. Visitors can wander through the back passages and chambers forever, or until they find themselves back in the common room.

- **Alterable Morphic Trait:** The items and terrain native to the plane can be affected by normal actions (brute force, magic, and the like).
- **No Elemental or Alignment Traits:** The World Serpent Inn has no tendencies favoring one particular element or alignment over another.
- **Minor Positive Energy Dominant Trait:** The World Serpent Inn has a mild affinity for positive energy, which makes it seem more vibrant than most other planes. All individuals in the Inn gain fast healing 2 and may even regrow lost limbs over time.
- **Impeded Magic:** All spells and spell-like abilities, whether arcane or divine in nature, are impeded within the World Serpent Inn. To cast a spell or use a spell-like ability, a creature must make a successful Spellcraft check (DC 15 + the spell's level).
- **Damage Reduction:** While within the common room of the Inn, all individuals gain damage reduction 10/-. Leaving the common room negates this benefit.
- **Visibility:** This unique trait of the World Serpent Inn grants all within the ability to see invisible to the limits of their normal sight range as though affected by a *see invisibility* spell. As a result, invisible and ethereal creatures are plainly visible to everyone with any sort of visual capability, though ethereal beings remain incorporeal. *Potions of invisibility* and *rings of invisibility* simply do not function here.

World Serpent Inn Links

The Inn's primary portal (called the main entrance) connects its common room with first one destination, then another, seemingly at random. On the connected plane, the portal usually takes on an appearance appropriate for its surroundings, such as a never-before-noticed storefront in town, a roadside tavern conveniently placed to provide shelter from a storm, or a cavern revealed by a rockslide. Anachronistic appearances are possible, but rare.

Often, it seems as though the World Serpent Inn is waiting for a particular individual or group to cross its threshold. Once that occurs, the portal vanishes, only to open anew elsewhere—on either the same connected plane or a new one. Roll on the table below to determine the portal's new location.

The portal, regardless of its appearance, is always marked with the symbol of a serpent curled into a horizontal figure eight (the sign of infinity), eating its own

Random Portal Appearance Table Main Entrance, World Serpent Inn

| d% | Connected Plane |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1–50 | Material Plane (if previously on the Material Plane, then a new location there) |
| 51–60 | Alternate Material Plane |
| 61–62 | The Seven Mounting Heavens of Celestia |
| 63–64 | The Twin Paradises of Bytopia |
| 65–66 | The Blessed Fields of Elysium |
| 67–68 | The Wilderness of the Beastlands |
| 69–70 | The Olympian Glades of Arborea |
| 71–72 | The Heroic Domains of Ysgard |
| 73–74 | The Ever-Changing Chaos of Limbo |
| 75–76 | The Windswept Depths of Pandemonium |
| 77–78 | The Infinite Layers of the Abyss |
| 79–80 | The Tarterian Depths of Carceri |
| 81–82 | The Gray Waste of Hades |
| 83–84 | The Bleak Eternity of Gehenna |
| 85–86 | The Nine Hells of Baator |
| 87–88 | The Infernal Battlefield of Acheron |
| 89–90 | The Clockwork Nirvana of Mechanus |
| 91–92 | The Peaceable Kingdoms of Arcadia |
| 93–94 | The Concordant Domain of the Outlands |
| 95 | Plane of Elemental Fire |
| 96 | Plane of Elemental Earth |
| 97 | Plane of Elemental Air |
| 98 | Plane of Elemental Water |
| 99 | Positive or Negative Energy Plane (roll d% again; a result of 1–50 indicates the positive energy plane, and 51–100 indicates the negative energy plane) |
| 00 | Demiplane (DM's Choice) |

tail. The door, if there is one, is never locked, and it opens into the World Serpent Inn's common room.

This main entrance is a two-way portal, though as noted above, its destination changes frequently. The Inn also has hundreds of other exits, which are accessible from a maze of passages leading out of the common room in all directions. Most of these other exits are one-way portals, and they are usually (though not always) clearly marked. Some always lead to the same plane, but others have variable destinations.

The World Serpent Inn has its own Ethereal Plane, which does not connect to the Ethereal Plane coexistent with the Material Plane. Like its counterpart, this Ethereal Plane is home to creatures such as ethereal filchers and ghosts. The Inn's Ethereal Plane coexists primarily with its back rooms and corridors, but the presence of a powerful ghost may cause a tendrill of it to reach into the common room from time to time. Because of the Inn's visibility trait, ethereal creatures are visible to those within the Inn.

The World Serpent Inn is also coterminous with the Plane of Shadow, but again the points of connection

occur mostly in the back rooms and corridors. Such portals usually lead to the wild, desolate reaches of Deep Shadow.

World Serpent Inn Inhabitants

An ever-changing cast of characters, including githyanki, illithids, outsiders, planetouched, half-elementals, humans, and humanoids, can be encountered in the World Serpent Inn. At any given time, between one and two dozen travelers are lounging in the common room. Some have lived in the Inn for years and remember no other life. Others are waiting for portals to open to particular locations so that they can find loved ones, complete quests, or just return home.

The minor positive energy and damage reduction traits reduce the incidence of death in the common room, though they by no means eliminate it. Brawls are frequent there, particularly between sworn enemies (such as celestials and devils, or githyanki and illithids).

The one permanent inhabitant of the World Serpent Inn is the barkeep, Mitchifer. He always appears as a large, bearded, human male, but his abilities (and even his character class) seem to change depending upon the situation. Regardless of his specific abilities, he is always 20th level or higher, and he most often seems to be a fighter. Speculation runs rife that Mitchifer is a refugee of one cosmic faction or another, or perhaps even a god or former deity in his own right. There have been reports of his death over the years, but he has always returned.

Mitchifer provides newcomers with basic information about the Inn. ("Food's on the house. Leave when you're ready. Management is not responsible for loss of property or life in the back rooms.") Beyond that, he swears ignorance, though he often hooks up like-minded individuals in the common room or recommends a source for particular information that someone seeks. Mitchifer employs an ever-changing crew of waitstaff and cooks, some of whom are former travelers who have chosen to remain and serve. Should he not be present, one of these employees or another traveler greets new arrivals and acquaints them with the law of the land.

Mitchifer may or may not be a god or godlike power, but his superior (known only as "The Owner") probably is a deity—perhaps even of Uber-God status. The nature and identity of the Owner is a common topic of conversation around the fireplace. Most travelers assume that this being can determine where the common room's portal next opens, and Mitchifer lends

credence to this theory by occasionally taking requests for destinations. Sometimes, such requests are fulfilled, though there seems to be no pattern as to which are fulfilled and how soon.

World Serpent Inn Features

Beyond the common room, the World Serpent Inn is a mass of twisting hallways and passages, broken by numerous doors and staircases to other levels. Some of the doors are portals to other planes, while others lead to libraries, studies, storage chambers, and rooms for the various inhabitants.

Use the following table to determine the features encountered by anyone moving randomly about the back rooms.

Nature of the World Serpent Inn's

Back Rooms and Hallways

| d% | Type of Feature |
|-------|-------------------------------------|
| 1–10 | Stairs |
| 11–30 | Additional corridor |
| 31–60 | Door to bedroom/living quarters |
| 61–70 | Door to library/study |
| 71–80 | Door to storage room |
| 81–90 | Portal to demiplane |
| 91–00 | Portal to another location or plane |

Stairs: The stairs access another floor of the Inn that has additional passages. Roll d% to determine the direction of the stairs. On a result of 1–50 they lead up; otherwise they lead down.

Additional Corridor: Any such corridor has 1d4 doors in it, as placed by the DM. These may include secret doors as well as normal ones.

Bedroom/Living Quarters: These rooms are dominated by large furniture—beds, armoires, sofas, large chairs, and the like. Each such room has a 50% chance of having a second door. Any living quarters or study may (50% chance) be inhabited by one or more beings of a challenge level equal to that of the visitors. An inhabited room has only a 10% chance of treasure.

Library/Study: Libraries and studies usually contain desks, chairs, cabinets, bookshelves, and the like. Any such room may (25% chance) be inhabited by one or more beings of a challenge level equal to that of the visitors, and there is a 20% chance of treasure in this case. The selection of books in a study or library often includes rare and fantastic volumes, the contents of which may or may not be valid for the current coterminous plane. There is a 25% chance that such a room has a second door.

Storage Room: These rooms are little more than closets filled with supplies, unused furnishings, and food or treasure stashed here by travelers who never found their way back. Roll d% to determine the exact contents of the room. A result of 1–40 indicates food, 41–80 indicates linen, 81–95 indicates old furniture, and 95–00 indicates treasure. Any treasure in a storage room is appropriate for a 6th-level encounter and has an 80% chance of being trapped in some way.

Demiplane: This two-way portal is the sole access to a random demiplane. Effectively, this is a chunk of some other reality that has hung onto the World Serpent Inn during its planar perambulations.

Portal: The door opens onto another plane. Roll randomly for its destination on the Random Portal Appearance Table for the main entrance. This is a one-way portal that disappears when the main entrance changes its destination.

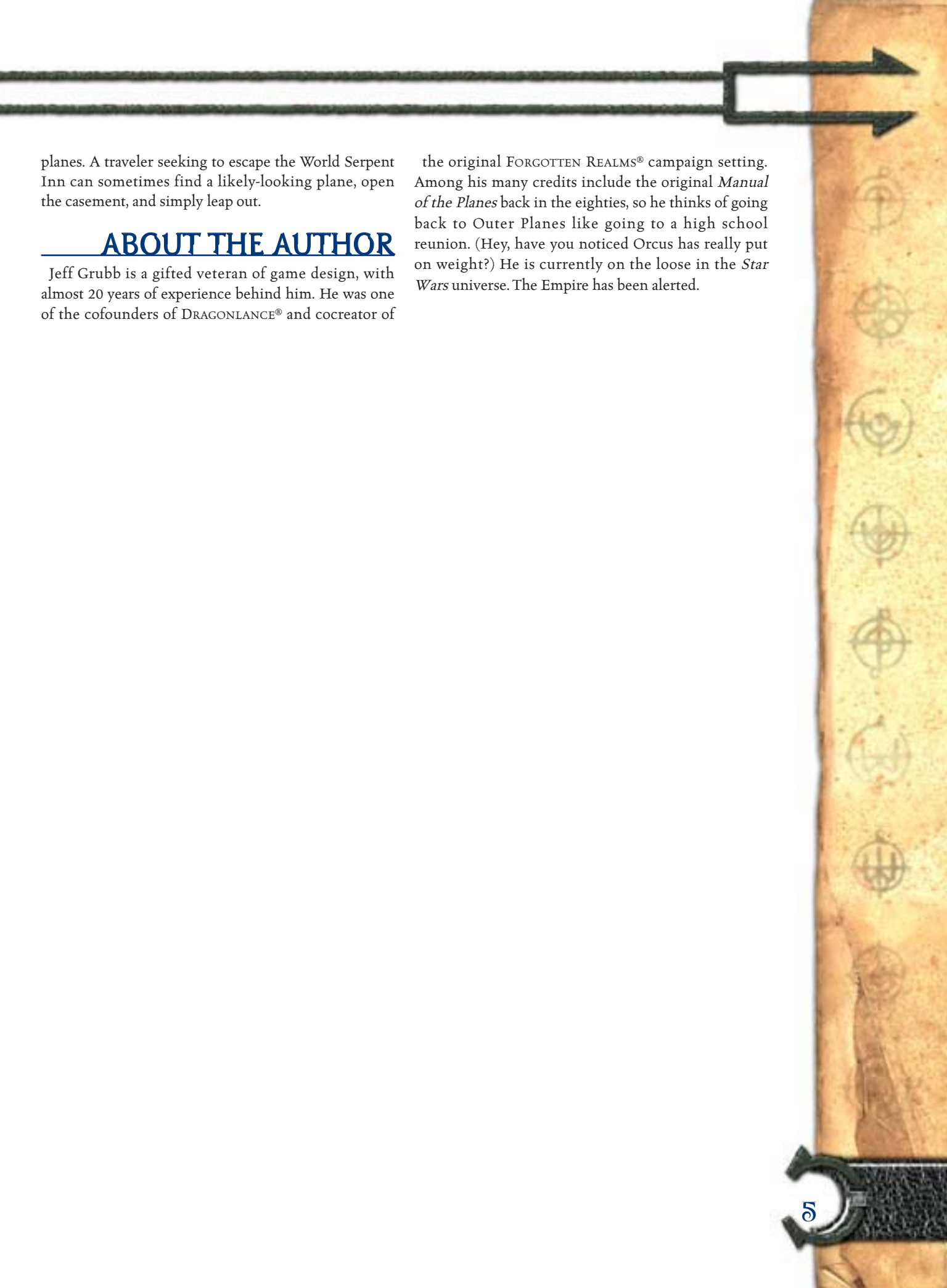
Mapping the back rooms and passages is possible, but such maps are valid only as long as the Inn's main entrance remains coterminous with a particular plane. When it changes connecting planes, the back rooms and hallways shuffle as well, forcing those within to map their surroundings again.

Sometimes the movement of walls caused by such a shift cuts off a few back rooms and passages entirely from the rest of the World Serpent Inn. If these areas are uninhabited, they tend to disappear. If they are inhabited, those within may break through the wooden walls to reconnect with the Inn. (Alternatively, at the DM's option, breaking through a wall can cause that portion of the World Serpent Inn to shear off and dump those within it unceremoniously into a random plane.) Characters can use spells such as *find the path* to locate particular spots within the World Serpent Inn—such as the closet where they stashed a *vorpal sword* before the main entrance changed connections.

Getting truly lost in the back rooms is difficult. A traveler wishing to return to the common room merely has to make that his or her goal. After that, every new door has a 10% chance of leading back to a familiar area (such as one of the hallways leading to the common room, the balcony, or the warehouses near the kitchen).

Though killing an opponent is difficult given the plane's fast healing trait, subdual works normally. As a result, there are stories of kidnappers roaming the back halls—in particular, a gang of vampires that capture and keep travelers for their blood.

A few of the hallways and rooms have windows. These are always one-way portals that look out over other



planes. A traveler seeking to escape the World Serpent Inn can sometimes find a likely-looking plane, open the casement, and simply leap out.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeff Grubb is a gifted veteran of game design, with almost 20 years of experience behind him. He was one of the cofounders of DRAGONLANCE® and cocreator of

the original FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting. Among his many credits include the original *Manual of the Planes* back in the eighties, so he thinks of going back to Outer Planes like going to a high school reunion. (Hey, have you noticed Orcus has really put on weight?) He is currently on the loose in the *Star Wars* universe. The Empire has been alerted.