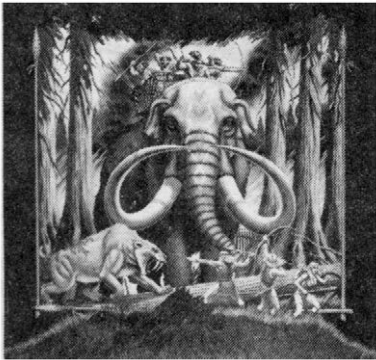


DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®

A Companion adventure
from the UK for 6-10
characters of levels 17-19

WHERE CHAOS REIGNS

by Graeme Morris



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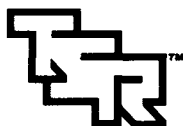
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This module is for use with the **DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®** Role-Playing Game Companion Set rules, and takes a group of 6-10 characters (of levels 17-19) from their own world and time, and into the chaotic history of the parallel world of Aelos.

As with any module designed for high level characters, it is impossible to predict exactly how powerful they will be in any given campaign, or how they will react to the situations with which they are faced. With this in mind, much of the information has been presented in a form which describes the essential features without resorting to unnecessary detail. Furthermore, the statistics of all monsters and non-player characters have been gathered together on the **Pull-out Sheets** (between pages 12 and 13). As a result, the DM should be able to adapt the adventure to the needs of the party concerned within the main framework, with particular reference to the strengths of the encounters.

Other Worlds

The prime plane in which the adventurers live is but one of the teeming planes scattered through the multiverse. Yet, within itself, the prime plane encompasses another whole universe; a universe in which many different, parallel worlds follow their own courses — sometimes moving in step with one another and at other times diverging.

Throughout its history, the world in which the characters live has witnessed the development of the powers of magic and the growth of the major races (humans, elves, dwarves and halflings). Many worlds grow thus, with only minor variations on the normal theme, but in other parallel worlds, normality is sometimes swept aside by some aberrant influence.

Aelos — where the adventures in this module take place — is such a parallel world, threatened by a race known as oards.

The Oards

In order to fully understand what follows, the DM should first read the description of the oards and their devices (see **Pull-out Sheets VII-VIII**).

The oards are a humanoid race whose power and strength derive from the mundane arts of technology and science — arts which have even given them the power to travel through time.

Their origin is obscure, but their influence on the world of Aelos is all too apparent since, in the distant future of Aelos, they have established a vast and mighty techno-



logical empire. Aelos' inhabitants could never have been defeated, however, and the oard empire could never have been founded, if the major races and the power of magic had developed fully there. The oards' empire is founded on their technologically-based ability to send small groups of agents back to critical times and places in Aelos' past, there to nip in the bud the major races and their powers, and thus pave the way for the oard conquest.

The Immortals

The Immortals are immensely powerful beings who watch over and influence events in the multiverse (see **CP2**). In time, the adventurers may encounter these beings, some may even join their ranks, but for now the characters may not even be aware that the Immortals exist.

The power of the oards is of great concern to the Immortals, since the existence of mundane power reduces the influence of their own. The Immortals decided that the oards had to be destroyed, but were faced with the problem that, since the entire history of Aelos had been changed by time-travelling oard agents, Aelos could not be restored simply by using the Immortals' power to destroy the oard empire. No more could a flower be brought into bloom by pulling open its bud.

Fortunately, the very foundation of the oards' empire was its weakness. Since the oards had founded their empire by producing particular events in the history of Aelos, the empire could be destroyed by reversing those events.

Such tasks could be performed by mere mortals, creatures whose powers would not be great enough to impose their own distortions on Aelos' history. Thus, in order to pluck a suitable group of mortals from one of the "normal" parallel worlds and transport them to the times and places

in the history of Aelos where they will be able to thwart the oards, the Immortals created the Nexus.

The Nexus

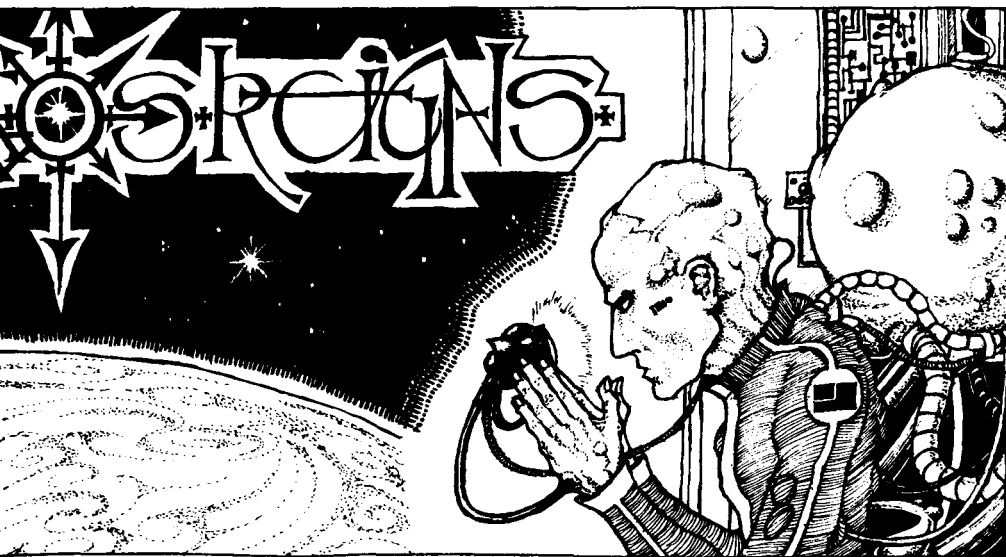
Have you ever walked into a room and had the feeling that you'd been there before, even when you couldn't possibly have been? Just for that moment, before the feeling vanishes, it seems as if two places, separated in time and space, are the same place. Well the Nexus is something like that... only much more.

The Nexus will link a series of six points in time and space. The first is now, and on the adventurers' own world, and the others are critical moments and places in the history of the parallel world of Aelos, separated by hundreds of years and as many miles — yet all are linked so strongly that characters can actually be drawn through the Nexus from one to another.

The six entrances to the Nexus are all very similar. Each is in a room of some sort — a one-room cottage, a hut, a ship's cabin, an underground temple, a turret-room or a stark chamber — and each has a similar (but distinctive) set of furniture, and a characteristic smell and sound.

The Nexus takes the adventurers through the eras of Aelos' in a set order. Only after the party's task in a given era is done, will the Nexus-link to the next era open. When this happens, the adventurers will begin to experience a feeling that it is "time to go". The feeling will grow until sooner or later, the adventurers will have to return to the Nexus and be taken by it to the next crucial point.

The Nexus will only transport the player characters and their equipment (including any inanimate objects they may have acquired during the adventure). Any other creatures will be left behind.



It is completely beyond the power of the player characters to control, manipulate or harm the Nexus. The rooms and their contents serve only to mark the entrances to the Nexus and are in no way necessary for it to operate. Even so, if a room or its contents are altered, moved or destroyed, it will be restored in every detail when the time comes for the party to go through the Nexus once more. The objects in the rooms will not be transported by the Nexus, even if in the possession of the adventurers.

The Nexus will give the adventurers the ability to speak the equivalent of the common tongue in each of the eras they visit (except the oards' Entropy Bubble).

The Adventure

The adventure begins (see **Here and Now** - page 4) in the player characters' own world. The Immortals have decided that it is from this place that mortals will be taken to Aelos.

In the characters' world, the Nexus links to a sage's cottage which may be located by the DM in any convenient wilderness area (hills, mountains, marsh, woodland or forest). The party will be drawn to this place by means of strange (but harmless) omens visited on the region around it.

Once they enter the Nexus in the cottage, the adventurers will have begun a one-way trip through the history of Aelos. The Nexus will only return them to their own world if they save Aelos from all its perils, and defeat the oards in their entropy bubble (see **The Entropy Bubble** - page 21).

The adventurers will first enter Aelos soon after its creation (see **In the Beginning** - page 6), when elves and humans have only just emerged. Here, the oards are using garls (a race of primitive proto-men) to destroy the elves and subjugate the humans so as to halt their development of magic.

Just before the emergence of dwarves from the earth (see **Forge of Power** - page 10), the oards will enlist the help of hephaeston (see **New Monsters - Pull-out Sheet VII**) to destroy the newcomers and prevent the fusion of dwarven smithcraft and magic.

By the third era (see **Bronze and Iron** - page 13) the previous interventions of the adventurers will have allowed humans, elves and dwarves to grow in numbers and power. In order to crush them, the oards have taken control of the armies of the Kolmede empire — a human civilization which has eschewed magic. This section uses the **Mass Combat** rules (see **CD12-17**) to resolve the war with the Kolmedes.

With the Kolmedes overcome, the elves and men of Aelos continue to develop their magic and, after many long years, assemble what they have learned in the Bibliotheca — an underground library on a remote island (see **Island of Sorcerers** - page 17). Here, the oards set a trap for the greatest wizards of the era, hoping to undermine the power of magic. The adventurers must discover and foil the oard plot.

With the final threat to magic and the major races removed, Aelos will develop in the normal way and the oard empire and its technology will simply cease to be (or, put another way, it will never have the chance to establish itself).

However, a few of the oards will remain, sealed inside an Entropy Bubble which separates them from events outside (see **The Entropy Bubble** - page 21). In the last part of the adventure, the Nexus will take the adventurers into the bubble for the final confrontation against the masters of mundane technology.

Once the oards are destroyed, the adventurers will be returned to their own world, and the Nexus, its purpose fulfilled, will vanish (see **The Bubble Collapses** - page 24, and **Here and Now** - page 4).

Using This Module

Monster Rosters

The statistics of all the monsters and non-player characters used in this module have been gathered together for ease of reference in the **Monster Rosters on Pull-out Sheets II-VI**.

Oards as NPCs

Since they use technology, the oards are very unusual creatures in the context of the **DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®** adventure game, and it is essential that the DM reads the details of the oards carefully (see **Pull-out Sheets VII and VIII**) before running the adventure.

In most cases, when they are first encountered by the party, the oards will be disguised with image amulets so as not to appear out of place. Once they begin to use their technological weaponry, however, it will soon be apparent that they are not all that they seem. When an oard is killed, its image amulet ceases to function and the oard will be revealed in its true form.

The DM should remember that oard technological devices cannot be used by the adventurers, and should avoid giving any explanations of the devices or referring to them by their proper names. The objects themselves should be described in terms of objects which they resemble (as detailed in the description of the oard devices), and their powers should be likened to similar magical effects.

Abbreviations

Monster Statistics (in the following order): Number; Name; Armour class (**AC**); Hit dice (**HD**); Hit points (**hp**); Movement rates (**MV**); Number of attacks (**#AT**); Damage (**D**); Save as (**Save**); Morale (**ML**); Alignment (**AL**); Experience point value (**xp**); Roll needed to hit armour class zero (**THACO** - see below); Source.

The following abbreviations are used:
General: C - cleric; F - fighter; MU - magic user; D - dwarf E - elf; L - lawful; N - neutral; C - chaotic.

Rulebook References (followed by page number): **BP** - **D&D®** Basic Players Manual; **BD** - Basic Dungeon Masters Rulebook; **EX** - **D&D** Expert Rulebook; **CP** - **D&D** Players Companion; **CD** Dungeon Masters Companion.

THACO = To Hit Armour Class Zero. This is the roll on 1d20 needed by a creature to hit an opponent with AC 0. In most cases, the roll needed to hit other armour classes = **THACO** minus AC.

HERE AND NOW

This section describes both the adventurers' departure through the Nexus to Aelos, and their return, since they will apparently have been absent only a few minutes. The entrance to the Nexus on the player characters' own world is in a small, lonely cottage which may be sited by the DM in any convenient, sparsely inhabited area (e.g. moorland, marsh or woodland) within a few days' travel of the adventurers' current location(s).

It Begins

The adventurers will gain their first inklings of the great events to come from a series of omens in the region, which they will either see themselves or hear about from others. The widespread occurrence of these omens allows player characters to be introduced to the adventure either individually or as a group.

The omens, although strange, will be harmless, and DMs may use those on the following list or invent their own:

- fish fall from the sky during a rainstorm
- birds are seen migrating at the wrong time of year
- trees blossom or bear fruit out of season
- a rainbow appears with its colours in the wong order
- the moon appears blue
- mice are seen chasing cats.

If the adventurers make enquiries concerning the omens (either of their own volition or in response to the concern which the happenings will cause amongst the common people), they will discover that the events have taken place only within a limited area. Further investigation will reveal that a sage lives in a lonely cottage in the middle of the affected area and "he is certain to know all about the omens". Strangely, although the party will have no difficulty finding people who know about the sage, and will be able to gain general directions to his dwelling, they will be unable to find anyone who has actually seen him or who has been there.

A Lonely Cottage

The adventurers will have no difficulty finding the cottage; in fact, it will be surprisingly easy to find, considering the vague nature of the directions they were given. The cottage is the location of the entrance to the Nexus, and the sage (who is an agent of the Immortals) will set them on their adventure on Aelos.

When the adventurers arrive, the sage will be waiting for them at the cottage door, and will greet each of them solemnly by name. He is wearing a deep blue robe with long sleeves and a hood which frames his deeply lined face. The characters will notice that although his features are those of an old man, his eyes are bright and piercing, and his voice is firm.

The sage will not enter into conversation with the party, nor will he answer any questions. Instead, once the adventurers are assembled, he will raise his hands for silence and prepare them for the adventure with the following words:

Look around at this world you call your home. To you it is everything, yet in the limitless eternity of existence it is but a tiny speck on a tiny speck. In the planes beyond, there are more worlds than you could ever conceive... infinite universes upon infinite universe.

Imagine, if you will, lost within that vastness, a world without magic; a world ruled by the power of mechanical devices constructed by a race who know no magic. Aelos is such a world, and the oards are such a race.

In the time of Aelos were sown the seeds which in your world grew and blossomed into magic and the might of men, elves, dwarves and halflings. But these seeds came to naught, for the oards had learned the secret of travelling through time and sent their agents to many times and places in Aelos' history. There they could shape certain events, bending the past to their own ends.

Yet all is not lost for Aelos. The events which changed its history might yet be reversed by those who could, like the oards, travel back in time. It is in the minds of those who watch over the countless worlds that you few might be the ones to make such a journey.

Come now into my humble abode, for there is much to do.

The adventurers will feel strangely compelled to accept the sage's invitation (no saving throw) and enter the cottage.

The description allows the DM to place in the cottage any weapons or other equipment belonging to the characters which

would be useful on Aelos, but which they have not brought with them. There will also be provisions of food and drink. These will have been magically transported here by the power of the Nexus. If the characters are fully equipped, the DM should omit the piles of gear from the description:

Inside the old man's cottage, the air is heady with the scent of stale incense, and there is the gentle tinkle of wind-chimes, set in motion as the door is opened.

The cottage is built of solid timbers. It is windowless, and the gloom within is relieved only by a smoky clay lamp on a large, circular oak table. Next to the lamp stands a mug of foaming ale and by it a loaf on a platter.

Stacked neatly in piles around the outside of the table are weapons and equipment... your weapons and equipment, which you left behind when you set out on this latest journey!

Slowly your eyes adjust to the gloom, and you begin to make out a tapestry on the far wall, a tapestry depicting a bewildering pattern of peoples and places. Somehow, they all seem strangely familiar...

As soon as the party members are all inside the hut, the DM should read out the description of their transportation to Aelos (see **The Beginning** - page 6).

It Ends

After the adventurers have destroyed the oards' entropy bubble (see **The Bubble Collapses** - page 24) and their mission to save Aelos is completed, they are returned to the sage's cottage after an absence (in their own world) of only a few minutes. With them, they will have all of the items which they acquired during the adventure. Any injuries or curses (but not energy drains) which the survivors have suffered will have been healed or removed.

The sage will be waiting outside the cottage, and will solemnly thank the characters for all that they have done. The moment they look away, however, both the old man and his cottage will vanish. The Nexus, its purpose fulfilled, will be sealed... perhaps for ever... perhaps not.





Aelos (see **Map A1**) is young and beautiful. The ice and fire from which it was formed are retreating, to be replaced by virgin forest — home to treants and bands of primitive elves. In the mountains to the north, the first bands of humans have emerged. Given time, elves and men will take the first steps towards civilization. But time is not on their side!

The garls (see **New Monsters - Pull-out Sheet VII**), a race of brutish half-men, also live in the mountains. Not long after the appearance of humans, the garls began to lose ground to their more intelligent cousins and were dying out, but the oards visited them, showing them how to control terrible beasts (rocs, mastodons and sabretooth tigers) and how to make weapons (bows and spears). With these, the garls enslaved the humans. Since their enslavement, a few humans have escaped the garls and have established a settlement in the forest.

A year ago, the oards returned and led the garls in the destruction of all but two of the elven villages. As winter fell, the garl armies retreated to their caves, but now it is spring and the assault has begun anew.

The Elves

The elves are primitive, stone-age hunters. Their love of woodland life is already developed, but they have not yet formed into proper clans since the treants have not given them the Trees of Life (see **CP30** and area 4). The elves are only just beginning to learn about magic, and can cast only the following spells:

First level: **detect magic, light, protection from evil, read magic, shield, sleep.**
 Second level: **continual light, detect evil, locate object, phantasmal force, web.**
 Third level: **dispel magic, haste, protection from evil 10' radius, water breathing.**

The Adventure

The party will arrive in this era during a garl raid on an elven village (Callafae - see below) and will soon learn of the garl threat to the elves and other inhabitants (see **Loralis** - area 2). The adventurers may escort the elves and humans as they flee in search of safety, and will encounter a garl war party (see **The Wandering Bands** - page 7), probably at the treants' home Galgrove (area 4). It is here that the party should overcome two of the oards in this era. Before the adventurers can leave (see **The Parting** - page 9), however, they will have to seek out the garl stronghold (area 7) and overcome the remaining three oards there.

There are very few items of a magical nature in this world for the adventurers to acquire. The principal treasures available are uncut gems which, in later years, will be coveted and hoarded but which are currently quite abundant.

The Newcomers

The elves, humans and treants will recognize at once that the adventurers are strangers to the land. The adventurers' clothes, magical powers (especially healing) and equipment (especially metal objects and weapons) will arouse particular interest since the inhabitants have no knowledge of the working of copper, bronze or iron, and have only stone tools and weapons.

The Beginning

1. Callafae

The characters are transported from the sage's cottage to a hut in the elven village of Callafae which is under attack by garls. The battle is nearly over, and most of the villagers are either dead or in hiding:

Looking around, you notice that the old man has vanished. Before you can look for him, the room begins to spin around you, and a shrill whistle blots out all other sounds. Your vision blurs, and the pattern of people and places seems to flow out from the tapestry to surround you. The room is changing from instant to instant, so fast that the details are lost, yet all the while the essential nature of the place remains the same.

After what seems like an age, the spinning sensation passes and your eyes can focus once more. The room before you is now circular and the timbers of the walls are replaced by woven twigs, daubed with mud. A frame of branches lashed together with thongs stands in place of the table and bears a bowl of steaming food and a posy of flowers. The clay lamp is gone and the light now comes from a small, open fire-pit filling the air with the smell of burning pine-cones and sending shadows dancing across the walls. Stretched on a frame over the door is a painting of a hunting scene.

The awful whistle, which still rings in your ears, has ceased, to be replaced by screams and the sounds of fire and battle. The door bursts open and an elven woman in a leather dress staggers into the room, her eyes wide with terror...

The village consists of 25 circular huts surrounded by a log palisade. Most of the huts are on fire and there are over 100 elven corpses scattered around, plus those of a roc and a garl. Running in panic amongst the huts are 12 villagers. Each round that the party stays in the hut after the woman enters, 1-6 villagers will be killed.