

CITY OF THE GITHYANKI

Written by

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Based on the premise by Richard Merwin

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Chapter I: Gimme a Break, Will Ya?

After a long afternoon of catching stray lizard hens grazing on herbs on the outskirts of the Black Lake, we see the Young Ones wander through what looks like a verdant garden. In search of a way back home, they realize they are super beat.

They immediately come to a sign that reads:

GARDEN OF EVIL

Hank points to the sign.

"Hey! Check this out, you guys!d"

A few split to scout the lush spot, with Diana taking note of a tall set of steps to a temple entrance at its center.

"I dunno about what's in *there*, but... out here looks pretty okay," shrugged Diana, looking to the others. "Should we trust it?"

"I dunno, you guys. Maybe the people who lived here are still around."

"Shut up Presto," don't ruin it for us," added Eric, still lethargic from overeating.

Presto and the gang come upon an alternating set of stones and carved logs arranged in a circle.

'Well, anyway, I can't think without a good night's sleep. Here looks like a good place,' sighed Presto, sitting down on one of the logs.

"Let's stop here," said another.

One, however, has trouble getting to that.

"Oof!"

"Hey! A little hand here!?" shouted Eric, who just fell over. "I can hardly move!"

"Well that's what you get for stuffing your face full of roasted sludge snails!" teased Diana, sitting Eric down on a smooth stone.

Right at that moment, Eric let out a belch as loud as the croak of a Bogbeast!

"BAAA00ORPRRP!"

"ERIC!!!" Everyone shouted as Diana backed away.

"HEY! COOL IT! YOU'RE SO DISGUSTING!"

"Well excuuuuuuse me, Princess!" Eric exclaimed.

"Well how was I s'posed ta know Presto could pull something so tasty outta that hat?"

Presto grinned, pleased to hear a kind word from Eric, who had goaded him over skunk chickens that eluded them since breakfast time yesterday.

From the small commotion of **group chatter**, Sheila looked heavenward, pointing up to something far enough away.

"Gee guys, it's only noon... why is it so dark so fast?"

"Hey, Sheila's right!" shouted Presto pointing in the same direction. "Look!"

"What the-?" gasped Diana. "The stars... have they dropped from the sky??"

The group gasps in astonishment at the dark shape.

"Great," Bobby muttered. "Now this whole place has dead batteries."

"Nothing on this forsaken realm runs on batteries stupid!" countered Eric.

Eric flipped his shield behind his head, landing on the firm of Bobby's left arm.

"Now I'll just lie here on this rock and -"

"OW!"

Bobby sprang up in reflex, let out a grunt before shoving a surprised Eric to the ground with his forward momentum.

"Oof!" "Why, you-!" growled the Cavalier.

"KNOCK IT OFF!" Diana growled while standing between the two. "You two have been at it all day! When are you two gonna stop bickering?"

Hank stood up, starting to pull the Barbarian off of Eric.

"I wanna go back home an' eat ice cream and play video games!" **cried Bobby as he dropped his club, sobbing.**

"Is that all?" dribbled Eric, drifting back in and out of consciousness. Sheila rushes to brother Bobby's side as the others, save for Presto, complain to Eric for causing their earlier misadventure.

At that moment, the DungeonMaster emerges from a bush. He appears exhausted, on the verge of collapse.

"Pupils!" the words escape his lips like a cry for help.

Eric's food stupor abated. "Oh brother, it's dungeondrip! To show us our latest sacrifice home."

Bobby backs off of Eric as Hank looks on at the crinkles on the Dwarven regnant's dome as the Ranger eases his restraint on the boy.

"What's the matter Dungeonmaster?"

"I have good - and bad- news!"

panted the tiny lord, catching his breath.

"There is yet another way back home!"

"Where is it this time?" asked the Acrobat.

The DungeonMaster drew them closer.

"Just beyond the gates of Krelm...you will find a portal in the astral plane containing the floating city T'unerath - an ancient metropolis untouched by time of an ancient race of undead known as the Githyanki.

"Great!" exclaimed Sheila. "Sounds a little scary but...maybe they'll help us."

"I'm afraid not, thief," lamented DungeonMaster. "Once human, millennia of enslavement by the mind flayers have changed them into monsters on their plane with a thirst for war and ruin."

"Well, surely they are reasonable people," reasoned Eric. "I've got a few bucks."

"They are friends to no one here but red dragons who guide them through our realm," continued Dungeon Master, "which is now inhabited by Vlaakith, their Lich queen of the Githyanki."

"Great! She can bring the light back and help us!" said Presto, joyfully.

"I fear not, Magician," muttered DungeonMaster. "You see -"

"Don't tell me," sighed Eric.

"Vlaakith is the one plunging the realm into darkness."

"I said don't tell me!" cried a quivering Eric, clutching the collar of his cape.

"Far encroaching on the gates of Krelm, Vlaakith has brought her own city T'unerath to our realm, over yonder in the sky -

"Oh No! In those black clouds over there?" Diana pointed to an oddly moving cloud rotates around a fixed area roughly a mile away.

DungeonMaster nods.

"Gives me the shivers!" uttered Sheila.

"And with her, are her legions of undead, and her own necromancy- dark magic," continues the spritely man.

The children all walla in panic as the cloud visibly expands.

"Can't you help us DungeonMaster?" pleaded the Acrobat.

At this DungeonMaster turned away, shaking his head in sorrow.

"My realm -based magic will not stop her fierce might and magic from the Astral plane, I'm afraid, her sorcery is without equal. Vlaakith's cold hand rots all it touches. Her minions are bringers of destruction. To defeat her, you must make your fiercest enemies your friends."

"You mean...we gotta work with them?!!" interjected Hank.

"Once you have wielded the Amulet of Endless Flames atop the summit of the Flame Mountains, one of you must use it to banish her from our realm once and for all.

"Piece'a cake!" Bobby interjected.

"Pnnhaa kaynnnk!!" mimicked Uni.

"In exchange for the amulet, Nayr the gnome keeper of the gates of Krelm shall grant you passage home."

DungeonMaster looks this way and that.

"Time is short. Make haste by dawn... added the man as he slipped behind a nearby column, "... or forever be shrouded in pitch of night."

It is now nightfall.

"Dungeon master wait!" exclaimed Hank, drawing his bow for a light source while approaching the column. "How are we supposed to end up way up there??"

"Remember, the darkness of yesterday holds tomorrow's light," echoed the spritely man's voice traveling up the building.

"WHY does he still DO that?!!" Eric cried.

"You heard him," said Hank, bow still drawn. "We've got no time to lose."

"Do we have to now? All this walking's got me tired, you guys," complained Sheila."

"We could use a little shut eye, Hank," said another.

"Fair enough you guys," replied Hank, holding up his drawn bow.

Presto conjures up blankets from his hat as Diana passes them out. "Let's get some rest."

"Not too much rest, Hank," whimpered the Cavalier. "I'm sure the sign doesn't read 'Garden of Evil' for nothing."

"We leave for the city in the morning."

"If there is a morning," mumbled Presto.

The kids settle in as an owl hoots overhead.

"Good night," said Hank.

"G'night."

The kids go to sleep.

As we track out from the Garden of Evil heavenward, we zoom out worlds away, until we realize that the point of view that we reach is that of Sardior, the ruler of a storied kingdom in a realm presided over by Gem Dragons.

End of Act I