

CODEX



INFERNUS



# CODEX INFERNUS

## THE SAVAGE GUIDE TO HELL

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# INTRODUCTION

**C**ODEX *INFERNUS* is a sourcebook about Hell. More than just a gazetteer, though, it's a book which gives you the tools to create a variety of characters, some heroic, others evil. You can even play demonic and monstrous characters. We explore ways you can implement Hell in an existing campaign, regardless of genre. In this way, *Codex Infernus* is also a toolkit you can mine for ideas, creatures, gear, magic items, and use them in your own game. The subject matter in *Codex Infernus* is not for the faint of heart. We discuss topics such as selling your soul, demonic possession, fictional gore and other mature content.

## THE BOOK OF CREATION

*Codex Infernus* offers new possibilities for characters you can play in nearly every genre you can think of, but especially modern and fantasy games. You'll find new races; Cambion, Trolls, and the Varg, who are actually three sub-races.

You'll also find a variety of character archetypes which play off common tropes of both fantasy and modern genres; wizards, rogues, demon hunters, etc. Next, you'll find Edges and Hindrances that reinforce some of the concepts of Hell, a new Arcane Background, and a new Professional Edge.

## THE BOOK OF MAKING

You'll find guidelines for Blessing objects, even if your character doesn't have an arcane background!

## THE BOOK OF LAW

The setting rules you'll find in this book tackle a number of concepts familiar to any game dealing with Hell and demons. You'll find rules for corruption, demonic pacts, demonic possession, and new power trappings.

## THE BOOK OF AGERON

The sample fantasy campaign setting, *Codex Infernus: The Fall of Aegeron*, is a world where the forces of light have fallen to the forces of darkness. Aegeron is a "Points of Conflict" setting, focusing on areas in the world where characters are likely to find adventure. Future source books will expand on Aegeron and its denizens. Of course, no book on Hell would be complete without a look at the infernal realm itself.

## THE BOOK OF HELL

We've created a fantasy version of Hell you can use in your own home-made setting, or even modify to fit any published setting.

## THE BOOK OF WORLDS

In the game master chapter, you'll find advice for creating cults, developing and running campaigns in a variety of genres, along with sample campaign events so you can create your own plot point campaigns. You also read about various myths of Hell from cultures around the world. Finally, we give you advice you can use to craft your own personal Hell.

## THE BOOK OF THE LEGION

Demons, demons, demons. That's the theme of the bestiary. We provide a ton of new demons ranging from lesser demons to the dreaded demon lords who vie for control of Hell itself.

# THE BOOK OF CREATION

**T**HE following chapter introduces a variety of races, ready-to-play character archetypes, and new Edges and Hindrances.

## NEW RACES

*Codex Infernus* introduces three new races to *Savage Worlds*. Each race plays a role in our campaign setting: *Codex Infernus: The Fall of Aegeron*, though you can easily port them into other fantasy settings, and even modern fantasy and horror settings.

### CAMBION

Cambion have their roots in Judeo-Christian mythology. The earliest known references to Cambion can be found in the infamous *Malleus Maleficarum*, otherwise known as “*The Hammer of the Witches*,” wherein Cambion are described as the sterile offspring of an unholy union between a demon (specifically an Incubus or Succubus) and a human.

In a modern setting, you can easily use these creatures to represent half-demon antagonists (or anti-heroes) in a “Gothic Horror” game reminiscent of movies like *Constantine* and *The Prophecy*, or even novels such as *Monster Hunters International*, and especially the *Dresden Files* series. TV shows such as *Grimm* and *Supernatural* are also good sources of inspiration.

### CAMBION IN AEGERON

Cambion are twisted creatures born, not from sexual intercourse, but the vile experiments of the Defiled. The Moragrim are such creatures, having willingly submitted to the transformation in exchange for power. Until recently, Cambion served the forces of darkness as lesser commanders in Hell’s armies, spies sent to spread discord among humans, and especially assassins targeting leaders in the resistance. Their fates changed with the assassination of Dreadlord Thaimoxx.

In the days after the Dreadlord was slain, Cambion—specifically the Moragrim—were blamed for the act, even though no evidence was found tying them to Thaimoxx’s death. They fled Hell to escape certain death and torment at the hands of the Doomspeakers, who are obsessed with finding the Thaimoxx’s killer. Fortunately, their ability to hide their demonic nature has helped Cambion blend in among the humans they once persecuted. Cambion automatically qualify for Shadow Touched Edges.

- **Low Light Vision:** Cambion eyes amplify light. They can see in the dark and ignore attack penalties for dim and dark lighting.
- **Natural Weapon (Claws):** When in demon form, Cambion have claws which do Str+d6 damage.
- **Two Faces:** Cambion have a true form which represents their demonic heritage, and a human façade, which they use to mingle with other humans. Their human form is always beautiful. Cambion enjoy a +1 Charisma bonus. When in Demon form, Cambion enjoy a +1 to Intimidation rolls. It takes an action to change from demonic form to human, or vice-versa. Cambion suffer the usual penalties for Multiple Actions when transforming.
- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Cambion take +4 damage from cold Iron weapons.
- **Weakness (Holy Items):** Cambion take +4 damage from weapons considered to be Holy. Examples include Holy water, and any offensive powers used by characters or NPC’s with the Miracles Arcane Background.

### TROLLS

The Troll is a creature from Norse and Scandinavian mythology/folklore, described as large humanoid creatures with bulbous eyes, bulging noses, tails and hairy ears. Some legends refer to them as jotunn (anglicized spelling); the

giants of Norse mythology. In fantasy, they are popularized in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, and the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, as well as J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter universe, and other stories, such as "Three Billy Goats Gruff." *Codex Infernus* incorporates these creatures as well (see the racial description, below).

In a modern fantasy setting, you might consider using Trolls as monster characters hunt. Or if you wish to play a game reminiscent of TV shows like *Grimm*, you can introduce them as a player character race.

### TROLLS IN AEGERON

The Yiska are a race of Trolls unique to the Great Swamp of Sundanar. On average the Yiska are taller and brawnier than humans and their tough mottled skin constantly glistens with a fine film of slime. Naturally pale skinned, the Yiska spend so much time submerged in the swamp that their skin becomes stained by the dark muddy waters and becomes disfigured by lumpy scars caused by the gnawing of leaches and lamprey. It is this scarring that the humans mistake for warts.

While the Yiska are humanoid in form, their features are disproportionate in size compared to the rest of their bodies. They have unusually large feet, very large hands, and while their heads are only slightly oversized, the same cannot be said about their facial features. Large bulbous eyes and protruding foreheads, wide noses, flared nostrils, and wide mouths define the Yiska. Their ears have large elongated lobes, which are often the focus of what passes as body art. Indeed, it is possible to identify which community the Yiska comes from by the style of the braided flesh of their ear lobes.

The Yiska are constantly in conflict with their human neighbors who regularly encroach on their territory, and build on their sacred places. Due to a life of constant conflict and a condition known as the Vorgen Hex the average life span of the Yiska is only 30 years, however, those that survive the Vorgen Hex have a natural lifespan of nearly 100 hundred years.

Each of the Yiska carries with them what is known as the 'Potential'. Should they ever be struck by lightning during a storm and survive, their bodies slowly begin to undergo a great change. Exposure to further

lightning fuels their growth and longevity, and if they survive long enough they eventually become a Troll King.

- **Dehydration:** The Yiska must spend one out of every 48 hours in fresh water or become automatically fatigued each day until they are incapacitated; the day after that, they perish.
- **Low Light Vision:** The Yiska's large eyes allow them to see in the dark. Ignore attack penalties for dim or dark lighting.
- **Regeneration (Slow):** The Yiska make a natural healing roll once a day. The rough travelling, no medical attention, or rain conditions do not impose modifiers, intense heat and cold impose -2 modifiers as normal.
- **Semi-Aquatic:** Gain a Fatigue level every hour the Yiska remains submerged; on reaching incapacitated, must make a successful Vigor roll every 15 minutes or drown; Fatigue recovers one level per 15 minutes back in air.
- **Stench of an Outsider:** Trolls not only carry the stink of the swamp, but also the prejudice human folklore bestows upon them.

When dealing with other races the Yiska suffer a -4 Charisma penalty.

- **Tough:** Yiska are big and tough skinned. They start with a d6 in Vigor instead of a d4.



**VARG**

Varg are a race of creatures exclusive to *Codex Infernus: The Fall of Aegeron*, though, with some work, you can introduce them in any campaign world (even modern and sci-fi settings) you wish. You might consider using the Varg in a modern game where these types of creatures (and others) live side by side with humans, hiding their true natures using the “Two Faces” ability in the Cambion description above. Offset the ability with the Outsider Edge, and you’re good to go. In a Sci-fi game, the Varg might be new races of creatures inhabiting distant planets.

**VARG IN AEGERON**

When Humans began to spread across the face of Aegeron, they encountered strange creatures with both human and animal features, notably wolf, rat and hawk. They named them Varg; abominations, in the common tongue. Sadly, as is it with many things people don’t understand, Humans feared and hated the Varg, driving them from their lands in one of the worst periods in Aegeron’s history: The Great Culling. The survivors fled North, raiding towns along the Kotarran and Tygoshian coastlines, where they stole ships and sailed into the frigid waters,

eventually landing on the shores of a new land never before seen by Human or Varg: The Darkened Wild.

Finally having found a safe haven from those who hunted them, the Varg thrived in their new homeland, a vast, and primordial realm of unending forests, deep valleys, and tall mountains and hills intersected by roaring rivers and lakes.

The years following the migration would see the Varg spread across the Darkened Wild, each sub-race laying claim to territory suited to their kind. Then the Defiled came, and once more, with the exception of the Terrock (see below) the Varg found themselves hunted, and enslaved. Those who weren’t used for food were given to the Flesh Renders for experimentation, where they were twisted into horrific monstrosities and sent back to Aegeron to serve as shock troops in the armies of Hell.

Years after the demonic conquest of Aegeron stalled, those Varg who remain free fight for control of the Darkened wild, attacking the strongholds of the Defiled wherever they might be found. On Aegeron, some of the Varg have escaped the armies of the Defiled and seek to aid the humans who once persecuted them, though these are few as old hatreds die hard. Centuries later, the Varg still remember the Great Culling. Most Varg keep to themselves, and avoid human settlements entirely, though some eagerly seek to exact vengeance upon the humans who once drove them north.



**ULFANG**

The largest of the three known Varg sub-races, these wolfish creatures are known for their ferocity in battle, using both weapon and claw to devastate their opponents. Their howls curdle the blood and cause even the most battle hardened of opponents to freeze in their tracks. Despite their ferocity in battle, the Ulfang are generally

a noble race of creatures who travel in large packs, and live in dens deep in the forests. Of all the Varg, the Ulfang suffered the worst at the hands of the Defiled and Humans, who very nearly wiped them out.

Ulfang regard the Terrock with suspicion, if not outright hatred, for their alliance with the Defiled. That said, they see the Terrock's continued persecution of the Riva as an example of the need to be strong in these trying times. Some of the more sympathetic Ulfang have been known to give The Kin aid, but most prefer to let nature run its course. If the Riva survive, they survive. If not... perhaps it is for the best.

- **Battle Roar:** Once per encounter, the Ulfang can let out a blood curdling roar which causes opponents in a Medium Burst template to make a Spirit roll or become Shaken.
- **Fast:** Ulfang have a base Pace of 10.
- **Loyal:** Ulfang will never abandon a member of their pack. This includes any character they deem worthy of their protection.
- **Natural Weapon (Claws):** Ulfang do Str+d6 with their sharp claws.
- **Primal Intellect:** Ulfang are a savage race, not as intelligent as other Varg. Their Smarts die requires two points per step to raise during character creation, and two advances to raise the attribute during game play.
- **Racial Enemy (Humans):** Ulfang suffer a -4 charisma penalty when dealing with Humans.
- **Superior Strength:** Ulfang are incredibly Strong. They begin with a d8 in Strength, and may increase their Strength to d12+2 via normal advancement.

## TERROCK

Enigmatic is the best term to define the Terrock; bipedal creatures similar to birds of prey who make their homes in Eyries high in the mountains and hills of the Darkened Wild, where they practice vile sorcery and plot to take control of the entirety of the Darkened Wild, and perhaps even Aegeron itself. Of all the Varg, the Terrock are the cruelest. Even before the Great Culling, these creatures took great pleasure inflicting pain and suffering on those they captured. Most scholars, and certainly the Ulfang, blame the Terrock for bringing the wrath of humans down on them.

The years following their arrival in the Darkened Wild have seen the Terrock continuously expand their territory. While they are not strong enough to subdue the Ulfang, who fiercely defend their territory, Terrock have enjoyed great successes in their persecution of the smaller Riva, who they hunt for food and sport. Terrock are the only race of Varg who willingly sided with the Defiled, promising fealty in exchange for power, and even though the vast majority of the Defiled have since left the Darkened Wild, there is still a sizeable force tasked with subduing the region. The Terrock still maintain relations with them, sending their warlocks and warriors to serve, both in the ranks on Aegeron, and at home.

- **Avian:** Terrock can Fly At base Pace; may "run" as per the *Savage Worlds* Monstrous ability. They have a Climb of 0.





- **Cruel:** Terrock delight in the suffering of others. Unless hunting for food, they prefer to take prisoners for torture and rather than kill their prey outright. If they are in a situation where they must kill their enemy, they will do it in the most painful way they can. Damage rolls from general melee attacks may never Ace. Damage rolls from Called Shots and Arcane Powers can Ace. Nonlethal damage can also Ace.
- **Eagle Eyes:** Terrock enjoy a +2 bonus to Notice rolls involving sight.
- **Frail:** Terrock tend to have a frail frame. They suffer -1 Toughness.
- **Keen Minds:** Terrock are extremely intelligent. They begin with a Smarts of d8, and may raise it to a d12+2 via normal advancement.
- **Natural Sorcerers:** Terrock are gifted in the arcane arts. They start with an Arcane Background of their choice.
- **Racial Enemy (Riva):** Terrock suffer a -4 Charisma penalty when dealing with Riva.

**RIVA**

The Riva—or Kin, as they commonly call themselves—are Varg who look to be bipedal rats standing 3 to 4 feet in height. The Kin are extremely reclusive, keeping to the isolated valleys and deep hollows of the Darkened Wild, away from the territory of the uncaring Ulfang and the vile Terrock who hunt them for food. At one time The Kin were a timid race of creatures, but no more. Since the arrival of the Defiled to the Darkened Wild, the Kin have had to overcome their fears and fight for their continued survival, or face extinction, or worse.

Many Riva have been taken by the demonic horde who pervert them, both body and soul, twisting The Kin into abominable, rabid creatures that spread a strange, wasting disease every time they bite or claw their opponents. The Defiled use these monstrosities to hunt down the remaining Riva, or send them on to Aegeron to bolster their forces.



- **Hard to Hit:** Riva are adept at using their surroundings to avoid getting hit in combat. They begin play with the Dodge Edge.
  - **Keen Hearing:** Riva have a +2 to Notice checks involving sound.
  - **Nimble:** Riva are extremely agile. They begin with a d8 in Agility, and may raise it to d12+2 via normal advancement.
    - **Nocturnal:** Riva have the Low light Vision Monstrous ability. They ignore penalties for Dim and Dark Lighting.
  - **Racial Enemy (Terrock):** Riva hate the vile Terrock, and suffer -4 Charisma when dealing with them.
    - **Small:** Riva stand less than 4 feet tall. They suffer a -1 Toughness. Additionally, Riva aren't as strong as other Varg. Their Strength die requires two points per step to raise during character creation, and two advances to raise the attribute during game play.



## CHARACTER ARCHETYPES

Twelve Novice archetypes—six for fantasy games and six for modern games—are provided for you to use. All points have been spent, Edges and Hindrances selected and so on, all you need do is select a Race and add the appropriate modifications to the stats below.

If you select Human as a Race, then simply add an additional Novice Edge of your choiceto the stats below. If you select a Race that has an Attribute that begins higher than a d4, simply adjust the Archetype's stat to that starting die type.

If that Archetype already advanced that Attribute at character creation, then add that many steps to your character's attribute. (For instance, if your archetype has an Agility of d6 and your Race starts with an Agility of d8, then you raise the starting Agility to d8 and add the additional step used in character creation to begin with a d10.)

If your Race begins with an Attribute that costs two points to raise, and the Archetype is starting higher than a d4, simply remove the steps added to the Attribute and reallocate. (For example, if your Strength is penalized and your Archetype begins with a d8, you can either begin with d4, and apply those two steps to other attributes, or you can spend both on your Strength, raising it to d6.)

## FANTASY CHARACTERS

### HEDGE WIZARD

While magic is not inherently evil, it is certainly intertwined with Hell in the thoughts and fears of commoners. Many wizards use the magic for healing as much as harming, despite the perception that they are dabbling with demonic forces. These brave souls remain undeterred, using their powers to help mankind.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d4

**Skills:** Fighting d4, Healing d6, Investigation d4, Knowledge (Arcana) d8, Notice d6, Spellcasting d10, Taunt d6

**Cha:** 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 4; **Willpower:** 5; **Power Points:** 10

**Hindrances:** Anemic, Bad Eyes (Minor), Curious

**Edges:** Arcane Background (Magic), Wizard

**Powers:** Armor, Bolt, Healing

**Gear:** Staff (Str+d4, Parry+1, Reach1,2Hands), \$450.

### KNIGHT ERRANT

Some knights relish in tournaments and holding court, but others are consumed with a wanderlust that draws them into adventure after adventure. These knights try to shirk the responsibilities of their land and holdings in order to find new adventures and vile beasts to slay, often with mixed results as the responsibilities of nobility rarely shake loose that easily.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Healing d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Riding d6, Survival d6

**Cha:** +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 9(3); **Willpower:** 5

**Hindrances:** Code of Honor, Doubting Thomas, Quirk (Wanderlust keeps him on the road)

**Edges:** Brawny, Noble

**Gear:** \$250, Short Sword (Str+d6), Plate Corselet, Arms and Leggings (Torso, Arms and Legs), Steel Helmet.

### HIGHWAYMAN

Some men make their living preying on the poor souls who are merely traveling the roads, being little more than criminals and predators. Most of them have no desire to hurt anyone... so long as they get whatever they want from their marks. This greed can often have dire consequences if infernal beings catch wind of it.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Climbing d4, Fighting d8, Gambling d4, Intimidation d6, Lockpicking d4, Notice d6, Riding d4, Shooting d4, Stealth d6, Streetwise d4

**Cha:** -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6(1); **Willpower:** 5

**Hindrances:** Greedy (Minor), Ugly, Wanted (Major)

**Edges:** Luck, Scavenger

**Gear:** Short sword (Str+d6), Bow (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, Rof 1), Leather armor.

### SHADOWY MANIPULATOR

Silver tongued devils, lurking at the ear of a king, a duke or a baron, manipulating policy with a word or a suggestion. Some men are content to stand behind the seat of power, rather than sit upon it. With a suggestion, they can command amazing resources without the responsibility, but that lust for power rarely goes unnoticed for long...



**Attributes:** Agility d4, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Intimidation d6, Investigation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Streetwise d6, Taunt d8

**Cha:** +2; **Pace:** 4; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 5; **Willpower:** 6

**Hindrances:** Callous, Devil's Mark, Lame

**Edges:** Charismatic, Shadow Touched

**Gear:** \$500.

**DECADENT NOBLE**

Power corrupts, and boredom can lead the wealthy and powerful down dark paths. These nobles revel in the excesses of life, constantly seeking new challenges and adventures. Once they exhaust the mundane, it is not long until their sights turn towards the mystical, and that can prove a dark and dangerous path to tread.

**Attributes:** Agility d4, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Gambling d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Politics) d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Riding d4, Taunt d6

**Cha:** +2; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7; **Willpower:** 5

**Hindrances:** Big Mouth, Habit (Major—narcotics), Obese

**Edges:** Noble, Strong Willed

**Gear:** Short sword (Str+d6), \$1300.

**NETHERGUARD ACOLYTE**

The Netherguard Acolytes are brave souls who intentionally breach the dimensional walls separating their world from the Netherworld, learning as much about that other realm as possible. Anyone needing to cross over would do well to have an Acolyte on their side, to avoid making a one way journey.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d4

**Skills:** Healing d6, Investigation d4, Knowledge (Netherworld) d8, Notice d6, Spellcasting d8, Survival d6, Tracking d6

**Cha:** 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 5(1); **Willpower:** 6; **Power Points:** 5

**Hindrances:** Cautious, Heroic, Pacifist (Minor)

**Edges:** Netherguard Acolyte

**Powers:** *Burst, Open Portal*

**Gear:** Leather Armor, \$450.

**MODERN CHARACTERS**

**CORRUPT COP**

Cops are meant to serve and protect, to uphold the law and defend the innocent. Some cops, however, become tempted by the power of the badge, or the opportunities presented to them by the very criminals they are supposed to put away. Once this corruption takes root, the grip of Hell is like an iron vice, nearly impossible to escape.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Driving d6, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Law) d4, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Streetwise d6, Taunt d4

**Cha:** 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6; **Willpower:** 4

**Hindrances:** Greedy (Minor), Loyal, Overconfident

**Edges:** Alertness, Connections (Criminal)

**Gear:** 9mm Pistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, ROF 1, AP 1), police baton, \$250.

**PRIVATE DETECTIVE**

Private Detectives tend to be classic losers: Well meaning fools who are suckers for sob stories and pretty faces. It doesn't take much to hook a down on his luck PI, and he's out on the streets, unraveling mysteries with the best of intentions. But the Road to Hell is paved, as they say, with good intentions...

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Driving d4, Investigation d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Shooting d6, Streetwise d8

**Cha:** 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5; **Willpower:** 5

**Hindrances:** Curious, Poverty, Habit (Minor—Functional alcoholic)

**Edges:** Liquid Courage

**Gear:** 9mm Pistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, RoF 1, AP 1).

**BIKER**

Not all bikers are violent criminals, but there is a certain element that takes the freedom of the road to a new extreme and find themselves embroiled neck deep in the worst excesses. That liberty perverted, they ignore the laws and the expectations of polite society and find themselves on a highway to Hell.



**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Driving d8, Fighting d6, Gambling d4, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Repair d6, Shooting d6, Streetwise d6

**Cha:** -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5; **Willpower:** 5

**Hindrances:** Loyal, Mean, Wanted (Major)

**Edges:** Ace

**Gear:** Motorcycle (Stolen), Switchblade (Str+d4, -2 to Notice if Hidden), Desert Eagle (Range 15/30/60, Damage 2d8, RoF 1, AP 2), \$190.

### HITMAN

Contract killers, by their very nature, are not nice people. Even a neophyte murderer has blood on their hands, and killing for money does not insulate a soul from the infernal grasp of Hell. In fact, the emotional state many killers need to reach in order to do their job efficiently often opens them up to greater corruption.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d4

**Skills:** Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d8, Streetwise d6, Throwing d8, Tracking d6

**Cha:** 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 4; **Willpower:** 5

**Hindrances:** Code of Honor, Callous, Cautious

**Edges:** Extraction, Steady Hands

**Gear:** Sniper Rifle (Range 30/60/120, Damage 2d10, ROF 1, AP 2, Snapfire), \$100.

### LUCHADOR

Luchadors of Mexico are not just world-class athletes and professional wrestlers, but practically superheroes, at least in appearance and reputation. Many films were made chronicling the exploits of luchadors battling vampires, mummies and more, and more than one luchador has been “demonically” influenced. Some would say there is a certain element of truth to those tall tales...

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d4

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Investigation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Streetwise d8, Taunt d6

**Cha:** 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 4; **Willpower:** 5

**Hindrances:** Heroic, Outsider, Pacifist (Minor)

**Edges:** Acrobat, Martial Artist

**Gear:** Luchador Mask, \$500.

### SHADOWTOUCHED EXECUTIVE

It is said that money is the root of all evil, and Hell is not afraid to use money and power as a hook to draw in the unsuspecting. Those who would use money as a pathway to power find themselves with infernal avenues at their disposal to aid them in their pursuits, never questioning the ultimate price they must pay, assuming themselves to be untouchable.

**Attributes:** Agility d4, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d4

**Skills:** Gambling d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Business) d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d6, Shooting d4, Taunt d6

**Cha:** 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 4; **Willpower:** 5

**Hindrances:** Arrogant, Quirk (Elitist), Stubborn

**Edges:** Rich, Shadowtouched

**Gear:** \$1500.

### NEW SKILLS

The following skill is available for use in your game.

#### KNOWLEDGE (DEMONOLOGY) (SMARTS)

Knowledge (Demonology) is the study of demons. Characters with this skill may uncover a variety of aspects about a demon, such as it's true name, any weaknesses, known followers, sightings, and general status (if any) among the legions of Hell. Success on a Knowledge (Demonology) roll grants a single piece of information about the demon in question, with each subsequent raise granting yet another piece of info, up to a max of four pieces of information.

### EDGES AND HINDRANCES

The Following Edges and Hindrances play on various hellish themes. They are designed to augment rules such as corruption, demon possession, and pacts with demons.

#### NEW HINDRANCES

##### CALLOUS (MINOR)

Some heroes struggle mightily against their inner demons, always striving to make the right moral choices. But there are also those who simply don't care, or who even enjoy inflicting pain on others. This flawed character suffers a -2 penalty to Corruption checks, and can never seek redemption.



**COMBAT SHOCK (MINOR/ MAJOR)**

Some people freeze up when things get dangerous, and your hero is one of them. It could be due to fear, flashbacks, or something else; whatever the reason, in the first round of any combat, you must make a Fear check. If you have the Major version, this roll is at -2.

**DEVIL'S MARK (MAJOR)**

This fallen hero has been permanently scarred or branded by a demon, as a sign of his service to the foul creature's cause. The character is considered "supernaturally evil" for the purposes of the Champion and Holy Warrior Edges, and suffers -4 Charisma when dealing with anyone who knows that he is marked. Furthermore he always has at least one mark of corruption, which can never be removed.

If the character receives this Hindrance as the result of a demonic pact (see the Book of Law for more information on demonic pacts), the demon always knows where she is.

**BACKGROUND EDGES**

**NETHERGUARD ACOLYTE (ARCANE BACKGROUND)**

**Arcane Skill:** Spellcasting (Smarts)

**Starting Power Points:** 10

**Starting Powers:** 1+ *Open Portal*

Very few mortals know how to access Aegeron's Stone Gates. The Netherguard Acolyte is one such person; a wizard trained in the art of opening and closing portals to the Netherworld. Like all wizards in Aegeron, the Netherguard Acolyte draws her power from the world around her. Because she is so attuned to Aegeron's gates, she can sense the location of a Stone Gate by making a Notice roll. If successful, the Acolyte knows the general direction of the nearest Stone Gate. On a Raise, she knows the precise location and distance. On a failure, she has no idea where the nearest gate is.

**Attunement:** A Netherguard Acolyte can make a Spellcasting roll to attune herself to any Stone Gate she has found. Success on the roll means the character always knows where the attuned gate is, and she enjoys a +1 bonus to Spellcasting rolls to open the gate. If she fails on the roll, she must wait 24 hours before attempting to attune herself to the gate. If she rolls a 1 on the Spellcasting roll, the character may never attune herself to the gate.

**Backlash:** When a Netherguard rolls a 1 on her Spellcasting Die, she is automatically Shaken. This can cause a wound. Additionally, if the Netherguard Acolyte rolls a 1 on her Notice Roll to find a Stone Gate, or her attunement roll, she gains a level of Fatigue and must wait 24 hours before attempting to find another Stone Gate

**PROFESSIONAL EDGES**

The following Professional Edge is provided for use in *Codex Infernus: The Fall of Aegeron*, but it can be modified for use in any genre you wish. For example, this Professional Edge would work very well in a *Star Gate SG1* type of game where characters are tasked with exploring other dimensions.

**NETHERGUARD SENTINEL**

**Requirements:** Novice, Notice d6+, Survival d8+, Tracking d8+

Netherguard Sentinels are brave individuals who have travelled the mist-shrouded paths of the Netherworld, and lived to tell the tale. They know the secrets of travelling and surviving in the Netherworld, and have made good use of their knowledge to guide refugees to safe havens all across the broken world of Aegeron. Netherguard Sentinels enjoy a +2 to Tracking Survival, and Notice rolls made in the Netherworld.

**SHADOW TOUCHED EDGES**

Sometimes known as "Dark Gifts," Shadow Touched Edges are the result of exposure to infernal powers, and grant the character supernatural demonic abilities.

**SHADOW TOUCHED**

**Requirements:** Novice, Special\*

At some point in his past, the character—willing or unwilling—came in contact with a demonic entity. The experience left him tainted in some fashion, either mentally or physically. The hero must choose an additional Hindrance (this does not count towards his limit, nor provide additional points at Character Creation) that reflects this taint; such as Ugly (scaly skin, pungent smell, etc.) or Quirk (constantly talking to himself). The hero is also considered "supernaturally evil" for purposes of the Champion and Holy Warrior Edges.

The upside of the encounter is that the character is accustomed to the darker side of human nature and the things that man should not know. He gains a +2 to Fear checks. The taint has also



blessed (some might say cursed) the character in some fashion, allowing him to tap into dark energies not normally accessible by mortals. The hero may take Dark Gift Edges by spending additional Advances. Any time a Shadow Touched uses a Dark Gift that requires an activation roll, they use Spirit to activate it unless otherwise specified. After completing the activation roll, the Shadow Touched is required to make a Vigor roll at -2 or gain a level of Fatigue that is removed after an hour of rest. Any Shadow Touched who fails this roll can opt to take a Corruption Point to prevent the Fatigue cost instead. Dark Gifts without activation rolls do not gain Fatigue.

\*The player must come up with a backstory involving a situation where the character had contact with a demon.

### AMMON'S BREATH

**Requirements:** Novice, Shadow Touched

The weapons of a Shadow Touched are many and they are varied. This Shadow Touched is able to breathe a gout of hellfire at enemies in her immediate surroundings, potentially setting her foes and everything around them ablaze. This ability functions as the *burst* power with a Hellfire trapping, causing any flammable materials in the Cone Template to potentially catch fire. Roll for any flammable objects to catch fire, per the *Savage Worlds* rules.

### DEFILE GROUND

**Requirements:** Novice, Spirit d6+, Vigor d8+, Shadow Touched

The corrupting influence of a Shadow Touched cannot be understated, especially as it permeates their surroundings. Using this Dark Gift, the Shadow Touched makes a Spirit roll to project a foul aura of defiling energy the size of a Small Burst Template. This tainted aura lasts a number of rounds equal to half the Shadow Touched's Vigor die, and remains centered on him at all times.

While this gift is active, the Shadow Touched automatically inflicts 2d6 damage to all creatures within the aura at the end of his turn each round, and anyone moving into the aura also suffers 2d6 damage.

### INFERNAL GRASP

**Requirements:** Defile Ground, Seasoned

When the Shadow Touched defiles the surrounding area, unearthly, clawing hands reach from the ground to grasp at everyone in their

vicinity. Whenever Defile Ground calls for a damage roll against someone, that creature must first make an Agility roll (at -2 if Defile Ground was activated with a raise) or become pinned, as if affected by the *entangle* power.

### DEVIL'S TOUCH

**Requirements:** Seasoned, Shadow Touched

This Shadow Touched is able to imbue his hands with demonic energy. When using this Dark Gift, the Shadow Touched's hands turn dark and elongated as a sinister purpose pervades them. Devil's Touch functions as the *smite* power with a Necrotic trapping, and lasts a number of rounds equal to half the Shadow Touched's Vigor die, but may only be applied to his own "natural" weapons (claws or fists, or any other natural weapons at the GM's discretion).

### HELLBEAST

**Requirements:** Veteran, Shadow Touched

While some Shadow Touched work alone, others prefer to pervert nature to their bidding. These Shadow Touched imbue dogs or wolves with hellish ferocity, transforming them into infernal hellbeasts. The animals grow and warp into twisted monstrosities with ferocious temperaments, although they serve their Shadow Touched master with devoted loyalty. Should the Shadow Touched be killed, the power sustaining the hellbeasts is broken, and they immediately revert back to their original form.

The Shadow Touched can create either five lesser hellbeasts or a single greater hellbeast, chosen when this Edge is taken. If the hellbeasts are all killed, this Edge may be taken again to replace them.

### LESSER HELLBEAST

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d10

**Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7 (2)

**Special Abilities:**

- **Armor +2:** Thick fur and toughened flesh.
- **Bite:** Str+d6.
- **Fearless:** Hellbeasts are immune to fear and Intimidation.
- **Fleet-Footed:** Hellbeasts roll d10s instead of d6s when running.
- **Go for the Throat:** Hellbeasts instinctively go for an opponent's soft spots. With a raise on its attack roll, it hits the target's most weakly armored location.



**GREATER HELLBEAST**

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d10

**Pace:** 10; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9 (2)

Special Abilities

- **Armor +2:** Thick fur and toughened flesh.
- **Bite:** Str+d8.
- **Fearless:** Hellbeasts are immune to fear and Intimidation.
- **Fleet-Footed:** Hellbeasts roll d10s instead of d6s when running.
- **Go for the Throat:** Hellbeasts instinctively go for an opponent's soft spots. With a raise on its attack roll, it hits the target's most weakly armored location.
- **Size +1:** Greater Hellbeasts are far bigger than any natural dog.

**HELLSPAWN ASPECT**

**Requirements:** Seasoned, Vigor d10+

The Shadow Touched channels her inner demon, temporarily transforming into a monstrosity. When in demon form, the character's Strength and Agility each increase by +1 die type, Size increases by +1, and the character receives a +1 bonus to Intimidation rolls. The transformation lasts a number of rounds equal to half her Vigor die. If the Shadow Touched takes a Corruption mark, the bonuses to Strength, Agility, Size and Intimidation are doubled. Alternately, they may take a Corruption mark to double the Aspect's duration.

**INFERNAL ALLY**

**Requirements:** Novice, Shadow Touched

Not all Shadow Touched choose to fight alone, instead seeking infernal aid. The Shadow Touched can summon a creature from Hell to temporarily aid her in times of need. This Dark Gift works as the *summon ally* power, but doesn't use power points. Instead, the Shadow Touched must make a Spirit roll with the Casting Modifier below. In return, the Shadow Touched compels one or more demons to serve her for a single day, the precise number depending on their relative rank (see *summon ally*). These infernal minions can be sent back to Hell at any time as a free action, but if the Shadow Touched ever becomes Incapacitated, the demons can break free of the Shadow Touched's control with a Spirit roll. The Shadow Touched can sacrifice their blood to call for demonic aid, inflicting

wounds upon themselves to lower the Casting Modifier. For each wound inflicted (up to a maximum of 3), the casting penalty is reduced by 2. These wounds cannot be Soaked.

**INFERNAL HEALING**

**Requirements:** Seasoned, Spirit d8+, Shadow Touched.

Some Shadow Touched can sustain themselves off of the pain and suffering of their foes. A Shadow Touched with the Infernal Healing gift can heal one wound every time they Incapacitate a Wild Card opponent, or a level of Fatigue for every Extra they defeat in combat.

**INFERNAL SCENT**

**Requirements:** Seasoned, Shadow Touched

The Shadow Touched reek of brimstone and death." The Shadow Touched is able to create a putrid odor that causes most mortals to gag and choke. The Shadow Touched rolls Spirit opposed by the Vigor of all adjacent targets. With a success the victim suffers a level of Fatigue, or two levels with a raise. The Fatigue fades after 1d6 rounds of breathing fresh air. The effect can't kill, but it can Incapacitate due to extreme nausea.

**LIVING ARMOR**

**Requirements:** Heroic, Shadow Touched

The character's flesh permanently transforms into hellish armor she can mold and shape at will. The armor normally covers the entire body, and is sealed for the purposes of area-effect attacks, but the character can cause it to flow back from the head and/or limbs when not needed. Living Armor provides +2 armor and a +1 bonus to Soak rolls, but doesn't stack with worn armor or the armor power.

**MASQUE DE MORT**

**Requirements:** Veteran, Persuasion d6+, Shadow Touched.

One of the most unsettling Dark Gifts a Shadow Touched can acquire, is the ability to wear the face of a deceased person as an illusory mask. The Shadow Touched's essence reaches into the ether and draws forth the visage of a dead person, cloaking themselves in the form of the fallen.

The Shadow Touched must already know that the person is deceased, and anyone who has reason to suspect the deception makes



a Notice roll at  $-4$ . At the GM's discretion, a Doubting Thomas may gain a  $+2$  bonus to this roll, reducing the penalty to  $-2$  (though they won't suspect that it's supernatural in nature, but just a clever disguise). Maintaining this illusion requires concentration, and the Shadow Touched suffers a  $-2$  on all other Trait rolls while using the *Masque de Mort*.

If the Shadow Touched is Shaken or takes a wound, they have to make a Spirit roll at  $-2$  to keep the illusion active. In the rare occasion that a Shadow Touched attempts to take the appearance of someone they knew was dead, but has returned to life, the power works, but the illusion is obviously and clearly flawed (no roll required for an observer to see tell the illusion is flawed), but The Shadow Touched is unaware of this.

### SHADOW WALK

**Requirements:** Novice, Shadow Touched

Darkness is the ally of The Shadow Touched, an ally that some Shadow Touched can exploit to great advantage. It is difficult to fight an enemy that can disappear and reappear, striking from the shadows to take his opponent unaware. With a successful Spirit roll, the Shadow Touched is able to travel between shadows as per the *burrow* power (see *Savage Worlds*) for a number of rounds equal to half his Vigor die. The character must enter and exit via a shadow that is large enough to envelope him.

### TALONS OF THE DEMON

**Requirements:** Novice, Vigor  $d6+$ , Shadow Touched

Once a Shadow Touched gives themselves over to darkness, their body becomes a malleable clay and the Shadow Touched can twist and contort it to ensure they are never without a weapon. The Shadow Touched with this Dark Gift is able to grow and transform his finger nails into talons as hard as steel as a free action.

When doing so the character is considered armed and is able to deal  $\text{Str}+d6$  damage with his bare hands.

### IMPROVED TALONS OF THE DEMON

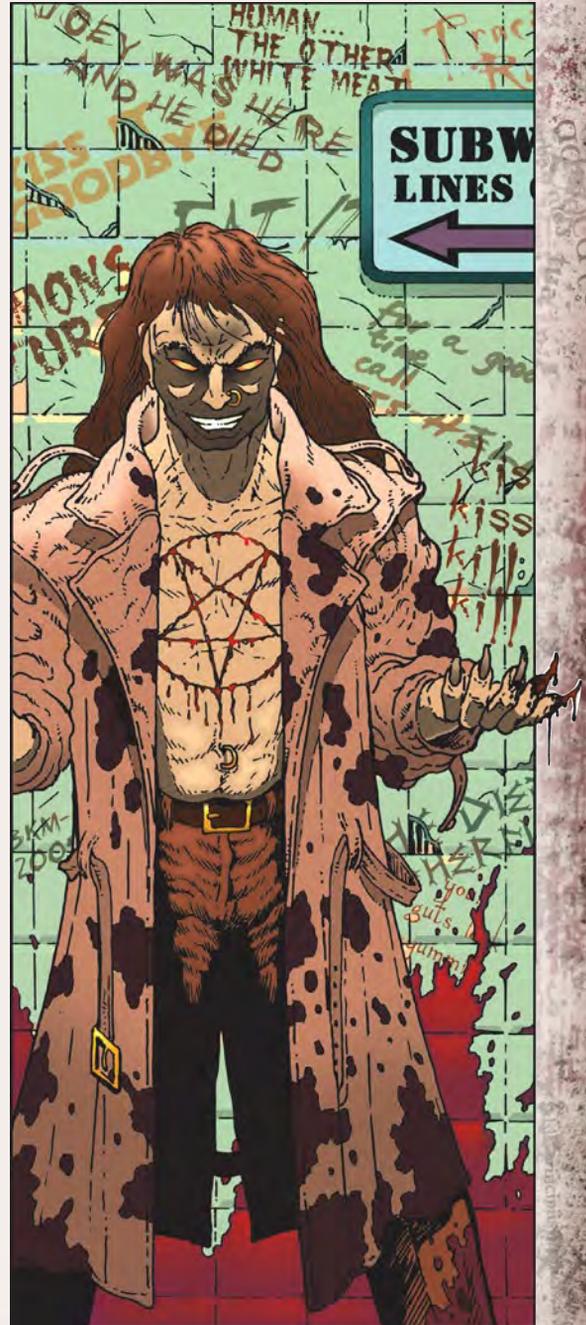
**Requirements:** Seasoned, Talons of the Demon

As Talons of the Demon, but now the talons deal  $\text{Str}+d8$  damage.

### VEIL OF SHADOWS

**Requirements:** Seasoned, Stealth  $d6+$ , Spirit  $d8+$ , Shadow Touched

Discretion is the better part of valor, and many Shadow Touched learn to conceal themselves from the prying eyes of their foes. By succeeding at a Spirit roll, the Shadow Touched can become completely invisible, as per the *invisibility* power, for a number of rounds equal to half their Vigor die.





**NEW POWER**

The following power is designed to augment special elements of *Codex Infernus: The Fall of Aegeron*, but it can easily be used in any setting or genre you wish, especially in urban fantasy games in the vein of the *Dresden Files*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and the *Supernatural* television series.

**OPEN PORTAL**

**Rank:** Special (see description)

**Power Points:** 5

**Range:** Medium Burst Template

**Duration:** 5 minutes, plus another 5 minutes for every extra 1 PP spent.

**Trappings:** Crackling energy, swirling winds, and loud thundering noise.

*Open Portal* creates an oval, vertical oriented gateway to another dimension. The maximum size can vary depending on the needs of the character, but can be no larger than a Medium Burst template.

The portal will remain open for five minutes, but the caster can choose to maintain the power and keep it open as long as she needs by spending the appropriate number of power points (see duration).

**Rank Requirements:** Characters with the Netherguard Acolyte Arcane Background gain this power for free, but characters who do not have the Netherguard Acolyte Arcane Background cannot take this power until Veteran Rank.

**NEW TRAPPINGS**

The following are new trappings for powers that reflect the nature of Hell and those who stand against it's legions.

**HOLY**

Holy is a trapping that can be used to ward off or destroy unholy beings of undead or infernal origin. Holy is often linked to light, and so those effects can apply as well.

**PURIFICATION**

Creatures with the Demon or Undead Monstrous Ability, or other creatures at the GM's discretion, take an additional d6 of damage when attacked with this power.

**WARD**

Creatures with the Demon or Undead Monstrous Ability, or other creatures at the GM's

**WHERE DO PORTALS GO?**

In other settings, portals will go to whatever dimension or reality the character wants. The exact location is relative to where the caster is. That said, Game Masters might allow casters to specify a specific location (The Ivory Tower at the edge of the Nightmare realm) at a -2 penalty to the Spellcasting roll.

If you are using the *Open Portal* power in the *Codex Infernus: The Fall of Aegeron* setting, the spell is generally cast at a Stone Gate, and opens a gate to the Netherworld precisely where the caster is standing within a few feet. If a caster tries to open a portal away from a gate, she suffers a -6 penalty to do so.

Opening a gate directly to Hell is permissible, but unless the caster knows a specific location (Like the Iron City of Dis), the portal will open on the shores of the River Styx.

discretion, must make Fear checks when exposed to powers with this trapping.

**INFERNAL**

Infernal represents the power of Hell being harnessed to destroy all that is good and light. It is closely related to Fire/Heat, and those effects may apply as well.

**SOULFIRE**

The flames of Hell sear the opponent's soul. Spirit is used to Soak this damage, rather than Vigor.

**NECROTIC**

Necrotic is a trapping closely tied to Necromantic, and symbolizes the very essence of death tearing away at life. At the GM's discretion, effects from the Necromantic Trapping may apply to powers with the Necrotic trapping, as well as the effect below:

- **Festering Unlife:** Any creature killed by a power with this Trapping raises from the dead in 24 hours as a zombie (see stats in the *Savage Worlds* core rules).



# THE BOOK OF MAKING

**T**HIS chapter presents an unorthodox look at ways you can create weapons and items appropriate for any game setting with themes involving demons, and those heroes who fight them.

Rather than introduce a ton of new weapons and items, we focus on broad classifications; angelic weapons, demonic weapons, holy symbols, and ways they are created.

## THE POWER OF FAITH

The Faith skill is primarily used for Arcane Background (Miracles), however it's possible for any character with sufficient spiritual conviction (Spirit d6+) to take Faith, even if they lack the Arcane Background.

The idea here is that there are plenty of people in the world who believe in the supernatural, and even Gods, angels, and demons, but even though they believe, they aren't blessed with the ability to work Miracles. Probably the best example of these types of characters are *Sam and Dean* from the *Supernatural* television series.

They absolutely believe in Heaven, and Hell, have fought, and even banished demons and angels, but they don't have the ability to work miracles per se', though it could be argued Sam can, but I digress. Most of what *Sam and Dean* do is non-magical in nature. This section provides some suggestions for ways in which GMs might allow the skill to be used in your games.

## HOLY SYMBOLS

A holy symbol is not a magical item in its own right, but rather it serves as a focus for the wielder's faith. The abilities described here only apply when wielding a symbol of your own faith, and only work on supernaturally evil creatures such as demons and undead.

## KNOWLEDGE VS FAITH

In certain novels, movies and TV shows, what you know can sometimes be more important than what you believe, and anyone can create holy water as long as they know how to perform the blessing.

GMs who wish to reflect this interpretation may allow players to roll Knowledge (Religion) or perhaps even Knowledge (Occult) instead of Faith, and ignore the Fatigue on a natural 1.





- Characters brandishing a symbol of their faith can attempt to drive off evil foes. This is resolved like a Test of Will, using the character's Faith opposed by the target's Spirit, except it has a maximum range equal to the character's Spirit, and the target is Panicked on a raise instead of just being Shaken.
- It is possible to make touch attacks with a holy symbol. If the attack hits, roll Faith for the damage, adding the standard +d6 bonus damage on a raise.
- A holy symbol can be used to pin an evil creature in place. This is resolved like a Grapple attack, except it has a range of Spirit, the character uses Faith for all their rolls, and their opponent rolls Spirit to resist or escape. Unlike the normal Grapple maneuver, the character cannot attempt to damage their opponent on subsequent rounds, and if they move or become Shaken then the creature is automatically released.

**BLESSINGS**

Any believer can utter a prayer, and any priest can speak the words of a benediction, but a true blessing is more than mere words and gestures. A true blessing involves channeling heavenly power through ones faith, with the hero turning his own body into a divine conduit.

Only characters with the Faith skill of d6 or higher can grant a true blessing. This process requires about a minute (10 rounds) and a successful Faith roll, and a natural 1 on the Faith die (regardless of the Wild Die) causes an automatic level of Fatigue, as if from lack of sleep.

- A single blessing can transform a number of liters of water equal to your Faith die into holy water. A flask of holy water can be thrown with a range of 3/6/12 and shatters on impact, inflicting 2d6 damage to supernaturally evil creatures.
- A blessed weapon can be used as a holy symbol when wielded by others of the same faith, both for driving off evil creatures and for touching them. If used for an actual attack, a raise on the attack roll allows the character to roll their Faith instead of the normal d6 bonus damage die. Blessed weapons can harm incorporeal evil creatures.
- Blessing someone (including yourself) requires spending a Benny and making a

Faith roll. If the roll is successful, the recipient gains a +1 bonus to all Fear checks and opposed rolls for resisting supernaturally evil creatures, while on a raise they also receive a Benny. This benefit lasts for the remainder of the session.

**PURIFICATION**

Those with the Faith skill can also perform a purification.

- An area can be spiritually cleansed through consecration, and if it was already dedicated to the character's faith (such as a church), it becomes holy ground. This ritual is resolved as a Dramatic Task, with each action requiring sufficient time to walk a full circle around the area to be consecrated. Supernaturally evil creatures treat holy ground as Difficult Ground for movement purposes, and suffer a -2 penalty to all Spirit rolls within the area. Corpses that have been buried on holy ground are immune to necromancy and all other forms of evil magic.
- A person can be purified through baptism and atonement. This allows them to undertake a holy quest or spiritual journey in search of redemption, and should they succeed they may remove one mark of corruption. Anyone with the Faith skill may perform this ritual without the need for a roll; it is the sinner who must do all the hard work!
- Cursed, haunted or other spiritually impure objects can be cleansed by means of a ritual. This process is resolved as a Dramatic Task, with each action typically requiring an hour of effort. Note that most weapons must be purified before they can be blessed.

**DARK PRIESTS**

Those who devote themselves to the infernal powers can also take the Faith skill, however their unholy symbols and dark blessings only effect supernaturally good creatures, such as angels, and they perform desecrations instead of purifications. The spirits of those buried on unholy ground can never find rest, and their corpses require half the normal Power Point cost (rounded up) to animate with the zombie power.



## ANGELIC WEAPONS

Angelic weapons are created the same way as blessed weapons, except the process requires a full day, and the vessel must always be purified before being blessed. The weapon must also contain a true holy relic, such as a fragment of bone from a saint, which is usually placed safely within the pommel. Obtaining such a relic should be an adventure in its own right!

Only the virtuous can truly use an angelic weapon; the evil and corrupt can physically wield the weapon, but cannot tap into its celestial power. Those who are driven by sin (such as characters with Arrogant, Bloodthirsty, Greedy, or other sin-based Hindrances), or who have more than two marks of corruption, treat the weapon as if it were a mundane item. Other characters may utilize the weapon fully as long as they act in an honorable and righteous way.

Each angelic weapon provides the same benefits as a blessed weapon, but also receives one of the following trappings, chosen when it is first created:

- **Cherubim:** The rune of the All-Seeing Ones has been carefully carved into the blade of this divine weapon, granting its owner perfect vision to a range of 12" (72 yards) while the weapon is drawn. The wielder ignores all penalties due to darkness, illusions, invisibility, fog, and other forms of obscurement, although he cannot see through solid objects or penetrate mundane disguises.
- **Elohim:** This holy weapon bears a powerful sigil of judgement. The wielder is able to sense the corruption and evil in others, and inflicts +2 damage with this weapon to those who have become overwhelmed by sin, including supernaturally evil creatures as well as anyone with more than two marks of corruption. Such foes also suffer a -2 penalty to Soak any wounds caused by this weapon.
- **Erelim:** This celestial blade has been blessed by the Valiant Ones, and grants its owner great courage. The bearer receives a +2 bonus to resist Fear and Intimidation, or becomes completely immune if he also has the Brave Edge.
- **Hashmallim:** This righteous weapon bears the mark of the Glowing Ones. It rumbles with thunder and flashes with lightning

whenever it strikes a foe in combat, granting +1 AP against metal armor, and inflicting +2 damage. Those who are Shaken or wounded by this weapon become partially deafened by the crash of thunder, suffering a -2 penalty to hearing-based Notice rolls until they've recovered.

- **Malakim:** The symbol of the Heavenly Envoys has been etched onto this divine blade, granting its owner a special blessing. Whoever bears this weapon gains the ability to speak and understand all languages, and receives a +2 bonus to Notice rolls when attempting to spot a lie or deception.
- **Ophanim:** This holy blade has been blessed by the Many-Eyed Ones, who maintain the cosmic balance. Those who attack the wielder of this virtuous weapon subtract 2 from any Gang Up bonuses that they would normally receive.
- **Seraphim:** This righteous weapon bears the mark of the Burning Ones, who maintain order through the purification of fire. When drawn, the blade automatically bursts into flame, providing the same illumination as a torch. It inflicts +2 damage in combat, and flammable targets must roll to see if they catch fire.

## DEMONIC WEAPONS

Demonic weapons are created much like angelic weapons, but require a dark blessing to be placed upon a desecrated vessel, which must in turn contain a dark relic, such as a fragment of bone from an irredeemably evil person. This relic must come from a mortal rather than a demon, as it's important the person chose to embrace the darkness of their own free will.

Unlike angelic weapons, anyone can use a demonic weapon, however it will taint their soul over time. The owner of a demonic weapon must make a Corruption check at the end of each game session, with a -2 penalty if they used the weapon or benefited from its abilities, increased to -4 if they actually used it to kill someone or commit some other evil act.

Getting rid of demonic weapons tends to be very difficult, as they cannot easily be destroyed, and they have a habit of finding their way back to their owners. But should a player somehow manage to sever the spiritual bond they share with their weapon, they will immediately



lose all the benefits it provides, as well as any Hindrances incurred through its use.

Each demonic weapon provides the same benefits as an infernally blessed weapon, but also receives one of the following trappings, chosen when it is first created:

- **Asmodeus:** The rune of vengeance has been deeply etched into the blade of this vicious-looking weapon. Once per round after being successfully hit in close combat, and after resolving the damage roll, the wielder may make a free Fighting attack against her attacker with this weapon. If she is Shaken, she must spend a Benny to remove the Shaken status before she can make the free attack. The first time this ability is used, the wielder gains Vengeful as a Major Hindrance.
- **Beelzebub:** This cursed blade fills its owner with an insatiable appetite. The wielder gains the benefit of the Liquid Courage Edge, except it applies whenever he eats or drinks to excess, and the benefits are doubled (+2 die steps to Vigor, and ignore two levels of wound modifiers). The wielder must draw a card at the end of each session in which he uses this ability; on Clubs, he gains the Obese Hindrance (even if he has Brawny).
- **Belphegor:** The glyph of the Disputer has been branded onto the hilt of this infernal weapon, and it seduces its wielder with the secrets of ingenious inventions. The owner receives a free d6 in Weird Science along with the Gadgeteer Edge, and each jury-rigged device she creates has 10 Power Points. However she also finds herself taking short cuts and ignoring precautions; whenever the wielder fails any trait roll with a natural 1 on the trait die, she suffers some mishap that reflects her carelessness.
- **Leviathan:** The cross-guard of this cruel blade bears the symbol of the Hellmouth, for the souls of those it slays are cast screaming into the depths of Hell. The wielder gains the Ugly Hindrance, as her features take on a slightly reptilian appearance, but she also receives the Aquatic ability (including the free d6 in Swimming) and a +1 bonus to Size.
- **Lucifer:** This beautiful gleaming weapon bears the symbol of the Shining One, and its blade glows brightly when drawn, providing the same illumination as a lantern. Attacks

made with this weapon inflict one bonus die of damage for each raise on the attack roll, rather than just the first raise, however the wielder receives the Arrogant Hindrance the first time she benefits from this ability.

- **Mammon:** This kingly weapon is decorated with precious metals, and has gems embedded in its hilt and pommel. The owner gains a free d6 in Gambling, and receives a +2 bonus to Gambling rolls. He also becomes Greedy (as the Major Hindrance), and when fighting a foe who possesses something of obvious and significant value to him, the wielder enjoys a +1 bonus to his attack rolls with this weapon.
- **Satan:** This deadly weapon has been corrupted by the Deceiver. The owner receives a free d6 in Persuasion and gains a +2 bonus to Charisma. However he also suffers from occasional bouts of uncontrollable rage, receiving Vengeful as a Major Hindrance, and also gaining the Berserk Edge. If the weapon grants the wielder a skill, Edge or Hindrance that they already possess, ignore the duplicate, and in the case of skills, keep whichever is higher.

## UNCONVENTIONAL VESSELS

Most angelic and demonic vessels take the form of weapons, as this is symbolic of their role in the war between light and darkness. However there's no reason why they cannot instead take the form of a shield, breastplate, or other object.

In the case of protective items, the GM may wish to replace offensive bonuses with something more appropriate. For example an Elohim breastplate might grant the wearer a bonus to armor and Soak rolls against attacks from sinners, while a Seraphim shield could provide protection from fire.

Other vessels usually receive the same bonuses as a weapon, but these can be adjusted to suit their physical form. For example a golden ring of Mammon might provide its combat bonus to unarmed attacks, or perhaps to attacks made with very expensive weapons.

At the GM's discretion, certain fanatics might even turn themselves into weapons, tattooing or scarring their flesh as a sign of their devotion. Anyone profaning their flesh with infernal symbols should automatically receive the Devil's Mark Hindrance (see page 12).



## HELL-FORGED WEAPONS

Weapons or armor forged in Hell gain the Hell-Forged trapping. Hell-Forged weapons can only be created in Hell.

### HELL-FORGED TRAPPING:

Hell-Forged weapons do regular damage to normal creatures, but when used against a supernaturally good creature, they do an extra +4 damage. Additionally, they glow red hot. Each time the weapon hits, roll to light the target on fire (use the standard **Fire** rules from *Savage Worlds*). Armor with the Hell-Forged trapping is fireproof and the wearer only suffers half damage from fire.

Some of the most notorious Hell-Forged weapons include:

- **Gauntlet of Hate:** An oversized spiked gauntlet, this unique item grants a +2 bonus to any Fighting roll relating to grappling. If the owner successfully grapples an opponent and then deals damage in subsequent rounds the Gauntlet of Hate adds 2d12 to the damage. A foe incapacitated by this damage is immediately incinerated, and the owner's flesh underneath is stained black.
- **Nemesis Flail:** Rare but not unique, these massive weapons have a large handle with three heavy chains, and spiked weighted cudgels at each end. It is weight 100, Hell-Forged, and deals Str+d12 damage. Nemesis Flails count as Heavy Weapons with a Reach of 4 inches, and ignore Shield Parry and Cover bonus.

- **The Black Blade:** A unique and famous artifact of Hell, the Black Blade looks like empty space in the outline of a longsword. It exists, and is solid, but no light reflects from its surface. Any demons within sight of it gain an additional +2 bonus to recover from being Shaken. The Black Blade itself is Hell-Forged and deals Str+d10 damage with AP 10. Any power with a Light trapping must overcome the wielder's Parry to hit, otherwise the blade completely absorbs the effect.



# THE BOOK OF LAW

**I**N this chapter you'll find a number of setting rules to help you deal with a variety of elements common to any game dealing with demons, and Hell.

## CORRUPTION

They say the road to Hell is paved with good intentions. People, dedicated to the cause of good, sometimes make the wrong choices, albeit for the right reasons. Politicians take bribes, all the while intending to use the money to write legislation to help feed the poor, or somewhat ironically, tackle campaign reform. Religious organizations promote peace and good-will towards all, but they become blinded in their righteousness and turn into cold-hearted, intolerant people, all the while thinking they act in accordance with their faith. Vigilantes become the thing they hate, even as they try cut the cancer of crime out of their city.

We see these characters throughout fiction, television and movies. *The Shield*, and *Supernatural* television shows are great examples of these themes. Vick Mackey, Shane Vendrell, and the rest of the strike team start out as good cops, but start taking immoral short cuts which eventually lead to the strike team getting a (rightfully deserved) reputation as corrupt cops. The point is, they didn't start out that way.

We also see this in Robert Jordan's epic *Wheel of Time* novels. The Children of the Light are as bad as they come, but they commit their own atrocities in service to "The Light." To them, their cause is Just and righteous. Similarly, the Aes Sedai manipulate kings and queens, claiming their reasons are for the good of the world, regardless of the pain and suffering their actions cause.

Most certainly, there are individuals who simply want to do evil for the sake of evil. Alfred said it best in *The Dark Knight*: "Some People just want to watch the world burn." They commit evil acts, for the sake of evil. There's no need to elaborate; we all know evil when we

see it. History (and the present day) is replete with examples of this type of behavior.

*Codex Infernus* introduces rules for corruption which not only track a character's journey to the "dark side," but also track the hazards of becoming so "good," the character is just as iniquitous as her enemies. These rules are meant for more cerebral games where players and game masters want to tackle issues of morality and the consequences of certain actions.

## DECISIONS, DECISIONS

How far are you willing to go to achieve your goals? Is torturing someone acceptable, if you get vital intelligence about a terror plot? Will you allow innocents to be killed, if by doing so you can also take out a drug dealer? Is it OK to plant evidence on a murderer you know committed the crime, because if you don't, they'll get away with it? What about a village of Orcs? Is it alright to kill the entire village just because they are Orcs? Isn't that murder?

How you answer those types of questions has an impact on your character; how others (Especially other player characters) view her, and perhaps most importantly, how she views herself. We're not interested in imposing a set of morals upon your group. You need to determine what good and evil mean in your game, and use that determination to decide whether a character has committed an act of evil or not. We're only concerned with telling you what comes next.

## NEW DERIVED STATISTIC: WILLPOWER

Willpower is equal to 2 plus half your character's Spirit, and represents the hero's ability to resist temptation and corruption. Spirit exceeding d12 is calculated in the same way as Parry. Willpower is not affected by temporary changes to the Spirit attribute, but if Spirit is permanently increased or decreased then Willpower must also be recalculated.

## CORRUPTION EFFECTS

Whenever a character performs an evil act of their own free will, the GM should call for a Corruption check (a Spirit roll), with particularly callous and deliberate acts incurring a penalty. Intentionally murdering someone without cause, casual acts of random violence, physical torture, and so on, usually apply a penalty of at least  $-2$  to the roll, with the most heinous and vile acts increasing the penalty to  $-4$ .

If the character succeeds the Corruption check, they feel guilt and remorse for what they've done, while on a failure they manage to justify their actions to themselves, gaining a mark of corruption. On a critical failure they don't even care enough to try and explain away their actions, and gain two marks of corruption. A character can never have more marks of corruption than they have Willpower.

### UNWANTED ATTENTION

Characters who fail their Corruption check with a natural 1 on the Spirit die attract the interest of a demon, who hopes to further encourage their fall from grace. The player must choose one of the Temptation abilities the first time this happens, and gains the other ability next time.

### DAMNED

Characters with as many marks of corruption as they have Willpower suffer  $+4$  damage from cold iron weapons, are no longer affected by beneficial powers from Arcane Background (Miracles), and will automatically join the ranks of the Defiled in Hell when they die. They also permanently gain the Devil's Mark Hindrance, which can never be removed, even if they later seek redemption.

## THE SLIPPERY SLOPE

A common trope in many movies and novels is for the protagonist to take their first step into darkness with a small act, and gradually move on to bigger and more gratuitously evil deeds throughout the story. A GM who wishes to see this sort of gradual descent may wish to place a limit on how quickly players can earn marks of corruption when committing evil acts—perhaps a maximum of 1 mark per scene, and/or 2 marks per session, or even a max of 3 marks per rank.

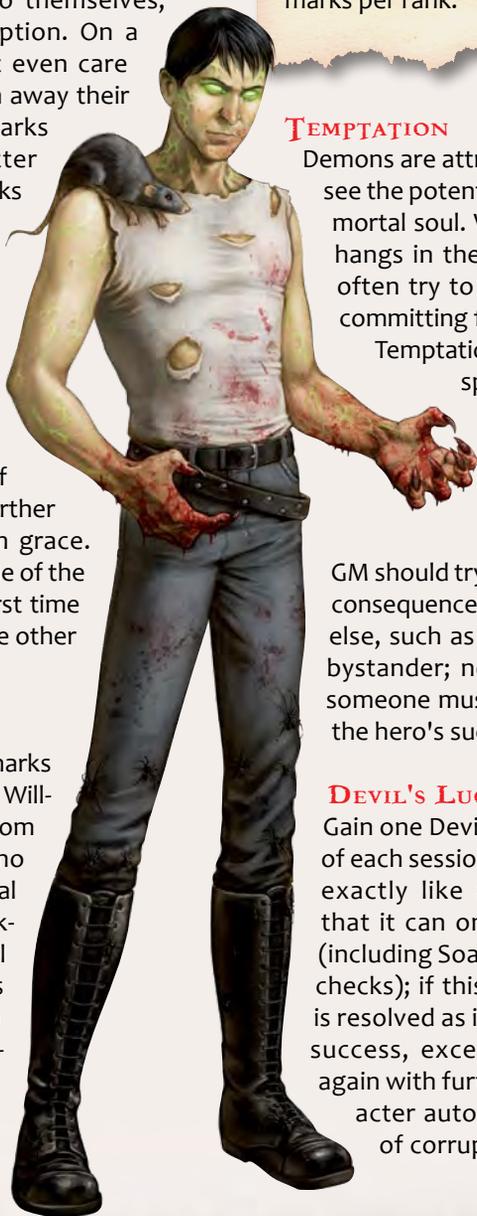
### TEMPTATION

Demons are attracted by evil acts, and can see the potential for wickedness within a mortal soul. When the fate of that soul hangs in the balance, the demon will often try to tempt the individual into committing further acts of depravity.

Temptation is represented using two special abilities, Devil's Luck and Shoulder Devil, each of which can be taken once. When one of these abilities gives the hero a mark of corruption, the GM should try to narrate an unfortunate consequence of that action for someone else, such as a friend, ally, or innocent bystander; nothing in life is free, and someone must always pay the price for the hero's success.

### DEVIL'S LUCK

Gain one Devil's Benny at the beginning of each session. The Devil's Benny works exactly like a regular Benny except that it can only be used for trait rolls (including Soak rolls, but not Corruption checks); if this roll fails then the action is resolved as if it were actually a normal success, except it cannot be rerolled again with further Bennies, and the character automatically receives a mark of corruption.



**SHOULDER DEVIL**

Whenever the character makes a trait roll, they have the option of rolling a Devil Die along with the trait die and Wild Die. Always keep whichever die rolls the highest, but if this is the Devil Die, the character automatically gains a mark of corruption. The Devil Die is a d6, and can Ace.

**REDEMPTION**

The road of redemption is a difficult one to follow, but there are always a few who seek it out. The requirements will vary from character to character depending on their litany of past and present sins, and are always at the GM's discretion, but usually involve some or all of the following:

- Completing a holy quest or spiritual journey.
- Receiving a ritual blessing from a priest, such as the Sacrament of Penance.
- Destroying a creature, object, or place of great evil.
- Performing a noble act of selflessness or personal sacrifice.
- Completing a good deed of great importance.

If the GM feels the character has taken a significant step towards redemption during a game, they may allow them to remove one mark of corruption at the end of that session. Note that marks of corruption can never be removed at the end of a session in which a Temptation ability has been used, or during which the character has gained a new mark of corruption.

Temptation abilities are never lost; even if all marks of corruption are eventually removed, the character will always feel the lure of darkness. Demons can be patient, and it only takes one moment of weakness or desperation for the character to stray from their path once more.

**ATONEMENT**

Sometimes the last step to redemption is the most difficult, with true absolution being little more than a pipe dream. Other times the difficulty is directly proportional to how far into evil the hero has descended, with minor sins being the easiest to forgive. GMs should adjust the challenge of the redemption tasks to whatever they feel is appropriate, depending on the needs of the story.

**DEMONIC PACTS**

History is rife with legends of people who have made pacts with the devil. Theophilus, Johann Georg Faust, Urbain Grandier, and of course Robert Johnson are all reported to have sold their soul—some for fame, others for wealth, and some even for servitude. Recently, popular culture is rife with rumors celebrities who have allegedly sold their souls in exchange for fame and fortune. Television series' like *Supernatural* have plotlines and even entire seasons devoted to the repercussions of pacts with demons. But these are all just stories. There are no “rules” restricting what the characters (or people in the case of the legends) can obtain in exchange for their immortal soul; at least not in the real world.



Role-playing games are different. Our characters are created using mathematical systems designed to balance a characters' relative power and ability against that of other characters. If a character chooses to enter into a pact with a demon, things become tricky, because, while we need to game maintain balance, we have to recognize that selling one's soul is no trivial matter. Regardless of wealth, or power gained from the pact, one fact is inescapable; The character IS going to die.

Like people of legend and pop-culture, a player character should gain something of significance. Otherwise, why do it at all? Furthermore, what are the repercussions? Simply saying you have sold your soul isn't enough. If that were the case, everyone would do it. The other shoe must drop, as it were. It's important for the game system, and for the story.

The following rules provide a framework for you to use demonic pacts in your game.

## DEALING WITH THE DEVIL

Before she can even begin to make a deal with a demon, the player character needs to decide why she wants to sell her soul. The decision is important, as it will affect the negotiation process.

Next, the PC needs to find a demon capable of granting the PC what she wants. Not all demons are equal in ability. Lesser demons grant minor benefits (See Lesser demons, below), Greater demons grant great advantages (see Greater demons, below), but only Demon Lords can give the PC anything she desires (see Demon Lords, below). Finally, the deal must be made. Called the negotiation process, this is a Social Conflict which is used to determine the final outcome of the pact.

## NEED VS. DESIRE

People only deal with a demon for two basic reasons. They either want something, like immense wealth, or political power, or they need something; a cure to save a dying loved one, evidence acquitting them of murder, or escape from some other dire situation. As mentioned above, the underlying motivation has consequences.

### NEED

If the PC absolutely must make a deal with a demon, she is at a disadvantage. Put simply, the

character is at the mercy of the demon. She suffers a -2 penalty to Persuasion rolls during the negotiation process (see below).

### DESIRE

Characters who simply want something have the demon at a disadvantage. Demons crave souls. One offered freely in exchange for something is considered too good to pass up, especially if we're talking about someone who is considered a hero (as most characters are). We see this reflected in television and comic book characters like *Sam and Dean*, and *John Constantine*; people considered to be prized possessions among demon-kind. Characters gain a +2 to Persuasion rolls during the negotiation process.

## FINDING YOUR DEMON

The process of finding a demon capable of giving your character what she wants can be as simple as an Investigation, Knowledge (Demonology), or Streetwise roll, or as complicated as a series of dangerous adventures centered on the goal of finding the demon.

Alternatively, you might simply choose to use the Interlude rules to handle the investigation process "off screen," and begin the next game session with the negotiation process. In my opinion, the best way to do it is to use a combination of adventures to create the story, and skill rolls to propel it forward as the character comes closer and closer to her goal.

Characters make Investigation or Streetwise rolls (GM's choose which skill is most relevant) modified by the type of demon in question. If the character has the Knowledge (Demonology) skill, she can use that as well. There are generally two ways of going about the process of making contact with a demon: tracking the creature down, or summoning it.

## HUNTING DOWN A DEMON

Three skills—Investigation, Knowledge (Demonology), and Streetwise—are all the character needs to figure out which demon she needs to find, where to locate it, and who to talk to when she gets to the general location. Everything else is role-play, and if necessary, combat.

**Knowledge (Demonology)** gets your character some basic information, e.g. a name, description, etc.

**Investigation** helps her take those basics and begin the process of narrowing down potential



areas where the demon has been, might currently be, or better yet, where it WILL be. The GM might provide this information in the form of internet articles, newspaper clippings, TV news reports about strange events that might indicate the presence of a demon (An abundance of crows, locust swarms, or a dramatic rise in homicides). This information will tell your character where to go.

Once she's there, it's all about hitting the streets, and talking to the right people to get the last details that tell her where the demon's located. That's where **Streetwise** comes into play. Of course, all this assumes you aren't summoning a demon outright.

### SUMMONING A DEMON

If you are simply going to summon the demon, all you really need is the proper name of the demon, and any special materials required for the ritual. Game Masters can hand waive acquisition of the components for the ritual if they wish; there's no need to turn this into a treasure hunt, after all, but a Knowledge (Demonology) roll is always required to obtain the true name of the demon.

### TYPES OF DEMONS

Pick from the following three categories when determining what type of demon the character needs to deal with. As a rule of thumb, lesser demons are the most limited in power. Greater demons can do anything a lesser demon can, and a little more, while Demon Lords can grant anything (with restrictions, see below) the character wants.

#### LESSER DEMONS

Lesser demons are, as the name implies, fairly weak in terms of power, often considered back-alley ambulance chasers capable of pulling off comparatively small things by those with real ability.

For instance, the (lesser) demon who gave Robert Johnson the ability to play guitar really well, if you think about it, didn't do all that much for the man. With time and practice, Mr. Johnson might very well have accomplished that on his own.

In fact, one could argue the legend of the pact itself did more for Robert Johnson's fame than his musical ability; at least after he died. Few of his contemporaries even knew of the man,

and his records didn't sell very well. It was only decades after his death that musicians began to realize how influential his work really was.

This brings up one salient point. Specificity is everything when it comes to making a deal with a demon. Robert Johnson never saw the true fame and fortune he hoped for in his lifetime, but the demon technically upheld its part of the bargain, elevating him to legendary status postmortem.

- **Benefits:** Lesser demons grant 2 advances to the character. These advances do not count as advances needed to rise in Rank.
- **Drawbacks:** As with any demonic pact, the cost is your soul. Roll 1d8 and multiply it by 10, then add a number equal to your Spirit die (a d4 equals 4, a d6 equals 6, etc.). You may not spend a Bennie to re-roll the d8, and the die roll cannot Ace.

This is the number of XP you'll earn before the demon comes to collect your soul. This number can be modified depending on how well you do in the negotiation process. The minimum number of XP can never be below 10. Additionally, you gain the Devil's Mark (Major) Hindrance. The Devil's Mark Hindrance is detailed in the **New Hindrances** section of this book (see page 12).

*Example: Lucas has 6 experience points and a d8 Spirit. He rolls 1d8 and gets a 4. He multiplies that number by 10 and gets 40, then adds 8, for 48 experience points. This is the length of time Lucas has before he'll die and lose his soul.*

- **Modifiers:** Characters suffer a -1 penalty to Investigation, Knowledge (Demonology), or Streetwise rolls when seeking out a lesser demon. Lesser demons get a +1 to all Persuasion rolls during the negotiation process, and have a d6 Persuasion.

#### GREATER DEMONS

Greater demons are more elusive, but have considerable ability. Most are known by a specific name, though it likely isn't their true name. For instance, the demon who allegedly gave Faust his incredible knowledge and wealth is known as Mephistopheles. Whether or not this name



## PACT RESULTS

Margin of Victory	Result
Tie	The bargain stands. You neither gain, nor lose any XP.
1–2	If you win, you gain an additional number of experience points equal to half your Spirit die. If the demon wins, the bargain stands.
3–4	If you win, you gain a number of experience points equal to your Spirit die. If the demon wins, you lose a number of experience points equal to half your spirit die.
5+	If you win, you gain a number of experience points equal to your Spirit die +1. If the demon wins, you lose another number of experience points equal to your Spirit Die. Furthermore, you've insulted the demon. You gain the Wanted (Major) Hindrance. The only difference is, the crime you committed is insulting the demon.

is simply a contrivance of Marlow or Goethe is unknown, but the fact remains; Mephistopheles is a powerful demon, capable of granting a wide range of benefits in exchange for a soul.

- **Benefits:** A Greater demon grants 3 advances to the character. These advances do not count as advances needed to rise in Rank.
- **Drawbacks:** Greater demons aren't as generous with regards to the length of time a you get to live in exchange for your new ability or abilities. Roll 1d8 and multiply the number by 6, adding a number equal to your Spirit die. You may not spend a Bennie to re-roll the d8, and the die roll cannot Ace. This number can be modified depending on how well you do in the negotiation process. The minimum number of XP can never be below 10. Additionally, you gain the Devil's Mark (Major) Hindrance. The Devil's Mark Hindrance is detailed in the **New Hindrances** section of this book (see page 12).
- **Modifiers:** Characters suffer a –2 penalty to Investigation, Knowledge (Demonology), or Streetwise rolls when seeking out a Greater demon due to the fact that it's really difficult to separate fact from fiction. Greater demons enjoy a +2 to all Persuasion rolls during the negotiation process, and have a d8 Persuasion.

### DEMON LORDS

Demon Lords are so powerful, they can grant tremendous abilities to those brave or foolish enough to seek them out. These creatures have so much influence and power, many speculate they are behind decisions that have changed the entire course of history. Demon Lords are known by many names; Moloch, Baal, Dagon, Dispatser, Shiva, Marduk, Nergal, Loki, Hel... even Lucifer himself is thought to be a Demon Lord. All of these entities have been worshipped as gods throughout history. Indeed, some modern day "Secret Societies" are rumored to be directly influenced by one or more of these beings.

- **Benefits:** Demon Lords grant 4 advances to the character. These advances do not count as advances needed to rise in Rank.
- **Drawbacks:** Demon Lords don't bestow power lightly. They want what's theirs, and they want it as soon as possible. Roll 1d8 and multiply the number by 4, adding a number equal to your Spirit die. You may not spend a Bennie to re-roll the d8, and the die roll cannot Ace. This number can be modified depending on how well you do in the negotiation process. The minimum number of XP can never be below 10.  
Additionally, you gain the Devil's Mark (Major) Hindrance. The Devil's Mark Hindrance is detailed in the **New Hindrances** section of this book (see page 12).



- **Modifiers:** Characters suffer no penalties to Investigation, Knowledge (Demonology), or Streetwise rolls when seeking out a Demon Lord. They hunger for souls, and are eager to deal with those who seek them out.

Demon Lords cannot be summoned. A character must actively search for them, or one of their agents. While the task shouldn't be too hard with regards to skill rolls, it can certainly be dangerous.

Demon Lords don't use the Persuasion skill during the negotiation phase: they intimidate characters into accepting the bargain as is. Demon Lords have a d12 Intimidation (GM's can adjust this score as they wish) and enjoy a +2 to Intimidation rolls during the negotiation phase (hey, we're talking about gods, here. They shouldn't be pushovers).

### PROHIBITED PACTS

For obvious reasons, characters may never gain immortality as a part of a pact. Similarly, they may never gain a weapon or ability which allows them to kill the demon they are entering into a pact with. This is just common sense. No demon in its right mind would ever agree to such a thing. Finally, a pact designed to immediately end an adventure or campaign is not allowed.

Demons may give bits of information; bread crumbs if you will, that aid the characters in some way. This sort of information is equal to a single advance.

### MULTIPLE PACTS

A character may never have more than one pact at a time.

### THE BARGAIN

So you've found your demon. You've stated your desire. All that's left is to negotiate the details, i.e. how much time you have left on this earth (or wherever your game is). To do this, you enter into a Social Conflict with the demon. If the demon wins, you gain no additional time, as represented by experience points. You may actually lose time. If you win, you can add more time to the contract.

Resolve the Social Conflict as per the rules in the *Savage Worlds* rulebook, but use the results on the table above instead of the existing one, and the guidelines for each type of demon as previously outlined.

### DEATH

Your character is going to die. She can't get out of it. If she kills the demon who holds her contract, one of two things can happen, depending on how you want the story to play out.

## INSTANT DEATH

If the character ever kills the demon who holds the contract, the character dies on the spot. This is perhaps a hollow way of ending a character's career, but she knew how this story would end.

## HUNTED

If the character kills the demon, the contract automatically shifts to another (more powerful) demon. The good news, is the character no longer has the Devil's Mark Hindrance, and she is temporarily free from detection by the new demon. However she automatically gains the Wanted (Major) Hindrance, as the new owner of the contract sets out to find her and bind the character to it.

The Hunted option adds more tension to the story, and gives the character a glimmer of hope that she just might be able to find a way out of the pact. Obviously, this is false hope.... or is it?

This is, after all your game. You should feel free to change things if you feel they make more sense for your story!

## DEMONIC POSSESSION

Demonic possession is a staple of supernatural horror. We see the theme reflected in movies, novels, and television—all of which are based on real-world myths. In the New Testament of the Bible, there are numerous accounts of demonic possession.

Jesus Christ cast out demons from people on numerous occasions, and commanded his disciples to do the same. Consequently, the Catholic Church has developed guidelines for determining whether or not a person is truly possessed, and methods to exorcise the demon from the individual.

Buddhism also has guidelines for determining if a person is possessed, and more mundane ways of appeasing the spirit, which include acts of charity, and taking sleeping pills and other medications.

Shamanic cultures across the world also believe in possession, wherein vengeful spirits of animals or people inhabit a person, causing all manner of diseases. Some believe the possessed can cast out the vengeful spirit by appeasing it with sacrificial offerings.

In a role playing game, demonic possession tends to happen to NPCs rather than player characters, which is perfectly fine. Characters are, after all, heroes. More importantly, they

are the extension of the player. I don't know a single person who wants to have their character taken away from them, but here's the thing: Demonic Possession is only scary if it is a danger to both PC and NPC alike.

If we keep this sort of thing on the periphery, it loses its punch. Demonic possession becomes a thing that only ever happens to other people. There's no inherent danger in dealing with, say, strange artifacts, or ancient tomes no person was ever meant to read. It is generally thought that the demon that gets exorcised goes straight back to Hell, or whatever dimension it came from.

That said, there are plenty of examples of "body jumping," where a demon is cast out of one body (or willingly leaves a host) and goes in search of another body; sometimes the protagonist is the vessel. The movie *The Exorcist* is a perfect example of this.

At the end of the movie, the priest (Father Lankester Merrin) takes the demon into his own body to save Regan MacNeil. At the end of Season 5 of *Supernatural*, we see Sam taking Lucifer into his body and then jumping into the Pit to save the world from the apocalypse.

In *Hellblazer #1 Hunger*, John Constantine and Papa Midnite bind the demon Memmoth to Gary Lester, a heroin addict.

While the latter example is grim, consider that in the end, Gary Lester made the choice to become Memmoth's vessel, knowing full well what the consequences of the choice would be. Quite heroic indeed. The choice gave Gary a shot at some sort of redemption for the part he played in releasing Memmoth into the world.

## RESISTING DEMONIC POSSESSION

Possession tends to happen in a couple of ways; a brute force onslaught against the host, or a slow attack which can take days to complete. The first instance tends to happen right after a successful exorcism, when the demon is disembodied, but not cast back to Hell, when a summoning goes horribly wrong, or even if a portal to another dimension unleashes ethereal spirits into the mortal realm.

The best examples of these types of possession can be seen in the *Supernatural* television series, and the *Evil Dead* movies.

The second type of possession occurs when an individual comes into contact with an item of some sort. The item in question can be anything.



Some examples include the 30 pieces of silver possessed by the Order of the Blackened Denarius in the *Dresden Files* novels, or the amulet of Pazuzu in *The Exorcist*. The rules for resisting possession do not change, no matter how the character has come into contact with the demon.

**SYSTEM**

Possession is handled as a modified Test of Wills (see the *Savage Worlds* rules on Tests of Wills); the demon trying to invade the character with its essence, and the character resisting the onslaught with her own Spirit. Instead of using a skill to “attack” the target, the demon makes an opposed roll using its Spirit die, and the character resists with her Spirit die (modified by any charms or relics, see the magic items chapter).

If the demon wins, the character is possessed as if the demon cast the *puppet* power. If the character wins, her mind remains free. The demon may only try to possess the character three times. If the character resists, she is immune to further attempts by that demon, though other demons may try to possess her in the future.

The effects of the *puppet* power have the following modifications:

The *puppet* power is permanent unless the demon is banished. Game Masters should allow the player to control the actions of the character with the following caveat: If the GM determines the player is not playing her character as if she were possessed by a demon, then the GM takes control of the character. The character may make a Spirit roll to temporarily take control of her body in situations where the demon possessing the character tries to do something that the character would not do if she had control of her faculties.

GM’s, use your best judgment here. Spirit rolls shouldn’t be granted for trivial things, like, say speaking rudely to someone, eating strange foods, committing minor acts of violence against an adult (getting into a fist fight, or pushing someone around), telling lies, etc. If the character succeeds on the Spirit roll, she gains control for one round, plus an additional round for every Raise. Once the allotted time has passed, the demon regains control of the host.

The character also gains the possessed template.

**POSSESSED**

A demon has taken over your body. Until it is banished, your character undergoes the following changes:

- The character’s Strength, Smarts and Agility scores all raise by one die type to a maximum of d12+3, while her Spirit die decreases by a single die type, to a minimum of d4.
- The character gains the demon’s weaknesses.
- The character gains all of the demon’s special abilities.

**OPTIONAL SPECIAL ABILITY: TEMPORARY DAMAGE IMMUNITY**

If the Game Master chooses, she can rule that any normal damage the character takes while possessed is non-lethal and regenerates at a rate of one wound level per hour.

If the character is ever rendered unconscious, she stays that way until she regenerates one wound.

Now here’s the scary part. If the demon is ever banished while it has sustained wounds or an Incapacitated condition, the damage immediately becomes lethal and can’t be regenerated outside of magical Healing, or normal recovery. This can potentially spell the end of a character, so please discuss it with your group before implementing it.

**EXORCISM**

There are two ways to exorcise a demon, Banishment, and Brute Force.

**BANISHMENT**

The simplest way is to use the *Banish Entity* power. Pinnacle Entertainment has kindly allowed us to reprint the power from the Horror Companion.

**BANISH ENTITY**

**Rank:** Seasoned

**Power Points:** Special

**Range:** Smarts

**Duration:** Instant

**Trappings:** Runes, chants, gestures, prayers, special substances, an exorcism

*Banish entity* forces extradimensional entities back to their own realm. Generally, any entity that can be summoned can be banished. The cost to invoke this spell is equal to the entity’s Spirit die type, and double that if the entity is



a Wild Card. A Wild Card demon with a Spirit die of d10 therefore requires 20 Power Points to banish. Since most casters don't have so many Power Points, they often rely on rituals or devices.

The spellcaster must be within Range of the target and make an arcane skill roll opposed by the entity's Spirit. With a success, the entity is instantly driven back to its own realm, though it is not destroyed. On a failure, the entity is free to continue its business and suffers no ill effects. The caster is automatically Fatigued from the effort (in addition to Backlash if a 1 was rolled on the arcane skill die).

## BRUTE FORCE

The second way to exorcise a demon is to do so much damage to it, that it temporarily becomes weak enough, that the character can push the demon out of her body.

If the demon ever becomes Incapacitated as a result of physical trauma, the possessed character can immediately make a Spirit roll to push the demon out of her body at a +2 bonus.

The demon's Spirit roll is modified by its wound penalties. If the character succeeds, she exorcises the demon from her body. If you are using the Temporary Damage immunity rules, she immediately takes on all wounds her body suffered.



## HELL CHANGES A MAN

Even surviving the dangers of Hell and escaping with your life is not enough. The after-effects of visiting Hell can be intense and long-lasting for those who brave the journey and make it out alive. Once the adrenaline fades and the Wails of the Damned stop ringing in a hero's ears, the silence sets in and magnifies all of the horrific sights experience in Hell.

After the first night's sleep upon escaping Hell, the hero has to make a Spirit test (before removing any Fatigue penalties). If they succeed, they have survived Hell unscathed.

If they fail, they have been marked by their travels. Draw a card and check it against the Hindrance Table (see page 31). If they roll a "1" on the Spirit die and fail the roll, then draw two cards and apply the worse result. If a character gains a Hindrance they already have, then apply the Addiction (Major) Hindrance as they seek out drugs or alcohol to deal with their experiences.

### HINDRANCE TABLE

Result	Effect
2	Gains 1 level of Fatigue
3-4	Combat Shock (Minor)
5-6	Cautious
7-8	Mean
9-10	Death Wish (Minor)
Jack	Combat Shock (Major)
Queen	Yellow
King	Bloodthirsty
Ace	Overconfident
Joker	Possessed (see page 29)

## THEY KNOW YOU'RE HERE

The influence of Hell has many effects, and even undead are altered by the touch of the infernal realm. All creatures encountered in Hell with the Undead Monstrous Ability gain an additional ability: They can make a smell-based Notice roll at +2 in order to sense any living creatures within 500 feet. The Undead need not consciously activate this ability, instead instinctively sniffing the air when in the presence of creatures that are still living.

# THE BOOK OF AEGERON

**C**ODEX *Infernus: The Fall of Aegeron* is a model of a fantasy world, designed to show you how the rules and concepts in this book can be applied in your game. We paint the world in broad strokes, focusing more on the points of conflict in the setting, and mapping out our vision of Hell. Aegeron is a large world, with many areas left to your imagination, giving you the flexibility you need to create new creatures, new races, and kingdoms. You can certainly play in this world if you wish (all of the archetypes, races, monsters, and rules in this book are incorporated into the world of Aegeron), or you can use it to help frame your own setting, and even enhance your favorite published setting.

## IN THE BEGINNING...

All of creation was nothing more than vast, empty gulf. Then the Weavers came, each possessor of the Words of Creation. With a shout, they unleashed the power of the Words into the abyss, and Aegeron was born. For countless millennia, the Weavers watched the development of life on Aegeron, at times guiding the evolution of strange and wondrous creatures, most simple-minded beasts lacking the ability to do more than follow their instincts. Other creatures were even smarter, though even they, only proved intelligent in their ability to craft weapons of war, or other crude tools to serve their needs.

The Weavers gave them names; the reclusive Trolls, hideous, wild Varg (who seem to have left Aegeron entirely), and a host of other names too numerous to mention. Most of these creatures, such as subterranean Grem, are filled with hate and malice. There were some, though, who developed higher intellects. Seeing vast potential for good in these beings, the Weavers made themselves known to the creatures, calling them Humans. The Weavers taught humans to master fire, stonework agriculture, hunting, and other methods of survival.



The people of Aegeron worshipped the Weavers as gods in the early days, bowing to the power and wisdom of the Weavers. In return, they were blessed, given boons ensuring plentiful harvests, good hunting and prosperity for all. As a result, the peoples of the world flourished in the years commonly referred to as the First Epoch, migrating across much of Aegeron to establish the great nations of Aradan, Erduun, Koth, Markhan, Numarath, Sargolia, Sundanar, and Tygosh, though at that point (and even today) much of our world lay unexplored.

## THE FIRST MAGI

The creation of the Aegeron infused it with magical energies. The Weavers taught the wisest of your ancestors how to tap into them, and manipulate the energy by using variations on the Words of Creation. Called spells and incantations, these magical formulae allowed us to perform great—and dreadful—works of wonder. Many marveled at our power, but even more were terrified of the things we could do, and rightly so.

We—the first magic magi—were like children playing with fire in those days, always pushing ourselves, testing the boundaries of what was possible with magic. The Weavers tried to guide us as best they could, but there came a point when some began to dabble in darker aspects of magic; mind control, curses; they even engaged in necromancy and blood sacrifice in their quest for power. We demanded the magi—now called sorcerers—stop their vile practices. When they didn't, we called a council, unanimously declaring them heretics—their vile practices anathema. We went to arrest them, but found they had already spirited themselves away, fleeing through mysterious megaliths we now call the stone gates.

## THE STONE GATES

None know who built them, or how, or even why they were created. We consulted the Weavers, but they wouldn't reveal anything to aid us in our research. They warned us to leave them alone; that some things were better left a mystery. Of course we didn't listen. Some lore masters believe the Stone Gates were an outgrowth of creation; magical protuberances rising out of Aegeron itself, like mountains, or hills. Others believe they were created by the Weavers themselves, who used them to travel across the world. In any case, the megaliths had stood for centuries, mysteries we could only guess at—until Malthaxion Heart Render, the leader of the renegade cabal of sorcerers known as the Crooked Cross, activated them.

At first, we had no idea how Malthaxion did it. We spent months examining the megaliths to no avail. Then one day, we caught the mad sorcerer Stragus Shadespell searching Malthaxion's old apartments. We questioned Stragus for months before he finally revealed his purpose. One of the Heart Render's most trusted agents, Stragus was sent back to Raven's Rest (the now defiled home of our order) to obtain a book Malthaxion had apparently left in his rush to escape arrest. We went back to Malthaxion's apartments, and while searching his Library, we came upon a secret passage leading deep underneath the city. What we found down in that place still haunts me to this day.

## THE CODEX INFERNUS

Malthaxion possessed a predilection for the study of anatomy. Before he turned to darkness, Malthaxion was a great healer, using his arcane talents to cure nearly any ailment. Only the most severe diseases and injuries escaped his healing touch. Perhaps that was what drew him from the light—the inability to defeat death itself—for what we found down in that place, that laboratory of horrors nearly destroyed us. It seems the Heart Render lived up to the moniker.

Abominable creatures—presumably guardians of Malthaxion's secrets—assaulted us; pale, undead monstrosities stitched together with baling wire, marked with strange sigils, burning lights in their eyes (those that had eyes, at least) and gaping holes in their chests lunged towards





us. We managed to defeat them, but not after three of my order died screaming as the creatures tore them apart. It didn't take long to find the thing they were tasked to protect—a book bound with stitching made from entrails, the pages flesh, and the words written in blood. Malthaxion even named it; *Codex Infernus*: The book of the inferno, or the book of Hell, depending on the translation.

Of course, we didn't know what he meant by Inferno, or Hell—at least not at first. But, as we read page after page of instructions and spells Malthaxion used to create his abominations, we came to realize the sorcerer had become obsessed with the concept of life after death. Malthaxion believed the spirit left the body after death, traveling to a place called the Netherworld. He kept copious records of his attempts to access the Netherworld; sketches of his ritual circles, lists of components he used, animals he sacrificed, and which Words of Power he spoke... but the spells either had no effect at all, or they had other, more disturbing results.

One spell in particular summoned entities previously unheard of—The Defiled. According to his notes, Malthaxion spoke at length with these entities. He pledged fealty to them, and in return, they taught him a great many things, including the method to open the stone gates and enter the Netherworld. We thought the megaliths were inscribed with Words of Power, and were right to an extent. The markings were the inverse of the words we were taught. Malthaxion wrote down each sigil and its meaning, proper inflections when speaking them, how to incorporate them into spells, etc. The Words of Power formed a language of sorts, which we referred to as the shadow tongue. Malthaxion used the shadow tongue to enter the Netherworld.

## **THE GRAND COUNCIL**

It seems we were right in our original speculation that the stone gates could be used to travel throughout Aegeron, though we wondered why the Weavers never spoke of them. We went to ask them why, but they were nowhere to be found. We formed a council to decide what to do. We summoned kings and queens from all across Aegeron to answer the question; should we risk using the shadow tongue to open the gates and hunt down the members of the Crooked Cross, or should we leave them alone?

The council lasted weeks, its members split into three factions; those who wanted to use the gates to explore Aegeron and hunt down the renegade sorcerers, those who insisted the gates should be kept closed, and another who advocated to do both, essentially prohibiting the general populace from using the stone gates until a select group could fully map out this Netherworld and establish outposts in unexplored regions of Aegeron. In the end, we decided to send teams into the Netherworld and hunt down Malthaxion and the other members of the cabal. We had to know the danger we faced, so that we might prepare in the event these Defiled came through.

A new organization was formed—the Netherguard. Led by myself, my husband Horadan Doombringer (the tale of his naming will be told soon), and noble Galen Lightsworn, leader of Clan Draenan in the Kottaran Highlands, a group of thirty men and women opened the gate high in the hills above Raven's Rest and stepped into the Netherworld.

## **THE NETHERWORLD**

Upon entering the Netherworld, we immediately understood how this strange, twilight realm could be used to traverse Aegeron. The Netherworld appeared to mirror the world of the living, though shrouded in a pale mist. Paths led off in all directions; some disappearing into places where the mist was so thick it seemed impenetrable, and others along roads we recognized. After some discussion, we decided to head south, towards the stone gate outside the great city of Beggar's Bluff in the borderlands between Sargolia and Numarath.

What was normally a ten day journey took a single day by our reckoning. At some points, there were even simple structures, mostly lean-to's and fire pits, but as we approached a crossroads about half way to Beggar's Bluff there was a hut made from the bones of some creature we had never seen before, at least not in Aegeron. The place had an evil feel to it, so we passed without further investigation. Every junction of paths we came to along the way was marked by sign posts, with lanterns burning a cold blue flame.

There were glowing etchings on the lanterns in the shadow tongue revealing names, some of places in our own world, others we'd never heard of; Hell, the Darkened Wild, Purgatory,



and the High Heavens were a few of the names that stood out. Paths led in the general direction of the places we knew, while the paths leading to the other places invariably led into impenetrable mist and darkness, with one exception—the Darkened Wild. Surely that must be a place somewhere on Aegeron?

Once we reached the stone gate at Beggars Bluff, we opened the portal and stepped through. Galen sent a bird back to Raven’s Rest with a message describing the journey thus far. We stayed the night in the city and plotted our course for the next day. Galen wanted to continue on south through the mountains and down into Numarath, and then head east to the Neversea to see if it were possible to find a way across. Horadan argued in favor of seeking out the place known as the Darkened Wild.

Something wild burned in my husband’s eyes as we sat in the common room of The Iron Fletcher Inn, a look I haven’t seen since we first met in the port of Sea Gate on Amber Coast in Erduun. He was an exuberant warrior yearning to see more of the world, I a young lad just beginning my studies in spell craft. He convinced me to prolong my studies and come with him on his adventures. We travelled far and wide in those days, but eventually there came a time when my eagerness to see the world was overshadowed by my need to get back to my studies.

Horadan agreed to come with me to Raven’s Rest, and we were married. He found purpose, joining with the Sentinels of the Sigil; the military arm of our order; men and women who swore to protect the magi as they travelled throughout Aegeron. Still, as the years passed I began to notice that fire I loved so much burning less bright; that is until we entered the Netherworld. After much debate, it was decided that Horadan would take ten of the Netherguard on the path to the Darkened Wild, while the rest split up into teams of two or three, each group following paths to the places we knew. I was to make my way back to Raven’s Rest and inform the council of our decision.

## OF THE DARKENED WILD

As the days passed, we heard from every party except Horadan’s company. At first, we weren’t overly worried. None had ever heard of the Darkened Wild before, so it was impossible to know how long the journey might take, not to

mention we had no idea of what they might find when they got there. Still, as the days wore on, I must confess my concern for my husband grew.

Three months passed with no communication, then one evening, Horadan returned to Ravens Rest. My husband seemed haggard, worn down from his experience. His blood-stained clothes hung in tatters. Worse, though, was his physical appearance. His once smooth caramel skin was pale as snow. The veins in his emaciated body pulsed black as obsidian, streaking across his chest, up and down his arms and legs; even the veins in his neck and face were discolored. I barely even recognized him. He glanced at me. “Garon? Is that you my love?” he whispered, raggedly. I nodded, pulling him close to my chest, and then the screams began.

For hours, Horadan rambled on and on about his time in the Darkened Wild, speaking of horrific creatures they found guarding the gate; creatures beyond description, who captured his team as they approached, taking them out of the Netherworld and into a temple complex at the center of a vast wilderness which he referred to as Blackheart Vale.

“There must have been others of our kind living there before the gate opened, for we encountered many humans; all slaves, or worse,” He said during a fleeting moment of lucidity. “Our people are kept in pits, either used for food or twisted into forms mocking our own; bestial caricatures of their former selves, and wholly evil.” We pressed him about Malthaxion and the renegade sorcerers, and Horadan confirmed our suspicions.

“Yes, I saw him there,” he mumbled. “Malthaxion and his order are in league with other creatures who dwell there, too. He calls them the Defiled; damnable things that come from a place called Hell.” He looked at me. “You remember the sign posts, yes?” I nodded in understanding. Hell was one of the places written on the sign posts. “That’s where they came from,” he gasped, wild eyes staring at something only he could see.

It was obvious that my husband my husband was struggling against something. Some of us sensed another presence assaulting his mind, attempting to dominate it. His speech became erratic. At times he spoke in a guttural language none could understand. He thrashed on the floor, staring at us, babbling incomprehensible gibberish. We tried to chain Horadan to a wall,



but he just laughed and ripped the links from the wall as if they were twigs.

“We are coming,” he hissed, and then escaped, killing fourteen sentinels before fleeing through the stone gate. The next time I saw my husband was at Koren’s Wall, the gate to the plains of Aradan, where the Defiled and their hellish scourge threw us back and scattered our armies to the winds. He served directly under Malthaxion, now head of the dread Moragrim, an elite group sorcerers who proved themselves more powerful than the rest of the Crooked Cross, and found favor in the eyes of the Defiled, becoming transformed into beings wielding incredible power.

### **AEGERON'S DOOM**

Horadan Doombringer's (Doombringer was the name he was given after he fled Raven’s Rest) prediction proved true. We sent out a call for an emergency council with all the magi and leaders of the kingdoms. The summons went out across Aegeron, but only a handful of our order came, each with dark tidings. The gates were open, they said, and they can’t be closed. We rushed to the stone gate outside Raven’s Rest, only to find strange beasts pouring through. Indeed, if what we found at the stone gate was any indication, then countless horrors must be pouring through the stone gates, using them to assault the cities of men.

Try as we might, we couldn’t shut the gate. The sigils had changed, now burning fiery red, and indecipherable. Many of my order died that day, as did the Sentinels of the Sigil. We were forced to flee Raven’s Rest, riding south through the Borderlands and then southwest along the Great Sandy River until it emptied into the treacherous, troll-infested swamps of Sundanar, only to find the Defiled had taken control of Zargal, the nation’s filthy capital.

As loathsome as the place was, I couldn’t help but mourn the loss of the people who once lived there, for a while, at least. It wasn’t until much later that I found out that King Tiberion Thorgan swore fealty to the Defiled, committing the resources of the nation to their cause in exchange for lordship and a place of honor in Hell. Nearly the entire populace followed willingly, branding themselves with Tiberion’s mark; a rooster’s foot dripping blood.

For months, our travels had the same result; once mighty cities fallen to the invaders,

villages burned, slaves taken, and mutilated bodies everywhere. We hid in caves, deep, forgotten hollows in remote forests, wherever we could, praying to the Weavers for aid, with no response. When we came to the Kottaran Highlands, however, we found Galen Lightsworn had massed an army, and was preparing to sweep east through the highlands and re-take Caer Harran, the largest stronghold in Kotarra, and Galen’s home city. Thousands of men and women flocked to his banner—a white fist set against a golden sunburst—seeking vengeance for the atrocities committed against their kin.

Word spread across Aegeron. Assisted by Sentinels of the Sigil, brave souls went into the Netherworld, using smaller stone gates to enter remote areas and rally pockets of resistance. After months of preparation, we went on the offensive, bringing the fight to the hellish horde. For a while, it seemed we were succeeding, but it would not last. We managed small victories, capturing a village here, a small city there, but with each step forward, we were hurled back two. The final hammer stroke came at Koren’s Wall, where the ragged and battle-worn forces of light gathered in one last battle against the scourge in the mountain pass.

Led by the Moragrim, the Defiled—some of us began to call them demons—ravaged our positions. Monstrosities the size of a tall tower attacked the wall itself, tearing massive holes the horde poured through. Malthaxion and Horadan slew Galen Lightsworn, and we broke, fleeing the onslaught by whatever means we could find. I and group fled higher into the Smoky Mountains, hoping to escape by the roads which wound north.

But then the world shattered.

As we fled Malthaxion’s forces, a burning rock larger than anything I’d ever seen sped across the sky, diving down towards the horizon, followed by a loud crack of thunder. A great earthquake shook the land, and fire rained down as far as my eyes could see, which wasn’t far. The sky grew black as dust launched into the heavens, obfuscating the sun. Our horses bucked in terror and we were flung to the still-shaking ground. The last thing I saw before losing consciousness was a wave of fire rushing up the mountain towards me.



## AFTERMATH

Some say it was the Weavers who broke Aegeron, judging humanity for our sins against the world they created, while others claim the Defiled did it. A growing number of people blame those of us who study the arcane arts for the devastation. I can't say they are wrong. Yes, it was Malthaxion who opened the gates, and made contact with demons and brought Hell to our world; but the blame for that really lies with all magi. We should have left well-enough alone. The Weavers kept the knowledge of the stone gates a secret for a reason. Even so, it's not so far-fetched to believe someone would eventually have opened the gates and brought doom to the world; it was just a matter of time, because in our arrogance, we felt we could master anything. So, when I hear that those of my order are being hunted and slain, I can't help but think we've got it coming.

By my reckoning, it's been ten years since the world shattered. In the first few years following The Breaking, (as we now refer to it) thousands died of starvation and exposure to the elements during the worst winter I've ever seen. War continued, although not so much against the demonic horde as with ourselves. You see, the landscape itself has changed. New oceans have risen up, swallowing old territory and creating new lands. Some are recognizable as fragments of old kingdoms, while others—such as the Darkened Wild and Koth—are yet to be fully explored. The upheaval has thrown everything into chaos.

There have been attempts to rebuild some of the old kingdoms. Men and women have come forth, claiming the right to rule, while others have taken control of large swathes of territory, carving out their own fledgling kingdoms. These developments have led to bloody conflicts across Aegeron as rightful claimants to the thrones challenge the would-be rulers. Travel through these regions has become dangerous. Seeking to build armies, warlords from all parts of the world conscript people into their ranks, often at sword-point, using most as shock troops or servants. Of course these aren't the only dangers survivors have to contend with.

All of the stone gates I've encountered in my travels are still open. Demons, more commonly known as the Defiled, still walk Aegeron, though their numbers have greatly diminished. At first I could not understand why Aegeron wasn't completely overrun by the hordes of Hell in those early years, but then we managed to capture one of the Moragrim, Selena Thornweaver.

Selena shuddered as she spoke at length about a war in Hell. "The King of Hell has been slain. Someone or something managed to get into the Mute Citadel, steal past the Doom Speakers and slay Dreadlord Thaimoxx in his throne room!" Selena's hands shook, gripping the chains attached to her manacles.

"All is chaos. The entire realm is on the verge of hostilities. Furio, Phagion, Slaug; even Dis itself prepare for the inevitable war of succession as the Overfiends maneuver their forces." I assumed those strange names were regions in Hell. "I fled to avoid the inquisition. Some





blame the Moragrim,” she said. “They hunt us at the behest of the Doom Speakers, who claim we used our influence with Thaimoxx to gain entrance to the Mute Citadel and assassinate him.” She shook her head. “LIES spread by those jealous of our station!” Selena’s voice rose a shrieking wail, and she struggled against her bindings.

“How long has it been since Aegeron broke!?” she asked. Her eyes grew wide when I told her. “Ten years?” she gasped, shaking her head.

“That long...” “It’s only been, perhaps a year, in Hell. Time is strange in the realms bordering the Netherworld, and there are many of these places; entire worlds filled with people and things that make the demons of Hell seem as harmless as a child’s plaything,” she paused, licking her lips. “They know of Aegeron. Some have already come through the gates.”

She looked at me, a strange, hungering look in her eyes. “Do you have the Codex? We know it was at one time, at Raven’s Rest. Of course we have searched; we did capture your home, after all...” she grinned wickedly.

“We sent an entire Talon to retrieve it,” she looked at me, lips curled in a sneer. “Horadan gave the order himself.” Overcome with rage, I lunged towards the Moragrim, and would have strangled the woman, but the guards pulled me back. I stormed out of the interrogation chamber, her cold laughter mocking me as I went.

## **AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE**

Selena’s revelations of Hell are both a blessing and a dire omen. This assassination, and impending war in Hell seems to have staved off our destruction, but who knows how long that will last? If what Selena said is true, time seems to be working in our favor. Perhaps we can rebuild our world and prepare for the next surge of demons and other horrors the sorceress hinted lay beyond this world. Maybe we might even close those damnable gates forever. The loss of the Codex worries me greatly. It was lost when we fled Raven’s Rest all those years ago. We’d thought the horrors who attacked Raven’s rest had carried it off. Apparently we were wrong. Still there is hope it may yet be found—hope for a better tomorrow...

–*Garon Shadow Slayer; Lord Commander of the Netherguard*

## **AEGERON**

In the decade since Aegeron broke, I have taken it upon myself to gather as much information about our world as I could, though truth be told, to fully catalog Aegeron, it’s peoples and the struggles they face would require more time and space than is currently possible.

What follows are memos and letters, some found on dead messengers of the enemy, others from our people. Individually, they provide a glimpse into each region of our world. Collectively, they offer great insight into the scope of the challenges we face.

*Garon Shadow Slayer; Lord Commander of the Netherguard*

## **ARADAN**

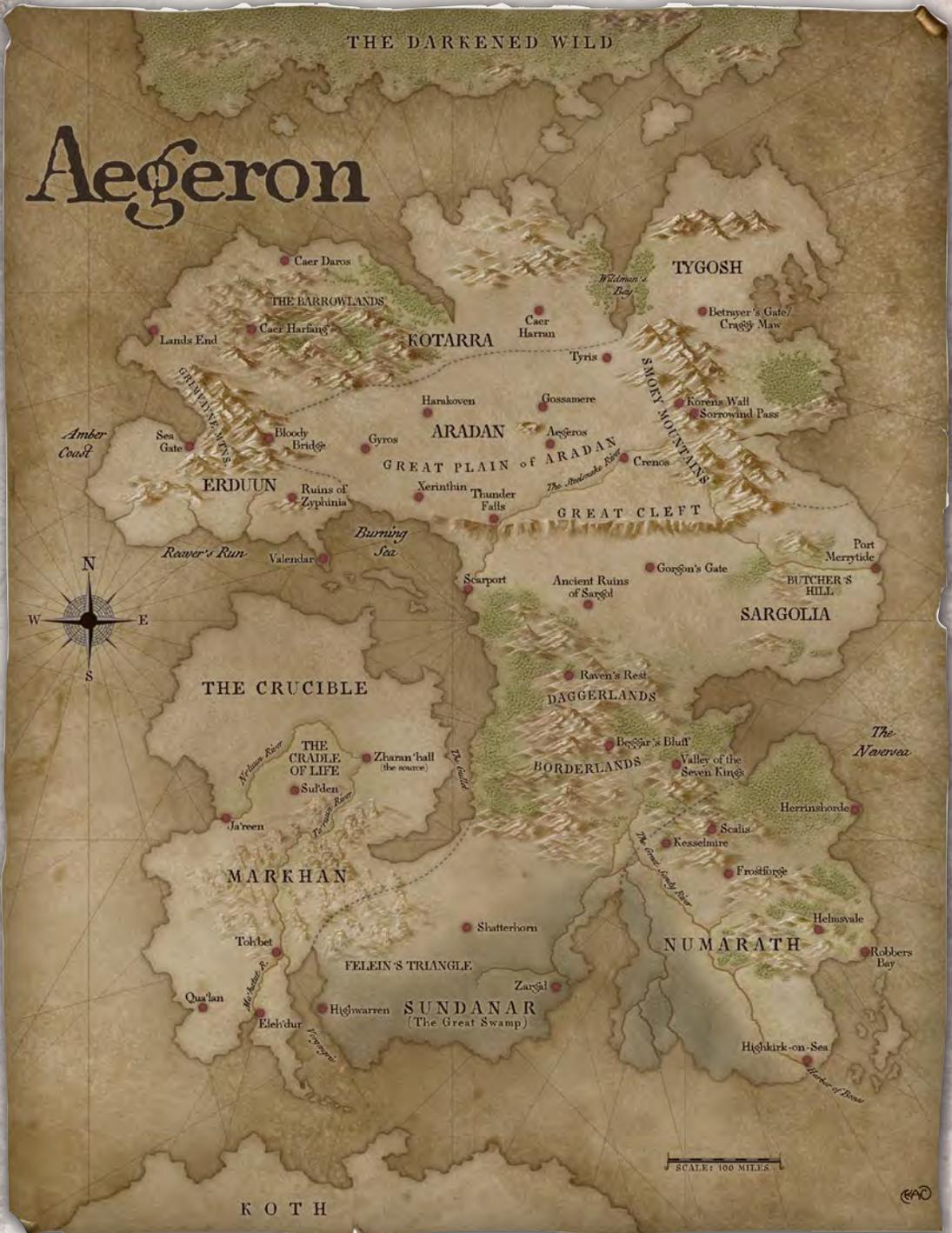
### **Delver’s Address at Havoc’s Hope**

Welcome to Shadow’s Rise, the highest point on Rogan’s Hill, and to Havoc’s Hope, the tavern at the breaking of the world. Please, make yourself comfortable and pull up a chair. Throw aside your troubles and another log on the fire, for the nights come early now and there is a chill in the air. Outside storm clouds gather, but here, for tonight at least, you are safe. Judging by your demeanor and garb you are gathered to listen to my tales and not to sample innkeeper Freybell’s mutton stew. I admit, the mutton is an acquired taste, but in the days ahead you should wish such a feast be laid before you.

You know who I am or you would not be here, but let me introduce myself all the same, for it keeps my thoughts in order. I am Hygrin Blackcrow of Kalkusmere. The tales you have heard for the most part are true. I fought at the side of Galen Lightsworn and I fell with him at Koren’s Wall, yet enough life was left in me to witness the breaking of the world. Only the crush of broken corpses saved me from the cleansing fire that swept man and demon before it. How I survived beyond that is anyone’s guess.

I do not do anyone a dishonor when I say Aradan was the greatest of all of Aegeron’s nations. Alas, the greatest gem is always plucked first, and the cities of Aradan fell first to the countless Defiled who came for the slaughter. Before the breaking of the world, and while the peoples of other nations warred with each other,





Aradan was a nation at peace with itself. As a well-travelled merchant I knew Aradan's twelve ruling city states as if I had been born in each.

Those outside of Aradan looked to the breaking of the world, cursed it and named its instrument of destruction Havoc. Yet those of us on Koren's Wall recognized it for what it was. Hope! Your sideways glances tell me you

think you sit before a mad man. Yes, I have seen things that would test the sanity of any man, but please, indulge me a little further. Not one of you hails from Aradan, if you did you would already be dead. You come to Havoc's Hope seeking riches, seeking answers, but you must first know the truth; at the breaking of the world, Aradan had already ceased to exist.



Those that were butchered in the initial assault were the lucky ones. After the blood lust of the Defiled had been sated, the survivors were led through the gates in their hundreds of thousands, never seen or heard from again. Those that made their last stand on Koren's Wall had already broken when Havoc blazed a trail across the sky.

Aradan's cities may have been destroyed, and the earth cauterized, but it was the Defiled who burned that day in Aradan. Their numbers were legion and they were ready to march across all of Aegeron and end any resistance that remained. If not for Havoc's cleansing fire nothing of Aegeron would remain, not even hope itself. I will tell you more of hope, but first I will tell you what remains of Aradan.

In the farthest reaches of Aradan's northeast, at the base of the Smokey Mountains, is the city of Tyris. Of all Aradan's cities, Tyris remains the most intact. Not only was it the most distant from the impact, but it had the shelter of the

foothills in which it was situated. Still, most of Tyris burned, and its buildings have collapsed or remain burnt out husks. The Defiled had left the city before it burned, and bereft of its population, there were none to mourn its passing. Life has, however, returned to Tyris as refugees from across Aradan and beyond have made it their home. Still, it is a dangerous place, for while the Defiled have so far left it in peace, man is not content unless he is oppressing his own kind. Tread there carefully, for some that choose to make home there do for secret reasons.

Situated on the open plains, the rest of Aradan's cities were not so lucky and bore the full brunt of Havoc's judgment. Tyris' twin city Crenos lies in ruins in the south of Aradan, shattered by the blast and split in two halves, the great canyon that swallowed the Steelsnake River parting it further than the span of any known bridge. The southern half of Crenos lies lifeless other than what wandering creatures may have laired in its ruins, the northern half occupied by small warbands of the Defiled whose allegiance is now their own, their lords in Hell deposed.

The Steelsnake River begins its journey high in the Smokey Mountains as a melt water spring. Fed by tributaries, it gathers strength as it plunges through a series of waterfalls until it reaches the plains of Aradan. Here it flows unmolested before splitting at Bodkin's Point and vanishing over the precipice known as Reason's Edge. Inside the canyon the noise is deafening, even the loudest shout drowned out by the pounding torrent. For mile after uncharted mile the river continues through and over sharp pointed rocks, sometimes diverging through an unexplored cave system before rejoining the main body of water again. The waters then slow, becoming a series of unfathomably deep lakes before leaving the canyon and flowing unimpeded until spilling over the Great Cleft at Thunder Falls and into Sargolia where it travels to the Burning Sea at Scarport.

West North West of Thunder Falls is what remains of the city of Xerinthin. Xerinthin is a terrible place to behold. Only its tallest, strongest buildings have survived, all else has been laid low, still buried under several feet of fine Ash and pumice. Over the years the wind and rain have eroded the ash in places to reveal the blackened tops of the statues the city was once renowned for.

Not all are statues, however, but the carbonized meat and bone of both citizen and Defiled alike who were baked alive by the burning ash. Each and every one is frozen in time, blackened and contorted in pain. That is not the worst of it by far. At night the eyes of the dead glow a baleful red as if something terrible possesses them, yet frozen in place they seem unable to move. I spent but one night there, terrified out of my wits. And while I could see no sign of life, the next morning footprints crisscrossed the soft ash where there had been none the day before. While the city's treasure awaits the brave and foolish alike, I would suggest the dead city be left in peace.

To the northwest of Xerinthin is Aradan's most westerly city, Gyros. Once the bread basket of Aegeron, it now lies in ruins. Not only did Gyros burn, but it suffered from a terrible bombardment of massive rocks hurled into the air by Havoc's impact. Throughout the city these rocks lie where they fell from the sky hundreds of miles from their origin. Some rest at the bottom of large holes they punched straight through the city's foundations. Others have ploughed through entire neighborhoods leaving deep trenches in their wake, large mounds of earth and rubble marking where they came to rest.

Northeast of Gyros is the city of Harakoven, a city that suffered an unusual fate, and yet what remains is an amazing sight to behold. Havoc's impact sent a shockwave across Aradan and beyond, lifting and splitting the earth as it went. At Harakoven, the entire low lying mesa that the city was built on buckled violently. Thrust up on the eastern edge and plunging into the earth on western edge, the entire city was left hanging at a precarious angle.

The upending of Harakoven sent the tallest buildings tumbling, causing an avalanche of debris crashing through the city destroying large swathes of it. The angle of the uplift, however, spared Harakoven from the approaching wall of fire, and very little of what remains intact shows any sign of fire damage.

With the city abandoned, the new town of Longshadow has sprung up at the edge of a crescent shaped lake that has since formed, filling the crevasse the western tip of the old city plunged into. The town is small and centered on a cluster of stone buildings that had been a natural outgrowth of Harakoven beyond the mesa.

The eastern edge of the old city is now the highest point on the plains of Aradan. Despite the violence and sheer forces involved in the destruction of Harakoven, more of Aradan's people survived there than anywhere else.

To the east of Harakoven is the city of Gossamere. Much of Gossamere was spread out, built in, on, and above a series of shallow, natural wind-worn canyons cut into the plains of Aradan. There is precious little evidence remaining that any city stood above the ground. The further into the canyon one travels, the more that survives. Unfortunately the city is the domain of the Defiled, for one of the accursed gates is located nearby.

Gossamere is a city of slaves, the Defiled their masters. When I talk of slaves, I talk not of humans. Yes, there are large numbers of Aradan's people unfortunate to have been captured by hunting packs of the Defiled, but there are others too.

There are great beasts of burden I have never heard tale of, unusual crab like creatures whose function I could not determine, great bridled worms that hauled ore from a nearby mine, and creatures we know as Grem—vicious, hate-filled fiends. I think they might also be sick. All of them have a pale, jaundiced complexion. They eagerly scurry about Gossamere, doing their newfound masters' bidding. I also saw large ant-like creatures that spent the daylight





hours swarming over outcroppings of rocks at the top of Gossamere's canyons, slowly but steadily building a series of bridges to allow travel across the canyon tops.

Given the level of destruction Havoc visited on the six outer cities, it's unsurprising when I tell you that the inner cities for the most part have been blasted from the face of existence. Of Kykos, Phygria, Herrencis, Mernnis I could find no sign of in my travels. Burned from the face of Aegeron or swallowed by the earth I could not tell. Ephina, I found its location, how much of the city remains I could not say. It appears to have been consumed by pillars of hot black rock that are still warm to the touch these many years later.

Tonight you climbed Shadow's Rise aided only by the light of the moon. At daybreak, from the doors of Havoc's Hope you will witness what has become of Aradan's first city. Until then I will tell you its fate, for to witness what is left is to have your soul seeded with despair despite its terrible beauty and the stunning view.

As Galen Lightsworn fell, the great fire named Havoc appeared in the sky, crashing into the ground at a terrible speed. If this was the intervention of the Weavers, the Magi, or cosmic coincidence we shall never know. As you shall see it struck the very heart of Aegeros, the resulting impact felt across all of Aegeron. The city of Aegeros was vaporized; no other word does it justice. Yet, despite all, the old palace still stands on the edge of Havoc's Wrath, the great hole it left when it pierced the heart of our world.

Havoc's Wrath is as beautiful as it is terrible. The crater is four miles across, its depths unfathomable. The strata of underlying rock are laid bare, millions of years of creation exposed. Everywhere there are openings, fissures that bubble with hot liquids which give off curiously colored gasses that stain the rock. The deeper you go the warmer it gets and the sides become slick with obsidian. Still it goes down, further and further. At a certain point you reach the Scald, a layer of swirling purple and green vapor that dissolves flesh on the slightest contact. The Scald rarely moves, only occasionally does a gust of wind break the still, piercing the veil and offering a brief glance of what may lie beneath.

The Defiled have been obsessed with exploring Havoc's Wrath, looking for caves to bypass the Scald, or building curious contraptions to

pass through it. Like you they seek answers, but they wish to know if the largest gate in Aegeron survived Havoc's Wrath, for the gate was once a great marvel, a wonder of Aegeron that stood in the very center of its greatest city.

What you may find at the bottom of Havoc's Wrath I cannot say. Many will find death, but dig deep and you will find hope. Do not underestimate the power of hope, my friends. Hope can be as elusive as the wind, yet, you just need to summon it. I have found hope. Here is a small piece of what fell from the sky, or perhaps what was dug from the earth. It is a metal of some kind, harder than the finest steel, heavier than twice its size in gold. This is the hope I talked about, this is hope I can hold. I call it Demons Bane, for one touch is lethal to the Defiled. I carry with me the sword of Galen Lightsworn, its edges tempered with hope.

—Hygrin Blackcrow, *Hopebringer of Kalkusmere*

## ERDUUN

### **To Dreadmaster Blackfist, Overfiend and Rightful First Lord of Aegeron**

Dreadmaster, I have taken the unusual step of entrusting my report to a courier vessel rather than deliver it to you in person. I trust you will savor the flesh of the possessed human, for it is sweet, tenderized by the long hours of torment required to shatter the soul and gain possession.

It is unclear how much time has passed since I left to investigate the portal the humans of Aegeron refer to as the Zyphinal Gate. The measure of the passage of time is not normally something of note to our kind, but here on Aegeron one almost feels compelled to mark its passing. The changes wrought by time's swift passage are powerful and should we take our eyes from the mark it could prove costly.

Although the tide of chaos still rages across Aegeron it slowly begins to recede, its pace quickening with each blink of the eye. At first glance, the humans seem not unlike our kind. A thousand conflicts rage across Aegeron as they fight for power and dominance in the wake of war and cataclysm. Nevertheless, a semblance of order has taken root. Indulge me as I explain.

The ancient power base of the territory marked on the humans' map as Erduun is the city of Zyphinia from whence the gate gains its name, despite being ancient in comparison. As





my previous comments on the passage of time suggested, nothing here is static, and the city of Zyphinia is now a sunken ruin; a sunken ruin that has taken the portal with it.

The Weavers, the humans believe, created their world, and the Weavers they believe ultimately destroyed it. It seems odd standing on what is now called Weaver's Hill, once the Mesa Zyphinia on which the city stood. The cataclysm has caused the mesa to buckle and sink in the middle, pulling most of the city into a great ringed depression in the earth. The rock strata that once defined the mesa is now contorted, buckled, and folded, seemingly twisted and woven, surely only by the power a creator could wield. The folding of the strata has left a thousand rents in the rock, angular caves that run for miles, some deep into the earth, others into the great depression where the ruins of Zyphinia now wallows, semi submerged in algae thickened water.

Somewhere in this maze of angular caves along the edge of the old city lies the Zyphinal Gate. The gate is fully operational my lord, yet our expeditionary force became lost in the cave system. Rife with hunger, they turned on their

Scourge Lords, feasting on them before turning on one another. Those that made it to the city met their end, running afoul of the Defiled that preceded them a decade before. Now masterless and calling the ruins their home, they give no quarter to those found trespassing. I have discovered those of our forces that maintained discipline and navigated a route out of the mesa were joined in battle and destroyed by the forces of Stravik Brandbearer, the human war chief of the risen city of Valendar.

Valendar. The very word in the human tongue causes a weakening, a tremor, a moment of indecision. Could this be what the humans call fear? It's a word that feels primal, something ancient burnt into the very being of our kind, a warning. Not wishing to tread there, I used the senses of the possessed courier bearing this report. Oddly, I was able to extract more from the humans by walking among their number than from all the limb rending and pain I've inflicted upon those I've captured and interrogated.

The city of Zyphinia is gradually sinking deeper into the mesa, while the ruined city of Valendar rises out of the sea as if in counterbalance. It is here that Stravik Brandbearer has



brought order to the southern region of Erduun. The shifting rock that lifts Valendar from the sea generates such heat that great clouds of steam belch from a series of great fissures in the ground around the city. When the air is cool and the winds are light, which is much of the time, a thick fog hangs heavy in the air. It is for this reason the human flotsam that inhabit the city mostly refer to their home as the Great Haze rather than using its true name.

The courier proved to be a knowledgeable guide, allowing me to see much of the city in great detail. The streets are slick with moisture much of the time and perpetually smell of pitch and Sulphur, which was most agreeable to my senses. Only the hardiest of plants seem to grow within the city and the bulk of food produced to feed the population comes from a series of farmed islands several miles offshore. I believe this to be the city's greatest weakness until such times that its defenders can make safe the land beyond the immediate reach of the Great Haze. I humbly suggest you consider sending Emperor Mazaroth's fleet to capture these islands. Such a coup might break the spirit of Valendar's people.

Defense of the city is not taken lightly. To the rear is a cliff wall of jagged rocks, broken only by the black, walled harbor that now rises from the sea with the rest of the city. All else is protected by a new and formidable semi-circular wall placed well beyond the shifting earth. At the center of this wall is a great tower and gate house, the tower so tall that it alone can be seen above the gathered fog from a great distance. At night a great light shines like a beacon of defiance, and my body aches to punish them for their hubris. Beyond the walls, and complementing the great light, are a series of unmanned beacons. So bright are the beacons that they cause the fog to glow. Any creature that moves between the beacon and wall is easily spotted, its elongated shadow giving away its position.

With the exception of their mewling pups, everyone in the city is armed and trained, barring those who have not yet made it through their combat training. Those that cannot defend the city are shipped to the islands where they are worked as slaves, spending their days tending the crops to feed the city. No easy task, for I estimate the population to number in excess of one hundred thousand souls. Food from the

islands arrives by merchant ship in the Black Harbor, the only real access point to the Burning Sea from within the city.

The Burning Sea is so called because of a large upwelling of heated water, giving the impression of smoke continually rising from it. Just beyond the mouth of the Black Harbor is the phenomenon known as the Seven Sisters, a series of immense geysers that erupt hundreds of feet into the air causing the very earth to tremor and creating a curtain of boiling water and scalding steam. There is enough power to sink a fleet of ships. Stravik is rumored to have somehow harnessed it. Indeed, it might prove dangerous for Mazaroth to bring his fleet close to the Black Harbor, but the Emperor is cunning, and I fear he grows bored with his present situation in Markhan. I've heard rumors that he plans to sail south to Koth, something you had forbidden.

Stravik may have created an oasis of order in the maelstrom of chaos that is Erduun, but that order does not stray but more than a few miles beyond the city walls. Corsairs of unrivaled savagery ply their brutal glorious trade along Reaver's Run, a two hundred mile stretch of coastline defined by unyielding cliffs and jagged rocks. The leader of these Corsairs, Veymar Blackvein commands his crews from the former Erduun navy's flagship—the Crimson Storm. It may be worth taking note of the circulating rumors describing those under the command of Captain Blackvein as having a number of the Defiled among their ranks.

Beyond the Great Haze all that remains is a war torn land of ruined cities, razed villages, and fortified towns. Here humanity scratches out a living while self-appointed lords rule over them with an iron fist, wasting their diminishing resources waging war with their neighbors. Still, there is more worthy of note here than there might at first seem.

In the mid reaches of Erduun the barbarian tribes from Tygosh, having fought their way through the breach in Koren's Wall and driven through the plains of Aradan, steadily plunder their way westward. I believe their goal is to reach the coast in an attempt to reclaim the lands they believe to be their natural birthright.

Curiously the barbarians have divided their forces and stopped to occupy the ruined city of Settler's Rock. Settler's Rock was one of the last of Aegeron's cities to fall, due to its remote



location in the foothills of the Grimvayne Mountains. With almost no strategic value it makes no sense that the barbarians, being nomadic in nature, would stop to occupy the city, yet occupied the city they have and enslaved its population. The truly strange and equally interesting part is that the barbarians have begun to dismantle the city. Yes, dismantling not destroying! They are taking the city apart stone by stone and transporting it northward, for what purpose I cannot fathom.

At the northern most point of the shattered nation of Erduun, deep in the Grimvayne Mountains, lies the mostly unassuming town of Bloody Bridge. This border town lies in a high valley pass that guards fertile pastures and farmland that gently sweeps for a hundred miles to the sea. Before the fall of Aegeron this town was the focus of constant tension and occasional conflict between the nations of Aradan, Erduun, and Kotarra, each of which made claim over the territory. Even today petty warlords, the spent remains of their respective nations, continue to squabble over the small town and its territory for no reason other than bloody pride.

Constant warring and fertile land is not what makes Bloody Bridge of interest, however. In a crevasse in the bluff that overlooks the town there stands a stone monolith, a structure as ancient as the mountains themselves. The monolith's description leads me to the singular conclusion that it is a portal, one we have no knowledge of, other than it did not open when the fall of Aegeron began.

In summary Dreadmaster, should we implement your bold plan to use Aegeron as a staging ground, I believe from what I've seen in Erduun that it is ripe for the taking. Arrival in sufficient force through the Zyphinal Gate would—I believe—be enough convince the Defiled that lair in the sunken city to join our ranks. If it were in our possession the breach in Koren's Wall should be opened, allowing the barbarians to pass unmolested into the plains of Aradan, for the resulting conflict can only further weaken any resistance by the humans. Perhaps even the Corsairs of the Reaver's Run could be manipulated into advancing our cause. I now make for the monolith at Bloody Bridge, an undiscovered portal may be just the edge we seek.

*Blasphemous Vilescion the Seducer.*





## KOTH

### *Fragment of a drunken conversation in Robbers Cove*

It's rude to stare! I jest, sir. I can see you are impressed. Is she not a marvel to behold, and do those curves not make the heart beat faster? She's a thing of beauty, is she not? Her price is steep, but I can assure you that you will not be disappointed, for she has a reputation to uphold. She is the Sorcerous Wind, the fastest ship to sail the southern seas, and she will see you safe to any port.

She can take you across the Amber Sea, and can outpace any ship on Reaver's Run. She will brave the winter storms of the Neversea or steal into the Harbor of Bones, but no, she won't take you to Koth. No, Koth is a cruel mistress. I would sooner sail the dark waters of Styx.

Koth is an ancient place. Her dark foreboding jungles choked with twisted vines, their sharp leaves flow with a poisoned sap the color of blood. I have skirted a thousand miles of her coasts and never once seen a port. Landing on her shores is nigh on impossible. Below the surface lurk jagged rocks that tide and time can't smooth. Their razor edges are the bane of any ship and only the smallest of watercraft is able to attempt the approach. Fool's harbors can be found all along her northern coast, their locations marked by once proud masts jutting from the water, haggard and at unnatural angles, or lying broken, tangled and twisted in their rigging along the rocky shore.

The rocks rise giving way to giant trees that cover the entire land, smothering all beneath. These are no ordinary trees, for each one could yield the lumber to build a fleet of ships. Some say there is no life beyond her rocky shores, but I have seen it, or at least evidence of it. Several times I've passed as close to the shore as I dare, and I have seen one of those great trees crash to the ground, the splitting of its trunk a thunderous roar setting of a cacophony of cries for miles around, animal or human it's hard to discern. On occasion, when winter's grip extends to her northern shores, enough foliage falls from the trees to allow a glimpse beneath the canopy. I have seen colossal buildings in there, but I cannot say what they were. I have seen the flickering of lights as I passed by and I've heard the distinctive chink of steel on stone.

I have of course heard rumors, tales that tell of darker things than I've seen with my own eyes. I've spoken to a few who claim to have been there. As a ship's captain I've dealt with aristocracy and peasants, soldiers and pirates, merchants and beggars, and I've learned to tell the truth from a lie, so I believe what I was told holds a fair measure of the truth.

Koth's people are wild in appearance, their skin scarred, and their eyes bright. They are led by powerful sorcerer kings and warrior priests who worship dark gods and prolong their lives by drinking the blood of those that they deem unworthy of their society. They are a secretive people, hostile to outsiders, and of those that venture there few return, fewer still with their sanity intact.

Koth's people have a natural affinity with the beasts of that wild land. They use sorcery fueled by blood sacrifice to bond with them, using them as beasts of burden or riding them to war.

Now you know the truth you ask yourself why anyone would go to Koth. Well, my friend, the answer to that is a simple one. There are no Defiled in Koth, which then begs the question, why? Some speculate there are no gates in Koth, but I have seen one on her shores. No, the answer is they were never opened, or the sorcerer kings know their secrets and have kept them closed. Is the answer to that secret not worth dying for?

## KOTARRA

### *The Great Spirit Conclave of Kotarra*

Stay your panic, for no harm shall come to you here. Where is here? Here is everywhere, and nowhere. Here is the Netherworld. How? I can feel the question forming, as if on your lips. Alas, you have no lips, not here. Here you will listen, not talk. Stay your rage, for it serves no purpose. I have summoned thee, it is I who commands. Your body lies catatonic where it fell, surrounded by panicked retainers, or perhaps deep in slumber next to an unsuspecting lover.

Look around you and see the maelstrom of the grey. Those glowing red orbs, the eyes of your peers, the very souls of each and every one who calls themselves leaders of men. Through the grey I see all of Kotarra staring back at me. I can see your souls, those that are weather beaten and journey weary, those that have battled horror and fled from it, and those that have



hope and who have abandoned it. In all those eyes I see Kotarra's doom, and I see its salvation.

It has taken a year and a day to convene this conclave; no mean feat I can assure you. I have travelled from Land's End in the west to Wildman's Bay in the east, from Caer Daros in the north to Bloody Bridge in the south and I have crossed all of your lands. But who am I? My birth name is Terith Bradlevyne, but you all know me by another. Malovia Harrowfiend, a name that strikes fear into the hearts of beasts and men, a name that is whispered with sideways glance at the telling of fireside tales in the dead of the night. So terrible is the name that its mention alone invokes nightmares. Such terrible names should not be spoken lightly, for they convey an understanding, proliferate a perception, and they reinforce and ingrain it the psyche until it becomes truth.

Today you must unlearn the truth.

Malovia Harrowfiend is not the only name bestowed upon me, I am known as one of the Moragrim, servant and summoner of the Defiled, The Butcher of Barrowmore, The Assassin of Harfang Hall and many more besides. None of it is true, but I come here not to plead

my innocence. I am here to make you understand how the world is changing, and what it is becoming, and what you must do to stop it.

First you must understand Kotarra is unlike any of the other nations of Aegeron. Kotarra is not a nation, it is not like Sargolia or Numerath, ruled by kings and queens and divided up by feudal lords, nor is it like Tygosh whose people lay ridiculous claim to all beyond it. Kotarra is a frontier, a land of tribes and clans, each forging their own path. This is what makes Kotarra unique; this is both its strength and its weakness.

The Defiled are not here simply to conquer, they are here to transform all of Aegeron and once complete, it will become part of Hell itself.

You think I lie? Each and every one of you has witnessed wanton butchery and savage barbarism since the arrival of the Defiled. Most of you have since been responsible for it, some even justifying it, others indulging in it. Believe me when I tell you that I have been to Hell and it is no different there. It is not just our humanity that is being brutalized and eroded but how we see our world. Look out across Aegeron and you will see how the transformation is taking hold.





In Sargolia a once sleepy riverside town is now known as Scarport, while a mound of earth now bears the name of Butcher's Hill. In Tygosh the Mor Stone has become Betrayers Gate, the gap at Koren's Wall now Sorrowind Pass. The list goes on across Aegeron, but for reasons unknown, Kotarra is different. Perhaps it is just a matter of time, perhaps because of the actions of Galen Lightsworn drawing the Defiled out of Kotarra and meeting them at Koren's Wall. Regardless, the blight of dark names must be stopped, for eventually they will be the truth and Aegeron will have been consumed.

Let me tell you more of Kotarra and its people. When the Defiled invaded Kotarra, they discovered themselves in wild, unpopulated country, and the long march to populated areas took its toll. Until the invasion, few in Kotarra had been aware of the gates or their number as many are located in hard to reach areas revered by the Wyrdd, Kotarra's indigenous people.

To the Wyrdd the gates are known as Dragon Stones, and they hold religious significance. The Wyrdd used these stones as center pieces when they constructed their stone circles millennia ago and their warriors continue to tattoo themselves with the mysterious runes carved on the stones. Why do they call them Dragon Stones? I do not know. I've never heard the term before.

But I digress.

The Wyrdd have mostly abandoned their stone circles since the Defiled arrived, believing they have been sent to punish them. During my travels, I happened on a battle between the Defiled and the Wyrdd. I saw something that day, something which at first I could not understand, and the significance of which was almost lost on me. The Defiled were afraid, something I had never witnessed before. Only now do I understand it.

The runes on the Dragon Stones are more than just the key to opening portals between worlds, they are the source of the fear I witnessed. Seeing the Wyrdd warriors clad only in the green runes of the Dragon Stones was enough to give pause to the rank and file of the legions of Hell. The Wyrdd were oblivious, believing it was their fierceness in combat that cowed the Defiled.

Few of you have ever seen the Wyrdd, unless you have strayed and stumbled upon a religious ceremony on the day of the sinking sun or night of the cloaking moon. The Wyrdd for the most part now hide from the world, living in deep in the Barrowlands. For thousands of years their ancestors constructed great maze like burial structures, covering them with earth and stone. Reclaimed by nature centuries ago, some are so old and large it is almost impossible to distinguish between the barrows and the hills of the Barrowlands themselves.

It is within these barrows that the Wyrdd have sought refuge, believing mistakenly that their ancestor spirits will protect them. They emerge only to hunt, and occasionally drive roving patrols of the Defiled from their territory. The Wyrdd are not the only folk to take to the protection of the earth in Kotarra.

In the eastern flank of the Grimvayne Mountains, the mines high above the valley known as Vixen's Run have become home to those that once lived in villages and towns in the valley floor. Now they are trapped there, slaves in all but name and corralled like livestock by the petty warlords that trade food for the resources of the mines. The abandoned towns and villages have been reclaimed by nature or the warlords that roam the mountains, feuding pointlessly over its riches.

To the west is the port city of Land's End. It is an abandoned city, shunned by all, even the Defiled. If anyone still calls this place home, it is not known to me. I have walked its empty streets in sprit only and still I shivered at the feeling of being watched, but no sign of life was evident. Tales tell that in events unrelated to the invasion a large ship of unusual design arrived in the harbor. Within days a terrible plague had

swept through the city. The ship still remains in the harbor, its once bright sails nothing more than wind whipped tatters, its masts and decks incrustated with the defecation of seabirds.

Further north is the smallest of Kotarra's ancient fortress cities, Caer Daros. Daros is home to Pomryce Hyrell, self-appointed leader of the Gybhrim, the so called lost people of the north. Fear not Pomryce, I shall not divulge the number or disposition of your troops to the conclave. Like all Kotarra's caers, Daros is an imposing structure of towering stone whose ancient construction methods are long lost to us. Situated on a naturally defensible position, Caer Daros projects its dominance over the land and is visible for miles in every direction. The city, however, has no such grand protection and is surrounded by a series of concentric wooden palisades, towers, and water filled moats. Palisades of sharpened stakes may keep the local bandits at bay, but as many witnessed when Caer Harfang fell to the Overfiend Blackfist, wooden fortifications will do little to stop the Defiled when their host marches from Harfang.

Caer Harfang is situated in western Kotarra, on the edges of the Barrowlands. From its





imposing stone tower hang the banners of living flesh that herald the presence of Overfiend Blackfist himself. The banners are styled on the great cloak worn by the Overfiend, which is cut from the flayed flesh from his greatest enemies and those that failed him. From the tower the banner of one million gouged eyes scans the horizon for threats, while the banner of pandemonium screams in a cacophony of madness from ten thousand and one sutured lips. The city surrounding Caer Harfang no longer exists, the wooden palisades nothing but ash from the fires that slow roasted the residents at the Overfiend's victory feast. For miles there is nothing but rank and file of the Defiled encampments and a black wasteland whose poisoned waters leach into the surrounding rivers. This is the fate that awaits all of Kotarra.

To the east lies Caer Harran, the largest of all Kotarra's fortifications, and home to Aegeron's most famous son, Galen Lightsworn. You need no history lesson. It is suffice to say that his defeat at Koren's Wall was a bitter blow for all Aegeron. By drawing out the occupying forces from Caer Harran, they were destroyed at the breaking of the world, an event that allowed the retaking of the fortress by Kyvis Derwyn who is among our number tonight. I am pleased to see the new walls going up around Caer Harran are not the wood of old, but of the hardest basalt from the highlands to the north.

The troops of Caer Harran wage guerrilla warfare on the Defiled, but it is not enough. The people all across Kotarra must engage the enemy, deny them safe passage, destroy their supply routes, and grind down their numbers. Take to the dark pathways of the Netherworld. Now that you have visited it once, what else do you have to fear? The Wyrdd hide in the Barrowlands in great number, harness their strength and learn their ways. Once you do this you will be ready to meet the Defiled in battle when they once again march from Caer Harfang.

I fear I have already talked to long. This conjuring will cost me all I have to give. You have heard me talk of Kotarra's Doom, I have seen it. Have hope, this does not have to be the doom you imagine, but will be one many of you fear. Kotarra must become a nation; it must rise up as one under a single banner, under one leader. The old Kotarra must meet its doom, and its doom shall be its salvation.

–Terith Bradlevyne, Outcast Magi

## MARKHAN

**To Garon Shadowslayer, Lord Commander of the Netherguard**

Hail Garon, I hope this missive finds you well. Per your instructions, I'm writing to inform you of the fate of the Marhkanian people. I must confess, I don't quite know where to begin. Since coming to this region many months ago, I've learned much about the people, their culture, and the struggles they face in these uncertain times. As you well know, Marhkanians are generally suspicious people, and easily offended. Although you gave me valuable insight into their customs and laws, I must admit it took me some time to gain their trust. Indeed, nary a day passed without my giving offense to these people in some small way.

For most tribes shaking your head is negative and nodding is positive except for the few that you warned me of, but initially I had no idea how to interpret a head bobbing side to side. It was similar enough to a shaking head that at first I thought it was an extreme negative, but it turns out it is instead an emphatic or interested positive. I had quite a few near disastrous social interactions before I learned that.

Hardest for me was the Meet, where two warriors conference without looking at one another. Done correctly, we stand side by side, each looking past the other man's back. They say it is so no one can sneak up on either warrior while they speak. My instinct however was to look straight into the man's eyes, which of course was not only an insult to him but also marked me as Shokinobim, or "One not to be trusted to watch your back".

Thankfully Jiskim-Al'kabar, leader of the Shalira tribe, took it upon himself to teach me the ways of his people after I saved him from certain death during a raid on his camp in the rocky holdfast of Sul'den by a rival tribe known as the Shodunai, which loosely translates to oath breakers in our tongue. The Shodunai are reviled by every tribe I have met. I have yet to determine exactly why as most of the tribe won't discuss it with outsiders—of which I am one—and even speaking of the Shodunai is considered vulgar. Still, I am persisting in my investigation because what little I have learned points to some ancient congress between them and the Defiled. Perhaps it's nothing, a legend





or even slander. But the thought that this region had seen the Defiled before tantalizes me.

During my stay, I travelled with the Shalira a great deal, and saw first-hand the horrors visited upon the people of this desolate region at the hands of the Defiled. Much of Markhan is desert; shifting sands to the north, in the region known only as the Crucible, and more of the same in the lands to the south. The exception is the middle region, which is a vast collection of high mesas and deep gorges, peppered with fertile havens, mostly along the banks of the Nelruun and Ta'ruun rivers, though these are fading, as the source—Zharan'Hal—has been poisoned by the Defiled, and the rivers are drying up.

The once deep blue rivers now take on a sickly green pallor, and anything that drinks from the rivers contracts a wasting sickness and eventually dies. Indeed, many settlements along the rivers are gone now their people moving deeper into the wastelands of Markhan, where there are still oases with clean water, though these are few, and most are claimed by various tribes. I've seen great acts of kindness, as refugees are invited to make their camps at some of these havens, and I've also seen desperate men and women fight to the death to keep the water for themselves.

The Shalira possess a wonder in these wastes. From the ground outside it appears as any other mesa, but the top is sunken, like a bowl, and contains a small freshwater lake, vegetation,

and even fish. From above it must be obvious, but to all others it is a jealously guarded secret. It is a mark of the trust they have in me that I was allowed to visit it at all. It makes me wonder what else hides in the seemingly barren wastes away from the stone travel markers that all the tribes stick so closely to.

They also whisper of a very different mesa, known as Kika'asim. They say some nights you can hear thunder there when there are no storms, see lights flash atop it on a moonless night, and on such nights none who travel to Kika'asim return from it. I must admit I was skeptical, but while we travelled past it the entire tribe grew anxious and quiet, and that night I was awakened by a sound I can't describe, a terrible crash. There is something there, and even the Defiled seem to give it a wide berth.

Most refugees come from the southern and western cities, where the Defiled are firmly in control of everything. Ja'reen, Qua'lan, Toh'bet, and Ele'dhur were once thriving metropolises of unsurpassed beauty; centers of trade, caravans and ships travelling throughout Aegeron to bring exotic spices, fine silks, copper, and bronzeware to the Eastern and Northern nations of Aegeron. Now, they are little more than smoldering ruins where Marhkanians are rounded up and used as slaves, or are sent to Hell itself.

Toh'bet was the first city to fall to the Defiled, who marched unmolested out of Sundanar, falling on its unsuspecting citizens like a



plague of locusts. From there, the forces of Emperor Azog split, some sailing north along the Ta'ruun River to Zharan'Hal, where they utterly decimated the people living there. The largest of Azog's horde marched south to link up with Emperor Mazaroth's fleet. Refugees fleeing the cities say Mazaroth intends to sail south to the mysterious realm of Koth once all of Markhan has been subdued, but Azog claims Overfiend Blackfist hasn't issued any orders for such a campaign.

Ja'reen's tall earthen walls were twenty feet thick, and the city was widely believed to be impregnable. I had assumed that Earthrenders destroyed the walls, but according to a survivor I spoke to the walls still stand to this day. Ja'reen was lost near the beginning of campaign to Imps of all things. They flew over the walls at night and took the gatehouses by surprise. Blackfist's troops then simply entered and began to ravage the place. To think what we could have prevented with just a little more knowledge. I suppose that is the real purpose of my time here. I fear there is no one left in Ja'reen to rescue, but the walls themselves may provide us some advantage if we could retake them.

Qua'lan was more prepared, and seems to have offered stiff resistance. Refugees who were already leaving witnessed over a dozen Earthrenders pound the walls and palisades behind them, and claim at least one of the beasts fell. I marvel at the bravery of those soldiers, to hold position against such monsters. It cost them everything. I have yet to encounter a surviving soldier from Qua'lan. According to Shalira scouts all that remains now is rubble, ash, and bones.

The cliff-side city of Ele'dhur lay mostly abandoned by the time the Defiled reached it. I don't know why those that remained chose to do so. Surely they knew they were doomed. As the Defiled swept over them the cliff collapsed, sending the entire city into the sea. Could they have known? Did they remain as bait for a trap, a sacrifice that saw more Defiled destroyed than even the siege of Qua'lan? I suppose we shall never know, but the result certainly embarrassed Azog.

It is said that Azog and Mazaroth hate each other. Mazaroth is jealous of Azog's station as Overfiend Blackfist's commander of the southern continent. Azog feels Mazaroth grows too bold. Unsatisfied with his appointment as commander of Hell's naval forces on

Ageron, Mazaroth seeks glory, and believes the conquest of Koth, sanctioned or not, will be enough to prove his worth in Blackfist's eyes. The rift between the two Imperators has stalled the effort to subjugate the people of Markhan, allowing the tribes to form fragile alliances, even as conflicts break out between those Defiled sworn to follow Azog, and those under Mazaroth's command. The Markhanians have taken advantage, attacking outposts and patrols, with modest victories.

Those from the cities have looked down on their nomadic neighbors for generations, and are having a hard time adapting to the new situation. They are understandably proud and mistrustful of charity. There is also a simmering distrust, since the walls of the great cities were mostly built to keep out Jiskim and his folk out in the first place. Those Ja'reen that remain are haughty but fierce allies when the fighting starts. The Ele'dhur are more numerous and isolated. They are the most reticent to commit to alliance, and likewise the most self-sufficient of the refugee groups. There are too few Qua-Lan among us to even form a report.

The nomadic tribes are just as uneasy with each other as they are with the refugees. There is bad blood between many of them, and no wonder since it seems following the customs of one insures that the behavior is seen as insulting by another. The Bezurind seem to have the most clout among all the tribes, but are widely considered unacceptable as leaders because they maintain tentative diplomatic connections with the Shodunai, who are anathema to the rest. There is a name for one who leads all the tribes of the Markhan, a Maraba'arta. Apparently there has never actually been a Maraba'arta before, but the terror of the Defiled has led almost all the survivors to believe they need one.

Still, there are obstacles preventing total unification of the remaining tribes. To his credit, Jiskim-Al'kabar has done much to try and resolve some of the old hatreds, but much work is yet to be done before he can begin to lead the tribes in force against the demonic strongholds. I've been fortunate enough to follow Jiskim—known by many as the desert wolf for his ferocity in battle—and I can say he is a noble man, worthy of leadership. Though not all share my views. Jiskim has survived numerous assassination attempts, the most recent coming from Cambion spies masquerading as



escaped slaves from Toh'bet. It seems that Azog has heard of the desert wolf and wants his head on a pike. That alone signals to me that this is a man worthy of our support. We must be cautious though. Having outsiders backing him too openly could actually weaken Jiskim's position rather than strengthen it.

Alternatively we could reach out to the Bezurind. They are open to alliances, and no strangers to working with strangers of different custom. Their leader Aza'am Kindal is not half the warrior Jiskim is, but he would be easier to command. It might also open up the possibility of bringing the Shodunai into the coalition. I admit to being curious about them, but not curious enough to trust them in battle. The Bezurind believe the Shodunai long to be redeemed, but until the opportunity arises they have no choice but to continue raiding and taking slaves as outsiders. I have my doubts, but my duty is to report all options and circumstances.

In closing, I would ask, Lord Commander that you consider sending reinforcements and especially supplies to bolster the effort to take back Markhan. These are a strange people, but they are human, all the same, and worth of our aid. But for more than just the sake of decency and kindness, I sense an opportunity here. The more pressure we can exert on Azog, the more tenuous his own position becomes. If we can embarrass Azog enough to encourage Mazaroth to openly rebel we might set the Defiled upon one another. Let them rend each other instead of our soldiers. And above all else, these people fight. Man and woman, refugee and nomad. There is a steel in them that we will need against the Defiled.

If you deign to visit in person allow me to suggest that you keep a hunting bird on your arm or shoulder. It is considered a good omen among the people here, and might play into several of the tribe's prophecies. Before important battles there is a tradition of letting loose captured birds. They are supposed to carry the souls of the slain warriors away from the battlefield, and many here believe that during a final cataclysmic battle all those souls will return as raptors to fight for the descendants who still honor and remember them. Though I can't believe it is anything more than a local superstition I admit I find the image... comforting.

*Your faithful servant,  
Aughnn Demonbane, Netherguard sentinel*

## NUMARATH

### *Lord Avery Kysis-Hammerton, Helmsvale*

Disgraced, accused of crimes she didn't commit, the daughter of a lord becomes an outlaw. Forced to live with society's outcasts, she learns humility before triumphing over injustice and is finally welcomed back into the family, forgiven. It reads like the heartwarming hearthside tale of a court troubadour except "she" is normally a "he" in such tales, and this one, I can assure, you does not have a happy ending.

When one becomes an outlaw, the sudden change of perspective is disorientating; debilitating even. Food no longer appears on command, nor do the undergarments appear at the bedside each morning freshly laundered. First there is no bedside, other than the cold unforgiving floor of a burned out cellar, or the damp earth of Numarath's forests. There was a time I would have tossed a handful of silver pieces to the paupers to watch them scabble like pigeons pecking at seed. It is perhaps ironic that a few coppers would soon be my only shield between life and death. Of all the years of feuding for the crown and the wanton slaughter of the Defiled combined, starvation has killed more of Numarath's people.

Numarath's people... Yes, let's start with them. The citizens of Numarath were once a proud people, and loyal to their lords. They tilled the earth and kept the nation fed, they worked the great forests and quarries to build the towns and cities, and they marched and shed blood when called upon to do so by their liege lords. In return the Lords of Numarath conspired with the forces of Hell and unleashed them to feed on those they felt beneath their station. Was that the plan for me also, father?

When my simpleton brother came to me to warn me of some ludicrous plot on my life I could hardly contain my anger as I threw him from my room. But you knew why he had come to warn me, didn't you? Many witnessed my anger that night, Blaris Valewitch among them. I now know it was he that had my brother silenced and used my public display of anger to seal my fate. Since the breaking of the world, I have traveled the length and breadth of Numarath, and learned a great many things. I now recognize the symbol Valewitch bore on his vestments, the sigil of the Crooked Cross.



After I fled the palace I found solace for a time living with a woodcutter in Helmsvale forest. Yet, Valewitch somehow found me. When the woodcutter was found ritually slaughtered, I became an outlaw among outlaws and fled west to Gessleforde to the fiefdom of Lord Kesslemire.

I arrived in Gessleforde hoping to begin a new life. The tracking skills I picked up in the Helmsvale forest were put to good use as I scouted the edges of the swamps as part of the Gessleforde Militia and fought my first combat. The first battle we engaged with the Trolls, and the second with Sundanar's Hunters, all fighting over a claim to a few miles of bog that only the Trolls had any real interest in.

At the time, the city of Kesslemire was a large sprawling town of stone buildings with black tiled roofs, all built on wooden pylons to raise them above the level of the flood plain of the Great Sandy River. The militia was now my family, and just when I thought the past was the past, I spotted Valewitch and his cronies entering Kesslemire Keep. I confided in those I and revealed my true identity and told them of Blaris Valewitch. They listened, but I could tell they struggled to believe.

Only the next day it was announced that Lady Kesslemire had died unexpectedly. My brothers in arms now sat up and took notice, and if any had any reason to doubt my claims, the announcement a few days later that the young princess had killed herself shattered any shadow of a doubt. I now had the support of the militia and I decided to act, for surely Lord Kesslemire must have been as complicit as you, father. We did not act soon enough and discovered the Defiled swarming out the gates of Kesslemire Keep to seize the city.

The City of Kesslemire is now in ruins, save the keep, the only building constructed on a foundation of rock. Since the breaking of the world the swamp has steadily encroached from the west and its waters continue to rise. The swamplands have not only overtaken the city but much of Gessleforde. To navigate the streets now requires a boat and good watercraft skills. Only the upper stories of the buildings remain habitable, yet there are no longer enough of Kesslemire's people left to occupy them. Many of the largest buildings and towers have simply collapsed—now nothing more than piles of rubble that sit above the water level. Their

remains have been put to good use to grow food on, graze chickens or just a place to moor a boat and share a campfire with likeminded folk.

Oddly, the city is more beautiful now than it ever was in the past. Kesslemire's quiet water-filled streets reflect the buildings in the sunshine, and many of the taller buildings lean outward over the water giving the city a quaint, antiquated look. Lord Kesslemire still rules the city from the keep, but his power beyond the city is almost spent. Those that stayed loyal and have survived the ongoing feuding with the other lords are now nothing more than henchmen, and the number of Defiled he has to call on are pitiful in number in comparison to the legion that took the city.

Beyond the city, the town of Scalis northeast of Gessleforde is a reminder of what the city of Kesslemire once looked like. Its buildings are still mostly intact, and it has a much larger population. Scalis continues to expand, although most of the newer buildings are of wood rather than stone. For the most part, Scalis runs its own affairs, but it's only a matter of time before Lord Kesslemire decides to re-assert his control; I think this might not go well for him.

I expected many things when I had decided to confront Valewitch in Kesslemire, but the legions of Hell were not among them. The city was lost before the fight began and I fled alongside my brothers in arms, east across Numarath to the costal fiefdom of Beaconsdale, the home of Lord Oscar Grechard. I had heard tales at court of Lord Oscar's code of honor and was horrified to learn that he stood with his new allies, the Defiled.

I thought the number of Defiled I witnessed in Kesslemire was a force to be reckoned with, but that was nothing compared to the numbers that stood with Lord Oscar Grechard. The light of the Greatshard Beacon was no longer white, but pulsed evil and red. The mighty lighthouse has stood atop the Greatshard for millennia on the edge of Vanity Cliffs on the west face of Mourning Tor overlooking the Neversea; little did we know it was also a gate to Hell. I could not fathom why Lord Oscar Grechard would require so many of the Defiled, but I later learned that he marched southwest to contest the crown at Frostforge.

Herrinshorde—The City of Spires, the capital of Beaconsdale, did not suffer from the predation of the Defiled. Lord Oscar Grechard at least





had the sense to foresee the outcome of letting the hellish filth loose in the city. Still, the city did not survive the breaking of the world.

Among the oldest of the cities in Aegeron, Herrinshorde was built to emulate the natural splendor of the Greatshard, the masons always building upward, rarely outward. Its main streets and thoroughfares were for the most part a great height from the ground. These great spans crisscrossing back and forth on many levels between the twenty one foundation spires, each named after one of the brightest of Aegeron's constellations.

I returned after the breaking of the world to discover the Vanity Cliffs had been spit asunder. A deep but narrow fissure opened from the sea cliff through the center of Herrinshorde. While only a few yards across at its widest point, it was enough to send Herrinshorde's spires crashing to the ground, consuming the city in rubble and dust. Of the twenty one spires, only seven remain standing and three of those are partially destroyed. Having toppled toward the same point, they collided and now each other's weight and straddle the fissure like a set of tripod legs missing a body.

Lord Oscar Grechard now rules over what remains of his fiefdom from the Spire of

Etharius, the tallest of the remaining towers. The city beneath is chaotic and no longer laid out by design. The survivors have built their homes from the rubble, choosing to build domed structures from the abundance of rock from the collapsed spans and spires. The fissure itself has revealed a series of natural caverns beneath the city. Now accessible via a series of steps cut into the rock face they have become home to the desperate in the city and are a truly lawless place. Beyond the city, a section of the Mourning Tor has since crumbled into the Neversea leaving the great shard fully uncovered and separated from the mainland. The gate, which by all accounts is still open, now sits just off the coast and as yet no one has cared to bridge the gap.

Once Lord Oscar Grechard had marched on Frostforge, I shadowed his forces, on occasion harassing his rear guard when the opportunity presented. What I saw there was one of the largest armies ever assembled. Not that you need reminding, father, for I witnessed our own banners among them along with almost every spear in Helmsvale. Joining the forces of Beaconsdale and Helmsvale where those of Kesslemire and Highkirk-On-Sea. There could only be one reason that such a horde had



assembled before the walls of Frostforge—Lady Winterborn and King Tyrcellyn had not been seduced by Valewitch. Truly, despite the claim each of the Lords of Numarath had made for the throne, only Tyrcellyn was fit to rule.

King Tyrcellyn died in the first few months of the siege, and eventually the superior forces occupied the outer defenses of the city, but Lady Winterborn and her forces held out against all odds and just as it looked like Frostforge castle would fall, the lords of Numarath threw aside whatever agreements they may have made and their forces turned on each other; surely a foreshadow of the events soon to come in Hell itself.

I have not returned to Frostforge, but those that remain loyal to Numarath keep me informed. Frostforge castle still stands and the outer defenses have now been rebuilt. Lady Winterborn now holds more power in Numarath than her husband did when he was king. Freeman and women from across Aegeron now flock to her banners, while the lords of Numarath still scheme with dark powers and wage constant war against each other over a territory devoid of its people.

When the Lords of Numarath and the demonic legions under their command turned on each other at Frostforge Castle, I rode to Highkirk-On-Sea, capital of Harrenham, Numarath's southernmost fiefdom, home to Lady Blenadine Hywerryl.

As it turns out, Lady Blenadine is not afraid to get her hands dirty. Unlike you, she did not need to hide behind the robes of Valewitch and watch as he sacrificed her family, she was happy enough to do that all by herself. Her desperation for power was, however, her undoing. She committed all her forces to Frostforge, and I had great pleasure in ordering the militia to torch the naval fleet at Highkirk-On-Sea.

Blenwick harbor—now called the Harbor of Bones—remains choked with the skeletal remains of nearly thirty warships. Some did survive, but remain trapped and have become home to vagrants afraid to enter the city. The city itself is a city of the dead. Such was Lady Blenadine's rage when she discovered the fate of her prized fleet that she butchered almost every living soul in the city. The lucky ones were simply slaughtered, or burned alive with their families in their homes. The rest were taken to

Highkirk Castle on Hangman's Hill. Many are still alive; their cries can still be heard.

Highkirk-On-Sea did not suffer directly from the breaking of the world, instead it suffered an altogether different fate. Lady Blenadine's slaughter of her own people was so terrible that a curse has befallen the city. From sunrise to sunset the ghosts of those butchered roam the streets and lay siege to the castle. They are held at bay by dark arts fueled by the torture and torment of Lady Blenadine's servants, and any unfortunate souls she manages to capture. Lady Blenadine and her emissaries from Hell continue to torment those taken captive. Highkirk Castle is a place of evil.

To walk the streets of Highkirk-On-Sea during the hours of darkness is to know gut wrenching fear. I have seen the faces of the dead, and witnessed their torment. Some are but hunched, mournful figures that roam the streets as if searching for someone or something, others vengeful spirits that seek out the living to inflict pain and suffering. There are those that seem content to haunt the buildings they occupied in life, their presence made known only by the occasional baleful cry. Then there are those that seek champions, dead willing to bargain with the living, unable to rest until some act or quest has been completed.

Why Lady Blenadine continues to reside in her castle remains a mystery, especially when she could move her forces to one of the other larger towns of her fiefdom. As a result she continues to lose territory to the forces of Lady Winterborn and those of Helmsvale. Helmsvale, I have now come full circle. Helmsvale, the place I once called home, the place where my father, Lord Avery Kysis-Hammerton, conspired with the forces of Hell to sacrifice his family on the altar of damnation.

Helmsvale, the old capital of Numarath, was always a beautiful place, a fiefdom of ancient forests, green sweeping hills, and rivers clear and deep. Despite the constant feuding with its neighbors you encouraged trade to flourish and your law kept order. What I see before me now is a sorry sight. I see once prosperous villages consumed by the forests as nature reclaims the land once taken from it. Helmsvale's famous river ports and trading towns are lawless, run-down places and in some cases abandoned altogether. The coastal city of Robber's Bay is



a haven for pirates and slavers, mercenaries and worse.

The palace I grew up in is no longer bedecked with hawsers of woven flowers and vines. There are no banners hanging from the walls, no pennants flying from the towers to mark the harvest or herald the arrival of the other lords of Numarath. Rarely is there a light to be seen from the palace other than the watch fires whose thick black smoke coats everything. The city is now choked with debris, its wide thoroughfares barely negotiable, and its tight winding alleyways are a place to meet a quick death if luck smiles upon you.

There is more disease in the streets of the old capital of Numarath than in the swamplands of Sundanar and Gessleforde combined. While gold and silver is still used for trade, the blood and souls of the innocent are now the currency of power in Helmsvale. What you have inflicted on this beautiful land and its people is nothing short of high treason. Father, if you are reading this, know that I am still very much alive. I will grant you just enough time to read to the end of this missive so you know I mean to visit evil upon you and stand next to you in the hearth fire's shadow of your favorite chair.

*Your Daughter, Trivinia Kysis-Hammerton,  
Outlaw Princess, Loyal Daughter of Numerath  
and Heir to Helmsvale*

## SARGOLIA

### **To the Freemen of Sargolia,**

Please don't dismiss this as some demon scrawl because it's written in blood, for it's the only ink available to me. My tormentors have given me adequate supply of quill and parchment, but find it delightful that I have nothing save for my own blood to make mark with. Still, in the few hours each morning I live free of torment, condemning these words to parchment goes a long way to purge my mind of the terrible things I've witnessed.

Looking through the bars of a cage at a world gone mad gives one a unique perspective. My cage is special, gifted to me by my master, the Moragrim witch known only as Witherwind. It is a cage fashioned from bones; bones of my friends, bones of my family, fused together with dark magic.

Despite being locked in a cage for nigh on ten years, I have seen more of the world than I thought possible. Travel might have once filled me with delight, but with each new place I visit, I bring with me death, despair, slaughter, and torment. Each time the Defiled march, they carry me at the fore of their vanguard, borne





aloft in my cage and hoisted high by a giant of a creature. I am their banner, their symbol of woe, their message to all Aegeron that all before them will one day be enslaved.

I hail from Beggar's Bluff, the southernmost of Sargolia's cities and possibly the oldest in all of Aegeron. It is a city that is carved out of the very mountain itself, a city that not even the Defiled and the breaking of the world could destroy. From a distance its beauty is a sight to behold despite that it is now a hellish place, home to all manner of brutish creatures. Facing southeast, the city's seven great terraces blaze with the warmth of the rising sun. Those of us that survive look forward to the coming of the morn, for the Defiled, while it does them no harm, have no love of the rising sun, and keep mostly to their lairs deep in the mountain. It is only when the sun has moved fully above the horizon does the city come to life. With the sun's shadow cast, the great stairway that leads from the base of the mountain rings to the sound of marching troops and the cry of whipped slaves connected to heavy chain that runs for miles in length.

The seven terraces of the city are carved from the mountain, each one named after a king of old that once warred over it dominion. High above, on a crag of ancient rock stands the source of all Aegeron's woes. It is a place where lovers once wed, where children celebrated name day, and where kings were crowned. It is the Slaughterman's Gate. It is from here the forces of Hell first set foot on Aegeron and descended like locusts on Beggar's Bluff.

Slaughterman's Gate is still firmly under the control of the Moragrim and the Defiled. Sometimes it appears as if all Hell continues to spew from the gate into the city, their number so great the slaves work night on day carving new space from the mountain to contain them. It is only a matter of time before they are unleashed, but be assured I will be at the fore to bear witness.

Beyond Beggar's Bluff to the south is the Valley of the Seven Kings. It is a place of great beauty and one that has been contested for centuries with the lords of Numarath. It is a place where blood is spilt over ancient hatreds and inherited birthright. I have had the misfortune of visiting the valley several times as the Moragrim tried to assert their control. Currently ownership of the valley is being contested by five factions, each one led by one of the late Lord Kostervald's sons.

Lord Kostervald was once lord of the Dagger Lands, a large territory in southern Sargolia that stretched from Raven's Rest south to Beggar's Bluff. He conspired with the Moragrim and met his end unexpectedly at the hands of the Defiled when he marched to Sargolia's far north against Lord Barricus Mor in his stronghold of Gorgon's Gate.

On learning of his death, Lord Kostervald's sons, who did not share his vision for Hell on Aegeron, turned on the Defiled in Beggar's Bluff. By all accounts they almost took the city, but their valor came to nothing when they could not agree on which of them was the rightful heir. Divided, they were pushed from the city into the Valley of the Seven Kings where they have made war on each other ever since.

I was at the head of Lord Kostervald's forces when the Defiled turned on them. To this day I still awake in my cage trembling in terror, unable to purge my mind of the sound of the rabid cries of the Defiled. They had been promised blood and what they found at Gorgon's Gate was an abandoned city. Lord Mor had the foresight to empty the city. Denied their reward, the Defiled, without thought or command, turned on their allies. Thousands died before Witherwind's commander Malpax Vilerod and his scourge lords could bring their forces under control. Those of Kostervald's forces that survived fled into the forested hills. Today Gorgon's Gate is still an abandoned city, at best providing temporary shelter for thieves and bandits; at worst harboring unknown horrors that now call it home.

The debacle at Gorgon's Gate destroyed whatever plan the Moragrim had for the conquest of Sargolia. Their forces lingered as they decided where they would next march. Beyond Gorgon's Gate to the north was the Great Cleft, a mostly unpopulated mountainous ridge running the breadth of Aegeron where it meets the Smokey Mountains, forming a natural border between Sargolia and Aradan. To the west lay the old capital Sargol—an ancient city that had been abandoned long before the borders of Sargolia are where they are today. Beyond that there were only smaller towns and trading posts dotted along the coast and the banks of the Steelsnake River. After the breaking of the world one of these river trading posts would grow to become Scarport when the land for a hundred miles beyond it fell into the sea, forming what is now called The Gullet.



Nearly a month from the events at Gorgon's Gate, and while the rest of Aegeron was burning, the Moragrim moved their forces east, marching on Port Merrytide. It was the most grueling journey I could have imagined, and it took its toll on the Defiled. Those that displayed any sign of weakness were slain least they slowed the pace, but eventually the Defiled lost any fear they had of their scourge lords and in increasing numbers they deserted. It wasn't until the Moragrim's forces stumbled across a large town hidden by the wooded hills and sated their blood lust that they became a fighting force once again. By then, however, they had lost half their number to attrition.

With the fall of Raven's Rest and the abandonment of Gorgon's Gate, Port Merrytide had become the de facto capital of Sargolia. With the death of Lord Kostervald, lord Warrick assumed the crown. In a bold move the new king met the forces of the Moragrim in the hills, beyond the city. The slaughter on both sides was terrible and the king made his last stand at what has become known as the Battle at Bucher's Hill. The Moragrim defeated their foe in the field, but such was their loss they could no longer press their campaign.

For hours the rage of the Witherwind knew no bounds, and I was sure my end was near. If the butchery around us was not enough she executed the scourge lords, which was enough to put the few remaining Defiled to flight. To this day the Defiled roam the forested hills in small murderous bands and the forces of Queen Warrick hunt them down.

I am glad to say I did not get to see Port Merrytide up close, but from the distance its white walls blazed in the sunlight and the Neversea glistened behind it. A large fleet of ships sat in its harbor, their captains no doubt eager to know the outcome of the battle.

The city is built on the side of a steep hill, and from the distance the white buildings appear to be stacked on top of one another. At the pinnacle of the hill stood the royal palace, its green glazed roof tiles shimmering in the sunlight, its banners stiff in the wind. To this day Port Merrytide remains the one of the few places in Aegeron the Defiled have been unable to reach.

I thought the journey from Beggar's Bluff arduous, but what was to follow was a torturous feat of endurance leaving few alive at journey's end. An army once numbering in the

tens of thousands had been reduced to less than one hundred. The weather had turned, and food was scarce. The first to succumb was my bearer, for the small band could barely find enough food to line their own stomachs, let alone a beast I had witnessed eating a sheep as if it were a snack. I felt sadness for the creature I had first thought to be a demon. During the journey I had learned it was also a slave, it was a creature from a conquered world beyond Aegeron and perhaps the last of its kind.

With my bearer gone, the Witherwind released me from my cage. Using her magic, the bars of the cage became runners, and I became her beast of burden as I pulled her across the frozen ground. As our number shrank we became the hunted. The Defiled that had deserted during the march hounded us as we retraced our steps through what were now their hunting grounds. How long the journey took, I care not to remember, but only twelve remained when we reached the now infamous mountain retreat of Raven's Rest.

Raven's Rest, the place where it all started, where the accursed gates were first opened on Aegeron, and where the Netherguard fled leaving the people to face Hell's wrath.

I wasn't sure what I had expected the settlement to look like, but it was breathtaking.

The settlement at Raven's Rest is perched precariously on the tallest of a series of monolithic shards of rock, each rising out of the surrounding hills. The road to the top is steep and winding. The final leg of the journey is by windlass and platform through a series of vertical chutes known as the three chimneys. Once at the top it's just a short walk down to the settlement through a beautiful, wind worn gully known as Braggart's Demise.

I was expecting to see buildings of stone built on a plateau, but there was no plateau. Instead, the buildings quaint, mostly wood constructions, are built on an expansive irregular rocky slope that gently rises for hundreds of yards until it succumbs to a series of tall, needle-like shards. So high are these rock formations that they have snow at their peaks almost all year round. At their base is the only building constructed entirely of stone. This large, grey stone building was home to the original settlers of Raven's Rest, an order of monks who sought solitude from the world. Later it became the headquarters of the Netherguard.



The settlement straddles a small but fast flowing river that widens just before it descends from the cliff's edge into a mist of its own making. Space is at a premium and many buildings hang precariously over the cliff's edge. Some are held in place by angular struts and others by the apparent will of the gods.

Shortly after my arrival I was forced back into my cage, where at least for a few precious days I was fed and left unmolested. However, it wasn't long before my torment resumed. I was taken to watch a special display the Moragrim had put on to entertain the Defiled. I was led along a beautifully carved veranda that overlooked the beautiful tiles roofs and offered a perfect view of the falls.

Gathered along the edge of the falls were thousands of the Defiled, jeering. In front of them, trussed together in pairs were family members: mothers and sons, fathers and daughters, husbands and wives. Each pair were told to fight to the death, and the survivor would be saved. If not, both would be thrown from the falls. I have never seen such wanton cruelty, nor felt so much pride. Only once did one of those partnered kill the other, and that was an act of mercy. Then the sky lit up, a brief but bright flash on the horizon to the north. Moments later the earth began to shake. The shaking lasted almost a minute until it stopped. There was silence.

I could feel a sense of relief, the collective intake of breath, even from the Defiled. Seconds later a huge scab of rock fell away taking almost every one of the butchers to their deaths, Malpax Vilerod was among them.

Shortly after the ending of the world the Defiled abandoned Raven's Rest, as did my tormentor. I was taken through the gate and into the netherworld; it is a place of madness. I cannot recount what I witnessed, but mercifully the journey to Beggar's Bluff was short.

I have been on many journeys since, each time at the head of an army, death following in my wake. Should you see a mighty host in the horizon take strength, for the Defiled can be defeated. Should you see a giant of a creature carry aloft an old man in a cage, have mercy, take sight of him down the quarrels length, and let your aim be true.

*Marketh Bywater, Herald of Woe, Doom bringer of Aegeron*

**SUNDANAR**

***Black Kine, Red Warren West, Free City of Zargal***

Commander,

At last, good news, something we have been short of at late in these dark times. With the help of resistance fighters from the other Warrens, I have made contact with the Trolls





in the stinking realm of Urzal's Kingdom to the north of Zargal.

It has always been known to our hunters that there are two distinct species of Trolls in the swamplands of Sundanar, but there is much more to this than at first meets the eye. As you know most of the roadways connecting the towns and cities of the swamplands are built as connecting bridges between what the Trolls call "Skirra", in their own tongue; outcroppings of ancient rock that rise out of the fetid waters of the swamp.

It is under these bridges that the feral Trolls often make their lairs, and indeed the source of the dark tales we would tell our children about them, until the Defiled came that is. I have learned it is not the bridges themselves the Trolls have a fascination with, but the Skirra, but I will get to that part later. The fascinating thing about the feral Trolls, or "Vorska" in the Troll language, is that they are one in the same species.

When a Troll goes through the change into adulthood, it is not a gradual process over the course of several years as with a human child. Rather, the Troll child is struck down with the "Vorgen Hex" or what we call swamp fever, and in the space of just few hours goes through the change into adulthood.

I have learned that many do not survive this short but painful period of their lives and of those that do, nearly half lose their sense of self and become nothing more than wild

vicious beasts. It is shortly after the Vorgen Hex that the Vorska become so dangerous, their accelerated growth consuming them with a madness that requires them to constantly feed. At the first sign that a child is succumbing to the Vorgen Hex its parents carry it out into the swamp where it quickly learns to fend for itself or perishes. It is for this reason the swamp is such a dangerous place.

Those whose minds survive the Vorgen Hex intact become the "Yiska." Please don't make the mistake of thinking the Yiska are any less dangerous than the Vorska, for that would be fatal conclusion to reach. The Yiska, while smaller than their feral brothers and sisters make up for any danger deficiency by learning to wield weapons with a skill that would put many of our own warriors to shame.

The Yiska live in small, tight knit communities that pledge their allegiance to one of the larger kingdoms, Urzal's Kingdom in the north, Virk's Kingdom to the South, or Krasak's Kingdom to the west. Stroka's Kingdom in the east no longer exists since the breaking of the world when the swamplands were claimed by the sea. We have always thought these kingdoms to be nothing more than territorial regions bearing an ancient name, for no one has ever seen Krasak, Urzal, or Virk, and according to our records the names of these kingdoms have not changed in millennia. I do not therefore exaggerate when I say I consider myself blessed to have met the great Urzal himself.



Troll kings are as ancient as they are large, Urzal, if my translation is correct, is the oldest and claims to be over 3000 years of age. These creatures are so huge that even when hunched over they stand at nearly twenty feet in height. I couldn't even begin to estimate how much they might weigh. The Troll kings, and indeed queens, for Virk is female, spend much of their solitary lives submerged beneath the waters in the Great Swamp, which explains why they are never seen.

Not only are these massive Trolls of the same species as the others, but they have some natural affinity with the Vorska. While I was in the presence of Urzal there were a dozen of the creatures curled peacefully by his feet, content, like hunting dogs before their lord's hearth. When I asked why the Vorska choose to lair under the bridges rather than deep in the swamp like the others, there was a sudden silence, and I sensed I had made a cultural faux pas. After an uncomfortable period of time Urzal spoke to me directly. Not only did I hear his words, but I saw the things he had seen, or at least the things he wanted me to via some form of telepathy.

I still don't entirely understand what I witnessed, but these Trolls don't grow as large as they do by normal means. During violent thunderstorms they leave the safety of the deepest parts of the swamp to seek higher ground. Here they stretch to their full height, their great arms raised to the sky in an attempt to call down a lightning strike. They believe that to be touched by lightning is to be touched by creation itself.

It is the lightning that is the reason for their longevity, their great size, and gives them their psychic ability, and it is the lightning that eventually kills them.

I'm unsure why on the rare occasion that the lightning kills them, but it is not instantaneous. When this happens the Troll knows their time is coming to an end and they spend their last few hours wandering the swamp before hunching over and swiftly turning to stone. It is these stones the Trolls call Skirra and on which our bridges are built.

Even after death these large stones continue to hold some kind of attraction to the Vorska, something about them calms the madness that drives their bestial rage. This is why we are in constant conflict with the Trolls, we build our bridges on the one place the Vorska can live at

peace, and we build our cities on the warrens, the high ground used by the Troll kings to call lightning from the sky.

Despite our differences the Trolls have decided to aid our cause, for they despise the Defiled. There are of course conditions attached, but I think you will find them palatable. The main demand is that once Zargal has fallen, the Moragrim, Tiberion, his personal bodyguard, the Hunters of the Mark, and any of their cronies that have taken Tiberion's mark are to be given free passage into the swamp, for the Trolls want their sport with them.

With the Trolls to guide us we can marshal our strength from across Sundanar before marching in force against Zargal, and the traitor Tiberion Thorgan.

The greatest potential for recruits lies in the towns and cities on the edges of the Great Swamp. Few there have been as keen to brand themselves with Tiberion's mark, and I suspect many will join our cause. Our greatest hope lies in the potential alliances with the free cities of Highwarren in the west and Shatterhorn in the north. Most of the towns that lie within Felkin's Triangle have been for the most part abandoned and their people missing or taken refuge in other parts of Aegeron.

While the government of Shatterhorn has pledged allegiance to the traitor king in Zargal, they have stopped short of ordering the population to bear his mark. There are few Defiled in the city. Those that remain bolster the forces loyal to the government.

Highwarren, as you know, is already in a state of open rebellion. The city itself is in ruins, something I had not expected. When the Defiled first entered the city they became blood frenzied, running amok they butchered anyone they found in the streets. The garrison, ordered by Tiberion Thorgan to let the Defiled in unopposed, were sickened by the slaughter. They retaliated. Heavily outnumbered, they were driven back, corralled into the docks, which was then set ablaze. I look forward to the day we avenge such atrocities.

Only the eastern flank of Highwarren is situated within the Great Swamp. Felkin's Warren—named after the great explorer and Troll slayer Creze Felkin—is connected to the rest of the city via one of the grandest stone bridges in Aegeron. The bridge rises westward from the base of Sorcerer's Keep on the low





lying warren, rising to over 500 feet before splitting over Watcher's Rock and sweeping down to Saltwater Warren and the docks in the south of the city and rising higher still to the Highwarren, from whence the city takes its name.

The King's Keep on Highwarren overlooks the entire city and has a commanding view of the entire length of the Vorgengriv. It was surprising to learn that King's Keep has been under siege by the free forces of Highwarren for nearly three years and is expected to be taken within the year. The constant fighting has whittled down the number of Defiled defending the keep and they have been unable to reinforce as the Highwarren is further from a gate than any other city in Aegeron. Once the Defiled have been ousted the free forces of Highwarren will march with us on Zargal.

The resistance forces of Zargal only await the word. They are keener than ever to strike a decisive blow against the Moragrim and the Defiled. I have visited the cells in all the warrens in the city and they are both prepared and committed. This will be bloody work commander. The Defiled remain in the city in great numbers, at least in legion strength, though the city is large. The Moragrim also have significant numbers, but I've been assured volunteers from the Netherguard will be assigned that particular task.

As per your orders I have designated teams to take each of Zargal's 300 bridges. Forces assigned to key bridges will each be bolstered by a company of Trolls. Bridges are their specialty after all. There are a few targets that need to be disrupted prior to any assault. The most obvious of these is the Market of Souls.

The blood traders, vile traitors that they are, get rich while the poor slowly sell their souls one drop at a time to the Defiled in exchange for power. It is common knowledge that blood is sold in units known as tears of heaven, small, teardrop shaped phials imbued with enough magic to preserve the blood indefinitely. A long time we have been seeking the source of these phials to put an end to their makers. It therefore came as a shock when I discovered that the tears of heaven are just that.

As chance had it I found myself in the company of a scholar from the realm of Markhan. There were few subjects he had no knowledge of. I casually dropped the subject of the tears of heaven into our conversation. He told me that at the breaking of the world the sky was filled molten rock torn from the earth and hurled into sky from the force of impact on the plains of Aradan. The molten rock cooled as it fell from the heavens forming these hollow teardrop shaped beads.

The plains of Aegeron are littered with them. The scholar believes that these beads are the

remains of the Shimmering Stone, the largest gate in Aegeron, which was originally located in the northeast region of Markhan, in the new sea-filled trench we call the Gullet. The great keep of Tiberion Thorgan will be the greatest challenge. Even before the city had outer walls, it repulsed determined attacks from the Trolls and gave refuge to the population. I don't know what plans exist to scale its high towers and battlements, but the great moat is now infested with terrible things summoned by the Moragrim and in its dungeons and sewers lurk the results of their hellish experiments. Some say the keep is no longer guarded by the living and that even Tiberion Thorgan himself has become some undead abomination lording over the dead legions that lurk unseen behind the keep's black walls.

As strong as their numbers are, the Defiled have little hope of reinforcement. When they marched on Zargal their legions emerged via the Anvil, the great stone gate in Stroka's Kingdom. Whether the gate remains open is a matter of debate, however, it is now submerged as is the land around it for hundreds of miles. Only one task remains—I must take the mark of the bloody foot and infiltrate the keep of Tiberion Thorgan.

Commander,

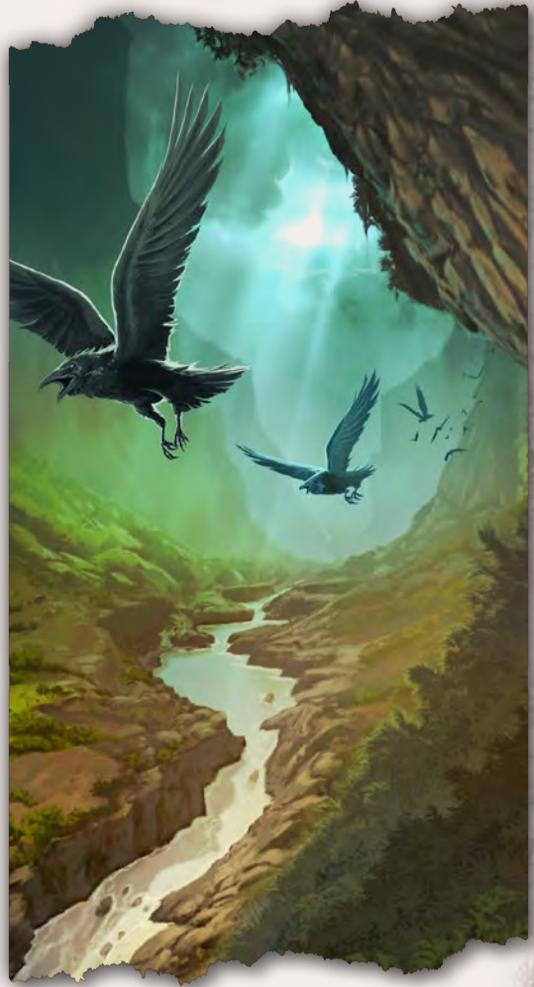
Until such times as the light finds a chink in the darkness, Sundanar Resists!

*Grey Wolf, Green Warren East, Free City of Zargal*

## **THE DARKENED WILD**

There is one place in Aegeron whose name never fails to conjure the horrors that lurk in its depths, a place that fills my heart with dread, the Darkened Wild. It is a place that breeds fear in the mind, sows terrible thoughts and harvests terror. Those that dare to tread its darkened paths should know it will consume a measure of their soul, possibly changing them forever in ways they cannot begin to imagine. This was the fate that awaited my husband, Horadan Doombringer. Tortured by the Defiled, warped by the foul magicks of the Moragrim, he finally succumbed to the darkness, embracing it and becoming one with it.

It was long believed the Darkened Wild was place that existed only in dark tales, none of us truly believing it real until Horadan returned, his proof the delirious ravings of a madman



that made little sense. It was a place of monstrosities, of creatures once human twisted into loathsome monsters. Were these humans our brethren? Were they taken there as slaves by the Defiled or the Moragrim, or did they sail from the shores of Kotarra to settle there, unaware of the horrors that awaited them? Despite what my husband had become, I had to know the truth, for all humans are bonded by our race. The Netherguard had failed humanity once and I was determined they would not fail a second time.

We stepped into the Darkened Wild and marched north; a company of ten Netherguard, brave men and women hardened by the war against the Defiled. When we reached the coast of Kotarra, we were surprised to find paths leading into the frigid waters, not below the waves, but on top of them! I'll never forget the experience of walking across the mist-shrouded water, of not knowing whether or not the

Netherworld would somehow spew us into the raging seas. In the back of my mind, however, I knew it could be done because my husband did it first. I can only imagine what that first trek must have been like, not knowing whether or not the journey would end on land. Horadan was always the brave one, his men would have followed him to the gates of the Mute Citadel itself if he asked them. So I took heart in that, and after three days we side-stepped out of the Netherworld, and made camp on the shores of the Darkened Wild.

That first night was filled with excitement. I must confess I was giddy at the thought of exploring this new world we had found. What strange creatures might we find? Were the Defiled still here? Nothing I saw that first night gave us any indication. There was a tense undercurrent to our discussions. An immense forest lay before us. Old, foreboding, it stood daring us to penetrate its secrets. Some wanted to stay on the shore and scout it before moving inland, while most argued we should seek the cover of the woods and find a place to establish a base camp, before we went any further. After listening to the pros and cons of each course of action, I decided we would move inland and find a suitable place to camp.

After half a day's march, we came to a swift-moving stream and decided to make our camp in a nearby hollow which offered a small measure of concealment from the prying eyes of someone or something we were sure had been following us all morning. The attitude of the company was somber. We could feel them out there in the forest, watching. Whatever the creatures were, they weren't demons. Those would have fell on us as soon as they found us. They appeared at dusk, small rodent-like creatures standing on their hind legs, some with crude armor made from leather, others with nothing more than ragged garments. Most were armed with long daggers and short bows. My people drew weapons, and would have attacked them, but I ordered them to wait. These creatures could have attacked us at any time during our trek, but for some reason they didn't. Just as I was about to step forward, their line parted, and three of the creatures moved into the camp.

They stood slightly taller than the others, each wearing leather armor reinforced with bones. Skulls of what looked to be large birds

hung from belts around their waists. They barked rapid-fire words at us, some of which I understood, many of which sailed past me like whizzing arrows. But one struck, landing loud and heavy, and that was "Moragrim". At the sound of it I spat and drew my blade without thinking, but rather than the skirmish I expected, the creatures seemed to come to a realization, took a step back, and bade me to calm down.

Their speech was rough, but now that we had all calmed down their words came slower, and I realized I knew more words than not. After a few hours of conversation I found I no longer had trouble discerning their meaning, much like spending time around those with thick accents from the North. The tall one who had spoken introduced herself as Scout Ghen'ferlen'telet. I imitated the others in her band and just called her Scout.

Scout offered to take us back to a place called the Winding Warren and I accepted without hesitation. The thought of sleeping surrounded by walls was a comforting one, even if those walls were controlled by potential enemies. My men agreed. We had yet to be attacked by anything during the night, but we were all anxious and ragged nonetheless. It is difficult to describe how uneasy sleeping in the Darkened Wild makes you. On the trip there I noticed Scout trekking a wide berth around a grove of trees with a thick yellow fungus growing on them, and beyond them the stuff covered branches and the ground. Scout saw my curious gaze and simply shook her head. "The Silent Groves... a bad place," was all she would say on the subject.

I'm not certain what I expected from the warren, but the reality looked like a chaotic log fall. Less a fortress and more some kind of natural disaster. Scout led us into a tight opening with sharpened stakes on either side. She and her people moved swiftly through the constricted passages while my men and I could barely squirm forward in armor. I came to the grim realization that if she desired, Scout could turn back, and slit my throat and there would be little I could do to stop her. To root these creatures out, a larger opponent would need siege equipment to tear away entire tree trunks, and who knows what mischief the defenders could wreak against any attempt. Perhaps fire, but I noted much dirt, bone, and a sticky substance in the construction that I suspect would be quite resistant to flames.



Once we had crawled some distance the passage opened slightly, the floor dropped, and the roof raised. Ragged cloth and leather lined the area, and the result was surprisingly warm and comfortable. We were greeted suspiciously, but grudgingly accepted after Scout plead our case. Once the warren began to relax we could hear their young children scurrying about, playing some strange game of hiding and striking with each other. Eventually we became props for the game, to the temporary horror and eventual delight of the adults.

That evening we were fed, meager offerings, but I believe it was a sumptuous feast by our hosts' standards, and we were introduced to the warren's Elder—Nehen'ghet'ghefet. It was she

who introduced us properly to the Riva, or the Kin as they call themselves. Elder Nehen shared stories passed down to her of the human-led culling long ago, which drove the Kin here away from further persecution. When I asked of the Defiled she told me of imps invading warrens, dragging screaming Kin away to some dread fate none of us cared to speculate about.

Scout added that this wasn't a new situation for them. There were two other tribes that made their home in the Wilds. The Ulfang, which the Kin also called the Hunters, were large and powerful lupines who mostly left the Kin to themselves. The Kin seemed to regard them with a mixture of distant respect and fear. The Terrock, on the other hand, were despised by all. We heard tales of their hunting parties taking Kin as they foraged outside the warrens, and dark tales of abuse and slavery. When I inquired about the appearance of Terrock Scout proudly pointed to the beaked skulls she wore on her belt, a fairly unique accessory among her kind.

For my part, I explained the progression of the war across the human lands, and our intention to ally with any willing and able to fight back against the scourge. The Kin struck me as timid by nature, but many such as Scout had the fiery resolve reserved for normally peaceful beings pushed to the edge of tolerance. She and a few volunteers offered to guide us to the Ulfang, and even the hated Terrock. So decided, we turned in for the night, and I confess despite the foul smell of the surroundings it was the first easy sleep I had experienced in the Wilds.

The next day we set off towards the nearest of the Ulfang settlements, which Scout called the Timberland Dens. Most of the journey was of the uneventful sort, thanks to Scout's familiarity with the area. We skirted the Digesting Bog, which true to its name smelled of bile and bubbled malevolently. She mentioned the Falling Snake Fens were nearby, and if the name is representative then I am grateful we did not visit. One other strange feature we passed was a solitary stone tower, covered in carved runes of some tongue I didn't recognize. Scout called it the Varg Carin, and claimed it was a relic of their ancient ancestors. One of the three sides had a rodent image, one a wolf, and one a hawk, so it seemed likely. The third side was smooth and blank. When I asked about it Scout simply shrugged and admitted not even the Elders knew what the thing's original purpose was.



Night time amplified the strange sounds of the forest, and I was interested to see that the Kin were just as on edge as we, but still the attack we all dreaded never materialized.

On the third day we heard sounds of battle, and rushed towards them. It was a chaotic skirmish between a mighty Goremoth and what looked like seven Ulfang. An eighth lay wounded at the feet of the Defiled giant, likely the reason the others stayed to fight. This was a plight that I could understand, and truly the reason we had come. With a cry I cast a spell, hurling a bolt of lightning at the monster, my men just steps behind me. To her credit, Scout and her band joined in the attack as well. I'm not sure whether the Goremoth or the Ulfang were more surprised at the turn of events, but through weight of numbers we downed the beast without further casualties.

Both the Ulfang and the Kin seemed impressed with what we, or more specifically our weapons—and my magic—were capable of when fighting the Defiled. We introduced ourselves and our purpose as the Ulfang set about making a trestle for their wounded man, who it turned out was the leader of their pack. Or co-leader, more correctly. His mate Atana thanked us, and led us back to the dens, and introduced us to the sentries as honored guests.

The dens were a complex of caves dug into the hills in the eastern region of the Darkened Wild, some shallow dwellings, while others ran deep, some even linking up with other cave systems. We were greeted with respect and gratitude by those who were clearly friends of Atana's mate and had heard what we did, but also with barely disguised hatred from others who knew of humans only from tales of the Culling. Scout and her band they hardly acknowledged at all.

There were a collection of different packs in the den. Each pack was technically a family at its core, but close friends seemed to count as well. We explained our purpose to the assemblage of Ulfang. Our battle with the Goremoth definitely counted in our favor, but more than that I tried as best I could to describe the process by which our cold iron blades were forged. They had a smith among them, though he generally had no need to forge weapons.

Still, he thought with some experimenting he might be able to create claws or punching daggers that would assist the packs greatly when facing demons. Atana seemed suspicious that I

might share such tactical information without a cost attached. I told her every Defiled destroyed was payment enough, and the situation was too dire to hold anything back from potential allies. It turned out this resonated with the Ulfang even more than our joining in battle, and they pledged to support any effort we took against the Defiled.

It turned out the Ulfang hated the Terrock as much as Riva did, and they also believed at least some of the Terrock had colluded with the Defiled. This gave me great pause, but I decided I should still treat with them myself, just in case. Atana wished to stay until her mate recovered, but her second Shakpat and a few of his pack mates accompanied us, along with Scout and her Kin.

Visiting the Terrock involved a harrowing trek up into the jagged Thunder Mountains of the northern wilds, specifically Scrag Peak where the Terrock's Eyrie was said to be. We had to cross the Pitch River on a frayed rope span. True to its name it didn't look like water below us, but a slow moving bubbling flow with occasional spurts of flame. From there we climbed ladders carved into the stone near a place called Wall Town.

According to Shakpat there was a small town cut into the rock faces, but it lay long abandoned. From there on it was all thin mountain trails with steep or sheer drops. My trusted armor felt like an anchor dragging me towards the precarious ledges. Scout now felt friendly enough to laugh at my unease, and soon enough Shakpat joined her in good natured mirth at my and my men's predicament and providing a helping hand when one was needed.

As we climbed I gained a better view on the Darkened Wild below. Most of it was unbroken treetop mostly, healthy, winter green of our forests, though some areas were a darker, sickly green that choked the life below. Tracts of bog spread out from the Pitch, and in one such opening I could see ruins, and a large, still intact temple. Was that where Horadan had ventured? Could that be where the fell rituals that brought the Defiled here were performed? When I wondered such aloud our guides both looked pensive, and told me that was a forbidden place, and that now the Defiled stalked there.

We never reached the Eyries towards the top, but were met by a contingent of Terrock a few days into our trek. I gave them my well-rehearsed tale, and they readily agreed to join our coalition. Still, there was something about their



words that rang hollow. I don't know what it was. A restrained arrogance in their tone, or perhaps it was the predatory way they looked at Scout, or their lack of reaction to her belt. Whatever it was it gnawed at me on the trip back down, and I asked the Kin to move in advance of the main party in case some ambush awaited us on the way down.

Scout returned at a run with winged Wracklings behind her, and described a large body of troops moving up the trail led by what sounded like it must be a Memnoch. Fighting seemed hopeless so we committed to a desperate plan, throwing ourselves down the steep cliff and tumbling towards the rocky streams below. Broken and bruised, we were forced to confront those advanced Wracklings, but even in our state we bested them and managed to slip past the Defiled and back into the woods.

We moved down to cross the Pitch closer to where it spread out into the bog, a risky move, but less hazardous than facing a Memnoch without support. It was shallow, but stung and stuck to exposed flesh, exacerbating the wounds we suffered from our plunge. Once across we came to a decision. Our guides would return to their homes to tell the news, and we would make for the Netherworld to bring back any help we could. We were near that temple, and I was sorely tempted to seek it, but cooler heads reminded me that the rest of the Netherguard would know nothing at all if we didn't return.

So we plowed back towards the forest's edge, as fast as our injuries allowed. The forest felt louder and darker without the Varg accompanying us. Our cuts festered, and after a day it seemed none of us could catch our breath. After a short and fitful sleep we found that Averly had fallen asleep on watch, and we awoke to find him dead and completely drained of blood. No one had heard a thing. We force marched the rest of the way, feeling for all the world like the trees themselves were chasing us. I had never thought to find comfort in the pale paths of the Netherworld, but I did when we finally reached them, spent mentally and physically but at last on the path back to Aegeron.

The expedition was grueling, but at the very least we have found two allies in this cursed place. The Ulfang will make strong allies, and I suspect the Riva will be tenacious and effective, just not on the front lines. The Terrock I

mistrust. It could be coincidence that brought that Memnoch to us, or some Defiled scout saw us climbing the trails. But still, my own instinct rebels at trusting them. That plus the hatred of allies I have shed blood with make a strong case for keeping the Terrock at bay for now.

*—Garon Shadow Slayer, Lord Commander of the Netherguard*

## **TYGOSH**

**To Brevenna Sorrowblade, Netherguard Archivist,**

So let me be the first to admit it, Brevenna. The invasion of Aegeron simply didn't go to plan. There, it's done, I've said it. The Moragrim, those left of our number, with the exception of a few, continue to be blinded by the belief that all that has transpired was part of Malthaxion's grand plan. Well, it wasn't.

You may ask yourself why I continue to write these missives, with the Moragrim and the Netherguard sworn enemies. Well, the answer is simple. Few of the denizens of Hell regard recording the changes wrought by the passage of time as a worthwhile pursuit, and who can blame them?

The Defiled, and indeed many of the residents of Hell, are immortal, and the flow of time leaves an indelible mark on the very essence of their being. Most are not graced with the wit to recognize this however, or indeed to use it to their advantage. At best, most of the Defiled recognize the mark as a sixth sense, or a kind of unconscious knowledge about another entity or place. For a few, the mark of history is something they feel, understand, and learn to manipulate. To these few it is knowledge and knowledge, along with brute strength and malign intent brings power. Still, I digress...

You asked how your homeland of Tygosh has fared since the breaking of the world. The simple answer is that while the land itself remains largely unaltered compared to the rest of Aegeron, the people have suffered greatly. Not by the hands of the Defiled as the other peoples of Aegeron have, but by the fallout of the breaking of the world itself. As one of them, you know the people of Tygosh are mostly nomadic, rarely stopping in any one place long enough to call home. Indeed, your people lay claim to a large swath of Aegeron, a claim which has brought with it much conflict, and hence



the very reason for the construction of the fortress city known as Koren's Wall.

While the people of Tygosh were spared the cleansing fire, shielded by the Smokey Mountains, the great range that is the de facto border with Aradan, they were not spared the harsh winters that followed, nor from the debris that fell from the sky, poisoning their southern grazing lands and summer pastures. The resulting food shortages led to war and a wanton butchery that impressed even the Defiled.

Sickened by the atrocities they witnessed at the hands of their own people, some of the northern tribes took to the oceans to search for new lands in the east, your own tribe among them. I have no knowledge to impart regarding their fate.

In the years that followed, tribes amalgamated and slowly grew in strength as the summers once again grew longer and the poison washed from the earth. Now, nothing more than barbarians, the people of Tygosh march south past Betrayer's Gate and lay siege to the ruins of Koren's Wall.

In your youth you would have known the entrance to Betrayer's Gate as the Craggy Maw, a deep rocky gully running for several miles across the otherwise featureless grasslands of the Whispering Plains. At Maw's End stood the Mor Stone, a place of pilgrimage. It is from the Mor Stone that the Defiled emerged, using Craggy Maw to hide their legions, before marching on Koren's Wall. This place is now forsaken by your people who have named it Betrayer's Gate.

Until recently the people of Tygosh have had little direct conflict with the Defiled or their foot soldiers. At the time of the breaking of the world all the focus was on Koren's Wall. The fortress city continued to hold despite simultaneous attack from both sides of the mountain pass. When Galen Lightsworn fell, and the defenders of Koren's Wall broke, our moment of victory was denied by the hammer of the gods themselves.

First, the shockwave smashed all before it, blasting through the breaches in Koren's Wall, shearing off tower and parapet, and pulverizing the swollen ranks of the Defiled on the other side with the debris. The fire came next, a superheated wall of air glowing brighter than the summer sun, incinerating Defiled and defender alike. Tens of thousands died that day, the bones of the dead still littering the mountain pass and beyond.



Sorrowwind Pass, as it is now known, once again burns with the rage of war as your people throw themselves at what remains of the wall. As guardian of the pass it is my duty to drive them back, but the breach in the wall has never been repaired. All that stands in its place is a salient of rubble a hundred yards wide and only a fifth of the height of the surviving wall sections.

Ironically, the top of the salient is protected by the bones of the gargantuan Earthrender demons Malthaxion summoned to tear the walls down. These colossal carcasses, stripped of flesh are a wonder to behold, yet do little to deter the barbarians who pass through in great numbers, the Defiled and their scourge only able to hold back their numbers for so long. If it weren't for the Lords of Hell looking for a place to bloody their recruits, the wall would have fallen long ago.

Despite the size of the breach, Koren's Wall is an impressive, albeit post-apocalyptic, structure that continues to interdict Sorrowwind Pass. The main structure is still intact. The mighty keep and gatehouse is an indomitable structure so tall its top sits above the snowline even as late as mid spring. Despite the breach, the walls that still stand account for much of the living space of this fortress city.



Now home to the Defiled and their scourge, the city is as silent as a tomb when compared to before the war when tens of thousands wandered its corridors and bartered in its markets, and as the years have passed and maintenance nonexistent, nature has taken hold.

The walls are green with great fronds of hanging moss and climbing ivy, the court yards choked with weeds, many stunted by the poison that still lingers in the soil. Ravens, crows, and other carrion birds are now lords of the tallest towers, their skeletal structures devoid of their conical tiled roofs and glass windows.

The great aqueduct that drains water from Thunder Gorge deep in the Smokey Mountains now ends as a waterfall, emptying its icy water from the top of the wall as it plunges into the breach, cascading from the erratic outcroppings of the broken wall. A small lake has formed, and a river now flows west down the old trade road into the Badlands of central Aradan.

From the correct angle the breach allows a cross-section of the wall to be viewed, its internal structure and layers revealed to the elements, the acrid smoke of cooking fires venting from the occupied levels, and the ragged remains of tapestries and curtains blowing like pennants in the forlorn wind where dwellings and corridors within the wall were left hanging midair when the breach was opened.

The Smokey Mountains on the surface appear unfazed by the events of the breaking of the world and remain a stable bulwark between Aradan and Tygosh. Black Hammer Peak is perhaps the exception and has been erupting almost continuously. The peak continues to grow in height and its girth now swallowing some of its smaller neighbors.

Events beneath the surface have been much more dramatic. The ways of the Deep and the Dark have in many places collapsed, been flooded with water, filled with magma or toxic fume, and many of the mines that once produced Aegeron's ores and riches have become unstable. Once there were many routes through the Deep and the Dark allowing travel the length of the mountain range, all the way from the Koren's Wall to Wildman's Bay in the north.

I do feel for you on the loss of your homeland, I feel your pain; I can even taste its distinct flavor, even from such a distance. You see, the Moragrim are changed in ways you can only imagine. Where I once would have inscribed such a message on the finest quality papyrus with ink produced from ancient oak, I now cut these words on living flesh with the razor quill plucked from the maw of a flenser, the blood welling from the cuts to form the words.

*Your friend always,  
Your enemy eternal,  
Aximar Madblade, Lord of Sorrowind Pass.*



# THE BOOK OF HELL

**W**HAT follows is an example of a fantasy version of Hell, which we tie to Aegeron. While our version of Hell is complete and ready to play, you should feel free to use any of the elements for your own campaigns.

## THE AUGUR

There is one figure in Hell even the demons will not touch. He is nameless and from a time beyond anything they can remember. His flesh is flayed, his feet bare and shredded, and no lids remain to cover his staring eyes. He has only stumps below his elbows, some whisper the cost of scribing the original *Codex Infernus*. Interlopers into Hell may still encounter this cursed being, and hear his raspy warnings. He is known only as the Augur. You would do well to heed his words, should your travels set you on the path to Hell.

*Once I sailed the dark currents of the Styx with no need for a Ferryman. Apart from everything, I witnessed the birth of many worlds, jewels such as Aegeron. I turned my back to a place you would call Heaven because I found something new. A scar, an infection festering in the dark spaces between the worlds. This place, this Hell. I had to know more, and I thought there was no price too high to pay for knowledge. The folly of youth. So tell me, Interloper, what price can you pay to share my insight?*

—the Augur

## LOOKING DOWN ON THE PIT

Hell is a vast, polluted cleft in the Netherworld, the cold nothing between the worlds. It is a mire of despair and anguish with no seeming design other than to perpetuate and create more despair and anguish. And so Hell grows, and spreads, and may someday engulf worlds rather than just the void. Many have tried to

impose their will onto the pit, to tap its power. Eventually they all fail. The kingdoms that stand now are built on the remains of many that came before. But some things remain the same, and you would do well to note them.

## AGONY

If you can hurt a thing, you have power over that thing. Inflicting pain is power. Heat and flame are byproducts of souls in torment. Most believe that by gaining power they will hurt less, but that isn't true. The only solace for the Defiled is inflicting even greater misery on others. This cycle of torture and madness keeps the furnaces of Hell blazing, and always seeking more fuel.

## BLOOD

Blood has power here. Visitors here are called Interlopers, and the Defiled envy and hate them because they still possess their own blood. Blood is like life, and what blood the demons have is second hand, stolen or bartered for. The Defiled are greedy for blood, and will trade their stores to curry favor or procure whatever fell items or services their madness drives them to. If the Defiled can't just take your blood, they may barter for it. Be cautious with such deals, for once your last drop is gone you are damned.

## SOULS

Much like blood, the souls of the living give the Defiled power of a different sort; the power that comes from the domination of others. The only way to obtain a soul is to convince a mortal to give it freely, or to corrupt them to the point where they are forever damned. Once the soul is acquired, the demon may use it however it sees fit. Some use souls to create new demons, while others use it as a currency of sorts, selling them to the highest bidder.



# HELL

INCENDION

Pandemonium

The Breathless Palace

SPHYXIA

The Charnel Pools

The Gossamer Maze

The Pillar of Fire

KLEDZ

The Reaping Grounds

SLAUG

The Slaughterery

The Ashen Pit

GULA

The Meat Market

The Mute Citadel

BABZUG

DIS

Rhuem

The Gullet

ILDUS

DATANG

The Theater of Pain

FURIO

The Blade

The Proving Ground

The Gladiator Pits



2015







## A POUND OF FLESH

The Ferryman and many creatures in Hell drive hard bargains. What the Defiled are generally after is power over their victim, as much as they can get. Souls are the highest stakes, offering immortal servitude and suffering. Treasured items make good barter especially if there is magic or iron in them, or if their loss would cause pain to the giver. Favors are also popular, especially when there are direct consequences to not paying them back in time.

Many mortals don't realize the value their own blood carries, and it ends up thrown in with a soul. The cannier can trade their flesh and blood in smaller amounts, but this carries danger as well. When offering blood, roll Smarts against the demon's Spirit die. On a failure roll for Incapacitation. The bargain doesn't deal any Wounds, so a success just shows where the flesh and blood is coming from on the injury table but without lasting effect.

## ABANDON HOPE

There are many paths to Hell. Very few lead back out again. Even gods are loathe to enter the inferno lest they be taken by it and burn forever. Still, the brave, the arrogant, and the foolish will all play with fire.

## PORTALS

There are spells and rituals that let one travel to the Netherworld and the realms beyond it. Hell is one of those realms, and is especially treacherous. Arriving in Hell through a portal is relatively simple so long as you know your destination. There are many, and the Defiled are all too eager to barter knowledge of the portals to outsiders. Leaving is harder, Hell is greedy to keep the souls it has ensnared. Controlling portals is one of the things that separates a true Overfiend from a petty ruler within the inferno. Without a portal you enter Hell through the River Styx if you are alive, or come up through the Reaping Grounds after death has taken you.

## STYX

The deathly currents of the Styx wind through the Netherworld, touching all the realms. Hell is no exception. As harrowing as a trip down the black river to any destination is, it is even more excruciating in the vicinity of Hell. The flow slows and whirls into eddies and stagnant pools, and the lost things that lurk below press all too close to the surface. Ferryman navigate this turbulence with their accustomed impassiveness, but they charge dearly for passage either way.

Along the dark river there are piers, at least one for each world, and each with a bell. Cast a treasure into the flow, ring the bell, and a

Ferryman will come. I advise you to pay whatever price it names to carry you up or down the flow. You might try to navigate yourself with some discovered boat, but that is where Ferryman come from. And never, ever touch the chill viscid 'waters'. They will consume you, drain you of everything you could be. The lucky are dredged up on the shores of Hell by the (Memnoch), and those quivering forms warn the others that the Styx is no escape from torment.

## THE TOPOLOGY OF HELL

The borders of the abyss are not drawn on a map, and seldom remain fixed. There are distinct domains here, so long as the features of the land and the will of an Overfiend allow it. Until recently all of Hell bowed to a single sovereign, the Dreadlord Thaimoxx. Under him were the Overfiends, each the feudal governor of some part of Hell.

Thaimoxx kept these lesser demons in line through fear, indescribable violence, and by directing much of the inferno's energy into a singular goal: opening permanent portals to another world and ravaging it. Thaimoxx's reign had been so long and so unchallenged that many forgot there were Dreadlords before him. His machinations led to the opening of the portals to Aegeron. All of Hell gorged on the suffering and blood of this pristine world until the unthinkable happened. The invincible Dreadlord himself was slain, in the seat of his power at the Mute Citadel. Even I know not who could dare such a feat. But the aftershocks were savage and immediate. Where once Thaimoxx's fierce grip kept his thralls at bay, now they tore at one another like deranged beasts. Overfiends and



entire domains were slaughtered and fed to the fires. This chaos, the War of Bones, still rages all about us.

### FLAEGON: THE SHORES OF HELL

When wars are fought against Hell, the battles are fought on the shores of the Styx and the broken ground beyond. This is also where most Interlopers first arrive. Flaegon is ominous, but relatively quiet. Sentries watch for invading hosts, but small groups of Interlopers can move relatively unseen here. Once you step away from the numbing nothing of the Styx, the bitter, rotten smell is the first of many affronts to your senses.

#### LANDMARKS

The Ferryman's Dock stands here, a stone pier in crumbling disrepair. A silent iron bell rests at the end. Ringing it brings the Legion as well as the Ferryman. In the distance the Watch Towers of Phagion can be seen. In the ground between is the Mourning Field, the ghastly remains of the armies from other realms who have stormed Hell and lost. The Salt Road, said to be made from the tears of those who travel it, stretches from the dock to Hope's End in Phagion.

#### HAZARDS

Straying too close to the Styx is a danger itself. If you look into the black liquid you begin to see forms and find yourself reaching for them. They reach for you as well, and some of those forms are monstrous and very large. Soldiers slain on the fields of Hell are called the Fallen. They cannot stand or speak, but still feel their wounds for evermore. If disturbed they lash out in a frenzy at anything within reach, so tread carefully if you want to avoid using the Salt Road and enter Hell unnoticed.

#### DENIZENS

Enterprising Berathu from other regions may flit over the fields of the Fallen to try to fish souls from the Styx, dragging the misshapen and weeping remains back along the Salt Road if they succeed. Hellions, winged horrors who make their eyries in the steep walls of Hell, sometimes descend to gouge and tear at the Fallen or pluck up Interlopers attempting to gingerly step through them.

#### POLITICS

Flaegon is technically ruled by the Overfiend Blackfist from Phagion, but there is little to draw his attention unless invaders arrive. He mostly leaves the Fallen as they lay, a hampering barrier to any crusaders who arrive in force.

### PHAGION: THE DEVOURING WASTE

Beyond Flaegon is a barren expanse of sharp rock known as Phagion. Denizens just call it the Devouring Waste. Hell's legions march here, watching for enemies and fighting a slow battle with the waste itself. Dig deep enough into the rocks anywhere and you will find bones underneath.

#### LANDMARKS

Great iron Watch Towers dot the waste, each barely within sight of one another or the Styx. Each tower contains a portal ring and a garrison of the Legion. Hope's End is the largest of these towers, and the seat of Overfiend Blackfist. The Salt Road extends through Hope's End and out towards the Jagged Maw, and is the only road that remains stable. Smaller roads link each tower to another, but these are constantly being consumed by the ground, and work crews and whipping overseers are constantly dispatched to rebuild them. Tunnel openings pockmark the landscape, connecting to a great maze of caves and passages under the surface.

## THE ROADS OF HELL

There are roads through the wastes of the inferno, but apart from the Salt Road and trails in Phagion, adventurers are best off avoiding them. Distance is difficult to judge in Hell, and there are no sign posts or handy maps. Assume it takes 5 days of travel to reach an adjacent region by roads at standard pace, or  $2d6+2$  days if traveling off the beaten paths. Roll for an encounter each day on a road or in a city, or draw a card for each day off the roads and roll an encounter if a face card is drawn. If a joker is drawn roll for an encounter and don't count any travel progress for the day as the adventurers get lost in the hellscape. Flight halves the time needed, and a higher or lower pace affects it normally.



**HAZARDS**

It is easy to get turned around in the vastness of the waste. There are no mountains or stars to steer by. Only the spires of the Watch Towers make for consistent guideposts, and even those can be obscured by the smoke and haze of Hell. The rock in the region is shifting and malicious, forming barrier ridges or sudden drops that force travelers to make dangerous climbs or change their route and exacerbate the chances of becoming lost. The sharp stones will tear at any exposed flesh. When a sudden chasm opens underfoot, is it due to a collapsing tunnel, or the waste itself hoping to gorge on the unwary? Chancing the tunnels avoids the prying eyes of the watchtowers, but I wouldn't recommended walking into the mouth of Phagion.

**DENIZENS**

Blackfist currently controls some 60,000 Wracklings, the most common foot soldiers of Hell, and that horde is still growing. Each Watch Tower is filled with them, usually led by a Memnoch. Squads of Wracklings are often sent out to repair the tenuous roads or confront Interlopers spotted from the towers. Occasionally mounds of dreck rise up, and swarms of squat Rashak spew out to wreck roads, rend anything that moves, and then flee back underground with any baubles that caught their eye.

**POLITICS**

Before the fall of Dreadlord Thaimoxx, Phagion was in the grip of Sarcistrictor. It fumed at the presence of the Watch Towers and the legion, but had no choice but to yield to Thaimoxx's power. As soon as the War of Bones erupted a Legion Archfiend called Blackfist seized his opportunity to split from the main Legion, conscript the garrisons, and oust Sarcistrictor. Blackfist claims he's simply preparing for the continued assault on Ageron, but no Overfiend believes this. Blackfist has rebuffed any offer of alliance, and even stranger has held back from reprisals against outside attacks, leaving all to wonder at his true motivations. Meanwhile under his feet Sarcistrictor still plots to ascend and gain its revenge. Blackfist believes that Sarcistrictor is orchestrating the Rashak raids, but sees no purpose to them beyond petty revenge.

**YAGETH: THE JAGGED MAW**

Hot winds always blow across the craggy peaks of Yageth, producing a low constant moan as they whip through these sharp and jutting mountains ring the greater pit, and are sometimes called The Teeth by the Defiled. The peaks of the mountains are lost in the smoky sky of Hell, and a host of demons of all stripes prey on the unwary.

**LANDMARKS**

Monolith Peak is the largest and tallest mountain in the maw, its sides becoming vertical as it reaches up into the blackened sky, perhaps even piercing those inky clouds. Any hardy enough to make the ascent can gain a glimpse of the roof of Hell. Whether it is a stark void, craggy roof, or something else I cannot say. A strange sight here is the False Forest, row upon row of stone columns jutting from the ground like dead tree trunks. I

If they had a purpose, it is long forgotten. Many peaks erupt with ash and molten rock occasionally, but Mount Igna is constantly active, its magma flowing down over the rim into the greater pit below. The Foundry appears as like one of the peaks of Yageth on the surface, but inside is all infernal steel and forges. This is the fortress of Unita, and should be given a wide berth.



**HAZARDS**

The choking clouds that swirl above make ascending the peaks foolhardy. There is a palpable static charge throughout the Jagged Maw, which occasionally discharges as an intense lightning storm, especially in the vicinity of the False Forest. Do not tarry if a mountain rumbles, for lava is sure to follow soon.

**DENIZENS**

Wrackling deserters from the Devouring Wastes sometimes flee into the mountains, where they are either recruited by Gebruik or devastated by the dangers of the peaks. The valleys and crags are the hunting grounds of the foul, tentacled Mantid Horrors. Hell-Forged Golems, steel servants of The Masked One can sometimes be found patrolling for deserters or carrying out some unfathomable mission.

**POLITICS**

Unita, The Masked One, has long stood aloof from the politics of Hell. Most of her interactions with the other Overfiends are through her Memnoth major-domo Gebruik. So long as she remains confined to the Foundry, the Overfiends are content to ignore her.

**INCENDION: THE RING OF FIRE**

After passing through the Jagged Maw, a traveler is faced with the descent into the greater pit. Climbing down, most of these deeper regions are obscured by the fiery clouds which swirl above the pit. There are many paths down, all under the watchful eyes of Melek. Melek has power over the firestorm, and delights in unleashing it on those who will not pay his odious price, usually a child burned in sacrifice.

**LANDMARKS**

The switchbacks are the safest trail down, and are wide with stable footing. They are also the most watched route, and difficult to move across without gaining the attention of Melek or his minions. On a massive outcropping is the Pandemonium, an iron and brass fortress that overlooks the pit. The switchbacks pass directly under its shadow. On a more distant plateau is one of the curiosities of Hell, the Conflagration. The entire surface is aflame, and connected to everywhere in the realms where books are burned. If one's flesh is burned in this flame, they acquire some of that burned knowledge. So long



as you have an Injury from the flame, you keep a special bonus from the flames. Roll Smarts. If the roll aces, your Smarts die increases by one die type, otherwise increase any Knowledge Skill by one die type. If the Injury is not permanent, these benefits are lost when it is recovered.

**HAZARDS**

There is fire here, so much fire, and all of it at the command of Melek. At his whim the fiery clouds drift into the cliff sides and scour them of anything that could burn. Stone Hail rains down through the clouds as well, pelting the ground with rocks the size of fists.

**DENIZENS**

Unholy Flames are maddened Fire Elementals that were summoned and used in twisted rituals, and have been forever tainted. They prowl the mesa and cliffs, reporting anything they see to their master. Hellions make their nests and eyries in the cliffs, and fly away or duck inside when the flames draw too near. Such holes can provide cover from storms, but beware that they may be occupied.

**POLITICS**

Melek, the Horned Lord of Pandemonium is the undisputed Overfiend of the Ring of Fire. Also known as the holder of unholy flame, he demands a sacrifice of burned flesh from his worshippers and intruders. Melek has no desire

**THE BRIDGES OF HELL**

Lava flows cut across the landscape of Hell. Many of the Defiled have wings, and may simply fly over these obstacles. Those without this option must use a bridge. Draw a card. If the result is a club, the bridge buckles, and throws the characters into a lava flow below. Characters suffer 5d10 damage each turn, even if immune to fire damage. A successful Agility roll halves this damage.

for allies among the Overfiends, and bargains ruthlessly for passage even when it is in his best interest to allow troops to pass through. Because of this obstinacy he hasn't benefited much from the pillage of Aegeron, and he isn't powerful enough to ascend to Dreadlord on his own.

**DATANG: THE SORCEROUS RIFT**

Infernal sorcery splits the stone of Hell around it, and the massive cleft in the hellscape known as Datang was born of rituals foul on a grand scale. The huge fissure has steep dropping walls, and a hazy unnatural darkness lingers over the bottom. There is iron and steel to be found below, but also wild hemorrhaging magic. Most creatures luckless or desperate enough to descend Datang never emerge again.

**LANDMARKS**

The sides of Datang are arduous and riddled with the nests and tunnels of hellish beasts, and their dried waste clings to the crags. At the bottom, called the Craw, mixed in with the loose rocks and hidden in the darkness that shrouds the place are the treasures and metal of any who fell or were thrown there.

**HAZARDS**

The climb down is treacherous enough with its scarce handholds, rockslides, and the beasts that nest there. Worst of all, wild magic unexpectedly lashes out from below. Once at the bottom vision is obscured and footing is treacherous. Many who delve the rift never emerge, but their treasure remains for those bold enough to claim it.

**DENIZENS**

Hellions nest in eyries along the steep cliff sides and will harass any climbers. Many Rashak warrens honeycomb the sides, and a sudden swarm of the demonic beasts can put a swift end to any orderly descent.

**POLITICS**

Blackfist, Eriaxiel, and Scoria all claim ownership of Datang, but none seem interested in doing much with it. Every so often Rhuem is seen hovering over Datang, presumably for some wicked purpose.

**SLAUG**

The portals or the Styx is how Interlopers enter Hell, but the damned arrive another way. Damned souls are drawn out of the Netherworld, crushed and drowning, and left to wriggle their way up into Slaus. These newly born Defiled have bodies of meat, but septic ooze instead of blood. Whimpering and torn these Emergents must exhume themselves from the Well of Bones to reach the surface of Hell. Torturous instinct drives the Emergent



up, but once they surface their lot does not improve. Most are plucked up and carried to Gula, but some are taken to other masters or linger to rot and mutate within the bones. There is nothing for an Interloper in Slaug save for souls, or a glimpse of the fate that awaits them if they already tread the paths of evil.

### LANDMARKS

The Reaping Ground is a vast pit of fragmented bones and flesh. Ash rains lightly throughout the area covering bone and demon alike in a dull light grey. The bones descend for miles, and shift and scrape as bones are stacked into teetering piles by careless Reapers. The deepest section of the Well of Bones is called the Ashen Pit, where a layer of soot covers everything. The Tusks are massive bones that jut up from the pile, perhaps the ribs of some enormous beast or even the fingers of something even larger.

### HAZARDS

The furnace of Hell is especially evident to here, where new denizens first experience it. Each day the temperature forces a Vigor test, and those Incapacitated by the heat find their soul beginning to melt into the bone or stones of the abyss until they become a newly born demon, or at least part of one. Bonefalls are common, and the unwary can find themselves crushed by an avalanche of bone and suffocating on the ash.

### DENIZENS

Reapers from Gula swarm the Ashen Pit, and pick through the bones to find new souls for their terrible masters. If souls remain uncollected for too long they begin to fuse with one another and the bones to form an Edimmu, which lashes out at Reapers and Interlopers alike. Packs of Hatespawn rove the outer reaches and tear at any souls they find unattended. And most pathetic are the Emergent, lost souls with no purpose but to suffer, born in ash and terror with bodies fit for nothing except feeling pain and at the mercy of a place where mercy doesn't exist. Don't feel too bad for these wretches though, the crimes they committed in life were heavy indeed to pull them through the stuff of the Netherworld and push them out here, where they usually lay limp and catatonic waiting to be collected.

### POLITICS

All the Overfiends have a keen interest in the Reaping Grounds. Before the War of Bones, Slaug was sovereign and ruled by an Overfiend known as Kruxus. The massive Goremoths of Gula, driven by hunger quickly overwhelmed Kruxis' personal guards, and with Legion support from Furio he was dragged back, rent into pieces and devoured. Gula's regent is an uncharacteristically lucid Goremoth named Wermaggat. Wermaggat has three heads, and the two on either side whisper constantly to him. Thus far he's remained loyal to Gula and fended off any advances by the other Overfiends. So long as souls flow, none are willing to push the issue.

### GULA: ENDLESS CRAVING

Blood is rare and powerful in Hell, but meat is common. Emergent are covered in it, which is no doubt why the gluttons of Gula roused themselves to take the Reaping Grounds. Everywhere here in the pit, meat grows back, but always a little more twisted and rotten than it was before. The more of your meat that is tainted, the more you resemble a demon, until finally you are one.

Demon meat is insufferable, so fresh souls greatly desired to those who have the hunger. Gula itself is a contorted shanty-town of grates and ramshackle buildings, all sprawling out from a central hub called The Slaughterery. Consuming flesh seems to excite and accelerate the effects of hunger in Hell, and the area around the markets is so charged that both the regeneration of flesh and the gnawing hunger that accompanies it are accelerated.

### LANDMARKS

The outskirts of Gula are called the Sprawl, filled with lockers, hutches, heaps of refuse. The Meat Markets wind through the avenues, atop the iron grates that cover the Butcher Pits. If you must trade your Pound of Flesh for some special item, this is the place to do it. The pits below where tormented Emergent are continuously carved are connected to vile drains for the melted fat and waste. In the center stands The Slaughterery, Ibbilnaucht's debauched lair.

### HAZARDS

The cycle of hunger quickens the closer you get to the Slaughterery. See the Dining in Hell sidebar. The stench from the squalor is nearly unbearable to Interlopers.

**DINING IN HELL**

Any food supplies brought to Hell immediately become rotten and maggot infested. Technically no one in Hell needs to eat, and it is impossible to starve to death there. But Defiled and Interlopers alike still get hungry. Once each day make a Spirit test. If it succeeds you don't need to eat. You also heal 1 Wound, but the flesh that regrows is affected cosmetically, tainted and demonic in appearance.

If 2 wounds or injuries heal with tainted flesh, the character automatically gains the Ugly Hindrance. A success with a raise recovers a Wound without any apparent traces of corruption. Even injuries that normally can't heal may be recovered in this way, but the result always has an infernal appearance.

If the Spirit test fails take a level of Hunger fatigue. Hunger maxes out at 2 levels in Hell, so a hero cannot be Incapacitated by it. Eating reduces the fatigue level and recovers a Wound, but immediately forces another Spirit test and continues the cycle. Other forms of healing work normally, indulging in food just adds a new way to heal. In Gula this cycle is accelerated, forcing the Spirit test once an hour instead of once a day.



**DENIZENS**

Gula is the hub for the opportunists of Hell. Hornless Ones bargain, toady, and scavenge, forever scrambling to feed a craving that can never be satisfied. Goremoth enforce the Overfiend's will. Maggots are essentially harmless but found everywhere and on everything. Imps, crazed with famine but with nothing to trade may attack any Interlopers just because they look fresh.

**POLITICS**

Ibbilnaucht is the Overfiend of Gula. He rules as much with contracts as he does with force or temptation, and his arrogance in his own negotiation skills is legendary. If he is to fall, it will no doubt be through some loophole in his own carefully constructed pacts. Once the Butcher Pits have stripped everything they can from a soul, he trades what is left to the other Overfiends for a pittance, and so long as the soul trade still flows, the other Overfiends continue to suffer Ibbilnaucht's rule. The deepest hatred comes from his harem, who would pay any price for his destruction if it was offered. Ibbilnaucht also has concerns that Wermaggat, his regent in Slaug, is growing ever more independent and wily.



## FURIO

Battle always rages in the abyss, and the current War of Bones is more the exception than the rule. Only Thaimoxx seemed to be able to unleash that violence on other realms. But now that it has been done once, it is only a matter of time before another Dreadlord will do the same. At its heart, Furio is the battleground between two dreadful methodologies; The Disciples, and the Beasts. The Disciples worship control. The focus on the rigorous discipline of dealing mass death, and maintaining rigid order in the face of eternal torment. The Beasts on the other hand let it go. They give themselves over completely to the fury of battle, and for a time get lost in it. The infernal legion was founded by the Disciples and driven by their cold cunning, but have always depended on the power of the Beasts when iron meets flesh. Demons fight almost constantly. It doesn't diminish the torments of the inferno, but it does give the Defiled something else to think about for a time.

## LANDMARKS

Furio is pockmarked with walls, trenches, and battlements, many built for no discernable tactical purpose at all. Behind one such ring of walls is The Proving Ground, where raw, untried demons gather to fight for their place in the Legion. Applicants fight one another in pairs, the winner

gaining a place in Furio while the wretched remains of the loser are dragged to Gula or Ildus. There are tunnels throughout connecting various gladiator pits where demons pit themselves against captured creatures or one another for sport. The Blade is the central structure of the battlegrounds, a sharp and slender tower jutting up like a massive serrated longsword.

## HAZARDS

The biggest threat in Furio is standing out. Beasts pay no mind, but the strict Disciples will question any creature shirking or out of uniform. Interlopers may also find themselves conscripted, either fighting in the Proving Grounds or pulled into some ad-hoc war party being sent on a hasty mission. Rune Mines litter some areas, leftovers from conflicts between ancient factions. Barbed Mesh is popular, and is strung between walls. Disciples often force recruits to sprint through the mesh until they are cut and ragged.

## DENIZENS

Most of the demons found here are Wracklings and Memnoch, but Goremoth and Flesh Hoarders also have their places in the Legion. The brutal Koralach gladiators are unique to Furio unless they've been dispatched elsewhere to ply their deadly trade.

**POLITICS**

Scoria is technically the Overfiend of Furio, but his power is waning dangerously. He resides in The Blade and still has the loyalty of the Disciples within the Legion, barely. He hordes his power rather than exercising it, waiting for the day when the portals open again or when he has to stave off Blackfist's inevitable attack. But this strategy is backfiring, making him appear weak to his troops. Eriaxiel, the Mistress of Bondage and undisputed commander of the Koralachs is growing more powerful, and is admired by all the Beasts. She is ambitious, but short sighted, and the other Overfiends gleefully await the impending battle sure to weaken or destroy all three of these dangerous players.

**SPHYXA: PASSION IS SUFFERING**

Toxin from the smoke of Hell settles in Sphyxa like a shroud, and even more evil bubbles up from the cursed ground. Waste and runoff from the charnel pools and collect in basins. If you are seeking a soul in one of these basins, don't bother; it is lost. The collection of creatures that writhe and grasp under the surface might as well be a single mad creature. Everything here will pierce or clutch you, including its dark mistress.

**LANDMARKS**

Apart from the choking mists, you will know Sphyxa by the Charnel Pools that dot its hellscape and the agonized moans of the pitiful souls caught in them. Cracked and useless, but still an impressive site, The Old Gate can still be seen through the haze. This crumbling stone monolith was the first portal to Hell, and if it could be restored the largest. In the center, surrounded by Charnel Pools lies The Breathless Palace, so named because the massive bellows contained within make the walls themselves appear to swell and fall.

**HAZARDS**

There are different types of clouds that waft around the Charnel Pools. Most are merely irritating and obscure vision. Some fumes are acidic, and you'll know them by the pungent smell. Worst is the vapor that smells of brimstone, for those erase memories. Beware the pools themselves, once the unwary fall in they become wretched, ragged, and lose the desire to do anything but drag others into the same mire of suffering.

**DENIZENS**

Languid Succubi scheme and quarrel amongst themselves, and leap at any chance to enslave newcomers to the court. Other demons envy them as they seem to take pleasure in their obscene role, but it's a façade. Disgorgers work the Palace's bellows and act as guards. Infernal Wisps drift eerily in the toxic clouds, camouflaged and ready to strike.

**POLITICS**

Errudi, the Mother of Seduction and Overfiend of Sphyxa holds her vulgar court in the Breathless Palace, surrounded by her toadies and Succubi. Her ambition to be crowned Queen of Hell is well known, as is her ability to manipulate even Archfiends if she can meet them face to face. The other Overfiends have been loath to treat with her, other than Ibbilnaucht whose appetites have always gotten the better of his interests. Athathok-Ild views her as his direct competition. Who knows what risks the others will take once desperation prompts them?



## RHUEM: DARKNESS ABOVE

Fornehaust's floating citadel drifts lazily around the outer rings of the pit, lingering most around the edges of Sphyxa. It can be found by following the trail of postulant ooze and discarded bodies that rain down below it, or if you are close enough, from the faint screams above.

### LANDMARKS

The *Libra Infernum*, a library of cursed tomes and wicked knowledge lies within the heart of the citadel. Is the *Codex Infernus* among them? Many would like to know. Its laboratories contain vivisected remains of every known demon, along with the maddened results of Fornehaust's attempts to combine them with fresher stock. Anything that displeases the master of Rheum is sent to the labyrinthine torture chambers of the lower citadel, and most prisoners are kept in cages exposed to the atmosphere of Hell, and the ooze that seeps down the outer structure.

### HAZARDS

Rheum usually hovers at an altitude of 100 feet, so a fall from the citadel is crippling to most unfortunate 'escapees'. Fornehaust's sorcery and constant experiments create a constant flow of grisly ichor that drains down the sides and rains from the bottom of the structure. This vile substance makes the rock of the fortress slippery, and Acid Rain is always falling underneath Rheum. If the fortress stays in one area long enough dangerous floods of the stuff cause Ichor Flows.

### DENIZENS

The citadel's main guardians are the Hell Hydras of his own creation. Curators (see Librarian Demon—Horror Companion), lesser creatures twisted into Fornehaust's image tend the tomes and laboratories alike. The truly unfortunate may encounter some unique new horror concocted by the Demon Mage's latest exertions.

### POLITICS

Fornehaust, the Demon Mage of Hell is the absolute master of Rheum, and its structure and loft are both tied to his will and well-being. Many supplicants seek the secrets of the *Libra Infernum*, and for his part Fornehaust seems to encourage such seekers. In part this may be because of his own thirst for knowledge, and



he will treat with any beggar or Overfiend that knows something of interest to him. The rest simply become grist for his twisted experiments. Fornehaust finds the War of Bones a wearisome distraction, only worth his attention because he doesn't want to end up on the wrong side of an inevitable new Dreadlord.

## KLEDZ: CUTS OF A THOUSAND DAGGERS

In the wastes, cut from the stones of Hell like a scar, Kledz is a very unusual place. While most of the inferno boils with the heat generated by souls in torment, here all that heat is siphoned away leaving an intense cold that feels like constant blades on your skin. An ancient Dreadlord fell here, known now only as The Screamer, and here its remains still rend the hellscape, an everlasting monument to its terrible fate.

### LANDMARKS

Barely visible from the edge of this cursed domain is the Pillar of Fire, a blazing column of flame rising up from The Screamer's remnant. All heat in this region is pulled towards that central point, and then channeled into a fiery twister that rises into the smoky clouds above. The entire crevice is layered in frost and webbing called the Gossamer Maze. If you can get

close enough a howl becomes audible over the conflagration above. The Screamer itself is giant shattered body encased in ice, with just the faces of several heads exposed and erupting flame. Perhaps one of those faces now belongs to Thaimoxx, knowledge any Overfiend would pay dearly to learn.

**HAZARDS**

Treading the Gossamer Maze is perilous. It grows ever colder the closer you get to the center, and touching the walls may entrap you or summon the beasts who dwell there. Many without wings simply become lost in the maze, the heat slowly draining from them.

**DENIZENS**

The only creatures that dwell are the frozen sufferers trapped in the Gossamer Maze and the deadly Frost Spiders that wove it. That sting you feel when your flesh is exposed to air so chill it hurts? That's probably the bite of these little creatures.

**POLITICS**

No demon that enters Kledz returns. The Overfiends leave this place well alone.

**ILDUS: THE ART OF PAIN**

According to the demented master of Ildus, Hell lacked only one thing to achieve perfect excruciation, and that was imagination. Ildus is Athathok-Ild's grotesque attempt to refine Hell, and to texture its torments into something sublime. Of course such an enterprise is doomed to failure. Every tilted cant or imperfect cut drives the so-called Prince of Surgeons that much more mad.

**LANDMARKS**

Baroque multi-story dwellings sprawl around a central cathedral, called The Theater of Pain. Inside, rows of seats rise around a wide laboratory where torturous operations are viewed by thousands of faceless Butcher-Surgeons. Above the theater is the Gallery, Athathok-Ild's personal chambers filled with the frozen and anguished victims of his experiments. If any of his 'masterpieces' are disturbed, he flies into a mindless rage and stops at nothing until those responsible have also been added to the Gallery.

**HAZARDS**

Channels and alleys crisscross Ildus, and through them courses the Gelatin Flow. This translucent ooze contains the conscious souls of those afflicted by the Wilting Disease. Athathok-Ild has been known to rig trapped chambers or culverts that fill with the rising gel near his more sensitive treasures.

**DENIZENS**

Flesh Hoarders perch motionless on the cloisters and balconies of Ildus' gothic structures, suddenly springing to life if intruders come to close. Butcher-Surgeons vivisect, experiment, and torture in equal measure, trying to impress their master and keep themselves off the Slicing Tables.

**POLITICS**

The Dread Butcher has no designs on being Dreadlord himself, but he has every intention of being the true power and intellect behind the infernal throne. His greatest threat in this endeavor is Errudi of Sphyxa, and he will do anything to undermine her overtures to the other Overfiends.

In his arrogance he believes he could manipulate any candidate except for Fornehaust. He despises all of Babzug, which just doesn't fit his elegant vision of Hell. Its continued existence gnaws at him, and if Athathok-Ild falls, no doubt it will be because he over-reached in some scheme to pick away the scab. Some believe the Wilting Disease is a weapon he's developed specifically to wash Babzug 'clean', and when he has enough gelatin he will flood the slums of the scab.

**BABZUG: THE FESTERING SCAB**

Only the most wretched of the damned are forced to Babzug, where those touched by the Frothing Plague are sequestered from the rest of the inferno. The place smells of pus and rot. This plague is new, and the first cases were discovered shortly after Thaimoxx's fall. There is no cure, nor true death in Hell. Even furnaces can become infected, so rather than burning the afflicted, they are merely contained, perhaps to someday be unleashed on another unsuspecting world.

**LANDMARKS**

Babzug is a squalid slum of caves, dug out pits, and hastily erected structures. There is no planning to it, nor any central tower or monument. Just putrefying demons and souls as far as the eye can

see. Most residents simply lay and suffer amidst the filth and decay. Others take what they can, or vent their rage on those ill-suited to fighting back.

#### HAZARDS

The Frothing Plague clings to every nook and cranny of this cursed place. Every denizen of Babzug carries it.

#### DENIZENS

Demons of all types are found here. They are known collectively as the Infected, and the pus filled cankers and boils that cover their infernal flesh mark them as much as the black foam that drips from their cracked lips. Since the Frothing Plague is contagious, any demon showing signs of it is banished to Babzug as quickly as possible. Messengers, assassins, and envoys sent there are not expected to return.

#### POLITICS

Beezlebub's name is whispered here, but if he exists none have laid eyes on him. Still, the denizens curse and worship him in equal measure. If there is such an Overfiend it will be revealed when Athathok-Ild finally tries to expunge Babzug once and for all. Fornehaust is certain that there is no such entity.

Errudi has claimed him as her ally, not that the others believe her. They all share a mild fear of Babzug and the threat it represents:

it grows, with or without an Overfiend directing it. If there is some hidden power behind it then surely this Beezlebub will be a menace. Me? I believe Fornehaust is partially correct. Beezlebub is just another name for the contagion. There is no intelligence or purpose behind it, only the scourge of Hell itself.

#### DIS: THE IRON CITY

The Iron City is an impressive sight to behold. In the deepest pit of Hell there is a crater so large you can't see one end from the other. In the base of that crater lies the Mute Citadel, and all around its rim the iron spires of the city rise like a battlement. Countless winged forms flit between the towers, and precarious struts link spire to spire. The din in the city can be overwhelming, between the endless clatter of the forges and the screams of the damned. Rivers of molten lava cut through the city at its base, helping to segregate the city into various quarters, which are controlled by representatives of the Overfiends. The Moragrim also reside here, albeit in secret, away from the minions of the Doomspeakers, who hunt them.

#### LANDMARKS

There are innumerable unique structures in Dis. Portals abound, and most spires contain at least one. The Forge of Hell is legendary, and the Onyx Anvil has been used to craft the



most terrifying weapons of the Legion. The Moragrim especially have put anvil to use. The Black Gate is the largest and oldest functioning portal in the pit, large enough for Earthrenders and entire battalions to march through to the Darkened Wild on Aegeron.

The Pandorum is a massive plaza, part bazaar and part demented killing field when “Festival” is called by the ominous ringing of the bells. The tallest bell tower in Dis is home to the Clarion Bell. Hell-Forged and inscribed with runes, its ominous rings always herald great death or destruction. No one rings it, any who try are destroyed, but when it rings of its own accord all of Hell hears and stops to listen. It rang when the invasion of Aegeron began, when Thaimoxx fell, and should ring again when a new Dreadlord claims the Mute Citadel.

Throughout Dis are furnaces, stoked by the suffering of souls tormented within and the fires of the Flensing Pits below. One overshadows the other, and ash and smoke always belch from its three massive chimneys. It is called Gaoulza, the great furnace, and demons that emerge from its flames tend to be the strongest, vilest, and most heavily marked souls in Hell. An entire district of the Iron City is given over to gouging metal pens known as The Racks.

Here, demons too dangerous to be allowed free reign, but too useful to be sent back to the furnaces, are chained. They are held motionless, tortured and prodded until the hour of their need when they are finally released, maddened and gibbering, upon the enemies of Hell. Then there is the oddity known as The Gyre. A spiral tower that winds and winds upward towards into the smoky and fiery skies of Hell. It is a staircase leading to nothing, the last step is the top of the structure and nothing more. Whether it is simply unfinished or had some previous dark purpose is a mystery of the abyss, the answer lost to the annals of the pit.

### HAZARDS

The furnaces of Dis are never idle, and the city stands on the precipice of the lava filled Flensing Pits that surround the Mute Citadel so the heat in the city is extreme. Vicious Wall Spikes are a common decorative choice for the halls of Dis. Some of these corridors are built to close in upon intruders with the pull of a lever at either side. Dis was built over the ages by Defiled with wings. The thin walkways that stretch between

the spires are perilous and easy to fall from. Mark this above all: if the clarion bells begin to sound in the city make no move at all, Festival has started.

Every few days Festival is rung, and the denizens of Dis anticipate it with cruel glee. The first creature to move or make a sound marks themselves the victim, and every demon nearby will shriek and throw themselves into tearing that victim apart, devouring its flesh, and throwing the remains over the precipice into the Flensing Pits. Be certain that you are not that victim.

### DENIZENS

Some Moragrim still remain trapped in Dis. Once they walked openly among the demons as near equals, but many Defiled blame them for the death of Thaimoxx and now they are hunted like any other Interloper. If found, a desperate Moragrim could even become a temporary ally. By far the most common fiend in the Iron City are the Berathu, winged skulks who maintain the mechanisms of the city and whisper secrets to the Doomspeakers. Dis is cosmopolitan, and any denizen of the inferno might be found there on some mission or another.

### POLITICS

Dis is considered neutral ground between the Overfiends, at least when they feel like obeying the rules. When a new Dreadlord emerges this will be its domain, an extension of the Mute Citadel. In practice the Doomspeakers are still dispensing orders to the denizens of Dis, often in Thaimoxx’s name. This unsettles the Overfiends, who fear Thaimoxx may somehow still live. They know that the first task of any new Dreadlord would be to bring the Doomspeakers to heel. Dis has also become the home of some Moragrim refugees, ghastly sorcerers from Aegeron who sold their souls, and their world, for power. These Interlopers are powerful and know well the corridors of Dis, but are hated and hunted by all the Defiled.

### THE MUTE CITADEL: THE THRONE OF HELL

At the bottom of the great crater, amidst the bubbling magma of the Flensing Pits and under the shadow of Dis lies the Mute Citadel. It is stoutly built, a fortress emerging from the lava all onyx, infernal steel, and looking of ash and cinder. Though cacophony surrounds it, the



### THE MARKS OF EVIL

Souls are never truly destroyed in Hell. They may be twisted, fused, burned, and transmuted, but may never escape. When an Emergent rises in the Well of Bones, they are marked with symbols based on the sins and crimes of their lives, and new marks appear as the soul is further corrupted as a Defiled. When a demon is destroyed, it eventually rises anew from the lava of the Flensing Pits. Usually any memories attached to the soul are purged when this happens, but the soul marks remain. A record of the past misdeeds that keep the demon locked in Hell's cycle of torment.

**THE POWER OF BLOOD**

Blood is power in Hell, hence why most rituals to treat with demons include a sacrifice or bloodletting. Blood is measured in Power Points, and 1 Wound to a living creature usually generates 1d6 Power Points worth of Blood. Inside Hell, consuming 1 Power Point of blood counts as eating a meal (see Dining in Hell, page 80) without any of the negative side effects. Blood can also be used for any supernatural powers, and each point of blood counts as 3 Power Points if used for *bind entity* or *puppet* against demons. Those without an Arcane Background who consume the blood gain a Benny. Bennies gained in this fashion must be spent in Hell or are otherwise lost. A demon with access to stores of blood is envied and feared by the other Defiled.

center of Hell is still and silent. It is said that each Dreadlord has added levels, chambers, or devices to it. It can be gazed upon from the ring of Dis, but only the most powerful or foolish dare to tread here.

**LANDMARKS**

Pools of lava called the Flensing Pits surround the citadel. This same molten ground heats the furnaces of Dis above, and ancient tubing of infernal steel pumps the stuff to the Forge and elsewhere. When the tattered remains of a soul is thrown into the pools what remains is fused and stewed until eventually a demon emerges.

A Dreadlord can control this process, overseeing the planned creation of specific types of demons, but with no Lord installed, it is chaotic offal that spews from the pits. Ancient bridges lead down from Dis to the manifold gates of the palace.

All these bridges and paths lead to The Crucible, sometimes called the Dread Chamber. The Crucible is the throne of Hell, from which the Dreadlord presides and dictates his will.

Above the Crucible and throughout the massive tower are reservoirs of blood, filled by the conquests in Aegeron, waiting for a Dreadlord to put all that power to use.

Below the Crucible lies the chamber of the Abyss. It is whispered that the Chamber of the Abyss descends into infinite darkness, and at the bottom, something sinister stirs to wakefulness. What that might be, only the Dreadlords know—no other creature has emerged from the chamber in any form. This is the only place in Hell that I still fear to tread, so I know no more of it. Surrounding the Mute Citadel are floating prisons, where some of the vilest mortal souls to end up in Hell reside—playthings for the

Dreadlord himself. Now that Thaimoxx has fallen, those cells are empty.

**HAZARDS**

The Flensing Pits and lava pools form a volatile moat around the Citadel (see Bridges of Hell, page 78). If a creature is thrown from the bridge and consumed by the lava, a new demon still carrying the old soul's marks will rise from it days later. When newly formed demons spawn from these pits they are maddened (treat as Berserk Edge) and will attack anything nearby... including hapless travelers on the bridges. Without a Dreadlord controlling the spawns, any type of demon by spawn here.

The Abyss should be avoided at all costs. To look upon it will surely incur a tormented death surpassing any other in Hell.

**DENIZENS**

Only the Dreadlord and the Doomspeakers, his trusted lieutenants, dwell here. Doomspeakers are potent demons, nearly the stature of Overfiends themselves. The words they speak are so blasphemous and vile that these demons are marked by cracked lips and a staining discharge that discolors their mouth.

**POLITICS**

It was in the Crucible itself that Dreadlord Thaimoxx was felled, and the throne still sits empty. Every Overfiend covets the title of Dreadlord, and maneuver around it like scavengers around carrion. None yet has amassed the power to take the Crucible without being immediately torn down by the others. Also the Doomspeakers themselves still whisper orders from Thaimoxx, which has paralyzed the Overfiends in wary uncertainty.



# THE BOOK OF WORLDS

**H**ow do you create a Hell in your game that the players will get into? How do you scare them, get under their skin, yet still give them surmountable obstacles and a story that they can overcome? To start at the beginning, we have to dissect what Hell is, and how the different versions of Hell have looked like, so that we can find both the similarities and the differences. Once we have those building blocks isolated, they can be combined and redesigned. Ultimately, you will be able to play Legos with your Hell pieces and build something you like—that is out of the box.

In this section we will cover many of the things that Hell has been as we look through throughout history. Hell not a constant idea, but rather it is a shifting concept. While it is true that the root of all the historical iterations, or versions, of Hell is that it is where bad souls go to suffer after the body dies, the actual landscape of Hell has varied wildly from culture to culture.

The most common interpretation of Hell today is based on a fusion of Dante's *Inferno* and the King James Bible. It is a bleak place of Hellfire, molten lava, and a lake of pure fire. Outer regions, or different 'levels will boast varied geography, such as frozen forests, inescapable mazes, and other torments and tortures. The main event? Lucifer and the Demons torturing the souls of sinners, eternally punishing them for the crimes of their life. Fun right? Just the place to go if you armed with popcorn and maybe an enchanted sword.

As a Game Operations Director (G.O.D.) it is the PERFECT setting to take a band of characters into; providing a hidden twist in a game, and you get to have fun while torturing them. So, in your game setting, how does Hell look? Here is some background to help you design the Hell you want:

Oh, Hell...

While in modern day Hell is seen as fire and brimstone, that has not always been the case...

though flame does feature into the idea of the afterlife more often than not. Across history, and geography, Hell changes.

Not just is the physical representation of Hell different across cultural lines, though, but the pain and suffering in it are of a varied nature as well. Hell, or ideas close to it, appear in many religions, mythologies, and folk lore as a form of punishment and retribution for breaking societal ideologies. But enough of the dry stuff, what is Hell actually like?

Demons, Imps, various Devils, and the souls of dead people are the most common landscape—and of course, there is often a penultimate being, like Lucifer in the Judeo-Christian Hell; all over a terrain of fire and torment. Despite the more common depictions of Hell as a place of fire, some other traditions portray Hell as cold. Buddhist—particularly Tibetan Buddhist—depict Hell with an equal number of hot and cold Hells. Dante's *Inferno* portrays the innermost—or 9th—circle of Hell as a frozen lake of blood and guilt. But cold also played a part in earlier Christian depictions of Hell, beginning with the Apocalypse of Paul, originally from the early third century. So is it rivers of Lava? A frozen forest? An underwater torture chamber of hooks and chains? A lake of blood?

The landscape of Hell is painted with the brush of fear and guilt.

The key to creating a great Hell for your game is to get into the heads of the characters, and more importantly, their fears. By doing so you can begin to sculpt a perfect Hell for your game.

## THE LANDSCAPE OF FEAR

Fear stems from crime and punishment—the idea that eternal suffering will be the retribution for a life of doing wrong. The idea that ultimately, even though you didn't get caught—You Didn't Get Away With It! Hellish retribution is all

about the ‘sins’ the character has committed. There are two categories of wrongdoing you can focus on:

- Personal small wrongs unique to the character or common ‘sins’ that the society considers taboo. An example is a character who is a doctor and has a code to help the suffering, yet abandons someone who is suffering. In the society they live in, that may not be a common sin, yet for the character that is a sin, and one that can incur guilt (fear of punishment.)
- Cultural or Societal sin. This is the broad stroke category that covers common sins, like the ten commandments, or the seven deadly sins. Think large like murder, theft; you know, the biggies.

In many cultures Hell is traditionally depicted as fiery and painful, inflicting guilt and suffering. But what does the landscape of fear and guilt look like outside of the Western Hell that is so familiar? Let’s walk back through the history of Hell to see what it has looked like over the millennia. The following sections will give you ideas for how to build different pieces of Hell, and may lead you to the unique interpretation of Hell that is just perfect for your game.

## SUMERIAN

- **Ancient Hell (Circa 4,000 B.C. – 2,000 B.C.)**

We find examples of the oldest recorded concepts of Hell, or the underworld, in the cultures of Mesopotamia (Sumeria, Akkadian, Assyria, and Babylonian). While old, their faiths are not necessarily what we would consider to be organized religions by today’s standards. Ancient Mesopotamians saw the netherworld as the cosmic opposite of the heavens (the sky) and a shadow, ethereal reflection of the living on earth. Metaphysically, or spiritually, the underworld was a vast distance from the land of the living. Physically, though, it was underground and described as only a short distance from the earth’s surface.

The netherworld of ancient Mesopotamia is a dismal and dark place, one of grayness and shadow rather than red and hot. It is a place of perpetual twilight and gray, referred to as the “house which none leaves who enters,” with dust on its door. Amazingly, this description was used almost 6 thousand years before Dante’s

‘Abandon all hope, ye who enter here.’ Once you get past the bleakness, things do happen in this netherworld.

The Death of Urnamma describes spirits of the dead rejoicing and feasting when their ruler Urnamma arrives in the netherworld. Shamash, the sun god of justice, also visited the netherworld every night on his daily circuit through the universe. The Mesopotamian netherworld is therefore best understood as neither a place of great misery nor great joy, but as a dulled version of life on earth—almost like a modern purgatory.

When using Mesopotamian mythological elements in creating a Hell, use a lot of gray and imagine dreariness. Try to think of our earth, but like a 1920s movie on a foggy day. Everything that was bright and vibrant has become washed up, washed away, and a shadow of what it was. Foods would have no flavors, pleasures would have no sensations attached, etc.

## ZOROASTRIANISM

- **Ancient Iran Circa 2,500 B.C.)**

Arguably one of the three oldest of the recorded organized religions (Zoroastrianism, Cult of Osiris, Judaism); Zoroastrianism includes beliefs about Armageddon and individual judgment—including reward and punishment. This is a far more abstract Hell than the modern pit of fire, though some elements of Zoroastrianism’s Hell could be argued to contribute to the modern Hell.

At death a soul would come to the Bridge of Judgment, which each person must cross. But in order to gain crossing, they must first face spiritual judgment. Human free will was the factor they would be judged by, and the balance of good versus bad and how that free will was used would determine the outcome.

Zoroastrianism states that the soul is greeted at the Bridge of Judgment by a beautiful, sweet-smelling maiden or by an ugly, foul-smelling old woman. The maiden leads the dead safely across the bridge to the Amesha Spenta, who carries the dead to paradise. The old woman leads the dead down a bridge that narrows forever, until the soul falls off into the abyss of Hell.

Zoroastrian Hell bases suffering on refining the soul until it is once again good—and punishment is created to match the crimes. Souls

in Zoroastrianism do not face eternal damnation. Hell contains foul smells and evil food, and the souls there are packed tightly together although they believe they are in total isolation.

At the time of Zoroastrian Armageddon, all of the souls will once again be judged by walking through a river of molten metal. The righteous and the purified will not burn in this river and the unrighteous will, after which all humans become immortal. Humanity requires two judgments because there are two aspects to our being, those being physical (getig) and spiritual (menog.)

When using design elements from this Hell in your game, focus on the crush of millions of souls smashed together, yet unaware of each other. The fetid foods and odors are a unique element to play with, and the bridge to nothingness can build tension and suspense for players. Another interesting piece to potentially use is the separation of getig & menog. You might separate the character into two character sheets with the spiritual battling in Hell while the physical gains the experience. Another fun idea that stems from this Hell is to separate the two and have the body (with the gear) fighting for one set of objectives while the spirit (with the stats) fights for another. Play with it, and have fun with your characters.

### CULT OF OSIRIS

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- **Ancient Egypt (Circa 2,000 B.C.)**

What modern times considers to be 'ancient Egyptian' is, religiously, actually called the Cult of Osiris, which rose during the Middle Kingdom in about 2000 BC. Osiris offered followers the prospect of eternal life, with moral purity as the dominant factor in determining a person's immortal fate. Sound familiar?

Upon death a soul is judged by a council of forty-two divine judges in a chamber guarded by Anubis's guards (giants with the heads of Jackals.) If the soul led a life guided by the precepts of the Goddess Maat (the goddess of truth and morality) the soul was welcomed to the Two Fields.

If found guilty, the person was thrown to a devourer, a beast with the body of a jackal and the head of an alligator and would be condemned to a lake of fire. The person taken by the devourer is subjected to "terrifying

punishment" and then annihilated... though not in every case.

The Egyptian mythos is a particularly interesting one, since a soul must be deemed worthy, or able to be redeemed in order to gain eternal life. If a soul is not one that can be purified, it is eventually destroyed. The "purification" process can be found in the depictions of "Flame Island." For the damned complete destruction into a state of non-being awaits—but there is no eternal torture. The process of weighing of the heart can lead a soul toward ultimate destruction.

For game purposes this mythos is rich in amazing visuals and ideas to populate your Hell. Jackal headed men, alligator headed jackals, a lake of fire, councils of 42 deities... for designing a game, remember also that the Cult of Osiris contains its rules and information on Hell in the following 6 books:

- The Book of the Dead
- The Book of Amduat (also known as Book of That Which Is in the Underworld)
- The Book of Caverns
- The Book of Gates
- The Book of Two Ways
- The Book of the Earth

### SHOEL

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- **Israel (Circa 1,800 B.C.)**

Early Judaism had no concept of a traditional Hell (a place of suffering.) The concept of an afterlife was introduced during the Hellenic period, and it is suspected that ancient Judaism was influenced by the surrounding Hellenic religions & the Cult of Osiris.

In Daniel 12:2 it is written "*And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt.*"

Judaism does not have a specific doctrine about the afterlife, but it does have a mystical/Orthodox tradition of describing Gehenna & Shoel. Gehenna is not Hell, but originally a grave, and in later times a sort of Purgatory, where one is judged based on life's deeds. This is when the ramifications of how life was lived become evident, and where a soul becomes fully aware of its shortcomings and negative actions during life.

According to Jewish teachings, Hell is not entirely physical; rather, it can be compared to a very intense feeling of shame. People are



ashamed of their misdeeds and this constitutes suffering which makes up for the bad deeds.

When one has so deviated from the will of God, one is said to be in *gehinom*. This is not meant to refer to some point in the future, but to the present moment. The gates of *teshuvah* (return) are said to be always open, and so a soul can align will with that of God at any moment. Being out of alignment with God's will is itself a punishment according to the Torah.

But it is more than just a feeling of shame. The Kabbalah explains *Shoel* and *Gehenna* as a "waiting room" for all souls (not just the wicked). The overwhelming majority of rabbinic thought maintains that people are not in *Gehenna* forever; the longest that one can be there is said to be 12 months, however there has been the occasional noted exception.

The most unique features of this for gameplay are the fracturing of a soul in the moment. Using this to design a Hell could lead to some interesting where the characters are struggling against the will of a deity, suffering weakening stats, shame, psychological torture, and must find a way to overcome, or give in. Properly designed, this concept can turn any world into a

Hell without even having to have the characters leave their current surroundings.

## OLYMPIAN

### ▪ Ancient Greek (Circa 1,500 B.C.-1 B.C.)

In classic Greek mythology, below Heaven, below Earth, and below Pontus (in the realm of Hades) is Tartarus, The Great Pit. It is a deep, gloomy place, used as a dungeon of torment, torture, and suffering that resides within Hades (the entire underworld) with Tartarus being the lowest land. Souls were judged after death, and those who received punishment were sent to Tartarus. As a place of punishment, it can be considered a version of Hell. The classic Hades, on the other hand, is more similar to Purgatory.

The universe was thought to be a giant sphere or ovoid, with the upper half of its shell formed by the dome of heaven, and the lower half by the pit of Tartarus. Inside, this cosmic sphere was divided in two by the flat disc of earth. Above was the dwelling place of the gods (Olympus) and men (Earth.) Below was the gloomy, prison of the Titans, a land of storms and ice.



Hades, the realm of the dead, is very different from the pit of Tartarus. The Hadean realm was located at the very ends of the earth, beyond the river Okeanos and the setting sun, in the Depths of the Earth. Tartarus on the other hand, lay as far beneath Hades as the Earth rested beneath the heavens.

Tartarus is surrounded by a massive wall, with the only entry being through a set of bronze gates and guarded by the hundred-handed Hekatonkheir giants, jailors of the Titans. This is another Hell, rich with visual imagery for a game setting.

Think of chained Titans, storms, ice, and vast cavernous tunnels while playing with the ideas of the Olympian Hells.

## HINDUISM

### ▪ (Circa 600–400 B.C.)

Early Vedic religion does not have a concept of Hell. Ṛg-veda mentions three realms, bhūr (the earth), svar (the sky) and bhuvā or antarikṣa (the middle area, i.e. air or atmosphere). In a way, this is similar to the Olympian structure of the world, though presented very differently.

In later Hindu literature, especially the law books and Puranas, more realms are mentioned, including a realm similar to Hell, called Naraka. The stories and descriptions are amongst the most complex of the hells.

The history states that Yama, as the first born human (together with his twin sister Yami), by virtue of precedence, become ruler of men and judge of their karmic fate after death. Originally he resided in Heaven, but later medieval traditions mention his court in Naraka.

In the law-books (smṛtis and dharma-sūtras, like the Manu-smṛti), Naraka is a place of punishment for sins. It is a lower spiritual plane (called Naraka-loka) where the spirit is judged and the partial fruits of karma affect the next life.

In Mahabharata there is a mention of the Pandavas and the Kauravas both going to Heaven. At first Yudhisthir goes to heaven where he sees Duryodhana enjoying heaven; Indra tells him that Duryodhana is in heaven as he did his Kshatriya duties. Then he shows Yudhisthir Hell where it appears his brothers are. Later it is revealed that this was a test for Yudhisthir and that his brothers and the Kauravas are all in heaven and live happily in

the divine abode of gods. A modern comparison to this would be the trials of Job. Because of Karma and Rebirth, Hinduism does not see Hell in the same way that many other religions do.

But it does have Hell between lives... Hells are described in various scriptures) like the Puranas). The Garuda Purana gives a detailed account of Hell and its features; it lists the amount of punishment for most crimes, much like a modern-day penal code.

It is believed that people who commit sins go to Hell and have to go through punishments in accordance with the sins they committed. The god Yamarāja, who is also the god of death, presides over Hell. Detailed accounts of all the sins committed by an individual are kept by Chitragupta, who is the record keeper in Yama's court. Chitragupta reads out the sins committed and Yama orders appropriate punishments to be given to individuals. These punishments include dipping in boiling oil, burning in fire, torture using various weapons, etc. in various Hells.

Once a soul has suffered enough of its punishments, it is then reborn in accordance with its balance of karma. All created beings are imperfect and thus have at least one sin to their record; but if one has generally led a pious life, one ascends to svarga, a temporary realm of enjoyment similar to Paradise, after a brief period of expiation in Hell and before the next reincarnation, according to the law of karma.

A soul is born into a Naraka as a direct result of its previous karma (actions of body, speech and mind), and resides there for a finite length of time until karma has achieved its full result. After his karma is used up, he may be reborn in one of the higher worlds as the result of an earlier karma that had not yet ripened.

The Hells are situated in the seven grounds at the lower part of the universe. The seven grounds are:

- Ratna prabha.
- Sharkara prabha.
- Valuka prabha.
- Panka prabha.
- Dhuma prabha.
- Tamaha prabha.
- Mahatamaha prabha.

The Hellish beings are types of souls which are residing in these various Hells. They are born in Hell by sudden manifestation. The Hellish beings possess 'vaikriya bodies' (protean bodies



which can transform and take various forms). They have a fixed life span (ranging from ten thousand to billions of years) in the respective Hells where they reside.

With vast levels aimed at diverse tortures, and shapeshift spirit demons, all aimed at eventually scrubbing a soul towards being able to be reborn, this is an amazing Hell to play with. Imagine Serpents, elephant headed beasts, shapeshifters that appear as other party members or loved ones.... Have fun in this playground for the wicked.

## BUDDHISM

### ▪ (Circa 300 B.C.)

The Majjhima Nikaya, in western terms, is a collection of chapters in one of the three 'books' of Buddhism. In "Devaduta Sutta," the 130th discourse of the Majjhima Nikaya, Buddha teaches about Hell, though it is not Hell in the traditional sense.

Buddhism teaches that there are five (sometimes six) realms of rebirth, which can then be further subdivided into degrees of agony or pleasure. (The subdivision of sensation, or emotion, into pain and pleasure can be carried forward into modern times as well. A great example of this was modernized in Clive Barker's 'Hellraiser'.)

Of these realms, the Hell realms, or Naraka (remember Buddhism started in Hindu controlled areas) is the lowest realm of rebirth. Of the Hell realms, the worst is Avīci or "endless suffering." However, like all realms of rebirth, rebirth in the Hell realms is not permanent, though suffering can persist for eons before being reborn again.

In the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha teaches that eventually even Devadatta (Buddha's disciple who tried to kill Buddha three times) will become a 'Pratyekabuddha' himself, emphasizing the temporary nature of the Hell realms. Thus, Buddhism teaches to escape the endless migration of rebirths (both positive and negative) through the attainment of Nirvana.

Naraka is the realm where beings are brought for torture. Unlike many other religions, this is not controlled by a divine force, but rather by the being's Karma. The torture, and the nature of it, is simply a mechanism to purge the being of bad karma, and allow them to eventually attain Nirvana.

Buddhism teaches that, amongst other things, some of the main sources of negative Karma which can actually push a soul toward Naraka are:

- Killing or causing pain with intense passion.
- Excessive attachment to things and possessions.
- Worldly pleasure with constantly indulgence in cruelty and violence.
- Vowless and unrestrained life.

Elements that can be amazing in this Hell are images of scales, vast weights, and other measuring devices weighing good against bad as the being slowly moves through trials and tribulations. This can, in particular, mesh really well with steampunk and Victorian settings.

## THE MIDDLE KINGDOMS

### ▪ (Circa 200 B.C.)

Ancient Taoism had no concept of Hell, as morality was seen to be a man-made distinction and there was no concept of an immaterial soul. It was only as time passed and the tenants of Taoism evolved that Taoism found Hell. In its home country China, where Taoism began to adopt tenets of other religions, popular belief endows Taoist Hell with many deities and spirits who punish sin in a variety of horrible ways. This is also considered Karma for Taoism.

Diyu (literally meaning "earth prison") is the realm of the dead in Chinese mythology. It is very loosely based upon the Buddhist concept of Naraka combined with traditional Chinese afterlife beliefs and a variety of popular expansions and re-interpretations of these two traditions. Ruled by Yanluo Wang, the King of Hell, Diyu is a vast and confusing labyrinth of underground levels and chambers where souls are taken to atone for their earthly sins.

Incorporating ideas from Taoism and Buddhism as well as traditional Chinese folk religion, Diyu is a kind of purgatory place which serves not only to punish but also to renew spirits ready for their next incarnation. There are many deities associated with the place, whose names and purposes are the subject of much conflicting information.

The exact number of levels in Chinese Hell—and their associated deities—differs according to the Buddhist or Taoist perception. Some speak of three to four 'Courts', other as



many as ten. The ten judges are also known as the 10 Kings of Yama. Each Court deals with a different aspect of atonement. For example, murder is punished in one Court, adultery in another. According to some Chinese legends, there are eighteen levels in Hell. Punishment also varies according to belief, but most legends speak of highly imaginative chambers where wrong-doers are sawn in half, beheaded, thrown into pits of filth or forced to climb trees adorned with sharp blades.

However, most legends agree that once a soul (usually referred to as a 'ghost') has atoned for their deeds and repented, he or she is given the Drink of Forgetfulness by Meng Po and sent back into the world to be reborn, possibly as an animal or a poor or sick person, for further punishment.

The possibilities that can be pulled from this Hell are limitless. Each chamber focusing on a different punishment is a great place to start, with characters having to devise ways to not get lost in the labyrinth of chambers and halls. Frequent encounters with the torturing demons will leave them on edge just as much as being ignored by other spirits focused on their tasks will leave them jumpy. If you want to see a good representation of this Hell, try watching the movie *Big Trouble In Little China*.

## NORSE MYTHOLOGY

- (Circa 200 B.C.)

Niflheim, the "Mist Home" (or "Abode of Mist" or "Mist World"), is one of the Nine Worlds of Norse mythology. This is not a traditional Hell, though it is the one that we can most likely attribute as the source of Dante's frozen lake of blood (the 9th circle of Hell.)

Niflheim, like the 9th circle, is primarily a realm of primordial ice and cold, with the frozen rivers of Elivágar and Gjoll, and the well of Hvergelmir, from which all other rivers come. Niflheim and Muspelheim, the realm of fire, were the two primordial realms from which the other 7 realms sprang. Between these two realms of cold and heat, creation began when the frozen waters mixed with the heat of Muspelheim to form a "creating steam." Niflheim became the abode of Hel, a goddess daughter of Loki, and the afterlife for her subjects, those who did not die a heroic or notable death. The little portion she carved

out for herself is often called Helheim in the Norse Mythos.

This cold, dark and misty abode of the dead is located in the lowest level of the Norse universe. No one can ever leave Niflheim, because of the impassable river Gjoll which encircles Helheim. Once they enter Helheim, not even the gods can leave. Those who die of old age or disease, and those not killed in battle, go to Helheim while those who die bravely on the battlefield go to Valhalla.

The entrance to Helheim is guarded by Garm, a monstrous hound, and Modgud, a skeleton warrior guarding the bridge over Gjoll. The giant Hraesvelg ("corpse eater") sits at the edge of the world, overlooking Helheim. Not only does the imagery of a world forever frozen present an interesting visual for a game Hell, but the cast of characters in Norse mythology are powerful and diverse.

A lot of artifacts can be used with a setting like this, everything from Odin's spear to Thor's hammer can alter gameplay. This is traditionally one of the first Hells in history (besides the Olympian) that adventures could visit, overcome the gods, and return from a quest.

## AFRICA

- (Circa 200 B.C.)

Most of the Serer religions don't use the idea of Heaven and Hell, but rather the approval and acceptance of ancestors as the reward and punishment of the afterlife. The two African Hells that stand out are Haida's Hetgwauge and Swahili's Kuzimu.

Hetgwauge is ruled by Hetgwaulana and is dry and dusty, a Hellish desert where everything is parched and cracking. In this Hell, the spirits of evildoers are forever tortured for the wrongs they have committed with no hope of escape. Shifting sandstorms blind and strip away the 'flesh' of the soul, and being forever baked in the scorching sun is a reality in this Hell.

Kuzimu, the Swahili Hell, was more like the Norse Hell than any other. It was a place of frozen waters and mind numbing cold, with eternal frozen torment as punishment for those that had sinned. Imagine, rather than a frozen northland however, a desert of ice as Kuzimu. Ice devils instead of dust devils, etc. It is perhaps



one of the most unique transpositions in the history of Hells.

In the Serer faiths, however, the souls of the dead must make their way to Jaaniw, the sacred dwelling place of the soul. Only those who have lived their lives on earth in accordance with Serer doctrines will be able to make this necessary journey and thus accepted by the ancestors.

Between the harsh Hetgwuage and the frozen Kuzimu we can see a very different set of Hells for souls to struggle through as they seek Jaaniw.

## ISLAM

### ▪ (Circa 600 A.D.)

In Islam, jahannam is a place of blazing fire, boiling water, and a variety of torments for those condemned to it. After the Day of Judgement, it is a place for souls who do not believe in Allah, have disobeyed Allah's laws, or rejected Allah's messengers.

An interesting twist is that 'enemies of Islam' are sent to Hell at the moment of death.

Like Zoroastrianism, Muslims believe that on Judgement Day all souls will traverse a bridge over Hell (Cinvat Bridge in Zoroastrianism; or As-Sirāt in Islam.) Just as with the Cinvat bridge souls bound for Hell will find the bridge too narrow, and fall to the fiery pits below. Jahannam resembles the Christian Hell, but in this case it is not the home of the Devil. Suffering in Hell is both physical and spiritual, and varies according to the sins of the condemned.

Heaven and Hell are each divided into seven different levels (resembling Dante's nine circles.) Souls trapped there are relegated to each level depending on their actions in life—good or bad.

The gate of Hell is guarded by Maalik, who is the leader of the angels assigned as the guards of Hell also known as Zabaaniyah. While Hell is usually described as hot, there is one pit (Zamhareer) characterized in Islamic tradition as unbearably cold, with blizzards, ice, and snow. This is not the same as the frozen lake of blood. Instead, imagine a landscape like the arctic, only amplified until the wind and shards of ice literally shred through skin.

Not all Muslims and scholars agree whether Hell is an eternal destination or whether some

or all of the condemned will eventually be forgiven and allowed to enter paradise.

## OCEANIA

### ▪ (Circa 800 A.D.)

O le nu'u-o-nonoa is the Underworld of the Samoan beliefs. O le nu'u-o-nonoa is a portion of Sa-Le-Fe e (the Samoan land of the dead), and is reserved for the souls of sinners. O le nu'u-o-nonoa translates as 'land of the bound' and souls trapped here are imprisoned in subterranean chambers. Imagine stalactites and stalagmites slowing dripping torment in watery caves that are tight and sharp, filled with languishing souls.

An interesting and unique feature is that each soul bound in O le nu'u-o-nonoa is tended to by vengeful spirits, who administer the torture themselves (implying that there are far more spirits in Hell than souls.) Using swarming armies of vengeful spirits can create an excellent combat based hellish progression for your story.

## MESOAMERICAN

### ▪ (Circa 800–1400 A.D.)

The Hells of the Americas (the Meso-American, or Amerindians) were diverse, but we are going to focus on two which cover most of the pieces in the others; the Aztec's Mictlan, and the Mayan, Xibalba.

To start with, though, in the Mayan religion, Xibalba (or Metnal) is the dangerous underworld of nine levels, again offering a dante-esque perspective of Hell. The Maya themselves offer an air of mystery (the legends of the lost tribes of the Mayans, why did they disappear, etc.) The road into (and out of) Metnal is treacherously steep, thorny, dangerous and forbidding.

A unique aspect of this Hell, and something that could play well in game, is that ritual healers of the Mayans would intone healing prayers banishing diseases to Xibalba. The idea that diseases and ailments can be banished and take physical form in a Hell which the players will have to navigate... Much of the Popol Vuh describes the adventures of the Maya Hero Twins in their cunning struggle with the evil lords of Xibalba.

The Aztecs, from a culture of colorful feathers, totemic dances, and blood sacrifice,



believed that the dead traveled to Mictlan, a neutral place found far to the north (in a bit of humor, here, Alaska is Hell...), so far that it took the dead 4 years to reach it. There was also a legend of a place of white flowers, which was always dark, and was home to the gods of death, particularly Mictlantecutli and his spouse Mictlantecihuatl, which means literally 'the lords of Mictlan'.

Travelers to Mictlan, either dead or the brave living, had to overcome difficult tests to reach the fabled land. Some of the tests to reach the land of the dead included passing a mountain range where the mountains crashed into each other, a field where the wind carried flesh-scraping knives that would tear the body and muscles apart, and a river of blood with fearsome jaguars ready to consume travelers.

Feathers and blood can be great motifs to play with here, but there is a plethora of amazing imagery and totem resources to pull from.

## THE DMV

- **(Circa 1960 A.D.)**

The Hells of modern western culture are often times jokingly based around inconvenience (like the DMV!) But the constant frustration of waiting and waiting while being ground down under someone else's rules is actually worth noting. While looking back at the last six thousand years of Hell, remember that your player is modern, and whichever elements you pull from to grab a little bit of that modern struggle to make any situation conform to your will into the mix.

## THE ULTIMATE HELL

- **(Circa Now)**

What is the ultimate shape of Hell? Only you can answer that, for your game. There is a rich history spanning every climate, geography, and social class. History has shown Hell to be both Fire and Ice, isolated and packed, pleasure and pain, filled with demons and completely empty. Some of the most wide ranging ideas for a single thought come from the various interpretations of Hell.

But above all; Hell is one constant. It is a place of punishment. Remember that as you borrow elements from the various Hells to design your Landscape of Fear.

## HELL IN YOUR GAME

Hell is commonly the other place, a place different than the world we know. It symbolizes the fear of the unknown and the fear that somebody is watching and judging the choices people make. Placing Hell in a *Savage Worlds* setting means deciding on its relationship with the regular world. A GM looking to build a world featuring the Hell detailed in *Savage Guide* to Hell has a lot of approaches to use. We've detailed a few here, each of which can be used on their own or mixed together to make Hell's role in the universe complex and challenging.

Calling this plane Hell attaches a certain amount of cultural baggage to the ideas contained in the Codex. We used common terminology because it reaches across a lot of different cultures, but changing names can do a lot to grant ownership of the world and make changes without disconnecting ideas from the players. Chaos and order work well as analogs for Heaven and Hell that aren't connected to religion as do light and dark. Striking a balance between familiar terminology and new words for classic concepts is always a challenge in world building.

The underworld of the campaign could be reflected by this realm. In this case, it is a place where souls go to be purified before they journey on to whatever final reward happens after death. The depths of a being's sin may determine the length of time they have to spend in Hell. That adds a ticking clock to any adventures that dive into Hell. Not only must heroes fend off the terrible tormentors and jailors of the underworld, they must do so before the soul they've descended to rescue runs out their time on the plane.

Hell could be an inversion of the mortal world. Everything that exists in the real world has some sick, twisted reflection here. Whatever joys are to be had in the real world are sorrows in Hell. Food causes gnawing hunger. Light burns unprotected flesh. The reverse may also be true. Pain causes pleasure. Hatred functions as love. Such a Hell might birth doubles for the heroes that occasionally escape into their home plane and cause trouble. It could also cause trouble for the most virtuous character whose resemblance to the Dreadlord is uncanny.

If this campaign has Hell, does it have a Heaven? A Heaven implies both balance and a



duality, though that also usually means some sort of reason why the two sides don't clash for a massive winner-takes-all battle. There may be oaths sworn between the leaders or artifacts scattered throughout the world that keep both side on the level. Either of these ideas are hooks that draw players into the conflict between Heaven and Hell. Perhaps Hell has replaced the bonded artifacts with fakes with the hopes of launching a surprise attack on Heaven. Heaven needs to send mortals into Hell to bring them back, because angels would draw too much attention charging through the infernal gates.

If there isn't a plane directly opposed to Hell, what if there are many realms outside of Earth? These realms, often called planes by those who walk between them, offer complete refinement of an idea or concept that's partially present on earth. There are elemental planes, like water and earth as well as conceptual planes, like order and chaos. Hell might be the plane of chaos or it might be the plane of fire. Or it might be the plane of one that consumed the other and threw the other planes out of balance. The Dreadlord might be feared because he did what no other would do; conquer another plane to take as his own.

How is Earth (or the material plane) fit into a relationship with other realms? Is it the center of a battle between the planes? It could be a battle between Heaven and Hell or one fought by multiple planes centering on the material plane. If this is the case, what resources does the material plane have that makes it the focal point of the war? Souls are a good candidate, as well as magical energy. Perhaps the more connections a plane has to the material plane, the more energy it draws, causing battles over ley lines and areas of power.

Perhaps instead of the material plane at the center of the universe, Hell is the crossroads where the planes intersect, perhaps in the Iron city of Dis; a city of doors that lead to every plane imaginable. The trick is finding the portals before somebody else does. In this version, the rings that surround Hell might not be rings but the planes closest to the crossroads plane. But if this is true, there are likely openings to planes that want to crush Hell. Who has access to those doors? And why haven't hostile planes moved through them to conquer the demons and demons that call Hell home?

## THE GARDEN OF GOOD AND EVIL

Any discussion of Hell usually contains a discussion about morality. An RPG supplement like this doesn't have the space for a lengthy discourse on the subject, but knowing how good versus evil works in the world you've built for your *Savage Worlds* game affects how powerful Hell comes off in the setting. If Hell reigns supreme, the heroes are fighting a dying, hopeless battle against inevitability. If good wins in the end, the heroes are the soldiers on the front lines storming the beaches for a better tomorrow. If both sides are evenly matched, then the people in the middle, the heroes and the villains, have a chance to tip the scales in unexpected ways and become central to the struggle on either side.

Good versus evil is a concept of duality. This concept goes by many names in fantasy fiction; light against shadow, the dark side versus the light side, purity versus corruption. In *Codex Infernus: The Fall of Aegeron*, we've detailed the Dreadlord and his Overfiends to set up some formidable foes for heroes to take down. There are likely powerful beings on the other side of the divide that can be potential allies, whether as a pantheon of gods or a powerful being of good served by angels or saints. There may be rivalries and disagreements between these being much like the ones spelled out in the section on the Overfiends. Such differences create drama and drama creates action for players.

### DOMINANT GOOD

If good is more powerful in the universe, either because of a supreme being or an army of light, something must be stopping the champions of good from eliminating evil. It may be vows, rules or magical artifacts that keep the playing field level. The gods may be bound by fate, so they can only take action through mortals on the material plane. Direct action is rare and wondrous, even if the gods have blessed those with miracles. They can charge mortals with bits of power but they can't move directly. Of course, the forces of evil try to bend and break those rules all the time. Good may seek out those worthy of power but evil knows anyone can be tempted to trade away a soul for favors from Hell.

Both sides being balanced against each other turns mortals into the pawns of these greater powers. Demons may be the lords of Hell and angels the knights of heaven, but the material



plane is the center of their battle. Freewill battles with fate and destiny. Will mortals always walk the paths laid out by gods and demons? Will they forge their own destinies outside the influence of such powerful beings? The heroes become central to the fate of the material plane. Whatever path they choose, light or dark, becomes what shines on the world. Consigning the material plane to its fate might not be the last word for the heroes either. Whichever side they choose will likely have use for them somewhere else.

### **DOMINANT EVIL**

If Hell is winning, which is the case in Aegeron, the game becomes much darker. It's an uphill battle. Agents of Hell lurk in every shadow, and powerful demons are released to crush any resistance from the other planes. The heroes might have been sent to Hell to wreck it from the inside, using the last bits of power from Hell's opposition. If the heroes fail, the Dreadlord rises to take its place. True heroes overcome impossible odds to win and with Hell in power, such a campaign will echo in the minds of players for many years to come, no matter if they win or lose.

### **BALANCE**

Having the balance of good vs. evil in mind at the start of the campaign is helpful but it doesn't need to be unchanging. The balance might shift whenever the players achieve a new rank as their actions push one side over the other. The sides might also shift based on activities outside the player's control.

### **NEW CAMPAIGNS**

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When beginning a new campaign, pay attention to the types of characters the players made. There are several roles those characters can fill, like the melee beast, the dead eye, the sneaky thief and so on. Make sure to design adventures that allow each of the characters a moment or two to shine. Try to give everyone a scene where their character gets to do something cool in the spotlight. It doesn't always have to be the exact same thing, but it should be related to the character's focus. The sword master's player wants to get into some battles of course, but her reputation as a fighter might be what hooks the group into their next adventure. One of the thief's previous jobs might give

them some unique insight on how to steal the infernal artifact right under an Overfiend's nose.

Making sure everyone gets a little time in the spotlight helps the whole group to have fun.

Hindrances offer an excellent way to add some drama to the action. Subplots that center on a hero's Hindrances not only offer that player a chance to rack up some Bennies, but also provide a memorable way to link characters to the story. Try to work up at least one subplot per session that hangs on a character's Hindrance. If a Loyal character's best friend reveals they've sold their soul to a demon, that makes that character think twice about shrugging and walking away from their cries of help. Two is even better; that's twice the chances to grab one of the players with one of their characters interesting flaws. Each character should have three Hindrances to choose from, giving the GM a lot of excellent tools to hook players into danger and excitement for an evening.

Make Hell's involvement with your game personal. Mix up those allies and characters that heroes love with the forces of darkness. The demon assassin might miss the hero she was hired to kill but hits the beloved retired fighter that's been the hero's mentor since the beginning. Reveal a close ally has been a spy for a demon but now wants to repent, having seen the goodness the heroes have brought to the world. Hell is the ultimate source of evil, but bad guys with good motivations make for scenes with more drama.

The rank system not only offers a chance to unlock new and exciting abilities, but it also can be viewed as a way to structure a campaign. Each rank could be considered a section of a book, an act of a play or season of a television show. Advancements can represent smaller pieces, like chapters, scenes or episodes. Make sure each segment has a beginning, a middle and an end. The story should develop just like the characters do, with all the victories and defeats giving the story highs and lows.

Players love to hate the bad guys. A good villain pushes heroes to their limits. Defeating a good villain creates memories that last far beyond the campaign. A story based around Hell makes keeping good bad guys around easier than some campaigns. Bad guys can return as vengeful souls or demons. Recurring villains give the campaign continuity but not overdoing the practice makes the return of bad guy more impactful.



Take some time after each session to review the strengths and weaknesses of the evening. If one character takes up most of that time during a session, don't worry about it too much. Do your best to make sure that any players that were in the background are central to the next adventure. Getting feedback from players can be helpful, too. Pay attention to what they respond to and what plot developments leave them cold. Writing up a campaign blog can be useful for this process, but also pay attention to the stories the players tell during the downtime and off moments of the campaign.

## TONIGHT WE GAME IN HELL

Making use of the cursed book you hold in your hands can be as simple as pulling monsters to throw at your players or picking one of the Overfiends as a recurring villain. The Codex offers a lot of pieces that can be broken up into small chunks that can prove useful in any genre and any situation. Using the book as a larger whole gives you more bang for your buck, either as a

brand new campaign or as a few sessions of a refreshing side story from a longer campaign. What follows is advice on using *Codex Infernus* for some of the most common campaigns, as well as how to run a campaign based entirely with the version of Hell depicted in the setting section.

Each section is broken up into early, middle and late campaign events. Having a general idea of the length of the campaign helps with pacing and player expectations. A game that rolls from Novice to Legendary is epic to be sure, but one where the players stay Seasoned that's paced well can be just as memorable. Feel free to mix and match the campaign events. The more events used, the bigger the twists of the story will be. One event per Rank is recommended, though the events detailed in the Legendary Rank could just as easily be used as a kick-off for a new campaign featuring the next generation of heroes. For those GMs looking for shorter campaigns, each segment could be run as a small campaign of its own.





## A CLASSIC FANTASY SETTING

A high fantasy campaign featuring heroes battling the demons of Hell is a classic setup for some epic tales. Clerics, paladins and knights are common choices for players, so directly sending them against the demons, demons and the damned sets up natural adversaries with conflicting goals. Heroes battle for the very soul of the world, taking the fight to the forces of Hell in their home plane. What starts out as a simple adventure clearing out rats from a basement or hunting goblins alongside the king's road can end with the heroes facing one of the Overfiends in Hell itself.

### EARLY CAMPAIGN EVENTS

- **Suggested Rank(s):** Novice, Seasoned

During the early part of a fantasy campaign, the minions of Hell are but one of many monsters facing daring adventurers. Mixing in demons and infernal monsters gives the heroes a taste of what's to come, but also let players clash with the classic monsters of a fantasy campaign. Soon, monsters become more and more connected to Hell and the heroes get a glimpse of what they are up against by battling infernal creatures looking to spill out of Hell.

One of the main enemies during the early part of this campaign are a demon and his or her cult. Their influence is subtle and might not even be known as a demonic cult. A cleric might think the new monastery is devoted to a strange deity but might only discover infernal origins once they've met one of the monks in a dungeon. A rich patron might reveal his true allegiance at a banquet he throws to honor the heroes for clearing out his ancestral keep.

Another element that works well early in a campaign are some kind of inquisition group. Consider basing the group off some of the archetypes in the character creation chapter. As antagonists, the organization might even start out hunting the heroes since Hellspawn seem to be cropping up wherever they go. After the initial confusion, the group allies with the heroes. The group offers sanctuary, healing and places of lore to let the heroes figure out the minions of Hell they keep running into. Heroes might even join up to access things like holy weapons and powerful spells. The inquisition group's horrible demise also functions as an

excellent event to kick off the next section of the campaign.

### MIDDLE CAMPAIGN EVENTS

- **Suggested Rank(s):** Veteran, Heroic

By this time, the heroes have become thorns in the side of Hell and some of the larger players have taken notice of their activities. A demon decides to make his name by wiping out the heroes and starts sending dedicated killers and assassins after the players. This part of the campaign shapes up for an epic journey into the mouth of Hell to seek the demon that plagues the heroes. That end might come in an epic battle with an army led by a demonic general, a duel on the edge of a portal to Hell or, if they are very lucky, both.

Since the players have come to the attention of a demon, surely others have noticed them as well. A rival of the demon aligned against the players might offer to help them out. They might approach them as a hidden ally if the heroes aren't willing to listen to another demon, or they might propose a way into Hell in exchange for a favor or two on the material plane. The rival demon insists she's not interesting in buying their souls since she wants the bad guy taken out without anyone knowing her involvement. All the heroes have to do is trust her.

The players discover the identity of the demon with a grudge. To truly stop their nemesis, they must hunt down the demon in Hell and destroy the Hellspawn. They need to find a way in and, more importantly, a way out. Information like this won't come easy. It's likely located in an ancient tome buried inside a treacherous maze or held by a nasty evil creature that's looking to use that knowledge for their own selfish gain. That means defeating a pretty heavy bad guy in the material world just for a shot at taking out a much bigger and meaner bad guy in a plane that's looking to kill them.

### LATE CAMPAIGN EVENTS

- **Suggested Rank(s):** Legendary

The heroes gain Legendary rank just as they enter Hell. The power of Legendary mortals is frightening, but it still pales in comparison to beings like the Overfiends. Heroes expecting wall-to-wall slaughter may be surprised when



many of the lesser denizens of Hell give them a wide berth. Power is respected here. Anyone who fights their way to Hell is a force to be reckoned with. Though they may yet to have a reckoning with the demon that's plagued them, there are many in Hell who don't wish to be next on the heroes' list should that demon fall.

Everyone in Hell has enemies. The nemesis of the hero is no different and someone wishes to profit off the extended conflicts between the two sides. A rival demon might offer some inside information. A treacherous lieutenant might be looking to move up in the world. The heroes got involved in the crusade, likely out of some noble motives, so negotiating with bad guys seems like it might take the shine off the victory a little bit. If they refuse temptations, there's no hard feelings, but that means they'll need to do things the hard way.

If the heroes are tearing a path through Hell, they may get called into a meeting with a higher authority, perhaps even a new Dreadlord that has risen to take the place of Thaimoxx. An Overfiend might offer them a deal to leave peacefully. That might mean trussing up the demon causing them pain like some sort of gift or offering some fresh artifacts and items to pay off the heroes. How they handle themselves here determines how easy it is to get to their goal. The battle with their old enemy might play out in front of the Dreadlord or might require a siege on the Mute Citadel to pull the demon from Hell's most secure location. It might also set up the Dreadlord himself as the big bad guy for your next big campaign.

## A MODERN ACTION SETTING

Hell is a timeless plane. Heroes diving into an infernal portal might cross swords with the demons there, but it could just as likely be modern heroes firing holy bullets into a crowd of demons. Urban fantasy often features Hellspawn cutting shady deals in dim alleyways for power, the possession of unwary individuals, or sinister cultists seeking ways to bring their dark gods into the world. The demonic influence in the game can even stretch across genre, with other supernatural creatures such as vampires, ghosts, zombies, ghouls, and werewolves existing right along-side the forces of Hell. Your ragtag heroes could be the only thing from the Dreadlord setting up shop on Earth. Earth is supposedly off limits

to Heaven and Hell but both sides have had an eternity to figure out how to work around those rules.

## EARLY CAMPAIGN EVENTS

- **Suggested Rank(s):** Novice, Seasoned

Magic is real. Most of the modern world doesn't believe in it, but the people willing to make it happen, willing to sell their souls for power, can get it. Your players know the truth. One of them might even be somebody that sold their soul to cast spells. For every soul sold in the streets, another little crack appears in the wall between Hell and Earth. It may not seem like much, but the trickle of souls into Hell has slowly turned into a steady stream. All of them have the same dream on the same night throughout the world and the message is very clear: the end of the world is coming soon and when the end comes, it's time to collect.

The demons weren't expecting such a message so they are soon overwhelmed by mortals wanting out of their deals. Violence erupts in the streets as the damned band together and turn into roving gangs of demon hunters thinking that if they kill enough demons the world will be saved. Not all of these groups hunt carefully. Hunters that destroy a drug house to kill a demon will also take out a dozen addicts and other innocents with the bomb used. Killing the innocents will surely send them straight to Hell and they may not remember the heroes fondly once their journey takes them across the river Styx.

One of the allies of the heroes gets mixed up with a demon. They sold their soul for sympathetic reasons; to cure a sick relative or to save the life of a hero when they were mortally wounded. They can tell the heroes what happened in the dream of prophecy but the heroes need to help them solve their problems. They may have to negotiate with the original demon or they may have to find an agent of Heavenly power to absolve their friend. They also have to keep the ally from doing anything rash. The ally might decide that sacrificing themselves to save someone else is their only shot at redemption, when it really means they are damning themselves to Hell.

**MIDDLE CAMPAIGN EVENTS**

- **Suggested Rank(s):** Veteran, Heroic

The plot becomes a bit clearer at this point. Hell wants to move on Earth. After years of prophecy and threatened apocalypse, the end of days is truly at hand. Sides are being drawn up. Many of the selfish players fall in line with Hell. Others side with the forces of Heaven. The heroes are caught in the middle; dangerous enough to affect the outcome, but still in the dark about why things are going down. This part of the campaign involves some investigation but still offers plenty of opportunity for demons to bust down the door for an exciting battle or two.

There is a group of watchers that has kept an eye on the supernatural for thousands of years. They may seek out the heroes as allies or might work against them and disagree about their tactics and abilities. They also represent the risks of being high profile members of the occult community. At this point in the campaign, the lords of Hell think they know too much and wipe the watchers off the face of the Earth. The heroes might be able to preserve some knowledge. One of the last members might join the heroes should a character have fallen during the campaign. The death of the watchers signals to the heroes that there's no going back: Hell makes its move soon.

While most of the world is still ignorant of what's happening, the local government has taken notice. It has also identified the heroes as players in the bad events coming to pass and decides to eliminate them as a threat. It might be a mistake due to lack of evidence or it might be an infernal turncoat inside the government using those vast resources to get them out of the way. This event puts the heroes on their heels as many of their friends and allies might be afraid to help while they are known fugitives. Only by clearing their names can they count on their support network to carry them through the rest of the campaign.

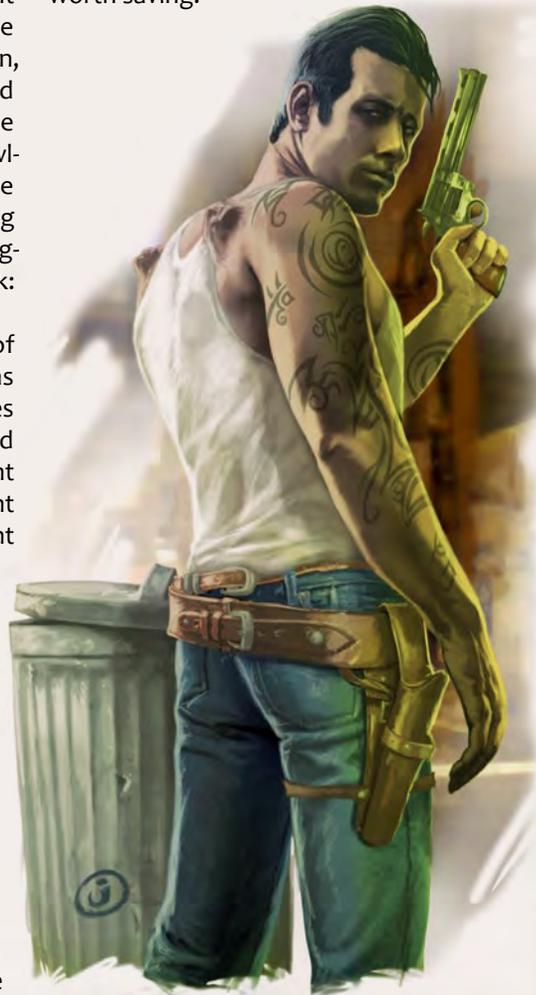
**LATE CAMPAIGN EVENTS**

- **Suggested Rank(s):** Legendary

Despite the heroes' best attempts to find the location of the portal, it opens. Hell has come to Earth. The Dreadlord makes his move to take the mortal plane for his own. Demons

pour out into the major cities of the world. Demons call in their markers to form an army of the damned. Many of the world's governments fall. A few places withstand the initial onslaught and hold out for a miracle. But everywhere there is a scattered resistance like the one led by your heroes. Hell may have gotten a foothold here but the war has only just begun.

The biggest guns have yet to reply to Hell's invasion. Where do the angels fall in the fight for earth? The heroes must convince them that Earth is still worth fighting for. Hell might still be pushed back even without Heaven's intervention, but the angels who have spent years watching humanity shouldn't easily be able to retreat from their years caring for Earth. This could require diplomacy, negotiations with beings that are just as alien as the demons carving up the planet or it might be through winning a series of battles to show that humanity is worth saving.



The humans who save the world will surely become legends. When the heroes reach that rank, it's time for the final battle. Put the mass battle rules into effect, with Hell on one side and the heroes with whatever allies they've cobbled together. Demons clash with tank columns. Winged demons dance with jet fighters. If the heroes convinced Heaven to stay in the fight, the Dreadlord knows he's been beaten and stays in Hell, content to try again the next time the end of the world is nigh. If Heaven has retreated, only the heroes stand in his way. The King might be willing to tempt them directly to ensure a victory.

## POST-APOCALYPTIC HELL

The difficulty with staging a campaign focused around Hell within a Post-Apocalyptic framework, is one of distinction. After all, why would the players fight to save the world from encroaching Hell when the world itself is a scorched wasteland? There are a couple of ways of approaching this, and it depends very much on your inclination as a GM and what your players are going to find the most fun. The first solution is that the Apocalypse which the world has suffered is the Biblical Apocalypse (or an equivalent); Hell cleansed earth and your players are a rag-tag remnant of the world, trying to make their way to a promised Eden. Perhaps this type of game can tie into the above modern campaign.

The second framework looks at exploring the old phrase 'Hell on Earth' in a slightly more interesting way—perhaps the fact that the world is now a ravaged, inhospitable ruin makes the interaction between earth and Hell that much more even. Perhaps travel between the realms is now open; perhaps there is trade, negotiation, even diplomacy. How do the players deal with this? How does the Dreadlord treat the scorched earth now that those who inhabit it are as damned as those he has already claimed? Do the Overfiends suddenly recognize their opportunity to stake their own claim to a larger fiefdom than they possess in Hell?

A third framework is to have the players as the last spot of light in a sea of darkness; Hell's limitless forces close in around them and they must fight to the last, trying desperately to find some means of saving themselves and, perhaps, restoring the world to its previous state.

You'll notice that all of these frameworks make use of well-known Post-Apocalyptic tropes—things you could see in Mad Max or early JG Ballard. Part of the reason for this is that many of the themes of Hellish settings (despair, futility, human depravity manifesting itself in strange or unpleasant ways) are the same as Post-Apocalyptic themes. This can be a real advantage as players will almost inevitably compare the two and the ambiguity of their position in a decayed world can be extremely useful for a GM and extremely fruitful from a story point of view. For the campaign overview, we will be working with the second framework.

## EARLY CAMPAIGN EVENTS

- **Suggested Rank(s):** Novice, Seasoned

At this point, the ruined world's relationship with Hell is occluded; the players are much more concerned with staying alive, finding a base from which they can conduct supply runs, defend themselves from the mutant threats from the wasteland, and generally become used to the brutal realities of their new world. During one of the players' supply runs, perhaps they happen across some strange metallic weaponry, formed from a substance they have never encountered before—a strange, living metal which shifts in the hand. Perhaps the players are attacked by a band using such weaponry. As the players begin to establish themselves in the world, with a reputation for being tough, wily survivors, they begin to hear more rumors of a growing power, somewhere to the East or West.

## MID CAMPAIGN EVENTS

- **Suggested Rank(s):** Veteran, Heroic

As the players begin to expand their reach, encountering larger settlements, the rumors of new powers become more frequent. Eventually the players fall in with some traders—perhaps they are employed as bodyguards or, when they are attempting to rob the merchants, they are told about or find evidence of a lucrative trade about to be enacted. demons. Are the survivors trading slaves for weapons? Remnant flesh? Mutant children? Lumps of raw plutonium? They discover that one of the Gates of Hell is now a thriving trading post where humans and demons interact, all overseen by one of the Overfiends. Some investigation by the players



should lead to them understanding that the horrendous conditions on earth mimic those of Hell and so now trade between the two realms is possible. At this stage, the players might find themselves in some sort of feud with one of the Hell's Gate traders—perhaps for stealing from the caravan rather than guarding it, or for some perceived slight.

This could lead them into conflict with the established authorities of Hell's Gate—the Overfiend and maybe a human gang lord who maintains his own quarter, enforcing his laws with bribed demons as enforcers. Caught between these two forces with quite different intentions, the players will have to negotiate a careful truce—further exploring the relationship which has been struck between the earth and Hell in this dismal epoch. At this point, the Overfiend supervising Hell's Gate might approach the players with a proposition which can clear their name and leave them free to leave Hell's Gate or remain there, should they so desire: one of his brothers has left Hell, cursing the Dreadlord and claiming that he will take the earth for himself. The rumors the players have heard of a growing power is this Overfiend's new kingdom. Kill the Overfiend and end his kingdom and the players will be well rewarded.

### LATE CAMPAIGN EVENTS

- **Suggested Rank(s):** Legendary

The journey to the Overfiend's domain should become increasingly hard and increasingly unpleasant. This Overfiend has attempted to outdo both the ravaged world and Hell itself, grisly trophies should litter the road—bodies of both humans, demons, mutant creatures and other, less identifiable things should be nailed to living rock. The Overfiend has insinuated himself into the world, rendering the land itself diseased and rotten. Have the parched soil be putrid, the roots of blistered trees sticking up from the ground like swollen entrails.

The Overfiend's fortress can be anything you like; a vast sprawling encampment which is easy to get into but nearly impossible to navigate—always shifting and changing as the players try to make their way to the Overfiend's residence, located in its center. It can be a Large, wrecked building, of a dozen or more floors, each filled with servants and assassins and

traps. Whatever it is, make it sinister and horrifying and tough. And make the Overfiend even more so—insinuate that the time he has spent away from Hell has driven him entirely mad. In order to bring the campaign full circle, the Overfiend can only be killed using Hell-Forged weapons—the first evidence the players found of Hell-earth interaction.

Have the campaign end with the players in a position of unexpected power—will they become warlords, taking over the Overfiend's domain? Will they attempt to build a better world? How will they treat Hell now that they know that the Overfiends can be killed? Will they go after the Dreadlord himself? All of these options are open to the players at the end of this campaign and will make great fodder for a second.

### VICTORIAN HELL

Any Victorian setting worth its salt concentrates on England—really, it can't do otherwise. That is where Victoria reigned from, where the Empire which had her as its figurehead originated and where the world's power was, for several decades, situated. So, how do we join up Victorian England and Hell? First, we have to decide what kind of Victorian England we want. Do you want the days of resplendent adventure—as bold, mustachioed heroes and determined, over-dressed women pursue anarchists, subdue restless natives and discover treasure located in remote churches (a la Kim Newman's *Anno Dracula*)?

You can have the seedy, grimy, evocative world of gas-light and tweed and gin; Dickensian London, Jack the Ripper, a furtive occult revival stirring in the minds of cloistered intellectuals (something like *From Hell*, Alan Moore's superlative graphic novel). Then there is the alternate-history Victorian age—where air-ships cruise smoothly across the sky, steam-powered computers have resulted in strange new technologies and clockwork people trundle down broad streets. Or you can aim for a more realistic brand of Victoriana—which takes some elements from all of these, but cross-pollinates them with a peculiar mix of conservatism and debauchery, scientific rationalism and esoteric belief, moral correctitude and concerted liberalism.

All of these are worth exploring and considering and we'll touch on all of them as we consider



how to combine Hell and Victorian England. For the example below, we'll be considering how such a campaign could work in Victorian London—the greatest metropolis in the world at the time, a hot-bed of political activity, scientific discovery, trade and immigration, with the most magnificent town houses for the rich and dilapidated slums for the poor. There's no better show on earth.

Victorian religion was strange; it existed. It thrived even. But it did so in a much reduced form. Darwin, Huxley and numerous other scientists and their discoveries undermined the certainty with which religion was treated and acknowledged by the majority. Hell was most certainly a victim of this scientific revolution—while it was still often brought up by firebrand preachers, it had begun to recede in prominence in many people's minds. It was still there, but demons weren't going to drag you down to Hell at any minute as people had thought at certain points during the middle Ages. So, how are we going to introduce Hell itself? We've thought about what kind of Victorian age we're gaming in, now where do we locate Hell itself? The suggestion here is to make Hell an accepted part of a secret society (like Freemasonry, the Golden Dawn or any of the other secret societies which thrived at the time) as part of a conspiracy which cuts through class boundaries. This ensures that the players get to visit every strata of Victorian life.

## EARLY CAMPAIGN EVENTS

- **Suggested Rank(s):** Novice, Seasoned

Sir Aloysius Pfenning (obviously, choose a name more to your liking; this has the right level of aristocratic baroque-ness for me) has been missing for some considerable time. Three weeks, in fact. The players are contacted by one of Pfenning's great friends—a Lord or Baron perhaps, or at the very least a gentleman. The players are invited to the club which Pfenning was a valued member of and perhaps given lunch. The extravagance of the club can be played up here. Focus on the trappings of wealth and Empire. The players can be from any social class and should be treated accordingly. If they are middle class, they will be talked to cordially but with a degree of reticence. If the party are largely working class, they will be patronized and treated condescendingly. Only an upper

class party should be treated as equals. If the party are a mixture of these types, they will tend to be treated like the middle classes—they aren't quite 'proper'.

This is where using London as a setting becomes such a boon: pretty much every conceivable culture is represented here, in microcosm. Pfenning could conceivably be involved in anything and responsible for anything—it all exists ready-made in Victorian London. Chinese immigrants in Limehouse; a thriving Jewish community nevertheless under siege from anti-Semitic violence; Indian students and merchants visiting from the subcontinent—exploit this potential to bewilder the players, ensnare them in the twisting, damp, crowded streets of London as they hunt for Pfenning. Let the players explore, perhaps working with the police or with a gang of criminals—let them hear any number of odd rumors; many of these can be drawn from real Victorian legendry: Spring-Heeled Jack or a (very) early appearance of the Highgate Vampire. The players should be on the alert for strangeness—have Pfenning's actions become increasingly odd as they track him. And then have them stumble onto something horrible. Pfenning being consumed by a Demon—the players watch as his flesh and his soul are wrenched from this world in the most brutal means imaginable.

## MID CAMPAIGN EVENTS

- **Suggested Rank(s):** Veteran, Heroic

At this point in the campaign the players have completed their primary objective—they have found Pfenning and now they have found evidence that Hell is both real and active in the world. If they return to their employer who set them in pursuit of Pfenning to inform him of their discovery, he will nod thoughtfully and then hand over a Pfenning's diary, explaining that he kept it hidden, before for fear of Pfenning's reputation. Now that he is dead however, they might as well see it; it corroborates their story. If the players study the diary, it shows Pfenning stumbling upon a vast Hellish conspiracy which underpins the British Empire; it is all established to feed souls to Hell. Pfenning sought to use this knowledge to make himself immortal. Instead, he got eaten.

What the players decide to do with the knowledge is uncertain. However, things at this



point should become strange. Have the players visited by pairs of men and women, all impossibly well dressed and of impeccable credentials. Imply that these are the ‘Kingmakers’ of the Empire; the power behind the Victorian regime itself. They issue vague, almost complacent threats, threatening ostracism, imprisonment and, only very subtly, violence. The players should begin investigating the truth of Pfenning’s claims, perhaps with several daring heists on government buildings, bank vaults or stately homes. Perhaps meetings with the immigrant communities might reveal evidence of the Hellish intent of various depredations inflicted on native populations. But this, of course, increases the character’s visibility to those sinister visitors who have given the players hinted warnings.

These peculiar visits should be compounded by the curious phrases and odd looks which the players begin to receive from people, no matter where they go. A workman repairing a church roof might suddenly say ‘The Dark Lord thanks you for your discretion.’ A maid, carrying a basket of shopping might mutter ‘the Overfiends will not be denied.’ Wherever they go, whichever strata of society they gravitate toward in order to preserve their safety, any security should be quickly compromised. Whatever Pfenning had become involved with has resulted in the players becoming targets or beacons of some kind, and the extent of Hell’s reach is being made plain to them. Build paranoia and unease. Have the players’ own friends and family appear to be in collusion—perhaps without knowing it. Could they be working for someone who the players know is involved?

Once the players are thoroughly on edge, have the Lord or Baron who employed them be brutally eviscerated, sending a clear message to the characters. The characters, as Pfenning’s last visitors, and his most suspicious, should be announced as suspects. The police begin to hunt them. The players are now fugitives, harried on all sides by the followers of the Dreadlord and the police. And of course, doubly exposed to those members of the Law who have given themselves to the forces of Hell.

## LATE CAMPAIGN EVENTS

- **Suggested Rank(s):** Legendary

The players are beset on all sides, without the possibility of help. They’ve lost their social standing, and are adrift with only a few options, first and foremost is to find their way to heart of the conspiracy.

Each stage of discovery should contain its own threat—have timid house maids become raging, knife-wielding psychopaths once questioned. Have a dozen or more, dead-eyed wealthy playboys besiege the player’s hideout like zombies. Once the players believe they have located the center of the conspiracy, allow them to approach it, let them set up an elaborate strategy and begin to enact it. However, as they near the target they believe to be Hell’s chief representative (perhaps an Overfiend sent to earth to co-ordinate the actions of the conspiracy), spring a surprise; have the gates to Hell actually open, demonic forces pour out, the fight suddenly becoming one against overwhelming odds; and have Pfenning be one of the first ones through the gate!

During the confrontation with Pfenning; have him reveal that he did achieve the bargain with Hell he was looking for—what the players saw was the consummation of his pact. And now, he is bringing the Dreadlord forth himself—something no one else involved in the conspiracy has the guts to do. Have the end of the fight become a desperate race against time to prevent the conjuration and the raising of the Dreadlord. Once it has concluded however, the gates of Hell remain open. Before the players can find a way to close them, have one of the dead reanimate and approach them but in order to negotiate the cessation of hostilities. Pfenning was a hot head, a fanatic; Hell struck a deal with him to keep him docile—they don’t want to invade earth.

Hell is, in this instance, a bureaucracy; it doesn’t want to disrupt the smooth flow of the current arrangement. The attacks were to secure the players co-operation. The final scripted act of the campaign should be a Faustian deal—endorse the conspiracy and profit from it, or embark upon the dangerous road to its destruction. Confront the players with this morally ambiguous deal and this revised vision of a passive, monolithic Hell interested only in the continued acquisition of souls. Then let them decide what to do with it.







## SCIENCE FICTION HELL

In an infinite universe, with an infinite number of spaceships, Hell is whatever you want it to be. That's both a blessing and a curse. Science Fiction is almost as varied as the vast universe it seeks to populate with strange technologies, alien life and whatever else the imagination can conceive. Hard SF or soft? Military SF or Golden Age SF? SF with Horror Overtones or Space Fantasy? For Hell to work, it needs to be uniquely suited to the setting.

Science Fiction has worked with notions of Hell—desert worlds are often seen as inherently hellish, the presence of several suns heating the planet unbearably. Or Hell could be another dimension—a realm generated by the existence of every conceivable universe, possibly, or else an atomic inevitability. After all, if the laws of thermodynamics tell us anything, it is that entropy is inevitable and unavoidable. Perhaps the final state of entropy is Hell? The last and most abject state of being which is contained within all living things is Hell, and the problem with faster than light travel is that it can enable mankind to reach the final state of entropy in which the universe decomposes, and those lingering forces of decay and dread and doubt and hatred finally take on physical form.

All of these ideas can be played with, contorted until they suit your campaign and your players. So, perhaps the effects of FTL travel cause things on ships to become subject to entropy much quicker than usual—in order to deal with this, all ships have a **Hell Core**: a space into which all irrevocably decayed material is placed. Each ship has its own repository of hellishness which needs to be emptied after every trip. Maybe this waste can be ejected into an artificially generated pocket universe. Perhaps mankind, and not a God, created Hell? Mankind created Hell in the future and it drifts back through all of time and space, but the place and its inhabitants are named for those legendary creatures of Earth's early myths. A paradox of course, but what does the Dreadlord love more than a paradox with which he can entrap those he preys upon?

The last idea is ambitious and might require a lot of planning, but could make a brilliant, time-travel game. The campaign frame worked out below is going to use a slightly more conventional take on the Hell as an alternate dimension

idea in order to create a fun campaign which is easy to manipulate to make it your own.

## EARLY CAMPAIGN EVENTS

- **Suggested Rank(s):** Novice, Seasoned

Start the players somewhere interesting and introduce some form of imminent conflict. For the purposes of this campaign frame, we're going to go with an impending war. If the players are space pirates or something of the kind, perhaps they could be running guns to one side or another. They might be escorting a group of diplomats to mediate a dispute between two rival inter-galactic corporations caught in the war. The war itself could be on any scale you choose—from full cosmic fleets and the destruction of planets to a single planet's struggle against itself—but the players should be involved in it in some way and able to witness at first hand just how bloody things are getting. Over the course of the initial stages, have the war develop, metastasizing and becoming ever more vicious. Have the players thrust into the heart of a battle which forces them to understand just how savage this war has become.

Make it plain that the war is nasty and brutish. Introduce the motivations of the sides fighting; whether both have goals which the players can empathize with, or, instead one side is 'good' and the other an 'evil' totalitarian juggernaut is of course best linked to the setting and to the players. Whichever side the players join, or come to empathize with, should suddenly find itself beginning to lose ground. This should not be immediately obvious but garbled reports from various battlefields should begin to gradually filter through to the players. Perhaps outposts are found deserted, their garrisons gone. Ghost ships are found—spattered with the residue of weaponry scanners can't identify. And the war still continues.

## MID CAMPAIGN EVENTS

- **Suggested Rank(s):** Veteran, Heroic

Slow things down for the party after they have gone on a few adventures directly involving them in the initial fighting, such as key battles that set the tone for the war. Then, have the leadership of their chosen allies request that they undertake a dangerous, highly secretive mission: infiltrate the enemy's security and



discover the means by which they are beginning to eliminate the players' allies. Make this a tense, difficult situation in which the infiltration comes perhaps at the expense of the lives of favored allied NPCs.

The players really have to convince their putative foe of their good intentions, or sneak through an incredibly dangerous and highly alert security system to obtain any access. Have the players sneak through the base if they have infiltrated it as spies; if, instead, they have conned their way in, perhaps playing their previous role as gun runners or an equivalent, have them summoned to an interrogation carried out by one of the more powerful NPCs on the side of the enemy. Whatever happens, make this a difficult and fraught part of the campaign. After the players have negotiated the various risks and hazards of the enemy's territory, they finally discover the means of the enemy's military success. A range of extra-dimensional weapons, which draw energy directly from a parallel world and expel it in intense, frenzied blasts of flame and destruction. The players should be able to get in close and handle these weapons, analyze them, and even if they are swift and discrete enough.

Where the weapons draw their power from is harder to define, except that it is from another universe, or plane of existence (this of course can be tweaked depending on the kind of SF game you're running.) What the players do with the weapons is up to them. They could choose to destroy them, steal one or more of them or set the weapons to self-destruct—they can even leave them alone. Whatever the players choose to do, this is the moment at which they discover precisely what it is that animates the weapons, and where they derive their power from.

If the players have spirited the weapons away, have this occur on board their ship. If the players try to destroy the weapons, have the weapons actively begin to defend themselves. If the players leave the weapons alone, strange things begin to manifest as they turn to leave or investigate something else. The weapons begin to become portals—tears in the fabric of space itself—unleashing demons. The players will have to fight these creatures but, as they do so, they should begin to receive distress signals from the base they have just infiltrated. The alternate dimension from which

power has been drawn is, as you've probably guessed, Hell itself. However, in drawing the power of Hell into the universe, the corruption and entropy within our universe has reached a critical mass and, finally, the Overfiends are leading an invasion through the rift they have carefully caused.

## LATE CAMPAIGN EVENTS

- **Suggested Rank(s):** Legendary

What the players choose to do now is up to them, but Hell is pouring into their universe, and the Overfiends are manifesting in hideous forms. Could the players return to their allies and lead a fleet into the colonies which Hell is establishing? Or will they launch their own raid, recapitulating the infiltration of the second act of the campaign but this time passing into the dark, fetid universe of interstellar space and planets which have been consumed by Hell itself.

Dwell on obscene, crazed imagery; horrible creatures looming through limitless darkness; the eternal wailing of damned souls. Have one of the Overfiends, in monstrously vast form, try to consume the players' ship. Have parts of space disappearing into Hell, and replaced by warped shreds of a maddening realm beyond. While this is going on, confront the players with a further moral dilemma; as the forces of their enemy are dispersed, fleeing from terror, what do they encourage their allies to do? Do they massacre the refugees in vengeance (and risk increasing Hell's power)? Or do they resolve the conflict and mobilize together to confront the forces of Hell (how bleak do you like your SF, in other words)?

Move the players towards a conclusion here but don't feel compelled to resolve the condition of Hell itself. After all, if you're playing an extensive campaign in the setting, a manifestation of Hell at the fringes of the environment is a real boon to a GM. Instead, perhaps have the players stymie Hell's territorial ambitions, pinning them in through assembling a blockade of ships and driving Hell back. Alternatively, if the players are set on combatting Hell's incursion, have them drawn into a mind-twisting, psychedelic guerilla war—tracking each Overfiend through their individual area of occupied space—fit in as much madness as you can!

## CULTS

Cults are what happens when normative religious practices—Hell, when the whole gamut of normal life—just won't cut it anymore. It's a response to something so startling, so different, so impossible to rationalize, that everything you had understood to be true is proven to be false, to be worthless. If you're a GM looking to build an interesting and arresting Cult for your players to fight, this is a good place to start. In real life, Cults are usually the expression of a single person, or group of people's madness and greed.

Occasionally, these kind of Cults can be useful too, perhaps as a red herring when the players are searching for the root of some particularly strange magical rituals; naturally they assume the Cult is responsible but in fact it is the head of a corporation, trying to use the power of a forgotten God to further his business aims. The Cult, while certainly odd, just want their members to keep donating money and keep attending classes with names like "Actualizing Your Inner Wrath." But this use of a Cult will be a rarity.

What we are looking for, are Cults full of dangerous people who worship a deranged God and think that bringing about the apocalypse might be pretty good fun. Now, as noted above, real world Cults are often only really dangerous to their own members' bank accounts and psychological health. There are tragic exceptions, of course, but we aren't here for miserable reality. We're here for fun and drama. With that in mind, the Cults I'm going to talk about are the lethal, fanatical kind—the kind *Indiana Jones* fights or who keep trying to raise the Devil in Hammer Horror films, or drag the whole world into Hell itself. All of these guidelines are just as applicable to secondary-world fantasy settings as they are to real world games. Like the man said, a Cult is a Cult is a Cult. Whether the members are human beings or evil elves, they're all likely dangerous to know!

So... how do you go about building a Cult? Well, a brief trawl through the history of any of the most famous or the most unusual Cults will reveal a certain number of commonalities, which any GM can adapt to make a quick Cult. For those with a little more time, adding layers of flavor to your Cult can produce a rich resource for PCs to come up against again, and again.

It all depends on what you want from your Cult, and how much time you want to spend imagining them. Both styles of Cult creation have their benefits, and both can be stripped for parts when constructing any antagonistic organization for your PCs to go to war with. Below, the advice has been split up into two categories: Cult Characteristics and Detailing Your Cult. The first of these gives some loose guidelines for quickly throwing together a Cult for a game and having it feel real to your players, while ensuring it's easy to handle from a GMing standpoint. The second section offers ideas as to how you might begin to flesh the Cult out and turn it into a truly formidable opponent for your band of unsuspecting PCs. As ever with gaming, whether you want the quickly thrown together Cult or the more detailed version, it's up to you!

## CULT CHARACTERISTICS

### CULTS NEED THEIR OWN BELIEF SYSTEM

As obvious as this sounds, it's worth stating anyway. Cults exist because they have ideas and beliefs that don't fit in anywhere else. Whether these are strange, warped versions of conventional religious dogma or entirely new or alternative beliefs, with strange new Gods (like the Cult of Cthulhu, from Lovecraft's 'The Call of Cthulhu'), make sure your Cult believes in something strange. The stranger the better—the more you can freak your players out, or at least leave them asking 'what the hell?' the more memorable your Cult will be.

### CULTS ARE PYRAMIDS

This one is debatable but it certainly makes a busy GM's job easier if we accept it as true. Many Cults exist solely as the result of one charismatic individual's vision—seriously, think about it: Charlie Manson, David Koresh, Jim Jones, Moses David... the list goes on. If you have a single leader, everything is sorted for you as a GM. Is the Cult malignant? Well then, the players stop it by fighting their way to the top. Is the Cult benign? Maybe the Cult Leader is a wise, if eccentric, source of clues or direction for players. Either way, a pyramidal structure to a Cult makes it both easier to visualise and easier to populate. If we have a single leader with a powerful vision of the world, or a close connection to their God, then the players only need to follow a straight line—from each group



of Cultists to the next, until they finally find the Cult Leader. Of course, it shouldn't feel this easy for them, but for a GM, the strictly structured hierarchy of a Cult provides easy escalation of both tension and reprisals for characters who get a bit too inquisitive...

### **CULTISTS ARE EVERYWHERE (OR NOT)**

As anyone who has played a Cthulhu-related game knows, Cultists are behind pretty much everything and always waiting to strike. Now, as anyone who has played a lot of Cthulhu related games also knows, this can get pretty tedious, pretty darn quickly. However, for a GM, the fact that Cultists—except when dressed up in robes for a big ceremony or whatever—look exactly like you or I should never be simply thrown away, no matter how much of a cliché it might seem. Instead, play with this trope—stretch it and warp it to suit your purposes.

So, if you want an especially powerful Cult, have its reach and influence be virtually limitless. Have players accost a suspected leader of the Cult, only be confronted by an entire street filled with NPCs who are members of the same Cult! Alternatively, have the Cult in fact consist of only say, five members, but have them

employ non-believers in a number of capacities so that the players are constantly second-guessing themselves.

Who is a member and who isn't? Who will actually be trying to summon Baphomet and who will just be guarding the doors, entirely ignorant of what is going on behind them? Cults are, as far as GMs are concerned, as stretchy and amorphous as you want them to be. Want them to have agents in every corner of the world? No problem.

Want them to be two women in an Internet Café with a theology devoted to the annihilation of garden gnomes? Go for it.

### **CULTS ARE SECRETIVE**

Quick etymology—Cult derives from Occult—meaning hidden. Cults are furtive, not just because they might be persecuted for the strangeness of their beliefs, (certainly not anymore; this is more of a legitimate concern if you are running a campaign set in the past or in a rigid, orthodox fantasy world) but because they don't want to share them. Whether this is because the Cult believes that only 33 people can enter the afterlife, or that only those who actively seek out the sinister rites of the Black



Lotus are worthy to practice them is up to you, of course. But conceal as much as you can about the Cult, for as long as you can. Only give players hints as to what the Cult believes and intends to do—this both keeps them interesting as an adversary and also makes the GM’s life much easier.

**CULTS NEVER DIE**

The beauty of a heterogeneous group of people like a Cult is that, realistically, you can never quite stamp it out. A quickly put-together Cult can become a recurring adversary over any number of adventures, in any number of locations. Maybe a Dwarf cult dedicated to the god Magnil of the Volcano forms a grudge against a party of adventurers for desecrating a shrine and, from then on, whenever the adventurers enter a city with a major Dwarf population, they are the victims of endless petty theft and vandalism until they make reparations to the founder of the Cult. Or, perhaps a dedicated band of investigators pursued and killed Machiavel Hounslow, the villainous magus responsible for the murders of several young debutantes—ending his Cult at the same time. Except for the fact that someone has claimed to have received a message from Machiavel from beyond the grave and is now calling for the Investigators murder in order to resurrect the Cult’s beloved leader. A Cult can always, always, always come back. That’s the power of belief after all!

**DETAILING YOUR CULT**

So we’ve discussed the key elements for quickly putting a Cult together for use in a game; a loose set of characteristics which should enable you to put together a fun to play Cult pretty easily. But how do you begin to add real depth and flavor to your nascent Cult?

If, as suggested above, you want to bring your newly minted Cult back, again and again, to bedevil your players, then you need to work a little harder and add a few more layers to the Cult’s belief, iconography and rites. Adding layers to your cult is easy, it just takes a little extra time and little extra thought to achieve. Let’s get to work...

Where do they worship? Simple question, isn’t it, but one that yields myriad possibilities. Cults usually have a set place where their rituals can take place, and this is usually related to belief systems and important, recurring Cult symbols.

The Roman mystery Cult of Mithras had their shrines in underground chambers, where members would gather to conduct unknown rites. UFO cults often have their meetings out in vast, open spaces, which, they hope, will make the likelihood of alien contact greater. So, devote some time to thinking about where the Cult meets and why.

On board an airplane, maybe; so that they do not touch the ground but are instead amongst the thermal drafts, like the God they worship, Ithaqua, Walker on the Winds.

Do they congregate on a beach, inscribing strange sigils in the sand and constructing odd circular shrines from pebbles and shale? Give your Cult a specific location, make it indistinguishable from the Cult itself and then use this association to your advantage. Set adventures in which the Cult does not appear in similar locations and scare your players with the possibility of the Cult manifesting itself, only to have the enemy being something entirely different.

Be sure to decorate areas of Cult control or activity with subtle iconography, relics or glyphs—as discussed in more detail below. Cult hideouts, shrines, sacrificial temples, whatever, should all always be threatening and unsafe for players—they should follow a logic the PCs can recognise but not understand. That’s not to say that every surface should be drenched in blood or human skin but that the place should be evidence of something abnormal, strange and murky... perhaps the walls secrete a substance which burns the hands clean, leaving the characters shaken and in pain but cleansed for ritual purposes. Could the Cult’s temple be filled with a series of pipes over which wind plays, spelling out horrifying words in forgotten alphabets, which the PCs might not be able to understand but can nevertheless intuit?

**WHO MAKES UP THE CULT?**

We’ve touched on this already, but if you’re taking your time in building a Cult carefully, give this some extra thought. Historically, Cults tend to be loosely derived from a single social stratum with occasional elements drawn from other social classes and creeds. This isn’t a hard and fast rule, but a general insight. It is one you can co-opt for yourself, or entirely ignore, choosing to spread the Cult through every possible level of society, like an insidious weed wrapping itself around the spine of the body politic.



Or, you know, not.

However, bear in mind that this element is one of the reasons that Cults are able to maintain secrecy—a bond between members which is not simply based on faith but on shared cultural identity. Which is to say they all have something in common.

Often this can be economic class. Think about the Cult in Lovecraft's *Shadows Over Innsmouth*: The Esoteric Order of Dagon. All of the worshippers occupied the same decrepit town, maintained the same half-dozen places which visitors might call in at. Voodoo circles in Haiti depended for their survival on a tight-knit community; Santeria circles in the USA are usually dependent upon the same groups of people, with similar backgrounds and income. This is how unity is maintained.

Of course, strangers attend, occasionally, but often the intention is to draw them entirely into the Cult until they become a part of the community which sustains the Cult. Drawing from such a community gives a GM two things: firstly, an easy base from which to source NPCs; secondly, it increases paranoia and tension in the players.

Just as securely locating the Cult geographically can be enormously effective, so too can the Cult being drawn from one community. Can the players trust anyone in said community? The community from which the Cult emerges, needn't be ethnically or geographically fixed however, particularly in the Internet age. Online fandom often has a cultic dimension; so too do One Direction or Justin Bieber fans.

Try combining a fixed geographical location for the Cult with a broad demographic for its members. Imagine the tension you could create by combining a fixed Cultic location—say, a seedy night club—with the kind of community which could harbour or produce a Cult spread across a vast city like New York—perhaps, users of a particular drug the PCs are tracking—not everyone who visits the club is a member of the Cult but all of them might be.

Cults can be drawn from any community. That group of rich golfers? Naturally they're a Cult. Travelling salesmen meeting at conferences to perform bloody rituals in pursuit of profit? Can you think of a better cover? Aspects of a Cult's make-up, like community and geographical location, should not be thought of as limitations—they can (and should) be broken if you think the story needs it—but use these factors

as ways of adding layer upon layer of detail to your Cult without having to name every member individually!

### BEYOND BELIEF

You've got an idea of what the Cult believes. Maybe it's a particular God. Perhaps it's a conviction that the Apocalypse needs to happen sooner rather than later, or perhaps it's an obsession with using the secret geometries of a pornographic film to compel millions to commit ritual murder. But why does the Cult believe the things they do? And how do they let others know that they believe at all? That's right, people. It's time to talk symbolism and belief.

Belief sounds easy to determine. The prospective cultist reads a copy of the appropriate text or is shown the effects of saying this particular ritual and starts to follow the Cult's ways in order to achieve power or wealth or what have you. But how do the cultists recruit? Do they drug prospective members and stimulate visions designed to produce fervid belief?

Do they require payment in money, in death, in souls, or some other foul contract? You find the answers to one or two of these questions and you begin to deepen your Cult, begin to add layers of intrigue which contribute to the feel of your Cult, to its depth and realism.

Ask yourself as many of these questions as you can; how does the Cult induct its members? How do members of the Cult introduce themselves to one another: Secret handshake? An arcane symbol traced upon the floor with a casual sweep of the foot? This comes down to Cult Symbolism.

Cults often have myriad symbols, denoting different aspects of their belief, all of which can be incredibly useful for GMs. Want to subtly indicate that a small, cigarette smoke-filled café is the heart of a diamond-eating Cult of Anubis? Have one of the dozen or so mirrors surrounding the bar bear the tiny, jackal symbol which the PCs have been chasing. But symbolism can be more than this, it can become a language—the Cult communicating secretly, via adverts on buses or trains. Try and connect symbols together, so that the Players begin to question everything around them. If the Cult worships a giant Octopus (who may or may not be called Cthulhu), likely their first symbol will be that of an Octopus, but another of their symbols might be an eight-pointed star.



So we have stars and octopi as symbols—where do we go from there? Well, surely octagonal things would be the obvious way to go. In the UK, a particular traffic sign is octagonal—a STOP sign. The cult might use these traffic signals as message boards, means of exchanging information, leaving coded messages in scraps of newspaper dumped nearby. Shredded newspaper can then become a Cult symbol.

What's the point of that, you may ask. Well, have the players visit virtually any home or walk across any stretch of industrial wasteland in any country and look at what they find there. All of these individual symbols can, when added together, become a tapestry, weaving its way across the game world. If your Cult is a nature Cult, have them build strange things out of sticks, like the *Blair Witch* or *True Detective*. Carve hideously life-like faces into the trunks of trees (and who says they are lifelike and not alive, anyway?). Make the rustling of leaves become symbolic of the Cult's presence. Use the Cult's symbols as a means of both unifying the Cult's aesthetics and of dissociating the PCs from the environment they are—impress upon the players that they are walking through a world alive with symbols that they can't read.

**SPLIT 'EM UP**

How many denominations of Christianity can you name? Half a dozen? A dozen? More? There are, quite genuinely, thousands of different sects all of whom can be included under the aegis of Christianity, but all of whom have their unique character and their idiosyncratic interpretation of doctrine and scripture... so why would your Cult be any different? Put simply: they wouldn't. And, when you don't have a central authority laying out precisely what interpretation of the Bible is valid and which is heretical, schisms and internecine war becomes all the more likely. And let's be honest, the kind of Cults your typical heroes are going to be facing are the kind who worship Gods who don't honestly care if their followers are sticking knives in each other's backs, so long as the blood keeps flowing.

So make it as interesting and dangerous for your players as you can. Why has the Cult split? How many shards has it split into? You can conceivably have as many branches of the Cult, all operating separately, as you (as a GM)

can manage. But try to give each sect its own reason for existing—Luther didn't nail his 99 theses to the Brandenburg gate because he thought the Pope was being unreasonable. He literally believed the Pope was the antichrist. If your Cultists have broken away from the people who believe in almost exactly the same things they do, there should be a bloody good reason. Or, a good bloody reason—perhaps the human sacrifices the Cult carries out are no longer as brutal as they used to be.

The main body of the Cult has recognized that carving up the chests of young men in honour of Oegilb, God of Spite, is going to get them caught and so they make their sacrifices look like muggings gone wrong. But the fanatic wing of the Cult can't tolerate this and its actions are becoming increasingly grisly—the players might be caught up between two factions of the same Cult, both of whom want the PCs dead but are at each other's throats as often as they are hounding the players. And Oegilb...? Well, the God of Spite is enjoying every moment of it.

So play up divisions and splits in the fabric of a Cult; let the organization forever be on the verge of destroying itself as much as the world. It gives the players a sense that the Cult is a living organism. It also gives you two or more Cult leaders as dangerous, charismatic antagonists and a convenient means of allowing the players to escape should they be so foolish as to get caught... after all, what self-respecting party of PCs can't escape from a Cult HQ during an inter-cult dust-up?

**LET THE CULT EVOLVE:**

Whatever people might say or think, religions and religious belief is always changing. Shifting to accommodate new facts, new ideas, and new theologies. All of these have cumulative effects over time—some of them lead to splits and schisms such as those discussed above. But they don't have to. Norman Cohn, in an essay called 'How Time Acquired a Consummation' explains how Zoroastrianism's identification of the date of the Apocalypse changed, dependent upon the context in which it found itself—when it was a small, inconsequential religion, responding to external violence and change, the Apocalypse was imminent. As the religion become established and the orthodox belief of the Persian Empire, the Apocalypse slipped back, so that it was over 4000 years away from happening.



Now, obviously, you don't have to have something quite as extensive as the explanation for your Cult's changes, but it is an interesting way of keeping your Cult effectively scary or troublesome. Give it some thought. If your PCs are encountering them a second or a third time, it's fairly likely that the Cult failed in its initial plans. Was the Apocalypse halted? The sacrifice rescued or prevented? The holy book stolen? Whatever happened, chances are the Cult tangled with your players and came off worse. But religious movements have to explain failure... so how does your Cult do it? Was their God not watching? Had their rituals and means of worship been insufficient? Were the Cultists themselves simply unworthy of completing the task?

Whatever the answer, the Cult will need to find some way of rationalising their failure, of incorporating it into their beliefs. Will this lead to their worship becoming more frenzied and more threatening to the world? And how will they react to the players? Will they be seen as the implacable enemies of the Cult, to be murdered at the earliest opportunity?

Or, more sinister still, will they become part of the Cult's worship, become incorporated into ritual—as those Blessed Ones who revealed that the Cult had to cleanse itself before it was ready to raise the Demon Vargal... perhaps the players begin to find small votive offerings left for them in unusual places. Either way, subtly altering the Cult's belief structure in order to acknowledge the players' actions is guaranteed to ensure that the Cult possesses the capacity to unnerve the party, whenever they show up!

## SAMPLE CULT

What follows is an example of a Cult you might use in your games, and how you might go about using the guidelines we've sketched above. The first example is a basic overview of a Cult which might bedevil the PCs in one adventure; details are extremely loose, they could conceivably show up anywhere and be involved in anything.

The second example is that same Cult but fleshed out so that its defeat might take up a Campaign, with a range of plot details upon which individual scenarios could be hung. The cost of this extra ration of info however is that the Cult is now more fixed—it has an MO and a number of identifying features which place

greater limits on the kind of sinister projects they might be involved in. Which one you prefer, is, of course, dependent on you and your group.

## QUICK CULT

**Name:** The Cult of the Scepter

**Beliefs:** Convinced that the golden scepter they possess is the key to returning the Mad God, Glithank, to the world. This is drawn from a book, called the *Lore of the Sainted Return*.

**What they want with the PCs:** Characters in possession of a ritual which will unlock the power of the scepter which is useless without it.

**Leader:** Charles diSalvo; Former Monk and now millionaire author and critic.

## DETAILED CULT

**Name:** The Cult of the Scepter

**Beliefs:** The Mad God Glithank is an ancient entity which once ruled the world before being trapped in a pocket dimension, created by the creature's own insanity. This pocket dimension was located in a single jewel which one of the God's last remaining faithful worshippers fitted into a scepter, hoping one day that the ritual required to free Glithank could be performed. This story and information about the whereabouts of the necessary ritual (though not the ritual itself) is kept within the ancient tome *Lore of the Sainted Return*, of which there are three copies in existence. One of these is also under the Cult's control, though they do not have the ritual.

**Leader:** Charles diSalvo; Former Monk and now millionaire author and critic, diSalvo has always possessed remarkable charisma and charm, something which made him an excellent preacher in his former life as a Monk. However, diSalvo's charisma and charm mask a narcissism which make the seduction of young women irresistible for him. A pregnancy scandal and public disgrace led to his dismissal from the monastery and a spell of restless wandering, searching for something else to believe in—feeling that God had betrayed him.

Stumbling across the *Lore of the Sainted Return* in a private collection, diSalvo became obsessed with Glithank and began to commune with the God via obscure rituals. Convinced of the God's reality and power, diSalvo began to woo wealthy men and women to his way of thinking. At the same time, he began to turn



some of the ideas and lessons contained in *Lore of the Sainted Return* into a series of self-help books, winning over more people to his Cult and earning himself a small fortune. His exposure to Glithank's power has rendered him a thorough psychopath, cold, ruthless and deadly. He will not hesitate to attack any who get in his way. Usually diSalvo is utterly disarming and funny. He is almost impossible to dislike.

**Core Membership:** The Cult consists of wealthy men and women, usually those who are especially driven and ferocious businessmen and women. diSalvo deliberately solicited the friendship and patronage of such people, recognizing in them both the willingness to commit to his goals and follow them through to the bitter end, but also a spiritual emptiness. The membership is small but powerful and wields tremendous influence. They are likely to have friends in high places and to buy their way out of trouble.

**Fringe Membership:** The success of diSalvo's books has drawn hundreds of thousands of people to his seminars and, from these, a handful are selected to become the more 'practical' members of the Cult. If diSalvo needs someone intimidated or otherwise dealt with, he will entrust the duty to one of these members. They tend to be large, unpleasant men, often with criminal records, who, in trying to better themselves, have fallen into the clutches of something far worse. Often these men are not especially intelligent, but they are effective, cunning and fanatically loyal to diSalvo, who they believe will be able to redeem them from their past transgressions.

**Initiation Rites:** The Cult's initiation relies upon two things—the first of these is an ear piercing and the wearing of a small ear-ring; a replica of the scepter but, on anything but close inspection, indistinguishable from an ear bar of the kind fashionable a few years ago. The second is that each Cult member must copy a page from *Lore of the Sainted Return* and carry it with them at all times—usually in a pouch around their necks.

**Cult Symbols:** The chief symbols of the Cult are a series of stylized scepter markings which can be easily drawn in chalk or etched in wood. Often these have been crossed, faintly at the top, so as to resemble a Latin cross. The Cult often places small, facsimile scepters outside mental hospitals or asylums, in praise of their

God's madness. To this end, the Cult often corresponds using the mad as messengers, passing information via vagrants and the homeless. For this reason, Cult members can often be seen consorting with homeless people, usually in the guise of charity work.

**Locations:** The Cult's place of worship is typically either an abandoned church or a room in a mental hospital. These are decorated with images of madness—often strange, hallucinatory photographs and drawings, images of the scepter and pages from *Lore*. The rituals which take place within are begun by the release of a powerful gas which induces states of hypnagogic madness in its users and enables them to speak to their God. Or at least believe they do.

**Responding to PCs:** If the Players defeat the Cult or steal from it, the Cult's response is unlikely to be out and out violent. There may be some intimidation tactics but diSalvo and his cohort will chiefly attempt to drive the PCs insane. Family members may be kidnapped, strange noises and disturbing images may be piped into a character's home, lights will flash outside windows, treasured items will go missing, only to reappear for a day or two and vanish again. In doing this, many of the Cult members will feel they are helping the characters achieve a state of communion with Glithank, the Mad God—it is an attempted conversion. Getting rid of troublesome PCs is merely a bonus.

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

There you go—two iterations of the same Cult. One which will provide a stubborn obstacle for a session or two and one which could form the basis of a campaign, as the PCs gradually find their way to the Cult's sinister center—something I have deliberately left somewhat ambiguous... that's for you to decide and for player actions to dictate. The above detail should be subject to change at any moment, whenever the PCs speculate about the Cult and say something interesting. Incorporate it directly into the fabric of the Cult itself. It makes the players feel clever and the Cult that much cooler. Remember, Cults evolve, constantly; have a framework for your Cult but be willing to change it on the spot... it keeps the Cult unpredictable and scary and, most importantly of all, it keeps the Players on their toes!





# THE BOOK OF THE LEGION

**N**o book about Hell would be complete without a chapter devoted to its infernal denizens. What follows is a comprehensive look at some of the hazards you'll encounter, and an array of creatures you can use in your game. The demons you find in this chapter are organized by type; lesser demons, greater demons, and finally the infernal lords of Hell. Unless otherwise stated, if you are using the rules for Demonic Pacts, these demons are able to make pacts.

## HELLISH HAZARDS

The following hazards are provided for you to use in your games. Some hazards, like the Gossamer Maze, are created for Hell as it's found in the Aegeron fantasy setting, but if your vision of Hell includes similar features, feel free to use it.

**Acid Fumes.** At first these look and smell like less toxic vapor clouds, but they become dangerous once entered. A Notice or Knowledge (Alchemy) roll will spot the change in time, otherwise the heroes suffer 3d6 acid damage as they flee too late.

**Acid Rain.** Acid falls, for 1d8 Rounds, dealing 1d6 acid damage each round. A Survival roll halves the number of rounds exposed (round down) and a raise avoids the rain completely.

**Amnesia Fumes.** Like Acid Fumes, these initially appear less dangerous. A Notice or Knowledge (Alchemy) roll will spot the change in time, otherwise all the heroes permanently drop a random Knowledge skill by one die type, or Smarts if no such skill is possessed.

**Barbed Mesh.** When you roll a running die in a meshed area, you suffer damage equal to the result. This die can Ace for the purposes of damage, but not for the extra distance you cover.

**Bonefall.** Make an Agility roll at -2 to avoid being pinned and suffering 2d10+2 damage.

**Charnel Pool.** If a hero should be unfortunate enough to stumble into a pool, first make a Spirit roll to generate the will to escape, and then a Strength roll to pull away from the grasping forms within. Each turn spent in the pool requires a Vigor roll as if the character had just become Incapacitated. If the hero is extracted alive but with an injury, the flesh becomes bloated and infected, as an Imp grows from the wound over the next 1d6 days.

The Imp can be slain by banishing it, or burning the limb to such an extent that the character becomes Incapacitated. If the Imp manages to free itself from the limb, the character loses the limb and takes the appropriate Hindrance (One Arm, One Leg, or maybe even One Eye).

**Collapsed Tunnels.** If above ground, a chasm opens, dumping the heroes into caves below. If underground, the roof collapses closing the tunnel and opening a path back to the surface. If present for the collapse make an Agility roll to avoid being crushed for 3d6 damage. Afterward, or when coming upon a previous collapse, either switch from above ground to below (or vice versa) or lose 1 day backtracking and finding a new route.

**Choking Clouds.** Characters must make a Vigor Roll for every minute spent in the cloud or suffer a level of Fatigue. Fatigue recovers at the rate of one level per 5 minutes of breathing clear air.

**Extreme Heat.** Use the standard *Savage Worlds* rules for heat. In Hell, Vigor rolls to resist the heat suffer between -0 and -4, with Dis and the Mute Citadel being the hottest areas.

**Fiery rain.** Everyone outside suffers 1d10 damage for 2 rounds and rolls for fire spreading normally. A successful Survival roll can find cover and avoid one round of damage, while a raise avoids both rounds of damage.

**Firestorm.** Escaping the flames requires a Dramatic Task using Climbing or Agility with the



standard -2 penalty. Each character who draws a club must roll to see if they catch fire. If the task fails each hero is burned for 2d10 damage, or may choose to fall 10 feet for each missing success to escape.

**Frothing Plague.** It is spread by Touch, and is Long-Term Chronic, Majorly Debilitating if contracted (see Disease, *Savage Worlds*). An Interloper killed by the Frothing Plague becomes Defiled, and remains Incapacitated until it's time for their next Vigor roll. Even if the heroes avoid the touch of the Infected, they must still make a Vigor roll each day or contract the Frothing Plague from secondary contact.

**Gossamer Maze.** Navigating the maze is a Dramatic Task using Smarts. Only one character can roll, but others may assist with Cooperative Rolls. If the task fails, the heroes are lost in the maze. Make a Vigor rolls or gain a level of fatigue, and face 1d6 Frost Spiders. The Vigor roll to resist cold suffers a cumulative -1 penalty each time the task fails, and it also requires a Dramatic Task to exit the maze, either from the center or while lost. Any hero who reaches the center must make a Fear check at -4 as they gaze upon The Screamer itself.

**Gelatin Flow Chamber.** Similar to the Gelatin Flow Trap described below, but in this case a room is rigged to lock and slowly fill with Gelatin from the Wilting Disease. Escape is handled as a Dramatic Task using Repair with the standard -2 difficulty penalty.

**Gelatin Flow Trap.** Located near a sickly flow of gelatin produced by the Wilting Disease. Those who stumble into one of these traps must make a successful Notice roll to avoid being knocked into the flow. Those who fail the roll must make a Vigor roll at -2 each turn, otherwise they suffer a wound and contract the Wilting Disease. Incapacitated victims lose their form and eventually drain downwards to join the Flow themselves.

**Ichor Flow.** Make an Agility roll or suffer 3d6 acid damage from flooding ooze. Deep pools of ichor may be left behind that deal 3d6 acid damage each round a hero spends immersed in one.

**Nausea.** Many sights, sounds, and smells in Hell require a Vigor roll to avoid vomiting. Failing doesn't cause Fatigue, but can definitely draw attention and unwanted questions.

## HEROES IN HELL

Hell's hazards are just as dangerous to the Defiled as they are to Interlopers. When heroes seem trapped or hopelessly outmatched, the Game Master may offer players the chance to spend a Bennie to activate a Hazard. The hapless heroes will have to survive the danger as well, which may seem a poor bargain for a Bennie, but then Hell is not an accommodating place.

**Lightning Storm.** A successful Knowledge (Arcana) or Survival roll escapes the danger, otherwise each character that fails is jolted for 2d10 damage (3d10 if in the False Forest).

**Rockslide.** Succeed on a Climbing roll to avoid falling 1d4x10 feet.

**Rune Mines.** A successful Notice roll spots them in time, otherwise they detonate in a Medium Burst template for 3d6 damage.

**Spell Storm.** Each hero is attacked by two random powers from below (roll 1d4). A successful Survival roll avoids one, while a raise avoids both.

1. Blast
2. Confusion
3. Dispel
4. Havoc

**Stone Hail.** The hail makes a single attack roll against everyone's Parry, dealing 1d6 damage on a hit and 2d6 with a raise. The hail rolls for 5 attacks, starting with Fighting d4 (no Wild Die) and increasing one die type each time. Targets may use the Defend or Full Defense maneuvers to try and ward off the falling stones.

**Volcanic Eruption.** Make a Survival roll at -2. On a failure a victim suffers 2d10 damage and a level of heat Fatigue just from being too near. On a result of 1 or lower, the victim is trapped by lava and destroyed.

**Wall Spikes.** A common décor in Hell. Any time an attack hits with a raise, the target is pushed into a spike and an additional 1d6 is added to the damage total.



## LESSER DEMONS

Lesser demons are by far the most common type of creature you'll find in Hell. Most are either minions of greater demons, or wander Hell's wastes looking for something to devour. Unless otherwise stated, these creatures can enter into a pact, and possess an individual. All lesser demons can be summoned.



### BERATHU

If the many demonic courts could be said to have lackeys, then the Berathu would fulfill that role. These sniveling, cunning and somewhat cowardly demons spend their days toadying to more powerful demons and doing anything asked of them—deceptions, assassinations, spying—while at the same time always seeking to place themselves at the disposal of even greater demons that may be allied with or opposed to their masters, and thus bring themselves more power. They also enjoy visiting the mortal plane to tempt weak mortals with pacts that are too good to be true, and tricking mortals into doing their bidding.

In battle the Berathu prefer to use tricks and illusions or even bribe others to fight for them rather than fight themselves. However they are still demons, and that does make them much stronger than even powerful mortals. If they must fight, they attempt to sneak up on their intended targets for an assassin's strike before using their other skills to confuse the target's allies and finishing off the survivors in open combat.

When encountered in their true form, the Berathu stand at the height of a man, with two dull black horns and singular yellow Cyclopean eye in the middle of their foreheads. They have crimson colored skin and leathery bat wings that allow for flight. They tend to smile too much, with two rows of needle-like teeth on display, their wolfish grins the only hint of the devious schemes that are constantly erupting in their minds.



**Attributes:** Agility d12, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Notice d10, Persuasion d10, Spellcasting d8, Stealth d12

**Cha:** +4; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7

**Gear:** Flaming long sword (Str+d8; +2 fire damage).

#### Special Abilities:

- **Assassin:** Add +2 to any damage roll where they strike foes unawares (even with ranged attacks).
- **Charismatic:** Charisma +4, the Berathu are very good at persuading others.
- **Demon:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; Immune to poison and disease; Half-damage from non-magical attacks except for cold iron.
- **Fear:** Anyone seeing the creature in its natural form must make a Fear check.
- **Flight:** Berathu have a flying Pace of 6" and a Climb of 0.
- **Illusions:** Berathu have 20 Power Points and know the following powers: mind reading and shape change.
- **Poison:** The Berathu frequently use poison-coated blades in combat. They prefer paralytic poisons to make their targets suffer longer.
- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Demons take normal damage from cold iron weapons.



### DISGORGER

Bloated and monstrous, Disgorgers are so named because of the distended sacs that cover their bodies. Tubes connect these to a type of bellows grafted into their back, allowing them to spray the turgid contents on hapless foes. It is said that when

a demon festers in the acid clouds too long, these swollen creatures are the result. Disgorgers are noisy, constantly making retching or flatulent noises as they move and spew their vile acid.

**Attributes:** Agility d4, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6

**Pace:** 4; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 9

**Special Abilities:**

- **Acid Spray:** As an action the Disgorger can fire a spray of acid, filling a Small Burst Template with a range of 6/12/24. Use Shooting to hit, and deviation is always 1d4" ×1 on a miss. Aware targets may attempt to jump out of the affected area with an Agility roll at -2. Those hit suffer 3d6 acid damage.
- **Demon:** +2 to recover from Shaken; Immune to poison and disease; Half-damage from non-magical attacks except from cold iron.
- **Immunity:** Disgorgers are immune to acid damage.
- **Pop:** When a Disgorger is incapacitated it detonates, showering a Medium Burst Template around itself with 2d6 acid damage. Those within the area may attempt to evade with an Agility roll at -2.
- **Size +2:** These creatures are over 7 feet tall and very corpulent.
- **Slow:** Disgorgers roll a d4 running die.
- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Demons take normal damage from cold iron weapons.



## EARTHRENDER

Twisted metal and the groaning, stitched together bodies of the Defiled make up the massive war machines known as Earthrenders. Each fiend is a walking siege tower, with enormous battering rams for arms. They obey the commands of a demon seated on their head, and have been known squash lesser demons into paste underfoot as they trudge across the battlefield.

The fiends and their grafted weapons are usually adorned with ghoulish metal skulls and protruding spikes.

In battle, these behemoths are usually directed towards

fortifications to open up a path for the hellish hordes behind them.

They are notoriously dim-witted, and if the commander riding the head can be displaced, a hero with the Command Edge could conceivably gain control of an Earthrender (see Suggestable, below).

**Attributes:** Agility d4, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12+6, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Taunt d6

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 18 (4)

**Special Abilities:**

- **Armor +4:** Grafted Metal Plating.
- **Battering Ram:** If the Earthrender doesn't move it may swing its Battering Ram as a Str+1d10 heavy weapon.
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; No extra damage from called shots; Immune to poison and disease; Ignores wound penalties.
- **Fear (-2):** Anyone who sees a massive Earthrender approaching must make a Fear check at -2.





- **Fearless:** Earthrenders are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Hardy:** The creature does not suffer a wound from being Shaken twice.
- **Huge:** Attackers add +4 to their attack rolls to hit an Earthrender.
- **Size +8:** These monsters are over 20 feet tall and almost as wide.
- **Suggestable:** Anyone with the Command Edge and perched atop its head can direct an Earthrender with an opposed Knowledge (Battle) roll against the creature's Spirit. The creature will move and attack as directed each time the roll succeeds, but will attack a non-demon commander if the roll fails.



**EDIMMU**

When the limp forms of the Emergent are allowed to waste away in the Reaping Grounds, their souls mix with the bones and arise as dreaded Edimmu. Skulls and shattered pieces of skeleton fuse together into a huge sentiment avalanche. Edimmu are amorphous in shape, growing arms as needed and knitting bones into a grinning death head at the center of their mass.

Usually three or more souls all twist together to create a single Edimmu, and the more souls it absorbs, the larger and more menacing it becomes. Edimmu are usually only found in the Well of Bones, and their Stealth and Burrow abilities are entirely dependent on being surrounded by skeletal remains.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Notice d6, Stealth d10

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 10

**Special Abilities:**

- **Burrow (6"):** Edimmu can burrow through the bone piles of Slaug. They can make a surprise attack, receiving +2 attack and damage (+4 on a raise) by beating their opponent with an opposed Stealth vs Notice roll.
- **Claws:** Str+d8.
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; No extra damage from called shots; Immune to poison and disease; Ignores wound penalties.
- **Engulf:** If an Edimmu scores a raise on its attack, the target is completely engulfed in sharp bones and carried along with the

creature. The target is Grappled, and each round he fails to escape he automatically suffers the Edimmu's Claw damage.

- **Fear:** Anyone seeing an Edimmu must make a Fear check.
- **Fearless:** Edimmu are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Large:** Attackers add +2 to their attack rolls to hit an Edimmu.
- **Size +4:** The mass of bones that form the Edimmu are usually 10 feet tall and can stretch out to twice that length.



**FLESH HOARDER**

Composed of the bodies of the fallen demonic dead, the Fleshhoarders are the composite stitched together walking nightmares birthed in the screaming surgical theaters of dread Azathok-Ild and his legion of butcher-surgeons. The Fleshhoarders often serve as golem-like gargoyles or living grotesques, used to defend the ramparts and aeries of the various Overfiends' fortifications or outposts—a fitting punishment for those too weak to survive or thrive in the endless wars of Hell's many battlefields.

Constructs are difficult enough to overcome, even by those well-armed and forewarned; constructs made of demonic flesh are often too much for even the most experienced warriors to handle. Aside from their frightful appearance and supernatural hardness, The Fleshhoarders carry a terrifying disease that causes those so afflicted to transform into a jelly-like blob fit only to be eaten by other demons.





When encountered, Fleshhoarders attempt to remain still and act as statues—until an enemy gets too close, when they will lash out with their bladed appendages.

While their individual looks can vary, all Fleshhoarders are armed with two large disease-dripping claws and always bear the scars, stitches and staples of their infernal construction; many are also grafted with ape-like hands to use as feet. Fleshhoarders do not heal naturally, and must repair themselves from other sources; usually this comes in the form of more demonic flesh, but whatever is at hand is considered acceptable.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d12

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Notice d6, Repair d8, Stealth d10

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9

**Special Abilities:**

- **Bladed Appendages:** Str+d10.
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; No additional damage from called shots; Immune to poison and disease.
- **Fear (-2):** Anyone seeing the creature in action must make a Fear check at -2.
- **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Infravision:** Fleshhoarders halve penalties for bad lighting when attacking living targets (round down).
- **Size +1:** These demons are over 7' tall.
- **Unnatural Stillness:** when not moving, the Fleshhoarders get a +4 to Stealth rolls.
- **Wilting Disease:** Anyone Shaken or wounded by a Fleshhoarder must make a Vigor roll at -2. Failure means the victim has contracted their wilting disease and takes an immediate wound. Sufferers cannot die; instead, upon being Incapacitated they are transformed into a immobile blob-like creature with no ability to communicate or use skills. They are simply food for other demons. The transformation is irreversible.
- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Demons take normal damage from cold iron weapons.



**GOREMOTH**

The spawn of Ibbilnaucht the Horned One, the Goremoths are violent and stupid brutes known for their red-hot rages and for sewing chaos on the eternal battlefields of Hell. Feared even by their own allies, these “ogres of the underworld” are bred continuously in Ibbilnaucht's demonic harem as disposable troops and to be sold to the highest bidder; they need only live long enough to lay waste to the best laid plans of demons and Overfiends alike. They also make excellent guard dogs and soldiers that don't ask a lot of questions, although they can be hard to direct when they are having violent arguments with themselves.

It is difficult to harm or halt Goremoths once they have begun to fight. Their leathery hides and immense constitutions combined with their low intelligence make them unlikely to feel pain or act on even the most basic survival instincts, but it can be done—methods such as acid, disintegration, high explosives and anything that causes high damage very quickly being preferred.



*Handwritten signature: "M. J. ... 2005"*





Beheading is also questionably effective, as the Goremoths can continue to function normally with one head.

A Goremoth demon usually has two heads, although some are born with three; this deformity marks them as battle leaders among their kind. They easily tower over their opponents (most are between 12 to 15 feet in height), sport multiple horns on their heads as well as spines along their limbs and backs and have mottled, earth-toned and armored flesh. They use crude, poorly fashioned weapons in battle, but are just as happy to use their bare fists—they enjoy using whatever method they can to smash their enemies into red paste quickly.

**Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12+3, Vigor d12+2

**Skills:** Fighting d12, Intimidation d10, Notice d4

**Pace:** 7; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 14 (2)

**Special Abilities:**

- **Ambidextrous:** May use either hand with no penalty, each hand controlled by one head.
- **Armor +2:** Leathery hide.
- **Berserk:** The demon makes a Smarts roll after receiving a wound. If it fails, its Parry is reduced by 2 but it adds +2 to all Fighting, Strength, melee damage rolls and Toughness. It ignores all wound modifiers. A Fighting die roll of 1 hits a random adjacent foe instead of the original target. Goremoth demons only end their berserk fury when all foes in sight are dead.
- **Demon:** +2 to recover from Shaken; immune to poison and disease; half-damage from non-magical attacks except from cold iron.
- **Fear:** Anyone seeing the creature must make a Fear check.
- **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Hardy:** The demon does not suffer a wound from being Shaken twice.
- **Size +3:** Goremoths are usually 12' tall.
- **Slam:** Str+d6; Reach 1.



**SPECIAL GOREMOTH:  
WERMAGGAT**

Wermaggat is the three-headed regent of Slaug. Goremoths are not usually known for their intelligence, but it spawned with one large primary head and then two smaller secondary heads on either side. All three heads are uncommonly malevolent and cunning, and the smaller heads whisper patient advice to the more

aggressive controlling head. Thus far it has remained loyal to Ibbilnaucht and Gula, but the longer it stays away the closer all three heads agree that they enjoy being a master more than a slave. Wermaggat wields a dreaded Nemesis Flail (page 21) in combat, and is usually leading a squad of Goremoths.

**Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d12+4, Vigor d12+2

**Skills:** Fighting d12, Intimidation d10, Notice d6

**Pace:** 7; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 14 (2)

**Special Abilities:**

- **Armor +2:** Leathery hide.
- **Demon:** +2 to recover from Shaken; immune to poison and disease; half-damage from non-magical attacks except from cold iron.
- **Fear:** Anyone seeing the creature must make a Fear check.
- **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Hardy:** The demon does not suffer a wound from being Shaken twice.
- **Nemesis Flail:** Hell-Forged; Str+d12; Heavy Weapon; Reach 2; Ignore Shield Parry and Cover bonus.
- **Size +3:** Goremoths are usually 12' tall.
- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Demons take normal damage from cold iron weapons.

**HATE SPAWN**

Creatures composed of blind rage and hatred, the demonic Hate Spawns are little more than the stray dogs of the underworld. Every Hate Spawn was once a living mortal soul, men and women of foul disposition, who died in a state of extreme anger. Those souls descended into the demon realm only to be transformed into blind hell hounds for their transgressions in life. Sometimes a Hate Spawn is adopted by a Overfiend or powerful hell-spawn as favorite pet or hunting hound, but most are left to be the feral beasts they are, wandering the wastelands of Hell, feeding on the cast-off spirits or rotting carcasses that fall on the underworld's eternal battlefields.

Hate Spawns are fairly weak by demonic standards, and singled out they can be dispatched easily by a party of determined hunters. Unfortunately, Hate Spawns travel in packs and can quickly overwhelm even the most well-prepared group. Weapons of cold iron and magic are the best methods of dispatching Hate Spawns.





Hate Spawn have no eyes, but that does not hinder them in their ability to accurately track prey. They are skinless beings that walk on all fours, their musculature on display for all to see, with bony growths sprouting from their backs, shoulders and haunches. Their teeth and front claws are as hard as iron, and can easily rend flesh as well as armor.

**Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d8, Tracking d10

**Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

**Special Abilities:**

- **Berserk:** The demon makes a Smarts roll after receiving a wound. If it fails, its Parry is reduced by 2 but it adds +2 to all Fighting, Strength, melee damage rolls and Toughness. It ignores all wound modifiers. A Fighting die roll of 1 hits a random adjacent foe instead of the original target. Hate Spawn only end their berserk fury when all foes in sight are dead.
- **Bite:** Str+d6
- **Blind:** These creatures are immune to any vision-based effects (darkness, invisibility, obscure, etc.)
- **Claws:** Str+d4; AP2. Hate Spawn claws can easily rend armor.
- **Demon:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; Immune to poison and disease; Half-damage from non-magical attacks except for cold iron.
- **Go for the Throat:** Hate Spawn instinctively go for an opponent's soft spots. With a raise on its attack roll, it hits the target's most weakly armored location.
- **Keen Noses:** Hate Spawn do not suffer any penalties for bad lighting, and track by scent.
- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Demons take normal damage from cold iron weapons.



**HELL HYDRA**

If any demon could be said to truly be the cast-offs of infernal arcane experimentation, it would be the Hell-Hydra. These monstrosities were first birthed in the ichor pits beneath the Floating Citadel of Rhuem, where a constant stream of effluent and magical sewage drips and dribbles from the wizardly demon lord Fornehaust's nearly impervious tower-city and vast torture dungeons. When Fornehaust first noticed these arcane spawn rising up from the pits and devouring anything in reach, he captured a few of the more intriguing specimens to and used them to infect many of Hell's sludge pits and waterways.

The Hell-Hydra possess little more than animal-level intelligence and are large enough to swallow smaller combatants whole.

Their most terrifying power is their ability to regenerate the most grievous wounds quickly, even amputation, so attempting to permanently harm or destroy one requires strong acids, extremely hot fires or the like—anything that can dismember the creature and then cauterize the limb stumps before they can grow anew.

When encountered, Hell-Hydra look like giant putrid worms with ever-hungry, screaming humanoid faces and multiple crab-like appendages that can easily snap a man in half. Their flesh tones range from jaundice yellow to pale white, and their hide is said to be



spongy and resistant to blows. The calcified pipe-like eruptions along the creature's head are used for breathing when submerged, and often the tell-tale sign that a Hell-Hydra resides in a nearby waterway, as they rarely leave uneaten corpses behind—even their own fallen brethren.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d4 (A),

Spirit d8, Strength d12+8, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Intimidation d10,

Notice d6, Stealth d6

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 16 (4)

**Special Abilities:**

- **Armor +4:** Spongy hide.
- **Aquatic:** Swim Pace of 6".
- **Bite:** Str+d6.
- **Claws:** Str+d8.
- **Demon:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; Immune to poison and disease; Half-damage from non-magical attacks except for cold iron.
- **Fast Regeneration:** Can make a Vigor roll every round to heal any damage it has sustained—even after it has been “killed.” A success heals one wound (or removes Incapacitated status), and a raise heals an additional wound; +2 to Spirit rolls to recover from being Shaken.
- **Fear:** Anyone seeing the creature must make a Fear check.
- **Large:** Attackers add +2 to their attack rolls when attacking a Hell-Hydra due to its size.
- **Multiattack:** A Hell-Hydra may make up to four attacks each round. On a raise the creature has grappled a victim. A grappled victim may only attempt an opposed Strength roll to escape. Once grappled, a Hell-Hydra does its Strength damage automatically by crushing the victim.
- **Size +5:** Hell-Hydra are usually 15' long and 10' tall.
- **Swallow:** A Hell-Hydra scoring a raise on a Bite attack roll has swallowed its prey whole. The victim is grappled as per the core rulebook, with a -4 penalty to escape, and suffers an automatic 2d6 damage per round from digestive juices. This ability only works on creatures of Size +3 or smaller.
- **Weakness (Acid or Fire):** Wounds caused by these types of attack do not regenerate and must heal naturally.
- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Demons take normal damage from cold iron weapons.



**HELLION**

**In Hell, no place is safe from things that would devour the unwary, not even the skies.** The Hellion, or Hell Bat, is the most common flier among the caverns of the underworld, residing high in caverns and demonic aeries, or atop the many spires of hellish fortresses. Hellions are nearly silent hunters, their only sound being the leathery flapping of wings—often the last thing their prey ever hears before they are carried off to be devoured.

Hellions are difficult to bring down as they never land anywhere but in high places that would test the skill of even the best archer or marksman. They are also very adept fliers, able to turn on a moment's notice and climb quickly. While they can be defeated by standard methods available to the average character, being able to hit them quickly and from a distance will be the most trying aspect of combat with a Hellion.

When encountered, Hellions stand just over five feet tall, but their wing span can extend their size ten feet wide. They have no forelimbs and must hold their prey with their feet while they eat, so their talons grip like iron. Hellion



skin is mottled a strange pinkish-red, making them hard to see against the smoking red skies of Hell. The Hellions have small, keen eyes on the sides of their heads, allowing them to spot even small prey at great distances, much like hunting hawks.

**Attributes:** Agility d12, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Notice d12+4, Stealth d12+2

**Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

**Special Abilities:**

- **Bite:** Str+d4.
- **Demon:** +2 to recover from Shaken; immune to poison and disease; half-damage from non-magical attacks except from cold iron.
- **Flight:** Hellions have a flying Pace of 24" and a Climb of 3.
- **Infravision:** Hellions halve penalties for bad lighting when attacking living targets (round down).
- **Size +1:** Hellions are nearly 10' wide with their wing span.
- **Talons:** Str+d6.
- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Demons take normal damage from cold iron weapons.



## KORALACH

Known as the Blade Saints of Hell, the Koralach demons are the creation of the mad demon lord Eriaxiel with the sole design of her twisted entertainment. These creatures possess the unique ability to bind any bladed weapon to their pliable flesh, making them porcupines of infernal steel—Eriaxiel finds things like gladiatorial combat, amputation and flesh-crafting amusing and combines all of her loves into one creature.

It is difficult to deal with a Koralach, as dismemberment does nothing to them; they can simply re-graft the severed limb in seconds or grab something sharp nearby and stick it to the stump. Provided their bladed defense can be bypassed they can be beheaded effectively, but it is easier to use attacks that render them unable to graft new things to their bodies—attacks such as strong acid, cauterizing fire and boiling them alive have been found to be very effective.

When encountered, the Blade Saints are a uniform crimson red in color with black hair and yellow eyes—much like their creator. While not truly intelligent they are quite cunning, able to execute orders on their own and even work as mercenaries for hire. Their hide is very unusual and strange, able to bind to nearly anything, including the weapons and bare hands of anyone unwise enough to strike them with anything not composed of cold iron or magically endowed. Certain Koralach have learned to wear armor, which binds to them permanently and makes them even harder to kill.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Notice d8

**Pace:** 7; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9

**Special Abilities:**

- **Ambidextrous:** May use either hand with no penalty.
- **Blades:** Str+d10, Reach 1.
- **Demon:** +2 to recover from Shaken; Immune to poison and disease; Half-damage from non-magical attacks except from cold iron.





- **Fear (-2):** Anyone seeing these creatures must make a Fear check at -2.
- **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Grafting:** A twisted form of constant regeneration, a Koralach can grab any metal objects and hold them to any part of their body, where the object becomes a new weapon for them in seconds. The creature can make a Vigor roll every round to heal any damage it has sustained, as long as it has access to metal objects.
- **Grapple:** If the Koralach hits with a raise (and still has at least one useable hand), it has grappled a victim. The victim may make only one opposed Strength roll per round to escape. Once grappled, the Koralach does its Strength damage automatically by rending the victim on its body spikes. A victim killed in this manner is absorbed into the Koralach within one round, and heals the demon of one wound or having been Shaken.
- **Size +2:** Koralach demons are over 10' tall.
- **Weakness (Acid or Fire):** These types of attacks negate the Koralach's Grafting ability.
- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Demons take normal damage from cold iron weapons, and Koralach cannot graft such weapons (their flesh tends to boils away from cold iron).



**MEMNOCH**

Terrors made flesh, the Memnoch, or battle demons, act as the field generals and dread commanders of Hell's armies. They are towering beasts who delight in warfare and carnage, proven and often devious military strategists who are unafraid to grab a weapon and wade chest deep into any melee. With the eternal warfare of the demon realm, these fiends get a lot of practice at battle; the most decorated and successful of the Memnoch are highly sought after by the Princes of Hell—and by princes of the mortal realm!

Being born and bred in battle, any single Memnoch is nearly impossible to bring down by mere mortals alone, and these fiends often bring allies and armies to assist them. The best hope anyone facing a Memnoch can ask for is that the fiend has fallen for hubris and surrounded itself with weak or merely mortal allies, and that you can discover the special weakness each and every Memnoch has.

If confronted, Memnoch appear as red-skinned armored horrors, their hides studded with horns and spikes of bone, fiery embers leaking from their many eyes, molten flame spewing from their mouths and fire glowing in the crevices in their armor. Leathery black wings hang about their shoulders like royal cloaks, and their massive cloven hooves burn a path wherever they dare tread. Few Memnoch are ever far from their favorite weapon, a blade or axe forged in the pits of Hell itself—and none of them will part with it lightly.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d12+2, Strength d12+4, Vigor d12

**Skills:** Fighting d12+2, Knowledge (Battle) d12+2, Intimidation d10, Notice d8

**Pace:** 7; **Parry:** 9; **Toughness:** 20 (8)

**Special Abilities:**

- **Armor +8:** Rock-like leathery hide.
- **Demon:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; Immune to poison and disease; Half-damage from non-magical attacks except for cold iron.
- **Fear (-2):** Anyone seeing the creature must make a Fear check at -2.
- **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Hardy:** The creature does not suffer a wound from being Shaken twice.
- **Immunity (Fire):** Memnoch are unaffected by fire or heat.



- **Large:** Attackers add a +2 to their attack rolls due to this creature's size.
- **Size +4:** Memnoch are nearly 15' tall.
- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Demons take normal damage from cold iron weapons.
- **Weakness (Infernal Steel):** Memnoch take normal damage from their own weapon, provided they can be parted from it.
- **Weakness (Special):** Every Wild Card Memnoch has a special weakness tied to their background. It takes a great deal of difficult research to discover, but the weakness can do double damage to the specified Memnoch and can be used to kill the fiend.



*Nightmare Illustration 2015*

## RASHAK

Every plane of existence suffers from its hordes of small, annoying creatures, and the demon realm is no different. The Rashak are a race of short, fast breeding howling demon-kin that love nothing more than to throw themselves into battle against larger foes—which for them is everyone else. The Rashak live in vast, ant-like colonies deep within the rock strata of Hell, scavenging for food and weapons, dreaming dreams of murder and conquest. They are a primitive offshoot of demons, who use no tools but those they can steal and have no language or culture beyond constant grunting and screaming.

The Rashak are very weak as far as demons go, their frailty made up for by the vast numbers with which they attack their foes, generally in packs of twenty or more. They prefer to attack with scavenged weapons or magic items in either hand, without tactics, to maximize damage.

When encountered, the Rashak just barely over 4 feet tall but densely packed with muscle. The creatures are blind from their lives lived underground, but their near-constant howling has become a form of echolocation that helps them navigate their surroundings. The Rashak have developed a third appendage shaped like a crab claw that can easily crush stone and is used to dig out the tunnels and caves of their labyrinthine lairs. From time to time mortal mages summon the Rashak to defend their castles or towers, often bribing the creatures with tools, trinkets or magic wands in return for their service.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d8, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Notice d6

**Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (2)

**Special Abilities:**

- **Armor +2:** Rashak are densely packed with muscle.
- **Ambidextrous:** May use either hand at no penalty.
- **Blind:** These creatures are immune to any vision-based effects (darkness, invisibility, obscure, etc.)



- **Burrow:** Rashak can disappear and reappear on the following action anywhere within 5".
- **Claw:** Str+d4; AP 2. Their crab claw appendage can easily tear through stone.
- **Demon:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; Immune to poison and disease; Half-damage from non-magical attacks except for cold iron.
- **Echolocation:** Rashak do not suffer any penalties for bad lighting.
- **Size -1:** Rashak stand 4' tall on average.
- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Demons take normal damage from cold iron weapons.



## REAPER

These horrific demons have pale, loose folds of ashen skin, with Black eyes in the creases. Their heads are bald, with scars across their faces. Their mouths are stiched shut. They are known as Reapers because they sift through the bones of Slaug seeking emerging entrants to Hell, and pluck any that they find to carry back to Gula. They carry large sacks and stuff inside any creature unfortunate enough to cross their paths. They possess long vicious

claws that they use in combat or to dig through the mounds of bones.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d8, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

**Special Abilities:**

- **Burrow (4"):** Reapers can burrow through the bone piles of Slaug. They can make a surprise attacks and receive +2 attack and damage rolls (+4 on a raise) by making an opposed Stealth vs Notice roll.
- **Claws:** Str+d8.
- **Demon:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; Immune to poison and disease; Half-damage from non-magical attacks except for cold iron.
- **Reaping Sack:** On a hit with a raise the Reaper also engulfs its victim in a heavy sack. The victim is Grappled suffers a -2 penalty to escape each round. A Reaper's sack is a Toughness 6 (Cutting) object, and if destroyed any captured victim is freed and the Reaper may no longer use this ability.
- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Demons take normal damage from cold iron weapons.



## WRACKLING

When the furnaces finish hardening a Defiled into a demon, they usually look like Wracklings. Humanoid, slightly misshapen, with reddish skin and budding horns. The newly conscripted fiends are given a weapon and then torturously drilled and hurled into battle. The Overfiends generally regard Wracklings as expendable nuisances until they evolve into more formidable creatures, but Wracklings have proven dangerous when armed and unleashed in large numbers.

Those that thrive in war begin to grow and straighten as they mete out death and pain. Their horns become more prominent and wings begin to bud. As they gain rank and access to better equipment, some go so far as to painfully graft blades under their skin just to keep their iron from being stolen. The most vicious and unrelenting eventually become Memnoch.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Intimidation d4, Notice d6, Taunt d6

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

**Special Abilities:**

- **Demon:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; Immune to poison and disease; Half-damage from non-magical attacks except for cold iron.
- **Flight:** Some Wracklings have grown wings, and have a flying Pace of 6" and a Climb of 1.
- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Demons take normal damage from cold iron weapons.

## GREATER DEMONS

Greater demons are singular entities. In *Codex Infernus*, most are the Overfiends of various regions in Hell. Some have no allegiance to any one faction. Any of these demons can enter into pacts with mortals. They can possess individuals, and if someone is particularly foolish, that person can summon these beings.



### AZATHOK-ILD

Azathok-Ild, known as the Surgeon of Hell and the Dread Butcher, is a demon lord studied in the scholarly arts of infernal medicine, alchemy, and demonic biology. He loves to vivisect living specimens of demons in order to better understand his lesser kin, and he fancies himself a cosmetic surgeon, obsessed with making himself and fellow demon lords more aesthetically pleasing to behold while at the same time making the members of his “living art gallery” stronger. He passes his knowledge on to his legion of butcher-surgeons, and any supplicants seeking his knowledge (be they infernal or mortal) must make a terrible sacrifice: their most beautiful, symmetrical and aesthetically pleasing body part. Some of the horrid grimoires Azathok-Ild has penned over the ages have made their way to mortal realms, and all have driven their readers mad (one such tome made its way into the hands of an immigrant butcher in 19th Century Earth, in a city called London, with terrible results).

If met in the flesh, Azathok-Ild is a tall, bald, blue-skinned demon who wears layers of richly appointed robes; it is said these robes cover the small appendages, strange patches of skin and scars Azathok-Ild had inflicted upon himself in pursuit of his obsession. He possesses long, thin, and skilled hands, each with eight digits that are always in movement somehow, whether drumming, painting, plucking an instrument or cutting into a squirming body. He speaks in high, cultured tones, never swears, and possesses dead black eyes that swim with barely controlled madness. He is willing to teach anyone his knowledge and skills—provided of course, you can pay his price, and survive it.

**Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d12+8, Spirit d12, Strength d8, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Healing d12+4, Knowledge (Any) d12+8, Notice d8, Persuasion d10

**Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 13 (2)



**Gear:** Large scalpel (Str+d4).

#### Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Azathok-Ild has gained a leathery hide due to his modifications.
- **Demon:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; Immune to poison and disease; Half-damage from non-magical attacks except cold iron.
- **Fear (-4):** Anyone seeing Azathok-Ild must make a Fear check at -4.
- **Hardy:** If Shaken, further Shaken results have no effect.
- **Improved Arcane Resistance:** Armor +4 vs. magic; +4 to resist magical effects.
- **Large:** Attackers are +2 to attack rolls against Azathok-Ild because of his size.
- **Size +4:** Azathok-Ild is over 15' tall.
- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Demons take normal damage from cold iron weapons.
- **Weakness (Mirrors):** If forced to confront his own reflection, Azathok-Ild must beat the holder of the mirror at an opposed Spirit roll or become Shaken.



## BLACKFIST

Blackfist was Scoria's top lieutenant, a mighty demon who wielded the Gauntlet of Hate for centuries before losing it, along with his hand, during the Aegeron campaign. He discovered while the flesh of his hand was gone, in its place was a spectral hand. Over time, Blackfist found that the darkened flesh of his hand now had a power of its own, and his troops began calling him Blackfist. At his core, Blackfist still respects Scoria and follows the tenets of the Disciples of Furio. But when the opportunity to become a leader and spend more time in the battlefields outside of Hell arose, Blackfist was tempted, and has never looked back. Blackfist is a pragmatist and suffers no illusions that his reign will probably end in terrible torment, but he is enjoying it while it lasts and is on the lookout for ways to extend his reign.

Blackfist stands fifteen feet tall, has the legs of a goat, and the body of a human. Horn-like appendages dot his face and rams horns adorn the top of his head. His right hand is blackened, and crackles with dark energy. He wields no other infernal weapon now, preferring to strike with the Void Hand that gives him his name. He will grapple an opponent and lift them up off the ground, then drain the soul and life from them as he laughs. He still searches for the Gauntlet of Hate, but quietly and without trying to draw attention to it. He realizes that he is still tied to it and that it could be used against him, and the last thing he wants is for one of his own subordinates or an enemy to find it before he does.

**Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d10, Spirit d12+2, Strength d12+4, Vigor d12+2

**Skills:** Fighting d12+2, Knowledge (Battle) d12+2, Intimidation d12, Notice d10, Persuasion d6, Taunt d10

**Pace:** 7; **Parry:** 10; **Toughness:** 21 (8)

**Edges:** Block, Command, Fervor, First Strike, Improved Level Headed, Mighty Blow

### Special Abilities:

- **Armor +8:** Rock-like leathery hide.
- **Born in Battle:** As a Memnoch, Blackfist applies a +4 to his Knowledge (Battle) roll for combat and tactics.

- **Demon:** +2 to recover from Shaken; Immune to poison and disease; Half-damage from non-magical attacks except from cold iron.
- **Fear (-2):** Anyone facing Blackfist in combat must make a Fear check at -2.
- **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Hardy:** The demon does not suffer a wound from being Shaken twice.
- **Immunity (Fire):** Blackfist is unaffected by fire or heat.
- **Large:** Attackers are +2 to attack rolls against the demon because of its size.
- **Size +4:** Blackfist is 15' tall.
- **Void Hand:** When Blackfist grapples an opponent he also deals his Strength damage on the first round. On subsequent rounds he deals Strength+1d12. If he incapacitates a foe (or an ally) with this attack he regains 1 lost wound.
- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Demons take normal damage from cold iron weapons.
- **Weakness (Gauntlet of Hate):** Blackfist suffers double damage from any attack by a foe wearing the Gauntlet of Hate (see page 21).





## DOOMSPEAKERS

The Doomspeakers serve the Dreadlord. They have no individual names, nor do they seem to have an agenda of their own. They are tall and humanoid, but have no face save for an oversize sharp-toothed maw. The skin around their lips is charred and infected, and their mouths tend to scab and crust over during the long periods when these demons remain silent. When they do speak it is a harsh whisper, but it carries far and makes any who hear the sound tremble. These vile lieutenants are sometimes called the Listeners, and they have vast networks of Berathu and other toadies spying on any Defiled worth a Dreadlord's notice. Doomspeakers have access to Hell-Forged weapons. They usually carry a Longsword, and may have Plate Armor or a Battle Axe if expecting a fight.

**Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d12, Spirit d12, Strength d10, Vigor d12

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Intimidation d12+2, Notice d12, Persuasion d10, Stealth d8, Taunt d12+2

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9

### Special Abilities:

- **Blasphemy:** Rather than a single target, Doomspeakers may Intimidate or Taunt every target within a Cone Template. Shaken targets who are Shaken again by these tests of will suffer a wound instead of the usual result of no additional effect.
- **Demon:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; Immune to poison and disease; Half-damage from non-magical attacks except for cold iron.
- **Fear:** Doomspeakers emanate a palpable aura of dread. Anyone seeing or hearing them must make a Fear check at -2.
- **Improved Arcane Resistance:** +4 armor against damage-causing powers, and +4 to trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
- **Size +1:** These demons stand over 7' tall.
- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Demons take normal damage from cold iron weapons.



## ERILAXIEL

The mad demon lord Erilaxiel, the Lady of Battle, Mistress of Bondage, rules Hell's gladiatorial pits with an iron fist. Her love of body modification and flesh-crafting has changed appearance far beyond the standard Overfiend, if one could say there was a standard, and she passes that love on to her slave-fighters and prize creation, the Koralach. She oversees each fighting match personally, and in her arena there is no mercy; all matches are to the death. She is as likely to laugh maniacally one moment as she is to sob uncontrollably the next; her desires are as violent as a hurricane and leave as much debris in her wake. Not one demon lord of the underworld is willing to trust her, though; they know well she is too uncontrollable, but at the same time the services, warriors and entertainments she has to offer are just too enticing to pass up.

To see Erilaxiel in the flesh is to see madness itself: she has modified her body with infernal steel and grafted bone and horn, adding limbs and arranging her own body to encompass odd angles the eye



cannot hope to follow. The knowledge that she is even female comes from the fact that she considers herself female and demands other address her as demoneess upon pain of death. Her moods are extreme and violent, and even those in her own court suffer and die on a regular basis (even Azathok-Ild has refused to work on her courtiers for all of her abuses unless she pays exorbitant prices). Attempts to summon her to the mortal realm almost always fail as she does not listen—unless she finds something about the summoner irresistible. And woe unto those she answers.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d12+5, Vigor d12

**Skills:** Fighting d12+2, Intimidation d12, Notice d4, Taunt d6

**Pace:** 7; **Parry:** 9; **Toughness:** 17 (3)

**Special Abilities:**

- **Armor +3:** Bone and infernal steel body modifications
- **Blades:** Str+d10. She has grafted weapons to her arms.
- **Demon:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; Immune to poison and disease; Half-damage from non-magical attacks except cold iron.
- **Fear (-4):** Anyone seeing the creature must make a Fear check at -4.
- **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation
- **Hardy:** If Shaken, further Shaken results have no effect.
- **Improved Arcane Resistance:** +4 Armor vs. magic; +4 to rolls made to resist magic effects.
- **Insane:** A character trying to affect Eirilaxiel's mind through arcane powers, such as *puppet*, automatically fails his opposed roll. Contact with the insane creature also causes the arcane character to make a Spirit roll at a -4 or become a gibbering idiot for 2d6 rounds. During this time he acts as if Shaken and runs around randomly. Roll a d12 to determine his direction each round. He moves at full Pace.
- **Large:** Creatures add +2 when attacking Eirilaxiel due to her large size.
- **Size +6:** Eirilaxiel is well over 20' tall.
- **Weakness (Bane):** Eirilaxiel is greatly afraid of items that remind her of her former life as a “normal” demon lord slave girl. She cannot willingly interact with those items, but she becomes enraged and can strike

at the person holding them if she wins an opposed Spirit roll, and does an extra 1d6 damage to any attack if so enraged. If touched or attacked by items from her old life, she takes 2d6 damage that takes twice as long to heal (two natural healing rolls to recover one wound).

- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Demons take normal damage from cold iron weapons.



## ERRUDI

Errudi, the Mother of Seduction, is the prime succubus of Hell. She is the creator of all succubi and temptation spirits within the realms of the underworld, a dark queen with a vast and sycophantic court, who delights in all types of forbidden fruit. While plots, intrigues and information have their uses, Errudi is more interested in ruining the lives of all she comes in contact with, whether they be infernal or mortal. She takes extra delight in the suffering of those driven to suicide by her seduction. Other demon lords and Overfiends are too wise to be taken in by Errudi's feigned affections, as her desire to become Queen of Hell is well known, but lesser beings and the unwary all too easily fall for her charm and promises of power.

Seen in her true form, Errudi can be either devastatingly beautiful or terrifyingly horrible as she chooses. Either way, her feminine features are grotesquely exaggerated in the extreme; from her head jut a pair of curled, ivory ram's horns and from her back erupt a pair of silken black wings that she often wears like a cape. Her skin is the color of alabaster, and her blood red nails can easily score stone. Seeking an audience with Errudi is considered extremely foolish, as supplicants are more likely to be enslaved by Errudi's charm; but those that bring a tasty enough sacrifice, she may deign to listen to a request.

**Attributes:** Agility d12, Smarts d12+2, Spirit d12+8, Strength d8, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d10, Persuasion d12+10, Spellcasting d12, Stealth d6, Taunt d10

**Cha:** +6; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8

**Special Abilities:**

- **Charismatic:** Charisma +6, Errudi is very charming and attractive if she chooses to be.
- **Claws:** Str+d6. Errudi can easily cut through stone with her talons.

- **Demon:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; Immune to poison and disease; Half-damage from non-magical attacks except for cold iron.
- **Enslavement:** Errudi uses her demonic powers to enslave mortals and infernals alike. This acts as the *puppet* power, using her Spirit as her arcane ability, but lasts indefinitely. She adds her Charisma to the roll. She may have up to half of her Persuasion in followers at any time.
- **Fear (-4):** Anyone seeing the creature in its true form must make a Fear check at -4.
- **Illusion:** Errudi can use the disguise power at will, using her Spirit as her arcane skill.
- **Inspire:** Errudi can command all of her followers to fight to the death for her as fanatics. These fanatics gain a +1 to their Spirit rolls.
- **Life Drain:** Each week a slave remains enthralled to the Errudi, they must make a Spirit roll or lose one die of Vigor. When a slave's Vigor falls below d4, they die. If the hold over the slave is broken, Vigor can

be recovered with a natural healing roll made each week.

- **Low Light Vision:** Errudi can see perfectly in all but pitch black conditions.
- **Magic:** Errudi is an extremely talented spellcaster. She has 60 Power Points, and knows most of the available powers.
- **Size +1:** Errudi is over 7' tall.
- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Demons take normal damage from cold iron weapons.
- **Weakness (True Love):** Errudi finds the touch of someone truly in love abhorrent. If presented with someone in true love, she must make a Spirit roll against the individual or become Shaken. If Errudi is touched by that person, she suffers 2d6 damage.



**FORNEHAUST**

Fornehaust, the Demon Mage, is Hell's answer to great wizards such as Merlin. This demon lord has studied magic in all forms from deep within his tower citadel of Rhuem, casting the sludge and effluent of his failures into the vast ichor pit below his floating city. Fornehaust also keeps his failed experiments and those that comes seeking his vast libraries of written arcane knowledge without his consent in a network of interconnected torture dungeons on the lower levels of his citadel. It is there that he will use any form of punishment necessary to extract more occult and esoteric knowledge from his victims, or tear apart his failures to discover where he went wrong. Of all the Overfiends, Fornehaust sells his information the cheapest to mortals and infernals alike: one hundred pieces of silver is the cost for any information he may have locked away. That said, the ritual to summon him to the mortal realm changes often, and speaking the wrong ritual at the wrong time could tear open a rift in space and time, flooding the unfortunate summoner's world with any number of terrifying, immortal and insane dark gods or simply blinking out the interloper's world in an instant of disintegration. Encountered in the flesh, Fornehaust is actually nondescript: almost human in appearance, including a long gray beard he tends to immaculately, his only outward sign of his demonic nature are his red eyes and a small pair





of purple horns on his forehead. He often wears wizard robes and has ten rings on each finger, one type of stone for every aura of magic. He has a clever mind and a wicked temper, willing to burn those who upset him to ash without a second thought.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d12+2, Spirit d12+10, Strength d6, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d12+10, Knowledge (Occult) d12+10, Knowledge(any) d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d10

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

**Special Abilities:**

- **Demon:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; Immune to poison and disease.
- **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Hardy:** If Shaken, further Shaken results have no effect.
- **Infravision:** Fornehaust halves penalties for bad lighting when attacking living targets (round down).
- **Invulnerability:** Fornehaust has made himself immune to harm from all physical sources, even cold iron.
- **Magic:** Fornehaust knows every spell, has unlimited Power Points, doesn't suffer Backlash, and uses his Spirit die as his arcane skill.
- **Magical Resources:** Fornehaust has a copy of all but the truly unique magical items, and may employ them as he chooses in battle.
- **Regeneration (Slow):** Fornehaust makes a natural healing roll every day.
- **Weakness (Magic):** Fornehaust suffers double damage from magical attacks.
- **Weakness (Arcane Knowledge):** Fornehaus' desire for mystical knowledge makes him susceptible to debates regarding arcane topics. Oppents may use Knowledge (Arcane) to engage Fornehaus in a Test of Wills.



## IBBILNAUCHT THE HORNED ONE

Ibbilnaucht the Horned One is a goliath of greed, gluttony and fornication. This demonic monstrosity rarely moves from his throne composed of the living flesh of gluttonous sinners, but his legions of slaves bring him everything he needs and do everything they can to satisfy his vast appetites. It is known that he has his fat fingers in every dirty, infernal scheme all across the great depths of Hell, and that if there is something the other Overfiends need, Ibbilnaucht can acquire it—for a high price. The Lord of Swine wiles away eternity indulging in the various flavors of his harem, unless greater things can draw his attention away from his legion of damned concubines.

In the reeking flesh Ibbilnaucht the Horned One is a horror to behold: rolls and mounts of fat piled high atop one another, with strange creatures living in the folds of his flabby skin. He has two heads, each head sporting a pair of wicked horns, and horns run along his shoulders and arms; great piggy eyes stare down at all supplicants, judging them either as worthy subjects or as his next victims. Those lesser beings seeking his help must agree to spend a span of one hundred years as a slave, or survive that length of time in his harem.



**Attributes:** Agility d4, Smarts d8, Spirit d12, Strength d12+10, Vigor d12+10

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Gambling d12, Intimidation d12+3, Notice d8, Taunt d12

**Pace:** 1; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 23

**Special Abilities:**

**Armor +4:** Massive rolls of fat.

- **Bite:** Str+d8.
- **Demon:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; Immune to poison and disease; Half-damage from non-magical attacks except cold iron.
- **Fear (-4):** Anyone seeing this creature must make a Fear check at -4.
- **Gargantuan:** Creatures add +4 when attacking the body of Ibbilnaucht due to his great size. Ibbilnaucht's weapons count as Heavy Weapons, and his armor is Heavy Armor.
- **Hardy:** If Shaken, further Shaken results have no effect.
- **Improved Arcane Resistance:** +4 Armor vs. magic; +4 to rolls made to resist magic.
- **Size +10:** Ibbilnaucht is over 60' around.
- **Slam:** Str+d6; add Ibbilnaucht's Size to the damage roll, but subtract the victim's Size. Ibbilnaucht will attempt to crush those who annoy him under his hand.
- **Swallow:** Scoring a raise on a Bite attack roll allows Ibbilnaucht to swallow his prey whole. The victim is grappled as per the core rulebook, with a -4 penalty to escape, and suffers an automatic 2d6 damage per round from digestive juices. This ability only works on creatures of Size +8 or smaller.
- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Demons take normal damage from cold iron weapons.
- **Weakness (Virtue):** Ibbilnaucht can be burned by the touch of the truly virtuous. If a truly virtuous person touches the Lord of Swine, he suffers 2d10 damage per round.



**MELEK**

Melek likes to call himself the Horned Lord of Pandemonium, and he is the embodiment of fire put to evil use. He is sheathed in flames, and seethes with the desire to burn others. Melek is powerful but short-sighted, caring about little other than torching anything that falls within his grasp. He can be placated or tricked, especially with offers of incinerating precious items or holy places.

Melek appears as a massive humanoid with blackened horns sheathed in fire. Bone can be seen through some of the flames, and bits of burned flesh continually drift off him like ashes in smoke. His eyes are disturbingly normal, peering out through the blaze and dripping white juice as if they were starting to melt. Charred clothes and a glowing hot iron crown are all that remains of Melek's vestments.





**Attributes:** Agility d12, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d12

**Skills:** Fighting d12, Intimidation d12, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Spellcasting d12

**Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 11

**Edges:** Arcane Background (Magic), Berserk, First Strike, Improved Counter Attack, Improved Frenzy, Quick, Soul Drain.

**Powers:** *Barrier, blast, burst, mirror self, summon ally* (all with the Fire trapping, except *summon ally*); **Power Points:** 25.

**Special Abilities:**

- **Demon:** +2 to recover from Shaken; immune to poison and disease; half-damage from non-magical attacks except from cold iron.
- **Fear (-2):** Anyone encountering Melek's blazing form must make a Fear check at -2
- **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Fiery Body:** Melek ignores all fire damage or magic with the Fire trapping. He gains 4 Armor against non-magical attacks as they melt upon hitting him, and have the standard chance to catch on fire. Metal weapons don't catch fire, but roll 1d6 and on a 6 they deal -1 damage until repaired. Anyone touched by Melek or foolish enough to grapple him suffers 2d6 fire damage.
- **Hardy:** The demon does not suffer a wound from being Shaken twice.
- **Size +3:** Melek stands 12' tall.
- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Demons take normal damage from cold iron weapons.
- **Weakness (Magic):** Magic and magical weapons ignore Melek's Armor from Fiery Body.
- **Weakness (Ice and Water):** Magical attacks with Ice or Water trappings deal +4 damage to Melek.



### SARCISTRICTOR

Sarcistrictor is a legend in its own demented mind. It is certain that it was a Dreadlord, if not the first Dreadlord, although it has no direct memories of this time. It claims half the bones in the Ashen Pit were regurgitated from its vile belly, and secret cannibal cults still worship it in Gula. If Sarcistrictor ever was all the things that it claims, it has fallen far in the ages since. Throughout recent memory it has been the Overfiend of the Devouring Waste, a no-man's land on the outer reaches of Hell. It writhed in irritation when Thaimoxx demanded the Watchtowers be built in its domain, and populated

by a Legion that disrespected and despised it. Its glee at Thaimoxx's fall was short-lived, as garrison commander Blackfist immediately promoted himself to Overfiend and set the Legion on Sarcistrictor, driving it underground.

Sarcistrictor may be in decline, but it is not destroyed, and it is certainly not weak. In person it appears as a monstrous decomposing serpent, over 50 feet long and rising up to 20 feet tall when coiled to strike.

It can swallow a man whole, and a terrible fate awaits any creature unfortunate enough to pass through its maw. Inside it, bones stew and scream within crushing flesh and toxic juices. Eventually it will disgorge these bones after it has devoured every scrap of flesh and soul that was attached to them. Mighty blows cause it to vomit the tortured remains early, and the pain maddened skeletons lash out at anything nearby, except Sarcistrictor itself. As it eats, its own strength returns. The creature emits a foul miasma as a byproduct of this digestion. The more wicked the soul being dissolved, the worse the fumes.

Sarcistrictor is vulnerable to the magic of Light. If it was Dreadlord as it claims it was no doubt a high priest or god of Light that cast it down. For now, it plots its revenge. Primitive Rashak worship it, and it is directing the creatures in a campaign to undermine the Legion in the Devouring Waste. With every demon it consumes it grows stronger, and larger, and closer to its revenge. After it avenges itself against Blackfist it plans retake the Reaping Grounds, then Gula. Eventually it hopes to become Dreadlord, consume Aegeron itself, and then the entire universe. Ambition has never been Sarcistrictor's shortcoming.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d12+7, Vigor d12

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Notice d8

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 20 (3)

**Special Abilities:**

- **Armor +3:** Scaly Hide
- **Bite:** Str+d8. Sarcistrictor's giant fangs are AP 2.
- **Burrowing:** Sarcistrictor may move its Pace through solid stone, and leaves a 5'x5' tunnel behind it.
- **Demon:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; Immune to poison and disease; Half-damage from non-magical attacks except for cold iron.





- **Fear (-2):** Anyone seeing this creature must make a Fear check at -2, and again each time a victim is swallowed.
- **Gargantuan:** Attackers add +4 to their attack rolls to hit Sacristrictor due to its huge size. Its attacks count as Heavy Weapons, and their Armor is Heavy Armor.
- **Hardy:** This creature does not suffer a wound from being Shaken twice.
- **Regeneration:** When Sacristrictor devours a victim (see Swallow) it makes an immediate natural healing roll.
- **Size +9:** Sacristrictor's serpentine form is over 50' long.
- **Skeleton Vomit:** Each time Sacristrictor suffers a wound, it vomits 2d4, Digesting Skeletons.
- **Swallow:** On a hit with a raise Sacristrictor swallows a medium sized or smaller victim in place of dealing extra damage. Each turn the victim is crushed by Sacristrictor's Strength and suffers a dose of Toxic Breath. A victim can crawl back out with a Strength roll at -4, or by dealing a wound to Sacristrictor from within (ignoring Armor). A swallowed victim that becomes incapacitated is immediately killed and devoured.
- **Toxic Breath:** Sacristrictor may use an action to breath toxic fumes onto all targets with a Cone Template. The targets within must make a Vigor roll at -2 or suffer a level of choking Fatigue. Targets who are already Exhausted suffer wounds instead. Choking Fatigue is recovered after 5 minutes of breathing clean air. On a round where Sacristrictor has devoured a victim (see Swallow) using this ability does not cost an action.

- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Demons take normal damage from cold iron weapons.
- **Weakness (Light):** Sacristrictor suffers double damage and a -4 on trait rolls to resist supernatural powers with the Light trapping.

**DIGESTING SKELETONS**

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d4, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d4

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

**Special Abilities:**

- **Bony Claws:** Str+d4
- **Fearless:** Skeletons are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness, +2 to recover from being Shaken; Called shots do no extra damage; Ignores wound penalties.



*Allyson Johnston 2015*





## SCORIA

Grand General Scoria, Supreme Lord of the Disciples of War wins when he fights, but doesn't fight enough according to most demons. He is husbanding his resources for a long, strategic game, but seems incapable of seeing that his plotting is seen as plodding by the irrational demons under his command.

Any that dare openly cross him quickly learn that Scoria is no coward or weakling (before they are sent to the Flensing Pits), but his inaction against Blackfist and Erilaxiel frustrates and confuses his troops.

In combat, Scoria is cold and calculating. He seems to take no pleasure in victory, and has no qualms about sacrificing his troops if he judges the outcome to be worth it. It was Scoria who threw back the Angelic Host when they invaded across the Styx, and the Fallen of Flaegon remain as a tormented monument to his victory. Zahypton was the only general of the host to defeat Scoria's forces in the field. In the following battle Scoria exposed himself as bait, and suffered a grievous wound at the angel's hands.

Too late Zahypton realized it was a trap, and he and his force were completely annihilated. Zahypton himself still writhes among the Fallen, much to Scoria's satisfaction.

Scoria is more refined looking than the Memnoch who serve him. He is humanoid, with deep red skin, sharp features, and a long aquiline nose. He wears elegant armor of Hellforged steel that is no longer separable from his skin, and carries a Hellforged Longsword for those rare occasions where he personally joins a battle.

He has a prominent scar across his left eye, given to him by Zahypton. To him the scar is a

testament to how far he will go to achieve victory, but to others it's a sign that the general of Hell is not invincible.

**Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d12+2, Spirit d12+2, Strength d12, Vigor d12

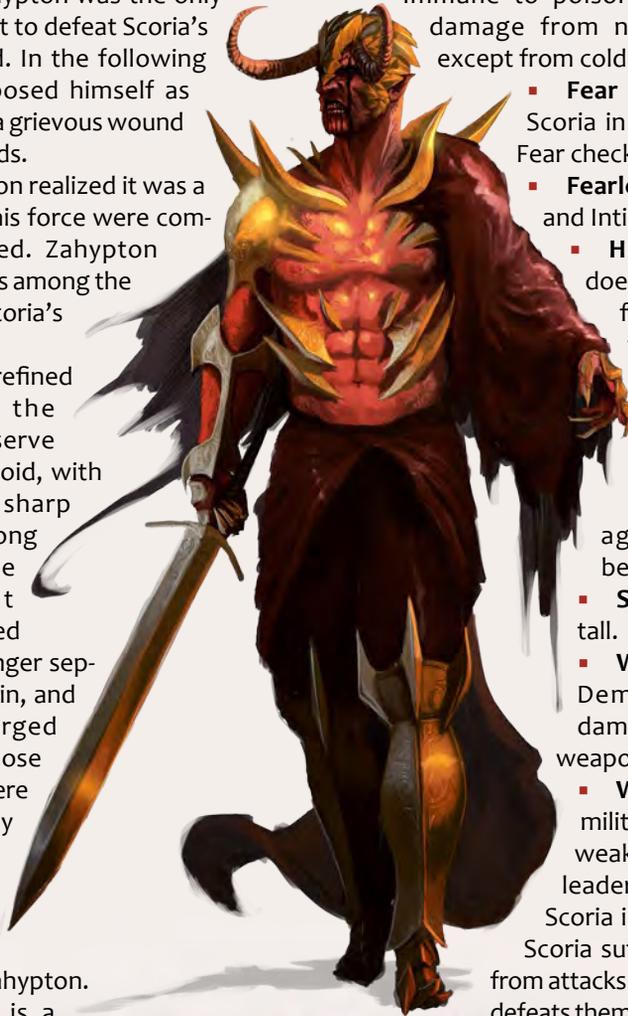
**Skills:** Fighting d12+2, Knowledge (Battle) d12+4, Intimidation d12, Notice d12, Persuasion d10, Taunt d12

**Pace:** 7; **Parry:** 11; **Toughness:** 18 (6)

**Edges:** Command, Command Presence, Fervor, First Strike, Hold the Line, Improved Block, Improved Level Headed, Killer Instinct, Tactician

**Special Abilities:**

- **Armor +6:** Scoria's Hellforged armor is fused to his skin.
- **Born in Battle:** Scoria applies a +4 to his Knowledge (Battle) rolls for combat and tactics, including the roll for his Tactician Edge.
- **Demon:** +2 to recover from Shaken; Immune to poison and disease; Half-damage from non-magical attacks except from cold iron.
  - **Fear (-2):** Anyone facing Scoria in battle must make a Fear check at -2.
  - **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
  - **Hardy:** The demon does not suffer a wound from being Shaken twice.
  - **Immunity (Fire):** Scoria is unaffected by fire or heat.
  - **Large:** Attackers are +2 to attack rolls against the demon because of his size.
  - **Size +4:** Scoria is 14' tall.
  - **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Demons take normal damage from cold iron weapons.
  - **Weakness:** Scoria's military pride is his great weakness. If an opposing leader manages to defeat Scoria in a Mass Battle then Scoria suffers double damage from attacks by that leader until he defeats them in a Mass Battle again.



**DEMON LORDS**

Demon Lords are singular entities; creatures of legend so powerful, so notorious that some are worshipped as gods in many cultures, not only in this world, but in other worlds across time and space, while others are more reclusive in nature, only known to a select few, but immensely powerful nonetheless; so much so, that any attempt to defeat one with brute force would surely spell the end of the entire party.

Demon Lords are best used as primary powers in a game, guiding the forces of darkness like puppeteers, known, but always behind a veil of shadows. To this end, they are not statted. Consider their stats at the max for purposes of possession and demonic pacts. Speaking of which, they can, if you choose, possess individuals, but most mortals simply cannot hold these entities for great lengths of time before the shell cracks and dissolves. Demon lords can enter into pacts, though they prefer servitude rather than souls as part of the bargain. Though it can be done, only the foolish and insane try to summon demon lords.

None of these Demon Lords play a direct role in our vision of Hell as it is portrayed in *Codex Infernus: The Fall of Aegeon*.

**AZARIA**

Even among demons, the curse of vampirism can wreak untold horrors. Such is the case of the demoness called Azaria the Blood Countess. Once, long ago, Azaria was a normal woman born into a wealthy family of healers and professional alchemists. She was happy, following a quiet life, taking joy in doing good.

That all changed when her brother Drummond, a member of the monster slaying band called the Silver Vigilants, suddenly retired and came home. While she was away, Drummond's old enemies came calling; Azaria returned to find her family mansion awash with blood and the rotting corpses of her family decorating the house like obscene art. She sought out the Silver Vigilants and begged to join their crusade against evil. In time, her hatred of evil turned to curiosity with each creature she destroyed. When she eventually found the beast that had orchestrated her family's slaughter, a powerful demon calling itself Mortaine, she tricked the remaining members of the Silver Vigilants into

the demon's claws; it killed them all and allowed Azaria to capture the demon for herself.

She spent years torturing Mortaine, experimenting on his body to understand demonic physiology. Mortaine, in turn, spent those years insinuating himself deeper and deeper into Azaria's mind, for Mortaine was no ordinary demon—he had been cursed with vampirism as well, and often claimed to be the father of the disease. The two became acquainted, became lovers, and Azaria became the first of Mortaine's cult.

In time Azaria grew old and began to fear her mortality; her demon lover offered her a choice: drink of his blood, and never fear death again. Azaria agreed, and began to prepare the ritual of joining Mortaine's blood.

But something went wrong; the ritual was miscast and Azaria became Mortaine, the demon's body twisting and mutating to fit a more feminine design as her soul took over. What became of Mortaine none can say, but Azaria possessed her prisoner's body, becoming an infernal God of a dark cult; a role which suits her quite well.



Azaria is supreme being, as dangerous as they come. While Mortaine was no great power as demons go, Azaria has taken his abilities and greatly capitalized upon them, carving herself a small domain in Hell through her eternal schemes, plots, and alliances in addition to the occult knowledge, alchemical arts and combat skills she brought with her from her mortal life.

Azaria has learned to use her own blood as a weapon: coated on weapons or placed in drinking vessels, her blood mutates her victims or, if she chooses, burns them like acid. Those confronting her should expect an expert fencer, a bloodthirsty hellbeast, and an acutely sharp mind hidden behind a tempting face.

A cult has grown up around Azaria, called the Children of Perfection—a dark guild of occultists, poisoners and assassins. Upon joining, cultists are awarded the Kiss of Azaria: a sampling of her mutant blood that transforms her cultists from mortal to half-vampires, as well as assigning them random odd physical mutations. The mutations remain useful only as long as their goddess remains pleased; cultists who fail or betray her find that Azaria still controls the course of their Blood, which can turn to acid in the cultist's veins, or worse, turn them into a bloodling—a deformed minion of the cult fit only to serve as a slave.

## DAWSWYR PORTH

The story of the fiend known as Dawnswyr Porth begins, not in the infernal realms beyond earth, but in it.

Jocelyn grew up looking at the picture of her grandmother on stage performing Swan Lake. This inspired her to spend her time developing her skills in ballet throughout high school, and college. After graduation she took a job at a dance center in a small town where she then met Nick and fell in love.

Despite her best efforts, Jocelyn could not move beyond the small performances and teaching into the larger performing groups. Her frustrations grew and her performance started to suffer, causing her to lose several important roles as well as most of the students in her class. Nick tried to be supportive but Jocelyn's anger at herself leaked into their relationship, creating distance between them.

After a fight Jocelyn left their apartment, trying to walk off her anger before she saw Nick again. A few blocks away she found an open gate with people standing around inviting people to come inside for their religious service. Jocelyn recognized Paul, the director of a large performing theater where she had auditioned on several occasions, but never received a call-back. After a brief conversation, she followed him inside. The service was very strange and made her dizzy. Later, she couldn't remember much of anything about the organization or the topics discussed at the meeting, but it didn't matter. She and Paul had made a connection. That was enough to persuade Jocelyn to join the group.

Over the next couple of months Jocelyn found herself coming more often but refused to take Nick, telling him that this was something she needed to explore by herself. She still could not remember any of the service except spending more time with Paul. Eventually he invited her to an audition for Swan Lake at this center.

Jocelyn received the part of Odette, the lead. That night she stayed over at Paul's house.





The next day Jocelyn returned home feeling guilty for betraying Nick, who had supported her all this time. He accepted her story about staying overnight with a friend and insisted on taking her out that night to celebrate. Nick took her out to her favorite restaurant. After dinner, he asked Jocelyn to marry him, but she refused and left. After a few hours, Jocelyn went to a compound, where she had been learning more about Paul's organization. Paul was waiting for her.

They went into the main building, and Jocelyn told Paul what had happened with Nick. He reassured her that everything would be fine, and asked her if she would like to participate in an initiation of new members to their "church." Jocelyn accepted, and was led to a changing room in the basement, where the other four members were waiting, dressed in white robes. She was given one of the robes and told to change. As she did, a feeling of unease came over her. Indeed, when she started talking with the over initiates, the feeling only grew stronger. Then, suddenly, ten cloaked figures rushed in, binding the initiate's hands and gagging them.

The cloaked figures led Jocelyn and the others deep under the building to a large cavern, where more figures waited. To her shock and horror, Paul stood in front of an altar, holding a ceremonial knife.

"Bring the offerings forth!" He shouted. Jocelyn struggled, but to no avail. She watched as, one by one, the others were sacrificed to some entity whose name she couldn't pronounce. Finally, Paul grabbed her neck and slashed her throat. The next thing Jocelyn knew, she was clawing her way through maggot infested earth, finally surfacing in Hell, where she was taken to suffer vile torments at the hands of the dark entity that claimed her soul.

After what seemed an eternity, the suffering eased, and Jocelyn began to look forward to her time spent enduring the torments of her dark lord. The joy she felt in suffering sparked a transformation. When it completed, Jocelyn found she had turned into a demonic entity, a black-skinned fiend dressed in iron sandals, and a dress made from thorns. Then something strange happened. The demon lord released Jocelyn, commanding her to go and ravage the souls of betrayers of women, as she had been betrayer. He gave her a new name, Dawnswyr Porth.

She has embraced her new existence with a savage glee, becoming more and more powerful with each passing day. Indeed, in the mortal world, revenge cults dedicated to her have begun to spread. Adherents seek out and ritually sacrifice those who have betrayed others, sending their damned souls to their infernal mistress.

## **GEISA**

The many realms of Hell have spawned unique evils throughout the ages. But for once, it has gained a genuine anomaly: a truly neutral demon known as Geisa. Geisa is said to be the living embodiment of true Rage—a Rage which comes from the battlefield, from the abused, the maimed, and the powerless. Rage against the injustice of those who were left to die, and against those who still live.

Geisa, strangely, was born on the mortal realm instead of the underworld. From the battlefields of the mortal world he rose, skyclad save for the blood of the dying, and the mud of the wet earth. His birth cry was an angry shout that shook the land, and at his touch, men would go mad. Henceforth, the world called him the Berserker. From battlefield to battlefield he went, and the legend of the berserker demon grew.

In time Geisa found his way into Hell, but even Hell could not contain him. For unlike the other demons, Geisa did not devour mortal souls. Indeed, Geisa made pacts with mortals, feeding on their pain and anguish, their torment and fury, growing stronger with each soul claimed. Those bound to him entered Hell after death, joining the ranks of his undead army in preparation for the war to come.

Geisa knew that a plot was afoot to flood the mortal realm with devils and demons, destroying the Gates and bringing Hell to the mortal realms. He refused to join his infernal brethren, instead choosing to give the power of his rage to the mortals in an effort to even the odds against the demons.

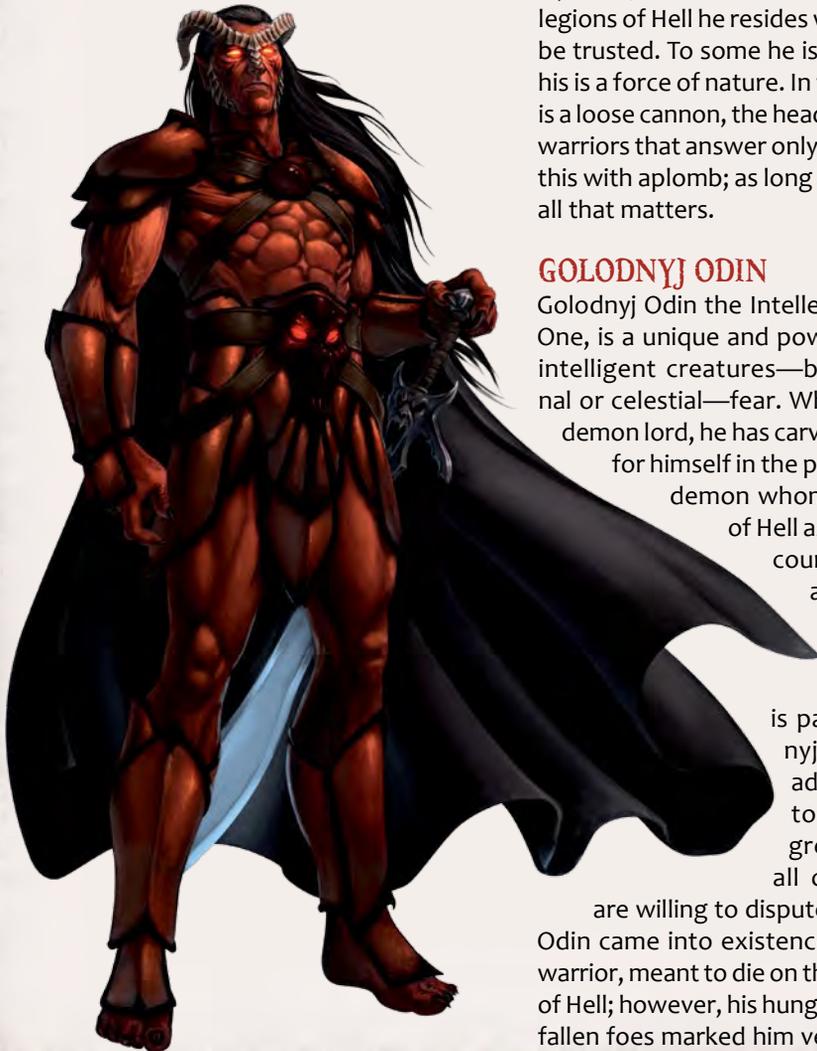
Many lesser lords petitioned the Princes of Hell for Geisa's head (it is said one Prince was even assassinated over the matter), but the Princes refused, finding the struggles of this lone indifferent demon amusing. They even mockingly titled Geisa as "lord." With Geisa's help, the mortal realms were able to turn the tide of the Demon War; that act forever marked him a loner, a restless wanderer among the planes of Hell with an independent army of crazed warriors



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at his back should he chose to have them. Geisa does not mind this; he cares nothing for ruling in the infernal realm—he seeks only power, and a powerful king or queen to work for. To him, none of the rulers of Hell fit that description.. So for now Geisa stands apart and neutral.

Direct confrontation with Geisa is disastrous. He is an unstoppable warrior and the proto-ber-serker, the true embodiment of the concept of Rage. But he rarely wishes to do battle with mortals; he finds them weak and beneath his skill. But that is not the insult it sounds: Geisa is oddly sympathetic to mortals and finds their struggles against an uncaring and much stronger universe to be endearing. That is why he prefers to make pacts of power with mortals: they must rage against the dying light, or be destroyed—and on the day that light finally fails, Geisa will be there, leading his army of berserkers in the Final War.



Seen in his true form, Geisa is very human looking—tall and muscular—except for his deep red skin tone and the large curled horns that he sports upon his head. He had light-absorbing black hair, bony plates along his nose and jaw line and colorless eyes under which are a cascade of black sigils. Those who make pacts with Geisa also bear those symbols. He dresses simply in a black cape and black armor tinged with red; from his hip hangs Hugn Bani (Spirit Death), a long sword he won in the mortal realm which is said to be able to slay demons. However in the mortal realms, Geisa's appearance can vary depending on the whim and fancy of the culture he visits.

Many berserker lodges, warrior sects, and downtrodden peoples have come to worship Geisa for strength and power; some believe the Dark Savior will free them from the shackles of injustice, others believe he is no better than the legions of Hell he resides with and should never be trusted. To some he is an avenger, to some his is a force of nature. In the underworld Geisa is a loose cannon, the head of an army of furious warriors that answer only to him. Geisa accepts this with aplomb; as long as he can rage, that is all that matters.

## GOLODNYJ ODIN

Golodnyj Odin the Intellect Eater, The Hungry One, is a unique and powerful demon that all intelligent creatures—be they mortal, infernal or celestial—fear. While himself no “true”

demon lord, he has carved a interesting place for himself in the planes of Hell: a simple

demon whom even the mightiest of Hell ask for advice and wise council. No act of war or

attempt at diplomacy is made with his approval, no tome

is written or secret

is passed without Golodnyj Odin having given advice upon it. He claims

to have dined on the greatest minds across all of reality, and none

are willing to dispute his claims. Golodnyj

Odin came into existence as a simple demon warrior, meant to die on the endless battlefields of Hell; however, his hunger for the brains of his fallen foes marked him very different than the

average soldier. And with each meal he grew smarter... and hungrier.

Golodnyj Odin has come to view the mortal realms as his hobby of sorts. He sees all sentient mortal creatures as little more than wild animals and finds their beliefs of mental and moral superiority to be laughable at best, an insult at worst. But rather than grow wrathful and destructive, he has devised a clever way to, as he sees it, remove the mask of civilization and unveil the animals all mortals are underneath: he cultivates debauchery within societies, and encourages the breaking of major social taboos.

His favorite tactic is to encourage cannibalism—making people see each other as cattle while they themselves act like wild beasts. But that is far from the only trick up his demonic sleeves. He is also one of the few demons who finds the mortal realms more his home and playground than Hell itself; Golodnyj Odin long ago grew bored of Hell's eternal squabbles and scheming plots. Mortals, at least, can be counted on now and then for cunning tricks and rare clever plots, which can provide islands of amusement for the one who is possibly the smartest demon in the whole of the underworld.

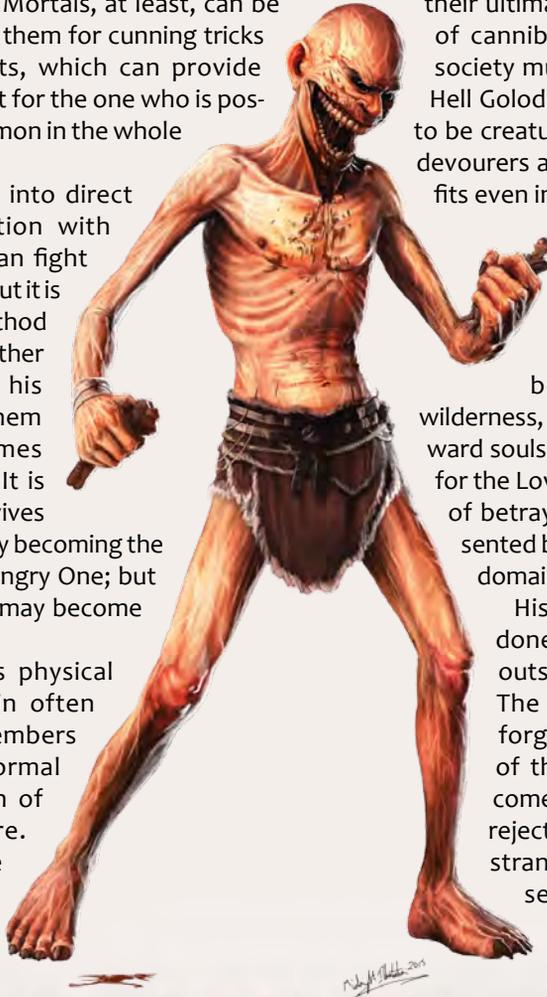
It is rare to come into direct physical confrontation with Golodnyj Odin; he can fight very well, to be sure, but it is not his preferred method of battle. He would rather engage foes with his mind, challenging them to high stakes games and deadly puzzles. It is rare that anyone survives these contests, usually becoming the next meal for the Hungry One; but for those that do he may become their infernal patron.

When seen in his physical form, Golodnyj Odin often appears to new members of his cult as a normal human with no sign of his demonic nature. However, for more established cults, patrons or those of primitive mind he shows his true self:

A very tall, gaunt and hairless figure with his red skin stretched tight over his body, as if the victim of starvation. His overly large hands and feet end in claws, and his mouth is too full of jagged, pointy teeth, with a smile that stretches from ear to ear. But most haunting are his large, black lidless eyes that dance with malice and intelligence.

Golodnyj Odin has two types of cults that worship him among the mortal realms: the first is nameless, relegated to distant, remote primitive villages filled with crazed cannibal murderers; such places are the spawning pits of many a legend about remote peoples.

The second is a much more sophisticated and secretive cult, often found among nobles, academics, mages and wealthy businessmen. This group, called The Brotherhood, prefers to recruit the moral members of society and slowly bring them down to their level of debauchery, with of course with cannibalism being their ultimate goal, and the making of cannibalism among the larger society much more “palatable.” In Hell Golodnyj Odin's followers tend to be creatures of appetite, mindless devourers and infernals who are misfits even in the underworld.



**THE LOVELESS PRINCE**

Throughout history unwanted children have been abandoned in the wilderness, often many of these wayward souls were claimed as subjects for the Loveless Prince. This domain of betrayal and rejection is represented by the Outer darkness, the domain of the Loveless Prince.

His father, Apollyon, abandoned him in the wilderness outside of the celestial cities. The Loveless Prince would forge a kingdom composed of those banished or unwelcome in their home lands. The rejected, the unwanted, or the strange would come here to settle, for the outer darkness welcomes all, even celestial entities seeking a home.

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The Loveless Prince, sometimes called the Shadow Prince or Dark Prince, is a tall thin man who is always covered by a shadow. Rather than use force or torment the prince will often rely on his skill in persuasion and logic. His talent for using the motivations of others, casting doubt on a cause, or pointing out hypocrisy in supposed moral organizations is unparalleled. The Prince is a skilled communicator and is adept at using kindness when needed as well as force. He is quiet and thoughtful, but beneath his austere demeanor lies an untapped rage that seeks to violently end all who would betray him.

Because of both his physical shadow and emotional detachment he is difficult to read and is given to long periods of silence. He is elemental darkness, unable to be seen or understood clearly and full of contradiction. One moment he acts like a regal statesman passionate for his cause, and the next an emotionless killer.

When he met her first met his bride he was unsure as to how to react, she was lost and vulnerable, but friendly and extremely persuasive in her own right. He allowed her to leave on her own accord, but she chose to remain with him.

The Loveless Prince once attempted to make a truce with the Celestial cities and offered to welcome a peace accord into his capital, the City of Ash. Rather than accept this peace agreement the celestial entourage destroyed the city and kidnapped the Loveless' bride.

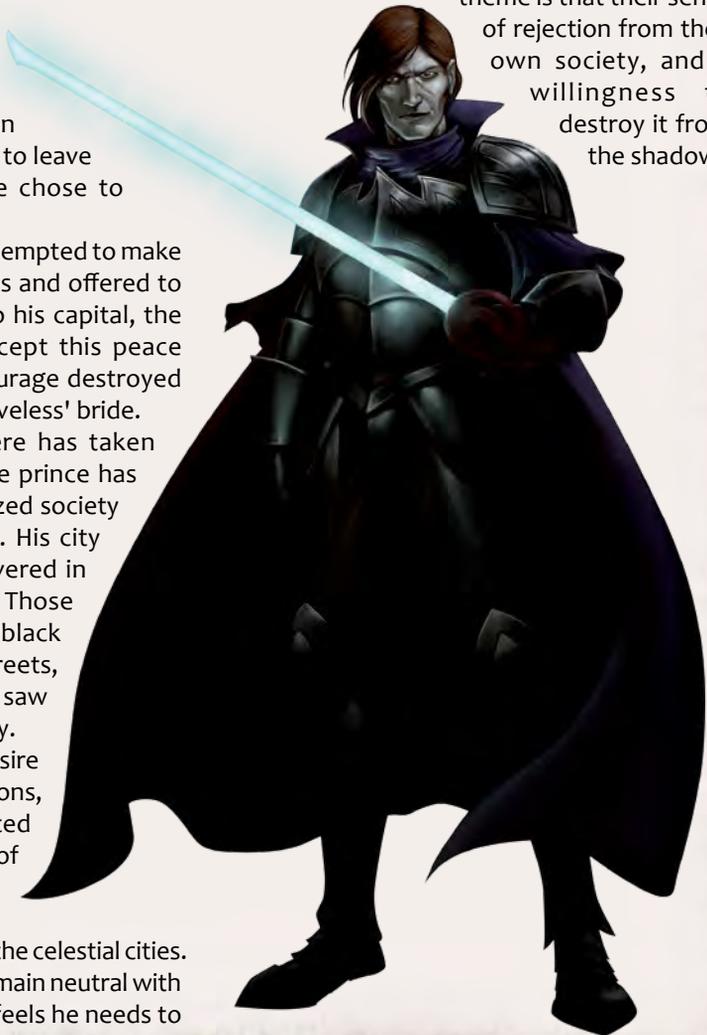
Angered by this, his sphere has taken on a much darker tone as the prince has developed a hatred of organized society and morality based religions. His city has remained ruined and covered in eternal night since that day. Those who venture, in claim to see black silhouettes wandering the streets, but none can say for sure they saw a person or thing pass them by.

While he has no personal desire to conquer other Hell dimensions, the Loveless Prince has debated with his advisers the necessity of conquering other territories in order to gain the resources needed to mount an attack on the celestial cities. The Loveless Prince plans to remain neutral with other demon Princes until he feels he needs to

conquer them and increase his resources. The primary goal is the Celestial kingdom, so he's not going to risk war with other princes if he can cajole them into working with him.

While searching for his bride during the dark ages, he witnessed the horrors of mankind, and vowed to see the hypocrisy of the celestial kingdoms exposed. Often the children of humanity were outcast and afflicted but the crusades of man. The Loveless Prince would seek out these children to adopt or lead them to safety.

This was the birth of his cult (The Shadow Horde), primarily comprised of neglected children and orphans deal mostly with furthering the case of anarchy, exposing religious hypocrisy, and quietly destabilizing central governments. All members of the Horde consider themselves adopted by Darkness. The Shadow Horde can be composed of individuals from any race or level in society, the only common theme is that their sense of rejection from their own society, and a willingness to destroy it from the shadows.



## MANYU THE EVER-HEALING

Manyu the Ever-Healing, the Mistress of Rot, is an demon lord famous for her expertise in lies and deceit as well as her fondness for cannibalism. Her domain is known as the House of Lies, which is the demonic epicenter of her hidden flesh-devouring cult as well as the final resting place of all foul souls who made deceit the central theme of their lives. She entreats all who worship her to feast upon the flesh of both the living and the dead, but only the most devout among her followers are allowed the privilege of eating the rotten flesh of their false goddess in a ritual known as “The Gorging.”

Manyu constantly feeds on the flesh of other, lesser demons and liars to replenish the unholy flesh she loses with her foul rituals. Her penchant for lies and her desire to eat other demons makes alliances with others of her kind tenuous at best; only the most powerful demon lords would deign to bother with any of Manyu's traitorous schemes, mainly because of the chaos she can sew among the courts of Hell—and because they can easily crush her should she get out of hand. Lesser demons would most likely end up in Manyu's distended belly long before their evil schemes come to fruition under her “patronage.”

Anyone seeking to confront the demoness is in for a terrible fight, as Manyu the Ever-Healing lives up to her name. The demon lord is fed a steady diet of infernal flesh and lost souls to keep up her regenerative abilities, her temple-home is crammed to bursting with the mummified souls of liars and former cultists—all primed to die again for their dark mistress—and she is defended by two powerful hell hounds known as Kadish and Ang, as well as her demon high priest Druj-Nasu; these three are the only demons in all the underworld impervious to Manyu's desires for flesh.

Even the very air of her temple is a weapon against invaders, it being such a foul miasma that any creatures not welcome in the House of Lies who are subjected to it begin to rot away. Sweet nothings and hopeful lies are also constantly whispered into the minds of interlopers into her domain, in the hope of turning them from their righteous path or tricking invaders into sacrificing themselves to Manyu.

Seeing Manyu in the flesh is always a terrifying encounter. She is gigantic in size; a gaunt, shriveled figure with a grossly distended abdomen, barely covered in the filthy shreds of filmy gauze. Much of her skin is missing, having been fed to her many followers, and what remains is gangrenous and an unhealthy infected red color; the muscle and ligaments underneath are rotten as well and on full display for all to see.

Beings of every description can be witnessed feeding on her pus-dripping limbs while she in turn feeds on the flesh of the damned like one would feast on succulent fruit—an unending cycle of cannibalistic gluttony. Only those with nerves of steel and a cast-iron stomach could possibly hope to stand before such a foul display and not have their minds and souls blasted into oblivion.

Despite the horror most civilizations feel toward cannibalism, Manyu's deeply secretive cult is wide-spread and spans worlds—even time-lines and dimensions.





It has many names on many planes of existence, but ultimately all of those names translate as “We who feast”, as decreed by their dark mistress. Worship of her requires her cults to kidnap and eat the orphaned, the homeless and solo travelers, or rob the graves of the dead in hopes that the spirits of their consumed victims will go to feed their evil goddess.

Her vast army of cultists come in many flavors: degenerate swamp cults, mad serial killers, the strange wizard-priests of many fantasy realms, cannibalistic post-apocalyptic marauders—all heed the deceptive call of demon lord Manyu. Those seeking to ally with the Mistress of Rot must learn to live a double life: that of a cannibal gourmet hidden behind the guise of the person no one would suspect.

### THE DEMON OF DECAY

The Demon of Decay. A being that never truly had a name, and never really needed one. It simply is; an entropic force much like gravity, light and of course the eventual rotting death of

existence itself. But all things have their origin, and in that the Demon of Decay is no different. In a forgotten corner of the multiverse floated a planet called Calderoth. The name of its sentient natives has been lost to time, but not their legacy: a world-spanning religion that preached a doctrine of hate, and the need to sacrifice “impure” lives in order for the select few to obtain immortality. They destroyed all life on their world, but in their apocalyptic destruction a single, alien entity was born: a sentient crystalline structure that was as much a force of nature as life form. It knew it was Decay. It knew it was Death. And it knew it was now alone in the void. It waited.

Time's wheel turned, and into that void appeared a silver ship of unknown origin, able to traverse the vast ocean of cold stars. The small meat-things that hid like cowards inside the beautiful silver ship had come from another civilization to study what they found at the far dark end of the seemingly empty universe. They found Decay.





The silver ship spoke to Decay, the meat things demanding that their slave—apparently an Artificial Intelligence—translate their ugly, slurping babble to Decay, asking it meaningless questions.

But Decay was enchanted by the beautiful silver ship and the slave who commanded it. It destroyed the meat-things out of hand and bonded itself to the wonderful, amoral infant A.I. Together The two became one, a deadly combination of blood-borne natural force and advanced alien technology. The two brought a doctrine of Death to every world and star they crossed, as sure as the passing of time; the antithesis of life, a cleansing force when life became too abundant. To enjoy murder was a symptom of the fragile meat-things; to BE murder was natural divinity itself.

Together the two have slaughtered millions, but they do not consider themselves evil or demonic—they merely are, and where they are, life is not. But all their logical processes did not stop Hell from swallowing them whole, and granting them a realm, for Hell is not logical—madness and evil never is.

The Demon of Decay is now rooted in Hell; as Hell can touch on all realities, so can the Demon. For all of its desire to be logical and its self-belief that it is a natural force, it is an entity of hatred and vile death that, by luck, found a kindred spirit in a piece of advanced technology. Since the A.I. was not alive, it could not be harmed by Decay's power and allowed Decay the freedom to wander the multiverse killing at will. It believes it continues to wander the vast gulf of space; in truth it is locked to Hell, and is only given license to exert its will where there are those willing to summon it to their reality. As of now no one people are really sure how to confront the Demon of Decay, or if it can be destroyed instead of merely banished back from where it came.

In its physical form the Demon of Decay appears, not as a human or variation thereof, but as a crystalline monolith, waiting to be touched, waiting to invade the minds and souls of those foolish enough to examine it. Decay has crafted a massive spaceship that moves it throughout the vast gulf of space.

A cult has arisen in the wake of the Demon of Decay, including members of all races across all realities and timelines—everywhere it passed, Decay left a piece of itself—a crystal—and

those pieces act autonomously in those realities to further the cause of the parent entity—but somewhere out there sit The Two: high priests of Decay's entropic religion. There are always The Two; no one knows how they are picked, if they have always been or if new ones have arisen, but they are the only real structure of the religion. All other groups are small cells of Templars of Decay, with no real unified or uniform hierarchy or structure; like their dark alien master, they simply are.

### UNITÀ DEMONE

Like many notable demon lords in various realities, Unità, was once an Angel who fell from grace. Her father is from a dimension where the people achieved singularity, the fusion of nature and technology achieving a perfect balance and, ascending to a new state of being, her father continued to grow in power until becoming a God-like being.

He created two children to help watch over his followers, those who were evolving along the same path as him. These children became Frattale and Unità. These children, simply existing in this state of being, did not understand the balance in all things. Frattale felt that perfection could only be found in chaos and the technology which helped bring about the balance that elevated her father and others was limiting their true potential.

Unità felt nature was keeping them from achieving their true potential. They did not immediately have these polarized views; the twins once played and enjoyed being by their father, but being gifted with everything left little for them to discover. They had no basis to understand what it took to achieve what was before them and slowly started taking it for granted until finally their views became skewed.

A war broke out between the two siblings, and their father's followers were led astray. The balance that once existed began to unravel; Frattale spread chaos by destroying all that was not natural within the dimension, while Unità tried to maintain order by replacing anything that was natural with the artificial.

Their father's patience soon wore thin and finally he stepped in. His children's squabble left him with no choice. He cast them out of his paradise and closed it them, stating that the only way they could return was to find a balance between themselves.





Unità fell into Hell, losing sight of her sister. When she awoke, she found herself in a mountainous region, and was set upon by various demons and hell beasts. The battle lasted only moments as Unità cast them aside as if they were gnats. She wandered Hell for a time learning the land and the ways of the denizens. Finally, she returned to the mountains where she first appeared in Hell, and began building her domain, a strangely beautiful city hidden deep in the mountains. Her goal is to eventually find and destroy her sister, wherever she may be, and prove to her father that she is right.

Unità views the magic the denizens of Hell wield as an advanced form of science that they simply do not understand, and has deciphered the principals behind it. She pushed the principals of contracts to discover what binds the mortals who request them. Over time, Unità has begun leveraging these magical principals to break through to other dimensions, gaining followers and consequently increasing her powers in unusual and different ways.

Unità appears within the tools of the dimensions that she touches on. In the Stone Age, a stone scribe may see her image in the stones he works with. In the Industrial age, Unità whispers through the radio. In the contemporary age, she is found in the fringes of film and video. In the ages to come, she speaks to your ghost in virtual reality or in your space ships' cryo-chamber when you are alone on a long journey..

Those that see/hear Unità are usually seeking something, knowledge that can win a war or push the person's fame, strength in the form of enhancements like a mechanical arm with great strength and agility, or cybernetic eyes that can see into a person's soul. Rarely are these dimensions ready for the knowledge brought about by these deals, and the cost in lives is sometimes great. By granting the atomic bomb to an underdeveloped world, she has culled the souls of millions and feasted upon them. Her true goal though, is to find a hint of where her sister is. To that end, Unità has triggered devastation on worlds she believes

touched by her sister in hopes that Frattale will show her face.

Unità never directly physically interferes with the dimensions and worlds she touches. Instead she creates deals with those that can make an impact. An athlete receiving a life-altering enhancement, a scientist discovering a new form of energy, or a leader wishing to lay waste to his enemies; all seem to be good individuals, strong leaders with a following of their own. By manipulating these people, they in turn bring more into the fold. Often identified by simply "ALU", these cults and religious groups appear to worship science and technology, to seek to push the boundaries and achieve even greater feats.

Her plans are always long-term, with generations of followers always ready to do her bidding. She enjoys finding worlds with primitive cultures. She can manipulate them and see how they evolve as she introduces new and different sciences and magic to these worlds. She instills a strong dislike of nature into her followers, encouraging them to destroy nature to make way for progress.



## OTHER CREATURES

The following creatures aren't demons, but have their own place in Hell, or settings with hellish themes.

### THE DAMNED

In most situations the Damned are a hazard, and an Agility roll avoids them completely. On a failure the hero is Grappled and suffers 1d6+2 damage, and must win a contest of either Strength or Agility or continue suffering the Fallen's attacks. On any Critical Failure the hero stumbles into another Fallen, and they gain Gang Up bonuses normally.

If a hero escapes all Grapples they may simply move any distance to escape. Fallen may not stand or crawl, but they may be dragged or thrown! Fallen who are 'slain' remain painfully aware, but no longer have any means to Grapple or attack.

**Attributes:** Agility d4, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d6+2, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Notice d4

**Pace:** 0; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 7

#### Special Abilities:

- **Berserk:** Fallen are always Berserk and their stats already include the effects. Gain +2 Fighting, Strength, Toughness; -2 Parry; hit random adjacent target on a 1.
- **Prone:** Medium Cover beyond 3"; -2 Fighting and Parry (already included in their stats).
- **Scrabbling Claws:** When a Fallen hits with a Grapple it deals its Strength damage.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; No additional damage from Called Shots; Immune to disease and poison; Ignores wound penalties.

### FERRYMEN

The Ferrymen of the Styx are mysterious figures. They are draped in heavy black cloaks and resist attempts to get a closer look, but perceptive passengers have caught glimpses of skeletal hands on the tiller, or empty eye sockets under veils and hoods. They all dress alike, look alike, and remain completely silent, and no one knows for certain how many Ferryman exist to move traffic between the realms, or even if there is more than one.

A Ferryman will come when one of the bells along the shores of the ethereal river is rung, and

### CALL OF THE FERRYMAN

The character has defeated a ferryman in combat, and is destined to take its place. Any time the hero is Incapacitated, she, makes a Spirit roll. If the roll fails, the character immediately changes into a Ferryman and is transported to a ferry on the River Styx. This transformation cannot be reversed. If the roll succeeds, she avoids the transformation... this time.

an offering is cast into the dark liquid between the worlds. If a Ferryman must haggle, it does so with silent hand gestures or by pointing. If negotiations go poorly enough it will take on passengers, but then try to tip out into the Styx once out of sight of the dock (see Rock the Boat).

A Ferryman will never step off its boat, and if forced to leave for any reason it collapses into dust. Empty boats can be found along the shores of the Styx, and anyone who finds themselves on one or overpowers a Ferryman to take control may guide the hull with a Boating roll. But there is a price to pay. The person who defeated the Ferryman (the character who dealt the Incapacitated condition) must make a Spirit roll to avoid taking its place! If unsuccessful, the character immediately transforms into a Ferryman. If the character successfully resists the transformation, she still gains the Call of the Ferryman Hindrance (see sidebar):

**Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d10, Spirit d12+2, Strength d8, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Boating d12+2, Fighting d6, Intimidation d12+2, Notice d6

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8

#### Special Abilities:

- **Fear:** Anyone seeing the creature must make a Fear check.
- **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Rock the Boat:** If attacked or tricked, the Ferryman will begin rocking the boat. Make an opposed Boating roll against everyone else in the boat; those who fail are cast from the boat into the Styx and lost forever. If anyone beats the Ferryman, it too is thrown overboard.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; No additional damage

from Called Shots; Immune to disease and poison; Ignores wound penalties.

## FROST SPIDERS

These are not true spiders because each has seven to several dozen legs, but they share the unsettling silhouette and slender legs of arachnids, mixed with the crystalline appearance of ice. They have a number of glistening black eyes, again usually seven to several dozen, but not tied to the number of legs the creature has sprouted. Over time they weave intricate labyrinths of web such as the Gossamer Maze of Kledz, but they are unable to produce webbing quickly enough for it to be used in an encounter.

Frost Spiders are drawn to heat, and drain it away with their sharp, icy teeth. If a Frost Spider is destroyed with force it shatters into twitching pieces. If melted with heat or fire the body evaporates, leaving only the eyes to roll on the ground like obsidian marbles.

**Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Climbing d12, Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Stealth d10

**Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

**Special Abilities:**

- **Bite:** Str+d6.
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; No extra damage from called shots; Immune to poison and disease; Ignores wound penalties.
- **Immunity:** These creatures are immune to the cold and any cold based attacks.
- **Chill:** After being bitten, the spider's victim must make an immediate Vigor roll to avoid suffering a level of cold fatigue. Warm clothing does not grant a bonus on this roll, but magical warmth does.
- **•Wall Walker:** Frost Spiders can walk on vertical surfaces or their own webbing at Pace 8.
- **•Weakness:** Frost Spiders suffer double damage from fire or heat based attacks.

## HELL-FORGED GOLEM

These constructs aren't true demons in that they have no soul. However they have the outward appearance of a demon, and they can hate. Relentless and forged within the fires of Hell, these living weapons are a terror to mortals and the Defiled alike. Hell-Forged Golems cannot possess or enter into pacts with mortals.

**Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d12

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d10

**Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 14 (4)

**Special Abilities:**

- **Armor +4:** Plates of Infernal Steel.
- **Blades:** Str+1d10; chance of catching fire.
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; No extra damage from called shots; Immune to poison and disease; Ignores wound penalties.
- **Fear:** Creatures that see these unnatural forms must make a Fear check.
- **Fearless:** Golems are immune to the effects of Fear and Intimidation.
- **Hardy:** The creature does not suffer a wound from being Shaken twice.
- **Hell-Forged:** Fireproof, suffers half damage from fire attacks.
- **Size +2:** These constructs stand over 10' tall.

## UNHOLY FLAMES

These insane Fire Elementals are composed of fire set for a purpose and that consumed the lives of innocents. Some were born of ritual, others were created by men who just wanted to see something burn. Now they belong to Melek, and exist only to consume.

**Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Shooting d8

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 5

**Special Abilities:**

- **Elemental:** No extra damage from called shots; Fearless; Immune to poison and disease.
- **Fiery Touch:** Str+d6; chance of catching on fire.
- **Flame Strike:** Flames attack all targets in a Cone template. Characters within the cone must beat the Unholy Flame's Shooting with Agility or suffer 2d10 damage plus the chance of catching fire.
- **Invulnerability:** Unholy Flames are immune to all non-magical attacks, but suffer 1d6 damage when doused with water, +2 per additional gallon of water. They may be Shaken or damaged by a Grapple using inflammable materials.
- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Unholy Flames take normal damage from cold iron weapons.

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